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SHOOT THE MESSENGER - SHOOTING SCRIPT

EXT. SCHOOL GATES. DAY

"Fuck Teachers" sprayed in big letters on an inner city school wall. Joseph Pascale, 33 years old, black and pleasant looking, cleans it off. He looks at us.

JOE  
(to us)  
I guess I just want to do some  
good.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

Boys play all around. It's an inner city school and it's racially mixed, but there is a preponderance of black boys. Joe looks around. He notices two white boys fighting over a game boy. He also sees two black boys playing 'piggy in the middle' with an Asian boy's jacket. He sets off in the direction of the white boys.

JUMP CUT TO:

The game boy slips into Joe's pocket.

JOE  
Collect this from me later.  
(to us)  
I had no plans to be a teacher.  
I was a computer programmer. I  
was well paid, and had good  
prospects, but I kept seeing the  
headlines.

CUTAWAY

Shots of different headlines, "Black Boys Failing" "Gun Crime Goes Up Again" "Another Week, Another Death"

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

Joe walks along.

JOE  
(to us)  
I was drawn to do something.

He jumps, catching the piggy's jacket as it flies over his head. He hands the asian boy his jacket. He points at the black boys who were playing with the jacket.

JOE (cont'd)  
Detention.

The boys start to moan. "Come on sir." "That's not fair."  
"We was just playing"

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I was desperate to do something.  
I just didn't know what. I went  
to a meeting that I'd seen  
advertised in the papers.

CUTAWAY

Shots of headline. "Save Our Children", "We ask the tough questions".

CUT TO:

CUTAWAY

Paragraph showing "Meeting Town Hall, Thursday 7th May,  
7.30pm

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

JOE  
(to us)  
It was like a call to arms.

CUT TO:

INT. EDUCATION MEETING. EVE

A room packed to the seams with black people. On the

raised dias stage at the front sit five people. In front of each person is a holder stating their name and job. There is a councillor, a head of education, a parent governor, an MP and a teacher. People have their hands up, champing at the bit to have their say. A woman from the audience is chosen. She stands up. She wears ethnic clothing and a wrap on her head.

EVELYN

I just want to say that I believe there is a racist conspiracy against black boys.

A huge percentage of the audience make agreeing sounds. Others shake their heads. The chair of the meeting looks around the table. They all want to comment. She calls on the councillor, COUNCILLOR Watts.

COUNCILLOR

I think there's some truth in what you say.

Angry sounds from the audience. The white MP, Tracey Willis, shakes her head.

COUNCILLOR (cont'd)

My experience of being a councillor is that black boys are being systematically destroyed by the system.

The crowd roar angrily. Tracey feels driven to interrupt.

TRACEY

I think what you've just said is totally irresponsible. We are all concerned about the performance of black boys.

COUNCILLOR

Yes, but too often you're concerned about their performance on the football field.

The audience roar their support for the COUNCILLOR's viewpoint. JOE, sat in the audience, watches. Hands shoot up in the air. A man in a suit is chosen.

NEVIL

Doesn't the panel see in the reporting of these statistics in the tabloid press, yet another attempt to make the black community look bad.

Lots of cheers of support from the audience.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR. DAY

Joe walks along through throngs of pupils scurrying to their lessons.

JOE  
(to us)  
It went on like that most of the night. Everyone blaming everyone else. Digressing. No solutions offered.  
The problems were just beginning to look insurmountable when it happened.

CUT TO:

INT. EDUCATION MEETING. EVE

The crowd is in the middle of a roar.

CHAIR  
Mary as a teacher what do you think we need?

MARY  
We need more black teachers.

The audience cheers to a man.

MARY CONT  
But what we really need. What I believe could really turn this thing around are more black male teachers.

Joe suddenly transfixed. The audience signal their agreement. Joe's face lights up as she continues.

MARY O/S  
These boys need role models. They need to see, hear that they have other options than the gang...

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE JOE'S CLASS. DAY

Joe stands as boys stream by him into the class room.

JOE  
(to us)  
So here I am. Making a  
difference.  
(pause)  
But it's more than that.  
(thinks)  
It feels.. It's as if I'm doing  
what I'm meant to be doing. What  
I was put on this earth to do.

He notices 14 year old, Germal Forest sauntering towards him, flanked by his two 'disciples', Reece and Yannek.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to boys)  
Come on. Move it.  
(to us)  
I'm not saying it's easy. Some  
of these boys are a real  
challenge. Meet challenge number  
one in year 9. Germal Forest.

As Germal saunters into the class, Joe gives him a 'get a move on' tap upside the head.

GERMAL  
Oi, don't touch me you perv.

JOE  
In.

GERMAL  
(to Joe)  
You're not supposed to touch us!

JOE  
In!

Germal kisses his teeth and walks into the classroom. His disciples follow him. Joe looks at us and bats his eyes heavenward. 'The drama of it all.'

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY

Joe walks about handing out certificates.

JOE  
In third place Andrew Haynes,  
(he places a certificate  
in front a black boy)  
in second place is Sean Moore  
(he places a certificate  
in front of a white

boy)  
and in first place Amir Khan.  
(he places a certificate  
in front of an asian  
boy)  
Well done.

The 'winners' look at their awards proudly.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
They're not official or anything.  
I made them on the computer.  
It's just a way of encouraging  
them to strive, to succeed.

A missile flies from the back of the class and hits Andrew Haynes squarely in the back of the head. Andrew doesn't bother to look around, he knows who did it. Joe looks back at where the missile came from. Germal and his cohorts lounge nonchalantly. A tell-tale grin on Yannek's face marks him as the culprit.

JOE (cont'd)  
Yannek, Germal, Reece.  
Detention.

REECE  
(indignant)  
I didn't do anything.

JOE  
That's the problem. Lesson -  
next time one of your friends is  
about to lob a missile into  
someone's head - stop him.

REECE  
I've got football practise  
tonight. Sir, I've got foot...

JOE  
(with finality)  
Detention.  
(to us)  
We've got enough black  
footballers  
(beat)  
...and Thierry Henry he ain't.

GERMAL  
My mum says she's coming up the  
school if you give me detention  
again.

JOE  
Wonderful. It would be lovely to

see her.

Joe flicks open a book that say 'Germal Forest' on the front. Pages of almost illegible writing.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to Germal)  
I'd appreciate the opportunity to  
'show' her how well you're doing.

People snigger under their breaths, not wanting Germal to see them. Germal looks around, angry, humiliated.

JUMP CUT TO:

Joe packs up his stuff. Andrew is the last to leave the class. He looks down the corridor nervously.

ANDREW  
Sir, are you walking towards the science block?

JOE  
I can go that way.

#### EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

The 'late' kids dash to their various lessons. Andrew steps out of the school doors. Across the yard Germal and his cohorts, spy him and step forward, vicious little smiles on their faces. Their smiles die. Germal's eyes go cold, Yanek looks disappointed and Reece looks worried. Stepping out behind Andrew is Mr Pascale. Andrew sees the gang. He looks at them nervously. Joe sees them. He shakes his head. 'Why do they do it?' Germal stares back, insolent.

Germal watches as Joe and Andrew walk towards them. Yanek looks at Germal, 'maybe they should head off before Mr Pascale reaches them'. Reece looks at the floor, at the sky, anywhere, but at Joe and Andrew. Joe and Andrew reach the gang.

JOE  
(without looking at the gang)  
Double detention.

Reece looks like he might cry. Joe keeps right on moving without missing a step.

GERMAL  
(shouting after him)  
We're just standing here.

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY

The class is packed. There are a few white, Turkish but mostly it's black boys. Germal and his gang are amongst them. The 'piggy in the middle' boys are there. They work.

JOE  
(to us)  
I'll tell you something about my  
detention classes. They're not  
really detention classes at all.  
(he nods and grins)  
I formulated a plan soon after I  
got here.  
(beat)  
Enforced Education.

Joe walks around looking at people's work. He walks up to Germal, Yannek and Reece. Germal makes a big show of doing nothing. Yannek works under protest. Reece works well. Joe looks at Reece's work. It's fair.

JOE (cont'd)  
(overdoing it)  
Excellent work Reece.

Reece embarrassed, looks at Germal who looks at him annoyed.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL/STAFFROOM. DAY

A locker with books, pens, folders. More books are put in. The door is shut.

JOE  
(to us)  
I am going to force these boys to  
learn. I know they're no angels,  
but I don't think this place  
helps.

He looks around, loads of white people. Little enclaves of teachers dotted about the room.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I'm the only black teacher, in a  
school of 800 pupils where 70  
percent of them are black. If I  
was them I might behave the same

way.

MR WATSON  
Joe, the head wants to see you.

Joe looks surprised, but walks off.

INT. HEAD'S OFFICE. DAY

Joe looks shocked.

JOE  
He said I did what?

MR MORTON  
He said that you assaulted him.

JOE  
That's ridiculous!

MR MORTON  
I know it is, but you know what  
the procedures are. All  
complaints have to be  
investigated no matter how flimsy  
and no matter how unreliable the  
source.

Joe is still reverberating from the charge made against  
him.

JOE  
What will happen now? To me?

MR MORTON  
(confidently)  
Nothing. I've investigated and  
find his accusations unfounded.

INT. SCHOOL/CORRIDOR, OUTSIDE HEAD'S OFFICE. DAY

The plaque on the door says 'Mr Morton, Headmaster'. Joe  
walks out. He looks at us.

JOE  
Bastard.

Joe storms off, we follow him. He looks back at us.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
The little shit.

He walks off. We watch him go.

INT. JOE'S CLASSROOM. ANOTHER DAY

On the board is written. "Subject and Object" There are 10 sentences on the board. Most of the class work studiously including Andrew. Joe looks to the back where Germal and his disciples lounge. Germal stares at him challenging. Reece and Yannek snigger.

INT. HEAD'S OFFICE. ANOTHER DAY

Joe looks stunned.

MR MORTON  
I'm so sorry Joe.

JOE  
I don't understand, you said it  
wasn't going any further.

MR MORTON  
And I wasn't taking it any  
further, but his parents have  
been up to the school. They're  
threatening to call the police.

JOE  
The police?

MR MORTON  
I know, I know. It's crazy. The  
thing is, his friends Yannek and  
Reece are supporting his story.

JOE  
(incredulous)  
They're saying I assaulted him?

Mr Morton nods.

MR MORTON  
You see my position?

JOE  
Yea. Well actually no, I don't.  
What is your position?

INT. STAFF TOILETS. DAY

Joe leans back on one of the sinks thinking. He looks at

us through the mirror.

JOE  
(repeating what Mr  
Morton said to him)  
As the head of this school Joe,  
it's my job to protect the  
children from any danger or any  
perceived danger. While this is  
being thoroughly investigated I'm  
afraid you're...

INT. HEAD'S OFFICE. DAY

MR MORTON  
(As the head of this school, Joe,  
it's my job to protect the  
children from any danger or any  
perceived danger. While this is  
being thoroughly investigated I'm  
afraid you're)  
...suspended.

Joe's face registers shock then disbelief.

MR MORTON (cont'd)  
I know this will have come as a  
shock, but I will speed things  
along as fast as I can and I feel  
certain Joe, certain this will  
all blow over.

INT. STAFF TOILETS. DAY

The toilet is empty.

INT. STAFFROOM. DAY

Joe at his locker. The staffroom is quiet. People look  
his way and whisper.

EXT. PLAYGROUND. DAY

Joe walks across.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES. DAY

Joe walks out and as a matter of course looks at the wall where the epithet is normally written. Someone has written "Fuck Mr Morton". A teacher is cleaning it off. Joe walks away.

INT. BOOKSHOP-CAFE. DAY

JOE  
(to us)  
I've been thinking about it. You know. This could be a good thing. I mean suspended with pay. It's like being on a paid holiday.  
There are loads of things I can do until this all blows over.

Reveal that he has a book open.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I can catch up on my reading.

Joe goes back to reading his book.

INT. JOE'S ROOM. DAY

Joe's room has a sleeping area and a work area. In the work area there is a large bookcase with loads of books. Books on teaching, loads of books on black children and education. There is also a table.

Joe on the phone.

JOE  
No... No... Yes, I understand  
totally. No, I'd rather not.  
Yea, thank you.

Joe hangs up. He shakes his head in disbelief at what he's just heard, half amused. He catches us looking at him. He looks up.

JOE (cont'd)  
You wouldn't believe who that was.  
(he pauses as if waiting for us to guess)  
The press. Yea, you heard me right. The press. Germal's parents contacted the press.  
(he laughs)  
They wanted my side of the story.

Story? What story? I told them  
I wasn't interested. I don't  
want to fan this thing. I think  
the best way to do that is to  
maintain a dignified silence.

INT. BOOK SHOP-CAFE. ANOTHER DAY

Joe looks with horror at the front page of The People (a black newspaper a'la The Voice or The Nation) On the front page is a forlorn looking Germal flanked by his parents. The title, "My Abuse at the hands of Teacher". Joe looks at us.

JUMP CUT TO:

Joe avidly reading the paper.

JOE

Ms Rowe sobbed when she talked  
about the physical bruises  
sustained by her son at the hands  
of the teacher.

(to us)

Bruises, what bruises?

(reads)

"My son was absolutely terrified.  
He did not want to go back to  
school. Me and his dad were so  
worried about what he might do we  
had to put him on suicide watch.

Joe looks at us. A phone rings. Joe reaches over and picks up a mobile. The screen says 'Mum'. He sighs.

INT. PASCALE LIVING ROOM. DAY

Joe's mother Ivaline Pascale, late 50s, neat hair and attractive nails looks at the paper horrified. His father Rodney Pascale, late 50s attractive looks at him, earnest.

RODNEY

Apologise.

JOE

For what? I didn't do anything.

IVALINE

(looking at paper,  
talking to herself)

What a disgrace. Thank god they  
didn't put your picture in the  
paper.

RODNEY  
You must have done something.

Joe looks at him angrily.

IVALINE  
When I think of how you gave up  
your good job in computing to  
teach for a pittance.

RODNEY  
Make them apologise then.

IVALINE  
Just to help those wort'less boys  
and this is the thanks you get.

RODNEY  
Make them print a retraction.

The phone rings, Ivaline answers it.

IVALINE  
(into phone)  
Hello.  
(she listens. she puts  
her hand over the phone  
and speaks to Joe,  
bitterly)  
You should sue them.  
(into phone, sweetly)  
No, it's not him.

Joe looks at her.

RODNEY  
I'm telling you Joe, you can't  
just let them get away with it.  
Right now, you're suspended,  
suppose you lose you job?

JOE  
That's not...[...going to happen]

RODNEY  
How you going to get another one  
if this is following you? Speak  
up man.

Joe's goes to speak when-

IVALINE  
(into phone)  
It must be another Joseph  
Pascale, it's quite a common  
name.

Joe looks at her and looks at us. Can we believe this.

INT. BOOKSHOP-CAFE. DAY

Music heard coming from radio behind counter. Joe sits with Vernon, a black reporter for The People who scribbles on a pad as Joe speaks.

JOE

As a black teacher, a black male teacher I think I deserve some credit, some support. I gave up a well paid job to teach...  
(remembering what his mother said)  
for what amounts to a pittance.  
And let me tell you those kids are not easy. They lack discipline and....

A cup of tea being carried. It is placed in front of Joe.  
The reporter is gone.

JOE (cont'd)

(to us)  
It was actually a relief to say my part, balance the whole thing up.

The person behind the counter changes the station.

SIR LANCELOT ON RADIO (V.O.)  
You said and I quote...

INT. RADIO STATION. ANOTHER DAY

Close on newspaper headline. 'Teacher Calls Black Kids Dogs!'

SIR LANCELOT  
(reading from paper)  
"They lack discipline. They need training, even dogs need training."

The DJ looks up askance at a nervous Joe. Joe puts his mouth to the mike.

JOE  
I didn't mean it that way.

Councillor Watts, the councillor from the beginning is

there.

SIR LANCELOT  
Councillor Watts, what is going  
on? We got black teachers  
calling black kids dogs. Hitting  
black kids.

The councillor goes to speak.

JOE  
I didn't hit him.

SIR LANCELOT  
(to Joe)  
Did you touch him?

JOE  
Yes, but...

SIR LANCELOT  
(to Joe)  
Then you hit him blood. That's  
the meaning of 'hit'. Councillor?

COUNCILLOR  
What I want to know, is given  
that he has admitted (pointedly  
to Joe) 'hitting' the boy, why  
the school is fighting to  
reinstate him.

SIR LANCELOT  
That's a point, I mean I thought  
that if a teacher hit a pupil,  
he's gone.

JOE  
(frustrated)  
I didn't hit him.

COUNCILLOR  
(ignoring Joe)  
Seems like it's one set of rules  
for one kind of pupil and another  
set for another kind of pupil  
doesn't it?

SIR LANCELOT  
Let's take a call. Nona from  
Lewisham you wanted to say what?

NONA ON AIR  
He's ruuuuude! Councillor Watts  
is right, if he had hit a white  
child, he'd be in prison right  
now and then he'd remember how

black his arse is.

SIR LANCELOT  
Keep it clean folks. Saul in  
Camberwell, what you saying?

SAUL ON AIR  
I wanted to say that comparing  
our kids to dogs is an insult!

Councillor Watts nods his head, Joe is getting more and more frustrated.

SAUL ON AIR (cont'd)  
...to dogs.

Sir Lancelot laughs. Councillor Watts shakes his head.

SAUL ON AIR (cont'd)  
If I was a teacher, forget  
hitting, I'd beat them.

SIR LANCELOT  
(to councillor, amused)  
Saul is speaking for many people  
who feel that a lot of the  
problems we're seeing in this  
generation is because they don't  
get enough beating.

COUNCILLOR  
Violence against children won't  
cure bad behaviour.  
(turning his focus to  
Joe)  
And as a teacher we hold this man  
to a higher standard. He has a  
duty of care, a duty of trust.  
He broke that trust when he hit  
that boy.

JOE  
I DID NOT HIT HIM!

Sir Lancelot and Councillor Watts are caught off guard.

JOE (cont'd)  
It was a tap. A 'get a move on'  
tap.  
(desperate to explain)  
I left a really good job to  
become a teacher...because of  
those boys...because I wanted to  
help.

Sir Lancelot is touched, the councillor is sceptical.

SIR LANCELOT  
Helen from Hackney. What you  
saying?

HELEN ON AIR  
He's a liar! My brother goes to  
that school and he's been  
complaining about him for months.

Councillor Watts nods vigorously. Joe looks as if someone  
just sideswiped him.

HELEN ON AIR (cont'd)  
He hates the black boys. He's  
always giving them detention for  
nothing!

COUNCILLOR  
(to Sir Lancelot)  
I've had loads of calls to my  
office saying the same thing.

SIR LANCELOT  
(to Joe)  
Do you give black boys more  
detention?

Joe looks at us, 'How to explain...?'

JOE  
Yes, but it's...

Sir Lancelot is stunned, he goes to speak, but...

JOE (cont'd)  
...not really detention,  
(brightly)  
...it's extra tuition. I'm  
trying to...  
(hears what the  
councillor is saying)  
No, I'm not a predator. Listen!  
Please listen.

COUNCILLOR  
(into his mike)  
Black people, slavery days are  
over, it's time to stand up and  
be counted. Join me in a  
campaign to make sure this  
dangerous predator is no longer  
given access to our kids. The  
white establishment is...

COUNCILLOR  
(into mike)  
...trying to ensure that he stays

in his job because they've found  
their ideal teacher for our kids.  
A klu klux Klan man with a black  
face.

Sir Lancelot nods agreeing. Joe's face, stunned.

EXT. COURT HOUSE. DAY

Joe's face bewildered. Crowds of black people outside with  
placards saying "Sack Him", Protect Our Kids", "Traitor".  
Councillor Watts stands front and centre of the crowd.

INT. COURT HOUSE. DAY

Joe standing by the window looking out at the crowd.

MARK O/V  
You really shouldn't have spoken  
on the radio.

Joe looks at him.

JOE  
I was trying to set things  
straight. Trying to get people  
to hear my side.

MARK  
Yea. Well.  
(looks outside)  
Looks like it may have backfired.

INT. COURTROOM. DAY

Germal on the stand. Joe, open mouthed, shocked.

GERMAL  
He was strangling me. Yanek and  
Reece were trying to get him off  
me, but he wouldn't let go.

JUMP CUT TO:

GERMAL (cont'd)  
(shrugs)  
I don't know.

MARK  
(to Germal)  
You described a very serious

assault. You later pointed to  
bruises that you alleged were  
caused by Mr Pascale. How come  
no one saw any signs of this  
vicious attack immediately after  
the alleged incident?

GERMAL

It was round my neck they  
couldn't see.

MARK

Indeed, but they say when you  
entered the class you were your  
usual, disruptive, vocal self.  
Hardly the behaviour of someone  
who has just survived attempted  
strangulation.

Germal nervous.

MARK (cont'd)

It's time to end this farce Mr  
Forest. It's gone too far, but  
it's not too late. You were  
angry with Mr Pascale for some  
perceived slight and took  
advantage of a fracas in which  
you sustained your 'bruises' to  
blame him.

Germal defiant, shakes his head

JUMP CUT TO:

Yannek on the stand

YANNEK

I was trying to pull him off, but  
he told me to get away.  
(ad libbing)  
And he pushed me, like that...

Yannek does a rough push with his hand. Joe shakes his  
head.

JUMP CUT TO:

Reece on the stand. Reece looks embarrassed. Joe's lawyer  
looks at him.

REECE

I didn't really see anything.

Hubbub in the court room.

MARK

You saw that Mr Pascale didn't do anything of the sort.

REECE  
I didn't. I didn't. I...I was looking the other way.

INT. COURT HOUSE. DAY

A devastated Joe with his lawyer.

MARK  
It's a good result.

JOE  
(incredulous)  
I was found guilty.

MARK  
Yes, but with a suspended sentence. Given the evidence and it's corroboration they had to find you guilty, but the suspended sentence shows that they don't believe the little blighters or at the very least they think they got exactly what they deserved.

JOE  
I didn't touch...

MARK  
I know, I know and I think we have a really good chance at an appeal. When the temperature dies down. It's obvious they're lying. That Reece boy will crack.

JOE  
An appeal, that could take years...

MARK  
...more like months Mr Pascale and like I say I think there's a good chance that...

JOE  
..., but what if they stick to their story, what if I lose again? And in the meantime I have a criminal record...for assault. What about my

teaching... my life...?

Mark pats him sympathetically and walks off. Joe looks devastated.

EXT. COURT HOUSE. DAY

Joe looks at something terrified. A camera crew look at the cheering, jeering crowd. They focus on a woman who screams "traitor!". A man shakes his fist. A line of children hold a banner saying "Protect our children" They chant "Out, out out!" Joe looks at them in terror. 'How did it come to this?'

The camera crew swing their camera around to...Councillor Watts. He smiles broadly into the camera.

COUNCILLOR  
It's a great day to be black.

The crowd immediately behind him cheer and jostle to be on camera.

COUNCILLOR (cont'd)  
He's lucky there's no death  
penalty for betraying your race.  
Now there's no excuse, we want,  
we demand that he receives the  
sack!

The crowd roar at the councillor's words. Joe's eyes water then he swallows back the tears. He heads down the stairs. A missile hits him in the back of the head, a voice shouts, "See how you like it." Joe turns, a mix of egg and flour hits him squarely in the chest. The crowd roar their approval. Joe looks at his chest then at the baying crowd. His face hardens, his eyes angry.

A CAMERA  
SHUTTER EFFECT

CUTAWAY

The front page of The People has a picture of Joe and is done up like a 'wanted' poster, but it says 'UNWANTED, Dead or Alive'.

A CAMERA  
SHUTTER EFFECT

INT. STAFFROOM. DAY

A stony faced Joe packing stuff from his locker into a box: books, pens, a can of spray paint, folders...et al. As Joe turns to go we see several teachers waiting to say goodbye. They look at him sympathetically,

A CAMERA  
SHUTTER EFFECT

INT. CORRIDOR. DAY

Joe walks down the corridor with a box of stuff. Behind him people are coming out of their classes and looking.

Joe hears the roar of the crowd outside the court house.

Andrew Haynes watches him sympathetically. Joe looks neither right nor left.

CAMERA SHUTTER  
EFFECT

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

Joe walks across.

EXT. COURT HOUSE. FLASHBACK. DAY

Joe sees the banner "Protect Our Children". The angry faces. The man shaking his fist. The woman shouting traitor. The kids shouting "Out, out, out".

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

Germal and Yannek watch him out of the window as do the other kids in the class.

INT. CLASSROOM. DAY

Inside the class, the kids scrabble for a good vantage point. Reece, is the only pupil still seated, his head hung.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

Joe approaches the school gate.

CAMERA SHUTTER  
EFFECT

EXT. COURT HOUSE. FLASHBACK. DAY

The missile lands in the back of his head, he turns and he is hit square in the chest by the flour bomb.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES. DAY

Joe steps back surveying his handiwork. His mouth smiles, but his eyes are cold. He drops the spray can into his box. He walks away leaving the box where it is. In the background on the wall is written "Fuck Black People!!!

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. JOE'S ROOM. DAY

Joe's books fly off the shelves and onto the floor. Joe sweeps more books off the shelves.

EXT. GARDEN. DAY

Joe's books piled into a barrel. He pours lighter fuel on to them. He strikes a match and they begin to burn.

INT. JOE'S ROOM. DAY

Joe's book shelf devoid of books. Joe sits on the bed and stares into the distance. His face hard, his eyes cold.

JOE

You know when I think about it,  
whenever something bad has  
happened to me, a black person  
has been involved.

(he thinks)

The first day I started school, I  
broke my leg. A boy backed into  
me in the playground. Desmond  
Anderson. He was black.

INT. JOE'S ROOM. DAY

An open suitcase on the bed. Clothes being thrown in. Joe is emptying out his wardrobe. He looks 'happier' than he has for a while.

JOE  
(to us, hopeful)  
I'm emigrating...  
(grabs more clothes and  
dumps them in the case)  
...to Australia.  
(dumps more clothes into  
the case)  
They're crying out for people...  
especially people with computing  
skills... It's sunny... What  
really decided me though is that  
they have a white policy. They  
don't let that many black people  
in.

He carries on emptying the contents of his wardrobe into his suitcase.

INT. JOE'S ROOM. ANOTHER DAY

Joe's case is by the door. His room looks stark with the books gone and the wardrobe empty. Joe sat on the bed.

JOE  
(to us)  
I didn't get into Australia.  
They don't take people with  
criminal records.

He lies down fully clothed. Day becomes night, night becomes day.

INT. JOE'S ROOM. ANOTHER DAY

Joe sits at his table looking unkempt. He looks off into the distance.

The door knocks. Joe looks over at it, startled, almost frightened. The door knocks again. Joe doesn't move.

LANDLORD O/S  
Joe. Joe.

Joe recognises the voice.

EXT. JOE'S ROOM. DAY

Joe opens the door a crack. Seen from the landlord's point of view he looks slightly wild eyed.

LANDLORD O/S

Joe, have you got the rent?  
It's over a week late. I know  
you're not working, but..

JOE

I'll have it for you tomorrow.

LANDLORD O/S

Okay. You alright, you don't  
look-

JOE

I'm fine.

The landlord goes to walk away, then remembers.

Your mum phoned she says she's  
been trying to reach you.

JOE (cont'd)

Tell her I moved to Australia.

Joe shuts his door abruptly. His landlord looks taken aback.

INT. JOE'S ROOM. ANOTHER DAY.

Joe looks decidedly shabby. He has obviously not shaved in a while. He looks at a grubby copy of the 'unwanted poster' front page from 'The People'.

Door knocks.

LANDLORD O/S

Joe. Joe.

Joe doesn't answer. He looks at us and puts his finger to his lips as if telling us to be quiet.

DOCTOR 1 O/S

Maybe he's not in.

LANDLORD O/S

He's in there, but he hasn't been  
out in days. I think something  
might be wrong.

Door knocks

LANDLORD O/S (cont'd)  
Joe, Joe, open the door.

Joe doesn't move. Keys heard. The door is opened and we see things from the point of view of the landlord and the doctor. It's an absolute tip. Joe is hold up in one corner, his beard overgrown and wild eyed.

DOCTOR 1 O/V  
It's okay Joe, I'm a doctor, I'm here to help.

JOE  
(to us)  
I took one look at him and I knew  
I was in trouble.

The doctor is black.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/WARD. DAY

Joe struggles with a black nurse while the doctor injects drugs into him.

DOCTOR  
It's okay Joe, it's okay, this is  
just something to calm you down.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/WARD. ANOTHER DAY

Through a drug induced haze, Joe sees several other patients, some black, some white look at something, curious. MRS PASCALE watches something horrified. Joe, who is trying to leave the ward, is restrained by two white members of staff.

JOE  
It's not safe.  
(looks at black  
patients, looks at his  
mother)  
I tell you, it's not safe!

He renews his efforts to get out. The staff double their efforts to restrain him.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/ROOM. DAY

Joe in bed. A pretty, white nurse hands him his

medication. He takes it happily. She leaves. He looks around, he is in a room by himself. He looks at us and grins.

JOE  
(to us)  
That's better.

INT. HOSTEL/ROOM. DAY

A room with three bunk beds. Joe walks into frame and sits on a bunk. (A TO CAMERA PIECE TO FOLLOW.) He takes out a bottle of pills and takes two. There are three people in the room. One of them is black. Joe watches him, mistrustful. The white superintendant Bob, comes in.

BOB  
Joe? Your mum's here to see you.

JOE  
I told you she's not my mum.

BOB  
Joe...just come and...[...say  
hello]

JOE  
Tell her you couldn't find me.

BOB  
Joe-

Joe lies on his bunk turning his back to Bob, effectively ending the conversation. Bob gives up.

INT. HOUSING OFFICE. DAY

A ticket is taken. It says 92. Joe looks at the number being served. It says 63. He looks around the housing office. There are loads of black people. There are asians and whites as well. Joe goes and sits next to an asian woman. She looks at him suspiciously and holds her bag tighter.

Close on the ticket machine as it loudly changes to 92. Joe walks to the counter. Ms Jones, a white woman, serves him.

JUMP CUT TO:

MS JONES  
You have no children, no  
dependents. I'm sorry, but I  
can't help you find alternative

accommodation Mr Pascale. You'll have to go back to the hostel.

JOE  
I can't.

MS JONES  
Why not?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSTEL ROOM. DAY

The white superintendant, Bob looks at Joe mystified. Joe looks around, cautiously. A couple of residents are on their beds, including the black resident.

JOE  
(whispering)  
I know it sounds weird, but it's just bad luck for me.

Bob thinks about that.

BOB  
Being around black people?

Joe nods.

BOB (cont'd)  
Joe, have you been taking your medication?

INT. HOUSING OFFICE. DAY

Joe's mouth moving. Ms Jones looking incredulous.

MS JONES  
(coldly)  
I can do nothing for you.

JOE  
When you say nothing, exactly what do you mean?

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH STREET. DAY

Joe huddled outside a shop doorway. Joe seen on CCTV. A man is walking by him. He stops and hands Joe change.

Joe smiles up, grateful.

JOE  
Thank you.

Joe looks over at the legs of someone as they walk up to the cash machine. He watches as they collect their money and go to walk away.

JOE (cont'd)  
Spare some change.

The person walks on without giving Joe any money. Another person walks by...

JOE (cont'd)  
Spare some change, please.

That person walks on, but someone else hands Joe some money. He takes money gratefully then looks up at the person who gave it to him. His face freezes. He manages a nod of 'gratitude'. The person walks off. Joe chuck's away the money.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us, superior)  
I don't take money from black  
people. I may be homeless, but  
I've still got my pride, my  
principles.

He smiles brightly. He looks rather pathetic.

JOE (cont'd)  
(cheerfully)  
It's not that bad. In fact,  
this life, is strangely freeing.  
Who would have thought that, eh?  
But it's true. There's nowhere  
to go, but up. You ain't got  
nothing so no one can take it  
away.  
(he grins)  
It can't get any worse than this.

The cup that Joe is absently holding is kicked out of his hand. Joe crawls, frantically, picking up his spilled coins.

YANNEK O/V  
Mr Pascale?

Joe looks up. He sees two boys looking at him. Yannek and Germal. A grin is spreading across Yannek's face. Germal looks at the filthy man in front of him. As he recognises his former teacher, he is shocked.

YANNEK  
It is, It's Mr Pascale.  
(he laughs)  
Believe it! He's a beggar. A  
beggar to rass.

Joe looks from a laughing Yannek to Germal. He focusses on Germal staring at him accusingly. Germal grabs Yannek and pulls him away. Germal glances back once to find Joe still staring at him. Joe collapses back into the corner of the doorway, his spilled coins forgotten, his eyes blank, what was left of his spirit gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET/CARDBOARD CITY. NIGHT

Joe lies under his cardboard box. He hears raised voices. He doesn't bother to look. He hears gunshots. He opens his eyes and looks out from under his box. He sees a black man lying on the floor, gun in hand and another black man standing over him with a gun. The gunman looks about. He sees the cardboard in the doorway 'Did it move?' He looks carefully. Joe holds his breath as the gunman looks in his direction. The gunman decides it's nothing and he runs off. Joe lets out the breath he was holding. He looks over at the guy lying in the street. He looks at the gun in the guy's hand, he looks at the guy's face, the guy moves slightly, alive. Joe looks at him then at the phone box which is ten yards beyond the body. Joe looks at the man's face, the man's gun. He covers himself with his cardboard box.

EXT. HIGH STREET. DAY

It is driving rain. Joe wears an old coat and tries to keep himself warm. There is a huge amount of human traffic as people move about. Joe watches the people. The women with their children. The men with their families. The individuals. Something catches his eye. An old black woman makes her way along. Her bags are heavy and she keeps having to stop and rest. Joe ignores her. He watches the human traffic in front him like it's a live show. His eyes flicker back to the old woman, she's not making much progress. The rain pours down on her. Joe looks away, determined to ignore her.

The woman rests next to her bags, breathing heavily, getting wet.

JOE O/S  
Would you like some help?

The woman turns around to see Joe. She looks startled by his appearance, but then she notices his eyes. There is concern in them. She smiles and nods. Joe silently takes all her bags.

Joe follows the woman down the High Street carrying the bags walking several yards behind her.

EXT. STREET. DAY

Joe follows the woman down a road with terraced houses. She turns into her gate.

EXT. OUTSIDE MABEL'S HOUSE. DAY

Mabel opens the door and turns, a grateful smile on her face. It fades. Her shopping bags are on the ground. Joe is nowhere to be seen.

EXT. STREET. EVE

Joe walks down the street.

MABEL O/S  
Hey, hey, you!

Joe turns. Mabel is in the distance waving for him to come back. Joe looks at her. Her sparkling eyes to him seem full of evil intent, her warm smile transforms into a carnivorous grin. Joe runs away.

EXT. STREET. EVE

Joe runs along. He looks back. Certain he is not being followed, he slows down.

JOE  
(to himself)  
Stupid, stupid, stupid.  
(slapping himself in the head)  
Stupid, stupid, stupid.

EXT. HIGH STREET. EVE

Joe wanders down towards his 'home' talking animatedly to himself. Joe sees a black couple walking arm in arm up the road. He makes a point of crossing over.

JOE  
(to himself)  
That was obvious man. Obvious.  
(to us)  
Can't believe I fell for it.  
They sent her... The black  
people. Trying to get me back.  
(he grins)  
But I was too smart for that.

A young white woman with a child holds her child closer and creates a wide berth around the 'mad' man.

EXT. A DIFFERENT STREET. ANOTHER DAY

Joe looks a bit better. His eyes are a little clearer and he's seems a bit cleaner.

JOE  
(to us)  
They're not giving up. The black  
people. I've moved streets, but  
they always find me.

Notices something up the road.

JOE (cont'd)  
Here they come.

We look slowly up the road, we see nothing.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Not there. There.  
(he points)

We follow his hand and there, sure enough, coming down the road is a five strong, band of 'evangelists'. Mabel is in the lead, bible in hand. They head towards him, 'on a mission'. Joe looks at us knowingly.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
It's not going to work... She's  
tried everything...

EXT. STREET. FLASHBACK. DAY

Mabel holds out a fiver to a filthy, dishevelled, crazy

eyed Joe who watches her malevolently.

EXT. STREET. FLASHBACK. ANOTHER DAY

A tupperware lid is pulled off of a dish containing soup. A mistrustful Joe looks at the soup and then up into the face of a 'smiling' Mabel. For him her image is distorted, her eyes a little too shiny. Joe knocks the soup into the street. Mabel looks at him, sad.

EXT. STREET. PRESENT. DAY

JOE  
(to us)  
When that didn't work, she  
brought in reinforcements.

EXT. STREET. FLASHBACK. DAY

Mabel, Delia and Rev Wilson pray around an angry,  
malevolent Joe

REV WILSON  
Father we ask you in Jesus name  
for the life of this young man.

MABEL  
(speaking in tongues)  
[refers to speaking in a highly  
excited completely unintelligible  
language which is believed to  
signify that someone is 'in the  
spirit']  
EEee mama shandala by. Eeee  
contada mama shanda

REV WILSON  
Like so many of your young men  
lord, he is lost. The bible says  
there were ninety and nine, but  
one was lost.

The Evangelists chorus.....One sheep was lost, lost,  
lost.

MABEL  
Backa shanda ama lie.

Joe looks about at the attention this circus is attracting.  
He is embarrassed.

JOE  
(to us)  
I wanted them to get lost.

EXT. STREET. PRESENT

JOE  
(to us)  
But they didn't.

A healthier looking Joe, in a 'new' coat watches something bemused.

A group of about twenty stand around him. Joe looks at the group with interest. He watches Rev Wilson who hops from one foot to the other, his hands up as if he's boxing.

REV WILSON  
And Satan is in the left hand corner. And Satan has come into the ring to do battle with the lord, but out of the skies, out of skies comes the lord. And with a one, two jab Satan is down. The lord is the winner. Help me people. The lord is the winner.

Joe looks along, highly amused as everyone chants.

EVERYONE  
The lord is the winner. The Lord is the winner! The Lord is the winner!!!

Joe is startled as Rev Wilson suddenly grips him by the head.

REV WILSON  
(gripping Joe's head)  
I cast you out in Jesus name.

Rev Wilson begins to jerk as if lightning is shooting through him. Several of the women including Mabel and Delia also begin to do the lightning dance.

JOE  
(to us, his head jerking under the pressure of Rev Wilson's hand, with sympathy)  
Black people. They're all going mad.

INT. SHELTER. XMAS DAY.

A huge Christmas Tree. Long tables. People sit eating. Joe walks through. He looks a bit better. Clearer eyed, cleaner. Men, women, some of them quite young, most of them white. Joe sits down on a bench. He looks at the food in front of him. It's unappetising, served in plastic plates with plastic knives and forks. He looks at the white 'do gooders' serving. He looks at the other people around him. Some eat ravenously, some look about with 'dead' eyes. An obviously mentally ill man eats, dribble comes out of the corner of his mouth.

EXT. MABEL'S HOUSE. XMAS DAY

The door is opened. Joe blinks at the sudden light. Mabel looks at him open mouthed. Joe, embarrassed is suddenly ready to flee, but too late, Mabel grins and pounces.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE/HALLWAY. XMAS DAY

Mabel frog marches Joe through the hall.

JOE  
(to us)  
I figured I'd just eat something  
and go.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE/OUTSIDE BATHROOM-INSIDE BATHROOM. XMAS DAY

Joe divested of his coat closes the door on an eager Mabel. He rams the bolt home. He turns to look at the bubble filled bath.

JOE  
(to us)  
Okay, wash, eat and go.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE/ROY'S BEDROOM. XMAS DAY

Joe looks around the bedroom, distracted. Mabel takes some clothes out of the wardrobe.

JOE  
(to us)  
I know there's food. I can smell it.

MABEL

You and Roy are about the same height, he's bigger than you though. You're nothing, but skin and bone.

(she clucks  
sympathetically)

Help yourself. Roy don't need them.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. CHRISTMAS DAY

The cassette recorder plays Jim Reeves. Joe stares. The table is like something out of a fairy tale. Lots of beautiful, brightly coloured food and drink.

JUMP CUT TO:

Joe tucks into the food. He keeps looking up at Mabel who watches him. At first she seems kind and benign, but then she begins to look more predatory.

JOE

(to us)

There's something weird about this whole thing. All this food...for who? She didn't know I was coming...or did she...

Joe, his mouth full of chicken, dribbling gravy, looks at Mabel suspiciously. She looks at him happily.

JOE (cont'd)

(to us)

Maybe when I'm finished I'll be dragged off to a basement. Who's Roy? What happened to him? Why don't he need his clothes any more?

He looks around, the kitchen is no longer perfect. He sees the worn wallpaper. The food is good, but no longer glistening 'fairy tale like'.

JOE (cont'd)

(between mouthfuls)

Is Roy coming?

Mabel looks sad. She shakes her head. Joe looks worried.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN/MABEL'S KIDS SECTION. SAME DAY

Joe tucks into a pudding, happily.

A picture of Mabel's three children. Two boys and a girl.

MABEL

That's Roy, that's Everett and  
that's Sherlene.

JOE

Are they coming?  
(in his mind)  
Please say no.

MABEL

Yes, they're on their way.

JOE

(to us)  
It seemed rude to eat and run,  
but...  
(standing)  
I better be going.

MABEL

To where. Sit down man.

Joe is about to insist when he sees a look of desperation cross Mabel's face. He looks at her hand holding his arm. Her hand shakes slightly.

JOE

Well, just for a little while.  
Just till your kids get here.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. CHRISTMAS DAY

The clocks says 3 o clock. The clocks changes to five then to seven.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. CHRISTMAS NIGHT

Joe, comfortable eats some more food.

JOE

(to us, happily)  
She's got these kids see. They  
are real. They keep phoning and  
saying they'll be here in ten  
minutes.

He looks over at Mabel who looks towards the door

anxiously.

JOE (cont'd)

(to us)

She's worried they're not going  
to turn up, but I told her not  
to.

You see, there's Greenwich mean  
time and there's black people  
time.

(he laughs to himself)  
I figure I'll get to let this  
food settle and have one more  
meal, watch the late movie, be  
another day older...before they  
arrive.

(he laughs, he thinks  
his joke is very funny)

Mabel looks at Joe laughing to himself. She shakes her head, "Poor boy".

The doorbell rings. Joe, almost jumps out of his skin. He looks towards the door panicked. The ringing seems to get louder. Mabel runs off towards the door excited. Joe looks about for a means of escape.

EXT. MABEL'S FRONT DOOR. SAME NIGHT

A child's finger holds the buzzer down.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. SAME NIGHT

A nervous Joe watches as 29 year old Sherlene troops in with her four kids. A sullen 13 year old Sherman, 11 year old Malika, 8 year old Kaylon and 5 year old Shenequa. Sherman is medium brown with short afro hair; Malika is polynesian looking with shoulder length hair; Kaylon is medium brown with big curls; Shenequa is very dark with more obvious negroid features, her tight afro hair is in cane rows.

The kids rush the table. Joe immediately rises.

MABEL

What time you call this Sherlene?

Sherlene's attention is focussed on the food.

JOE

I really have to go.

MABEL

Nonsense, you stay. Sit down.  
(to Sherlene)  
You said you was coming at 2.

SHERLENE  
(signalling Joe)  
Who's that?

MABEL  
This is Joe. He's one of my  
brethren.

Joe looks at Mabel, she signals for him to play along.

JOE  
(trying to think of  
something christian to  
say)  
The lord is the winner.

SHERLENE  
They got man in that church now,  
maybe I better start attending.

MABEL  
You need to forget about man and  
give your life to the lord.

Sherlene ignores her and starts picking at the food. Joe is hesitant, but Mabel signals for him to sit down.

JOE  
(to us)  
(sitting down)  
I needn't have worried, it was  
like I was invisible.  
(BEAT)  
Unfortunately they weren't.

He watches the kids helping themselves and devouring the food ravenously. Sherman finishes his chicken. He looks around. The other leg is on Kaylor's plate. He sticks his fork into his plate and takes it. Kaylor starts to cry.

MABEL  
What now?

KAYLON  
He took my chicken. He took...

MABEL  
Take another piece. Come on  
Kaylor,  
(offering him another  
piece)  
You want this?

Kaylon shakes his head.

SHERLENE  
Sherman give him back his  
chicken.

Sherman throws the chicken at Kaylon. It hits Shenequa. She starts to cry.

MABEL  
(reprimanding)  
Sherman.  
(to Shenequa)  
It's alright. Come on. It's  
alright Shenequa.

JOE  
(to us)  
Kaylon. Shenequa. What is with  
black people and unique names for  
their kids.

Sherlene points her elaborately decorated half inch nails  
at Sherman.

SHERLENE  
You see you.

JOE  
(to us)  
I had it all the time when I was  
teaching. The only thing more  
weird and wonderful than the  
names were the spellings.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM. FLASHBACK. DAY

WOMAN1  
His name's TaSharn.  
t.a.s.h.a.r.n. Capital T,  
capital S.

JUMP CUT TO:

WOMAN2  
Kwame. K.w.am.e. It's Ashanti  
for Saturday.

JUMP CUT TO:

WOMAN3  
It's spelt Nathan, but it's  
pronounced, N'tarn.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. SAME NIGHT

Joe wakes as if from a trance to hear the doorbell ringing.

MABEL  
That's probably Everett.

She goes out passing Sherman on his way in. He hands his mother the phone.

SHERLENE  
What did he say?

SHERMAN  
He was busy, said he'd call me back later.

Sherlene hands the phone to her eldest daughter.

SHERLENE  
Ring your dad.

Malika takes the phone and dials. Mabel comes in followed by 31 year old Neil. Kaylor rushes him, hugging him.

KAYLON  
Dad!

MABEL  
(to Neil)  
You want something to eat Neil?

MALIKA  
(on phone)  
Hi dad...

NEIL  
(pats his stomach)  
I would but my mum would kill me if I turn up at her house and I'm not starving.

MALIKA  
(on phone)  
...it's me... Me,

NEIL  
(to Sherlene)  
I'll bring him back later.

Sherlene barely acknowledges him. Neil leaves with Kaylor.

MALIKA  
(on phone)

Malika. ....Sherlene's Malika.  
...Sherlene.  
(to her mum)  
He says he don't know no  
Sherlene.

Sherlene grabs the phone.

SHERLENE  
Sherry you idiot.

Joe looks at us, "Can we believe this?" Sherlene hands the phone back to Malika.

SHERLENE (cont'd)  
(to Malika)  
Ask him what he got you for  
Christmas?

JOE  
(to us)  
Four kids for four different men  
and she's not thirty yet.  
Probably gave more thought to how  
to name the kids than to who  
should father them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Joe looks about. He wears Roy's pyjamas.

JOE  
(to us, referring to  
pyjamas)  
Don't ask.  
(beat)  
No wonder they don't want to come  
back to this house. Once you get  
here you're not allowed to leave.  
(pause)  
Everett never did turn up.  
(thinks)  
They say the family is the  
building block of a nation.  
(beat)  
We're doomed.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. ANOTHER DAY

Joe strips wallpaper. Shenequa heard screaming.

JOE  
(to us)  
Sherlene left the kids here  
Christmas day. She had a party  
to go to. That was a month ago.  
Mabel's tried to contact her, but  
no joy. Sherman ran off about a  
week ago. No one's heard from  
him since.

A comb is dragged through frizzy hair. Shenequa cries.

MABEL O/S  
You head tough sah. You father  
did too black. Malika get the  
good hair because her father was  
Indian. Your father did black  
like pot bottom. If I told your  
mother once I told her a thousand  
times... "Anything too black is  
no good"

JOE  
(to us)  
Wise words. I wish somebody had  
warned me.

A sizzle is heard. Joe looks past the ring of fire on the  
cooker to where Mabel is pulling the hot comb through  
Shenequa's hair, straightening it. Shenequa's squinched up  
face speaks of pain. Joe flinches.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE/ROY'S ROOM. DAY

Joe reaches into a drawer and takes out a small container.  
He shakes out two pills and takes them.

JOE  
(to us, referring to the  
pills)  
Some...sometimes I see things  
that...aren't there.

KAYLON O/S  
Joe, what does this say?

Joe startled, turns to see Kaylor standing beside him  
holding up a book. Joe closes his eyes tight. He opens  
one, Kaylor is still there, his finger pointing at the word  
'exactly'. Joe looks at Kaylor. Kaylor looks back at him  
with big brown eyes, his face, sweet, innocent.

JOE  
I don't know, ask your gran.

Kaylon looks disappointed. He wanders off.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I know what you're thinking. Oh,  
that was just petty, Joe. He's  
only a child. Three words for  
you. "They--grow--up." Fuck  
him.

Beat.

KAYLON O/S  
Joe, I know you're going to tell  
me.

Kaylon is standing in the hallway grinning at Joe. Joe  
looks at Kaylon with an angry expression. Kaylon laughs.  
Joe looks angrier, threatening. Kaylon laughs harder. Joe  
gives up.

JOE  
Exactly.

Kaylon walks off reading.

KAYLON  
"Exactly said the bear."

Joe sneaks an embarrassed look at us. He shrugs, "What can  
you do."

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM. EVE

Mabel, Rev Wilson, the other street evangelists and the  
children sit.

REV WILSON  
....love suffers long and is  
kind; love does not parade  
itself, is not puffed up;

Joe looks in, self conscious.

REV WILSON (cont'd)  
Love does not behave rudely, does  
not seek it's own, is not  
provoked, thinks no evil

Delia waves for Joe to come in, she pats the seat beside  
her. He comes in and sits down. He looks about, more an  
observer than a participant.

REV WILSON (cont'd)  
Love does not rejoice in

iniquity, but rejoices in truth;

INT. HAIR SHOP. DAY

Hair. Loads of it. Weaves, wigs, different colours, different styles. Loads of black women trying on, looking and buying. Several asian shop assistants rush about serving. Joe watches the circus, fascinated.

MABEL O/S  
What about this one?

Joe looks over. A vibrant, happier looking Mabel has a wig on. Joe nods non-committal, 'he's got no idea'. Mabel pulls off the wig and reaches out for another.

JOE  
(to us)  
There's a big church convention  
on Sunday. People are coming  
from all over.

MABEL O/S  
What about this one?

Mabel in a different wig.

INT. CHURCH. ANOTHER DAY

Water. Joe robed in white, drops in backwards.

REV WILSON O/S  
I baptise you in the name of the  
father, the son and the holy  
ghost.

A queue of people in white robes wait to be baptised. Joe is pulled out of the water by Rev Wilson.

JOE  
(to us)  
Surprise!

Mabel in her new wig (none of the ones she tried on) and the kids (Shenequa, her a hair newly pressed) clap. As Joe walks from the pool the congregation rise up. Joe takes his applause. He mouths his thanks to the congregation. We see the faces of a few of the street evangelists. They are very proud of the boy that they 'saved'. Delia has tears in her eyes, 'it's a miracle'.

INT. CHURCH. SAME DAY

Joe, who has changed into dry clothes, walks along the aisle.

JOE  
(to us)  
The whole church thing has given  
my life a sense of...direction.  
I feel like I belong somewhere  
again... I've found my kind of  
black people...thank  
god...because for a while there  
it was getting pretty scary. So  
what if they're 50 years older  
than me. I was born in the wrong  
era.

He finds his pew, he squeezes past a proud Mabel, a straight haired Shenequa, Kaylon and Malika. He sits next to Malika.

Mabel looks at her 'family' with great pride. She looks annoyed to see that Malika is reading a teenage novel. Mabel signals for her to put it away. Malika does so sulkily. She sits annoyed. She sighs bored. Joe offers her his open bible, she looks at him resentful, then takes it sulkily. Joe takes her novel out of her bag, opens it and puts it in the middle of the bible. Malika looks at the book and looks at him in wonder, she giggles. Mabel looks down the row. Malika looks at her guiltily. Mabel sees the bible in Malika's hand and smiles approvingly. Malika looks at Joe, he winks. Mabel looks at Joe, grateful. Joe smiles. Something catches Joe's eye.

A young woman is looking at him from across the church and smiling. He notices a woman behind her smiling at him too. He looks around, all the young and several not so young women, including Delia are looking at him like something they'd like to eat.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Something weird's happened to the  
church though since I was little.  
It's full of...

Pulling out from Joe reveal that 95 percent of the congregation is female.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Women. Where are the men?

INT. PRISON HALL. DAY

JOE  
(to us)  
Oh, they're here.

Pull out to reveal a prison visiting room with rows of tables. 70% of the inmates are black. Joe and Mabel are sat at a table. Mabel looks around at the young men. She looks haunted.

MABEL  
Such a waste.

JOE  
(to us)  
Best place for them if you ask me. Not very christian I know.

MABEL  
There he is!

Joe looks to where Mabel is pointing. ROY is walking towards them.

JOE  
(to us)  
There was I thinking I was wearing dead men's clothes. When all the time he was - doing 15 to 20 for armoured robbery.

Roy arrives. Mabel stands to hug him.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
You know I think everything started going wrong for us when we abandoned the whole religious thing. The older generation have something... I mean look at the difference between us... They stayed with their families, we abandon ours, they go to church, we go to prison...and mental institutions. There's a definite pattern.

(pause)  
Maybe I'm the start of a new trend, turning the clock back.  
Going back to god. God is good.  
God is lov-

Joe's face stunned. He stares. Behind Roy a young man gesticulates while talking to his girlfriend.

EXT. HIGH STREET. FLASHBACK. NIGHT

The gun man, seen from Joe's vantage point in the doorway, stands over the body of the guy he's shot. He looks over at the cardboard in the doorway 'Did it move?'

INT. PRISON HALL. DAY

Joe holds his breath while he watches the man.

EXT. HIGH STREET. FLASHBACK. NIGHT

The guy lies dying, the phone box, the guy dying. Joe's point of view as he pulls the cardboard over his head, shutting out the image.

INT. PRISON HALL. DAY

Mabel, concerned, looks after Joe who is walking out. She turns to Roy.

MABEL  
Sometimes he...  
(she taps her head)

ROY  
He shouldn't be living with you  
if he's not right.

MABEL  
He's perfect. He's such a help  
to me, you wouldn't believe.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN. ANOTHER DAY

A bubbling pot. Season sprinkled in. A tearful Joe looks at Mabel desperate.

JOE  
I just left him to...die.

MABEL  
You was mad. You couldn't do no better.

Joe is wracked with guilt. Mabel looks in the cupboard for something. She can't find it. She notices Joe still looking worried.

MABEL (cont'd)  
Forgive us our trespasses. As we  
forgive those who trespass  
against us.

Joe looks at her.

MABEL (cont'd)  
The bible says we must forgive  
seventy times seven. And that  
includes ourselves.

Joe thinks about that.

MABEL (cont'd)  
Kaylon!

KAYLON O/S  
Yes granny!

MABEL  
Come here.

KAYLON O/S  
Coming.

MABEL  
Stop coming and come!

Kaylon runs into the kitchen. He looks at Joe who looks  
upset. 'what's up?' Mabel hands Kaylon £10.

MABEL (cont'd)  
Pimento.

Kaylon goes to leave.

MABEL (cont'd)  
And remember, don't go to the  
black man shop, him too t'ief.

Kaylon nods and runs off. Mabel goes back to her cooking.  
Joe looks after Kaylon then looks at Mabel

JOE  
Mabel. Do you think it's wise to  
say those things to the kids?

MABEL  
What things?

JOE  
Anything too black is no good,  
you black like sin, black people  
too t'ief. You say them all the  
time.

MABEL  
(kisses her teeth)  
You is young. When you reach my  
age Joe, you will know what I  
know. Black people can't be  
trusted.

JOE  
Mabel, come on-

MABEL  
Joe, learn this. Black people  
are like crabs in a barrel. You  
could put crabs in a barrel with  
no cover and they won't get away.  
You know why?

Joe shakes his head.

MABEL (cont'd)  
Because any time one of them try  
to climb out, another one will  
pull it down.

JOE  
(to us)  
Well, that would explain a lot.  
(to Mabel)  
Seriously, Mabel that don't make  
no sense. Why would we do that?

MABEL  
Cos we're cursed.

Joe looks at her. She's serious. He looks at us.

JUMP CUT TO:

'THE HOLY BIBLE'. Reveal Joe is reading it.

JOE  
(reading)  
...And Ham, the father of Canaan  
saw the nakedness of his father,  
and told his two brothers  
outside. But Shem and Japeth took  
a garment, laid it on both their  
shoulders, and went backwards and  
covered the nakedness of their  
father. Their faces were turned  
away, and they did not see their  
father's nakedness. So Noah  
awoke from his wine,...

MABEL  
Here it comes.

JOE  
(reading)  
... So Noah awoke from his wine  
and knew what his younger son had  
done to him and he said. "Cursed  
be Canaan; A servant of servants  
he shall be to his brethren"...

MABEL  
(nodding)  
Cursed.

JOE  
...be Canaan. It doesn't say  
black people.

MABEL  
Everybody knows it's black  
people. "A servant of servants he  
shall be to his brethren"  
(pauses for effect)  
Slavery.

Joe looks at her stunned. Mabel thinks he's impressed.  
She goes back to cooking. Joe looks at us, he taps his  
head, she's crazy.

INT. ROY'S ROOM. NIGHT

Joe jumps out of his sleep, his face covered in sweat. It  
takes him a moment to get his bearings. He looks at us  
startled.

JOE  
Weird. Really weird.  
Suppose...I mean just suppose  
this whole curse thing is true.  
I know, crazy right, but it would  
explain everything.

INT. OUTSIDE MABEL'S ROOM. NIGHT

Mabel looks at Joe blurry eyed.

JOE  
So what do we do? To get rid of  
the curse. Do we apologise,  
sacrifice a lamb, what?

MABEL  
Pray.

JOE

Pray?  
(getting angry)  
Pray? But we been praying for  
years...centuries.

MABEL  
Talk to God Joe. Just talk to  
him. God is good. God is Love.

Joe looks stunned.

INT. JOBCENTRE. DAY

Rows and rows of boards with jobs displayed. People wander  
about. There are desks where the jobcentre staff sit.

JOE  
(to us)  
God is good. God is love.  
Putting a people through 500  
years, 500 years of slavery for  
what, let's face it was a minor  
indiscretion. He's rude.

Joe reads a card on the board. He takes the card and walks  
towards a desk.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
But we are stupid. Can you  
imagine any other people  
worshipping a god who's cursed  
them? Can you?  
(he waits)  
Course you can't. Stupid.

CUT TO:

A plaque on a desk says "A thousand mile journey starts  
with one step." Joe in front of the desk. HEATHER, a 31  
year old dark skinned black woman with shoulder length  
straight hair and beautifully done picturesque nails, looks  
through Joe's application.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I mean it's just ridicul-

HEATHER  
What have you been doing for the  
last year?

JOE  
(playing for time)  
Sorry?

HEATHER

Well, I see that you worked as a teacher and that you have a criminal assault conviction,

Joe flinches,

HEATHER (cont'd)

But with no time spent in prison which tells me it probably wasn't serious...but there's almost an 18 months gap here. What were you doing?

Joe thinks.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL WARD. FLASHBACK

Images of Joe being restrained in the mental ward.

EXT. CARDBOARD CITY. FLASHBACK

Joe on the street at his lowest.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. CHRISTMAS. FLASHBACK

Joe at Mabel's for Xmas.

INT. MABEL'S HOUSE. ROY'S BEDROOM. FLASHBACK

Joe popping pills into his mouth.

INT. JOB CENTRE. DAY

JOE

I....I....

Heather waits.

JOE (cont'd)

I went travelling.

Heather looks interested, but obviously wants him to elaborate.

JOE (cont'd)

...to Europe. I went to Spain,  
not to your usual tourist places,  
I went to Granada it's amazing  
there. The architecture is...

JUMP CUT TO:

JOE (cont'd)  
France...the Riviera...

Heather fascinated.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
It was true, I had gone  
travelling for a year...when I  
was nineteen.

CUT TO:

INT. JOBCENTRE/KITCHEN. DAY

A plunger plunges away at a blocked sink. Joe is holding  
the plunger. He looks at us.

JOE  
(to us)  
She was very impressed by my trip  
to Europe, but...

CUT TO:

INT. JOBCENTRE/HEATHER'S DESK. DAY

HEATHER  
This criminal conviction.

INT. JOBCENTRE/KITCHEN. DAY

Joe sweeps the floor. Heather comes in.

HEATHER  
Hey Joe.

JOE  
Hi Heather.

Heather takes her lunch from out of the fridge.

HEATHER  
How you doing?

Joe nods, "Good". Heather goes to leave then turns back.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
Had any more thoughts about your  
appeal?

Joe looks nervous. He hears the roar of the crowd.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
It would make such a difference  
to your employment prospects. I  
know a good lawyer.

Joe shakes his head.

INT. JOBCENTRE/OFFICE. ANOTHER DAY

A waste paper bin emptied into a large black bag. Joe walks around emptying the waste paper baskets.

WARREN O/S  
I don't wanna do that!

Joe looks over. Heather sits talking to a young man, Warren, who slouches in front of her. Warren flicks a job card back on the table, dismissive.

HEATHER  
This is your third job in as many  
months Warren.

WARREN  
Stop sending me for shit jobs  
then.

Joe looks at the boy, angry.

Heather's phone rings. She answers it. Warren taps his foot impatiently. He looks around, bored.

Joe comes over to empty Heather's bin. Warren deliberately kicks it over. The bin falls and coins spill out. Joe blinks, coins don't make any sense. He looks at Warren only to find Germal grinning back at him. Joe shakes his head. He looks again. It's turned back into Warren.

WARREN (cont'd)  
What you looking at? You fancy  
me? Perv.

Joe tips the bag of rubbish over Warren. Warren looks shocked.

HEATHER O/S

Joe. Joe, are you alright?

Joe looks at her. She smiles, "Can she help him?" Joe looks at Warren. He sits, unsoiled, the insolent grin still on his face. Joe looks at the bag of rubbish. He still has it. He looks at the bin. It's still kicked over, the rubbish spilled out on the floor. Joe bends to pick it up.

WARREN

Some people got no shame. I'd never do a job like that.

HEATHER

Be quiet Warren.

WARREN

(to Joe)  
Pussy.

Heather looks at Warren annoyed, about to berate him-

JOE

Spell pussy.

Warren looks at him surprised, he wasn't expecting that. Joe straightens up.

JOE (cont'd)

I think what you're trying to say is that I'm some kind of weakling or coward, so say that. Pussy brings up images of...cats and...other furlike things.

Heather stifles a giggle. Warren, embarrassed, has another stab.

WARREN

You're weird.

JOE

Good. Better than strange. You could also have said peculiar, outlandish...

WARREN

(derisively)

Mad.

JOE

And you were doing so well. You could have had insane, demented, deranged.

(looks at him intensely)  
Lunatic...maniac

Warren fidgets uncomfortably.

HEATHER  
(to Joe)  
I think you've made your point.

Joe looks at her. He smiles and nods, then he looks at Warren. He leans in deliberately, Warren looks scared.

JOE  
Get yourself a thesaurus.

Joe walks away. Warren looks after him. Warren straightens up out of his slouch. Heather looks at him surprised as he reaches over and picks up the job card and re-examines it. Heather looks after Joe, curious.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. SAME DAY

Joe and Heather walk along.

HEATHER  
I think you'd be really good at it. I spoke to Aidan and he's willing to give you a trial run. Of course he's concerned about your conviction, but I've told him you're appealing it.

Joe isn't listening. He is trying to ignore a young black man sitting in the street a little way up ahead with obvious mental health issues. He looks away at the other things happening in the street, but finds himself looking back. He gets more and more nervous as he nears the guy. As he passes the guy he takes out some money and gives him. Heather enters a shop.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
(parting shot)  
Just think about it.

EXT-INT. NAIL PARLOUR. DAY.

Heather goes into the shop and sits at a table. Joe looks at the shop, it's full of black women getting their nails done by Korean nail technicians. He walks off.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. JOBCENTRE/HEATHER'S DESK. DAY

The placque saying "A thousand mile journey starts with one step." Joe looks at something with disdain. He starts with 18 year old LaBraia's red and black, two tone wig. He continues his perusal, taking in her ginormous earrings. Her numerous rings and elaborate nails. Her fake gucci bag. Having finished his examination Joe looks at her and 'smiles'. She smiles back, he nearly chokes, she's got a gold tooth!

JUMP CUT TO:

JOE  
(into phone)  
She'll be there, Monday at 2pm.  
Thank you.

Joe hangs up. He writes the details on a card and then hands it to LaBraia. LaBraia takes it and prepares to leave.

JOE (cont'd)  
Can I suggest that when you go  
for the interview you  
wear...something  
more...something...  
(attempting humour)  
...a different 'uniform' shall we  
say.

L'BRAIA  
I'm not wearing a uniform.

JOE  
We all wear uniforms L'Braia.  
This one you should save  
for...friends and family.

L'Braia looks at him annoyed.

L'BRAIA  
(to Joe)  
I don't know what you're talking  
about, I ain't wearing a uniform.

JOE  
Yes, you are. It says single  
mother, no qualifications,  
council estate...

Joe looks at the numerous rings and elaborate nails on the hand clutching the fake gucci bag.

JOE (cont'd)  
...spends more money than she  
earns on her clothes and...

L'BRAIA  
You're fucking facety!

Heather looks over from her desk, as do some other people who are close by.

JOE  
Yes, but am I wrong?

Inspite of herself, L'Braia thinks. She looks at Joe uncertain.

L'BRAIA  
(indignant) I ain't got no  
kids...(embarrassed) yet.  
(beat)  
Does this job do maternity leave?

Joe looks her. He looks at us. Can we believe it?

CUT TO:

INT. HEATHER'S FLAT. EVE

Conversations with God, The Road Less Travelled, The Power of Now. Reveal a raft of personal development books.

HEATHER O/S  
Do you want some wine?

Joe turns. Heather is sat on a sofa, wearing an attractive dress. The coffee table is laid out with light eats.

JUMP CUT TO:

Joe drinks his wine. Heather watches him curious. She flicks her hair flirtatiously.

HEATHER  
This whole 'treat em mean keep  
'em keen' approach seems to  
really work. I mean they really  
listen to you. How do you  
maintain that 'surly' expression.

JOE  
Hate them.

Heather thinks he's joking and laughs. Joe doesn't laugh. Heather looks at him intently.

HEATHER  
You don't add up Joe Pascale.  
You talk one game, but you play

another.  
(pause)  
You're hiding something.

Joe looks nervous.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
(gently)  
Tell me.

Joe looks at her. There's something about her, an openness, a directness. He looks at us. Should he tell her? He looks at her.

JOE  
(simply)  
I hate black people.

Heather nods, she believes there's some truth in that. Her calm reaction surprises Joe. It releases him.

JOE (cont'd)  
I hate being black. I find  
it...exhausting. When I think  
about being black...I physically  
ache. Sometimes I get  
so...tired...of wanting it to be  
different. So depressed looking  
around and seeing the state of  
our lives... Being black...  
feels like...a punishment.  
(pause)  
A curse.

Heather thinks.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Well, she asked.

HEATHER  
Maybe for you it is.

Joe looks at her, "What?"

HEATHER (cont'd)  
A curse. Maybe it's your karma.

Joe looks confused, what is she on about?

HEATHER (cont'd)  
Maybe in a previous life...maybe,  
just maybe, you were....a  
vicious, evil white slave master  
and you're condemned in this  
life, cursed to care, to feel the  
pain of the subsequent effects of

your behaviour.

Joe looks at her in consternation. Is she serious? He realises she is. He bursts out laughing.

JOE  
(to us)  
That's what I love about Heather.  
She lives somewhere between here  
and the twilight zone.

Joe looks at Heather with laughter filled eyes.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us, but looking at  
Heather)  
She makes me feel sane.

JUMP CUT TO:

'The Holy Bible'. Heather looks up from it. She and Joe are side by side on the sofa. The bottle of wine is nearly finished.

HEATHER  
It doesn't say black people.

JOE  
Everybody knows it's black  
people.  
(he points at something  
in the bible)  
And that bit there. Slavery.

Heather goes over to the book shelf and comes back with another book. She gives it to Joe. It's 'The Road Less Travelled'. Joe opens the book.

JOE (cont'd)  
(reading)  
Life is difficult.

He looks at her, he don't like this.

HEATHER  
Read.

JOE  
(reading)  
Life is difficult. This is a  
great truth,...because once we  
truly see this truth, we  
transcend it. Once we truly know  
that life is difficult - once we  
truly understand and accept it -  
then life is no longer difficult.  
Because once it is accepted, the

fact that life is difficult no longer matters.

HEATHER  
(pointing)  
Read this bit.

JOE  
(reading)  
Life is a series of problems. Do we want to moan about them or solve them?

He thinks about what he's read.

JOE (cont'd)  
So, you don't think we're cursed?

HEATHER  
I don't think we're cursed. Just you.

Joe bursts out laughing, that feels true. They laugh and laugh. Joe stops laughing and looks at Heather. She notices him looking at her and becomes self conscious. Joe leans in and kisses her. She kisses him back. He holds her face and goes to slide his hand into her hair, but it won't slide in. Heather jumps back.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
Not the hair.

JOE  
Oh, okay.

They kiss again. He keeps his hands on her shoulders.

INT. MABEL'S KITCHEN. DAY

Heather is having Sunday dinner with Joe, Mabel and the kids. Malika watches Heather resentfully.

Joe looks distorted. Reveal that he is being watched through the bottom of a glass tumbler by Kaylon. Joe grabs the glass, fills it with juice and sets it down in front of the child.

MABEL  
So your mother's seventh day adventist?

Heather nods, Mabel nods approvingly. Heather glances at Joe, he winks, she's doing well. Malika looks from one to the other, she doesn't like it.

MABEL (cont'd)  
So you a sabbath keeper too?

HEATHER  
I'm not into the whole 'going to  
church' thing.

Joe looks tense. Malika smirks.

MABEL  
What do you mean?

HEATHER  
The whole 'going to a building on  
a particular day of the week'  
thing.

Mabel looks stunned.

JOE  
(to us)  
This is not good.

Malika grins.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to Mabel)  
Heather's very spiritual.

MABEL  
(spits out the word)  
Spiritual. What's that?

HEATHER  
I believe that most religions in  
the world are all saying the same  
thing and all of them have  
something to offer.

MABEL  
"I the lord thy god am a jealous  
god, thou shalt have no other god  
before me!" Take care for your  
soul. Hell fire is hot. You  
look like a sensible girl, you're  
not like Joe, you won't be able  
to plead madness.

Joe looks stunned, what? Mabel's rancour silences  
everyone. They eat in silence. Heather opens her mouth to  
speak, Joe shakes his head at her, leave it. Heather eats.  
Malika looks at her smug.

HEATHER  
Mrs Morgan, I'm sorry, but I just  
don't think that god's  
that...petty.

Mabel freezes. Malika laughs, but an arctic glance from Mabel stops her. Joe and the kids look at Mabel and then at Heather. It's a gunfight.

JOE  
(to us)  
Uh oh.  
(to everyone)  
Anyone for more chicken?

Kaylon and Shenequa make sounds of glee. Malika watches as Heather squirms uncomfortably.

HEATHER  
What I mean is. This is a being  
that knows everything. The alpha  
and the omega. The beginning and  
the end. This is a being-

JOE  
More chicken, Heather?

HEATHER  
No thank you Joe.

JOE  
(to us)  
I tried.

He gives the kids more chicken.

HEATHER  
...that knows our hearts, our  
very intentions. I do not  
believe that this 'god' who is  
above all, a god of love, is  
going to condemn continents  
of..., billions of people  
for...being born in the wrong  
location?

That makes absolute sense to Joe. It cuts no ice with Mabel. She eats her food, ignoring Heather. Malika can't hide a smile. They all eat in an uncomfortable silence.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
(to Mabel, heartfelt)  
I just think that all the going  
to church that you do, all the  
praying and all the reading of  
the bible doesn't come close to  
meaning as much to  
(she puts quotes around  
the word)  
'god' as the fact that you took  
these children in. That you took

Joe in. Because that is love.  
...in action.

Joe and the kids look at Heather. Malika is moved. Mabel slowly looks up. She's touched. She smiles at Heather. Heather eats. Mabel looks at Joe and signals Heather, "She's alright." Malika, sad.

EXT. MABEL'S HOUSE. DAY

Mabel hugs Joe. The kids hug Joe. Joe carries his stuff out of the door. Malika watches from an upstairs window as Joe puts his stuff in the back of a car.

Joe and Heather ready to leave. Joe looks at the upstairs window. Malika watches sulkily. Joe holds his arms out.

JUMP CUT TO:

Malika rushes into Joe's arms and he hugs her.

INT. JOBCENTRE. DAY

CUT TO:

Joe's picture on the wall, "Employee of the month."

JOE  
(to us)  
A good job, a great relationship.  
It don't get any better than  
this.

Joe looks at the new client who has just sat down. It's Germal Forest. They're both startled. Joe doesn't believe his eyes.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Or does it?

Germal goes to get up.

JOE (cont'd)  
No, please, please sit down.

Germal sits down.

JOE (cont'd)  
What can I do for you?

GERMAL  
I'm looking for a job.

JOE  
(to us)  
There is a god. And he loves me.  
(to Germal)  
Of course you are. What type of  
job?

Germal shrugs, "don't know"

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Some things never change.

JOE (cont'd)  
What sort of qualifications have  
you got?

GERMAL  
I didn't get any.

JOE  
Excuse me?

GERMAL  
I didn't get any. I left.  
...They chucked me out  
before...you know.

JOE  
Oh, Okay. Let me see what I have  
for someone with no  
qualifications. If you wouldn't  
mind filling this out.

Germal fills out the form.

JOE  
(to us)  
Revenge is definitely a dish best  
eaten cold.  
(looking at Germal)  
I had exactly the right position  
for him.

Joe turns to his card index box.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I had never sent anyone, for this  
job, never being able to find it  
in my heart to send anyone to  
work as a...

Joe pulls out a card that says 'sanitation technician'. He  
looks at us and grins.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I could see him now.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRAIN. NIGHT

Germal and a man slosh along through excrement filled sewage.

FRED  
There it is.

They walk up to a blocked hole.

FRED (cont'd)  
Clearing this should sort it.

As Fred clears the blockage, filthy sewage water spurts out into Germal's face.

INT. JOBCENTRE. DAY

Joe's face looking sad as he looks at Germal's application form. Quick shots of the form show that Germal's handwriting and spelling are poorly developed. Joe looks at him and he squirms. Joe notices that in hobbies/interests Germal has put 'computers'. He stares at that word for a long time.

JOE  
(to us)  
If this was one of my other clients, I'd suggest they take two years out. Go to college, take evening classes, improve their literacy. I'd wax lyrical on the benefits of an education, but it's not one of my other clients. It's Germal Forest.

JOE (cont'd)  
I have something I think will be right up your street.

Joe takes up the card and holds it out. Germal takes it.

INT. HEATHER'S FLAT. DAY

Joe takes a drink from the fridge. Magnetic letters make an

aphorism saying, "If you say can or you can't, you're right."

HEATHER

That's terrible Joe. Two wrongs,  
don't make a right.

JOE

So, you think I should forgive  
and forget? Just let him get away  
with it.

HEATHER

No one gets away with anything  
Joe, that's the meaning of karma.

Joe walks out.

INT. HEATHER'S FLAT/LIVING ROOM. EVE

Joe comes in followed by Heather.

JOE

You know what I think. I think  
it was his karma to run into me  
at the jobcentre and get sent to  
interviews for some shitty jobs.

Heather shakes her head.

JOE (cont'd)

He ruined my life Heather. ...on  
a....whim.

Heather shakes her head.

JOE (cont'd)

Yes, yes he did. Then, as if  
that wasn't enough he comes back  
when I'm at my lowest - in the  
street with nothing - and he  
kicks me...lower.

HEATHER

Maybe he's...

JOE

And now when I'm doing good, when  
I'm the best I've been  
in...ages...in my life. He turns  
up. You think he wants to wish  
me well. You think it's a  
coincidence?

HEATHER

No, I don't, that's what I'm saying. ...I think if this boy keeps turning up, you know, at significant moments maybe, just maybe he has something to teach you.

Joe looks at her with growing irritation, then just plain rage.

JOE  
He can't read or write, what the fuck could he have to teach me Heather.

Heather is taken aback by his anger.

HEATHER  
(concerned)  
Resentment gives you cancer

JOE  
(stone cold)  
It would be worth it.

Heather looks at him, he's cold.

HEATHER  
This isn't you.

JOE  
Don't start with that you don't believe what you believe crap.  
This is me. Look at us, we never fight, look what he's caused.  
(frustrated)  
I...I hate that boy!

Heather looks at him, she thinks. She sees his frustration, his rage.

HEATHER  
Something happened, something else. What was it?

Joe looks at her. He hears the low sound of a crowd roaring. He looks trapped. He goes to walk out, she steps in front of him.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
What happened?

EXT. COURT HOUSE. FLASHBACK. DAY

The tail end of a banner waving.

INT. HEATHERS FLAT. LIVING ROOM. EVE

Heather looks at Joe, he's thinking about something. He sees her looking at him, concerned. He thinks about telling her.

JOE  
I can't.

HEATHER  
Tell me.

JOE  
Tell you, tell you, tell you.

HEATHER  
I love you. I want you to...

JOE  
I don't dig at you. "This isn't  
you, this isn't you"

He flicks her straight hair.

JOE (cont'd)  
This isn't you Heather. I want to  
touch your scalp once in awhile,  
but you know what it ain't going  
to happen so I let go.

Heather touches her hair, embarrassed.

JOE (cont'd)  
You've got every book on loving  
yourself as you are known to man.  
(referring to hair)  
This is not as you are.

Heather looks at him tears beginning to form.

HEATHER  
I'm working on it.

JOE  
And so am I Heather, so am I. I  
make you a deal, you sort out  
what's going on on your head and  
I'll sort out what going on in  
mine.

He walks out. Heather stunned, hurt.

INT. HEATHER'S FLAT/BEDROOM. NIGHT

Joe and Heather lie awake, neither talking to the other. They stare into the distance.

HEATHER

When I was about five...six. I went to a family party with my sisters...

She thinks. It's obviously quite painful.

HEATHER (cont'd)

At some point they decided to line us up, in order of...beauty. ...I came last.

Joe looks at her with compassion.

HEATHER (cont'd)

...too black...hair too knotty.

JOE

(with disgust)  
Black people. Fuck them.  
(long pause)  
It was them...more than the boy...it was...

EXT. COURT HOUSE. FLASHBACK. DAY

The faces of the people outside the court, jeering.

INT. HEATHER'S FLAT/ BEDROOM. NIGHT

JOE

...they were shouting and screaming - at me. Me, who'd only tried to help...and something happened, somebody threw something and it hit me -

EXT. COURT HOUSE. FLASHBACK. DAY

The flour bomb hits him in the chest.

INT. HEATHER'S FLAT/ BEDROOM. NIGHT

JOE

- here.

He touches his chest.

JOE (cont'd)  
And I just went cold. I've been  
cold ever since.

Heather snuggles up to him as if trying to warm him. She puts her hand in the spot on his chest that he touched and rubs it as if soothing it.

HEATHER  
You loved them and they hurt you.

Joe tears up. He wipes his eyes, determined not to cry.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
They broke your heart.

A sob escapes Joe. He turns away from Heather, not wanting to be vulnerable in front of her. She strokes him like she's soothing a hurt child. Unable to hold it in, he sobs, pulling away from her.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
Forgive them.

JOE  
Never.

HEATHER  
Not for them, for you, it's  
eating you up. It's destroying  
you.

Joe continues to sob. Heather touches him, he pulls away.

INT. JOBCENTRE. DAY

A young man in baggy trousers and hooded top sits across from Joe, a bored look on his face. Joe looks at him calmly. He looks at us and smiles.

JOE  
(to us)  
This forgiveness thing is...  
(he thinks)  
I feel...lighter. I still see  
stuff, but I don't take it on. I  
don't get so angry...so depressed  
about it all. It's like I'm  
teflon and, things just slide  
off...

A young man walks by who, by the state of his clothes, is obviously a painter and decorator. He has a young child with him.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
...and I see other things.

The man with the child goes and sits at a desk. He picks the child up and puts on his lap.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
...good things.  
(pause)  
And I owe it all to-

Reveal that man with the child is sitting across from Heather. Joe smiles.

INT. HEATHER'S FLAT/LIVING ROOM. EVE

A threaded needle pulled. It's put back through something and pulled again. Reveal that the needle is being pulled through a weft of straight hair. A head half done. The sewn on hair flows long and straight, the unfinished hair is plaited close to the head in canerows. Wefts of straight hair lie on sofa, waiting to be put in. A hand picks the hair up. Joe looks at the straight hair. Heather who is having her hair done, looks up at Joe uncomfortably. She grows more uncomfortable the more he looks at the hair. She grows even more uncomfortable when he looks at her, a strange expression on his face. Joe looks at Heather with her hair half done, to him she looks ridiculous. He looks at the woman who is doing Heather's hair. She wears a long weave.

JOE  
(to us)  
We hate ourselves.  
(pause)  
When you think about it, we're  
the only ones with our hair. In  
the whole world we're the only  
ones with woolly hair. That's  
unique. You'd think it might a  
source of celebration. No.

Joe looks at label on the weave. He looks shocked.

JOE (cont'd)  
Whose hair is this?

HEATHER  
What?

JOE  
It says human hair. Whose hair  
is it?

The woman doing Heather's hair laughs, she thinks Joe is joking. Heather, knows he's serious.

HEATHER  
The women sell it.

JOE  
Yeah right.

Heather shifts uncomfortably, she's hoping he won't go on.

JOE (cont'd)  
This is a billion dollar  
business.  
Wherever you find 'I hate myself  
black people', you're going to  
make money.

Heather looks at him annoyed. The woman doing Heather's hair looks at him curiously, 'is he for real.'

JOE (cont'd)  
I mean, how do you know they sell  
it voluntarily? How do you know  
there aren't hair farms where  
women are reared in cages solely  
for the purposes of harvesting  
their hair?

The woman doing Heather's hair looks at him cautiously. An irritated Heather takes the words right out of her mind...

HEATHER  
You're mad.

JOE  
I'm mad? You're sewing human  
hair into your head.

The woman doing Heather's hair, realises he is serious. She kisses her teeth. Humiliated and embarrassed, both women both decide to ignore him. Joe looks at the wefts of human hair in his hand.

JOE (cont'd)  
They steal organs Heather...

She looks at him.

JOE (cont'd)  
I read about it. They club  
children over the head and steal

their eyes. And hair is so much easier to steal than eyes.

Both Heather and the woman doing her hair look suitably chastened.

EXT. STREET-COMMUNITY CENTRE. NIGHT

Heather, her hair in short, natural twists, storms along. Joe walks along quickly, but can't quite catch up to her.

JOE  
(to us)  
She had to unpick the weave,  
because I...I burned the hair.

He hurries after her.

JOE (cont'd)  
Heather! Heather! Resentment gives you cancer.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/MAIN AREA. NIGHT

Music playing. Lots of people in groups talking. Some people dancing. Some people sit eating at tables.

Joe walks beside Heather. She totally ignores him, looking at the crowd, waving at people at intervals

JOE  
(to us, referring to her hair)  
Now that's her. No additives, no preservatives. I think she looks good.

Joe looks at Heather. She's smiling broadly at someone, whilst giving him the cold shoulder.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to Heather)  
You're creating really bad karma right now.

Heather pauses, she breathes trying to calm down. It doesn't work. She looks at him, furious.

HEATHER  
Joe, if I were you I'd  
(referring to his mouth)  
keep it buttoned.

He goes to talk.

JANINE O/V  
Heather!

Heather turns to see Janine bearing down on her, a look of wonder on her face.

JANINE  
I thought you weren't coming.

HEATHER  
I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

JANINE  
Your hair looks fabulous.

Heather can barely 'smile' an acknowledgement of the compliment. Joe looks smug. He winks at us.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/BUFFET AREA. NIGHT

A buffet table. Heather and Joe help themselves. On the opposite side of the table, Elroy and Kwame help themselves.

KWAME  
(to Elroy)  
...We're the real Jews.

Something goes down the wrong way and Joe coughs. Heather looks at him, is he okay.

KWAME (cont'd)  
The bible says, Jesus came out of the line of David, and Solomon was David's son and he said...

KWAME/ELROY  
I am black, but comely.

Joe looks at them, 'are they for real'.

KWAME  
So if he was black, Jesus was black. And therefore the Jews are black, man. People always trying to steal our shit.

JOE  
(whispers to Heather)  
Imagine, white people stole Jesus from us.

Heather elbows him, "be quiet".

ELROY

It's the same with the pyramids.  
We built the pyramids.

Joe can't help himself, he starts to laugh. Elroy and Kwame look at him, 'what's so funny'. Heather looks at him annoyed. She walks away.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/MAIN AREA. NIGHT

Groups of people talking. Some people dancing. Heather moving through is pursued by Joe.

JOE

They were being ridiculous.

Heather turns on him.

HEATHER

Because they don't think what you think? Anyone who doesn't agree with you is ridiculous that's right isn't it Joe?

JOE

(knows what she's really talking about)

I didn't say you were ridiculous.  
I said sewing 'human hair into your head'....

Heather looks about self conscious.

JOE (cont'd)

...was ridiculous.

Heather walks off. Joe looks after her. He doesn't understand why she's so upset her. He looks back at where Elroy and Kwame are still talking.

JOE (cont'd)

(to us)

"I am black, but comely." They're talking shit. It's something we do. It's as if we look at our lives, don't like the mess we see so we go back into the annals of history to when

(he puts quotes around the phrase)  
we were great.

Joe looks at the groups of people standing about. He looks

at us and grins. He walks off signalling for us to follow him.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Black people always, I mean  
always talk about being black.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/THE GROUPS. NIGHT

Joe walks past a group. He listens in.

TIMOTHY  
We bought early so whatever  
happens we should be okay, house  
prices will never fall as low as  
that again.

JOE  
(to us)  
A pitstop, a diversion from the  
main topic of our lives...  
(pauses for effect)  
"The problem with black people."

He looks about and then spots a group of women talking animatedly, he heads towards them.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
Let's see... talking about the  
shortage of good black men, or  
the fact that fifty percent of  
black men are dating white women

He arrives at the group.

SARAH  
I got them in New York. The  
pound is so strong, if you're  
going to buy a lot of stuff, it's  
worth paying the air fare.

The other women look at her shoes. Joe looks at her shoes.  
He looks at us embarrassed.

JOE  
(to us)  
Trust me, they'll get on to it.  
Shoes are an aperitif. It's  
"unreliable black men" for  
dinner.

JUMP CUT TO:

Joe in a different group.

PATRICK

We're consumers. We create stuff, but we don't make any money out of it. The Koreans sell us our nails and the Asians sell us our hair. We're dumb.

Everybody agrees including Joe

JOE

(to us)

He's good.

MAUREEN

That's not fair though. The white man gives the Asians and the Koreans more of a chance because they're servile and passive.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/BLAME SECTION. NIGHT

JANINE

We're at bottom of the system educationally. The latest figures show that-

ELROY

The schools need to teach black history. They should be taught about ancient Egypt and how we built the pyramids.

Joe frowns.

JANINE

The white man ain't going to do that, because he wants to keep us d-

JOE

Why is it always someone else's fault?

Everyone looks at him, taken by surprise by the question.

JOE (cont'd)

We shoot each other because somebody brings guns into the country. We don't do as well as the Asians because white people won't let us. We're taking crack because somebody's trying to

destroy us. Black men don't look after their kids because no one will give them a job. It's ridiculous.

(pause)

I used to teach. The children who do the best in school are the Chinese and then the asians and they don't get taught their history.

People in various states of disagreement, agreement, embarrassment and resentment.

JANINE

It's alright for them. They never had their culture totally destroyed by slavery.

Everyone nods. People mutter about how slavery is the root of all the problems.

JOE

(to us)

Slavery. Game over, Check mate. Whatever the argument, the rule is the first person to mention slavery - wins. We've got to get over slavery!

ELROY

(incredulous)

"Get over slavery".

JOE

(to us)

Did I say that aloud?

He looks around, people are looking at him, some outraged, some put out, others think he's got a point.

ELROY

Did you say, "Get over slavery". Slavery was the greatest crime against humanity in recorded history. Millions of Africans were stolen from their homes. Carried away, chained in the hull of a ship, lying in their own excrement for months.

Everyone listens to Elroy, solemn. Joe understands the gravity of what he's describing.

JOE

I'm not saying that...

ELROY

...and the unlucky survivors of  
the journey were met with  
unimaginable violence and abuse.  
Our languages were destroyed and  
so were our families. The  
effects of that ricochets down to  
this day. So no, my friend, we  
cannot just "get over" slavery.

JOE

I know, I'm just saying...

ELROY

People like you are the problem.

Joe, startled.

ELROY (cont'd)

You've bought into the illusion  
of freedom. I bet you're  
educated. Been bought off by a  
degree and a decent job.

Joe confused, 'Could that be true?' People nod.

ELROY (cont'd)

You used to teach you say? How  
many other black teachers were  
there?

Joe thinks, he remembers the staffroom with it enclaves of  
white teachers.

ELROY (cont'd)

(correctly assessing  
Joe's reaction)

You were The One. The one they  
let through while they kept all  
the others down, knowing you'd do  
nothing to help your brethren.

JOE

No, that's not true. I tried. I  
even tried...[...to force-]

MAUREEN

I know you. Didn't you get sacked  
from some school for hitting some  
boy? A black boy.

Everybody looks at Joe, some people recognise him and their  
faces take on a meaner aspect. Joe starts to panic. Elroy  
smells blood in the water and rounds on him.

ELROY

You're a sell out, a house

nigger. The proverbial crab in  
the barrel...

Everybody nods.

ELROY (cont'd)  
...Anybody tries to get out you  
pull them down.

Joe shakes his head, "It's not true." He's no crab. He looks around and sees the crowd looking at him resentfully as Elroy continues. Joe's panic rises. He hears the roar of the crowd from outside the court house. Elroy is still talking. Joe catches the odd word...traitor...coconut. Joe sees the people all agreeing with Elroy. The roaring gets louder. Joe rushes off. Elroy looks after him, still talking, the crowd agreeing.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTRE. NIGHT

People headed into the centre. Joe paces up and down. He breathes in deeply trying to stem the tide of panic and fear. He hears the roar of the crowd.

JOE  
(through gritted teeth)  
Forgive them. Forgive them.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/SLAVERY SECTION. NIGHT

The clinking of cutlery on glass. Everybody looks in the direction of the sound. Heather looks shocked to see Joe standing on a table, knocking a glass, with a knife. He looks at them ice cold.

JOE  
Wanted to ask a question. Could anyone here, anyone, who was a slave, please put their hand up.

Heather stunned, 'what is going on?' The people look at Joe confused.

JOE (cont'd)  
Anybody? Laid in the ship in  
their own excrement... beaten and  
raped by the massa?

Heather looks at him angry. Mutters of 'rude', 'facet', 'what's he on about?'

ELROY  
You're taking the piss!

JOE  
No, you are. We built the pyramids. You didn't build the pyramids, you couldn't build a... fucking barbecue.

People laugh. Elroy angry.

JOE (cont'd)  
We were not on the plantation.  
We're free.  
(dispirited)  
This is what we do with our freedom. Talk, moan, blame.  
(he looks heavenward)  
If those slaves were looking down on us, do you think they'd be proud? Do you think they'd think we were worth dying for?

That's struck a chord. People think about that. Joe pursues his advantage.

JOE (cont'd)  
I'm not saying...slavery isn't important or that...it doesn't matter. ...I'm saying...we've got to find another way of...being with it, because... this isn't working. It's destroying us. We have to...forgive.

Heather is touched and her anger falls away. Some people sigh dismissive, 'it can't be done'. Some are disgusted, 'it's heresy'. Some people think about it.

JOE (cont'd)  
Not for them. For us. So we can be free.

Most people don't understand what he means. Joe looks at Heather, that's right isn't? Heather is torn. He's such a strange, amazing contradiction. She agrees with him about the forgiveness so she nods. This gives Joe confidence.

KWAME  
So how do you suggest we 'get over slavery'?

JOE  
I think...we should honour the fact that we...we're the descendants of those (with irony)

unlucky survivors. Maybe see it  
as some kind of karmic...payback  
for something we did.

"karmic payback...something we did", people don't know what  
he's talking about

JOE (cont'd)  
...and you know, look at the good  
things that have come out of it.  
The bright side.

Everyone is stunned, did he just say 'bright side'.

JANINE  
(daring to ask)  
And the bright side of slavery  
is..?

JOE  
I don't know...  
(scraping the barrel)  
...at least they took us  
somewhere sunny.

People's jaws drop. Is he serious? Heather giggles.  
Patrick is feeling him. Janine turns to her companions and  
says 'he's mad'.

JOE (cont'd)  
(warming to his theme)  
Think what would have happened to  
us if they'd known about organ  
transplant.

People think about that. It's not a pleasant thought.  
Patrick nods, the brother's making sense. Joe looks at  
them desperate and hopeful. "Do they understand?" They  
look back. He's definitely struck a cord, but they're not  
sure about his ideas or him. He looks wild eyed,  
hysterical...mad.

JANINE  
Black people have suffered too  
much to have some coco-nut 'make  
jokes' about our pain.

ELROY  
Slavery is still a reality for  
millions of black people all over  
the world. They're still raping  
Africa of the oil, the diamonds,  
the gold.

Elroy is swaying the crowd. Even Patrick thinks he's  
making some solid points.

JANINE

Slavery's got a new name, 'my friend'. It's called 'third world debt'. Black people are still...[...enslaved]

JOE

(frustration)

Fuuuuuuck Black People!!!

Everybody is stunned. Joe looks at them with rage. It consumes him. Heather see what is happening to him, where he's headed.

She shakes her head, 'don't, don't go there', but it's no use. Joe looks at them like some kind of avenging angel.

JOE (cont'd)

Fuck us. Fuck our self denial...

Fuck our "let's blame the white man for everything" response.

Fuck us.

(in their faces)

Fuck black people!!!

The crowd surge forward, "how dare he". Elroy and Kwame grab him down. Elroy punches him in the face. Joe falls. The crowd surround him, baying for blood. Heather tries to get to him, but it's no use.

EXT COMMUNITY CENTRE. NIGHT

Heather helps a bloody and battered Joe into a minicab. She stands at the door. Joe looks at her, is she getting in?

HEATHER

I'm going to stay with some friends for a few days. ...I don't want you there when I get back.

Joe looks at her, stunned.

HEATHER (cont'd)

You're so full of...anger. I've tried to find a way to deal with it...to help, but I can't do it any more Joe. You're just too... negative.

JOE

Heather-

She shuts the door on whatever he's going to say and walks/runs away. The minicab pulls off.

JOE (cont'd)  
Heather! Heather!

EXT. COURT HOUSE. DAY

A smart looking Joe walks out with his lawyer, Mark.

JOE  
Negative? Me? I'm not negative.  
I haven't got a negative bone in  
my body. Fuck her. I'm finished  
with black women anyway.

He shakes Mark's hand. Behind them an older Reece can be seen leaving the court.

MARK  
(to Joe)  
Good luck. What are your plans?  
You going back into teaching?...

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/LOUNGE. DAY

JOE  
(to us)  
No fear.

A trolley full of charts moves along. Joe, dressed as a ward clerk pushes the trolley.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I thought I'd work with people  
who know they're mad.

He stops and thinks.

JOE (cont'd)  
I mean to be free and not think  
you're free is a sort of madness  
isn't it?

Joe looks at the patients that sit around in various states of mental illness, some completely out of it, others seem very lucid. Most of them are black.

A naked black person runs past being chased by two care workers.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
I think they should bring back  
slavery.

(beat)  
We were good at that. Maybe  
that's why we go on about it so  
much. Somehow we know that's  
when we were at our  
most...productive...our best.

The naked person runs back the other way, the care workers  
still chasing him. Joe looks at the naked man running.

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us)  
And let's face it, this freedom  
shit isn't working.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/ROOM. DAY

Joe walks in with a chart. He puts chart on the end of  
bed. He looks around nostalgically.

JOE  
(to us)  
Remember this room? I spent two  
months in here a few years back.  
I had a psychotic episode. Ah,  
life's little ironies.  
(casting his gaze  
towards the bed)  
Who would...[...have thought]

Joe stares...he blinks and looks harder...disbelieving...at  
a sedated Germal Forest. Joe takes up the chart and looks  
at it. It's definitely Germal. Joe looks about paranoid  
as if looking for the crazy, vicious author of this  
'terrible' coincidence.

JOE (cont'd)  
What is going on? What the fuck  
is going on?  
(thinks)  
What did we do? What did we do?  
(he shouts)  
We're sorry! We're sorry!  
(he looks at us)  
(desperate)  
Tell him. Tell him. Tell him  
we're sorry. We're sorry.  
(to us)  
Maybe if we say it together. If  
we all apologise at once he'll  
hear, he'll forgive and lift the  
curse.  
(to god)  
We're sorry, we're sorry, we're  
sorry.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

Joe sits on a bench and thinks.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/ROOM. DAY

Germal lies sedated. A nurse hands the doctor a chart. Joe loiters about with intent.

The doctor looks at the chart.

DR CHATTERJEE

Germal Forest, admitted last night. He was found wandering the streets in an extremely agitated state. The police judged him to be a danger to himself so they brought him here. We'll keep him sedated for now.

JOE

What's wrong with him?

The doctor and the nurse look at him sharply.

DR CHATTERJEE

I can't discuss patients with you.

The nurse looks at Joe angrily, he knows he's not supposed to do that.

JOE

(to the doctor)

I used to teach him.

The doctor turns. He looks at Joe, 'what does he want?'

JOE (cont'd)

I was a teacher. I taught him. He's only 17. What...how could that happen-

DR CHATTERJEE

There's nothing physically wrong with him. Looks like stress. Sometimes a breakdown is the lesser of two evils. The mind is like a pressure cooker. It's ready to explode so-

(he clicks his fingers)

...it blows the fuse, shuts down.

Having said as much as he's prepared to, the doctor abruptly walks away. Joe thinks.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GERMAL'S ROOM. DAY

Joe sat at Germal's bedside looking at him, trying to figure something out.

JOE

Why do you keep turning up?

(pause)

What do you want from me?

(pause)

What am I supposed to learn?

CUT TO:

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GERMAL'S ROOM. NIGHT

Germal lies seemingly alone. Reveal Joe, in civilian clothes standing by the window looking out at the darkness. Germal opens his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GERMAL'S ROOM. ANOTHER DAY

Joe walks in with Germal's chart. He looks at Germal who stares out of the window. Joe thinks then-

JOE

(brightly)

How you doing today Germal?

Germal doesn't respond.

JOE (cont'd)

You want anything?

Germal doesn't respond. Joe goes around so he can see his face.

JOE (cont'd)

(conspiritorially)

The food in here is pretty crap,  
I could bring you something.  
Don't worry I wouldn't be cooking  
it myself.

Joe looks at Germal's unresponsive face, his blank eyes.

Joe looks sad.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/LOUNGE. ANOTHER DAY

Joe, walking by, notices Germal who stares at the TV like a droid. Joe walks over.

JOE  
(to Germal)  
What you watching?

GERMAL  
TV.

JOE  
Is it good?

Germal shrugs. Joe walks away. Germal turns to watch him go.

INT. BOOKSHOP. ANOTHER DAY

Joe looks at something surprised. He smiles.

JOE  
Good book?

The 'Mind, Body & Spirit' section. Heather, her hair in a natural style, holds a book open. She looks up. Caught off guard and pleased to see him, she smiles.

They look at each other.

JOE (cont'd)  
You look great.

Her insecurity around him returns and she touches her hair self conscious.

JOE (cont'd)  
I miss you.

HEATHER  
I miss you too, sometimes.

Joe smiles, relieved.

JOE  
You want to get a coffee?

HEATHER  
No, I don't think so.

She goes to leave.

JOE  
Another time?

HEATHER  
No. Thanks, but no.

JOE  
Why?

Heather thinks.

HEATHER  
I don't feel good about myself  
when I'm with you.

Joe is upset.

JOE  
Couldn't we just...[...be  
friends]

HEATHER  
A man walks down a road Joe. He  
sees a hole in the road, he falls  
in.

Joe doesn't know where she's going, but he listens.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
He walks down the road the next  
day, he sees the hole again, he  
still falls in. The next day he  
walks down the road, he sees the  
hole and he walks around it.

Joe nods, he thinks he gets that.

HEATHER (cont'd)  
The next day, he takes a  
different road.  
I don't want to spend my life  
avoiding holes Joe. I'm taking a  
different road.

She walks off. Joe looks sad.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/LOUNGE. DAY

A chess table. Germal studies the pieces. His opponent, another patient, watches him. Germal picks up a pawn. His opponent grins. A cough is heard. Germal looks up at Joe, who shakes his head. Joe 'gallops' signally that Germal should use his knight, oblivious to the fact that several

of the other patients are looking at him like he's mad. Germal moves the pawn. Swiftly his opponent brings his rook across taking Germal's queen. Involved in the game, Joe is 'upset' by the careless loss of such a major figure. Germal is unmoved by the loss.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/LOUNGE. ANOTHER DAY

Books. Germal looking along.

JOE  
Reading. Good idea

Germal continues looking at the books as if Joe hasn't spoken.

JOE (cont'd)  
...It stimulates the mind.

Germal looks at a pile of magazines. Germal's eyes fix on something and register interest, almost excitement.

JOE (cont'd)  
Mental exercise is...

A pile of comics. Germal takes one, definitely excited. Joe looks at the comic, disappointed.

JOE (cont'd)  
...good for you.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GERMAL'S ROOM. ANOTHER DAY

Pages of a graphic novel. Germal looking at it. Joe watches him.

JOE  
Dr Chatterjee says you're doing a lot better. You could go home in a few weeks.

Germal turns a page as if he hasn't heard Joe. Joe looks out of the window.

JOE (cont'd)  
You should go outside.

Germal is focussed on in his book.

JOE (cont'd)  
I could go with you if you wanted.

Germal looks at him, something is confusing him. Joe looks at him, 'what?' Germal goes back to his book. Joe goes to leave. He is opening the door when-

GERMAL  
(begrudging)  
I'm sorry.

Joe looks at him, what did he say?

GERMAL (cont'd)  
For what I did. I'm sorry.

Joe comes back into the room.

JOE  
Why...why did you do it?

Germal shrugs.

GERMAL  
It started as a joke. ...but my  
parents got behind me and...

Joe waits. Germal nervous.

GERMAL (cont'd)  
And... I didn't like you...  
(looks at him)  
I hated you. We all did.

JOE  
(stunned)  
All? Who?

GERMAL  
The black kids.

JOE  
(shocked)  
The bl... Why?

GERMAL  
...it always seemed... ....we  
wasn't good enough for you...

JOE  
(shocked)  
I never said you weren't good  
enough. I always tried to show  
you guys your potential, what you  
could be.

GERMAL  
...Why was we never good enough  
like we were?

JOE  
(with disdain)  
What? Illiterate, violent,  
insolent.

Germal nods, that's the teacher he remembers.

JOE (cont'd)  
I was supposed to say "Great,  
carry on." God, I cannot believe  
the...ingratitude...

GERMAL  
Nobody asked you to-

JOE  
No one else in that school gave a  
damn! You didn't like me. You  
didn't like me? Then what have  
you been following me around for?

Germal looks at him, 'what's he on about?'

JOE (cont'd)  
Then what have you been  
haunting...hunting me for. To  
tell me this. You know what.  
Fu...

Joe storms out. Germal thinks about what Joe was saying,  
'that guy is weird'.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

Joe walks up and down. He stops and looks at us as if he  
might say something, but he's too furious. He sets off  
pacing again.

JOE  
(to us, incredulous)  
They didn't like me.

He can't believe it. It's ridiculous. He sees himself...

INT. SCHOOL/CLASS ROOM. FLASHBACK. DAY

Lecturing one of his Enforced Education classes.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

He thinks he was doing a good job, then he sees...

INT. SCHOOL/CLASS ROOM. FLASHBACK. DAY

...the boys resentful faces.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

JOE  
(to us)  
I was trying to help them.

He sees...

EXT. SCHOOL/YARD. FLASHBACK. DAY

The boys who have been playing 'piggy in the middle' look at Joe.

JOE O/S  
Detention.

The boys look angry, frustrated. 'It's unfair'.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

Joe looks at us, beginning to feel embarrassed, but he's not ready to give up. He was right. He sees...

INT. SCHOOL/CLASS. FLASHBACK. DAY

Reece's hurt expression.

JOE  
(to us, smug)  
We've got enough black footballers.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

Joe's losing his confidence in his rightness. He sees...

INT. BOOKSHOP. FLASHBACK. DAY

HEATHER  
I don't feel good about myself  
when I'm with you, Joe.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

JOE  
(to himself)  
Shit.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GERMAL'S ROOM. DAY

Joe walks back in. Germal barely looks at him then goes back to reading. Joe hovers nervously.

Germal reads.

JOE O/V  
(geninue)  
Sorry.

Germal looks up. He looks at Joe who seems to have transformed. The stuck up, self righteous do-gooder has been replaced by a sad, nervous looking man.

JOE  
I'm sorry. I thought I was  
helping, I wanted to help...to do  
some good.

GERMAL  
The only person you really cared  
about was Andrew Haynes.

Joe looks stumped, where did that come from, what's he on  
about.

JOE  
That's not true. I wanted...[to  
help...]

GERMAL  
Lending him books.

JOE  
He wanted them. He asked  
for...[...extra work]

GERMAL  
Walking him to classes.

JOE  
Because you guys kept beating him

up. Why was that by the way? I  
never understand...[...stood]

GERMAL  
Cos he was stuck up.

JOE  
He wasn't he...[...was a regular  
kid]

GERMAL  
...Thought he was white. Doing  
all his work, winning  
certificates. He was a real  
coconut.

JOE  
And you're a real crab.

GERMAL  
What?

JOE  
Why would you bully a black boy  
for doing well? You didn't bully  
the clever white boys or the  
clever Asians. It doesn't  
make...[...sense]

GERMAL  
HE THOUGHT HE WAS BETTER THAN US!

Joe looks at Germal in shock. He sees rage, hate and  
bitterness. He doesn't understand it. Then he sees  
something else. He looks at Germal with realisation. He  
looks at us, he thinks.

JOE  
(to us)  
It's fear.  
(thinks)  
What I thought was laziness,  
stupidity, cruelty... It's fear.  
(thinks)  
Fear of...humiliation. Fear  
of...being left behind.

He thinks, this is big stuff. He has a light bulb moment.  
'Could it be possible?'

JOE (cont'd)  
(to us, posing the idea)  
A 'curse of fear' would be a  
pretty powerful thing.

He smiles to himself, it's all theoretical. Joe looks at  
him. He has learned all he needs to from him. Joe walks

to the door with a new confidence. He opens the door, he stands there about to leave, he thinks... He decides.

JOE (cont'd)  
So what do you say to that walk  
outside?

Germal looks at him surprised. This man keeps surprising him. He looks at Joe suspicious, 'What's he up to?' Joe smiles. Germal thinks, he nods, "okay". He gets up. Joe holds the door open, Germal walks through. Joe goes to follow him then stops. He looks at the room where both he and Germal have spent time...mad. He looks at the bed. He looks up at the possible author/orchestrator of these coincidences. He thinks. He leaves.

The empty room. Through the window we see Joe and Germal walking into the distance.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL/GARDEN. DAY

Joe and Germal sat on the bench. We eavesdrop.

GERMAL  
I just want a job that interests  
me. Have that...special girl,  
you know, the one that...well you  
know.

JOE  
(thinks of Heather)  
Yeah...I know.

They sit in a companionable silence, each thinking about what they want.

GERMAL  
Mostly, I just want a family.  
...that all lives together in one  
place. I suppose you think  
that's pathetic.

JOE  
You kidding, this day and age,  
that's up there with going to the  
moon.

Germal smiles at the compliment. We move on leaving them alone.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD. DAY

A teeming playground. It's home time. Joe walks through.

The boys run out around him, some say "Bye sir".

EXT. SCHOOL. DAY

Joe walks out of the school. He stops, behind him we see that the wall has "Fuck P.E" written on it. Joe looks at us, a still, calm look. A car horn beeps. Joe looks over. Heather, her hair in a natural style is waiting for him. Joe walks towards her.

THE END