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THE COLONY

ALL SCENES TAKE PLACE IN FLATS ON A SOUTH LONDON ESTATE
SOUND OF SOMETHING FALLING – AS IF A BOMB/OBJECT X-FADES
INTO SOUND OF INSECTS VERY CLOSE UP CRAWLING

Act 1

SCENE 1 – PAUL’S FLAT

PAUL HENRY There are some moments in your life when everything becomes clear, when you for one tiny second expand and become one with the all of creation; time slows, moves in frames, God runs through your veins, your mind no longer ends at the inside of your skull but spills out to encompass people walking, trees swaying stars exploding as for that instant you are somehow plugged into all knowledge, though the only thoughts pounding through your universe sized awareness are – A: before the second is out you will have to return to the ice-cream-dropped-in-a-puddle you call a life and – B: that things will never be the same. This has happened to me twice. The first time was in the Blue Peter

garden, 1975, Hearts and Minds of Gold award
when I called Noakes a prick, live on air.

FX **SOMEWHERE A PARTY STARTS (UNDER).**

PAUL HENRY

Introduced on the show four months earlier as the world's youngest myrmecologist at only twelve years of age, Noakes peering into my aquarium of *Eciton burchelli*, the beaver ant and points to one of thousands of workers and says 'What's his name, Paul?' They all laugh, but I don't. I've heard that joke before, it's not funny. I say 'Her.' 'Whassat, Paul?' 'Her name.' 'No, his name.' More laughter, but not quite as confident. 'It's a she.' Kindly voice 'No, the queen's a she, Paul; that's a worker.' 'All ants are female except –' 'Well it doesn't matter, does it –' and off he goes talking to camera but yes it does, it does matter John, it does matter very much when you've just called me a liar in front of twelve million people, in front of everyone I know, in front of my entire school, in front the entire myrmecologist community, it does matter when I'm right and you're wrong and you know I'm right and I know you know I'm right and you know I know you know I'm right but you still use your celebrity status to cover up your blunder, your ignorance and act like you know best when you're on my territory, the one thing I know and have over all the other screaming little shits in the playground.

FX **MOVES TO WINDOW. AGAINST THE GLASS.**

PAUL: Four months later I'm at the Hearts and Minds of Gold award, in the Blue Peter garden along with a swimmer, a girl who saved a dog and a bald kid in a wheelchair and I see you there, coming down the line, genial, relaxed, loved by the world, and I wait, and I wait, and I wait, and there you are, handing me a medal asking me if I'd like to say anything and I say 'Yes John. A; all ants are female except the males who live only long enough to fertilise the queen, then die.' Slight pause. Noakes is a tad unsure. 'And B; you're a prick.'

FX **WINDOW OPENING, SOUNDS FLOODING IN.**

PAUL HENRY TURN THAT DOWN, YOU BLOODY REPTILES!

FX **WINDOW CLOSING.**

PAUL HENRY And the second? The second time? The second time is about to happen any minute now.

SCENE 2 – VINNIE’S BEDROOM

FX **A BOMB FALLING, MASSIVE EXPLOSION.**

FX JETS ROARING OVERHEAD AND THE
DISTANT CRACKLE OF SPORADIC GUNFIRE
(UNDER)

VINNIE

... extremely... extremely close, the situation is, it's chaos here. F16's overhead as you can probably hear, there are Marines to my right, the ten 58th, laying down a suppressing fire, though to be honest it's extremely difficult to tell the difference between civilians and civilian militia, and I can see a body, 10, 15 feet away, I can't tell whether it's male, it's female, it looks young but...

FX ANOTHER HUGE EXPLOSION.

VINNIE It's... it's chaos here, it's madness, the madness
of war, it's mental, it's a mental war, the mental
war, the mentalness of war, but it's my duty no
matter how terrified, no matter what the personal
danger

SARAH (MUFFLED, UNDER) Vinnie?

VINNIE because, this is the job, it comes with the, and I
will tell what's happening here, the body

SARAH (MUFFLED, UNDER) Vinnie?

VINNIE the body, a girl, I think a young girl

SARAH (MUFFLED, UNDER) Vinnie? She's got her door open...

VINNIE an old man, yes, it's a wise old man, a blood
stained book in what's left of his

SARAH (MUFFLED, UNDER) That one opposite.

VINNIE No fingers, no thumb, yet somehow still clinging

SARAH (MUFFLED, UNDER) She's got her door open again and...

FX CD TURNED OFF. WAR SOUNDS STOP.

FX DISTANT PARTY (UNDER). DOOR OPENING

SARAH (SLIGHTLY SLURRED) You doing your thing?

VINNIE Yeah

SARAH Up here doing your thing?

VINNIE Yeah

SARAH

Yeah.

Don't want me disturbing you.

She's got her door open again, Vinnie.

That one opposite. Look, two along from the party, look, second floor, she's got her front door open and her little one'll get out on the...

Why don't you ask if you can join them.

VINNIE

Mum.

SARAH

- party there, get some friends, you should have –

VINNIE

Mum!

PAUL HENRY (SHOUTING FROM NEXT DOOR) FILTHY ANIMALS!

SARAH

He's at it again. Next door. Eh?

D'you want a drink? Drinkie with your mum?

You gonna come and watch telly with – (SHE
BEGINS TO CRY QUIETLY)

VINNIE

Mum.

FX

**DOOR CLOSING. CD BEING TURNED BACK
ON. MASSIVE EXPLOSION.**

SCENE 3 – PAUL’S FLAT

FX **DISTANT PARTY**

PAUL HENRY I don’t allow people to screw me. I’m not
vindictive, but I remember. I don’t let them win.

FX **OPENING WINDOW AGAIN.**

Look at it. The U bend she used to call this
place. Because the block is in the shape of a U.
If you look at it from the air. ‘Five floors of toilet’
she’d say (SLIGHT LAUGH) She meant it funny,
not nasty.

FX **CLOSING WINDOW. MOVING AROUND AND**
SETTING UP – SPRAYS AND WIPES SIDE OF
GLASS TANKS.

PAUL HENRY

Things, admittedly, went down hill after Noakes.
For some reason people took his side. Teachers,
kids at school, my parents even, so is it any
wonder when I don't, I don't do as well as
expected, is it any wonder that instead of a career
in zoology I find myself standing behind the
counter of a pet shop, is it any wonder that I am
treated for stress, spend some time on a, on a
ward, is it any wonder when I attempt, pills and, is
it any wonder when I make an attempt–
And then I meet Heather and things change. Just
like that. Almost in an instant, in a second things
change, a door is opened and light pours in,
laughter, breath, hair, auburn, it wasn't dry, she
used to say it was dry but it wasn't dry. I'd look at
her and wonder if she was real, and she'd catch
me giggling because I'd realised she was. She
respected my love of ants. Perfect.
And...

FX

OPENING A CUPBOARD.

PAUL HENRY

...time for the tubes...

FX CLOSE UP ON SOUND OF TAP RUNNING,
BREATH OF A SICK PERSON ,SOUND OF
THE PARTY, OUTSIDE, , LOUISE COMES IN
AND PUTS PLASTIC SHEETING ON THE BED.

FX **WHEELING OVER BED.**

FX COLLECTING BOWL & TOWEL FROM BATHROOM

FX	WASHING SOUNDS (UNDER)
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LOUISE

This is just, just gonna, to sponge on the water.

There.

How's that?

Nice? yeah?

Lovely hair.

You used to say mine was like Poppet's coat.

Probably have their barbecue set up out the back.

Nice sunny day like today.

(SLIGHT LAUGH). 'Great hair for a dog,' you'd say 'not for a girl'.

S'that alright? Not going in your eyes?

Didn't invite me. Went to school with her daughter, but still.

'Member her barking to get out? And you said 'Don't you let that dog out'. I did anyway. You called me pathetic.

Just a little shampoo, then. I'll rub it in my hands because that'll be warmer.

Pathetic, you said. And you went out to find her and she'd been hit by a car. D'you remember that mum? And you brought her home. And I was in bed crying. And you lay her down at the end of my bed. And she was screaming. And bleeding. And you said 'you see what you've done'.
Contd over .../

LOUISE:

Just massage this in now.

And you left her there. On my bed. And you
taped up her jaw to stop her screaming. And I
watched.

Not too cold?

And I watched her die. And it took all day. And
you said 'That's a lesson;' you said 'you learn that
lesson'. And I did. I did learn that lesson.

PAUSE.

I'll leave that in for a few moments because it'll
condition the hair.

SCENE 5 – PAUL’S FLAT

FX **ROOTING AROUND – SOUND OF RUBBER TUBES.**

PAUL HENRY Here we are.

FX **CLOSING CUPBOARD. FOOTSTEPS (UNDER).**

PAUL HENRY For ants’ life is a chain of events leading to a whole. One ant may tend the young, another may excavate tunnels, another may lay a chemical trail towards food which other’s will follow and then follow back again towards the nest. Every one individual is linked: cause and effect, cause and effect, cause and effect. I can see Heather standing there now, in front of me, I can see her looking at me, frightened, I can see her twisting her hair into her mouth and I think ‘Well you may twist your hair into your mouth’ ‘I wanted to be honest.’ she says ‘Our first day in our new home. I wanted everything to be... I wanted to be honest.’ Honest. Honest. I say nothing. But something has changed.

FX **PLACING TUBES IN GLASS TANK (UNDER).**

PAUL HENRY

One tube leading down into the battleground
tank... and... another tube leading down into the
battleground tank. It begins. It begins.

SCENE 6 - PARTY

FX

IN THE PARTY, LAUGHING MUSIC (UNDER)

ADE (V/O)

Hello, how are you?

Fine thank you, I'm fine.

How are you enjoying the barbecue?

Great, I'm having a great time.

That's good. I just wonder because you're
standing here on your own, staring at the
television set.

Well, I'm watching a bit of television.

In the middle of a party?

Well, it's the Superman film.

I just thought maybe you were staring at that
television set because no-one was talking to you.

I'm thinking about the bit at the end when
Superman flies around the world and turns time
backwards.

I thought maybe you were paralysed with fear.

I'm imagining what would happen to the bullet in
my son's brain if I could do this.

I thought maybe you were just terrified.

I imagine time going backwards. I can see the
pieces of grey flesh filling out the furrow made by
the bullet in my son's brain. Contd over .../

ADE:

I can feel his shattered conscious filling up again,
fragments of his vision flying back together, taste
returning, memories flooding back into his head,
his life screaming back into his body.

Maybe you just don't know what else to do. How
stupid.

SCENE 7 – VINNIE’S BEDROOM

FX **DISTANT PARTY (UNDER). DOOR KNOCKS.**

SARAH (OUTSIDE DOOR) Vinnie?

FX **WINDOW CLOSING, PARTY MUFFLED
(UNDER)**

VINNIE What?

SARAH (OUTSIDE DOOR) Can I come in?

VINNIE No.

FX **DOOR OPENING.**

SARAH Vinnie?

VINNIE What?

SARAH (BEAT) Good news. I called them, the party I
called them and –

VINNIE You did what?

SARAH Yeah, and they said you can go.

VINNIE What did you do that for?

SARAH But you can go, Vinnie –

VINNIE What's the matter with you?

SARAH You can go, you can go to the –

VINNIE Get out!

SARAH Vinnie...

VINNIE GET OUT!

FX **SLAMS DOOR, TURNS LOCK.**

SARAH (OUTSIDE DOOR) Vinnie!

SCENE 8a – PAUL’S FLAT (INTERCUTTING SCENES)

PAUL HENRY ... making love, all the time and we’re laughing
and happy and she bought me an ant farm and
though I’m not too keen on ready-mades I kiss
her and we make love, and we make love
whenever, whenever I can, and she jokes about it
and I tell her it’s because my heart is exploding
and I need her and sometimes I catch her looking
at me strangely, and I wonder if she can see
inside and I freeze, I almost melt, but then we
make love and over time the one ant farm
becomes several aquariums, tunnels fingering
down into the soil and we make love, soil rippling
with life, and we make love, and she jokes and
every opportunity I can we make love, because I,
I have a plan, inside a secret...
(PAUSE) Bloody Hell.

FX WALKS TO WINDOW.

That’s... that’s a baby.

8b. LOUISE’S FLAT

LOUISE Her babies just crawled out.

FX BREATHING AGITATED.

LOUISE Mum?

8c. VINNIE'S BEDROOM

SARAH (OUTSIDE DOOR) Her baby's just crawled out her door. Vinnie?

VINNIE

Mum!

FX **WINDOW OPENING.**

8d. PAUL'S FLAT

PAUL HENRY

Her babies just... Left her door open, her, baby's
just... I mean I can't... I've got... I can't... I'm
busy. I'm busy!

SCENE 9 – VINNIE’S BEDROOM

SARAH (OUTSIDE) Vinnie?

FX **CD MACHINE CLICK. AIR-STRIKES (UNDER).**

VINNIE And opposite I can see, I can see a barbecue, as
incredible as that sounds amidst this chaos and
madness, on this ruined housing estate...

SARAH:(OFF) Vinnie?

VINNIE cont: some crazed and selfish people are barbecuing,
unaware or either uncaring of the armoured
division coming down on that very location, and if I
look along on the ...

SARAH: (OFF) Vinnie, I’m worried!

VINNIE cont: same floor, the second floor, I can see, through the
railings, a child, an abandoned infant child
abandoned, and if I look further along again, still
on the same floor, still the second floor, I can see
where the railings have been kicked away ...

SARAH: (OFF) I’m worried, Vinnie!

VINNIE cont: exposing a gap, the child in peril, danger, the
party...

Scene 10 – PARTY

FX

**PARTY FROM INSIDE (UNDER), SOUND OF
RUSH OF AIR AS IF FLYING OVER EARTH.**

ADE (V/O)

The bullet spins out through his jaw and teeth,
healing them, bringing the pieces of them back
together and replacing the fillings while the bullet
itself becomes smaller, more compact, regaining
its original shape and then suddenly bursting out
through my son's cheek.

Everybody here thinks you are stupid.

But still time goes backwards, and having brought
my son back to life, I am tracing the path of my
son's death. Faster now, picking up pace, I am
racing across that hot landscape...

See the way no-one makes eye contact?

...clouds above, sand below, racing backwards
with the bullet as I see in the distance a man, the
man with the rifle and I just have time to make out
the look of concentration on his face before I slam
into the barrel of the gun and up into the
chamber, causing the trigger to jerk forward and
gently push the man's finger away.

Contd over /

ADE:

They can't bear to talk to you

But I don't stop there because time is going

backwards and I am in this man's brain, in his

brain, yes, I trace the path of my son's death into

the brain of this man.

They can't even look at you.

SCENE 11 – LOUISE’S FLAT

FX **CLOSE UP BREATHING, INCREASINGLY
AGITATED. THE PARTY. WASHING HAIR
(ALL UNDER)**

LOUISE Don’t worry about the baby. Be fine.

 I’m going to towel this now.

FX **LOUISE VIGOROUSLY TOWELLING HER
MOTHER’S HEAD.**

D’you remember coming back from Auntie Nora’s
in Cardiff? And we stayed at that motel because
you were scared to drive in the rain? And you
we’re just talking and taking and talking and I held
my breath in case you stopped, I didn’t want you
to stop. And there was only one bed and we
slept together in that bed, and I was curled up
against you and I pretended to be asleep and you
kissed me on the head. D’you remember?

FX **FINISHES TOWELLING.**

Now, this is colour so it might sting.

You okay?

Don’t worry about the baby, mum.

SCENE 12 – PAUL’S FLAT

FX

INSECTS CLOSE UP

PAUL HENRY

Oh, yes, that’s it, that’s it, into... yes, that’s it into the tube, explore, off you go, brilliant. And let’s have a look at... Oh, very good, Lasius niger, that’s very good. Ten years, ten and a half years I’ve had this nest. It was one of those summer days, the air full of flying ants, special, once a year, Heather was standing there in front of me, tears streaming down her face. ‘It’s not mine,’ I said, cold, very cold, ‘I don’t want it and I don’t want you.’ ‘Who’s is it then?’ she screamed and it was the first time I’d heard her scream, and I knew I’d got to her, I knew I’d won. ‘Maybe it’s the man you fucked when we first moved in.’ And she suddenly stops crying. And I can see her mind moving, I can see things tinkling into place, I can see the world beginning to shift in her head into an entirely new place, an unpleasant place and I thought ‘Welcome to what you’ve made me feel’ but I just said ‘I’m going out to get a queen’ and I did. And when I came back she wasn’t there.

Contd over .../

PAUL HENRY

There are two creatures on this earth that war.

Two species in all of creation that destroy their
own kind en masse. Man and ants.

SCENE 13 – VINNIE’S BEDROOM

FX

WAR - HELICOPTER CLOSE - BULLETS.

VINNIE ... and I can see ordinance now pouring into the
party, people screaming, tracer bullets shattering
windows ...

SARAH (OFF): Vinnie, the baby!

VINNIE cont: trying to escape, mortars coming, a tank round
tearing a wall away, and the baby infant now
moving, fast

SARAH (OFF): Vinnie, it's moving!

VINNIE cont: the baby infant now moving fast, away from the ordinance, but towards the gap in the railings, and people hurling themselves from the windows of the barbecue...

SCENE 14 - PARTY

FX **ADE MOVING THROUGH THE PARTY, DESPERATE TO GET OUT, BUMPING INTO PEOPLE.**

ADE (V/O) ...and suddenly I am flying back the way I have come, tracing the path of my son's death, time still racing backwards, tracing the path the bullet will take over the dust and under the sky as I see his face, my son's cheek rushing up towards me, but instead of smashing through it I burst into it, into it and beyond and now I am racing along the paths of orders, hurtling backwards and forwards along the path of commands and orders and, and, and...

FX **DOOR OPENS, OUTSIDE NOW. HEAVY BREATHING.**

ADE (ALoud) But I don't stop there.

SCENE 15 – PAUL’S FLAT

PAUL HENRY That baby is not my responsibility. This is
important. What’s happening in here...

FX **WINDOW CLOSING. POLAROID PHOTOS**

Nests sprang up around me the first few years,
aquariums everywhere, my freedom, and I knew
that if she came back to me I would tell her to go,
get out, I’ve not forgiven you, and the next few
years as the nests become too big for one tank
alone I began to use plastic tubing to link one
aquarium to another so sometimes a nest could
be in two or three aquariums and in those years I
began to think that when she did come crawling
back I would at least talk to her, I would at least
listen to what she had to say, and in the few
years after that I began to allow the smaller nests
to die out and just concentrate on keeping two
very large nests, *Lasius niger*, the common black
ant and *Mymica ruginodis* the red ant, keep it
simple, and in those years I knew that if she
came back to me with our, with our, with our
daughter I would say,

FX **PHOTOS STOP. PICKS UP BOTTLE OF
PILLS.**

PAUL HENRY

yes come in, come in, live with me, I'm sorry, let's forget what happened, and in the last few years, in the last few years I've begun to look at these two huge nests covering my living room, aquariums everywhere, plastic tubing connecting them so that I have to crawl sometimes to move around and I've begun to think my god, my god, has my life gone into these tanks, are these ants eating my life and in these last few years I've begun to know that she is never, ever, ever, going to come back.

SCENE 16a – LOUISE’S FLAT – INTERCUTTING SCENES

<u>FX</u>	<u>BREATHING INCREASINGLY AGITATED</u> <u>SOUND OF HAIR WASHING CLOSE UP,</u> <u>PULLS BACK.</u>
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LOUISE	... and you said ‘Terry’s not coming back’ you said ‘Uncle Terry’s not coming back because you made him kiss your stupid dolly out on the balcony in front of all his friends so he went and killed himself’ you said ‘He went and threw himself under a train’ you said ‘ and his face was smashed into a pulp’ and I was crying so hard I couldn’t breath and I saw Terry years later in a pub with a fat girl with red hair and then I understood, I understood that that was a lesson, that was a lesson...
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16b. VINNIE’S BEDROOM WAR CD ON...

VINNIE	... the child now, leaning out into, into the void, like this country, like me, like this country, a baby, it’s parents the state, nowhere to be seen, though (CD OFF) no, that’s not quite right, so the baby like the inevitable march of war, no, peace, like peace leaning out into, into, though maybe not peace, maybe more like...
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16c. PAUL'S FLAT

PAUL HENRY ... that poor little, so this moment, this moment,
this moment is too important, cause and effect,
cause and effect, this moment is far to important
for me to

FX GOING TO WINDOW.

PAUL HENRY interrupt for a child, a child on a balcony, poor
little, they're inches apart, these ants, they're
inches apart, this moment...

FX SHAKES PILLS OUT INTO HAND.

PAUL HENRY There are some moments, when you step out of
your mind, my mind...

SCENE 17 - OUTSIDE PARTY – INTERCUTTING SCENES –

MUSIC & SPORADIC WAR UNDER

ADE (ALoud) ...my mind is a pulse of electricity now, as now I
am screaming across the surface of the earth, a
photon crackling through trillions of atoms, as I
pull back, as I tear back time, across desert, over
mountains, skimming across the surface of lakes,
seas,

FX **SARAH (STILL DISTANT) RUNNING TOWARD**
ADE, SHOUTING.

ADE (ALoud) hurtling over the borders of countries, heading
North, North West, weaving through the streets of
cities in a moment, fields of corn, maze, olive
groves, vineyards in a fragment of a second, life
being ripped backwards around me, an expanse
of water, the Channel, white cliffs, I flash over the
white cliffs and, and, and...

VINNIE ... and a woman now, a woman who's, running
across the tarmac, she looks drunk, a drunk
woman now running across the tarmac screaming
because the child is... the child is...

(BEAT) Mum?

Shit...

PAUL HENRY ... they're meeting, they're meeting, the ants,
they're, this is the moment,

FX OPENING THE WINDOW

PAUL HENRY they're about to, tiny feelers, chemical
identification, enemy, destroy, they'll hack, I can't,
I can't, I can't...

LOUISE ... and I can't sleep and I'm scared and you turn
my bed over and make me sleep on the floor and
I cut my leg and I'm crying and you kiss it better,
right there in the supermarket in front of everyone
you don't care you just kiss it better and I stop
crying and I'm laughing and you're laughing and
you catch me smoking and I have to eat cigarette
butts and...

FX SARAH SHOUTING, MUCH CLOSER NOW.

ADE (ALLOUD) ... and I trace the path of my son's death back to
...

VINNIE (QUIETLY) Mum?
The child... the child... leaning out...

PAUL HENRY ... I can't, they're, they're...

ADE (ALoud) ... my own face, me, and it is my face ...

LOUISE ... d'you remember, remember, d'you
remember...

PAUL HENRY ... touching! They're touching, they are tou...

VINNIE The child...

PAUL HENRY Oh god.

MOMENT OF ABSOLUTE SILENCE. HOLD.
WORLD RUSHES IN
(VOICES/FOOTSTEPS/MUSIC) - AS THE
CHILD FALLS.

PAUL HENRY There are some moments in your life when
everything stops.

SCENE 18 – VINNIE’S KITCHEN

FX **KISSING, PASSIONATE AND CLUMSY, MOVEMENT AS A TABLE IS KNOCKED AND SOMETHING ON IT ROLLS.**

VINNIE (THROUGH KISSING) Shit.

LOUISE What?

VINNIE No, it’s...

LOUISE What?

VINNIE Nothing.

FX **THEY CARRY ON. SUDDENLY IT STOPS. BREATHING. PAUSE.**

VINNIE What?

LOUISE Nothing.

VINNIE You alright?

LOUISE Course I’m alright.

VINNIE (BEAT) Have I done something?

LOUISE No.

VINNIE Louise –

LOUISE You were going to make me some tea.

VINNIE Yeah. Yeah, I'll –

FX **MOVEMENT. TEA MAKING SOUNDS (UNDER)**

VINNIE Louise, are you al-

LOUISE Are there still many people down there?

VINNIE What? No. Yes: one. Just one. That bloke
who's boy got killed in Iraq. He's just standing
there, staring.

LOUISE What about the ambulance?

VINNIE Gone.
(PAUSE) Dunno why they bother putting it in an
ambulance. Seems a bit silly.

LOUISE Can't just chuck it in a bin.

VINNIE You alright?

LOUISE I'm fine.

VINNIE Sorry.

LOUISE What about?

VINNIE You know, for... for kissing you.

LOUISE I kissed you.

VINNIE Doesn't seem right, does it.

LOUISE No.

VINNIE But it feels different. Now.

LOUISE It does.

VINNIE That's not why I spoke to you.

LOUISE I know.

VINNIE I wasn't trying to, using something like that to –

LOUISE I kissed you.

VINNIE (BEAT) There was a lot of people.

LOUISE There was.

VINNIE Probably that barbecue.

LOUISE You weren't invited?

VINNIE D'you take sugar?

LOUISE Two small ones.

VINNIE I've seen you around. On the estate. I don't
mean, I mean I haven't been watching you or
anything.

LOUISE And what did you think?

VINNIE What?

LOUISE When you saw me around?

VINNIE I thought you was... nice.

LOUISE 'Nice'?

FX HANDS HER THE TEA. SITS DOWN.

VINNIE In your own world.

LOUISE How old are you?

VINNIE Seventeen.

LOUISE I'm twenty-eight.
I didn't want... I didn't want to go back home yet.

VINNIE No, it's nice.

FX HE GIGGLES. SLIGHT LAUGH FROM HER.

VINNIE That's bad though, innit. After something like
that.

LOUISE I spose so.

VINNIE D'you wanna see me again?

LOUISE (SLIGHT LAUGH) What?

VINNIE Nothing. I'm just...
D'you feel different?

LOUISE Yes.

VINNIE Something like that. Makes you feel different.
How old do you think it was?

LOUISE Eighteen months. Two years.
Your mum ran after it.

VINNIE Yeah, she tried to –

LOUISE You didn't help?

VINNIE What? Well, no, well I thought she was just –

LOUISE What?

VINNIE I thought she was...

LOUISE What?

VINNIE I thought she was just pissed.

You watched it?

Yeah, but no, I couldn't've –

I'm just asking.

- it was too, I saw it at the end, it was too –

I'm just asking.

(PAUSE) It felt like it was me. When it fell. It seemed like a perfectly normal thing and it then suddenly it was like I was on the top of a building or on the arm of a crane looking through the metal at nothing, nothing beneath me.

How's your tea.

Bit too sweet.

(BEAT) Sorry, d'you want me to -?

No, no, I mean I like it. It's like my mum, my mum used to make it too sweet, she always used to make it too sweet. I haven't had tea like this in ages.

VINNIE I've got the knack.

FX SLIGHT LAUGH, HER JOINING HIM.

LOUISE You have. You've got the knack.

VINNIE You're beautiful.

LOUISE (NOT UNKINDLY) Fuck off.

VINNIE Sorry.

LOUISE And don't keep saying you're sorry.

SCENE 19 – OUTSIDE THE FLATS

FX **SARAH WALKING ALONG OUTSIDE, MUTTERING TO HERSELF. SHE STOPS SUDDENLY. PAUSE. KIDS PLAYING FOOTBALL IN THE DISTANCE (UNDER).**

SARAH What you doing?

ADE What?

Sorry, I –

I'm... I'm sorry.

SARAH No, I'm not having a go.

You the only one left.

(PAUSE) Everyone else gone?

ADE Yes.

SARAH Ambulance gone?

ADE

Yes.

(PAUSE) They won't serve me in the Mitre!

Fifteen years I've been going in there and they won't bloody well serve me. I told them about the shock, I've had a shock. Stupid bastards. Stupid fat bastard. They've got no sense of humour. What's the point if you haven't got a sense of humour? A tiny joke. Fifteen years of my business and I'm barred. I said 'What about the shock?' Fat bastard says 'You're barred and you're staying barred.'

ADE

I should –

SARAH

Don't go.

ADE

What?

SARAH

Because I called his boy a mong? Not nasty. It was humorous, you can say things like that these days as long as you say it with humour, he doesn't understand, he never gets out from behind that bar, he should watch more telly. I don't laugh at cerebral palsy. I'm a mother. He's not up to date. I've had a shock. He should lift the bar in case of a shock.

ADE I think I've been here long –

SARAH Please don't go, fifteen years, a little joke, what
am I s'posed to now? When do I talk to people?
Where do I sit down for a laugh, for a bit of a
laugh?

ADE Really, I have to –

SARAH You watched it fall.

ADE (BEAT) What?

SARAH I shouted at you. I was shouting to you, I was
screaming to you to do something.

ADE I didn't –

SARAH You did, I shouted at you. Running but I was too
far, so I shouted at you.

ADE I didn't watch...

SARAH What did you do then?

ADE I –

SARAH I was too far. I screamed at you to do –

ADE I didn't watch, though.

SARAH What did you do then?

ADE I saw you, but I didn't think –

SARAH You saw me, you saw me screaming.

ADE Yes, I saw you screaming, but –

SARAH I was too far.

ADE I know, but –

SARAH You were a few doors down.

ADE I was –

SARAH I was screaming at you.

ADE I saw you but I didn't think –

SARAH What?

ADE I-I was.

SARAH What?

ADE In my own world, I –

SARAH In your own world?

ADE I know, but –

SARAH What did you think when you saw me screaming?

ADE I don't know, I thought –

SARAH In your own world? That baby's dead! I tried to
stop it, I wanted to stop it, I couldn't move fast
enough, I was screaming, so I was screaming at
you and I thought you'd, I thought you'd, I thought
you'd... contd over .../

SARAH

SHE NOTICES THAT HE IS CRYING. QUIETLY.

Well, don't –

Well don't cry.

Look, I'm just saying because –

You were closer.

That's all.

Don't –

We all cry. Everyone cries. Don't –

Look, don't.

Are you alright?

Hello? Look I'm sorry I just –

It's not your fault.

Hello?

In wars.

Yeah, but you're respected.

Are you not respected now?

No, no, I'm not saying –

I'm just asking.

It's a great job, Louise.

It is.

I've got letter from the BBC.

I was thinking sports commentator but to be honest they usually go for a sportsperson these days. I'm not good at sport.

What do you do now?

I work in Matalan. It's like a furniture warehouse.

I left school unexpectedly. So, you know. I was gonna stay on and do 'A' levels, but. So it's just a temporary thing. The people there are a bit –

LOUISE It's dead.

VINNIE (BEAT) Yeah.

LOUISE All that blood.

VINNIE There was a lot of blood.

LOUISE It's dead, and we're here.

VINNIE We are.

LOUISE I should've... I shouldn't've kissed you.

VINNIE Why?

LOUISE S'wrong.

VINNIE It's not, no, no, it's –

LOUISE I felt like I'd walked out of a fog. What kind of
person am I?

VINNIE You're lovely.

LOUISE Piss off, Vinnie.

VINNIE You are, you're lovely.

LOUISE You're just saying that because I kissed you.

VINNIE No I'm not, I can tell.

LOUISE She's been dying for eight years. They said she
wouldn't last three. She's a miracle. Sometimes
I think she'll last forever. Sometimes I think I'll
have to sit in that room forever. Sometimes I
wish... This part of me wishes it was over. And I
know she's thinking I'm taking advantage of her
because she can't punish me because she's ill
and I feel terrible. I feel like I'm her cancer.

VINNIE You're not.

LOUISE No.

VINNIE You're not her cancer

VINNIE Oh.

LOUISE I had to make a choice.

VINNIE I understand.

LOUISE I had to make a –

VINNIE I understand.

LOUISE I wasn't invited to the barbecue either. I'm disappearing.

VINNIE You're a beautiful woman, Louise.

FX SHE LAUGHS.

LOUISE You're a fucking idiot, Vinnie.

FX HE LAUGHS.

VINNIE Yeah. Fair enough.
(PAUSE) D'you want to see my letter?

SCENE 21 – OUTSIDE FLATS

FX **DISTANT FOOTBALL (UNDER). TOP BEING
SCREWED OFF A BOTTLE.**

SARAH D'you want some of this?

ADE No.

SARAH Go on.

ADE It's four thirty.

SARAH You've had a shock.

ADE No. No, thank you.

FX **SHE DRINKS.**

SARAH You feeling better?

(PAUSE) Quite comfortable this old couch, innit.

Smells a bit. Still. Might come down and sit here.

This could be my summer resting perch.

Cocktails. Bloody Mary's with a stick of celery.

Boys playing football. Bollocks to the Mitre.

I always used to try and get Vinnie to go out and play football, but no chance. Well, when he was younger, yeah, but. Went a bit funny in his teens.

You alright?

ADE I'm fine, thank you.

SARAH You sure?

ADE Yes. I... I might just sit here for a while. I don't feel ready to go back to the barbecue.

SARAH No.

ADE (PAUSE) Don't let me keep you.

SARAH Oh, no. I'm fine. He's in one of his moods. I'm fine here.
(PAUSE) You crying for your boy?

ADE (Beat) What?

SARAH Shouldn't be ashamed of tears.

ADE What are you talking about? Did you know my son?

SARAH No. Small estate though. Can't take a piss without splashing someone else's shoes.

ADE (BEAT) Look, I don't know you. We've never met. You seem... kind enough, but please don't start telling me how brave you think I am.

SARAH Okay.

ADE Okay?

SARAH Okay.

ADE I didn't want to go to the barbecue. I don't know why they invited me. I don't think they would've invited me before. I keep wondering what I am supposed to behave like.

SARAH Not supposed to behave like anything.

ADE I keep wondering what they expect from me.

SARAH They don't expect nothing.

ADE All I can see is people looking at me. I don't know how to be what they expect me to be.

SARAH Here y'are.

ADE No thank you.

SARAH You sure?

ADE Positive.

FX SHE DRINKS.

SARAH Always carry a little one. Handy pick-me-up. He gets annoyed. Have to bloody hide it in my own home, what's that all about? I keep saying 'I'm your mother!' Still gets annoyed. Annoyed all the time now. (BEAT) I did go through a bad patch. I'll admit that. I'll admit that, that I went through a bad patch. But it's all under control now, which is what I say to him, I say 'It's all under control.' Just social.

(PAUSE) He had to call an ambulance. Thirteen years old. Good job he did or I wouldn't be here today. Still. Not nice, is it. But I'm over that. I was out of control then, I'm in control now, that's what he doesn't understand.

You sure you don't want some?

ADE No thank you.

SARAH

Fair enough.

I do think you're a brave man.

ADE

Bloody hell.

SCENE 22 – OUTSIDE A FLAT / MOVING INSIDE

FX **FOOTSTEPS ON A WALKWAY,
APPROACHING A POLICEWOMAN RADIOING
FOR A TRANSLATOR. TRYING TO GET A
SIGNAL THE WPC MOVES FURTHER AWAY.
FOOTSTEPS STOP. KNOCKS ON ALREADY
OPEN DOOR.**

PAUL HENRY Hello?

FX **NO ANSWER. PUSHES DOOR, GOES IN. A
WOMAN SOBBING WITHIN.**

PAUL HENRY Hello?

FX **GOES IN FURTHER. OPENS DOOR, FINDS
THE SOURCE OF THE SOBBING.**

PAUL HENRY Hello.

 The... the door was open, I thought... I thought
 I'd...

 I live opposite. D'you speak English? No?

 The block opposite, I live in the block opposite.

 Sorry. I saw what happened.

 I just wanted...

 I just wanted to say sorry.

SCENE 23 – VINNIE’S BEDROOM

VINNIE This is my room. That’s where I sit there, on the,
er, bed and do my tapes. I send them tapes, the
BBC, just so they know. I send them a tape
every week. You can sit there if you want.

FX SHE SITS ON THE BED.

VINNIE I’ll get the letter.

PAUSE.

LOUISE Well?

VINNIE It’s... it’s under the... if you just move your leg.

FX MOVEMENT. HE REACHES UNDER THE BED.

VINNIE Right. Ready?

LOUISE I’m ready.

VINNIE

Okay.

'Dear Vincent,

Thank you for your enquiry regarding a position as war correspondent and for sending in the enclosed tape, which I am now returning to you.

As I'm sure you're aware this is an extremely competitive field, which can be seen to represent one of the higher rungs on a well-defined career ladder, and as such is something that can require a large degree of experience. Looking at your CV I would suggest a few more GCSE's, three or four 'A' levels, a degree, followed by a good post grad MA (preferably in journalism, though not necessarily) then maybe a year or so's internship for a quality broadsheet.

I listened to your tape with interest and noted that you had a lively - if somewhat unusual – style and had an interesting grasp of the basics. I would say, however that you occasionally veer towards —'

LOUISE

I watched it happen.

I watched all of it, not just the end, I watched it from the very beginning and I didn't do anything.

I could've done something, but I didn't want to.

My mum was, she was agitated, she saw the baby and she was, she was, and I thought 'Fuck you, caring about that baby, you didn't care about me, it's too late to come over all caring, you can watch, you can watch and I won't do a thing because you want me to.' I wanted her to learn. It's important that we learn. If there's one thing I've learned it's that, that it's important that we learn.

(PAUSE) I didn't know the baby was going to...

VINNIE

No.

LOUISE

I just thought it would –

VINNIE

Yeah.

LOUISE

You know...

VINNIE

Yeah, I do.

LOUISE (BEAT) What?

VINNIE I was, because I didn't feel, I was lying. I saw.

LOUISE You were lying?

VINNIE Yeah, I was watching, from the beginning, I was doing a tape and I was really, this is a new CD, this sound effects CD... and I'd just got it and was doing a tape –

LOUISE You lied.

VINNIE Because I felt... I was reporting. I watched the baby and I thought this is great –

LOUISE You watched?

VINNIE Yes. And reported. I reported the child crawling out on the balcony.

LOUISE And you didn't do anything?

VINNIE No. I didn't...
My mum came in and told me.

LOUISE Your mum told you what?

VINNIE That a baby –

LOUISE Your mum told you?

VINNIE Yes.

LOUIE And you did nothing?

VINNIE Yes, I –

LOUISE Your mum came in and told you and you did
nothing?

VINNIE Yes, because –

LOUISE Because you were reporting?

VINNIE Re... reporting, yes, I was reporting –

LOUISE And you did nothing?

VINNIE	No.
	No, I did...
	No.
	Like you. Louise. I did nothing.
LOUISE	(LONG PAUSE) I want to hear you.
VINNIE	What?
LOUISE	I want to watch.
VINNIE	What do you mean?
LOUISE	I want to watch you do a report.
VINNIE	(BEAT) I don't think – I'd feel –
LOUISE	I want to, Vinnie.
VINNIE	- bit silly, or –
LOUISE	Vinnie?

VINNIE (BEAT) I've never... I've never done... it's
private.

LOUISE Do you like me?

VINNIE (PAUSE) Yeah.

LOUISE Let me watch.

VINNIE What now?

LOUISE Yes.

VINNIE Just like that?

SCENE 24 - INSIDE FLAT OF BABY'S MOTHER

FX

WOMAN SOBBING, QUIETLY (UNDER)

PAUL HENRY

Can I do something? Some tea? I'm stupid, you don't speak English. Tea? Would you like some...?

I saw the door open and I thought... I just thought... I wanted to make sure...

I felt like something died. In me. When your... when it... Which was a bit of a shock to be honest, because I didn't know there was anything left. I felt like the world slowed, stopped and then pieces of it was ripped out, and then it was started again and we have to carry on without those pieces. Sorry, I'm...

I collect ants. I was... I was busy. I was doing this... Did you know that ants and humans are the only creatures that destroy their own kind... I'm sorry. I saw the door open and I thought, I thought about you.

Sorry.

SCENE 25 – OUTSIDE FLATS ON SOFA

SARAH I'm sorry.

ADE What for?

SARAH I didn't mean to have a go at you. About the
baby.
You didn't do anything.

ADE I know.

SARAH No, I mean it's not like you did something. It's not
like you did something deliberately. You were
just in your own thing. I didn't mean to... It's
made me feel a bit funny. The whole thing. And
then that fat bastard in the Mitre.

ADE They've never invite me to a barbecue before. I
didn't know what to do.

SARAH Just be yourself.

ADE I felt I was letting them down.

SARAH Don't be silly.

ADE All the time I'm thinking 'If only Michael were here, he would be laughing and joking. He was very good with people. He would be chatting and making them laugh. The life and soul. Instead they just have me. Standing there, like some kind of moron, staring at the television with a stupid fake grin on my face, wondering what these people expect from me.

SARAH Sounds like a nice fella. Michael.

ADE He was.

SARAH (PAUSE) Vinnie's shit with people. Messes up his GCSE's, left school, I said keep in contact with your friends, but he won't do it. They found out he got expelled from his last school for smashing up the bogs with an hammer. Think he's embarrassed.
One for the road.

FX CAP UNSCREWING.

ADE What do you think you are doing?

SARAH	What?
ADE	What's the matter with you?
SARAH	I'm just having a little –
ADE	You're pissed!
SARAH	I'm not, I'm –
ADE	You're drunk.
SARAH	I'm not, I'm not drunk.
ADE	For Christ's sake, you are sitting on a stinking couch with a complete stranger drinking that stuff from a bottle. Why don't you see yourself from the outside?
SARAH	You're sat here!
ADE	The sun is in the sky.
SARAH	So what?

ADE You have a son.

SARAH What about you, you at a barbecue, up there,
they're all having a drink, what about you,
standing there in a barbecue. At a bloody
barbecue! Out to parties, I love my son, I love
Vinnie. Don't you call me into question, at a party
with your son in the ground.

ADE I didn't want to go to their party!

SARAH You still went though.

ADE I went.

SARAH Don't call me into question. I love my son,
 Alright? I've had a shock, I've had a bad day,
 there's blood on the tarmac and now you're
 having a go.

ADE I'm sorry.

SARAH I'm offering you a drink, if you don't want it don't
take it, but don't start calling me a –

ADE I'm sorry.

SARAH - calling me a –

ADE I shouldn't've –

SARAH - don't start calling me a –

ADE I'm just angry.
I'm just angry.

SARAH (PAUSE) Yeah, well. I know but...
I know you are, but... You know. Fair enough,
but...
You shouldn't cast aspersions.

ADE I'm sorry.

SARAH No, it's alright, it's just it gets my blood up. Gets
me going, you know. Makes me defensive, I say
things.
I didn't mean that. About...

ADE No. I know.

SARAH

Because I think you should get out.

ADE

I know.

I just don't feel I deserve it.

SARAH

Who does?

(BEAT) Sorry, (PAUSE) I can't understand how life's going on. Football. Good luck to 'em, I say, but I mean it feels odd. All those people out here. Tragedy. Then back into life. Into what it was before. Just you and me sat on a couch.

ADE

Just you and me sat on a stinking couch.

SARAH

Just you and me sat on a stinking a couch.

SCENE 26 – INSIDE MOTHER’S FLAT

<u>FX</u>	<u>CLOSE UP WIPES TO NORMAL ACOUSTIC OF WOMAN SOBBING</u>
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PAUL HENRY	(PAUSE) It’s my daughter’s birthday. Today. She’s ten. Ten years old today. Be a party, should imagine. Balloons and kids, and ice- cream in wafer sandwiches. Probably don’t do that now. Dunno. Better sweets these days. Toys. Presents. Games, music, jelly, probably have new clothes, watch a video, maybe a clown, maybe a magician. And her mother. And her... father. Whoever she thinks is her father. I was thinking of sending her a present, but I don’t know what they like. Britney Spears or something, but then you never know because maybe that’s exactly what they don’t like. I didn’t think I’d make it through the day. I didn’t plan to. I’ve got some pills. I thought... you know. Be fitting. With my ants. I collect ants. You shouldn’t be alone. Not now.
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SCENE 27 – VINNIE’S BEDROOM

FX **GUNFIRE, EXPLOSIONS (UNDER).**

VINNIE ... and, and more gunfire behind us that sounds like AK 47s, the ten 58th marines, perhaps, but it's, it's difficult to tell because all around, it's coming from all around on this ruined, wrecked, tortured –

LOUISE That's good.

VINNIE ... tortured, yes, tortured housing estate, this
tortured, twisted –

FX **SERIES OF SMALL EXPLOSIONS NEARBY.**

and I think, yes, mortars, what seems to be, be
mortars coming in now, I think from our left which
would indicate, perhaps enemy, no friendly, no it
would indicate a new twist, houses, mortars
coming in from the houses, yes houses,
children's houses, a, a ,a children's home,
mortars coming in from a children's home in a
new and horrible twist to this chaotic –

LOUISE What about the baby?

VINNIE - a war so perverse now –

LOUISE What about the baby?

VINNIE – so twisted, so dark –

LOUISE The baby?

VINNIE - that children have taken to –

LOUISE The Baby, Vinnie!

VINNIE - a baby, a baby, I can see a baby –

LOUISE Where?

VINNIE To the left, in the children's –

LOUISE No.

VINNIE - opposite –

LOUISE Yes.

LOUISE Vinnie?

VINNIE ... and I, I, I'm watching the baby...

LOUISE Why?

VINNIE ... reporting on the baby, I'm here reporting on
the baby, I'm here reporting on this baby because
this story must be told –

FX **HUGE EXPLOSION.**

- a huge explosion there –

LOUISE Talk about the baby.

VINNIE - a huge explosion frightening the baby, yes
frightening –

LOUISE What are you doing?

VINNIE I'm, I'm reporting on this baby –

LOUISE Why?

VINNIE - the baby a, a, a metaphor, yes the baby is a metaphor, society groping towards the precipice –

LOUISE No.

VINNIE No, that's not, perhaps, perhaps the innocence of an age –

LOUISE No.

VINNIE - freedom and democracy –

LOUISE No.

VINNIE - this child, this small infant perhaps what happens when a nation –

LOUISE No.

VINNIE - sacrifices, yes that's it, the child is what we've lost by launching a pre-emptive, yes, yes, our innocence, our right is the, our sense of –

LOUISE No!

FX **CD TURNED OFF, WAR SOUNDS STOP.**

LOUISE

(BEAT) It's just a baby.

(PAUSE) Vinnie? It was a baby.

You're never going to be a war reporter. Okay?

It's never going to happen in your life. Ever.

You work in Matalan.

You make tapes.

SLIGHT NERVOUS LAUGH FROM VINNIE.

What's funny?

VINNIE

Are you –

LOUISE

What?

VINNIE

Louise?

Is this –

LOUISE

No. I'm just telling you because it's true. Lively
and unusual style means shit.

VINNIE

Louise?

LOUISE Yes. Yes it does. It means shit. But they can't put shit in the letters, Vinnie. Do you understand?

VINNIE I don't think that's –

LOUISE But you didn't get that. Did you. You thought it was a positive thing. You didn't get it because you're too thick.

VINNIE I'm not.

LOUISE You are Vinnie. I'm sorry. You are. And you will never, ever be a war reporter. You're too thick and you're too lonely.

VINNIE I...

LOUISE Alright?

VINNIE Why –

LOUISE

And the baby? The baby wasn't a metaphor for freedom. Or innocence. Or our loss of pride. Or the indefinable something that we lost by whatever it is you're on about. It was a baby. Vinnie? It was a baby. It was a little eighteen month old baby, it was someone's child and now it's dead because of you. Because of your stupid, lonely little game. That's what this is.

VINNIE

Louise –

LOUISE

That's all this will ever be.

VINNIE

(BEAT. TRYING NOT TO CRY.) Wh... what are you saying that for?

LOUISE

Because... because this is a lesson.

VINNIE

And what about you?

LOUISE

Did you like me, Vinnie?

VINNIE

What?

LOUISE

Did you find me attractive?

VINNIE (CRYING NOW) You said, you said you felt different.

LOUISE I did.

VINNIE You said about the fog.

LOUISE The fog, yes.

VINNIE You said you felt different.

LOUISE I did. I did feel different, Vinnie.

VINNIE What about all that?

LOUISE There's only one way to learn. We have to learn the hard way.

SCENE 28 – INTERCUTTING SCENES

SARAH Well, I'd better be going.

PAUL HENRY I should go.

LOUISE I'm going to go.

SARAH Everyone gone as if it never happened.
Still. We've met now. I'll say hello to you now.

ADE No. We'll just go back to our lives.

SARAH No we won't. We won't. I'll say hello.

PAUL HENRY I'd better get back. I'm sorry about....

VINNIE (THROUGH TEARS) Back into the fog.

PAUL HENRY I'm sorry about...

LOUISE Bye, Vinnie.

SARAH Bye.

PAUL HENRY

I'm sorry.

LOUISE

Goodbye.

ADE

Bye, then.

PAUL HENRY

Sorry.

SCENE 29 (a)– OUTSIDE PAUL’S FLAT – CORRIDOR**FX** **PARTY STARTS UP AGAIN (UNDER TO END).**

PAUL HENRY

Cause and effect, cause and effect. All

individuals are linked. All individuals are linked by a chain of events to their past, one action leading to another, one reaction to a new reaction. Ants don't know what they're doing. An individual performs an action as a response to some form of stimuli and a collection of these actions – when looked at from above – become a tunnel, a nest, the tending of grubs, the destruction of a colony. Cause and effect.

I'm lifting my key to the lock of my front door and suddenly I'm struck with the overwhelming impression that I've stepped out of my life. That inside my life is carrying on without me. I begin to think that if I turn that key I will walk in on myself standing over the battleground tank, barking out orders, festering away, alone, unnoticed. And then another image; me slumped into that tank, eyes open, an empty bottle of pills on the floor, ants swarming all over my face. So strong is this impression that I begin to shake, can't turn the lock. I think back: no-one has spoken to me, no-one has seen me. Maybe it's, maybe I'm in there, maybe - Then I calm.

Contd over .../

PAUL HENRY

That's no different to any other day. I turn the key and open the door. And I am surprised by what I see.

LOUISE'S FLAT – 29 (b)

FX

DOOR OPENING.

LOUISE

Mum, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I was so late it's just...

SILENCE.

Mum?

SILENCE.

M... Mum?

PAUL'S FLAT – 29 (c)

PAUL HENRY

Ants are incredible. The leaf cutter ant slices off little pieces of foliage, brings it back to the nest and uses it to fertilise tiny farms of fungus within it's home, feeding the colony. The common black ant rears aphids, minute insects, milking their sweet liquid for the young. If the nest is threatened they'll carry their herd away to safety. In the Amazon where flooding is common the fire ant has learnt to link it's legs with other members of the nest when the waters come, forming a dense raft of ants over a foot in diameter, the grubs and young up on top placed carefully in the middle while the whole colony floats away to safety. And in my flat ...

SCENE 30 – OUTSIDE FLATS

FX

ADE WALKING TO THE BARBECUE.

ADE (V/O)

... and I turn back time further, I pull my son towards me and suddenly it is the weekend before he leaves and he has taken me to the pub, he has taken me to the pub and he is meeting his friends later on, but right now he is with me in the pub and we are having a couple of pints, I don't drink pints, but we are having a couple of pints, and it is sunny and the smoke in the pub drifts around in the sunlight as if it is in no hurry whatsoever and it's a nice pub, he has chosen a nice pub and he is laughing and smiling and slightly worried because he has started smoking and he wants to tell me but doesn't know how, but I already know and I want to laugh because I am annoyed that he is smoking but it is funny that he can't tell me, this soldier, this big soldier, and I stop time there, that is where, that is where, that is where time stops. Exactly there. And I hold it there. I hold it right there.

SCENE 31 (a) – PAUL’S FLAT

FX

INSECTS CLOSE-UP WIPE OF SOUND

PAUL HENRY

A huge battle rages in all of the tanks.

Thousands of workers have been killed on both sides. They fight in the sand, up the sides of the tanks, inside the connecting tubes, tiny bodies being dragged everywhere. But both nests are dead. The first queen I see is that of the *Mymica ruginodis*, caught while trying to escape. There are still ants killing her even though it is obvious that she's dead. Then I see the *Lasius niger*'s queen, her own workers now dragging a corpse to safety. And they fight. Unaware that they are already destroyed.

VINNIE'S BEDROOM – 31 (b)

FX

DOOR OPENING.

SARAH

Hey there.

You alright?

VINNIE

Yeah.

SARAH

(PAUSE) Not doing your thing?

VINNIE No.

SARAH No. (BEAT) S'pose it doesn't seem right after
that.
S'terrible.

VINNIE Yeah. S'terrible.

SARAH (PAUSE) Do you want to be left alone?

VINNIE (BEAT) No.

SARAH No? Maybe you want something to eat? Drink?

VINNIE No.

SARAH (PAUSE) Tea? Want a cuppa tea with your
mum?

VINNIE Yeah. Yeah I'll have a cuppa tea, mum.

PAUL'S FLAT – 31 (c)

PAUL HENRY

I'm standing surveying the scene. I'm looking at
the ants. I'm looking at the queens. I'm looking
at the linked aquariums sprawling across my
living room like some insane glass insect. I'm
looking at the bottle of pills.

And I'm wondering if it's too late.

I wondering if chains can be broken.

I'm wondering.

I'm wondering.

END