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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 *Ecton 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 confidant. '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...

SCENE 4 – LOUISE'S FLAT

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.

LOUISE There we go.
 Just...
 There. This'll be fun. Eh? Dye our hair together.
 Eh? Like in a salon.
 D'you want to go by the window? Mum? I'm
 gonna put you by the window.

FX WHEELING OVER BED.

You can watch the party while I do your hair.
Alright? Still got lovely hair. Not like mine.

COLLECTING BOWL & TOWEL FROM BATHROOM

(SLIGHT LAUGH) Mine's shit. Sorry. But it is.
Let's get this around your neck.

FX WASHING SOUNDS (UNDER)

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.

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.

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.

EX **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

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

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

FX

BREATHING INCREASINGLY AGITATED
SOUND OF HAIR WASHING CLOSE UP,
PULLS BACK.

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...

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...

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.

SCENE 17 - OUTSIDE PARTY – INTERCUTTING SCENES –

MUSIC & SPORADIC WAR UNDER

ADE (ALLOUD) ...my mind is a pulse of electricity now, as now I am screaming across the surface of the earth, a photon crackling though 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.**

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,

OPENING THE WINDOW

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

3

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'?

‘Nice’?

FX HANNS HER THE TEA. SITS DOWN.

VINNIE In your own world.

LOUISE How old are you?

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.

LOUISE I suppose so.

VINNIE D'you wanna see me again?

LOUISE (SLIGHT LAUGH) What?

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

LOUISE Yes.

LOUISE You didn't help?

LOUISE What?

VINNIE I thought she was...

LOUISE What?

VINNIE I thought she was just pissed.

LOUISE You watched it?

VINNIE Yeah, but no, I couldn't've –

LOUISE I'm just asking.

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

LOUISE I'm just asking.

VINNIE (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.

LOUISE Bit too sweet.

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

LOUISE 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 –

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?

SCENE 20 – VINNIE’S KITCHEN

VINNIE I’m going to be a war reporter.

LOUISE (BEAT) Right.

VINNIE Yeah.

LOUISE That’s...

VINNIE Yeah. I practice. I practice in my room. I’ve got
a lively and unusual style.

LOUISE Why?

VINNIE Why what?

LOUISE Why d’you wanna be a war reporter?

VINNIE (BEAT) Why?

LOUISE Yeah.

VINNIE Why? (BEAT) It’s great job. You’re on the telly.

LOUISE In wars.

In wars.

LOUISE Are you not respected now?

VINNIE No, no, I'm not saying –

LOUISE I'm just asking.

VINNIE It's a great job, Louise.

LOUISE It is.

VINNIE 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.

LOUISE What do you do now?

VINNIE 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.

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

LOUISE I nearly had a baby once. Then mum got ill.
Couldn't look after both. I had to make a
decision.

VINNIE (PAUSE) And... what about the father?

LOUISE Dead.

VINNIE (BEAT) Really?

LOUISE No.
He is to me though.

VINNIE (PAUSE) There was a lot of blood wasn't there.

LOUISE Yes. Sorry. I shouldn't've said that.

VINNIE What?

LOUISE He's not dead.

VINNIE No?

LOUISE He's alive.

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.

(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.

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.**

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

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

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 I just thought it would... Or someone else, I thought someone else would come. And I would just be looking her in the eye and she would be scared and think 'I taught her well'.

VINNIE I understand.

LOUISE Do you?

VINNIE Yes.

LOUISE I thought someone else would –

VINNIE I know.

LOUISE She's a wonderful woman. When she goes my life will be sludge.

VINNIE It won't. We feel different.

Now. Don't we.

Louise?

I was watching as well.

Like you.

I was, when I said I just saw at the end I was lying.

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.

LOUISE I want to watch.

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?

What?

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

FX

**CLOSE UP WIPES TO NORMAL ACOUSTIC
OF WOMAN SOBBING**

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.

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.

VINNIE ... a baby, opposite, crawling along a balcony, unnoticed by the world. The baby perhaps eighteen months old, crawling through the horror of war –

LOUISE And what about you?

VINNIE (BEAT) What?

LOUISE (AGGRESSIVE) Carry on!

VINNIE The... the baby, the baby —

LOUISE And what about you?

VINNIE ... and...

VINNIE ... and...

VINNIE ... and...

LOUISE Vinnie?

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

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 -

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

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

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

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 .../

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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?

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