

CRACKED

by

Nicola Baldwin

Cracked

Characters:

Toni or TJ or Antonia Caister	age 17
Joe, Toni's closest friend	age 17
Mary Douglas, a doctor	age 32
Mickey Mitch, lead singer of the Bedlam Runners	age 22
Sarah Evans (formerly Caister), Toni's mum	age 36
Tony Caister, Toni's dad	age 38
Tom, a young man who Toni meets	age 20
Jamie Radcliffe, lead guitarist of the Bedlam Runners	age 25
Ross Mac Manus, a rock journalist and talkshow radio DJ	age 34
Rod Harrington, a family therapist	age 35
Various phone-in callers	

The story takes place somewhere in the UK. The present day.

Scene 1

(JOE AND TONI stand side by side - as if at Joe's presentation at the end of the play.)

(In the course of the following scene they run from this position 'at the end', right to the beginning of their journey, as they run up the HILL BEHIND THEIR SCHOOL. Toni speaks directly to the audience. This scene loops the end back to the beginning)

TONI: There wasn't any one thing that happened - no trip wire that brought everything crashing down. But I remember...the day we broke up at the end of the summer term last year. Still knackered from the Runners gig at the weekend...the best time...finished at lunchtime, brilliant sunny day - everyone off to the pub. Joe said something like:

JOE: Six down, only one more year to go!

TONI: Everyone cracked up laughing. But suddenly I was like - outside of me, hearing myself laugh. There's this hill behind our school. Me and Joe'd go and sit there sometimes, slag everyone off, discuss the state of the universe...I set off running (RUNS UP HILL)

JOE: Toni you daft! (SETS OFF after her)

TONI (BREATHLESS): - like I was running for my life.

(TONI reaches the top and flings herself down. JOE arrives behind her and throws out his arms in exhilaration.)

JOE: (arms out against the wind) On top of the world! Hey (MIMES MICKEY ON STAGE) Who's this?

TONI: Nah (GETS UP TOO) - he's more - (MIMES HIM)

JOE: That it! (LAUGHS) Doesn't enjoy life much does he, Mickey Mitch?

TONI (DANCING NOT LISTENING): - he has his moments.

JOE: A little giggle if he stubs his toe or something?

(Toni laughs. Stops laughing.)

TONI: I feel like my laugh is loose. Feels like just...this noise coming out of my mouth.

JOE: You're mad Toni -

(TONI shrugs and speaks to the audience, leaving Joe on the hill.)

TONI: I can still see the flattened grass. It seemed...horribly green. The sound of the others going off to the pub came up on the wind. I remember thinking - "it's all downhill from here". Six months later - I was a different person.

Scene 2

(A HOTEL BAR. ROSS MACMANUS, Mancunian rock journalist is here to interview MICKEY MITCH of the Bedlam Runners. He sits down and rewinds the cassette player on the table, sets it to record. Mickey says nothing for a moment, but when he starts to speak his manner is surprisingly sad and gentle.)

ROSS: Oh, hang on (GETS UP) off for a slash -

(He goes out. The tape is still running. MICKEY talks.)

MICKEY: My mother died when I was three... I grew up on an estate where everyone knew my secrets except me. The other kids bullied me. Lots of them had no dads around but I suppose I was a novelty having no mother... (ANGUISHED) If I could talk about these things... I wouldn't have to sing - to send my words out into the wide blue yonder for strangers to find. So as not to have to see your face. Not your pity. Or worse - no pity at all...

SCENE 3

SIX MONTHS LATER - TONI SITS IN HER BEDROOM cutting a Mickey Mitch interview out of the NME slowly and carefully with a small pair of scissors, before pasting it into her scrapbook. THE BEDROOM MIRROR IS COVERED UP WITH A BLACK BEDLAM RUNNERS T SHIRT. BEDLAM RUNNERS MUSIC BLARES. Her mother, SARAH comes in and turns off the music.)

TONI: Hey - I'm listening to that!

SARAH: Why aren't you at school?

(Toni puts her arms protectively over all her cuttings and notebooks)

TONI: Boiler's broken. Why aren't you at work?

SARAH: Oh I'm supposed to slog my guts out so you can do exams and go to college?

TONI: I don't know if I am going to college -

SARAH: Well, college or not. YOU'LL have to get a job one day - in the real world...And right now, with your attitude, the way you look -

TONI: What's wrong with the way I look?

(SARAH pulls the black t shirt from the mirror and forces Toni to look at herself)

TONI: Don't mum!

SARAH: You've got so pale, you lie in bed half the day - but look at the bags under your eyes!...

(Toni covers the mirror again. Sarah adopts another tack)

SARAH: We used to be such mates, you and me...

(Toni is about to speak, but her mother continues)

SARAH (gently): Is it the January blues or what? Antonia?

(TONI bristles at the mention of her name and the moment between them is gone)

TONI: How can I be sweet with a name that rhymes with ammonia?

SARAH: (hurt) You act like I don't understand! when I was your age - I was a punk! But the world's different now. These record companies are run by people with degrees in marketing and they tell people like (SNEERS) Mickey Mitch exactly what to do -

TONI: No one tells Mickey anything!

SARAH: (exasperated) Junkie chic shifts units! Can't you see that? Nike, Reebok (MIMICS MICKEY) Nervous breakdown - they're brand identities. Your generation doesn't want understanding - it wants consumer durables! You're not a rebel - you're part of a...marketing strategy!..

(Pause. Awkwardly, SARAH comes and tries to stroke her daughter's hair.)

SARAH: Oh why do we argue? It seems like only yesterday you were a little girl. Now you slip in and out of this house like the grim reaper. I never know where you are half the time... (pause) And it's not just me, your dad has had it up to here with you.

TONI: Dad! I thought -

SARAH: He fixed up that interview and you weren't in there five minutes.

TONI: Don't call him my dad! He's your husband. He's nothing to do with me...

SARAH: Mark's a better father to you than your own dad ever was!

TONI: For a minute you had me going there, mum - (mimics) "Oh Antonia what's the matter?" Now I get it - this is another Be Nicer to your Step Father talks. Well I'm not going to be nicer to Mark until he's nicer to me!

SARAH: He couldn't do better by you if he tried!

TONI: How about I buy him a gun and he... (mimes shooting herself right between her eyes)..?

SARAH (furious): When your dad left, I was a wreck -

(TONI puts her hands over her ears.)

SARAH: Mark gave me back my confidence. And he's stuck by us, despite your efforts to drive him away. But these last few months - the way you're carrying on - looks like you might finally be getting the better of him. You'd like that wouldn't you? Now you're off to college, starting your own life - you'd like Mark to sling his hook and

leave me on my own? BECAUSE YOU BLAME ME, DEEP DOWN, FOR NOT STAYING WITH YOUR DAD!

TONI (distressed): No!

SARAH: YOU'RE LIKE HIM, TONI. That's your problem. Totally self-obsessed! Just like your dad!

(TONI bundles all her cuttings, scissors and books into a bag and runs out.)

Scene 2 cont....

(ROSS comes back, zipping up his fly. Picks up the cassette, realises it is running. Stops it, rewinds it, starts at the beginning. MICKEY watches sadly.)

ROSS: Okay Mickey - start at any beginning you like.

MICKEY: In the dawn of time this world was full of small tribes - each with their own language and stories. After the flood these tribes got scattered all over the world. But every so often you meet someone and you know you're speaking the same language. Growing up, I had more in common with Iggy and Kurt than (affects voice) the kids down the road...

ROSS: So you always wanted to be a singer?

MICKEY: No I was - am - too shy and battered actually, to be a front-man.

(ROSS looks at him cynically. MICKEY returns his gaze)

ROSS: Your third album "Cracked" is rocketing up the charts, single straight in at number 7, you're playing stadium gigs and you're set to break in the States. But I want to know - how come when you've cracked it - you still bang on with such a miserable view of life?

MICKEY: All that's cracked is my protective shell. And the thousands of letters I get make me aware that the tribe of the lonely and forgotten is the biggest tribe on earth.

ROSS: You're "lonely and forgotten"? (LAUGHS) God help the rest of us!

MICKEY: Loneliness is the one thing you can't share. It is only added to, and deepened, by repetition. My songs and my fans only echo what I feel - they can't change it...

ROSS: So all these love songs off the new LP? There's no Mrs Mitch keeping the home fires burning in some Scottish croft somewhere?

(MICKEY shakes his head.)

ROSS: So who are you writing love songs to? Yourself? (PAUSE, challenging) Oh come on! Loneliness? Despair? Madness? Suicide? Surely it's more about the Bedlam Runners not wanting to change a winning formula?

MICKEY: The treatment of the mentally ill is the measure of a civilised society.

ROSS: Oh really -

MICKEY: Did you know the mental hospital at Friern Barnet had the longest corridor in the world? IN THE WORLD? And these were people who were already scared and ill and vulnerable. Don't you think that corridor is going to become some hideous metaphor for your entire life - a long pointless walk from hospital ward to hospital ward...?

ROSS: Oh yeah...metaphor, right.

MICKEY: (continuing) it's demolished now. (Affects voice) Care in the Community. Rehabilitate the walking wounded into born-again consumers - no more basket making - turf them out into the crazy world that drove them mad in the first place with six month's supply of Prozac and a Lonely Planet guide to the major cities of Great Britain. Come to London, young man, where the streets are paved with the mentally ill! You too can join in the great debate: To give or not to give to beggars.

ROSS: And you've just come out of a funny farm again yourself?

(Hostile pause)

MICKEY (quiet anger): Yes.

ROSS: Did you pay or was it the record company's treat? Must be your dream holiday location eh? Other bands shoot off to Jamaica to write their LP - not the Bedlam Runners.

MICKEY: I was in re-hab for six weeks

ROSS: Oh how tragic

MICKEY: If you say so. (Beat) Look - I never asked for all of this.

ROSS: All what? Adoration? Success? What exactly is it about living on cloud nine you don't like? Noel, Liam, and the Spice Girls popping round to borrow a cup of sugar?

MICKEY: Why are you so hostile to me?

(ROSS turns off the tape.)

ROSS: I'm sorry, mate. I just don't buy this doom and gloom you put out. I think it's a pose.

MICKEY (smiles): It's a survival strategy.

ROSS: What's wrong with you then? What is it about YOU that you need all this help?

(MICKEY says nothing.)

ROSS: Oh - you're a tortured genius, right - like Beethoven - crazy is just the price to pay for all your talent? Or is it something you put on to SHOW how truly tortured and talented you are?

MICKEY: (sad) The world is crazy. This is crazy. You, my friend, sitting here - seething with ambition, envy, destructiveness - why? For your career in broadcasting - your penthouse flat, 4 x 4. Paid to sit there with that thing (NODS AT TAPE RECORDER).. conducting this miserable charade one more time. That's sad, isn't it? Crazy.

(PAUSE. ROSS switches the tape on again.)

ROSS: Okay Mickey, last question. I'm sure all your fans are dying to know - you're off the drink, you don't do drugs, touring exhausts you and being a rock star is hell. You write love songs but you say you're sad and lonely. How on earth do you unwind?

MICKEY: I'm unwinding as we speak.

ROSS: Oh really? How's that then?

(MICKEY smiles sardonically and takes hold of his T Shirt.)

MICKEY: I'm cutting you a break here (LAUGHS and lifts up T shirt.)

ROSS: Oh my god!

(MICKEY'S chest is criss-crossed with fresh slashes and cuts and smeared with blood.)

ROSS: (running out): Get a doctor! Get a photographer! Help!

(MICKEY is left alone, hunched on the floor. MUSIC RISES UP.).

Scene 4

AT SCHOOL. TONI sits in the school library. JOE sees her from outside, hunched over a book, scrawling words on a page. He pulls a face and signs that he is coming in. Moments later he is in - his energy disrupting the quiet of the library.)

JOE: TJ!

(Someone from the other side of the room hisses)

LIBRARIAN: Ssssh!

(Joe laughs sits on the table, looks around, like he can't believe it.)

JOE: Library? Where's the bar? The Dancefloor? This isn't a TJ Caister kind of place?

TONI: I know I'm hiding from TJ Caister here.

(Confused JOE sits down, flips back the book.)

JOE: What's in the bag?

TONI: My mother's head.

(PAUSE)

JOE: Called at your house a couple of times...

TONI: Oh.

(PAUSE)

JOE: Did you go to English today?

(TONI shakes her head, JOE groans in exasperation.)

TONI (shrugs): It's all pointless anyway

JOE: "Beneath the pavement lies the beach!" "Rip it up and start again!". "Life is not a rehearsal". These things you told me, Toni. And God help me - I believed you. (PAUSE) something else you said at the start of the year - "All I have to do for an 'A' in English is turn up".

TONI: What a pain in the bum I was in those days...

JOE: No...in those days, you weren't..

TONI: And I am now, right? So why hang round me if I'm so horrible?

JOE: (LOUD) Look, you're not the only person who's parents've split up, you know. I never see my dad. Do I let it get to me?

LIBRARIAN: Ssssh!

JOE: Lets get out of here-

(THEY COME OUT OF THE LIBRARY INTO THE HALL.)

JOE: I'm not as clever as you, Toni! I have to work. And every time I have to lie for you to Mrs Annis or whoever I look into her face - and I see my grades going down...

TONI: You don't have to lie for me -

JOE: She asked me where you were with your English assignment - what do you expect me to do?

TONI: Tell her I died.

JOE: Look fuck this! What's with you lately? If you can't stand me just say it - get some other idiot to watch your back.

(They stare at each other for several moments. JOE struggling to suppress his anger.)

JOE: Mrs Annis really rates you, you know. (BEAT) Asked me why you'd stopped showing up to her lessons. I told her you'd been working really hard on your assignment.

(TONI says nothing.)

JOE (awkward): She says if you want to talk to her about anything...

TONI: It's just more pressure. The way she smiles at me all the time - (SMILES) "I'm on your side and I'm here to help" - and I have to smile (SMILES) "Thanks" until my face aches. The way she went on about those stupid poems I wrote like they were some deep thing.

JOE: They were pretty morbid...(BEAT) Hey - what about Mickey Mitch? Did you see the state of his lovely chest in the NME?

TONI: At least he was honest

JOE: Toni listen to yourself will you? If he thinks - with all these fans and journalists and the whole world gawping at him - that the only way he can make an honest statement is to hurt himself then the dickhead is truly, sadly, off his trolley...(HE LAUGHS) Come on - this coursework better be good. I told Mrs Annis you'd been working on it three weeks... (HE WALKS OFF)

TONI: Give me a break.

Scene 5

(IN CLASS. Toni is standing reading her 'coursework assignment' to the class. Joe sits in the front row. It is through his reactions that we gauge the general reactions of everyone else.

TONI: This is my um...(LONG PAUSE) "The Environment". I couldn't ah (LOOKS AT TEACHER) you know - the ozone layer, ice age, but God -to be honest - I couldn't. Okay right. Focus...the Environment -

(JOE shifts nervously in his seat and looks around to check other's reactions)

(TONI):"Environment". Dictionary - (READS) "surrounding; objects, region or conditions, especially circumstances of life of persons or society". My environment is I live in the house, which was ours - with my mum and my step-father, Mark. Mark's got a really bad DIY habit, so the house that started off crappy but fairly ordinary is now crappy and truly horrible.

JOE (under his breath): come on TJ, get a grip girl.

TONI: I can cope with shelves in the ah kitchen and um maybe living room...but my bedroom has got - if I lie on the bed and half close my eyes - like...blades...shelves bearing down from all angles to cut me to bits. My mum's buying knickknacks, trolls, baskets of cotton wool balls to try and make sense of shelves...creeping like a dreadful virus through her home. But the more she lends them the illusion of utility the more they keep on coming. In the toilet - three each side, low. Sinister really because what kind of small secret objects might you conceivably take into a toilet and put down...

(She looks at JOE. Desperate. She is not in control. JOE begins tapping his foot, angrily)

TONI (emotion threatening to break through): You know - he never actually mends any of the broken things in our home like the roof, the door my real dad kicked in, or anything. Anyway (READS) ENVIRONMENTALIST, is "one who...um...considers that environment has primary influence on a person's or group's development". Yeah. ENVELOP, ENVENOM, ENVISAGE. "Look in the face of danger or facts. Contemplate especially under a particular aspect, imagine a thing or conditions not yet existing"...ENVOI whose original meaning is "an author's concluding words". My swan song, if you wish. Or some might say a suicide note.

(THE SCHOOL BELL RINGS, SOUND OF CHAIRS SCRAPING AND PEOPLE MOVING. TONI panics and runs out.)

JOE: WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE PLAYING AT!

TONI: SINCE WHEN DID YOU JOIN THE THOUGHT POLICE?

JOE: I TOLD HER YOU'D BEEN WORKING ON IT FOR THREE WEEKS!!

TONI: I HAVE! Joe - I swear - I did look all that up. I don't know what anything means anymore...

JOE: Look - why don't you leave school and go and become a groupie for Mickey Mitch? You'd much rather grovel at his bloodstained feet, wouldn't you? Then you wouldn't have to deal with us mere mortals.

(He goes out.)

TONI: Joe - I'm scared. I don't know what's happening to me!

(TONI is left alone. She hugs herself and crumples into a corner on the floor.)

Scene 6

THE BEDLAM RUNNERS ABOUT TO GO ON STAGE

(JAMIE holding his guitar by the neck, and Mickey are waiting to go on. SOUND OF A RESTLESS, ANTICIPATORY CROWD GROWS THROUGHOUT THE SCENE. Mickey stares out at the crowd transfixed, half terrified, half defiant.)

JAMIE: I love this the best you know. Some people say the best buzz is after. But not for me - you're hyped up, ready - (BEAT) Give us the playlist, Mick ?

MICKEY: I tore it up.

JAMIE: Oh Jesus!

MICKEY: I'm bored of all the old songs.

JAMIE: You mean all those boring old songs off that new album we just did? They might be boring to you - but all those people out there have paid good money to come and listen

MICKEY: Nobody listens. That's just it. Bread and circuses.

JAMIE: Look at me! (GRABS MICKEY'S FACE SCRUTINISES HIS EYES.) I've had about as much of this as I can take.

(AN ANNOUNCER STARTS TO INTRODUCE THE BAND)

ANNOUNCER (ON TANNON): An now, live for the last time in this country before they conquer America (CROWD CHEERS)...

(JAMIE RUMMAGES OUT A PENCIL AND SCRAP OF PAPER, starts his list, MICKEY wanders around like a child hiding his face with his hands)

JAMIE: Okay, okay - same order as G-mex - "Sweetest Song", Mick - you hear - do the three off CRACKED straight into "Hell on Earth"...

MICKEY (mumbles): This is hell on earth.

ANNOUNCER: .. The Bedlam Runners! (WILD CHEERS FROM THE CROWD)

MICKEY: I can't go on, Jamie - I can't do this anymore, man

JAMIE: Shut up! SHUT UP will you! You can't back out now. It isn't about YOU anymore. It's about us - it's about them (WAVES A HAND AT THE CROWD) Get on that stage and sing.

(MICKEY waves him away and walks off. A DRUM ROLL BEGINS)

ANNOUNCER: THE BEDLAM RUNNERS!

(CROWD ROARS)

JAMIE: Oh sweet lord -

(JAMIE hesitates whether to follow MICKEY or go on - he pulls on his guitar and walks on stage, raising his hands to quiet the crowd.)

Scene 7

(IN HER BEDROOM AT HOME. TONI lies on her bed staring at the ceiling, listening to BEDLAM RUNNERS)

MICKEY'S SONG *You Only Love Me When I Cry*

(SARAH comes and stands at the door.)

SARAH: That was the school on the phone. Apparently you've missed the last two weeks. (BEAT) Want us to come in "for a talk". (PAUSE) Well...?

(TONI rolls over to face the wall.)

SARAH: I thought you were going to your dad's tonight? You'd better tell him - the school want to see him too. He's got to ring and arrange a time. Do you hear?

(TONI curls up even more.)

SARAH (anger rising): Alright! You want silence?

(SARAH marches over to the CD Player and turns it off. Pulls out the CD.)

SARAH: Mickey bloody Mitch morning noon and night. He's sent you soft in the head...

TONI: That music is the sound track of my life

SARAH: Oh so you haven't heard the news then? Your precious Mickey Mitch has gone and run off -

TONI: You're lying!

SARAH: Walked out of a concert last night - fans and everyone waiting - all had to be cancelled - vanished. Nice guy eh? They'd been queuing five hours in the rain...

(SARAH chucks the tape down on the floor and goes out.)

TONI: How could you do this to me?

Scene 8

(In her dad's sitting room. TONI sits at her father's feet. He's reading about Mickey in the paper)

DAD: Stars are just like you or me, except... from the moment they wake up in the morning to the moment they go to sleep at night, they are surrounded by people who tell them the sun shines out of their arses and everything they say is right...

TONI: I don't think Mickey could sleep last night, Dad. I think that was part of the problem...

DAD: Too busy partying with sixteen-year-old girls. My heart bleeds.

TONI: Spooktime at 4am - the rest of the planet sleeps, the fat of the just and here am I again alone in my waking nightmare..."

DAD: What does he know about it?

TONI: Dad, something weird is happening to me and I don't know why...

DAD: Is this the trouble at school?

TONI (running on): I've been trying to look it up in the library - but it's like I can't read anymore..

DAD: Can't keep up with the lessons then? I thought you were supposed to be clever?

TONI: It's not that -

DAD: Ah well - you know my views on school -

TONI: (shakes head) I had to do this essay on the environment, but that's not the point - everything that's living is dying all the time -the grass is too green. That's not natural. Look at that green and you can see the putrefaction eating everything away. Dad - remember before you left - when you were on those pills and you couldn't sleep and we never opened the curtains?

DAD: Toni!

TONI: Did you feel like that?

DAD: What's brought this on?

TONI: Was it? I need to know?

DAD: DROP IT WILL YOU? Do you think I'm so proud of what I went through that I want to talk about it all the time?

TONI: But could I have got it too? Because the thing is -

DAD: What's your mother been saying?

TONI: Nothing!

DAD: Oh I know what she's up to. Meeting with the teachers. Oh yes. Drag me in. You get in trouble at that poncey school - gives her an excuse to dredge all that up again.

TONI: She hasn't said a word!

DAD: You wait - she'll have a field day! Well I can tell them a few things she won't like, believe me - how she changed after I lost my job... I haven't forgotten. Hey!

TONI (crying): I wish I could walk off the end of the planet...

DAD (lets go of her face): Rubbish! You've got opportunities I never dreamed of. (Hands her a hankie) Dry your eyes. Let's forget all this... (picks up the paper)

(TONI blows her nose)

TONI: See I was thinking maybe if I went to the doctor for some of those pills you had - if I knew what they were -

DAD: Don't you know anything? If you see the doctor, it'll go on your notes. He'll put that you wanted treatment for something mental. Mental? Do you want that label following you around forever? Applying for jobs? Insurance? Might as well right your future off now...

TONI: I suppose so.

DAD: Believe me, TJ I know. (BEAT) Anyway - you're too old to be crying over schoolwork. You're moving out soon. That'll be better, eh?

(TONI shrugs and nods)

DAD: I hate to say so - but you're mother's turned into a right proper snob since she took up with the Shelf King.

TONI (smiles weakly): Yeah, I s'pose

DAD: Smiling! That's more like it! (BEAT) Oh and... Don't talk about... all this when Moira gets back. Okay?

Scene 9

(On the couch at Dad's. Now made up to a makeshift bed. TONI sits hunched up - scrapbook, cuttings and scissors in front of her.)

TONI: I can see them... Mrs Annis smiling. Moira and my mum. Moira in tears because this is (MIMICS) "the last thing, the last thing we need right now" - like it's some plot cooked up in spite of her. My mum heroically positive - "Well Mrs Annis, WE TRY and encourage her. MARK" - she pointedly not-looks-at Dad "HAS TRIED EVERYTHING". Dad ready to blow - no, worse than that - Dad blowing. What's he going to say? Mum'll think I put him up to it... Nightmare. And in front of Mrs Annis... Home again. Silence through tea and telly and then Mark and her arguing 'til the small hours... "Why does she hate us so much? Pills she wants, pills!"..."Tell them you can't cope with her anymore"..." (PAUSE) There must be something horribly wrong with me - how can a person be cared about so much by all these CARING adults and still feel so... numb.

(Almost ritually she rolls up her sleeve, contemplates the soft part of her inner arm.)

(Picks up the scissors) Time to make my mark in the real world.

(She lifts the scissors)

Scene 10

(Joe arrives at Toni's house. Her mum answers the door. She is dishevelled and distraught)

SARAH: Joe! Is Toni?

JOE (simultaneously): Hello. Is Toni -

SARAH (interrupting): (moans) Oh God?

(JOE pulls out a file. SARAH sees the Bedlam Runners cuttings)

JOE: See I'm doing my assignment on Mickey Mitch - how he seemed to have everything and then he cracked up? I thought Toni might -

SARAH (interrupting): If I see another word about that bloody man!

JOE: Alright - I'll catch up with her another time. Is she at her Dad's?

SARAH: We rowed Joe. I thought she was staying at her Dad's when she didn't come home. Turns out she left his two days ago! (She starts to cry)

JOE (stunned, after pause): Where?

SARAH: NOBODY KNOWS.. (BEAT) It wasn't a big argument - not by recent standards. What's happening to her lately, Joe? You must know. Is it drugs?

JOE: No

SARAH: I'm not going to go mad or anything - help me Joe!

JOE : Honestly she's not into drugs.

SARAH: Is there anyone else she'd have gone of with?

(JOE shrugs helplessly, feeling uncomfortable with this idea.)

SARAH: We argued about him. Mickey bloody Mitch. The day he went missing. I threw her CD on the floor. Oh Joe - I don't know why. I feel terrible now. You know how much she thinks of that music. (ANGRY) But she shuts me out like I'm not there. I only wanted her to listen to me... (BREAKS DOWN) Mark's out looking for her. But we don't know where to start. Oh -
(She ducks inside to fetch something, hands him a parcel, labelled "Joe")

SARAH: She left this for you. I'm sorry, I opened it - but I thought - (CRIES)

(JOE opens the parcel. Inside are all Toni's precious scrapbooks)

JOE: She must have left a note or something?

SARAH: Nothing. No word to anybody. (PLEADS) Help us find her Joe, find my baby again...

(JOE nods, mumbles, clutches up the bundle and goes away)...

Scene 11

(We see TONI on the streets, wandering about. She carries a blue sleeping bag.)

(ON A RADIO we hear ROSS MAC MANUS PHONE-IN DJ)

ROSS: If you've just tuned in, this is Ross Mac Manus, and this is my new show. Live loud and nation-wide... As the hunt goes on for the missing rock star Mickey Mitch - British tourists saw someone "who looked like him" in a Berlin street market - but still no word from Mickey or an explanation for his actions. Is he - as some now fear - dead - a victim of his own success? We want to hear from YOU? Call this number NOW and right through the night!

(LOUD RADIO JINGLE OF TELEPHONE NUMBER)

PHONE IN FAN#1: Hello

RADIO DJ: Who's that?

FAN#1: Jon from Basildon

DJ: Are you a Runner's fan?

FAN #1: I am.

DJ: What's your theory? Isn't this all some publicity stunt to promote the new single?

FAN #1: Not at all.

DJ: So, you think he's dead?

FAN#1: Um me I think Mickey is alive... I just think he went somewhere he could drink and do what he wanted for a bit...

DJ: Not so much a cry for help as an arrogant gesture of contempt to his record company and public alike, eh?

(A hunched, hooded young man comes along and beds down beside her. He (TOM) coughs and rolls over with his back to her and falls asleep. TONI is terrified. She pulls the sleeping bag tight to her neck.)

FAN#1: Nah. But he's under a lot of pressure...

DJ: We're all under pressure Jon! Aren't you? I am. Will I get job, or will I get laid? Pressure is a fact of life. Only most of us haven't got luxury of dropping out when we feel like it to (FUNNY VOICE) get my head together man!

(The hooded figure beside TONI jerks suddenly in his sleep. He throws his arm over her.)

TONI (jumping up): Hey!

TOM (groggily): What?

TONI: I was here first!

TOM: I've never seen you here before -

(TOM pushes back his hood and looks at her. TONI is stunned. He looks so like Mickey Mitch that is must be him!)

TOM: Find your own place or shut up!

(He turns away. TONI reaches out to him.)

TONI: Mickey?

(TOM pulls her arm off him. TONI winces)

TOM: (gently, he pushes back her sleeve) You want to get those looked at, they're infected.

(TONI glances at her own arms as if they belong to someone else)

TOM: Get down the drop in centre tomorrow. Ask for Mary. She's alright is Mary. (He turns to sleep again)

TONI: I've got so much I want to tell you -

TOM (sits up): You don't know me...

TONI: You're the only person who understands!

TOM: (getting up) Who sent you? Who? (He looks around in panic as if expecting to be attacked by a mob.) Get away from me! Leave me alone!

(Tom gets up, bundles up his bedroll and beats it.)

TONI: No!

(She tries to get up and trips over, falls on her sore arm, winces - rubs at the pain. Cries.)

ON THE RADIO ROSS continues his show.

ROSS: Caller on line 2 -

FAN#2: Er.. no one's said anything about Richey from the Manics, Ross...

ROSS: Go on then.

FAN#2: Um... Richey disappeared much the same as Mickey and still no one knows what happened to him all these years later.

ROSS: What, you think they might be together? (LAUGHS) What a duo they'd make, eh? Look out Robson and Jerome!

Scene 12

AT THE DROP IN CLINIC

(MARY DOUGLAS watches as TONI comes in nervously looking around. She sees MARY looking at her.)

TONI: I'm looking for Mary

MARY (smiles): You've found her.

TONI: Mickey told me to come here... but don't say I said so (touches fingers to her lips.)

MARY: What's your name?

TONI: Toni... but he doesn't know my name...

MARY: Have you hurt your arm?

(TONI allows her to roll up the sleeve. MARY is careful not to react.)

MARY: Okay Toni, I'm going to need to clean and bandage it for you, alright?

(Blankly, TONI allows MARY to dab her arm with antiseptic.)

TONI: You're wasting your time.

MARY: Why do you say that?

TONI: My flesh is going to rot off anyway.

(PAUSE)

MARY: (starts to bandage the arm) Been here long, Toni?

TONI: Are you a doctor or a social worker?

MARY: A bit of both. (Finishes bandaging TONI'S arm.) ... I do some of my work at the Mowbray Hospital and some here.

(TONI gets up)

MARY: Why don't you stay a bit? Perhaps your friend will turn up. Michael?

TONI: I don't think so.

MARY: Are you hungry?

(MARY goes out. TONI runs off. MARY comes back in with a plate. But TONI has gone.)

MARY: We've got some - (MARY curses under her breath.)

ROSS: Denise from Leeds -

FAN: (in tears) Mickey is in a much better place than here and now he is finally at peace. The Runner's rule forever and Mickey will never be forgotten. (HANGS UP)

DJ: Hello! Hello Denise from Leeds? Alive or dead, my darling?

Scene 13

(IN THE DROP IN CENTRE. JOE enters. MARY looks up)

JOE: Is this where homeless kids come?

MARY (smiles) : Yes.

JOE: I'm not homeless.

MARY: This is a drop-in centre. You can drop-in too.

JOE: I'm looking for a friend. A girl. About this tall. Long dark hair.

MARY: You're not called Mickey are you?

JOE: Toni!

MARY: She was here just now. Are you a close friend?

(JOE folds his arms, glares at MARY.)

MARY: She had a blue sleeping bag. Probably got it from St. Saviours on North Road. There's an abandoned funfair - wait!

(Joe is about to dash off.)

MARY: Your friend needs help! Possibly urgently -

JOE: What?

MARY: I'm a doctor - I specialise in mental health -

JOE: - Bollocks -

MARY: I can't be sure because I don't know her but -

JOE: Oh blow it out your ass will you! You're all the same you do-gooders - always trying to make work for yourselves. Toni's not mental... she's just pissed off at the world. What - you're going to lock her up for that? No way!

MARY: IF you find her -

JOE: WHEN I find her - I'll make sure she stays as far away from you as possible!

(JOE leaves. MARY hesitates a moment, then picks up the phone and dials.)

MARY: Hello? Can I have the duty Sergeant please...

Scene 14

The caravan. TONI is crouched on the floor like an animal. Offstage – we hear Joe shouting “Toni? Toni? Hey T.J.!” Toni doesn’t register Joe’s voice. She doesn’t look up when Joe comes in.

JOE: Hey TJ - it’s me... didn’t you hear me shout?

(TONI doesn’t look up. He punches her arm affectionately.)

JOE: Why didn’t you tell me you were going to run away? Almost had me worried when your mum told me. (BEAT) Hey guess what - I met this mad old woman at that drop-in centre place (LAUGHS) I dunno what kind of stunt you pulled on her but she (LAUGHS) she reckons...

(TONI looks up, her expression stops JOE in his tracks)

TONI: Why are you laughing?

JOE: It’s just... good to see you. (Uneasily JOE looks around the caravan) Who lives in this dump then?

TONI (flatly): I saw him.

JOE: Who?

TONI: I saw Mickey!

JOE: He’s dead, Toni.(He waits for a reaction. None comes. Unsure) Come on. It’s obvious. He must be -

TONI: He lay beside me. And he touched my arm.

JOE: Bollocks did he! A boy, any boy - it was dark -

TONI: I saw his eyes as plain as I see yours -

JOE (spooked): Just a guy - you on your own - a guy coming onto you-

TONI (shakes he head): No. Even he hates me.

JOE: Look I got some cash - let’s go to the seaside or something. Have a laugh - like we used to? (BEAT) just ring your mum and -

TONI: No.

JOE: - tell her to call off the search party and -

TONI: No.

JOE: Take a couple of days? Toni?

TONI: No.

JOE (exasperated): You can't stay here!

TONI (with effort): I can't leave here with you Joe.

JOE: I see. Right. Are you on your own?

TONI: No.

JOE: I see.

TONI: You're here, aren't you?

JOE: This is going around in circles to nowhere. So this is where you want to be? This is your big dream destination is it? Homeless? On your own? People see you like this Toni - and they'll think you're wrong in the head - you know that? People think that.

TONI: I am wrong in the head.

JOE: No you're not!

TONI: And I'm going wronger and wronger.

JOE: Come with me Toni. Just come home.

TONI: I'm not going home with you Joe. Get that into your head.

(He sits down)

TONI: You're not staying.

JOE: I don't know why I bother.

TONI: I don't know either.

JOE: Oh! Like - dickhead right, trailing after you. Well maybe I am - but I'm not in the fucking gutter and I never will be.

TONI: I smell. I'm rotting - everything I touch is rotting away.

(JOE reaches to her.)

TONI (SCREAMS IN HIS FACE): DON'T TOUCH ME, DON'T TOUCH ME, DON'T TOUCH ME!

JOE: I'M SICK OF THIS! You know maybe you're mum is right Toni -

TONI (backing away): Get lost. Piss off.

JOE: Yeah I reckon, she might have a point. You don't give a shag about anyone else if they're worried or... all you care about is your music, your kiss my sweet ass attitude - your Mickey Mitch - is that what you're waiting for then eh? Sleeping Beauty? Answer me? Sit

here and shrivel yourself into a heap until Mickey Mitch or someone like him comes along to wake you with a rock star's kiss??

TONI (screams): GET OUT! GET OUT! GET OUT!

JOE: DON'T WORRY! I'M GOING!

(JOE leaves)

Scene 15

(ROSS is still taking calls. As the phone in goes on, we see JOE and TONI. JOE pacing the street, TONI making the phone call and returning to the caravan with pills.)

ROSS: Hello who's there? Line five...

FAN#5: Sanjay.

ROSS: Okay Sanj - what's your verdict?

FAN#5: Unfortunately Ross, I think Mickey Mitch must be deceased. He was a seriously troubled young man and he couldn't live with himself. Kurt Cobain and Ian Curtis gave the same signals in their songs before their deaths and I don't think Mickey had his life together well enough to fake his death successfully.

DJ: If you've just tuned in - we're asking YOUR views on Mickey Mitch. Is he yet another sad rock and roll casualty who just couldn't take the pace? Line nine - hello... hello... is anyone there?

TONI (voice on the phone): This is a message for Mickey.

(As we hear the following telephone conversation, we see TONI coming back to the caravan, opening a chemist's packet)

DJ: What's your name sweetheart? (PAUSE) Hello.

TONI: Antonia

DJ: Lovely name. Where you calling from babe?

TONI: Mickey - what I wanted to say before you went is... I understand.

DJ: Understand what Antonia?

TONI: I don't know if anyone has ever felt like this before - but I guess this is how you're feeling too. (She takes out a bottle of paracetamol, opens the lid.)

TONI: (on the phone) I've tried to cut it out but the 'it' is me. Everything rotten falling apart. The skull behind the smile... (Starts to take the pills.)

DJ: Antonia - where are you calling from sweetheart?

TONI: I can't face another morning waking up inside my skull. I'm sorry. I know it's weak and I'm not proud of it, but I've got to let it go.

(TONI hangs up. Loud sound of the phone ringing dead)

ROSS: Hello, hello, Antonia! Call back sweetheart. Reverse the charges and we'll call you back. We'll try to trace that call. (RELIEF) Caller on line three?

FAN 3#: Dave from Brixton. Mickey Mitch was probably kidnapped by aliens wanting to do research on his suicidal mind -

ROSS: Yeah, yeah thank-you. Okay - Corinne from Hastings?

FAN#4: Mickey's in MY bed, in MY house enjoying being MY husband. We're madly in love.

ROSS: You make a lovely couple, sweetheart - you're as bonkers as he is!

(IN THE CARAVAN. TONI is swallowing pills by handfuls. Rams them into her mouth, gagging as she chews them down.)

(JOE comes in)

JOE: NO! Stop! Don't do it, Toni!

(He lunges at her and they roll over. TONI breaks away. He tries to grab her - pull the pills out of her mouth. They struggle. JOE is stronger - she crumples into his arms, vomiting)

JOE: I never meant the things I said. Get up - get on your feet (PULLS HER UP) Oh God - I didn't know you were going to - Oh God help me. Can you hear me? Keep walking - move Toni. "Joe" you said "I'm scared. I don't know what's happening to me!" Scared? I should've known. I thought you hated me. I thought you never wanted to see me again. Don't die - don't die - you do my head in you know. Open your eyes - **Come on Toni, walk!**

(A police/ ambulance siren is heard outside. JOE drags TONI out.)

Scene 16

(IN THE HOSPITAL. JOE sits in the corridor - MARY brings a cup of tea.)

MARY: Hello again Joe.

JOE: You!

JOE (bitterly): Handing out tea and sympathy? (Gets up and paces about.)

MARY: From what the ambulance crew told me, you've earned it.

JOE: I don't want either from you. Where is she?

(MARY puts down the tea.)

MARY: Why don't you go home and get some rest...

JOE: Oh no - I'm not leaving her here with you. I wasn't going bring her here! It was the police.

MARY: You did the right thing, believe me.

JOE: No, No I didn't. I didn't. No.

MARY: This is a safe place for Toni right now. I'm getting her transferred to the Adolescent Psychiatric Unit as soon as I can...

JOE: (anguished) No! This is all wrong. She's not ill that way. I've got to take her home, see.
(ANGRY) It was all your fault. You wound me up. I said some things. I was mad I went off. When I came back she was, oh Lord. (Holds his head in his hands.)

MARY: This crisis will have been building in Toni for a long time.

JOE: How long?

MARY: Months and months.

JOE: That's bollocks. I'd know. She's in my class at school!

MARY: She's ill Joe. And it will take months more to help here sort this thing out - or next time, you might not be there to help.

(MARY hands him the tea. JOE sits down.)

JOE (helpless): Did she mean to ... (kill herself)

MARY: She certainly meant to TAKE them.

JOE: But - don't you have to take loads of -?

MARY: She'd never know how many were safe. Paracetamol OD is the commonest cause of liver failure in young people. How are you coping, Joe?

(JOE makes the sign of the cross "Vampire style" at her.)

JOE: Oh no. Back off. I'm fine.

MARY: We're all fine until we're not.

(PAUSE)

JOE: You plan on keeping her here for months do you? Against her will?

MARY: She can leave here anytime she wants.

JOE (cynically): Oh yeah -

MARY: I know what you're saying. And Toni could easily be sectioned for her own protection.
But it won't come to that.

JOE: You're so sure you people.

MARY: She's exhausted.

JOE: You don't know a thing about her. You don't know Toni at all. (PAUSE) I'll be back.

(MARY nods to him. JOE walks out)

Scene 17

A day room in an adolescent psychiatric unit. TONI CAISTER sits hunched up on a chair. MARY DOUGLAS her psychiatrist is interviewing her.)

MARY: Recently have you experienced changes in your pattern of sleeping?

(TONI does not respond)

MARY: For example, have you been sleeping more or less? (PAUSE) More?

(TONI nods slightly, MARY makes a note.)

MARY: And when you wake? Do you feel refreshed?

(TONI shakes her head slightly)

(MARY): Do you have trouble waking?

(PAUSE)

TONI: I Can't -

MARY (SIMULTANEOUSLY): And how long - (STOPS) - go on Toni...

TONI: I can't sleep at night. I can't wake in the morning.

(MARY makes a note.)

MARY: And how long has this been going on? Weeks? (PAUSE) Months?

(TONI nods)

MARY: and your appetite? Are you more or less hungry than usual?

(Toni shrugs)

MARY: What about your concentration, Toni? Have you noticed any change there?

TONI: Reading. I can't - words...thinking...no there's no thread.

MARY: Obviously you've recently started a course of tablets, but these problems you're talking about - with reading and thinking - have been going on for...weeks?

(TONI nods)

MARY: Have you - before last week - ever experienced thoughts about killing or hurting yourself in any way?

(TONI looks out of the window)

MARY: To your knowledge, has anyone in your family ever been treated for any psychiatric condition - or are you aware of members of your family having problems...? (PAUSE carefully) Has anyone in your family committed or attempted suicide?

(PAUSE. MARY closes her file.)

TONI: (suddenly) I think about killing myself all the time. All. The. Time. The thought of killing myself is the one thing that (SNEERS) keeps me going. Thinking about it now. Killing myself...thinking about - those stairs in the other block there -

MARY: The adult ward?

TONI: Like how high is high enough? These windows are locked...you'd have to crash through the glass- toughened glass...safety glass. Pilkington. And then this is only the first floor so (SHRUGS) you know, might end up screwing it up and be worse off.

(Long PAUSE)

MARY: My office is down the corridor. I'll be calling in to see you once a week. But I'm usually around if you feel you want to talk about anything - whatever's important to you...

TONI (looks away): Nothing is important to me.

(MARY goes out)

Scene 18

JAMIE: I heard the news while I was in my hotel room. Our Roady came up, looked at me and simply said "Sorry" and left the newspaper. Mickey Mitch lead singer of the Bedlam Runners has been found in a West London flat. A post-mortem will be carried out next week, but it is believed that the star, who had a history of drink and drug abuse, and was reportedly suffering depression, died of a drug overdose. It is thought that the star's body may have lain alone and undiscovered for several days.

Scene 19

(IN THE HOSPITAL DAY ROOM. The end of Toni's four week assessment period. Mary has Toni's growing file and a pile of other papers beside her.)

MARY: The diagnosis was pretty clear when you first admitted, but the assessment period has confirmed.

TONI: Depression.

MARY. Yes.

TONI (angry): You told me I was ill!

MARY: Depression is an illness.

TONI: But I thought you said something was making me depressed, that you'd been testing me for.

MARY: You mean - something physical?

TONI: Some illness.

MARY: Depression is -

(TONI puts her hands over her ears)

MARY: - a serious and disabling illness, which can be life threatening if it goes untreated...

(Tony folds her arms and looks away in disgust. MARY HOLDS UP A PET SCAN)

MARY: This is what's called a PET scan - these reds and yellows show the patterns of activity in a healthy brain'.

(MARY PICKS UP ANOTHER PICTURE. SHOWS IT TO TONI. IT IS COLOURED IN SHADES OF BLUE AND PURPLE)

MARY: And this is a PET scan of a depressed brain. Actually it comes from the same person as the other slide - but here in a depressed state. These cold, dead blue areas show that brain activity is physically changed - slowed down during depression. Literally 'feeling blue'.

TONI: That (POINTING) is how I feel. (TOUCHES HEAD) up here. Dead and cold. But why ?

MARY Basically,.. we don't know. That's what we're here to find out.

TONI: So if you don't know, how are you going to help me?

MARY: You'll be appointed a Key worker - to liase between you and the various departments involved.

TONI: You're my key worker right?

MARY: No. The Key Worker is usually your Primary Nurse - co-ordinating with your clinicians, the OT staff, and later with the social services, your school -

TONI: So I get a whole gang of people arguing about what's to be done with me? No way. I can get that at home. Why can't I just talk to you?

MARY: You will talk to me. I'm your therapist.

TONI: This is a waste of time.

MARY HANDS TONI A DIARY

MARY: It's for you to fill in. Kind of a diary.

TONI: Don't I need a life first?

MARY: I want you to jot down what's going on - stressful situations, pleasant situations and note how you felt at the time. Anything that comes to mind, thoughts, things that happen. That's all there is to it. Then we talk. See you next week.

Scene 20

(In the dayroom MARY and TONI sit together. TONI has her 'diary' on her knee.)

TONI: (READS) Tuesday. Got up. Went to group session on Woodstock ward. (BEAT) Look I've been doing this six weeks and I'm getting nowhere. (THROWS THE DIARY ACROSS THE FLOOR AT MARY) You fill it in. I'm not doing it right am I?

MARY: Why do you feel that?

TONI: I don't FEEL it. It's not working. Fact.

MARY: There's no right or wrong. Cognitive therapy is all about learning to tune into that "running commentary" we have inside our heads. You haven't said anything in your diary about wanting to harm yourself.

(TONI strokes her arm)

TONI: I haven't felt - thought - about cutting.

MARY: And the last time you did? How did you feel then?

TONI: I didn't feel anything. Don't you see? Cutting up made me feel SOMETHING. After I cut myself I could breathe. (Touches her arm) I could carry my pain with me - on my skin. And no one knew about it, except Mickey, because he did it too.

MARY: Is that why you did it first? Because of Mickey Mitch?

TONI: (shakes her head) I thought I was the only person in the world who hurt themselves like that. Until I found out about him. All this is pointless. (PAUSE)

MARY: I need you to help me help you, Toni. (PAUSE) You know your friend Joe called to see me yesterday. (BEAT) he left these for you...

(She hands TONI a parcel. She watches TONI open it. It is the Bedlam Runners material she left for Joe. TONI smiles ruefully and nods)

MARY: He wants you to write to him (PAUSE) I think your friend Joe cares about you a lot.

TONI: Out there in the happy world - life goes on. When I thought I was gone for good, I left these for him. It was my way of telling him good-bye.

MARY: He asked me to tell you to write to him. Why don't you write to him in your diary? Work out what you want to say.

TONI: (angry) What do you know about it? Hey? Sitting there with your jargon and your smiles. You haven't got a clue what it's really like.

(MARY puts down her file)

MARY: I don't have to answer that -

TONI: Of course.

MARY: I had a depression myself, Toni... when I was a student. After I got better, I switched from physics to neurology, trained as an analyst and now I am here.

TONI: Do you ever get depressed now?

MARY: Not for some good while. (She reaches out, touches wood and smiles)

TONI: (noting this) Very scientific.

MARY: Science is only the study of people things and the world we live in. (GETS UP) I'll see you next week.

(MARY leaves. TONI looks down the pile of her cuttings again, turns the pages. She picks up her diary and pen.)

TONI: (writes) Dear Joe. It was all just words before, wasn't it? "Breakdown" "Asylum" Titles of an album. Until that night. But I know you better than you think. (PAUSE. THINKS) No one gets involved in anything by chance. That's why I can't -

(She pulls out the page, scrunches it up and throws it away.)

Scene 21

(IN THE HOSPITAL DAY ROOM. TONI is busily writing in her diary.)

TONI: Tuesday. Week 7. Joe came yesterday...

(She does not notice MARY come in. MARY watches for a moment before TONI looks up.)

Quite a lot has happened to me this week. (She holds up her diary to show MARY the page.)

MARY: Good. Because I want to try something different to start the session today.

(She produces drawing paper and a marker pen.)

TONI: (groans) Not more art! Drawing, poetry, (FUNNY VOICE) batique-ke-ke. We do all that in OT. What do you want me to draw?

MARY: It's up to you.

TONI: I'm seventeen years old. This is kid's stuff.

MARY: We were all kids once.

(MARY waits, pretending to organise her notes. Facetiously, TONI picks up the marker and begins to sketch in cartoony, childish strokes.)

MARY: Your friend Joe called to see me yesterday.

TONI: Is that meant to be a question?

MARY: He said you'd refused to see him again.

TONI: I don't know why he keeps trailing out here.

MARY: To see you.

(As MARY talks, TONI'S style of drawing changes becomes more primitive than ever - strokes like cuts and gashes on the page.)

TONI: He doesn't want to see me. He feels responsible for me. It's not the same.

MARY: I think your friend Joe cares for you a lot.

TONI: Poor crazy girl in hospital?

MARY: Is that how you see yourself?

(TONI looks down at her drawing.)

TONI: I don't remember much about the night I was admitted. But I do remember the look on his face - pity... fear... disgust... (TONI grabs the drawing and scrunches it up.)

MARY: He was upset by your illness, not by you...

(TONI throws the crumpled drawing away.)

TONI (disgusted): I can't draw!

(MARY bends and picks up the sketch.)

MARY: Let's see what you're so anxious to throw away.

TONI: Leave it!

MARY: Why?

TONI: Because it's rubbish!

(MARY smooths out the picture. It is a childish drawing of TONI as a little girl. As Mary looks at it, she is aware of a change in TONI. She breathes faster.)

TONI: It's only a picture of me as a little girl.

MARY: So this is the image you don't want me to see?

TONI: THROW IT AWAY! (BECOMING DISTRESSED) It's rubbish!

MARY (quietly persisting): What is it about you as a child that you want to throw away?

TONI: (sobbing) Because it's stupid! It's not meant to be any good. I did it like that - (mimes scribbling) like a little kid...

MARY: But when we are little kids, we don't know any better - (PROBING) we need people to take care of us...

TONI (upset): No! Yes... It's only a drawing - throw it away!

MARY: When children first learn to draw they draw the same images over and over again, don't they - mapping out the world - 'Me', 'Mummy', 'Daddy', 'My House'

TONI (crying): THROW IT AWAY MARY! It's a waste of time!

MARY: Why Toni?

TONI (breaks down): If they'd cared about me they'd never have gone on the way they did.

MARY (gently): Who? Your mum and dad?

TONI: (angry) Yes! Always screaming about their own problems. (CLENCHES FISTS) When I was little.... mum and dad arguing downstairs... like I didn't exist! They married each other - why can't they be happy? If they loved me they'd be happy! Sometimes I feel so small and lonely! I hate that feeling!

(She breaks down. MARY holds her while she cries.)

MARY: That "small and lonely feeling" Toni? That's what you don't want me to see?

(TONI writhes free and gets up.)

TONI: (wiping eyes) Okay! You've won. I've been here - what? Three months. Here I am. You broke me.

MARY: What?

TONI: Hello birds, hello bees. What a lovely day! I'll go home and marry Joe and Mrs Annis and Moira can be bridesmaids! Happy now?

MARY: (holding her shoulders) Toni - do you really think I've been trying to break you in some way?

TONI: And I'll be good. Won't say bad things. I'm cured!

MARY: Toni. All I'm trying to do is help you put your self back together. To manage your feelings. But first you have to let them out. Somewhere under all this hurt you've been giving yourself, is anger. The anger of a child. Get hold of the anger. It's yours. (TONI cries) You know. I think it's time you had a chance to talk with your mum and dad -

TONI: Oh no -

MARY: (insistent) - Your mum and dad have been coming in together for some weeks now, talking with a Family specialist. He thinks THEY'RE ready - whenever you're ready for them?

(TONI nods slowly)

TONI: How soon can you get them in?

Scene 22

(IN THE ROOM IN THE ADOLESCENT UNIT. ROD HARRINGTON, the Family Therapist, comes in and sets out the chairs. TONI comes in. She has brushed her hair back and wears a new shirt. She looks around in dismay.)

TONI: They're not here.

ROD: Your parents are in the day room. Do you want to see them on your own first?

TONI (shakes her head): No.

ROD: Okay then, Toni. (He goes to the door and calls them in.)

(SARAH and TONY senior enter, nervously.)

ROD: Come on in - find a chair -

SARAH: Hello doctor.

TONY: Hiya TJ.

ROD: (sitting down) Now as I explained, (Nods to them all) I'm not going to interrupt you, I'm going to let you all go on...today is a chance for you all to talk and perhaps more importantly listen to each other as a family unit.

TONY: Right.

SARAH: Yes doctor.

TONI: Hang on a minute. Since when were we a family unit?

SARAH: Don't start, Toni -

TONI: Can she say that to me? Oh I'm starting and you can both sit there until you're finished -

TONY: Your mum and I have had our differences kid, but -

TONI: (cutting him off) - now you're a united front? It was ever thus. Bicker, bicker! Boying, boying the smashing off the walls... She's on at me about you! You about her. But when it comes to how I'm feeling, BOYING! And the pair of you together - this metal net - bang! In my face.

(SARAH closes her eyes)

ROD: I think Toni feels -

TONI (to ROD): Since when are YOU in my head.

TONY: Your mum and I love you more than anything!

TONI: You never loved me enough to stay together did you?

SARAH: (as if carefully rehearsed) I think a lot of our problems stemmed from money, didn't they Tony (to DAD)

TONY: Yeah.

SARAH: (helpfully) Rich people don't have money problems and most of ours were.. Let's face it - after you got laid off. (BEAT) If you've got money you can sort out a lot of stress. I've always wished we could have more than one holiday a year...

TONI: Mum! I have two holidays a year. One with you and one with Dad. Am I happy? No! I'm in a fucking loony bin!

(TONY snickers audibly. TONI glares at him)

TONI: Do you know what it's like living in two families at once? Either of you? Yanked between two sets of rules - light left on in the hall, lights off? No swearing or anything goes? Do your homework before tea or chuck it on the fire and rent a video? Two bedrooms, two wardrobes and nowhere to call your own?

SARAH: So I suppose you wanted us to stay together?

TONY (nervous): She's not saying that!

SARAH: Some bloody commune built around you!

TONI: Why not? You had me. You work it out!

SARAH: I've tried for god's sake! And these last eight years I've done it on my own!

TONY: Oh and I don't exist, then!

SARAH: I don't see you washing her clothes or trailing round getting her into a school where she wouldn't have to travel.

TONY: Mark's got a big enough car.

SARAH: I'm not talking about Mark. Before him.

TONY: You never let me near! You sodding martyr! Had to do it all yourself. School? Was I ever consulted? No it was all you. Your little girl. Like she was a bloody handbag!

SARAH: You don't know what it was like. Always being the one to nag! No one else to take turns at with being the nasty bossy one -

TONY: Oh well – that's because you're so bloody good at it! (Grins at TONI)

SARAH: (to ROD) She idolises him! He bugged off. (To TONY) You've never had to say no to her about anything!

TONI: Yes he has

TONY: NO, I haven't.

TONI: You've said 'no' to me all my life! And to mum. And everyone else. 'No' - because nothing is more important than you. What you want. And you want it now. I tried to talk to you about how I was feeling but no - you wouldn't listen - because all you thought was it was about you!

TONY (defensive): That's not true.

TONI: I even had to have your name for God's sake! Toni. Antonia. Sodding stupid version of your own name. Because Tony, Tony, Tony is the only thing on your mind.

TONY (gets up): I'm going.

TONI: Wait Dad! Don't go please! (She reaches out to him) And you Mum!

SARAH (breaking down): My baby.

(They all huddle together in an awkward, messy hug - half sitting half standing between them.)

TONY: So what are we supposed to do now?

SARAH: This is awful.

TONI: Mum, Dad. I love you both.

TONY: I know. But your mum and I don't like each other very much, kid.

SARAH: At least we're talking about it.

Scene 23

(IN THE DAY ROOM OF THE ADOLESCENT UNIT.)

TONI: Tuesday. Week 9. Group therapy session today.

(TONI is looking through the parcel of cuttings and scrapbooks Mary gave her. As she leafs through she nods in recognition of all the familiar reviews and pictures in the books. Suddenly she stops)

Wait a minute - I didn't stick these in. (CHECKS DATE) This is from last week... Oh Joe. (PAUSE) What's this... Joe's handwriting (READS). "What does it mean to be mentally healthy? ...Serotonin levels... genetic, environmental, stress factors... or (STRUGGLES TO READ) "simply a sane response to an insane world - see end" (SHE TURNS TO THE END) Is this for Joe's project? (CONFUSED) What's going on?

(TONI does not notice TOM - the homeless boy from the doorway - enter. He is cleaned up now, less fearful and nervy, but he still looks a lot like Mickey.)

TOM: It's good to see you smile.

(TONI looks up and drops the book in amazement.)

TONI (scared): Mary! MARY!

TOM: I've been watching you for weeks.

(TONI gets up and backs away from him.)

TONI: Leave me alone! Get out of my head!

Tom: It's me Tom - don't you remember? I told you about Mary... she's alright isn't she?

(TONI nods. She watches as TOM bends down and picks up her scrap book. He glances at it and hands it back.)

TOM (giving back to TONI): People say I look like Mickey Mitch... I've never seen it myself.

(TONI gasps and laughs)

TOM: You are feeling better! (LAUGHS) Did you find your friend?

TONI: What?

TOM: That night - you were looking for your friend...?

TONI: Oh yes...

(PAUSE)

TOM: I'm here for the session. I come to the day centre. I'm schizophrenic...

TONI (reacting but trying to hide it.): Oh.

TOM: They've started me on Risperdal. I couldn't get on with the other stuff - stopped taking it. So I got ill again. That's why I was funny with you last time we met... (PAUSE) Are you here much longer?

TONI: Another week.

TOM: Will you carry on coming to the group here after that?

TONI: I suppose so.

TOM: Then maybe (HESITATES) if you want to go out sometime...? See a band or something?

TONI: I'm not sure....

(TOM is sad.)

TOM: You're not schizophrenic are you?

TONI: No.

TOM: Yeah right. See you then.... (He moves to sit the other side of the room.)

TONI: Wait! Tom...

TOM: Yeah... but you don't want to hang about with crazy people... you want to get back to your normal friends. You're sad. I'm mad. I understand... I'll sit over there.

TONI: Sit by me.

TOM: If you're sure it's not catching. (He pulls a crazy face)

TONI: That friend I was looking for.. (She touches the scrapbook) I didn't realise it then, but he was looking for me. I'm not sure why. It's hard to explain. But I need to see him first... Thanks anyway. (She touches his hand to pull him to the seat next to her. He holds hers and pulls up her sleeve. It's clean. She smiles.)

TOM (grinning): Tom Carpenter (Shakes the hand)

TONI (laughing): Toni, Antonia J. Caister - TJ, Toni, Ant, That's me. (GRINS)

TOM: Antonia J. (LAUGHS. Sits down)

TONI: I get dead nervous in these sessions...

TOM: Sometimes if I can't think of anything to say - I bring something to read.

(TONI laughs)

TOM: Nah - I mean read out to the group. These are my notes - (READS) "March 17 patient has elected to resume medication because of severity of schizophrenic episodes. Will begin 300mg... Blah, blah. March 25, Vomiting. April 8, tolerating medication. Feeling depressed at realisation that he is more sick than he believed. April 30th Patient has stopped taking medication. Very important, he says, to prove he can cope without it. May 3rd, persists in not taking medication. Already experiencing severe visual disturbances. Patient well aware of it. May 10th, patient has resumed medication..." And so it goes.

TONI: Mary says if it was diabetes I had or a kidney condition, I'd still probably resent the medication, but I wouldn't question whether or not I was going to take it.

TOM: She's right.

TONI: I just wish I could live my life without all this.

TOM: Look on the bright side, two hundred years ago they'd probably have burnt you at the stake as a witch and I'd be living with the pigs in a sty.

TONI: (Laughing) I suppose you can look on the bright side.

TOM: So long as I keep taking my tablets.

(TONI picks up scrapbook as if preparing to read)

Scene 24

Jamie walks on with his guitar, SOUND OF AN ANTICIPATORY CROWD. He steps forward.)

JAMIE (voice hoarse with emotion): That decision to do Glastonbury without him was the toughest 48 hours of my life. Four numbers. That's all. It was enough. Some people said we shouldn't. But we talked about it - about what had happened the way we should have done when things were out of control. If we'd talked about our feelings back then... who knows...? (PAUSE) Mickey stopped the roller coaster for all of us. We'd always thought we were so sussed and in control. But we weren't. Right from the start it was in control of us and we'd go along with it because it was the thing to do. It wasn't easy, but we decided to go on...

(He picks up his guitar and walks, as if onto the Glastonbury stage.)

JAMIE: The sky was overcast. I remember feeling like the heavens were going to open and he would walk on. I used to stand next to him on-stage, and we'd always had this little thing going

up there. I turned to look for him and he wasn't there. We finished the gig, and that's when it hit me...

(JAMIE takes off his guitar, choked, and walks emphatically off stage.)

Scene 25

(TONI and JOE walk up the hill behind the school, they walk fast breathless - and reach the top.)

TONI: Look at that view!

JOE: Yeah.

TONI: I've missed coming up here.

JOE (haltingly): I've missed coming up here... with you.

(They sit down. Neither speaks for a while. There is a tension between them.)

TONI (suddenly): Joe? I've been wanting to ask you something for a long time.

JOE: Yeah?

TONI: All last term when I was out of control, hell to be around. You stuck by me.

JOE: What kind of question is that?

TONI: I want to know why?

JOE: I care about you.

TONI: Even after I attacked you and puked all over you - with my arms cut up and it made you sick and disgusted - you kept coming to the hospital. I wouldn't see you - but you kept on coming back. Didn't people take the piss out of you that your girlfriend was nuts?

(JOE glances at her unsure of where this is leading)

JOE: Are you my girlfriend?

TONI: I want to know why you wanted to hang around me when I was like that.

(PAUSE)

JOE: (confused) I don't know what you want me to say!

TONI: Your mum and dad split up too right?

JOE: So?

TONI: You were always telling me how you never saw your real dad any more - but you didn't let it get to you. You had to work to support your mum - but it was no big deal. Then you

pick as your girlfriend someone who's acting out big trauma about the exact same thing!

JOE (uneasily): So what?

TONI: I don't think it was a coincidence Joe. Maybe it's a bloke thing or the difference between you and me. Who knows? But I think you needed me to express your pain. Because you couldn't.

JOE: That's bollocks.

TONI: You needed me dancing on the edge. You were going to reach out and save me. Because you desperately did want things to be alright, didn't you Joe? You went right out on a limb. (PAUSE) I think that you couldn't make it alright between your mum and dad...

JOE: That's not...

TONI: (continues) So you were always looking for other broken things you could patch up.

(PAUSE)

(JOE is suddenly too choked to speak)

TONI: And like me - you were pushing as far as you dared. You had a coping strategy too. I cut up my arms. You ran around with crazy girls.

JOE: Not girls! Only you!

TONI: But I fell over that edge. You wanted to save me but instead the cops made you take me to hospital. Instead of making it alright, things got a whole lot worse. I think the reason you kept coming back to the hospital, was in some terrible way - you thought that because you hadn't prevented it, what happened was your fault.

(JOE is now openly crying)

JOE: Yes, I should've - I don't know - if I hadn't - if I'd been there for you - but it was TJ - the things I said that night - it was my fault.

TONI: (holds him) None of it is your fault. Not your mum and dad splitting up or what happened to me. You're not responsible for other people Joe.

JOE: But you mustn't think I only cared coz you were in a state. I... (Looks at her) cared from the start. Yeah - maybe because you were crazy and angry, because you said things I was thinking, but I'd never admit in a million years. When you slagged off your mum and made life hell around you, it touched my own (thumps his chest) ... heartache. You were a firework shooting words and thoughts and ideas into my own darkness. (PAUSE) I kept coming back to the hospital because I was shit scared that everything I'd fallen in love with about you was somehow 'wrong'. That they were going to empty out your skull and put you back together all sweet and nice. I was scared that's what you wanted. That after all this time being around you, trying to learn to express my own feelings, you were

going to turn into some kind of Barbie Doll. I was scared of losing you... and being alone again.

(He puts his arm round her, wipes his eyes.)

TONI: Come here...

(They embrace)

TONI: ... you... are... mad....!

(They laugh)

The End

c. Nicola Baldwin
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