

## **NO BRAVE WORLD**

was first performed October 1st 1997  
at The Workshop Theatre, University of Leeds

Performed by:

Louisa Ashley  
Clare Duffy  
Elizabeth Margree  
Jon Spooner  
Chris Thorpe

Directed by Paul Warwick

Original music by Chris Thorpe  
Set Design by Clare Duffy

Tour Manager Edmund Collier  
Stage Manager Debbie Burton

## PROLOGUE

*The stage is dark as the audience come in except for a shaft of light on a face trying to push its way through a lycra window at the bottom of the set - the stillborn.*

*Once the audience have settled the spot on the face goes down and a light picks out a window further up the set. This is a puppet booth. Two puppets appear, one a squirrel and one a bear. The squirrel is cleaning.*

Bear: Put the kettle on.

Squirrel: Do you want some more tea?

Bear: Oh, I don't know. No. I don't think so. God how I hate Sundays. It's always so depressing. Always the same ritual. Reading the papers. Drinking tea. Cleaning. Our youth is slipping away, do you know that? Are you going to be much longer doing that?

Squirrel: Why?

Bear: Perhaps you haven't noticed but it's interfering with the radio.

Squirrel: I'm sorry, I shan't be much longer.

*The bear snatches her cleaning rag and throws it away*

Squirrel: What did you do that for?

Bear: I wanted to listen to the concert, that's all.

Squirrel: Well what's stopping you?

Bear: Everyone's making such a din, that's what's stopping me.

Squirrel: Well, I'm very sorry but I can't just stop everything because you want to listen to music.

Bear: Why not? *(Hits her)*

Squirrel: Really Jimmy, you're like a bloody child.

Bear: Don't try and bloody patronize me. *(Hits her repeatedly)*

Bear: Darling, I'm sorry.

Squirrel: Get out of my sight.

Bear: I'm sorry.

Squirrel: I know.

Bear: The trouble is you get used to people. Even their trivialities become indispensable to you, indispensable and a little mysterious. *(They kiss)* You're very beautiful, a beautiful great-eyed squirrel with high-polished, gleaming fur and an ostrich feather of a tail!

Squirrel: Wheeeee! Well, you're a jolly super bear too. A really sooooooper, marvellous bear.

Bear: Bears and squirrels are marvellous.

Squirrel: Marvellous and beautiful. Do do de do, do do de do...

Bear: What the hell is that?

Squirrel: That's a dance squirrels do when they're happy.

Bear: What makes you think you're happy?

Squirrel: Oh, I don't know. Everything just seems alright suddenly. *(She kisses him)* That's all.

***When the show is over the puppets descend and two heads (puppeteers) rise shamefacedly into the booth. They draw the booth door shut.***

***In B/O we hear music. As the lights come up the sides of the set open out to become three times its size. Images of fetuses and goldfish can be picked out on the screen. Upstage left is a small set of steps leading nowhere and there are two cubes; downstage left and upstage right. From behind the set five figures appear and populate the stage. They seem lost, displaced, confused.***

***Jon has hessian trousers, bare feet and torso. He has a shaved head. He drags himself along the floor towards his steps.***

***Liz has a fantastically glamorous evening dress made of red velvet, big hair, high heels and an orange feather boa. She comes downstage and surveys the audience, flirting with them. She is dangerous.***

***Clare appears in a filthy suit, bare muddy feet and has a black hood over her head. She cannot see.***

***Louisa wears a long brown skirt and an orange vest top. She is searching for something. During Chris' speech she finds a large kitchen knife.***

***Chris also has a shaved head, orange polo-shirt, jeans and trainers. He carries a pair of silver dancing shoes.***

***As the music fades the figures find their positions.***

## PHASE ONE

Chris: My father told me two stories about the death of my mother, depending on his mood. I say his 'mood' but in reality he only had the one, and he clung to it like a shipwreck to a rock. Depending on the depth of his mood is probably more accurate. The depth of his mood. Which in turn depended on his attitude towards me, and towards her. Which in turn, like the rest of his waking hours, was dependent upon the consumption of cheap chemical blends of supermarket whisky. "Established causal links between alcohol dependence and sociopathic behavioural patterns". These two stories had certain things in common. Certain elements he could never lie about, or bring himself to lie about. For instance, I know my mother died when I was six. I've seen certification. Papers. I know, also, that she killed herself. I know the twentieth of February that year was a Tuesday and I know she died alone. No papers to prove the last. I just know. The other thing common to both these tales of woe is that either of them could be true. Equally they could both be bullshit. Certainly they say more about my father than my mother, so their truthfulness.....it's neither here nor there. Probably.

The father inside my father who loved my mother, or at least the man who couldn't live without her, arrived home while she was still alive. He turned the key in the door with his sickly sweet shop hands.

***(Chris becomes his father. Not merely an imitation. Something more like a possession. A middle aged man. Hunched and weak but not sickly)***

She was sitting in the chair by the window. When I came in she looked at me and smiled. Such a smile, so girlish and full of promise like she'd won a prize. A school prize. The look she must have had before she met me. She was even wearing my old red shirt, and I thought how much she'd shrunk that that shirt could look so big on her. And it grew as I watched until it became a gown, a shimmering gown She looked down at herself in surprise and laughed. She stroked her bare leg and the gown came away on her hands like paint. So much paint. I'm not a doctor son. Even when I ran to her and lifted her, even when I ripped the shirt from her body, so much blood that I couldn't see the wound. She'd cut herself up in a place I couldn't reach. Butchered herself inside. I don't know if she wanted to die, or if she just wanted the thing inside her out. I kissed her and I kissed her but she never opened her mouth to speak. By the time the doctors broke the door down she was already dead.

***(Chris is himself again)***

And then there was my other father. My father whose story was shorter and less full of love. My hateful father. My usual father. The man who I pray was my truthful father.

***(Chris becomes his father)***

Oh your mother didn't stand upon the order of her going, son, she just went. So like that feeble little animal that was always cowering inside of her, twitching its tiny paws from side to side. It had to be instantaneous to save her the burden of her possible survival. All those nasty decisions she was too scared to make even about her own death. Queen pusillanimous dropped the electric fire into the bath. On the coldest night of the year too, the bitch.

***(Chris is himself)***

For twelve months I watched my father dying. Something I'm beginning to suspect runs in the family, and that'll leave me resolutely childless until the day I die. I'll be the last of the Porters to carry our heavy load of malice and confusion and unbelief across the world. No more Porters. And while I live I'll remember. A few memories of my mother. A heavy silence. An odour of comfort. A soft cloud of sadness in a shabby dress. And my father, an old man who believed in nothing, or at least believed in nothing enough to stop him dying as he pissed in his own shoes staggering to the toilet in the middle of the night.

***(A spot comes up downstage. Jon enters it)***

Jon: It's 1983. I am ten years old, it's Saturday tea-time and my Mum has bought... ICE CREAM. Cold, wet, soft. From supermarkets. And it normally came in a plastic tub. □ In litres. Unless you get Neapolitan of course, because that often came in a long thin rectangular box, and your mum... would cut it into slices. Now, ice cream in those days was not very exciting. Just about the most exciting flavours you could get were raspberry ripple or mint choc chip. So...they invented... ICE MAGIC !

Ice Magic came in a plastic, mountain shaped container. The cap of which was shaped to make it look like there was snow on top of the mountain. Now, the colour of the snow denoted the flavour of the Ice Magic inside. So you had brown snow for toffee and orange snow for orange. And what you would do was take the snow off the mountain and you pour it onto your ice cream. Now, some people liked to make pretty little rivulets on their ice cream, personally I preferred to coat the whole lot. And then you had to wait for ten seconds...and the Ice Magic went hard!

***(His light goes out, he appears deeply disturbed. Louisa, who has been watching Jon, meets his eye as he returns to his steps. Her face belies a desire to communicate but she does not speak. Liz has been watching Louisa)***

Liz: Hello again.

***(Louisa is transfixed by the feathers)***

Touch it , if you like. It won't bite.

***(Lou touches the feathers)***

There's no harm in touching something. If you want it, is there?

***(Pause)***

Can you keep a secret?

Louisa: Yes.

Liz: I used to dance, and after I'd danced, I liked to fuck. I used to try people on like old shoes, and then throw them away. (whispers) I'm over it now, of course.

Chris: I tried to change, but something happened when my back was turned, something crept up on me. I tried to see the world in a different way to him. I tried to see the world in so many different ways. Not to let it get under my skin. I tried to find love, instead of dependence and sickness. I tried to keep my eyes open. But people are like elastic. You can stretch them but then they either break or snap back into place. Well I wasn't strong enough to break.

Liz: Hello clumsy.

Chris: Hello.

Liz: Nice shoes. Are they yours? Do you wear them when you're on your own?

Chris: They don't fit me. I bought them...in a shop. I don't know why, but they seemed right. Not for me, but for someone. I think the person I bought them for died a long time ago. She wouldn't have been allowed to wear them anyway.

Liz: Can I try them on?

***(She tries on the shoes, flirting outrageously with Chris whose discomfort is evident)***

Liz: They're beautiful. Shoes made for dancing. Do you dance?

Chris: I don't like dancing.

Liz: Shame. I used to. Loved it. And what came afterwards. All that swirling and touching had to lead to something. So close to another body. You can taste them in the air. Don't you think?

***(Chris crosses the stage and puts on an old jazz LP. They dance. Lou and Jon sway to the music; vacant and distant. Clare is clearly highly distressed by the music and begs them to turn it off. Chris turns off the music. Jon's spot comes up)***

Jon: So, I was lying there, in bed... asleep when I was woken by the merry cry of children outside in the street playing. I could hear them they were shouting "look mum, no hands." I drew aside my curtains and peered outside and sure enough they had... no hands. ***(Spot down)***

Louisa: Tell us another. Go on. I like it.

***(Pause. Jon returns her gaze. Louisa offers him the knife.)***

Cut them a second smile. You can really get under the skin with one of these.

***(Jon takes the knife, and stares)***

Anytime you want to talk about murder, just ask.

***(Pause. Jon returns to his steps. Liz moves toward the audience)***

Louisa: I've been thinking about you.

Liz: You hardly know me.

Louisa: Sounds strange, doesn't it?

Liz: No.

Louisa: That a stranger could occupy so much of my time.

Liz: If I wasn't a stranger there wouldn't be so many gaps for you to fill in. (Affectionately she pushes Louisa's hair behind her ear) Because you don't know me, you can mould me. As many of me as there are people watching.

**(Pause)**

Liz: **(Poking her nose affectionately)** You're pretty.

Louisa: He never says I'm pretty. Not even when he's drunk. He just puts me to good use. That's how he says it. "I want to put you to good use".

Liz: You're a queen. You're a fucking goddess.

Louisa: If you say so.

Liz: I do.

**(Louisa begins to search again, tapping the floor and listening for clues.)**

Louisa: Shhh softly, softly, slowly, slowly.

Clare: She is touching the floor as if it were the ground. Are your fingers imitating the speech of souls or drumming them to life? Bang the floor. Raise the dead. Pull your lost ones to view. Their soft heads and slow limbs should make you feel amongst friends.

Louisa: Shhh. Go to sleep.

Clare: Or is it the rain you can hear? The tapping of new life?

Louisa: Slowly, slowly. I'm finding my way home.

**(During this dialogue Clare repeatedly pushes or throws Louisa to the ground)**

Clare: Home to mummy?

Louisa: I've lost my daddy.

Clare: Oh, poor thing and has he lost you?

Louisa: I don't know. I was bad and he was angry so I ran away.

Clare: Where are you now?

Louisa: It's gritty. There's scratchy dirt and heat. Hot, so hot. There aren't many clues. I found a mark on the ground, a line and then corridors of painted metal. I heard a sound like a city transporting the goods and bads and mmm I'm thirsty.

Clare: What is home?

Louisa: Home is soft, warm circle. It's together.

Clare: And you're tapping your way home like a blind little mouse to big daddy mouse and quiet mummy mouse.

Louisa: I want to be safe and sound.

Clare: You don't want to live.

Louisa: I want to be found.

Clare: You need to see.

Louisa: I can see better than you. You're blind.

Clare: That's more like it, baby.

Louisa: I'm going to have my own baby. Then I will love it.

Clare: **(Grabbing Louisa by the hair she makes her stare out to the audience)** Love will take you home? Love is ripe and reproduced. Grown in its own soil, wet in its own garden. Is it the rain you are listening for? Or can you hear the other soft shells blistering in the sun?

Louisa: I want to go home.

Clare: You won't want home if you come with me. See with me. There are eyes cracking in front of you. You think you are lost but you just cannot see. Your screams and pain are unnecessary. Look at that, what are you scared of baby? Touch it, take it.

Louisa: It's just empty dirt. I'm lost.

Clare: **(Kicking her)** You're not even born.

**Blackout.**

## **PHASE TWO**

**(Lights up. Chris is smoking, sat on the cube DSL)**

Chris: I don't want to do things his way. I'm not scared of being alone, it's just that that's admitting defeat. I don't want to give up on humanity. My humanity. If I cut myself off it

will be like admitting failure. Failure to control those things that he gave me; spite, bitterness. I want to love, to find something lovable.

Jon: You're smoking.

Chris: I know.

Jon: Why are you smoking?

Chris: That's a very good question.

Jon: Where did you get a cigarette from anyway?

Chris: **(Gestures to Liz)** She gave it to me.

Liz: Ever read the bible?

Jon: Fucking hell.

Chris: I don't think it says anything about smoking, does it?

Jon: I went to a party once. Before all this. In another life. I met a girl. A girl I rather wanted to go to bed with, actually. We quite hit it off. Talked about all the usual things young and vibrant people talk about on these occasions, all the time looking for signs of consent in the angle of a head or the turn of a phrase. About how our families didn't understand us. About the friends we had in common. And she had a thing for cats, I remember, which I pretended to go along with on the presumption that it would accelerate my progress into her knickers. And just as our lips were almost touching, she pulled back and said-

Liz: Do you believe in God?

Jon: **(Spot)** Difficult situation. Do I say yes, do I say no? Do I pretend to be a pious man, and ruin my chances of fucking an existentialist, or do I dismiss God as pure fantasy, and lose the opportunity to know her in the biblical sense? I was truly in a quandary. **(Pause)** So I hit her... and went home. I didn't feel particularly good about it, but I was confused.

Liz: I believe in God.

Jon: I mean she shouldn't have brought religion into it, should she? How was I to know what she was thinking? I'm not a fucking telepath.

Liz: The Father Almighty.

**(Jon's spot down)**

Chris: I used to think my father was almighty. I knew he wasn't God. All that stuff...to whom all hearts are open, all desires known.....

Liz: From whom no secrets hidden.

Chris: I know. He had a knack for secrets. He could delve down into your heart, find the things you held deepest. And destroy them.

Jon: He was good with words, I'll say that.

Chris: It wore you down. Every day he'd work on your foundations. Every day digging a little deeper. It got so you didn't believe in anything in the end. Only anger and that's a cruel way to live... no way to make allowances for people, you see. No room to manoeuvre when you're up to your neck in blind fury. If you can't break it, you don't want to know.

Liz: Everything breaks eventually.

Chris: That's the trouble. Everything and everyone.

Jon: Put a record on.

***(Chris goes to the record player and puts on 1960's surf pop. He begins to dance as does Liz. Jon reluctantly joins in from his steps. Clare reacts violently against the music, she goes to smash the record player but is stopped by Chris. There is a struggle and the music is turned off. We hear Louisa, she is cradling a teddy bear)***

Louisa: In the corner, on the edge, I heard your little voice call out to me,  
Sad, upset, monsters in your head  
Stop you sleeping in your bed.  
"Shh... Shh... Go to sleep"  
Mummy picks you up and cuddles you.  
Mummy makes everything alright  
Mummy going to hug you tight  
Soft and softly,  
Smooth and smoothly  
Mummy loves you to death.  
Don't want you scared of monsters in your head,  
Can't kill the monsters,  
What can I do to protect you my sweet?  
Mummy going to hug you tight  
Soft and softly,  
Smooth and smoothly  
Mummy loves you to death  
Give you a drink, give you some food,  
Your voice gets louder  
Screaming, Crying.  
"Shh... Shh... Go to sleep"  
"Go to sleep... Go to sleep"

***(She kills the bear with a lethal injection)***

Mummy put you to sleep now,  
Won't ever wake up.

Monsters gone.  
Good night.

Jon: (*Offering Louisa the knife*) Look, you'd better have this back. I can't use it.

Lou: Are you sure. You can keep it anyway, for a rainy day.

Jon: No. Really. I can't use it.

**(Lou takes the knife. Jon returns to his steps. Liz makes her way to the front of the stage, stopping to stroke Louisa's head along the way.)**

Liz: (*To the audience*) I can smell you.

I can taste you.

I can feel you breathe.

I can feel you blinking as you stare at me.

I know you're looking at me, all of me.

Do you like looking at me?

I like it.

Which bit do you like best? (*Giggle*)

I can smell your perfume.

I can smell your feet.

You stink.

I can smell under your arms and in between your legs.

I can taste your breath on my lips. In my mouth. It's rich and heavy. Stinky.

I can hear you shuffling, biting your nails, picking your nose.

I know you're looking at me.

Can you smell me? Do I smell like roses?

Do I smell of cakes? I don't think so.

Maybe you'd like to taste me?

Do I taste of cherries? I don't think so.

Do I taste nicey wicey yummy wummy woo?

Do I? Nicey wicey yummy wummy woo?

Some people are really stupid. Are you a little bit stupid?

Can you see me?

Clare: Are you talking to me?

Liz: Maybe.

Clare: Where are you?

Liz: In the sunshine.

Clare: So you're all lit up.

Liz: I'm a beachy babe.

Clare: You're dazzling me.

Liz: I'm bright enough to take you in the dark.

Clare: People find you attractive?

Liz: I'm so beautiful I shine. It's a shame you can't see me. Can you smell me? Do I smell of strawberries?

Clare: No. A tank in a loft.

Liz: Why?

Clare: Because flies like you.

Liz: Well, what do I taste of? Do I Taste of cakes?

Clare: No. Cut liver

Liz: Is that what you want?

Clare: I've seen you. Exercising your passion. It was very illuminating.

Liz: We all have our cross to bare. Are you in pain?

Clare: Not like her.

Liz: *(To Louisa)* She's on her way home.

Clare: I know. I see you here with me. A subtler whore than most, but still a working woman, a beast of burden, a sexual mule; braying in the darkness. Come and show me what you're really made of, save the pouting for the sighted.

***(Liz begins to sing "Three Blind Mice" while tormenting Clare. Louisa and Jon join in the bullying. As Louisa and Jon punch and kick Clare Liz reels off laughing.)***

***Blackout.***

### **PHASE THREE**

***(A spot comes up slowly on Jon DSC.)***

Jon: I remember being left here - but I don't remember when or who by. I remember feeling alone, and that I had not always been that way. I was alone for a long time. Here. Stuck. I didn't know how to leave. I don't think I can. Not moving is easier anyway, and you get used to it. It doesn't seem strange. Or at least it didn't until one day when a lot of people arrived. They sat there, just like you, and were very quiet. They seemed to be waiting for something, but I didn't know what. They looked strange, or rather they looked strangely - at me. I spoke to them, but they didn't reply. They looked disgusted - with me! So I tried to make them like me. All they did was laugh. And then they left, but I had begun to learn. Now I just go through the motions. The dreary, essential, stale motions without any emotion. I wish I was alone again.

***(Louisa reaches out and touches Jon. They stare at each other for a moment then Jon returns to his steps. Louisa notices the bear.)***

Chris: Why did you do that?

Louisa: It was for the best.

Chris: Pick him up.

Louisa: No.

Chris: Pick him up. He's not going to make any unreasonable demands on you is he? Not like while he was alive. At least try to love him now he's quiet and still. Pick him up.

***(Louisa moves to the bear, touches it)***

Louisa: He's cold.

Chris: That's a surprise isn't it?

Louisa: He had to die. I'm sorry he's dead, but I couldn't see him grow up to suffer.

Chris: You can't be sorry. You're not allowed to be sorry. You can't kill a baby to prove some sort of philosophical point and then be sorry. You just can't.

Louisa: I can be sorry if I want to be.

I thought about it before. When he was inside me. But I wanted to be sure. Could have been my.....hormones, couldn't it? They could have...gone off. Curdled. Screwed me up. And then when he was born...I thought about it then too. But I waited. Sunset and sunrise. And I decided to go on waiting. He was born in the autumn. On an autumn morning. Everything glowed. I gave myself until the spring. I wanted him to be a little person. A little person with a little personality. He had to know what I was doing. For killing him to be of any use. I wanted him to know what I was saving him from before I did it. All those dark nights and early sunsets. And when the days got longer I knew, suddenly-

Chris: Pick him up.

Louisa: I'm going to.

Chris: Now.

***(Louisa picks up the bear)***

Chris: Is he heavy?

Louisa: No. He's only six months old. How could he be heavy?

Chris: Because he's dead.

**(Pause)**

Chris: You could have given him to me. I could have tried to love him. If you didn't want to...is that why you did it? Looking after a child. It can't be that hard...clothed and fed can't be the most difficult thing in the world, can it. I might not have loved him. But I could have tried.

Louisa: I did it just for him. To save him.

Chris: Fuck salvation.

Liz: Hello.

***(Liz comforts Lou and takes the bear away from her. As she places the bear down she discovers the knife and picks it up)***

Louisa: You smell lovely. I still can't get rid of it. It follows me around like a curse.

Liz: I think I could....put it to good use.

Louisa: Good. It's yours then. Good.

Liz: Beautiful.

Louisa: I need to know....

Liz: Know what? You can ask me anything you want.

Louisa: Do you love me?

Liz: Yes. I love you. **(Pause)** I mean it.

Louisa: I love you too.

***(Liz moves towards Chris)***

Liz: I think I met your father once.

Chris: Oh?

Liz: He was a handsome man. Like you.

Chris: Thank you.

Liz: Handsome but clumsy. Always knocking things over.

Chris: He didn't knock things over. He used to throw them.

Liz: At the wall. I remember. We used to live upstairs. *(She runs her fingers down his neck and shoulder)* I must have been just a girl when you were born. Nine years old, perhaps ten. He got terribly drunk with that irritating Welsh friend of his and played those

horrible jazz records all night long. They were howling like wolves. I remember thinking how terrible it was going to be for you, to grow up in a house like that. *(Leans forward to whisper in his ear)* Was it terrible?

Chris: *(Reaches up to touch her arm)* Did you ever meet my mother?

Liz: Your mother was....*(Closes eyes, opens eyes)* almost invisible, I think. He'd worn her away to almost nothing by the time she....went away.

Chris: Killed herself.

Liz: I must have been sixteen. I'd been to the pictures. With a man. I left early. Oh it was a good film, an adventure story of some sort. It was the man. When he slid his hand inside my underwear I suppose I should have expected it. He didn't try to kiss me, just wanted to touch my cunt, as if it wasn't actually part of my body, like a pet animal I just happened to keep in my knickers. When I looked up in surprise it seemed like he was flickering on and off in the light. But I could still feel the hand. Creeping. Probing. He was still clutching his balls and moaning when I reached the exit. In any case when I arrived home your mother was just....leaving. Your Father was nowhere to be seen, I thought how sad it was for her, being carried away by strangers. *(Liz sits on the arm of the chair, stroking Chris)* When the...bag she was in brushed against the doorframe, it left a red smear, and then she was gone. It came off on my hands like paint....she made far more of an impression on me dead than alive.

Chris: I hardly remember her.

Liz: Do you want to? *(Kisses Chris's neck)*

Chris: Remember her?

Liz: No. Not that. Do you want to? *(Kisses him again)*

Chris: Not now.

Liz: I can smell you. I know what you want. I could look into your eyes once, and I'd be everything you lack. Security. A home to go to. A family. A reason. Peace. You'd never have to think again, except of me. I know you.

Chris: Not that well.

Liz: You could love me. I could love you.

Chris: Till hate do us part.

*(Pause)*

Until the first time I did something wrong.

Liz: I can be very forgiving.

Chris: Not of me. You might forgive, the first time. But one day I'd hurt you so badly you'd never forgive, much less forget. I'd send you mad. I'd drown you in the bath. I'd kick you until you were paralysed. I wouldn't mean to but I would. I'm not my father. I haven't got the language. Words build up in me. They go rotten. Stillborn. And the rot bursts out.

Liz: I could heal you.

Chris: Shall I tell you what I think.

Liz: Go on.

Chris: I think you should fuck off. Go a long way from me and never, ever come back.

Louisa: *(To the bears body)* Hello. I've come to say hello. You look different, you look better now. Not like when you were born, you didn't look like a baby then - you were ugly. You came out all wrinkly, like a prune. All that pain just for a little prune. You look pretty now. Are you smiling? You look happy. I wanted you to be happy. It wasn't an easy decision to make you know, are you listening to me? I had to be sure. I'm not mad. I knew what I was doing. A mummy is supposed to make her baby happy. I wanted to make you happy but you wouldn't stop crying. I didn't know what you wanted, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't tell if you were cold or if you wanted a cuddle or whether something hurt.

You wouldn't stop crying, I wanted to make you quiet. You weren't very much help you know, I thought you were supposed to help me but you didn't. I don't feel any better you know. Can you hear me? You feel cold, cold and hard. But you look so peaceful, so content.

*(To the audience)*

I don't really know what to do now.

I just feel like I'm waiting for something to happen now.

I'm sorry.

*(Jon comes to the front of the stage, in his spot)*

Jon: Let me try and make you understand. I have ticker tape in my head it runs behind my eyes, in front of my brain. And it tells me things. Things that I once believed, then didn't want to see, then started telling people, and now, though seen are ignored.

My ticker tape suggests:

Laugh in his face.

Touch her tits.

Punch her hard in the face.

If I am destructive I shall be punished.

If I am destructive I shall be recognised as an individual.

Slit your wrists in the bath and make your family sorry.

Your father despises you.

All human life is worthless and futile.

I would like to be crucified.

Kill the cat.

Fuck the cat.  
Tread on its head and look at its brains-

*(Spot down)*

Clare: Oh you're so shocking. You're so confused, so amoral and so vexed. You are a liar and a petty thief, too stupid to steal the big ideas and too protected to steal property. But your bad thoughts just show your frail humanity and basic decency. I hate. I hate love. That's what you want isn't it. You are a child, shocking the world so that it will notice you and say; "Oh yes, I have felt this. I am like this therefore I love you. If a child ever crosses my path I beat it and abuse it in order to to give it a sense of injustice. As far as I can see there is too much bloody justice in the world and not enough earthquakes, nuclear-plant meltdowns, incurable disease, war and famine.

Jon: *(He pushes Clare around the stage with increasing violence)* What's the matter with you. You hate do you? You're angry are you? Angry is just a load of words to you. A load of words that don't make any sense! I'm just trying to get on with it. Do you think they understand what you're on about? Do you? You can't even see them. They're just looking at you like you're some kind of freak. Why don't you just shut the fuck up? Well come on then. What are you going to do...speak some more words at me? I'll show you what fucking anger is.

*(Jon beats Clare savagely.)*

**Blackout.**

#### **PHASE FOUR**

***(Music. Chris reads blank letters and drinks. Liz dances alone. Jon sits alone. Lou sits with a syringe and tournequet. Clare is lying in a beaten heap centre stage.)***

Jon: Stop it.

***(The music stops)***

Chris: Stop what?

Jon: That.

Chris: What?

Jon: That shit.

Chris: It's not shit.

Jon: Yes it is. Do you think they are interested in your maudlin little fantasies? Do you?

Chris: They might be.

Jon: Well they aren't.

*(A spot comes up at the front of the stage. Jon goes to it.)*

Jon: Ere' - now - listen to this - true story. A friend of mine was off on a trip - to Manchester he was. And he asked me if I knew anywhere he could stay. Oh yes, I knew just the place, lovely, it is, I say to him. And the best thing about it is it won't cost you a penny. No, dinner, booze, penthouse suite. And the manager, when you leave, he'll even send you away with a tenner. "Well that sounds ideal" he says, "you've stayed there have you?" No, I says to him, but my sister has!

Ere! Now! Ooh! You are dreadful! Don't laugh!

Ere! Only twelve she was at the time and all.

Ere - now - really - how awful - I warn you.

Ere, but that's a good age isn't it? Twelve. X

*(He moves his body as in a dance, a gesture, a gift to the audience - pure performance)*

Can I go home now please?

*(Jon goes to leave.)*

Chris: Rooms are genetic. A code put together from old arguments and love affairs, reassembled. The web of cracks in an old vase, fossils of a moments anger. The coffee mug without a handle. Burn marks like old inoculation scars on a cream carpet. Burn marks on the skin.

Jon: What did we ever find to argue about?

Chris: Oh, we'd argue about any old shit.

Jon: You tried to kill me once.

Chris: I didn't.

Jon: It started because-

Chris: The milk had gone off. I said it was your fault.

Jon: You wanted to fuck, and I didn't want to.

Chris: Not true. Probably true...I didn't want you to die.

Jon: No but you wouldn't have cared if I had.

Chris: No. Not at first. But there wasn't any malice there.

Jon: Why then?

Chris: I thought if I could make you suffer, you'd be a better person. I wanted to have love, not dependence or sickness.

Jon: I didn't press charges. Three weeks I was in the Hospital, I couldn't speak for two. Broken fingers and a broken jaw. Soup through a straw. No visitors because a beaten husband is a social leper. Have you ever tried sobbing with fractured ribs? Three weeks and I never even thought of retribution.

Chris: Because you saw my point.

Jon: You wanted to make me heroic? Your brave little soldier?

Chris: Instead of a fucking housewife.

Jon: Fracture lines!

Chris: I wanted to touch you in a way that you wouldn't forget. You were so insipid, like water left over after boiling the Sunday potatoes. And I'd rather have killed what you were than stopped trying to make you what you could have been. And the thought of beating you never crossed my mind until that moment. I thought you were so strong and admirable and brave, because you were quiet.

Jon: I didn't have anything to say.

Chris: And you didn't even scream.

Jon: My mouth was too full of your fists to get any sound out.

Chris: I beat you to a pulp. I couldn't even recognise you. I broke your ribs, you couldn't even breathe. I kicked you in the head. Twice. I spent an hour washing your blood out from under my finger nails. Not a word. Not even a plea. You bastard. Looking through my father's letters, I realised how much of him there is in me. I can't force it out. His spite and his bile. He didn't hit my mother much. Not after the first few times.

Jon: Because he knew that it achieves precisely fucking nothing. Changed you more than it changed me.

Chris: I think I'm much calmer now.

Jon: Dinner'll be burning I'd better go and see to it.

*(Jon looks up and exits. We notice that Louisa has tied a tie around her arm. She commits suicide by lethal injection. Liz watches over her repeating a refrain from Lou's speech to her Bear. Liz claims Lou's body, wraps it in cling film and drags it off stage.)*

Chris: i don't understand  
i don't understand cars  
i don't understand why people travel by air  
i understand suicide  
but i don't understand smoking  
i understand rape  
but not unwanted kisses, especially from children  
i understand what it's like  
to have to tell someone that a friend has died

and at the same time feel like laughing in their face  
and i understand  
why it is important not to do it  
and I understand the feeling that i should do it anyway  
i understand that making sick jokes about the recently deceased  
are not simply a way of coping with loss  
but sometimes  
just sometimes  
an honest attempt to make other people laugh  
i understand that God disapproves  
of taking one's own life  
but I don't understand his refusal to murder me  
and most of all I understand  
oh yeah I understand so well  
so completely  
the need  
to simply  
stop.

*(He takes off Clare's hood and exits. Clare is in the centre spot, she has been blinded and her eyes are bound in blood-soaked bandages - she bleeds)*

Clare: Pain is a new beginning. Now I hate as much as I am hated. We have transcended the stage of bickering and taunts. Mostly words are used as a form of self-debasement. Now we practice sensible, meaningful torture.

I offer this prayer to the god of anger.  
A female-male god with the face of a teething baby  
and the obstinate hide of the ancient.  
Give me the courage that I might carry out thy vengeance honourably.  
Give me the strength that I might climb thy seething mountain  
That the steaming clouds will quicken my ire  
and the blood of the meek will heat my desire.  
Where there was acceptance let me bring mutiny  
Where there were cheeks let me bring whips  
Where there is passivity let me bring energy  
Where there is harmony, let me incite  
Oh passion hear my prayer

Provoke my eye to stone that I may see clearly  
Madden my heart to steel that I may feel seeingly  
Strip my sex that I may dance  
Throw me on the rocky ground that I may find that crooked path  
Oh Passion hear my prayer

***Blackout.***

## **EPILOGUE**

***Piano music. Face in muslin. Blackout.***