

'Man. Up. Man – Up.

Literally, what do you mean?

Is this how I walk as a man, or stand? Or do I do it like this?

Please fucking tell me what that instruction means!

Every 31 hours someone takes their own life by jumping in front of a train.
They are ten times more likely to be male.

31 Hours is the story of four men who clean up after rail suicides. It is a story of four men at work. Four men at home. Four men dealing with their own lives. Their own problems. Dealing with them in their own way. On their own. Silently. It is a story of four men failing to talk.

Filled with humour and humanity, it is a high-speed kaleidoscopic journey through masculinity, mental health and messy aftermaths in modern Britain.

Kieran Knowles trained at Loughborough University and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, and completed the Royal Court Young Writers Programme. His debut play *Operation Crucible* was first performed at the Finborough Theatre before transferring to the Sheffield Crucible and touring with House. He is currently adapting the play for BBC Radio Four and is under commission from Sheffield Crucible.



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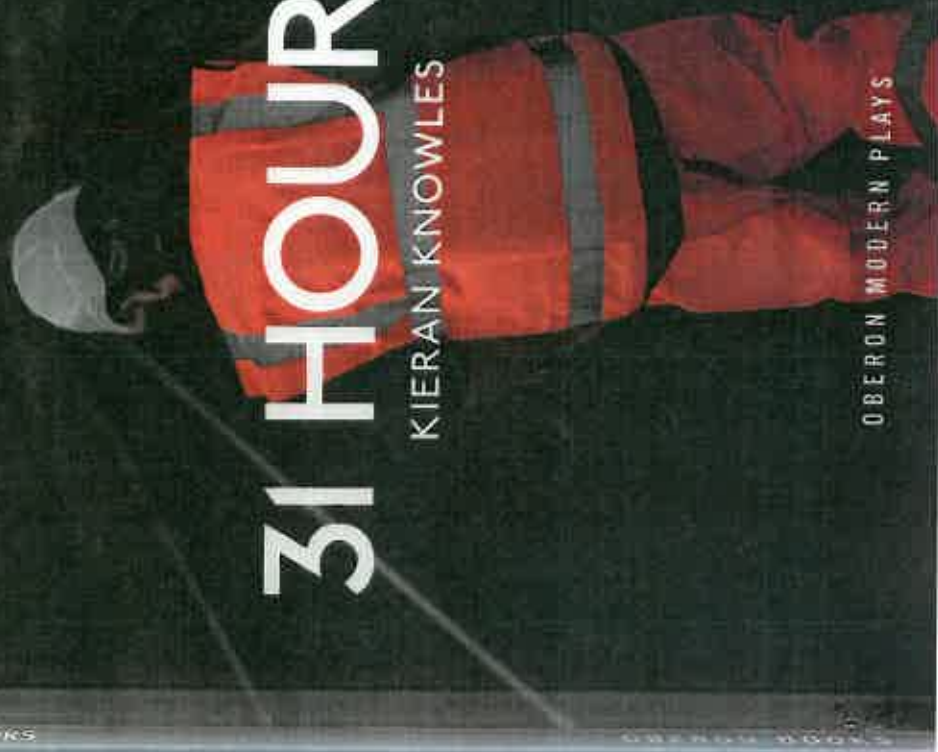
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31 HOURS

KIERAN KNOWLES

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At the end of the play the character names which have appeared throughout the narrative are replaced by alphabetical prefixes (A-D). Each of the characters will assume a letter according to a predetermined understanding worked out in rehearsal. It is for a director to decide how they would like to interpret this, however it is my intention that a different character takes their life (performs the role of 'A') in each performance. The randomness and spontaneity in the conclusion of the piece is designed to mirror the unpredictable/instinctive nature of rail suicides. It is my hope that in production each of the characters has been built to a point where they might decide to take their own life, we discover which one in those final passages.

I have removed many of the stage directions, those that remain are merely for context, they are optional and open to interpretation.

The jumps and transitions between scenes can be handled in whatever manner the creative team decide, however, there are a wealth of sounds and lighting opportunities unique to the rail network that would lend themselves to distortion or abbreviation. There is also a 'language' to on-track behaviour outlined by the Rail Safety and Standards Board's (RSSB) documents on Personal Track Safety which would be useful to incorporate and utilise. These are available online.

The play was written in accordance with the Samaritans' Media Guidelines For Reporting Suicide and their Drama Portrayal Factsheet. I have tried to incorporate their advice into the structure of the piece and have been deliberately wary of details and specifics throughout. There are a number of videos on the Samaritans website which offer real life context to the fiction we present here.

If you have been affected by any issues in this piece, I urge you to contact any of the charities listed below:

Samaritans Email: jo@samaritans.org.uk / Tel: 116 123

Maytree Email: maytree@maytree.org.uk / Tel: 020 7263 7070

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

Email: info@thecalzone.net / Tel: 0800 585858

Or go here: <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Suicide/>

Train noise builds to a crescendo.

Lights up the four stand in high visibility orange, with blue helmets equipped with head torches, they are inspecting the aftermath of a rail suicide.

It's a Tuesday morning.

Despite its initial appearance, this is not a typical job.

Silence for a long time.

JOHN: Fucking hell.

Another long pause.

STE: "Alright Neil, thanks for coming today, my name is Carl I am the Cleaning Operations Manager, If you get the job, you'll report to me, this is Catherine who works in HR."

JOHN: "Hi."

NEIL: Hello.

STE: "Neil, just to let you know the questions we ask today are standard and were put together by our HR team, they're fairly simple and aren't designed to catch you out."

NEIL: Ok.

STE: "Neil, do you have any questions before we begin?"

NEIL: Err - No.

STE: "Great. Catherine?"

JOHN: "Hi Neil. Nice easy one to start off, what can you tell us about Network Rail?"

DOUG: We work for Network Rail's specialist cleaning branch.

STE: It is our job to attend accidents.

JOHN: Incidents.

STE: Incidents sorry.

DOUG: We are usually the first on site.

STE: Well, sometimes we get there after the police.

JOHN: But we do tend to be amongst the first to...you know.
 DOUG: Get our hands dirty.
 JOHN: "Anything to add Neil?"
 NEIL: No, that's about it.
 STE: "Right... Ok, thank you for that..."
 NEIL: Oh yeh. Shit. You own all the rail, whatsit. Tracks and buildings and stuff.
 STE: "Infrastructure"
 NEIL: Yeh, sorry, yeh...forgot to mention that.
 STE: "Yeh."
 NEIL: Sorry, didn't mean to swear.
 JOHN: "So Neil, why are you applying for this position?"
 DOUG: It's our job to facilitate the transport police.
 STE: So that they are able to ascertain identity.
 JOHN: And stupid as it sounds, cause of death.
 STE: Which is usually being hit bloody hard by a train.
 DOUG: It's obviously upsetting at times.
 STE: But you can't let it get to you.
 JOHN: "Sorry Neil, I didn't catch that."
 NEIL: I said I don't know.
 JOHN: "You don't know?"
 NEIL: I can't think.
 JOHN: "Alright."
 DOUG: People underestimate the speed -
 JOHN: Definitely.
 STE: And the size.
 JOHN: Yeh.
 DOUG: Of the trains.
 JOHN: Normally you see a them from a platform -

STE: But -
 DOUG: When you're at ground level -
 JOHN: It can be towering above you.
 DOUG: Twelve feet. Lots of power.
 STE: Bodies explode.
 JOHN: And blood is a chemical waste.
 DOUG: So it's our job to get it cleared up.
 NEIL: I mean, I didn't get fired, but I just wanted to leave because the environment was... I saw this on the website and I thought...it was a good opportunity to...it seemed like I would - could, it was like it seemed like I would be good at it.
 JOHN: "Thank you Neil."
 DOUG: 60 minutes travel and 75 to clean up.
 STE: That's the target.
 JOHN: If we're more than an hour away.
 DOUG: They outsource.
 JOHN: Yeh, they get a contractor in.
 DOUG: But, that's expensive.
 STE: So they don't like doing it.
 DOUG: Cheap bastards.
 JOHN: From impact to normal service should take about 3 hours.
 STE: But it can take a bit longer if you get a 'Popper'.
 DOUG: Bloody hell.
 JOHN: Don't say that.
 STE: What?
 DOUG: Sorry about him.
 JOHN: He means if the impact is particularly...
 DOUG: If someone is hit in a certain way then...
 STE: They pop!

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JOHN: Jesus Christ.

NEIL: ...and I were captain at the time, so I went in there and said you know, you've hit him pretty hard there Timothy, do you know what I'm saying Cath? His name was Timothy, you've gone in a bit rash and the referee has given you a red card, so I think you should leave the field now. Because the referee had just shown him the red, and so what I'm trying to say, you know, I think I was able to calm the situation, you know, but it also shows that I was a good team player because I probably stopped Timmy getting punched in the face.

JOHN: "Thanks Neil, that was actually the last question, so if you don't have anything for us?"

NEIL: No I don't think I do...erm actually...when will I? I mean, when is it that I'll find out?

STE: "Erm..."

DOUG: Ready?

STE: Bag

NEIL: Zip

DOUG: Overalls

STE: Waterproof

DOUG: Radio

STE: Face mask

JOHN: Belt

DOUG: Zip

STE: Pause.

DOUG: My name is Doug, and I'm team leader.

JOHN: He isn't bloody leader.

NEIL: There's no such thing.

JOHN: I'm John.

DOUG: That over there is -

STE: Ste.

DOUG: And this is -

Beat. NEIL isn't looking.

JOHN: Neil, that's Neil.

NEIL: What?

STE: Never mind we've moved on.

DOUG: Deep breath

NEIL: Stop

DOUG: Look

JOHN: Think

DOUG: Assess

STE: Your concerns

NEIL: The risks

DOUG: And feelings

JOHN: How are you feeling?

STE: Fine

JOHN: Great

NEIL: Pause.

JOHN: Discuss

STE: Advise

NEIL: You must

DOUG: Discuss

JOHN: Communicate

STE: Question

DOUG: And advise

NEIL: You must

STE: Prior to

JOHN: Before you
 DOUG: Start to
 JOHN: Plan
 DOUG: Before you start to plan
 NEIL: In order to
 JOHN: Avoid
 STE: Unwanted
 DOUG: Injuries
 JOHN: Pause.
 NEIL: Clear the obvious
 JOHN: The visible
 DOUG: Clear the obviously visible
 STE: The limbs
 JOHN: The bones
 NEIL: The bodies and the phones
 JOHN: The rings
 DOUG: And things
 NEIL: Clear the other bits of bling
 STE: Clear hats
 NEIL: And clothes
 DOUG: And put it all in rows
 STE: So we can tag it
 JOHN: And bag it
 DOUG: And then bring in the hose
 STE: So we can clean
 NEIL: And spray
 DOUG: And wash it all away
 JOHN: The blood
 DOUG: The gore

STE: A little piece of jaw
 NEIL: And then we scrub
 JOHN: We scrub
 DOUG: We seriously scrub
 STE: Clear the shit
 NEIL: And scum
 DOUG: Until our hands go numb
 JOHN: And then like fighters
 STE: Covered in detritus
 NEIL: Just our hats to light us
 JOHN: We are blowing
 DOUG: Adrenaline is flowing
 STE: Filth and dirt
 DOUG: Exhausted by the hurt.
 NEIL: We stop
 JOHN: Out of breath
 STE: About to flop
 NEIL: We stop
 DOUG: And it's gone
 NEIL: We go
 JOHN: A blink
 DOUG: A flash
 STE: Ago
 DOUG: We stop
 STE: Bag
 NEIL: Zip
 STE: Face mask
 DOUG: Radio
 STE: Waterproof

JOHN: Overalls

NEIL: Belt

DOUG: Zip

STE: Pause.

DOUG: It was a Tuesday.

I remember that.

Tuesdays are always the hardest days to get up.

We were on 'earlys' so it made it even harder.

It was frosty.

JOHN: I'd heard a rumour.

DOUG: Crisp.

JOHN: About work, nothing serious. But a rumours a rumour.

STE: Cold. It was very cold.

JOHN: And even though you know rumours are just Chinese
whispers, they always have a beginning don't they?

STE: Cold... and lonely.

DOUG: I got in the car and drove to the station, parked up,
usual spot, it was icy.

JOHN: Someone always has to say something to start one off.

NEIL: It was in the middle of everything else.

JOHN: And when it gets to you, obviously its warped, but
someone said something about you.

You just don't know what.

DOUG: It was strange. I just -

STE: I was thinking. 'I can't be bothered' you know because of
the cold.

DOUG: Just had this feeling.

NEIL: Work was an escape. Just - yeh.

STE: I was thinking that.

DOUG: From the moment I woke up...everything felt difficult.

STE: Like a chore.

NEIL: The wife, the baby.

JOHN: And I hate that.

NEIL: Yeh. An escape.

JOHN: "My name is PC Williams, I am with the British
Transport Police based out of Crewe. I was called to the
scene on the Tuesday morning. Nothing strange about it
really.

Unfortunately.

Just another jumper."

DOUG: "Fran Wallace, station manager. I was on call that
morning. Still at home.

Still in bed."

JOHN: "The man were middle aged. Again not unusual, it was
all very neat.

The driver, a Paul Monroe had reported the incident to the
Train Operating Company's switchboard."

DOUG: "My first responsibility is to my staff and my
passengers. Fortunately this happened in an area just away
from both which is a positive - I suppose.

I just thought - typical, every bloody time I'm on call."

JOHN: "The station manager was on-site and the coroner had
been informed.

There was no reason to suspect foul play, though an
investigation was opened.

I don't have the case number.

Sorry."

DOUG: "I called the boys, emailed them as well, I didn't know at that point... obviously."

STE: This is a young man

JOHN: He is 34

NEIL: "ish"

JOHN: Called

NEIL: "David"

JOHN: He works in a -

STE: DIY store

JOHN: Thank you, he works in a DIY store as

NEIL: "Deputy Store Manager"

DOUG: £19,995 basic salary

STE: Additional based on store and team target achievement

JOHN: The targets are not being achieved

NEIL: "Not for some time"

DOUG: And that is putting pressure on -

JOHN: "Me"

STE: This is his wife

JOHN: "Janine"

STE: She has to stay at home because they have a young boy called
NEIL: "Walter"

JOHN: Which puts a lot of pressure on them

NEIL: "Another mouth to feed"

DOUG: Plus

STE: David has credit cards

JOHN: Tah-Dah

DOUG: Loads of them

JOHN: But the straw that breaks the camel's back
DOUG: Is a small

STE: But not insubstantial bout of

DOUG: Depression

NEIL: "Depressed"

DOUG: He is depressed

NEIL: "I am"

JOHN: It's April

DOUG: Raining

NEIL: "Pouring down"

STE: He leaves the house

NEIL: "As normal"

DOUG: He makes his way to the station

STE: And

DOUG: It hits him

STE: He realises

DOUG: This -

STE: It isn't for him

DOUG: It's no fun

JOHN: Not anymore

DOUG: He is no longer having any fun
Neil: "None"

STE: And then the decision

DOUG: Is easy

JOHN: It's not even a decision

NEIL: "It's an instinct"

STE: A reaction

DOUG: A natural progression

JOHN: He doesn't want to hurt anyone

NEIL: "No"

STE: But he can't cope

NEIL: "No"

DOUG: But maybe the kid?

NEIL: "No, he'll be better off"

STE: Maybe the Mrs?

NEIL: "She hates me anyway"

JOHN: How about the mortgage, the debt?

NEIL: "They'll write it off, surely"

STE: Will they?

DOUG: Erm

NEIL: "Surely -"

JOHN: No, you'll still have the debt

NEIL: "I have life insurance"

DOUG: Nope

NEIL: "What?"

STE: Suicide invalidates all insurance

NEIL: "Right"

STE: But to be fair you probably don't know that

NEIL: "Yeh, no, I didn't, I don't, I wouldn't know that"

DOUG: Yeh, that'll be the sort of thing Janine will find out

JOHN: "He's a bastard, he knew he'd leave me like this"

NEIL: "I didn't - Don't -"

JOHN: "I will never forgive him for this"

STE: Bit harsh

NEIL: "No, I just -"

STE: It was easier

JOHN: An option

DOUG: A moment

STE: A question

NEIL: "A chance."

JOHN: I hated it.

I...

Sorry

It's - Erm...

Beat.

I'm coming up on 20 years service.

On the railway.

Beat.

It's all I know.

Beat.

All I -

My life is this job, this job and holidays I can't afford.
That's it.

Beat.

That's it.

So any rumour...

Beat.

Sorry.

Pause.

Sorry.

STE: "Michael Savage, ticket inspector. Conductor. I was working on the train, that day, Tuesday, I was working at the time of the incident."

NEIL: "Paul Monroe."

STE: "I was discussing the route a passenger would have to take when arriving at Crewe in order to continue on to Manchester Piccadilly. Fairly simple."

NEIL: "Train driver."

STE: "I was in the front carriage."

There was a lurch as the brakes were applied and a hard squelchy thud. I knew, instantly."

NEIL: "It's a very lonely time. In the aftermath."

STE: "People were looking out of the windows to either side; they were trying to get a glimpse."

NEIL: "There's obviously phone calls and...but essentially it's you in a small cabin, thinking about what you just saw. What you just did."

Thinking about it, over and over."

STE: "I made contact with the driver via the intercom."

"Was that what I thought?" I asked."

NEIL: "'Yes' it was all I could say."

It's hard. Because all I could think of was the life, the choices which he made to end up in front of the train. In front of me."

STE: "I couldn't see any blood or claret on the windows so I knew it must have been a fairly clean hit."

NEIL: "This was the first time I'd...you know."

STE: "My job was, essentially, to sit tight, and wait for instructions."

DOUG: John, pass us the juice. John!

JOHN: Sorry?

DOUG: The bleach

JOHN: Here

STE: It's important that you pack everything away clean

DOUG: Otherwise next time you come to use it

STE: It'll be all hard and shitty

NEIL: Right.

DOUG: Grab that broom

NEIL: Right.

DOUG: Dunk it

NEIL: What's that?

DOUG: Water

NEIL: Right.

DOUG: And soap and some disinfectant

NEIL: Right.

DOUG: Then you pull it out

STE: Shake it over a drain

JOHN: Dunk it again

NEIL: Right.

DOUG: See all that blood?

NEIL: Yeh.

STE : Then you pour a bit of bleach on it

JOHN: Leave it for a minute

DOUG: Dunk it again

JOHN: Then pack it away

DOUG: And you do that with everything

NEIL: Right.

STE: Hold these Neil

NEIL: The first month was crazy.
 DOUG: Neil, come here
 NEIL: I was more of a servant than a colleague.
 JOHN: Erm... Sorry lad what's your name?
 NEIL: Neil.
 STE: Neil, that's it, can you nip back to the station and ask them for the usual?
 NEIL: Erm... What's the usual?
 STE: Coffee, white, boring
 JOHN: Tea - strong.
 DOUG: Black -
 JOHN: Splash of milk
 DOUG: Coffee
 JOHN: Semi skimmed
 DOUG: Two sugars
 NEIL: Right
 JOHN: What are you doing?
 NEIL: Sorry?
 STE: Neil, I thought you were getting the drinks?
 NEIL: I think it was because I was new. I didn't know the routines.
 DOUG: Bloody hell
 NEIL: The shorthand
 JOHN: Take your time Neil
 NEIL: It's funny when you start something new, isn't it?
 First you have to learn the actual day to day job, then you have to learn the people... what they're like and what they want from you.
 STE: Hold these Neil
 NEIL: Give us a minute.
 DOUG: Neil, come here

NEIL: Why?
 DOUG: Because I bloody said so
 JOHN: Erm... Sorry lad what's your name?
 NEIL: Neil.
 STE: Neil?
 DOUG: Neil.
 JOHN: Neil!
 NEIL: Fiss off. It's trial and error but you get there in the end.

JOHN: Gasping
 STE: Breathing
 NEIL: Panting
 DOUG: Breath
 JOHN: Gasping
 STE: Breathing
 NEIL: Panting
 DOUG: Breath
 JOHN: Air
 STE: I need -
 JOHN: Gasping
 STE: Breathing
 NEIL: Panting
 DOUG: Breath
 JOHN: Air
 STE: I need air
 NEIL: I need
 DOUG: Need air
 JOHN: Gasping

STE: Breathing

NEIL: Panting

DOUG: Breath

JOHN: Air

DOUG: I Need, I –

STE: I –

NEIL: Need air.

STE stands alone.

He pulls out a wallet and fishes in it for a picture.

He shows it to the audience.

STE: Hard copy.

I've got more on my phone, but I keep this one with me.

I just –

Yeh.

As if feeling he has said too much, he carefully puts the picture away.

DOUG: "Erm... Jennifer Flowers. I was a passenger on the train.

The police were brilliant.

It was very calm."

NEIL: "Manic. It's always manic."

DOUG: "It was early in the morning, dark. It was still dark.
And frosty.

I just felt the braking. And straight away you think, that's not normal, trains don't normally brake like that. Someone fell over. In the aisle."

NEIL: "Sorry, I'm Tina King, I'm a Rail Care Team volunteer. Have been for 7 years.

We are always on call for suicides in our area. We're just there to help. To assist."

DOUG: "Then there was a long pause, we were just sitting there. Waiting.

It was cold."

NEIL: "We identify passengers who may not be coping, help them, offer them a shoulder. We're the caring side of the company."

DOUG: "No one was speaking. Which isn't unusual I guess, but they weren't listening to anything either. It was just silent. Heavy. It was like we were at a remembrance service for the person already. There were a couple of people walking the train advising us of what had happened, what they were doing, and how long these things can take. They looked sympathetic."

NEIL: "Sometimes they have to isolate the train, which means it loses power, that can shock passengers, being plunged into near darkness."

DOUG: "I just remember the calm, they even dimmed the lights."

JOHN: "Fuming. I was fuming. And everyone was deflecting."

NEIL: "This was my sixteenth suicide. Fourth this year."

STE: "Sir this is a very serious matter."

JOHN: "Said the conductor, who had been breezing up and down the train all morning with an unearned sense of authority. Serious!"

STE: "There are a number of logistical issues as I am sure you'll appreciate."

JOHN: "How can I fucking appreciate them, when we are just sat here, clueless. It is a joke! The lights weren't on, it was pitch black, freezing. The company should have plans for this –"

STE: "I'll stop you there."

JOHN: "What?"

STE: "This is a Network Rail issue."

JOHN: "It was infuriating. Thoughtless prick. How can you do this, kill yourself like this. There's a train full of people here, 400, 500 people, all just trying to get to work, trying to have a normal Tuesday, and one idiot kills himself and now we are all sat here managing the consequences."

STE: "Sir, this is an ongoing situation -"

JOHN: "I don't even have phone service, my phone isn't in service. I was taking photos though. I was going to tweet the shit out of this, taking pictures of every inept member of staff"

STE: "it's obviously a very delicate time for everyone and -"

JOHN: "It's a joke."

DOUG: I'm alright.

I'm always alright.

Course I am.

Beat.

I'm fine.

I am.

Beat.

But...

He thinks. Takes his time.

No.

STE: You're ten minutes late.

NEIL: What?

DOUG: What time do you call this?

NEIL: You what?

STE: Phone's been going off the hook.

NEIL: Has it?

STE: Yeh it was only Carl though.

NEIL: Shut up!

DOUG: Just checking we were all here ready to start the week.

NEIL: Hey?

STE: Just seeing if we needed anything.

DOUG: "All set?" he said.

NEIL: Nah.

DOUG: "You know what you're up to this week then boys?"

NEIL: Shut up.

JOHN: He did ring.

NEIL: Oh Christ. He didn't?

JOHN: He did.

NEIL: What did you say?

DOUG: What could we say?

STE: Had to tell him the truth.

NEIL: You didn't! You could've said I were on the bog.

DOUG: But you weren't

NEIL: I'm only ten minutes late.

STE: Ten minutes is someone's life Neil.

NEIL: Fucking hell.

STE: I'd start packing that bag.

DOUG: Aye, pack it up son, you'll be on your way later.

NEIL: I can't, I'm not -

JOHN: They're messing with you Neil. He only spoke to me.

NEIL: Really? Thank God. Dicks. What did you say?

JOHN: I said Neil's a lazy fucker he's never here on time.

NEIL: You didn't.

JOHN: Can't get his arse out of bed.

NEIL: John!

STE: "Come in Neil, take a seat."

NEIL: Here?

STE: "There's fine."

NEIL: Thanks.

STE: "How you doing?"

NEIL: Yeh, I'm alright.

STE: "Did Donna get you a tea?"

NEIL: No.

STE: "She didn't?"

NEIL: Didn't want one.

STE: "Right.

Beat.

So this is just a quick catch up, just a quick meeting to discuss -"

NEIL: I wasn't late.

STE: "When?"

NEIL: Never.

STE: "Pardon."

NEIL: What?

STE: "This isn't about punctuality."

NEIL: It's not a disciplinary?

STE: "No. It's a one to one."

NEIL: Right.

STE: "Who said it was a disciplinary?"

NEIL: Nothing, no one, they are just having me on.

Beat.

STE: "Are you ok?"

NEIL: Yeh, fine.

STE: "Anything bothering you?"

DOUG: Boots.

STE: "Your boots?"

DOUG: Yeh, they're shit.

STE: "Right."

DOUG: Our last manager - James - he bought DeWalt boots.

STE: "I only -"

DOUG: But these ones are shit.

STE: "I can only order off the portal."

DOUG: Can you order DeWalts off the portal?

STE: "Err... No."

JOHN: Am I?

STE: "Are you alright?"

JOHN: Yeh... I suppose. Yes.

STE: "Suppose?"

JOHN: Well I mean. I'm fine, you know. It's just...sometimes this job, being what it is, you know. I mean it's a good job, I know that, but sometimes it's -

STE: "Difficult."

JOHN: Yeh.

STE: "Are you finding it difficult at the moment?"

NEIL: The job?

STE: "Yes."

NEIL: I guess so.

STE: "Is there anything I can do to help?"

NEIL: Like what?

STE: "Well what are your issues?"

DOUG: Thermals.

STE: "Thermals?"

DOUG: Yep.

STE: "Why are they an issue?"

DOUG: Because we don't have them. The lads want them but they're too scared to ask.

STE: "You want thermals?"

JOHN: No I'm fine.

NEIL: Thermals? No. What are they?

STE: "They never mentioned them to me."

DOUG: As I said, scared, I sometimes feel like they raise things just so I stick my head up. I don't know why I bother.

STE: "I'll look at costs."

DOUG: It's just... station staff have them and we don't, I'd hate to get the union involved.

STE: "No."

NEIL: No. I don't need anything, I'm alright, it's just a lot of change.

STE: "Yeh. Well honestly I'm always here."

NEIL: Thank you.

STE: "And here's the number for Factor, they offer advice. It's through HR. But it's anonymous."

JOHN: I'm not mental.

STE: "I'm not saying you are."

JOHN: I don't need that.

STE: "That's fine."

NEIL: It's free?

STE: "Yes, you can talk to them about anything, money, work anything."

NEIL: Thanks.

STE: "What's up?"

JOHN: Huh?

STE: "Your tea? Is something up with it?"

JOHN: Erm -

DOUG: I don't know whether the other lads raised this -

STE: The Jumper.

Just our average job really.

They're the ones who stand there waiting for that announcement which says -

ALL: "Please stand back from the platform edge as the next train does not stop here"

STE: They wait for those because they know they're going faster.

They tend to do it when most trains are running, at or very near stations and they go everywhere.

NEIL: We don't carry water

DOUG: We get it from stations

JOHN: Too heavy

DOUG: And if it's in the middle of nowhere

JOHN: You don't need it

NEIL: Biodegradable

JOHN: Just chuck a bit of sand down

STE: The Winger.

Similar to a jumper only they time it wrong, or get unlucky.

Tend to get winged by the train they're not always dead when you arrive.

NEIL: High vis vest

DOUG: Detachable at the shoulders

NEIL: Hard hat

DOUG: Blue

NEIL: Orange reflective trousers

JOHN: High vis T-Shirt

NEIL: Breathable material

STE: The Platform Crawlers – these are the ones who get clothing caught or fall down the side of the track.

Often lose limbs, occasionally worse, sometimes bounce the length of the platform, smash into tunnel walls, obviously this is a broad category and the injuries and clean-ups vary.

DOUG: Safety boots

JOHN: Steel toe-caps

DOUG: Steel mid-soles

NEIL: Rubber bottoms

JOHN: Ankle supports

DOUG: Shit boots

NEIL: Waterproof

JOHN: Not branded

DOUG: Because the boss is a stingy fucker

STE: The Bouncers.

Almost the exact opposite of the Crawler, and an extension of the Winger.

Imagine you are on a bridge and you jump slightly too late, you hit the train but perhaps the roof, it sends you flying in all directions, spinning out of control, very effective but blood splatter isn't limited to the front end of the train, I once saw a man who hit a Virgin Pendolino, he managed to splatter every carriage.

DOUG: That's it really

NEIL: In terms of –

JOHN: Yeh

NEIL: Erm

JOHN: That's our kit

NEIL: PPE

JOHN: Personal Protective Equipment

NEIL: Sorry

JOHN: And we have the van

DOUG: White

JOHN: Branded

NEIL: Network Rail logo

DOUG: Specialist Cleaning Team

JOHN: "How's my driving?"

DOUG: Shit

STE: Finally... The Popper.

These people know what they are doing – It's almost as if they've done it before.

They time it right, perfectly so that they hit the hardest part of the train at its fastest moment.

The name comes from a water balloon, which acts in much the same way as a human body does when hit by a high speed train.

NEIL: We don't know what we'll see when we arrive

JOHN: Have to be prepared for anything

NEIL: Spillages from freight trains

JOHN: Infrastructure collapses

NEIL: Bridges and that

DOUG: The cows were the worst

NEIL: Aye

DOUG: Two cows hit full speed

JOHN: Looked like a fucking deli counter

STE: You obviously have the idiots as well, who jump in front of a train that changes track right in front of them, end up with two defunct knee joints, some leg bones sticking out and the lingering question of what to do if you can't even kill yourself.

JOHN: I went on holiday. To Croatia. Mrs booked it.

Dubrovnik.

Pricey.

And the thing I remember most about it, the trip.

I mean, don't get me wrong it were hot right, and that was great and the city were pretty impressive. Walled, orange rooves, it were busy. Rammed.

But it was alright.

The thing I remember though was, this Nutella sauce that they served for breakfast. I can't remember the name but it wasn't Nutella. And it was different because you got it in these little plastic tubs right, and half of it was chocolate, milk chocolate, brown. And the other half were white chocolate. Perfect halves. Soft, spreadable like. Not like if you melted chocolate at home and tried to do it.

Anyway, I was blown away by it, we had a continental breakfast everyday with the room, salami, breads, cheeses, pastries and that, but all I ate were this chocolate spread on toast.

I don't even like Nutella.

But I had just never seen it before.

Then, I'm in Tesco and there it is on the shelf, next to Nutella.

There's just no joy anymore is there?

NEIL: Can you stop banging on about it?

DOUG: He said he asked.

JOHN: About thermals?

DOUG: Well about equipment.

JOHN: I don't remember.

STE: He asked me.

DOUG: What did you say?

STE: I said I had some.

DOUG: Fucking hell.

STE: I do.

DOUG: "All for one, one for all" boys.

NEIL: I said I didn't want them.

DOUG: Oh for the love of God.

JOHN: It was alright weren't it.

STE: Pile of shite.

NEIL: He's not that bad.

STE: Felt like I was talking to myself.

JOHN: Did Donna make you a tea?

DOUG: Aye.

JOHN: How was it?

DOUG: I can't remember.

NEIL: She's alright Donna isn't she?

STE: You think?

JOHN: Mine tasted like piss.

DOUG: Really?

JOHN: Yeh. Literally.

NEIL: I don't mind Carl.

STE: That's because the daft bastard gave you a job.

JOHN: It tasted like piss smells.

STE: What?

JOHN: The tea.

STE: What you on about?

JOHN: Like she'd fished it out with pissy fingers.

NEL: He gives a shit at least.

DOUG: Gives a shit?

NEL: I think he does.

DOUG: Gives a shit? Look at your boots Neil, does he give a shit about them?

NEL: I don't give a shit about them.

STE: Did he mention your punctuality Neil?

NEL: Piss off.

JOHN: Was it an action?

STE: Improve your timekeeping.

JOHN: Just under 'stop being a penis'.

STE: and man up.

NEIL: MAN UP?

Beat.

Man. Up. Man - Up.

What's that even mean?

It's not even a...it's not even an anything, just two frigging words.

Become a man? Be more male, what do you want from me?

That's what she's saying. She says. She's saying it all the time. Man Up.

How do I do that? What do you mean?

Literally, what do you mean?

Is this how I walk as a man, or stand? Is it? Or do I do it like this? Please fucking tell me what that instruction means!

I am a man. Look at me. I'm male.

Beat.

I feel things. Things hurt me. Does that mean I am not a man, not dealing with things in the way I should as a man?

As a man do I have to be detached? Hard? Do I have to be strong, have arguments, protect my damsel from danger? Do I?

Does that make me a man?

Beat.

I'll hold my hands up. I'm treading water.

I don't know what I am.

I'm treading water without any idea how to swim.

I'm kicking frantically, hoping to stay afloat.

Beat.

I am manning up.

That is what I am doing.

This is me - manning up.

STE: We rock up to this job.

DOUG: And it looks like a quick one.

JOHN: All inside the four.

STE: Foot.

JOHN: What?

Beat.

STE: The four foot.

JOHN: Yeh.

Beat.

NEIL: They don't know what the four is.

JOHN: The four foot?

DOUG: Yeh.

JOHN: It's the tracks.

Look, here's the tracks right.

STE: For the love of God!

JOHN: What? Here's the tracks and this is the four. The middle bit.

STE: What are you doing?

JOHN: Well I don't have a fucking crayon and a flip chart do I?

DOUG: Now if the body lands in this bit then you can get it cleared up in no time.

NEIL: In the four.

STE: But in this case the man had laid himself down on the track.

NEIL: His head sticking over this rail here.

DOUG: The train has come along and whipped his head off.

JOHN: Clean as a whistle.

DOUG: Whoom, just like that.

STE: And his body was lying still, right across the four.

NEIL: But his head.

JOHN: His head was here.

NEIL: No, it were right over here.

STE: Problem is, here, just outside this track, here.

JOHN: Is the live rail.

DOUG: The juice rail.

NEIL: Actually called a "Third Rail".

They take a small beat to acknowledge that NEIL knows this information.

STE: It runs parallel to the others.

JOHN: And it's...

NEIL: Alive with electricity.

DOUG: It's how trains move.

JOHN: The live rail is like a really powerful microwave.

DOUG: It'll cook you from the inside out in seconds.

NEIL: Anyway -

JOHN: Because this guy's head is here.

NEIL: The nice and simple clean up job.

STE: 45 minutes at the most.

DOUG: Becomes a tricky little bugger.

STE: Now we have to do -

JOHN: Risk assessments

NEIL: Isolation requests

DOUG: Line blocks

JOHN: Double checks

DOUG: Triple checks

JOHN: Safety checks

DOUG: In short this is a faff.

NEIL: Ste?

JOHN: Shit.

DOUG: What you doing?

JOHN: He skipped over the rail and legged it down to the head.

DOUG: You can't do that... what are you doing?

NEIL: The rail were still 'live'.

DOUG: And there could be passing trains on the other track.

NEIL: Ste!

STE: I'm sorting us out boys.

JOHN: The station manager was coming.

NEIL: No more than 300 yards away.

DOUG: Two civil policemen pottering along behind her.

NEIL: If they see him.

JOHN: He's fired.

DOUG: That simple.

JOHN: Ste you daft bastard get back over here.

STE: Will do -

JOHN: He said.

STE: But I'm not staying here all night for this.

JOHN: He adjusted his stance.

NEIL: Shuffled his feet.

DOUG: Lined up the head.

NEIL: And toe poked it.

JOHN: It flew

DOUG: High

NEIL: Up

JOHN: Up

DOUG: Up

JOHN: Hair flapping

DOUG: Blood splurting

JOHN: Flying

NEIL: Looping

DOUG: Over the live rail

JOHN: And back into the four

NEIL: Landing nostrils first

DOUG: Bouncing

JOHN: Rolling

DOUG: And stopping by Neil's feet.

NEIL is speechless starting at the head between his feet.

JOHN: Ste skipped back over the rail.

DOUG: And stood there like he'd done nothing wrong.

Beat.

JOHN: Before we knew it, station manager arrived.

DOUG: "Alright boys, looks like an easy one this."

Beat.

STE: Yeh.

JOHN: Took his head clean off.

STE: We're lucky it stayed in the four.

DOUG: "Yeh...you alright Neil?"

NEIL: I -

JOHN: You alright for us to start Fran?

DOUG: "Yep, go ahead."

STE: Neil -

NEIL: I... Yeh?

STE: Bag.

DOUG: For the head.

NEIL: Erm... Right... Yeh.

STE: Touch black take it back.

NEIL: Touch white make it right.

DOUG: Sign of the cross.

JOHN: Bow to the bird.

NEIL: The magpie.

JOHN: Magpies.

DOUG: All I see is magpies.

NEIL: Everywhere.

STE: He comes to me every other Friday and stays through until Sunday night.

He sits there and says things like -

NEIL: "What do you prefer Pepsi or Coke?"

STE: And -

NEIL: "When it's my birthday can you get me some skates?"

STE: Or asks questions like -

NEIL: "What is it you do?"

STE: It's getting harder to ignore the ones about work.

NEIL: "Dad? It's for a project.

Beat.

Dad?"

STE: I...err... What does Roger's Dad do?

NEIL: "He's a fireman."

STE: He's a prick.

I make him fish finger sandwiches on Friday nights.
White Bread. Butter. Loads of brown sauce.

He likes it I think.

It's for a project?

NEIL: "Yeh."

STE: Right.

On Saturdays we sometimes pop to the local and I treat him.
Hunters chicken or beef pie, and chips, again - obviously.

Well... I help make sure the trains are running on time.

NEIL: "Is that it?"

STE: No... I...erm...clean the tracks when they get mucky.

We should never really have got married. His mum and me. I was 19 and she was 18, we just thought - that was what you did, you get married.

You get married and you have kids, you get a house and that's what you do.

NEIL: "Mucky?"

STE: Mucky...dirty. With mud and stuff.

NEIL: "You clean mud off tracks, is that a job?"

STE: No I...what? No, it's not just mud.

Beat.

Well - sometimes people jump in front of trains.

NEIL: "Awesome!"

STE: No not really.

NEIL: "Why do they do that?"

STE: Because they're not very happy.

Beat.

NEIL: "Do you see brains and guts and stuff?"

STE: Not answering that.

I used to maintain the train carriage cleaners in the depots, and from there it just made sense to do this. More money.

NEIL: "Do you take pictures?"

STE: No.

NEIL: "I bet you have to take pictures"

STE: She left me when I was 23. We had nothing in common, nothing, apart from the baby, it wasn't nasty, it still isn't, I loved her...once, but it was when I was working out what that meant. I loved her but in the way that you like looking at rivers until you see the sea.

JOHN: Fucking hell Neil.

NEIL: What?

JOHN: Where's the bloody light?

NEIL: What?

JOHN: The light you tit.

NEIL: Oh sorry.

NEIL turns on his torch.

JOHN: I told you my battery was on the blink.

NEIL: Yeh.

JOHN: Right, hold still.

Beat.

NEIL: I don't like this.

JOHN: What?

NEIL: Being out here in the dark.

JOHN: You're afraid of the dark?

NEIL: No.

Beat.

What was that?

JOHN: Oh for God's sake.

NEIL: What was it?

JOHN: You? Me?

NEIL: Nah, it wasn't. Sounded big?

JOHN: Just look over here or we'll be here all bloody night.

Beat.

Neil?

NEIL: Sorry.

Beat.

How was the holiday?

JOHN: Alright.

NEIL: Good. Where was it you /

JOHN: Croatia.

NEIL: That's it.

Beat.

Where's that then?

JOHN: Europe.

NEIL: Right. Nice?

JOHN: Hot.

NEIL: Nice.

What was that?

JOHN: Oh, for fuck's sake.

NEIL's light goes off and STE and DOUG illuminate theirs.

DOUG: How's the lad?

STE: Yeh, he's good. Getting bigger.

DOUG: Yeh, they do that.

Beat.

He's alright though?

STE: Yeh.

Beat.

DOUG: How old is he now?

STE: Coming up on ten.

DOUG: Shit.

STE: Yeh.

Beat.

You going to have kids?

DOUG: Nah.

STE: Really?

DOUG: No.

Beat.

STE: Mrs doesn't fancy any?

DOUG: Nah.

DOUG turns his light off. STE waits a moment then turns off his own.

JOHN: Jesus, Neil!

NEIL: What?

JOHN: What do you mean what? We're in the bloody dark again.

NEIL: I know.

JOHN: So turn on the light.

Beat.

NEIL: I can't.

JOHN: Why?

NEIL: I think the batteries have gone.

STE: "I was on-track cleaning and maintenance manager for Network Rail at the...erm...at the time. I'm Carl, Carl Bates."

JOHN: "Deborah McKay, psychiatrist, I deal with post-incident care for train drivers, passengers and railway staff."

STE: "I managed most of the on-track maintenance. Anything from vegetation to... well, obviously...obstruction clearance."

JOHN: "Sometimes my role is over in a matter of hours, most of the time it can be part of an ongoing support package."

STE: "I remember the day very well."

JOHN: "Yes. I was involved with this particular case.

I would like to keep this fairly vague if that's ok?"

I provided sessions for the driver, and several members of Network Rail staff who were closely involved with the individual."

STE: "It was a horrible day. The worst.

I knew the guy. I knew him. Do you know what I mean?"

JOHN: "There were no witnesses with that one, which was a positive.

They can be the tricky ones. Children particularly so."

STE: "I had met with them the previous week, all of them, one to one, I asked them... I asked him."

JOHN: "I have also dealt with those who are contemplating suicide."

STE: "Is there anything I should know?"

ALL: No.

STE: "Anything I can do for you?"

ALL: No.

STE: "He said no."

JOHN: "There are trends on the railway, patterns. They tend to be lost, looking for an outlet. It's often a spontaneous act. Not a series of deteriorating symptoms. It's generally men. From poorer socio-economic groups, with a history of mental health problems. They often leave little behind."

STE: "I felt like I -"

JOHN: "No notes, no letters to loved ones. They are incapable of focusing on the impact, on the legacy of their choice. Their focus is entirely on the moment not the ramifications."

STE: "Obviously I felt... I could have done more."

JOHN: "Reasonable people, who for that moment become impervious to reason. Detached from sentiment."

STE: "I did. I still do."

DOUG: A report in 2015 claimed that 305 people a year took their own life on the railways.

JOHN: Doesn't sound much does it?
NEIL: But when you think there were just over 6,500 suicides in total.
JOHN: It puts it in perspective.
NEIL: Nearly 5%.
DOUG: All the bridges you can jump off.
STE: The pills you can swallow.
NEIL: The branches you can hang from.
STE: And 5% end their life this way.
JOHN: Almost one a day.
STE: Every 31 hours.
JOHN: Most male.
NEIL: Most between the age of 30 and 55.
DOUG: Our age.
STE: Most from poorer families.
NEIL: Poorer areas.
DOUG: Most poor.
NEIL: In 2010, there were 218 suicides on the railway.
JOHN: Every 38.4 hours.
STE: Suicide delays cost the government -
NEIL: £33 million a year.
JOHN: Compensation to the TOC.
NEIL: Train operating company.
JOHN: Yep - sorry.
DOUG: Line blocks.
JOHN: Clean-up teams.
STE: Support teams.
DOUG: Both emotional and physical.
JOHN: Isolations.

STE: The list goes on.
JOHN: The problem is now so bad.
DOUG: That they employ teams to deal with it.
JOHN: Us in the North.
NEIL: And another down South.

STE: Arrive
JOHN: Clock starts
STE: Engine off
NEIL: Greet
JOHN: Meet
DOUG: Talk
NEIL: Pass - bag
STE: And -
JOHN: Off, we're off
STE: Ten minutes on the clock
NEIL: Here
STE: Pass - bag
JOHN: Over here
NEIL: Pass - bag
DOUG: Here
NEIL: Pass - bag
DOUG: And here
STE: Pass - bag
NEIL: Sand
JOHN: Lots of sand
STE: Pouring sand
DOUG: And one

NEIL: and another
 STE: And here
 JOHN: Over there
 DOUG: And here
 NEIL: Pass – bag
 STE: and here
 DOUG: Pass – bag
 STE: Skin
 JOHN: Bones
 DOUG: Pass – bag
 STE: Blood
 JOHN: Bits
 NEIL: Pass – bag
 DOUG: Over here
 NEIL: Clothes
 STE: Rings
 JOHN: Pass – bag
 NEIL: Here
 STE: Pass – bag
 NEIL: And here
 DOUG: Pass – bag
 JOHN: Faster
 STE: Spray
 DOUG: And spray
 STE: Power spray
 JOHN: Wash away
 NEIL: Here
 DOUG: Wash, wash
 NEIL: And here

STE: Wash, wash
 JOHN: Then
 NEIL: Tidy up
 JOHN: Hurry up
 STE: Cleaning up
 JOHN: Quickly
 DOUG: Flag it
 NEIL: Bag it
 JOHN: Tag it
 STE: Bleach it
 JOHN: Spray it
 DOUG: Done
 NEIL: Pass – bag
 JOHN: Yep
 DOUG: Done
 NEIL: Pass – bag
 JOHN: We're done
 DOUG: Ignition
 JOHN: Stop the clock.
 Beat.
 STE: 80 minutes.

They are disappointed.

NEIL: It wasn't like they said, I'll go that far.

Sorry. Is anyone pregnant here?

I don't want to be that dick that goes too far while you're sitting there thinking it'll be like a Disney film. Thinking you'll be singing songs while sparrows wrap a ribbon around the baby's head.

JOHN: This is -

DOUG: "Stanley."

JOHN: Hi Stanley, how old are you Stanley?

DOUG: "I'm six."

JOHN: He's six.

NEIL: Sixteen hours of screaming. Before we went to the hospital. Sixteen hours of bouncing on a ball. Leaning on walls. On me. Meditating. Crying.

I hadn't helped, I'd done nothing, felt useless, just flicking buttons on a TENS machine, adjusting pads, offering water, breathe I was saying, breathe. All I could think of, as if she'd forget. I was useless.

DOUG: "I was with my dad."

STE: "Hi."

JOHN: His dad is called -

STE: "Tom."

JOHN: Hi Tom.

STE: "Alright."

NEIL: At the hospital - gas and air, wasn't enough, she needed something stronger, tears, screaming, I was dabbing her head, trying to be something, to do something to make it easier, I wasn't, I couldn't. An epidural helped, but the baby got stuck, it was back to back and its heart rate rocketed, I remember words like 'distressed' and 'operate' and before I knew it we were in theatre. She was scared. She was looking at me to help, to fix it. I couldn't.

JOHN: What were you doing Stan?

DOUG: "We were waiting for the train."

JOHN: Just waiting?

DOUG: "Waiting and playing."

NEIL: When the baby came, a girl, a little girl, she 'needed assistance' someone had said, her airways were blocked.

She went straight onto a gurney and down a corridor. Everything was 'routine', that's what people were saying, 'it's routine', but nothing felt routine. I went with the baby, to the special care unit. The first time I wrote her name I was signing a disclaimer. Emily.

JOHN: Why were you playing?

DOUG: "It was fun."

JOHN: It's not a playground though is it Stan?

DOUG: "No."

JOHN: It's very dangerous son.

DOUG: "I know."

NEIL: 'I never got to hold her,' Nic said. 'They took her before I held her.' I couldn't say anything, I couldn't comfort her. She'd cry when she said it. The baby was back with us, she was fine, but it was like she wasn't.

I hugged her, Nic, held her, but I couldn't - they had to stay in, both of them, I had to go home every night, to leave her, to leave the baby. Emily. In the mornings when I got back it was like everything had got worse. The nurses noticed, I think but -

She was agitated. Scared.

That was my first weeks paternity leave.

JOHN: And what were you doing?

STE: "Hey?"

JOHN: While he was playing?

STE: "I was... I was."

JOHN: What?

STE: "I was on my phone."

JOHN: On your phone?

STE: "... Yeh."

NEIL: I asked Carl to extend my leave, told him what had happened. Said I needed more time, I needed to be here.

He wouldn't, couldn't, our leave is done on rotas, 'It's hard,' he said, 'I'm so sorry,' I asked if I could take emergency leave and he said I could take five days, 'best he could do'.

JOHN: Making a call?

STE: "No."

JOHN: Emails?

STE: "No."

JOHN: What then?

STE: "I was - Facebook."

JOHN: Right.

STE: "I didn't think -"

NEIL: Nicola couldn't move because of the operation, when I was home I was doing everything. Bed time, midnight feed, 2 AM, 4 AM, 6. I was trying to make it better, to make it easier. But with work -

JOHN: You weren't doing enough were you?

STE: "No"

JOHN: Not nearly enough.

STE: "No."

NEIL: I was tired - shattered. We both were. Emily was on formula all the time because Nic refused to have her near her when she was crying...problem was every time I took her near her she'd cry, and that made it worse, it made it harder, for both of them.

I looked at them - both, I was failing them.

DOUG: "I was just playing and I tripped."

STE: "He tripped over."

JOHN: Right.

STE: "And the train it was already coming."

JOHN: It's alright.

NEIL: It's hard, I want to be here, I want to be there, I don't know where I am, where I should be, I don't know anything, nothing, I'm lost. I want to help. I want to help them, both of them, but I don't know how. It's like I'm playing a game without the rule book. A game that should be fun - but it's shit.

I tell you, what I would've given for a sparrow and a fucking ribbon.

STE: "I tried to -"

JOHN: Yeh.

STE: "It was too late."

JOHN: I bet you wish you could've...

STE: "I do."

JOHN: I bet it's hard.

STE nods. Sits. Defeated.

A long pause.

STE: It was this kid. About six.

Tiny.

He was messing around, near the platform edge, he was hit hard.

He had no chance.

His dad, was sat down with the police when we arrived.

His face red, puffy, tears streaming from his eyes.

He couldn't -

Beat.

He couldn't breathe. Couldn't focus on anything.

He was holding his kid's bag still, this little blue, red and yellow bag.

This tiny little thing.

As we arrived they took him inside, he couldn't move. He wanted to stay where he was, he was screaming, but no words you could recognise, just these horrible growls, these gut-wrenching screams.

We walked past him with sponges and buckets of water and he was dragged the other way with that little bag.

That was... that's when you -

Beat.

That... in my heart, I felt that. In my heart. As if I was that man. As if I was clinging onto that little bag.

That's when the worry started, the doubts, worries, that's when they started.

NEIL: What've you got there?

Beat. JOHN notices.

JOHN: Hey?

NEIL: What you eating?

JOHN: Sushi.

DOUG: Course you are.

NEIL: What's that?

JOHN: Sushi?

NEIL: Yeh.

JOHN: It's -

DOUG: It's too posh for you mate!

JOHN: Like rice wrapped with fish in it.

NEIL: You what?

JOHN: It's fish and rice.

NEIL: Cold?

JOHN: Yeh.

NEIL: You what?

STE: He's never seen anything like this John.

DOUG: Blowing his mind look at him.

JOHN: It's been around a while.

NEIL: You're eating it cold?

JOHN: Yeh, its raw.

NEIL: Raw?

JOHN: Yeh. It's fish.

NEIL: What's that it's wrapped in?

JOHN: Seaweed.

NEIL: Sorry?

STE: Seaweed.

NEIL: Has someone got a camera on me?

STE: What?

NEIL: Is this a wind up? That's seaweed and that's raw fish?

JOHN: Yeh.

NEIL: Why are you eating this shit John?

DOUG: It's healthy.

NEIL: It don't bloody look healthy. What's that?

JOHN: Soya sauce.

NEIL: Right.

DOUG: What, you've heard of that?

NEIL: Yeh. What's that?

JOHN: You'll like that try a bit.

NEIL: What is it?

JOHN: Try it.

NEIL: Is it fish?

JOHN: No, try it.

He does.

NEIL: Fucking hell.

DOUG: That's wasabi you daft bastard!

NEIL: Fucking - me tongue.

DOUG: Am I Johnny big bollocks? Leader of the pack?

Beat.

No.

Not really.

Beat.

It's who I've become.

It's a habit.

I sometimes hear myself say things and a second after I wish I could take it back.

Sometimes I wish I could take it back before I've even said it. Like I know that I am about to say something I don't mean. Then I say it anyway.

I'm not a dick.

But I know that I am.

That I've become one.

Beat.

It's not - I'm not angry - I'm -

JOHN: It was back there.

STE: It weren't.

JOHN: I'm telling you it was back there.

NEIL: You can get this way.

STE: You don't just "get" this way, this is the way.

JOHN: I promise you it was back there, with the big bloody station sign.

DOUG: I think there's road works.

JOHN: Thank you.

DOUG: Just beyond the lights there, can you see.

STE: Is there?

JOHN: Is there...now he's bloody interested.

STE: Shit.

NEIL: Can you not get past 'em?

DOUG: Well you can get past them but I'm not sure you'd want to.

JOHN: For God's sake.

STE: Shhhhh I'm trying to think.

JOHN: Think?

STE: Shh.

JOHN: U-turn, how hard's that? Turn around, go back to the lights and listen to me.

STE: Shut up.

NEIL: There, there's a diversion sign.

DOUG: Diversion, the bloody station is there, I can see it. How far we going to go on a diversion?

STE: Shhhh.

NEIL: Well what's the point in the diversion sign?

DOUG: It's for people going a bit bloody further than 400 yards.

JOHN: We've been here before haven't we.

DOUG: Yep.

NEIL: Were it recent?
 DOUG: Nah, about a year.
 NEIL: Bad one?
 DOUG: I can't remember.
 STE: I think it were a girl.
 DOUG: That's it.
 JOHN: Weren't you driving then too?
 STE: Think so.
 JOHN: Bloody idiot.
 STE: Young girl?
 DOUG: Yeh, it was, I remember that.

DOUG: This is
 JOHN: Peter
 NEIL: Peter's a dick head
 JOHN: "Hey -"
 STE: You are
 DOUG: Yeh
 NEIL: Everyone thinks it
 DOUG: He has spent his life being a bit of a cock
 STE: But Peter is about to become a legendary dick head
 JOHN: "Am I?"
 NEIL: Yes
 DOUG: Peter is a solicitor
 STE: Quite a successful one
 JOHN: "Thank you"
 STE: He handles minor family law cases

DOUG: And, he has no previous diagnosed mental health conditions
 NEIL: Yay
 STE: Clean bill of health
 NEIL: He is raking in a whopping
 JOHN: "Circa £72,000"
 NEIL: Plus
 JOHN: "Bonuses"
 DOUG: Wow
 STE: Good man
 NEIL: Married
 DOUG: Two kids
 STE: Two cars
 NEIL: Peter eats well
 STE: Votes Tory
 NEIL: Reads the Daily Telegraph
 STE: Is blind to the problems of others
 DOUG: He works hard
 NEIL: And holidays harder
 STE: Dick head
 JOHN: "No, I give to charity"
 NEIL: He does
 STE: Yeh
 DOUG: Not much
 JOHN: "No - but -"
 DOUG: A little
 JOHN: "I give what I can"
 STE: Yeh
 DOUG: Hold the phone

NEIL: Put the brakes on
 STE: Woah there
 JOHN: "What?"
 STE: I think Peter's holding something back
 DOUG: What's this?
 STE: Something is coming over the horizon
 DOUG: Just popping its little head up to say hello
 JOHN: "There isn't"
 DOUG: Oh I think there is Pete
 NEIL: I think there bloody might be my mate
 STE: Peter has been stealing from clients
 DOUG: Oh no
 JOHN: "I haven't"
 NEIL: That was his defence
 DOUG: But the police didn't buy it
 JOHN: "I wouldn't"
 STE: His wife didn't buy it either
 NEIL: But, where did the money go?
 STE: On the house?
 NEIL: The cars?
 DOUG: The kids?
 STE: No
 NEIL: No, no, no, no, no
 STE: Pete has spent the money on filthy nights with dirty girls
 JOHN: "I would never"
 DOUG: There are witnesses
 STE: And bank statements
 NEIL: Understandably these charges
 JOHN: "Accusations"

NEIL: No, charges
 STE: Are all getting a bit much for our loveable rogue
 DOUG: And one day
 NEIL: In the early morning
 STE: He rolls out of bed
 DOUG: Drives to the station
 NEIL: Parks the car
 STE: Pays for a three day parking ticket
 DOUG: Sticks it on the underside of his windscreen
 STE: Walks to his boot
 DOUG: Takes his jacket and briefcase from where they lay
 NEIL: Walks past the other cars
 DOUG: Down the steps to the platform
 STE: He hears the announcement
 NEIL: He waits
 STE: He hears the announcement again
 NEIL: He takes a deep breath
 DOUG: He hears a train
 STE: A screeching
 NEIL: Creaking train
 STE: The hum of the rails
 DOUG: The scratching of wheels
 NEIL: He takes another breath
 DOUG: His heart is racing
 STE: His mind racing
 DOUG: His head's aching
 NEIL: Another breath
 STE: Deeper
 DOUG: Longer

STE: Screeching
DOUG: Wailing
NEIL: Another
JOHN: "Breath"
NEIL: Another
JOHN: "Breath"
NEIL: Another
STE: And he just does it -

Beat.

JOHN: "How does that make me a dick?"
STE: Because Pete
DOUG: It's rush hour

NEIL: And you jumped in front of a high speed train

STE: At a very busy station

DOUG: And -

STE: There's a party of school children heading into town

NEIL: Going to a museum

DOUG: Only they don't make it

NEIL: Because you are all over them

STE: Literally

DOUG: Like a wave of gunge

JOHN: "Right"

STE: That's a bit thoughtless isn't it Pete

JOHN: "I didn't notice - I didn't see - I wasn't thinking of -"

NEIL: Them

JOHN: "No"

DOUG: Dick head.

Silence. They are back in the van.

NEIL: That was -

JOHN: Yeh.

NEIL: Yeh.

Beat.

STE: Horrible.

DOUG: Messy.

Pause.

JOHN: I was right though.

STE: What?

JOHN: It was that first left back there.

NEIL: I cross the magpie.

STE: The magpie crosses me.

DOUG: Bad luck to the magpie.

JOHN: And good luck to me.

NEIL: One for sorrow.

STE: Two for joy.

DOUG: Three for a girl.

JOHN: Four for a boy.

NEIL: We do other cleaning to 'keep us busy'

STE: Planned not reactive

JOHN: High level windows

STE: Jet washing platforms

DOUG: Removing chewing gum from forecourts

JOHN: Deep clean of toilets
 DOUG: And we clean light fittings
 STE: Which is shit
 DOUG: It's all shit
 NEIL: It is
 JOHN: But it's a job
 NEIL: Yeh
 JOHN: A good job with -
 NEIL: Pressure
 DOUG: Washer
 NEIL: Here
 JOHN: There's always pressure
 DOUG: That's not new
 STE: But money's tighter
 NEIL: Time shorter
 DOUG: Prices higher
 NEIL: So we have additional
 DOUG: Pressure
 STE: Washer
 DOUG: Here
 JOHN: Here
 NEIL: I can't... It's hard to describe
 STE: Some days, most days, it's nothing, it is not anything, but others -
 NEIL: It's like pressure
 JOHN: Washer
 DOUG: Here
 STE: Here
 DOUG: Sometimes it's starting that's the difficult bit.

Picking where to wipe, what to collect. How to start.
 That's sometimes the hardest bit.
 NEIL: A silence, before we begin, I always like to just have a small moment.
 Just a moment, a second.
 DOUG: You look at it, the body, the remains, the job and for a moment you feel like it's wrong to disturb the scene, like it's a shrine.
 STE: Here
 JOHN: Here
 NEIL: I think of it as a minutes silence but it's more like ten seconds.
 Just to think of what they've done, what we're doing.
 Just a moment to acknowledge that this is weird.
 DOUG: After you start you forget it is someone, it is literally someone.
 Someone's son. Dad. Someone's sister.
 You forget it when you start.
 NEIL: It's weird.
 DOUG: So sometimes it's literally picking up the cloth, or putting on the gloves that's the hardest bit. Because that's when it's a person.
 NEIL: I like to acknowledge that.
 DOUG: After that, it's just a mess. Just a job.
 STE: Over here.

 JOHN: If you make it to 82. That gives you 30,000 days - to live. 30,000.
 The first 6,000 are lost to youth.
 The last 2 to senility.

That gives you 22,000 days to define who you are.

To be what you are.

It's hard that isn't it.

It's hard to imagine, hard to hear.

If you imagine piles of pound coins.

Thirty thousand of them.

Built over a lifetime, pound by pound. Each one the same in many respects, but with different dents, bruises, Different memories.

They're piled one by one. Coin by coin.

One then another. Until the stack reaches 365 and then a new pile is started. 82 piles.

Every morning I wake up.

I sit in my bed. Throat dry. Eyes sore.

I sit there and I think about throwing another fucking coin on that pile.

Another day older, another pound poorer.

DOUG: There are patterns

STE: The Loner -

NEIL: Tell-tale signs

JOHN: Specific to the railway

STE: Who stands at the end of the platform deep in thought

DOUG: He isn't talking to anyone

JOHN: Just standing

STE: Coat pulled tight around him

NEIL: He stares

DOUG: At nothing specific

NEIL: Just stares ahead

STE: Lost in his own thoughts

JOHN: The Bridge Dweller

DOUG: Standing with both hands on the hand rail

NEIL: Looking out to the horizon

JOHN: Arms locked

DOUG: Tense

STE: There's a lot going on

JOHN: His eyes may shut from time to time

DOUG: The movie of his life projecting on his closed lids

NEIL: He is calm

STE: No aggression

DOUG: Relieved

JOHN: There is a chance

STE: A window of opportunity

DOUG: To rescue them

STE: Not always

DOUG: But sometimes

STE: Sometimes

NEIL: There is

JOHN: It's called intervention

STE: It works

JOHN: "Hello?"

DOUG: Just making contact

JOHN: "Hello, mate, are you alright?"

NEIL: Just noticing them

JOHN: "Are you sure?"

STE: Reminding them that someone is there

DOUG: Giving them a hope

NEIL: A reason

JOHN: "I just... I just wanted to check."

STE: To intervene

NEIL: To interrupt

JOHN: For every suicide there are believed to be three interventions

DOUG: Three

STE: Three more people

NEIL: Three lives saved

JOHN: Every 8 hours someone seriously contemplates jumping in front of a train.

NEIL: I don't know how to sort this.

For her.

I don't -

I don't have answers.

I thought I would have them, by now, the answers.

I don't.

STE: This is

JOHN: "Beryl."

STE: And this is

DOUG: "Colin."

NEIL: They're married

STE: Have been for 52 years

JOHN: "Love you."

DOUG: "I know you do."

NEIL: Beryl joined the RAF during WW2

JOHN: "Travelled the world."

STE: Belgium, Paris and finally

JOHN: "Dorset."

NEIL: He was based there for a short while.

DOUG: "We were just in a pub."

NEIL: When they met

STE: Just minding their own business

NEIL: She noticed him

STE: He noticed her

JOHN: "What's your name?"

STE: She asked

DOUG: "Colin."

NEIL: He replied

JOHN: "I'm Beryl."

STE: He took her address and called on her when the war had ended

NEIL: She was happy with that

JOHN: "Very romantic."

NEIL: They wed

JOHN: "Love you."

DOUG: "I know you do."

NEIL: They had kids and lived their lives

STE: Beryl worked at

JOHN: "The local store, then at the school"

STE: And then finally

JOHN: "At Tesco."

NEIL: And Colin worked

DOUG: "In haulage."

NEIL: Low paid

JOHN: "But happy."

STE: After they retired because

JOHN: "I was 62."

NEIL: And

DOUG: "My eyesight weren't..."

JOHN: "It wasn't what it used to be was it?"

DOUG: "It wasn't."

JOHN: "No."

STE: They expected to live in the relative comfort that they had earned

NEIL: But...

STE: They didn't own their house

JOHN: "No."

STE: And they hadn't really got any savings

NEIL: They'd spent it on

JOHN: "The grandkids."

STE: And

DOUG: "Cruises."

NEIL: Their pension wasn't what they thought

JOHN: "We took a big lump sum."

DOUG: "But we didn't -"

JOHN: "Just didn't calculate it."

DOUG: "Didn't get the sums right."

NEIL: So when the eviction letter came, they were somewhat at a loss

STE: They'd lived in the flat for 15 years

DOUG: "And just down the road before that."

STE: Colin's health was

JOHN: "Deteriorating."

DOUG: "It was."

JOHN: "You're not as strong as you used to be are you?"

DOUG: "No."

NEIL: And Beryl hadn't dealt with money for thirty years

JOHN: "Colin is the numbers man."

DOUG: "Yep."

STE: And also

NEIL: She couldn't bear the thought

JOHN: "I couldn't live without him."

DOUG: "She's my left arm."

JOHN: "And he's my right."

STE: One evening, they ate their tea

JOHN: "Just sausage and mash."

NEIL: Watched *Coronation Street*

STE: Hoovered the front room

NEIL: Puffed up the pillows

STE: Took a look at the photographs lining the hallway

JOHN: "One by one."

DOUG: "Face by face."

STE: Then they put on their coats

NEIL: Pulled on their wellies

STE: Carefully locked the front door

NEIL: And walked through the field at the back of the street

STE: They negotiated the small wooden fence

DOUG: "Careful now."

NEIL: They wandered down to the track and stood

JOHN: "Love you."

STE: She said squeezing his hand

DOUG: "I know you do."

NELL: He answered as the light began to creep up his face
 DOUG: "I love you too."

STE: "Hello team."

Beat.

NELL: Alright Carl?

STE: "How are we all?"

JOHN: Alright.

DOUG: Alright?

STE: "Are you not alright Doug?"

DOUG: Let's see why we're here first.

STE: "Fine, lets make a start.

Got a bit of news for you. Nothing that will have a direct effect on you, but in a few months I will be taking up a new role in the department. A little bit of a promotion.

Beat.

Nothing changes for the moment but we'll be advertising to fill my position soon."

DOUG: Are you changing the structure of the department?

STE: "Erm... No."

DOUG: Is that official? There are going to be no changes to the department.

STE: "Well, we work in a flexible area Doug, so there will always be some degree of change to fit the demand"

DOUG: But, to our positions, there won't be any changes.

STE: "Has someone been filling you head with things Doug?"

Beat.

DOUG: Sorry?

STE: "I mean..."

DOUG: Has someone been filling my head?

STE: "Well..."

DOUG: Are you suggesting that my head is incapable of filling itself?

STE: "Of course not."

DOUG: Because Carl, though you have been on the railway 5 minutes lad, I've worked in some area or another all my adult life, so you come in here with your fancy packs of paper and your neatly ironed shirt and you expect us to respect you, and we do, we go along with your performance reviews and your one to ones, because if that's how you like to waste your time, then we'll help you. But on the railway lad, people talk, so no, no one has been filling my head with anything, they have been passing on snippets of information gathered from meetings you've had.

So can I ask you again, and this time let me assure you I expect a satisfactory response. Can you confirm that there will be no alterations to our jobs? Yes or no?

STE: "There will currently be no changes to your positions."

DOUG: Was that a yes or a no?

STE: "That was a response to your question.

Beat.

Alright... Anybody have any questions on structural changes or on...the news that... I...you know?

Beat.

No.

Right. Moving on... Performance... Here is a line graph that indicates how many jobs you have done so far this annum compared to the previous years."

DOUG: FUCK OFF!

It's the pressure, the pressure.

To be strong. To be right!

It's a pressure.

It hurts. Here. All the time.

I take tablets but then I realise it isn't actual.

It isn't a real pain, it's more than that. It's like my brain is screaming.

It's screaming for me to calm down, for me to take it easy. To wind down.

It is screaming at me relax. Fucking relax!

Beat.

But I can't.

I can't.

Beat.

I don't think I can.

NEIL: I'm in the belly of the beast

JOHN: The eye of the storm

STE: My head is -

DOUG: Frazzled

STE: Spinning

NEIL: Dehydrated

STE: Swirling

JOHN: A whirlwind

STE: I'm spinning

DOUG: Noise

NEIL: Noises

JOHN: In my head

DOUG: There's a build up of noise and I want to

NEIL: Scream

DOUG: Shout

JOHN: Cry

STE: I'm Spinning

JOHN: Vision

STE: Spinning

JOHN: People blurring

NEIL: Reflections

STE: Shadows

NEIL: Ghosts

STE: Blurs

NEIL: Breath

STE: Panting

DOUG: Questions

STE: Laughing

JOHN: Normal

NEIL: But at the same time

STE: Shrinking

JOHN: Like a crisp packet in a fire

NEIL: Winking

DOUG: Crinkling

NEIL: Shrinking away

JOHN: Hiding in plain sight

STE: Lost

DOUG: But aware

STE: Lost

NEIL: Screaming

DOUG: But aware

STE: Both a figment

NEL: Shouting

STE: A figment and an imagination at the same time

DOUG: Bills

NEL: Nappies

JOHN: Conversations

STE: Bills

JOHN: About holidays

NEL: Nappies

JOHN: Shit TV

NEL: Endless nappies and tears

STE: Shouting

NEL: Screaming

JOHN: Round and round

NEL: I'm on a carousel

JOHN: Earn money

DOUG: Spend money

STE: No money

NEL: Need sleep, don't sleep, want sleep - round and round

JOHN: A carousel

STE: With no exit, and no brakes

DOUG: That -

JOHN: is how -

NEL: I feel

JOHN: Sometimes

DOUG: That is how

JOHN: That's how it feels.

DOUG: "Morning #CommuterTweeps! How are we this Tuesday?"

My name is Elaine Chambers. I work in the Social Media section of the Comms department."

NEL: "Trains late again. #typical."

DOUG: "@smugglebug827 I'm so sorry to hear that your train is delayed, there are signalling problems around Warrington, we're hoping this is all cleared up by 9AM."

STE: "#Lovely member of staff at Liverpool Lime Street helped my Mum on to the train thanks again."

DOUG: "Retweet. Retweet. Retweet."

JOHN: "I hate trains, I hate trains, I hate trains. #joke #delays #hatetrains."

DOUG: "Nothing I can do with that really."

JOHN: "Some prick has jumped in front of my train and now I am late for interview. Absolute farce #selfish."

DOUG: "@RichardGunn25 Sorry about the interview - Always refer back to their original message makes it look like

you tailor specific responses to all customer concerns - we have an ongoing situation in your area - Don't mention specific areas this can lead to copycat suicides - we have a team on site who hope to have you moving soon. Nothing provocative, nothing procedural, simple. 140 characters. Apology, fact, fact."

NEL: This is

STE: "Mike."

NEL: He is -

DOUG: Erm -

JOHN: Mike is... male
 NEIL: Looks about 50 but he's probably in his mid thirties
 DOUG: We'll be honest
 JOHN: No one really knows a lot about Mike
 NEIL: He's --
 STE: "Homeless."
 DOUG: Lives off
 STE: "Food bank donations."
 DOUG: And
 STE: "Anything I can make from strangers."
 NEIL: He plays the guitar
 DOUG: But he's a bit shit
 JOHN: In another life he was in the army
 STE: "Two tours of Iraq."
 DOUG: Not any more
 STE: "No. Discharged."
 JOHN: With undiagnosed mental health conditions
 STE: "Yep."
 NEIL: Yep
 JOHN: Mike was a popper.

NEIL: Friends.
 JOHN: Yes.
 NEIL: Yeh.
 STE: Errn --
 DOUG: I do. Of course I do.
 NEIL: Lots, on Facebook and that. People I'm in touch with yeh.
 DOUG: I have a few, I'd trust, you know to support me.

JOHN: We have 'couple friends'.
 DOUG: Just a few.
 STE: No.
 DOUG: I mean, I don't need support, you know, but if I want it
 STE: Not really. Work mates. I guess.
 NEIL: Yeh.
 JOHN: My friends are her friends, collective friends.
 DOUG: Family is in Newcastle. So --
 JOHN: Dinner date friends - not pint and a clear the air chat
 friends.
 NEIL: I have a few from home, from school you know. My
 family is nearby but --
 DOUG: I don't tend to need to - talk, you know.
 STE: Yeh, mates from work. Is that strange? I don't feel like
 that's strange.
 DOUG: I'm not a big talker.
 STE: Where do you meet friends now?
 There's no dating app that I know that's just for finding
 someone to have a pint with. Is there? I don't really know
 the neighbours.
 I like the pub, the local, but how often you going to sit
 drinking on your own?
 DOUG: So... Yeh.
 NEIL: They're nearby but we're not that close, if you get me.
 JOHN: And if they were, I still wouldn't speak to them.
 STE: Do you know what I mean?
 JOHN: I probably wouldn't.
 DOUG: I'd talk to the Mrs.
 NEIL: I don't know who I'd --
 STE: I just keep my own counsel, I leave work, reluctantly and
 I go home. That's what I do. Work, home.

And if I've had a bad day, or a bad feeling about someone, something, if I'm bothered by something then I think it over, and normally, by the time I get home it's gone, it's no longer a problem.

JOHN: Luckily I'm no head case, but if I were -

NEIL: I don't know.

JOHN: God, it's hard that, because it'd get back to her.

DOUG: Yeh, I'd talk to her. I think

JOHN: Don't know. Genuinely.

STE: I walk because it clears my head, frees me up. Rain makes you think clearer. So doesn't matter the weather, I walk home, thinking. That's my thinking time.

JOHN: Sad that innit?

NEIL: Are we done?

STE: It's not three yet.

NEIL: I know but, do you reckon we can get off?

STE: No I don't.

Beat.

NEIL: I'm going to go.

JOHN: You've only just got here Neil.

DOUG: Yeh, you've only just turned up and now you want to leave?

NEIL: Piss off.

JOHN: Lets give it until ten to.

NEIL: I don't see the point.

STE: What of working your contracted hours?

NEIL: No. Of sitting in the bloody van doing nothing.

STE: Because we're paid to?

JOHN: Because it's our job?

NEIL: What time is it now?

DOUG: Half past.

NEIL: Are you joking?

DOUG: How is that a joke?

STE: I don't go around all day thinking about him, but it's nice to think he's doing something, that wherever he is, he's moving, talking, breathing, that he is there. That's nice.

Beat. He pulls out his wallet and removes a photograph he offers it as evidence to the audience.

He looks like his mum, they're her eyes.

Beat. He slowly puts the picture away again.

He disappears though. For me. He can disappear.

It's easy to forget. To forget his face. His voice.

I start questioning whether I remember him or if I'm remembering photographs of him.

Whether it's memories or pictures.

And then I feel like I have lost him.

That he has gone.

And I start to - I need to speak to him, see him, even a new picture or video on the phone, just to know he is still there. Just to ground me, to give me a fix, he's my drug. I'm an addict.

Beat.

I need to see him to remind me that he exists. That he cares.

That he is there.

KIERAN KNOWLES

NEIL: John, let me do some of the notes.

JOHN: No chance.

NEIL: Go on.

JOHN: Nah.

NEIL: I'm going out of my mind here, let me do something.

JOHN: Nope.

Beat.

STE: You could clean the van?

NEIL: Nah, I'm alright.

JOHN: A hundred years ago

DOUG: Men our age

STE: Boys

NEIL: Boys our age covered the fields of France

JOHN: They died for honour

STE: To preserve a way of life

NEIL: They died in a fair fight

STE: Watching the enemy

JOHN: Manoeuvring

NEIL: Praying for mistakes

DOUG: Today

NEIL: Those same lads

JOHN: Those same boys who given the chance

DOUG: Would fight for our country

JOHN: Would run into gunfire

STE: Would die to protect our beliefs

NEIL: They're still fighting

DOUG: They're still at war

STE: Only now they battle demons

DOUG: Reflections

JOHN: Social perfections

NEIL: Depressions

DOUG: Ambitions

NEIL: Thoughts

JOHN: The trenches are wrinkles on slowly aging faces

DOUG: No man's land is the image looking back at them from the mirror

STE: There are no rousing speeches

NEIL: No help for heroes

DOUG: But they still battle away

NEIL: Still protecting their honour

STE: Trying to avoid disgrace

JOHN: But this fight isn't fair

NEIL: The opposition is already behind enemy lines

STE: The game is stacked

JOHN: The odds are fixed

DOUG: 100 years ago the biggest killer of young men -

NEIL: Boys

DOUG: 100 years ago it was war

STE: Now they kill themselves.

JOHN: "He went out the usual time. John likes to stick to routines. It was about quarter to 6. I hear him go, but I try to block it out if I'm honest, I know I shouldn't but... He seemed normal. He seemed -"

NEIL: "Neil? He'd been great, really great, looking after me, looking after Emily. Really lovely actually, yeh."

JOHN: "I stayed in bed until about 7, about 7:15. It was a normal day."

NEIL: "I don't think I've told him that though."

DOUG: "Doug -"

NEIL: "I haven't told him enough."

JOHN: "We'd had a lovely weekend."

DOUG: "He works to live."

JOHN: "We had."

DOUG: "He hates work, but you'd never know it at home."

JOHN: "Didn't do anything really."

DOUG: "He's happy here."

JOHN: "Nothing, just lots of very normal, very lovely things."

DOUG: "Always happy, always laughing. Always making me laugh. He can always make me laugh."

STE: "My dad is called Stephen and he works for Network Rail."

DOUG: "He can make anyone laugh, when he's in the mood. Anyone."

STE: "He helps to make sure that the trains run on time."

DOUG: "He gets angry, course, who doesn't, but - he's all hot air."

NEIL: "It had been hard, for both of us."

DOUG: "He'd had a meeting at work on the Monday he told me that. He was worried that he'd got angry. Worried about the consequences."

STE: "He is part of a team who clean the track, the stations and the vehicles to make sure they can continue running."

DOUG: "It's strange because he never normally told me anything about work, so he was obviously -"

JOHN: "He was very concerned."

DOUG: "Upset."

NEIL: "He was scared I think - about money."

STE: "It's a very difficult job, because his team often have to clean up after accidents on the railway."

NEIL: "About his job."

STE: "When I grow up I want to work on the railway as a driver."

JOHN: "John doesn't see himself as others see him. He still saw the kid who failed his exams and left without a chance."

STE: "Dad said, that's where the money is."

DOUG: "He was probably overthinking it."

JOHN: "Where others see warmth and compassion, he sees weaknesses."

NEIL: "I was a month away from statutory pay. It was about to get harder."

STE: "But I don't want to do it because of the money."

JOHN: "He is weak in a way."

STE: "I want to be a driver so that I can drive past him doing his job."

JOHN: "He was fine. He was."

NEIL: "Distant, I remember he was a little distant."

DOUG: "He was, when I think about it, he was irritable."

STE: "And I can sound the horn and wave to him when I see him."

DOUG: "Angry."

NEIL: "Scared."

STE: "And he'll wave back, and he'll know that I'm near him."

JOHN: "Fine."

STE: "I want to work on the railways like my Dad."

JOHN: One for sorrow.

STE: Two for joy.

DOUG: Three for a girl.

NEIL: Four for a boy.

DOUG: Imagine you're on a platform, any platform, they're pretty much universal.

Over here you have your waiting shelter, little bit battered. Maybe a shop here. Benches.

You're under a wooden canopy which runs from the red bricked station building to the platform edge.

Tube lights hanging, some flashing or out. There's lamp posts all the way from one end to the other.

Then there's the platform itself - you normally have an area of tarmac or concrete, or even a mix of the two - maybe crumbling - normally is.

There's a yellow line 1.5 metres from the platform edge. It's on the cusp of where the tarmac meets the tactile paving, you know those little bobbly squares - for blind people.

And then at the edge are these large concrete slabs, massive, they're usually tipped with a faded white line and illustrated with words like "Mind the Gap".

If you jump, this will be the last thing you come into contact with before you hit a train.

The last step you make from this world to the next is from those stones.

Do you know what they are called?

Coping stones. Coping.

They're coping. Copers.

STE: It was a Tuesday

JOHN: The Tuesday after

STE: The Tuesday before

NEIL: Just another day

JOHN: Just another -

DOUG: Tuesday

NEIL: It was cold and frosty

JOHN: Wet and drab

DOUG: I was feeling

NEIL: Overwhelmed

STE: Like I'd been here before

DOUG: Like my mask was cracking

STE: Déjà vu

NEIL: With everything and nothing

DOUG: My defences melting

JOHN: Concerned and confused

NEIL: I'd had an argument

STE: I was hovering above myself, watching

NEIL: And then got a text which said, 'I love you'

DOUG: Like I was weak

JOHN: I couldn't picture the faces

STE: Staring

JOHN: The people I loved

DOUG: That's how it felt

JOHN: Like I was forgetting details

STE: A magpie

NEIL: In the street there was this -

JOHN: Magpie

DOUG: I guess you see signs when you want to don't you

NEIL: My mum had always had this thing with magpies
 STE: And my sister
 JOHN: They always had this thing
 NEIL: Touch black take it back
 STE: Touch white make it right
 DOUG: Sign of the cross
 JOHN: Bow to the bird
 STE: If two of you see it, then it's ok, but if you see one on your own, you have to go through this, every time
 JOHN: I know it's bullshit
 NEIL: But that day, Tuesday
 JOHN: I see one, a magpie
 DOUG: And I'm walking on my own, and I'm racking my brains for their system
 JOHN: Not to do it just to remember it, only, I can't remember it
 NEIL: I can't think
 STE: And I can see one, a magpie
 JOHN: Just on the other side of the road
 STE: I'm walking –
 JOHN: Because the car's bugged
 NEIL: Because of the argument
 DOUG: Just to clear my head
 STE: And the thing is – it's not just a magpie –
 NEIL: It's dying
 DOUG: It's a dying magpie
 NEIL: One dying magpie
 JOHN: One for sorrow.
 STE: Two for joy.
 DOUG: Three for a girl.

NEIL: Four for a boy.
 DOUG: It's been hit by a car or a –
 STE: It's been hit by something and it's lay at the side of the road
 DOUG: And it's twitching
 STE: Just twitching
 NEIL: Raising its wings then letting them sag
 STE: As if it is trying to feel the wind in them one more time
 DOUG: And I think
 STE: Not only am I seeing one magpie, on my own, but this is a dying magpie
 JOHN: The last thing it will see is me
 NEIL: There are omens
 JOHN: And then there's this
 DOUG: But I don't believe it
 STE: So it doesn't matter
 NEIL: It doesn't count
 STE: Only... I noticed it
 JOHN: One, one for sorrow
 STE: I noticed it
 DOUG: And that is something in itself.

JOHN: You alright?
 DOUG: Am I
 STE: Alright?
 NEIL: Yeh
 STE: I need to talk
 NEIL: Mate
 JOHN: Can I talk?

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NEIL: Could we –
DOUG: Would you mind?
NEIL: Get a drink?
JOHN: I need to talk
STE: I need
NEIL: To talk
STE: To someone
JOHN: Anyone
DOUG: Advice
NEIL: I need
JOHN: Just a little
STE: Would you mind?
NEIL: No
DOUG: I never asked
STE: I never said
JOHN: Not their problem
NEIL: It's mine
JOHN: Gasping
STE: Screaming
NEIL: Panting
DOUG: Breath
STE: I'm screaming
JOHN: Help
STE: Help me
DOUG: Help me, please
JOHN: Silence
NEIL: Buzzing
JOHN: Silent
DOUG: But buzzing

NEIL: Ambient
STE: Screeching
JOHN: Quiet
STE: Wailing
DOUG: Whispers
JOHN: Nothing
STE: No one
DOUG: Just whispers
STE: I can't –
JOHN: It's like I'm lost
DOUG: Yeh
STE: It's like I'm lost
JOHN: Lost
STE: But know the way
NEIL: Help
JOHN: Help me – please
NEIL: Like I've been here
DOUG: Seen here
NEIL: Before
JOHN: Like I'm remembering
DOUG: Screaming
STE: But silent
JOHN: Shouting
NEIL: Bawling
JOHN: Hear me
STE: Ask me
JOHN: Hear me
DOUG: Please
STE: Ask me

NEIL: Anyone
 JOHN: Someone
 STE: No
 DOUG: Please
 JOHN: No
 DOUG: Please
 STE: No
 JOHN: Gasping
 STE: Breathing
 NEIL: Panting
 DOUG: Breath
 JOHN: Gasping
 STE: Breathing
 NEIL: Panting
 DOUG: Breath
 JOHN: Air
 STE: I need -
 JOHN: Gasping
 STE: Breathing
 NEIL: Panting
 DOUG: Breath
 JOHN: Air
 STE: I need air
 NEIL: I need
 DOUG: Need air
 JOHN: Gasping
 STE: Breathing
 NEIL: Panting
 DOUG: Breath

JOHN: Air
 DOUG: I Need. I -
 STE: I
 NEIL: Need air.

A: Lights.
 Lights curved over the horizon.
 They curved.
 Three lights.
 Strong. White.
 There is speed.
 I am aware of it, though it can't be measured.
 I am aware of - speed.
 I hear the screeching of the tracks, rumbling.
 Metal wheels meet metal track and they screech.
 They shout.
 Scream.
 B: He arrived first that day
 D: That Tuesday
 B: Got into the van, started the engine and put the heaters on full blast
 D: He sat there watching as the air chiselled away the condensation
 C: He switched the radio on, just to hear other voices
 B: But he couldn't focus, it was just noise, so he snapped it off again
 D: Panicked, he was panicking
 C: He sucked in a deep breath - there was no air
 B: Gasping

C: Breathing

D: Panting

A: Weight.

Moving towards you.

Arriving.

It has potential.

D: He exploded from the van

B: The cold air washed over him

C: He ate it

B: Starving

A: I'm aware of colours I've never seen.

Sounds I'd never heard.

I've never been more alive.

More aware.

C: Safety boots

B: Steel toe-caps

C: Steel mid-soles

D: High vis vest

B: Hard hat

A: I feel the ground beneath my feet.

Concrete.

Anchoring.

My legs are heavy.

Rooted.

D: Clear the obvious

B: The visible

C: The obviously visible

A: I look around.

No one.

Nothing.

D: The limbs

B: The bones

D: The bodies and the phones

A: Adrenaline pumping.

I'm alive.

C: A Tuesday

B: The Tuesday after

D: The Tuesday before

A: I feel the cold on the tips of my fingers.

The wind in each strand of hair.

B: He never asked

C: He never said

D: Are you alright?

A: An impulse.

A moment.

A heartbeat.

A -

Train noise builds to a crescendo.

Lights.