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# USER NOT FOUND

Created by Dante or Die Written by Chris Goode

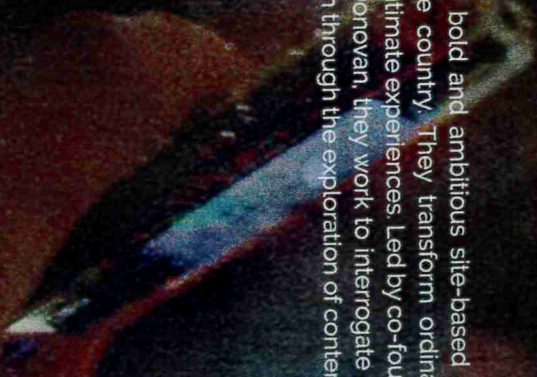
It's the moment of your death.  
There's a magic button.  
Do you delete your entire online legacy?  
Or do you keep it – and leave the choice for someone else?

USER NOT FOUND is about our digital identities after we die. This play has been created by celebrated site-specific company Dante or Die in collaboration with pioneering writer Chris Goode and creative technologists Marmelo. It's performed in cafés: audience members receive a smartphone and a pair of headphones and are immersed in one man's story as he's faced with keeping or deleting his partner's online existence. A story of contemporary grief unfolds through this intimate, funny performance that gently interrogates our need for connection.

Dante or Die make bold and ambitious site-based performances that tour across the country. They transform ordinary spaces to create unique and intimate experiences. Led by co-founders Daphna Atlas and Terry O'Donovan, they work to interrogate and celebrate the human condition through the exploration of contemporary social concerns.



DANTE OR DIE



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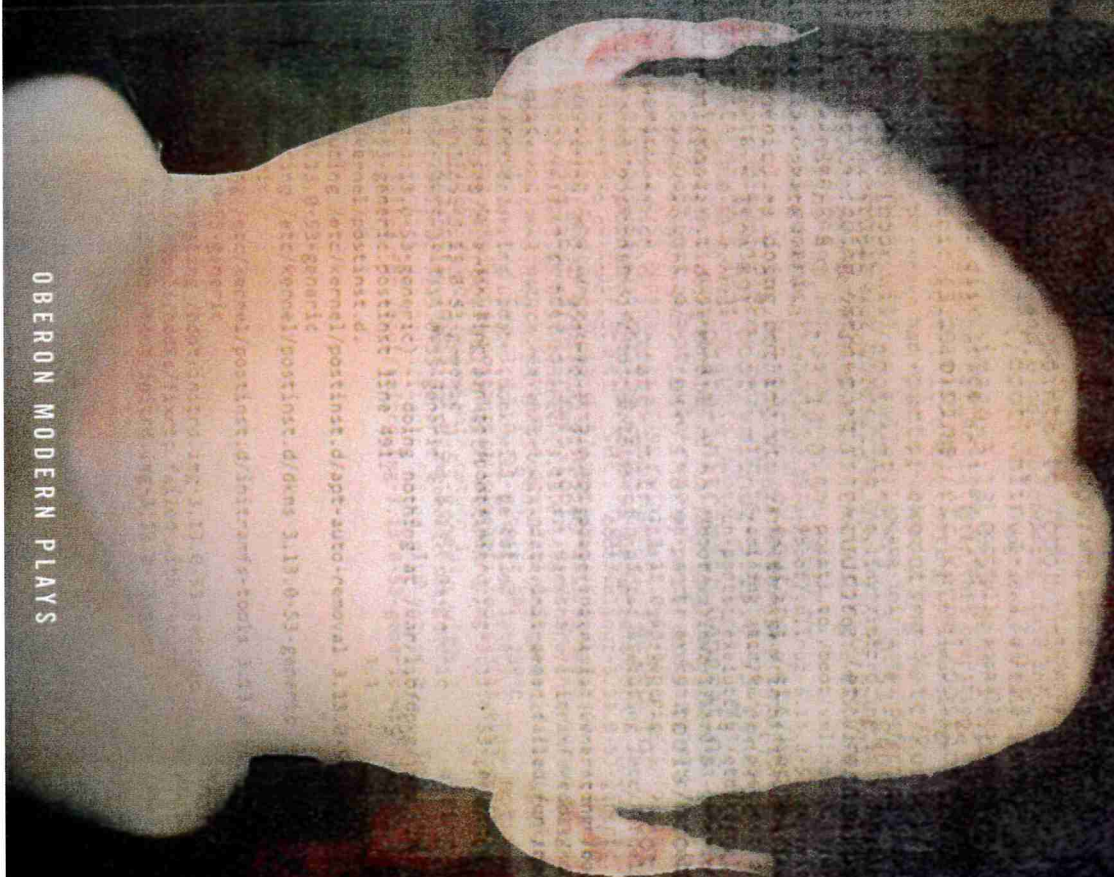
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DANTE OR DIE / CHRIS GOODE  
USER NOT FOUND



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## ABOUT DANTE OR DIE

Dante or Die makes bold and ambitious site-based performances that tour across the country. They transform ordinary spaces to create unique and intimate promenade experiences. Led by co-founders Daphna Attias and Terry O'Donovan, they work to interrogate and celebrate the human condition through the exploration of contemporary social concerns.

Passionate about developing audiences, we seek to dismantle the social and physical barriers to attending our performances. Our participation and training initiatives nurture new talent helping young people find employment in the arts.

Dante or Die has partnered with a wide range of organisations including The Lowry and the Almeida Theatre, Arts Partnership Surrey and Creative Arts East as well as businesses such as Hilton Hotel and Lok'n'Store. We are SITELINES Associate Artists at South Street Reading, which champions performance in unusual locations.

The name 'Dante or Die' comes from the site where Daphna and Terry first made a site-specific performance together in the skate park of Kennington Park many years ago. The graffiti that has the words Dante or Die still is scrawled there...

### Co-Artistic Directors

Daphna Attias & Terry O'Donovan

### Executive Producer

Lucy Atkinson

### Producer

Sophie Ignatieff

### Associate Artist

Anna Woolhouse

[www.danteordie.com](http://www.danteordie.com)

## ABOUT CHRIS GOODE

Chris Goode is a writer, director and theatre-maker, and the lead artist of Chris Goode & Company, with whom his shows include the award-winning *Men in the Cities*, *Monkey Bars*, and *The Adventures of Wound Man and Shirley* (all available from Oberon Books). He is the host and producer of the theatre podcast Thompson's Live, and the author of *The Forest And The Field: Changing theatre in a changing world* (also from Oberon Books).

[www.chrisgoodeandcompany.co.uk](http://www.chrisgoodeandcompany.co.uk)

## Note by Terry O'Donovan & Daphna Attias

Co-Artistic Directors of *Dante or Die*

Three years ago we read Caroline Twigg's article published in *The Guardian* in which she questioned what should happen to her husband's digital legacy after his sudden and unexpected death. Her writing is poignant yet aware, a moving depiction of grief that was magnified through the screen-life of the man she had lost in reality. Immediately after reading her story, we began imagining a Dante or Die-style performance inspired by this contemporary addition to the grieving process. Our audience would see into the online world of someone faced with the questions that go hand in hand with legacy: what should or shouldn't you read, how has privacy changed now that smartphones and laptops are so entwined with our day-to-day living, and how do our digital identities compare with the 'real' us.

Our process of creating *User Not Found* has been a compelling and enlightening one. We met with John Troyer at University of Bath's Centre for Death & Society, questioned Aleks Krotoski whose chapter on digital afterlife in her book, *Untangling the Web*, was an excellent resource alongside her BBC4 podcast *The Digital Human*. We've collaborated with Professor Lib Taylor at University of Reading on a research project exploring how social media has been used to date within contemporary performance.

Up to this point the most technical a Dante or Die show had been was using old iPhones to play music in *Handle With Care*, and inciting rage in our cast of *LD* as they tried to make visual voicemail work on cue. We knew we needed artistic yet technical creators who would be able to build the digital world we were imagining. When we met with Luke Alexander and Abhinav Bajpei from a creative digital agency called Marmelo, they seemed to immediately understand the possibilities. Their inventive and detailed approach to both the subject matter and developing the technical language, platform & content for the production has been a continued source of inspiration. They've built a programme that is entirely interwoven and drives the narrative of the piece, which in this playtext is represented through imagery used within the original production.



We had three adjectives in mind when searching for a writer with whom to collaborate: provocative, warm and human. Having been fans for many years, Chris Goode was top of the list. At first, he was sceptical about creating a piece with technology so entwined, but during our research & development period Chris created a Twitter poll asking: *if there was a button that you could press at the moment of your death that would delete your entire online existence would you push it?* The options were Yes or No. At the end of the day over 70 people had voted and the result was 52% to 48% – similar to a very recent referendum. The fact that there was such a split in response convinced us all that this subject matter is a contentious issue, and one that we can provoke more conversation about through our production. Creating *User Not Found* with Chris has been a dream. Generous and insightful in his united approach, he contested our perceptions and has crafted a script that has been a new challenge for us to direct and perform together.

One of our initial instincts was to stage the performance in a café – the contemporary office / thinking spot / anonymous communal zone. So many of the people sitting around us are also connecting to the world through their screens whilst sitting in these cosy, communal spaces, insulated from our chats by their headphones. What if the person sitting next to us was endlessly watching the pop music video that reminded them of their lost lover, or re-reading their old WhatsApp messages, or getting a Facebook message with the worst news possible?

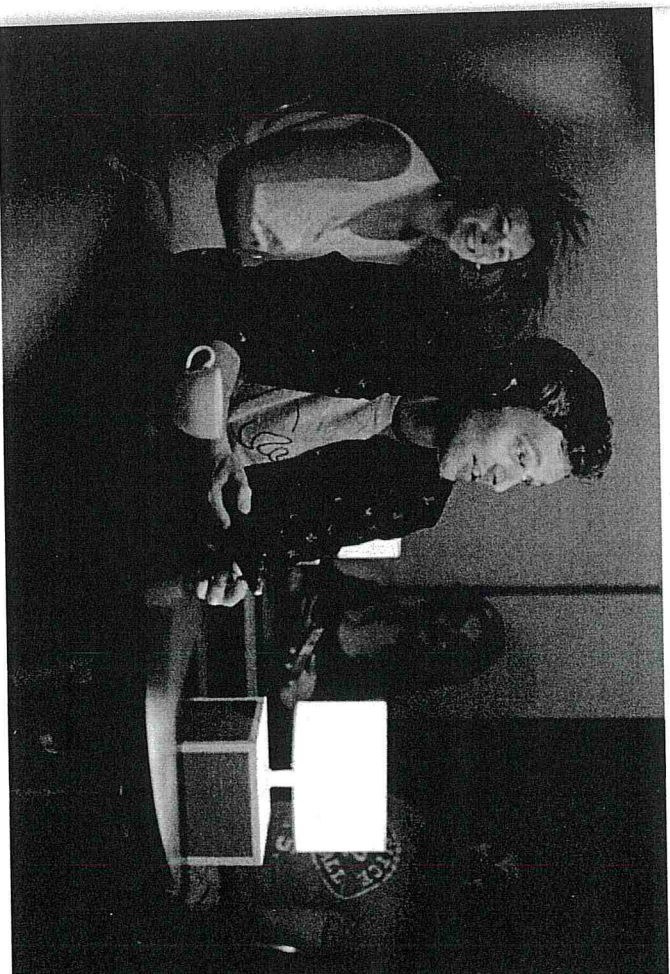
It became clear that creating the insular world of an individual in a communal space would be central to the work. Composer Yaniv Fridel has collaborated with us since day one, and he has developed a world-within-a-world to immerse our audience in the story alongside the rest of our inspirational creative team including ingenious lighting designer Zia Bergin-Holly, imaginative video makers Preference Studio and talented, passionate & skilled technical stage managers.

So, it's July 2018 and we're finally about to share our story with small groups of people in cafes across the country and beyond these borders. We are incredibly grateful to all of the contributors who have shared their personal stories or their hours of research with us. We hope that whenever you sit down to read this, whether or not you have

seen our production, that it will spark a conversation with the person sitting next to you. We hope it will amuse and move you. We hope it will trigger debate with your loved ones. We hope to hear from you and stay connected in this weird digital world that we're all navigating by tapping and swiping with our 'real' digits.

Tweet us to let us know – would you push the button?

**@danteordie**





# SCENE 1

*We are handed a pair of headphones and a smartphone.*

*We are all in a cafe together.*

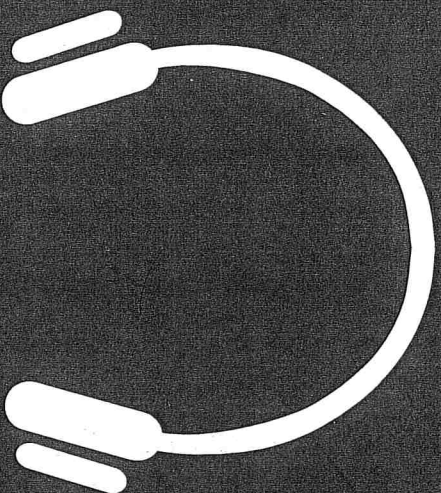
*A comfortable mid-range cafe – not a chain, but not achingly hip either. They just make good coffee.*

*TERRY comes here a lot. In fact he's here already, nursing a peppermint tea, but he doesn't stand out and at first we might not know who he is.*

*At a signal, we all put on our headphones. The sound in our ears of a subtly different cafe – more bustling, more detailed, and not quite 'here'. It includes a Norah Jones song in the distance.*

*A bed of ambient music bleeds in to the sound feed.*

*And then we hear TERRY's voice, though we still can't necessarily pick him out. Throughout the performance TERRY moves around the cafe, sits at different tables, stands on chairs and tables at specific moments.*





TERRY:

Listen, I mean...

I mean I could be anybody.

I mean any of us could be anybody.

Don't you think?

To everyone else in the cafe, I sort of am. Anybody.

You know, when you spend a lot of time on your own, you don't always get a sense of how completely unspecial you are until you're around other people. And then when they ignore you – not unkindly, I'm not saying that...

But that's how you find out.

Hello. Hi. I'm just...

My name's Terry.

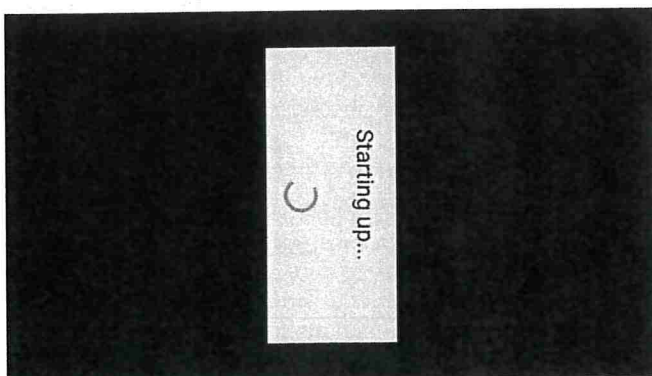
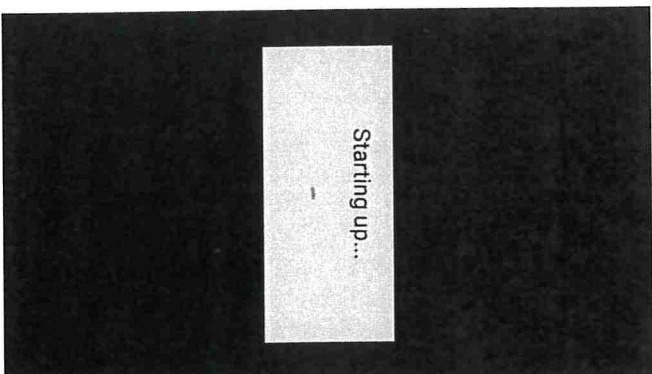
*Without making eye contact with anybody, TERRY raises his hand.*

This is me. Sort of as close as anyone can get to not even being just anybody but actually being nobody.

I'm not nobody, I know, but I'm sort of nobody in particular.

I'm just a guy in a cafe.

*TERRY turns on his phone. All of the audience's phones vibrate as they turn on in sync. We see the boot up screen. When the lock screen appears it displays today's date and the time right now.*



# 14:57

4 July 2018

I suppose it depends on who else is looking. If they're looking at me the way I look at... others.

Is anybody actually...? Are you, for that matter? Looking?

Take a look around.

Who do you see?

Easy one first. Margaret. I don't know her name obviously but in my head she's Margaret. Can you see her? If you look around you'll see her. She blatantly looks like a Margaret. She's like me. She likes to find a table out of the way, tucked in a corner. Margaret and me, we sit a little bit out of sight. Get on with our... stuff.

Not like Giancarlo. Thinks this place is his stage to walk out on. He's a flirt. A pansexual flirt. I don't think he's ever had to pay for a shot of syrup in his life.

The retired couple, Dennis and Barbara. Sit in comfortable silence with two teas and two flapjacks. Maybe it isn't comfortable. Maybe they're screaming inside.

This is where we all come.

What did everyone do before every fourth store on the street was a cafe? Sit at home, I suppose. Suffer in silence. Now we come here and suffer to the greatest hits of Norah Jones. Joss Stone. Fake soul for an age of counterfeits.

I've learned to drown it out.

*TERRY unlocks his phone, we see all his apps. He chooses the Relaxing Sounds App.*

I have this app. I put on my headphones and listen to the sounds of a waterfall. It's good. You can toggle the birds on and off depending on what you fancy.

*He switches the waterfall on and then the bird sounds on then off then on again. The bird sounds continue to play over the top of the waterfall.*



Welcome back, Terry

Select sounds to listen to



Waterfall: On



Birdsong: Off



Ocean waves: Off



Fireplace: Off

I get my regular peppermint tea and my regular bottle of water and my regular look of withering disdain from whichever barista, and I sit and listen to waterfalls and I write. Or I try to write. Or I wait to be able to write. Or I just wait.

And I look at all the other people who are waiting.

Maybe you. Maybe I'm watching you wait.

What are you waiting for, I wonder?

You:

*TERRY starts to describes one person who is actually in the cafe as part of the audience – so the following text is indicative only:*

Or you: cookie-cutter middle-aged guy in a check shirt and – let me guess – yep, Converse. Never got over the death of Kurt Cobain. Well why would you? You're kind to your mother, lethal to houseplants. Stuck in a rented studio flat and trying to save up for something else except you keep coming here and ordering the most expensive bloody complicated coffee on the blackboard. Yeah I know you. I might even become you.

What's coming down the track for you, dude?

We're all in the cafe. The cafe that doubles as a metaphor. For... Life or something.

Here we are. That's all. That's what we do. We come here. To be together. Alone together. Every day. Not everybody every day. But people like us every day.

*The date on the phone starts to move backwards quickly. It arrives at six weeks ago, 11:45am. The screensaver picture morphs from the sunrise to a picture of a shadow of a man as the clock settles on the date.*

It's going to be like this forever.

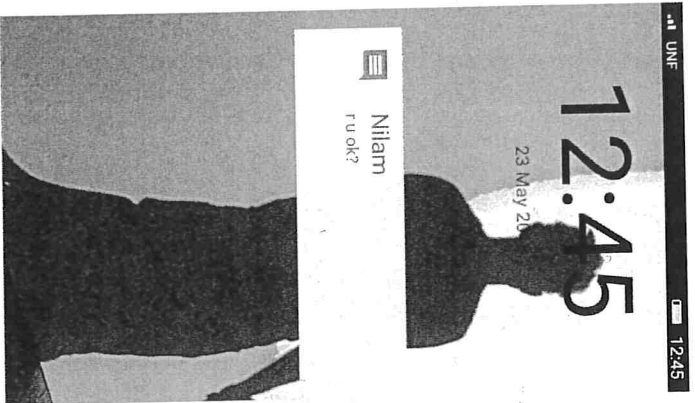
Except, what's coming down the track for us?

*All our phones on the cafe tables start to vibrate.*

What's coming directly towards us? Out of a clear blue sky?

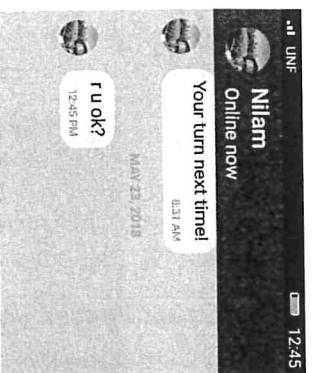
The thing that's going to turn out to be an explosion, but for now, the only sound it makes is:

*The ping of a text message arriving on TERRY'S phone. The phones of the audience light up with the same message.*

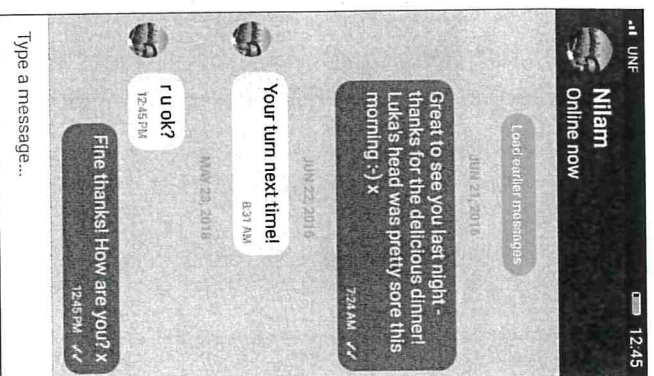
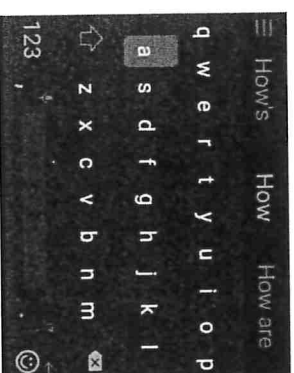


Yes Nilam I'm fine thanks. More to the point, are *you* OK? Because something seems to be preventing you from typing whole words like an adult. When did your life get so busy that —

Jesus.



Fine thanks! How



Type a message...

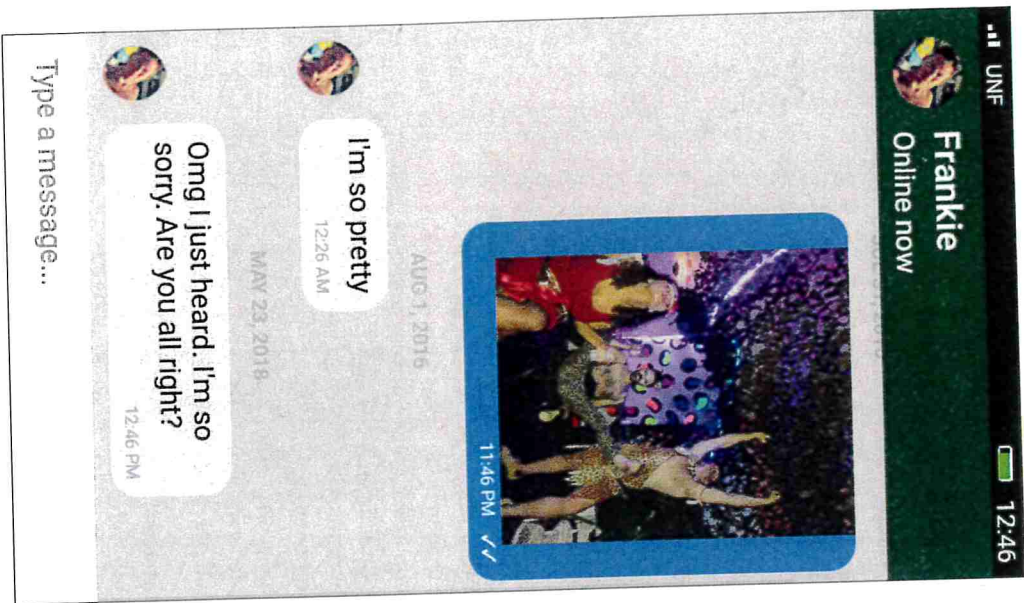
And I'm sort of wondering how Nilam drifted away. Or maybe I drifted away? We used to be so, what's the word? ...Entangled. We used to be so tangled up in each other. I don't know what happened really. But something must have... I mean she slept in my bed at least twice, when she was too drunk to go home. I'm talking years ago at uni and anyway nothing happened. But that's not... Sleeping in your bed is not nothing. And then there was some kind of accidental disentangling over the years and now it feels weird even to have put that kiss on the end of my text. Like I leaned over and kissed her in that moment and it wasn't right.

But she started it. She was thinking of me for no reason. I just popped into her head. Who knows what heads any one of us is popping up in right now somewhere on the planet.

And I'm thinking about a whole compilation album of heads I might be popping up in when I get another message.

*Pings as we all get the text:*





Have I seen Frankie since Pride before last? Our gloriously bigmouthed friend. So absurdly opinionated I always used to call him Frankie Says. That's a joke for the old folks, there.

Where did Frankie go?

And why am I not processing this message?

"I just heard. I'm so sorry."

Yeah no something's happening.

Something's happened or happening and Frankie's heard and Nilam's heard and I haven't heard.

What haven't I heard?

*TERRY replies:*





*Pause. The sound of the waterfall*

The café. Dennis and Barbara. Giancarlo and Margaret. And me. Always me. Always Norah Jones.

Minutes. I'm waiting minutes.

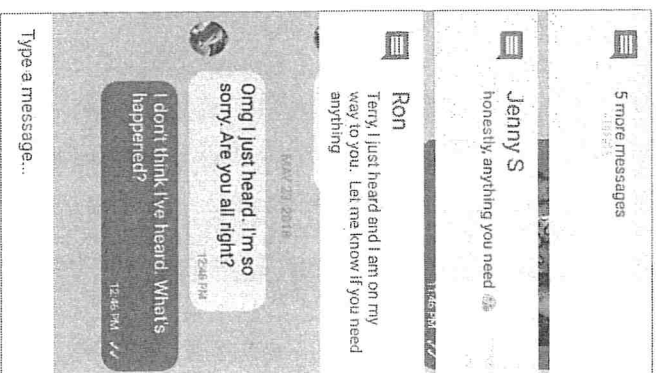
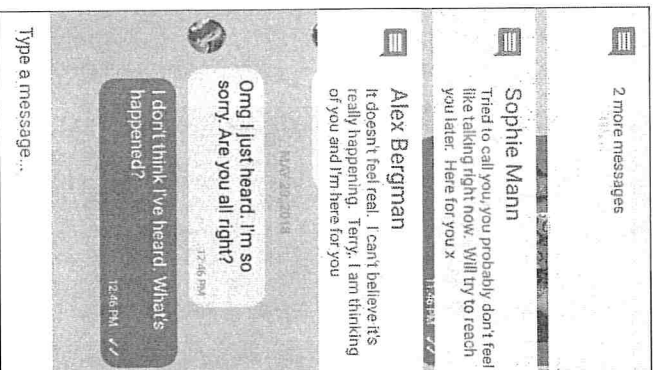
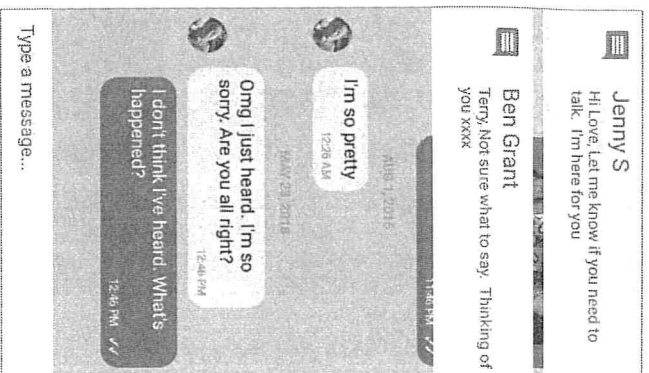
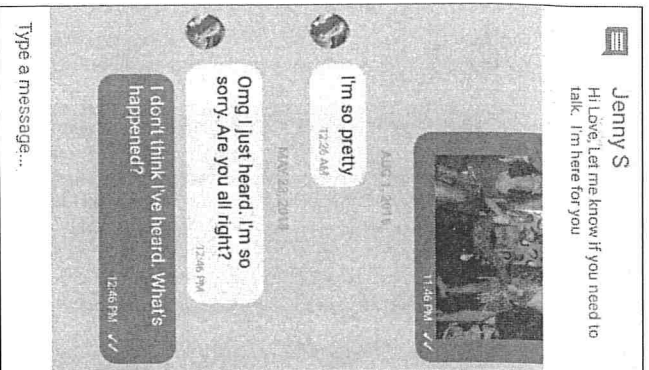
Frankie Doesn't Say.

Doesn't say.

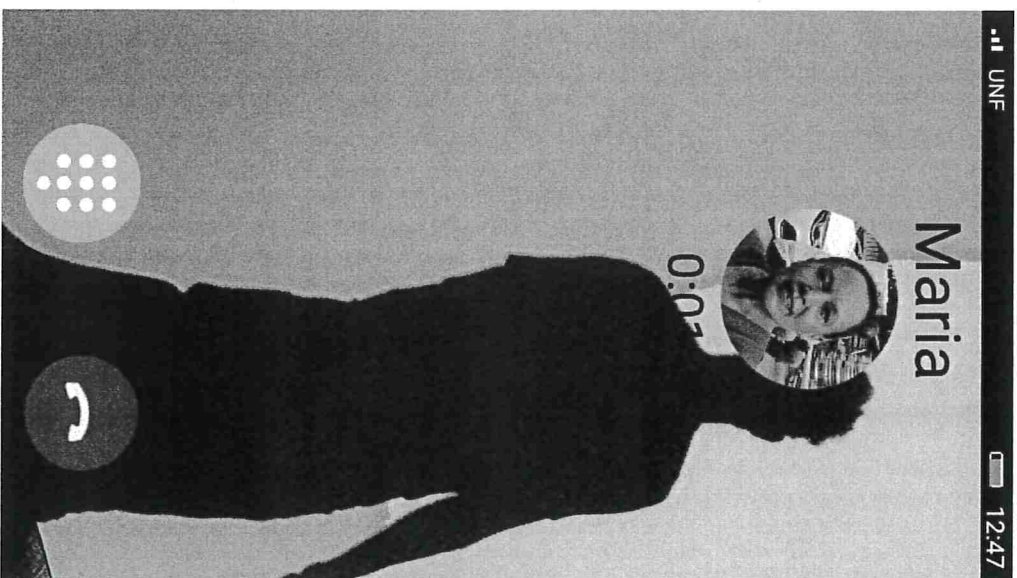
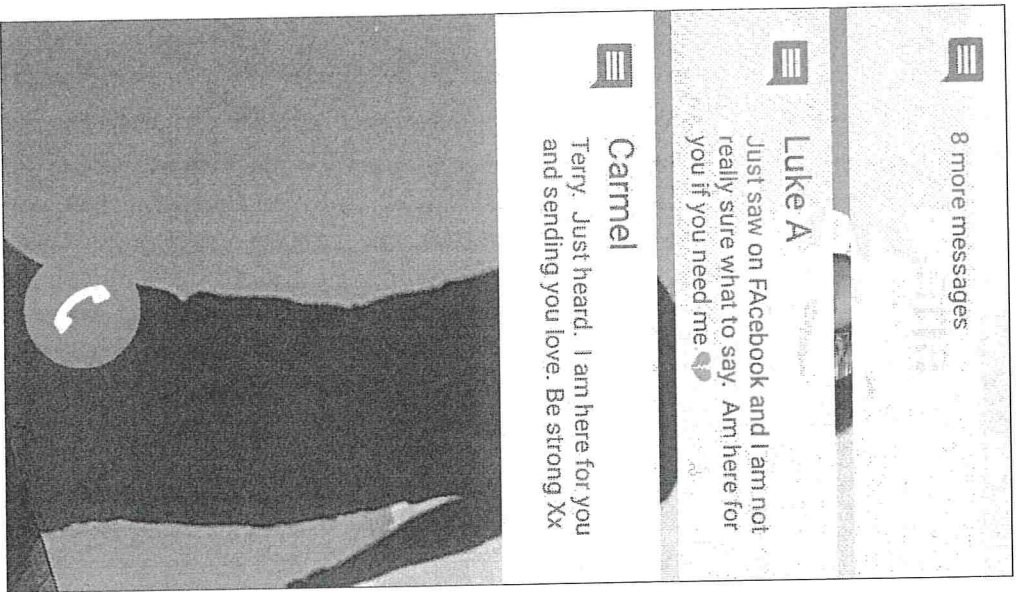
Doesn't say.

And my mind wanders back through Frankie and Niam and college and my first kiss and my fourteenth birthday and back and back through when I was six and we spent half term on holiday in Wales looking at sheep like so many little watercolour blots of amnesia in the distance and it rained and rained and I remember the pounding in my heart

the first time I heard my mother say the word  
cloudburst







*The sound of the waterfall becomes louder and louder.*



## SCENE 2

**TERRY:**

To begin with, I can't remember anything.

Not a thing.

Nothing.

I can't even picture his face.

I mean OK he's dead, I get it. But it's more than that. He's so unbelievably gone.

It was bad enough before, just being left when he left me.

Nine years we were together. Knew each other as friends for two years before that.

Three thousand times I reckon I woke up next to him and looked at his face.

Looked at it, watched it, stared at it.

Took it in. His face. I learned it by heart.

Every contour of it, every impossible angle.

Every blemish, every imperfection.

That's what it's like to start with, isn't it? You want to somehow kiss each imperfection. You want to bless and keep each pixel that makes him less daunting to lie next to.





Over time, of course, you start joining the dots. And after you've been together that long, you can hardly bear the curve of his hip any more because it reminds you of what he said about your roast potatoes or the rollerblinds in the guest bedroom.

But this is something else all together, though. It's like a stage hypnotist has erased him completely from my memory.

When I click my fingers and you wake up, you'll have no recollection of Luka.

No visual recall whatsoever.

The man you woke up next to almost every day for all those years.

And then, after he walked out on you, you woke up next to the absence of him for months. The lack of him.

And you stared at that instead, that lack, that nothing. You took it in. You learnt it.

The untroubled pillow next to yours.

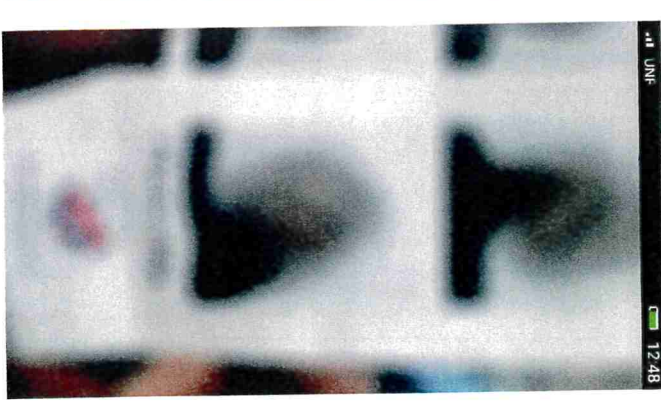
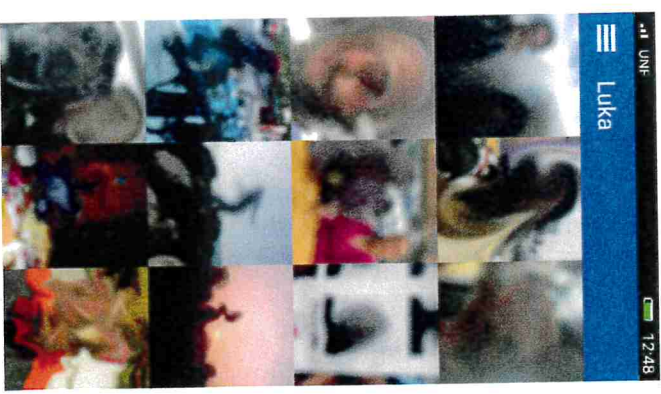
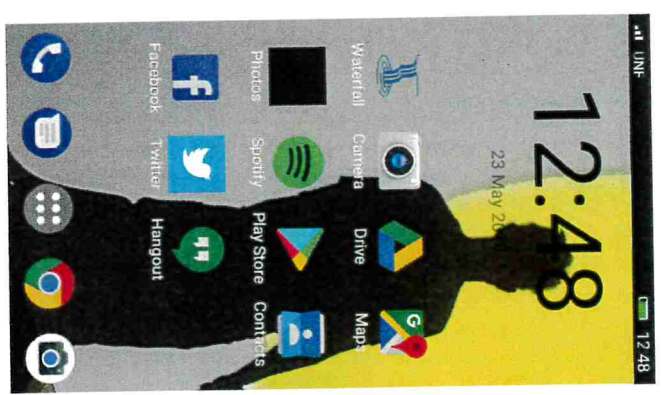
The no breathing to synchronise with.

Instead of the smell of his sweat, his scent, his skin: the smell of thin air. Fake vanilla and cotton wool.

Like a nothing that's obliterated everything else.

But here we are, at the beginning of a whole new absence. A deeper, denser, richer nothing.

No face, no scent. Not so much as an echo to wink at.





This here would have been his passport photo that we laughed at together because he was sucking his cheeks in like a model out of *L'Uomo Vogue*.

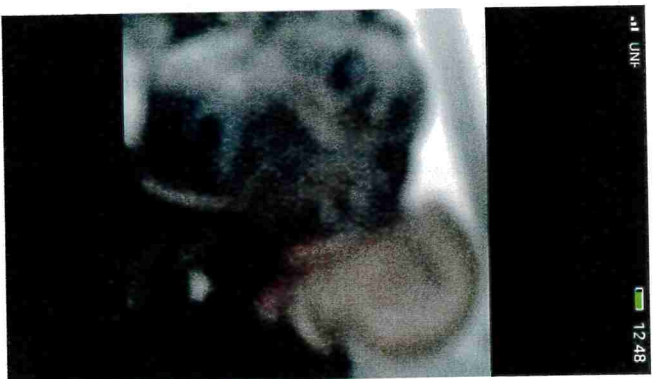
But I just can't picture it.

*TERRY swipes to another photograph.*



And this would have been us together on the beach at Bexhill in the pissing rain because I wanted to go to an exhibition at the Pavilion and Luka thought beach meant sun and boys and everything but I still remember him smiling all the time, all the same, like ten times more than I did.

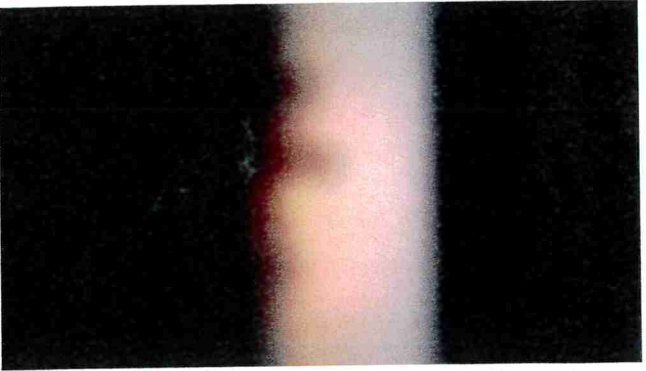
I can't picture it.



And this would be us with his nephew's dog. I embarrassed myself all day long because the dog's called Felix and the nephew's called Dexter and I kept getting them mixed up. In fact I'm still not sure that's the right way round.

And then Luka sulked for days because I said we couldn't get a dog. But I don't know what that looked like.





And this is ten seconds after he kissed me in front of a flapping pink sunset in Lisbon on his birthday.

Nope. Not a clue.

And this is when he broke his arm and some drag queen he was crazy about signed the cast and I loved the glee of it, the fucking glee, God I loved him so much, Jesus Christ, and I nugged him all the way home.

That bike, I said. That bike'll be the death of you.

*An album of blurred photographs begins to morph from one to another taking over the whole screen.*





No idea. I've no idea what any of this looks like.

It's like there's a huge white wall in the way and everything's happening on the other side of it.

They're cutting the clothes off him in A&E.

They're asking him whether he can feel... this; or this...

They're wiping a tear from his cheek.

They're telling Maria they're going to take the best care of her son.

The second hand on the slow clock. I can imagine that. That's one face I can picture.

Then they're rushing him down the corridor on the other side of a white wall.

They're calling to each other in extravagant polysyllabic lexicons.

They're trying to restart his heart.

To the point of exhaustion they're trying.

I can't see any of it.



I'll tell you what I can see. I can see his reading glasses.

Six weeks before he left me, he got new glasses. Like out of the blue. Didn't ask me, didn't mention it. Just showed up one night with new glasses.

He said, what do you think?

I said, they're nice.

He said, what do you really think?

I said, you don't look like you.

And then after he left I found his old pair in the drawer where we put stuff we didn't know what to do with.

I opened the case and there they were. Neatly folded looking up at me.

And now I can remember what his face looked like when I woke up next to him.

Even though he wasn't wearing his glasses while he slept.

Because I remember his glasses, I can picture the strange fragile nakedness of his face without them.

Bare-faced Luka who I loved and who left me

and now at last everyone knows how I felt

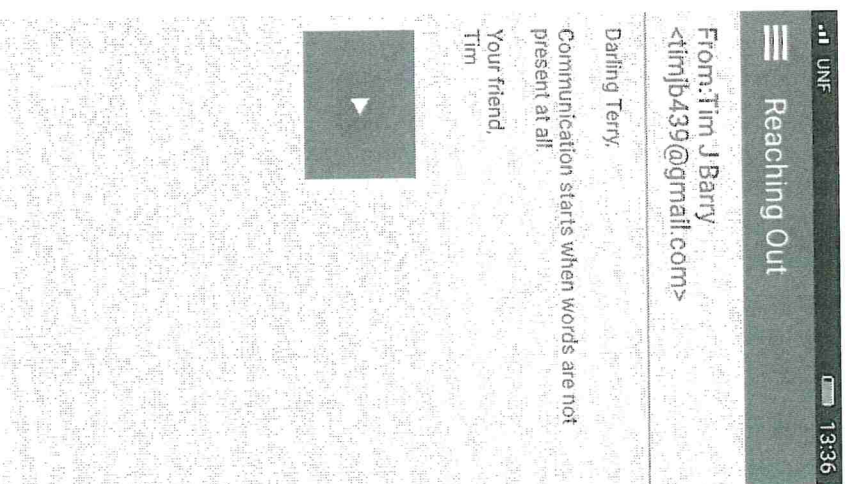
because now he's left them too

*The blurred photos gradually come into focus until we see a photograph of LUKA in bed, smiling groggily but happily.*



# SCENE 3

*An e-mail notification arrives on the phone. TERRY swipes and it opens the email.*





TERRY:

The eleventh condolence email comes with a video attached.

It's from Tim, who started out as my friend and then he was our friend and then he was Luka's friend and now apparently he's my friend again.

Tim's a performance artist, which is not something many people have the nerve to say about themselves after the age of thirty-five so you have to give him that.

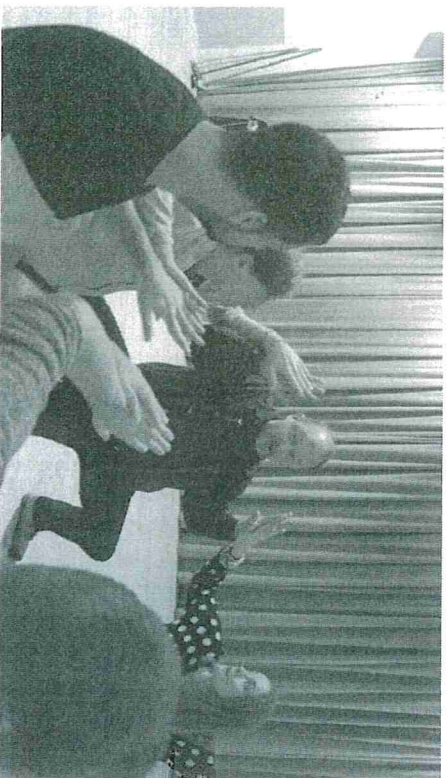
But he teaches, mostly, to pay the rent.

He's still funning because this year they merged the performance module he teaches with something called Digital and Pervasive Media Arts. This is someone who can hardly even work a toaster.

So he's sent me this video from one of his classes – and you can see he's making them all hold hands. I'm surprised it's even allowed these days.

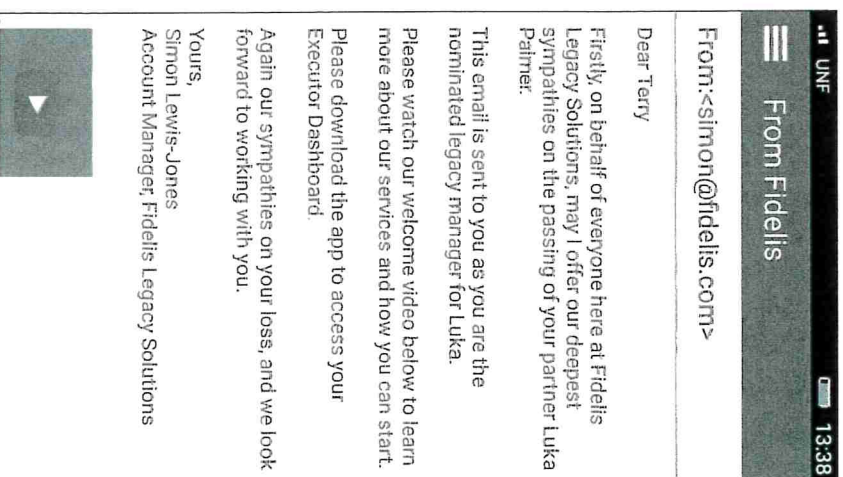
He makes all the students hold hands to remind them, he says, that digital, he says, means 'pertaining to fingers'. Digital, he says – you can hear him saying it – digital means we use whatever digits we have in order to touch each other.

He sounds ridiculous. He sounds creepy is what he sounds. But his students adore him. Poor fuckers.



Tim is the eleventh condolence email.

And then there's a twelfth. And it's not like any of the others.





*TERRY clicks on the video icon and a sleek video plays with the following voiceover:*

Losing a loved one is never easy. Here at Fidelity Legacy solutions we aim to help you through this difficult time.

Your loved one has appointed you as their Online Legacy Executor. This means you now have ninety days in which to make a decision as to how their online presence is managed going forward. All of their social media and Cloud assets are now bundled together with their Fidelity account and we are ready to advise you every step of the way, whether your decision is to preserve or discontinue any or all of these assets.

How does it work?

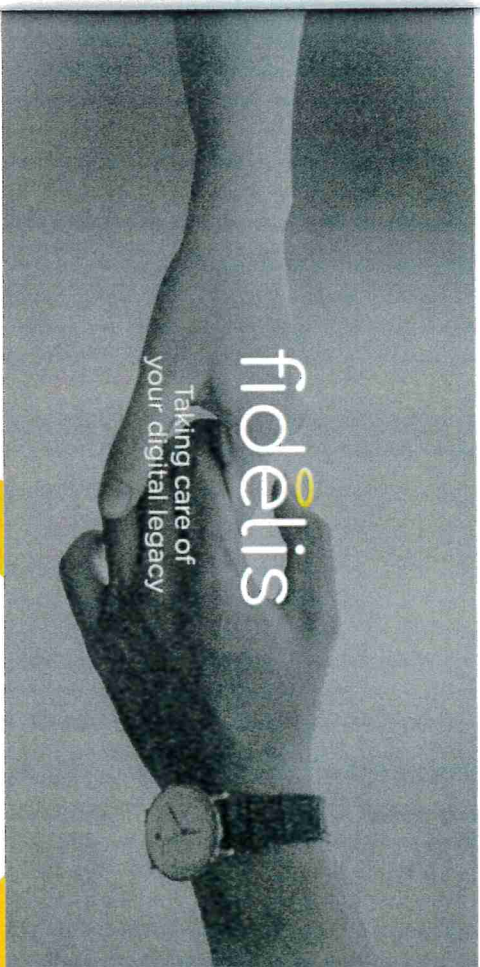
It's simple!

Step 1: Just download the Fidelity app from the link in your welcome email which will take you to your Executor Homepage.

Step 2: Take your time to remember, explore and connect with your lost loved one.

Step 3: Simply decide which assets you want to keep for friends and family to continue to enjoy and which ones you want to delete.

Our dedicated team are here to help every step of the way through our easy to use online chat.



Online Legacy Executor



90 DAYS

**STEP ONE**

Just download the Fidelity app from the link in your welcome email which will take you to your Executor Homepage.



**STEP TWO**

Take your time to remember, explore and connect with your lost loved one.



**STEP THREE**

Simply decide which assets you want to keep for friends and family to continue to enjoy and which ones you want to delete.





TERRY:

At first I'm basically assuming it's an admin error.

But there's a feeling in my stomach that knows otherwise.

It starts to come back to me, this creeping washed-out memory, one Sunday morning a year or fifteen months ago, white bed linen, the muffled sound of gangsta rap from the next door flat, I'm eating a neectarine for breakfast, and we're reading the Sunday papers together, I've got actual newspaper, he's reading the same paper on his tablet, which says it all, really, doesn't it, and he's annoying me by reading me extracts from this article about digital legacy services, I'm saying yeah, he's saying it's so interesting, I'm saying Yeah, he's saying we should think about this, I'm saying yeah.

He says: stop saying yeah.

I'm saying I have the exact same paper with the exact same articles, he doesn't need to keep reading things out to me like he's Charles Dickens at Christmas.

He says will I be his digital executor?

I say yeah. I take another bite of neectarine. And then I say: Baby you're going to live forever.

And he starts dancing around the bedroom, singing the song from

*Fame.*

*TERRY slowly dances around the audience in the café.*

UNF

03:23

PLAYING FROM PLAYLIST  
Sunday morning

THE ORIGINAL SOUL VOTTRUCK FROM THE MOTOWN PECTI BE

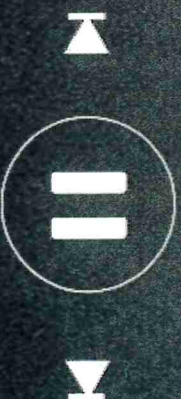
*Fame*

Fame

Irene Cara

0:01

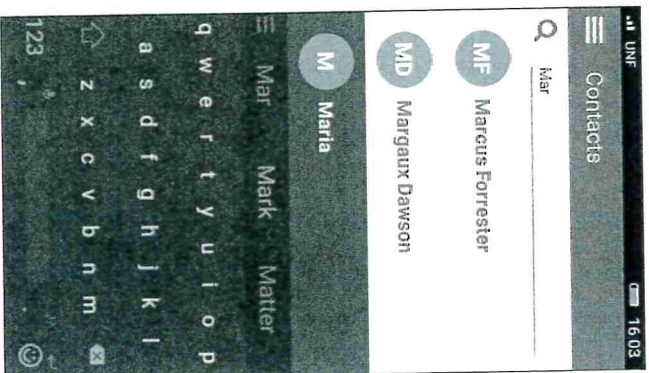
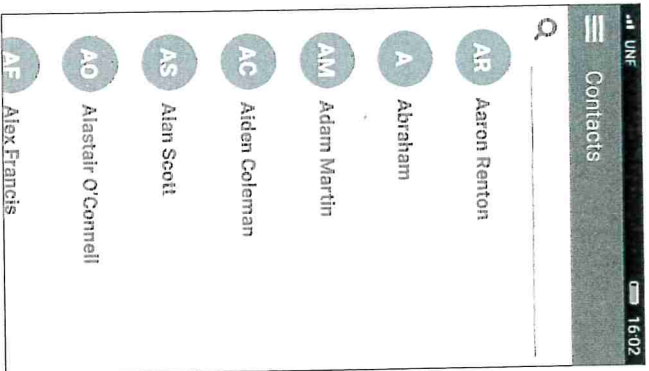
-5:13





# SCENE 4

*TERRY is sitting at another table. His homescreen displays a date one week later. TERRY opens his contacts, chooses MARIA and calls her. It goes to voicemail.*



**MARIA'S VOICE:**

Hello. I'm so sorry, I'm not able to take your call just now. Perhaps you'd be kind enough to leave me a message after the beep. Thank you very much indeed.

**TERRY:**

Um, Maria. It's Terry again.

I'm sorry. I owe you an apology. I'm sorry. That didn't go as planned, before. I don't blame you for hanging up on me.

This must be so hard for you.

What I was trying to say was, this is just an absurd situation. After he left, Luka and I were not on very good terms. We just weren't. I'm not saying there wasn't still love there. You don't just switch it off, do you?

But I promise, I barely registered what he was asking when he said about me being his online executor.

If I'd known what was going to happen, there's no way I would have said yes.