

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

By CHRISTOPHER REASON

1 x 44' Afternoon Play, Radio 4

CHARACTERS

JOANNE Sarah Lancashire
DAVID George Costigan

Every Child Matters

Every child matters

BY

CHRISTOPHER REASON

INT. STARBUCKS TYPE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

SECTION 1.

NAT KING COLE SINGING A *BLOSSOM FELL*.

A QUIET TIME OF DAY. THE PLACE VIRTUALLY DESERTED. SITTING AT A TABLE IS JOANNE, A SOCIAL WORKER IN HER MID THIRTIES. SHE IS CURRENTLY UNDER SUSPENSION. SHE IS EXTREMELY STRESSED BUT TRYING HARD NOT TO SHOW IT. SHE IS GLANCING AT A COPY OF THE SOCIAL WORKER'S BIBLE *COMMUNITY CARE*.

DAVID - A FELLOW SOCIAL WORKER - APPROACHES WITH TWO COFFEES ON A TRAY. HE TOO IS STRESSED AND HIDING IT, BUT MORE SUCCESSFULLY THAN JOANNE. THEY'VE ALREADY SAID THEIR BRIEF INITIAL HELLOS, DAVID'S ASKED HER WHAT SHE WANTS TO DRINK ETC, BUT THEY HAVEN'T YET HAD ANYTHING LIKE A PROPER CONVERSATION. THEY WILL DRINK COFFEE AD LIB DURING THE FIRST THIRD OF THE PLAY.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THEY'VE SEEN EACH OTHER IN SIX MONTHS.

THEY EACH HAVE A SECRET AGENDA.

DAVID

There you go... I couldn't remember
if you take sugar or not.

LOSE NAT KING COLE

JOANNE

How soon we forget.

HE PUTS THE TRAY TO ONE SIDE AND SITS DOWN OPPOSITE HER

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DAVID

Don't be like that. You didn't use to, did you? But then you split up with whatshisface and you were back on it again, weren't you? Or have I got that wrong?

JOANNE

That was just the once, David, it was over a year ago. It was a silly idea; I hated it.

DAVID

Yeah, I remember now.

JOANNE

I don't take sugar. I've never taken sugar. Not in all the time you've known me. OK?

DAVID

Why are you being so touchy?

JOANNE

Guess what? I'm not in a very good place.

DAVID

(measured)

OK. Has something else happened that I don't know about?

JOANNE

Actually an awful LOT has happened that you don't know about. If only you'd thought to phone

DAVID

There are rules and you know it.

JOANNE

Oh yes, and we have to stick to the rules, don't we, David? Wouldn't want to get into trouble, would we?

JOANNE TURNS A PAGE OF COMMUNITY CARE.

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DAVID

Have I given up a whole morning's work to sit her and be slagged off while you read *Community Care*?

JOANNE

Can't believe you're still reading it.

DAVID

(more lightly)

I'm a social worker, Joanne, which makes me, by definition, a masochist. Which is why I read it, OK? Now put it down.

JOANNE SPOTS SOMETHING DISTURBING IN THE PAPER

SECTION 2

JOANNE

(weary cynicism)

Oh my God....

DAVID

What?

JOANNE

I got an email about this. Didn't want to believe it.

DAVID

What?

JOANNE

Kincaid and his knighthood.

DAVID

What did I just say? You're only going to upset yourself.

JOANNE

The first time I so much as look at this paper in six months and there's his big fat mug.

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DAVID

(facetious)

Surely you mean 'differently sized'.

JOANNE

I'm not in the mood, David.

(and then reading with
distaste)

'Chief Superintendent Geoffrey
Kincaid recently named in the Queen's
Birthday Honours list and chair of
his local Safeguarding Children
Board...' Excuse me whilst I puke my
guts up.

DAVID

Is this how it's gonna be?

JOANNE

Yes, it's how it's gonna be. Is that
a problem for you?

DAVID

You said it was important. I've
cancelled three appointments for
this. With clients. Remember them?
The people we're supposed to care
about? The reason we came into this
business in the first place?

JOANNE TAKES THAT ON BOARD AND IS PENITENT

JOANNE

I'm sorry. Very wound up.

THEIR DEFENCES DISSOLVE A TAD

DAVID

You're forgiven.

(beat)

Oh Joanne...

JOANNE

Don't start being nice to me, David,
please, or I'll cry. And I've done
enough of that these last six months.

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DAVID

OK. Let's start again.

JOANNE

It was Kincaid's phrase, you know.

DAVID

What was?

JOANNE

'This repulsive woman'. The day Debbie was arrested and charged. And won't he have loved it when the press picked up on it.

DAVID

It's his job, Joanne.

JOANNE

His job is catching criminals. Supposedly.

(beat)

You know she's being sentenced today?

DAVID

Hard to avoid.

JOANNE

Kincaid didn't even know her. Nothing to do with the case whatsoever, but he wanted that knighthood so it was 'I'll have a piece of that'.

DAVID

Forget Kincaid.

JOANNE

You know he's a child abuser?

DAVID

(he's heard this rumour)

No I don't. And neither do you.

JOANNE

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You didn't see the bruises on his son's legs. I did. Did Pattie follow it up?

DAVID

Follow what up?

JOANNE

The day I was suspended I said to her, 'Keep an eye on the Kincaid investigation....'

DAVID

Whoa, now come on - we had an agreement...

JOANNE

And he's still Chair of the Safeguarding Board? I am in awe.

DAVID

...that we wouldn't talk about...

JOANNE

What's Pattie been doing?

DAVID

(assertive)

...about any ongoing cases.

JOANNE

I had interview notes with his youngest. A full disclosure...I was just about to phone legal...

DAVID

I mean it, Joanne. Stop there. It's not our responsibility.

JOANNE

If it's not ours, then whose?

DAVID

We had an agreement...

JOANNE

(with irony)

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'Every Child Matters'. What a joke.

DAVID

You've made your point. And we're being stared at. The couple by the door.

THEY BECOME A LITTLE MORE AWARE OF THE NEED FOR SECRECY

JOANNE

When you get back to the office, you need to look into this, David. Talk to Pattie. Seriously.

DAVID

I will.
(beat)
Who sent you the email?

JOANNE

What email?

DAVID

You said you got an email about Kincaid and his knighthood.

JOANNE

That is hardly the crucial fact in all of this, David.

DAVID

No.

SECTION 3

SHE LEAFS THROUGH TO THE CLASSIFIEDS.

JOANNE

(still absorbed)

I see we're advertising for people again. Ha! I love this - 'Do you thrive on a challenge?'

SHE SNORTS DERISIVELY

JOANNE (CONT'D)

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So long as you're idea of a challenge is being thrown into a tank of piranha fish...

DAVID

(mock fierce)

Put it away!

JOANNE

How's the escape committee? Anyone else made a home run since Danielle?

DAVID

You've not gone to all this trouble just to catch up on office gossip.

JOANNE

How many replies will you get to this?

DAVID

I dunno. College leavers who don't know about piranha fish?

JOANNE

Sooner I get back to work the better then, eh?

DAVID

(beat)

You want to?

JOANNE

Want to? Course I don't *want* to. But I've a monstrous mortgage and a pile of unopened bills sitting on the sideboard. I don't see who else is going to be giving me a job any time soon.

DAVID

For the last time: put down the paper.

JOANNE

Sick of it anyway.

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DAVID TAKES THE PAPER AND PUTS IT TO ONE SIDE. HE TRIES TO RESTART THE CONVERSATION AS THOUGH THAT HAD NEVER HAPPENED

SECTION 4

DAVID

So, how are you?

SHE DOESN'T RESPOND

DAVID (CONT'D)

Alright, it's a dumb question but you've got to start somewhere.

JOANNE

Let me think. How am I? A little confused.

DAVID

Why's that?

JOANNE

Was it deliberate?

DAVID

Was what deliberate?

JOANNE

This place.

DAVID

What about it?

JOANNE

Oh come on, David.

DAVID

Somewhere we both know.
(correcting himself)
Knew.

SHE SNORTS DERISIVELY

DAVID (CONT'D)

What are you trying to say, Joanne?

JOANNE

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Out of all the coffee bars in all the towns in all the world...

DAVID

It was the first place I thought of.
Does it make me guilty of something?

JOANNE

Not that you'd recognise it from back then.

DAVID

No.

JOANNE

And it is the other side of town from the office.

DAVID

Well yes. I won't deny that was a consideration.

JOANNE

(mock melodramatic)

What if we're seen? [GASP]

DAVID

If we're seen, I shall be in a lot of trouble. Am I really supposed not to worry about that?

(beat)

Come on, you still haven't answered my question. How are you?

JOANNE

Look, I know how I must be coming across. It's not intentional. It's just... I am grateful, really.

DAVID

For god's sake, how are you?

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JOANNE

(thinks)

Most bodily parts still functioning.
Not dead. Whether that's a good or a
bad thing I don't know. What about
you?

DAVID

Chugging along.

JOANNE

Kids?

DAVID

Amanda was fifteen last week. Ricky
starts at the big school in
September. Fran and me are still
together. Just. She's back working
part time.

JOANNE

And the department?

DAVID

Is still the department - what can I
say?

JOANNE

The Gorgon still doing her glaring
thing?

DAVID

If you mean Pattie...

JOANNE

If you're talking piranha fish...

DAVID

Pattie has had to deal with a lot.

JOANNE

Sticking up for her too, are we?

DAVID

Would you have been in her place,
these last six months?

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JOANNE
Better than my place.

AWKWARD PAUSE

DAVID
OK. Point taken.

JOANNE
And still no date for my hearing.

DAVID
No.

JOANNE
But after today?

DAVID
No doubt.

DAVID IS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THIS LINE OF CONVERSATION.

SECTION 5

JOANNE
You've got your funny look on.

DAVID
What funny look?

JOANNE
Where there's something going on that
you're not saying. I'm on your tail,
David.

DAVID
(covering)
Just this place. Maybe it was a
mistake.

JOANNE
Can't bear what they've done with it.

DAVID
Yeah, the old Java had a bit of
character.

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JOANNE

(sipping)

Coffee was better too. Not that beverages were the main thing on our minds that particular night.

DAVID

No.

THEY'VE ESTABLISHED PROPER EYE CONTACT FOR THE FIRST TIME

JOANNE

(eventually)

It's good to see you.

DAVID

You too. Like I say, I'm only sorry it's taken this long.

JOANNE

If you thought I was hassling you, I'm sorry.

DAVID

I know I should have rung you back before...

JOANNE

But the rules?

DAVID

Nothing to do with the rules.

JOANNE

I do understand actually.

DAVID

I know you probably thought I was only thinking of me, but I wasn't; I was thinking of you too.

JOANNE

I know.

THEY TALK OVER ONE ANOTHER AGAIN

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DAVID

There were a dozen times when I
picked up the phone...

JOANNE

Really, David...

DAVID

But I was frightened....

JOANNE

I understand

DAVID

Not so much of being found out.

JOANNE

It doesn't matter.

DAVID

But of us. I was frightened of us.

JOANNE

I know. Frightened of us. That's
how I feel too.

PAUSE

JOANNE (CONT'D)

There are so many things we haven't
talked about. Things we should have
sorted out ages back.

DAVID

I don't blame you for hating me.

JOANNE

Who said anything about hating?

DAVID

We were idiots. We should never
have...

JOANNE

(cutting in)
Oh forget it.

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DAVID

I remember you saying, 'We're going to regret this in the morning'.

JOANNE

'It will ruin our professional relationship.'

THEY SHARE A SICK LAUGH AT HOW PROPHEMIC THAT TURNED OUT TO BE

DAVID

We were a good team.

JOANNE

The Bonnie and Clyde of Social Work.

DAVID FINDS THAT VERY FUNNY

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I mean we used to tell each other like everything, didn't we?

DAVID

You are the only woman I've ever known - and I'm including my wife in this - who virtually from day one was happy to share with me the ongoing soap opera that was her bowel movements.

THEY SNORT WITH LAUGHTER THAT TURNS INTO GIGGLES THAT BUBBLE THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING

JOANNE

I had haemorrhoids!

DAVID

I know!

JOANNE

Dog semen case?

DAVID

Oh god...

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DAVID (CONT'D)

That flat on the Ainsworth.

JOANNE

With all the animals.

DAVID

You with a parrot on your head...

JOANNE

It was a cockatiel actually....

DAVID

Me explaining to Dr Dolittle why his children were going to be taken into care and all the time his dog is humping my leg.

JOANNE

And that was his alibi!

DAVID

'Weren't my semen on her underwear, your honour, it were the dog's!'

THE HYSTERIA STARTS TO SUBSIDE

JOANNE

Oh god....

DAVID

Bonkers...

JOANNE GLANCES ROUND

JOANNE

That dishy Polish barista is giving us a very funny look.

IT WINDS DOWN COMPLETELY

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I know it was completely mad and I know we used to work all the hours god sent but I think I actually used to enjoy the job back in those days.

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DAVID

Steady on.

JOANNE

Whilst still under the youthful misapprehension that I was doing something worthwhile. That I was making a difference.

DAVID

You were. You were brilliant. The best.

JOANNE

I wasn't fishing, David.

DAVID

And I'm not sucking-up. You were fantastic. You had principles, but you knew when to bend. Clients always came first. Always. I was in awe of you.

JOANNE

In awe? Oh come on...

DAVID

I was. Alright, you rubbed people up the wrong way from time to time...

JOANNE

You mean I was a bolshie bitch.

DAVID

Yeah...but you always did it for the right reasons.

JOANNE

Yeah and look where it's got me.

DAVID HAS NO ANSWER TO THAT. AN AWKWARD SILENCE.

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SECTION 6

DAVID
You've lost weight.

JOANNE
You don't say.

DAVID
Not that you were fat before.

JOANNE
Surely you mean 'differently sized'.

DAVID LAUGHS.

JOANNE (CONT'D)
When all this is over, I'm going to write a diet book. The 'stress-induced nervous breakdown diet' and it's going to be full of really useful tips.

DAVID
(amused)
Uhuh?

JOANNE
Number one: Get yourself a job in social work.

DAVID
(joining in the game)
Obviously.

JOANNE
Number two: Aim to do your job properly.

DAVID LAUGHS

JOANNE (CONT'D)
You are already half way towards your nervous breakdown.

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DAVID

(laughing)
Stop it.

JOANNE

Before long you'll have three times the officially agreed work load. The sheer terror of which will leave such a knot in your stomach that the very idea of eating will make you want to gag.

DAVID

You're amazing..

JOANNE

Three: take up smoking again. You'll hate yourself for this. Self loathing is good. Four: discover that alcohol doesn't work either. Five: persist with alcohol in the face of all the facts.

DAVID

(no longer laughing)
I miss you.

JOANNE

Six: have a case go tits up and everyone blame you. Even though you are completely innocent.

DAVID

Did you not hear what I just said?

JOANNE

Even people you thought you could trust.

HER TONE HAS SUDDENLY DARKENED. DAVID INTERPRETS IT AS A PERSONAL ATTACK

DAVID

When did I ever blame you?

JOANNE

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Of course not you. But somebody did.
Somebody leaked my name to the press.

DAVID

Do you have a suspect?

JOANNE

Why? Do you?

ANOTHER AWKWARD PAUSE

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Seven: get the press involved. Ditto
TV and radio. Have your name and
professional reputation dragged
through the mud. Get called names in
the street.

DAVID

I always stuck up for you. You do
know that?

JOANNE

Eight: get suspended on full pay.
Nine: cry uncontrollably for two
months; ask yourself over and over,
'What did I do wrong? Why are they
picking on me?' Drive yourself
mental going round in circles with
unanswered questions. Spend another
two months in bed popping Seroxat
like Smarties, wondering why you
still feel like something someone
scraped off their shoe. Finally,
ten: take a look at your skinny naked
body in a full length mirror whilst
contemplating suicide.
Congratulations. You have completed
the Joanne Davis stress-induced
nervous breakdown, weight loss
programme. Here's your badge.

A HEAVY AWKWARD SILENCE

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SECTION 7

DAVID

Suicide?

JOANNE

There were moments.

DAVID

When I mentioned your weight, I was actually trying to be nice.

JOANNE

And I was trying to be funny. Don't know what went wrong towards the end there.

DAVID

I meant it. You look good.

JOANNE

'Be the envy of your friends as you get showered with phony compliments from former colleagues who are too embarrassed to say anything else.'

DAVID

Why do you keep on picking on me?

JOANNE

Because I can? Because even when I'm trying not to be, that's how I end up. Because I know you won't take it personally. This place doesn't help.

DAVID

I'm sorry. I should've thought....

JOANNE

Yes you should.
(change of tone)
Oh David...

DAVID

What?

SHE GAZES AT HIM FOR A SECOND

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JOANNE

I did love you.

DAVID ISN'T ENTIRELY SHOCKED AT SUCH A BOLD REVELATION. IT WAS ALWAYS ONE OF THE UNSPOKEN ASSUMPTIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Part of me still does. And I think you felt the same. Well didn't you? Don't you?

DAVID

Is that the right word? Love?

JOANNE

No, it was better than that, more important than that - we *trusted* one another.

DAVID

Definitely.

JOANNE

I knew here...
(her heart)
...that you would never let me down. Even when the sky was falling in, and everyone else was running for cover, you'd still be there.

DAVID

And that worked both ways.

JOANNE

But then we did a dumb thing...

DAVID

I've been over it in my head a million times.

JOANNE

...and nothing was ever the same again.

DAVID

If I could turn back time...

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JOANNE

You'd be Cher. Only without the plastic surgery.

DAVID LAUGHS

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Or better still Dr Who. I could be your assistant and we could zoom off to some distant galaxy made of chocolate where everyone is happy and they've never even heard of social work.

DAVID

You'd hate it.

JOANNE

How do you know?

DAVID

Bored out of your mind in a week.

THEY SMILE. PAUSE

SECTION 8

JOANNE

Alright, here's another let's pretend.

DAVID

Go on.

JOANNE

Let's pretend it didn't happen.

DAVID

And how do we do that?

JOANNE

The night we did the CPI on the dog semen case, we came here like we usually did. And when it was time to go home, we kissed each other like usually did. We hugged each other like we usually did....

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DAVID

You casually insulted me like you usually did.

JOANNE

And vice versa.

DAVID

In a strictly supportive non judgmental way.

JOANNE

And then we went our separate ways like we usually did. That's how it was. That's what happened.

DAVID

(the hopelessness of it)
Oh Joanne.

JOANNE

(sighs)
I know.

DAVID

Perhaps we shouldn't mention this again.

JOANNE

(sighs)
I just want to go back to how it was.

HE STRETCHES OUT A HAND TO HERS. BUT THE INSTANT HE TOUCHES SHE RECOILS

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I'm not keen on being touched. It's not you.

DAVID

When you said 'nervous breakdown'...

JOANNE

It's not so much that I want to go back to how I was. It's more I hate the person I've become. Angry. Anxious. Eaten up with nerves.

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DAVID

You've been through an awful lot.

JOANNE

You know how much effort it took even to get on the bus today? How scared I was?

DAVID

I can imagine.

JOANNE

No you can't. I promise you. Had to keep saying to myself: 'Come on - it's almost over. Debbie's getting sentenced today. Tribunal can happen now. Another few weeks and you can get your life back. See this...

SHE PULLS OUT A PAIR OF SUNGLASSES FROM HER POCKET AND PUTS THEM ON

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Sunglasses. So as I wouldn't be recognised.

DAVID

You look like a film star.

JOANNE

Do film stars generally get spat at outside supermarkets?

DAVID

What?

JOANNE

When it all first blew up and my photo was in the papers, I got spat at as I was coming out of Waitrose with my shopping.

DAVID

Really?

JOANNE

All down my coat.

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DAVID

(as Alan Bennett)

Netto I could understand. But
Waitrose?

JOANNE PAYS LIPS SERVICE TO THE JOKE BUT SHE DOESN'T REALLY
LAUGH

JOANNE

And what for? What did I actually
do? What was my crime?

DAVID FEELS HELPLESS. JOANNE TAKES A DEEP BREATH

SECTION 9

JOANNE (CONT'D)

What time's Debbie due in court?

DAVID

I dunno. Any time now.

JOANNE

This place hasn't got a telly. Did
you bring a radio? How will we know?

DAVID

I've got my phone. We'll know.

JOANNE

Everyone's saying eight years. Do
you think it'll be eight years?

DAVID

That's what everyone's saying.

JOANNE

(almost to herself)

Like prison is ever going to do
Debbie a scrap of good.

DAVID

It was a pretty awful crime, Joanne.

JOANNE

I'm sorry? Whose side are you on?

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DAVID

Oh come on. To exhibit your own daughter over the internet...

JOANNE

Debbie Hurst is a deeply screwed-up woman who has never once got an even break.

DAVID

I'm not denying that...

JOANNE

And now we're going to burn the witch to keep the mob happy - oh fantastic.

DAVID

What would you have done, then? Let her off?

JOANNE

How does it feel to be part of the mob, David?

DAVID

You're doing it again.

JOANNE

Doing what?

DAVID

Why can't we go two minutes without you having a go at me?

JOANNE

(shrugs)

The plan was to be nice. Butter you up a bit.

DAVID

Why would you need to do that?

NO REPLY. SHE STARES AT HIM QUIZZICALLY. IT MAKES HIM UNCOMFORTABLE

DAVID (CONT'D)

Joanne?

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JOANNE

I so want to trust you, David.

DAVID

What do you mean?

JOANNE

(a lobbed hand grenade)

When were you going to mention it?

DAVID

Mention what?

JOANNE

The promotion.

FOR A SECOND DAVID IS LIKE A RABBIT IN THE HEADLIGHTS

DAVID

Sorry?

JOANNE

Or were you planning to keep schtum,
hoping it wouldn't get back to me?

DAVID

(in a corner)

I wasn't going to tell you yet
because it's not even official yet.

JOANNE

So you weren't going to mention it at
all?

DAVID

If it's not been announced, why would
I?

JOANNE

Because we used to tell each other
everything possibly?

DAVID

(sighs)

Who told you?

JOANNE

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It was on the ten o'clock news.
You're a very important person these
days.

DAVID

Seriously.

JOANNE

Why do you need to know?

DAVID

Because it's supposed to be
confidential. Even within the
department.

JOANNE

Why's it confidential?

DAVID

(iterating)

Because it hasn't been officially
announced.

JOANNE

Why hasn't it been officially
announced? Because it's
confidential. We could be here all
week.

DAVID

I'm just a bit concerned - that's
all.

JOANNE

Well that makes two of us.

DAVID

That it's leaked out.

JOANNE

Are you going to ask me how I know?

DAVID

I'd be intrigued.

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JOANNE

Tell you what: I'll do you a deal.
You tell me who stitched me up to the
press and I'll tell you who told me
about your promotion.

DAVID

You think if I knew I wouldn't tell
you?

JOANNE

I dunno. I'd hope so.

DAVID

It's not like I suddenly stopped
caring for you.

A MOMENT'S CONNECTION

JOANNE

Do you know how much I wish we could
get back what we had? Do you know
how much I miss us?

DAVID

Why didn't you mention it the moment
I arrived?

JOANNE

What?

DAVID

The promotion.

JOANNE

Because I wasn't supposed to know,
was I?

DAVID

Felt like you were testing me.

JOANNE

Maybe I was.

DAVID

And I've gone and failed and now I
feel dreadful. Well done. Result.

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JOANNE

It was wrong. I'm sorry. Wasn't planned. Not sure I even realised I was doing it. I want to trust you. I want you to trust me.

SECTION 10

DAVID

(beat)
So what else did they tell you?

JOANNE

Who?

DAVID

Your Deep Throat.

JOANNE

Don't put me on the spot, David.

DAVID

If we're trying to trust one another again....

JOANNE

I would. Only what with you being management these days...

DAVID

Don't be daft.

JOANNE

What's daft about it?

DAVID

Because I'm still me.

JOANNE

I remember Pattie Dewhurst saying something along those lines.

DAVID

I'm not Pattie.

JOANNE

Every Child Matters

Look where she's ended up and then look at me. Who's the idiot?

DAVID

I'm not saying Pattie hasn't got an unfortunate manner, but once you get to know her...

JOANNE

Oh pur-lease.

DAVID

She's actually alright. She's got good instincts. I trust her.

JOANNE

You *trust* Pattie?

DAVID

Yes.

JOANNE

To do what? Sod off home at five sharp while we were out on a CPI till ten? To sit with her feet up, tut tutting over her bleeding Guardian and all the while allocating extra cases behind our backs? Then running off on annual leave so we couldn't even argue the toss? Oh I trust Pattie alright.

DAVID

Things look a bit different from the other side of the fence.

JOANNE

Jesus, David - that's exactly what she used to say!

DAVID

Joanne, You can moan all you like. But the fact is you were encouraged to apply for team leader and you turned it down...

JOANNE

Every Child Matters

Because I wasn't gonna climb that greasy pole just so as I could turn round and dump on my former colleagues from a great height.

DAVID

Someone has to be prepared to take responsibility.

JOANNE

Like someone had to collaborate with the Nazis, you mean?

DAVID

(hugely offended)
Oh for god's sake.

JOANNE

(a sudden shocking thought)
Are you shagging her?

DAVID

What?

JOANNE

Pattie?

DAVID

Don't be ridiculous.

JOANNE

You are, aren't you?

DAVID

No!

JOANNE

I don't believe you.

DAVID

Joanne, will you pack it in?

JOANNE

It certainly would explain a lot.

DAVID

No way.

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JOANNE

That night at Bernice Collier's
leaving do...

DAVID

For God's sake - that was over ten
years ago.

JOANNE

...and she tried to drag you into the
stationery room.

DAVID

She was drunk.

JOANNE

You boasted about it afterwards.

DAVID

Boasted? Don't be daft. I was
having a laugh.

JOANNE

Look me on the eye.

DAVID

Will you stop it?

JOANNE

If I've ever meant anything to you...

DAVID

Joanne, this is ridiculous.

JOANNE

I'm serious. If I've ever meant
anything to you, if all we went
through together ever counted for
anything, you will tell me the truth
now. Are you or are you not in the
sack with Pattie Dewhurst?

DAVID

(looking her in the eye)
No I am not.

JOANNE

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Never?

DAVID

I'm a married man with two kids.

JOANNE

Didn't stop you before.

DAVID

I thought we weren't going to mention that again.

JOANNE

If I ever find out you've lied to me, David...

DAVID

I'm not.

JOANNE

(just about convinced)

OK.

DAVID

Calling me a Nazi. Jesus.

JOANNE

Alright, Alright, Alright, I'm sorry. Paranoia is one of the symptoms. All these anti-depressants rattling round in my system. I say things I don't mean.

(quieter)

Forgive me?

DAVID BREATHES OUT A YES BUT THEY'RE BOTH LEFT BRUISED.

THE CONVERSATION HAS RUN ITS COURSE. JOANNE GLANCES AT HER WATCH

SECTION 11

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I wonder if they're in court yet?

DAVID

We'll hear soon enough.

Every Child Matters

DAVID PREPARES TO BROACH HIS SECRET AGENDA

DAVID (CONT'D)

So...how are you feeling about the hearing?

JOANNE

I don't want to talk about the hearing.

DAVID

I can understand you dreading it. Who wouldn't? What with all the press interest and what not. Has it occurred to you that there might be another way of...[tackling it]

ONLY JOANNE FORESTALLS HIM

JOANNE

I'm not here to talk about the hearing!

DAVID

No?

JOANNE

No.

DAVID

What then?

JOANNE

(beat)
Paige and Jordan.

DAVID

What?

JOANNE

Debbie's kids.

DAVID

You're doing it again. We had an agreement.

JOANNE

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I just need reassurance about a few things.

DAVID

What did I say on the phone? 'As long as we don't talk about ongoing cases.'

JOANNE

I was lying.

DAVID

And you're the one been going on about trust.

JOANNE

If that's what it was going to take to get you to see me.

DAVID

Those rules are there for a reason.

JOANNE

I was Debbie's case worker for over five years. I've known Paige since she was seven years old. I was holding Debbie's hand when she had Jordan. I'm supposed to forget all that, am I? I CARED for them.

DAVID

So where were you?

JOANNE

I beg your pardon?

DAVID

When she was pimping out her daughter over the internet, where were you?

JOANNE

(deeply hurt)
You bastard.

DAVID

It's a legitimate question. They'll certainly ask it at the tribunal.

Every Child Matters

JOANNE

I was dealing with a hundred other cases and you know that.

SHE GRABS DAVID'S COPY OF *COMMUNITY CARE* AND HITS IT TO PUNCTUATE HER NEXT SPEECH

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Including that Chief Superintendent Geoffrey Kincaid...

DAVID

It's not like you're the only person with a massive case load...

JOANNE

...who is still Chair of the sodding Children's Safeguarding Board. And people wonder why I get cynical.

DAVID

Keep your voice down will you? Your problem, Joanne, was that you never got cynical enough.

JOANNE

Pardon?

DAVID

You never learnt to separate yourself emotionally from your clients. Well did you? It's not like I'm telling you something you don't know.

JOANNE

How can I not be cynical? When you've got the Debbies of this world looking at eight years while an abusive bastard like Kincaid...

SHE STABS HER FINGER ONTO *COMMUNITY CARE*

JOANNE (CONT'D)

...gets to walk away scot free. Apart from his sodding knighthood that is...

Every Child Matters

THE ANGER HAS DRAINED OUT OF HER A LITTLE

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Just tell me what you know about
Paige and Jordan and I'll shut up.

DAVID

You're talking to the wrong person.
It's not my case I'm not up to speed.

JOANNE

Who's case is it then?

DAVID

Pattie's.

JOANNE

You're kidding me?

DAVID

You moan about her never taking
responsibility.

JOANNE

Why her?

DAVID

It's very politically sensitive.
Showed the suits that she was taking
it seriously.

JOANNE

So where's she up to on it?

DAVID

(shrugs)

I think there's a Looked After Child
review next week.

JOANNE

Don't treat me like I'm straight off
the farm David. What's the plan?

DAVID

You know the procedure. Once it's
confirmed that their mother will be
staying in jail, the search will be

Every Child Matters

on for an alternative permanent placement.

JOANNE

It's just I've heard a rumour that they might be put with their grandfather.

DAVID

Where did you hear that?

JOANNE

Is it true?

DAVID

Where are you getting all this information?

JOANNE

Because if they are, you've got to stop it.

DAVID

Why?

JOANNE

You won't find it in any of the case notes cos Debbie asked me not to....

DAVID

Sorry?

JOANNE

Debbie's old man sexually abused her for five years from the age of eleven and fathered her first child.

DAVID

And you didn't think to put that in her notes?

JOANNE

She begged me not to.

DAVID

And you agreed?

Every Child Matters

JOANNE

At the time the kids had no contact with their grandfather and it didn't seem relevant.

DAVID SIGHS

JOANNE (CONT'D)

Fact is she was never going to tell me until I'd agreed not to write it down.

AGAIN DAVID SIGHS

JOANNE (CONT'D)

I know - it's not very professional. Looking back, it was a screw up. But when I give my word to a client, I like to keep it.

DAVID

So what do you want me to do about it now?

JOANNE

Stop the placement.

DAVID

On what evidence?

JOANNE

You're surely not doubting my word?

DAVID

No, but if there's nothing in your notes and there's no other evidence to go on, what am I supposed to say to Pattie? 'Oh I had a highly illicit meeting with Joanne in a coffee bar on the other side of town and she told me this big secret'?

JOANNE

Pattie already knows.

DAVID

You what???

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JOANNE

And the fact that she doesn't appear to be doing anything about it I find deeply worrying.

DAVID

How does Pattie know?

JOANNE

(eventually)

The name Tony Jukes mean anything to you?

DAVID

Tony Jukes. Yeah, vaguely. Probation Officer?

JOANNE

Did Debbie Hurst's PSR. He went to see Pattie.

DAVID

How come?

JOANNE

Because I told him to.

DAVID

Why?

JOANNE

Because following on from doing Debbie's pre-sentence report, he came to see me.

DAVID

While you've been suspended?

JOANNE

Cos Debbie told him exactly what she'd told me about her Dad. And cos it wasn't in her notes, he didn't know what to do. So he came to see me in order to corroborate her story.

DAVID

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And you told him to go and see
Pattie?

JOANNE

You actually met him but you probably
don't remember.

DAVID

How come?

JOANNE

He was in Pattie's outer office when
she was promoting you. The door was
open. You were introduced on your
way out, but you were that full of
yourself, you probably didn't take it
in.

DAVID

That was Tony Jukes?

JOANNE

That was Tony Jukes.

DAVID

And he?...[told you about my
promotion]

JOANNE

Uhuh. More importantly he told
Pattie about Debbie's dad.

DAVID

So what's the problem? If Tony Jukes
said something to Pattie, she'll be
looking into it.

JOANNE

So why hasn't she said anything to
you?

DAVID

Why should she?

JOANNE

Well with you being her number two
these days, I would have thought...

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DAVID

You really think having been given a piece of information like that Pattie would just sit on her hands?

JOANNE

If it gets Paige and Jordan off their care orders quicker and helps her meet her damned targets, then too right she would.

DAVID

You're being absolutely ridiculous.

JOANNE

Could you sleep knowing the department was delivering them kids up to an abuser?

DAVID

It will never come to that. Not in a million years.

JOANNE

How do you know? Why do you think Pattie's promoted you? Mm? To get you onside. So you won't kick up a fuss...

DAVID

Give me some credit.

JOANNE

If you've got any balls at all, David, you won't let it happen.

DAVID

Has it not occurred to you that Pattie won't be able to do anything at all until after Debbie's been sentenced and the legal situation's been sorted out?

JOANNE

We all know she's going down...

DAVID

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But until it's official...

JOANNE

If you don't, I will. I'll bring it up at the tribunal. I'll scream it from the rooftops. I'll go to the press. I'll do whatever it takes...

DAVID

I promise you: I will make sure Paige and Jordan are taken care of. Yes?

JOANNE

(only partly assuaged)
OK.

SECTION 12

DAVID

You never gave me an answer, about the tribunal. How are you feeling?

JOANNE

Well what do you think?

DAVID

It's going to be nasty. You do realise that?

JOANNE

I've had meetings with Linda.

DAVID

Linda?

JOANNE

Union rep. And she says we're not going to take it lying down.

DAVID

That might be the plan, but they're still going to want to make an example of you.

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JOANNE

Who doxed me in? That's what she's going to be asking. So far no one's had an answer to that.

DAVID

I'm not sure that you're fully aware of what you're up against.

JOANNE

What do you mean?

DAVID

They've been turning over a lot of stones. Looking for stuff on you.

JOANNE

(alarmed)
Who has?

DAVID

I don't know their names. From another section of the department. Combing through all your files. Your computer got taken away for examination.

JOANNE

And?

DAVID

Word has it they've found something.

JOANNE

(aghast)
What?

DAVID

Do you remember obtaining a grant from the department to buy Paige a new bed? Two hundred pounds. Yes?

JOANNE IS FROZEN WITH SHOCK

JOANNE

What about it?

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DAVID

Did she ever get that bed?

JOANNE

She got a bed, yeah.

DAVID

Did she get a bed costing two hundred pounds?

JOANNE

She got a bed. That's the point.

DAVID

(iterating)

Did she get a bed costing two hundred pounds?

JOANNE

What is this?

DAVID

You didn't get this from me, right?

JOANNE

Debbie was getting threats from her loan shark. You know what those scumbags are capable of.

DAVID

Why didn't you go to the police?

JOANNE

Oh come on, David. Get real! This is the Ainsworth we're talking about. Like the cops are ever going to give a tuppenny damn about the likes of Debbie.

DAVID

So you thought you'd fiddle the department?

JOANNE

I gave her my own spare bed - that's what I did!

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DAVID

While the two hundred pounds went to pay off Debbie's debts?

JOANNE

So I saved her from a beating? I kept her out of hospital. I stopped her kids going into an emergency foster placement. For two hundred quid, I reckon that's a bargain.

DAVID

That's not how it's going to look, Joanne.

JOANNE

Are you doubting my word?

DAVID

They're going to hang you for it. It's a sacking offence, Joanne, whichever way you try and spin it.

JOANNE

Like you've never done anything like it.

DAVID

(ignoring that)

On top of which you'll lose your Social Care Registration. You will be completely hung out to dry. No job. No future. No nothing.

JOANNE

(verge of tears)

I've given fifteen years of my life to this bloody job. Every relationship I've ever had gone tits up because of it....

DAVID

I do know that.

JOANNE

And for what?

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PAUSE

SECTION 13

DAVID

There is another way. A way where you get to keep your Social Care Registration. Where there's no tribunal, no publicity. You get a chance to pick your life up and start over again.

JOANNE

What are you saying?

DAVID

What do you think I'm saying?

JOANNE IS BEWILDERED

DAVID (CONT'D)

You resign.

JOANNE

What?

DAVID

Save yourself an awful lot of grief.

JOANNE

No way.

DAVID

You give three months notice, which you won't actually have to work out because Pattie says....

JOANNE

Pattie says???

DAVID

Just listen, will you! You get to keep your Social Care Registration. You've got those three months to find yourself another job...

JOANNE

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Where? Where? Outer Mongolia?

DAVID

You'll get a good reference.

JOANNE

From Pattie?

DAVID

She's got contacts. She can pull strings. Really.

JOANNE

She put you up to this, didn't she? This was all her idea.

DAVID

No.

JOANNE

So why are you seeing me today? Why not six months ago when I first left a message on your machine?

DAVID

This is as good an offer as you're going to get, Joanne.

JOANNE

Why does she want to get rid of me so bad?

DAVID

It's nothing personal. But if you go down, it won't be just you that suffers...

JOANNE

What's happened to you, David? What have you turned into?

DAVID

The whole department could go down with you.

JOANNE

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And what would be so very bad about that?

DAVID

Oh come on, Joanne.

JOANNE

The whole system is fundamentally rotten to the core, David. I know that, you know that, Pattie knows that. Even the bloody government knows that. Only nobody's prepared to say it. Cos that would mean someone might have to try and fundamentally fix it. The fact there's still places like the Ainsworth estate is a disgrace to a modern civilised society. But nobody's prepared to do anything about it cos the sad fact is we actually prefer it like this. Put all the social inadequates in one place - 'let this be a warning to you - this is where you end up when you don't toe the line' - and pay poor deluded suckers like us to keep a lid on it. Well to hell with it. Let the lid blow off. Let's have a riot. Let's get angry. Let's tear the whole damned system down.

DAVID

You're not in the student common room now. This is the way the world is. Not like this is a sudden revelation to you either. So we're keeping the lid on. You think taking the lids off will make any difference? Have your riot. Completely destroy the place. Let's send in the boys in blue with their shields and truncheons. Throw in a few deaths! Then we can have a government enquiry! Bit of luck you might get a garden festival or a community action social inclusion welfare idiot-speak initiative or something. And two

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years down the line, everything will be exactly the same as it is now. Or more probably worse. And there will have been a whole bunch of avoidable misery in between. Is that what you want?

(beat)

Well is it?

JOANNE SUCCUMBS TO A FLOOD OF TEARS

DAVID (CONT'D)

(with compassion)

Oh come here.

JOANNE

What was it all for, David? What did I put in all that work for? What was it...? Why did I try?

DAVID

It's not like I don't know it stinks. But you have to deal with what you've got. This way the department can carry on with its work, you get to keep your career...

JOANNE

And Debbie's gonna go down.

DAVID

Debbie did a bad thing. And if you go along with the idea that society needs a system of punishments to regulate itself, that's exactly as it should be.

JOANNE

Eight years?!

DAVID

I know.

JOANNE

I'm not saying Debbie was a perfect mother. God knows she could drive me nuts. Stupid and reckless and

Every Child Matters

irresponsible. But there was something about her. She'd been given another life, she could've done something with herself. And she was doing so well.

DAVID

Let go, Joanne.

JOANNE

Before all this happened, she'd been clean for six months - do you know that? For Debbie, that's a world record. Don't think she'd gone six hours till then. What's the chances she's gonna stay clean over the next eight years?

DAVID

I'm not saying this is an ideal outcome...

JOANNE

And she never hit them kids. Not once. Unlike a certain Chief Superintendent. When's Kincaid going to get his eight years? No - silly me - I'm getting muddled up. It's Kincaid getting the *knighthood* and Debbie getting the eight years. Sorry. Easy mistake to make.

DAVID

It's a wicked world. When was it ever not?

JOANNE

You should've seen the state of his boy. Paediatrician reckoned he'd been hit with a golf club. I tell you, if I hadn't've got suspended, I'd've *had him*.... I'd've *had him*!

THOSE LAST WORDS HANG IN THE AIR. A SUDDEN MASSIVE REALISATION ON JOANNE'S PART. SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN STARING HER IN THE FACE FOR MONTHS SUDDENLY COMES INTO FOCUS.

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SECTION 14

JOANNE (CONT'D)

(quietly)

David...

DAVID

(uncomfortable)

What?

JOANNE

I've been asking the wrong question. All along I've been asking *who* doxed me in. When I should've been asking *why* was I doxed in?

DAVID

Oh Joanne.

JOANNE

Been staring me in the face all this time. Why did I never realise?

DAVID

You don't know that.

JOANNE

Are we friends?

DAVID

I hope so.

JOANNE

Then say.

DAVID

Say what?

JOANNE

You know.

DAVID

Not without your assurance.

JOANNE

What assurance?

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DAVID

That you'll resign.

JOANNE

Is this what it's come to?

DAVID

Will you?

JOANNE

Are you holding a gun up against my head, David?

DAVID

I can see how from your point of view...

JOANNE

Oh for God's sake.

DAVID

...it looks like a mess. And it *is* a mess - I'm not saying it isn't. But what you never quite grasped is that it's a game. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. And everyone cheats. Sometimes they get caught, other times it's us. And once you've recognised that it's just game...

JOANNE

This is *people* we're talking about here, David. 'Ever Child Matters'. I know it's just a slogan - a piece of marketing nonsense - but I actually used to believe it. How dumb was I?

DAVID

Once you've recognised that it's just a game, you don't take the defeats so personally. You just get on with it.

JOANNE

Tell me something. The David I first knew - the David that was fresh out of college - the David that wanted to

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change the world - how would he react hearing you say that now?

DAVID

If that David had to make the kind of decisions I have to make now, he wouldn't last the week. It can't be done. That whole idealism thing...

JOANNE

What about it?

DAVID

...is a complete waste of time.

LONG PAUSE WHILE JOANNE TAKES IT IN

JOANNE

What can I say? You win.

DAVID

It's not about winning.

JOANNE

You said yourself, it's a game. Well, true. And you've won. I'm defeated. I am completely and utterly defeated. All the things about me I was proud of....they're all gone.

DAVID

Once this is behind you, once you've got yourself another job, you'll get your spirit back. You will. Cos I know you. You don't stay down for long.

JOANNE

So how did Kincaid do it? Get me suspended I mean.

DAVID

I don't know.

JOANNE

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Oh come on, David. Come on! You said if I agreed.

DAVID

Who stands to lose, who stands to gain? That's the way to come at these things. Kincaid's a player. He wrote that report on knife crime. He's best buddies with the Home Secretary. Plays golf with all the right people. He's on all sorts of committees....

JOANNE

The Children's Safeguarding Board.

DAVID

Including the Children's Safeguarding Board. He goes down, it's a lot more than one man. Credibility goes down.

JOANNE

And his kids?

DAVID

Pattie explained about this....

JOANNE

Oh Pattie, Pattie did?

DAVID

He's not denying that he hit the kids but it was a very stressful period in his life...

JOANNE

Give me strength.

DAVID

His wife had just found out about an affair he'd been having. Tipped him over the edge. Went a bit mad. Took it out on the boys.

JOANNE

I'm sorry, David, but that is no excuse.

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DAVID

The affair was with Pattie Dewhurst.

SILENCE. JOANNE TAKES IT IN.

DAVID (CONT'D)

When you asked me if I was in the sack with her, it was all I could do to stop myself from laughing. 'If she only knew,' I thought. Well now you do.

JOANNE

I don't know what to say.

DAVID

Well, if it's any use, he's given Pattie his categorical reassurance that it won't happen again.

JOANNE

Uhuh? What if Debbie gives her categorical reassurance that it won't happen again?

DAVID

(reminding her)
It's a game, Joanne.

JOANNE

(without rancour)
Doesn't it make you angry?

DAVID

Once maybe. Not anymore. Fact is, I got a wife and two kids...

JOANNE

Every child matters, right? Apart, that is, from those who don't.

DAVID

Who said it was ever going to be fair? Like I say, I've got two kids and they have to come first. Another three years and Amanda'll be going to university. Before you know it,

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Ricky will too. That all costs. The promotion gets me six grand a year. I can't afford to sneeze at that.

JOANNE

And Debbie's kids? Kincaid's kids? You can afford to sneeze at them?

DAVID

I have told you - it stinks. But this way the show stays on the road. And all things considered - the backstabbing, the tacky compromises, all the crap you've had to go through - that's still the best outcome.

(beat)

And if it helps, I don't like myself either. But I've learned to live with it. You need to do that too.

SECTION 15

HIS PHONE GOES. HE FISHES IT OUT AND GLANCES AT THE SCREEN BEFORE ANSWERING

DAVID (CONT'D)

Hi ya, Pattie...

JOANNE

What?

DAVID

(cupping phone and assertive)

Shut up.

(change of tone)

Why do I have to brace myself?

JOANNE

Is it Debbie? What's the news?

DAVID WAVES HER AWAY

DAVID

(hugely shocked)

You're kidding me? The judge did? How could he do that? What reasons

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did he give? Did he actually quote
from the PSR?

LONG BEAT WHILE DAVID LISTENS

JOANNE

What's she saying?

DAVID

And what are they saying about it on
the news? Oh you're kidding? She's
never? Oh God...

(beat)

I'm with a client on the other side
of town. I'll come straight back.
Be as quick as I can. Bye now.

HE SHUTS UP HIS PHONE

JOANNE

What?

DAVID

I don't believe this.

JOANNE

What?!

DAVID

Judge has only gone and given Debbie
'time served'.

JOANNE

(delighted)

What???

DAVID

Along with two years probation. The
silly cow's just walked out of court.
Out on the steps right now apparently
talking to reporters from the TV news
and making a complete tit of herself.

HE STARTS TO GATHER UP THIS THINGS

DAVID (CONT'D)

This is all down to your mate.

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JOANNE

Which mate?

DAVID

Tony Jukes. What the hell did he put in that Pre-Sentence Report?

JOANNE CAN'T STOP LAUGHING

DAVID (CONT'D)

I don't know why you're laughing. Do you think this is gonna help you?

JOANNE

I wasn't thinking about me!

DAVID

Well you should. Cos this is gonna rake the whole thing up again. It'll be just like it was at the beginning only worse. You think your face isn't going to be all over tomorrow morning's papers? You think they won't be queueing up outside your house when you get back home today?

JOANNE

(calmly)

Only this time, I'll have something to tell them, won't I, David?

DAVID

What?

JOANNE

Don't think I won't.

DAVID

Don't be an idiot, Joanne. What good's that going to do?

JOANNE GETS UP

DAVID (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

JOANNE

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Find Debbie. She'll want to know how to go about getting her kids back.

DAVID

Are you out of your mind?

JOANNE

No. For the first time in a very, very long time I feel almost sane.

DAVID

I told you all that stuff about Kincaid and Patty in the very strictest confidence.

SHE STARTS TO HEAD FOR THE EXIT

DAVID (CONT'D)

I thought we were mates. I thought we trusted one another.

SHE STOPS BY THE DOOR

JOANNE

(with a sad smile)

So did I.

SHE OPENS THE DOOR. TRAFFIC NOISE. BRING IN ALMOST SUBLIMINALLY A *BLOSSOM FELL* BY NAT KING COLE

JOANNE (CONT'D)

(her parting shot)

Tell Pattie I'll see her at the tribunal. And that it might be a good idea for Kincaid to get himself a decent lawyer.

(beat)

Funny thing is - and I never told you this at the time - but you were a pretty good lay.

(beat)

I'll see you, David.

(beat)

But then again, I probably won't.

SHE HEADS OUT. DAVID IS LEFT STUNNED

Every Child Matters

DAVID

Joanne?

THE CLIMAX OF A *BLOSSOM FELL* ("THE DREAM HAS ENDED") OVER
WHICH ARE READ THE CREDITS

FADE OUT.

23.07.10