

INT. CRISIS CENTRE-CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY.

De Swain is agitated and anxious. Mo trying to calm him.

MO

I need your help, Mr De Swain. We have to work together if we're to achieve anything. And there's much we can achieve. It doesn't feel like that now, I know that, but it does get better. You may feel I know nothing about what it's like to be you, that there's nothing you can communicate to me that describes how it feels. But you are communicating with me Mr De Swain, even while you try not to. You are communicating to me your distress and your anxiety. There's a gap isn't there, between you and the world. How can we reduce that gap, make you and the world fit together? What would you do?

DE SWAIN

Burn it.

MO

Burn?

DE SWAIN

Burn the world, the whole world and everything in it. Reduce it to dust, to nothing. Burn.

Mo's startled face, fearing she's out of her depth. CUT TO/

EXT. PALACE PIER. EVENING.

Couples, kids and families swarm around; taking pot shots on the stalls and winning cuddly toys, screaming as they spin on the rides, eating hot dogs and drinking beer.

DE SWAIN

(VOICE OVER) Burn all the rubbish, all the crap, the crud, the useless rotten waste.

De Swain walks among them. He carries his briefcase. He gazes at people. In particular at women. Most are with other people; but he spies one, a woman in her late 30s, wandering through the crowds alone. De Swain focuses particularly on the silk scarf tied round her neck.

DE SWAIN (CONT'D)

(VOICE OVER) The newspapers, televisions, mobile phones, computers, cars, what's the use? The use?

She is quietly smiling at the sights and sounds of the pier; she wanders into the central amusement arcade. De Swain follows her.

MO

(VOICE OVER) Does nothing have any use? Mr De Swain? Can you think of anything that is useful?

Inside the arcade, the Woman goes to the cafe counter and buys coffee. De Swain keeps his distance; starts to pump a fruit machine. He's putting in money and pressing the buttons, but his eyes are fixed on the woman.

DE SWAIN
(VOICE OVER) All crap.

INT. FLAT. EVENING.

Mo climbs the communal staircase to her top floor flat.

Mo dumps her wrapped fish and chip supper on the kitchen table and switches on the lights. A large, wonky attic studio flat, with sloping ceilings and windows which look out in all directions across rooftops and the sea. Very sparsely furnished and decorated, making every book, every cd, every card that's tacked to a wall potentially significant.

Mo looks at her answerphone. No messages. A stray ginger cat is mewing from outside a window. Mo taps on the window to shoo it away.

MO
Shoo. Go on, piss off. There's nothing for you here.

It keeps mewing plaintively. Mo pulls down the blind so she at least doesn't have to see it. She takes case notes out of her bag, unwraps her fish supper, opens her fridge. Just the dregs of a bottle of white wine in there. She pours the wine into a coffee mug, sits at the kitchen table and starts reading her notes, picking at her chips. Still reading, she picks up the mug and sips on the wine. Stops in her tracks. Walks to the sink, her cheeks bulging, and spits out the wine. The cat still mewing; she loses her temper, pulls up the blind opens the window and reaches out for the cat, which darts across rooftops.

MO (CONT'D)
And don't bloody come back. You're not wanted.

The cat gazes at her from a safe distance. She shuts the window. Starts to fill a kettle with water; stops suddenly. Switches off the tap. Looks at the table - the case notes, the cooling food. Abruptly picks up her keys, pulls on a coat and walks out of the flat.

EXT. SEAFRONT. NIGHT.

De Swain follows the Woman off the pier and along Marine Parade. She stops once and looks around, feeling a bit queasy. De Swain stops and pretends to be waiting for a bus. The Woman feels re-assured and crosses the road; De Swain lets her get across, then starts to follow again.

DE SWAIN
(VOICE OVER) The world's made out of rubbish.
What do you do to rubbish? You incinerate it.

MO
(VOICE OVER) Or you recycle it. How can you
make things useful, Mr De Swain? For example, in
what ways do you make yourself useful?

EXT. NEW ST. NIGHT.

Mo, walking, hears the sound of some very promising music (seventies soul). Follows the trail; finds herself standing outside the Mash Tun pub, looking through the window.

A mixed-age, friendly looking crowd; warm decor and great music. Mo perks up; goes into the pub.

EXT. SIDESTREET. NIGHT.

De Swain follows the Woman to a church hall-type building, and watches her go inside. A few others also going in. De Swain walks up to a window, looks through it. Chairs being set out in a circle; people taking their coats off, buying cups of tea. The Woman sitting on her own. A FRIENDLY CHAP comes and stands in the doorway.

FRIENDLY CHAP

Hiya. We're about to start. You're very welcome.

MO

(VOICE OVER) How are you useful?

DE SWAIN

It's alright thanks, I-

FRIENDLY CHAP

You don't have to do anything. Just come in for a cuppa.

De Swain looks in through the window again. The Woman is sliding the scarf off from around her neck. He focuses on her bare neck.

INT. MASH TUN PUB. NIGHT.

Mo sits down with a bottle of beer; the people around her smile and happily accommodate her, no problem that she's on her own. She's well into the beat of the music; scans the room. Walls of warm oranges and purples, original artworks hanging; people chatting and grooving to the tunes. Through the throng she sees the DJ (this is JAY); thirty years old, unself-consciously good looking, he is totally wrapped up in his work - pulling out LP sleeves, studying them, lining up the decks, his whole body moving to the beat. Never looking up, it's as if he's playing away in his own bedsit. Mo has a wide smile as she watches him at work.

INT. CHURCH HALL. NIGHT.

De Swain finds himself sitting uncomfortably in the middle of an AA meeting. A Man, who has just been talking, is sitting pouring out his eyes in sobs and tears. De Swain is starting to pull together his coat and briefcase.

FRIENDLY CHAP

Thanks for sharing that with us, Dave. Who'd like to pick up the baton? Yes; Abby.

The Woman (Abby) has shown her hand. De Swain settles back down into his chair, staring at her.

ABBY

Thanks. Hi. For those of you who don't know me, my name's Abigail and, yes, I'm an alcoholic.

De Swain can't take his eyes off her.

MO
(VOICE OVER) Mr De Swain?

INT. MASH TUN PUB. NIGHT.

Mo at the bar, buying another beer; hands over a fiver.

MO
Cheers. And a pint of whatever the dj's having.
You'll give it to him? Thanks.

She looks over again at Jay, well into his set.

INT. CHURCH HALL. NIGHT.

A haze of smoke - everyone in the hall is smoking except for De Swain. Abby has their attention.

ABBY
...What I think is happening now...Now I can see
relationships really as much about addiction as
anything else we can do to ourselves...I think now,
I'm finding out I don't really need men at all...We
don't, do we? It's just what we're told...I mean, they
have their uses...

Polite laughter.

MO
(VOICE OVER) How?

ABBY
...But what I'm saying is...in your life...well when
you find out you can get by really quite happily,
more than happily, without a drink...then you start to
ask that question about everything and everyone
around you...And where I've come to is...

MO
(VOICE OVER) How are you useful?

ABBY
I've ended an unwell relationship...I talked about
that before...and it's been nearly a year now since I
had I man in my life...and really, it's fine.

De Swain, edgy and angry, glaring at her.

ABBY (CONT'D)
It's really really fine.

INT. MASH TUN PUB. NIGHT.

Mo watches as a barman walks over to Jay with a pint; Jay looking up, suprised when he's given it. Mo looking away modestly, watching Jay's reflection in a window as he asks the barman who the drink is from. The barman looks around the room; points out Mo. Jay stares over. Mo looks round innocently; Jay waving at her. Their eyes meet. Jay lifts his drink, grins; Mo smiles back and lifts hers in a cheers. Jay goes back to the deck.

INT. CHURCH HALL. NIGHT.

The meeting has broken up. People putting on their coats and leaving. The Friendly Chap heads straight for De Swain, who is watching Abby.

FRIENDLY CHAP

Wasn't too bad was it? Your first time? It gets easier, I promise you. Have you just acknowledged a problem?

DE SWAIN

I don't have a problem, actually.

Abby has put on her coat and is starting to walk out; her scarf has fallen from her coat to the floor.

FRIENDLY CHAP

You know, everyone in this room has said that.

DE SWAIN

Excuse me.

De Swain runs after her and picks up the scarf.

DE SWAIN (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Abigail.

She turns round, to see him holding out her scarf.

ABBY

Oh. Thank you.

She takes the scarf; it swishes over his hand as she takes it. He's staring at her.

ABBY (CONT'D)

I have to go.

She turns and leaves. De Swain puts his hand to his face, breaths in deeply the scent from the scarf.

INT. MASH TUN PUB. NIGHT.

Mo gazing into middle distance, lifting a bottle to her lips.

JAY

(OOV) Thank you.

She starts, looks up at his smiling face.

JAY (CONT'D)

For the beer. Can I sit down?

MO

Won't the music stop?

JAY

Me mate's taken over the decks. Actually its his rig, I'm just keeping me arm in. Okay?

To sit down. She nods him of course.

JAY (CONT'D)
Thanks again.

MO
Thank-you. Brought a smile to my face.

JAY
Weren't it smiling before?

MO
Nothing a dose of the Isley Brothers couldn't sort out.

JAY
That the soundtrack to your life? Everyone's got a basic musical backing running through their lives I reckon. Half a dozen tracks that sum them up. So. 'Summer Breeze' we know about - first love? Thought so. What else?

MO
The Undertones. 'Over You'.

JAY
Dabbling in punk; hair dyed purple, pissed on cider. Am I right?

She's laughing. He's right.

EXT. THE LANES. NIGHT.

De Swain follows Abby from a distance. Her walking slows down. De Swain ducks into a doorway. She stops, turns around; has a good hard look to check that no-one sees her. Then she furtively dashes through the door of a pub. De Swain walks from the doorway up to the window of the pub; looks through.

DE SWAIN
(VOICE OVER) I make sure people pay the right tax. That no-one pays too little. The revenue collects the correct amount, the government spends the tax. On schools and hospitals and lots of weapons. That's how I'm useful.

De Swain's pov; Abby buying a large gin and tonic, and gulping it down.

EXT. KEMPTOWN STREETS. NIGHT.

Jay is carrying an armful of his records; walking alongside Mo.

MO
To Be Born Again.

JAY
Van Morrison. Had to be. Student travelling layabout days I bet.

MO

What've you got against students?

JAY

Hey, nothing. Some of me best friends are students. So where was it. See you dossing around say in Barcelona.

MO

India.

JAY

Respec'. A real traveller. Number four?

MO

George Michael. Faith.

JAY

Hard-nosed eighties. Better put those qualifications to good use. Get a job, get a car, get a flat.

MO

Have you been following me the past fifteen years?

EXT. SEVEN DIALS. NIGHT.

De Swain watches from across the road as Abby walks up the path to her flat, unlocks the door and goes inside. He watches the main light switch on, and Abby walking across the room. He sees her take off her coat and scarf and let them slide to the floor. He puts his hand to his face again, smelling the scent. He watches as she holds her head in her hands, shaking her head. Then she walks to the window to pull shut the curtains; stops for a moment and stares out at the darkness through the nets, then she closes the curtains. The light goes out on De Swain's face.

DE SWAIN

(VOICE OVER) If I didn't do it, someone else would. The sum of my impact on the world is negligible. Most of us amount to little more than a smudge, a stain. Just once in a while, someone comes along who makes a difference. And what do we do? We crucify them.

De Swain crosses the road to her front door; takes from his briefcase a tin of lighter fluid and a box of matches, lifts up the dustbin lid outside Abby's door, squirts lighter fuel into the bin, then lights a match and drops it into the waste. He walks quickly away as the bin starts burning.

EXT. MO'S FLAT. NIGHT.

She stops at her door.

MO

Wildwood. Paul Weller.

JAY

Heartbreak. Am I right?

MO

You're going to have to stop asking that question.
This is me. Thank you.

JAY

What? Don't I get asked in for coffee? Can I come
in?

MO

I wouldn't want to get your hopes up.

JAY

A coffee!?

MO

Jay, I don't know you. And you don't know me. At
all.

JAY

Know the soundtrack to your life though, don't I.

MO

Ask me again tomorrow, you'd get five utterly
different songs.

JAY

I know. One coffee. Can I come in?

MO

I don't like coffee, Jay.

JAY

No?

MO

No. You like coffee, I like tea.

JAY

You say tomato, I say-

MO

Jay. You're a nice man. But you're a man. You
follow?

JAY

Think I'm beginning to.

MO

Good. Because if we're going to be friends-

JAY

I'd like that.

MO

-you've got to respect that

He pulls from his pocket a flyer; gives it to her.

JAY

I'm runnin' a drum and bass night. Will you come?

MO

Do you hear me?

JAY

Yes. Will you come?

MO

Maybe. Not sure it's my thing.

JAY

How d'you know until you try it?

MO

Maybe. Goodnight. Thanks.

She unlocks the front door, walks through, turns back.

JAY

I can't come in?

MO

Don't you hear me?

JAY

(Counts the three steps with his fingers.) Ask once, ask twice, ask three times. Always ask three times to get the true answer.

MO

(Counts the three steps back to him on her fingers, showing a broad friendly v- sign.) Then three times no, you can't come in.

JAY

Wasn't one song from the last five years. Soundtrack of your life. If you chose another five tomorrow, and another five the day after that, and the day after...bet you still wouldn't have a recent tune.

MO

Goodnight.

JAY

Am I right?

She smiles. He smiles. She shuts the door.

EXT. DE SWAIN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

De Swain fumbles in the dark with his briefcase; he pulls out a quarter bottle of whisky, opens it. He takes a massive mouthful of the drink, swills it around in his mouth, gargles it, then spits it out into the gutter. He splashes more whisky on his hand and dabs it over his neck and face like cologne. Screws tight the remains of the bottle, puts it back in his briefcase, and approaches his house.

INT. MO'S FLAT. NIGHT.

Mo walks into her flat, drops her jacket onto the floor, walks over to her front window and looks down at Jay, walking away down the street with his records under his arm. He suddenly turns, looks up at her window, and waves. She instinctively stands back against the wall out of sight.

MO

Shit.

Then is annoyed at this reaction. Looks out again. Jay walks away with a jaunty bounce in his step. Mo notices a sound. The ginger cat is back mewing at the kitchen window. She strides over, pulls up the blind. It is quite a sweet cat really.

MO (CONT'D)

No. No.

Looks around at the table; the fish supper gone cold. Miaow. She looks back round at the cat, pawing at the window.

MO (CONT'D)

This is not going to be a relationship. Got that?

Miaow. She opens her window; the cat jumps in and is straight onto the table. Goes over to investigate the fish and chips. Looks round at Mo.

MO (CONT'D)

This is not a relationship.

The cat tucks into the food.

INT. DE SWAIN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

De Swain sets down his briefcase, walks into the kitchen. He reads a note on the table, takes a casserole out of the oven, lifts the lid to look at it, then scoops the entire pot of hot food into the bin, covering it with screwed-up newspaper. Switches out the light as he leaves the kitchen. CUT TO/

De Swain removing his clothes on the landing outside the bedroom. CUT TO/

De Swain creeping into the bedroom with his pile of clothes. He sets down the clothes, takes off his wristwatch, and eases himself into his side of the bed.

KATARINA

Time is it?

DE SWAIN

Hm?

She turns over in bed, huggles up to him.

KATARINA

Freezing you are. Want warming up do you? Roll over then, Boozy Bill, let me give you a good warming. Simon?

Nothing. He's asleep (faking it). Katarina rolls back over onto her own patch. She cuddles her pillow as if it were a man.