

DEJA VU FOR ICE AND JEN

A Screenplay

by

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EXT – ALLEYWAY - DAY

An alleyway, off a street, with trash-cans.

JENNIFER, known as “JEN”, MOIRA, known as “ICE”, hanging around, both 50-ish.

JEN

I am so tired.

ICE

You’re just tired, I’m bored. You’re lucky.

JEN

I am not lucky. I have never been lucky, not for the whole of my life have I ever been the recipient of any luck.

ICE

Then you’re lucky you never been lucky.

JEN

Explain that to the ignorant.

ICE

That’s you ?

JEN

That’s me.

ICE

If you had luck, you become dependent on the notion of luck, you believe yourself to be lucky. So, you get careless, you have accidents ‘cause you’re lucky. You don’t do the right thing ‘cause you depend on being lucky. You have to take precautions, to prevent disasters. You have to do the right thing, if you want things to turn out well. But if you’re lucky, you do none of that, and you get a whole load of mischance, ‘cause you left everything up to chance. So, it’s better you never had no luck, ‘cause your expectation should be sufficiently low to match your experience of the world.

JEN

Man, that is deep. You can’t argue with that. When did you become the philosopher king ?

ICE
The Philosopher Queen, if you please.

JEN
The Philosopher Queen.

ICE
Sometimes, I can interpret this world of ours,
grind down the mystery and expose the bitter
truth of our existence.

JEN
I am so tired, I can't even think any more.

ICE
Is it so necessary, to be able to think ?

JEN
I don't know. I don't think so. I'm not sure.

ICE
You're not sure ?

JEN
No, I am not certain at all.

ICE
That's better. You are opening your mind
to new possibilities.

JEN
Oh man, I am so heavy with the past.

ICE
The past is past.

JEN
I know that. It's just, you fuck your brains
up with drugs in the hope they will help
dissolve the past, but it's still here, it haunts
me. It's got me in its grip and it won't let go.

ICE
Then, you gotta take more drugs.

JEN
I can't take any more. I will just die.

ICE
Then, I pity you, 'cause you are fucked.

JEN

I got no future, 'cause I am stuck in the past.

Jen kicks a trash-can in frustration.

JEN

Maybe, I could meet a man would rescue me from my miserable existence.

ICE

Ain't no man like that no more. They're all dead, if they ever existed, which I doubt. That is a fairytale we girls used-ta tell ourselves when we had hope. But we don't need hope any more, 'cause we know how shit life is.

JEN

Life ain't shit for everyone.

ICE

Life is shit for us.

A beat.

JEN

So, why they call you, "Ice" ?

ICE

That's been my name, for a long time.

JEN

How'd you get that name ?

ICE

I was delivered in summer, when my ma and pa would get ice delivered, 'cause it was hot. They did have air-conditioning, but it wasn't much good, so they still relied on ice.

JEN

That is a good reason. I thought it might be 'cause you were an ice queen.

ICE

That would be a shit reason. I might be Ice, but I am nice.

JEN

I like you.

ICE

I like myself, sometimes, not all the time.

JEN

I don't like myself at all, none of the time.

A beat.

JEN

Hey, I just realize, "Ice" is a cool-sounding name.

ICE

You got it. Man, your brain is doing overtime.

JEN

I'm catching up. If your brain is so fucked with drugs, reasoning ain't your forte.

ICE

I ain't seen you take drugs.

JEN

How long have you know me ?

ICE

Not long. A day or two.

JEN

I ran out of money for drugs, so now I'm off them, for a while, but the damage gets worse over time.

ICE

Are you an addict ?

JEN

I used-ta be, I'm not so sure any more. You start to take drugs, to blot out the world, your experiences, then you gotta take them 'cause you're addicted, then you realize, you can survive without them, when you run out of money, and then you go back to why you started in the first place, the memories return, and you want to blot them out again. All the time, you do yourself more damage, but you don't do enough brain damage so you can't remember no more all you want to forget. So, I guess, they don't work, except to make you stupefied.

ICE

You never took drugs to get high ?

JEN

Nope. I took drugs to forget, but it is only a temporary solution.

ICE

What's so bad in your past you have to blot it out ?

JEN

Things I would rather not talk about, things I do not want to remember, things that just make me despair, they happened to me. I just hope one day, I get enough brain damage so that I don't remember nothing.

ICE

But the damage that has already been done is interfering with your normal functioning. You act like you're dumb, or stupid, or plain retarded.

JEN

I wasn't always like this. I used-ta be quite bright, intelligent, but now I am a moron. The odd thing is, the drugs do so much damage, you can't think straight, you got mental impairment, but they never do enough damage, you can't remember what you so want and need to forget.

ICE

So, you reckon, to attain peace of mind, you have to have so much damage, you are almost a cabbage ?

JEN

That's it. I ain't that far gone yet.

ICE

If you are a retard, a bit simple, people will take advantage of you.

JEN

Then, I need you to protect me.

ICE

That is giving me a responsibility.

JEN

I know.

ICE

I don't think I can do that.

JEN

You've got to, for me.

Ice turns away from her.

ICE

I am not capable of responsibility.

JEN

Well, I am totally incapable of anything.

A beat.

JEN

I'm hungry.

ICE

You should not depend on me.

JEN

I gotta depend on someone.

ICE

Depend on yourself.

JEN

I can't. I'm a retard.

ICE

You are dumb, but not that dumb.

JEN

How dumb should a person be ?

ICE

Dumb enough, but not so dumb people play tricks on them. You know what, I don't know why someone with normal intelligence thinks making a retard look stupid is such an intelligent thing to do. They regard us as a subject for mockery. I tell you what, one of them mocked me, if they were ever so unfortunate to meet with misfortune, and became mentally

ICE (cont'd)

impaired, I would never resort to mocking them.
I would never sink so low to do that.

JEN

That's that old saying, don't mock the afflicted.

ICE

They can laugh at me, I don't care. I wish them
equal misfortune, but I would never mock them.

JEN

Man, I am still hungry.

ICE

We could have a rummage in them trash-cans.

JEN

Okay.

They go over to the trash-can and take the lids off some of them.

Jen takes a sniff of one of them.

JEN

Puh. Smells.

ICE

But it don't stink. In summer, it stinks to high
heaven. It is decomposing matter.

JEN

I would like a sandwich.

ICE

Ain't got nothing here.

Ice puts one of the lids back on a trash-can.

Jen replaces the other lids.

ICE

Aw fuck, we'll have to beg. I hate having
to do that. It is so demeaning. People judge
you, you can see it in their eyes. They are
like, "I am not on the streets. I am not a bum.
I do not beg. Get a job." They got no idea.

JEN

They don't understand 'cause they have no

JEN (cont'd)
experience of life as we know it.

ICE
People are essentially lacking in empathy.
I don't like it when people get angry with me,
or frustrated with me, or impatient with me.
They should learn how to deal with me. They
don't have a clue. I hate them for that.

JEN
I would like a sandwich.

ICE
Well, we can hang out around a sandwich
shop and hope some people take pity on us,
and buy you something to eat.

JEN
I wouldn't mind a hotdog.

ICE
There's a stand near. We could pine and look
miserable, and someone might buy you one.

JEN
That would be nice.

ICE
Let's give it a go.

JEN
Okay.

They walk to the end of the alleyway, and out onto the street.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

Near a hot-dog stand.

Several customers standing in a queue, and some who have already been served, eating their hot-dogs.

Jen and Ice stealthily creep around the corner onto the street and spot the hot-dog stand.

JEN
So, what do I do ?

Ice sighs.

ICE
You look miserable.

JEN
I am miserable.

ICE
You look hungry.

JEN
I am hungry.

ICE
You sniff the aroma of a hotdog. You say, "Yummy". You sigh, you say, "I wish I could afford one of them." And you pine.

JEN
I don't want them to think, I am putting it on.

ICE
You have to put it on, a bit.

JEN
Okay. I'll try.

Jen, watched by Ice, approaches the hot-dog stand, and then stops, close to some of the customers. She takes a long deep sniff of the aroma.

JEN
Yummy.

A man speaks to her.

MAN
You hungry ?

JEN
Yeah.

MAN
I ain't that hungry. You can finish this, if you like.

The man hands her the remainder of his hot-dog. He has eaten about two-thirds of it, and about one-third is left. Jen is disappointed, but still a bit grateful.

JEN
Thanks.

The man walks off.

Jen eats the rest of the hot-dog.

JEN
Yummy.

CUT TO:

EXT – ALLEYWAY – DAY

Jen and Ice.

JEN
Deja vu.

ICE
Huh ?

JEN
Deja vu. I just had a real deja vu, just then, and I don't like it. I saw something, bad, so very bad.

ICE
What did you see ?

JEN
I can't say.

ICE
One day, you will tell someone.

JEN
Deja vu, it's horrible. It is piercing, like a needle or a knife, it rips your guts wide open. There is no escape from the past. It is a tunnel you go down that just closes in behind you, you're trapped, forever.

ICE
Deja vu ?

JEN
It repeats the past, but it's such a strange feeling, like you get a tiny glimpse of something, but the rest you don't see. - I know the rest, and I really don't like it. I don't like it all. I hate it. The past is just so heavy. I feel like I have no future. I don't even have a present.

JEN (cont'd)

And I can't get no drugs to block the whole fucking thing out.

ICE

The past should never prevent the present.

JEN

It always does. It always will. I end up doing nothing, 'cause I get prevented by the past.

ICE

That's just an excuse.

JEN

Is it ? I thought you understood.

ICE

You're too sensitive.

JEN

Of course I am.

ICE

It's no good for your survival.

JEN

Is my survival necessary ?

ICE

It is for you.

JEN

Is it desirable ?

ICE

That is more of a question. Your own survival is foremost in your mind, or should be. If you give up on that, no-one has any responsibility to make you survive. You gotta preserve your existence. No-one else will.

JEN

I hate my miserable existence, but I know life is too precious to waste. I would never commit suicide.

ICE

I should hope not. No matter how bad life is, it's always better than being dead.

JEN

I always wanted to be happy, I always wanted to have fun, but I get prevented by my past.

ICE

Let's just try to live for today. Anything new in the trash ?

Jen takes the lid off a trash-can and spots a football. She picks it out, removes any rubbish clinging to it, gives it a wipe.

She walks to the back of the alleyway with the football in her hand. She tries to get her fingers around the girth of the middle of the football, but it is too large for her hand.

She stretches her fingers around as far as she can, and then gets ready to throw it to Ice, who is watching her.

JEN

Catch !

Jen throws the football as best she can and Ice moves to catch it.

Ice manages to catch and runs for a bit towards Jen, but then stops, coughing and spluttering, gasping for breath and holds her chest. She lets the football drop.

ICE

Shit. Gave up smoking, but they still fucked my lungs. I must have the COPD.

JEN

At your age ?

ICE

I am not too young to have the COPD. Gave up the cigarettes 'cause I could not afford them no more.

Ice leans against the wall, then slips down it, to sit down on the ground. She sits, gasping for breath.

ICE

Shit. If you can't breathe, you are seriously fucked. You know, I used-ta be a high-school athlete before I started smoking. I thought, 'cause I was an athlete, I could get away with smoking, 'cause I was so fit. But I was so wrong. I had to pack in my career as an athlete. I did that, rather than pack in the smokes, which I should've done,

ICE (cont'd)

but I didn't. So, I smoked for years, and used-ta joke about smoking-related illnesses. Then one morning, I got up and I could not breathe. I was about to light a cigarette, but I could not even do that. Time to quit. So, I quit, but too much damage had already been done. I was worried about my lung capacity. So, I got it tested, and it was below fifty percent. So, I destroyed more than half my total lung capacity by smoking. I was so stupid.

JEN

You were addicted.

ICE

That's no excuse.

JEN

It has to be. You can't punish yourself thinking what you should have done. We never do what we should do, and by the time we regret, not done, it's too late, and then we say, we should have done this and we should have done that, but we didn't, we didn't do nothing we should've done, and we regret it, too much.

ICE

I will regret smoking to my dying day, which is much sooner due to that disgusting habit.

JEN

Some people smoke themselves to death.

ICE

I was almost one of them. I just smoked myself to COPD, which is a long lingering decline into death.

JEN

At least you quit. Some people got the COPD and they still smoke.

ICE

I ain't one of them.

JEN

Which means, you deserve praise for quitting.

ICE

I deserve blame for not quitting soon enough.

JEN

C'mon, Ice, don't beat yourself up about it. You quit.

ICE

I lost my singing voice. I used-ta be a good singer, but now I croak like an old crone.

Ice starts singing, but croaks and splutters to a stop, coughing on the dots.

ICE (singing)

Oh, say...can you...see,
By the...dawn's early...light,
What so proudly...we hailed...
At the twilight's...

She coughs and spits something out.

ICE

I used-ta has a decent voice, not as good as Jackie Evancho, but pretty good, but now, it is shit.

JEN

Man, I heard Jackie Evancho singing our National Anthem, and it was just divine, such a pure voice, the voice of an angel.

ICE

Well, I got the voice of an old crone, like I'm the Wicked Witch of The West with emphysema.

JEN

But you're alive.

ICE

Only just. They should have me on one of them adverts, where a former smoker says, "Whatever you do, don't smoke". But I'm too much of a scumbag for that. No-one's ever set a camera crew on me, maybe 'cause I am not your standard bum. I am reasonably articulate, when I can breathe properly, and formulate my ideas. I do not fit the stereotype of the female bum

ICE (cont'd)
on the street. I am an individual.

JEN
You are the Philosopher Queen.

ICE
Yes, I am. And I am proud of it.

A beat.

ICE
Sometimes, I wish I was someone else, like I might have a future, I might have a career, I might have a decent pair of lungs, I might...I am what I am, a bum, of the female kind. I wish...ah, what's the point? I am not a child. I know my wishes will never come true. I am not naive. I wish I was, but, face reality, I just cannot see myself ever getting much better or having a better life. If your health is poor, you will be poor, unless you were born very rich.

JEN
Poverty is generally a negative experience.

ICE
I second that.

JEN
We were never comfortable. We were always financially insecure. We were often short of money. We never had enough, then we got even less, then we had to downsize, then we lost everything. It happens.

ICE
We had so little money, we were barely hanging on. Then, we let go, and we lost everything. That's how I ended up on the streets.

JEN
Same here.

ICE
It was not my fault we lost our place. They tried to blame it on me. I didn't mortgage the place up to the hilt. I lived there, I made

ICE (cont'd)

a contribution, but I did not gamble our house against the market, betting our debts would be covered. I did not do that. They blame me 'cause I was easy to blame. That was unfair, it was untrue. I hate it when the person who is not to blame gets all the blame. I hate it.

JEN

Your folks -

ICE

They blamed me. A family's under a lotta stress, 'cause people hafta borrow just to live, they can't earn enough, so they hafta leave their property as security, rates go up, you get repossessed, and we can't admit we fucked it up collectively, we made the wrong decision to over-borrow, someone has to be the scapegoat, someone has to get the blame, and that was me, but of all of us, I would consider myself the actual least to blame. It is so shit when that happens.

JEN

I'm hungry.

ICE

You're still hungry after that hot-dog ?

JEN

I only had, about, less than half of that hot-dog. I mean, a full hot-dog might have satisfied my hunger, but I only got, less than a half. I'm hungry.

ICE

Okay. This time we go hang out around that sandwich shop.

JEN

Okay.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

Jen and Ice creep around the street corner, walk down the street, trying not to be noticed, but they are noticed because of their shabby clothing.

They approach a sandwich shop. Some customers are inside, in the queue, some are inside seated at tables, eating their sandwiches.

Other customers are outside, seated at tables, eating sandwiches, and smoking.

Ice can sense the smell of burning tobacco.

ICE

Aw, shit, I hate that smell.

Ice has to step back, to keep away from the cigarette smoke.

ICE

You go ahead.

JEN

What do I do ?

ICE

You go up to one of them, stuffing their sandwiches, you admire their sandwich, and say, you wish you could afford one, but poor me, I don't have the money. You have a moan you're hungry, you ain't had nothing to eat since that hot-dog someone bought for you – which ain't true, but you tell them that, so you expect them to buy you a sandwich, 'cause someone else was so generous before, so they know they can buy you a sandwich. That should work.

JEN

Okay.

Jen slowly approaches one of the tables, where a woman is smoking and then taking a bite out of her sandwich.

JEN

Ma'am, may I ask what type of sandwich you got there ?

WOMAN

That is, tuna and mayonnaise.

JEN

Is it tasty ?

WOMAN

It is well tasty, it is, delicious.

JEN

Ma'am, I ain't eaten nothing since this gentleman bought me a hot-dog this morning.

WOMAN

He bought you a hot-dog ?

JEN

Yes, he did.

WOMAN

Why ?

JEN

'Cause I asked him to. I told him I was hungry, and he went and bought me a hot-dog,

WOMAN

That was nice of him.

JEN

Yes, it was. He was a gentleman.

The woman takes another bite out of her sandwich, then drinks from a can of diet cola. Then, she takes a puff on her cigarette and blows the smoke away.

JEN

Ma'am, I wonder if I might have one o' them tuna and mayonnaise sandwiches.

WOMAN

You can if you can afford to buy one.

JEN

Ma'am, I got no money.

WOMAN

Then you can't have no sandwich.

JEN

Ma'am, please buy me a sandwich.

This direct appeal angers the woman, who stubs out her cigarette.

WOMAN

Listen, scumbag. I am not a charity. I do not buy sandwiches for scumbags. Here -

She hands the remains of the sandwich to Jen, who takes it.

WOMAN

You can finish my sandwich -

She hands her can of diet cola to Jen, who takes it in her other hand.

WOMAN

And you can finish my diet cola, but I ain't gonna buy you a sandwich, you understand ?

JEN

Yes, ma'am.

WOMAN

And you can be grateful.

JEN

Thank you, ma'am, thank you very much, ma'am.

WOMAN

Now, fuck off out of my sight.

JEN

Yes, ma'am, thank you, ma'am.

Jen moves away from the woman, holding the sandwich and eating it, alternating with drinking from the can of diet cola.

Jen goes back to where Ice is and offers her the remains of the sandwich and the can of diet cola.

ICE

No thanks. I do have some standards.

Jen then consumes the rest of the sandwich and drinks the last of the diet cola. She then deposits the can in a municipal trash-can.

Jen goes back to where Ice is standing.

ICE

You stink of cigarettes.

JEN

That woman, she was smoking.

ICE

Did she buy you a sandwich ?

JEN

No, she gave me the remains of hers,
and her can of diet cola. She told me
to fuck off.

ICE

I hope she gets lung cancer and dies,
the bitch.

Ice fingers in the direction of the woman.

ICE

Let's go.

They walk off towards their alleyway.

CUT TO:

EXT – ALLEYWAY – DAY

Jen and Ice amid the trash-cans.

ICE

That bitch, who does she think she is ? She's
so superior, she tells you to fuck off - ?

JEN

That's what she said.

ICE

She can fuck off herself, and get lung cancer
as well. I don't often wish ill on someone else,
but that attitude is so contemptuous, someone
like that deserves a certain dollop of misfortune,
show them what it's like to live on the streets,
and suffer pangs of hunger, like us.

JEN

You ain't hungry ?

ICE

Not like you. You're hungry all the time.

JEN

Can't help that. Like my food.

ICE

Greedy guts.

JEN

Aw, Ice, don't be mean.

ICE

Sorry, Jen, you can't help it.

JEN

I can't. I am so sorry.

ICE

Don't worry about it. I was too mean.
It's that bitch, that contemptuous woman,
she made me so angry. Why does someone
like that think they are immune from life's
disasters, like nothing bad can happen to
them, they are exempt from misfortune ?
Bad things happen all the time. They can
happen to anyone. No-one is exempt. No-one
is immune.

JEN

That's so true.

ICE

I dispense wisdom. - Some people are so rude.
What happened to manners and common decency ?

JEN

There ain't none of that no more.

ICE

I might be scum, but I would be polite.

JEN

I was respectful and polite when I spoke
to her, but she was rude and disrespectful
when she spoke to me. She was downright
nasty, I reckon.

ICE

Well, I would not be telling her to stop smoking.
I would encourage her to keep on poisoning and
destroying her lungs. Bitch. Wait till you get
COPD, you bitch. Maybe, that's why I don't
eat too much, 'cause my lungs are all shot.

JEN

That could be why.

ICE

Anyway, I cannot afford to get too angry.
Ain't good for my heart. My blood pressure.
'Cause I got the COPD, it puts extra strain

ICE (cont'd)
on my heart, so I gotta take it easy.
I don't want heart attack.

JEN
Ice, you take it easy now.

Ice sits down on an empty wooden crate. She leans back against the wall of the alleyway.

ICE
If I had my time over again, I would choose not to smoke, but I chose to smoke, which is the dumbest thing you can do, anyone can do. Life is so short and so precious, you don't want to make it any shorter. What's more, if you suffer damage, and don't achieve your potential, if your health suffers, life is less precious than it was. You cannot have what should have been yours, you are denied, you are deprived of what you could've been, what you might've been.

JEN
Like what ?

ICE
An athlete, a singer. If that don't suit, a lawyer. But what I am is a bum on the street. I hate that. It is a wasted life. You look back on it, all that potential, all that promise, got thrown away, and not by me – apart from the smoking - that I did to myself, and I regret it.

JEN
Ice, you gotta chill out.

ICE
I will, I promise you. Could you get me something to drink ? I am thirsty.

JEN
I'll see what I can get. We got no money no more.

ICE
I know.

JEN

Not one god-damn cent. Don't buy nothing.
I will have to beg, which I do not like.

ICE

Please. I don't think I could beg myself
any more. It is just so demeaning, and
my chest is, I can't breathe sufficiently
no more. I am thirsty. Please, get me a
drink, somehow.

JEN

I will, I promise you.

ICE

Thanks.

Jen goes out.

Ice sighs.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

People walking down the street in a certain direction.

Jen is walking in the direction against them.

She stops to beg, but people dismiss her and walk on.

She looks despairingly, but tries again. She speaks to a GUY, who is 45-ish.

JEN

Sir, sir, please, I got a friend back there
with COPD. She can't walk out here to
beg for herself. She needs a drink. She
is so thirsty. It's no good for her. She
has to drink.

GUY

She might get dehydrated.

JEN

That's it. - Could you give me enough
money to buy her a cold drink, from that
machine, over there.

GUY

I will buy her a drink and you can take
me to see her. I will personally administer

GUY (cont'd)
the drink.

JEN
Okay.

The guy goes over to the machine and buys a small bottle of lemonade.

GUY
Take me to her.

JEN
Okay.

Jen shows him the way.

GUY
You better not be lying to me, girl. You
will be in trouble if you are.

JEN
I assure you, kind sir, I am telling the truth.

Jen leads him to the alleyway.

JEN
Down there.

CUT TO:

EXT – ALLEYWAY – DAY

Jen leads the guy to where Ice is now slumped, asleep.

JEN
Ice, Ice, I got you a drink.

GUY
Ice ?

JEN
Her name. She got delivered in the summer
time, when they got ice delivered, her folks.

GUY
I see. Ice, we got a drink for you.

Ice opens her eyes.

ICE (weakly)
Thank you, sir.

He hands the bottle to Ice, who drinks from it.

ICE
That's better.

GUY
You must not get dehydrated.

ICE
I got the COPD because I was a smoker.
I don't smoke no more. I regret being a
smoker. I regret it.

GUY
Just drink.

ICE
Okay.

She drinks.

He turns to speak to Jen.

GUY
And you -

JEN
Jen.

GUY
Jen, you were telling me the truth, and you
are a good friend.

ICE
Mister, you are treating us like human beings.

GUY
Is that so unusual ?

ICE
Yes, it is. Most people treat us like dirt.

GUY
I won't do that.

ICE
You are a decent man.

GUY
Thanks.

Ice drinks some more.

ICE

I do apologize for being here.

JEN

We live on the streets, in this alleyway.

GUY

It's no place to live.

ICE

We sleep here. This is where we live.
I apologize -

GUY

It's not your fault. It's society's fault.
This should not happen -

JEN

But it does.

GUY

I am appalled society is so negligent.
Everyone has a responsibility to make
sure poverty does not mean destitution.

ICE

We lost everything, some time ago.

JEN

We been here ever since.

GUY

Well, I will see if there's any help
available.

JEN

Thank you, kind sir.

The guy draws Jen aside to talk to her alone.

GUY

She won't survive, not in her condition.

JEN

We gotta get her out of here, into some
accommodation.

Ice cranes her ear to try to hear them.

GUY

She needs a clean dust-free environment,
and she might need oxygen soon.

JEN

We got no money. We got nowhere to go.

GUY

We've gotta find somewhere, even if it's
a slum. At least she could sit down in one
room and get some oxygen, a place to put
the cylinder. I'll look around.

JEN

I gotta stay here, to look after her.

GUY

You are a good friend.

JEN

And you are a gentleman.

GUY

Thank you. I'll see what I can do.

JEN

Thanks.

The guy goes to the end of the alleyway and then goes off.

ICE

Jen. Come over here.

Jen goes over to Ice.

ICE

What did he say ?

JEN

He said we've gotta get you off the streets.
You will not survive here, not with COPD.
He said you might need oxygen soon, and
you need a place to park your cylinder.

ICE

You don't spare me much.

JEN

I am too dumb to do that.

ICE
I know. Never mind. Life goes on.

CUT TO:

EXT – ALLEYWAY – DAY

Next morning.

Jen and Ice asleep under some dirty duvets.

The guy enters at the end of the alleyway.

He moves over to speak to Jen and Ice.

He bends down to speak to them.

GUY (softly)
Ice, Jen.

They open their eyes slowly and wake up.

GUY
I found you a place. It's not exactly a palace,
but it's better than here.

Jen and Ice remove the duvets and stand up.

JEN
Oh, Ice, he's found us a place. Ain't that
great ?

ICE
Let's see it first.

JEN
Hey, Mister...

GUY
I ain't no mister, I am a guy. I am a fella.

ICE
What's your name ?

GUY
I'm somebody. I ain't nobody.

ICE
We are nobodies.

GUY

No, you are somebody.

ICE

We are scumbags.

GUY

You are who you are.

JEN

That is so true.

ICE

What is your name ?

GUY

Why do I need to have a name ?

ICE

We want to thank you, in person.

GUY

Call me, "Guy".

JEN

That ain't a name.

ICE

It is a name.

JEN

I don't know no guy called, "Guy".

ICE

Are you English ?

GUY

I wish to keep my origins a mystery.

JEN

Why ?

GUY

'Cause I am the guy. Names don't matter.
Intentions do.

ICE

A mystery ?

Guy looks at Ice.

GUY
It's better that way.

JEN
You are an angel of God.

ICE
God does not exist.

GUY
I am who I am. Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT – HOUSE – DAY

Outside a dilapidated house, repossessed many years ago, but not refurbished at all. The house shows neglect and decay. It is more or less derelict.

Guy shows Ice and Jen the outside of the house.

GUY
Like I said, it's not a palace.

ICE
It is derelict.

GUY
It's the only place I could find.

JEN
Better than nothing.

GUY
Better than being on the streets.

ICE
Only just.

JEN (to Ice)
Don't be ungrateful, Ice.

ICE (to Guy)
I am grateful for all you have done for us.

GUY
Remember, I am just a guy, I am not
a miracle-worker. This is the best I can do.

JEN
Thanks.

They approach the front door.

Guy opens the creaking front door, which is just about hanging on its hinge.

Guy leads them inside.

CUT TO:

INT – HOUSE – DAY

They look at the state of the place.

ICE

What a dump !

JEN

Ice, this is gonna be our home.

ICE

You are dumb.

GUY

Ladies, don't be too disappointed. It is a place to stay.

ICE

But not to live.

JEN

Ice, we will have to live here.

Jen approaches an armchair. She pushes against the springs, then sits down on it.

JEN

Not bad. C'mon, Ice, let's make the best of it.

Ice sits on another armchair, tentatively at first, then bounces, then sits still.

ICE

It's okay.

GUY

Ladies, this property is -

ICE

Condemned.

GUY

Well, it is left over from when they had those repossessions, but never got done

GUY (cont'd)

for sale, so it was effectively forgotten,
which is why it became available for
occupation by -

ICE

Scum like us.

GUY

Yes. It is a roof over your head.

ICE

I guess it is.

GUY

Well, this is the best that I can do. I am not
a man of means, but I know someone has to
do something to help people like you. Rich
people, who could do more, much more, they
ain't interested in helping the urban poor, they
are oblivious to your suffering. Ice, I will go
get you a cylinder o' oxygen, you will need
it soon.

ICE

Thanks.

GUY

I'll bring some food as well.

ICE

Okay.

Guy goes to the door and goes out.

JEN

Nice place.

ICE

Are you deluding yourself ?

JEN

I am, a bit. Look, I reckon we gotta pretend
it's better than it is, like, it is well maintained
and we are paying the mortgage on it.

ICE

It is a badly neglected derelict dump, but we
don't pay nothing for it.

JEN

At least we paying nothing.

ICE

You get what you pay for, and we pay nothing, zilch.

JEN

Did you really expect better ?

ICE

I guess not. That guy, he ain't no millionaire, so, if we got us a benefactor, we got to embrace his generosity, as far as it goes, which ain't that far, but, I do confess, he is generous in spirit,

JEN

If we rely on the generosity of strangers, we cannot be too particular.

ICE

He is a stranger, but is he strange ?

JEN

A strange stranger ?

ICE

Yes.

JEN

Are you suspicious of him ?

ICE

I don't know. Only, he won't tell us his name.

JEN

He said he was a guy called, "Guy". That is possible, isn't it ?

ICE

I guess so. He is a bit strange, though.

JEN

Yes, he is, but kind.

ICE

Can you trust a guy called, "Guy", if that is his name - ?

JEN

We gotta trust him. There is no-one else for us.

CUT TO:

INT – HOUSE – DAY

Later.

Jen and Ice have fallen asleep in their armchairs.

Guy comes in, lugging a cylinder of oxygen on wheels, with a face mask.

He lugs it to near Ice, who wakes up.

He then brings in a bucket of fried chicken.

Jen wakes up.

GUY

Folks, I got us some fried chicken, and oxygen for Ice, here.

ICE

Thanks.

Guy passes the bucket of fried chicken to Jen, who takes out a leg and eats it.

Guy then passes the bucket to Ice, who takes a piece and eats it.

He then takes a piece himself, and puts the bucket down. He eats his piece of chicken.

GUY

Umm, pretty good.

They eat their chicken pieces and then wipe their hands on their clothes.

ICE

A drink ?

Guy takes out a small bottle of lemonade from a bag and hands it to Ice, who drinks from it.

She then puts the bottle down.

GUY

How about some oxygen ?

ICE

Okay.

Guy fixes up the oxygen for Ice, and hands her the face mask, which she puts onto her face. Guy turns on the oxygen. Ice breathes deeply.

She takes off the mask when she speaks.

ICE

That's better.

She puts the mask back on and takes some deep breaths.

JEN

Where you get that ?

GUY

I got connections, at the suppliers to the hospital. I get a discount.

JEN

You are a good-natured useful person.

GUY

Someone's gotta help.

ICE

What's in it for you ?

GUY

Ain't like that. I get satisfaction from helping people, that's all. I don't profit from it. I lose out financially, but I think it is my moral duty to do what I can to help.

JEN

Ain't many people like him. Most are like that woman who told me to fuck off.

ICE

What makes you feel you have a moral obligation to help the disadvantaged ?

GUY

That's it. There are people in life who have more than they really need, they are the much advantaged. Then, the folks who have enough but not too much, they are the ones in the middle. Then, there's you, who are the disadvantaged. Ain't fair some have more than they need. Ain't fair some have less. You gotta try to equalise, do what you can, to level it out. Society should be fair, but it ain't. An individual member of

GUY (cont'd)
must do what he can to make things better.

ICE
That is, the distribution of wealth ain't fair.

GUY
It ain't.

ICE
You know, what I resent the most is the way
people treat you, just because you are destitute.
I do not feel too much shame, but other people,
they reckon you should be ashamed. Well, I ain't,
and I don't care for their opinion, 'cause they
don't know what it's like, so, they can just shut
up, don't show their ignorance.

JEN
Ain't nice, the way they treat us.

ICE
I am human, I am a person. You, Guy, you treat
us like we are human, I appreciate that.

GUY
You need a helping hand if you are to survive.

ICE
What would happen if we didn't survive ? Would
anyone care ?

GUY
I would, and I won't let that happen.

JEN
He will protect us. He is a guardian angel.

GUY
I ain't that, but what I am is a fella who can
help.

ICE
Why do you care when so many people don't ?
You must have a reason ?

GUY
A person with COPD should not be on the streets.

ICE

You had someone in your family got
COPD died on the streets ?

GUY

When I was too young to help, my uncle,
he got the COPD, he lost his job, his house,
everything 'cause he got sick, and he died,
on the streets, without oxygen.

ICE

I thought so. You got personal guilt over
your uncle, and you seek to expiate it by
helping me.

GUY

I was twelve. I was too young to help. I could
not buy oxygen for him. I could not find him
a place to stay, a roof over his head.

JEN

Your father, his brother - his wife -

GUY

They could help, but they didn't. He was too
much of a drain on their limited resources.
They knew he was sick, so their let him die.

ICE

They threw him out when he was sick ?

GUY

They made him feel guilty. It was intolerable
for him to be such a burden. So, he decided
to leave. He knew it would kill him, but he
thought he had no choice. They did not tell
him he could stay. They did not say he was
welcome. They respected his decision, but
they must've known it would mean his death.
I hated them for killing him, indirectly. I had
to find some way to assuage my guilt.

JEN

When he died -

GUY

I told them, they said, it was a shame, they
were sorry, but – they couldn't afford to keep
him, they didn't have suitable accommodation
for his condition. They had their excuses ready.

GUY (cont'd)

I found his body, in the morning, in an alleyway, like the one you were sleeping in. I took him food, in the mornings, on my way to school, but I couldn't take him no oxygen. He would die without oxygen, but there was no way I could get it. So, he died.

JEN

Not your fault. You did your best for him.

GUY

I was ashamed, of myself, of my folks...I rejected my name, the name my mother and father gave me. I have not allowed anyone to know my real name since then. I call myself, "Guy", or "the Guy", or, a fella.

ICE

What is your name ?

JEN

Don't ask him.

ICE

What is your real name ?

GUY

Why do you need to know ?

ICE

I would like to know.

GUY

You don't need-ta know. No-one does.

ICE

I guess not.

GUY

I won't tell you.

ICE

You have admitted your motivation.

GUY

What's wrong with that ?

ICE

It all makes sense. It explains your actions. I am not surprised. I am wary of acts of kindness and generosity. I always suspect a personal motive. Nothing to do with society's inequality. Who cares about that ?

JEN

He done us a favour, you especially, with that oxygen. You need that. Does it matter why he done it ?

ICE

I think it does.

JEN

You should be grateful -

ICE

And I am, only -

JEN

What ?

ICE

It reassures me, even the best people, are essentially selfish. They do acts of charity for their benefit, to make them feel good, not for us, the recipients, who are grateful, but suspect why they should receive such kindness.

JEN

That is too cynical. Without him, whatever his reasons, you might well be dead.

ICE

Not yet, but soon, maybe.

JEN

You need oxygen.

ICE

Yes, I do.

JEN

Then, be grateful.

ICE

I am, I am.

Ice takes a breath of oxygen.

JEN

See.

Jen addresses the guy.

JEN

Guy, I do appreciate your help, and I speak for Ice, we are both very grateful.

GUY

I did not do this for gratitude. I did this to help her, and help me with my guilt. I am not a selfless benefactor.

JEN

It don't matter. Ice is just bitter she got herself into this state by smoking, so she got dependent on us, to help her. She has a spirit wants to be free, but she is stuck in that body with not enough lung, she can't live her own life.

ICE

I am bitter, but I did that to myself. It was my fault. You, Guy, you actually feel guilt. Not many people do. They are ruthless, and indifferent to the suffering of others. I need people like you, but, of course, I don't like to admit it, because of pride, I guess. I had some pride when I was young, when I was a promising athlete, when I could sing, and enjoy life, before I almost smoked myself to death – what a dumb thing to do. I was so stupid. Sometimes, I hate my life, but I am still grateful to be alive at all, and life is precious, no matter how bad it is. But, I made my own bed, and I must lie in it.

GUY

You are so honest, Ice.

ICE

I have to be. It gives me some justification to pontificate on life and judge people. I know there is no pure motivation on the planet. People always have their reasons why they do stuff. You should be grateful for the result, not the why they done it.

JEN

That is a mature attitude, Ice. I am proud of you.

ICE

I feel better with this oxygen. I can think more clearly now. I can be fair to people.

JEN

We can all three of us be friends.

ICE

Yes, we can.

JEN

Let's have a hug.

ICE

Okay.

Jen goes over to hug Guy, and then goes to hug Ice, which is more difficult, due to her cylinder and tubes.

Guy then hugs Ice.

JEN

That was nice.

ICE

I enjoyed that.

JEN

What you need, Ice, is the right mental attitude.

ICE

How is that ?

JEN

You need to be more positive.

ICE

I am positive.

JEN

You are improving on that score, due to the oxygen.

GUY

If you can't breathe, you can't think straight.

ICE

I am breathing better, I can assure you.

GUY

That's good.

JEN

You know, Ice, we do sympathize with you.

ICE

I don't want sympathy.

JEN

Why not ?

ICE

I don't deserve no sympathy. I did this to myself, not no-one did it to me. I take the blame.

GUY

You hafta have a clear head for that. It's so much easier to blame someone else.

ICE

I blame myself. - As for sympathy, my ma once said to me, "Do you expect sympathy ?" I said, "Sympathy is for other people."

JEN

What did she say ?

ICE

She said nothing. It was hard to find a reply to, "Sympathy is for other people."

JEN

Why did she ask you that, about expecting sympathy ?

ICE

I don't remember. All I remember is her saying that, and what I said to her. Why it all arose, I simply do not recall. Things like that, the things we said, they stick in the memory, nothing else.

GUY

That was quite something, you said to her. How did you come up with that, instantaneously ?

ICE

I don't know. It just kinda happened.

GUY

That is amazing. No wonder she said nothing after that. I think it might take hours to think up a suitable reply. I can't now, you really have to think about it. That is a conundrum.

JEN

Ice could've been a genius, if it wasn't for the smoking.

ICE

Could've been. The story of my life. I could've been this, I could've been that, I could've been anything if it wasn't for those damn cigarettes. That is such a common story, it's boring. It says on the packet, "Smoking Kills", but no-one takes no notice. They just smoke and smoke, until it either kills them or does so much damage, they have no life, even if they are actually still alive. That is my story.

GUY

Well, you could tell someone about that.

ICE

No-one listens.

JEN

Make them listen.

ICE

How can we do that ?

GUY

Someone needs to spend a day here with you.

ICE

How could you get someone to do that ?

GUY

I don't know.

ICE

And you, Jen, why did you have to take so many drugs you ended up with brain damage ?

JEN

My mental impairment, my brain damage,
is another common boring story, no-one's
interested.

ICE

I might be interested.

JEN

In me ? No way.

ICE

You have a secret. You have the PTSD.
You got the deja vu, flashbacks to something,
to what ? Tell us.

JEN

I will not.

ICE

There is nothing to be ashamed of.

JEN

You wouldn't understand.

ICE

Yes, I would.

JEN

I don't want to. It is a private matter.

ICE

Suit yourself, then. I will not compel you.

JEN

You couldn't anyway.

ICE

One day, you will want to get this off your
chest.

JEN

Not today.

ICE

I do not want to be the centre of attention.
I had to admit my mistake, however painful.
You keep your secret. Don't share it. But, if
you ever feel you could tell us, we will listen
with sympathy.

JEN

I don't want sympathy, I just want to change my past.

GUY

That is not possible. The past is fixed, it cannot be altered.

JEN

That's the problem. Since the consequences of the past on us individuals will always be the same, 'cause we cannot change the past, we live on years afterwards, damaged by what happened so many years ago. I regret my past, I hate it, but I'm stuck with it.

ICE

Guy's real name, and your secret, Jen, are things we might never know.

JEN

Won't make much difference to the world.

ICE

Might make some difference to us.

JEN

I doubt it.

ICE

We don't know.

GUY

Okay. Let's just take stock, huh. We are friends, more than acquaintances, more than people met up on the streets. We are building understanding and relationships, but some things have to remain unknown. But, we can still get on. I reckon so.

JEN

Of course we can.

GUY

That's good.

JEN

How can I get more brain damage, so's I don't remember at all any more ?

Guy looks at her with some indignation.

GUY

That is not a good idea.

JEN

It is for me.

ICE

Then we would never know.

JEN

Do you need-ta know ?

ICE

I guess not.

JEN

I have more resentment than guilt.

ICE

Is that a clue ?

JEN

Maybe.

ICE

Give us some more.

JEN

I do see the flashbacks to a certain incident.
I suffered more harm than I did to others.
Those are clues. It really is a personal thing.

ICE

After a while, we won't want to know.

GUY

I will never tell you my real name.

ICE

Who cares ?

JEN

Some things you just have to keep to
yourself.

ICE

You choose to. You don't have to.

JEN and GUY

Yes, we do.

ICE

Okay, but I confessed everything.

JEN

You chose to.

ICE

I guess I did. Anyway, I do need my oxygen.

JEN

I would prefer to remember nothing. I would prefer to find some drug to blot it all out, so I remember none of it, ever again.

ICE

You don't want more drugs, not after all the damage you already done.

GUY

There is no drug can guarantee you that. All would get is more brain damage, but you might still have those memories.

JEN

Aw, shit, so I'm stuck with it.

ICE

Yes, you are.

JEN

Shit.

ICE

You might as well tell us.

JEN

No.

Jen goes out of the living room.

ICE

She is upset.

GUY

There's no such drug.

ICE

I know. - She does have brain damage, she don't think straight.

GUY

Would she confess on camera ?

ICE

I don't know, it's possible.

GUY

Maybe, I could get someone to interview you both. You could tell people not to smoke. She might open up and tell us her secret. It would be therapy for her. If you can't forget the past, you have to come to terms with it.

ICE

That is so true.

CUT TO:

INT – STUDIO – DAY

Guy is talking to his friend, KIM, 25-ish, a documentary-maker.

GUY

We got a woman with COPD, used-to live on the streets, now she's occupied this old derelict house, dependent on oxygen, and this other woman, she's co-habiting, with a secret she won't tell without an audience, both have something important to say.

KIM

I like this idea. I'll do it.

GUY

Thanks, Kim.

CUT TO:

INT – HOUSE – DAY

Living room.

Kim, with her cameraman, TIM, setting up the equipment.

Guy, Ice and Jen waiting.

TIM

Okay. That should do it. We're ready.

KIM

Okay. Let's roll.

Kim addresses Ice, who talks in between taking oxygen.

KIM

Now, Moira, known as Ice, please tell us a little about yourself.

ICE

My name is Moira, but people call me, Ice, 'cause I was delivered in summer, and my folks had ice delivered in the summertime, 'cause poor people still did that, sometimes, back then. I am now fifty-one years of age. We lost our place, when it was repossessed, 'cause we over-borrowed, we were over-mortgaged, and we lost. That was about twelve years ago. Since then, I been living on the streets, but this kind gentleman, called, Guy, we don't know if that's his real name, we call him Guy, he won't tell us his real name for reasons of his own...

KIM

We'll ask him that later. Go on.

ICE

Well, he rescued me and found this place for us. It was a repossessed property that never got sold on. It is abandoned. So, I live here now, with my friend, Jen, who found Guy. One day, you see, I had a bad episode, where I could not breathe, so she found Guy, and he got me some oxygen, which I needed, 'cause I got the COPD, emphysema, which I got from smoking.

KIM

Tell us about that.

ICE

Well, I used-ta be a junior champion athlete, I was promising, but one day, I started smoking, 'cause it was cool. That was the worse decision I ever made the whole of my life. What a dumb thing to do. I used-ta have a good singing voice. I had options, to be a professional athlete or a singer. But I was a smoker, and that took both of those potential career paths, and tore them up. I did not become either. I smoked instead,

ICE (cont'd)

and I smoked, and that was it. That is the story of my life. One day, I woke up in the morning and I could not breathe, I could not even light a cigarette, I had got COPD, so I had to quit, which I did, but I had lost more than half of my lung capacity. Then, later, we lost the house, and I was homeless, so, I was on the streets with the COPD, but I survived, because I didn't smoke no more, but the damage had already been done.

KIM

So, you got COPD after smoking for only about, twenty-five years...?

ICE

Yes, it can happen. My life lesson was, not to smoke. So, I urge everyone who sees this, whatever you do, don't smoke. Don't end up like me. If you smoke, you can lose your job, you won't be able to pay your mortgage, so you can lose your place, and end up on the streets like me, destitute with COPD, and the only reason I am still alive to talk about this, is due to my friend, Jen, who found me Guy, who got me this oxygen and found me this place, which is a roof over my head, even though it is derelict.

KIM

Thank you, Ice, that is a very moving story. Now, Jen, tell us a little about yourself.

JEN

Well, we lost our place as well, when it got repossessed, and I was out on the streets. I took drugs in the hope it would blot out my past, which I did not want to remember, but I got the deja vu, I saw flashbacks of things, bad things, I got the trauma, the PTSD, and I felt bad, real bad. So, I took drugs and I got some brain damage, mental impairment, but I still remember those things I wanted to forget. So, maybe one day, I get more damage, I might not remember no more, but I don't want to take any more drugs, 'cause they mess you up, they hurt your health. Maybe, one day, I might have an accident, and get a concussion, might blot out those memories, so I can forget everything.

JEN (cont'd)

But, if I took more drugs, I could end up as a cabbage, but that might be better than remembering what I want to forget, but I can't. Maybe, some day, someone will punch me in the head, and I get more brain damage, but not enough to turn me into a cabbage.

KIM

Something like that might kill you.

JEN

I want relief from the deja vu, the PTSD, but I can't get none, not even from drugs, and I get all mixed up, 'cause I got the brain damage. I was release from this prison of the mind.

KIM

That is a sad story.

JEN

The rest of the time, when I don't get the deja vu, I am happy, and I enjoy life.

KIM

I hope one day you will find peace of mind.

JEN

So do I, but I might be a cabbage by then. I'm half way there already.

KIM

Thank you, Jen, for sharing your story. Could you tell us something about your flashbacks, what you see when they happen - ? Could you tell us something about the causes of your trauma ?

JEN

That is personal.

KIM

It would help us to understand, to offer sympathy.

JEN

Sympathy is for other people.

This leaves Kim dumbfounded. She has to think for a while before she speaks again.

KIM

Well, why can't you tell us what happened ?

JEN

I don't want to.

KIM

It's a secret, then ?

JEN

Yes, it is.

KIM

We do not intend to intrude on private grief,
but, I'm sure the audience would like to know,
so they can understand and sympathize.

JEN

I am not telling. I have my reasons.

KIM

What caused you trauma ?

JEN

Guess.

KIM

Sexual abuse ?

JEN

No.

KIM

Physical abuse ?

JEN

No.

KIM

Financial abuse ?

JEN

No.

KIM

Verbal abuse ?

JEN

No.

KIM

Bullying ?

JEN

No.

KIM

Coercive control ?

JEN

No.

KIM

What then ?!

JEN

I'm not telling.

KIM

Okay. Keep it to yourself, then. Thanks again, Jen, for sharing your experiences with us.

A beat.

KIM

Now, Guy, please tell us something about yourself.

GUY

I found Ice and Jen on the streets. I found them this place. I got Ice some oxygen. She needs oxygen.

KIM

Now, why did you act on the situation with Ice, when other people did nothing to help her ?

GUY

Someone has to help, and that someone was me. I saw she needed oxygen, and I got her some.

ICE

He did have a personal motive.

KIM

What was that ?

GUY

Do I have to ?

ICE

Yes, you do. Tell her.

KIM

Please.

GUY

I had an uncle, many years ago. He had the COPD -

ICE

From smoking.

GUY

Yes, from smoking. He was on the streets. I was twelve. I could bring him food, but I couldn't get him no oxygen. I was too young to get oxygen. I found him one morning. He was dead. I could get Ice oxygen, but I'm older now, so I could get it.

KIM

Why was he on the streets with COPD ?

GUY

He was living with my folks, my mother and father, but they implied he was a burden. He had pride, the dumb ass, so he could not stand being a burden, so her left. I was so ashamed of my parents, doing that to him, so I refused to be known by that name they gave me, so I lost my name, and now I am known as Guy, 'cause I am a guy, nothing more.

KIM

Well, that does explain things. Please, tell us your real name, for the viewers.

GUY

No way. That name is banished, dead.

KIM

You're sticking with that ?

GUY

Absolutely. No way will I ever speak my name again.

KIM

Well, thank you, Guy, Ice and Jen. That's it.

Tim turns the camera and microphone off.

KIM

Okay. I'll see what my producer makes of that. Thanks.

They pack up the equipment.

KIM

You did well, all three of you. That was interesting. Thanks again.

Kim and Tim go out.

JEN

You hear that, we did well.

Ice and Guy look more doubtful.

CUT TO:

INT – STUDIO – DAY

An editing room.

Kim talking to her producer, MARK.

MARK

Good film, Kim. Problem is, I spoke to my viewers' group, and they weren't all that interested in the plight of these individuals. What they were interested in, was Jen's secret and Guy's name.

KIM

Those things are insignificant little details. The story is, a woman with brain damage, and a woman with COPD living on the streets. When someone gets them off the streets, all they can find for them is some accommodation in a derelict abandoned house. What is society's obligation to these people, the sick and the homeless ?

MARK

The viewers' group filled in their surveys, and they wanted to know the details, Guy's name and the cause of Jen's trauma.

KIM

Jen's got brain damage. She might not even

KIM (cont'd)

remember the cause of her trauma accurately any more. All she's got are some glimpses, flashbacks, like a puzzle she doesn't even understand herself. If we get the secret out of her, it might not even be coherent. It might make no sense.

MARK

Look, Kim, I can see you are really passionate about this report. That's a good thing, but, unless you get the secret out of her, unless you get Guy to reveal his name, the story does not air. It won't get any viewers the way it is now. The viewing public is not interested in social issues. It is into personal stories of individuals who have something to say. Issues are boring. People are interesting. So, the bottom line is, get those little details, or it won't air. Okay ?

KIM

I'll try.

Kim goes out with her file in her hands.

CUT TO:

INT – HOUSE – DAY

Living room.

Tim and Kim setting up the equipment again.

Guy, Ice and Jen, seated, waiting to be interviewed.

Tim and Kim finish setting up the equipment, and Kim is ready to start.

KIM

Now, our viewers would like to know a little more, Jen, about the cause of your trauma, the reason for your deja vu, your PTSD, what you see in your flashbacks. What do you see ?

JEN

Fragments of things, images of the past, I get a bad feeling when I see them, but I get confused, I don't really know, I'm

JEN (cont'd)
not sure any more.

KIM
But you do see something ?

JEN
Yes.

KIM
Please tell us what you see.

JEN
No.

KIM
Please.

JEN
No.

KIM
Please, please, please !

JEN
No.

KIM
Why not ?

JEN
I don't want to. It's private. It's personal.
It's a secret.

KIM
Okay. - Now, Guy, please tell the viewers
your real name.

GUY
I can't do that.

KIM
Why not ?

GUY
I haven't spoken that name since I was
twelve. I am too ashamed of that name.

KIM
Why ?

GUY

It was the name my parents gave me,
and I am ashamed of them.

Kim sighs in exasperation.

KIM

Look, Jen, if you don't tell me your secret,
and Guy, if you don't tell me your real name,
the report gets shelved. You understand, my
producer told me. Tell me your fucking name.
Tell me your secret.

JEN

No.

KIM

Tell me your real name.

GUY

No.

KIM

That's it, then. It doesn't air. I did my
best. If you are so stubborn, your story
will not get told. I'm sorry, that's the
best I can do, without your co-operation.
Let's pack up, Tim.

TIM

Okay.

They start to pack up the equipment.

Kim goes to speak to Guy.

KIM

My producer will not allow it, without
those little details.

GUY

Those are personal details.

JEN butts in.

JEN

Private details -

KIM

The public wants to know.

JEN

Why ?

KIM

'Cause they're nosey. They like personal stories. They are interested in people, not in social issues. They want to identify with you, and to do that, they demand your life details, your innermost secrets.

ICE

That is intrusive.

KIM

Yes, it is, and I wish it wasn't like that, but it is. I'm sorry, I can do no more.

GUY

Okay.

KIM

My producer insisted. Not my idea.
Not my decision. Not my fault.

Kim and Tim finish packing up the equipment, and go out.

ICE

Fuck. No-one will get my anti-smoking message.

GUY

That's a shame.

ICE

If I can save one person from smoking, which is one of the grave evils of this world, I have done some good.

JEN

That is shit, though, not doing our story 'cause we want to keep some details to ourselves. Who cares what Guy's real name is, or what my secret is, caused my trauma, I want to keep that quiet - them is personal matters, not for the general public.

ICE

Would it matter if they did know ?

JEN

It would matter to us, to our sense of privacy.

ICE

We lost our story being put out there for the world to know, because you want to safeguard some insignificant personal details. Is that so important to you ?

JEN

Yes, it is.

ICE

Why ?

GUY

'Cause some things should remain private, not be put out there in the public domain.

ICE

It's pride, stupid stubborn pride. You are too proud, you keep your innermost secrets, which don't matter in the least, the great scheme of things, so why don't you let them know ? Huh ?

JEN

Why do they need to know ?

ICE

It's their curiosity. You tell someone there's a secret, no matter how banal that is, they will want to know. It's human nature.

JEN

Well, I ain't telling, and that's that.

GUY

I ain't telling, neither.

ICE

Great, so no-one gets to know about us, our circumstances, our predicament, 'cause of your pride. We are scumbags, scumbags can't have no pride.

JEN

We can have pride, even if we are scumbags.

ICE

That is some dumb shit.

GUY

If you don't got pride, you got nothing.

ICE

We have nothing. We were on the streets.
Have can you have pride in what we are ?

JEN

Pride is like, you gotta have it, even if
you're on the street, and people tell you
to fuck off, you gotta say, I am someone,
I am human. If you don't got no pride,
you do not live as a person.

ICE

Your argument is, pride is an essential
part of self-esteem.

JEN

It is.

ICE

Shit. I can't argue with that. I can't argue
with someone with brain damage. It is too
difficult. Your argument is, infallible.

A beat.

ICE

Guy, can you get me a portable cylinder,
so's I can walk around ?

GUY

I guess so.

ICE

I need to go to the station, to open up that
locker where I left my mother's ashes. I
got nothing in life, except that. I got the
key here.

She shows them the key.

ICE

Now I got a place to stay, I can bring them
home safely. That urn is the most precious
thing in the world for me.

GUY

Okay. I'll get you one tomorrow.

ICE

Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT – LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Ice and Jen.

JEN

You know, Ice -

ICE

Yeah ?

JEN

I need-ta blot out my memories of what happened to me, get me some more brain damage, so's I don't remember, - I gotta do that soon, before I start getting the dementia, 'cause I need a few years when I'm free of all that stuff from the past before I become senile.

ICE

So, you start off as a fairly normal person, then you become a bit of an ass-hole, then you take drugs and you get brain damage, then, in the future, you will get dementia, so, some of your life at least, you got the impairment of mental faculties.

JEN

I was an idiot, then a retard, and I might become a cabbage. I do need a little time in between when I do not remember what caused it all. I got my trauma, and the bits, glimpses of the past, my deja vu, PTSD, I just need to be free of that, before I get demented, 'cause otherwise, I will never know I am free.

ICE

When you get demented, you will forget the whole fucking thing.

JEN

That would be a relief.

ICE

That might be your only hope of ever being free. You will forget everything.

JEN

Then, my secret would be lost, even to me.

ICE

You would get peace of mind, 'cause you ain't got no mind left. All those painful memories will be gone. Only thing is, all your memories will be gone, good and bad.

JEN

If only it would take the bad.

ICE

It doesn't work like that. It's everything.

JEN

I sort o' look forward to that.

ICE

You are a brain-damaged simpleton.

JEN

Thank you, Ice.

ICE

I am insulting you.

JEN

I'm grateful.

ICE

You idiot.

JEN

Thanks.

ICE

My pleasure. Now go to sleep.

Jen beds down in the armchair, pulling a duvet over herself.

Ice pulls her duvet over herself and closes her eyes, to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT – HOUSE – DAY

Jen and Ice, waiting for Guy.

ICE
I gotta get that urn.

Guy comes in with the mobile oxygen cylinder.

GUY
Here it is. Try it out.

He puts the cylinder near Ice, who picks it up, and places the mask over her face. She removes the mask when she speaks, then replaces it, when she is not speaking.

ICE
Umm, I can carry it. It's nice and portable.
C'mon, Jen, you look after on the way there.

JEN
Okay.

Ice moves towards the door, carrying her cylinder.

ICE
It's good to be mobile. No good to be
stuck in one place.

Jen goes up to her, and then they both go out.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

Jen and Ice walking down the street, Ice walking slowly, Jen slowing down now and again so that she does not get too far ahead of Ice, who is carrying her cylinder, and has the mask on her face.

Some people stare at Ice, but most are not interested.

Later:

They get to the front of the station entrance.

They go inside the station.

CUT TO:

INT – STATION – DAY

Ice goes to the row of lockers, Jen following her.

Ice finds the locker, and takes out her key.

She opens the locker to find an small urn of ashes, which she takes out, then locks the locker with her key.

ICE

Got it. This is so precious to me. I gotta be careful.

Ice carefully puts the urn in a small bag, which she hands to Jen, who then carries it.

ICE

Let's go.

CUT TO:

INT – HOUSE – DAY

Living room.

Jen and Ice come in, Jen carrying the small bag containing the urn, Ice carrying her mobile oxygen cylinder.

ICE

Good to get out of the home from time to time.

Ice sits down, and takes off the mask to her mobile cylinder and replaces it with the mask to her full-size cylinder which is at the side of the chair. She then turns on the tube from the main cylinder.

ICE

Please, Jen, give me the ashes.

Jen takes the urn out of the bag and carefully hands it to Ice, who holds it in both hands.

ICE

That is so precious, my mother's ashes, the only thing I got left of her.

Ice starts to weep a little.

JEN

Oh, Ice, do not cry.

ICE

I gotta.

JEN

Oh, Ice, I feel for you.

ICE

The truth is, sometimes I blamed her, not for me becoming a smoker. That was my decision. Not for that. For other things. Why we lost the house. She died soon afterwards, from shame, I guess. That was not the official cause of death, of course. A stroke killed her. But that guilt and shame of losing our place, that was a torment. Anyway, I had her cremated, 'cause I could not afford a burial. Then, we sold what we had left, we could carry with us, to pay for it. So, I had nothing left, no jewellery, no bonds, no money, nothing except this urn, and that is why it is so precious to me.

JEN

I understand.

ICE

Put it somewhere safe, Jen.

Ice holds the urn out to Jen, who takes it from her and positions it carefully on a table.

JEN

It should be safe there.

ICE

Good. - What was I saying ?

JEN

When ?

ICE

Last night.

JEN

I don't know.

ICE

You don't know.

JEN

I don't remember.

ICE

But that was only yesterday. You should remember.

JEN

You don't.

ICE

No, I don't, but I am on oxygen. My lungs are shot.

JEN

My brain is shot.

ICE

Are you getting early onset dementia ?

JEN

I don't know. Are you getting it ?

ICE

I don't know. I can't be certain.

JEN

If I'm getting it, maybe I can forget my past.

ICE

If you get it, you won't know what you're doing. You won't remember nothing, not even who you are.

JEN

Some things, you're better off not knowing.

ICE

You still got your deja vu's ?

JEN

I always got them. It is getting tedious now.

ICE

Well, Jen, getting those ashes again gives me a sense of proportion about life and death. I am still alive, my mother ain't. I appreciate what a blessing life is, even if you're in my state, depending on oxygen to breathe. I can feel and think, I have that capability. My mother, she is gone, dead, she can't do none of that, she is simply no more. She does not exist as a person, because she is dead. She only exists in my memory of her, and that is not a life. I am alive. I gotta live my life the best I can. One day I will be dead, then I will no longer feel, or think, or breathe at all. I will be gone, dead. So this time is precious to me.

ICE (cont'd)

I hate my own life. I hate my miserable existence, but it is better than being dead. At least now I still have the ability to feel hate. Once you're dead, you feel nothing. I love life, the concept of life, the feeling of being alive. I only hate what I did to myself by smoking and the lousy life I have now, but life itself, being alive, is wonderful.

JEN

I would love my life if I didn't have my deja vu, my flashbacks and PTSD. Every other aspect of life, I totally love.

ICE

I value life now. I wish I had have done before. Now it is too late, but I admit, the worst done to me I did to myself.

JEN

The worst thing ever done to me, I did to myself.

ICE

Explain that.

JEN

Each day, it still haunts me, a little bit, but it's gotten less over time. That is 'cause I am losing my mind, it's going. I don't know - I am to blame. I was out of my mind already, when I did it, I was not in control. Otherwise, what am I gonna do, if it was my fault? Then, you might say, does it matter any more whose fault it was? I think I need it to dissolve even more, like snowdrops in the rain, so it's all gone, and I don't think about it no more, like I don't think no more at all, not about nothing. I am losing it.

ICE

That's a shame.

JEN

Is it? If you can't think, if you can't remember nothing, it's better.

ICE

You won't be able to function at all.
You will be a cabbage.

JEN

I want it to be all confused, so, if I am
to blame, I don't know that no more.

ICE

Tell me what happened.

JEN

I can't.

ICE

Why not ?

JEN

I am ashamed.

ICE

Of what you did ?

JEN

What I did, what I did not do.

ICE

What ?

JEN

I didn't do what I needed to do. I did what
I did not need to do. I was all fucked up.

ICE

Why did you behave in a way contrary to
your best interests ?

JEN

I was not in control. I was on drugs made
me do the opposite of what I wanted to do,
the very and precise opposite of what I needed
to do, and I knew it at the time, but I still could
not do what was in my best interests, because
of the drugs I was on.

ICE

You were on drugs then ?

JEN

Not street drugs, nothing illegal, drugs prescribed

JEN (cont'd)
for me, for my mental health issues.

ICE
So, you had to take psychiatric medication.

JEN
They fucked my mind up. I did things on that stuff I would never have done, if I'd not been on them. They made me insane, they made me crazy, and they were supposed to cure me. I had no choice what drugs to take. It was imposed on me, and I am ashamed of what I did.

ICE
What did you do ?

JEN
I did no harm to anyone else. I only harmed myself.

ICE
Self harm ?

JEN
No. It was not that.

ICE
What then ?

JEN
I neglected myself. I dejected myself. I got some brain damage then, from the drugs.

ICE
Then it's not your fault.

JEN
I guess not, but I still blame myself.

ICE
You were being controlled by inappropriate medication made you behave like you were insane.

JEN
That's it, I guess.

ICE

Is that your secret ?

JEN

I am so ashamed of my behaviour. I am so ashamed I suffered damage there and then. I am so ashamed I neglected myself and my prospects due to that shit.

ICE

That's not a secret.

JEN

It is a personal testament of shame.

ICE

You should forget about that.

JEN

I should, but I can't, because I got the brain damage, which forces me to remember, it is involuntary adverse memory syndrome, the PTSD, what I call my deja vu.

ICE

That is an incorrect misuse of the term.

JEN

Well, I don't have the intelligence to know that any more.

ICE

You were so ashamed, you couldn't tell that documentary maker ?

JEN

I thought it was a private indiscretion I would keep secret.

ICE

It was something done to you. You were a victim, not a perpetrator.

JEN

I don't want to be known as a victim, like I had no choice whatsoever, I was a person without volition. That is a slave to fate, not someone in charge of their destiny. That means I do not exist in my own right. Other people determine what happens to me. I have no future,

JEN (cont'd)
only a past I cannot escape.

ICE
So, you got fucked up with street drugs
to help you deal with the trauma of being
originally fucked up by psychiatric drugs ?

JEN
That's it.

ICE
That secret ain't worth keeping. It is a shit
secret.

JEN
I'm sorry to disappoint you.

ICE
Never mind. I bet the secret of Guy's real
name is some banal shit like that. I bet he
has a very ordinary name, like Bob, or Dick,
or John, or something like that.

JEN
You ask him.

ICE
I will.

They hear Guy come in.

Guy comes into the living room.

ICE
Hey, Guy, Jen here just confessed her
secret. Turns out she got fucked up by
psychiatric drugs made her behave like
a lunatic, inappropriate medication made
her more crazy than her mental illness,
and she is ashamed of that. Isn't that
a disappointing shit secret ?

GUY
Not much of a secret. Why be ashamed
of that ?

JEN
I am. I am terribly ashamed.

GUY

You shouldn't be.

JEN

But I am. I am.

ICE

Now, Guy, since she told us that, I reckon you should tell us your real name.

GUY

I am ashamed of that name.

ICE

But the name itself, I bet it's nothing special, ain't that so ?

GUY

I guess so.

ICE

Then tell us your name.

JEN

Go on, please.

GUY

Well, I'm only gonna do it, 'cause you confessed your secret.

JEN

Okay, so what is it ?

GUY

Jack.

ICE

Jack ?

JACK

Yes, Jack.

ICE

Wow, that is such a secret, should be stamped, Top Secret, like something James Bond should see. Jack. What's in a name ? Nothing.

JACK

Okay, so now you know. Are you happy now ?

ICE

Yes, I am. Jack.

A beat.

JACK

We have got to support each other.

ICE

We can, now that we know each others' innermost secrets. - I am sorry, I am too aggressive, but this makes me laugh and despair. Life is more than being ashamed. Life is about tolerance and hope. We must forgive ourselves before we can forgive anyone else. Learn to forgive yourself, Jen. Learn to forgive yourself, Jack. Think on this. The things you were ashamed of, none of it was your fault. It was all things done to you, you had no say in whatsoever, so you shouldn't feel guilty or ashamed, even for having no choice, which is a fact. You only think you had some choice, or you should have had some choice in retrospect, but you never had none at the time. So, let it go, don't blame yourself. Let the whole thing dissolve and evaporate.

JEN

That is wisdom.

JACK

It certainly is.

A beat.

They hear someone else come into the house.

JACK

Shhh.

They get as quiet as they can, but Ice's breathing is a bit heavy in her mask.

A policeman comes in.

The COP spots signs of occupation, and then, Jack, Ice and Jen.

COP

What are you doing here ?

ICE

What does it look like ?

COP

Don't get lippy with me. What the fuck are you doing here ?

ICE

We are occupying this property.

JEN

We live here.

COP

In this dump !

ICE

Yes. We have nowhere else to go.

COP

I pity you, but this is an illegal occupation.

JACK

Please, let them stay here.

COP

Why should I ? This could be against the law, which I am here to uphold.

JACK

That woman, she has COPD. She is reliant on oxygen to breathe. She can't go back on the streets. She wouldn't survive. That other woman, she's got brain damage. She is too vulnerable to go back on the streets. Please, allow them to stay here.

COP

It is my duty to report this.

JACK

Just forget about your duty, and engage your common humanity.

COP

This place ain't even fit for human habitation.

ICE

I know that. We can't afford better accommodation. It's this place, or the streets, and we cannot survive

ICE (cont'd)
on the streets.

COP
This place should be condemned. No-one
should live in these conditions.

JEN
We gotta live somewhere.

COP
The authorities should find you a better place.

JACK
Not with the cutbacks. By the time they find
them a better place, if they go back on the streets,
they will be dead.

COP
This place is insanitary and unhygienic.

JEN
We accept the limitations.

JACK
Please, let them stay.

COP
Okay, you can stay here, for now. I will
discourage my colleagues from looking
into this place. I will say, it's rat-infested
and a disease-riddled, which is not much
of an exaggeration.

JACK
Thanks.

COP
Okay. Enjoy life.

ICE
We will. Thanks.

The cop goes out.

JACK
Wow, a cop who is a decent human being.

ICE
Maybe, our life has turned the corner.

JEN

We can look forward to a better life.

ICE

Now, Jack, I want you to do me a favour.
I want you to find a copy of Jackie Evancho
singing our National Anthem, and something
portable to play it.

JACK

Okay. I should be able to do that.

ICE

Thanks.

Jack goes out.

ICE

I want to hear her beautiful voice. She is just
divine.

CUT TO:

INT – HOUSE – NIGHT

Living room.

Jen and Ice, waiting for Jack.

Jack arrives with a copy of Jackie Evancho's rendition of the National Anthem and a portable player.

JACK

Got it.

ICE

Great. Please, put it on.

JACK

Okay.

Jack switches on the player, which plays Jackie Evancho's version of the National Anthem which lasts about one and a half minutes.

During this, there is silence from the three of them, but they each begin to well up tears and cry a little, due to the beauty of Evancho's voice.

When it ends, Jack turns it off.

ICE

That was so beautiful.

JEN

She has such a pure voice.

ICE

I once sang our National Anthem at a local football game. O' course, I was not as good as Jackie Evancho, but I had a pretty decent voice. I lost that due to smoking.

Ice takes in some oxygen.

ICE

You gotta have appreciation of some beauty in life. That girl's voice is such a treasure-house of beauty, it makes me feel good. It gives me hope, if I can still recognize beauty, I have the strength to go on. We gotta make the best out of things. We gotta live.

THE END

