

# FRIED CHICKEN

## THE SCRIPT



**BOUNCE THEATRE**

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**FRIED CHICKEN**

Written by  
Louise Pendry

**Characters:**

LEILA 15 YEAR OLD GIRL

MATT 15 YEAR OLD BOY

VINCE 31 YEAR OLD MAN, CHICKEN SHOP OWNER

JACOB 14 YEAR OLD BOY

**BOUNCE THEATRE**

(1) INT: CHICKEN SHOP

(LIGHTS GO DOWN AND FOR A MOMENT IN A BLACKOUT ALL WE HEAR ARE THE SOUNDS OF MOBILE PHONES AND VOICES WHICH TAKE OVER THE STAGE. DEVISED SCENE OF A CHICKEN SHOP BUZZING WITH POST SCHOOL ENERGY. CHORUS DISSOLVE INTO QUIETLY EATING CHICKEN AND OUR FOCUS IS ON THE COUPLE.)

LEILA: I actually can't believe you have ordered all that food.

MATT: (TALKING WITH HIS MOUTH FULL) Why? It's hella cheap here.

LEILA: (LAUGHING) You're rank.

(MATT: STUFFS LOADS OF CHICKEN IN HIS MOUTH. HE PICKS UP SOME CHICKEN AND THREATENS TO RUB IT ON LEILA.)

LEILA: If that chicken comes anywhere near me...

(MATT STARTS LAUGHING AND CONTINUES. VINCE COMES OUT THE BACK TO CLEAN THE TABLE.)

LEILA: That's not even funny, yeah, I swear to god, I'll throw my gravy on you.

VINCE: If either of you throw anything in here you will be cleaning it up yourselves.

(LEILA AND MATT START LAUGHING BUT PUT DOWN THEIR FOOD. MATT'S PHONE PINGS AS HE GETS A SNAPCHAT. HE LAUGHS TO HIMSELF AS HE CONTINUES TO EAT HIS CHICKEN AS HE WATCHES HIS PHONE.)

LEILA: (EATING CHICKEN) What's the plans this weekend then?

(MATT CONTINUES EATING WHILE LOOKING AT HIS PHONE.)

LEILA: You wanna come over? I got a free yard.

MATT: Ah ha.

(MATT CONTINUES EATING WHILE LOOKING AT HIS PHONE.)

LEILA: I was thinking of having a party.

**BOUNCE THEATRE**

MATT: Ah ha.

LEILA: Unless you wanna just chill, you and me?

MATT: Ah ha.

LEILA: Or maybe I'll...

**(MATT CONTINUES EATING WHILE LOOKING AT HIS PHONE.)**

MATT: Ah ha.

LEILA: Oi. Are you listening to a word I am saying?

MATT: What? Yeah, yeah I know, babe.

**(LAILA ROLLS EYES AT HIM. MATT CATCHES IT AS HE LOOKS UP FROM HIS PHONE.)**

MATT: Errr...so you were saying?

**(MATT STARES DUMBLY AT LEILA. SHE GLARES BACK AT HIM.)**

LEILA: I come all the way to your side to hang with you, yeah, and all you do is stuff your face and send snaps to your dumbass mates.

MATT: Ah, Leila. It ain't like that.

LEILA: What's it like then?

MATT: Chantel is having some serious beef with Jacob.

LEILA: (JEALOUSLY) Who the hell are Chantel and Jacob?

MATT: Chantel is in my form. Jacob's cousin, Lauren, has been chatting with her boy.

LEILA: Ha. Says who?

MATT: Everyone, man. It's all over Insta. They were bare DMing and that. I'll add you to this group. Chantel 's been baiting her out for days.

**(LEILA LOOKS AT HER PHONE)**

LEILA: I feel bad for them already. This Chantel is sounding like an absolute psycho.

MATT: Nah, no it's not like that. She just don't stand for anyone taking the piss that is all.

LEILA: (HOLDS HER SCREEN TOWARDS HIM) Matt, you know this is savage. It's not cool.

**(MATT SHRUGS AND LAUGHS. LEILA ROLLS HER EYES GOES BACK TO EATING HER CHICKEN.)**

MATT: Check this out. Reiss has just sent us a video.

**(LEILA TURNS HER PHONE OVER AND REFUSES TO LOOK. EVENTUALLY ALL YOUNG PEOPLE APART FROM LEILA ARE IN THE CHICKEN SHOP ARE WATCHING THE FIGHT ON THEIR PHONES WHILST EATING THEIR FRIED CHICKEN. MATT SHOWS LEILA HIS PHONE. SHE PUSHES IT AWAY.)**

LEILA: I don't want to see it.

**(PAUSE. SHE PULLS IT BACK.)**

Is Jacob in your form too?

MATT: I think he goes to Blackwood.

LEILA: I feel bad for this boy. This Chantel and her mates sound mad.

MATT: (KISSES TEETH) Why you feel bad for him? He's been asking for it.

LEILA: Asking for it? You're an idiot.

**(LEILA STARTS RECEIVING SNAPCHATS FROM HER FRIENDS.)**

LEILA: What the... Joe is there too.

**(THE CHICKEN SHOP IS SILENT AS WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF A FIGHT FROM THE PHONES. LIGHTS MIGHT CHANGE TO SIGNIFY THIS.)**

LEILA: I swear down, that boy man...

MATT: Did you see that slap? Oh peak! I heard the connection.

LEILA: That is so deep. As if he didn't learn the lesson from Jake. Why is he there? Wait til he gets home.

MATT: It's on periscope. Check it, there's hella beef.

**(HE PUTS THE PHONE IN HER FACE SO SHE CAN'T HELP BUT SEE)**

LEILA: Wait. Isn't that the shop near the High Street? Are we going to get caught up in this?

MATT: No way. Deeeeeeeep.

**(MATT'S PHONE PINGS AGAIN.)**

MATT: Shit, have you seen this, that girl just ripped out someone's nose ring. (LAUGHING) Ouch, that looks like it's gotta hurt. Dayyyymmm, have you seen Mitch's story? Some of the boys are involved now. You see that smack, I reckon that would have broken his nose, man. This is madness.

LEILA: Having fun are ya?

MATT: Nah, it is just mad. All this over some Donny. I mean Sam's sound but he looks like a squirrel.

LEILA: What?

MATT: Yeah, straight up. He's all...

**(MATT DOES SQUIRREL GESTURE. LEILA CAN'T HELP BUT SMIRK AT HIS SQUIRREL.)**

LEILA: You need help.

**(MATT'S PHONE PINGS AGAIN.)**

MATT: Reiss's telling us to come down.

LEILA: No way. We ain't getting involved in that shit.

MATT: Don't be a snake.

LEILA: We ain't going anywhere.

**(MATT RECEIVES MORE AND MORE SNAPCHATS. THE CHICKEN SHOP IS A CHORUS OF PEOPLE DESCRIBING THE FIGHT 'BEEF BEEF BEEF'. MATT AND LEILA CROWD ROUND THE PHONE AS THEY WATCH THE FIGHT KICK OFF. A FEW PEOPLE MIGHT LEAVE TO JOIN IN.)**

MATT: Come on Lei...I ain't snaking out on my boys when it's kicking off.

LEILA: You go then...

MATT: (HESITANT) You sure?

**(LEILA SHRUGS. MATT GETS UP TO LEAVE.)**

MATT: Catch ya later then babe?

**(LEILA LOOKS AROUND LIKE SHE'S LOOKING FOR THE 'BABE'.)**

LEILA: What? Nah, I'd don't think so...babe.

MATT: How come?

LEILA: You ain't leaving me alone in a chicken shop with your greasy bucket.

MATT: Oh yeah He picks ups the bucket and makes to go. She shakes her head and tuts in disapproval.

LEILA: If you're going to go, then go. Just don't expect me to wait around for you do be done.

**(BOTH THEIR PHONES ARE GOING OFF CONSTANTLY. LEILA TURNS AWAY FROM MATT AND CHECKS HER MESSAGES.)**

MATT: Leil

LEILA: That boy is getting seriously messed up. I don't want any part of it.

**(MATT GETS HIS PHONE OUT AND CHECKS HIS MESSAGES.)**

MATT: Lei, I gotta go. My boys need me. That's how it is.

LEILA: Is that them talking, or you?

(MORE SOUNDS FROM PHONE. MATT WALKS TOWARDS THE DOOR JUST AS JACOB BURSTS THROUGH THE DOOR COVERED IN BLOOD.)

(2) INT: CHICKEN SHOP  
(JACOB IS HOLDING HIS NOSE WHERE THE BLOOD IS COMING FROM, HE IS CRYING AND LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM MANICALLY. VINCE NOTICES AND IMMEDIATELY RUSHES OVER.)

VINCE: Jesus Christ. What has happened? Are you ok? Shit...You're bleeding all over the shop.

(LEILA STANDS UP AND GOES TOWARDS HIM. VINCE HAS BLOCKED HER WAY THOUGH, SO SHE BACKS OFF. HE REGROUPS WHILST TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF JACOB MUMBLING THROUGH TEARS.)

VINCE: Mate, slow down. I can't understand what you're saying. Let me have a look?

(HE TOUCHES HIS SHOULDER, HE WINCES TO SUGGEST FURTHER INJURIES)

I think I need to call an ambulance?

JACOB: They are still out there. After me.

(YOUNG PEOPLE ALL ENGAGED IN LOOKING AT THEIR PHONES. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE FIGHT. DEVISE A WAY TO REMOVE EVERYONE BAR THE ACTORS OFF STAGE)

MATT: (PICKS UP HIS PHONE) Oh my god. It's him.

(MATT HOLDS HIS PHONE UP TO TAKE PICTURE BUT LEILA BATS IT DOWN)

LEILA: what do you think you're doing?

MATT: What a wassy, running away and that.

LEILA: Listen to yourself. Look at the state of him. He's bleeding. Stop trying to be big man. You're an idiot.

VINCE: What's your name mate?

JACOB: Jacob. Am I safe here?

VINCE: Right, Jacob. Yes, you are safe here because I'm going to lock the doors. No one else is getting in here.

JACOB: (SHAKES HIS HEAD) They are still out there. I saw a blade.

VINCE: A blade? (UNDER BREATH) You kids don't know where to stop. (BACK TO JACOB) Right mate. I'm just going to lock the doors. I'm going to call an ambulance and the police. (LOOKS AT LEILA) Darlin', what's your name?

LEILA: Leila.

JACOB: No, I don't need...

VINCE: You let me be the judge of that. Jacob, Leila here is going to patch up your nose whilst I sort things out.

**(LEILA GOES OVER. JACOB STANDS SHAKING AND CRYING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STAGE WATCHING THE DOOR. MATT STARES IN SILENCE. VINCE GOES OFF.)**

LEILA: Are you alright?

(JACOB NODS BUT DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING.)

LEILA: Jacob...I know who did this.

**(JACOB IS QUIET FOR A MOMENT AND LOOKS AT MATT BEFORE REPLYING. LEILA CHECKS OVER HER SHOULDER AT MATT, WHO IS TEXTING ON HIS PHONE.)**

You don't need to protect them from me. I don't go to his school.

**(JACOB REMAINS SILENT. HE STARTS PATTING AT HIS HAIR AND IS CLEARLY WORRYING ABOUT HOW HE LOOKS. HE STARTS RUMMAGING IN HIS POCKET. GIVES UP.)**

LEILA: How did you get involved with them?

JACOB: I didn't... I didn't mean to do... don't matter now, does it?

**(JACOB PULLS OUT HIS PHONE, WHICH IS SMASHED AND STARTS USING THE TISSUES VINCE HAD BROUGHT TO BLOT HIS FACE.)**

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LEILA: Hang on let me get my bag.

**(LEILA GOES TO GET HER HANDBAG. SHE NUDGES MATT.)**

What are you doing? Get off your phone and come help.

MATT: What? There isn't anything I can do. He's just taken a couple of punches, that's all. He'll be fine.

LEILA: Stop being an idiot.

**(HE WALKS OVER RELUCTANTLY AND MAKES A SMALL GESTURE OF HELP. VINCE RETURNS WITH A WARM DRINK FOR JACOB AND HIS COAT, WHICH HE PUTS OVER HIS SHOULDERS.)**

VINCE: So... Jacob, tell me what's happened. Who is coming after you?

**(JACOB REMAINS SILENT. HE CONTINUES TO CRY. MATT WATCHES AS VINCE AND LEILA TRY TO COMFORT HIM.)**

JACOB: Sorry it's fine. It's fine. I'm sure...

VINCE: Calm down man. Take your time and just tell me what has happened to you. Jacob covers his face with his hands.

LEILA: I think we might know what's happened.

VINCE: Oh yeah?

MATT: (CUTS IN) Nah, we don't. We don't know shit.

VINCE: Don't know shit? Good answer that, while you sit and watch someone bleed. Well, since none of us are going anywhere until the police get here.../

MATT: /What you call the feds for man?

LEILA: Take a wild guess, idiot.

VINCE: We will just wait and see shall we? Those doors are staying locked until I know it's safe outside.

**(HE MAKES A POINT OF PUTTING THE KEY IN HIS UNIFORM. THEY ALL GO SILENT. YOU CAN HEAR THE SOUND OF THEIR PHONES GOING OFF. MATT CHECKS HIS PHONE. THE SOUND OF THE FIGHT CONTINUING IS PLAYED OUT OF HIS PHONE.)**

MATT: Shit there's hella beef, man.

VINCE: What's happening now?

MATT: (LAUGHING) Jake just one-banged some guy. Shit man. It is kicking off out there.

**(JACOB LOOKS VISIBLY AFRAID.)**

VINCE: Don't worry. You are fine in here. No one's getting in.

**(MOVEMENT SIGNIFYING TIME PASSING WHILE THEY CHECK THEIR PHONES.)**

LEILA: I cannot believe this is happening.

JACOB: (WHISPERS) Me either.

MATT: Yeah (GESTURING OVER TO JACOB) whilst I'm snaked up in here with this wassy.

VINCE: I don't know how you get away with speaking like that out there, but in here, in my gaff, it's my rules so watch your mouth.

**(LEILA WALKS OVER TO MATT.)**

LEILA: I knew your mates were idiots but I thought you were different.

MATT: They've got each others' backs that's all. (CHECKING HIS PHONE) I've no idea who half these people are anyway, they ain't my mates. Just a bunch of wastemen.

**(MATT GETS A PHONE CALL FROM ONE OF HIS FRIENDS AT THE FIGHT. HE SEES WHO IT IS AND SHRUGS TO LEILA. SHE SHAKES HER HEAD IN FRUSTRATION. HE MOVES OUT OF EAR SHOT OF THE OTHERS.)**

MATT: Mate, I'm not snaking on you. I'm stuck in a chicken shop. Yeah, That's right. I tell you if I was there, I'd be all over the lads from

Bancroft. For Dom. Can't believe they beat the shit out of him. Is Chantel there? Yeah...well tell her that Jacob pussied out of the fight and ran into here and it's all been locked up 'cause he was bleeding and crying and shit. That's why I'm in here. The owner won't let us out. I'm not lying fam. I'm telling ya. Right.

**(MATT HANGS UP THE PHONE AND GOES OVER TO JACOB WHO IS TALKING QUIETLY TO VINCE WHILE LEILA WATCHES ON. MATT GETS OUT HIS PHONE AND TAKES A SNAPCHAT PICTURE OF JACOB BUT NO ONE NOTICES. HE PULLS AWAY FROM THE GROUP SLIGHTLY TO SEND HIS SNAPCHAT.)**

(3) INT: CHICKEN SHOP

**(VINCE AND LEILA HAVE FINALLY GOT JACOB TO TALK. MATT: IS WATCHING ON FROM A NEARBY TABLE.)**

JACOB: We was coming out of school and they were all waiting for us. She was in the middle of them all.

VINCE: Who is she?

**(JACOB LOOKS AT MATT BEFORE CONTINUING)**

Chantel Dunham.

MATT: Lauren shouldn't have slept with her boyfriend then should she, the sket.

VINCE: Shut up!

**(EVERYONE IS A BIT SURPRISED BY VINCE'S INTENSITY. MATT TURNS AWAY BUT IS STILL IN THE CONVERSATION. JACOB SUDDENLY SNAPS WITH FRUSTRATION.)**

JACOB: She didn't sleep with no one's boy.

MATT: Why ya lying for?

JACOB: I'm not lying.

MATT: Well what about all those DMs she's been sending?

JACOB: She ain't been sending any DMs. He's been DMing her. Why does no one get their facts straight before they start mouthing off?

**(THEY STAND UP TO FACE EACH EACH OTHER. THE OTHERS INTERJECT. JACOB SITS BACK DOWN, CLEARLY TAKEN ABACK AS THE BRUISES START TO HURT.)**

VINCE: (TO MATT) Sit down (PAUSE) I SAID SIT DOWN!  
(BACK TO JACOB) So this wasn't a chance encounter then?

JACOB: No. It's been going on for weeks. Chantel started sending Lauren messages calling her a side-chick and a desperate slut. I saw some of the messages before she deleted the snaps. She called her a tramp, said she was a fucking whale, and sloppy seconds. She tried to ignore it 'cause she had never even met the girl before and she'd never even met her boy in person. It's been going on for weeks though. Messages every day. (LOOKS AT PHONE) She couldn't get away from it even if she wanted to. She's changed cos of it. She doesn't do her hair anymore. It hangs over her face like she's hiding. So eventually I snapped and I messaged Chantel and said I wasn't scared of her and Lauren wasn't anyone's side chick.

LEILA: So she turned up today. Nice.

JACOB: Yeah. To get all up in our face. She started calling Lauren a sket and a hoe and saying I wa' bare ugly and that. And then all her little side chicks started joining in and mouthing off. Suddenly they started threatening us with all sorts.

MATT: She might have dropped it if you had just left it.

JACOB: She wouldn't have done nothing if she didn't have all her little side-hoes with her. But they was all bigging her up so she got gassed. She grabbed Lauren's hair and slammed her face against her knee. I heard the smack. It must have fucking killed but she didn't go down. So some of her girls jumped in and their lads. All of a sudden, I was on the ground and they all started kicking me in the stomach and my back. The rest had their phones out. Then there was

bare people, like they all knew to come. Everyone was suddenly becoming a big man then. Some people started yelling at each other, so before too long people were joining in, the lad who had me let go. I took a chance and ran. Here.

MATT: You pussied out.

VINCE & LEILA: (TO MATT) Shut up!

JACOB: I didn't pussy out. (PAUSE) I lost Lauren in the crowds though. (THEY ALL PAUSE) All this 'cause some guy I don't know started following her on Insta, yeah, but she didn't think anything of it. He started liking and commenting on her pics, yeah. I didn't know who he was, but let's be honest us guys online are always doing that. She told me he'd DMed her and started buss convo. He was alright. Not what she would usually go for but she ain't chatting to no one at the moment so i guess she thought, why not? They didn't even chat that much. I can't really remember what was said but then all of a sudden I was added to this group and everyone was chatting shit about Lauren, saying she'd shagged this lad that she'd never even met. Calling her a hoe. She was tagged in a bate out page of some naked girl. I didn't even know who she was and everyone thought it was Lauren. Then this Chantel who she'd never met starts DMing me calling her all sorts of shit.

**(LEILA AND MATT LOOK AT EACH OTHER DURING THIS. SHE IS SEEING HIM IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT. HE KNOWS IT AND HE DOESN'T LIKE IT, SO DISTRACTS HIMSELF WITH HIS PHONE.)**

MATT: So Chantel just messaged Lauren out of the blue?

JACOB: Yeah, she ain't done nothing.

MATT: You can't say she ain't done anyfing. What is that emoji she posted underneath his selfie.

JACOB: What you on? They were just talking and she liked the picture, what's up with that? That's just being friendly.

MATT: Are you dumb? That emoji isn't friendly, that is straight up flirting.

JACOB: What, no it ain't?

MATT: Yeah, you can't post that on someone's Insta if you ain't trying to flirt with them.

JACOB: Ah whatever bruv... That's nothing.

MATT: That ain't nothing and you know it. Lucky you didn't put the purple devil or Chantel would have ripped her eyes out.

**(PUTS UP HIS FINGERS INTO DEVIL HORNS AND WINKS. HE'S THE FLIRTY THAT ONE.)**

VINCE: This is the most ridiculous conversation I've ever heard.

MATT: Nah, it's true. You can't just be posting emojis on random guys' Instas and not expect shit to get real.

LEILA: OMG are you for real? Do you know how stupid that sounds? There is no way a bad use of an emoji means someone deserves all this. God, Matt. When I met you, I thought you were a bit different to all the other lads - that this shit wouldn't touch you. That you could talk about bigger stuff like art and stuff.

**(VINCE CAN'T HELP BUT LIKE LEILA AT THIS MOMENT. JACOB CONTINUES TO CRY. MATT LOOKS PERPLEXED LIKE HE KNOWS SHE HAS A POINT BUT THEN THEY ARE DISTRACTED BY THEIR PHONES. MOMENT SIGNIFYING A PASSAGE OF TIME)**

MATT: Sorry to disappoint you.

**(PASSAGE OF TIME)**

**(4) INT: CHICKEN SHOP**  
**(SILENCE AS THE CHARACTERS ARE ALL LOST IN THEIR OWN THOUGHTS)**

MATT: Oi, mate, can I get a coke?

VINCE: You gonna pay for it?

MATT: I'm all outta pea's. Spent it all on that bargain bucket I never got to eat.

LEILA: No one's stopping you.

MATT: I aint eating that cold chicken. I'll probably get salmonella.

LEILA: Oooo that's a big word for you.

MATT: Coming from the girl who can't spell Wednesday.

LEILA: Shut up and eat your chicken.

**(JACOB IS SITTING QUIETLY.)**

VINCE: You should text your parents to tell them where you are. You've been here for a while already.

**(MATT CONTEMPLATES THE IDEA. JACOB SHRUGS)**

LEILA: Nah, my mum won't be home for ages.

VINCE: She work late then?

LEILA: Yeah. She never stops...

**(VINCE GOES TO SAY SOMETHING BUT STOPS HIMSELF.)**

MATT: Seriously mate, I am dying here...

**(VINCE GOES TO SAY SOMETHING BUT STOPS HIMSELF.)**

VINCE: Fine. Anyone else thirsty? The others nod.

**(HE GOES TO THE BACK OF THE COUNTER AND HANDS OUT COKES. HE DISAPPEARS OUT THE BACK. MATT REPLAYS A CLIP FROM THE FIGHT. THIS IRRITATES LEILA. SHE MOVES TO SIT BY JACOB. THIS IRRITATES MATT.)**

LEILA: (TO JACOB) So, where do you go to school then?

JACOB: Blackwood.

**(LEILA NODS)**

JACOB: You know it?

LEILA: Yeah, some of my brothers go there.

JACOB: What they called?

LEILA: Tom, Nick and Jordan...Hurst.

JACOB: Yeah, yeah. I know them. Ain't there like fifty of you lot?

LEILA: (LOOKS UNIMPRESSED) Nine.

JACOB: Jesus. I bet Christmas is mad.

LEILA: Ha. You have no idea.

JACOB: How many brothers do you have then?

LEILA: Eight. I'm the only girl.

JACOB: No way. I feel for any boys you bring round for dinner.

**(LEILA SMILES BRIEFLY.)**

You get on with them?

LEILA: Yeah, apart from one.

JACOB: How come?

**(LEILA SHRUGS BUT DOESN'T RESPOND. THEY FALL INTO SILENCE. JACOB RECEIVES A SNAPCHAT. HE LOOKS AT IT AND PUTS THE PHONE DOWN. LEILA PICKS IT UP BEFORE HE CAN STOP HER.)**

LEILA: Are you alright?

JACOB: Yeah... Not really. I'm not sure.

**JACOB 'S FACE IS EXPRESSIONLESS. HE DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING. LEILA: LOOKS AT JACOB SYMPATHETICALLY.**

LEILA: She'll be ok.

JACOB: I shouldn't have left, but it all went mad. People just kept getting involved and I couldn't see her anymore in the crowd...

LEILA: Don't blame yourself for that. This fight...it's totally out of hand. This isn't

about an emoji anymore. People just can't help themselves, can they? When did violating become the thing to do? I can't stand it. I mean OMG it's an emoji, it doesn't mean anything, but this (HOLDS UP HER PHONE) stuff is serious. It's not 'beef', it's bullying. You didn't do anything wrong. Chantel is beyond petty. She's probably just jealous because her boy thinks Lauren is prettier than her. Don't open any chats from her, block her, ignore them, and prove them wrong! Screen shot anything in future, so you have proof... This is not your fault!

**(MATT SNIGGERS AT HIS SCREEN.)**

LEILA: Can you just turn that off?

MATT: I'm watching what's going on.

LEILA: You care so much about what the boys think. It's embarrassing.

**(MATT DOESN'T REPLY, HE CONTINUES LOOKING AT HIS PHONE.)**

LEILA: I don't know why you are trying to be one of them; they're all dickheads anyway.

**(MATT LOOKS UP.)**

MATT: You don't even know them, so why you chatting shit?

LEILA: I know that you are better than this.

MATT: This is me, Leila. If you don't like it you know what to do...

LEILA: God. You are such an asshole.

**(LEILA GLARES AT MATT AND THEN STORMS OFF TO SIT AT ANOTHER TABLE. SHE GETS HER PHONE OUT AND STARTS TEXTING SILENTLY.)**

(5) INT: CHICKEN SHOP

**(MATT'S PHONE GOES OFF. HE READS THE MESSAGE.)**

MATT: You need to let me out.

VINCE: I don't think so.

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MATT: You can't keep me here against my will.

VINCE: Tell you what. Call the police. Do me a favour.

MATT: My boys need me. I'm no pussy. I need to get out. Shit is getting real.

VINCE: (TO MATT) Shit is getting real. It is already real. There are young people knocking each other to pieces out there and for what? What do your boys really need you for?

**(MATT CONTINUES LOOKING TOWARDS THE EXIT WHERE HIS FRIENDS ARE.)**

MATT: I'm no pussy-o. I need to be with my boys.

VINCE: I said no.

LEILA: Stay where you are Matt.

**(SHE STANDS IN HIS PATH)**

MATT: Move out of my way.

LEILA: No chance.

MATT: Move out of my way.

LEILA: I'm not scared of you.

MATT: The opps from Bancroft have turned up. This ain't no joke.

VINCE: Not really a strong case to open the door is it.

MATT: I need to be with my boys. That's how this shit works.

VINCE: I'm not opening the door, so sit down.

MATT: You have to let me out.

LEILA: Why? What are you going to do?

MATT: Move out of my way.

LEILA: No.

MATT: Leila, I swear I will...

LEILA: What Matt? What? What are you going to do? Go to war with the Bancroft boys? How's that going to end Matt? Like my brother?

MATT: Just stop...

LEILA: No. I've told you all about what it's like at our house Matt. I put my heart on my sleeve over Whatsapp.

MATT: Stop...

LEILA: No. I won't stop 'cause I don't want your mum to be the next one. You told me how much she means to you. So, I don't want your mum to be visiting you in prison because you thought you needed to be with your boys. I don't want her to be the one crying at night after she's visited you in prison. Crying and telling us that you didn't mean to, it wasn't your fault, but somehow you couldn't help shanking up some Bancroft boy. Saying she doesn't understand because you were bought you up better than that. Crying at night wondering what she did wrong.

**(MATT CAN'T SPEAK BUT HIS ANGER/TORMENT/AGGRESSION IS BUILDING UP PHYSICALLY.)**

OMG. Do you know what it's like to live with the guilt even though you didn't do it? Do you know what it's like to know your brother took another person's life? Do you know what it's like to watch a mother and a father cry their eyes out as they listen to the recount of how your brother killed their son? Do you? No and I won't let you.

**(VINCE AND JACOB TRY TO INTERJECT BUT THEY ARE LOST FOR WORDS.)**

You are better than that Matt. You are better than that. So sit down. Please.

MATT: Just let me out. I need to be with my boys.

**(HE GOES TOWARDS HER. WE THINK HE MIGHT PUSH HER OUT OF THE WAY.)**

**BOUNCE THEATRE**

JACOB: Shit. The fight is coming this way. They are heading towards the shop.

**(EVERYONE'S ATTENTION IS REFOCUSED.)**

LEILA: How would they even know anyone was in here?

**(THEY ALL GO SILENT AND LOOK AT MATT.)**

JACOB: Did you tell your mates that I was in here?

MATT: It might have slipped out?

VINCE: Why the hell would you do that?

LEILA: What is wrong with you?

MATT: What was I supposed to do? The boys were saying I was a snake and I didn't have their backs so I had to tell them why.../

LEILA: /The boys... All you talk about are the fucking boys.

JACOB: /What did I do to you?

VINCE: /Why would you do that?

MATT: You wouldn't get it. None of you would get it.../

LEILA: /Don't worry. I get it. I should never come here. You and me, we're done.

**(SHE IS UPSET. JACOB COMFORTS HER. BEING DUMPED ADDS TO MATT'S TORMENT.)**

VINCE: What is it with you young people today?

**(HE PICKS UP HIS PHONE AND DIALS WHILST WALKING OFF TO THE ENTRANCE)**

(OFF STAGE) Hello, yes, I have reports that this fight is coming to my shop.

**(HE LEAVES THE STAGE. MATT SLAMS DOWN ONTO A TABLE, HIDING HIS FACE.)**

LEILA: I can't believe you turned out like all the others.

MATT: Just stop talking.

JACOB: I messed this up so bad. I thought I could handle it, when Lauren told me, I just wanted to help it stop. I thought they'd give up but it's all spiralled out of control. It was just on our phones but this it's just... How am I going to explain it to my parents?

**(VINCE REAPPEARS.)**

VINCE: The police are on their way.

MATT: (LOOKS UP) Why do you keep calling the feds man?

**(VINCE LOSES HIS TEMPER WITH MATT)**

VINCE: Because I didn't ask for this. All I wanted to do today is fry some poultry and go home. Who gives you the right to risk destroying my shop? My livelihood. The thing that keeps a roof over my head and food in my children's mouths. Who made you capable of deciding that he (LOOKS AT JACOB) has done something so awful that is worth that? You've seen the state of him and still you'd risk more violence. Why? 'Cause you're all creating turf wars out there. Real violence over the invisible lines of social media.

MATT: I swear down, just let me out.

VINCE: No. You're not going anywhere. I don't understand where's the passion to want something more, something better, something different... No, you're not leaving this shop. For our sake and mostly for yours... You're just a boy, a boy with his whole future ahead of him. Going out there isn't going to make you a man. It'll make you a corpse. Your girlfriend is right. So sit down.

**(SMALL PAUSE)**

**(MATT RUNS AT VINCE TO GET HIS KEYS. VINCE DEFENDS HIMSELF BUT WITHOUT RETALIATION. MATT STUMBLES BACK AND PUNCHES THE WALL AND HURTS HIS HAND. AS HE DOES SO, SOMETHING DROPS OUT OF HIS POCKET.)**

MATT: Fuck.

**(WE SEE THE BLADE. EVERYONE IS SILENT FOR A MOMENT. VINCE SLOWLY MOVES FORWARD.)**

VINCE: You two, move to the back of the shop.

**(THEY ARE STILL)**

(Forcefully) I said move to the back!

**(THEY RETREAT TO THE BACK OF THE SHOP AS VINCE POINTS TO THE KNIFE.)**

Well, you've just stepped it up a notch son. That changes everything. No more gently does it. What the hell do you think you are playing at? Carrying a knife?! Who do you think you are?

**(MATT IS SILENT. VINCE STARTS TO TALK AND MOMENTARILY BECOMES QUITE SCARY AS HE CONFRONTS MATT.)**

I said who do you think you are? A big man yeah? Cause this is what a man is, right? Violent and aggressive, yeah? A man carries a knife and a blade and tears up another because of the way he looked at your girl, because of his postcode, his phone, or whatever makes you feel better about yourself... whatever gives you some misguided sense of fucking honour... Come on then Matt, be a man, let's have it. Be a man, tear me down. Show me what you're made of son. Come on then. Come on.

**(MATT IS STILL SILENT.)**

I am so sick of kids like you because that's what you are, a kid. You're 15 years old. You're all barely shaving and you think you know enough about life to risk ending it. I am so sick of picking up the paper and reading about another young lad who never had the chance to become a man. I am so sick of watching the old men in this area, men with real honour who fought only to protect their fucking country from a dictator huddle up in my shop for a bit of company in the afternoon and be terrified, terrified of being around in the afternoon when school kicks out. I don't

understand it. What if he (POINTS TO JACOB) had been your brother? Or your cousin? What then? You're just a kid and you know what I don't even mean that in a patronising way, it's just the truth... you haven't lived yet. You've your whole life ahead of you yet son. (CALMS DOWN) I mean what would your dad say?

MATT: Nothing. My dad is dead.

**(VINCE IS THROWN)**

VINCE: Shit. I'm sorry.

MATT: You weren't to know.

LEILA: Doesn't excuse the fact you're carrying a knife. You're a snakey piece of...

MATT: God. It's all so easy and black and white for you isn't Leila? I know you've had it hard but I tell you what, this (POINTS TO KNIFE) doesn't end 'cause your brother went down.

VINCE: Jacob, take her out the back.

LEILA: No, I want to...

JACOB: Come on, Leila, let's just go for a moment and calm this down.

**(HE TAKES HER OUT TO THE BACK.)**

VINCE: You better start talking. Fast.

**(MATT LOOKS AT HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME.)**

MATT: I'll tell you why I was carrying a blade, yeah?! Mostly for protection. I live on an estate and pretty much everyone I know carries one. I carry one because I see violence at every corner. I see it on our estate. I see it on our road. I see it in my house when my stepdad slaps my mum. I carry one because that's what people like me do. People like me should never be in an art gallery. I'm too road. People like me don't get to go to college and do art. Art...it isn't for real men. It's for poofs and I may as well turn it on myself if anyone at home thought I was a poof. I'm not, by the way, but still, try explaining that

to a man whose breath still reeks of the beer he drank the night before and has selective hearing to justify his fist against the back of your mum's head when she's trying to defend your paintings. Try facing up that man when he laughs in your face and tells you he wasn't looking for a stepson and he's not having one that wants to do paintings all day. Try living in my fucking world one day, when you know you so badly want to leave it, but you don't know how to escape it. So, all you can do is go out on the streets, 'cause you want to escape home and the boys they draw you in. They offer you a safe place to be, they have your back and for a while you actually love it because it has been a long time since you ever felt anyone actually gave a shit about you. So you carry on and you do more things and you get sucked in to it until you don't know who you are anymore. And you can't get out, every time you try'n leave they drag you back in. You just about remember that yeah, you're a kid, you're 15 and your biggest worry should be your GCSEs but it's not 'cause you're in above your neck and you don't know how to get out of it. The one person that would have pulled you out went and died on ya. Then your mum remarries and pisses on the ashes of any happy memories you just about cling onto because she replaces him with someone so brutal the boys look kind. I miss my dad so fucking much. It's this pain in my gut that won't go away. He used to draw, his van was full of doodles. He used to let me graff it. He still managed to be a proper man though, he was a construction worker... everyone loved my Dad. Cancer took him though, didn't it? Miserable fucking cancer made him all but disappear by the end. It was like it stole my dad, he shrunk before my eyes and one day he was gone. All that was left was this pain in my gut. No one told me what to do with it and it became this hard knot inside me. I don't know how to undo it, it's the only thing that keeps me going some days...

**(VINCE IS STUNNED. MATT EVENTUALLY STOPS AND CLAMS UP, MORTIFIED BY HIS REVELATION. THERE IS AN AWKWARD SILENCE. VINCE GOES TO GET THEM BOTH A DRINK. THEY OPEN THEIR CANS AND SIT FOR A WHILE.)**

MATT: I would never have used it you know.

VINCE: I know.

MATT: You have to believe me.

VINCE: I do.

MATT: Are you going to call the police?

VINCE: About this? No. Not if you put it in the bin behind the counter.

MATT: Why are you being decent to me?

VINCE: Because I think you probably deserve someone to be...

**(HE STANDS AND PUTS THE KNIFE IN THE BIN)**

MATT: What about the others?

VINCE: We'll deal with them later.

**(PAUSE)**

MATT: I'm lost. I don't know what to do now.

VINCE: What you've been through... Well, I can't sugar coat that. It's more than anyone should and you're only 15... But you've started talking, Matt, and that's good. That's strength right there. That's being a man, being strong enough to admit your feelings you know.

MATT: Do you?

VINCE: All the time.

MATT: Really?

VINCE: Ha. I'm not ashamed to admit my feelings all the bloody time.

**(SILENCE)**

I know what it feels like to lose someone you love. (BRIEF PAUSE) I lost my mum when I was seven. An old guy lost control of his car after she'd dropped me off at school. She died instantly. No pain, my dad said. It felt like

**BOUNCE THEATRE**

the pain was all mine though. I thought it was all my fault because I had made us late for school. If I had woken up when she shouted for me, then she wouldn't have been there when he turned the corner. (PAUSE) I was really angry for such a long time. I picked fights. I did things I shouldn't. I took it all out on my dad. It took years of walking through my front door and accepting she wasn't going to be there before I realised none of it was my fault. One day, I realised I couldn't carry on. I went into school and told my form tutor and it was the best decision I ever made. I hated school for so long, but that day, I understood it... That day they weren't the people that rammed maths down my throat as if my entire life depended on it. That day they were the people that really cared about me. They called me dad in and they let me cry. As soon as I started, it was like something finally broke. (PAUSE) I never looked back. I put my life back into my own hands. I started to get fit, take better care of myself. Joined a boxing club. I met a nice girl and we had a baby, even though we were barely out of our teens. I took any job I could to make ends meet. I wanted life to be good for my boy. I met this guy Haviz stacking shelves in the supermarket and I helped him with his English. Years later, we randomly ran into each other. He invited me to work in his shop and eventually I took a franchise. I became chicken man if you will... Pays bloody well too.

**(THERE IS A FLICKER OF A SMILE BETWEEN THEM)**

MATT: I can't escape home though can I? I'm just a kid...

VINCE: Yes you can, if you tell the right people.

MATT: I can't leave my mum.

VINCE: She can too. If she tells the right people.

MATT: Yeah, I guess.

VINCE: You don't have to decide right now.

MATT: (QUIETLY) I want to go. I want to do art.

VINCE: Then let me help.

**(MATT SITS SILENTLY. THE OTHER TWO RUN IN.)**

VINCE: I thought I told you to stay out the back.

JACOB: We know but the thing is, the fight, it's over.

LEILA: The police arrived before they could get this far.

JACOB: We're gonna be ok, you can unlock the door, it's Lauren, she's ok, she made a run for it too, she's home, she's told her mum, they want to know if I'm ok.

LEILA: Mum... (SHE STARTS TO TEXT BACK) She's worried sick we've caught up in this. I'm going home (LOOKS AT MATT) I'm sorry I ever came to your side.

MATT: Leila, Leila, I thought you were different. I'm so tired of people breaking my trust.

VINCE: Just give him a chance Leila...

**(MATT'S PHONE PINGS)**

LEILA: Don't tell me it's the boys...

**(MATT PUTS HIS PHONE DOWN AND TURNS IT OVER. EVERYONE IS SURPRISED.)**

MATT: It starts now, right?

VINCE: Yes son, it starts now.

**(MATT TURNS TO THE OTHERS.)**

MATT: I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry. I never would have used it.

(SILENCE)

JACOB: It's ok.

LEILA: Ok? How is it ok?

JACOB: Cause we all make mistakes. Stuff gets out of control... I don't know, I just believe him when he says he wouldn't use it.

**BOUNCE THEATRE**

MATT: Thanks man. Leila, I'm sorry. I'm not your brother, you know. All those things I said on Whatsapp, I meant them. I just don't know how to be them...

VINCE: Yet. You will get there.

(LONG SILENCE)

LEILA: It's ok. You know... I believe you.

(Silence)

LEILA: We're still over though.

MATT: I know and that's cool.

**(SILENCE)**

LEILA: We can hang out though, maybe, as mates.

MATT: That'd be cool. I have a feelin' I'm going to need some mates around me.

**(SILENCE. JACOB AND LEILA MOVE TO MATT.)**

VINCE: I'm going to unlock the doors. Police will be here any minute. They'll want statements from you. You'll tell them what is going on because that's the right thing to do.

**(MATT LOOKS DOWN.)**

Then you'll go home.

**(THEY ALL FREEZE. YOU'LL GO HOME AND YOU ALL WILL BE OK.)**

LEILA: How do you know that?

VINCE: Like I said, all I wanted to do was get up and fry some chicken today and go home. Stuck in here with you, well, that wasn't on my to do list. Yet, I'll tell you something I've learnt. Each of you, you are good kids deep down. You've been hurt in different ways and there's nothing wrong in how any of you are feeling right now... Scared, angry... I don't blame you. You've learnt too soon life isn't easy but, and this is a big but, you have to believe

**BOUNCE THEATRE**

that there are people you will be able to trust when you leave here. People who will have your best interests at heart. It might take time but it will happen. Don't give in now. Leila, be his mate. He's right, he's going to bloody need it and you need to believe you can trust people, otherwise you're going to grow up really lonely. All of you, you know, can come back in here anytime... Getting older, you realise life... it can be downright ugly sometimes but also bloody beautiful, you just have to find the courage to believe that.

**(PAUSES. CATCHES HIMSELF.)**

Christ, I've been locked in here too long or I'm really not afraid to share my feelings...

**(MATT AND HE LAUGH)**

JACOB: Hey, I realised... I never said thanks. You saved me earlier by locking the doors you know. Thanks man. You're kinda a hero.

MATT: He's Chicken man.

**(THEY ALL LAUGH. VINCE LEAVES TO OPEN THE DOORS.)**

JACOB: What now?

MATT: We wait.

**(BLACKOUT)**