**RED**

**Characters:**

**Joe** (younger man) A deeply disturbed young man, with a history of violence.

**Mother** (older woman) Tries to be supportive but is wary of her unpredictable son,

feels like she’s walking on eggshells when with her son, Joe. Worn down by the stress of living with his behaviour. Age up for this role. Regional accent.

***Joe sits at a table, a carrier bag in front of him.  He stares into space and drums his fingers on the table in front of him.***  ***A door slams.  Enter Joe’s mother.***

**MOTHER:** Oh!  Hello love.  I didn’t think you’d be back for a while yet.  You alright?

***(Joe closes his eyes again, still drumming his fingers and doesn’t reply.)***

**MOTHER:** I’m going to make a cup of tea.  Do you want one?

***(Joe, eyes, still closed, shakes his head slowly.)***

**MOTHER:** That number 22 bus was late again.  That’s every day this week now.

***(He opens his eyes and looks at her.  Smiles slowly.)***

**MOTHER:** ***(Beat).*** What’s wrong love?  I can see there’s something wrong.  Talk to me.  You’re back early.  I thought you’d still be with Beth?

**JOE:** You might as well know, we’re not together anymore.  We argued.

**MOTHER:** ***(concern in her voice)*** You didn’t lose your temper Joe, did you?

**JOE:** You always think the worst of me.  I’m not like that anymore.  You just need to give me a chance.

**MOTHER:** So, you didn’t…didn’t lose your temper.

**JOE:**  I promise you I didn’t.

**MOTHER:** Well, everyone argues, don’t they?  You’ll make it up.  I’m sure you will.  She’s lovely Beth.

**JOE:** She is.  But we can’t be together anymore.  We want different things.

**MOTHER:** Do you want to say what the argument is about?  Most things can be fixed.  If you’ve said things you didn’t mean, well, we all do that don’t we?  It’s normal.

**JOE:** ***(laughs)*** You think I might be normal now then?

**MOTHER:** You know what I mean.  Anyway, I hope you sort it.  What’s in the bag then?

**JOE:** Few bits.

**MOTHER:** Like what?

**JOE:** Peanuts.  Peanuts and stuff.

**MOTHER:** Right.

**JOE:** Beth told me today that she was pregnant.

**MOTHER:** What?

**JOE:** Yeah.

**MOTHER:** God. I don’t know what to say.

**JOE:** She did.  Beth knew what to say.

**MOTHER:** What did she say love?

**JOE:** She was so cold.  Very “matter of fact” you know?  How can you be so cold when you’ve got a warm life growing inside of you?

**MOTHER:** What did she say?

**JOE:** She said…  Beth said ,that she wasn’t keeping the baby.

**MOTHER:** Oh.

**JOE:** It’s my baby.  I want to love my baby.

**MOTHER:** Maybe it’s not the right time for her.  She’s still young.  She’ll want to do things won’t she.  Travel and things.  With you I mean.  There’s so much for you both to do before you settle down with babies.  That’s probably why she said that.

**JOE:** That’s not what she said.  She said…  Beth said, that she didn’t want me around a baby right now.  That she didn’t think the baby would be safe.  That it was too soon.

**MOTHER:** She was trying to be honest I suppose.  But you’re a different person now Joe.

**JOE:** When will people believe that?  How long do I have to wait before people trust me again and believe that I’ve changed?  Because you don’t.  My own mother.

**MOTHER:** I do.  I see the difference in you.  Every day I see it.

**JOE:** And yet, the first thing you asked me when I said we’d argued, was if I’d lost my temper.