**RED**

**Characters:**

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

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

***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.