

THERE WERE 7 OF US

by ANDREW SHAKESHAFT

THE BOYS

JIMMY
DANIEL
MAX
TOM
SIMON

THE GIRLS

ERIN
CLARKY

For this play, there is no room for doubling. Each of the characters are clearly defined and add some characteristic to the general mix.

Jimmy is the organiser and the worrier, a basically nice guy.

Daniel appears cool and a little detached. He comes from a wealthy background, can be a little patronising.

Max is the butt of many jokes. He's not the brightest and should be physically bigger than the rest.

Tom is the jester of the group - irritating, quick-witted, his joking is his protection against hurt.

Simon is hard to read, the mystery man, a serial suicide attempter who has missed much of his schooling because of it.

Erin is quick, bright, popular with the boys. She can be bitchy and provocative in what she says and does.

Clarky is calmer, plainer and a good sidekick for Erin. A basically nice practical girl.

THE PLOT

Jimmy is reluctant to leave school without a last get-together with his closest mates, so he has booked a caravan/ mobile home near the sea for the weekend and invited his friends. He has also invited Simon, who no one really knows, except as a frequent absentee from school with a troubled life and many suicide attempts. Everything goes well - they go clubbing, talk, tease Max, and begin to like Simon. The first part ends with Simon putting on his favourite CD and the others, very drunk, responding with glee.

Then we jump forward a year and Jimmy has booked a caravan again at the same site. His friends arrive in dribs and drabs and it becomes clear that they have Simon's ashes with them and his mother's permission to scatter them there, where he was apparently - from a phone call he made to her from the site - happier than she'd ever known him. All have been traumatised by the event - which is only shown at the end, as a flashback. Simon poured fuel over himself and set himself alight as his favourite CD track was playing. Before we witness that event, we see how the group have progressed in the intervening year. Tom cannot hold down a job. Max has been in trouble with the police, for violence. Clarky is engaged to Daniel, but it will be a marriage of convenience rather than love. Erin has become even more hard-nosed and her relationships with men don't seem to work. Jimmy can't let go of his guilt about Simon. The fun reunion has left them all with a grim legacy.

Though the subject is serious, the whole script is leavened with the bubbly humour of the young people involved.

The play runs for approximately one hour fifteen minutes. It could easily be cut to examinable length. Andrew Shakeshaft is an award-winning playwright and many of his plays have been professionally performed.

EXTRACT ONE

Lights come up on the empty interior of a caravan. It is mid-afternoon. There is a welcome booklet on the table, all surfaces are clean and the generic nature of the interior is obvious. There is the sound of a group of lads outside.

JIMMY Put the key in.
DANIEL It is in.
MAX Give it a kick.
DANIEL You give it a kick.

The door is kicked.

JIMMY Oi! He was joking!
TOM Chill out! He can't help being thick.
MAX I'm not thick!
TOM No?

The door opens. All enter.

DANIEL There you go.
TOM You're just clever in different ways ... like in a thick way.
MAX Say it again and I'll throw you through that window.
TOM Very intellectual of you. That's how Freud won a lot of his arguments.
JIMMY Can you stop being a dick to him?
MAX Yeah.
DANIEL **looking around the caravan** Is this it?
TOM No, there's a swimming pool and gym complex out the back.
DANIEL Really?
JIMMY Look, can you stop that!
DANIEL Stop what?
JIMMY That!
TOM What? What's he doing? Why's the angry man shouting, mummy?
JIMMY Sand!
MAX Yeah, there is.
JIMMY We don't want it in the van ... please?
TOM Okay ... chill out ...
JIMMY I'll be the one who ends up clearing it ... that's all ...
DANIEL Okay.

Daniel and Tom exchange a look.

MAX No one else says I'm thick.
TOM Not to your face, obviously, that would be mean ...
JIMMY Can you shut up?

All freeze. Jimmy walks over to the table and picks up the welcome booklet.

JIMMY **reading** Welcome to the Sunshine Holiday Park. ... Please can we remind
adults are guests to respect those around you, and that groups of young
not allowed on site ...
[**To audience.**] Maybe they had a point ... maybe we shouldn't have
bothered. Done our exams, got drunk, promised to stay in touch then
pissed off for good, properly, clean break. But I couldn't ... not sure
why ... I didn't really know any of them. Not properly, just a group of
people you get thrown in with cos that's where you were born, that's the
school you go to, that's the class you're in.

All unfreeze. Daniel exits upstage to look at the bedrooms.

TOM **looking in the cupboard** Is there no food?

JIMMY We haven't bought it yet.

MAX What do we eat then?

TOM Each other ... it's like a disaster movie where the plane comes down in the mountains and we have nothing to survive with but a camp stove and a small bottle of ketchup.

MAX I don't really like ketchup. Is there brown sauce?

Tom starts head butting the table at Max's stupidity.

MAX What?

TOM This table is about as thick as you ... have a chat with it, tell me if it makes sense.

DANIEL **re-entering** Jimmy?

JIMMY Yeah?

DANIEL Where're the other rooms?

JIMMY What other rooms?

DANIEL There're three bedrooms and there's four of us.

JIMMY And?

DANIEL I'm not sharing.

JIMMY Yeah, you are. We all are.

TOM Three bedrooms, four people...

JIMMY Seven people.

TOM Seven? You start counting, Max, see if you come up with seven.

MAX D'you want me to rip your face off?

TOM Are you chatting me up?

JIMMY Stop! [**To Tom.**] You, leave him alone, you - no one wants their face ripped off, not for the entirety of this holiday. And there are three coming, ok?

more

TOM Who?

JIMMY Erin.

TOM Whooo! Girls! This'll be like Ibiza ... only in South Wales. [**Chant.**] Barry Island!

JIMMY Clarky.

Groan from Tom and Daniel.

MAX She's all right.

TOM She's dull.

JIMMY Erin wouldn't come unless Clarky came.

DANIEL Shotgun Erin!

TOM Not fair.

JIMMY You can't shotgun a girl.

DANIEL Why not?

TOM Fair point ... Shotgun Clarky.

JIMMY You don't like Clarky, you said she's dull.

TOM Yeah, but if I don't have her, I'm left with one of you two ... and if I have to get off with Max that's really going to screw up my holiday.

MAX I'm a good kisser.

Tom looks at him. A beat. They all laugh.

MAX What?

DANIEL You want to kiss, Tom?

MAX No ... Errrrggghhh! ... Piss off!

TOM Oi! I'm right here ... I've got feelings you know.

All freeze.

JIMMY It cost four hundred quid ... between seven of us ... one week on the Welsh coast, delaying that moment when we all had to go out into the real world and find jobs or try for a college course. One last moment to try and make a connection... One day in the future we'd meet up again, all successful, all able to swap stories about how it used to be... I'm just trying to create a 'how it used to be.'

All unfreeze.

TOM But if you're really good ... maybe we *could* share? Jimmy, please can I share with Max - I'm getting a really good feeling about this.

MAX Don't touch me!

TOM Close your eyes - I'll be gentle.

Daniel laughs.

JIMMY Leave him alone.

TOM Aww ... but he's so cute!

Max stands quickly and hits Tom across the face. Tom staggers backward slightly and looks at Max. Pause.

JIMMY Leave him alone, okay? ... Tom?

TOM Yeah, okay. Sorry.

JIMMY Max?

MAX **looking at Jimmy** Yeah?

JIMMY Leave him alone.

MAX Yeah. Okay.

Pause. Tom sits down far away from Max. Max looks at his fist.

DANIEL Who's the seventh then?

JIMMY Seventh what?

DANIEL Four here - Erin and Clarky ... and?

JIMMY He's getting the shopping.

DANIEL Who is?

TOM It's not Spence, is it?

DANIEL No - please, no.

MAX I like Spence.

TOM You would ...

Max raises a fist. Tom holds his hands up in apology.

TOM **impression of a geek** 'I just wanted to say to all of you that these maths lessons are very valuable to me ...'

DANIEL **laughing** 'Valuable.'

TOM 'And your attempts at humour are very upsetting, particularly the comments about my hamster and the sexual suggestions you are making...'

JIMMY He didn't say that!

TOM No. He threatened me with a compass though. Told me he'd de-eyeball me...

DANIEL De-eyeball?

TOM Yeah. [**Mimes a stabbing motion as if with a compass.**] 'It is a word

... and I'll do it. My Dad's a marine ...'
JIMMY Was he?
TOM Don't know - might have been - never saw him...
MAX Spence is all right...
TOM He's a tool.
DANIEL He's a spanner.
TOM A really annoying spanner - who likes hamsters.
MAX He's all right.
TOM Not as bad as Wrighty, though...
DANIEL Oh God, no! Please tell me it's not Wrighty...
MAX Wrighty's ...
TOM What?
MAX *smiling* He's a hammer.

Beat.

TOM What?
MAX A hammer... It's like a spanner. Only bigger.
TOM No, it isn't... How ... ? You really haven't got the hang of this, have you?
MAX He's a power drill! [*He laughs.*]
TOM Stop it.

Daniel laughs. There's a knock at the door. They all pause.

JIMMY Come in.

Nothing happens.

JIMMY Come in!

There's another knock.

TOM That's all we need. Deaf Jehovah's witnesses.

Jimmy goes to the door.

TOM *as if deaf-signing* I ... love ... Jesus ...
DANIEL Is there anything you won't take the piss out of?
TOM Almost nothing.

Jimmy opens the door. Simon enters with a rucksack.

SIMON Sorry. Didn't know if this was the right one.
JIMMY No, you're all right. Come in.

Simon enters nervously...

EXTRACT TWO

TOM When did you get here?
ERIN Just now. Big night, was it?
TOM Yeah. I'm going back to bed - not ready for this. Hopefully I'll wake up and it'll all be a bad dream.

Erin blows him a kiss as he exits. Clarky and Erin both smile.

CLARKY Didn't you two used to...?
ERIN Yep, for about a month. Then I dumped him.
CLARKY Why? He's quite cute.
ERIN He was a bit heavy, too early - started talking about what our kids would look like.
CLARKY No!
ERIN And he couldn't kiss.
CLARKY Couldn't?
ERIN *miming* All tongue and hands.
CLARKY Errghh!
ERIN I tried teaching him, but he was convinced he was doing really well!

They smile. Simon enters from outside with a carrier bag of shopping. Both girls stop.

SIMON Hiya.

Erin turns to Clarky and mouths 'Who's that?'. Clarky shrugs. Simon starts to unload his shopping onto the top. Erin goes over to him.

ERIN Is there any proper food?
SIMON You want some?
ERIN You cooking?
SIMON Yeah, why not?
ERIN Cool. Clarky, what d'you want?
CLARKY I'm fine, honest.
SIMON It's okay. No trouble.
ERIN That's Clarky.
SIMON Hi.
CLARKY Hi.

Beat.

ERIN I'm Erin.
SIMON Nice to meet you.

Beat.

ERIN And your name is ...?
SIMON Oh, sorry. I'm Simon.
CLARKY Nice to meet you.
SIMON You too. [***He starts cooking eggs.***]
ERIN And ... who the fuck are you?
CLARKY Erin!
ERIN I'm just wondering, that's all.
SIMON Sorry. I'm a friend of ... well, Jimmy invited me.
ERIN Oh, so you're a friend of Jimmy's.
SIMON Not really.
ERIN Relation?
SIMON Try charity case?

Erin looks confused.

SIMON He feels sorry for me.
CLARKY Why?
SIMON Ask him.
ERIN *pointing to the egg in the pan* Is that one yours?

SIMON *tipping it out onto a piece of bread* Go for it.
 ERIN Cheers.
 CLARKY *to Erin* Don't take the piss.
 ERIN I'm not. I got offered..
 SIMON You want the next one?
 CLARKY Okay.
 ERIN *mocking Clarky* Don't take the piss!
 CLARKY You're funny.
 ERIN Thanks. [*She sits down again and eats.*]
 CLARKY Were you at our school?
 SIMON Yeah.
 CLARKY Don't remember you...

EXTRACT THREE

JIMMY She's got a new bloke.
 TOM *to Erin* You've got a bloke? Awesome. You might leave me alone now! Why does it smell of cremations in here?
 JIMMY Toast.
 TOM Right. [*Grabs a slice of bread and sits slightly too close to Erin, who moves up.*] Come on then - who is he? Lucky fella... his guide dog must be so excited!
 ERIN *to Jimmy* Don't worry about it - I'll tell you later. When the children are in bed.
 TOM Charming.
 ERIN *standing and going to the door* Are they still out there? [*She stops as she realises.*] No!
 JIMMY What?
 ERIN Simon... Isn't it? It is! Christ! I hadn't worked out who it was.
 TOM Did you think he was dead too? Cos Max was convinced - kept pinching him for the first half of the night.
 JIMMY I had to invite him.
 ERIN I'm going to hide my aspirin.
 TOM I'd hide your contraceptives too. Rumour is he'll try anything.
 JIMMY He's a nice guy.
 ERIN He's a grade A proper nut-job. His mum came into school and screwed one of the teachers once ... then screamed about it on the bus for a whole week, while he was sitting at the front! He's like a case study in weird.
 TOM D'you reckon you could overdose on the pill?
 JIMMY Can we not talk about this?
 ERIN Why not? It's the only thing we can talk about. He's right out there.
 TOM He's not a celebrity.
 ERIN Apparently he's got the number of times he's tried it tattooed on his wrist.
 JIMMY Oh - that's bollocks.
 ERIN Have you seen his wrists?
 JIMMY *losing it* Look! I want to have a nice break. I don't want anyone saying anything to him. Get on with him. Talk to him. None of it is his fault, okay? When he goes back from here ...

Simon enters. All go quiet.

ERIN All right?
 SIMON Yeah, thanks. You?
 ERIN Yeah.
 TOM Go on then, Jimmy. You were saying?
 SIMON When I go back from here I go into care - in case you were wondering -

cos I'm not yet eighteen. So they're going to take my mum and put her in a mental hospital twenty-four-seven, and I get to live with a string of lovely families who will encourage me to call them by their first names and try and make everything as 'normal' as possible. And my mum will die in there. Is that about all of it? Anything else you'd like to know?

JIMMY Look, I'm sorry.

SIMON Don't be.

JIMMY Can we just not do this. Would that be okay?

TOM Yeah. Sorry.

SIMON If you want to ask me anything about it, that's fine. Just don't do it behind my back....

EXTRACT FOUR

SIMON Thank you for inviting me.

JIMMY It's fine. I told you you'd enjoy it. You are enjoying it, right?

SIMON Yeah.

They freeze and the club is created around them. Loud music, flashing lights. Snapshots of the evening are seen amidst the dancing. Clarky and Tom are dancing together. Then Erin and Clarky are dancing. Max is arguing with an imaginary bouncer. Jimmy's trying to pull him off while Daniel's encouraging them. Erin and Tom are dancing. Clarky's screaming at them angrily. Simon is drinking and smiling in the middle of it all. Erin dances with Max and encourages him not to carry on the fight with the bouncer. They all finish with arms around each others' shoulders, pogo-ing to a fast-paced dance track. There is a flash and a photograph is projected on the whole set of them. They are back at the van now. Max is being encouraged to drink by Tom and Daniel. Simon is lying back on a sofa with Clarky on the other side of the room, watching him. Jimmy and Erin are sitting outside the van on plastic furniture. The loud music subsides. Those inside the van freeze as Erin and Jimmy talk.

ERIN You know it's not real, don't you?

JIMMY What isn't ?

ERIN This group of friends you've created.

JIMMY I didn't create them

ERIN They'll leave here and none of them will remember any of it.

JIMMY You say the nicest things to me, do you know that?

ERIN I'm worried about you. You're putting too much on this experience meaning something.

JIMMY Like what?

ERIN I don't know.

JIMMY **getting annoyed** So shut up then.

ERIN Like - you want to show you don't have to grow up yet, or that you've got some strong foundation in the world that you can always come back to. Look at them in there. They're kids.

JIMMY We're kids.

ERIN Yeah, and we'll grow up, and we'll move on, and we'll leave it behind....

EXTRACT FIVE.

The characters have returned to the van. It is one year later...

Tom and Jimmy are seated, bored. Erin enters with a case.

ERIN Isn't it supposed to be Summer? Evening, boys. You been waiting for me?

TOM **going to her** D'you want a hand with that?

ERIN You're such a gent - what have you done with Tom?

TOM **half smiles. A brief pause Then** Shall I take it into the back?

ERIN Okay.

Tom exits.

ERIN You okay?

JIMMY Yeah.

ERIN Is he behaving?

JIMMY I think so.

ERIN Well, you've got two of us here. You're doing well.

JIMMY Three of us.

ERIN I wasn't counting you.

JIMMY Neither was I. [**He goes to one of the kitchen cupboards and takes out a small pot with a lid on it. He places it on the sitting room table.**]

ERIN You've brought a pet ... it's not a frog, is it? I hate frogs.

TOM **returning** I put it in my room.

ERIN Good of you.

TOM You can move it later if you want. [**He notices the pot.**] What did you bring that for?

ERIN What is it?

TOM Have you carried that around with you all this time? He wouldn't let it out of his sight.

ERIN I don't get it. Do I need to open it?

TOM & JIMMY No!

TOM **smiling to himself** You'll spill him.

JIMMY That's not funny.

TOM Then we'll have to Hoover him up and separate him from all the other crap in there...

JIMMY Don't ...

ERIN I still have no idea what you're on about.

TOM **miming picking bits from a Hoover bag** Bit of cornflake, bit of fluff, bit of Simon, bit more fluff ... no, wait, that's an eyebrow ... bit more of Simon ... ooh, a raisin! [**Mimes eating it.**]

ERIN **staring at Jimmy** Are you for real?

TOM **chewing his imaginary raisin** No - wait... not a raisin.

JIMMY Will you shut up!

Tom smirks. Erin sits down.

ERIN That's sick.

TOM Sorry.

ERIN Not you ... [**Pointing to Jimmy.**] ... him. What is wrong with you?

JIMMY I promised his mum.

ERIN And you reckon he'd want to be back here?

TOM He wasn't planning on being back in a little jar. That's definite.

ERIN **ignoring Tom** Does his mum know where ... you're going to scatter him - right?

JIMMY Yeah.
ERIN Does his mum know that?
JIMMY Yeah. I got an e-mail from his care-worker too... said how appropriate it was.
ERIN It's sick. Did you know about this?
TOM No, I swear.
ERIN So why are you here?

Beat.

JIMMY *to Tom* To see Erin - right?
TOM Not exactly.

Beat.

TOM It's a nice idea - catching up...
ERIN Oh Christ! I thought this was going to be fun.
JIMMY It still can be.
ERIN No, it can't. Cos you haven't grown up yet ... and you... [*To Tom.*]
... don't even think about it...

EXTRACT SIX

JIMMY You okay?
DANIEL Yeah, fine. You?
JIMMY Yeah. It's good to have everyone back.
DANIEL Almost everyone.
JIMMY Well, yeah ... obviously.
DANIEL Are we really going to scatter him here?
JIMMY On the beach. Well, out to sea.
DANIEL Why would you want to stay where you died?
JIMMY It was a good holiday. We had fun. He had fun.
DANIEL When I have fun I smile and laugh - and then don't kill myself.
JIMMY His mum said it was okay. That's all I got.
DANIEL Sad, isn't it?
JIMMY Yeah.

Beat. Daniel drinks.

JIMMY I thought it was a joke.
DANIEL What was?
JIMMY You and Clarky. Getting married.
DANIEL Thanks.
JIMMY No, I don't mean ... I think it's ... it was a surprise.
DANIEL Lots of people have said that... When I'm twenty-one I'll get my inheritance - from my Grand-dad. Banking, or finance or something, he was in. Only he was a big religious guy, read at his church, took collections - that sort of stuff. It says I need to be married in order to get it. So that was my life pretty much mapped out from the minute he died, wasn't it? Bit unfair really.
JIMMY Do you need the money?
DANIEL Saves working, doesn't it? I could get a flat straight away, do what I want - might go travelling.
JIMMY Does she know?
DANIEL Who?
JIMMY Clarky.

DANIEL Oh yeah ... yeah, we've talked about it.
JIMMY And? Do you love her?

Beat.

DANIEL Yeah, she's great.
JIMMY Great? Like frosties are great?
DANIEL She knows. She's fine. She loves me. Better than most futures, isn't it?
JIMMY Yeah. I suppose.

Loud music begins to thump in the background. They all dance around the van, apart from Daniel who sits outside. Tom is trying to dance with Erin. Max warns him off. Clarky comes outside and sits with Daniel. Jimmy walks into the middle of all of it and sits, staring at the jar of Simon's ashes. Slowly the music fades. Clarky kisses Daniel, who looks uninterested.

CLARKY I love you.
DANIEL Good.

Clarky gives a half smile. She goes inside. Daniel follows her. The others exit. Each of them patting Jimmy on the shoulder as they go - as a 'good night.' Jimmy remains, staring at the jar of ashes, then falls asleep. Lighting changes to blues. A hooded figure sits outside the van. Jimmy gets up, walks out of the van and approaches it.

JIMMY Max? ... Max?

Simon takes off the hood. Jimmy stops.

JIMMY Sorry... I thought you were ... a firend of mine... sorry.

JIMMY backs away and returns to his sleeping position in the van. Simon talks to the audience.

SIMON My mum always used to say: don't go outside if it's raining - or if it's too cold, or too icy, or too noisy. She didn't like all the cars going up and down our road - thought they might be dangerous. And don't stay in your room playing computer games, or reading, or thinking. Try and join in ... but don't go outside - it's too cold, or hot, or angry, depressing. Sit down here with me. We can chat. What have you done today? And I'd look at her and try to explain that I hadn't gone anywhere, hadn't done anything. I'd just sat next to her all day - giving her something to do. Because she was lonely, and I was lonely. We were alone together. And I'm still alone. I think I might take up smoking - never tried it. Might take up drinking - never tried that. So many things I've never tried. And I just want to talk to someone. And there are millions and millions upon millions of people in the world - who might actually want to listen. But you never realise that at the time, do you?...

EXTRACT SEVEN

...Lights change to the sea's edge. Tom sits in the background. They all stand in a staggered line. Max is holding Simon's ashes. They all have hoods up apart from Tom.

ERIN **beckoning to Tom** Come on.

TOM It hurts.

ERIN Stop whingeing.

TOM You didn't stand on it.

JIMMY Can you shut up!

TOM Sorry if I'm spoiling the dramatic moment but you didn't stand on a - whatever it was.

ERIN Come on.

TOM **standing up and hobbling over** Coming. Should we not put our hoods down? It looks like a meeting of the Ku Klux Klan, Slough branch, at the minute...

They take their hoods down. Max passes the jar to Jimmy.

JIMMY And?

ERIN Someone should say something. And then we should all have some.

DANIEL What? Share him out?

ERIN **serious** Yeah.

DANIEL Okay, I'll have a leg.

TOM It's not a Kentucky bargain bucket.

JIMMY **angry** Shut up!

TOM **serious** Sorry.

ERIN Does anyone want to say anything?

JIMMY Umm... This was our friend ... No, that's crap.

TOM Good start.

MAX This was Simon, and none of us knew him... even at school.

JIMMY No.

MAX It's true though. No point lying, is there? Who's watching?

CLARKY He's got a point.

JIMMY Oh, come on then.

They all hold out their hands and Jimmy pours a small amount of ash into each of them.

JIMMY To Simon - someone I wanted to be a friend. Who I wished had had some friends.

ERIN Who I wished I'd got the chance to know, cos I'd have been his friend, I hope.

DANIEL Who I never knew... [**Shrugs.**]

MAX Who I liked.

CLARKY Yeah - who I liked too, though I only met him once. And I wish he hadn't gone that way.

The others look at Tom.

TOM **looking out to the sea** Simon - who should have amounted to more than just this group of people. Who after this point in time will probably not keep in touch, whatever we promised - apart from the married lot maybe - what? Honesty - Max is right - what's the point otherwise? Simon, I will never forget you. We will never forget you, not because of who you were or what you did, because we never had the chance to find out. It's because

of how you left us. And it scared the crap out of me. And me throwing you into the sea is how I say - Go. Leave me alone. Cos all I've got in my head is that image of how you went - and I hate it. I hope you're reliving it. What ever counts for heaven out there for you - I hope you are happy. [**Shouts as he hurls his handful.**] Go!

not
hope you are
JIMMY Go!

The others shout 'Go!' as they hurl their handfuls towards the audience. Pause. They put their hoods up and stand at the edge of the sea. An image of them is projected on the back wall. They are standing, hooded; they each remove their hoods and Simon is in the middle of them....

EXTRACT EIGHT

ERIN This is not your fault. You are trying to fix things which are not your fault. That makes you a good person - it doesn't mean you are to blame. Simon did not kill himself because of you. *This* is not happening because of you.

JIMMY Tom lost his job.

ERIN Not because of you.

Lights fade out then in. JIMMY is on the sofa. Max is on the other end of the sofa. Erin is sitting at the table. Pause.

JIMMY We want to help.

ERIN You know that, don't you, Max? We're your friends.

MAX So?

JIMMY Thank you for being here.

MAX Didn't have to come.

ERIN We know. So thank you, from both of us.

JIMMY I'm out of my depth here, Max. I phoned some doctors.

MAX **looking up** What?

JIMMY No one would see you - or me.

MAX No? Good.

JIMMY You're not on Facebook any more.

MAX Might be.

JIMMY You've been getting into fights.

MAX No.

JIMMY Max, the police asked me for a reference.

MAX So? [**Beat.**] Did you give me one?

JIMMY I didn't know what to say. I think you've lost it.

ERIN We think.

MAX Where's everyone else?

ERIN Like who, Max?

MAX That last trip - everyone. Why aren't they here?

JIMMY I didn't invite them.

MAX Why not?

JIMMY Fair point. I should have done. We could all be talking this out.

MAX Bollocks.

JIMMY Please, Max.

MAX You know why they're not here? Cos no one cares. .. It was supposed to be for ever.

ERIN What was?

MAX Us . Mates. I'd have someone I could call a mate, back me up - look out for me.

JIMMY And we're here.
MAX Too late. [**Standing up, threatening Jimmy.**] Everything's fallen apart.
 Why didn't you stop it? Why did this happen?
ERIN It's not his fault, Max.
MAX **pinning Jimmy by the throat into the sofa** It's all lies. We have nothing...
 Cos you brought us together and promised we'd all be okay - and none
 of it is okay. We can't get away from it. I close my eyes and it's there. And
 all it makes me think of is - what can I possibly do with my life... my life ...
 that could help me forget that, get over it - make it better?

Pause. Erin takes Max's hand and moves him away.

MAX Is it just me? Do you think it too? Life would have been better if he
was still here - wouldn't it?
JIMMY Yeah, it would.

EXTRACT NINE

This is the end of the play - a flashback to the death of Simon.

**Erin stands in the doorway. The characters inside freeze. Max is trying to
down a pint of peanuts.**

DANIEL Go! Go! Go! Go!
TOM Max! Max! Max!

A song starts playing on the CD player. Simon has put it on.

CLARKY God, I love this one.
TOM Turn it up.

Simon stares at them.

TOM Simon! Turn it up!

**Simon turns it up. They all begin to dance. They start to dance outside, past
Erin, who joins in dancing with Tom. The rest of them dance towards Jimmy
who reluctantly joins in. Max stands on the balustrade and screams into the
air, and the others join in. The music has risen to a crescendo. It slowly fades
into a different track - gentler. They are all lying on the sofas.**

TOM What time is it?
DANIEL Three... four ... no...
JIMMY **staggering to his feet** I need my bed.
ERIN No! Drink through...
MAX Yeah!
JIMMY No.
DANIEL Yeah!

**Simon is sitting in the middle of them all. He has a clear, water bottle with
him. He is thinking.**

CLARKY What else is there to drink?
TOM There must be something.
DANIEL What you got, Si?

Daniel takes the bottle from him and undoes it.

MAX There was some in the other,,,
DANIEL **recoiling** Whoa! What is that? You carry on, big man!
MAX ...under the bed...
TOM Drink! Drink! Drink!

Simon pours a small amount of the liquid from his bottle onto the main table. Jimmy has gone out and he comes back in with a vodka bottle.

JIMMY Drink!
ALL Yeah!

Simon takes out a lighter and sets fire to the strip of fluid which he's poured onto the table. Any close to the table move back. Jimmy drops the bottle of vodka.

JIMMY Jesus!
SIMON Turn the music up. I love this one.

Erin screams. Clarky joins in. So does Jimmy. All of them are backing away from the table and screaming 'No!', or just screaming, or running away. Simon undoes the cap on the bottle. The music grows louder. He pours the liquid around the back of his shoulders and partially over his head. He throws the bottle in the air. He flicks the lighter on.

JIMMY Get out! Get out! Get out!

The smoke alarm beeps loudly. The sound of emergency sirens is heard in the distance. Members of the cast open the doors to the auditorium and usher the audience out. Simon sits there throughout, bathed in a warm spotlight. As the audience arrive in the foyer, there is an e-mail projected onto a screen there.

'Dear Jimmy, I've never had the chance to meet you, but I feel that I need to write this e-mail in order to say thank you for what you did for my son, Simon. I don't know how much he told you about our situation, or home - family life, but I wanted you to know that the holiday you took him on was probably the happiest I have ever known him. He telephoned me after the first night and explained that everything was going to be okay and that he was having the best of times. And I believed him. I'm sorry that I wasn't a good parent to him. I'm sorry that he did what he did, or felt that he had to as he felt that he had no other options in life. I just wanted to thank you for giving him some glimpse into a different life, which maybe he felt was unattainable. You and your friends are obviously a very special group of people and I hope you all stay in touch and keep each other safe. All my best Bridget Church.

THE END.

