



# CHOKKA

by

Luke Barnes  
with 20 Stories High Youth Theatre

Directed  
by  
Nathan Powell

## **Accessible Transcript**

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## Overview

This transcript is available to audiences as an alternative format to the audio format of our podcast, Chokka.

Chokka was written by Luke Barnes, in collaboration with 20 Stories High Youth Theatre. With original beats, flowing melodies and poetry to stretch your mind and heart. Chokka follows the journey of 16-year-old Jem who is coming to terms with the world around them. How they fit into a community in which they feel other and what happens when love punches them in the gut.

20 Stories High Youth Theatre each give their own voice to Jem as well as weaving in their own personal reflections on love, jealousy, depression and friendship.

The podcast is suitable for ages 13 plus – it contains themes of mental health and strong language.

20 Stories High Youth Theatre is made up of predominantly young people with Scouse (Liverpoolian) accents, and so some of the transcript contains incorrect spellings, which denote when a particular word is said in a Scouse accent.

We hope you enjoy our play.

## EPISODE ONE

### EMILY

Hi, I'm Emily, and this is our podcast, Chokka. With 20 Stories High Youth Theatre and Luke Barnes, in association with Unedited.

### *Beatboxing*

### KIM

This podcast contains strong language and themes of depression that may be triggering for some listeners. For information on support or organisations and helplines, please visit the resources section of our website, [www.20storieshigh.org.uk](http://www.20storieshigh.org.uk)

### *Music plays, a soft beat with synth chords*

### ROSIE

We've been working since last November, with Luke Barnes, to create a new show about some of the things we've been thinking about a lot. We settled on this story, that explores loneliness and what it feels like when you think you're the only

one going through something difficult. Luke listened to all our thoughts and ideas, and moulded them into a beautiful story, that we're going to be sharing with you in this four-part series.

### TIA

Together, we're going to tell you the story of one person's journey. We'll all be your storytellers and narrators. But every now and then, we may pause the acting to share with you some of the pieces of art we've been making as a response to what the story explores. That might be music, poetry, monologues, anything you can listen to or read.

### BECCA

We're glad we can get to share this piece with you in this way, and we hope you enjoy listening, or reading, as much as we've enjoyed making it. Here it is, Chokka.

*An electric guitar plays soft  
fingerpicked chords – almost like  
a lullaby - for the start of a song*

### TIA (sings)

*I know,  
Life pulls us along,  
We need,  
To keep moving on.*

*We're all fixated,  
on not getting it wrong,  
Why not think of life as a song?*

### *(chorus)*

*I need you to understand,  
I'm struggling to keep my head above the water.  
My eyes have seen too much,  
I need much more than love.*

--

*I've been completely wrong,  
I don't know,  
what's going on.*

*I've been waiting,  
For someone who's strong,  
To help me carry,  
the weight I hold on.*

*(chorus)  
I need you to understand,  
I'm struggling to keep my feet on the land.  
My eyes have seen too much,  
I don't want you to touch.*

--

*There is a key change with the guitar,  
the pace slows slightly*

*I don't know if what I'm doing is right,  
I'm not sure if I'm acting mature.*

*It's real hard to understand,  
If I mean anything or am I bland?*

*The guitar stops*

*Sounds of summers day in the park, in  
Liverpool. Birds chirping, dogs barking, kids  
playing. There is a soundscape underneath  
throughout this scene.*

#### ALL CAST

It's Summer.

#### REECE

The sun is high over Liverpool and the air hangs  
still like a fart in a lift.

#### HANNAH

There's a dryness in my mouth.

#### KIM

That's not a fart metaphor, there actually is a  
dryness in my mouth.

#### SEYI

I want to speak and say how happy I am that it's  
warm and there's people and there's flowers and  
there's trees and there's birds and there's life

and there's everything, but I can't because of this dryness.

HANNAH

This dryness stops me from saying all that.

REECE

I'm as quiet as mouse in a house full of bellends.

KIM

If I say it

If I say that right now

In this moment

If I say that right now in this moment, I am happy; then it might end.

REECE

Sometimes I think the universe has to see that I'm sad.

I feel that if it knows that in this second

*There is a distorted sound of chatter and laughter of friends from school*

Looking at my friends

Looking at everyone around me

Looking at all this life

If it knows I am happy

Then it will take it away.

KIM

I know that sounds mental;

ALL CAST

This some Jayden Smith shit.

SEYI

But I know the minute I say it I will be back in my bed

At 4:48

*The background chatter stops, we are alone in the park again*

And everything will be death.

And I will be me.

HANNAH

So, I don't.

I let the dryness stop me  
I watch everyone be happy.  
And I let the sadness feed me.

KIM  
I have felt like this forever.

*A sharp noise, to indicate time passing*

*Soundscape of Sefton Park, ducks  
on the pond, children playing, water  
fountain and birds*

TIA & MELANI  
I meet them in Sefton Park

REECE  
By that weird pointy thing with the fountain.

HANNAH  
We're the same year but never talk

REECE  
They're fit and I'm fit but I'm always scared of  
people on account of being dead weird.

SEYI  
But it doesn't feel like that now

KIM  
The first time we look at each other  
It's Like Ant and Dec  
When you know you know.

REECE  
You know what I mean?  
I know you know

KIM  
When you know what it feels like to meet  
someone you don't need words

SEYI  
You just need a glance

HANNAH  
A half smile

*A heart beat gradually getting louder  
until we reach 'big bad drum' and it  
stops*

MELANI

A feeling of fluttering in your stomach

TIA

A vibration

KIM & TIA

Your heart going DUM DUM DUM like a BIG  
BAD DRUM.

*A mild dream-like sound plays  
underneath this section*

TIA

And this is what I'm feeling now

REECE

Looking at them I imagine a future

HANNAH

I imagine adventures

SEYI

I imagine traveling the world

HANNAH

I imagine listening to music  
Dancing

KIM

But not shit dancing like cool dancing.

REECE

Singing even though I'm shit  
I imagine eating everything  
In posh places

SEYI

On couches whilst watching Netflix

KIM

I imagine my head on their lap

HANNAH

I imagine crying

REECE

I imagine sitting still in parks and saying nothing

KIM

I imagine love

And looking at them

Looking in their eyes

I know

More than anything

*The dream-like sound stops, back to  
present day park sounds*

HANNAH

That I can't let them know who I am.

REECE

Because I am fucking weird.

*Music plays, which we hear at the start  
of any of our 'response' pieces. The  
music is triphop.*

ANDREW

Hello, my name is Andrew and this is a piece that  
I wrote about the fear of being judged by others:

The fear of being judged by others is felt across  
the spectrum,  
people kill - like Hannibal Lecter given lectures.

Certain people deserve a punch when they look  
at you down the spectrum.

Whether you're White, Black, Muslim or Asian,  
we bleed the same blood,  
when we've been cut

people struggle to understand that we're the  
same under the skin,  
because I'm a different race,  
I have more opportunities than someone who's  
got more melanin.

It isn't enough to not be racist  
anti-racism is the time we need.  
It's the key  
because we should stand together,  
not for a week, but forever

for a cause that's becoming a war and a struggle,  
a wound, a fight  
a loss as soon coming for the people who hate  
and judge,  
because of the way a person looks.

### FREYA

Hi, my name is Freya, and this is a piece that I've  
written about the fear of being judged by others:

The fear of being judged by others  
Puts worrying thoughts in your head  
Like, why she like that?  
or why is her mindset like that?

But hella' people don't know  
what goes on in your life behind closed doors.  
so, they make up rumours, and false  
assumptions about you  
and brainwash people you know and don't know  
to believe the things they say about you.

The fear of being judged by other people can be  
based on your image, such as  
skin colour,  
how you dress  
or what your hairstyle is.  
But bear in mind,  
Some people can be judgmental by just looking  
at you.

### ROSIE

Hey, I'm Rosie, and this is a song I wrote about  
being judged by others.

*A Ukulele underscores the song*

ROSIE (singing)

*I will run and I will fall  
They will all laugh like they did before  
See my cheeks go red hear my heart go boom  
Caught the attention of everyone in the room*

*But do they think that I'm that bad?  
Do they talk about me behind my back?  
Coz I'm a little paranoid that I'm the joke that no  
one gets  
The friend that everyone forgets*

*Thoughts rush and my hands shake  
I'm just waiting to make a mistake  
My heads a mess and I'm kinda scared  
I don't know if people even care*

*I don't know what people think of me  
Keep my mouth shut in case they want me to be  
Someone that I'm not at all  
Could I be something more?*

*I don't want to care what people say  
I'm not you I'm me and that's ok  
They might laugh but I will rise  
I will be ok this time.*

### FATIMA

Hi, my name is Fatima and I wrote a piece about being judged by others:

Fear of being judged by others  
is what we all feel at some point in our life.  
But why is it we all fear showing this fear of being  
judged?  
What if we were honest about it, we will know it's  
all in our head.  
What if the other person is also fearing your  
judgement?

When you hear this out loud,  
Doesn't it sound funny?  
So, ask yourself  
Why do you fear being judged by others?

Now, if this still doesn't convince you that fear of being judged is all in your head, then you should know this fear is obstructing the path to your success.

Count how many times did you hold yourself back just due to your fear of being judged? How many times did you hide yourself, only because of your own assumptions?

Fear of being judged by this  
Is what we all feel at some point  
It's understandable,  
But how you deal with it may break or make your life.

*A big loud, wet fart sound*

*Music underscores this section, it's a slow, melodic beat*

ALL CAST  
RELATIONSHIPS ARE MAD

KIM  
When you meet someone you do this thing where you assume you're amazing because they're vaguely interested in you but you cover up all the things you think they won't like.  
You never fart

*A little cheeky, non-offensive, fart*

SEYI  
Farting is important because  
It's such an important part of living

HANNAH  
It exists to make you comfortable

REECE  
It bonds you with friends

KIM  
I have made some of my best friends because I fart.

TIA

But you never do it with people you fancy

HANNAH

And that's what dating feels like  
Like holding a fart in until it's too late for them to  
turn their  
back on you.

*Big wet loud fart, followed by laughter that  
fades out, followed by the sounds of a  
bar/pub play – techno music, chatter and  
laughter of punters. Drinks being poured,  
food being served.*

REECE

We meet in Spoons on concert square  
Proper sophisticated  
This is the best perfect place because it's shit  
enough to get served in and also they do cheap  
food

KIM

I'm sitting here like Regina George Like Ru Paul  
Like Jafar  
And they come in

*A choral choir sing a heavenly-like 'aaaaa'  
note until 'I...'*

A choir sings  
This is magical and sexy and cool  
And for a second -  
I....

*The bar soundscape stops abruptly. We hear  
the outside, that merges with seagulls and  
crashing waves of the pier*

SEYI

No we've been kicked out for not having ID and  
we get ice cream and sit on pier head

REECE

The Sun makes me sweat  
I cover up the sweat with a jumper  
I sweat more  
It's embarrassing

They don't notice.  
I'm so hot  
This is literally the most uncomfortable I have  
ever been  
Covering up being hot with a sweater is the  
mentality of mings

HANNAH

We talk about everything that normal people talk  
about...  
We talk about how Liverpool is the best place in  
the world and anyone that doesn't agree has  
never given a pound to Pete the busker with his  
megaphone  
How the Tories are mings.

SEYI

We both say all the right things  
We say what we know we should say  
But I'm not honest.  
Because if I was honest

*The soundscape fades out, to an isolated  
space*

If I was  
They would be at home now doing anything to  
avoid talking to me.

*A sharp noise denotes the passing of time.  
We hear sounds of the night - owl hooting,  
water trickling from a fountain, distant traffic  
in the background and foot steps of two  
people*

REECE

A month passes  
Honestly it was faster than Mo Salah and  
Richarlson's baby.

To celebrate our anniversary we kiss under the  
moonlight in the park by the Palm House  
The ducks sleep softly on the lake  
as we walk hand in hand  
I have never felt like this  
I have never felt this excitement

This safety.  
There is nowhere else I would rather be  
Than with them.

HANNAH

We're holding hands  
Lying on the grass  
Looking at the moon.

KIM

I haven't looked at my phone  
but I know me ma's ringing  
I know there's a thousand missed calls from her  
I can feel it  
I could feel it when it went dark  
I don't know what time it is, but I know it's too  
late and I know she's ringing  
I can feel her anxiety in my neck  
Even without seeing my phone I can feel her

She gets into my soul like Christ  
but an annoying Christ that makes you Hoover  
the stairs  
But I'm not arsed  
Because I am happy  
In my mind

SEYI

As we lie  
The stars clear here  
The same stars that every human being that has  
ever lived has seen  
All I can think of  
is how my parents looked at the same stars  
theirs  
We're sharing the night with all the lovers that  
came before us  
And I don't want it to end

*The night time soundscape comes to a  
gradual silence*

TIA

They look at me, and they say

MELANI

Do you ever think about what happens after  
when time stops?

TIA

I don't know how time can stop?

MELANI

Well time only exists because we made it up. It's  
really just a mad invention so that we can meet  
other people at arranged times

TIA

That's mad

MELANI

I know

TIA

How can it stop existing?

*There is a very slow fade up of night  
soundscape*

MELANI

Well I guess if we stop paying attention to it. Or  
yano, everyone dies.

TIA

Oh...

MELANI

Yeah, I think a lot about the idea of what  
happens when everyone dies.

TIA

How do you think everyone will die?

MELANI

You see the stars?

TIA

Yeah

MELANI

They're getting further apart from each other

TIA

Oh

MELANI

Yeah do you know what that means?

TIA

No

MELANI

That gravity is pulling them away from each other as the universe expands

TIA

Ok

MELANI

Yeah and so what happens is that we're being pulled away from the Sun

TIA

Oh

MELANI

And we'll stop being warm and it'll just be an ice block, and everyone will die

TIA

Why are you telling me that?

MELANI

Because it makes life worth living doesn't it. Knowing it's not always going to be here. It's how we learn to enjoy every moment.

TIA

Like what?

MELANI

Like this

*They kiss them on the cheek*

If you knew that you were going to live forever nothing would be special because you'd know eventually it would happen.

TIA

That feels like an awful lot of pressure...

*Music plays over the introduction of the poem*

REECE

Hi, I'm Reece Brown and this is my poem on love and sexuality:

*An electric guitar plays, to underscore the poems. It is upbeat and has a quicker pace than previous songs*

Sometimes I get asked, what is love to me.  
I turn around and say,  
Well, you see,  
it's different for me, as a gay male  
to find love that doesn't have a veil.  
It's not always been as easy as it is  
for me to express my love and connect with his.

What's the world come to,  
I don't understand  
that we'd rather see men holding knives in the  
street  
than holding each other's hand.

But I won't give up, I won't just be a statistic.  
After all, my friends do call me Mr optimistic.  
The world's getting better, learning every day.  
I believe that one day, being gay will be okay.

BECCA

The question may seem simple  
but the answers can be long  
So what is love?  
Your answer is never wrong

Man and a woman  
that's what people expect it to be.  
It doesn't matter who the people are  
love is accepting you and me.

I'm happiest when people come together,  
celebrating and being 100, that feeling lasts  
forever.

When two people stand by side  
The smiles and joy you see at Pride

Love is different for you and me  
That's okay it's strange for me  
how I express myself because I'm gay.

No one should be judged because their sexuality,  
but we do, and I guess that's just reality.  
One day, people will accept one another.  
Remember that's someone's son, daughter,  
sister or brother.

Why does it matter what they are if they are  
happy?  
That's my answer to love and sexuality.

*The electric guitar gets louder as we  
hear the lyrics start*

TIA (singing)  
*I met her on a summer evening  
She ruled my world even though I ain't seen her  
For who she is she could be real sleazy  
I guess I'll have to wait and see*

*I have confirmed she listens to Girl in Red  
She doesn't care that I listen to Sweater Weather  
in bed  
She makes me feel like I've never done before  
I really adore her*

*I never thought I'd find someone who cares  
She makes me feel like I never felt in years  
'Cos she's pretty, and she's witty, and she  
loves me better than anyone in my life*

*I know it's soon, but I feel so at home  
When I'm with her, this feeling comes on  
I wanna make sure she knows I care  
And I think she likes it when I play with her hair*

*I can't stop looking at her  
She draws me in every time she speaks  
She makes me feel happy  
And a lot of other things*

*I never thought I'd find someone who cares  
She makes me feel like I never felt in years  
'Cos she's pretty, and she's witty, and she  
loves me better than anyone in my life.*

*We hear a sigh of relief, followed by a  
director in the background saying '3, 2,  
1...'*

*The beatboxing from the beginning of  
the episode plays*

HANNAH

Thank you for listening to episode one I look  
forward to seeing you in episode two.

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## EPISODE 2

### GRACE

Hi, I'm Grace, and this is our podcast Chokka. Made by us, 20 Stories High Youth Theatre and Luke Barnes, in collaboration with Unedited.

### *Beatboxing*

### GEORGINA

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*The beatboxing stops. A soft, piano plays. It is the chords of 'Bohemian Rhapsody' by Queen.*

### ROSIE

We're telling you a story about a character we call Jem. We all take it in turns to play Jem. We're sharing the storytelling between us. Every now and then, we pause the story to share with you some of the pieces of art we've been making as a response to what the story explores.

In Episode One, Jem started to fall in love, but was holding back, scared that if they were truly themselves, they'd be unlovable. In this episode, Jem struggles with their depression, but tries to pretend to everyone else that they are fine.

*Music underscores this section: a high pitched synth pad swells in, followed by a lo fi beat.*

### ANDREW

It's 4:48

I'm lying with my arms by my side and my legs straight

My eyes are closed but my mind is electric

It's whirring

I can feel the electric shooting round it so it means it's resting but I cannot sleep

I feel weight  
Here

*The music stops. There is a lucid dream  
soundscape. The words have an echo/  
hazy effect*

SARA  
But you have friends?

HELDA  
You are loved.

SARA  
What do you offer?

HELDA  
What is the point of you?

SARA  
I am sad (*laughs*)

GEORGINA  
I am too everything

GRACE  
I don't have enough anything

QUEVIN  
My legs is too much

SARA  
My stomach too real

ANDREW  
My body is wrong

HELDA  
I am not normal

GEORGINA  
I am too normal

GRACE  
I want to stop this feeling

HELDA

I don't want to die

ANDREW

I want to stop this

SARA

I want this to end

ALL CAST

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

*The echo & dream soundscape stop*

ANDREW

No

ALL CAST

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

GEORGINA

I remember the light

I remember that morning always comes

This is not normal

Everyone else is asleep

It is only me that doesn't

Only me

GRACE

Only me that replays moments where people  
hate me over and over again

Only me, that is stuck in these waves of  
memories of feeling not enough  
And they splash on me  
And I drown in them  
And here in night

*Music in an Indian raga inspired  
style enters with a Tabla drum beat.  
Heavy use of reverb makes it feel  
dream-like.*

At this time  
The memories and faces of everyone I love  
stand over me

QUEVIN

And pity me  
Because they can never know that I don't sleep  
Because if they knew

HELDA

If they knew what I was  
They would walk away  
And this would be me forever  
sitting in arm chairs as fires burn  
Wondering why I wasn't enough  
Wondering why I can't dream

ANDREW

And when I can't dream in sleep, I can't dream in  
life  
I can't dream of me  
Of the best me  
The only dream I dream is when I met them  
And they will leave  
Because I am this

*The soundscape stops abruptly*

SARA

This is how I will live forever

*Subtle hints of birds twittering/chirping  
throughout this section*

SARA

The dawn breaks  
(pause)

ANDREW

And I drift to sleep  
The last thought that I thought  
Was that this  
This is the clearest I have been  
The most honest I have been with myself

HELDA

The truest me  
And the me that I have to hide now  
Because if I don't  
If I don't and everyone finds out  
If they find out  
I will be more alone than I have ever thought  
possible

GEORGINA

And all my fears will be real

SARA

I will lose everything

QUEVIN

They're going to find out  
I can't keep this down forever

*The beginning of a track starts to play*

Not with this inside me

*As the birds fade out, we hear the following  
rap track:*

QUEVIN

KNK I'm back in the game  
No rain, no face  
I'm back in the space  
Zoomin' through just like in the fade  
Blackjack boy I'm king of the ace  
*(The chorus repeats, another five times)*

KNK I'm back in the game  
No money, just stars  
Again, I game  
Pocket man to the moon, I claim

Shape before I'm Cosmic microwaves  
I'm not gonna let my haze enslave  
Put it down on the ground, put it in the grave  
I'm not no monkey put in a cage  
Black or White don't disrespect my name  
Here for the grace, I'm the only one that stated  
the place  
Gotta put him to shame  
All them ballers like it is already  
Shine at the moon, I pray  
Telling alien as I levitate  
That condemns so many ways just go through  
it,  
Gotta be brave.

KNK I'm back in the game  
No rain, no face  
I'm back in the space  
Zoomin' through just like in the fade  
Blackjack boy I'm king of the ace  
(The chorus repeats, another four times)

*The music stops. We hear an echo of  
the next two lines, as if she has been  
listening to the song through  
earphones*

#### GRACE

This song restores me  
And I walk into school; resurrected

*As the song fades out, we hear a busy  
school cafeteria-like soundscape with  
background chatter. There is a slight echo to  
signify we are in the 'Arts Theatre' of the  
school.*

#### ANDREW

Lunch comes and I still haven't seen them  
My lunch is always shit as Dad makes it and he  
has the diet of a fat man even though he's got  
the exact same body shape as teenage Ron  
Weasley.

#### HELDA

Me and my mates are eating in the Arts Theatre  
It's where the packed lunches go

Don't know why  
It's the only big space I guess  
Who cares about Drama?

GEORGINA

I stare at my cheese sandwich  
And it's dry  
The tomato has made the bread wet  
I can feel it in my fingers  
I'm not even annoyed at my Dad for doing that.

GRACE

I don't care about any of the shit my friends are  
talking about

HELDA

I never do  
Honestly, they chat more shit than a Tory

QUEVIN

It's like I'm in a bubble  
I'm here but I'm separate.

ANDREW

I don't want them to know this  
I don't want to kill their buzz  
Life is hard enough without realising that your  
friends hate you.

HELDA

And I look over and I see them  
And they're looking at me  
And they smile  
And I smile back

GEORGINA

And they pull their tongue  
And I pull mine  
And they do a big fart noise and suddenly...

GRACE

I feel different  
I feel empowered  
I feel naughty

HELDA

So I stand up and I walk

ANDREW

I walk to the back of the room and I flick on the power and I plug my phone in

*We hear the sound of aux cable being plugged in.*

GEORGINA

The speakers crackle  
And I press play  
And I sing this

*We hear a slight background tune of Queen  
– 'Bohemian Rhapsody'*

GRACE *(singing, badly)*

*Mama, just killed a man  
Put a gun against his head  
Pulled my trigger, now he's dead  
Mama, life had just begun*

*We hear people laughing, as the rest of the singing plays under the rest of this section*

ANDREW

Everyone is laughing  
They are smiling  
I am alive  
Well I seem alive.

*The singing stops, everyone goes back to what they were doing – talking, etc.*

GEORGINA

And no one has any idea that I haven't slept well for months.  
And they don't know that I am mental

GRACE

Not like, fun mental  
Actually mental

*Music plays, as an introduction to the following response piece*

FAMIA

My name is Famia and this is a piece I wrote for how nature gets on with it, this is called 'See the Good'

Too many of us, myself included,  
get depressed because we get stuck  
on seeing the crap that goes on in this world.

We let the negative things in life,  
get the best of us on some days,  
we forget to see the good.

Where is the good?  
It's all around you  
It's the way a kitten sleeps curled up on a pillow  
or when a baby smiles.  
It's a way of father has catch with his son  
or the way child builds a sandcastle at the beach.

It's the way the moon glows at night,  
or how the sun shines warm and bright  
It's a smile from an old lady who's dying,  
or the hug a man gives his wife  
It's the son of someone telling you they love you  
for the first time.

There's beauty with the way a tree's branches  
sway  
from the breeze.  
Or a skyline from a city that was built by people.  
This goodness gets no mention.  
Literature, science, art, goodness in things we  
do not understand about this life.  
See the good and bad  
See the good in sad  
see the good in tough situations  
Or when people get together for a cause.

See the good against the wrong  
And the good against the pain  
See the good see the beauty  
See the love.

*We hear a sigh of relief, followed by a director in the background saying '3, 2, 1...'*

*The beatboxing from the beginning of the episode plays*

ANDREW

Thank you for listening to Episode Two, and we look forward to seeing you in Episode Three.

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## EPISODE 3

### SARA

Hi, I'm Sara, and this is our podcast Chokka.  
Made by us - 20 Stories High Youth Theatre and  
Luke Barnes, in association with Unedited.

### *Beatboxing*

### TIA

This podcast contains strong language and themes of depression that may be triggering for some listeners. For information on support organisations and helplines, please visit the resources section of our website, [www.20storieshigh.org.uk](http://www.20storieshigh.org.uk)

*Heavily processed trap music enters  
with an India Raga inspired Tabla drum  
beat and trap style synths.*

### TIA

Together, we're telling you a story about a character we call Jem. We'll take it in turns to play Jem. We're sharing the storytelling between us. Every now and then, we pause the story to share with you some of the pieces of art we've been making as a response to what the story explores.

In the previous episode, Jem struggled with their sleep and depression – worrying about how others would see them. In this episode, Jem looks for somewhere to express how they're feeling.

*There is heavy breathing, as if someone is scared*

### SAM

It's 4:48 again

### LEON

It feels like it's always 4:48

### FREYA

Maybe it's always been 4:48

FRED

Maybe it's always felt like this

*There is a high-pitched noise swells  
until it reaches a climax, followed by  
silence.*

EMILY

There is the exact same light outside  
The exact same stillness  
The exact same numbness to everything

FATIMA

The rumble of a car goes by

FRED

Some students singing a song that sounds shit

SAM

My legs are warm, and my chest is cold  
The hot water bottles at my feet are freezing  
I snifle

FREYA

My eyes feel awake which is terrible because I  
know that in a few hours they'll be knackered

*A lo-fi piano chord progression enters  
with a crackly, vinyl character.  
Then beat drops, and a sub bass enters.*

KIM

I'm Kim, and this is track me and Fred made  
about Jealousy.

KIM (*sings*)

*Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time*

*Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time*

DIGITZ (*rapping*)

*Thousands in attendance for me*

Empty rows and no people in seats  
For you  
Man how've you fallen through  
Trust  
This weren't the purpose, it weren't the motive  
I gave you answers, you kept ignoring  
I even wrote them  
Man I told you we could make it both  
If you followed my guidelines  
Now I am under the spotlight  
Deep in all the good times  
We used to have  
Spitting bars in the same room  
Now we've split apart, uh

KIM (sings)  
Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time

Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time

DIGITZ (rapping)  
Man I've been looking through pictures  
Tryna predict our future  
Feel like my fuel has been used up  
All this pain I gotta chew up  
I could do it, you just couldn't  
Got it pumping, made a movement  
You got stuck in your own mud and  
Now I'm through it  
And you're struggling  
Struggling, struggling  
Struggling  
Back again  
To our basics again  
Don't pretend  
Be a man  
And just tell me you didn't want me to win, uh

KIM (sings)

*Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time*

*Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time*

*Mmmmm*

*Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time*

*Love and jealousy don't go well the trust ain't  
there and I'm in hell  
I got something on my mind and I'm feeling like  
shit and I'm wasting my time*

*The backing track of the song  
continues to play as we hear Helda's  
poem*

### HELDA

My name is Helda and this is a piece I wrote  
about jealousy:

Why is it always me  
that's left cold, wounded, shaking?  
left alone once again, no one is listening  
no one is asking, while I struggle, no one cares.  
While I cry, no one is there

While they have their little group, talking about  
their feelings,  
But the difference is, they always ask for help.

But I cry alone  
In the dark  
At 3am  
in my abandoned room  
where everything is hidden.

I try to show my emotions, but I'm pretty good at  
hiding and lying.

I smile and lie pretending everything's okay,  
But how can they not see?  
See that I'm in pain,  
See that I have no energy left.  
See that I fake every single emotion that contains  
happiness.

How can they not see that I'm struggling,  
struggling to keep up  
struggling to keep this act going  
struggling to keep going.

My energy is running out.  
Running low  
while theirs is getting higher and higher.  
Maybe it's because they are open and honest,  
when everything is crashing in their lives, talking  
it out with their friends.  
But I have no energy to talk about mine.

And that is okay because at the end. No one will  
listen, and no one will care. That's it.  
No one cares about  
me.

*There is a sharp noise as the music fades,  
we are in a bedroom.*

#### LEON

My laptop is by my side  
Left over from when I was watching Keeping Up  
with The Kardashians before bed  
I am an avid fan  
I like the fashion

I'm not a gimp.

#### FRED

I open it  
I need to speak to someone, but I can't  
Then maybe  
I should just speak to myself.  
Is this weird?

*We hear typing*

EMILY

I write  
I write about how I'm feeling  
I write about my thoughts  
I write about this thing in my stomach

FATIMA

This weight on my shoulders  
My eyes being always tired  
My mind that won't switch off

FRED

And I write  
My mind running through the endless versions of  
life where I am shit  
My body  
My everything

ALL CAST

Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything  
Everything

*There is a sharp noise which stops the  
typing sound.*

FRED

And I close the tab  
And I think I am weird.  
Who else is doing that?  
Who else is writing that stuff?  
Who else is sitting in their single bed in Liverpool  
writing about the feeling of not being able to  
sleep?

FREYA

In this city everyone is happy.  
I can't talk here.

LEON

So I have to reach out  
Where there are weirdos.

*We hear typing, to signify that we are in a chatroom. The responses Sam gets have an echo on them, as if they are in a different room. We also hear a 'click' every time a line is said, as if it's been sent to the chatroom. The scene is also underscored with a digital sounds, and some voices are processed to have a robotic quality.*

SAM

Why am I sad?

EMILY

Because you're shit

SAM

Harsh

FRED

Harsh that's why people kill themselves

EMILY

Blue pill shit

FREYA

Have you thought about being a dog?  
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA

EMILY

I am sad too

LEON

Gay

SAM

Why are you all so horrible?

EMILY

What did you expect to happen when you wrote  
on something like this?

WILLY WONKA

FREYA

Willy Wanker

FRED

Everyone here is sad we wouldn't be here if we  
were happy

LEON

Here is my bank account - I am happy

FRED

You're boasting about money in an anonymous  
room you're not happy.

FATIMA

I am, here is my wife with her face blurred out

FRED

Now You're just showing a picture of your wife's  
body to a bunch of strangers

FATIMA

And she looks like Alan Sugar

LEON

My wife does not look like Alan Sugar

FRED

Alan Sugar

EMILY

BAT MAN

LEON

Why did you just do Bat Man?

FRED

That's what he is, his superpower is being rich

FATIMA

Bat Man is a virgin

EMILY

So is this guy

LEON

Not a virgin. Had loads of sex.

FATIMA

Listen to yourself.

FRED

Lets all be HAPPY,  
RAINBOW KITTEN  
GRUMPY KITTEN

EMILY

Why Grumpy Kitten

FRED

Because that's what it is

EMILY

Ok

SAM

But why am I so sad?

EMILY

You tell me

FATIMA

Aids?

FRED

Shut up

EMILY

We're all sad everyone's always a little bit sad  
because we know we're going to die  
but that's what makes life worth living.  
Knowing we're going to die.  
So everything feels special.

SAM

That doesn't make me less sad

FRED

I literally just solved the life universe and  
everything for you,  
How does it not make you less sad?

SAM

Because I still feel sad

EMILY

MICHAEL JACKSON POP CORN

FATIMA

Then maybe you're just shit

Maybe

Maybe

Maybe

Maybe

Maybe

Maybe

FREYA

I don't think writing you're sad on here is ever  
going to get you anywhere because people on  
here are all pretending their happy behind  
keyboards

LEON

I am clinically depressed

EMILY

I am a wizard harry

FRED

I am Dumbledore

FREYA

You are a fucking bore

FATIMA

I am the egg man

FREYA

I am a cat

Meow

FRED

I am so alone

SAM

That doesn't help me

I need to try something real

*We hear music for Sam's response piece.*

SAM

Hi, my name's Sam, and this is a story about a guy named Tim, and his warm-hearted Grandfather.

Once upon a time, there was a young boy named Tim. He was an average kid. Not really special. But, having problems, nonetheless.

He felt alone. People at school never really paid attention to him, had no friends... didn't really have anything special to his name. But the one thing that he held dear was his dear old grandfather.

Every time he felt sad, he always went and just sat there and played cards.

*Nature sound effects begin to play under the story – sounds of birds, the sea and trees rustling.*

One day, he asked his Granddad:

"Granddad, how do you do it? The world keeps troubling me every day. I just don't know what to do. You've lived all this; you know what to do. And, I just need to know how you do it."

His Grandfather pulls him aside and says, "look outside and tell me what do you see?". He looks outside and sees a beautiful garden - the pond has got little toads next to it. The sun is shining over the birds calling, feeding their little chicks.

And he says, "I see nature"

and his Granddad says, "How is that any different than yesterday, or tomorrow?"

"Well, it isn't" he replies.

"Exactly. No matter what you're feeling. No matter how life treats you, you can always enjoy a beautiful view. Because nature still moves on."

*We hear a sigh of relief, followed by a director in the background saying '3, 2, 1...'*

*The beatboxing from the beginning of the episode plays*

EMILY

Thank you for listening to Episode Three. We look forward to seeing you Episode Four.

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## EPISODE 4

### *Beatboxing*

#### HANNAH

Hi, I'm Hannah, and this is our podcast Chokka. Made by us, 20 Stories High Youth Theatre and Luke Barnes, in collaboration with Unedited.

#### SAM

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*A lofi track enters, it sounds like it is played  
Back on an old worn out tape machine  
as the pitch wavers up and down.  
A hip hop beat then enters.*

#### ROSIE

We're telling you a story about a character we call Jem. We'll take it in turns to play Jem, we're sharing the storytelling between us. Every now and then, we pause the story to share with you some of the pieces of art we've been making as a response to what the story explores.

In previous episodes, Jem has been experiencing anxiety and insomnia, because they can't be themselves in their new relationship. They feel like they are too weird to be honest about who they are. Jem has tried to find other people like them online, but this hasn't helped. They wonder if they might be brave enough to confide in their partner.

*We hear hustle and bustle of school  
corridors*

#### FAMIA

I've never done drama before  
I changed to drama because they're here  
They love it  
And they're good at it  
They're like Leonardo meets Mila Kunis  
I just look at them.

SINA

They volunteer for everything  
They're the funniest  
And the best looking  
They're amazing

ROSIE

I'm terrible but I wanted to be in the room  
Partly to be closer to them  
Partly because of jealousy.  
We play games  
For a second I feel normal  
I forget who I am

KAYLEIGH

And at the end the teacher  
Who smells like milk  
Says we have to write our own art  
Something new  
And I am shitting myself.

*The background noise changes – we  
hear birds to signify that we're outside*

ROSIE

What should it be about?

KAYLEIGH

Something real

ROSIE

How real?

KAYLEIGH

The realer the better that's what art is

ROSIE

Would you read something for me?

KAYLEIGH

OK

ROSIE

You promise not to judge me

*We hear the unfolding of a piece of  
paper*

KAYLEIGH  
No. Of course

FAMIA  
I am as nervous as JK Rowling at a trans march  
I have what I wrote  
I don't know whether to hand it in  
But I want them to read it

ROSIE  
I want them to read what I wrote  
Because I want them to know what I am  
In my room  
At 4:48.

SINA  
You can't be with someone and not feel safe.  
I curl up in a cat-like ball  
I watch them flick through the papers  
And in their eye

KAYLEIGH  
Right there  
Just for a second  
And I know it's a second  
Right there  
In their eye  
A tear

FAMIA  
And it's lovely  
And they look up  
Right here  
And they don't say anything  
And they hug me  
And we don't speak  
We just hug  
In eternity  
And we kiss  
And I know: this is love.  
They look at me  
And they say

KAYLEIGH

Me too

ROSIE

And I am happy.

*Music, to signify the start of Rosie's  
response piece*

ROSIE

Hi, my name's Rosie, and this is a piece that I've  
written about self-care:

I am human  
I am hurting  
And that's ok.

Just a little bit kinder  
Let go of the hate  
Let go of the fear  
I can be messy, bruised and broken here.

Taking the time to look after myself  
Nothing big or extravagant  
But a face mask and bar of chocolate isn't a bad  
idea  
This 'self-care' is hard sometimes  
And in a world where almost everywhere  
People are telling you that you aren't good  
enough  
You can forget who you are.

So, in the deepest darkest bit of your mind  
The bit filled with insults from childhood bullies  
Sharp words you never wanted to hear  
And goodbyes that sting like a knife in your back  
Find it

And say  
I don't hate myself anymore  
And say it again  
I don't hate myself anymore

And say it every time you get knocked down  
When your first instinct when you mess up is to  
call yourself names until you shrink into a ball of  
all the things you used to be.

It's not easy  
I know  
But you are loved.

And when, just for one moment  
I was kind to myself  
Something felt different.

You will need  
Some space to heal and some time to grow  
And even though  
Your heart is heavy  
You don't have to do it alone

To be kind to yourself is the simplest act of self-care  
To know you are fragile  
To be gentle  
To know you are human  
Because human is ok.

You matter  
More than you know  
So don't sit on a shelf  
Doubting and belittling yourself.

Your anxiety and depression does not make you  
a freak.

You can do anything but not everything.  
So take it slow  
Breathe  
Nourish your body  
Talk to people  
Sleep.

Just a little bit kinder  
Let go of the hate  
Let go of the fear  
We're all messy, bruised and broken here.

*A ukulele plays a tune that is reflective  
and peaceful, then fades to a lower  
volume until it eventually fades out as  
the conversation starts.*

DONNA

So... Emily - What does 'self-care' mean to you?

EMILY

Erm... I guess maybe like, looking after yourself so, knowing that, I don't know, if you feel a bit down or just not right, you can, you know, go talk to someone, like, I dunno - my mum - or something.

DONNA

Anything else do you think?

EMILY

Erm, what I really enjoy, is like running a bath. And I don't do it that much because I normally have showers. But just like putting loads of like bubble bath stuff in it - so there's loads of bubbles and putting candles on and music, and just like sitting there.

DONNA

Oh, nice, yeah.

I miss that because I usually get erm, just usually get showers, that would be something. But I - for me, I like to dance, I put my earphones on and dance round my flat.

Because I want to be respectful to the neighbours so I don't want the music blasting and so if I just need a little bit of a minute, I put my earphones on and have a dance, right round the flat.

*We hear Emily laughing*

I'll think I'm in like a Dance video and stuff, where I'm like *(she makes a heavy bass noise)*

EMILY

That sounds really fun.

DONNA

And it makes me feel, good. Apart from I realised that people probably see my shadow through the blinds and just think: Wow.

EMILY *(laughing)*

What is happening?

DONNA

Yeah exactly, just see - there's that weird girl  
(*laughs*). That weird girl with the weird little cat,  
with the cat tryna' escape out the window.

EMILY

Yeah

*They both laugh*

*We hear birds chirping, gusts of wind.*

FAMIA

The next day the sun shines  
It's different  
The world isn't quite so  
Grey

*The strummed electric guitar from  
episode one (with an upbeat tune)  
underscores this scene.*

SINA

I slept  
I dreamt of nothing  
Just the abyss of darkness  
My body feels rested

KAYLEIGH

I feel like fucking Joe Wicks or something  
I feel amazing.  
I skip into school  
Everyone's smiling  
There's loads of smiling faces  
And I'm like

SINA

Hi  
Hey  
Hello there  
Hello  
Heyo  
Like a legend.

FAMIA

I'm J Hus in a world of Laurence Foxes.

I'm skipping  
I'm literally skipping  
This is new  
This is...

*The meadow sounds stop.*

*A piece of sound design enters, with  
Low menacing sub bass synths and  
Eery high pitched synths.*

ROSIE  
What's that  
They're there  
And they're talking to everyone else  
They go quiet  
They can't look at me  
shuffling their feet around like penguins  
And I know  
They're silent  
And they say...

KAYLEIGH  
Hi

ROSIE  
You told everyone.

*There is a rhythmic drumbeat, adding  
tension to the running*

I run  
I run  
I run away  
And out  
And out of school  
And I run through the streets

FAMIA  
And I don't know where I'm going  
I'm in a field now  
I'm running  
I'm running faster than Usain Bolt and a train  
combined  
And I hear voices behind me

SINA

Loads of them  
And I turn around  
And they're there  
They've followed me  
Their eye is glimmering

ROSIE

WHAT DO YOU WANT? I GAVE YOU  
SOMETHING PERSONAL AND YOU TOLD  
THEM. YOU TOLD THEM. YOU TOLD THEM  
ALL MY SECRETS. YOU TOLD THEM  
EVERYTHING.

FAMIA

More people from my class; they've followed

KAYLEIGH

I didn't mean to say anything but-

ROSIE

LEAVE ME ALONE!

And they say:

*The drum beat stops.*

KAYLEIGH

Listen. I just want to say.

I just want to say... I can't sleep

because I sometimes worry that you'll walk away  
because I am not enough for you.

I sometimes can't sleep because I don't think  
that I can make my parents proud.

I sometimes can't sleep because I am short.

I sometimes can't sleep because I worry about  
what I've said online. I get this.

And you're not weird.

I feel like this.

All the time.

And it gets worse because I feel like I'm the only  
one.

And I'm not.

That's what we were talking about.

I told them about me because I knew you did  
too. And they do too. I felt like you made me,  
like, normal

ROSIE

I don't believe you

*A Sci-fi style synth playing chords enters.*

SINA

I am scared of the ocean.

TIA

When I'm making tea, I pretend I'm in a musical.

SAM

When I'm alone, I just grab one of the guitars in my room and I have it on me, with the strings and hole facing upwards. And I just talk to myself in the guitar, because it feels as if someone's talking back to me – the echo.

ROSIE

Sometimes I like to lie on the floor because it feels more comfortable than sitting on my bed or a chair.

FRED

I'm just perfect.

FREYA

Be quiet Fred.

I eat scrambled eggs with barbecue sauce, but it tastes nice

FATIMA

I eat my eggs with ketchup. *(laughs)*

REECE

I don't drink tea. I can fit an entire pencil case under me boob.

MELANI

I put the milk before the cereal.

QUEVIN

I never sleep in PJs; I always wear pants on.

KIM

I love manga and anime have such a massive Weeb, you can't get away from me.

LEON

I feel like people hate me, even though they're my friends and they have always stood with me.

KAYLEIGH

I'm double jointed. So, when I put my arm out straight, it looks like I've got an inside out elbow, and everyone's says it's like, weird, but I kinda love it.

SEYI

My right leg is longer than my left leg.

GRACE

I'm probably the fattest drag queen-looking thing you'll ever meet. I wear way too much makeup for my liking the bottom lashes are just, oh my god. They hurt so much.

HANNAH

I count the stairs. Yeah, if I go up, I count them and when I come back down I count them. Like one of them's gonna go missing.

GEORGINA

I probably dance way too much. Like I'll just start spontaneously dancing in the most random way and I even start dance battles with myself, never know who really wins. But I mean, meh.

FAMIA

So, basically before anyone's upstairs, I go into my room, then I get my pillow, I set it in the middle then I get two other pillows - put it aside next to them. Then I get the teddies and put it all around. And I got this like, it's like a round pillow - I'll put that at the end. Then, I get the quilt, and I put it all over them, then I get in, and that's when I sleep.

EMILY

When I go to bed, I always have to cuddle something for I can go to sleep.

ANDREW

I don't smoke, drink, or do drugs because I've  
saw the effect that it has on people.

HELDA

This was a journey for myself. It was not for  
anyone else, or anyone who cared about me, or  
this person that I liked that person this was for  
me, because I never felt beautiful. For once I  
wanted to feel beautiful and confident and love  
myself - every part of myself. And now I do,  
which I find extremely beautiful.

*The music changes, to an acoustic  
guitar backed with a hip hop beat. It  
brings a feeling of reflection and  
comfort.*

ROSIE

And standing here  
In this field  
With all these weirdos staring me  
Saying these truths  
For the first time  
I don't feel weird  
I feel completely normal  
And I can see  
I can see we all have something  
No one is alone  
This isn't weird  
We all have something

FAMIA

So maybe the problem isn't us  
It's what we're told  
I feel safe  
And the universe doesn't take it away from me  
It's opened itself up  
Because knowing this  
Knowing the world is all weirdos

SINA

All scared

All human  
There is so much life to live  
And I am ready for it

KAYLEIGH and ROSIE  
So what do we do?  
WE LIVE

FAMIA  
WE ARE ALL WEIRD

SINA  
AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES US NORMAL.

KAYLEIGH and ROSIE  
LETS EMBRACE IT!

*Pause*

ANDREW  
Andrew's top tip for happiness is try to be yourself, no matter whether you're with a load of people who are similar to you, or a load of people who are different. You have to try and be yourself and be honest to yourself, no matter what circumstances.

FRED  
If you want to be happy, follow God.

FREYA  
Make a list of the things that are making you feel sad. Write them down, and then then burn it.

LEON  
If there's a hobby you love, or something you love: then sit down, cancel your plans, and just do the hobby.

KAYLEIGH  
You need to surround yourself with people who you feel safe around, and who you can be just yourself, because that's the only true meaning to be happy.

ROSIE

You can do anything, but not everything.

GEORGINA

Stop thinking about what everyone thinks because at the end of the day, no one really cares.

SARA

Erm, go to Pets at Home, to look at Rabbits?

EMILY

Try to listen to some of your favourite music

FAMIA

Having a conversation with my sister and her stupid stuff that makes me laugh.

HANNAH

If you want to be happy, just live.

QUEVIN

Just do what you love, init man.

JANINE

Everybody's different specially in like the black life matters moment. Everyone should be treated like, the same, you know? 'Cos nobody's perfect. And even if they're not perfect, doesn't mean like, you go and kill them or harass them or something. Everyone's different and you have to understand their personalities, even if you don't like it you just got to stand it, and do it.

*Pause*

REECE

Thank you for listening to our Podcast, Chokka. Chokka was written by Luke Barnes in collaboration with 20 Stories High Youth Theatre. The audio script was developed by Dani Mosely. Chokka was performed by the 20 Stories High Youth theatre and directed by Nathan Powell. The producer for 20 Stories

High was Lucy Graham and our audio producers were Unedited.

### KAYLEIGH

To learn more about us and keep in touch, follow us on our socials, they're linked in the description of this podcast, and if you need support on any of the themes we covered in this story, a good place to start is Young Minds: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

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