



Skin Deep

A song of hope

Words by Peter Scott-Presland

Music by Robert Ely

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Cast

FRANKIE: 20s, a pub regular, not what you'd think of as politically active or aware. Very good looking. In a relationship, but still a good-time guy.

QUEENIE: 30s, a bar manager, a mother hen type – camp and quite fearless.

JODIE: FRANKIE's best friend and work colleague, 20s, straight

Multiple parts for one actor of either gender or none.

Music Notes

There is a disco/pub sound track [standard, not to be written] which fades in and fades out to go into and out of the Admiral Duncan. The onstage music plays over that in the first scene when QUEENIE is serving – it should be a bit discordant, a bit of an effort. I'm not sure if it should return at the end, I leave that to Robert.

There is an offstage choir [soundtrack] for the ending.

Set

A bare stage, but a bed which is brought forward for certain scenes.

Scene One

Bare stage. FRANKIE, QUEENIE and JODIE separate spots. FRANKIE and JODIE in barrista aprons

FRANKIE: It was a bloody awful day at work

JODIE: A bloody awful day
I hate being a barrista

FRANKIE: I love being a barrista
I love the skill of a manual espresso

JODIE: Having to be nice all the time

FRANKIE: Grinding all the beans
But not too much or they go sour

JODIE: Laugh at all the stupid jokes
Of men who think they're funny

FRANKIE: Espresso's temperamental
Only gives its best
If you treat it gently

JODIE: Little big shots
Think they're something

FRANKIE: A bit like a pick-up,
Come to think of it.

JODIE: But at least I can get time off
To go to auditions

FRANKIE: Still, it was an awful day

JODIE: Awful day

FRANKIE: The machine broke down

JODIE: I was goosed.

FRANKIE: Goosed?!

JODIE: Yes, goosed

FRANKIE: How quaint
 Nobody's been goosed since
 Nineteen-eighty two

JODIE: It wasn't funny

FRANKIE: Sorry

JODIE: My feet were killing me

FRANKIE: The air-con on the blink

JODIE: I'd been on my feet

FRANKIE: I'd been on my feet

BOTH: Since seven-thirty

[They look at each other, nod, take off their aprons.]

BOTH: Let's go to Soho.

JODIE: Do you want to call Andrew?

FRANKIE: Maybe later
 If I feel like clubbing.
 What about Frank?

JODIE: We had a bit of a barney
 Let him stew
 This one is for us.

BOTH: Let's go to Soho

[The pub disco soundtrack fades in. QUEENIE comes to life. Polishing a glass.]

QUEENIE: We're expecting a rush in Soho
It's quiet now, but in an hour or two
It will be heaving

[To an unseen customer]

Is that your bag?
Well, keep it with you, doll.
I thought it was a bomb.
No, seriously.
Haven't you seen the posters?
We have to keep a look-out
Since Brick Lane

[To the audience] Dizzy gym queen

It's drinking all that Red Bull
Rots the brain

Mind you... I wouldn't say no
Wouldn't kick him out of bed
Lovely eyes
Even if there's nothing much behind them

[To himself] What are you like?
Stop it. You've work to do.

[Puts down the glass cloth, moves to another part of the stage, behind the bar.]

What will you have, doll?
Pint of IPA?
Just finished work, have you?
Going on anywhere later?
I reckon G-A-Y will be packed tonight
Bank holiday weekend

[Hands over the pint]

There, get that down you
You've earned it I'm sure
That'll be two pound twenty please.

[QUEENIE freezes. Disco soundtrack fades. JODIE and FRANKIE re-enter]

JODIE: No, I'll get them. It's my round.

FRANKIE: Are you sure?

JODIE: You got them in the Joiner's Arms, remember?

FRANKIE: When was that?

JODIE: Karaoke night. You sang It's Raining Men
Almost cleared the pub.

FRANKIE: My mind's a sieve.
[Remembers something]
No, you're wrong.
You got them at the Vauxhall
That was Sunday
The Sunday Social

JODIE: I don't remember

FRANKIE: What is she like?
What are you having?

JODIE: A pint of foaming meths
"Gonna wash that Starbucks out of my throat"
Amstel, please.

FRANKIE: Good idea. Me too.

JODIE: I'll stay out here and have a fag

FRANKIE: You can smoke inside you know.
Nanny hasn't made it *yet* a crime

JODIE: It's so hot in there
And though I love a smoke
Can't stand the smell of other people's

FRANKIE: OK, OK. I won't be long

Don't go wandering off.
Excuse me. Excuse me.

[Mimes making his way through a crowded doorway. Lighting lowers – some filters. Disco music swells again. It becomes louder and louder. As it does the lights slowly fade to blackout. An Almighty explosion, followed by absolute silence. The lights come up abruptly on JODIE. There is smoke billowing everywhere, and debris.]

JODIE: It was weird, the silence
 But that's what I remember.
 For a few seconds
 Nothing but silence
 Too shocked to move,
 To speak.
 I could hear a bird
 High over St Anne's churchyard
 And my own feet
 Crunching on broken glass.

[She comes to, and runs towards the door.]

FRANKIE! FRANKIE!

[To the audience]

People limping out
Covered in blood
I saw a boy with nails
Sticking in his face.
One boy got a nail in his eye
Suddenly there was noise again
Screaming
FRANKIE! FRANKIE!

[QUEENIE carries FRANKIE out, like a pieta, lays him down on the ground. FRANKIE'S face is unrecognisable with blood, and his legs are at an awkward angle. QUEENIE too is covered in blood. His clothes are hanging off and he has a huge gash in his arm. FRANKIE is unconscious.]

JODIE: Careful where you put him.
 Mind the glass! There's glass everywhere.

QUEENIE: Mind the glass? After that?

[Puts ear to FRANKIE's chest. To JODIE.]

He's still breathing.
Well, what you standing there for
You dozy cow?

JODIE: Ambulance... get an ambulance

[Wanders vaguely off]

QUEENIE: Pull yourself together.
There's help on the way,
And more to get out
From inside.

[He makes to go back in]

JODIE: How many are there hurt?

QUEENIE: How the fuck should I know?
I saw one girl with her leg took off
Not much more than twenty
I got to go and help.
Get them out.
They need me in there.
They're my people.

JODIE: Yes, of course.

[QUEENIE disappears through the smoke. JODIE holds FRANKIE's hand. FRANKIE groans and stirs.]

JODIE: *[to audience]* They told us afterward
There were fifteen hundred nails in that bomb
There were eighty two in FRANKIE

FRANKIE: What's going on? I can't see

JODIE: Shhh. Quiet. Lie still.

FRANKIE: I can't feel anything

JODIE: It's the shock

FRANKIE: I can't feel my legs

JODIE: The medics will be here soon
They're on the way

[Woman's voice offstage, drunk and slurred – sung??]

WOMAN: Hey, move over
I want a better view
I want to see that queer blood
Ha! Serves them right

JODIE: Fuck right off

WOMAN: Knew it would happen one day
Serves them right
Showing off like that
In the street

JODIE: Fuck you!

[She throws something offstage at the WOMAN – her lighter, maybe, if it's chunky]

FRANKIE: I can't see anything
I think I've gone blind

[A Scream of panic]

Where's Andrew?
I want Andrew

JODIE: Oh hush darling. Baby.
We'll get him when we can

FRANKIE: I need Andrew

[She takes out some moist tissues from her bag. She holds FRANKIE and tries to wipe his face. He winces in pain.]

FRANKIE: Don't touch me.
I want to die.

JODIE: You know, it's lucky
We didn't try to meet with Andrew
After work. He would have brought the dog.

FRANKIE: You're right.

JODIE: Can you imagine? If he licked the blood
He would go crazy -
The dog too!

FRANKIE: Please don't try to make me laugh

[QUEENIE reappears with a woman out of the pub. He is holding her and checking there are no patches on her clothes still burning.]

QUEENIE: I had to find a fire extinguisher
I had to put her out
She was on fire.
I smothered her as best I could.

WOMAN: An orange flash of fire
A rush of warm air
A pain like an electric shock
Right through me.
Look after her
Have you got any water?

JODIE: No.

QUEENIE: You should always carry water.
I'll find you some
If I can.

[QUEENIE exits]

WOMAN: I looked in the pub mirror

What was left of it.
Just a fragment
I looked in it
And a stranger looked back at me
Covered in blood
What happened?

JODIE/FRANKIE: What happened?

ALL: What happened?

[This can be a canon or round, and distributed between the four – QUEENIE should be part of it. We are stepping out of the immediate situation]

How can this happen here?
We have always felt safe here
In Old Compton Street
What happened?
We could walk down the street
Hand in hand and no-one turned a hair
We fell in and out of love
We quarrelled and made up
We could kiss in doorways
And policemen smiled
What happened?
This was community
This was family
This was home
What happened?

FADE TO BLACKOUT

Scene Two

[A Hospital Bed. FRANKIE in it. His face is covered in bandages.¹ HOSPITAL KITCHEN PORTER comes in with a cup of tea and a biscuit on a tray.]

PORTER: Mr. FRANKIE? Are you awake?
Mr FRANKIE?

FRANKIE: What is it?

¹ Robert, it is important that we don't see his face immediately, so his face should be swathed, but I don't know if that will make it impossible to sing. We may have to discuss what we can do about this.

PORTER: I brought you tea.
I brought you biscuit.

FRANKIE: How the fuck do I eat a biscuit?

PORTER: I don't know. I no doctor
But everyone else have tea and biscuit.
I don't want you feel left out.

FRANKIE: I could murder a cup of tea.

PORTER: I know. I get you special cup
They have special cups
For cripple people
Can't use their mouth

FRANKIE: Thanks a bunch

PORTER: I get you cripple cup.

[PORTER exits.]

FRANKIE: Cripple cup!
He's right of course.
That's what I will be
A fucking cripple.
Even if I get an artificial leg.
Of course it will show
Everyone will know.

[He puts his hand to his face]

I wonder what's happening
Underneath these bandages
Must be healing
Cos every time I smile
I can feel the tissue pull.
[Thinks] "Cripple cup!"
There. I can feel the pull.

[QUEENIE arrives with a huge bunch of flowers.]

QUEENIE: Make way for Bossy Flossie Nightingale!
I brought you these

FRANKIE: What have you brought me?

QUEENIE: Flowers, darling. *[He tries to embrace FRANKIE gently]*

FRANKIE: Careful

QUEENIE: Sorry. I know you can't see them
But you can smell them
And feel them
And nibble on a petal if you're peckish.
I'm doing the rounds
Of my poor battered babies
There's so many in here
I bought up the whole fucking florist
Didn't seem right to leave you out

FRANKIE: That's what Alina said
She's gone to get me a cripple cup
Cos that's what I'm going to be

QUEENIE: Some of my best friends are crips
At least they get legless often enough

FRANKIE: Don't. It hurts

QUEENIE: Then stop feeling sorry for yourself
You're alive. Three aren't.
And think of poor little Alan

FRANKIE: What's happened to him?

QUEENIE: It took his right arm off at the elbow
They had to amputate his left hand too

FRANKIE: That's awful.

QUEENIE: I know. He's never going to masturbate again.
I've offered to help him out

Any time that he's short-handed

FRANKIE: *[Laughing helplessly but painfully]*
Don't. Don't.

QUEENIE: What else should we do?
Can't let the fuckers get us down –
If we do they've beaten us.

FRANKIE: Oh Queenie, you're a tonic

QUEENIE: I'd rather be a gin.

[In FRANKIE's ear. Confidential]

They've got him, you know.
Tommy Richards,
The fucker who did it.
Admitted it right out, and the other two,
Like he was proud of it.
They say that he'll get fifty years for it.

FRANKIE: When I get out
I'll go to church and pray for him
That he rots in hell

QUEENIE: I didn't know you were religious

FRANKIE: I'm not. Just vindictive.
When I think of what I'd like to do to him...

QUEENIE: What good does that do anybody?
It can't change the past

FRANKIE: That's easy for you to say.
You won't be a freak for the rest of your life
In a wheelchair
Not daring to show my face
You won't wake up screaming
With the nightmares.

QUEENIE: You're forgetting I was there

FRANKIE: I'm sorry.

QUEENIE: I keep it bottled up inside
For your sake, and the others
In the hospital.

FRANKIE: I'm so sorry

QUEENIE: So many here.
Some have been discharged
But some will take weeks.
Months.
Fifteen hundred nails!
That's what they said.
Fifteen hundred four inch nails.
Can you imagine how much that weighs?
Twenty kilos, maybe more
And that's what he brought into the bar
With murder in his heart.

I go into the pub, to work,
As if nothing had happened.
They've done it up, you know
You'd never realise
That once it had been hell.
But I see it as it was
The blackened walls
The plaster down
The windows out.
Sometimes I have to have
A vodka just to face it
Sometimes half a bottle.

FRANKIE: I've been so bloody selfish

QUEENIE: You're entitled.
Now pull yourself together
And I will too.

[They hug, very gently. Lights fade to

BLACKOUT

Scene Three

[The hospital again. JODIE visiting, FRANKIE in bed, still bandaged.]

JODIE: Today's the day
Bandages off
I brought you some fruit
To celebrate
They wouldn't let me bring champagne

FRANKIE: I can't chew too well
I lost half my teeth
Ripped out by the nails
I can't have false ones yet

JODIE: I know. I brought bananas

FRANKIE: How considerate *[Pause]*
I wonder if I'll recognise myself
I feel under the bandages
I touch the scars
And wonder what they look like

JODIE: They'll heal.
Of course they'll heal
Plastic surgery is wonderful
These days.

FRANKIE: Cosmetic surgery
They call it nowadays
We've talked about it.
No way.

JODIE: You could look like Sylvester Stallone

FRANKIE: I could look like his mother.

JODIE: Where's Andrew? He should be here

FRANKIE: He came to see me twice
Got too upset
He can't deal with pain or injury
It freaks him out
It's the same with death
He won't go to funerals
His whole life is spent

Trying to hold back time.

JODIE: That's ridiculous
He's only thirty-two

FRANKIE: You tell him that.
He searches every day for signs of grey
He looks for lines on his face
And fat on his body.
That's why he's always in the gym
Always at the mirror.
I used to think he was a narcissist
But now I know it's fear.

I told him to go home
He was so jittery
So anxious
He did more harm than good.

JODIE: But even so
You should be able to rely on him

FRANKIE: It's not his fault
He wanted to be here
To do the proper thing
But then he took it out on me
That he was feeling bad
No, it's best this way.

[Enter MEDIC with a wheelchair.]

MEDIC: Time for the bandages to come off, Mr. Bray
Sorry it has been so long

[To JODIE]

We've had so many in
It's pushed us all to breaking point
I haven't seen so much destruction
Since the IRA

[FRANKIE and JODIE reach for each other's hands, squeeze tight]

JODIE: Can I come with him?

MEDIC: I'm afraid you can't.

It won't take very long.

[MEDIC helps FRANKIE off the bed and into a wheelchair. FRANKIE is reluctant to let go. The two go to the far side of the stage, leaving JODIE alone on the bed. During JODIE's aria, the bandages are slowly, ritualistically taken off in full view of the audience.]

JODIE: It should have been me
 In that bar
 It was all my fault.
 It was my round
 I should have got the drinks
 He said it was his turn
 Because I got them at the Vauxhall
 But he bought the second round
 I didn't think
 I didn't remember until later
 And now I dare not tell him
 He will always live with it
 Every time he looks into a mirror
 And sees a stranger
 Maybe he'll never walk again
 The nails ripped the nerves to shreds
 In his legs
 Knees are so difficult to fix
 Perhaps they'll amputate
 And all because of me.
 How can I look him in the face again?
 Every time I will see what I have done
 And I won't be able to confess
 I don't think our friendship can survive
 From so much shame.

[Lights down on JODIE. The bandages come off. We see FRANKIE's face. I don't think this should be a realistic make-up job of terrible scars. There are two ways of doing it. One is to have nothing at all, so that everything we know about the seriousness of the injuries is in other people's reaction. The other is to do a literal 'defacement', such as a big red cross across his face, as if he has been erased. This is a directorial decision.]

MEDIC: There. They're healing nicely.

[He takes some antiseptic on a pad and gently pats FRANKIE's face.]

Just a little weepy.

FRANKIE: Can I see?

MEDIC: Is that wise?

FRANKIE: What are you saying?
Something wrong with them

MEDIC: It's a bit soon.
Maybe you should get used to –

FRANKIE: Show me. I want to see.

MEDIC: As you wish

[He wheels the chair to the front of the stage, to an imaginary mirror. As he goes]

MEDIC: It's early days
You mustn't expect miracles.
Ready?

FRANKIE: Yes

MEDIC: There

[FRANKIE looks in the mirror with horror. He breaks down wordlessly, head in hands, shoulders heaving.]

MEDIC: You must be patient
We can start facial reconstruction
In a month or two.
We must let it settle down.
You'll be able to go home soon
You're lucky to be on the ground floor
You won't need so much adaptation

FRANKIE: I've lost him
I've lost Andrew
He'll never look me in the face,

He won't be able to.
I'll make him physically sick
Just to look at me.

MEDIC: You're still the same inside

FRANKIE: But outside – no, it's over.
Over.

[He looks in the mirror again]

Take me away from this bloody mirror.

BLACKOUT

Scene Four

[FRANKIE at home in his wheelchair. There is a pair of crutches in the corner. Same 'scarring' as before. It is 12 months later. His Social Worker, JENNIFER², is looking over paperwork.]

JENNIFER: They sentenced him today

[There is no reaction]

Tommy Richards. The bomber.

[Still nothing]

In court they called him Thomas,
Which made him sound almost respectable.
He got four consecutive life sentences.
He said nothing.

[No reaction]

Aren't you pleased?
Don't you care?

FRANKIE: It's too late now.

JENNIFER: I thought you would be pleased
To see justice done

FRANKIE: Nothing can put it right
They could hang him
And it wouldn't put things right.
It won't bring Andrew back.

JENNIFER: FRANKIE, he's been gone now
Almost a year
You must stop living in the past.

FRANKIE: Why? I haven't got a present
And I sure don't have a future.

² If you prefer to have a male social worker, it could double with Queenie. In which case the name is CHRISTOPHER.

JENNIFER: What happened to your nice friend –
The one I saw here on my first visit?

FRANKIE: Jodie? Oh, she tried.
She tried to take me out
“You’ve got to get out of yourself”
She said

JENNIFER: Quite right too

FRANKIE: Wherever you are
You always take yourself with you
We went into a pub once
Everybody looking at me –
Everyone who could bear to look at me –
And then the whispering:
“Look it’s that gay bloke who was in the bombing.”
Only some used other words than gay

I couldn’t stand it
She couldn’t stand it
We ended up sitting
Staring at each other
We didn’t know what to say.
I haven’t seen Jodie in months. *[Pause]*

JENNIFER: There are other places

FRANKIE: Where? Where?

JENNIFER: In your community

FRANKIE: I tried that
One day I got desperate
For some company
For a bit of eye candy.
Even if I couldn’t have any
I thought, no harm in looking.

I braved the rising panic that I felt
Sitting in my chair
In the crowded bus

The driver didn't know how to use the ramp
It took ages to get off
With everybody looking.

I went to Back Door first –
The leather club I used to go with Andrew –
I forgot I can't use stairs
And they are in a basement

So I went to Twinks, the club next door
The doorman looked me up and down
"We don't want your sort here.
You'll spoil people's evenings
They come here to enjoy themselves
The sight of you will put them off their drinks.
Go home. You don't belong here."

JENNIFER: That's dreadful.
Your own kind!

FRANKIE: My own unkind...

What makes you think queers are so wonderful?
We're no better and no worse –
Except the scene, which is worse
Much worse
Their world is full of hunks and pretty boys
That's all they want to know
And the drugs of course,
Don't forget the coke
And the Es and the PCPs
The roofies and the lollipops
The speed and phennies
And the never-ending fucking

[He comes to a hysterical climax, then calms down. JENNIFER strokes his hair.]

They'd sell their grandmothers
To get a shag

JENNIFER: Do you want another of your pills?

FRANKIE: *[bitter laugh]* Another pill?
I'm no better than the rest of them.
I wish Andrew had left me the dog.

JENNIFER: How could he?
How would you exercise it?

FRANKIE: Shut up! Don't remind me

JENNIFER: Are you doing your exercises? *[Indicating crutches]*

FRANKIE: What's the point?

JENNIFER: You'll never get out of that chair
Unless you work at it

FRANKIE: What do you know?

JENNIFER: You know what the physio said –

FRANKIE: She knows nothing of pain
"You've just got to ignore it
And blast through it"
She can say that
She hasn't got nails in her legs.

JENNIFER: You have to try

FRANKIE: Why? Where should I go?

[The doorbell rings. JENNIFER waits to see if FRANKIE will get it, almost trying to force him to move. He tries, half-heartedly.]

JENNIFER: Shall I see who it is?

FRANKIE: *[Unconvincing]* There's no need

JENNIFER: I'm nearest the door *[She goes.]*

FRANKIE: Bloody do-gooders
Ticking their bloody boxes

And trying to be so bloody helpful

[JODIE comes into the room. A pause while they eye each other up, uncertain.]

JODIE: Hello

FRANKIE: Hello

JODIE: When I heard the news I had to come

FRANKIE: What news?

JODIE: It was on the news

FRANKIE: I never watch the news

JODIE: Queenie is dead.

[JENNIFER realises that this is a private moment. To JODIE quietly:]

JENNIFER: I'll see myself out...

[JODIE nods and gestures. JENNIFER goes unobtrusively.]

FRANKIE: *[numb]* How did it happen?
Queer bashing, of course

JODIE: What do you mean, 'of course'?

FRANKIE: Cos that's what life is like.
Tell me ...

JODIE: It's what they call happy slapping
Someone cuffs you round the head
And someone else films it
For the internet
It started as a joke
The joke got out of hand.

There were five kids
Only teenagers

The youngest was fourteen
He was going home from clubbing
When they set on him
It was on the South Bank
There was no-one else around
It was like something out of
'A Clockwork Orange'.

They punched him
And threw him to the ground
Where they kicked his head in
It was all recorded on a mobile phone

Someone found him an hour later
He died in hospital
A ruptured spleen
They hit him more than forty times

They didn't even know that he was queer

FRANKIE: *[exploding]* So that's all right then

JODIE: Don't shout at me
It's not my fault

FRANKIE: I loved Queenie
Everybody did
When I came home
He'd cleaned the place
Put a bunch of lilies on the table
Baked a chocolate cake

JODIE: I know. I was there.

FRANKIE: He kept popping in
"Are you OK, chuck?
Are you behaving yourself?
Just checking."
He was like a mother

Where have you been?
I've missed you.

JODIE: What could I do?
 You wouldn't let me near
 Besides...

FRANKIE: Yes?

JODIE: I felt so guilty...
 I never told you this...
 But now with Queenie gone
 I thought I had to
 It should have been me
 Sitting in that wheelchair
 I was the one who should have bought the drinks
 I should have been inside that pub
 It's all my fault
 My and my memory
 It was my turn

[QUEENIE appears, a ghostly figure]

QUEENIE: It was Tommy Richards' fault.
 Remember him?
 Stop beating up on each other
 I won't be having it

FRANKIE: Do you feel better now for saying that?

JODIE: Yes, yes, I do

QUEENIE: Give her a hug

FRANKIE: Then give me a hug *[They embrace]*

JODIE: Do you forgive me?

FRANKIE: What is there to forgive?

JODIE: I thought you must be thinking –
 You were brooding so
 I thought it was preying on your mind
 What I had done

FRANKIE: It was – everything
It was all so hopeless

QUEENIE: Now that's enough of that

Let me tell you something.
A week after it happened -
The bombing, you know –
We'd got the rubble all cleared up
The windows were back in
But we hadn't done the painting
And we hadn't any stools -
Anyway, it was just before we opened
There was a ringing on the bell.

I thought it must be post,
We'd had that many cards.
So I answered it.

There was these Asian lads
Standing on the step
I hate to say it, but my first thought was
Here comes trouble, it's happening again
So I went to shut the door
But this lad holds out his hand
He's got this most ginormous card
And he says,
We wanted you to know
We're all so very sorry.
We live in Brick Lane
We use East London Mosque
We know what it feels like.

And one of the lads
- Handsome lad he was –
Held out his arm
To show me the scar

Well, I cracked up
Cried me eyes out
These lads, well, they don't like gays

Where they come from, do they?
But here they were
We'd all been through it
Of course I asked them in
And made a cup of tea.

That's what kept me going
Through the months after
The memory of their kindness
What we'd all been through together.

So what are you going to do?

JODIE: So what are you going to do now?
There'll be a funeral...

FRANKIE: I should go to that

JODIE: There'll be hundreds there
You'll know a lot of them

FRANKIE: Yes.

QUEENIE: They've all been missing you

FRANKIE: It will bring back memories

QUEENIE: Good ones too.

FRANKIE: They haven't seen me
Seen what I look like –

QUEENIE: You think they give a shit?

JODIE: Andrew may be there

FRANKIE: I can't let him see me
I'll disgust him

QUEENIE: He's changed a lot
Look, do you want to hope?
Do you want a future?

You have to believe in yourself
In other people,
That they can be good.
You have to go

FRANKIE: You're right. I have to go.
Give me the crutches

JODIE: Are you sure?

FRANKIE: I'm going in there on my own two feet

[JODIE hands him the crutches.]

QUEENIE: Don't forget to do your face

[JODIE finds a tissue, and takes off the 'scar' make-up. FRANKIE is his handsome self again.]

JODIE: You see? Skin deep.
You're still the same inside

FRANKIE: Let's go

QUEENIE: Good luck, chuck.

[QUEENIE and JODIE push the wheelchair out of the way, so there is a bare stage. Light floods from the rear, as FRANKIE very slowly and painfully, but determined, moves towards it on his crutches. QUEENIE, JODIE and the MEDIC frame him. Offstage choir – recorded - starts a Vocalise.]

JODIE: You can do it

QUEENIE: You can do it

MEDIC: Have the will

CHOIR: The world is waiting and it wants you

JODIE: Forget the pain

QUEENIE: This is more important

[FRANKIE stops for a moment to get his breath back. They are worried he's giving up]

MEDIC: No, don't give up.

JODIE: Don't turn back

QUEENIE: We've all got to keep going

CHOIR: Believe, believe

QUEENIE: Remember – you survive

FRANKIE: I survive

QUEENIE: You're alive

FRANKIE: I'm alive

JODIE: FRANKIE, I believe in you

MEDIC: The doctors are so proud of you

QUEENIE: You do my memory proud

CHOIR: The doors are open for you.
Hands reach out
To steady and support you.
We have been a crime, a sin, disease.
But we defy the judges and the doctor and the priest,
We have come through AIDS,
Through bombs and knives and guns and hate.
And still we come through strong
And stronger yet and stronger
For we are one.

JODIE/MEDIC: We're with you, with you all the way

CHOIR: Your family is awaiting you

QUEENIE: We are your family

We always were

JODIE: We are your family

QUEENIE: If you come through
You help to guarantee
I'll never be forgotten

MEDIC: You boys inspire me so
Your courage is a marvel

QUEENIE: You remember
You bear witness
Even as you mourn

[FRANKIE stops again, and feels his face with wonder]

FRANKIE: I'm alive

CHOIR: Skin deep, skin deep

JODIE: You are the same you always were
You're FRANKIE and I love you

CHOIR: We still have work to do
We need to work with you
There is work to be done
There are rights to be won
We are not there yet
So near yet so far

QUEENIE: We must be kind to one another

FRANKIE: This is the way, there is no other

JODIE: From heart to heart
Deep inside
Reach out to your people
To your tribe

QUEENIE: Go for it, handsome
You're going home

CHOIR: Home, home
Home is waiting for you
Home will welcome you
You're coming home.

[The music comes to a climax. Fade to -]

BLACKOUT