

ALS20 (SS 6/7/89)

QU: Could you tell me about your home circumstances, where you live, with your parents or whatever?

AN: Well, I don't live with my parents; I live, it's like a shared house. It's my friend's, she's been there about five years, she owns the house, and her boyfriend lives there as well, and I rent a room.

QU: Anybody else there?

AN: Well, my friend LAURA, she's expecting twins in a few days, so there'll be twins there soon as well.

QU: Is there going to be room for you and twins?

AN: Well, it's quite a big house.

QU: How do you feel about suddenly living with twins?

AN: I really like living there. I mean I don't particularly like the idea of living with two crying babies..(011)..

(phone)

QU: You were talking about the twins...

AN: Oh yeah, well I really like living there and everything, because it's really, I mean rented accommodation is getting really expensive these days, I mean it used to be pretty cheap. It's getting expensive now. Like, the way the dole's going, you know you've got to pay so much out of your dole money towards your rent. So..(016)..a few pounds..I paid more..(017)..And it's like really nice, it's centrally heated, it's got a shower and a washing machine..

QU: You get used to all that!

AN: ..(018)..

QU: How long have you been living there?

AN: Since September.

QU: And where did you live before?

AN: I was in (?)London before that. I was there training to be a nurse.

QU: Tell me about school. How old are you?

AN: I'm 23, yeah. Well, I left school when I was 16, and went to sixth form college for a year; I started my 'A' levels then.

QU: Was this in London?

AN: No, this was in Manchester, Salford. At [NAME OF COLLGE]. And then I left after a year, got fed up of it, and went on the dole. And then I went on a YTS for a year doing a Community Care course, which is like working for children and old people. And then after that I got a job with, do you know (?)OLD PEOPLE'S HOME in Prestwich?

QU: Yes! What were you doing there?

AN: Well, it was the only job I could find!

QU: A friend of mine used to work there years ago, I bet it hasn't changed that much.

AN: It's so, they're just so strict them nuns. I mean I'm not a Catholic or anything, I'm not particularly religious, but I needed a job. The money was just so bad, because I was only about 18 at the time; I was the youngest person working there, and they put me on to like £1.60 an hour. And they had me working like seven days a week. Because you needed to work seven days a week to earn yourself enough money to live on. And they

just used to have me doing, I mean you just couldn't sit down for one minute, they were on your back all the time.

QU: It's terrible.

AN: You know, they thought you ought to go to Church with them.

QU: How long did you stick there?

AN: I stuck it for just over a year.

QU: That's not bad.

AN: I was desperate. And then that's when I went down to London. And I did my training to be an FCN for two years.

QU: Where did you do that?

AN: Do you know [NAME OF BOROUGH]? It's in South East London, a hospital there. And I qualified last May, and then I worked over the summer, doing agency work. And then I came back to Manchester in September and went to [NAME OF COLLEGE].

QU: So why the shift again? Were you disillusioned with nursing?

AN: Oh God yes.

QU: Why did you do it in the first place?

AN: I mean, well I sort of like, after I left sixth form college, and went on the dole and everything, they were really hassling me, saying - You've got to go on a YTS or we're going to cut your dole. And like the only one available was this Community Care one. But I was quite interested in it anyway, so I went on that. And it was more or less that same work, sort of Care Assistant in old people's homes. And then I went on to do that OLD PEOPLE'S HOME. It just sort of carried on from there. It was sort of an excuse to get away from Manchester in a way. Because I was a bit sick of it, and I wanted to go away and meet different people, see..(054). I mean that was part of the reason.

QU: Did you have the time and energy to see anything other than [NAME OF BOROUGH] when you were in London?

AN: Yeah, yeah, I knew sort of the South East of London..(058)..

QU: So what disillusioned you into coming back to Manchester and going back to college?

AN: Well, like I'd had sort of four years of this sort of caring for people; I felt I'd had enough of it. I don't know, I don't think young people should be doing that, because I got into that when I was only 17. And, I don't know, most young people like, are dead hopeful about the future and everything. Like seeing all these dead people, dying people all the time, and old people..

QU: It's really depressing..

AN: It's really depressing..(066)

QU: You worked with Geriatrics quite a lot?

AN: Yeah, well I mean like most people in hospital are obviously, because those are the people that get in, even if it's just not a Geriatric ward, it's just a Medical Surgical ward. Most of them are old people.

QU: So you've done that.

AN: I didn't like nursing. I think it's like the way people treat you, it's.. I was sort of embarrassed telling people I was a nurse, because people have got this sort of stereotype of nurses: either, either you're an angel, or you're a good lay. All (?)they see are two stereotypes of nurses. It used to be really embarrassing telling people. They don't understand, you're just normal people, you know.

QU: So why did you come back to Manchester?

AN: Well, I wanted to do my 'A' levels, I really wanted to do them, and..

QU: What triggered that?

AN: Well, I really regretted giving them up in the first place. And I just thought it to.. (081)..again, because I quite like being a student, I like studying anyway.

QU: Did you not think about staying in London?

AN: Well, I was going to, but it was just too expensive. And like I got offered, one of my friend's said - you can come and move in here..(084)..

QU: So which 'A' levels are you doing?

AN: I'm doing Sociology, Psychology and Biology.

QU: And you've just finished your first year?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Sorry I have to sit up, my voice is getting quieter and quieter; the person that transcribes this is going to go mad! What happens next, are you heading for something, or are you just doing your 'A' levels and see what happens?

AN: I wasn't too sure actually when I started what I wanted to do, but I was thinking I might go on to Polytechnic. Just a thought really. I'd quite like to do that.

QU: What to do?

AN: Well, probably Sociology. I'd quite like to do Religious Studies, but I'm not too, I don't really know much about it. Because when I first started my 'A' levels I was doing Religious Studies 'A' level.

QU: (?)I did that.

AN: Did you? (?)Highly interesting..

QU: Because I teach the Sociology of Religion here, and we've got a joint degree; it's half Religious Studies and half Sociology.

AN: Yeah, I was thinking of something like that, mind you I don't really want to do it in Manchester.

QU: Well, there's lots of places do it.

AN: Yeah. When you do a joint degree, is it half a Sociology degree and half a Religious Studies?

QU: It varies, yes, quite often. But sometimes it's a bit more integrated than that. I mean, here it's Comparative Religion, which has quite a lot of sociological aspects to it. And then there's the Sociology of Religion courses, so there's quite a lot of linking.

AN: Yeah.

QU: It varies. When we've finished we can have a talk about it. What about your family, are they still in Salford?

AN: Yeah, they live...(107).. Well like I grew up in Salford, like the inner city, sort of.. (108)..until I was 13. We lived in like these really old houses, you know, like the old back-to-backs. And like the Council were pulling them down. So they moved us out into ..(110)..which is like, just part of..(111). And my mum still lives there..and, well my sister, she's just left..(112)..

QU: Oh..

AN: She's just got a baby.

QU: How old is she?

AN: She's 19 now. And she had a baby when she was 17.

QU: So it's quite a big move?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Do you see much of them?

AN: Yeah, I didn't get to see..(116)..

QU: Right. So, tell me what the most important relationships in your life are at the moment.

AN: Just my friends really, I've got a best friend, SALLY. My family as well, and the people I live with. Just friends really.

QU: What about sexual relationships, are you involved with anybody?

AN: No, not at the (?)moment...(124).

QU: Is that a good thing?

AN: Yeah.

QU: What about the past?

AN: I've been out with quite a lot of blokes, but I've never had like a serious relationship, and I don't really want one. I mean it might seem stupid, at 23, I don't feel ready for it..

QU: No!

AN: But you see these sort of 15, 16 year olds in these like steady relationships.

QU: They think it's everything, that it's all sorted out.

AN: I never seem to be able to cope with that, I'm sure I could cope with it now.

QU: Well, I'm 36 and I can't cope with it. Tell me about the relationships you have had. Will it help to do it chronologically?

AN: Right. Well, the first boy I went out with was when I was at school. It was MICHAEL, and it was just like really off and on. It was just because you had to have a boyfriend at school. And like you had to go along the canal bank with them every Friday. And that was off and on from the start of my third year to the fifth year, but you know, it was so off and on. I don't think I ever really knew him. It was just sort of holding hands, nothing any more serious. And then, I don't know, oh yeah, then I went out with, that was a pretty steady boyfriend, when I was about 16. But he was a lot older than me. It was just like if you've got to go out with somebody..(148)..

QU: How old was he?

AN: He was 30 and I was 16. Like he'd been in loads of trouble with the police, and been in and out of prison all his life. And he'd been in the Navy, and like travelled the world. He came from London actually, but I forget (?)where I met him in Manchester.

QU: So he was dangerous..?

AN: Yeah!

QU: Was it dangerous and exciting?

AN: Yeah, he got me into some bad trouble.

QU: Did you think you were going to reform him?

AN: No, I wanted him to reform me! I thought he was, I don't know, I'd never met anyone who wasn't from Salford, that was it, that's all I knew was Salford, and people from Salford, and the lads from school were just little boys really. Like he was the first person I'd met who'd ever done anything.

QU: Where did you meet him?

AN: Well, I used to have this job, I only did it for a few weeks. It was when I was in the lower sixth, it was a job after school. It was a really crap job, it was going round selling pens. It was somewhere in Piccadilly..(165).. I used to go there every night after school, they used to give me loads of pens, they'd normally take you to the middle of nowhere,

and you had to go round in twos knocking on people's doors. It was really quite good, like these pens, you could buy them for about 5p in the shop. There was like a bunch of four for a pound, and you had to sell them. And like he was working, he was sort of like a friend of the boss. It was all a bit of a con..

QU: It's alright, this isn't going any further. There's no way that a copper is going to come and identify you. How long did you go out with him for?

AN: It was about three months or something like that. It's about the longest I've ever been out with anybody.

QU: How did he treat you?

AN: More like a father than anything I suppose, he was very protective. I quite like that because I've never had a dad really. And like it was this exciting thing, like he'd done everything..(182)..

QU: Was that a sexual relationship?

AN: Yeah, I lost my virginity to him.

QU: Was that OK, was that what you wanted?

AN: I did want it, but, well, I thought I wanted it at the time, but now I'm not so sure whether I really did.

QU: What's made you rethink it?

AN: I don't know, like when I think back to the day I lost my virginity, it seems so sordid and ugh, like really horrible. Like this young 16 year old and this old man in his crummy flat in Salford.

QU: Not the kind of romantic image?

AN: No!

QU: It very rarely is, I think.

AN: But, I was so desperate at the time to like lose my virginity.

QU: What about him, did he expect you to have sex with him?

AN: Yeah, I should think so.

QU: How long did you wait?

AN: About a month.

QU: Presumably he was quite sexually experienced?

AN: Oh yeah.

QU: Did you feel bad at the time?

AN: Er..

QU: Did it change the relationship?

AN: No, I don't think it changed the relationship. I don't know, I thought I'd feel different afterwards, but I didn't really. ..(203)..

QU: Did you enjoy it?

AN: No way.

QU: ...(206)..

AN: It's horrible.

QU: Lots of people say that as well. Really horrible?

AN: It was really painful, that's all I remember about him. I just wanted him to get it over and done with.

QU: Definitely not the romantic image. Did it get better? I'm assuming you did it again?

AN: Slightly, yeah. It did get a bit better, but I don't think I could really relax that much. And that's why.

QU: Did you feel you didn't know what was expected of you? Just wasn't sure..?

AN: Yeah, I wasn't really sure what I was doing or anything really. And he wasn't that helpful at explaining things.

QU: Not a talkative type?

AN: Oh, he was, he was quite (?)friendly.

QU: So how did that end?

AN: He went off to join an oil rig in the North Sea or something.

QU: So then what?

AN: That's the only real sort of longish relationship I've had in a way I suppose, that was just purely sexual, and not just really good friends beforehand. But then between being sort of 17 and 18, there was like me and a group of friends going to the clubs every week down Manchester. And it was like you had to cop off with a bloke every week. I mean I don't, I never slept with any of them, but you had to get a bloke. It was like, you know that questionnaire you gave us, with, was it a box that said 'Relationship which did not include sexual intercourse', you know, it was a one-night stand.. Well, I mean, I didn't really know what to put in mine! Because I was sitting there thinking, I was thinking it was like over a two-year period we did that, and you had to get a bloke every week; and that's 100 to start with! I thought - I can't put 100 down, so I put five down! It was really embarrassing, because we were in our Sociology class, and there was loads of people there, and I couldn't really ask, what actually did it mean. I mean, does it mean just sort of a kiss?

QU: Yes, I suppose, something that was potentially a sexual relationship, or in the context of a sexual relationship..

AN: So, it would count then?

QU: I suppose like picking blokes up is partly sexual.

AN: That was really hard, to answer the questionnaire.

QU: It is difficult, I appreciate that. We've sorted it out, about 105 would be accurate. What about other men that you've slept with, or had sexual intercourse with?

AN: I've had quite a few one-night stands, sort of on holiday and things like that, or when I was living in London. And I think I put down four or something..(257)..And there was another bloke I was going out with. I mean, that was more of friends. It was really funny because I went down to London, and..(261).. this bloke that I'd been going out with, and slept with..(262). And then like these blokes once a week. I never sort of, during that period went out with anybody steady. And then, I don't know, I was just used to blokes really treating me bad I suppose. I mean I did have one more one-night stand, in Manchester. Well, I had 105...probably what I slept with in the end, d'ya know what I mean? Slept with hundreds.. What was I saying? I was like really used to blokes treating me really bad, like I don't think I'd ever really had a bloke as a friend. Like they were all sort of sexually orientated, and not much between us in sort of friendship ways. But I went down to London, and like I met this lad, JOHN, and I couldn't believe it because he just wanted to be my friend. It was really amazing. And he was really nice to me, like he was really interested in me. Just amazing really.

QU: Why not! The question is, why isn't it like that more often? So that didn't become a sexual relationship?

AN: Well, I sort of went out with him, but I never had sex with him. It was like really close, I mean it was closer than any of the others I'd ever been with. It was probably the closest I've ever been to a man.

QU: Does that give you more faith, that you could positive relationships?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Are you still in touch with him?

AN: No, I did lose touch with him, he had another girlfriend. Because he was like living in a nurses' home as well, but he was a Polytechnic student, because they used to have Polytechnic students in the nurses' home as well.

QU: What would you say you were looking for at the moment? Do you feel that you don't want a relationship, or you don't want any sex, or..?

QU: Sometimes I do think - Oh yeah, it would be nice to have a boyfriend, because like people make you feel odd if you haven't got one. Like there's something wrong with you, and it's so many people. Very few people understand it, some girls, women don't want to have a boyfriend or a relationship, but like to the majority of women or men that's so difficult to understand. They think you're a lesbian or there's something wrong with you. You know, you..(305).

QU: So it's the pressure you feel?

AN: I would like to have a relationship, I think, but a very sort of casual relationship. Not sort of like, I mean I see, most of my friends have got these really really steady boyfriends, 24 hours a day relationships. I mean they have to do everything with their boyfriends. And I really don't want anything like that ever. All my friends are like that.

QU: It must be very difficult for you to see them then?

AN: Yeah, it is. Like if you go down the pub the boyfriends are always there, with his mates.

QU: Are these friends that go way back, that haven't left Manchester?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Have you still got friends in London?

AN: Yeah. But I mean I do feel that I want like I suppose a casual boyfriend.

QU: Someone that's not going to put a lot of pressure on you?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Tell me a bit more about how you feel about sex and sexuality. You said it wasn't that good with that guy, has it been better with men since? Is it something that's important to you?

AN: No, it's not that important. Yeah, it's been a bit better, but..

QU: Not all it's cracked up to be?

AN: But I mean it probably would be different, supposing, if you were in love with somebody, or if you knew somebody better.

QU: Yes, it's very variable; I'm not making any judgement, sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't.

AN: It depends what sort of relationship you've got. I mean I have enjoyed it quite a few times, sort of one-night stands or like in pretty casual relationships. I mean it's more just a physical thing, just physical..(340).

QU: You'd like to engage your head?

AN: I mean a lot of the time, I've just had sex with people because, because I've thought it's expected of me, I've got to do this.

QU: Is that something you think a lot of women feel, have you talked to friends about that?

AN: Yeah, yeah, I think a lot of women do feel that.

QU: How does that make you feel afterwards, do you wish you hadn't, or do you think - oh, that's just the way it is?

AN: Yeah, sometimes it makes you feel like sick. You know, sort of upset..

QU: Quite confused?

AN: Yeah.

QU: To get into a situation where you're so physically close to someone, but don't know them, can be confusing.

AN: Yeah.

QU: What about contraception in your case?

AN: Usually condoms, or first of all we used the withdrawal method. He wasn't very responsible, this man.

QU: How did that work?

AN: I've never been pregnant so..

QU: So it worked in that sense. But did it worry you?

AN: No, not at that point.

QU: Did you just expect it to be alright?

AN: Yeah, I had the sort of feeling, it will never happen to me. Like with this bloke, the 30 year old, he was saying, you know - 'oh, I know what I'm doing. I won't get you pregnant'. So I (?)believed it.

QU: Does that make you angry looking back?

AN: I think that's just the way you..(369). I mean I think he believed that he wasn't going to get me pregnant.

QU: It wasn't just being horrible to you.

AN: But I mean the fact that really he could have done.

QU: But it didn't so put it down to experience. Have you always used a condom since?

AN: There have been times when I haven't used anything. That sounds really stupid, doesn't it?

QU: No, I'm not sitting in judgement.

AN: No, but it does looking back now.

QU: Loads of us get into those sort of situations. I'm interested in why you took that risk. I'm assuming you didn't want to be pregnant?

AN: No.

QU: So why?

AN: I don't know, at first, you just really thought - oh, it'll never happen to me. I mean really believing that it wouldn't.

QU: It hasn't!

AN: ...(386)..

QU: When you did use condoms, did they have them, or did you have them? Was it difficult?

AN: No, I just said, you know, use a condom.

QU: So it wasn't that you were afraid to ask?

AN: Oh no, I would never be afraid to ask.

QU: So the times when you didn't, why not?



AN: I didn't ask, I just didn't think. I just thought with them not coming inside you, you weren't going to get pregnant.

QU: So this was when you were using withdrawal?

AN: Yeah.

QU: It's a bit of a game of Russian Roulette, I certainly wouldn't recommend it as a method of contraception. But you don't have any difficulty asking them to use condoms?

AN: No, I always ask, perhaps I would've, I don't know, I can't remember..(403).. I mean I certainly wouldn't now.

QU: Would you carry them around thinking you might have sex?

AN: No, I don't think I'd be able to go in the shop and buy them.

QU: Why?

AN: I'd be too embarrassed.

QU: Do you think that would be any easier if they sold them in different places?

AN: Well, they do, they do sell them in vending machines and toilets sometimes, don't they? But not many places do. I think I'd still be embarrassed.

QU: Do you think it's wrong that there's a situation that makes you feel embarrassed?

AN: Yeah...(416)..

QU: Do you think women in general feel embarrassed?

AN: Yeah, I don't know any woman among my friends that would go in the chemist and buy a packet of condoms, in general. It's just seems the male role, the man should go in and buy them. I'm not saying that's right.

QU: What about other forms of contraception, if you were in a situation where it was appropriate, would you do anything else?

AN: I think condoms would probably be like the most safest thing these days, with AIDS and that. And stops you getting cervical cancer.

QU: It does protect you.

AN: Yeah. I mean I'd never go on the pill; it just ruins your body.

QU: Tell me where you found out about things. What sort of sex education did you get at school?

AN: We got, learnt about sort of sexual intercourse at Junior school..

QU: At Junior School!

AN: Yeah, which I thought was a bit early really.

QU: What did they tell you? How babies were made?

AN: (?)I didn't understand that.. Yeah, I remember this teacher coming in and giving us a little talk on it, which I didn't understand at all. And the only thing that stuck in my mind, that I understood, was her saying that you can have a baby from the age of ten, and I was about ten at the time, and thinking – 'Oh my God, I can have a baby!' - That's the only bit I understood.

QU: They didn't explain about periods very well then?

AN: Oh no, there was nothing about periods in it, I didn't know anything about periods at that stage. And I really didn't understand how the baby got there in the first place. The only thing that stuck in my mind was that it was possible that me, at ten years old, could have a baby. And then, like on three consecutive weeks, we watched some videos, which weren't too bad actually. They showed this woman giving birth, and they showed these adolescent girls and boys with no clothes on.

QU: Was this a mixed group of juniors?

AN: Yeah, sort of fourth year juniors. And that was it.

QU: That was supposedly preparing you for changes in your body.

AN: I think it was quite good on..(465)..the Junior school, because I think they knew that the secondary school I was going to didn't do any sex education. So I think they were trying to prepare you. I mean I left that school in the second year or something anyway.

QU: Secondary school?

AN: Yeah, because we moved.

QU: What sort did you get after that?

AN: I remember some kind, I think it was my second year at this other school, getting a talk on periods. ..(478).. I think it was very technical..

QU: So it hadn't happened to you at the time?

AN: No, I mean I was so innocent; I don't think I really knew what a period was until I was about 14.

QU: Was that when yours started?

AN: I started when I was 15.

QU: Did your mum tell you anything?

AN: She had a go once. I think she'd got this book from somewhere, I don't know, about periods. She was really embarrassed about it. I think I got sent home from school one day when I was about 13 or something..(488).. it wasn't that, it was just..(489). So she sat me down, and said - There's something you should know. And she gave me this booklet to read; she was going really red and flustered and everything. Told me to read this booklet, because I was so embarrassed I wasn't taking any of it in. She went - Do you understand it? - Yeah, yeah. And that was it.

QU: So where did you get anymore useful information?

AN: Just off friends, and reading Jackie magazines. Jackie magazines were quite good actually. They're really sexist but they were good for things like that.

QU: Basic information?

AN: Yeah. And just listening to playground talk.

QU: What about AIDS, anything about that at school?

AN: I don't remember anything about AIDS, but I don't think it was such a big thing then.

QU: You went to school nearly six years ago?

AN: Well, I left school in 1982.

QU: Yeah, it's very unlikely.

AN: Yeah, I don't remember anything.

QU: Tell me a bit about what you know about AIDS.

AN: About AIDS?

QU: Yeah, whatever.

AN: Well, you can get AIDS through having sexual intercourse with somebody, or if you're exchanging body fluids, which can be blood or anything. Or through injecting with needles, somebody else has used before. It goes to your immunity system; it's not the actual AIDS that kills you, it goes to your immunity system, so you get things like pneumonia which can kill you.

QU: What about the difference between AIDS and HIV?

AN: If you're HIV+, that means you've got the AIDS virus in your blood, but you haven't actually got the disease. AIDS is when you've got the full-blown disease.

QU: Where have you got that information from, from nursing?

AN: No, (?)there isn't much about it in nursing. Just through reading things in magazines, and sort of leaflets.

QU: Is it something that concerns you? You said that condoms were best because of AIDS, is it something that's had an effect on how you behave?

AN: What, in my sex life?

QU: Yeah.

AN: It hasn't, no, not really. I think it will do in the future, yeah. It just doesn't seem real, AIDS, to most people.

QU: Do you still think - It won't happen to me?

AN: Yeah, it's like getting pregnant - oh, it won't happen to me. But I mean, people take no notice of taking contraceptives to stop them getting pregnant. And pregnancy's more of a real threat than AIDS. Because you know people who got pregnant by mistake, but you don't know anyone that's got AIDS.

QU: Don't you know anyone that might be HIV+?

AN: I don't think so. I might do, but I don't know anyone that has.

QU: Do you know people that you think might be at risk?

AN: Yeah, I know quite a few people that I've thought are at risk.

QU: From what source, from sexual practice..?

AN: Yeah.

QU: ..Or drugs?

AN: From their sexual practice.

QU: Do you see yourself as someone who takes risks? You talked about this guy who seemed dangerous..

AN: That was before..(573)

QU: Tell me about now.

AN: Now?

QU: What risks do you think you'd take?

AN: Umm.

QU: Do you smoke?

AN: I drink a lot.

QU: A lot?

AN: Well..

QU: What do you mean?

AN: I mean I do binge sort of once a week, and that's it, get really pissed. And then that's it for another week. I don't know, I mean I've just got a really low alcohol threshold; about three bottles of Pils and I'm just..(584).

QU: That makes it cheaper!

AN: Yeah. I don't suppose I drink that much really, it's supposed to be 14 units a week, and I don't drink that much. I mean I think I used to when I was, I used to drink a lot more. It was nearly every night drinking.

QU: That was to do with the lifestyle you were in?

AN: Well yeah. Sort of living in the nurses' home, it was..(595).

QU: Anything else you'd see as risk taking?

AN: As risk taking? Yeah, I suppose, I quite like the excitement of taking risks. Just stupid things like not paying the right bus fare.

QU: Well I go rock-climbing!

AN: Well, it's a risk, isn't it? Like me and my friend went out the other week, and we just like go out of our heads and everything. We were in this club, 42nd St, have you ever been there?

QU: I've heard of it.

AN: It was crap anyway, I'm not going back. And it was at the end of the night, and we was well out of it. And we were in the toilets, and you know those Tampax machines with a box of three Tampax in them, well there was this massive big box with these Tampaxes, these little boxes of Tampaxes, that were just lying there. So we were just sort of chucking them in our bags and in our pockets. And it wasn't because I can't afford to buy any Tampax..

QU: They were there?

AN: Yeah!

QU: Should be free anyway.

AN: Yeah, it was just sort of the risk of, this is a bit of excitement. And sort of like, just getting chatted up by blokes and everything, I mean you're taking risks there.

QU: Getting yourself into a situation you can't handle?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Has that ever happened, have you ever actually been in a situation where you've thought – 'Shit! What am I going to do?'?

AN: I nearly got into one on Saturday night. Like me and this same friend, my best friend SALLY, went into town and we went to a club. And then afterwards we went up to Chinatown for a meal. And we were just talking to these blokes, they were just like talking to us, these lads at the next table. We were just sort of being friendly, talking back, I mean I didn't fancy them or anything. Like it got to about four o'clock and this place was closing, and we said - we've got to go now. And they were being really stupid, these blokes - You can't go, you can't go, you've got to come to the press... (647)..whatever that is. And like they nicked my friend's shoes and everything. So we told this sort of Chinese waiter, but he didn't want anything to do with it. And by this time the restaurant had emptied, and these Chinese waiters were in the back..(652). And so my friend got her shoes back, and we said - we've got to go, got to go. And they were following us and everything. And like, the restaurant was sort of there, and then you went down this corridor, and there was this door to go out there, and the toilets were right next to it. And so we just ran into the toilets, like they were really really pestering us. We ran into this toilet cubicle..got shit..(660). And they came in the toilets, and they were sort of banging around in the toilets, going - Come on, come out. And we just didn't know what to do, we were looking for a window to climb out and everything. And we just had to stay there for about half an hour. Because there was no way we could get any help, because this restaurant was right down the corridor at the back, so there was nobody around, and it was like four o'clock. Luckily it was starting to get light by that time, so we didn't feel so frightened. Sort of thinking - oh they've gone.

QU: You don't need it, do you really?

AN: No. It pisses me off that attitude, that because you've talked to somebody. I just get it so much, it really pisses me off.

QU: Do you think that's what men think generally?

AN: I think a lot of men do, I don't think all men do. But I mean..(682).

QU: So you've got to be thinking three steps ahead all the time?

AN: Yeah, I mean you just can't be friendly, so you know they don't think..(687).

QU: Where do you see yourself headed? You said you'd like to go back into education, perhaps university or wherever?

AN: Yeah, what I'd like to do is finish my 'A' levels. I mean, after that..I don't know. I mean, I'd really like to see a bit of the world, go and travel the world. I was supposed to be on, stayed on a kibbutz last summer..(700-701)..

QU: Do you know a lot of people that have done that?

AN: Yeah, I've spoken to quite a few people that have done that, and they've said it's really good. But I mean some people have got pretty bad stories about it.

QU: It really depends where you go; if you end up in a war zone, it can be very heavy.

AN: But some kibbutz sound really nice.

QU: Would you say you generally felt positive?

AN: About the..(714)?

QU: About going on any track you wanted?

AN: Yeah, I feel positive; I guess it's all to do with how you do feel, what happens. I'm not one of these people that just sit back and let things happen. Because I had this conversation with my mum on Sunday. Like she's really one of these people who just, I don't know, ..(727)..is a working-class fatalistic attitude, like she really is. I mean like it seems it's only working-class people.

QU: She just feels that she has got no control?

AN: Yeah, I mean she really does, she believes that the day you're born, like, your book's written and your life is written for you. So whatever happens is going to happen anyway; you've got no individual life.

QU: She really operates like that?

AN: Yeah, I feel sorry for her, because she's never done anything.

QU: ...(742)..?

AN: Yeah, well like she didn't get married until she was really, she was 35, 36 when she got married. And like she'd lived at home with my grandma the whole of that time. And she'd worked in the same factory since she left school, and so she'd led a really sheltered life.

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..she was only three months old. And so she had a really tough time, because he didn't pay any maintenance to her. Because like as soon as they got divorced, he went to live with this other woman, and had three more kids by her.

QU: So that confirmed your mother's belief that life was going to shit on her basically?

AN: Yeah, by the sound of it, yeah.

QU: What were you saying to her about trying to change her mind about this?

AN: I think we were talking about my sister to begin with. Yeah, we were saying.. Because my brother and sister have got this attitude as well that, just really sort of passive, no ambition at all sort of attitude. I think it's just such a shame.

QU: Why do you think you're different?

AN: I don't know.

QU: Going to a different school, or having different sorts of friends?

AN: The same sorts of friends, not different. I mean all my friends are like that now, the friends that I know from school and sixth form college, like my friend SALLY and ANGELA and all that, are have just the same sort of attitude. They've all never done anything, they're all in the same jobs they did when they left school. They've always lived in Salford.

QU: That's it with getting out and going somewhere else; you build on it as you go along, don't you? There's a cumulative effect?

AN: Yeah, it makes you want to do more.

QU: It's just getting started.

AN: I think I left home very early; I left home when I was 16.

QU: How did that come about?

AN: Well, I was in the lower sixth, 16, and I wasn't getting on too well with my mum. Because we've always had a lot of problems in our family. It was like when my dad left, like he used to beat my mum up and everything, and then he left. And my mum had a lot of troubles, because like social security's quite bad, but it was even worse in them days. I mean my mum tells me, this was in 1970, she only had eight pounds a week to live on; she had to feed us all and clothe us, and pay the rent and everything. And so she always had a really bad time, and she got very very depressed. And she nearly had a nervous breakdown when we were younger...(795)..when I was about ten...(796). And like she used to hit us a lot, and shout at us, and stuff like that. So we've always had a lot of problems, and like we've always had social workers round our house and everything. And my brother was taken into care. I don't know, by the time I got to 16, I'd just had enough of it. Up until 16 I'd always taken it, I'd just been really passive about it. You know, she used to hit me, and shout at me, and I'd just sit there and take it. But at 16, I don't know, something inside me clicked, and I thought - I'm not going to take it anymore. I just started really rebelling against it. This is when I met this bloke, and started getting into trouble with the police and everything. Just stopped being a really good little girl; I actually got thrown out of sixth form.

QU: So where did you move out to?

AN: Well, I went to find my dad...(806)..

QU: And did you find him?

AN: Well, like I knew where he was. I mean he left when I was four, and like he used to come and see us about once a year, and stuff like that. I knew whereabouts he lived, he still lived in Salford. So I just phoned him up one day, I said - 'Look, I can't take any more, I'm leaving'. He said - 'Well, you can come and stay here for a bit'. But by this time he'd remarried and he had three more kids, and then there was another girl, who was just about a year older...(815)..living with them, who was his second wife's daughter, from the previous relationship.

QU: Quite a house full?

AN: Yeah, it was just a little sort of Council house in Salford, you know. But it was just obvious anyway; we didn't know each other, I'd never met these people before, they were my half brothers and sisters and I'd never met them. It was really weird. So he got in touch with our social worker, and she put me with these type of foster parent people. And I stayed with them for about three weeks. And then I went into a hostel until I was 17.

QU: Is that when you were getting into trouble with the police?

AN: Yeah.

QU: Did something click again, you say you were thrown out of sixth form? Did you think - I've got to stop?

AN: I think it was more gradual. I think the first time I'd been really passive before. And it was like really sudden. It was like just one day I thought - This is it - it just snapped. And I just changed like that, from being a really quiet person to this rebel. It was just like overflowing with hate. But I think it's because like I just got worse and worse and worse, and I was getting into more and more trouble. I just wasn't a very nice person. It was more gradual; I just sort of thought - I can't go on like this, you know, I'm not a very nice person, nobody likes..

QU: Did..(837)..?

AN: No, I didn't actually get to that..

QU: There wasn't somebody that was saying - well, this is..?

AN: No, there was nobody behind me sort of guiding me. Because my mum had disowned me at this point. There was this social worker, she was so crap. I think it was because I was 16, and so I was sort of an adult in their eyes really.

QU: Yeah, but they didn't quite know what to do with you at the same time, you fall between two stools.

AN: I think once you're over 16, I think you..(844).

QU: Can you look back on that experience and think - well, I've learnt..(847).. In terms of doing your 'A' levels now, doing Sociology, it must make a hell of a difference to the way you read some of that stuff?

AN: Yeah, yeah. I mean it's just everything else seems to help me solve the...(850)..the way to do it. I think that may have made me develop a more positive attitude, because I knew I was on my own, like I had to, whatever I did..

QU: ..Do it for yourself?

AN: Yeah.

(end tape: 855)