

About A Boy

By

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Nick Hornby

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OVER A BLACK SCREEN

We hear the voice of a GAMESHOW ANNOUNCER reading off a question.

GAMESHOW ANNOUNCER

The Question is -- who wrote the phrase, "No man is an island." Was it -- a) John Donne, b) John F. Kennedy, or c) John Bon Jovi.

1 INT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY

1

We open on a fishtank; or rather, THROUGH a fishtank, in which trendy, expensive tropical fish and miniature sharks swim (if we have a weird experience of scale -- i.e. that the sharks are really normal size sharks, that's okay, as a matter of fact, it's good.

WILL (V.O.)

Well that's an easy one. Definitely the most crap Bon Jovi lyric ever.

Through the fishtank, we see a trendy flat -- the home of a bachelor of independent means. We see WILL, 38, unattached, as he moves through it...

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The way I see it, every man is an island.

...Or rather, we see PIECES of him, not his face yet, as he strolls through his place getting ready to go out. Underneath the V.O., very quietly, we hear the patter of the game show continuing.

WILL V.O.

But the great thing is, there's never been a better time in history to be an island. Even fifty years ago, for instance, they didn't have daytime TV --

We see Will's hand loom into frame and turn off the TV.

WILL V.O. CONT'D

Or videos, or CD's, or home espresso makers, or glossy magazines with questionnaires about how cool you were and pictorials of scantily - clad models from Brazil.

As Will talks, we follow him as he goes to fetch his coat, and pass by various indications of his lifestyle.

(CONTINUED)

Christine thrusts baby Imogen into Will's hands. Will holds her gingerly away from his Prada shirt.

WILL (CONT'D)

She's...

(thinks; what are you supposed to say)

...delightful?

CHRISTINE

Isn't she?

WILL

Yes. But I think she smells my fear.
Perhaps you'd better...

Christine takes the baby back.

CHRISTINE

(cocks her head)

Imagine...she could have been yours, if you'd got your act together..

WILL

Your place looks marvellous.

They glance around the apartment, which looks like a hurricane hit it. Plastic toys all over the place. Videos strewn about. The white throw on the couch has a brown smear on it near where Will is sitting.

WILL (CONT'D)

I hope that's chocolate.

The joke doesn't register on Christine. JOHN, Christine's husband, comes into the room, carrying Barney, a hyperactive two-year-old.

JOHN

Say hello to Will, Barney!

WILL

(V.O.)

Oh God, it's the anti-Christ.

(out loud)

Hello, Barney. How are you.

JOHN

Barney's a right little devil today, and he's not too sure what to make of Imogen, but...he's lovely.

(CONTINUED)

WILL
(covering)
...Point of my life...very good
question...do you want that in five words
or less?

JOHN
She doesn't really mean it, Will. It's the
hormones. We just want you to be as happy
as we are.

John is trying to pry Barney's little hands off his throat.

WILL (V.O.)
*God, it's like a cult. They're trying to
recruit me.*

JOHN
Will, we wanted you to come over today, so
we could ask you...

CHRISTINE
...How would you like to be Imogen's
Godfather?

Christine and John smile at Will expectantly.

WILL
Christine. John. I am truly,
truly...touched. But you must be kidding.
I couldn't possibly think of a worse
godfather for Imogen. I'd drop her on her
head at the christening, then I'd forget
about her birthdays until her eighteenth,
when I'd take her out, get her drunk and
try to shag her. Seriously. Very bad
choice.

John and Christine look a little horrified.

CHRISTINE
I just...I always thought you had hidden
depths, Will.

WILL
But I don't. I really am this shallow.

Will smiles. We stay on the smile a beat too long as we hear a
metallic TICKING sound.

MARCUS (V.O.)

*Mum was disappointed about a lot of things.
At least that's how it seemed lately.*

(out loud)

*So...did Roger and you split up because he
liked McDonald's?*

FIONA

Of course not. Are you being funny?

MARCUS (V.O.)

*It was weird. Mum had known me my whole
life, so she must have known I was never
funny. Not on purpose anyway. It seemed
like a sensible question.*

6 INT. FIONA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - FLASHBACK, MORNING

6

We open tight on one of those odd trivia QUESTIONS that they put on the back of cereal boxes as a fun-and-games thing for kids, like, "When did Vasco De Gama cross the equator?" The V.O. continues as we see Marcus intently staring at the cereal box as we hear HUSHED MUTTERING in the background.

ROGER, forty or so, rumped and unshaven, walks out of the KITCHEN (we'll come to learn it's the kitchen of Marcus and Fiona's house) into the dining room, and looking at Marcus.

MARCUS (V.O.)

*Mum and Roger had a big row, then they'd
gone off into the kitchen to talk quietly.
Then Roger came out.*

Roger stands in front of Marcus, looking at him. He HOLDS OUT HIS HAND TO SHAKE. Marcus looks at him, takes his hand, and shakes it.

Roger heads out, stops, look back at Marcus, shakes his head, and leaves.

7 EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

7

We pick up Fiona and Marcus's walk, and their conversation.

MARCUS

Then why did you split up with Roger? Did he have another girlfriend?

FIONA

I don't think so.

MARCUS

Do you have another boyfriend?

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

A sheep.

FIONA

Right. And what does a sheep go?

MARCUS AND FIONA

(together)

BAAA.

Fiona smiles, starts straightening Marcus's tie. We see that the COOL KIDS are observing him.

MARCUS

*Then I realized she was about to kiss me
goodbye.*

We see Marcus straightening, looking over at the COOL KIDS.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*I decided to let her. Maybe it would make
her feel better.*

Fiona leans over and kisses Marcus goodbye. Marcus closes his eyes and lets it happen, taking pains not to wriggle away. But that's not enough for Fiona...she HUGS HIM TIGHTLY, as though he were going away for a year.

Marcus walks towards school, through some kids.

FIONA

(calls out)

Marcus --

(from the bottom of her soul)

I love you.

The COOL KIDS see everything...

MARCUS

(quietly)

I love you too...

Fiona heads off and Marcus turns and heads into school, past a few COOL KIDS, who SNIGGER as he passes and call after him in fake MUM VOICES --"I love love love you!", "Take good care, sweetie!", "Don't wet your pants!", etc. Marcus pretends to ignore them, but we can see the FEAR register on his face as he goes inside, past ELLIE, a punky girl with her own little clique, who pays him no attention.

8a EXT. TRENDY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

8a

Will walks down the street towards a trendy restaurant.

(CONTINUED)

10 EXT. ZOO - DAY

10

Angie looks on happily --

WILL (V.O.)

But she did buy my rubbish. For the next few weeks I was Will the Good Guy. Angie's kid took to me right away.

We can hear the SCREAMING laughter of a child -- and we pan to reveal --

WILL, HOLDING A THREE YEAR OLD UPSIDE DOWN BY HIS ANKLES.

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Mostly because on our first meeting I took him to the zoo and held him upside-down by his ankles. I wish relationships with proper human beings were that easy.

ANGIE

(laughing)

Will, you are brilliant.

WILL (V.O.)

And I came to realize that with single mums...

Angie walks out of frame and into --

11 INT. ANGIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

11

Angie's living room, which is in dark and sensual mode. Angie refreshes Will's glass of Barolo.

WILL (V.O.)

Particularly the ones who'd been messed around and eventually abandoned by the father of their children, you became, by comparison, well -- wonderful.

ANGIE

Will, you're a wonderful person.

WILL

Oh. Well...thank you.

Angie LUNGES for him, knocking the glass of wine out of his hands as she kisses him passionately...

(CONTINUED)

WILL (V.O.)
She didn't have a VCR or a satellite or cable, so we were always stuck watching some crap made-for-TV movie about a kid with a disease.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
(on TV)
I'm afraid there's nothing we can do.

WOMAN'S VOICE
(hysterical)
Oh God...Oh please, please no...

15 INT. TRENDY RESTAURANT - DAY

15

Will and Angie are eating. Will is thinking, trying to find the right time to broach something unpleasant.

WILL (V.O.)
I had to end it. But having been Will the Good Guy, I didn't relish going back to my usual role of Will the unreliable, emotionally stunted heartbreaker.

MATCH CUT FLASHBACK to various women sitting in seat where Angie is sitting.

OLD GIRLFRIEND #1
(cold)
I'm sorry, you're breaking up with me? You

OLD GIRLFRIEND #2
(crying)
-- self-centered bastard, I --

OLD GIRLFRIEND #3
(angry)
-- can't believe I wasted my time on you, you --

OLD GIRLFRIEND #4
(amazed)
-- useless superficial loser!

Will's look seems to be in response to the attacks.

ANGIE
Will...

We are back to the present: Will and Angie.

(CONTINUED)

17 INT. FIONA'S FLAT - KITCHEN - DAY

17

Fiona is CRYING HER EYES OUT. She looks like hell. SNOT dribbles from her nose. She barely has the energy to wipe it away.

MARCUS (V.O.)

I think Mum was depressed.

A mournful Joni Mitchell song about how you don't need a piece of paper from the City Hall to stay together is playing. We see Marcus looking at her his mouth open.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The crying had started again, and it scared me. Because now it was in the mornings. Before breakfast. She'd never done that before.

(aloud)

May I have some cocoa puffs?

FIONA

(crying)

...No...it's not Sunday...

MARCUS (V.O.)

She was still Mum, of course.

Fiona takes down a box of ANCIENT GRAINS cereal -- No Preservatives, No Added Sugar -- from the cupboard. She reaches up for a bowl, which is blocked by some hastily-stacked plates. This sends her into a fresh wave of tears.

MARCUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I couldn't figure it out. Nobody was dead. She had a job as a music therapist, which is a kind of teacher for sick kids, so there was enough money for food and everything. And she was the one who got rid of Roger.

(aloud)

Should I fix my own breakfast?

FIONA

No. I've got it.

Fiona pours milk over the cereal. The milk hits the cereal and splashes out onto the counter. This minor defeat brings another wave of anguish.

FIONA (CONT'D)

(crying)

Oh God...

(CONTINUED)

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17 CONTINUED: (2)

16.
17

FIONA (CONT'D)
...So...are you...looking forward to school
today?...

Fiona breaks into fresh tears before Marcus can answer.

18 INT. SCHOOLROOM - DAY

18

Marcus sits in class, looking at a math textbook as the teacher does a problem at the chalkboard.

We can see that Marcus's mind is wandering. As he begins to think of his Mum, he starts HUMMING the Joni Mitchell song she was playing that morning.

We see OTHER KIDS notice that Marcus is humming...jabbing others in the ribs. Soon everybody is noticing it...

But Marcus is oblivious. His humming gets louder, past the point of just humming-to-yourself humming...

And finally the TEACHER notices. Looks up. Marcus starts to sing.

MARCUS
(sings)
We don't neeeeed no piece of paper from
city hall --

He opens his eyes, sees that everyone is looking at him. Everyone bursts out LAUGHING at Marcus, including the teacher.

19 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

19

Marcus walks along the fence of the school's concrete exercise yard. Word has clearly gotten around, and everywhere he goes, kids are SINGING at him, throwing in nonsense words. Marcus keeps walking, trying to ignore them, and then stops in front of NICKY and MARK, two equally geeky-looking losers, who are the closest thing Marcus has to friends at this point.

MARCUS
Hi, Nicky, Hi Mark. Are you going to
Computer Club later?

A FOOTBALL slams into the fence near them. We follow the ball's return path to where --

Some older kids, led by the thuggish LEE HARTLEY, come up behind Marcus.

LEE HARTLEY
Oi, Madonna! Give us a song!

(CONTINUED)

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19 CONTINUED: (2) 18.
19

Time restarts and BOOM -- the ball hits him.

20 INT. TRENDY SUPERMARKET - DAY 20

Will wheels a cart down the aisle of the trendy supermarket he frequents.

WILL

(V.O., under this repeated)

It was all very well deciding that single mums were the future...

Will sees a beautiful woman with a little girl in tow. Smiles, starts edging towards her. The woman's husband joins her with carrying a packet of pasta. Will edges away, disappointed.

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...but the frustrating truth was that I didn't have any of their numbers. Where did they hang out?

20a EXT. NEWS KIOSK - DAY 20a

Will, buying magazines, sees a posterboard containing notices for flats, dog groomers, babysitters...and an advertisement for a local self-help group: a hand-written sign that says: "SPAT -- SINGLE PARENTS, ALONE TOGETHER". Meetings every Friday at 2.00 PM, All-Purpose Room, Clerkenwell Town Hall. *

21 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY 21

Will walks up to the local town hall. Takes a deep breath, sees a xerox copy of the sign we saw at the news kiosk.

WILL

(aloud, to himself)

I'm a single father. I have a two year old boy. I'm a single father. I have a two year old boy.

(VO)

SPAT. A veritable goldmine of single mums. I could see the beautiful creatures now, getting roaring drunk, forgetting their troubles, ready to rock and roll...

22 OMIT 22

23 INT. FUNCTION ROOM - DAY 23

We are in the middle of the circle of chairs, panning around as the various single Mums exchange stories of woe. They are not beautiful, and they are not drunk. One of them is wearing a Lorena Bobbitt t-shirt.

(CONTINUED)

We see that all the others are women, a wide assortment, but no-one fitting Will's bill. Except one. Suzie.

SUZIE
Just one, Jeremy. He's on holiday.

WILL
(relieved)
So his wife left too.

SUZIE
(shakes her head)
Jeremy's wife was killed in a car crash.

WILL
Oh.
(pause)
So I'm on my own.

Some sympathetic moans from the women. MOIRA, the one wearing the Lorena Bobbitt t-shirt, chips in.

MOIRA
(cheerily)
You got dumped, then?

WILL
(brightly)
Yes!
(then, wistfully)
Yes.

SUZIE
And does your ex see Ned?

WILL
Sometimes. Not that she's really bothered.

REACTIONS from the women. Will is pleased.

SUZIE
How does he cope with that?

WILL
(getting into it)
Oh, he's a good little boy. Very brave.
(pause, off their looks)
They have amazing resources, don't they?
Just yesterday, I was...thinking about my
ex, and he...he crawled right up to me, put
his pudgy little arms around my neck, and
said...Dad...it's okay, Dad.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO

Will is fascinatedly inspecting a BREAST MILK PUMP. Tentatively puts the cup to his chest.

CUT TO

Will is playing with a musical toy that plays "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" in doggy woofs, duck quacks, or sheep baaas, depending on which button you push. He's enjoying it.

CUT TO

Will inspecting some cans of baby food. Opens one and tries it. *
Not bad. *

CUT TO

The car seat area. Will ambles up to the shop assistant.

WILL

I'm looking for a car seat. *

ASSISTANT

What type are you looking for?

WILL

Dunno. Anything. The cheapest.
(laughs)

What do most people get?

ASSISTANT

Well, not the cheapest. Parents are usually worried about safety.

WILL

Ah. Yes. Not much point in saving a few quid if he ends up through the windscreen, is there?

ASSISTANT

(beat)

Yeah.

WILL

That's a cool one!

ASSISTANT

Of course even if you get a nice one, the kids mess them all up anyway with their sweets and all that.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS (V.O.)

I hated that SPAT lot. I mean, Mum's friend Suzie was fine, but now there was also this Wally who wanted to get off with her...

WILL

Okay. Pile in, everyone. Whoa, look what a mess Ned made of the car seat. Shame he can't come.

Marcus notices the dirty car seat, and the spotlessly clean interior of the rest of the car.

28 EXT. PARK - DAY

28

The picnic. Marcus strolls along besides Suzie.

SUZIE

What a bitch. Taking Ned off like that at the last moment. This is a nasty business, Will. You'll have to toughen up. You're too nice.

WILL

(savouring "too nice")
I know, you're right, she's...
(thinks)
A cow.

MARCUS

Mooooo.

Will looks at Marcus, who looks back blankly.

WILL (V.O.)

I was beginning to wonder if we were going to be stuck with this weird kid all day.

SUZIE

So...what do you do, Will?

WILL

Me? Well...

Will looks a bit sheepish.

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*There were already too many lies to keep track of. So I told the truth.
(real world)
Nothing.*

(CONTINUED)

SUZIE & MARCUS

(singing, together)

So just leave out the mince pies, and a
glass of sherry, and Santa will visit you,
and leave you feeling merry, Oh, ho ho ho,
hey hey hey, it's Santa's super sleigh,
Santa's super sleigh...

Will looks ashen.

SUZIE

I expect people always do that, don't they?

WILL

You two are the first, actually.

SUZIE

Sorry.

(pause)

But I don't understand. How does that make
money? Do carol singers have to pay you
ten percent?

WILL

They should, but you can't always catch the
little bastards. No, it's on every
Christmas album ever made. Elvis did it,
you know. The Muppets. And an American
punk band called Jesus Crotch.

(changes the subject)

So, Marcus, who's your favorite footballer?

MARCUS

I hate football.

WILL

Right. What a shame.

MARCUS

Why?

WILL

(beat)

Who are your favorite singers then?

MARCUS

(snorts)

Are you getting these questions out of a
book?

Suzie laughs. Will blushes, as Marcus walks a bit ahead.

(CONTINUED)

30 EXT. PARK - DAY

30

Nearby, Will and Suzie are sitting down on a blanket. Some wine has been consumed. Something in the air. In the background, kids from the picnic play.

SUZIE

You miss him, don't you?

WILL

Who? Ah. Ned. Yes. I do.

SUZIE

So...what does Ned look like?

WILL

Well...he looks like me. He got the short end of the stick.

SUZIE

I don't think it's the short end...

Will looks at Suzie. Suzie smiles at him. Will smiles back.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Uh...Uh...

Marcus is there, hopping from foot to foot, as if he's about to wet himself.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(upset)

I think I've killed a duck.

31 EXT. NEARBY - POND - DAY

31

Will, Suzie, Marcus and Suzie's little girl Megan stand by the side of the lake, looking at what is definitely a dead duck, floating upside-down in the water, its webbed feet sticking up in the air.

MARCUS

I was just trying to feed it.

WILL

What's that floating next to it? Is that your mum's bread?

We can see the loaf floating around near the duck. Marcus nods unhappily.

(CONTINUED)

The park-keeper, nonplussed, shakes his head.

PARK-KEEPER

(annoyed)

I'll have to wade in and get it.

And he heads off.

WILL

(calls after him)

I hope there's not some sort of epidemic.

(to Marcus)

I think we beat the rap, Marcus.

As soon as Will turns his back, Marcus smiles.

Then, over Will's shoulder, he sees FIONA. Standing on the other side of the pond. She's smiling and waving at him.

MARCUS

(to himself)

Mum.

Marcus turns to Suzie.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Suzie, look, it's --

Marcus turns round again, but Fiona isn't there anymore. Marcus looks confused.

32 EXT. FIONA'S FLAT - LATE AFTERNOON

32

Will pulls up in his car, and Marcus and he get out. Suzie gets out too, carrying Megan. They head to the front door.

MARCUS (V.O.)

That day, the Dead Duck Day, was when it all began.

33 INT. FIONA'S FLAT - FRONT DOOR - LATE AFTERNOON

33

The door opens, Marcus holding the key, Suzie and Megan and Will behind him.

MARCUS (V.O.)

That bloke Will just followed us in, and I didn't tell him not to.

Things have a sudden dreamlike quality. The textures of the entrance hall, the colors, seem a little off. They are walking up the stairs to the upper flat, where Marcus and Fiona live.

(CONTINUED)

SUZIE

How could you do this! You have a son!

Then Marcus sees the empty pill bottle. Suddenly Will seems to wake from his trance.

WILL

Marcus, where's the phone?

CUT TO:

35

EXT. THAMES EMBANKMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

35

From high above, we see Will's car driving along the embankment at high speed following an ambulance (HELICOPTER).

WILL (V.O.)

This was horrible, horrible...but driving fast behind the ambulance was pretty cool.

36

INT. WILL'S CAR - SAME

36

Will and Marcus sit in the front seat of Marcus's car. Will is racing after the AMBULANCE, trying to keep up. His tongue is out in concentration.

37

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

37

Suzie sits there in the waiting room, which is populated mostly with drunks -- stumbles, fistfights, DUI accidents. Will, unscratched in his modish clothes, is like a creature from another planet here.

WILL (V.O.)

I mean, granted, it wasn't quite up to the level of a good episode of E.R., but I couldn't help getting sucked in.

(out loud, brightly)

So what's happening?

SUZIE

(a little taken aback by Will's enthusiasm)

She's conscious. She was okay in the ambulance.

(to Marcus)

She was asking after you, Marcus.

MARCUS

That's nice of her.

(CONTINUED)

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34.
37

The nurse's gaze includes both Suzie and Will.

WILL
Right then.
(to Suzie, a bit suggestively)
Your place or mine?

Suzie gives Will a very annoyed look.

WILL (CONT'D)
Sorry.

38 EXT. SUZIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

38

Will's car pulls up to a nondescript bunch of row-houses --
Suzie's house. He gets out, opens the door for Suzie.

WILL (V.O.)
*All in all, this had been very interesting,
but I wouldn't want to do it every night.
The thing was...a person's life was like a
TV show. I was the star of the Will show.*

Will leans in to kiss Suzie goodbye; she emphatically gives him
"The Cheek". Suzie takes Megan out from the car seat.

WILL (CONT'D)
*And the Will show wasn't an ensemble drama.
Guests came and went, but I was the
regular. It came down to me, and me alone.*

Will looks at Marcus, standing next to him. Gives him a playful
punch on the arm.

WILL (CONT'D)
See you soon.

Marcus seems set into motion.

WILL (CONT'D)
*If Marcus' mum couldn't manage her own
show, if her ratings were falling, well,
that was her problem. All in all, the
single mum plotline was a bit complicated
for me.*

Will gets into the car and pulls away, and we are --

39 INT. WILL'S CAR - NIGHT

39

As Will looks at himself in the vanity mirror. Turns on his
stereo.

FIONA (CONT'D)

(laughs; then)

Did you read the part where I said I'd
always love you, and I'm sorry?

MARCUS

It's hard for you to love me when you're
dead, isn't it?

FIONA

I understand why you're angry, Marcus. I
don't feel the same as I did yesterday, if
that's any help.

MARCUS

What, it's all just gone away, all that?

FIONA

No, but...at the moment, I feel better.

MARCUS

At the moment's no good to me. I can see
you're better at the moment. You've just
put the kettle on. But what happens when
you've finished your tea? What happens
when I go back to school? I can't be here
to watch you all the time.

FIONA

No, I know. But we've got to look after
each other. The two of us.

Marcus nods.

MARCUS (V.O.)

*Suddenly I realized -- two people isn't
enough. You need backup. If you're only
two people, and someone drops off the edge,
then you're on your own. Two isn't a large
enough number.*

(aloud)

You need three at least.

FIONA

Three what?

MARCUS

...Nothing.

(V.O.)

But I'd had a great idea.

(aloud)

What's Suzie's number?

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44c CONTINUED:

37A.
44c

WILL (CONT'D)
Will here.

(CONTINUED)

WILL

Well, I'm taking care of Ned, aren't I? As
a matter of fact we're on the way to
preschool right now, and --

The stylist fires up a pair of clippers. Marcus overhears the
buzz.

MARCUS

What's that?

WILL

Lawnmower. Look, Marcus, this is just not
going to work...

(V.O.)

-- *but then I thought, why not?*

(CONTINUED)

50 EXT. CHURCH - DAY

50

Will walks up to a church with some homeless people queued up by the side entrance.

WILL(V.O.)

In fact, charitable impulses were a good way of using up units. Like that time I phoned and volunteered to help out at a soup kitchen.

Will keeps on walking.

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And I almost made it.

50a INT. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL - DAY

50a

We track along a line of right-on looking people on phones, making phone calls for an Amnesty pledge drive.

WILL(V.O.)

Or the time I volunteered at Amnesty International.

RIGHT-ON PERSON #1

(fervent)

-- Did you know, for instance, that in Burma you can be sentenced to seven years in prison for telling jokes? Next time you laugh, I want you to think of Pa Pa Lay, the Burmese stand up comedian!

*
*
*
*
*
*

RIGHT-ON PERSON #2

-- we're at a crucial stage in our struggle for human rights in Burma, which are being grossly abused by the ruling military junta, and --

*
*
*
*

RIGHT-ON PERSON #3

-- we need your support more than ever. Together we can make a difference --

*
*
*

Meanwhile, Will flirts over the phone with someone he's just cold-called.

WILL

(laughs)

You're kidding. So what does your boyfriend think of that? Wait a minute -- you're single? Talk about human rights violations.

51 OMIT

51

53 INT. TRENDY RESTAURANT - DAY

53

Will, Marcus and Fiona sit at lunch in the same trendy restaurant we saw him in with Angie earlier. Marcus looks around, annoyed, as he's handed a menu.

WILL

You said you liked chips, didn;t you? Well they have great chips here.

Marcus shrugs.

WILL (CONT'D)

(to Fiona)

So...how are you...I mean...how are you feeling...

FIONA

My stomach's fine. I must still be a bit barmy, though. That kind of thing doesn't go away overnight, does it?

(CONTINUED)

WILL (CONT'D)

We probably have at least sixty years of conversational experience here. I'm sure we can manage something.

FIONA

Okay, then.

WILL

So.

FIONA

After you.

They laugh. But they don't say anything. Marcus sighs.

MARCUS

Will, why did your wife chuck you?

FIONA

Marcus!

WILL

No, that's okay. I feel okay talking about it now.

(thinks)

She went through this whole I-Want-To-Find-Out-Who-I-Am malarkey.

FIONA

And did she find out who she was?

WILL

Um...

(V.O.)

She was a figment of my twisted imagination, that's who she was.

(out loud)

Not really. I don't know if anyone really does, do they?

FIONA

(smiles)

We know who we are, don't we Marcus?

WILL (V.O.)

That's right, you're a depressive hippy and her weirdo son.

MARCUS (V.O.)

This was going really well. I wondered if we were going to move into Will's place, or move into someplace new.

WILL (V.O.)

*That was the problem with charity. You
have to mean things. You have to mean
things to help people.*

MARCUS

Nothing. Except you've been lying to me,
and my Mum, and my Mum's friend.

(pause)

Can I come in?

WILL

No, you can't.

MARCUS

Why? What are you doing?

WILL

Just...watching TV.

MARCUS

I could watch it with you, if you want.

WILL

That's very nice of you, Marcus, but I
usually manage on my own. Haven't you got
homework to do?

MARCUS

Yeah. Do you want to help me?

WILL

That wasn't what I meant. I meant, why
don't you go home and do it?

MARCUS

Alright, but I'm gonna tell my mum.

WILL

Oooh, I'm scared.

(V.O.)

That's the best I could come up with.

*"Ooh, I'm scared". But as a matter of
fact, I was.*

MARCUS

I'll do you a deal. I won't tell anybody
you don't have a kid -- if you go out with
my Mum.

WILL

Why would you even want your mum to go out
with somebody like me?

MARCUS

Well, you're not too bad. I mean, you told
lies, but apart from that you seem okay.

(CONTINUED)

- 61 EXT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 61
 Marcus rings the doorbell.
- 62 INT. WILL'S FLAT - LIVING ROOM - DAY 62
 Will hears the doorbell ring, and TURNS UP THE MUSIC.
- 63 EXT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 63
 Marcus starts RINGING THE DOORBELL IN TIME WITH THE MUSIC.
- 64 INT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 64
 Will is driven crazy by the RINGING OF THE DOORBELL. He GETS UP.
- 65 EXT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 65
 Will opens to door. Looks at Marcus. Marcus still has his finger poised by the bell, threateningly. Will submits. Motions him in.
- 66 INT. WILL'S FLAT - SITTING ROOM - SAME 66
 Will and Marcus sit watching TV. Will looks over suspiciously at Marcus, who's intent on the programme. As the show ends, Marcus gets up.
- MARCUS
 Thanks. See ya.
- Marcus reaches out his hand. Will shakes it. Marcus heads out.
- 66a EXT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 66a *
 Marcus walks away from Will's place. *
- 67 INT. WILL'S FLAT - SITTING ROOM - NEXT DAY 67
 Will glances up from the TV at his trendy wall-clock. The DOORBELL RINGS.
- 68 EXT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 68
 Marcus is there.
- 69 INT. WILL'S FLAT - SITTING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY 69
 Will and Marcus sit watching TV. Will appears to be a little less freaked by the whole situation. Then they LAUGH at the same bit on TV. Will looks a little miffed, like he's given in to the enemy.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Who are these people on the wall? With the saxophones and the trumpets?

WILL

Saxophonists and trumpeters.

MARCUS

Yeah, but why are they on your wall?

WILL

Because they're cool.

MARCUS

What's cool about them?

WILL

Probably that they took drugs and died, I guess.

CLOSE ON MARCUS. Takes this in. Will realizes what he's said.

MARCUS

Okay. I better get home. Thanks.

WILL

Wait a second.

(off Marcus's look)

You may as well catch the beginning of Saved by the Bell.

Marcus shrugs and sits down again.

The we CUT TO JUMP CUTS of Will and Marcus on the same couch. Marcus is in his school uniform, but Will is wearing a different outfit each time (note to Joanna: don't freak out -- it's okay to just recombine some previously used costumes for Will). We are establishing the growing everydayness of Marcus's visits by jump-cutting to them in slightly different positions on the couch, different expressions, etc.

73a INT. SNOOKER HALL - DAY

73a

Will is playing snooker, about to pot a ball when he realizes something, checks his watch, and, making his apologies, heads off...

73b INT. WILL'S FLAT - LATER THAT DAY

73b

Will checks his watch again. Seems uncomfortable, a little bereft that Marcus isn't there.

WILL

No. I Mean, yeah, I thought about it for a bit, but then it turned out all I could write was songs that were even more crap than my dad's, and since he wrote the most crap song in history, well, I just let it slide.

*
*
*
*
*
*

MARCUS
(looks at Will, surprised)
You mean my Mum?
(trying to be casual)
She's alright, thanks.

WILL
No, you know, I mean...

MARCUS
Yeah, I know. No, nothing like that.

WILL
Does it still bother you?

MARCUS
Does it bother me?

74 OMIT 74
75 OMIT 75
76 INT. FIONA'S FLAT - STAIRWAY - LATE AFTERNOON 76

WE SEE Marcus trudging up the stairs, and his distorted POV of the door opening, a woman slumped on the floor.

MARCUS (V.O.)
Every single day...

77 INT. WILL'S FLAT - SITTING ROOM - DAY (AS BEFORE) 77

MARCUS (V.O.)
That's why I come here instead of going home.
(aloud)
A bit. When I think about it.

WILL
(seeing Marcus' expression)
Fucking hell...

Marcus looks over at Will.

78 EXT. WILL'S STREET - DUSK 78

Marcus walks away from Will's flat. We see him walk down various streets.

MARCUS (V.O.)
I didn't know why he swore like that, but it made me feel better.

(CONTINUED)

81 INT. SCHOOL - DAY

81

Marcus, standing in the corridor at school, is looking at a notice for an upcoming SCHOOL CONCERT. He looks up as ELLIE, the punky-looking girl who we saw earlier, walks by.

MARCUS

(smiles)

Hello.

ELLIE

(same kind of smile)

Fuck off.

Surprisingly, Marcus looks...intrigued. Then something HITS Marcus on the back of the head, and goes clattering down the corridor. Marcus turns and sees two older kids coming towards him. He starts backing away from them.

82 INT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY

82

Will sits on his sofa, watching Countdown. *

From outside, we hear KNOCKING -- not person-knocking-on-the-door knocking, but HAILSTONE knocking, as though somebody were throwing rocks at the house. This sound is shortly followed by a frantic and persistent RINGING of the doorbell.

Will looks unsettled, frowns, and turns up the VOLUME on the gameshow. But it's not high enough to drown out the CRACKLING and RINGING.

83 EXT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY

83

The door opens to reveal a couple of mean-looking kids throwing what appear to be geological samples but are in fact hard candies at Marcus, who has been dodging them and ringing the bell. Will shoves Marcus inside the flat.

WILL

(to the kid)

Oi! What do you think you are doing?

MEAN KID#1

Who are you?

WILL

Who am I? Bugger off, that's who I am!

MEAN KID#2

(trying to act unscared)

Oo-er.

MARCUS

I said I did it without noticing, didn't I?
It just happens. Do you think I would do
it on purpose? I'm not stupid, you know.

WILL

Sorry. My advice is, stay out of people's
way. Try to be invisible.

MARCUS

(getting angry)

How am I supposed to be invisible? Is one
of the machines in your kitchen an
invisible machine? I don't think so.

(pause)

I just try not to think of it, that's all.
It happens, and I wish it didn't, but it's
just life, isn't it? There's nothing I can
do about it.

Will looks at Marcus, his annoyance with him subsiding. He sits
down facing Marcus, looking Marcus in the face, serious and
determined.

WILL

(heartfelt)

There is something we can do about this,
Marcus. You're coming with me.

CUT TO:

85 INT. NIKETOWN - DAY

85

CLOSE ON a HIGH-TECH TRAINER (SNEAKER).

Marcus and Will stand there in Niketown, high-tech, air-
conditioned, Michael Jordan-endorsed mecca of cool footwear. A
cute salesgirl in fly gear sets down a few boxes of shoes that
share design features with Star Wars spaceships.

MARCUS

I don't get it.

WILL

We're starting with your feet, Marcus. I
can't make you invisible, but I can make
you blend in with the crowd.

Marcus looks around at all the other shoppers milling about.

MARCUS

Sheep. Baaaaa.

(beat)

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

I'm going to be late for school every morning if it takes this long to get them on.

WILL

There. Locked and loaded.

Will stands up. Marcus starts stomping around, looking at himself in the mirror. Trying to repress a smile.

WILL (CONT'D)

You think you look cool, don't you?

MARCUS

I don't know. Do you think I look cool?

WILL

Yeah, Marcus. You look cool. *

MARCUS

(pause; then, smiling)
Yeah.

Marcus nods and smiles. He and Will head to the counter.

WILL (V.O)

I was suddenly hit by an extraordinary rush of well-being. So this was what people meant by a natural high -- and it only cost sixty pounds! I had made an unhappy boy temporarily happy. And there wasn't anything in it for me at all. I didn't even want to get into his mum's knickers.

Will hands over his credit card at the REGISTER.

86 EXT. FIONA'S FLAT - DAY

86

A familiar frame by now -- the door opens to reveal Marcus. He's standing there, crying. Behind him, it's raining.

FIONA (O.S.)

Marcus!

Marcus's next V.O. is over a silent shot of Fiona asking the next logical question, something like, "what do you mean, he's sort of your friend?"

MARCUS (V.O.)

Yeah. She had loads more questions. She kept repeating the last thing I said, except she shouted it.

(out loud)

I go round to his place after school.

FIONA

YOU GO ROUND TO HIS PLACE AFTER SCHOOL?

MARCUS

Well, you see, he doesn't really have a kid.

FIONA

HE DOESN'T REALLY HAVE A KID?

MARCUS

Can I play computer games now, please?

A pause.

FIONA

Where does he live?

MARCUS

He's not there now, he's out to dinner -

Fiona grabs Marcus's hand and yanks him up --

89 OMIT

89

90 INT. TRENDY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

90

Will sits across the table from Christine, the mother-of-two who we saw earlier in the movie. They're at a table in the trendy restaurant where Will brought Fiona and Marcus earlier.

WILL (V.O.)

Christine had asked me out to dinner for one of her pep talks.

CHRISTINE

...You'll end up childless and alone.

WILL

Well, hopefully, yes.

Christine looks at him, glares at him, in fact.

(CONTINUED)

WILL

You think I've been...fiddling with your son?

Patrons turn to observe the scene.

FIONA

I'm simply asking why you entertain twelve-year-olds in your flat.

CHRISTINE

Oh my God.

WAITRESS

Oh my God.

FIONA

What do you have to say for yourself?
Well?

Will's had about enough of this. He leaps up.

WILL

(exploding)

Well? Well I don't have any choice, do I? Your son comes round uninvited every night! And you know why? Because he's having the shit bullied out of him and you haven't got a clue! You send him out there like a lamb to the slaughter! He's getting taken to pieces every day of the week, you daft fucking hippy!

FIONA

I think you're being a bit melodramatic. Marcus is doing fine.

Marcus looks confused and, at the same time, tired. He sits down at the table.

MARCUS (V.O.)

It was strange. Will had it right, and Mum didn't. It was supposed to be the other way around.

FIONA

Maybe you haven't had very much contact with kids before.

WILL

I used to be a bloody kid. And I used to go to a bloody school.

Will takes a moment to absorb this.

WILL
Excuse me?

FIONA
Let's say you're right, and I'm wrong.
Let's say there's this whole world going on
for Marcus, that I don't understand, and
you do. What are you going to do about it?

WILL
Nothing, obviously. He's none of my
business!

FIONA
God, you're a selfish bastard.

CHRISTINE
That's what I've been trying to tell him.
He always puts himself first.

WILL
But I'm on my own. There's just me. I'm
not putting myself first, because there's
nobody else.

FIONA
Yes there is. There's Marcus. You can't
just keep life out. No man is an island.

CHRISTINE
She's right, you know.

CUTE WAITRESS
(still there)
Yeh. She is.

WILL
No, she's not. I am an island. I'm a very
cool island. I'm bloody Maui, okay?

FIONA
What on earth are you talking about?

MARCUS
(brightly)
Do you want to come over for Christmas?

95 OMIT 95 *

96 INT. FIONA'S FLAT - DAY 96 *

Will sits uncomfortably with various members of Fiona's family. There's a nut roast on the table, with numerous veggie side dishes.

WILL (V.O.)

The good news was, it wasn't just me and Fiona and Marcus. The bad news was, well...

(aloud)

So you're Marcus' Dad?

CLIVE

Yeah, I guess so. And this is my girlfriend, Lindsey.

WILL

Ah.

CLIVE

And Lindsey's mum.

LINDSEY

And how to you fit in, Will?

WILL

I'm...a friend. Of Marcus. And Fiona's.

CLIVE

Does anybody mind if I roll a joint?

Fiona gives him a sharp look. Clive puts away his rolling papers.

CLIVE (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Cut to LATER. Numerous presents have been opened. Including the latest, a PENIS SHAPED CHOCOLATE.

FIONA

(laughs)

...Thank you, Lindsey...

Marcus has opened a set of woolly socks from his father.

WILL (CONT'D)

The great thing about it is that you can turn it loud enough to damage your hearing, without disturbing anybody else.

FIONA

I've got something musical for you too, Marcus.

MARCUS

Really? Brilliant!

WILL (V.O.)

I had to hand it to the kid. He could be enthusiastic about some really crap presents. It was as if he didn't want to let anyone down.

Marcus opens a present, which is...

MARCUS

Wow! A tambourine! Thanks, Mum!
(turning to Will)
Isn't that great, Will?

WILL

...Yeah, that'll come in handy.

FIONA

I saw it in the shop, and thought, this'll be perfect. I thought maybe...you could perform at that school concert. You know, maybe get a pop group together, make some friends...

MARCUS

...maybe, Mum.

FIONA

(hugs him)
When you sing, it brings sunshine and happiness into my heart.

MARCUS

Thanks, Mum. Open yours, Will.

Will opens Marcus's present for him. It's "THE SINGLE PARENT'S HANDBOOK". Fiona looks at Marcus, surprised.

WILL

(surprised)
Marcus...is this a joke?

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

He's my friend. I invited him. I should be able to tell him when to go home.

FIONA

I haven't told Will to leave, Marcus. Suzie's angry with Will, as she has every right to be, and she's telling him so.

Marcus looks at Will. Will looks completely humiliated and defeated.

WILL

She's right, Marcus. Leave it alone.

MARCUS

All he did was make up a kid for a couple of weeks. God, that's nothing. So what? Who cares? Kids at school do worse than that every day.

FIONA

The point is, Marcus, that Will left school a long time ago. He should have grown out of making people up by now.

MARCUS

It's not fair to gang up on him. He's been a lot better behaved since then. He got me trainers, and he let me come by his house, even if he didn't want me to. And he knows what kids need.

FIONA

What? Expensive footwear and obscene music? If there's something you really need, we can talk about it.

MARCUS

No we can't. Because it's not really a discussion, it's an argument, and you always win. Why don't you just tell me what to do?

FIONA

Because I want you to think for yourself.

MARCUS

Okay, I'm thinking for myself. And I want Will to stay. I mean, it's not like he's the only one who ever did anything wrong. You remember how we met Will? You remember why? Because --

(CONTINUED)

96a CONTINUED:

96a

WILL (V.O.)
As I sat there, I had a strange feeling...

*
*

96b INT. MARCUS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

96b

Alone in his room, Marcus takes out the Discman, puts in the disc...and hits PLAY. Smiles.

WILL (V.O.)
...I was enjoying myself. I'd never really enjoyed Christmas before...

96c INT. WILL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

96c

Will sits reading the Single Parent's Handbook. Smiles.

(CONTINUED)

WILL

Yes. Although I did have a terrible nightmare the other day where I actually was in the television. It was pretty cramped.

In fact, Rachel does seem to be interested. Will, though, is starting to get the look of a swimmer running out of energy, about to plunge beneath the surface.

WILL (CONT'D)

It was torture. For five minutes I realized what life would be like if I were in any way interesting; if I had anything to say for myself, if I did anything. But I didn't do anything. And in about thirty seconds she would know...and she'd be gone like a shot.

We rejoin their conversation.

RACHEL

...So if you're not a TV mogul, how do you know Richard?

WILL

Uh...just...I bought my dope off him years ago.

RACHEL

(pause)

Oh. Right. Well, that's great. Drugs really...bring people together, don't they? I mean. At least the two of you have kept in touch.

WILL

Yeah. Dunno why, really.

RACHEL

So, what do you do?

WILL

Well, I'm sort of...taking some time off right now.

RACHEL

Oh. Sounds great.

WILL

(momentarily relieved)

Yeah...

(CONTINUED)

There's a pause, and Rachel's tablemate to her left attracts her attention. Will sits there, looking forlorn.

WILL

There. She was gone. There was no more to say.

RACHEL

(to other tablemate)

I know this makes me a useless old bag, but all rap music sounds the same to me.

WILL (V.O.)

...or was there?

(interrupting Rachel's conversation)

I know a twelve year old who'd kill you for saying that.

RACHEL

So do I, come to that. Maybe they should meet. What's yours called?

WILL

Mine? Well...

As Will considers, we hear the tick-tock theme music from COUNTDOWN.

WILL (CONT'D)

He's called Marcus.

RACHEL

Mine's Ali. Alistair.

WILL

Right.

(V.O.)

And there it was. It wasn't a lie. It was 100% her assumption. Well, 50% at the very least.

RACHEL

And is Marcus into rap, and skateboards, and the Lara Croft, and all of that?

Will raises his eyes to the skies and chuckles fondly.

WILL

Is he...

MARCUS

(raps)

Shake Ya Ass -- but watch yo'self! Shake Ya
Ass -- show me what you workin' with!

Ellie stops dead.

ELLIE

Oi, titch! What did you just say to me?

MARCUS

Shake Ya --

Marcus stops, sees himself face to face with Ellie, her cool friends gathered around. Marcus takes off his headphones, looks questioningly.

ELLIE

You heard me, you squitty shitty little
snot-nosed bastard.

MARCUS

No I didn't. Sorry. I was just singing
along to this song. By Mystikal. It's
rap.

Ellie looks him up and down. Marcus has on a t-shirt for the band Badly Drawn Boy.

ELLIE

You like rap?

MARCUS

A little. It's by black people, mostly,
and they're pretty angry, most of the time,
but sometimes they just want to have sex.

This provokes laughter from the cool kids. Ellie scrutinizes him.

ELLIE

Are you taking the piss? Because if you
are, you'll get such a slap.

MARCUS

I'm not taking the piss. I don't even know
how to take the piss.

Again the cool kids laugh. Marcus laughs too. Ellie looks confused.

ELLIE

What's your name then?

(CONTINUED)

WILL (V.O.)

I took him to the zoo, scene of my past kid triumph.

MARCUS

What are we doing here?

WILL

What do you mean? The zoo's a treat. I thought you liked animals.

MARCUS

Not particularly.

(pause)

Why did you tell this lady that I was your son?

WILL

I didn't tell her. She just got the wrong end of the stick.

MARCUS

So just tell her she got the wrong end of the stick.

WILL

No.

MARCUS

Why not?

WILL

We're going around in circles here, Marcus. Just accept the facts, okay? You're my son.

MARCUS

I'll tell her, if you like. I don't mind.

WILL

That's very kind of you, Marcus, but no.

MARCUS

Why not?

WILL

Oh, for Christ's sake! Because she has this rare disease, and if she believes something that's not right and you tell her the truth, her brain will boil in her head and she'll die.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

I know, I'm not stupid. I just can't believe there's nothing more to it. I mean...I want to be with her more. I want to be with her all the time. And I want to tell her things, which I don't even tell you, or Mum. And I don't want her to have another boyfriend. If I could have those things, I wouldn't mind if I touched her or not.

WILL

(shakes his head)
I tell you, Marcus, you'll learn. You won't feel like that forever.

They walk on.

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But later that night, when I was on my own...

102 INT. WILL'S FLAT - NIGHT

102

Will sits on his couch, listening to music, LOUD. It's a song expressing deep, painful longing.

WILL (V.O.)

...I remembered the deal Marcus was prepared to strike. Yes, I wanted to touch Rachel. But right now...if I had the choice, I would settle for the less and the more that Marcus wanted. Jesus, was I turning into Marcus? Would he be buying me shoes soon?

103 EXT. STREET - HOLLAND PARK - DAY

103

Marcus and Will stand in front of the door of Rachel's very nice house. *

WILL

Did you have to dress like that?

MARCUS

Like what?

WILL

Never mind. Just try to act normal, okay?

Will rings the doorbell. *

MARCUS

Wait. How much did I weigh at birth?

WILL

Marcus, she doesn't suspect we're not
father and son, she's not going to be
trying to catch us out.

(pause)

Okay, when's your birthday?

MARCUS

August the 19th. What's my favorite food? *

WILL

Duck? *

MARCUS

Wrong. Spaghetti with mushroom sauce that
my mum makes. So who's my Mum? *

WILL

Sorry? *

MARCUS

Who's my Mum? *

WILL

...Your Mum's your Mum. *

MARCUS

So you were married to my Mum and you've
split up.

WILL

Yeah. Whatever.

MARCUS

And does it bother you? Or me?

They look at each other. The situation is so weird that Marcus
starts LAUGHING, a particularly high-pitched and inhuman MIAOW.
Will can't help it; starts laughing too.

WILL

(laughing)

It doesn't bother me. Does it bother you?

But Marcus is too busy laughing to reply. Will joins him again.
The door opens, and the two of them stop, like they've been
caught out. But they're still smiling. Rachel looks at them
bemusedly.

RACHEL

Hi, Will! And it's...Mark, is that right?

MARCUS

Marcus.

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL
C'mon in.

104 INT. RACHEL'S FLAT - DAY

104

We're on Will's face as he takes the place in. Warm, inviting, sepia toned photos, etc. Etc.

WILL (V.O.)
Mark? How could she forget one single detail of our conversation on New Year's Eve? Clearly she had not spent the last ten days thinking and dreaming of me. I remembered everything about her. And I could never have forgotten her kid's name --

RACHEL
(shouting)
Ali? ALI?
(pause)
Let's just go up.

Still leading Will, this time up the stairs.

WILL (V.O.)
That would be like forgetting when England had won the World Cup, or the real name of Luke Skywalker's father. Mark, Marcus...it was all the same to her. This was what I had been afraid of. Devastation. Pain. Loneliness. Sudden loony mood swings. And now it was too late.
(aloud)
Lovely place.

Rachel knocks on Ali's door.

105 INT. ALI'S ROOM - DAY

105

ALI, a cool kid in baggy trousers, a head taller than Marcus, opens the door. The place is definitely a teenager's den. Alan Iverson, Gisele Bundchen, Rage Against the Machine. Ali looks Will and Marcus up and down. Not impressed.

RACHEL
Ali, Marcus. Marcus, Ali.

Marcus reaches his hand out. Ali shakes, ironically.

ALI
You're in my year. At school.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

Well, I'm not sure it's really up to me.

ALI

It better be. Or you're going to die.

MARCUS (V.O.)

*I was beginning to get the feeling that
maybe this kid Ali was a serial killer.*

(trying to change the subject)

Can I have a go on the computer? What games
have you got?

ALI

Are you listening to me?

MARCUS

Yes, but I'm not sure there's very much I
can do at the moment. Will -- that's my
Dad, I call him Will because -- well,
anyway, he likes your Mum, and I think
she's keen on him --

ALI

(screaming)

SHE'S NOT KEEN ON HIM! SHE'S ONLY
KEEN ON ME!

106 INT. RACHEL'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

106

Will and Rachel sit together on the sofa, talking.

WILL (V.O.)

(over Rachel's animated talk)

*One of the amazing things about Rachel was
that I wanted to kiss her every time she
was talking about something interesting.
Which was all the time. It was sexy. It
was weird.*

We check back in on Rachel.

RACHEL

I mean nowadays most cartoonists just use
Adobe photoshop and email j-peg files to
the newspaper, but I'm really old
fashioned, I still just use India ink and
Bailey Board -- Will, are you listening?

*
*
*
*
*

WILL

(surprised in his reverie)

Yes, I am.

Rachel smiles at him and gives him a bemused look.

*

(CONTINUED)

Will seems nonplussed, but it's actually a tender moment.
They're leaning in towards one another when --

We hear a STOMPING as something whizzes by, and we hear the door
slam. Rachel goes to the door, looks out, comes back.

WILL

*Suddenly I didn't want her to step away,
even for that long. It hurt, in my chest.
What the hell was going on?*

RACHEL

I think Marcus has gone home.

107 EXT. - RACHEL'S STREET - DAY

107

Marcus is walking down the street. Will runs up to him.

WILL

C'mon. We're going back.

MARCUS

He's off his head.

WILL

No, he's not.

MARCUS

He said he'd cut me up in little bits and
hide me under the floorboards.

WILL

He did?

MARCUS

No...but I think he's capable of it.

Will grabs Marcus's hand and drags him off.

WILL

C'mon. It'll be different. You'll love it.
I promise.

108 INT. RACHEL'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

108

Ali stands there, blubbering like a three-year-old child, in
front of Marcus, who looks immensely pleased.

RACHEL

Marcus, Ali has something to say to you,
doesn't he?

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

(singing)

I FELT ALL FLUSHED WITH FEVER,
EMBARRASSED BY THE CROWD...I FELT
HE FOUND MY LETTERS, AND READ EACH
ONE ALOUD...

We hear LAUGHTER, and suddenly Marcus is surrounded by Lee Hartley and his mates.

LEE HARTLEY

Oi! What you singing, Fuzzy?

But Marcus just stands there, looking ahead of him. Lee takes the Discman out of Marcus's hands.

LEE HARTLEY (CONT'D)

Mind if I borrow this?

MARCUS

Yes.

LEE HARTLEY

(listening)

Jesus. This is crap.

MARCUS

Can I have that back please? It was a
Christmas present and --

LEE'S MATE

Fuck off.

ELLIE (O.S.)

Oi!

Suddenly Ellie hooves into view.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You pathetic little shitbags. Give it back
or you'll get such a slap.

Lee hands Marcus back the CD player, but Ellie SLAPS him anyway,
a nice ripe slap that raises the blood in his face.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Tricked you. Now run along, all of you,
before I get really cross.

LEE HARTLEY

Slag!

But Lee says it as he's walking away.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

You should have seen her!

WILL

I feel as though I did. So, things are going really well with me and Rachel --

MARCUS

Wham!

WILL

Yes. Wham. Like you said.

MARCUS

She's fantastic.

WILL

Yes, but...I'm not sure that it'll be so easy for Ellie to think of you as a boyfriend if she has to turn into Mike Tyson [Alt: The Rock] to defend you all the time. *

MARCUS

Who's Mike Tyson?

WILL

Never mind. All I'm saying is, be careful. This looks more like pet and owner than boyfriend and girlfriend.

MARCUS

So? At least I'm honest.

WILL

What do you mean?

MARCUS

Well, I mean, you and Rachel...

He gives an elaborate shrug.

WILL

What. What does --
(repeats the shrug)
Mean?

MARCUS

(thinking aloud)
Well, it's just that I think there's a problem with you and Rachel. I mean, you want to be with her, but she thinks you have a son. And you don't.

(CONTINUED)

WILL (CONT'D)

(peers at a menu, tries to
pronounce:)

Xiao...Xing?

(pause; off Rachel's look)

Anyway, tell me about your relationship
with Ali. Is it as complicated as mine and
Marcus's?

RACHEL

No. I slept with his father and nine
months later I gave birth, and that's about
it. Pretty straightforward, but these
things usually are.

WILL

Yes, I envy you.

RACHEL

I'm sorry to harp on this, but I still
haven't got all this worked out. You're
Marcus's stepfather, but you don't live
with him or his mother.

(pause)

Did you ever live with Marcus's mother?

WILL

Define "live with".

RACHEL

Did you ever have a spare pair of socks at
her house? Or a toothbrush? Were you in
fact ever married to her? Have you ever
had a romantic relationship with her?

Will's back is against the wall.

WILL

...No.

Will pops a spring roll in his mouth, and makes a big deal out
of chewing it, like it'll prevent conversation forever. But
Rachel just waits there.

WILL (CONT'D)

I never actually said he was my son. The
words, "I have a son called Marcus" never
escaped my lips. That's what you chose to
believe.

RACHEL

Yeah, right, it's me that's the fantasist.
I wanted to believe you had a son, so I let
my imagination run riot.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON
Bye, Marcus!

SECOND KID
See ya, Marcus!

113 INT. FIONA'S HOUSE - LATER 113

Fiona, sitting on the couch, CRYING. A hell of a lot
reminiscent of when we saw her crying before her suicide
attempt.

Marcus comes in, a hop in his step. He turns the corner to see
Fiona.

She doesn't see him, but he's watching her. There's a look of
fear on his face.

MARCUS
Mum?
(pause)
Mum?

No response.

114 INT. WILL'S HOUSE - DAY 114

Will sits or rather slumps on his couch, listening to some
music. He's unshaven, looks like shit. We hear RINGING on the
doorbell. Will ignores it. But the ringing doesn't stop. Will
turns off the stereo with his remote, gets up

114a EXT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 114a

Will opens the door. Marcus is there.

WILL
(pause)
...Hi.

Marcus squeezes past him. Will waits a beat at the door, then
closes it.

114b INT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY 114b

He joins Marcus inside his flat.

MARCUS
My Mum's at it again.

WILL
...At what?

WILL

Who? Who do you think I am? Who do you think you are? You come here, uninvited, you...disturb my life, you screw things up for me...what do you want from me, Marcus? This is not my problem! I'm not your family! I'm not your uncle, I'm not your big brother, and I think it's been established that I'm not your bloody father!

Marcus shifts.

MARCUS

But --

WILL

Marcus, I'm...I'm a guy who can tell you what trainers and records to buy. That's it. But I can't help you with real things. I can't help with anything that means anything.

MARCUS

You could try.

Will is silent.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You're right. You can't help me. How could you? All you do is sit around all day and watch telly and buy things, and you don't give a shit about anybody and nobody gives a shit about you.

*
*
*
*
*

Will doesn't say anything.

Marcus turns and leaves. Heads out the door. Will watches him.

Goes back to the couch.

Takes out the remote.

115 EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

115

Marcus trudges up towards school.

116 OMIT

116

116A OMIT

116A

MARCUS

I'm thinking of singing at the school concert.

ELLIE

You? At the rock concert. Good luck.

MARCUS

Thanks. Will you play guitar? All I've got is a tambourine.

ELLIE

Are you joking?

(stops herself)

Of course you're not. Marcus...I don't think it'll go over very big with the kids. I mean like they'll crucify you.

MARCUS

I don't care about them. It's not for them.

ELLIE

Good on ya, Marcus. Tell them to shove it right up their arses.

MARCUS

So will you do it? Will you accompany me?

ELLIE

Marcus...no. I'm sorry. It's suicide.

Ellie walks off, leaving Marcus there.

121A OMIT

121A

121B INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR -DAY

121B

Marcus takes a deep breath, and picks up a pen.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Mum had said that when I sang, it brought sunshine and happiness into her life. So I'd do it. Even if it meant mine was over.

We see Marcus sign his name, and then under "ACT", the word "SINGING".

121C INT. FIONA'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM

121C

Marcus hands an invitation to the school concert to Fiona, who takes it and looks at it.

121D INT. STEREO STORE - DAY

121D

WILL (V.O.)
*My life is made up of units of time.
Buying a stereo...two units.*

Will is looking at a bunch of high-tech stereos. He stands before a particularly slick model. His face is blank.

121E INT. TRENDY RESTAURANT - DAY

121E

WILL (V.O.)
Eating lunch...three units.

Will sits eating lunch on his own, as waiters mill around the full restaurant.

A CUTE WAITRESS smiles at Will. He doesn't respond.

121F INT. WILL'S FLAT - NIGHT

121F

Will goes to his bookshelf. Pulls out a book.

WILL (V.O.)
...Reading...

Will reads Marcus' gift: The Single Parents Handbook.

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Two units...

121G INT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY

121G

WILL (V.O.)
All in all, I had a very full life.

From DIRECTLY ABOVE, we see Will moving around his flat like a rat in a maze.

122 INT. WILL'S FLAT - DAY

122

WILL (V.O.)
It's just that...it didn't mean anything.

Will puts a CD into the stereo. It reads "One Hit Wonders."

SANTA'S SUPER SLEIGH comes on. Will sits down on the floor, in front of the stereo, and listens to it.

WILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The fact was...

Will kneels forward, his face on the floor.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

April 23, 2001

123alt EXT. WILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

123alt

It's not Marcus. It's Christine.

WILL

Christine -- what are you doing here?

CHRISTINE

What am I--? Will, did you forget we're having lunch today?

WILL

Yes. Completely.

He walks off past her.

CHRISTINE

Will -- where are you going?
(to herself)
Selfish bastard.

SPAT MEMEBERS
SINGLE PARENTS ALONE TOGETHER! ALL FOR ONE
AND ONE FOR ALL!

*
*
*

WILL
(relieved)
Fiona!

The assembled group turns around to look at Will.

FIONA
Will?

FRANCES
Will! We haven't seen you for a while.
How's Ned?

WILL
Who? Oh, Ned. He's a load of crap.
Doesn't exist.
(off their looks)
I made him up.

MOIRA
You made him up?

WILL
Yes. To meet women.

CAROLINE
That's sick.

WILL
Yes.

MOIRA
You bastard.

WILL
Yeah, I know. You can cut my penis off
later if you like. But right now...
(to Fiona)
Fiona, I need to talk to you.

FIONA
Will...you know I'm not attracted to you.

WILL
What? Oh, of course not! Jesus -- you and
me -- are you nuts?
(off her look)
Wait -- nuts was the wrong term. The thing
is...Fiona...could we talk privately,
please?

(CONTINUED)

FIONA

Are you crazy! That was my private business!

WILL

Well, that's the thing, I mean -- it's not. Marcus is worried about you, and I'm worried about Marcus, because Marcus is worried about you, and --

FIONA

Will, I don't have any plans to commit suicide.

WILL

You don't?

FIONA

Not at the moment, no.

WILL

Great! Great! That is fantastic!

Will impulsively leans over and hugs Fiona, a gesture which takes her completely by surprise.

FIONA

Will, I'm not attracted to you, you know.

WILL

What? Oh! For Christ's sakes, no. I mean, absolutely not -- are you insane?
(beat)

That probably wasn't the best choice of words. But...look...the whole depression thing. The crying in the morning thing...I mean, we have to fix that.

*
*
*
*

FIONA

That's what men think, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

126b INT. GREEN ROOM - DAY 126b *

As Simon tootles away on a recorder, Marcus is practicing -- *

MARCUS *

Killing me softly with his song -- *

Nearby, some kids snigger. Simon looks nervous. *

127 OMIT 127 *

128 OMIT 128 *

129 EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY 129

Will's car races through the street. (SECOND UNIT) *

129a INT. WILL'S CAR - SAME 129a

WILL

I just hope we're not too late.

FIONA

What do you have against Marcus singing?
He has a lovely voice!

Will is looking panicky.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON
...That's a lot of people.

MARCUS
(nervous)
...Yeah...

SIMON
This is suicide, Marcus.

MARCUS
...I can't see Mum.

The LIGHTS go ON and OFF, signalling the audience to sit down.

133 OMIT 133

133a OMIT 133a

133b EXT. SCHOOL - DAY 133b

Will's car screeches to a halt.

WILL
Here -- park it!

Will jumps out, leaving Fiona behind with the high-tech key.

134 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - STAGE - DAY 134

The school concert.

A bunch of kids are doing a choreographed BREAKDANCE to Snoop Doggy Dogg's latest album.

134a OMIT 134a

135 INT. AUDIENCE - DAY 135

The AUDIENCE of kids seems really into the hip-hop, the hipper kids bobbing their heads coolly.

135a EXT. SCHOOL - DAY 135a

Fiona backs up the car, which STALLS.

136 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - BACK OF AUDIENCE - DAY 136

Will hurries into the back of the darkened house, brushing by peoples' seats.

WILL
Excuse me. Excuse me.

Someone shushes Will.

(CONTINUED)

WILL

-- What are you doing here?

RACHEL

That's Ali up there.

Will looks up, and sees Ali among the breakdancing hip-hop kids.
Looks back at Rachel.

WILL

The kid's got talent. Excuse me.

Will keeps heading towards the stage.

137 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - STAGE - DAY 137

The hip-hop crew gives a bow and leaves the stage.

138 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - DAY 138

The curtains close.

MARCUS

Well done, Ali!

139 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - STAGE - DAY 139

Mr. Chalmers comes onstage and announces, consulting a cheat sheet.

MR. CHALMERS

That was the Def Penalty Kru with "Murder Fo' Life". Our next big act is Marcus Brewer, singing Roberta Flack's beloved "Killing Me Softly", a personal favorite of mine. He'll be accompanied by Simon Cosgrove on the guitar.

140 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - BACK OF AUDIENCE - DAY 140

WILL

Christ, it's too late.

141 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - BACKSTAGE - DAY 141

Marcus starts towards the stage. Simon freezes.

SIMON

Marcus, I can't do this.

MARCUS

Can't do what?

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS
(surprised)
What are you doing here?

WILL
Well, I heard a rumor that you were going
to commit social suicide, so I thought I'd
drop by.

Mr. Chalmers STAGE WHISPERS to Will.

MR. CHALMERS
Excuse me, what is going on here?

WILL
Nothing. Everything's under control.

MARCUS
My accompanist left!

WILL
Well then I suggest you cut your losses and
forget about it.

MARCUS
I can't do that. My mum wants me to sing
it. It'll make her happy.

WILL
Marcus, nothing you do can make your mum
happy -- I mean -- not in the long term.
She has to make herself feel better.

MR. CHALMERS
Excuse me, but --

WILL
(to Mr. Chalmers)
Shut up, you daft old prat.

The SLOW HAND CLAPPING continues from the audience.

WILL (CONT'D)
(to Marcus)
I guess what I'm saying is, you have to
make yourself happy.

MARCUS
I've tried just making myself happy. And
she's tried making herself happy. But it
doesn't work. You need other people to
make you happy.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I HEARD HE SANG A GOOD SONG...I
HEARD HE HAD A STYLE...

Some LAUGHTER from the crowd, but also a tiny undercurrent of support from the mums.

149 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - BACK OF AUDIENCE - DAY 149

Fiona takes this in...

150 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - STAGE - DAY 150

MARCUS
AND SO I CAME TO SEE HIM TO LISTEN FOR A
WHILE...AND THERE HE WAS THIS YOUNG BOY...A
STRANGER TO MY E-EYE...

Marcus takes a pause. The LAUGHTER GETS LOUDER, despite the protests of the teachers -- some of them are even laughing now.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
(sings)
KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS
SONG...TELLING MY LIFE WITH HIS
WORDS...

We are starting to hear the first outright calls of GET OFF!, but here's also a smaller, less vocal faction that is trying to support him; however, at this point Marcus is losing the battle. But then, in the pause in the middle of the chorus, we hear a mighty GUITAR CHORD STRUMMED. Marcus looks back and sees Will, striding on stage as coolly as he can manage. Marcus takes heart and keeps singing...

MARCUS (CONT'D)
KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS
SONG...KILLING ME SOFTLY...WITH
HIS SONG...TELLING MY WHOLE LIFE...WITH HIS
WORDS...KILLING ME SOFTLY...WITH HIS
SONG...

Marcus looks over at Will.

151 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - AUDIENCE - DAY 151

The audience seems somewhat amazed by this new development.

152 INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - BACK OF AUDIENCE - DAY 152

Fiona sings along.

(CONTINUED)

WILL
(still singing)
I PRAYED THAT HE WOULD FINISH, BUT
HE JUST KEPT RIGHT O-ON...

MARCUS
Will? Hello?

WILL
(V.O)
*So there I was, this young boy, killing
them softly with my song, or rather, being
killed, and none too softly, singing with
my eyes closed.*

The audience is now getting tired of the whole thing. They
begin to BOO as Will keeps SINGING, OBLIVIOUS TO THE JEERING.

WILL (CONT'D)
(V.O)
*I was like a small, newborn animal, with
its throat throbbing and exposed. Was I
frightened? I was petrified. This was
definitely not island living. I was in
some strange territory.*

Will ENDS, strumming his guitar feverishly. The audience is
mixed between APPLAUSE and OUTRIGHT BOOING.

MARCUS
Can we go now?

WILL
Just a second.
(to the mic)
Okay, that was pretty crap. I admit it.
(some laughter from the crowd;
Will is winning over the cynics
now)
But it could get worse. Let me show you.
(beat)
This one goes out to my Dad.

WILL (CONT'D)
OHHHHH....JUST LEAVE OUT THE MINCE PIES,
AND A GLASS OF SHERRY, AND SANTA WILL VISIT
YOU AND LEAVE YOU FEELING MERRY...
HO HO HO, HEY HEY HEY, SANTA'S SUPER
SLEIGH, OHHHHH SANTA'S SUPER SLEIGH...

MARCUS (V.O.)
*Will had gone completely round the bend.
Frankly, I felt embarrassed for him.*

FIONA
Okay. Another time.
(pause)
Any time. I'll be around a while, you
know. Even if I do cry every now and then.

*
*
*
*

155b EXT. WILL'S DOOR - DAY

155b

Will's doorbell rings. He opens it and turns around
automatically, then does a double-take.

WILL
Hi.

RACHEL
You made a complete arse of yourself, you
know.

WILL
Yeah.

RACHEL
I enjoyed it.

WILL
I bet.

RACHEL
Especially that part where you clapped your
hands over your head --
(demonstrates the rock-and-roll
gesture)
and nobody went along with you.

WILL
I kind of thought I was drawing fire, you
know? Like the worse I looked the better
Marcus would look.

RACHEL
In that case Marcus looked fantastic.

WILL
So...you basically came here to insult me.

RACHEL
Well, yes. I figure you lied to me and
made me feel like an idiot, so...it was the
least I could do.

They stand there a second.

(CONTINUED)

MARCUS

I used to want Will to marry my Mum.

ALI

For real?

MARCUS

Yeah. But that was when mum was depressed and I was really desperate.

WILL

Cheers, mate.

FIONA (O.S.)

Will? How do you use this blender thing?

WILL

You don't.

We hear the sound of GEARS GRINDING as something goes badly wrong with a Cuisinart. Will gets up.

WILL (CONT'D)

Oh, for Christ's sake.

MARCUS (V.O.)

I used to think two wasn't enough. Now there were loads of people. And that was great, mostly.

Ellie pops her head into frame.

ELLIE

Oi! Are you two lazy shitbags going to help with the food or what?

Ellie heads off, and Ali and Marcus resignedly get up from the couch.

The boys head over towards Will's dinner table, and we see that it's laid for Christmas dinner...in Will's style, which is to say, trendy.

Fiona pours whatever vile concoction she was just brewing up into the glass of none other than RIGHT-ON PERSON #1, who is sitting at the table now with Rachel, Will, and Ellie as Ali and Marcus join them. *

RIGHT-ON PERSON #1

And Pa Pa Lay is still in jail, just for telling jokes. *

(drinks the concoction) *

Wow. Delicious. What is it? *

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: (3)

156

RIGHT-ON PERSON #1
Sprouts and nuts. Great.

There's obviously something on between the two of them.

FIONA
So...how do you know Will?

RIGHT-ON PERSON #1
Oh, we...volunteered together at Amnesty
International.

Fiona looks over at Will, impressed.

WILL
I dabble.

RIGHT-ON PERSON #1
And then he just called me up, out of the
blue.

Fiona and Will share a look. Will sits down next to Marcus and
leans in confidentially.

WILL
So are you and Ellie...you know...

MARCUS
Nah. She's a bit too unstable.
By the way, I do think you and Rachel have
a shot. I mean, if you don't screw it up.

WILL
Well, thank you, Doctor Love.

People are settling in to eat. *

FIONA
Look, before we eat, I'd like to say a few
words... *

MARCUS
Mum. It's Will's party. He gets to give the
speech. *

FIONA
You're right. Will? *

Will looks unwilling, but calls of "speech, speech!" force his
hand. Will starts. *

(CONTINUED)