

Breaking the Chain

By

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INT. A HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

START CREDIT SEQUENCE

The rhythmic sound of scissors cutting paper.

On a table, a pile of holiday brochures and travel guides:
Rome, Paris, Venice.

As the scissors cut, little bits of magazine paper fall on
the brochures gently like snow, and a male hand brushes them
away.

Next to the pile are several newspaper clippings: "*Lucky
punter scoops £1.3m*"
"*One in a million - student claims jackpot prize on night
out*"

The accompanying photos show joyous faces, champagne bottles
spraying, huge cheques displaying huge amounts...

STEVE (PRE-LAP)

Hi. My name's Steve.

The scissors stop, their work done. An unseen person
lovingly adds a freshly cut picture of a bright green Aston
Martin to the pile of papers.

END CREDIT SEQUENCE

INT. SHABBY FUNCTION ROOM - EVENING

A group of misfits, one of whom is Steve, sit in a badly
arranged circle of plastic blue chairs.

STEVE (CONT.)

(reluctant)

And I'm a gambling addict.

EVERYONE

Hi Steve.

Another long pause.

ORGANISER

This is anonymous, Steve. You can
say anything you like here.

STEVE

Doesn't seem very anonymous. I know
everyone here.

He looks around, the others a mixture of amused, embarrassed, interested and bored. He nods at one or two of many familiar faces.

STEVE (CONT.)

John. Bob.

John and Bob half raise their hands in acknowledgement.

STEVE (CONT.)

Look, I don't even want to be here.

ORGANISER

Then why have you come?

Long pause.

STEVE

'cos of my wife. She's going to leave me.

(he reflects)

Actually leave me. If I hadn't turned up tonight, and said those words, she'd have already left.

ORGANISER

We can't change for other people. You have to want to change.

STEVE

Course I want to change. I want to start winning 'stead of bloody losing.

A couple of people laugh, but Steve leans forward, deadly serious.

STEVE (CONT.)

If nothing changes, one day I'm going to drop dead replenishing the bloody toilet rolls or tins of bastard tuna. It's all got to change.

(beat)

But my wife-

The door opens, and MARTIN (mid 20s, thick glasses) bursts in. All eyes go to him.

Martin staggers unsteadily over to the group and collapses into a chair. Through drunken vision, he gradually realises that people are staring.

MARTIN

Sorry.

ORGANISER

(to Steve)

Please continue.

Steve looks like he doesn't want to, but eventually shrugs his shoulders.

STEVE (CONT.)

I ended up offering to give her my wages every week.

(looks around the group)

She checks my wages. I feel like a little kid.

MARTIN

(slurred)

Mind if I jump in here? I can't stop long. I'm Martin, and I'm an alcoholic.

They all look at him, and he looks at them, puzzled for a second, before realisation dawns.

MARTIN (CONT.)

Fuck it. I've done it again, haven't I?

EXT. TOWN HALL - EVENING

Steve and some of the others from the group stand around, smoking in the cold. An OLD GUY (70s), rough-looking, turns his attention to Steve.

OLD GUY

You sound like me thirty-five years ago.

STEVE

Oh God, do I?

Nearby, others in the group are talking.

GUY#1

Who you got in the Grand National?

GUY#2

Freeloader.

Laughs from everyone around him. Steve turns to the old guy in astonishment.

STEVE
Nobody's quitting at all.

OLD GUY
Makes the wives happy though,
doesn't it? Don't go for
Freeloader, though. Fucking
rubbish.

He coughs/laughs again.

STEVE
But I actually do need to quit.

The old guy studies him carefully.

OLD GUY
Listen, I'll tell you what you do.

He leans in conspiratorially.

OLD GUY (CONT.)
Break the chain. Bet on utter shit.
(off Steve's look)
I'm serious. The worst, wrongest,
most stupid bet you can think of.
One that's got no chance of coming
in.

STEVE
Why?

OLD GUY
So you know you're gonna lose. You
do that often enough, you won't
want to go in there.
(off Steve's look)
Trust me, lad. Break the chain.

A beat.

STEVE
(bemused)
Thanks.

Steve stubs his cigarette out, and trudges towards home.
Once he's far enough away, the old guy is approached by one
of the others.

GUY#3
You still saying that shit to all
the newcomers?

OLD GUY
Never gets old!

Their laughs and coughs fill the night sky.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

Steve walks through shabby, empty streets.

INT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

In a shabby room, among props that are falling apart, rehearsals for a low budget amateur play are underway. It's some kind of melodrama.

The star, MADELEINE, (late 40s, still trying to be 20s) is centre stage, in mid-speech. So over the top, her speech screams "Look at me!"

Other actors on stage just might as well not be there, as Madeleine drones on and on.

Steve enters, and sits in one of the empty seats.

He watches the proceedings, but it's not Madeleine he's focusing on, as a soft smile takes over his face.

SARAH, (30s, beautiful, shy) stands just off stage, dressed as a scullery maid.

She is listening intently, as if it were a public performance.

As Madeleine reaches the end of a long speech, the bit Sarah has been waiting for arrives. She steps forward, and walks on stage.

SARAH
Ma'am, there's-

NIGEL (O.S.)
Cut!

(claps)
OK, everyone. That's all we've got time for tonight. Can we get all this stuff away before you go?

A groan goes up, and people start dismantling the sets.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

Steve and Sarah walk home together. Sarah seems depressed.

With no words, Steve puts his arm round her. Her head sinks onto his shoulder.

EXT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

A small, nondescript shop for a small, nondescript town.

A loud souped-up sports car SNARLS to a halt in a nearby parking space.

The door opens, and out steps CRAIG (30s), reasonably good looking but thinks he's James Dean. Shades, leather jacket, the works.

He looks around the high street, before setting his eyes on the shop. He grins, and walks towards the entrance.

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

It's one of those small town shops that seems to sell EVERYTHING. Outdated, with no frills.

BRADY is in his late 40s, bespectacled, balding, anal, and is the shop manager, the sort nobody would want to work for.

BRADY

Spick and span, gentlemen. Our prestigious owner arrives here in approximately fifteen minutes and counting. I will NOT tolerate anything less than absolute perfection.

Steve, stocking shelves, mouths along with Brady's words, mimicking him.

ARRAN, in his early 30s, shy, nervous, attractive, laughs at Steve.

Craig enters. Steve goes to help him.

STEVE

Hi, can I he-

As he sees Craig, his smile falters.

STEVE

What do you want?

The bell rings behind Craig as another customer comes in, but Steve and Craig don't even notice.

Craig throws a ten pound note down on the counter.

CRAIG

Twenty Silk Cut.

Behind Craig is KELLY (early 20s, very pretty).

Brady pokes his head round an aisle, and takes in the scene.

BRADY

Arran! Till, please.

Arran dutifully walks over to the till. He freezes when he sees Kelly, a deep blush comes over his face, and he turns into a gibbering fool.

ARRAN

Hi Kelly. Change?

KELLY

(sweetly)

Hi Arran. Yes please.

Arran gets bags of coins out, but is so disarmed by Kelly's sweet smile, he spills coins all over the counter.

BRADY

Steve, when you've finished that,
can you replenish the toilet rolls,
and then the tuna?

Craig is eyeing up Kelly, leeringly, but turns back to Steve with a smile.

CRAIG

(to Steve)

Sounds like you've got a busy day
ahead of you.

Steve tries to ignore Brady's belittling instruction, and tries to eye-to-eye Craig, but can't, due to the sunglasses.

He throws the cigarettes and Craig's change onto the counter.

STEVE

Take those off. You look ridiculous.

CRAIG

How are you, Steve?

STEVE

I'm alright.

CRAIG

Aren't you going to ask how I am?

STEVE

No.

CRAIG

How's Sarah?

STEVE

She's fine. Why are you back? Fail in London?

CRAIG

Did fine in London, thanks very much. Been taking the show round Europe. Got another lined up in a couple of months. Thought I'd come back to my home town. See what carnage you've all caused while I've been away. You caused much carnage, Steve?

Craig finally removes his shades and looks around the shop.

CRAIG (CONT.)

Certainly looks pretty impressive, mate. You're clearly a bit of a...high flier. I hope you're keeping Sarah in the manner to which she became...accustomed?

STEVE

I said she was fine.

A car alarm goes off outside.

STEVE (CONT.)

You'd best get going now. That's the wanker alarm.

Craig is momentarily thrown.

BRADY
 Steve! I will not tolerate language
 like that!

STEVE
 (to Craig)
 You're going to be busy. There's
 lots of them about.

Craig's smile returns.

CRAIG
 You'd best get on with that tuna,
 Steve. Not going to stock itself,
 is it?

He walks to the door, and pauses.

CRAIG (CONT.)
 Give Sarah my best. Or maybe I
 will.

Craig leaves, the bell over the door cheerily announcing his
 exit.

ARRAN
 (to Kelly)
 There ya go.

KELLY
 (sweet smile)
 Thanks. Seeya.

The door rings as she leaves.

ARRAN
 (too late)
 Bye.

STEVE
 Steady, Casanova.

ARRAN
 Shut up.

STEVE
 You almost spoke to her there,
 mate.

Arran throws a packet of cigarettes at Steve.

BRADY

No throwing the merchandise, Arran.
Check for marks on the packet,
Steve. And I will *not* have you
talking to customers in that way.

STEVE

Even if they're assholes?

BRADY

Especially if they're... that sort
of person.

The bell rings again, as someone else comes in. It's a
suit-wearing businessman. Not many of them in this town.

He's MR ROBINSON, who owns the shop. He's in his fifties,
means well, and lives in his own little bubble, noticing
nothing that goes on around him.

Brady immediately tries to look even more important.

BRADY

Mister Robinson. Welcome.

ROBINSON

Hello gentlemen.

He looks around, then seeing no customers, he leans in.

ROBINSON (CONT.)

I wonder if we might all have a
word.

He turns back to the door, and switches the sign to say
"CLOSED"

CUT TO:

They are all looking at copies of spreadsheets and rows of
figures that not even Brady understands.

ROBINSON (CONT.)

So you see, with the evidence
before you, I have no alternative
but to sell the shop.

They all look up at him, **shocked**. They're still confused,
but those last words they DO understand.

STEVE

Jesus!

BRADY

Sell the shop? But-

ROBINSON
I wish there was another option.

ARRAN
Who to?

ROBINSON
That is yet to be determined, young man. It is being listed today, and I have to hope some offers do come in. Of course, in this current financial climate-

BRADY
Will they keep us on?

Robinson holds up his hands.

ROBINSON
I understand your panicked reaction. When I know more...
(beat)
By way of apology, you'll find a little extra on top of your normal wage packet this week.

He brings out three envelopes, and hands them out.

ARRAN
(horrified)
Are we being fired?

STEVE
(whispering)
It's a bonus, you wally.

EXT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON

The three lock up the shop, and go their separate ways.

EXT. WINALOT BOOKMAKERS - LATE AFTERNOON

Steve passes the bookies, looking absent-mindedly at the adverts in the window proclaiming instant riches.

He stops, and looks back.

INT. WINALOT BOOKMAKERS - LATE AFTERNOON

As the door shuts behind him, Steve closes his eyes as he takes in the sounds and smells. Then, opening them, he sees walls of monitors, vying for his attention, offering every sport imaginable, and a television excitedly previewing upcoming sporting events.

Steve takes some banknotes from the envelope Mr. Robinson gave him, leaving most of the money there untouched. Then he grins.

CUT TO:

Steve has his head in his hands, surrounded by screwed up betting slips and a solitary ten pound note.

He looks around. The monitors are still going mental, mocking him. His eye catches the word FREELOADER, right at the bottom of the list of runners in Saturday's Grand National horse race, at 150-1.

STEVE

Break the chain, huh?

He grabs a new betting slip and starts writing.

STEVE (CONT.)

Freeloader. One hundred and fifty to one. Perfect. What else?

He looks to the television, which is showing a current football match, where the score is currently 3-0 to Rovers, the home team. A reporter is giving the half time report.

REPORTER

It's carnage here, Andy. At 3-0 down, City have shown NO sign of stopping their losing streak, now the longest in the league since nineteen-seventy-eight...

Steve looks to one of the monitors. He sees odds on City winning have gone out to fifty to one.

STEVE

Excellent. City to win there, then.

More hasty scribbling.

STEVE (CONT.)

What else?

The television bursts into an over-the-top preview of a big boxing match. As a huge, terrifyingly buff champion (tagline: MAGIC MELVYN MARSHALL) faces down a smaller, meek-looking challenger (tagline: NIGEL "THE LUCK" LAMB), a different reporter talks up the fight.

REPORTER#2

There have been many classic fights in recent heavyweight history, but this is unlikely to be one of them. Marshall has been accused of avoiding the tough fights with this one, a straightforward defence against a challenger from Ireland who has consistently failed to set the boxing world alight.

Steve looks over to another monitor to see odds of forty to one being offered for the no-hoper.

STEVE (CONT.)

Nigel the luck
Lamb? Jesus. That'll do.

More scribbling.

CUT TO:

A bemused bookie, Colin (40s), is looking at the slip.

COLIN

Why not just give ME your money if you don't want it, Steve?

STEVE

I kind of figured that's what I've been doing for years.

COLIN

You know an accumulator needs all the results to come in, or you don't win anything? The odds are huge.

STEVE

And so are the winnings.

COLIN

But-

STEVE

You are the worst bookie in the world, Colin. How do you make any money? Just take my bet, will ya?

Colin sighs, and slides the slip into the computer. He holds out his hand, and takes Steve's last tenner. It's not a new experience for either of them.

COLIN
Just trying to help, Steve.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

The wallet changes hands, from Steve to Sarah, the envelope stashed inside. She takes the money out, and counts the notes out on the table. She's suspicious.

She puts the money next to a PILE of unopened bills.

SARAH
You're late back.

STEVE
Yeah, I went for a walk.

SARAH
I feared the worst.

STEVE
That I was dead?

SARAH
OK, I feared the second worst.

STEVE
Maimed?

SARAH
You know what I mean.

Steve picks up a pile of papers from the kitchen table. Sarah's script.

STEVE
So what have you been doing?
Learning your lines?

Sarah hands his wallet back.

SARAH
Yeah, both of them.

STEVE
Look, it's still an important part.

If looks could kill. Steve hugs her.

STEVE (CONT.)

I've had some bad news. Robinson is selling up.

Sarah stops. Her shocked face says it all.

INT. THE WALL INN PUB - EVENING

Steve is sitting with FRANK, his dad, in a run of the mill northern pub.

Frank is in his mid 60s, slightly overweight, clean-shaven, grey-haired. He dresses smartly, but his clothes have aged and faded over time.

FRANK

So what does this mean? Are you being laid off?

STEVE

God, I don't know, Dad. They don't tell me anything. They don't even know yet.

FRANK

So have you looked around? For other jobs?

STEVE

Well no. I've not been sacked, and I only got told a couple of hours ago.

FRANK

You have to be ahead of the pack, Steve. I check the job pages every single day.

STEVE

Dad, I'm still not sure what's even happening at the shop yet. Robinson-

FRANK

Steve, you have to come out fighting every single day. I do. And one day, that attitude is going to work. The day you give up, Steve, is-

STEVE

Is the day you die. I know. I know.
Look, I've just had the news. At
least let me have a pint before the
pep talk, alright?

Frank nods, apologetically. They study their pints in pensive silence.

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAWN

Steve and Arran are at the shop, unknotting the bundles of newspapers and setting them out for the day.

Steve pauses. He's staring at the back of one of the papers.

ARRAN

Get a move on, mate. Brady'll be on
us in about twenty minutes...

Steve is gazing at the headline:

"Stunning City fightback keeps Jackson's job safe".

The scoreline "ROVERS 3-4 CITY" is proving difficult for his racing mind to process.

His accumulator is still alive.

INT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

It's Sarah's big night. We see her on stage. Madeleine is hamming it up in a big speech, while Sarah stands on the side of the stage.

Steve watches from the stalls, feeling her frustration.

LATER

The cast are taking their bows. Madeleine is milking it, theatrical gestures.

Sarah is bowing with the rest of the cast, but is in the shadow, a long way from the spotlight.

EXT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

Steve's waiting patiently outside, when Madeleine leads the majority of the cast out, soaking up all the attention.

Sarah waits in line to say her goodbyes, and Madeleine goes to kiss her on the cheek, before seeing someone altogether more important behind her.

MADELEINE

Julia! Oh Julia!

She forgets the kiss, and heads over to lovey-dove Julia, leaving Sarah looking embarrassed. Steve attempts to not have seen it, and they head for the car.

STEVE

You were great, Sarah.

SARAH

Thanks.

STEVE

Really great. I mean, you should be getting bigger parts.

SARAH

Well, it's an ensemble piece, you know.

STEVE

Oh sure, the maid was important. But you would have been a much better lead than Madeleine.

SARAH

Madeleine's very good. It's a difficult part.

Long silence. It's awkward.

EXT. STEVE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

A house in state of gradual decline, due to lack of money rather than care.

Steve's car is parked across the driveway, blocking in the resident car - the sign of the temporary visitor.

INT. STEVE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

Frank is there and so is Steve's mum, ELAINE, mid 60s. She is small, slightly frail, but permanently friendly and bustling. She loves it when the house is busy.

The television is on in the corner of the room, with the sound off.

STEVE

How was your interview, Dad?

Awkward silence following Frank's disgusted look.

ELAINE

Something will come up.

Another awkward silence. Frank doesn't like the platitudes.

STEVE

This town's dying on its arse.

ELAINE

Language, Steve!

SARAH

It's not! It's the same as anywhere else.

FRANK

I've lived in this town all my life. It's no worse off now than any time I've known it.

ELAINE

Well, it is a lot more run down. Remember the park, Frank?
(excited)
We used to go for walks in the park.

SARAH

When was this?

FRANK

Back when we were courting.

ELAINE

So beautiful, it was. We got all dressed up in beautiful dresses, the men in their suits. The flowers would all come out in the Spring.

SARAH
(laughing)
Is this the same park we know?

STEVE
You wouldn't see the flowers now,
under all that crap.

ELAINE
You used to play football in that
park.

FRANK
They'd need tetanus shots to try
now.

ELAINE
It's a shame. It was so beautiful.

FRANK
No more news on the shop being
bought, Steve?

Steve shakes his head.

SARAH
Maybe a change of career would be
best, Steve? You don't even like
the shop.

STEVE
And do what? I don't have any
skills.

SARAH
Maybe you do. You never push
yourself.

The mood darkens. Annoyed glances between Steve and Sarah.
Frank sees it, and turns up the telly.

FRANK
Look, the Grand National's on. You
guys got any money on it?

Steve feels Sarah's gaze on him.

STEVE
No.

SARAH
No, Steve isn't betting anymore.

ELAINE

Oh, the National's not really betting, is it? Everyone does it.

She waves her betting slip excitedly. Sarah shakes her head, exasperated.

FRANK

Who have we got, Elaine?

Elaine scrutinises the slip.

ELAINE

Remora.

FRANK

They're off.

The commentator is listing all the horses. Steve's ears twitch when he hears the word "Freeloader". He's trying desperately to look uninterested though.

ELAINE

Where's Remora?

FRANK

I'm not sure, love.

STEVE

Sixth. Jockey's wearing orange.

Sarah's eyes fixed firmly on Steve. He feels the heat. There's a long silence, with just the commentary from the television adding to the silent tension in the room, which only Steve and Sarah are aware of.

ELAINE

Oh come ON Remora. Is he still-

FRANK

He's in second, love. What odds was it again?

Elaine looks at her ticket.

ELAINE

Forty divided by one.

STEVE

That's forty to one, Mum. If you've put a pound on, you get forty back.

ELAINE
That sounds good.

FRANK
(rubbing his hands)
It IS good, love. Very good. Come
on, Remora!

The commentator is still mentioning Freeloader though, and Steve is finding it difficult to keep his neutral look. He gulps nervously, as the horses enter the final straight.

COMMENTATOR (O.S.)
And it's Town Crier from Remora,
Town Crier from Remora, with
Freeloader in third. Town Crier
from Remora, who's gaining. Or is
Town Crier losing. Town Crier is
losing ground. Remora takes the
lead. Remora from Town Crier.

ELAINE/FRANK/SARAH
Yes!/Come on!/Go on Remora!

COMMENTATOR
Town Crier has faded now. Town
Crier is nowhere. It's Remora from
Freeloader, but here comes
Freeloader. Freeloader is gaining.

ELAINE
Oh no! Come on Remora.

FRANK
Come on, you stupid bloody nag! Get
the whip on him!

COMMENTATOR
They're neck and neck. It's Remora,
level with Freeloader. As they're
coming to the finish, it's, yes,
Freeloader is going to take it.
It's Freeloader at the death.

As the commentator goes into wind-down mode, listing all the horses as they come in, there's disappointment in the room. Except for deep inside Steve's eyes.

FRANK
Ah God, did you have it each way?

ELAINE

No, I've only got one ticket.

FRANK

No, each way, woman. Oh, never mind.

SARAH

Unlucky Elaine, such an exciting race.

ELAINE

Ah well, that's it for another year. I'm going to check on the potatoes.

FRANK

You alright, Steve?

Steve takes a breath. The second of his bets has come in.

He's one step away from a fortune, but he can feel Sarah's eyes on him once more. He forces a regretful smile.

STEVE

Yeah, yeah, it was unlucky. Great race.

SARAH

Do you want a hand, Elaine?

She wanders out.

Frank rubs his hands and grins mischievously as he nods towards the drinks cabinet.

FRANK

Fancy a quick snifter before dinner?

STEVE

(exhaling nervously)

Yes. Yes I do.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Steve pretends to watch television, and is clearly TENSE. Sarah is in her pyjamas and reading a magazine.

On television, a preview of that night's boxing match is on the news, the last in Steve's betting trilogy.

A long pause. Steve glances up at the clock.

STEVE

I want to go for a drink. Do you want to go for a drink?

SARAH

Do I look like I want to go for a drink? It's late. What time is it?

STEVE

(waves his watch)

I don't know. My watch has stopped.

Sarah studies him.

SARAH

What's going on, Steve? You've been weird all evening.

STEVE

Nothing. I'm fine.

SARAH

Is it the shop?

A pause. An escape?

STEVE

Maybe. I think it's on my mind.

SARAH

(sympathetic)

Want to talk about it?

She puts a hand on his arm.

STEVE

(no)

I just think a drink would-

She whips her hand away.

SARAH

(annoyed)

OK.

She picks up her magazine again.

INT. THE BLACK HORSE PUB - NIGHT

As the two men begin fighting on the big satellite TV, the mismatch is obvious, and the champ is beating the hell out of the smaller challenger.

Whistles and laughter from the crowd watching in the pub. This shouldn't take long.

Steve, propped against the bar, winces and takes a big gulp from his pint.

LATER

As Steve drains another pint...

COMMENTATOR

And Marshall moves in again. So fresh, not a drop of sweat on him. And Lamb looks out on his feet.

Steve turns disgustedly to the bar, and orders another pint.

LATER

Steve picking disinterestedly at a beer mat, as Marshall rains down more punches on Lamb.

COMMENTATOR

And he's toying with him, like a cat with an injured bird. We have to hope that a more interesting defence is on the horiz-

Lamb suddenly unleashes a mighty punch, out of nowhere, and drops Marshall to the canvas.

The commentator's voice is lost in a roar from the crowd. The referee gives Marshall a standing 8 count, but Marshall is dazed. Not as dazed as Steve, though, who doesn't even realise his jaw is hanging loosely open.

As soon as he's allowed, Lamb attacks Marshall with everything he's got. Marshall isn't sure where he is. The crowd are going crazy, Steve is wide-eyed, and the Lamb has turned on the style.

Within seconds, it's all over, the ref stops the fight, Lamb is hoisted in the air, and the crowd in the pub are boisterous.

Steve fights his way through the crowd, and bursts out through the front door.

EXT. THE BLACK HORSE PUB - NIGHT

Steve crashes onto the street, and gasps in the cold night air. A group of smokers regard him curiously.

Hands on knees to regain his composure, he pauses a few seconds, then stands and walks away, into the moonlit streets.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - NIGHT

Steve walks faster and then breaks into a run. Sprinting furiously, he runs into the

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Steve yells to the skies

STEVE
Yeeeeesssssss!!!

Some tramps sitting on the grass drinking from cans look at him. They're not too surprised. They're used to people acting strange.

In the moonlight, Steve looks around at the graffiti and rubbish. He sits on a bench, his shaky legs grateful for the rest.

He takes off his watch, and opening the battery compartment removes his betting slip, folded many times. Smoothing it out, he gazes at each line, confirming his win.

Then he folds it up, and replaces it in his watch, and puts his watch back on his wrist.

He sits on the bench for some time, looking into space, trying to work out just how much his life is about to change.

He looks around him, at the ruined state of what was once a beautiful park. A punctured football lies half-buried among the debris. He looks at it, thoughtfully.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

BEDROOM

Steve crawls into bed besides Sarah, who stirs in her sleep, but doesn't open her eyes. Steve wraps his arms around her and kisses the top of her head. She murmurs and snuggles into him.

SARAH
Was it good?

STEVE
Huh?

SARAH
Was it a good night?

A pause.

STEVE
It was amazing.
(beat)
You're amazing.

He kisses her again.

SARAH
(sleepily)
You're drunk.

He smiles, and lies back, staring at the ceiling, mind whirring. After a few seconds, he plucks up courage, and leans over.

STEVE
(leadingly)
Babe?

Sarah's voice is firm, suspicious, and awake.

SARAH
Tell me now. Did you bet?
(beat)
After all we talked about?

A beat.

Steve opens his mouth to speak. She waits. He tries to tell her. Can't.

STEVE
No.

He lies back. Sweating. Thinking.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - MORNING

Steve hurries through the streets, talking on his phone.

STEVE

I know, Brady... OK, Mister Brady.
I'm sorry. Look, I'll see how I am
later on, yeah? It might just be a
quick bug or something.

He pauses, attempts a pitiful cough into the phone, and then hangs up.

EXT. WINALOT BOOKMAKERS - MORNING

As Steve approaches the bookies, he sees a collection of people standing outside it. They wear suits, they have cameras and press passes hanging from their necks. The grizzled old guy from the G.A. meeting tries to get in, and is accosted on his way in.

MAN#1

Hey, old fella.

OLD GUY

What?

MAN#1

You know who the winner is?

OLD GUY

What winner?

MAN#2

The big accumulator. Some guy round here won three million on the fight last night.

OLD GUY

Three million on Lamb? What kind of chump would do that?

MAN#1

A millionaire chump. You know who it is?

OLD GUY

No I don't. Get out of my way.

MAN#2

It's a small town. You guys have got to know.

The old guy shrugs past and the door cuts off further retreat. The two men take a drag on their cigarettes and return to the pack.

Steve carries on past them, on the other side of the road.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - MORNING

Steve walks round the corner, looks around nervously, then shins over a fence and down a small alleyway. After a couple of efforts, he manages to scale a wall, and drops down into the back yard of the bookmakers.

He shouts out on impact. He's no super spy, and falls awkwardly in a pool of oil and rubbish.

Walking to the door, he catches his shirt on a nail and there's a loud rip.

Steve knocks on the rusty old fire door that makes up the back entrance, and looks at his hand, covered in dirt.

Eventually, the door opens. Colin's astonished face appears.

COLIN

Steve?

(grins delightedly)

Steve! Come in, mate.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Colin is currently the most excited he's been in years.

Two suited men in their 50s look at him and his filthy appearance with some surprise.

COLIN

(conspiratorially, to Steve)

Head office.

(to the men, excitedly)

This is our winner! Gentlemen, I give you... Winalot's FIRST MILLIONAIRE!

The two men shake his hand eagerly.

SUITED MAN#1/SUITED MAN#2

Congratulations!

Steve looks at Colin in surprise.

STEVE

How many people have to know about
this?

Colin opens a fridge and grabs some champagne.

COLIN

Have a drink before we go out
there?

STEVE

Out where?

COLIN

To get our photos taken!

STEVE

No. Absolutely not.

COLIN

Where's Sarah? They'll want Sarah
in it too!

STEVE

No. Colin, shut up and listen a
minute.

COLIN

I'm sure she'd love to-

STEVE

(with feeling)
She really wouldn't.

COLIN

(more and more excited)
Wait there!

He dashes to behind Steve, rummages in a cupboard, then holds up a MASSIVE plastic cheque, made out to Colin Willets. It's as big as he is.

COLIN (CONT.)

I've been waiting years to give out
one of these.

Steve turns round and nearly gets a cheque in the face. He ducks sharply.

STEVE

Jesus, no! What is wrong with you?

COLIN

Had this one made out to myself.
Just to see what it looked like,
you know?

STEVE

Look, none of this is going to
happen. I can stay completely
anonymous. I know my rights.

SUITED MAN#1

Excuse me, but this is terrific
publicity for us. Those people out
there-

STEVE

...are arseholes. Now listen. Not a
chance. I don't want any publicity
at all, and I'm certainly not
giving any interviews. I do NOT
want my name mentioned, do you hear
me?

Long pause.

COLIN

(sulky)

Sure.

STEVE

Now, how do I get the money?

COLIN

(his dreams are in ruins)

Give me your bank details. I'll
sort out the transfer.

STEVE

Sort code is four six, nine one,
two-

He stops. Realises.

STEVE

I need a new bank account. I'll be
right back.

He runs back out through the fire exit.

INT. BANK - DAY

A filthy and bedraggled Steve, with ripped shirt flapping open, faces a bemused but efficient bank manager, who is trying not to be curious.

STEVE
And it's all paperless?

MANAGER
That is our policy, yes.

STEVE
Meaning NOTHING gets posted?

MANAGER
That is correct, Sir.

STEVE
Ever?

MANAGER
(beat)
Yes, Sir.

Long, almost accusatory eye contact from Steve.

STEVE
Well, I guess that will be satisfactory. How quickly can you set this thing up?

MANAGER
(eyebrows slightly raised)
Immediately, Sir, given the appropriate documentation.

He slides a form over the desk.

As Steve fills out the form, the manager looks Steve up and down, rather patronisingly. Steve doesn't look like a bank manager's favourite sort of customer.

MANAGER
We can offer extra incentives depending on the amount being deposited, Sir. Can I ask what you are intending to leave with us as a starting-

Steve doesn't even look up - the form has his full attention.

STEVE
Three million pounds.

The words fall like bombs. The manager is speechless. Steve, oblivious, looks up.

STEVE (CONT.)
I can't remember the postcode for
my previous address. Is that OK?

The manager realises after a few seconds that he is meant to respond. He nods, vigorously.

EXT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

As Steve enters the shop, he bumps into Kelly.

STEVE
Hi Kelly. Bye Kelly.

Kelly flashes that lovely smile.

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Steve hurries into the shop. Arran is behind the counter, red-faced, sappy and lovelorn, his hand still raised, forgotten, in fond farewell.

ARRAN
(sotto voce)
Bye.

STEVE
Hi mate, you asked her out yet?

Brady emerges from between aisles.

BRADY
Feeling better, are we, Steve?
Jesus, what happened to you?

Steve affects a cough.

STEVE
I think so. Still a little peaky, I
guess. Maybe one of those twenty
four hour things.

BRADY
What happened to your clothes?

Steve looks down at himself. He had forgotten about this, and is completely nonplussed.

STEVE
The, erm, doctor advised me to exercise.

A long pause, with Brady and Arran staring at a self-conscious Steve, who is trying to brazen it out.

BRADY
Tuna, Steve.

STEVE
Huh?

BRADY
We're low on tuna.

Steve moves into action.

STEVE
(to himself)
How come this town eats so much damn tuna? It's not like we even get any customers?

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Steve serves a customer at the till. There's someone else waiting behind him.

A man walks in with a pile of newspapers.

DELIVERY MAN
Evening edition.

STEVE
Cheers.

BRADY
Sign for it, Steve.

Steve does, glancing at the paper. He freezes.

HEADLINE: LOCAL 'ANONYMOUS' GAMBLER WINS THREE MILLION ON ACCUMULATOR

ARRAN
Jesus, look at this.

He picks up the paper, leaving many more copies underneath. Arran tuts as he walks by. Steve forces himself to grin.

SHOPPER#1

I bet it doesn't change him. I bet he carries on his crappy job and lives in his crappy home. Don't know why people like that bother.

ARRAN

Yeah. "It won't change me"!

SHOPPER#2

(reading from the article)
Colin Willets, thirty-nine-

A burst of laughter.

SHOPPER#1

Thirty nine?!

Everyone laughs. Steve joins in, nervously.

SHOPPER#2

-said "The winner has decided to remain anonymous. He's a lovely bloke, and I definitely can't tell you any more."

Steve breathes a sigh of relief.

SHOPPER#2

He did disclose, however, that the winner is a local family man, brought up here, and plays an active part in the community.

Steve's eyes roll in frustration.

SHOPPER#1

Ooh, that narrows it down.

ARRAN

I bet it's that Ronald from the library. He likes a flutter.

SHOPPER#2

Mister Willets also said that his own personal forecast was that he would retire from work and start a family. "And good luck to him," added Willets.

SHOPPER#1

So he's young?

SHOPPER#2
And employed!

STEVE
Jesus, why didn't he just draw a picture?

ARRAN
Yeah, we've got to be able to work it out from here.

They all stand there, deep in thought.

BRADY
Arran, can you restock the chocolate section?

ARRAN
(to Steve)
What about Dave Br-

STEVE
(snaps)
You heard him, Arran. Do the chocolate.

Arran looks at Steve in surprise.

EXT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - EVENING

The sun is setting as the three lock up the shop. They carry out their specific duties. Thoughtless, wordless, second nature.

ARRAN
Brady, what do you reckon our odds are?

Brady thinks about it, and then shakes his head.

They all stare at the ground. Brady attempts a busy expression, but his eyes stay sad.

BRADY (CONT.)
Tomorrow, gentlemen.

He turns and leaves.

STEVE
What would you do, mate? If we get the push?

Arran looks startled.

ARRAN

I'm trying not to think about it.

(beat)

Night, Steve.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

Steve is walking home, thinking.

He has a brainwave.

INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

Steve is shown to one of the computers. On the internet, he finds the local shop. Adverts section. He chooses to Place an Advert. A box appears for him to type, so he does, and the letters flash up on the screen, one by one:

WANTED: BUSINESS MANAGER.

He is smiling. He is nervous.

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Full page spread in local paper, that says:

WANTED: BUSINESS MANAGER. QUALIFICATIONS AND ENTHUSIASM
NEEDED TO TURN AROUND AILING BUSINESS.

Steve is looking at this, and he's chuffed with the results.

BRADY

Steve?

Steve drags himself away, shutting the paper with a snap.

The main headline is: WHO IS THE SECRET MILLIONAIRE

A phone number appeals for contributions. Several people in the shop are reading it, and chatting excitedly.

Steve looks at everyone, nervous.

EXT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE - DAY

Establishing shots of an out-of-town place, just off a motorway, that hires out rooms by the hour. Soulless, clean, presentable.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE RECEPTION - DAY

Some people sitting around, waiting to be seen. Some are nervous, some are confident. All look young, go-getting, geeky and incredibly business like.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE MEETING ROOM - DAY

MONTAGE OF VARIOUS PEOPLE STEVE IS INTERVIEWING

All these people are suited, bespectacled, earnest, and their super fast robotic way of speaking makes Steve feel like a complete fool even before he realises he hasn't got a clue what they're saying.

1)

SOULLESS GUY#1

The main thing, of course, is to socialise the data and action our key deliverables.

Steve goes from optimistic grin to completely puzzled. And it gets worse.

2)

SOULLESS GUY#2

I quickly realised that the spreadsheets costing variance analysis-

3)

SOULLESS GUY#3

So I got sick of their Blue Sky Thinking approach, and...

(beat)

Sorry, do you have a Blue Sky Thinking approach?

STEVE

(beat)

God, no! I, erm, no, I just like to, erm, I...

(looks at CV)

So! It says here you like playing badminton?

4)

SOUL LESS GUY#4
The most important thing is to
establish escalation routes.

He looks at Steve confidently.

Steve looks back, horrified.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE - DAY

Steve is having a cigarette in an outdoors soulless business
centre smoking section.

The door bangs open, and he is suddenly joined by somebody
he recognises: Martin, the drunk who gatecrashed the GA
meeting.

Martin is suited, but unshaven, red-eyed, and clutching a
cigarette like he means business.

He nods at Steve, and flips the cigarette in his mouth.

MARTIN
Got a light, fella?

Steve obliges.

MARTIN (CONT.)
Thanks.

He gazes into the wind for a second.

MARTIN (CONT.)
You here for this business thing?

Steve thinks about it, realises he is, and nods.

MARTIN (CONT.)
Yeah, me too. We've got some
serious out-of-town competition
here though, eh? I think these
fuckers actually know what they're
talking about!

Steve laughs, then stops when he realises Martin isn't
laughing.

MARTIN (CONT.)
I guess today's the day. Sweet talk
a guy with the business talk. I got
(MORE)

MARTIN (CONT.) (cont'd)
 all the talk. You wanna know the
 secret?
 (taps his nose)
 It's all about the entrance.

STEVE
 What about the stubble?

Martin takes a battery powered shaver from his pocket.

MARTIN
 No rush, fella. Gives me something
 to do.
 (leans in, conspiratorially)
 Stops the shakes.

Martin stubs his cigarette out, and looks wistfully into the sun, like a modern-day, suburban, low budget, short sighted Clint Eastwood.

MARTIN (CONT.)
 Well, I'm going in. Good luck,
 fella.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE MEETING ROOM - DAY

The door opens. A freshly shaven Martin comes in, arm outstretched in a confident businesslike manner.

MARTIN
 Hello there.

He sees Steve. The door closes behind him while he takes it in.

MARTIN (CONT.)
 Oh for fuck's sake.

Steve smiles sympathetically.

STEVE
 (sympathetic)
 You certainly nailed the entrance.
 No doubt there.
 (beat)
 Won't you sit down?

MARTIN
 Is there any point?

STEVE
You might be surprised.
(beat)
Please?

Martin sits down, all bravado gone. Steve picks up his CV.

STEVE (CONT.)
It says here you were born here,
but went and got a first at
Cambridge, worked in the city for
eighteen months, and then-

MARTIN
Yeah, that's about where I should
have stopped writing.

STEVE
In all fairness, you pretty much
did.

MARTIN
Well, don't bother getting
references.

STEVE
Reference. You only had one job.

MARTIN
Well, I've recently decided I want
another one.

STEVE
What happened?

MARTIN
You know city firms have a bit of
an after-work scene? Work hard play
hard?

STEVE
So I've seen on telly.

MARTIN
Well, it turned out that the better
I got at one of those...

Steve tosses a piece of paper over to him.

STEVE
What do you think of this?

Martin scans it.

MARTIN

Great. A test. OK, let's see... A grocery shop. Small town. Continual yearly losses. No real consumer base. Pointless. Won't ever compete with the big boys nowadays. Foolhardy to even try, given their resources.

He puts the paper on the table, and looks up at Steve.

STEVE

How about if I REALLY wanted it to work.

Realisation dawns.

Martin picks the paper up and looks at it again.

MARTIN

This sort of thing just needs some new ideas. Beat the big boys at their own game.

He puts the paper on the table again, and tries to look confident.

STEVE

Well, I don't know if I believe you there but at least I understood what you said. Welcome aboard.

Steve beams.

Martin, looking rather unconfident, attempts to beam as well, but he's too confused to properly nail it.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE RECEPTION - DAY

Robinson, owner of the shop, is sitting patiently on one of the chairs in the waiting room.

Martin comes out to meet him, dressed in a new suit, friendly smile and welcoming handshake at the ready. He escorts him into the function room, and the door closes behind them both.

FADE TO BLACK

A champagne cork pops, and voices cheer (a mixture of hearty and forced).

FADE IN

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Mr Robinson is pouring champagne (or a cheaper version thereof) into paper cups, in the same office as he announced the devastating news just a few days before.

ROBINSON

The main thing I wanted to tell you is that he seemed very keen that you should not be panicking. There will be no redundancies.

BRADY

So who bought it?

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

SARAH

So who bought it?

STEVE

Some company, Robinson said. He met the manager who'll be dealing with us. Said he was nice. He wants to meet us all, apparently.

SARAH

But what about the company? Whose cash is it?

STEVE

I don't know.

SARAH

What are they going to do with it? Where's the announcements in the press?

STEVE

I don't know.

SARAH

Why would you be so secretive?

STEVE

(guilty start)

Me?

SARAH

I mean whoever bought this shop.

STEVE
Oh. Well, lots of reasons.

SARAH
Name one.

STEVE
Look, we can't change what happens.
Let's just see how it pans out.

SARAH
Well, I don't trust whoever it is
bought this.

She leaves the room.

STEVE
(quietly)
I don't know if I do, either.

EXT. PARK ENTRANCE - NIGHT

One of the few roads with street lights. A car pulls up and
turns the lights off.

MARTIN (.O.S.)
I want you to have a look through
these.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Martin hands Steve a pile of papers.

MARTIN
It's some initial proposals on how
to improve the shop.

Steve scans the first few pages in the glow of a nearby
street light. Diagrams, charts, lots of writing.

STEVE
Local produce?

MARTIN
I think we need to freshen things
up.

STEVE
Freshen up. Good.

MARTIN

People get bored, Steve. We've failed them time and time again. We've been coasting along, hoping these people will stick around, that they'll make do. But people end up looking for better, more exciting options.

A pause. Steve deep in thought.

STEVE

So the people are bitter and bored, eh?

MARTIN

(confused)

Bitter?

STEVE

And we've got to make them want us all over again.

He starts getting excited. Martin likes the enthusiasm.

MARTIN

Now you're getting it!

STEVE

Reawaken their enthusiasm. Make them remember why they loved us in the first place.

MARTIN

Right!

STEVE

What do you know about the arts?

Whatever Martin had been expecting Steve to say, it wasn't that.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE MEETING ROOM - DAY

Martin is in a meeting with NIGEL, the director of the amateur dramatics company that put on Sarah's play earlier.

Nigel is staring at Martin with a complete lack of comprehension.

MARTIN
My client is a big fan of your
work, Mister Lassiter.

NIGEL
Please, call me Nigel.

MARTIN
With the right backing, Nigel, you
could be a legend.

NIGEL
Well, it's most kind of, erm, what
did you say his name was again?

MARTIN
My client wishes to remain
anonymous. What play are you
planning to do next?

NIGEL
I'm thinking of doing Romeo and
Juliet.

MARTIN
(nods wisely)
A classic. Have you any thoughts on
casting?

NIGEL
Well, I am planning auditions for
Romeo, but I have a leading lady
that I generally-

MARTIN
The girl who played the scullery
maid...

NIGEL
(mind racing)
Maid? Oh, there was-
(incredulous)
Sarah?

MARTIN
My client was a big fan.
(beat)
There's your leading lady.

NIGEL
Oh I really don't... I mean
Madeleine is really-

Martin produces a cheque, and gives it to Nigel.

MARTIN
 My client is most insistent. I
 trust such a trifling matter won't
 be a stumbling block.

Nigel looks at the cheque, and his mouth hangs open.

MARTIN (CONT.)
 Mr Lassiter? I mean, Nigel?

NIGEL
 No. No, I don't expect it will be.

INT. STEVE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

The usual weekend dinner get-together.

FRANK
 Well, I'd still look around if I
 were you.

SARAH
 Absolutely.

STEVE
 Why? I think things are fine.

SARAH
 You don't even know who's hired
 you.

STEVE
 Robinson says they're great.

FRANK
 Ah that guy always had his head up
 his arse.

ELAINE
 Frank!

FRANK
 Well!

STEVE
 I think they're hiring delivery
 drivers too, Dad.

ELAINE
 Ooh Frank, you could-

SARAH
 I could help tailor your
 CV-

FRANK

Ah Christ, I've applied there before. I'm more likely to get jail time for killing that Brady idiot than actually getting a job there.

STEVE

Never give up, eh Dad? Got to have a system.

FRANK

Ah shut up.

ELAINE

You do say that, Frank.

FRANK

(knows he's beaten)
Ah, you shut up too.

Steve is grinning his "I love it when a plan comes together" grin.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE RECEPTION - DAY

Steve, Arran and Brady sit in a reception room. Arran is rubbing his hands together and staring at the ground, while Brady paces the room, looking at his CV that he clutches tightly in both hands. Steve sits, calmly looking at the ceiling.

STEVE

It's going to be OK, you know?

BRADY

Know that for certain, do you?

STEVE

Look, Robinson said-

BRADY

What the hell does that old fart know?

ARRAN

You do seem remarkably calm, Steve.

A door opens, and Martin comes through, arm outstretched.

MARTIN

Gentlemen, great to meet you.

He shakes all of their hands, and baulks at Brady's terrified impression of a relaxed smile.

MARTIN (CONT.)

Please try to relax. I hope to be able to answer any concerns you may have about our plans for the shop. To that end, I think it is best to see you individually. Mr Brady, would you follow me?

He walks towards the meeting room, with Brady hot on his heels. So hot, indeed, that he catches the back of Martin's foot.

BRADY

Sorry! God, sorry!

MARTIN

Not a problem, Mr Brady. Please, after you.

Arran exhales with nervous energy, while Steve suppresses a snort of laughter.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE MEETING ROOM - DAY

MARTIN

Please, take a seat.

BRADY

Thanks. Thank you. Thanks.

Brady sits, then stands up until Martin sits down, and then sits down again. Worry lines on his face practically spell the word 'tense'.

MARTIN

Now, as I said, I'm just looking to stop any unnecessary rumours or worry from getting out of contr-

BRADY

I'm an excellent manager. I run a tight ship. It's tough, Mister-?

MARTIN

Carter. But call me Martin.

BRADY

It's tough, Mister Martin, but I get my team working, and we get the work done.

MARTIN

I'm sure you do. I want to reassure you that I have no plans to cut the workforce in the near future. So please try to relax.

Brady cuts the tightest of smiles.

MARTIN (CONT.)

We do, however, have a battle on our hands. I wonder if you have any ideas on how to arrest the decline of our company's fortunes, in face of the competition from the global supermarket chains?

A long pause. Martin can almost hear Brady's veins trying to pump answers into his brain.

BRADY

Free stuff?

MARTIN

I'm sorry?

BRADY

Free stuff? Gets the, erm, customers in.

MARTIN

Well, I'm sure it would, Mister Brady.

Martin is baffled. Brady is pleased. Awkward silence.

MARTIN (CONT.)

Well, thanks for coming in. I'm looking forward to us working together.

Brady rises, like a defendant upon hearing a not guilty verdict. Relief radiates off him, lighting up the room.

BRADY

And you'll think about the, err-

MARTIN

The free stuff? I'll certainly take it under advisement.

LATER

Martin is now facing Arran.

MARTIN

Please, Arran, relax. There is nothing for you to worry about. You have been preceded by immensely encouraging reports of your exemplary conduct, and I am very keen to come to an agreement regarding improving your level of financial remuneration.

Arran looks at Martin as if he is speaking Martian. There is a pause.

ARRAN

So...

MARTIN

I am delighted to offer you a raise in salary.

Arran breaks into a beaming smile. Martin hands him a letter.

MARTIN

I hope you find this satisfactory.

Arran opens the letter, and looks at the content.

ARRAN

Bloody hell!

Martin laughs.

ARRAN (CONT.)

Shit! Sorry for swearing.

MARTIN

Can I take that as acceptance of our new terms?

ARRAN

Too right! Erm, yes. Yes please.

Martin stands.

MARTIN

You're an asset to this company, Arran. We're lucky to have you on board.

Arran rises, grinning in disbelief.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Steve walks in, exhausted.

He is greeted by a CHAMPAGNE CORK POP, which makes him DUCK. Sarah, in an evening dress-to-kill, and bounce-off-the-walls excited, giggles, and starts pouring champagne into two glasses.

SARAH

Hello, gorgeous. I've been expecting you.

STEVE

What's going on?

SARAH

I've had some good news. Too good not to share.

(scans him up and down)

Go get dressed.

INT. BARTALO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Busy, swanky Italian restaurant, and Steve and Sarah are sitting plumb in the middle.

Sarah is still giddy, either on champagne or life itself.

STEVE

So you going to tell me now?

SARAH

They did the casting today.

STEVE

Oh?

SARAH

Romeo and Juliet.

STEVE

Wow! Even I know that one.

SARAH

Guess who I got.

STEVE

Who?

A pause, where Sarah would like to insert a drum roll.

SARAH
Juliet. Can you believe it?

STEVE
(delighted)
Of course I can. You're my
Juliet...
(he sees her look and tails
off)
...every day.

SARAH
Bleugh!

STEVE
Well, it was the best I could do.
I'm no Shakespeare!

SARAH
No kidding!

STEVE
So how did that happen? What about
Madeleine?

SARAH
She's the nanny.

STEVE
Right. Waiter!

He signals for a waiter, and one comes over.

STEVE (CONT.)
A bottle of your finest champagne,
please.

WAITER
(trying to be incredibly
subtle)
Um, that is over a hundred pounds,
Sir. Are you sure?

SARAH
Oh God, no! Just normal wine or-

STEVE
(checks price list)
Um, OK, a bottle of normal
champagne. House champagne. That
OK? OK. Done.

He slams the menu shut and gives it to the waiter, who
leaves.

SARAH

God, Steve, we can't afford that sort of thing.

STEVE

(devilish grin)

I think we'll cope, baby.

SARAH

I guess it doesn't hurt, occasionally. Just to dream a little.

STEVE

Let's dream. Let's be millionaires for the night.

SARAH

(grins)

What's the first thing you'd do?

STEVE

I'd probably panic and run around thinking "I've got three-"

(checks himself)

-thinking "I'm a millionaire!"
Then I'd get myself an Aston Martin DB9. Green.

SARAH

You and that bloody Aston Martin.

STEVE

Like James Bond.

A beat. The champagne arrives, and the waiter pours it. Sarah watches, thrilled.

STEVE (CONT.)

How about you?

SARAH

I'd plan a holiday.

STEVE

Where? Where would you want to go?

A beat.

SARAH

Barbados.

STEVE

Barbados?

SARAH

Yeah, I know. But I really would.
Those beaches. The hotels...

Steve nods.

STEVE

Yeah. Be nice, alright. Thought it
was Cuba?

SARAH

Cuba?

STEVE

That's what you said a month or two
ago.

SARAH

Oh, cos of that program on the
telly. Yeah, well, I'm sure I could
cope with Cuba.

STEVE

But you'd prefer Barbados.

SARAH

Well, anywhere nice and hot really.
It's the-

STEVE

Yes, but if you had to choose one
or the other...

SARAH

(grinning, puzzled)

Steve, I don't know if you've seen
the bills recently, but let's not
waste the whole night arguing about
where we're not going to go on
holiday. Now drink your bloody
champagne.

Steve raises his glass to hers, and they chink. Their eyes
are sparkling.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE RECEPTION - DAY

Frank, adjusting his tie, pacing, pausing, pacing.

The door opens. Out comes Martin, fitting into his business suit more easily by the day. He's smart, business-like, and greets Frank with a handshake and a warm, efficient smile.

INT. STEVE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

Champagne corks pop, once again - it's getting to be a regular occurrence. Warm-hearted cheers abound, and Frank pours into a variety of ill-matched glasses.

They all eventually get organised enough to toast and chink each other's glasses.

STEVE

To Dad!

SARAH

To Frank!

FRANK

To me!

ELAINE

(almost to herself)

To my lovely Frank.

They drink heartily.

FRANK

(looking at the glass)

Six bloody years.

He nearly says something to Elaine, but glances say more. They chink glasses again, just the two of them, eyes slightly watering.

STEVE

And to Sarah!

SARAH

(delighted)

Oh no, Steve.

FRANK

Of course! To Sarah!

ELAINE

To Sarah!

FRANK

And Steve's job's safe!

ELAINE
A raise no less!

SARAH
To Steve!

FRANK
To Steve!

ELAINE
To Steve!

STEVE
OK, enough toasting! Any chance of
a top-up?

INT. BARTALO'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Nigel and Madeleine sit, waiting for lunch. Nigel looks very hungover.

A waiter arrives.

WAITER
Wine?
(for Madeleine)
Gin and tonic?
(for Nigel)

He leaves.

Nigel takes out some alka seltzer and slips it into his G&T. It froths up over the glass.

NIGEL
Christ, can I borrow your napkin?

He looks at her, and she is staring at him, in a raging mood, affecting not to have heard him. He just takes her napkin, and starts mopping up the mess.

MADELEINE
Have you thought about it? What are you planning to do?

NIGEL
What *can* I do?

MADELEINE
I want a better part. I will *not* be the nurse. The nurse is an *old person*.

NIGEL

It's a good female part. It's important.

MADELEINE

I want the lead. Why aren't I the lead?

NIGEL

Mads, we've talked about this.

MADELEINE

Don't you *dare* call me Mads.

NIGEL

I think Sarah is right for the part.

MADELEINE

(on the verge of tears)

She's your new favourite. You make me sick. It's all so bloody predictable.

NIGEL

Calm down, it's nothing like that.

MADELEINE

Course not. She wouldn't want *you!*
Have you seen yourself? Men!

A waiter steps forward, thinking she called. He cowers before her fierce stare, and retreats again.

MADELEINE (CONT.)

Well, I want this nurse to be glamorous.

NIGEL

(dubious)

Right. The thing is she breastfed Juliet. We're-

MADELEINE

And I want her in more scenes.

NIGEL

What?

MADELEINE

I want more scenes with her in. You can get rid of some less important scenes to make room.

NIGEL
You want me to add scenes?

MADELEINE
Yes.

NIGEL
To Shakespeare.

MADELEINE
Yes.

NIGEL
(throwing his hands up)
You're being ridiculous!

MADELEINE
(eyes narrow)
I wonder if Brian would like to
know some of the things you've said
to me in the past.

Nigel sweats, and drinks the rest of his G&T in one go.

INT. THE WALL INN PUB - EVENING

Steve and Arran are supping pints and eyeing up the people
in the room.

STEVE
What about her over there?

ARRAN
(points)
Yeah, she's got a boyfriend.

STEVE
Oh.
(points elsewhere)
Her?

ARRAN
She's about fifty!

STEVE
(nods, knowingly)
Experienced!

While they're talking, a gorgeous girl enters the bar and
walks to the bar behind them. Arran turns back for his pint,
and nearly drops it on seeing her. He ducks behind Steve for
cover, who turns and sees her too.

STEVE

Jesus! Arran, you have to talk to her.

ARRAN

Not. A. Chance.

STEVE

You have to. If you don't, I'm going to introduce you.

ARRAN

You wouldn't.

STEVE

(to girl)

Excuse me?

GIRL

(surprised)

Yes?

STEVE

I was wondering if you've met my friend, Arran.

GIRL

Erm, no.

STEVE

He's a bit of a celebrity. Little bit famous.

GIRL

(smiling)

Really?

ARRAN

I'm not. I'm really not.

STEVE

Apparently, if you talk to him too long, though, you'll fall under his spell. You be careful.

ARRAN

(blushing)

This is ridiculous.

GIRL

(still smiling)

I'll be sure to watch out.

STEVE
Listen, I'll be back in a second.

Arran's eyes widen in panic.

ARRAN
Steve?

Steve wanders quickly over towards the gents, but once out of sight, he hides against the wall and watches.

Arran and the girl stand in awkward silence for a minute or so, and then the girl makes a friendly goodbye and leaves.

Steve rejoins Arran.

STEVE
What happened?

ARRAN
(flustered)
You bastard! What did you do?

STEVE
What? You were in there!

ARRAN
Ridiculous. Why can't you just leave it alone?

STEVE
You've just got to talk to them, Arran. They're humans you know, not angels.

ARRAN
I'm pretty sure she was an angel, and angels don't go out with bloody shop assistants who sweat out of their bloody eyes when they're left alone with bloody angels!

STEVE
She's been looking for an eye-sweating shop assistant her whole life, mate, just one with a little bit more confidence.

He thinks a bit more, as they stand there in awkward silence. He has an idea.

INT. RAY'S BAR - DAY

Cocktail bar, fairly empty. Steve sitting nervously drinking a coffee.

A girl enters. Dark hair, short skirt, high heels, make-up. Good looking in a babestation-TV way. Steve stands to greet her.

Awkward greeting, where they end up settling for a handshake.

STEVE

Michelle?

MICHELLE

Steve?

LATER

They're sitting, and both nearing the end of a garish pink-red umbrella-laden cocktail.

MICHELLE

It's weird. I've not done this before.

STEVE

(surprised)

Not done it before?

MICHELLE

Not all secret and shit.

STEVE

Exciting?

MICHELLE

No. Weird. I like to be up front.

STEVE

Look, it's gonna be good. I want it all night, remember.

MICHELLE

I can do all night.

STEVE

I'll bet you can. And anything goes.

MICHELLE
Nothing too kinky.

STEVE
Sure.

MICHELLE
Cash up front.

STEVE
Obviously.

Michelle holds her hand out, expectantly.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - EVENING

Steve watches telly, a bowl of snacks next to him on the sofa.

The front door slams, and Sarah enters. Drops onto the sofa next to him. She grabs a handful of his snacks with that been-together-for-years easiness.

Her eyes are glowing.

STEVE
How did it go?

SARAH
It was amazing. We did a full read through, all sitting around a table.

STEVE
Did it feel right?

SARAH
It felt perfect.

STEVE
So who's Romeo?

SARAH
Craig Wilson.

A pause.

STEVE
You're joking.

SARAH

No.

STEVE

And you were going to mention this, were you?

SARAH

I was working up to it.

STEVE

Working up?

SARAH

I knew you'd react.

STEVE

Because you and your ex are going to be Romeo and J-

SARAH

He's not my ex.

Heavy pause.

SARAH (CONT.)

I really need this, Steve. Don't ruin it for me.

Sarah cuddles Steve. After a few seconds, his eyes raised to the ceiling, he puts his arms around her.

INT. THE WALL INN PUB - EVENING

A group on a night out. Among them are Steve and Sarah, and Frank and Elaine, and Arran. Laughter, chat, general pub merriment.

Michelle, the escort, comes into the pub. She isn't so much dressed to kill as dressed to annihilate. This is a small town pub, where everyone knows everyone, and it's a real stop-a-jukebox entrance. Jaws drop, including Arran's.

Steve nudges Arran again.

ARRAN

Oh no, not again.

STEVE

She needs a shot of that Arran charm, mate.

ARRAN
That's the last thing she needs.

STEVE
Don't make me talk to her again.

ARRAN
You wouldn't.

STEVE
Excuse me.

MICHELLE
Hello?

STEVE
I was wondering if you'd met my
friend, Arran.

MICHELLE
No.

ARRAN
Hi.

STEVE
Oh, I'd better get over to my wife.
I'll be back in a bit.

MICHELLE
No rush.

Arran's caught in the headlights. His eyebrows plead for Steve's help.

Steve ignores him, and wanders back to Sarah, Frank and Elaine. He watches and grins as Arran is drawn into conversation by Michelle.

SARAH
...and so it's really about putting
a spin on it, seeing as it's such a
familiar play.

ELAINE
Well, it all sounds very exciting.

FRANK
So who do you get to snog every
night?

ELAINE

Frank!

STEVE

Craig Wilson.

Steve downs his pint.

STEVE (CONT.)

Anyone want another?

Awkward silence. "Oh dear" glance between Frank and Elaine. Sarah is upset. Steve wanders over to the bar.

LATER

Arran is still huddled in a twosome with Michelle, talking and flirting. Steve sits ignoring everyone, drinking heavily.

SARAH

Craig, he's done some acting in London, and he really knows how to approach it, you know. He once met Judi Dench...

The polite "oohs" from Elaine and Frank are drowned out as a cheer goes up from somewhere in the bar. Michelle leads Arran towards the exit. Others take up the cheer, which becomes deafening by the time the door closes behind them.

FRANK

Bloody hell, he's gone and done it.

Steve grins, and raises a pint to the departed couple.

BRADY (PRE-LAP)

Where is he?

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Steve is sorting out stock, and Brady is pacing the floor, looking at his watch.

STEVE

He said he'd be running late. I'm sure I told you. He was expecting a delivery.

BRADY

Nobody told me.

Arran runs through the door, adjusting his clothing, flustered.

ARRAN
Sorry I'm late.

Questioning look from Arran. Answering nod from Steve.

ARRAN (CONT.)
I was expecting a delivery.

BRADY
And did it arrive?

ARRAN
Um, yes. Yes it did.

BRADY
And was it as attractive as people say?

ARRAN
Um, what?

BRADY
(hint of a smile)
You might think I have no life, or friends, but I do still get to hear things, sometimes. Now, could you replenish the confectionery?

Steve chuckles, and Arran blushes, as Brady moves away.

STEVE
How did it go?

ARRAN
That was the greatest night of my life.

STEVE
(grinning)
It went well then?

ARRAN
Well? It was perfect. She's amazing. I can't wait for you to get to know her properly.

STEVE
(grin fades)
What?

ARRAN

You two will get on great. She's hilarious.

STEVE

I thought it was-

ARRAN

She's perfect mate.

(he pauses)

You thought it was what?

STEVE

A bit of fun. She doesn't really look-

(beat)

I didn't think she was your sort, mate.

ARRAN

(incredulous)

She's amazing. How can you think that? Which bit of her do you think I would choose not to see again? Those gorgeous eyes? That smile? The sense of humour? The fact she was totally into me?

(smacks Steve on the arm)

You idiot. She's perfect.

He wanders off to stack shelves. He's on top of the world. Steve frowns. This is not what he had planned.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Sarah sits at the kitchen table. Steve rustles a spitting stir-fry with a spatula. They are sharing a bottle of wine.

SARAH

We're all going for a drink tomorrow night.

STEVE

All?

SARAH

The cast.

STEVE

Where?

SARAH
Ray's bar. Dead posh!

STEVE
OK.

SARAH
Steve?

STEVE
Mmm?

SARAH
Are you OK?
(beat)
About the play?
(beat)
About Craig?

She can't see Steve's expression.

STEVE
Yes.

A pause.

SARAH
Are you sure?

STEVE
I said yes, didn't I?

SARAH
You say a lot of things.

Another pause.

STEVE
Look. I can't pretend it's ideal
for me. But I know how much you
wanted this. I mean you've been in
tons of these things.

SARAH
Fourteen.

STEVE
Sometimes you don't even get a
line. This is huge. I know that.
And of course I trust you. I mean,
I think he's an asshole. But I
trust you. And I love you. And I
want you to be happy.

(beat)
 You should be happy.

She smiles. If he'd seen the way she looked at him at that moment, he would have probably told her everything.

EXT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Scaffolding covers half the shop, and builders have begun to knock the place into shape.

A delivery truck parks outside the shop. Frank gets out, and walks to the shop. He is wearing a brand spanking new UNIFORM.

The rain is pouring down. Frank is humming. He's grinning. Life's bloody perfect. He arrives at the same time as Kelly, the girl from the bakery. He holds the door open.

FRANK
 After you, my dear.

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

They walk in. Arran sees Kelly, but he doesn't react as normal. In fact, he doesn't react at all.

Chaos reigns inside, as the builders troop in and out. Brady is extra busy with his clipboard.

ARRAN
 (pre-occupied)
 Hi Kelly.

KELLY
 Hi Arran. How are you?

ARRAN
 Shit. But I'll live.

BRADY
 Arran, we'll have none of that, and I'll see you in my office once you've attended to your duties.

ARRAN
 Can't wait.

Steve appears from an aisle.

STEVE

Hi Dad.

FRANK

Hey Steve. Beautiful day, isn't it?

Steve looks out at the rain, and smiles.

STEVE

I guess so. You all set?

FRANK

All present and correct, my good man.

He holds out his arms in full uniform, for inspection.

STEVE

(proud)

Looking good.

Martin enters, and Brady goes into full sycophantic mode.

BRADY

Ah, Mister Carter. I was hoping to talk to you about my ideas for-

MARTIN

Frank. Excellent to see you. Everything OK?

FRANK

Perfect, Martin. Perfect.

MARTIN

Let's talk business. Brady, we'll talk later.

BRADY

Of course.

They leave.

BRADY

(doing childish impression of Martin)

We'll talk later.

KELLY

Bye.

ARRAN
 (not even looking)
 Yeah, see you, Kelly.

Kelly smiles, slightly perturbed, at the new, confident Arran, and leaves.

BRADY
 Arran, my office, please.

ARRAN
 Ah for Christ's sake, Brady.

BRADY
 (shouting)
 That's Mister Brady to you!

INT. RAY'S BAR - EVENING

Ray's bar is in two halves. Steve and Arran are in the quiet half, sitting in a booth.

Sarah's theatre group are in the bigger, noisier half. Craig, Nigel, Madeleine and all the others are there.

Steve looks determined. Arran looks nervous.

ARRAN
 I don't see why we couldn't just go to the Wall Inn?

STEVE
 Ah just get your drink down you and stop your bloody moaning.

LATER

Steve and Arran aren't talking at all. Arran is bored, and picking at a beer mat.

Steve is staring non-stop over at Sarah's group, on the other side of the bar, who are having a fantastic time. Craig is paying special attention to Sarah.

STEVE
 Christ, he's all over her.

ARRAN
 Well, I'm glad you wanted to come out to talk about why Michelle isn't answering my calls. You're a real pal, Steve.

STEVE

Look mate, you need to forget her.

ARRAN

Forget her? I only just met her.

Kelly walks up to the other side of the bar with some friends, to get served. She sees Steve and Arran, and walks around the bar to join them.

KELLY

Hi Arran.

ARRAN

Alright?

STEVE

Kelly, come sit with us.

ARRAN

Steve, she's with friends.

KELLY

They'll be alright for a while.

Steve stands up.

STEVE

Kelly, sit here.

She slides in next to Arran.

KELLY

Don't see you in here often. Why are you on this side? Nobody ever sits round here.

ARRAN

(nods at Steve)

His idea. Been a bloody great night so far.

Craig appears in front of them.

CRAIG

Steve! I thought it was you. I didn't know this was your sort of 'place'?

STEVE

Why wouldn't it be?

CRAIG
No reason, no reason. Why don't you
and your friends join us?

ARRAN
You buying?

Craig opens his wallet.

CRAIG
(smiling)
Of course.

LATER

Steve, Arran and Kelly, supplied with fresh drinks, go with Craig to join Sarah's group.

Craig hands her a glass of wine, as if he is Sarah's partner. She eyes Steve suspiciously.

SARAH
What are you doing here?

STEVE
Having a drink.

CRAIG
(cheery)
I found these reprobates slumped on
the bar.

ARRAN
(friendly)
Why are you wearing sunglasses? Are
you blind?

Several people laugh out loud, especially as Arran doesn't even seem to be anything other than friendly.

Nigel laughs, and looks to Madeleine, but she is sulking and refuses to join in the fun.

Steve laughs louder than most, and is pleased to see that Sarah has also found it funny.

CRAIG
No.

He removes the sunglasses and blinks proudly in the brightly lit bar.

KELLY
 (to Arran)
 I'll be right back.

She heads off to the toilets.

Arran is about to say something to Steve, but suddenly catches sight of something amazing.

Back over towards the bar, a group of people have entered. It's a group of businessmen, and on the arms of one silver-haired fifty-something is Michelle. His eyes widen, he gasps, and he heads straight for her.

STEVE
 Oh shit.

Steve catches him, and pushes him against a wall, far enough away that neither group can hear what they are saying.

STEVE
 Arran, you have to listen to me. Do not go over there.

ARRAN
 Why the hell wouldn't I?

STEVE
 (desperate)
 Because you have everything you need right here. Look at her, hanging off rich businessmen. What are you doing?

ARRAN
 She's amazing.

STEVE
 You know who's amazing? Kelly. Remember the girl you've been in love with since God knows when? Hi Kelly. Bye Kelly.
 (impersonates Arran's sigh)
 The Kelly who you've ignored since Michelle arrived. The Kelly who has ditched her friends to sit with you, even when you're being fucking miserable. You're going to ignore her just to chase after some girl you don't even know, who hangs round people for the size of their wallets?

He has Arran's shocked attention. He realises he is shouting.

STEVE

You want more, but everything you wanted is right bloody there, under your nose. You go back there, and you sweep that woman off her feet.

He watches Arran, worried he'll carry on over to Michelle, but Arran is thinking, resting his head against the wall that Steve shoved him against.

Without a word, Arran turns and walks back to the group. Steve breathes a sigh of relief, and follows him.

Craig is flirting with Sarah, his arm round her. Sarah laughs. They couldn't look more like a couple.

Steve walks up to them with a face like thunder.

STEVE

I'm going home.

SARAH

Fine.

STEVE

Aren't you coming?

SARAH

No. I'll be along later.

CRAIG

(grinning)

What's up, Steve? Hope there's not an emergency at the shop?

Snap!

STEVE

Fuck off, Craig!

SARAH

Steve!

NIGEL

(steps forward)

Gentlemen, I feel that alcohol is playing-

STEVE
Just back off, Craig. Don't say
another fucking word.

Craig stands back in an amused "What did I do?" shrug.

CRAIG
Sarah, your man here appears to be
unhinged.

Steve swings for Craig, but misses, and hits Nigel in the arm. Nigel drops to the ground. Sarah screams. Craig falls over a chair backwards. It's a rubbish non-fight.

STEVE
Jesus, sorry!

A bouncer comes over and grabs Steve by the collar.

BOUNCER
Alright mate, you're done for
tonight.

STEVE
Are you OK, Nigel?

NIGEL
(from the floor)
I am undone.

STEVE
I'm so sorry!

Steve makes helpless attempts to grab his coat which has fallen on the floor. The bouncer easily drags him towards the exit, and people part for them.

Sarah grabs Steve's coat, and her coat, and looks around the group, shocked and humiliated.

SARAH
I'm sorry!

She runs out of the bar.

INT. BRANTON'S CAFE - DAY

Martin, breathless, walks briskly through the door. He joins Steve, who pours some coffee into two cups.

MARTIN

Good idea to meet up. Look at this.

He opens his briefcase, and gets out various documents. Steve looks at them, utterly confused.

STEVE

What's this?

MARTIN

Well, that first one shows how our monthly expenditure has been cut, despite buying better produce.

We've cut good local deals-

(he points to another sheet)

- that's that one, and the customer surveys,

(another sheet)

here, are bearing out our thoughts that this is what the customers want.

STEVE

(unenthusiastic)

This all sounds great, Martin.

MARTIN

Wow, you sound overwhelmed.

STEVE

I will be, mate, but this is more of an emergency meeting.

MARTIN

What's up?

STEVE

I need you to have a word with Nigel.

MARTIN

Who's Nigel?

STEVE

Theatre Nigel.

MARTIN

Oh. Why?

STEVE

We're going to sack the lead actor.

MARTIN

But the play's in a couple of weeks. Why are we doing that?

STEVE

Because he's trying to fuck my wife.

Beat.

MARTIN

Oh.

(awkward beat)

OK.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

Steve walks down the street, and makes a call on his mobile phone.

STEVE

Sarah? Look we need to talk. I love you. I have something I need to tell you. I- Ah fuck it, I'm coming over.

LATER

He walks through the town streets.

LATER

His phone rings. It's Brady.

STEVE

Brady?

BRADY (O.S.)

Where are you?

STEVE

I can't make it today. Sorry.

BRADY

What do you mean?

STEVE

I should have said. I've got stuff I have to sort out.

BRADY

You get here right now.

STEVE

Sorry, no can do.

BRADY

Get here in ten minutes, or you are fired.

STEVE

I understand. I'm afraid it's door number two.

He hangs up.

INT. PLAYHOUSE - DAY

Nigel is in charge of rehearsals, when Martin appears in the wings.

Nigel calls a halt to proceedings.

MARTIN

Sorry to interrupt, Nigel. Could I have a word?

NIGEL

(claps hands)

OK, everyone. That's lunch.

INT. NIGEL'S OFFICE - DAY

They sit opposite each other.

MARTIN

I suppose you're wondering what this is about?

NIGEL

I have receipts.

MARTIN

Excuse me?

NIGEL

For the lunches. Business lunches. Nothing untoward.

(beat)

I'm not paying any of it back.

MARTIN
 (confused)
 I feel we're getting off on the wrong foot. Could we start again?

NIGEL
 (to himself, stressed)
 Ridiculous. You can't rewrite Shakespeare.

MARTIN
 (slowly)
 No. No, you can't.
 (then)
 Look, I wanted to find out how it's all going, though I also have a tiny little change I need you to make, much as I hate to intrude.

NIGEL
 It's not about- I haven't done anything wrong?

MARTIN
 (laughing)
 Oh, no! No you're doing a great job. It's all going well?

NIGEL
 (relieved)
 Oh yes, this sort of thing is all about chemistry you know? I guess,
 (adjusts his tie)
 enough experience means it's less of a gamble than with others, you know?

They both laugh.

MARTIN
 That's terrific.
 (face goes sad)
 Thing is, there is one little tiny change we have to make.

NIGEL
 (calm, benevolent)
 What is it, Martin?

MARTIN
 Romeo needs to go.

Nigel makes a whining noise, high and strange, that eventually becomes

NIGEL

No. No no no.

MARTIN

Yes. Now-

NIGEL

This is going to be my finest work,
and the reason for that is-

MARTIN

My client is more than happy to pay
good money for a replacement actor,
someone who's played the part
before, and can step into the-

NIGEL

You said your client would not be
intruding. You said he was a
non-executive!

MARTIN

I know, and except for this one
thing, he-

NIGEL

And the Sarah thing.

MARTIN

Well yes, that as well, but as you
said, that turned out to be a good-

NIGEL

I suggest your client direct it
then. If you are firing Craig, then
you are firing me-

MARTIN

Then you will be sued for breach of
contract, and will have to return
the money we have paid you.

Nigel glowers, powerlessly.

MARTIN (CONT.)

Is there anything else you would
like to discuss, Nigel?

NIGEL

(icy)

Mister Lassiter. No, there isn't.

EXT. PLAYHOUSE - DAY

Sarah and the rest of the actors emerge for their lunch break.

Steve is leaning against a wall on the other side of the road, waiting for her. As he sees her, he starts to walk over.

He stops when he sees that Sarah and Craig are standing apart from the others.

CAST MEMBER

Aren't you two love-birds coming?

CRAIG

No, we'll see you back here.

The group walk off, laughing and joking, and Steve stares open-mouthed at Sarah and Craig, who walk off in the opposite direction.

He follows, at a distance, on the other side of the street.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Craig and Sarah walk through the park, with Steve in hot detective pursuit, running from tree to tree.

They sit on a bench, and Steve, desperate to hear what they're saying, starts working his way through flowerbeds and clumps of shrubbery.

As he eventually manages to get quite close, and can just start making out what they're saying, Craig's phone rings. He pulls it out, looks at it, then answers.

CRAIG

Hi Nigel... Well we've only just
come out. Can it wait? ... Why not?
... Well tell me over the phone...

As Craig talks, Sarah pulls her own phone out, and sees she has a missed call. She starts pressing buttons.

Steve suddenly realises who the missed call was, and scrambles madly for his own phone.

He pulls it out just as it starts ringing. He cancels it immediately. Sarah heard it ever so briefly, and, confused, starts looking around.

Steve sweats in the foliage.

CRAIG

Oh for God's sake. OK, I'll come back.

He hangs up.

CRAIG

We gotta get back.

SARAH

Did you hear a phone?

CRAIG

(not interested)

I was on the phone.

SARAH

Not yours. A ring tone. I just rang Steve.

CRAIG

Let's go. Nigel sounded weird.

They stand up and leave. Steve waits for a few moments before scrambling out, covered in mud and grass stains.

A family, walking through the park, see him, and stare at him.

He gives them a "what?" look, and attempts a whistle as he walks out of the park.

INT. NIGEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Craig sits, confident, opposite Nigel, who is picking nervously at his sleeve.

CRAIG

What's this about, Nigel? I was just getting some private Romeo time, if you know what I mean?

NIGEL

Yes, well, I would only stop your lunch for something important.

CRAIG

Well, out with it. Spill the beans, so to speak. I've had some thoughts about the first kissing scene.

NIGEL

I've had some bad news.

Craig finally gets wind that this could be bad for him, as opposed to just bad for Nigel, and sits upright.

CRAIG

What is it? Just tell me for Christ's sake.

NIGEL

We're letting you go, Craig. I want to thank you for all the work you have done, and you'll always get a good reference from me, but-

CRAIG

Bullshit. What fuckery is this? Nigel.

(leans forward)

Look at me, Nigel. What's going on? This isn't right.

NIGEL

I can't say. I'm sorry.

Craig stands, arms outstretched. He hangs his head, dramatically.

CRAIG

Et tu, Nigel?

NIGEL

(dying inside)

Craig, please. I-

CRAIG

ET TU, NIGEL?

Craig looks around for a dramatic gesture, but it's a small, sparse office. He sees some paperwork on Nigel's desk, and sweeps it to the floor.

NIGEL

Craig!

Nigel drops to his knees and puts it all back on the desk. It only takes a minute.

Craig visibly contemplates doing it again, but decides against it.

CRAIG
 (whispers)
 Et tu?

He sweeps dramatically out of the room.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

Steve sits on the sofa, drinking tea, when Sarah enters. She lets out a startled gasp.

SARAH
 Shouldn't you be at the shop?

STEVE
 Left early. Felt ill.

Sarah collapses into a chair.

STEVE
 Good day?

SARAH
 No. Nigel fired Craig.

STEVE
 Blimey. That's unexpected.

SARAH
 Unexpected? It's a disaster.

STEVE
 That's what I meant. Did Nigel say why?

She shakes her head.

SARAH
 I don't get it. Craig was furious.
 All that work he's put in. We've
 put in.

STEVE
 They'll be getting someone else in
 though, I presume.

She looks at him. He's walking a tightrope. One wrong comment and it's World War Three.

SARAH
 In two weeks, Steve, I will be a
 laughing stock in front of the

(MORE)

SARAH (cont'd)
entire town. And you'll be front
row centre to witness my complete
and utter humiliation.

STEVE
(confused)
You'll still be great. You'll still
be the same. It's just the other
guy will be someone else.

Her face clouds over.

SARAH
Still the same?

STEVE
I'm coming to see you. Not anyone
else. Why would-

SARAH
(shouting)
This isn't about you. Don't you
see? It isn't about what you are
doing.

STEVE
(shouting)
Well what is it about? About you
being in a play? Or spending time
with Craig?

Sarah looks at him, like he's a stranger. She turns and
leaves the room.

INT. STEVE'S CAR - NIGHT

Steve is making a phone call.

STEVE
Martin?

MARTIN
Steve?

STEVE
I need you to follow Sarah.

A long pause.

MARTIN (O.S.)
I'm not sure I heard you right
there.

STEVE
You heard right.

MARTIN (O.S.)
You want me to follow your wife.

STEVE
That's right. I was doing it today,
and I couldn't get close enough.
They don't know you. I think you'd
find it easier to-

MARTIN (O.S.)
Steve, are you hearing yourself?

STEVE
I need to know before everything
comes out. It's going to happen,
Martin, and I need to know.
Otherwise I'll never know. Does
that make sense?

MARTIN (O.S.)
(weary)
No. What do you want me to do?

EXT. PLAYHOUSE - DAY

Martin sits uneasily on a bench outside the Playhouse. He flicks open his phone and looks at a grainy picture of Sarah.

STEVE (V.O.)
I'm going to follow Craig. You
follow Sarah. Report back
regularly, and try and find out
what you can.

The door opens and all the cast come out. Sarah splits from the others, and walks in a different direction. Martin stands and starts to follow.

CRAIG (O.S.)
Sarah.

She turns, and stops, as Craig runs up to talk to her.

Martin, who was behind her, has to walk past, and hasn't got a clue what to do with himself. He walks over to a random noticeboard and begins reading it.

They start walking again, and Martin stops reading and starts to follow them.

STEVE (O.S.)

Martin.

Martin stops, thoroughly confused now. He turns to face Steve.

MARTIN

Steve, what are you doing here?

STEVE

Following Craig.

MARTIN

(looking around)
Craig's here?

STEVE

(gestures)
That's Craig. Look, you'll have to follow them both now. Let me know if they split up.

MARTIN

(doubtful)
OK. What if-?

STEVE

Look, they've nearly gone. Go!

He pushes Martin, who wishes he hadn't got up this morning. Martin runs after them.

INT. RAY'S BAR - DAY

Martin bursts in, causing them to turn to look.

Martin looks around frantically, sees Craig and Sarah sitting at a table, the only other customers in the place.

He walks past them in a hurry, turns back, then approaches the bar.

AT SARAH'S TABLE

SARAH
(whispers)
He looks a strange chap.

AT THE BAR

A bartender goes to serve Martin.

BARTENDER
Anything in particular you'd like,
Sir? I'd be happy to recommend
something.

Martin looks at the vast array of spirits. He gulps.

MARTIN
No, thanks. I'll just have a coke.

BARTENDER
(reaches down a glass)
Of course, Sir.

MARTIN
I'm working, you know. It would be
nice though. I've not even heard of
some of those.

He nods at the spirits as the bartender gives him his coke.

BARTENDER
We stock a wide variety, Sir. Maybe
another time, when you're not
working. You should come back.

MARTIN
What whiskeys do you have?

BARTENDER
Ah, a man after my own heart. Do
you prefer bourbons or single
malts, Sir?

Martin is sweating.

MARTIN
Not something I've committed to,
yet.

BARTENDER
Well, when you come back, you can
experiment, Sir.

Martin starts to walk away, but can't. Instead, he slips a five pound note on the bar.

MARTIN

Look, could you put a little in here?

BARTENDER

Of course, though you'll not really be able to taste the finer aspects-

MARTIN

No, I know. It's not that. It's just too sweet. I'm working, like I said. This is just...

BARTENDER

I understand, Sir.

He carefully selects a bottle and pours a measure into the coke.

BARTENDER

This will take that sweet edge right off.

MARTIN

Perfect.

(takes a swig)

Perfect.

(checks bartender's name tag)

Thanks Gavin.

Martin takes the glass and sits three tables away from Sarah and Craig. He takes his phone out.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Steve gets a text.

STEVE

(reading)

Followed them to a place called Ray's Bar. Having a coke. They've ordered lunch. Sandwiches. Didn't catch the filling. Gonna listen in now.

INT. RAY'S BAR - DAY

Martin looks at the menu. Tries to look busy.

SARAH AND CRAIG'S TABLE

CRAIG

You're going to do fine. Just do it like we rehearsed. Pretend he's me.

SARAH

It's the timing as well, though.

(shakes her head)

Sorry, this must be the last thing you want to talk about. I'm just so nervous.

CRAIG

(smooth)

I understand.

He puts his hand on hers, but she removes her hand just before his lands. She takes her drink and has a sip.

The bartender brings over their sandwiches. Behind him, Sarah sees Martin down his drink and head over to the bar.

The bartender leaves, and Craig, with a mouthful of sandwich, says something unintelligible.

SARAH

Sorry?

CRAIG

When are you going to come out with me then? After all this play business?

SARAH

(smiling)

You don't give up, do you?

CRAIG

Nope.

SARAH

I'm married, Craig.

CRAIG

I know. I mean as friends.

SARAH

You don't have friends, Craig. You have conquests.

Sarah watches Martin, who returns to his seat, and downs his drink. He instantly gets up and heads back to the bar.

SARAH

He's off again! What do you reckon that's about?

CRAIG

I don't know, but he hasn't stopped bloody staring at us, and you seem to be staring at him. Do you think we could talk about us?

SARAH

Craig, there is no us.

CRAIG

There could be.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Steve gets another text.

STEVE

(reading)

Im drinking coke. Theyre talkingwork and stuff. Hes a dick isnt he. Nice place. Am dinking coke.

Steve realises what's happened.

STEVE

For fuck's sake.

INT. RAY'S BAR - DAY

SARAH

Look, I should head back. Shouldn't have had that second drink.

CRAIG

Should be having a third, more like.

(nods at Martin, at the bar)

Or a seventh, like that guy.

SARAH

(laughs)

He's like a machine, isn't he?

Martin staggers back to his seat, and sits down. He looks at them, no subtlety, open mouthed.

CRAIG
(staring back)
Fucking cheek.

Martin looks puzzled as to why they're looking at him.

SARAH
(shouts across)
Are you having a nice day?

MARTIN
(slurs)
It's a weird one. I don't think
I've had a day like it.

CRAIG
Oh, I should think you have.
(mimes taking a drink)
No stranger to it, I'd say.

Martin walks over.

MARTIN
Look, I've got to take a trip to
the "little boy's room".
(leans in and whispers)
I need a piss.

SARAH
(laughs)
When you gotta go.

MARTIN
Could you look after my drink till
I get back?

CRAIG
Surprised you don't take it with
you.

SARAH
Sorry, we have to go. I'm running
late.

MARTIN
(panics)
Oh God, are you? Can't you wait
until I finish?

SARAH
Afraid not. Can't you drink it and
then go?

MARTIN
 (ignores her)
 Well where are you going?

He takes his phone out.

SARAH
 I'm sorry?!

CRAIG
 What the hell is that to you?

MARTIN
 Listen Craig, I'm not talking to
 you. I'm talking to Sarah.

SARAH
 Sorry, do I know you?

CRAIG
 Have you been listening to us or
 something?

SARAH
 Leave it Craig. Let's go.

She drags a threatening Craig out of the door, while Martin
 dithers, his phone in his hand.

EXT. TOWN STREETS - DAY

Steve is walking quickly towards Ray's Bar, when he sees
 Sarah and Craig come out. He ducks into a side street, and
 waits as they walk past.

He comes out after a pause, and starts to follow them.

MARTIN (O.S.)
 (shouts)
 Steve!

Steve hisses in frustration, and waits for Martin.

MARTIN
 (slurs)
 They're so damn fast, aren't they?

STEVE
 Shh. Wait here, you idiot.

He runs after Sarah and Craig, who have turned a corner.

He reaches the corner, and hurtles round it, straight into Craig, who stands there waiting. Sarah stands a few yards further on.

CRAIG
Hello Steve.

STEVE
(panting)
Sarah, can we talk?

SARAH
(neutral tone)
I don't know. Can we?

CRAIG
Who was that guy?

STEVE
What guy? Look, fuck off. I'm talking to my wife.

CRAIG
The guy in the bar.

SARAH
Who was he, Steve?

STEVE
I don't know what you're talking about.

Martin runs around the corner, into Steve's back.

He seems relieved to have caught them, and stands there, bent over, panting.

MARTIN
You're all so fucking quick.

SARAH
(to Steve)
Why aren't you at the shop?

STEVE
I got fired.

Sarah's face is a picture of surprise.

SARAH
Oh. And why were you hiding from us?

STEVE
I was following you.

CRAIG
I can see the trust is alive and
well in this relationship.

MARTIN
I think I'm going to be sick.

STEVE
(to Craig)
Are you still here?

CRAIG
I'm going nowhere. This is great.

SARAH
Why did you get fired? When did you
get fired?

STEVE
Yesterday. It doesn't matter.

SARAH
Not to you, evidently.

STEVE
We need to talk. I can explain
everything.

SARAH
The time for talking appears to be
over. I look at you and I don't
even know you.

STEVE
Oh come on, that's a bit
melodramatic.

SARAH
Melodrama is skulking around in
alleyways.
(points at Martin)
And who's that?

Martin steps forward, hand outstretched.

MARTIN
(in interview mode)
Martin Carter.

Nobody shakes his hand. Eventually he drops it.

SARAH

Why is he following us around? Is he a friend of yours?

STEVE

Yes. Look, forget all that. Can we go-?

SARAH

I can't forget it, Steve. It's not every day you find out your husband is...

CRAIG

(helpful)

A loser.

STEVE

(to Craig)

I'm not the only one who got fired.

SARAH

Do you trust me so little that-?

STEVE

I trust you. It's *him* I don't trust.

SARAH

You haven't got a clue what trust is.

STEVE

Don't say that. Things have been getting better.

SARAH

I thought they had. I can't do this.

STEVE

No, you're right, let's not do this now. Let's go home.

SARAH

No, I mean *this!* Us!

STEVE

Baby, I did this for us.

SARAH

Well, you shouldn't have.

CRAIG
 (to Sarah)
 Let's go, Sarah.

SARAH
 (to Craig)
 Leave me alone. All of you.

STEVE
 Don't go.

SARAH
 (sad)
 I've already gone.

She turns and leaves.

CRAIG
 Well, that went well.

MARTIN
 (to Craig)
 Fuck off, pal.
 (to Steve)
 Come on, I'll buy you a drink.

Steve looks from one to the other, shakes his head, and runs after Sarah. He takes his phone out of his pocket.

He sees twelve missed calls from his mum. As he registers this, her name flashes up again - yet another call.

He answers.

STEVE
 Mum?

His face gawks in confused horror as he takes in what she's saying.

INT. TOWN HOSPITAL

Steve runs along a corridor, and into the waiting room. He gets to the reception desk, and is about to ask, when he sees his mum, and another older man, who is consoling her. He runs over to them.

STEVE
 What happened, Mum? How is he?

ELAINE

They're operating on him now. I don't know what happened. He was in the van. Some other car, I think, but I don't know what happened. I don't know where. They called me. I didn't- I don't- I called your uncle John and he, he brought me in.

Steve nods at Uncle John - thanks.

Uncle John nods back, worried.

STEVE

When can I see him?

UNCLE JOHN

They've been in some time.

ELAINE

I've been calling you.

STEVE

I know, Mum. I'm sorry.

UNCLE JOHN

We've just got to wait.

They look at each other, terrified.

LATER

Elaine and Uncle John sit, heads bowed, in the empty waiting room. Steve paces the floor nearby. Then he stops.

STEVE

It's my fault.

ELAINE

No!

STEVE

I got him the job. I gave him the job.

ELAINE

It wasn't the job.

NOTE: THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES OFF-SCREEN AS WE WATCH THE FOLLOWING SCENE.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A car pulls up. Sarah gets out.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sarah enters.

STEVE (V.O.)
If he hadn't got that, he'd-

ELAINE (V.O.)
He'd still be miserable. That job
was the best thing that had
happened to him in years.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SARAH
Steve?

STEVE (V.O.)
He'd be miserable, but he wouldn't
be in there.

ELAINE (V.O.)
Who knows that? All I know is that
since then, I've not seen him so
alive. Not since we were your age.
Don't you dare blame yourself.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Sarah checks the lounge. It's dark. Uninhabited.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah sits on the bed. Looks around. This is her life. Was
her life?

STEVE (V.O.)
I've got stuff I have to tell you,
Mum. I've really screwed things up.

She gets up, and gets a suitcase out from under the bed. She
opens the wardrobe. Takes some clothes. Looks at the clothes
on his side of the bed.

ELAINE (V.O.)
Where's Sarah?

STEVE (V.O.)
She's left.

Then she opens a chest of drawers. Goes through them one by one. In one of his drawers, she sees an A4-sized box. She takes it out, and opens it. It's full of old clippings about lottery winners, lovingly clipped from various papers and magazines.

STEVE (V.O.)
I've been trying to fix things.
I've been trying to make things
right.

She finds more and more. Her face hardens. Bloody idiot.

Under them, a piece of paper covered in handwritten scrawl:

The heading, underlined in thick black marker: **Steve's list!**
Underneath, a couple of items: an Aston Martin DB9 (green)
and a City season ticket.

SARAH
Selfish bastard.

She is about to put the page back in the box, when she sees another page underneath it. She pulls that out.

The heading: **Sarah's list!** The list is huge, with holidays, jewellery, dresses, acting schools, luxury spa breaks, etc.

Underneath that page are a load of holiday brochures, all ringed with the holidays she has indicated in the past.

The latest brochure is Barbados.

Her face takes it all in. Sad, but thoughtful.

ELAINE (V.O.)
You'll sort it. I know you don't
think you will, but you will. I
don't care what you've done,
because I can tell whatever it is,
you've done it for the right
reasons. Think what Frank would do.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah takes her suitcase down the path to the waiting car.

STEVE (O.S.)
(sadly)
I'm not my dad.

After she is in, the car pulls off, leaving a dark, empty house.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The doctor finally comes out to meet Steve, Elaine and Uncle John. They rise to meet him.

EXT. STEVE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Steve's car pulling into the driveway.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - NIGHT

He walks in.

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

He sees the clothes gone.

He finds the box open. He closes his eyes. How did it come to this?

INT. STEVE'S HOUSE - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Drinking. Alone. With the wish lists, the brochures, the pictures. How pointless it all seems now he's got the money and nobody to share it with.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

It's midnight in the park, it's raining, and Steve's absolutely hammered. Utterly ill-equipped, in jeans and shirt (both quickly disintegrating under the rain's insistent attack), Steve is carrying a broom and some refuse sacks.

He begins with whatever is nearest to him, piling discarded rubbish into the sacks.

EXT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

People buzzing around the entrance. There's a real atmosphere.

Steve cuts a lonely figure in the crowd, on his own.

INT. PLAYHOUSE - BAR - NIGHT

At the bar, he grasps a gin and tonic, and suddenly comes face to face with Arran, with Kelly on his arm. They look fully loved up, and greet Steve warmly.

ARRAN

How's your Dad, Steve.

Kelly gives Steve a hug.

STEVE

Thanks guys. He's stable. Early days, you know?

ARRAN

Are you and Sarah-?

He trails off. Steve shakes his head.

STEVE

Doesn't look like it.

He holds up the programme for the show.

STEVE (CONT.)

Still, the show must go on.

Over Arran's arm, Steve sees Martin. On his arm is Michelle. Steve's eyes widen in disbelief.

Arran and Kelly look behind them at his confused look. Arran double-takes.

Martin, whiskey in hand, gives Steve a thumbs-up.

KELLY

You know them?

ARRAN

He's, erm, our boss.

KELLY

Let's get to our seats.

Arran and Steve give each other a stunned look re: Martin, and join the queue to get into the theatre.

INT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

As Juliet, Sarah has centre stage. She looks nervous. A stuttering start. Craig helps her, adapts his lines, reassures her with a look.

Steve looks on, sweating, helpless.

LATER

Madeleine is doing some awful speech, meant to sound like Shakespeare, written by Nigel.

The audience murmur. Some laugh. Steve has his head in his hands.

LATER

The entire place is enraptured as Sarah delivers a scintillating speech. Craig, as Romeo, gazes at her adoringly.

In the audience, Steve gazes just as adoringly. A tear runs down his cheek.

LATER

The place is deathly silent, enraptured as two bodies lie centre stage.

ACTOR

For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

The lights go out.

A pause.

The place erupts and the lights come up.

Steve claps as loudly as anyone, bursting with pride.

Sarah takes her bow, centre stage. Whistles, applause, the works. Craig takes his bow. Same.

The two together, surrounded by the cast, take their bow, and hug. Steve claps as loudly as ever.

They call for Nigel, the director, who comes on to take his bow. It's one big luvvie-fest.

EXT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah emerges, on the arm of Nigel and Craig, surrounded by the rest of the cast. She's revelling in it, and fighting off the congratulations of just about everyone, including a clearly jealous Madeleine, who taps Nigel on the arm.

MADELEINE

We're not doing that speech tomorrow.

Nigel nods, relieved.

Sarah's parents are amongst the people waiting outside, and she greets them enthusiastically.

Steve stands a little way back, smiling genuinely. The smile becomes a little more pensive when she sees him.

Craig sees him too, and scoffs slightly at his cheek.

CRAIG

Come on, let's get to the bar.

SARAH

Wait.
(beat)
You go.

She detaches herself, and moves slowly over to Steve. Craig follows her, but then stops and stands apart from them.

STEVE

Hi.

SARAH

Hi Steve.
(beat)
How's your dad?

STEVE

He's going to be OK.
(beat)
Congratulations!

SARAH

(cautious smile)
Thanks.

STEVE

You were amazing.

SARAH

Well, it went better in rehearsals,
but I guess I'm feeling good.

STEVE

I knew you would be.

(beat)

I want to apologise, Sarah.

SARAH

Steve-

STEVE

I couldn't have fucked it up more
than I have. And I did it all
wrong.

SARAH

It's not just you.

STEVE

I could have-

(beat)

What?

SARAH

I wasn't good for you either.

STEVE

What do you mean?

SARAH

Maybe we weren't good for each
other?

STEVE

We're perfect for each other.

(beat)

It's just the world that's all
fucked up.

Sarah raises an eyebrow.

STEVE (CONT.)

Yeah, that's pretty shit, actually.

Sarah laughs.

SARAH

It's better than some of your
lines.

Steve's smiling too.

CRAIG
Sarah? Shall we-

STEVE
Shut up, Craig.
(to Sarah, speaking really fast)
I've been lying to you. I want to say all this before you say anything back. You'll probably not say anything back anyway, you'll probably never speak to me again, but I'm going to do it anyway. I need to tell you about what happened. See, I only got fired from working in the shop, but that's OK, cos I own the place, so I don't really want to work in it anyway. I only did that so you wouldn't know I had bought it.

Sarah looks confused. After a pause, Craig laughs out loud.

STEVE (CONT.)
Whereas Craig here DID get fired. I fired him, but I took him on again, because it just wasn't right to do that, cos while he's an asshole, and I've done lots of asshole things, I was trying NOT to be an asshole at that point. Though out of all the non-asshole things I've done, that was probably the hardest. Cos, let's face it, out of all of us, he is the most fucking sackable.

CRAIG
(mocking)
Wait, you sacked me?

STEVE
Shut up, Craig.

NIGEL
(to Steve)
YOU'RE the anonymous backer?

STEVE
Yes. And I'm sorry about that punch. How's the arm?

Nigel rubs his arm and makes a rueful "so-so" face.

CRAIG

What anonymous backer? You mean he
DID sack me?

NIGEL

(nods)

And rehired you.

Craig is dumbfounded.

STEVE

(to Sarah)

Anyway, and I know what you're
thinking, and yes, I did it to get
you the lead.

MADELEINE

(hits Nigel)

I knew it!

STEVE

But don't let it detract from what
you did. That was the greatest
performance I ever saw in my life.
Not even twat features over here
could mess it up with you on that
stage.

CRAIG

Twat features?!

SARAH

I wasn't thinking that, Steve. Why
would I think you got me the lead?

(beat)

What is going on, Steve?

STEVE (CONT.)

I'll explain everything. But that's
over now anyway. It's just the shop
now. And Martin's doing an amazing
job with that.

Steve points to Martin, and Martin waves, slightly
embarrassed. Michelle immediately cosies up to him.

STEVE (CONT.)

And I don't gamble anymore. And I
love you. Jesus, I love you. But I
need you to know that even if you
won't come back, I want you to be
happy. I've got you these.

He thrusts envelopes at her.

STEVE (CONT.)

It's a holiday in Barbados. I wasn't sure whether to go for Barbados or Cuba. And I've got you acting classes in London. Ol' Lassiter there has some pretty good contacts.

(Nigel wears a modest "ah shucks" smile)

And if you leave me, you'll obviously get half of everything anyway. But don't. Christ, Sarah, don't do that.

SARAH

(looking dumbfounded)

Steve, what is going on? How-

STEVE

I won the bet, Sarah. The one in the papers, the one people are talking about. The three million. It was me.

Now everyone's gobsmacked, but Steve can't see it because he's trying to say everything he wanted to say before his courage runs out.

ARRAN

What the-

STEVE

And I haven't gambled since, and I won't ever again, and if you leave I'll understand, and you'll be rich either way, but please, Sarah, come with me.

Sarah looks at him, her jaw still hanging down. She hasn't got a chance of taking all this in right now.

SARAH

Another lie?

STEVE

But this was different. This was a good lie.

SARAH

There are no good lies, Steve.

STEVE

But-

SARAH

I found your box. With what you wanted to do if you ever won.

STEVE

That was just-

SARAH

You had me wrong. I didn't want jewellery, I didn't want holidays. I just wanted you, and the life we had together. Without the constant lying.

STEVE

OK, I didn't know what you wanted. I didn't know what I wanted, either. I thought I wanted lots of things. But when I won, all I wanted was to make you happy, and I still didn't know how to do it.

KELLY

Awww!

SARAH

You just had to stop lying.

STEVE

I have stopped lying. Admittedly, I could have chosen a better time and place to start telling the truth.

SARAH

You think?

STEVE

And telling the truth seems to make it come out all jumbled, and it doesn't make much sense. But hey, give me a break. It's my first day.

Sarah laughs, despite trying to hold back tears.

They stand in the centre of a circle. Steve, looking around the circle, senses a gesture is needed, and goes down on one knee.

CRAIG
Sarah? Let's go.

SARAH
Shut up, Craig.

Sarah looks into Steve's eyes, and slowly walks towards him. When she reaches him, she stops.

SARAH
You're crazy.

STEVE
I know.

SARAH
You almost proposed then, didn't you.

STEVE
(nods)
I got carried away.

SARAH
We're already married.

STEVE
I know.

She laughs. They embrace.

The crowd cheer.

Kelly embraces Arran.

Martin goes to embrace Michelle, but she just looks at him, bored, and he decides not to.

Nigel and Madeleine look at each other, then Madeleine embraces her husband instead.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE RECEPTION - DAY

Brady at the reception desk.

BRADY
I'm Mister Brady, from Robinson's.
I have an appointment.

A door opens and Martin Carter appears.

BRADY (CONT.)
 (smiling)
 And here he is!

Martin shakes his hand.

MARTIN
 Not me this time, Mister Brady. The
 owner is here and wanted to see
 you.

Brady's eyes betray his panic. He tightens his tie
 automatically.

Martin leads Brady back into the room.

INT. SOULLESS BUSINESS CENTRE MEETING ROOM - DAY

Steve sits in a plush business chair, fingers steepled. He
 looks determined.

Brady's eyes widen.

STEVE
 Hello Brady.

Brady just stands there.

MARTIN
 (gestures to the chair)
 Please, Mister Brady...

STEVE
 What the hell IS your first name
 anyway, Brady?

A beat.

BRADY
 Chris.

STEVE
 Chris. Please sit down.

Brady sits down. Steve and Martin stand over him, one on
 each side. Brady looks terrified.

STEVE
 It's a hell of a lot to take in, I
 grant you, but you are looking at
 the new owner of Robinson's.

BRADY
I never treated you in any way-

STEVE
Yes you did. Anyway, I have extensively reviewed your conduct, Mister Brady, and I have come to the following conclusion.

A LONG beat.

STEVE (CONT.)
You have done a fantastic job.

BRADY
What?

STEVE
Exemplary. And I want to give you a raise.

Brady is utterly confused.

STEVE (CONT.)
It's exciting times for Robinson's, Mister Brady, and I want you on-board. Mister Carter and I have many plans. We are intending to promote Arran to run alongside you, and bring in new blood. This shop is moving on up.

Brady is almost gibbering in delight.

EXT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

The scaffolding is off. The work is done. Robinson's has never looked better. A new start. A shop to be proud of.

INT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Steve, Brady and Arran are in the shop, which is unrecognisable from its earlier incarnation. Gleaming, tidy, larger, it is a real statement of modern efficient beauty.

It is also busy. People are shopping with a purpose. A healthy hive of industry.

Brady is examining his clipboard. Arran is examining HIS new clipboard.

Steve is wearing a smart business suit. He gives off an air of calm authority. The three of them are going through business reports and order sheets.

Martin walks in with a woman in her fifties.

MARTIN
Steve, this is-

STEVE
(happy)
Mrs Roberts! How terrific to see you. How are you?

Mrs Roberts simpers, happily.

MARTIN
Mrs Roberts is providing a range of cakes and various wonderful things for our new deli counter.

STEVE
Another brilliant idea, Martin. I look forward to sampling each and every one.

The bell rings, and Kelly walks in with a grin, reciprocated by Arran.

As she reaches the till, an entirely new employee, Justin, goes to serve her.

ARRAN
I'll handle this one, Justin. Can you do the tampons?

Kelly and Arran kiss over the counter.

STEVE
(to Justin)
And then the tuna.
(to Martin)
I think we should stop selling tuna.

Martin shakes his head.

MARTIN
It's a top seller.

STEVE
I know.
(beat)
(MORE)

STEVE (cont'd)
I hate tuna.

He looks at one of the charts.

STEVE (CONT.)
Jesus, this is our sales??

Martin turns the sheet round so it's the right way up.

STEVE (CONT.)
Oh.
(delighted)
Oh!

MARTIN
Our sales since the refurb have
shown a sharp increase in profits.

STEVE
As in, we actually HAVE profits.

MARTIN
Well, that's an increase.

Steve grins, and Martin reciprocates. This is a moment.

Steve looks at his watch.

STEVE
I gotta go.
(attempts to be an owner)
Keep on, erm, working and that.

KELLY
Bye Steve.

Steve winks at Arran, who waves back.

EXT. ROBINSON'S SHOP - DAY

Waiting outside is a green Aston Martin DB9.

The old guy from the bookies stands on a pavement admiring Steve's new toy. When Steve grins at him, the old guy registers who he is, and double-takes.

STEVE
Guess I broke the chain.

The old guy is speechless.

Sarah is in the driver's seat. Steve gets in at the passenger's side.

STEVE

You know, I always thought I'd be the one driving this.

SARAH

That's the thing with life. It never quite works out how you expected it.

The engine guns, and then the car leaps away, racing start.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The park that Steve sat in on the night of his big win. It has been transformed. It is spotless, the graffiti gone, the rubbish cleared away, and new plants down and sprouting.

Two sets of youngsters are playing a football match on a new pitch. One of the teams has **Robinson's** emblazoned as sponsors on their shirts.

Steve and Sarah join Elaine and Frank, who sits in a wheelchair, with a rug on his lap. Together, they share a picnic, in the centre of what is now a place of peace and beauty.

FADE OUT