

BREATHE

by
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Double White Revisions - August 18 2016

Tan Revisions - August 2 2016

Cherry Revisions - July 28 2016

Salmon Revisions - July 26 2016

Buff Revisions - July 15 2016

Goldenrod Revisions - July 11 2016

Green Revisions - July 8 2016

Yellow Revisions - July 5 2016

Pink Revisions - June 28 2016

Blue Revisions - June 26 2016

White Draft - June 2 2016

- 1 BLACK SCREEN 1
- The sound of air hissing through a machine at regular intervals. Almost like breathing, but not quite. At the end of each breath a faint click, then the hiss again.
- OPENING TITLES RUN
- SUPERIMPOSE CAPTION: *June 1957*
- 1A EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY 1A
- FLYING OVER England, the green rolling Chiltern hills, over woodland and villages and country houses.
- The CAMERA FINDS a handsome manor house. In the field by the house, a cricket match is in full swing.
- 2 EXT. CRICKET FIELD - DAY 2
- MOVING POV - A blur of tree trunks. Railings round a pavilion terrace. Glimpses of women drinking tea on a sunny English afternoon. Sounds of a cricket match in progress.
- The UNKNOWN WATCHER is on the move, trying for a better vantage point. Now at last he catches a clear sighting of -
- DIANA, a beautiful young woman, 22 years old, dark hair, calm manner. She's seated on the pavilion terrace, surrounded by others but looking as if she's alone. A young man, TOMMY, is clearly trying to talk to her, one hand nervously fiddling with his straw hat as he does so. Diana seems unaware of his existence.
- Some other figure crosses the line of vision, obscuring her. The MOVING POV shifts again. This time the watcher gets an even better view of her.
- ROBIN (O.S.)
Dear God. What - is - that?
- ON ROBIN CAVENDISH, staring. A good-looking 25-year-old, dressed in cricketing whites, wearing pads. With him, also in whites, his friend COLIN CAMPBELL.
- COLIN CAMPBELL
Not a chance.
- ROBIN
(gazing at Diana)
How so?
- COLIN CAMPBELL
She's a famous heart-breaker.

ROBIN

Do you know her?

COLIN CAMPBELL

I know her brothers.

A glance towards two young men watching the cricket, identical twins BLOGGS and DAVID BLACKER. They too are watching Diana, amused by Tommy's utter failure to attract Diana's attention. They're mimicking the way his hand fiddles with his hat.

Robin's gaze turns from the twins back to Diana. The sounds of a wicket being taken, and the clapping of the spectators.

ROBIN

She's gorgeous.

COLIN CAMPBELL

No one's ever got near. Martin proposed twice.

ROBIN

Would you marry Martin? I wouldn't. But I would marry me.

COLIN CAMPBELL

And I'm sure you'd be very happy together, Robin.

ROBIN

The thing is, I'm running out of time. I leave for Nairobi on July 15th. I need a wife.

It's now his turn to bat. Smiling, confident, he strides out to the crease.

3

EXT. CRICKET PITCH - DAY

3

Robin prepares to face the bowler. He glances back at Diana on the pavilion terrace: he's going to make her notice him.

But Diana's only half-watching. She's bored. Tommy has given up.

The ball hurtles towards Robin. He steps forward, smashes the ball with a sweeping off-drive. It sails over the pavilion for a glorious six. A cheer goes up.

Diana is chatting to a girlfriend. She didn't even notice Robin's triumph.

4

EXT. PAVILION, CRICKET FIELD - DAY

4

Robin with a cup of tea in his hand moving past team mates and supporters, accepting congratulations as he goes. He's heading for Diana. She sits staring far away at nothing. Still bored.

He comes to a stop beside her. She doesn't register his presence. He drinks his tea, watches her.

ROBIN

I know you can see me.

Diana turns her lazy gaze to take him in.

DIANA

I'm sorry?

ROBIN

I don't believe you're half as bored as you look.

DIANA

Do I look bored? I don't mean to.

ROBIN

Cricket's a lot more fun to play than to watch.

DIANA

Yes. I suppose it is.

ROBIN

Like life, you might say.

DIANA

Might you?

An older friend, HARRY TENNYSON, comes up to Diana. Harry is very overweight, and just walking gets him out of breath.

HARRY TENNYSON

We're off. If you want a lift it's now or never.

Diana gets up.

DIANA

I'm ready.

ROBIN

Will you be at the Barings' bash on Saturday?

DIANA

I might be.

ROBIN

Maybe see you there.

DIANA

Maybe.

She goes off with Harry. Robin watches her go, but she doesn't give a backward glance.

5 SCENE DELETED 5

6 INT. LONDON BALLROOM - NIGHT 6

MOVING POV - Through the throng of guests at the ball: glimpses of Diana, stunning in a formal gown. On her lovely face the same air of not seeing the bustle round her; of living in some other private world.

Robin, smart in his formal evening clothes, tracks her with his eyes. He moves steadily towards her. She turns, catches his gaze. Holds the look for a moment, then turns away.

He reaches her. She shows no sign of noticing him.

ROBIN

I could ask you to dance. You could say you don't feel like dancing right now. I could say, Next time, maybe. And I could saunter away.

DIANA

You could saunter away.

ROBIN

Or I could just not ask.

That's unexpected. She looks at him, unsure what he means. He takes her hand and pulls her onto the dance floor.

She's too taken by surprise to resist. Before she knows what's happening they're dancing.

He dances very well. She lets him lead her, looking at him with an amused quizzical look. She likes dancing with him.

7 SCENE DELETED 7

8 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/WIDE ENGLISH VIEW - DAY 8

Robin's battered old sports car bowls along an empty country road. Diana sits beside Robin.

IN CAR -

DIANA

So where are we going?

ROBIN

I thought Maidenhead. I know a rather jolly pub by the river.

The car turns off into a lane that winds up a hill between trees, to come to a stop facing a giant vista of rolling countryside. Robin's favourite view.

DIANA

This doesn't look like a jolly pub by the river.

ROBIN

No. We seem to have missed our way.

DIANA

What a surprise.

ROBIN

Lucky I packed a bottle of wine and a pork pie.

DIANA

Good Lord, is that the time?

She reaches for the car door handle. There is no car door handle.

DIANA

How do you open the door?

ROBIN

You don't.

DIANA

But I want to get out.

ROBIN

No you don't.

DIANA

Don't I?

ROBIN

You want to kiss me.

DIANA

What makes you think I want to -

He pulls her towards him and kisses her. No aggression, but nor does he give her any choice in the matter.

For a moment she accepts the kiss passively. Then she starts to kiss him back. Then she starts to kiss him with real passion.

9

EXT. GARDEN, BLACKER HOUSE - DAY

9

The grounds of Diana's family home. Diana sits on a swing attached to a branch of a tree. She's slowly twisting herself round and round, winding the two ropes above her. At her feet on the grass lie her brothers, Bloggs and David.

BLOGGS

(to Diana)

You hardly know the little man.

DAVID

(to Bloggs)

Would you say he's littler than us?

The two brothers eye each other, as if making the mental comparison.

BLOGGS

Not much in it.

DAVID

(to Diana)

Has he got any money at all?

BLOGGS

It's not like you don't have other options.

DAVID

What happened to Hugh? Doesn't he have a castle in Scotland?

BLOGGS

Mind you, who'd want to live in Scotland?

DAVID

She's talking about going to live in Kenya, for God's sake!

BLOGGS

Diana, please stop going round and round and concentrate. This is your future life we're talking about.

DAVID

Your future happiness.

Diana stops twirling. Her feet on the ground hold the swing steady.

DIANA

The thing is, I just know this is
it.

She lifts her feet and the swing spins her round and round,
skirts flying, as the ropes unwind.

9A EXT. KENYA 9A

We find ourselves flying through a magnificent gorge ravine.
The searing heat of the bright African light upon us. We fly
over trees and waterfalls, ahead of us a towering mountain.
Into frame drops a Tiger Moth biplane, flying away from us.
Its pilot unknown.

9B EXT. KENYA 9B

The biplane, now a tiny speck, flies along a massive cliff
wall and circles over the planes below.

9C EXT. KENYA 9C

The biplane comes in to land. As it taxis and stops, the
engines cut. The pilot climbs out of the cockpit, raising his
goggles, revealing that it is in fact ROBIN. He helps DIANA
down.

10 EXT. BUSH ROAD, KENYA - DAY 10

TRACKING PAST red earth, fields of sugar cane, banana
groves.

A Landrover jolts down the dusty road. In the Landrover
Robin and Diana sit side by side, bronzed and beautiful.

NOW TRACKING PAST thick bush - the view from the Landrover as
it heads into deep country -

The sound of CRASHING in the trees -

An ELEPHANT lumbers out into the track just ahead,
frighteningly close. The MOVING POV screeches to a halt. The
elephant continues across the track, followed by another, and
another.

In the Landrover Diana sits very still, captivated by the
sight. Robin has his camera out, taking photographs. The herd
of elephants passes in front of and behind their vehicles,
thrillingly close.

11 SCENE DELETED 11

14

EXT. BUSH, KENYA - DAY

14

Robin and Diana are out walking in the bush with their friends COLIN CAMPBELL, Dr DON MCQUEEN, MARY DAWNAY and KATHERINE BARING, all young people of their own age.

They're on the lookout for wild animals. Both Robin and Colin carry guns. The women walk behind. Robin is entranced by the immense view.

KATHERINE

What is it you actually do out here, Robin?

ROBIN

I'm a tea broker. I get tea and I broke it. It's very skilled work.

KATHERINE

And what does Diana do while you're off broking?

ROBIN

She comes too.

MARY DAWNAY

My God! That's almost indecent.

DIANA

I like it. Really.

MARY DAWNAY

God gave men jobs to do so women could get a little time to themselves.

DIANA

I like being with Robin. He's really quite bearable.

COLIN CAMPBELL

I can't see it myself. It's all a mystery to me.

DON MCQUEEN

What Colin means is, how on earth did Robin manage to nab Diana?

MARY DAWNAY

Oh we'd all like to know that.

DIANA

I don't know. How did you, darling?

ROBIN

It's very simple, really. Diana is bone idle. She hates having to make decisions.

(MORE)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

She has no idea what she thinks about anything. So I tell her what to think, and I make all the decisions, and she's happy as Larry. Right, darling?

DIANA

If you say so.

14A SCENE DELETED

14A

14B SCENE DELETED

14B

14C EXT. NGONG HILLS, KENYA - EVENING

14C

The young people are gathered round a campfire in a grove of fever trees, sharing a picnic supper. Diana lies with her head on Robin's lap. Robin holds up his hand to ask for silence. Nothing but the sounds of dusk.

ROBIN

You hear that?

COLIN CAMPBELL

What? I don't hear a thing.

ROBIN

That's just it. It's like the dawn of creation.

MARY DAWNAY

The dusk of creation, you mean.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Watch out, Robin. Africa does funny things to people. (To Diana) Has he started talking to God?

DIANA

Not exactly talking. But Robin and God are quite chummy.

DON MCQUEEN

You need faith to survive out here.

MARY DAWNAY

How can you say that, Don? And you a doctor.

DON MCQUEEN

Oh, I believe in the power of the mind. Did you hear about the African prisoners on Kome Island? During the Mau-Mau rebellion? There were sixty of them crammed into a small tin hut. Prison officer wouldn't let them out. The Mau-Mau leader said, very well, I give my men permission to die. Next morning all sixty were dead.

ROBIN

How?

DON MCQUEEN

Mind power. They chose to die. Turned their faces to the wall and died.

DIANA

What a waste of mind power. I'd
have chosen to live.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Quite right. Thats a sensible woman
you've got there, Robin. Don't lose
her.

ROBIN

I'll try not to.

He bends down and kisses her.

15 SCENE DELETED 15

15A INT. TEA PLANTATION OFFICE, MOMBASA - DAY (PREV SC12) 15A

The shady office of a tea warehouse. Drying tea plants hang over the windows, filtering the bright light. Diana sits fanning herself with a sales document at one end.

Robin is inspecting the tea with a white ESTATE MANAGER.

ESTATE MANAGER

The Dark Amber is as good as you'll get this year. Take a sniff of that.

Robin smells the crumbled leaf. A black servant brings a tray of tea - pot and three cups - and sets it down beside Diana.

ESTATE MANAGER

This one's Milima Estate. More subtle fragrance, but it hasn't got the depth.

Robin smells the second type.

ROBIN

What do you drink?

ESTATE MANAGER

Oh, I drink Nairobi Chai. But it's too black for the home market.

The Estate Manager crosses to the teapot beside Diana. He smells the tea in the pot, and pours.

ESTATE MANAGER

We don't usually get wives on these buying trips, Mrs Cavendish.

DIANA

It's Robin's business. I want to know about it.

ESTATE MANAGER

Secret of a happy marriage, eh? Never let hubby out of your sight.

Diana blinks at this. The Estate Manager is quite unaware of his crassness. He shows Robin the tea in the cup.

ESTATE MANAGER

You see the golden colour of the liquor? That's top grade. Top price. Pure blonde.

DIANA

Gentlemen prefer blondes.

ESTATE MANAGER

I'm sorry?

To Robin's amusement, Diana answers with a perfectly straight face -

DIANA

Diamonds are a girl's best friend.

15B

EXT. KENYA ROAD - DAY (PREV. SCENE 13)

15B

Robin and Diana driving back to Nairobi in their Landrover. They sing as they go.

ROBIN/DIANA

(singing)

Time rolls on and youth is gone
And you can't straighten up when
you bend -

ROBIN

(singing)

But stiff back or stiff knees -

DIANA

(singing)

You stand straight at Tiff'ny's!

ROBIN/DIANA

(singing)

Diamonds are a girl's best friend!

WIDE - The Landrover drives on as night descends.

IN CAR -

DIANA

I've got news.

ROBIN

Oh?

DIANA

It's a frightful bore. I shall
never be able to have fun again.

He throws a quick glance at her, worried.

ROBIN

Tell me.

DIANA

I'm going to have a baby.

Robin slams on the brakes.

WIDE - The car has come to a stop by the side of the road as it curves round an escarpment. Beyond, the vast expanse of Africa.

IN THE CAR - Robin sits motionless for a moment. Then he turns to Diana, his face radiating happiness.

DIANA
Somebody's pleased.

ROBIN
Yes.

DIANA
Very pleased?

ROBIN
Best news I've had since I proposed
and you said yes.

DIANA
You didn't propose.

ROBIN
Didn't I?

DIANA
You said you had to get married
before going out to Africa or you'd
go native.

ROBIN
But you did say yes, didn't you?

DIANA
Apparently I did.

16A EXT. AFRICAN BUSH PANORAMA - NIGHT

16A

A portable record player on the Landrover is playing a scratchy record: the song is 'True Love' from 'High Society'. Robin has Diana in his arms, and they're dancing, alone on the high ridge, with the great view stretching out below them in the moonlight.

SINGER

Sun-tanned
Wind-blown
Honeymooners at last alone
Oh, how lucky we are!

Robin and Diana are dancing slowly, smiling at each other. Robin knows the words and anticipates the sung lines -

ROBIN

I give to you -

SINGER

I give to you -

ROBIN

And you give to me -

SINGER

And you give to me -

ROBIN

True love -

SINGER

True love, true love
So on and on
It'll always be

17 SCENE DELETED

17

18 SCENE DELETED

18

19 SCENE DELETED

19

20

EXT. TERRACE, GOVERNMENT HOUSE - DAY

20

The wide shaded terrace of a grand colonial building. Katherine Baring and Mary Dawnay dozing in the shade. Diana reading a novel. She's now very pregnant.

Governor EVELYN BARING comes out and stands on the terrace, looking towards a distant tennis game.

EVELYN BARING

Robin thrashing Colin again?

His wife MOLLY BARING appears behind him.

MOLLY BARING

Come on. We'll be late.

They go.

The thwack of tennis balls. Diana looks up to glimpse the distant game.

21

EXT. TENNIS COURT, GOVERNMENT HOUSE - DAY

21

Robin is playing tennis with Colin Campbell. He's losing. Colin serves. Robin's return hits the net.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Game!

He throws his racket high into the air, whooping with triumph.

ROBIN

Hell of a serve, Col. I never knew you were that good.

COLIN CAMPBELL

First game I've had off you in my life. How about one more?

ROBIN

No. I'll quit while I'm still standing.

They leave the court.

COLIN CAMPBELL

God, that feels good! So this is what it's been like to be you all these years.

ROBIN

Enjoy it while it lasts, old
chum.

They come in sight of the lawn by the terrace, and burst into laughter. Katherine Baring and Mary Dawnay are attempting the latest craze - the hula hoop.

Mary is good, swinging with her hips, making the hoop spin. A small crowd of friends look on and applaud. Black servants grin from the terrace.

Katherine is not so good. She steps out of her hoop as Robin and Colin join them.

KATHERINE BARING

God, I'm useless.

MARY DAWNAY

(swinging away)
It's all in the hips.

Robin takes the dropped hoop and steps into it. Diana looks on, smiling.

MARY DAWNAY

Robin'll be a natural. You see.

Robin spins the hoop, starts swinging his hips, but he can't get the knack.

ROBIN

Harder than it looks.

MARY DAWNAY

Just imagine you're jiving.

Robin tries again. Diana looks on, smiling, one hand on her bump. Robin staggers slightly as he swings his hips. The hoop drops to the ground again.

ROBIN

Too much tennis.

He turns to Diana. She's not smiling any more: watching him, puzzled. He grins, moves towards her, gives his body a shake as if to wake it up.

ROBIN

I need a drink.

Colin has picked up the abandoned hoop and is spinning it with great success.

COLIN CAMPBELL

I've got it. It's easy! Look at
this! Robin! I'm doing it!

Robin turns to look, smiling. He feels his left arm with his right hand.

DIANA
You all right, darling?

ROBIN
Yes, fine. So what's the plan?

DIANA
I've asked Thomas to run me home.
Don's coming round to prod me.

ROBIN
(feeling his arm)
Maybe he should give me a prod
while he's at it.

DIANA
Are you sure you're all right?

ROBIN
I think it's got to me, watching
you and your bump. Makes my
joints ache.

DIANA
I'll do my own aching, thank you
very much.

He kisses her.

ROBIN
you get on home. I've got a
meeting first thing. I'll bunk
here.

22

INT. BEDROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE - NIGHT

22

A plainly-furnished ADC's bedroom. Robin sits on the bed in pyjamas, feeling one arm. Sweat on his brow.

He gets up and goes out into the passage. Knocks on a door. Colin Campbell appears in the doorway, woken from sleep.

ROBIN
Sorry, Col. I'm not feeling so
good.

COLIN CAMPBELL
You look ghastly.

ROBIN
My arm is giving me gyp.

Colin suddenly sees that Robin's in intense pain.

23

INT. NAIROBI HOSPITAL - NIGHT

23

Robin lies on a hospital bed surrounded by medical staff. Dr Don McQueen is running checks. Colin Campbell looks on from behind.

Robin is now shivering with fever.

DON MCQUEEN
Lift your right arm.

Nothing.

DON MCQUEEN
Left arm.

Nothing.

DON MCQUEEN
Legs.

Robin tries to move his legs and can't. It's scary.

ROBIN
Can't move. What's happening?

His voice comes out with difficulty.

ROBIN
Can't - breathe -

DON MCQUEEN
Get ice!

CRUSHED ICE is packed round Robin's body by nurses, moving fast. Robin lies, eyes open, breathing with difficulty.

DON MCQUEEN
He's losing it. We have to get him on a respirator.

MOVING with Robin's bed as it's wheeled fast down a hospital corridor. Robin breathing in agonising wheezes. Don McQueen and Colin walking beside him.

DON MCQUEEN
Have to get oxygen into you somehow. Looks like we're going to have to smash our way in.

24

SCENE DELETED

24

24A

INT. NAIROBI HOSPITAL - NIGHT

24A

CLOSE SHOT - A scalpel slices into Robin's throat. The tracheotomy in action.

25 SCENE DELETED 25

26 INT. ISOLATION WARD, NAIROBI HOSPITAL - DAY 26

DIANA'S POV entering the ward - A bed with curtains round it. A large respirator beside it. The machine wheezes and clicks with a regular rhythm. The sound we've heard before, now identified.

The nurse goes ahead of her and draws back the curtain. There lies Robin, on his back, with a tube coming out of his neck.

The MOVING POV comes closer - goes round the bed -

Robin lies utterly still but for his eyes, which strain to see. He looks just the same as ever, but for this spooky immobility.

DIANA
Hello, darling.

He looks back at her, unmoving.

DIANA
Can I kiss him?

DON MCQUEEN
Yes.

She bends over him, kisses him. Then she sits down by the bed. Her eyes have never left Robin's.

His face twitches. His lips move: he's trying to mouth words. Diana watches, pays close attention, begins to work out what he's saying.

DIANA
'Bit' -

DON MCQUEEN
The air can't reach the larynx any more. That's why he can't talk.

Diana watches Robin's lips: works it out.

DIANA
He says, 'Bit of a bugger.'

27 SCENE DELETED 27

28

EXT. VERANDAH, NAIROBI HOSPITAL - DAY

28

Don McQueen stands at a chart showing a cutaway view of the body, explaining to Diana and Colin Campbell what has happened. Diana, very pregnant, sits on a chair.

DON MCQUEEN

You inhale the virus from droplets in the air, the same way you catch a cold. It passes into the blood stream, into the central nervous system, and attacks a group of big cells in the spinal cord. The anterior horn cells. These are the cells that control the voluntary muscle system. The result is you become like a rag doll. You can't move anything from the neck down. You can't even breathe for yourself.

He stops. Silence, while they take it in.

DIANA

How long will he be like this?

DON MCQUEEN

The paralysis is irreversible. A good respiration system will maintain life for a while. We're talking a matter of months.

Diana takes this in in silence.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Does it affect his brain?

DON MCQUEEN

Not at all. Mentally he's as alert as ever. He can move some facial muscles, as you've seen. His digestive system's unaffected.

Diana looks up.

DIANA

Can he feel me if I touch him?

DON MCQUEEN

Yes. He can still feel.

29

INT. ISOLATION WARD, NAIROBI HOSPITAL - DAY

29

Diana sits beside Robin's bed, one hand reached out. She's stroking his face very slowly. He has his eyes closed.

The machine hisses and clicks beside them. The tube carrying air to his throat twitches.

ON DIANA - She's not weeping. She's just hurting so deeply she can hardly move.

30

EXT. VERANDAH, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, NAIROBI - DAY

30

The Governor, Evelyn Baring, and Colin Campbell, look on in silence as Molly Baring sits with Diana, holding her hands.

MOLLY BARING
Tell me what we can do.

Diana can't answer.

MOLLY BARING
Do you want to go home?

DIANA
After the baby's born.

MOLLY BARING
What about Robin?

DIANA
Him too.

MOLLY BARING
You do know?

She looks round to her husband to say what she can't bring herself to say.

EVELYN BARING
I've seen enough people paralysed by polio before. The mercy of it is, they don't last long.

Diana nods.

MOLLY BARING
It's no kind of life.

Diana nods. Colin looks down. He can hardly bear this.

31

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

31

ON DIANA - Her head on a pillow, her eyes closed. She turns her head from side to side. Her face creases with pain. No sound. She seems to be asleep, perhaps having a bad dream.

Then her suffering intensifies. She bangs her head from side to side, her mouth opens in a silent scream, sweat glistens on her brow. It must be a hideous nightmare.

Then she jerks up, her eyes open, the pain unbearable. It bursts from her in a scream of agony.

DIANA

Aaa-aaah!

WIDE - Full sound. We now see we're in a maternity ward in Nairobi. MIDWIVES and NURSES clustered round the bed. A pool of light on the lower part of the bed, obscured by their busy activity.

A baby is being born.

32

INT. ISOLATION WARD, NAIROBI HOSPITAL - DAY

32

MOVING POV tracking down the bright corridor as before, past the screens swaying in the breeze. Through doors and outer rooms.

The MOVING POV enters Robin's room and approaches his bed. Robin gazes AT CAMERA.

Diana holds the TINY BABY for him to see. The baby gazes back just as gravely at Robin.

ON ROBIN - He gazes at the baby for a moment longer. Then he closes his eyes.

Diana holds the baby against Robin's unmoving cheek. A kind of contact for a moment. Then she takes him away.

She watches Robin in silence. Kisses her baby's cheek.

No movement from Robin. His eyes stay closed. The respirator fills the silence with its hissing and clicking.

33

SCENE DELETED

33

34

EXT. RAF LYNEHAM - DAY

34

A TRANSPORT PLANE has just landed. The cargo doors are open and a tricky unloading operation is under way. Robin Cavendish is being hoisted out of the plane, strapped to a stretcher. A big battery powered respirator is being unloaded alongside him. An ambulance waits to receive him. Medics, RAF personnel and ground crew are gathered round.

MEDIC

Easy now. Take it slowly. Keep some slack in the tube. That's more like it. Down you come.

They get the stretcher onto the tarmac. Now the respirator has to be man-handled into the ambulance.

MEDIC
(to Robin)
Disconnecting you for a moment.

ON ROBIN - The sound of the respirator ceases. He is no longer breathing. He takes it calmly, but for us the wait is unnerving. We hear the grunts and scrapes as the big respirator is heaved into the ambulance, and the sounds of wires being clipped back into place.

Then Robin's stretcher is on the move, into the ambulance. The respirator starts up. The tube is replaced in his throat.

Robin breathes again. His eyes close.

35 SCENE DELETED 35

36 INT. LOBBY, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY 36

Diana sits waiting with TID, her former nanny, called out of retirement to help. A proud and capable woman. The pram stands between them.

A young Pakistani doctor, DR KHAN, approaches.

DR KHAN
Mrs Cavendish?

DIANA
Yes.

DR KHAN
I'm really sorry. This isn't a good time. We've had to medicate your husband. Perhaps you could come back tomorrow.

DIANA
I don't mind if he's asleep. I'd just like to see him.

DR KHAN
I don't think it's a good idea.

DIANA
I'm sorry. I don't understand.

The doctor hesitates.

DR KHAN
You know, with this sort of thing the morale can drop pretty low at times. Your husband is going through a temporary depression.

DIANA

I'd still like to see him.

DR KHAN

I'm so sorry. He doesn't want to see you.

Diana stares: shocked.

37 INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

37

Robin lies in his hospital bed, linked to his respirator. It hisses and clicks as it pumps away.

SLOW MOVE IN on Robin. He lies with his eyes open, looking up at nothing, tears seeping down his cheeks.

38 INT. HALLYWAY, OXFORD HOSPITAL - EVENING

38

Diana is on her way out of the hospital, with her baby in his pram, accompanied by Tid.

DIANA

I'll be able to manage from now on, Tid. It's not fair to ask you to do this.

TID

I don't see why not. I looked after you when you were a baby, didn't I?

DIANA

The thing is, we're not very well off, I'm afraid. We've got some savings, but there's not a lot coming in.

TID

Don't you worry about that. Your family's my family, really. It's nice to be back.

39 INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

39

TRACK into the ward. Six beds, each one surrounded by medical apparatus, each one linked to a respirator, each one hissing and clicking as it pumps away. This sound, a syncopated rhythm of overlapping beats, fills the air.

Diana's brothers, Bloggs and David, sit on either side of Robin's bed. Robin is laboriously mouthing words. Bloggs is struggling to understand.

BLOGGS

Sorry. I'm not being very clever here.

Robin tries again. He's mouthing three words. Bloggs catches the lips-together form of an M.

BLOGGS

Mmm. 'Mum'?

DAVID

Why would he say 'mum'?

BLOGGS

Maybe he wants to see his mum.

DAVID

(watching Robin)

Ma? Moo? Me?

Robin mouths 'Yes'.

DAVID

'Me.'

Robin goes back to mouthing his three words.

BLOGGS

Eh. Me. Aye.

DAVID

Eh. 'Get' - is the first word 'get'?

BLOGGS

Or 'let'?

DAVID

'Let - me - lie'?

BLOGGS

He is lying. Sorry, Robin. You must think we're awful chumps.

Robin mouths again. David suddenly gets it.

DAVID

'Let me die.'

Robin closes his eyes, sinks back exhausted.

BLOGGS

Let me die.

DAVID

Well, that's pretty bloody final, I must say.

40

EXT. OXFORD - DAY

40

Diana walks through Oxford lanes with her brothers Bloggs and David. Students rattle past on bikes, dodging them as they go. Diana is putting on a good face, refusing to be sorry for herself.

BLOGGS

Diana, darling. How can we help?

DIANA

Oh, I shall manage.

BLOGGS

How are you off for money?

DIANA

I've got my share of what Mother left us. That'll keep us going for a while.

DAVID

Talking to Robin was rather like one of those ghastly party games where you don't know the rules.

DIANA

It was clever of you to get him to say anything at all.

Bloggs comes to a stop.

BLOGGS

What he said was, 'Let me die'.

Diana meets Bloggs's eyes. Giving nothing away.

DIANA

Well, we can't, can we?

As they resume their progress down the lane -

DAVID

Do you mean we can't even think such a thing, or we don't know how to do it?

DIANA

Both, I suppose.

BLOGGS

Makes no odds, really. I had a sort of a word with the Consultant. He wouldn't hear of it.

DAVID

Not what they do.

BLOGGS

He said it's not a good way to go. Several minutes of agony.

DIANA

No. I don't want that.

BLOGGS

Of course not.

DAVID

On the other hand, you have a life too.

BLOGGS

You are allowed to think of yourself.

41

INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

41

Diana sits by Robin's bed with her baby on her lap. Robin lies with his eyes open, but he's not looking at either of them. The baby is fascinated by the rise and fall of the respirator.

DIANA

He couldn't go on having no name. I decided to call him Jonathan. I hope that's all right.

No response from Robin.

Diana watches him in silence.

DR ENTWISTLE now joins them accompanied by his entourage, which includes Dr Khan. He checks his notes. Speaks in professionally cheerful tones.

DR ENTWISTLE

Well, Mrs Cavendish. We do have some progress to report.

DIANA

Progress?

DR ENTWISTLE

We're learning to swallow again.

DIANA

We are?

DR ENTWISTLE

It's more significant than it sounds.

(MORE)

DR ENTWISTLE (CONT'D)

At present we have an inflated cuff round our tracheotomy tube, to stop food or drink going down our windpipe. If we can swallow again, the cuff can be removed, and air can get to the larynx. Then we'll be able to talk again.

Diana takes this in.

DIANA

Might there be other progress too?

DR ENTWISTLE

This is about as good as it's going to get, I'm afraid.

(to Robin)

How are we this morning?

Robin stares back at him in silence.

DIANA

We wish we were dead.

A twitch in Robin's face. Was it a ghost of a smile?

DR ENTWISTLE

(not listening)

Good, good.

Dr Entwistle moves on. He can be heard at the next bed, speaking breezily to another paralysed patient, PADDY. Paddy, a 40-year-old ex-soldier, is on a respirator like Robin.

DR ENTWISTLE

Good morning to you, Paddy.
Ticking along as usual, I see.

42

EXT. OXFORD HOSPITAL GARDEN - DAY

42

Diana sits on a rug in this open quadrangle, an area of bald grass, watching over baby Jonathan as he wriggles on his tummy beside her. Tid is pouring cups of tea for them from a Thermos flask. Diana's face is turned away from us.

Baby Jonathan manages a short burst of crawling.

TID

There's a young lad who'll be on the move before we know it.

Diana turns to her. Now we see the strain on her face.

DIANA

He never looks at him, Tid. He
can't bear even to look at him.

TID

You don't know that.

DIANA

Yes, I do. I know everything he's
thinking. Each time I go there I
hope he'll have changed. But he
can't bear to look at his own
son.

TID

I loved my home, but when I left, I
couldn't turn and look back. I
loved it too much.

DIANA

Oh, Tid.

The baby makes gurgling noises.

TID

There. Listen to him. He'll be
talking soon.

44

INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - NIGHT

44

ON ROBIN - Seen through a gap in the curtains that surround his bed. NURSE MARGARET, a smiley friendly young woman, is raising Robin in a hoist, removing a used bedpan, wiping his bottom.

Diana is on the other side of the curtains, watching every move.

Robin is lowered back onto his bed.

NURSE MARGARET

Let's give you a suck, shall we?

She takes the breathing tube out of Robin's neck and inserts a suction tube. A glugging sound as the fluid in his lungs is drawn out into a container.

Diana, watching, holds her breath.

The breathing tube is re-inserted, and Robin breathes again. So does Diana. Nurse Margaret makes him tidy.

NURSE MARGARET

All comfy now?

She pulls the curtains open. Paddy's eyes follow the Nurse with admiration.

Diana moves forward so that she's on Robin's eye-line.

DIANA

They tell me you've been learning
to talk.

Robin gazes at her. His lips move, preparing to talk. Then,
slowly, slurring every growly word -

ROBIN

I'm... sorry.

DIANA

That's not what I want to hear.

ROBIN

You... are... so... lovely.

Diana smiles.

DIANA

Better.

Robin gazes at her a moment longer. Then his eyes close.

Diana reaches out one hand and strokes his head, his face.
Just sits there stroking him.

45	SCENE DELETED	45
46	SCENE DELETED	46
47	INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY	47

The HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN is visiting Robin, sitting close,
murmuring his professional consolations.

CHAPLAIN

An old priest I knew once, a very
holy man, he used to say, 'Those
God loves most he allows to
suffer most.'

Robin lies, eyes open, gazing up at the ceiling.

CHAPLAIN

We can't know the mind of God. We can only know that whatever happens to us is somehow part of his plan.

Robin makes a noise that might be a reply.

CHAPLAIN

I'm sorry, I missed that.

ROBIN

(indistinct)
Closer.

CHAPLAIN

What's that you say?

ROBIN

Closer.

CHAPLAIN

Yes. Right.

He moves his ear so that it's near Robin's lips.

Robin spits in the Chaplain's ear. It's a feeble attempt at a spit, but unmistakable. Paddy, in the next bed, sees it.

The Chaplain stands. He takes out a handkerchief, wipes his ear.

CHAPLAIN

Yes. Well. I'll be moving on.

He leaves Robin's bedside, glancing round to see if anyone else saw what happened, and leaves. Paddy speaks so Robin can hear.

PADDY

That was grand.

Robin can see Paddy out of the corner of his eye. He raises one eyebrow.

PADDY

I'm thinking you're not a believer.

ROBIN

Believer in what?... God's a joke.

PADDY

No, pal. God's a joker. Look at the pig's mickey he's made of you and me.

Robin grins at that.

ROBIN
How do you live like this?

PADDY
You get used to it.

ROBIN
What if I don't?

PADDY
There's always a way out.

He indicates the empty bed opposite.

PADDY
Like Pete there got out. His own private box.

48	SCENE DELETED	48	
49	SCENE DELETED	49	
50	INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL/ROBIN'S BEDROOM, GOVERNMENT HOUSE - NIGHT	50	* *
	CLOSE UP ON ROBIN - In bed, apparently in Oxford Hospital.		*
	PULL BACK TO REVEAL - Robin in the bedroom at Government House where he became ill.		* *
	PULL BACK FURTHER - He has a tube running into a throat tracheotomy. Robin awakes, looks confused, pulls out his tube, leans forward and looks out, desperately in search of Diana.		* * * *
51	SCENE DELETED	51	*
52	INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY	52	
	ROBIN'S POV - A window is curtain drawn back. Bright light of day. Out of the brightness the image of Diana forms. She's come to visit him.		
	For a few moments he gazes at her in silence.		
	ROBIN Why do you keep on coming?		
	Diana doesn't answer at once. It's a fair question.		

DIANA
I don't really know.

ROBIN

I'm no damn use to you... You should leave me to rot.

DIANA

It wouldn't look very good.

Robin twitches a smile at that.

DIANA

And apparently I love you.

ROBIN

Not this... You can't love this.

DIANA

Apparently I can.

ROBIN

I don't want you to... It makes it harder for me.

DIANA

Yes. I can see that. You'd rather just pack it in, I know.

ROBIN

Bloody machine keeps on breathing for me.

DIANA

So it looks as if you're going to have to stick around for a while.

ROBIN

Sorry about that.

DIANA

I'm not sorry. I'd like Jonathan to know you.

His face twitches. She scratches the itch for him.

DIANA

And maybe I can make life a little better for you.

He looks at her. She strokes his face and head.

ROBIN

It's only duty.

DIANA

Yes, all right. We know all about that. Everything is as bad as it could be.

(MORE)

DIANA (CONT'D)

But I can't go on coming in here
and have you saying you wish you
were dead. You're not dead, and
that's that.

Robin stares at her. This is a new Diana.

DIANA

There must be something I can do
to make things more bearable.

Beat.

ROBIN

Get me out of here.

He knows it's impossible as he says it.

But Diana's thinking: Maybe that's the only way...

53

EXT. FURLONGS - DAY

53

Diana stands outside a big crumbling house, gazing at it in
dismay. Beside her stands its owner, MR TOLLAND, an elderly
man as decrepit as the house.

MR TOLLAND

I'll be sad to go, of course, after
all these years. But since Muriel
died I can't seem to get on top of
things. Things can run away with
you, you know.

DIANA

It needs a lot of work. Is the roof
sound?

Mr Tolland casts a melancholy eye on the roof.

MR TOLLAND

Some of it.

DIANA

Why are some of the windows bricked
up?

MR TOLLAND

Ah, yes. Those are my rooms, you
see. Muriel said it saved so much
on the heating bills.

Diana gazes up at the unpromising prospect. Then she draws a
deep breath.

DIANA

It's a lot of work, but I think it
might just about do.
(MORE)

DIANA (CONT'D)

I can't pay twelve thousand, of course. Or anywhere near.

MR TOLLAND

I'd take eleven. Or even ten.

DIANA

All I can manage is seven.

MR TOLLAND

Seven?

DIANA

Cash. And you'd be rid of the place for ever. And Muriel.

Mr Tolland's face creases into a slow smile.

53A

SCENE DELETED

53A

54

INT. DR ENTWISTLE'S OFFICE, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

54

Diana sits facing the Dr Entwistle, who is enthroned behind his desk.

DR ENTWISTLE
I'm afraid it's out of the
question. I'm sorry.

DIANA
Has anyone tried?

DR ENTWISTLE

No one with your husband's degree of disability, anywhere in the world, exists outside a hospital.

Diana seems not to be taking this in.

DIANA

I've watched what the nurses do. If we can have a respirator at home I don't see why it wouldn't work.

Dr Entwistle tries to control his irritation.

DR ENTWISTLE

Allow me to explain. Your husband is only alive because a machine is breathing for him. If that machine should fail, in under two minutes your husband would be dead.

Silence.

DR ENTWISTLE

Forgive me if I speak plainly. Have I made myself clear?

DIANA

Yes.

55

INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

55

Robin is speaking to Paddy in a low voice.

ROBIN

She's up to something... She's scheming.

PADDY

So what's her plan?... Dig a tunnel for you to escape?

Dr Khan and Nurse Margaret enter. Robin and Paddy fall silent. Nurse Margaret comes to Paddy's bedside.

NURSE MARGARET

How are you, Paddy? Let's make you comfortable, shall we?

She places a urine bottle for him. He starts to pee. A look of ecstasy on his face.

PADDY

Aah! Pissing... Best moment of the day.

Dr Khan checks Robin's charts.

Diana enters and comes to Robin's bedside. She gives Robin a kiss on the cheek.

DIANA

Morning, darling.

Dr Khan gives her a nod as he continues with his checks.

DR KHAN

Mrs Cavendish.

Nurse Margaret is now preparing to suck the fluid from Robin's lungs. Diana looks on.

DIANA

Do you think I could do that?

NURSE MARGARET

I don't see why not. It's just like a Hoover, really.

Diana watches as Nurse Margaret switches off the respirator pump, removes the breathing tube, and inserts the suction tube.

NURSE MARGARET

Here, give it a try. Hold it like this.

Diana holds the tube. Nurse Margaret switches on the pump. The tube gives a jerk, and fluid gloops out. Diana jumps, unnerved.

DIANA

Oh God! Please! Take it!

Dr Khan grins: it's as he expected. Nurse Margaret takes over. Diana watches the rest of the process closely.

DIANA

Once I got used to it, I think I could manage.

DR KHAN

Why would you want to manage, Mrs Cavendish?

DIANA

Robin?

DIANA

Robin and I wanted to ask you, Dr Khan. Can machines like that -
(the respirator)
- only work in hospitals?

DR KHAN

Well, it's just a machine, you know. You plug it in and it goes. Why do you ask?

DIANA

Robin's going to leave the hospital.

Dr Khan is flabbergasted.

DR KHAN

Impossible!

DIANA

I think you mean inadvisable.

DR KHAN

You do have any idea of the risk?

DIANA

Yes. The risk is he might die.

The sucking is completed. The breathing tube goes back in.
Robin can speak again. Diana turns to him.

DIANA

Robin?

ROBIN

I go on living here like this... Or
I leave here and die.

DIANA

Yes.

ROBIN

What are we waiting for?

56 SCENE DELETED 56

57 INT. FURLONGS - DAY 57

Bloggs and David stagger down the stairs with a bed.

BLOGGS (O.S.)
No, you halfwit! Up! I said up!

DAVID (O.S.)
But we're going down.

BLOGGS (O.S.)
Lift your end UP to get the bloody
thing DOWN!

They manoeuvre the bed into the study.

BLOGGS
Left! LEFT!

DAVID
I am going left!

BLOGGS
Then go right!

They get the bed into the study.

BLOGGS
Further over. We have to leave room
for Robin's bed.

Once it's in place, they both sit down on it, side by side,
and mop their brows.

Through the French windows little Jonathan can be seen out in
the garden with Tid. He's playing with a terrier puppy,
BENJY.

DAVID
Diana sleeps in this bed?

BLOGGS
Yes.

DAVID
And Robin's bed comes here?

He indicates the space they've left beside it.

BLOGGS
That's what she wants.

DAVID
Surely Robin'll have a nurse.

BLOGGS
No nurse. Just Diana.

DAVID
What about - I mean - she can't be
with him every minute of the day
and night. She has to pee.

Tid speaks from the doorway.

TID
She's got me.

59 SCENE DELETED

59

59A INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - NIGHT

59A

The ward in darkness. The sounds of the respirators form a weave of hissing in the wider silence.

ON ROBIN - His eyes are open, gazing up at nothing.

PADDY

Five pounds says you'll never make it.

ROBIN

What do I get if I do?

PADDY

You get five.

ROBIN

You're on.

Other patients in the ward overhear them.

PATIENT 1

Thinks he's getting out.

PATIENT 2

Some chance.

PATIENT 1

Bloody nutter!

PATIENT 2

Like taking candy from a baby.

Paddy whispers conspiratorially at Patient 2 -

PADDY

Hush up and I'll cut you in on my winnings.

59B INT. WARD, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

59B

Dr Khan and Diana enter the ward, followed by Nurse Margaret. They head for Robin's bed. Dr Khan's looking round nervously. The other patients are all watching with interest.

DIANA
(to Robin)
This is it.

DR KHAN
(to Robin)
I'm only permitting this because
your wife has taken full
responsibility for the
consequences. You can still change
your mind.

ROBIN
I want to go.

DR KHAN
Very well.
(to Nurse)
You ready?

Nurse Margaret nods. Dr Khan shifts Robin's respirator to a trolley. Nurse Margaret unlocks the bed's wheels.

PADDY
Best of luck, pal.

ROBIN
So long, Paddy. I'll be back for my
fiver.

Paddy watches as Robin's bed is wheeled away.

PADDY
I'll miss you, pal.

60 INT. CORRIDOR, OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

60

A rumbling sound. Double doors open. Diana peeps out to see if the coast is clear. The doors open wide to let ROBIN'S HOSPITAL BED through, pushed by Nurse Margaret. Beside him rolls the respirator on a trolley, pushed by Dr Khan. Diana walks by the side of the bed, one hand on Robin's arm.

The procession passes through another set of double doors.
There ahead a grim figure looms into view.

Dr Entwistle.

The bed and the trolley come to a stop under his withering stare.

DR ENTWISTLE
Where do you think you're going?

DIANA
We're taking my husband home.

DR ENTWISTLE
You don't have my permission.

ROBIN
Is this a prison?... Am I your prisoner?

Dr Entwistle doesn't register Robin at all. He addresses Dr Khan.

DR ENTWISTLE
What do you think you're doing?

DR KHAN
It's the patient's own wish, sir.
He's fully apprised of the risks.

DR ENTWISTLE
Is the patient medically qualified?
Take him back to the ward at once.

ROBIN
Diana. Call the police... Tell them I'm being held against my will.

Now Dr Entwistle takes in Robin's living presence.

DR ENTWISTLE
I'm sorry. What did you say?

ROBIN
I'm neither criminal nor insane... You have no right to stop me leaving this place.

A long beat. Dr Entwistle looks from Robin to Diana and back again. He's very angry, but hides it under sarcastic courtesy.

DR ENTWISTLE
Of course. Be my guest. Do as you please.

He stands aside. The procession rolls past.

DR ENTWISTLE
You'll be dead in two weeks.

61 SCENE DELETED 61

62 EXT. FURLONGS - DAY 62

Benjy on a lead held by Tid, with little Jonathan by her side. Beside them, Colin Campbell, Bloggs Blacker and Harry Tennyson. A welcome committee for the ambulance as it pulls up to Furlongs.

The ambulance men roll Robin out of the ambulance. Benjy yaps. Jonathan watches eagerly.

BLOGGS
How's Robin coping?

DIANA
So far, so good.

Robin is disconnected from the respirator in the ambulance and stretchered into the house. He looks round him as he goes.

ROBIN'S POV - Grey stone walls. Glimpses of garden. Little Jonathan pointing at him, moving alongside him. Benjy bouncing and yapping.

63 INT. FURLONGS - DAY 63

Robin is carried down the hall and into his new room. Here the ambulance men lift him onto a hospital bed, now placed beside the other bed.

Diana inserts the breathing tube attached to the new respirator. Robin breathes again. A tense few moments is over.

DIANA
Are you all right, darling?

ROBIN
Yes... Yes.

BLOGGS
It actually works?

DIANA
It works.

Bloggs and Harry shake hands.

Diana, Colin, Bloggs and Harry gather round the bed.

DIANA

This is it. Our new home.

Robin looks round as best as he can, rolling his eyes.

DIANA

How do you feel?

ROBIN

Better.

Colin is inspecting the respirator.

COLIN CAMPBELL

What happens if there's a power cut?

BLOGGS

You work it with a hand pump.

HARRY

Nifty bit of kit.

Tid, Jonathan and Benjy come in. Diana picks Jonathan up so he can see Robin.

DIANA

There's Daddy.

Little Jonathan gazes at Robin. Robin gazes back. The first time he's acknowledged his existence.

ROBIN

Hello, Jonathan.

Benjy jumps up onto the bed. He sniffs at Robin, and gives a little bark. Robin 'barks' back. Jonathan bursts into laughter.

Robin smiles. His first proper smile.

65 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - NIGHT 65

Robin lies in the darkness with his eyes open. The wheeze and clank of the breathing machine.

WIDEN to see the second bed alongside his bed. Here Diana lies, settling down to sleep.

DIANA
Good night, darling.

ROBIN
Good night.

Diana's hand reaches out and feels its way to his face. She strokes his brow and cheeks and lips. He kisses her fingers. She leans across and touches her lips to his.

66 SCENE DELETED 66

67 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY 67

JONATHAN'S POV - Crossing the room towards his father's bed, looming above him. Peering at the fascinating machine by the bed, that hisses to itself.

Jonathan mimics the machine's wheezing sound.

Benjy comes trotting in. Jonathan tries to take Benjy in his arms but the dog wriggles free. Jonathan topples over, trying to get him back. As he scrabbles about on the floor he pulls unknowingly on the power cord.

The respirator stops.

Robin, helpless in bed, makes a clicking noise in his mouth: his distress signal.

Jonathan, entirely unaware of the crisis, chases after Benjy. Dog and child run out of the room.

Robin's eyes show his mounting fear. He keeps making the clicking noise. He can hear the radio playing in the kitchen.

A squeal of pain from Jonathan in the hall.

DIANA (O.S.)
Jonathan! Are you all right?

The seconds are passing. Robin's eyes close. He stops making his noise.

Diana's footsteps in the hall. Jonathan whimpering.

DIANA (O.S.)

It's just a bump. No damage done.
Here, I'll kiss it better.

Now at last she comes into Robin's room.

DIANA

Robin - Oh my God!

She races for the machine, finds the plug, pushes it back in.
The regular hissing begins again. Robin opens his eyes.

DIANA

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

ROBIN

That was interesting.

DIANA

How did it happen?

ROBIN

Jonathan... Fell over... Just an
accident.

She puts out one hand, still shaky from the shock, to stroke
his cheek.

The distant roar of an engine -

68

EXT. FURLONGS - DAY

68

A pale blue Mercedes convertible sweeps across the lawn in
front of the house.

IN CAR - The driver is a big genial eccentric, TEDDY HALL.
On the passenger seat beside him in a cardboard box six
bottles of wine rattle and clink.

69

INT. ROBIN'S BEDROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

69

Teddy Hall works a corkscrew into a bottle of wine. Colin
Campbell lights two candles on a birthday cake. There's a
small party happening round Robin's bed. Diana has little
Jonathan on her lap in his best clothes, while Tid looks on.
Friends from Kenya are here: Mary Dawnay and Katherine
Baring. And of course Bloggs and David Blacker.

TEDDY HALL

Best claret I've got. Spent the
war in my air raid shelter.

POP! Out comes the cork. Teddy Hall fills the glasses he's
also brought with him.

BLOGGS

Looks like a good drop, Teddy.

TEDDY HALL

It is good. Good wine deserves good glasses.

He gives Diana a glass -

TEDDY HALL

For the lovely Diana.

And glasses for the others.

TEDDY HALL

Mary. Katherine. Bloggs. David. Tid?

Tid shakes her head.

TID

No, no, not for me.

DIANA

Tid only drinks Dubonnet.

TID

And only on my birthday.

Diana arranges Robin's glass with a straw that he can reach. Teddy raises his glass.

TEDDY HALL

To Jonathan. Happy birthday.

ALL

To Jonathan.

ON LITTLE JONATHAN - Gazing back, enjoying the attention.

DIANA

(to Jonathan)

Now you blow out the candles.

She helps Jonathan blow out the candles. They all clap. Jonathan claps.

Diana starts cutting up the cake. Teddy Hall studies the respirator. Robin sips wine through a straw.

ROBIN

I wonder what it would be like to get drunk... given that I'm legless already.

TEDDY HALL

What you have to do with mechanical devices is stress-test them. Find their breaking point.

BLOGGS

Interesting experiment, Teddy. Of course, Robin would die. But you'd probably be able to improve the machine.

DAVID

All progress has its price.

Teddy Hall is too intrigued by the machine to hear this.

TEDDY HALL

The weak link is the power supply.
Power can fail. Power frequently
fails.

MARY DAWNAY

Do stop it, Teddy.

TEDDY HALL

Just hypothesising.

BLOGGS

It is his job.

DAVID

He's an Oxford professor. He hasn't
got a job.

DIANA

There's nothing to worry about.
It can be worked by hand.

MARY DAWNAY

What about in the night?

DIANA

I'm here.

KATHARINE BARING

But you have to sleep some time.

DIANA

If Robin needs me, he wakes me.

BLOGGS

He makes this noise, like a duck.

He makes a quacking sound.

DAVID

More like a chicken.

He makes a clucking sound.

Robin makes his own clicking noise in his mouth. They all
look at him.

ROBIN

Not much, is it? I'd rather have a
bell.

He sees Teddy Hall watching him closely.

TEDDY HALL

What can you move?

Robin moves everything that moves: mouth, tongue, eyebrows.

BLOGGS

You can move your head. I've seen you do it.

Teddy holds his palms on either side of Robin's head.

TEDDY HALL

Move your head.

Robin moves his head. It's such a small move it's almost invisible.

TEDDY HALL

I think I can have some fun with that.

70 INT. TEDDY HALL'S WORKSHOP - DAY

70

The large workshop is cluttered with machine tools, parts of clocks, electrical devices, and all sorts of litter. In the midst of all this, Teddy Hall is at work bodging up a padded lever connected to a bell. He's setting its sensitivity, making it so that a very slight pressure rings the bell.

71 EXT. GARDEN, FURLONGS - DAY

71

Little Jonathan races round and round the lawn, chased by Benjy. Tid sits on a garden chair reading a detective novel. Jonathan's push chair stands empty beside her.

Jonathan charges up to the French windows to Robin's room and presses his face to the window panes. He bangs on the glass.

72 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

72

Jonathan's cheery little face outside the window, smiling and banging. The eternal wheeze and clank of the respirator.

Robin is in bed, studying stock prices, the Financial Times open on a rack before him. A heap of old copies of the Financial Times lies on the floor.

He hears Jonathan banging and smiles for him. Then he winces. He moves his head. We now see Teddy Hall's apparatus fixed to the bedhead enables him to sound a bell.

Diana appears.

DIANA

Bottle?

ROBIN

Please.

Diana takes a cloth-covered glass urine bottle from a table, draws back Robin's bedclothes, and carefully arranges him so he can relieve himself.

We hear the sound as he pees.

ROBIN

You know the Marconi shares I bought?... Justin's hot tip... They've almost doubled in price.

DIANA

I hope Justin gets something out of it.

ROBIN

Of course he does... He gets the agreeable sensation of having helped... someone less fortunate than himself.

DIANA

Poor Robin, paralysed for life.

ROBIN

And his poor wife. I hear she's a saint.

They grin at each other a little guiltily: making fun of other people's pity.

A squeal of laughter outside, a burst of yapping. Robin looks out of the French windows.

ROBIN'S POV - Jonathan has got hold of his push chair. He's pushing it busily up and down the terrace, followed by Benjy.

He finishes peeing. Diana removes the bottle, straightens the bed, heads for the door.

Robin watches little Jonathan racing his push chair on the terrace.

ROBIN

Call Teddy, darling... I've had
an idea.

73 INT. TEDDY HALL'S WORKSHOP - DAY

73

CLOSE ON a metal frame onto which has been bolted an electric motor and a bellows. A bicycle chain links the two. Wires run to a 12 volt battery.

Teddy connects the leads and the motor turns. The chain drives, and the bellows rise and fall.

A few turns and the chain falls off.

TEDDY HALL

Bugger.

CLOSE SHOTS - The motor's position is adjusted - the chain is tightened. An aircraft seat is bolted on. Wheels for the contraption come off a bicycle.

74 INT. DRAWING ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

74

CLOSE ON a record player as the pick-up arm descends on a spinning LP.

The SOUND OF TRUMPETS: the Grand March from Aida.

75 EXT. TERRACE, FURLONGS - DAY

75

The French windows to Robin's room are wide open. To the sound of the Grand March, out comes a strange procession. It's led by Robin, seated in a home-made WHEELCHAIR with a battery-operated pump. Teddy Hall pushes the chair. Diana walks alongside, watching closely to see that Robin's breathing tube stays in, and that the pump keeps pumping. It makes a gentler sound than the static respirator. Tid and Jonathan and Benjy follow behind.

On the terrace a small crowd of friends applaud: Bloggs and David, Colin Campbell, Mary Dawnay, Katherine Baring, Harry Tennyson.

ON ROBIN - Looking a little alarmed at being lurched about - but thrilled to bits.

The procession marches round the terrace to the stirring sound of Verdi's trumpets, and comes to a stop in the midst of the crowd of smiling friends.

COLIN CAMPBELL

There'll be no stopping him now.

MARY DAWNAY

It's terrifying. What if it
breaks?

Diana and Teddy Hall study the respirator. It still seems
to be working.

DIANA

(to Robin)

How does it feel?

ROBIN

Wonderful.

TEDDY HALL

A little fast?

ROBIN

Perhaps a little.

Teddy clicks the lever on the bicycle gears that regulate
the chain. The machine pumps a little more slowly.

TEDDY HALL

Better?

ROBIN

Yes.

BLOGGS

How long will the battery last?

TEDDY HALL

Up to three hours, we think.

HARRY TENNYSON

Isn't this a case where a little
more certainty would be
appropriate?

TEDDY HALL

There's a mains lead too.

ROBIN

Teddy. You're a genius.

TEDDY HALL

To be honest it all turned out to
be pretty basic. I used a bicycle
chain and Sturmey Archer gears. I
don't know why it hasn't been
done before.

ROBIN

Because you're not a doctor...
There's no one to tell you it
can't be done.

75A INT. OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

75A

Diana wheels Robin in his wheelchair into the hospital lobby.

DIANA

We have an appointment with Dr Khan. Robin Cavendish, for his check-up.

IN HALLWAY - Diana wheels Robin down a hallway and into a ward. This is the same ward from which he escaped, still occupied by many of the same paralysed patients on respirators. As Diana wheels Robin between the beds, the patients stare. Some are amazed, but some look confused, even distressed. Robin's former neighbour Paddy is grinning all over his face. Beside him stands Nurse Margaret, also looking on in wonder.

Robin says to Diana -

ROBIN

Take me to Paddy... Hey, Paddy!

PADDY

Robin!... You jammy little beggar!

Dr Khan comes into the ward and sees the wheelchair. He approaches, his face filled with admiration.

DR KHAN

This is really quite something!

Dr Entwistle enters, and stares at them in frigid silence. He advances towards them, turning his anger on Dr Khan, as if Robin and Diana aren't there.

DR ENTWISTLE

Did you give permission for this contraption to be brought into my ward?

Dr Khan starts to answer, but Dr Entwistle isn't interested in any excuses.

DR ENTWISTLE

It's hard enough for our patients to accept the conditions of their lives without raising false hopes that can only leave them more dissatisfied. Where you come from it may be common practice to play games with people's lives, but here it is not. Is that understood?

He stalks off out of the ward.

ROBIN

The man's a pompous idiot... Don't
you want to smack him?

DR KHAN

Believe me, I'm used to it.

DIANA

You'd think he'd want to get
wheelchairs like this for his other
patients.

ROBIN

(to Paddy)

Paddy, you owe me a fiver.

PADDY

Not so fast, pal... You could drop
off your perch tomorrow.

(to Dr Khan)

How safe is it, Doctor?

DR KHAN

I don't know, Paddy. It's the first
time I've seen anything like it.

ROBIN

(to Paddy)

Does four miles an hour with... the
wind behind you.

Dr Khan is examining the wheelchair.

DR KHAN

(to Paddy)

I'd advise waiting a little while
longer. Test its limits.

ROBIN

Quite right... Find the breaking
point.

DIANA

We're not testing Robin till he
breaks.

ROBIN

Yes, we are... That's exactly what
we're doing.

DR KHAN

Let's get on with this check-up,
shall we? See what state you're in.

As Diana wheels Robin away to an examination room, followed
by Dr Khan, Paddy speaks to Nurse Margaret.

PADDY

If he doesn't make it, who pays me
my fiver?

75BA SCENE DELETED

75BA

75C EXT. OXFORD HOSPITAL - DAY

75C

Diana wheels Robin back out onto the street.

DIANA

You're doing better than all his other patients. That's what he said.

ROBIN

Poor old Paddy... I wish we could help him to escape too.

Two PASSING WOMEN pause to stare at Robin. They assume he can neither see nor hear them.

FIRST WOMAN

It isn't kind to let them out like that.

SECOND WOMAN

On the street, where everyone can see.

ROBIN

Believe me, ladies... My distress is greater than yours.

The women hurry on their way, shocked.

FIRST WOMAN

Did he speak? Was that him speaking?

76 EXT. GARDEN, FURLONGS - DAY

76

JONATHAN'S POV - MOVING THROUGH sun-dappled bushes in the depths of the garden towards a light-filled gap - and there, across the wide lawn, sits Robin on the terrace in his wheelchair, Benjy curled up on his lap. Beside him sits Tid, reading her book.

LITTLE JONATHAN, now aged 5, is exploring the fringe of the pond.

The phone rings: an amplified external ringer. Jonathan waves at his father.

TID

(to Robin)

Should I answer that?

ROBIN

Yes, yes. I'll be fine.

Tid rises, puts down her book, and goes into the house.

Jonathan moves closer to the shore of the pond. A flicker of light as a fish flashes through the water. Fascinated, Jonathan looks closer.

Across the lawn, Robin is watching, calling something we're almost too far away to hear.

ROBIN
Jonathan! Be careful!

Jonathan turns back to look at his father - and slips on the pond's verge - and tumbles into the water.

ON ROBIN - Horrified.

ROBIN'S POV - The place where Jonathan had been standing, now empty. The distant sound of splashing. Distant cries.

ON ROBIN - Helpless, frozen. Then he comes to his senses and presses at his bell. The bell rings on his wheelchair.

Tid comes running out of the house.

ROBIN
Jonathan. Pond.

Tid runs to the pond. Benjy jumps off Robin's lap and follows her. Robin watches as she pulls Jonathan out of the water. He hears his screams, at their most intense now he is safe.

Tid carries the soaking screaming child back.

TID
He's all right. He's fine.

ROBIN
My fault... I'm sorry.

ON ROBIN - Gazing at his frightened screaming son. Overwhelmed with the awareness of his own powerlessness.

77

INT. ROBIN AND DIANA'S BEDROOM, FURLONGS - NIGHT

77

Jonathan enters in his pyjamas, all alone. Comes to Robin's bedside.

ROBIN
Come to say goodnight?

JONATHAN
Sorry, Daddy.

ROBIN
You must be careful, you know.

Jonathan nods, gazingly solemnly back at him.

ROBIN
Don't want any accidents... Don't want you hurt.

JONATHAN
Don't want you hurt.

The little boy reaches out one hand and strokes his father's face. He's imitating what he's seen his mother do so many times. Robin smiles, very touched.

78

INT. DRAWING ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

78

It's winter, and very cold in the drafty old house. Ice on the windowpanes. Robin is wrapped in blankets in his wheelchair, and wears a hat and mittens. Diana, also well wrapped, is carrying out the chore of sucking the fluid from his lungs.

She's so used to this now that she can talk while she works. Robin of course can't speak, his breathing suspended until she's done.

DIANA

Bloggs told me the other day that
all our friends were convinced
I'd give up on you. Apparently
they saw me as some kind of
pampered nitwit.

She finishes and reinstates the breathing tube.

ROBIN

You were a pampered nitwit.

DIANA

Didn't stop you running after me.

ROBIN

I've got nothing against
nitwits... so long as they're
pretty.

DIANA

Well, you're stuck with me now.

ROBIN

Just think... All those affairs I
could have had.

DIANA

And me.

ROBIN

It's not too late.

DIANA

What, and come back to find you've
popped off while I'm out?

ROBIN

Yes, that would rather spoil the
party.

JONATHAN comes in, now FIVE YEARS OLD, carrying a photograph album. He too is well wrapped.

JONATHAN

Look! I found Daddy!

CLOSE SHOTS of black-and-white photographs in an album: pictures of Robin in uniform, surrounded by friends from his regiment, the Greenjackets.

Diana goes to look at the album.

DIANA

That's Daddy when he was a soldier.

JONATHAN

Daddy's a soldier!

He turns the page. Now the photographs show Diana and Robin in Kenya, surrounded by elephants.

DIANA

This is us in Africa, where you
were born.

Jonathan doesn't even notice the contrast between his father then and now. He likes the wild animals.

JONATHAN
Wow! Elephants! You saw
elephants!

ON DIANA - Finding it painful to look at the pictures. She looks up and meets Robin's eyes.

JONATHAN
You were luck-ee-ee.

He settles down on the floor, absorbed by the photographs.

Diana leaves Jonathan looking at the album, and returns to Robin. She's smiling but she has tears in her eyes. She bends down to kiss him. Her tears slightly moisten his cheek. She brushes the wetness from his face.

JONATHAN
I wish I could go to Africa.

DIANA
Do you, darling?

She goes on gazing down at Robin. She mouths silently to him, Sorry. He mouths back: Me too.

DIANA
I'd better sort out tea.

79 SCENE DELETED 79

79A INT. KITCHEN, FURLONGS - DAY 79A

Diana puts on the kettle, and then stands by the kitchen table, holding it as if to steady herself, and closes her eyes. Sometimes it just feels too hard.

She hears the voices coming faintly from the drawing room.

JONATHAN (O.S.)
Can we go to Africa, Daddy?

ROBIN (O.S.)
That would be fun.

JONATHAN (O.S.)
I could push you.

ROBIN (O.S.)
Rather a long way to push me.

JONATHAN (O.S.)
I don't mind.

79B INT. DRAWING ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

79B

Diana carries the tea tray in. Jonathan goes for the cake at once. As Diana pours tea for herself and Robin -

ROBIN

This chair pushing... Just how hard is it, over a long distance?

DIANA

Harder than a pram, I can tell you.

ROBIN

(to Jonathan)

Well, Jonathan... We're going to have to do some more thinking.

80 SCENE DELETED

80

81

EXT. FURLONGS - DAY

81

ON ROBIN - Grinning as he rises slowly upwards.

He's in his wheelchair, which is on the powered tail-gate of a converted Bedford van. The MECHANIC who has built it is now showing Robin and Diana how it works.

MECHANIC

As per your design, Mr Cavendish.
Takes up to three hundred pounds.

The tail-gate reaches the van's floor level. The mechanic rolls Robin and his chair into the back of the van, and closes the rear doors.

MECHANIC

(to Diana)
Hydraulic lifting mechanism. You
won't see that on a Bedford
anywhere else.

IN THE VAN - Robin looks round the enclosed space.

Outside, the mechanic repeats the process in reverse. Robin is wheeled back out.

MECHANIC

(proud)
What do you think?

ROBIN

It's wonderful... But it has a
design fault.

MECHANIC

What's that?

ROBIN

It's rather dark in the back...
It makes me feel like luggage.

MECHANIC

(taken aback)
I just thought - being as the
wheelchair has to be got in - the
back seemed...

His voice falters under Robin's steady gaze.

ROBIN

Have you ever sat in the back of
the van?

MECHANIC

Me? Well, no. But then I'm not -
I'm not -

ROBIN

Luggage?

(Beat)

Please don't think I'm not grateful... I suppose it has to be this way.

MECHANIC

You want to sit in the front?

ROBIN

Would it be very difficult to arrange?

MECHANIC

I suppose if I took our the front seat...

He's peering at the space in the front, working out how it could be done.

ROBIN

You've done such marvellous work on the tail lift.

82

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

82

HIGH ANGLE - Down the road comes the Bedford van.

IN THE VAN - Diana driving. And beside her, in the passenger seat space, Robin in his wheelchair. The sliding door is open beside him, the wind blowing in his hair. Jonathan sits behind with Benjy. The respirator hisses away, drawing its power from the car battery.

Robin loves the open spaces, the wind, the freedom. He starts to sing in his croaky voice -

ROBIN

When I get to heaven... tie me to a tree...

For I'll begin to roam and soon...
You'll know where I will be...

Diana and Jonathan laugh and join in as he sings.

ROBIN/DIANA/JONATHAN

I was bo-orn...

Under a wand'rin' star...

A wand'rin', wand'rin' star...

CRANE UP to see the road and a wide view of the surrounding countryside as the Bedford van drives on.

83

SCENE DELETED

83

84 SCENE DELETED 84

84A SCENE DELETED 84A

84B SCENE DELETED 84B

85 EXT. GARDEN, FURLONGS - DAY 85

Some years have passed. It's now 1970.

A crowd of friends fills the garden. JONATHAN, NOW TEN YEARS OLD, is playing cricket in the field beside the garden with a mix of his friends and older guests. A ring of small girls holds a dolls' tea party, watched by Tid. Bloggs Blacker is by the terrace table, hacking at a ham, talking to Teddy Hall. David Blacker carries plates of food to guests, among them Colin Campbell and RORY STEWART, a good-looking man in his 40s.

We follow the party in a montage of brief moments.

BY THE TERRACE TABLE -

Bloggs, carving the ham, glancing over towards Robin.

BLOGGS
He's amazing, isn't he?

Teddy Hall's looking at Diana.

TEDDY HALL

So's she.

BY ROBIN IN HIS WHEELCHAIR listening to Rory Stewart -

RORY STEWART

Lucy walked out a month ago now.
Been coming a long time.

ROBIN

I'm sorry, Rory... Very rough on
you.

RORY STEWART

Yes. Life's a shitty business,
isn't it? There you are, getting on
with your life, and out of nowhere -
crash! It all comes tumbling down.

ROBIN

And you know what's so strange?...
The sun still comes up tomorrow.

RORY STEWART

How do you mean?

ROBIN

Oh, nothing really... Help me with
my drink, will you, Rory.

Rory moves Robin's glass near enough for Robin to reach the
straw with his lips.

ROBIN

Let's have a toast.

RORY STEWART

What are we drinking to?

ROBIN

New dawns.

Rory raises his own glass, smiling for the first time.

RORY STEWART

New dawns!

AT THE DOLLS' TEA PARTY -

LITTLE GIRL

Rosie says, It's been delightful,
but I simply must rush.

THE GAME OF CRICKET -

Diana with Colin Campbell watching Jonathan as he bowls.

DIANA

I think he's going to be quite good.

BY THE TERRACE TABLE -

Harry Tennyson is shovelling food in liberal quantities onto his plate.

HARRY TENNYSON

You really should go to Simla, it's not like India at all. You're in the Himalayas, but it feels like England. Like England, but better.

The Blacker twins surveying the ruin of the ham carved by Bloggs.

DAVID

You've made a real hash of that.

BLOGGS

Look at Robin now.

They both look. Robin has four pretty women round him now.

BLOGGS

How does he do it?

BY ROBIN IN HIS WHEELCHAIR - One of the pretty women, PAMELA HARRIS, confiding in him.

PAMELA HARRIS

He proposed yesterday. I'm so fond of him. But he's no beauty. I feel so confused.

ROBIN

Is he actually ugly?

PAMELA HARRIS

Well, yes.

As they speak, Robin's looking across the lawn to where Diana stands, in conversation with Rory Stewart. From their body language he can see that Rory's confiding in her, and she's being sympathetic.

ROBIN

Good.

PAMELA HARRIS

Why's that good?

ROBIN

Good-looking men are idle... Ugly men get things done.

THE GAME OF CRICKET -

Jonathan, batting, hits the ball a terrific whack, sending it sailing into the shrubbery. He tosses his bat in the air, turns triumphantly to call to his father.

JONATHAN

Dad! You see that?

Robin is gazing at him, full of pride. Diana, sitting beside Robin, shares the proud moment: her hand applauds, clapping softly on Robins' hand, as if they're clapping together.

86

SCENE DELETED

86

87

INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - EVENING

87

The party's over. The guests departed.

Diana comes into the room where Robin sits in his bed. She's tends to him, arranging him to make him comfortable, before going to bed herself.

DIANA

So. Did you enjoy that? You were surrounded by admirers.

ROBIN
So were you.

DIANA

Me?

ROBIN

Rory Stewart couldn't take his eyes off you.

DIANA

Oh, Rory. Lucy's really messed him about. I feel so sorry for him. He says he spends his evenings alone, watching television.

ROBIN

I expect he'd like you to relieve his loneliness.

DIANA

Well, I'm not going to.

ROBIN

You can if you want to.

DIANA

Oh. You're giving me permission, are you?

ROBIN

I worry that you don't have much... fun.

DIANA

Don't worry about me. I'm all right.

She strokes his head lovingly.

DIANA

We manage, don't we?

ROBIN

Easy for me... I just sit here... You do all the work... Turns out I'm quite enjoying myself.

DIANA

(fondly)

Good old selfish Robin.

ROBIN

But you... Not so much fun for you.

She bends down and kisses him.

DIANA

Turns out I love you.

He responds to her kiss. The loving nuzzling of his lips moves her, almost too much. Her eyes glisten.

ROBIN

I got lucky with you, didn't I?...
I say, Diana. Run away with me.

DIANA

Mustn't overdo it.

ROBIN

Why not?... I'm supposed to be testing the limits.

DIANA

You are. Every day.

ROBIN

Haven't reached breaking point yet, have I?... I can go further.

DIANA

Go further where?

ROBIN

Anywhere... Everywhere.

DIANA

What is this, Robin? Is this another of your mad projects?

ROBIN

I've always wanted to see the sun rise over the Mediterranean.

88 EXT. RAF NORTHOLT - DAY 88

The front wheels of the van riding up a long ramp.

PULL OUT TO DISCOVER the cargo hold of a front-opening transport plane, as the Bedford van disappears into its belly.

IN THE VAN - Diana at the wheel. Robin beside her in his wheelchair. Behind them, Jonathan and Bloggs.

89 EXT. RUNWAY, RAF NORTHOLT - DAY 89

The cargo plane rumbles down the runway and creaks into the sky.

THE CAMERA follows it up into the clouds.

90 INT. CARGO PLANE - DAY 90

Inside the Bedford van, in the hold of the cargo plane: everything is juddering, the engine noise is unbearable, but there they are, Robin, Diana, Jonathan, grinning at each other like fools. Only Bloggs shows signs of nervousness, staring out of the van window.

BLOGGS'S POV - Three race horses staring back at him from their horse boxes.

91

EXT. SPANISH ROAD - DAY

91

DOWN FROM CLOUDS to find a road cutting through Spanish countryside to the sea. The Bedford van is cruising down the road. Spanish road signs indicate TARRAGONA.

IN THE VAN - The hiss of the respirator.

DIANA

The house is on the beach. I've got a long extension lead, so in theory Robin can stay out all day.

ROBIN

There's something else my chair needs... A parasol.

DIANA

I've brought pints of sun cream.

ROBIN

We should charge up the chair battery.

DIANA

Good idea. Bloggs, do you see the cable down here? I can't take my eyes off the road.

BLOGGS

I see it.

DIANA

On the side of the wheelchair there's a plug-board. Plug it into the second socket.

BLOGGS

Oh, yes. I see.

He fumbles about in the shadowy space between the seats.

BLOGGS

Second socket. Got it.

He inserts the plug.

BANG! The car swerves and lurches. Black smoke streams from the respirator motor. The pump stops.

DIANA

For Christ's sake!

BLOGGS

God! God! What happened?

Diana steers the van up onto the verge, pulls on the brake, and turns to the respirator. The van's filling up with black smoke. Diana fumbles for the hand pump. Bloggs throws open the door. Diana starts to hand-pump. Robin breathes once more.

Diana is badly frightened.

DIANA

I knew something like this would happen. I just knew it.

Bloggs is fanning the door to clear the smoke.

BLOGGS

What did I do?

DIANA

I don't know, but the respirator's bust.

(to Robin)

You okay, Robin?

ROBIN

I'm fine.

DIANA

Bloggs, can you see what I'm doing? Do you think you can do it? Just maintain the same rhythm.

Bloggs takes over the hand-pumping. Diana examines the respirator to see what's broken, but it's hard to get at it.

DIANA

Let's get the wheelchair out. Whatever you do, don't stop pumping.

She and Jonathan open the van's back doors and lower the platform. Then with Bloggs doubled up working the hand pump they wheel the chair out onto the grass.

Here Diana gets to work with a whole box of tools.

BLOGGS

Do you know how to fix it?

She gets the motor open: it's melted.

DIANA

No. I don't.

She stares. This is a total disaster.

BLOGGS

I'm sorry. I just don't know what I did.

A SPANISH MOTORIST has pulled up to help.

SPANISH MOTORIST

(in Spanish)
Can I help you?

DIANA

Do you speak English?

SPANISH MOTORIST

Little.

BLOGGS

We need a mechanic.

DIANA

For God's sake, Bloggs. We need to telephone.

She mimes dialling. The Spanish motorist understands. He points down the road.

SPANISH MOTORIST

Torredembarra. Telephone. I take you?

DIANA

Yes, please. Jonathan, get my handbag.

Jonathan runs to the front seat of the van.

ROBIN

No need to go so fast, Bloggs... I'm not a balloon.

Jonathan is back with the handbag. Diana takes out her address book.

DIANA

Bloggs, go with this man, find a phone, call Teddy Hall. Here's his numbers. He'll either be at the lab or at his home. That's the Littlemore number.

BLOGGS

In England?

DIANA

Tell him what's happened. We'll wait for him here.

BLOGGS

Wait for him to fly out from
England?

DIANA

(tense)
Just go. Please.

She takes over the hand-pumping. Bloggs heads to the Spaniard's car. Robin calls after him.

ROBIN

Get some bread, and sausage...
And wine... And a corkscrew.

Diana pumps away steadily. Robin looks at her.

DIANA

I'm not saying it. I hope you can
hear me. I'm not saying it.

92

EXT. SPANISH ROAD - DUSK

92

Diana, Bloggs and Jonathan sit round Robin in his wheelchair sharing a picnic supper. Jonathan is taking his turn on the hand pump. The others drink wine straight from the bottle.

ROBIN

Pleasant temperature... Reminds
me of Nairobi.

BLOGGS

You okay there, Jonathan?

JONATHAN

Yes, I'm fine. It's quite easy,
really.

BLOGGS

(to Diana)
What's the plan for the night?

DIANA

We'll take it in turns to sleep,
one at a time. That leaves one to
pump, and the other to make sure
they don't fall asleep.

ROBIN

Yes, please don't fall asleep.

DIANA

You're doing brilliantly,
Jonathan. I'll take over in a
moment.

JONATHAN

I'm okay. Really.

A few cars go by, their headlights sweeping the little group by the van.

DIANA

I wonder what on earth they think we're doing.

BLOGGS

El camping. The English are famous for not wanting to stray far from their cars.

Diana feeds Robin wine through a straw, catching the dribbles with a handkerchief. Jonathan pumps away, watching his father silhouetted against the evening sky.

Robin's eyes move to rest on Jonathan kneeling by his chair, keeping him alive. He smiles, and Jonathan smiles back.

93

EXT. SPANISH ROAD - NIGHT

93

Moonlight over the road and van.

The sound of the hand pump in action.

IN THE VAN - Jonathan asleep, prone on the back seat. Bloggs upright, eyelids drooping. Diana in the driver's seat, pumping away, very weary. Robin asleep in his wheelchair.

Diana's head droops, and she slips into sleep. The pump stops. Bloggs fails to notice.

Robin's eyes open. He makes his clicking noise. No one hears. More clicking. No response.

Seconds pass. He closes his eyes.

Seconds pass.

Bloggs emits a sudden snore. Diana wakes.

DIANA

Oh God!

She starts pumping again. Robin opens his eyes.

DIANA

Sorry. Sorry.

ROBIN

I can go for longer than that.

94

EXT. SPANISH ROAD - DAY

94

A small CROWD OF LOCALS has gathered round the van. Three cars are now pulled up on the verge beyond. The locals have turned out with food, wine, sunshades, folding chairs, and a radio that plays cheerful pop music. Among the group is a PRIEST. He has no English, so his remarks are translated by a friendly local SPANISH WOMAN.

In the midst of the festivity Robin sits under an awning, being fed by Diana and pumped by Jonathan.

SPANISH PRIEST

(in Spanish)

Almighty God likes to play jokes on us. But his jokes are always for a purpose.

SPANISH WOMAN

He say God make joke.

SPANISH PRIEST

(in Spanish)

This poor man's suffering brings us all together in celebration.

SPANISH WOMAN

So we have party.

ROBIN

Quite right. God has a joke... We have a party.

The priest beams. Diana meets Robin's eyes, and they share a smile.

ROBIN

You know who'd have loved this?... Paddy.

95

EXT. SPANISH ROAD - DUSK

95

DRIVER'S POV - Approaching down the road. A big crowd camped on the verge ahead, by the light of kerosene lanterns. It looks like some kind of outdoor religious festival.

Closer, we make out dozens of cars lining the road. The crowd can now be seen to be centred on a trio of singing GUITARISTS. They play with great seriousness, and sing very beautifully.

The approaching car cruises to a stop close to the gathering.

In the heart of the crowd, Robin sits in his wheelchair listening to the singers, blissfully happy.

Beside him sits Diana, her hand holding his hand, also happier than she's been in years.

Behind her, Jonathan leans over them, his chin on her shoulder. Bloggs kneels by Robin's chair, pumping away.

TEDDY HALL (O.S.)
For heaven's sake!

Diana looks round.

DIANA
Teddy!

It's Teddy Hall, looking exasperated.

TEDDY HALL
You could at least have the
decency to be on the point of
death.

CLOSE on the respirator, lit by torches, as Teddy Hall replaces the burned-out part with a new motor. Bloggs goes on hand-pumping all the while.

TEDDY HALL
God knows how you managed to make
such a balls-up of this.

BLOGGS
My fault, I'm afraid.

TEDDY HALL
What are you all doing
gallivanting in Spain in the
first place?

ROBIN
My fault, I'm afraid.

TEDDY HALL
This thing isn't built for trans-
continental voyages.

ROBIN
I wanted to see the sun rise over
the Med.

TEDDY HALL
It rises over Drayton St Leonard
too, you know.

He's done.

TEDDY HALL
There. Let's fire her up.

He presses a switch. The machine turns, taking over the job of pumping. Bloggs rises, stretching his arms and legs.

BLOGGS

Thank Christ for that!

The crowd starts to applaud. The applause spreads, turns to cheers. Diana watches, smiling with relief. Teddy looks round, grumpy but touched.

TEDDY HALL

I'm glad someone's happy.

96 SCENE DELETED 96

96A EXT. TEDDY HALL'S WORKSHOP, OXFORDSHIRE - DAY 96A

Rain streaming down over sodden English countryside.

Robin's van has just pulled up by Teddy Hall's workshop. Diana and Jonathan get out, trying to keep umbrellas in place over themselves, and open the van's rear doors.

ON ROBIN in his wheelchair as he descends on the powered tailgate. The chair hits the ground. Diana holds an umbrella over him.

ROBIN

Let's get this show on the road.

Ahead, standing under his own umbrella is DR CLEMENT AITKEN. Beside him stands Teddy Hall. Robin is pushed up to him.

ROBIN

Dr Clement Aitken?

CLEMENT AITKEN

The same.

ROBIN

(to Teddy)

When I phoned him he thought I was... a wheelchair salesman.

CLEMENT AITKEN

A drunk wheelchair salesman, actually.

TEDDY HALL

I suppose I'm the wheelchair salesman.

Dr Aitken takes in the wheelchair properly for the first time.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Is that chair *breathing*?

He bends down to listen to the respirator.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Like a sleeping lion! Glorious!

97	SCENE DELETED	97
98	SCENE DELETED	98
99	SCENE DELETED	99
100	SCENE DELETED	100
100A	SCENE DELETED	100A
100B	SCENE DELETED	100B
101	SCENE DELETED	101
102	SCENE DELETED	102
103	SCENE DELETED	103
104	SCENE DELETED	104
105	SCENE DELETED	105
106	SCENE DELETED	106
107	SCENE DELETED	107
108	INT. TEDDY HALL'S WORKSHOP - DAY	108

Teddy Hall shows Clement Aitken round his workshop where the chair was made. Diana wheels Robin along behind.

CLEMENT AITKEN

I have never in all my career seen anything like this. You just made this up?

TEDDY HALL

Pretty much.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Only way to get anything done.

TEDDY HALL

I like this man... Is he a doctor?

ROBIN

He runs the Disability Research Foundation.

DIANA

Which he invented.

ROBIN

And appointed himself Director.

CLEMENT AITKEN

If nobody else will do it, you have to do it yourself.

He's reached an early version of the Mark II wheelchair.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Hello! What's this?

TEDDY HALL

I've been having a go at a Mark II version. The battery life on the Mark One is poor. Also the pump is too noisy. I'm trying out using a solenoid.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Fascinating! So what is the battery life?

TEDDY HALL

On the Mark II, about six hours.

CLEMENT AITKEN

(to Robin)

How long have you been living with
this condition?

ROBIN

Eleven years so far.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Incredible! If these chairs of
yours really work, I could use a
lot of them.

TEDDY HALL

How many?

CLEMENT AITKEN

Hundreds.

TEDDY HALL

Ah. So far I've financed the work
myself. Hasn't set me back too
much. But if we're to go into
production, we'd need proper
funding.

ROBIN

Name a figure.

109

INT. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OFFICE - DAY

109

A senior civil servant in the Department of Health, Mr PICKERING, leans across his desk, studying Robin's wheelchair. Robin sits patiently, Diana by his side. Pickering's questions are all addressed to Diana, as if Robin is deaf as well as paralysed.

PICKERING

What qualifications are required for operating this equipment?

DIANA

None. It's not hard.

PICKERING

Do you regard it as perfectly safe?

DIANA

Nothing's perfectly safe, is it?

Pickering nods and settles back behind his desk.

PICKERING

The Department has to take into account the question of cost-effectiveness. The life expectancy of polio patients is, let's say, below average. I'm sorry, I can't see how I can in all fairness make a case for funding. I have to follow the rules.

ROBIN

Rules are so paralysing, aren't they?

Pickering turns to look at Robin in surprise.

PICKERING

Of course, I do have every sympathy for your condition.

ROBIN

Likewise.

109A SCENE DELETED

109A

110 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

110

The Bedford van drives down a country road.

IN THE VAN - Diana driving. Robin in his wheelchair beside her.

ROBIN

Name?

DIANA

Lady Jane Neville.

ROBIN

Good for?

DIANA

A thousand at least, if she's in the mood.

ROBIN

Am I plucky or pitiful?

DIANA

I think plucky. These old dowagers are tough as nails.

111 INT. DRAWING ROOM, COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

111

Lady Jane Neville is a perfectly-groomed 70-year-old, with all her wits about her. She gazes at Robin in his wheelchair.

LADY NEVILLE

Why does it make that funny noise?

DIANA

That's the wheelchair. It does his breathing for him.

The Countess meets Robin's gaze with interest.

LADY NEVILLE

Are you quite sure it's safe for you to be out?

ROBIN

Seems to have worked so far.

LADY NEVILLE

And what exactly is it you want?

ROBIN

More of these chairs.

DIANA
For other polio patients.

ROBIN
At £200 a wheelchair.

DIANA
Excellent value.

ROBIN
Five for a thousand.

LADY NEVILLE
A thousand?

ROBIN
Or ten for £2,000.

LADY NEVILLE
£2,000?

ROBIN
I knew we could count on you.

DIANA
That is so generous.

ROBIN
We'll take a cheque.

Lady Neville knows exactly what's been done to her, but it amuses her.

LADY NEVILLE
I don't usually have any difficulty saying no to spongers. But here you are, wheezing away at me. So I suppose I shall have to pay up.

111A SCENE DELETED 111A

112 SCENE DELETED 112

113 EXT. TEDDY HALL'S WORKSHOP - DAY 113

Teddy Hall now has a team of mechanics assembling the Mark II wheelchairs. Three of them stand by the doors ready to go. Robin's van has just pulled up. The mechanics load the new wheelchairs into the back.

IN VAN - Three Mark II wheelchairs in the back. Robin in his wheelchair in the front. Diana in the driving seat.

DIANA
Here we go.

115 SCENE DELETED 115

115A SCENE DELETED 115A

115AA EXT. HOSPITAL CAR PARK - DAY 115AA

ON PADDY'S FACE - Terrified and delighted - as Nurse Margaret wheels him out in one of the new wheelchairs.

A line of eight wheelchairs, each carrying a responaut, is now advancing TOWARDS CAMERA like an invasion of battle tanks. Robin and Paddy in the lead. Press photographers take pictures. This is a staged event.

Diana moves from wheelchair to wheelchair adjusting the working of the machines

PADDY

This is bloody marvellous!

ROBIN

Feel safe?

PADDY

I feel bloody terrified.

ROBIN

Why?... I'm still here.

PADDY

You're a bloody miracle, Robin.

ROBIN

You too, Paddy.

(to Nurse)

Still stuck with him, are you?

NURSE MARGARET

Can't get rid of him.

Clement Aitken joins the responauts to make a press statement.

CLEMENT AITKEN

My name is Dr Clement Aitken. I'm the Director of the Disability Research Foundation. In this country there are hundreds of severely disabled patients currently living their entire lives in hospital beds. Worldwide there are thousands. You think they like that?

He appeals to the responauts.

CLEMENT AITKEN

You want to get out, give me a
shout!

All the wheelchair-bound patients shout as loud as they can.

LATER - Diana is wheeling Robin across the car park to their
van. Clement Aitken walks alongside Robin. Bloggs follows
behind.

ROBIN

How many thousands worldwide?

CLEMENT AITKEN

Tens of thousands. Maybe more. No
one's ever believed it's possible
to live as you do.

ROBIN

So we should show them.

DIANA

What do you want now, Robin? A world tour?

She's not serious. But Clement Aitken comes to a stop.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Of course! There's a European conference coming up in Germany, on severely disabled living. All the so-called key experts will be there. Oh, my giddy aunt! If they could only see you...

115B	SCENE DELETED	115B
115C	SCENE DELETED	115C
116	SCENE DELETED	116
117	SCENE DELETED	117
118	SCENE DELETED	118
119	SCENE DELETED	119
120	SCENE DELETED	120
121	SCENE DELETED	121
121A	INT. RECEPTION, GERMAN HOTEL - NIGHT	121A

Bloggs is at reception, filling in forms. Diana, Colin Campbell, Clement Aitken and Harry Tennyson stand round Robin in his wheelchair. The GERMAN RECEPTIONIST keeps glancing at Robin.

BLOGGS

There. All done.

GERMAN RECEPTIONIST

I think he should be in a hospital, no?

BLOGGS

You're quite right. No.

Beaming, he takes the room keys.

COLIN CAMPBELL

You did check we'd be able to get
the wheelchair in, didn't you,
Bloggs?

BLOGGS

Of course I did. What do you take
me for?

122

INT. GERMAN HOTEL - NIGHT

122

Robin's wheelchair jammed in the doorway to the bedroom.
Bloggs, Harry and Colin all trying to force it through,
watched by Clement Aitken and Diana.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Won't go through. You're not going
to make it.

BLOGGS

One more heave.

HARRY TENNYSON

Clem's right.

BLOGGS

Nobody told me I was supposed to
measure doorways.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Half an inch is all we need.

ROBIN

We could take off the inner door
frame.

They look at each other. A burst of laughter.

BLOGGS

Shh! They'll catch us.

ROBIN

Diana's got tools.

They all look at Diana.

DIANA

You want tools?

LATER -

Wielding a hammer and screwdriver, Bloggs eases the last of
the inner frame off the doorway. The wheelchair passes into
the room.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Quick. Close the door before anyone finds out.

The door closes behind them. From within comes another burst of laughter.

123 SCENE DELETED 123

124 SCENE DELETED 124

125 SCENE DELETED 125

125A EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, GERMANY - DAY 125A

The van is now making their way down a country road between trees. They turn off and drive up to a manned barrier before a grim-looking institutional building.

Clement Aitken speaks in German to the gatekeeper.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Wir haben einen Termin mit dem Direktor, Dr Langdorf.

The gatekeeper nods and raises the barrier. The van drive up to the front of the building.

IN VAN -

CLEMENT AITKEN

I want you to see this, Robin. Let me go in first. You may come as something of a shock.

125B INT. GERMAN HOSPITAL - DAY 125B

The German Director of the hospital, DR ERIK LANGDORF, comes striding across the hallway to greet Clement Aitken.

DR LANGDORF

Dr Aitken, this is an honour. I am Erik Langdorf, I am the director.

CLEMENT AITKEN

My associates.

A glance back at Bloggs and Harry, who nod enigmatically. Dr Langdorf leads the way.

DR LANGDORF

Please.

CLEMENT AITKEN

I've heard so much about your care
for the severely disabled. This
hospital is famous!

Dr Langdorf leads Clement Aitken, Bloggs and Harry into a
long ward. It's spotlessly clean and orderly.

Silent staff patrol the long lines of beds, where patients lie alongside hissing respirators. Everything is state of the art.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Such excellent modern machinery!
And everything so clean! Such clean
machines!

DR LANGDORF

Best in Germany. Possibly the best
in the world. Our patients have an
median life expectancy of seven
years. We have one who has been
with us for twelve years.

Clement Aitken turns and give a signal. Robin enters in his wheelchair, pushed by Diana, accompanied by Colin Campbell. Dr Langdorf sees him, and falls silent in shock.

Robin gazes at the patients in the silent ward.

ROBIN

(to Diana)

Push me down the ward.

Diana pushes Robin past the beds where the polio patients lie, their respirators hissing away, keeping them alive. The patients gaze back at him with dulled eyes. The system has rendered them entirely passive.

DR LANGDORF

I don't understand. The chair has a
respirator? Is it safe?

A white-coated HOSPITAL OFFICIAL comes hurrying in.

GERMAN HOSPITAL OFFICIAL

Es tut mir so leid, Herr Direktor.
Ich habe ihnen gesagt, dass sie
gehen müssen. Wenn er hier auf
unserem Gelände sterben würde....

Dr Langdorf gives a jump of alarm.

DR LANGDORF

Sterben? Hier? Er muss gehen! Er
muss sofort raus hier!

The official hurries down the ward and steers Diana and Robin back towards the exit. Dr Langdorf stares at Robin in his chair as he comes back towards him.

DR LANGDORF

I'm sorry. He must leave.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Of course he must. How stupid of me.

DR LANGDORF

Please understand we are a department of the Bundesministerium des Innern. If anything were to happen...

CLEMENT AITKEN

The Ministry of the Interior? Like our Home Office. Don't they run the prisons too?

DR LANGDORF

I believe so.

Dr Langdorf doesn't hear him, staring anxiously at Robin as Diana wheels him past him out of the ward. Clement puts out his hand to shake.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Thank you so much, Dr Langdorf. I do hope we'll be seeing you at the conference.

He leads his group out, exchanging glances with them as they go: mission accomplished.

127 INT. CONFERENCE HALL, MUNICH - DAY

127

The hall is packed with delegates. A banner reads: MANAGING THE LIVES OF THE SEVERELY DISABLED. Bloggs, Harry and Colin have side seats. Dr Langdorf is near the front.

Clement Aitken is at the podium, the conference Chairman to one side.

CLEMENT AITKEN

May I begin by noting an interesting fact. At this conference on managing the lives of the severely disabled, there are no disabled people present.

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

Dr Aitken, forgive me. The severely disabled are on life support machines. How can they be present?

Clement Aitken beckons into the wings. Robin rolls onto the stage, pushed by Diana. A gasp from the delegates.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Allow me to introduce - Mr Robin Cavendish.

He places a microphone for Robin.

ROBIN

Good afternoon.

The chairman and the delegates gape in amazement.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Robin, tell the conference how long you've been paralysed.

ROBIN

Fifteen years.

CLEMENT AITKEN

You're kept alive by a mechanical respirator?

ROBIN

Yes.

CLEMENT AITKEN

And you live at home?

ROBIN

Yes.

CLEMENT AITKEN

You have a question to ask our
hosts.

ROBIN

Yes... Why do you keep your
disabled people in prisons?

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

In prisons? No, no. We maintain some of the best facilities in the world for the severely disabled.

ROBIN

Run by prison officers.

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

Not at all -

ROBIN

Kept out of sight... No part of healthy society...

Uproar in the hall. The delegates are appalled.

CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN

I must ask you to withdraw that.

CLEMENT AITKEN

Mr Cavendish doesn't mean to cause offence. He merely suggests that the severely disabled can be better integrated into society.

ROBIN

I'm sure you care for your disabled people... But when you look at me, what do you see?... A creature that's barely alive... What do you think?... Let's put him in the waiting room for death... But I, as you see, have escaped... I have a machine under my seat that breathes for me... The battery lasts for about six hours... At home I have a respirator by my bed... I can do nothing for myself... Yet here I am.

Silence. He's got to them.

ROBIN

When I was first paralysed I wanted to die... My wife wouldn't let me... She told me I had to live, to see our son grow up... So I've gone on living... because of her... and with her... and for her.

Diana, standing behind Robin, biting her lip, refusing to cry.

ROBIN

Every day I accept the risk of dying... because I want to live...
(MORE)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

So go back to your prison
hospitals... Tell your paralysed
patients they too can live... Open
the gates... And set them free.

Silence.

Then the clapping begins. Then cries of applause. Then
shouts of acclaim. Then the whole hall is on its feet,
cheering.

128

INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - NIGHT

128

More time has passed. Now it's 1980.

Robin's face jerking, making scary sounds, blood spattering
onto the sheets. Diana up and swabbing away at the blood
spitting from the hole in his throat.

Robin subsides at last.

DIANA

I don't know what that was, but
it seems to be over.

Robin gazes up at her, exhausted and apologetic. He looks
older and more worn. Over ten years has passed.

129

INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

129

Clement Aitken is operating the suction tube, emptying the
fluid from Robin's lungs. Dark blood comes oozing out into
the receiving jar.

Diana looks on.

Clement finishes and replaces the breathing tube. Robin
breathes again.

CLEMENT AITKEN

I'm afraid this is what happens
after a number of years on a
respirator. The lining of the
lungs becomes irritated. You get
small abrasions, you get
bleeding. It's what you might
call normal wear and tear.

ROBIN

Thank you, Clem. Good to know
everything's normal.

130

SCENE DELETED

130

131 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

131

CLOSE ON an electronic display panel lit up with an array of lights, all flashing at random.

ROBIN (O.S.)
Buggeration!

Robin has now been equipped with a machine called POSSUM, that enables him to perform several functions by activating a sensor with his head. Everything's going at once: phone ringing, TV screen jumping channels, bed rising and falling.

The phone call is picked up.

PHONE VOICE
Hello? Doreen here.

ROBIN
Hello, Doreen. How are you, my dear?

Jonathan enters: now a young man in his early 20s. He stands waiting for the call to end. He looks on, smiling. Robin hasn't yet seen him.

PHONE VOICE
Oh, can't complain.

ROBIN
I bet you can. Life's never quite how you want it, is it?

PHONE VOICE
You can say that again. I'd swap Tom for a start.

ROBIN
Be fair. You'd miss him if he wasn't there.

PHONE VOICE
Don't know that I'd notice, to tell you the truth. Is that Brian?

ROBIN
No, it's Robin. Have to go, Doreen. Be good.

PHONE VOICE
Bye, Robin.

Robin manages to end the call.

JONATHAN
Hello, Dad.

ROBIN
Jonathan! How lovely!

JONATHAN
Who was that?

ROBIN

No idea... Haven't quite got the hang of the machine yet... Keep dialling wrong numbers.

132 INT. KITCHEN, FURLONGS - DAY

132

Jonathan stands in the kitchen as Diana prepares lunch.

DIANA

He does it on purpose. He's just bored. Being Robin, of course, they all turn into his best friends.

JONATHAN

How is he apart from that?

DIANA

He's been getting these bleeds. And his bowels aren't doing what they should. He gets so tired.

JONATHAN

How about you?

She looks up at him. She too looks so tired.

JONATHAN

I don't know how you've done it, Mum. All these years.

DIANA

Oh, you know. Keep plodding on.

Jonathan takes her in his arms. She hugs him close, craving the warmth and comfort of touch.

DIANA

The stupid thing is, I just love him so much.

133 EXT. COUNTRY PATH - DAY

133

Jonathan pushes Robin down a frosty path.

JONATHAN

How are you, Dad?

ROBIN

Well the wheels are starting to wobble a bit.

JONATHAN

Mum is worried about you.

ROBIN

I am worried about her.

JONATHAN

You don't need to worry about Mum. She's stronger than anyone I know.

ROBIN

Quite right... How about you?

JONATHAN

Oh, I'm all right.

ROBIN

I wish I could have done more for you.

JONATHAN

What? You've done loads for me, Dad. You've always been here.

ROBIN

Couldn't get away, could I?

JONATHAN

Always listened to me. Always
wanted to know what I'm doing.
Never put me under any pressure.
Always made life fun for me. I
couldn't have asked for a better
dad.

ROBIN

Funny old world.

Jonathan gently strokes Robin's cheek.

134 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - NIGHT

134

Robin lies in bed in the darkened bedroom. His eyes are open. The rhythmic sound of the respirator.

He starts to gurgle. Spatters of blood appear round his breathing tube.

His body spasms. Blood bursts out of his neck, staining the sheet. He activates his alarm.

Diana comes running in, followed by Jonathan. Robin is now gushing blood. Diana takes hold of him, and is at once covered in blood.

DIANA

Help me turn him onto his side.

Jonathan moves in and is soon blood-soaked too.

Diana gets Robin onto his side. The blood streams out of his neck.

Robin's eyes meet Jonathan's. Jonathan sees there a look of mute horror.

DIANA

Do what you can to clean up the mess.

She gets the suction tube and sets to work emptying the last of the blood from inside Robin's lungs. Jonathan mops up round her.

The breathing tube goes back in. Robin lies there, on his back once more, staring at the ceiling.

135 INT. KITCHEN, FURLONGS - NIGHT 135

Diana stands by the kitchen sink, which is full of blood-soaked sheets.

She has her arms tight round herself and she's shaking all over. A silent disintegration.

136 EXT. WIDE ENGLISH VIEW - DAY 136

A slow-moving procession through the trees: Robin in his wheelchair, Jonathan pushing him, Diana following behind. An echo of the earlier scene when Jonathan as a child raced along beside the wheelchair. Times have changed. They go slowly now.

Jonathan pushes Robin out into the open and turns him to gaze out over the view. Diana joins them.

ON ROBIN - Looking at the view.

ROBIN

I heard a story once, in Kenya...
about a group of Mau Mau
prisoners... sixty of them...
Their leader said to his men...
'I give you permission to die'...
The next morning all sixty were
dead.

No one speaks.

ROBIN

It's just a matter of will...
I've gone on long enough.

Diana stares at him, guessing what he's going to say.

ROBIN

August is a good month. When
August comes... I'm going to let
myself go.

Diana moves round so that he can see her.

DIANA

What about me?

ROBIN

You'll be free at last.

Suddenly Diana's shouting -

DIANA

No! NO! You stupid, stupid man!
What do you think I've been doing
all these years? Your life is my
life too!

She turns away and stamps off across the open grass.

Jonathan makes a move to go after her.

ROBIN

Let her go.

They watch Diana as she circles away from them, and then
heads back. She starts shouting when she's still some
distance away.

DIANA

All right! Have it your own way!
You always do.

She comes back to Robin and stands fiercely before him.

DIANA

Just never, ever say you did it
for me.

137 EXT. FURLONGS - DAY

137

Colin Campbell has just arrived, and is heading into the
house. Through the open window to Robin's room he hears
Robin's voice.

ROBIN (O.S.)

I want to arrange a funeral.

138 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

138

Robin has now become skilled at working his POSSUM machine.
He's on the phone to an Oxford undertaker.

UNDERTAKER'S VOICE

I can assure you of the best
service in Oxfordshire, sir. We had
the honour of handling all the
arrangements for Sir Winston
Churchill's funeral, Oxford end.

ROBIN

I just want to make it quite clear
that I want the cheapest coffin
you've got.

UNDERTAKER'S VOICE

The cheapest, sir?

Colin Campbell comes in and stands waiting, unseen, as Robin finishes his call.

ROBIN

The cheapest.

UNDERTAKER'S VOICE

In respect for the deceased, sir -

ROBIN

The deceased doesn't care. I should know. I am the deceased.

UNDERTAKER'S VOICE

(now uncertain)

Ah, in that case... We pride ourselves on providing a bespoke service -

ROBIN

Yes, yes. Just send me the details. Thank you.

He ends the call, working the POSSUM machine.

COLIN CAMPBELL

The deceased is very bossy, as usual.

Robin's face lights up at the sight of Colin.

ROBIN

Ah, Col! I've been waiting for you. How kind of you to come.

COLIN CAMPBELL

What's this about a funeral?

ROBIN

I want you to organise the wake.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Not for a few years yet, I hope.

ROBIN

Beginning of September.

COLIN CAMPBELL

No, no. I'm not listening to any of this. We've got a bit more life in us than that, you and I.

ROBIN

You can hang around as long as you want... I'm off in August.

139

INT. KITCHEN, FURLONGS - NIGHT

139

Diana is clearing up. Colin Campbell is helping her.

COLIN CAMPBELL

We must buck him up. Get him out
of this morbid frame of mind.
Make him see how much his friends
need him.

Diana works away in silence. Then -

DIANA

We're not going to keep Robin
alive for the benefit of his
friends.

COLIN CAMPBELL

(startled)
No. Of course not.

DIANA

But I expect they'd like to say
goodbye.

140

EXT. GARDEN, FURLONGS - DAY

140

WIDE - The house and garden are overflowing with hundreds of
Robin's friends. Beyond the garden, above the intervening
trees, rises the square tower of the village church.

Robin lies in his bed, which has been brought out onto the
terrace, where he's surrounded as always by young women. The
atmosphere is noisy and cheerful. Several of the guests are
other responauts in Cavendish chairs with their carers,
including Paddy with his carer, now wife, Nurse Margaret.

A queue of people are lined up to speak to Robin.

Bloggs and David Blacker look on.

BLOGGS

You know he's telling everyone this
is a leaving party?

DAVID

What, even the girls?

BY ROBIN -

PAMELA HARRIS

Robin, I can't bear this! What am I
supposed to say?

ROBIN

You say, About bloody time.

PAMELA HARRIS

Do you have any idea how much we're
going to miss you?

Robin's gaze is across the garden to where Jonathan stands, with his arm round a pretty girl. Jonathan meets Robin's eyes and grins. He says something to his girl she looks round and gives Robin a smile.

BY DIANA -

MARY DAWNAY
Is this really serious?

DIANA
It's what Robin wants.

MARY DAWNAY
How on earth are you coping?

DIANA
I don't really know. I feel strange.

BY ROBIN -

Paddy is wheeled up to Robin by Margaret.

PADDY
What's this I'm hearing? You're planning another great escape?

ROBIN
Time to go... For me, anyway.

PADDY
Just like the last time. Not waiting for your friends.

ROBIN
You're too slow for me, Paddy.

PADDY
But you'll be back for me later, right?

Robin smiles at him, moved.

ROBIN
Now that would be quite a trick.

PADDY
If anyone can do it, you can.

ROBIN
You owe me £5.

PADDY
(to Nurse Margaret)
Maggie!

Nurse Margaret has a five pound note ready. She hands it to Paddy, who gives it to Robin.

Teddy Hall comes to Robin's side, cradling a bottle of wine. Jonathan joins them, accompanied by his girlfriend. Jonathan's spotted the wine, and knows Teddy's tastes.

JONATHAN

What have you got there, Teddy?

With a flourish Teddy holds up his bottle of claret.

TEDDY HALL

It's a '59 Saint-Émilion. My last bottle of one of the greatest wines ever made. Jonathan - glasses.

Teddy takes out a corkscrew and opens the bottle. Jonathan fetches glasses.

Harry Tennyson comes and sits on the chair beside Robin.

HARRY TENNYSON

Robin, we've known each other a long time. I just wanted to say -

The chair buckles under his weight, sending him toppling to the floor. Robin's face crumples up with laughter.

As he clambers to his feet, Teddy hands round glasses of wine. He raises his own glass in a toast.

TEDDY HALL

Here's to you, Robin.

The others echo the toast.

ROBIN

Jonathan...

Jonathan steps into his eyeline.

JONATHAN

Here, Dad.

ROBIN

About my ashes... I'd like you to scatter them over the Ngong hills... They were the happiest days of my life.

JONATHAN

Of course, Dad.

ROBIN

I don't mean I've not been happy...

He's embarrassed. Jonathan understands. He touches Robin's cheek to show affection the old way.

JONATHAN

It's okay, Dad.

TEDDY HALL

Do we have to talk about scattering ashes? It is all a little morbid.

ROBIN

I suppose death is a little morbid.

The Blacker twins join them.

BLOGGS

Robin, are we to take this seriously?

ROBIN

I don't know about seriously... It's all a bit of a joke, when you think about it.

DAVID

But are we really supposed to be saying goodbye?

ROBIN

Matter of courtesy, David... One shouldn't leave a party without saying one's farewells.

BLOGGS

Then we'd like to do it our way.

He and David form up side by side. They come to attention, salute, and start to sing.

BLOGGS/DAVID

Goodbye-ee, goodbye-ee
Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your
eye-ee
Though it's hard to part, I know -

On Robin, mouthing the next line with them -

BLOGGS/DAVID

I'll be tickled to death to go -

The crowd of friends round Robin listens, laughs. Tears glisten in eyes.

BLOGGS/DAVID

Don't cry-ee, don't sigh-ee
There's a silver lining in the sky-
ee -

They begin a synchronised march away, singing as they go -

BLOGGS/DAVID

Bonsoir old thing, cheerio chin-
chin
Na-poo, toodle-oo, goodbye-ee.

Their march takes them into the shrubbery, out of sight. Here they come to a stop, and standing side by side, not looking at each other, they let the tears come.

141 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - NIGHT

141

Colin sits by Robin's bed, his head in his hands, listening to Robin.

ROBIN

I suppose I should be afraid, but I'm not... Stopping believing in God helps... No afterlife, nothing... Just the end of my innings... Head up high, back to the pavilion.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Bloody cricket.

ROBIN

Always loved that game.

Beat. Colin lifts his head to look at Robin.

COLIN CAMPBELL

Something I have to say. I want you to know what a difference you've made to my life. It's not always been easy for me. But every time I come here, I go away stronger. Not because you're worse off than me. It's who you are. Or who you've turned yourself into. God knows how.

ROBIN

Thanks, Col.

COLIN CAMPBELL

You were always the great player. Cricket. Tennis. Girls. And you've had to live your life as a spectator. No more sixes. No more killer serves. No more -

He gives a meaningful shrug.

ROBIN

As it happens, that's not been a problem... Just about the only part of me that's worked.

Colin is stunned.

COLIN CAMPBELL
Seriously?

ROBIN
Unlikely as it may seem.

COLIN CAMPBELL
Well, hurrah for that! You really
are a bloody miracle, Robin. There
you are, stuck in a chair, stuck in
bed, but there's more life in you
than anyone I've ever known. Bloody
hell. I'm going to miss you.

142 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

142

A cricket match on the TV screen. Robin watching the match.
He looks weary. His eyes close. The distant sound of Lee
Marvin singing 'Wand'ring Star' -

SONG

When I get to heaven
Tie me to a tree -
For I'll begin to roam, and soon
You'll know where I will be -

I was bo-orn
Under a wand'rin' star
A wand'rin', wand'rin' star...

A MEMORY FROM THE PAST -

Young Robin at the cricket match from the start of the film.
He's striding out to bat, looking back at Diana. This time
she's looking at him, smiling for him.

Robin's eyes open. He stares out at nothing.

ROBIN

Who am I fooling?

143	SCENE DELETED	143
144	SCENE DELETED	144
145	SCENE DELETED	145

146 SCENE DELETED 146

147 SCENE DELETED 147

147A SCENE DELETED 147A

148 INT. KITCHEN, FURLONGS - DAY 148

Jonathan drinking coffee in the kitchen with Diana.

JONATHAN

Dad's Mau-Mau thing isn't working. It's like a bad joke. How does a paralysed man commit suicide? He's been telling everyone he'll be gone by the end of the summer. I mean, it's a matter of pride.

He starts to laugh. Then the laugh stops.

JONATHAN

Oh, hell.

DIANA

He won't let me help him. Did he ask you?

JONATHAN

No. I wish he would. It would be something -

He looks away, afraid of revealing too much.

JONATHAN

- something I could give him.

149 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

149

Robin in his wheelchair with Dr Clement Aitken by his side. They've been talking for some time.

ROBIN

Should be simple enough... think of it like putting down an injured racehorse.

CLEMENT AITKEN

You do know it's against the law?

ROBIN

Who's to know?

CLEMENT AITKEN

If Diana or Jonathan were to be involved, they could end up in prison.

ROBIN

What about you?

CLEMENT AITKEN

Oh, me. I've been breaking the rules all my life. Just promise me you know what you're asking.

ROBIN

I know what I'm asking.

CLEMENT AITKEN

I've never actually played God before.

ROBIN

You'll make a good God, Clem... All the God I need.

150 SCENE DELETED

150

151 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - NIGHT

151

Robin has had another bleed, and Diana is finishing cleaning him up. As she gathers up the blood-soaked sheets and turns to leave -

ROBIN

Darling.

She pauses.

ROBIN
That's enough.

DIANA
Yes.

ROBIN

I expect you know... but just in case... No one could have loved you... as much as I've loved you.

DIANA

I know.

ROBIN

My love. My life.

She reaches out to stroke his cheek.

DIANA

Me too, Robin. My love. My life.

152 SCENE DELETED

152

153 INT. ROBIN'S ROOM, FURLONGS - DAY

153

Robin is using his phone system, listening through an earphone.

ROBIN

Clem... It's time.

He listens to the person on the other end.

ROBIN

Today. Now.

He listens again.

ROBIN

Like a military op, eh?...
Synchronise watches...

He listens, smiles.

ROBIN

Thank you, Clem. I'll be here.

He operates the sensor to end the call. For a moment he lets his eyes close. He's preparing himself.

Then he uses the sensor again to ring his bell.

Diana comes in.

ROBIN

Get Jonathan.

Diana goes to the door and calls.

DIANA

Jonathan!

Then, back by Robin's side -

DIANA
What's this about?

ROBIN
No questions.

Jonathan comes in. One glance at his mother and he knows this is serious. They both turn their gaze on Robin.

ROBIN
I want you both to listen very carefully... You're to do exactly as I say... This is very important... Promise me.

DIANA
Yes.

JONATHAN
Yes.

Diana takes Jonathan's hand in hers.

ROBIN
I've come to the end... I want to rest, as they say, in peace.

DIANA
Oh my darling.

ROBIN
Not yet... Soon.

JONATHAN
Tell us what you want us to do, Dad.

ROBIN
You're to leave the house just before eleven-thirty this morning... Go down to the pub... You're to come back at twelve noon... on the button.

JONATHAN
Twelve noon. Okay.

Beat.

DIANA
Promise me I'll have time to say goodbye.

ROBIN
There'll be time.

154 EXT. COUNTY LANE/VILLAGE PUB - DAY

154

The clock on the church's square timber-clad tower says twenty-five to twelve.

Diana and Jonathan walk past the church to the pub. They walk in silence. A red car passes, driving fast towards Furlongs.

CUT TO -

They're sitting at one of the outdoor pub tables, waiting, in silence. Then -

JONATHAN

Mum -

DIANA

No. Don't say anything.

She looks across towards the church clock. Ten to twelve. Nothing shows on her face, but beneath the table her hand is holding Jonathan's tight.

A barmaid comes up.

BARMAID

So what can I get you all today?

JONATHAN

Nothing for me, thanks. Mum?

Diana shakes her head.

BARMAID

Strictly speaking these tables are reserved for customers only, I know we're not very busy right now, but what with it coming up to lunchtime, though a few minutes more won't hurt -

JONATHAN

It's okay. We're just leaving.

The red car comes past them down the road, driving away from Furlongs. A glimpse of the driver: Clement Aitken, looking strained.

155 SCENE DELETED

155

156

INT. FURLONGS - DAY

156

MOVING POV - Into the front hall. Across to the door to Robin's room. Through the door into the room. Across the room to Robin's bed.

There he lies, eyes closed, seemingly asleep. The respirator hisses away.

The MOVING POV approaches Robin. His eyes open.

ROBIN

Still here.

Diana and Jonathan sit down by his side.

ROBIN

I shall go to sleep very soon.

Diana strokes Robin's head and face. An unexpected peace settles over them.

A rumble from Robin's chest. Some flecks of blood appear on his neck. Diana moves to clean him up.

ROBIN

Leave it.

Another beat of silence.

ON DIANA as she strokes Robin's face. She's very calm, almost as if she's accepted he's gone already.

DIANA

You go first, Jonathan.

Jonathan kisses Robin's cheek.

JONATHAN

Bye, Dad. I love you.

Robin gazes long into Jonathan's eyes.

ROBIN

My son. My boy... You've given me more than you'll ever know.

Beat.

DIANA

I don't have a farewell speech. You don't mind, do you?

ROBIN

No.

DIANA

You've given me a wonderful life.

ROBIN

Not quite what you were
expecting.

He's getting drowsy now.

DIANA

No.

ROBIN

Nor me.

DIANA

I do love you, Robin.

ROBIN

And I love you, my darling... My
beautiful wife.

Another beat of silence. Their eyes on each other. Then
Robin's eyes close. Diana leans close and kisses him.

WIDE - Diana and Jonathan sitting by Robin's bed in
silence.

Time passes.

Jonathan takes Robin's hand and feels gently for the pulse
on his wrist. He meets his mother's eyes. Gives a small
nod.

Then he reaches out and switches off the respirator.

Suddenly the silence is deafening.

157

EXT. AFRICAN LANDSCAPE - DAY

157

FLYING LOW over lakes and plains. The red earth of Africa,
the dark green forests. A whole world away...

158

SCENE DELETED

158

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