

THE SCIENCE OF LOVE AND LAUGHTER

Sam Baron

INT. STAND-UP COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

An empty stage. A spotlight illuminates a microphone. A water bottle sits on a stool next to it. SLOW ZOOM IN to an extreme CLOSE UP of the microphone as the sound of a CAMERA FLASH charges, the pitch increasing like a tightening spring until--

FLASH!

INT. ACADEMIC'S OFFICE - LONDON - DAY

DANIEL (24) blinks as a PHOTOGRAPHER snaps a shot. He's posed awkwardly by a desk. Rows of perfectly alphabetised academic books line the walls. Photography lights point at him.

PHOTOGRAPHER

You're doing great, try to relax...

He needs to. He still carries himself like a gawky teenage virgin. He's handsome, but he hasn't realised it yet.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

(trying to loosen him up,
still snapping shots)

I like your shirt.

Daniel looks down, uncomfortable, and straightens an already-neat collection of pens in a pot on the desk--

DANIEL

Luckily Wifey picks the clothes.

The Photographer laughs, and - FLASH! - gets nice shot of Daniel suppressing a wry smile. Pleased with his joke.

PHOTOGRAPHER

These are looking really nice, I'm
just going to check them back...

The Photographer goes off to review the photos on his laptop in the next room. Daniel watches him through a glass window, then takes a Dictaphone from his desk and records into it-

DANIEL

(quiet, clinical)

Stand up comedy idea - a bit about
how people always tell you to relax
in photos, as if it hadn't occurred
to you... Not sure where this could
go next, but I feel like there
might be something funny there...

He trails off as he sees the Photographer returning. He clicks off the Dictaphone and slips it back in the drawer.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Great stuff, some lovely shots.

The Photographer is holding a bag awkwardly behind his back.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
Listen, one last thing...

He pulls a BOOK and a large RUBBER OCTOPUS TOY out of the bag and puts them on the desk. Daniel stiffens at the sight.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
I know you asked not to, but they insisted I get just one shot with each, just as an option...

DANIEL
I did specifically say...

PHOTOGRAPHER
I know, and if you want to say no, that's fine. I don't want you to be uncomfortable, I'll take the heat.

Daniel pauses - then slowly picks up the bright POP-SCIENCE PAPERBACK: "The Disembodied Octopus", by Daniel Worthing.

DANIEL
(incredibly reluctant)
...I'll do one with the book.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Oh, wow, that's amazing-

Daniel holds up the book with an awkward smile. FLASH!

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
Thanks so much, you're the best.

Daniel puts it down. The Octopus continues to sit there. The Photographer waits it out, playing him. Daniel looks like he's about to crack, when - BRRRINNNG! - his phone rings.

DANIEL
(checking the display)
Sorry, one second.
(he answers, excited)
Hey gorgeous.

His smile drops at the sound of crying on the other end. He goes into "hero on alert" mode, his voice strong but kind-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Emma... take a deep breath, tell me what happened.

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel closes the door behind him. He's in an empty corridor in a quiet university department. He listens, worried.

DANIEL

It doesn't matter what I'm doing,
I'll come and... of course I'm
coming, I love you... No, I love
you more...

(he cringes at the line)

God, listen to us. We've turned
into awful people.

He listens, then laughs at something she says. Very in love.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel returns to find the Photographer tweaking the lights,
getting the bounce just right on the Rubber Octopus Toy.

He sees Daniel come in. The Octopus stands between them.

PHOTOGRAPHER

...don't worry, I won't force you.

Daniel stares at the Octopus. Incredibly reluctant. He looks
at the Photographer, who meets his gaze with pleading eyes.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

But if you could just do one...

The Photographer waits for more, knowing he'll break.

DANIEL

Look, I don't want to get you in
trouble... I'll do one, but just,
can you please tell them I'd really
rather they don't use it?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Of course. There's almost no chance
they'll use it, I promise.

DANIEL

Okay quickly, then I have to go.

Daniel picks up the Octopus and forces an awkward grimace.

PHOTOGRAPHER

And 3, 2, 1...

FLASH!

INT. MAGAZINE PRINTING FACTORY - DAY

Endless copies of NEW SCIENTIST MAGAZINE whizz by on conveyor
belts as they run through a huge printing-press machine.

The front cover shows Daniel awkwardly holding the Rubber
Octopus Toy with that terrible fake smile.

We PUSH IN on the headline "The Disembodied Octopus Effect: exploring the science of love and laughter" until only the final words are seen... THE SCIENCE OF LOVE AND LAUGHTER

The machine's roar builds as copies whizz by, then WHOOSH TO:

INT. BIG NEUROSCIENCE CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

Academics fill the room, which is decorated with posters for a big Neuroscience event. At the podium, a BELGIAN HOST with an amusing accent jubilantly reels off an introduction-

BELGIAN HOST

Our keynote speaker is concluding an eight day book-tour which has already seen him speak in Paris, Barcelona, Luxembourg, Moscow, Wien, Prague, Stuttgart and...
(he glances at his notes)
...Berlin, so we are lucky to have him here today: Dr Daniel Worthing!

LOUD APPLAUSE as Daniel bounds on stage. The golden boy. The prodigy. The big screen transitions to show the SAME OCTOPUS PHOTO. Daniel is thrown - but determinedly fakes enthusiasm.

DANIEL

Groucho Marx once said "I wouldn't want to belong to any club that would have me as a member", so with that in mind let me say how pleased I am to be here at this esteemed society, not yet as an inducted member, but as a *guest* speaker.

A chuckle from the friendly crowd. This loosens Daniel up.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'll be talking today about my experiments on The Disembodied Octopus Effect, and my publishers have asked me to remind you all that just because I'm telling you about it now, that doesn't mean you can't still buy the book.

Another laugh. Daniel claps his hands, enjoying himself.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So! What *is* The Disembodied Octopus Effect?

He flips to his first PowerPoint slide: a photo of a BRAIN.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SMALL DRAB LECTURE THEATRE - SEVEN YEARS LATER - DAY

It's 7 years later. Daniel is now 31, and doesn't look good.

He's haggard. Unshaven. But not in an "Ooh, that's a nice beard" way. He's let himself go. His faded shirt is baggy and misshapen. "Wifey" is clearly no longer styling him.

He stares dead-eyed at the same PowerPoint slide. Vacant. Brain-dead. He's given this lecture a thousand times before, and he wasn't crazy about it the first time.

DANIEL

(dry and monotonous)

By having participants interact with avatars whose limb movements were uncorrelated with their conversational partner's, and varying the emotional valence via discrete matched integers on a positive-negative spectrum, I was able to demonstrate significant differential movement and neuro-activational patterns, and thus established a directional link between cognitive-emotional brain states and expressed motor signals.

He clicks for the next slide. The computer is grindingly slow-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

In short: when subjects engaged in positive interactions, like making their partner laugh or telling them they loved them, their micro-body movements and brain patterns were different when those interactions reflected genuine existing sentiments between subject-pairs.

He looks at the screen. It still hasn't changed slides.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Sorry, it's just changing slides.

A dozen scattered students wait as the cursor spins. One STUDENT raises his hand. Daniel gives him a tiny nod.

STUDENT

So where do the octopuses fit in?

Daniel looks like he wants to kill someone. Probably himself.

DANIEL

Why does everyone always... okay look, I used virtual reality octopuses as avatars, but they were an irrelevant gimmick.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I could have discovered the exact same thing without them. But then it wouldn't have had the words "virtual reality" involved, it would have been called something less "cool" so it wouldn't have got funding or been accepted into any big, fickle "prestigious" journals.

The words of a man on the precipice of career-suicide.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Urgh... I think it's crashed.

He re-starts the computer. They wait as the system re-loads.
A HIPSTER STUDENT with super-trendy hair speaks up-

HIPSTER STUDENT

So... could you, like, build a machine to test if my girlfriend really loves me?

DANIEL

We wouldn't need a machine to test that, she's clearly only with you for your fantastic hair.

The students laugh. This seems to liven Daniel up a notch.
The Hipster Student touches his ornate hair, self-conscious.

The computer is still slowly re-booting.

HIPSTER STUDENT

So what are you working on next?

DANIEL

Honestly, you sound like my mother.

The group chuckles again. Daniel is encouraged-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(Mum voice)

"What's next Dr. Worthing? Are you eating your vegetables? When am I going to get a grandchild?"

A big laugh from the students. Daniel likes that.

HIPSTER STUDENT

(to his neighbour)

He thinks he's so funny...

DANIEL

And now you sound like my wife.

Another laugh from the group. But the look on Daniel's face suggests there's painful truth behind that joke.

INT. HOMEBASE - DAY

Daniel and his wife EMMA (31) stand motionless in Homebase.

She is beautiful but tough, in a square-shouldered business suit. They are staring at a wall of SINK TAPS for sale.

There are so many taps, and they all look nearly identical. Daniel breaks the silence with a half-hearted joke-

DANIEL
How about that one?

Emma looks at him with a face like thunder.

EMMA
Are you retarded? That's like the ugliest one.

Daniel looks back at the wall of taps. They really do look almost identical. This is no longer a happy marriage.

EXT. DANIEL'S UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT - DAY

WORKMEN drill with a loud jackhammer outside the building.

INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - DAY

Daniel walks down a dreary corridor. Computers quietly hum. The distant jackhammer drones. He passes a MALE COLLEAGUE with a distinctive FACIAL MOLE. Muttered pleasantries-

DANIEL
Hi.

COLLEAGUE
Hi.

INT. MRI BRAIN-SCANNING ROOM - DAY

Daniel is with an annoying female PARTICIPANT in a dingy, windowless basement. A dirty MRI scanner sits in one corner, surrounded by ancient equipment and tangled wires.

He is conducting a pre-scan interview-

DANIEL
...and how long have you been with your current partner?

PARTICIPANT

Well we first got together on Halloween last year, cos I was dressed as a sexy nurse and he was a sexy soldier, but he was actually still sleeping with his ex, but then he broke up with her and we started going out, but then I discovered he was still texting her, but he said they were just friends, but I didn't believe him so I broke up with him but then I gave him a handjob at my friend Mark's party and he told me he loved me, so then...

Daniel listens in pure misery.

LATER--

They are filling out a stack of health and safety forms-

PARTICIPANT

And what does this mean?

DANIEL

That's just where you put your occupation.

PARTICIPANT

Why?

DANIEL

Er... because it's on the form.

PARTICIPANT

Will you sell my DNA to the government?

DANIEL

We don't take DNA, it's just a brain scanner.

PARTICIPANT

And how do I know you won't-

DANIEL

(deadpan)

Because if I did, I'd lose my job.
And I love my job.

LATER--

Daniel is strapping the Participant down, readying her for the MRI machine. He secures her head in a clamp-

DANIEL

This just holds the head still, to make sure the scan doesn't blur. Is that too tight?

PARTICIPANT

A bit-

DANIEL

Okay, so you'll be in there for 45 minutes. Follow the instructions on the screen inside, and beware, the machine is very loud.

LATER--

The MRI machine groans and roars. It's extremely loud. On an ancient computer screen is a low-res image of an OCTOPUS. Daniel stares at a COUNTDOWN TIMER: 44 minutes remaining.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Emma sits watching TV as Daniel stands carefully spooning vegetables on to her plate. They are physically awkward around each other. He mutters politely as he serves her-

DANIEL

Here we go-

EMMA

That's plenty-

DANIEL

One more for luck-

EMMA

Be careful-

DANIEL

Oopsy daisy-

As he serves a final scoop, he drips sauce on her skirt-

EMMA

Oh, for fuck's sake, I said be careful...

DANIEL

Sorry, I'll get a cloth...

INT. LECTURE THEATRE - DAY

Daniel packs up and students shuffle out after a lecture. A CUTE GIRL approaches him, flanked by two YOUNG MEN. Daniel tenses up as she gets close, focusing on the guys-

DANIEL
Richard, Harry... having fun
writing those seminar essays?

They laugh. It's awkward as Daniel avoids looking at the girl-

CUTE GIRL
Um... Dr. Worthing?

He pretends to have only just noticed her-

DANIEL
Oh, hi - erm - you're not in my
seminar class are you?

She shakes her head.

CUTE GIRL
I loved your book though. You're
the reason I came to study here.

DANIEL
Oh my - I'm so sorry.

She laughs, thinking he's joking. He's not.

CUTE GIRL
Would you mind if I took a photo
with you?

DANIEL
Oh - sure - do you have a...? Ah.

One of the guys already has his iPhone out. She puts her arm around Daniel's hip, pulling him in close. He seizes up, thrown by this intimate contact, as they snap the photo.

INT. LIFT - SHORTLY AFTER

Daniel is alone in the lift. He re-creates and evaluates his posed smile in the mirror. He looks exhausted. Skin pale.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

The same office Daniel had his photo taken in seven years ago, but now it's gloomy and run-down. Underlit. Cheerless. He stares at the Google homepage. He types "how to ask for" then stops. Google has offered some suggestions, including:

- how to ask for a blowjob
- how to ask for a hug
- how to ask for an open relationship
- how to ask for an emo haircut
- how to ask for a weed hookup

Then he types in the final word: "divorce"

He presses Search and an alert box appears with the message:

"This is the 100th time you've used the Search Term "divorce" this month. Would you like to make a Desktop Shortcut?"

Daniel stares at the message, realising how pathetic this is.

He Googles "Luke Thompson - Divorce Counsellor" instead. He finds the number and dials it, nervous. He listens, then-

LUKE (ON VOICEMAIL)
 Luke Thompson, Divorce Counsellor.
 I can't get to the phone, so please
 leave your name and number.

DANIEL
 Hi - Luke - er... it's Daniel...
 Worthing. Er - long time no see!

Daniel is practically sweating with nerves, skirting around the real reason he's calling-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 It'd be great to catch up some time
 soon, have a beer or, I dunno, go
 play, er...

He looks around for inspiration and sees a bottle of ORANGE SQUASH on his desk.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 ...squash, or...

He makes a face to himself like he's thinking "Why the fuck did I just suggest squash?!"

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 ...anyway, yeah, anything would be
 great... I actually need a bit of
 advice.

INT. MRI BRAIN-SCANNING ROOM - DAY

Daniel is with a laddy MALE PARTICIPANT in the dingy room, conducting another pre-scan interview-

DANIEL
 How long would you say you've been
 in love with your current partner?

PARTICIPANT 2
 Oh we're not in love, we're just
 shagging.
 (cheeky)
 ...but don't tell her that.

Daniel doesn't laugh. Full of loathing or jealousy or both.

LATER--

Daniel straps him in for the scan-

DANIEL
Tell me if this is too tight-

The participant YELPS in pain as Daniel yanks the headstrap.

LATER--

Daniel stares at COUNTDOWN TIMER as the MRI machine roars.

He opens a Word Document on the computer entitled "NEW STUDY IDEAS". It's blank. He stares at it, with zero inspiration.

LUKE (ON VOICEMAIL) (OVERLAYED)
Daniel, it's Luke. Great to hear
from you! I'd love to meet up...

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel flicks through brain scans on his ancient computer.

LUKE (ON VOICEMAIL) (OVERLAYED)
I didn't know you played squash,
that sounds great, I know the
perfect place - Thursday lunchtime?

He clicks on one scan. An area is highlighted. He clicks on more. The same area is highlighted in all of them. He scoffs.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - SHORTLY AFTER

Daniel sits opposite his ARROGANT SUPERVISOR (50s) at a large oak desk. He is a trendy, vain pop-scientist: stylish suit, a coiffed mane of white hair and a booming American accent. The wall behind him is covered in framed newspaper clippings.

He flips through print-outs of brain-scans and statistics-

SUPERVISOR
This is brilliant work, Dan. It's
exactly what you predicted.

DANIEL
It is.

SUPERVISOR
You should be thrilled.

DANIEL
(incredibly unthrilled)
I'm thrilled.

SUPERVISOR
This calls for cake.

DANIEL
No, please don't--

INT. SEMINAR ROOM - DAY

The SUPERVISOR is holding some cake. Daniel and assorted mismatched COLLEAGUES stand around with their own slices.

SUPERVISOR
Cake! To celebrate some sensational new results, the culmination of... four?

DANIEL
Five.

SUPERVISOR
Five years of work... Dan, would you like to share?

DANIEL
Er. Well. After my first study, I predicted we'd find systematic activity patterns in the lateral fusiform gyrus. And now, after running pretty much every test possible, I did find that to conclusively be the case, with no surprises whatsoever.

Light applause and murmurs of congratulations, then silence. The Colleague with the distinctive facial mole pipes up-

COLLEAGUE
So - what's next?

DANIEL
(loathing the question)
Thanks for asking. I'm planning to replicate the study again to verify the robustness of my findings.

They all eat cake in silence. Zero celebratory atmosphere.

SUPERVISOR
Does everyone have cake? Zoe, you don't have cake!

ZOE, a painfully shy small woman, retreats even further into her shell, trying to hide behind thin air.

ZOE
I'm fine. I'm a celiac.

SUPERVISOR
 (nodding solemnly)
 I am so, so sorry.

LATER--

Daniel has been cornered by his Colleague with the facial mole. The man is standing much too close, showing Daniel smiling photos of him and his family on holiday in Thailand-

COLLEAUGE
 Thailand. Absolutely stunning. Have you been?

DANIEL
 (factual, dry)
 Emma and I went on our honeymoon.

COLLEAGUE
 Oh, how is Emma?

DANIEL
 (clearly lying)
 Wonderful.

The Colleague keeps flipping through his photos, oblivious-

COLLEAGUE
 (re: one photo)
 That was in a hotel where you sleep out under the stars. Oh, it was amazing, highlight of the trip...

DANIEL'S P.O.V. -- SLOW-MOTION CLOSE-UP ON COLLEAGUE'S FACE.

As the Colleague continues talking, sound becomes distant, dampened and shell-shocked. Time slows to a glacial pace as Daniel focuses in on his facial mole, his gross nose hairs, and bits of cake stuck in his teeth. This is DANIEL-VISION.

DANIEL (PRE-LAP)
 Stand up comedy idea...

INT. OFFICE BATHROOM - DAY

Daniel stands nervously in the empty office bathroom, recording a hushed iPhone Voice Memo, one hand on the door-

DANIEL
 ...how can the highlight of your holiday be sleeping under the stars? You're asleep. How can the best bit of your holiday be when you're asleep?

He clicks it off, frustration exorcised.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel is leaving Luke another voicemail-

DANIEL
Hi Luke. Er... squash it is.

He has a Google page open: "What are the rules of squash?"

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(epic voice)
"The battle of the beasts"...

He pulls another face to himself like "Where the fuck did that come from?" then desperately tries to wrap things up-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Or, something, erm... great, so,
see you then.

INT. SQUASH CENTRE - PUTNEY - DAY

Daniel waits in the lobby, dressed head-to-toe in shiny new squash gear. He's got the shoes, the sweat band, everything. He's on edge, nervous, eyes scanning - then he sees him.

LUKE (31): handsome but not vain. Strong but gentle. The guy you want your sister to marry. He gives Daniel a friendly hug.

LUKE
Daniel Worthing... Mr. Big Shot.

DANIEL
What about you, you've got your
name in the Yellow Pages...

LUKE
I know, when did we turn into
proper grown-ups?

There's an uncertainty in the air. It's clearly been a while.

LUKE (CONT'D)
I'm so glad you suggested squash, I
love squash, I play all the time.

DANIEL
...Yeah. Me too. Love it.

An awkward silence. Then Luke leans in, conspiratorially-

LUKE
You've still got the price tag on
the back of your shorts.

Daniel feels it and looks up, caught - then they both burst out laughing. Daniel looks him up and down.

DANIEL

It's good to see you. You've beefed up.

Luke flexes a bicep, and grins to his old friend.

LUKE

These guns don't grow on trees...

(in Daniel's "epic voice")

Time for *THE BATTLE OF THE BEASTS*.

Daniel laughs. He deserved that.

INT. SQUASH COURT - SHORTLY AFTER

Daniel and Luke play a practice rally. Luke is comfortable, light on his feet, his moves precise. Daniel looks more like he stumbled on squash on TV once and changed the channel.

LUKE

I've got to say, I was surprised
when you rang... I'd begun to think
I'd never hear from you again...

Daniel misses the ball, and they start the rally again.

LUKE (CONT'D)

So go on. You need some advice.

Daniel concentrates hard on making his shots.

DANIEL

Look, I can't complain. I have a
great career and a beautiful wife.

LUKE

But?

Daniel misses the ball again. Luke picks it up and holds it for a moment. Eye-contact between them. Daniel admits-

DANIEL

But.

LUKE

You wake up every morning dreaming
of gargling lighter fluid?

DANIEL

Bleach. Enters the bloodstream
faster.

Luke grins at the morbid joke, and they begin the next rally.

LUKE

How is Emma?

Daniel manages to hit a powerful shot-

DANIEL
Volatile.

LUKE
What did you do?

Daniel lunges for another great shot but fails spectacularly, landing in a heap. Luke looks at him, and highly amused.

DANIEL
All I can say is I never knew my face was so detestable until I saw the way she looks at me now.

LUKE
To be fair, I could have told you your face was shit.

DANIEL
(getting up)
I used to make her laugh...

Luke starts a new rally-

LUKE
Oxytocin. Dangerous shit.

Their shots get stronger and start breaking up the dialogue:

LUKE (CONT'D)
It's almost like... you should have listened when... that really handsome old... friend of yours warned you not to... marry the first girl you... finally convinced to... sleep with you...

Daniel has finally cracked this sport - the shots have been getting faster and faster, back and forth-

DANIEL
He wasn't that... handsome, was he?

LUKE
No, maybe he was just a guy who...
CARED--

THWACK! Luke cracks a hard shot which hits Daniel in the face.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. LUKE'S OFFICE - PUTNEY - DAY

Daniel leans back, holding a bloody tissue to his nose.

They are in Luke's office - a counselling room with "positive message" posters about the benefits of marital separation.

DANIEL
Is it still bleeding?

LUKE
Surely it's stopped by now...

Luke picks up the dustbin as Daniel unpeels the tissues-

DANIEL
It's nice to see you, man...

Daniel hesitates, then addresses the lingering tension-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
And sorry I kind of stopped hanging
out with you all when I got married.

LUKE
...it's fine. You want to apologise
for anything, apologise for that
time in Year 6 when you threw up in
my lap on the coach to France.

Daniel laughs at the shared memory. Luke holds out the
dustbin and Daniel tosses the tissues in.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Sorry I hit you in the face.

Daniel shrugs - no worries. Luke sits down at his nice desk.

LUKE (CONT'D)
So. The spell's worn off. You hate
her-

DANIEL
She hates me.

LUKE
Right. She ever cheat?

DANIEL
Not that I know of. But she does
work with her ex-boyfriend. And
they're in the same rowing team.
And they go dancing together.

LUKE
What kind of dancing?

DANIEL
Salsa.

Luke blanches at the word.

LUKE
And you're... okay with that?

DANIEL

"Okay with that"? What era are we in?

LUKE

I know, it's just... *Salsa*.

He looks at Daniel pointedly.

DANIEL

...I take your point.

Luke writes down "SALSA" and underlines it.

LUKE

So... did you ever cheat on her?

DANIEL

No.

LUKE

Not even... a bit?

DANIEL

No.

LUKE

...so you've still only had sex
with one person?

DANIEL

(emasculated, defensive)

Nice to see we're still 16. If only
someone could tell my bald spot.

Daniel does have a the tiniest hint of balding. He's nowhere
near being bald, but in five years he might be.

LUKE

That's not a spot, it's a landslide
waiting to happen.

Daniel spots a smiling photo of Luke with his wife on the
shelf behind Luke's desk.

DANIEL

You know you probably shouldn't
have that photo up in here.

Luke looks round and sees the photo - slightly smug.

LUKE

People need something to aim for.

Daniel shoots him a look that seems to say "Oh, shut up".

DANIEL

(irked)

How is Julie?

LUKE

Fantastic. We're going to Paris next week. She says Hi.

DANIEL

(on edge)

You told her you were seeing me?
What if she tells Emma?

LUKE

She's not going to tell Emma.

DANIEL

How do you know?

Luke looks like he's about to say something - then hesitates.

LUKE

Okay, do you want me to be straight with you?

Daniel opens his hands. He's all ears.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Julie can't stand Emma.

DANIEL

But... what about that girls day out they went on?

LUKE

Once. Five years ago. When we first started dating.

Daniel digests this. He looks sad.

LUKE (CONT'D)

None of my girlfriends liked her.
None of any of our girlfriends did.

Daniel nods, accepting. He's heard this about her before.
Luke hands him a flier for his Divorce Counselling service.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Divorce doesn't need to be awful.
Talk to her honestly, and give her this. Come in together, we can try to arrange a peaceful settlement.

Daniel looks at it. It has a cheesy photo of Luke on it.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel is staring at Luke's Divorce flier. Deep in thought. There's a knock at the door and his Supervisor enters. His face is bright orange with make-up. Daniel flusters to hide the Divorce flier as his Supervisor opens up his laptop.

SUPERVISOR

Dan, Dan, the Octopus man! Boy have I got something for you to Tweet.

DANIEL

Oh, I don't really, um...

Daniel can't stop looking at how orange his face is. The Supervisor presses some buttons on his laptop as he sits.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Were you on TV this today?

SUPERVISOR

Lunchtime news, did you see it?

DANIEL

(re: his orange face)

You just have that TV star aura.

SUPERVISOR

(tapping away at laptop)

See, you always know just what to say, you really should have a media agent. People love the Octopus, Dan. Can't let them forget how much they love the Octopus. We should talk merch strats again. Octopus lunch boxes? Oh, here we go...

On the laptop, a SEXY COMMERCIAL for their department begins.

Grotesquely stylish "blue-hue" shots of Daniel and colleagues in various laboratories, inter-cut with irrelevant "cool science" clips: DNA twisting, an ATOM BOMB exploding... It's a total misrepresentation - more like CSI than The Office.

Thumping music plays as the text appears with gaudy panache-

SEXY NARRATOR VOICE (ON SCREEN)

World class research! Global impact! High-tech cutting edge science!

It SWOOSHES to a sexy climax and the Department logo appears. The Supervisor looks at Daniel, expectant-

SUPERVISOR

What do you think?

Daniel clearly does not want to Tweet it.

INT. MRI BRAIN-SCANNING ROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

Daniel sits by the groaning brain scanner: 34 MINS REMAINING. His finger hovers over his laptop, incredibly reluctant, as he glumly presses "TWEET", posting a link to the video.

Luke's divorce flier sits on the desk next to him. He looks at it again, and seems to come to a decision.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daniel wears an apron as he slaves over a gorgeous meal.

As he cooks, he checks a recipe where he's written out detailed timings. There are ticks next to "Wait 15 minutes before boiling rice" and "After 3 minutes, turn down hob".

He waits for the second hand to hit 12, then adds the vegetables to a pan, nailing the timings with precision.

LATER--

Daniel waits in front of the oven. His Stop-Watch timer counts down from 5... 4... 3... 2... 1... BEEP BEEP BEEP!

As if by magic, the oven clicks off. He points at the Microwave, which PINGS on cue. He tastes the rice - MMM! - perfect timing. He takes the rice off the stove to drain it, doing a nerdy little victory dance/spin when - CRASH! - he drops the pan. There's rice all over the floor.

DANIEL

Shit.

He quickly clears it up, and chuckles as he scoops the last grains into the bin. He takes out his iPhone and records-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What about something about... when victory celebrations end up ruining the very thing you're... actually that's not funny, forget that.

Suddenly, the sound of the front door opening. Daniel thrusts his iPhone away and pretends to be cleaning.

Emma strides in and unceremoniously dumps her bags.

EMMA

What a fucking day.

Daniel gives her a routine platonic cheek-kiss.

DANIEL

Bad luck, love.

EMMA

That smells good...

DANIEL

Hope so. I'm just popping the rice on now-

She throws her jacket over a chair, eyes narrowing-

EMMA

You didn't put it on yet? That's the whole reason I called ahead...

DANIEL

Sorry, I'll boil the water now-

EMMA

You didn't boil the water yet?

Daniel fills the kettle. She spots his iPhone, annoyed-

EMMA (CONT'D)

...were you on your iPhone?

DANIEL

Em-

EMMA

Whatever, I'll just skip dinner...

DANIEL

You need to eat love.

EMMA

Yeah, but I also need to go, so...

Emma grabs her jacket, frustrated and upset.

DANIEL

I'll do pasta instead, it'll be ready by the time you're changed-

But she's already gone. Daniel dutifully puts the kettle on.

LATER--

Emma and Daniel are eating in silence. Emma now wears a semi-revealing dress, ready for a night out Salsa dancing.

DANIEL

Sorry it's a bit *al dente*.

She doesn't seem in a forgiving mood. They eat in silence.

He looks like he's trying to find a good moment to start the "divorce" conversation. Finally-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So I was thinking-

EMMA

I'm just going to go. I don't want to be sick when I'm dancing.

She puts her cutlery together, food barely touched. He looks rebuffed. She stands up to leave, so he tries a new tactic-

DANIEL
I'll drive you.

EMMA
(cold, rejecting)
I can take the Tube.

DANIEL
But... you hate the Tube?

Emma looks at him - she clearly doesn't want to be stuck in a car with him right now. But he's determined to talk to her.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Daniel puts his coat on. Emma squeezes past to get something. They mumble politely, like strangers passing on a plane-

DANIEL
Sorry-

EMMA
Sorry-

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - NIGHT

Daniel drives Emma in silence. A car is close behind them. The atmosphere is awkward. He tries to lighten the mood-

DANIEL
How was your day?

No response. The car behind revs it's engine, edging closer.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
So, I wanted to talk to you about something-

The car behind rapidly accelerates, over-taking dangerously. She beeps the horn aggressively, giving them the finger-

EMMA
Fuck you!

She settles back down in her seat-

EMMA (CONT'D)
What did you want to talk about?

Daniel freezes up. This clearly isn't the right moment.

DANIEL

Oh, um, just... what was the name of that book you recommended? The one you read. Earlier this year.

Emma stares at him. Sensing he's avoiding some other issue.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You know the one. You loved it. Something about cats.

EMMA

(reluctantly)
...The Catbird Seat.

DANIEL

(fake enthusiasm)
The Catbird Seat! Great. Yes. Great. I'll give it a read.

Emma is annoyed. She tries to provoke him-

EMMA

I gave it to you months ago.

Daniel doesn't take the bait. They drive in silence.

EXT. SALSA CLUB - SOHO - CONTINUOUS

Daniel's car pulls up in front of a Salsa club in Soho.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Emma faces looking out of the window. The atmosphere is uncomfortable. He avoids acknowledging it.

DANIEL

Well, have a great time... Let me know if you want a lift later.

EMMA

(muttered)
Ever the taxi service.

Daniel pretends she hasn't said anything. Refusing to engage.

DANIEL

Have a great time, love.

He leans over to give her a kiss on the shoulder but she stiffens and gets out of the car. Daniel is left rejected.

He watches her demeanour change as she crosses the road and heads into the Salsa club, putting on her happy face for the MALE REGULARS who greet her fondly and spin her around.

Through the window, Daniel can see her handsome ex-boyfriend ROBBIE (31) start to dance with her. He clearly loathes him.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Daniel drives in light rain. He sees CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB through the windscreen and slows to look at it.

INT. SALSA CLUB - NIGHT

Emma and Robbie laugh as they dance together. He spins her around and she loves it. It's joyful, not sexual, until...

Robbie's dancing starts becoming more sexual, but she spins away, shutting him down, dancing with one of the other MEN around her. One FEMALE REGULAR shoots a judgemental sideways glance at her, but Emma's either oblivious or ignores it.

EXT. SALSA CLUB SMOKING AREA - LATER

Emma comes outside to where the SALSA TEACHER and two WOMEN stand smoking. They're all laughing together. Emma joins them-

SALSA TEACHER
Emma, mi hermosa!

He embraces her. The women keep talking amongst themselves.

EMMA
Can I grab a cheeky smoke off anyone?

SALSA TEACHER
Here, have mine, I shouldn't be smoking anyway...

He takes one last drag, then hands it to her and heads in.

Emma turns to the women, who are wrapped up in their own conversation. She hovers uncertainly, clearly wanting to join in their chat but not knowing how to make the move. Finally-

EMMA
Hi, I'm Emma-

WOMAN 1
(over-apologetic)
Hi, sorry... I think we're going to head back in...

EMMA
Sorry, yeah, of course...

The women stub out their half-smoked cigarettes. Emma raises her beer bottle in a misguided attempt at conviviality-

EMMA (CONT'D)

Party on!

The women head inside, leaving Emma alone in the cold. She smokes in silence, clearly regretting having said "Party on". She finishes her beer in one go and tosses the bottle.

INT. SALSA CLUB - SHORTLY AFTER

Emma walks back in, over to where Robbie is drinking a beer. She casually takes the bottle from his hand and swigs from it, comfortable but platonic in her physicality around him.

EMMA

(conspiratorial)

You should try and fuck Little Miss Earrings over there.

ROBBIE

Where?

EMMA

My three o'clock, the one with the flat chest and the attitude.

Robbie looks over to where the two women from the smoking area are laughing by the bar, having a great time. The woman who rejected Emma outside does have very noticeable earrings, but neither of them have any discernible attitude.

ROBBIE

Right. Maybe next week.

He tries to take Emma's hand to dance, but she spins off to dance with some other guys. He watches her go. He clearly has a crush on her but she keeps him squarely in the friend zone.

She starts taking photos with a few of the guys. Robbie goes over to join her, pretending to be totally happy with things.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Daniel is on his laptop looking at Facebook photos of Emma and Robbie at the Salsa club, uploaded moments ago. They're having a great time. He sips a glass of whiskey.

He searches "HARRY WILSON" and the page loads with a photo of Harry (the student who took Daniel's photo with the Cute Girl). Harry is at a neon nightclub holding a big cocktail. He clicks on a tiny picture of one of Harry's friends who looks a bit like the Cute Girl - but it's not her.

He Googles "How to see two people's mutual friends on Facebook". He browses the results and we catch the words: "it's impossible to see two people's mutual friends". He thinks, then copies Harry's FRIEND LIST into Excel.

He then searches for RICHARD HAWTHORNE, and finds a page with Richard (the other student from earlier) pictured at the top of a mountain in climbing gear. Daniel copies his FRIEND LIST into the same Excel sheet.

He types in some formulas and the software whizzes into action, merging and sorting the two lists, then it beeps:

"24 DUPLICATES IDENTIFIED"

Daniel scrolls the list of duplicates. He copies several over to Facebook, searching them. He finds the CUTE GIRL's page.

Over this, an iPhone Voice Memo starts to play-

DANIEL (OVERLAYED)
Stand up comedy idea - a bit about
an aging guy who pervs on girls who
are 10 years younger than him...

He browses photos of the Cute Girl on holiday. Her doing horse riding. Winning a medal.

DANIEL (OVERLAYED) (CONT'D)
...I'm not sure where this goes
next... is this funny?

He finds THE PHOTO OF THE TWO OF THEM AFTER THE LECTURE. His face looks tired, sweaty and pink. The tiny dots on his jacket have made a weird optical illusion. Strobing lines.

DANIEL (OVERLAYED) (CONT'D)
I don't think it's funny actually,
it's just depressing...

He looks slightly disgusted at the sight of himself. He tries typing a message: "Hi Louise - Great to meet you. Daniel."

DANIEL (OVERLAYED) (CONT'D)
Maybe do a bit about how there's
such a fine line between 'funny'
and 'tragic'...

He deletes the full-stop and puts an 'x'.

Then he deletes the 'x', puts the full-stop back, and adds: "P.S. Hope you weren't blinded by my terrible jacket!"

He deletes that and tries: "P.S. Congratulations on winning that horse riding medal!"

Then he deletes it all and quits.

DANIEL (OVERLAYED) (CONT'D)
...or maybe just shoot yourself.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel is asleep in bed. Emma stumbles in, drunk. She strips off and climbs in next to Daniel. She reaches out to touch his naked back, running her fingers over it, but he rolls away groaning. She tries kissing his shoulder and whispers-

EMMA

Danny... Danny, wake up...

His eyes stay closed.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Please, Danny... I want you...

She kisses his neck, but he still doesn't respond. She gets up and stumbles out of the room. The door shuts behind her.

Daniel opens his eyes a crack. He wasn't asleep.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Emma brushes her teeth with an electric toothbrush. She looks at herself in the mirror, eyes slightly glazed over.

She finishes brushing and stares in the mirror again. Then she reaches into her pyjamas and starts masturbating. She sinks back against the locked door. Her spare hand moves down to her breasts as she feels herself under her pyjamas.

Then she pauses, mid-motion. Her expression changes as she stands and tentatively presses on her breast. Concerned.

She lowers her pajama top and looks at the top of her breast in the mirror. She keeps nervously feeling it. Investigating.

She stares at herself in the mirror. Disbelieving.

EMMA

Fuck...

INT. DANIEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Daniel and Emma are asleep. Her alarm clock rings: 6:00AM. She wakes, a little worse for wear, pulls on some casual clothes and grabs her bag. Daniel is still asleep.

She looks at him, desperate for him to wake. But he doesn't.

EXT. RIVER THAMES (NEAR CANARY WHARF) - DAY

Emma is the only woman in a rowing team with seven TONED MEN. One of them is Robbie (her colleague and Salsa partner).

She concentrates hard as they row in sweaty unison.

INT. SPORTS FACILITY SHOWER - SHORTLY AFTER

Emma washes her body in the cubicle - but as she washes her breasts, she feels the lump again. A look of recollection.

She nervously presses the spot on her breast again.

INT. SANDWICH SHOP - BLOOMSBURY - DAY

Daniel stares at endless shelves, overwhelmed by choice.

POPPY (31) notices him. She's a cute Irish red-head. Lots of ear-piercings. A smart-casual style with a hint of cleavage.

POPPY

The spicy tapenade is good.

Daniel turns - and recognises her immediately.

DANIEL

No way. Impossible.

She does a little pose as if to say "Here I am". He slips his left hand into his pocket, hiding his wedding ring.

POPPY

(laughing)

You look old, man.

DANIEL

It's nice to see you too.

They both seem utterly amused to have run into each other.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You know I look at these sandwiches every day, and I always go for hummus, but every day when I walk away I always think "maybe I really want that weird tapenade one..."

She laughs, and takes stock of him.

POPPY

Daniel Worthing... The Disgruntled Octopus man.

DANIEL

Disembodied.

POPPY

I wasn't talking about the Octopus.

He smiles - touché.

DANIEL
And didn't I hear you're someone
very important at NCI now?

POPPY
Oh, very important.

Their eye-contact is overflowing with sexual chemistry.

POPPY (CONT'D)
So - where are you planning to eat
your hummus?

DANIEL
Er, I... don't know?

POPPY
Well open your mind, the night is
young!

DANIEL
(chuckling)
It's 11 AM - the night is a foetus.

POPPY
(playing along)
Yet to pass through the cervix of
dusk...

DANIEL
Wow - pregnancy jokes, left, right
and placenta...

POPPY
BOOM Selecta! Ladies and gentlemen,
Dr. Daniel Worthing!

Daniel waves to a vast imaginary audience in the distance.

DANIEL
Thank you, thank you...

They're both highly amused - totally on the same wavelength.

EXT. SANDWICH SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel and Poppy emerge on to the Bloomsbury street.

DANIEL
So... where are you off to?

POPPY
Swimming pool. You?

DANIEL
Office.

They stand there, not wanting to go their separate ways yet.

POPPY
I mean... you could join me. Bit of
exercise in your old age?

DANIEL
I - don't have any trunks.

POPPY
They sell them at reception.

Daniel looks conflicted. She clearly wants him to come.

DANIEL
...is it far?

She points across the street - he follows her gaze to see a
big swimming pool. He looks back at her. She knows she's won.

INT. SMALL RUN-DOWN HOSPITAL - ACTON - DAY

Emma is in a grimy second-rate hospital room, medical overall
open as a handsome YOUNG DOCTOR examines her breast.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Yes, I see... over here?

EMMA
(flinching)
Oooh that's ticklish-

YOUNG DOCTOR
(flustered)
Sorry-

She instinctively goes into "laddy banter" mode, embarrassed-

EMMA
Don't apologise, you know you love
your job...

He chuckles politely, clearly uncomfortable with her joke.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Okay, you can button up again.

Emma closes her shirt up. He checks the notes in her file.

YOUNG DOCTOR (CONT'D)
So I see you have a family history.
I'm sorry for your loss.

Emma gives him a look, sad but accepting - that's life, eh?

YOUNG DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Do you regularly examine yourself
for lumps?

EMMA
(looking guilty)
I know I should.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Okay, but you hadn't felt anything
unusual before this week?

She shakes her head.

YOUNG DOCTOR (CONT'D)
And your husband hasn't mentioned
feeling any changes recently?

EMMA
No, we don't often, er...

The Young Doctor realises what she means. His face falls.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Oh - sorry. I shouldn't have-

EMMA
It's fine-

YOUNG DOCTOR
Um, okay, well, if you can open
your top again then, we'll get
started with the scan...

Emma opens her shirt, as--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SWIMMING POOL CHANGING CUBICLE - DAY

Daniel slips his pants off. His bare white bum looks awfully
pathetic as he gawkily puts on some swimming trunks.

He sees his wedding ring - conflicted - then he takes it off
and puts it in his shoe.

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Daniel steps out from the changing rooms. Poppy is already in
the pool, swimming away from him. He watches her bum.

She gets to the far side and sees him as she turns around. He
nods at her, shy, and as she swims back over to him.

When she gets to his end, she raises herself half-up on to
the side, supporting herself on the edge of the pool.

Daniel stares at a large tattoo on her forearm.

POPPY (O.S.)
I do have a face you know.

DANIEL
What? Oh, no, I wasn't looking at -

His eyes flick to her breasts, which are clearly outlined.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I mean, but... your tattoo.

POPPY
Oh... yeah, of course. God, it has
been a long time.

DANIEL
It's very... big.

POPPY
Ta. Concise.

DANIEL
You really... went the whole hog?

Poppy puts on a serious academic's voice, mocking him-

POPPY
"I'm Daniel Worthing and following
my work with imaginary Octopuses,
I've concluded that everyone who's
ever got a tattoo regretted it.
Also I think I'm cool now because I
have a beard."

Amused, he dips his toe in the water.

DANIEL
Mothering Sunday that's cold!

Poppy laughs and swims backwards, tempting him in-

POPPY
Jump.

DANIEL
I think I saw a sign saying 'No
Jumping'.

POPPY
Jump...

DANIEL
I'm a grown-up. I'm taking my time.

POPPY
 Oh, Jesus Christ on a crucifix...
 Let's go on the curly-whirly slide.

INT. SWIMMING POOL CHILDREN'S AREA - SHORTLY AFTER

Daniel climbs the ladder behind Poppy - her bum in his face. It's not a super-model bum, it's a real woman's bum: plump, beautiful and imperfect. He's transfixed.

DANIEL'S P.O.V. -- SUPER-SLOW-MOTION CLOSE-UP ON HER BUM.

DANIEL-VISION kicks in as again sound becomes distant, shell-shocked, and time slows to a glacial pace. Drips of water falling from her bum tumble at a millimetre per second. Every hair on her bum is visible, all the tiny details.

Over this P.O.V., another iPhone Voice Memo plays:

DANIEL (OVERLAYED)
 Stand up comedy idea - a bit about
 how swimming pools are strange
 places, because normally when you
 see your friends they're wearing
 clothes, but all of a sudden you
 know exactly what they look like
 naked... Then there could be a bit
 about how I went swimming with a
 friend, and I ended up with her bum
 right in my face as we climbed up a
 ladder, so close I could see every
 tiny little hair, so I now know
 more about what her bum looks like
 than I would if we'd-

DANIEL (OVERLAYED) (CONT'D)	POPPY
...made passionate love all	(distant)
night with the lights off.	Daniel... Daniel...

POPPY
 Daniel!

Daniel snaps out of his daze-

DANIEL
 Sorry! Yes. I was miles away.

He joins her inside a plastic pod at the top of the slide.

POPPY
 What were you day-dreaming about?

DANIEL
 (clearly lying)
 ...work.

They slump against the sides of the pod. It's cosy.

POPPY
So - you still see anyone from uni?

DANIEL
(more lying)
...No. You?

POPPY
I see Richard Perkins sometimes.

DANIEL
Richard Perkins! I'd literally
forgotten he existed...

POPPY
He follows your work like a hawk.

Daniel looks nostalgic.

DANIEL
God that was a long time ago...
I still had all my hair.

She laughs, and remembers something-

POPPY
You still recording comedy ideas on
that Dictaphone?

He can't believe she remembers.

DANIEL
...I've upgraded. Got an iPhone.

POPPY
You never tried it for real?

DANIEL
...one of many things.

Their eyes meet. Their chemistry is electric. She does an
impression of Daniel recording a Voice Memo-

POPPY
"Stand up comedy idea - isn't it
funny how the years can make you
see old friends in new ways?"

Daniel can't believe she just said that. Their eye-contact is
electric, full of sexual tension - then she whooshes down the
slide, leaving him alone in the pod. Lusting after her.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - BLOOMSBURY - DAY

Daniel and Poppy stand by the entrance, hair still damp.

POPPY
Well. It was great to see you.

DANIEL
It was great to see you too.

Their chemistry is still high, but out in the open he's back to his usual awkwardness. He offers a handshake.

POPPY
Wow. Okay. Hold on.

She rummages in her bag. Daniel lowers his hand.

POPPY (CONT'D)
No, keep it there...

He obeys. She puts something from her purse into her palm.

POPPY (CONT'D)
Okay. Now pay attention.

She extends her hand, and they shake.

POPPY (CONT'D)
Now you have my number.

She leaves. He looks down. He's holding her business card.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel is staring at Luke's Divorce Counselling flier again.

PING! A new email arrives, from Poppy. All it says is "Jump".

He downloads the attachment: an ad for a STAND-UP COMEDY OPEN MIC NIGHT. He considers it, then dials the number. His finger hovers over the CALL button, about to press it, when-

BRRRRRINNG! The phone rings in his hand. It's EMMA. He tries to adopt a "normal" voice as he answers-

DANIEL
Heya.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. SMALL RUN-DOWN HOSPITAL - ACTON - CONTINUOUS

Emma paces outside the hospital. She looks desperately shaken.

EMMA
Hey, how's it going?

DANIEL
Good, how are you?

She's clearly figuring out how to tell him her news.

EMMA

I... I love you Daniel.

DANIEL

(stiff, unconvincing)

Uhh... okay, well... you know. I
feel the same about you.

She can feel his distance, and it hurts.

She decides not to tell him and instead she pulls herself
together, suddenly brisk, businesslike-

EMMA

Listen, some people have just come
in for a meeting, I have to go-

DANIEL

Okay, have a good-

CLICK. She's gone.

He looks guilty. He needs to talk to her.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Daniel drives home, nervous. He passes CASA DI MONACO COMEDY
CLUB - but now he can't bring himself to look at it.

INT. TRENDY BAR - NEAR CANARY WHARF - NIGHT

Emma enters a trendy wanker-banker bar, clearly preoccupied.
She spots Robbie laughing with some WORK FRIENDS. They fit
right in here. They are CHARLIE, RICH and MIKE (early 30s).

As she reaches their table, she puts on a brave face, trying
to avoid thinking about it. She greets them enthusiastically-

EMMA

Ladies...

They cheer with raucous energy to greet her. She settles in
next to Robbie as the conversation picks right back up.

CHARLIE

Emma, weigh in on this: Rich has
become a vegetarian.

EMMA

(mock-outraged)

No! What about bacon?

RICK

No meat.

EMMA

What about steak? Or lamb?

RICK

Those days are gone.

MIKE

What about pussy?

RICK

I consider that fish.

They all laugh, including Emma. She seems relieved to have them to distract her.

ROBBIE

(leaning in to her)

How was the appointment?

EMMA

(dismissive)

Fine, just a routine check-up.

She fakes a smile for the group, putting up a macho-front.

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Daniel is parked outside his house - a modest terraced home near Shepherd's Bush. He looks at the door.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Daniel enters the house. He's holding Luke's divorce flier.

DANIEL

Emma?

Silence. His voice cracks as he shouts up the stairs-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Emma?

He climbs the first flight of stairs, tense.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

We need to talk, Em.

Nothing. Total silence.

LATER--

Daniel listens to his phone as it rings. It connects, and suddenly he can hear that she's somewhere noisy.

DANIEL
Hello? Em?

EMMA (ON PHONE)
(casual, distracted)
Hey, hi.

DANIEL
I thought you were coming straight
home after work...

EMMA (ON PHONE)
I can't hear you...

DANIEL
I need to talk to you.

EMMA (ON PHONE)
I can't really hear you, can you
join me?

He stuffs Luke's divorce flier back in his breast pocket.

DANIEL
...where are you?

INT. TRENDY BAR - NEAR CANARY WHARF - NIGHT

Daniel enters the bar, still in his tired academic clothes. He looks very out of place. He spots Emma laughing with her friends, and nervously waves. She comes over to greet him with a more loving cheek-kiss than usual.

EMMA
Hey... come see everyone...

DANIEL
Em, I need to talk to you...

She takes his hand and he reluctantly follows-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Can't we go somewhere just the two
of us for a bit?

But she's pulled him to the table and her raucous friends all stand up to do the obligatory hand-shakes.

EMMA
Hey... you remember everyone right?

DANIEL
(shaking hands)
Charlie, hi. Mike. Rich... Robbie.

Daniel sits down and it falls quiet. He's ruined their fun.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 (trying to fit in)
 So... seen any good games lately?

They all look at him. He's so clearly not one of them.

ROBBIE
 Er... I was going to get a drink
 actually.

RICH
 Yeah, me too.

They disappear to the bar. Charlie and Mike are suddenly deep in conversation, avoiding having to talk to Daniel.

Emma reaches for his hand under the table, trying to connect. Needing to feel she can count on him.

EMMA
 (whispering to him)
 Want to dance?

He looks over at the dancefloor. It looks like his idea of hell. But it's a chance to get her on her own to talk.

ON THE DANCEFLOOR--

Emma holds Daniel's hand as they dance. They look like Beauty and The Beast: Emma so natural, holding her awkward husband.

She pulls him close, but he keeps looking at her friends.

DANIEL
 I need to talk to you, Em.

EMMA
 (deflecting)
 I need to talk to you too, but not
 now.

DANIEL
 Can't we just have a quick talk?

She scoffs-

EMMA
 We need a big talk, but I've had a
 hell of a day... I just need to
 have a good night. Please.

Daniel tries to relax into their dancing, but he sees two HOT BITCHY GIRLS looking at them. One says something to the other and he seizes up even more.

It might just be in his head, but it feels like there are judgemental eyes everywhere, all staring at him.

DANIEL
I'm tired Em, I'm going to go-

EMMA
Please stay, Daniel-

He looks conflicted. She looks desperate. He compromises-

DANIEL
I'll be at the table.

LATER--

A different song is now playing. Daniel is trapped at the table as Rich tells Robbie, Charlie and Mike a story-

RICH
So this must have been - December,
I think, cos I had all the heaters
on and a little portable one in the
corner of the room. Anyway, so one
night I'm doing my yoga moves on
one of those big exercise balls-

CHARLIE
Because you're a woman.

RICH
Because I'm a woman - and the girl
I was seeing at the time, Laura,
she comes in, "looking all horny",
so she comes over and pretty soon
we're properly having sex on the
exercise ball, really going at it,
harder and harder, but we didn't
realise the ball was touching the
portable heater until POP - it
explodes and we fall to the floor.

The guys wince as he mimes her landing on his cock. Daniel clearly feels out of place.

As he sits there, trying to look comfortable with them, he watches Emma on the dance-floor, now dancing with a new guy.

The conversation continues around him as he watches her-

MIKE (O.S.)
Okay, I've got a better one.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Impossible.

RICH (O.S.)
Go on.

MIKE (O.S.)

So I met this girl in some dirty, dirty club, and she was grinding me for hours, I had an absolute rager to annihilate her... anyway I take her back to mine and before I can even pour us a drink, she's pulled me onto the bed, she's ripping all her clothes off, and suddenly I'm bashing around in the dark, trying to find a rubber - I find one, pull my pants down to pop it on my chap but as I rip it open, I painfully discover it's not a condom - it's a ramen noodle flavouring sachet.

The guys explode with laughter. Charlie bangs the table in hysterics. Daniel tries to fit in, unconvincingly-

DANIEL

...they do look like condoms!

The guys turn to him. Silent. Waiting for him to say more.

ROBBIE

(saving him)

...alright, I've got one.

As Robbie tells his outrageous sexcapade, DANIEL-VISION kicks in. Slow-motion shots of the guys laughing as he explicitly mimes the juicy details, with an iPhone Voice Memo overlaid-

DANIEL (OVERLAYED)

Stand-up comedy idea - a bit about how having only had sex with one person is worse than being a virgin. At least when you're a virgin you know your life sucks. When you're married to the first person you ever slept with, you have nothing to compare anything to - you have no idea if you have the best relationship in the history of the world, the best sex, the best love - or the absolute worst. You don't know if your wife has a magical vagina we should be using all our scientific resources as a species to clone, or if you should cut the cord, dive back into the abyss of celibacy and loneliness again in the desperate hope that next time, if there is a next time, you'll find someone...

DANIEL (OVERLAYED) (CONT'D)
...who actually genuinely
makes you happy.

CHARLIE
(distant)
Daniel... Daniel...

CHARLIE

Daniel!

The sound of his name calls his attention back to the group. They're now silently looking at him again. Expectant.

DANIEL

...Hm?

CHARLIE

Your turn.

RICH

Tell us a story.

Daniel realises what they want. He freezes up completely.

DANIEL

Oh... no... I don't think that's fair on Emma.

CHARLIE

Oh, look at her, she won't mind. Something from your wild days.

DANIEL

No, I'm not going to do that...

RICH

Tell us what she's like in bed.

DANIEL

No, I don't think-

CHARLIE

Or Robbie could tell us.

Robbie looks up, caught out. Rich and Charlie guffaw.

ROBBIE

Daniel. I didn't bring that up.

DANIEL

It's fine, it was ten years ago. More. Eleven. Twelve. Who's counting? Forget it.

ROBBIE

Forgotten.

DANIEL

Great.

An awkward silence. Daniel looks completely humiliated.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 I mean, from what she's told me,
 it's not like you gave her much
 worth remembering.

Rich chortles-

ROBBIE
 Stop it Rich.

DANIEL
 Don't worry, I know it didn't mean
 anything... she wasn't exactly
 North Korea back then, it was
 pretty easy to get in there.

Rich and Charlie laugh, shocked. Daniel suppresses deep pain.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 I'm just going to pop to the loo.

He gets up and strides over to Emma, getting between her and
 the guy she's with, who turns to dance with a new girl.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 I'm going to head home, Em.

EMMA
 What? No... what's the matter?

DANIEL
 Nothing, everything's great, I've
 just got a headache...

He gives her a functional peck on the cheek and leaves before
 she can protest. She watches him go, sad and abandoned.

EXT. TRENDY BAR - CONTINUOUS

The beautiful sight of Canary Wharf at night. Daniel strides
 out, humiliated. He takes out Poppy's business card and looks
 at it. Conflicted. He presses to call her and starts walking,
 glancing guiltily over his shoulder as it rings.

POPPY (ON PHONE)
 Hello?

DANIEL
 Er... hi. It's Daniel.

POPPY (ON PHONE)
 Daniel Worthing! Twice in one day.

DANIEL
 I was just, erm... do you want to
 go see a show?

The moment the words are out, he can't believe he said them.

EXT. CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB - LEICESTER SQUARE - LATER

Daniel waits nervously outside the CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB, just off Leicester Square. Trying to stay incognito. He sees Poppy, and tentatively waves.

DANIEL

Dr. Morgan.

POPPY

Dr. Octopus.

She confidently links her arm in his, and they head inside.

INT. TRENDY BAR - NIGHT

Emma dances on her own. She looks drunk. She doesn't notice a SEXY ITALIAN MAN at the bar, watching her dance.

The Sexy Italian pays for two cocktails and brings them over. He hands one to her and she gleefully accepts. They clink.

Over at the table, Robbie watches them - his mind whirring.

INT. CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

On a stage we might recognise from the start of the film, a comedian is performing: ROSA (50s) - an overweight, grey-haired, sharp-talking, brash American gal. Think Kathy Bates.

Poppy cries with laughter as they watch her. Daniel is laughing too, really laughing, laughing like he hasn't laughed in years. And his eyes are drawn to the beautiful sight of Poppy by his side, laughing hysterically. Entirely on his wavelength.

INT. TRENDY BAR - NIGHT

Robbie watches as Emma grinds hips with the Sexy Italian Man.

The Italian tries to touch her body but she pushes his hands away. He tries again, and again she has to push him away.

Robbie goes over to intervene. He takes her cocktail-

ROBBIE

Em, I think you've had enough.

EMMA

That's mine.

ROBBIE

It's not, this guy gave it to you.

EMMA

So what?

SEXY ITALIAN MAN

What's your problem buddy?

Robbie pushes him away-

EMMA

I'm fine, Rob.

SEXY ITALIAN MAN

(to Emma)

Is this your boyfriend?

ROBBIE

Yes I am.

Robbie squares up to the Italian. For a moment it seems like they might fight - then the Italian backs off.

SEXY ITALIAN MAN

YOLO, baby. I'll be over here.

He blows a kiss as he leaves. Robbie looks at Emma. Her eyes are glazed, drunk. She plays with his tie. Her White Knight.

EMMA

Robert Marshall. To the rescue.

He laughs.

ROBBIE

Wait here, I've got an idea.

He dashes over towards the DJ booth and whispers to the DJ. Emma retrieves her confiscated cocktail and downs it.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - KENTISH TOWN - NIGHT

Daniel and Poppy stroll home. She has her arm linked in his.

POPPY

You know I actually saw you speak once. That huge interdisciplinary conference in Barking.

DANIEL

Why didn't you say hi?

POPPY

Wasn't a good time in my life. It was "before my tattoo".

Daniel nods, and doesn't press her. She keeps things light-

POPPY (CONT'D)
You were great though. You got a standing ovation.

DANIEL
Please, they'd been sitting for hours - if people stood up it was to get the blood flowing again.

She laughs, and they come to a stop outside her house. It's that awkward moment by the doorstep - what now?

POPPY
Well - this is me...

She clearly wants him to come in.

DANIEL
I should - probably get going. I've got a meeting first thing. I've had a great time. We should do this again some time. This was great-

POPPY
(stopping his blabbering)
Daniel. You can come in for a drink if you like.

He freezes up, way out of his comfort zone.

POPPY (CONT'D)
(opening her door)
Well, I'm going to have a drink. You can either follow me in, or leave me to get robbed.

She heads inside. He stands frozen, looking at her open door.

INT. TRENDY BAR - NIGHT

Emma and Robbie are dancing like crazy to a wild, sexy Salsa track. It's louder and sweatier than before, energy doubled. She grinds him, and he finds it very hard to resist.

ROBBIE
Emma... I'm only going to say this once and then whatever happens, happens... You're married.

She kisses him, full and sensual. He goes with it entirely - then she pulls away, looking more wasted than ever.

She lurches around, nauseous. She steadies herself on the Hot Bitchy Girls' table but accidentally knocks over the main girl's cocktail, before stumbling and landing in her lap.

The girl shoves her off, over-aggressive. Emma looks furious.

EXT. TRENDY BAR - NIGHT

The BOUNCER throws Emma and the Hot Bitchy Girls out. Emma's knuckle is bleeding and so is the main girl's lip.

The Hot Bitchy Girls stumble away as Emma walks off in the other direction, wrapping her bloody hand in her scarf.

HOT BITCHY GIRL

Bitch!

Emma looks on the edge of tears as she strides away.

INT. POPPY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Daniel and Poppy are pissing themselves laughing, remembering a joke from the show. They've each got a glass of wine.

The laughter fades - and their eyes meet. This is it. No more excuses. This is the moment they're finally going to kiss...

Their faces edge closer together... she reaches inside his jacket to stroke his chest... and her hand brushes up against Luke's divorce flier in his breast pocket. Daniel tenses up.

DANIEL

(edging away)

Listen, Poppy, there's just...
something I need to do...

Poppy retreats. She knows a guy with baggage when she sees one. She backs off as he puts his shoes on-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

POPPY

It's fine.

DANIEL

I'd love to see you again.

His shoes are on. She opens the door.

POPPY

Goodnight, Daniel.

She ushers him out and closes the door. Alone in her hallway, she looks downbeat - why can't she ever pick the simple ones?

EXT. MAIN ROAD - CANARY WHARF - NIGHT

Emma is slumped against a shop front, her make-up smudged from tears. A taxi pulls up and the DRIVER rolls his window and honks his horn. Emma looks up with weak, bleary eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Daniel and Emma are asleep in bed next to each other. They both look worse for wear, completely hung-over. Her alarm goes off. She stumbles up and pulls on some clothes.

He wakes up - and realises what he needs to do.

DANIEL

Emma - are you in tonight?

EMMA

Yeah, I'll come straight home.

DANIEL

Great. I need to talk to you about something.

EMMA

I need to talk to you about something too. See you later.

She leaves - and Daniel's mind starts racing. Worried.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Daniel is on the phone to Luke, panicked-

DANIEL

Those were her exact words. What could she need to talk to me about?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. LUKE'S OFFICE - SAME

LUKE

Well, hopefully it's an affair.

DANIEL

What do you mean "hopefully it's an affair"? How is that a "hopefully"?!

LUKE

Daniel, calm down. You don't know what this is, so there's nothing you can do. Just wait till tonight.

Daniel doesn't look like he can wait.

INT. VARIOUS ROOMS - DAY

FAST CUTS of Daniel ransacking in Emma's drawers. Rifling through her bras and bank statements. Anything and everything considered. Her make-up bag. Toiletries. Jewellery box.

He finds a nice photo of the two of them from years earlier, and takes a moment to look at it - then continues his search.

EXT. RIVER THAMES (NEAR CANARY WHARF) - DAY

Emma and her Rowing Team move furiously down the river, pumping the water hard with their oars. She looks like she's working through some serious emotions as she yanks her oar.

Robbie sits directly behind Emma. He sneaks a few glances at the outline of her sports-bra and the tiny hairs on her neck.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Daniel searches through a drawer - then stops.

A letter addressed to Emma Worthing sits half-hidden, marked PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL, with a HOSPITAL LOGO.

He slips the letter out and nervously reads. His face drops.

EXT. ROWING CLUB - CANARY WHARF - DAY

Emma and Robbie emerge, waving goodbye to some team-mates. He puts his arm around her shoulder as they walk, looking very "boyfriendly", full of confidence after their kiss in the club-

ROBBIE
That was fun last night.

EMMA
(lying)
Yeah.

ROBBIE
Don't feel much like going to work now though...

EMMA
(forcing a chuckle)
No.

Robbie turns his cheeky flirting up a notch-

ROBBIE
Maybe we should skive off work, go have oysters in Farringdon... or we could go wine tasting!

EMMA
Right.

ROBBIE
Or we could get a boat and sail up to Henley!

EMMA

(dry)
Or off to Jamaica.

ROBBIE

Excellent idea! I'll be the Captain
and you'll be my cabin boy!

He tickles her provocatively close to her breast, unaware of the lump-

EMMA

(pushing him off)
What the fuck! Don't touch me like that!

ROBBIE

But - what?

Emma sees what's happening and shuts him down, calm but firm-

EMMA

Last night was a mistake.

The words are a dagger in Robbie's heart.

ROBBIE

...was it? You know how I feel about you-

EMMA

Please don't start this-

ROBBIE

Stop ignoring it-

EMMA

Robbie, stop...

ROBBIE

Why? We'd be great together-

EMMA

Please stop it.

ROBBIE

Why? And don't say "Daniel"-

Emma's short fuse snaps-

EMMA

Need I remind you that last time we were together, you cheated on me for eight months-

Robbie is shocked by this explosion and gets defensive-

ROBBIE

Ten years ago - eleven! Twelve!

EMMA

I know how long ago it was, my Mum was fucking dying in hospital!

ROBBIE

Emma...

EMMA

Daniel was the one who picked me up off the floor! I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for-

ROBBIE

(becoming spiteful)

"Daniel", yeah, and it's all been perfect ever since.

EMMA

Fuck you, I don't just quit on people at the first sign of trouble.

ROBBIE

No, because you've got all the time in the world.

Emma is stunned.

EMMA

What is that supposed to mean?

Robbie shrugs, now baited, like a petulant child-

ROBBIE

Biological clock won't wait forever.

That cuts Emma deeply. This is clearly a sensitive topic. She takes a moment, then answers his earlier question-

EMMA

This is why, Robbie.

He knows he's blown his chances for good. Nothing left to say, he turns and walks away.

Emma is left alone, desperately wishing she felt more confident that Daniel would be there for her.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Daniel looks concerned as he reads Google search results for "Is deep-tissue mammary biopsy a routine procedure?"

He Googles "Harley Street cancer doctor telephone number". He clicks on some contact details, then dials on his iPhone.

DANIEL

(adopting a nasal voice)

Hello, this is The Guardian switchboard, I have Health Editor Justin Thurrock for Dr. Bruce, is he available?

Daniel waits in silence. He looks at the letter.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(adopting a deep voice)

Dr. Bruce! Thank you so much for taking the call.

(he listens, then laughs)

Yes, of course. Well, we're running a slightly sensitive story in the paper tomorrow and I just wanted to run a few things by you to make sure we're not getting anything wrong, would that be alright?

(pause)

Great, so the story involves a "stereotactic deep-tissue biopsy" to check for "ductal carcinoma"... Now first of all, it's fair to say that's not a routine check, right?

(pause)

Great, so then would it be fair to say that someone who's had that procedure has had a "cancer scare"?

(pause)

Right, right... No, unfortunately we can't name names at this point, there's a big injunction, hence the sensitivity about the language...

(pause)

Exactly. So, what percentage of people who have that kind of test generally turn out to have cancer?

(pause)

I see. I see. Well, thank you so much for your help, Dr. Bruce.

Daniel hangs up and his fake smile drops. Deeply troubled.

MOMENTS LATER--

He Googles "Acton Hospital cancer ward" and dials the number.

DANIEL

(in jolly Indian voice)

Hello, is this Acton Hospital?

As soon as the words are out, he makes a baffled face to himself like "Where the fuck did that accent come from?!". But he's stuck with it now, and has to keep it going-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 (jolly Indian voice again)
 Hello, yes, I'm calling from BUPA
 Medical Insurance...

He's really regretting this accent. For this, of all calls.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 (jolly Indian voice still)
 Yes, we've got a couple of biopsy
 procedure claims I need to check
 the status of?
 (pause)
 Wonderful, so I have six names to
 check, the first one is... let me
 see... okay, yes... Emma Worthing?
 (pause)
 W - O - R - T - H - I - N - G
 (pause)
 Yes, so - 31 year old female, May
 6th 1982, patient number... 218956.
 (pause)
 Wonderful, so I need the current
 status and any confirmed results...

He listens, and his face goes white.

INT. FANCY LOBBY (EMMA'S WORK) - CANARY WHARF - DAY

Daniel waits in the big glass-walled lobby of a fancy office. The Canary Wharf skyline rises high in the background. BUSINESSMEN in flashy suits power-walk through the revolving door, beeping their ID cards for security. His heel jitters.

Emma comes out of the lift and sees Daniel. He sees her and stands as she comes over.

EMMA
 What... what are you doing here?

DANIEL
 Em... I... I found the letter.

She wasn't expecting that. Her eyes well up. She's been desperately wanting to be able to tell him.

EMMA
 They confirmed it this morning...
 it's malignant.

He instantly gives her a giant hug, holding her tight.

DANIEL
It's going to be alright... You can
do this. We can do this.

His "we" makes her burst into tears, so relieved to have him
hold her like this. As she sobs into him, she confesses-

EMMA
...I kissed Robbie last night.

That hits him hard, but he squeezes her even tighter.

DANIEL
It's okay. It doesn't matter.

Over her shoulder, he looks scared and confused.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel is snuggled behind Emma as she sleeps. His eyes are
open, his mind racing. Still processing the news.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Daniel is on Skype with Luke (whose profile image is a funny
photo from years earlier). They both whisper. A bottle of
whiskey is open next to Daniel's laptop, but he's not drunk.

LUKE (ON SKYPE)
Fuck... what are you going to do?

DANIEL
What do you think I'm going to do?

A charged moment. Luke is lost for words. Then, tentatively-

LUKE (ON SKYPE)
Cancer can't save a marriage, man.

DANIEL
How do you know?

Luke doesn't have an answer.

LUKE
God... are you going to hate me now
because I said all those things
about her when I thought you were
getting divorced?

DANIEL
Believe it or not, this isn't about
you.

Luke almost laughs. Daniel looks completely lost.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 She has cancer, man. She has
 fucking cancer...

LATER--

Daniel stares at the Google homepage. He types "my wife has"
 then stops. Google has offered some suggestions, including:

-- my wife has burned the scrambled eggs
 -- my wife has never seen Jurassic Park
 -- my wife has an STD I don't have
 -- my wife has webbed feet
 -- my wife has got some god-damn balls

Then he types in the final word: C A N C E R

He stares at the phrase - then hits Search and starts reading.
 His concentration is focused. He's going to save his marriage.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Emma wakes up in bed. She sees Daniel's not there.

EMMA
 Daniel?

DANIEL (O.S.)
 Perfect timing!

Daniel enters, wearing only his pants, carrying an amazing
 breakfast tray. Fruit, pancakes, eggs, sausages. The works.

EMMA
 Daniel...

DANIEL
 Orange juice?

He's already pouring her a glass. She takes it, over-whelmed.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 Want to see what we're going to do
 to cancer?

He leaps to the cupboard, rummaging around for something.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 Hold on... here we go...

He spins around wearing a huge pair of foam boxing gloves.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 Yeah?

He starts punching the air, dancing like a boxer.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Take that, cancer. Take that. You
think you're going to come near my
woman? Hiiiiiya!

He lunges for a knock-out punch. It's cringeworthy.

She looks conflicted. He's making a big effort, but she can't stand it when he puts on this fake enthusiasm towards her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Come here, you.

He leaps onto the bed and hugs her, crouched on the mattress.

Over her shoulder - he looks scared, and she looks uneasy. He doesn't know what to do, it's awkward. He pretends to wobble-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Oops, losing my balance!

He falls sideways, landing on the bed, looking up at her with a grin. He's making a big effort. She softens slightly-

EMMA
Thanks for this. You didn't have to.

She starts to eat - tentative and uncertain.

INT. CAR - ACTON - DAY

Daniel and Emma are parked by the small, run-down hospital.

DANIEL
You can do this.

Emma looks nervous, and still wary of his new positivity.

EMMA
I just keep picturing it inside me.
I hate it. I want to throw up.

DANIEL
We're going to kill it, alright?

She looks unconvinced.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You go have a seat and relax, I'll
tell them you're here.

INT. SMALL RUN-DOWN HOSPITAL RECEPTION - DAY

Daniel approaches the DEPRESSING DESK LADY.

DANIEL

Hi, I'm here with my wife, she's got an appointment at 3.30?

DESK LADY

Okay, can I take her surname?

DANIEL

Yes, it's Worthing.

DESK LADY

Great, first initial?

DANIEL

E.

DESK LADY

B?

DANIEL

No, E. E for... egg.

She picks up the phone and dials a number.

DESK LADY

Mrs. Egg Worthing here for a 3.30?

Daniel stares at her - dumbfounded.

DESK LADY (CONT'D)

Mrs. Worthing, yes. Ta.

Daniel looks unsettled. This hospital is awful.

INT. SMALL RUN-DOWN HOSPITAL - DAY

Daniel and Emma sit in the silent waiting room. The paint is peeling on the dirty walls. He looks around the room.

Down the row from Emma he sees a deteriorating gradient of women, each progressively further along in their cancer treatment. He squeezes her hand. She fakes a smile. Nervous.

INT. YOUNG DOCTOR'S CONSULTATION ROOM - DAY

The Young Doctor explains the plan. Daniel listens intently.

YOUNG DOCTOR

...so after the operation you'll then need 18 weeks of chemotherapy, one every three weeks-

DANIEL

And you know she's allergic to penicillin?

The Young Doctor's face reveals he clearly didn't know that.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Okay. That's fine. That shouldn't affect anything, but we can check.

He makes a note in his file. Daniel looks uneasy.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daniel and Emma eat dinner together in silence. Then-

DANIEL

I don't trust that young doctor.
Can you believe he didn't know you
were allergic to penicillin?

EMMA

(playing with her food)
He said it didn't matter...

DANIEL

So? Next time it might be something
that does matter. Nothing in that
hospital gave me any confidence.

EMMA

Daniel, can you stop? That's my
hospital. That's my doctor. We just
have to trust them.

DANIEL

I think you deserve better.

She puts her fork down, annoyed. But he's not trying to provoke her. He takes out his iPhone and dials a number.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I have a friend at the National
Cancer Institute.

She watches as he leaves the room, phone to his ear.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - KENTISH TOWN - SAME

Poppy is working in bed. Glasses on, a laptop and lots of papers. Her phone rings: DANIEL. She answers, wary-

POPPY

(reserved)
Daniel.

DANIEL

Hi. Erm. How are you?

POPPY

Fine...

DANIEL

I... need to tell you something.

Poppy waits for more.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Er... well... I'm married.

Poppy stiffens, but still says nothing. Highly irked.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Are you... still there?

POPPY

Just processing, Daniel.

DANIEL

Right... sorry. Um. Anyway, so. I should have told you, I don't know why I didn't. You actually know her from back in the old days... Emma?

POPPY

Wow. Emma. Okay. That's... Well...

DANIEL

Erm... so, unfortunately, that's just the first thing. I have some bad news and I need a favour...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emma watches through the glass door panel as Daniel talks into the phone, facing away. She can't hear what he's saying.

INT. DANIEL'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Daniel looks serious as he listens to the phone.

POPPY

...listen, I'll text you as soon as I've figured something out but I can definitely help her. God, I'm really sorry to hear that...

DANIEL

Thanks...

POPPY

It's fine... you're a dick about the other thing, but this is... I just hope she's okay.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emma watches as he lowers his phone and puts it away. She pretends not to have been watching as he comes back in.

DANIEL
Good news. They're going get you a specialist expert.

Emma tries to smile, appreciative - but still seems fragile.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Hey... what are you thinking?

EMMA
I... don't want to have to tell people.

He offers his hand for her to hold.

DANIEL
We don't have to.

She looks at him. Takes his hand. He squeezes it, supportive.

EMMA
No, we should get it over with.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - BLOOMSBURY - DAY

Daniel's Supervisor is framing a newspaper clipping, which has a large photo of himself. Daniel sits opposite him.

DANIEL
So... you remember my wife. Emma.

The Supervisor clearly doesn't remember her-

SUPERVISOR
(preoccupied)
Sure. Emma. Right.

DANIEL
So... she's just been diagnosed with ductal carcinoma.

The Supervisor snips the newspaper too hard in shock, accidentally cutting the picture of his face in half-

SUPERVISOR
Oops-

He puts the scissors and paper down and turns to Daniel, interlocking his hands and adopting a "concerned" posture.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
That's terrible. I'm so, so sorry.

DANIEL

Mm. The good news is they've caught it early, but still, she's going to have an operation, then 18 weeks of chemo, one every 3 weeks, then 6 months of radio...

As Daniel talks, DANIEL-VISION kicks in again -- Slow-motion close-ups of the Supervisor's solemn nodding face, furrowed brow and sad eyes. Sound is muffled and distant once again. On top of this P.O.V., another iPhone Voice Memo plays-

DANIEL (OVERLAYED) (CONT'D)

Stand up comedy idea - what about a bit about how people in positions of authority have this insincere, patronising default sympathy mode they go into when they hear bad news? It's like in order to succeed in life you have to have sat through so many weeping widows and disabled victim sob stories that you just learn to switch off, you just initiate this generic Solemn Face Protocol...

INT. EMMA'S BOSS'S OFFICE - CANARY WHARF - SAME

The iPhone Memo plays over similar slow-motion shots of Emma, facing three grey-haired BOSSES in a cold, corporate, glass-walled office overlooking Canary Wharf. They all nod solemnly-

DANIEL (OVERLAYED)

It doesn't matter if you're dealing with cancer or a celiac, it's just: head cocked to the side, mouth turned down, a slow empathetic head-nod, saying profound things like "Mmm" and "Of course..."

They mouth words which look quite like "Mmm" and "Of course".

INT. EMMA'S WORK - SHORTLY AFTER

Emma comes out of her bosses' office looking drained. She strides towards the lift, trying to avoid having to see people. She presses the CALL button urgently, willing it to arrive. It PINGS and the doors open... and Robbie steps out.

They fluster as they face each other. He steps towards her-

ROBBIE

Em, I'm sorry... I miss you...

She steps into the lift and presses the button.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Where have you been? Can we talk?

She presses the button until the doors start to close. Robbie is left standing there. He looks genuinely heart-broken.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daniel and Emma eat dinner together.

DANIEL
How did it go?

EMMA
Yeah, fine...

She seems pretty bummed out, playing with her food.

DANIEL
What are you thinking?

EMMA
Do you think I have to tell my Dad?

Daniel's heart sinks. This is clearly a well-worn topic.

DANIEL
It'll be okay. I'll come with you.

She tries to give him a smile, sad but appreciative.

INT. EMMA'S FATHER'S HOUSE - OXFORDSHIRE - DAY

Daniel and Emma sit in stiff old chairs, several feet apart.

Emma's father ANDREW (58) sits on the couch facing them. The small room is dark and dusty with bad decor, a mix of cheap and old. Silence. Then he speaks, quiet and passionless-

ANDREW
...I see.

He seems harmless enough. Unsettlingly casual, given how on edge Emma looks. He clearly still intimidates her.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Well. I'd better fetch the tea.

He shuffles into the adjacent kitchenette. Emma whispers-

EMMA
I think we should go.

DANIEL
It's fine... look how old he seems.
He's harmless.

EMMA

He's a dick.

Daniel squeezes her hand. Andrew shuffles back in with a tea tray. He pours three cups of tea, and hands them each one.

ANDREW

I s'pose you blame me as usual. But this comes from your mother's side.

Daniel sees Emma's blood starting to boil. He meets her eye, soothing, supportive. Andrew takes his tea from the table.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

She always told me I'd go first.

He sips his tea, then raises the cup with a bleak smirk-

ANDREW (CONT'D)

To victory.

DANIEL

(snapping)

Andrew, I don't think Emma appreciates your particular strand of bleak humour right now.

Andrew puts down his tea. Still very casual. Faintly amused.

ANDREW

"Daniel Worthing"... You were much more credible as the white knight when you didn't have the bald spot.

Andrew knows just how to cut him, but Daniel doesn't waver, and gives him a firm look that shuts him up. Emma watches Daniel: her man, defending her, being strong for her.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DUSK

Emma rests on Daniel's shoulder, looking out of the window as they pull in to the edge of London. She's nuzzled in under his arm. Trusting. He kisses her hair. Loving.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel and Emma lie in bed, both facing up at the ceiling.

DANIEL

Em... are you awake?

EMMA

Yeah.

DANIEL

How are you?

EMMA

...I'm okay.

He reaches his hand out to touch hers.

DANIEL

I think we can beat it, Em.

She takes his hand and starts to play with his fingers.

EMMA

It just doesn't seem real.

He thinks aloud with a ponderous "meaning of life" ramble-

DANIEL

I know... It's weird... it reminds me of... when we got married, or... when we bought this house... when you find yourself in these moments that look like classic scenes you always imagined you'd end up in. But when you imagine them as a kid, you put these generic non-faces on all the bodies... But now you're in them, and you look around and the faces are people you've known so well for so many years, and you think, oh, I guess I crossed a line somewhere and started my grown-up life without noticing... do you know what I mean?

EMMA

I think so... like... when did it become normal for you to be balding and me to have cancer?

Daniel looks at her, deadpan-

DANIEL

I *knew* you were lying when you said I wasn't going bald.

She looks back at him - then they crack up laughing. It's the first time we've seen her laugh at something he's said, and it's like the flood gates have opened. They laugh and laugh.

Finally, the laughter subsides, and they wipe their eyes.

EMMA

God, it feels like yesterday that we were just two drunk idiots at Bella's leaving party...

Daniel looks at her - and a thought occurs to him.

DANIEL

Okay, remember at that party, when I asked you to dance... Imagine if instead of saying that, if I'd said "Hey, do you want to dance right now, then have sex tonight, then spend 90% of the next few years together, then get married, then one day you'll get cancer and I'll take care of you?"

Emma looks at him, and laughs again - then they kiss.

They kiss and kiss, and soon they're ripping each other's pyjamas off to have desperate, passionate, loving sex.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Emma is eating breakfast. Daniel is reading the newspaper. They look like the definition of marital bliss.

His phone beeps with a text. She watches him read it.

DANIEL

Mm, this is my friend from the NCI. You've got an appointment at 3.45 on Harley Street.

She looks incredibly relieved.

EMMA

Daniel, you're amazing.

DANIEL

(re: the phone)
I did nothing.

EMMA

Well then your friend is amazing. Who was it?

Daniel tenses up. He tries to act casual as he lies-

DANIEL

No-one you know. A guy who spoke at that big conference in Barking a few years ago.

He locks the phone and puts it in his pocket. She senses him acting strange and is confused.

He tries to take her bowl but she holds on to it, her guard raising an inch back up-

EMMA

I've got it.

He releases the bowl, trying to preserve the domestic bliss-

DANIEL

...okay.

He kisses her on the lips but it's awkward. Their rejuvenated honest channel of communication is damaged again.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL - HARLEY STREET - DAY

A sleek, slick, hi-tech hospital. The walls are bright, glossy white. It looks like an Apple Store, but for medicine. An iHospital. The kind of place where cancer gets cured.

Daniel and Emma sit in the waiting room. He holds her hand. DR TEES (58) enters with an iPad. He checks the screen.

DR TEES

Mrs. Worthing?

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SHORTLY AFTER

Dr Tees leads them down the corridor. He has a kindly face, and a calming intelligence in his soft voice.

DR TEES

The famous Daniel Worthing...

DANIEL

Um. Yes.

DR TEES

Phillip's an old colleague of mine. He speaks highly of your friend, it seems she's a very bright spark.

Emma looks surprised at the word "she". Daniel flusters-

DANIEL

Er, thank you so much for seeing us so quickly.

DR TEES

Happy to help... I'm Peter.

He offers his hand to Emma - but she's still thrown.

EMMA

Er... Emma.

DR TEES

You're in the right place, Emma.

They reach a consultation room.

DR TEES (CONT'D)
Take a seat in here, I'll be back
in one moment.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL CONSULTATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel and Emma wait alone in the consultation room.

DANIEL
It's so much better here... he's
the UK expert on ductal carcinoma.

EMMA
Why did he call your friend "she"?

DANIEL
(playing dumb)
What?

EMMA
Your friend at the National Cancer
Whatever, the one who got me in
here. You said it was a "he" but
that doctor said "she".

DANIEL
Oh... er... his name's Robin. I
guess he thought it was a girl.

Emma looks at him, wary. Trying to shake a troubled instinct.

LATER--

Daniel and Emma listen as Dr Tees goes through her file.

DR TEES
...and I see you're allergic to
penicillin, anything else?

She shakes her head. Daniel looks pleased he's so thorough.

DR TEES (CONT'D)
And do you have children?

They both tense up at the word - clearly a thorny issue.

EMMA
No.

DANIEL
We don't.

Dr Tees tries to be factual but kind-

DR TEES

Right, well... I'm sorry, this may be hard to hear... Unfortunately chemotherapy can often damage the reproductive system, so even if the treatment is successful, there is a significant chance you may never be able to conceive.

This hits Emma incredibly hard. Daniel reaches for her hand.

DR TEES (CONT'D)

Normally you'd be due to start your chemotherapy next week, soon after the operation, but some people in your situation choose to undergo an intensive IVF course to freeze some embryos. However, this would mean delaying chemotherapy by several weeks - which does increase the risk of malignant cells spreading within the body.

They are both stunned. Neither of them saw this coming.

DR TEES (CONT'D)

Would you like some time alone to discuss that option?

Emma is deeply shaken. She looks to Daniel for guidance. He takes a long, hard sigh - then looks into her eyes.

DANIEL

(completely sincere)

We can do whatever you want. I'll support whatever you want to do.

Emma waits for more - but that's it. He's said his piece.

EMMA

(sotto)

Are you sure that's all you think?
What do you really want?

She clearly wants him to say he wants kids. Even the doctor can sense it. But Daniel doesn't understand that. He thinks she wants him to say-

DANIEL

(lying)

I want what you want. Whatever you want.

She waits for more - but that's really it. She digests this, her heart breaking inside.

EMMA
(finally)
...let's go ahead with the chemo.

DR TEES
Are you sure? You can take more
time to talk about it.

She looks at Daniel, who is looking at the floor.

EMMA
It's up to you, Daniel.

He hesitates. It seems like he does want kids. But then he looks up, faking certainty, determined to "support her"-

DANIEL
I'm happy with that if you are.

Dr Tees can feel the tension, but doesn't press it.

DR TEES
...okay.

He continues talking, but they're both clearly distracted, processing what just happened.

DR TEES (CONT'D)
Now, because of the unfortunate
location of the tumour and the
increasing risk if it grows in the
wrong direction, it's best if we
operate quickly, so I'll schedule a
final MRI scan for tomorrow, then a
priority operation for Thursday...

Daniel squeezes her hand, but neither can meet the other one's eye. Both look like they've made an awful decision.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Daniel drives. Emma sits shotgun. There's a tension between them. Daniel blabbers to avoid addressing what just happened-

DANIEL
These treatments are so incredible -
I mean, that's real science. If I
was doing research like that...
it's real magic what they're doing.
Even compared to ten years ago...

EMMA
(snapping)
Can you stop talking about it?

Daniel shuts up, and they drive in silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Daniel and Emma eat dinner in front of the Evening News. The atmosphere is frosty. Daniel tries to find a good moment to talk about what happened at the hospital, but as he's about to speak, Emma's phone vibrates with an e-mail. She reads it.

DANIEL
(trying to be light)
Anything interesting?

EMMA
(shutting him down)
Work.

They watch the news in silence. Her phone vibrates again with another e-mail. She reads it, looking increasingly annoyed.

DANIEL
Everything okay?

She puts her phone down, frustrated-

EMMA
When will the Japanese realise? It doesn't matter how respectfully you apologise, a fuck up is still a fuck up.

Daniel doesn't know what to say. Silence takes over again.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL RECEPTION - DAY

Daniel and Emma stand at the sign-in desk. A highly efficient woman with an iPad checks her in on the touch-screen.

Emma looks nervous. Daniel puts his arm awkwardly around her waist to comfort her, but she doesn't nestle closer to him.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

They sit in the silent waiting room. She looks on edge.

DANIEL
(trying to be nice)
How're you feeling?

EMMA
(rejecting)
I'm so nervous I want to be sick.

DANIEL
(trying again)
Can I get you anything?

She looks at him, not wanting to let her guard down again.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Daniel is at the hi-tech snack machine buying some chocolate.

POPPY (O.S.)
Well look who it is.

He looks up to see Poppy.

DANIEL
Oh... hi. I didn't realise you'd-

POPPY
Be here? That's because you don't think about anyone but yourself.

DANIEL
Poppy...

POPPY
I know. You're sorry. Great. I still get to be pissed off at you.

DANIEL
Sorry.

POPPY
You should have told me.

DANIEL
I know.

POPPY
And you should never have taken me to see that show.

Daniel nods. Embarrassed and awkward.

POPPY (CONT'D)
Where's Emma?

DANIEL
Waiting room... MRI scan today and the operation on Thursday.

Poppy nods. He takes the chocolate from the snack machine.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Chocolate duty.

POPPY
I should say hello.

DANIEL
Oh. Er. Pop...

She looks at him with a sense of forboding.

POPPY

What now?

Daniel squirms, reluctant to say, but knowing he has to.

DANIEL

I... told her you were a man.

Poppy looks absolutely furious.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Daniel pokes his head around the door. Emma looks up-

EMMA

Did you find any?

Daniel gives her the chocolate bar.

DANIEL

I found something else as well.

He comes in, with Poppy following him. She waves tentatively.

POPPY

Hi...

Emma can't believe it. Briefly distracted from her fears.

EMMA

Poppy? Oh my god...

Emma gets up and they nervously hug.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What are you... how...?

Poppy glances at Daniel, loathing having to lie-

POPPY

Total coincidence. I just bumped
into him out there, I work here
three days a week... how are you?

Emma shrugs, motioning to her breast. Poppy nods.

POPPY (CONT'D)

(reassuring)

You're in the right place. Who's
your surgeon?

EMMA

Er, Dr...

She looks at Daniel.

DANIEL
Halschwager.

POPPY
Good, I was hoping you'd say that.

That seems to give Emma some comfort. She opens up a little-

EMMA
God, it's crazy seeing you after
all this time...

POPPY
I know...

Poppy pulls up a chair. Daniel continues to hover.

POPPY (CONT'D)
So... where to start!

They both laugh. Conversation isn't immediately flowing, but they both seem to want to connect with each other.

A hi-tech flashing buzzer goes off in Daniel's hand.

DANIEL
Oh - looks like they're ready for
us again.

POPPY
Well, listen, it was great to see
you Emma. We should catch up soon.

EMMA
Absolutely, yeah.

POPPY
Here, let me give you my number...

Daniel fakes an uncomfortably smile of approval as they swap numbers. Very aware that Poppy is doing this to spite him.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL MRI SCANNING ROOM - LATER

Emma glides into the hi-tech MRI scanner in a hospital gown.

Daniel watches as a trendy MRI TECH closes the lid and begins the scan with a wireless remote control. The machine quietly purrs. It's much slicker than the one in Daniel's department.

DANIEL
This is a great piece of kit. So
quiet and smooth.

The Tech Guy doesn't seem keen to do small-talk.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
We use the VeriScan 8000 in my lab.

MRI TECH
...do they still make those?

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Daniel and Emma eat another silent dinner in front of the TV.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Emma is reading a trashy pop-fiction novel in bed. Her phone rings: it's POPPY. She looks surprised, but answers-

EMMA
Hello?

INTER-CUT WITH:

INT. POPPY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

POPPY
Hey Emma, it's Poppy.

EMMA
Oh. Hi. Er.. Hi.

POPPY
I was just calling to see when you
might be free to meet up.

Emma clearly did not expect this call to ever happen, and especially not this quickly.

EMMA
Oh, um - I'm not too sure what
Daniel's plans are, so...

POPPY
(cheeky)
Who said Daniel was invited?

Emma flusters a chuckle, caught off guard, not used to being on the inside of this kind of girly banter.

POPPY (CONT'D)
How about the 14th?

EMMA
Erm... I think I'm actually busy on
the 14th...

POPPY
Or another night next week?

EMMA

Um... I'm not sure, I'm trying to keep things clear for after the operation, just in case...

POPPY

(getting the message)
Absolutely, of course. Well, why don't you let me know a date whenever you like.

EMMA

Okay, yeah.

POPPY

Talk soon then.

They hang up. Emma looks annoyed at herself for having left things on such an ambiguous down-note - like she's just failed to embrace a shot at a great possible new friendship.

Her phone beeps with a text - from Poppy. She reads it:

"Mad idea - are you free now?"

Emma can't believe it - why is she being so nice to her?

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Daniel is watching stand-up comedy on his laptop. Emma enters and he flusters, hitting mute and changing to another window-

DANIEL

Hi, um, you alright?

EMMA

(factual)
I'm going out.

DANIEL

Okay, er - who with?

EMMA

Poppy.

She enjoys the surprised look on his face, turns and leaves.

INT. BAR - KENTISH TOWN - EVENING

Emma walks nervously through the busy bar. She sees Poppy, engrossed reading a copy of THE CATBIRD SEAT (the pop-fiction novel Emma recommended to Daniel earlier). Emma smiles-

EMMA

The Catbird Seat, nice.

Poppy looks up, embarrassed-

POPPY
Emma! Sorry, I was just...

EMMA
Hooked? It's amazing, right?

POPPY
It's so good.

EMMA
I mean, it's trash, obviously...

POPPY
Pure trash.

EMMA
But quality trash.

Poppy laughs, and so does Emma.

POPPY
Shall we get a drink?

Emma smiles, nervous, but pleased to be embracing this. Poppy signals to get the barman's attention.

INT. RESTAURANT - KENTISH TOWN - NIGHT

Poppy and Emma are having desert in a nice restaurant. It's quieter here. They're in the middle of a deep conversation.

POPPY
The biggest thing was when my Dad passed away. I just... it wasn't a good period after that. Lots of mistakes, lots of regrets...

She looks like she's remembering something, but refuses to let herself get sentimental-

POPPY (CONT'D)
(self-mocking)
Now I'm 31 and still single, "but I'm okay with that"!

She laughs, then falls silent. Emma looks moved, and decides to match Poppy's honesty-

EMMA
For me it was my Mum...

Poppy nods, a look of recognition-

POPPY

I think I knew that... you were still young, right?

EMMA

Last year of school. Lots of mistakes, lots of regrets...

Poppy digests, re-evaluating old memories.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Then along came Daniel. He was amazing to me... God, it's so fucking fucked up...

Poppy gives her space to continue.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I look at the way he's stuck with that job he hates, just because he was accidentally really good at it back then, and I just think...

She trails off. But Poppy gets where she was going with that. A moment of deeply intimate silence. Then, softly-

POPPY

How're you coping with the cancer?

Emma appreciates her asking but still has to fight back tears-

EMMA

...I'm scared. I'm scared of dying, I don't want to die. I don't even want to lose my hair. I hate how I'm proving everyone right who ever thought I was vain, but I'm scared of losing my fucking hair...

Poppy finds this incredibly sad. She offers her hand, and Emma tentatively takes it. Poppy decides to say something-

POPPY

When we were at uni... I avoided you... But I judged you without knowing you... I was wrong.

That's the most meaningful thing Emma's heard in a long time.

POPPY (CONT'D)

At the hospital... have they told you about the classes and support groups?

EMMA

Erm... I'm not sure.

POPPY

They're great, lots of women at all different stages all go. There's one where a wig-maker helps you match your wig to your hairstyle, and there's a class which teaches you how to draw on your eye-brows. It's sounds terrifying but it's so frickin' weird that most women really love going there all together. So... let me know if you ever want to go to any of them... I'd love to come with you.

Emma is deeply touched. So relieved to not be playing games.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Daniel is eating breakfast. The remains of their plates and pans from last night's dinner on the side. Emma comes in.

DANIEL

Morning.

EMMA

Morning.

DANIEL

How was last night?

EMMA

Nice. Really nice.

She starts to wash up the mess from last night's meal. He jumps up to try and take over from her.

DANIEL

Em, I can do that-

EMMA

You're having breakfast.

DANIEL

It's fine, I can-

EMMA

And you cooked-

DANIEL

It's fine, it's no bother.

She slams down the plate in her hand, snapping-

EMMA

You never let me do anything!

DANIEL
You have cancer...

EMMA
So? I can still wash up. You just want me sitting on the stupid cancer bench like a lemon. It's just like it's always been, you love me when I'm weak and dependent...

Daniel doesn't understand why she's being so confrontational now. He refuses to be riled, still trying to make this work-

DANIEL
(calm)
Ok. You can wash up tomorrow.

EMMA
Oh can I? Oh thank you master!

DANIEL
Emma-

EMMA
Don't fucking patronise me. You want to clean up after me? Fine.

She knocks over a box of cereal.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Clean that up.

DANIEL
Emma!

She empties a pot of coffee grains.

EMMA
Enjoy.

DANIEL
Emma, stop!

EMMA
Why? Did you start reading The Catbird Seat yet?

He doesn't reply. Just as she knew he wouldn't.

She walks out and he sighs at this familiar old dynamic - so much for their rejuvenated marriage. He starts washing up.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

The shower is running, but Emma's not in it - she's leaning out of the bathroom window, fully dressed, smoking a secret cigarette. Regretting what just happened. She deliberately blows the smoke outside, trying to avoid being caught.

She finishes smoking and vigorously brushes her teeth.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Daniel is watching stand-up comedy on his laptop in bed with the volume quiet. He looks distracted, deeply serious.

He hears the sound of the shower turn off and the bathroom door open. He quickly puts his laptop away, grabs his copy of THE CATBIRD SEAT and pretends to be reading it just as Emma enters in a towel, dripping wet.

She sees him reading the book and softens - but she still turns away to get changed. He offers another olive branch-

DANIEL

Some people from my department
are going for a drink later, I was
thinking we could go together?

Emma is making a particular effort of getting into her pyjamas behind her towel, without showing him her naked body.

EMMA

...you never like it when I come to
those things.

DANIEL

Em... that's not true, I do...

EMMA

Well I said I'd meet the guys from
work tonight, so...

Daniel looks rejected, but seems determined to make amends-

DANIEL

Why don't we do both? You come with
me then I'll come with you?

Emma doesn't trust him. But he is making an effort, and she wants the fight to be over as much as he does.

EMMA

...okay. Let's do that.

INT. SMALL UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC'S BAR - EVENING

Fusty ACADEMICS sip wine and talk theories in quiet voices.

At one table, Daniel's COLLEAGUES sit with small glasses of wine and half-pints of expensive beer. It's the same group from the silent cake celebration (including Zoe the Celiac, and the Colleague with the distinctive facial mole).

Emma wears a slightly sexy dress and make-up, as if she was going to her Salsa night. Daniel looks uncomfortable.

COLLEAGUE

Yes, I was telling Daniel, my wife and I took the kids to Thailand this summer... I gather you were there on your honeymoon?

EMMA

Yes! God, it was amazing, I would love to go back there.

Emma talks too loudly and boisterously for the environment. She's clearly trying to make an effort, but she's nervously over-compensating and misjudging completely, coming across like a loud banker amidst quiet scholars.

COLLEAGUE

I must give you the name of this hotel we stayed at, you sleep out on the roof under the stars-

EMMA

Fuck, that sounds *incredible*.

Daniel winces at the profanity, wishing she'd stop talking.

EMMA (CONT'D)

We stayed at one amazing place, because Jerry owned a lot of hotels out there-

DANIEL

(clarifying)

Jerry was Emma's former boss.

EMMA

(annoyed at the interruption)
-and for tax reasons, it actually worked out better for him if he put us in the Presidential Suite and then expensed it, so we had a week of being treated like royalty, then on the last night Jerry was in town because Sting was doing a gig, so we all went backstage and had beers and shots after the gig with Sting and the band, remember that love?

Daniel looks embarrassed by her "playing the cool girl" here.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Daniel went home early but-

DANIEL
It's fine Emma, you don't need to
tell the whole story.

She stops and shoots him a hard look - how dare he do that?

He looks away and tries to change the subject, immediately
regretting having interrupted her-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Zoe, how's your research?

ZOE
(shy voice)
Um. Yes. It's okay. Yes.

Emma is staring daggers at Daniel. It's uncomfortable.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Daniel drives. Emma still looks furious with him.

DANIEL
I'm sorry for interrupting you.

Emma remains angry. Daniel tries a new tactic-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I've been thinking of trying stand-
up comedy.

EMMA
Urgh, you think you're so funny.

DANIEL
...I was going to invite you.

Emma looks like this is her idea of hell. But she sees it was
an olive branch. She tries to decline calmly-

EMMA
I think you'd have a better time if
I wasn't there, you know how it
grates on me.

Daniel looks rejected, which gets her annoyed again-

EMMA (CONT'D)
Oh, don't look at me like that, I'm
allowed not to like it, a lot of
people don't. It's arrogant.

DANIEL
(digesting this)
...arrogant.

INT. TRENDY BAR - CANARY WHARF - NIGHT

Daniel and Emma sit with Charlie, Rich and Mike in the arrogant banker bar. Robbie is conspicuous by his absence. Emma and the guys are laughing and drinking. Daniel looks more out of place than ever.

LATER--

Emma watches across the room to where Daniel stands alone at the bar, drinking down the last half of his drink in one go.

She goes over and stands next to him. It's awkward between them. They both know it's not been good lately, and that brief rejuvenation period feels like a long time ago.

Daniel starts flipping a beer mat off the side, trying to catch it in mid-air, but he keeps missing it.

DANIEL
It's funny, isn't it. The way life
plays out. How tiny decisions can
change your whole future.

Emma's not sure where this is going. He looks drunk.

EMMA
...what do you mean?

He flips the beer mat up again, but misses catching it again.

DANIEL
Can you believe that night at
Bella's leaving party was nearly
twelve years ago?

EMMA
...what are you saying?

Daniel flips the beer mat - and catches it this time.

DANIEL
I had a dream that the book we're
working on in the lab was sitting
on the table in front of me, all
finished. I had no desire to read
it... I'm a fake. I never wanted to
be an academic. I had so many
things I wanted to try. But people
told me "get a degree, get a safety
net".

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Now I've got a PhD and a career,
but I'm still just a schoolboy,
riding the train, after everyone
else got off and got jobs, and no-
one will ever tell me to stop.

She looks at him, tempted to say "Fuck you". But instead-

EMMA

...I wish I had a safety net.

Daniel looks at her. He realises what she means, and how insensitive he just was. He gives her a sincere drunk hug.

DANIEL

I don't want you to have cancer...

Emma allows him to hold her. Unsure how to read him tonight. He holds her tightly as they keep hugging.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I just meant... I don't know...
I think if choices in life were
presented as the huge paths they
lead to not just the small moments
they feel like, everyone's lives
would be so different...

Emma's gut is a mess of contradictory instincts. She tries one last time to embrace the positive between them-

EMMA

I'm pleased I said yes to that
dance...

Over her shoulder, Daniel sees Charlie is miming having breasts. Probably making bad-taste cancer jokes already.

Her statement hangs in the air. He hasn't said it back. The hug turns cold and awkward. Suddenly too close and physical.

They pull apart, and Daniel looks round for the bartender. He catches his eye and waves his empty glass. The man nods.

DANIEL

(forcing a chuckle)
Okay, finally...

Emma fake-smiles, heart-broken.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Do you want another gin and tonic?

Emma doesn't reply. The silence becomes increasingly uncomfortable as neither knows what to say, until finally-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm just going to make a quick call.

Emma says nothing. He fake smiles, then makes his escape. She watches him through the front window as he goes outside.

EXT. TRENDY BAR - CANARY WHARF - CONTINUOUS

Daniel pulls out his phone and brings up Luke's number. He calls him, but it just rings and rings. Finally-

LUKE (ON VOICEMAIL)
Hi, you've got through to Luke's
phone - Julie and I are on holiday!
Leave a message and I'll get back
to you next week, or if there's
anything urgent: tell someone else!

Daniel hangs up. He's on the verge of a panic attack.

He searches "Poppy" on his phone, and stares at her number.

Then he sees her "Jump" e-mail in a small window in the lower half of the screen.

He clicks on it and the e-mail opens, with the STAND-UP COMEDY OPEN MIC NIGHT FLIER at the bottom.

He looks at the flier - then clicks on the number. It rings.

VOICE (ON PHONE)
Laugh Riot.

DANIEL
Hi - my name's - er... David...
Wilberforce. I'm calling to find
out about performing... Tomorrow
night? Yes, absolutely...

INT. PUB - CONTINUOUS

Emma watches suspiciously as Daniel talks on the phone. She takes out her own phone and texts Poppy: "Free tomorrow?"

INT. GARAGE (DANIEL'S HOUSE) - DAY

Daniel surveys a stack of dusty storage boxes. He finds some smaller boxes marked "1996-98", "1999-2001", "2002-2004" etc.

He opens one up - it's full of rows of old Dictaphone tapes.

EXT./INT. CANCER CARE CENTRE - ISLINGTON - DAY

Emma nervously enters. She sees Poppy, engrossed reading THE CATBIRD SEAT again. She waves and they greet each other. Emma points at the book and their conversation is suddenly fun and animated as Poppy shows how few chapters she has remaining.

INT. LIVING ROOM (DANIEL'S HOUSE) - DAY

Daniel puts a Dictaphone tape in an old player and listens on headphones, blank notepad open before him. He looks serious.

INT. WIG SHOP (CANCER CARE CENTRE) - ISLINGTON - DAY

A smiley WIG DESIGNER shows Poppy and Emma some wig-styles. She holds up a much shorter wig than Emma's current haircut. Emma looks nervous and Poppy notices. She puts a supportive hand on her shoulder and suggests a longer wig.

INT. LIVING ROOM (DANIEL'S HOUSE) - DAY

Daniel continues listening to the tapes. Something makes him chuckle and he makes a note in his pad, still very serious.

INT. MAKE-UP CLASS (CANCER CARE CENTRE) - DAY

Poppy and Emma sit in front of a mirror with a MAKE-UP SPECIALIST, who is showing Emma how to draw on her eyebrows. Emma sneezes and draws on a wobbly eye-brow. Poppy and Emma exchange looks in the mirror - and crack up laughing.

INT. LIVING ROOM (DANIEL'S HOUSE) - DAY

Daniel is surrounded by tape boxes. His notepad is full of writing. He opens the next box and starts the first tape.

INT. COFFEE SESSION (CANCER CARE CENTRE) - DAY

Emma and Poppy have tea and biscuits. There are lots of other CANCER WOMEN around. Some cliques with funky wigs/headscarves and also some older, straighter women. The leader starts a "hugging exercise" and they all turn to hug each other. Emma and Poppy face each other, both feeling ridiculous, and hug.

INT. BATHROOM (DANIEL'S HOUSE) - EVENING

Daniel practices his stand-up in the mirror. Focused.

DANIEL
Hi, how's everybody doing?
(he tries again)
Hi, how's everybody doing?
(and again)
Hi, how's everybody doing?

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Emma enters. She looks like she's had a good day, for once.

EMMA
Daniel...?

She walks towards the kitchen-

EMMA (CONT'D)
...Daniel?

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emma enters the kitchen but he's not there. She opens the oven and is hit by a cloud of hot smoke. She jumps back, grabbing some oven gloves to rescue the burning lasagna.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emma walks towards the bathroom. She can hear Daniel's voice talking behind the door. She waits for a pause, then knocks-

EMMA
Daniel?

DANIEL (O.S.)
(caught)
Hey! Er - I'll be right out.

The toilet flushes. Emma glowers.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emma and Daniel eat the lasagna. His foot taps nervously.

DANIEL
Sorry. I must have set it too hot.

EMMA
...who were you talking to in the bathroom?

His foot stops tapping.

DANIEL
What? Oh. Er. No-one.

EMMA
You were talking to someone.

DANIEL
Just myself.

EMMA
...why?

DANIEL
Just... practicing a lecture.

EMMA

I thought they gave you the term off?

DANIEL

Yes, but, er - I just have one I have to do before then.

Emma looks incredibly distrustful. Daniel fakes a smile.

EMMA

I'm going to go to bed.

She gets up. He pretends to remember something-

DANIEL

Oh, um - do you mind if I go meet Luke for a drink?

Emma looks at him, wary-

EMMA

Since when do you meet Luke for a drink?

DANIEL

...exactly.

She can tell he's lying.

EXT. SMALL COMEDY CLUB - ARCHWAY - NIGHT

Daniel pulls up in his car outside the comedy club. He stares at the entrance, terrified.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma scrolls Facebook on her laptop. She sees a smiling photo of Luke with his wife by the Eiffel Tower, tagged: "Luke Thompson is in Paris with Julie Thompson - 23 minutes ago".

She realises Daniel has lied, and slams the laptop shut.

INT. SMALL COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Daniel sits awkwardly at the bar, sipping a beer and watching a comedian performing on the stage. His foot taps nervously.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma nervously loads Daniel's e-mail. She types in his login and password, and hesitates - but then she steels herself and hits Enter. Determined. It loads, and she starts reading.

INT. SMALL COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Daniel watches as another comedian finishes up their set. The crowd laugh wildly as he runs off and the COMPERE appears-

COMPERE

Wow! Tony McKnee there, big round of applause! And up next, you've never heard of him but I know you'll love him, put your hands together and be nice to: David Wilberforce!

Daniel walks briskly up, pale white under the lights.

DANIEL

Hello everybody.

Scattered applause. He faces them, petrified. Quiet falls. This is it. The moment he's spent decades dreaming of. The first time ever he's going to leap from a safety net. A chance to escape from his life for one night. He begins:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Er. So. Apparently Sylvester Stallone's next movie is going to have a lot of Latino dancing in it. It's going to be Rambo Number Five.

The crowd doesn't laugh. Daniel glances at his notepad.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Er. Okay.

He flips over to a new page in his notepad, skipping ahead.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Um. I like my women like I like my cereal - covered in milk and ready for spooning.

He pauses - but there's no laugh.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Also, sometimes I like to put a banana in.

Silence. He flips to the next page.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I've had some weird house-mates in the past, like for years I lived with this crazy couple who always argued, and the other house-mate there was a baby. But after 18 years with them I left home and went to Uni.

Nothing. No laughs. He skips to the next page. Looks at the joke. Skips it. Reads the next. Skips it. Then he finds one.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I mean, speaking of superheroes - I mean, I was, in the previous, er -

He motions to the notepad.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Which I skipped... but... you know, people often ask what super-power you'd like to have. But I've already got a superpower - I can turn food into me.

Absolute silence from the crowd. At the back, Rosa (the American comedian he took Poppy to see earlier) is watching.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

In the old days when people sent telegrams, they had short-hands, because you paid by the letter, so instead of writing "Lots of Love" you'd write "LOL". My grand-dad still uses them, he writes me e-mails saying things like "Bad news. The doctors say I have now gone blind in one eye. LOL."

Still no laughs, but Rosa watches keenly. Considering him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You know there must be telegrams from the war saying things like "Dear Margaret. Bad news. Brian and sons were killed in bombing. Terry injured by shrapnel. LOL."

The crowd don't laugh, but Rosa looks silently amused.

INT. MEN'S TOILET (SMALL COMEDY CLUB) - NIGHT

Daniel is washing his hands. Rosa walks in.

ROSA

Man, tonight was not your night...

DANIEL

Oh, I think this is the Men's Room-

He recognises her - starstruck.

ROSA

You look familiar... we ever fuck?

DANIEL
Unfortunately not... er, David
Wilberforce.

He offers his hand to shake.

ROSA
Dude. Look where we are. I'll pass.

He retracts his damp hand and wipes it on a paper towel.

ROSA (CONT'D)
So - they hated you.

Daniel nods, glum.

ROSA (CONT'D)
First time?

He nods.

DANIEL
Last time.

ROSA
Oh, come one - what'd you expect?

DANIEL
Well, I didn't expect an agent to
jump straight up and hand me a TV
show but you know - I might have
secretly hoped.

Rosa laughs.

ROSA
Well then you're a born comedian.

That seems to cheer Daniel up a little.

DANIEL
So... why was I terrible?

ROSA
They hated you.

DANIEL
Yeah - I got that.

ROSA
No - that's why. You had some funny
lines, but you never gave them a
reason to love you. People won't
laugh if they don't love you. You
have to be human. Open up. Confess.
Show them the worst parts of
yourself. If you're honest, they'll
love you, and they'll laugh.

DANIEL
(digesting)
...and what if I don't deserve
their love?

ROSA
If you don't, then I definitely
don't, so we'll both be fucked.

He laughs.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Give me your e-mail, I'll get you a
slot for Saturday night.

DANIEL
But... I bombed?

ROSA
So? Everyone bombs. Get used to it.
You're still alive.

The truth of that statement dawns on him. He failed, and it was okay. He quickly writes down his e-mail address for her.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Bring a whole new set, and if you
make one cheesy pun, I'll punch you
in the face.

She leaves and the door swings shut. He looks like a weight has lifted. He jumped - and bombed - but he survived.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Daniel's stuff is strewn all over the bed, Emma lying on top of it all. She's clearly gone on a mad search of his things, but she doesn't seem to have found anything.

Her laptop PINGS loudly. She looks at the screen. There's a new e-mail in Daniel's inbox - from Rosa:

"No excuses. Saturday night, 11PM at Casa Di Monaco."

Emma is stunned. She hears a car pull up outside. She races to the window and sees Daniel parking out the front.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Emma rushes down the stairs - and stops, as Daniel walks in. He sees her furious expression and waits for her to speak.

EMMA
...where have you been?

He doesn't reply. His mind racing.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Answer the question.

He's speechless. Emma stares at him, hurt. He moves towards her but she recoils from him. He stops, then slowly speaks-

DANIEL
I wasn't with Luke tonight...
I... went to a bar.

She braces herself for what's next. He confesses:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I tried stand-up comedy.

She waits for more. Blood boiling.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
That's everything.

EMMA
Liar.

DANIEL
I promise.

EMMA
Liar!

DANIEL
I promise!

EMMA
Who's Rosa?

DANIEL
W- What?

EMMA
WHO'S ROSA?

DANIEL
I don't know what you're-

EMMA
Don't play dumb with me, I've seen
the e-mail!

She moves towards him and he backs down the hallway-

EMMA (CONT'D)
(doing sexy slut voice)
"Ooh, hi Daniel, meet me at Casa Di
Monaco on Saturday..."

DANIEL
It's not like that!

EMMA

Who is she?

DANIEL

She's a comedian-

EMMA

Bastard!

DANIEL

She's fat and old-

EMMA

Liar!

DANIEL

It's true!

EMMA

Stop lying!

DANIEL

I'm not having an affair-

EMMA

Don't do this to me!

DANIEL

I didn't! I tried stand-up tonight
and now she's booked me for
tomorrow night-

EMMA

You're lying!

DANIEL

I'm not! I promise you, I'm not!
Look it up! It's a comedy club in
Leicester Square, I'm performing on
Saturday night, 10PM, come along,
see for yourself, I'm not lying!

EMMA

Then... that's even worse!

DANIEL

What?! How?

EMMA

I have cancer, Danny! And you
flaunted it!

DANIEL

I didn't-

EMMA

You wanted me to worry! You
tortured me on purpose!

DANIEL

No, Emma-

EMMA

I didn't ask to get sick!

DANIEL

It's not that-

EMMA

You're a coward! You can't handle
the fact that I'm sick!

DANIEL

No!

EMMA

You're punishing me for my cancer!

DANIEL

I WANTED TO LEAVE BEFORE YOU GOT
CANCER!

They both freeze, shocked. He rushes to take it back-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

That's not true, I didn't mean it.

EMMA

What the fuck is wrong with you?!
I HAVE CANCER, YOU FUCKING PRICK!

DANIEL

Emma, I'm sorry-

EMMA

Get out.

DANIEL

Emma-

EMMA

Now!

DANIEL

But-

EMMA

I have my operation tomorrow! I
might fucking die, Daniel!

She's pushing him back towards the front door-

DANIEL

Emma-

EMMA
 Hey, Dr Fucking Ha-Ha Octopus
 Funnyman Judgemental Bald Fuck -
 GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!

Daniel stands there. But there's nothing more he can say. He turns and leaves, closing the door behind him.

She stands in the hallway, alone - then collapses in tears.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Daniel drives through the city. Mind racing. Lost.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emma tearfully cleans the kitchen, angry. Marigolds up to her elbows. She finally finishes, and catches her breath.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma lies in bed. Exhausted, but calmer. Deep in thought.

INT. CAR PARK - MORNING

Daniel wakes up in his car, looking terrible. He calls Luke.

LUKE (ON VOICEMAIL)
 Hi, you've got through to Luke's
 phone - Julie and I are on holiday!
 Leave a message and I'll get back
 to you next week, or if there's
 anything urgent: tell someone else!

DANIEL
 Hi. Um. It's Daniel. I know you're
 on holiday, but... I could really
 do with a chat.

INT. PUBLIC TOILET - MORNING

Daniel tries to wash his hair in a dirty broken sink.

INT. GREASY SPOON CAFE - DAY

Daniel sits in a greasy-spoon cafe. He looks at old photos of him and Emma on his iPhone. Nostalgic.

Suddenly it vibrates with a Calendar Reminder:

EMMA OPERATION - 60 MINUTES.

His finger hovers over the DISMISS button - and he forces himself to press it. He puts the phone away. His heel taps.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel speeds towards Central London. He hits traffic, so dumps his car and races down into a TUBE STATION.

INT. TUBE - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel looks anxious, willing the train to go faster.

EXT. FANCY HOSPITAL - HARLEY STREET - SHORTLY AFTER

Daniel runs towards the entrance just in time to see Emma getting out of her car. He runs out of his car and hugs her.

DANIEL

I can't let you do this alone.

Emma shoves him off her, exhausted. She takes a long moment. Trying to stay calm, not wanting a repeat of last night-

EMMA

...what are you doing here?

DANIEL

Em, I love you-

She sighs, desperate to stay lucid.

EMMA

...do you?

Daniel doesn't understand why she's being so calm.

DANIEL

You're my wife...

EMMA

Oh fuck the fucking marriage contract...

She starting walking towards the hospital. He follows her-

DANIEL

We ate baguettes in Paris, Em... we climbed the Great Wall of China...

EMMA

Generic shit, Daniel. All of it.

DANIEL

But...

EMMA

Please don't try and take it back.
It came out. It was honest. And I
feel sane for the first time in
years. Don't try and undo that.

DANIEL

I want to be there for you...

She spins round to face him, getting riled now-

EMMA

Why? Do you realise how horrible
it is when you try to act like the
nice husband but all I can see is
how miserable you are?

Daniel tries to process all this.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You're unhappy, Daniel. You're
unhappy, and it's made me unhappy,
and I don't want to go back to
that... God, I've witnessed you
sink and I tried everything, I
tried smothering you, I tried
giving you space, I tried being
myself and involving you, but how
many times was I supposed to invite
you out and hear another rejection?
Another "dance by yourself and cry
in the taxi home, you stupid slut"-

DANIEL

Emma, no-

EMMA

...North Korea?

Daniel is hit hard by that. He has nothing to say. But this
refusal to maturely engage infuriates her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

God, why am I the one who got
cancer? I go rowing, I eat fruit,
and salad, and bio-yoghurt. You
just go on your fucking computer
and pretend everything's okay. You
deserve to have cancer.

DANIEL

...I know.

EMMA

(losing control now)

What do you mean "I know"?! Can you
hear what you're saying? Don't say
"I know"!

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

Say "Fuck you, Emma, I *don't* deserve to have cancer and neither do you!"

DANIEL

...I'm sorry.

EMMA

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" - listen to what I'm fucking saying - I don't want Daniel People-Pleaser Worthing who can't stand not to be the cancer husband good guy! You can't fix this marriage with plasters, Daniel, we need chemo-fucking-therapy!

They stare at each other. She tries to calm down again.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I know I'm a bitch sometimes but I love you and I want your children and that's terrifying when you give me nothing to indicate you feel the same about me. I want you to want me, I *need* you to want me! I need you to want this, to want us, to want kids-

DANIEL

I do want kids...

EMMA

With me?

Daniel hesitates - a moment too long - and that's enough. She looks at him, now completely calm, trying to be rational-

EMMA (CONT'D)

We both need to think very hard about what we actually want, because the way we've been doing things has not been working.

She walks away, into the hospital. He looks destroyed, and clueless. What does he want? Does he even know?

INT. BAR - DAY

Daniel walks in and buys a pint. He downs it all in one go.

DANIEL

(to the bartender)

Same again.

The BARTENDER gives him a look - then reluctantly pours.

LUKE (ON VOICEMAIL) (PRE-LAP)
 Hi, you've got through to Luke's
 phone - Julie and I are on holiday!
 Leave a message and I'll get back
 to you next week, or if there's
 anything urgent...

INT. DANIEL'S UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT CORRIDOR - DAY

Daniel strides along, on the phone, drunk and dishevelled-

LUKE (ON VOICEMAIL)
 ...tell someone else!

DANIEL
 Hi *Luke*. It's *Daniel*. Hope you're
 having a *great* time in Paris. Ooh,
 you're in *Paris* with *Julie*! Lucky
 you! Is it *romantic*? Or is it
 actually a bit *shit*? You should
 have gone to Thailand and slept
 under the stars, I hear it's
amazing!

He SLAMS through a pair of double-doors, into--

INT. DRAB LECTURE THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

--the Drab Lecture Theatre from earlier, where his Colleague
 with the distinctive facial mole is covering his lecture
 class. There's a virtual reality Octopus on the PowerPoint.

Daniel strides up to his Colleague and slaps him on the back-

DANIEL
 (absolutely wasted)
 Hey Michael!

COLLEAGUE
 (sotto)
 Daniel, what's going on? You stink
 of alcohol-

DANIEL
 (to the class)
 Hello, students!

COLLEAGUE
 This is highly inappropriate-

DANIEL
 Oh is it? Ooh! Well you've got a
 cute little mole!

Daniel tries to diddle his mole, but the Colleague turns and
 leaves, irked. Daniel takes control of the podium-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What is love? Why do we love? How do you know if you're really in love? I've studied it for long enough, I should really know!

He sees his Colleague on the phone in the corner-

COLLEAGUE

(into phone)

Yes - I think he's having a breakdown.

Daniel points at a couple in the class, holding hands-

DANIEL

You probably think you're in love.
BZZZZZZZZ.

He mimes pressing an Incorrect Buzzer.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Have you done an experiment? Have you been in love with ten different people and kept the amount of eye-contact and physical touching constant to control for hormone balances then after all that compared your relative happiness in each relationship to find out who was really the one? BZZZZZZZZ.

He mimes the Buzzer again. Students are filming on their iPhones. Zoe The Celiac and some other COLLEAGUES burst into the lecture hall and approach him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Then you *don't* know.

He turns to the Cute Girl who took the photo with him before.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Maybe we're in love! Probably not. We have different interests. I like stand-up comedy and you like winning horse-riding medals.

The Cute Girl looks freaked out - how does he know that?

DANIEL (CONT'D)

But we could still probably trick ourselves into thinking we loved each other!

Zoe and his colleagues reach him and try to drag him out.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(shouting to her)
Will you marry me?

Almost every student has their iPhone out, filming this.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(wriggling against them)
No! Wait! I'm not finished! I don't
know if my wife has a magic vagina!

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Emma sits on a check-up bed. Distracted. Dr Tees comes in-

DR TEES
Hi Emma...

Emma straightens herself up-

EMMA
Oh, hi, sorry, I didn't know if
you'd be-

DR TEES
(calming)
Someone will take you up to surgery
in due course, I just wanted to say
hello now too...

Emma gives him a grateful smile, but she's clearly nervous.

DR TEES (CONT'D)
Try to relax. Dr Halschwager is our
best surgeon - although don't tell
him I said that, his head will
explode.

Emma fakes an unconvincing chuckle. He tries light small talk-

DR TEES (CONT'D)
Oh, I finally met your husband's
friend Poppy.

Emma doesn't understand-

EMMA
...Poppy?

DR TEES
I think that's her name - Phillip's
colleague. The one who put you in
touch with me.

Emma's face drops as she realises why Daniel lied.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Emma has her phone to her ear outside the ladies toilets.

EMMA

Hi... Poppy? It's Emma.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POPPY'S KITCHEN - SAME

Poppy butters a piece of toast, holding her cordless phone between her ear and her shoulder.

POPPY

Hey Em... how are you?

EMMA

I just wanted to thank you, I didn't realise you were the one who got me into this hospital.

Poppy is thrown - caught in Daniel's lie. She stops buttering and holds the phone properly.

POPPY

Okay, I'll be honest and I hope you'll forgive me and believe me when I say that I *hated* not being able to tell you this... I bumped into Daniel before I knew he was married or still with you, and we ended up going on a date...

Emma listens - stunned.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - EVENING

Daniel is unconscious on a long sofa. His Supervisor is working at his desk. Daniel stirs, looks around himself.

DANIEL

Oh god...

The Supervisor adopts a solemn, concerned pose by his side.

SUPERVISOR

How're you feeling?

DANIEL

Erm... hungover...

The Supervisor opens a mini-fridge and pulls out a slice of-

SUPERVISOR

Cake? To soak up the alcohol.

He hands him the slice, which Daniel gratefully accepts.

DANIEL
(starting to eat)
What happened?

SUPERVISOR
Dan, you broke into the university.
You tried to give a lecture whilst
drunk, which had very little to do
with the core syllabus. You made
reference to Michael's mole, and
you proposed to a student who
you've clearly been stalking on the
internet.

Daniel doesn't know what to say. The Supervisor sighs.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
You're an absolute legend... but
you are fired.

INT. UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT LOBBY - SHORTLY AFTER

STUDENTS huddle around iPhones, showing each other the video
of Daniel's breakdown rant.

Daniel comes through the double-doors, holding a box of
paltry desk clutter. Students notice him, and point.

One student begins a slow clap as he walks to the exit. More
join in. Some stand up. Daniel nods at them, distracted.

EXT. DANIEL'S UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel walks out of his Department for the last time, holding
his box of paltry desk clutter. He doesn't know where to go.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL OPERATION ROOM - LATER

Emma lies unconscious on the table as DR HALSCHWAGER and his
team of skilled junior surgeons and nurses calmly operate.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL SCANNING ROOM - LATER

Emma lies unconscious on the full-body MRI scanner as they
take a post-operation assessment scan.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL WARD ROOM - LATER

Emma is wheeled in and tucked up in bed for the night.

EXT. CAR PARK - DAWN

Daniel is asleep in his car. He wakes up, and immediately reaches for his phone to call the hospital. It rings, then-

DANIEL
Hello? Hi, yes, I'm calling to find
out how my wife's operation went
last night... it's Emma Worthing...

He waits nervously. Clearly troubled about not being there.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL WARD ROOM - SAME

Emma slowly wakes in her hospital bed. Someone is holding her hand. As her eyes adjust to the light, she sees: her father.

She withdraws her hand, waking him-

EMMA
(confused)
Dad...? What are you...?

He rubs his eyes, then quietly speaks, casual as ever-

ANDREW
Your chap called me. Told me he'd
rented a room at a hotel round the
corner. Said if I didn't use it,
he'd send me the bill. So I
thought, while I was here...

Emma doesn't laugh. Deeply conflicted about him being here.

He seems to realise that, and goes one step further-

ANDREW (CONT'D)
...I wasn't there for your mother.
Look where that got me.

This is all too much for Emma to process in one go.

EMMA
What... what did Daniel say to you?

ANDREW
Not Daniel... the other one...
Robbie?

Emma can't believe it. She looks touched, but torn.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
That doctor was in a few minutes
ago. I'll go tell him you're awake.

He struggles up and shuffles out. Emma is reeling.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - SAME

Daniel stares ahead in a daze, no longer on the phone.

His phone vibrates with a new e-mail. He opens his Inbox to find dozens of new e-mails downloading. He looks confused.

He opens one to find a YouTube link - to a leaked recording of his BREAKDOWN RANT titled "Daniel Worthing loses his s***". It's gone viral. He watches it in disbelief.

INT. POPPY'S KITCHEN - SAME

Poppy watches the same YouTube video of Daniel's breakdown. Stunned. It finishes, and she e-mails the link to Emma with the message: "You should probably see this..."

She clicks SEND - but then immediately feels bad. She pulls up Daniel's number on her phone and looks at it, conflicted.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - SAME

Daniel stares out at the bleak car park, digesting the whole mess of everything. His eyes fixate on a FAMILY BUSINESS VAN with a big logo:

GILMOUR & SONS - ESTABLISHED 1879

BRRRRRRING! His phone rings. It's POPPY. He answers-

DANIEL

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POPPY'S KITCHEN - SAME

POPPY

Daniel Worthing. YouTube Sensation.

DANIEL

...so you've seen it.

POPPY

Do you wanna come over and talk?

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL WARD ROOM - DAY

Alone in her room, Emma watches Daniel's breakdown on her iPhone. Mortified. Aghast. Deeply affected. This is the final straw. It finishes and she stares at the screen. Processing.

She presses play again and starts watching it a second time.

EXT. POPPY'S HOUSE - KENTISH TOWN - DAY

Daniel knocks on the door. He looks awful. Poppy opens it.

POPPY
God. You could use a shower.

INT. POPPY'S SHOWER - DAY

Daniel lets the water run over him. His eyes are caught by Poppy's razors. He looks at her tiny hairs in the blades.

INT. FANCY HOSPITAL CONSULTATION ROOM - NIGHT

Emma is in bed, still processing everything. Dr Tees enters with Andrew. He gives Emma a calm smile-

DR TEES
Morning Emma - how do you feel?

EMMA
Like I've been asleep for a hundred years.

DR TEES
(checking his watch)
Fourteen hours actually.

EMMA
Close enough.

Andrew snorts as he takes a seat.

DR TEES
Well, I was just telling your father that the operational risks were mitigated and the tumour was removed in one piece, which should hopefully reduce the number of chemotherapy sessions you'll need.

Emma can't believe it. She doesn't know what to say.

DR TEES (CONT'D)
(conspiratorially)
I know - Dr Halschwager will be gloating, I'm sure.

Emma smiles. Incredibly relieved to be in such good hands. He checks her stitches and looks pleased-

DR TEES (CONT'D)
These are healing up as we'd want them to...
(MORE)

DR TEES (CONT'D)

We'll certainly want to keep you in here today and tonight to make sure you keep healing up nicely, but all being well, there's a good chance you'll be able to sleep in your own bed this weekend.

Emma is overwhelmed with relief.

INT. POPPY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Daniel is flipping through a copy of THE JOURNAL OF ONCOLOGY, his hair damp from the shower. She is pouring them some tea.

DANIEL

You know, you do such important research. The things you guys figure out actually save lives...

POPPY

(handing him his tea)

Jesus... do you want to do what I do or do you want to be a comedian?

DANIEL

I think for once I just want to be the guy who says "Fuck it" and gets the spicy tapenade.

POPPY

(simple)

Well then, just... do that?

He looks at her - then lunges in for a kiss. She backs away-

POPPY (CONT'D)

Woah, Daniel, stop - that's not what I meant.

Daniel looks mortified.

DANIEL

Oh my god, I'm sorry-

POPPY

It's fine-

DANIEL

I'm so sorry-

POPPY

Stop it. It's fine. But that's not going to happen, okay?

Daniel looks humiliated. Poppy sees he regrets it.

POPPY (CONT'D)
 You need a friend right now. I'm
 Poppy, pleased to meet you.

She puts her hand out, and they shake. Friends.

DANIEL
 God... what is wrong with me?

Poppy closes the laptop and chuckles, mocking him-

POPPY
 You don't know if your wife has a
 magic vagina?

DANIEL
 (with a naive shrug)
 I don't... I literally don't.

POPPY
 Here's a clue: she doesn't. Neither
 do I. Neither does that frickin'
 toddler you proposed to on YouTube.
 We're all just normal people with
 normal problems and normal vaginas.
 No-one's special. But if you find
 someone who you love, who loves you
 too... that's special.

Daniel looks down, thinking very deeply. Then, quietly-

DANIEL
 And what if you've tried to make it
 work with every ounce of faith you
 have, but your gut is still telling
 you you're unhappy and hurting her?

He looks up at her. The look on her face makes him realise
 what he's just said. Fuck... he's finally got to leave her.

EXT. LEICESTER SQUARE - NIGHT

The bright lights of Leicester Square on a Saturday night.
 Excitement as people stream into CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB.

INT. CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Daniel surveys the impressive crowd. Rosa approaches-

ROSA
 Nervous?

DANIEL
 Distracted.

ROSA
How's the new stuff?

Daniel doesn't reply. He returns to studying some note cards.

INT. TAXI - SHORTLY AFTER

Emma sit in the back with Andrew, in silence. Her mind full of a million thoughts. They pulls up outside his hotel and he gets out - but before he goes inside, he gives Emma a little nod. She remains wary of him, but seems pleased he's come.

The driver pulls the car away and heads towards a big main road to take them out of the city centre - but then Emma sees a road sign showing a turning for Leicester Square.

She looks away, torn. Then, at the last second, she points-

EMMA
Sorry, can we actually go back into the centre?

The driver wearily obeys, taking the turn. Emma sits up straight in the back, her adrenaline suddenly flowing.

INT. CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB - LATER

Daniel and Rosa are watching the stage from behind a curtain. A comedian is finishing up his act. Daniel looks distracted. The Compere comes back on stage as the audience applauds-

COMPERE
Ben McFadden, everybody! Now if you think he was great, you're going to love our next act...

Daniel looks at his note cards one last time.

ROSA
Ready?

Daniel shrugs, and puts away the cards. Nothing left to lose.

COMPERE
...please give a warm welcome to Mr. David Wilberforce!

The audience whoops and cheer as Daniel walks out. This is the same stage, stool and microphone from the opening shot of the film. He takes the mic and the room falls quiet.

DANIEL
...Hi.

Silence. In the wings, Rosa watches, hooked.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Er - this is weird. You've all come out to see some comedy, but I really don't feel like being funny.

A few nervous laughs from the quiet crowd. At the back of the room, Emma walks in. She finds a space to watch from.

Daniel hasn't seen her. He continues-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

My name is not David Wilberforce, and I'm not a real comedian. My name is Daniel Worthing and in my day job I'm a neuroscientist. Which is sort of funny, I guess, because my job is to understand how the brain works, but I have no clue how my own brain works - I don't know what's making me unhappy. And for the longest time I thought that maybe the very fact that I didn't know what was making me unhappy, might have actually been what was making me unhappy....

It's deadly quiet, and the light in his eyes is so bright - but then he sees Emma watching. Near the back, perched on a stool by the bar. And he's completely thrown.

Their eyes meet. A moment of incredibly intense connection. The room is completely silent. He looks like he's going to falter. But he knows he has to plow ahead. So he carries on-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

...but now I've realised it's something deeper, something much more important. It's that unfortunately, even if I don't have the evidence or anything to compare it to, deep down I've known for a long time that I'm in the wrong relationship, and I've stayed in it for the wrong reasons.

The audience are a mixture of confused and hostile. But every word now seems to be delivered entirely to Emma.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I say I'm a neuroscientist, but I actually got fired yesterday, and I have to say, I deserved it. I've been a real prick lately. And when I say lately, I mean, for the last few years. I've been selfish and cowardly, just an awful person.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I've treated people who love me badly and never more so than in the past week. My wife got diagnosed with cancer last week and 3 days ago I told her I wanted a divorce.

The crowd are shocked. Emma is captivated by his honesty.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

And what's more, she's an amazing person. She's absolutely amazing. I look at these divorce websites and they're full of people saying "Oh, my wife's a bitch but at least I have my two amazing kids", but the thing is, my wife... she's not a bitch. She's just... not the woman I'm supposed to be married to. She's great, she's amazing, but we're such different people, we don't belong together, and if we hadn't met so young, we'd never have ended up together.

In the crowd, Emma has tears in her eyes. This is what she's been longing to hear, but it's still painful to hear it-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

But still, we did get together all those years ago, and for better or worse, we've shared nearly 12 years of our lives together... she might not be my soulmate, but... we don't have kids, there's nothing practical tying us together, so what, we're just supposed to cut the cord and never see each other again? Is that how it's supposed to work? We just walk away?

Daniel has real passion in his voice as he struggles on-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

That can't be the only way to do this - you meet someone and fall in love and if it doesn't work you have to cut them out of your life? Every time you like someone enough to date them, you're damning them to either end up your wife or a stranger?

Daniel's eyes are filling with tears now, but he carries on-

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I saw a van yesterday, one of those family business vans, and on the side it said "Gilmour & Sons, Established 1879. Services include Potted Plants, Pet Supplies, Door Mats, Fashion Fittings and Secure Data Destruction" - and I just loved that, because clearly, that family business has run it's course, you know? It was set up so long ago, probably by a Butcher or a Cobbler or something, and the new generation just has such different interests and ambitions that it doesn't matter how long that business has been in the family, it makes no sense at all for them to keep going - but I imagine Mr. Gilmour putting his foot down and saying to his kids, "Listen. No. I don't care what you want to do, you can do whatever you like with your lives, but one thing is non-negotiable. We're staying together. We're a family. We're not splitting up". And no, me and my wife weren't established in 1879. But so what if I like Potted Plants and she likes Secure Data Destruction? She's been my best friend for 12 years. She's my family. How can I leave her?

By now, the audience have figured out that he's talking to Emma, and that this is more than just a comedy routine.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

But I also know we can't carry on like this. We've both been pretending it could work for far too long, when we both know it's wrong, and all we do when we lie to ourselves and pretend we're happy is hurt each other. And I'm the most guilty. But I can't hurt her anymore. She deserves better than that, which is why I need to do the right thing at last. It's time for me to look into her eyes, and say something I should have said a long time ago...

Every single eye in the room is on them, but they're not looking at anyone but each other. It's just the two of them.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Emma... will you be my ex-wife?

She bursts out laughing, crying happy-sad tears, and nods profusely, their eyes locked as she whispers-

EMMA

Yes.

And just like that, Daniel and Emma are both finally free.

The confused Compere comes back on stage and tries to take the mic but Daniel darts back to add on last thing-

DANIEL

Meet me out the front, Em-

The Compere takes the mic and Daniel leaves the stage.

COMPERE

Everybody put your hands together
one more time for the avant-garde
stylings of Mr. David Wilberforce!

A few confused, scattered claps from the crowd.

EXT. CASA DI MONACO COMEDY CLUB (REAR EXIT) - NIGHT

Daniel walks out of the back door and heads towards Leicester Square. He turns the corner to see Emma waiting for him.

Their eyes meet. More connected than they've been in years.

EMMA

Good show.

He laughs. She laughs too. They're like nervous teenagers. He motions to her stitches-

DANIEL

How did everything go with...?

EMMA

Good. Really good.

Daniel looks incredibly relieved.

DANIEL

Good.

A comfortable silence. They're both just so relieved.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

If you ever want me to come to the
hospital with you, or anything...

EMMA

...I've got your number.

He laughs. So does she. They're on the same wavelength.

DANIEL
Let's not be strangers, Em.

She nods.

EMMA
It'll be hard... it'll take time...

DANIEL
I know, but... let's just keep
being honest.

Emma likes that. Moving carefully so as not to tear her stitches, she pulls him in for a gentle hug. A beautiful, freeing moment of release. Then they pull apart - both reluctant to let go, but knowing it's got to be done.

She's about to walk away into the night when he says-

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm pleased you said yes to that
dance.

That means a huge amount to Emma.

EMMA
I'm pleased I did too.

They look at each other one last time - it almost looks like she's going to say something more - but in the end she just nods, and disappears into the night.

Daniel just stands there, watching her go. All around him are crowds of people - hot young LONDONERS and excited TOURISTS. He stands motionless, staring out at where she disappeared.

Rosa strolls up behind him and gives him a friendly jostle-

ROSA
I didn't mean be *that* honest.

Daniel can't help but laugh, as he wipes his eyes.

ROSA (CONT'D)
Listen, obviously you'll never play
here again, but... give me a call
sometime. My life is really boring.

Daniel smiles, appreciative. She's about to go, then adds-

ROSA (CONT'D)
Hey - don't fear the wilderness.
People will forgive a few dodgy
years on the road to happiness.

DANIEL
And if I never find happiness?

ROSA
Then you're human.

She walks off into the night, leaving him finally alone.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - THAILAND - NIGHT

Torrential monsoon rain. Thunder and lightning.

Young Daniel (21) and Young Emma (21) stand at the window of a hotel lobby, looking out at the swimming pool.

DANIEL
This is crazy...

EMMA
Do you want to go swimming?

Daniel looks at her and laughs. Then realises she's serious. They race to strip off their clothes.

EXT. HOTEL SWIMMING POOL - THAILAND - CONTINUOUS

They run out into the rain and jump into the pool, laughing. They plunge underwater, and the sound of the rain is muffled.

They open their eyes underwater. Emma wiggles her finger at Daniel for him to come closer. He swims over and they kiss.

They rise to the surface and catch their breath.

DANIEL
Race you to the end?

EMMA
Hmmm... GO!

She darts off towards the other end.

DANIEL
Wha- No!

He swims after her as fast as he can.

BLACK. END CREDITS.