

I WISH, I WISH.

BY PETER SOUTER

HARTSWOOD FILMS

1 **EXT. RACING CIRCUIT. DAY.**

1

A seven-year-old girl walks slowly across an expanse of tarmac. Her pupils are pure white. Sightless.

In the heat haze behind her a scattering of brightly coloured dots appear. The dots grow rapidly, bearing down on her.

They are powerful racing bikes.

The bikes scorch directly towards the little blind girl at 200mph.

But at the last possible moment they all swerve left into a bend and we realise we have been slightly fooled by a long lens. The little blind girl turns out to be in the pit lane of a racing circuit. Suddenly she gets scooped up by Jessica Eddison, a head turning beauty in her late twenties.

JESS

Poppy!

(Trying to hide her panic)

It's a teeny bit dangerous if you go that way angel. Stay close to me... we'll find him.

2 **EXT. ROPED OFF PIT CREW AREA. DAY**

2

Jess steers Poppy towards a bright red trailer covered in Ducatti logos. There are several mechanics noisily tuning up bikes in the area around it and in the doorway stands Dean Spence, a fit looking man in racing leathers peeled to the waist. He is the owner of a perfect six pack and knows it.

JESS

Mr Spence?

DEAN

CARNEARYA.

The decibels dip as the pack of bikes recedes.

JESS

Mr Spence, I'm Jessica Eddison... from Kids Wish... We spoke last week?

DEAN

Oh yeah! With the blind Kid. Who likes 200mph bikes.

Dean smirks at a nearby pit monkey who feels obliged to smirk back. Another pack of bikes scream past forcing Jess to shout. (It's a track day rather than an actual race so the bikes keep coming.)

JESS
 ARE. YOU. STILL. ABLE. TO. TAKE.
 POPPY... (The bikes pass) for a little
 spin as we discussed?

Dean notices Jess' beauty for the first time. We get the slight feeling that Jess is used to the effect she has and is prepared to exploit it.

DEAN
 Sure thing baby.

JESS
 ...is there any chance you could ride
 something a bit safer...

She eyes a 50cc pit moped.

DEAN
 (Sweetly)
 Oh no, it would be morally wrong to
 cheat a blind girl.

He climbs astride the enormous Ducatti Demon the pit monkey is working on, fires up the deafening engine, zips up his leathers and pulls Poppy aboard.

JESS
 But...

DEAN
 Seriously, I've had kids on the back
 before, it's not a problem.

JESS
 (Relieved)
 Really?

DEAN
 Yeah, if I feel their grip loosening
 I just speed up. That generally
 makes 'em hold on tighter.

A helmet is loosely dumped on poppy's tiny head and Dean blasts out of the pit and becomes a blur.

Titles over Poppy and Dean hurtling around the track. Poppy screams with unrestrained delight. Jess just screams until its over.

TITLE: I WISH, I WISH.

4 EXT. HAMMERSMITH. DAY.

4

A big man in a worn leather jacket picks his way through an ugly 70's estate carrying a bright yellow plastic bag at arms length.

The bag has "BIO-HAZARD" written on it in large letters.

This is Ben Riley.

5 INT. BEN'S FLAT. DAY.

5

Ben sits at a small kitchen table opposite his son Christian. The boy is painfully thin and has no hair.

BEN

Melon and ice cubes, blended into a smoothie and garnished with a sprig of mint.

There is a long pause. Neither move.

BEN (CONT'D)

Ok. Mint Aero bars and Polos, also blended with a little ice and perhaps a dash of lime cordial.

The boy sighs, gives his father a pitying look and then grabs a plastic beaker of noxious looking green fluid and gulps down the contents in three desperate glugs. His delicate features contort as he struggles to hold the liquid down.

CHRISTIAN

I wish that visualisation thing actually worked.

BEN

(Mock harsh)

You're probably not doing it right. Concentrate harder tonight. See the Polo's. Be the Polo's.

He puts the beaker in a bin marked hazardous waste and removes the surgical gloves he has to wear when handling it. Then he scoops the child up and carries him back to bed.

6 JESS' HOUSE. DAY.

6

In close up we see some wheatgrass growing in a little pot. And pair of scissors trims a handful of shoots off and we watch as they are dropped into an expensive blender. Two level teaspoons of yoghurt are meticulously measured into the same jug and then a ridiculously small drop of honey is dropped on top.

Pause. Then a finger enters frame and scoops the honey back out again and rinses it away into the sink.

6 CONTINUED:

6

Finally the blender goes on and a small cupful of green liquid (rather like the one Ben was dispensing though at the opposite end of the frivolity scale) is produced.

We see Jess drink it. She obviously has plenty of time on her hands and a fair amount of self obsession to spend it on.

7 **EXT. VAUXHALL. DAY.**

7

A brand new Orange Range Rover Sport driven by Jess picks its way through a dirty Vauxhall side street as if on tiptoes. It arrives at a dull building with a jolly sign: **Kid's Wish.**

8 **INT. KID'S WISH RECEPTION. DAY**

8

A young volunteer is hanging pictures on newly painted walls. They are huge, beautiful shots of obviously sick children, all smiling broadly. Some are on rides at Euro Disney, some in the company of famous footballers or pop stars, some standing with groups of friends by comically long pink Limos. All look like they are having the best day of their lives. Some look like their lives are not destined to last much longer. Kid's Wish, it seems, is a volunteer organisation that arranges wishes for seriously ill and dying children

Jess walks along the corridor looking at the pictures, she seems like a newcomer. Suddenly she is scooped up Rebecca, a woman so similar to Jess that she could only be her sister. Rebecca is five years older, ten years more confident and a century louder.

REBECCA

(As if dictating a letter home)
"Day two. I think I'm getting the hang of this, though some of the other girls in my class seem a little crude."

JESS

I can't believe I let you talk me into this. My first one was a disaster...

9 **INT. KID'S WISH OFFICE. DAY.**

9

Jess is working with Rebecca and Kent, 50, the chief coordinator. They are unpacking boxes and trying to reduce the chaos in the new premises.

KENT

A squeelie?

JESS

You know, a squeelie. Where they go along on just the back wheel.

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

The bastard did a squeelie at 180mph with a blind seven-year-old clinging to his six-pack.

REBECCA

She means a wheelie. My sister is involved in a life long struggle with the English language.

JESS

(Ignoring her) I was screaming so loud I nearly turned inside out.

REBECCA

And the six pack?

JESS

Poppy, of course, was delighted. Insisted on going around again.

REBECCA

Back to the sixie. Did you see it?

JESS

I saw everything. Turns out you can't wear anything under the leathers for aerodynamic reasons.

REBECCA

(Mock Sulk)

Bitch. That wish was mine until you swanked in here.

KENT

We got a lovely letter from the parents. Sounds like you handled your first one well Jess.

JESS

Yes, well I think his plan was to handle me. Poppy saved me by burning her calf on an exhaust pipe. A trip to first aid preferable to a trip to 'love heaven' with Dean.

REBECCA

(Cheerfully)

Fool. We have dozens of sick children around here and very few naked bike champions.

KENT

Anyway. Now you've done an easy wish, ready for a brain tumour?

JESS
(Suddenly small)
What?

KENT
Not necessarily terminal, though
obviously not ideal in a twelve year
old.

JESS
Kent I...

KENT
Boy wants to meet a Fulham player.
Shouldn't be too tricky. Single
Dad, a bit depressed apparently. Who
can blame him? Fulham fan for a son.
There's the file, they are expecting
you tomorrow.

JESS
(Steeling herself)
Okay.

REBECCA
How about me Kent. Colin Firth?
Trip to Barbados?

KENT
Penny McFall, dying of some vicious
cancer or other, also dying to meet
Jimmy Saville, ageing deejay and
track suit wearer, for reasons that
defy understanding.

He passes her a picture of Saville, he of the bleached
haired, gold tracksuit and ancient face.

REBECCA
Have I upset you in some way Kent?

KENT
Must go and bawl pointlessly at
Polish builders... shout if you need
help.

Jess is still getting over the idea of her new wish. Rebecca
has seen the look in her eye before, again she does her
impersonation of a school girl doing her journal...

REBECCA
"Dear Diary, things have got a tiny
bit more difficult and I am
seriously thinking about giving up
and going home to stare in the
mirror instead."

9 CONTINUED: (3)

JESS

Go boil your head. Boil it, strain it and then pop it back on a low heat to simmer some more.

She's annoyed her sister is right as usual.

10 EXT. HAMPSTEAD. DAY. 10

Jess enters the front door of a sumptuous and slightly showy Hampstead house.

11 INT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY. 11

The interior is massive but a little sterile. No evidence of children. Only new money. There are big rooms and expensive furniture. A hired designer has been at work here. And he seems to have taken most of his brief from the man of the house.

Jess chucks her coat on an impractical Phillepe Stark hat stand. It pauses for a moment before falling to the ground.

12 INT. JESS' LIVING ROOM. DAY. 12

As she walks in we see her husband Andrew, 40, a polished looking man clicking away on a blackberry and talking into a mobile at the same time in a low, controlled voice.

ANDREW

I don't much care, do it anyway....

He walks towards her still texting and talking. But when he reaches her he chucks the Blackberry on the sofa, takes her in and unleashes a full dose of his megawatt attention.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Spam, I have to go now because a fantastically beautiful woman has just walked in and I need to shag her before my wife gets home...wait though! She actually is my wife, result!

He clicks shut the mobile without saying goodbye to whoever it was and kisses her. One tanned and muscular hand slips easily inside the band of her skirt.

JESS

I don't need to ask if you had a good day then. That's your money making stiffy.

ANDREW

Rubbish. All down to you Piglet.

Jess is happy to believe him and joins the kiss more passionately. The mobile rings, he flicks it open.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Get lost, I'm doing something important...

JESS

Technically you are not actually doing me yet.

Andrew smiles broadly but...continues the call.

ANDREW

What!?! (To Jess) One second baby, sorry...That's not a return, I'd get more cash running my hand down the back of the sofa...

He peels away and the light goes off Jess. She's slightly pouty but lets the moment pass.

Jess has her wish files out, Andrew has the football on but is tapping at a laptop too.

JESS

Do you know anyone at Fulham Babe? I have a new wish, a boy with...

ANDREW

Whatsiname... Fenton... He owns 10% I think. (Remembering) Oh but you can't call him.

JESS

Why not?

He glances up at her and smiles.

ANDREW

Because I stiffed him out of a factory in Portugal, so we're not on speaking terms.

Jess crinkles her brow, disappointed. There is a slightly unappealing "Daddy, buy me that doll" element to her face. This is how she gets what she wants from men. Andrew duly responds.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Maybe his wife can sort it though, don't think he discusses his laughable business acumen with her. Want me to call her?

13 CONTINUED:

JESS

No, just give me her number.

He flicks it up on the ever present Blackberry, Jess notes it down and they settle back into their slightly separate evenings, everything rosey...ish.

14 EXT. HAMMERSMITH. DAY,

14

Ben and Christian pick their way from their flat to the nearby hospital. Christian is not going anywhere fast which makes crossing the busy road difficult. A Motorbike blasts past them and earns a volley of frustrated abuse from Ben, thankfully masked by its engine noise.

Eventually they make it inside.

15 INT. HAMMERSMITH HOSPITAL. DAY.

15

We see a dizzying medley of tests take place to the heartbreaking strains of FIX YOU by Coldplay. Scans, examinations, assorted prodding's and finally Christian is covered in lead sheets and a bright, ugly light is aimed at a tiny tattooed cross on the dome of his head. Then we see a dozen cross section scans of the boys head spread on a large wall mounted light box. We spiral in on a tiny white spot on the scans until it grows on screen and eventually consumes the entire picture in a flare of white light. The song ends.

16 INT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY.

16

Andrew and Jess are in the large hall of their house. They each prepare to leave at tables on opposite sides of the hall.

They arm themselves with mobiles and blackberries, coats and bags, then meet in the middle.

JESS

What time will you...?

ANDREW

Seven-ish.

JESS

Sisters night, don't forget.

ANDREW

Eleven-ish then.

JESS

You love them really.

16 CONTINUED:

ANDREW

I genuinely don't.
 (He grabs her hips and
 thrusts them against his
 own.)
 You must be adopted. Only
 explanation.

They kiss briefly and then both pretend to spit out the bad
 taste of the kiss onto the floor.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Peyuh!

JESS

Peyah, peyah!

It's both cute and slightly telling. A familiar rhythm.

17 **EXT. BEN'S FLAT. DAY.**

17

Jess parks her car behind a burnt out Ford and thinks twice
 before getting out. She walks up to the communal door of a
 low, ugly unit of flats and rings the bell. There's no reply.
 She tries calling through the letterbox.

JESS

Hello? Anyone there?

She rings again and finally someone comes. Ben opens the
 door.

BEN

(Blank)
 Yes?

JESS

I'm Jessica Eddison... from Kid's
 Wish?

An awkward pause.

JESS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry maybe I got the wrong..

She tries the little girl lost thing which usually works a
 treat on most men. But Ben is immune.

BEN

No. You didn't.

JESS

Is your son...
 (Consults file)
 ...Is Christian here?

BEN

Yes, he's always here. He falls over quite a lot at the moment. So we stay indoors where there's impact absorbing carpet. Albeit of an unpleasant swirly patterned nature.

Pause. Jessica looks hopelessly out of place, a flower in a scrap yard.

BEN (CONT'D)

But he's sleeping. He needs to sleep a lot. Radioactivity takes the spring out of your step.

JESS

I'm sorry. I'm sorry to hear that.

BEN

Yeah. Bummer huh?

JESS

I didn't, I mean... I'm a bit new to this, to the...

BEN

Pointless do-gooder business?

JESS

I don't think it's...

BEN

Cured anyone yet? I hear a ride in the Magic Kingdom fixes up Leukaemia a treat...

JESS

Mr Riley maybe I should come back another...

BEN

Please yourself.

And he shuts the door in her face. Jess is absolutely amazed. We get the feeling that a door has never closed in her face before, either literally or metaphorically. She stands there for a minute and then wanders back to her car embarrassed and angry.

There's a melodic bing-bong and Jess jigs to the door cheerily.

When she opens it two women barrel through the door talking simultaneously. They are her sisters Rosanna and Rebecca.

REBECCA

(To Jess)

Eat more pies you ridiculous stick insect...

ROSANNA

I'm thinking of having fat sucked out of my bottom and injected into yours Jessica. Is that okay by you?

JESS

Nibbles in the blue room.

REBECCA

What kind of person colour codes her rooms anyhow?

ROSANNA

One with too many rooms.

JESS

We don't have to do this in my house every week.

REBECCA

Yes we do.

ROSANNA

Posher nibbles.

REBECCA

Comfier sofas.

ROSANNA

Better class of cutlery to steal.

JESS

That's where all my teaspoons have gone.

Jess is left with an armful of coats which, after a moments thought and a glance at the treacherous Stark coat-stand, she just dumps on the floor.

Rosanna loads Desperate Housewives into the DVD which they proceed to talk all over it whilst eating and drinking everything they can lay hands on.

Jess eats a solitary stick of celery. And doesn't even finish it.

ROSANNA

Is it called the blue room because this is where Andrew watches porn when you've gone to bed?

JESS

Don't speak ill of my beloved husband.

ROSANNA

Oh, have you remarried since we last met? Who's the lucky fellow?

JESS

Do what you do best. Eat.

ROSANNA

I will. Now I know the fat is ending up on your ass. How's the new fad?

JESS

Fad?

REBECCA

She means the wishes.

JESS

It's not a fad.

ROSANNA

What was wrong with my idea?

JESS

I don't want to buy a puppy.

ROSANNA

But Puppies are an excellent child substitute.

There's suddenly an ugly, silent hole in the air. Rebecca scowls at Rosanna.

ROSANNA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry baby, I...

JESS

Don't worry... Don't make it into a thing again.

REBECCA

Okay. Lets talk about me instead. This morning my Pilates instructor got a stiffy while he was extending my thigh ligaments.

ROSANNA

You said he was gay.

REBECCA

Evidently I cured him.

19 CONTINUED: (2)

JESS

It's not a disease Becca.

ROSANNA

Maybe he thought your arse was
fetchingly masculine...

We pull away from them as they settle into a rhythm. A fun night.

20 INT. JESS' BEDROOM. NICHT

20

Happy, Jess gets ready for bed. She slips on a white vest and a pair of cute pink PJ bottoms that hang low on her hips. While cleaning her teeth she rubs her fingers along the two small scars that sit just above her bikini line..one for each fallopian tube. The left one is old and pale, the right one is newer and redder. The evenings cure is only temporary.

21 INT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY.

21

We see Jess and Andrew's leaving routine through the big glass doors, this time without words. The kiss and spit routine still seems cute. Then, after they have each selected a car from one of the four expensive choices parked in their drive, they drive off in opposite directions.

22 INT. THE ROUNDHOUSE, CAMDEN. DAY.

22

We find Jess hovering on the outskirts of a large make over party. Many of the children are severely disabled or gravely ill. Rebecca is in the thick of it, experienced and relaxed. Jess, fiddles with a pile of napkins and pretends to check messages on her phone unable to dive in, stalling.

REBECCA

(Spotting Jess) Jessica! Do nails.

There's a little table with play manicure equipment laid out on it. Jessica settles at it relieved. This she can do. Rebecca trundles over a little girl in a wheel chair that has various braces that hold up its limp occupant.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Carrie wants to be blinged to within an inch of her life. We're talking rhinestones, we're talking metallic varnish...

The little girl does not speak, perhaps can't.

JESS

(smiling) Coming up.

Jess unfolds Carrie's left hand. She is so ill that there are basically no nails left on her fingers. Jess looks like she wants to run away or be sick, perhaps both.

There's a long pause. They stare at each other. Jess is frozen. The little girl less so...

CARRIE.
Rhinestones!

Jess jumps and then...gets to work. She paints gold metallic varnish on the rough skin where Carrie's nails aren't. As she works her flightiness recedes and her confidence begins to grow a little.

Soon the little girl has a passable attempt at blinging nails twinkling on her fingers. She holds up her left hand.

CARRIE. (CONT'D)
Not. Bad.

JESS
Thanks.

Then she holds up her right hand and pulls a face.

CARRIE.
Not. Great.

They exchange grins, friends over the nail polish.

JESS
Keep that hand in your pocket maybe.

CARRIE.
Good. Call.

Carrie swivels the joystick on her chair and she twirls off at impressive speed. It's a small but important breakthrough for Jess.

Ben and Christian sit with another little plastic cup of vile green liquid. Neither move. Then with an unexpected flourish Ben produces a can of squirty cream and a glazed cherry. He swirls an extravagant creamy cap onto the green gunk and then pops the cherry on top.

CHRISTIAN
Goof.

Again with a deadpan expression Ben puts an additional swirl of cream directly onto Ben's bald head.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Goof, the whole goof and nothing but the goof.

Jess and Rebecca are sorting through wish requests. Sorting wishes by expense, practicality and the sickness of the child. Difficult and occasionally heartbreaking work. We see it from a distance without hearing specifics then drift in when they take a break and sip coffee and biscuits.

Well, coffee and Hobnobs for Rebecca. Hot water and a rice cracker for Jess.

JESS

The make over thing was good I think. The other day? (Fishing) Did you think?

REBECCA

(Withholding praise) Yeah it was okay.

JESS

Did Carrie have a good time in the end?

REBECCA

Who?

JESS

Carrie. With the nails. Without the nails.

REBECCA

Oh yes! Yes she had a great time. Laugh riot that girl.

JESS

Oh that's great.

REBECCA

Yeah and then she died.

JESS

What??

REBECCA

(Less casual than she makes out) Yeah, she died. The next day.

JESS

She died?!? The next..the girl with the nails??

REBECCA

It was nail varnish Jess, not the elixir of life.

JESS

She's dead?

REBECCA

Yeah. Harsh, huh?. Still, that's the point isn't it? That's what we're supposed to do. Instead of getting hair extensions or shagging the tennis coach. We're supposed to give them their dying wish. You know...before they die. Even if its just nice nails.

Jess is knocked sideways.

JESS

Becca, I don't know if I can... I don't know if I could be like you...

REBECCA

Hey, sod off. I'm as upset as anyone. Should have seen me after my first one...nearly didn't come back. But you can't drop out. You're not allowed. This has to get done. And it's the rich, shallow and gorgeous girls like you and me, though I say it myself, who have to do it. Because everyone else is too busy or too squeamish to get stuck in.

JESS

I... I guess..

REBECCA

And you get tougher. You just get on with helping the next person. And you have a laugh because if you don't then you start crying. And you never stop.

There's a pause. Rebecca almost daring Jess to be feeble.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

How's it going with whatshisname... Ben?

JESS

Not brilliantly. My face is practically flat from having the door slammed in it.

REBECCA

Your face always has been pretty flat. (Expecting a yes) Want me to take over?

24 CONTINUED: (2)

JESS

(Pause) No. No I'll...I'll try again.

25 **EXT. BEN'S FLAT. DAY.**

25

Jess has another encounter with the unresponsive doorbell.

BEN

(Off) I'M COMING. Jesus, have a little patience! (Opening up) ...Oh... it's you. Didn't think they'd send you again...(he's not embarrassed but maybe slightly softened by her persistence)... You're early aren't you?

JESS

Yes, a little.

She pulls out her notes, flustered and vulnerable. Since he seems uniquely immune to her charms she feels like Superman in the presence of Kryptonite.

JESS (CONT'D)

I wanted to discuss your son's needs while he's on the wish. Travel, diet and so on...and maybe meet him?

BEN

Well. You'd better come in then...

26 **INT. BEN'S FLAT. DAY.**

26

Jess picks her way down the bike-strewn hall that leads to Ben's flat.

BEN

...Mind yourself on that.. and that. Tread on those by all means, they belong to the skank headed morons upstairs....

JESS

Oh, your neigh ...ouch!...

Jess impales herself on an unseen bike part.

JESS (CONT'D)

Ow, ow OW...

She looks up girlishly, expecting sympathy and chivalry. But Ben just waits for her to stop making a fuss. Again her beauty and Princess-ishness are nothing to him. She stops hopping about, embarrassed.

BEN

You need to step back...

The door to the tiny flat turns out to open into the hall.
Ben acknowledges this unusual arrangement.

BEN (CONT'D)

Breaks every fire restriction known
to man but we figure when the drug
addicts set themselves alight we'll
hear the screams before we inhale
much smoke ourselves...

They go inside. There's an awful pause, Jess unsure of where
to start, Ben in no mood to help her out.

The palpable tension is broken by Christian walking into the
room.

CHRISTIAN

What's occurring (Grinning at Jess)
How come there's another human being
in our house?

BEN

This is Christian...

JESS

Oh hi, hi... I'm Jess.

CHRIS

Blimey Dad. Result. Hubbah hubbah!

BEN

Christian that's more of a private
con...

CHRIS

(Explaining to Jess)
First one to spot a babe has to
shout Hubbah hubbah! It's immature
I know but it makes Dad happy. He
saw it in a film I think...

BEN

Moving swiftly on...

JESS

It's really nice to meet you
Christian...

CHRIS

No use hitting on me baby, you're
way too old and I'm pretty sick.
Dad's free though. Some would say
desperate.

BEN

You can see why I've sold everything
to keep him alive can't you?

There's a moments awkwardness.

CHRIS

How are you on Grand Theft Auto?

JESS

I am, as it happens, outstanding.
Why, are you looking to get your
puny ass spanked?...

They disappear into his room and Ben, a little surprised by
this more capable Jess, turns to gather together the stuff
they need to take with them.

Andrew is winding up a speech to a gathering of businessmen.
At the back of the hall his pretty, 23 year old assistant
Candy is watching his performance and timing her powerpoint
to match his words. Next to her, taking copious but probably
unnecessary notes is Spam, a slightly goofy junior exec.
Andrew signals the changes to Candy with tiny hand signals.
They are well attuned.

ANDREW

We need to recognise that if we are
not working with the Chinese...one
day soon we'll be working for them.
Thanks for your attention.

There is enthusiastic applause from the 50 or so delegates as
Andrew leaves the little stage. He collects back pats and
nods of approval as he goes. By the time he reaches Candy
she has already packed up his laptop and is ready to leave.

CANDY

Not bad. Couple of them were still
awake at the end.

ANDREW

I rocked. You know I rocked. I
know you know I rocked. My rockdom
is, in fact, universally recognised.

SPAM

Universally!

Candy and Andrew shoot him identical looks of pity.

CANDY

Your poor neck. (She mimes a big head.) Cars on the corner, you've got 15 minutes before you meet Mrs Eddison.

ANDREW

I need a bucket of Nurofen, I've got another of my...

Before he can finish Candy hands him three white pills and a glass of water.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

...Thanks. Did you get the thing?

CANDY

Of course.

She hands him a turquoise box and they make for the door.

Jess is waiting at a window table. She sees Andrew coming and runs a quick hand through her hair out of habit. He walks in looking powerful and well groomed, still buoyed by his earlier success.

He reaches the table and chucks a little turquoise Tiffany box at her.

JESS

What's the occasion?

ANDREW

It's the anniversary of our first kiss.

JESS

No it's not.

ANDREW

(Grinning) Look, do you want it or not?

JESS

Depends on what it is...

But she's clearly pleased, and he's cheerful too. Jess unwraps the box. It's a little silver pig with diamond eyes. Jess swallows her disappointment.

ANDREW

It's to butter you up in fact. I've got to go to China again,...sorry.

JESS

Don't flatter yourself. Always glad to see the back of you, you grumpy bastard. Especially as you go to Tiffany's and this is the best you could come up with.

ANDREW

I sent Candy as it happens. Blame her.

He grins, trying to wind her up. She pouts back, trying to wind him up.

JESS

Maybe I'll run off with Candy while you're away. Sapphic love is all the rage according to Grazia.

ANDREW

I'm taking her with me to prevent just such an eventuality. Want to hear about my epic success with the stiffs this morning?

JESS

Not in the slightest. Want to hear about my Fulham wish tomorrow?

ANDREW

Rather jam these steak knives in my ears.

Both enjoy this mock grumpy exchange.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Aren't you going to put it on?

The little pig comes with a silver chain.

JESS

No, I'm going to return it obviously. Don't you know me at all? I've ordered you a steak that's so rare that it's practically still mooing and some green beans on the off chance you might eat one.

ANDREW

You calling me predictable?

JESS

Knew you were going to say that.

We cut outside and see them through the plate glass window chatting cheerfully. Candy waits patiently in the car.

29 INT. BEN'S FLAT. NIGHT. 29

Ben goes through the nightly routine. A humidifier is filled and turned on. A row of pills is set out for Christian, followed by the terrible green drink.

As Ben goes through each step meticulously the frail child lays out his Fulham kit for the next morning with equal care.

There's a sweet yet claustrophobic quality to the little snapshots of their life together.

30 EXT. FULHAM FOOTBALL GROUND. DAY. 30

We hear the noise of a football crowd spilling into the street. Then we see an orange Range Rover driving away from the ground at speed.

31 INT. JESS' RANGE ROVER. DAY. 31

CHRIS

(Weakly)

I'm sorry Mrs Eddison. I know you must have been to a lot of trouble...

BEN

Shh sweetheart. It's not important.

JESS

We can go another time. It's easy. My friend's husband basically owns the club. We could probably get them to play the next home game in your garden if we move a few bikes.

She is blabbering, freaked.

CHRIS

Dad, I feel sick again...

BEN

Nearly home beautiful, close your eyes.

JESS

Ben, are you sure home is the right... I'd be happy to take you to the...

BEN

No. Home is... he needs to rest. Falling over is his body's way of saying 'lie down'. The torrent of puke is meant to subtly underline the point I think.

CHRIS

(Weak indignation)

It wasn't a torrent. Well, not a huge torrent.

JESS

I'll put the match on a DVD. I'll send it to you tomorrow.

BEN

No rush.

CHRIS

No DVD player. And the CD drive on my computer has jam in it.

BEN

(Embarrassed but kind)

Shut. UP.

JESS

I... oh look, a space right outside, one sec...

BEN

Thanks. Er..Thanks for everything... could you get the door? I'll have to carry him.

JESS

Yes, I'm sorry, here...

BEN

Bye...

JESS

Do you want me to...

BEN

(Distant)

No, we're fine. Bye. Thanks...

Pause.

JESS

(Quietly)

Christ. Christ alive.

Jess and Rebecca are editing together footage of various wishes on a Mac. Rebecca is surprisingly proficient in i-movies, Jess is good at timing and knows which bits are the most moving.

JESS

There, when she turns away from Mickey and looks right at camera.

REBECCA

Okedoke...

Rebecca clicks and drags and then replays the sequence. It is a very powerful, emotional medley of wishes with the birth and death dates of the children on screen supered at the end of each wish.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

(Slightly surprised) You're good at this.

JESS

You're good at that.

REBECCA

My holiday videos are epic and erotic masterpieces darling.

JESS

Think we're nearly done.

REBECCA

Tightwad business men will weep salty tears.

Still watching the replay Jess gets up and pulls her jacket on.

JESS

Have to go, got to work on the Fulham thing I can't seem to get done....

Rebecca follows her to the car. They weave amongst the other volunteers on the way.

REBECCA

Do you want me to take it?

JESS

Tempting. (She swerves away from admitting defeat)
But I know the people who own the club and the arrangements have to be flexible because the boy is pretty sick...

REBECCA

I've met him actually. We helped them move.

She opens their file and scans Ben's picture, remembering.

When they had to sell their house and go to that God-awful flat by the hospital. Why do they build all the children's hospitals in the crack estates? Whose idea of a joke is that anyhow?

JESS

Yes, it's not a laugh extravaganza there.

REBECCA

God handed them the shittiest end of the shittiest stick. It explains his thing, the anger. And then some. No wife, not sure why. The child gets very sick. The bills mounted up, the travel, the time off work. Then they started a private treatment, supposed to be revolutionary, hasn't done much so far except empty out their bank account. I quite fancied him actually, when he wasn't throwing stuff. Course it would take a while to hunt out the bed under all the crap.

This is just run of the mill teasing from Rebecca. But, almost to her surprise, Jess betrays the tiniest hint of jealousy.

JESS

(Deflecting) Like I said... you and Rosanna are essentially the slut sisters. I'm more the angelic one that everyone likes better than you.

They reach Jess' car then kiss and part.

Christian sits looking tiny in the middle of Andrew's huge curved sofa. The wall plasma blasts out the recording of the Fulham match they missed. The presence of the boy, surrounded by crisp bags and drinks, lightly underlines the rather sterile, childlessness of the house.

Ben sits next to him, watching the match while Jess hovers slightly awkwardly. The boy nudges his Dad.

CHRISTIAN

Be nice, foolparent.

Ben mouths "nice?" Christian withers him with a stare and Ben is forced to his feet..

BEN

Could I...er...see the garden?

JESS

Sure...

They walk through the big sliding glass windows into the garden.

BEN

Thanks for...

JESS

Well...you wouldn't take the DVD player...

BEN

We don't...

JESS

(Kindly)

Even though you practically get them free when you buy a pint of milk these days.

BEN

I, er, read to him mostly.

Another uncomfortable silence is broken by Christian yelling at the plasma for showing something that didn't altogether go Fulham's way. Ben meanwhile can't help but love the garden. He bends down to look at one of the less spectacular plants.

BEN (CONT'D)

Love-in-a-mist. My favourite weed.

JESS

Ooh, should I yoink it out? I'm afraid a little man comes and does.

BEN

It's not really a weed. I just like it because its scruffy but has a poetic name. Like me.

JESS

Ben?

BEN

Ok, poetic soul then. Still, I like that its snuck in here and squatted with the toff plants.

JESS

Like I say we don't really...Andrew says that gardens are just for making your neighbours further away.

The Garden is vast, like the house. Ben takes in the obvious wealth.

BEN

So Andrew (checking the name) is what...an international drugs smuggler?...arms dealer?...hugely successful pimp?

He regrets that last one... but Jess laughs.

JESS

All those things maybe... but most of the time he pretends that he just makes deals. Toys, White goods... anything that he can pick up cheaper than he sells them for.

BEN

Hmmn, I don't know. To get a house this big and fancy I reckon he must mostly sell those guns that fire prostitutes packed with Cocaine.

She smiles. Then, a small miracle, Ben smiles back. But then he looks oddly at her beautiful, open face and quickly puts his smile back into its dusty box. Jess is thrown.

JESS

So er... no Mrs Riley?

BEN

No.

Big pause, Jess has no choice...

JESS

Is she... dead?

BEN

No. She's French.

JESS

(None the wiser)

Oh.

BEN

(Giving in)

Ok, I suppose that's not the complete explanation. She left. Things were not utterly peachy before...

(he means before the tumour)

Christian managed to carry us both for a while.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Picked us up on his tiny back and lugged us through all the tests and the poking and the gunk. But she wasn't as strong. She slipped off and... bounced back to Paris. She still writes and phones and makes these lovely pictures. But essentially she ran. Got another baby now and a 'Pierre' too apparently.

JESS

I'm sorry.

Ben's face is firmly set. He picks a dead leaf from a fern, clearly knowing what he's about in a garden. Then looks around for somewhere to dispose of the leaf. Jess reaches out and takes it from him. Their hands touch and their eyes meet. An unexpected connection. Jess tucks a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

BEN

You've... got a... shade loving fern a bit exposed there...

JESS

Oh...er, darn. (Quietly keen to get the conversation back on track)
It's usually...the dad who leaves.

BEN

Yes, I'm a statistical aberration. But why should we always get away with it? Why should the woman always have to stick around? Maybe I stay because I love him less than her. Maybe being able to stay is no better than loving him so much you can't bear to watch. Anyway, she couldn't...so she didn't.

JESS

I can't imagine...

BEN

It's fine. Naturally, on a slow night, I make little wax models of her and stick sharp things into them, cut up her clothes, that sort of thing... (akward pause)... At least she's not an international criminal like your...

ANDREW

(Off) Hi Pig.

33 CONTINUED: (4)

Andrew walks past the open window battering his Blackberry with his thumbs.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Stop cutting the leilandai. The idea is to obscure that steel and glass bollock next door...

It takes them both a moment to realise that Andrew has mistaken Ben for the gardener. Jess is embarrassed.

JESS

I'll call interpol,... see if they'll come arrest him.

Ben goes to Christian and helps him get ready to leave.

34 INTERIOR. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT.

34

Jess and Andrew share a meal, both eating from a bowl of Nachos on Jess's knee. They seem close.

ANDREW

Didn't think much of your new boyfriend.

JESS

Huh?

ANDREW

The gardener.

JESS

He's one of my wishes you dolt.

But she flushes slightly.

ANDREW

I'm just saying you could do better, pretty girl like you.

JESS

You were rude to him.

ANDREW

I'm very possessive.

JESS

You're a dolt. In a dolt's hat. And wearing a dolt's overcoat.

She bashes him and she gently bashes her back. Then he glances at her sideways...

ANDREW

These wishes. Are they a...

JESS

A what?

ANDREW

Are they a baby thing?

JESS

No. I don't think so. No.

ANDREW

You're just cruising for studs.

JESS

Yeah.

ANDREW

Fair play.

Jess looks like she wants to talk about the "baby thing"...but can't. And neither can Andrew.

35

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HEATH. DAY.

35

The sisters are running up Golder's Hill. Rebecca is flagging.

REBECCA

Freaks.

JESS

Endorphins coming any second.

REBECCA

(Panting)

Pat-ron-ising fr-eaks. I'll see you at the café.

She staggers to a halt and drifts towards the little café at the bottom of the hill. Jess and Rosa keep going. At the top of the hill they stop for breath.

Rosanna, more knackered than Jess, looks hard at her.

ROSANNA

You've been running on your own, haven't you, you cheating bitch?

JESS

A little. Helps me think.

ROSANNA

Tell me about him.

JESS

Who?

ROSANNA

I've known you your whole life,
fool. Just because you smile all
the time doesn't mean you're happy.
So. Who is he?

JESS

Roz don't. It's nothing. Actually
and literally nothing.

ROSANNA

The worst kind.

JESS

He's one of my wishes. The dad of...
its really nothing.

ROSANNA

Shag him.

JESS

What?!?

ROSANNA

Shag your sulky Colin-Firth-alike.
... If not him then someone. Just
don't fall in love you dope. Have
sex and then stop having sex and go
back to Andrew. You always think
everything is so romantic..

There's a sudden harsher note in her voice.

ROSANNA (CONT'D)

Punish Mr Crackberry if you like.
But then forgive him. He's your
man.

JESS

I thought you didn't really like
Andrew.

ROSANNA

He's perfection. A good provider
you don't have to like much. Don't
mess it up.

JESS

I'm not going to. You're...barking
up the wrong...whatever you bark up.

ROSANNA

You know that little weight thing on
the lid of a pressure cooker? The
thing that stops it exploding by
letting out a bit of steam?

35 CONTINUED: (2)

JESS

Yes.

ROSANNA

Well there's an analogy in there somewhere... (still panting) can't be bothered to spell it out. But it means sex if you have to, but no love under any circumstances.

JESS

No one has a pressure cooker these days.

ROSANNA

Hence the divorce rate.

She trots off down the hill as if this is somehow a conclusive argument.

36 EXT. BEN'S STREET. DAY.

36

Jess dithers in the street outside Ben's flat. She turns back towards her car then spins again and heads for Ben's door. Another moment's hesitation then she presses the bell.

37 INT. BEN'S FLAT. DAY.

37

The bell rings persistently and does not stop once Ben opens the door. Jess is outside looking very embarrassed.

They stare at each other for an uncomfortably long time while the bell continues to ring.

JESS:

(Sheepishly) I pressed it in but it wouldn't come out again.

Ben puts his finger on the offending bell button, twists it slightly so it pops out and the noise stops.

JESS: (CONT'D)

Is Christian asleep?

BEN:

Not any more.

Jess covers her lower face with two theatre tickets and looks mournfully over the top of them through giant Bambi eyes. It is extremely difficult to not find her adorable...but Ben makes a stab anyhow.

BEN: (CONT'D)

Those invisibility cards don't really work. You should ask for your money back.

JESS:

Billy Elliot. Thursday. 7.00pm.
They've given us the whole
performance. 400 sick children and
their grumpy Dads. Well...some
cheerful Mum's too probably. Wanna
come?

There is a long pause.

JESS: (CONT'D)

I just thought since the initial
wish didn't really work out. I mean
we'll still try for a Fulham thing
but...

BEN:

Will there be small boys in clogs
doing high kicks and singing miners?

JESS:

(Starting to regret coming) Almost
certainly.

BEN:

Excellent. We love clogs. And
musical miners as it happens.

Their eyes meet properly, and perhaps for the first time Ben
actually sees her.

Then little peel of laughter drifts into the hall. A woman's
laughter.

Jess looks confused then quizzical.

Ben's face is also suddenly clouded with conflicting
emotions.

BEN: (CONT'D)

(Explaining) Gabrielle.

JESS:

Gabrielle?

BEN:

Would you like to meet Christian's
mother?

He opens the door some more and Jess goes inside. They walk
into the little kitchen and find Christian sitting with an
exotically beautiful woman. She is surprisingly young
looking, perhaps ten years younger than Ben. The same age as
Jess. She and Christian look almost like brother and sister.

CHRISTIAN

Oh, hi Jess! Mum, this is Jess.

GABRIELLE

Ah...

(she smiles warmly)
the charity worker, no? Christian is
very much in love with you I think.

CHRISTIAN

(Slightly embarrassed)
You'll have to forgive Mum, she
doesn't really speak English.

GABRIELLE

I have to thank you so much for the
wonderful thing you do for Chrissy.
With the football.

JESS

It's a pleasure. He's a wonderful
boy.

GABRIELLE

I like this idea of the wish. I
wish Christian would answer his
emails more quickly. And perhaps
for Ben to buy a shaving razor
sometimes with the money I send.

Gabrielle is clearly quite a piece of work. Expertly both
unmanning Ben and claiming him in her sing-song girlish
voice.

JESS

Listen, I'm intruding. I really
just came to drop off the tickets.

CHRISTIAN

Tickets?

BEN

Billy Elliot, Thursday.

CHRISTIAN

Fan-bleeding-tastic! I love Billy.
Favourite film after Kill Bill. And
maybe Kill Bill 2.

JESS

I remembered you had a Billy poster
on your wall... (Embarrassed that
this might seem manipulative) We get
the tickets free from the...

GABRIELLE

Thursday? This Thursday?

BEN

We can do both.

JESS

Both?

GABRIELLE

Oh it's nothing. I have a little private view for my pictures. But Ben is right, they can do both. My thing will be over in seconds! Just five people with some sausage and pineapple on the cockstick.

CHRISTIAN

Cocktail stick Mum.

Again they giggle like siblings

GABRIELLE

All the time they make the new words. How am I to keep up?

BEN

(Still monosyllabic, torn)
We can do both.

JESS

No, look I'm so sorry, forget the tickets, it's much more important that you go to the opening...

GABRIELLE

Why don't you come to the gallery? Then maybe the boys can go onto this Billy with you after.

JESS

Oh, no I wouldn't want to crash about spoiling your...

GABRIELLE

Come. Please.

JESS

Well, okay...look. Take the tickets. If you can come great but if not it's really no problem. And I'll come to the...if i can, and you're sure you...(exhausted by her confusion) Nice to meet you Gabrielle.

She retreats, hiding her mortification as best she can. Ben shows her to the door.

BEN

See you Thursday, thanks again. We'll come to the show if we can escape Gabrielle's clutches.

37 CONTINUED: (4)

JESS

It's really no problem if you
can't..anyway, sorry to barge in.

And she's gone.

38 EXT. THE ESTATE. NIGHT.

38

Jess fumbles with her keys by the big, incongruous, car
desperate to be somewhere else.

JESS

(Mumbling)

Shit-shit-shit.

She takes a Mars bar out of the glove compartment and unwraps
it feverishly.

Then, as she retains some calm, she puts down the electric
window and... chucks it out.

A passing derelict looks disapprovingly.

TRAMP

I say...

39 INT. BEN'S FLAT. NIGHT.

39

Ben returns to the kitchen.

GABRIELLE

She is extremely charming. And so
beautiful. The kind you like before
you make mistake with evil French
hussy.

BEN

Gabbie don't do this. It's bad
enough Christian hands out my number
to everyone without a beard.

CHRISTIAN

You really should keep an open mind
about the beardies too Dad. Can't
afford to be too picky at your age.

BEN

She's also happily married to a
multi-millionaire. Multi
millionaire contract killer I
believe.

GABRIELLE

But she likes you I think.

BEN

(Hardening)

Well of course I would have simply dozens of illicit and adulterous affairs. But for the small matter of looking after our sick child.

CHRISTIAN

Hey don't blame me for your pathetic pulling record.

But he's actually hurt and Ben is full of regret. He strokes his hand across the boy's bald head and Christian nuzzles against it instinctively.

BEN

Quite right. Bed now pickle. Mum and I fight better without an audience.

GABRIELLE

No fights tonight. I am here to see my boys. To bring them love and presents and hope they forgive a little their frog-witch.

(She kisses Christian on the mouth)

Good night handsome boy. I come back from the Hotel in the morning and take you for the disgusting pig grease English breakfast you adore so much.

Christian hugs them both and goes to bed. Again Ben whisks him through the night routine of pills, ventilator puffs, steamer and green gunk while Gabrielle watches from the doorway.

When the routine is complete Ben rejoins Gabrielle out on the balcony where she smokes a roll-up.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

He is more frail. More than even last time. Are you sure they should not operate?

BEN

We've been through this Gabs. 30% survival rate are not odds I'm prepared to bet his life on. We'll do it the long hard, slightly safer way. He's okay. Some days are worse than others.

GABRIELLE

You say I make him sick?

BEN

No. Of course not. He loves it when you come. You should come more.

GABRIELLE

It's harder since Gilles is born, you know that.

BEN

Pierre
(he spits the name out)
can't be trusted to hold a baby up the right way for a day or two?

GABRIELLE

Pierre is not around so much anymore.

This is big news. Maybe news she wouldn't have shared without Jess' appearance.

BEN

Not around?

GABRIELLE

He was not the man for me as it appears. You have a good word, no? Rebound.

BEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

GABRIELLE

(Smiling)
You are not.

BEN

You are right. I hope the Eifel tower falls on him. Preferably pointy bit first.

GABRIELLE

He did not steal me from you Benji. I broke things all myself. I am selfish. And a coward. I am not strong like you.

BEN

No. You are not.

GABRIELLE

Maybe I should come back. With little Gille.

BEN

Yes, why not? You keep cracking out the children. Then pop back here and leave them with me to bring up. You'll get more pictures coloured in that way and everybody's happy.

Gabrielle seems prepared for this from Ben and reacts gently, stroking his face.

GABRIELLE

I make a big scar on your heart, no?

BEN

No.

GABRIELLE

You want me to stay?

BEN

No.

GABRIELLE

You are sure?

BEN

No.

GABRIELLE

I will stay then.

BEN

(After a huge struggle)

No.

GABRIELLE

No?

BEN

It is confusing. For Christian.

It is a horrid, complex situation, full of longing and reproach and regret. Gabrielle leans in and kisses him square on the mouth.

Ben pulls away, angry and confused. Then, unable to stop himself and longing for human company...he leans in and kisses her back.

Gabrielle pulls off Ben's shirt. Even in the dark the room is chaos, a symbol of the sacrifice that Ben has made for his son. He's done nothing for himself. And now a beautiful, flawed woman wants to sleep with him.

40 CONTINUED:

He gives in. The sex is about as passionate as the censor will allow.

41 INT. BEN'S ROOM. DAY.

41

Dawn light spills through the small window in Ben's bedroom.

Ben's eyes are open, searching the ceiling for a clue as to what he's doing. Gabrielle's naked body is curled possessively around him. He tries to move away from her.

GABRIELLE

(Eyes closed) I make you too hot?

BEN

Christian will be awake soon.

GABRIELLE

You are afraid he will be traumatised by the sight of us together? His mother and father, shocking no?

BEN

I don't want him to be confused.

GABRIELLE

He is smarter than you and I put together I think.

BEN

I am confused.

He gets up and begins to dress. Gabrielle sighs and pouts, then does the same. They walk around the room retrieving various items of clothing from different places they fell.

GABRIELLE

It's not so tricky. Man wants woman. Woman wants man. Not surgery for the brain.

BEN

Unfortunate choice of words.

GABRIELLE

If you ever learn French you can criticise my English baby.

They both continue to pick out their abandoned clothes.

BEN

Okay, so what is this?

GABRIELLE

A sock I think.

BEN

I meant what does this mean?

GABRIELLE

One warm foot? Two if you find the other one.

BEN

You know what I mean. What does this mean?

GABRIELLE

It means that we still have great passion, no?

BEN

(Flat) Does this mean that you are coming back?

GABRIELLE

Maybe.

BEN

Maybe is no use to me.

GABRIELLE

It is soon after Pierre. Maybe is where I am. Maybe I come back. Bring the baby. Maybe.

BEN

Maybe is no use to Christian either.

GABRIELLE

There is an English thing, I get wrong, play by nose?

BEN

Ear.

GABRIELLE

That's the one. We'll play it by ear?

BEN

Then you should go before Christian wakes. 'Have I got a Mum or haven't I?' is not...it's not an ear thing.

GABRIELLE

Ok. It was nice. The kissing. And the being thrown all round the room.

BEN

That part always worked.

41 CONTINUED: (2)

GABRIELLE
And other parts no?

BEN
Maybe.

She gives a little gallic shrug, kisses him three times on the cheek and goes.

42 INT. CHRISTIAN'S ROOM. DAY

42

Christian, who is wide awake, watches his mother make her way down the path and off down the street. His expression is hard to read. Then he gets back into bed and pretends to be asleep.

Ben enters with a little tray of pills and the dreaded pot of green gunk. He makes quiet preparations for when Ben wakes. His movements are grooved by routine but his eyes betray his distraction.

43 INT. HARVEY NICKS. DAY.

43

The three heads bob up and down inside three connecting changing booths. A steady drift of discarded clothes mounts up at the floor below their feet.

REBECCA
It's all about territory.

JESS
She was being nice.

ROSANNA
I'm with Bex. She might as well have weed a little circle around him.

JESS
Gross. And besides, there's no need for her to mark territory from me: a happily married woman who only wants to help their sick child.

She steps out of her booth to reveal she is wearing an astonishingly short skirt and a corsetted top that pushes her somewhat small breasts up and together. Her sisters deadpan through a long, comic pause.

REBECCA
Fair enough. A lot of the volunteers dress as hookers when they are invited to their subjects father's ex-wives private views. Standard practice in fact.

ROSANNA

Good way to raise extra cash for the wishes too, I imagine.

JESS

I was just trying it on.

She ducks back into the booth.

REBECCA

Ros has a point actually, maybe we could pimp you out. 'Adults Wish' the fund-raising arm.

ROSANNA

We'd have to pad her out a bit up top. Is Andrew still offering to pay for plastic ones?

JESS

You think you're funny but actually you are just rude.

REBECCA

Its a winning combination I think: she sounds like Julie Andrews and dresses like Pammie Anderson. We could have Kids Wish in the black by Christmas.

Jess emerges in a demure trouser suit buttoned to he neck.

JESS

Fuck off the pair of you.

ROSANNA

Now she's dressed like Julie but sounds like Pammie. I'm confused. What's the objective again?

Jess looks crestfallen and goes back into the changing room.

44 EXT. BOND STREET. NIGHT.

44

Jess and Rebecca search for a parking space. Jess has a light raincoat over whatever she's wearing.

REBECCA

Why do *I* have to come. I *hate* art.

JESS

You're immoral support.

REBECCA

Thought you were the immoral one all of a sudden.

Jess stamps on the brake and lets her head sink to the wheel.

JESS

You're right. Lets go home.

REBECCA

Of course I'm not right! When am I ever right? (Smacking her hand in her fist) Lets go snatch that grubby depressed pauper from the teenage French bitch!

JESS

You're right. Lets go in.

And sure enough they find a space.

45 INT. CORK STREET GALLERY. NIGHT.

45

The private view for Gabrielle's pictures is much bigger than she implied. She's no Damian Hirst but there are 50 people in the Gallery including some press. We maybe catch a glimpse of Charles Saatchi.

The pictures are huge collages of small photographs and drawings that combine to make a bigger image. The overwhelming majority of them feature an ethereal, almost Christ like boy. The boy has a bald scalp. Some of the individual elements of the collage are X-rays of Christian's head.

Ben and Christian edge through the door. Ben has made an effort but his clothes still look too scruffy for the occasion. Gabrielle does not notice their arrival because she is busy working the room. She is wearing a see-through black dress.

Ben looks at the pictures and his jaw sets as he begins to take in what they depict.

Christian grabs a huge handful of mini pizzas and positions himself next to Charles Saatchi.

CHRISTIAN

Evening Mr Saatchi.

Saatchi examines the boy. He does not know him but is cool enough to go with the flow.

SAATCHI

Hi Kid. Like the scribbles?

45 CONTINUED:

CHRISTIAN
They're okay. You buying?

SAATCHI
Maybe.

There's a brief pause.

CHRISTIAN
Nigella: Hubbah hubbah.

SAATCHI
(Without missing a beat)
I've always thought so.

They grin at each other and wander off in different directions. The evening is going well. Christian is drawn into a group that includes his mother and a couple of art critics.

Ben stands in the corner alone.

46 **EXT. CORK STREET. NICHT.** 46

Jess and Rebecca find the gallery and go inside.

47 **INT. CORK STREET GALLERY. NICHT.** 47

Jess slips her coat off and reveals a lovely, modestly sexy gold dress...exactly half way between the St Pancras street corner and the Knightsbridge WI. She looks edible. However all the attention is on the stage and the pictures, so for the moment she is unnoticed.

Unnoticed by everyone but Gabrielle that is.

The French woman clocks her and, seeing Jess at her best decides she needs to reclaim her prize.

We see her slip quickly over to Ben, thread her arm through his and tuck her hand just fractionally into the back of his jeans. A kiss would be too obvious. Almost imperceptibly Ben leans into her.

Jess watches them carefully for a moment, decides that she sees a marriage that is trying to repair itself and so...melts into the crowd.

Rebecca is helping herself to two glasses of Champagne when Jess comes towards her.

REBECCA
Sorry babe, couldn't carry one for you as well (she necks one and starts on the other).

JESS

Come on.

REBECCA

Where are we going?

JESS

Back to reality.

Only Gabrielle sees her go. She smiles the smile of the practiced manipulator. Then there's a commotion as the gallery owner drags a not particularly reluctant Gabrielle up to a little stage with a microphone.

OWNER

Ladies and Gentlemen... Gabrielle Riley.

There is a ripple of applause. Gabrielle looks stunning. The spotlight on the stage makes her dress virtually transparent and under it she wears only a tiny G-string. There is something slightly calculated about the whole thing.

GABRIELLE

Thank you so much for coming. Please buy all my pictures for much, much more than the price on the list.

This gets a laugh.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Even though I live here ten years my English is still...what's the word?...ah yes, crap!

Another laugh.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

Maybe my son Christian, who is the star of all my picture,... could come up and help me out?

She stretches out her hand. Surprised, Christian looks up at his Dad for permission. Ben forces a smile and Christian goes to the stage. As soon as he turns away Ben's face is a storm. Gabrielle is using their son to promote her work.

Christian gets to the stage. Gabrielle lowers the microphone and kisses him gently on the head.

The crowd is enchanted. The huge picture behind his head is an eerie repeat of his frail figure. Its golden extremities form a kind of halo around his head. This can't be a coincidence. Christian sees his reflection in the huge gallery windows and realises the microphone has been artfully positioned.

47 CONTINUED: (2)

CHRISTIAN
Unaccustomed as I am to public
speaking...

This gets the biggest laugh of all. A photographer flashes
off pictures on a motor-drive.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Thank you all for coming tonight and
for putting red dots on the
pictures. You won't regret it. My
Mum...

We see his pale eyes scan the crowd for his Dad. Then they
settle on the artfully composed reflection he sees in the
gallery window.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
My Mum is a brilliant artist...

Many nods in the crowd, Gabrielle allows herself a little
smile of victory. But Christian is not done...

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
...she's just not always a brilliant
Mum.

Complete silence.

He gives his mum a little kiss and hops off the stage, takes
his Dad's hand and leads him towards the street. As they
reach the door Ben and Gabrielle exchange a look that says
nothing good.

48 **EXT. BOND ST. NIGHT.**

48

Ben and Christian walk to the tube. Ben isn't quite sure
what to say. He simply puts his arm around those incredibly
frail, incredibly broad shoulders.

CHRISTIAN
Don't get cocky.

BEN
I'll try not to.

CHRISTIAN
She'll probably sell even more now.

BEN
Hope so. We could use some extra
cash.

CHRISTIAN
You were done kissing her, right?

BEN

I reckon.

As ever with Ben, despite the obvious pain, he is strong.

BEN (CONT'D)

Want to go to the Billy thing?

CHRISTIAN

I...Dad I'm sorry...I don't think
I...the gallery took it out of me a
little. Do you think Jess will...

BEN

I'm sure she'll be too busy to
notice. And she didn't make it here
right?

Ben hides his slight disappointment. Christian can't hide how ill he looks.

55 EXT. BEN'S FLAT. DAY.

55

Its later that night. Again the only light on in the block is the one in Christian's bedroom. We hear him being copiously sick, the retching made just bearable by the fact that we are outside, a fair distance away.

56 INT. BEN'S FLAT. NIGHT.

56

Ben gives Christian a clean plastic bucket and takes another away to the tiny bathroom where he washes it out. There is no ceremony or drama, this is something he has done a thousand times before.

CHRISTIAN

Ah, the blue bucket. My favourite.
No disrespect to the yellow bucket.
Or the red for that matter. You
just can't beat old bluey.

BEN (V.O.)

Yes the blue ones a keeper. Rinses
out a treat.

There is another harsh retching noise from next door and Ben allows himself a tiny, heartbroken wince in the privacy of the bathroom. Still he attempts to keep the banter going.

BEN (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, just because it rinses
well doesn't mean I want to do it
immediately.

But something has changed.

CHRISTIAN

Dad...

BEN

(Returning to the bedroom
in an instant)

Yes?

CHRISTIAN

(Suddenly very small and
an adult at the same
time)

I'm not going to make it am I?

Ben is turned inside out. This has obviously never been said out loud before.

BEN

(slowly at first then with
unbelievable passion)

Yes... you are. Yes you are.
Absolutely and without doubt. You
are going to make it. You are going
to live and love and fight and laugh
and watch your... watch your... see
your grandchildren ride their...
hover-boards across the beach. It
might be the beach in Birmingham the
way the planet is going but you are
sodding well going to be there.
Every one of your ancestors on my
side and your mothers has been lucky
and attractive enough to stay alive
long enough to mate and make you
possible. Every one of them, back
through time for 35 billion years.
Without fail, be they man or monkey
or mouse or guppy or slime thing.
You are not breaking that sequence.
It is not going to happen. We are
going to fill you full of foul green
gunk and zap you with lasers and
love you and hold you and swap
buckets for you... and you are
totally and utterly going to... make
it...

His eyes are red rimmed but his face is set and his fists are balled ready to demolish walls.

After a moment when we fear he might have been frightened by the speech Christian unleashes a tiny grin.

CHRISTIAN

All right Dad. Keep your hair on.
I only asked.

56 CONTINUED: (2)

56

He turns over and rolls into a ball. Asleep in a moment.

57 **EXT. BEN'S BALCONY. NIGHT.**

57

A big man in immense pain surveys the sky. He drains a mini bottle of cheap whisky and seems to have a small fit. We see immense rage contort his rugged face. His knees give a little, then strengthen...then give again. Fighting it every inch of the way he gradually sinks down... into the praying position.

BEN

God... you vicious, sadistic
bastard... help me. Help me out.
Name your price. I'll do anything,
give up anything, everything...

We pull out to show the little Christmas lights twinkle on the balconies all around adding an odd quality to this tragic scene. Just as the scene fades to black there is a single, synchronised pulse through all the lights around Ben, radiating outwards in a circle. It could easily be a simple moment of random coordination between the fairy lights. Or it could be something more magical...

What deal has Ben struck?

57A **INT. BEN'S ROOM. DAY.**

57A

The chaos of Ben's room is partially hidden in the dawn light. A small ping trills from beneath the bed. Ben, hung over and unshaven, fumbles for the phone. He reads the text.

So sorry couldn't make it last night. Too much admin at the theatre. Jx

Only semi conscious he starts to write a flirty reply, then he remembers something... and instead taps in a simple.

No prob. Same our end. B

A seeming dead end.

58 **INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT.**

58

It's Christmas day. Jess' house is packed. Her entire extended family is wandering around the house eating, drinking, fighting and laughing.

Rebecca is stuffing a Turkey, Rosanna and Jess add decorations to a huge, Christmassy table.

REBECCA

Ah Christmas! A time for family, gifting and sticking your hand up a big chicken's arse.

ROSANNA

You're frighteningly good at that Becca, is your new man a pervert?

JESS

What new man?

ROSANNA

She's got some new victim. Won't say who... so he's obviously a criminal. A married criminal most likely. A married criminal with close ties to the Nazis.

REBECCA

Have you been tailing me?

ROSANNA

No need. You make metronomes seem wild and unpredictable.

JESS

Is he nice?

There's a pause while Rosanna and Rebecca consider the question. Then they piss themselves laughing.

REBECCA

Poor sweet Jess!

The girls laugh, Jess takes her turn to be the butt of the joke with good humour and everything seems well. Andrew is cheery, sloshing Champagne around in the background. Jess puts an empty box of decorations down on a side table next to her mobile. She stops and looks at it, struggling for a moment.

After what she thinks she's seen at the gallery she is clearly trying to forget Ben. But without much success.

She slips it in her pocket and drifts off towards the downstairs loo.

Rebecca sees Jess sneaking away with her phone and decides to take action. She goes looking for Andrew.

Cut to her inside the toilet, sitting on the closed lid... texting.

60 INT. BEN'S FLAT. NIGHT.

60

Ben sits with Christian asleep awkwardly on his lap. There are unwrapped presents on the floor and evidence of a budget Christmas dinner for two on the table. Propped up against the wall is a big collaged picture of a beautiful woman hugging a boy who looks like Christian and a man who looks like Ben; a gift from Gabrielle.

Ben looks sad.

Then there's a little buzz in his pocket and he flips open his mobile. The light of the screen picks out the details of his handsome, worn face.

He smiles. We do not need to see what the text says. Then his face clouds as if he has just remembered something. He looks down at Christian. Then he presses delete on Jess' message without replying.

61 INT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY.

61

Rebecca has found Andrew. They sit in two big arm chairs opposite each other in Andrew's Media den and throw a Champagne cork at each other in a lightly vicious and slightly drunken game of blind the in-law. This is a meeting of the head boy and girl of the Barclay/Eddison clan. We join their conversation as a malicious cork impact occurs by Andrew's ear.

REBECCA

Blimey, how could I miss a giant
Bison's head like yours?

Equally vicious cork impact just by Rebecca's shoulder. And so on throughout.

ANDREW

I'm obviously hitting the target but
you are using your witch's powers to
make it pass clean through your
face.

Rebecca's next shot is a direct hit on the bridge of the nose.

REBECCA

Bullseye! Bison's eye rather.

ANDREW

(Rubbing his nose) Make yourself
useful, put more fizz in that.

Rebecca leans over with the bottle that used to hold the cork and refreshes his glass.

REBECCA

Say when.

Andrew lets it fill right up.

ANDREW

...when.

REBECCA

Useful skill. Knowing when to say when.

Andrew sighs heavily, knowing where this is going...

ANDREW

Don't suppose there's any chance to avoid what's coming.

REBECCA

I'm trying to warn you oaf. She won't put up with it forever...enough with the hard man Andrew. You're starting to believe it yourself. Jess deserves more. Running away to work to avoid talking about the baby thing is not the answer.

ANDREW

I don't run away. She doesn't want to talk about it.

REBECCA

She needs more from you.

ANDREW

...I give her bloody everything.

REBECCA

I'm talking about things that cost nothing and I know that you know that because you are the smartest person I know. Not to mention the stupidest.

ANDREW

You're pissed.

REBECCA

I'm also right.

ANDREW

So what, in your Solomonic opinion, should I be doing?

REBECCA

Stop pretending you are not nice.

61 CONTINUED: (2)

ANDREW
(Vulnerable)
What if I really am not nice?

REBECCA
Then I want you to stop pretending
that you are not nice and pretend to
be nice even if you aren't nice.

Pause while they both consider that last one...

ANDREW
Could you write that down for me?

REBECCA
No. I'm too pissed.

62 **EXT. HAMPSTEAD. DAY.** 62

Hampstead Dustmen load huge dead, needle-less Christmas trees
into the back of their surprisingly posh and shiny cart.

63 **EXT. HAMMERSMITH. DAY.** 63

Smaller trees go into a dirtier cart.

64 **INT. HAMPSTEAD. DAY.** 64

As casually as she can manage, Jess checks her text inbox.
It is full but still none from Ben.

65 **EXT. FLASK WALK. DAY.** 65

Jess piles out of her car carrying a heap of pink Fairy
paraphernalia.

Her phone goes.

ANDREW (V.O.)
What are you doing?

JESS
Nothing.

ANDREW (V.O.)
Good. Bond Street, half an hour.
Got my China thing more sorted and
in the mood to squander some of the
booty on my Pig.

JESS
Oh.

ANDREW (V.O.)
(Misunderstanding)
Can't do Knightsbridge pigsty, got
to be back for a 12.30.

JESS

No it's not that... I'm on a wish.

ANDREW (V.O.)

Oh, that kind of nothing. Please yourself.

He rings off. We cut to his office where we discover that he looks... uncharacteristically hurt.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Candy! Change of plan...

He rubs his troublesome temple absentmindedly and fumbles in his desk draw for more pills.

66 INT. THE FAIRY SHOP, HAMPSTEAD. DAY.

66

A small, cave-like room under the Fairy shop in Flask Walk is packed with little girls dressed in wings and tutus. There are a bunch of Mums too and a solitary dad. Rebecca commands the scene. Her own Fairy outfit is pretty extraordinary: a pink Jean Paul Gaultier Bustier, Tutu and motorbike boots plus wings and wand in matching pink. She is quite magnificent.

REBECCA

Fairy number three. I would like you to make Fendi bags grow on trees. Fairy number four, gorgeous tutu decision by the way,
(the little girl has it on her head)

...darling I would like you to wave your wand and teach all men how to work the buttons on a washing machine. Fairy five, you adorable pixie, I'd like you to... remove these fine lines from around my mouth. Quick as you like.

(Fairy five zaps her in the face with her tinsel wand and Rebecca touches her cheeks in wonder.)

Now, who hasn't had cake?

Fairy four totters up to her mum for a toot from an oxygen cylinder and then wobbles back into the fun.

Jess comes down the stairs carrying a tray laden with party bags. She grabs and demolishes a large slab of cake herself.

JESS

(Full mouthed) I have party bags for everyone dressed in..err..pink!

Which is, of course, everyone. Jess picks up a large, icing encrusted slice of cake and eats it all. A fuller life needs a fuller stomach it seems.

She's just trying to dislodge the crumbs from all round her mouth when a pale, haunted looking woman comes up to her. It's the Mum of the frailest looking little girl.

We watch them talk from a distance. Their words are mostly covered by the noise of the assorted faries. The odd word floats across "scans" and "test results". The Mum crosses her fingers and then see Jess do the same. A sad moment in all the fun. Rebecca watches her, moved and thoughtful.

67 INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

67

A pink Bustier and Tutu lie in a heap on the carpet.

A little trail of further Fairy gear intermingled with more masculine clothes leads to a bed.

In it lie Rebecca and... Kent.

KENT.

How do you feel about slipping that tutu back on for round two?

REBECCA

Thought you'd never ask.

67A

67A

68 INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT.

68

A similar trail of Fairy clothes leads to a different bed. And occupants in a different place. Jess and Andrew. Andrew's face is illuminated by the light of his Blackberry as he quietly scrolls messages while Jess talks.

JESS

...It was the strangest thing. We both stood there with our fingers crossed, neither of us wanting to be the first to stop. The little girl won't see Easter. Anyway her mum crossed her fingers when she said "we're waiting on the last lot of test results". And I crossed mine. And I caught myself wishing that it worked. The fingers thing. Imagine? Me, who used to believe only in the higher power of Gucci. Strange that you can believe in luck or superstition of any kind when your child is...

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

That you can be around this pointless waste and think that there is a plan somewhere, or an invisible saviour. That there's someone with cosmic binoculars checking on your commitment to the fingers crossed game. "Oops, that one uncrossed a bit early. Lets mark her six-year-old down for painful death. That'll learn her." But there we stood. Overlapping digits. Not daring to stop. Not daring.

Andrew knows that this is time to do what Rebecca advised. Time to talk to her about their own quiet tragedy. But he just can't...

ANDREW

That's really sad Pig. The kid.
And the fingers. Sad.

She looks at him. Not annoyed. Just lonely.

69 EXT. CEMETERY. DAY.

69

Jess, Rebecca and Kent stand in a row, dressed in black. We hold on them for an impossibly long time. Then two men walk slowly by them carrying a small, white box.

An intolerably sad scene.

Later we see a young woman, lost and numb, wander up. She is the Mum of the Fairy party girl. She holds onto Rebecca and Jess for a long time.

Fingers no longer crossed.

70 INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT.

70

Jess sits at home, still dressed in her funeral clothes. She looks defeated. She punches in another TXT. "Broken thumbs? Fallen down a big hole? Abducted by aliens? Jx"

There's a pause and then "No. Sorry. Ran out of credits. Bx" Jess is delighted. She replies "Pathetic excuse. How are you?". There's a short pause then "Fine thanks. Bit tired."

Jess reads the four words over. A polite stonewall? She starts to text again, then stops herself and closes the phone.

71 **EXT. HAMPSTEAD HEATH. DAY.**

71

Ben and Christian walk on the Heath. They walk slowly as an accommodation of Christians's frailness.

They stop to watch a Dads/Kids football match.

CHRISTIAN

Do you ever wish I was normal?

BEN

Constantly. Freakishly intelligent children are just plain annoying.

CHRISTIAN

No, I meant physically.

BEN

I know what you meant. I was just ignoring a stupid question.

CHRISTIAN

Lets play. Sod the brain thing.

BEN

Chrissy...

CHRISTIAN

I know I know, if I head the ball in the wrong place it's all over... but we're skilled, we'll just keep it on the deck.

BEN

(Starting to walk on) Come on.

CHRISTIAN

Spoilsport.

72 **EXT. HEATHROW PICK UP. NIGHT.**

72

We see Jess pick up Andrew from Heathrow. They embrace, Andrew holds his wife a little longer than she is expecting. When they get into the car Jess takes the wheel. Spam and Candy, who have obviously travelled with Andrew, get in the back.

73 **EXT. KNIGHTSBRIDGE. DAY.**

73

The Range Rover noses through heavy traffic. Spam and Candy are asleep, her head on his shoulder.

JESS

How was China?

ANDREW

Okay. Complicated. Things are different there. Slower.

Jess waits for more. Getting nothing she switches tack, glancing in the mirror...

JESS

(Whisper) Are Spam and Candy an item?

ANDREW

I...don't know, Maybe. (Deflecting)
How's your thing?

He begins to leaf through some of Jess' wish papers that were on the seat when he got in.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Big file...

JESS

They get hundreds more requests for wishes than they can cover. Not enough money.

ANDREW

Balls.

JESS

I'm sorry?

ANDREW

They need to do Balls. Fund raising Balls. For rich people with no brains. More of them about than you'd imagine.

JESS

Say more.

Andrew seems slightly preoccupied, as if an idea is forming in his head. Then he tunes into Jess' question and tailors an answer.

ANDREW

Well, it's not rocket science ...rent a big venue, better still put on something skimpy and blag an evening for nothing. Monday nights are always slow. Get a decent comedian or a has-been 80's band. Invite lots of businessmen and sports types, make sure they bring their wives and put the almighty squeeze on them at the end. Auction, sealed donations, that kind of thing.

JESS

Maybe.

ANDREW

You'll need a video before the auction. Cheerful kids at Disney who've died since you filmed them. Lots of free drink for the ladies. Bingo.

JESS

Got one of those. Rebecca and I...

ANDREW

(Interrupting) I'll help you if you like.

There's a pause. Jess is amazed.

JESS

Really?

ANDREW

Really. I know I've been a bit...(struggling for the right word and picking a suboptimal one) preoccupied lately. I'm sorry. I'll try and be less...preoccupied.

Jess is thrown. And also guilty. She cuddles his arm as he drives.

JESS

Okay, hurrah for the... preoccupied thing.

A sweet moment. Kind of.

In a small conference room near Andrew's office there is frantic activity. Andrew has drawn up a list of businessmen to invite and put Candy, Spam and a few others on the task enrolling them. They phone around and make arrangements, a precise and efficient operation. Jess and Rebecca watch, obviously impressed.

SPAM

Three more yeses.

ANDREW

We ought to consider putting a few tables on the balcony level.

74 CONTINUED:

SPAM
(Dialing) I'll see if I can get them
for nothing.

REBECCA
(Stage whisper)
...And you said Andrew was a
heartless bastard.

JESS
I did not!

REBECCA
No, you're right. That was me.

Another 'Yes' goes on the board for the MD of a big Telecom
firm.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Well,.. seems I might have been
slightly harsh.

75 INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT. 75

Jess is trying on a couple of dresses for the ball. She
looks, naturally enough, stunning. But her face is slightly
pained.

There's a mobile on the bed.

She reaches for it, then thinks better of it. Then reaches
for it again.

After one last spasm of indecision we see her rapidly type in
a text and send it before she can change her mind again.

76 INT. BEN'S FLAT. NIGHT. 76

Ben is exactly where we left him. His mobile bings. The
message reads. **"What are you three doing on Friday night?"**

77 INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT. 77

Jess is also frozen where we left her, staring at her mobile
perhaps trying to magically unsend the text.

Then the reply comes back: **"You three?"**

She texts again **"You, Chris and Gabrielle"**

Another reply **"She gone back to France. What about Friday?"**

Andrew walks in silently, admires her naked back and slides
his arms around her waist.

Jess nearly jumps out of her skin

77 CONTINUED:

ANDREW

(Off her exaggerated action) Nice to see my touch is still electric.

Jess turns around and kisses him enthusiastically. Partly to cover her snapping shut the mobile. Partly because she doesn't know what she wants any more.

78 EXT. GROSVENOR HOUSE. NIGHT.

78

A big crowd of very expensive looking people spill from assorted Mercs & Bentleys and make their way into the Banqueting Hall entrance.

79 INT. BANQUETING HALL. NIGHT.

79

Jess, Rebecca and Kent meet and greet. Rebecca spots a promising victim...

REBECCA

Sir Something Henley, two O'clock, awash with cash. Shoulders back, tits out Jessica.

JESS

(Seamless)

Sir Christopher, thank you so much for coming, May I show you to your table?...

SIR C

You absolutely may...

Jess unleashes a practiced shy grin and steers the old man towards his place. Rebecca nudges Kent.

REBECCA

My sister would be worth her weight in gold if she weren't so sickeningly skinny...

(scooping up another guest)

Mr Clifford! Welcome, brought your lovely wife? And your lovely wallet?

We track with Rebecca into the busy Banqueting hall. As well as the moneyed guests there are number of teenagers in wheel chairs and other sick older children interspersed with the crowd, playing, laughing and even hosting tables with the parents. The turn out is excellent. Watching from the balcony is Andrew. Jess comes up behind him and wraps her arms around his waist.

JESS

Thank you... for all this.

ANDREW
No problem Piggie.

JESS
(She swings him around and
presses her body against
his)
You are going to get sooo lucky
later.

ANDREW
Hope so.

JESS
Try not to get one of your
headaches. Be a terrible waste.

ANDREW
I'll try.

She kisses him. He goes to do the pretend spitting thing but she catches his face in her hands and kisses him again...with real love and gratitude. Then she catches sight of someone in the crowd over his shoulder.

JESS
Oops, got to go. There's your Hedge
Fund guy looking a bit lost.

ANDREW
I'll come with.

We see Christian and Ben wandering through the crowded, sparkling room. Ben wears the kind of tux you buy from a hire shop when no one will rent it any more. He goes to get them both a coke whilst Christian looks for something to do. He spots an expensive looking man chatting to a woman half his age.

CHRISTIAN
Nice watch.

RICH GUY
Thanks.

CHRISTIAN
Vintage Rolex Oyster.

RICH GUY
You know your stuff.

CHRISTIAN
5k in that condition.

RICH GUY
Maybe.

CHRISTIAN
Same as a Home dialysis machine.

RICH GUY
Er...

CHRISTIAN
Would you like an auction catalogue?

He produces one with a little flourish.

RICH GUY
Thanks.

CHRISTIAN
Later homie.

Then, happy with his handiwork, he ambles away.

81 INT. HOTEL KITCHEN. NIGHT.

81

Jess and Rebecca cross paths on the stairs.

REBECCA
Hey babe. Fantastic turn out.
We're packing in the rich people
like Japanese Bullet Train
conductors.

JESS
Yes. I'm so proud of Andrew.

REBECCA
But not so proud you didn't invite
your boyfriend too...

She nods at Ben who she has just spotted coming up the stairs. Jess tries hard to hide her panic.

JESS
He's not my...hi Ben!

BEN.
Oh. Hi. Thanks for the..

JESS
(Cutting in) Have you met my sister
Rebecca?

BEN
Yes.

REBECCA
No need to meet again then...

81 CONTINUED:

She peels away instantly to leave them stranded together.

BEN

You look...twinkly.

JESS

Thanks. I think. You
look...OH...look, Ben I'd like you
to meet my...

Andrew has appeared on the stairs too.

JESS (CONT'D)

...Andrew, you remember Ben. From
the garden...

ANDREW

(Cutting in) Pig, I need you to
come chat up this Chinese
Billionaire. Now. Speaks French for
some reason, that's one of yours
isn't it?

JESS

Andy say hi to...

She indicates Ben.

ANDREW

Hi. Nice tux. (To Jess) Come with
me, we don't want him and his Yuan
getting bored and going home do we?

He spins her round and back down the sweeping stair case
towards a group of Chinese businessmen.

JESS

That was rude.

ANDREW

You can talk to your waiter friend
later. There's money at stake.

82 INT. BANQUETING HALL. NIGHT.

82

We catch a glimpse of Andrew working the tables, animated and
dedicated to the task. Candy follows just behind Andrew,
perhaps noting donations. On stage Kent walks to a little
podium and waits at the microphone for the noise to die back.
Andrew settles by an important looking Chinese man and
continues to talk to him in a low voice as Kent begins his
speech.

A video plays on the large screen behind him. It's the one
Jess and Rebecca were working on and it is very moving
indeed.

Beautiful kids full of life, captions telling of the great days they had... then giving their dates of birth and death. The numbers are tragically close together.

KENT

There are 25,000 very sick children in Britain's hospitals tonight. Some of those children will never become adults. A few brilliant doctors and carers battle to make their lives longer. But we can all help make their lives happier. Kid's Wish try to make children's dearest wishes come true. We help them meet their heroes. We take them to places they dream of visiting.

At this moment there is a picture of Christian at the Fulham match. Ben's handsome, brooding face in the background. In the crowd the real Christian nudges Ben and nods at their pic on the screen.

CHRISTIAN

Look at the ten foot crows feet on you dad. Eagles feet in fact!

We cut back to Kent.

KENT

We do simple things like makeover their rooms or organise parties. Whatever makes them truly, magically happy. For a day. We create joyful memories for them, and for the people they sometimes leave behind. But special children have special needs. Just insuring the children for the wish trips costs us £50,000 a year. Comfortable and safe travel accounts for £100,000. Accommodation double that. On average, each wish costs £1500. We never turn anyone away. But the number of children we are asked to help doubles every year. And so does the cost of helping them. We receive no help from the government. Every penny we get comes from people like you on nights like this...

At the back of the hall Jess watches with tear filled eyes. Even though she's seen the footage many times. On stage Kent is assured and persuasive, winding up his speech and handing over to Lionel Blair for the auction. We see Rebecca rush to congratulate Kent. In the background Andrew, Candy and other work colleagues applaud at their table.

Spam, the junior exec who works for Andrew, sidles up behind Jess as she leans on a pillar. He's a little drunk.

SPAM

Jessica.

JESS

Oh, hi Spam. Thanks so much for the help.

SPAM

Anything for the boss' beautiful girl. An the kids of course. But freel fee...feel free to express your gratitude by making him give me an enormous rise.

He is clearly extremely tipsy.

JESS

I will talk to the old meany first thing. I'm actually rather proud of my boy this evening.

SPAM

Quite right. Made a lot of money tonight I recon. Nobody works a room full of cash like our leader.

JESS

Well, yes fingers crossed. I mean, we won't be able to really tell until after the auction and the donations bit I suppose...

SPAM

Auction?

(Befuddled but keen that she should understand how clever they are)

Oh I see... no, no Jessie. Wasn't talking about the charity nonsense. Andrew's been throwing together a deal all night. We lined up all the players in the room at the same time,..(a steadying swig of beer) pinged around the tables like a pin ball until it was all nicely nailed. New factory in China. Funds on table seven.

(MORE)

82 CONTINUED: (3)

SPAM (CONT'D)

Construction on table 15. Telecoms
on 19.
Infras...infrastru...building fellas
on 11. Quite brilliant. Exploiting
dying children for financial gain!
Epic!! That man is my
hero...(turning) now about that ri..

But she is already gone. Heading for the toilets crushed and
furious. The bidding has begun and is actually very strong.
But that's not the point anymore.

83 INT. GROSVENOR HOUSE TOILET. NIGHT.

83

Jess flies into a cubicle, locks the door and empties her
rage, kicking and battering the interior of the cubicle.

JESS

I HATE YOU! I hate you, hate you,
hate you... I wish you would... I want
you to... I wish you would DIE! Take
one of these terrible diseases from
these angel kids and just GO AND DIE
YOU...

She gasps, fighting the urge to throw up or explode with
anger. The temporary party lights in the room do that same
coordinated pulse that happened on the balcony of Ben's flat.
Again it could easily be a coincidence. Or perhaps something
more.

Then... a familiar voice from the next cubicle.

REBECCA

(V.O.)

Yes... It can be very annoying when
the attendant doesn't leave enough
paper. Would you like me to roll
some under the door? As a first
step before the whole death wish
scenario Jessica...

In her cubicle Jess manages a chuckle.

REBECCA

(Guessing what Jess might
be upset about)

If you can't actually inflict God-
sent death on the toilet attendant,
I find revenge works just as well...

Jess takes another big gulp of air, settles herself,
considers this last suggestion and then leaves the cubicle.

JESS

Thanks Becca.

REBECCA

(V.O.)

No probs.

She fixes her make-up and leaves. We cut inside Rebecca's cubicle to find she is sitting astride a silent Kent.

REBECCA

Five more minutes?...

They pick up where they left off before Jess' outburst.

INT. GROSVENOR HOUSE BAR. NIGHT.

Boiling with emotions Jess searches the bar for someone she knows. She bowls past Ben and Christian without seeing them. Her beautiful face is flushed and strangely sexy. She removes the wrap she has had on her shoulders revealing gorgeous shoulders and quite a bit of cleavage. She finds who she's looking for: a short bald man surrounded by half a dozen tall fit looking young men. This is Fenton, the guy who owns a bit of Fulham. She hides her pain and unleashes a megawatt smile..

JESS

Fenton!

FENTON

Jess! Golly... you look delicious tonight.

JESS

Looking very sexy yourself Fents. But listen, before I give up everything and run away with you to a desert Island... I could use a favour.

FENTON

Anything.

JESS

I need one of your players to visit one of our sick children. Preferably the most famous. Preferably tomorrow.

Jess looks literally irresistible. Several of the players are clearly keen on helping and not all because they were moved by the plight of the children.

HILL

(Rather feebly)

I'm the third most expensive goalkeeper in the league...

TRING

I was top scorer last season... apart from Stubbsie.

STUBBS

(Pushing the others aside)
Steven 'Stubbsie' Stubs. Club captain, leading scorer and quiz show regular. At your service...

JESS

Excellent! I'll pick you up at 3.00pm. Number please?...

She holds out her arm and a pen. Stubbs sees this as a very welcome development. As soon as she has the number Jess melts into the crowd and her face falls again.

85 INT. BALLROOM BALCONY. NICHT.

85

Up on the Balcony, Ben has seen Jess making a play for the footballer and hangs his head.

BEN

(Softly to Christian)...Home time little friend.

CHRISTIAN

But you haven't spoken to Jess.

BEN

She's pretty busy I think.

86 INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT.

86

Jess undresses and gets into bed, her face a mask.

Downstairs we see Andrew through the vast folding, sliding glass doors that link the kitchen to the garden. He's dressed only in boxers, a big man gone a little to seed. He rubs his close cropped hair and temples, apparently in some pain. Then he reaches into a cabinet, shakes four Nurofen into his hand and swallows them without water.

He grips the kitchen counter waiting for the pills to relieve the throbbing in his skull. This is no early hangover.

He walks slowly into the bedroom where Jess sits upright in the bed. Her face is impassive but her eyes burn.

ANDREW

What?

Jess open's her mouth to speak...but the words won't come. Her rage is white hot but also dumbstruck.

86 CONTINUED:

86

ANDREW (CONT'D)
 (Of her silence) Well, I'm glad we
 had this chat.

He gets into bed and lies with his back to her.

87 **EXT. STUBBS' MANSION. DAY.**

87

Stubbs' house is more or less what you'd expect, vast and gaudy. Jess rings the bell and he opens the door dressed only in a towel.

STUBBS
 Hey Baby... wanna come in?

If anything Jess looks even more beautiful in her jeans and vest than she did the previous evening. But she is a completely different person towards Stubbs.

JESS
 No. I want you in a track suit in
 30 seconds in my car in 60. Bring
 your boots. Sick children to cheer
 up, no sex for you today.

Stubbs, who is after all only 22 and used to being bossed around by coaches, meekly does as he's told.

88 **INT. BEN'S FLAT. DAY.**

88

Stubbs sits in front of a large poster of himself. His 6ft 4in frame fills pretty much the whole of Christian's room. A pair of signed boots are newly installed on a shelf by the poster. The two of them play Fifa 2008 on a recently unwrapped Playstation...and actually, Stubbs is quite happy..

Jess and Ben watch from the next room.

JESS
 Tea Stubby?

STUBBS
 No thanks Mrs Eddison...

His reversion to childhood is more or less complete. The two boys play contentedly. Jess gets to be alone with Ben on the balcony. As planned. Ben is wary but at the same time pleased to see her.

89 **EXT. BEN'S BALCONY. NIGHT.**

89

By dusk Ben and Jess have become very easy in each others company. They both have their feet up on the edge of the balcony and the smallest part of the skin on their calves.. touches.

There's a little pause. They are completely relaxed with each other and yet sexual energy crackles in the air between them.

BEN

So...how many wishes do we get anyhow?

JESS

Huh?

BEN

I thought it was a one per child thing... but you seem to be giving the genie-in-a-bottle guys a run for their money.

JESS

(Busted but unrepentant)
Oh sorry to cut in on your valuable sitting and frowning time.

Ben smiles... then strangles the smile, fighting back love. Jess is confused.

JESS (CONT'D)

This is the last one. I just thought none of the others really counted, what with one thing and another...

BEN

I'm not complaining.

They go back to sitting. They sneak looks at each other, just missing each others eye. They gulp down the unfamiliar nerves and vulnerability like teenagers.

A beautiful sunset sprays the clouds over the grim estate.

BEN (CONT'D)

I love this bit. Just after the sun's ducked past the power station... it paints the bottom of the clouds pink for about three minutes.

JESS

(Quietly)
That's my favourite bit too.

BEN

(Trying to make less of their utter compatibility)
I guess...its everyone's favourite bit...

89 CONTINUED: (2)

JESS

I guess.

Behind them Christian cheers another cyber-goal at Stubbs' expense.

90 **EXT. BEN'S FLAT. NIGHT.**

90

Jess and Stubbs say their goodbyes. Jess has run out of excuses to appear and is maybe a little hurt that Ben hasn't invented any.

Stubbs gently noogies Christian's bald head.

STUBBS

We're in the Inter-toto cup. For now at least. Come to the Lille game. Might be your only chance to see us in Europe for a while. Ever in fact.

CHRISTIAN

Wow. Ok. So... you don't mind that I spanked your ass all day on the PS2.

STUBBS

I was going easy on you. Because you're a fan.

CHRISTIAN

Likely.

JESS

(Fishing)

Would he be up to going? I could... take you. Maybe.

BEN

(Happy to be hooked)

I'll talk to the doctors. Thanks very much Mr Stubbs. It was good of you to come. Thanks Jess.

CHRISTIAN

Can you bring someone with better hand eye coordination next time please?

JESS

I'll try.

Stubbs and Christian mock wrestle for a second, the big footballer sweetly cautious of actually hurting the frail boy.

Then they are off in Jess's Range Rover. Father and son watch them go, happier than they have been for a long time.

91 INT. SIDE OFFICE, KID'S WISH. DAY.

91

Rebecca is in a side office with the door closed, her eyes red rimmed and wet. Jess sees her through the little slit window in the door and enters.

JESS

There you are I've been
loo...Rebecca? What is it baby?

REBECCA

He's ruined everything.

JESS

Who has? What have they ruined?

REBECCA

(Distracted, not reacting
to Jess' question)

I didn't mind about the other girls.
He's has everyone of course. Well,
apart from you, but you're my sister
and you've been busy.

JESS

I... I'm not following you...

REBECCA

The sex was just fun. Great
actually. All the practice he gets
I suppose. But I didn't care. I'm
between marriages and it's just an
extension of what he does. He makes
people feel good. But now he's
ruined everything!

JESS

(Gently)

Who?...

REBECCA

Kent you idiot.

JESS

Kent's your boyfr...?

REBECCA

He's not my anything.

JESS

(Still confused)

And he..? He's found someone else?

REBECCA

Who cares? He's got hundreds...all
the volunteer girls 'volunteer'
themselves to him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

REBECCA (CONT'D)

You get a your files, your training manual and a bunk up from Kent.

JESS

And you're upset. About the other girls?

REBECCA

Course not! Knew all along, didn't matter. Not the point of him.

JESS

Oh. Well. What then? I don't...

REBECCA

You are so slow today Jessica. Kent's on the take.

JESS

What?

REBECCA

Kent steals cash nice people have given to sick children and spends it. On hotel rooms mostly I guess. Anyway he takes it. He's supposed to be the good person. I didn't love the sex. Or even him. I loved what he...what he... I loved that someone was... good.

JESS

Come here...

(some quiet sobbing)

...it will be okay lovely girl...how do you... how did you find out?

REBECCA

Well obviously I stole his password and checked out everything about him on his laptop.

JESS

Obviously...

REBECCA

Simple matter of hacking into his bank details and cross referencing a few hundred pages of transactions. £3000 over twelve months.

JESS

Not much...

REBECCA

Bugger all actually. We did £2.6 million worth of wishes last year.

91 CONTINUED: (2)

JESS

The patron's board would probably double his pay if he'd asked.

REBECCA

But super dick has to take it on the sly. He's ruined everything.

JESS

What will you do?

REBECCA

I don't know. Shooting him is obviously tempting. But I'll probably just let him know the games up. Make him pay it back and make himself scarce. Better for the charity. Scandal doesn't exactly do wonders for your fundraising.

JESS

Oh angel...

REBECCA

(Like a little girl)

He was supposed to be good Jess.

JESS

(Sad)

I know baby. Good is... a hard thing to be.

92 INT. KID'S WISH RECEPTION. DAY.

92

We see a confrontation between Kent and Rebecca through a plate glass window, but do not hear it. Kent stands in front of a large photograph of a very sick little girl meeting Take That. He looks ten years older than when we last saw him.

Rebecca finishes what she has to say, turns on her heel and walks towards the plate glass. When he can no longer see her face she looks distraught.

93 EXT. QUEEN ELISABETH'S HOSPITAL, HAMPSTEAD. DAY.

93

Jess is helping a child in a wheel chair and connected to numerous tubes and devices into a stretch limo filled with pink balloons (and assorted friends of her age). She waves them off and looks satisfied.

She is about to climb in her own car when she sees Andrew walking into the hospital. She calls him but he does not hear her through the traffic. Jess pauses for a moment, confused. Then she follows him. Andrew has quite a head start and she loses him at the entrance to a particular wing of the Hospital. The signs for that wing read Neurology, Oncology, Plastics.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

Jess looks puzzled... then mortified. Maybe her wish is coming true.

94 INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT.

94

A not altogether comfortable Jess goes through Andrew's AmEx bill. She finds two substantial payments to Queen Elisabeth's. More evidence of Andrew's imminent death.

95 INT. KID'S WISH. DAY.

95

Rebecca is on the phone, Jess is pecking away at an old, uncooperative computer. She is distracted, eventually stopping altogether and staring with unseeing eyes at the flickering computer screen. Rebecca notices. And thinks she knows what's up.

REBECCA

How is Ben? I mean Christian.

A long, painful pause.

JESS

Becca I think... I can't but... I seem to have... I love him. Them. Him.

REBECCA

(Suddenly serious)

Oh God baby, don't. Don't cry. I didn't mean to... come here. People around here will think the we're the bubbly snot sisters. I'm an idiot on a stick for bringing it up...

JESS

No. If anybody's an idiot... Oh Becca, you have to help me. The other night, at the ball, you heard me wish for... Christ I don't even know where to start...

(She takes a breath)

He calls me pig. Andrew does. "Pig. Pig-face. Pigsty. Pig-tits". Somewhere a million years ago it was a joke. It was funny. It's what smart boys do.

REBECCA

They tell pretty girls they are ugly. To get sex.

JESS

Exactly. No one else could talk to me, you know, because of the big eyes. And Andrew treated me like dirt, well pretended to.

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

Called me Pig. And it made me laugh. Then, God knows when or where, it changed. He kind of means it now and I kind of hate it. When we couldn't have kids and I needed him to be kind... he couldn't, wouldn't. He went to work. Made money on top of more money. 'There you go pig, buy yourself something nice...'

REBECCA

(Quietly)

I know babydoll.

JESS

(In an outburst)

And the thing is I met Ben and Christian and suddenly I wanted... I just wanted... then he goes and rigs up the ball just so he could make more...

REBECCA

We did make quite a bit ourselves in the end...

JESS

I don't care! It's not the... he doesn't... I... I just wanted Andrew to DIE! For a second, even though he is basically a good man I think,.. I wished it. I made a wish that he would die. Of course a minute later I snatched it back. Tried to snatch it back. But it's gone. It's out there. I made an evil wish in a world where God's a cynical bastard with a thing for practical jokes. And I just know he's going to take me up on it.

REBECCA

What?

JESS

He's going to kill poor Andrew stone dead because he calls me pig instead of angel face or poppet or love-pixie.

REBECCA

And uses charity balls as cover for business meetings.

JESS

That too.

Long pause.

REBECCA

You're kidding though, right?

JESS

No! I'm totally serious. I've fallen in love with a miserable, broken, beautiful man who doesn't want or expect anything from me and now... Andrew is, is,..is a goner! I've cursed him!! I've killed him!!

REBECCA

(Practical)

Have you been drinking?

JESS

I wished it so. I wished it so and now I'm pretty sure it is so. I saw him coming out of the Queen Elizabeth.

REBECCA

Who, Ben?

JESS

No Andrew. I was on another wish visit and I saw him come out from outpatients ... and I found these hospital payments on his credit card bill. He's listless. Tired all the time. Distracted. He has these headaches, most nights! He's sodding dying and he's too proud to tell me because, little does he know, it's all my fault.

REBECCA

Everybody strikes down their stupid husband in their head! My front room would be like the Somme if all my husbands dropped dead the first time I put the evils on them. You... you are... you are so good Jessica.

Jess sniffs and begins to pull it together.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

A bit of an idiot obviously, but basically an all round good person who's good. And Andrew's a horse of a man. Nothing can kill him... especially not a stupid wish.

JESS

Sorry... Sorry... thanks...

95 CONTINUED: (3)

REBECCA

Okay then. Now...here... blow that cute little up-turned nose... the dripping bogie look is so last year.

96 INT. ANDREW'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

96

Andrew at his desk massaging his obviously painful forehead. Candy's voice comes through on the intercom...

CANDY VO

Dr Croxton from Queen Eli...

ANDREW

Put him through...Stephen....No Friday's no good. Thursday...first thing.... Just do the operation, I'm paying you enough... yeah, I know it makes sense to talk nicely to you Stephen but I can't be bothered... ..I don't care really whether you feel comfortable about it...

(A glimmer of charm)

sharpen your knives and lets get on with it... And listen... Thanks...

Pause, Andrew gathers himself then clicks the intercom.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Candy. Come in here... please. I've got...things to tell you...

97 INT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY.

97

Jess is carrying a Waitrose bag around the house restocking various toilets and bathrooms with posh toiletries and so on. She goes into Andrew's bathroom and puts a new soap dispenser on the counter, disposing of the old one. She opens up his wall cabinet and pops a month's worth of razor heads on the bottom shelf. She's about to go when the top shelf catches her eye. We see her pull out a dozen empty packets of Nureofen, Nurofen extra strong and some industrial looking blue painkillers.

Andrew's hidden pain and her hidden guilt at being its cause contrast starkly. She stuffs them back into the cabinet and wanders away, her head clearly spinning.

98 INT. JESS' HOUSE. NIGHT.

98

Andrew pounds away on a running machine in the home gym. Jess brings in a bottle of water and puts it in the stand. Andrew stabs the speed button and the treadmill slows to a stop. He looks drained.

ANDREW

Thanks. No energy tonight for some reason.

JESS

Andrew. Do we need to talk?

ANDREW

(Spooked but covering) No.

JESS

Really. Nothing at all we need to talk about?

ANDREW

(Covering better) Well, I'm not that keen on those Jane Austin dresses you've been buying but, you know, marriage is all about compromise so...

He tries to divert her but as he walks into the shower she catches him rubbing his temple again.

We leave Jess looking quietly tortured and follow Andrew into the shower.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

(Whispered) Shit, shit shit.

Ben is also up early. But he is pulling on the plastic gloves and dispensing the toxic gunk into its small beaker. His eyes are half closed. He also has a mobile scrunched between his shoulder and his ear, listening. Christian totters in sleepily on the way back from the little bathroom.

BEN

...okay...don't worry, I hope it turns out to be nothing serious...

He puts the phone down, relieved and disappointed at the same time. Christian raises the bit of skin where a quizzical eyebrow should be.

BEN (CONT'D)

(Off his look) Jess can't take us to France. Something wrong with her hitman husband she thinks. Someone else is taking us though, her sister maybe.

CHRISTIAN

Bugger.

BEN
Don't say bugger.

CHRISTIAN
You say bugger.

BEN
Bugger off.

CHRISTIAN
See. That's probably what put Jess off. Foul and abusive language.

BEN
That and the whole being married to someone else extravaganza.

CHRISTIAN
Yes that *is* a bugger.

100 EXT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY. 100

Andrew climbs into his car at dawn, crawling it up the gravel drive to cut down the noise of his departure.

101 INT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY. 101

Jess is just about to go out when she hears a chime from Andrews side of the hall. She feels in his pocket and finds an extraordinary thing. His Blackberry. He's left it behind, an unheard of occurrence.

The chime bongs again and we see it is a diary alert. It reads **QE Hosp. 8am. Op.**

Jess is confused. Then concerned. Then resolved.

102 INT. HOSPITAL RECOVERY ROOM. DAY. 102

Andrew sits up in a chair by the window wearing a loose sweat-suit. Dr Stephen Croxton, a 55-year-old consultant, enters reading notes without looking up.

STEVEN
And how are we feeling now?

ANDREW
Well I don't know or care how you feel Stephen but I've got a splitting headache and I'm bored. When can I get out of here?

STEVEN
(Familiar with and immune to Andrew)
Just one last check on my favourite patient...

ANDREW

Does the bedside manner cost extra?
Because if it does and it also slows
down my exit I can live without it
frankly.

STEVEN

(Without skipping a beat)
Glad to hear you are in typical form
Andrew...

He turns away from Andrew towards the bed which we now see
for the first time...is occupied.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

If I could just admire my handiwork
I'll be happy to let you go home...
Ah exquisite, oh yes, oh yes they're
exquisite...

Andrew comes and looks over his shoulder.

ANDREW

Bigger than I expected.

STEVEN

There will be some swelling for a
couple of days but then...
perfection!

ANDREW

So they should be at five grand a
pop.

STEVEN

Andrew, I am an artist. And cheap
breast enhancement is indeed a false
economy.

We see the beds occupant... Candy. Complete with new
breasts.

ANDREW

Yes, well. They do look good. You
happy with them Candy?

CANDY

(Slightly groggy)
Yeah, they're lovely Andrew. An
unconventional Christmas bonus
but...just what I always wanted.

Andrew shows an easy affection that's missing in his
exchanges with Jess...almost like he feels more on his own
level.

ANDREW

You look beautiful. You looked beautiful before mind.

CANDY

Well I didn't do it for you, you big sap. And don't expect a refund when I'm done with you.

But there is real affection here. And, of course, betrayal.

ANDREW

As long as you're happy babydoll.

STEVEN

(taking Andrew to one side)

One more thing Andrew. If you want to lose the headaches...

ANDREW

Yes?

STEVEN

Ease up on the Viagra.

103 **EXT. QUEEN ELIZABETH'S. DAY**

103

Jess jumps from her car and walks, then runs into the hospital. She's walking towards Neurology when she bumps straight into Andrew carrying two coffees. The lids save the spills. But that's all they save...

JESS

Andrew. Are you okay?

ANDREW

(Brightly and with a hint of guilt)

Hi Pig. It's okay, the lids caught most of it.

JESS

No. I mean are you okay. Why are you here?

Andrew looks down at the two coffees and seems to resolve something instantly in his mind.

ANDREW

(Guilty but decisive)

Listen Pig... Listen Jessica. This can't go on. I've got something to tell you...

JESS
(Knowing what's coming)
Oh Andrew. Oh Baby. I know...

ANDREW
(Surprised)
Really?

JESS
You're not that good an actor. Why didn't you say anything?? (Strokes his forehead with real concerned affection) We'll get through it together. There are specialists, people we can go to...

ANDREW
Well.
(Confused by her reaction but pressing on)
That's... that's nice and everything Jess... and you know.. I feel bad obviously. But I don't really want to try and get through it together...

JESS
Oh Andrew, how bad is it??

Patients, doctors and nurses mill all around them making the conversation disjointed.

ANDREW
Well... look its not your fault or anything...

JESS
(Sadly)
Actually, I think it might be...

ANDREW
Really it's not... Jessica. You were always too... and I'm more... Candy's just more my...

JESS
(Puzzled but catching up fast)
What's Candy got to do with...?

The two coffees suddenly seem much larger in Andrew's hands.

ANDREW
I know she's young but she...well, she makes me...
(again an unfamiliar word)
..happy. She makes me happy.

JESS

Oh... oh, I see.

There's a moments pause. They are standing at a cross roads in the hospital corridor so the flow of passers by is pretty constant. Jess is suddenly up to speed and steely.

JESS (CONT'D)

Candy. Candy with the glazed expression and the school uniform?

ANDREW

She's 23.

JESS

Oh good, another six months and she'll only be half your age.

ANDREW

She's a single Mum.

This is a huge blow. He meant it as proof of her adulthood but it is, of course, also a contrast to Jess' infertility. Andrew looks for a moment like he'd like to take it back but then...in too deep...he goes for defiance instead.

JESS

(Cold and yet molten) Oh well, if she's fertile that makes it all okay then.

ANDREW

Look, don't cause a scene Jessie.

JESS

(Exploding) Oh I'm sorry, got another meeting scheduled? I thought you were dying! I thought you were bleeding dying you bastard and in fact you're just shagged out. Coming home to refuel and rest your ancient gonads before popping back out for another round...

There's a pause. The passer bys, embarrassed pass around them in near silence. Andrew's shoulders slump a little, some of the air knocked out of him.

ANDREW

I'm the pig. You know that really. You could do better than me. Just... there'll be a settlement...just...we'll both be happier in the end.

JESS
 (Gathering herself)
 Yes. Maybe. Maybe we will.

There's a long awful pause. There's terrible hurt. Strangely on both sides. And perhaps, for Jess,... the beginnings of a feeling of release.

ANDREW
 I didn't mean to... It got lonely.
 Being the only git in the house.

JESS
 (Slightly softer)
 Good luck Andrew. Tell Candy to get
 you to eat a salad once in a while.
 (Harder again)
 I wont go home for a bit ...Be gone
 when I get back.

And then Andrew is alone in the swirl of humanity, cold coffee in either hand.

104 INT. JESS' CAR. NICHT

104

The Orange Range Rover is parked at the top of Primrose hill, nose pointed towards that lovely view of London sparkling below.

Less composed than she appeared at the house Jess fumbles in her bag for her phone. She begins to text. "**Looks like I can do the Lille trip after all, is that okay? Jx.**" The reply comes almost immediately. "**Okay. B**"

JESS
 Well, not as effusive as one might
 like but...

She walks back to her car.

105 EXT. JESS' HOUSE. DAY.

105

We see time-lapse photography of Andrew's bags going into his fleet of cars and one by one they disappear off the drive.

106 INT. JESSICA'S CAR. DUSK.

106

Jess' car powers along a French motorway, Ben is in the passenger seat, Christian is asleep in back. Jess wears no make-up and has her hair loosely tied back. She looks both like someone who has been through an upheaval...but also, if anything, even more beautiful. Ben sneaks a look at her as she drives.

JESS
 I'm so glad he was well enough to
 come.

BEN

Yes, it comes and goes. Sleeps then...grows. At the moment he's on a new radioactive gunk that might...he has to swallow it... but no improvement so far... Anyway they said if he took it easy... and it's not every day that Fulham play in Europe. In fact it's not any day is it? Sure you haven't made this Intertoto cup up just so you can get us into a lay-by and steal our clothes and credit cards?

JESS

It's a real cup! This Wish is happening or I'm dying in the attempt.

Pause.

BEN

Why do you do it? The wishes I mean...

JESS

I fell into it. My sister roped me in. I don't have children. Can't. But I don't think it's that...
(digging a little deeper)
People are good and bad aren't they? A mix of the two I mean. And we have a mix of luck. Good and appalling. No order or purpose. Just stuff. Turns out I'm ridiculously, cartoon lucky, so my attitude is.. "Sorry, I seem to have been given too much here, you have a bit..." I can help a little. So I do. I do 'good'. I'm a do-gooder to use your charming introductory phrase.

BEN

Yes, I do have a way of making a girl feel special don't I? No wonder I have the pick of every woman in North London.

JESS

(Giggles)
Mmm, I nearly jumped you myself, right there amongst the bike bits.

A change between them, more intimacy.

We see a close up of her left hand. There is a pale white band of skin on her honey coloured skin where her wedding ring used to be. We catch Ben staring at it.

SATNAV

NEXT LEFT, THEN SHARP RIGHT TURN.

JESS

Nearly there.

BEN

(spell broken a little)
I'll wake Christian. He won't want to miss arriving at the fancy hotel.

The hotel is indeed fancy. A large converted chateau with neatly sculpted grounds. There are a couple of rather erotic statues near the entrance.

JESS

Gosh, she's a busy lady...

There's a nymph making love to two goat men, one in front, one behind. Jess hops out and goes to check in...

JESS (CONT'D)

Back in two ticks...

BEN

(Gentle)
Chris... time to wake up.

CHRIS

(Instantly)
Oh don't be daft Dad. You think I was going to sleep through you love birds blundering your way towards a snogfest?

BEN

Little swine! You were pretending?
How long for?

CHRIS

Only since the Channel. I get the whole hubbah hubbah thing for you Dad... but can't really understand what's in it for her?

BEN

Again I return to my original swine point.

CHRIS

Still, result! Want me to switch rooms later? Or I could just carry on with the coma thing...

106 CONTINUED: (3)

106

Jess returns.

JESS

Oh, hi Christian. Good sleep.

CHRISTIAN

Excellent thanks.

JESS

Come see the fancy rooms I got you.
Hot and Cold running butlers, the
works.

107 INT. BEN'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

107

Christians roots around the room pressing buttons. A superior looking bellboy places their tattered case on the stand and waits with his hand slightly extended.

Ben shakes it. The bellboy looks appalled.

CHRISTIAN

Think he was after a tip dad.

BEN

(Still shaking the bellboys hand) I
know.

108 INT. JESS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

108

Jess tips the bellboy handsomely and then changes her clothes. She makes a subtle adjustment to her underwear. No cartoon Basques, just carefully selected and undeniably enticing La Perla. The kind you expect to get seen.

There's a sweet moment of indecision about whether one shoulder strap should be left loose over the arm then...

She dials a short number into the phone by the bed.

JESS

Hi. Everything to your
satisfaction.

BEN V/O

This room is three times bigger than
my flat. And a hundred times nicer.

JESS

(Sweetly) Not that hard to achieve I
guess.

BEN

Quite.

There's a half awkward half cosy pause. It's Ben's turn to talk but he just can't. He's not indifferent to the possibilities...just conflicted.

JESS

Want to see my room? The bed is so big that if you stand with your back to it you can still see the edges in your peripheral vision.

She's hiding a direct come on behind a cute joke.

BEN

Er... no. I'll leave you in peace. Long drive and all.

JESS

Well...goodnight...I guess. Call me if you...need anything.

BEN V/O

I will.

Jess puts the phone in its cradle and looks disappointed.

Another long pause. Then a knock at the door.

Jess hops to her feet, checks her hair in the mirror and flicks open an extra button on her top before opening the door....it's a maid.

MAID

Would Madam like a turndown?

JESS

Think I've just had one, thanks.

She closes the door and gets ready for bed. The subtle underwear coming off again.

Jess, Ben and Christian leave the Range Rover in the parking area of a huge football stadium. A column of brilliant light punctures the air about the pitch and the first few thousand supporters are milling around. It's all rather exciting. Jess hops out first. Pekinese

JESS

(Fake casual)

Come on, I got seats sitting beside something called the 'dugout'. Is that good?...

She knows this is amazing, Christian is beside himself.

110 INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM. DAY. 110

The match is in full swing. It's a passionate affair, end to end, joy and disaster and joy again.

Christian sits right next to the Fulham subs who, on Stubbs orders, chat to the boy throughout the game.

Jess and Ben shout themselves horse, hug, dance and generally have a brilliant time. The physicality of it is intense. Jess and Ben touch each other for the first time, a moment not lost on either of them.

Fulham lose but valiantly. Christian is happy. Ben even more so. And yet and yet...he's holding something back.

111 INT. BEN'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. 111

Fantastic night or no Christian's night routine must go on, pills, ventilator, gunk. Only when he's is settled does Ben allow himself a moment to think...

Checking Christian one last time and, almost as an afterthought, his own appearance, he seems to reach a decision and makes for the door.

CHRISTIAN

(to himself without opening his eyes) That shirt doesn't go with those trousers.

112 INT. JESS' HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. 112

A soft knock on the bedroom door. Jess opens it with wet hair and wearing only a loosely tied towelling robe. It's Ben.

BEN

Oh, sorry I didn't think you'd already be...

She is genuinely surprised to see him. Last night she was in her full seduction gear, now her hair is wet and she wears no make-up...but she is, of course, his dream just like that.

JESS

Oh...oh..no, I...Just a shower...
Come in. Is he settled?

BEN

He's out cold. The hospital gave me something to bonk him on the head with.

JESS

(Softly)

Did you eat? Want a bed picnic?
French room service is tip top...

BEN

No, I... I just came to... you're in
your dressing gown and I don't mean
to... by the way you look like a
movie star, just for the record, no
offence intended...

(distracted by the
intimate situation)

...I'd better go... because, you
know if you stand there and you look
as beautiful as that... it is really
hard to see how I can be reasonably
expected to avoid... you know...(she
lets him blabber on)... the whole
starting to kiss you and never, ever
stopping...situation...scenario...

They kiss. A beautiful, unhurried kiss. Jess pulls him
inside and closes the door. Then...

BEN (CONT'D)

(Gentle and sad)

Jess... you're not going to believe
this... but I can't...

JESS

(Dreamy)

You can... in fact you are really
rather good...

They kiss again, with greater passion. Then...

BEN

(With huge difficulty)

...Jess... I... can't... I can't do
this...

JESS

(Seductive and cute)

No, I'm no expert but that was
definitely a pretty good kiss you
were instigating there...

(another kiss)

And I seem to be managing okay too
so ...

They kiss, slowly and tenderly again. Then..

BEN

(Abrupt and desperate)

Jess. I Can't. I... I made a
deal.

JESS

What?

BEN

I made a promise. I cut a sort of deal... with God... oh this is impossible to...

JESS

(Suddenly sober but still kind)

No. Go on. I might... Go on.

BEN

I made a deal. In my head. With the universe. About Christian. If I gave up... If I didn't... not that I ever really thought I had a chance to... but if I gave up this thing that I wanted so much... burned for with all my heart...

(Lost)

JESS

Go on...

BEN

I said that if I gave you up then it would shrink... the tumour... I traded you for a smaller tumour. For no tumour in an ideal world... like I say I didn't even assume I could but I still swapped you... for more life. More life for my baby boy.

JESS

Oh Ben.

BEN

Yes. I know. You've been kissing a mad man. I'm sorry...

JESS

Oh Ben.

BEN

It's crazy. I'm not even particularly religious... or even superstitious... how could I be? How could I believe in the mercy of fate when it's dealt me such a fabulously shitty hand. And yet I made a wish. I gave you away before I even had you. And now... I don't expect you to understand...

JESS

But I do.

BEN

I'll just go. You're probably scared. "Hello room service, can you clear away my tray? And take the nutcase with you while you're at it please?"

JESS

(Serious)

I said I understand and I do. I made a... I had a thing that's kind of similar, well completely opposite actually but... I understand. More than understand... it was lovely... kissing you. Just for a second.

113 EXT. FRENCH HOTEL. DAY.

113

We see Jess, Ben and Christian loading up the car from a distance. There's a sweet, stupid awkwardness to the way they dance around each other. Even at range you can sort of see Christain's confusion.

114 INT. KID'S WISH. DAY.

114

Jess wanders into the Kid's Wish offices. Rebecca is completing a call. She mouths to Jess "It's HIM!". She flicks a promotional photo, one of many in a pile on her desk, of an aging glam rock pop star. Jess rolls her eyes and settles at a desk to file expenses and a report of the French trip.

REBECCA

...okay, bye then and thanks again,
SO much for the offer... bye!

The phone gets slammed down.

JESS

Not again?

REBECCA

AAARRRRGGGGHHH!!!!

JESS

I 'spose it's sweet in a way...

REBECCA

No! It's not in any way sweet! Just ridiculous! He never stops calling and NO CHILD IN THE WORLD WANTS TO MEET HIM!

JESS

No. No they really don't.

REBECCA

Why would they, why would they, why would they want to shake his wizened, green leather be-gloved hand in the last few days of their tragically short lives???

JESS

I'm sure he means well...

REBECCA

Rubbish!

(Getting over it)

Hey, how was France. Oodles of juicy sex with our handsome, if grubby, friend?

JESS

Oh Becca don't... I'm in ten different types of trouble. I flashed flesh Rebecca! I've only just,.. Andrew and I...I'm not even vaguely divorced yet! And...anyway we kissed.

REBECCA

You COW! You get all the fun wishes. I'm the oldest! I should be getting...

JESS

...and then he pulled back. He said he'd... it doesn't matter what he said. He was noble and lovely.

There's a pause and the tone changes utterly.

JESS (CONT'D)

Oh Becca I love him. I love him more than anyone or anything. He's the first thing I think of each morning and the last thing I dream of each night. I love him, love him, love him. And now, for a series of perfectly good reasons, its all fucked up now.

REBECCA

(Suddenly wise and kind)

Course it's not. A certain amount of kissing and pulling back is utterly inevitable. Haven't you ever been to the movies?

They stare at each other, never closer than they are now.

JESS

I love you too.

REBECCA

Of course you do, who wouldn't?
Come on, we're done here... lets
revert to type and go spend lots of
money we didn't earn on stuff we
don't need.

JESS

(Off) You're paying though. Andrew
has lawyered up...

REBECCA

(Off, ironic) You amaze me...

They are about to walk out, more equal than they've ever
been. Then Rebecca remembers something and goes back to her
desk. She roots in a cabinet and then hands Jess a framed
photo of Christian with Stubbs, obviously taken by Jess on
the day after the ball.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I rooted through your i-photo file
and had one of these printed up.
You know. In case you are driving
past one day and feel like dropping
it in.

Her intention is obvious. Jess accepts the picture with shy
gratitude.

115 **EXT. HAMMERSMITH. DAY.**

115

Ben and Christian walk along a busy Hammersmith street. Ben
is loaded down with Tesco shopping, Christian carries a
single, lightly filled bag.

CHRISTIAN

..well you must have said something.

BEN

I didn't say anything.

CHRISTIAN

Done something then.

BEN

I didn't do anything either.

CHRISTIAN

Maybe you should have done
something. You know.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Gargled her tonsils. Bumped uglies.
 Maybe you were supposed to do
 something and you didn't do it
 because you are too stupid.

Christian rubs his temple in an odd way and looks perplexed.

BEN

You're twelve. Be twelve.

They reach the scabby little front yard of their flats.

CHRISTIAN

Maybe you smelt. Did you wash
 properly?

BEN

Look, I didn't say, or do, or not do
 anything. Mrs Eddison is a nice
 married lady and whatever you were
 expecting to happen was never going
 to happen.

CHRISTIAN

You must have barnyard something or
 we'd heckle from her by...heard
 from...flom...neurk...

BEN

(Looking for his keys and
 not really paying
 attention)

You're speaking in tongues now
 Christian. Shall we just let it go?

CHRISTIAN

...Da..Dad...

Christian clutches his head and crumples to the floor. Tins
 and jars spill across the pavement in slow motion.

A moment of complete silence enfolds the busy street as we
 hold on Ben's face trying to process the information.

Then he explodes into action. Dropping his own shopping onto
 the pavement he scoops up the boy and begins the sprint up
 the street towards the hospital.

Pedestrians scatter. The druggie upstairs pokes his head out
 of the window and examines the spilt shopping through glazed
 eyes.

116 EXT. BEN'S FLAT. NIGHT.

116

The orange Range Rover pulls up outside the flat. Jessica
 climbs out, steps over the spilt shopping and begins to ring
 Ben's doorbell, hiding the framed photo behind her back.

But there's no answer. She rings again and a white guy with filthy dreadlocks leans slowly out of the window above.

SKUNK
(From above)
They ain't in.

JESS
Sorry, I don't?...

SKUNK
Laughing boy downstairs and the sick kid. They ain't in. Saw them go across to the Hospital an hour ago. Looked like they were in a hurry or summink.

JESS
(Quietly)
Oh God.

SKUNK
Come up here instead baby, I'm conducting a very interesting chemical experiment in the living room that will take your mind off your troubles...

JESS
(Stunned)
No. Thanks. Tempting but I think I'll leave it for the...
(Tails off, mind whirring)

SKUNK
No worries.
(Calling after her)
I'm always here if you change your mind gorgeous.

Christian lies, eyes closed, in a bed, tubes and devices spiral out of him but he is not interbated (and can therefore speak). He looks half his twelve years.

Ben stands by his bed, face completely drained of colour. Two doctors talk quietly to him.

BEN
...but you've always said that it was too dangerous to operate.

KYLE
It was Ben. But the vein that feeds the tumour has started to bleed into his brain.

(MORE)

KYLE (CONT'D)

If we do nothing now he will...

(Tails off knowing
Christian is listening)

The operation is still..
tremendously dangerous. But
circumstances mean it is really the
only choice. We're suggesting a new
technique called a Stop/Start.
It's...well, it's complex...

CHRISTIAN

You freeze me. Kill me. Fix me.
Warm me up again and then unkill me.
Right Doctor Kyle?

BEN

(Gentle, amazed even)
When we go home I'm going to
disconnect the internet and smash
your Mac into tiny little pieces.

KYLE

(Relieved to only have to
fill in the details)
Christian, as ever, is right.
Essentially we pack his body in ice
to lower his body temperature to 4
degrees...

CHRISTIAN

Get him to sign the consent now,
he's not good with detail. Easily
confused.

BEN

Please Chrissy...
(unable to finish the
sentence)

KYLE

Once the body is cold enough we stop
his heart and drain all the blood
from his body to relieve pressure on
the brain. He'll be dead for 45
minutes. Hopefully the freezing
means we can revive him when the
operation is over. People rescued
from freezing water have come back
over an hour after death in the
right circumstances. This procedure
is based on that...theory.

BEN

No. There must be something else.

117 CONTINUED: (2)

KYLE

There isn't. And we have to do it now.

CHRISTIAN

Sign the forms. I'll make it. You said, remember? 3.5 billion years of successful mating. Guppies, slime creatures. You said it yourself.

BEN

Yes. I did.

CHRISTIAN

Sign the thing. My head hurts. From all your yakking.

BEN

I love you.

CHRISTIAN

I noticed.

The doctors leave and suddenly Christian's face crumbles. The years and precocious wisdom fall away and reveal a frightened little boy.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I...I don't want to die Daddy. Don't let me die.

Ben threads his arms through the various wires and tubes coming out of the small boy he loves. He whispers so quietly we can hardly hear...

BEN

I won't baby. I won't let that happen.

118 INT. OPERATING THEATRE. DAY.

118

Christian's body is packed in ice. A temperature monitor falls and his heart stops. The operation begins with a large clock counting down from 45 minutes.

119 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

119

The junior doctor from the consult finds Ben pacing.

JUNIOR

It will take quite a while. Maybe you should go for a walk.

Ben looks at first as if he might punch the doctor...but is in fact meek as a kitten.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

BEN

Ok.

We see him numbly wander off along the corridor.

120 INT. HOSPITAL. DAY.

120

We see Jess lost in the nightmare of the large hospital's complex administration. She is searching for Ben and Christian but not getting very far. The camera finds her at a series of desks and computer terminals as she is directed from one place to another.

121 INT. OPERATING THEATRE. DAY.

121

The observation gallery is packed with young doctors. This is a rare procedure. Below the countdown clock scrolls through the seconds and the surgeons do their work. Ten people attending the tiny body.

122 INT. HOSPITAL RECEPTION. NIGHT.

122

Jess talks to an overweight security guard who is cheerful but not fantastically helpful. He doesn't take his eyes off a bank of little screens that show the output of the hospital's dozens of CCTV cameras. Jess is about to walk away when she spots Ben on one of the monitors. She points at the screen...

JESS

Please! Where's that?

GUARD

Er... Neonatal love. 3rd floor, West Wing.

JESS

Thanks.

She sprints away.

123 INT. NEONATAL. DAY.

123

Ben stands looking through the window at an assortment of Babies in incubators. A nurse looks like she wants to ask him what he's doing but then thinks better of it.

Then Jess appears.

JESS

Ben?

BEN

Jess? What are.. why are you here?

JESS

I was at the flat. The man upstairs said you'd been rushed in here... I was worried that... where is he? Is he...

BEN

He's in the theatre now. Makes him sound like he's doing a pantomime doesn't it? Don't think he is though. He fell down. The thing, the tumour had begun to bleed into his brain. They had to...they're doing this operation... they call it a stop/start. They freeze him and stop his heart, kill him for 45 minutes... then they bring him back. They say they can bring him back. Like when your neighbour borrows your hedge trimmer. They say they will bring it back... but they know they probably won't.

Jess brushes her hand slowly and gently down Ben's arm.

JESS

I couldn't find you. What are you doing here?

BEN

Long operation. Four hours of preparation then 45 minutes of terror. Thought I'd come and look at the babies. They look peaceful. Hopeful.

They both look at the tiny people sleeping in the incubators. Ben turns and engages with Jess properly for the first time.

BEN (CONT'D)

I never asked you. May I ask you? About why you... why you don't have these..

(points at the babies.)

There's a long pause. Then Jess answers with a sweetness that contrasts starkly with what she is saying.

JESS

My babies.. liked to snuggle up in my fallopian tubes. They only let you have two ectopic pregnancies... then they sort of take your licence away.

BEN

I'm sorry. Sorry to ask. Sorry
that's the answer.

(Pause)

I don't remember. I don't remember
what it's like not to have a child.

She takes his hand and leads him back to the waiting room outside the theatre where Christian is being operated on. There's a bank of chairs. With a tender authority she pushes his shoulders down so he sits on the leftmost chair. Then she sits two seats away and spreads her hands in her lap. With numb understanding he lies down across the chairs and puts his head on her knee. We see him from far above, simultaneously a large, careworn man and a tiny baby.

124 INT. OPERATING THEATRE. NIGHT.

124

We look down from inside the observation gallery. The clock counts past 45 and into minus numbers. The doctors movements are more frantic and there is muffled shouting through the glass. The ice bags are torn away and they begin their frantic efforts to restart the child's heart.

125 INT. WAITING ROOM. DAY.

125

Jess and Ben are where they left them. Both have their eyes closed but through mistimed glances at each other we learn that neither sleeps.

The young doctor who advised the walk approaches. He seems in two minds about what to do. Finally he gently shakes Ben's shoulder.

DOCTOR

Mr Riley...

Ben sit bolt upright. Jess reaches for his hand.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Christian survived the
operation...but we went over the
time that is considered safe. We
don't know what the effects will be.
He's back in recovery if you and Mrs
Riley would like to see him.

BEN

Okay.

(To Jess)

Can you be Mrs Riley for a bit
longer?

JESS

Yes.

125 CONTINUED:

125

Eva Cassidy singing 'Songbird' fades up and then soars beautifully over the next few scenes.

126 INT. RECOVERY ROOM. NIGHT.

126

Christian lies motionless, his head almost entirely encased in bandages. He looks a little like a large matchstick. The one eye that is visible is closed.

Ben climbs up on the bed and lies next to his tiny body. Jess quietly takes a seat in the shadows.

127 INT. RECOVERY ROOM. DAY.

127

We see three days pass in a series of soft dissolves. Jess brings food, then a change of clothes for Ben, then more food and more clothes. We also see them talk and talk...but the song covers what they say. There's no improvement in Christian. The monitors show no brain activity. (There's another of Gabrielle's pictures in the room now, evidence perhaps that she has been and gone, or perhaps just sent some things over.)

Then the same Junior doctor comes to talk to them. His face is bleak. Years of practice has left Ben highly attuned to reading doctors faces.

BEN

Go away. Go away with that face.

DOCTOR

Mr Riley.

BEN

I mean it, get the fuck away from me with that face.

DOCTOR

I realise that this is a very diff....

BEN

No you don't. If you did you wouldn't be walking around with the "I'm sorry face". You'd have put a bit of effort into coming up with a better, blanker one.

DOCTOR

I'll give it some thought (he looks exhausted too, enough to make him blunt anyway) I wanted to talk to you about our donor programme.

JESS

You can't ask Ben to give blood at a time like...

BEN

He doesn't mean me. He means
Christian.

JESS

(Suddenly very small) What?

BEN

Don't you? Young livers and kidneys
and hearts. In demand. He's a
vulture in a white coat.

DOCTOR

I realise this is a very
difficult...

JESS

NO!

Her voice is completely changed. Powerful. Molten.

JESS (CONT'D)

Get the fuck away from us. He's
going to be fine.

DOCTOR

It's been ten days with no sign of
any brain activity Mr Riley, you
ought to start...

JESS

Get away from us.

The doctor, too tired to press any further shrugs and walks
away.

BEN

They think he's spare parts.

JESS

They are wrong.

BEN

They aren't often.

JESS

But they are sometimes. They are
this time.

BEN

Ok

JESS

Ok?

BEN

Ok.

127 CONTINUED: (2)

127

But its not ok.

We pull away from them. They look like two children in the vast ugly waiting room.

128 INT. RECOVERY ROOM. NIGHT.

128

Jess arrives and brings coffee and a paper. Ben begins to read the football scores.

BEN

...Arsenal 1 Bolton 1. Liverpool 2
Everton 1. And finally Fulham 12
Manchester United 0.

There's a long pause.

BEN (CONT'D)

Worth a try.

Another pause.

(Ben (CONT'D)

(So sweetly) Wake up you lazy sod.
You're 10 days behind with your
homework.

(Pause)

Hey and listen, one more time...you
don't even have an excuse to skive
school any more. When they were in
there sticking a plaster over your
little bleed they decided they could
yoink out the tumour. Two for one,
special offer. The stop start made
it... anyway, your inoperable tumour
turned out to be more operable than
they thought.. once they'd killed
you and taken all your blood out so
they had a bit of room to work...

He is making light of a miracle. A miracle too late maybe.

JESS

(Sweetly joining in)
So all this lying in bed stuff is
really just sheer laziness.

Again the boy is motionless. The brain monitor lines motionless.

BEN

Ok. I didn't want to go this far
but you give me no choice...

He rummages in an old knapsack and takes out a small cup and a steel flask. From the flask he pours a blob of vile, lime green liquid.

BEN (CONT'D)

It's not blended mint Aero. It's not melon juice and lime cordial. Enough mollycoddling nonsense. This is foul tasting semi nuclear green gunk. And if you don't wake up right now I'm pouring it down every one of the tubes that are sticking out of you. Including the one you're supposed to breathe through.

Still nothing. Jess puts her hands on each of the big man's shoulders as he bows his head in defeat. The pistachio ice cream (for that's what it is) melts a little in the cup.

Then Jess' eyes widen.

A tiny corner of Christian's mouth has turned up. The movement is so small Jess is not even sure of what she's seen.

JESS

...Ben.

She pulls his head up. He sees it too.

BEN

Chrissy?

Jess is on her feet in an instant and out the door. She's back moments later with the young doctor. He checks the boy's eyes and gives a tiny smile of his own. Christian raises a feeble hand to the pipe going into his mouth. The doctor looks momentarily concerned, then works to remove it.

There's a long pause then...

CHRISTIAN

(opening an eye)

You..better..not..be
lying..about..the 12-Nil.

Ben tries to find a bit of his son that doesn't have wires or tubes coming out of it...and settles for his left hand. He cradles it like it was his son's entire body.

BEN

You had me scared you little
bastard.

The doctor continues to run checks and Jess slips out of the room.

129 INT. RECOVERY ROOM. DAY.

129

Ben is asleep with his head across the boy's feet, an extra couple of days beard growth have appeared on his face since we last saw him. Christian now has both eyes free under a new, smaller bandage. They glisten with life.

Jess enters with coffee and another change of clothes for Ben. Christian winks at Jess with his newly freed eye.

CHRISTIAN

You'll have... to jump... him Jess.
He's too thick... to know when he's
onto... a good thing.

The sound of Christian's voice snaps Ben awake. Slightly befuddled he takes in what the boy has just said.

BEN

(Overjoyed to hear
Christian's voice again
but also embarrassed)
Christian don't...it might even be
safe to clip you round the ear now.
You.. you mustn't be cheeky to Mrs
Eddison. She's been very...

JESS

(Blurting slightly)
Reeve. My name is Reeve. Now. I
think...

There's a pause, this is obviously a day for big news.

JESS (CONT'D)

My maiden name is Reeve.

BEN

You? You and Andrew...?

JESS

Yes. Yes, pretty much...

BEN

Why didn't you say?

JESS

Because it's not..
(Not wanting to say more
in front of Christian)
because of... the deal. Especially
now.

(Big heartbroken smile)
The deal worked out, didn't it?

CHRISTIAN

What deal?

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Chrissy, it's sort of private...

CHRISTIAN
This is not... the "spare him and I'll give up all hope of being with Jess" prayer that you... make too loudly in our tiny flat when you're drunk... is it Dad?

BEN
(Quietly)
I get no privacy...

CHRISTIAN
Because if it is then... you're thicker than even I... realised.
(cross and gaining strength from it)
I've been baked in radioactivity!... Swallowed ten gallons of green gunk!... Thrown half of it back up again like I'm in the exorcist!... Finally they bloody kill me... And you think that I'm getting better because of you and your deal?...

BEN
Well, no I...

CHRISTIAN
(Calm again)
Adults are so thick. Kiss with tongues. Try and do it right this time Dad.

He closes his eye again, happy with his work.

There's a big pause. A crash of some wonderful, spiraling love song....Then, at last, they kiss.

A wonderful kiss. A long, passionate kiss. Too long for Christian in the end.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Yuck! I wasn't serious about the tongue thing for crying out loud.
(More kissing)
Ok, forget Fulham. My new wish is, like, that you stop now with the eating each others face thing... anyone interested?... in my wish?
(Almost lost in the music) Jess? Dad? No?... apparently not...

129 CONTINUED: (2)

The wonderful song reaches it's crescendo and we get the strong feeling that everything will work out fine for this new little family.

THE END.