

HOPE SPRINGS MATERNAL

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PILOT: Home is Where The Fan Is

INT. UNIVERSITY STAFFROOM - MORNING - DAY 1

Faded sofas and chairs with sunken seats are scattered about randomly.

A solitary figure sits typing on her laptop. This is ANNIE DEVINE (52, short purple hair, glasses, minimal make-up).

FRAN (60s, long silver hair, radiates 1970s counter-culture) enters breezily.

FRAN
(cheerily)
Morning.

Annie stretches and lets out a long yawn. Fran wipes a shiny apple on her top before taking a large bite.

ANNIE
(drearily)
Try telling that to my
hypothalamus.

FRAN
(crunching apple)
Oh dear, still not sleeping?

ANNIE
Got it in one.

FRAN
I don't understand why you let
yourself suffer. HRT did wonders
for me, you know.

ANNIE
Yeah, so you keep saying. I'm just
not sure I trust it, that's all. I
read about a study that found a
significant increase in heart
disease and breast cancer in women
who've taken it.

Fran wanders over to the noticeboard on the wall.

FRAN
Suit yourself.
(MORE)

FRAN (cont'd)

(beat)
What you teaching this morning?

ANNIE

Feminist ambivalence and the
generational paradigm. You?

FRAN

The limits of epistemological
knowledge and the Metaphysics of
God.

ANNIE

Ugh. Sounds rough. Thank Christ I'm
an atheist.

FRAN

Ooh, don't you have your lesson
observation for the Senior Lecturer
post today?

ANNIE

Yeah, two o'clock. I'm dreading it.

FRAN

You'll be fine. If you're nervous,
just imagine you're naked.

ANNIE

Shouldn't I be imagining the
observer naked?

FRAN

Oh. Yes. Duh! (snorts) Best not
imagine Randy Andy naked though.
You'll have nightmares.

EXT. TEIGNMOUTH HARBOUR - DUSK (LATER THAT DAY)

Squawking seagulls circle above small, quirky, washed-up
fishing boats.

A large SEAGULL perches on the hull of an upturned boat
painted with the words, 'Mucky Pup'. We adopt its POV.

Heading towards us, down the narrow slip road, is a
ramshackle, CONVERTED AMBULANCE VAN plastered in climate
action stickers.

A petrified DOG WALKER stands with his back against the wall
of a pub to let it pass. The dog barks furiously.

At the bottom of the slip road, where the tarmac meets damp sand, the vehicle shudders to a halt as its engine cuts out.

INT. HIPPY VAN - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

In the driver's seat is SKY (24, slim, fresh-faced, unconventionally dressed in earthy tones, festival wristbands on her tanned arm).

In the passenger seat, sleeping open-mouthed, is SHROOM (mid 20s, dreadlocks, tatty beard, ragged clothes, clearly hasn't washed in a while).

SKY

Shit. I forgot. It's one-way around here now. Oi, wake up. I need you to help me turn this thing around.

SHROOM slowly opens his eyes, squinting against the gloomy daylight. He groans and stretches, lazily, as the staring seagull comes into focus.

SKY (cont'd)

It's weird being back here. Feels so... confusing.

(beat)

I wonder if everyone feels like that about where they grew up?

(beat)

Where were you brought up again?

SHROOM

Ashdown Forest. Weird as fuck.

SKY

Isn't that the place where Winnie the Pooh hangs out?

SHROOM

Yeah. East Grinstead. Mental leylines.

(beat)

That seagull's freakin' me out.

SKY

Everything freaks you out.

SHROOM

That's cos the world's so fucked up.

SKY
It's cos you're always blazed, more
like.

SHROOM
I only get blazed cos the world's
so fucked up.

Sky turns the ignition key. The engine coughs and splutters,
refusing to start.

SKY
Not again! That's just great...

ROLL TITLE CREDITS: 'HOPE SPRINGS MATERNAL'

EXT. AERIAL VIEWS OVER SEASIDE TOWN - DUSK (CONTINUOUS)

The gull takes off, defecating heavily on the windscreen as
it passes over the van.

SKY (O.S.)
For fuck's sake!!

We take the seagull's POV, soaring over the closed-down
pier, the abandoned promenade, Regency hotels, boarded-up
shops, and pastel cottages.

The gull finally alights on a telegraph pole opposite a
backstreet pub. We follow BAZ (53, beer gut, silver mullet,
resembles a failed 80s rock-star) inside.

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT

A typical British seaside-town pub. Average age 58. A couple
of bald men in their 40s are playing pool. There's '80s soft
rock music playing in the background.

ANNIE and her partner LIAM (54, tanned face, chiselled
cheekbones) sit at a table near the bar, underneath a screen
showing a football match (sound muted). A third chair at
their table remains empty.

The door swings open and BAZ enters, tripping over the low
step. Not at all embarrassed, he grins as he strides over to
join his old friends.

BAZ
(shouts towards the bar
in a broad Brummie
accent)
Yer still 'aven't moved that step
then, Maurice?! I'm gunna break me
bleedin' neck one o' these days.

Baz reaches his friends and falls into the empty chair,
groaning like someone who'll soon need a hip replacement.

ANNIE
You need to do more exercise.

BAZ
Don't you start. I've already 'ad
your other 'alf in my ear about
that.

LIAM
Well, you can't survive on Doritos
and beer, mate. We're at the age
people start talking strokes and
heart attacks.

ANNIE
He's right, you know. I mean, when
was the last time you had your five
a day?

BAZ
I always have my five a day, bab.
Five beers every day, without fail.
(winks)
Speaking of which... get 'em in,
mate.

EXT. TEIGNMOUTH HARBOUR - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

ESTABLISHER SHOT of the hippy van still on the slipway.

INT. HIPPY VAN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

We're in the back of the van. There's a cosy glow from
battery-powered fairy lights.

SKY is reading a book titled: *The More Beautiful World Our
Hearts Know Is Possible* by Charles Eisenstein.

SHROOM sits cross-legged, rolling a joint on the underside
of an old guitar.

SHROOM

What time's the RAC bloke coming?

SKY

Dunno, they just said early tomorrow.

SHROOM

Better set an alarm for half eleven then.

SKY

It's just as well my mum added me to her policy. We've had to call them out seven times this year already. I just can't work out why the battery keeps going flat.

SHROOM

Um, I did look it up online. It could be something to do with this.

Shroom holds up a mini-rig speaker, a lead dangling from it.

SKY

Don't tell me you've been playing music through that thing while it's been hooked up to the battery?

(beat)

While the engine wasn't running...

SHROOM

I might have done. A couple of times.

SKY

Fuck's sake! That's why it keeps going flat!

SHROOM

But it's not just the battery, to be fair. Loads of things are fucked. You said yourself it's not reliable enough to get us round Europe.

SKY

Which is why I need to speak to my mum about grandad's inheritance. So I can get us a new van.

(beat)

And we'll get dinner.

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER)

Annie gazes wistfully at an unsmiling, elderly couple sitting in comfortable silence nearby.

Liam and Baz approach from the bar with three full pints. Annie snaps out of her reverie. She's clearly distracted about something.

ANNIE

Sorry, miles away. Cheers, m'dear.

BAZ

You weren't thinking about a wild swingers session with Bob and Eileen was ya?

ANNIE

Baz! Bob and Eileen are in their 90s!

BAZ

So? Yer never too old for a bit of nookie. I swear, the older I get, the stronger the urge. I'm like a caged rhinoceros on heat first thing in the morning. Eh, mate?

Baz elbows Liam in the ribs. Liam winces and avoids eye contact with Annie.

ANNIE

Yeah, that's a little bit TMI.

BAZ

So, come on then. How did yer lesson observation go today?

ANNIE

Well... I think I can safely say that I'm not gonna get the job.

BAZ

Oh no, what went wrong, bab?

ANNIE

Basically, it was hijacked by a teenage girl pretending to have a wilted, shrivelled up, menopausal vagina.

BAZ

Eh? What you on about, hijacked?
And can we just unpack that second
part? Is that what really happens
to yer... (whistles)... y'know?

ANNIE

And when I told Fran, she said,
"Well, at least *we* don't have to
pretend." So much for sisterhood!

BAZ

I still don't understand. Start
from the beginning, will ya?

FLASHBACK BEGINS

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - EARLIER THAT DAY

ANNIE is teaching a small group of students.

Observer, RANDY ANDY (40s, corduroy trousers, beard, acne
problem) sits in a corner at the back of the room, a
clipboard on his knee.

On Annie's desk is an electric fan and a mug with the
slogan: *He who hath not a uterus should shut the fucketh up.*
Fallopians 13:13.

On the whiteboard behind Annie is a list of words:
'menstruation, menopause, meningitis, menorrhea, mendacious,
menacing, mentor.'

ANNIE

Any more words that start with the
Latin prefix, 'men'?

DYLAN (STUDENT)

Mentalist.

Some of the students snigger.

ANNIE

Actually, Dylan, that leads us to
another interesting prefix relating
to the female. This one's Ancient
Greek.

Annie writes 'HYSTER...' on the whiteboard as she speaks.

ANNIE (cont'd)
It means womb. So, which words have
the prefix, 'hyster'?

FEMALE STUDENT
Hysterectomy.

ANNIE
Good. Yes.

DYLAN
Hysterical.

Annie feels a hot flush coming. She blows at her damp
fringe, to no avail.

ANNIE
So, why do we think that words
linked to the female reproductive
organs share prefixes with words to
do with mental distress?

Annie is looking pink in the face. She switches on the fan.

ANNIE (cont'd)
Let's take the word, 'menopause.'
Actually, I have a clip...

Annie connects her laptop to the whiteboard so that she can
project the video. Dozens of open browser tabs appear on the
whiteboard. She clicks on each one, trying to find the
video.

One tab shows an Amazon page for a facial hair removal
product. Another reveals a Google search for 'knickers with
charcoal gusset.' The students snigger. Randy Andy looks up,
suddenly interested.

ANNIE (cont'd)
Oops, no, not that one. Or that
one... Um... It's a TED talk...

The bored students start chatting and checking their phones.
Annie finally finds the YouTube video - *Dr Jen Gunter: The
Menopause Manifesto*.

ANNIE (cont'd)
Ah! Here it is! Yes, as I was
saying, this...

A VERY LOUD ADVERT begins to play, interrupting Annie. A
close-up of a young, fresh-faced, overly-enthusiastic woman
is projected onto the whiteboard.

AMERICAN FEMALE
(on the screen)
Do you suffer from vaginal dryness
due to the menopause?

The woman holds up a tube with the label: "Satin Minnie."

AMERICAN FEMALE (cont'd)
You need Satin Minnie. It's a lube
that makes your Mary-Allen feel as
moist as grandma's Victoria Sponge.

Some students snigger, some look shocked. Randy Andy is
clearly aroused.

ANNIE
What the...? I'm so sorry about
this.

Annie desperately tries to stop the video, but her brain is
shutting down and her fingers refuse to co-operate. Her
anxiety is rapidly escalating into anger.

AMERICAN FEMALE
So, shine that 'gine with Satin
Minnie. You'll never whinge about
that minge again.

ANNIE
(shouts at the screen)
Just fuck off, you stupid little
girl! You've absolutely no idea!

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

BAZ
(unconvincingly)
Um, it's probably not as bad as you
think, y'know?

LIAM
Yeah, I'm sure they'll take tech
problems into account.

BAZ
Come on bab, cheer up. Get that
pint down ya, and I'll get you a
vodka chaser.

Annie smiles weakly.

LIAM

Hey, did I mention we finally finished converting Sky's old bedroom into a home office? Annie's gonna use it as a quiet writing space, aren't you babe?

ANNIE

Yeah. I always wanted to be like Virginia Woolf.

BAZ

Who's that? An interior design influencer or summat?

ANNIE

Don't tell me you've never heard of Virginia Woolf! She's a famous writer. You must've heard of *A Room of One's Own*.

BAZ

Yeah. Just now... when you were talking about 'aving a room of yer own to write in.

ANNIE

I give up.

BAZ

Are yer writing a book then, bab?

ANNIE

I am. Well, I haven't started actually writing it yet, but I've done a lot of planning in my head.

BAZ

What is it? Crime thriller? Mills & Boon?

ANNIE

Feminist non-fiction. Academic.

BAZ

Epidemic? Not another one! I'm still on the sick cos of the last one.

Annie rolls her eyes.

BAZ (cont'd)
Nah, seriously. What's it about?
Yer book?

ANNIE
It's about representations of women
in the media. How they evolve
through three distinct stages.

Baz stops listening as two girls in skimpy outfits stumble through the door. The girls survey the scene like they're encountering a site of ancient relics.

ANNIE (cont'd)
So, up to the age of 30, girls and
women are objects of sexual desire.
That's Stage One. Then, women are
expected to live up to cynical and
impossible representations of
motherhood. That's Stage Two.

Baz and Liam's eyes are still on the girls. Annie sighs. The girls look at each other and giggle drunkenly, then leave as suddenly as they had arrived. Baz and Liam exchange a disappointed look. Liam's mobile phone pings.

ANNIE (cont'd)
And Stage Three is when women go
through menopause. They become
obsolete and invisible. Nobody
listens to them anymore.

Obviously not listening to Annie, Baz gulps his beer and looks up at the football on the screen above Liam's head.

Liam takes out his phone and opens an email that begins with the words, 'Dear Mr Murphy, Thank you for your recent application. I am sorry to inform you that, on this occasion, you have been unsuccessful...'

ANNIE (cont'd)
The only representations left for
mature women are the crone, the
witch, and the grandmother.

Baz eventually realises that Annie has stopped talking. He drags his eyes away from the game, reluctantly.

BAZ
Sounds fascinating bab. Can't wait
to read it. When you've finished
it, like.

ANNIE

Yeah, right.

A short, awkward pause. Baz is keen to change the subject.

BAZ

(to Liam)

How's the job-hunting going, mate?

LIAM

Badly. No one's interested in taking on ex-indie record shop managers in their 50s. Just had another rejection email.

BAZ

I wouldn't worry. I heard most people over 50 ain't working these days. I've made a career out of being unemployed, me.

LIAM

I thought you were self-employed? As a musician?

BAZ

Yeah, technically, but I've been making a loss for 30 years. Gotta look on the bright side, though. Never paid a penny in tax.

ANNIE

Yeah, well, Liam needs a job because his redundancy money has run out and we're behind with the mortgage. Which is also why I needed that Senior Lecturer job.

BAZ

Blimey. That level of responsibility would set me asthma off. Didn't yer dad leave you some dosh in his will, bab?

ANNIE

I'm sure he has, but Matilda's the executor and her solicitor is dragging his feet. In the meantime, we're screwed.

BAZ

Bugger. So, is Waltzing Matilda still getting on yer tits then?

ANNIE
Yeah. But she's been lonely since
dad... y'know...

INT. MATILDA'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

MATILDA (stocky, too much make-up, mid-70s, Afro-Caribbean descent) stands admiring a framed photograph of a jovial-looking man in his 70s - HAROLD DEVINE.

She kisses the picture tenderly before addressing her late husband's image in a combination of Standard English and Jamaican Patois.

MATILDA
Off to see Mr Dunbar tomorrow,
Putus. All this paperwork soon be
finished. Never knew death cause so
much admin.

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

ANNIE
Maybe I should invite her over
tomorrow. She's family after all,
and she hasn't seen Sky for ages.

Liam shoots Baz a look of dread.

LIAM
Did we mention Sky's in town for a
few days?

BAZ
Oh, ah. Is she still hanging out
with tree-huggers and chucking soup
at masterpieces?

LIAM
Yeah. She's coming to dinner
tomorrow, with her boyfriend.

BAZ
Same fella as before, or a
different one? I can't keep up.

ANNIE
Same one, sadly. A fire juggler who
calls himself Shroom. As in magic
mushroom.

BAZ
Blimey. Bet he's a 'fun-guy' to be around.

LIAM
He's a total loser. Seems to attract women like flies though.

ANNIE
Perhaps it's his eau de bullshit.

INT. HIPPY VAN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

SHROOM
Do we have to go inside, though?
Like, inside the actual house?
Can't we stay in the van after we've said hello and shit?

SKY
We're not eating dinner in the van.
That's just rude. Even I know that.

SHROOM
They've got a weird aura, your family. Makes me paranoid.

SKY
That's the weed, not my relatives, you fuckwit. Look, I know you don't do families, but you survived last time, didn't you?

SHROOM
I found it fuckin' traumatic, to be honest.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

INT. ANNIE AND LIAM'S KITCHEN - DAY

ANNIE, LIAM, SKY, SHROOM, BAZ, and MATILDA sit at the table.

MATILDA
So, have you found a proper job yet, Chloe, dear?

SKY

My name's Sky now, gran. And I don't want a proper job. I would die of boredom. Anyway, I get by OK with the street performing.

Matilda eyes her disapprovingly. Baz turns to Annie and attempts to steer the conversation in a different direction.

BAZ

What you teaching this year, then bab?

ANNIE

Feminist Film Narratives and Women's Studies.

SKY

Is Women's Studies still a thing? What about the gender spectrum?

MATILDA

Mi will never understand the yout' of today. I expec' when you get married, yuh won't take the man's name neither.

SKY

Marriage is for losers. Anyway, I'm polyamorous.

MATILDA

Polly who? Why you keep changing your name? What the matter with Chloe?

SKY

My name is Sky! Oh, whatevs. I can't be arsed to explain.

ANNIE

You should lead your life however you want, sweet pea. I'm sure polyamory works out for some people.

LIAM

Yeah, just look at how well it worked out for Charlie Sheen.

BAZ

And the Charles Manson cult.

SKY

Who?

ANNIE

Is it me, or is it hot in here?

EVERYONE

It's you!

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. HIPPY VAN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

SHROOM

Can't you just drop me off at the squat?

SKY

No, I can't! You need to help me dump all this shit in the spare room.

Sky waves her hand vaguely at a pile of paraphernalia: musical instruments, fire spinning implements, hula hoops, muddy clothes and blankets, etc.

SHROOM

(sighing, lazily)

We could just burn it.

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Annie is looking very pink in the face. She tries to blow her fringe away from her forehead, but it's stuck down with sweat.

ANNIE

I'm just popping to the loo. Won't be long.

Annie hurries towards the ladies' toilets.

INT. LADIES' TOILETS (CONTINUOUS)

We see that one of the three cubicles is occupied and there's a PAIR OF RED STILETTOS visible through the gap under the door.

Standing at the mirror above one of the basins, ANNIE stares at her reflection in dismay. Rivers of sweat have painted

tracks into the foundation on her cheeks and her eyeliner is a smudgy mess. Her hair is soaking wet and totally flat.

Annie attempts to dry her hair under the hand dryer, but this just makes matters worse. She dabs at her eyes, attempting to rectify the sticky, black mess, but the smudges just spread further.

In frustration, she gives up and splashes her face with cold water. At last. A modicum of relief.

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE (CONTINUOUS)

BAZ
Is Annie OK, mate?

LIAM
Yeah, I think so. Why?

BAZ
It's just... She seems a bit quiet, like.

LIAM
(thinks)
It's probably just this promotion she's going for. Sounds like today was stressful.

BAZ
But you two are OK though, yeah?

LIAM
What do you mean?

BAZ
It's just... I dunno. I'm probably talking out of my arse. As usual. Ignore me.

Baz takes a hefty swig of his beer.

INT. LADIES' TOILETS (CONTINUOUS)

As ANNIE pats her face with paper towels, we hear the sound of a toilet flush. The cubicle door opens and a glamorous WOMAN (early 40s) emerges. She approaches the basins.

The two women catch each others' eye in the mirror. Annie sees that the other woman's heavy make-up is flawless and expertly applied. Her tight black dress hugs every perfect

curve and reveals an impressive, premenopausal cleavage.

The woman washes her hands, reapplies lipstick, and adjusts her dress. Annie awkwardly tousles her hair, straightens her clothes, and tries to reapply some eyeliner. Her hands are shaking and she's struggling to control her breathing.

WOMAN
(looks at Annie in the
mirror)
You OK, hon? Some bloke let you
down?

ANNIE
It's nothing. I'm fine. Thanks
though.

WOMAN
No worries. Us girls got to stick
together, eh?

The woman flashes Annie a fake smile and heads for the door. Annie waits a moment before following her out. She heads for the exit at the back of the pub.

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE (CONTINUOUS)

BAZ
So, did you have a word with Annie
about joining our new band, then?

LIAM
Yeah. She's totally made her mind
up, mate. Says she hasn't got the
energy and she can't stand the heat
from the lights anymore.

BAZ
Ah, that sucks big balls. I'll see
if I can talk her round. Work my
charm, like.

LIAM
Yeah, well, good luck with that.

EXT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

ANNIE leans against the wall at the back of the pub, offering up her face to the cool night air. She's focusing on her breathing, trying to allay a panic attack.

She takes a deep puff on her vape and breathes out a huge blanket of vapour. With her other hand, she taps various points on her face and neck with her fingertips and closes her eyes as she repeats her mantra.

ANNIE

Even though I feel agitated, I am releasing this feeling, as I deeply and completely accept myself. Even though I feel panic, I am choosing to let it go, as I deeply and completely accept myself.

INT. ANNIE & LIAM'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

ANNIE lies on her side, on the edge of the bed. LIAM pulls back the duvet on his side and slips in beside her. Placing his arm across her body, he nuzzles the back of her neck.

LIAM

(whispers)
Hey babe, you awake?

Liam starts kissing the back of Annie's head. He's in the mood for sex. Annie closes her eyes. She slows her breathing and gives a little grunt, pretending to be asleep.

After a few moments, Liam sighs quietly and turns over.

Remaining motionless, Annie opens her eyes – they're full of sadness.

Liam turns off the bedside lamp and stares into the darkness, the pain of yet another rejection etched on his face.

INT. ANNIE'S WRITING ROOM - MORNING (DAY 2)

A perfectly tidy, well-organised writing room. A neat pile of feminist textbooks sit atop the brand new Ikea desk. On one of the bookshelves, a Himalayan salt lamp emits a cosy, orange glow. Peace. Tranquillity.

Annie stands gazing out of the window, deep in thought. We hear her thoughts as a voiceover. She's planning the beginning of her book in her head.

ANNIE (V.O.)

Chapter One: Freedom From The Male Gaze.

(MORE)

ANNIE (V.O.) (cont'd)

(beat)

How the menopausal body...

How the *desexualised* menopausal
body changes...

No, that's not the right word.

(thinks hard)

How the desexualised menopausal
body *confounds* ... no, *reverses* the
representation of women in the
media as objects of desire.

LIAM (O/S)

(shouting up the
stairs)

Coffee's up!

Annie is slightly irritated that her mental flow has been interrupted.

ANNIE

OK, coming!

INT. ANNIE AND LIAM'S KITCHEN - MORNING

The kitchen is homely and cosy, but the air is tense.

ANNIE gulps her coffee and gathers her work things as LIAM
(dressed in T-shirt and boxers) stands leaning against the
fridge, eating a bowl of muesli.

A few beats of silence.

LIAM

Babe, we need to talk.

ANNIE

I know, I know.

LIAM

It's been over a year now.

ANNIE

I know. And we will. Talk. Soon.

LIAM

But when? We can't keep skirting
around the issue.

ANNIE

I know. I'm sorry. I've just got a
lot on my mind with work and money
issues...

LIAM

Don't worry, we'll be OK. Your dad's bound to have left you a fair bit.

ANNIE

Yeah, I know. But I don't want to spend that on debts. I want to save it for Sky – for when she settles down, y'know?

LIAM

Hmm, I don't think that's likely to happen anytime soon.

ANNIE

(looking up at the clock)

I need to go. I'm late.

Annie picks up her coat from the back of a dining chair and pulls it on. She kisses Liam tenderly on the cheek.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

We'll talk soon. I promise. Oh, Sky said they'd be here about four. I should be back a bit before then.

Annie spots a jar of gravy granules on the kitchen counter. She picks it up and squints at the label.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Oh, shit. I forgot to get gravy granules. These are out of date.

Liam finishes his muesli and places his bowl in the sink.

LIAM

I'll pick some up while I'm out. I said I'd meet Baz for a lunchtime pint.

ANNIE

Oh. OK. You'll be back in time for dinner though, right?

LIAM

Course.

Liam kisses Annie's forehead.

LIAM (CONT'D)

You worry too much.

EXT. MATILDA'S FRONT GARDEN - MORNING

MATILDA stands talking to her neighbour, BOB, over the fence of her perfectly coiffed front garden. Bob is busy shearing his hedge.

Matilda wears a fawn, brushed wool coat (probably from M&S), sturdy flat shoes and silk gloves. A 1950s-style handbag hangs over her arm.

MATILDA
I'm just waiting for mi taxi,
y'know.

BOB
Right. Going anywhere nice?

MATILDA
I got an appointment with mi
solicitor, Mr Dunbar.

Bob smiles politely and continues shearing his hedge. Matilda pulls back a silk glove to check her wristwatch and glances up and down the street.

MATILDA (CONT'D)
(tuts)
He should be here by now.

Bob's head disappears from view as he walks away from the fence. Matilda is oblivious.

MATILDA (CONT'D)
Won't be long till me cruise, now,
y'know. Course, I was meant to be
going with poor Harold, god rest
his soul. I wish he wa' still here
with me.

EXT. MATILDA'S STREET - MORNING (MOMENTS LATER)

MATILDA stands at the kerb in front of her wrought iron garden gate. She checks her watch and taps her foot impatiently as she looks up and down the street.

A taxi swings into view and pulls up alongside her. The driver waits for Matilda to get in, but she doesn't budge.

TAXI DRIVER
(shouts loudly)
It's open!

No response.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Fuck's sake. I haven't got time for
 this.

The driver opens his door and sticks his head out.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)
 It's not locked, love.

MATILDA
 I'm waiting for you to open the
 door for me. Isn't that what taxi
 drivers are supposed to do?

TAXI DRIVER
 You're gettin' us confused with
 chauffeurs, darlin.'

The taxi driver sighs, gets out of the cab, opens the back
 passenger door and makes an exaggerated gesture for Matilda
 to get inside, as though she were an aristocrat.

Matilda inspects the back seat closely and brushes off
 imaginary detritus with her gloved hand. She slides into the
 seat, gracefully.

Shaking his head, the driver closes the door.

INT. SOLICITOR'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

The waiting room is empty other than MATILDA and the
 RECEPTIONIST, who sits behind the reception desk, typing.

Matilda's face is concealed by the Daily Mail newspaper
 she's holding. We take Matilda's POV. The headline
 of the article she's engrossed in reads: "Illegal Migrants
 Flood UK."

Matilda tuts, disapprovingly.

MATILDA
 (to herself)
 How much this costing our NHS?
 That's what I want to know.

The receptionist approaches Matilda.

RECEPTIONIST
 Mr Dunbar is ready for you now, Mrs
 Devine. If you'd like to follow me.

Matilda lowers the newspaper and folds it neatly before rising from her seat. She follows the receptionist towards a closed door which bears an engraved name plaque: 'Thomas Dunbar: Family Solicitor.' The receptionist knocks on the door.

MR DUNBAR (O.S.)

Come in!

INT. SOLICITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

MATILDA sits upright, with her silk-gloved hands draped over the handbag on her lap.

Across the desk from her is MR DUNBAR, the solicitor (60s, bald, suited, a tired face that clearly yearns for retirement).

MR DUNBAR

I'm afraid, Mrs Devine... Well, there's no easy way to put this... I'm afraid your husband has left an insolvent estate.

MATILDA

I beg your pardon? I'm not sure mi understand.

MR DUNBAR

Were you aware that your husband had considerable outstanding debts, Mrs Devine?

MATILDA

Well, yes ... mi know he had a credit card with a few hundred pounds on it. But 'im savings will cover that.

MR DUNBAR

Unfortunately, your husband didn't have any savings.

(noting Matilda's
incredulous face)

I'm sorry. I realise this must be a bit of a shock for you.

MATILDA

A bit of a shock?! It's a bolt from the blue! But he never mentioned anyt'ing about any debts. How much, exactly?

MR DUNBAR
(clears his throat,
nervously)
Your husband's total debts amount
to sixty seven thousand, seven
hundred and eighty two pounds ...

Matilda reacts as though she's been punched in the stomach.

MR DUNBAR (CONT'D)
... and sixty one pence.

MATILDA
Sixty seven ... But how ...?

MR DUNBAR
Of course, as there is no property
ownership involved, we may be able
to get these debts written off if
there is no personal guarantor.

MATILDA
I can't ... I don't ... Sixty seven
t'ousand ... What on eart' did he
spend sixty seven t'ousand pounds
on?

MR DUNBAR
I'm very sorry, Mrs Devine. You
were probably expecting to inherit
some savings or life insurance
payouts, but I'm afraid there are
none.

MATILDA
I t'ink I must be dreaming.
(suddenly realising)
What about the rent arrears?
(beat)
And me summer cruise?

INT. MATILDA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

MATILDA sits in an armchair, very still. She's staring at a piece of paper in her hand. She's in shock. As we adopt her POV, we see that she's holding an eviction notice from her landlord.

Suddenly, Matilda springs into life. She crosses over to a bureau. Hands shaking, she rifles through a drawer, looking for the key to the main compartment. She finally finds it,

hidden inside a packet of paper clips at the back of the drawer.

In a frenzied state, Matilda unlocks the bureau and starts pulling out the contents of the drawers and cubby holes inside. Dozens of letters and other documents land in a huge pile on the floor.

As she searches through them, we see several final demand and rent arrears letters.

Matilda eventually stops rummaging and holds up one particular letter. It's from the landlord, dated four months previously. It shows that she and Harold were already behind with seven months' rent payments. The equivalent of £5,600. A more recent letter shows this has since increased to £8,800.

Matilda begins to sob.

EXT. UNIVERSITY STAFF CAR PARK - DAY

Balancing a pile of books in her arms, ANNIE is speaking into a mobile phone positioned under her chin as she walks across the car park.

With difficulty, she presses her key fob. We hear a beep and the headlights of a small, red Fiat Punto (or similar) flash on and off.

There is a huge 4x4 parked far too close to Annie's car on the driver's side. Annie opens her car door tentatively and struggles to squeeze herself inside without scratching the other car.

ANNIE

Wait, Matilda, you need to slow down. You're not making sense. Just... What's that about dad? Please, just speak calmly.
(a couple of beats)
He did what?!

A stunned Annie struggles to speak as she attempts to take in the news.

ANNIE (cont'd)

OK, OK. Look, Matilda, just call a taxi and I'll meet you back at our place. We can talk about this over dinner, OK?

(MORE)

ANNIE (cont'd)
(a couple of beats)
Don't worry... we'll sort something
out. It's probably not as bad as
you think.

INT. ANNIE & LIAM'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

ANNIE places a casserole dish in the oven, then takes a deep puff of her vape. She wipes the sweat from her forehead with a tea towel just as BAZ enters.

BAZ
Alright, bab?

Annie jumps, startled.

ANNIE
Baz! I didn't know you were here.

Annie reaches for the kettle and fills it with water.

BAZ
Been for a pint with Liam. He
said it'd be alright to pop in and
ask you a favour, like. Forgot last
night in the pub.

ANNIE
Oh, right. Where is he?

BAZ
In the bog.

ANNIE
Well, you might as well stay for
dinner. I'm sure there'll be
enough.

BAZ
Ta very much. Don't mind if I do.

Annie switches on the kettle and takes out two mugs.

ANNIE
Tea? Or coffee?

BAZ
You haven't got a beer, have ya,
bab?
(winks)
Not enough hair on the dog yet.

Baz groans as he lowers himself onto a dining chair.

Annie opens a cupboard and pulls out two bottles of beer. She holds them up for Baz to peruse.

ANNIE
Horny Devil or Arrogant Bastard?

BAZ
Don't suppose you've got a
Blithering Idiot lying about?

ANNIE
Don't tempt me. Got plenty of wine
if these are no good?

BAZ
(grimacing)
Nah, you're all right, bab. The
Horny Devil will do nicely.

Annie removes the bottle-top and hands Baz the beer.

BAZ (CONT'D)

Ta, bab.

ANNIE
Oh, sod it. I think I'll join you.
I need it after the day I've had.

Annie takes a bottle of wine from the fridge, pours half a glass, then raises it in Baz's direction.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Cheers!

Baz clinks Annie's glass with his bottle.

BAZ
Cheers!

Baz swigs from his bottle as Annie glugs her wine. She refills her glass.

ANNIE
So, this favour ...?

BAZ
Oh, ah. I was wondering if I could
borra some black eyeliner for the
Black Sabbath cos-play thing?

LIAM ENTERS

ANNIE

Yeah, course. In fact, you can have it. I'm done with make-up. Makes me look like a drag queen these days.

BAZ

Great, ta bab.

LIAM

I think you're meant to say, "Of course it doesn't make you look like a drag queen," mate.

BAZ

Oh. Yeah. Goes without saying don't it? Nuthin' wrong with drag queens, anyway. I love a bitta Ru Paul, me.

LIAM

I'd stop digging if I were you.

BAZ

So, tell us about this bad day you've 'ad then, bab. More trouble at work?

ANNIE

Well, yes, but... it's Matilda.

LIAM

What's she done now?

ANNIE

I had a call from her just as I was leaving work. She was hysterical. I've never heard her like that before. She said her solicitor told her there's no money from dad's estate. Apparently, he was in huge amounts of debt...

LIAM

What? That can't be right. Harry was always so careful with his money. Could she have got it wrong?

ANNIE

I don't know. I don't think so. I told her to get a taxi over here so we can talk about it over dinner.

INT. TAXI - LATE AFTERNOON

MATILDA sits in the back of another taxi, clutching her handbag and staring morosely out of the window as the cab cruises along the seafront.

Thinking of his potential tip, the TAXI DRIVER makes an attempt at conversation.

TAXI DRIVER
You on holiday then, love?

Matilda shoots him a disdainful look in the rear view mirror. She's grown used to this assumption over the years.

MATILDA
(indignantly)
No. I'm going to my stepdaughter's.
I've lived here for sixty years,
y'know.

TAXI DRIVER
Oh, right.

MATILDA
My family come to Britain when mi
was a baby. Invited here by our
great, late Queen, God bless her
soul.

As the taxi stops in a queue of traffic at a red light, we see the hippy ambulance van up ahead.

EXT. ANNIE'S DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The HIPPY AMBULANCE pulls into the driveway at the front of Annie and Liam's house, blocking in Annie's car.

INT. ANNIE AND LIAM'S KITCHEN (CONTINUOUS)

ANNIE and BAZ are still sitting at the kitchen table, laughing. Annie appears a bit tipsy and is pink in the face.

ANNIE
I've been a bit worried about it,
to be honest. He spends more time
in that loo than he does anywhere
else.

BAZ
Yeah, well, it's a thing with
blokes over 50. Pretty common,
actually.

ANNIE
I made him have his prostate
checked, but it was fine. I reckon
he's drinking too much beer and tea
since the shop closed.

A COUPLE OF BEATS.

BAZ
So, when are you two gunna get
hitched then? I've got a killer
Best Man's speech looking for an
audience.

ANNIE
Nah. Not gonna happen.

BAZ
But why? You're obviously made for
each other.

ANNIE
(quietly)
It's complicated.

BAZ
You could always marry me instead.

ANNIE
Or I could never marry anyone.
Sounds like the best plan to me.

Annie looks uneasy and is now very hot indeed. She reaches
across the table and switches on the electric fan.

Baz is oblivious to Annie's predicament.

BAZ
Bloody hell, how can you be hot?
I'm freezing me bollocks off in
here.

ANNIE
Hot flush.

Annie downs her wine and pours another half-glass. She takes
a puff of her vape.

LIAM enters and takes the bottle of Arrogant Bastard beer from the kitchen counter. He opens it deftly with a bottle opener.

LIAM
What have I missed?

BAZ
Nothing much. Apart from yer missus getting pissed and having a hot flush.

Annie suddenly looks alarmed and jumps out of her seat. She has spotted an impending disaster on the hob.

ANNIE
Shit, the cheese sauce!

Annie rushes to save the sauce, just as it boils and spills all over the surface of the hob.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Shit, fuck, bollocks!

Like a participant in a Generation Game challenge, Annie (who has clearly had too much wine) takes the pan off the heat, grabs a tea towel and attempts to mop up the puddle, smearing the sauce further in the process.

Then, just in time, Annie lurches forward to catch a pile of badly stacked plates as they slide along the draining board and threaten to crash to the floor.

Seeing Annie is making matters worse, Liam takes the tea towel from her.

LIAM
Here. Let me do it. Go and sit down. You look as though you might topple over any second.

ANNIE
Thanks.

Annie gives Liam a smile of surrender and retakes her seat at the table, in front of the electric fan. She flicks the switch to a higher setting and revels in the breeze.

Annie takes another swig of her wine, then hiccups.

BAZ
Bloody 'ell, bab. Steady on.

THE DOORBELL RINGS.

From the hallway, we hear a loud BANG. It's the sound of the front door hitting the inside wall.

BAZ (cont'd)
That must be them.

SKY (O.C.)
Hiya! We made it!

INT. ANNIE'S HALLWAY / FRONT DOOR (CONTINUOUS)

SKY and SHROOM are framed in the doorway - a raggle-taggle pair sporting huge, grubby backpacks.

SKY
Hey, mumma. Missed you.

Sky throws herself at ANNIE and hugs her tightly.

ANNIE
(slurring slightly)
Aw, I missed you too, sweetheart.

Annie smiles coolly at Shroom.

ANNIE (cont'd)
Hello again.

SHROOM
Alright?

SKY
Sorry if we're a bit late. Been dealing with some emotional shit and I totally forgot to DM you.

ANNIE
Well you're here now. Good that you found your door key, anyway. How was the...

SKY
Hey, mum, you know I said I'd found somewhere to store the van 'til we go away again?

ANNIE
(suspiciously)
Yeah...

SKY

(speaking very fast)
Well, that didn't work out. So, I'll need to leave the bus here on the drive for a while if that's OK. And there's some stuff I need to put in the spare room, cos it'll just go mouldy in the van. Which reminds me... Is it OK to do some washing while we're here?

ANNIE

Yes, I suppose so. But I've been using the spare room as my writing...

Sky and Shroom push past a dazed Annie with their junk and disappear up the stairs.

ANNIE (cont'd)

...room.

SKY

(shouts down)
Thanks Ma. Love you!

ANNIE

Please don't move all my work stuff!

As Annie goes to close the front door, a taxi pulls up at the kerb outside.

The TAXI DRIVER gets out and opens the back door. MATILDA emerges, eyeing the ambulance van with disdain.

MATILDA

(calling to Annie)
You running a hostel for the homeless now, then?

INT. ANNIE AND LIAM'S KITCHEN - EVENING

ANNIE, LIAM, BAZ, MATILDA, SKY and SHROOM are seated around the table, eating dinner. The atmosphere is somber. Annie seems to have sobered up.

ANNIE

But I just don't get it. It's not like dad to get into so much debt.

LIAM
You don't think he was in some kind
of trouble, do you?

MATILDA
He'd 'a' been in all kinds of
trouble if I'd known while he wa'
still alive.

Matilda gives a sad sigh.

MATILDA (CONT'D)
I just don't know what mi going to
do. Penniless and homeless. At my
time of life.

Matilda puts down her fork and begins to sob. She suddenly
seems very vulnerable. Annie touches her hand, gently.

ANNIE
Hey, don't worry. We wouldn't see
you on the streets. Would we, Liam?

LIAM
(caught by surprise)
Er, no. Of course not.

ANNIE
You could come and stay here with
us. Just until you find somewhere
else.

Liam shoots Baz a look of despair. Baz shrugs as if to say,
"What you gonna do? Throw an old woman out on the street?"

ANNIE (cont'd)
The only thing is, Sky is storing
some stuff in the writing ... the
spare room, and I'm not sure
there's enough space to pull the
sofa bed out now.

SKY
It should just about be OK if you
move my double bass into your
bedroom, ma. But there's not much
room to move in there, to be fair.

Annie looks alarmed.

ANNIE
Oh. OK. I can still get to my
writing desk though, right?

SHROOM

That would involve moving all the juggling clubs and the aerial rig.

SKY

Oh, yeah. That aerial rig might be a bit heavy for you, mum. I'm sure Liam would help though, wouldn't you, Liam?

Annie sighs heavily and shoots Liam a look of despair. Liam returns the look.

LIAM

I suppose so, but ...

MATILDA

Mi appreciate it. Don't worry, I'm quiet as a mouse when I get up for the lavatory in the night. I t'ink my bladder is improving, y'know. Mi only had to go four times last night.

ANNIE

(trying to turn a
grimace into a smile)
Great.

Matilda sets down her knife and fork on her plate, looking a little uncomfortable.

MATILDA

I could do with a Rennie. Pass my handbag, will you, Chloe, dear.

SKY

My name's Sky now, gran.

MATILDA

Yes dear, of course it is.

As Sky reaches across Annie to pass the handbag to Matilda, she sees the Daily Mail newspaper sticking out of one side.

SKY

Ew, gran! Can't you buy a different paper? This one's disgusting.

MATILDA

What's wrang with it? It just a newspaper.

SKY

It's full of vile, immigrant-bashing, woman-hating, gay-baiting shite. That's what's wrong with it.

MATILDA

I think you need to watch that tongue, young lady.

SKY

I'm actually non-binary?

MATILDA

Well, whatever you are, there's such a thing as manners, yuh know.

ANNIE

Is it me, or is it hot in here?

EVERYONE

It's you!

Nobody speaks for a few beats. Just the sound of cutlery scraping plates.

Suddenly, a LOUD FART rips through the silence. They all eye each other suspiciously. Matilda looks mortified.

MATILDA

Oops, pardon me. My irritable bowel is playing up again. I t'ink I'd better pay a visit to your lavatory.

Matilda rises, carries her plate over to the sink, then leaves the room hurriedly.

As soon as the door closes behind her, everyone bursts out laughing.

BAZ

I can't believe she just did that.

LIAM

Must be those mung beans I put in the casserole.

SKY

I know I should feel sorry for her, but she's really doing my head in.

ANNIE

Take no notice of your gran, sweet
(MORE)

ANNIE (cont'd)
pea. She's from a very different generation. She doesn't really understand how young people live today.

SHROOM
You don't say.

Annie ignores Shroom and continues to address Sky.

ANNIE
So, how was Barcelona? Apart from getting robbed.

SKY
Expensive. The city itself is cool, but I don't know how people can afford to live there.

BAZ
That's probably why there's so much theft then.

SKY
Yeah. I couldn't believe it when the van was broken into. We'd only gone to have a shower at the swimming baths. You'd think it'd be safe in a leisure centre car park. I mean, we weren't gone for that long, were we?

SHROOM
Nah. I didn't even use the shower; just the bog.

SKY
You often take ages having a dump though, to be fair.

ANNIE
Please can we not talk about that while we're eating. That image is making me nauseous.

SKY
It's weird that they only took our money and passports though. They didn't touch anything else.

Liam, Annie and Baz exchange smirks.

LIAM
 Hmm, very strange, that.

SHROOM
 I thought they took your period pants?

SKY
 Oh yeah, they did.

ANNIE
 Please! For the love of Zarathustra, can we change the subject?

A few beats of awkward silence.

SKY
 You'll never guess what we did a few weeks ago, before Barcelona.

BAZ
 What, you mean you sometimes *do* stuff?

SKY
 Ha ha, very funny. We went fishing. Up the reservoir.

ANNIE
 Sounds good. Did you catch anything?

SHROOM
 Yeah, pneumonia.

Sky kicks Shroom under the table, playfully.

SKY
 Funny. Not. Nah, we didn't catch anything. But do you remember that time when you, me and dad went fishing and I caught that giant trout?

ANNIE
 (frowning)
 Mmm.

Liam's face tightens at the mention of Sky's birth father.

SKY
Dad was so proud of me. He took us
down the pub afterwards and we
showed it off to all his mates.
Then we went home and he showed me
how to gut it.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY. SUMMER 2006 - SKY'S POV

A younger ANNIE (33) sits reading on the riverbank as ROB
(50, well-built, pitted skin, a crate of beer beside him)
teaches a five year-old SKY how to cast a fishing line.

ROB
Yeah, that's it! Aren't you a
clever little thing? You'll be
giving John Wilson a run for his
money at this rate.

Sky giggles happily as Rob tousles her hair and kisses her
on the head.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. ANNIE AND LIAM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

ANNIE
Yeah.

Annie looks troubled and sad.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT. SUMMER 2006 - ANNIE'S POV

ANNIE stands in front of the stove. On the hob is a pan
containing a burnt trout. A drunken ROB stands over her.

ROB
(face like thunder)
What's the matter with you? You
fucking idiot!

ANNIE
I'm so sorry. I've never cooked it
before. I wasn't sure how ...

Rob yells in her face, his spittle flying everywhere.

ROB
Stupid bitch! You're a waste of
fuckin' space, do you know that?!

ANNIE
I'm sorry. Really, I am.

Five year-old SKY appears at the kitchen doorway to see
what all the shouting is about. She sees Annie, cowering.

SKY
What's the matter, mummy?

ANNIE
Nothing, sweet pea. It's OK. Go
back and watch the telly. I'll be
there soon.

ROB
So, you won't admit to your
daughter that you've ruined her
catch then? No! Because you're a
useless fuckin' twat!

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. ANNIE AND LIAM'S KITCHEN (CONTINUOUS)

ANNIE shakes off the memory with a shudder and becomes
visibly agitated. Her foot rocks back and forth and she
scratches her neck, which has begun to show signs of hives.

SKY
Are you OK, mum?

ANNIE
Yes, I'm fine. Just a bit tired.

BAZ
Y'ow need a bath and an early
night bab.

ANNIE
Y'know, I might just do that.

SKY
You definitely should. You don't
relax enough; you're always so
tense.

They all look at Annie. Annie looks even more startled.

SKY (CONT'D)
You can use some of my ylang
ylang and willow bark bath salts if
you like.

ANNIE
(feigning enthusiasm,
unconvincingly)
Great. Thanks.

SKY
You shouldn't use bubble bath. They
put synthetic chemicals in it.

ANNIE
Right. OK.

SHROOM whispers in SKY's ear.

SHROOM
Coming to the van for a doobie?

SKY
We're just popping out to the van
for a bit, ma.

ANNIE
OK, darling. Don't forget about
your washing though. It'll need to
go in the dryer soon ...

As she is speaking, Sky and Shroom leave the room.

Annie covers her forehead with her hand. She can feel a
headache coming and she's starting to feel very hot again.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I think I'll just nip outside for
some air.

BAZ
OK, bab. You look like you need it.

Annie picks up her vape and heads out into the back garden.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

ANNIE stands vaping, under the bright outside light, close
to the open kitchen window.

She strains to listen to Baz and Liam's hushed conversation.

INT. ANNIE AND LIAM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

BAZ

Mate, I think I might have found a singer for the band.

LIAM

Oh, yeah? Who's that then?

BAZ

I met this woman at an '80s revival thing last week. Says she can sing. I've got her number.

LIAM

Has she got any performing experience?

BAZ

Dunno. She's hot though. Blonde, leggy, early 40s ...

(mimes big breasts)

Anyway, I would; y'know what I'm saying?

(winks)

LIAM

Say no more. When can we audition her?

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Disappointment and dejection are written all over ANNIE's face.

She catches sight of her reflection in the kitchen window - flat, sweat-dried hair, sagging breasts, and a bright red, exhausted face. She wipes away a tear from her cheek with her sleeve.

INT. UNIVERSITY STAFFROOM - AFTERNOON - DAY 3

FRAN is perched on the arm of a sofa, eating wild brown salad from her lunchbox with a fork. ANNIE sits beside her, trying to concentrate on her marking.

FRAN

I don't like to speak ill of the dead, but it sounds as though your
(MORE)

FRAN (cont'd)
dad was hiding something from you
all.

ANNIE
Yes, thanks Fran; I'm aware of
that.

FRAN
Maybe he was secretly a Russian
spy with a mystery mistress in
Soho.

ANNIE
Yeah, that's really helpful.

FRAN
Just trying to lighten the mood
a bit.

Annie's phone rings. We see that it's Sky. Annie answers.
Her phone is on loud speaker so we hear both sides of the
conversation.

ANNIE
Hi, sweet pea. You OK?

SKY (V/O)
(half-sobbing; shaky)
No. I'm at the hospital in Exeter.

ANNIE
Oh my God, what's happened!?

SKY (V/O)
It's Dad. He's had a stroke.

Fran almost chokes on her salad as her eyes widen.

ANNIE
What!? Oh, no, that's terrible. How
is he? Is he conscious?

SKY (V/O)
No, he's in a coma. They can't tell
me anything yet. I'm scared, mum.

ANNIE
Oh darling, are you on your own
there?

SKY (V/O)
(sniffing back tears)
Yeah.

ANNIE
What about whatsisface? Shroom.
Isn't he with you?

SKY (V/O)
He's gone back to the squat.

ANNIE
(sarcastic)
Course he has.

SKY (V.O.)
Can you come to the hospital?

ANNIE
Yes, of course. I've finished
teaching for today. I'll have to
get a taxi though, cos I got the
train into work this morning.

SKY (V.O.)
It's OK. I spoke to Liam. He said
he'll come and pick you up.

ANNIE
Oh. Right. Was he OK with that?

SKY (V.O.)
Yeah, I think so. Why?

ANNIE
It doesn't matter. You just sit
tight and try not to worry too
much. Your dad's in the right
place, so...

SKY (V.O.)
(sniffs)
Yeah. Thanks.

ANNIE
No problem. I'll see you in a bit,
OK?

SKY (V.O.)
'K, Bye.

ANNIE
Bye darling. Love you.

INT. LIAM'S CAR - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The windscreen wipers SCREECH as they struggle to disperse heavy rain.

ANNIE is in the passenger seat. LIAM is driving, and wincing at the glare of oncoming headlights.

The air is tense.

LIAM

Is it too soon to say it couldn't have happened to a nicer bloke?

ANNIE

Not now, Liam. Remember he's still Sky's father at the end of the day.

Liam flinches - it's still a painful thing for him to hear. Annie immediately regrets her tactless remark.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean...

(beat)

You know she'll always regard you as...

(beat)

It's just...

LIAM

Yeah, I know. Blood's thicker than water.

ANNIE

No, that's not true. She loves you so much. And she always will.

LIAM

I just don't understand why either of you even give him the time of day...

Trying to restrain his anger, Liam grips the steering wheel so tightly that his knuckles turn white.

LIAM (CONT'D)

After everything he did.

Annie turns her head, staring at her sad reflection in the passenger window. Not for the first time, she wonders whether she made a big mistake allowing Sky to know her birth father, the monster.

FLASHBACK BEGINS**INT. HALLWAY OF A FLAT - NIGHT. 1998**

ROB (42, wearing labourer's shirt and steel toe-cap boots) is banging 25 year old ANNIE's bloodied head against the wall in a psychopathic rage. He bellows barely decipherable obscenities and accusations.

Annie cries and whimpers in terror. She dare not scream. As her body becomes limp, Rob grabs her throat and leans in close so that his face is almost touching hers. Annie recoils at the overpowering stench of alcohol.

ROB
(lowering his voice,
menacingly)
Don't ever forget you're a fucking
piece of shit on the bottom of my
fucking shoe. And if you EVER do
anything like that again, I swear I
will fucking kill you!

FLASHBACK ENDS**INT. HOSPITAL ICU CUBICLE - NIGHT**

ROB (69, thinning grey hair, the craggy face of a seasoned alcoholic) is still in a coma. ANNIE and SKY are at his bedside. Sky's head rests in Annie's lap, and Annie strokes her hair reassuringly.

ANNIE
So, did the doctor say how long the
scan results would be?

SKY
No, he just said they'd be back
soon. Oh God, mum. What if he never
wakes up?

ANNIE
I'm sure it won't come to that,
darling. But, whatever happens, you
know I'm here for you, right?
You're not on your own.

Sky sniffs and gives a slight nod.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Let's just think positive thoughts
(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)
for now, eh?

SKY
Why didn't Liam come in with you?

ANNIE
(hesitant)
He didn't want to be in the way.
Thought it best for just you and me
to be here.

SKY
How are we going to get home
though?

ANNIE
Liam said we can phone him when
we're ready, and he'll come and
pick us up.

SKY
(beat)
OK. I love Liam.

DR BRADSHAW (40s, glasses, short beard, well-groomed) pulls
back the curtain and enters the cubicle.

SKY sits up, eager for news.

DR BRADSHAW
Hi. Doctor Bradshaw.
(addressing Annie)
Are you Mrs Delaney?

ANNIE
Oh, no. I'm his ex. But Sky here is
Rob's daughter. And also my
daughter. Is there any news?

DR BRADSHAW
Well, we've got Rob's scan results
back now.
(beat)
I'm afraid it's not the best news,
but there may be some hope.

SKY
Oh no, please don't say he's going
to die.

DR BRADSHAW
Well, it's too early to say for
sure, but we think there's a high
(MORE)

DR BRADSHAW (cont'd)
probability that he'll wake up from
the coma fairly soon. However,
there is some significant damage to
Rob's brain evident on the scans.

SKY

No...

Sky begins to sob gently.

ANNIE

Do you know how bad it's likely to
be?

DR BRADSHAW

We can't be certain until he wakes
up. All we can say at this stage is
that Rob is likely to need round-
the-clock care for the foreseeable
future. Obviously, we'll take good
care of him here in the ICU, but
ultimately he will need home care
as and when he's well enough to be
discharged.

ANNIE

OK. Um, it's quite a lot to take
in, sorry ...

DR BRADSHAW

I understand. I appreciate this is
a difficult conversation to be
having. Does Rob have anyone living
with him at home?

ANNIE

No. He lives alone. Has done for
years. Sky is the only family he
has. His parents died years ago and
he doesn't speak to his sister.
They fell out back in the 90s.

DR BRADSHAW

OK, well, you may need to consider
taking on a full-time carer. Even
perhaps a live-in carer, depending
on what we're dealing with. But we
can think more about that in due
course. I'll come back again later
to see how Rob is doing, OK?

As Dr Bradshaw speaks, we notice Rob beginning to stir.
Slowly, his eyes open.

Sky, Annie, and the doctor haven't yet noticed this.

SKY
(her voice trembling)
Will he still know who we are?

DR BRADSHAW
We don't ...

ROB
(shouts)
Fuck off!

Annie and Sky gasp, as they turn to look at Rob.

ROB (CONT'D)
Fuck off! Fuck off! Fuck off! Fuck
off!

SKY
Dad! Stop! It's me, Chloe! Dad!
Look at me!

INT. ANNIE & LIAM'S KITCHEN - DAY - DAY 4

ANNIE and SKY are sitting at the kitchen table, drinking coffee.

ANNIE
So, how many did you call?

SKY
Every single one on the list I got
from the council.

ANNIE
And none of them are able to offer
anything?

SKY
No, not in the foreseeable. One of
them reckoned they might have
something in a few weeks, but they
were a bit vague.

ANNIE
Well, that's just ridiculous. Years
of underfunding from the bloody
Tories, that is! We're going to
have to think of something. The
doctor reckons your dad might be
discharged in a couple of weeks.

Annie and Sky sit in silence for a few beats.

SKY
(tentatively)
Maybe he could stay here until a
carer comes up?

ANNIE
What?

Annie's mind briefly drifts.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

INT. LIAM'S CAR - EARLIER THAT MORNING - 4AM

SKY is asleep on the back seat. ANNIE sits in the passenger seat. LIAM is driving them back home from the hospital.

They speak in hushed tones, trying not to wake Sky.

LIAM
Can't you see? It's happening all
over again.

ANNIE
What is?

LIAM
That bastard controlling your life.
Even from a hospital bed. He
doesn't even deserve to breathe the
same air as you.

ANNIE
I know. But I have to be there for
Sky. She's got no one else.

Annie bites her lip, realising what she has said. Liam blinks hard, clearly hurt.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. ANNIE & LIAM'S KITCHEN - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

ANNIE composes herself as she tries to think of a diplomatic response to Sky's proposition.

ANNIE

I don't think that would work,
sweet pea.

SKY

Why not?

ANNIE

Liam wouldn't like it for a start.
And your gran will be staying with
us for a bit. We don't have another
spare bed.

SKY

But...

ANNIE

Besides, me and your dad haven't
spoken properly for years.

SKY

Well, he won't be able to speak
properly now, anyway.

(beat)

It would just be temporary until
something comes up. What about the
front room? You hardly ever go in
there anyway. I just don't know
what else to do.

Tears brim in Sky's eyes. She turns her face away.

Annie knows she would do anything to protect her daughter
from pain.

ANNIE

Oh, darling. Don't worry, we'll
work it out. If you really want to
care for your dad, you could always
visit him every day at home.

SKY

Yeah. I did consider that. I'm
scared about doing it on my own
though. I don't know anything about
caring for someone. Not medically,
anyway.

ANNIE

Well, yes, it is hard work. But I
suppose it would only be temporary
until a professional carer comes
up. And I'll help you all I can; of
(MORE)

ANNIE (cont'd)
course I will.

Sky gets up to give her mother a hug from behind.

SKY
(childlike)
Thanks mumma.

INT. HIPPY VAN - DAY

SKY is sitting in the back of the bus, exchanging messages with SHROOM. There a WHOOSH sound as Sky sends each text.

SKY (TEXT)
You still at the squat?

SHROOM (TEXT)
Yea.

SKY (TEXT)
WYUT?

SHROOM (TEXT)
Not much. Just sparking up a doobie and chatting shit with some bipolar dude. You?

SKY (TEXT)
Nowt. Bored.

SHROOM (TEXT)
How's your dad?

SKY (TEXT)
Not good. Gonna have to look after him for a bit. Nightmare.

SHROOM (TEXT)
That's harsh man.

SKY (TEXT)
I know right. Can't go away for ages now anyway though, since there's no inheritance from grandad. When will I see u?

SHROOM (TEXT)
Come over here later if you want. Got some banging Ket.

SKY (TEXT)
OK. Might see you tonight then. x

SHROOM (TEXT)
Safe. Laterz.
(stoned face emoji)

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT

It's open mic night at The Crown. We catch the tail end of an ECCENTRIC ELDERLY COUPLE 'performing' on an out-of-tune ukulele and a kazoo.

JUSTIN, the enthusiastic host (late 30s, a fan of '80s music) bounds up to the mic as the old couple struggle to get out of their seats behind him.

JUSTIN
What a unique take on Greensleeves.
Eileen and Bob, everyone!

Someone gives a slow, pitiful clap. Everyone else carries on talking. BACKGROUND MUSIC starts - '80s soft rock.

ANNIE, LIAM and BAZ sit at the same table as before. They each have pints in front of them and are all a bit tipsy.

Baz lifts his glass.

BAZ
To Annie's new job!

The three of them clink their glasses together.

LIAM
Annie's new job!

ANNIE
Cheers. Even though I don't deserve it. In fact, I still can't believe it.

BAZ
Course you deserve it, bab. You work harder than anyone I know.

LIAM
That's cos nobody else you know actually works.

ANNIE
Seriously though, I really thought
(MORE)

ANNIE (cont'd)
I'd blown it with that lesson
observation the other day.

BAZ
Oh, yeah. Did he mention that?

ANNIE
Well, apparently it actually worked
in my favour. Randy Andy thought
the whole 'losing it' thing was a
deliberate ploy, to prove the point
of the lesson.

LIAM
Which was?

ANNIE
(bitterly)
That women are cursed by their
biological make-up.

BAZ
(winking at Liam)
What, you mean the curse God
bestowed on the female species in
the Garden of Eden?

ANNIE
Yeah, it's all His fault.

Baz lifts his glass to his lips, then realises it's empty.

BAZ
Ooh look, someone's drunk all me
beer. Would you Adam 'n' Eve it?

Baz guffaws at his own joke.

BAZ (CONT'D)
Geddit? Adam 'n' Eve? Garden of
Eden? God, I'm on fire tonight.

Liam and Annie look at each other, both rolling their eyes.

BAZ
Anyway, how's that book coming
along?

ANNIE
Huh! It's not. The 'Room of One's
Own' has become 'A Room of One's
Nightmares'. It's full of
didjeridoos, fire spinning
(MORE)

ANNIE (cont'd)
implements, and moulting
dreadlocks.

(beat)
With a snoring stepmother thrown in
for good measure!

BAZ
Blimey. That sounds horrendous.

ANNIE
It is.

BAZ
Right, s'pose it must be my round
then. Same again?

LIAM
Thought you'd never ask.

As Baz scoops up three empty glasses with the fingers of one hand, we hear LOUD SCREECHING FEEDBACK. Everyone winces. Annie covers her ears and scowls.

Justin is at the mic.

JUSTIN
(through the mic)
Sorry about that. Slight technical
hitch. OK, next up we have Liam.

Justin shields his eyes from the glare of the spotlight as he scours the room.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Liam? Are you still here?

BAZ
(to Liam)
Eh, yer up!
(shouts to Justin)
He's over 'ere!

LIAM
(shouts to Justin)
On my way!
(to Baz and Annie)
Shit, I haven't decided what I'm
gonna play yet.

BAZ
Why don't you two do one of the
songs you used to perform together?

Liam considers this for a moment, then turns to Annie.

LIAM

We could do, I suppose. What do you reckon? You fancy it?

ANNIE

Er ... ooh, I dunno. I haven't performed for ages. I'm not sure I can still...

BAZ

Go on, bab. I miss your voice. This lot aren't taking any notice, anyway. Do it for me?

ANNIE

(throwing caution to the wind)

Oh, go on then. That's if I can remember any lyrics. What do I know inside out?

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The hippy ambulance pulls up outside a run-down, dimly-lit terraced house.

SKY turns off the engine and stares at the house, apprehensively.

INT. THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

LIAM plays the opening bars of 'YESTERDAY' by THE BEATLES on his guitar.

As ANNIE begins to sing, the room falls silent, everyone spellbound by the yearning in her voice and the obvious chemistry between her and Liam.

The music continues offscreen, over these closing scenes:

INT. ANNIE'S WRITING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Boxed in by mountains of Sky's paraphernalia, MATILDA is fast asleep in bed, gently snoring with her mouth open.

A bookmarked Daphne du Maurier novel and a pair of reading glasses sit beside an enormous bong on the bedside table.

An acoustic guitar with a Rastafarian strap is wedged between the bedside table and the bed.

A dream-catcher dangles from the ceiling, and on the wall above Matilda's head is an A1 size poster proclaiming in huge, bold letters: "KEEP THE EARTH CLEAN. IT'S NOT URANUS!"

EXT. MATILDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The house is shrouded in darkness. No light from any of the windows. It's as though it's been abandoned.

INT. MATILDA'S HALLWAY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

We can just make out the picture on the wall: HAROLD DEVINE's jovial face, laughing into the darkness.

INT. THE SQUAT - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

A sparse room with old, torn, ineffective drapes hanging at the window.

The floor is littered with the detritus from heavy drug-taking.

FIVE BODIES lie strewn about, in various stages of stupor.

A door opens into the room and we see SKY in the doorway. She takes in the scene, hesitates, then leaves, closing the door behind her.

We focus in on SHROOM. His knotty dreadlocks hang down over the side of a ratty chair.

His eyes remain open in a lifeless stare.

ROLL END CREDITS. FADE OUT MUSIC.