

Brown Balloon
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FADE IN:

INT. STUDY - DAY

Looking down from a worn poster is serial killer Fred West. A speech bubble commands "WRITE SAID FRED".

Sat in this scrupulously untidy office is DANIEL MERKIN - young, hawkish and tailored.

He peers over his specs at a Smith-Corona typewriter. His fingers hover over the keys, paralysed.

Procrastinating, Daniel scoots over to a house plant. He pours his drinking water into the pot then stares at the empty glass.

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN, PUB - DAY

A dusty skeleton dangles from the wrists, bilious liquids are pumped along tubes to bubbling vats and daylight is smuggled into cobwebbed crevices.

DANIEL

Here, Clive.

CLIVE approaches - a sack of spuds in an apron. He flicks the beer tap and refills Daniel's glass.

Daniel stares intently at a blank note pad. Just next to it he notices something scrawled on the weathered bar:

NO FATE.

He tuts and makes some adjustments. Now it reads:

NO PÂTÉ.

Clive sets Daniel's pint down.

CLIVE

You're knocking them back.

DANIEL

I'm thirsty. For knowledge.

Daniel takes a swig. Sat in front of him a device starts RINGING.

ROCKET JONES, the pub's only other patron - a shrivelled old geezer with a shock of white hair - starts:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROCKET
You gonna get that, Daniel?

DANIEL
Get what?

Daniel picks up the device. A lid flips open and a cigarette slides out. He takes it from the Tobacco Jail and lights it.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Only opens on the hour. Supposed to help me cut down.

ROCKET
Where's your willpower, son?

DANIEL
So speaks a master of discipline.

ROCKET
I don't need willpower, I'm an old man.

Rocket sups greedily from an antique tankard engraved with his name.

DANIEL
How do you do it, Rocket?

ROCKET
Do what?

DANIEL
You know, stay alive?

ROCKET
A jar of pickled herring every day, that's the trick.

DANIEL
Seriously?

The ancient nods sagely. Daniel shrugs and makes a note in his pad.

Clive sets Daniel's pint down and goes to walk away.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Aren't we forgetting something?

CLIVE
Oh, right you are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Clive steps aside to reveal a monstrous contraption -
- THE WHEEL OF TORTURE.

The figure of a woman in a rags is nailed to a giant wagon wheel. Dotted around the circumference are various awards:

NO WIN -- ONE FREE PINT -- TOUGH BREAK -- MAYBE NEXT TIME --
SPIN AGAIN -- YOU ARE A LOSER -- ONE HALF PINT -- NO WIN.

A hundred of these. Finally the tiniest sliver:

BROWN BALLOON

ROCKET
Why do you bother?

DANIEL
You're not interested in a year's
free beer?

ROCKET
It's fixed, you mug.

DANIEL
I worry about you - a man your age
with so little faith.

Daniel cracks his knuckles.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Let her fly, landlord.

Clive gives the wheel a hefty tug. CLACK-CLACK-CLAK goes the tongue.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Go, go, go!

Rocket raises an eyebrow. The wheel begins to slow.

CLAK---CLACK---CLACK.

Daniel waits with baited breath --

CLACK----CLACK----

-- then finally --

-- NO WIN

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(pounding the bar)
Bastard thing!

ROCKET
'course, you can eat all the
pickled herring in the world and
it'll be the temper does you in.

The door swings open and in tramps DUNSTON, a lean black man with a mane of dreadlocks stuffed under a tattered boater hat. He approaches the bar sheepishly.

CLIVE
What can I get you?

Dunston pulls a fistful of change from his pocket.

DUNSTON
(in an American accent)
A quid coin, please.

CLIVE
We don't say quid coin, it's a
pound coin or it's a quid - one or
the other.

DUNSTON
My bad.

Clive sighs and picks through the shrapnel.

Daniel and Rocket glance at each other, "here we go again."

Finally Clive hands Dunston a nugget. Dunston slopes guiltily to the fruit machine in the corner.

He inserts the coin and presses a few buttons. In the wink of an eye his money is gone. Dunston sighs and exits the pub, shoulders slumped.

ROCKET
See, Danny boy, you're not alone in
the world.

DANIEL
Fuck you, grandad.

ROCKET
There's that temper again.

INT. BOOK SHOP - DAY

Daniel sits at a table facing a long queue - all men - every one of them an oddball. The luckless DUD at the front of the line steps forward and hands Daniel a book entitled DRAGON WOMAN. Daniel signs it, forcing a smile.

DUD
Can you make it out to Tony?

DANIEL
Whatever.

DUD
(excited)
I saw you at the signing in
Coventry last weekend, remember?
You signed my first editions?

DANIEL
Okay.

DUD
Your book was a big help, you know -
It really got me through my
divorce.

DANIEL
Really, you were married?

DUD
To a real bitch - just like your
ex.

DANIEL
Hugo's ex, not mine. Hugo is the
character in my book. You'll find
it in Fiction.

DUD
I know, but come on, right?

DANIEL
Come on, what?

DUD
It's not like I don't read the
papers.

DANIEL
You want this signed or not?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUD

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to annoy you.

He produces a stack of paper. A manuscript.

DUD (CONT'D)

Look, I'm a fan - a huge fan.

Daniel takes the opus, scanning the front page.

DANIEL

Dragon Woman Part Two.

DUD

It's been so long since your last book I thought I'd take a stab at it. It's fan fic you know, just for fun. Would you read it, I'd love to know what you think?

Daniel stares incredulously at him.

DUD (CONT'D)

You can email me - I'm on the back there.

Not that Daniel notices, but he is indeed:

MANGA_KING112@GMAIL.COM

DANIEL

Okay.

DUD

You'll read it?

DANIEL

Of course I will.

DUD

You're not just saying that?

DANIEL

If I wasn't going to read it why would I take it?

DUD

God, I was so nervous about meeting you - who knew we'd be so alike?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He backs off, beaming at Daniel all the way to the exit. The second he's gone Daniel drops the manuscript in the bin.

RYAN, Daniel's agent, leans over and retrieves the document. He's a camp fellow with omni-directional hair and artfully torn jeans.

RYAN
Play nice, young man.

He stuffs the manuscript in Daniel's satchel.

RYAN (CONT'D)
How's your wrist holding up?

DANIEL
Better than my patience.

RYAN
Tell me you'll be coming up with
better than that for the new book.

Ryan beckons the next man in the queue.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Last one please.

A man in a TWEED SUIT steps forward looking every bit the professor. Daniel seems relieved.

DANIEL
What can I do for you, sir?

The man sets a baby down on the table.

TWEED SUIT
Sign the kid's head, would you?

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - DAY

Daniel warms his regular stool, Rocket by his side.

DANIEL
Here, Clive.

Clive dutifully tops him off.

The door opens and Dunston enters, soaking wet from the storm outside. He steps up to the bar and empties a pile of change onto it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIVE

Marvellous, I was running low.

Dunston makes an apologetic face. He collects his pound coin and makes directly for the fruit machine.

He inserts the money and punches a couple of buttons, going through the motions --

-- then lights start flashing.

Excited, Dunston presses the payout button. THUNK, THUNK.

Grinning, he makes his way back to the bar.

He sets down his winnings. Two pounds plus assorted change.

CLIVE (CONT'D)

That's it?

DUNSTON

Doubled my money.

ROCKET

Big winner.

DUNSTON

Thank you.

CLIVE

What are you having?

Taking his time, Dunston carefully selects a tap.

DUNSTON

This one, please.

Clive counts the money.

CLIVE

You're ten pence short.

DUNSTON

You have anything cheaper?

CLIVE

I'm afraid not.

He's not budging. Dunston looks crestfallen. He slowly collects his coins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL
For fuck's sake, Clive. Here...

He hands over the difference.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Get the man a drink.

CLIVE
Pint of Brown Balloon wasn't it?

DUNSTON
Yes, please.

Clive flicks the tap.

DANIEL
What's your name?

DUNSTON
Dunston. Bless you, sir.

DANIEL
Not a problem.

Dunston squirms awkwardly.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You okay?

DUNSTON
I need the washroom.

DANIEL
Then go.

DUNSTON
Thank you.

Dunston backs away beaming, just like the Dud at the book signing.

ROCKET
Your friend for life.

Daniel shakes his head "I don't think so". Clive sets the pint of Brown down and goes to walk away.

DANIEL
Aren't we forgetting something?

INT. GENTS - CONTINUOUS

Dunston stands unzipped before a gargoyle's head. Whistling, he aims a stream into its mouth.

He wrings his dreads over the sink under the hand dryer.

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - CONTINUOUS

Back in the bar, things are afoot.

Daniel is hooting and pogoing up and down.

The Wheel of Torture rests from it's last spin. The tongue of the clacker points to BROWN BALLOON.

DANIEL

How do you like that, old man?!
Who's the mug now? Ha!

ROCKET

It aint right, the yank won it.

CLIVE

(reading the rules)

Not according to this. Daniel made
up the money - he paid for the pint
and took the spin - he's the
winner.

DANIEL

Too right I am! A year's free beer
for me! I'm the daddies momma!

Clive and Rocket are looking over Daniel's shoulder.

Daniel freezes. Turns around. Dunston is there, as hang-dog as anything.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(floundering)

How was the wash room?

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

High-tech and Feng Shui.

Ryan darts about clutching a decanter of scotch. He skids to a bookcase cluttered with old manuscripts. Pushing some aside, he ferrets the decanter away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RYAN
(breathlessly)
Step into my orifice.

The door opens and Daniel trudges in.

RYAN (CONT'D)
You look peaky.

DANIEL
Yeah. Got any medicine?

RYAN
Come again?

Daniel rifles a cabinet.

DANIEL
Where's the scotch, Ryan?

RYAN
That old thing? I dropped it -
bloody mess it made.

Daniel eyes him with suspicion.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Anyway, let's talk shop. Tell me
you have the outline.

Daniel flops into a chair and exhales.

RYAN (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
Nothing? Time's running out, Daniel
- second novel - crunch time!

DANIEL
I know.

RYAN
What's occurring?

DANIEL
It's the hero. I just can't find
him. I mean, how am I supposed to
invent the everyman twice in row?

RYAN
Forget the everyman, just write me
a big fat loser.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL

What?

RYAN

Like Hugo.

DANIEL

Hugo wasn't a loser, he was a victim. And he wasn't fat.

Annoyed, Daniel struts to the bookcase and digs into the manuscripts. He liberates the decanter and pours himself a slug of scotch. Ryan is suitably surprised at his deduction.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What? Oh right, you were just leafing through the dud pile?
(picking one out)
"Brutal Indifference"? What stops you binning this shit?

RYAN

My big heart.

Daniel snorts and downs a shot.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Look, here's your problem. The first time out you needed a hero and you wrote yourself. That's fine, they loved you! The book's on the shelf of every anaemic college boy in the country! Trouble is you're not a... victim anymore.

DANIEL

So I write a success this time?

RYAN

God no, people hate those. I'm saying dig deep. Use some imagination. Create. Like a writer, you know?

Daniel isn't impressed.

EXT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - DAY

Daniel is stood in the doorway wearing a quizzical expression. Curled up asleep in the porch is Dunston. He nudges him with his toe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL
Morning Major.

Dunston wakes, rubbing his eyes.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

DUNSTON
I got comfy.

Dunston dusts off.

DANIEL
Pub's open now.

DUNSTON
Great.

Dunston pushes inside. Daniel takes a moment then follows.

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - CONTINUOUS

Dunston empties a pocket of shrapnel.

DANIEL
Put it away.

He signals Clive.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Get us a round would you?

CLIVE
I looked that up in the rules - the offer only applies to the actual winner of the competition.

DANIEL
Fine, make that two pints for me then.

CLIVE
(checking the book)
Clever, clever.

He pours two glasses.

DANIEL
What's that?

He points to a notice behind the bar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIVE

The brewery wants a refit.

DANIEL

They're not going to wreck the place are they?

CLIVE

Oh no, it's just a spit and polish.

DANIEL

(warily)

Fine.

Clive hand over two pints. Daniel hands one straight to Dunston.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Get a seat?

He beckons Dunston to the corner of the pub. Dunston follows apprehensively. Daniel gestures to a chair - a customised electric chair to be precise. Dunston sits uneasily and Daniel positions himself opposite.

Dunston takes off his coat. Underneath, a grubby T-Shirt proclaims:

I d K.Y.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You love K.Y.?

DUNSTON

Huh?

DANIEL

Your shirt. It says you love K.Y.

DUNSTON

What does that mean?

DANIEL

It means you're gay.

DUNSTON

Oh.

Dunston puts his coat back on.

DUNSTON (CONT'D)

Thank you for my drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL
Not a problem, Dunston.

DUNSTON
Can I have a cigarette?

DANIEL
What's the time?

DUNSTON
(checking his watch)
Twelve thirteen.

DANIEL
Give it forty seven minutes.

He sets the Tobacco Jail down on the table. Dunston stares at a while then starts sniffing his wrist.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

DUNSTON
My watch strap smells like vinegar.

He offers it for Daniel's opinion. Daniel smiles.

He has his loser.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel relaxes on a couch. DOCTOR GALE sits rigid opposite - a rake of a woman - spectacles and gooseflesh.

DOCTOR GALE
How are you today, mister Merkin?

DANIEL
Very good, thank you.

He swings his feet up to stretch out. The Doctor wags her Biro, panicked.

DOCTOR GALE
Shoes!

Daniel quickly takes his feet off the furniture. Gale regains her composure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR GALE (CONT'D)
You aren't feeling low today?

DANIEL
No, I'm feeling very positive.

DOCTOR GALE
That's good to hear. Why the change?

DANIEL
Things are going well. I have the new book to occupy me now - the ideas are really churning out.

Gale gulps uncomfortably. Holds her gut.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
It was "churning" wasn't it?

DOCTOR GALE
I'll be okay. It's just certain words.

DANIEL
(despairingly)
Take your time.

DOCTOR GALE
I'm fine, go on.

DANIEL
Anyway, I met this guy. He's hard work at the minute but he's showing real promise. Talk about a character - he's just what I need.

DOCTOR GALE
That's wonderful, I'm glad you finally met someone.

DANIEL
What? No, no, he's a study.

DOCTOR GALE
Oh. I see.

DANIEL
You thought he was my boyfriend didn't you?

She crows her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Are you serious? I've been coming here for two years and you thought I was gay?

DOCTOR GALE

(flustered)

It's not the sort of information I occupy myself with.

DANIEL

I talk about girls all the time - I was married for God's sake! Don't you keep notes? Don't you read?

Doctor Gale is having trouble breathing. She ducks her head between her legs and starts gasping.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I'm not angry! Are you having an anxiety attack?

She holds up a hand as if to say she's okay.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Are you sure - I can call someone.

She shakes her head.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Shall I come back next week?

She gives a weak thumbs-up.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Okay then, I'll go.

While she's holding the crash position Daniel tears a couple of blank prescriptions from her pad. He grins in a way that tells us he engineered this whole scene.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

See you next time.

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - NIGHT

Daniel and Dunston play a game of pool. Daniel stretches for the break. He takes the shot but fluffs it.

DANIEL

Shit it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Grinning, Dunston takes the cue. Without breaking his stride he sinks two in a row.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
That's some natty play.

Without answering, Dunston pots another. Daniel drains the last of his pint. We see from the empties that he's well into his cups.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You play a lot?

Still nothing. Dunston is in the zone.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I suppose you learned back in America. That's an American accent, right? Not Canadian?

Dunston puts his last colour in the pocket.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Bloody hell, I thought you yanks loved talking about yourselves!

DUNSTON
(eventually)
California.

DANIEL
Whereabouts in California?

DUNSTON
Los Angeles.

DANIEL
Okay. What did you do back home?

Dunston ignores the question and lines up for the black.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
That's it is it? Conversation over?

DUNSTON
You're putting me off.

DANIEL
(frustrated)
No I'm not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Daniel turns away. We hear him undoing his flies. He turns back and inserts himself into the target pocket.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Now I'm putting you off.

DUNSTON
(shielding his eyes)
Don't do that!

DANIEL
I'm going to make a deal with you,
Dunston. If you fuck up this shot I
get your story.

DUNSTON
My what?

DANIEL
Your story. You tell me everything
I want to know - the whole kit and
caboodle.

DUNSTON
What for?

DANIEL
Do we have a deal or not?

DUNSTON
What if I make the shot?

DANIEL
Well, aside from my being seriously
injured, fifty quid coins.

Daniel slaps a stack of notes on the edge of the table.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Play it.

Dunston chalks his cue, still in shock.

DUNSTON
You'll get hurt.

DUNSTON (CONT'D)
Fifty says I don't.

Daniel wiggles his hips suggestively. Dunston lines up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANIEL
Sink that eight, baby.

Dunston is struggling. Finally his elbow comes back--

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

Daniel's legs are held apart by what looks like a birthing contraption. His nether-regions are swaddled in bandage.

Ryan enters with a bouquet of flowers.

RYAN
Does this go in the book then?

Daniel shoots him a face of thunder and digs into his hospital food.

RYAN (CONT'D)
What are you eating?

DANIEL
Pickled herring.

RYAN
You ordered that?

To Ryan's disgust, Daniel takes another mouthful.

RYAN (CONT'D)
So, how's the outline coming?

DANIEL
Jesus Ryan, I've split a bollock!

RYAN
I'm sorry! How do you do that playing pool anyway?

Daniel finishes his meal.

DANIEL
I have a title.

RYAN
So tell me.

DANIEL
Brown Balloon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RYAN

Brown Balloon? That's your title?

DANIEL

As opposed to Dragon Woman?

RYAN

That title sold that book.

DANIEL

It sounds like it should come with a ten-sided dice.

RYAN

Die. Ten-sided die.

DANIEL

Whatever.

RYAN

Brown Balloon makes me think of a colostomy bag. It's full of shit.

DANIEL

The title stays.

Daniel adjusts himself with discomfort.

RYAN

Who's your protagonist anyway?

DANIEL

He's a black guy.

RYAN

Nice. A loser?

DANIEL

Without a doubt.

RYAN

A big black loser, I'm liking that.

DANIEL

And get this - he's American too.

RYAN

You're setting it here though, right?

DANIEL

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RYAN

That's great. Cultural mores, the whole transatlantic divide - you could really widen your audience here. I like what you're doing to me.

DANIEL

I'm glad.

RYAN

What's he called?

DANIEL

Dunston.

RYAN

That's a solid name. So what's Dunston after?

DANIEL

Eh?

RYAN

What's his need?

DANIEL

He likes a drink. Plays the fruits.

RYAN

That'll make for an interesting read - some bloke sat in a pub all day.

DANIEL

(uncertain)

He goes other places.

RYAN

Yeah, but what's his need? What is it drives the guy?

DANIEL

I'm the writer, Ryan, let me worry about that.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE : LOUNGE - DAY

A distinct lack of modern furnishings. Ikea hasn't made a penny out of Daniel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Of interest is a large animal trap hung on the wall. Dunston runs a finger over the zig-zag of the serrated jaw.

Daniel enters.

DANIEL
You like it?

Dunston flinches, startled into thinking he's sprung the trap.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(setting down a tray)
I brought drinks.

DUNSTON
Is it a animal trap?

DANIEL
Man trap actually. Take a seat.

Dunston settles into an armchair.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm going to stay standing if
that's okay, it's more comfortable.

Daniel pours a tonic water and hands it to Dunston.

DUNSTON
I'm sorry about your testicles.

DANIEL
Not as much as I am. Drink up.

Dunston stares at his drink.

DUNSTON
There's no gin.

DANIEL
No, I don't have any.

DUNSTON
Vodka?

DANIEL
Just enjoy the tonic.

DUNSTON
You had liquor you said.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL
I was mistaken.

Dunston screws up his face in incomprehension.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(reading the label)
This has quinine in it. That has to
be good, right? Unless it's a
warning.

DUNSTON
No alcohol nowhere?

DANIEL
You could always pop down the
offie. Fifty pounds buys a lot of
gin.

Dunston gets up and paces anxiously.

DUNSTON
The games machine took my money.

DANIEL
Oh, that's a shame.

DUNSTON
Maybe you could....

DANIEL
Could what, Dunston?

DUNSTON
You know, if I could maybe...

DANIEL
...you mean borrow?

DUNSTON
Right.

DANIEL
I'm not sure about that...

DUNSTON
...ten pounds even...

DANIEL
Winning a bet, that's one thing,
but you're asking for a loan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DUNSTON
A little loan, yeah.

DANIEL
But I hardly know you.

DUNSTON
What do you want to know?

DANIEL
(craftily)
I don't want to feel like I'm
interrogating you or anything.

DUNSTON
I'm from Venice Beach. That's where
I worked.

DANIEL
Really?

He sits down and pulls a bottle of Gordon's from under the chair. He pours Dunston a long measure, then one for himself.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
And what did you do there?

DUNSTON
I wrote things. On a grain of rice.

DANIEL
(genuine)
Wow. That must be hard.

DUNSTON
I learned it in an hour.

DANIEL
Oh.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Anything else I should know?

Dunston drains the last of his gin.

DUNSTON
No, that's me.

Daniel explodes - hurling the empty tonic bottle across the room. It bounces off the wall right by Dunston's head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DANIEL

Try harder!

Dunston springs up, shaken. He races out of the room.

Daniel sits a while. Big regret.

Dunston skulks back in. He points to tonic bottle now lying on the floor.

DUNSTON

Can I have that?

DANIEL

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have...

DUNSTON

Can I?

DANIEL

What?

DUNSTON

The bottle?

DANIEL

What are you going to do with an empty plastic bottle?

INT. WORKSHOP - DAY

A vast shed of corrugated iron. Dunston leads Daniel through an assortment of sculptures - wild beasts made of car parts and scrap. Dunston nods to a ARTIST busying herself with an arc welder. She replies with a doff of her visor.

They arrive at a screen door. Dunston sweeps it aside.

INT. STORE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel holds his nose and peers through the gloom.

DANIEL

It stinks like a brewery in here.

A strip light flickers to life.

Bottles. Empty plastic bottles. Hundreds of them. Some spill out of bin liners, others are lined up against the walls or heaped in great piles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Bottles.

DUNSTON

I got two thousand, three hundred...

(waving his latest acquisition)

...and thirty two.

DANIEL

That's great. I'm going home now.

DUNSTON

You don't get it.

DANIEL

You recycle plastic - bully for you, have a biscuit.

He makes to leave.

DUNSTON

No, I'm making something.

DANIEL

I bet you are. A little raft perhaps?

DUNSTON

Not me, I don't swim. I'm making an island.

Daniel turns on his heel.

DANIEL

Pardon me?

DUNSTON

I need more, but I can get them.

DANIEL

Wait, go back.

Dunston begins to talk - hyped - animated - a totally different character:

DUNSTON

The bottles are to float it. On top I'll have a beach. Real sand. I'm going to build my own house - two storeys high.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUNSTON (CONT'D)

I'll grow crops and everything.
Maybe get some livestock too. Cows,
pigs and hens for eggs.

DANIEL

(aghast)

Brilliant.

DUNSTON

You like my idea?

DANIEL

Do I like it?

He sees Dunston's efforts so far - a couple of bales bound by
gaffa tape.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I love it.

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel bursts in grinning ear to ear.

DANIEL

Where's the scotch?

RYAN

In the cabinet. What's going on?

DANIEL

We're celebrating.

He selects a pair of hi-balls.

RYAN

Not for me.

DANIEL

Okay then, I'm celebrating.

He bolts a shot.

RYAN

What are you so chuffed about?

DANIEL

You want a need? I've got your
need.

RYAN

Fire away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

Okay, get this.
Dunston...
is building...
an island.

RYAN

You're drunk.

DANIEL

Not yet. Listen, this guy is so
confused, so discontent, so unhappy
with the way things are he decides
he doesn't want to live with the
rest of us anymore.

RYAN

How is he supposed to make an
island for God's sake?

DANIEL

That's the story.

RYAN

"No man is an island". Who said
that?

DANIEL

I don't know, Shakespeare?

RYAN

It's lofty.

Ryan drums his fingers.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Give me that drink.

Daniel pours him a generous one.

RYAN (CONT'D)

When would I see pages?

DANIEL

Trust me, next time we meet I'll be
carrying a brown envelope with your
name on it.

Ryan downs it in one. Winces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RYAN
Just write the thing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANIEL'S STUDY - DAY

The house plant has doubled in height. Daniel is sporting fuzz about the face.

A thick manuscript sits in his Out Tray. He tears another page from the typewriter and slaps it on the pile.

The doorbell CHIMES.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Looks like someone dumped a pile of dirty laundry in the porch. No, that's Dunston.

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Daniel twitches the netting. Sees who's calling and ducks.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Dunston loiters a little longer. Eventually he slopes off.

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Tentatively, Daniel returns to the typewriter.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Daniel strolls along, clean-shaven now. He has a brown envelope tucked under his arm. Written on it:

RYAN

He freezes suddenly in his tracks. Backs up a few paces.

He looks confused. Flabbergasted in fact.

Giant, aluminium letters spell:

THE LOCAL

INT. THE LOCAL - CONTINUOUS

An ultra-hip professional's bar - all po-mo art, smoked glass and brushed-chrome fittings.

A chattering cabal of MEDIA TYPES bray in a corner. Daniel marches past them to the bar.

Clive is there trying to look non-chalant in a one-piece body suit.

DANIEL
What's the hell is going on?

CLIVE
The prodigal son returns.

DANIEL
Less bollocks, Clive - what happened to the Nun?

CLIVE
Fantastic isn't it?

They look around.

Rocket Jones props an internet terminal. He fiddles with some buttons, accidentally ejecting a disk tray. Satisfied, he sets his tankard down on the makeshift drinks holder.

Daniel is not won over.

DANIEL
It's a fucking disgrace is what it is!

CLIVE
Wait until you see the new urinals. Your wee filters through a system of Indonesian mood stones.

DANIEL
I don't care where my piss goes!

CLIVE
How can you say that?

Daniel glares disdainfully at him. Clive breaks.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
Okay I admit it - they turned my pub into a stupid theme bar!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He picks up a framed picture of the Nun in it's hey-day, complete with spooky skeleton, antique armour and gargoyles.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
(sighing)
Salad days.

DANIEL
You have to do something! Take a stand! Complain to the brewery and tell them...

Gesticulating wildly, his elbow connects with the man behind him, spilling beer down his front.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Sorry mate...

It's Dunston, even more dejected than usual.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Oh, hi.

Dunston sniffs.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Haven't seen you in a while.

DUNSTON
No.

There's a painful silence.

DANIEL
Can I get you a top-up?

Clive creeps away.

DUNSTON
Where have you been?

DANIEL
Just busy. With work.

DUNSTON
What work?

DANIEL
Not so much work really... it's my friend, Ryan, he's... not well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUNSTON
Like how?

DANIEL
It's the big C.

DUNSTON
Canada?

DANIEL
No, Dunston. The big C - Cancer.

DUNSTON
I'm sorry.

DANIEL
Don't be, it's one of those things.

DUNSTON
A drink to Ryan?

Daniel is trapped.

INT. THE LOCAL - LATER

Closing time. Clive roams the floor collecting empties.

CLIVE
Time gents, drink up.

The Media Types pay little attention, busy as they are haranguing Rocket.

MEDIA TYPE
Look at you - cigar in one hand,
pint in the other - what's your
secret, man?

Rocket takes a thoughtful drag.

ROCKET
A Kendal mint cake every day,
that's the trick.

MEDIA TYPE
Awesome. I'm taking that down.

The whole pack fire up their PDAs. Rocket smiles to himself.

Clive reaches Daniel and Dunston, still propping the bar.
They're well and truly sozzled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

Look at those fucking mimsys! He's wearing a scarf indoors for Christ's sake! What is he, a fucking timelord?

CLIVE

Come on you two, time to go.

DANIEL

We demand a lock in.

CLIVE

Those days are done.

DANIEL

Says who?

CLIVE

The brewery.

DANIEL

Bastards. I want to lodge a complaint.

Clive points out a SUGGESTION BOX on the wall.

CLIVE

Do your worst.

Daniel attempts to fill out a form but isn't up to the task.

DANIEL

I don't like your attitude. In fact, I don't think I'll be spending my money here anymore.

CLIVE

What money, you don't pay for drinks!

DANIEL

Yeah, yeah!

Dunston, who is bearing up a little better than Daniel, hands Clive his empty glass.

DUNSTON

Bless you, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL

Oh I get it, Daniel's the asshole!
Daniel's the troublemaker! Daniel's
the...

(losing his track)

Wait, where was I?

CLIVE

I think you'd finished.

DANIEL

Fine. I'm going to the toilet.

As he staggers away, something drops from his coat. A brown envelope. Dunston calls after him.

Daniel turns and sees what he almost lost. He stoops to pick it up with some difficulty, laughing moronically.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You're a good man, Dunston.

He gives him a bear hug.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Look after it would you? And be careful.

He makes a "ssshhhh" motion then weaves his way to the gents. Confused, Dunston turns the envelope over. He sees written on it a name:

RYAN.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Daniel and Dunston amble down the white line of the road, take-out bottles sashaying at their sides. They howl a shanty together.

Daniel splutters.

DANIEL

Wait a minute.

He pads his coat.

DUNSTON

What you looking for?

Daniel continues to dig in his pockets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL
I don't remember.
(shrugging)
Forget it.

They totter on.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE : LOUNGE - DAY

Daniel lays splashed across the floor, as though sleep crept up from behind and knocked him flat. His bloodshot eyes flicker open.

He's shocked to see Dunston looming expectantly over him.

DUNSTON
I fetched your mail.

Daniel groans as he peels his face from the carpet.

DANIEL
Thank you, Dunston.

Dunston dutifully hands him a wedge of envelopes. Daniel takes them, rubbing his eyes and yawning. He sifts through the junk.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You stayed the night then, I don't
even remember...

A snap of realisation. He stares at what he's holding.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
The manuscript!

DUNSTON
The what?

He tosses the mail.

DANIEL
The envelope - the one I gave you
to look after - where is it?!

DUNSTON
I don't know.

DANIEL
Don't fuck me about, Dunston!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUNSTON

Was I supposed to take the envelope?

DANIEL

Tell me you're being clever.

What is he saying? Daniel bolts for the door.

INT. THE LOCAL - DAY

Daniel explodes into the pub. Clive is wiping the surfaces.

DANIEL

My envelope?!

CLIVE

Come again?

DANIEL

I left my manuscript here last night - the only copy of my manuscript!

CLIVE

I would have seen it, I've been cleaning - another of the brewery's big ideas.

DANIEL

Look, if I upset you last night I'm sorry, but I need that envelope.

CLIVE

I'm telling you I don't have it.

DANIEL

Then where is it?

CLIVE

Maybe you dropped it?

DANIEL

It has to be in this pub!

CLIVE

Maybe someone picked it up.

DANIEL

Who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIVE

I don't know, who was here? Rocket?

DANIEL

Why would he take it?

CLIVE

Could be a joke, you two are always arguing.

DANIEL

He knows better.

CLIVE

Then maybe someone else who was here.

DANIEL

Who?

Clive gives the eyeball to a table behind. One of the Media Types is sat in the corner talking on his mobile.

Daniel marches up and slaps it out of his hand.

MEDIA TYPE

My phone!

DANIEL

Give it back.

MEDIA TYPE

Give what back, you fucking loon?

DANIEL

My manuscript!

MEDIA TYPE

I don't know what you're talking about but you owe me a new Motorola!

DANIEL

I'm sorry, did I spoil the nice conversation with your shitwitted advertising buddy?

MEDIA TYPE

I don't work in advertising.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL

What do you do then - when you're not stealing books I mean?

MEDIA TYPE

I review them.

DANIEL

What?

MEDIA TYPE

I review books.

DANIEL

(faltering)

You were in here yesterday. You were wearing that scarf.

MEDIA TYPE

This isn't a scarf. This is a cravat.

He's not lying.

MEDIA TYPE (CONT'D)

Good luck with your next novel, mister Merkin.

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan paces the office, livid.

RYAN

Why do you hate me, Daniel, why?

DANIEL

It was a misunderstanding.

RYAN

You stroll up to the Guardian's literary critic and bitch slap a Nokia out of his hand.

DANIEL

Motorola.

Daniel goes for the drinks cabinet but Ryan snaps it shut.

RYAN

Pages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

What?

RYAN

You were on the way to my office with an envelope. A brown one with my name on it.

DANIEL

Oh, right. Can you wait on that?

RYAN

No, Daniel, now!

Daniel reaches into his satchel. Ryan cracks his knuckles expectantly --

-- but Daniel hands over a scrap of paper.

RYAN (CONT'D)

What is this?

(reading)

Is this a sick note?

DANIEL

It's a letter from my Doctor. I haven't been well.

RYAN

This isn't P.E. Daniel - you're not bunking off rugby! I swear to god I'm about to get the lawyers involved, now where's my book?

Reluctantly, Daniel delves back into the bag and comes out with an envelope. Feebly, he offers it up.

DANIEL

Here.

Ryan snatches it and pops the seal. He removes a manuscript and lays it on the desk.

The title is DRAGON WOMAN PART TWO.

RYAN

What's this?

DANIEL

I decided to go another way. You like the title, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ryan turns the manuscript over. Written on the back:

MANGA_KING112@GMAIL.COM

RYAN

You are so fucked.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Doctor Gale paces her office, all a fluster.

DOCTOR GALE

You exploited a mentally challenged immigrant for a story?

DANIEL

I said he was a bit touched in the head, I didn't say he was a spaz.

Doctor Gale recoils, appalled.

DOCTOR GALE

Have you ever heard of karma?

DANIEL

Never in a Doctor's office.

DOCTOR GALE

Call it what you will - cause and effect, the threefold law, unconscious guilt - you did something bad and now you're paying for it.

DANIEL

Are you saying I deliberately left my book behind?

DOCTOR GALE

Do you have a better solution.

DANIEL

Yes. I was drunk.

Gale sits down, a touch more composed.

DOCTOR GALE

Would you say you have a problem with alcohol?

DANIEL

Why don't you check your notes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR GALE

I don't decide whether you're an alcoholic - all I can ask is that you come to realize the truth of your situation.

DANIEL

Here we go with the Yoda treatment.

DOCTOR GALE

You're obviously angry.

DANIEL

And anger leads to hate.

Doctor Gale is beginning to flush.

DOCTOR GALE

There are more effective ways to vent your frustration than picking on me.

DANIEL

Oh yeah?

DOCTOR GALE

You've heard of primal scream therapy?

DANIEL

What?

DOCTOR GALE

I want you to scream as loud as you can.

DANIEL

And give you a heart attack? Don't be stupid.

DOCTOR GALE

This is recognized psychiatric tool. I'm ready for you.

DANIEL

I'm not screaming!

DOCTOR GALE

You'll feel better for it.

DANIEL

No!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOCTOR GALE
Just do it.

Daniel snaps --

-- yells the place down --

-- a long, furious HOWL.

Doctor Gale adjusts her spectacles, quivering.

DOCTOR GALE (CONT'D)
I meant into a cushion - I have
neighbours.

INT. DANIEL'S STUDY - DAY

The curtains are drawn. An empty bottle of red wine lays on the desk.

Daniel bounces his head off the keys of the typewriter.

The phone RINGS. The doorbell CHIMES.

Daniel butts harder. Nonsense words ink the page. He's hurting himself - drawing blood.

The bells and chimes rise to a cacophony.

Daniel lifts the typewriter over his head and let's fly - hurling it across the room - demolishing a bookcase.

The NOISE is deafening now.

He tugs a desk drawer right out, spilling the contents over the floor.

On hands and knees he scrabbles through the junk.

He snatches up a jar. Medicine. BETA BLOCKERS. A warning label says:

NOT TO BE TAKEN WITH ALCOHOL.

Daniel knocks a couple of pills back with a glass of red.

The BELLS go quiet.

EXT. REGGAE CLUB - NIGHT

Daniel stumbles to the front of the queue, eyes dilated - messed in the head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A BOUNCER bars his way. Daniel does his best to look sober, spilling a lopsided grin.

Unimpressed, the Bouncer pads down Daniel's coat. Turning out a pocket he produces a jar.

BOUNCER
What's this?

DANIEL
(slurring)
That is medicine.

The doorman shakes it. Nothing.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
It is empty.

The bouncer tosses the jar and waves him in - no eye contact.

INT. REGGAE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

A thumping dance floor churns with booty and bling. Daniel sticks out like a drag queen at a Sunday brunch.

On his way to the bar he accidentally shoulders a man - a mean-looking BRUTE dripping with sham gold.

Daniel extends his fist for a friendly pound but is left hanging.

DANIEL
(shouting over the music)
'Sup, blood?

BRUTE
Are you a fucking vampire?

Daniel is vexed.

DANIEL
I'm looking for a friend.

The Brute grabs him by the collar.

BRUTE
I will bust you up, batty boy!

DANIEL
No, not like that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Daniel smacks him playfully on the shoulder, no idea how thin the ice has gotten.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
My friend is called Dunston. He's black, do you know him?

BRUTE
Do you think we're in some kind of club?

DANIEL
Yeah, a nightclub. I thought he's be here - you know, for the music. What is this?

BRUTE
Dancehall, mon.

DANIEL
Like reggae, right?

The Brute nods. Scant commitment.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Personally, I don't like reggae.

The Brute kisses his teeth. Daniel has gone too far.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(singing)
...I love it!

[Aside : this routine, as you're no doubt aware, is from the 10cc song, Dreadlock Holiday]

The Brute is characteristically unimpressed.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm just mucking about.
Seriously though, I don't enjoy reggae music.

The Brute straightens up again. Daniel is dicing with death.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
...I love it!

Daniel howls and slaps his knee.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
All joking aside though...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

There's a flash of gold as the Brute's bejewelled fist connects with Daniel's forehead.

SMACK!

Daniel hits the floor like a sack of hammers.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE : CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Chairs are arranged in a rough circle. A group of MEN stop mid discussion and turn their attention to Daniel as he enters with caution.

DANIEL
Is this the room for...

JEFF, a well-groomed thirty something, senses his awkwardness and beckons him in.

JEFF
Come in, take a seat.

Daniel does so, still wearing his outdoor hat.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I'm Jeff. And you are?

DANIEL
Daniel Merkin.

JEFF
First name is fine.

DANIEL
Just Daniel then.

JEFF
Okay. Maybe you'd like to tell us what brought you here, Daniel.

DANIEL
Do I stand?

JEFF
However is comfortable for you.

Daniel stays seated.

DANIEL
I've been a drinker since I was fourteen - no, thirteen. I took to it right away.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

No matter how much I have I never
get sick.
I'm sorry, it sounds like boasting.

There's a good natured chuckle from the crowd.

JEFF

That's okay, go on.

DANIEL

It's only the last few years I've
started paying attention to the
damage it's doing me. I get shakes;
my gut hurts; I lose days at a
time. I have to rely on other
people to fill in the blanks, and
when they do I'm too paranoid to
believe them. My ex-wife used to
tell me...

JEFF

...whoah, whoah!

DANIEL

What?

JEFF

Did you say wife?

DANIEL

Ex-wife, yes.

Jeff points to the blackboard. Written in chalk:

THE GAY A

JEFF

Wrong room, fella. The AA is across
the hall.

DANIEL

Does it matter?

JEFF

Yes, it matters.

The crowd certainly looks serious. As Daniel leaves he casts
a final look over his shoulder expecting faces to crack.
Nothing.

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

Daniel closes the door behind him. Just heard from inside:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE

Wanker.

Daniel shakes his head, "what the hell?" and crosses the hall. He listens at a door then knocks politely and enters.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel steps in, interrupting another meeting. A pot-pourri of people are arranged in a circle. This time they are all are women.

DANIEL

Sorry.

Daniel backs out. Cocooned in a woolen sweater, JANET calls after him in a soothing Irish brogue.

JANET

Can I help you?

DANIEL

I don't know, is this the group for, erm...

JANET

The group for...?

DANIEL

(wincing)
People who drink.

JANET

Yes, you're in the right place.

She points to the blackboard:

HIGH AND DRY

JANET (CONT'D)

Take a seat.

Daniel perches in a cheap plastic chair.

JANET (CONT'D)

I'm Janet.

DANIEL

Daniel. Just Daniel.

JANET

Everybody say hello to Daniel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANET (CONT'D)

Daniel has taken the first step and admitted he's an alcoholic.

The women clap.

DANIEL

Technically I was just asking if this was the room for drinkers.

Janet smiles warmly.

JANET

It's nothing to be ashamed of, Daniel, we are all of us here alcoholics.

DANIEL

Are you?

JANET

Certainly not.

(beat)

Maybe you could start by telling us what brought you here.

DANIEL

Could I hear some other stories to get me into the swing of things?

JANET

Of course. Would anyone like to talk?

SARAH gets to her feet. She is very pretty, with wide eyes and a fresh, scrubbed look.

JANET (CONT'D)

Sarah.

SARAH

Hello everybody.

Familiar replies of, "hello".

SARAH (CONT'D)

I've been an alcoholic since I was sixteen. It was because of the modelling I started drinking.

Daniel perks up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Every day was a party. There was no getting away from the booze. I'd get driven from one bar to the next - even the car taking me places would be serving drinks in the back.

Daniel notices the girl sat next to him. TATIANA has cropped hair and an ankh tattoo on her bosom. She's hanging on Sarah's every word.

SARAH (CONT'D)

One day I realised I couldn't go on like that much longer. I decided I'd had enough. Thank God alcohol was my only vice or I'd be here Tuesdays with the narcotics too. I haven't touched a drink for eleven years now.

JANET

Very good. Thank you.

Tatiana claps enthusiastically.

Daniel puts up a hand.

JANET (CONT'D)

Daniel?

DANIEL

How do you know you're still an alcoholic if you haven't had a drink in eleven years?

JANET

Once you're an alcoholic you always are.

DANIEL

So it's an incurable disease?

JANET

Well, yes.

DANIEL

She doesn't look sick. She looks pretty healthy to me.

Sarah smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JANET

Inside she's sick.

Daniel shrugs and takes off his hat.

Embedded in angry red letters on his forehead is the word ENORYT.

TATIANA

What's wrong with your face?

DANIEL

Oh, right. It says Tyrone.
Backwards. I was in a fight.

She's not amused.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

A black man hit me.

TATIANA

What does it matter if he was
black?

DANIEL

It doesn't, it's just a fact.

She huffs.

JANET

Okay, Tatiana. How about we hear
from you now?

Tatiana gets to her feet.

TATIANA

I started drinking when my dad got
ill. It was a cold Christmas, but
he'd been complaining about the
heat. He was up a ladder hanging
decorations when he passed out and
hit his head on the fireplace. At
the hospital they gave him a CAT
scan. The doctor told us the fall
hadn't done any serious damage, but
he had some bad news anyway. Dad
had a brain tuna.

Daniel's eyebrow twitches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TATIANA (CONT'D)

(breaking down)

Mum fell to pieces. I didn't know how to cope so I turned to alcohol. Dad was back and forth to the hospital for treatments - it went on for months. In the end the doctor decided on surgery. Nothing can prepare you for that. They were going to have to cut the tuna out of his brain.

Daniel's frustration mounts. Sarah is wise to him. She gives him a cautioning glance.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

(crying now)

They removed ninety percent of the lesion but they couldn't save him. It was devastating. This sweet man - not even fifty years old - dead from a brain tuna.

The other addicts sob in sympathy.

DANIEL

Tumor.

TATIANA

What?

DANIEL

Tumor.

TATIANA

Yes!

DANIEL

You were saying tuna.

TATIANA

Fuck you!

DANIEL

I'm just letting you know.

TATIANA

What kind of fucking idiot are you? This is what you do? My dad dies and you take the piss?!

Sarah goes to console her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DANIEL

I wasn't having a dig, I was putting you straight on your pronunciation.

TATIANA

Prick!

DANIEL

It sounds so stupid when you get it wrong.

TATIANA

Now I'm stupid?

Tatiana moves to clobber him but Sarah holds her back.

JANET

I think you should go, Daniel.

DANIEL

But I came all the way down here...

JANET

...I know, but I really think it would be for the best.

Daniel searches the room but is met only with disapproval.

DANIEL

Does no one want to hear my story?

EXT. COMMUNITY CHURCH - NIGHT

Daniel stomps away, defeated. Sarah calls out.

SARAH

Daniel!

He stops and she catches up to him.

DANIEL

What?

SARAH

(coyly)

Do you really think I'm pretty?

DANIEL

What? I said you looked pretty healthy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

Oh.

DANIEL

Of course you're pretty, take a
look in a mirror!

She blushes.

SARAH

You're drunk right now, aren't you?

DANIEL

No.

SARAH

I can tell.

DANIEL

What if I am anyway?

SARAH

Don't you think it's a shame? You
came to an AA meeting drunk.

Daniel softens.

DANIEL

What gave me away?

SARAH

You have black lips.

DANIEL

Huh?

SARAH

Wine stains.

DANIEL

Shit.

He roughs his mouth with his sleeve.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Thanks.

SARAH

It's cold - they're going to get
chapped.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL

I'm fine.

SARAH

Here.

Sarah reaches into her pocket and takes out a pot of balm. She dips a finger and dabs some salve on his lips.

Their eyes lock.

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S FLAT - DAY

A human hand, an eyeball embedded in its palm.

Daniel blinks a couple of times as if to erase the image.

The hand is a sculpture stood on a coffee table.

Splayed across a chaise-lounge, Daniel grimaces. He opens his eyes to a hippy grotto.

SARAH

You're awake.

Sarah sets down a tray.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I bought you miso soup.

Daniel sits up and wipes the gum from his eyes.

DANIEL

Thanks, I'm not hungry.

SARAH

It's good for you.

She feeds him a spoonful.

DANIEL

That's actually not bad.

SARAH

I told you. How do you feel?

DANIEL

Like I punched Bambi. I'm sorry about last night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
You already apologized about thirty
times.

DANIEL
I did?

SARAH
Do you remember how you got here?

DANIEL
Sorry.
(beat)
Did we....?

SARAH
...no, we didn't.

DANIEL
Good. I mean... well, you know?

SARAH
I do. You're sorry because you
don't remember if you had sex or
not.

He's bang to rights. Sarah takes the spoon from his mouth.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You don't have to be drunk.

A kiss from the blue takes him Daniel by surprise.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I want to help you, Daniel.

DANIEL
Okay.

SARAH
Will you let me help you?

Sarah manoeuvres on top of him.

DANIEL
I want you to.

As their mouths lock we drift porno fashion to the sculpture -

CUT TO:

INT. DANIEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

- which is now sitting on Daniel's bedside table.

Daniel is alone, tucked in with the covers pulled up to his chin. He's wide awake and staring at the ceiling.

Sarah bursts in fully dressed. She's wearing a new hairstyle. She pulls the blinds and whips away the sheets, kicking up a cloud of dust.

DANIEL

Don't!

Daniel is exposed, dressed only in his underwear.

SARAH

When did you last clean this quilt?

DANIEL

I did it when you moved in a couple of months ago.

SARAH

Not the sheets, the quilt.

She strips it down.

DANIEL

I don't know. Never?

SARAH

You're supposed to wash it every six months at least. You need to start writing again.

DANIEL

I fail to see the link there.

Sarah bundles the quilt into a laundry bag and walks over to a wall chart.

SARAH

At least you're making some progress.

It's a calender of sorts. It plots Daniel's alcoholic abstinence in graph form, complete with encouraging smiley faces.

Daniel grimaces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH (CONT'D)

What?

DANIEL

I've told you how I feel about that thing.

SARAH

Don't be such a grump.

She adds a gold star to today's date.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Here, I made you a vegetable juice.

She hands him a glass of pond water.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Drink up, I'm going to pop the quilt in the machine. I'll be back in ten for sex.

She leaves. Daniel adopts the foetal on the spartan mattress.

INT. TATIANA'S FRONT GARDEN - DAY

A van is parked in front of a posh Brighton town house. Boxes and furniture are piled on the pavement.

Tatiana approaches the back of the van. Daniel appears from inside and loads her up with a box. She accepts it with an icy stare and doubles back to the house.

Sarah arrives at the van sheened in sweat. Daniel hands her a box, almost folding her in half.

SARAH

It's four floors up, Daniel.

DANIEL

Yeah?

SARAH

Maybe we could swap jobs?

DANIEL

(pointing at Tatiana)
Look at the shoulders on her - she looks like a pit fighter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

She looks great! I wish I had her
body.

Daniel arches an eyebrow.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Here.

(handing back the box)

I'll unload the van.

Daniel reluctantly lugs the box to the house. He catches a
corner on the gatepost and the cardboard tears.

A dildo flops onto the garden path.

He looks up to see Tatiana standing there, hands on hips.

DANIEL

Let me get that...

He stoops to retrieve it but the bottom of the box gives out
completely.

An avalanche of sex toys spill out.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Dear God!

SARAH

Daniel!

TATIANA

It's alright, Sarah.

Tatiana bends down and begins piling the toys in a fresh
crate, calm as you like. Sarah assists.

TATIANA (CONT'D)

They're for a project.

DANIEL

Right. You're just testing them.

TATIANA

I am as a matter of fact. I'm
writing an article about sex toys.

DANIEL

(mocking)

For who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TATIANA
Bare magazine.

DANIEL
Never heard of it.

TATIANA
You wouldn't have, it's not for
men.

DANIEL
Oh.

Daniel clocks the way Tatiana is staring at his girlfriend.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Right.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

A dingy chamber is divided from a stark white room by a large window. The white room is an identity parade suite. It has a row of numbers set on the back wall and a long bench.

Daniel is in the observation room. He's accompanied by a junior LAWYER and a PARADE OFFICER. Another lawyer is there also.

PARADE OFFICER
...and finally, this is mister
Thompson, the lawyer for the
defense.

DANIEL
(disdainfully)
Right.

PARADE OFFICER
Are you confident you understand
the rules of the identity parade?

DANIEL
His name was imprinted on my head.

He flaps a Polaroid at the Officer.

PARADE OFFICER
We're required to follow procedure.
Once again, are you sure you
understand what you're doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

I point at him through the two-way mirror - I get it.

PARADE OFFICER

It's a one-way mirror, sir. A two-way mirror would be glass.

Daniel thinks on this a while.

DANIEL

Whatever.

LAWYER OFFICER

I want you to consider your choice very carefully. Once you've identified a suspect you won't be able to change your mind.

The Defense nods in agreement.

PARADE OFFICER

Just take it slow, mister Merkin.

The Parade Officer speaks into an intercom.

PARADE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Would the volunteers please step inside, please?

The door opens and assorted MEN file in.

Right away Daniel sees the Brute responsible. His assailant takes a spot under NUMBER 3.

PARADE OFFICER (CONT'D)

In your own time, please call out the number of the person who attacked you.

Daniel is about to speak --

-- when Dunston steps into the line.

DUNSTON

(to the volunteers)

I was in the wash room.

He sits next to the suspect.

DANIEL

Dunston?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He raps on the glass.

PARADE OFFICER
Just a number mister Merkin.

DANIEL
(ignoring him)
Dunston!

Dunston is deaf to the commotion next door. Daniel bangs his fists on the glass.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
NUMBER FOUR!

The Defense smiles. Daniel's lawyer hangs his head in resignation.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Daniel and Dunston sit together on the steps outside.

DUNSTON
They let him go?

DANIEL
Yeah.

DUNSTON
Why?

DANIEL
There were complications.

DUNSTON
He must have hurt you bad - you don't look so good.

DANIEL
Thanks. It was weeks ago.

DUNSTON
Sorry.

DANIEL
Don't be.

DUNSTON
Would you like to share a beer?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL
Like you wouldn't believe. Can't
though, I have to be home. Sarah's
waiting on me.

DUNSTON
Sarah?

DANIEL
The enemy.

DUNSTON
Huh?

DANIEL
Girlfriend.

DUNSTON
Oh. Guess I'll see you around.

DANIEL
(guilty)
Yeah. Another time.

Dunston makes with the puppy eyes. He trudges away.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Wait.

DUNSTON
Yeah?

DANIEL
One.

DUNSTON
Huh?

DANIEL
One drink.

DUNSTON
(grinning)
I know a great place.

CUT TO:

DANIEL

Opens his eyes as Dunston takes his hands away, to reveal:

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - DAY

Daniel's jaw drops. The Nun is reborn - recreated exactly as was - every ghoul and goblin present and correct.

DANIEL

Fuck a duck!

Rocket is back in his regular stool and Clive is wearing a familiar beer-stained apron.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What happened?

CLIVE

The brewery had a change of heart.

DANIEL

Why?

CLIVE

It's like when coco-pops changed to koko-crispies and then turned back again - no one really knows!

DUNSTON

What's a coco-pop?

A BURLY MAN with mutton chops brushes by hefting an amp.

DANIEL

What's he up to?

CLIVE

Setting up for Karaoke.

DANIEL

I don't like the sound of that.

CLIVE

Oh no, he's very good - does a fantastic Elvis. Calls himself Elvish. I just hope we're not flooded by confused Lord of the Rings fans.

The proverbial tumbleweed blows by.

DUNSTON

(chuckling)

Karaoke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROCKET

Anyway, it's good to see you again -
D and D, the dynamic duo.

DANIEL

It's good to be back.

ROCKET

You gonna get the drinks in or
shall we all die of thirst then?

DANIEL

Since when is it my round?

Rocket points to the Wheel of Torture.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Right. I'd forgotten about that.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

That okay, Clive?

Clive nods to the four pints of Brown Balloon already lined
up along the bar. They're each served in tankards engraved
with their names.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Okay then.

They each grab a handle. Daniel pensive. They CLUNK tankards.

ROCKET

(as a "cheers")

Hysterectomy.

They upend their beers. Drain them in one and pound their
mugs on the bar. Except for Daniel. He's sipping his
politely. Not wanting to disappoint, Daniel plays catch up.

CLIVE

Another one on the way.

DANIEL

Not for me, thanks.

Clive shakes his head, "what a card". He pours a drink.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm serious.

ROCKET

What's your problem?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUNSTON
Daniel has a girlfriend.

CLIVE
Like that is it?

DANIEL
No.

Clive makes whip cracks.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
To tell the truth, I don't like
what this stuff does anymore.

Dunston forces a mug into his hand.

DUNSTON
What's a couple of beers going to
do?

DANIEL
I don't know, and that's the point.
A few of these leads to couple more
and whatever does happen I won't
remember. Just little flashes.
Guilty little fl...

BEGIN DRUNK
MEMORY MONTAGE:

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - LATER

Heroically drunk.

On the karaoke stage Daniel and Dunston belt out Stevie
Wonder's Ebony & Ivory like a nail bomb in a violin shop.

Rocket, Clive and Elvish stare at them with a mixture of
amusement and horror.

With a slop of beer, the boys clash tankards.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB BACK ROOM - LATER

Magnetically drunk.

Tucked into a seedy booth, Daniel cosies up to a TOPLESS
WOMAN. He has a hand on her tit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

I still say the natural ones feel better.

Across the other side of the room is Dunston, his hand attached to the chest of a SECOND TOPLESS WOMAN, identical but for her massively inflated boobs.

Dunston wears a face as if God himself had just stepped into the room and flashed his arse.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIER - LATER

Suicidally drunk.

Howling at the moon, Daniel and Dunston leap from the edge of the pier into the frothing black sea.

END MONTAGE.

INT. DANIEL'S STUDY - DAY

Daniel is crumpled in his office chair, the side of his face glued to the desk as he snores away.

A powerful light burns into his eyes, tearing him from his slumber. Sarah has a desk lamp angled at his face.

DANIEL

Don't!

SARAH

Decided to sleep downstairs did you?

DANIEL

I didn't want to wake you.

Daniel clutches his stomach.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm starving! How about some of that soup?

SARAH

Where have you been?

Daniel takes a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

Well, after the ID parade I ran into a friend.

SARAH

Which friend?

DANIEL

Dunston.

SARAH

Go on.

DANIEL

Anyway, I haven't seen him in a while so we hung out. We went to the park, caught up, chatted about this and that. We ate some lunch at that new Italian place - you know Pepe's?

SARAH

I know it.

DANIEL

Right. Then we got given a flyer for a poetry slam at the coffee house so we went and checked that out. Turned into a late one.

SARAH

Good night?

DANIEL

It was okay. Some of the acts weren't so good.

SARAH

Acts, right. One thing I'm interested in...

She unravels something she's been holding behind her back. Daniel's abstinence calender.

SARAH (CONT'D)

...why have you been gone four days!

She screws it up and hurls it at him.

DANIEL

Careful, it's got pins in it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SARAH

How could you lie to me like that?

DANIEL

Because I knew what you'd be like.

SARAH

What do you expect, Daniel? You promised no more drinking! You wanted me to help you!

DANIEL

I know, I'm just... I'm an idiot.

Sarah puts an arm around him.

SARAH

You're not an idiot, you're just easily led. What were you doing with Dunston?

DANIEL

I ran into him at the police station.

SARAH

Well that makes sense.

DANIEL

It's not like that. Look, Dunston isn't a bad person, I am.

SARAH

Bad how?

DANIEL

I used him for the sake of a book. I strung him along with free beer, pretended to be his friend, and as soon as I got his story I left him for dust.

SARAH

You never said anything about that.

Sarah pulls away from him.

DANIEL

Because I still feel like a total shit about it. I don't like thinking about it even.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SARAH
That's why you punish yourself.

DANIEL
I don't know, maybe. I just wanted
to put things right with Dunston.

Sarah bends down and flattens out the scrunched calender. She takes a pen and writes the name DUNSTON down for Saturday.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

SARAH
We're having him for over.

DANIEL
Is that a good idea? Didn't you
call him my enabler?

SARAH
It's alright, we'll have a nice
meal, no drinking.

DANIEL
I don't know...

SARAH
You've got to put this right,
Daniel. You have to apologise to
Dunston for what you did.
It's karma.

INT. DANIEL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Daniel, Sarah and Dunston sit at the table enjoying a meal. The lights are dimmed low and the good silver is out.

SARAH
So who would it be? Who would you
have dinner with, dead or alive?

DUNSTON
Definitely alive.

Sarah snorts with laughter.

SARAH
Oh God, I'm sorry.

Daniel laughs too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH (CONT'D)

You didn't tell me Dunston was so funny.

DANIEL

Trust me, you'll be in stitches. You got any words of wisdom for us today, Dunston?

Dunston thinks on this.

DUNSTON

Did you know that Hair Wash and a Shower sounds the same backwards as forwards?

SARAH

Really?

DANIEL

We'll have to check that out on our mixing desk later.

SARAH

Hair wash and a shower.

They laugh a while - a good long belly acher. As they tail off the conversation steps up a gear.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Do you want to tell Dunston why we invited him over, honey?

DANIEL

Don't make it sound all suspect.

Dunston forks some food in his mouth, doe-eyed.

Daniel gums up. Sarah nudges him under the table.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(to Dunston)

I wanted to talk to you.

DUNSTON

About what?

Daniel looks to Sarah. She motions for him to go ahead.

DANIEL

You're a good friend, Dunston, and I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUNSTON

What for?

Sarah pins Daniel with an insistent gaze. He squirms. Dunston saves him.

DUNSTON (CONT'D)

What is this I'm eating?

SARAH

It's spiced squash, but Daniel was telling you something.

DUNSTON

It makes my mouth hot. Do you have a beer?

SARAH

We don't.

DUNSTON

(to Daniel)

I get it. Like with the tonic water?

DANIEL

Not this time. We really don't.

SARAH

Daniel doesn't drink any more, and neither do I.

DUNSTON

Really?

DANIEL

Really really.

DUNSTON

Oh.

Dunston delves into his coat and pulls out a can of Brown. Sarah stares at him, incredulous. He's about to pop it when...

SARAH

Don't do that, please.

Dunston pauses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SARAH (CONT'D)
This is a dry house. I'm going to
have to take it.

She lurches forward. Dunston crowds the beer instinctively.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Give it to me!

Dunston tosses the can to safety. It lands in Daniel's hands.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Okay, thank you, Daniel.

DANIEL
If he wants it, let him have it.

Daniel casts it back to Dunston.

Sarah dashes back to him but he passes it right back to Daniel.

SARAH
I'm not playing!

It changes hands a couple more times - Sarah piggy-in-the-middle.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Give it to me!

Daniel throws the beer --

-- CRACK.

It hits Sarah square in the face. Her forehead opens up.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA - NIGHT

Dunston and Daniel sit side-by-side, eyes straight ahead.

DUNSTON
You said she'd be in stitches.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. DANIEL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Plates rise from the sink like an unholy tower of Babel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Daniel is sat at the breakfast table in a dressing gown. He's craned over a newspaper and poking at some muesli.

Dunston walks in dressed in a frilly gown. He opens the fridge and roots inside.

DANIEL
That's Sarah's nightie.

DUNSTON
Yeah, but...

DANIEL
...but what? She's coming back.

Dunston unwraps a hunk of cheddar and takes a big bite, lips smacking.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
So don't get too comfortable.

Dunston pulls something from the pocket of the gown.

DUNSTON
Would you like a licorice?

DANIEL
No, thank you. Dunston, when are you going home?

DUNSTON
In a little while. I have to be out while they roomigate.

DANIEL
Roomigate?

DUNSTON
Spray for bugs.

DANIEL
Right. Where is it you live anyway?

DUNSTON
Downtown.

DANIEL
There is no downtown, just a town - any further down and you're in the sea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUNSTON

Oh.

DANIEL

Do you... do you even have a place?

DUNSTON

No.

DANIEL

You're telling me you're homeless?

DUNSTON

Sometimes I'm allowed to stay at the workshop. You know, where I make my island?

DANIEL

Jesus, all this time. What do you do for money?

DUNSTON

Souvenirs.

He takes a grungy bag from a door hook. Unzipping it, he carefully removes an object -

- a grotesque sea shell sculpture. Two people arm in arm, one in spectacles, the other with seaweed dreadlocks.

Scratched into the base it says:

THE DYNAMIC DUO

DUNSTON (CONT'D)

This is for you.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - NIGHT

Daniel storms in, wrecking a sensitive group session.

DANIEL

Sarah, come back.

JANET

I don't think you should be here, Daniel.

TATIANA

Yeah, fuck off!

Daniel doesn't rise to it - just holds up a finger.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ropes bulge at Tatiana's temples, "Oh no, you didn't!"

DANIEL
Please, Sarah.

SARAH
You're drunk.

DANIEL
I haven't touched a drop.

SARAH
Your lips lie.

DANIEL
I swear.

SARAH
No.
(touching her mouth)
Black lips.

Daniel wipes them, confused.

DANIEL
Licorice. I ate licorice!

Sarah isn't buying it.

Daniel finds a flimsy chair - the only one left - and pulls up in front of her. It groans as he sits. She won't meet his eyes so he takes her hand.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about what happened, but
I promise I haven't had a sniff of
a drink since you left.

Not a flicker. Tatiana looks perfectly smug.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You put a stop to all that. It's
you I have to thank. Not long ago I
would have reached for the bottle
over a lot less than this. Jesus, I
got tanked one time because some
kid beat me on eBay.

He clenches her hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm not saying it's been easy,
Sarah, but you've changed me.
You've given me the armour I need.
You got me on the wagon. Except
you're not there. I'm on the wagon
but I don't have a driver.

(struggling desperately)

I'm plummeting down hill in the
wagon... wearing my armour...

SARAH

(smiling)

Shut up, Daniel.

DANIEL

Thank you.

She pulls him forward. They're about to kiss when --

TATIANA

You're not listening to this
enabler?!

DANIEL

Butt out, will you?

TATIANA

Make me.

Daniel goes to get up but his chair leg gives out.

Sarah gasps as he crashes to the floor.

Groaning with pain, Daniel nurses his tailbone.

Janet goes to help him up.

DANIEL

Get off me!

Daniel clambers up. The crowd is getting rowdy. They cluster
protectively around Sarah.

TATIANA

Go home and have another drink, you
fucking alchy!

JANET

Now, Tatiana...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TATIANA

He doesn't belong here! He's an insensitive, bigotted, pig!

He jabs her in the chest.

DANIEL

You want to add homophobe to that?

Big mistake. She darts out a hand and seizes his finger. Suddenly his arm is riding behind his back and he's on his knees.

JANET

Tatiana!

SARAH

Don't do it!

The crowd goes berserk.

DANIEL

I'm sorry! You're not a lesbian!

She applies a little pressure to his digit.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Arrgh! I mean you are a lesbian and that's okay!

She maintains her grip. Daniel grimaces as with minimal effort Tatiana walks him to the door.

Sarah calls out but is consumed by the cheering crowd.

TATIANA

Closing time, prick!

With a punt from her Doc Martens she sends Daniel on his way.

INT. DANIEL'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

The floor is a minefield of empty beer bottles. Daniel and Dunston share the sofa, nissed as pewts. Daniel rouses from a semi-coma and massages a sore finger.

DANIEL

Get a beer would you?

Dunston doesn't stir. Daniel begrudgingly staggers to his feet and makes the trek to the kitchen. He comes back with a bottle in each hand. Dunston is miraculously awake now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUNSTON

Thank you.

Daniel sneers and falls back into the sofa. He crosses his legs and notices something afoot. Quite literally. The soles of his bare feet are red.

DANIEL

Wasn't my carpet brown?

DUNSTON

Yeah.

DANIEL

But it's red now.

DUNSTON

I spilled some wine.

DANIEL

Over my whole floor?

DUNSTON

I couldn't get the stain out so I had an idea. Why not dye the rest of the carpet the same way?

DANIEL

Using what?

DUNSTON

More wine.

DANIEL

No.

DUNSTON

I think it looks good.

Daniel sighs in defeat.

DANIEL

I need Sarah.

DUNSTON

Last week you called her a dragon woman.

DANIEL

I was drunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUNSTON

No you weren't.

DANIEL

Well I was upset anyway! Sarah was the best chance I had and I pissed it up the wall.

DUNSTON

You really want her back?

DANIEL

Yes.

DUNSTON

You know where she is?

DANIEL

I think so.

DUNSTON

Then go to her. Tell her you love her. Don't take no for an answer. Admit you made mistakes and explain how you're going to put them right. She wants you to be a bigger man. Be that man.

Daniel nods with a sense of awe and clarity. He knows what he must do...

CUT TO:

A WINDOW

SMASHES as a rock sails through it.

EXT. TATIANA'S FRONT GARDEN - NIGHT

Daniel lurks below, pie-eyed. Lights flicker on. A FURIOUS NEIGHBOUR appears at the window.

FURIOUS NEIGHBOUR

OY!

DANIEL

Sorry! What floor are you?

FURIOUS NEIGHBOUR

(in disbelief)

Third!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

Thank you.

He hurls another stone, shattering a second window the floor above. The whole building is lighting up now. People are yelling -

NEIGHBOURS

Fuck off! Go home! Gerrout out of it! Calling the police!

Suddenly something hits Daniel smack in the face.

He reels, eyes watering.

A dildo lays on the ground.

Up on the forth looms Tatiana.

DANIEL

Where's Sarah?!

Sarah appears by her side. She buttons a night dress.

Daniel staggers back in disbelief.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

No.

Sarah looks down with pity and disgust.

Daniel scoops up the dildo. Gives it a sniff.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(pathetic)

No.

INT. DANIEL'S BEDROOM - DAY

It looks like the aftermath of a mortar shelling. Daniel lays tangled among the bedsheets.

The door opens a crack. Daniel rouses. Through the gloom a face comes into focus.

Daniel's face!

Daniel thrashes and tumbles off the bed as his doppelganger steps into the room.

It's not a nightmare and it's not a monster --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

-- It's Dunston wearing a paper mask.

DANIEL
What the fuck?!

DUNSTON
I cut it out of a magazine. It's
you.

DANIEL
I know who it is!

DUNSTON
Why is your face in a magazine?

DANIEL
I don't know.

DUNSTON
The article says you're a writer.

DANIEL
I was.

DUNSTON
You never told me that.

DANIEL
Look Dunston, you barge in at the
crack of...
(checking the clock)
...eight pm? Is that right?
(Dunston nods)
That's fifteen hours without a
cigarette!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Daniel scours the room, digging among the detritus. Dunston follows close behind.

DUNSTON
You need to get dressed.

DANIEL
Why do I?

DUNSTON
It's Friday night.

DANIEL
So?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUNSTON
So we're going out.

DANIEL
Off to paint the town beige are we?

Dunston doesn't get it.

DUNSTON
Tonight is special?

DANIEL
You mean Karaoke?

DUNSTON
No. Tonight is our anniversary.

DANIEL
What?

DUNSTON
It's been a year since we met.
Remember? You won the wheel?

DANIEL
(depressed)
That was a year ago?

DUNSTON
And it's about to run out. The
prize. Don't you want a last free
beer?

Daniel locates his cigarettes.

DANIEL
Okay. Just don't call it an
anniversary.

INT. THE BRICKED-UP NUN - NIGHT

TICK TOCK goes the Guinness clock.

All the regulars are in. Staring intently as the hands near
eleven o' clock.

CLICK.

And it's done. As sombre as a wake.

Clive deadlocks the door and pulls the curtains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Daniel stares mournfully into his pint.

Dunston bows his head.

Even Rocket observes a respectful silence.

DUNSTON
Cheers everyone.

They raise their tankards for a hollow CLUNK.

Daniel puts the beer to his lips and proceeds to drain it in one. The others follow suit.

They sit a while, silent as monks.

DANIEL
Clive?

CLIVE
Yes, Daniel?

DANIEL
Four pints of Brown, please.

CLIVE
Okey doke.

Daniel locates his wallet as Clive pulls the drinks. The others nod their appreciation.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
Ten pounds forty.

Daniel hands over the cash but a coin gets away. Bounces behind the bar.

DANIEL
Shit it.

CLIVE
Don't worry, I've got it.

Clive roots down the side of the glass washer.

He grasps something unexpected. Pulls it out. It's large. Brown. Rectangular. He blows the dust off, inspecting it.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
Does anyone know a Ryan?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He drops it onto the bar. An envelope A name written in black marker.

Daniel's manuscript.

Dunston's eyes widen. He looks to Daniel.

He looks at the envelope, stony-faced.

ROCKET

Isn't that the envelope you were looking for? Your book?

CLIVE

(panicking)

I looked everywhere for it! I don't see how I missed it...

Daniel doesn't twitch. A zen calm.

DANIEL

The drinks?

CLIVE

Of course, right away.

Clive pulls another trio. Shaky. He sets them down.

Daniel takes a sip. Wipes his mouth.

DANIEL

Aren't we forgetting something?

Clive doesn't know what to say. He looks to the others for support. They avert their eyes.

CLIVE

Forgetting what?

DANIEL

I get a spin, don't I?

CLIVE

Right. Of course you do.

He goes to the device, "what the hell?" He gives the wheel a tug. CLACK-CLACK-CLAK goes the tongue.

CLAK---CLACK---CLACK.

Dunston tenses. Baited breath --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CLACK----CLACK----

-- then finally --

-- YOU ARE A LOSER

Not good. Clive backs up a couple of paces. Rocket whistles nervously. Dunston shuffles his stool along.

Suddenly Daniel cracks.

Laughter.

A stream of joyous laughter.

Rocket starts to chuckle. Clive get's caught up in it too. Finally, Dunston joins in.

They're all laughing. Pounding the bar. Roaring away. Wiping eyes.

Daniel puts his arm around Dunston's shoulder.

DANIEL

Let's go.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Hooting and hollering, Daniel charges toward the sea, pebbles crunching underfoot. Dunston runs alongside. Between them they are dragging a crude raft made of plastic bottles.

Daniel tumbles. Takes Dunston with him.

DANIEL

Keep up!

He bounds to his feet, dragging the raft in his wake.

Dunston takes a moment. He's gone this far, hasn't he? He catches Daniel up and takes the slack.

EXT. AT SEA - NIGHT

The boys struggle to cling to the raft as the choppy water tosses them this way and that. A wave almost flips them over.

DUNSTON

I don't like it!

DANIEL

Just paddle!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dunston does his best. Daniel sculls feverishly.

DUNSTON
What are we doing?

DANIEL
When we get there.

The city grows dim as the tide carries them away.

DUNSTON
It's coming apart.

DANIEL
What is?

DUNSTON
The raft.

DANIEL
It's not a raft.

DUNSTON
What do you mean?

DANIEL
This is an island.

DUNSTON
I didn't finish it yet!

DANIEL
We'll do that later.

DUNSTON
I want to go back.

DANIEL
Shhhh!

The crashing has stopped. The waves are quiet now. The raft bobs gently. Only pin pricks of light to show for land.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Here...

He produces a pair of cans from his pockets.

DUNSTON
Are you sure?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANIEL

I am.

Daniel hands a can of Brown Balloon to Dunston. He hesitates.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I have more.

He takes it.

Daniel kicks his legs playfully in the water. Pops his can. Takes a swig. He looks to Dunston.

Dunston pops his also. Smiles uncertainly. Takes a sip.

CUT TO:

EXT. AT SEA - DAY

Daniel's comes to underwater. Panic. His head breaks the surface and he coughs a bellyful of saltwater.

He wheels around. No sign of land. No sign of Dunston.

Fragments of raft bob in the distance.

Daniel thrashes about. Struggling to stay afloat.

Then he sees it, rising above a wave --

A buoy. A big brown buoy.

He fights the tide, crawling desperately toward it.

It doesn't seem to be getting any closer at first, but he battles on until finally --

-- he gets a hand to it.

Latching on, he's about to take a gulp of precious air --

-- but the buoy plunges underwater. He loses grip.

Dunston is hanging onto the other side of the buoy. It can't take the weight of them both.

DUNSTON

The raft! Get the raft!

DANIEL

You get it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUNSTON
I don't swim!

DUNSTON (CONT'D)
I'm too tired!

Daniel treads water but he's too exhausted. He grabs the buoy. Again it sinks, this time dislodging them both.

The buoy boosts to the surface. Dunston is the first to grab hold. Daniel fumbles at it.

DUNSTON (CONT'D)
Please. You're dragging me down.

Daniel starts to laugh.

DANIEL
I'm dragging you down?

He chokes on another wash of brine, still laughing.

He releases his grip.

The water washes over him.

Dunston makes a grab for his sleeve but misses.

Daniel sinks. Disappearing below.

DUNSTON
Daniel!

He's left alone, a dot at sea.

DUNSTON (CONT'D)
DANIEL!

Nothing.

Then bubbles break the surface. Something floats to the top.

An envelope.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

The sun dips into the horizon like a molten coin.

A hunk of wreckage from the raft has made it back to shore.

Dunston too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He sits hunched on the shore, dry but for the tide lapping at his bare feet.

In his hands he holds the manuscript. BROWN BALLOON.

He reads the last page. Closes it and flips to the front.

On the cover:

RYAN ANDERSON, CAVALIER PUBLISHING SERVICES

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dunston doesn't belong here. He doesn't look intimidated though.

Witnessing Dunston as he makes a mark on a literary contract is Ryan's SECRETARY.

RYAN
Thanks for that.

She gives a little look to her boss, "sure you're okay?" Ryan shoos her away with a smile.

Ryan pulls a company cheque book from a drawer. He scribbles a sum.

SIX HUNDRED AND FORTY POUNDS ONLY

RYAN (CONT'D)
Who shall I make it out to?

Dunston doesn't answer.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I'll make it out to cash.

He adds his signature with a sigh. Dunston takes the cheque, folds it carefully and slips it in his pocket.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I was sorry to hear about what happened. I always knew he'd do himself in. Not like that, but you know...

Dunston nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)
You were a friend of his?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUNSTON
It's all in the book.

RYAN
You're Dunston then?

Dunston gets up.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Wait.

DUNSTON
What?

RYAN
Is it good? I mean what did I just
pay for?

DUNSTON
Goodbye, sir.

He reaches the door.

RYAN
You could have asked for more.

DUNSTON
Don't need it.

RYAN
What are you going to do with six
hundred and forty pounds?

Dunston smiles.

DUNSTON
I'm going home.

He exits.

Ryan looks at the manuscript weighing his desk.

And picks it up.

FADE TO BROWN.