SOHO NOIR

by William Johnston

Current Revisions by 21 October 2005

Superimpose on black:

"In the UK it is estimated that 0.5% of screenplays written get made"

Source, B.A.F.F.

Then:

FIRST DRAFT. THE SCREENWRITER

FADE IN:

INT. GARRET - NIGHT

Fade in on the words "Fade in:" in Courier font size 12. These words are on a laptop screen. The laptop is attached to a printer, which is printing out a 109-page document, "Soho Noir", churning out page after page with monotonous rhythm.

The computer is on a desk, which suddenly judders as two semiclad, sweaty bodies locked in a sexual embrace career into it. They are SEAN FUDDER and JENNY HOLGAN, both 20s, their mouths and hands all over each other.

Sean manhandles Jenny away from the desk, her struggling all the way, and they topple onto several piles of scripts. The scripts scatter to all directions as they writhe and wrestle on top of each other, ripping each other's clothes off.

The printer churns out page after page.

Jenny grapples with Sean and rolls herself on top, but Sean keeps the momentum going and they roll several times across the floor, still in an unbreakable embrace. Cold cups of coffee and overflowing ashtrays scatter in their wake.

Eventually they hit an unsteady bookcase, filled with DVDs. The bookcase rocks with the force of Sean and Jenny's collision. A DVD, "Collar and Cuffs, a film by Melissa Keddy", falls out of the bookcase onto Sean's bare back.

Still the printer churns out page after page.

Heads pressed against the bookcase Sean yanks down Jenny's knickers and enters her. Sweaty and breathless they both cry out in ecstasy and start to fuck fast and furiously. Their heads bang against the bookcase sending DVDs toppling down on Sean's bare back: "Lavender Blue, a film by Melissa Keddy", "Do Geese See God, a film by Melissa Keddy".

The printer churns out another page.

Sean and Jenny's fuck gets faster and faster, DVDs raining down on top of them.

The printer churns out another page.

(CONTINUED)

Sean and Jenny's fuck is approaching climax. Another DVD falls: "Line of Desire, a film by Melissa Keddy".

The printer churns out another page.

Sean and Jenny climax in unison and at length.

The printer churns out the final page, the last two words are "Fade out."

FADE OUT.

INT. GARRET - NIGHT

Still sweaty, Jenny sits amongst the DVDs, having a postcoital cigarette. She is bright, droll and even after years of supporting Sean, she is still in love and lust with him.

She watches Sean at the printer, methodically sorting through the hard copy of "Soho Noir". Sean is a dreamer; intelligent, self-absorbed and just a little odd. A screenwriter, who is so far un-produced and always stony broke.

> JENNY It must be good.

SEAN It's just a first draft.

JENNY You must think it's good. We only do it like that when you're really pleased with yourself.

Sean smiles to himself.

SEAN "My boy's wicked smart."

JENNY You better be. Talk over, me read now.

She reaches out for the script. Sean pauses, then lays the script back on the desk.

SEAN It's late. Let's go to bed.

INT. BEDROOM, SEAN AND JENNY - NIGHT

Sean and Jenny are in bed having sex; this time slowly and tenderly. But it's too much for Sean, who starts to cry.

JENNY What is it? 2.

SEAN Don't stop. Please don't stop.

He buries his face in her neck and they continue having sex.

INT. BEDROOM, SEAN AND JENNY - NIGHT

Post-coital: Jenny smoking, Sean sitting on the side of the bed, unable to meet her eye.

JENNY Post-script blues? You expect me to believe that?

SEAN I said it's a possible explanation, not definite. I don't know what just happened.

JENNY You've never got post-script blues before.

SEAN Well, maybe I've never written anything like this before. Or maybe it just felt really, really... nice.

Jenny scoffs at this idea, gets out of bed and heads for the door.

SEAN (cont'd) Where are you going?

JENNY To read your script.

SEAN (With sudden urgency) No.

JENNY Anything that provokes "post-script blues" I'm not gonna sleep till I read.

SEAN Jenny, please. Let's just go to sleep and figure it out tomorrow.

JENNY What difference does it make if I read it now or tomorrow?

SEAN Maybe I don't want you to read it tomorrow either. The mood suddenly darkens. Jenny stares at him in disbelief, but he cannot meet her eye.

> SEAN (cont'd) Jenny, I love you. I love you so much. I don't know what I'd do without you.

Jenny still frozen, her disbelief melting into fear.

SEAN (cont'd) The central relationship in the script. (An agonising pause.) It's us. I based it on us.

For Jenny this is the ultimate betrayal. Her fear turns to unconditional fury.

EXT. HOUSE, SEAN AND JENNY - NIGHT

The front door to the house opens. Jenny emerges from the house, suitcase in hand, and heads to a waiting taxi. In the house Sean is sitting on the stairs, framed by the bars on the balustrade.

Jenny gets in the taxi and it drives away. We close in on Sean in the house as the wind slowly blows the front door closed until it slams in our face.

BLACKOUT.

Superimpose on black:

DRAFT TWO. THE PRODUCERS

EXT. CURZON CINEMA, SHAFTESBURY AVENUE - DAY

In the window of the ground floor cafe of the Curzon Cinema is a poster under the title "Opening Today". The film is "Sleeping Partners" and the poster is dominated by the words "Gary Kole in" and the rugged visage of said actor.

A blur of a person races past the poster. A beat later another blur races past. We turn to see the backs of these two blurred people racing up Frith Street... towards Soho.

#### EXT. FRITH STREET - DAY

Pounding music. Legs sprint along the pavement. They are TOBY HEAD's. Behind him is CLAIRE SAPSTAIRS. They are both tearing along. Somewhat reminiscent - but not the same - as the opening of Brit flick Trainspotting.

Suddenly, as Toby crosses a road, a car skids to a halt, inches from him. Toby stops and looks at the shocked driver.

Toby looks from the driver to Claire, who has continued running. He starts to laugh, then runs on.

INT. RECEPTION - DAY

The female RECEPTIONIST looks up as CLAIRE bursts in.

# CLAIRE (Breathless) Claire Sapstairs and Toby Head. Head First Films. We have a 10.30 with Ken Gillith.

The receptionist turns her head to a clock: 10.37. She turns back, unimpressed. Then Toby bursts in and immediately fixes the receptionist with a heartbreakingly charming smile.

TOBY

Hi.

The receptionist instantly melts into a smile.

RECEPTIONIST I'll see if I can get you straight in.

### INT. OFFICE, KEN GILLITH - DAY

KEN GILLITH has his feet up on his desk. Seated on the other side of the desk are Toby and Claire, who has very visible sweat patches under her arms. All they can see of Ken Gillith are the soles of his shoes.

#### TOBY

It's called Soho Noir. Totally set in Soho. About a barman who's cool but haunted. Married to an actress, who's beautiful and brainy. The barman, he used to be someone. A singer, but he blew it all on the horses. The actress, she's on the verge of making it. But she's pregnant. She's gotta take time out. So finances are bad and it's wrecking their marriage. But the barman's got a brother. A rich ad exec. Seriously nasty piece of work. The barman goes to him for a loan, but the brother turns him down. Couple of hours later the brother's dead. Murdered. And as the only living relatives the barman and the actress inherit the lot. But and it's a big but - they're prime suspects. And not just by the police. By each other. They both suspect the other of the murder and maybe, just maybe, one of them's right.

Toby sits back, spent. A long silence.

KEN GILLITH (From behind his shoes) Which one?

TOBY That's the hook.

KEN GILLITH (From behind his shoes) And...?

Toby glances at Claire, who is pointing at her watch.

# TOBY

(Quickly) The actress. She went to the brother, who agreed to lend her the money in return for sex. She refused. He tried to force her. She topped him in selfdefence.

Ken Gillith's shoes sway from side to side like a metronome.

TOBY (cont'd) It's just the option. I'm telling you, Ken, this is the best script I've read since I've been in the business.

KEN GILLITH (From behind his shoes) I try not to read scripts. Are you any relation to Alexander Head?

TOBY

He was my dad.

### KEN GILLITH

(From behind his shoes) Now there was a great producer. He knew a good script. And he knew how to pitch one. I don't think I ever saw a bad film he made. But then I try not to see films. I saw yours. The art-house gangster one. What was that called again?

TOBY Zero Tolerance.

KEN GILLITH (From behind his shoes) That's it. What went wrong there?

(CONTINUED)

TOBY Like most people who saw it, we liked the film. If you mean the box office, that was down to bad marketing.

KEN GILLITH (From behind his shoes) Didn't you use a real-life gangster as some sort of technical adviser?

TOBY Alan Fengell, yeah.

KEN GILLITH (From behind his shoes) You'd have thought with him on board the film would've had some sense of authenticity.

Toby grits his teeth and glances at Claire, who points at her watch again, but quickly stops as suddenly the soles of Ken Gillith's shoes vanish. Ken Gillith leans forward on his desk.

> KEN GILLITH (cont'd) Toby, Claire, I'd love to help you out. If only out of admiration for your father. But it's just not us. It sounds too... well, too Hollywood.

INT. TOILET - DAY

Toby snorts a line of the white stuff.

EXT. FRITH STREET - DAY

Pounding music. Legs sprint along the pavement. Toby tearing along, Claire lagging behind.

INT. OFFICE, KATH FOSSIDE - DAY

Another meeting. Claire now has very visible sweat patches under her arms and on her midriff. This time all they can see of the person they're meeting, KATH FOSSIDE, is the back of her swivel chair.

> TOBY ... They both suspect the other of the murder and maybe, just maybe, one of them's right.

Toby sits back, spent again. A silence.

KATH FOSSIDE (From behind her chair) I'm confused as to who we're meant to be cheering on. We can't cheer on people who could be murderers.

CLAIRE But that's the beauty of the piece. You just can't trust anyone. And, to be fair, it's not really a cheering on kind of film.

Kath Fosside swivels her chair round to face them.

KATH FOSSIDE Well, maybe there's a clue in that. Toby, I was a great fan of your father's, but this is just too English. You need to think more… more Hollywood.

INT. TOILET - DAY

Toby and more nose candy.

INT. DEAN STREET - DAY

Pounding music. Legs sprint along the pavement. Toby tearing along, Claire way behind. Toby disappears into a tall office block, the BAFF Building. A plaque by the door reads "British Assembly of Film Financing". Claire, now with very visible sweat patches under her arms, on her midriff and under her breasts, staggers past the plaque and into the building.

INT. RECEPTION, BAFF - DAY

The reception area is filled with PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS and WRITERS. They are all listening to Toby leaning into the intercom on the reception desk.

TOBY (Into intercom) They both suspect the other of the murder and maybe, just maybe, one of them's right.

A long silence.

VOICE (DANIEL BAGRUE) (Over intercom) Toby, could either of these characters be monks? Monks are very in right now.

Toby and Claire exchange a disbelieving frown while the producers, directors and writers all make a note of this.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

Toby and Claire emerge from the BAFF building and stand there in inconsolable silence.

CLAIRE You were fantastic.

Toby looks at her and laughs wearily.

CLAIRE (cont'd) I was amazed every time we got turned down. Every pitch was exciting and passionate - -

TOBY

And pointless. Christ on a bike! We can't even get the option money. How are we gonna get the money to actually shoot the bastard?

CLAIRE We could still go to ... you-know-who.

TOBY Fengell? No way is that psycho getting anywhere near this.

#### CLAIRE

Okay, well, there are other places to try. And if you keep pitching it like that I know we'll get all the money we need.

TOBY I dunno, Claire. It's so much easier for these people to just say no. You're not gonna make a bad film if you don't make a film at all.

(A sad silence.)

You know my dad's theory that everyone's life is a film. I don't think mine's ever getting out of development hell.

CLAIRE

Do you want to come back to mine? (A hint of seduction) Make a plan of action?

Toby understands Claire's hint. They are more than just business partners, but unofficially and only occasionally.

> TOBY How long till we meet with Sean?

9.

CLAIRE Couple of hours. Enough time to wind down.

Toby is tempted, but then he is distracted by a wealthy and beautiful woman in dark glasses emerging from the BAFF building. Toby watches her saunter off down Dean Street.

TOBY No, I've gotta clear my head. I'll see you back at the office.

Toby trots off after the beautiful woman. Claire lulls her head and sees for the first time the very visible sweat patches all over her top.

### CLAIRE

Oh, Claire!

# EXT. CHAPONE PLACE - DAY

Toby is grunting his way through a shag against the wall with the wealthy and beautiful woman, NORMA, cool and insatiable. The scene is somewhat reminiscent - but not the same - as the scene in Brit flick Quadrophenia.

EXT. CHAPONE PLACE - DAY

Toby and Norma lean back against opposite walls, enjoying a post-coital breather.

NORMA I heard your pitch.

TOBY I knew it. You were in that guy's office. That's why I had to pitch over the intercom.

NORMA I heard you were in the building; I asked if I could listen in.

TOBY

And?

NORMA I liked it. Pity about the monks, but you can't have everything.

TOBY You got him to ask that? (Norma just smiles wickedly.) (MORE)

### CONTINUED:

### TOBY(cont'd)

You're twisted, you know that. Did you tell him you liked my pitch?

NORMA

No.

# TOBY

Cheers.

NORMA No need. He liked it himself. But his slate for thrillers is full.

TOBY

What good is shagging the wife of the head of BAFF if she's not gonna get your film green lit?

NORMA Babe, don't pretend you're fucking me for your career. You're fucking me cos I want you to. Cos you can't help yourself.

Toby sizes her up before:

TOBY

Shit, I wish that wasn't true.

Toby starts to go, but Norma stops him.

NORMA Where do you think you're going?

TOBY I've got money to raise. Besides, (Pointing to a building) That's BAFF. People in there can see us.

NORMA (Pinning him to the wall) I know. Put that in your Soho Noir.

Norma kisses and caresses him. Toby gives in without a fight and pushes her to the other wall (where they first had sex). But Norma pushes him back to the other wall.

> NORMA (cont'd) We did it there already.

TOBY They can see us here.

NORMA You're not scared of Roman, are you? He's a pussycat. A neutered one. TOBY He's Soho's Harvey Weinstein, Norma. If he found out about us my career would be over.

NORMA

Honey, if Roman found out about us our lives would be over. The only way we live happily ever after is with him in a seven by four wooden box.

This turns Norma on even more and she straddles Toby, who can't help himself and buries himself in her with a gasp.

INT. HEAD FIRST FILMS - DAY

Sean stares off into space. He's miles away. A strip light flickers above him. Sean snaps out of it as Toby thrusts a contract under his nose.

> TOBY One option agreement. You wanna look through it one last time?

> > SEAN

Oh, well - -

Claire brings Sean a cup of coffee.

CLAIRE

One coffee. Black, six sugars. It may be a bit cold. Our machine's on the blink.

SEAN

Thank you. Um - to be honest, if Neil says it's alright, I'm happy.

TOBY Lawyers, yeah. We should get you an agent. Put that in the diary, would you, Claire? Get Sean an agent. Okay, so let's sign.

SEAN Right, now the only thing is, Neil did say not to sign until the money's in my hands.

TOBY

Isn't it?

SEAN No. Should it be? TOBY We put the cheque in the post, what -(To Claire) a week ago?

### CLAIRE

Are you sure you're not confusing it with that other script we're trying to option, "Integrity Bypass"?

This hurts. Toby lulls his head in shame.

SEAN

I hate to say this, but I haven't got it.

Toby looks up; he's going to come clean.

TOBY

Course you haven't. That's cos we haven't sent it.

A beat. Sean opens his mouth to respond, but not quick enough.

CLAIRE

To the right address. I can't believe we forgot. We've had a computer virus. Our database of addresses is all over the place. We'll send out another which you should get by the end of next week. (To Toby) Right?

TOBY

Right.

CLAIRE Unfortunately it means this meeting's over.

SEAN

I thought we were going to talk about the script.

#### CLAIRE

We can't give you our notes, Sean. You could go away, re-write it and sell it for millions to someone else. (To Toby) We'll have to call off the meetings at DNA, BAFF and Working Title. Tim and

Eric aren't gonna be too pissed off, are they?

SEAN I'll sign. The money's not important. TOBY They'll be okay, but it'll be tough to get another meeting this year.

SEAN No, listen, I'll sign. Really. "It's a deal. It's a steal. It's sale of the fucking century."

As Sean signs Toby and Claire share a look. They're in it now. Suddenly with a bang the strip light finally conks out.

> TOBY Shall we do this over a drink?

INT. DRAWING ROOM, SOHO HOUSE - DAY

Toby, Claire and Sean drinking the afternoon away in the smoke-filled first floor drawing room.

#### TOBY

A screenplay is like a house of cards. The foundation's gotta be strong or it'll never stand up. And you know what the foundation is in Soho Noir? It's that central relationship. Simon and Joanne. That's the key to this whole script, and I tell you what, Sean. You've fucking nailed it.

#### CLAIRE

It's a brilliant piece of writing.

TOBY

To find a relationship in a script as three dimensional, as moving, as... real as Simon and Joanne's is just gold dust.

#### CLAIRE

You can really feel the pain of his affair in every word they utter.

TOBY

It's heartbreaking, mate.

#### CLAIRE

But inspiring. Joanne is so strong. She's amazing. I know a lot of Joannes, and as for Simon.

TOBY Where do we start? CLAIRE I've met a few Simons in my time as well.

TOBY What a prize dickhead!

Sean's beaming smile starts to droop.

TOBY (cont'd) He's so self-obsessed. So wrapped up in his own problems. The guy's an arsehole.

### CLAIRE

I got the same feelings of frustration reading this as I do when I actually meet a couple like that in real life. I just wanted to slap him. And her for staying with him for so long.

TOBY

And just when you think he can't get any worse he goes and puts all that money - that they haven't actually got yet - on a horse, for fuck's sake!

### CLAIRE

But you know what's really tragic? He never realises how good he has it with Joanne until it's too late. Till she leaves him.

TOBY

The twat!

Sean reels from this "praise".

CLAIRE You okay, Sean?

SEAN

She leaves him, yeah. "All things end badly or else they wouldn't end."

CLAIRE

It's the only ending.

TOBY

We're gonna have to fight for it. Down endings are hard to sell. But it can't end well. Not for that loser.

SEAN

Good, yes, I think I need another drink.

More drinks have been drunk.

#### TOBY

I had this idea about the blackmailer's death. I love it as it is, but we've seen fights in bars before. I was thinking we could put it in the blackmailer's office in Centre Point. After hours. It's a great location for a scrap - all the desks to roll over all the computers to smash.

#### CLAIRE

And it's dangerous. Twenty floors up with those massive windows. I think they're meant to be unbreakable, but there's always a doubt, isn't there?

SEAN

I like it.

TOBY And he could kill him with some sort of office equipment. Like one of those paper spikes and say something like "Now do you get the point?"

A long, horrible silence. Claire and Sean try to keep the grins off their faces.

CLAIRE

Yeah, or maybe "You've got nail".

Sean blurts out a laugh, but reels it in. He and Claire try desperately not to give in to the hysteria. Then:

SEAN How about "I may not know your name, but I'll always remember you as Pierce."

That's it. Sean and Claire can't keep it in and guffaw out loud. Toby slowly gets the joke and smiles along.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, SOHO HOUSE - NIGHT

All three very drunk now.

SEAN The thing about film noirs is that us Brits don't make them. At least not good ones.

(CONTINUED)

TOBY But isn't that what's exciting? We'll be making the first. After this everyone'll be making "British Noir".

### CLAIRE

I think we should talk about Noir. Cos it's a term that's used pretty freely nowadays.

SEAN Too right. Anything remotely moody's called noir these days.

CLAIRE

So do we know an actual definition?

TOBY

It's the lighting, isn't it?

### SEAN

Actually, there is no definition. It's an artificial genre. The makers of proper film noir had no idea they were making them. I just wanted to capture the mood of those films, the feel of them. Actually no, the attitude. People do the mood, the look all the time. I wanted to capture the attitude. They're morality tales. There are sub-genres: amnesia noir, corrupt cop noir, heist noir. But the generally accepted noir story is of a low-life caught between a beautiful woman and a dutiful woman.

Toby hears this and goes white.

#### SEAN (cont'd)

I've done a variation on that. My femme fatale's money, but essentially it's the same story. Doomed lust. Once a man chooses the femme fatale he's had it. "It was in the cards and there was no way of stopping it."

Toby is genuinely spooked.

TOBY Why does he have to choose?

SEAN Because you do. You always have to choose in the end.

TOBY What would happen if he chose the dutiful woman? SEAN Men don't; that's the point.

TOBY Yeah, but what if he does? I'd have a chance of a happy ending, right?

SEAN I'm getting a bit lost here.

### CLAIRE

Me too.

SEAN Jenny leaves him. That's his inevitable fate. Deep inside, he's always known it. (Beat.) Joanne, I mean.

# TOBY

I'm just being hypothetical. If this was real life and you have to make a choice between a beautiful woman and a dutiful woman, would the dutiful woman be the right choice?

SEAN If you believe the movies, and who here doesn't believe the movies?

Toby mulls this over then glances at Claire. She is giving him a very puzzled look. Sean suddenly bangs on the table.

SEAN (cont'd) "I demand to have some booze."

EXT. SOHO HOUSE - NIGHT

Toby is leaning back against the wall. Across the road a really young homeless MAN is out cold and has been left for dead on the pavement. Claire walks into his eye-line.

CLAIRE Sean's decided to walk home. The wrong way, I think. But our taxis are waiting.

Toby pauses, then looks at her with scared, puppy dog eyes.

TOBY Can I get in yours? INT. BEDROOM, CLAIRE - NIGHT

Toby and Claire in Claire's bed. Claire snoring, lying across Toby, who's wide awake. Toby looks over at the bedside table at the lamp still on. Under the lamp is a copy of Soho Noir.

Toby manoeuvres Claire off him, careful not to wake her, reaches over, grasps the script and starts reading.

INT. BEDROOM, CLAIRE - NIGHT

Extreme close-up of Toby's eyes. The words on the script reflect in his eyes, hurtling up, down, left and right at an ever-increasing speed. His eyes suddenly close.

The script drops to the floor.

SLOW FADE OUT.

INT. BEDROOM, CLAIRE - DAY

Claire's hung-over eyes creak open. After a moment's recollection she smiles. She turns over, but Toby has gone. All that remains is the copy of the script on the floor.

INT. BEDROOM, NORMA AND ROMAN - DAY

Norma sits in her massive bed, arms folded, smoking. She listens to sounds from her en suite bathroom: a steady stream of urine in the toilet water; teeth being cleaned; toilet paper being torn; and finally the toilet being flushed.

ROMAN WARRING, a curt and enormously corpulent man who oozes power, emerges from the bathroom, stark naked. He galumphs across the room to a cupboard filled with numerous, identical white suits. He looks through the suits.

ROMAN

I leave in eleven minutes.

Norma pauses, then semi-stubs out her cigarette, gets out of bed and ambles out.

Close-up on the smouldering cigarette as a globule of spit lands on it, extinguishing it with a sizzle.

INT. KITCHEN, NORMA AND ROMAN - DAY

Roman, white-suited, eats his breakfast with all the grace and comportment of a hippopotamus. Opposite him Norma, cigarette and coffee on the go, watches impassively. Cigarette smoke wafts over Roman's plate of food, but he eats on oblivious. He finishes eating, pushes his plate away and leaves the table.

INT. HALLWAY, NORMA AND ROMAN - DAY

Norma stands by the front door. Roman, briefcase in hand, is heading for the door. Without a word exchanged Norma opens the door, lets Roman out and shuts the door behind him.

Norma doesn't move. Almost as if she's waiting for something. She is.

A knock. Norma reaches across, opens the door and admits a dishevelled-looking Toby.

NORMA I wanna do it in his study.

She reaches for him. But he backs off.

TOBY I came to talk.

NORMA I get enough of that from Roman.

She reaches for him again, this time more forcefully. Again he backs off, but this time he has to push her away.

TOBY

I mean it.

NORMA

So talk.

TOBY I've had an epiphany.

NORMA In English.

TOBY A revelation. A realisation. A moment of clarity.

NORMA Okay, Roget. About what?

TOBY

Us.

This time no smart comeback. She looks scared.

TOBY (cont'd) It can only end badly. That's the only ending. (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

### CONTINUED:

#### TOBY(cont'd)

At least this way we all stay alive. I'm sorry, Norma, but we can't - -

NORMA

Don't do it.

Pause.

### TOBY We can't - -

NORMA

You're the only reason I don't throw myself under a train every morning and every night. And that's not emotional blackmail. That's just telling it like it is.

Pause.

#### TOBY

We can't - -

NORMA

Yes, we fucking can. And if you can't with him around, you find a way to get rid of him. Or I tell him everything. I've got nothing to lose but you, Toby. Nothing.

A chilling silence. Then the unmistakable clink of a key entering a lock. Toby and Norma freeze.

The front door seems to take an age to open and reveal: Roman. Roman sees Toby and Norma staring at him. No-one moves. Dead silence. Almost a Mexican stand-off. Then:

> TOBY Mr Warring, Toby Head, Head First Films. Have I got a pitch for you?

Silence. Roman just stares at him, then at Norma.

NORMA Toby's an old school-friend. I said if I liked his pitch I'd get him a meeting with you.

TOBY And she loved it, right?

NORMA

So-so.

Another silence; another stand-off.

ROMAN

You know where my office is?

21.

TOBY BAFF? 107 Dean Street.

Roman picks up from a table what he came back for: white driving gloves.

ROMAN Be on the roof in twenty minutes.

The door slams with a bang. Roman is gone. Toby and Norma breathe sighs of relief before:

TOBY Twenty minutes? We're in fucking Richmond.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

TOURISTS wander up and down the street. They flinch at a loud bang. Bits of clay rain down on them. After frantic discussion they wander on before another loud bang and more falling clay.

EXT. FLAT ROOF - DAY

Roman points a shotgun up into the sky. A completely out of breath Toby is with him.

#### ROMAN

Pull.

Roman's PA, ear-plugs in, lets fly another clay pigeon. Roman shoots. A direct hit. He does this throughout the scene.

TOBY It's called Soho Noir. Totally set - -

ROMAN Do you like guns?

TOBY Not really. Totally set in - -

ROMAN How can you be in the film business and not like guns? Imagine Lock, Stock without guns. Imagine Get Carter without guns.

TOBY Imagine Notting Hill with guns.

ROMAN Is that your pitch? TOBY

No.

ROMAN

Pity. Pull.

Another shot. Another hit.

TOBY

If you like guns, Mr Warring, Soho Noir now has guns. It's totally set in - -

# ROMAN

I exec-ed one of your father's films.

TOBY

I know. I ran on it.

#### ROMAN

Well, I'm sure you were a terrific runner, Toby, but your father was a terrific producer. He always gave the impression - whether it was true or not - that he had things under control. You don't give that impression. Did he ever tell you his theory about every person's life being a film?

TOBY

Once or twice.

ROMAN And what's yours?

TOBY I don't know. Film noir, maybe.

ROMAN

Does that mean you're having an affair with some man's wife? Or planning a robbery? Or maybe you've just got that feeling that time's started to run out on you?

TOBY Something like that.

#### ROMAN

You know the thing about film noirs, don't you? Why no-one does them anymore. Because they don't end well for the hero.

TOBY

So I hear.

ROMAN But maybe you're not the hero. Maybe I'm the hero and you're having an affair with my wife?

A timeless pause. But Toby keeps his cool. Roman smiles.

ROMAN (cont'd) But that's absurd. That would make Norma some sort of femme fatale. And we both know Norma. She's just a pathetic, clingy lap-dog. Right?

### TOBY

She is?

### ROMAN

She acts the snake. Good at it too fooled me for years - but it's just a front. They don't come any tamer than Norma. It turns my stomach. Pull.

TOBY So why don't you leave her?

Another shot. But a miss. Unamused he turns to Toby.

TOBY (cont'd) Not my business, I'll - -

### ROMAN

Stop talking! Producers, always talking, never thinking. That's why your father was different. That's why he was good. And since you're his son, I'll answer your question. I stay with Norma so I can torture her, so I can cause her as much psychological pain as I am able. Maybe even drive her insane. And you know why she stays with me? Cos she likes it. Almost as much as me. So if she ever tried to leave me I'd kill her without hesitation and the piece of turd she was leaving me for.

Toby, frightened enough as it is, notices that Roman's shotgun is inadvertently pointing at his chest.

ROMAN (cont'd) You have until this shotgun is reloaded to pitch me your film. Go.

Over Toby's following manic pitch Roman cracks open his shotgun, empties it and reloads.

TOBY

Soho Noir. Barman, actress. Married but poor. Barman's rich brother murdered. They inherit the lot, but are suspected of the murder by the police and each other.

With a crack the shotgun is reloaded and back pointing at Toby. Roman mulls over Toby's pitch.

ROMAN That's the worst pitch I ever heard. Pull.

In on Toby as the shotgun is fired.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

Once more Toby emerges from the BAFF building disconsolate. Only this time he's alone. A gunshot is followed by bits of clay raining down.

Toby gets out his mobile: 2 messages. As he listens to the messages PASSERS-BY glare at Toby. They can't possibly hear the messages, but their looks betray this.

NORMA (OVER PHONE) - - on my knees begging you. Don't do this. I'm going insane here. I need to make this better. What do I have to do to make this better? I'll do anything. Anything you - -

Toby cuts the message short, skipping to the next message.

CLAIRE (OVER PHONE) Where are you? I've been sitting on the tube, thinking about last night and just getting hornier and hornier. I'd actually started touching myself by Goodge Street. I want to do it on your desk, but you're not here. Maybe I'll lock the door and do it without you.

The message ends. Toby is really lost; which is the dutiful and which the beautiful now?

INT. THEATRE STAGE DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY

Toby, shadows under his eyes, is buying something illegal from the stage DOORWOMAN.

INT. TOILET - DAY

Toby sniffs some whiff.

EXT. THEATRE STAGE DOOR - DAY

Toby still has dark shadows under his eyes, but his eyes are wide. He's buzzing. He takes out his phone and makes a call.

TOBY (INTO PHONE) It's Toby. We need to talk.

INT. ALL BAR ONE - DAY

Sean, hungover, is on the coffee. Toby, whisky.

TOBY

I re-read the script last night.

SEAN

Really? Well, I obviously couldn't even read a road sign. I ended up in Vauxhall.

TOBY

No, listen. I didn't read it as a producer. I read it as me. It was like reading it for the first time. I was wrong about the Simon character. He's not a prat. He's stupid, he's pretentious, but he's just some bloke living on borrowed time before all the shit in his life comes tumbling down on top of him. Just a guy like you and me fucking up his life royally.

SEAN Yeah, that's him. "Dumber than a bag of hammers."

TOBY So before my time runs out I want to come clean.

SEAN About what?

TOBY

Your money.

SEAN What about it? TOBY I haven't got it. I never had it. And it doesn't look like I'm ever gonna get it.

A long, awful silence. Toby is expecting a furious tirade, but instead:

SEAN That sounds quite final.

TOBY I just wanted to tell you in case something happened to me.

SEAN Yeah, you see, the thing is, I've spent - in affect - a good deal of it already. And not on something I can get a refund for.

TOBY I don't know what to say.

SEAN Right. Well, if you haven't got it, you haven't got it.

Sean drifts off into a worried reverie. Toby watches him, overcome by guilt. Toby can't take it and snaps.

TOBY F-U-U-U-CK! (Standing) Okay, there's one more place I can try. I'm not promising anything, but next time someone tries to fuck you over, shout at them or punch them or something. Fuck's sake!

Toby storms off, leaving Sean to face the beady eyes of other drinkers all looking at him.

INT. TOILET - DAY

Toby snorts one line. Then another.

EXT. QUAY ON THE THAMES - DAY

A large yacht - somewhat reminiscent but not the same as the one in Brit flick The Long Good Friday - is moored.

Toby and Fengell stand opposite each other. ALAN FENGELL, 50s, the last of the old hard men, now retired, has a glass in one hand, a bottle in the other.

### FENGELL

Drink?

### TOBY

Yeah.

Fengell throws him the bottle. Toby catches it. Toby laughs nervously before getting a glass and pouring himself a glass.

FENGELL It takes bottle coming here, knowing what you know about me. What I've done, what I'm capable of. Especially when it comes to money.

Fengell sits behind his desk. On the wall behind him is a framed publicity poster of Zero Tolerance.

TOBY Shall I just pitch you the story?

Toby puts the bottle on Fengell's desk.

FENGELL I need to know one thing... how much?

Toby pauses, then sits himself.

TOBY

Eight grand.

FENGELL Eight grand? They're making movies across the pond for millions and billions and you can't raise eight poxy grand?

TOBY Thank you for putting it into perspective for me.

FENGELL You're in one fucked up industry. But I tell you something: I get it. Since I've been legit the only fun I've had was working on that film with you. The rest of it? I can't shit it's so dull. (Offering the bottle) Top up? Toby stands and replenishes his glass.

FENGELL (cont'd) That's why I'm giving you ten.

TOBY

What?

Fengell dumps ten grand on his desk.

FENGELL Ten grand. One each for you and Claire. Keep you going. You deserve it.

Toby stares hungrily at the cash and sits.

TOBY Okay, I can give you a credit, but are you gonna want to be involved in production?

FENGELL Would you take it if I did?

TOBY

Dunno.

FENGELL A few years ago I would've cut your tongue out, cut your dick off, swapped'em round and sewed'em up for saying that. Good job I've mellowed, ay.

TOBY Most definitely.

FENGELL

I don't wanna be involved in production; I don't want a percentage; I don't want a credit. I want a part. Not the lead, just a - what d'you call'em - cameo.

TOBY You want to act?

FENGELL I do act. I've got a show-reel. Now, have we struck ourselves a deal here or what?

Toby nods, slightly reluctantly.

FENGELL (cont'd) (Half-joking... ish) Right.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

#### FENGELL(cont'd)

Now, business out the way, you gonna tell me what's really wrong or do I get all Long Good Friday on you?

Fengell, bottle in hand, stands before him. Toby looks absolutely terrified.

EXT. YACHT DECK - DAY

TOBY I'm living a film noir.

FENGELL Last word, not a clue.

TOBY

It's a film genre. I'm caught between a beautiful woman and a dutiful woman.

FENGELL

Anyone I know?

#### TOBY

The beautiful woman's the wife of the head of BAFF, which isn't clever. And the dutiful woman's Claire. At least I thought it was that way round. Today the lines have got blurred. I'm not sure which is which now.

## FENGELL

You reckon women are as clear cut as beautiful or dutiful?

TOBY

No, but some are more one than the other.

FENGELL

If you've got two women on the go, son, and Claire ain't the beautiful one, you enjoy it while you can.

TOBY You're missing the point. (Beat.) I mean, I haven't explained it well. Film noirs - no, forget it's a film noir - these situations, they don't end well.

#### FENGELL

You just sit tight and don't do anything hasty, cos in my experience, these situations, they have a habit of resolving themselves.

### EXT. HUNTLEY STREET - NIGHT

Toby, dog tired, drags his feet towards home. But Norma is waiting under a street-lamp outside his block of flats. Toby ducks out of sight and edges back the way he came.

# EXT. HAM YARD - NIGHT

Claire emerges from the office and trudges away towards Great Windmill Street. Watching covertly from the car park is Toby, almost asleep on his feet.

#### INT. HEAD FIRST FILMS - NIGHT

Toby pulls down the blinds. He lays a pile of scripts on the floor. Using a jacket as a blanket and the pile of scripts as a pillow Toby lies down. His eyes smile before closing.

EXT. BREWER STREET - DAY

Morning. A Bentley roars up the street and turns with undue carelessness and inattention into the car park.

INT. CAR PARK - DAY

With a screech of tyres the Bentley parks. Out gets the driver, Roman, white-suited as ever. He clicks his neck with a crack in preparation for the day.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

Roman strides up Dean Street as if he owns it. His power is evident as all PASSERS-BY get out of his way, but he doesn't side-step for anyone.

As he approaches the BAFF building a man steps out right smack into his path, causing Roman to stop. The man is Fengell, undisguised. Fengell raises a gun to Roman's head.

ROMAN

Glock.45.

FENGELL

Nice spot.

A shot is fired.

EXT. SHAFTESBURY AVENUE - DAY

An ambulance, sirens wailing, tears past Claire ambling into work.

INT. HEAD FIRST FILMS - DAY

Toby is watching Sean count his money. He looks up as Claire enters.

TOBY

Morning.

Sean just waves, not wanting to lose count.

CLAIRE (To Toby) You're alright, then.

TOBY Yeah, sorry about yesterday. We need to talk script changes. We've gotta find a cameo for Alan.

CLAIRE There isn't a cameo for Alan.

TOBY I know. And we need to find one.

He nods towards £2000 piled up on Claire's desk.

TOBY (cont'd) A little extra. To keep us going.

Claire nods, piecing the scenario together.

SEAN … 900, 1000. It's all there. Who's Alan?

INT. HEAD FIRST FILMS - DAY

Toby, Sean and Claire rounding up their meeting.

SEAN Look, I'll do my best to get this gangster character in, but I can't help feeling it's just a bit... mockney. A bit out of style, do you know what I mean?

(CONTINUED)

TOBY If anyone can make it work you can. Let us know when you've got something to read.

SEAN Okay. "Hasta la vista, babies."

# CLAIRE

Bye, Sean.

Sean exits and they're alone at last. An awkward pause before Toby lays out a line of morale-booster.

> CLAIRE (cont'd) Are we gonna talk about - -

TOBY Give us a chance. I've been going though - -

The buzzer goes.

TOBY (cont'd)

Oh, Sean!

Without picking up the intercom Toby buzzes the caller in, then starts rolling up a £50 note.

TOBY (cont'd) I've been going through a crisis, okay, but I've come through the other side. I've made my decision and - -

Toby stops as the door opens. But instead of Sean, two burly, cheap-suited men enter, NEWMAN and REDFORD.

TOBY (cont'd) Can I help you?

NEWMAN

Toby Head?

TOBY

Yeah.

NEWMAN DI Newman, DS Redford, Charing Cross CID. We'd like to ask you a few questions.

TOBY You're kidding, right? Newman and Redford?

NEWMAN Do I look like I'm kidding? Toby guiltily unrolls the £50 note and sits on his line of coke. Claire instinctively hides the £2000 under a couple of scripts, not really knowing why.

TOBY

Ask away.

NEWMAN

I believe you had a meeting with a Mr Roman Warring yesterday morning?

TOBY

That's right.

NEWMAN Could you tell us the nature of this meeting?

TOBY Just business. I pitched him a project.

NEWMAN This was an unscheduled meeting. Not in his diary.

TOBY Yeah, something wrong with that?

NEWMAN Mr Warring doesn't hold unscheduled meetings.

TOBY Well, he did yesterday.

REDFORD And there's the rub.

Toby looks at Redford, not quite believing this piece of dialogue.

NEWMAN Did Mr Warring like your pitch?

TOBY

No, as it goes. He said it was the worst he's ever heard.

REDFORD Harsh. A man could hold a grudge.

TOBY Are you serious? Is he serious? (No response.) Look, I live off rejection. It's no big deal. To be honest, I was glad to get out of there. (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

### TOBY(cont'd)

Now if you tell me what this is about I stand a considerably better chance of helping you out.

A pause.

#### NEWMAN

At 8.42 this morning Mr Warring was shot in the head at point blank range outside his Dean Street office.

TOBY

You are shitting me.

REDFORD

We shit you not.

TOBY

And what? You think I did it because he didn't like my pitch? If that were the case Soho'd be a bloodbath.

NEWMAN

We're certain you didn't do it yourself. We have a photo-fit of the gun-man. If you wouldn't mind taking a look.

Redford gets out the photo-fit and places it in front of Toby, who instantaneously turns white. The photo-fit is Fengell.

TOBY

It's Alan.

CLAIRE Oh, my God!

TOBY (Quickly, without thinking) Alan Fengell. I saw him yesterday, told him about my affair with Roman's wife. How I was caught between her and another woman and he told me these situations have a habit of resolving themselves. I never thought he'd do this. I never wanted him to do this. God's honest truth, I swear it.

Redford gets on his mobile.

NEWMAN We're going to want to talk to you again, Mr Head. So don't go anywhere.
CLAIRE (Looking at the photo-fit) God, that is Alan. Who gave you such a good description?

# NEWMAN

Mr. Warring.

CLAIRE Roman Warring?

### NEWMAN

Remarkable, isn't it? Shot at point blank range, through the middle of his forehead, and his condition's described as stable.

Toby and Claire just stare at Newman in disbelief.

INT. TOILET CUBICLE - DAY

Toby snorts the Charlie off the toilet-seat. Then the Charlie off the cistern. Then the Charlie off the window sill.

INT. MEN'S TOILET, SOHO HOUSE - DAY

The cubicle is locked. No sounds of bodily functions, just the occasional short, sharp snort. A queue of waiting men by the bored attendant.

> MAN IN QUEUE 1 You hear about Roman Warring?

MAN IN QUEUE 2 Shot in the head, point blank range. And survived. That's fucked up, man.

MAN IN QUEUE 1 Yeah, but he's a financier; it missed his brain by 3 feet. (Banging on cubicle door) What are you doing in there? Having a crap?

There is a click as the cubicle is unlocked and Toby emerges, wiping his nose, eyes wide. He barges his way to the exit.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, SOHO HOUSE - DAY

Eyes darting to all parts of the room, Toby scurries to a table, where Claire waits calmly.

TOBY Is there anyone here not talking about it?

Toby downs his drink, signals to a waiter for another, then looks around the room, leg jigging.

CLAIRE You're sitting with her.

TOBY

(Not having heard) I'm a dead man. Did you see how quick I grassed Alan up? I've never been that quick to do anything in my life, but grass up a psychotic, gun-happy gangster? Oh, you just watch me go.

CLAIRE How long have you been seeing her?

Toby focuses on Claire at this turn in the conversation.

TOBY

Few months.

CLAIRE How often do you see her?

TOBY Does knowing this make any difference?

CLAIRE I don't know. I never thought I was the only one, but I'd like to know where I stand.

TOBY You are the only one. I broke up with her yesterday morning.

CLAIRE But you didn't want to.

TOBY I made my choice.

A silence as the waiter brings Toby his refill.

CLAIRE In a minute I'm going home. Alone.

TOBY But Claire, I chose you.

# CLAIRE

Just listen to me, Toby. I love you. I'm in love with you. I always have been and I probably always will be. I was happy being your part-time shag, but it was always more than that for me. And the other night I thought it was more than that for you too. But whatever it was, I know you don't love me. Not the way I want you to. But I'm a mug. I'll follow you to the ends of the earth, if you want me to. And I'll still be your part-time shag, if you want that too. Just, not tonight.

Claire goes, leaving Toby alone. Toby slowly clicks out of his calm, looks round and signals for another drink.

I/E. MINICAB (MOVING) - NIGHT

Claire gets into the shadowy back seat and the car drives off. Soho lights illuminate her face sporadically. She is expressionless for some time before her face is illuminated briefly by a street light and we see that she is crying.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, SOHO HOUSE - NIGHT

The waiting staff are clearing up. A waitress looks into the blue room and sees Toby, head lulled, blood dripping from his face into his vodka and tonic, turning the drink red.

The waitress screams. Other waiting staff rush to her as Toby slowly rouses, lifting his head to reveal that the blood is coming from a nose-bleed.

TOBY

What?

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOBY - NIGHT

The room is dark and empty. The phone rings. The answerphone, showing 0 messages, clicks in.

> TOBY (OVER ANSWER-PHONE) Out. Leave a message.

After the beep there is a silence before:

FENGELL (OVER ANSWER-PHONE) Toby? (Pause.) To-by? Are you the-re? (Pause.) I'm disappointed in you, I really am. (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

# FENGELL(cont'd)

I try resolving your situation and what do I get in return? Anyway I'm living the cliché and fleeing to Spain, so I'm gonna decline that cameo we agreed on, and I'm gonna let that money go as a gift. I won't be back to settle up financially, but I will be back to settle up. Toby, you're in movies, you know what happens to a grass.

Then just the dialling tone.

EXT. SOHO HOUSE - NIGHT

The streets are wet; it's raining. Toby emerges from the House and looks around. Cold, hard stares from TAXI-DRIVERS. The CONTROLLER appears behind him.

CONTROLLER

Taxi?

Toby jumps with fright.

# TOBY

No, fuck off!

Toby hurriedly backs away towards Old Compton Street.

EXT. OLD COMPTON STREET - NIGHT

Toby jogs across Old Compton Street and up Greek Street.

EXT. GREEK STREET - NIGHT

Toby walks fast, eyes darting everywhere. With a drunken cry a HOORAY stumbles out of L'Escargot into Toby's path. Toby dodges him and jogs ahead, to the cash-point.

In the metal of the cash-point his reflection is clear enough to see that his nose is bleeding from his right nostril only. After looking up and down Greek Street he lays out a line of Chan and rolls up an unwanted cash-point slip.

Toby snorts the line up his left nostril, then turns to see Fengell... but it isn't Fengell; just that drunk hooray.

# HOORAY Got any spare, chum?

Toby nearly coughs it all out in shock, before turning and legging it up towards Soho Square.

EXT. SOHO SQUARE - NIGHT

Toby races across Soho Square, rain pouring down.

EXT. TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD - NIGHT

The hideously unfit Toby runs breathlessly up the middle of Tottenham Court Road.

EXT. HUNTLEY STREET - NIGHT

Toby runs up to his building's front door. Wheezing raspishly he looks up and down the street before producing a key, opening the door, then slamming it behind him. Safe.

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOBY - NIGHT

A figure moves in the dark. We hear the key in the lock and the figure flits into hiding.

Toby enters, quickly closing the door behind him. He's still, dripping wet, catching his breath.

Then he sees it: the flashing "1" on his answer-phone. He moves to the answer-phone and presses play.

ANSWER-PHONE VOICE You have one new message. Message one:

FENGELL (OVER ANSWER-PHONE)
Toby?
 (Pause.)
To-by? Are you the-re?
 (Pause.)
I'm disappointed in you, I really am. I
try resolving your situation and what
do I get in return? Anyway I'm living
the cliché and fleeing to Spain, so I'm
gonna decline that cameo we agreed on,
and I'm gonna let that money go as a
gift. I won't be back - I won't be back
- I won't be back -

The answer-phone has broken, stuck repeating Fengell's last sentence. Somewhat reminiscent - but not the same - as the end of Brit flick Brighton Rock. Toby tries to mend the machine by pressing every button until:

> ANSWER-PHONE VOICE Message deleted. End of messages.

Toby visibly relaxes; he even manages a smile.

NORMA That's destroying evidence.

Toby flinches with fright, and spins round to see Norma, in a sexy, figure-hugging dress, watching him from the bedroom.

TOBY

How did you get in here?

NORMA Look at me. I get in wherever I want. (Beat.) Who's the message from?

TOBY No-one you know.

NORMA I could know Fengell. It was Fengell, wasn't it?

Toby is too tired to lie.

TOBY

Yeah.

NORMA (Approaching him) Sounded to me like money exchanged hands to "try to resolve your situation".

TOBY You got the wrong end of the stick. I didn't pay him anything.

NORMA

Really?

TOBY Yeah, really.

Norma looks away, crest-fallen, the wind totally taken out of her seduction. Toby looks her up and down; she looks amazing.

TOBY (cont'd) He did it for a part in Soho Noir.

Norma's wicked smile returns. Her seduction resumes.

NORMA That is such a turn-on.

TOBY Shame it didn't work.

### NORMA

Haven't you heard? I should've shot Roman years ago. He's a new man. A new, pliant man, who's offered me a very generous deal not to be his wife anymore. I hope you're ready for me, Toby, cos you've got me. All you've got to do now is keep me.

Toby, the cat who got the cream, grabs her and they kiss.

INT. GARRET - NIGHT

Sean asleep at his computer. The screensaver is a montage of Melissa Keddy film posters. The phone rings, waking Sean with a start.

SEAN (INTO PHONE)

Hello?

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOBY - NIGHT

Toby, semi-naked, is on the phone. In the background we see a satiated Norma in bed, smoking. Intercut between two scenes.

TOBY Sean, Toby. Scrap the gangster.

SEAN What? I've just written him. It's - -

TOBY Alright, keep him in, but I need you to write something else. A happy ending.

Sean is dumbstruck.

TOBY (cont'd) I know we all agreed, but we were wrong. Film noirs can end happily. I know from experience. The murderer needs to be someone apart from Simon and Joanne. They need to live happily ever after, alright?

SEAN

I really think we'll be short-changing the audience if neither Simon nor Joanne is the murderer.

TOBY

I don't have time to argue this, Sean. Read your contract. It's my script now and if you don't wanna do the re-write I'll find someone that does.

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CONTINUED:
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Toby hangs up. Sean sits there, stunned.

SNAP TO BLACK.

Superimpose on black:

RE-WRITES #1

INT. HALLWAY, SEAN AND JENNY - DAY

The post lies uncollected on the mat. The front door opens and a female leather boot steps in: it's Jenny.

JENNY

Sean?

No reply. Jenny walks to the living room: a pig-sty littered with torn-up betting slips.

Jenny moves on to the bedroom: bed unmade, empty and grubby. No sign of life.

Jenny looks up the stairs to the garret door.

JENNY (cont'd)

Sean?

No reply. She starts climbing the stairs.

INT. GARRET - DAY

Jenny pushes the door open and looks in. The scattered DVDs, the upset ashtrays; it's as it was when Jenny left.

Sean's legs are visible, lying on the floor, the rest of him hidden behind his desk.

Jenny walks into the room and slowly sees Sean's prone body on the floor. He is asleep in front of a shrine of photographs of Jenny, his trousers slightly pulled down and a hand down the front of them.

> JENNY Oh Jesus, Sean!

Sean starts to stir. Jenny scuttles back out the room.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Jenny scuttles down the stairs, then:

JENNY (Calling loudly) Sean, are you up there?

(CONTINUED)

Jenny clomps heavy-footed back up the stairs.

JENNY (cont'd)

Sean?

INT. GARRET - DAY

Jenny enters to see Sean on his feet, bleary-eyed, but trousers done up.

JENNY Thanks for answering.

SEAN I was asleep. What are you doing here?

JENNY (shrugs) See how you are. You look like shit.

SEAN I've been blocked. Lost my muse.

JENNY

Oh, please. (Looking at the shrine of photos) These here to help you write the character in your film that's meant to be me?

Sean falters, answering Jenny's question for her.

JENNY (cont'd) And when you look at these photos do you see me or her?

SEAN She doesn't exist. She's you.

### JENNY

How can she be me? She does things I haven't done. She says things I haven't said. Come to think of it, what do you make her do in your script? What do you make me do?

SEAN

Read it and see. You come out really well. Everyone says so. No-one understands why someone as great as your character is with a gimp like my character.

JENNY Doesn't say much for your writing. SEAN (Offering her the script) Maybe not, but you should read it.

JENNY You've always known my feelings about putting us in one of your scripts, but you still did it.

SEAN Maybe if you read it you'd understand.

Jenny is tempted, but finally shakes her head.

JENNY I didn't come here to read your script.

SEAN But now you're here, what harm can it do?

JENNY Don't you think it's done enough?

Sean concedes this and puts the script down.

SEAN So why did you come here?

JENNY To talk. (Pause.) I'm pregnant.

Sean is about to burst into a response, but:

JENNY (cont'd) I haven't finished. (Beat.) And I'm considering having a termination.

Sean stands motionless and silent for an age.

JENNY (cont'd) I thought we should talk about it.

Sean slowly clicks out of his reverie. He picks up his laptop, calmly walks out of the garret and closes the door behind him.

Jenny did not expect this reaction. After a moment she goes after Sean, but the door won't open.

JENNY (cont'd) Sean, the door's jammed. (No response.) (MORE) CONTINUED: (2) JENNY(cont'd)

Have you locked it? (No response.) Sean, open the door. Sean! Sean!

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Sean is leaning back against the locked door.

SEAN (Barely audible) I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Unable to take Jenny's increasingly anguished cries Sean strides down the stairs, repeating "I'm sorry".

INT. LIVING ROOM, SEAN AND JENNY - DAY

We hear Jenny's faint cries throughout the scene. Sean puts headphones on. He sits amongst the carnage, laptop on his lap, and stares at the screen. He is blocked. But gradually the muse comes to him and he types. And types. And types.

INT. GARRET - NIGHT

A naked light-bulb hangs from a cable into the ceiling.

Jenny is sitting back against the wall, all screamed out. She stares at the script on the desk. Eventually she stands, goes to the desk and picks up the script.

She stares at the title page, still undecided. Then she hears a quiet scraping. She looks to the door and sees one processed cheese singlet being pushed under the door.

She puts the script down, goes to the door and sees another processed cheese singlet being pushed under the door.

JENNY Sean? (No reply.) What is this?

SEAN (O.S.) Your supper.

JENNY Two processed cheese singlets?

Over Sean's speech more flat food is pushed under the door.

SEAN (O.S.) There's more, don't worry. I've been out and bought some pregnancy books. (MORE)

# SEAN(cont'd)

I haven't read them all yet, but I've made a start on diet and this contains everything you need. The only tricky bit is water, so what I've done is bought 48 of those long, thin ice pop things, emptied them, put water in them and frozen them, so you can either eat them as ice or wait for them to melt.

Under the door are pushed several long, thin ice pop wrappers now filled with ice.

JENNY Are you out of your fucking mind?

SEAN (O.S.) Please, just do what I tell you.

JENNY And how long do you think I'm gonna last on food that'll fit under this door?

SEAN (O.S.) Not the full term. Just till it's too late for a termination.

JENNY For fuck's sake, Sean! Does it say anywhere in these books about the affects of kidnapping on mother and baby?

SEAN (O.S.) That's why you have to keep calm and do what I say.

JENNY

Fuck you!

SEAN (O.S.) Okay, I'm going. Get some rest.

JENNY

Sean, wait!

SEAN (O.S.) I'm sorry, I'm on a bit of a roll. I'll look in on you later.

JENNY

Sean! SEAN!!

Sean's footsteps fade away. Jenny slowly cries.

The laptop is open on the document, "Soho Noir". A blearyeyed Sean is staring at the stage direction: "For the first time since scene 2 Simon cracks a smile; a cruel, sneer of a smile. Fade out."

Sean clicks on the e-mail icon, types in <u>Toby@headfirst.co.uk</u> then clicks send. He stares at the screen for some time.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Sean walks up to the garret door. He bends down and looks through the keyhole.

SEAN

Jenny? (No response.) Jenny, I want to talk. (No response.) Jenny, please don't play dead on me - -JENNY (O.S.) I'm not playing anything. I'm tired and I feel sick again. SEAN I think I went a little crazy

I think I went a little crazy. (Silence.) Did you hear - -

JENNY (O.S.)

I heard.

SEAN I think I've been depressed. And I was blocked. And you came along and it just seemed like I was losing everything if I lost you.

JENNY (O.S.) Do you think this has got me back?

SEAN No, but that's all I wanted. I didn't know what it was going to take.

JENNY (O.S.) You to ask.

SEAN And what will it take now? JENNY (O.S.) This isn't a script. You don't know what's gonna happen next. Just like everyone else.

Sean pauses then unlocks the door and opens it. Inside, sitting on the floor, is Jenny, looking pallid and weak.

SEAN It's not too late for a termination. If that's what you want.

JENNY How long have I been up here?

SEAN

Two weeks.

Jenny stands and staggers to Sean. Up close he sees the anger in her eyes.

> JENNY Then no, it's not too late for a termination, but I'm not gonna have one. I never intended to. I came here to find out if you wanted the baby. And now that I know that you do, that you really really do, I am never ever gonna let you near him.

Jenny staggers past him and down the stairs. Sean is rooted to the spot, her words echoing in his head. He sees his shrine of photographs of Jenny; all the photos with him in have been viciously defaced.

SNAP TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

DRAFT THREE. THE DIRECTOR

INT. HEAD FIRST FILMS - DAY

A full-page advert for "Gary Kole in Sleeping Partners, Out Now on DVD and Video" is on the back of a film magazine that Sean is pretending to read. His thoughts are elsewhere.

Sean, oblivious to the tension in the room, is seated at a table with Toby and Claire.

On the table are a pile of "Soho Noir" scripts. Also three cups, the coffee inside of which is moving rhythmically. The coffee's movement is due to Toby unconsciously jigging his leg against the table leg.

(CONTINUED)

Claire is really feeling the tension and Toby's jigging is killing her. She sees the clock on the wall tick over to 10.03.

Toby's jigging starts to cause one of the cups to wobble in its saucer, creating a repetitive clinking sound.

Claire can't take it anymore, and reaches over to physically hold Toby's leg still. Toby flinches, jogging the whole table, upsetting all three cups, sending coffee everywhere.

# CLAIRE

Shit!

# TOBY

Oh, Christ!

The copies of the script soak up the brown/black liquid. Just then the buzzer goes.

SEAN (Excitedly) She's here.

Claire manically cleans up as Toby answers the buzzer.

TOBY (INTO INTERCOM) Hi. First floor, come on up.

The coffee-stained scripts are binned. The place is back to normal as MELISSA KEDDY, late-50s, cold, hard and always in control, walks in.

TOBY (cont'd) Melissa, Toby. My dad said so many great things about you. Let me introduce my partner, Claire Sapstairs.

CLAIRE Hi. Can I take your coat? Get you something to drink?

MELISSA No, I won't be staying long. I just wanted to say a few things to the writer.

TOBY Right, well, here he is. Melissa Keddy, Sean Fudder.

Melissa locks eyes with Sean.

SEAN Hello. I'm a really big fan. "Your number one fan." Sorry, that's really naff. But I am.

# MELISSA

Well, then hopefully this'll hit home. If you wanna be a writer, write a fucking ABC book, cos that's how trite the plotting is. This script isn't just fucking bad; it isn't just fucking crass; it's everything that's fucking wrong with the British fucking film industry. On pages 7, 22, 61 and 89 the words in this script made me physically sick. Fifty fucking pounds worth of shellfish on my fucking bedroom carpet. My agent writes better dialogue than you. My fucking agent! This script is so bad it's actually in danger of getting made, so I've set up meetings with every cunting financing body in this country and I'm going to pay them never ever to touch this script with surgical fucking gloves on.

Melissa turns and storms out. Sean, Toby and Claire reel in silence.

TOBY Wow! We're seriously fucked.

INT. STAIRS - DAY

Melissa thunders down the stairs.

EXT. GREAT WINDMILL STREET - DAY

Melissa strides out of Ham Yard and steps into the road, straight into the path of a speeding rickshaw. A screech of tyres can't prevent a collision.

Melissa falls back, cracking the back of her head on the edge of the pavement.

PASSERS-BY rush to her rescue.

MELISSA (Getting to her feet) I'm fine. Don't fucking touch me. It was just a fucking accident. Fuck off, would you!

Melissa storms off, rather unsteadily, towards Archer Street.

INT. WARDOUR STREET - DAY

Melissa reels across Wardour Street and totters into Saint James' Churchyard.

Melissa slumps onto a bench and tries to regain her balance. Slowly her eyelids get heavy then close.

FADE TO BLACK.

We hear heavy breathing and clothes being ruffled.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. ST JAMES CHURCHYARD - DAY

EXT. ST JAMES CHURCHYARD - DAY

The source of the heavy breathing: a TRAMP, standing over Melissa, going through her pockets. Slowly Melissa's eyes blink open.

> MELISSA What the fuck are you doing?

The tramp, Melissa's wallet in one hand, her mobile phone in the other, legs it.

MELISSA (cont'd) Hey! You fucker!

Melissa stands to go after him, but loses her balance and makes it as far as the churchyard gate before she has to stop to regain her balance and composure.

Clinging onto the gate, Melissa watches the inhabitants of Soho walk past, this way and that, barely glancing at her.

One of these inhabitants is a familiar face to us: Sean. He approaches her with a look of venomous hatred.

MELISSA (cont'd) You know me.

Sean passes her and keeps on walking.

MELISSA (cont'd) Hey, wait! Hey!

Melissa staggers off after Sean.

EXT. WARDOUR STREET - DAY

Melissa catches up with Sean, putting a hand on his shoulder. Sean stops to shake her hand off aggressively.

> SEAN Leave me alone.

He starts to walk on.

MELISSA Just tell me who I am.

Sean stops and turns on her, seething with anger.

SEAN Who you are? If I started telling you that I don't think I'd ever stop.

MELISSA

Please.

Melissa looks scared and pathetic. Sean can't be bothered.

SEAN You're just another disappointment. "A bad joke with no punch-line."

MELISSA Whose name is?

SEAN

What?

MELISSA Whatever I've done to you, I apologise, but could you just tell me my name?

Sean stares at her, totally bemused.

INT. A & E, HOSPITAL - DAY

Sitting amongst the sick and wounded are Sean and Melissa.

SEAN Your first film was "Lavender Blue", a love story set against the decline of the agriculture industry. Then it was "Do Geese See God".

MELISSA "Do Geese See God"? What the fuck does that mean?

SEAN

It's a palindrome. The same spelt backwards. The film was structured kind of like a palindrome, so it was a pretty good title, actually.

MELISSA I don't even fucking understand that. God, I swear a lot, don't I? SEAN Yeah, you do.

MELISSA

What else? If you're such a big fan you must know more about me than just my films.

SEAN

Not really. You're the loudest and most hard-line supporter of British films. And you put your money where your mouth is. You get masses of offers to do big budget Hollywood films, but you stay here, doing your small, beautiful, very English films.

MELISSA What about family? Friends?

SEAN

I don't know.

MELISSA This is fucking crazy. How can I not

remember who I am? How do you know me?

SEAN I'm a writer. We met earlier today.

MELISSA When I disappointed you.

SEAN

Yeah, though, that was kind of an understatement. You said my writing was trite. That my script was everything that's wrong with the British film industry. And that your agent writes better dialogue than me.

MELISSA (Realising) I have an agent. I have an agent, right?

SEAN

I suppose.

MELISSA You're gonna take me to him. Or her. Okay?

SEAN

Okay.

A NURSE appears.

NURSE Melissa Keddy? SEAN That's you. MELISSA Right. (Standing, to Nurse) That's me. INT. OFFICE, DANIEL LATHKEY - DAY DANIEL LATHKEY is behind his wide, imposing desk. He looks up to see Melissa enter with Sean. His face falls. MELISSA Daniel Lathkey? DANIEL Melissa Keddy. And who's this, police? SEAN Sean Fudder, screenwriter. MELISSA Why would I bring the police? DANIEL Why would you bring a writer? Sorry, pal, you look like police. So, what's up? MELISSA I need you to tell me about myself. DANIEL Don't tempt me. MELISSA What does that mean? DANIEL It means don't tempt me. What's going on here?

SEAN

Melissa has amnesia.

Daniel looks from one to the other, waiting for the punchline. SEAN (cont'd) There's a large bump on the back of her head, but the doctor suggested that maybe there's another contributing factor. Like stress at work or at home. We wondered if you could help.

DANIEL You're a comedy writer.

### SEAN

No.

DANIEL Cos a control freak like Melissa getting amnesia, that's hilarious.

MELISSA No, it isn't. It really fucking isn't.

Another pause. Daniel is beginning to believe them.

DANIEL Okay, let's play this out. You've got amnesia, fine. What do you remember?

MELISSA Nothing. All I know is what Sean's told me.

# DANIEL

Which is?

SEAN Just about her films. Her support of British films. And her refusal to sell out to Hollywood.

DANIEL Two out of three ain't bad.

SEAN

What do you mean?

# DANIEL

I've just spent the last three weeks negotiating for Melissa with an American agent on a film called "Kiss Kiss", an erotic thriller starring Nic Cage and Hilary Swank for Warner Brothers. We always said you could only hold out for so long.

Melissa glances at Sean and sees that he's gutted.

MELISSA What about my family? DANIEL What family?

MELISSA That's what I'm asking you.

DANIEL You don't have a family. You're an only child, your parents are dead. Us. We in the business, we're your family.

MELISSA But you hate me. Quite clearly you fucking despise me.

Daniel's pause says it all.

DANIEL Mel, this must be very upsetting for - -

MELISSA (To Sean) We're going.

DANIEL Melissa, wait! I'm your agent. You're my top client. How can I hate you? I love you.

But they have gone.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

Sean leads Melissa into The Groucho.

INT. RECEPTION, THE GROUCHO CLUB - DAY

Sean and Melissa approach reception.

MELISSA Hi. I was wondering if I was a member here.

The RECEPTIONIST cracks a beaming, fake smile.

RECEPTIONIST (Caustically) Oh yes, Miss Keddy, you're a member.

INT. POOL ROOM, GROUCHO CLUB - DAY

Sean is at a corner table, watching Melissa, with two drinks, chatting to one of two POOL-PLAYERs.

### CONTINUED:

The conversation over, Melissa turns and heads towards Sean. Sean catches the pool player make a wanking gesture behind Melissa's back.

> MELISSA (Arriving with drinks) He did something behind my back, didn't he? (Sean nods.) What?

SEAN The international gesture for masturbation.

Melissa manages a small laugh.

SEAN (cont'd)

Who is he?

# MELISSA

Second AD on the last three of my films, apparently. God, I must be one fuck of a bitch. Maybe it's best if I never remember who I was.

SEAN No. You have to remember who you are to carry on making the films you make.

MELISSA

But I'm not going to, am I? I'm going to make "Kiss Kiss". That's twice I've disillusioned you today.

SEAN

A film's a film wherever it's made. I just don't want you to make a bad one.

MELISSA Well, I only know one thing: whoever I was, whatever I was like, I'd never do for someone what you've done for me today.

A compliment from Melissa; Sean's heart is warmed. They stare at each other. Is there something between them? The charged moment is broken suddenly:

> MELISSA (cont'd) FUCK!! I don't care what kind of a cunt I was. I want my memory back. I hate how this feels. I fucking hate it.

Looks from the pool players.

SEAN

I think the doctor's got to be right. There must have been something going on in your life that caused this. However big that bump, you don't just get amnesia by banging your head.

MELISSA So what do we do? Investigate my life?

SEAN Yes. That's exactly what we do.

MELISSA Starting where?

SEAN Well, I suppose... your place.

Melissa pauses then slowly smiles.

MELISSA Any idea where that is?

EXT. CHARING CROSS ROAD - EVENING

Towering high above Blackwells booksellers is a large towerblock, 125 Shaftesbury Avenue. We focus in on the 9th floor: Melissa's flat.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MELISSA - EVENING

Melissa is standing at the window that looks straight down Old Compton Street: Soho at dusk. Sean joins her, standing close.

SEAN

Anything?

MELISSA No. But it's fucking beautiful.

Melissa turns to him. Their faces inches apart.

MELISSA (cont'd) You're shaking.

SEAN

It's cold.

A pause. Melissa sees a pile of DVDs discarded on a sofa.

MELISSA Is that them?

CONTINUED:

SEAN

Yeah.

Melissa goes to the sofa and browses the DVDs.

MELISSA We should watch the most recent.

SEAN "Line of Desire".

A pause. Melissa smiles.

### MELISSA

If you say so.

Melissa sits as Sean turns on the TV, then inserts the DVD. He joins Melissa on the sofa. It's a tight squeeze. The film starts and Melissa watches her own film as if for the first time.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MELISSA - NIGHT

They have reached a graphic and extended sex scene from "Line of Desire". The tension between Sean and Melissa is almost unbearable. To Sean's relief he hears a muffled ringing. It's his mobile phone: "Toby calling".

> SEAN I'm gonna take this in the other room.

Melissa nods and Sean exits.

INT. KITCHEN, MELISSA - NIGHT

Sean enters, closing the door behind him.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) Toby, you'll never guess where I am.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MELISSA - NIGHT

The film is still playing, but Melissa has left the sofa. She is at her desk, browsing through letters and documents. She looks down and sees a script in the bin. She takes it out and finds that it's a beaten, battered and spat on copy of "Soho Noir by Sean Fudder".

Melissa wipes the spit off it, opens it and starts to read.

Extreme close-up of Melissa's eyes. The words on the script reflect in her eyes, hurtling up, down, left and right at an ever-increasing speed until her eyes suddenly close.

INT. KITCHEN, MELISSA - NIGHT

Sean still on the phone.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) ... we had a drink at The Groucho and then we came back here to watch "Line of Desire".

SPLIT SCREEN:

INT. PUB - NIGHT/INT. KITCHEN, MELISSA - NIGHT

Toby is standing in the middle of the pub, mobile to his ear. Behind him are Norma and Claire seated at a table, but not talking to each other.

> TOBY (INTO PHONE) Have you pitched her the script yet?

SEAN (INTO PHONE) No. Didn't you hear? She's got amnesia. She doesn't remember who she is.

TOBY (INTO PHONE) Sean, how the hell do you expect to survive in this business? Pitch her the script.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) But she hated it.

TOBY (INTO PHONE) She doesn't know that.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) She will when she reads it again.

TOBY (INTO PHONE) Maybe, maybe not. But what have we got to lose? If she hates it, then nothing's changed, but what if she loves it? Come on, Sean, this is a second chance. SEAN (INTO PHONE) I dunno, Toby. We've had a really good day. Some really good chats. I don't want the script to ruin things.

# TOBY (INTO PHONE)

Look, mate, if you want to make films you have to take the opportunities that come your way. I wish to Christ we could swap places right now, but we can't. So please, for my sake, for Claire's sake, for your sake, be me for a few hours. Be a whore to getting this film made.

Pause.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) Are you telling me to have sex with her?

TOBY (INTO PHONE) Jesus, Sean! She's old enough to be your grandmother. That's fucking gross.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) I didn't know if - -

# TOBY (INTO PHONE)

Look, if she's the bag you're into, mate, you shag her. But whatever you do, do it quick. Cos her memory could come back at any point and then you and your film are gonna be out on your arses. Oh, and if you do fuck her, don't tell me about it. It's gross.

INT. LIVING ROOM, MELISSA - NIGHT

Sean enters, looking nervy. The sofa is empty. He sees Melissa at the desk, hanging up the phone.

SEAN

Anything?

#### MELISSA

The film? No. But make yourself comfortable. Watch another, if you like. I'm just in the middle of something.

Sean sits, even nervier. He glances over at Melissa, who is still looking at him. She gets back to the script. INT. LIVING ROOM, MELISSA - NIGHT

Sean and Melissa as they were. The edgy silence is broken by the doorbell ringing.

MELISSA

Stay put.

Melissa exits. Sean daren't move. After a moment Melissa reenters with Daniel Lathkey.

> MELISSA (cont'd) Daniel, you remember Sean.

DANIEL The comedy writer.

## MELISSA

Don't patronise him. He doesn't write comedy. He writes noir. Very well. I just re-read his script. Soho Noir.

# DANIEL

I remember that. You hated it.

# MELISSA

No, actually it's very good. It just hit a nerve. You see, there's this subplot in it about a blackmailer. And that's what brought it all back. That's what gave me total recall, I think the technical term is.

SEAN You remember?

### MELISSA

Yes, I fucking remember. I remember my agent - my support, my fucking guide blackmailing me into signing on to do erotic thriller "Kiss Kiss" starring Nic Cage and Hilary Swank.

#### DANIEL

So you remember. Nothing's changed.

#### MELISSA

Wrong. I've fucking changed. I've gone on one fuck of a character arc today. I've learnt some home truths. Notably that people hate me. Really fucking loathe me. Especially within the industry. And you know what? I'm fine with that. I like it. (MORE)

# MELISSA(cont'd)

So you sell, print, do whatever you like with that tape, because, my exagent, people can't hate me any more than they already fucking do.

Daniel is lost for words; he knows he's lost. Then:

SEAN

What tape?

Daniel smiles, seeing this as a chance for a small revenge.

DANIEL I had a bit of trouble last year with an actor I used to represent. Since then I record all my meetings. Including one with Melissa pitching me an idea about how the holocaust was all faked, and how she had a certain amount of admiration for Herr Hitler.

Sean glances over at Melissa, who can't meet his eye.

DANIEL (cont'd) You know what, I think I'll keep the tape. It may yet come in useful. It's a shame you won't be doing "Kiss Kiss". That might have brought your work to more than just movie geeks and doting screenwriters. Toodle-oo!

Daniel exits. An awkward silence.

MELISSA I make that three times now I've disillusioned you today. That's almost biblical.

SEAN (Lying) Not at all.

MELISSA So, knowing my politics, you'll still let me direct your script.

SEAN You wanna direct Soho Noir?

MELISSA You're quite a talent, Sean.

SEAN That's great. Really. Fantastic.

MELISSA Slow down, stud. I have conditions. (Sean looks scared.) (MORE)

# MELISSA(cont'd)

Script changes. The style of it; it's not noir. But it does have some sharp, witty dialogue. That's why I wanna make it as a comedy.

It takes some time for this to sink in, then:

SEAN

Um - just because there's witty dialogue doesn't make it a comedy.

## MELISSA

Absolutely right. That's why I want to make the lead an amnesiac. Daniel was right. Someone like me getting amnesia, that's funny. That's really fucking funny.

SEAN It wasn't funny this morning.

# MELISSA

Course not; it was happening to me. But you know that thing: tragedy and comedy, two sides of the same coin.

SEAN I'm sorry, Melissa, but that isn't the film I wrote. Or want to make.

#### MELISSA

Don't get precious on me, Sean. Film is the most collaborative art-form there is. Embrace that.

### SEAN

But it's not a comedy. I can't write it as a comedy.

MELISSA You don't have to. I'm gonna have first crack at it.

Melissa picks up the phone and dials a number off the script title page. We overhear her as we focus in on Sean speechless.

MELISSA (INTO PHONE) (cont'd) Is that Toby?... Melissa Keddy here, I've changed my mind. I'm gonna do your film.

SNAP TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

RE-WRITES #2

INT. LIVING ROOM, SEAN AND JENNY - DAY

Sean's laptop is closed. Horse racing is on TV. Sean is slouched in a chair, watching dispassionately. A betting slip drops from his hand joining several others on the floor.

INT. HALLWAY, SEAN AND JENNY - DAY

Several mornings' post lies untouched on the mat. They include several bills. Sean treads on a final demand on his way out.

INT. CAR (STATIONARY) - DAY

Sean is behind the wheel of his wreck of a car, which is parked in a tree-lined avenue; the essence of suburbia. Sean is on his mobile.

> SEAN (INTO PHONE) Hey, David, it's Sean. How - -

Sean is hung up on. He redials.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) (cont'd) David, I just want to speak to her - -

Hung up on again. Sean gives up and turns his attention to a house on the avenue. He dials a new number.

INT. SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM - DAY

Framed photos of Jenny at various ages adorn a table; some of them include Jenny's mother and giant of a father. On another table is a ringing phone. The answer-phone clicks in:

MR HOLGAN (OVER ANSWER-PHONE) Hello. We aren't in at the moment,...

I/E. CAR (STATIONARY) - DAY

Sean is listening to Mr Holgan's message.

MR HOLGAN (CONT'D, OVER PHONE) ... so please leave a clear and concise message after the - -

Sean hangs up, his eyes still on the house on the avenue.

## EXT. SUBURBAN GARDEN - DAY

Without an ounce of gainliness Sean clambers over a side door and jumps down. He ambles to a flower pot, lifts it, picks up a key from underneath and uses it to open the back door.

# INT. SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM - DAY

The back door opens. Sean steps in and listens: silence.

He passes the table with photos of Jenny on and goes to the phone and answer-phone table. He flicks through a notepad, then opens an address book under J, but doesn't find what he's looking for. He moves on through the house.

## INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

Magnets stick scraps of paper to the fridge door, but none of them are what Sean is looking for. He moves to a corkboard with more scraps of paper, but still nothing.

A noise from upstairs. Sean freezes. We hear heavy footsteps coming downstairs.

Sean looks around in panic. He opens a tall, thin cupboard. Inside are cleaning utensils. He takes out a mop and a broom and then he can fit inside.

INT. SUBURBAN CUPBOARD - DAY

Sean has squeezed into the cupboard, sitting on buckets, leaning against a hoover. Through a crack in the door he can see into the kitchen.

He sees an extremely heavy woman waddle into the kitchen, wearing just a nightdress. The woman picks up the phone and dials. Her voice is familiar: it's Jenny.

> JENNY (INTO PHONE) Mum, it's started. Where are you?

Jenny turns and we get a perfect view of her, nine months pregnant and in the first stage of labour.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

JENNY (CONT'D, INTO PHONE) Well, when can you be here?... I can't wait that long... Fine. Don't you worry about me. I'm only about to give birth.

(CONTINUED)

### CONTINUED:

Jenny slams the phone down. She leans against the table as a contraction takes affect.

JENNY (cont'd) Oh, shit! I'm gonna kill you, Sean. I'm gonna fucking kill you.

INT. SUBURBAN CUPBOARD - DAY

Sean is frozen.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

The contraction over, Jenny goes back to the phone and dials.

JENNY (INTO PHONE) David, it's Jenny, it's started... I know it's early. Look, my mum's in Crewe and my dad's in Prague. I need someone to help me through this... Can't you get out of it?... Okay, okay, I'm sorry. Not your fault... I'll be okay. Women have been giving birth for years. How hard can it be?

She hangs up. After a moment's pause she goes back to the phone and dials again.

JENNY (INTO PHONE) (cont'd) It's me. If you're there pick up. (Pause.) Please pick up. I need you, Sean. (Pause.) Fine. I'll try your mobile.

INT. SUBURBAN CUPBOARD - DAY

The colour totally drains from Sean's face.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

Jenny hangs up and immediately starts re-dialling.

INT. SUBURBAN CUPBOARD - DAY

Practically unable to move Sean somehow manages to manoeuvre his hand into his pocket.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY Jenny is still dialling.

INT. SUBURBAN CUPBOARD - DAY

Sean has his hand in the wrong pocket. The ironing board jolts as he forces that same hand across into his other pocket.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

Jenny dials the final number and waits.

INT. SUBURBAN CUPBOARD - DAY

Sean pulls out his mobile phone. His thumb hovers over the off button, but the phone slips out of his hand and lands in a bucket; when the phone rings the sound is amplified by the bucket.

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - DAY

Jenny, phone to one ear, hears The Third Man theme ring-tone with the other. She turns to the cupboard.

Jenny slowly walks to the cupboard and opens it. Inside is Sean finally grasping his phone and turning it off.

## JENNY

What - the fuck?

Sean, as stiff as the ironing board he's been leaning against, steps out.

SEAN

Okay, you said you needed me. I'm here. I can help you through this.

JENNY If you're not out of this house by the next contraction I'm calling the police.

SEAN

Jenny, come on, I've got the car out front. Let's go to the hospital and have our baby.

JENNY

I've had two contractions, Sean. It could be hours before I need to go to hospital. You obviously never read all those books you bought me.

SEAN

I couldn't.

### JENNY

Well, here's a crash course: I'm about to go through more pain than even your warped mind can imagine, so I don't recommend you be here when I need to take it out on something.

### SEAN

But I want you to take it out on me. I want you to kick me, punch me, swear at me, strangle me. Whatever it takes.

JENNY

The next contraction or I call the police.

SEAN

Jenny, please. He's my baby too.

# JENNY

And what sort of a father do you think you'd make? What sort of a father does a kidnapper, now stalker make?

SEAN

I haven't been stalking you. I've just been trying to find you.

JENNY

I don't care why you're here. You're here.

### SEAN

Jenny, I love you. I miss you. Since you left everything's gone wrong. Not only is my life empty, it's taunting me about it. It's like a little kid in the playground, teasing me about what it's taken from me. Rubbing my nose into the emptiness.

JENNY And what film's that from?

SEAN

It's not. That's my life. Without you I have nothing.

JENNY "It's only after you've lost everything that you're free to do anything." (Beat.) Contraction coming.

SEAN Jenny, please - - JENNY

Get out!

SEAN I'm not giving up this - -

JENNY (Contraction starting) Oh, you bastard, get out! GET OUT!

Jenny staggers to the phone and, doubled over in pain, dials 999. Sean lulls his head, turns and trudges out.

EXT. SUBURBAN AVENUE - DAY

Sean trudges out of the house, gets in his car and drives off.

INT. HALLWAY, SEAN AND JENNY - NIGHT

Sean comes in and sees an A4 envelope amongst a new batch of post. He picks it up and takes it into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SEAN AND JENNY - NIGHT

Sean presses play on his answer-phone.

TOBY (OVER ANSWER-PHONE) Sean, Toby. You should be getting a copy of Melissa's draft in the post pretty soon.

Sean opens the A4 envelope and pulls out a script: Soho Noir. He starts reading.

> TOBY (OVER ANSWER-PHONE) (cont'd) We've had some great feedback, so we're going out to cast. What else? Oh, yeah. Melissa's put us into contact with this Canadian company, who look like they might want to co-finance. It would mean shooting Toronto for Soho, but Canada, eh? Pretty cool. Anyway, enjoy the script. Speak soon.

Sean has read a page and is shaking his head in despair.

JENNY (OVER ANSWER-PHONE) It's me. If you're there pick up. (Pause.) Please pick up. I need you, Sean. (MORE) 71.
CONTINUED:

JENNY(cont'd)

(Pause.) Fine. I'll try your mobile.

FADE TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

DRAFT FOUR. THE CAST

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

In front of a backdrop of posters for "Sleeping Partners 2" sits GARY KOLE, 30s, mischievously charming, but on his best behaviour. He is with a REPORTER.

GARY

The script. I'm usually wary of sequels. If it's not as good I think a sequel can demean the original. But I actually think this one's better.

### REPORTER

I hear your character, Harry Cronin, has sex with even more women in this one. Did you have anything to do with that?

GARY I guess. Harry's an addict. Sex is his addiction. I thought there was a lot more to explore about the whole nature of addiction. It is something I know a lot about.

KATE And that's time.

KATE CINDY, 40s, Gary's American publicist has been standing just off camera.

# REPORTER Thanks, Gary. That was great.

He shakes Gary's hand and is led away. A sudden flurry of movement around Gary: lights adjusted, make-up applied, back-drop spruced. Then another REPORTER is led in.

REPORTER 2 Gary, hi. Grant Howmen, Absolute Entertainment. So Sleeping Partners 2. What made you decide to do a sequel?

GARY

The script. I'm usually wary of sequels. If it's not as good I think a sequel can demean the original.

Gary is made up to look like Burt Lancaster in "The Killers". Kate and the PHOTOGRAPHER are arguing over how Gary should be shot, manhandling him as if he wasn't there. Gary just sits there: the product.

INT. BACK OF A LIMO (MOVING) - NIGHT

Gary and Kate are seated in silence. Gary bored, Kate reading a celebrity magazine.

KATE 14th. You're the 14th sexiest Brit. Behind Shane Ritchie. That's an outrage. Who's Shane Ritchie?

Gary really couldn't care. The car slows up.

KATE (cont'd) We're here. Ready?

Gary nods. The car stops. Kate opens the door and Gary steps out.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Gary steps out onto the red carpet and is greeted by a wash of camera flashes. The paparazzi are out in force, along with some general public. Gary's journey up the red carpet is slowed by duty bound stops to shake hands with the general public and sound bites to press.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A placard reads "Elite Rehabilitation Centre. 10 Year Anniversary". B, C and D-list celebrities are everywhere, making good use of the free booze. Interspersed between these celebs is the odd reformed alcoholic looking uneasy.

We move through this odd mix of people to a table, where Toby, Norma and Claire are seated. There is the usual uneasy atmosphere between them.

> NORMA Claire, you've really excelled yourself. Between the recovering alcoholics and Z-list celebrities my head's dizzy with excitement.

CLAIRE Tickets for this were actually very hard to get hold of. NORMA And suddenly I'm having the time of my life.

TOBY I told you you wouldn't enjoy it. This is work for us. Rehab's about making deals. Places like Elite cost anything from 3 grand a day. This is the next best thing.

Norma stares daggers at Toby; he's taking Claire's side again.

CLAIRE Don't worry, Norma. We don't expect you to understand an industry you're not part of.

NORMA Cause you two are right at the heart of it.

An edgy silence.

TOBY Is that Nick Moran over there?

NORMA

Who?

CLAIRE He'd be amazing as Simon.

TOBY You're in my head. Shall we go talk to him?

CLAIRE What have we got to lose?

TOBY (To Norma) We'll be back in a minute, alright?

Norma just glowers at him, really pissed off. But he doesn't notice and leaves with Claire. Norma takes out a packet of cigarettes, but the packet is empty.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Gary and Kate are in a booth with the nightclub OWNER and a couple of very beautiful busty MODELS.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Gary's very indebted to Elite. His very public battle with alcohol hurt a lot of people in his life and very nearly ruined his career. If it wasn't for Elite we wouldn't be here now in your really beautiful club.

OWNER

Thank you.

MODEL #1 (To Gary) How's Sleeping Partners 2 going?

KATE The public response has been great. We

think it's gonna do better than the original.

MODEL #2

What made you decide to do a sequel, Gary?

GARY The script. I'm usually wary of sequels. If it's not as good I think a sequel can demean the original.

MODEL #1 Do you get to sleep with as many women? Is that why you do these films? Do you like sleeping with lots of beautiful women?

Gary stares at the flirty model for a moment. Then:

GARY (Restrained) Excuse me.

Gary leaves the table, leaving the models perplexed.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Gary goes to the bar.

GARY Have you got anything non-alcoholic that tastes like it could be?

BARMAN (Starstruck) Gary Kole. GARY (Sighs) Never mind. Could you give me change for the cigarette machine?

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

At the cigarette machine is Norma. She just can't work it and is getting seriously pissed off. She sees Gary watching her.

> NORMA I'll give you 20 quid if you can get 20 Marlboro Lights out of this thing.

Norma clearly doesn't know who Gary is.

GARY Are you serious?

NORMA Cut the chat and I'll make it 40.

Gary smiles to himself, goes to the cigarette machine and extracts a packet of Marlboro Lights. He holds them out to Norma, smiling his \$10 million smile.

> GARY How about I take the money in kind?

> > NORMA

That was chat. (Taking the cigarettes) And there's only 16 in here.

Norma turns and strides away. Gary is hooked.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Norma sits and lights up. Gary joins her.

GARY For 16 cigarettes I think you owe me 16 pounds.

NORMA The deal was 20 for 20. You're sitting in my boyfriend's seat.

GARY I reckon there's room for two.

NORMA You haven't seen the size of him. Jealous type too. GARY Yeah, I would be.

NORMA Am I being too subtle for you? Do you need me to hold up a sign that says go away?

GARY No, that would be labouring the point. But we made a deal. I don't renege on deals and I don't like being reneged on. I think we need to re-negotiate.

NORMA I think we don't. The bag by your side. My wallet's in there, help yourself.

Gary barely takes his eyes off her as he picks up the bag and rifles through it.

GARY Tell me, do you like going to the cinema?

NORMA I go with my boyfriend. You wanna come with?

GARY No, I was just wondering how up-to-date you are with Hollywood film-making. Film-stars, that kind of thing. (Pulling out a wallet) This it?

NORMA Take what you want.

Gary opens the wallet and looks at the name on the driving license inside.

GARY Claire Sapstairs, 11b Fitzroy Avenue. That's what I want.

Gary smiles triumphantly. Norma smiles back sarcastically.

CLAIRE What do you think you're doing?

GARY

What?

77.

CLAIRE What the hell do you think... (Recognising him) ... you're... doing?

#### NORMA

Claire, I'm sorry. I thought he was just a stalker. If I knew he was a thief as well I would've called the management immediately. Do you want to do that now?

GARY I'm really sorry. She told me it was her bag - her wallet.

CLAIRE It's fine, Mr Kole. It's great to meet you. I love your work.

GARY Thank you. (To Norma) This the boyfriend?

NORMA No, this is.

Toby arrives at the table, eyes fixed on Gary.

TOBY

Alright?

GARY Hi there. Gary Kole.

TOBY Yeah, Toby Head, Head First Films.

GARY (A wry smile) Really?

TOBY Has Claire been telling you about Soho Noir?

GARY

About what?

CLAIRE

No.

TOBY Oh, Gary. It'd be a great vehicle for you. Melissa Keddy directing. You know Melissa, right? (MORE)

# TOBY(cont'd)

We were just talking to Nick Moran about it, but I don't think he's quite right. I'm not gonna bore you with the big pitch, but basically it's totally set in Soho. About a barman who's cool but haunted and he's married to an actress - -

### GARY

I'd love to read it.

## TOBY

Yeah?

GARY

Sure. I'm home alone all tomorrow. Let me give your assistant (Referring to Norma)

my address and she can bring me over a copy.

# TOBY

No, no, no. Norma's not my assistant. Did you two not get introduced? Norma's not in the business. She's my other half.

GARY

(Acting embarrassed) Oh, Norma, I'm so sorry. I feel terrible.

### NORMA

Clearly talent in acting isn't a necessity to becoming a film star.

GARY

You haven't seen me perform.

NORMA And I never will. Not if you were the last actor on earth.

Gary smiles. His attraction to Norma is obvious; especially by Toby.

TOBY Gary, why don't I take your e-mail and I'll send you the script.

GARY

Great idea.
 (Writing his e-mail
 address on a coaster)
I'll give you an answer by sometime
tomorrow. I've intruded; I'm now going.
Enjoy the party.

Gary leaves. Claire stares at the coaster.

CLAIRE God! Gary Kole's e-mail address. How cool is that? I've gotta phone Melissa.

Claire, mobile in hand, leaves the table. Norma glances over and sees Toby staring at her.

NORMA

What?

TOBY

Nothing.

They look away from each other and out into the nightclub.

#### INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

A massive open-plan penthouse apartment with massive windows. Gary sits beside one that looks out over London. He is smoking. In his hand is a packet of Marlboro Lights that he can't seem to take his eyes off.

#### INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Daybreak. Pulse-monitors, nose-plasters and other accessories are strapped to Gary as he runs on a running machine. On a desk are a state of the art computer and printer, printing out a large document.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

From a jar marked "raisins" Gary pours an exact amount into a bowl on electronic scales. He resets the scales then does exactly the same thing with jars of "oats" and "barley".

On a table is the large document: "Soho Noir".

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Gary eats his self-made muesli while reading "Soho Noir".

Extreme close-up of Gary's eyes. The words on the script reflect in his eyes, hurtling up, down, left and right at an ever-increasing speed, until his eyes slowly close.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

The script is on the floor. Gary is at his computer replying to Toby's e-mail.

Gary's reply reads: "Toby, Read the script. We should talk. I'm free tonight. Does your girlfriend cook? Gary."

Gary clicks on the "send" icon.

INT. KITCHEN, TOBY - NIGHT

Norma stares out the steamy window while dinner cooks around her. She looks uneasy. The door opens; it's Toby.

# TOBY

He's here.

NORMA (Pretending to cook) I'll be out in a minute.

Toby exits and Norma returns to her reverie.

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOBY - NIGHT

Norma glides in to see Toby and Gary seated, chatting. Seeing Norma, Gary stands, so Toby stands too. Gary is different; not on best behaviour anymore, quite the reverse.

> NORMA Don't get up.

### GARY

Too late.

No smart comeback; Norma just sits.

GARY (cont'd) It smells delicious.

NORMA

Thank you.

### TOBY

You're in for a treat, Gary. Norma's a great cook. I get a new culinary masterpiece every night. Since we've been living together I must've put on two stone.

GARY

#### (To Norma)

That must please you immensely.

No smart comeback; Norma just smiles.

GARY (cont'd) Well, I've got to say it's good to be somewhere I feel relaxed enough to just be myself. Not to have to be on best behaviour, you know what I mean?

Toby's mobile phone rings.

## TOBY

You're safe here. Do your worst. Excuse me.

Toby leaves the room to answer the phone.

GARY

You're not playing.

## NORMA

I don't know what you mean.

# GARY

All those clever comebacks I can see whizzing through your head. Don't edit them. They're what drew me to you.

#### NORMA

What drew you to me was that I didn't have a clue who you were. And you couldn't stand that there was someone on the planet who didn't know the Gary Kole.

#### GARY

You're half right. Not knowing who I was did draw me to you. But because you have no preconceptions. You spurned me and insulted me not because I was "the Gary Kole", but just because I was me. That's a serious turn-on.

# NORMA

(Unimpressed) Bathroom's that way. Knock yourself out.

Gary smiles. That's more like the Norma he knows. Toby reenters.

> TOBY Sorry about that. I've been getting these crank calls from some foreign guy. Anyway, what are we talking about?

NORMA The script. Gary liked it. TOBY

Yeah?

GARY Let's save that for later. Tell me about you two. Where did you two meet?

TOBY Some industry party. For the life of me I can't remember what.

NORMA

BAFTA.

GARY And it's been happy ever after since.

TOBY Not exactly. Norma was married. Actually, still is.

GARY Is that right?

NORMA

Technically. My decree nisi is filed, but Roman's gone AWOL. No-one knows where he is, so I can't officially divorce him.

## GARY

Not Roman Warring? Isn't he the guy that got shot six times through the head by an escaped lunatic, but somehow survived?

TOBY Once, by a gangster. But yeah, that's him.

GARY You weren't the "gangster", were you?

TOBY

No.

GARY Is he lying?

NORMA

No.

GARY Are you sure? He's a producer, that's what he does best. NORMA I think I smell burning.

Norma exits.

GARY

Only kidding. No offence, right?

TOBY

Shall we talk about the script?

GARY

It must be hard for you two. Coming from an affair into a monogamous relationship. I mean, you know she's capable of it and now you're the husband.

TOBY

I think we should talk about the script.

GARY

Okay.

TOBY

So?

#### GARY

I liked it. It's flawed, but most great works are. In places it actually affected me more profoundly than any script I've read in a long time.

TOBY

It does seem to have that affect on people.

GARY

It's nasty. Evil; I like that. Has it been out to many actors? Don't lie cos I can find out.

TOBY

People have found Simon a bit too unsympathetic, but I think it's the kind of part that wins awards.

GARY

Not if you can't find someone to play him. Bottom line: I get this made.

TOBY

I don't think it means an automatic green light, but we'd be most of the way there.

GARY I think I get this film made, but I take your point. I'm just trying to put your position into perspective. I just wanna know what you'd do to get this film made?

TOBY Sell my own granny. Then again, I'd probably sell her for an empty sandwich.

GARY What about your girlfriend?

Pause. Toby smiles.

TOBY Let's cut to the chase. Are - -

GARY I am. I'll do the film - script changes aside - on one condition. I spend one night - just one - with Norma.

Time seems to stand still for a moment. Gary and Toby staring at each other.

TOBY You're fucking crazy.

GARY Think about - -

TOBY

No deal.

GARY

Just think about it. Your film gets made for one lousy indiscretion that you have full knowledge of. That she's doing for you. I bet she fucked her husband while she was seeing you. Is this so different?

Pause.

TOBY I'm not a pimp.

Norma enters with dinner.

NORMA

Here we are.

GARY Norma, your timing is impeccable.

(CONTINUED)

The three of them take their seats around the table. Norma sees that something has happened and that Toby is brooding.

GARY (cont'd) Bon appetit.

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOBY - NIGHT

The meal has been eaten in total silence. Norma looks from Toby, who can't meet her eye, to Gary, who smiles at her.

GARY Total silence. Sign of a great chef.

NORMA Sign that you hated the script.

GARY Not at all. I loved it. Some of the best writing I've read in years.

TOBY (To Gary) I think you should go now.

NORMA Hold on. Some of the best writing you've read in years and you're not gonna do it?

GARY

No.

NORMA Why not?

GARY

Let's just say that we can't agree terms. Although strictly, it's not up to him.

TOBY Enough. Gary, I want you out of here now.

NORMA What? No, wait! What condition?

TOBY It's not an option.

## NORMA What condition?

Toby and Gary stare at each other, before:

GARY I get to spend one night with you.

Time stands still again. Slowly Norma turns to Toby, who pauses before managing to meet her eye.

TOBY I've said no.

Norma meets his eye, then lulls her head and nods. There is a short pause before Norma stands, clears the plates and exits.

TOBY (cont'd)

Satisfied?

GARY (Standing) Shame. I did like the script. It really re-lit something inside me. I haven't felt this free since I gave up the drink.

TOBY If this is you free, you should be locked up.

Toby leads Gary to the door when Norma re-enters.

NORMA

Wait!

Toby and Gary linger at the door.

NORMA (cont'd) One night or one fuck?

TOBY

Neither.

NORMA Shut up! (To Gary) One night no, one fuck okay.

TOBY

Norma!

GARY I want a whole night.

TOBY You're getting nothing, do you understand?

NORMA Shut up, Toby. This has nothing to do with you anymore. TOBY

What?

NORMA (To Gary) It's half nine now, you're out that door by six.

GARY

Deal.

TOBY No! Norma, you don't have to do this. I don't want you to do this.

NORMA

Yes, you do.

They stare at each other for a moment. No denial.

NORMA (cont'd) Okay, Gary. How do we know you'll keep your end of the bargain?

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOBY - NIGHT

Toby and Norma watch Gary on the phone.

GARY (INTO PHONE) Jim, it's Gary. Look, I'm gonna do this English film "Soho Noir"... I'm not asking you, I'm telling you. I don't know when, but I will, okay? I owe the producer... The money's not important. They'll pay me what they can. Do you understand?... Do - you - understand? ... Okay, gotta go. I'll e-mail the details in the morning.

Gary hangs up.

GARY (cont'd)

Okay?

Norma nods; she looks nervous now.

GARY (cont'd)

So let's go.

Norma leads Gary out and Toby is left destroyed.

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOBY - DAY

A clocks reads 5.47. Toby is asleep in a chair, a nearly empty bottle of whisky beside him.

### CONTINUED:

A door closes and Toby's eyes creak open to see Gary appear in the doorway.

## GARY

You okay?

Toby doesn't dignify this with a reply.

GARY (cont'd) Do you want me to deal just with your partner from here on?

TOBY No. Just with me.

GARY If that's what you want.

Gary turns to leave.

TOBY Is she awake?

Gary turns back to him.

GARY You didn't see her?

TOBY

When?

GARY She left about ten minutes ago.

TOBY Left for where?

GARY She didn't say, but don't expect her back.

TOBY

What?

# GARY

Toby, come on. Being treated like a product, that's okay for work. But at home, that's just not right.

TOBY I said no. I kept saying no.

GARY But you meant yes. She saw that. And that was enough. I guess she thought she meant more to you than that. (MORE)

## GARY(cont'd)

(Turns to go then turns back again) Oh, I had an idea about the script. I was thinking that my character could get his wife to fuck the gangster. For the money. He'd lose a certain amount of empathy, but it's me. They'd still love me.

Gary turns and goes. Toby is alone.

SLOW FADE OUT.

Superimpose:

RE-WRITES #3

INT. BAR - DAY

Sean is with the BAR MANAGER.

### BAR MANAGER

It's 4.40 an hour, plus tips. But this is Soho, don't go expecting much more than your basic. Are you in-between jobs at the moment or careers or - -

SEAN I'm a screenwriter.

BAR MANAGER Really? Anything I've heard of?

#### SEAN

Things in the pipe-line, but no, still just a promising writer; maybe in a few more years I'll be an overnight success.

BAR MANAGER

Is that likely? I know it's only bar work, but I am looking for a stayer.

SEAN

To be honest, if those things see the light of day, I'll need this job more than ever.

BAR MANAGER

Okay, just a few formalities. You've got a National Insurance number, I take it. What about a criminal record?

SEAN Um... yeah, I think so. BAR MANAGER You think so?

SEAN

I don't know if this counts, but I've got a restraining order against me.

### BAR MANAGER

Why?

### SEAN

"Once I did something wrong." Then I went a little crazy. And I can see how the magistrate saw it as stalking, but I just wanted her to know that I love her; and I wanted him to know that I exist. I have a baby and I am no part of its life.

A long pause as the bar manager sizes Sean up.

## BAR MANAGER

Is this gonna affect your work? Cos you speak English, which puts you ahead of most people I've seen. But I've got to be sure your private life won't affect your work.

SEAN

Never again.

### EXT. STREET - DAY

Sean trudges home. The veneer is down, he is a broken man. He reaches his house to see a GIANT of a man emerging, carrying Sean's TV. He is followed by a LESSER GIANT.

LESSER GIANT Sean Fudder?

SEAN

Yeah.

LESSER GIANT Samson & Samson Debt Collectors. We're collecting on behalf of Dobbers Turf Accountants to the order of this sum here.

(Points to his clipboard) We've taken goods to this value, so if you could print here and sign here.

Sean takes the pen and clipboard as the giant emerges from the house, carrying Sean's laptop. Sean watches but does nothing as the giant carries his laptop to a van. LESSER GIANT (cont'd) Mr Fudder?

Sean looks back at the clipboard and signs.

INT. HALLWAY, SEAN AND JENNY - DAY

Sean ignores the mountain of bills and goes into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SEAN AND JENNY - DAY

The living room is gutted. The landlord, DEREK CRANTHOR, is waiting for Sean.

#### CRANTHOR

Ah, Sean.

Cranthor tears a sheet of paper off his clipboard and hands it to Sean.

CRANTHOR (cont'd) Your final eviction notice. In effect as of today. As for your £500 deposit I've been round the flat: carpet stains of unknown origin in the attic, the bedroom and here. Cost of cleaning £250. Shower and shower door broken. Cost of replacement £170. Handles on attic door, bedroom door and living room door. Cost of replacement £80, leaving no pounds and no pennies. (Holding out his hand) Keys please.

I/E. CAR (STATIONARY) - DAY

Sean puts the key in the ignition and turns it. The petrol gauge reads nearly empty. Sean takes a deep breath, then turns the engine on.

I/E. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Sean drives, the petrol gauge flashing empty.

SEAN Come on, come on, come on.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sean, exhausted, pushes his car, now empty of petrol, into a parking spot, then gets back in the car.

I/E. CAR (STATIONARY) - NIGHT

Sean pulls the hand-brake on then catches his breath. He looks at the houses across the road. In an upstairs window of a house we can see a woman rocking her baby to sleep. It is, of course, Jenny. Jenny closes the curtains.

Sean is happy just to have seen them. He smiles to himself, reclines his seat, closes his eyes and starts to sleep.

SLOW FADE OUT.

Superimpose:

DRAFT FIVE. THE FINANCIER

EXT. CURZON CINEMA, SHAFTESBURY AVENUE - DAY

"Opening Today" at the Curzon cinema is "Sleeping Partners 3". Underneath the visage of Gary Kole is the tag-line "The trilogy is complete".

Two people amble past the poster. We turn to see the backs of these two people ambling up Frith Street... towards Soho.

SEAN I thought BAFF turned the project down.

EXT. FRITH STREET - DAY

Legs amble along the pavement. They are Sean's. Beside him is Claire. They are both moseying along.

CLAIRE

They did, but since Roman Warring's been missing they've got interested. And when Melissa and Gary came on board they were hooked. So in 4 hours we meet the head honchos at BAFF. It's make or break. That's why you, me, Toby and Melissa are having this pre-meeting meeting. Preparation, preparation, preparation.

SEAN

Yeah, I still don't see why you need me after all this time.

CLAIRE It's your name on the script, Sean.

SEAN Does that mean I can read the latest draft? CLAIRE I don't think that would be wise.

As Sean crosses a road, a car skids to a halt, inches from him. Sean stops and looks at the shocked driver.

Sean looks from the driver to Claire, who has continued ambling on. He stays expressionless, then ambles on himself.

EXT. GREEK STREET - DAY

The smallest shop on the street is called "HAIRCUT £5". Toby steps out from the shop, his hair the trimmest and neatest it's ever been, but the scars of getting to this point plain to see in the black shadows under his eyes.

INT. GROUCHO CLUB - DAY

Claire, Melissa and Sean are sat around a table, on which are the remnants of lunch. They are waiting for Toby to get off his mobile.

> TOBY (Into phone) I - DON'T - UNDERSTAND. No comprende. (Hand over phone) I think it's Spanish. Anyone speak Spanish?

No-one does.

TOBY (cont'd) (Into phone) No comprende. Leava mea alona. (To Claire) Hung up. Fucker!

MELISSA How long have you been having these calls?

TOBY I dunno, months. If I let them get to me, he wins. They're not getting to me. Let's get back to the plan. It's all about the plan. Where were we?

CLAIRE Possible objections to the script number 14: is there anyone actually likeable in it?

A long silence.

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TOBY

No. Shit! Fucking shit!

CLAIRE

Probably not the response that's gonna seal the deal.

### MELISSA

Listen, just because people's motives are dark doesn't make them unlikeable. Look at Hannibal Lector.

TOBY

Like it.

### MELISSA

Anthony Hopkins made that character as good as heroic and it's the cast that we have that'll make these characters empathetic even if their motives are less than savoury.

CLAIRE

I'll buy that.

TOBY Me too. Good one. 15?

#### CLAIRE

Number 15: the tone. It sways from black comedy to dark drama very suddenly. Readers have had a problem with this, what if they do?

### MELISSA

Then they're missing the fucking point. Comedy and tragedy are two sides of the same coin. Look at Woody Allen, Spike Jonze. Without the jokes their films'd be tragedies.

#### CLAIRE

That works, but I don't think you should tell them they're missing the point.

#### TOBY

Or the fucking point. But you won't. It's my meeting, I'll be doing all the talking. 16?

CLAIRE

Number 16: will it play in the sticks?

TOBY

Too right it will. It's a little slice of England. The sticks'll love it. MELISSA Actually it's a slice of little England. That's the whole point.

TOBY Right, I know that tone of voice. Melissa, I've said this before, but I gotta say it again. We know what you're like. We've all seen you in action. You're not using this meeting to debate the British film industry, alright?

MELISSA I was just saying that - -

TOBY

I don't care. We're there to kiss arse, not argue. I'm leading the meeting; you leave the talking to me.

MELISSA I will, but it's a slice of little England. That is the whole point.

TOBY Whatever. Number 17.

CLAIRE

That's it.

TOBY Right. Now we go through them again. One.

CLAIRE Number 1: are there at least two jokes on every page?

Sean is very, very bored.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

Toby, Claire, Melissa and Sean walk up Dean Street. They mean business.

But someone is following them. Someone in white shoes.

INT. RECEPTION, BAFF - DAY

Toby, leg not jigging, Claire, Melissa and Sean wait in a tense silence. After a moment the RECEPTIONIST has a hushed conversation into an intercom, before:

RECEPTIONIST You can go up now. INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Toby, Claire, Melissa and Sean trudge up the stairs and gather outside Meeting Room 1. Then Toby opens the door.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Seated at a long table, flanked by two film execs (ROBERT FUCE and DANIEL BAGRUE) is Roman Warring.

Roman is white-suited and has a bullet wound in the very centre of his forehead. He has changed; he speaks quieter, more focussed, more knowing and much more scary.

Toby and Roman stare at each other and we hear nothing of the introductions until:

CLAIRE

Toby?

Toby looks over at the worried Claire.

CLAIRE (cont'd) Robert Fuce and Daniel Bagrue.

FUCE

Hello.

BAGRUE We spoke over an intercom.

CLAIRE Oh, that was you. I remember - -

ROMAN How are you, Toby?

TOBY Okay. I didn't know you still worked here.

ROMAN First day back in - what is it, Robert? 18 months?

FUCE

21, Roman.

ROMAN 21 months. Doesn't time fly. Please proceed as if I wasn't here.

The assembled murmur pleasantries and sit around the table.

BAGRUE So we've read this latest draft and it's really started to rock. But there are a few things we need to clear up. First off - -

ROMAN (To Toby) Is this the project you pitched me that day on the roof? (Toby nods.) I didn't like it, did I?

TOBY

No, but it's changed a lot since then.

ROMAN

Okay, shoot.

TOBY

Shoot what?

ROMAN Pitch it. With changes.

TOBY I didn't know I was coming here to pitch. I thought the point of this meeting was - -

ROMAN I haven't read the script, Toby. That puts me at somewhat of a disadvantage.

Toby looks round at Claire, at Sean, at Melissa. He has no choice.

TOBY Okay. It's called Soho Noir. Totally set in Soho. About this cool and haunted comedian.

Sean frowns; he didn't know this.

TOBY (cont'd)

He was big, but he blew it all in casinos. Now his trophy wife's pregnant, finances are bad and the marriage is in trouble. But the comedian has a brother, a gangster, who's just pulled off the heist of the century. The comedian wants the money so he gets his wife to fuck the gangster.

Sean's mouth drops open.

TOBY (cont'd) Couple of hours later the gangster's dead. Murdered and the money's gone. But worse, the comedian's lost his memory. Amnesia.

The colour has completely drained from Sean's face.

# TOBY (cont'd)

A control freak like him losing his memory - it'd be hilarious if it wasn't for the fact that he and his wife, they're prime suspects. And not just by the police. By each other. They both suspect the other of the murder and the comedian - because he's amnesiac - he also suspects himself. And maybe, just maybe, one of them's right. But there's a twist: it's a scam. The comedian and the wife, they're fleecing everyone: the gangster, the cop, the blackmailer. And... they get away with it. Just when you think these two can't have a happy ending, they do. We see them lying in the sun, by a pool, living the high life, happily ever after.

Sean, having gone into a trance, lulls his head. Roman considers the pitch.

### ROMAN

Film noirs are morality tales, this
seems to be an immorality tale.
 (Beat.)
Not sure. Daniel, please continue.

BAGRUE Okay, um... the script, yeah, we like it.

A few points. Who are we rooting for? I mean, there's no-one actually likeable in this.

### TOBY

Just because people's motives are immoral doesn't mean they're unlikable. Look at Hannibal Lecter or Kevin Spacey in Se7en. The actors make those characters no less than iconic, and look who we've got: Gary Kole.

Bagrue and Fuce exchange a look.

#### BAGRUE

I like that. Okay, I'm gonna cut to the chase here. Our main concern is its international appeal.

FUCE

Will it play in Canoga Park?

MELISSA

Where?

TOBY Canoga Park will love it.

MELISSA Where the fuck is Canoga Park?

TOBY

(Ignoring her) It's a little slice of England.

MELISSA Actually it's a slice of little England.

## BAGRUE

And that's it on the nail. That's our fear. You see, Melissa, we believe to compete in the world film market we have to stop making these parochial, "little England" films. The market's just too limited.

MELISSA You see, Daniel, I believe - -

TOBY Melissa!

----

MELISSA Let me finish.

TOBY We've got off the point.

MELISSA No, this is exactly the fucking point.

> TOBY Moliggo

Please, Melissa.

## MELISSA

We are just having a calm discussion, thank you, Toby. (Beat.) Now, Daniel, you see I believe your point of view is blinkered, dismissive of our whole culture and above all fucking brainless. 100.

# BAGRUE

Melissa, the average UK film costs 3.5 million to make - -

### MELISSA

I know what the average fucking UK film costs.

## BAGRUE

- - but takes only 750,000 at the box office. We have to take the international market into account.

## MELISSA

But you don't have to pamper to it. Because when you do you lose identity. You muddy what you're trying to say. If you were a film-maker you'd know that.

#### BAGRUE

Actually I was first AD on - -

## MELISSA

Would we have had Saturday Night Sunday Morning, anything by Ken Loach or Mike Leigh, Full-fucking-Monty, for fuck's sake, if the makers worried about what the fucking yanks felt?

#### BAGRUE

For every success you name I can name 6 failures. Most successes are lucky. We can't afford to rely on luck. We're not a charity. We have to think about getting our money back. What is wrong with thinking globally?

#### MELISSA

Because we're British. Our film industry is and always will be the same as our weather, the same as our cricket team, the same as everything British: inconsistent. That's our national trait and we have to learn to live with it. We are capable of glorious feats and the most dire fucking dross. That's the way it is, has been and always will be. You lot may want to be American, but you're not. You're British, okay? Fucking live with it.

A long silence. We hear a quiet sobbing. Sean, his head still lulled since Toby's pitch, is quietly sobbing to himself and he can't stop.

Melissa and Claire stare at Sean in incredulity. Bagrue and Fuce look at each other with concern.

## CONTINUED: (5)

Toby just stares up at the ceiling; for all the planning, this meeting could not have gone any worse... but there's more:

ROMAN I want everyone out of this room. (Pointing at Toby) Except you.

FUCE Roman, there's still a number - -

ROMAN

Including you two clowns.

Bagrue and Fuce shuffle out with the rest of them. Sean is still sobbing.

CLAIRE

Sean?

SEAN What happened to my script?

CLAIRE

Come on.

SEAN (Being led out by Claire) What happened to my baby?

The door closes, leaving Toby and Roman alone at last.

ROMAN I've seen the world, Toby.

TOBY Come again.

5

## ROMAN

That's where I've been since the shooting. I've spent 21 months seeing the world. Getting away from this small, dirty little part of London. And I've seen people and places I never knew existed. I've been introduced to cultures and beliefs that opened things inside me that I never knew were there. I went to places where they'd revere me like a God. To some people this

(Indicating his scar) makes me a God. And you know what? They're right. They made me understand everything that's happened and everything that's going to happen. Because I am a God. To you and hundreds of others like you. And finally I've learnt to live with that. I'm at ease with it.

(CONTINUED)

He smiles a serene, beatific smile.

ROMAN (cont'd) How's Norma?

TOBY

Dunno.

ROMAN She left you?

TOBY

Yeah.

#### ROMAN

Yes, I was just toying with you up on the roof. Norma's not a lap-dog. She's not even a snake. She's just... Norma. And that's why we're going to do this film, but with the amnesia as the main plot. I want the wife to be just a bit part. I don't want to give her the satisfaction of being in the main plot. Because I want her to be Norma. I want you to re-write the part as Norma; and I want you to rip her to shreds. How does that grab you?

Toby smiles sadly.

TOBY That grabs me just fine.

#### ROMAN

You know, Toby, I think you might just turn out to be as good a producer as your father. If not better.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Claire, Melissa, Fuce and Bagrue wait nervously. Toby emerges from meeting room 1 and looks only at Claire. He smiles wearily:

TOBY I made the deal.

Melissa swears with delight.

Claire jumps into Toby's arms and they hug. Their faces are inches apart. They stare into each other's eyes. Will they? Won't they? Claire smiles. Of course they will. They kiss.

Fuce and Bagrue trudge back to meeting room 1, but Melissa gets in their way.

MELISSA (To Fuce and Bagrue) In your faces. In your fucking faces! Loser, loser! Fucking lo-o-o-sers!

Toby and Claire part.

TOBY Right, who's for some serious celebrating? Hold on - where's Sean?

Claire and Melissa shrug.

EXT. FLAT ROOF - DAY

Sean has stepped out onto the flat roof. He slowly walks to the edge and listens to the buzz of the metropolis.

Standing on the edge of the roof Sean looks down. He is a long way up. He can see the inhabitants of Soho on ground level as tiny as ants. If he jumped he'd land smack in the middle of them.

> SEAN "Top of the world, ma."

Sean has tears in his eyes.

Suddenly we hear an unlikely noise: a zip being undone. Sean has undone his flies and starts urinating over the edge.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

Toby, Claire and Melissa emerge from the BAFF building, all touchy-feely and self-congratulatory. Melissa suddenly stops.

MELISSA Is that rain?

EXT. FLAT ROOF - DAY

Sean, still urinating, starts to laugh.

EXT. DEAN STREET - DAY

PASSERS-BY run to and fro, dodging the stream of urine that sways from the street to the pavement and back again.

Looking up at Sean from the opposite side of the street are Toby, Claire and Melissa, who has a large damp patch on her jacket, and is on his mobile phone.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (INTO PHONE)

Police.

Watching them surreptitiously from an alley a little further along are the white shoes.

We pan up the white shoes. The wide-boy suit is familiar, but his face is unmistakable: it's Alan Fengell.

FENGELL (In Spanish, sub-titled) It's time to pay your debts, Toby Head. It's time we settled up.

EXT. FLAT ROOF - DAY

Still urinating, Sean's laughter becomes more and more hysterical until...

SUDDEN BLACKOUT.

Superimpose:

FINAL DRAFT. THE TEST AUDIENCE.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

The screening room is full. Among the audience is Jenny, looking very nervous. The lights dim and the film starts:

"The British Assembly of Film Financing presents"

"Gary Kole in"

"A Head First Film Production of"

"A Melissa Keddy Film"

"Dedicated to the memory of Toby Head"

"Soho"

Jenny looks round the room. People are here for a free film and aren't that interested. Jenny looks back at the screen:

"Executive Producer Daniel Bagrue, Robert Fuce & Roman Warring"

"Screenplay Sean Fudder"

Jenny smiles and a tear falls down her cheek. She keeps watching, but is getting increasingly tearful.

105.

We are well into the film now and several people have gone. A couple are asleep and one is on his mobile phone. Jenny, however, is sobbing. Jenny sobs and sobs and can't stop.

## INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Extreme close-up of Jenny's eyes. The images on the screen reflect in her eyes, hurtling up, down, left and right at an ever-increasing speed, until her eyes suddenly close.

INT. BAR - DAY

The bar is empty. Sean, a shadow of his former self, is polishing glasses, his mind miles away. He glances round and sees the silhouette of a mother and her son in the doorway.

Sean can't quite believe what he's seeing. He looks round the empty bar to make sure it's not a trick of the light.

It isn't. The mother, Jenny, and their son, WILLIAM, walk to the end of the bar, where Sean meets them.

JENNY Sean, this is William. William, this is your father.

SEAN Hello, William.

William frees himself of Jenny's hand and runs away.

JENNY

Will!

William has run to the door, where the bar manager is. He waves to indicate that he'll look after William.

SEAN He looks like you.

JENNY Actually, I think you'll be surprised how alike you and he are.

William is shown the flashing lights of a fruit machine and watches it intently.

JENNY (cont'd) I just went to a test audience screening of "Soho". SEAN Terrible, isn't it?

#### JENNY

Diabolical. I don't think you could make a more over-complicated and ridiculous film if you tried. I had to fill out a form and I didn't know what to write. In the end I just said that I liked the dream sequence.

# SEAN

Jenny, the thing is, - -

# JENNY

Sean, it doesn't matter. It's a film, for Christ's sake. In a month no-one will even remember not going to see it.

## SEAN

I know, but it's not my - -

## JENNY

I don't want excuses or reasons. I came here, because I saw how you portrayed our relationship - -

SEAN

But that's the point. It's not - -

### JENNY

Just let me finish. I saw how you portrayed our relationship and it really moved me.

## SEAN

It did?

#### JENNY

I was shocked how moved I was. Not by the film. By the feelings that were still there. It's been 3 years. I thought I was over you. But apparently I'm not.

SEAN Does that mean... there's a chance we might get back together?

EXT. SOMEWHERE SUNNY - DAY

A momentary flash of an extreme close-up of Sean lying back, day-dreaming.

INT. BAR - DAY Back to Sean and Jenny.

> SEAN - - back together?

JENNY Let's take it slow, shall we?

EXT. SOMEWHERE SUNNY - DAY

Another momentary flash of an extreme close-up of Sean lying back, day-dreaming.

INT. BAR - DAY

Back to Sean and Jenny.

JENNY - - shall we? Or fast. I know how you like it fast.

EXT. SOMEWHERE SUNNY - DAY

Back to the extreme close-up of Sean lying back, daydreaming. Slowly we pull out to see that Sean is lying beside a swimming pool, sun-oil all over his body, ice-pack on his crotch, basting in the sun. Somewhat reminiscent - but not the same - as the opening scene in Brit flick Sexy Beast.

We pull out to see that Sean is by a pool. A HARD-BODIED WOMAN, carrying a cordless phone, approaches Sean, kisses him then hands over the phone.

> HARD-BODY (American accent) It's your agent.

Sean sits up, takes the phone as the hard-body rubs sun-oil onto his chest.

SEAN (INTO PHONE) Bob, what's up?... Not tonight, Bob. I'm teaching my screen-writing course... You know. "Osmosis. The realities of screenwriting."... People's lives affect scripts just as scripts affect people's lives. Osmosis... What are they offering? ...I don't need to read the script, just find out what they want me to do to it and if the money's right, I'm their man... That's showbusiness. Sean hangs up as the hardbody's oily hands have worked their way down to his crotch. He lies back and for the first time since scene 2 Sean cracks a smile; a cruel, sneer of a smile.

FADE OUT.