

PILLION

Written by

Harry Lighton

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EXT. MOTORBIKE - ROAD - NIGHT

A BIKER speeds up a winding hill, banking with the turns. It's been raining. The headlights of an oncoming car bounce off the glassy tarmac.

The BIKER's visor is translucent, the face behind it unidentifiable.

The BIKER moves wide to overtake one car.

Then another.

The angle recalls YouTube crash videos, predicts impact round the next bend.

We watch through our fingers as he speeds towards a beaten up hatchback on a blind corner...

INT. SMITH CAR - ROAD - SAME

The faded red interior of the Smith family car has seen better days. So has the engine, which strains against the cold.

From the back seat, **COLIN SMITH** (35) watches the bike overtake.

His dad **PETE** is behind the wheel, next to his wife **PEGGY** - the textbook perfect couple. PETE trills his lips to warm up his vocals. He's the founding member of the Smith Four, a family quartet on the way to their last gig of the year. That explains the outfits.

As the bike disappears round a bend, fat drops of rain begin to knuckle the windscreen.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SMITH CAR - PUB CAR PARK - NIGHT

It's shitting it down, wipers working furiously as Pete reverses into a parking space.

The headlamps illuminate a row of bikes and then, with the arc of the reverse, a view of the pub.

Two men in leathers are by the entrance. One smokes, propped up by a walking stick. This is **STEVE**. The other holds an umbrella over **STEVE**'s head without trying to cover himself. This is **KEVIN**. His blue mullet is as wet as the rest of him.

It's odd enough to make us double-take. But then PETE cuts the engine, off go the wipers / headlights, and the windscreen becomes a wet blur.

The Smiths exit, scurry through the rain towards the pub, PEGGY holding her hair in place, COLIN lagging behind.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

An old school boozier. Rust-reds and faded greens. Christmas past its use-by date.

On one side -- BIKERS dominate the darts board.

On the other -- the SMITH FOUR stand in horse-shoe formation on the small pub stage. Colin's brother DON (hotter, smarter, richer) and cousin ROY complete the quartet.

PETE blows into a chrome pitch-pipe.

They sing a sour note in unison, then slide up into a perfect chord that crescendoes until they begin their arrangement of The Only Thing I Want For Christmas.

They're a well-oiled act, choreography as slick as their harmonies.

COLIN sees PEGGY waving over a man scanning the room from the door. This is CHIGS (30s, pear-shaped). Momentarily distracted, he loses his grip on the tempo, feels PETE's hand on his shoulder, refocuses himself.

INT. PUB - NIGHT (1 HOUR LATER)

A smattering of applause. It's the end of the set -

PETE

Thank you. You've been a wonderful,
generous audience.

(beat)

Now put your hands in your pockets!

They fly into The Auctioneer.

COLIN takes the lead, wrapping his tongue around the auction chant, hurtling through fifty words in ten seconds.

As he does so, he steps off the stage and moves through the tables, offering his hat for tips. 50p here, £1 there. A grin from Peggy, a tenner from Chigs.

He arrives at the table of another biker writing his Christmas cards in ink. We recognise his leathers. It's the biker who overtook the Smith car. Helmet off, he's ridiculously **HANDSOME**. Not ornate, but virile with knobs on. COLIN lingers for long seconds. The speed at which he's singing is really very impressive. But HANDSOME doesn't so much as look up. It's as if COLIN isn't there.

INT. PUB - NIGHT (LATER)

HANDSOME playing darts with the bikers.

COLIN and CHIGS tucked away in a small corner-table by a window. COLIN has a nervous pull of his mulled wine. CHIGS nurses a Diet Coke. Conversation doth stall.

CHIGS

So does your mum set you up with lots of guys?

COLIN

No. Actually, you're the first.

CHIGS

Oh. Lucky me.

COLIN smiles palely. They lapse back into silence.

CHIGS (CONT'D)

You ever been on a motorbike?

COLIN

No. You?

CHIGS

No.

More silence.

CHIGS (CONT'D)

Never been with a biker then?

COLIN

A biker? No. You?

CHIGS

No. No I haven't. Not my cup of tea.

COLIN murmurs agreement.

The bikers playing darts erupt as HANDSOME scores a bullseye.

CHIGS (CONT'D)
You wanna go somewhere else?

COLIN
I'm easy.

CHIGS
You don't mind it here?

COLIN
Not if you don't.

CHIGS
So you're happy here?

COLIN
I am if you are.

CHIGS
I'm happy enough.

Silence. CHIGS sucks the last of his coke up through the straw.

CHIGS (CONT'D)
I need a piss.
(then)
Coming?

COLIN balks.

CHIGS (CONT'D)
Joking.

COLIN laughs falsely. CHIGS checks the time.

CHIGS (CONT'D)
Same again?

COLIN
My round.

CHIGS
Okay. One more. Then let's make a move.

CHIGS heads off to the toilets.

The coast clear, COLIN sneaks a single blister-packed blue pill from his wallet. Viagra. Knocks it back with the last of his drink.

He glances back at the toilets, sees KEVIN handing drinks to STEVE and HANDSOME.

Drinks served, KEVIN takes a seat on the floor by STEVE's feet. STEVE shoves his fingers through KEVIN's blue hair, grips and pulls hard. KEVIN's head is pulled back. His eyes water as he looks up into STEVE's eyes.

Suddenly HANDSOME catches COLIN staring. COLIN looks away, down at his empty glass, picks it up and takes it to the bar where he waits his turn. Eventually -

BARWOMAN

Who's next?

COLIN steps forward. He's opened his mouth to speak when he feels a towering presence at his shoulder -

HANDSOME

Hi, what crisps do you have?

BARWOMAN waits for COLIN to assert himself. Instead COLIN steps to the side, relinquishes his position in the queue.

BARWOMAN

Ready salted. Salt and vinegar.
Prawn cocktail.

HANDSOME

I'll have one of each.

BARWOMAN

Four pound eighty.

HANDSOME dumps a fistful of change on the counter and sweeps it over to COLIN.

For the first time their eyes meet - COLIN's grey and watery, HANDSOME's impossibly blue.

HANDSOME holds eye contact. Get on with it.

COLIN begins counting out the coins.

HANDSOME scribbles something on a Christmas Card and tucks it in COLIN's breast pocket.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SMITH HOUSE - NIGHT

PEGGY and PETE with their backs against the sofa wrapping presents: PETE folding the paper, PEGGY applying the sellotape. PEGGY wore a wig to the pub, but now her hairless scalp is on display.

Their sausage dog HIPPO yaps as COLIN enters. COLIN heads straight up the stairs.

PEGGY twists her neck to watch him go. Uh-oh.

INT. COLIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

COLIN sits on the edge of his bed in his pants, struggling to break open a Terry's Chocolate Orange. HANDSOME's Christmas card lies on the duvet beside him.

A knock on the door jolts him.

PEGGY
Are you decent?

COLIN
No!

INT. CORRIDOR - SAME

PEGGY by COLIN's door with a stocking, HIPPO at her feet.

PEGGY
Everything okay?

COLIN
Yes.

PEGGY
Nice chap, isn't he?

COLIN
Yes.

PEGGY
You had a nice time?

COLIN
Yes.

She waits for him to elaborate. Nothing comes.

PEGGY
Alright. Night darling. Sleep well.
Stockings at eight, okay?

She lays the stocking by the door and pads away.

INT. COLIN'S BEDROOM - SAME

COLIN listens to her footsteps recede.

He lies back on his bed, and now we see the chemically induced tentpole pressing against his pants.

But when we see his face our laughter stalls. He's racked with anxiety.

DISSOLVE TO:

OMIT

INT. CHURCH - DAY

TIGHT on COLIN as the congregation begins the final verse of Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!. He sings in a restrained fashion, careful that his voice blends. PEGGY and PETE do the same. Clearly the family line is don't show off in Church.

A few rows behind them CHIGS takes a different approach, scaling up and down the descant in a showy fashion. COLIN glances at PETE who rolls his eyes.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SMITH HOUSE - DAY

A series of shots:

- 1) In the privacy of their own home, the SMITH FOUR flaunt their superiority over the congregation via a barbershop version of the final line of the same hymn. The whole family there, including HIPPO, DON's wife and their three kids.
- 2) DON asks COLIN about his upcoming cruise ship audition while his TODDLER tugs at his trousers.
- 3) Lunch. COLIN folds into himself, letting others dominate the conversation.
- 4) Later, at the piano, PETE plays an all-frills cover of Silent Night while PEGGY sings along. DON lies bloated on the sofa as his TODDLER tries to force feed him Quality Street. COLIN slinks out.

INT. COLIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

COLIN perched on his bed, HANDSOME's card open in his hand. Now we see the telephone number scrawled across the top underneath a single instruction -- Tomorrow, 5pm

Tomorrow is today. COLIN keys the number into his phone and makes the call. After one ring he hangs up, bottling it.

He rubs his face through his hands.

Don's TODDLER waddles in clutching handfuls of quality street.

COLIN
Are those for me?

The TODDLER stares back.

Suddenly COLIN's phone rings. The telephone number on HANDSOME's card flashes on his phone screen.

He lets it ring three times before picking up.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Hello?

We can't hear the other end of the line...

COLIN (CONT'D)
Colin.

TODDLER
Colin!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

DON washing up. COLIN drying. PEGGY and PETE hovering.

DON
Want a lift?

COLIN
That's okay.

DON
What's his name?

Colin shrugs.

DON (CONT'D)
You don't know his name?!

COLIN
I didn't ask.

DON passes COLIN a frying pan to dry. COLIN runs his finger round the rim and finds something charred stuck to the bottom. He hands back the pan.

DON rolls his eyes, pulls the plug and turns on the hot tap.

PETE
I can wait nearby if you want.

COLIN
That's okay.

DON
Well take the dog.

COLIN
Stop.

DON
You're taking the dog.

COLIN
But-

DON
But nothing.

DON digs around in the soapy water, pulls out a carving knife and hands it to COLIN by the handle.

DON (CONT'D)
If you go missing I'm not spending
my new year organising search
parties.

A joke but also not a joke.

PEGGY
Don shush. Middle-aged men don't go
missing.

DON
What normal person asks someone on
a date on Christmas Day?

PEGGY
Maybe he's alone.

PETE
Maybe he's lonely.

COLIN
Maybe I'll get my head bashed in.

PEGGY
Nonsense. Ignore your brother. It's
an adventure.

DON
 Since when has Colin liked
 adventures?

PEGGY
 Well he could do with one before
 his hairs turn grey.

PEGGY's headscarf becomes the elephant in the room. "Live a little while you can" screams her hairless scalp.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
 I think a biker sounds exciting.
 You can borrow your dad's leather
 jacket.

EXT. ROUTE INTO TOWN - DUSK

HIPPO beside COLIN, tugging at her leash as they head towards town.

EXT. HIGH STREET - NIGHT

Christmas decorations strung across the high street. Shops shuttered. Most people at home.

COLIN appears heading towards a huge Christmas tree centred in an intersection.

A young FAMILY pass the other way --

FAMILY
 Happy Christmas.

COLIN
 Happy Christmas.

Beyond them, he sees a big man and a big dog heading his way. It's HANDSOME. Clearly he's taken the rural route. His boots are muddy. So are his dog's legs and undercarriage.

The big dog runs towards COLIN. Sensing danger, HIPPO cowers behind his legs.

HANDSOME
 (calling over)
 She's only saying hello.

HANDSOME doesn't sound panicked. His voice is calm and deep.

But as they draw closer, HANDSOME's dog looks out for blood. So COLIN lifts Hippo up and tries to shield her. Big mistake.

HANDSOME's dog turns frenzied, jumping up at COLIN who smiles desperately as he tries to move away.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)
Put it down.

COLIN ignores him.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)
(fearsome)
Put the dog down!

COLIN drops Hippo to the ground.

HANDSOME's dog stops barking, settles.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)
She was only saying hello.

COLIN
Sorry.
Hello.
I'm Colin.
This is Hippo-

HANDSOME
Never pick up your dog like that.
You'll get your arm bitten off.

COLIN
Sorry.

HANDSOME
You're lucky Rosie's all bark.

COLIN
Yes. Hello Rosie.

Silence.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Sorry - I didn't catch your name?

HANDSOME
Leave the dogs here.

COLIN
What, here?

HANDSOME
...

COLIN

Do you think that's a good idea?
You know, dog thieves and all that.

HANDSOME

(interrupting)
They'll be fine.

COLIN

Um... okay.
(tying Hippo)
Will we be long?

But HANDSOME's walked off. COLIN finishes tying Hippo and follows.

EXT. HIGH STREET - NIGHT

HANDSOME walks in long strides that radiate authority. COLIN scurries after him on legs that seem stumpy by comparison.

The silence between them builds.

HANDSOME walks straight through a long puddle which COLIN skirts around.

Eventually HANDSOME walks off down a SIDE STREET. Thinking he's probably about to get robbed or worse, COLIN follows.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

The side street lined on either side with stuff from nearby shops (cardboard boxes, roll cages, wheelie bins).

HANDSOME unzips his jacket and hangs it over the corner of a roll cage. He's wearing a sleeveless leather one-piece. COLIN eyes his thick arms greedily.

HANDSOME

(re Colin's jacket)
You too.

Under RAY's stare COLIN squirms out of his jacket, clumsy and graceless, feeling his breath quicken and his arsehole clench against the cold.

HANDSOME's body is everything his isn't, all hair and height and muscle mass.

COLIN goes to hang his dad's beat-up leather jacket next to HANDSOME's. But as he turns away the jacket slides to the ground. COLIN reddens, turns to pick it up.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)

Leave it.

COLIN stands shivering. He folds his arms, massages his tiny biceps with opposing thumbs, stamps his feet to keep away the cold. For the first time HANDSOME comes close to smiling.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)

What am I going to do with you?

COLIN

Whatever you want...?

COLIN's tone is hesitant. He's not the hungry bottom of some gay porno. He wants HANDSOME to do something with him but he's not quite sure what.

HANDSOME closes the space between them and stares COLIN dead in the eye. Breath clouds around their faces. Is he waiting for COLIN to make the next move?

COLIN goes in for a kiss...

SLAP! The crack rings out. A nearby pigeon scatters skywards. HANDSOME's open palm leaves a livid mark on COLIN's cheek. It frightens him. It turns him on.

He tries another kiss. Gets another slap for his efforts. Harder this time.

HANDSOME

No kissing.

COLIN

Sorry. Is that a biker thing?

HANDSOME

No. It's a me thing.

HANDSOME holds his hands up, palms out, inviting COLIN to lock fingers in a game of Mercy.

COLIN brings his palms to meet HANDSOME's. Their fingers lock and HANDSOME bends COLIN's wrists back, forcing him down into a backwards bridge. Only HANDSOME's grip prevents him from falling to the ground.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)

Do you give?

COLIN

Sorry?

COLIN's confused. HANDSOME applies more pressure, bending COLIN's wrists back till he screams.

HANDSOME
Do you give?

COLIN
Yes?!

HANDSOME releases and COLIN hits the ground with a thud. He lies on his back, shaking the pain from his wrists.

HANDSOME takes COLIN by the hair and pulls him up to his knees. COLIN finds himself with his back to the alley wall, hidden from the high street by a catering trolley. The unforgiving concrete wears away at his trousers.

HANDSOME unfastens his one-piece. The whirring, purring sound of teeth separating as he

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The way HANDSOME performs this motion has precedent. As the panels of leather slide apart, COLIN discovers --

- A keyring on a chain around HANDSOME's neck. No key.

- A pair of door-knocker nipple rings.

- Two narrow zones of sweat-dampened fur, one on his breastbone and one below his navel.

The zip continues all the way down past HANDSOME's crotch. He reaches in and, with care, tugs out his cock and balls. COLIN's eyes widen at the sheer extent of his scrotum, and the plump cushion it provides for a lazily swollen cock.

HANDSOME rests a hand on COLIN's neck and guides him in a fumbling attempt at a blow job. When COLIN chokes, HANDSOME lets him recover, before pulling him forward again. He's a patient taskmaster, but COLIN can't stop gagging.

So with the same guiding hand, HANDSOME directs COLIN down to his wet, dirty boots.

HANDSOME

Lick.

COLIN lowers his face to the boot and obeys. Comes away grimacing, wiping at the grit in his mouth with the back of his hand.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)

Again. Lick them clean.

A beat. Then COLIN goes back for seconds, thirds etc.

Growling with pleasure, HANDSOME begins to wank.

He's nearing climax when a bark draws his attention to a DOG WALKER stopped in his tracks, gawping.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)

Do you mind?

The DOG WALKER retreats.

HANDSOME pulls COLIN up to his knees and fucks him in the throat like he's taking a swab. He quickly cums.

HANDSOME collects his jacket and returns to find COLIN still on his knees, dirt on his face, a smear of cum on his jowl. HANDSOME hoists COLIN to his feet.

HANDSOME (CONT'D)

I'm Ray.

EXT. HIGH STREET - NIGHT

The pair head back towards the Christmas tree. RAY's jacket draped over his shoulder. COLIN's tucked awkwardly under one arm.

They find the dogs muzzling one another.

COLIN

Look at that. What's a grudge to a dog, huh?

COLIN bends to untie HIPPO

COLIN (CONT'D)

So... if you don't mind a little walk I saw a pub on my way here that's open till midnight.

RAY

I've got to go.

COLIN

Of course.

(then)

Sorry if I was a bit hopeless. I suppose like most things in life it takes practice.

RAY

Yes. Practice hard, you might have a future.

COLIN builds to words --

COLIN

Maybe I could practice with you...

RAY

That won't do you much good. I'm not around much.

COLIN

Ah.

He's surprised to feel devastated. He's barely known RAY an hour, but it's been the most exciting hour of his life.

RAY points down the high street --

RAY

You're that way?

COLIN

Yes. You?

RAY signals the other way.

COLIN (CONT'D)

Whereabouts do you live?

RAY's brow furrows. COLIN joins the dots -

COLIN (CONT'D)

Sorry. None of my business.

RAY half-smiles: Exactly.

RAY

Alright then Colin. Happy Christmas.

He offers his hand. COLIN shakes it.

COLIN

Happy Christmas.

As we now gather is his habit, RAY's already walking off.

COLIN heads off the other way. Then, worried he's been ungrateful, spins round and calls after RAY --

COLIN (CONT'D)

Thank you!

RAY doesn't turn back.

COLIN rubs at a new soreness in his throat. Then he's smiling, proud of being sore.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SMITH HOUSE - NIGHT

COLIN's parents are back in front of the TV as he returns home. PEGGY on the sofa. PETE lying face down on the carpet.

PETE

He lives!

COLIN

Yes. No search party required.

COLIN's voice is going. He takes a seat in the armchair rather than retreating to his bedroom.

PETE

I told you this air would turn your throat inside out.

PEGGY

But you had fun?

COLIN

Mmhm.

PETE

Nice chap?

COLIN

Mmhm.

PEGGY

Mmhm?! Did you get yourself a boyfriend.

COLIN

I don't think so. I don't think he liked me that much.

PEGGY

Of course he did. Did you kiss?

COLIN
I'm not sure that's any of your
business.

PEGGY
Oh! Fair enough.

But COLIN raises his feet onto the coffee table so PEGGY can't help but notice the muddy scuff marks on his knees. When the dots connect she grins.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
You better give me those trousers
before you get muck on my sofa.

COLIN peels off his trousers --

PETE
When's the big audition?

COLIN
Wednesday.

PETE
Oh dear. One honey and lemon for my
idiot firstborn coming right up.

PETE groans to a stand, follows PEGGY out.

Alone, COLIN sinks back into the sofa. He notices the graze on each kneecap: a wound for his efforts, a little keepsake.

INT. AUDITION ROOM - DAY

Doodles scrawled on a CV with a photo of COLIN clipped to it.

Two CRUISE-LINE TALENT RECRUITERS sit behind a desk. COLIN stands opposite them, visibly nervous. When he speaks, his voice is hoarse.

RECRUITER
Says here you're a Civil
Enforcement Officer?

COLIN
Yes.

RECRUITER
What's that?

COLIN
A traffic warden.

The recruiter barely stifles a grimace.

RECRUITER
Interesting choice of job...

COLIN
My uncle works for the council. It was meant to be a short-term thing when I left school. I'd much rather be a singer.

RECRUITER
Yes. You're part of "The Smith Four"?

COLIN
That's right.

RECRUITER
What happened to the other three?

COLIN smiles, not sure if it's a joke or a question.

RECRUITER (CONT'D)
You toured with a cruise before?

COLIN
No. I've never auditioned.

RECRUITER
Why now?

COLIN
I guess I could do with an adventure. Before my hair turns grey.

The OTHER RECRUITER -- his hair the definition of grey -- scowls. COLIN bleeds all over his face.

EXT. CAR PARK - DAY

COLIN slams a parking ticket on a windscreen.

He's glummer than ever after the failed audition.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - TRAFFIC WARDEN HQ - DAY

TRAFFIC WARDENS get changed after work. Discuss New Year's Eve plans. A mess of different languages. COLIN disengaged.

INT. PUB - NIGHT (NEW YEAR'S EVE)

COLIN back at the bikers pub. But there's no sign of Ray.

At the stroke of midnight the pub erupts with cheers and kissing. The sound of fireworks going up all across town carries overhead.

Hidden in the corner, COLIN makes a call to RAY. When he doesn't pick up, COLIN slinks out.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. CAR PARK - DAY

COLIN back at work patrolling the car park.

LATER --

He's checking a windscreen when a PARKING VIOLATOR approaches brandishing a ticket.

PARKING VIOLATOR
Does this give you pleasure?

COLIN
No.

PARKING VIOLATOR
I bet it does.

COLIN
I'm just following orders, ma'am.

PARKING VIOLATOR
Following orders?!

COLIN
Yes ma'am.

PARKING VIOLATOR
Go get your fucking supervisor.

COLIN
If you want to appeal-

PARKING VIOLATOR
Shut your fucking mouth.

COLIN does. But she only starts back up.

PARKING VIOLATOR (CONT'D)
Do you sleep well at night?

COLIN
Do I sleep well at night?

PARKING VIOLATOR
I bet you do.

COLIN
Not really.

PARKING VIOLATOR
I bet you fucking do.

COLIN
I don't.

PARKING VIOLATOR
You fucking do.

COLIN
If you want to appeal-

PARKING VIOLATOR
Shut your fucking mouth.

Again, he does.

But now his phone rings. When COLIN sees who's ringing his heart skips a beat.

COLIN
(into phone)
Hello?

PARKING VIOLATOR
Excuse me? We're not done here!

COLIN
(into phone)
Sorry, I'm at work.

PARKING VIOLATOR
EXCUSE ME?!

COLIN
(into phone)
Yes, if I leave early. If I leave now.

PARKING VIOLATOR
YOU'RE GOING NOWHERE!

COLIN
(into phone)
I'll text you the address.

COLIN scurries off.

PARKING VIOLATOR
ARE YOU DEAF?!

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM / CORRIDOR - SMITH HOUSE - NIGHT

COLIN's packing when PEGGY appears with a box of Quality Street.

PEGGY
What about these? Or soap? Do we
have any of that nice soap?

She disappears to the bathroom O.S. Reappears.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
(shouting off-screen)
PETE! HAVE YOU TAKEN THE NICE SOAP?

The far-off sound of a motorbike.

EXT. SMITH HOUSE - NIGHT

Gathered by the door, the Smiths shield their eyes from the glare of the headlamp until RAY cuts the engine.

He approaches and removes his helmet. PETE and PEGGY's jaws hit the floor. This man and Colin?!

As they shake hands PEGGY's eyes dart from RAY to her son.

PETE
Gosh you're tall.

PEGGY
Very tall.

PETE
Time for a quick drink?

RAY
No. Not when I'm biking.

PETE
Of course, yes. Good lad. Something soft?

RAY
We need to get going.

PETE
Yes. Next time then.

COLIN shoots RAY a furtive glance, worried he'll infer the wrong expectations from "next time". But RAY doesn't react.

PEGGY
You don't sound local, Ray. Where's home?

RAY
Chislehurst.

PETE
Chislehurst. Very nice.

PEGGY
I don't think of Colin as a very Chislehurst sort of person.

RAY
He'll survive.

PEGGY
Of course.

Beat.

RAY
Come on then Colin.

RAY heads back to his bike. COLIN follows. After a nudge from his wife, so does PETE.

PETE
Ray - sorry to fuss but you have a spare helmet, yes?

RAY
Yes.

PETE
And he has to actually wear it.

COLIN
Dad.

PEGGY
You're not getting on without one!

RAY hands COLIN a shabby second-hand helmet -

RAY
He's not getting on without one.

PETE

Great.

COLIN pulls the helmet down over his head, fiddling with the chinstrap as RAY mounts the bike, heels the kickstand.

Given the signal to climb aboard COLIN hesitates. Under RAY's instruction ("left hand here, left foot there") he gracelessly clambers into the pillion seat. With his additional weight the mirrors are misaligned. RAY makes adjustments.

Unsure what to do with his hands, COLIN grips the back of the saddle.

PETE (CONT'D)

You sure you know what you're doing?

COLIN

Mmhm. Don't worry.

PETE

I'm not worried.

(to Ray)

I rode a bike when I met Colin's mum. A Bonnie. Plain black. Not like all this neon crap you see nowadays. I sold it when the twins were born. Spent the money on a very expensive pram. But I don't suppose you two need to worry about that.

(then)

Not yet I mean!

RAY presses the electric start and the engine growls. When he revs PETE startles, then cackles to mask it.

RAY repositions COLIN's hands around his waist.

RAY

HOLD ON TIGHT.

PEGGY

HAVE FUN!

PETE

BE GOOD! WATCH OUT FOR ICE!!

As the bike moves away into the night PEGGY gives PETE's hand a reassuring squeeze.

They step to the side of the road to avoid a car coming the other way.

EXT. ROADS - NIGHT

Led by the headlamp's aisle of white light, the bike passes through unidentified roads. COLIN sees a fog of shop lights rush by. Later darkness, broken only by street-lamps.

INT. LOUNGE - RAY HOUSE - NIGHT

From below, the noise from the bike engine rattles the street-facing window. On her hind legs looking out, ROSIE (Ray's dog) barks away.

She goes quiet when the engine cuts out, pads across to the flat's front door and waits.

We hear the sound of the hard soles climbing up steps, the key in the lock.

RAY enters, helmet in hand. Drops to his haunches and lets ROSIE kiss his face.

As soon as she spies COLIN in the doorway, ROSIE growls.

COLIN

Hello Rosie. Remember me?

He steps across the threshold and she starts up barking.

RAY

Rosie. Basket.

She stops, retreats to her basket.

RAY peels off his leather jacket. COLIN follows suit.

COLIN

Thanks for the ride. I can't believe how noisy it is onboard! And nippy! I think this jacket might be a bit crap.

RAY

Yes.

RAY hangs his jacket on a peg, drops COLIN's on the floor and heads off across the lounge, disappearing into a toilet.

Left alone, COLIN looks around. The flat's unremarkable save for the conspicuous absence of personal history. There's not a single family photo on display.

There's evidence of a New Year's party: surfaces dotted with empty bottles and ash-trays, the remnants of a poker game on the small dining table.

From her basket, ROSIE continues to stare him down.

COLIN heads to an upright piano. He inspects the sheet music on the stand: movie soundtracks, simple classical pieces, arpeggio exercises.

A flush O.S and RAY re-emerges.

COLIN

Lovely flat. I didn't think you'd have a piano.

RAY

No?

COLIN

You don't seem like the sort.

RAY

What "sort" do I seem like?

COLIN

No no it's a compliment.

RAY half-smiles, inscrutable.

COLIN (CONT'D)

How does she sound?

He goes to lift the piano lid but RAY blocks him with a strong hand.

COLIN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

RAY

Why don't I show you where everything is. Then you can make dinner.

COLIN

Dinner?

RAY

Yes.

COLIN

Right. I mean, I'm a lousy cook.
But I can give it a go...

RAY leads COLIN through to the **KITCHEN**

COLIN (CONT'D)

Have you lived here long?

RAY sighs. *Enough questions.*

He points out where the dry food, saucepans, sieves are stored, then checks his watch.

RAY

Something quick tonight. Pasta.
Don't add mountains of cheese.

With that, RAY takes a beer from the fridge, heads through to the lounge and settles himself on the sofa.

After a beat, COLIN gets to work.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

RAY is watching the NEWS AT TEN when COLIN approaches with two bowls of pasta.

COLIN

Are we eating here, or?

RAY

Here.

COLIN

Okay. Bon appetite.

COLIN hands over a bowl, a touch offended when RAY doesn't say thank you.

He eyes the space on the sofa next to RAY. There's nowhere else to sit.

By way of an answer, RAY whistles. ROSIE runs over and curls up in the free space.

COLIN sniggers, but RAY gives no suggestion it's a joke. So COLIN stays on his feet.

For a while they eat in silence, watching the news.

RAY finishes his beer. Shakes the can once. Then again, significantly, raising his eyebrows.

COLIN doesn't need subtitles to know he wants another. He takes the empty from RAY and heads back to the kitchen.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT (30 MINUTES LATER)

The news is nearing an end with the weather report.

COLIN shifts his weight onto his other leg. He's tiring now, losing patience.

Finally RAY reaches for the remote and turns off the TV.

RAY
Time for bed.

The word bed sends a throb to COLIN's groin, and a bolt of panic to his mind. Both sensations build as RAY moves around the room turning off lights.

INT. RAY'S BATHROOM / BEDROOM - NIGHT

RAY brushes his teeth. COLIN lurks with his washbag, takes his turn once RAY's finished.

In the mirror he looks skittish. He tries to find something to admire, but every feature seems pitiable in comparison with RAY.

Fuck it. There's no going back now. Anxiety hardening into resolve, he rinses his mouth, turns off the tap and turns to RAY, ready to throw himself off the cliff --

He enters the bedroom. RAY's naked. Holy fuck.

RAY
Do you snore?

COLIN
No. Not that I know of.

RAY
How's your bladder?

COLIN
My bladder?

RAY
Will you wake me up going to the toilet in the middle of the night?

COLIN

Oh. No. I think my bladder's pretty good actually.

RAY points to a rug at the foot of the bed.

RAY

If you're quiet you can sleep on the rug. If not you should go in the corridor.

With that RAY climbs into bed.

COLIN's eyes flick to the rug. Is RAY serious? This wasn't what he thought he was signing up for.

Slowly, he lowers himself to the floor.

Silence presses down on him. There's none of the noises of his own bedroom. No creaking timber, scuttling mice or water in pipes. And RAY makes no noise at all.

RAY turns off the light, plunging the room into darkness

OMIT

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT (6 AM)

It's still dark outside when COLIN follows the sound of a metronomic alarm through to the kitchen.

On the table he finds a half-full laundry basket, a carton of 12 eggs, and an alarm clock weighing down a list of instructions.

COLIN turns off the alarm, then reads the instructions written in RAY's recognisable hand.

1. *Check dog's water.*
2. *Wash clothes.*
3. *General clean. Wipe down surfaces, vacuum etc.*
4. *Breakfast. Omelette (6 whites, 3 yolks). Coffee (black, 1 shot).*

COLIN feels the stiffness in his shoulder, the crick in his neck. What is he? A housemaid? He scrunches up the list.

A bark draws his attention to ROSIE at the street-facing window. COLIN heads over and looks out.

The street outside is quiet. Under the light of a street lamp RAY cleans his bike.

There's no great distance between them, no way RAY can't see COLIN standing there in full view. But not once does RAY acknowledge COLIN's presence, as if COLIN is so insignificant he's invisible.

The sounds of the pre-dawn suburbs (road-menders, reversing garbage trucks) fall away. Everything stops. In the silence, the air thickens as RAY draws a clean cloth tenderly across the alloy wheels, his movements loaded more and more with sexual consequence.

COLIN uncrumples the list of instructions and heads away from the window to get to work.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (8AM)

First light. 3 egg yolks huddle in the sink drain. COLIN delivers RAY's coffee to the table, where RAY is seated on the only chair.

COLIN
(needling)
Sorry if it's not to your liking.
I'm no barista.

COLIN returns to the counter and waits. Once RAY's swallowed the last of his omelette he takes a sip of coffee. Again he withholds thanks, shows no obvious satisfaction or disgust.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Do I pass then?

RAY
...

COLIN
What do I get if I pass?

RAY
You get to be my pillion.

COLIN
Yes but what do I get? Like,
actually?

RAY
Keep on pestering me and you won't
get a thing.

COLIN bites his tongue. RAY checks his wrist-watch, then removes it, locks his fingers behind his back and stretches his shoulders.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY (MINUTES LATER)

RAY's wrist watch lies atop a speaker. The sofa has been pushed back to clear a space.

RAY stares DOWN THE BARREL. He's stood in a wrestling singlet, arms out by his sides as he stretches: the Vitruvian Man made flesh.

REVERSE to reveal COLIN. Where RAY fills out his singlet, COLIN's is baggy. He has to pull up the shoulder straps to prevent them falling down.

RAY steps forward and they grapple.

Soon he heaves COLIN up in a bearhug. Feet dangling above the ground, COLIN cries out as RAY steps up the pressure on his back, shaking him from side to side like a rag doll. The pleasure on COLIN's face is legible.

RAY
Do you give, boy?

COLIN grits his teeth.

RAY (CONT'D)
Give!

COLIN
No!

RAY throws COLIN to the carpet where he lies on his front, wheezing.

RAY takes a moment to pose in the mirror, sucking in his stomach, flexing his pecs. It's a mighty body for a man of any age.

He returns his attention to COLIN, stepping on his hamstrings then rocking him back into a particularly painful submission hold called the MEXICAN SURFBOARD.

COLIN's left staring skyward, dangling above the air, immense pressure on his back, shoulders and neck. His erection strains against his singlet.

RAY wraps a thick forearm around COLIN's neck and pulls him down so his mouth is by COLIN's ear.

COLIN's screams change key with the increased strain on his back. He taps out.

COLIN (CONT'D)

I give!

RAY releases COLIN from the hold and for a few seconds they lie together in a sweaty tangle of limbs.

RAY

You know what this means?

He rolls COLIN onto his front, pulls his singlet down over his pale arse, and lubes up.

He locks COLIN's arms behind his back and enters him slowly. Even so, COLIN's jaw clenches at the pain.

RAY lies still for long seconds, the full length of his body pressing down on COLIN's, instep to heel, chest to shoulder blades, letting COLIN adjust to the sensation of his cock.

COLIN relaxes, murmurs his satisfaction.

RAY responds by building to a rhythm. Slowly at first. But soon he's pounding COLIN with his whole body.

COLIN wills himself to enjoy it. He wants so badly to be fucked. For Ray to enjoy fucking him. But the pain is overwhelming. "Ah" becomes "ow", eyes scrunch --

RAY pulls out and rolls off COLIN. Both men lie panting for some time, COLIN's sense of failure mounting in the silence.

COLIN

Sorry. Should I finish you off?

RAY

No. Help me move the sofa back.

They get to their feet.

COLIN

I didn't expect it to hurt that much. Sorry.

RAY

Stop saying sorry.

One at either end, they lug the sofa back into position.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL / LANDING - DAY

As he pulls his jacket on half an hour later, COLIN's defeated. He digs a gift-wrapped box out his rucksack.

COLIN
Thanks for having me. I had a lovely time.

RAY takes the package without comment.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Alright then. I'll be off.

RAY
Don't come back before six. Or you'll just have to wait outside.

COLIN
Six today?

Pause.

RAY
I'm sorry, are you busy? Is there a booming market for Colin Smiths I'm not aware of?

COLIN
No, it's just...

RAY
What?

COLIN
(SMILES) I'll see you at six.

RAY starts counting the cash in his hand.

RAY
I need you to pick up some things. I'll text you a shopping list.

COLIN
Yes.

RAY
And buy yourself a butt plug. You're too tight.

COLIN
Oh, okay. Sounds like a plan.

RAY hands COLIN £100 plus the unopened gift.

RAY

You can keep these. I don't eat chocolate.

COLIN

Oh well. Next time I'll wrap up an omelette.

When RAY chuckles COLIN feels triumphant.

PIANO MUSIC UNDERSCORES THE FOLLOWING SCENES:

EXT. STREET - DAY

TWO DELIVERY MEN on the receiving end of a parking ticket scream in COLIN's face, but today his attitude has shifted. Now when he's told "you're a disgusting piece of crap" he gets the giggles.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

COLIN walks down the pavement (butt plug in?). One hand grips shopping bags full of food and drink.

EXT. RAY HOUSE - NIGHT

COLIN arrives back to find THREE MOTORBIKES and ONE TRIKE parked alongside Ray's bike.

He rings the bell and waits, nervous.

INT. RAY HOUSE - NIGHT

As COLIN enters, heads turn his way.

Besides RAY, there are FOUR BIKERS.

RAY directs COLIN to the kitchen with a nod.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

COLIN enters the kitchen to find four pillions getting changed out of their biking leathers and into kinky aprons.

He recognises the pillions from the pub, particularly KEVIN with his blue mohawk, who hands COLIN a boring white apron.

COLIN notices the collars / chains padlocked around their necks.

Soon they're stood in nothing but their socks.

COLIN doesn't know where to look. His eyes dart to the window to see if they're being watched. Outside it's black.

KEVIN turns his tattooed bum to COLIN and hands him the apron strings. COLIN catches on, ties it at the back.

EXT. RAY HOUSE - SAME

ANGLE on TWO ADJACENT WINDOWS (kitchen and lounge) --

Once their aprons are tied, KEVIN and the other pillions bring drinks from the kitchen to the lounge for their bikers.

Alone in the kitchen COLIN swallows his self-consciousness and begins to strip. He has carpet burns on his knees from this morning's wrestle.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LOCKER ROOM / CORRIDOR - TRAFFIC WARDEN HQ - DAY

TIGHT on COLIN's phone screen. A candid photo of Ray looking hot.

COLLEAGUE
That's him?

COLIN
Yep.

A finger swipes to a new photo. RAY looking even better.

COLLEAGUE
That's your boyfriend?

COLIN
(unsure)
Well no. Not boyfriend. Not yet.

COLLEAGUE
How did you get a man like that?

COLIN
He says I have "an aptitude for devotion."

I/E. HONEYMOON MONTAGE - VARIOUS

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1) COLIN hastens out of traffic warden HQ, pulling on his tatty jacket as he goes. RAY is waiting with the engine purring. COLIN jumps on the back in one swift motion and they're on their way.

2) RAY FLAT. NIGHT. RAY on the sofa with his feet up on the coffee table, reading Knausgaard's My Struggle: BOOK ONE (A DEATH IN THE FAMILY). COLIN between his legs, watching TV. COLIN presses backwards against RAY's groin. RAY responds by squeezing COLIN's neck with his mighty thighs until COLIN's seeing stars.

3) RAY FLAT. DAY. RAY takes COLIN's measurements, smirking when COLIN puffs out his chest. He pulls a hand through COLIN's hair, testing the length.

4) WEEKS LATER. RAY FLAT. ENTRANCE HALL. Still light when RAY lets COLIN (carrying shopping) into his flat after work. COLIN drops to pet ROSIE, warmed to him now. He notices beribboned packages from LEWIS LEATHERS piled high by the door. RAY tells him to bring them inside.

5) BIKER PUB - CAR PARK. RAY walks through the car park, bustling with bikers. A convention. Summer is here. REVERSE to reveal COLIN 2.0. Tatty leathers replaced. Hair gone, shaven to the scalp. He carries a Tupperware full of sandwiches.

They reach the bike club: bikers sat round a table; pillions on a low wall. As COLIN joins the other clean-shaven pillions, his transformed look bestows a sense of belonging.

LATER -- TIGHT on RAY lying back on the bench. The key on the chain around his neck glinting in the sun.

TIGHT on COLIN stood against a tree. The padlock on the collar around his neck also glinting. He watches RAY bask in the sun, the pick of the bunch among these bikers and any bikers on this earth.

END MONTAGE.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SMITH HOUSE - DAY

The curtains drawn, the room dark.

PETE and PEGGY enter singing Happy Birthday. Set a cake before COLIN. The candlelight dances across the BIRTHDAY BADGE pinned to his breast.

COLIN's phone rings, interrupting their song.

COLIN
Sorry. It's Ray.

PETE and PEGGY share a look as COLIN picks up. Can't it wait?!

COLIN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hello?
(pause)
Sure, yes, no problem. Sorry, one second.

He searches through drawers for a pen. Pulls open the curtains, ruining the vibe. Rushes back to the table where the rejected cake burns away.

COLIN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Ready.

He scrawls ingredients (potatoes, gruyere, double cream) on the inside of the birthday card from his parents, further aggravating them.

COLIN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Okay. I'll be back in an hour.

But RAY's already hung up. No goodbye or love you.

COLIN finally blows out the candles.

PETE
Everything okay?

COLIN
Mmhm.

PEGGY
So when do we get to meet this Ray of yours?

COLIN
You have.

PEGGY
For half a second in the dark. It's an achievement, bagging a man like that. You should show him off.

PETE
Your mum used to parade me around town like a prize cow.

COLIN hopes they'll change the subject.

PEGGY
We're not that embarrassing are we?

COLIN
No.

PEGGY
Good. Let's get a date in the diary. Sooner rather than later...

COLIN acquiesces. PEGGY reads his shopping list.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
You having something nice for dinner?

COLIN
Potato dauphinoise.

PEGGY
Oooh, fancy. So he's a good cook, is he?

COLIN
I'm cooking. Ray doesn't cook.

PEGGY
What? He's making you buy and cook your own birthday dinner?

COLIN
I don't mind.

PEGGY
It's your birthday Colin. You're meant to be spoilt rotten. If Ray can't cook he could at least take you out somewhere nice.

COLIN chooses silence. Eventually:

PEGGY (CONT'D)
I suppose he can do the washing up.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - RAY HOUSE - DAY (EVENING)

ROSIE turns her nose up at the dauphinoise in her dog bowl.

COLIN washes up.

OFF-SCREEN -- RAY practices the same bars of Satie's Gymnopedie No.1 on repeat.

INT. LOUNGE - DUSK (30 MINUTES LATER)

RAY still practicing the same loop. Again and again. Never quite nailing it. COLIN boiling like an angry kettle.

RAY
You look like you want to say something.

COLIN
Really?

RAY
Yes.

COLIN
Oh.

RAY
No?

COLIN
No well yes, that reminds me. Would you maybe come have dinner with my parents some time?

RAY
Dinner?

COLIN
Or lunch.

RAY
At your parents?

COLIN
Yes.

RAY
You'd like that?

COLIN
They would.

RAY
I don't think it's a good idea.

COLIN
Okay.

RAY points to a position on the sheet music. Goes to play-

COLIN (CONT'D)

Could you maybe be persuaded? Could it maybe be my birthday present?

RAY

I hope you're not expecting a birthday present.

COLIN

It's my Mum. She's asked to meet you. And she's ill. She's dying, actually. But I don't want to force you.

RAY

No?

COLIN

No.

RAY

I'd say that's exactly what you're trying to do.

COLIN

I'm not-

RAY

You are. You fucking are!

The explosion startles COLIN.

COLIN

I didn't mean to upset you.

RAY

Colin, you couldn't upset me if you tried.

COLIN

You seem pretty upset, so...

RAY

So what?

COLIN bites his tongue.

RAY (CONT'D)

So nothing.

RAY resumes playing and is quickly at the end of the page.

He nods for COLIN to turn. A tense beat. Then COLIN obeys. The act of defiance lasted barely a second.

But now RAY doesn't resume playing.

RAY (CONT'D)
Time for bed.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight illuminates the grid-lines of RAY's stomach, gently rising and falling as he sleeps.

COLIN stood staring at the man he shares a bedroom with but not a bed.

The clock strikes midnight. It's no longer his birthday.

He lies down on his mat and rubs a hand over his soft belly. Not an ab in sight. It's hard to believe it's the equivalent part of the same species as Ray.

He shuts his eyes and tries to lull himself to sleep, counting the number of sit-ups that could turn his tummy into RAY's, counting down from a thousand.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

COLIN wakes to the sound of that familiar alarm. He leaves it ringing for long seconds before getting up. RAY's not in bed.

INT. LOUNGE - SAME

On the windowsill, atop the alarm, a single candle burns in a tiny cupcake. On seeing it COLIN's suddenly wide awake.

He approaches the window and startles. A barrage of revving and honking from the street below.

He holds up the cupcake to his audience and blows. Flashing headlamps strobe his face. He beams back.

CUT TO:

EXT. VARIOUS ROADS - MONTAGE

1) Dawn. Tunnel. RAY and COLIN out in front. Behind them, the rest of the club in formation.

2) Twilight. The club in the same formation heading over DARTFORD BRIDGE.

3) Day. Layby. RAY and STEVE study a road map while pillions buy coffees, bacon baps and cherries from a cafe. COLIN applies suncream to his scalp.

4) Day. Motorway. The club pass through the frame in profile.

5) Day. Countryside. The club ride through rolling hills down towards a river.

EXT. FIELD / RIVER - DAY

The bikers sprint towards the water, stripped of their leathers, cocks slapping against their thighs.

RAY's the first to reach the water's edge. As his soles come into contact with sharp rocks, his macho physicality deserts him and he looks delightfully dainty.

The rest of the bikers hoot and holler as the cold water hits their bollocks. One pillion (Paul the pup) exits the water and, dog like, careens across the field.

Some way behind KEVIN carries STEVE's rod, chair and parasol, as STEVE crutches his way towards the river's edge.

EXT. FIELD / RIVER - DAY (HALF AN HOUR LATER)

STEVE in his chair on the bank. A fishing-rod across his lap. KEVIN stood over him with a parasol.

DOWNSTREAM - the rest of the club in deeper water, testing the weight of their pillions on their shoulders.

UNDER WATER:

Pairs of feet struggle for purchase on the river bed.

ABOVE THE SURFACE:

Veins worm across RAY's forehead as -- jostled by another biker-pillion pairing -- he tries and fails to keep COLIN on his shoulders. COLIN crashes back into the water.

He surfaces to hear RAY shouting to Steve -

RAY

Can I borrow Kevin for five minutes? You can have Colin.

STEVE

Fine. If in ten minutes you lot
leave me to fish in peace.

RAY turns to COLIN who stands there, petulant.

RAY

Colin...

COLIN

What?

RAY

Don't be possessive. It's very
conventional.

COLIN swims off towards STEVE. He sees KEVIN kiss STEVE
before heading his way. A proper smooch on the mouth.
Jealousy bubbles in his stomach.

TIME CUT

In the next battle RAY and KEVIN are the last pair standing.

RAY lets out a victory roar and drops KEVIN into his arms
like a proud groom.

COLIN stares, green with envy. STEVE lights a fag.

EXT. BARN - DAY

In their aprons, the pillions remove trestle tables from a
barn.

EXT. ROLLING HILLS - WOODS - DAY

KEVIN and COLIN either end of a trestle table, carrying it
towards the woods. Another pillion pair with a table way
ahead of them.

COLIN

Boiling isn't it? And we're not
exactly drowning in clothes!

Silence.

COLIN (CONT'D)

So how come you're allowed hair?

KEVIN

I've been with Steve twelve years.
I get special privileges.

COLIN
What happened to his leg?

KEVIN
None of your fucking business.

COLIN
Don't you know?

KEVIN
Of course I know. Steve tells me everything.

COLIN downs his end of the table, halting their progress.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
So how's it going with Ray?

COLIN
Great.

KEVIN
You guys look good together.

COLIN
Thank you.

KEVIN
I mean it. He really is impossibly handsome. You sort of throw his qualities into relief.

COLIN tries not to rise.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Do you two never kiss?

COLIN
...

KEVIN
Don't you miss it?

COLIN
No.

KEVIN
You can kiss me if you want.

COLIN
No thank you.

KEVIN

I couldn't put up with no kissing.
It would drive me nuts.

(then)

He really is impossibly handsome...

Scowling, COLIN turns his back on KEVIN. They carry the table into the woods in silence.

PRELAP: Acoustic guitar

OMIT

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

GVs of dinner been and gone. A BIKER picks his teeth with a fish bone. Colin's fish picked clean.

(...)

One biker rides figures-of-eight through the woods.

The rest are by a bonfire playing poker. Acoustic guitar issues from a portable speaker. STEVE folds. Followed by RAY.

They leave the group, and move across to a line of trestle tables covered in white table cloths. PILLIONS are bent over the tables, facing away from the bonfire, their buttocks on display like a row of supermarket chicken breasts.

COLIN is next to KEVIN on one table.

STEVE places his stool in position by KEVIN's bottom and begins to eat KEVIN's arse with relish.

RAY rounds the table so he's by the pillions' heads. He walks up and down the row, surveying them, deliberating.

Finally he walks forward to KEVIN, who shoots COLIN a victorious look. COLIN's heart sinks.

KEVIN looks up at RAY with a big grin, then takes him in his mouth. COLIN wants to scream stop!

But RAY shows no pleasure in the act. There's no intensity. His hands stay folded behind his back, his hips still. It's like it's a formality.

Soon he withdraws from KEVIN and steps across to his pillion.

Now it's COLIN's chance to shine. He purses his lips and blows a stream of air on Ray's cock, grins as it stands to attention. Soon he's worshipping RAY's cock. It's world's apart from his first fumbling blow job on Christmas Day. RAY's eyes close and he releases little moans of satisfaction to let everyone know his pillion's doing the best job.

RAY rounds the table so he's behind COLIN.

He draws a finger from COLIN's nape, down his spine and beyond. COLIN purrs with pleasure.

RAY moves COLIN onto his back and begins to fuck him missionary.

Now it's COLIN's turn to shoot KEVIN a victorious look. But RAY's not interested in their rivalry. He takes COLIN by the chin, forces him to look into his eyes which seem bluer than ever. As COLIN starts to moan RAY clamps a palm over his mouth and leans down, so the only thing separating their lips is his hand. And suddenly, with a kind of spasm and a shout, COLIN reaches orgasm. The first orgasm of his life that wasn't by his own hand.

COLIN feels an incredible sense of relief, is moved to tears. He covers his eyes with his hand, but RAY pulls it away and holds eye contact.

If Colin was allowed to speak, he'd say thank you.

DISSOLVE TO.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The tall bonfire burns fiercely. Naked, COLIN pulls a stick from the flames. Holding it by the cold end, he turns to RAY, writes his name in the air like a child with a sparkler.

COLIN (V.O.)

Before I met you I was innocent in every way.

RAY (V.O.)

And now?

COLIN (V.O.)

And now I've lost virginitities I didn't even know I had.

COLIN begins to spin faster and faster until the stick's burning end becomes an orange circle orbiting his body.

CUT TO BLACK.

PRELAP: Knock-knock.

EXT. SMITH HOUSE - DAY

RAY and COLIN at the front door.

RAY
You'll pay for this later.

COLIN
I'll remind you.

PETE opens the door, beaming.

INT. KITCHEN - SMITH HOUSE - DAY

PEGGY and COLIN plating up. His bare scalp catches the glare of the ceiling light. Hers covered by her best wig.

PEGGY
I hope you're not keeping your hair like that to make me feel better. Because it doesn't. Your hair was your best feature.

COLIN
Ray likes it like this.

PEGGY
Is Ray a hairdresser?

COLIN
I don't know. I told you - he's discreet.

PEGGY
Yes. But what does that actually mean?

COLIN
It means don't ask personal questions.

PEGGY
I don't get it. Why not?

COLIN
Just don't, okay. It's a gay thing.

PEGGY goes to speak, then stops herself.

PEGGY
Right. That'll do.

As they pick up the plates, it dawns on COLIN this evening was a terrible idea.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SMITH HOUSE - DAY

RAY and PETE chatting at the table as lunch arrives.

PEGGY
What are you two chatting about?

PETE
Turbulence.

PEGGY
Terrifying.

PETE
Ray thinks it's getting worse!

PEGGY
Really? Do you fly a lot?

RAY
Not really.

Silence. PETE smiles awkwardly. Shifts his wine glass an inch to the right. Rack his brains for a conversation starter that doesn't violate RAY's discretion.

PETE
Well cheers everyone. Thanks for coming boys.

RAY
Thanks for having us. This looks delicious.

PEGGY
Tuck in.

They chink glasses and begin to eat. All except COLIN, who on noticing RAY's empty beer disappears to the kitchen to fetch him a fresh one.

PETE
(to Peggy)
Remember South Africa...
(to Ray)
Our honeymoon.
(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)

The flight nearly didn't go cause of storm something-or-other. Anyway, for ages they just kept us at the gate, and then we were boarding and the pilot came over the speakers and was like: "alright everyone, if you board this flight it's not gonna be pleasant but I will get you to Cape Town." Peggy was sobbing. I was --

PEGGY

Sobbing.

PETE

Not sobbing. But blimey!

He slaps out a rapid heart-rate on his chest.

PETE (CONT'D)

Amazing place though. Have you - can I ask - have you been?

RAY

No.

PETE

Oh. Amazing place...

Silence. PETE shifts his glass an inch to the left.

RAY

How long have you two been married?

PETE

Thirty-nine-

PEGGY

Thirty-nine-

PEGGY (CONT'D)

(SMILES) Thirty nine years.

PETE

Forty this September.

RAY

Wow. Congratulations.

PEGGY's prognosis the elephant in the room as COLIN returns with RAY's beer. RAY doesn't thank him. PEGGY notices. She goes to speak, stops herself, then --

PEGGY

So Ray. Colin tells us you're "discreet"?

RAY

Does he?

RAY turns to COLIN, who reddens.

COLIN

I just meant you're private.

RAY

(to Peggy)

Well yes. I believe in the benefits of privacy.

COLIN

Yes.

(to Ray)

Gravy?

RAY nods. As COLIN pours gravy onto RAY's plate, PEGGY's eyes narrow.

PEGGY

I don't get it though.

RAY

No?

PEGGY

What does it mean? Like, actually? You "believe in the benefits of privacy"?

RAY

It means -- I believe in the benefits of privacy.

PEGGY

Which are?

RAY

Well for one thing, if Colin's ever captured and tortured, he won't be able to give me up.

PETE

Blimey. That's a thought.

RAY

This gravy's incredible.

PETE

Best gravy in Bromley.

RAY
What's your secret?

PEGGY
What's my secret?

RAY
If you don't mind...

PEGGY
No, I just put the chicken on a rack so all the juices from the chicken go onto the veg. And then once the chicken's done remove it, and into those vegetables which has all that chicken juice, I add a bit of flour, chicken stock, salt and pepper, a squeeze of lemon juice, and a dash of hot sauce.

RAY
Hot sauce?

PEGGY
Yes. That's the secret.
(then)
Colin makes a good gravy.

RAY
(SMILES) No. Colin's good for an omelette, but that's about it.

COLIN and PETE laugh. PEGGY doesn't.

PEGGY
What's up with you?

RAY
What's up with me?

PEGGY
Yes. What's up with you?

COLIN
Mum - let's talk about something else.

PETE
I think / that's a very good idea...

PEGGY

(interrupting)

No come on Ray, I'm not one to judge. I'm just interested. What's your secret? Do you have another life? A husband somewhere?

PETE

Peggy!

PEGGY

Or a wife? Is that what discreet means? Does it just mean you have two wives and ten kids?

COLIN

(to Ray)

You don't have to say.

RAY

(acidic)

Don't I? I'll bear that in mind.

COLIN

Sorry.

PEGGY

(smilingly)

I'm not sure I like the way you talk to my son.

RAY

That's okay. It's not for you to like.

PEGGY

Excuse me?

RAY shrugs, looks to COLIN to explain.

COLIN

(to Peggy)

He's actually very nice when you get to know him.

PEGGY

Nice?! You don't know who he is Colin. What he does. If he's a hairdresser or a serial killer. You don't even know his last name. He could be on the run.

COLIN

He's too good looking to be on the run. He wouldn't get away with it. He'd turn too many heads.

Exasperated, she turns to PETE.

PETE

He is very good looking.

RAY

Thank you.

PEGGY

He's a creep. Our son's going out with a good looking creep.

PETE

Peggy-

PEGGY

And you - you're encouraging him.

RAY

Look, I can see I make you uncomfortable. This makes you uncomfortable. But deciding what makes you uncomfortable is wrong for your son. Honestly, that's a pretty backwards way of thinking.

PEGGY

I beg your pardon?

RAY

I'm saying you sound a little ignorant.

PEGGY

Well you sound like a cunt.

COLIN

Mum!

PEGGY

No I'm sorry Colin, maybe I'm silly and conventional, but I'd like to know -- before I die I'd like to know that my son isn't going out with a serial killer. Is that too much to ask Ray? Won't you do me that honour? Won't you tell me your full fucking name?

Her desperation is clear. RAY holds eye contact.

RAY

I knew a man who was told he had months to live. He converted to Buddhism. He seemed to find real comfort in it.

PEGGY

I don't give a shit Ray. Who are you Ray? Who the hell are you-

PEGGY goes to speak, but a sudden cough erupts from deep within her lungs. She swallows, wipes a string of bile away with her sleeve.

But then she starts up hacking, covering her mouth. It's horrid to hear - like a saw cutting wood.

PETE

Are you okay?

PEGGY

I can't breathe.

PETE

Hold on.

He moves to her side, rubs her back, offers her water and soothing words.

For the first time RAY looks rattled. Watching him feels like peeking behind the curtain at some memory or trauma.

Then, in between splutters -

PEGGY

Why are you still here?

RAY puts down his fork, wipes his mouth, exits.

COLIN stands to follow.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Sit down.

COLIN freezes.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

He won't make you happy.

COLIN

I don't know. When I'm with him I'm not not happy.

PEGGY

You can do better than that.

But after a beat, COLIN heads out after RAY, past a gallery wall of family photos on which the CAMERA lingers.

INT. SMITH HOME - DAY

Twine on the counter. Cut stems in the sink. STILL LIVES of fresh flowers in vases.

PETE (PRE-LAP)

In the village of Great Dunmow
there's a side of bacon given every
year to a couple who haven't had a
single quarrel.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

PETE at the lectern -

PETE

Me and Peggy could've won that
bacon every year. We had every
possible qualification.
(pause)
Well - apart from not living in
Great Dunmow.

Laughter ripples through the congregation. COLIN doesn't join in.

PETE (CONT'D)

I'm not saying we were the perfect
couple.
(then)
Actually, maybe I am. I've not seen
none better, and I've seen an awful
lot worse.

For the briefest second PETE catches COLIN's eye.

EXT. RAY HOUSE - DAY

Early evening. RAY returns home on his bike.

As he parks up we see COLIN waiting on the doorstep, stripped to funeral trousers and white polyester shirt.

RAY approaches, a flicker of concern. COLIN stands, brushes himself off, picks up the shopping bag by his feet.

RAY
You're back early?

COLIN
Yes. Sorry.

RAY
No that's okay. How was it?

COLIN
Good. A good turnout.

A beat. Then RAY rummages for his keys.

RAY
What's in the bag?

COLIN
Dinner. Mince, if that works?

RAY
You don't need to cook. I'll order
in.

COLIN
It's fine. I've bought it now.

RAY accepts this, leads COLIN inside.

INT. KITCHEN - RAY HOUSE - DAY (EVENING)

COLIN stirs a big pot of chilli, gloomy.

He places his hand over the rising steam and holds it there, ignoring his screaming nerve endings.

His eyes dart in the direction of RAY, watching TV in the next door room.

Suddenly his hand darts to the pan's metal handle and clamps down.

A split second before the burn registers.

AARGH!

The pot hits the floor with a clang. Tomato sauce goes everywhere. It looks like a murder scene.

COLIN squats and begins to scoop the sauce back into the bowl with his burnt hands.

ROSIE pads over and starts gobbling up the spillage. COLIN shoves her away, but she only comes back.

RAY arrives with a cloth. Drops to his haunches to help.

COLIN loses it. Hits out at RAY. Then bursts into tears.

RAY helps him up. Leads him to the sink. Runs COLIN's burnt hands under cold water.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

COLIN on the sofa. ROSIE growling.

RAY (O.S.)
Rosie, quiet.

She stills. RAY arrives carrying a pizza box, a delivery in place of the spilt chilli. He does something to make COLIN smile / laugh.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

COLIN enters from the bathroom to find RAY reading Knausgaard's My Struggle: Book 5 (SOME RAIN MUST FALL) in bed. He heads to his usual position on the floor.

RAY
Sleep in the bed tonight.

COLIN
That's okay. I'm feeling much better now.

RAY
It wasn't a question.

COLIN climbs into one side of the bed. RAY makes no effort to bridge the gap between them. Silence, then.

COLIN
Can I ask you something?

RAY
Yes.

COLIN
If you die before me - would you want me at your funeral?

RAY
I don't want a funeral.

COLIN
Would you come to mine?

RAY
Would you want me to?

COLIN
You know I would.

Silence.

COLIN (CONT'D)
You know I love you, right?

RAY
Yes.

COLIN
But you don't love me?

RAY
[Don't upset yourself.]

COLIN
Is that something that can change?

RAY
That's not what this is Colin.
That's not the point.

COLIN
Isn't love the whole point?

RAY
Of what?

COLIN
Everything.

RAY
I don't think so. I think love's a
Disney concept. But I like having
you around. I like you a lot
sometimes.

COLIN nods. RAY goes back to reading.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (PAST MIDNIGHT)

In his sleep RAY wraps an arm around COLIN, who snuggles up willingly. Right now it feels enough that this man likes him a lot sometimes.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (THE NEXT MORNING)

The alarm clock bleeps away on top of a fresh to-do list.

Colin turns it off, heads to ROSIE at the window, sees Ray cleaning his bike.

Things are back to normal.

FADE TO BLACK.

WEEKS LATER --

INT. FRONT ROOM - SMITH HOUSE - DAY

STILL LIVES of the same condolence flowers, now wilting in their vases. COLIN and PETE move through the room binning them. Cards on every surface.

COLIN
Should I bin the cards?

PETE
No. I'll put them in a drawer.

HIPPO on the sofa, toy in mouth.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - TRAFFIC WARDEN HQ - DAY

End of shift. COLIN isolated from the group.

RAY HOUSE - NIGHT

RAY on the sofa reading Knausgaard's My Struggle: Book 6 (THE END). COLIN on the carpet below.

COLIN
I've been thinking - you don't have to say yes - I know it was a sort of one off - but I was wondering if maybe I could sleep in your bed a bit more often. Not all the time, obviously. But maybe once a week?

RAY
...

COLIN
In fact, maybe once a week we could sort of have a day off.
(MORE)

COLIN (CONT'D)

One day a week where we wake up in the same bed, eat breakfast at the table together, I don't know, play a duet on the piano! That sort of thing. Not every day. I wouldn't want that. But maybe once a week could be nice. Could be fun. For both of us. Don't you think?

A beat, then.

RAY

No.

COLIN

No?

RAY

No.

COLIN

Fair enough. How about once a month?

RAY

No.

COLIN

Think about it.

RAY

Excuse me?

COLIN

Just think about it.

RAY glares.

COLIN (CONT'D)

So no. Just no. No no no.

RAY

If you're not happy Colin...

COLIN

I am happy. I just could maybe be happier...

RAY

...

COLIN

But no. Forget it. As you wish.

His tone is thick with resentment.

RAY marks his page, closes his book, gets up from the sofa.

RAY
Time for bed.

COLIN
I'm going to finish my chapter.

COLIN keeps his eyes rooted to the page, vibrating inside as he refuses to meet RAY's stare.

Beat.

RAY exits, turning the light off as he goes. COLIN stubbornly reads on in the dark (uses his phone light?).

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (ONE HOUR LATER)

COLIN takes a Tupperware of leftovers from the fridge and begins to eat, leaning against the counter.

He eyes ROSIE sleeping. He eyes the forbidden table.

Quietly, he moves to RAY's seat and sits down.

For a while he eats.

Then he gets up and heads to the drinks cabinet. He returns to the table with a bottle of whiskey.

INT. BEDROOM - SAME

The door whispers open. COLIN enters. Creeps up to the bed and stares at the sleeping RAY: the beauty of his breathing and being alive.

Ever so slowly, COLIN peels back the duvet and tries to climb in beside him. He's got a leg in when RAY's eyes snap open.

RAY
What are you doing?

COLIN
Nothing.

RAY
Go to sleep.

COLIN moves to his place at the foot of the bed. But after a beat, he tries to enter the bed from this new angle.

RAY expels him with a kick hard enough to leave a bruise.

RAY (CONT'D)
Get out. Sleep in the corridor.

COLIN seems to accept defeat. But at the door he turns. RAY eyeballs him.

COLIN
Stop scowling. You look very small-mouthed and old.

A beat. Then COLIN makes a running attempt at the bed.

RAY snaps into action, twisting COLIN's arm behind his back and forcing him out the room, slamming the door behind him.

INT. CORRIDOR - SAME

COLIN tries to barge the door but it won't budge. He beats on it, shouts insults, but when he stops there's no response. Clearly he's being ignored.

INT. LOUNGE - SAME

COLIN heads straight for the piano, opens the lid and starts hammering at the keys, trying to draw RAY out.

Instead it's ROSIE who arrives, growling, baring her teeth.

COLIN growls back at her, confrontational, but jerks out the way when she snaps at him.

COLIN exits the house.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

RAY lies wide-awake in bed, listening. It's quiet.

He shuts his eyes. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

The chainsaw whine of his bike engine rips him from his meditation.

He bolts to the window. What he sees has him charging out the room.

EXT. RAY HOUSE - SAME

COLIN astride RAY's bike, revving the engine with all the care of a child psychopath handling the class pet.

Suddenly RAY's racing towards him barefoot, arm outstretched.

COLIN accelerates away, evading RAY's clutches and roaring off down the street.

He's too fast into the turn onto the main road, nearly losing the bike from under him.

Once he's regained his balance he picks up speed. The wind buffets his t-shirt. The headlights of oncoming cars slide across his face. No helmet. Wild eyes.

Now he's getting the hang of it. Picking up the pace.

Until a LORRY up ahead gives him pause.

Fuck it.

He goes for the overtake.

The engine roars. The speedometer rises. Vibrations spread from his bare hands white-knuckling the handlebars through his entire body.

He makes the pass.

Mission accomplished he whoops and hollers, triumphant.

So this is what it feels like to take the reins! To stick it to the man!

JUMP-CUT with COLIN as he speeds along the open stretch of road for some time, riding high.

But then he's slowing down, stopping at a traffic light.

Bathed in red light, we see his expression begin to shift as he processes where he is, what he's done, the danger, the consequences.

By the time the lights turn green he's lost his nerve.

He makes a cautious u-turn and returns the way he came, now going well within the speed limit.

EXT. RAY HOUSE - DAY (THE NEXT MORNING)

COLIN asleep on the doorstep.

The front door opens. RAY squats, gives COLIN's shoulder a gentle wobble till he wakes.

RAY
Morning.

COLIN
Morning.

It takes him a few seconds to remember he did something very stupid. The colour drains from his face.

RAY
Come on. Let's get you inside.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

COLIN stands there staring as RAY moves to the counter and returns with two plates - an omelette on each.

RAY
Come on sit, before it gets cold.

COLIN sits but doesn't eat. There's something different about RAY.

COLIN
What is this?

RAY
Breakfast.

COLIN
I don't understand.

RAY
I made you breakfast. I thought we could try a day off.

There's no menace in the way RAY says this. But the lack of menace is eerie. RAY begins to eat. COLIN follows suit, cautious, half-wondering if he's about to be poisoned.

RAY (CONT'D)
Sorry. They're a bit overcooked.

COLIN
No they're nice. I like them like this.

RAY smiles.

RAY
So what shall we do? Where shall we go?

COLIN
What do you want to do?

RAY
It's your day off. You decide.

COLIN looks out the window -

COLIN
Okay, well, uh. It's a nice enough day. Maybe we could bike somewhere.

RAY
No biking today.

COLIN readies himself for a bollocking...

COLIN
I'm so sorry about last night. I was rude and stupid and not myself at all.

RAY
No biking. It's a day off.

That same smile. COLIN risks a smile back.

COLIN
But I'll pay for it later?

RAY
No.

The "no" is conclusive. Without frisson.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

LONG ZOOM on the pair, walking side by side for the first time. COLIN still wary, waiting for his punishment to reveal itself.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

COLIN and RAY sit on a bench with their coffees, blending into the weekend crowd. Across the street, a BUSKER draws a small audience.

RAY
So... what next?

COLIN
Umm...

A long pause.

RAY
Sing something for me.

COLIN grins, hoping he's joking, aware of all the strangers in near proximity.

RAY (CONT'D)
I'm serious.

COLIN
What, here?!

RAY
Teach me some barbershop.

COLIN shy. RAY nudges him playfully in the shoulder.

RAY (CONT'D)
Come on! Unless you're worried I'll show you up...

COLIN sings a line quietly, trying to avoid attention.

RAY copies, his voice tuneless enough to make COLIN giggle.

RAY (CONT'D)
What, you think you're better than me?

RAY goes to a nearby bench where a couple of ELDERLY LOCALS are having their lunch.

RAY (CONT'D)
Excuse me, madame. Can I borrow you a second. We need an impartial judge for a sing-off.

ELDERLY LOCAL
Well we ain't moving. You can come here.

RAY
(shouting over)
Colin!

COLIN heads over, tail between legs.

They sing the same line of barbershop in turn.

COLIN wins unanimously.

In jest RAY storms off, returns and shakes COLIN's hand, raises it in the air like a boxing champ.

COLIN enjoys the charade, feels himself relaxing.

INT. CINEMA - DAY

The pair take their seats slap-bang in the middle of a near-empty cinema. RAY eats popcorn from a box in his lap. Something about his open posture encourages COLIN. He reaches across and takes a handful. No protest on RAY's part.

RAY

Do you come here often?

COLIN

I used to. I've sat in that seat over there more times than I can count. G16. Right in the corner. Friday nights I used to tell Mum and Dad I was going out for dinner or going on a date, but really I just came here and watched a film till it was late enough that I could go home without them feeling sorry for me.

A beat. Then RAY rests his hand on COLIN's thigh, a little above the knee.

A beat. Then COLIN responds, resting his head on RAY's shoulder.

The lights go down.

INT. CINEMA - DAY (30 MINS LATER)

ANGLE BEHIND COLIN. Seemingly by himself as the film plays. No sign of RAY.

An USHER climbs the aisle. Stops by COLIN's row. Shines his torch on COLIN.

USHER

Excuse me.

RAY's head rises into view from COLIN's lap, his mouth sticky with saliva.

USHER (CONT'D)
Please come with me.

RAY
Sorry, I'm not quite finished.

USHER
Now!

The pair stand, COLIN tugging up his trousers -

COLIN
One sec.

COLIN zips up, fastens the button.

Suddenly he bolts, dragging RAY after him. They race out the other end of the row and away through the exit.

INT. FOYER - CINEMA - SAME

They hurtle down the stairs. RAY's first to the bottom. He grabs a pack of sweets from the kiosk as he scarpers. COLIN follows suit. They exit onto the street.

Moments later, the USHER skids to a stop in the doorway and watches them go.

EXT. TOWN CENTRE - DAY

The pair flee the scene, laughing as they dodge the weekend crowds.

EXT. STREET - DAY

TRACK the pair weaving through pedestrians on a busy pavement.

EXT. STREET - DAY

TRACK the pair, still running but now hand in hand, away from the crowded town centre.

EXT. PARK - DAY

TRACK the pair as they cross onto grass.

COLIN catches RAY and jumps on him, bringing him to the ground.

They wrestle on the ground for a moment, a gentle play fight in the romantic tradition, strikingly different from their previous one-sided contests at RAY's home.

COLIN finds himself on top, straddling RAY, their faces close enough to feel the tickle of the other's breath.

Eyes fixed on eyes.

RAY invites COLIN to make the move.

A beat of startled passivity.

COLIN wants RAY to kiss him.

RAY accepts, pulls COLIN in for a kiss, finds it returned with feeling.

It's the first kiss COLIN's been dreaming about for months.

They break apart, breathless. COLIN giddy, the cat that got the cream.

RAY studies his reaction, finds an answer.

His face clouds over with a new resolve.

Colin recognises this with a sudden sense of dread.

The fantasy falls away.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - SMITH HOUSE - DAY

COLIN lies at the foot of the bed staring at the ceiling in the same clothes we last saw him in.

COLIN (V.O.)
I gave Ray a week to cool off.
Worst decision I ever made.

INT. SMITH CAR - NIGHT

THROUGH THE WINDSCREEN - the car heading along a main road.

The car turns into RAY's street. Pulls to a stop outside Ray's home. An empty space where RAY's bike used to be.

The car stops. COLIN gets out, approaches the front door, rings the bell.

COLIN (V.O.)

Seven days was enough to end seven months. Enough for him to evaporate.

INT. RAY HOUSE - VARIOUS

Shelves emptied of records and books. No dog bowl beneath the window. Nothing of RAY remains except the piano.

A SEQUENCE OF STILL LIVES imply - through harsh shifts in light and sound - the passing of time.

COLIN (V.O.)

For weeks, Dad drove me to Ray's every day after work, and before work the next morning. But he was gone.

THROUGH THE WINDOW - Colin returns from RAY's door to PETE's car.

INT. SMITH CAR - DAY

ANGLE looking through the windscreen onto RAY's house as COLIN climbs inside.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SMITH CAR - PUB CAR PARK - DAY

PETE taps a nervous rhythm on the steering wheel.

Through the windscreen he watches COLIN ask STEVE, KEVIN and other members of the bike club where RAY is. They don't know. When he presses them they maintain ignorance.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SMITH CAR - BIKER CAR PARK TWO - DAY

A big gathering of bikers.

PETE has joined COLIN outside. They move between the different bikers, asking after RAY. No one's seen him.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SMITH CAR - BIKER CAR PARK THREE - DUSK

The biggest gathering yet. Late afternoon September sun bounces off the windscreen. COLIN in the passenger seat.

PETE O.S. Until he returns to the car with two ice creams. He offers one to COLIN.

COLIN
I said I didn't want one.

PETE
I know but... please. Or I'll be forced to eat two. (CHUCKLES)

COLIN takes one reluctantly.

PETE (CONT'D)
I think I could've been a great ice cream man in another life.

A new BIKER roars into the car park and dismounts. He's tall and broad, positively Vitruvian. COLIN sits up. But when he takes off his helmet it's not RAY.

PETE (CONT'D)
Blimey, he's a bit of alright.
Don't you think?

COLIN
His sideburns make his face look fat.

PETE
Oh. I think he's very handsome.

COLIN
...

PETE
You know Colin, Ray was hardly the first sexy biker, and he won't be the last.

COLIN
...

PETE
All I'm saying is, there's plenty more fish - well maybe not plenty like Ray - but there's other fish in the sea, in this here sea, if that's the sea you wanna fish in.

COLIN

...

A bark from the back seat O.S. PETE twists round.

PETE

Yes Hippo. I know you want your dinner.

When he turns back, he notices COLIN's tearing up again.

PETE (CONT'D)

Why don't we knock it on the head for today? We can try somewhere else next weekend. Okay?

COLIN nods his assent.

PETE starts the car and drives out the car park.

The frame remains static, looking out through the windscreen, but as they curve towards the exit the new sense of movement should feel reinvigorating, like a bowel movement after a month of constipation.

The car turns onto the main road.

COLIN turns to the window, to streets flashing by. Tattered shops with grubby brick faces. Pedestrians going about their days. Balconies full of clutter. It all looks very ordinary.

FADE TO BLACK.

BLACK

PRELAP: A vocal warm-up. The same one COLIN taught RAY on their "day off".

INT. PUB - NIGHT (DECEMBER)

The SMITH FOUR warming up in a corner of the pub or a makeshift green room. COLIN sat to one side, head in his phone, not taking part in the warm up.

TIGHT on his phone screen. He's filling in a dating app. profile. Cursor blinks in the empty ABOUT ME textbox.

COLIN (V.O.)

So yes. A bit about me...

He begins to type --

COLIN (V.O.)
 I've been told I have an aptitude
 for devotion...

INT. PUB - NIGHT

The Barbershop Four take the stage --

COLIN (V.O.)
 ... I'm obedient, hard- working and
 excellent at following
 instructions. I'm low maintenance,
 have a high pain threshold, and
 rarely fail to deliver on any task
 I'm given. But I'm also very modest
 so this is probably the only time
 you'll hear me sing my own praises.
 Unless you ask. I won't cut my hair
 for anyone. And I require one day
 off a week. That's not up for
 debate. The rest of the time, your
 wish is my command.

They begin to sing 'Smile'

EXT. VARIOUS - DAY

A sequence of "journey" shots of COLIN walking towards the
 park, a cling-filmed plate of oranges in hand.

EXT. PARK - DAY

A Sunday League football match underway. Podgy forwards
 battle clumsy defenders.

Colin circles the pitch.

Spectators are dotted along one touchline.

COLIN peers down it, looking for someone...

He steps out onto the pitch and begins to walk.

Moments later an oncoming player has him darting for the
 other side of the touchline.

He presses on, walking behind the spectators, until he spots
 the man he's looking for. DARREN, the home team's manager,
 barking at one of his players.

COLIN removes his hat, fixes his hair. It's grown back, but been styled in a way that gives Colin a glow-up.

He arrives by DARREN's side, lingers for a beat while DARREN stares out at the game. Then --

COLIN
Darren?

DARREN glances across.

COLIN (CONT'D)
It's Colin.

DARREN
Right. You're early.

DARREN returns his focus to the game. COLIN feels his confidence wobble.

A long pause.

COLIN
What's the score-

But DARREN's storming off the touchline onto the pitch to berate the ref.

DARREN
Oi no chance! He got the ball!

On COLIN: a flicker of arousal.

BACK TO:

PUB

A key change. The singing ramps up.

BACK TO:

PARK

COLIN looks across at DARREN.

Then back to the game.

Then back to DARREN, letting his eyes wander pointedly down DARREN's pristine football kit to his boots, caked in mud. Then back up.

DARREN
What are you staring at?

COLIN
If you don't want me staring, wear
something else.

A beat. Then DARREN turns to COLIN, holds eye contact.

"You'll pay for that later" he says with his stare.

COLIN feels himself go hard.

They return their attention to the pitch, both smiling now.

BACK TO:

PUB

The singing reaches its climax.

BACK TO:

PARK

DARREN leads COLIN out the park. Colin carries the ball bag
over his shoulder.

DARREN
Can you cook?

COLIN
Yes. Yes I can.
(then)
I bet you're hungry after all that
football.

DARREN
Starving.

COLIN
What can I make you?

DARREN
Surprise me.
(then)
No gluten.

COLIN
No gluten. Understood.

CAMERA cranes up, till we're high and wide above the park and COLIN / DARREN are mere dots.

BACK TO:

PUB

TIGHT on COLIN as the Barbershop Four belt out the song's final chord, smile stretched across his face. Finally the note ends and for a split second we see his smile waver.

CUT TO BLACK