

SEX EDUCATION

by

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FADE IN:

OPENING CREDITS ROLL over clips from assorted sex education films of all ages, races and styles. The blunt, the louche, the stilted and coy; clips from the noughties, from the forties, from India and from France. All trying their best to explain this most basic human function.

CREDITS END on a cheap, oversaturated, eighties example. All tinny synth music and crap video effects. In a lurid disco, a boy and a girl dance woodenly.

PULL OUT from the video to reveal an old-fashioned biology lab. Tall wooden benches, cast iron retort stands and a class full of cynical, self-conscious sixteen year-olds stifling giggles as they label anatomical diagrams.

At the back ARTHUR POTTS, small, messy and ink-stained, appears to be studiously taking notes. Close up we see that he's pasted his vagina diagram hand-out into a scrappy art book and made it the core of a drawing of a naked woman, bent over, peering up seductively. He adds a speech bubble: 'Ooh, Arthur touch me on my labias'. He proudly looks across to share it with best mate THOM BARTON: Shy, anxious and gazing absent-mindedly at OLIVIA HARPER in the next row. Pretty, gauche and colour-coordinated, she lazily paints her nails with pink highlighter.

ARTHUR

(sotto)

Maybe if you took her to the
discotheque?

Thom snaps to, caught out, embarrassed, pleading innocence.

THOM

What? Why?

ARTHUR

(nodding to the screen)

Do a little dance, make a little
love. Touch her jub-jubs.

O/S

POTTS!

Arthur swivels to attention. The video has been paused by MR SCHRICTER, tall, vulpine and imposing, a man in love with his position rather than his job.

MR SCHRICTER

Quick quiz. What occurs
immediately after ejaculation?

Arthur stammers, bewildered. Without prompt, Thom covers his mouth, dips his head and whispers.

THOM
Heart rate regulates...

ARTHUR
Err, your heart rate regulates...

THOM
Endorphins released from brain...

ARTHUR
And dolphins are released from
the brain?

The class erupts with laughter. Thom winces, casting a look of disbelief at his friend. Schricter privately takes note.

MR SCHRICTER
(to the class)
Shut it.
(to Arthur)
We just watched the video. What
were you doing?

Schricter marches over and picks up Arthur's art book, showing it to the class. The cartoon is met with universal disgust and derision. Thom withers, tainted by association.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Very artistic. Detention.

Arthur just shrugs petulantly. Mr Schricter spots this.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
And this stays with me.

Arthur looks genuinely panicked.

ARTHUR
But, Mr Schricter...

MR SCHRICTER
'But Mr Schricter!' Right. Who
else? What happens after
ejaculation?

A few hands go up. Thom's does not. Mr Schricter ignores the sea of straining arms, looking straight at him.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
What about Rain Man over there?
Come on Barton, help us out.

THOM
(mumbles)
I don't know, sir.

MR SCHRICTER
Can't hear you. Stand up!

Thom half gets to his feet, head bowed.

THOM
I don't know, sir.

He sits straight back down.

MR SCHRICTER
See I think you do know. I think you're just too shy and delicate to want to take part in my class.
(off the kids' laughter)
Is that it? Are you a shy little mouse?

Thom goes bright pink and just stares ahead.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Well, we'll just have to wait.

Schricter folds his arms and perches on the edge of his desk. The class groans and stares daggers. Thom sweats.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Maybe we should rethink that medical school application? Hell of a doctor you'll make if you shit yourself every time someone asks you a question. Or do you just need someone there to hold your hand. Is that it? Here.

Schricter takes Thom by the hand. Thom blurts out.

THOM
Endorphins are released from the pituitary gland...

MR SCHRICTER
He does know! A miracle! Praise be to Allah!

Thom goes to sit but Schricter won't let go of his hand.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
And what else? Come on! Something more...physical.

THOM
The...the...

MR SCHRICTER
The...The...

THOM

The penis becomes flaccid.

The class explode like shrieking baboons.

CLASSMATE

Your penis is flaccid.

The class roar again. Thom looks around in disbelief.

THOM

What? Shut up.

CLASSMATE

What you saying it's not flaccid?

Sir, Thom's got a lob on!

Howls from the class. Thom is burning red, dying inside.

MR SCHRICTER

Alright, alright.

(Thom looks relieved)

That's enough about Thom's boner.

(to Thom)

Correct. Well done. No doubt gleaned from a long succession of hot and heavy one night stands, is that right?

He smirks. Already uncomfortable, Thom catches Olivia's eye and reddens even further.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)

You're not at med school yet.

Play your cards right and you could piss your life away in Woodford just like your little mate here.

The bell goes. Instantly kids jump up, gathering their bags. Schricter shouts, halting them instantly.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)

Sit down! Thanks to Barton and Potts we'll all be staying into break. You can thank them later.

Thom just closes his eyes against the angry glares.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Hordes of kids rampage through the school's austere corridors where oak panels bear the names of decades old team captains and scholarship recipients (blank since 1971).

Though clearly once an institution of some standing, now the high ceilings are peeling and the oak panels are covered in notices, petitions and anti-drug posters.

Thom and Arthur march along, trying to ignore the angry looks, comments and 'accidental' shunts of their peers. Thom sports a dated and faded wide-lapelled corduroy jacket over his standard-issue school shirt and tie.

ARTHUR

I definitely heard 'dolphins'.

Thom doesn't respond. He's in a mood.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm the one who got his book nicked.

THOM

It's just a stupid art book. Get another one. If I don't get into Imperial that's my whole life fucked.

ARTHUR

(clearly offended)

It wouldn't have happened if you hadn't been perverting up Olivia.

THOM

I wasn't...I don't fancy Olivia, okay? I was just thinking about something.

ARTHUR

Thinking about how badly you want to suck her tits.

Breaking into a smile, Thom goes to kick Arthur up the arse but he laughs and runs outside.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

The boys spill out into the vast green spaces of this grand old schoolyard, passing WESLEY, an effortlessly handsome kid and his mob of similarly styled acolytes hanging out on the steps. Arthur gives Wesley a 'cool' cocked-gun finger gesture as he passes but it's entirely ignored. Arthur tries to style it out. Poorly. Thom smirks.

THOM

What was that?

ARTHUR

What? We're in the same art set.
(quickly owning up)

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get us an invite to his big end of term party.

THOM

Why would we want to go to Wesley Dean's party?

ARTHUR

(tentatively)

Just...might be fun? We could go and..take the piss or whatever.

THOM

Won't be fun. It'll be a bunch of overgrown kids running around playing kiss chase while you and I have to sit in the corner talking to each other all night.

ARTHUR

Oh, cheers!

The boys slump down on the plinth of a crumbling statue.

THOM

Listen, we've got less than a year left in this place. Take out half terms and weekends it's 183 days. Let's just keep our heads down, stay out of the spotlight and get through it. Then it's no more Schricter, no more kids' parties, no more of this playground bull...Shit! Battrani!

Thom and Arthur feign a sudden interest in the statue's plaque but it's too late. CHAZZ BATTRANI has spotted them.

CHAZZ

Alright, benders? Guess who's swung an invite to Wesley's party? S'gonna be the mash-up of the century, innit! Wall to wall jelly-bucket. All just waiting for some boom boom pow.

('casually')

Probbly end up fingering some vag.

ARTHUR

Yeah? Your cousin's gonna be there is she?

CHAZZ

Fuck off. That was three years ago. You boys are just jealous.

THOM
Jealous of you fingering your
cousin?

CHAZZ
I didn't finger her.

THOM
(to Arthur)
He's not one for the foreplay.

CHAZZ
Suck a bollock, Barton. Nice
jacket by the way.
(a grand beat)
For a paedophile.

THOM
Clever.

Arthur leaps in, outraged, but clearly enjoying the drama.

ARTHUR
Chazz! That was his dad's jacket.

Thom looks to the floor, embarrassed. Chazz looks suitably
humiliated too but can't back down.

CHAZZ
So? What? I didn't know did I?

He cuffs Arthur on the ear.

ARTHUR
What? What was that for?

Arthur cuffs him back. As they fight, Thom looks up to see
Olivia apparently walking in his direction. He panics.

THOM
Err...guys.

CHAZZ
...trying to make me feel bad...

THOM
Guys!

They look up and spot what Thom's seeing: Olivia Harper
definitely now heading straight for him.

THOM (CONT'D)
Hellooo!!

OLIVIA
 (light disdain)
 Alright? I just got sent by the
 head? She wants to see you.

THOM
 Oh, yeah? That old... witch.

He snorts, but dies a bit inside. Chazz and Arthur smirk.

CHAZZ
 So...Olivia, are you going to
 Wesley's thing?

She turns, surprised to be addressed by the loser.

OLIVIA
 Yeah. Why?
 (with disbelief)
 Are you?

Yeah!

CHAZZ

Maybe.

ARTHUR

THOM
 (too forceful)
No! No. I mean, we could go but,
 I don't know, we probably won't.
 Just not really our sort
 of...scene.

OLIVIA
 (bit insulted)
 Why not? What's wrong with it?

THOM
 Well, no, it'll be good it's just
 that, y'know, you get a lot of
 losers don't you. All sort of
 prancing about to Girls Aloud or
 some crap. Drinking blue WKD and
 crying on the stairs.

OLIVIA
 What's wrong with WKD?

Chazz and Arthur cringe.

THOM
 No. Nothing. It's nice.
 Fizzy...it's just..so Miss
 Daniels wants to see me now? Like
right now. I should probably...

Thom slings his bag over his shoulder and hurries off.
 Arthur and Chazz are left smiling vacantly at an
 unimpressed Olivia.

INT. MISS DANIELS' OFFICE - SCHOOL - DAY

A cramped, musty office filled with books and dying plants. An obese, bored old woman, MISS DANIELS, sits squinting at a document through her half moons, pen in hand. In front of her sits Thom.

MISS DANIELS
This doesn't say who you've
chosen as your personal tutor.

THOM
I haven't picked one yet.

MISS DANIELS
Do it soon. Without a glowing
personal reference this form's a
waste of time. Now, interests?

THOM
Erm. I like reading...music...

MISS DANIELS
Very controversial. GCSEs?

THOM
8 A stars, 3 As.

MISS DANIELS
Do you have a girlfriend?

She hovers a pen above the paper. Thom stammers, flustered.

THOM
Erm. Well. No, not at present.
I'm between girlfriends.

She peers at him, saying nothing.

THOM (CONT'D)
I mean, y'know, I've had
girlfriends. Not girlfriends,
like, long term, but...I've
kissed girls and...stuff, if
that's what they mean. A girl.
But, y'know, not just kissing.
All sorts. Is this on the form?

A flicker of a dark smile crosses her face.

MISS DANIELS
Nope.

Thom blushes and gazes at her in utter, angry confusion.

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)
 Now, are you a member of any
 school societies? Chess Club?
 Library Bunch? Young Inventors?

Thom squints at her with growing indignation.

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)
 You play the piano, weren't you
 in the band years ago? What
 happened there?

THOM
 They painted 'band queer' on my
 locker, my bag and the tops of my
 shoes.

MISS DANIELS
 (utterly unmoved)
 Right, so you don't participate
 in school life at all. You've got
 nothing else to offer?

THOM
 Other than 8 A stars and 3 As?

She removes her half-moons and sighs onto a lens.

MISS DANIELS
 From a pile of over 4000
 applications, Imperial accepts
 around 300 medical students per
 year. They've all
 (reading from his form)
 'wanted to be a surgeon for as
 long as they can remember' and
 they all have the 24-carat GCSEs.
 Good grades aren't enough any
 more. They want all-rounders.

Thom's jaw hangs at this terrible revelation.

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)
 Mr Chandos is auditioning for the
 school play. You could do that?

THOM
 I couldn't. I literally couldn't
 do that.

MISS DANIELS
 Why?

THOM

One - 'play queer'. Two - I'm just, I'm not good with...attention. There must be something else. Anything.

MISS DANIELS

Have you ever considered voluntary work?

Thom sighs in resignation. Then a ghost of a smile...

THOM

Can I bring a friend?

EXT. STATELY HOME - GARDENS - EVENING

A well-heeled garden party. A large banner reads 'ACT on Arctic Conservation'. Thom and Arthur stand behind a bar in front of a huge ice sculpture of a polar bear. They wear waiter's uniforms - black trousers, white shirts...and furry polar waistcoats.

ARTHUR

Just admit it. Say 'I love Olivia Harper. I want to kiss her and hold her and dickslap her bangers'.

A shocked reveller hands over two empties. Arthur takes them and then points to the floor in horror.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Shit, look at that!

Thom and Arthur duck beneath the bar out of sight. They neck the dregs from the empty glasses, whispering...

THOM

Shut. Up. I don't like her!

ARTHUR

I don't know why you're so embarrassed. She's quite fit.

They bob back up, wiping their mouths.

THOM

She's just...I dunno. She's such a...teenager.

ARTHUR

You're a teenager, you anus.

Before Thom can respond...

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Holy shit, a...mole!

Arthur grabs two full glasses of champagne this time. They duck down for two seconds then resurface looking distinctly giddy. Giggling. As they regain their focus Arthur is struck by what he sees. He nudges Thom.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Shit. The. Bed.

Thom, filling up glasses of red wine, looks up to see a heart-stoppingly pretty woman, EMMA, early thirties, being talked at by an overbearing older man. She laughs politely like she's had to do it her whole life. Thom swallows.

THOM
Wow. I mean...fuck.

He's overfilled one of the glasses. Arthur drunkenly grabs for it but only succeeds in knocking it over Thom's waistcoat. Thom swiftly whips off the waistcoat and checks his shirt for damage.

THOM (CONT'D)
Shit. Do you think they'll charge me? Arthur?

But Arthur's back staring at the woman.

ARTHUR
She's like that Monica Bellucci but...real. You've gotta go and talk to her.

THOM
What?

ARTHUR
You have to. When do we ever meet women like that? That's like, six months of wanking material just speaking to her.

THOM
Why don't you go and talk to her?

Arthur looks at Thom - 'as if'.

THOM (CONT'D)
Well what am I going to say to her? 'Hi, my friend and I were just saying how fit you are. Will you come and talk to us so we can pop it in the wank bank?'

ARTHUR

Err, no. You're a waiter. Offer her a drink.

Thom gapes - stuck for an answer to that.

ANGLE ON: Emma, smiling professionally at a couple.

MAN

Emma, we're off. Thank you though. Listen, I'm sorry but...

In the background Thom nervously walks past the group. He makes to interject...and bottles it. He tries to back away.

EMMA

...completely understand. I'll just twist your arm twice as hard next year.

As they leave she turns to catch Thom reversing away. He tries to escape but it's too late.

THOM

Yes. Hello. I was just... I saw that you didn't have a drink and so...anyway, I wondered if you'd like one. A drink.

Emma smiles patiently, amused at the young man's front.

EMMA

Well. It's an A for effort and an E for technique there. Thanks for the offer but I'm spoken for.

Thom double takes, his jaw drops like Guy Goma.

THOM

What? No, I didn't...

She delights in his discomfort.

EMMA

Yeah yeah. Course you didn't. It's actually my event though, so let me.

She turns to where Arthur stands polishing glasses and attempting to see what's going on. She gestures to him 'two glasses of champagne, over here.' Arthur looks stunned.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You're a bit young for this crowd aren't you? Are you one of the new VentureCorp boys?

Thom stammers, unsure how to respond as Arthur arrives with a tray of drinks.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Oh thank you.
 (to Thom)
 Is champagne okay?

THOM

Oh, absolutely.
 (to Arthur)
 Thank you.

Arthur looks at Thom: 'what the fuck?' Thom shrugs back, bewildered.

ARTHUR

You're welcome. Sir.

Arthur slowly backs away, head cocked, straining to hear.

EMMA

So what do you do at VentureCorp?

THOM

What do I do? What do I do? At
 VentureCorp? What do I do? I...
 (gives up the pretence)
 I don't know, I'm not really...

EMMA

Huh. Tell me about it. Sometimes
 I wonder what I'm doing, too.

Arthur reverses back into shot brandishing a tray of drinks, craning to hear.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't get your name.

THOM

I'm Thom. With an aitch.

EMMA

Emma. Emma Schricter.

A CRASH from behind as Arthur drops his tray of glasses. She offers a business card. Thom looks at her in shock.

THOM

Emma Schricter? Cool. Cool.

Arthur fumbles across the floor trying to pick them up but only causes more disruption.

THOM (CONT'D)
 ('nonchalantly')
 Is there...is there a Mr
 Schricter?

Emma raises an amused eyebrow - he's very forward.

EMMA
 And that's an A star for
 persistence.

Again Thom reddens. She touches his arm reassuringly...

EMMA (CONT'D)
 Nice to meet you Thom.

...and moves off, leaving him dazed, flustered and a little
 bit in love.

EXT. LEAFY STREET - NIGHT

A bedraggled Thom and Arthur stumble home. Thom takes the
 business card from his pocket. Arthur grabs it.

ARTHUR
 Oh my God. She loved you. She
 totally wants to do you.

THOM
 It's just a business card.

ARTHUR
 With her number on. It's a 'do
 the business' card.

Arthur looks pleased with himself. Thom rolls his eyes.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
 It's a 'Monkey Business' card.

THOM
 Finished?

Arthur thinks.

ARTHUR
 Jizzness card.

THOM
 Good. So...

Arthur stops Thom in his tracks.

ARTHUR
 You should totally fuck sir's
 wife.

THOM

And thank you.

ARTHUR

I'm serious. She was practically foaming at the muff. She thought you were like, a real bloke.

THOM

And again.

ARTHUR

She gave you her number. You've got to do this. Why should an asshole like Schricter get to have sex with a vision like that while guys like us have to rush home just to catch the freeview on Channel X.

THOM

Guys like you.

ARTHUR

Fuck sir's wife.

THOM

No!

ARTHUR

Do it.

THOM

Shut up.

ARTHUR

Do her.

THOM

You better hurry up or you'll miss your show.

The pair bicker on into the darkness.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Thom and Arthur sit at the back. On the whiteboard is written '2nd TRIMESTER'. Schricter speaks as he writes...

MR SCHRICTER

Weeks 13-27. Vernix begins to cover the foetus, which...

A loud hip-hop ringtone cuts him off. He swivels, eyes like skewers. ENOCH, neanderthal school hardnut, scrabbles in his bag and grabs his phone.

But too late - Schricter swoops, snatches it off him, glances at the screen and answers.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Hewwo Jennifuh! Diss is Enoch torkin!

The class roar with laughter. Enoch scowls, mortified.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Can I call you back, Jennifuh?
Mummy's giving me bathtime now.
OK. Bye bye Jennifer! Bye bye!

Thom and Arthur laugh along. Enoch picks Arthur...

ENOCH
Oi shut up, prick!

...As Mr Schricter picks Thom.

MR SCHRICTER
I know, Mr Barton! Imagine how exciting it'd be if a girl wanted to talk to you on the phone!

Thom blushes as the class snigger.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
You could take her out on the town in your swanky new jacket.

Mr Schricter whips the jacket off the back of Thom's chair and tries it on for size. He plays to the gallery, strutting about foppishly.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
What do we think? Me?

Cackles from the mob. Thom stews darkly.

INT. ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - DAY

C/U on Emma's business card, now well thumbed.

Thom, sits on Arthur's bed, staring at it. The bedroom is a messy playpen: Posters on the wall; scalextric on the floor; drawings, cartoons and caricatures scattered about. Arthur talks as he rummages under his bed, chucking out old toys as he hunts.

ARTHUR
She gave you her card, she's expecting your call. It would be rude if you didn't call, I think.

As Arthur ferrets he chucks a Buckaroo set on the bed beside Thom. Thom picks it up. Arthur catches him smirking.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
What? I just haven't got round to chucking them yet. Here.

Arthur hands him the phone. Thom looks doubtful.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Come on! We can do it together. Be like that time we convinced Debbie Silton we'd been accepted for a manned mission to Mars.

THOM
We were just kids.

ARTHUR
Yeah, I know. And you're 'sick of being a kid'. Well...Emma doesn't think of you as a kid.

Thom contemplates this. It has a certain appeal.

THOM
I just...I'm not good on the phone. I get...
(scrabbles for a word)
like this! Look at me.

ARTHUR
You'll be fine. Just be doing something else while you're speaking. Bounce a ball or whatever. Something to concentrate on. It'll take your mind off it, make you sound cool.

INT. ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - LATER

Whilst carefully loading up a Buckaroo, Thom holds the phone to his ear. It rings. He nervously rehearses his opening gambit.

THOM
Hi, could I speak to Emma Schricter, please?
(more manly)
Hi. Could I speak to Emma Schricter, please?

INT. ARCTIC CONSERVATION TRUST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Emma sits at a desk in an uninspiring office. She finishes typing and impatiently answers the ringing phone.

EMMA
Emma Schricter.

INT. ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

THOM
Hi, could I speak to Emma Schricter, please?

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY.

EMMA	THOM
This is Emma Schricter.	This is Emma Schricter.

EMMA
Yeah.

THOM
Hmrrrrrr.

Thom goes totally blank. He stares at Arthur in panic. Arthur reaches for something on the floor.

EMMA
Sorry, who is this?

THOM
It's Thom. From the party. With an aitch.

EMMA
The pharty?

THOM
No, I mean...

She smiles, her brusque tone evaporates.

EMMA
I'm kidding. Hi Thom. How are you?

THOM
Fine thank you. Good.

Arthur thrusts his kids' blackboard under Thom's nose. On it he's scribbled: 'LOVED OTHER NIGHT. WANT KNOW MORE.'

THOM (CONT'D)

So, I really enjoyed the other night. Thank you.

Arthur gives him a thumbs up and resumes scribbling.

THOM (CONT'D)

And I'm just calling because I've actually been thinking of making a donation. I wanted to find out a bit more about the work you do.

Emma's eyes light up. She sits up.

EMMA

Great! Sure.

Arthur finishes scribbling: COFFEE? U & ME?

THOM

I was thinking perhaps we could discuss it over, say, coffee...

Emma rolls her eyes, cottoning on. He just wants a date.

EMMA

Well, we're actually having a fundraising evening this Friday night at Sotheby's. Why don't we discuss it there?

THOM

Er, well, erm, yeah. No, yeah that sounds...

The Buckaroo bucks, Thom nearly jumps out of his skin.

EMMA

Are you OK?

THOM

Yeah! Sorry, that was just my...horse, anyway, I should probably...

BUZZ!! Arthur looks up guiltily. He's playing Operation.

EMMA

What was that?

THOM

That was...my secretary. Buzzing me. So, I should go. But, Friday night. Great. OK.

Thom hangs up. He looks shaken and traumatised.

THOM (CONT'D)
Well that went well, I think.

ARTHUR
Your horse?

INT. SCHOOL CHANGING ROOMS - THE NEXT DAY

Thom (in his pants) and Arthur (in his speedos) towel off. Behind them boys spray entire cans of Lynx over themselves.

ARTHUR
My towel smells like Edam. It's like rubbing Edam in my hair.

Thom snorts. A kerfuffle - boys hastily cover up and loudly complain - as Miss Daniels enters.

MISS DANIELS
Calm down the lot of you, I'm not wearing my glasses. I need to see Mr Tyrell, is he still in the sports hall?

She spots Thom and halts.

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)
Ah, someone else I need to see. The Arctic Trust called. They've got an auction at Sotheby's on Friday evening.

THOM
(feigning ignorance)
Do they? Right.

ARTHUR
We'd love to.

THOM
What? No we wouldn't!

He shoots Arthur a look - Think!

THOM (CONT'D)
(thinking fast)
I just...It's an ethical thing. I don't agree with their aims.

MISS DANIELS
Saving penguins?

THOM
(to Miss Daniels)
Exactly. Yeah. I hate penguins. Always have. I'm anti-penguin.

Arthur and Miss Daniels stare at him like he's mental.

MISS DANIELS
I might just tell them you
weren't free.

Thom just stares at her. Punching himself internally.

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)
Well. You'll need to find
something else for your form
then. Mr Chandos tells me he
still needs numbers for the play.

Arthur smirks at Thom's misfortune.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Thom stares at a door, gathering himself. A couple of kids push past him and into the school theatre to reveal Wesley standing on stage warming up his voice, over-enunciating each syllable.

WESLEY
I like yogurt pots in New York.

Thom can't do it. As he walks away he spots Olivia and two friends approach and go in.

He chews it over for a moment. Looks around to make sure no-one's watching. And follows her...

INT. SCHOOL THEATRE - DAY

He gingerly closes the door behind him. It makes the slightest noise. Instantly, a shriek from the stage.

MR CHANDOS
WONDERFUL!

Thom flinches and turns. Everyone is staring at him. MR CHANDOS stands in the centre of a cross-legged circle of students. Over-earnest, he's clearly seen Dead Poet's Society once too often.

MR CHANDOS (CONT'D)
Hello and welcome! Another lamb
to the slaughter! Jump up and
join in.

Thom fights the urge to flee. He walks to the stage and clambers up as Olivia raises a hand.

MR CHANDOS (CONT'D)
 No need to put hands up in here.
 Does this look like a classroom?!

Thom edges round the circle, clumsily trawling for a gap.
 No-one budges.

OLIVIA
 Erm...what's the play?

He's forced to sit cross-legged, just outside the circle.

MR CHANDOS
 The piece is called The Knife's
 Tale. It's my own work, but for
 today I'd thought we'd improvise
 these auditions. See how you
 react without a script, OK?

Thom's eyes close. Oh Jesus no.

MR CHANDOS (CONT'D)
 So give it your best shit. And
 that's another thing. You're here
 to express yourselves. So if you
 feel it, if you feel like saying
 shit or fuck or whatever, say it.
 Everyone: Shit.

EVERYONE
 (unenthused)
 Shit.

MR CHANDOS
Fuck.

EVERYONE
 Fuck.

MR CHANDOS
 Great stuff.

Thom stares into his crotch, willing a stroke.

JUMP CUT TO:

A quick-fire series of improvised vignettes: Thom is faltering, awful and living his nightmare; Olivia cringes in the stalls; Mr Chandos and Wesley furiously overact at each other; Chandos throws Thom improv curveballs he's forced to act out or react to.

INT. THOM'S HOME - EVENING

Thom steps into a small, dark hallway.

THOM

I'm home!

He waits for a response. Then sags slightly when none comes. The house is empty.

INT. KITCHEN, THOM'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

He switches on the light. A post-it note sits on the table - 'DINNER IN FRIDGE. AT WORK IF YOU NEED ME. LOVE YOU!'

He opens the fridge door, which we see is festooned with Thom memorabilia, certificates and badges. He pulls out a ready meal, then opens the microwave, also covered in report cards, rosettes and photos of Thom.

As the machine quietly starts humming, he checks his watch.

INT. THOM'S MUM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A chintzy, grown-up room. An old photo of his parents at an eighties wedding sits on the dressing table. Thom opens a wardrobe revealing a rack of men's clothing, some bagged up for Oxfam. He hesitates, then flicks through. He removes a tuxedo and holds it up to himself. He stares at his reflection in the floor length mirror.

EXT. NEW BOND STREET, LONDON - EVENING

Thom, in ill-fitting dinner jacket, ruffled shirt and bow tie, walks down Bond Street, visibly intimidated by his high-end, A-list surroundings. He stops outside Sotheby's, adjusts his outfit, and takes a deep breath.

INT. THE GRAND HALL, SOTHEBY'S - MOMENTS LATER

He walks into the imposing hall. And freezes. White with panic. Not one other person is in black tie.

Arthur, busy waiting, spots him. His eyes widen, he breaks away and heads for Thom. He makes a play of offering the canapes, and whispers --

ARTHUR

What the fuck have you come as?

THOM

Oh my God. That's it, I'm going.

ARTHUR

No. Come on. It's fine. You look like James Bond. Stay, think of the penguins.

He smirks, looking Thom up and down.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I know I am.

Arthur laughs guiltily as Thom makes to leave.

THOM
Right, I'm off.

EMMA (V.O.)
Thom!

Thom swivels and sees Emma heading for them. Horror.

THOM
Mrs Schr...Emma! Hey! Hi!
(to Arthur)
No! Listen, I don't want a vol au
vent.

Arthur takes a second to catch up, then shuffles off.

EMMA
Sorry. Volunteer staff - you get
what you pay for.
(taking him in, amused)
Wow. Love the tux! Very smart.

THOM
Well, y'know, you spend all day
in a suit, events like these it's
nice to dress up, make a bit of
an effort.

She smiles, intrigued and amused. The sound of laughter inappropriately interrupts their exchange. It's SIMON, Emma's boss, pretending to be enjoying their conversation.

SIMON
Yes! Wonderful. Ha ha ha. How are
we? How are we? Good!

He slips a patronising arm around Emma, still 'laughing'.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Emma, eight no-shows. How do we
sell art to absentees?

EMMA
It's still a decent turn out. I'm
sure we'll be fine.

SIMON
Well, we better fucking be!

He laughs his way off to glad hand another group.

EMMA

My boss.

THOM

He seems really nice.

Emma smirks but before she can respond:

V/O

(cod Italian accent)

Emma! Bellissima! Ciao!

OLLY (portly, oily, late 30s) kisses Emma twice, eyeing her hungrily.

OLLY

You look radiant.

EMMA

Not as radiant as your lovely wife, I notice. How did you manage that one?

OLLY

Same way I manage my investments. I see something I want, I go for it, I get it. And what's marriage if not an investment!

Emma forces a laugh and glances at Thom, who raises a conspiratorial eyebrow. Following Emma's glance, Olly turns and notices Thom. He drains his glass and hands it to him.

OLLY (CONT'D)

Aah. Perfect timing. Could I get a refill?

An awkward moment. Thom hovers. Emma looks mortified.

EMMA

Actually...

THOM

(interrupts)

Of course.

Thom shoots Emma a coy smile - 'it's fine'. She returns a grateful one as he slips off.

INT. THE GRAND HALL, SOTHEBY'S - LATER

The auction is underway. Thom stands at the back of the hall watching as guests shout bids for a watercolour. Arthur sidles up next to him, bottle in hand. They speak, but never look at each other.

ARTHUR

How did it go?

THOM

Awesome. Her friend mistook me
for a waiter.

The auctioneer brings down the gavel at ten thousand pounds. The guests applaud the winner. A new lot opens - a modern art piece: a misshapen baby doll with umbilical cord and a melted clown's face. The whole room flinches.

AUCTIONEER

Next up Lot number 5 - 'Laughter
Birth' an...arresting work in
mixed media kindly donated by
Jasper Wong. What am I bid?

A deafening silence.

Arthur grabs Thom's hand, raises it...

ARTHUR

Two Thousand!

Arthur steps away as the whole room turns and gawks at Thom. Thom blinks and smiles wanly.

AUCTIONEER

I have two thousand pounds from
the dapper gentleman at the back.
Do I hear two and a half?

Thom rounds on Arthur.

THOM

What the hell are you doing?

ARTHUR

I'm saving your arse. How many
waiters have got two grand in
their back pockets? She'll
probably do you in the car park.

THOM

I don't have two thousand pounds!

ARTHUR

Chill out! You'll be outbid,
won't you? It's the gesture.

A female hand in the crowd shoots up.

LADY BIDDER

(slavic accent)

Two and half!

Arthur looks smugly at Thom, who breathes a sigh of relief. Arthur grabs his hand again.

ARTHUR

Three!

AUCTIONEER

I have three thousands pounds
from the gentleman at the back.

Horrified and enraged, Thom glares at Arthur, who grins. He's getting into this. From a corner, Emma looks over at Thom, surprised but impressed.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Any advance on three thousand?
Three thousand.

Thom's eyes widen as the panic grows.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Do I hear three five? Any
advance? No? Going...

Thom is hyperventilating.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Going...

Thom lets out a high, keening noise.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Gone.

The gavel comes down. Thom stares straight ahead, in shock. Arthur winces, and slides off.

INT. SOTHEBY'S - LATER

As the event winds up, Thom stands in the lobby with Emma, holding his nightmarish buy. The departing guests eye him with a mixture of sympathy and disgust.

EMMA

Listen, thank you so much. It's
amazingly generous of you.

THOM

No. Not at all. I'm just thrilled
with my purchase.

She glances at the doll - 'okaay'. Olly sweeps past with his wife SVETLANA, a six-foot, pneumatic Barbie. She spots the doll.

SVETLANA

Ah! It is you who buy against me!
I was try for two thousand five
hundred. My husband he don't let
me make three!

Olly, visibly embarrassed to see Thom again, mutters:

OLLY

Not really my cup of tea.

Thom tries to save face.

THOM

Well, I've had my eye on the
artist for some time now.
(barbed)
And when I see something I want,
I go for it, I get it.
Interesting investment, I think.

The sound of familiar laughter swoops in.

SIMON (V.O.)

Ha ha ha. Excellent. Excellent.

As Simon sidles in he looks down at the horrific art work.
He stifles a retch. A long, awkward silence. He thrusts out
a hand to Thom.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Simon Tibbs.

INT. SCHOOL CANTEEN - DAY

Thom and Arthur queue with their trays. Thom is clearly
still stewing. Behind them an intimidating, gum-chewing
trio of girls wait impatiently.

ARTHUR

You can't just quit. We've barely
even started! And now she thinks
you're minted. The ladies love a
brother with the benjamins.

Thom squints at him in derision. Arthur hands the dinner
lady a fiver, then spots the girl behind him. Has an idea.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

And, er, whatever she's having.

He winks at the girl. Who rolls her eyes at him and looks
down at her solitary mini-trifle.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
 (to dinner lady, smooth)
 Keep the change.

He swans off. She stares after him with contempt. Thom looks at her apologetically, hands her some coins and follows Arthur over to the condiments bench.

THOM
 Listen, I've made a fool of myself in front of a beautiful woman, been ridiculed by some banker prick, bought one of the most hideous works of art ever created...

ARTHUR
 It's not that bad!

THOM
 It's an aborted clown foetus!

ARTHUR
 It's bold. What the fuck is marie rose sauce?

THOM
 (ignoring him)
 And I had to break into my Young Savers Account, money I'm pretty sure my Dad wanted to go towards med school and not clown...tragedy. On top of which I now find out I've got a part in the school play as the deaf younger brother.

ARTHUR
 What?! Oh my God that's brilliant.

He doubles up, creased with laughter as they dump their trays but keep their plates and walk through the canteen.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, I'm sorry but look. You can't give up now. We're actually getting somewhere. This woman actually likes you. She wants to show you her tits. She's desperate to show you her tits. So just be a brave little soldier and...let her show you her tits.
 (cod deaf voice. Signs.)
 Pleeeeease Tommy.

Thom closes his eyes to Arthur's inappropriateness.

THOM

No. I'm out.

ARTHUR

But what about justice? What about revenge?

(cod deaf voice. Signs.)

What about Schricter?

THOM

Screw Schricter.

ARTHUR

Screw his wife.

Thom's phone rings. He has to balance his yoghurt in his casserole to free up a hand. He looks down. Turns white.

THOM

Shit. It's her.

ARTHUR

Really? Shit! Answer it!

Thom gives Arthur an 'as if' look. But Arthur grabs it, answers it and holds it out to Thom. Thom flaps in silent panic for a moment, then reluctantly takes it.

THOM

Hello, Thom speaking!

INT. ACT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

Emma sits at her desk in her office.

EMMA

Thom, hi, It's Emma Schricter! I just wanted to say thank you for helping us out the other night. I think you reminded everyone what a good cause it was and...bidding really picked up. So...thank you.

Standing over her expectantly, Simon silently prompts her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

And, anyway, I just wanted to say that I really enjoyed our chat and...wondered if you might want to meet up some time to talk about some of our initiatives. I know you've already been very generous but...

Arthur grabs a banger and starts fucking his mash with it. Thom cuffs him, momentarily distracted.

THOM
No, that'd be great.

EMMA
Yes?

Thom curses himself.

THOM
Yes.

EMMA
Well, when is best for you? Are you free on Thursday?

Emma's boss nods approvingly. Thom looks flustered.

THOM
Well...not during the day.

Emma raises her eyebrows at this but spots Simon bearing down on her. Considers.

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Thom and Arthur carry their lunches up a stone spiral staircase.

THOM
Can't believe I said I'd pick her up. I don't have a car. I don't even have a licence.

ARTHUR
You've got a provisional licence.

THOM
Which means I can only drive when accompanied by an adult.

ARTHUR
Right then. It's definitely on.

The boys reach the belfry, a secluded hideout overlooking the whole school. Old lunch plates sit stacked in a corner.

THOM
It's not on. Nothing's on. She just said she wants to talk about the charity.

Thom plugs a pair of speakers into his iPod and hits play.

ARTHUR

Well obviously she said that.
Adults don't say what they mean.
It's all in code...What the fuck
is this music?

THOM

It's Neil Young? From After The
Gold Rush. Wait for this key
change...

ARTHUR

God you always...It's like you're
hiding vegetables in my pasta
sauce.

Arthur skips the track. Outkast's 'Hey Ya' comes on.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Listen, at her age you don't just
go up to a bloke and ask if he
wants to get off with you. You've
got to make clear your intentions
whilst masking your emotions.
Ambiguity is armour on the
battlefield of romance.

He produces a tatty paperback from his blazer: 'Holding
Love's Hand: A Guide to Getting Your Guy'. Defensively, off
Thom's look:

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I've been doing some research.

Thom removes a pair of binoculars from a cubby hole under
his seat and looks out over the school. Mr Schricter walks
into view, lambasting a first year for running past him.
The kid holds back his tears.

THOM

What the hell does she see in
him?

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The boys leave school and walk towards the bus stop.

ARTHUR

Girls love an arsehole, don't
they.

THOM

Really? Surely nobody loves an
arsehole. That's why they call
them arseholes.

ARTHUR
You love an arsehole.

THOM
If everybody loved arseholes...

ARTHUR
You'd be ecstatic.

THOM
They'd call them heroes, or
champions or something.

ARTHUR
(high pitched, mocking)
Ooh, champions!

Arthur leaps on to the bus. Thom just shakes his head.

EXT. PLAYING FIELDS - DAY

Thom and Arthur, in cricket whites, lie on the grass staring at Schricter refereeing a football match. Schricter gives a free kick and confronts a player. He makes to attack the kid, clearly enjoying the kid's flinching.

ARTHUR
He is quite imposing, physically.
Good, strong thighs.

THOM
Yeah, but he's also got great
skin. It looks soft.

The three intimidating girls from the canteen walk past and overhear the chatter. They snigger to each other.

INT. CHEMIST - DAY

Thom faces a bewildering array of moisturisers. Arthur appears wearing a pair of old man's glasses.

THOM
What's turnaround cream?

Ignoring him, Arthur thrusts a small tub at Thom.

ARTHUR
Hair gel.

THOM
What?

ARTHUR

When Steven Smith started using it he was fighting girls off with his cock.

THOM

Would that be the gel though? It just makes your hair go a bit crispy. How is that attractive?

Arthur just shrugs.

ARTHUR

He got off with three girls and Emily Pinkus touched the end of his knob.

Sold. Thom puts the gel in his basket.

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Their den has become research HQ. Post-it notes, torn out pictures and annotated articles line the walls. The boys flick through men's magazines.

ARTHUR

It says here women want to feel spotlit: 'Ask plenty of questions, maintain eye contact...' Ooh. 'Be sensitive. There is nothing wrong in hurting or letting her know that you hurt.' You'll be good at that. You could do a little cry.

THOM

Wait, hang on, this one says 'Be strong. Show no weakness.'... 'every maiden wants her knight in shining armour.'

Arthur shrugs. They both double check their magazines.

INT. PETROL STATION - DAY

The boys peer nervously at the counter. Arthur nudges Thom but he shakes his head, firmly. Fine. Arthur strides up himself. Thom looks around, terrified.

ARTHUR

Good morning. I would like to purchase a pack of Fetherlite condoms please.

He leans on the counter, pleased with himself.

SHOPGIRL
Large or small.

Arthur's eyes widen. He slowly turns his head towards Thom then looks down at his crotch. Thom sighs.

THOM
She means the box.

Arthur's eyes widen even further. They flit to her crotch.

SHOPGIRL
The packet?

She holds up two sizes. Arthur looks up. Then laughs as if he knew this all along.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The boys walk along dressed in suits. Thom has slightly crispy hair.

ARTHUR
So I had some thoughts about where you should take her.

THOM
I'm not taking her to Nando's.

ARTHUR
Wasn't going to say Nando's. I thought maybe somewhere a bit classy like a Chinese.

Thom screws up his face.

THOM
I don't know. What happens if she expects me to order wine or something?

ARTHUR
Wine's easy. They tell you which is the nicest in a list of money down the side. Just order something near the bottom that you can pronounce.

The boys stop and look up at their destination - a Porsche dealership. Arthur nods to Thom who nods back.

INT. PORSCHE DEALERSHIP - DAY

At a desk sits an overly groomed dealer, Martin, chatting casually on the phone.

He looks up as the boys enter and finishes his call. The boys look a car over as Martin approaches, suspiciously.

MARTIN
All okay lads?

ARTHUR
Yeah. How much is one of these?

MARTIN
This model right here, sir?

He sneers. Arthur looks him in the eye.

ARTHUR
This model here.

MARTIN
(with relish)
Ninety five. Thousand.

Arthur turns to Thom casually.

ARTHUR
I like it. What do you think?

THOM
I like it. Good car. Nice car.

MARTIN
Well I'll draw up the paperwork
shall I? Cash or credit?

Martin laughs, condescendingly. Arthur begins laughing too. As does Thom.

ARTHUR
Obviously we'd need to check it
out first. I read you do a
weekend test drive?

MARTIN
Sure, I'll just go get the keys.

He turns to leave. Arthur gives Thom a secret thumbs up.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Oh no hang on. I just remembered
we mainly do that for CEOs and
Russian oligarchs. Not just any
pair of kids who pitch up wearing
cheap suits. Now was that you
leaving or me calling the police?

The boys secretly curse. Thom drops the act.

THOM

Listen, I'm sorry, we're just, we really love this car. You don't know how lucky you are to work in a place like this.

Martin's ego is flattered.

THOM (CONT'D)

And we just wanted the opportunity, just once, to be cool...like you and drive one of these...magnificent machines.

Martin weighs this up.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Thom sits behind the wheel of the 911, carefully pootling along, Arthur alongside. Martin cranes his head from the back seat.

MARTIN

Got one of these up to one sixty on the M4 once. Blistering. How you finding it? Drives like a dream right?

THOM

Like a dream.

He awkwardly threads the steering wheel.

ARTHUR

Ooh, just remembered I said I'd go and get those papers off my dad. Do you mind if we stop off?

Martin gestures: 'be my guest'. Thom indicates left and pulls into the forecourt of an Aston Martin dealership.

INT. ASTON MARTIN DEALERSHIP - CONTINUOUS

A DEALER looks up from his desk to admire a Porsche 911 parking up outside. Thom and Arthur leap out. They exchange an apprehensive look and casually stroll up to the office.

INT. ASTON MARTIN DEALERSHIP - DAY

The salesman rises to greet Thom and Arthur.

DEALER

Gentlemen! Good afternoon.

He shakes both their hands warmly.

DEALER (CONT'D)
The new 911 I see. Lovely
machine. How's the handling?

THOM
Oh, great, great. One on each
door so... good.

DEALER
What's the MPG?

ARTHUR
It means miles per gallon?

THOM
(jumping in)
We were actually thinking of
trading up.

The dealer's eyes light up.

THOM (CONT'D)
I read you do a weekend test-
drive?

EXT. FORECOURT - DAY

In the 911, Martin picks his teeth in the rear-view mirror. He double takes, spotting something in the reflection. Behind, an Aston Martin emerges from the showroom, top down, Thom behind the wheel, Arthur riding shotgun. The car pauses alongside. Thom slides on some sunglasses, gives the slightest of smiles to Martin and roars off the forecourt.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Thom and Arthur sit at the traffic lights. Thom nervously checks his feet position, the mirrors, the gearstick.

ARTHUR
Oh my God. That's gotta be the
coolest thing I've ever done.

THOM
I can't believe we're doing this.
I've only got a provisional
licence. This is illegal.

ARTHUR
Thom, you're in an untaxed,
uninsured Aston Martin which you
just basically stole.

(MORE)

EMMA

So, I had a think about donation schemes for...

THOM

(snaps at her)

Sorry. I just need to...

She clams up, not a little put out.

INT. SHOE SHOP, HIGH STREET - EVENING

Enoch paces around, testing a new pair of school shoes. Behind him, his mum and the shop assistant look on. He glances out of the shop window as the Aston Martin glides past. He spots the youthful driver and his beautiful companion and double-takes as they disappear, unsure whether to believe his eyes.

INT. CAR - SOHO, LONDON - NIGHT

Emma points to a modern-looking restaurant.

EMMA

It's just over there.

EXT. SOHO, LONDON - NIGHT

Thom pulls up opposite the restaurant. He breathes, happy to be alive, then darts out and round to Emma's side, slyly unpeeling an L-Plate from the back as he passes, and opens her door. His cheesy formality is met with a bemused...

EMMA

Thanks.

THOM

I just need some change for the meter. Shall I see you in there?

EMMA

Er. Sure.

Thom watches her until she's inside, then pops the boot. Arthur is inside, bent triple. He shields his eyes.

ARTHUR

(still hunched)

You drive like a fucking spastic.

A couple of alarmed pedestrians spot Arthur still coiled in the boot. Thom smiles at them pleasantly.

THOM
 (to Arthur)
 Get out.

Arthur painfully unpacks himself and climbs out.

THOM (CONT'D)
 OK. So. One more time. 10
 O'clock, I politely excuse myself
 from the table. You enter and
 begin to pester her. Not too
 much, though. Just enough.

ARTHUR
 Fine. 10.05 On. The. Dot. You
 come back...

THOM
 And deal with you firmly, like a
 knight in shining armour. Me and
 her ride off into the sunset.

ARTHUR
 (excited)
 All set? You ready?

THOM
 No.

ARTHUR
 First date nerves. You'll be
 fine. Just remember: lots of
 questions, lots of eyes, lots of
 mmmms.

Thom nods. He holds out the key. Arthur grins.

THOM
 Don't even think about it.

Thom glowers, then reluctantly hands him the key.

INT. COOL, WHITEWASHED RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Thom strides self-consciously toward Emma's table.

THOM
 Sorry, sorry. You okay?

EMMA
 I coped.

Thom sits as the waiter appears. He's too old to be a
 waiter and knows it. Indignation steams off him.

WAITER

Sir, Madam. Can I get you a drink?

Thom throws open the wine list and 'peruses'.

THOM

We'll have a bottle of the...

Emma raises an eyebrow at the 'we'.

THOM (CONT'D)

(looks down the list)

...Port, please.

Thom looks up - quizzical stares from Emma and the waiter.

EMMA

Just a beer for me please.

The waiter jots, then disappears in a cloud of contempt.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Interesting choice.

THOM

Yeah. Actually, I've had that one before. It's excellent.

A pregnant pause.

THOM (CONT'D)

So. What do you like to do at the weekends?

She double takes slightly. He's not kidding.

EMMA

Erm. Well, I've got a garden, so I often...

Thom leans in and stares into her eyes.

THOM

Mmmmm. Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

EXT. SOHO, LONDON - NIGHT

Arthur hovers by the car, already bored. He spots a pigeon perched on a wire above the bonnet. Eyes it warily.

ARTHUR

Shoo. Go. Move.

A faint bassline and a gaudy flashing light emanate from a nearby sidestreet.

Arthur cranes, but can't see round the corner. He tentatively steps away from the car, crosses the street, and rounds the corner.

The alley is aglow with neon. Seedy strip joints line the kerbs. Arthur walks on like a moth to a flame, agog.

(O.S.)

Hey handsome. Up for some fun?

A very scantily clad girl eyes him from a strip joint doorway. Arthur blushes, flattered. Then stiffens with resolve, glancing back toward the car.

ARTHUR

No thanks.

SEXY GIRL

Free entrance tonight. Lots of pretty girls.

Arthur reads the flashing sign: 'FULLY NUDE TABLE DANCING'.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Emma appears uncomfortable under Thom's persistent stare and irritating 'mmmm'ing.

EMMA

So if I had to pick a favourite, probably, I don't know, Tuscany?

THOM

Yeah. Mmmmmmmmm.

She pulls a work folder out of her bag.

EMMA

So, we should get down to...

THOM

And where did you grow up?

EMMA

(hastily)

Why don't we talk about you? What do you do at VentureCorp?

Thom coughs, then takes a long glug of port, stalling.

THOM

Oh, y'know. All sorts of... ventures, really. I work across various...desks. It's complicated.

Emma covers her irritation at his condescension with an angry swig of beer.

INT. SOHO STRIP JOINT - NIGHT

Arthur reclines on a velour banquette as if blown backwards. Two very sexy, very naked, ladies gyrate in front of him to throbbing music. He is their sole customer. He sips on a scotch, unable to believe his eyes, or luck.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Thom and Emma smile at each other awkwardly. Thom sips some more port, wincing slightly at the silence. Thankfully the waiter appears, pad in hand. Emma looks up.

EMMA

I'd like the gurnard rillette
with butternut jelly and avruga,
but could I have that as a main?

Thom takes note. His turn.

THOM

And I will have the...

He makes a grand show of poring over the menu.

THOM (CONT'D)

Chicken.

The waiter nods perfunctorily and exits.

THOM (CONT'D)

So do you enjoy your job?

EMMA

(unconvincing)
What? Yeah. God, yeah! It's...
great. You know. It's charity
so...rewarding. Making a
difference.

(pointedly)
Certain aspects can get a bit
tiresome.

Ouch! Thom looks slightly hurt. She feels bad.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I actually wanted to be a lawyer.
Human rights.

Thom naively waits for her to finish her thought.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What?

THOM

(innocently baffled)

So? Why aren't you a human rights lawyer?

She's obviously never really thought about it.

EMMA

Well, I'm 34 now so...

THOM

So?

EMMA

Well, we talked about it and we decided it wasn't the right time.

THOM

We decided?

EMMA

My husband's a teacher so... his career comes first. He's trying for head of year.

THOM

Wow. He must be quite a guy.

EMMA

(defensively)

Yeah, well, he puts everything into that job. The kids love him.

Thom hides his amused outrage by chugging some more port.

EMMA (CONT'D)

And anyway, it would cost a fortune to re-train and we've got other priorities at the moment.

THOM

Like what?

EMMA

(quiet, embarrassed)

Like a kitchen conservatory.

Thom hoots, a little drunkenly.

THOM

Yeah, totally. Fuck the refugees, you need a conservatory. '

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

Yeah, sorry Yusuf, you're gonna have to stay put, the builders are still in.'

Emma just stares at him. He freezes, petrified. To his immense relief and amazement Emma bursts out laughing.

EMMA

Well, exactly, so....Anyway, a law course is two years so...

THOM

So? I'm doing medicine. That takes five!

Oops. Giant, crunching oops.

EMMA

You're what?

Thom scrabbles for a way out.

THOM

What?

EMMA

You're leaving VentureCorp?

THOM

Yeah. Well, y'know, I thought, I could let another five years slip by and still be in a job that I hate or I could leave now, and by the time I'm...

(quick sum)

29, I'll be a doctor. I know I'm leaving it late, but maybe it's never too late.

She contemplates this, almost swayed.

EMMA

Do you know how old I'll be by the time I qualify?

THOM

Same age as you'll be if you don't.

She looks at him anew. Stumped for once. Thom smiles.

THOM (CONT'D)

Here, you have to try some of this. It's sweet!

He pours some port into her empty beer glass.

INT. SOHO STRIP JOINT - NIGHT

Arthur (head tilted sideways, boggle-eyed) watches a girl perform an extraordinary contortion. A girl arrives and puts down another drink and the bill. Arthur catches sight of the bill. Grabs it. Mouth drops.

ARTHUR

Sorry, I think there's been a mistake.

He tries to hand back the bill, but she just stands there, staring and chewing gum. Arthur checks it.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Four hundred pounds? I didn't even order those drinks! The bloke said they were on the house! I'm not paying 400 quid!

Two skinhead, neanderthal heavies step out of the shadows.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry. I haven't got any money. Really. I'm just a kid!

He empties his pockets: Half a Snickers, a mini stapler...and a set of keys to an Aston Martin. Everyone takes them in for a second. The heavies step forward.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Alright, alright. Look, my wallet's in the car. Just give me a second, alright? I'll go and get it. Can I go and get it?

He gets up and backs out. The heavies follow. Arthur reaches the stairwell, glances behind him, then SHOVES a 6ft plastic Jessica Rabbit. It CRASHES down, partially blocking the heavies' path. Arthur SPRINTS up the stairs...

EXT. SOHO STREET, LONDON - NIGHT

...out, and down the street. The heavies appear in time to see him vanish round the corner. They give chase.

Arthur races to the car, keys in hand. He beeps the alarm, reaches it, jumps in and locks it. The heavies pile round the corner, fists clenched, as he FRANTICALLY SEARCHES for the ignition. The gorillas begin POUNDING the windscreen and YANKING the door. Arthur SCREAMS in frustration and blind terror. He finds the slot - the engine fires, and the car ROARS off.

The heavies give chase on foot for a few steps, then give up as the car jerks round the corner, and away.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Emma pours herself another glass of port. Both are now quite drunk: Emma has slipped off her shoes and let down her hair. Thom's teeth are stained red. The waiter appears.

WAITER
Any desserts?

EMMA
Yes, I'll have the pannacotta.

Thom anxiously scans his menu: Parfaits, granites, petit fours. Shit. His eyes flit up to the starters.

THOM
Could I have the Sweetbreads, but as a dessert?

He puts the menu down, pleased with himself. The waiter laughs politely at his 'joke'. Emma laughs too, but genuinely. Thom, realising he's made some sort of faux-pas, laughs along. The waiter rolls his eyes and strides away.

This only makes it funnier. Emma wipes tears from her eyes. Thom looks on, thrilled but entirely baffled, then checks his watch. 10pm exactly.

THOM (CONT'D)
Shit!
(off her look)
10 o'clock! I better have a poo.

She watches, smiling and bemused, as he hares off.

INT. THE CAR - SOHO, LONDON - NIGHT

Arthur, sweating and shaking, judders the car down a narrow backstreet. The radio and heaters still roar on full blast. He stops at a junction, utterly lost, unsure whether to turn left or right.

He glances anxiously at the dashboard clock: 10.02, curses and pulls out left...just as a van cuts across his nose, missing by a whisker. He yelps in fright.

INT. GENTS' TOILET - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Thom sits in a cubicle, staring at his watch, pitching and rolling slightly in his seat.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Arthur bursts in, hood up, panting and wild-eyed. He spots Emma and makes for her table. She looks up as he arrives.

ARTHUR

Hi there. Do you...

BAM! A fist smashes into his ear, sending him howling and sprawling to the floor, head smacking a table on the way down. Thom stands over him as Emma looks up, horrified.

EMMA

THOM! What the hell are you doing?!

THOM

I'm saving you!

EMMA

From what?

THOM

...Him?

EMMA

He wasn't doing anything! He just walked in.

She glances down at Arthur, whose hood has come down.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Hang on. I know you! You're that waiter!

Thom thinks fast.

THOM

From the other night! Exactly! He's that waiter!

EMMA

Oh my God, are you following me?

THOM

Yes! Exactly! He's following you, like a...bloody weirdo.

Other diners look on, fascinated. Arthur, lying on the floor holding a bruised eye, looks up at Thom - 'what?!'

THOM (CONT'D)

(to Arthur, manfully)

I'll give you five seconds to get out of here before I...throw you out. The window.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)
 (getting into it)
 And if you ever, ever trouble
 this lady again, I will come down
 on you like a ton of...shit.
 Five...four...

Arthur clambers up and skitters out. Emma, and several diners, look at Thom, not quite sure what just happened.

EXT RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Thom grandly holds the door for Emma as they exit. She chuckles and curtsies.

THOM
 I'm sorry they didn't let you
 have your special dessert.

EMMA
 I'll be okay.

Across the road Thom spies an ice cream kiosk. He gasps.

THOM
 Ice cream!

EMMA
 No, it's really fine.

THOM
 Oh come on. Ice Cream!

He really wants an ice cream. She laughs, unused to such exuberance.

EXT. ICE CREAM KIOSK - NIGHT

At the front of the queue Thom speaks to the server.

THOM
 So with the Fundae Cup I get
 sprinkles and a sauce?
 (she nods, bored)
 OK I'll have a two-scoop Fundae
 Cup, one summer fruits, one
 mango. Raspberry sauce if it's
 real raspberries but if it's blue
 raspberry then blackberry sauce.
 Sprinkles. Emma?

EMMA
 Maybe just a coffee.

A beat.

THOM

And she'll have a two-scoop with cappuccino and...chilli choc chip with hot fudge sauce.

Emma laughs, powerless.

SERVER

Sprinkles?

Thom and the server look at her questioningly. She grins.

EMMA

Loads of sprinkles.

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

The pair stumble along, loving their elaborate sundaes. Thom thrusts his to Emma's face.

THOM

Here, try with the biscuit bits.
It's amazing.
(she does)
Huh?

She cogitates then nods enthusiastically.

EMMA

Uhh. Oh my God we're swapping.

She forcibly wrestles his cup off him, chuckling away. A group of teenagers bustle past them horsing around, giving each other piggy backs. Thom instinctively backs away.

EMMA (CONT'D)

God, don't you miss being a teenager?

THOM

Not really.
(off her look)
I think people who say they're the best years of your life must have really short memories.

EMMA

And what's so great about adulthood?

THOM

Well you've got...freedom. No one judging you the whole time. No one telling you what to do.

Emma secretly ponders the irony of this statement.

THOM (CONT'D)
 You're allowed to do whatever.
 Drink... Have sex.

EMMA
 Ha!

THOM
 What?

EMMA
 Bank holidays and feast days if
 I'm lucky.

Thom squirms, wishing he hadn't brought it up.

EMMA (CONT'D)
 And thank God for Viagra.

Thom almost retches.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Thom glances at the car, parked serenely exactly as he left it. He and Emma face each other. Their eyes meet, and hold for a moment. Thom nervously, tentatively leans in. She lingers for an instant then comes to, stepping back sharply.

EMMA
 I er...I should get going. My
 husband will be waiting.

THOM
 (blushing)
 OK. Can I give you a lift, or...

She looks at him, then puts out a hand.

EMMA
 Bye, Thom.

He hesitates, then shakes it, taking the hint. She smiles stiffly and leaves.

Thom heads for the car, opens the door and peers in.

THOM
 (angry)
 I don't believe you! What did I
 tell you about the car? What did
 I tell you?

Arthur sits up in the back seat, still holding his eye, stammering guiltily.

ARTHUR

How do you..? I'm sorry, I...

THOM

The lights are on, you mong. I said don't touch anything, and you turned on the lights.

Arthur sags, relieved. Then smacks Thom's head, hard. Thom squeals and gawks in shock. They both hold their heads.

INT. THE CAR, SOHO - LATER

Thom and Arthur sit in the parked car. Thom jabbbers.

THOM

Honestly, all that shit you said about eye contact, going mmmmm, all that shit. Bollocks.

Arthur looks a little hurt. Thom is too hyped to notice.

THOM (CONT'D)

It weirded her out. I could see it weirding her out. You know what the secret is? I found out the secret. Want to know?

(before he can respond)

Just take the piss. Make fun of her. Not like 'hey fatso, nice fat arse' obviously, but just gentle ribbing. That's basically flirting. That's it. Nutshell.

ARTHUR

Wow. Well, well done you.

(a beat)

So I had an idea about how to let Schrieter find out his wife's been playing around.

THOM

What? He can't find out.

ARTHUR

What do you mean he can't find out?

THOM

Have you any idea what would happen to me if this got out?

ARTHUR

(mounting anger)

So what are we doing? Why are we here? What happened to revenge?

THOM

This is revenge. We're dating his wife!

ARTHUR

How is it revenge if he doesn't find out about it?!

Arthur stares at him, incredulous. Then his eyes widen in terror. Over Thom's shoulder in a car beside them are the heavies from the club.

THOM

Look I'm sorry. But...

ARTHUR

(quiet panic)

Never mind, don't worry. Just go. Go.

Thom looks quizzically at him.

THOM

Might just wait until I sober up a bit before...

ARTHUR

Don't worry about that. Sure you're fine. Just go.

Over his shoulder, the nearest heavy turns, catches Arthur's eye, and double-takes, eyes aflame with rage.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

GO GO GO!

Thom hesitates, confused and alarmed. WHAM! The heavies' car slams into their side. Thom sees his attackers, gets the message and floors it, tearing through a red light. Cars skid and swerve to avoid them, honking furiously. The heavies stay on their tail as they race towards Piccadilly, Thom and Arthur screaming in panic at each other.

THOM

WHO THE FUCK ARE THEY? THE CAR!
ARTHUR!?

ARTHUR

So, OK, don't go mental...

Thom swerves to avoid a pedestrian and mounts the kerb.

THOM

ARTHUR!

ARTHUR

So I went to a strip club and I couldn't pay, and these guys just totally overreacted and...

THOM

You IDIOT! I said stay in the fucking car, STAY IN THE FUCKING CAR!

SLAM! The heavies ram them from the rear. The glove box pops open and the foetal clown doll plops onto Arthur's lap. He SCREAMS at it in fright. Thom SCREAMS at Arthur's screaming. They BOTH SCREAM. Arthur hurls the doll over his shoulder, as...

SLAM! They're rammed again, sending the car ploughing off the road into a square filled with pub tables and drinkers.

ARTHUR

WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING?

THOM

I'VE HAD HALF A BOTTLE OF PORT!

People scatter, screaming, as Thom wrestles the car out the other side back onto the street, racing into oncoming traffic. The heavies skid into view behind them.

A pair of rickshaws head for them, side by side. The guys howl...they part just in time and the Aston scrapes between them, close enough to catch some ornamental tinsel on the wing mirror. One lane becomes two and the heavies race up along side them. The two cars tear down a packed street. Traffic lights ahead glow red as the cars bear down.

ARTHUR

POLICE!

A police car waits at the lights. Thom slams on the brakes, as does the other car. They draw up at the lights sedately, Thom beside the police. And wait.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

The officers peer across at the two cars. The heavies smile 'innocently', Thom and Arthur smile 'innocently', in the back window the clown fetus smiles. Terrifyingly.

INT. THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Neither Thom or Arthur move. The radio plays The Carpenters. The police car turns off down a side street.

The lights go AMBER - both engines rev. Thom and his rival driver glance at each other.

GREEN -- Thom jams his foot down, the engine explodes and... he stalls it. The heavies catapult past, on through the intersection.

INT. HEAVIES' CAR - CONTINUOUS

The two gorillas screech to a halt, barking at each other in furious Russian. One turns to look back, in time to see the Aston Martin turn left and speed off.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - LATER

Darkness. The Aston pulls up outside a terraced house.

INT. THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

The boys sit in silence. Thom stares straight ahead.

ARTHUR

Listen, I'm sorry, I'll pay...

THOM

I'll see you tomorrow.

Arthur clams up. Then gets out. Thom's eyes close as the door shuts.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - DAY

Thom and Arthur sit at the back of the lab looking tired and haggard, staring into space. Thom is disheveled and bed headed. Arthur has the makings of a black eye.

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Thom stands over Arthur as he dials his mobile phone.

ARTHUR

Yeah hi, this is Arthur Potts, we came into test drive the...

Shouting down the line. Arthur holds the phone away from his ear.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Yes, that's right, I...Well I know we said we'd be back by...If you'd just listen...

Arthur looks up at Thom who urges him on.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Here's the thing. We can't bring it back. Not... yet.

More screaming. Arthur panics. Thom grabs the phone.

THOM

Listen, Clive, I'm sure you're upset...Well I don't think you can have us arrested...Because I think your boss would be more than interested to know what you were doing offering a test drive with no form of background check to a pair of schoolkids...That's right...That's jailtime, Clive. Now listen, you will get the car back but we're just going to need a while. I suggest you come up with a really good cover story. Now if you don't mind, I've got double PE. Thank you very much.

Thom flips the phone shut. Arthur smiles up at him in nervous disbelief. Despite himself, Thom returns it.

INT. SCHOOL THEATRE - REHEARSAL - DAY

Pounding Hip Hop beats. A gang of kids enters from the wings, all doing ridiculous pimp walks. Thom trails at the back attempting to follow suit but he looks like he's caught his nuts in his pants. Mr Chandos leaps on stage to demonstrate.

MR CHANDOS

Thom, it's dip then drag, dip then drag. Okay, from there!

As Thom tries again, Wesley speaks to Olivia. He's 'off book' and melodramatic while she's more circumspect and still refers to her script.

WESLEY

I'm saying that he was more than just my boy. He was my brother. This ain't about revenge it's about respect.

OLIVIA

There is no respect when you live by the blade. I'm so tired of it. Tired of this madness, this bravado, this secretarial violence.

MR CHANDOS

Cut!

Olivia blinks down at her furious director.

MR CHANDOS (CONT'D)

Secretarial violence? Really,
Olivia? It's sectarian violence.
Sectarian!

Olivia studies her script.

OLIVIA

Sorry, sir. I'm just... It's a
lot of lines.

INT. SCHOOL THEATRE - DAY

Students begin to disperse. Olivia stands in the wings anxiously studying her script. Thom looks across to her, hesitates, and then goes for it.

THOM

I'm with you.

She looks up, confused and annoyed to be interrupted.

THOM (CONT'D)

(nervous)
So tired of all this secretarial
violence.

She looks at him, utterly baffled. He has to plough on.

THOM (CONT'D)

We had a drive-by faxing down our
street last week. Doris from
accounts got sprayed with
paperclips. It was brutal.

Thom smiles to show that he was joking.

OLIVIA

Are you taking the piss?

THOM

What? No! Well...yes, obviously
but... I don't know why. Sorry.

OLIVIA

No carry on. It's really helping.

She gestures to her thick script.

THOM

Have you got an iPod?

She looks up again. Where's he going with this?

THOM (CONT'D)

Just, one thing you could do is record your lines onto your iPod, then listen to them as you drift off to sleep. That way they sort of get into your subconscious. It works for me like...

He snaps his fingers.

OLIVIA

You haven't got any lines. You're deaf.

Thom reddens slightly.

THOM

Well I do it for my chemistry revision, and...

He stops, realising how geeky that sounds.

OLIVIA

Cool!

She glides away triumphantly. Thom stares after her, astonished to have been outmanoeuvred by her.

ARTHUR (O.S.)

(in a dancehall stylee)
Mister Lover Lover.

Tom turns, angry and embarrassed. Arthur grinds away.

THOM

What are you doing here?

ARTHUR

(cheerful)
Sets! They needed volunteers so...I volunteered. So I get to hang around too!

Thom attempts to feign enthusiasm. Unsuccessfully.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

So, film night tonight! Your place or mine?

THOM

Ah shit, I can't.

ARTHUR

Come on. I'll let you choose. We can see something foreign slash old therefore probably intellectual.

Thom bridles at the piss taking.

THOM

No, I mean... I'm seeing Emma tonight.

ARTHUR

I thought she was all: 'Oh Thom, my husband, we mustn't...'

Thom puts an arm around Arthur's shoulder.

THOM

Well, the thing about women is that you've got to read between the lines.

Arthur blinks at Thom as if he doesn't recognise him.

THOM (CONT'D)

Why would she say something like that if she only thought of me in a work sense? She must think of me as more than just a donor. You follow?

Arthur, bristling at the patronising tone, removes his arm.

ARTHUR

Just about, yeah.

(recovers)

So what's the plan? What are we doing?

THOM

I'm just gonna go along to this event she's putting on. Surprise her.

ARTHUR

Cool. What shall I do?

THOM

I need you to cover for me.

ARTHUR

Cover for you?

THOM

Yeah. I'm gonna have to skip last period so if you could like, tell Schrieter my mum was ill or something.

Arthur blinks in shock and disappointment.

ARTHUR

Yeah, sure. No problem.

THOM

Thanks.

Thom bats him on the arm. Arthur watches him go.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Thom creeps through the empty corridor and stops at a locker. He opens the padlock and removes a bag of clothing.

EXT. VICTORIA EMBANKMENT, LONDON - EVENING

Thom, in suit and smart shirt, strides up to a large ship lit by candles and full of revellers. He marches up the gangplank and through the throng, where he spies a stressed Emma chatting to guests. She notices him and struggles to mask her shock. She awkwardly excuses herself.

EMMA

What are you doing? You shouldn't be here.

THOM

Well it's a fundraiser isn't it? I might want to...invest.

She's not impressed.

EMMA

Look you've got to go. You're not on the list and my boss is on my...

Too late. She's interrupted by the chuckle.

SIMON

Hi hi hi hi hi! Brilliant. It's Thom, isn't it? We met at the...exactly. Hi there. Everything OK? All well? Emma looking after you?

THOM

She is.

Simon guffaws as he leans in to Emma, cupping a lurid canapé...

SIMON

What the fuck is that? Looks like a fucking...organ.

Thom seizes his chance.

THOM

I'll leave you to it. Emma - let me get you a drink.

Emma glares at him. Through gritted teeth.

EMMA

I'll have a white wine spritzer. Thank you.

She fixes him with a smile. He nods cordially.

INT. SHIP - EVENING

Thom stands at the bar waiting for a barman to appear. Sat at the far end of the room a slightly hangdog guy, GERALD, sits alone, staring at Thom. Thom turns to him and rolls his eyes at the lack of service. Gerald smiles knowingly, then shyly yet suggestively raises an eyebrow and then his wineglass. Thom snaps back to the bar, unsure of what that may have meant. Finally the barman arrives.

BARMAN

Sorry, mate. Yes.

THOM

Err, yes. Could I have one white wine spritzer and one...

BARMAN

Got any ID?

Thom looks blank. The barman points to a 21 sign.

THOM

Hah! You've made my week, mate.

BARMAN

Can't serve you without ID.

THOM

No. Right. I actually don't have any on me, so...listen I'm just getting one for a...lady so...she runs this event?

BARMAN

Cool, well, just explain the situation to her, get her down here. No problem.

He fixes Thom with a cool smile. Thom returns it. He thinks, then looks across at the guy sat at the bar, still staring at him. He turns back to the barman.

THOM

Could I just get a tap water?

Thom leaves the bar and walks as casually as he can over to the guy at the far end of the room.

THOM (CONT'D)

Hi.

GERALD

Hello.

THOM

I was just wondering...if I could buy you a drink.

Gerald beams, touched. Thom has clearly made his day.

GERALD

Well, certainly, young sir. It would be a pleasure.

Thom puts his hand to his back pocket.

THOM

Excellent. Ooh, hang on, I'm vibrating. Would you mind getting them?

He hands Gerald a tenner.

GERALD

Of course. What's your tippie?

THOM

A...white wine spritzer?

Gerald nods knowingly. Thom smiles sheepishly as he attends to his 'phone call'.

INT. BOAT - NIGHT

Thom, holding two drinks, approaches Emma, hidden by a group of revellers.

THOM

Sorry...excuse me...sorry. Hi.

He grins at Emma and hands her the drink. She can't help but smile as she accepts.

THOM (CONT'D)
So, how's the canapé situation?

EMMA
Canapé situation's under control,
thank you.

THOM
God, that's a relief. I heard
there were fights breaking out
over the smoked salmon blinis.

Thom's clearly proud of his food reference. Emma smiles. But not for long...

SIMON
Hi there! All well? OK? Emma, the
music is fu...

Emma pre-emptively steers Simon to one side. Thom watches as he berates her. He tries to hear what's being said.

SIMON (CONT'D)
...to liven the thing up. It's
like Diana's fucking funeral out
here.

Thom watches as Emma tries to hold it together. He sips from his drink and slopes away.

SIMON (CONT'D)
People're leaving. It's a
fundraiser. Where's the fun?

As Simon speaks we hear the faint sound of jazz piano. A couple of revellers turn. There, noodling away at the baby grand in the corner, is Thom. They pause briefly, then return to their conversations. Thom looks around. His efforts are having very little effect. He clears his throat, plays a bit louder, but nothing. He plays a few more bars and then gives up.

He goes to close the piano, then rethinks. He swallows hard and gently knocks out a lounge style jazz introduction but this time the tune feels oddly familiar. Gently, nervously he attempts to sing along in a jazz standard style.

THOM
*My baby doesn't mess around
because she loves me so and this
I know for sure.*

Though his voice is so weak that it barely registers, Simon and Emma turn to see what's going on.

THOM (CONT'D)

*But does she really want to but
can't stand to see me walk out
the door.*

It's no good. People just look confused. He's losing them and he knows it. From the back of the room a solitary voice pipes up, this time strong and clear.

GERALD (O.S.)

*Don't try to fight the feeling,
cos the thought alone is killing
me right now.*

Gerald steps forward and joins a grateful Thom next to the piano as everyone stops to listen.

GERALD/THOM

*Thank God to Mum and Dad for
sticking two together cause we
don't know how.*

Gerald gestures to him to up the beat.

GERALD

*...six, seven, eight! You think
you've got it, Ohh, you think
you've got it, But got it just
don't get it, Till there's
nothing at aaaaaaaaaaaaaallllll!*

The revellers begin laughing and tapping their feet.

THOM

*(gaining confidence)
We get together, Ohh, we get
together, But separate's always
better when there's feelings
invooooolved.*

Simon and Emma look around as the room bursts into life. People sing and dance along. Emma grins at Simon. In the background fifty people shake it like a polaroid picture.

REVELLERS

*Heeyeeey Ya! Heeeey ya!/Heeyeeey
ya! Heey Ya!*

INT. BOAT - NIGHT

Simon conducts a raffle for a roomful of raucous, drunken, happy investors. He looks delighted.

EXT. BOAT'S DECK - NIGHT

Emma and Thom stand on deck, drinks in hand, slightly drunken buzz. Emma peers inside, a smile of satisfaction.

EMMA

So...any other hidden talents I should know about?

Thom snorts at the innuendo.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I don't mean...I just...God you're like a schoolboy. I just meant, most blokes with even a sniff of talent will make sure you know all about it. You never even mentioned it.

THOM

Why would I mention that?

EMMA

Erm...to impress me?

THOM

What makes you think I want to impress you?

They share a combative, playful smile. Thom looks away first, down at his feet.

THOM (CONT'D)

I suppose people I know don't...appreciate stuff like that? I'd rather people didn't know.

EMMA

You're so bizarre.

THOM

No I just... It's probably my mum's fault.

(off her look)

When I was growing up she kind of expected a lot of me. And every time I got like a commendation or an A grade or whatever it would just raise her expectations. So the bar gets higher and higher and one day you know you're not gonna reach it.

EMMA

So what, you wouldn't tell her?

Thom just shrugs.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What about your dad?

THOM

Oh, he died when I was fifteen.

EMMA

God, sorry. That must have been so difficult.

Thom considers this and nods, clearly a bit emotional. Emma just stares into his eyes, completely taken. He smiles awkwardly as she gently touches his side. She leans in towards him and...

BONG! Over Thom's head Big Ben strikes midnight.

THOM

Oh, shit. I really need to go.

He backs away and down the gang plank.

EMMA

Seriously?

THOM

Shit. Yeah, I'm sorry. It's just, last tube, so, shit...I'm so sorry. Bye. Bye.

A baffled Emma watches as Thom reluctantly drags himself away into the night.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Thom, dishevelled and hungover, tucks in his shirt as he runs through the gates. A couple of kids nudge each other as he passes. Self-consciously, he flattens down his hair.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

As Thom heads towards his locker a younger kid points him out to his mates. They snigger. Thom looks worried. He chucks his bag in his locker, grabs some books, then turns to find Chazz and a group of kids waiting expectantly.

CHAZZ

Alright, my nigger? The man himself.

THOM
Alright? What's going on?

CHAZZ
You tell me. There's some rumours
circulating.

Shit. Thom tries to play it cool.

THOM
What? What rumours?

CHAZZ
Rumours that you been big time
slipping it to some older lady.

Chazz laughs at the absurdity of it all.

CHAZZ (CONT'D)
And get this, yeah? Driving her
round in an Aston Martin. Then
doing her in the car park at
Tesco.

The others nod along.

CHAZZ (CONT'D)
So come on. Is it true? What were
you doing last night?

A long pause as Thom's ego battles his better judgement.

THOM
Oh, y'know. Homework. The Bill.
Nothing special.

The kids look disappointed. Chazz turns to them.

CHAZZ
See? What did I say? I was like,
Barton? With a woman? No way!
He's a paedo nutsucker if
anything.

Thom stares at them in frustration as they march off.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - DAY

Thom, still noticeably hungover, sits at the back of the
lab as Mr Schricter talks. He leans over to Arthur.

THOM
So, aren't you going to ask me
about last night?

Arthur doesn't even look up from his notes. Shrugs.

ARTHUR
How was last night?

MR SCHRICTER
...the NADH generated may then donate its electrons to drive ATP synthesis. Now, what bright spark can tell me how NAD is regenerated?

THOM
What's the problem?

Schricter spots Thom trying to get Arthur's attention.

MR SCHRICTER
Mr Barton?

Thom barely snaps to life.

THOM
What?

MR SCHRICTER
Get up.

Thom hesitates, his brain still foggy.

CLASSMATE
He can't get up, sir. He's got another boner.

Laughter from the class. Schricter wants a piece of this.

MR SCHRICTER
Is that right, Thom with an H? Get a bit excited looking at those fallopian tubes did you? Nursing another 'chubby'?

The class roars.

THOM
(mutters)
Least I can still get one.

Schricter is stopped in his tracks. The room falls silent...before erupting.

MR SCHRICTER
Well, I...That's...
(over more laughter)
Enough, settle down.

Thom looks around to see his classmates, even Olivia, laughing away. Arthur chuckles along too, which is more than Mr Schricter can take.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Right. You! Up!

ARTHUR
Me? What?

Arthur reluctantly gets to his feet.

MR SCHRICTER
'Me? What?' Why don't you tell us
what's so funny?

Arthur considers this for just a moment.

ARTHUR
What Thom said about your...

MR SCHRICTER
Shut up. How pathetic are you?

A hush descends. This is big. Arthur blinks up at him.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Padding around after your little
boyfriend, laughing at his jokes.
What are you gonna do when he's
not there for you anymore? When
he realises he can do better and
he's off to medical school and
you're still in Woodford with
half an A-Level drawing your
little cartoons.

Arthur looks about to burst.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Oh they're very good by the way.

ARTHUR
Fuck you!

A smile slowly spreads on Schricter's face. He's got him.

MR SCHRICTER
Ahh, very eloquent, Mr Potts. Got
any other gems for us?

Arthur fights back angry tears.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Nothing else to share?

Arthur fixes Schricter with a determined look. He goes to speak but glances across to Thom. Thom pleadingly shakes his head. Arthur looks utterly betrayed.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
 Didn't think so. I suggest you
 head straight for Miss Daniels'
 office.

Arthur reluctantly heads for the door, the eyes of the
 class on his back.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
 Okay! So who can tell me how NAD
 regen...

The bell rings. Over the bustle of squeaking chairs...

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
Alright! More on this tomorrow.
 One more order of business, is
 there anyone who didn't sign up
 with their preferred UCAS referee
 yesterday?

Thom curses his forgetfulness. He worriedly puts his hand
 up. Mr Schricter can't believe his luck.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)
 (malevolent)
 Oh really?

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Arthur sits outside the headmistress's office, glaring
 ahead. Thom strides down the corridor towards him.

THOM
 What the fuck!

ARTHUR
 What?

THOM
 Uni applications. Schricter's
 made himself my personal referee!

ARTHUR
 Yeah, that was yesterday.
 (pointedly)
 You weren't here.

THOM
 And you didn't say anything?
 Couldn't you have signed me up
 with Taylor or Gunderman or
 something?

ARTHUR
(unconvincingly)
Sorry, I didn't think of it.

THOM
Great, well now I've got
Schricter which would be bad
enough even if I wasn't trying to
stick it up his wife!

Thom reigns himself in as he sees Wesley and some of the
theatre kids walk past. Wesley spots him.

WESLEY
Hey, Thom. Olivia just told us
what you said to Schricter. Shit,
man! That's funny.

Thom blushes despite himself. At the back of the group
Olivia coolly nods a hello.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
We're just gonna grab some lunch.
You fancy joining us?

Thom can hardly believe it.

THOM
Oh yeah, sure, that'd be great.

Arthur glances at him, wounded, scared. Thom hesitates,
reluctant...then does the right thing.

THOM (CONT'D)
('breezily')
Oh, hey, would it be okay if
Arthur came too?

Wesley looks down at Arthur, clearly unconvinced. Arthur
reddens under his scrutiny.

ARTHUR
(aggressively)
It's fine. Forget it. I'm busy.

Thom turns to Arthur and speaks in hushed tones.

THOM
What's the problem?

ARTHUR
Why are you being such a dick?

THOM
What?

ARTHUR
I'm not a fucking charity case.

THOM
I know you're not. I just thought
you might want to come with.

This only makes Arthur angrier. He turns to face the wall. Thom looks back at the waiting group. He smiles, embarrassed, then turns back.

THOM (CONT'D)
Arthur..?

ARTHUR
You better go. Your friends are
waiting.

THOM
Okay. Okay, fine.

Thom masks his anger as he goes to join Wesley and the gang leaving Arthur to stew.

INT. SCHOOL CANTEEN - DAY

Thom and Olivia sit their trays down at a table. She lifts a slice of grey meat from her plate like it's a dead rat.

OLIVIA
What the hell is that? Look at
it.

THOM
It's like Ghandi's insole.

She chuckles, encouraging him.

THOM (CONT'D (CONT'D))
I actually had a beautiful piece
of beef at a restaurant the other
night. Filet mignon?

OLIVIA
What are you talking about?

THOM
Filet mignon. It's...

OLIVIA
I know what it is. Just wondering
why you're talking like a ponce.

Thom reddens. Bested again. Olivia sniffs at her plate.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I swear someone's pissed in this
gravy.

THOM

Yeah. Sorry about that.

She nearly laughs up a mouthful. Wesley and the others
arrive and sit around Thom and Olivia.

OLIVIA

Thom pissed in my gravy.

They all look at him.

THOM

You don't even want to know what
I did in the chocolate mousse.

They roar with laughter. From a far corner Arthur, in
plastic apron and rubber gloves, watches as he clears trays
off a table, overseen by a gloating Schricter.

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Arthur eats lunch alone.

INT. SCHOOL THEATRE - DAY

Clutching a knife to his chest, Thom is cradled by Wesley
and surrounded by other castmembers. He signs his dying
words to them, and dies. The others applaud - he's not bad.

In the background, Arthur tries not to watch as he works on
the set. Chazz pretends to execute him, gangsta style, with
a glue gun. Arthur sighs.

INT. BUS - MORNING

Arthur sits on the bus. An empty seat beside him. Enoch
slumps down into it, leans across Arthur and holds up a V-
sign at the widow. He then shoves Arthur's face against the
pane. Alongside, a white van man looks up from the wheel to
see Arthur apparently giving him the finger. He flips.

INT. BIOLOGY LAB - DAY

Mr Schricter sits at his desk, wading through paperwork. A
nervous looking Thom peers at him through the door. He
knocks. Schricter impatiently beckons him in.

THOM

Yes, sir. Hi. Really sorry to disturb but I just wondered if you might be able to sign off my UCAS form.

He holds the green form out but Schricter doesn't even look up from his paperwork.

MR SCHRICTER

Yes.
(off Thom's relieved look)
I might.

He smiles, savouring the power, then takes the form and glances at it.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)

Imperial? Really? I've got some good friends over there.
(with relish)
In the admissions department.

As Schricter's smile broadens a loud commotion breaks out in the corridor. Students start running past the door.

Confused, Mr Schricter makes for the door. Thom follows.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Students rush past Thom and Schricter, twittering excitedly. Up ahead, a mass of kids peer over the bannisters of the main staircase.

ANGLE ON: the foot of the staircase. A crowd has formed around an unseen object on the stone floor, blocking the school's main artery and nexus. Students join the circle and line the stair and bannisters, craning for a view.

ANGLE ON: Thom and Schricter. At the top of the stairs, peering over the bannister directly above the circle. Thom's face white as ash.

THOM'S POV: In the circle, on the stone floor, lies a message daubed in paint: *'It's a little secret, just the Robinsons' affair...'*

Thom backs away from Schricter and the bannister then bolts, shoving students aside. In a classroom doorway, watching him go, stands Enoch.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYING FIELD - DAY

Arthur sits on a bench, idly scratching a werewolf into the wood with a compass. He looks up to see Thom charging towards him. He sighs.

ARTHUR
Wasn't me.

THOM
You couldn't resist, could you?

ARTHUR
It wasn't me.

THOM
Who was it then?

ARTHUR
I hate to break it to you, but it might not be about you.

THOM
'It's a little secret, just a Robinsons' affair. *Most of all you've got to hide it from the kids.*' Mrs Robinson? The Graduate? We saw it last year. But you're right, it's probably just a coincidence.

ARTHUR
Or maybe you told someone else.

THOM
(laughs incredulously)
Who? Who else would I tell?

Arthur shrugs sulkily.

THOM (CONT'D)
Oh grow up.
(a beat)
Did you tell anyone else?

Arthur rounds on him, tears in his eyes, furious.

ARTHUR
Who?! Who am I going to tell?
Chazz?
(off Thom's look)
No, I didn't fucking tell Chazz.
And that's sort of where the list ends, isn't it?

He fights back hot tears.

THOM
Arthur, look...

ARTHUR
No fuck off, don't patronise me.
Go and play with your friends.

Thom wavers, not wanting to leave.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
YES?

Thom faces him silently, then turns and walks away.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Schricter teaches. Thom and Arthur sit apart. Olivia glances round and catches Thom's eye. She gives him a friendly half-smile. A phone rings.

Instantly the class look about excitedly for the culprit. Thom flaps into action as he realises it's him. Schricter approaches as he scrabbles it out of his jacket. He just has time to see the caller, 'EMMA', before Schricter snatches it from him. Thom is rigid with terror.

Schricter raises the phone to his ear and clears his throat theatrically, playing to the crowd.

SCHRICTER
(thick French accent)
Eeeuuuuuh oui bonjour?

The class erupts.

EXT. LONDON STREET - CONTINUOUS

Emma walks down a busy street, phone to her ear. She frowns and checks the screen.

EMMA
Thom?

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

SCHRICTER
Non. Ce n'est pas Thom. Je
m'appelle Didier. Et vous?

The class lap it up. Thom sinks into his chair, bracing himself. Arthur watches Schricter with silent intensity.

Emma strains to hear over the din of the traffic.

EMMA

Sorry, who?

SCHRICTER

Thom is beezy. How you say...pedicure? You call back after pedicure?

EMMA

OK. Thank you. Sorry, who did you say...

Schricter hangs up, cutting her off. He pretends not to notice the class's cackling, turns off Thom's phone and chucks it in the bin. Thom finally exhales - a wave of relief and euphoria.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE SCHOOL THEATRE - LATER

Thom dials on his phone, then falters. He glances through the door and watches Olivia on stage. He hits 'call'.

INT. HAIRDRESSERS, LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Emma stands at the counter in a cool hairdressers, paying up. She tucks the phone under her chin as she taps her pin.

EMMA

Ah. Bonjour.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY.

THOM

Hi. Sorry, I missed your call. I gather my colleague did his Didier bit.

Emma steps out of the shop. She looks fantastic - a funky new haircut and a younger, sexier outfit than we've seen before. She seems invigorated.

EMMA

Yep. Tell him he's hilarious.

THOM

I will.

Thom stiffens with grim resolve. Deep breath.

THOM (CONT'D)

I wanted to talk to you, actually.

Emma misreads this, and smiles.

EMMA

Really? I was a bit worried about calling. After last week I didn't know whether to wait or call or not call or...

(quiet, girlish)

I'm a bit rusty...

THOM

Listen, Emma...

EMMA

I want to see you. Is that bad? I've been back and forth and I just think...we're both grown-ups, and you're right, sometimes you've just got to bite the bullet, so...I want to see you again. Tonight.

THOM

Tonight?

EMMA

I've told my husband I'm doing a fundraiser in Manchester.

THOM

What? Why?

EMMA

So I don't have to go home.

The penny drops. Thom looks winded, speechless.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Are you free?

A long pause. Thom grips his hair, wrestling with his better judgement.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Thom?

THOM

Yes. Yes, that sounds...I'd love to. Tonight. Why not?

He slaps his own head angrily, then looks up. Making for him down the corridor is Mr Schrieter. Thom panics.

EMMA

Oh thank God. I thought for a second you were going to say no.

Schricter closes in, barely metres away now...

THOM
Hah! No. Listen, I should...

EMMA
Can you meet me in town around seven?

THOM
Yep yep. Fine. I've got to...

EMMA
Thom, I hope you don't think...

THOM
I don't. My meeting's starting, gotta go. Bye.

He hangs up. Schricter eyes him suspiciously.

THOM (CONT'D)
Rehearsal. I meant rehearsal.

He rolls his eyes elaborately at his misnomer.

SCHRICTER
This form of yours...

THOM
Yes sir, that's...

SCHRICTER
I'm taking the golf team to West Burton this afternoon and won't have time to come in and out. So after school you're going to come to my house...

THOM
Your house? No!

Schricter raises his eyebrows in warning.

THOM (CONT'D)
Yes sir. Sure. Just - wouldn't you rather do it at school, maybe another time when...

SCHRICTER
We'll do it when I say we do it.

THOM
Just that, I wouldn't want to disturb your family. If you have any.

SCHRICTER

Your concern is heartwarming, but my wife's off on some business trip. So, shall we say 7?

Thom thinks.

THOM

('breezily')

Or earlier? How's half five?

SCHRICTER

Fine. Half past five. Do not keep me waiting.

He marches off leaving Thom bamboozled in the corridor.

INT. SCHOOL THEATRE - MOMENTS LATER

Thom enters, looking strained, miles away.

OLIVIA (O.S.)

Hey. What are you doing tonight?

Thom snaps round, jittery.

THOM

What? Nothing. Nothing. Why what have you...what?

OLIVIA

I just...I'm still struggling a bit with these lines and...the i-Pod thing was great by the way but...I wondered if, as you're not busy you might come over and help me practice.

THOM

Oh. Ohh. Erm, no actually I just remembered I am busy.

OLIVIA

(doubtful)

Really?

THOM

Yeah, Mr Schricter wants me to go through my UCAS form after school so...

OLIVIA

Oh, okay, well I can wait around. How about after that?

Thom curses himself internally.

THOM

Yeah, no. I've also just remembered that I'm busy after that too. I'm meant to be seeing someone. A mate.

She squints at him scornfully as he burrows for excuses.

OLIVIA

Look, I just thought you might want to help, it wasn't a... If you can't be arsed it's fine...

THOM

No, I can, I just...

But she picks up her bag and walks out. Thom hangs his head, exhausted.

EXT. SUBURBAN CUL DE SAC - DAY

From outside the garden gate, Thom stands looking at this leafy semi-detached like it was the Death Star.

EXT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - DAY

Thom rings the bell and waits anxiously. The door opens revealing a sour Schricter. Thom offers his hand to shake.

THOM

Hey, Mr S!

Schricter looks at his hand with disdain and opens the door. Thom withdraws it and strolls in.

INT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Thom steps in and takes in the Schricters' home. Mesmerised despite its tasteful but unremarkable decor.

He disappears into a living room. Thom follows, nosing at everything, itching with curiosity.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MR SCHRICTER

Have a seat.

Thom eyes the room. On the desk sits a World's Best Teacher mug beside a photo of Mr Schricter, sunburnt to a crisp in a foreign taverna. Under a pile of papers he spies Arthur's art book. On the wall hangs a signed Arsenal shirt.

THOM
Go go Gunners!

Schricter looks up, baffled. Then sees the shirt.

MR SCHRICTER
(darkly)
It's my wife's. I'm a Spurs fan.

THOM
Oh, yeah, Spurs. I like them too.

Schricter stares at Thom with unutterable scorn as he sits.

MR SCHRICTER
So. You fancy yourself at
Imperial then?

THOM
Yes, well, ideally.

MR SCHRICTER
Good guys at Imperial. Good guys.

Thom feeds his boast with an encouraging smile, removing his form from his record bag.

THOM
I'm sure. So, all I need is for
you to sign here and here.

MR SCHRICTER
Obviously, I wouldn't want
to...mislead them at all.

THOM
No, sure.

MR SCHRICTER
I need to know you're going to
behave yourself if you get in
there. What do you think?

THOM
No, definitely. I'd definitely
behave myself.

MR SCHRICTER
No stupid outbursts, no showing
off...

Thom smiles through gritted teeth.

THOM
No, obviously.

Thom glances at his watch anxiously.

MR SCHRICTER

Am I keeping you?

(off Thom's look)

Good. Well. Right. So. Why you?
Why do you think you deserve a
place at Imperial?

Mr Schricter sits back in his chair expectantly. Thom wasn't prepared for this. He briefly glances at the clock on the wall.

THOM

Well, I've wanted to be a doctor
for as long as I can remember...

EXT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - EVENING

The sun begins to set.

INT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

THOM

...and hopefully, all that...

A buzzing. Thom surrepticiously takes his phone out as he talks, sees 'EMMA' calling, and hastily rejects the call.

THOM (CONT'D)

...coupled with strong A-level
results, should see me through.

Schricter nods thoughtfully, taking this in.

MR SCHRICTER

And what else?

Thom can't believe that's not enough.

THOM

...erm, I won the science prize
back to back and the Wilkinson
prize last year...

MR SCHRICTER

Don't brag, Thom.

Thom gapes in disbelief. Schricter peruses the form.

INT. EMMA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

EMMA

Hi Thom, it's me. Just wanted to
let you know I'm running a bit
late.

(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'm going to nip home and grab some stuff, but I'll see you there in a bit I hope. Okay, bye.

INT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The clock shows six twenty-five. Thom's starting to panic.

MR SCHRICTER

And what would you say are the qualities that...

THOM

Listen, I'm sorry but I really should think about leaving. My mum will be expecting me...

MR SCHRICTER

Well, just a couple more bits and we should be done so...

Thom glances out the window and sees a car pull into the driveway. It's Emma. Shit.

THOM

Well, just, it's late and...

Thom stands. Then sits again. He sees Emma get out of the car, carrying some files. As she kicks the door shut Thom leans back in his chair out of view.

The front door opens and shuts.

EMMA (O.S.)

(flatly)

Hi.

MR SCHRICTER

Hello.

(by explanation)

My wife.

THOM

Oh!

Thom gets up and shows a sudden interest in the bookcase by the wall as Emma walks straight past the open door.

EMMA

Just dropping off some bits and doing a quick change then I'll be off.

MR SCHRICTER

(disinterested)

Yup.

THOM
Dick Francis! Wow!

MR SCHRICTER
Would you sit down, Thom? I
thought you wanted to get
finished.

Emma walks back past the door, starts climbing the stairs.

THOM
Yeah, I was just, no, I like
books so...

Thom sits again.

INT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emma stops halfway up the stairs, she's forgotten
something. She heads back down towards the living room.

INT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma marches through the door. Thom looks up, petrified.

EMMA
I just meant to say...

She sees Thom and freezes.

EMMA (CONT'D)
...Fuck. Shit. Sorry. Erm...

Schricter snaps, disgusted at her language.

MR SCHRICTER
Emma!

EMMA
Sorry. Hi. I...

MR SCHRICTER
(impatient)
I'm just talking to Thom here
about his medical school
application.

Thom looks up at her, green. Emma's completely confused.

EMMA
Oh. Right. That's good.

Thom smiles nervously.

MR SCHRICTER
What were you going to say?

EMMA
What?

MR SCHRICTER
Jesus. You said 'I just meant to say'...

EMMA
Erm. Don't know. No idea. Stupid.
I'll just...I er...

MR SCHRICTER
(interrupting coldly)
Why don't you go and change or
whatever it is you need to do.

Emma reddens at this embarrassing dressing-down.

EMMA
Fine. Two seconds. I'll just be
upstairs.

She backs out of the room in a daze fixing Thom with a glare as she goes.

THOM
Bye!

Schricter continues looking through the form. Thom clutches at his stomach.

THOM (CONT'D)
Ooh, you know, I don't feel that
great. Could I use your toilet?

MR SCHRICTER
Right out of here, next to the
kitchen.

THOM
Right.

Thom hurries out of the room.

INT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Thom shuts the door behind him. He looks up to see Emma looking down from the landing. She furiously beckons him up. He wincingly tiptoes up the stairs to meet her.

EMMA
(whispered)
What the hell's going on?

THOM

I...don't know. I...thought you said to pick you up.

EMMA

Yes, from work! How did you find my address anyway?

THOM

Hmm? Oh, my...secretary found it. Shit. I'm so sorry. I didn't realise he'd be here!

EMMA

What did you tell him?

THOM

I just said I was here to pick you up. For work. And he was asking me about myself and I told him about medical school and he just started going on about it.

EMMA

It's his job.

THOM

That's what he told me!

EMMA

Right, well, fine. Let me get changed and then we'll go.

Thom turns to go back downstairs. She grabs his arm and pulls him towards her. She kisses him sensually on the mouth. He whimpers slightly. She smiles, releases him and walks away. He gathers himself then heads 'coolly' down the stairs. He trips on the last two steps and goes sprawling. He pops up again and stumbles into the living room.

INT. SCHRICTER'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THOM

Hi!

Schricter looks up, unimpressed with his forced joviality.

THOM (CONT'D)

So...I just spoke to your wife.

MR SCHRICTER

Really?

THOM

Yes. And she told me that she needs a lift to the station.

Schricter grits his teeth in disbelief at her cheek.

MR SCHRICTER

Did she? Well, I can do that.

THOM

Too late! Too late. I already said that I would do it.

MR SCHRICTER

Well, that's...surprisingly noble of you.

THOM

Not at all, not at all. It's a pleasure. More than a pleasure. An honour. Not an honour but...

MR SCHRICTER

Hang on, isn't she going from King's Cross?

THOM

Err...yes?

MR SCHRICTER

Well that's all the way into town? Are you taking her all the way?

Thom considers this.

THOM

Yes, sir, I think that I will.

MR SCHRICTER

Right, well, fine. I'll need to hang on to this and finish up another day.

He folds the form and places it on the table as Emma appears carrying an overnight bag.

EMMA

Okay, sorry, sorry. I'm ready.

THOM

Ha ha, no problem, okay let's go.

Thom ushers her towards the front door. Schricter follows.

THOM (CONT'D)

Well, thanks for all of your... advice, Mr Schricter.

EMMA

(laughs)

I think you can call him David.

Mr Schricter looks at his wife like she's mad. Thom hesitates, looks him in the eye.

THOM

Thank you, David.

Thom again offers his hand. This time Schricter shakes it. They eye each other awkwardly.

MR SCHRICTER

You're welcome, Thom.

Thom turns to open the front door, revealing his shirt hanging out.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)

Well at least tuck your shirt in would you?

Thom freezes. Emma turns and glares at Schricter.

EMMA

David! You're not at school now!

Thom looks like he's going to shit himself.

MR SCHRICTER

(sheepishly)

Sorry.

THOM

That's okay. Bye then!

Thom grabs Emma's overnight bag and they walk up the driveway. Mr Schricter watches them go. A wave of relief floods Thom's face.

MR SCHRICTER

Don't forget that coursework's due in on Tuesday!

Thom freezes. Emma stops, confused.

Thom turns back to the door. He forces a laugh.

THOM

Ha ha ha. Okay then, I won't.
I'll see you in the form room!

Emma laughs. Thom laughs. Schricter looks vaguely puzzled. Thom hurries away to the car.

EXT. SUBURBAN AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER

The Aston Martin tears down the residential street, engine snarling. The tyres screech slightly as it corners.

INT. THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Emma drives. She squeals with excitement. Beside her Thom slumps, glassy-eyed. Utterly exhausted and traumatised.

EMMA

(hyper)

Jesus! I really thought that was it. I nearly had a heart attack, you two sitting there! Do you think he noticed anything weird?

The windscreen wipers come on full blast.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Ooops! Where are the indicators? How do I turn these off?

THOM

Hmmm? Oh. Here.

He reaches over and flicks off the wipers. She giggles.

EMMA

My hands are shaking! I feel like I've just got away with stealing sweets or something. I should feel bad, shouldn't I? Or should I? I don't know. I feel bad I don't feel bad. Are we turning left here? It's like the butterflies you get when...

As she jabbars on, Thom stares out the window. The car glides past a small common filled with groups of teens. Smoking, scrapping, laughing, playing games. Two boys with water guns creep up behind a bench of girls and ambush, soaking them. The girls pretend to be angry and give chase. Thom watches the scene longingly.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Thom? Thom?

He snaps back.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Does this thing have sat nav?

Thom just looks at her.

THOM
I don't know.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

A functional hotel room. Thom sits on the bed, fiddling anxiously. Emma calls out from the en suite bathroom.

EMMA
Be two seconds. Make us a drink.

Thom scans the room for a drinks cabinet. He opens the wardrobe. Inside is a smaller cupboard. He opens that to reveal a minibar. He reaches in and pulls out a lilliputian Grand Marnier bottle. He frowns at it for a second then catches sight of himself in the mirror in the wardrobe door. He stares at himself, sighs and turns, decided.

THOM
Emma. I think maybe...

He turns. Emma stands in the en-suite doorway wearing nothing but a revealing negligee, hair cascading over bare shoulders. Thom gasps.

THOM (CONT'D)
Holy shit.
(recovering)
I mean...wow.

She laughs, pleased but coy.

EMMA
Hi.

She moves towards him. He stands stock still, breathing in fits and starts. She stops just before their chests touch. Her lips millimetres from his.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What were you saying?

THOM
Ummmmmm...

She kisses him. His eyes virtually roll back in his head. He surrenders for a moment, then comes to, breaking away.

THOM (CONT'D)
Emma, listen...

She takes his hands and puts them on her bottom. He catches his breath. They both glance down at his crotch.

THOM (CONT'D)
Sorry.

EMMA

About what?

THOM

My...boner.

She laughs, then eyes him lustily and starts slowly sliding down his body. He watches her descend, dumbstruck, then jumps away as she reaches his crotch.

THOM (CONT'D)

Woah, hey! I can't. I can't do this. I'm sorry.

He backs away, clattering into a trouser press.

EMMA

What?

THOM

I shouldn't be here.

He catches the trouser press and in doing so nearly topples into the open wardrobe.

EMMA

Oh my God. It's me, isn't it? Look at me.

She covers herself with her arms, suddenly thrown, humiliated, naked.

THOM

No. It's me. I just...I don't belong here. This is a hotel. And there's a minibar. A minibar and a tiny iron and...You've got a husband.

EMMA

Please don't bring my husband into this. It's nothing to do with him.

THOM

Isn't it? How is it not? You're not here because of me. You don't know anything about me.

EMMA

Yes I do.

THOM

No.
(with meaning)
You don't.

Emma sits on the edge of the bed, hugging herself.

EMMA

Fine, then. Just go. Get the hell out of here.

Thom looks at her, sadly, then makes for the door. He turns back to face her trying to decide what he wants to say.

THOM

You're not a child.

EMMA

What?

THOM

He treats you like one of his students. The way he talks to you.

EMMA

That's ridiculous.

THOM

He won't even let you do a law course.

(a beat)

You're the smartest... coolest...most amazing woman but he's happy for you to rot in a job you hate. I don't get it.

EMMA

Is that what you came here to tell me?

She turns to face him.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You don't just mess people about like this, Thom. You're 24 years old. You need to grow up.

THOM

I'm sorry. I'm not ready.

EMMA

Just get out.

Thom opens the door. Hesitates, unsure what to say.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Get out!

He turns and leaves.

MONTAGE - MUSIC UP: a melancholic Neil Young track.

INT. THOM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Thom stares at the ceiling. His alarm goes off.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Schricter writes on the blackboard. Thom sits at the back. Alone. Arthur now sits two rows in front, eyes forward. Olivia turns and passes Thom a pile of handouts. She doesn't even glance at him.

INT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Thom eats lunch alone, in silence. He watches the gangs and groups in the playground, laughing and shouting. From below, the faint peep peep of a mobile phone alert. Then another. Then dozens, all at once. The games stop as if frozen in time. Every kid is looking at their mobile phone.

Thom's phone beeps. He takes it out and reads his message. His breath is taken from him, his eyes blink in terror. He bolts out of the belfry and down the stairs.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MOMENTS LATER

Thom flies out of the bell tower into the playground, then stops abruptly. Standing in the middle of the yard, staring at him, a half-smile on his lips, is Enoch. They eye each other for a second, before Thom sprints off.

INT. BACKSTAGE, SCHOOL THEATRE - MOMENTS LATER

Arthur paints a scenery flat, his phone on one side. He sighs as he sees Thom rushing in.

ARTHUR

Quick quiz. Which teacher should be keeping better tabs on his wife?

THOM

You got it too.

ARTHUR

Yep.

Arthur continues painting. Thom faces him awkwardly.

THOM

Look. I've been a dick, I know I have. I'm sorry.

(MORE)

THOM (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have blamed you, I know you wouldn't do that. I was just freaking out.

Arthur still doesn't look up.

THOM (CONT'D)

I think I know who it is, and I need your help. They think we've fallen out, so if you...

Arthur turns, almost laughing, incredulous.

ARTHUR

You're fucking unbelievable.

THOM

What?

ARTHUR

I'm such a dick. You're only saying sorry because you want a favour. Of course you are. Why else would you lower yourself to talk to a stagehand?

THOM

What? No! I'm just... Look, someone knows what's going on and if Schricter finds out then that's it. Gone. Medical school. My whole future. I'll end up...

Thom stares into his bleak future.

ARTHUR

Like me?

Thom is stumped.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Good luck tomorrow night.
(coldly)
Break a leg.

Arthur heaves up the flat and hauls it off, forcing Thom to step away as it swings round.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - EVENING

A handmade sign reads 'TONIGHT ONLY- THE KNIFE'S TALE - THE ST. STEPHEN'S HIGH PLAYERS. Parents and kids filter in.

INT. DRESSING ROOM AREA - EVENING

Olivia, dressed in an 'urban' outfit of pink Juicy velour tracksuit and scraped back hair, sits on the floor, script in lap, rocking slightly. The door swings open and Thom, in baggy jeans and an American football shirt, strides in.

THOM

Shit. Sorry. I..sorry. Are you ok?

OLIVIA

Yeah, fine, just...shitting it.

THOM

(tentative, concerned)
Anything I can do?

OLIVIA

You could start a fire maybe.
Just before curtain. That would help.

THOM

Okay, I'm on it.

He takes a breath, then...

THOM (CONT'D)

Listen. I'm really sorry. About last week.

She know what he's referring to but won't show it.

OLIVIA

Why you being weird? It's fine. I just needed some help with the script. Not like it was a big deal, was it?

She looks for his reaction. Thom wavers, then...

THOM

No. No.

She papers over her disappointment with a 'matey' smile. Thom tries to return it.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Mr Schricter drives. Emma stares out of the passenger side looking sad and distant.

MR SCHRICTER

This isn't exactly my ideal night out you know. But if you're gonna go around with that... face on all night you'll do me more harm than good. Once I'm head of year you can stay at home all you like but until then please just... behave. Yes?

Emma sighs and looks ahead, swallowing down her anger. Mr Schricter indicates and drives into the school car park.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Mr and Mrs Schricter shuffle into their seats, all fake smiles and handshakes as the lights dim. On stage a lone 'street kid' comes out under the spotlight.

KID

Hey. Alright? Hello. It's me. I'm the kid that you see. The kid on the street corner hanging out with his mates. The kid you hope won't notice you as you walk from the car to your gate...

INT. WINGS - NIGHT

Thom watches nervously. He peers out to take a quick look down at the audience. Annoyed dads, proud mums, bored kids, Mr and Mrs Schric... holy shit. He checks again. He holds the sides of his head in a panic, then runs from the wings out into the corridor.

THOM

Shit. Shit, shit, shit, shit.

He looks either way for inspiration, for help, but there's nobody there. He turns back the way he came and heads for the backstage area, behind the huge scenery flats. There he spots Arthur, adjusting the set. Thank God.

THOM (CONT'D)

Arthur! You've gotta help me.

Arthur turns guiltily to face him.

THOM (CONT'D)

She's there! In the audience. Emma's here with Mr Schricter. And I've got to go on in five minutes. You've got to go on for me.

Only as Thom starts removing his costume does he see the fear in Arthur's face.

THOM (CONT'D)
What's going on?

Thom looks at the flat behind his back but Arthur steps to the side to cover it up. Thom pushes Arthur out the way. It's the backdrop of an urban wall. And on it Arthur has painted some graffiti. A woman in fishnets lying on a bed and the legend: 'Here lies the wife of Mr Schricter, but which of his little students dicked her?'

Thom stares at Arthur in disbelief.

KID ACTOR ONE(O.S.)
I thought you were my brother?
When everyone else was bitching
and ragging who stood by you?

WHAM! Thom throws a punch. Arthur feels his face for blood then returns the favour, clodding Thom on the back of the head.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

The show goes on despite the sound of fighting backstage.

WESLEY
If I was your brother then why
did you abandon me?

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA - NIGHT

Thom and Arthur wrestle on the floor. Arthur manages to get to his feet but Thom leaps on to his back. Arthur can't support the weight. His legs buckle as he staggers in the direction of the stage set.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

A huge commotion as Thom and Arthur come CRASHING through the set. They land on the stage and look up to see the entire audience staring up at them. As the main backdrop collapses, the others follow suit like a house of cards and the entire set falls to the floor. The only one to survive is Arthur's bit of handiwork.

The crowd gasps. A few giggles break out. At the front of the stage the actors show resolute professionalism.

KID ACTOR TWO

Look what you did to him. You
stabbed him. You stabbed him and
now he's dead. Why did you do it?

INT. HEAD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Emma sits, traumatised. Staring at Thom in disbelief, taking it all in, his uniform, his terrified demeanour. By her side Mr Schricter wears a menacing sneer. Arthur and Thom sit opposite, heads bowed. Miss Daniels waddles in front of the boys, fuming.

MISS DANIELS

NEVER in my years as headmistress
have I witnessed such a vile
piece of childishness. Such
vicious lies.

Arthur clenches. Thom shoots him a warning look - don't.

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)

Mr Potts I confess I'm less
surprised to find your grubby
hand in all this. Mr Barton,
however. I thought you had more
sense, and I'm all the more
shocked and disappointed
considering your application to
medical school.

Schricter unfolds the green form on his lap menacingly.

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)

Which now...?

She throws up her hands in disappointed resignation. Thom blinks in terror, face drained of all colour as his entire future evaporates before his eyes.

MIS DANIELS

I'm only sad you were weak enough
to let yourself be influenced by
someone who clearly does not have
your best interests at heart. Let
me be very clear. This appalling
campaign, these horrendous
lies...

ARTHUR

They're not lies.

Thom looks up from his hands, terrified - please no.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

They're true.

Thom shakes his head at Arthur, silently imploring him..

MR SCHRICTER

What are you talking about?

Thom, Emma and Mr Schricter lean in, breath baited. A long pause. Arthur glances at Thom like a suicide about to jump.

ARTHUR

The rumours are about me.

A beat. The others gape.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

It's nothing to do with Thom. He was just trying to stop me putting the banner up.

Mr Schricter scoffs. Thom is overwhelmed, speechless.

MR SCHRICTER

What?! Sorry, what? What are you telling me? That you've been having an affair with my wife?

Arthur nods unconvincingly.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)

You. Arthur Potts.

(laughs)

You don't even have any friends let alone a girlfriend! What? The...the runt of the litter, the class retard has been seeing my wife? You're nothing. You are a nobody.

Emma stares at her husband, shocked at his vicious attack. Arthur reddens. This clearly isn't working. Emma looks at him then looks at Thom's terrified face.

MISS DANIELS

Mr Schricter, I know you're upset...

MR SCHRICTER

Yeah, I'm upset. I'm upset that this little piece of shit on my shoe is trying to tell me he FUCKED MY WIFE.

The boys and Miss Daniels look at Mr Schricter in horror. Emma stares at her seething husband. She's heard enough.

EMMA

Actually it's true.

Arthur and Thom look up in disbelief.

MR SCHRICTER

I'm sorry, what?

EMMA

It's true. We met at the garden party where he was volunteering. And, yes, we went out a couple of times. I didn't know he was a schoolboy, obviously, but he...

MR SCHRICTER

Why would you do that?

EMMA

Because I liked him. Because he listened to me. He gave a shit.

As she speaks it's clear that she's realising these things for the first time.

EMMA (CONT'D)

He made me feel young and smart and he was excited to be around me and it...felt great. And he wanted me to make something of myself.

Schricter's silenced. He knows where this is going.

EMMA (CONT'D)

He told me I should apply for law school.

SCHRICTER

And why did he do that, I wonder?

EMMA

(exploding)

Because he's not threatened by the idea of me having a better career than him!

Arthur nods along, starting to believe it himself.

ARTHUR

Yeah, that is true. I am well skill.

Mr Schricter scowls at Arthur.

EMMA

Oh, I got in by the way, thanks for asking. I start in September.

A flicker of a glance at Thom.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I wanted to tell you.

MR SCHRICTER
(spits)
So, what? You slept with him?

ARTHUR
(with relish)
Yep, we totally boned. All sorts
of...nasty shit.

EMMA
No, we didn't sleep together.

ARTHUR
No, we didn't sleep together,
but, y'know, other stuff.

As Arthur talks, Thom catches Emma's eye. He gives her a look of apology and bottomless gratitude.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
...all the other stuff. Fine
line, isn't it?

MR SCHRICTER
I'm gonna...

Schricter launches himself at Arthur, but Thom's quicker, stepping between them and grabbing Schricter by the collar.

THOM
You're gonna what? Bully him some
more? Beat him up this time? Big
man.

With that Thom shoves him by the collar back onto his chair. Gobsmailed, Schricter turns to Miss Daniels.

MR SCHRICTER
He assaulted me! You saw that!

Miss Daniels stares at the two of them. A weary beat.

MISS DANIELS
No Mr Schricter. I didn't see a
thing. I'm not wearing my
glasses.

She is wearing her glasses. Schricter goes to protest...

MISS DANIELS (CONT'D)
(granite tough)
Pipe down. I think we've heard
enough from you. And why don't I
take that?

He nods to Thom's form. Schricter reluctantly hands it over, chastened but seething. Thom wells up with relief.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Thom sits nervously outside the head's office in the darkened, deserted corridor. The muffled sound of angry exchanges emanates from within. Eventually the noises dissipate. The door opens and Emma emerges. He looks up at her sheepishly. She shakes her head, looks at him gravely.

EMMA

Been a long time since I went out
with a schoolboy.

He looks to his shoes, thoroughly embarrassed. She gestures to the door.

EMMA (CONT'D)

He seems nice though.

Thom smiles.

THOM

Yeah. He's alright. You're very
lucky to have him.

She smiles back and goes to speak but the door opens again and she steps away from him as casually as possible. Arthur and Mr Schricter emerge, both looking fairly traumatised. Schricter tries to gather his cool.

MR SCHRICTER

Right, come on. Let's go. Home.

She just stands there looking at him.

MR SCHRICTER (CONT'D)

Come on. Get in the car!

EMMA

I'm sorry. No.

Arthur and Thom look at each other, shocked.

MR SCHRICTER

I said Get. In. The car.

EMMA

David. I am tired of being spoken
to like a child. I'm not coming
home.

A stand off. Arthur and Thom smirk slightly at Schricter.

MR SCHRICTER

(mutters)

Well. Maybe if you didn't behave like a fucking child.

EMMA

Oh, seriously. Would you just...Fuck. Off.

He fumbles for his keys, humiliated. Lost for words.

MR SCHRICTER

Right. Fine.

He shuffles off down the corridor, clearly shaken. Thom and Arthur share a grin.

ARTHUR

Bye, sir. Have a great weekend!
Take care!

Schricter punches a locker as he rounds the corner. Emma grabs her mobile from her bag.

EMMA

Right. Looks like I've got some arrangements to make.

ARTHUR

Well, you can always kip round...

EMMA

No! Thanks, Arthur but... No.

She slings her bag over her shoulder.

EMMA (CONT'D)

It's a Friday night! Apparently you're sixteen years old. Shouldn't you be out binge drinking and happy slapping?

THOM

Actually there is a houseparty. The mash-up of the year, apparently. But I'm pretty sure we're not invited.

EMMA

So what? It's a houseparty! God, you two need to grow some balls. These are supposed to be the best years of your life.

She grins sassily at Thom, then leans in and kisses him gently on the cheek. She turns and swans off down the corridor, alone. Thom and Arthur look at each other.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Thom and Arthur walk along apprehensively, dressed up, at least by their standards, in teenage garb.

THOM

I can't believe you got suspended.

ARTHUR

What? It's two weeks. Of not having to go to school.

('gravely')

It may of course jeopardise my application to Cambridge. Oh no, wait, hang on. University's for bell ends.

THOM

(amused, sarcastic)

Thanks.

He looks at Arthur again - thanks.

ARTHUR

So. I think Schricter actually shit his slacks.

THOM

Amazing. I'm guessing you're not getting your art book back any time soon.

Arthur sighs ruefully - he hadn't thought of that. Thom reaches into his bag and takes out the book. Arthur gawks at it in shock, then takes it.

ARTHUR

How did you..?

THOM

I'll fill you in later.

ARTHUR

You'd like to.

Their laughter stops as they reach a house festooned with party paraphernalia. Music and the sound of teenage abandon pumps out into the street.

The boys anxiously look up at the house and then at each other. Decision time. They wordlessly come to an agreement. As one they march up to the front door. Thom goes to knock but the door's already open.

INT. WESLEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A packed hallway, spilling revelling teenagers into adjoining rooms and up the stairs. The boys move into a living room strobed by disco lights and pocked with balloons. In the corner, a bin full of ice and assorted booze. A crowd mingle and dance self-consciously. Thom and Arthur enter. All heads turn their way. Groups of kids whisper and point in awed fascination. Thom and Arthur make their way to the drinks table. Most of the revellers resume. Thom spots Olivia with her friends. He catches her eye and hastily turns away. Arthur witnesses.

ARTHUR

You heard what the woman said.
Grow some balls.

Thom takes a deep breath, grabs two bottles from the ice bin, and strides towards her. She smiles coyly as he approaches.

OLIVIA

When I said set the building on
fire...

THOM

Couldn't find my zippo. Thought
smashing up the set was the next
best thing.

OLIVIA

You're a genius. How can I ever
repay you?

Thom hesitates, then...

THOM

How about a dance?

Olivia smiles incredulously.

OLIVIA

You dance?

Thom thinks about it.

THOM

I honestly don't know.

He takes her hand and leads her into the bobbing throng. From the buffet table Arthur watches, proud as punch.

V/O

Excuse me...

Arthur swivels. The three sexy, frightening girls face him, gum chewing in unison. Arthur sighs.

ARTHUR

Look, I'm allowed to be here. I'm crew.

CUTE GIRL

Are you Arthur Potts?

ARTHUR

(warily)

Yeah...

Another of the girls leans in excitedly.

CUTE GIRL # 2

Is it true you like slept with Mr Schricter's wife?

Arthur just smiles. The girls turn to each other, thrilled.

CUTE GIRL # 3

I told you. It's him!

They turn as one. Eyes on fire. Arthur grins sheepishly. He looks over to Thom, dancing ludicrously with Olivia. Thom turns and raises his plastic cup with a smile. Arthur responds in kind as Wesley steps forward and pats his shoulder admiringly, drawing him into his group.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CAR PARK, SUBURBAN GOLF CLUB - DAY

Paislied middle managers tee-off in the distance. Thom, in a suit, leans on the back of the Aston Martin, talking to Olly the investment banker. Thom holds out a hand.

THOM

Six thousand. Deal. You drive a hard bargain, I'll tell you that.

He pops the boot, lifts out the foetal clown doll and hands it to Olly, who smirks as he scribbles a cheque.

OLLY

That's why I'm ahead of the herd, Thom. Plus, you should see the wife when she's grateful.

He winks, revoltingly. Thom moves aside, revealing the dented boot. Olly winces.

OLLY (CONT'D)

Ouch. That's not gonna be cheap.

Thom smiles as he takes the cheque.

THOM

I've got it covered.

He climbs in and fires her up, casting a grin across to the passenger seat where Arthur sits waiting.

They draw up at a set of traffic lights. Arthur leans forward and switches on the radio. A ridiculous, fun, young pop tune bursts out. A wide-boy revs his engine beside them. Thom revs his engine back.

The lights go green. The music kicks in...

And they roar off into the sunset, over the crest of a hill, whooping like jackals as the wide-boy's left eating their dust.

FADE TO BLACK.