

LEONARD AND HUNGRY PAUL

EPISODE 1

'THE GAME OF LIFE'

Written by

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Based on the novel by Rónán Hession

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EXT. LEONARD'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON a beautiful sunflower.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Leonard's story began thirty two years ago.

CUT OUT TO REVEAL: a row of identical terraced houses on a leafy suburban street. Unlike the others, the end of terrace pops with colour, blooming window boxes, bird feeders, and a cherry blossom tree in bloom.

A woman, ELIZABETH (44), dressed all in black, rocks a baby carriage.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He was raised alone by his mother, his father having died tragically in childbirth.

The baby's cries break the silence as UNDERTAKERS carry a coffin from the house.

Elizabeth lifts BABY LEONARD from the pram and comforts him.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: LEONARD (7), wearing a homemade space helmet.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Leonard had few friends but lots of ideas.

Leonard hurtles through space, he dodges animated asteroids as they WHIZZ past.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, BACK GARDEN - DAY

Leonard (7), still wearing his space helmet, plays in a homemade spaceship made from boxes, tin foil etc.

From the kitchen window, Elizabeth (51) watches her son with a smile.

INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, LEONARD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Leonard (7) sleeps. Elizabeth (51) leaves a glass of milk on the bedside locker where she finds last night's artwork - a fine sketch of an astronaut with asteroids fizzing past.

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NARRATOR (V.O.)

This was a time when quiet,
imaginative children did not enjoy
the presumption of innocence.

4 **INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

4

Assisted by his mother, Leonard (7) delicately fixes the final piece to a model of the APOLLO 11 COMMAND MODULE (the bell-shaped crew quarters for the first lunar landing).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But Leonard was lucky to have a
devoted mother in his corner.

Leonard sits back, wide-eyed, staring at their creation. His proud mother gives him an affectionate squeeze.

5 **INT. SCHOOL, PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

5

A CHEERLESS PRINCIPAL stares coldly across his desk.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Often finding herself taking his
side against educators who
complained that they found it
impossible to get through to him.

On the other side of the desk, an expressionless Leonard (7) is seated next to his smiling mother (51).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

She would explain how, like his
late father, Leonard-

ELIZABETH
-simply lacks a Eureka face.

(QUICK INSERT: Leonard's parent's wedding photo - she's beaming next to her expressionless husband.)

Still smiling, Elizabeth looks from the unconvinced Principal to her son's expressionless face.

6 **OMITTED**

6

ON LEONARD'S (32) expressionless face. Through the window, he sees his MOTHER (76) happily occupied with her gardening. He taps on the window and waves.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Over the years, Leonard's
relationship grew from purely
filial to one of cosy partnership.

Leonard opens the fridge and takes items out for dinner.

Elizabeth enters, troubled.

ELIZABETH
The Murray's cat was terrorising
the birds again today. Nearly had
the bullfinch for lunch.

Leonard shakes his head.

LEONARD
I read somewhere that, in the UK
alone, around seventy million birds
are killed by cats every year.

ELIZABETH
Dreadful business.

Elizabeth looks out the window, thoughtful.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
What's the life expectancy of a
domestic cat?

LEONARD
Fifteen years, give or take.

ELIZABETH
(stunned)
Fifteen years! I can't wait that
long.
(deadpan)
Fetch the family shotgun, Leonard.

LEONARD
(playing along)
We don't have one but you do have a
birthday coming up.

ELIZABETH
Well, now you know what to get me.

Elizabeth joins her son in preparing their evening meal.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 When an adult son lives with his mother, assumptions are made that she is overbearing or that he lacks initiative.

8

INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, LEONARD'S BEDROOM - DAY

8

Leonard (32) sleeps soundly. Elizabeth (76) quietly leaves a cup of tea on the bedside locker. She pauses to admire a notebook, sitting on top of a 'Birds of the World' encyclopaedia, filled with notes and detailed sketches of birds.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 But in this case both were independent people who quite simply got along.

As she leaves, he wakes and stretches with a little smile upon seeing the cup of tea.

9

INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

9

Birthday cards and a '77' balloon tell us it's Elizabeth's birthday. Leonard watches as she unwraps a present - a Super-soaker water gun. Elizabeth stares at it, perplexed.

LEONARD
 Cats hate water.

Elizabeth lights up.

ELIZABETH
 I love it!

From the morning post, Leonard weeds out the colourful envelopes (birthday cards) and gives them to his mother. Seeing an envelope addressed to himself, he opens it and finds a wedding invitation inside.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 The subject of romance was artfully avoided, as Leonard's mother was unsure whether his apparently celibate life was due to lack of interest or opportunity.
 (MORE)

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 So when Leonard received a wedding invitation one morning, it was only his lack of a Eureka face - which extended to expressions of surprise, grave concern and anxiety - that hid his distress.

Expressionless, Leonard looks up from the invite to his mother and sees she's busy reading her cards. He returns his attention to the invite.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 'Plus one'. He could invite his mother. Would she be quietly hurt if he didn't? Or would she rather see him invite someone his own age? In which case, who would that someone be?

10 **EXT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, FRONT GARDEN - DAY**

10

CLOSE ON Leonard, looking well-groomed in his suit with pink petals (like confetti) on one of his shoulders.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 As it happened, the decision was taken out of Leonard's hands.

PULL OUT to reveal he's not attending a wedding, but watching UNDERTAKERS carry a coffin out his front door.

Leonard looks up to the cherry blossom tree next to him and dusts the petals from his shoulder.

OPENING TITLES

11 **INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, LEONARD'S BEDROOM - DAY**

11

Leonard wakes and rolls over to face his bedside locker. He stares at the empty space where his cup of tea should be.

12 **INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, LANDING - DAY**

12

Now dressed for work, Leonard exits his room. He pauses for a sad beat by the open door of his mother's room... then closes it and goes downstairs.

12A **INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, HALL - DAY**

12A

Leonard leaves through the front door.

13 EXT. LEONARD'S HOUSE - DAY 13

Leonard closes the door behind him.

14 EXT. STREET - DAY

With the weight of the weekend still on his shoulders, Leonard walks heavily down the street.

Looking vacantly out the window, Leonard sits upstairs next to an OLD WOMAN who appears to be asleep. The old woman's head lolls lifelessly onto Leonard's shoulder, snapping Leonard out of his daze.

He eyes the woman uncertainly for a beat and then gently pokes her shoulder. Nothing. He pokes her a little harder. Nothing. Getting increasingly concerned Leonard gives her a hard jab and the old woman wakes with a start.

Leonard is momentarily relieved but, in the annoyed glare of the old woman, becomes uncomfortable and resumes looking out the window.

16 INT. OFFICE - DAY 16

The open plan office seems like a social place to be, with EMPLOYEES chatting happily with one another.

Leonard, headphones on and engrossed in his typing, appears removed from the social aspect. He keeps a neat desk and the partitions around it act as a small gallery for illustrations from various children's encyclopaedias.

Dragged from his flow, Leonard is suddenly aware of a man (MARK BAXTER B. Ed, 43) sitting on his desk, staring at him. Leonard removes his headphones.

MARK BAXTER
Hi, gorgeous.

Leonard is confused by the greeting.

LEONARD
Hi?

MARK BAXTER
Did you think I forgot about you?

LEONARD

Em...

Mark, still staring deep into Leonard's eyes, points to his bluetooth earpiece to let Leonard know he's on a call.

MARK BAXTER

Call me when you get this.

He hangs up.

MARK BAXTER (CONT'D)

Lenny! How was the weekend?

Leonard considers the question before deciding to answer honestly.

LEONARD

Not great really. Actually, my mother-

Mark cuts him off to greet A YOUNG WOMAN passing the desk.

MARK BAXTER

Hi!

(aside to Leonard)

Is she new? I think she's new.

Mark returns his attention to Leonard.

MARK BAXTER (CONT'D)

Anyway, just stopped by to see how our book is coming along.

Leonard is pleasantly surprised.

LEONARD

Oh, right, great. I think it's going really well.

MARK BAXTER

Excellent! That's what I like to hear.

Leonard starts to search for a document on his laptop.

LEONARD

If you like I could show you what I've been-

Mark cuts Leonard off again when he notices a young woman with cherry-coloured hair (SHELLEY, 28) pulling a folder from a shelf.

MARK BAXTER

Now *she* is definitely new.

LEONARD

I think they moved some people down
from the third floor.

MARK BAXTER

Well *she*'s new to me.

Leonard patiently waits for Mark to return to the conversation. Shelley leaves for her desk with the folder, allowing Mark to focus again.

MARK BAXTER (CONT'D)

Anyway, I was hoping we could
deliver Friday.

LEONARD

Ah. That won't be easy. I thought
we had to the end of the month?

MARK BAXTER

We did. Only I need to get this out
of the way before the team building
weekend.

This is not music to Leonard's ears.

LEONARD

I don't know. This isn't a great
time for me...

MARK BAXTER

You? Oh, no, it's not for you. It's
only for the interns.

LEONARD

I didn't know we had interns.

MARK BAXTER

Sure we do. Well, we have one.
Libby.

Leonard's confused.

LEONARD

So it's going to be just you and
Libby? On a team building weekend?

MARK BAXTER

I thought she might benefit from
some one on one time. You see, the
thing is-

The penny drops and Leonard finishes Mark's sentence for him.

LEONARD
She's new.

MARK BAXTER
Bingo! Gotta go, Lenny.

He hops off the desk and waves goodbye without looking back.

MARK BAXTER (CONT'D)
You're the best!

With a deflated sigh, Leonard puts on his headphones and, with notably less enthusiasm, returns to work.

16A **EXT. CREMATORIUM, ASHES COLLECTION DEPOT - DAY** 16A

Taking in the ominous sight of the building, Leonard braces himself and enters.

17 **INT. CREMATORIUM, ASHES COLLECTION DEPOT - DAY** 17

In a dull, lifeless room, Leonard speaks to a CREMATORIUM TECHNICIAN.

LEONARD
I'm here to collect my mum's ashes,
eh, Elizabeth Dranoel.

He moves off. A beat. The Technician reappears carrying a sealed plastic package. He puts it on the counter.

Leonard looks at the package of ashes for a moment.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
Would you have a bag or something
like that?

The Technician steps back to look under the counter and finds a scrunched up plastic bag.

He gives Leonard the bag. There is a smiling cartoon tree on the bag with 'Bag for Life' written over it. Leonard stares at the bag, lost in the irony.

18 **INT. BUS - DAY** 18

Leonard sits upstairs on the bus with the Bag for Life on the window seat next to him.

An ELDERLY MAN comes down the aisle and motions for Leonard to move the bag. Leonard takes the bag and stands to let the man in to the seat.

But what will Leonard do with his mother's ashes? He can't bring himself to put the bag on the floor. Instead, much to the elderly man's bemusement, he places the bag on the seat and stands next to it in the aisle.

19 **EXT. STREET - DAY**

19

Leonard's journey home in reverse, only this time he's carrying the Bag for Life.

20 **INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE - DAY**

20

Leonard lets himself in.

21 **INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, KITCHEN AND UNDER THE STAIRS - DAY** 21

Leonard stands, mug in hand, staring at the bag of ashes on the table. He suddenly puts the mug on the table and hurries from the room - *he needs a change of scenery.*

22 **INT. PARLEY VIEW, HALL - DAY**

22

Grace answers the door to Leonard.

GRACE

Leonard, how are you doing?

Grace hugs an unsuspecting Leonard.

LEONARD

Hey Grace, I wasn't expecting to see you here.

She releases him and brings him in.

GRACE

Dad wanted to run some of his wedding speech ideas past me.

LEONARD

And?

GRACE

Disaster. You have to talk to him.

LEONARD

Me?

Grace is ushering him towards the living room.

GRACE

You'll know what to say, you're a writer.

LEONARD

Of children's encyclopaedias.

23

INT. PARLEY VIEW, LIVING ROOM - DAY

23

With pen and paper in hand, Peter stands before Helen who's sitting on the couch looking concerned. Grace arrives into the room with Leonard. They're clearly happy to see him.

HELEN

Leonard, come in!

PETER

How've you been?

LEONARD

Getting there, thanks.

Grace nods to Leonard to say something.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

I hear you're working on your speech. How's that going?

PETER

Making progress. Just trying to work in a joke at the moment.

GRACE

It's not a joke, Dad.

Peter looks to his notes excitedly.

PETER

Watch this, Leonard. Are you watching?

(clears his throat)

Did you hear about the insomniac who was up all night sleeping?

There's a pregnant silence in the room. Helen shifts uncomfortably on the couch while Peter stares at Leonard waiting for the laughter that doesn't come.

LEONARD

Oh, is that... the whole thing?

PETER

You don't like it.

LEONARD

It's not that, it's just... I'm not sure if it *is* a joke. In the classical sense, I mean.

Peter looks back at his notes, starting to doubt his work.

PETER

It sounds like a joke.

LEONARD

Yes, I will grant you that, it certainly does sound like a joke. A good one too. But, sadly, it isn't.

GRACE

Thank you.

Deflated, Peter drops his arms to his sides.

LEONARD

But you don't need jokes, Peter. You never have. Your Christmas speeches always go down a storm. You've got a gift, don't mess with it.

As Peter considers this Grace puts an arm around him.

GRACE

You know he's right.

PETER

I just thought the occasion called for me to move it up a gear, you know? Do something a bit different.

LEONARD

Trust yourself. When you speak from the heart, you always hit the right note.

Peter nods acceptingly. Grace winks at Leonard - *well done*. Helen beams. A beat. The cogs in Peter's head are turning...

PETER

The right note. Leonard, you've just given me the best idea.

He turns to Grace, suddenly brimming with excitement.

PETER (CONT'D)
What if I open with a song? I've
got the very one.

GRACE
What do you mean '*open with*'? It's
my wedding, not Carnegie Hall.

PETER
You haven't even heard it yet.

Peter hurries from the room.

HELEN
Oh dear.

Grace glares at Leonard (not *entirely* serious).

GRACE
I swear to God, Leonard, if he
comes back with his ukulele...

LEONARD
(sheepish)
I think my work here is done.

Leonard starts to back out of the room.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
I might pop up and see himself.

24

INT. PARLEY VIEW, HUNGRY PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY

24

Leonard enters. The bedroom is a mixture of eras, a half-hearted adult gloss undermined by scatterings of boyhood fascination. The golden hour light, streaming through the window, adds to the nostalgic atmosphere.

Somewhere in the background a toilet flushes.

Hungry Paul arrives wearing a white fluffy bathrobe tied with a white belt, tracksuit bottoms and flip-flops.

HUNGRY PAUL
Leonard. I sensed you were here.

LEONARD
Your sister thinks I'm an idiot.
I'm with her on that one. What's
with the bathrobe?

HUNGRY PAUL

I have begun training in the
martial arts.

Hungry Paul straightens, adopting the 'vibe' of a martial artist.

LEONARD

What's brought this on? I didn't
think violence was your thing.

HUNGRY PAUL

It's not. Judo isn't about
fighting, it's about calm in the
midst of combat. It's physical but
not violent. Although I may already
have a nemesis.

LEONARD

Nemesis? I thought you didn't like
people touching you.

Hungry Paul eyes a shelf, laden with lots of different board games, deliberating over which game to choose.

HUNGRY PAUL

I'm hoping this might help with my
personal space issues. Besides, I
have to think of my fitness and the
swimming didn't work out.

LEONARD

Why not?

HUNGRY PAUL

Is the pool warm because kids pee
in it, or do kids pee in it because
it's warm? Either way, I'm done
with public pools. Yahtzee?

Hungry Paul points to Yahtzee on the shelf.

25

INT. PARLEY VIEW, LIVING ROOM, GAMING AREA - DAY

25

Leonard and Hungry Paul play Yahtzee at the table, drinking tea. In the background, Peter reads while Helen organises photos in an album.

Leonard rolls the dice.

LEONARD

So how's the judo going so far?

HUNGRY PAUL

Great. In fact, my sensei warned me, in no uncertain terms, that if I show up in my mother's bathrobe again he won't let me in the door.

LEONARD

(delicate)

Would we call that... *great*?

HUNGRY PAUL

Well he'd hardly push me to invest in the proper gear if he didn't see great potential, would he?

Leonard is not convinced.

LEONARD

Good point. That must be it.

He rolls again - five different numbers on the dice.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

Crap.

Putting the dice back in the cup, Leonard gives them to Hungry Paul.

HUNGRY PAUL

Did you see the documentary about Edwin Hubble last night?

LEONARD

No, I missed it.

HUNGRY PAUL

The expansion and contraction of the universe. A lot to digest.

LEONARD

You know, I can never get that right in my encyclopaedias. How do you explain to children that eventually everything will snap back like an elastic into some kind of tiny full stop?

HUNGRY PAUL

It's the expansion that bothers me. Mother nature pushing everything away from everything else. Hardly maternal.

Leonard nods sagely in agreement.

Hungry Paul half-heartedly rolls the dice as the two men stare into the middle distance, contemplating the enormity of their thoughts.

LEONARD

It's like the universe is expanding
to get away from us, leaving us
more alone, our world feeling
smaller, and our-

HUNGRY PAUL

(distracted by his dice)
YAHTZEE!!!

26

EXT. PARLEY VIEW - NIGHT

26

Leonard and Hungry Paul stand in the driveway staring up at the inky universe.

LEONARD

Maybe it's not only the universe
that expands and contracts. Maybe,
as we get older, our lives start
shrinking too.

HUNGRY PAUL

How so?

LEONARD

It's like... I feel myself getting
smaller. Quieter and more
invisible. One thing's led to
another and now I worry if I don't
do something, I'll just carry on
some minor, harmless existence.

HUNGRY PAUL

What's wrong with that? Better than
trying to make a mark on the world
only to end up defacing it.

LEONARD

I can't help feeling I need to open
the doors of my life a little.

Hungry Paul eyes his friend with mild concern and awkwardly pats him on the shoulder.

HUNGRY PAUL

This is all my fault. Yahtzee's too
intense, I should have eased you
back into game night.

Leonard smiles. The camera travels up to the stars.

MATCH DISSOLVE:

The stars begins to move around the sky.

27

INT. OFFICE - DAY

27

PULL OUT to reveal the night sky screensaver on Leonard's laptop.

Leonard arrives at his desk with a mug of coffee.

After putting on his noise-cancelling headphones to drown out the cacophony of office chatter, he opens his emails ready to get stuck into his day's work.

One immediately catches his attention. It's from Mark Baxter. Leonard opens it and we hear Mark's voice.

MARK BAXTER (V.O.)

Happy Friday, Lenny! We're nearly there on this. Notes attached from my meeting with Rhona.
Ciao for now,
Mark Baxter B. Ed.

Leonard opens the document and immediately looks at the number of comments. 73. He rolls his eyes as he clicks on the first comment.

Thanks to the noise-cancelling headphones, we hear only RHONA's voice.

RHONA (V.O.)

Do we have to specify that it is Christians being eaten by the lions? Concerned this may alienate other religions.

As Leonard skims the notes, keywords pop up on screen like a visual and verbal assault to the senses.

MARK BAXTER (V.O.)

Love the slaves section.

RHONA (V.O.)

Slaves are very problematic.

MARK BAXTER (V.O.)

Tone down the slaves section.

The notes keep coming, louder and faster.

MARK BAXTER/RHONA (V.O.)
Dig deeper...on the nose...
flat...needs a punch...Lean
in...have fun with it...

A hand lands on his shoulder, jolting him.

Leonard turns to see a smiling colleague with cherry-coloured hair (Shelley). She now wears a sash that says 'fire warden'.

Leonard takes off his headphones and is thrown to hear the fire alarm sounding. He sees the floor is quickly emptying.

SHELLEY
(light)
Fire! You have to get out of here!
Run for your life!

Leonard is confused.

LEONARD
Is it a fire or a fire drill?

SHELLEY
I'm not allowed to answer that question and, even if I was, it doesn't matter, you still have to get out of here.
(all cowboy)
Them's are the rules partner.

LEONARD
I'm okay, I'll take my chances.

Leonard returns to his computer.

SHELLEY
Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.
(with a smile)
You leave me no alternative. I'm going to have to pull rank on you.

Shelley points to her hi-vis sash.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)
They don't give this sash to just anyone you know. I had to do an in-service course that lasted nearly an hour.

With a sigh, Leonard stands.

LEONARD
Fine.

SHELLEY

Thank you.

Leonard makes his way to the exit, Shelley follows.

Leonard stops at the lift and presses the button. Shelley gives him a look and shakes her head 'no'. Leonard knows arguing with her is pointless. He takes the stairs, followed by Shelley.

28

INT. OFFICE, STAIRWELL - DAY

28

Leonard is uncomfortable with the attention as Shelley walks behind him.

LEONARD

Shouldn't you be wardening the other floors?

SHELLEY

Wardening? You think 'to warden' is a verb? Aren't you a writer? But no, I'm Floor 2 only. And, if I do say so myself, I'm the best. I haven't lost anyone yet. Now, when you get outside I need you to assemble at the bike shelter. Can you do that for me, cowboy?

LEONARD

Cowboy?

Leonard heads out the emergency exit and into the carpark.

SHELLEY

(after him)

Don't feel like you have to thank me for saving your life. All in a day's work!

29

EXT. ASSEMBLY POINT - DAY

29

Co-workers chat and laugh, enjoying the break. Not Leonard. He waits alone, anxious to return to work.

Shelley goes through the group, clipboard in hand, checking off people's names. She arrives next to Leonard.

SHELLEY

Me again.

(checking her list)

Mark Baxter, right?

(MORE)

SHELLEY (CONT'D)
You wrote the 'Facts at My
Fingertips' series? Great books.

Leonard's caught off-guard by the compliment.

LEONARD
Thank you. But no, I'm not Mark
Baxter.

SHELLEY
I've seen you working on them.

LEONARD
Mark's the author, I'm the content
supervisor. He decides what goes in
the book and I write it up.

Shelley seems disappointed to hear this.

SHELLEY
Really? That's a job?

LEONARD
(small surprised laugh)
I hope so.

SHELLEY
Sorry. I didn't mean it that way
but, that's a bit shite, isn't it?
You do all the hard work and Mark
Baxter gets his name on the book?
You should at least get a co-
credit.

LEONARD
It doesn't really work that way.
I'm kinda like a ghost writer.
OooOooh!

Leonard tries for a ghostly impression but, suddenly self-conscious, doesn't commit and fails miserably.

Shelley eyes him curiously.

SHELLEY
Are you being a ghost?

Leonard gives an awkward shrug.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)
(struck by a thought)
Oh, you know what you could do?
Kill him.

LEONARD
Who, Mark Baxter?

SHELLEY
Or I could do it for you. Nobody
would suspect the fire warden. I'm
like the office hero.

Leonard looks at Shelley, hoping she's joking.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)
Don't look so worried, I'd make it
look like an accident. Is he
allergic to nuts? Drop a couple in
his salad and...

Shelley makes a cartoon dead face, then returns to her list.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)
Anyway, think about it. So, if
you're not Mark Baxter then you
are...

LEONARD
Leonard.

She ticks his name off her list.

SHELLEY
Found you! I'm Shelley. Pleased to
meet you Leonard.

LEONARD
You too.

Mark Baxter interrupts.

MARK BAXTER
Lenny. How's the writing going?
That last pass is always the
hardest.

SHELLEY
You're Mark Baxter!
(loaded, glancing to
Leonard)
The *author* of Facts at your
Fingertips.

MARK BAXTER
Guilty as charged. And with another
one on the way. They're like my
children.
(MORE)

MARK BAXTER (CONT'D)

I spend all this time with them
growing inside me, and then... I
give birth.

SHELLEY

Is that not a little outside the
male experience?

Mark is suddenly on the back-foot.

MARK BAXTER

Sorry, maybe that's a poor choice
of analogy.

SHELLEY

Maybe you could say you feel
constipated with the idea. Really
backed up, and then eventually...
you have to...

Shelley doesn't need to finish her sentence, Mark is a bit
unsure what to make of Shelley as she consults her clipboard.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

So, Mark, are you allergic to nuts?

MARK BAXTER

Excuse me?

Leonard stifles a laugh. Mark tries to look at the clipboard
but Shelley pulls it closer to her chest.

Mark's phone rings and he moves away to take the call.

MARK BAXTER (CONT'D)

Sorry, I have to take this.
(answering phone/whisper)
Hi gorgeous.

Turning to Leonard, Shelley shrugs.

SHELLEY

I tried.

LEONARD

(amused)

Thanks.

SHELLEY

Well, I think we're done here.

LEONARD

Right. Yes. I should get back.

Shelley genuflects theatrically with a wave of her arm.

SHELLEY
Go! Create!... Haunt! Don't hold
yourself back!

LEONARD
Thanks.
(after thought)
Bye!

Leonard hurries off. Shelley watches him leave.

30 EXT. STREET - DAY

30

Hungry Paul reads a newspaper. Leonard arrives.

LEONARD
Hey.

Hungry Paul doesn't acknowledge him yet, he's so ensconced in an article. Leonard waits, used to his friend's quirks. Finally, Hungry Paul finishes.

HUNGRY PAUL
Hi, Leonard.

LEONARD
Sorry I'm a little late.

HUNGRY PAUL
No worries. I'm breaking in my new
docs anyway.

He raises a leg, showing off his new Dr. Marten's boots.

LEONARD
Nice.

Hungry Paul stands and hands Leonard the newspaper.

HUNGRY PAUL
Look at this.

Leonard eyes the article.

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)
The Chamber of Commerce are running
a competition.

LEONARD
For a new email sign off?

HUNGRY PAUL
 Winner gets a statuette and ten
 grand.

LEONARD
 For a new-

Hungry Paul cuts him off.

HUNGRY PAUL
 Yes, Leonard, for a new email sign
 off.

Leonard hands Hungry Paul back his newspaper and both head
 into the shop.

31 INT. CLOTHES SHOP - DAY

31

Leonard and Hungry Paul peruse the suit section.

HUNGRY PAUL
 How do you sign off your emails?

LEONARD
 (has to think about it)
 'Best'.

HUNGRY PAUL
 'Best' what?

LEONARD
 Wishes, I guess.

Hungry Paul is not impressed.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
 Sometimes I write 'Leonard' and
 leave off the 'best' altogether.

Hungry Paul nods and takes out a black suit jacket.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
 (re: the suit)
 That's nice.

HUNGRY PAUL
 It's my sister's wedding, I'm not
 joining a Ska band.

Hungry Paul continues to browse.

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)
 'Regards' is a bit lukewarm.

LEONARD

'Yours faithfully'? I mean, why bring fidelity into it at all?

HUNGRY PAUL

'Sincerely' has the opposite effect of its intention. Now, my guard is up.

LEONARD

Exactly. You're thinking you've just been lied to.

Suddenly, Hungry Paul looks quite troubled. A father (ISABELLE'S FATHER) and daughter (ISABELLE, 8) peruse the aisles.

HUNGRY PAUL

This is all I need. Let's move.

LEONARD

What's wrong?

HUNGRY PAUL

Keep walking, hopefully she won't spot us.

The girl, Isabelle, greets Hungry Paul with a friendly wave.

ISABELLE

Kon'nichiwa!

HUNGRY PAUL

(cold)

Isabelle.

ISABELLE

(to her father)

He's in my Judo class.

HUNGRY PAUL

Evening.

Hungry Paul's frostiness means this impromptu crossing of paths fails to develop into a friendly chat. A silent beat.

ISABELLE

See you on Monday.

HUNGRY PAUL

Yep.

Isabelle and her father move on.

LEONARD
What was that about?

HUNGRY PAUL
Don't be sucked in. Isabelle is
cold, calculating. Ruthless.

LEONARD
She's your nemesis?

HUNGRY PAUL
Isabelle may have the advantage of
youth and fleetness of foot but...
(taps the side of his head)
I'm winning up here. Long runs the
fox, Leonard.

Hungry Paul pulls out a jacket.

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)
Let's try the dark grey one. White
shirt and...

Hungry Paul eyes the different coloured ties on display. He
chooses a purple one.

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)
Purple. The same shade as Grace's
favourite sweet wrapper in the
Quality Street tin.

Leonard smiles at his friend's thoughtfulness.

32

EXT. CLOTHES SHOP - DAY

32

Leonard and Hungry Paul, now laden with bags, walk and talk.

HUNGRY PAUL
How is the Roman book going?

LEONARD
Done. Sent it earlier.

HUNGRY PAUL
Happy with it?

LEONARD
Ah, it's a bit same-y but that's
what the author wanted.

Hungry Paul shakes his head, disapprovingly.

HUNGRY PAUL

Don't hold yourself back, Leonard.

LEONARD

You're not the first person to say that to me today.

HUNGRY PAUL

Maybe the universe is telling you to write your own book. You know more about encyclopaedias than anyone.

LEONARD

Well, I had been working up some ideas of my own but then Mum... and... you know.

HUNGRY PAUL

I know. But I also know that If I were a kid I'd much rather read your book than the regurgitations of some absentee author.

Leonard considers this as Hungry Paul waves down a bus.

33

INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

33

Leonard stares at the Bag for Life on the table...

36

INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

36

Leonard finds a space for the 'bag for life' on the bookshelf beside a framed photograph of Leonard and his mother.

A beat.

Leonard's suddenly intrigued by something else on the shelf.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That night, the muse paid a visit to both friends.

Leonard takes down a thick manuscript of sketches and notes.

37

INT. HUNGRY PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

37

With stocking feet, Hungry Paul lies in bed with one leg outside the sheets for coolness.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 As he lay there on the threshold
 between reflection and sleep,
 Hungry Paul felt the ghost of
 inspiration enter his room...

Hungry Paul sits bolt upright. He starts to write his entry in a bedside notebook.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 And he wrote down his competition entry in one perfect draft.

38

INT. LEONARD'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

38

Leonard sits on the couch with the manuscript spread out before him on the coffee table. He sketches while half-watching the (unseen) television.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Buoyed by his friend's gentle words of encouragement, Leonard found distraction from his loneliness in the flow of working on his concept for an encyclopaedia. His encyclopaedia delved deeper into the Roman conquest of Britain and how they were pushed back by a Celtic Queen named Boudicca.

CLOSE ON: Leonard's sketch of the Celtic Queen 'Boudicca'. Adding detail to the rough outline sketch, he is bringing Boudicca to life. Her golden bracelets, her green tunic...

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 As he worked, Leonard's mind drifted back to his encounter with the Fire Warden.

Leonard adds a bow and arrow to Boudicca.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Leonard wondered why he couldn't seem to stop thinking about her. Maybe because he couldn't remember the last time he laughed. Or maybe it was something else entirely...

Leonard looks down at his drawing of Boudicca and now sees that he's given her cherry-coloured hair and a hi-vis sash.

LEONARD
(shocked realisation)
Oh no.

An ARROW flies out from the notebook to hit Leonard directly in the heart.

Leonard finally finds his eureka face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Eureka, Leonard. Eureka.

The End.