

Leonard & Hungry Paul

Episode 3

'Chess'

Draft 4 - BLUE SHOOTING SCRIPT

10th April 2025

Written by

Richie Conroy & Mark B. Hodkinson

Based on the novel by Rónán Hession

1 **EXT. PARLEY VIEW - DAY**

1

Very early morning establisher.

2 **INT. PARLEY VIEW, KITCHEN - DAY**

2

HELEN makes herself breakfast.

She returns the milk to the fridge and we see it is adorned with magnets - memories of trips and holidays past.

One is from the Aquarium in Monterey. It is a photo magnet from the 1980s and shows a younger HELEN and PETER beaming.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Long before they had children, Helen and Peter were avid travellers. On a trip to Monterey, California, they stopped at an aquarium where Helen declared the sunfish to be her favourite of all the exhibits.

3 **EXT. OCEAN - DAY**

3

STOCK FOOTAGE shows: A large ghost-white SUNFISH floats along, going with the flow.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It wasn't an obvious choice. With a slightly lost expression, the sunfish had an idiosyncratic charm, drifting through life at its own pace.

4 **INT. PARLEY VIEW, BATHROOM - DAY**

4

Enjoying a bath, Hungry Paul is submerged under the milky water, eyes open.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Years later, after a very difficult birth, Helen vowed that, if her son survived, she would not expect or ask any more from him for his whole life than that. And so, she accepted Hungry Paul as he was and let him drift through life at his own pace.

He rises up from the water and gasps for air.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Her very own sunfish.

5

INT. PARLEY VIEW, KITCHEN - DAY

5

HUNGRY PAUL, wearing his robe, is assembling his usual breakfast - three Weetabix and a banana, which he coins using the side of his spoon.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Whereas people generally vary their lunch and dinner habits, at breakfast it is accepted the world over that it is better to find a system and stick to it.

He then pours himself a coffee, heaping four teaspoons of sugar into it.

Something out the window grabs his attention - the empty bird feeder in the back garden.

6

EXT. PARLEY VIEW, BACK GARDEN - DAY

6

Hungry Paul fills the bird feeder with fat balls.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hungry Paul felt that way about most things.

7

INT. PARLEY VIEW, HALL - DAY

7

Now wearing his postal uniform, Hungry Paul eats his breakfast in silence, sitting across from the house phone.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Which made breakfast his favourite meal of the day.

Helen arrives, putting on her coat.

HELEN

I'm off out. If you're going to see Mrs. Hawthorn later, you might bring that tin of Roses for the nurses.

Helen gestures to a tin of Roses chocolates on the hall table.

HUNGRY PAUL

Tin of Roses. Got it.

The phone rings. Helen pauses at the door while Hungry Paul answers.

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)

Hello?

(a beat)

(MORE)

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)
 Will you be needing me today?
 (a beat)
 I'm on my way.

He gives Helen a thumbs up.

OPENING TITLES

8 OMITTED

8

9 EXT. STREET - DAY

9

Hungry Paul is out on his rounds.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Hungry Paul took great pride in
 being a part-time postal worker...

He arrives at a house with a snappy, aggressive dog chained in the front garden.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 ... happy that he wasn't taking up
 a whole job, depriving someone else
 of a living.

Cautiously, Hungry Paul posts the letters while maintaining eye contact with the dog at all times.

10 EXT. STREET - DAY

10

Hungry Paul stands by a gate with a DISAPPOINTED WOMAN IN PYJAMAS. She's holding up a damaged parcel for Hungry Paul to see.

PYJAMA WOMAN
 Who do I talk to about this?

He shakes his head, apparently sharing her disappointment.

HUNGRY PAUL
 You see, I only do Mondays.
 (brighter)
 But the regular fella will be back
 tomorrow.

Pleased to have 'helped', he leaves the woman no happier than he found her.

11 EXT. STREET - DAY

11

At another house, an ELDERLY MAN, with an open letter in his hands, tries to engage with Hungry Paul, gesturing through the window for him to come back.

Hungry Paul smiles and waves but keeps moving.

HUNGRY PAUL
(calling back)
I only do Mondays; the regular
fella will be back tomorrow!

12 **EXT. STREET - DAY**

12

Hungry Paul is surprised by a letter he finds in his satchel. He begins to open it but becomes self-conscious when a PASSERBY stops to eye him suspiciously.

HUNGRY PAUL
This isn't what it looks like. If
it looks like mail fraud. It's
addressed to me. See?

He holds up the letter for them to see but the passerby doesn't appear convinced.

Keeping a dubious eye on Hungry Paul, the passerby moves on. Hungry Paul looks at the letter, conflicted.

13 **OMITTED**

13

14 **INT. PARLEY VIEW, HALL - CONTINUOUS**

14

The letter lands on the doormat. Hungry Paul immediately enters and, picking it up, opens it and begins to read.

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

15

LEONARD is wearing matching pyjamas.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Leonard had spent much of the weekend thinking about Shelley. He definitely liked her. That was without question.

CUT TO:

Leonard is now wearing a pair of tope corduroys.

Still in his pyjama top, he holds up different shirts while looking in the mirror, trying to decide which goes best with his choice of trousers.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But did she like him? That was very much 'with question'. And did a blue plaid shirt go with tope-coloured cords?

Leonard eyes his pyjama top which actually goes quite well with his cords. He tosses the rejected shirts onto his bed, takes another look at himself in the mirror and, with a shrug, leaves the room.

16

INT. OFFICE, FOYER - DAY

16

Wearing a backpack (and a zipped-up hoodie) Leonard arrives in the foyer.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Leonard had set himself the challenge of figuring out if his feelings for Shelley were reciprocated.

He spots that SHELLEY is waiting for the lift - she hasn't seen him. This gives Leonard the opportunity to take a breath and gather himself.

The time is nigh. Leonard closes his eyes to steel himself.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But Leonard was suddenly hit with a wave of self-doubt.

He opens his eyes to find himself as SEVEN-YEAR-OLD LEONARD (from Episode 1) - drowned by his adult clothes and cutting a lonesome figure.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He felt like an inexperienced child stepping into an adult world.

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD LEONARD

Oh God.

Shaking off his worries, he steps forward.

The lift opens and OFFICE WORKERS enter. Shelley has yet to notice Leonard.

(Adult) Leonard hurries to make the lift.

Trying to squeeze in, Leonard's presence causes the doors to stop working (although he acts innocent).

AUTOMATED VOICE

Doors closing. Please stand clear of the doors.

A beat.

AUTOMATED VOICE (CONT'D)

Doors closing. Please stand clear of the doors.

He removes his backpack and sucks in his gut but the doors still won't close. Now everybody is glaring at him.

Shelley sees him, amused as Leonard toughs it out for longer than is comfortable before a phone rings - with a loud, annoying ringtone.

Leonard looks around, even more innocently than before, for the source of the irritating ringtone.

One of the other lift dwellers, face mashed into Leonard's shoulder, nudges him.

OFFICE WORKER
You going to answer that, pal?

LEONARD
(acts confused)
Me?

Leonard steps out of the lift.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
I don't know why you would think-

The doors close. Leonard immediately answers his phone and the annoying ringtone stops.

LEONARD (CONT'D)
Hi.

INTERCUT WITH THE FOLLOWING SCENE.

17

INT. PARLEY VIEW, HALLWAY - DAY

17

Letter in hand, Hungry Paul speaks on the house phone.

HUNGRY PAUL
Leonard, it's me.

LEONARD
I know.

HUNGRY PAUL
Good news. My sign-off phrase has
been shortlisted for the Chamber of
Commerce email competition.

Although somewhat irritated by the timing of the call, Leonard tries to sound upbeat for his friend.

LEONARD
That's great.

HUNGRY PAUL
I just found out, thought I'd ring
you.

LEONARD
I'm glad you did.

HUNGRY PAUL
Right. Well, you're probably busy
so I won't delay, best of luck with
your seductress today.

Leonard smiles, rueful.

LEONARD
Thanks.

18 **INT. OFFICE, FOYER - DAY**

18

Leonard has just hung up when his phone rings again.

LEONARD
Hello?

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

19

Hungry Paul speaks on the landline.

HUNGRY PAUL
Leonard. It's me. Again.

19A **INT. OFFICE, FOYER - DAY**

19A

Still waiting on the next lift, Leonard nods, not in least surprised to hear from Hungry Paul again.

LEONARD
I know.

19B **INT. PARLEY VIEW, HALL - DAY**

19B

Hungry Paul clears his throat.

HUNGRY PAUL
Also, Mum and Grace asked me to call you about wedding numbers. The thing is, you've been allocated a plus one. So have I. Now, I don't need mine and yours...

Hungry Paul is unsure how to mention Leonard's plus one - his mother - is now deceased, so he doesn't.

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)
Well, they wondered if, perhaps, we could be each other's plus ones, thereby freeing up two spots.

20

INT. OFFICE, FOYER - DAY

20

Leonard's lift arrives.

LEONARD

Yes, no problem at all.

HUNGRY PAUL (O.S.)

(over the phone)

Thanks. They'll be relieved.

LEONARD

Great. See you later.

HUNGRY PAUL (O.S.)

(over the phone)

Remember, it's Risk we're playing
tonight. No risk, no reward.

Leonard smiles and hangs up as he enters the lift.

21

INT. OFFICE - DAY

21

Leonard arrives. He spots RHONA, mid-conversation with Shelley at her desk, and decides to walk the long way around to his own desk.

Rhona looks up and sees him skulking across the room.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

There was no denying that the task
Leonard set for himself would be a
challenge.

Now at his desk, Leonard takes off his backpack and powers up his computer.

He steals another glance at Shelley, this time locking eyes with Rhona who is staring right back at him. He immediately looks away.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And that challenge could wait until
lunchtime.

Putting on his noise-cancelling headphones, Leonard busies himself with work.

22

INT. KITCHEN, OFFICE - DAY

22

Alone in the kitchenette, Leonard makes a coffee at the machine. It pours into his keep-cup.

Coffee in hand, he's about to leave when Rhona enters the kitchenette. Leonard's face drops.

RHONA

Leonard, this has to stop.

LEONARD

What has to stop?

Rhona gestures, pointing back and forth between Leonard and herself.

RHONA

This. Us. I see how you look at me.
We had a lovely evening, I know.

LEONARD

Pardon me?

RHONA

Yes, there was chemistry, but I'm back with Marco now. You need to move on.

Leonard is momentarily stunned.

LEONARD

Okay... great! Thanks for clarifying.

This is all the motivation that Leonard needs. He leaves with an unusual determination--

23

INT. OFFICE - DAY

23

--And heads straight for Shelley's work station.

Shelley is on a call.

Helpdesk Greg is at his work station straining to open a jar of sandwich filler.

As casually as he can, Leonard perches on an empty desk next to Shelley's. She signals to Leonard that she won't be long.

Waiting, his anxiety grows and he suddenly becomes his seven-year-old self again. He swings his legs which no longer reach the floor. Seven-year-old Leonard looks down at himself.

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD LEONARD

Uh-oh.

SHELLEY

(finishing the call)

Right so. I'll have that posted out to you today.

(to Leonard)

Hey, Leonard.

He gives a shy little wave.

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD LEONARD

Hey Shelley.

Spotting Rhona across the room, returning from the kitchen with her coffee, he is instantly adult Leonard again.

LEONARD

Lunchtime. Thank God, right?

SHELLEY

You said it.

Shelley fishes in her bag, produces a lunchbox, and opens it. Leonard's heart drops; his plan seems scuppered already.

At his desk, Greg finally wrestles the lid off the jar of sandwich filler, spilling some onto his keyboard and sleeve.

GREG

Aw for...

Shelley and Leonard watch as Greg scrunches up a piece of non-absorbent printer paper in an attempt to clean his keyboard. Making it worse, he smears the sandwich filler around his keyboard while licking the filler from his sleeve.

Shelley looks down at her salad and closes the box.

SHELLEY

Maybe I'll eat out today.

Sensing an opportunity, Leonard lights up.

LEONARD

I was going to grab a sandwich and have lunch in the park if you fancy it.

SHELLEY

Sounds good.

Shelley grabs her bag and lunchbox.

Leonard looks pleased as they leave.

A trendy sandwich joint.

Leonard and Shelley are close to the top of the queue.

LEONARD

You sure you don't want anything?

SHELLEY

You're alright, I have my own.

She pats her bag.

LEONARD

You don't know what you're missing.
They do this thing called The Meat
Feast. It's practically a barnyard
in a wrap. Pig. Chicken. Cow. Maybe
even turkey too.

SHELLEY

I'm a vegetarian.

Leonard's face drops.

LEONARD

Oh. Do you mind me ordering a- I
like vegetables too.

SHELLEY

(with a smirk)

You like vegetables too?

Leonard decides to 'banter' this out.

LEONARD

Yeah, cucumber, carrot sticks...
and don't get me started on French
fries.

SHELLEY

I'll try not to.

25

EXT. PICNIC BENCH, POND AREA - DAY

25

Leonard's huge sandwich is left untouched, while he and Shelley sit side by side, facing the pond (Leonard's hoodie is now open).

Leonard is more animated than we've seen him previously and they are clearly enjoying each other's company.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The lunch hour they spent together
seemed like the shortest hour of
Leonard's life.

He looks at his watch, surprised and a little disappointed.

LEONARD

We should really get going.

SHELLEY

(determined)

Quick, let's cut through all the
wallop and ask each other deep,
searching, personal questions. Go.

LEONARD

Me? Okay. Em...

SHELLEY

You can do it.

LEONARD

Tell me about yourself?

SHELLEY

That's quite broad. Considering the time pressure.

LEONARD

Sorry.

SHELLEY

No, I can go broad. How about I give you ten second Shelley?

LEONARD

What's ten second Shelley?

SHELLEY

Ready?

He nods.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

(fast)

I struggled in school. Didn't really fit in. Found myself in art college. Dropped out of art college for reasons not to be discussed before a third date and took a part-time admin job in Harper Wren. Boom.

Leonard is amused.

LEONARD

Okay. Lots to unpack there.

SHELLEY

Now. Ten second Leonard. Go.

LEONARD

...Oh. Right.

(fast)

I didn't really fit in at school either. Also went to college. Wanted to write and illustrate children's books. Got a job with Harper Wren. My Mum died two weeks ago-

SHELLEY

Oh God.

Leonard winces, he didn't mean to say that during his flow of consciousness.

LEONARD

Sorry. I didn't mean to... did I go too deep? I went too deep.

SHELLEY

Two weeks ago? I'm so sorry. How are you doing?

LEONARD

Okay. I think I'm okay. I'm coping.

SHELLEY

You see, you say that but, that looks like a pyjama top to me.

Leonard looks down at his pyjama top.

LEONARD

Yes. It absolutely is.

SHELLEY

By choice?

He replies with a smile.

LEONARD

I'm afraid so.

Shelley laughs.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

And we *really* should be going.

They stand.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

Maybe we could do this again?

SHELLEY

You men, always thinking about your next meat feast.

Shelley hands Leonard her phone.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

Number please.

He types in his number and returns it.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

I'll call so you have mine.

Shelley rings and, once again, the obnoxious ringtone sounds.

LEONARD

I'm thinking of changing that.

SHELLEY

I can't imagine why.

They begin their walk back to work.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It may have felt like the shortest hour of Leonard's life, but it was an hour which, if he wasn't mistaken, seemed like the start of something.

26

OMITTED

26

27

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

27

Leonard and Hungry Paul are playing a game of Risk. Hungry Paul is wearing his games visor and has a military medal pinned to his shirt.

HUNGRY PAUL

So she didn't run for the hills when you asked her out?

LEONARD

No, quite the opposite actually. I mean, I didn't exactly ask her out, we exchanged numbers though.

HUNGRY PAUL

Good for you. What did you talk about?

LEONARD

It's funny, I can't quite remember.
(thinks about it)
I talked a little about my mother.

Hungry Paul's face tells us he isn't sure this was a wise move.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

No, that's the thing. Somehow it wasn't a downer. Made me realise that I hadn't talked about Mum to anyone really, since she died.

Suddenly uncomfortable, Hungry Paul looks to his friend, barely able to get the words out.

HUNGRY PAUL

Do you... want to... talk about it?

Leonard appears equally horrified by the thought.

LEONARD

God no.

(catches himself)

But thank you.

Hungry Paul is visibly relieved.

HUNGRY PAUL

So, what's your next move?

LEONARD

I don't know. I hadn't thought of that. Dinner maybe? A comedy gig? I guess the ball is in my court.

HUNGRY PAUL

(re: the board game)

No, I mean, your next move. I'm curious. Invading Europe on six fronts was, tactically speaking, questionable.

Hungry Paul's focus is purely on their game now. Leonard's mind, however, is elsewhere.

27A **INT. LEONARD'S HOUSE, LEONARD'S BEDROOM - DAY** 27A

Leonard wakes... and resumes thinking.

27B **INT. BUS - DAY** 27B

Sitting in his usual spot, Leonard is deep in thought. Realising the PASSENGER next to him is reading (a version of) The Gig Guide, he cranes his neck to take a subtle look.

Not subtle enough. The passenger glares at Leonard until, smiling sheepishly, he turns to look out the window.

28 **INT. OFFICE, LEONARD'S DESK - DAY** 28

Leonard arrives at his desk to see a homemade card - a cartoon of angry-looking barnyard animals (cow, pig, chicken and turkey) looming over Leonard in his pyjamas. He smiles.

Shelley appears by his desk.

LEONARD

(impressed)

Did you do this?

SHELLEY

I told you, art student dropout.
And if I don't speak up for the
barnyard animals, who will?

LEONARD

Ah, that. I was hoping I could make
it up to you. And the barnyard
animals, of course.

SHELLEY

Dinner at a vegetarian restaurant
would be a start.

Leonard lights up.

LEONARD

When?

SHELLEY

I'm free tonight as it happens.

LEONARD

Great.

29

OMITTED

29

30

EXT. PARLEY VIEW - EVENING

30

Later. A beautiful pink, spring sky over Parley View.

31

INT. PARLEY VIEW, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

31

GRACE stands on a footstool while HELEN makes alterations to her wedding veil.

The roses tin, with sewing accessories, is open on the sideboard.

A frame on the wall (the kind that holds multiple photos) shows a very young Grace standing outside Parley View, holding baby Hungry Paul.

Moving across the photos, the next is of Grace and Hungry Paul, holding hands, outside school gates in their uniforms.

Another photo shows the duo, now in their twenties, ready for a fancy dress party, dressed as Laurel (a bewildered Hungry Paul) and Hardy (Grace posing for the camera).

Grace's eyes are fixed on Hungry Paul who lies on the couch, purring softly in his sleep (there's a chess game set up on the coffee table in front of him). She snaps her fingers.

GRACE
Winnie the Pooh!

HELEN
Excuse me?

GRACE
My brother. A thirty-two-year-old
Winnie the Pooh, drifting aimlessly
through life without a care in the
world.

Helen gives Grace a playful slap on the arm.

HELEN
What a thing to say! And so unfair.
Did Winnie the Pooh have a position
at the post office?

GRACE
'Position'. He delivers post one
morning a week.

HELEN
And he's just been shortlisted for
that major award.

GRACE
The email thing?

Helen looks at her daughter to let her know she's close to crossing a line.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm not trying to be unkind, I just
think, maybe, it's time he learned
to stand on his own two feet.

The phone rings in the hall, waking Hungry Paul up.

Sighing deeply, Hungry Paul gets to his feet with a lazy stretch.

HUNGRY PAUL
That's enough of that.

GRACE
(to herself/puzzled)
Of what?

Hungry Paul shakes out his arms, loosening up as he goes to answer the phone.

HUNGRY PAUL
That'll be Leonard, we've got a
game of chess on later.

Helen returns her attention to the dress.

HELEN

Now, how does this feel?

Grace sighs, knowing this is Helen's way of ending the Hungry Paul conversation.

GRACE

Good. Thanks, Mum.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It baffled Grace how her mother, so intelligent and insightful, had such a blind spot when it came to Hungry Paul.

PUSH IN ON another photo in the frame on the wall - beaming, Helen holds her newly born baby boy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Maybe someday, if she has a sunfish of her own, she might understand.

32

INT. PARLEY VIEW, HALL - EVENING

32

A serious Hungry Paul speaks into the phone.

HUNGRY PAUL

I see.

LEONARD (O.S.)

(over the phone)

It's just, Shelley's free tonight.
I'm sorry, I tried to call earlier
but-

Hungry Paul tries to sound okay with it.

HUNGRY PAUL

Really, it's fine. Enjoy your evening.

He hangs up with a sad, accepting nod.

33

OMITTED

33

34

OMITTED

34

35

EXT. STREET, NEAR BURGER JOINT RESTAURANT - EVENING

35

Outside a Burger Joint, Leonard, dressed for his date, stares at his phone for a moment, feeling bad about letting Hungry Paul down. He suddenly looks up with a strange expression on his face - somewhere between uncertainty and anxiety.

Leonard checks his watch then goes into the Burger Joint.

36

INT. BURGER JOINT - EVENING

36

Leonard enters and approaches the counter where a TEENAGER, who is clearly not shooting for promotion, is on duty.

LEONARD

I know normally you need to buy a meal to use the toilet but I've got a date next door and I'm early so...

Leonard smiles hopefully at the unmoved teen.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

(overthinking it)

I'm not being tight, it's just, everything here comes with a burger and she's a vegetarian so... I don't want meat breath. And if I don't eat the burger then the cow will have been slaughtered for nothing.

The teen continues to look at Leonard, not showing any signs of sympathy.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

Which doesn't seem right because she's a vegetarian. My date, that is. Obviously. Not the cow.

He's hoping to see a flicker of a smile on the teen's face but... nothing.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

Right. So can I just quickly use your toilet?

CUT TO:

At a table by the window, Leonard simultaneously checks his watch while stuffing a burger into his mouth.

It's only when the entire burger is in his mouth that he becomes aware of a knock at the window.

He freezes when, to his horror, he sees a smiling Shelley outside, waving in at him with a slightly confused expression.

Leonard waves, mortified, with a mouthful of burger.

37

INT. PARLEY VIEW, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

37

Helen and Grace sit on the couch, leafing through a wedding magazine.

Peter reads the newspaper while Hungry Paul stares blankly at the unplayed game of chess on the coffee table.

HELEN

That's lovely, reminds me of Gwyneth Paltrow in Maid in Manhattan.

Peter looks up from his newspaper.

PETER

Gwyneth Paltrow wasn't in Maid in Manhattan, that was Elizabeth Shue.

GRACE

No it wasn't.

HELEN

What film am I thinking of?

PETER

How could I know what film you're thinking of?

Hungry Paul stands up - that's about as much of that as he can listen to.

HELEN

Where are you off to, love?

HUNGRY PAUL

Somewhere else.

(thinks about it)

Maybe I'll visit the hospital.

PETER

Don't forget to tell Missus Hawthorn about the email competition, she'll be made up.

HELEN

The chocolates for the nurses!

On his way out, Hungry Paul takes the chocolate tin from the sideboard.

38

EXT. PARLEY VIEW - EVENING

38

Walking towards the gate, Hungry Paul's curiosity is piqued by something he sees on the chocolates tin.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hungry Paul was a man who normally stood as a weir, allowing the world to wash over and through him.

As he examines the tin more closely, a look of disbelief appears on his face.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But that night, upon discovering the chocolates intended for the hospital staff were past their 'best before' date...

His expression morphs from disbelief to anger.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He could not stand idly by.

CUT TO:

39

EXT. SHOPPING PRECINCT - EVENING

39

Staring icily ahead, Hungry Paul walks at a determined pace towards the shops, chocolates tin in hand.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hungry Paul's rising sense of injustice was solely directed towards the corporate monster that had sold his mother the chocolates in the first place.

Reaching the corner shop, he stops in his tracks, staring at the premises as if he were confronting it.

40

INT. SUPERMARKET - EVENING

40

With a sense of destiny, Hungry Paul enters.

Sadly, the moment is somewhat undercut by the undramatic surrounding (which includes stacks of Easter eggs) and gentle muzak.

AN OLDER LADY pauses to stare at Hungry Paul as he approaches DEIRDRE, reading a magazine behind the counter. Deirdre has the air of someone who doesn't like their job very much.

DEIRDRE

Yes?

Hungry Paul speaks authoritatively.

HUNGRY PAUL

I would very much like to speak to the manager please.

DEIRDRE

I see.

(dripping with sarcasm)

You don't think that maybe I might
be able to help you? Or is the
matter in question so complex that
only the manager could possibly
deal with it?

Her reaction takes some of the wind out of Hungry Paul's
sails.

HUNGRY PAUL

These chocolates are out of date.

Deirdre considers the matter for a long, silent beat. Then:

DEIRDRE

Finbar!

She returns to her magazine.

The owner, FINBAR HOGAN, appears from the back of the shop.
Deirdre doesn't even look up.

DEIRDRE (CONT'D)

Out of date chocolates.

Finbar seems surprisingly concerned as he approaches Hungry
Paul, arm outstretched.

FINBAR

Finbar Hogan.

Only now does Deirdre look up to roll her eyes as Finbar
shakes Hungry Paul's hand.

FINBAR (CONT'D)

Now, the good news is, thankfully,
it wasn't a more serious food item
that was out of date: a ham,
chicken goujons, fish...

DEIRDRE

Cheese.

FINBAR

No, not cheese, Deirdre.

Deirdre clenches her jaw.

Hungry Paul regains some of his momentum.

HUNGRY PAUL

These chocolates are not just out
of date, they are...

(takes a dramatic moment)

Significantly out of date.

The Older Lady's ears prick up, jaw agape.

FINBAR

So sorry for the inconvenience. You can swap it for another one there.

He gestures towards a stack of tins of chocolates.

Hungry Paul can't believe what he's hearing.

HUNGRY PAUL

It's not the chocolates, it's the *principle*.

The Older Lady nods firmly in agreement.

Buoyed by her support, Hungry Paul becomes uncharacteristically vocal.

HUNGRY PAUL (CONT'D)

I purchased these chocolates, or rather my mother did, for the kind people at the hospital.

FINBAR

How very unfortunate. Maybe-

But Hungry Paul will not be interrupted.

HUNGRY PAUL

Can the brave nurses of St. Matthew's not enjoy the modest luxury of a Strawberry Whirl without finding themselves writhing feverishly on a bathroom floor, clutching the bowl for dear life?

The Older Lady is really getting invested now.

OLDER LADY

I bought bread here once which was mouldy when I opened it at home.

HUNGRY PAUL

It appears I'm not alone.

FINBAR

Are you sure you bought them here?
Do you have a receipt?

HUNGRY PAUL

If it's evidence you want, we can produce that in court!

The Older Lady pointedly nods again at Finbar, as if she were somehow involved.

Finding himself on the back foot, Finbar raises his hands in an attempt to settle everyone down.

FINBAR

Okay, calm down. We're talking about chocolate. Even out of date, I'm sure it won't do any harm.

DEIRDRE

You eat one then, since you're so sure.

Finbar shoots Deirdre a look.

She shrugs, wide-eyed and innocent - *What did I say?*

OLDER LADY

Yeah, you eat one.

FINBAR

I'm sorry, who are you?

Looking around, Finbar can feel the room is turning on him.

FINBAR (CONT'D)

You know what? Fine. I'll eat one.

All eyes are on the tin as Finbar begins slowly popping around the rim.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Finbar Hogan expected to see fine and edible chocolates. But he was wrong. Hungry Paul expected to see a selection of rotten confectionary. But he was wrong.

The Older Lady and Deirdre lean in for a closer look.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The onlookers expected a dramatic climax...

Finbar prises the lid off to reveal all of Helen's sewing stuff.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But they were bitterly disappointed.

FINBAR

This appears to be somebody's sewing kit.

The Older Lady shakes her head and moves away to continue shopping.

DEIRDRE
(under her breath)
Dope.

Deirdre returns to her magazine.

Frozen, Hungry Paul stares at the tin's contents with a drained expression.

Finbar replaces the lid and returns the tin with a smile.

FINBAR
An honest mistake. Tell you what...

He takes an Easter egg from a stack next to him and gives it to Hungry Paul.

FINBAR (CONT'D)
From one chocolate lover to another. No hard feelings.

Finbar disappears into the back of the shop, leaving Hungry Paul standing alone, sewing kit in one hand, Easter egg in the other.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Under the flickering tube lighting, catatonic with failure, Hungry Paul stood at his most alone, only now realising what had driven him to take this uncharacteristic step outside of his comfort zone.

41

INT. HOSPITAL, WARD - NIGHT

41

Hungry Paul sits next to Mrs. Hawthorn. With the chocolates tin (sewing kit) open on the bed, Mrs. Hawthorn is busy repairing the cuff of her dressing gown.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Things were moving on without him. Grace was getting married, Leonard had a girlfriend, and his recently retired parents were entering a new phase in their lives.

Hungry Paul stares into the middle distance. But his usual, relaxed expression is replaced by a look of concern.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Lining it all up together, he recognised a familiar pattern. Checkmate. Game over.

42

EXT. VEGETARIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

42

Leonard and Shelley exit the restaurant, happy and relaxed in each other's company.

SHELLEY

So that wasn't so bad, right?

LEONARD

(light)

Who knew a courgette could be so versatile? I honestly don't know why I ever ate meat.

Shelley laughs as they walk, arm in arm, out of frame.

43

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

43

They continue to walk through the park.

LEONARD

Can I ask you a question?

SHELLEY

More questions? We've covered our favourite films, bands, and childhood sweets. Oh, and favourite novel.

LEONARD

The Mill and the Floss, right?

SHELLEY

Right. So what first date question could possibly be left?

LEONARD

What did I do right?

Shelley is thrown by the question.

LEONARD (CONT'D)

I can't imagine what it was, but I'd like to know so I can keep doing it.

SHELLEY

Oh my God, are you asking me what I saw in you?

LEONARD

I guess so.

(braving it out)

Yes, I am. What did you see in me?

Shelley is horrified.

SHELLEY

Ew! That's like the worst question you could ever ask a person.

Shelley considers his question.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

Right. Well. Wow. Okay. It certainly wasn't the wearing pyjamas to work thing.

He smiles. She gets a little more serious.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

I guess I didn't really see you at first. I mean, I recognised you, but, for whatever reason, looked past you.

Leonard is not sure how to take that.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

But I always thought your books were somehow magical. And then, when I met you, you seemed, I dunno, really gentle. And, in my impressive and immeasurable experience, gentleness is not easily found in this world.

She looks at him, hoping she hasn't said the wrong thing.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

How was that?

LEONARD

Good. I mean, I don't exactly sound like a great love - more like a great neighbour - but good.

Shelley gives him a playful slap on the arm.

SHELLEY

Hey! It was a horrible question! You try it - what did you see in me?

Leonard pauses for a moment to put his finger on it.

LEONARD

I just think you're breathtaking.

Shelley looks momentarily vulnerable as she searches in vain for any sign of insincerity in his eyes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It had been a long time since anyone had looked Shelley in the eye and called her special without any calculation or contrivance. Leonard's sincerity, so free from art, had a perfection about it.

SHELLEY

This is the bit where you kiss me like a gentleman, by the way.

Their kiss is short and perfect.

A smiling Shelley backs away towards the taxi waiting at a nearby rank.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)

Take it easy on the protein won't you?

LEONARD

Goodnight, Shelley.

She gets into the taxi and gives smiling waves out the window as it pulls away.

Leonard holds up a hand in a silent goodbye.

When her taxi disappears from sight, he begins to walk away and, not even a momentary slip on the pavement, is going to break his stride.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Happy to prolong his mood, Leonard walked home on that cloudless night, with a light heart and nothing above him but his expanding universe.

FADE TO BLACK.

The End.