

MAGPIE

by Lee Mattinson



SCENE 1 LANCE'S STOMACH (14:00)

LANCE: (V.O) Down here. In my gut. That's where I feel it.

**F/X RELAXED BREATHING, SMALL SWALLOWS, THE
FLUSH OF FOOD.**

LANCE: (V.O) This is what I want it to sound like inside of me.
The clarity and precision and beauty of digestion. My
shimmering pink stomach. My luminous large intestine.
A single miraculous machine where bread is processed
like boxes.

**F/X PANICKED BREATHING, PAINFUL SWALLOWS, A
STOMACH WORKING TOO HARD.**

LANCE: (V.O) But I chose needles and pins instead of bread. I
chose puncturing and pain and an ultimately more
dangerous digestion. My scarred red stomach. My
lanced large intestine. A single broken bag of bile that
eventually ripped in on itself, burning and blistering itself.

Until today.

MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.

SCENE 2 HOSPITAL - DOCTOR TATE'S OFFICE (14:01)**F/X A DOOR SLAMS SHUT.**

DOCTOR TATE: It is bedlam out there. No offence.

LANCE: Non taken, Dr Tate.

DOCTOR TATE: So. How do you feel within yourself?

LANCE: Great.

DOCTOR TATE: You look great. In fact, you look positively Christmassy.

LANCE: Thanks.

DOCTOR TATE: Just a few matters of protocol before I sign off your out patient sheet.

LANCE: Course.

DOCTOR TATE: I'm assuming Nurse Corrigan's furnished you with the appropriate handout re differential reinforcement?

LANCE: It's in my bum bag.

DOCTOR TATE: The anxiety brain shower we did re acceptable and developmentally inappropriate forms of nutrition?

LANCE: That's in there, too.

DOCTOR TATE: And you're due at the council offices, bear with me, bear with me, bear with me –

F/X DOCTOR TATE FLICKS THROUGH HIS FILE OF NOTES.

LANCE: Tomorrow.

DOCTOR TATE: Tomorrow. Perfect.

I would also advise you cling onto the extensive abandonment worksheets we filled out re your mother with quite a haunting grasp.

LANCE: Like my life depends on it.

DOCTOR TATE: And you know to expect a call from Wendy, wee Wendy the Clutter Wizard who's been charged with the exhaustive task of Wombling your household hoard.

DOCTOR TATE: She's fully aware of your circumstances, Lance. Your treatment.

LANCE: I really do feel better, Doctor.

F/X THE SCRATCH OF A SIGNATURE ON PAPER.

DOCTOR TATE: Well, if all else fails you've always got your dickie bow tie pasta portraiture to fall back on eh? That art therapy funding's been nothing but a godsend.

LANCE: Thank you, Doctor Tate.

DOCTOR TATE: You're more than welcome. You know where I am. And remember, above all else, Lance, that you are good.

SCENE 3 STREET - OUTSIDE THE REID HOUSE (15:00)

F/X DOGS BARKING BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR.

F/X A METAL GARDEN GATE RATTLES SHUT.

GLADYS: You're back then, lad.

LANCE: It looks like it.

GLADYS: Neither hide nor hair of your mother, if that's what you're expecting.

LANCE: She's away abroad.

GLADYS: Sixteen weeks late on her catalogue, Payday Paula's words not mine.

LANCE: I start at the council tomorrow. I'll sort it.

GLADYS: Get you, moneybags.

Where's she this time?

LANCE: Who?

GLADYS: Your mam.

LANCE: Spain. She's met the love of her life.

GLADYS: God. Been there, got the boob tube, honey.

F/X DOGS BARKING, LOUDER, MORE FEROCIOUS.

LANCE: You started breeding dogs?

GLADYS: They're my children, Lance.

SCENE 4 THE REID HOUSE - HALL (15:01)**F/X THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS.****F/X A TELEPHONE BLARES, RINGS OUT UNTIL IT
CLICKS TO ANSWERPHONE.**

MAM: (ANSWERPHONE RECORDING) You're through to the
Reid house. Leave a message after the pips.

F/X BEEP. BEEP. BEEEEEEP.

WENDY: (ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE) Lance, my love. It's
Wendy here with the sole purpose of taking the shudder
out of your de-clutter. I've understood from a reputable
Doctor Tate that you're to be expecting my call.

So, if you'd care to give me a buzz back, I'd be more than
happy to discuss an appropriate window within which to
access the property for what I understand to be quite a
hefty hoard.

**F/X LANCE BREATHES IN THROUGH HIS MOUTH, OUT
THROUGH HIS NOSE, ATTEMPTING TO CURB HIS
ANXIETY, IN AND OUT.**

DOCTOR: (V.O) Although the condition is characterized by a
hunger for substances of non-nutritive value. We've
established that that's not what you really need, haven't
we?

Remember the danger signs. They're only triggers if you
allow them to spark gunpowder.

Breathe. In time with me. In and out, Lance. In and out.

You're in your gut. Feel it. Feel it. Being back there. But, this time, you are braving it.

Conquer it, Lance.

**F/X LANCE CAN'T CATCH HIS BREATH, A SERIES OF
GULPS, A JOURNEY DOWN LANCE'S OESOPHAGUS
AND INTO HIS STOMACH.**

SCENE 6 LANCE'S STOMACH (08:02)

MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.

LANCE: (V.O) Things I'm bad at.

Being called Lance. Looking nice. Having more than one
wild and wonderful dream. Wrapping Christmas
presents. Eye contact.

And eating proper food like Knickerbocker glories and
crisps.

Things I'm good at.

First and foremost –

First and absolutely foremost, I'm good at –

SCENE 7 CITY COUNCIL - RHONA'S OFFICE (09:30)

RHONA: What?

LANCE: Dickie bow tie pasta portraits.

F/X RHONA FINDS THIS HILARIOUS.

RHONA: Really?

LANCE: Genuinely.

RHONA: I can see we're gonna have to keep an eye on you.

Seriously, though, I will have to keep an eye on you since I understand you've recently graduated from a spell in sickbay?

LANCE: That's right.

RHONA: I wasn't furnished with the particulars. Which are?

LANCE: I have allergies.

RHONA: I feel your anaphylactic pain. I've just this week had to deal with an incredibly popular cousin of mine losing both his thumbs in a freak kiting accident so –

LANCE: So?

**F/X A SWIFT KNOCK AND THE OFFICE DOOR SWINGS
OPEN.**

RHONA: (SNAPS) Not now, Tanya.

F/X THE OFFICE DOOR CLOSSES.

RHONA: Strengths?

LANCE: First and foremost, I've a keen eye for detail.

RHONA: As trainee town planner that will be paramount.

Goals?

LANCE: First and foremost, to have the ability to work well on my own but also as part of a multicultural team?

RHONA: Diverse aware. I like it.

Well, I suppose that's it from me. Never been the brand of boss to stand on ceremony. But that's just my style. I'm Rhona and people round here know it.

They like it or they loathe it. Lance.

LANCE: I'll like it, please. Rhona.

SCENE 8 CITY COUNCIL - MAIN OFFICE (09:35)**F/X OFFICE ACOUSTIC.**

RHONA: This is your desk.

You will have noticed you're located in an optimum position re the photocopier but bear in mind that if we hadn't lost Karen to cancer you'd be in that far corner by the Kenco capsule bin.

LANCE: I'm sorry.

RHONA: For?

LANCE: Karen's cancer.

RHONA: She wouldn't want you to stand on ceremony, Lance.

I'll run you through the fridge labeling system later, if you like? It can be quite the brain-blitzer.

LANCE: That'd be really kind.

RHONA: Brought your own packed lunch, have you?

LANCE: No. But I'd still be interested in seeing how everything works.

RHONA: Personally, I've a pre-prepared chicken omelette. Which is quite a sinister concoction if you think about it.

LANCE: I suppose it is.

RHONA: Technically, it's an old boyfriend's recipe, not mine.

LANCE: I see.

RHONA: But I have made it my own. I chop in a red pepper, which really does lift its spirits.

LANCE: I can imagine.

RHONA: He fancied himself as quite the avant garde chef. You know the type, oysters, champagne, all manner of aphrodisiacs. I said, you can keep the oysters.

LANCE: I've never had them.

RHONA: I hope your wife won't take issue to you working in such an extensively female dominated work setting.

All this estrogen can take its toll.

LANCE: I'm not married.

RHONA: Girlfriend?

LANCE: No.

RHONA: Boyfriend?

LANCE: No.

RHONA: Me, neither.

SCENE 9 THE REID HOUSE – KITCHEN (20:00)

F/X THE MICROWAVE HUMS AT FULL POWER.

**F/X LANCE POTTERS ABOUT, LAYING OUT A PLATE,
 CUTLERY.**

LANCE: (TO HIMSELF) Knife. Fork. Napkin. Nice.

F/X (OFF) A KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR.

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) Lance? It's Wendy, my love –

F/X LANCE FREEZES, HOLDS HIS BREATH. SILENCE.

F/X (OFF) THE LETTERBOX FLIPS OPEN.

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) Are you in there?

F/X (OFF) THE LETTERBOX SLAMS SHUT.

F/X (OFF) A TELEPHONE BLARES.

**F/X THE RING BECOMES METALLIC, A TINY RYTHMIC
 RATTLE RATHER THAN A RING, INCREASINGLY
 DISTANT.**

SCENE 10 LANCE'S STOMACH (20:02)**MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.**

LANCE: (V.O) I find it extremely important to determine whether things are good or bad.

But that's not as simple as it might sound. There are hundreds of questions involved. Thousands of decisions.

Doctor Tate taught me that food is good. And that needles and pins are bad.

And I have to remember that. Because that's what matters.

SCENE 11 THE REID HOUSE – VARIOUS (20:05)

**F/X LANCE PLACES THE PLATE ON THE FLOOR AND
PROCEEDS TO MOVE CARDBOARD BOX UPON
CARDBOARD BOX FROM HIS PATH.**

F/X HE LIFTS THE PLATE.

**F/X LANCE ENTERS THE BEDROOM, SETS DOWN THE
PLATE.**

MAM: What's that?

LANCE: Chicken omelette. Which is quite a sinister –

F/X MAM PUSHES THE PLATE AWAY.

MAM: I don't want it.

LANCE: You've got to eat –

MAM: I'm not hungry.

LANCE: But I made it for you.

You're drunk.

MAM: I'm no such thing.

And I dunno what you want with all these boxes. I can't
breathe in here. There's no air, Lance –

LANCE: You are drunk –

MAM: You can get gone if you're gonna be like that –

LANCE: I will.

MAM: No. Don't go. Not yet.

I'll prove it.

LANCE: What?

MAM: That I've not been drinking. Cos I haven't.

Once upon a time –

LANCE: Not that –

MAM: Once upon a time there was a man.

I can do it. I'll show you.

LANCE: Quickly.

MAM: A man with needles in his arteries and pins in his veins.
A man in constant pain from dawn until dusk, unable ever
to work or provide for his family.

And. And? And –

LANCE: I knew it –

MAM: And so when his only son was old enough, he took over his father's affliction and had the needles and pins transferred into his own blood in order that his father might find work in a local factory.

'You're my brave little boy, pal,' his father would say at the end of each day.

LANCE: That's enough –

MAM: And this made the little boy forget all about his forever-present pain. This wiped it away. If only for a few precious seconds.

LANCE: Done.

MAM: (QUICKER) Until one day the little boy pricked his finger and the thousands of needles and hundreds of pins began to pour out of him at such a miraculous rate that he was unable to push them back in –

LANCE: I said –

MAM: (QUICKER) Because the quicker he reinserted them, the faster they escaped through the pinprick in his finger –

LANCE: Eat up –

MAM: And so the father stopped returning from work –

LANCE: (SNAPS) I don't want to know, that's enough.

MAM: (BEAT) With the little boy no longer considered brave.
With the boy suddenly considered bad.

But it wasn't the boy's fault, Lance.

F/X (OFF) A BANG AT THE FRONT DOOR.

MAM: Who's that at this hour?

LANCE: I don't know. It doesn't matter.

F/X (OFF) ANOTHER BANG, LOUDER.

MAM: Lance?

Don't put the boxes back.

**F/X LANCE STANDS, QUICKLY REPLACES THE WALL
OF BOXES AT THE BEDROOM DOOR.**

SCENE 12 THE REID HOUSE - HALL (20:08)

**F/X LANCE WALKS INTO THE HALL, STOPS IN HIS
TRACKS.**

MAX: Hiya, pal.

LANCE: How did you get in?

MAX: I'm Max.

LANCE: Is it not a bit late for you to be out?

MAX: I am seven, pal.

LANCE: Where's your mam and dad, Max?

MAX: Unpacking. We've just moved in along the road. They're
head to toe in boxes.

LANCE: Right.

MAX: Like you. What's in your boxes, Lance?

LANCE: How do you know my name?

MAX: I asked next door. Her dogs are vicious, aren't they?

LANCE: Can you please leave?

MAX: What's through there?

LANCE: Nothing.

MAX: Is that the dining room?

LANCE: It used to be.

MAX: It's full of boxes, pal.

LANCE: I don't mean to be rude but –

MAX: You should get a doorbell. I've been knocking ages.

LANCE: There is one somewhere.

F/X **MAX OPENS A CARDBOARD BOX.**

LANCE: Leave that –

F/X **THE BING BONG OF A DOORBELL.**

MAX: It was in there with your records.

Who's Neil Sedaka?

LANCE: No one.

MAX: Here.

F/X **THE BING BONG OF A DOORBELL.**

MAX: You can put it out for next time I come.

I can come back, can't I, Lance?

LANCE: No.

MAX: I'd best go anyway. My mam worries. You know what parents are like.

High five? No? Right.

See you soon, best pal.

F/X MAX EXITS, SLAMS THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.

SCENE 13 LANCE'S STOMACH (20:10)

MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.

LANCE: (V.O) When I was seven there was no good and no bad.
There just was.

My dad was strong. My mam was beautiful. The house
was always clean. Tea was always on the table and
mine was always a clean plate.

But then everything was different. Everything was all of a
sudden wrong. He became ill and couldn't speak. She
started drinking and would only ever scream. The family
was splintered. And it all began to fall away in front of
me.

It was all, and all of a sudden, bad.

SCENE 14 **CITY COUNCIL - MEETING ROOM** **(11:00)**

F/X BACKGROUND EMPLOYEE CHIT CHAT OF A MEETING ABOUT TO BEGIN.

RHONA: This may be somewhat of a baptism of fire but if you need to impress anyone in this role it's Mrs. Cockfoster.

LANCE: Mrs. Cockfoster?

RHONA: Big boss. High up but not too high up –

F/X A TRAY OF TEAS AND COFFEES ARE SET DOWN ON THE TABLE.

RHONA: Ah coffee. Thank you, Tanya.

(TO LANCE) If nothing else she's a fiend for a pretty face so you'll be taking minutes, it'll be good experience for you.

LANCE: I haven't brought a pen.

RHONA: Use my fountain.

F/X RHONA PLONKS A FOUNTAIN PEN ON THE TABLE.

RHONA: She finds me a tad tedious but she only demands we gather for a generic update once in the blue moon so –

LANCE: I understand.

RHONA: Are you implying I'm tedious, Lance?

LANCE: Not at all.

RHONA: Because I can be quite the opposite when the mood takes us.

LANCE: I've no doubt you can.

RHONA: I have an ex who grew chillies in a window box.

LANCE: I didn't know you could grow chillies in a window box.

RHONA: You can. He did. And do you know what I did one day?

LANCE: Eat one?

RHONA: Yes. A big fiery, hot one.

Who's tedious now, Lance?

LANCE: What you got for lunch today, Rhona?

RHONA: Chinese niks and naks with a sweet and sour dipping sauce.

Perhaps you'd care to join us?

LANCE: I'm not really that hungry –

RHONA: Only there's an opening popping up in urban design I've been meaning to discuss with you.

Quiet, please, people, she's here.

F/X **THE CHIT CHAT STOPS.**

RHONA: (SNAPS) Chewing gum, Tanya –

F/X A DOOR OPENS AS SOPHIE SWINGS IN.

SOPHIE: Greetings, everyone, one and all.

RHONA: Sophie.

SOPHIE: I recognise all but I don't know you, are you new?

RHONA: This is Lance. He is new –

F/X LANCE NERVOUSLY CHEWS ON HIS PEN.

RHONA: (TO LANCE) Pen out your mouth, please, Lance.

LANCE: I'm new.

RHONA: He'll be scribbling minutes.

LANCE: I haven't got anything to write on, Rhona.

RHONA: The stationary cupboard is just there, Lance.

LANCE: Sorry.

SOPHIE: Can I just say from the off that I'd like to keep it brief. I've my daughter's swimming gala at one and I've yet to pick her up a new bather.

F/X LANCE OPENS THE CUPBOARD DOOR.

MAX: (WHISPERS) Surprise –

SOPHIE: You getting this, Lance?

LANCE: I'll just be a second –

(WHISPERS) What are you doing hiding in the cupboard?

MAX: (WHISPERS) How exciting is this?

F/X LANCE SLAMS THE CUPBOARD DOOR, SHIFTS HIS CHAIR OVER TO JUST IN FRONT OF IT.

SOPHIE: Lance?

LANCE: Troublesome hinges. I'll just sit here.

RHONA: We're way ahead of ourselves re the Byker Wall Garden Festival fiasco.

F/X THE CUPBOARD DOOR CREAKS OPEN.

MAX: (WHISPERS) Have you heard how she goes on?

SOPHIE: And the hanging basket supplier I sent your way?

LANCE: (WHISPERS) How do you know where I work?

RHONA: His margins were minimal, which means we should be able to claw enough back to implement that tawny owl sanctuary arts and crafts group for the little ones

SOPHIE: The tawny is the rightful king of all owls.

RHONA: I actually give two pounds a month to the RSPB.

MAX: (WHISPERS) She talks like a book.

F/X A PEN RATTLES FROM BETWEEN LANCE'S TEETH.

SOPHIE: You getting this, Lance?

LANCE: Getting it.

MAX: (WHISPERS) You can do this.

LANCE: (WHISPERS) Shut up.

F/X A PEN RATTLES FROM BETWEEN LANCE'S TEETH.

SOPHIE: You ok there, Lance?

LANCE: Fine.

MAX: (WHISPERS) Give her eye contact.

RHONA: He's fine.

F/X A PEN RATTLES FROM BETWEEN LANCE'S TEETH.

LANCE: What was that re the Neighbourhood Watch pending?

MAX: (WHISPERS) Be professional.

LANCE: I'm being professional.

RHONA: Sorry?

MAX: (WHISPERS) Take the pen out of your mouth.

SOPHIE: He looks a tad peaky.

MAX: (WHISPERS) Tell her you're fine.

LANCE: I'm fine.

F/X SNIGGERS FROM THE ASSEMBLED EMPLOYEES.

SOPHIE: Does someone want to get him a glass of water?

RHONA: Do you need to take a minute?

MAX: (WHISPERS) She's pretty when she's angry –

SOPHIE: Lance?

MAX: (WHISPERS) Pretend I'm not here –

LANCE: (SNAPS) Shut. Up.

F/X THE CUPBOARD DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

RHONA: (BEAT) Lance?

F/X WHISPERS FROM THE ASSEMBLED EMPLOYEES.

SOPHIE: Was that directed at me?

SCENE 15 CITY COUNCIL – TOILETS (11:10)**F/X A TOILET FLUSHES.****F/X LANCE UNCLICKS THE CUBICLE LOCK, WALKS
OUT, PUNCHES DOWN THE COLD WATER PLUNGER
TAP.****F/X HE SPLASHES HIS FACE, DEEP BREATHS.**

LANCE: I am a good person. I am a good employee. And I can
be professional.

LANCE: I can be good.

RHONA: I'm averting my eyes but when I said, 'my office,' I meant
now.

LANCE: I'm coming.

SCENE 16 CITY COUNCIL - RHONA'S OFFICE (11:15)

RHONA: I have never been so mortified in my whole entire life.

Is this something to do with your allergies? It is me?

(SNAPS) Well, don't just stand there like a documentary on crabs on pause.

LANCE: It won't happen again.

RHONA: No, it will not.

Because I will no longer be breaching the company policy on inter-office relationships by offering out my niks or my naks.

You won't be emailed the job description for the opening in urban design suffixed with a winky-face emoticon.

And I will not be publically humiliated like that again.

Are you even listening to me, Lance?

LANCE: I'm sorry, Rhona.

RHONA: Then I suggest you issue a formal apology to the whole office in the form of an email reflecting that sorrow. That embarrassment. And blatant unprofessionalism.

LANCE: I will.

RHONA: Too right you will. And you can cc Sophie in for one.
Take the rest of the day off. Unpaid. And we'll see an all
too different you tomorrow.

LANCE: I promise.

RHONA: Don't make me wrong about you, Lance.

SCENE 17 THE REID HOUSE - VARIOUS (20:00)

F/X A BIRO SCRIBBLES AT A NOTEPAD.

LANCE: Dear City Council colleagues.

I would like to begin by saying how very sorry I am regarding today's incident –

F/X THE BIRO CROSSES SOMETHING OUT.

LANCE: Today's unforgivable incident.

F/X THE BIRO CROSSES SOMETHING OUT.

LANCE: I've been experiencing an increasing amount of anxiety recently. This whole matter has caused me deep embarrassment.

F/X LANCE BITES THE LID FROM THE END OF HIS PEN,
CHEWS ON IT AS:

LANCE: I would like to extend a further apology to Rhona who I understand was personally traumatized by my selfish and senseless actions –

F/X **A CARDBOARD BOX BURSTS OPEN.**

MAX: (SCREAMS) Boo –

F/X LANCE SCREAMS AS MAX BURSTS OUT LAUGHING.

MAX: Isn't hide and seek the best game ever?

LANCE: What are you doing?

MAX: You basically just admitted that she's your girlfriend, pal –

LANCE: Get out.

F/X MAX CLAMBERS OUT OF A CARDBOARD BOX.

MAX: I just wanted to make sure you were ok.

LANCE: I was before you turned up.

Do your mam and dad know you're here?

MAX: They'll not even notice I'm gone.

LANCE: I'm sure that's not true.

MAX: What's your dad like?

LANCE: Dead.

MAX: Did he die in the dining room? Is that why you'll not go in there?

He did, didn't he, pal?

I'm dead good at guessing games. Better even than hide and seek –

LANCE: Unless someone told you.

MAX: I don't talk to anyone but you.

LANCE: Her next door told you my name.

MAX: Do you eat your tea on your lap, then?

LANCE: I don't really eat tea.

MAX: Are you one of them diabetics?

LANCE: What do you want, Max?

MAX: What's wrong with you, pal?

LANCE: (BEAT) I was in hospital.

MAX: Did you have a stroke? Cos I know what one of them is.

LANCE: I had a condition.

MAX: In your body?

LANCE: And my head.

It made me want to eat certain things. Things that made my stomach poorly –

MAX: Like what?

LANCE: Metal.

MAX: You're alright now, aren't you?

LANCE: I'm on the mend.

MAX: Because I can fill that gap now, can't I, pal?

LANCE: I think you should go.

MAX: There was a boy at my last school had something like what you had wrong with you.

His dad died –

LANCE: I'd like you to leave –

MAX: It was an accident –

LANCE: Max –

MAX: An accident isn't anyone's fault –

LANCE: (SNAPS) Enough.

MAX: (BEAT) But his dad understood.

Cos that's what dad's do, pal.

They say it's ok. They say you're still a good boy –

LANCE: How would you know what dad's do?

MAX: Television.

LANCE: I've got to go to bed now, Max. Use the doorbell next time, will you?

MAX: Here it is then. It'll only take you two minutes.

LANCE: Give it here.

MAX: Course. Love you, pal.

**F/X MAX EXITS, THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS. LANCE
HEAVY BREATHING**

**F/X THE NOTEPAD IS VIOLENTLY RIPPED APART,
CRUMPLED UP, THROWN AGAINST THE WALL.**

F/X (OFF) THE BING BONG OF A DOORBELL.

**F/X LANCE STANDS, WALKS THROUGH TO THE HALL,
PICKS UP THE DOORBELL.**

F/X THE BING BONG OF A DOORBELL.

**F/X LANCE QUICKLY DISMANTLES IT, PLOUGHS IT'S
PIECES INTO HIS MOUTH, METAL AGAINST TEETH,
TIN AGAINST TONGUE AND PAINFUL SWALLOWS.**

DOCTOR: (V.O) I fear we may be up against a condition known as Pica. Latin for Magpie. Although the condition is characterized by a hunger for substances of non-nutritive value.

Max: Like what?

Lance: Metal

Doctor: (V/O) For you, it seems to be a hunger for feelings but characterized by the consumption of nothing but hurt.

It's a one in a million case Lance, this. The extremities, the rarities.

SCENE 18 THE REID HOUSE - BEDROOM (20:05)**F/X LANCE PLACES A PLATE ON THE FLOOR.**

MAM: What's that?

LANCE: Chinese niks and naks with a sweet and sour dipping
sauce –

MAM: I don't want it –

**F/X MAM FLIPS THE PLATE AS CUTLERY CRASHES
INTO CARPET.**

LANCE: But I made it for you.

MAM: There's been some wife knocking all day. Wailing
through the letterbox like a banshee. Wendy.

LANCE: She's no one –

MAM: A lot of no one's around at the minute, isn't there?

LANCE: You've been drinking.

MAM: She was the devil of persistence. And she'll be back,
Lance, I know her type. That 'no one.'

LANCE: I can smell it on you.

MAM: Though, God knows, who in their right mind would want
anything with you.

LANCE: I'll pop back up for your dirty plate. You might end up fancying some –

MAM: Leaving me, are you?

LANCE: It's not nice, is it?

MAM: (SNAPS) Don't you dare.

LANCE: (BEAT) I was seven –

MAM: And yet you're still bleating on about it.

LANCE: You could've saved him.

MAM: From what? You?

SCENE 19 CITY COUNCIL - MAIN OFFICE (16:00)

F/X OFFICE ACOUSTIC.

**F/X RHONA STRUTS OVER TO LANCE, SLAMS A SHEET
OF PAPER DOWN ON THE DESK.**

RHONA: I'm professionally obliged to draw your attention to this.

LANCE: Rhona?

RHONA: It's a poster for the proposed company-wide paintballing
extravaganza for Siobhan's leaving do.

LANCE: Am I invited?

RHONA: You'll notice little speech bubbles have been added to
each and every gun-wielding maniac with 'shut up'
inserted into the aforementioned speech bubbles.

LANCE: I see.

RHONA: Now, I'll circulate my standard email re inter-office
bullying but I just wanted to make you aware of the
vendetta personally.

LANCE: I'm just about to ping off an email that explains
everything. That truly apologises –

RHONA: Does it explain why you took it upon yourself to make a
City Council-wide mockery of yours truly?

LANCE: It explains everything.

RHONA: And to think I thought I might one day prepare you a seven, not three, Lance, seven-course fusion cuisine banquet with banana fritters for after.

Well?

Lance?

LANCE: What you got for lunch today, Rhona?

RHONA: Battered heartbreak on burnt toast, goodbye –

F/X RHONA STRUTS OFF.

F/X LANCE PICKS UP THE POSTER.

LANCE: (READS) Shut up.

F/X LANCE BLIND-FIRES STAPLES OUT OF A STAPLER.

LANCE: (READS) Shut up.

F/X LANCE BLIND-FIRES STAPLES OUT OF A STAPLER.

LANCE: (READS) Shut up.

**F/X HE PLOUGHS THE STAPLES INTO HIS MOUTH,
CHEWS, PAINFUL SWALLOWS.**

F/X THE PHONE ON HIS DESK RINGS, HE PICKS IT UP.

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Hello?

MAX: (ON PHONE) Do you wanna meet for lunch, pal?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Max?

MAX: (ON PHONE) I could come to your house?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) How did you get this number?

MAX: (ON PHONE) You've not eaten already, have you?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) No.

MAX: (ON PHONE) 'No' you've not eaten or 'no' you don't want to meet?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Both.

MAX: (ON PHONE) But I can hear something in your mouth.

You're chewing, Lance.

What is it? Is it staples? Cos it sounds bad –

F/X THE PHONE IS SLAMMED DOWN.

F/X LANCE'S BREATHING ESCALATES, PURE AND UNADULTERATED PANIC.

F/X LANCE BOLTS, HIS CHAIR SPINNING IN HIS WAKE.

RHONA: And where do you think you're going?

LANCE: I've got the dentist.

RHONA: You never said.

LANCE: It's an emergency.

RHONA: Has something happened?

LANCE: No.

RHONA: Only I am governmentally obliged to document any dental related injuries that occur within this office.

LANCE: It happened at home.

RHONA: How then is it still an emergency?

Is this about me? Is it about me and you?

F/X AN OFFICE DOOR SWINGS OPEN AND SWIFTLY
SLAMS SHUT BEHIND HIM.

SCENE 20 THE REID HOUSE - VARIOUS (17:00)**F/X THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS. WITH MAX AND MAM**

MAM: So I said. Wait till you hear this...

MAX: Go on.

MAM: You can't just creep up at me like a dog at a disco.

F/X THEY LAUGH.

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Mam?

F/X LAUGHS.**F/X LANCE RACES THROUGH THE HOUSE, RIPPING
CARDBOARD BOXES FROM HIS PATH.**

MAX: Hiya, pal.

MAM: You never said you'd made a little friend, Lance.

LANCE: I haven't.

MAM: We've honestly put the world to rights this afternoon,
haven't we, Michael?

LANCE: He's called Max –

MAX: Honestly, pal –

LANCE: (SNAPS) Stop calling me 'pal.'

How did you even get in here?

MAM: I let him in.

MAX: I didn't think you'd mind.

MAM: And such wonderful company he's been. Such an almighty afternoon of chatting and gossiping and reminiscing we have had –

LANCE: And Max has to go now –

MAM: But I was just about to crack open a bottle –

MAX: Why do I have to go?

LANCE: You've got scouts.

SCENE 21 THE REID HOUSE - HALL (17:02)

F/X LANCE DRAGS MAX INTO THE HALL, A TANGLE OF
FEET ON A WOODEN FLOOR, CARDBOARD BOXES.

LANCE: This has to stop –

MAX: Why didn't you say someone was through there?

LANCE: Because this house has got nothing to do with you.

You're a child. You're seven –

MAX: Going on fifty seven –

LANCE: Going on eight.

This isn't your home, Max.

MAX: But we've had a wonderful afternoon –

LANCE: Where do you even live?

MAX: Along the road –

LANCE: Where's your family?

MAX: What are you being mean for?

LANCE: Because it's not here, we're not it.

And you are not my responsibility.

MAX: (BEAT) But we're best pals, me and you.

Aren't we?

Cos I know you've got your job now. That I've got school.
But –

LANCE: What?

MAX: On the weekends. Out of school time. In the holidays –

LANCE: I haven't time –

MAX: We could go to the park. The pictures. Or talk. Just talk.

LANCE: About what?

MAX: Take your mam out. Give her some air. Instead of just leaving her there –

LANCE: She's happy where she is –

MAX: Are you happy where you are? Cos I've got loads of games we could play. I know card tricks and cat's cradle, I've got Kerrplunk, I could bring it round.

We could have a sleepover?

LANCE: There's nothing for you here.

MAX: You're right.

I should've stayed hidden in a box. Like whatever is in there boxes.

LANCE: I won't tell you again.

MAX: Like records. Papers. Letters.

LANCE: (SNAPS) Out –

F/X MAX RUNS OUT, THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS.

**F/X A TELEPHONE BLARES, RINGS OUT UNTIL IT
CLICKS TO ANSWERPHONE.**

MAM: (ANSWERPHONE RECORDING) You're through to the
Reid house. Leave a message after the pips.

F/X BEEP. BEEP. BEEEEEEEP.

WENDY: (ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE) Lance, my love. It's
Wendy again. It appears from the previous few days'
experience that I'm a bit of a doofus when it comes to
locating the most opportune time to catch you.

If I didn't know better, I might be inclined to think you
were just avoiding me. But I'm sure you're still just
catching your breath from your newfound occupation
cementing the slabs of our current urban landscape.

WENDY: (ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE) I'll expect to hear from
you soon, only I do need to alert Doctor Tate when we've
touched base. I've popped a card through to reiterate my
contact details.

SCENE 22 LANCE'S STOMACH (17:05)**MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.**

LANCE: (V.O) The dining table went up to my room. The chairs to my mam's. And they were replaced by a special bed they wheeled along from the hospital for him.

She set out his things in a row on the cabinet.

His old things like karate medals and tankard. His big five pence piece and security pass from the factory.

His new things like Riluzole and Intravenous needles. Wet wipes, a sharps bin, breathing machine and syringes for feeding.

All he wanted was to die at home, he said.

So there he lay. My dad. Weak where he was once strong. Wrapped up in the violence of that rotten and rotting disease. And slowly, so painfully slowly, disappearing to a dot.

SCENE 23 THE REID HOUSE - HALL (17:07)

**F/X A CARDBOARD BOX DROPS TO THE FLOOR AND A
PILE OF RECORDS, PAPERS, LETTERS TUMBLE
OUT.**

LANCE: Records, papers, letters. Nosey.

F/X LANCE PICKS UP AN ENVELOPE.

LANCE: (READS) Dear Father Christmas?

**F/X AN ENVELOPE IS TORN OPEN, A LETTER REMOVED
AND UNFOLDED.**

LANCE: (READS) My name is Lance Reid and I've recently
moved to a new home in Newcastle. Which is upon a
Tyne to make me easier to find.

Two months ago my dad died of something that was all
my fault. Because of an accident with his needle when I
was feeding him. And so I don't deserve things like other
boys.

Except the chance to say sorry to my dad for killing him.

LANCE: (READS) And so all I want for Christmas is to have him
back. Even just for a little bit to say sorry. To help with
the pain. To wipe it away. If only for a few precious
seconds.

Lance Reid. Aged seven years old.

PS. I've included his passport so that you can find him in heaven. It's got his picture in. And his name's at the back.

F/X **LANCE REMOVES A PASSPORT FROM THE**
ENVELOPE, FLICKS THROUGH IT, STOPS, NOTICES
SOMETHING.

LANCE: (READS) Michael Max Reid.

(READS) Michael Max Reid?

MAM: (V/O) We've honestly put the world to rights this
afternoon, haven't we, Michael?

LANCE: (READS) Michael. Max.

RHONA: (ON PHONE) It's not. Cos that meeting with Sophie. I wish that could be me. I wish I could be better –

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Listen, Rhona –

RHONA: (ON PHONE) And I know, I know you've probably got much bigger fish to fry than me. I imagine you're sat there now with all your friends living life. Telling them about your allergies.

But I'm not. I'm sat here on my own thinking about you –

F/X (OFF) A SWIFT KNOCK AND AN OFFICE DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

RHONA: (SNAPS) Not now, Tanya.

F/X (OFF) THE OFFICE DOOR CLOSES.

RHONA: (ON PHONE) I think I could love you, Lance.

Are you there?

Are you listening?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Yes.

RHONA: (ON PHONE) I've had a glass of white.

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) I'm sorry.

RHONA: (ON PHONE) I don't want you to be sorry.

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) I need to go.

F/X LANCE ENDS THE CALL. BEEP.

GLADYS: You lost someone, lad?

LANCE: Have you seen a little boy?

GLADYS: What's his name?

LANCE: Max. He's not long moved in along the road. Knocked at yours the other day and asked my name.

GLADYS: I've not. Though you might care to flick your music off next time you leave the house.

LANCE: Sorry?

GLADYS: That garish blare coming from yours. I was forced to Sky Plus *Britain's Ugliest Children* and pop up the Spar –

F/X LANCE DASHES OFF.

LANCE: I need to go.

GLADYS: (SHOUTS) You seen Payday Paula about that catalogue yet? Lance?

SCENE 25 STREET - OUTSIDE THE REID HOUSE (18:45)

F/X DOGS BARKING BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR.

F/X LANCE RUNS UP TO THE HOUSE.

WENDY: Mr. Reid? It's Wendy.

LANCE: She said there was a blare.

WENDY: I'm assuming you're fully aware that I've been trying to
get in touch –

LANCE: You'll have to come back –

WENDY: I have already frequented the property on a number of
occasions, Mr. Reid –

**F/X THE FRONT DOOR IS UNLOCKED AS LANCE RACES
INSIDE, SLAMS IT BEHIND HIM.**

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) Please, Mr. Reid?

SCENE 26 THE REID HOUSE - VARIOUS (18:46)

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) Lance?

**F/X LANCE RACES THROUGH THE HOUSE, RIPPING
CARDBOARD BOXES FROM HIS PATH.**

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Mam?

F/X HE RIPS THE CONTENTS FROM THE BOXES.

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Where are the photo albums? The ones of
dad –

F/X HE EMPTIES MORE BOXES.

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Where are you?

F/X HE EMPTIES MORE BOXES.

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Max?

**F/X A DULL THUD AS A FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM FALLS
OUT. LANCE STOPS, PAUSES, PICKS IT UP.**

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) I'll wait all night if I have to –

**F/X LANCE OPENS THE ALBUM, TURNS ITS TACKY
PAGES, PEELS A PHOTOGRAPH FROM PLASTIC.**

LANCE: Here they are. (READS) Michael Max Reid. Aged seven.
Whitley Bay.

No.

F/X **HE TURNS ANOTHER PAGE, PEELS ANOTHER
PHOTOGRAPH FREE.**

LANCE: (READS) Michael Max Reid. Aged seven. Tynemouth.

MUSIC **'THAT'S WHEN THE MUSIC TAKES ME' BY NEIL
SEDAKA PLAYS IN THE NEXT ROOM, MUFFLED
BEHIND CARDBOARD BOXES.**

F/X **APPREHENSIVE FOOTSTEPS ALONG A WOODEN
FLOOR.**

LANCE: You can't be in there. Of anywhere. Are you listening?

We're not allowed –

F/X **LANCE REMOVES CARDBOARD BOXES FROM HIS
PATH AS NEIL BLARES INTO BEAUTIFUL CLARITY.**

MAX: Hiya, pal.

LANCE: It's time for you to leave.

MAX: But we're having a welcome home party.

MAM: It was Max's idea –

LANCE: That's not his name.

MAX: It is.

LANCE: Not your real name. Your first name –

MAX: Surprise.

LANCE: This is his room.

MAX: I've done a buffet, pal.

LANCE: I'm not hungry.

MAX: Needles for starters and pins for pudding.

LANCE: I don't want it.

MAX: That is right, isn't it?

LANCE: I don't do that anymore –

MAX: Do you want a party hat, pal?

LANCE: No. And I don't need a pal –

MAM: I think that's what you'd call a party pooper. Have a drink
–

LANCE: (SNAPS) I don't want a drink.

MAX: But you're the guest of honour.

LANCE: (BEAT) Are you real?

MAX: What do you think?

LANCE: Because I was on the mend. I am on the mend. I've never once seen people that weren't really here. And so I know you're not sitting there. I know you're not talking. That it's not you.

I am better.

MAM: He's just showing off, Dad –

MAX: (SNAPS) Don't snap at your mother like that.

LANCE: (BEAT) You're not him.

MAX: But I've put our favourite record on –

LANCE: Mine and his. Not yours. (SHOUTS) Never yours.

MAM: Will I put my favourite record on?

LANCE: I don't know who you've been talking to –

MAM: We can all have a bop –

LANCE: Or what you think you know –

MAM: You used to be such a bonny little mover, Lance –

LANCE: Or what you're really doing here but –

MAX: I know what happened that day.

LANCE: She shouldn't've left me alone with him. I was only your age, did she tell you that?

Look how little he is, mam.

MAM: I couldn't watch him disappear –

LANCE: So you just left me to?

MAM: We used to dance on tables to this song, me and your dad –

MAX: Put this world to rights like there was no tomorrow –

MAM: And sing in that street at the top of our voices –

LANCE: You're a bitch. And a very bad drunk.

MAX: Once upon a time she wasn't –

LANCE: Get out –

MAX: Because once upon a time you were just a boy –

F/X **LANCE RETREATS INTO HIS STOMACH –THROAT**
SINGING UNDER.

LANCE: (V.O) Remember the danger signs.

FX **MAX STILL OUTSIDE STOMACH**

MAX: Lance?

LANCE: (V.O) They're only triggers if you allow them to spark gunpowder.

MAM: Breathe –

LANCE: (V.O) In time with me. In and out. In. Out.

F/X **MAX AND MAM NOW WITH HIM INSIDE HIS STOMACH TOO**

MAX: Listen –

LANCE: How are you in here?

F/X **THE BING BONG OF A DOORBELL.**

MAX: I knew this was where you'd hidden it –

MAM: These shimmering pink walls are lush, Lance –

LANCE: Why are you in here?

MAX: Because I know you need to hear this. Because once upon a time you were just a boy –

MAM: It's glorious in here –

LANCE: Get out –

MAX: A boy with a dad for his best friend. Who went everywhere he would. Liked everything he did –

LANCE: Goodnight, Max.

MAX: But where he once fed you, there came a time that you had to feed him –

LANCE: I didn't have to –

MAX: With tiny hands that could barely hold the syringe –

LANCE: I wanted to. I could hold it.

MAX: You stepped on my lead and the needle came out.

LANCE: I know.

MAX: The cannula. My line.

LANCE: It was an accident.

MAX: I know it was.

I know you tried to feed it back in. I know you couldn't.
That you sat with me until your mam came home –

LANCE: You were my best pal –

MAX: By then, though –

MAM: He'd gone. My Michael. My man.

LANCE: My dad.

MAX: But only because I couldn't hold up that disease any longer. I was too tired. Too weak. Unable to swallow. To breath even.

It was time to go. Nothing to do with what you did.
Because that needle, it was the only thing making me
stay. Clinging me here.

MAX: You released me, Lance.

LANCE: I didn't mean to make you go.

MAX: You did good. You wiped it away. And I understand.
Because that's what dad's do. They say it's ok.

And you're still my brave little boy, pal.

LANCE: I only ever needed to hear you to say that, dad.

MAX: You're still brave. Still my pal. Still so good.

MUSIC **THROAT SINGING IS MERGED WITH WHISTLING**
WHICH SEGUES INTO PURE WHISTLING.

SCENE 27 HOSPITAL - DOCTOR TATE'S OFFICE (14:00)**F/X A DOOR SLAMS SHUT.**

DOCTOR TATE: It's bedlam out there. No offence.

LANCE: You shouldn't say that.

DOCTOR TATE: Sorry?

LANCE: They're just people like you. You should have more respect.

DOCTOR TATE: You're right. You are right. Do forgive me, Lance, I had the best part of a wheel of blue cheese for lunch and I fear it's gone straight to my head.

And how are we?

LANCE: We are fine.

DOCTOR TATE: Dietary-wise?

LANCE: I've popped on a couple of pounds.

DOCTOR TATE: Emotionally-wise?

LANCE: Happy as Larry.

DOCTOR TATE: Any word from mum?

LANCE: She's still in Spain.

DOCTOR TATE: Still at arm's length. Good. That is good news.

LANCE: It's fine.

DOCTOR TATE: And the job? Settling in? Making new wee pals?

LANCE: I feel right at home.

DOCTOR TATE: And is there to be an erection with your name all over it popping up in the city centre any time soon?

LANCE: I'm more lampposts and pavements.

DOCTOR TATE: Super. And where are we at with Wendy the Clutter Wizard?

LANCE: I'm meeting her in an hour.

DOCTOR TATE: Now is that prospect conjuring up any degree of anxiety?

LANCE: Not really.

DOCTOR TATE: On our zero to ten point scale, zero being relatively calm and ten being quite frenzied.

LANCE: Zero, Doctor Tate.

SCENE 28 THE REID HOUSE - DINING ROOM (15:00)

**F/X A CLINICAL RUBBER GLOVE IS SNAPPED AROUND
A FAT FIST.**

WENDY: You are aware I am at liberty to inform the hospital as to
my findings?

LANCE: I am.

WENDY: And where to start.

**F/X A FINGER SLIDES ALONG SURFACES, IS RUBBED,
SNIFFED.**

WENDY: Spotless skirting boards.

F/X A CUSHION IS PUNCHED.

WENDY: Matalan cushions.

F/X AN OLD OAK TABLE IS TAPPED.

WENDY: And a keen eye for pre-war décor. You remind me of a
young me. It's gorgeous, Lance.

LANCE: Thank you.

WENDY: And is that the distinct blast of bergamot I detect?

LANCE: It's a seven-course fusion cuisine banquet with banana
fritters for after.

WENDY: A what, my love?

LANCE: I was just about to sit down to my tea.

WENDY: That's quite the extravagant feast for a solitary tea, if you don't mind me saying so.

LANCE: I'm expecting a friend.

WENDY: A lady friend?

LANCE: A colleague, Wendy. So, if you don't mind?

WENDY: Not at all. Thank you for your eventual hospitality and I wish you each and every luck with your tidy new life.

And hot date.

LANCE: Thank you.

F/X THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS.

**F/X A TELEPHONE BLARES, RINGS OUT UNTIL IT
CLICKS TO ANSWERPHONE.**

MAM: (ANSWERPHONE RECORDING) You're through to the Reid house. Leave a message after the pips.

F/X BEEP. BEEP. BEEEEEEP.

MAM: (ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE) Pick up if you're there, pet. It's mam.

You there? No? No? No? No?

MAM: (ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE) Anyhow, I'm coming home. Quelle surprise it went belly up with Diego but I won't be accused of being bitter. It's his loss and that Spain's not all it's cracked up to be; Eurovision's got a lot to answer for.

I've even knocked the drink on the head. You'll not recognize me when you see me. I'm like a sober Shirley Valentine minus the chip and eggs hair do.

I'll try you again in a bit. Can't wait to see you. Love to love you.

SCENE 29 CITY COUNCIL - MAIN OFFICE (10:30)**F/X OFFICE ACOUSTIC.**

RHONA: We appear to have navigated quite the U-turn, Lance.

LANCE: Sorry?

RHONA: Your draft plan for the Elswick Park Regeneration Project.
It's really good, clearly written, precise.

LANCE: Thank you.

RHONA: Keep turning in reports like this and you might just be
urban design material after all.

LANCE: I will. I promise.

Was that all, Rhona?

RHONA: Well. Um. I would also like to thank you for last night.

LANCE: You're very welcome.

RHONA: And I did also just want to say, without sounding –

LANCE: What?

RHONA: In terms of dating and mating –

LANCE: Was it the sweet and sour dipping sauce?

RHONA: Sorry?

LANCE: Was it too spicy?

RHONA: No –

LANCE: I should've used less HP Sauce –

RHONA: It was perfect.

Though I did just want to say –

LANCE: You don't have to tell me to my face if that helps. You can just pop it in an email.

RHONA: What?

LANCE: That it was bad. That it was a mistake. I won't mind or ever say anything to anyone if that's what's –

RHONA: I just wanted to know if you wanted to have lunch, Lance.

LANCE: Lunch?

RHONA: I packed an extra quarter of quiche this morning just in case. I don't know if you're a fan of quiche?

LANCE: I've never had it.

RHONA: It's like a cheesy egg pie with a tomato top hat.

LANCE: I'm starving.

RHONA: Then I'll give you a nod at one.

LANCE: Cool.

RHONA: Cool.

F/X RHONA WALKS AWAY.

MUSIC COMFORT BLANKET – WHISTLING TRACK UNDER.

LANCE: (V.O) I have one wild and wonderful dream where a magpie swoops down to steal me away.

He flies me to France where we have a baguette. No butter. No French filling. Brie, onions or snails. Just baguette. Just bread. Just flour and yeast and a pinch of salt.

Just food. Just food that's good for me.

Like it's nice. Like I deserve it. Like I'm finally good.

MUSIC WHISTLING TRACK OUT.

CREDITS.

END.