

THE A WORD

SERIES 2

Episode One

SHOOTING SCRIPT

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1 **EXT. LAKE DISTRICT ROAD. DAY 1. 07:30.**

Close up on JOE, his headphones on, the fells behind him, he is clutching a knitted giraffe toy. He is singing along to a track on his headphones that we can also hear . . .
Buzzcocks, 'Everybody's Happy Nowadays'.

JOE/BUZZCOCKS

(SINGING)

"I was so tired of being upset
Always wanting something I never
could get
Life's an illusion, love is a dream
But I don't know what it is
Everybody's Happy Nowadays
Everybody's Happy Nowadays."

So far, so familiar, except when we pull out we reveal JOE is not alone - he is walking on the side of the road and being shadowed by his Mum, ALISON, about ten yards behind, pushing a baby in a buggy. Buzzcocks plays across the following . . .

CUT TO:

2 **INT. SCOTT'S BREWERY. OFFICE. DAY 1. 12:20.**

MAURICE stares at the office computer, frustrated - bashes a few keys - no response - then he throws the mouse across the room. He reaches for his phone, dials, and . . .

CUT TO:

3 **INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE THEATRE. MANCHESTER. DAY 1. 12:21.**

EDDIE, standing in front of two complicated diagrams about machine learning, staring at a roomful of earnest-looking geeky STUDENTS. This is a slightly different EDDIE to last series - shirt rather than jumper, slightly trendier haircut. He stares down at his throbbing phone. 'DAD' and a picture of MAURICE glowing. He sighs . . .

CUT TO:

4 **INT. MAYBROOK MEDICAL CENTRE. CONSULTING ROOM. DAY 1. 12:25.**

NICOLA - now a GP - sees a PATIENT out of her consulting room. We glimpse DR GRAVES walking by as she goes back inside, shuts the door, sits down, opens her diary and checks a date, then dials a number . . .

CUT TO:

5 **INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE THEATRE. MANCHESTER. DAY 1. 12:26.**

EDDIE, still standing in front of the diagrams, STUDENTS taking notes. He stares down at his throbbing phone. 'NICOLA' with an old photo glowing. He can't quite believe this. He looks at the STUDENTS but can't help glancing back at the phone.

CUT TO:

6 **EXT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. DAY 1. 15:09**

PAUL and ALISON working at the gastropub. ALISON serving at the coffee booth, PAUL serving customers on the deck. A baby, asleep with her 'raggy' covering her - EMILY - is in a buggy next to the coffee booth. We do not see her yet but once ALISON has served a CUSTOMER she glances over at EMILY to check on her. PAUL is aware that his phone is ringing in his pocket. He answers it and we . . .

CUT TO:

7 **EXT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. ROOF/PLAYGROUND. DAY 1. 15:10**

Close up on JOE, his headphones on, the fells behind him, still singing. Maybe this is a continuation but he isn't moving anymore, he is standing still and . . .

JOE
(SINGING)
"Life's an illusion, love is a
dream
Life's an illusion, love is the
dream
Life's the illusion, love is a
dream
Life's the illusion, love is the
dream"

. . . we pull out to reveal that JOE is no longer on the road but in fact on the low flat roof of the school extension.

CUT TO:

8 **EXT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. DAY 1. 15:11**

PAUL is rushing from the deck towards the car, a bemused GARY left to serve, as ALISON is leaning into the car having put baby EMILY in a car seat.

CUT TO:

9

EXT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. ROOF/PLAYGROUND. DAY 1. 15:20.

JOE is watched by his delighted classmates and less delighted class teacher, MRS HANKIN. The caretaker - MR ELLIOT - is standing at the foot of the ladder, along with TERRY (now a LSA, but we don't know that yet) and the Head, MRS PAYNE.

PARENTS have arrived to take their CHILDREN home. A few are ushering their CHILDREN away, but most have stayed to watch. In fact it feels as though the whole Community is watching - even RALPH has drifted across from his lollipop duty.

CHILDREN stand excitedly underneath the roof, including RAMESH and BILL who have stretched out their coats in a vague hope of enticing JOE to jump.

MAURICE, who has come to pick JOE up, rushes across the playground, half running, half walking. MRS HANKIN is talking to MAURICE.

MRS HANKIN

I went up the ladder but he just lay down and so we are keeping it calm and low key.

MAURICE

Calm and low key? It's not hostage negotiation. What are his demands? A pizza and a helicopter to Alton Towers? I'm here now. Fun time over.

MRS HANKIN

We've rung his Mum and Dad. We don't want to alarm him in case he falls.

MAURICE

Yep. I get it. Calm and low key.

MAURICE has arrived at the roof.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

Joe! Joe! Ground Control to Major Tom. Get down here this minute!

They gaze up at the roof. JOE looks down at MAURICE, closer to the edge than he was.

MRS HANKIN

Not so close to the edge, Joe.

MAURICE

Joke's over, son. I'm counting to three and you're coming down. One. Two. Three.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nothing. JOE retreats. MAURICE turns to the gathered PARENTS and STAFF.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Has anyone got a bag of crisps and a big net? (TO TERRY) Why weren't you keeping an eye? I thought that was your job.

TERRY

I'm his Learning Support. I'm not with him every minute of the day.

MAURICE

Who is, then? Buzz Lightyear? Joe! Come on! That's enough now!

ALISON and PAUL arrive, ALISON pushing the baby in the buggy. She is concerned but calm.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Cancel the SWAT team. Batman and Robin's arrived.

An excited RAMESH runs towards ALISON and PAUL.

RAMESH

Mr Joe's Dad! It's Joe! It's Joe! He's doing a Joe!

PAUL

So we can see. Thanks, Ramesh.

MAURICE

Joe! Big Trouble now! Your Mum and Dad's here!

ALISON

Dad. Stop shouting. It's not helping. (TO TERRY) This is a new one. (BEAT) Did anything happen that might have upset him?

TERRY

Not that I've heard. But you can't always tell, you know . . .

ALISON turns to BILL and RAMESH.

ALISON

Bill. Did Joe have a bad day?

BILL

No. He had seconds of fishcakes and he didn't go under the table to eat them.

ALISON climbs the ladder.

(CONTINUED)

At the top, she peers over to JOE - she doesn't get onto the roof. She is calmer than last we saw her. More controlled. More adept at handling both JOE and his eccentricities. JOE takes off his headphones.

ALISON

Well. This is a thing, young man.

JOE

'Everybody's Happy Nowadays.'
Buzzcocks. 1979. Written by?

ALISON

Come down now, Joe.

JOE

'Everybody's Happy Nowadays.'
Buzzcocks. 1979. Written by?

ALISON

Come down and I'll tell you.

JOE

Written by?

ALISON

Nope. That isn't what happens.

JOE

What happens?

ALISON

What happens is you come down and
I'll tell you.

JOE

Is baby Emily here?

ALISON

Baby Emily is waiting in the
playground.

ALISON nods towards the buggy.

JOE

'Everybody's Happy Nowadays.'
Buzzcocks. 1979. Written by?

ALISON looks at JOE and JOE looks at ALISON. Face off. ALISON stays neutral. JOE manoeuvres himself over to the ladder and ALISON protects him as they descend. PAUL turns to MR ELLIOT who is aware of MRS PAYNE eyeballing him.

PAUL

How did he get hold of your
ladders?

(CONTINUED)

MR ELLIOT

I was getting a football off the roof. Not, strictly speaking, part of my job description but that's by the by . . .

PAUL

(AGITATED)

And you couldn't stop him? A seven year old?

MR ELLIOT

I didn't see him. And even if I had I couldn't have, you know, physically stopped him. Health and Safety, you see. Be the death of this country . . .

PAUL looks over as OTHER CHILDREN start to applaud as ALISON and JOE reach the ground. JOE doesn't react. ALISON turns to JOE immediately.

ALISON

Pete Shelley.

JOE nods - this is the correct answer.

JOE

Can I see baby Emily now?

ALISON

Yes. Go on.

JOE heads over to EMILY as though nothing has happened. He stares at her, fascinated, then calmly pushes the buggy towards the car. MAURICE looks at PAUL, PAUL doesn't say anything - heads towards the car. As he goes, he notices the OTHER BOYS, now no longer interested, huddling over Match Attax cards.

MAURICE turns to MRS PAYNE.

MAURICE

What you running here? A school or Fred Karno's Circus.

ALISON leaps in.

ALISON

I'm so sorry. I don't know why he'd do that.

MRS PAYNE

He's not hurt so that's the main thing. And Mr Elliot won't be making that mistake again.

(CONTINUED)

9

CONTINUED: (4)

ALISON passes a bunch of PARENTS including Bill's mum, SARAH, and LINDA.

ALISON

Sorry, folks.

SARAH

As long as he's safe and sound.

LINDA

Yeah. Don't worry about it. I'm sure you'd rather he was dancing on the roof than banging his head on his desk, hey?

ALISON

Well, yes, exactly.

LINDA

You're brilliant at handling it. I can't think how it must be for you. I've explained to my two that he's different so they're fine with it, but maybe not all the kids are, you know . . .

ALISON

Thanks, Linda. And sorry again, guys. We'll sort it.

Other PARENTS are drifting off with their CHILDREN. ALISON heads for the car. As MAURICE is about to follow, RAMESH sidles over.

RAMESH

Mr Joe's Grandad? Is Joe really in trouble?

MAURICE

I doubt it, Son. They'll probably give him a government grant for performing arts.

CUT TO:

10

EXT. HUGHES & SCOTT HOUSES. DAY 1. 15:40.

PAUL and ALISON, with EMILY in the buggy, follow JOE up the drive from the car. MAURICE has parked up behind them.

ALISON

Joe. Did anything happen at school today to make you sad? Or upset?

JOE

Let me see now.

(CONTINUED)

10

CONTINUED:

PAUL

Why did you go up there, Joe? Hey?
Were you missing Terry this
afternoon?

JOE

I was missing Terry this afternoon.

PAUL

Was it your school work? Something
too hard for you?

JOE

Was it my school work?

PAUL

Joe. Hmm?

JOE

Let me see now.

MAURICE has caught up from his car.

MAURICE

Has anyone been bullying you, Joe?
'Cos I tell you what. A lad gives
you a dig, you give them a dig
back. But ten times harder.

PAUL

Thanks, Maurice.

ALISON stops JOE, brings her face to his level.

ALISON

Okay. Let's try this. You went on
the roof because . . .

JOE

Because.

ALISON

Because?

JOE

I'm autistic.

ALISON, PAUL and MAURICE stop in their tracks.

JOE (CONT'D)

(CALM)

I'm autistic. I'm autistic. I'm
autistic. (BEAT) Nobody wants that.

JOE runs ahead towards the house. A stunned silence for all
three. ALISON and PAUL stare at each other.

(CONTINUED)

MAURICE
(TO ALISON)
Told you it was bullying.

PAUL gets out a ten pound note, hands it to MAURICE. They need him out of the way. As he does this, ALISON rushes with EMILY in the buggy towards the Scott House.

PAUL
Maurice. Go and tell Louise he won't be coming for his uke lesson today.

MAURICE
Can't you phone her?

PAUL
We owe her two weeks money and he needs his song for next week . . .

MAURICE takes the tenner.

MAURICE
Right.

By now NICOLA has come out of her house and ALISON is getting EMILY out of her buggy. EMILY takes NICOLA's hand and we have a good look at her now: around 15 months, mixed-race, NICOLA's child. NICOLA speaks to her in the tone of an adult. It's not cold but it's hardly "oochie coochie coo" either.

NICOLA
Hello, Emily. I hope you had a nice day with Alison.

ALISON
(ALREADY RUSHING AWAY)
She was lovely. It's all in the book.

ALISON heads for the house, leaving NICOLA with buggy and baby bag.

NICOLA
Oh, great. Thank you! Now then young lady, it's Wednesday so it's pasta with tomato sauce, and banana for afters. (LOOKS UP) Oh shit.

A middle-aged couple getting out of a taxi and walking up the drive. VINCENT - a vicar, 'life and soul' with all the insecurities that masks, and GRACE - an openness and a frankness that is reminiscent of Nicola, but tense today. VINCENT waves. NICOLA looks sick. This is her Mum and Dad.

CUT TO:

11 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY 1. 15:44.**

ALISON and PAUL with JOE at the table, JOE staring past them at the calender which has a photo of Rebecca on today's date and a series of crosses on the days leading up to it.

ALISON looks at PAUL, neither sure how to handle this.

ALISON

Joe. You know that word you said?
Autistic? Do you remember?

JOE looks at ALISON and says nothing.

JOE

'Whole Wide World.'

ALISON

Wreckless Eric. 1977. You know how
you find some things more difficult
than the other kids?

JOE

Let me see now . . . No. 'Hong Kong
Garden.'

ALISON

Siouxsie and the Banshees. 1978.
Okay. When you went up on the roof
today? What did you go up there
for? Can you remember?

JOE

Is it because the moon is there?

PAUL

So you wanted to get closer to the
moon? That makes sense. Not because
anybody called you names? Did
somebody say something to you?

JOE looks at PAUL and then at ALISON.

JOE

The Haribos.

ALISON

What about the Haribos?

JOE

What about the Haribos?

PAUL

(GETTING IT)

You didn't find them, did you?

JOE

No.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
Where didn't you find them?

JOE
Under the sink.

PAUL
Right. And where didn't you eat
them?

JOE
Under my bed . . .

PAUL slightly lost for words here.

PAUL
Okay. Well. Okay . . .

JOE leaves and they turn to each other.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Is it me or did he just do a number
on us?

ALISON
I thought you were going to ask
him? What he thinks autistic means.

PAUL
I thought you were . . . He clearly
doesn't want to talk about it, does
he?

ALISON
No. Because he thinks it's bad. Or
wrong.

PAUL
We don't know that.

ALISON
Why else would he say, "Nobody
wants that"?

PAUL
There's got to be something about
this on the internet.

ALISON
Or we could talk to actual human
beings who have been through the
same thing.

PAUL
Please not the 'Parents Support
Group.'

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

ALISON

How can you say that if you've never been?

PAUL

Three little words. "Parents", "Support" and "Group."

ALISON

Three more. "Narrow", "Minded" and "Twat". (Alternative: "Prat").

REBECCA

(SMILING)

It's like I've never been away.

ALISON and PAUL look up, surprised and delighted to see REBECCA standing in the kitchen doorway, rucksack at her feet, inter-rail shabby, and behind her a good-looking young man - JAMES - similarly shabby.

ALISON and REBECCA hug immediately. In silence. PAUL raises his eyebrows in JAMES' direction in a male solidarity gesture. ALISON finally breaks away.

ALISON

Look at you. My baby!

PAUL taps ALISON on the shoulder.

PAUL

This is James, this is Alison.

ALISON

I think we met on Facetime once.

JAMES

Was that Uganda?

ALISON gives him a cursory nod.

ALISON

You were moving around in the background in a very small towel. I don't remember the country.

PAUL looks at JAMES, they both laugh nervously. Then ALISON turns and hugs REBECCA again.

CUT TO:

12

INT. SCOTT HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY 1. 15:46.

GRACE is holding EMILY as she and VINCENT take in the cottage. Now it's only NICOLA living here with Emily it has changed.

(CONTINUED)

One corner is dominated by a pile of plastic boxes full of Emily's toys and playthings - labelled 'Creative', 'Arts and Crafts', 'Dressing Up Clothes', 'Pre-Reading', 'Science' etc.

NICOLA

Well, this is a surprise. And you know I don't like surprises.

GRACE turns her full attention to EMILY. VINCENT goes into the kitchen and starts opening drawers and cupboards as NICOLA looks on, irritated. Tupperware tubs labelled with the days of the week. In one set of cupboards he sees neatly arranged food. On one cupboard door an Emily Timetable - featuring every meal for every day of the week and days marked 'Eddie', 'Nicola' and 'Alison'. On another cupboard door a Nicola Work Timetable. He opens a fridge and sees that today's day, 'Wednesday' is in there, already prepared.

GRACE

We thought we'd come to see you! We did. Yes. We did! (TO NICOLA)
Hasn't she grown, love. And look at that smile.

NICOLA

Yes. Though I think her increasingly organised limb movements are more remarkable than a smile which has been around since she was six weeks old and been socially reinforced ever since.

VINCENT is warily looking at a Child Development chart with key stages ticked.

GRACE

Is it a lovely smile, is it? It is, isn't it?

VINCENT

Where's Eddie?

NICOLA

Eddie? What do you mean, where's Eddie? He's at work, of course. Eddie's at work. Why?

GRACE looks at VINCENT. Again there is something slightly uneasy going on here just beneath the surface.

VINCENT

We would just like to see both of you together, that's all. Are you all right?

NICOLA

Like I said, I don't like surprises. And neither does Eddie.

12 CONTINUED: (2)

VINCENT proceeds to put the kettle on without asking.

CUT TO:

13 **EXT. SCOTT HOUSE. DAY 1. 15:48.**

NICOLA outside the front door, on her phone. Voice down.

NICOLA

Eddie. There's a problem. You need
to get here. Right now.

CUT TO:

14 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. JOE'S BEDROOM. DAY 1. 15:55.**

JOE is sitting on his bed, headphones on. ALISON comes in,
mimes for him to take them off - which he does.

ALISON

Guess who is here?

JOE

Shrek.

ALISON

No. Not this time.

JOE looks blank. The door opens and REBECCA is standing
there. JOE smiles. REBECCA smiles. And there is an openness
in both their smiles that is rare in both of them.

REBECCA goes and sits on the bed beside JOE.

JOE

Are you back?

REBECCA

I am, yes.

JOE

You went away and you came back.

REBECCA

That's right.

JOE

I've been back all the time.

REBECCA

That's right.

They lie down on the bed. There is music coming out of JOE's
headphones - 'Something Better Change' by The Stranglers.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
'Something Better Change'.

REBECCA
The Stranglers. 1977.

JOE
Correct.

They both smile. This is the most uncomplicated relationship.

ALISON
Tell Rebecca about school.

JOE looks at ALISON.

JOE
Tell Rebecca about school.

ALISON
Joe. Tell her three things about school.

JOE
Two things.

ALISON
Three things and you get to watch Shrek.

JOE
The Cutter? (BEAT) Echo and the Bunnymen 1983.

ALISON stays neutral.

ALISON
Three things and you get to watch Shrek.

REBECCA glances at ALISON, clearly impressed by her restraint. JOE turns to REBECCA.

JOE
Terry is my helper.

REBECCA
I know! Mum told me! How is that?

ALISON
He's brilliant. Waiter by night, Learning Support by day. He's applying for teacher training next.

REBECCA
Who would have thought? Dopey Terry.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

ALISON raises a finger to her lips to stop REBECCA saying that in front of JOE.

ALISON

A certain young man takes in more than you think these days. Tell Rebecca a second thing.

JOE

Terry is my helper tomorrow.

REBECCA laughs.

ALISON

That's still one. Two more new things please.

JOE

I have school dinners. I went on the roof at home time.

REBECCA looks at JOE and looks at ALISON, impressed.

REBECCA

Wow! Fantastic. What were you doing on the roof?

JOE

Shrek.

JOE exits. ALISON and REBECCA exchange a look.

REBECCA

He's doing really well, yeah? He's really, really changed.

REBECCA heads out after Joe.

ALISON

(TO HERSELF ALMOST)

Yes. He really has.

CUT TO:

15 **EXT. LOUISE'S HOUSE/ROAD. DAY 1. 17:30.**

MAURICE reluctantly knocks at Louise's front door. LOUISE answers. She is friendly but surprised, MAURICE stiff and formal. He hands her the tenner.

MAURICE

Joe won't make it today. And they wanted you to have this.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

LOUISE

Thank you. He's not still on the school roof, is he? Ralph mentioned it.

MAURICE

No.

LOUISE

Wait there. I've got next week's music for him.

LOUISE retreats inside. RALPH passes into the hall, nods at MAURICE who nods back. LOUISE reappears with the music.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Tricky chord change from G to F.

MAURICE

Right. Thank you.

MAURICE doesn't move. Doesn't say anything. Then . . .

MAURICE (CONT'D)

G to F, you say? G to F.

LOUISE

Yes.

MAURICE nods. Still doesn't move.

MAURICE

You all right. Keeping busy?

LOUISE

(BEMUSED)

Yes. Thank you.

MAURICE

Just children you're teaching now, is it? No adults? No Men? Or Women for that matter? At all?

LOUISE

(PUZZLED/IRRITATED)

No. Not at the moment. But thanks for the interest . . .

MAURICE retreats - steps into the road only to jerk back at the sound of a car horn and screech of brakes. He turns to wave apologies but then sees it is EDDIE driving and doesn't bother. He immediately turns to see if Louise has seen but the door is just closing. He goes round to EDDIE.

EDDIE

(SMILING)

So close. I was so close.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2)

MAURICE

Give me a lift up to the brewery
and you can take a look at that
computer shit again. It's no good.
You must have put it in wrong.

EDDIE

It's you. Not the programme. And I
can't. Nicola needs me.

MAURICE

Oh, yeah. Lightbulb need changing,
does it?

EDDIE doesn't laugh as he drives on, leaving MAURICE on the
pavement.

CUT TO:

16 **EXT. HUGHES & SCOTT HOUSES. SWINGS. DAY 1. 17:40.**

NICOLA with EMILY on the swing. She sees Eddie's car driving
past and turning at the end of the road to park.

NICOLA

There's Daddy.

NICOLA gets up, EMILY in her arms, and walks towards the car.
Then speeds up as she sees that GRACE has come out of the
house and is heading for EDDIE.

GRACE

Hiya, Eddie, we were wondering when
you'd finish work. Vincent! Eddie's
here!

NICOLA overtakes GRACE and reaches EDDIE just as VINCENT is
coming out of the house behind her.

NICOLA

How was the drive?

EDDIE

(NOT PLEASED)

Very, very fast.

NICOLA

(FIXED SMILE)

Just keep pretending.

EDDIE

I am pretending.

A switch from EDDIE's grim face to a cheery smile to his 'in-
laws' and we . . .

CUT TO:

17 **EXT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. DAY 1. 18:10.**

We are outside the gastropub with MAURICE who is just arriving and who EDDIE has intercepted.

MAURICE

Pretend you're still married? Go to parks. What would I do that for?

EDDIE

Because I asked? And because everybody else has agreed to go along with it.

MAURICE

But mainly because Nicola said so and she's got your cock in a noose. (Alternative: "nob")

EDDIE

She just hasn't told her Mum and Dad yet that we've split up and I've moved away.

MAURICE

It's been two years! I don't know why we didn't just get you christened Soft Touch and have done with it.

MAURICE heads in . . .

EDDIE

Just behave yourself, Dad.

MAURICE

I'm not making any promises. Unlike you two on your wedding day.

They head inside and we . . .

CUT TO:

18 **INT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. DAY 1. 18:15.**

The gastropub is busy, OTHER CUSTOMERS at tables.

But the biggest table has been arranged for the family: MAURICE, ALISON, JOE, REBECCA, JAMES, VINCENT, GRACE, EDDIE, NICOLA and baby EMILY. PAUL is working but comes across intermittently to serve food and join in the conversation. ALISON's gaze constantly strays to JOE - taking in his behaviour, his demeanour, his speech and how others are reacting to him. He's wearing his headphones and is mainly preoccupied with EMILY - sometimes just watching her without expression, which she finds amusing.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL serves up starters.

GRACE

Now. Doesn't this look wonderful.

PAUL

Thank you, Grace. You can come again.

GRACE

Nicola said it was a little gloomy but I think it's very atmospheric.

PAUL moves down the table, fixed smile in place.

VINCENT

(STARING AT HIS PLATE)

Who would have thought that offal could ever find its way into a salad.

MAURICE

It's the modern way, Vincent. Nothing is what it seems anymore.

A dirty look from EDDIE. MAURICE pours a beer for VINCENT, casually handing the empties to PAUL as he tries to move away. They carry on talking as EDDIE turns to REBECCA.

REBECCA is watching JOE who is now playing happily with EMILY by showing her a series of objects with which she seems delighted. A spoon, a plate, a fork, etc.

REBECCA

(ENTHUSIASTIC)

Like before I went away he would never have done any of this.

JAMES

Before you went away you might not have noticed. You know, it's like, Africa, it's kind of, you know, opened our mind to things we didn't see before.

REBECCA

You're so right. You should go, Uncle Eddie? It's unbelievable.

EDDIE

Me? Africa. I can barely get to Manchester without being pulled back here at a moment's notice.

JAMES

It's all about personal growth, Eddie.

REBECCA

James was like, really young before
he went there. And now, it's like,
after the challenges we faced, he's
come back a man.

REBECCA squeezes JAMES' arm and he nods in agreement.

EDDIE

Isn't that actually the plot of
Lion King 2?

REBECCA laughs a bit too much as EDDIE's joke falls flat.
Back with MAURICE . . .

MAURICE

I mean, you know better than anyone
in your line of work that marriage
has its ups and downs, hey,
Vincent.

EDDIE looks at MAURICE, he can't believe this.

VINCENT

(TENSE)

It's a long and winding road,
that's for sure.

GRACE

Amen to that.

VINCENT raises his glass to GRACE but she ignores him and
looks over at JOE and EMILY instead.

CUT TO:

19 **OMITTED**

20 **INT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. DAY 1. 18:35.**

Main courses. JOE has finished eating, so has EMILY. JOE is
hopping around the table in a large circle, headphones on.
EMILY watches him, hypnotised. At some stage JOE gives her
the knitted giraffe he was carrying in Scene 1.

PAUL perches between NICOLA and ALISON in a conspiratorial
huddle, occasionally picking food off ALISON's plate,
glancing round at JOE.

ALISON

He's using the word autistic. We
should have been ready for that.
And we weren't. And worse than
that, he clearly thinks it's a bad
thing.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALISON (CONT'D)
And we tried talking to him about
it and he didn't want to so, I
don't know what we do next . . .

NICOLA
Maybe try talking to each other
about it first.

PAUL
That's all we ever do.

ALISON glances at PAUL - 'Really?'

NICOLA
No, I mean, one of you pretend to
be Joe, the other explain it to Joe
as though Joe understands.

ALISON
So like a role play?

MAURICE
Paul. Two more beers at this end
when you've got a minute.

PAUL
(TO ALISON)
Any chance your family could do a
bit of role play as paying
customers?

PAUL moves to the bar.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Go easy, you two. Strong stuff this
IPA at your age.

VINCENT
I'm not that old, Paul. I'm never
old. Feel that. Go on!

VINCENT offers a passing PAUL a bicep to feel.

PAUL
No, you're all right, Vincent.

VINCENT
Go on. Go on!

PAUL reluctantly feels VINCENT's bicep.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Hey. Hey. You don't win Hanwell
Lads Welterweight three times on
the trot without some steam in your
hammer.

(CONTINUED)

MAURICE

You boxed. Really? I didn't know that.

GRACE

Neither did he till he heard it coming out of his mouth, Maurice.

CUT TO:

20A **EXT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. NIGHT 1. 19:14.**

Night time. The lights of the gastropub shining brightly and inside the sound of a busy restaurant.

CUT TO:

21 **INT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. NIGHT 1. 19:15.**

Pudding. JOE is sitting next to EMILY, his pudding plate empty. He has collected all the spare spoons he can reach and lines them up in front of EMILY who seems delighted by this. ALISON has moved her chair close to REBECCA and JAMES at the far end of the table, speaking in lowered voices.

JAMES

So let me get this right, Joe's the only one who doesn't know he's autistic?

ALISON

It's a bit more complicated than that.

JAMES

So it was like, what, a secret?

ALISON

Not a secret, exactly. No.

JAMES

If you were keeping it a secret, maybe that's why he thinks it's a bad thing.

REBECCA smiles and looks at JAMES.

REBECCA

Told you he was smart, didn't I?

ALISON

Smarter than your last boyfriend.
(TO JAMES) Not exactly a high bar, James.

(CONTINUED)

21

CONTINUED:

GRACE turns to where JOE is continuing to entertain EMILY by giving her all the spoons he can sneak off neighbouring tables. MAURICE notices VINCENT noticing JOE . . .

MAURICE

Always been full of beans. Lining stuff up. Our Eddie was the same. His mam's shoes in his case so, you know, we've all got our crosses to bear. No offence.

VINCENT

None taken.

GRACE

Do you like having a baby cousin, Joe?

ALISON mimes to JOE to remove his headphones. JOE turns and looks at GRACE. Silence.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Baby Emily. Do you like her?

JOE

I like Baby Emily.

GRACE

Good practice for when you have a baby sister or brother of your own one day, hey?

JOE

We don't want another baby. We have enough with me.

On ALISON, she glances at PAUL.

GRACE

Oh. Oh, I see . . .

A brief silence.

MAURICE

We all like a man who speaks his mind, hey Vincent?

VINCENT looks discomfited so MAURICE overcompensates.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

(CLAPPING)

Well done, Joe!

JOE doesn't respond. The table falls back into awkward silence.

CUT TO:

22 **EXT. HUGHES & SCOTT HOUSES. NIGHT 1. 22:00.**

Bedroom lights on in both houses.

CUT TO:

23 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. ALISON & PAUL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 22:05.**

PAUL gets into bed beside ALISON who has a pile of papers on the bed and is working her way through some official looking letters . . .

ALISON

What if James has got a point?

PAUL

About what?

ALISON

That we're cowards, for not talking to Joe about his autism.

PAUL

Are you sure that's what he said?

ALISON

He didn't have to . . . and I think maybe he's right.

PAUL

What did Nicola say we should do?

ALISON

Try and talk to each other like we'd talk to Joe. If he could understand.

PAUL

I think you'd better start and I'll join in at the chorus.

ALISON is thinking, hard.

ALISON

So, Joe. You know that word you used?

PAUL

Are you being you now? Or are you being me? Because I wouldn't open with that . . .

ALISON

Stop messing about. If we're going to do this . . .

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

PAUL

Sorry. Sorry. Go on.

ALISON tries to focus again and is about to speak when they both hear the unmistakable sound of bed springs from next door.

ALISON

Is that what I think it is . . .

PAUL

Yes. But I'm afraid to say it out loud.

Both of them find themselves listening to the sound of the bed springs. They can't help themselves. The slow rhythm.

ALISON

We should have got her that futon she wanted.

ALISON wants to laugh. PAUL warns her with a look.

CUT TO:

24 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. ALISON & PAUL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 22:10.**

PAUL and ALISON lying side by side, staring at the ceiling.
The springs go on . . .

CUT TO:

25 **EXT. HUGHES & SCOTT HOUSES. NIGHT 1. 22:12**

A dog barks in the distance and we can hear the faint sound of springs . . .

CUT TO:

26 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. ALISON & PAUL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 22:15.**

PAUL has covered his head with a pillow and ALISON is reading through papers.

The springs go on . . . blending into . . .

CUT TO:

27 **INT. SCOTT HOUSE. EMILY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 22:25.**

. . . a different kind of pumping and panting. EDDIE with his foot on a foot pump trying to blow up an air bed which will be serving as NICOLA and EDDIE's mattress.

(CONTINUED)

EMILY asleep in her cot.

EDDIE
(OF EMILY)
She's gone straight off. Good as gold.

NICOLA starts to undress, EDDIE turns away.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
This is mad.

NICOLA
I realise it's a difficult situation but I think now the subterfuge has begun it would be even worse if we told them the truth.

EDDIE
So I have to cancel Tai Chi and then humiliate myself to save you from feelings of embarrassment?

NICOLA
Thank you for understanding.

EDDIE turns but NICOLA is still getting undressed, so he turns back again - self-conscious.

NICOLA (CONT'D)
Strange, isn't it. You have seen me undress a thousand times and I have seen you undress a thousand times. But this is uncomfortable because a previous intimacy has now been abandoned.

EDDIE
Just so we're clear. You saying 'undress' over and over again isn't really helping much.

NICOLA is feeling the air in the air bed hopefully and throwing a sheet on top.

NICOLA
You have watched me defecate while giving birth. I pretty much think we have nothing left to hide.

EDDIE
I saw you defecate. I didn't 'watch'. There is a crucial difference.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (2)

NICOLA lies on the air bed. EDDIE lies beside her, fully dressed on top of the sheets. On his back staring up at the ceiling.

NICOLA

The point remains that we have
nothing to hide from each other.

EDDIE shuts his eyes tightly and we hear the faintest sound of air escaping from the air bed . . .

CUT TO:

28

INT. HUGHES HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT 1. 01:58.

PAUL arrives in the kitchen - he is wearing a Stone Roses T-shirt and pants. A very buff JAMES, wearing only boxer shorts, is grazing in the fridge . . .

PAUL

I'll have to give you bigger
portions next time.

JAMES looks at PAUL, puzzled.

PAUL (CONT'D)

At the gastropub. You still got an
appetite. For food. I mean.

JAMES

No. Just thirsty.

PAUL

I'll bet.

JAMES

(PUZZLED)

What?

PAUL

Help yourself.

JAMES seems quite at ease half-naked in PAUL's kitchen. PAUL less so - conscious of his Stone Roses T-shirt and pants.

JAMES

You don't have any energy drinks or
anything like that.

PAUL

Not energy drinks, no. There's
plenty of milk though. Make
yourself a Horlicks if you like.
Although you might want to put some
clothes on before you do. Hot milk
and bell ends are an accident
waiting to happen . . .

(CONTINUED)

28

CONTINUED:

JAMES nods, PAUL takes in his buff body and a tattoo of a heart with 'Becky' on the scroll across it . . .

CUT TO:

29

INT. HUGHES HOUSE. ALISON & PAUL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 02:02.

PAUL comes back into the bedroom, starts doing a few press-ups. ALISON sits up.

ALISON

Anyone I know?

PAUL laughs and collapses on the floor.

ALISON (CONT'D)

What are you doing? It's two o'clock in the morning.

PAUL

Nervous tension. He's got a tattoo with Becky's name on it.

ALISON

Is it spelt right?

PAUL gets back into bed, but self-consciously feeling his own bicep as he does so.

PAUL

I don't think he's got much of a sense of humour.

ALISON

Because he doesn't laugh at your jokes?

PAUL

No further questions, your honour.

ALISON laughs and curls into him.

CUT TO:

30

INT. HUGHES HOUSE. REBECCA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 02:04.

JAMES returns to the bedroom, drinking milk from the carton, to find that JOE is lying on the bed next to REBECCA.

REBECCA

(AMUSED)

Sorry. You don't mind, do you.

JAMES

No. Course not. Course not.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

JAMES clearly does as he turns to leave . . .

CUT TO:

31 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. ALISON & PAUL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 02:18.**

PAUL and ALISON both lie awake, eyes open, preoccupied.

PAUL
Are you awake?

ALISON
Yeah.

CUT TO:

32 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. ALISON & PAUL'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 1. 02:20.**

PAUL and ALISON sitting bolt upright in bed. Lights on.
Looking at each other, trying to be serious.

ALISON
When you said "autistic", Joe. What
do you think that word means?

PAUL
What do you think it means?

ALISON
Come on, Paul. Stop dicking about.

PAUL
I'm not. That's what he's going to
say, isn't it? Because he doesn't
know what it means. Neither does
anybody.

ALISON
Okay. Okay. Fair enough. Can you
just, say what you think he might
say . . .

PAUL
Okay. I don't know what it means.
But people keep using it about me.
So I think it's got something to do
with me. It might mean I don't play
football like the other kids, and I
go and play my music anytime I can,
and I like remembering bands and
songs. Sometimes you get annoyed
with me and you talk through your
teeth and say "I'm fine", and
that's how I know you're annoyed.
And you love me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

32

CONTINUED:

PAUL (CONT'D)

And you think I'm the best boy in the world. And it's just a word. (THIS IS PAUL, NOT JOE ANYMORE) It's just a word, and I'm going to have to get used to it.

A beat. PAUL's openness has surprised both of them.

ALISON

Is there anything you want to ask me now?

PAUL

What do you think it means? Me being autistic.

ALISON

He would never ask that.

PAUL

No. He wouldn't. But what do you see when you see me. Hey? Mum?

ALISON

I see a puzzle I love. A boy I thought was one thing but turns out to be another. And I see a boy who sometimes has difficulties. Making himself understood. Half in and half out of the world. We all have secrets and hidden feelings but yours are buried deeper, maybe. And I see a boy who we might look after all our lives. A boy who is loved but might not find love with anybody else. And sometimes that is hard for your Mum and Dad. And maybe sometimes that makes it hard for you . . . 'cos sometimes you see that in us. The panic.

ALISON looks at PAUL. They fall into silence. He puts his arm around her and we . . .

CUT TO:

33

INT. HUGHES HOUSE. JOE'S BEDROOM. DAY 2. 07:00.

Dawn. JAMES fast asleep in Joe's bed. JOE is standing at the foot of the bed watching him . . .

'Brassneck' by The Wedding Present kicks in - plays over the following scenes . . .

CUT TO:

33A **EXT. LAKE DISTRICT ROAD. DAY 2. 07:32.**

JOE is marching along the road, headphones on. PAUL following behind on his bike.

CUT TO:

33B **EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE. DAY 2. 07:33.**

MAURICE leaving his house on an early morning run. A few token stretches, he sets his watch . . . and away.

CUT TO:

34 **EXT. LAKE DISTRICT ROAD. DAY 2. 07:34.**

JOE now singing along to 'Brassneck'. PAUL still following.

JOE/WEDDING PRESENT
(SINGING)
"But it's hard to be engaging
When the things you love keep
changing
Brassneck! Brassneck!
I just decided I don't trust you
anymore
I just decided I don't trust you
anymore."

CUT TO:

35 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY 2. 07:50.**

ALISON watches from the doorway as fired-up PAUL sits with JOE and two sets of Match Attax cards at the table. PAUL points to each card in turn. During this JAMES, in boxer shorts and T-shirt, and REBECCA, in long T-shirt nightdress, drift in, put bread in the toaster and kiss and hold hands and are generally inappropriate young lovers.

PAUL
Vardy. Leicester City.

JOE
Vardy. Leicester City.

PAUL
Rashford. Manchester United.

JOE
Rashford. Manchester United.

PAUL
Who's your favourite player?

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Manchester United.

PAUL

No. That's your favourite team. Who is your favourite player? Hey?

PAUL pushes the card towards him. There is an intensity about PAUL as he is doing this - a commitment to this new approach. ALISON enters to put the kettle on, coughing as she approaches JAMES and REBECCA.

ALISON

Hate to interrupt, guys, but I need to get to the kettle.

JAMES and REBECCA break apart, JAMES drifts out - looking slightly pissed off. REBECCA follows with the toast, smiling to herself dreamily. ALISON catches this and smiles.

JOE

Marcus Rashford.

PAUL

That's right. And he plays for Manchester United. Yay! Go on. Go and get your things and I'll test you again on the way.

JOE runs off. ALISON looks at PAUL for an explanation.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You said it. Last night. The panic he feels in us. He worries he doesn't fit in. This might just be a way that he can.

ALISON

He doesn't like football.

PAUL

He doesn't need to. Football cards. Stats. Dates. It plays to his strengths. It's all the other boys talk about. Got to be worth a try, hasn't it.

ALISON

I thought we were trying to work out how to talk to him.

PAUL

We are. And we will. But this is something we can actually do. Right now.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (2)

JOE appears at the door, his sweatshirt on back to front, carrying his school bag. PAUL starts to exit and reverse the sweatshirt at the same time.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Favourite player?

JOE
Marcus Rashford.

JOE and PAUL exit.

CUT TO:

36 **OMITTED**

37 **INT. SCOTT HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY 2. 08:00.**

NICOLA is sorting her things for the day, papers, briefcase. EDDIE and EMILY have a toy Doctor's kit out, plastic stethoscope, syringe, thermometer, etc. EDDIE is wearing a red head band attached with elastic with a red cross on it.

NICOLA
She has homemade chicken nuggets
for her lunch. Stewed apple for
pudding. No more sweet things.

EDDIE
Her or me?

NICOLA
(LAUGHS)
Both.

NICOLA looks over at EDDIE and smiles. EDDIE is hamming it up, looking at the plastic thermometer.

EDDIE
(TO EMILY)
And my thermometer says that Emily
should be eating her breakfast.
This is ridiculous.

NICOLA
Really? I think it suits you.

EDDIE
We are adults. And I know your
reasons for lying to your Mum and
Dad -

NICOLA
For not telling them the truth.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

EDDIE

(SIGHS)

Shall we settle on misleading . . .

NICOLA

Go on.

EDDIE

Whatever your reasons, we can't go on like this. Not least because this one will be able to talk soon and when she does she might mention the fact that Mummy and Daddy live in separate houses . . . in separate cities.

NICOLA

She might be a late talker.

EDDIE

We sit down and tell them. Now. For our sake. For her sake. Agreed?

NICOLA

Agreed.

NICOLA sits, reluctantly, puts her work things down and . . .

CUT TO:

38

INT. SCOTT HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY 2. 08:20.

EDDIE and NICOLA sit opposite VINCENT and GRACE at the table. EMILY is sitting on the floor, happily playing.

VINCENT

Your mother and I. We have some news for you.

NICOLA

Typical.

NICOLA shakes her head and smiles to herself.

GRACE

How did you guess?

EDDIE

Guess what?

GRACE

You both smiled. As though you've guessed.

NICOLA

What's the news?

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

VINCENT

You tell us. You've clearly guessed.

EDDIE

Nobody's guessed. The reason Nicola was looking at you like that is that we have some news of our own.

GRACE

We're splitting up.

VINCENT

A trial separation.

GRACE

It's permanent.

VINCENT

It's mutual.

GRACE

I'm leaving him.

VINCENT

There's nobody else.

GRACE

He had an affair.

VINCENT

It's amicable.

GRACE

I hate him.

VINCENT

We just got to the end of the road.

GRACE

He ran out of alibis.

GRACE smiles. VINCENT shrugs. On EDDIE and NICOLA, stunned.

CUT TO:

39

EXT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. PLAYGROUND. DAY 2. 08:45.

PAUL and JOE enter the crowded school playground. As JOE walks in, it is clear that he is very different from his peers - in the way he moves, and the way they all spend their time jumping into each other, some playing football, others swapping Match Attax cards . . .

PAUL

Favourite player.

(CONTINUED)

39

CONTINUED:

JOE
Marcus Rashford.

PAUL
Who does he play for?

JOE
Manchester United.

PAUL
Brilliant. Brilliant.

PAUL leans down and puts the picture cards in JOE's pocket.

PAUL (CONT'D)
So if any of the lads ask you about
football, that's what you say. Okay
top lad?

JOE
Top lad. Hair set to handsome.

PAUL smooths JOE's hair down.

PAUL
Hair set to handsome. Off you go,
mucker.

JOE goes to TERRY at the door. He tries to wait to be last in
but TERRY doesn't move. JOE does the 'door thing' then goes
in. TERRY turns to PAUL and nods, smiles. PAUL smiles back
and we . . .

CUT TO:

40

INT. SCOTT'S BREWERY. BREWHOUSE. DAY 2. 10:35.

DAVID and PAVEL are working but can see EDDIE in the office,
on the computer, while MAURICE looks in a baffled way over
his shoulder. The lads speak in Polish; English subtitles on
screen.

DAVID
Wzruszajace, ze Eddie wraca
tak czesto, zeby próbować
niemożliwego.

DAVID
It is touching that Eddie
comes back so often to
attempt the impossible.

PAVEL
Eddie wyjaśnia, a Maurice nie
słucha - jedyny sposób, żeby
Ojciec i Syn mogli wyrazić
swoją miłość.

PAVEL
Eddie explaining and Maurice
not listening is the only way
Father and Son can express
their love.

DAVID nods in agreement and they carry on . . .

CUT TO:

41 **INT. SCOTT'S BREWERY. OFFICE. DAY 2. 10:35.**

Through the glass we see DAVID and PAVEL working and keeping an eye.

EDDIE is on MAURICE's computer, MAURICE looking over his shoulder, puzzled. EDDIE is trying to work the mouse which has been taped back together by MAURICE.

MAURICE

I can see that Vincent might be a bit of a handful but it's a big decision to make at their age.

EDDIE

Surprising, certainly. Did somebody throw this?

MAURICE

Big decision to make at any age come to that.

EDDIE

Indeed. Which is why I appreciate you being supportive of my indecision over the years.

MAURICE

That's what you're calling it, is it? You two have had more reunions than Take That.

EDDIE

No more.

MAURICE

So why lie to her Mum and Dad?

EDDIE

Because last time they gave her so much grief . . .

MAURICE

Don't you see? Wake up and smell the laundry. Nicola doesn't want to admit to herself that it's over.

EDDIE

Dad. I have a new life in Manchester.

MAURICE

New maybe. I doubt it's a life.

Both men turn, surprised to see that RALPH is standing there.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Hello, Ralph. How you doing?

(CONTINUED)

41

CONTINUED:

RALPH

Is that job still going?

MAURICE

Brewery Assistant? Yep.

RALPH

Can I apply?

MAURICE turns this over, then looks to EDDIE who shrugs - no big deal.

EDDIE

'Course you can. 'Course you can.
I'll just get the application form.

MAURICE

No need to look so nervous.

EDDIE

Don't worry, Ralph. He makes me
nervous too.

EDDIE hands RALPH an application form.

RALPH

Don't tell my Mum about this.

MAURICE

(LAUGHS)

Fat chance of me having a
conversation with your Mum. No.
Course not. Not if you don't want
me to. (BEAT) Has she said she
doesn't want you working for me?
Has she said she has a problem with
that? With me, like?

RALPH

No. But she's not good with change.

RALPH exits. MAURICE sees EDDIE smiling to himself.

MAURICE

What?

EDDIE

"Has your Mum said anything about
me? Does she talk about me at all?"
(SINGING) "Want You Back, Want You
Back, Want You Back for Good."

MAURICE

What? Give over. I'm just looking
out for Ralph.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: (2)

EDDIE

"Perhaps you don't want to admit to
yourself that it's over."

EDDIE pats MAURICE on the back and exits.

CUT TO:

42

INT. MAYBROOK MEDICAL CENTRE. RECEPTION. DAY 2. 12:05.

NICOLA is sitting in the empty reception area with GRACE.
Both are eating cake from a huge tupperware box. DR GRAVES is
pottering around in Reception, eating a large, noisy apple,
and making no secret of the fact he is eavesdropping.

NICOLA

It doesn't make any sense. I just
don't see the point of you
separating at this stage of your
lives.

GRACE

Because we're so close to death,
you mean.

NICOLA

Well, partly, yes.

GRACE

We should have broken up years ago,
He's always been the same.

NICOLA

Mum . . .

GRACE

The chat. And the flattery. Truth
is, that's what attracted me in the
first place. So it serves me right,
really. And, well, in the end. Is
it better to struggle on in a
relationship or struggle on outside
it? It's a struggle either way. You
know better than anyone.

NICOLA

Me? Is that why you made a cake? So
you could tell me you think I'm
struggling?

GRACE

I know it. And you hide it. Like I
hide it.

DR GRAVES calls over.

(CONTINUED)

DR GRAVES
To be fair, I knew too.(A GLANCE
FROM NICOLA) Sorry. Sorry.

The door opens and VINCENT wanders in.

DR GRAVES (CONT'D)
Welcome. Welcome one and all.

GRACE
Did you follow me?

VINCENT
I just wanted to tell my daughter
that I don't want this.

GRACE
You should have thought about that
when you were sleeping with half
the congregation.

NICOLA
Mum. Please.

GRACE
What? I think we both know he's had
more than loose change in his
collection plate over the years.

VINCENT
She's met somebody else too. I
wasn't going to say anything but as
she insists on dragging my name
through the mud . . .

GRACE
I have not met somebody else. He's
just a friend. He has his own
business.

VINCENT
A key cutting booth. Good luck
doing the crossword with him on a
morning.

GRACE
At least he won't be texting his
Mistress the cryptic clues.

DR GRAVES
This explains so much.

GRACE
I want a word with you too, Dr
Graves. Pushing my daughter to work
all hours when she's got a baby at
home.

(CONTINUED)

DR GRAVES

Don't blame me. I have tried to
challenge her dedication at every
juncture but it's almost as if she
enjoys the job . . .

Out on NICOLA as DR GRAVES shrugs and walks away.

CUT TO:

43

INT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. CLASSROOM. DAY 2. 12:10.

JOE's class. The children round tables. TERRY close to JOE.
Whole class listening to MRS HANKIN.

MRS HANKIN

Okay, boys and girls. Put your
things away in your trays. And
let's see who can do it quickly and
quietly.

Each child has a marked tray which slides under the table.
They put away their trays, then start to move around, the
volume starts to rise. JOE starts to put his things away with
TERRY's help.

MRS HANKIN claps her hands in a clapping routine which the
kids and TERRY join in - JOE doesn't. They all fall quiet.

MRS HANKIN (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay. First one to tell me
the first sound they heard this
morning? Anyone?

A sea of hands goes up. Not JOE's. At JOE's table three BOYS
and a GIRL have their hands up. MRS HANKIN turns to another
table.

MRS HANKIN (CONT'D)

Maisie?

MAISIE

A bird singing.

MRS HANKIN

A bird singing. Very good. Maisie's
table can go.

TERRY nudges JOE to put his hand up.

TERRY

(WHISPERS)

What sound did you hear this
morning, Joe? When you woke up?

(CONTINUED)

43

CONTINUED:

MRS HANKIN waits for a response from JOE. Then realises he isn't going to respond, turns to another table which includes BILL and RAMESH.

MRS HANKIN

Ramesh?

RAMESH

A car. Probably diesel because of the sound of the engine.

MRS HANKIN

A car. Very good. Ramesh's table can go.

MRS HANKIN turns to JOE's table.

MRS HANKIN (CONT'D)

Joe?

JOE doesn't say anything. The other children at his table, OLLY, SAM, ELLA and HARRY have their hands up with their "Pick Me" faces on.

TERRY

(HALF WHISPERING)

What sound did you hear, Joe? Can you remember? Hey?

JOE looks at TERRY, then MRS HANKIN. OLLY, not malicious but impatient, turns to JOE who now has his hands up to his eyes and is peeping through the gaps in his fingers.

OLLY

What did you hear, Joe?! Just tell Miss! Tell her.

OLLY, SAM, HARRY and ELLA, hands up, rising off their seats.

TERRY

Can you think of anything?

OLLY mimes crashing the heel of his hand into his forehead in a comedy gesture of exasperation. SAM smiles.

SAM

Miss! Miss!

ELLA turns to JOE.

ELLA

Was it a lamb bleating, Joe?

JOE does a tiny nod from behind his hands but says nothing.

MRS HANKIN

"A lamb bleating." "Bleating". Good word, Ella. Joe's table can go.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: (2)

JOE and his table leave - the BOYS with a rush of energy. A smile of encouragement from MRS HANKIN. We follow JOE out.

CUT TO:

44 **EXT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. PLAYGROUND. DAY 2. 12:30.**

The playground is alive with activity. Football in one corner, hopscotch in another, groups wandering around chatting.

In one corner, BOYS feverishly examining Match Attax cards, including SAM, OLLY and HARRY.

OLLY

I got Theo Walcott, Robert Snodgrass and John O'Shea.

SAM

John O'Shea? Have you got Peter Crouch?

OLLY

Yes. My Dad says he's just a beanpole.

JOE on the outside of them, circling - literally walking in a big circle around and around them, not sure how to make an interjection. We see he is clutching his cards. OLLY finally notices . . .

OLLY (CONT'D)

Joe. Joe. What've you got? Hey?

JOE hands the cards over to OLLY to peruse.

OLLY (CONT'D)

Got any swaps?

JOE

Let me see now, I don't think so.

OLLY, puzzled, hands him back the cards. JOE hands them back to OLLY who doesn't really know what to do next.

OLLY

Who's your favourite player?

HARRY

Is it Aguerro? Stirling?

OLLY

Who's your favourite player, Joe?

HARRY (CONT'D)

Who does he play for? Chelsea? Is it? Or Spurs. You got to have a favourite.

We see the boys from JOE's POV and although not intentional their frenzy and questioning feels overwhelming.

(CONTINUED)

44

CONTINUED:

JOE

Marty.

OLLY and the other BOYS look a bit confused, not piss-taking but not really interested.

JOE (CONT'D)

Marty the Zebra. Madagascar.

OLLY gives JOE his cards back. The BOYS are back in a huddle, their conversation too fast and fanatical to penetrate.

OLLY

Eden Hazard.

SAM

I gave you that yesterday.

OLLY

Didn't. Anyway. Harry Kane is better. My Dad says he isn't . . .

HARRY

JOE drifts away, clutching the cards. Then he turns and looks back at the boys and looks at the cards and . . .

CUT TO:

45

EXT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. ROOF. DAY 2. 14:45.

JOE on the flat roof, headphones on. We hear the song - The La's, 'There She Goes'.

JOE/THE LA'S

(SINGING)

"There she goes
There she goes again
Racing through my brain
And I just can't contain
This feelin' that remains."

As we pull out we see that BILL is on the roof with JOE, staring down at the playground. The song carries on playing over the following sequence . . .

CUT TO:

46

EXT. THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. DAY 2. 14:50.

PAUL and GARY unloading a delivery from a van. ALISON exits the gastropub on her phone, grabs PAUL, and they rush towards her car.

CUT TO:

47

EXT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. ROOF/PLAYGROUND. DAY 2. 14:58.

JOE on the school roof, still singing as BILL is coming down the ladder with his Mum, SARAH, guiding him. MRS PAYNE, MRS HANKIN and TERRY standing at the bottom.

JOE/THE LA'S
(SINGING)
"There she goes
There she goes again . . ."

PAUL and ALISON rushing across the playground. PAUL turning to MR ELLIOT as he does.

PAUL
Why can't you just keep an eye on
your ladders!

MR ELLIOT
Don't blame me if you can't control
your own kid.

PAUL
What? What did you say?

But MR ELLIOT has been distracted by the sight of MRS PAYNE heading towards him with a face like thunder. ALISON leads PAUL away.

BILL and SARAH reach the ground. SARAH embraces BILL. PAUL notices Match Attax cards on the ground, clearly thrown from the roof. He climbs up the ladder to get JOE down.

SARAH
(CLOSE TO TEARS)
Bill! Bill! What were you thinking!
Are you all right? Did you touch
any moss up there? Or leaves?

ALISON
Hey, Sarah, I am so sorry.

SARAH
He's never been good with heights.

ALISON
Bit of a breakthrough, then.

SARAH
His balance, you know. He falls
over more easily than the average
child.

ALISON
Right. Sure. Sorry. I can see
you're upset. I don't know how they
let Joe get up there again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH has the wet wipes out and is wiping BILL down.

SARAH

Well, I daresay he'll need an anti-histamine after all the excitement and dust of course but that's not your concern . . .

ALISON

You're all right, aren't you, Bill? Tough as old boots!

SARAH

(FLUSTERED)

I know you mean well, Alison, but I am sorry to say that is very much not the point. (ANGRY NOW) He could have fallen. And hit his head. They both could. And I don't know how to say this because Joe is a lovely boy but . . .

ALISON

But what?

SARAH

(ANGRY)

But when things like this happen. It's always Joe that they're happening to, isn't it? Really?

ALISON

I see. I didn't know you felt like that.

SARAH

I don't feel like that. I just. . . No other parent would be different. I'm sorry.

A smattering of PARENTS start to arrive in the playground for pick up now - including LINDA. ALISON aware of her watching.

We go up the ladder to find PAUL with JOE who is facing away from him, refusing to engage.

PAUL

Joe. I know it's good up here, mate, but this has to stop.

JOE finally turns, walks towards PAUL, and hands him the one Match Attax card he has hung on to.

JOE

Marcus Rashford, Manchester United.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL stares at the card and stares back at JOE.

CUT TO:

48 **INT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. CLASSROOM. DAY 2. 15:30.**

MRS PAYNE, MRS HANKIN, TERRY, PAUL and ALISON are sitting around on small chairs. All serious stuff. If possible, we can see JOE in a separate room, sitting at a table, waiting, maybe on his Dad's phone.

MRS PAYNE

I can only apologise that this has been allowed to happen again. Mr Elliot has conceded that he is not temperamentally suited to the role of School Caretaker.

TERRY

Really? When was this?

MRS PAYNE

Later today after we've spoken.

PAUL

At least Joe had a mate with him this time, so it's kind of progress, isn't it?

MRS PAYNE

I know we all like to see the light side but he did set his mind on going up there again and found a way. I worry about what he might do next.

PAUL

How do we know Bill didn't suggest it?

TERRY

In the end there was no harm done. Bill was fine. His classmates were okay. He isn't the only kid who has the odd bad day.

MRS PAYNE

His bad days used to be once a term, then once a week, and now they're every other day.

MRS HANKIN

It's a funny age, seven. A lot of shuffling of the pack. Socially, I mean, as well as academically.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

48

CONTINUED:

MRS HANKIN (CONT'D)

The gap between Joe and the other kids is growing. He's different. And they've started to notice that.

ALISON

Joe has noticed he's different too.

MRS PAYNE

We've talked about this before. We love Joe and we can handle Joe. The question is whether Joe can handle this school anymore.

TERRY

Hang on, if we are worried about him feeling different then isn't it better he stays where he knows everyone and everyone knows him?

MRS PAYNE

I do think some of the children get upset by some of Joe's behaviour, so that doesn't help him integrate.

ALISON

The children have told you this? Have they?

MRS PAYNE

We've had feedback from some of the parents.

ALISON

I think I can guess which ones.

MRS PAYNE

The best place for Joe is where you are happy for him to be and where Joe is happy. I'll support you in whatever you decide is best.

ALISON

I'll come in and talk to the parents. Reassure them they've got nothing to worry about. Paul and I are happy to do that.

TERRY looks at PAUL and ALISON, reassured and we . . .

CUT TO:

49

INT/EXT. ALISON'S CAR/THE FELLSIDE GASTROPUB. DAY 2. 16:00.

JOE is in the back of the car wearing headphones. PAUL is about to get out of the car, being dropped off at the gastropub by ALISON.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

PAUL

What are we going to say to the parents?

ALISON

I haven't a clue. Which is why we're going to talk to people at the support group.

PAUL shakes his head.

PAUL

I don't know if I can get cover tonight.

ALISON

Come on. It's just people in the same boat as us. People who have been through this.

PAUL

And not a Fred Perry T-shirt between them.

ALISON

What?

PAUL

You know. Groups like that. It's always a bit hand-knitted and cords.

ALISON

Are you serious?

PAUL

I'm sorry, it's the group thing. I just don't like groups.

ALISON

But you're perfectly happy to go to Old Trafford with 65,000 strangers and chant inanely for two hours. I'll see you there. 7.30.

ALISON kisses him. PAUL gets out and heads up to the gastropub. ALISON drives away and we . . .

CUT TO:

50

EXT. HUGHES & SCOTT HOUSES. SWINGS. DAY 2. 17:30.

REBECCA and JAMES stand by the swings. JOE is there too, headphones on. Running his finger along the stone wall as though this is a task of great importance.

(CONTINUED)

REBECCA
Tomorrow?

JAMES
We said a few days. It's been . . .

REBECCA
Two days. Why are you so keen to
get away?

JAMES
(LOOKING AROUND)
Look at it. And it smells of
animals and rain.

REBECCA
So did most of Africa.

JAMES
Africa had heat . . . and mystery.

REBECCA
There's a nightclub in Keswick
that's pretty mysterious.

JAMES laughs.

JAMES
All I want is for us to get back to
what we were like when it was just
us. It was like, I never felt magic
like that. It was just . . .

They kiss. JOE comes over to the swing.

REBECCA
It was lovely. It is lovely. But
I've not seen any of my mates yet.
I've hardly spent any time with
Joe.

JAMES
Joe won't mind if we go. Will you,
Joe.

JOE stares straight ahead, JAMES does that waving hand thing
that hypnotists do in front of his eyes and JOE doesn't
react. JAMES turns back to REBECCA.

JAMES (CONT'D)
See. Joe doesn't mind.

REBECCA
Don't do that.

JAMES
Do what?

(CONTINUED)

REBECCA
You were making fun of him.

JAMES
No, I wasn't . . .

REBECCA
It felt like you were.

JAMES
Well, I wasn't.

REBECCA steers JOE off the swing and he walks back towards the house. They both watch him and REBECCA speaks as they go.

REBECCA
Look, I know it was only meant to be a couple of days but this stuff with Joe. And the school and everything . . .

JAMES
All kids get in trouble at school.

REBECCA
It's different for Joe.

JAMES
(SARCASTIC)
Of course it is.

REBECCA
My brother is autistic. I told you he was autistic when we were in Uganda. And you said you were cool with it.

JAMES
We were in the same sleeping bag in Uganda. I'd have said anything.

REBECCA
Nice.

JAMES
I'm joking.

REBECCA
No, you're not.

REBECCA turns away. Then they both spot VINCENT and GRACE outside the Scott House, pulling at the same suitcase as a taxi waits.

GRACE
After forty years of marriage I think the very least you owe me is a suitcase!

(CONTINUED)

REBECCA
They're not blood relatives.

CUT TO:

51 **EXT. SCOTT HOUSE. DAY 2. 17:32.**

GRACE is giving EMILY a big kiss.

GRACE
Granny will be back to see you
very, very soon . . .

NICOLA gives GRACE a light kiss on the cheek.

NICOLA
Look after yourself, Mum.

GRACE
You too. Your father is a liar. He
can't help it.

NICOLA
I know.

GRACE gets into the taxi. They watch it drive away.

EDDIE
Do you want me to order you your
own taxi, Vincent? Or have you
arranged that yourself.

VINCENT
No. No. I feel I should stay a few
days.

EDDIE
What?

NICOLA
Sorry, Dad. That isn't convenient.

VINCENT
Why? Because you and Eddie will
have to pretend you are still
together until I go. Is that what's
bothering you? (BEAT) I'm not
stupid, Nicola.

NICOLA and EDDIE look at each other, VINCENT heading back
into the house before either of them can reply.

CUT TO:

52 **INT/EXT. PAUL'S CAR/CHURCH HALL. DUSK 2. 19:32.**

PAUL sits outside the church hall, watching a PARENT arrive with his/her TEENAGE DAUGHTER - JAN - who is on the autism spectrum. He sits watching this but doesn't get out of his car.

CUT TO:

53 **INT. CHURCH HALL. DUSK 2. 19:38.**

The Autism Support Group. A group of PARENTS of various ages.

This is mainly a social support group so there will be small groups discussing issues from schooling to care packages or just chatting - sharing stories.

Maybe a poster on the wall advertising upcoming events.

One of the parents, SOPHIE, the same age as ALISON, is with her teenage son - MARK. The girl we saw outside, JAN, sits, withdrawn. MARK is pacing back and forth. SOPHIE talking to ALISON. ALISON has a pile of papers on a small table in front of them.

SOPHIE

Thanks for this, Alison. My brain just goes to mush when I have to fill in a form.

ALISON

No problem. I actually enjoy it. I was that girl at school who colour coded her notes.

SOPHIE

Really? I'd never have guessed.
(OFF ALISON'S LOOK) Bet you ironed your pants as well.

ALISON laughs, but SOPHIE is distracted by MARK who is growing agitated. She crosses to him.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

I need to talk to Alison. You sit with Jan. We have tea and biscuits. We go home on the bus.

MARK replies, almost talking to himself, no eye contact, his hoodie up.

MARK

You need to talk. I sit with Jan. We have tea and biscuits. We go home on the bus.

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIE
Yep. Correct. Right?

MARK
It's all right.

MARK sits next to JAN, no interaction between them but they prefer it that way. SOPHIE crosses to ALISON who has paperwork out in front of her on a small table.

CUT TO:

53A **INT/EXT. PAUL'S CAR/CHURCH HALL. DUSK 2. 19:40.**

PAUL sits in his car, staring at the lights of the Church Hall, unable to move and go inside.

ALISON (V.O.)
Okay?

SOPHIE (V.O.)
Yeah, yeah. He'll be fine now.

CUT TO:

53B **INT. CHURCH HALL. DUSK 2. 19:41.**

SOPHIE with ALISON, back at the table.

SOPHIE
You know, when I told our Mark he was autistic he was relieved. He said he thought he didn't have any mates at school because he was ugly. (BEAT) When I told the other parents they ran a mile. Now they were ugly.

ALISON
(LAUGHS)
So are you saying I shouldn't even bother talking to the parents?

SOPHIE
Talk to them by all means. I'm just not sure it's where you should be putting your energies right now.

ALISON
If it helps Joe . . .

SOPHIE
(MORE SERIOUS)
If it helps Joe? And how's that working out?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

He's been up on the roof, under the table, up on the roof again . . . Isn't that what you should be worrying about?

ALISON

I am worrying about it.

SOPHIE

What's Joe trying to tell you? Apart from the fact he wants a parachute? Cos it doesn't seem like the behaviour of a kid who is happy at the school he's at.

ALISON

We don't have much choice there. I've looked at primaries with autism bases and the nearest one with a space is Manchester.

SOPHIE

So?

ALISON

We always said he'd go mainstream and local. (ALISON POINTS TO THE PAPERWORK) We're doing all this to get your Mark back into mainstream.

SOPHIE

Because that's what Mark wants. It's what he tells me he wants. And he's 16. And six foot tall.

ALISON laughs. The door opens, ALISON looks up in anticipation but it is a couple of PARENTS. ALISON looks disappointed, then turns back to SOPHIE . . . refers back to the pile of papers on the table.

ALISON

You might want to get an up-to-date Speech Therapist report for the appeal, by the way.

SOPHIE

Be nice but I can't afford it. Mark had a bad patch and I kept missing shifts and I lost my job . . .

ALISON

Leave that one with me . . .

CUT TO:

54

INT/EXT. PAUL'S CAR/CHURCH HALL. NIGHT 2. 21:23.

PAUL waiting as some PARENTS along with ALISON, MARK and SOPHIE come out. SOPHIE now clutching the pile of papers. PAUL nods, "Hello".

ALISON

Sophie, this is Paul, my husband.
Paul, this is Mark.

PAUL

Hi. Hi, Mark.

PAUL shakes hands with SOPHIE and goes to shake hands with MARK. MARK touches the top of PAUL's hand and looks away.

MARK

Hello, hello.

ALISON

And this is Sophie, your new waitress.

SOPHIE

What?

ALISON

You need a part-time job. Paul needs help. Because as you can see he can't even get to one meeting on time . . .

SOPHIE

Wow. Thanks. I don't know what hours I can do -

ALISON

Paul'll sort it out. He's flexible like that.

SOPHIE

She's a hard woman to say 'No' to.

PAUL

I'm aware of that.

ALISON

And Sophie's looking for someone to drive her and Mark to gigs now and then so I thought you'd be up for that.

SOPHIE

You don't have to, if you don't want to . . .

(CONTINUED)

ALISON

'Course he wants to. Mark is into indie.

PAUL

Is he? Which bands do you like?

MARK looks down at the floor.

SOPHIE

I can't drive, you see, so it makes things difficult. And Mark loves a live band.

PAUL

How's your waitressing?

SOPHIE

Worse than my driving. (TO ALISON)
Thank you.

SOPHIE and MARK walk away. MARK, his back to them, holds one hand up in a 'Goodbye' gesture.

PAUL knows he is in the doghouse but also feels slightly pissed off.

PAUL

It just went mad at the Fellside. I tried to get away earlier but . . .

ALISON

No, you didn't Paul. You sat outside for two hours. In the car. Not coming in. I saw you.

PAUL

Oh. Right. So that's what the Sophie stuff was about. Stitching me up by giving her a job.

ALISON

No. That was about helping her out because she'd helped me. It's called supporting each other. It's what people do when they're all in the same boat, bringing up a child who is different.

PAUL

I'm sorry. I couldn't.

ALISON

That it?

PAUL

I couldn't go in. I don't know why. I just couldn't.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL and ALISON in the car now. PAUL starts the engine and they drive off.

CUT TO:

55 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT 2. 21:35.**

PAUL and ALISON enter in silence, then PAUL turns to ALISON.

PAUL

Okay. Right. Let's say Joe understands what autistic means. Except he doesn't. Not really. 'Cos none of us do. But let's say he sees some other kids, you know, more severely autistic than him. Does he think that's what autistic means? Does he think that's how the world sees him? How we see him?

ALISON

Better that than he thinks it's a bad thing. It might at least give him a sense of who he is. An identity.

PAUL

Club Autistic. I bet that's got quite a waiting list.

ALISON

If it helps give him a feeling of belonging and support then why not?

PAUL

What about our club? What about me, you, Rebecca and Joe? Isn't that enough?

ALISON

Not anymore, no. We thought we were doing all right and it turns out we weren't. We need other people. We've always needed other people. You saw that before I did . . .

PAUL

I know. But I want to be the one with the magic touch.

ALISON

What?

PAUL

Joe. I could always handle him. I could always get through to him in the end.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

PAUL (CONT'D)

It was a struggle but I could do it. And it felt, well, it felt better that way. No. That's not true. It made me feel better that way. And these last few months I feel like I'm losing that. I feel like I'm losing my boy.

ALISON turns to PAUL. She nods. She gets it.

CUT TO:

56 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. JOE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT 2. 01:30.**

Close up on JOE's empty bed. ALISON looking at it. He is under the bed, fast asleep. ALISON kneels down, reaches under the bed to coax JOE out from under the bed but he turns in his sleep and is tighter against the wall.

CUT TO:

57 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. JOE'S BEDROOM. DAY 3. 06:02.**

Early morning, PAUL looks in on JOE. ALISON is sleeping on the floor beside him. She has reached out a hand and is touching his arm under the bed in her sleep.

CUT TO:

58 **OMITTED - SCENE MOVED TO 69A**

59 **EXT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. PLAYGROUND. DAY 3. 10:15.**

PAUL and ALISON have arrived to meet the parents. They stand in the playground, watching the CHILDREN at break time, chatting and pushing each other. JOE on the periphery with TERRY. Other PARENTS are arriving. LINDA looks to JOE.

LINDA

Is he all right?

ALISON

He's fine, yes.

LINDA

We all worry about him, you know.

ALISON

You don't need to. He'll be fine.

LINDA smiles and heads inside. ALISON looks down and realises that PAUL is holding her hand.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

They stand like this, watching JOE as TERRY says something to him then goes inside - leaving JOE on his own.

ALISON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I know it hasn't been easy for you all this term. It hasn't been an easy term for Joe or us either.

CUT TO:

60 OMITTED

61 INT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. RECEPTION. DAY 3. 10:18.

PAUL and ALISON stare at class photos on the wall, including JOE's class with JOE standing at the back next to TERRY . . .

ALISON (V.O.)

So, first off, thanks to you and your kids for doing your best to understand him - or at least trying to, and putting up with some of the stuff he does that is, well, a bit out of the ordinary.

CUT TO:

62 INT. MILLCROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. CLASSROOM. DAY 3. 10:20.

ALISON, PAUL and TERRY sit with MRS PAYNE and MRS HANKIN at the 'front of class'. The other PARENTS - including SARAH and LINDA - sit in a horseshoe of chairs around them. There are some nods and nervous laughter at ALISON's previous comment.

CHILDREN can be seen playing outside in the playground.

ALISON

I know he can be a bit distracting and, from what I hear these days, upsetting to some of your children. I get it that the roof and the headbanging are new and hard to deal with.

LINDA

And the running out of the classroom.

ALISON

(SLIGHTLY STRAINED)

Yes. That too. But I'm not apologising for Joe. (ALMOST TO PAUL) I know there are a lot of good reasons for Joe to be here.

(CONTINUED)

LINDA

Nobody minds him being here at all.

ALISON

No? Another way of thinking about that is that it's good for your children to have him here. For them to be around a child who is different, who has a different way of looking at the world, who communicates differently, who doesn't much care about SATS or peer group approval or, God help us, football cards. Well, that's a privilege. So with the right level of support and right attitude I reckon the school should do all right by children like Joe. And be a better school for having him.

LINDA

Thanks, Alison. That's lovely but can we get to specifics? About Joe. And his behaviour. And what we can do about it . . .

ALISON

We could. But we'd be wasting our time. Because, well, Joe won't be coming here for much longer. We're going to find a school for him that is a bit more specialist. It's not going to be easy. But that's what we're going to do.

PAUL looks down but nods in agreement.

TERRY

I don't understand. When did you decide this?

ALISON

When we realised that we were getting more out of the idea of him being integrated than he was.

TERRY

So what was this about? I thought you were going to reassure the parents.

ALISON

I am reassuring the parents. About the next child like Joe who comes here. And the one after that . . .

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (2)

ALISON smiles at TERRY. TERRY looks away.

CUT TO:

63 **EXT. SCOTT'S BREWERY. YARD. DAY 3. 16:48.**

MAURICE and PAUL are loading some crates of beer into the back of Paul's car.

MAURICE

A special school? I thought you didn't want him going to a special school.

PAUL

It won't be a special school. It'll be an autism unit in an ordinary school.

MAURICE

But you're still taking him out of the school he knows?

PAUL

Something needs to be done. We've made the right decision.

MAURICE

Great. Good for you. So why are you talking to me about it?

PAUL

Well, you've always got an opinion.

MAURICE

You've never asked to hear it before.

PAUL

Well, I am asking for it now.

MAURICE looks up to see LOUISE walking into the yard.

MAURICE

I think my opinion giving days might be behind me, Paul.

PAUL looks puzzled and turns to see LOUISE.

CUT TO:

64 **INT. SCOTT'S BREWERY. OFFICE. DAY 3. 16:50.**

MAURICE and LOUISE sit, awkward.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE

This job. That Ralph has applied
for with you.

MAURICE

What job?

LOUISE

He left the application form out,
Maurice, so don't mess about. Has
he got any chance of getting it?

MAURICE

Yeah. He's a grafter. He's got a
good job record. We get on . .

LOUISE

Good. Good. That's good to hear.

MAURICE

He's got a good chance and he'll
get it on merit if he does get it.

LOUISE

Great. Well. That's great. Just
make sure he doesn't. All right?

MAURICE

What?

LOUISE

Let him do the interview. But
please, Maurice, don't give him the
job.

MAURICE

What? Why not?

LOUISE

I can't tell you that. I just need
you to promise me you'll let him
come close but not get the job in
the end . . .

MAURICE

He's a grown man. He makes his own
decisions. I don't - (make them for
him and neither do you)

LOUISE

(INTERRUPTING)

I've got my reasons, Maurice, I
just don't want to go in to them
with you!

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: (2)

MAURICE

Oh I get it. Don't go taking it out on Ralph because you've still got a problem with me.

LOUISE

A problem with you? My God. The view from your ego must be breathtaking. (BEAT) Hard as it must be for you to believe, it isn't about you, Maurice. It's about me. And if what we had or didn't have means anything to you then that should be enough for you to do what I ask.

LOUISE virtually shouts this last. MAURICE shaken by her vehemence.

MAURICE

Okay. Okay. Okay. I get the message. He won't get the job. I promise.

CUT TO:

65 **EXT. SCOTT'S BREWERY. YARD. DAY 3. 16:52.**

MAURICE comes out, exhales, turning this one over as he watches LOUISE walk away. What was that about?

CUT TO:

66 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY 3. 18:12.**

ALISON on the computer, PAUL brewing up. REBECCA enters.

REBECCA

Hiya. What you up to?

REBECCA sits down next to ALISON. ALISON doesn't quite expect this but is happy for her to be there.

ALISON

Where's James?

REBECCA

He's packing.

ALISON

Packing? What? You're not heading off already, are you?

REBECCA

Not me. Just James.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

ALISON and PAUL both turn to REBECCA. We hear the front door bang and . . .

CUT TO:

67 **EXT. HUGHES & SCOTT HOUSES. DAY 3. 18:14.**

JAMES leaving the house with rucksack. JOE, swinging on the gate, watches him go. At the bottom of the drive JAMES turns and looks back at JOE. An almost invisible nod.

CUT TO:

68 **INT. HUGHES HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY 3. 18:15.**

PAUL and ALISON with REBECCA.

ALISON
Do you love him?

REBECCA
Of course I love him. We had tattoos done and everything.

PAUL
"We"? Oh, wonderful.

ALISON
Paul . . . In fairness to James, it must have been hard to come here and meet your family all in one go. You'd had all that freedom and then this . . .

REBECCA
It isn't that. It isn't that. Well, it is that. But it's more . . .

ALISON
How do you mean?

REBECCA
I know Joe takes a bit of getting used to but it's like, I don't know, it's like he's almost afraid of him.

ALISON
Have you actually asked James about any of this?

REBECCA
No. We're not speaking.

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED:

ALISON

Clearly. Stop trying to second guess what James is feeling and go and talk to him before it's too late. Go on.

REBECCA

Since when did you think talking about feelings was a good idea?

ALISON

I don't really. I just do it to annoy your Dad.

PAUL cracks a smile at this.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Go on! Get after him. He might be the love of your life or he might not but you need to find out and whatever happens we're here for you. If you're happy, we're happy.

REBECCA

(GETTING UP)

You're becoming all right, you know!

REBECCA exits.

ALISON

Can I have that in writing?

The door slams. A silence.

PAUL

Just to be clear. That was the old, "We just want you to be happy but please God, dump him" tactic you did there, wasn't it?

ALISON

Correct.

PAUL smiles as he starts to brew up.

CUT TO:

69

EXT. BUS STOP. DAY 3. 18:25.

REBECCA rushes towards the bus stop. A bus is pulling away.

REBECCA

James! James! James!

But the bus disappears beyond the hill. REBECCA sags in despair, only to see JAMES still at the bus stop.

(CONTINUED)

REBECCA (CONT'D)
You didn't get on.

JAMES
It wasn't my bus. (BEAT) You came
after me.

REBECCA
I was going to the shops.

They half smile at each other and . . .

CUT TO:

69A **INT. SCOTT HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY 3. 18:30.**

VINCENT sits and watches as EDDIE enters with EMILY - still in the buggy, asleep. EDDIE puts his finger to his lips to indicate she is sleeping. NICOLA, home from work, nods towards the sofa where EDDIE sees VINCENT still sitting, reading a book. He has no dog collar - just an open shirt.

EDDIE
You still here, Vincent? Is there a
rail strike I don't know about.

VINCENT
I just need a little time.

NICOLA
You've had a little time.

EDDIE
(INDICATING LACK OF DOG
COLLAR)
Off duty today? Or Undercover?

VINCENT half laughs.

NICOLA
Won't your congregation be missing
you?

VINCENT
I've got a new curate. He's
stepping in. He works out and says
things like "Jesus has bare love."
They won't even notice I'm gone.

VINCENT sinks back into his depression.

NICOLA
You'll have to go back and face the
truth some time.

EDDIE
Nicola's right, Vincent.

(CONTINUED)

VINCENT

Perhaps I'll give it two years like you two did.

NICOLA

I didn't lie by the way. About my marriage. I just didn't tell you the truth.

VINCENT

You didn't feel you could tell your own Mum and Dad?

NICOLA

No, I didn't. Because the last time I told you, I got nothing but judgement from you. No support. No sympathy. Nothing.

VINCENT

It wasn't like that. You're exaggerating.

NICOLA

I don't exaggerate. But now I realise your response was partly projection of your own guilt on to my adultery. Now it makes sense. I'm right, aren't I, Eddie.

EDDIE nods in half-hearted agreement. VINCENT smiles. He has a plan.

VINCENT

I've been thinking. And praying. And this time it is going to be different.

NICOLA

I'm glad to hear it.

VINCENT

I am going to redeem myself with you and God.

NICOLA

Just me would be a start.

VINCENT

I'm going to stay right here and I'm not going to leave till I've got you two back together again.

Out on EDDIE - the horror, the horror.

CUT TO:

70

INT. HUGHES HOUSE. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM. DAY 3. 18:40.

ALISON and PAUL sit with JOE in between them.

ALISON
You know we love you.

JOE
We love you.

PAUL
Rolling Stones. 1967. Sorry. Dad
joke.

ALISON
And you know that you sometimes
find things a bit harder than other
kids.

JOE
Good news. "This is your Captain
speaking. I've got good news and
bad news." Which film?

PAUL
You don't get to ask a question
yet. Not till you answer Mum.

ALISON
What do you think autistic means?

JOE
Let me see now. Let. Me. See. Now.

PAUL
It just means. It just means
different really.

JOE
I'm not the same.

ALISON
Well, most of you is the same but
maybe a bit of you is different.
The bit that makes some things
harder for you. . . And some things
easier. Like you remember things
better than other kids and . . .

PAUL
And the good news is that makes you
Joe. And Joe is an absolute belter.

JOE
"The bad news is we're crash
landing."

(CONTINUED)

ALISON

Joe.

JOE

Madagascar 2.

PAUL

I know. "The good news is we'll be landing immediately. The bad news is we're crash landing."

JOE laughs and turns to PAUL.

JOE

I'm not the same.

PAUL

Nobody is the same.

JOE

So I am the same.

PAUL

Well, everybody is a bit different. And the bit of you that's different is autistic. It's just what it's called.

JOE

I'm sorry. I'm very sorry.

PAUL

Joe, No. No! That's not what we mean. It's not a bad thing. Or anything wrong.

ALISON

You never have to be sorry for this. Because we've all got things . . we're all a bit broken, you know.

JOE

We are.

ALISON

And . . .

JOE

(RAISES A FINGER)

Just one thing.

ALISON

Yes.

JOE

I have a choc ice. In the freezer. And it might be going mouldy.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
It won't. You know that.

ALISON
And from time to time you might
need a bit more help.

A look between ALISON and PAUL.

ALISON (CONT'D)
But that's okay.

JOE looks at ALISON but doesn't respond.

PAUL
What do you think.

JOE
I don't want to talk about autistic
anymore.

ALISON and PAUL exchange a look.

ALISON
Me neither, love . . . me neither.

ALISON gives JOE a hug. PAUL too. Then they let him go . . he
puts on his headphones, takes a mini choc ice from the
freezer and heads for the front door.

ALISON reaches for PAUL's hand and as she does so the door
goes and JAMES and REBECCA enter, hand in hand, both beaming.
JOE watches them join ALISON and PAUL.

REBECCA
Guess what?

ALISON
James is staying.

REBECCA
Better than that. We're engaged!

We hear the strains of 'Sticky' by The Wedding Present and
then JOE walks out of the house singing along . . .

JOE/THE WEDDING PRESENT
"Now get along, get along, get out
Get along, get along, get out of
here."

CUT TO:

71

EXT. HUGHES & SCOTT HOUSES. DAY 3. 18:44.

JOE with his headphones on. The Wedding Present playing. JOE eating a choc ice that doesn't seem to have gone mouldy, staring back at his house as though trying to puzzle something out.

THE WEDDING PRESENT
"Get along, get along, get out
Get along, get along, get out of
here."

END OF EPISODE