

THE CLEANER S2

'PEACH MELBA'

6/9/22  
Pink revisions

Written by

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Based on 'Der Tatortreiniger' by Mizzi Meyer

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Sucking his vape, Wicky drives DESERTED STREETS. He passes lights and a Christmas Tree in the centre of town as his phone rings. It's 'SIS'. Hesitates, curses, before answering, about to say 'Sis?' But doesn't even get the chance -

2/2A

INT/EXT. VAN/SIS'S HOUSE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

2/2A

SIS

Are you going then?

SIS, a few years younger than Wicky, looks frazzled. Phone between her shoulder and chin, coat half on, half off, laden with presents, literally unbalanced as she gets to a car -

SPLIT SCREEN between Wicky/ VAN and Sis/ HOUSE -

WICKY

Going where?

SIS

*You know bloody well where! To  
dad's. The boot Nigel! Wake up!*

Wicky holds the phone away from his ear.

SIS (CONT'D)

Pull your finger out! He's got into podcasts and the rest of the world is dead to him.

Wicky pulls up in the van.

SIS (CONT'D)

Well? Are you, Paul - going to dad's?

PAUL

No I'm not, I told you!

SIS

(gritted teeth - staccato)  
We're going to Nigel's folks and the parasite is really kicking off.

OOV KID

Dad! She's calling me parasite again!

SIS

You are a bloody parasite! You've ruined my body. Ruined it!

(To Wicky)

You have to go Wicky. End of.  
Nigel!

2/2A CONTINUED:

SIS (CONT'D)

*If I have to stand here for another ten seconds I'm throwing these gifts in to traffic?*

(To Wicky)

*He's back on his bloody podcast again. Since when did crime become entertainment... (beat) Now, you and dad...*

WICKY

I've got plans. The white horse is doing a full Christmas dinner.

SIS

Microwaved turkey is dangerous Wicky?! Have you not learned from last time?

OOV KID

I'm hungry!

SIS

You've just had breakfast if you want more get a job!

OOV KID

I'm 7!

WICKY

It's not just the dinner. Weasel's doing a raffle during the Queen's Speech, you can win a horse. Like an actual horse.

SIS

It's Christmas Wicky, you should be able to put aside your differences at Christmas.

WICKY

You put aside my differences and take him with you to Nigel's parents!

SIS

I can't because of Pablo! Nigel's mum is allergic. Her throat puffs up like a toad.

WICKY

Who the hell is Pablo?

SIS

Dad's new puppy.

OOV KID

I love Pablo!

SIS

Yes we all know you love Pablo. My god they repeat themselves at this age. It's like hanging out with a hairless parrot.

WICKY

Are you joking!? He's bought a dog!?

SIS

Yeah, Pablo, he's cute.

WICKY

Have you any idea how many times I asked for a dog when I was a kid?! It's all I ever wanted and he said they were...

SIS AND WICKY

Rats that bark and shit.

WICKY

Well that's it, I'm definitely not going round. He deserves to be on his own... and you know it.

SIS

And you're going to end up just like him! Have you even taken that copper out for a drink yet?

WICKY

(awkward)

Look, I've got to go.

SIS

Think about going round Wicky, at least think about it. He's an old man. (beat) It's Christmas...

He hangs up and looks at ALBERTO'S... an ice-cream parlour, yellow police cordon tape across the door.

Furniture is scattered, sprays of blood on the counter and walls and a concentration of blood on the floor. He gets out a dictaphone and makes his initial assessment:

WICKY

(into dictaphone)

Fake marble and formica: God bless the wipe down 70s. Two hours 30, tops. Turkey, pint, new horse.

(pulls up his mask)

*Let's have it Santa!*

4

## INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR - DAY

4

Cleaning montage: Wicky goes about his work - mixing chemicals... spraying and wiping down surfaces... a blast from a steamer...

In the midst of his work, humming 'Santa Baby' until he's dancing the tune. All alone in this ice-cream parlour, this dancing and singing grows increasingly raunchy -

WICKY

*'Santa baby, just slip a sable  
under the tree, for me/ Been an  
awful good girl/ Santa baby, so  
hurry down the chimney tonight/  
Santa, baby, a '54 convertible,  
too, light blue/ Well, I'll wait up  
for you, dear/ Santa baby, so hurry  
down the chimney tonight... '*

Wicky throwing shapes like a stripper, pouting outrageously, making love to his collapsible mop until he does a pirouette... and sees the 22 year old boy looking in at him through the glass door.

WICKY (CONT'D)

*Hey!!!  
(Shooing him away)  
Get out of it!*

The boy, ROBERT, knocks on the door and shouts in turn -

ROBERT

Good afternoon, my name is Robert  
Kendrick.

Wicky's face - And?

Robert knocks again and pulls at the locked door.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Good afternoon, my name is -

Wicky opens the door a crack and peers out.

WICKY

What are you doing here, kid?

Robert's gaze is dipped. He obviously feels more comfortable not engaging with eye-contact.

ROBERT

It's Sunday.

WICKY

And?

4 CONTINUED:

ROBERT

Every Sunday, I get a peach melba  
ice-cream in Alberto's.

WICKY

It's Christmas Day!

ROBERT

It is also Sunday.

WICKY

Right, well I'm sorry, Robert?

ROBERT

Robert Kendrick.

WICKY

Yes, sorry Robert Kendrick, the  
parlour's closed.

ROBERT

(confident)

No. Alberto always tells me when  
the ice-cream parlour will be  
closed. If he leaves for Italy, for  
instance. Alberto did not inform me  
of such an event so...

Robert gestures for Wicky to step aside. Wicky looks on  
incredulously. The kid is starting to irritate him.

WICKY

Listen carefully. The parlour is  
closed. Most shops are closed. It's  
Christmas Day!

Robert is getting irritated by Wicky now. His tone  
patronising.

ROBERT

Alberto opens every Sunday. He is  
an Italian Jewish person and does  
not celebrate Christmas.

(eye-contact for first  
time)

Are you an Italian Jewish person?

Wicky: impossible to look more Anglo-Saxon.

WICKY

(sarcastic)

Yeah.

Robert takes it literally.

4  
CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT

Oh. Ciao, shalom. Now, Please  
inform Alberto I have arrived for  
my peach Melba.

WICKY

I suppose you shouldn't see it on  
the news... Come in.

Wicky leads Robert in and sits him down to break bad news:

WICKY (CONT'D)

Sorry I have to break this to you  
Robert, but I'm afraid Alberto has  
passed ...

(off Robert's look of  
puzzlement)

On. Passed on. He's gone to a  
better place. He's gone to the  
other side. He's left the earthly  
plane. He's doing the big sleep.  
He's an angel botherer. He's one of  
God's cloud gardeners, he's got two  
goose arms ...

ROBERT

You're trying to tell me Alberto is  
dead.

WICKY

Yes I'm afraid he is.

Wicky removes his Santa hat respectfully.

ROBERT

Was his doctor right, was it his  
morbid obesity?

WICKY

Oh I shouldn't really say...

ROBERT

I shall need to know the cause of  
death, for my journal.

Robert gets out his journal and pen and looks at Wicky  
expectantly. He makes notes throughout the following:

WICKY

Ok, he was killed.

ROBERT

How?

WICKY

A bad man hit him with a plank.

4  
CONTINUED: (3)

4

ROBERT

A plank is not a suitable weapon!

WICKY

It might not have been a plank.

4  
CONTINUED: (4)

ROBERT

You said it was a plank. Just now.

WICKY

No I know... I was just...

ROBERT

Was it a plank or not?

WICKY

It may have been a bat?

ROBERT

(sighs)

A cricket bat or a baseball bat?

Wicky will say anything to make this stop.

WICKY

A cricket bat?

Robert is satisfied, and reads his notes back to himself:

ROBERT

(muttered)

Alberto was battered to death, with  
a...

(writes)

'Cricket bat.'

(off Wicky's incredulous  
stare)

I didn't do it.

WICKY

I'll tell the police to rule you  
out. Anyway, you better go home.

ROBERT

Alberto would normally take me home  
at 5:42pm.

Wicky looks baffled.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

That is the time my bus usually  
goes home. As there are no buses on  
Christmas day Alberto takes me home  
at the same time. 5:42pm. I am a  
valued customer.

WICKY

Alberto can't drive at the moment  
because of the whole dead thing and  
the parlour is closed to everyone.

Wicky opens the door to usher Robert out the room.

CONTINUED: (5)

WICKY (CONT'D)

...Including, I'm afraid, 'valued  
customers'.

ROBERT

But you're here and you're just a  
cleaner.

Wicky sucks this up.

4 CONTINUED: (6)

WICKY

Be that as it may, but clean I  
must. Now, if you'll excuse me  
Robert...

ROBERT

Robert Kendrick

WICKY

Yes... Off you pop.

Wicky closes the door and turns away.

5 INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR - DAY - MINUTES LATER

5

Wicky is bent down cleaning the tiles along the front of the counter. His phone rings. He looks at the display, 'SIS'. He answers -

WICKY

I'm not going!

SIS

Paul! We've just popped in there.  
Listen, he's really sorry. He says  
he thinks about you all the time.

Wicky clenches his jaw against this -

SIS (CONT'D)

He actually thinks a lot of his  
behaviour in the past was caused by  
his lactose intolerance...

WICKY

Oh for God's sake will you listen  
to yourself.

SIS

He's going to write you a letter.

WICKY

A letter? Him? What's he going to  
write it on - a betting slip?

SIS

He say's he's changed. He wants you  
to meet the dog Wicky...

OOV KID

I love Pablo!

SIS

We know!! First you wreck my boobs  
and now drive me crazy. My god, if  
I could turn back time...

5 CONTINUED:

Wicky cuts the call. No sooner has he done so than it rings again. He hesitates... but this time he doesn't answer and sets the phone on the counter.

ROBERT (OOV)  
I'll have a peach melba, please.

Wicky jumps and whips his head round like his ass has been nipped. Robert is sitting at a table. Wicky dumbfounded for seconds, he just stares back at Robert. Who calmly repeats his order.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
One peach melba please.

WICKY  
Am I missing something here mate?  
The parlour is closed!

ROBERT  
You have forgotten my name and used  
mate as a replacement. I should  
have formally introduced myself...

WICKY  
I haven't forgotten, the parlour is  
closed.

ROBERT  
My name is Robert

WICKY  
I know your name!

ROBERT  
My name is Robert

WICKY  
Yes I know! Your name is Robert  
Kendrick!

ROBERT  
Yes, that is my name.

WICKY  
I know it is your name! I remember  
your name and it doesn't make the  
parlour any more open.

ROBERT  
My name is Robert Kendrick, I am 22  
years old...

WICKY

Oh Well, at least we're getting new information come through now!

ROBERT

...I live in Bridgeford, a 23 minute bus journey from here...

WICKY

Great, let me grab a pen and I'll ghost write your memoirs!

ROBERT

I am autistic.

In sheer panic Wicky speaks utter nonsense.

WICKY

Oh well that's just the most fascinating....

(Wicky realises what Robert has just said)

Oh! Because of the broad, that makes the good stuff, really good stuff. So cool, acceptance, all valid, everyone valuable. Good to be different. Is it? Cos we're all a bit autistic aren't we?

ROBERT

No.

WICKY

Oh.

ROBERT

Alan Turing was autistic - the mathematician who helped crack the Enigma Code during World War Two and saved hundred of thousands of lives. Do you know what the authorities did to him?

WICKY

I'm hoping they gave him a lovely medal?

ROBERT

They castrated him because he was a homosexual. (beat) Chemically. His testicles became redundant.

WICKY

I know the feeling.

ROBERT

You do? Are you a homosexual?

WICKY

Am I? No. I'm disgusted enough by my own genitals without getting another mans involved. It's not for me.

ROBERT

Because societal norms have changed now. If you are a homosexual you are free to live your life as you wish.

WICKY

(losing it)

The place is shut Robert!

ROBERT

It may be that your testosterone levels have naturally dropped because of your age. Have you found you are developing breasts?

WICKY

*Peach melba is it? Coming right up!*

(a look at his watch)

And then we can all go to Christmas.

Wicky marches round behind the counter.

ROBERT

Who gave you permission to go behind the red line?

WICKY

What?

ROBERT

The red line? You have permission?

Wicky looks at the red line on the floor at the start of the counter area: 'Access Forbidden'.

WICKY

Oh. Yes I do.

ROBERT

How can Alberto give you permission if he was killed with a cricket bat?

WICKY

The police gave me it? Alberto's red line authority went to them.

ROBERT

Alberto told me I would never have permission to cross the red line for health and safety reasons.

WICKY

The Police vetted me for health and safety. They said I'm safe (beat) and health.

Robert accepts this and looks expectantly at Wicky- he considers the ice-cream compartments, each with a silver lid -

WICKY (CONT'D)

How do you make peach melba?

Robert rattles off the instructions, he knows this well.

ROBERT

One scoop of chocolate ice-cream,  
two scoops of vanilla ice-cream,  
two scoops of peach ice-cream...

At each stage of instruction, Wicky goes to begin but the instructions keep on coming.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Then cream on top of the ice-cream,  
then white chocolate flakes on top  
of the cream... And on top of the  
white chocolate flakes is raspberry  
sauce... And then a chocolate stick  
except I get two chocolate sticks  
because I am a valued customer.

Wicky waits. Is the boy done? The boy nods: done. Wicky grabs a glass and starts opening all the metal lids of the ice-cream compartments, making a lot of noise in the process.

The noise disturbs the boy and he covers his ears. Clocking this, Wicky is more careful with the other lids until he finds what he's looking for and scoops out some ice-cream and dumps it into the glass.

WICKY  
Vanilla then ...?

ROBERT  
(Wicky has forgotten the  
chocolate)  
But the (chocolate) -

WICKY  
What's after vanilla?

ROBERT  
But -

WICKY  
Simple question.

ROBERT  
Peach. It's a peach melba.

Wicky makes a move towards the peach ice-cream.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
(re the ice-cream in the  
glass)  
But that isn't vanilla, that is  
banana! There is no banana!

Fuming, Wicky dumps the banana ice-cream back into the compartment, looks at the other compartments -

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
Now there is banana residue on my  
glass.

Wicky makes a low whistle - telling himself to calm - takes another glass, begins on the other compartments until he scoops some ice-cream, holds it up -

WICKY  
Vanilla?

ROBERT  
Yes, but -/

A look from Wicky: one more word and you will be disembowelled. He dumps in the vanilla, puts the scoop into another compartment, holds it up -

WICKY  
Peach?

Robert nods in resignation. He may be dealing with an idiot.

WICKY (CONT'D)  
Cream?

Wicky squirts cream out of a can.

WICKY (CONT'D)  
Don't tell me ... White chocolate  
flakes!

He dumps some unceremoniously over the cream.

ROBERT  
Good. Now Raspberry sauce. In an  
arcing motion.

WICKY  
In an?

ROBERT  
Arcing motion. Or the sauce will  
'pool'.

Robert demonstrates an arcing motion. Wicky hard in, almost hysterical.

WICKY  
I was going to say the sauce will  
pool if I don't arc.

He applies sauce with a dramatic arc and holds the bottle aloft like a matador.

WICKY (CONT'D)  
And ... eh ... finally a chocolate  
stick.

ROBERT  
Except I get two (chocolate sticks)-

WICKY  
-You get two chocolate sticks  
because you're a valued customer,  
Robert Kendrick!

Robert shakes his head: protest is useless. Wicky moves round the counter and sets the peach melba down in front of Robert. Robert looks at it. Looks at Wicky.

ROBERT  
There is no scoop of chocolate.

WICKY  
Who mentioned chocolate?

ROBERT  
I mentioned chocolate.

WICKY  
I don't remember you mentioning  
chocolate.

ROBERT  
would it be helpful if I wrote it  
all down for you?

WICKY  
*No it would not be helpful if you  
write it all down for me!*

Wicky's eyes: if looks could kill then Alberto's ice-cream parlour would be the scene of a double murder.

ROBERT  
Do you find me irritating?

WICKY  
No of course not! I just want to  
get your melba right!

ROBERT

You seem to find me irritating.

WICKY

Well I don't.

Wicky throws a scoop in the glass, crosses back round the counter and bangs it down in front of the boy.

ROBERT

It's perfectly okay to say I'm irritating. I know I can be.

Wicky smiles.

WICKY

Well, not to me.

The two men look at each other for a beat.

ROBERT

The chocolate goes under the vanilla.

Another beat as Wicky composes himself.

WICKY

Are you joking?

ROBERT

How can that be a joke? It's just a fact. Alberto calls the chocolate the soil the house is built on.

Wicky about to explode - 5, 4, 3 ...

WICKY

What does it matter kid, the chocolate and the vanilla will taste the same when it's all mixed up in your greedy little mouth.

Robert ignores this and rattles off the way he eats a Melba.

ROBERT

I taste vanilla first, then peach, then I mix vanilla and peach in my mouth with some white chocolate flakes then I take a scoop of cream and push down for the chocolate. It passes the vanilla and the peach and all I can taste is chocolate and cream. That's how I eat it.

WICKY

Oh silly me for not knowing the  
Melba protocol. I better get back  
to the university of scoop!

Wicky grabs for the glass and in the process sends it flying  
and smashing on the floor.

The boy suddenly cowers, an arm over his face.

ROBERT

I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

This over-reaction pulls Wicky up like a slap.

WICKY

It's ok. It was my fault.

ROBERT

I'm in trouble, aren't I?

WICKY

It's just a glass. I'll clean it  
up. That's my job.

(the boy calming)

I'll make another peach melba ice-  
cream...

(going round the counter)

On a Sunday... in Alberto's.

Robert smiles.

Robert is eating his new peach melba, Wicky sitting across  
from him sucking his vape, taking another look at his watch -

ROBERT

Who killed Alberto? He was nice,  
why would anyone want to kill him?

Wicky is awkward but wants to tell him the truth

WICKY

Well, apparently he was behaving  
quite badly...

ROBERT

How?

WICKY

Do you know what playing away  
means?

ROBERT

Well Alberto was too obese to be involved in organised sport so I presume in this context you mean he was having sexual intercourse with another man's wife.

WICKY

Oh you do know.

ROBERT

Of course; Mr Ferguson, the deputy manager at Runcorn House, was being repeatedly unfaithful to his partner until he caught an STD and developed scrotal lesions.

WICKY

And we're back on testicles again!  
Runcorn House?

ROBERT

It's a placement.

WICKY

A home?

Robert is uncomfortable with this and changes the subject.

ROBERT

I don't like calling it that.  
That's not the right word. (beat)  
Please tell me what happened to Alberto.

WICKY

It seems the woman's husband confronted Alberto when he was locking up last night. They fought and then the guy hit Alberto with a plank/bat. Probably bat. Probably cricket bat.

ROBERT

If the man's wife wanted to have sex with Alberto then maybe Alberto was just better at sex than the man.

Wicky glances at a framed picture of Alberto. He is a very rotund, laughing Italian. Wicky shrugs.

WICKY

Yeah. Maybe she went on top. Maybe he was good with his hands.

(he see's the time)

Okay I need to get going, I can drop you back at Runcorn and--

ROBERT

I go back at 5:42.

WICKY

What? Well I have to go kid and you  
can't stay here...

ROBERT

I go back at 5.42. Every Sunday.

WICKY

Won't you miss your Christmas  
dinner?

ROBERT

The only thing I really like is the  
Christmas crackers. One year I got  
a mini-stapler. And the jokes...

(starting to laugh)

I really like the jokes. Tell me:  
'What is the wettest animal in the  
world?'

(off Wicky's look)

A rein-deer!

Robert lets loose with a huge cackle, doubled up with  
laughter. Wicky sits back in his seat, startled at this  
sudden change in personality but oddly charmed by it.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(laughing harder)

'What do you get if you cross Santa  
with a duck?'

Wicky shakes his head. Suddenly, Robert can hardly speak for  
laughing.

WICKY

'A Christmas-quacker?'

The laughter immediately stops.

ROBERT

It's not very nice ruining a joke  
you know. My father always laughed  
at my jokes even if he had heard  
them.

The atmosphere is soured and Wicky tries to put things right.  
If Robbie is in agreement I think this would be a good place  
for him to use his stim.

WICKY

Sorry Robert. Was it your dad that  
brought you here?

ROBERT

Yes.

WICKY  
When was that?

ROBERT  
When I was 10.

WICKY  
You've been coming to Alberto's all  
that time?

ROBERT  
Yes. Every Sunday. My father would  
sit there, I would sit here. I  
would have peach melba ice-cream,  
he would have caramel macchiato ice-  
cream. I don't know why you look so  
surprised. It's perfectly normal  
for a father to buy his son ice  
cream.

WICKY  
You haven't met my dad Robert  
Kendrick.

ROBERT  
You can call me Robert now, we have  
developed a relationship.

Wicky smiles

WICKY  
Thank you Robert. So your father  
brought you here every Sunday?

ROBERT  
Yes, every Sunday until the day he  
broke my arm.

WICKY  
He did what?!

ROBERT  
I was being stupid and not  
understanding things and so he  
pushed me off my chair and quite  
right too! And we drove to the  
hospital in a taxi like we were  
millionaires. And in the hospital I  
said  
(he whispers  
conspiratorially)  
I fell from a ladder.

WICKY  
But that's not true Robert.

ROBERT

I know you're not allowed to lie  
but my father said this was an  
emergency lie because otherwise the  
police would come and take me and  
put me in a treatment unit.

Aghast, Wicky listens to this.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

We carried on having peach melbas  
on a Sunday for a while and then  
one day my father told me that I  
had to go into a placement.

WICKY

This was the placement with the guy  
with the ... em -

Wicky gestures vaguely at his crotch -

ROBERT

Scrotal lesions? No, that's my new  
placement. It was my first  
placement. There have been 4.

WICKY

I'm really sorry he left you...

Robert is surprised by Wicky's sympathy.

ROBERT

Why? He was starting a new job and  
would be very busy and have to move  
around a lot. As soon as he's  
settled he's coming to get me.

WICKY

And this is why you come here every  
Sunday?

ROBERT

Yes of course, on Sunday, every  
Sunday, my father knows I'll be in  
Alberto's eating peach Melba ice-  
cream. He may even come today. He  
knows I'll be here until 5.42.

This matter-of-fact resume of heart-break finished, Robert  
gets on with his ice-cream, perfectly content with the  
situation. Wicky staring at the boy.

WICKY

Robert, maybe you should forget  
him.

Robert laughs again.

6 CONTINUED: (5)

6

ROBERT

Why would anyone want to forget  
their father?

WICKY

Some deserve to be forgotten.

ROBERT

Don't you like your father?! Why?

WICKY

Because dads aren't supposed to be  
selfish Robert. Once they've become  
a dad everything else should come  
second to that.

(beat)

And because I wanted a dog and now  
he's bought himself one!

7 INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR - DAY - MINUTES LATER 7

Robert continues to eat his peach melba as Wicky cleans on  
down the counter. Then he stops. There is a splash of blood  
on the floor at the very end of the counter area.

Puzzled, he walks down to stand over this.

This as we hear BLEEPING -

8 INT. ALBERTO'S. BACK OF SHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS 8

Wicky passes a SMALL OFFICE, looking in with a glance as he  
continues to follow the trail of blood and the bleeping noise  
down a narrow corridor with packaging and fork-lift pallets  
stacked against the wall.

8A INT. ALBERTOS. OUTSIDE/INSIDE FREEZER - CONTINUOUS 8A

Until he's outside a metal door which has been wedged open  
with a crate.

Wicky walks into the walk-in freezer and assesses the  
situation. Melted ice-cream is pouring from the shelves onto  
the floor and mixing with the trail of blood -

WICKY

Oh piss off, I'm not cleaning this!  
Nobody told me about this!

But he has to clean it, doesn't he. He turns to leave the  
freezer to get some equipment - and slips in some melted ice-  
cream, his legs going completely from under him -

- his feet kicking a box (a catering box of ice-cream or  
something) - which skids across the floor towards the door -

8A

CONTINUED:

8A

- Wicky lands flat on his back - as the box collides with the crate that's wedging the door open, knocking it away. The door swings shut, SLAM.

8B

**INT. ALBERTOS. OUTSIDE FREEZER - CONTINUOUS**

8B

The sudden slam of the door disturbs one of the pallets positioned against the corridor wall. The pallet falls and wedges in that finger-space between the handle and the door itself, jamming the door tight, effectively locking it.

9

**INT. FREEZER - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

9

Lying flat on his back, Wicky drags some air into his lungs. He hoists himself to his feet, catches his breath, goes to open the door but the handle won't budge.

He gives it a few tugs. Stuck, but no need to panic yet. He still has his phone. He reaches into his pocket and freezes--

9A

**INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

9A

The phone on the counter--

9B

**INT. INSIDE FREEZER - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

9B

Now, it's time to panic. Wicky bangs on the door.

WICKY

Robert! ROBERT!

10

**INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

10

Robert looks around at the sound of the thumping.

WICKY (O.C.)

Robert!

Confused, Robert goes to the end of the counter area. But then he sees the red line and the words, 'Access Forbidden'. It freezes him to the spot.

11

**INT. FREEZER - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

11

Wicky sees the old-fashioned PHONE/INTERCOM by the side of the door. He grabs it, presses a button.

12/12A

**INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR / INSIDE FREEZER - CONTINUOUS** 12/12A

Robert jumps at the sound of the phone hanging on the wall beside him -

12/12A CONTINUED:

12/12A

Stimming, wary, he finally lifts it -

ROBERT

Good afternoon, my name is Robert Kendrick.

CUT BETWEEN Robert PARLOUR/Wicky FREEZER:

WICKY

*Robert!* Thank God you're still there!

ROBERT

Who is this?

WICKY

What!? It's Wicky. The guy who made you the peach melba?

ROBERT

Wicky? That is a strange name.

WICKY

It's my nickname. Look--

ROBERT

I don't like nicknames. The boys at Runcorn House call me 'pub head'...

WICKY

My real name is Paul, Robert, ok? Paul Wickstead. Look, I'm locked in the freezer.

ROBERT

(deadly serious)

Is this another Christmas joke?

WICKY

No it isn't! I'm stuck in the freezer kid!

ROBERT

I didn't do it!

WICKY

No, I know you didn't. Listen, Robert, I need you to come down here and open the door.

ROBERT

But I don't have permission to cross the red line.

Wicky looks at the mouth-piece of the phone, the full force of this sinking in. The next word, when it escapes his lips, is so soft, so desperate, so pitiful--

WICKY

Fuck!

(beat)

No, no, Robert, please, you have my permission. You have to cross the red line.

As Wicky shouts, Robert holds the phone away from his ear and talks at it rather than into it -

ROBERT

But I need Alberto's permission.

WICKY

He's dead! Remember?

ROBERT

Then I need the police's permission like you got. Alberto always told me 'Robert, no cross the ...'

His words fall away because he has seen the splashes of blood at the end of the counter area, just before the turn into the corridor leading to the freezer.

WICKY

Robert? ... Are you there?

But Robert might as well not be there in this moment of almost complete sensory overload, his stim going nineteen to the dozen, staring at that blood ... He suddenly appears quite calm and sad.

ROBERT

I'm sorry. Alberto was my friend. He told me I must not cross the red line and I have to respect that wish now he has gone. (beat, with tearful sadness) RIP Alberto.

Robert puts the phone down.

Disbelieving, Wicky listens to the dead line.

WICKY

Robert!!!!

13/13A INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR / INSIDE FREEZER - MINUTES LATER/13A

Robert is eating the remains of his ice-cream.

The phone rings. He keeps eating.

It keeps ringing. He looks at it under the line of his brow.

It's not going to stop.

13/13A CONTINUED:

13/13A

He gets up, moves to the end of the counter, careful not to look behind the counter, a hand against the edge of his vision, before he lifts the phone and sets it on the counter and steps away to talk to it -

ROBERT

Good afternoon.

CUT BETWEEN Robert PARLOUR/ Wicky FREEZER:

Wicky is shivering, trying to rub some heat into himself -

WICKY

Hey, Robert, I thought you'd gone.  
It's me again!

ROBERT

I don't like shouting. So your voice is tiny now.

WICKY

(what the fuck?)  
Right, ok, whatever. Listen -

ROBERT

But I don't have permission to cross the line and that is that.

WICKY

Robert, I'm in trouble here!  
(tells himself, 'Calm,  
calm ...')  
Listen, Robert, mate, Roberto -

ROBERT

Robert, please!

WICKY

Ok. Sorry. Do you have your own phone?

ROBERT

Yes, but I don't use it very often.  
The phone company ring to ask if I want more data but I keep telling them I have quite sufficient-/

WICKY

Robert -/

ROBERT

Did you know that people in Finland have unlimited access to data?

WICKY (CONT'D)

*I could not give a shit, Robert.  
No, no, no, don't put the phone down, Robert.*

WICKY (CONT'D)

I don't care about unlimited access to data in Finland but if you want to, we can discuss it when I'm not trapped in a freezer.

ROBERT

You are still in the freezer?

WICKY

I am and it really is living up to it's name Robert. Now, I know you can't go past the red line and I wouldn't want you to, but do you think you could ring 999 for me?

Robert is amused.

ROBERT

But that is the emergency services.

WICKY

Exactly, Robert, exactly. Because here's the thing, the fat man freezing to death is an emergency! I need to you to ring the police.

ROBERT

Has a law been broken?

WICKY

It will be if I manage to get out kid! (beat) Please ring the police!

ROBERT

But they will ask questions. I'm not allowed to answer police questions. Remember? I promised my father.

WICKY

(Like Darth Vader)  
I'm your father!

ROBERT

What?

WICKY

Nothing. I'm not thinking straight. Call the police!

ROBERT

But if father finds out he might not come back.

WICKY

He's not...  
(Wicky stops himself)

13/13A CONTINUED: (3)

13/13A

WICKY (CONT'D)

Robert, your dad is wrong, the police are the right people to call. They will help.

Robert shakes his head. He's going to have to educate this man.

ROBERT

Oh no, my father told me exactly what will happen... I will become a fugitive from justice and have to descend into the criminal underbelly in order to procure false papers but the police will corner me in a warehouse.

Wicky's incredulous expression as he listens to this -

WICKY

What?!

ROBERT

And there will be a helicopter with a spotlight and a man with a megaphone with a blue coat that says Police on the back who will tell me that I must remain calm and that I am surrounded--

WICKY

Robert -

ROBERT

But a sniper will be perched on the roof of an apartment building /

WICKY

ROBERT! ROOOOBBBEEERRTTTT

ROBERT

(beat - breathless)

Yes?

WICKY

Has it ever occurred to you that you father might have been full of shiiii-Robert! Is my phone there?

His arms locked and rigid, Robert is holding Wicky's phone and the ice-cream parlour phone together and as far away from himself as possible, knowing it's bad manners to listen to other peoples' conversations -

15

**EXT. NIGEL'S FOLKS - BACK GARDEN - DAY**

15

In the back garden of Nigel's folks home, Sis is pulling on a fag like it was the breath of life as she answers the call -

WICKY (O.S. PHONE)

Sis!

SIS

Shithead! Have you been round?

TRIPLE SCREEN - Robert PARLOUR/ Wicky FREEZER/ Sis NIGEL'S FOLKS -

WICKY

Listen, I've got a situation here...

SIS

You've got a situation! The kid has just thrown up on Nigel's mum's rug and its dad is sitting in the car listening to a serial killer give evidence at his trial!

WICKY

I need you -/

SIS

I don't ask you for much but I want you to swallow your pride this year. Who prioritises a horse raffle over their own family?!

Even with their 'tiny voices' Robert doesn't like this unpleasantness and sets the phones beside one another on the counter and covers his ears.

WICKY

(pulling a face)

No, it's nothing to do with the raffle. Listen!

SIS

Honest to god, you'd think those stupid men in the pub were your real family! (beat) Oh god, the bloody kids throwing up haribos again! Not on the rug, get away from that bloody rug!

WICKY

I'm trapped in a freezer! I need you to call the police!

SIS

Christopher, would you mind going to the Passat and telling your son his child is going off like a puke volcano...

\*

WICKY

I'm trapped in a freezer, call the police!

SIS

I sometimes think you got it right you know, never marrying. It's a curse. That said. Go and see dad, he's all you have left! Or if you won't do that, write him a letter or something! Put him out of his misery! You owe him that at least!

She hangs up. Dumbfounded, Wicky stares at the receiver -

WICKY

*Sis? Sis!*

Robert sees Sis has ended the call. He takes his hands away from his ears and picks up the ice-cream parlour phone -

ROBERT

Thank you.

He gently put the phone back on the hook.

Disbelieving, Wicky stares at the phone. Dead air.

And now it's total panic - Wicky yanking, pulling, pushing the door as hard as he can before dropping to his knees.

All passion spent, he slides down the wall, hugging himself for warmth. He closes his eyes. Just sits there. Until his eyes suddenly pop open. He's thought of something.

16/16A **INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR / INSIDE FREEZER - MINUTES LATER** 16A

Robert is leaving, hoisting his bag over his shoulder, his ice-cream totally melted. The phone rings.

Robert moves quickly to the door, opens it. But just as he can't cross that red line at the counter, so he hesitates at this other threshold, paralysed with indecision, his foot hovering to exit the ice-cream parlour ...

A war going on behind Robert's eyes -

- until he step away from the door, crosses to the counter, lifts the phone, sets it down on the counter and quickly takes a step back as if this piece of hard plastic was alive.

16/16A CONTINUED:

16/16A

He doesn't introduce himself this time. Just waits. Instead, Wicky does the introduction -

WICKY  
Robert Kendrick.

ROBERT  
I thought it might be you.

WICKY  
I mean, that's what it says on the letter -- Robert Kendrick: 'To Robert Kendrick from his father'.

ROBERT  
I don't understand.

WICKY  
I found a letter in here. On the front of it, it says, 'To Robert Kendrick from his father'.

ROBERT  
A letter from my father? But how -

WICKY  
I don't know. Your father must have given it to Alberto for safe-keeping but it fell out of his pocket in the fight down here. Or something. Something like that.

Wicky is beginning to shiver uncontrollably -

Robert picks up the phone and puts it to his ear -

ROBERT  
What does the letter say?

WICKY  
I can't open it. Opening other people's mail is a criminal offence.  
(emphasis)  
I don't have permission!

ROBERT  
You have my permission.

WICKY  
That's not good enough. I'd need your written permission. A judge would throw the book at me. I could end up in a shoot out, Robert. With the Police.

ROBERT

What book would the judge throw at  
you?

Wicky shrugs, what the fuck.

WICKY

The Bible?

There is silence on the other end of the line.

WICKY (CONT'D)

(mouthing)

Please, please, please, please...

Robert contemplates the red line, panting through his nostrils, stimming. This is taking everything he has.

ROBERT

One... two... three!

WICKY

Yes!

ROBERT

... four... five...

WICKY (CONT'D)

What the f...

ROBERT

Six!

In SLO-MO Robert steps across the red line, runs down the counter area, past the office, hauls away the pallet that is wedged behind the handle, opens the door.

Wicky kneels before a radiator, trying to rub some heat into himself. He turns and stands to warm his back-side, and looks at a furious Robert glaring at him from across the parlour -

ROBERT

You lied to me. There's no letter.

WICKY

No. Where did I put that letter?

ROBERT

You're a liar!

Robert is so genuinely upset that Wicky feels he has to do something.

WICKY

I must have dropped it...

18

**INT. ALBERTO'S. OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

18

Wicky bursts into the office and grabs up a notebook and pen...

19

**INT. ALBERTO'S. PARLOUR - DAY - MINUTES LATER**

19

Robert hardly dares breath and backs away as Wicky walks round the counter and presents him with the letter in a plain brown office stationary envelope.

Thunderstruck, Robert takes the letter and sits down at his table. He reads the salutation on the front, mouthing the words, before opening the envelope, taking out the letter, his hand shaking.

ROBERT

I feel dizzy. I can't read it. Will you read it for me?

Wicky is mortified by the idea of reading out his made up letter

WICKY

I'd rather not.

Robert is clearly very stressed.

ROBERT

I can't read it/

With a slight exasperated sigh, Wicky takes the letter -

WICKY

*'Dear Robert, this is your father.  
I wanted to write this letter to  
tell you how proud of you I am.  
I'll bet that you have come for ice  
cream every single Sunday since we  
said goodbye. You're reliable  
Robert and that will always help  
you.'*

While Wicky reads, Robert stares straight ahead, his eyes fixed on nothing, listening intently. He also exhibits echolalia as he repeats key words Wicky is saying -

WICKY (CONT'D)

*I hope you understand that  
sometimes it is hard being a  
parent. I promised I would come  
back but sometimes life gets in the  
way and breaks promises for you. I  
want you to know that life is full  
of possibility.*

19

CONTINUED:

WICKY (CONT'D)

*Go off and enjoy yours and know  
that even though my work has kept  
us apart I am always thinking about  
you. '*

(hesitates - a furtive  
glance at Robert)

*'By the way, I have found out that  
I am lactose intolerant which is  
another reason I cannot return to  
Alberto's. Ice cream brings me out  
in a rash. Maybe that is why I was  
so angry in the past. Take care.  
Dad'*

Wicky folds over the letter.

WICKY (CONT'D)

Well. That's nice. The last bit  
seemed rushed but the rest is nice.

Robert still has his eyes fixed on nothing. Silent until--

ROBERT

It is nice. Very nice.

He looks up at Wicky after a beat of thoughtfulness.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

May I see it?

Wicky hadn't banked on this

WICKY

What?

ROBERT

The letter. May I see it?

WICKY

If you want to?

ROBERT

I do.

Wicky sees the game is up.

WICKY

Well, yep. Why not. Course you can  
see it if you want to.

He still hasn't handed it over. Robert waits patiently and  
Wicky, defeated gives it to him. Robert carefully reads it,  
throwing the odd glance up at a cringing Wicky.

WICKY (CONT'D)

I think being upset can really  
affect your handwriting.

Robert nods and goes back to the letter. He nods, seemingly satisfied and hands it back to Wicky.

WICKY (CONT'D)

It's a nice letter.

Robert smiles. Slightly knowingly.

ROBERT

It is. Thank you Wicky.

Robert looks down.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

So he's not coming back is he?

WICKY

I don't think so, Robert. I'm sorry.

Robert nods.

Wicky is silenced, choked for moments before--

WICKY (CONT'D)  
So what Christmas plans do you  
have? Until 5.42 I mean?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY - LATER

A door opens. In the hall, a stooped old man, DAD, looks up at his visitor.

DAD  
Son.

WICKY  
Dad... I brought a friend.

Wicky steps to the side to reveal.

ROBERT  
Good afternoon, my name is Robert  
Kendrick.

DAD  
Hello, Robert. I've got a new  
friend too.

He steps aside to reveal a gorgeous puppy. It looks up at Wicky with its big eyes. Wicky picks it up and it licks his face.

WICKY  
I can't believe you got a dog?

DAD  
You always wanted one, didn't you?

Wicky's face lights up in wonderment.

WICKY  
You remembered?

It begins to snow. Wicky looks up into the black sky at these white petals appearing as if by magic. His face creases with a huge smile. The moment is perfect, the swell of violins... before the needle screeches across the record--

DAD  
No, your sister just told me.  
Better watch him, he's a piss  
machine.

Dad takes his coat off the back of the door -

WICKY  
Where are you going?

DAD

Lock in at the pub.  
(surreptitious)  
There's a horse up for grabs in  
Weasel's raffle. You should have  
got a ticket.

And off he trots.

Stunned, mouth hanging open, Wicky watches him go... Robert puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

ROBERT

Wicky, maybe you should forget him.

Viewed from outside the window, Wicky sets a peach melba down in front of Robert and has one for himself. This as we begin to pull away, the snow falling heavier... and we hear the BANG of a Christmas cracker...

ROBERT (O.C.)

I win! A nail-clipper! Yes!

WICKY (O.C.)

What's the joke?

ROBERT (O.C.)

'What do reindeers hang on their  
Christmas trees?'

Robert is laughing already. He can't talk for laughing. As Pablo starts barking.

Then Wicky starts... barking that is, not laughing.

END