

10:00:00	Opening title music (The Cure/Close to Me) and coughing over opening shot. The camera pans along the windows of the smoking room and then over a table of magazines and full ashtrays and then around the room. The opening credits run over this as follows:
10:00:01	BBC Logo
10:00:03	The Smoking Room
10:00:09	Written by Brian Dooley
10:00:14	Music Out (The Cure/Close to Me) and character Robin's head is in shot – he finishes his coughing

INT. SMOKING ROOM

THE ROOM IS FUGGY AND DIRTY WITH MURKY, NICOTINED WALLS. THERE ARE CIGGY BURNS ALL OVER THE MISMATCHED FURNITURE: A FEW TATTY CHAIRS WITH MAGAZINES STREWN ACROSS THEM, LOW CHIPPED TABLES SMOTHERED WITH OVERFLOWING ASHTRAYS. THERE IS A DRINKS MACHINE AGAINST ONE WALL. ALL THE WHILE WE HEAR A TERRIBLE HACKING COUGH AND ROBIN SUDDENLY THRUSTS HIMSELF INTO SHOT, HAVING BEEN BENT DOUBLE TRYING TO HAWK UP SOME PHLEGM. ROBIN'S IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES AND IS WEARING A SHIRT AND TIE. WE NOW SEE THAT HE ISN'T ALONE. CLINT - TWENTIES, IN PAINT-SPATTERED OVERALLS, CLEARLY A MENIAL WORKER - IS BY THE DRINKS MACHINE.

CLINT

Heavy night last night?

ROBIN

Well ... no. I just stayed in. Watched some telly. Had my dinner.

CLINT

Baked potato!

ROBIN

Er ... no. It was a *Be Good To Yourself* biryani. 95% fat free.

CLINT REALISES HIS MISTAKE – SNAPS HIS FINGERS.

CLINT

Couch potato! That's you – couch potato.

ROBIN

Oh. Thanks.

CLINT

I went out last night – saw a one woman show.

ROBIN'S IMPRESSED BY THE IDEA OF THIS CULTURAL OUTING.

CLINT (CONT'D)

This little Thai girl, yeah, shot exotic fruit out of her (MIME). Kiwis – *bop!* Lychees – *bop!* Kumquat Mae, her name was. She was good.

ROBIN

And there was me – just watching *Bergerac* on UK Gold.

CLINT

I used to like the geezer in that. What was his name?

ROBIN

John Nettles?

CLINT

(REMEMBERING) Bergerac!

JANET ENTERS, WALKS TO NOTICEBOARD. SHE'S A RATHER BELEAGUERED TYPE. SHE REGISTERS THE HIGH LEVEL OF SMOKE AND REACTS.

JANET

Phew – 'They asked me how I knew'.

ROBIN

Hmm?

JANET

'They asked me how I knew'.

ROBIN

Who asked you?

JANET

No. (SINGS) 'They asked me how I knew'.

HE STILL DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.

Smoke Gets In Your Eyes?

ROBIN

Oh, right. Ah, I love Shirley Bassey.

JANET

Do you?

ROBIN

I'm not a fan or anything ...

SHE UNFURLS A POSTER - PART OF THE KIT SHE HAS BROUGHT INTO THE ROOM.

CLINT

That was John Wayne's name, wasn't it? Shirley! Big woman's name on him – and he was a cowboy!

ROBIN

No – you're thinking of Big Daddy.

CLINT

He wasn't a cowboy.

ROBIN

No, but he was called Shirley.
John Wayne was called Marion.

CLINT

Like Robin Hood?

ROBIN

Well ... like Maid Marion, yeah. John Wayne was called Marion and Big Daddy was Shirley.

CLINT

(THINKS) What about Giant Haystacks?

ROBIN

(SHRUGS) I think that was his real name.

JANET IS GATHERING TOGETHER HER STUFF.

JANET

I hope this doesn't end up like the one in the foyer!

ROBIN

What – all spelt wrong?

JANET

(DEFENSIVE) What d'you mean?

ROBIN

The one in the foyer says, 'Pantballing'.

JANET

It doesn't?

CLINT

It does!

JANET

It's been up since Friday.

JANET IS MORTIFIED. WE SEE THE POSTER PROPERLY: AN A3 JOB THAT HAS BEEN VERY BADLY PUT TOGETHER ON A PC. IT IS A KITCHENER STYLE PORTRAIT OF JANET BENEATH THE LEGEND, 'WE NEED YOU AS A NEW RECRUIT'; BELOW THE PICTURE IS THE CAPTION, 'PANTBALLING 23 OCTOBER'; THE WORDS 'TEAM BUILDING!!' AND 'FUN!!' ARE IN THE MARGINS.

ROBIN

Oh and so does that one. 'Pantballing'.

JANET

Oh, no. It came up as wrong on the spellcheck. I just assumed the computer hadn't heard of paintballing. It hadn't heard of pilates.

No, what I was getting at is - I hope it doesn't end up covered in jokey names. According to the one downstairs, the only people planning to go paintballing are Marge Simpson, Osama Bin Laden, Barbara Windsor and The Bear In The Big Blue House.

ROBIN

Oh! Is Babs going?

JANET

It's for people who work *here*.

SHE WRITES THE MISSING 'I' IN WITH A MARKER PEN.

ROBIN

And ...?

JANET

Barbara Windsor is an actress. Of sorts.

ROBIN

No there's a Barbara Windsor here – in distribution.

JANET

Which one's she?

ROBIN

Oh, God, um well she's.....

HE'S STUMPED. HOW CAN HE POSSIBLY DESCRIBE HER POLITELY?

ROBIN

(CONT'D) She's a lovely woman. Um, always beautifully turned out. Pussy-bow blouses.

JANET IS NONE THE WISER.

(RELUCTANT) A sort of wispy beard?

JANET

Very strong northern accent?

ROBIN

No! That's Stan. She's ... (LOSING PATIENCE) She's got a beard, buck teeth and her eyes look in different directions.

JANET

Is her name Barbara? Oh, for years I've been calling her Carole. I am thinking of the right woman, aren't I? Wears one of those Spice Girl shoes? Orthopaedic?

ROBIN

Yeah – that's Babs.

JANET

Well! I never knew she was Barbara Windsor. Ah, you're right though – she's a lovely woman.

SHE MAKES A NOTE ON HER CLIPBOARD.

And it's another name to add to my list.

ROBIN

How many are down there now?

JANET

Including me and Sharon?

ROBIN NODS. SHE LOOKS AT HER CLIPBOARD.

Three. (TO CLINT) What about you? On the list or off it? On?

HER PEN HOVERS ABOVE THE CLIPBOARD.

CLINT

Ah, come on, Jan. You know the coup. I'm smoking and we don't talk shop when we're smoking – do we, Robin?

ROBIN

Not if we can help it, Clint.

CLINT

It ruins the informal atmosphere.

JANET GOES TO PROTEST BUT CLINT INTERJECTS EVERYTIME SHE TRIES TO SPEAK.

JANET

Yes, but....

CLINT

Upf

JANET

Oh come on...

CLINT

Upf, upf.

JANET

Now look...

CLINT

Upf, upf, upf. Sorry, but them's the rules.

JANET

It's not really work, is it? Not really. It's a nice social thing. I'll be laying on a hog roast.

CLINT

What does it say on that poster? 'Team building', yeah? Now, I don't know about 'team' – that could mean anything – it could be ... football or cricket ... tennis ... rugby ... water polo ... golf...

ROBIN

(CUTTING IN) Yeah, um 'Sport' kind of covers it, Clint.

CLINT

But 'building'? That is so not a fun thing, 'building'. It is work – all the way, 'building'! Although, there's Lego.

JANET

Sharon is very keen for people to attend.

ROBIN AND CLINT POINTELY IGNORE HER.

I'm not saying it will reflect badly on you if you don't go but ... (LOSING IT) it *will* reflect badly on you if you don't go.

CLINT

Can I hear someone talking shop?

ROBIN

I can't hear anything at all.

JANET

Well, I think you're being very unfair. It's *not* a work thing. The emphasis is very much on fun. There's a disco!

SHE GATHERS HER STUFF TOGETHER, FURIOUS WITH THEM BOTH, AND HEADS TOWARDS THE DOOR. SHE GOES OUT.

CLINT PRODUCES TWO PENS FROM HIS POCKETS AND ROBIN AND HE IMMEDIATELY RUN OVER TO THE POSTER TO DEFACE IT. ROBIN BURNS TWO HOLES IN JANET'S EYES ON THE POSTER.

ROBIN

So will you be going to this then?

CLINT

No way, man. It kills.

HE WRITES 'JAR JAR BINKS' ON THE LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.

TWO YOUNG WOMEN, ANNIE AND SALLY, WALK IN. SALLY IS TAKING A CIGARETTE FROM ITS PACKET AS SHE WALKS IN, ANNIE IS SLIGHTLY BEHIND HER.

SALLY

You can't just *not* smoke, can you? And anyway he's not going to be in here at this ...

SHE LOOKS UP. SHE SEES CLINT.

CLINT SEES HER.

ANNIE STEPS OUT FROM BEHIND SALLY AND SEES CLINT TOO.
THERE IS AN AWKWARD PAUSE.

ANNIE BURSTS INTO TEARS AND RUNS OUT. SALLY DITHERS.
SHOULD SHE STAY AND SMOKE HER FAG? AMAZINGLY, HER
CONSCIENCE WINS OUT AND SHE TURNS TO RUN AFTER ANNIE
BUT NOT BEFORE HAVING A GO AT CLINT.

SALLY

Bastard!

SHE GOES OUT.

CLINT TURNS TO ROBIN, MOST PUT OUT.

THEY WANDER BACK TO THEIR CHAIRS, ALREADY BORED WITH
THE POSTER-BASED JAPERY.

ROBIN

So, does it really kill – paintball?

CLINT

Yeah, man. It's Bam! Bam! Aaagh!

ROBIN

Oooh!

CLINT

Mmm. Mate of mine, yeah – he went paintballing – and he
went with this guy he had, like, *history* with.

ROBIN IS TOTALLY MISCONSTRUING THIS, MISLEAD BY THE
MENTION OF TWO MEN HAVING 'HISTORY'.

ROBIN

Really?

CLINT

Mmmm. The other fella had shagged his wife.

ROBIN

Ah.

CLINT

More than shagged her, actually.

ROBIN REACTS.

CLINT (CONT'D)

So when it came to the paintball, my mate thought, 'P-ching!'

ROBIN

Right. And 'P-ching' means ... ?

CLINT

Dur! Time for revenge and he went Bam! Bam! Bam! - right in
the other guy's knackers. Yeah?

ROBIN

No!

CLINT

Yeah. And his cobbler, swelled up – whooop – like um, well, not like a football, 'cause that's unrealistic ... Like, um ...

ROBIN

A volleyball?

CLINT

I dunno, man. I've never played it. How big'd that be?

ROBIN

(SHRUGS) I dunno. I've never played it either.

CLINT

Let's say a melon.

ROBIN

Honeydew or canteloupe. (THINKS)

CLINT

Canteloupe. It swelled to the size of a canteloupe melon. And *that*, Robin, is paintball.

ROBIN

Well, I wasn't going to go anyway. I hate work functions.

CLINT

Yeah well, I've got to go and do a bodily function.

CLINT PUTS OUT HIS CIGARETTE AND GRABS A NEWSPAPER.

CLINT

And remember: if anyone mentions paintball, you've just got to ask yourself – do I really want a bollock like a canteloupe melon?

HE GOES OUT.

ROBIN THINKS ABOUT WHAT HE HAS SAID. HE SLIPS HIS HANDS DOWN HIS TROUSERS AND FEELS HIS TESTICLES, WONDERING WHAT THEY'D FEEL LIKE AT MELON PROPORTIONS AND HOW HE'D MANAGE TO WALK. HE DISCOVERS SOMETHING IN THERE. HE IS CLEARLY PANICKED. HE HAS A GOOD FEEL. THEN IT'S APPARENT THAT HE HAS WORKED OUT WHAT IT IS. HE IS RELIEVED. GOD KNOWS WHAT IT COULD BE. HE IS STILL FEELING HIS BALLS WHEN SALLY RETURNS.

SALLY

Oh. Don't let me stop you.

ROBIN WHIPS HIS HANDS OUT OF HIS TROUSERS, SHAMEFACED.

ROBIN

I was just...

BUT SALLY IS LOOKING OUT INTO THE CORRIDOR.

SALLY

It's alright, Annie. He's gone.

ANNIE RETURNS.

ANNIE

Bastard.

SALLY

Yeah. Dickhead.

ANNIE

(DEFENSIVE) He's not a dickhead, Sal.

SALLY

No, of course he's not.

SHE HEADS FOR A CHAIR. ANNIE SUDDENLY REALIZES THAT ROBIN'S IN THE ROOM AND THAT SHE'D BETTER SHUT UP ABOUT CLINT.

ANNIE

Oh.

ROBIN LIGHTS A CIGARETTE.

Are you planning on hanging around here?

ROBIN

(WHY WOULDN'T HE BE?) Yeah.

ANNIE

I see.

SALLY IS FETCHING OUT HER CIGARETTES. SHE SHOOTS ROBIN A PAINED LOOK ON THIS. ANNIE HAS CLEARLY BEEN DRIVING HER MAD.

(WHISPERS TO SALLY) Shall we go somewhere else?

SALLY

Nah! Do you good to have a break from talking about it.

ANNIE

(THWARTED) Mmmm.

SALLY POPS A CIGARETTE IN HER MOUTH. ANNIE EYES IT.

I'll have a fag. That'll cheer me up.

SALLY

(WEARY) God, I hope so.

SALLY LIGHTS HER OWN CIGARETTE. ANNIE STARES AT HER.

ANNIE

Are you gonna give me one then?

SALLY

Oh. Right.

RESENTFULLY, SALLY GIVES ANNIE A CIGARETTE.

ANNIE

Ta.

ROBIN INDICATES THE PAINTBALL POSTER.

ROBIN

What do you think about that?

SALLY

Oh very mature Robin.

ROBIN

No, no – I didn't mean ...

ANNIE

I think it quite suits her. Gives her a dangerous edge.

ROBIN

No, I mean the paintball in general – are you going to go?

ANNIE CHECKS WITH SALLY.

ANNIE

Are we?

SALLY

Get real!

ANNIE

No.

ROBIN

I think Sharon's expecting us all to go.

SALLY

Like I'm bothered! She ain't the boss of me.

ROBIN

Well ... she is. She's head of the entire region.

SALLY

Nah. Sharon don't scare me. I do boxercise.

SHE TURNS TO ANNIE.

SALLY

(CONT.) You calmed down yet, missus?

ANNIE NODS AND TAKES A MELODRAMATICALLY DEEP BREATH.

ANNIE

Yeah, I'm getting there. I'll do some yogic breathing.

ANNIE TAKES DEEP BREATHS – WHILE STILL SMOKING, NATURALLY.

ROBIN

It's not like I'm scared of Sharon or anything but it just might be worth keeping her sweet. I mean the non-smokers are on the warpath – trying to get this place scrapped. Admittedly, it's mainly Frank Gatting. And everyone knows he's just thinking of himself. And his emphysema.

ANNIE

So you are going to the paintball are you, Robin?

ROBIN

I don't know. You see, Clint's been telling me about how your bollocks can swell up,

ANNIE BURSTS INTO HYSTERIC TEARS AT THE MENTION OF CLINT IN CONNECTION WITH BOLLOCKS AND, HANDING SALLY HER CIGARETTE IN A FLUSTER, RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM.

SALLY TURNS ON ROBIN.

SALLY

Nice one, Robin! Could you be any more insensitive? Why not mention her big fat arse while you're at it?

ROBIN

What did I say?

SALLY

Banging on about Clint's balls.

ROBIN

Not Clint's in particular.

SALLY

Yeah, well.

SALLY BRIEFLY CONSIDERS BEING DISCREET. SHE CAN'T MANAGE IT.

Annie reckons he's given her the clap.

ROBIN

How?

SALLY

Now, let's see. Perhaps he sent it round in a jiffy bag.

ROBIN

No I mean, but when did they ever shag?

SALLY

At Lucy Wu's party. Of course, there was talk of spiked drinks. Rohypnol.

ROBIN

Clint wouldn't do that!

SALLY

No – he accused her.

SALLY SITS BACK AND SMOKES - BUT MAKES NO ATTEMPT TO GO AFTER ANNIE.

LILIAN, IN HER FIFTIES BUT YOUTHFUL, COMES IN. SHE IS PRETENDING TO BE SHAMEFACED.

LILIAN

Neither of you was in the Nag's on Friday, were you?

SALLY

Do we look like we drink at the Nag's?

LILIAN

So I'm safe? Thank goodness!

SHE COMES INTO THE ROOM PROPERLY AND CLEARLY ISN'T AT ALL HAPPY TO BE 'SAFE'.

That's the worst thing about Mondays, isn't it? Finding out what you did on Friday! But neither of you was in the Nag's?

THEIR BLANK FACES TELL HER ALL SHE NEEDS TO KNOW.

At any stage?

SHE'S MASSIVELY DISAPPOINTED. SHE'S OBVIOUSLY ENJOYING BEING THE TALK OF THE PLACE.

Oh, well. That's a relief. I can hold my head up high in here, at least. You two didn't see me. Doing the Riverdance. On the pool table! So that's fine. Though how I got my knees up to Meatloaf ... Still, you two didn't see me – so that's okay! You didn't even hear about it?

THEY SHAKE THEIR HEADS. SHE IS GUTTED.

ROBIN HAS FINISHED ADDING NAMES TO THE LIST. APPARENTLY, CAMILLA PARKER-BOWLES AND ANT AND DEC ARE ALL KEEN TO ATTEND.

ROBIN

Does anyone know if um Ben has signed up for this?

LILIAN

Aaah, poor Ben.

SALLY

Yeah.

ROBIN

How d'you mean, 'Poor'?

SALLY

He's split up with his girlfriend.

ROBIN IS DELIGHTED.

ROBIN

Oh, well! And I wonder why?

SALLY

How d'you mean?

ROBIN

What a sham relationship that was! He's fooling no-one.

SALLY

About what?

ROBIN

Girlfriend!

SALLY

She was his girlfriend.

ROBIN

Pfuh! It couldn't be more obvious.

LILIAN

What couldn't?

ROBIN

Ben! He's ... you know.

HE DOES A MODERN, NOT IN ANY WAY DATED, 'YOU KNOW WHAT I'M GETTING AT' MIME, HOPING THEY'LL CHIP IN WITH WHAT HE WANTS TO HEAR.

LILIAN

Epileptic?

ROBIN

No. He's ... you know.

LILIAN

Black?

ROBIN

Of course he's not black. Anyone can see he's not black!

LILIAN

Ben Okinawi?

ROBIN

No – post room Ben.

SALLY

What's he got to do with anything?

ROBIN

You just said he'd split up with his girlfriend.

SALLY

No, I never. Last I heard, he was moving in with her.

ROBIN SITS BACK DOWN IN A HUFF.

ROBIN

Pfuh! Well, I don't give that long. (SITS)

BARRY COMES IN. HE HAS A PAPER TUCKED UNDER HIS ARM AND IS HEADING STRAIGHT FOR A VACANT CHAIR. LILIAN IS DELIGHTED TO SEE HIM.

LILIAN

Barry! Barry – were you in the Nag's on Friday?

BARRY

No. I was in Betws-y-Coed.

LILIAN

Oh. You didn't see me then? Making a disgrace of myself!?

BARRY

I was up a mountain.

LILIAN

Right. Only I was showing my knickers and everything.

BARRY

Well, that's fascinating, Lilian. But if you don't mind, I'd rather crack on with the crossy.

LILIAN

Christ, try and make polite conversation ...

ROBIN

So are you going to the paintball then, Barry.

BARRY

Nope.

ROBIN

Are you worried about your bollocks swelling up?

BARRY

Not particularly. I am worried that terrorists might infiltrate the event, though. And that I'd end up being seized by extremists.

ROBIN

Oh yeah. Fair enough.

BARRY RETURNS TO HIS CROSSWORD.

BARRY

Was there ever a Pope Wayne?

ROBIN

No. Which letters have you got?

BARRY

None of them.

LEN COMES IN. HE'S A GRIZZLED BLOKE IN HIS LATE FIFTIES, WEARING A SECURITY GUARD'S UNIFORM. AS HE TAKES HIS CIGARETTES FROM HIS POCKET HE SPOTS LILIAN. SHE'S THRILLED.

LEN

There she is!

LILIAN

Now, Len *was* in the Nag's!

LEN

Old Skiddies.

LILIAN IS ABSOLUTELY MORTIFIED. LEN SITS NEXT TO LILIAN.

Have a word with Ranjit – he took some pictures on his phone.

LEN GOES OVER TO THE NOTICEBOARD.

LEN

'Ere, you know this paintballing lark? Some fucker's only gone and put my name down for it.

SALLY

Why don't you just cross it back off?

LEN

Um, never thought. But, I'm telling you, when I find out who it is – I'll paintball them. I'll paintball them good and fucking proper.

BARRY IS STRUGGLING WITH HIS CROSSWORD.

BARRY

Is 'knee capping' one word or two?

ROBIN

Hmm ... two, I'd say. What's the clue?

LEN

I'll knee cap whoever put my name on that list!

BARRY

'Mercy killing'.

ROBIN

Oh no that can't be right. Knee capping isn't a mercy killing - it's a punishment beating.

LEN

I'll be doling out a punishment beating.

ROBIN

It'll be 'euthanasia'.

BARRY

Oh, yes.

HE FILLS IN THE ANSWER.

I should have known that one. I've recently had my St. Bernard put down.

LILIAN

Aaah. Old age?

BARRY

No. It just stank.

LILIAN IS STILL BROODING ON LEN'S COMMENT.

LILIAN

(TO SALLY) Beginning to wish I'd never set foot inside Nag's. Especially now there's photographic evidence. I could kill that Ranjit.

SALLY

Well it's your own stupid fault. Never mix your social life with work that's my rule.

ROBIN

(NODDING) Always keep your private life private.

SALLY

Oh, yeah? And what dark secrets have you got to hide?

ROBIN

I don't have any secrets. Dark or otherwise. I'm an open book.

LEN

Plenty of mucky books about!

LILIAN

Like *Lace!* With the goldfish.

BARRY

How many Ks in 'concoct'?

ROBIN

None.

BARRY

Damn!

HE CROSSES SOMETHING OUT.

SALLY

I feel a bit guilty about Annie now – letting her just run off like that.

ROBIN

Do you?

SALLY

Hmm. I mean, she is sort of a mate. And if she really has got the clap ...

LILIAN

Has she?

SALLY

Claims to. But then she claimed to have met Ben Affleck in Safeways. So, I really shouldn't have mentioned anything. Forget I did.

SHE TURNS BACK TO HER MAGAZINE.

LILIAN

Right.

LILIAN'S INTRIGUED.

Who did she catch it off?

SALLY

I shouldn't say.

LILIAN LOOKS TO ROBIN, SUSPECTING HE MIGHT KNOW.

LILIAN

(MOUTHS) Who?

ROBIN

(MOUTHS) Clint.

LILIAN

(MOUTHS) Who?

ROBIN

(MOUTHS) Clint.

LILIAN

Who?

ROBIN

Clint!

LILIAN

(TO SALLY) Never?

SALLY

Robin! Ain't the poor girl allowed any privacy? As if the itching ain't enough.

LILIAN

Aaah.

BARRY STUDIES HIS CROSSWORD.

BARRY

I think I must have gone wrong somewhere.

ROBIN GOES OVER TO HAVE A LOOK AT BARRY'S CROSSWORD.

ROBIN

Well, for a start, 1. across should be 'Leicester'. There's no such cheese as 'Red Liverpool'.

BARRY

You sure?

ROBIN

Yeah.

BARRY CORRECTS HIS MISTAKE.

JANET RETURNS, CLUTCHING A NEW POSTER.

JANET

Right, let's see if Paintball's more popular than Pantball, shall we? I've run up a new version.

SHE HEADS FOR THE NOTICE BOARD BUT STOPS SHORT WHEN SHE SEES THE DEFACED POSTER.

Who set fire to my face?

SHE LOOKS ROUND FOR AN ANSWER. ROBIN SHRUGS, FEIGNING INNOCENCE.

Was it Clint?

ROBIN

Yeah.

LILIAN

Well, if you will plaster your face all over the building what do you expect?

JANET

It wasn't my idea to appear on the poster. Sharon thought it lacked the human touch.

LILIAN

Well she's right – you look like some sort of android.

JANET

Before my picture went on it.

LEN HAS STOPPED BY THE PAINTBALL POSTER TOO AND IS READING THE LIST OF NAMES.

LEN

Have you seen who've put their names down for this paintballing thing? Ant and fucking Dec! Well, I'm definitely not going if those two midgety gobshites will be there.

LEN GOES TO DRINKS MACHINE

JANET

They're not *really* going. And I do wish you'd moderate your language, Len. I don't come into work to hear that kind of talk.

LILIAN

Oh, it's all over – language. I was sworn at by a kiddy the other day – she couldn't have been more than six – called me a 'C'.

SALLY

She didn't say that?

LILIAN

Yuh. She said, 'F off, you motherFing, C!'

JANET

I blame the television.

LILIAN

'Kiss my A, you Fing Csucker!!'

JANET REACTS, THINKING THIS HAS BEEN DIRECTED AT HER.

That was another thing she said. And a 'Y' – she called me that and all.

WE SEE THE OTHERS TRYING TO WORK OUT WHAT 'Y' MIGHT STAND FOR.

I have to say, though, I'm not as clear on what's rude and what's not these days. I mean, words that, years ago, you'd never have mentioned are quite commonplace now. Like, 'bugger' used to be quite shocking, but you'd take 'bugger' in your stride now, (TO ROBIN) wouldn't you?

ROBIN REACTS.

LILIAN (CONT'D)

But new words, like ... 'tosser' – how rude is 'tosser'?

ROBIN

Not really.

JANET

Very!

LILIAN

What about 'beaver'? I don't mean the animal, obviously, I mean when they use it for your doings.

ROBIN

It's more of an American thing, 'beaver'.

LILIAN

Yes, but is it acceptable to refer to it as your 'beaver'.

JANET

I don't see why you have to refer to it at all.

BARRY

That reminds me – there's a programme with David Attenborough I want to see tonight. He's going to Canada to look at beavers.

LILIAN

The animal?

BARRY

I would have thought so.

SHARON ENTERS. SHARON IS THE BOSS. SHE SMILES AN OBVIOUSLY FORCED SMILE AS SHE STRIDES INTO THE ROOM. EVERYONE IS INSTANTLY ON EDGE.

SHARON

Morning, everyone.

ROBIN LEAPS TO HIS FEET AND STUBS OUT HIS CIGARETTE.

ROBIN

No, I'm sorry Barry – but I can't waste time, helping you with your crossword. I've got stuff to do. I can't be hanging round here all day.

HE HEADS FOR THE DOOR BUT SHARON PULLS IT CLOSED.

SHARON

Don't race off on my account.

ROBIN PRETENDS TO CHECK HIS WATCH.

ROBIN

Oh. Well. I s'pose I could just squeeze another one in.

AS HE SITS BACK DOWN INSTANTLY LIGHTS ANOTHER FAG, SHARON LIGHTS HER OWN. SHE SMILES AT THE OTHERS. THEY ALL SMILE WEAKLY BACK, TRYING TO AVOID HER EYE.

SHARON

Are you having a sponsored silence?

THERE'S NO REPLY. SHARON DOESN'T NORMALLY DO SMALL TALK. SHE LOOKS TO JANET – WHAT NOW?

JANET

Keep on chatting, everyone.

NO ONE SPEAKS. JANET PANICS.

JANET

(CONT'D) Please. Keep on chatting.

THERE ARE SOME AWKWARD LOOKS EXCHANGED AS THE SMOKERS WONDER WHO'S GOING TO RESTART THE CONVERSATION.

LILIAN

'Wanker'?

SHARON STOPS DEAD IN HER TRACKS. SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE'S GOING TO KNOCK LILIAN OUT.

SHARON

I beg your pardon?

JANET

It's alright, Sharon, she's not talking to you – and, yes, Lilian, *very* rude.

SHARON LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.

SHARON

D'you know I should come down here more often.

SALLY

Oh, Sharon. When you've got that lovely balcony to stand out on?

SHARON

I don't want to seem remote. I mean, when all's said and done, we're just co-workers. (RUEFUL) According to Head Office.

THE OTHERS DON'T LOOK SO SURE.

In fact, I'm told there was quite a get together at the, er ... the

...

SHE SHOOTS JANET A DESPERATE, ENQUIRING GLANCE.

JANET

The Nag's Head.

SHARON

... The Nag's Head on Friday.

LILIAN IS INSTANTLY ON EDGE. NO ONE SPEAKS. SHARON REACTS.

I'm told.

LILIAN

What else were you told?

SHARON

Just that it was a really good, crazy, exciting ... thing.

LILIAN

That's all?

SHARON LOOKS TO JANET. IS SHE MISSING SOMETHING? JANET SHRUGS.

SHARON

Yes.

LILIAN IS MASSIVELY RELIEVED.

LEN

Yeah. We were bollocksed.

SHARON

Oh good.

LEN

Lilian was up on the pool table, showing us all her ...

LILIAN

(CUTTING IN) I don't think anyone needs to know about that, Len!

SHARON REACTS.

Oh, God! It wasn't my beaver, if that's what you're thinking.

ROBIN JUMPS IN QUICKLY.

ROBIN

Yeah, on second thoughts, Lils, 'beaver' is quite strong. In context.

LILIAN

Oh. Right.

SHARON

You should have invited me along. Invite me along next time.

THIS IS MORE OF AN ORDER THAN A SUGGESTION.

LILIAN

It was all just spare of the moment.

SHARON

I can be spontaneous. You'd see a different side of me away from work. Just you wait 'til the paintball. I was at a party only this Saturday.

LEN

Ho! Pissed up were you. Giving it all of that?

SHARON

No. But I had a great time.

NO ONE COULD CARE LESS. SHARON STAGGERS ON, DESPITE THEIR COLLECTIVE INDIFFERENCE.

I really let my hair down.

NO REACTION. JANET STEPS IN.

JANET

Did you, Sharon?

SHARON

(SHARP) You know I did! (TO ROOM) It was my sister's birthday. There was a karaoke machine.

LILIAN

What did you sing?

SHARON

Oh I didn't sing.

LILIAN IS VERY DISAPPOINTED.

SALLY

Shame Barry weren't there! He does *Love In An Elevator*.

BARRY NODS AND SMILES PROUDLY.

SHARON'S HAD ENOUGH OF THIS CHIT CHAT. TIME FOR THE REAL PURPOSE OF HER VISIT.

SHARON

Talking of the paintball excursion ...

BARRY

Were we?

ATTEMPTING TO LOOK CASUAL, SHARON STROLLS TOWARDS THE NOTICE BOARD AND HAS A GOOD READ OF THE PAINTBALLING BUMF.

There's not been many takers.

EMBARRASSED SILENCE.

Why's that? It's going to be-

SHE CHECKS THE POSTER TO REMIND HERSELF WHAT IT'S GOING TO BE AND SEES THE WORD, 'FUN!'

-"fun"! There'll be a disco. And a hog roast.

SALLY

I'm vegetarian.

SHARON

There'll be quiches.

BARRY

I can't eat pastry. I'm gluten intolerant.

SHARON'S PATIENCE IS BEGINNING TO WEAR THIN.

SHARON

Are you all faffy eaters?

LEN

I've got irritable bowel syndrome.

SHARON

The food's just an extra.

LILIAN

Will there be champagne?

SHARON

What makes you think there would be?

LILIAN

Nothing particularly. I just like it. (TO LEN) Hey, do you remember all the champagne at Sheena Parson's wedding.

LEN

Oh, yeah. We were rat-arsed!

SHARON GOES TO SPEAK BUT IS INTERRUPTED.

SALLY

Is Sheena the one with all the different coloured kids?

LILIAN

Yeah. She looked lovely on the day. Didn't she, Len?

LEN

Oh, yeah.

LILIAN

The dress bit was lace, with a satin bodice and big puff sleeves with, like, these shiny beads on them.

LEN

And the veil just went Fuck Off!

LILIAN

I had a real seventies wedding. Big flared trousers. Bit of a hat. Poncho. I looked fantastic.

SHARON

(MORE INSISTENT) If we could just return to the subject in hand?

BARRY

Which is what?

SHARON

The paintball!

BARRY

Oh I'm sorry, I didn't realise there was an agenda. Are you taking minutes, Janet?

SHARON PRETENDS TO LAUGH.

SHARON

Ha, Ha, Ha. No, but to be serious ...

IT BRIEFLY LOOKS AS THOUGH SHE'S GOT THE ROOM'S ATTENTION. THEN THE DOOR OPENS AND ANNIE RETURNS. EVERYONE IS DELIGHTED TO SEE HER (EXCEPT SHARON) – SIMPLY FOR REASONS OF GOSSIP.

SALLY

Annie - are you okay?

LILIAN

Are you okay?

ROBIN

You okay, Annie?

LILIAN

(STANDS) Annie - are you okay?

SALLY

You okay?

LEN

You okay, Annie?

ANNIE DOESN'T KNOW WHY THEY'RE SO CONCERNED, NOT KNOWING THAT SALLY HAS DIVULGED HER SECRET.

ANNIE

Yeah. Has anyone got a fag?

LEN

Have one of mine, girl.

ANNIE TAKES A CIGARETTE AND SITS.

ANNIE

Ta.

SHARON

Right shall we come to some sort of decision about the paintball!

LEN

This *is* our break.

SHARON

I am well aware of that, Len. And my issue is not with you. At least you've had the manners to let us know you're coming ...

LEN

Am I fuck! Someone put my name down for as a piss take.

SHARON

(TO JANET) Are any of the people on your list going?

ROBIN

Babs Windsor is.

JANET

That is a sick joke. You can't have a cross-eyed woman playing paintball.

ROBIN

Yeah, um this is the thing, actually, Sharon. I've heard it can be quite dangerous, I've heard that your testicles – if you have them – can become quite inflamed. If they, you know, get caught in the crossfire.

ANNIE HEARS THIS AND IT SETS HER THINKING. BARRY LOOKS UP FROM HIS CROSSWORD.

BARRY

You want to check that out, Sharon. You don't want another lawsuit on your hands.

SHARON

Barry, let's not have the saga of your broken thumb again.

ANNIE

(TO ROBIN) Is that true – about your knackers?

ROBIN

Yeah. It's happened to loads of people.

ANNIE

Right. Janet – you can get my name down on that list.

JANET

Oh, that's wonderful.

SHARON

It's what we could do with more of in this company. Team spirit.

ANNIE

And I'll tell you someone else whose name you can put down there. Clint!

ANNIE MIMES SHOOTING AT HIS BOLLOCKS.

JANET

Yes!

SHE SHOOTS A LOOK AT THE DEFACED POSTER.

LEN

And whatever fucker signed my name up for it.

LILIAN

Yeah - snap happy Ranjit. There's a paintball with his name on too.

SALLY

Oh, well – if we're all chipping in – put that Gordon Evans down -from upstairs.

ROBIN

What's he ever done to you?

SALLY

(SHRUGS) I just don't like him.

SHARON

No, no. The paintball is meant to be a bonding exercise - to boost morale. I'm not having it abused by people just out to enjoy themselves.

ANNIE LETS HER IMAGINARY GUN FALL. JANET IS ALSO THWARTED.

ANNIE

But ...

SHARON NARROWS HER EYES.

SHARON

Did you not consider all this Janet?

JANET

It wasn't my idea!

SHARON

It is not going to turn into one big grudge match. There is going to have to be a serious re-think.

SHE STUBS OUT HER CIGARETTE AND GOES.

JANET FUMES.

LILIAN

Aah. I was just starting to look forward to it.

JANET

Well, thank you very much, people. She's going to be in a foul mood for the rest of the day. But don't think about me, having to put up with her. No, just you sit there and smoke yourselves into an early grave.

SHE LOOKS AT LEN.

Well ... grave.

SHE STORMS OUT.

LEN

So that's the paintball's definitely off then?

LILIAN

(DISAPPOINTED) As good as!

LEN

Who's going to tell Ant and Dec?

SALLY

I'm sure Sharon'll keep them up to speed, Len.

LEN STUBS HIS CIGARETTE AND GOES.

LEN

That'll wipe the smiles off their smug little faces!

BARRY IS STUDYING HIS CROSSWORD ONCE MORE.

BARRY

That's where I've been going wrong: 5. down – 'a handy receptacle' – I was thinking 'colostomy' - but it's 'handbag'!

HE FILLS IN THE MISSING WORD AND GOES. ANNIE ISN'T HAPPY THAT HER REVENGE PLAN HAS BEEN THWARTED.

ANNIE

One minute there's paintball, the next there's no paintball. What's next? No smoking room? No sky!

SALLY TURNS DISCREETLY TO LILIAN.

SALLY

Oh, God – if she's off again, I'm going!

SALLY QUICKLY STANDS UP, GATHERING HER THINGS.

I'll see you up there, Annie.

ANNIE

Oh, I'll come with you.

SALLY

No, no, no, you take your time.

SALLY HURRIES OUT. LILIAN GATHERS UP HER BAG AND HEADS OUT.

LILIAN

Oh Christ! I'd better get gone myself. (TO ROBIN) What are your feelings about 'tit's'?

ROBIN

Pretty mild.

LILIAN NODS AND LEAVES.

ANNIE PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER.

ANNIE

Oh it's so silly of me to cry like this. My counsellor says I've got to learn to be less touchy.

ROBIN

I didn't know you had a counsellor.

ANNIE

Oh, yes. Well ... he's not mine, as such. He's a woman off the telly's - in a documentary about crack whores – but I have such a lot of things in common with her.

ROBIN

With the prostitute?

ANNIE

Yes. Well, she's a 'hooker'. From the Bronx. She's so like me. Does not realise how much she has to offer. The only big difference is I can't speak Spanish.

THIS UPSETS HER.

I can say, 'Dos cervezas, por favor,' and 'con leche'. But I really listen to her counsellor's advice. Because we're so alike. And because it's cheaper.

ROBIN

And he tells her not to be so touchy?

ANNIE

Yes.

ROBIN

About every little thing that people say to her.

ANNIE ALMOST CRACKS AT THIS.

ANNIE

Yes. And he also says, 'You *are* an interesting person – people *do* want to hear what you have to say.' And, 'Believe in yourself and you can touch the stars.'

ROBIN

Oh, *that's* nice. That's like something you'd find on a fridge magnet.

ANNIE

'Always use a condom – even for oral'.

ROBIN IS LESS CONVINCED BY THAT ONE. HE'S THINKING OF THE TASTE. ANNIE PUTS OUT HER CIGARETTE AND STANDS. SHE LOOKS AT HER WATCH.

Are you ... ?

SHE INDICATES THE DOOR.

ROBIN

Um ... Not just ...

ANNIE

(SIGH) I think it's *such* a shame about the paintball.

ROBIN

(UNINTERESTED) Do you?

ANNIE

Yes. For private and personal reasons.

ROBIN

What Clint?

ANNIE

(PUT OUT) Yes. But it's not just my plans that are scuppered. I bumped into Ben from the post room.

ROBIN

I *think* I know who you mean.

ANNIE

He was really looking forward to it.

ROBIN IS ABSOLUTELY GUTTED. ANNIE LEAVES.

ROBIN

Bugger!

10:27:39 Music in (The Cure/Close to Me)

10:27:42 Fade to black and roll end credits beginning "cast in order of appearance".

10:28:07 **End card:**
Producer Pete Thornton
Director Gareth Carrivick
BBC logo and website

10:28:12 **Music out (The Cure/Close to Me)**