



# MARVELLOUS

by

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A            **INT. NEIL'S FLAT - DAY 0**

A

NEIL and REAL NEIL sit side by side on the sofa. REAL NEIL turns to NEIL.

                         REAL NEIL  
                         This is my story.

                         NEIL  
                         Right.

NEIL gets up and walks out, as though to work . . .

CUT TO:

1            **INT. KEELE CHAPEL - DAY 1**

1

People start to arrive, all ages, all races, some with disabilities. Some of them carrying ukelele cases. We don't know who they are.

They take their places on the horseshoe of chairs and set up . . . From now on we shall call the Choir and Ukelele band: the NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR.

We don't quite know where we are, or why . . . but a sense that something good is about to happen.

We are expecting a hymn or perhaps a spiritual but no, they start to sing Tom Jones' 'Delilah.'

                         NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR  
                         (SINGING)  
                         "I saw the light on the night that  
                         I passed by her window,  
                         I saw the flickering shadows of  
                         love on her blind,  
                         She was my woman."

CUT TO:

2            **BLACK SCREEN**

2

CAPTION: THIS IS A TRUE STORY . . .

3            **INT. CLASSROOM. STOKE - DAY 2**

3

A classroom. Old fashioned. Kids sit in rows. All practising handwriting in those old fashioned exercise books with printed lined handwriting staves.

Except for YOUNG NEIL, thick set, Fair Isle jumper, glasses, he is using the handwriting staves as imaginary telegraph wires upon which he is drawing a collection of birds.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"As she deceived me I watched and  
went out of my mind"

CUT TO:

4 **INT. HEADMASTER'S OFFICE. STOKE - DAY 2**

4

YOUNG NEIL sits opposite a HEADMASTER. The door is flung open and YOUNG MARY - new pin neat, a spark of energy, humour or rage depending on her mood - enters the room and without looking at the HEADMASTER takes YOUNG NEIL by the hand leads him out of the classroom and we . . .

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"My, my, my Delilah,  
Why, why, why, Delilah,"

CUT TO:

5 **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 2**

5

YOUNG MARY and YOUNG NEIL, both in Stoke scarves, STARE up at the outside of Victoria Ground, hear the roar of the fans as they rush towards it, joining the late stragglers at the turnstile...

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"I could see that girl was no good  
for me,  
But I was lost like a slave that no  
man could free"

CUT TO:

6 **INT. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 2**

6

Close up on the movie, 'Trapeze', with a YOUNG NEIL on the sofa watching, avidly, as Burt Lancaster loses his grip and falls . . .

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"At break of day when that man  
drove away, I was waiting,  
I cross the street to her house and  
She opened the door"

CUT TO:

6A **EXT. BIG TOP. CIRCUS - DAY 3**

6A

A crane shot. A big top in the centre of a field busy with caravans, etc.

CUT TO:

7 **INT. BIG TOP. CIRCUS - DAY 3**

7

NEIL lays out the ring blocks as the RINGMASTER distributes pay packets to other acts. The backdrop looks a far cry from 'Trapeze'. NEIL is a short man with thick glasses. He would be classed as having learning difficulties, even though he wouldn't class himself that way. The RINGMASTER gives him a pay packet, no love lost between them. NEIL opens the pay packet and looks inside, looks puzzled and disappointed.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"She stood there laughing, I felt  
the knife in my hand and she  
laughed no more  
My, my, my Delilah"

CUT TO:

8 **INT. BIG TOP. CIRCUS - NIGHT 3**

8

NEIL, as NELLO, with a bucket on a pole, apparently with water on it, 'threatens' the audience with it, leaning over them and then, finally, letting the bucket fall only for squares of paper to fall from it.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Why, Why, Why Delilah!  
So before they come to break down  
the door, Forgive me Delilah I just  
couldn't take any more."

CUT TO:

9 **INT. BIG TOP. CIRCUS - NIGHT 3**

9

NEIL, as NELLO runs around the ring high fiving the audience. It's low rent, not even full, but there is a ragged triumph to the whole routine.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Forgive me Delilah I just couldn't  
take anymore!"



The clown car comes out. NEIL hanging off the back. He falls off. He produces a plastic trumpet from his baggy trousers. He starts to play it.

RINGMASTER (CONT'D)  
Nello! What've I told you, you  
can't play music here.

NEIL  
Oh. All right.

NELLO crosses to the other side of the ring. Gets out a ukelele from his baggy trousers and starts to play it.

RINGMASTER  
I thought I told you, you can't  
play music here.

NEIL  
No. You said you can't play music  
there. I'm not there anymore, I'm  
here.

RINGMASTER  
I meant in the ring.

NEIL  
What about cooking?

RINGMASTER  
Cooking?

NELLO pulls a rubber egg from inside his trousers.

RINGMASTER (CONT'D)  
Definitely "No cooking!"

NELLO pulls a rubber chicken from his trousers.

NEIL  
No cooking?

RINGMASTER  
I told you.

NELLO pulls a small frying pan from his trousers.

NEIL  
No cooking?

RINGMASTER  
I told you no cooking.

NELLO produces a real egg from his trousers. He puts it in his hand and shakes hands with the ringmaster, crushing the egg.

NELLO

All right. No cooking.

The RINGMASTER looks at his hand covered in egg yolk. Nello wipes his own hands down the Ringmaster's costume.

This clearly not rehearsed.

RINGMASTER

(UNDER HIS BREATH)

All right. Now fuck off. (SMILING  
TO THE CROWD) Nello! Ladies and  
Gentlemen, boys and girls!

NELLO runs off, waving to the Boys and Girls and we . . .

CUT TO:

14 OMITTED 14

15 EXT. CIRCUS. FIELD - DAY 4 15

A crane shot. The field is now completely empty apart from one solitary caravan. The field marked with the dead grass patches of the big top and the other vehicles.

CONTINUOUS:

16 EXT. CIRCUS. FIELD - DAY 4 16

The door of the small caravan opens - out steps NEIL, still half dressed as NELLO. He peers around him. Where's everyone gone?

CUT TO:

16A EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY 4 16A

NEIL's walking down the road. HEAVY RAIN. He stares off in to the distance, a church Spire. He starts to walk towards it...

CUT TO:

17 EXT. CHURCH. SCOTLAND - DAY 4 17

THE RAIN HAS STOPPED. A vicar comes out of the Church to be met by a soaking wet NEIL. The vicar - REV MCCOIST - has a clipped but recognizably Scottish accent.

REV MCCOIST

Can I help you?

NEIL

Yes. I'm a friend of the Bishop.

REV MCCOIST

(PUZZLED)

And which bishop would that be?

NEIL

The Bishop of Keele. The Bishop of Lichfield. And the Archbishop of Canterbury is also a very good friend of mine. Could you give me a lift?

REV MCCOIST

(UNDERSTANDABLY BAFFLED)

Of course. Where would you need a lift to, exactly . . .

NEIL

Stoke-on-Trent.

REV MCCOIST

Right . . . well, that's quite a drive.

NEIL

It is, yes. Thank you.

REV MCCOIST

I didn't necessarily say I'd . . .

NEIL

Have you had breakfast?

REV MCCOIST

I have indeed.

NEIL

No. That's very nice of you to ask . . .

CUT TO:

18

**INT. KITCHEN. VICARAGE - DAY 4**

18

NEIL is eating a fry up. REV MCCOIST, bemused as to how he got into this . . . comes off the phone.

REV MCCOIST

I can take you as far as Dumfries and then your Mum has arranged for your local Vicar to come and get you from there.



NEIL

Marvellous. You've got a tow bar, haven't you?

REV MCCOIST

A tow bar? Why would I need a tow bar?

NEIL

Is there any more toast?

CUT TO:

19

**EXT. CAR PARK. SERVICE STATION - DAY 4**

19

Two vicars - REV MCCOIST and REV MARK - a young, pale gentle man, struggle to detach the caravan from one tow bar to try and transfer it from one car to another. NEIL emerges from the Services with food.

REV MCCOIST

(PANTING)

Should he be wandering around the country on his own like this? He's clearly got special needs of some sort.

REV MARK

He doesn't seem to have much trouble finding help. In fact he seems positively blessed in that regard.

REV MCCOIST

Is he in the habit of doing this?

REV MARK

Well, he does seem to regard the Church as some kind of ecclesiastical AA.

REV MCCOIST

(PANTING)

He says he's a good friend of the Bishop of Lichfield.

REV MARK

That's true, yes.

REV MCCOIST

And the Archbishop of Canterbury.

REV MARK

If Neil says he knows somebody then it's usually true.

REV MCCOIST  
How does he get to know them?

REV MARK  
By being Neil.

REV MCCOIST heads to his car. NEIL goes after him.

NEIL  
Thank you very much.

REV MCCOIST  
That's quite alright.

NEIL  
And would you mind signing this  
before you go?

NEIL hands him a Bible.

REV MCCOIST  
A Bible? Are you sure? Slightly  
irregular.

NEIL  
Thank you.

REV MCCOIST produces a pen and reaches for the Bible.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
No! No! No! Not the front page.  
That's my Bishops and Archbishops.  
There's space at the back for  
regular Clergy.

REV MCCOIST  
(SLIGHTLY DEFLATED)  
Right. So there is.

REV MCCOIST, bewildered, signs his autograph.

NEIL  
I've got them all in here. Desmond  
Tutu. Terry Waite. Ronan Williams.  
Jimmy Greenhoff.

REV MCCOIST  
I wasn't aware Jimmy Greenhoff had  
been ordained.

NEIL  
(MISSING THE IRONY)  
He hasn't. He scored 76 goals in  
274 matches for Stoke City. He was  
marvellous.

REV MCCOIST  
(WANTING TO GET IT OVER  
WITH)

Right, right. Well, there you are.

NEIL takes his Bible, and heads off for the second leg of his lift, leaving REV MCCOIST bemused, standing in the car park.

CUT TO:

20      **EXT/INT. EMPTY ROADS/REV MARK'S CAR (TRAVELLING)- DAY 4**      20

REV MARK's small car tows NEIL's caravan along an empty road.

REV MARK (V.O.)  
Your Mum will be pleased to see  
you.

NEIL  
I'll bet she will. I'll be pleased  
to see her.

REV MARK  
The truth is she's not been so well  
lately.

NEIL  
Right.

REV MARK glances at NEIL, not sure if this has landed or not.

REV MARK  
And, I know it's hard to think  
about these things but your Mum's  
not getting any younger.

NEIL  
No. She's not. (BEAT) None of us  
are. And that's life. So we have to  
make the most of it.

REV MARK nods. He gives up, puzzled if NEIL has registered this at all.

CUT TO:

21      **OMITTED**      21

22      **INT/EXT. STREET/MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 4**      22

We are watching from the POV of the picture window of a second storey flat. NEIL, still in clown trousers but with top half normal shirt and cardigan, gets out of a car with his belongings as REV MARK unhitches the caravan outside a white picket fenced garden.

The garden itself is noticeably more tidy and beautiful than the other gardens in the row. A bird table, bird feeder and nesting box have pride of place.

We reveal the POV belongs to MARY watching through the window by which there is a book of wild birds, binoculars and a home made chart keeping tally of birds spotted.

NEIL looks up and waves and MARY waves back, all smiles, delighted to see him. As she waves she notices a plastic hospital bracelet still on her wrist and quickly retreats, snips it off, and throws it into the bin just before NEIL enters with REV MARK.

MARY

Now here he is! There's a sight for sore eyes.

MARY hugs NEIL and kisses him on the cheek.

MARY (CONT'D)

Let me have a look at you.

NEIL

So how've you been keeping? Without me to keep an eye on you, like?

MARY

I've been tip top, Neil. Tip top.

A glance to REV MARK who knows this is a lie.

CUT TO:

23

**INT. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 5**

23

NEIL and MARY sit side by side bird watching. They have specially designated garden chairs even though they are indoors. Binoculars. A handmade chart. Across the top pictures and names of birds . . . Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Sparrow, etc. Across the side dates. And in each box a cross for birds spotted.

NEIL

Is that a robin?

MARY

Oh, he's back, is he? He was here last week. Bet he missed you.

NEIL

I'll bet he did. That's why he's come back.

MARY looks at NEIL then back at the sparrow. He has the slightest smile across his face. He reaches for a pencil then helps himself to a biscuit, they carry on their vigil.

They have created a little idyll here, in the front room of a council house overlooking a patch of grass.

CUT TO:

24

**INT. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 5**

24

NEIL and MARY eat tea. Immaculate white tablecloth. MARY looks at NEIL. Tentative . . .

MARY

Neil, love. When I let you join that circus you said they'd look after you.

NEIL

They did look after me. Just that one ringmaster took against me.

MARY

It only takes one.

NEIL

I'm nice to people and people are nice to me. And if they're not nice to me then there are other people who are.

MARY

I won't be here forever . . .

NEIL

'dunna talk like that.

MARY

We all die one day, Neil. Until Jesus returns, and raises his sleeping followers from death and grants immortality to the faithful.

NEIL

So there you are, then. Jesus 1, Mary Baldwin 0.

MARY

(STRAINING SLIGHTLY FOR PATIENCE)

I want to know you can look after yourself. When I'm not here to do it anymore. Not get taken advantage of. Hold down a job.

NEIL

I've got a job.

MARY

You've been sacked.

NEIL  
No. A new job. At the university.

MARY  
That's lovely! When did they offer  
you this?

NEIL  
Tomorrow.

Out on MARY, worried again.

CUT TO:

25        **BLACK SCREEN**        25

CAPTION: THE NEIL BALDWIN GUIDE TO GATECRASHING UNIVERSITY.

26        **EXT. KEELE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY 6**        26

NEIL stares at Keele University Student Union. He hesitates for a moment, overawed, and then takes a decision and heads for the Student Union, carrying a bag, files, folders, etc. He turns to find REAL NEIL standing beside him.

NEIL  
Were you nervous?

REAL NEIL  
I'm never nervous.

NEIL rummages in his bag and pulls out a vicar's dog collar.

CUT TO:

27        **INT. STUDENT UNION. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 6**        27

NEIL stands at the door, greeting students as they arrive, wearing the dog collar.

NEIL  
Hello, I'm Neil Baldwin. Welcome to  
Keele University.

NEIL is smiling as he greets people.

BEMUSED STUDENT 1  
Hello.

NEIL  
Hello, I'm Neil Baldwin. Welcome to  
Keele University.

BEMUSED STUDENT 2  
Hello.

NEIL  
Hello, I'm Neil Baldwin. Welcome to  
Keele University.

We pull out to reveal that NEIL has a vicar's white collar  
and garb along with a Stoke City scarf . . .

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Hello, I'm Neil Baldwin. Welcome to  
Keele University.

MALCOLM  
Hi. I'm Malcolm. Stoke City fan?

NEIL  
I am, yes. Very much so. Are you?

MALCOLM  
Yes. I am.

NEIL follows MALCOLM into the students' union.

CUT TO:

28      **INT. BAR. STUDENT UNION. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 6**      28

NEIL enters with MALCOLM.

MALCOLM  
So you work here, do you?

NEIL looks around.

NEIL  
Yes. I think I do.

NEIL smiles and doesn't offer any other explanation.

CUT TO:

28A      **INT. BAR. STUDENT UNION - DAY 6**      28A

NEIL and MALCOLM at the bar. MALCOLM with a pint, handing  
NEIL a soft drink and a song starts to kick in . . .

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Enjoy yourself, it's later than  
you think."

CUT TO:

29      **EXT. STANDS. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 7**      29

NEIL and MALCOLM sit next to each other at the match. NEIL is  
eating a pie.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Enjoy yourself, while you're still  
in the pink."

CUT TO:

30      INT. STUDENT FLAT. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 7      30

Students sit around eating, and, in their midst, there is NEIL eating a large plate of spaghetti bolognese. DAVE turns to MALCOLM for explanation. MALCOLM shrugs.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
The years go by, as quickly as a  
wink,"

CUT TO:

31      INT. BALLROOM. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 8      31

Freshers' Week University Societies. A row of wiry, athletic YOUNG MEN and NEIL . . . signing up for the University Football Team.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Enjoy yourself, Enjoy yourself,  
it's later than you think."

CUT TO:

32      EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 9      32

A student football match. NEIL hits a cross towards goal but it dribbles into the goalkeeper's hands.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"It's good to be wise when you're  
young,  
'cos you can only be young just the  
once."

CUT TO:

33      INT. LECTURE THEATRE. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 10      33

A philosophy lecture in full flow. Young STUDENTS including MALCOLM in various states of attention. MALCOLM turns and sees NEIL sitting there too. He smiles and waves at MALCOLM. MALCOLM, slightly puzzled, waves back.



NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Enjoy yourself and have lots of  
fun"

CUT TO:

34      **EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 9**      34

NEIL is on, huffing and puffing but the pace of the match is passing him by.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"So glad and live life longer than  
you've ever done."

CUT TO:

35      **INT. HALL OF RESIDENCE. KEELE UNIVERSITY - NIGHT 10**      35

A student party in full swing. Drinking from cans, dancing, smoking, loud music. On a sofa a couple snog remorselessly and next to them, watching Match of the Day on a small black and white TV and eating a plate of party food is NEIL.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
Enjoy yourself, it's later than you  
think,"

CUT TO:

36      **EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 9**      36

NEIL double up, hands on his knees, getting his breath back at the end of the match.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
Enjoy yourself, while you're still  
in the pink."

CUT TO:

37      **INT. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 11**      37

White table cloth. Tea. Neil is eating and checking the bird chart and looking out of the window. MARY is fretting over something, preparing to speak.

NEIL  
Is that a chaffinch?

MARY  
What exactly is it that you do up  
there, Neil? At the university?

NEIL

It is a Chaffinch, you know. It's got wing bars.

MARY

Neil Baldwin. As much as I love birds I will not be knocked off course by plumage talk. What are you doing there? At Keele.

NEIL

All sorts.

MARY

And what does it pay? This all sorts?

NEIL

"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them."

MARY looks hard at NEIL, she's not falling for it.

CUT TO:

38

**EXT. STREETS. STOKE - DAY 11**

38

NEIL and MARY head towards the Job Centre. NEIL is out of his clown outfit and is looking as smart as any man can in a tight suit and Stoke City scarf. MARY is immaculate. Even the clipping of her heels speaks of organisation and determination.

MARY

When I started work I read my Bible every dinner break and they made fun of me. They called me Holy Mary.

NEIL

I could be a Vicar. Then I'd be Holy Neil.

MARY

Is that why you don't want a normal job? Because you're worried they'll pick on you.

NEIL

I like the Church of England. I like performing. I believe in God.

MARY

Well that does put you three up on most of the Church of England clergy I've encountered. But there are other things you need, Neil.

NEIL

Bifocals?

MARY

I was thinking qualifications.

Another Stoke City fan passes them.

STOKE FAN

All right, Nello!

NEIL

Hi, Steve. Wigan on Saturday!

MARY

Who was that?

NEIL

Steve. A very good friend of mine.

MARY

You've never mentioned him before.

NEIL

I only met him yesterday.

They go into the job centre.

CUT TO:

39

**INT. JOB CENTRE. STOKE - DAY 11**

39

A nice young woman - ELAINE - sits opposite NEIL and MARY, filling in forms. ELAINE is well intentioned but patronising.

ELAINE

Well, the good news is, they are looking for pot dippers at Susie Cooper's.

MARY

(EXCITED)

I used to work for Susie Cooper's. I was the recipient of many a compliment on my eye for colour. I think our Neil's got the same.

NEIL

Thank you. But it's not what I'm looking for.

ELAINE

What are you looking for? What would you like to do, Neil?

NEIL

I'd like to manage Stoke City. Or be a Vicar. Either is fine. I'm flexible.

ELAINE

Okay. And what are you qualified to do?

NEIL

I help the students out at Keele and I'm a registered clown.

ELAINE

Are you indeed?

NEIL takes a hard boiled egg out of his pocket with painted clown's make up on it, holds it towards ELAINE.

MARY

What've you gone and brought that here for?

NEIL

That's Nello.

MARY

Neil . . .

ELAINE

Did you do this? Just look at the paintwork. Not a million miles away from ceramics.

MARY

That's right. He's a dab hand. Never hide your talent in the ground to paraphrase the gospel of Matthew.

ELAINE

Quite.

NEIL

You send an egg off with your make up on and it's registered. You can sue anyone who steals your make up.

MARY

I don't think Elaine wants to hear about all that now.

NEIL

In London there's a room full of eggs with clowns' faces painted on them. I'd like to see that, would you?

ELAINE

And are there any openings in the Circus right now?

NEIL

Not right now. No. But Charlie Carrolli is a very good friend of mine. I've got his phone number if you'd like it. Tell him Neil said to ring him . . .

ELAINE

I meant for you.

NEIL

0272 496 0725.

MARY

Neil.

ELAINE

I really don't think I'll be needing it.

NEIL

I can get you tickets. When he's next here. Best seats.

MARY

Sorry. He does go off on tangents now and then.

ELAINE

But you don't think he has any vacancies? For you?

NEIL

No. That's why I mentioned the Vicaring or football manager. It doesn't have to be Stoke. But I draw the line at Port Vale.

ELAINE

There are schemes. (BEAT) To help people into work. (BEAT) Who might otherwise have difficulties.

NEIL looks blank.

NEIL

Why are you telling me that?

NEIL looks puzzled. ELAINE and MARY exchange a look.

CUT TO:

MARY and NEIL work their way through the supermarket. NEIL keeps putting unhealthy things in the basket which MARY then silently removes while going for fruit, veg, etc. This is clearly an ongoing silent struggle . . . NEIL looks as though he thinks the day has gone well and MARY grows increasingly agitated throughout the following.

MARY

Fruit pastilles do not count as fruit and you know it.

NEIL

You'll be turning me vegetarian if I'm not careful.

MARY

If in doubt, when I'm not here. Ask Doris on the till. She'll tell you what's healthy and what's not.

NEIL

Doris? She doesn't look all that well to me.

MARY

She'll keep an eye out for you.

NEIL

(JOKING)

Looks like I should be keeping an eye on her.

MARY

For Goodness sake! All I need to know you is you can stand on your own two feet!

Both MARY and NEIL seem shocked by MARY's frustration here. NEIL heads to the till. Unnoticed by NEIL, MARY holds on to an aisle and breathes deeply. NEIL sneaks a creme egg in to the basket.

DORIS

More than my life's worth, Neil.

DORIS puts the creme egg back.

NEIL

(SMILING)

I thought eggs were good for you.

NEIL clearly joking. He heads towards the door with the bag. DORIS looks over at MARY. Sees the strain and breathlessness.

DORIS

Mary? Are you all right, duck?

DORIS nods and looks down at NEIL's basket, casting one or two doubtful glances in MARY's direction.

CUT TO:

41 INT. BATHROOM. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 12

41

MARY lays out her various heart and blood pressure tablets on the sink surround. She takes them one by one with a glass of water. Meticulous, organised. She takes a long hard look at herself in the mirror. Deep breath. A decision made.

CUT TO:

42 INT. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 12

42

NEIL sits in his mother's small neat, council flat. We should notice again that it is immaculate. Cups and saucers. Tea set. Cake stand. Serviettes, spotless. NEIL has various files and folders out in front of him, some listing Churches, others visiting Circuses, others Stoke fixtures. MARY enters, all smiles.

MARY

(UPBEAT)

Neil. I have been praying very hard about this. And you know what? I think you are ready for a place of your own.

NEIL

I've got a place of my own. This place.

MARY

A place of your very own. Not too far away. A little flat. While I'm still around to help you settle in.

NEIL

Move out? Of my home?

MARY

Somewhere nice, you know. Where you can start to be more . . . independent . . . Manage, you know.

NEIL

I do manage. When have I ever gone without?

NEIL looks at MARY. He blinks. Once. Twice. Silence.

CUT TO:





NEIL exits. The NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR - with uke accompaniment, hum 'Enjoy Yourself' . . .

CUT TO:

45

**INT. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 13**

45

NEIL stands with bags, suitcases, boxes. Ready to go. MARY enters from NEIL's room. Holding it together.

MARY

There's still half of your Stoke City programmes in there.

NEIL

I'll come back for them.

MARY

All grown up, hey. My Neil.

NEIL

'dunna worry, Mum. I'll not forget you.

MALCOLM comes in, looking red faced having clearly moved stuff before.

MARY

This is very kind of you, Malcolm. "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow do not turn away." Matthew 5.

MALCOLM

Well, I wouldn't say no to half a lager at the students' union - Malcolm 1. (MARY DOESN'T SMILE) Are you right, Neil?

NEIL

Yes. Let's get it over with. We'll have it dark.

NEIL picks up the smaller of the bags, MALCOLM has a box and suitcase. MARY brings a small handkerchief to her eyes as MALCOLM and NEIL exit.

CUT TO:

46

**EXT. FLATS. STOKE - DAY 13**

46

NEIL and MALCOLM come out of the flat carrying bags and boxes.

They then cross the grass that divides MARY's flat from the neighbouring one and arrive at a door next door but one. They go inside. This is NEIL's big move. We see MARY watching him from her own window.

CUT TO:

47

**INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 13**

47

Identical layout to Mary's flat but that is where the similarity ends. On one wall a home built aviary with four or five budgies and a canary. A two bar electric fire is already glowing on full blast towards the aviary to keep them warm. Local Radio playing in the background. MALCOLM is finishing off making a repair to the aviary.

MALCOLM

I don't know how that came loose.  
You've not got an eagle in there,  
have you?

MALCOLM turns to see NEIL holding up a huge handmade sign made from four A4 cardboard pieces taped together. It reads, 'NEIL BALDWIN FOOTBALL CLUB'.

NEIL

What do you think of that?

MALCOLM

What's the Neil Baldwin Football  
Club when it's at home?

NEIL

My own team. Picked by me.  
Captained by me. Managed by me.

MALCOLM

At least you can't be dropped.

NEIL

Exactly. You're Vice-President.

MALCOLM

Am I? Right. Not President then?

NEIL

No. Gary Lineker is President. I'm  
just writing to him now to tell him  
the good news.

Both NEIL and MALCOLM are suddenly distracted by the Radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

In sports news, Stoke City have  
sacked their manager Graham Paddon,  
citing disappointing results as the  
reason.

(MORE)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The announcement was made this morning and the search for his successor is said to be well under way . . .

CUT TO:

48 INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 14

48

MARY is tidying Neil's flat. She stares at an official looking letter addressed to NEIL. She looks worried. Every so often she picks it up in her hands and turns it round, holds it to the light.

CUT TO:

49 INT/MARY'S FLAT/FRONT DOOR. STOKE - DAY 14

49

MARY stares at the letter. The doorbell rings. MARY answers the door to find the REV MARK standing there.

MARY

Come in, Mark. Thank you for coming. I'd use my own Minister but he tends to be more in demand.

The slightest wince from REV MARK as he steps inside.

CUT TO:

50 INT. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 14

50

MARY and REV MARK sit with the letter, still unopened, between them.

REV MARK

It is addressed to Neil.

MARY

I can see that. And that's what worries me. You remember the misunderstanding around the payment for the coach hire.

REV MARK

I do indeed. It cast a long shadow over the Alzheimer's picnic.

MARY

He isn't terribly good with money. And who can forget what Paul reminded us in Romans?

REV MARK

Indeed.

A silence. It's not clear if REV MARK does know.

MARY

"Owe no one anything, except to love each other."

REV MARK

I'm not sure that can be applied directly to contemporary financial transactions.

MARY

(CUTTING IN)

I want you to steam the envelope open and tell me what's inside it.

REV MARK

I don't know about that.

MARY

I'm a Christadelphian. But you're Church of England.

REV MARK

How is that relevant?

MARY

Firstly, Neil is C of E so, spiritually speaking, he is of your flock, and secondly, I think of the Church of England as having a less rigorous moral code than my own.

REV MARK looks at MARY and at the letter.

CUT TO:

51

**INT. KITCHEN. MARY'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 14**

51

REV MARK steams the letter as MARY watches anxiously.

MARY

What's he going to do when I can't look after him?

REV MARK

We can appoint trustees. And he seems to manage . . . he has his adventures and . . .

MARY

And he's always got me to come back to. What about the time when that is no longer the case?

REV MARK glances at the now opened letter.

MARY (CONT'D)

How much is it for? You might want to bear in mind you're talking to a woman with an enlarged aorta.

REV MARK looks shocked.

REV MARK

When was your last check up?

MARY

How much does he owe?

REV MARK

(DRY VOICED)

Eight hundred pounds.

MARY closes her eyes in disbelief.

MARY

I should have never have let him move out. This is my fault.

REV MARK

No, Mary. I'm sure there's a way of paying this by instalments. I'll go over and see him right now.

MARY

He's not there. He's gone down to London.

REV MARK

Right.

MARY

On parliamentary business. So he said.

REV MARK can't tell whether MARY is joking or not.

CUT TO:

52

**BLACK SCREEN**

52

CAPTION: THE NEIL BALDWIN GUIDE TO GATECRASHING PARLIAMENT

53

**EXT. M6 MOTORWAY - DAY 14**

53

NEIL, dressed as NELLO, hitchhikes. A lorry pulls up and he goes after it.

DRIVER

Where you going, mate?

NEIL  
House of Commons.

DRIVER  
(TAKING IN THE CLOWN  
OUTFIT)  
Figures.

CUT TO:

54      **EXT. WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT - DAY 14**      54

NEIL stands on Westminster Bridge, plastic bag in hand, the sleeve of a clown outfit sticking out of it, stares up at Parliament. Heads towards it.

CUT TO:

55      **EXT. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT - DAY 14**      55

NEIL at the public entrance, now in respectable dress.

NEIL  
Is Tony Benn in today?

SECURITY GUARD  
I couldn't tell you that Sir.

NEIL  
Well, could you not find out if he's clocked on or not?

SECURITY GUARD  
I can't move from here I'm afraid.

NEIL  
Could you leave him this note? I'm a friend of his son Stephen's from Keele University.

The SECURITY GUARD sighs and takes the note.

56      **INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS TEA ROOM - DAY 14**      56

NEIL sits opposite TONY BENN, who we only see from behind, a halo of pipe smoke around the back of his chair. NEIL reaches for the last biscuit and we . . .

57      **INT/EXT. NATIONAL EXPRESS COACH (TRAVELLING) - DAY 14**      57

NEIL sitting in the window seat. He turns to REAL NEIL beside him.

NEIL  
Did you really meet him?

REAL NEIL  
Yes. He was very nice to me.

NEIL  
Poor Tony.

They both turn back to look out of the window.

CUT TO:

58

**INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 14**

58

NEIL, sits beside MARY putting a photo of him and TONY BENN into his scrapbook. The bill sits on the table, resealed, next to the photo album.

MARY  
Did you mention our drains to him?

NEIL  
He was very busy.

MARY  
They've not been right since next door did that paella for their ruby wedding.

NEIL  
No.

NEIL reaches for the bill and opens it. It opens too easily but he doesn't seem to notice.

MARY  
They were going to go barbecue but the forecast was for low pressure from the East.

NEIL stares at the bill.

NEIL  
800 pounds. That's not right.

MARY  
It's not right, Neil. No. It's not right at all.

NEIL  
I buy an electric stamp. Every week. At the post office. Five Pounds.

MARY

Neil. That only pays off sixty pounds. This is the electricity you've actually used.

NEIL

But I pay it. Every week.

MARY

You don't pay enough every week. Not when you're using this much. How do you even begin to use this much?

NEIL

I pay a fiver a week. I buy a stamp. Ask the woman at the post office.

MARY

How do you use that much?

NEIL

I don't. The budgies do. I have to keep them warm, don't I?

MARY

Please tell me you don't have that two bar electric fire on all day and night.

NEIL

Why shouldn't I? I pay it. Every week. I buy a stamp. I've got the book somewhere.

MARY

Where are we going to find 800 pounds?

NEIL

'dunna worry, Mum.

MARY

Neil, love. The whole point of you moving out was so you can learn to manage these things.

NEIL

I'll pay it off when I get the Stoke City job.

MARY

There is no Stoke City job, Neil. They appointed Lou Macari as the new manager this dinnertime.



NEIL  
Then I'll go and see him. First  
thing tomorrow.

MARY  
(GIVING UP)  
And Lou Macari is going to pay your  
electricity bill, is he?

NEIL  
(PUZZLED)  
I wouldn't have thought so. Why  
would he do that?

MARY lets her head sink into her hands and we . . .

CUT TO:

59

**INT. BEDROOM. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 14**

59

NEIL, his bedroom wall full of posters of Stoke City and the  
Circus, kneels by his bed.

NEIL  
God bless Dad and look after him.  
And God Bless Mum and let her not  
worry any more. God Bless the  
students. And God bless Norman  
Barrett OBE of Zippos Circus. God  
bless Gordon Banks. God Bless Ken  
Dodd. And God Bless Lou Macari and  
help him in his task to return  
Stoke City to the top division.  
Amen. (BEAT) Or the play-offs at  
least. For, like Job, we have been  
sorely tested.

CUT TO:

60

**EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 15**

60

NEIL is part of a small crowd that is there to greet LOU  
MACARI as he arrives for his first day in the job. NEIL and  
the other fans start to sing 'Delilah'. LOU MACARI stops and  
signs autographs. "Good Luck, Lou," etc.

NEIL  
You gonna' take us up, Lou!

LOU  
I hope so. I really hope so.

NEIL  
No. I mean I know you will.

LOU  
Good. Great. Top man.

NEIL  
I told my Vicar he'll make Bishop  
one day and I'll be right about  
that too!

LOU  
(BEMUSED)  
Right. Great. That's great.

LOU disappears inside the ground. NEIL smiles and nods his  
head. Yep. He's made an impact.

TIME JUMP:

61      **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 15**      61

NEIL hangs around the ground as everybody else drifts away.

TIME JUMP:

62      **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 15**      62

NEIL gets papers out of his bag. We see the names of players  
with photos next to them. He starts to make notes. It starts  
to rain.

TIME JUMP:

63      **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 15**      63

NEIL eats a pie, and walks back and forth as the sky grows  
dark. The rain continues.

TIME JUMP:

64      **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - NIGHT 15**      64

LOU MACARI comes out of the ground after a hard day's work.  
And there is only one fan waiting this time. NEIL.

LOU  
You've not been waiting out there  
all day, have you?

NEIL  
I have, yeah. Just in case you  
needed me, like.

LOU  
Well, that's very good of you, but  
have you not got work to do?

NEIL  
I'm out of work at the moment.

LOU  
Sorry to hear that. What's your trade?

NEIL  
Circus clown.

LOU  
(AMUSED)  
Oh, right. And what was your act?

NEIL  
Making people happy, you know, I get chucked off the back of a fire engine every night.

LOU  
So how come you got sacked?

NEIL  
(A SHRUG)  
Face didn't fit.

LOU shakes his head, not quite believing, starts to walk away, turning a thought over.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
'night, then.

LOU  
Night.

LOU takes a few steps away then turns back, a decision made.

LOU (CONT'D)  
A clown, you say? How do you fancy coming to work for me. Kit man?

NEIL  
Be very nice, yeah. I'll have to square it with the University but I think they'll be all right about it.

LOU  
What do you do at the University?

NEIL  
Help 'em out. With the students.

LOU  
You don't fall off the back of a fire truck there as well?

NEIL  
(DEADPAN)  
No. It's not really called for.

LOU  
(SMILES AGAIN)  
I suppose not. I'll see you  
tomorrow, then.

NEIL  
Yeah. See you tomorrow.

NEIL smiles and walks off towards the bus stop.

CUT TO:

65

INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 16

65

MARY is tidying Neil's flat. NEIL is mooching around beside her. There is a tense silence.

MARY  
Are you absolutely sure you've got  
this right, Neil. The Manager. Of  
Stoke City? Mr Lou Macari? Offering  
you, Neil Baldwin, a job?

NEIL  
Mr Lou Macari of Manchester United  
and Scotland. (TAPPING HIS FILE)  
I've started a file on him. Yes. Do  
you want a biscuit.

MARY  
No. But you have one. And don't  
make crumbs. I can only just see  
the pattern on the carpet as it is.

NEIL takes a biscuit. MARY has another go.

MARY (CONT'D)  
I know better than anyone how much  
you love football. I know you love  
football because of me. But, it's  
just, well . . . What exactly does  
it entail? This job?

NEIL  
Laying out the clean kit. Picking  
up the dirty kit. Taking it to the  
laundry . . .

MARY  
Well. You had me believing you till  
then.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

But you've never so much as picked  
up a dirty sock in your lifetime.  
Your front room's like the hold in  
Noah's Ark.

NEIL, oblivious, is already making notes in his new file.

CUT TO:

66      **INT. CHAPEL. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 16**      66

NEIL sits with the REV MARK.

REV MARK

Are you sure you've got that right?

CUT TO:

67      **INT. STUDENT UNION. KEELE - DAY 16**      67

MALCOLM sits with NEIL, who is taking chips off Malcolm's  
plate.

MALCOLM

Are you sure you've got this right?

CUT TO:

68      **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 16**      68

The SECURITY GUARD stands there. NEIL stands looking at him,  
too small jacket, Stoke City shirt swelling over his belly...

SECURITY

Are you sure you've got this right?

NEIL

Just tell the Boss that Nello's  
here.

The SECURITY GUARD stares at NEIL, sighs, and then disappears  
into the building.

CUT TO:

69      **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 16**      69

NEIL walks back and forth, staring at his shoes. REAL NEIL is  
there beside him, looking at his watch. REAL LOU next to REAL  
NEIL.

REAL LOU  
(TO CAMERA)  
What can I say? He was the right  
man for the job.

CUT TO:

70

**EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 16**

70

The GUARD returns to let him in, shaking his head. NEIL can't resist as he goes in . . .

NEIL  
"Oh, ye of little faith, wherefore  
didst thou doubt."

NEIL disappears into the bowels of the stadium. A beat, then he pops his head back.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Matthew 14.

CUT TO:

71

**EXT. TEAM COACH/VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 17**

71

A boiling hot day. The team are hanging by the coach, chatting. They look and see NEIL, dressed head to toe in a chicken suit - even his head is covered - wheeling the kit basket to the side of the coach.

NEIL  
Out of the way. We don't want any  
more injuries!

They watch NEIL going about his business. A player - LAINO - crosses to LOU.

LAINO  
Who's that?

LOU  
New kit man.

LOU offers no further explanation.

CUT TO:

71A

**INT. CHANGING ROOM. AWAY GROUND - DAY 17**

71A

On the players faces, tense, concerned, then to LOU, giving the talk. He seems tense too.

LOU

Keep it tight. Get in behind that lumbering full back of theres. Defending corners we leave Laino up but you need to get tight on their two big lads at corners.

Behind LOU, NEIL, still in chicken suit, walks across like Eric Morecambe back of shot. He stops, looks at LOU, hands on hips, shakes his head, walks on, straight through the showers that run across the back of the changing room.

LOU (CONT'D)

First to the ball. Don't give them time or space. Do that in the first ten minutes and they won't worry us. Laino! What? What is it?

The lads are all smiling now. The tension diminishes, LOU turns to see NEIL walking innocently away.

CUT TO:

72

**EXT. AWAY GROUND - DAY 17**

72

NEIL walks along, with kit bag in hand, still in the chicken suit.

CROWD

"What the fuck. What the fuck. What the fucking hell is that!"

NEIL blows kisses at the crowd as he goes to the dugout and sits next to LOU, finally taking his head off.

CUT TO:

73

**INT. AWAY CHANGING ROOM - DAY 17**

73

LOU, NEIL and the OTHERS welcome the triumphant team back into the dressing room. Shouts of "Come on!", "Get in!", "Have it!" etc.

LOU

Well done, lads. Great stuff. That was great stuff. Great stuff!

CUT TO:

74

**(SCENE 74 OMITTED)**

74

75

**INT./EXT. TEAM COACH (TRAVELLING) - DAY 17**

75

NEIL sits beside LOU on the front seat of the coach. He is still wearing the chicken suit. The coach tearing up the M6. Players behind play cards, etc.

NEIL  
(MUFFLED)  
Shall I take the head off?

LOU  
I think so. Yes.

NEIL takes off the head off the chicken suit. He is blood red, and sweating.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Bloody hell, Nello. A few spuds round you and you'd make a roast dinner.

NEIL  
I talked a girl out of killing herself once. A young student.

LOU  
Dressed as a chicken?

NEIL  
No. 'course not. Dressed as Father Christmas.

LOU  
Right.(PUZZLED) What's that got to do with the chicken suit?

NEIL taps the side of his nose.

NEIL  
Fancy dress. Good for morale. Charlie Carolli told me that. He's a very good friend of mine.

The head goes back on.

CUT TO:

76

**INT/EXT. LOU'S CAR/NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 17**

76

LOU is dropping NEIL off. NEIL about to get out of the car. He is back in jacket and shirt now. A bag in his hand with the chicken suit sticking out of it.

LOU  
Just out of interest. What did you say to the girl who wanted to kill herself?



NEIL  
I said, "We've all got to go  
sometime, love. But why do you have  
to go now."

LOU nods. This sounds about right. NEIL lets himself into the flat.

CUT TO:

77

**INT. CORRIDOR. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 18**

77

NEIL is cutting sock tags to length by measuring each one around his own leg and then cutting it. PLAYERS, changed for training, pass by on their way out to the pitch.

BOMBER  
All right, gorgeous.

NEIL  
Hiya.

PADDY  
How's it going, Nello?

NEIL  
Good, yeah.

Just LAINO and NEIL left together in the corridor.

LAINO  
All right, mong. I want that tea  
ready and waiting tomorrow.

NEIL  
I'm not a mong. I'm a registered  
clown.

LAINO moves off . . . NEIL heads towards the changing room.

78

**INT. CHANGING ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 18**

78

NEIL with REAL NEIL in the changing room.

NEIL  
That was a bit harsh.

REAL NEIL  
You've just got to get on with it.

NEIL  
Didn't you feel he was picking on  
you because of your difficulties?

REAL NEIL  
(EXITING)  
What difficulties?

NEIL kneels to start picking up the crap and . . .

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
" O Lord my God! When I in awesome  
wonder,  
Consider all the works thy hand  
hath made,"

CUT TO:

79 INT. CHAPEL. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 19

79

The NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR perform . . .

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"I see the stars, I hear the mighty  
thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe  
displayed."

CUT TO:

80 INT. CHANGING ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 19

80

NEIL wheels the kit basket into the changing room and lays out the kit and boots at each player's place. This is an act of almost religious precision.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR(V.O.)  
"Then sings my soul, my saviour  
God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art, how great thou  
art!"

CUT TO:

81 INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 19

81

LOU looks depressed at the team sheet. Head in hands. A newspaper on the desk saying, 'Potters Thrashed'. The door is open and he looks up and sees NEIL's hairy leg sticking out into the room at the very top of the door. LOU laughs.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Then sings my soul, my Saviour  
God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art, how great Thou  
art!"

CUT TO:



86

**EXT. PITCH. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 21**

86

The players run out on to the pitch. LOU heads for the tunnel, NEIL behind, carrying the physio's bag. His tummy is stretching his Stoke kit to breaking point.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God,  
to Thee,  
How great Thou art, how great Thou  
art!

NEIL takes a bow and, as one, the CROWD give him the 'V's.

CROWD  
"You fat bastard! You fat bastard!  
You fat bastard! You fat bastard!

NEIL blows a kiss to the crowd and sits next to the still laughing LOU.

CUT TO:

87

**EXT. DUGOUT. VICTORIA GROUND - DAY 21**

87

STOKE score and LOU and NEIL leap to their feet simultaneously, stand together in an identical pose, arms aloft, faces distorted in sheer joy. They embrace and leap around and we . . .

CUT TO:

88

**INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 22**

88

MARY is tidying NEIL's flat with a brisk efficiency. NEIL is sticking a photo of himself and LOU celebrating into a scrapbook.

NEIL  
My job is to make them laugh. And I  
do. They never stop laughing at me.

MARY  
I'm not sure I like the sound of  
that.

NEIL  
I'm a clown. That's my job.

MARY  
There's laughing at you and there's  
laughing at you.

NEIL

It's the best thing that has ever happened to me. It's the best thing that could ever happen to anyone.

MARY gingerly holds up a single sock.

MARY

Until Jesus returns to earth, you mean.

NEIL

Yes. Well, until then I'll have to make do with Saint Lou Macari.

MARY

Neil. You know better than that. Blasphemy might pass muster in the changing room but not under my roof.

NEIL

He's a lovely bloke. Treats me like a son.

MARY

That's as maybe. But I'm safe in assuming he would never be mistaken for Jesus.

NEIL thinks about this.

MARY (CONT'D)

Don't think about it, Neil. It wasn't a serious question.

CUT TO:

89

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 23

89

MARY, prim and proper as always, sits at LOU's desk, looking utterly out of place in these male surroundings. LOU sits opposite, lost in his explanation. MARY is no pushover.

LOU

He's Neil, isn't he? You know what I mean.

MARY

I know, Neil, my son, yes.

LOU

(SIGHS)

He's just great to have around. He's funny.

MARY

He doesn't always mean to be.

LOU

That does make it a bit funnier. If you don't mind me saying.

MARY

No. Not at all.

The door is open and from outside in the corridor we can hear PLAYERS arriving loudly and foul mouthed.

LAINO (O.S.)

I fucking turned on a sixpence.

PADDY (O.S.)

You couldn't fucking turn on a fucking manhole cover. You've got love handles like my 'missus and she's six months pregnant.

LAINO (O.S.)

Allright, Nello. You got a fucking brew on or what?

LOU embarrassed, stands up and shuts the door.

LOU

Sorry about that, Mrs. Baldwin. Where were we?

MARY

You were telling me why you've given my Neil a job.

LOU thinks again.

LOU

He's genuine. He hasn't got an angle. And you go a long way in this game to find a bloke without an angle.

MARY

And the fact that, well, that he isn't, perhaps, as quick on the uptake as . . .

LOU

Quick on the uptake. You're talking about footballers, Mrs. Baldwin. Not exactly University Challenge out there.

MARY

Even so . . . I had thought. Well.  
I won't be around forever and I  
have to be sure he'll be all right.

LOU

Of course. What mother wouldn't  
want that?

MARY

I had put his name down for a  
monastery. For when I'm not around  
to keep an eye. He seemed to like  
it there . . .

LOU

A monastery? Neil? Your son belongs  
in a changing room, Mrs. Baldwin.  
He loves it here. And we love him.  
He gives us all a lift. He's  
indispensable.

CUT TO:

90

INT. CHANGING ROOM. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 24

90

LOU is at the front of the dressing room. There's a chalk  
board behind him. Players getting ready, etc. A real tension  
in the air. NEIL is dressed, for no good reason, in top hat  
and tails.

NEIL

Paddy?

PADDY

Yes, boss.

NEIL

You'll do for me.

PADDY

Thanks boss.

NEIL

Laino. Just play . . .

LAINO

How should I play, boss.

NEIL

Like Ryan Giggs if at all possible.  
And as for you, Thumper.

BOMBER

Bomber, boss. I think you'll find Thumper's the name of the rabbit in Bambi.

NEIL

I'm the boss. If I call you Thumper, your name's Thumper.

BOMBER

Right boss.

NEIL

Play the game right. And the main thing is this. This is what you have to get in your noggins. The main thing is, go out there and score more goals than the other team.

They all nod in agreement, trying to hide their amusement, clap along.

LOU

Thanks, Nello. Was that supposed to be me?

NEIL

Brian Clough actually.

Each member of the team shakes NEIL's hand on the way out.

CUT TO:

91      **INT. CHANGING ROOM. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 24**      91

NEIL, still in tails, is carried round the changing room on the shoulders of the victorious muddy, sweating Stoke team.

CUT TO:

92      **EXT. STUDENT UNION. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 25**      92

NEIL and MALCOLM talk. NEIL eating MALCOLM's chips. A procession of Students, Staff and Dons pass by during this conversation: "All right, Nello", "Hello, Neil." "Good win on Saturday, Nello!" Etc.

NEIL

Lou says I should do the team talk every week.

MALCOLM

3-0. I'm not surprised.



NEIL

There might be a problem next Saturday. It's the boat race. I never miss the boat race.

MALCOLM

Can't you tape it?

NEIL

I'm not watching it on the tele. I'm on the river.

MALCOLM

You might have to lose a bit of weight if you're coxing.

NEIL

I'm not in the crews. I'm on the launch behind. With the Umpire and that.

MALCOLM

How did you wangle that?

NEIL

I just asked.

MALCOLM

You can't just get things by asking.

NEIL

Can't you? I can.

MALCOLM looks at NEIL. Thinks about this. It's true.

CUT TO:

93

**BLACK SCREEN**

93

CAPTION: THE NEIL BALDWIN GUIDE TO GATECRASHING THE BOAT RACE

CUT TO:

94

**EXT. M6. MOTORWAY (TRAVELLING) - DAY 26**

94

NEIL thumbs a lift, he is wearing a dog collar. He soon gets picked up.

CUT TO:

95

**OMITTED**

95



BOMBER

Purest silk boxer shorts these,  
boss. Kendal Mills, Deansgate.

LOU

If you're spending that much on  
your underpants I must be paying  
you too much.

BOMBER

Valuable cargo. They don't put the  
crown jewels in a cornflakes box,  
do they?

BOMBER grabs his balls and carries on getting changed.

BOMBER (CONT'D)

How much do you spend on your  
underpants, Nello?

NEIL

Nothing. My Mum buys them for me.

LOU

Very wise.

BOMBER

That might be because you're  
protecting as little as possible!

Some laughs, NEIL nods, he turns this over.

CUT TO:

98A **INT. BOOT ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 28**

98A

NEIL cleaning boots with REAL NEIL beside him.

NEIL

They weren't very nice to you.

REAL NEIL

There's always banter.

A smile. Exits.

CUT TO:

99 **EXT. PITCH. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 28**

99

A windswept grim training pitch with light drizzle and a  
North Easter. Players are put through their warm ups as NEIL  
lays out the cones. He is wearing an old fashioned tracksuit  
and looks enormous, more enormous than normal, having trouble  
bending. LOU crosses to him.

LOU  
Have you put on weight?

NEIL  
A bit.

LOU  
Your Mother will kill me. I  
promised her I'd help you lose  
weight.

LOU refocuses on training, turns to the pitch.

LOU (CONT'D)  
Come on, Laino. First touch. First  
touch!

NEIL pats his girth and smiles to himself.

CUT TO:

100

**INT. CHANGING ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 28**

100

Lads in the shower, some gelling hair, general male crap.  
NEIL throwing dirty kit into the basket. Picking up discarded  
tape, etc.

BOMBER  
Where the fuck are my boxer shorts.  
Which one of you bastards has 'em?

LOU  
Dearie me. Sixty fucking quid's  
worth. That must be a blow.

OTHER PLAYERS start searching through their clothes.

PADDY  
Hang on. My pants have gone too.  
What the fuck?

LAINO  
Some thievin' YTS lad'll have had  
'em.

NEIL  
That'll be it. Yeah. Those YTS  
boys'll steal anything that isn't  
nailed down.

BOMBER  
Who asked you?

BOMBER turns to find NEIL stripped off and wearing the entire  
team's underpants.

BOMBER (CONT'D)

No, 'Nello, you haven't, have you?

NEIL

Yours are on the bottom. And they're a waste of money. They're chafing right up my undercarriage.

LOU and the other players start to laugh and we . . .

JUMP CUT:

101      **INT. CHANGING ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 28**      101

NEIL and the rest of the PLAYERS throw buckets of water at the fully dressed BOMBER and spray him with water bottles. BOMBER stands STILL, taking his punishment, all of them laughing and singing, 'Delilah'.

PLAYERS

"My, my my, Delilah! Why, why, why, Delilah!"

CUT TO:

102      **EXT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 28**      102

NEIL singing to himself as he puts the key in the lock.

NEIL

(SINGING)

"Woaahh! Why, why, why Delilah. My, my, my Delilah,"

CUT TO:

103      **INT. STAIRWAY. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 28**      103

NEIL heads up the stairs.

NEIL

(SINGING)

"So before, they're coming to break down the door. Forgive me Delilah, I just couldn't take anymore."

CUT TO:

104      **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 28**      104

NEIL wanders in. The flat is in darkness.

NEIL  
(SINGING SOFTLY)  
"Forgive me Delilah, I just  
couldn't take anymore!"

NEIL turns on the light.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Mum? Mum?

MARY is on the floor, face down.

CUT TO:

105 INT. CUBICLE. A & E. - NIGHT 28

105

MARY is wheeled into the cubicle. NEIL beside her, still in his Stoke City kit. A young REGISTRAR gives MARY the once over. NEIL commentates throughout the examination.

REGISTRAR  
Mary? Can you watch this  
light.

NEIL  
Her eyes aren't what they  
were. She has bifocals but I  
don't think either of them  
are right.

REGISTRAR  
That's it. Good. Do you know  
where you are?

MARY  
(TRIES TO SPEAK)  
I . . . I . . . I . . .

NEIL  
Me Dad died here. He was  
young. And I was young too.  
And I did very well.

REGISTRAR  
Can you hold my hand, Mrs.  
Baldwin? Can you grip it  
tight? And the other hand.  
Can you do that one too.

CONTINUOUS.

105A INT. WARD AREA / CUBICLE. A & E. - NIGHT 28

105A

NEIL and the REGISTRAR come out of the cubicle talking.

NEIL  
She's very healthy. I'm not so  
healthy. She eats salad. I eat  
chips. She's always telling me.

REGISTRAR  
(TURNS TO NEIL)  
We're going to get a Consultant  
down to look at her.

NEIL  
I'd rather it was a Doctor.

REGISTRAR

He is better than a Doctor.

NEIL

And when will I take her home? I have to call a taxi.

REGISTRAR

She won't be coming home tonight, I'm afraid. She's really very poorly right now.

NEIL

She is. Isn't she. I think we need to get the Consultant right away.

REGISTRAR

He is busy but he will be down as soon as he can.

NEIL

Who is the Consultant? Is it Mr. Saeed?

REGISTRAR

(SURPRISED)

Yes. It is a matter of fact. Do you know him.

NEIL

He's a very good friend of mine.

The REGISTRAR looks doubtful for a moment but then he turns to hear MR SAEED shouting across the crowded cubicles.

MR SAEED

Neil! How are you? Everything okay?

NEIL

(SHAKES MR SAEED'S HAND)

Very well, thank you.

MR SAEED

Do you think we're going to beat Portsmouth on Saturday?

NEIL

If Laino's fit we can beat anyone.

MR SAEED

I love your attitude. This man is a force for good. I hope my Registrar here has been looking after your Mum.

NEIL

He's very young. My Mum has had an 'episode'.

MR SAEED

Okay. Okay. Well, let's see what we can do. (TO REGISTRAR) Have you ordered a CT scan? Bloods? BP? What's been keeping you.

The REGISTRAR moves off in a panic as MR. SAEED takes MARY's notes off him and moves to the bed.

MR SAEED (CONT'D)

Hello, Mary, I'm Mr Saeed.

CUT TO:

105A INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 28

105A

NEIL enters the flat and turns on the light. He takes in its neatness. He bends down and picks up the cup of tea that Mary dropped as she fell . . . he looks around for a pan and brush.

106 INT. CORRIDOR. HOSPITAL - DAY 29

106

NEIL sits alone, waiting. A couple of Stoke City fans come by, one of them with his arm in plaster.

STOKE FAN

All right, Nello. How's it going, duck?

NEIL

Shocking.

STOKE FAN

(NOT REGISTERING THIS)

Is Laino going to be fit for Saturday?

NEIL

Yes. He is. Dunna' worry about that.

CUT TO:

107 INT. CANTEEN. HOSPITAL - DAY 29

107

NEIL waits. Then MR SAEED comes over, sits beside him. He hands NEIL a pastry. NEIL eats it as he talks.

MR SAEED

Now, Neil. Your Mum has had a heart attack.

(MORE)



MR SAEED (CONT'D)

And that stops the oxygen going to her brain. And that is why she is confused.

NEIL

A heart attack. Yes.

MR SAEED

So you have to be strong for your Mum now. Because she needs you to be.

NEIL

I'll pray for her.

MR SAEED

That would be a good idea.

NEIL

And I'll visit.

MR SAEED

Also good.

NEIL

I'll get the Christadelphians to pray for her too.

MR SAEED

Excellent idea.

NEIL

And you. At your Temple. The more the merrier. That's what I say.

MR SAEED

Very wise.

NEIL

Have her home in no time. Hey?

MR SAEED puts his hand on NEIL's shoulder.

MR SAEED

There is a possibility, Neil. That she might not be able to come home. Her health hasn't been good for a while as you know and social services may have to find a place where she can live and be looked after. Do you understand?

NEIL

Yes. I do. (BEAT) Have her home in no time, hey?

CUT TO:

108      **OMITTED**      108

109      **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 29**      109

NEIL sits on his own in the flat, watching 'Trapeze'.

CUT TO:

110      **INT. LAUNDRY ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 30**      110

NEIL loads the kit into the washing machines . . .

CUT TO:

111      **INT. LAUNDRY ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 30**      111

LOU enters and sits down next to NEIL.

LOU

You take as much time off as you need, Neil. All right? Nothing more important than your Mother's health.

NEIL

I don't need any time off. She's going to get better.

LOU nods. He and NEIL staring at the kit going round in the machine.

LOU

How do you do it, Nello. How do you stay so positive?

NEIL

I've always wanted to be happy. So I decided to be.

LOU

Brilliant. I'm going to write some of this stuff down.

NEIL

If bad things happen you think about good things.

LOU

Like what?

NEIL

Like . . . best signing you ever made.

LOU  
I wouldn't know where to start.

NEIL  
With their shorts. (BEAT) Cleaner  
their shorts, the better the  
player. Means they've stayed on  
their feet.

LOU  
If you don't mind me saying that's  
very much a kit man's point of  
view.

NEIL  
Cloughie thought it too.

LOU  
So now I'm arguing with you and  
Cloughie, am I?

LOU exits, smiling to himself.

CUT TO:

112

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM. NURSING HOME. STOKE - DAY 31

112

MARY has a small neat bedroom with bed, armchair, dressing  
table, wardrobe. Small table with kettle and tea things and  
so on . . .

NEIL is looking unkempt and has a bag of shopping and a  
budgie in a small cardboard bird carrier.

MARY  
I'm assuming the budgie is not part  
of the food shop, Son.

NEIL  
The chap in the pet shop said I  
could have it at discount. Got your  
shopping.

NEIL starts to put MARY's shopping out. It is the wrong milk,  
some sweets, some crisps, and a marrow.

MARY  
(DESPAIRING)  
Did you not take the list, Neil? I  
made a list.

NEIL  
I did it from memory.

MARY

Whose memory was this. Not mine.  
That's for certain. I've never  
eaten any of this stuff in my life.

NEIL pulls out a box of chocolates and a tin of Red Bull.

MARY (CONT'D)

What did you pay for all this?  
Wasn't Doris on?

NEIL starts to pull receipts out of his pockets. We see receipts from McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Stoke City ticket stubs, an electricity bill.

NEIL

It's in here somewhere.

MARY

(HOLDING UP A HAND)

It doesn't matter. Really. Just  
take the list next time, will you?  
I'll write you a new one. Fetch me  
the writing pad.

NEIL

I'm keeping my flat clean as well.

MARY

Good. I'm glad to hear it. What  
about yourself. When did you last  
have a shave?

NEIL

I'm calling him Macari.

MARY

Who?

NEIL

The budgie. I'm calling him Macari.  
(BEAT) After Lou Macari.

MARY looks at NEIL, her face is a mask of concern.

CUT TO:

113

**INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 31**

113

NEIL sits in the flat, eating the chocolates and drinking the red bull. The flat is clean but as ever a study in untidiness.

CUT TO:

REV MARK is sitting next to MARY. She is looking unhappy, strained, clutching her Bible.

MARY

Could you do something about the temperature in here? It's driving me cuckoo.

REV MARK

I'll see what I can do.

MARY

I've tried to talk to them.

REV MARK

I'll talk to them, Mary. Just concentrate on getting well again.

MARY

And the car is coming to pick me up for Church on Sunday?

REV MARK

9 in the morning. Graham from the Christadelphian Hall is coming. And he'll drop you off afterwards.

MARY

My knitting seems to have gone astray. I put it down one minute and then . . .

REV MARK

It's in your bedside table, Mary. I know that because I just put it there.

MARY

I'm sorry. Of course it is.

REV MARK

Mary. What is it that's really worrying you?

MARY

I want to know that he'll be happy. When I'm not there. I just want to know he'll be happy.

MARY looks at REV MARK. He doesn't have an answer.

CUT TO:

115

INT. CHAPEL. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 33

115

NEIL is taking the collection during a Church Service, led by REV MARK. He waits at the end of one pew and glances into the pile of coins and envelopes. REV MARK looks over at NEIL, and takes him in, noticing that he isn't his usual self.

CUT TO:

116

INT. CHAPEL. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 33

116

NEIL sits with REV MARK.

REV MARK

You are looking after yourself,  
aren't you, Neil?

NEIL

Yes. I am. I always have.

REV MARK

Well, with your Mum in the home and  
so on . . . I can't help noticing .  
. . well, I think you need to maybe  
take extra care of yourself. Just  
so your Mum doesn't worry too much  
about you.

NEIL looks at the REV MARK.

NEIL

I've got the Lord.

REV MARK

You have indeed.

NEIL

I've got the students.

REV MARK

Yes.

NEIL

I've got Stoke City. And I've got  
my Mum.

REV MARK

What I want you to think about,  
Neil, is what you would do if one  
of them wasn't there?

NEIL thinks about this.

NEIL

Well, I'd probably have time to  
join the choir for a start.

REV MARK  
Right. Right.

NEIL stands up.

NEIL  
You feeling better for our little  
chat, Mark?

REV MARK  
Yes. Thank you, Neil.

NEIL exits.

CUT TO:

117 INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 33

117

NEIL sits gazing at his Stoke City scrapbook. Then he turns on the TV and there it is - LOU MACARI is going to Celtic. NEIL stares at the TV, doesn't quite believe it. He sits down.

CUT TO:

118 INT. KIT ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 34

118

NEIL is cleaning boots in the kit room. LOU enters. Silence. LOU looks awkward.

LOU  
Nello. When Celtic come calling a  
Glasgow boy like me has to say,  
"Yes".

NEIL  
I know that, yes.

LOU  
And whoever takes over here. I'll  
bet they'll find you as valuable as  
I did.

NEIL  
Do you want me to come? To Celtic?

LOU  
I'd love you to. But I think you're  
Stoke through and through. And I  
think the Rangers fans might eat  
you alive.

NEIL  
Yes. You're right. I'll stay put.  
And my Mum in the home and that.  
(MORE)

NEIL (CONT'D)  
She depends on me shopping and  
that.

LOU  
Exactly. So no hard feelings?

NEIL  
No hard feelings.

They shake hands.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
You staying on for Laino's  
testimonial?

LOU  
I can do better than that. I'm  
putting you on the bench.

NEIL  
I'm always on the bench.

LOU  
That isn't what I mean.

LOU exits, NEIL follows.

CUT TO:

119

**INT. CHANGING ROOM. STOKE TRAINING GROUND - DAY 34**

119

LOU hands NEIL a Stoke City shirt. It has his name and number  
on the back. NEIL looks at the shirt and then up at LOU, far  
from overwhelmed.

NEIL  
Midfield or striker?

LOU  
I've not thought about that yet.

NEIL  
I'm not as quick as I was.

LOU  
I daresay.

NEIL  
But the first two yards is in the  
head, hey, boss.

LOU  
Exactly. Don't be late, Baldwin.

NEIL  
No, boss. I'll be there.





NEIL (CONT'D)

Bananas cos the apples are tough on your dentures this time of year and Imodium for . . .

MARY

(INTERRUPTING)

For my indigestion. Thank you. Well, well, well. You could do it after all.

And NEIL hasn't finished, bread, a Wild Birds magazine and malt bread.

NEIL

You like malt bread, don't you? I remembered that.

MARY

(PLEASED)

You're a good lad Neil.

NEIL gets his scrapbook out.

NEIL

I met Ken Dodd last week. He's a very good friend of mine.

NEIL presents the scrap book with a flourish. A photo of NEIL and DODDY. MARY looks at the photo, then turns away, blinks back tears and flicks through NEIL's scrapbook of meetings with the good and the great.

NEIL (CONT'D)

That lady who runs it - this place, like, she asked me to come in as Nello the Clown tomorrow.

MARY

That'll cheer everyone up.

NEIL

And I've asked her if you can have a canary for your room. And she said, "Certainly" so I'll fetch you one in.

MARY

You know that business when you wanted to be a Vicar.

NEIL

Oh, that's water under the bridge. I didn't want to be bothered with doing a degree and what have you.

MARY

I know, son. But I didn't want you thinking that I didn't think you could do anything you wanted. Anything at all.

NEIL

I'm playing for Stoke City tonight.

When he looks at MARY she's crying.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Come on, Mam. It's only a testimonial.

MARY smiles.

MARY

Don't go just yet.

NEIL

No. I won't.

MARY lets her real need show for the first time. She holds his hand tighter.

MARY

Stay and hold my hand a while, hey?

NEIL

'course.

MARY

They used to call me Holy Mary, you know.

NEIL

I know, Mum. I know.

MARY

I'm very proud of you.

NEIL doesn't notice, he glances up at the clock on the wall, checks it against his watch. Does an internal calculation.

TIME JUMP:

123

**INT. DAY ROOM. NURSING HOME - DAY 35**

123

NEIL is still holding MARY's hand. He looks across at the clock. He looks at MARY, fast asleep. Slowly disentangles his hand from hers . . .

CUT TO:

124 **EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY 35**

124

NEIL rushes away from the Nursing home as fast as he can.

CUT TO:

125 **EXT. DUGOUT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - NIGHT 35**

125

Close up on the bench. First we see LOU watching intently, pull out to reveal NEIL sitting next to him, in shorts, kit and tracksuit top.

LOU

Laino! Laino! Move wide! Move wide!

LOU turns to NEIL.

LOU (CONT'D)

Nello. Go and warm up.

NEIL

All right, boss.

NEIL warms up in front of the Stoke fans.

FANS

(CHANTING)

Nello! Nello! Nello! Nello!

NEIL turns and acknowledges them in between his comedy warm up routine, which, given his weight and the size of the kit, is perilous . . .

FANS (CONT'D)

(SINGING)

Bring him on! Bring him on! Bring him on!

LOU looks over at NEIL warming up. He turns to the field of play again.

LOU

Paddy! Get over here!

PADDY comes over to LOU.

LOU (CONT'D)

I'm going to bring Nello on. When he gets in the penalty area everybody get out. Let him score. Okay. Tell our lads and tell the Villa lads too. (SHOUTING ACROSS)  
Nello! Get over here! You're going on!

NELLO looks up and jogs over to the dugout.

CUT TO:

126

**EXT. DUGOUT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - NIGHT 35**

126

LOU has his hand on NEIL's shoulder as he is telling him instructions.

LOU  
Just hang about in their penalty area and cause them problems.

NEIL  
How would I do that?

LOU  
Well, you're causing me problems just looking at you so it shouldn't be too hard.

NEIL  
All right, boss.

LOU  
Anything comes near you. You hit it!

NEIL  
Right, boss. Like a brick outhouse.

LOU  
I mean the ball. Not the other players.

NEIL  
Okay, boss.

LOU  
Score one for your Mum, Nello. Okay?

NEIL  
Okay? She'll like that.

NEIL stands on the touchline waiting to come on. BOMBER trots over, having been brought off.

BOMBER  
Good luck, Nello.

NEIL  
Well played, Thumper.

BOMBER  
It's Bomber. Like a plane or something. Not, Thumper.

But NEIL is in heaven as he trots on to the turf to the roar of the crowd. REAL LOU turns to camera.

REAL LOU  
This really happened by the way.

LOU  
(DOUBTFUL)  
Did it?

REAL LOU  
Yes. It actually did. How could I let the fans down.

CROWD  
You fat bastard! You fat bastard!

NEIL acknowledges the crowd. Play passes him by. He is walking but looks puffed out. Then a deflection. A corner. NEIL slowly makes his way to the penalty area. It is like watching a bus come to a halt. But the PLAYERS have got the message. He is alone in the box. The STOKE PLAYER swings it in and . . .

NEIL watches the corner taker shape, up. He and we can hear his heart beat and . . .

CONT:

127      **EXT. PITCH. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - NIGHT 35**      127

The sound - ethereal.

Slow motion: the ball comes across, NEIL, to everyone's surprise including his own, leaps like a salmon and meets the ball with a colossal header that rockets into the net, past the keeper's outstretched hands . . .

Back to NEIL, his arms aloft, about to be engulfed by team mates.

CUT TO:

127A      **EXT. PITCH. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - NIGHT 35**      127A

NEIL and REAL NEIL trudging off the pitch together. Other players slapping NEIL on the back, etc.

NEIL  
(IN AWE)  
Did it really happen like that?

NEIL looks to REAL NEIL. REAL NEIL looks at him.

REAL NEIL

No.

CUT TO:

128 **OMITTED** 128

128A **INT. CHANGING ROOM. VICTORIA GROUND - NIGHT 35** 128A

NEIL sits on the bench, still in his kit, head in hands.  
Other players are showering, chatting, not bothered.

LAINO

Come on, Nello. Cheer up! It was  
only a fucking testimonial.

NEIL

I think it must have hit a bobble  
just before I hit it.

LAINO is already walking away, joining in another  
conversation, oblivious. NEIL shakes his head at his failure.

CUT TO:

129 **INT. LAUNDRY ROOM. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - NIGHT 35** 129

NEIL takes one last look at the dirty kit rotating, still  
downcast.

CUT TO:

130 **OMITTED** 130

131 **INT. CORRIDOR. MANAGER'S OFFICE. TRAINING GRND - NIGHT 35** 131

NEIL lingers as LOU is clearing his desk. LOU doesn't look  
up. Neither of them know what to say.

NEIL

Sorry I let you down, boss.

LOU

What? When did you let me down?

NEIL

Tonight. After I'd slipped my  
marker. I should have buried it.

LOU

I'm not sure slipping your marker  
was the problem, Neil. I think  
maybe when you fell over.

NEIL  
The first time?

LOU  
To be honest, the second didn't  
help either.

NEIL  
I skied the shot a bit, didn't I?

LOU  
Just a bit. I think the ball's  
still rising now. I think Joderell  
Bank have just picked it up.

NEIL  
Must have hit a bobble. Blinking  
groundsman.

LOU  
It happens to the best of us. Don't  
let it worry you.

NEIL  
I think you might have played me  
out of position. All the best,  
boss.

LOU  
It was you by the way.

NEIL  
What was?

LOU  
Remember when you asked me who the  
best signing I'd ever made was? It  
was you, mate. No contest.

NEIL  
Yes. I know it was.

They shake hands. He turns and walks out.

CUT TO:

132     **EXT. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - NIGHT 35**     132

NEIL walks away from the ground, glowing with pride.

CUT TO:

133     **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - NIGHT 35**     133

It's late, and NEIL is sparked out in his arm chair, his  
scrapbook open on his lap.



The images of NEIL with the Stoke team celebrating the Autoglass Trophy win, promotion as champions . . . him and Lou.

CUT TO:

134      **EXT. NEWSAGENT'S. STOKE - DAY 36**      134

NEIL, dressed as NELLO the clown but not wearing make up yet, comes out of the Newsagent's with a pile of 'Stoke Sentinels.' and a small cardboard bird box with a canary in it.

CUT TO:

135      **INT/EXT. BUS/ROADS (TRAVELLING) - DAY 36**      135

NEIL, still smiling to himself, sits on the bus. He is looking at the sports page of the Stoke Sentinel. 'NELLO MAKES HIS STOKE DEBUT'. A photo of him nearly scoring.

CUT TO:

136      **EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY 36**      136

NEIL, a bag full of shopping, dressed as a NELLO the clown, arrives at the Nursing Home proudly clutching the newspaper. He goes inside . . .

CUT TO:

137      **INT. NURSING HOME - DAY 36**      137

As NEIL enters SUSAN - a Careworker, comes out to greet him, solemn faced.

SUSAN

Neil.

NEIL

(OF HIS CLOWN GEAR)

You hadn't forgotten, had you? I said I'd come and do Nello . . . and I did. (BEAT) I've brought the canary too . . . it's not part of the act, it's for my Mum.

SUSAN

Could you come into the office for a minute, duck?

CUT TO:

138

**INT. OFFICE. NURSING HOME - DAY 36**

138

NEIL, looking stunned, sits opposite SUSAN.

SUSAN

It was very peaceful.

NEIL

Yes.

SUSAN

She died in her sleep. And she died proud of you. We went in this morning and found her.

NEIL

This morning?

SUSAN

That's right.

NEIL

I rang you this morning.

SUSAN

We wanted to tell you in person. We thought it was better that way.

NEIL

She didn't want me to leave. (BEAT)  
Last night. When I had to get my bus. She didn't want me to leave. She knew.

CUT TO:

139

**INT./EXT. BUS (TRAVELLING) - DAY 36**

139

NEIL, still in full clown regalia, sits on the bus, dazed, bewildered.

CUT TO:

140

**EXT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 36**

140

NEIL, still in full clown regalia, turns the lock on his front door.

CUT TO:

141

**INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE. BATHROOM - DAY 36**

141

NEIL slowly removes his make up.

CUT TO:



145A **EXT. CHRISTADELPHIAN HALL - DAY 37**

145A

NEIL, walks away, flanked by REV MARK and MALCOLM.

REV MARK  
Anything you need, Neil. You call me.

NEIL  
I'm doing well though, aren't I?

REV MARK  
You're doing very well. Yes.

NEIL  
I suppose I've got time for the choir now.

REV MARK  
Why not. You okay for a lift?

MALCOLM  
You're coming with me, aren't you?

NEIL  
Am I? Oh, right.

MALCOLM  
Mary would have loved the service today.

MALCOLM's compliment doesn't seem to land.

NEIL  
I'm doing well, aren't I?

MALCOLM  
You are, Neil. You really are.

CUT TO:

146 **OMITTED**

146

147 **INT. MARY'S BEDROOM. NURSING HOME - DAY 38**

147

NEIL is shown into Mary's room. He stands there on his own for a few moments. He touches familiar objects. The photo of him. Her precious tea set on a tray by the bed. He opens the wardrobe and sees her clothes hanging there . . . And by the window, the chart of wild birds, the binoculars, the book of wild birds and Mary's delicate drawings of birds.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (O.S)  
"My soul he doth restore again,  
And me to walk doth make  
(MORE)

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (O.S) (CONT'D)  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
E'en for his own name's sake."

CUT TO:

148      **INT. CHAPEL. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 38**      148

The NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR sing and play.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR  
"Yea, though I walk in death's dark  
vale,  
Yet will I fear no ill."

CUT TO:

149      **EXT. NURSING HOME - DAY 38**      149

NEIL comes out carrying a small suitcase and a big clear plastic bag full of MARY's possessions.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (O.S.)  
"For thou art with me, and thy rod  
And staff my comfort still."

CUT TO:

150      **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 38**      150

NEIL enters the flat. He puts down the suitcase and the plastic bag. He takes the book of wild birds and the chart out of the top and starts to flick through the pages, not really looking.

He sees a sparrow on the lawn. He goes to put a cross in the chart but he can't be bothered. His heart isn't in it.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (O.S.)  
"My table thou hast furnished me  
In presence of my foes;  
My head thou dost with oil anoint  
And my cup overflows."

JUMP CUT:

151      **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 39**      151

NEIL sits in the flat, the budgies fly free. Pizza boxes and takeaway cartons. He looks as lost as we have seen him . . . The hymn continues but in an orthodox church setting.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"Goodness and mercy all my life  
Shall surely follow me;"

CUT TO:

152      INT. CHAPEL. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 40      152

'The Lord's My Shepherd'.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR  
"And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling place shall be."

We pick out NEIL singing too. But a little less robustly than before. He is unshaven, his clothes dishevelled.

JUMP CUT:

153      INT. CORRIDOR. CHAPEL. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 40      153

NEIL walks away. REV MARK comes after him.

REV MARK  
Neil? Neil. Going already?

NEIL  
Yes.

REV MARK  
How are you coping.

NEIL  
I'm coping well, yes. I'm doing well, aren't I?

NEIL exits, he clearly isn't doing well.

CUT TO:

154      INT. LOCAL CONVENIENCE STORE. STOKE - DAY 40      154

NEIL is fiddling with his purse, already with a pile of change on the counter. A YOUNG SHOPKEEPER has his hand out waiting, not really disguising his boredom and general impatience.

NEIL  
How much did you say it was again?

YOUNG SHOPKEEPER  
8.27.

NEIL takes bits of fluff and bus tickets out of his purse. Tips it upside down. Nothing.

NEIL  
Is Doris not on today?

YOUNG SHOPKEEPER  
8.27.

NEIL  
How much is it if I put the bread  
back?

The YOUNG SHOPKEEPER closes his eyes briefly with ill  
disguised contempt.

CUT TO:

155     **OMITTED**     155

156     **EXT. SEATS. VICTORIA GROUND. STOKE - DAY 40**     156

MALCOLM works his way to his seat. The match has already  
begun. He notes the empty seat beside him . . . looks around,  
no sign of NEIL.

CUT TO:

157     **EXT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 40**     157

NEIL arrives back home carrying his shopping, to find a small  
cardboard box with air holes waiting on his doorstep.  
Subdued. He picks up the box and takes it inside.

CUT TO:

158     **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 40**     158

NEIL slowly releases the new budgie into the aviary and reads  
the accompanying note.

JUMP CUT:

159     **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 41**     159

NEIL sits in front of the television, watching Trapeze. He  
looks dishevelled. Depressed. The phone rings. He lets it  
ring out . . .

CUT TO:





MALCOLM (CONT'D)

How are the birds doing?

NEIL

They're doing well. Yeah.

MALCOLM

Is that a new one? The blue one?

NEIL

It's a budgie from Zippos. Norman Barrett send it me. It used to be in his act but it's retired now.

MALCOLM

Bloody hell, Neil. Even your budgies are celebrities.

NEIL smiles, for the first time.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Freshers' week starts on Monday. Got to get down there and snap up the good players for Neil Baldwin FC . . .

NEIL

I 'dunna if I'll bother this time. Me hip's been playing me up.

MALCOLM

You know your Mum'd want you to get out there, don't you? Doing what you do best. Meeting people and that.

NEIL

She would. That's true.

MALCOLM

No time like the present.

NEIL

I dunna' know about that.

MALCOLM

I've heard the Union are doing two for one hot dogs.

NEIL looks at MALCOLM for a moment.

NEIL

Does that include onions?

MALCOLM

(A SMILE)

I should imagine so, yes.

NEIL nods. He is thinking this over.

CUT TO:

163

**EXT. STUDENT UNION. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 43**

163

NEIL stares up at the students' union, as on the first day at Keele. But this time, after a moment, RICHARD and ALAN come out of the Union to meet him.

RICHARD  
Nello. How are you?

NEIL  
I'm doing well, yeah.

ALAN hugs NEIL.

ALAN  
Sorry to hear about your Mum,  
Nello.

NEIL  
I cried once and then I got on with  
it.

NEIL starts to head to the Union building. But RICHARD steers him to the Sports Hall.

RICHARD  
Come on. This way. We've got you an  
office this season.

NEIL  
(NODS)  
Well, I do need an office. The boss  
should have an office.

CUT TO:

164

**INT. NEIL'S OFFICE. DERELICT CAFE. KEELE UNI. - DAY 43**

164

The space has been a catering area which looks out on the Sports Ground. It has been tarted up as 'Neil's Office'. RICHARD and ALAN are showing NEIL one of the tables they have 'customised' with the old NEIL BALDWIN FOOTBALL CLUB banner. Two framed photos on the wall of NEIL playing and with Gordon Banks next to it. A plate of sandwiches and a flask on the desk.

RICHARD  
There you go. Next to the training  
pitch. Just like Fergie. What do  
you think?

NEIL

Me and Fergie don't get on.

NEIL takes it in, nodding with approval. A beat. He looks out at the pitch.

NEIL (CONT'D)

The desk might need to be over here. (BEAT) I can see the players in action then. And if I fancy the look of them I can get them signed up . . .

RICHARD and ALAN exchange a look.

RICHARD

Sure. Okay. Good. Alan. You get that end.

RICHARD and ALAN go either end of the table to lift it as NEIL stands and watches.

NEIL

You can move the pictures later, hey, lads.

RICHARD

(PANTING)

Thanks, Neil. Yes.

JUMP CUT:

165      **INT. BALLROOM. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 44**      165

Freshers' Week. NEIL sits at a table. Big handwritten sign in front of him. 'Neil Baldwin Football Club'. Other students set up tables for other university societies around him.

JUMP CUT:

166      **INT. BALLROOM. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 44**      166

A row of students signing up for all sorts of events . . .  
NEIL sits with a clipboard. Nobody queueing to sign up . . .

JUMP CUT:

167      **INT. BALLROOM. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 44**      167

Freshers' Week in full swing. Still no sign of any interest as NEIL sits at his table, now in full Stoke City Kit . . .

CUT TO:

168

**EXT. EMPTY ROAD. KEELE - NIGHT 44**

168

NEIL, a lone figure, with his home made cardboard sign, checking his watch as cars roaring past.

A car comes down the road towards him. NEIL is temporarily blinded by the headlights. The car draws to a halt. For a moment this appears to be sinister . . . then MALCOLM pops his head out of the car window.

MALCOLM

Neil. What are you doing here at this time of night?

NEIL

Waiting for my lift.

MALCOLM

Looks like they forgot.

(SIGHS)

Come on. You'd better get in.

NEIL gets into the car with MALCOLM. They drive away.

CUT TO:

169

**INT/EXT. MALCOLM'S CAR/ROADS (TRAVELLING) - NIGHT 44**

169

They drive away.

MALCOLM

You shouldn't be hanging round on your own at that time of night.

NEIL

I wasn't hanging round. I was waiting for a lift.

MALCOLM

Which didn't come.

NEIL

No. But you did.

MALCOLM

What would you have done if I hadn't have turned up?

NEIL

You did turn up though, didn't you?

MALCOLM

I know. But what if I hadn't.

NEIL

But you did.

MALCOLM

And what if I hadn't turned up?  
Just think about that. How would  
you have got home then?

NEIL

Somebody would have turned up.

MALCOLM

You can't go through life relying  
on something just turning up.

NEIL

Yes, you can. (BEAT) Well, I can  
anyway . . .

MALCOLM shakes his head. NEIL stares out at the traffic.

CUT TO:

170

INT. STUDENT UNION. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 45

170

MALCOLM on a payphone in the Students' Union.

MALCOLM

Hiya, Kevin. You don't actually  
know me but I am calling on behalf  
of Neil Baldwin . . .

CUT TO:

171

INT. BALLROOM. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 46

171

NEIL sits with the real GARY LINEKER next to him. NEIL is now  
in full England kit. Now there is a full queue of players at  
his table. People nudging each other and looking over . . .

PETE

When do we play?

NEIL

Training every Sunday. Matches on  
Wednesday afternoon.

PETE

I play central midfield.

NEIL

You play where I tell you to play,  
young man.

PETE

No, really. I had trials with  
Macclesfield Town.

NEIL  
The problem is, son, central  
midfield is my position.

PETE looks over at GARY LINEKER.

PETE  
This is a wind up, right?

GARY LINEKER  
I'm just the club president, son.  
It's the gaffer that makes the  
decisions.

PETE  
(A LITTLE BEWILDERED)  
Right . . . Thanks.

He walks away, having signed up . . . Another STUDENT starts  
to sign up and we . . .

CUT TO:

172

**EXT. PAVILION. SPORTS FIELD - DAY 47**

172

Pre-match. A group of students, including RICHARD, PETE and  
ALAN in various kits of various sizes sit around, stand  
around, some smoke. One drinks from a can of beer. Another  
eats crisps.

NEIL  
You. Young man! This is the ball.  
You only have to put it in the net.  
It's that simple. Now do your job.

ALAN  
Neil. We're only playing the  
Christian Union.

NEIL looks across at a bunch of players looking even more  
raggle taggle than his own.

NEIL  
That is part of the problem.  
They've got the Lord on their side.  
. . . are you going to finish that  
pastie?

ALAN, bemused, hands him the pastie.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
(EATING)  
You, young man, have got a fitness  
problem. I'll be bringing myself on  
for the second half.

The STUDENTS look at each other. They can't be serious. NEIL takes his tracksuit top off to reveal his Stoke City testimonial shirt.

NEIL (CONT'D)

I played for Stoke City. Let's never forget that.

ALAN

No. I don't suppose anybody ever will.

PETE

Thought you said you got a Ref.

NEIL

He'll be here.

PETE

You've not got that lad from Islamic Soc again, is it? He looked like a strong wind could blow him over.

NEIL

No. I've got Premiership quality this time.

PETE

Oh, yeah.

NEIL

Yeah.

They look out over the horizon and a bemused looking URIAH RENNIE in full Premiership kit is walking across the pitch. The other players look at each other in amazement.

URIAH RENNIE

Neil! How you doing?

CUT TO:

173

**EXT. SPORTS FIELD. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 47**

173

The game commences. Montage of tackles sliding in. Players busting a gut. And, occasionally the gloriously overweight NEIL striding around, pointing, in full skin tight, Stoke City kit . . .

CONT:







REV MARK (CONT'D)

Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled."

JUMP TO:

184 INT. STOKE MINSTER - DAY 49

184

REV MARK and NEIL sit side by side on a pew in the now empty Church.

NEIL

One of my favourites, that. Feeding the five thousand.

REV MARK

(SMILES)

Now why doesn't that surprise me, Neil?

NEIL

Never trust a man who doesn't like his food.

REV MARK

I'm glad you enjoyed the sermon.

NEIL

I always enjoyed your sermons. That's why I told you you'd make Bishop one day. It was like watching Mark Stein for the first time. I knew he was special too.

REV MARK

Mark Stein?

NEIL

33 Goals in 57 matches. I made you a card.

NEIL hands REV MARK a home made congratulations card.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Tell you well done, like.

REV MARK

(TOUCHED)

Thank you, Neil. That means a lot.

NEIL

I've got a cockatoo.

REV MARK  
(PANICKING SLIGHTLY)  
Oh, no presents, I insist. The card  
is more than enough.

NEIL  
No, no, no. The cockatoo is for me.  
Fosset's Circus give it me. It's  
got something wrong with its foot  
so it's not cut out for  
showbusiness. It lands on my head  
every night. Without fail. He said  
he give it me because he knew I'd  
look after it. And I will.

REV MARK  
I'm sure you will. Your Mum always  
said you had a real knack for  
looking after animals.

NEIL  
She was proud of me, you know, my  
Mum.

REV MARK  
She was Neil. She was indeed.

They both stare ahead for a few moments, remembering their  
shared history.

CUT TO:

185

**EXT. STOKE MINSTER - DAY 49**

185

NEIL and REV MARK come out of the Church. The REV MARK has a  
car and driver waiting.

NEIL  
Can you drop me off on the way?

REV MARK  
Well it's not really on my way.

NEIL  
It is if you go that way to drop me  
off.

REV MARK  
(SMILES)  
Yes. Of course. Of course . . .

NEIL climbs into the car. The car moves off.

NEIL (O.S.)  
Can we stop off at the Co-op on the  
way. I've got a spot of shopping to  
do.

REV MARK (O.S.)  
(SIGHS IN RESIGNATION)  
Why not. Why not.

The car pulls away, NEIL can be seen waving to passers by. As he does so we can hear the NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR starting to hum the melody of 'Guantelamela', which then becomes . . .

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"One Neil Baldwin! There's only one  
Neil Baldwin!"

CUT TO:

186      **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 50**      186

NEIL is sitting in his flat. A cockatoo on his shoulder watching, 'Trapeze'. The Choir kick in again . . .

NEIL (V.O.)      NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
I have had a Marvellous life.      "One Neil Baldwin! There's  
Because I decide I want to do      only One Neil Baldwin!"  
something and I go and do it.

CUT TO:

187      **INT. NEIL'S FLAT. STOKE - DAY 50**      187

STILL PHOTO: NEIL with Herbie the cockatoo on his head.

CUT TO:

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"One Neil Baldwin! There's only one  
Neil Baldwin."

CUT TO:

188      **EXT. SPORTS FIELD. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 52**      188

STILL PHOTO: This year's NEIL BALDWIN FOOTBALL CLUB team photo, and, sitting in the middle of the front row, in contrast to his young fit charges, sits REAL NEIL, in Stoke City shirt.

CAPTION: 'NEIL BALDWIN IS STILL THE MANAGER OF THE NEIL BALDWIN FOOTBALL CLUB.

NEIL BALDWIN HAS WON PLAYER OF THE YEAR FOR THE PAST 42 SEASONS'.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"One Neil Baldwin! There's only one  
Neil Baldwin."

CUT TO:

189      **INT. CIRCUS BACKDROP - DAY 53**      189

STILL PHOTO: RINGMASTER NORMAN BARRETT MBE and REAL NEIL.

NORMAN BARRETT  
I'm a little nervous working with  
you, Nello. So you'll have to be  
kind.

CAPTION: 'NELLO' THE CLOWN IS STILL A LEGEND IN THE CIRCUS  
COMMUNITY'.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"One Neil Baldwin! There's only one  
Neil Baldwin!"

CUT TO:

190      **INT. BRITANNIA STADIUM - DAY 54**      190

STILL PHOTO: REAL NEIL and REAL MALCOLM stand side by side.

CAPTION: MALCOLM AND NEIL HAVE BEEN FRIENDS NOW FOR OVER 40  
YEARS . . . STOKE CITY HAVE WON ONE MAJOR TROPHY DURING THIS  
TIME.

NEIL BALDWIN CHOIR (V.O.)  
"One Neil Baldwin! There's only one  
Neil Baldwin!"

CUT TO:

191      **INT. STUDENT UNION. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 55**      191

STILL PHOTO: REAL NEIL talking to CONTEMPORARY STUDENTS in  
the union.

CAPTION: 'NEIL HAS BEEN TALKING TO STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY  
FOR 53 YEARS AND COUNTING'

CUT TO:

192      **INT. KEELE UNIVERSITY - DAY 56**      192

A degree ceremony. REAL NEIL receiving his honorary degree.

CAPTION: "IN JUNE 2013 NEIL RECEIVED AN HONORARY MASTERS DEGREE FROM KEELE UNIVERSITY FOR SERVICES TO STUDENT WELFARE."

Out on REAL NEIL's smile . . .

CUT TO:

193

**OMITTED**

193