

**My Life
Is A Series
Of People
Saying Goodbye**

Dan Rebellato

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The play contains a series of crossfades between scenes as character, actor, conversation, and setting all change at different times.

I've indicated character like this:

1. Actor and character united:

JANET Hello

2. JANET actor speaking JANE's lines:

JANET/JANE Hello

This means playing Jane's lines in the voice of Janet.

If there is a whole sequence of lines for JANET/JANE, it might be interesting to experiment with changing character voice slowly over the exchanges.

High on a mountainside. Wind whipping in our ears. Two mountaineers are on a ledge halfway up a mountain.

SCOTT Well hello mountains.

BEN Didn't I tell you?

SCOTT You told me, sure, but this.

BEN I know.

SCOTT The expanse of it all. The sun. I mean, you feel closer to the sun. What's that all about?

BEN Well, you are closer to the sun.

SCOTT Yeah but you really feel it.

BEN Because you are.

SCOTT Sht. You're spoiling my moment.

BEN I can see you becoming a real mountaineering bore.

SCOTT I mean, look at that.

BEN Top of the world, ma.

SCOTT (sings loudly) I'm on the Top of the world I'm looking down on creation and the only explanation -

BEN Okay, not so loud though.

SCOTT Oh, no, right.

BEN Plus that song gets a whole lot less relevant in a line or two.

SCOTT Actually, Benjamin darling, I've got something to tell you.

BEN Ha ha.

SCOTT The snow is cold but my passion is hot hot hot.

BEN It bloody is cold too.

SCOTT The wind is picking up.

BEN The snow's drifting too.

SCOTT Oh wow look. It's forming patterns in the air.

BEN Patterns?

SCOTT Like faces. Like webs. Wowzers.

BEN Come on.

SCOTT How's the ice looking?

BEN I think it's okay. It feels firm.

SCOTT You don't sound sure.

BEN No I think so.

Attacks the ice face with a pick.

 That sounds solid, right?

SCOTT You're the expert.

BEN It's fine.

SCOTT Okay wait a second.

BEN What's the matter?

SCOTT Woah.

BEN What is?

SCOTT For a moment I thought —

BEN What?

SCOTT I had a weird flash of something -

BEN Talk to me, Scott.

SCOTT I suddenly felt like I wasn't here.

BEN What do you mean?

SCOTT This is going to sound stupid.

BEN Go on.

SCOTT When I was 21, I went to Spain with some friends. We went to Galicia and climbed the Cathedral in Santiago. We were pretty drunk. But we sat at the top and watched the Galician hills. And I just felt like I was there again. Drunk and everything.

BEN You should take a toot on the oxygen.

SCOTT It was just a moment.

BEN Seriously, it's getting very thin up here.

SCOTT I'm not hallucinating, Ben. It was just a flash. Just a feeling.

BEN Because we can go back down.

SCOTT No, we're so near.

BEN If you're sure.

SCOTT Yeah, it was just a thing.

BEN Well if you feel like that again, tell me. I've got you, okay?

SCOTT I know, thanks mate.

BEN You're alright to press on?

SCOTT I think so.

BEN Think so?

SCOTT Know so.

BEN I mean it. Take a toot.

SCOTT I will.

BEN Well do.

SCOTT Actually I do feel a bit -

BEN Okay -

SCOTT Weak -

BEN Sit down.

SCOTT No I'm -

BEN Come away from the edge -

SCOTT I'm - I'm -

BEN Seriously, now -

SCOTT Woah -

BEN What -

SCOTT Another flash -

BEN Scott!

SCOTT I -

Scott drops to the edge of the path and tumbles over the edge.

SCOTT Ben -

BEN I've got you.

SCOTT Help me.

BEN Can you get a foothold?

SCOTT I can't. I can't.

BEN Don't panic, okay. I've got you.

SCOTT Can you pull me?

BEN Can you dig into the ice?

SCOTT I can't reach. I'm just hanging here.

BEN I can't pull you up. You're too heavy.

SCOTT Ben, you've got to try.

BEN I can't. If I pull any more I'm going to lose my footing.

SCOTT What are we going to do?

BEN Okay now, Scott, listen to me and don't panic.

SCOTT I'm listening, Ben.

BEN I can see, ten metres below you there's a snowdrift. It's on an outcrop and it's sheltered from the wind.

SCOTT What?

BEN I don't know how much longer I can hold you. But if you fall, you'll land on the snow. You'll be okay.

SCOTT No, Ben, you can't —

BEN I promise you, I'll go and get help and I will be back.

SCOTT Ben. Please. You can't leave me.

BEN/NATHAN I'm sorry. But I'm going to have to let you go.

The mood is changing. Characters,
location, story.

SCOTT No, Ben, please –

BEN/NATHAN I'm afraid the decision's been made.

SCOTT/SEAN Well unmake it.

BEN/NATHAN It's the climate. It's the climate we're in. I'm sorry.

SCOTT/SEAN What does that even mean?

BEN/NATHAN I'm sorry, but I really have no choice.

SCOTT/SEAN You do. You have a choice.

BEN/NATHAN It's either you go down or, frankly, we all go down.

SCOTT/SEAN That's absurd. Come on.

BEN/NATHAN It means we're making you redundant. I'm sorry, Sean.

SEAN Why me?

And by now we are in the boardroom.

BEN/NATHAN You've been a great servant of this company, Sean, no one's questioning that and I can assure you we have put together a very generous package but the fact is we're – the company this is – we're really pushing the near-East part of the operation, you know this. And the board just doesn't think that, given your experience in Europe, we will be able to make the best use of your skills and experience.

SEAN But I can adapt. Near-east, Europe, the principle's the same.

NATHAN Well, no it isn't. I mean it really isn't.

SEAN Well, send me on a course.

NATHAN This isn't a course thing, it's not something you can retrain for.

SEAN What, are we moving into brain surgery? Come on, Nat. This is ridiculous.

NATHAN In any case, Nat, I'm sure there are dozens, hundreds of companies with a big European focus who would snap you up like that.

SEAN You've changed, Nat.

NATHAN Let's not make this personal.

SEAN Did you argue my case?

NATHAN Sean, of course, as much as I could, but the business case is plain for all to see. You're Europe, Sean, and in this sector I'm afraid Europe is history.

SEAN We joined this company on the same day. We came over from Wilkins-Barrett, we were going to shake the firm up. I could have gone the management route but I wanted to stay at the operational level. We planned the strategy together; you set the course, I was at the wheel. We did this together and now you're letting me go?

NATHAN You haven't seen the package we're offering you. It -

SEAN Why not Geoff Woods? Geoff screwed up royally in June and I covered for him. Give Geoff this brilliant package, I don't want it.

NATHAN Geoff has made valuable connections in Jordan, Egypt, Syria and you don't need me to tell you what those connections are worth right now.

SEAN Well I'm not accepting this you know.

The phone rings.

NATHAN I'm sorry, I should really get this.

SEAN Oh you are kidding me –

NATHAN (on phone) Hello?

LOU Sarah? It's Louise.

SARAH Lou? Where are you?

LOU I'm in a cab.

SARAH How long will you be?

LOU No. No, Sarah I –
I'm going away.

SARAH What?

LOU I'm going away for a bit.

SARAH Away where? How long? What do you mean?
Aren't we having dinner?

LOU Oh look, we're going into a tunnel so I'm
probably going to lose

Pause.

NATHAN No one there. Sorry about that. Where were
we?

SEAN You remember we walked through the door
together that first day. Fifteen years ago
nearly.

NATHAN Of course I do.

SEAN We walked through the lobby, through the
workshop, through the shop floor, up into
the print room, the design studio, the
back offices. And every step of the way –

NATHAN I know, Sean –

SEAN That needs to be changed. He's not working efficiently. We can amalgamate this and knock that through. We didn't have to say it, we just knew we could turn this around and we did turn it around. You and me.

NATHAN And I don't want to you to think we're ungrateful –

SEAN Not we, you. Don't give me all this 'we'.

NATHAN Sean, I could have got someone else to do this. I could have had anyone – Nick, Bryony – sit you down and give you the bad news (if it is bad news) but I didn't because we go back together and I wanted to be fair to you.

SEAN 'Fair'.

NATHAN There's no good way of doing this.

SEAN How about 'not doing it'?

NATHAN That's not an option. I have responsibilities to the company.

SEAN I could go to a Tribunal. Tie the company up for months, years maybe.

DAWN/NATHAN The package is strictly time-limited.

SEAN Could get more from a Tribunal.

DAWN/NATHAN You're not even in the Union, Sean.

SEAN ...

DAWN/NATHAN Just take a look at the package. I pushed for you, I really did, and I think you'll like it. It's pretty tasty.

We are starting to move into a restaurant.

SEAN/RICHARD Maybe I'm not hungry.

DAWN Take a look.

SEAN/RICHARD I'll just have a coffee.

DAWN You can't just have a coffee.

RICHARD Why can't I just have a coffee? I'm a
paying customer. I want a COFFEE.

DAWN Keep your voice down.

RICHARD I don't know why we come here anyway.

DAWN Because it's close.

RICHARD It's not that close.

DAWN It's just round the corner!

RICHARD Given how bad the food is, it's a long way
to come.

DAWN You used to like the food.

RICHARD I used to like the atmosphere but I've
never liked the food.

DAWN What's got into you lately?

RICHARD ...

DAWN You've changed. You really have.

RICHARD What about you?

DAWN You used to be happy.

RICHARD (derisive.) 'Happy'.

DAWN Now you're angry all the time.

RICHARD I'm not angry. Maybe I'm
Maybe I'm a bit
Let down by things.

DAWN Things?

RICHARD I'm always saying goodbye to things. My youth for one. I'm at that age my friends have started dying. And at school, the kids, you teach them, they become adults, you get to respect them, then they go and you never see them again.

DAWN You have to harden your heart to that.

RICHARD Yes I know. And I do.

DAWN Because teaching is, well you told me this, teaching isn't a quid pro quo. You give yourself and they don't give the same back.

RICHARD It's just loss. Always loss. Everywhere I go, saying goodbye to things, things leaving, things never coming back.

DAWN Okay.

RICHARD It's like there's a pattern in the air.

DAWN What about happy? Have you said goodbye to happy?

RICHARD Yes. I've said goodbye to happy.

DAWN I know.

RICHARD (voice breaking up like a bad phone line)
I don't understand it.

DAWN/LOU Sarah?

RICHARD/SARAH Can you hear me?

DAWN/LOU It's a really bad line.

RICHARD/SARAH Where are you? I thought you were on your way to me in a cab.

LOU I'm on a train.

SARAH A train? Where?

LOU I'm on a train, somewhere. I don't know. I just got on a train.

SARAH What's up, Lou? What's the matter?

LOU I had to get away. I'm sorry.

SARAH Has something happened?

LOU (Breaking up.) I love you but I have to say goodbye.

SARAH You're breaking up again.

LOU/DAWN (Breaking up.) I've decided. I'm sorry Richard, but I want us to spend some time apart.

RICHARD ...
You're not serious.

DAWN I'm sorry, Richard.

RICHARD You're not saying you want -
Is that what you're saying?
A divorce?

DAWN A little time apart.

RICHARD Which means a divorce.

DAWN No, Richard, it means I think we should spend a little time apart.

RICHARD I can't believe this.

DAWN Why can't you believe it?

RICHARD Because I, because I, because I can't,
because, why haven't you said something before?

DAWN I'm saying it now.

RICHARD Why? Why do you want a divorce?

DAWN All sorts of reasons.

RICHARD So you do want a divorce.

DAWN We're not happy together, Richard. Are we?

RICHARD We used to be happy.

DAWN Yes we were but we're not now and
sometimes, like you said, I think you have
to say goodbye to things.

RICHARD That's not what I said. I didn't say you
have to say goodbye to things.

DAWN I've made my mind up, Richard.

RICHARD You can't have.

DAWN I really think it's best.

RICHARD It isn't. It isn't best. It's best for
you. It's not best for me. Dawn, let's not
do this. Dawn, please. This is obscene.
This is ridiculous. This is cruel. This is
unkind. This is Penelope, of course. This
Jane, who I think you know. And I'm sure I
don't need to introduce Caroline Logan
from Central Office.

Ad libs of hellos from all parties through
this.

CAROLINE Oh Andrew and I know each other of old.

ANDREW Not as racy as it sounds.

Laughter.

DAVID I hope not!

ANDREW Federation of Conservative Students, for
our sins!

CAROLINE Back in the day.

ANDREW We weren't the real 'Hang Mandela'
brigade, I should add. We were more the
blazer and barbeque set.

CAROLINE Anyhoo.

JANE Yes.

DAVID Thank you so much for coming in, Andy, we
do appreciate it.

ANDREW Not at all and may I say in my turn, that
I'm so pleased to be talking face-to-face
about this because -

DAVID Well exactly -

ANDY You end up talking through the press and
it all gets -

CAROLINE Nasty -

ANDREW Sticky -

CAROLINE Yes, sticky -

ANDREW Right yes.

DAVID We thought we'd all just have a big old
sit down and talk it through and cut
through the the the -

ANDREW Nonsense.

DAVID Exactly, the the the -

ANDREW The B.S.

DAVID Exactly, the B.S. that comes with a so-
called scandal like this.

ANDREW Absolutely, because everyone knows what
B.S. it all is but you only really know
when you're up to your, you know -

CAROLINE Neck -

ANDREW Waist -

CAROLINE Waist okay -

ANDREW (Neck?)

DAVID Because the press, I don't know they seem to think they can say anything about politicians, about you, because they know you won't sue. It's totally unfair.

ANDREW I wanted to talk to you about that, actually. Legal avenues.

DAVID And then when we're firing off press releases from here, there, and everywhere, I mean I get confused, so Lord knows how the general public are supposed to cope!

ANDREW Amen to that actually.

CAROLINE So let's, as you say, just speak honestly to each other.

ANDREW Yes. Right. Well, let me start by apologising. This whole expenses thing. It's been embarrassing for the constituency and embarrassing for the Party. I know that. (I mean I think the Telegraph have their own agenda, but that's another discussion, right?)

No response.

But what I want to say right off the the the the right off the bat so to speak is that I am sorry, truly. Because I never meant to embarrass you, David, and believe me there have been some tough times over the last two months but knowing that my constituency chairman has been rock solid over this whole silly business has meant a lot, an awful lot to me.

Pause.

CAROLINE And an apology is a good start, it really is.

DAVID (Really good of you to say, Andy.)

CAROLINE But ultimately it's just an apology, just words when you come down to it.

ANDY No I absolutely –

CAROLINE If you'd let me finish, Andrew, because I think there's perhaps a level of anger on the doorsteps that you underestimate and an apology, mm, yes, okay, but we're not sure it will cut much ice with ordinary hardworking families, yada yada, I mean you know what I'm saying.

Beat.

ANDREW Can I speak now? Yes I do know that and I can assure you that I know I have to do more than just apologise – though I would take issue with you that it's just words – but absolutely I intend to demonstrate my contrition not only in words but in deeds also.

CAROLINE Yes, though if we could linger on words for a moment longer, it does seem to us that it's the words that are giving the mixed messages actually, because and I know you've always been an independent sort of MP / and that's obviously something we respect but well David actually we might actually very well want it any other way.

DAVID And we wouldn't want it any other way.

ANDREW What do you mean?

CAROLINE For a bit, perhaps.

JANE What Caroline's saying, if I might –

CAROLINE No, sure, sure.

JANE - butt in at this point is that over this whole expenses thing you have sometimes seemed a little... bullish.

ANDREW Bullish?

JANE Antagonistic, even.

ANDREW I hardly think antagonistic.

JANE Well, you have had a pop once or twice haven't you?

ANDREW A pop?

JANE Take Newsnight for example.

ANDREW I thought I came out fighting.

JANE Yes, you did rather, didn't you?

ANDREW Landed a few punches on old Paxo.

JANE Yes but to the majority of the people, Andrew, and it is terribly important that you understand this -

ANDREW Yes.

JANE For an MP in your position - in your particular position - for you to come out fighting doesn't look heroic, it looks, I don't know -

CAROLINE Grotesquely arrogant.

ANDREW Well. That's nice.

CAROLINE I do hope we can speak honestly.

ANDREW I've never been an arrogant man.

DAVID People like a rogue. But describing callers to 5Live as 'envious riff-raff' was, I think you'd accept, misjudged.

ANDREW Look. I know it looks bad but the facts can't be wished away; my expenses claims were within the rules and they were accepted by the Fees Office. You work in a paper factory and everyone says oh yes you can take paper home for your kids or what have you, well that's the rule you work by isn't it?

CAROLINE With respect, Andy, a few sheets of paper is one thing, a swimming pool is a different thing.

ANDREW My son, and you know this, David, has a condition –

DAVID Of course, of course.

CAROLINE So I think we understand each other on words; can we move onto deeds?

ANDREW That sounds ominous.

CAROLINE Does it? Ha ha.

ANDREW You want me in the stocks for a week? Ha ha.

CAROLINE Ha ha. Not at all.

DAVID Ha ha. Because sometimes you listen to the phone-ins and you think, that's what they'd like to see.

ANDREW Tell me about it.

CAROLINE In some ways that would be simpler, I mean I'm not advocating the stocks obviously, but you know short sharp shock, bit of revenge for the electorate, all over and done with, but this one has legs, Andrew. It's not going to go away.

ANDREW Go on then. Deeds. What do I have to do?

CAROLINE Well, quite honestly, and I'm sorry to have to say this, but you have rather painted yourself into a corner.

ANDREW Have I?

CAROLINE It's going to be very hard to persuade people of your genuine contrition without a really significant sacrifice.

ANDREW Go on.

CAROLINE I'm afraid – and this really doesn't come from me because I argued for you – but they think you to step away from this.

ANDREW Step away?

JANE Step down.

ANDREW Resign?

CAROLINE Their feeling, and I can't stress enough that I am merely the messenger, but they think that if you put out a dignified statement today / saying that, yes, today, saying that

ANDREW Today?

CAROLINE having consulted with family and friends etc. etc. you know the kind of thing / we see no reason, no reason at all, why, in a couple of years, you might not be able to work your

ANDREW Did you know about this?

DAVID It's been mooted.

CAROLINE passage back into parliament, with a clean slate and a lot and I mean a lot of goodwill from the Party.

ANDREW What about the constituency?

JANE It will trigger a by-election, obviously, be we are confident that with the right candidate, / we can hold onto this seat -

ANDREW The right candidate. Have you got someone
in mind?

CAROLINE Well there are a number of names that
we're / looking at.

ANDREW It's not Derek Goodall is it? Because -

CAROLINE Nothing's been / finalised.

DAVID Derek's not in contention.

ANDREW I think I have a right to know if you have
a name in mind.

Pause.

 Give me that. At least.

Pause.

CAROLINE/SUE Ross Kemp.

ANDREW Who?

CAROLINE/SUE I know, I know.

ANDREW/GREGG Ross Kemp?

CAROLINE/SUE Look, I've been over this with them.

ANDREW/GREGG They want to replace me? With Ross Kemp?

SUE I feel awful about this.

GREGG But this is my film. It's my idea. I wrote
it. I wrote that part for me.

SUE They are aware of that, of course.

GREGG I did the fundraising - you and me, we did
it together.

SUE Their feeling is that with a very high-
concept movie like this one -

GREGG Oh, what?

SUE No no. They're totally behind the film.

GREGG I mean yes it is high concept. That's what they signed up to. I'm not changing the script now.

SUE No one is asking you to change the script. I mean, Gregg, they love the script. They just feel that it could use more of a 'name' in the leading role. Someone with a bit of recognition for the poster.

GREGG But this is my part. My script, my part.

SUE I know, Gregg.

GREGG Seriously Sue, Ross Kemp?

SUE Or someone Ross Kemp-ish.

GREGG But he's a... soap star.

SUE Well, be fair.

GREGG He was, who was he? On Eastenders.

SUE Grant Mitchell.

GREGG Exactly.

SUE He won a BAFTA, so let's not be too sniffy about Ross Kemp.

GREGG He's a bruiser. He's a hard man.

SUE Did you see him on Extras?

GREGG The point is this is a very delicate movie. It's it's it's it's it's it's

SUE Yes I know -

GREGG It's gossamer. Mm? It's a flower. It's a web. It's something fragile and gentle

about society and who we are. I'm not ashamed to say I think it's profound. It has a message about the modern world.

SUE It's a very important message, Gregg.

GREGG You know, a dozen different stories, intertwined, delicately. It's like music. It says you are not alone.

SUE And it does that very nicely, Gregg

GREGG The borders between us, the way we flow into one another, the continuities kind of thing. I have to say I find it – well, beyond belief actually – that you / or anyone else, whoever frankly, would think that Ross Kemp could in a million years

SUE Not me, the backers.

GREGG carry off these subtle changes of character. He's just Ross Kemp. He only plays himself. It'll ruin the film.

SUE You've made your point.

GREGG The title is No Man Is An Island for a reason, Sue. It's about the things that connect us. Ross Kemp is a bloody island, a bloody great BAFTA-winning bald island of –

SUE They're not – well, I may as well say this since we've got onto it – they're not that sold on the title either.

GREGG They don't like the title?

SUE Apparently someone in their office keeps getting it confused.

GREGG Confused? How?

SUE They think it's called Norman is an Island.

GREGG (impatiently) Why would it be called
 Norman is an Island?

SUE I don't know. This is just what I'm
 hearing. I think you're vibrating.

GREGG You think I'm what?

SUE I think your phone is going.

GREGG Oh right, yes.
 Hello?

LOU Sarah, it's me.

GREGG/SARAH Lou? Where are you? I've been worried
 sick.

LOU I'm on a plane. We're about to take off.

SARAH A plane? What are you doing on a plane?

LOU I'm going away. I'm going far away.

SARAH When did you arrange this?

LOU I didn't. I just decided. This afternoon.

SARAH I don't understand what's going on, Lou.
 Please, get off the plane. We'll talk. If
 there's a problem, let's talk about it.

LOU I can't. I can't do that.

 (Indistinct sound of a flight attendant:
 'I'm sorry, madam, you'll have to turn off
 your mobile phone now.')

 I'm sorry, we're about to take off. I have
 to (yes, okay) – gotta go. Bye.

SUE Important?

GREGG Wrong number.

SUE Look, they're talking about withholding some of the money.

GREGG But we start principal photography next week.

SUE Which is why, I'm sorry Gregg, but they have us over a barrel.

GREGG I could walk. I could take my script with me.

SUE You could walk but the script is owned by the production company.

GREGG But I own the production company.

SUE Weeeeell. Legally it's kind of the other way round.

GREGG Okay, here's my offer. I could bow out of the project as an actor. But: no Ross Kemp. No changes to the title. In fact no changes to the script at all.

SUE There's one thing they did want me to raise.

GREGG Oh what now?

SUE The Wind.

GREGG What about The Wind?

SUE They're getting cold feet about The Wind.

GREGG I don't believe this. Did they say why?

SUE They worry an audience won't buy it.

GREGG If we really sell it to them, they'll buy it.

SUE They feel it's a bit, I hate this word but, pretentious to have a a a a character who is supposed to be The Wind.

GREGG The Wind's been in every draft. Six drafts they've seen, The Wind in every one, and they only raise this now?

SUE They think people might laugh.

GREGG I'm cool with people laughing.

SUE Yeah, not in a good way though.

GREGG People are entitled to respond in any way they want. If they want to laugh, let them laugh.

SUE Well, I'm just flagging it up.

GREGG If they're too immature to accept the the the beauty, actually, of a character called The Wind, I say screw 'em.

We're in a classroom. Playground outside.

SUE You mustn't take it personally.

GREGG I'm not taking it personally. Don't do that.

SUE It's a great script.

GREGG Thank you.

SUE And it's being made, that's the main thing.

NIKI/GREGG Yeah. With a change of title and actor and one character removed.

SUE But still, a new British film. That isn't about gangsters.

NIKI/GREGG True.

RICHARD/SUE You've done fantastically well.

NIKI/GREGG Yeah?

RICHARD/SUE Not that I ever doubted you, of course.

NIKI/GREGG Yeah right.

RICHARD/SUE You really have. Everyone's, well, really impressed. You should be very proud.

NIKI I guess.

RICHARD This should give you a lot of confidence in yourself.

NIKI I think it's luck, mostly.

RICHARD Nonsense. Hard work and real talent. You're a very bright girl.

NIKI Thank you, sir.

RICHARD I mean it. Four As.

NIKI Suppose.

RICHARD I didn't get four As.

NIKI Ah but they's easier now, innit.

RICHARD No. They're not. They're really not. Don't listen to that rubbish.

NIKI You should have seen my mum. She was well mad. Get all her friends on the phone and like going crazy.

RICHARD She's obviously very proud of you - as are we, Nicola.

NIKI Yeah, thanks.

RICHARD And are you all set for next month? Got your halls of residence sorted out that kind of thing?

NIKI Got a load of forms to fill in.

RICHARD It's very exciting.

NIKI Nah, I'm nervous, sir.

RICHARD You shouldn't be.

NIKI Cardiff. I ain't never even been there.

RICHARD It's a very good University.

NIKI Wales though.

RICHARD What's wrong with Wales?

NIKI I don't know nothing about the Welsh, like I mean oh my gosh I don't reckon I've ever even met a Welsh, sir.

RICHARD I think you'll find they're much like you and me, Nicola.

NIKI Is Mr Jones Welsh?

RICHARD I don't believe so.

NIKI Cos Jones is a like a Welsh name sir.

RICHARD It can be, yes, but in this case I believe he's English.

NIKI That's good.

RICHARD Why good?

NIKI Cos if the Welsh are all like Mr Jones I is outta there, you feel me?

RICHARD Now now.

NIKI He's a wanker sir, sorry, sir.

RICHARD (Laughs.)

NIKI Anyway, I just came in to say thanks.

RICHARD You don't have to thank me, but it's very nice of you to do so.

NIKI Most of the teachers take the piss and you don't and that's good.

RICHARD Oh I'm sure they don't take the – take the, take the Michael.

NIKI Are you not allowed to say piss, sir?

RICHARD I am allowed. I choose not to.

NIKI Okay, sir.

Pause. NIKI doesn't want to leave just yet.

Do you reckon everyone is gonna be like well clever?

RICHARD Like everywhere, there will be very clever people and there will be not-so-clever people, or should I say, clever people who are a tiny bit lazy.

NIKI Nah man, cos if they's all well clever I'm outta there.

RICHARD Don't you dare. You're as clever as any of them.

NIKI No way, nuh-uh.

RICHARD Yes you jolly well are. Look at your A-Levels.

NIKI That's just A-Levels.

RICHARD Don't put yourself down. You're a very bright girl.

NIKI Mr Jones said I was thick.

RICHARD Oh I'm sure he didn't.

NIKI Oh. Ma. Gosh! Ask anybody.

RICHARD Well I'm sure he didn't mean it.

NIKI He's always vexing me but I don't care. I think Mr Jones is thick anyway.

RICHARD Oh do you, Nicola...

NIKI Yeah cos he needs glasses to read the whiteboard and he ain't gone none. That is like well thick?

RICHARD If you knew how well you're spoken of in the staff room you wouldn't worry about Mr Jones.

NIKI Yeah?

RICHARD I can tell you it's ever so easy to get jaded in a job like this. Get into a rut, start wondering if anyone's really listening. You think: I could be anyone here, they wouldn't care. And then someone like you comes along, someone who Blossoms actually It really restores your faith. Reminds you why you do the job. So actually, Nicola I should be thanking you.

NIKI Yeah?

RICHARD Yes.

NIKI Go on then.

RICHARD What?

NIKI Say thank you.

RICHARD Ha ha.

NIKI I did.

RICHARD Well then I will. Thank you, Nicola.

NIKI What for?

RICHARD For restoring my faith.

NIKI You're welcome.

RICHARD Feels very formal all of a sudden.

NIKI You should give me a proper goodbye.

RICHARD I - I...

NIKI I can teach you this handshake.

RICHARD Oh, no no no.

NIKI It's really easy. First you go like this, then like this - no you gotta get your thumb like that - that's it. Then you go like that. Yeah, man, you got it.

RICHARD Maybe I'll teach the rest of the History department. Have it going round the staff room in no time.

NIKI Yeah, except Mr Jones. I forbid you to teach it to Mr Jones.

RICHARD You have my solemn word.

NIKI That's good.

RICHARD So. Do you think you'll come back and visit us?

NIKI Come back?

RICHARD/SARAH (on phone) Yes. When are you coming back?

NIKI/LOU I don't know.

RICHARD/SARAH Where are you now?

NIKI/LOU I'm flying, Sarah.

RICHARD/SARAH Are you still on the plane?

LOU No, we landed in Biarritz. That was ages ago.

SARAH 'We'? What do you mean?

LOU Not we-'us'-we. Just me and the other passengers.

SARAH So, what do you mean you're flying?

LOU I'm in a balloon Sarah. A hot-air balloon.

SARAH Oh my God, what?

LOU We're travelling through the Pyrenees. I have a guide. I paid him €240 and he's taking us through an air passage through the Pyrenees.

SARAH Lou. Please. Tell me what's going on.

LOU I'm in the clouds, Sarah. I can reach out my hand and feel the cloud. Woo hoo. I'm touching the air. It's cold and soft and it winds round my fingers. This is amazing, Sarah. It's like holding the wind and not letting it go.

SARAH So are you coming back, Lou?

LOU I don't know. I'm sorry Sarah but I really don't know. I'm going to keep going.

SARAH Lou? What happened? What's happened to you?

LOU Look Sarah, I have to help with the burner. I have to go. Sorry.

SARAH/RICHARD Hello?
Nicola?
Niki?

NIKI Sorry, sir, I was miles away.

RICHARD You're alright?

NIKI Yeah. Just got a text from my sister.

RICHARD I didn't know you had a sister.

NIKI Yeah, Lou. She's eight years older than me.

RICHARD Is she okay or - ?

NIKI She dust out.

RICHARD She -?

NIKI Just like gone.

RICHARD How do you mean, gone?

NIKI Phoned mum to say she was on a train somewhere. Just like later and dust out.

RICHARD I'm sorry to hear that.

NIKI I don't care but mum is in bits.

RICHARD She really is.

NIKI/MATTY She'll be alright.

We're in a pub.

RICHARD/ROY It would help if you talked to her.

NIKI/MATTY Ain't got nothing to say to her.

RICHARD/ROY She worries about you a lot.

NIKI/MATTY Funny way of showing it.

RICHARD/ROY It ain't always easy being a parent sometimes.

NIKI/MATTY Yeah well.

RICHARD/ROY As you'll find out soon enough!

NIKI/MATTY Give us a chance, Dad.

LANDLORD What can I get you lads?

RICHARD/ROY What'll you have. I'm buying.

NIKI/MATTY Pint of best.

RICHARD/ROY Two pints of best and a packet of salted
peanuts.
Give us a chance? You want to stick a kid
on her sharpish. She's got that baby eye
has Jessica.

NIKI/MATTY There's no rush is there?

RICHARD/ROY Why hang about?

NIKI/MATTY What's wrong with taking a bit of time for
just me and her without kids to spoil it.

RICHARD/ROY Bit of time? What time? You're off away
for six months.

NIKI/MATTY I'm back in March.

RICHARD/ROY Aye a week or something.

LANDLORD There you go, gents. That'll be £4.90.

RICHARD/ROY Here you go.
You shoulda told them. Newly weds. They
coulda deferred it.

NIKI/MATTY Didn't wanna. Looks bad.

RICHARD/ROY Looks bad?

NIKI/MATTY Look I'm going alright?

RICHARD/ROY Okay okay, forget I said anything.

NIKI/MATTY It's forgotten.

RICHARD/ROY You know I ain't against you going.

NIKI/MATTY Well good.

RICHARD/ROY It's your mum. She's going up the wall.

NIKI/MATTY She's always going up the wall.

RICHARD/ROY She had a dream about you two nights ago /
I know, I know, but listen she did anyway.

NIKI/MATTY Oh bloody hell. Her and her dreams.

RICHARD/ROY She said she had a dream about you.
Halfway up a mountain. On a ledge. Snow
all around you. You had a broken leg. And
you were singing to yourself.

NIKI/MATTY And what do you want me to do about that?

RICHARD/ROY She was well shook up. I don't know.

NIKI/MATTY Tell you what, I'll go to my superior
officer, tell him I can't go to
Afghanistan cos me mum had a dream.

RICHARD/ROY Come on, son, I ain't saying that. I'm
just explaining why she's the way she is,
why she don't want you to go.

NIKI/MATTY She should be proud.

RICHARD/ROY She is proud.

NIKI/MATTY Stead of talking rubbish about dreams and
that.

RICHARD/ROY We're both proud of you, son, but we don't
want you to leave without patching things
up.

NIKI/MATTY She could make the first move.

RICHARD/ROY Or you could.

NIKI/MATTY Why should I? She started the row.

RICHARD/ROY Come on, Matty, wrong on both sides and
all that.

NIKI/MATTY She was out of order, I just defended myself.

RICHARD/ROY Maybe. But still, it would mean a lot to both of us if you just came home, just for an hour. Give your mum a hug, clear the air.

NIKI/MATTY I'm due back at Elizabeth at 7.00.

RICHARD/ROY Give her a ring then.

NIKI/MATTY Don't have my phone with me.

RICHARD/ROY Use mine.

Puts it on the bar.

NIKI/MATTY What, now?

RICHARD/ROY Why not now?

NIKI/MATTY I don't know.

RICHARD/ROY It would mean the world.

NIKI/MATTY What do I say?

RICHARD/ROY Tell her you love her.

NIKI/MATTY Bloody hell.

RICHARD/ROY Tell her you're sorry you had words and that you love her and that you'll be coming back and that she's not to worry.

NIKI/MATTY But if I say all that, we'll be okay right?

RICHARD/ROY Just call her, Matty.

Pause. He picks the phone up off the bar.
Dials.

NIKI/MATTY If she starts crying I'm ringing off.
 ...
 Hey mum, it's me. Matty.

LOU Hey Sarah.

SARAH Where are you now?

LOU I'm on a donkey.

SARAH You're on a what?

LOU I'm following the route of the old
 Pilgrims. There's a load of us. I sort of
 hooked up with them. We're headed for the
 Cathedral of Santiago... hold on.
 (to others.) ¡Mis amigos! ¿La catedral -
 qué se llama?

VOICES Santiago de Compostela.

LOU Muchas gracias.
 (Back on phone) The Cathedral of Santiago
 de Compostela.

SARAH Have you – have you had some kind of
 conversion experience? Is that what's
 happened?

LOU No. Not really. Sarah, I don't know.

SARAH Because we can talk about that.

LOU Well yes. I mean no, because it's not
 really like that.

SARAH Lou. Please. Tell me. What is it like?

LOU It's getting dark. The sun is very low
 behind me. The backs of the other pilgrims
 are dark orange. There's a purple sky and
 the moon is silver. I hear bells in the
 distance and in the towns below us there
 are lights and music.

SARAH I mean, what's it like for you?

LOU I'm getting cold. You know how I once said I'd never wear a poncho? Well I'm wearing a poncho. I think this is what I wanted.

SARAH What did you want?

LOU To get away.

SARAH From me?

LOU Yes. But it's not like that sounds, Sarah.

SARAH It doesn't sound good.

LOU I wanted to be lonely for a bit.

SARAH I can give you more space if that's —

LOU No. I didn't want to be alone. I wanted to be lonely.

SARAH Are you?

LOU A bit yeah.

SARAH Is it — I don't know — giving you what you wanted?

LOU I'm not sure.

SARAH Okay.

Wind picks up.

LOU When it gets cold I feel more lonely. And then the wind picks up and the dust on this road starts to swirl in circles and sometimes it feels like there are patterns in the air. And I feel lonely.

SARAH And what do you do?

LOU I sing to myself.

SARAH When will you back?

LOU I'm going to look at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and then I'll see.

SARAH I'll be here if you want me. And even if you don't want me, I'll be here.

The dust swirls. It becomes snow.

LOU (sings quietly.) Such a feeling's coming over me. There is wonder in most everything I see.

A climber is trapped on a mountainside.

SCOTT Not a cloud in the sky, got the sun in my eyes and I won't be surprised if it's a dream. Ben?
Ben, are you there?

Silence.

Ben?

Silence.

(sings quietly) I'm on the top of the world looking down on creation and the only explanation I can find is the love that I found ever since you've been around.

Wind and snow swirls and drowns him. Noise drains away. We are in a hospital room in Switzerland. We can barely hear anything Tom says here. A low whisper. A murmur. Maybe even just a movement of the lips.

MARGARET Are you comfortable, darling?

TOM yes thank you

MARGARET I can adjust the bed. You can lie back more if you like.

TOM after i drink

MARGARET Yes, right. Do you want any music on?

TOM what is there

MARGARET Vivaldi, Bach, Enya.

TOM no

MARGARET It's a shame we didn't see more of Zurich.
Whizzing through in a taxicab.

TOM you can, after

MARGARET Well, maybe.

TOM i want to drink now

MARGARET Already?

TOM yes

MARGARET Dr Amiel says it will taste quite bitter.

TOM yes

MARGARET I'm not allowed to help you. Will you be
okay drinking it?

TOM yes

He drinks.

MARGARET Shall I hold your hand?

TOM thank you

MARGARET Not long now, my darling, my love.
No more pain.

Pause.

 Your hand's very warm, Tom. Your hands
were always very warm.

 Mine always get so cold and you'd say
'warm your hands in mine, Maggie'.

A thousand tiny generousities.

Dr Amiel says the Nembutal will take effect very quickly.

I am so grateful, my love, my darling. Forty years I've loved you. The best thing I've ever done.

Not my job, not my books, not even our children and you know how I love our children.

Just forty years of loving wonderful you.

I don't regret a single moment. Every moment with you has been precious, is perfect.

Every moment I'd think, that's it: I couldn't love you any more. And then you'd smile or you'd make me laugh or you'd tilt your head and I'd love more than ever.

A murmur.

Yes, darling. I'm still holding your hand.

I'm here. I'm still here.

I'll love you, always. My darling man.

If there's something or if there's nothing, I want you to know I'll always love you. My sweetheart, my darling.

Sleep now, my love, you kind, sweet man.

I'll keep talking. Dr Amiel says the hearing goes

The hearing goes last.

Not long now, my darling. My Thomas. Tommy. My Tom.

In these last minutes, I want to fill your thoughts with love. Because I love you. You are everything.

You are the ground I walk on and the sun on my face. And the water by my bedside and the air in my sky.

I won't say goodbye, Tommy, my Tom. Because you are everything I am and I'll never let you go.

My darling.

My love?

My only one.

I'll never say goodbye to you.

NIKI If you ever come to Cardiff, you should text me.

RICHARD Well the likelihood of that is remote, but thank you.

NIKI Do you want to be friends on Facebook?

RICHARD I'm not on Facebook.

NIKI Not on Facebook? Oh my gosh. They even made a film about it, it's that good.

RICHARD I don't have time for that sort of thing.

NIKI Then I'll give you my number.

A classroom. A playground outside.

RICHARD I don't know whether I –

NIKI It's alright, I'm not arksing you out or nothing.

RICHARD Ha ha.

NIKI You got your phone?

RICHARD Yyyes.

NIKI Let's have a look.
Ah man, that is rank.

RICHARD I don't use it very much.

NIKI Can you even get the Internet on it?

RICHARD I don't think so.

NIKI That is well nasty. You got to get a
smartphone. Seriously.

RICHARD You think?

NIKI For real.

(Phone rings.)

 Okay, that's me. So now you got my number
in your phone.

RICHARD Thank you for the technological advice.

NIKI Seriously.

RICHARD And, well, goodbye Nicola.

NIKI Nah, this ain't goodbye. You gotta come
down Cardiff, want to see you jammin' wiv
me Welsh bred'rins innit.

RICHARD I'll – I'll see what I can do.

NIKI/ANDREW I would like to read this short statement.
I will not be answering any questions.

Some press. Some cameras. Some
photographers.

ANDREW

"The last few months have been difficult for me personally, but also for my family and for the party that I represent. While I may have some concerns about the manner in which certain newspapers have conducted themselves, I do not doubt the right of a free press to investigate its parliamentary representatives. On reflection, and after consulting with colleagues and constituents, friends and family I recognise that I did perhaps lose sight of the correct balance between the privileges and duties of public office. For that reason, I have determined to stand down as the MP for this constituency and devote my energies to voluntary work in my local community, helping ordinary hard-working people to play their part in the Big Society.

LOU/ANDREW

I wish to thank the party and my constituents for their understanding and support in this difficult decision."

Shouted questions. 'Did the Party force you to go?' 'Have you spoken to David Cameron?' etc.

LOU

(phone) I got scared, Sarah. I thought, I love you so much I don't know who I am any more. I thought, it's like the edges of my body aren't there any more, like you're part of me. I thought, I'm losing myself.

Which I why I went away.

I wanted to see what I was like on my own.

I needed to be on my own one more time, without you there to make things complicated - and better, but more complicated.

So I climbed to the top of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and the Spanish hills are spread out, and there's a big stone square and these huge buildings and everything was lit with yellow lanterns and people were walking through the square

arm in arm and the moon's silver and the
wind is whispering in my ear.

And I thought, this is beautiful but it
would be more beautiful with Sarah. Cos I
thought I'm alright, but I'm better with
her.

So, standing at the top of the Cathedral
looking out at Galicia, I said goodbye to
myself and now I'm coming back home to
you.

The wind picks up. The wind howls. A
helicopter joins the confusion.

LOU/SCOTT Ben? Ben I'm here!

BEN (approaching) Scott! It's me! I'm coming
to get you!

The snow is churned up by the helicopter.
Then there's a pattern in the air and the
wind speaks.

THE WIND We are the wind.
 And you are the shore.
 We whisper over your skin and scatter
 across the downs.
 Tree to grasses, rushes to reeds.
 We caress and rustle and flow and flutter.
 Over your immoveable sands we drown and
 disappear.
 We pass from the land and we fly over the
 sea.
 We say farewell and we say goodbye and we
 say adieu in a thousand voices.
 We dapple the surface of the ocean.
 We whip the seas to tears but we will
 return
 My shoreline
 My lovely shoreline
 We will return.

Wind rushes across out the sea. Salt
water, spray, tears and years.

THE END