

IMMACULATE

by

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**TEASER**

FADE IN

EXT. MANCHESTER - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A goat's head lies in the road, split in two, matter seeping down its face.

The body lies nearby, a strange symbol painted on its side.

Just ahead, a red car lies smashed and STEAMING. Flames ERUPT from the engine-

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - UPPER FLOOR - NIGHT - CONT.

A dimly-lit landing. Framed photos adorn the walls.

One photo: two couples in the countryside. LOUIS ADAMS (40, Irish; bright yet cautious) and LILIAN BLAKE (40, Irish; focused and confident), flanked by ARTHUR & DARA GRESS (30s, red-haired). Dara holds her pregnant belly, smiling oddly.

Another photo: Louis, Lilian and CAITLYN (7). A simple happy family portrait.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louis and Lilian lie sleeping. A door EASES OPEN. FOOTSTEPS. A shadow crosses the bed. The couple stir, looking up at-

Caitlyn, staring back.

LILIAN

Caitlyn? What are you doing up?

CAITLYN

I don't feel well.

LOUIS

Oh dear. When did that start?

CAITLYN

When the man came in my room.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louis peers under the pink-white bed...nothing. He checks the snow-white wardrobe...still nothing.

CREAKING. Louis freezes, glancing at the cabinets. A pretty doll's house teeters on the edge.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Caitlyn watches Lilian unscrew a bottle of sleep aid.

LILIAN

Take this. It'll help you sleep.

Caitlyn swallows a capful. Lilian replaces the lid-

BANG! BEAT. Lilian takes scissors from the drawer.

LILIAN (CONT'D)

If you hear shouting, lock the door.

She treads out, leaving the bottle by the sink. Caitlyn stares at it.

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lilian peers in at-

A hunched form by the bed. She grips the scissors, and-

Louis looks up, kneeling at the dented doll house before him. Lilian relaxes.

LOUIS

I'll fix it. Promise.

LILIAN

You better. Caitlyn, it's OK!

FOOTSTEPS. Louis replaces the doll house, hiding the damage, just as Caitlyn enters.

LOUIS

There's nothing here, sweetheart.

CAITLYN

He's not there. He's at the window.

Lilian grips the scissors. Louis edges to the curtains, grips...and PULLS-

Darkness. Nothing else. He shuts the curtains.

LOUIS  
Nothing there now.

CAITLYN  
But I saw him. He said I was special. He wanted to give me a gift. A magic drink. And-

LILIAN  
Caitlyn? It's late. Now come on, back to bed.

Caitlyn reluctantly climbs back in, COUGHING-

CAITLYN  
Sorry I woke you up.

LOUIS  
It's alright. It's warm tonight. Must've had a bad dream.

Lilian kisses Caitlyn goodnight, heading for the door. Louis squeezes Caitlyn's hand, following Lilian out-

CAITLYN  
Lilian? Louis? Can I call you Mum & Dad?

The couple stop dead. Stunned smiles cross their faces.

LOUIS  
If you're ready.

LILIAN  
If you're sure.

CAITLYN  
Promise you'll keep me safe?

LOUIS  
We promise.

Caitlyn smiles, settling down. The couple tiptoe out, leaving the door cracked.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lilian puts away the scissors and sleep aid. Louis hovers in the doorway.

LOUIS  
You're brave.

LILIAN  
Only when I need to be.

LOUIS  
Do you think she'll be alright?

LILIAN  
She just called us Mum and Dad. I  
think she'll sleep deep after that.  
I know I will.

She FLICKS off the light, heading back to bed. Louis glances back at Caitlyn's door...and follows.

FADE TO

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

TAP TAP TAP. Caitlyn stirs, turning over to look at-

A man's shadow on the curtains. It seems to stare at her. She can only stare back.

INT. UPPER FLOOR - NIGHT

Caitlyn treads back from the bathroom, sleep aid in hand.

The man's shadow SEEPS over her, filling the landing.

CAITLYN  
Can you open it for me please?

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - MAIN BEDROOM - DAY -  
CONT.

Louis stirs, unnerved.

INT. UPPER FLOOR - DAY

Louis paces the landing to Caitlyn's door, WHISPERING-

LOUIS  
Caitlyn? Are you awake?

He pushes the door. A SOFT CLANK. He looks down at-

The sleep aid bottle. Empty.

Louis blanches. He rushes in-

                          LOUIS (CONT'D)  
                          Caitlyn? Caitlyn, can you hear me?!  
                          Caitlyn?!

A shadow crosses the landing, resting on a photo of Arthur and Dara. In the dim light, their smiles don't seem real.

CUT TO BLACK

**END OF TEASER**

ACT ONE

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. MANCHESTER - COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

CAMERA FOOTAGE:

Sunlight GLARES through blue sky. FOOTSTEPS pace the edge of a shimmering lake, reflecting two figures: Arthur and Dara.

ARTHUR (O.S.)  
Where's Mummy and Daddy? Where's  
Mummy and Daddy?

Arthur SWIVELS his camera, reaching a picnic blanket, where-  
Louis and Lilian lie relaxing.

ARTHUR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
There's Mummy and Daddy!

Lilian LAUGHS, waving. Louis hides his face.

DARA (O.S.)  
Awww, are we shy Louis?

LOUIS  
Absolutely.

Lilian waves his arm for him. Louis manages a smirk.

ARTHUR (O.S.)  
There we go. There's his smile.

DARA (O.S.)  
Room for one more?

LILIAN  
Of course. Here, come between us.

Dara steps into frame to sit between them, pregnant belly swathed in white.

ARTHUR (O.S.)  
Now join hands for prosperity.

Louis and Lilian jokily join hands. Dara smiles oddly.

ARTHUR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Beautiful. Just beautiful.

PRESENT:

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

Louis BREAKS the surface of a still bath, GASPING IN PAIN. His beard is flecked with grey, eyes dark with circles. A skin graft on his left rib. He glares between his legs.

LOUIS  
Blight you. Fucking blight you.

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY - CONT.

Louis BOILS the kettle, reading a note left on the side-

INSERT: 'Good luck with the scan. Love Lil xxxxxxxx'.

He tenses, glancing out the window to the garden...he double-takes, staring at a dented red car over the fence. Like he's seen it before.

INT. HALL - DAY

Louis flicks through post, stopping on one for him. He tears it open, pulling out-

A fostering network brochure.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Louis reads the brochure, oddly guilty. He replaces it, glances around...and slips the envelope under the couch.

SMACK! He JUMPS in fright, whipping around to see-

A frame has fallen from the mantelpiece: a photo of Arthur and Dara. Louis replaces it, right next to one of Caitlyn.

LOUIS  
Where are you now, eh?

A shadow SWEEPS the mantelpiece. He doesn't notice.



EXT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Louis reverses out the drive. Next-door, an ESTATE AGENT pastes SOLD on a For Sale sign. They wave, smiling oddly.

TWO PCSOs stroll past. Louis ducks...he checks they're gone...he drives on.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - ULTRASOUND ROOM - DAY

Louis lies prone, lower half covered under a privacy sheet. A RADIOLOGIST prepares tools for an ultrasound.

Posters dot the walls: men's mental health, Gender Dysphoria, Erectile Dysfunction. Genital Mutilation.

RADIOLOGIST

Are you ready?

LOUIS

Is anyone?

The doctor draws a syringe. Louis WINCES, gripping the bed, knuckles white.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - UROLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The UROLOGIST shows Louis his ultrasound.

UROLOGIST

No interior scar tissue. No blood vessel damage. No STIs. No kidney trouble. No bladder trouble. No easy answers! Though the aprostadil only made you slightly erect.

LOUIS

No surprises there. Not exactly fertile anyway.

BEAT.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I'm intersex?

The doctor shifts back, pouring over notes.

UROLOGIST

Yes. Stage 3 phalloplasty: penile reconstruction, skin graft from left chest. Urethral lengthening for urination. Nerve hook-up.

(MORE)

UROLOGIST (CONT'D)

Only a few years back. Been through the ringer, haven't we?

LOUIS

Just the hand I was dealt, I guess.

UROLOGIST

But no erectile implant?

LOUIS

Didn't think I'd need it.

UROLOGIST

Huh. You said you get this phantom pain when you're intimate?

LOUIS

Not in the traditional sense.

UROLOGIST

Can you masturbate?

LOUIS

It's not for me. Even if I could.

UROLOGIST

Do you and your partner have an active sex life?

Louis looks away.

LOUIS

We've tried. Mostly we just hold each other. But when she touches me now, it hurts. So we've stopped. Just for a while. August or so.

UROLOGIST

Six months is a long time to be in pain.

LOUIS

I'm patient. Had a similar thing as a kid.

UROLOGIST

Right. And this all started just after your daughter-?

LOUIS

Yep! Yeah. That's it.

BEAT.

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
So what do you think?

The doctor folds his hands, pensive.

UROLOGIST  
I think you know already this is more than cosmetic. The body does tend to react to trauma before we do. Frankly I'd say this pain is being brought on by some underlying reminder of what you've lost. Have you tried counselling before?

Louis' jaw tightens.

LOUIS  
It's finding time y'know? I do late shifts, sleep in the day. Today's an exception.

UROLOGIST  
Right. Well the option's always there. Are you going home now or-?

LOUIS  
Shift first. All good. Thank you.

Louis makes for the door-

UROLOGIST  
One last thing. I noticed your surgical history goes back to 1993. There's nothing else before then?

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A pair of surgical scissors FLASH in dim light-

PRESENT:

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - UROLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Louis tenses.

LOUIS  
No. Nothing.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - DAY

MONTAGE:

- Louis works the porter's cycle: stripping and remaking cubicles; lab results; CHATTING to child patients.

END MONTAGE.

As Louis strips a bed, DR ANNA LUCA approaches (40s, Eastern-European; wise and discerning Paediatrics Lead).

DR LUCA  
Burning both ends, Louis?

LOUIS  
Sorry Anna. I just wanna be useful.

DR LUCA  
Well don't push yourself too hard.  
You're allowed to rest.

LOUIS  
Sure. Everything OK?

DR LUCA  
Cubicle 7. Infant to mortuary.

Louis straightens.

LOUIS  
Is there a trolley or-?

DR LUCA  
Basket. SIDS case. I can get  
someone else, if you're not comf-?

LOUIS  
No, it's fine. I can handle it.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - MORTUARY - DAY

A Moses basket on a trolley, a small form wrapped inside.  
Louis faces the infant's GRIEVING PARENTS.

LOUIS  
I'm sorry. It would've been quiet.  
Peaceful. Would you like a prayer?

The parents shake their heads, starting to SOB. BEAT. Louis  
treads out.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - DAY

As Louis remakes Cubicle 7, REBECCA (7) treads by, flanked by her PARENTS. Her bandaged arm cradles a soft toy goat.

LOUIS

Hey Rebecca. How was the X-ray,  
sweetheart?

REBECCA

It was OK. Not too scary.

LOUIS

What did I tell ya? Half my height  
and braver than I am! In fact, I  
reckon you deserve one of these.

Louis gives Rebecca a WELL DONE sticker. She peers at him-

REBECCA

Have you been crying?

LOUIS

Dusty sheets, that's all.

Rebecca looks at her goat toy...and hands it over. Louis  
stares stunned.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I can't take this Bec, he's yours!

REBECCA

He's yours now. He'll make you  
happy.

The parents smile oddly, ushering her away. Louis stares  
after them. Just as-

A hand GRIPS his shoulder. He FLINCHES, turning to face-

A grinning DOMINIC SHAWN (50s, Social Services Manager;  
scraggly ginger beard, creased suit; over-friendly).

DOMINIC

You hiding from me, mate?

LOUIS

Dom! How you doing, pal?

DOMINIC

Oh same old: people leaving me in  
the lurch, so I thought I'd track  
you down, case your joint, maybe  
kill some time?

LOUIS

I would if we weren't swamped. Not waiting to be seen, are you?

DOMINIC

No no. Safeguarding flagged a case. Apparently Daddy's 'rights' are worth more than a protection order. Some men just can't take the hint. Anyway, how are you? How's Lilian? Keeping well?

LOUIS

Getting on. Best we can anyway.

DOMINIC

Of course. It's difficult, isn't it? Coping. Caitlyn was a lovely girl. Very lucky.

LOUIS

Hmm.

BEAT.

DOMINIC

Well I won't keep you. But we'll have to get together soon, once the timing's right. I like being around you. Take it easy, mate.

He strides off, an odd spring in his step. Louis wilts, face tight with guilt.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - MEETING ROOM - DAY

A circle of bored staff. Louis sits on the edge, playing with the toy. A nasally SPEAKER leads a session-

SPEAKER

Fundamentally, how can we grieve if we don't give ourselves permission? By restricting permission, we give ourselves over to routine, in ways we may not realise are harming us until it's too late. Which is why it's so important to get what's in your head out into the open. Before it starts living up there. And what good's that?

Louis glances wearily at the floor-

Caitlyn's lifeless body lies at his feet.

He looks away...he looks back...she's still there.

INT. MANCHESTER - PRIMARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Bright colours, whiteboard. CHILDREN perch at tables with paper, pens and paints.

At the back, Lilian is distracted by her phone, scrolling through a Sexual Dysfunction Support group chat.

At the front: FRANCES 'FRAN' MOLOCH (50s, Irish; homely, spirited, keeps your secrets close).

FRAN

Right then kiddies, we all ready?  
Wonderful. Now for Fun Friday, I  
want to see how you'd look as your  
favourite animal. Draw yourselves,  
then fill in all your features.  
Would you have a wolf's eyes to see  
in the dark? Swap your tongue with  
a scary snake's? Go as wild as you  
like, let me see YOUR best version  
of you.

KNOCKING. Lilian JERKS to attention. The class door OPENS-  
Rebecca treads in, uniform rumped under her bandaged arm.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Rebecca! Good to see you back,  
lovie. And just in time to join in!

Some kids STIFLE GIGGLES. Rebecca WILTS. Lilian watches her longingly.

LATER

Lilian paces up and down, checking artwork. Rebecca has drawn an androgynous lady with silvery hair, feathers and horns, on a hill over the sea.

LILIAN

Wow! What animal's that?

REBECCA

Couldn't decide cat, bird or cow,  
so I did all of them.

LILIAN

A hybrid? That's beautiful-

SMASH! The class JUMP in fright. Lilian hurries to the window, peering out.

LILIAN (CONT'D)

Protestor. Would be lunchtime,  
wouldn't it?

Fran ushers the class to the door-

FRAN

OK my lovelies, all line up please!  
Extra lunchtime today, but you must  
stay inside. Leave your art now,  
they'll be safe.

As the class line up, Lilian lingers, staring through cracked glass at a RED-HOODED FIGURE running away.

EXT. MANCHESTER - PRIMARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - DAY

Lilian and Fran edge outside to the cracked window. A brick lies beneath, message painted in red: 'LET KIDS BE KIDS'.

LILIAN

Makes sense. Can't hate outside the grounds, so they chuck it instead.

FRAN

I can't understand it. Pulling kids out of class; death threats on the forums; and now this! We clarified the curriculum enough times, why do they keep fighting us on it?

LILIAN

Because some people like fighting more than listening.

A POLICE CAR pulls up outside. Lilian tenses.

FRAN

It's alright. I'll talk to them.

Fran strides to the gate. Lilian remains, staring at a dented red car across the road. Like she's seen it before.



INT. MANCHESTER - PRIMARY SCHOOL - FOYER - DAY

Lilian hovers outside the headmaster's office, watching like a hawk as Fran liaises with PC COOPER (30s).

PC COOPER

We should be able to track them across the area. In the meantime, carry on as normal and call in any new incidents if they occur.

FRAN

Thank you. I'll let the headmaster know when he's back.

Lilian edges away, calling Louis. It goes to voicemail-

LILIAN

Hi Lou. Just checking all's OK your end. I've got Simon's gift sorted for tonight, Nina said get there for seven? We've got Fran's group before then, usual start. Hope to see you there this time. Love you.

A horned shadow SWEEPS the foyer. Lilian blinks, peering through the glass doors to the playground. She peers closer. And closer. Until-

Fran's hand GRIPS her shoulder.

FRAN

We can go back.

LILIAN

Be right there.

Through the doors, in the distance, the red car idles.

INT. MANCHESTER - CHURCH HALL - DAY

Fran leads a diverse SUPPORT GROUP: old and young, all genders. Lilian sits among them. Louis is nowhere to be seen.

All listen to MALIHA (20s, Nigerian), speaking carefully-

MALIHA

It's been a long time. And not all days have been good. I still have the pain. I still have the dreams.

(MORE)

MALIHA (CONT'D)

I still see him standing over me,  
telling me the cut is good, and the  
hurt is good, and it will make me  
good and clean and pure for Him.  
And my mother over me, stroking and  
shushing. Because she doesn't know  
the pain anymore. She's forgotten.

Maliha blinks away tears. The circle listen on, unwavering.

MALIHA (CONT'D)

But they are only dreams. My room  
is safe now. And my home. And my  
body. And I have my little girl.  
Every time I look at her, a light  
fills me. She is innocent, and that  
is how she will stay. The cut will  
never be put on her. Never. I know  
now I can make that choice.

The circle smile and nod encouragingly.

FRAN

Thank you Maliha. That's exactly  
why we're here. Not just to share  
our pain, but protect the ones who  
take our place, and lead on when  
we're gone. To keep them safe. To  
heal them. But we can only do that  
when we've healed ourselves.

Lilian fidgets, glancing at the empty chair next to her.

EXT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - STREET - DAY

Fran drops Lilian at home.

FRAN

Same time next week? Maybe get  
Louis along if we're lucky?

LILIAN

Maybe. See how we do.

FRAN

Are you sure you're alright?

LILIAN

Yeah. It's just...are we doing  
enough? To keep them safe? There's  
only so much we can do at school,  
what happens when they get home?

FRAN

Some parents just can't be helped, lovie. They're the ones we pray for. Can't let a little thing like fear get in the way. Children are sponges: they soak up everything, good and bad. So it's up to us to give them the good, right?

LILIAN

Right. Sorry, I'm being silly aren't I?

FRAN

Never. If you two need anything, just call. I'll lend an ear.

LILIAN

Thanks Fran. I think we can cope.

Fran smiles goodbye, DRIVING off, just as Louis PULLS UP outside. He gets out exhausted.

LILIAN (CONT'D)

Hey stranger. Thought you were coming straight home?

LOUIS

I'd hate myself just sitting there.

LILIAN

The group are asking after you. It's not the same without you cooking the treats.

LOUIS

They'll live. Your day alright?

LILIAN

Quiet enough. Exam OK? Tender?

LOUIS

Tell you later. Look what I got.

He reaches in his satchel, handing her the soft toy goat.

LILIAN

Aww. What's this for?

LOUIS

Saw one of your kids before her X-ray; Rebecca? She gave me this. So I'd be happy.

Lilian pecks Louis on the cheek with the toy.

LILIAN  
You're an angel.

She spots the SOLD sign next-door.

LILIAN (CONT'D)  
Christ, it's happening. New people  
to pretend I like.

LOUIS  
Hey, they might be nice? Hopefully  
quieter than last time.

LILIAN  
Don't know if you could top last  
time. The shit in their lounge.

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - HALL - NIGHT - CONT.

Lilian fixes her hair. Louis enters in smart shirt and jeans,  
gift bag in hand.

LOUIS  
Got the gift. Hope he likes them.

LILIAN  
Course he will, he's sensible. Too  
sensible. If I was 16 again, I'd  
get slaughtered.

LOUIS  
Yeah well, blame his birth-mum for  
that.

LILIAN  
At least Nina doesn't overdo it.  
Stays the right side of merry.

LOUIS  
She just called actually. She said  
Dad's coming.

Lilian pauses, fingers caught in hair.

LILIAN  
Right. OK. No problem.

LOUIS  
What if he says something?

LILIAN

No skin off my nose what he says.  
You know I don't buy the 'Lord  
looking down on me' shit.

LOUIS

You didn't grow up with Him hanging  
over you.

LILIAN

Lucky girl me eh? Look, if Barney  
runs his mouth, just breathe. Let  
it wash over you like a soothing  
passive-aggressive wave. OK?

She reaches for his shoulder...then stops herself. Louis  
manages a smile.

LOUIS

You look lovely, y'know.

LILIAN

Shut up you, I feel bare.

LOUIS

Necklace or something? What about  
the blue cross one, you haven't  
worn that in a while?

LILIAN

It was Caitlyn's.

BEAT.

LOUIS

Is it still in the playroom?

LILIAN

In the little box. I'll grab it-

LOUIS

It's alright. I'll go.

He treads upstairs. Lilian bites her lip.

INT. UPPER FLOOR - PLAYROOM - NIGHT

Louis runs Caitlyn's necklace through his fingers. He blinks  
back tears, gazing around at untouched toys, costumes and  
furniture. He turns to leave, flicking off the light-

TAP TAP TAP. Louis looks back. He flicks the light on,  
peering around at...nothing.

He flicks it off, shutting the door behind him.

EXT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - STREET - NIGHT

Louis and Lilian head up the road.

Headlights FLICKER on behind them. It's the red car, IDLING toward the house.

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO

INT. MANCHESTER - NINA'S HOME - HALL - NIGHT - CONT.

DOORBELL. The door opens to Louis and Lilian, smiling at NINA ADAMS (40s; Irish; informed yet cautious Ofsted regulator; a trans woman, fully transitioned).

NINA  
What are you selling?

LILIAN  
We bear gifts. Nothing illegal.

NINA  
Right answer.

The couple enter, Lilian hugging Nina first, as Louis hangs up their coats.

LILIAN  
How you been, love?

NINA  
Knackered as usual. But home access is live, so I can finally do briefs in peace. Where's my hug Lou?

She envelops him tenderly. Louis returns it awkwardly.

LILIAN  
So where's the birthday boy?

NINA  
Fixing his collar. Wants to look his best now he's a 'man'.

LILIAN  
Well he's a good-looking lad, ain't he Lou?

LOUIS  
Yeah. Pretty boy. Speaking of-

SIMON paces shyly downstairs (just 16; Mancunian, boyishly handsome, not used to attention).

SIMON  
Not too much, is it?

NINA  
Oh Simon, you look lovely darling!

LILIAN  
A million dollars, love.

LOUIS  
Feel any different Si?

SIMON  
Can't tell yet. Just taking it as  
it comes.

LILIAN  
Well good things come to you  
tonight, young man.

She hands him their gift bag.

SIMON  
Aw, cheers!

NINA  
Go stick it with the rest, open  
after dinner yeah?

SIMON  
Pfft, killjoy.

Nina bats him playfully, as he heads to the dining room.

LOUIS  
So where's Dad?

NINA  
In the lounge. Go say hello?

LOUIS  
You coming Lil?

LILIAN  
In a minute. Too early for a drink?

NINA  
Never! Haven't got much, mind. Si  
doesn't like it in the house. But  
it's a special occasion, so I can  
finish some vodka shit I mixed.

LILIAN  
Lethal then?

NINA  
Oh sweetheart, anything that kills  
queers only makes us stronger.

They CHUCKLE, heading to the kitchen, leaving Louis alone.



INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Louis treads in, facing BARNEY ADAMS watching TV (70s; Irish; kind eyes betrayed by a stiff lip). BERNIE, a gorgeous St. Bernard, greets Louis warmly.

                  LOUIS  
Alright Dad?

                  BARNEY  
Louis! How are you lad? Look, they  
trained a goat to lead a blind dog.  
Fascinating. Pull yourself up.

                  LOUIS  
I'll stand. You get here alright?

                  BARNEY  
Aye. Your er, sibling, gave us a  
lift. Your sweetheart with you?

                  LOUIS  
Don't let her hear you call her  
that.

                  BARNEY  
Ah, can't be kind anymore can we?  
Still, good you're both here for  
Simon. Soft lad, mind, but a good  
heart I guess.

                  LOUIS  
Aye. Part of the family.

Barney gives Louis a careful look, as Lilian and Nina enter with red wine and the lethal vodka.

                  LILIAN  
Evening Barney. You keeping well?

                  BARNEY  
Ah, here's the gorgeous girl now.  
How are you Lilian, sweetheart?

                  LILIAN  
Cracking heads, breaking necks. The  
usual. Got a wine for you?

                  BARNEY  
Ah, you're an angel. See Lou, 'that  
we do unto our brothers-'

                  LOUIS  
'We do unto the Lord.'

NINA

You're paraphrasing again, Dad.

BARNEY

Ah, but it's the meaning that counts. What's behind the words. Just like people.

LATER

INT. MANCHESTER - NINA'S HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family eat casserole.

BARNEY

Didn't have you down as a cook.

NINA

You pick things up.

LOUIS

Best give Lil the recipe. Then I can take a break from the kitchen.

LILIAN

Try it and you sleep in the garden.

BARNEY

Well I could be an extra pair of hands. Once you've got my room sorted, of course.

NINA

I've still got room, Dad? You're closer to mine than theirs.

BARNEY

I'll feel safer in a medical man's home. Right Lou?

Nina wilts. Lilian takes Louis' hand under the table.

BARNEY (CONT'D)

So Simon, what are they teaching you now?

SIMON

GCSE mocks. They're alright. Maths drags though. And French. Why do I need French?

LILIAN

I know how you feel. Couldn't stick languages myself.

LOUIS

Aye. In one ear and out the other.

BARNEY

Oh don't decry it, Christ's sake! When I was your age Simon, we were studying Latin three times a week. And now kids know nothing about it! So take it all in. Secret words are a gift to a chosen few.

NINA

Just like church.

SIMON

I'll try. I like English. Arthur Miller and that. And the new P.S.E. one. The sex ed exam.

Barney stops chewing.

BARNEY

And what does that entail?

SIMON

Biology stuff mainly. Reproduction. Then there's STDS, contraception, consent. We'll do gender identity soon. Which means a load of lads making gay jokes. Joy.

NINA

Well Cathy's said you've been very mature in the lessons, so I've got no worries there.

BARNEY

Who's that now?

SIMON

Social worker. She's nice. But she's getting transferred soon.

NINA

I'm sure the replacement will be just as good.

SIMON

Bet they won't be as fun. Or join in like she did. She put condoms on fruit and everything.

LILIAN

I envy you Si. We got a birthing vid and a sub who couldn't work the VCR. Universal symbol for Stop, she still hits Rewind. Like watching a Devil child going back inside.

NINA

I can top that. Remember Sister Rosie and her books, Lou?

LOUIS

Oh mate don't, I'll throw up.

NINA

'The Lord and Your Body: A Guide to Health and Purity.' There was a nun on the cover doing this-

She folds her hands in prayer, a dowdy smile on her face. Everyone LAUGHS. Except Barney.

BARNEY

I remember Sister Rosie. Kind lady. Don't make fun.

NINA

Oh lighten up Dad, it's a new generation teaching us now.

LILIAN

Not that some don't want it. We had another incident today.

SIMON

Oh yeah, I heard. Someone smashed a window or something?

LILIAN

With a brick. It's fine, the police are looking at it.

LOUIS

Sorry, a brick?! Christ Lil, you didn't say anything before?

LILIAN

I'm fine. Really. No harm done.

LATER - CONT.

Table cleared. Simon opens Barney's gift: a box of miniatures. His smile is polite.

SIMON

Thanks Barney. My mates'll be happy.

NINA

You got him proper boozy ones there, Dad.

BARNEY

Let the lad live a little. Get him used to these before he's smashing 'em back like Grandad, eh?

Simon subtly sets them aside, opening Louis and Lilian's gift: luxury chocolates. His smile is real.

SIMON

Gold ones, nice! Thanks you two.

LILIAN

Still don't know why a lad wants posh chocs on his birthday?

SIMON

Never got anything like this before.

NINA

Well that leaves me last. Don't be fooled, it's bigger than it looks.

Nina hands Simon an envelope. He tears into it, pulling out forms. He reads. His hands tremble. His eyes water.

LOUIS

Si? You alright pal?

SIMON

Yeah, erm...this is real, right?

Nina smiles, eyes watering too.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Nina wants to adopt me.

Louis and Lilian twitch. Their smiles are careful.

LILIAN

That's brilliant, mate!

LOUIS  
          Amazing, pal!

They hug Simon tight.

                  LILIAN  
          Good on you Nina. Go on, go to Mum.

Simon lunges to hug Nina tight.

                  NINA  
          Happy Birthday sweetheart.

                  SIMON  
          You promise this is real?

                  NINA  
          Course it is, ya big softie.

Barney stands. He grips Simon's shoulders, smile tight.

                  BARNEY  
          Good on you lad. Really good on  
          you. I guess that means cake?

                  SIMON  
          Sounds good!

                  BARNEY  
          Great! I'll grab forks and plates.

He heads out too quickly. Louis and Lilian stare after him.  
Nina fakes a smile.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Louis treads in, glancing at a homemade cake on the side.  
Barney grips the sink, knuckles white.

                  BARNEY  
          You giving me a hand, boy?

                  LOUIS  
          You can do better than that.

                  BARNEY  
          Can't tell me you're not surprised?

                  LOUIS  
          She's doing a good thing.

BARNEY

We all do good things. Some more good than others.

LOUIS

So, 'good on you lad', was that good? You were talking to Simon just then, right?

BARNEY

Don't patronise me Louis.

LOUIS

I'm not, I'm just asking you to-

BARNEY

Six months. Caitlyn's been gone six months. And Simon goes and gets all that right in front of you? That's cruel. And yet you say nothing. I don't know why you let Niall walk all over-

LOUIS

It's Nina. And she has every right to be a mother.

BARNEY

'Mother'. Christ. And what about you? When's your time again, boy?

LOUIS

It's not that easy. Me and Lil still want it again. That doesn't mean this hurts us.

BARNEY

I saw you twitch. It hurt you. But go ahead. Play pretend. Whatever helps with the hurt down there.

Louis tenses. He closes his legs a little.

LOUIS

That doesn't mean anything.

BARNEY

Then why you are acting like it does?

Barney gathers forks and plates, breezing out. BEAT. Louis lights the cake and carries it in, painting on a smile-

LOUIS  
Happy Birthday to You-

As everyone JOINS IN, a horned shadow looms, filling the room. No-one notices.

EXT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - FRONT DRIVE - NIGHT

Louis and Lilian reach home. As they approach the front door, they notice-

The dented red car in next door's driveway.

LOUIS  
Did they move in after we went?

LILIAN  
Huh. Must've wanted to get sorted before the morning.

She heads inside. Louis follows, pensive.

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONT.

Louis and Lilian are in bed. They down tablets from separate prescription bottles: TESTOSTERONE and OESTROGEN.

LILIAN  
You were gonna tell me about the exam?

LOUIS  
Right right. They erm, numbed it all. Then stuck a needle in there.

LILIAN  
Lovely. How that'd go?

LOUIS  
Yeah erm, I got a little...hard.

LILIAN  
You can say 'erection', you won't get struck down.

LOUIS  
I know. Anyway, it means no vessel damage. Nothing on the ultrasound. So they asked about my surgeries and...I said I'm intersex. I mean, I actually said it out loud.



Lilian sits up.

LILIAN

Well done. God knows it wasn't easy when I said it out loud. What did the urologist say?

LOUIS

Same thing as always for phantom pain: 'go talk to someone'. Fob me off just to get me out of there.

LILIAN

I'm sure they meant well. That's why we do Fran's group: people who know what they're talking about. Because they've lived it. Your Dad say anything?

LOUIS

Didn't tell him. He's more a wait-and-pray type.

LILIAN

Well at least he came tonight.

LOUIS

You sure you're OK? Him moving in?

LILIAN

He needs the support. Plus we get a dog! Just means moving Caitlyn's stuff out.

Louis tenses.

LILIAN (CONT'D)

I feel bad for Nina, mind. She was adamant she'd take him in.

LOUIS

Yeah well, he's still getting his head around her. Made up for Si though. Kid deserves a home.

LILIAN

Ultimate birthday gift.

LOUIS

It's not too soon, is it?

LILIAN

She's had him two years now.

LOUIS

We fostered Caitlyn longer than that. You wanna be sure, after all.

LILIAN

Nina's a good mum. She wanted this. Like we wanted Caitlyn. You really think she'd mean anything by it?

LOUIS

No. You're right. Sorry. Ignore me, I'm being stupid.

LILIAN

Then I'm stupid with you, soft lad.

Louis smirks sadly. Lilian kisses his cheek-

He WINCES, gripping his thigh. She recoils, oddly guilty.

LILIAN (CONT'D)

Sorry. You want some water?

Louis shakes his head, BREATHING HARD. Lilian eases up, treading out alone.

Louis SMACKS his pillow, face taut. Just as-

His testosterone bottle TIPS by itself, spilling everywhere.

Louis stops confused. He gets up to clear the mess, glancing out the window at the front drive. He freezes, staring at-

A RED-HAIRED MAN, carrying a stained box into next-door's house. He looks just like Arthur.

EXT. ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - GARDEN - NIGHT

Lilian stands outside, glassy eyes peering down the garden at-

Four white memorial crosses in the soil.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MANCHESTER - CHURCH - DAY

Lilian sits in the pews, MOURNERS around her, staring at Caitlyn's coffin. Louis stands red-eyed in the pulpit. He glances at notes. Then screws them up.

LOUIS

I dread what's coming. Everyone telling me Caitlyn was my 'greatest achievement'. That can't be true. Otherwise she'd still be here. Is it really an achievement if you don't make them yourself? Because it feels like theft. I didn't achieve her. I stole her. And then I lost her. So what now? Add it to the list, I guess.

Lilian stares embarrassed at the floor.

PRESENT:

EXT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - GARDEN - NIGHT - CONT.

FLICKERING. SIZZLING. Lilian looks over next-door's fence at-

A RED-HAIRED WOMAN, dripping a hot candle on her open palm, face twisted in bliss. She looks just like Dara.

Lilian paces back inside, staring as she goes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lilian sags on the couch, rubbing her eyes. Her foot BRUSHES something. She sits up, reaching down. Her face falls.

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lilian trudges in, finding Louis sitting dazed.

LOUIS

I think I'm seeing things.

She holds up the fostering brochure. He freezes.

LILIAN

Why was this under the couch?

LOUIS

I thought you wouldn't find it?

LILIAN

Would you tell me if I hadn't?

LOUIS

Yes! Eventually.

LILIAN

But why now? Right after Caitlyn?  
Right after everything we went  
through? The police; the adoption  
service; your Dad; the things they  
said about us?!

BEAT.

LOUIS

It's been six months, Lil. I know  
it's not long but, I miss it. I  
miss HER.

LILIAN

I know. I miss her too.

LOUIS

So is there potential or-?

LILIAN

Oh Lou, I don't know-

LOUIS

I'm not forcing anything. I just  
don't want to lose hope.

LILIAN

Who's losing hope? Because it is  
there y'know. It's just a matter of  
time, and planning, and getting  
shit together. And even then I  
don't know. I really don't. Sorry,  
you said you were seeing things?

Louis gazes at the floor.

LOUIS

I think I'm just tired.

He lies down-

LILIAN

Have you seen the neighbours? On  
the drive or, out the back?

LOUIS

A guy, I think. By the car. Why?

LILIAN

Nothing. Think I saw one of them.  
She had red hair. Like Dara's.

They glance at a framed photo of Arthur and Dara on the bedside cabinet.

LOUIS  
You thinking about them?

LILIAN  
A little. Doesn't feel too long ago, does it?

LOUIS  
Never does.

FADE TO

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT - CONT.

Louis and Lilian lie back-to-back.

A SOFT SOBBING through the wall. Lilian sits up. The SOBBING gets LOUDER, MORE DESPERATE, until-

SMACK! The SOBBING STOPS.

Lilian puts in earplugs. Louis lies awake, listening out.

INT. NEXT-DOOR'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Candlelight. A book of Latin script lies open.

The red-haired man and woman kneel naked under red cloaks. We see now it IS Arthur and Dara, tracing chalk around an UNSEEN FORM lying prone.

Dara mixes herbs and black liquid, forcing it down the form's throat. Arthur heats a long needle in the candle, dipping it in ink. The form struggles weakly, as he grips the left foot, raises it high...and PIERCES the sole-

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - MAIN BEDROOM - DAY - CONT.

Louis and Lilian wake in unison, staring at each other.

LILIAN  
There's someone outside.

INT. GROUND FLOOR - HALL - DAY

Louis and Lilian tread downstairs. A SOFT RUSTLING outside the front door.

LOUIS  
We didn't order anything, did we?

Something THUDS the door. Louis steps forward-

A HARDER THUD. He recoils.

LILIAN  
Hello? Are you looking for someone?

A HAIL OF THUDS, shuddering the door in its frame-

LILIAN (CONT'D)  
If you're trying to scare us, it's not working!

The THUDDING STOPS. The SOFT RUSTLING again.

LOUIS  
Do you want to-?

LILIAN  
Nope, I've warned them. Your turn.

Louis treads to the door, peering through the peephole. BEAT. He UNLOCKS the door-

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

The couple step out, staring down at-

A large red box on the doorstep. The street is deserted.

LOUIS  
No post van anywhere.

LILIAN  
Is it ticking?

Louis gives her a look.

LILIAN (CONT'D)  
What? You wanna get blown up?

Louis leans closer to the box.

LOUIS  
Can't hear anything.

LILIAN  
Is there a stamp?

Louis scans the top of the box. His hand brushes a goat-like symbol at the back-

The box JERKS. A TERRIBLE CRYING erupts within. The couple lurch back. The crying softens to a DRY SOBBING. Louis reaches out. Lilian grabs his wrist-

LILIAN (CONT'D)  
Do we want to do that?

LOUIS  
You know what that sounds like,  
right? What if it is?

BEAT. Lilian lets go. Louis TEARS at the box, leaving-

A figure wrapped in paper. Wires wrapped around the arms, waist and thighs. Louis stares petrified, hands shaking.

LILIAN  
Lou, help me with this...Louis?!

Louis snaps out of it, rapidly untying the wires as Lilian RIPS the paper. They step back, gazing horrified at-

A pale androgynous BOY, in dirtied vest and underwear. Bruised skin, sweat-riddled hair, glassy bloodshot eyes. Wrists and ankles bound. Left foot bandaged and bloodied.

He sways. He sags. Louis catches him-

LOUIS  
W-what is this, Lil?

Lilian glances next-door. Smoke wafts from the porch.

She runs down the drive, picking up speed on the pavement-

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
Lil? Lil, wait!

-until she's dashing up to the front door-

It's ajar, smoke drifting out. She pushes it open-

INT. NEXT-DOOR'S HOUSE - HALL - DAY

Lilian steps cautiously down the hall, turning toward a doorway. She stops short. Her face twists with fright-

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Two bodies lie burning on parallel sofas, adorned with occult symbols. Blood seeps from both, trailing to a chalk circle on the floor. In the centre-

A goat's head, split in two, matter seeping down its face.

CUT TO BLACK

**END OF ACT TWO**



ACT THREE

FADE IN

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - CORRIDOR - DAY -  
CONT.

Louis and Lilian sit apart, staring into space.

LILIAN  
What is this, Lou?

LOUIS  
I asked first.

FOOTSTEPS. The couple glance up at an ambling figure-

JOHN DAY (30s, social support worker; kind face, clumsy gait,  
eager to please). A tatty satchel SLIPS off him, SPILLING  
forms and supplies everywhere.

JOHN  
Goodness sake.

He kneels to collect them. Louis and Lilian join in.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Thank you both. I'm looking for Dr  
Luca? She said Room 7.

LILIAN  
Just in there, mate.

LOUIS  
Take a seat if you like?

JOHN  
Oh you're a star. Glad that's over.  
Swear I spend more time looking for  
the right place than actually being  
in it. I'd lose my own head if it  
wasn't screwed on.

LOUIS  
So you're a doctor then, or-?

JOHN  
Nurse. Former. Gave it up about ten  
years ago now.

John sits, offering a warm handshake.

JOHN (CONT'D)

John Day, Social Services. Council got the call from Safeguarding. No-one was touching this one, so my manager volunteered me.

LILIAN

How much have they told you?

JOHN

Only that a child was found in a severely deprived state. You took them in and called the ambulance, right? Because of a fire?

LOUIS

Just doing the right thing.

JOHN

Amazing. Truly amazing. Y'know that's the sort of instinct you either have or you don't. And you two have got it.

Dr Luca emerges from a side room, followed closely by DI MATILDA 'MATTIE' COLLIER (40s, black; no-nonsense detective, struggles with compassion over instinct). Louis and Lilian tense. The DI avoids their steely gaze.

DR LUCA

John Day? Dr Anna Luca, Lead Consultant, Paediatrics.

DI COLLIER

DI Matilda Collier, Safeguarding Unit. Mattie.

JOHN

Pleasure. I was just chatting to the heroes of the hour.

DI COLLIER

Yes. We've met before. Though not in the best circumstances.

LOUIS

We lost our daughter, Caitlyn.

JOHN

Oh. I-I'm so sorry.

LILIAN

Not your fault. Same couldn't be said for us. For a while at least.

DI Collier shifts, guilt flashing over her face.

DI COLLIER

You're aware we'll liaise on a preliminary basis? Whether that continues is down to Safeguarding and the Council.

JOHN

Absolutely. I've got guides and stuff with me. Helps the kids know you're not a threat. How is he?

DR LUCA

Quiet. Anxious. Surprisingly lucid. Drawing's kept him occupied.

LOUIS

So what happens now?

DR LUCA

We'll need to perform a forensic protection exam. Where a child may lack capacity, we require consent of a responsible adult. Would you be willing to provide that consent?

LILIAN

Us? We've got nothing to do with the kid. How can we consent?

DI COLLIER

Can we talk in private?

INT. SIDE OFFICE - DAY

The couple sit waiting. Louis' shaky hands CLENCH his thigh.

LILIAN

Don't say too much, OK?

LOUIS

Why? We haven't done anything.

LILIAN

We took a bruised and bleeding boy into our home, from a box, left by two strangers who are now lying dead next-door. What would YOU think? Especially after Caitlyn?

LOUIS

Caitlyn was...we did nothing then,  
we've done nothing now.

LILIAN

Don't hold your breath. If they  
fucked us before, they can-

DI Collier treads in, perching opposite. Lilian SHUTS UP.

DI COLLIER

Sorry to keep you waiting. And I'm  
sorry you had to find the victims  
as they were. But the scene's been  
secured, so we'll have some answers  
soon. And at least the kid's safe.  
Always a plus in my job.

LILIAN

Must be nice. Knowing you're doing  
well. What do you want from us?

Patience etches across Collier's brow.

DI COLLIER

When you took him inside, did he  
speak at all? Tell you his name?

LOUIS

Kind of. He said WE had to tell HIM  
his name. Whatever that means.

DI COLLIER

The child's name is Noah.

The couple freeze.

LOUIS

N-Noah? Did he say that?

DI COLLIER

No. But Forensics sent over some  
findings from the house.

DI Collier opens a case file-

DI COLLIER (CONT'D)

Did you know your neighbours well?

LOUIS

Only arrived last night. Didn't  
even get to meet them.

DI COLLIER

Well it doesn't look like they  
planned to stay. Or keep Noah.

She pushes over photos of a desolate room. A bloodied belt  
lies in one corner.

DI COLLIER (CONT'D)

This wall is opposite your bedroom.  
Did you hear anything last night?

LOUIS

Sobbing. And slapping. Might  
support an abuse thing.

LILIAN

Then why reveal it? Why leave us  
THEIR kid for us to find like that?

DI COLLIER

Do the names Arthur and Dara Gress  
mean anything to you?

BEAT.

LILIAN

What about them?

Collier pushes over a legal document: a Will.

DI COLLIER

This was next to the bodies. It's a  
Last Will and Testament, naming you  
as Noah's legal guardians.

Louis and Lilian sit stunned.

LILIAN

It actually says that?

DI COLLIER

Section B5: 'We appoint Louis Adams  
and Lilian Blake, residents of 5  
Berith Road, Manchester, as the  
guardians of Noah Gress, our child  
under 18 years, at our deaths.'  
Signed: Arthur and Dara Gress.

The couple pour over the Will. They sag.

LOUIS

It's not real. This can't be real?

DI COLLIER

I know this must come as a shock.  
Only Forensics said you had photos  
in your home together.

LILIAN

You're not saying-?

DI COLLIER

We're still IDing the bodies. But  
it's looking likely it's them.

LILIAN

That's not possible.

DI COLLIER

Oh? How so?

LILIAN

You wouldn't believe us. Got form  
for it.

DI COLLIER

Mrs Blake, I know-

LILIAN

Ms. Not Mrs. We're not married.

DI COLLIER

I know we've made mistakes. But our  
previous investigation found you  
weren't at fault for what happened  
to Caitlyn. I believe that. Can you  
try to trust I'd believe you now?

BEAT.

LOUIS

Arthur and Dara died seven years  
ago.

Collier stares. She opens her notebook, pen gripped tight.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

They were friends. Good friends.  
Met them at the support group  
actually. Community art gig. We had  
a laugh, mellowed them out a bit,  
they opened us up more. Then erm-

The couple avoid the DI's gaze.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

We tried for a kid. They wanted to help so, we let them be surrogates. Had the IVF. All fine. Then...there was an accident. Car crash. A freak thing. We lost the baby too.

DI COLLIER

I'm sorry to hear that.

LILIAN

It doesn't make sense. We had a funeral. How can it be them?

DI COLLIER

We'll need to look into that. But right now, our concern has to lie with Noah.

KNOCKING. Dr Luca peeks in, stoic face etched with urgency.

DR LUCA

There's something you need to see.

INT. HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - SIDE ROOM - DAY

The boy, NOAH (7), sits in bed, hospital gown on, drip attached, scrawling pictures with bruised hands. John perches nearby, a clock face and reading pages in his lap. A CLINICAL NURSE and FORENSIC ASSISTANT observe.

Louis, Lilian, Dr Luca and DI Collier slip in quietly. Noah looks up, caution unwavering.

JOHN

Hello again!

LILIAN

Hi. How you doing, kid?

NOAH

Do you know my name?

LOUIS

Yes. It's Noah, right?

Relief slips over Noah's face. He GRIPS the couple's hands-

NOAH

I know you now. And you know me too. Thank you.

LILIAN

You're brave, aren't you?

JOHN

Isn't he? Noah's been showing me  
how to draw, haven't you?

Noah pushes over a pad, showing sketches of birds, lions,  
cows, and strange winged humans.

LILIAN

Wow! Little artist, aren't we?

NOAH

John's an eagle. So I trust him.

JOHN

My favourite bird. We've played a  
few games as well. He can count big  
numbers, and tell the time too.  
Reading's a bit slow but, bit tired  
aren't we mate?

DR LUCA

We've already removed the wires-

She TAPS an evidence tray, bloodied wires scattered inside.

DR LUCA (CONT'D)

-and Forensics took swabs and photo  
evidence as required.

DI COLLIER

Great. We'll get them processed.

DR LUCA

Hi Noah, remember me? Is it alright  
if I show them your foot?

NOAH

Yes. I trust you.

Dr Luca leads the couple and DI around the bed. They freeze,  
gazing shocked. Inked deep in Noah's bloodied left sole-

INSERT: 'Ne pueri tui fit immaculatus sit, et ut in tantis  
afficiar malis.'

DR LUCA

It's very intricate. And clean. I'm  
amazed it's clotted so quickly.



NOAH

The creature people did it. To keep me safe. Keep everyone safe.

DR LUCA

He has other injuries like this.

DI COLLIER

What kind of injuries?

The forensic assistant SCROLLS through a camera. One photo makes Collier FLINCH. She nods: 'I get the picture.'

LOUIS

What is it?

DI COLLIER

From experience, those injuries are consistent with ritual abuse. Especially the more sensitive ones.

Louis freezes. Lilian SWALLOWS-

LILIAN

And by 'sensitive', you mean-?

DR LUCA

We believe Noah may be a victim of genital mutilation.

BEAT.

DR LUCA (CONT'D)

We checked he understood the exam. He won't talk about it yet. And he doesn't know why someone would do that to him. But we've taken swabs, and we'll make sure he gets-

Louis LURCHES from the room. Lilian cringes.

LILIAN

He'll need a few minutes.

DI Collier approaches the bed, voice gentle-

DI COLLIER

Noah, you know if someone's hurt you, you won't be in trouble for telling the truth, right?

NOAH

Yes. I trust you. But no-one hurt me like that. I promise.

Collier gives Dr Luca a look: 'No use pushing too hard.'

DR LUCA

You've done really well, Noah.  
Shall we see about a wash?

NOAH

I need the man and lady to do it.

LILIAN

Wash you? Is that allowed?

DR LUCA

It's not unusual. As long as it's  
noted down.

JOHN

I could help? I do support work.  
Looking after kids with needs,  
getting them washed for school?

He hands over I.D., certificates and DBS guidelines.

DI COLLIER

Certainly prepared, aren't you?

JOHN

Always helps.

DR LUCA

Very well. Though you may want to  
prepare yourselves.

INT. HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

John and the clinical nurse bathe Noah. Louis sits holding his hand. Lilian hovers, arms folded. Noah's free hand TAP TAP TAPS a rhythm on the water. His bare chest reveals a tragic sight: vast scar tissue, like skin grafts. Louis can't help looking...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

YOUNG LOUIS (7) in a bathtub. Gentle hands SMOOTH soap over his bruised back. He relaxes into the hands.

JOHN (V.O.)

Recovered?

PRESENT:

INT. HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

Louis FLINCHES from his memory.

LOUIS

Mhmm. So why'd you stop nursing?

JOHN

Not enough support. All work and no sleep makes John a sad boy.

LILIAN

And kids are easier?

JOHN

No. Just more unpredictable. Keeps things exciting. Right Noah? Kids are better than grown-ups, yeah?

NOAH

I don't know. The creature people kept me from them. Is it because I look strange?

LILIAN

Do you think you look strange?

NOAH

I don't know.

Louis squeezes Noah's hand.

LOUIS

You look super, kid.

Noah looks away. His left hand CURLS, fingers TWITCHING.

NOAH

Something's missing.

INT. HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - SIDE ROOM - DAY

Louis, Lilian and Dr Luca watch Noah sleeping.

DR LUCA

We'll observe Noah for a few days, then run a full MMSE interview with a therapist. If you'll excuse me?

She slips out, leaving the couple alone. BEAT.

LOUIS

You saw that, right? His chest? How mirrored it was? Like someone knew what they were do-?

LILIAN

Stop. Please. Just for a bit.

BEAT.

LOUIS

So what do you think? Do we do it?

LILIAN

I don't know what to think! It's fucked up, Lou. That's our names in the Will. Our address. Are we actually bound to the kid?

LOUIS

They left the docs. If it is them, maybe it's what they wanted?

LILIAN

I VERY much doubt anyone who does that to a kid knows what they want. I mean there's care homes and shit, why not do that? Why do this to us? Why were they fucking ALIVE still?!

Louis SHUSHES her. Noah doesn't stir.

LILIAN (CONT'D)

Suppose we did take him: what do we tell people? Is he a replacement? A box-ticker? 'We've been cut, he's been cut, it's a perfect fit?'

LOUIS

Jesus Lil-!

LILIAN

Someone's gonna think it Lou, I'm just getting in first! What about his foot? Any idea what it means?

LOUIS

No. Don't know if I want to. Don't know how he's so calm after that.

LILIAN

That's not calm. You saw his hand tapping the water? He's distracting himself. I know what it's like.

LOUIS

Same.

BEAT.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. About yesterday. I get  
if you're not ready to try again.

Lilian wanders over, peering at Noah. She softens.

LILIAN

He held on tight eh? Relaxed with  
us. Takes you back, doesn't it?

Louis manages a sad smile, brushing Noah's hand.

LOUIS

I'll ask to cover an early shift  
Monday. Keep an eye on him.

LILIAN

Cool. I'll keep schtum at work.  
Don't want any gossip. When d'you  
wanna tell your family?

LOUIS

Tomorrow. Sunday roast.

LILIAN

Baptism by fire. Fun.

INT. MANCHESTER - NINA'S HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

Louis and Lilian eat quietly. Barney watches them  
suspiciously, while Nina and Simon CHAT-

NINA

You done your homework?

SIMON

Just some multiple choice left.  
It's P.S.E., it'll be quick.

NINA

What's it on?

SIMON

Warning signs of abuse.

Lilian's knife SCRAPES her plate. Louis CHOKES on his water.

NINA  
Alright you two?

LILIAN  
Yeah love. Just tired.

BARNEY  
On a Sunday? Sabbath's brightest.  
Should be in vigor. Full of light!

LOUIS  
Light burns out quick for us, Dad.

NINA  
This is nice, isn't it? Twice in  
one week. You'll have to invite us  
round to yours soon, Lou.

Louis eyes Lilian: 'should we?'. Barney notices.

BARNEY  
Aye aye. Touched a nerve, lad?

LOUIS  
No. Don't want you seeing our mess,  
that's all.

BARNEY  
What mess? Not like you've got  
kiddies under your feet.

Lilian tenses. Louis opens his mouth...and shuts it.

NINA  
Dad, help with the scones please?

She breezes out. Barney trudges after her. BEAT.

LOUIS  
How you doing Si? You have a good  
time Saturday?

SIMON  
Yeah, saw my mates. Told them about  
the adoption. They got me a load of  
sweets and art stuff to celebrate.

NINA (O.S.)  
You know exactly what you meant,  
I'm not too stupid to notice.

BARNEY (O.S.)

He doesn't need you defending him  
all the time, let him stand up for  
himself for once!

NINA (O.S.)

Easier said than done with you  
breathing down his neck. You don't  
get over losing a kid like THAT, so  
being passive-aggressive solves  
nothing. Not that you don't have a  
track record, the spite I get!

BARNEY (O.S.)

Oh Christ's sake, Niall-

NINA (O.S.)

Don't you DARE call me that! Don't  
fucking avoid me like that. It's  
only hard if you make it hard. So  
please try to give me some respect  
for who I am, and what I do, and  
I'll happily give it back.

Lilian rubs Simon's shoulder. He smiles gratefully.

INT. MANCHESTER - NINA'S HOME - HALL - DAY

Nina sees Louis and Lilian out.

NINA

Sorry about him.

LILIAN

It's you we're sorry for, mate.

NINA

I can handle him. Now, are you  
gonna tell me what's bothering you?  
And don't say dinner.

BEAT.

LOUIS

Do you think it's right for us to  
try again?

Nina folds her arms, speaking carefully-

NINA

You've been through what no-one  
should have to go through. People  
talked. Stirred shit up.

(MORE)

NINA (CONT'D)

You've every right to be wary. But  
you also have every right to care.  
And I can't think who deserves  
another chance more.

Louis and Lilian peer at each other.

EXT. MANCHESTER - PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY

BREAKTIME. Lilian supervises, flicking through photos of  
Arthur and Dara on her phone, lost in thought.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)

Blake?...Blake?...

Lilian looks up. She freezes, staring through the fence at-

A FIGURE in a GOAT MASK, standing in the distance.

REBECCA (O.S.)

Ms Blake? It hurts.

Lilian FLINCHES, facing Rebecca, left palm bleeding. She  
leads the girl away, glancing back through the fence.

The figure is gone.

INT. MANCHESTER - PRIMARY SCHOOL - NURSE'S OFFICE - DAY

Lilian and Fran apply a plaster to Rebecca's hand.

FRAN

There we go, lovie. All better?

Rebecca nods, head down.

LILIAN

Something else?

REBECCA

Why do the mummies and daddies get  
mad at you?

LILIAN

Because they think we're silly.  
They don't think you should learn  
about difference. And respect. Do  
they scare you?

REBECCA

No. Mummy says they just don't like  
themselves.

(MORE)



REBECCA (CONT'D)

And you can't be scared if you like yourself. And I like my hair, my clothes, my school, and drawing, and chocolate cake, and-

LILIAN

You like a lot, don't you?!

REBECCA

And I really like you, Ms Blake. You'd be a good mummy. Wouldn't she, Ms Moloch?

FRAN

I think she'd be a wonderful mummy. Go on lovie, off you pop.

Rebecca runs off to play. Lilian sags.

LILIAN

Wish I believed that.

FRAN

Belief's a funny thing. Inspires as much doubt as it does hope. That's why I love the kids: they're all hope. Keep me young at heart. Keep me believing in what's right. And it wouldn't be right if I didn't believe you weren't good enough.

LILIAN

You really think that?

FRAN

With every part of me, lovie. You're ripe for it.

BEAT.

LILIAN

Can I tell you something?

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - PLAY SERVICES - DAY - CONT.

A room of colourful tables, chairs, toys, and art supplies.

Noah crouches over a sand tray, building two houses from blocks. Cars, figurines and model animals litter the sand.

John CHATS with a PLAY THERAPIST nearby-

JOHN

Noah's taken to them quick. 'Hold my hand' quick. Most kids won't let you near them. Too painful.

PLAY THERAPIST

Not this one. Nurses said his pain threshold's something else.

Louis peeks out from the corridor, watching Noah's twitching fingers trace symbols around a baby doll in the sand.

NOAH

I'll make you safe.

Noah places a bull on the left; a lion on the right; an eagle north; a soldier south, a gold ring over its head. BEAT. He rifles through the toy drawers, panicked-

PLAY THERAPIST

What d'you need, Noah?

NOAH

I don't know what they're called!

Louis steps out worried. Noah relaxes, limping over glassy-eyed. Louis kneels to hold his shaking hands-

LOUIS

Hey Noah. Why the tears, pal?

NOAH

I can't find what I need.

LOUIS

Can you draw it?

Noah scrawls two naked figures with silvery hair and scarred flesh on card, standing them vigil over the baby.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Who are they?

NOAH

They keep the baby safe. From the creature people.

Noah places the baby and card figures outside a block house.

LOUIS

And what do the creature people do?

Noah places two goats outside the other block house. A snake drapes the roof. A red car outside.

NOAH  
They hurt the baby.

His left hand CURLS again, fingers TWITCHING.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
It's missing. Something's missing.

LATER

Noah reads a picture book with the therapist, while Louis and John CHAT-

JOHN  
Noah's calmed down quick. You must have a gift.

LOUIS  
Just experience. Reminds me of me at his age.

JOHN  
Still deciding?

LOUIS  
What would you do?

JOHN  
I care for so many kids, Louis. All I can say is I love it.

Louis watches Noah's CURLING left hand, lost in thought.

INT. MANCHESTER - POLICE STATION - DI'S OFFICE - DAY

DI Collier pours through photos of Noah's injuries. PC Cooper enters, handing over forensics files.

PC COOPER  
Boss? Positive match on the bodies from Berith Road. It's Arthur and Dara Gress. No next of kin.

DI COLLIER  
Explains the Will.

PC COOPER  
Another thing: coroner recommends the Council arranges the funeral. Cover costs and that.

DI COLLIER

I'll get onto them. And Louis Adams  
and Lilian Blake too, they might  
want some input.

PC COOPER

You think that's a good idea?

DI COLLIER

People grieve in different ways.  
Having some control is natural. To  
an extent.

She pauses on a seven year-old newspaper cutting:

INSERT: 'IVF COUPLE KILLED IN CAR CRASH HORROR'. A photo of  
Arthur and Dara next to the red car. A goat-like symbol is  
etched in the paintwork.

**END OF ACT THREE**

ACT FOUR

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Louis and Lilian lie in bed.

LILIAN

OK. If this is happening, we need to be on the same page. So why should we do this?

LOUIS

Experience. Structure. Trying again. Feeling good again. And helping a kid who needs it most.

LILIAN

Right. Good. Solid list. We'd need character refs. Who'd we trust?

LOUIS

Nina. Simon. John and Dom. And Fran's fine too, I'm sure.

LILIAN

What about work?

LOUIS

We could take leave. And...my Dad would be here too?

Lilian sits up sharpish.

LILIAN

You're not serious?

LOUIS

We did promise him.

LILIAN

You really trust him to get all this? Get Noah? Where'd they both even sleep? Playroom's full as it is, we've only got one bed left.

LOUIS

Right. Caitlyn's.

LILIAN

I'm sorry Lou. But if we do this, Noah needs space to heal.

(MORE)

LILIAN (CONT'D)  
And your Dad? It's just not wise.  
You'll have to tell him.

Louis wilts.

LOUIS  
Right. And...what about Caitlyn?

LILIAN  
It's not her room anymore. We'd  
need a clear-out. Can you do that?

Louis turns over...and nods.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - SIDE ROOM - DAY

Louis and Lilian sit with Noah.

LILIAN  
Noah, you know you can leave soon?  
Well, your Mum and Dad-

NOAH  
Not Mum and Dad. Creature people.

LILIAN  
Right. They've gone away. Which  
means you might have to come live  
with us. Would you like that?

Noah's fingers twitch, TAP TAP TAPPING his blankets.

NOAH  
Will you keep me safe?

LOUIS  
Of course. We promise.

NOAH  
Then yes. I would like that.

LOUIS  
Wow. Right. OK! We'll be happy to  
have you.

Lilian manages a cautious smile.

INT. MANCHESTER - CITY COUNCIL - SOCIAL SERVICES - DAY

John rubs tired eyes, skimming case files at his desk.

DOMINIC (O.S.)  
John, Johnny Boy, Little Johnny  
Green! I trust your head's screwed  
on tight today, eh?

John cringes, as Dominic strides up cheerily-

JOHN  
Morning Dom.

DOMINIC  
Message for you, Dom's Honour:  
special request on your behalf for  
Safeguarding. The Noah Gress case?

JOHN  
Oh his injuries, Dom. The poor kid.

DOMINIC  
Hmm. Good news though: you'll be  
joining a CAFCASS Officer in Noah's  
guardian proceedings.

JOHN  
'Proceedings'? You mean they're  
doing it?!

INT. MANCHESTER - SHOPS - DAY

MONTAGE:

- Lilian picks out simple understated kids' clothes.
- She picks out lion, cow and eagle soft toys, and an artist's pad and pencils.
- She picks out vitamins, toiletries, and a bottle of sleep aid...she dithers...she puts it back.

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

- Louis seals photos of Arthur and Dara in a cardboard box.

EXT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - GARDEN - DAY

- Louis buries Arthur and Dara's white crosses in the shed, LOCKING it shut. He turns to leave. Something THUMPS behind him. He looks back at the blank cross and Caitlyn's cross.

Louis kneels, fingers digging in the soil between them to pull out...a gilded red ball.

INT. ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

- Louis wipes the ball clean. Faint runes cover its surface. He shakes it. A faint papery RATTLING within. He smiles.

INT. MANCHESTER - HOSPITAL - PAEDIATRICS - SIDE ROOM - DAY

- Louis and Lilian set Noah's clothes, toys and meds down before him. He gazes stunned, lost in the comforts.

LILIAN

All for you, mate. You deserve it.

LOUIS

And a final special something. A little distraction?

He holds out the red ball. Noah takes it, staring awed. He SHAKES it. An odd flicker of recognition crosses his face.

The couple manage a smile, as Louis DIALS anxiously-

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Hi. Listen, Lil and I need your help. And erm...you can't tell Dad.

INT. MANCHESTER - ADAMS-BLAKE HOME - UPPER FLOOR - PLAYROOM - DAY - CONT.

- A stern REPORTING OFFICER (50s) surveys Caitlyn's untouched toys, making notes. Louis and Lilian hover anxious.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

- The Officer stares at the two remaining white crosses in the soil, doodling symbols in their pad.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

- The Officer sees themselves out-

REPORTING OFFICER

We'll be in touch.

- END MONTAGE.



INT. MANCHESTER - FAMILY COURT - DAY

Louis and Lilian wait tensely at the dock, while the Officer and SHERIFF check the Will. Noah sits with John and Dominic. Seated in the rows are DI Collier, Dr Luca, Fran...and Nina.

SHERIFF

Taking into account the applicants' previous experience; the Reporting Officer's inspection; and all statements offered; I hereby rule in the interests of Noah Gress to enter into a Guardianship Order under Louis Adams and Lilian Blake.

The Officer lays out a consent form, grinning oddly. Louis and Lilian hesitate...and sign.

GENTLE APPLAUSE. Nina looks utterly proud. The couple return grateful smiles.

Noah watches intently, left hand CURLING around the gilded red ball. His fingers TWITCH over the runes.

A horned shadow SEEPS over the room, casting all in darkness. All except Louis, Lilian...and Noah.

No-one notices.

FADE TO BLACK

**END OF SHOW**