

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION 2013

# ONE CHANCE

**BEST WRITING (ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY)**

**Justin Zackham**



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**written by**

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**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY**

Where a CHURCH CHOIR comprised of ordinary Welsh faces, begins a medley of "*God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*"... The chirpy rendition continues over the following scenes...

**INT. PRINCESS OF WALES HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY**

The doors fly open as a team of EMS WORKERS wheels in a YOUNG PAUL POTTS (9) lying on a gurney. His parents ROLAND and YVONNE POTTS follow.

DR. THORPE (29) a new intern meets the team along with a NURSE...

FEMALE EMS

Male, nine years old, possible ruptured eardrum.

YVONNE

His name's Paul.

DR. THORPE

Right. Room three, please.

He follows the gurney into a triage room, while the nurse waylays Roland and Yvonne with her clipboard.

NURSE

You're his parents?

YVONNE

That's right.

NURSE

I'll just need to get some basic information from you.

ROLAND

(to his anxious wife)

He'll be alright.

NURSE

(filling in a form)

Right, so it's Paul...last name please?

ROLAND

Potts. P, O, double-T, S.

NURSE

Paul Potts. Like the Cambodian dictator  
who massacred all the--?

YVONNE

(for the millionth time...)

Not at all like the Cambodian dictator.

NURSE

Right.

**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Shots of the choir... Four rows deep... First and third  
rows leading the song; rows two and four following several  
bars behind... All eyes on the peripatetic CHOIRMASTER...

Several rows behind the fourth row, Paul stands alone,  
singing with gale-force might...

YOUNG PAUL

*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and  
joy. O tidings of comfort and joy.*

Several members of the fourth row wince at the decibel  
level as--

**INT. TRAIGE ROOM THREE - DAY**

The gurney is locked into position as the medical team  
takes over. Yvonne wrings her hands in the doorway.

DR. THORPE

How long since it occurred?

YVONNE

About an hour. They said he just  
collapsed after his solo.

ROLAND

Miracle he hasn't ruptured our eardrums  
from all his hooting and hollering.

YVONNE

(elbowing her husband)

He's a passionate singer.

**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Where Paul sways as he solos with eyes fervently shut,  
hands clenched, voice like a wind throughout the  
cathedral...

YOUNG PAUL

*Fear not then said the angel, let nothing  
you affright. This day is born a Savoir  
of a pure Virgin bright. To free all  
those who trust in Him--*

CHOIR

*--from Satan's power and might. O tidings  
of comfort and joy.*

A distinct THUMP is heard... The members of the fourth row look over their shoulders to find Paul is vanished from sight.

CHOIR (CONT'D)

*Comfort and joy. O tidings of comfort and  
joy.*

**INT. EMERGENCY HALLWAY - DAY**

As Paul is wheeled into surgery. Young Dr. Thorpe, now in gown and gloves, meets his parents at the door...

DR. THORPE

*--got some fluid build-up in the middle  
ear. Not to worry, we'll have him right  
as rain in no time.*

YVONNE

So you've done this sort of thing before?

DR. THORPE

Of course. Well, not with anyone still  
breathing...

*(realizes the faux pas)*

*I'm still new, but rest assured, live or  
dead, the bits are all the same once you  
start digging around inside.*

*(now they're freaked)*

*Cafe's just down the hall.*

He heads into surgery... As the doors swing shut--

ROLAND

*(arm around his wife)*

*He'll be just fine.*

MATCH CUT TO:

**EXT. POTTS HOUSE - DAY (SEVERAL DAYS LATER)**

A two-story row house adjoined on either side and identical to the sixty other homes on the block.

The door slams behind Paul, who stands on the landing, carrying his school bag.

He pats the large bandage mummifying his repaired ear, then looks both ways before descending the steps to the sidewalk.

He checks his surroundings again before venturing out the gate and turning down the road.

MATTHEW

There he is! Get 'im!

Paul runs as a flock of screaming YOUNG BOYS crosses the road, hot on his heels... Their screams blend into the continuing choral medley as we return to...

**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY**

Where the same Welsh choir-faces, several years older now, continue the song with undiminished fervor over--

**EXT. PORT TALBOT, WALES - DAY**

Establishing shots of this gray, industrial steel-town huddled on the edge of the Celtic Sea.

From above the city, we see Paul, a lone figure running down the center of a road...a moment later the group of boys appears in close pursuit until they catch him and start punching...

**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY**

Reveal that the rows behind the choir are empty... And yet, Paul's voice rises above the rest, though it sounds impossibly far away...

**EXT. PORT TALBOT STREET - DAY**

Paul tears around a corner, the lead pursuers close behind him... He's slightly older now, closer to thirteen or fourteen with a few extra pounds...

He cuts across a busy intersection, narrowly avoiding a lorry which momentarily cuts off his pursuers...

**EXT. BUSY STREET - DAY**

Paul weaves through pedestrians. He's aged again, nearing eighteen, and puffing even harder with the extra weight.

The boys chasing him appear older, larger, and there are more of them than before and they're gaining on him.

**EXT. ALLEY - DAY**

Paul turns down the empty alley, losing his schoolbag to the clutching hand of the closest pursuer...

Near the alley's end, Paul veers wide to the left in anticipation, then cuts right, barely fitting his belly through a narrow pedestrian opening...

The lead boys miss the turn, smacking into the alley wall and crumple...

**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY**

Paul's hidden voice is somewhat louder now as the CAMERA looks down on the choir from above...

**EXT. OPEN STREET - DAY**

Paul looks back to see his lead has widened. He smiles then turns forward an instant too late to avoid the newly constructed scaffolding on the sidewalk...

He opens his mouth to scream...

CUT TO:

**EXT. OPEN STREET - DAY**

Where Paul lies on the ground, mouth bleeding, bullies standing over him, laughing. MATTHEW, the toughest of the lot, leans forward and allows a stream of spit to dribble onto Paul's cheek where it mixes with the blood from his ruined mouth.

**INT. PRINCESS OF WALES HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY**

As Paul is brought in on another gurney where he's met by, a slightly aged Dr. Thorpe.

DR. THORPE

What've we got?

CHOIR

*Among your friends and kindred that live  
both far and near.*

**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY**

CAMERA PULLS OUT of the shattered mouth of PAUL, now in his twenties, singing, with reckless fervor through the shards of two badly broken front teeth...

CAMERA CONTINUES pulling back to reveal he is alone, in the upper choir loft, a good twenty feet above the rest of the choir.

CHOIR (V.O.)

*That god send you a happy new year, happy new year. That god send you a happy new year.*

**INT. ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH - DAY**

The Choirmaster's fists clench shut, silencing the choir.

CHOIRMASTER

That's very nice indeed.

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

Walls lined with various phones and phone accessories. BRADDON (34), painfully thin with spiky hair, bad skin and elvish ear-extensions, hits on a FEMALE CUSTOMER.

BRADDON

Now this one comes with customizable ringtones and dual vibrating mode, which can come in quite handy in certain situations.

The bell jingles as Paul walks in quietly.

FEMALE CUSTOMER

And what situations would that be?

BRADDON

(leaning closer)

What've you got in mind?

FEMALE CUSTOMER

I'd like a word with your manager.

He shows her his employee badge, that reads "MANAGER" just below his name, "BRADDON MELLINS".

BRADDON

What seems to be the problem, Miss?

FEMALE CUSTOMER

They should lock you up.

BRADDON

Bondage? Naughty, cheeky, but presto, you talked me into it.

She storms out...

BRADDON (CONT'D)

Come see us again soon.

...passing Paul who offers a tentative, closed-mouth smile to Braddon.

PAUL

Better luck next time.

BRADDON

It's quantum algebra, mate; if I offer my personal services to twenty women, one point three of them are certain to shag me blind.

PAUL

How many have said yes so far?

BRADDON

(calculating)

S'about... I'm still tinkering with the approach, but erection is the mother of invention, yes? Right, what can we do ya for? Something compact, 'round five-hundred minutes a month with unlimited text and a free shaving kit?

PAUL

Actually, I was wondering if the position's still open.

BRADDON

The position?

PAUL

The job.

BRADDON

You want to work here, what in god's name for?

PAUL

Because I love mobile phones?

BRADDON

Lying will get you everywhere.

Hands him an application, then snatches it back...

BRADDON (CONT'D)

Have you got a girlfriend?

PAUL

Yes? Well, sort of-- Not really.

Braddon snatches the application back again...

BRADDON

Boyfriend then?

PAUL

Oh no, she's definitely a girl, I'm sure of it.

BRADDON

Okay, as long as you're sure.

Paul takes the application and gets to work.

**EXT. PORT TALBOT STREET - NIGHT**

Paul walks home from the interview, passes a pub, The Forge Tavern, from which numerous UNION MEN have spilled out onto the sidewalk.

Paul lowers his head and gives the men a wide berth, until one DRUNK man stumbles into him and "accidentally" drops his beer.

FIRST DRUNK

Watch where you're going, Martha.

PAUL

Sorry.

He tries not to break stride, but the man grabs his arm threateningly...

FIRST DRUNK

Sorry ain't gonna pay for a new pint, is it?

Suddenly, the drunk is jerked backwards and ends up on his ass.

ROLAND

(standing over him)

I'll thank you to leave him alone now, Peter.

FIRST DRUNK

'Not my fault he can't walk straight.

SECOND DRUNK

Probably 'cause his teeth are all crooked.

THIRD DRUNK

Or it's that enormous ass of his.

ROLAND

One more word.

SECOND DRUNK

And what?

ROLAND

And your next shift will be in the queue  
at the unemployment office.

Finally, they all back down to his seniority. Roland helps  
the First Drunk to his feet--

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Now come on Bill and apologize to--

But Paul is gone.

**EXT. QUIET STREET - NIGHT**

Paul walks down the center of the road. Roland jogs after  
him.

ROLAND

All right?

PAUL

I'm fine, dad.

ROLAND

Pete's a good lad, he's just in his cups  
is all.

Paul doesn't respond. They walk for a moment.

ROLAND (CONT'D)

Maybe if you joined a fitness club.  
Lifted some weights.

PAUL

Yeah?

ROLAND

I'm just saying... Maybe losin' a few  
stone you wouldn't provoke them as much.

Paul looks away; not the first time he's heard this brand  
of logic from his father.

PAUL

I got a job.

ROLAND

What, that bloody musical down the community centre?

PAUL

Mobile phone shop in Bridgend.

ROLAND

Oh... Well done... So, you'll be getting your own place then?

PAUL

Actually, um, I've been saving up for opera lessons...in Italy.

ROLAND

You're twenty-nine years old, Paul. Singing lessons can wait.

They turn up the path to their home. Paul hesitates a moment letting Roland go up the steps ahead of him. Furious, he opens his mouth to speak, but loses his nerve...

Music is heard - Pavarotti singing "*Che Gelida Manina*" from La Boeme.

CUT TO:

AN LP COVER; PAVAROTTI IN FULL CLOWN (CANIO FROM PAGLIACCI)

**INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

TRACK ACROSS walls plastered with posters and downloaded print-outs of images from the opera world: The Three Tenors; Caruso; a program from La Traviata in Rome; and finally a virtual shrine to Pavarotti, his great hero...  
ENDING ON:

A PAIR OF KNITTING NEEDLES

Pointed skyward, quivering slightly in anticipation... Then slicing and waving through the air as Paul angrily "conducts" the music as the refrain kicks in.

Gradually, Paul is enveloped and the thrashing needles slow and subside and finally slip to the ground as, panting, he stops the record, revealing a muffled BANGING coming from downstairs.

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

As Paul makes his way down the stairs and into the kitchen where Roland is already at the table.

ROLAND

Always with the bloody violins. Won't shed a tear when they've packed and gone.

YVONNE

(serving dinner)

What do you mean gone? Paul, are you going somewhere.

PAUL

Venice.

ROLAND

Oh no, this singing rubbish has gone on long enough. He's got a job, he can get his own flat.

YVONNE

Pish-posh.

(to Paul)

Stay forever darling. Here you are.

As she places an enormous plate in front of Paul.

ROLAND

Christ, Yvonne, He can hardly fit through the door as it is.

PAUL

(to Roland)

Look, I get it. I'm never going to be a professional singer. I just... It's the only thing that makes me-- Let me go to Venice and I'll move out when I get back.

Yvonne looks at Roland, eyes pleading Paul's case.

CUT TO:

**INT. STIARWELL - DAY**

As Paul, gasping and sweating and carrying two moving boxes, climbs several flights up the increasingly narrow staircase until he reaches the top floor and the door to--

**INT. A TINY STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY**

Where he drops the boxes alongside several others. The room is partially unpacked with his pictures of Pavarotti and Toscanini already hung with prominence, and his computer has been set up atop a "desk" made from several other boxes.

A CHIMING/BOUNCING MESSAGE is seen on the screen... Paul clicks on the message revealing a kitty-kat avatar, which expands into a Chat Invitation from "julzRulz".

JULZ

(typed)

How did it go?

Paul TYPES his response...

PAUL

How did what go?

JULZ

Job? Italy? Job? Italy?

PAUL

Job, yes. Smallest apartment in Britain, yes. Italy, no. How are you?

JULZ

I'm so sorry, Paul. I guess you'll have to settle for visiting me in Bristol.  
Hint. Hint. ;) :)

A beat as Paul flushes... He types...

PAUL

I'd love to, but the job starts tomorrow and until I get the cast off my leg, it's too difficult for me to get around.

Paul grimaces at the lie.

JULZ

(after a beat...)

Right.

PAUL

If I ask you something, promise not to get offended?

JULZ

Anything?

PAUL  
 You are a girl--  
     (deletes the word girl,  
     replaces it with...)  
 --a woman, right?

He sighs with relief at her response and continues  
 "chatting."

BRADDON (O.S.)  
 I could feel the firming of her breasts  
 as she pressed them into me.

CUT TO:

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

Where Braddon is in mid-soliloquy as he and Paul stock  
 shelves with bluetooth ear-pieces...

BRADDON  
 "Be gentle," said she. "Unicorns are not  
 meant for human love." "But lady," said  
 I, "I am only half human." And I laid her  
 down and took her there, amidst the moss  
 and leaves of the forest floor.

PAUL  
 And that was your weekend?

BRADDON  
 In a nutshell. Yours?

PAUL  
 Sorry, but... Did you say you shagged a  
 horse?

BRADDON  
 It's a game, role-playing, like Dungeons  
 & Dragons but for real.

PAUL  
 So she was a girl, pretending to be a  
 horse.

BRADDON  
 A unicorn!

PAUL  
 Right... Sorry. And you were--?

BRADDON  
 A half-elf wizard from the Black Mages  
 Guild of Quilanthum.

PAUL

Right.

BRADDON

When's the last time you had a bit of fluff?

PAUL

Em, well...

BRADDON

Right.

PAUL

She is a girl, by the way. My girlfriend.

BRADDON

When shall we double-date then?

PAUL

Um, she doesn't really live here.

BRADDON

Where's she live, then?

PAUL

Bristol.

BRADDON

Bristol? That's miles from-- You have actually met her, haven't you?

PAUL

Well, we chat all the time...

Shows Braddon his phone-chat which shows a lengthy text-thread between he and julzRulz.

PAUL (CONT'D)

She keeps inviting me up for a visit, but...

BRADDON

But what?

PAUL

Well, she looks like Cameron Diaz and...

BRADDON

And?

Suddenly Paul sees something over Braddon's shoulder and darts through the curtains into the back of the store.

BRADDON (CONT'D)

What's crawled up his--

He turns to the storefront where Matthew enters belligerently, wearing a blue janitor's uniform and carrying a smashed cell phone...

MATTHEW

The service on this phone is total crap!

BRADDON

It can't be bad as all that. I can see quarter crap, or maybe even half--

As Matthew dumps the smashed cell phone on the counter.

BRADDON (CONT'D)

Right, the thing is, in order for the service to actually work, the phone itself should really be in no more than three or four pieces.

MATTHEW

(threatening)

It's under warranty.

BRADDON

Of course, but--

MATTHEW

How 'bout you gimme a phone that works properly and I won't cram this one down your throat. Yeh?

Braddon glances at the cel phone Paul left on the counter, then at the curtains at the back of the store.

BRADDON

Excellent.

CUT TO:

**EXT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT**

Paul and Braddon lock up for the night.

BRADDON

Oh, nearly forgot.

Flips Paul his phone.

PAUL

Oh, right. Thanks.

BRADDON

I took the liberty, while you were cowering in the back...

PAUL

I wasn't cowering, I was-- Took the liberty to do what?

BRADDON

This Saturday, Swansea Railway Station. She's on the nine fifteen train.

Walks off leaving Paul dumbfounded...

**EXT. SHOPPING ARCADE - NIGHT**

As Paul catches up with Braddon.

PAUL

What did you do?

BRADDON

It's a bit difficult losing your virginity someone a hundred miles away.

PAUL

You invited her here?

BRADDON

You did. As far as she knows. And what's this rubbish about a broken leg?

PAUL

I told her that so-- She said she looks like Cameron Diaz!

BRADDON

How awful.

PAUL

It is!

BRADDON

In what universe could that be--

(realizing...)

You told her you look like someone famous as well?

PAUL

A bit, yeah.

BRADDON

Robbie Coltraine? Jack Black? Madonna?

PAUL

Worse.

BRADDON

Worse than Madonna?

CUT TO:

A PHOTO OF BRAD PITT - TORN FROM A MAGAZINE

**INT. TINY APARTMENT - DAY**

Taped to a mirror-frame in which Paul is seen not coming within a million miles of emulating Pitt's hair-style.

Finally, he gives up and tears the photo from the mirror.

**EXT. SWANSEA RAILWAY STATION - DAY**

Where Paul waits nervously as the train arrives. He practices several nonchalant leans against a pole before giving up entirely.

PASSENGERS flood from the train as the doors open. Paul searches through them, looking for a Cameron Diaz clone.

The train pulls away and the crowd thins until Paul is alone on the platform. His heart sinks a little - she stood him up.

JULZ (O.S.)

Brad?

He turns around and has to hide his smile...

PAUL

Cameron?

JULIE-ANNE "JULZ" COOPER, cute but short and thoroughly relieved that she's not the only one who exaggerated her appearance, smiles back at him.

They smile at each other for a moment...

PAUL (CONT'D)

Um, welcome to Port Talbot.

JULZ

(laughing at him, but in a good way)

Thank you.

They turn and walk towards the far end of the platform, each taking turns stealing glances at one another.

At one point, their hands touch and Paul's fingers close around hers... The continue walking, neither speaking.

CUT TO:

**EXT. PORT TALBOT HIGH STREET - DAY**

Still holding hands, Paul and Julz walk amidst shoppers.

JULZ  
You're leg's much better.

PAUL  
(touching his left leg)  
Yeah, thanks. Ship-shape.  
(off her look)  
What?

JULZ  
I thought it was your right leg?

PAUL  
Oh, right. Um...

YVONNE (O.S.)  
Paul, is that you darling?

PAUL  
Oh god.

Yvonne appears through the crowd, carrying bags of food from Sainsbury's and an incredulous look on her face.

YVONNE  
Well, bless my soul. Hallo, I'm Paul's mum.

Paul dies a little inside as Julz has to wrest her hand from his to shake Yvonne's hand.

JULZ  
Lovely to meet you. I'm Julz.

YVONNE  
Paul, you didn't tell me you were... Oh you must come for dinner. My husband would love to--

PAUL  
Thanks, mum, but Julz has to be back to the station by--

JULZ  
 (seeing Yvonne's  
 disappointment)  
 It's alright. I'd love to come. Can we  
 help you with these?

She takes several of Yvonne's bags.

YVONNE  
 Thank you dear. Aren't you lovely?

Julz looks at Paul. Mouths the word, "Okay?" Paul can't help but nod and smile/grimace. Julz sticks her tongue out at him before Yvonne pulls her onwards...

YVONNE (CONT'D)  
 Now then, tell me everything about  
 yourself.

CUT TO:

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

Where the four of them are packed around the small table loaded with food.

JULZ  
 --but then I thought to myself, I haven't  
 got the slightest interest in die-cast  
 aluminum figurines. So I got a job in the  
 pharmacy at Boots.

ROLAND  
 Good retirement benefits at Boots.

JULZ  
 Not so good as Car Phone Warehouse.  
 (to Yvonne)  
 That's lovely, thanks.

Yvonne has piled a towering stack of green-beans on Julz' plate.

ROLAND  
 And your parents? What do they do?

PAUL  
 Dad.

JULZ  
 It's alright. Mum's a--

PAUL

Her mum's a seamstress and Dad's on disability from the chemical plant.

ROLAND

Smithsons the one in Bristol?

JULZ

That's right. And I hear you're the foreman down the steel mill? And you, Yvonne, are said to make the best bread pudding in all of Europe.

YVONNE

I am somewhat celebrated for it.

JULZ

(nudging Paul)

Not the only celebrity in the family.

ROLAND

What? Him?

JULZ

He's going to be a wonderful singer.

ROLAND

I thought you two only met this morning?

Julz takes Paul's hand under the table.

JULZ

Nonsense. How could I be his girlfriend if we'd only just met?

Paul brightens at this news, as does Yvonne.

YVONNE

They've been chirping on the Internet for quite some time, dear.

PAUL

It's not chirping, mum, it's--

JULZ

We've been chirping for almost a year.

ROLAND

With all the chirping and singing, it's no wonder he's so undeveloped.

Paul's eyes fall to his lap...

JULZ  
You think Paul is undeveloped?!

ROLAND  
I wish my mum did all my washing when I  
was twenty-nine.

PAUL  
I can't stop her.

YVONNE  
You just try and stop me!

Everyone's taken aback by Yvonne's ferocity...

YVONNE  
Now then, who's for a sweet?

**EXT. POTTS HOUSE - DAY**

Yvonne kisses Julz several times goodbye.

YVONNE  
I mean it. Even if Paul's not here, we  
can go for a ladies lunch or have our  
hair done.

JULZ  
Sounds wonderful.

Roland appears, palms a packet of condoms into Paul's  
hand.

ROLAND  
Can't be too careful.

Paul pockets them quickly.

PAUL  
Bye then.

Forces his parents inside and pulls the door closed on  
them. Yvonne is heard yelling at Roland.

YVONNE (O.S.)  
Condoms?! Are you out of your bloody  
mind?!

JULZ  
(to Paul)  
He didn't?

ROLAND (O.S.)  
Who knows what her intentions are!

PAUL  
 (flushed, shows her the  
 condoms)  
 I'm sorry. I--

JULZ  
 What kind of a tart does he think I am?

YVONNE (O.S.)  
 (to Roland)  
 She's a lovely girl.

ROLAND (O.S.)  
 My point exactly. What's a girl like that  
 want with the likes of him, then?

YVONNE (O.S.)  
 (sarcastic)  
 She's after his inheritance! All twenty  
 pounds of it. Hurry, we must hide the  
 Picassos.

Julz watches Paul's face, feeling badly for him.

PAUL  
 Dad fell on his head when he was a child.  
 Or last week perhaps.

JULZ  
 (re: the condoms)  
 Well, you won't be needing those, just  
 so's you don't have any ideas.

PAUL  
 I don't! I swear. The thought hasn't even  
 crossed my--  
 (he's gone too far)  
 I mean. It has, but... I mean...

She puts her finger to her lips. Offers her hand. He takes  
 it and they walk off.

**EXT. FINNEGAN'S PUB - DAY**

Paul and Julz sit outside over pints of cider.

JULZ  
 He was just mean, really. Shagged my  
 former best friend, then told me it's  
 because I was getting too--  
 (eyes reddening)  
 It doesn't matter.

PAUL  
(taking her hand)  
He was a tosser.

JULZ  
An enormous tosser. But I'm well past it... I don't need that much love, I don't expect it anyway, not coming from where I do. But, nothing ventured, nothing gained as they say... You've got to take chances now and again, though it'd be brilliant if it was on something actually worthwhile for change.

Paul smiles... He wants to tell her he's worthwhile, but knows it isn't something you say... Instead, he traces outlines with his thumb across the back of her hand until--

PAUL  
If you could be one person, who would you be?

JULZ  
Well, seeing as I'm a dead ringer for Cameron Diaz...  
(flutters her eyelashes)  
Then again, she's got her own career, famous boyfriends, and an ass I'd sell my mum for. What about you?

PAUL  
I'd be me.

JULZ  
'Can't be yourself. Have to be someone else.

PAUL  
I don't want to be someone else.

JULZ  
That confident, are we?

PAUL  
On the contrary. But, if I were someone else, I wouldn't be here with you.

JULZ  
You'll get a kiss later for that one... Okay, what if you could meet anyone? Now that I've met Brad Pitt, I'll have to say...Nelson Mandela.

PAUL

Pavarotti.

JULZ

He's your true role model then?

PAUL

It used to be him and Han Solo, but then I realized Han Solo wasn't actually real.

JULZ

Crushing was it?

PAUL

Horrible scars on my psyche.

JULZ

He's Italian? Pavarotti, I mean.

PAUL

He lives in Monte Carlo now, but he's on the board of an opera school in Venice.

JULZ

That's where you want to go, isn't it?

PAUL

I'm not good enough to sing professionally, I just like singing for people. It'd be nice to learn properly. Maybe someday.

JULZ

Would you sing for me?

Paul flushes red. Smiles shyly but is clearly uncomfortable...

PAUL

It's not that I--

JULZ

Someday, then?

PAUL

Someday.

JULZ

One foot, then the other.

Suddenly, the door bursts open and Braddon emerges along with HYDRANGEA, an ethereal looking girl with blonde hair and a unicorn shirt.

BRADDON

What do you mean platonic? How can you be-  
Hallo Paul. What you doing here?

(sees Julz)

Is this-- This is! You are!

JULZ

I am?

PAUL

She is.

(to Hydrangea)

And you must be--

HYDRANGEA

Hydrangea.

PAUL

Right.

(re: her shirt)

Is that a unicorn?

Braddon signals desperately for him to shut up.

HYDRANGEA

Have you signed up for the contest?

PAUL

Just the cider.

BRADDON

Just as well, I've got the blue ribbon in  
the bag.

JULZ

What bag is that?

HYDRANGEA

Third annual Halloween costume karaoke  
competition. Three thousand pound to the  
winner.

Pulls a flyer off the wall, hands it to Paul.

PAUL

(stunned)

Three thousand pound?

BRADDON

Mind you, it's no amateur night. They get  
some pretty tough customers in here.

(bangs his bird chest)

It's sure be a blood-bath.

JULZ

You're a singer, then are you?

BRADDON

(as if it's obvious...)

I've got a gorgeous singing voice.

(kissing Julz hand)

Lovely to meet you.

(kisses Paul's hand)

And you.

Tries to kiss Hydrangea's hand, but she flicks him in the forehead.

HYDRANGEA

Come on, Sinatra. You can wash my motor-scooter.

BRADDON

It that code?

(off her look)

Oh. Right.

She drags him away, leaving Julz looking at the embarrassed Paul with raised eyebrows...

PAUL

Actually, he's my boss.

JULZ

You're joking?

PAUL

The less you think about him the better.

**INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Only slightly progressed since last time. The boxes are gone and yet it feels even smaller.

Julz marvels at the collection of opera posters and flyers.

JULZ

Wow. I knew you were into opera, but I didn't know you were completely mad for it.

PAUL

I'm not fanatical about it or anything.

(off her look)

Okay, maybe just a little bit.

Julz looks at a yellowed, framed newspaper article...

JULZ

What language is this?

PAUL

Portuguese. It's the--

JULZ

You speak Portuguese?

PAUL

Not at all. I had it translated though.  
It's the story of Toscanini's first  
performance in 1886...

Realizes he's probably boring her.

JULZ

Go on.

She glances at his knitting needles on the bedside  
tables... He's relieved when she doesn't ask...

PAUL

He was a cellist in an Italian opera  
company that was touring South America.  
(points to the date)  
One night in 1886, their conductor was  
booed by the audience and literally  
forced to leave the podium. In  
desperation, the singers suggested their  
assistant Chorus Master take over because  
he knew the whole opera by heart.

JULZ

That's a lot to memorize, is it?

PAUL

Um, yes it is. And though he had never  
conducted anything before, Toscanini  
threw aside the score and led a  
sensational, two-and-a-half hour  
performance completely from memory. He  
was nineteen.

JULZ

And then he became quite famous, didn't  
he?

She's seeing his deepest desires on his sleeve. He  
realizes he's gotten carried away.

PAUL

Sorry.

JULZ  
For what? I wish I loved something that  
much.

PAUL  
There must be something?

JULZ  
Not yet, anyway.

He smiles as he realizes she means him.

JULZ (CONT'D)  
Best get to my train.

**EXT. SWANSEA RAILWAY STATION - DAY**

Paul and Julz stand side-by-side, still holding hands as  
her train pulls in, neither wanting the day to end.

JULZ  
I had a lovely day.

PAUL  
I had a lovely day.

An awkward beat. Paul has no idea what to do as the train  
stops.

JULZ  
Sooo, I'll see you when you get back  
then.

PAUL  
From where?

JULZ  
Venice, of course.

PAUL  
I told you, I'm not going to Italy.

JULZ  
You are. You're going to win that karaoke  
competition and if the next time we speak  
you're not ringing me from a Venetian  
gondola, I mightn't think you can sing at  
all.

Then she kisses him, deeply, soundly, with just a bit of  
tongue.

PAUL  
(gobsmacked)  
Right.

JULZ  
See ya Brad.

PAUL  
Bye Cameron.

Almost without thought, he pulls her to him and kisses her again. Gradually realizing he might have been too forward, as evidenced by the shy look on his face as their lips part...

The smile that blooms in her mouth and eyes says otherwise as she opens one of the train doors and climbs aboard.

He follows her down the train until she finds a seat. He waves and smiles and she closes her eyes and kisses the window between them. The glass steams from her breath and she draws a heart around the imprint of her lipstick.

The train pulls away leaving Paul alone but brimming on the platform.

CUT TO:

**INT. CITY BUS - NIGHT**

Shots of BUS PASSENGERS staring at something in the back of the bus...

Reveal Paul, dressed in a puffy, white clown costume with large neck ruffles, grapefruit-sized pom-poms, a fake beard and white face paint with black, vertical lines bisecting his eyes.

He feels the stares and tries to look as if he doesn't notice them.

BRADDON (O.S.)  
Have you gone completely up the pole?

**EXT. FINNEGAN'S PUB - NIGHT**

Paul looks down at himself, embarrassed.

PAUL  
It's Pavarotti... As Canio... It's really that bad?

BRADDON  
You look like a dead marshmallow.

PAUL

Oh. So that's-- What's you're costume,  
then?

CUT TO:

A STACK OF RENTED PA SPEAKERS

**INT. FINNEGAN'S PUB - NIGHT**

The opening beats and squeaks of George Michael's "I Want  
Your Sex" blare...

Braddon jumps into frame, wearing nothing but a thin pizza  
box around his waist...

BRADDON

*There's things that you guess. And things  
that you know. There's boys you can  
trust. And girls that you don't. There's  
little things you hide.*

*(indicates his groin)*

*And things that you show.*

*(turns, showing everyone his  
butt)*

*Sometimes you think you're gonna get it.  
But you don't and that's just the way it  
goes.*

The audience is stunned, but some are laughing, and  
Hydrangea, dressed in shimmering white robes with a tiny nub  
of horn atop her forehead, sings along to the chorus as  
Braddon thrusts his pizza box at her.

UNICORN GIRL

*I swear I won't tease you. Won't tell you  
no lies. I don't need no bible. Just look  
in my eyes.*

CUT TO:

**INT. FINNEGAN'S PUB - NIGHT**

Braddon does an awkward split as the song ends.

BRADDON

*C-c-c-c-c-c-come on!*

The audience cheers and laughs as he climbs to his feet,  
trying to hold the pizza box together. Hydrangea hugs him  
and pulls him into the crowd next to Paul who's still in  
shock.

PAUL

Well done.

BRADDON

Yeah thanks, mate. It's a gift from--

Kisses his finger then points to heaven... Over by the karaoke equipment, the EMCEE reads from his list.

EMCEE

And now, singing... Blimey...

(squints)

Vesti la goober. The vocal stylings of Paul Poots.

Braddon and Hydrangea clap wildly, shoving Paul onto the stage. The audience quiets for a moment, taking in his costume, until the music starts, violins and cellos...

Paul opens his mouth to sing, but the crowd immediately ignores him, beginning to chatter amongst themselves.

Paul begins to sweat as the music continues to play. Braddon and Hydrangea spur him on...

BRADDON

Go on!

But the crowd are getting rowdy with themselves. Paul's nerves are getting the better of him. The emcee stops the music. Starts it again.

Braddon chews his thumbnail nervously as Paul begins to sing...

PAUL

*Vesti la giubba, e la faccia infarina. La gente page, e rider vuole qua. E se Arlecchin ti'invola Colombina, ridi, Pagliaccio, e ognun applaudira.*

No one's listening. The the music swells and his voice rises above the crowd, not necessarily great, but far above average and very loud...

PAUL (CONT'D)

*Tramuta in lazzi los spasmo ed il pianto in una smorfia il singhiozzo e 'l dolor, Ah!*

Conversations begin to tail off and people have no choice but to watch and listen to Paul. Braddon can't believe his ears...

BRADDON

Bloody hell.

...as Paul launches into the aria.

PAUL

*Ridi, Pagliaccio, sul tuo amore infranto!  
Ridi del duol, che t'avvelena il cor!*

The song ends and the pub is deathly quiet... Paul realizes he's made a complete fool of himself...

UNTIL THE CROWS ERUPTS

CUT TO:

CHEERING VOICES

**EXT. FINNEGAN'S PUB - NIGHT**

As Paul exits the pub with a sulking Braddon and Hydrangea and dozens of well-wishers who continue to congratulate Paul and clap him on the back.

With a nudge from Hydrangea, Braddon half-heartedly congratulates Paul.

BRADDON

Well done, I suppose. I still reckon the fix was in.

PAUL

There's always Christmas.

BRADDON

(brightening)

Bloody well right.

HYDRANGEA

Congratulations.

PAUL

Good night.

They walk off with Braddon singing a scratchy "operatic" *Good King Wenceslas*. He puts his arm around Hydrangea, but she shrugs it off.

Paul smiles then pulls out an envelope revealing...

A CHECK FOR THREE THOUSAND POUNDS

He allows himself a two-step jig before tucking the check back inside the envelope when suddenly...

He's jerked roughly backwards by his collar and slammed down onto the pavement.

MATTHEW

Well, if it isn't everyone's favorite circus freak. Hallo Potsy.

He and another HOOLIGAN stand over Paul.

PAUL

Get off me.

He tries to stand, but Matthew kicks his ribs. Paul buckles.

MATTHEW

What've we got here then?

He snatches the envelope from Paul's hand. Paul lunges for it, but Matthew sidesteps and Paul's face hits the curb.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Bloody hell, have a look at this.

HOOLIGAN

(eying the check)

What's an obese clown doin' with this kind of dosh?

PAUL

Give it back.

With surprising speed he finds his feet and SMASHES Matthew in the face with all his might...

Matthew blinks, but appears otherwise unfazed. He holds up the check...

MATTHEW

You're gonna pay for that.

He puts the check in his pocket and is about to lay into Paul when suddenly Braddon leaps onto his back, letting out a war cry--

BRADDON

May the Flame of Arveron sustain me!

Matthew recovers his balance and struggles to free himself from the clinging, scratching, screaming Braddon, finally dumping him on the pavement next to Paul, who has been held down by the Hooligan.

HOOLIGAN

Here.

He tosses Matthew a brick. Matthew raises it over his head, about to smash Braddon, when it suddenly falls out of his hand as his face goes limp and he falls to the pavement revealing--

HYDRANGEA

Standing behind him, wielding a cricket bat.

HOOLIGAN (CONT'D)

Where the hell'd you get that?

PARTYGOER

From me.

The Hooligan turns to see a group of PARTYGOERS dressed in various sports costumes: football (aka soccer), rugby, cricket, etc.

PARTYGOER (CONT'D)

She's welcome to it as long as she likes.

RUGBY PLAYER

Or we can use it for her.

The Hooligan runs. Braddon and Paul help each other up.

BRADDON

All right?

PAUL

Yeh. You?

BRADDON

(to Hydrangea)

You saved us.

HYDRANGEA

You'd have done the same for me.

(handing the bat back)

Thank you.

BRADDON

(on one knee)

I am your servant.

HYDRANGEA

You already were my servant.

BRADDON

I was? I was! Yes mistress. Command me,  
mistress. I'm not worthy. May I lick your  
ankles please?

Hydrangea rolls her eyes as Paul reaches into Matthew's  
pocket and removes his check. Matthew's eyes open.

PAUL

(offers his hand)

Truce?

MATTHEW

(whispered)

I'm gonna get you for this.

PAUL

Why?

Matthew doesn't answer just stares balefully...

DISSOLVE TO:

JULZ SMILING FACE

**INT. JULZ' PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY**

As she watches a video on YouTube -- the infamous monkey  
who scratches his butt then smells his hand and falls out  
of his tree.

She laughs to herself, then answers her RINGING mobile  
phone.

JULZ

Hallo?

PAUL (O.S.)

What's so funny?

JULZ

(her expression darkens)

Who is this?

PAUL (O.S.)

It's Paul.

JULZ

I knew a Paul once.

PAUL (O.S.)

You're cross with me.

JULZ

Three weeks goes well past playing hard to get.

**EXT. FERRY - DAY (INTERCUT)**

Paul stands on the sunny prow of a *vaporetto* (water taxi), talking on his mobile.

PAUL

(actually worried)

It's been nineteen days. And I was just following your instructions.

JULZ

Instructions to what?

PAUL

You said not to call you until I was settled in Venice.

A white, basilica appears behind Paul as the *vaporetto* merges into the Grand Canal, revealing the splendor of Venice.

JULZ

You're joking?

PAUL

Check your e-mail.

JULZ

Hang on.

She turns to her computer and opens an e-mail from Paul then scrolls through a series of PHOTOS detailing Paul's last few weeks...

Still in his clown-costume, face scraped but smiling with his check.

Buying his first suitcase.

Boarding an Al Italia plane.

Arriving at the Opera School.

In his room, smiling beside the window and the view of the city.

And finally one taken moments ago aboard the *vaporetto*.

JULZ (CONT'D)

I don't believe it.

PAUL  
Can hardly believe it myself.

JULZ  
Tell me everything.

A BARITONE SINGS A SUSTAINED NOTE...

CUT TO:

**INT. BASEMENT CONSERVATORY - DAY**

A tall, GANGLY STUDENT pumps the sound from his lungs, eyes widening as he runs out of steam, but fighting to keep the note alive at the behest of SIGNORA FIORENTINO, their fierce *istrutrice*.

PAUL (V.O.)  
The school is brilliant. It's in an old sixteenth century *palazzo*, which floods twice a day with the tide.

Paul and the others stand in "Wellies" (galoshes) in a foot of water, singing their hearts out. Even the legs of the piano wear rubber boots.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Every morning starts off with four hours of intensive Italian.

**INT. PALAZZO STAIRCASE - DAY**

As Paul, running late, runs up the first floor stairs... He slows a bit at the second floor... Walks the third... And limps up the fourth, stopping to gasp for air...

**INT. LANGUAGE CLASSROOM - DAY**

Affords a beautiful view of the city. Paul sits in the back row, drenched in sweat but conjugating verbs out loud with the rest of the class as the LINGUISTIC TEACHER points them out on the board...

CLASS  
Vado, vai, va, andiamo, andate, vanno.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Which I find comes quite easily.

Paul reaches into his bag for a handkerchief, still speaking the verbs without looking at the board.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
In the afternoons...

**EXT. PALAZZO COURTYARD - DAY**

Where Paul stands at a music stand before an ASST. CONDUCTOR who uses his violin to take Paul up and down the scales...

PAUL (V.O.)  
We learn to read music.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
Do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-la-la...

The Asst. Conductor repeats "la" bowing back and forth on the violin until Paul gets it right.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
La-la-si-si-siiiiii.

The Asst. Conductor winces at the last note.

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

Where Paul stands on stage wielding a long baton with padding on the end. GERHARDT, a blonde German student, faces him with a similar baton as a FIT PROFESSOR watches with the rest of the class...

PAUL (V.O.)  
Or practice stage combat.

FIT PROFESSOR  
*E ora, con molta attenzione.*  
("And now, very carefully.")

Paul swings and knocks Gerhardt into the orchestra pit.

PAUL  
(moving to help him)  
I'm so sorry.

**INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY**

Where Paul's back is to us as he does something to his face. The MAKEUP TEACHER enters, clapping her hands.

MAKEUP TEACHER  
*Ok, mi permetta di vedere voi.*  
("Okay, let me see you.")

PAUL (V.O.)  
Or basic hair and makeup.

The students turn, revealing their faces, made-up for a scene from Madame Butterfly.

Paul turns mournfully; he looks more like Clarabell the Clown than a Japanese warlord.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Which isn't my strongest subject.

Julz laughs as she scrolls down to a self-portrait photo of Paul, smiling through his disastrous makeup.

JULZ  
Is the food gorgeous?

**INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Where Paul loads his tray up at the sumptuous buffet table...

PAUL (V.O.)  
Heavenly. Home made pastas. Soups. And the bread...

Then turns to face the room, tables filled with chattering students and teachers...

JULZ (V.O.)  
What about the people? Have you made loads of friends?

He walks amongst them, spotting an empty chair next to ALESSANDRA, a pretty young Italian woman who smiles briefly at Paul before Gerhardt slips into the chair ahead of him.

**INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

Where Paul sits at the end of a table, eating alone.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Oh yes, loads. Everybody's quite friendly.

He hears laughter, but refuses to look up at a group of students, including Gerhardt, laughing at the amount of food on his plate before Alessandra scolds them..

**INT. ECHOING CHAMBER - DAY (INTERCUT)**

Where Paul whispers into his cell phone.

**EXT. WELSH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (INTERCUT)**

Julz walks her Cairn Terrier "Candy Floss" through the hills above the city.

JULZ

Have you had a gondola ride yet?

**EXT. VENICE CANAL - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

As Paul steps onto a narrow gondola, loses his balance and pitches over the other side, headfirst into the canal.

**INT. ECHOING CHAMBER - DAY (INTERCUT)**

PAUL

Uh, no. Haven't tried that yet.

JULZ

And what about the city? Is it breathtaking?

Paul comes to a stop and grows silent as he looks up, slightly awestruck, at Titian's towering masterpiece, "The Assumption of the Virgin".

PAUL

It is.

Reveal him standing before the apse of the Basilica Santa Maria Gloriosa Dei Frari, the famous Gothic choir stalls and rood screen behind him.

JULZ

Do you miss me?

**INT. PAUL'S SLEEPING CHAMBER - NIGHT**

Paul lies in bed, talking with the phone plugged into its charger.

PAUL

Terribly.

JULZ

Good.

PAUL

Good night.

JULZ

Good night.

He hangs up. Taking a moment to stare at Julz picture which he's made the splash-screen on his phone.

DISSOLVE TO:

ALESSANDRA; BEAUTIFUL AND FROWNING...

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

As she and Paul are handed the libretto for La Bohème as Signora Fiorentino explains that they will be...

SIGNORA FIORENTINO  
*...effettuare insieme l'apertura duetto di Mimi e Rodolfo.*  
 ("...perform together the opening duet between Rodolfo and Mimi.")

Allesandra smiles at him kindly, though clearly not thrilled. Paul only meets her eyes for a moment, then looks down, flushed and nervous. Gerhardt glowers in the background...

CUT TO:

**INT. BASEMENT CONSERVATORY - DAY**

PAUL  
 (singing as he reads)  
*O soave fanciulla, o dolce visio di mite circonfusa alba lunar. In te vivo ravviso il sogno. Ch'io vorrei sempre sognar!*

Signora Fiorentino cuts him off--

SIGNORA FIORENTINO  
 Non, non, non... Okay, this is um, 'ow you say, the spark... The moment of love creation.  
 (speaks the words from memory)  
*O soave fanciulla, o dolce visio, Oh! Lovely girl, oh sweet face. In te vivo ravviso il sogno. Ch'io vorrei sempre sognar!* I see you in a dream I will dream forever... Look at her, she is beautiful, non?

PAUL  
 (without looking)  
 Yes.

SIGNORA FIORENTINO

Look. With your eyes.

Paul looks at Alessandra, flushing again.

PAUL

She's very pretty.

SIGNORA FIORENTINO

(to Alessandra)

*E voi, guarda su di lui.*

("And you, look at him.")

Paul offers a hopeful, broken-tooth smile. Her eyes widen at the sight of his teeth. She tries to cover, but he knows what he isn't...

SIGNORA FIORENTINO

(CONT'D)

*Egli è molto...eh... Ha un cuore puro, no?*

("He is very...um... He has a pure heart, no?")

He looks down again...

ALESSANDRA

(Italian accent...)

Is okay.

PAUL

Sorry, I...

She takes his face in her hand and turns it so she can really see him. Finally, she smiles...

SIGNORA FIORENTINO

*Buono. Dream only of each other... Allow all other thoughts to slip away.*

She begins to play again on the piano as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. OPERA SCHOOL - MORNING**

Paul emerges with his suitcase, reading from a guidebook to Lake Como when--

ALESSANDRA (O.S.)

Paolo?

She follows him out of the doorway.

ALESSANDRA (CONT'D)

You are travel for the...*fine settimana*?

PAUL

Oh, the weekend. Yes, I'm on my way to Lake Como.

ALESSANDRA

*Da soli?*  
("By yourself?")

PAUL

*Si.*

ALESSANDRA

You want see Italia while you here?

PAUL

As much as I can.

CUT TO:

FLORENCE; SEEN FROM SEVERAL THOUSAND FEET

**INT. SMALL AIRPLANE - DAY**

Where Paul stares out the window, watching the *DUOMO* slide past before they cross the Arno River towards the vineyard encrusted hills of Tuscany.

Alessandra sits in the co-pilot seat, talking animatedly above the engine noise with her brother MANU. Paul snaps some pictures. *Click. Click....* And on the final picture...

*BOOM!*

CUT TO:

**EXT. PIAZZA DEL CAMPO, SIENA - EVENING**

CANON FIRE, as TEN HORSES AND RIDERS, resplendent in a dazzling array of silks and colors, launch over a starting rope and begin racing around the square, which is filled with THOUSANDS OF SCREAMING SPECTATORS.

Paul and Alessandra stand on a balcony overlooking the square, along with the rest of her obviously well-off FAMILY.

The horses round a very sharp turn and thunder almost beneath the balcony.

ALESSANDRA

They have race this race since sixteen hundred fifty-six. Two every year. One horse represent one, eh, neighborhood of Siena. My family live *Chiocciola*, the Snail. We have second most win, but *Oca*, the Goose have win the most times.

The horses circle the square and head for them again. One of the jockeys shoves a competitor off his horse.

PAUL

What do you get if you win? *Di cosa hai vinto?*

She thinks a moment, then touches a fist to her chest.

ALESSANDRA

*Orgoglio.*

PAUL

Orgoglio?  
(shakes his head)  
*Non capisco.*

Alessandra leans to her FATHER who turns and smiles at Paul...

FATHER

Orgoglio means pride.

His eyes linger on his daughter, who raises her chin in mock defiance before he kisses her.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Is your father not proud of you?

Paul struggles to respond, then mercifully--

ALESSANDRA

*Qui vengono!*  
(*"Here they come!"*)

As the horses appear once more and churn towards the finish line. Taking the sharp turn, one of the horses stumbles, tossing the jockey into the crowd which ROARS...

The rest of the horses cross the finish line and the family erupts into CHEERS!

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. BASEMENT CONSERVATORY - DAY**

Weeks of practice later, Paul and Alessandra sing the duet together...

<p>PAUL</p> <p><i>A! To sol commandi, amor!</i>          ("Ah! Love, you rule alone!")</p> <p><i>Fremon nell'anima,</i>          ("Already I state in spirit,")</p> <p><i>Le dolcezze estreme,</i>          ("the heights of tenderness!")</p> <p><i>Nel bacio freme amor!</i>          ("Love trembles at our kiss!")</p>	<p>ALESSANDRA</p> <p><i>A! To sol commandi, amor!</i>          ("Ah! Love, you rule alone!")</p> <p><i>Oh! Come dolci scendono,</i>          ("How sweet his praises,")</p> <p><i>Le sue lusinghe al core...</i>          ("enter my heart")</p> <p><i>Tu sol comandi amore!</i>          ("Love, you alone rule!")</p>
--	---

An orchestra joins the soundtrack, supplanting the piano as the duet continues over the following MONTAGE:

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

Where Paul and Alessandra are on-stage with a director, who has Paul put his arm around Alessandra. Both are uncomfortable until Paul makes a face and she laughs.

DIRECTOR  
*Attenzione!*

**EXT. PALAZZO COURTYARD - DAY**

Where Paul and Alessandra sing in each others arms. The Asst. Conductor stops them, pushes them apart and has them hold hands.

ASST. CONDUCTOR  
*Prova di nuovo.*  
 ("Try it again.")

**INT. LANGUAGE CLASSROOM - DAY**

More verbs on the board. Paul sits in the back, eyes closed, right hand gently waving/conducting the music from the scene which we hear on the soundtrack and he hears in his head.

**EXT. CAFE - DAY**

Where Paul and Alessandra sit together, surrounded by other students but oblivious to all others as they discuss a part of the libretto.

Unconsciously, she leans an arm on his shoulder as they argue over the same passage. The gesture is lost on Paul, but Gerhardt notices.

**INT. BASEMENT CONSERVATORY - DAY**

As Paul and Alessandra sing while holding hands, Signore Fiorentino places her hands on the small of their backs and pushes them together.

SIGNORA FIORENTINO

*Molto meglio.*  
("Much better.")

**INT. PALAZZO - DAY**

Alessandra is venting her frustration with all of the back-and-forth...

ALESSANDRA

Apart. Together. Hold hand. No hold hands. What it matters so much?

PAUL

Well sod them.

ALESSANDRA

"Sod them?"

PAUL

It means... *Fino loro asini.*  
("Up their asses.");  
Alessandra nods in agreement)  
*Che cosa volete fare?*  
("What do you want to do?")

ALESSANDRA

I don' know.

**INT. THEATRE - NIGHT**

The final performance... On stage, Paul and Alessandra perform the duet in costume with props and light makeup.

PAUL

*Dammi il braccio, mia piccina.*  
("Give me your arm, my dear.")

ALESSANDRA

*Obbedisco, signore!*  
("Your servant, sir.")

The fatal moment comes and Paul takes charge, grabbing her roughly around the waist and pulling her to him.

PAUL

*Che m'ami di'*  
("Tell me you love me.")

His hand gently holds her face, turning it to him just as she had done with him... She almost laughs with joy.

ALESSANDRA

*Io t'amo!*  
("I love you.")

PAUL

*Amore! Amor! Amor!*

ALESSANDRA

*Amore! Amor! Amor!*

(Behold! My love! My love!)

CUT TO:

**EXT. PIAZZA SAN MARCO - NIGHT**

Where Paul and Allessandra run into the square, hopping and yelling and bouncing for joy.

ALESSANDRA

*Questo è stato incredibile!*  
("That was incredible!")

PAUL

*Siamo i campioni di Venezia!*  
("We are the champions of Venice!")

ALESSANDRA

*Di tutto il mondo!*  
("Of the whole world!")

Allessandra leans in and kisses him. He's stunned as she pulls away, a new expression on her face before she kisses him again, deeply. His eyes close for a brief moment, before he pulls away.

ALESSANDRA (CONT'D)

You are okay?

PAUL

Yes, sorry I...

ALESSANDRA

What is wrong?

PAUL

Nothing, I just...

ALESSANDRA

*Li ha fatto l'amore, prima, si?*  
("You have made love before,  
yes?")

PAUL

(beet red at the suggestion)  
Of course I have, but... Actually I  
haven't, but that's not--

ALESSANDRA

You have a friend-girl at home?

PAUL

Um, well, yes. A girlfriend.

ALESSANDRA

*È lei il tuo primo?*  
("Is she your first one?")

PAUL

*Lei è l'unico.*  
("She is my only one.")

ALESSANDRA

There is a difference.

PAUL

There is.

ALESSANDRA

Signore Fiorentino was right. You have a  
very pure heart.

She kisses him firmly on the mouth then smiles at him. She  
turns quickly away and speed dials her cell phone as she  
walks down the square towards the Basilica.

ALESSANDRA (CONT'D)

*Ciao, Papa.*

He watches for a moment, then walks the other way. Dials  
his own phone.

**INT. POTTS HOUSE - NIGHT (INTERCUT)**

Where Roland watches "The Bill" while Yvonne snores softly  
on the couch beside him.

ROLAND

Yeah, hello?

PAUL

Oh, um hi, Dad.

ROLAND  
 (to Yvonne)  
 Oy, it's the eye-talian.  
 (to Paul)  
 What's good, son?

PAUL  
 Oh you know, lots of studying and  
 singing.

ROLAND  
 (sarcastic)  
 Sounds grand.

PAUL  
 Actually we, my scene partner and I, we  
 just won a scene competition and--

ROLAND  
 Hang on, yer mum's on the snore again.  
 (adjusts Yvonne's head)  
 Tucked into the sherry again this  
 evening. So did you win anymore pocket  
 money?

PAUL  
 No, but even better, they told us we get  
 to sing for--

ROLAND  
 (listens)  
 Well that's not bad. He's no Willie  
 Nelson, mind you.

PAUL  
 Right.

CUT TO:

**INT. JULZ' PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT (INTERCUT)**

Jaw dropping as she hears the news...

JULZ  
 Sod off!

**EXT. GRAND CANAL - NIGHT**

Paul sits on a stone wall, feet dangling over the edge as  
 he watches the lights of the city shimmer over the waters.

PAUL  
 It's true.

JULZ  
You're not takin' the piss?

PAUL  
I swear I'm not.

JULZ  
I don't believe it. Paul! What're you going to sing?

PAUL  
The duet, I suppose.

JULZ  
Oh. Right. 'Course you are.

PAUL  
And thinking of you the entire time.

JULZ  
There's a good boy... Nervous?

PAUL  
Off the charts.

JULZ  
Maybe open with a joke or something, let the air out a bit.

PAUL  
A joke? In front of-- Have you gone mad?

CUT TO:

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

Arguably the 20th century's greatest tenor sitting in the first row, dabbing his upper lip with a scented handkerchief while listening to Alessandra sing an aria.

Paul watches from the wings as her final note diminishes, applauding along with the audience. Pavarotti is on his feet, eyes devouring Alessandra as he claps. She feels his ardor and smiles shyly.

He beckons her to sit beside him as the Asst. Conductor brings him a teacup of hot water.

ASST. CONDUCTOR  
*Maestro.*

PAVAROTTI

*Grazie.*

He follows Alessandra until she's next to him, and begins whispering/congratulating her.

In the wings, a pair of students stare at Paul.

STUDENT #1

I wouldn't want to follow that.

STUDENT #2

Me neither.

PAUL

Thanks.

He sets his jaw and heads for the center-stage microphone.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Good evening.

(paralytic fear)

It uh, must be bargain night, it only costs one tenner to get in, instead of the usual three...tenors.

A smattering of laughter from the crowd. Pavarotti notices him for the first time, but seems less than amused.

Paul begins to sing; Rodolfo's, "*Che Gelida Manina*", the same aria Paul "conducted" in his room at his parents' house.

He's singing well, better than we've ever heard, eyes tightly closed as he focuses on his breathing and pitch.

Finally his eyes open...and what he sees seems to deflate his entire being, even as he continues to sing...

HIS POV; where Pavarotti's full gaze is on Alessandra, who although flattered, tries to turn his attention to Paul, but to no avail.

Finally, the aria ends to polite applause. Ignoring Paul completely, Pavarotti rises to leave until the Asst. Conductor whispers in his ear.

PAVAROTTI

*Ah, si.*

(turns to Paul; obviously hasn't heard a word)

You inhaled after *in te, vivo ravviso il sogno*. Rodolfo would not have run out of breath there.

Paul is about to speak, but Pavarotti's back is to him and he's heading for the door, arm in arm with Alessandra leaving Paul alone on stage, destroyed...

Paul stands for a moment, then slowly turns and walks off as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. PORT TALBOT - DAY**

Gray as ever. A bleak contrast from the vibrancy of Italy.

ROLAND (V.O.)

I hates to say it, but I did warn you.

**INT. POTTS FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY**

Where Paul and his parents are just finishing Sunday dinner. Paul stares at his plate.

YVONNE

Put a sock in it, Roland. At least he had the nerve to have a go.

ROLAND

Which has left him where?

PAUL

Thanks, mum. That was lovely.

He takes his plate to the sink.

YVONNE

There's treacle tart and strawberries.

PAUL

I've got work in an hour.

Kisses her goodbye.

YVONNE

When's that lovely girl coming to visit again?

PAUL

See you guys.

ROLAND

Oy. Hang on a second.

He follows Paul out the front door.

**EXT. POTTS HOUSE - DAY**

Paul works the combination lock to his bicycle which is chained to the iron railing at the base of the steps.

ROLAND

There's an opening down the mill. The wait list's a kilometer long, but, how'd you like to come work with me?

PAUL

No thanks, dad.

ROLAND

It's time to grow up now, son. You've had your great adventure, which is more'n I ever had, but singing didn't work out so--

PAUL

I know, dad.

ROLAND

(grabs his arm)

No you bloody well don't! You think you're too good to work the mill. Well I've got news for you, boy, you're the one's not good enough.

PAUL

(after a beat...)

I'll be late.

Roland lets him go. Paul pedals out onto the road.

ROLAND

Just what the world needs, more bloody mobile phones!

**EXT. PORT TALBOT - DAY**

As Paul cycles stoically to work.

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

Where Paul rings up a sale for an ELDERLY COUPLE...

ELDERLY WOMAN

Right. Now how far away from the house will the telephone actually work?

PAUL

As far as you'd like.

ELDERLY MAN

Nonsense. The cord on our last telephone didn't even reach to the back door.

PAUL

But this hasn't got a cord.

ELDERLY WOMAN

We don't take kindly to bullshitters.

PAUL

That's because you're bloody insane.

He walks away, despite their protestations. Braddon sees this and, after throwing a look at Paul, goes to help the elderly couple.

BRADDON

(shouting)

Good afternoon! May I help you?!

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE, BACK ROOM - DAY**

Paul puts together a cardboard display stand. His phone buzzes. He sees Julz picture with a text message: "?"

He taps it, revealing the "text thread"; a series of "?" and "!" and "?!?!?!?" stretching back over a week.

He switches his phone off just as Braddon enters.

BRADDON

Not quite the pinnacle of customer service, I'd say.

PAUL

Sorry.

BRADDON

Perhaps you're confused...see you're the diffident, jolly one, whilst I'm the edgy, mysterious bloke with bubbling cauldrons of danger and pizzazz.

PAUL

Right.

BRADDON

It's bad as all that is it?

(off Paul's look)

Right... Come on.

Pulls Paul to his feet.

PAUL  
Where we going?

BRADDON  
Desperate times call for naked dancers.

CUT TO:

**INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT**

Where Paul and Braddon sit at the edge of the stage, framed between the legs of a gyrating dancer.

Braddon's smile is ear to ear as his head bobs and swivels to the music... Paul still looks miserable.

**EXT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT**

Braddon follows Paul out of the club where they unchain their bicycles from the pole holding up the marquee.

BRADDON  
There you are. All better now?

PAUL  
(not at all...)  
Yes, loads. Thanks.

BRADDON  
D'you know, I think I could headline there. The first step on my career to pop superstardom.

PAUL  
That's your dream is it?

BRADDON  
When I was younger. Before x-box payments and chest hair and whatnot.

PAUL  
You haven't got chest hair.

BRADDON  
'Course I do. Gallons of it... It's just very blonde.

PAUL  
Right... And what about now?

BRADDON  
Dreams? Honestly?

PAUL

If possible.

BRADDON

Be nice to have a family of my own. Oh and one day go to New Zealand. Hire a car and do the Lord of the Rings tour. See where the hobbits live.

PAUL

That's it?

BRADDON

Well, yeah. The lower your expectations, I find, the greater your general level of happiness.

PAUL

(agreeing)

Right.

They pedal off down the road...

BRADDON

Then again, a threesome wouldn't be the worst thing that could happen.

PAUL

Obviously.

**EXT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

Paul hops off his bike and pushes it towards the entrance where Julz stands with several large suitcases.

PAUL

Hi.

JULZ

Hi.

PAUL

How did you--?

JULZ

Mum drove me. She waited as long as she could but...

PAUL

Right. Um... Sorry, did we?

JULZ

You stopped ringing me back.

PAUL

Yeah.

JULZ

Playing hard to get again?

PAUL

Just feeling sorry for myself.

JULZ

Always flattering on a man.

PAUL

He didn't even know I was there.

JULZ

(shrugs)

He's a celebrity.

PAUL

Sorry?

JULZ

He may be a great singer, but anyone that famous can't be anything but an ass of intergalactic proportions.

PAUL

It's lovely to see you.

JULZ

Is it?

PAUL

I'm an enormous idiot.

JULZ

You are. And?

PAUL

I'm truly sorry.

JULZ

And?

PAUL

I'm an ass of intergalactic proportions?

JULZ

Well said. Lucky for you, I've decided to take you up on your offer.

PAUL

You have?

JULZ

I have.

PAUL

Em, which offer exactly?

JULZ

Seeing as your self-esteem's down the loo, and we're never going to have a proper go at a relationship living so far apart, I decided to accept your offer to...move in together. To give it, you know, a proper go. Nothing ventured...

PAUL

Nothing gained.

JULZ

So...?

Paul stares dumbfounded... Realizes she's hanging herself out there for him...

PAUL

Oh right! Yes, of course. That would be, um...

JULZ

What?

PAUL

Wonderful.

JULZ

(smiling)

And?

PAUL

I'm an ass of intergalactic proportions.

JULZ

Yes, though there's still hope for you.

He reaches down to carry one of her suitcases but can't even lift it off the ground.

JULZ (CONT'D)

I packed a few things.

PAUL

We may need a bigger flat.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ABERAVON BREAKWATER - DAY**

An immense seawall jutting out into the gray water. Surfers and wind surfers brave the cold waters alongside as Paul and Julz walk hand in hand.

JULZ

So, maybe the joke wasn't the best idea.

PAUL

He was so goggly-eyed over Alessandra, I could've pulled me trousers down and he wouldn't've noticed.

JULZ

That beautiful was she?

PAUL

Oh yes. Very.

(realizing)

But in that Italian sort of way; all dark and... Not my type at all.

JULZ

Mmmm. It's not the end of the world, you know. There are loads of other operas.

They reach the end of the wall and sit, legs dangling over the waves.

PAUL

Not for me. I went to Italy to... Somewhere in there I got a bit outside myself. Just because I won some silly competition, I started to think... Anyway, I've got my expectations well back in line.

JULZ

Ridiculous.

PAUL

Really, I'm done with singing.

JULZ

So you say.

PAUL

I'm serious, Julz.

JULZ

I believe you, darling, but I know better...

PAUL

Oh do you?

JULZ

The first time we ever chatted on-line.  
Do you remember how you introduced  
yourself?

PAUL

As Paul, I imagine.

JULZ

You said you were a singer.

PAUL

It was more impressive than saying I  
worked in the produce department at  
Tesco's.

JULZ

I don't care where you work. I care that  
you're happy, and that you'll always love  
me back.

PAUL

(she just said she loves  
me...)

I will, you know.

JULZ

Good.

(standing)

Besides, as I recall, you promised you'd  
sing for me.

PAUL

"Someday."

JULZ

Someday when?

PAUL (V.O.)

(singing)

I love you as you love me, in the evening  
and the morning,

CUT TO:

**EXT. ST. CYNWYD CHURCH - DAY**

A small, stone church at the heart of Llangynwydd, an  
ancient hilltop village, one of the oldest Christian  
settlements in all of Wales.

PAUL (V.O.)

Nor was there a day when you and I did  
not share our troubles.

Guests arrive in suits and dresses, picking their way  
across the grassy cemetery which surrounds the church with  
eroded headstones.

**INT. ST. CYNWYND CHURCH - DAY**

The chapel is nearly full of FRIENDS AND FAMILY. Paul  
stands alone before the altar.

PAUL (V.O.)

And when we shared them, they became  
easier to bear;

Everyone stands as Julz appears, resplendent in a white  
dress with veil, escorted by her FATHER.

Paul sees her and begins to choke up. She smiles at him,  
telling him he's going to be fine...

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You comforted me in my distress, and I  
wept in your laments.

Julz reaches the front, kisses her father after he lifts  
her veil and stands to face Paul before the altar.

The VICAR gives his benediction and they exchange rings...  
Paul finally loses his composure and Julz kisses him to  
pull him out of it.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Therefore, may God's blessing be upon  
you.

**INT. RECEPTION HALL - NIGHT**

Where Paul sings the English translation of Beethoven's  
*Ich Liebe Dich (I Love You)* to Julz before everyone.

PAUL

You, my life's joy. God protect you, keep  
you for me, and protect and keep us both.

Now it's Julz turn to cry. He kisses her as everyone  
stands and applauds, many people wiping their eyes.

JULZ

(through tears)

So you can sing after all.

Braddon is a disaster as rivers of tears stream from both eyes. He turns to hug Hydrangea who bears him up for a moment, before reaching back and removing his hand from her ass.

**INT. RECEPTION HALL - NIGHT**

Paul and Julz whirl and twirl at the center of the crammed dance floor. Finally, the song ends...

PAUL  
D'you want a drink?

JULZ  
Champagne please.

PAUL  
Back in a flash, Mrs. Potts.

JULZ  
Why thank you, Mr. Potts.

He weaves through the crowd to the bar where Roland is holding court with a coterie of his friends from the mill.

PAUL  
Hello, Dad.

ROLAND  
(far from sober)  
Paul, you remember Charlie and Bill from  
down the mill.  
(he and Bill share a laugh  
at the rhyme)  
And this here's Matthew, the new chap.

Paul stops as he sees Matthew, his nemesis grinning coldly at him. Matthew offers his hand.

MATTHEW  
Paul and I went to school together.  
Felicitations an' all that.

PAUL  
(tentative)  
Thanks.

MATTHEW  
Maybe you'll sing us a pretty song as  
well?

The others laugh hysterically.

PAUL  
 Maybe you'll get knocked out by a girl  
 again.

Matthew goes cold. He'd love to take a swing at Paul but knows better. Instead, he just smirks portentously until Paul turns away from them.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 (to the bartender)  
 A champagne and a lager, please.

ROLAND  
 Matthew's only joking, Paul.

PAUL  
 How could you invite him?

ROLAND  
 I paid for half this bender, I can invite  
 who I like. Besides, he's a good lad, and  
 a hard worker.

The implication being that Paul is not.

PAUL  
 (getting his drinks)  
 Thank you.

ROLAND  
 What's wrong with Matthew?

They're interrupted by Paul's former Choirmaster (from the opening montage).

CHOIRMASTER  
 I say, young man. I don't know where you  
 found it, but your vocal control has  
 improved by light years.

PAUL  
 Thanks very much, sir. I was in Italy for  
 a while, but I don't really sing--

CHOIRMASTER  
 I'm commissioned to conduct a production  
 of Aida in Bath. And you, sir, would make  
 a wonderful Radames.

PAUL  
 Really?

ROLAND

No no, he's all finished with that nonsense. He'll be getting an honest job, earning an honest wage.

CHOIRMASTER

There's no pay, I'm afraid.

PAUL

I'll take it.

ROLAND

Bloody hell.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

As the door handle turns, then flips back to its original position... After a beat, it turns again, finally opening as Paul and Julz, she in his arms, spill into the room...

JULZ

No, no, on the bed. I couldn't stand another second in these torture devices.

He deposits her on the bed and helps her remove her shoes, to her great relief.

JULZ (CONT'D)

Oh, that's lovely. I shall never dance again.

PAUL

Famous last words.

JULZ

Reminds me of someone I just married.

PAUL

The lead tenor in Aida. I still can't believe it.

JULZ

This is the best wedding day ever... Which reminds me.

She jumps to her feet and opens a cabinet, revealing a beautiful antique gramophone and a mylar bag which she hands to Paul.

PAUL

What's this?

JULZ  
 I got sparklies--  
     (flashes her rings)  
 --this makes it even.

PAUL  
 Not unless you'll be paying this off for  
 the next ten years.

JULZ  
 Open it.

He removes a thin sleeve bearing a photo of--

PAUL  
 Puccini.

JULZ  
 That's an original recording from the  
 premiere at...  
     (grabs a slip of paper)  
 ...La Scala, Milan on April twenty-fifth--

PAUL  
 Nineteen twenty six. Conducted by  
 Toscanini himself, but how--

JULZ  
 E-bay, how else?

She places the disc on the gramophone and sets the  
 needle... The tenor, Miguel Fleta, begins to sing...

MIGUEL FLETA  
*Nessun Dorma.*

JULZ  
 This was recorded before Pavarotti was  
 even born.

She sits on the bed next to him and kisses him as the aria  
 unfolds...

JULZ (CONT'D)  
 What is he saying?

PAUL  
*Nessun dorma.* None shall sleep. Calaf has  
 been rejected by the woman he loves, a  
 princess.

Kisses him again as she starts removing her dress.

JULZ

What's it always have to be a princess?  
Why can't checkout girls have great love  
stories written about them?

(re: her dress)

Give us a hand.

PAUL

If she can guess his name by dawn, she  
gets to call off the wedding and chop his  
head off.

JULZ

I like that bit.

PAUL

(translating)

...my secret is hidden within me. None  
will know my name. On your mouth I will  
say it when the light shines.

She removes her undergarments and stands before him,  
naked.

PAUL (CONT'D)

And my kiss will dissolve the silence  
that makes you mine.

JULZ

So kiss me.

PAUL

I've never done this before.

She nods, knowingly, then helps him remove his shirt.

JULZ

So what happens to them?

PAUL

Well, she tortures all of his friends who  
refuse to reveal his name, but when dawn  
comes, he kisses her and she falls--

JULZ

--madly in love with him.

She pulls him down onto the bed as we linger on the  
gramophone and...

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER - DAY**

Where an impressive Egyptian temple backdrops the stage filled with PERFORMERS in ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian costumes.

Paul appears at the center of the company, carrying his own with great gusto.

The Choirmaster conducts the orchestra, very pleased with what he hears. A pastiche of music from the opera plays over...

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

Paul hangs a poster for the opera in the front window, indicating two weeks until the premiere. Welcomes a CUSTOMER with a smile and spring in his step and begins discussing various phone options.

**EXT. PORT TALBOT - EVENING**

Paul rides his bicycle home, arms spread wide as he belts out a soaring high C5 note. A passing car honks in reply.

**INT. PAUL & JULZ TINY APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Where they sit over dinner, talking happily. She says something flirty and he dives over the table to kiss her, not a trace of shyness.

**INT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER - DAY**

Paul sings the aria *Celeste Aida*. A DIRECTOR offers him some stage direction, which Paul executes beautifully. At the end, he takes a deep breath, scratches his side.

**INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY**

Paul makes another attempt at stage makeup, but he's still hopelessly crap.

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY**

Where Paul and the other leads sing into microphones as the Choirmaster and DIRECTOR huddle with an ENGINEER.

**EXT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER - NIGHT**

Paul leaves through the Artists' Entrance, laughing with his fellow performers.

He passes a flyer taped to a streetlight pole: "Two Days To Premiere."

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

Paul enters the empty store.

PAUL

Hallo? Brad?

He hears sniffing in the back. Passes through the curtain to--

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE, BACK ROOM - DAY**

--find Braddon, dressed in full elfish wizard regalia taking slugs from a bottle of bright green alcohol in between chest-heaving sobs.

PAUL

What's happened?

BRADDON

It's over. I'm finished with the lot of it.

PAUL

Your ears are coming off?

BRADDON

What? Oh.

Off Paul's gesture, he pulls his half-hanging, pointy elvish ears off and throws them in the trash.

PAUL

Shall I leave you alone?

BRADDON

So there I am, right in the heart of Morgol Forest, having blasted my way through an army of Hobgoblins using a spectacular array of spellcraft. When whom do I see with her tongue down the throat of some bloody hippogriff?

PAUL

Oh no.

BRADDON

As if unicorns and hippogriffs could ever be together. You can look it up, it's genetically impossible!

PAUL

I believe you.

BRADDON  
 (offering the bottle)  
 Creme de Menthe?

PAUL  
 The show opens tomorrow.

BRADDON  
 Rejected again.

PAUL  
 All right. Just a nip then.

He takes a small swig, wincing as it goes down, holds his hand to his side which burns...

CUT TO:

**INT. PAUL & JULZ TINY APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Julz enters, wearing her pharmacy uniform.

JULZ  
 Hal-oo? Radames? Wherefor art thou?

She sets some shopping bags down on the tiny kitchen counter. Sees the television's on, so he must be home...

JULZ (CONT'D)  
 Paul?

Suddenly, Paul emerges from the bathroom, doubled over and clutching his side in enormous pain...

JULZ (CONT'D)  
 Oh my god.

PAUL  
 Something's wrong.

CUT TO:

**INT. PRINCESS OF WALES HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT**

The doors fly open as a team of EMS workers wheel Paul in on a gurney with Julz following nervously behind them.

Dr. Thorpe is almost completely gray.

DR. THORPE  
 What've we got?  
 (recognizes Paul)  
 What, you again?

PAUL  
Bloody Creme de Menthe.

EMS WORKER  
Lower abdominal pain. Fever. Nausea.

DR. THORPE  
Appendix. Triage two, please.  
(to Paul)  
You might qualify for our frequent flier  
membership.

**INT. PRINCESS OF WALES HOSPITAL, WAITING ROOM - NIGHT**

Where Julz waits with Yvonne as Dr. Thorpe enters.

DR. THORPE  
Well, the good news is, it's got nothing  
to do with the Creme de Menthe.

JULZ  
And the not good news?

CUT TO:

**INT. TRIAGE ROOM TWO - NIGHT**

As Dr. Thorpe flips on a lightboard, revealing an x-ray of  
Paul's abdomen.

DR. THORPE  
The appendix hasn't ruptured, yet.

YVONNE  
Thank god.

DR. THORPE  
Yes definitely, although it'll have to  
come out I'm afraid.

JULZ  
When?

DR. THORPE  
How's four o'clock suit you?

PAUL  
I can't.

JULZ  
His opera opens tomorrow night.

DR. THORPE  
Oh, fantastic. Which one?

PAUL

Aida.

DR. THORPE

Oh, is that the Madonna one? Wonderful performance that. I'm afraid singing's quite out of the question.

PAUL

I'm the lead. They're counting on me.

DR. THORPE

An appendectomy is invasive surgery. If we leave it in it's sure to rupture and he could die. Take it out and any great effort, like singing for instance, you're liable to burst the stitches and cause irreparable damage to the kidneys or diaphragm.

PAUL

How irreparable?

DR. THORPE

It's possible that singing...wouldn't be possible.

YVONNE

Well, that's that then.

Paul and Julz exchange looks.

CUT TO:

**EXT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER - NIGHT**

Lit up with banners and posters displaying the names of the cast including Paul.

**INT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER, BACKSTAGE - NIGHT**

Where Paul warms up his vocal chords while bathing them in the output from a clothing steamer.

PAUL

Neeee, nayyyy, nahhhh, noooo, nuuuu.  
(up an octave)

Neeee, nayyyy, nahhhh, noooo, nuuuu.

He removes his shirt revealing an enormous post-surgical bandage across his stomach.

**INT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER - NIGHT**

As Julz, Yvonne and Roland take their seats.

ROLAND

It's right stupid, if you ask me.

YVONNE

Do shut up, Roland. The least we can do is support him, no matter how insufferably daft he's being.

JULZ

I'll thank you both not to talk about my husband that way.

YVONNE

Yes, you're right, dear. It's just so-- Really, why can't he just put himself first for a change?

JULZ

Because then he'd be just like everyone else. And he's not is he?

YVONNE

(kisses her cheek)  
You're a very lovely girl.

She takes Julz' hands in hers...

ROLAND

(rolling his eyes)  
I'd trade both me ears for a pint about now.

Despite his bluster, he's just as nervous as they are. The Choirmaster takes his place in the orchestra pit and the lights go down and the *Prelude* begins to play...

The trio watch nervously as...

Paul appears on-stage, resplendent in the costume of an Egyptian military commander. He sings his opening lines, a discussion with RAMFIS, the high priest.

JULZ

His first aria's right at the top.

Ramfis exits the stage and Paul steps forward...

The TRANSLATION CRAWL appears on-screen, above the stage.

<p>PAUL</p> <p><i>Celeste Aida, forma divina. Mistico serto di luce e fior. Del mio pensiero tu sei regina. Tu di mia vita sei lo splendor.</i></p>	<p>TRANSLATION</p> <p>Heavenly Aida, divine form. Mystical garland of light and flowers. You are queen of my thoughts. You are the splendor of my life.</p>
---	---

Julz mouths the words with him, squeezing the life out of Yvonne's hands...

JULZ (CONT'D)  
He's doing it. He's all right.

They clutch each other, while Roland stares transfixed at the stage in utter disbelief. He looks around at others in the audience to see if they're equally stunned then is physically moved as Paul hits a powerful high note.

**INT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER, STAGE WINGS - NIGHT**

Paul comes off stage during the transition, hands on his stomach and wincing in pain as he waits beside a stagehand.

STAGEHAND  
Y'okay?

PAUL  
Yeah, fine.

STAGEHAND  
Sounds bloody marvelous.

PAUL  
(appreciative but hurting)  
Thanks.

**INT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER - NIGHT**

Scene II is underway, the PRIESTS and PRIESTESSES of the temple pray to the spirit Phtha... And then something seems wrong. A priest repeats his line...

YVONNE  
What's wrong?

One of the other priests steps up and sings Paul's line.

JULZ  
That's supposed to be--  
(then she's up)  
Excuse me please.

Pushing her way through to the aisle, then running out to the lobby.

**EXT. BATH UNIVERSITY THEATER - NIGHT**

Julz runs around to the Artists' Entrance where an ambulance is just pulling up.

JULZ

Oh God.

Paul emerges, tunic soaked with blood from his broken stitches, arms around the shoulders of the Stagehand and a BACKGROUND PLAYER as the EMS WORKERS take him.

PAUL

(seeing Julz)

I'm okay. I'm okay.

Yvonne arrives, followed by Roland who carries a lager in a paper bag as Paul's loaded into the ambulance.

ROLAND

What did I tell ya?

CUT TO:

**INT. OPERATING THEATER - DAY**

Where Paul lies unconscious as a team of SURGEONS operates on him.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT**

Paul sleeps with Julz curled around him. She whispers as she strokes his hair.

JULZ

They found tumors on your adrenal glands. I know you're frightened, and not singing again is more than you can bear, but I just want you to know that if you never sing again, I'll do everything in my power to fill that void with as much happiness as I can possibly manage.

She closes her eyes and holds him tighter.

CUT TO:

**EXT. FINNEGAN'S PUB - DAY**

As Julz' car pulls up and she runs around, opening the passenger side door for Paul, who looks uncomfortable and miserable.

JULZ

You sure you don't want to wait in the car?

Paul shakes his head. Whispers that he has to go to the loo, even talking clearly hurts...

JULZ (CONT'D)

That you can do on your own.

**INT. FINNEGAN'S PUB - DAY**

As Paul enters to an uproarious--

EVERYBODY

SURPRISE!!

The entire opera company is there along with his Yvonne and Braddon. They all begin to sing, opera-style...

EVERYBODY (CONT'D)

For he's a jolly good fellow. For he's a jolly good fellow. For he's a jolly good fellow! Which nobody can deny!

BRADDON

("auditioning")

Can de-nyyyyyyyyyyy.

Ends in a coughing fit. Paul is touched and perplexed as the Choirmaster steps forward.

CHOIRMASTER

For bravery and the rather thick-headed willingness to sacrifice himself for his fellow man, and woman, and those undecided... Bath Opera is proud to present you with the first Golden Appendix award, in hopes for a clean bill of health, and a speedy return to the stage.

BRADDON

Hip-hip.

EVERYBODY

Hooray!

BRADDON

Hip-hip.

EVERYBODY

Hooray!

Paul accepts the Golden Appendix award, an amorphous lump of clay painted gold, and starts to speak softly.

EVERYBODY (CONT'D)

What's that? Speak up then.

He smiles bashfully then leads into Julz ear, whispering.

JULZ

You've no idea how much this means to me. My whole life I never even had one true friend, much less an entire company. From the bottom of my heart, thank you. And much as I'd love to continue talking through my wife, you'll all be very upset with me if I don't use the loo immediately.

Everybody cheers as he hustles quickly off towards the back. Drinks are ordered and the Choirmaster hugs Julz.

CHOIRMASTER

So how's he doing?

JULZ

He's heartbroken, of course. Time will tell.

CHOIRMASTER

(hand her a cassette)

This'll guarantee he can have his voice back whenever he likes.

CUT TO:

**INT. PAUL & JULZ TINY APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY**

Paul looks in the mirror as he checks the fresh bandages around his mid-section, poking and prodding them. So far, so good.

He licks his lips and, building his determination, tries to hum a single note but nearly collapses in pain.

He hears the front door open...

JULZ

Hal-oo? I've got some lovely vichyssoise.

He hurriedly buttons his shirt, but not in time...

JULZ (CONT'D)

Freeze, Jack!

(he drops his hands)

How many times--? Would you enjoy an infection then? Perhaps another surgery, like Dr. Thorpe warned you about?

(he hangs his head; pouting)

Didn't think so. Help me with me groceries.

He kisses her cheek then takes several plastic shopping bags off her hands and carries them into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

Paul helps a seven year-old GIRL and her MUM program her first mobile phone. He's lost several stone of weight and his hair's shorter indicating the passage of some time...

PAUL

Or you might like the dancing frog ringtone, which is quite popular.

GIRL

What kind of an idiot wants a dancing frog on their phone?

Suddenly, a DANCING FROG ringtone is heard. Braddon runs from the back and answers his flashing phone.

BRADDON

(suddenly black...)

Yeah? What up B-Dog. For reals? Yo, that's off the chain, yo, yo.

PAUL

(to the girl)

Excellent point.

BRADDON

Much love. Mad respect. Peace out.

PAUL

I didn't know you were a rapper.

BRADDON

Oh, that's just my boss up at HQ in Croydon. He's mah boyy.

GIRL  
You don't look African.

BRADDON  
The outside may be vanilla darlin', but  
the inside's chocolate through and  
through.

GIRL  
Have you got a large penis?

Braddon's about to respond, but a murderous look from the  
girl's mum freezes his tongue.

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE, BACK ROOM - DAY**

Paul comes in to find Braddon doing a pathetic breakdance  
celebration.

PAUL  
What's got you all chuffed up?

BRADDON  
I just got a raise.

PAUL  
That's fantastic, well done.  
(surprised...)  
If you don't mind me asking, um, why  
exactly?

BRADDON  
What d'you mean, why? I'm a stupendous  
manager. I feel a sudden urge to sing.

PAUL  
Oh, please don't. Actually, no offense or  
anything, and this is no reflection on my  
feelings towards you personally, but  
you're actually kind of a crap manager,  
if you really look at it.

BRADDON  
Well you that, and I know that, but... If  
you must know, our little shop had the  
highest sales in all of Wales over the  
last two quarters.  
(singing)  
The highest sales in all of Waaaaaaaales!

PAUL  
That's wonderful!  
(realizes...)  
(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 You mean over the six months since I got  
 back from surgery?

BRADDON  
 Yes, but--

PAUL  
 During which time I actually kept the  
 shop open between the hours of ten and  
 six?

BRADDON  
 Well yes but--

PAUL  
 And put my singing on hold because--

BRADDON  
 Because you're a sissy.

PAUL  
 (ignoring him)  
 And put the ads in all the local papers?  
 And--

BRADDON  
 Alright, blimey. You're getting a raise  
 as well.

PAUL  
 I am?

BRADDON  
 Couple'a quid an hour.

PAUL  
 You serious?

BRADDON  
 (singing again)  
 The highest sales in--

PAUL  
 --all of WAAAAAAAAAALES!

So powerful Braddon takes an inadvertent step back and  
 trips over an unopened box. He glares up at Paul from the  
 floor.

BRADDON  
 Bastard!

PAUL  
 (stunned)  
 I can sing.

BRADDON  
 These cost me ten pound down the--

PAUL  
 I can sing! I can--

BRADDON  
 Don't!

PAUL  
 (whispering at first)  
 The highest sales in--  
 (belting it out)  
 --ALL OF WALES!

Braddon goes down again...

**INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING, LOBBY - DAY**

Where Julz removes the mail from the postbox, and flips through as she heads for the stairs. Suddenly she stops at a letter and tears it open, reading hungrily.

JULZ  
 Dear Mrs. Potts we are in receipt of your cassette...and would very much like to...  
 YEAH!!

SMASH CUT TO:

THE DANCING FROG RINGTONE

**EXT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

As Paul, strapping on his bicycle helmet, answers his mobile phone.

PAUL  
 Julz?

JULZ  
 You'll never guess what--

PAUL  
 You'll never guess what--

JULZ  
 You first.

PAUL  
 I can sing.

JULZ

I know.

PAUL

No, I can sing. Now. Again.

JULZ

Oh, thank god.

**EXT. BRIDGEND SHOPPING MALL - DAY**

Paul coasts out of the parking lot on his bicycle, pumping his fists in the air.

JULZ (V.O.)

Promise you won't be cross with me.

PAUL (V.O.)

Cross is the last thing I'm going be with you when I get home.

JULZ (V.O.)

You don't know the half of it.

**EXT. WELSH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

Various shots of Paul singing "The Highest Sales in All of Wales" with both fists thrust in the air as he pedals through the rolling hills with their ancient stone walls.

PAUL (V.O.)

What've you done, Julz?

JULZ (V.O.)

Do you remember the cast recording of Aida, before it opened?

PAUL (V.O.)

Julie-Ann?

JULZ (V.O.)

Well, I made some copies of it and sent them 'round to a few agents in London.

PAUL (V.O.)

You what?

JULZ (V.O.)

Someone had to do something to get you off your bum.

PAUL (V.O.)

But, what if it turned out I couldn't sing?

JULZ (V.O.)

Remember when I first met your mum and dad and told them what a wonderful singer you were.

PAUL (V.O.)

Load of bollocks as far as you knew at the time.

JULZ (V.O.)

I believed in you... And it turns out I'm not the only one. You've got an appointment tomorrow in London with a music agent who thinks you're quite good.

PAUL (V.O.)

You're joking.

JULZ (V.O.)

I'm not.

PAUL

YAHOOOOO!!!

Paul WIPES FRAME, riding away from us down a mountain road, whooping as he goes until--

A CAR APPEARS FROM NOWHERE--

AND SMASHES INTO HIM HEAD ON--

PAUL IS THROWN FROM HIS BIKE, BOUNCES OFF THE WINDSHIELD, OVER THE HOOD AND LANDS ON THE PAVEMENT A DOZEN YARDS AWAY...

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. PRINCESS OF WALES HOSPITAL - NIGHT**

Where Julz is seen walking angrily/terrified towards the entrance.

**INT. PRINCESS OF WALES HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT**

She walks up to the nurses' station.

JULZ

(stammering)

I'm um... My husband, Paul... There was an accident?

DR. THORPE  
 Hallo, Julz. Right this way... You know  
 we're thinking of building you two your  
 own entrance.

He sees she's only barely holding it together. Puts his  
 arm around her and leads her into--

**INT. TRIAGE ROOM ONE - NIGHT**

Where Paul lies encased in a plaster cast that covers his  
 upper torso and left arm which juts out in front of him at  
 a right angle, supported by a metal pole.

His face is cut and stitched in several places and  
 supported by a thick neck brace.

DR. THORPE  
 His collar bone's shattered and he's got  
 severe whiplash.

JULZ  
 But he's not--

DR. THORPE  
 He won't be running a marathon anytime  
 soon, but he's not in any great danger.

PAUL  
 (slightly drugged)  
 Hello, Cameron.

JULZ  
 (kissing Paul's face)  
 You have got to stop doing this to me.

PAUL  
 I was singing again.

JULZ  
 Go to sleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE:

*EIGHTEEN MONTHS LATER*

**INT. PAUL & JULZ TINY APARTMENT - DAY**

Where a radio plays a commercial for BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT,  
 "searching for the next singing, dancing or other talent  
 sensation" and a hundred thousand pounds to the winner.

The ad is followed by Andrea Bocelli's rendition of *Con te Partiro*. Paul reaches out and switches the station to Coldplay.

He's reclining on an orthopedic chair while surfing the internet for debt consolidation information. He's gained weight again and his hair is unkempt.

The doorbell rings and he hoists himself to his feet with a grunt, and shuffles his way over to the door which he opens to reveal Braddon.

BRADDON

Are you Paul Potts?

PAUL

No.

BRADDON

Perfect, then you're just the man I'm looking for.

Paul lets him in.

PAUL

What you been doing?

BRADDON

(looking around)

More than you I'd say. Christ, how much moping can one man do?

PAUL

I'm not moping. I'm just...

BRADDON

Not doing anything... Like working.

PAUL

I told you, I'm still not up to--

Braddon tosses Paul a Car Phone Warehouse "Manager" name tag and a set of keys.

BRADDON

Too late.

PAUL

What's this?

BRADDON

Feast your eyes upon the South Western District Sub-Manager for Carphone Warehouse.

PAUL

You are not!

CUT TO:

**EXT. STEEL MILL - DAY**

Paul shuffles along beside Braddon as they walk along the road outside the mill and its towers of belching steam.

PAUL

What'd you do, cook the books again?

BRADDON

I'm quite capable of honest advancement, thank you very much.

PAUL

Somebody died?

BRADDON

The former South Western District Sub-Manager. Cholera. On safari or something. Anyway, I start Monday in Croydon.

PAUL

(fumbling with the keys)

Honestly, I don't really think I'm up to it.

BRADDON

Bollocks. You're on disability for over a year, they've cut up most of your credit cards and poor Julz--

PAUL

Do you have any idea how many pills I have to take every day? I didn't choose this!

BRADDON

Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.

PAUL

What?

BRADDON

Henry James...or Mighty Mouse, I'm not sure which.

They arrive at Braddon's new/used motorcycle, barely standing what with the various cases and bags strapped to it at all angles...

PAUL

You're leaving now?

BRADDON

Commerce waits for no man. Gonna miss you, laddie. You're me best mate. There, I said it.

PAUL

Rubbish. Uber-district-sub-under-managers don't have time for such emotions.

BRADDON

It's District Sub-Manager, and I'll be poppin' round every now and again to check up on ya. Make sure there's no funny business goin' on.

PAUL

You couldn't spot funny business if it was tattooed to your eye-lids.

BRADDON

You know that, and I know that, but--

PAUL

Give us a ring when you're settled.

BRADDON

I'm told the women in Croydon shag like wild ferrets.

PAUL

Might want to think about a rabies shot.

(Braddon considers this  
before they hug)

Thanks, Brad.

BRADDON

Give the missus a good squeeze for me.

PAUL

No, but I'll tell her you said bye.

Braddon kicks-starts the motorcycle which ROARS powerfully to life...

BRADDON

May the--

...then stalls immediately. He tries to start it again...

BRADDON (CONT'D)

May the-- Crap. May the--

PAUL

Bit more clutch, maybe.

Braddon scoffs until the bike roars to life.

BRADDON

May the--

The bike suddenly jerks forwards, zooming him out of earshot.

PAUL

--flame of Arveron sustain you.

He watches Braddon's motorbike teeter away down the road, before turning and shuffling back home.

**EXT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

Looking in through the windows as the lights come on inside. Paul walks to the window, looking up at the gray Welsh sky that's reflected in the glass and on his face as he pulls the chain on the neon "OPEN" sign.

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

He turns to face the store which is, predictably, in shambles.

DISSOLVE TO:

**THE NEON SIGN; BEING SWITCHED OFF**

**EXT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - EVENING**

As Julz waits patiently at the front door as Paul locks up.

JULZ

Good first day?

PAUL

(unenthusiastically)

Yeah. Brilliant.

She walks slowly as he shuffles along the arcade of shops.

JULZ

Any luck with the hiring?

PAUL

(distracted)

Only a few applicants. Be better once we get an ad going in the paper.

She follows his eyes as they linger on a display in the music store window, a life-size stand up of Palacido Domingo, promoting a new album.

She takes his hand as he looks away, sensing her pity but not wanting to talk about it...

PAUL (CONT'D)

How was your day?

CUT TO:

**INT. FISH BAR - NIGHT**

Where Paul and Julz sit over baskets of skate & chips with Yvonne and Roland.

ROLAND

...pressure caused a the number five furnace to literally split down the side.

YVONNE

Oh my lord.

ROLAND

Bunch'a the molten steel got out. Eighteen hundred Celsius, damn near melted half the machinery before we got the fire out.

JULZ

Was anyone hurt?

ROLAND

Billy Watkins almost got incinerated, but lucky for him Paul's friend Matthew managed to hoist him out of the pit before the soup got 'im.

PAUL

He's not my friend.

ROLAND

He's a bloody hero.

PAUL

Good for him.

YVONNE

(diverting...)

Anything exciting down at the shop?

ROLAND

Hang on, love.

(to Paul)

What ever disagreements you had when you were in school, don't you think it's time you--

PAUL

Disagreements? Do you see that, Dad?

He shows him a scar starting just at the edge of his hairline.

PAUL (CONT'D)

That's from a bicycle chain, wrapped around his fist while two of his droogs held me down. I was twelve.

ROLAND

I don't remember that happening.

PAUL

What was it you told me, dad? Maybe if I lost a few stone, I wouldn't provoke them.

ROLAND

Look just because you've had a run of bad luck... You've had plenty of opportunities to sort yourself out.

PAUL

(not backing down)

All those years wasted on that singing nonsense.

ROLAND

You're not singing now, are you?

YVONNE

Roland.

ROLAND

You're wife's working two jobs to pay your hospital bills and all you do is mope about.

JULZ

He's back at Car Phone Warehouse.

ROLAND

Oh, well, that's a step in no direction, isn't it.

(MORE)

ROLAND (CONT'D)

We may not have a lot in common, but you're my son and I've never been prouder of you than when I heard you perform in Bath. That was heroic. You want to give it up, anyone would understand after what you've been through...but you haven't have you. You're afraid to sing, but you're afraid to move past it. That's not life.

Julz and Yvonne stare at their hands, trying to hide their agreement...

**INT. PAUL & JULZ TINY APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Paul sits at the computer, pouting while working on their pitiful finances while Julz watches Coronation Street on ITV.

PAUL

Three hundred pounds paid, another thirty-seven thousand to go.

JULZ

We'll be all right.

PAUL

How do you know.

JULZ

It's just money, isn't it. As long as we've got each other.

PAUL

And Coronation Street.

JULZ

Well, yeah.

Paul turns back this his computer as a series of pop-up advertisements appear.

PAUL

Bloody pop-ups.

He closes several of them, then stops on the last, an ad for Britain's Got Talent.

JULZ

(attention on the TV)

What's that darling?

PAUL

Nothing, just... There's this new contest. A hundred-thousand quid to the best performer in Britain.

JULZ

Robbie Williams'll win that for sure.

PAUL

It's for amateurs.

JULZ

Too bad you don't sing. You'd've won it laughing.

Paul stares at the window then minimizes it... After a moment, he brings it back up on the screen and starts entering his details...

PAUL

It's cheaper than a lottery ticket.

JULZ

Are you seriously giving it a go?

PAUL

You're right. I'm such a plonker.

JULZ

No, do it!

PAUL

It's stupid.

He moves to close the window when--

JULZ

Heads or tails?

PAUL

Ay?

JULZ

(with a 50p coin)

Heads you forget all about it, tails you push send.

PAUL

Julz.

JULZ

I was at work today, chatting with my girls, who asked after you as they do now and again. And do you know what I said?

PAUL  
That I'm a tiger in bed?

JULZ  
Aside from that... I said I can't really say how my husband is, because, to be completely honest, I can't remember the last time he laughed.

PAUL  
(after a beat)  
Maybe my dad's right.

JULZ  
Sod your dad. What do you want?

Paul takes this in...

PAUL  
Heads.

Julz flips the coin...

**INT. PAUL & JULZ BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Where Paul lies on his side, Julz nuzzled up behind him as he's lost in thought...

JULZ  
What?

PAUL  
I was just thinking... It would be nice to sing for an audience again. I think I could let it go after that.

He looks over at the bedside table where the 50p coin sits, showing the profile head of Queen Elizabeth II.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Probably won't even get an audition anyway.

JULZ  
(drifting into sleep...)  
Mmmmmmm.

CUT TO:

**INT. PAUL & JULZ BEDROOM - MORNING**

Where the 50p coin reflects the sliver of sunlight into Paul's closed eyes, which snap open.

He frowns at the coin and jostles the bedside table, trying to shift it out of the sunlight. The coin doesn't move.

Paul reaches out for his clock-radio and tries to use it to shove the coin aside and instead ends up knocking everything off the table, waking Julz.

JULZ

What's happening!?

PAUL

Sorry.

**INT. CAR PHONE WAREHOUSE - DAY**

Where Paul looks over a job application. He's smartened up and has the shop back in order.

PAUL

Right, so where you answered "maybe" to the question, "Have you completed secondary school?" would you care to elaborate on that?

A PUNK GIRL, with a huge pink mohawk and numerous piercings both in her face and her leather jacket, stares at him vacantly.

PUNK GIRL

Not really, no.

PAUL

Right.

(as the phone rings)

Just a second. Car Phone Warehouse. This is Paul speaking.

**INT. PAUL & JULZ TINY APARTMENT - DAY (INTERCUT)**

Where Julz is taking off her coat.

JULZ

Is this Paul Potts the singer?

PAUL

I'm a bit busy now, darling.

JULZ

Oh right. Too busy to come with me to Cardiff on Friday.

PAUL

Cardiff, what's in--

As Julz hits play on their answer-phone. The voice of a FEMALE PRODUCER is heard.

FEMALE PRODUCER (O.S.)  
 Yes, Mister Potts. Is that right? Paul Potts. Oh my. Sorry, I'm calling from Britain's Got Talent. We've received your application and .mp3 audition and--

Paul listens as he watches the Punk Girl remove a safety pin from her nostril... He turns away.

JULZ  
 (as the message ends...)  
 Well?

PAUL  
 Um, brilliant.

JULZ  
 What?

PAUL  
 This Friday?

JULZ  
 That's what the lady said.

PAUL  
 That's not nearly enough time.

JULZ  
 Well, that's all the time you've got. See you at seven.

Paul hangs up, terrified. He turns to see the Punk Girl is using the safety pin to pick at a large scab on her forearm.

PAUL  
 Start Friday?

The Punk Girl looks up, surprised.

CUT TO:

**INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING, STAIRCASE - DAY**

Where we hear Paul long before we finally see him, huffing and puffing and sweating his way up the stairs until he collapses in a heap halfway up the final steps.

CUT TO:

**EXT. CARDIFF - DAY**

The largest city in Wales is seen in the distance as Julz drives Paul and Yvonne.

**INT. JULZ' CAR - DAY**

Where Yvonne sits in the back seat reading over materials regarding the show, including photos of the judges, AMANDA HOLDEN, PIERS MORGAN, and SIMON COWELL.

YVONNE

Right, so these are the judges.

(sees Simon smiling)

Now he looks like a very warm fellow. It says here, the auditions are going to broadcast live on ITV. Did you know that Paul?

PAUL

(blanching)

You're joking?

JULZ

(suddenly nervous for him)

Shouldn't you be rehearsing or something?

PAUL

I can't. No telling what shape my vocal cords are in after so long. Better to just warm up properly then see what comes out rather than risk overdoing it now.

JULZ

Right... But then how will you know if you sound any good?

PAUL

Trust me, babe. At best it'll be crap.

JULZ

As long as you're confident.

He smiles nervously, staring out the window as the terror builds...

**EXT. WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE - DAY**

Where THOUSANDS have queued up outside the building, hoping for a walk-on audition. The queue seems endless as they drive past...

YVONNE

Are you meant to wait in that line?

PAUL

I think maybe this was a bad idea.

JULZ

(putting her hand on his)

They liked Paul's song so much, he doesn't have to audition.

Paul watches the faces blur past as his apprehension grows...

**INT. WALES MILLENIUM CENTRE, ARTIST ENTRANCE - DAY**

Where Paul and the ladies are escorted through a swarm of people by a harried PRODUCTION ASSISTANT brandishing a clipboard and walkie-talkie.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

--complete cock-up I'm afraid. All of a sudden Simon "has" to be on a plane to Dubai at three so everything's been bumped up.

PAUL

Just as long as I've got time to warm up.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

How long do you need?

PAUL

Twenty minutes should be plenty.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Take away ten minutes from that and you're perfect.

PAUL

You mean I'm on in--

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

S'actually about nine and a half minutes, yeh?

(handing passes to Julz and Yvonne)

These should get you seats in the reserve section. Right through there.

(to Paul)

You're with me.

PAUL

(turns to Julz)

This was a mistake.

JULZ

You can warm up in ten minutes, can't you?

YVONNE

Nine and a half.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

We really must get--

PAUL

(to Julz)

It's been proven I'm not good enough.  
Let's just go home and--

JULZ

Good enough for who? Bloomin' Pavarotti?  
If you want a final go on-stage, then  
here's your chance. Or, if you really  
want to have a go at being a professional  
singer, here's your chance.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

(into her walkie)

We may have a problem.

(to Paul)

Nine minutes, yes or no.

YVONNE

Eight forty-five, actually.

(off their looks)

Sorry.

JULZ

What would Toscanini do?

CUT TO:

**INT. WALES MILLENIUM CENTRE, BACKSTAGE - DAY**

Where the Production Assistant leads Paul to the wings.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Just wait here for the pre-interview.

PAUL

Pre-interview?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Who are you? Why're you here? Just take a  
few minutes. Back in a sec.

She hustles off leaving him standing amidst several other performers: a MICHAEL JACKSON wanna-be, a JUGGLER and a WOMAN with a HOWLING TERRIER.

Paul realizes he's not in Kansas anymore and starts to warm up, just as a CAMERA CREW barrels in along with the hosts ANT and DEC who are fed background by the Production Assistant.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  
(CONT'D)

--works at Car Phone Warehouse. He's married. Teeth are all bashed up and sings opera.

ANT

Opera?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Paul, this is Ant and Dec. Three minutes.

The camera light comes on and blinds him.

**INT. WALES MILLENIUM CENTRE, AUDITORIUM - DAY**

Where a YOUNG GIRL over-performs "*It's a Hard Knock Life*" on-stage. Julz and Yvonne are led to their seats, high in the nose-bleed section.

JULZ

This is the reserve section?

YVONNE

(screaming into the phone)

I don't know if there's a delay, just get your puckered old bum to a telly, do you hear me?!

(hangs up; to Julz)

Honestly! If he weren't such an exquisite lover, I'd have to leave the man.

**INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY**

Paul stares nervously through a gap in the curtain at the myriad cameras and the enormous crowd as the imposing judges: PIERS, AMANDA and SIMON critique the contestant before him, a YOUNG GIRL.

SIMON

That was absolutely excruciating. It was like a little kitten had been trapped in a box and was shrieking for its mum to come rescue it... Only mum's too busy plugging her ears, isn't she?

The young girl walks off the stage, failing to hold back her tears.

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

Julz and Yvonne sit way in the back.

YVONNE

He isn't very nice at all.

JULZ

I think Paul's next.

The lights come down as an image of Paul appears, projected on a screen.

ANT (V.O.)

For the next contestant, the world of showbiz seems a million miles away. It's Paul. A mobile phone salesman from South Wales.

We Paul watches the young girl lets out a huge SOB as she runs to her MOTHER.

STAGE MANAGER

(to Paul)

I wouldn't want to follow that.

PAUL

Thanks.

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(on-screen)

By day, I sell mobile phones.

Paul walks away from the Stage Manager, trying not to hyperventilate as he passes behind a pair of PRODUCERS.

PRODUCER #1

Who's this chap?

PRODUCER #2

Joke contestant. The chubby opera fellah.

PRODUCER #1

Oh, he'll be good for a laugh.

Paul hangs his head. Finally, the truth of it...

PAUL (O.S.)

(in the interview)

By day, I sell mobile phones.

(MORE)

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 My dream was to spend my life doing what  
 I was born to do.

He sighs, giving up once and for all...

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

Paul is seen on the screen.

PAUL  
 Confidence...is...has always been sort of  
 a difficult thing for me... I always find  
 it a little difficult to be completely  
 confident in myself.

JULZ  
 Oh dear.

She starts texting furiously into her phone.

**INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY**

The Stage Manager runs up to Paul...

STAGE MANAGER  
 You're on.

Motions for him to take the stage, but Paul doesn't move,  
 his eyes find the exit door.

DEC  
 Paul Potts everyone.

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

Julz sends the text then prays to everything she can think  
 of. The audience begins to murmur. Julz senses his  
 hesitation...

**INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY**

Paul's checks his buzzing phone... Reads the text from  
 Julz:

NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED.

PS. PAVAROTTI'S AN ASSHOLE.

LOVE CAMERON.

Paul smiles...

**INT. THEATRE - DAY**

JULZ  
 (as a mantra)  
 One foot, then the other.

And then Paul steps self-consciously onto the stage, walks to the microphone, not looking at anything, keeping his teeth hidden...

PAUL  
 Good afternoon. I'm Paul.

Several thousand PEOPLE look on from the audience. His entire physicality seems to apologize for being there.

AMANDA  
 What are you here for today, Paul?

PAUL  
 To sing opera.

Simon and Piers exchange an "oh crap" look. The audience murmurs, this is going to be terrible. Paul tries to ignore them.

SIMON  
 (annoyed)  
 Okay. Ready when you are.

The opening strains of *Nessun Dorma* begin. Simon leans back and sighs, putting his pen in his mouth, wishing Paul were back in Wales.

Paul stares at a point above the audience until he finds Julz, which allows him to shut everything else out...

PAUL  
*Nessun dorma. Nessun dorma.*

Simon looks up, chews his pen, suddenly interested as Paul begins the first crescendo...

PAUL (CONT'D)  
*Ma il mui mistero e chiuso in me.*

Suddenly the audience cheers. Julz and Yvonne react, clutching each other again... Amanda takes a deep breath, stunned as are Simon and Piers.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
*Il nome mui nessun spara, No no. Dilegua,  
 o notte! Tramontate, stelle! Tromontate  
 stelle! All'alba vincerò!*

Simon's mouth hangs open. Amanda actually begins to cry as the audience rises to it's feet.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
*Vincero. Vincero!*

The audience are on their feet, roaring... Julz and Yvonne hug each other, bouncing up and down...

Even Simon applauds and smiles as the music ends... He looks back at the thundering audience, and actually laughs out loud.

Paul takes a deep breath, happy to be finished then just stares at the floor, face tight, expecting the worst.

SIMON  
So you work at Car Phone Warehouse and you did that. I wasn't expecting that.

AMANDA  
No, neither was I.

SIMON  
This was a complete breath of fresh air. I thought you were absolutely fantastic.

Paul smiles, somewhere between relief and vomiting.

PIERS  
You have an incredible voice. I think, if you keep singing like that, you are going to be one of the favorites to win this competition.

CUT TO:

**INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY**

Paul nods and smiles shyly at the congratulations from SHOW STAFF and other CONTESTANTS. He heads out the back door just as Julz runs up to embrace him...

He hugs her and begins to sob, burying his face in her neck as his entire body is wracked with spasms as the pain of the last three years flows from him in tears of joy.

JULZ  
It's all right. It's all right.

CUT TO:

**INT. THE FORGE TAVERN - NIGHT**

The grimy after-work men watch silently as Paul sings on each of the several televisions.

As he begins the final high note, the men erupt into laughter, clapping Roland on the back as tears run down his face.

Matthew watches, hating Paul all over again because he's brave enough to be different.

The First Drunk from the beginning leans over to Roland.

FIRST DRUNK

Bloody wonderful that.

Matthew stands behind Roland, talking with several of the other men.

MATTHEW

What kind of poof sings opera?

Roland turns to face him.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Not exactly a chip off the old block, is he?

ROLAND

A bicycle chain?

MATTHEW

What?

ROLAND

Is it true?

MATTHEW

Um, well, we were only kids.

Roland snarls and levels Matthew with haymaker. Matthew goes down, out cold.

ROLAND

Get this pile'a dung outta my sight.

Two men pick up Matthew and carry him to the door, passing Paul, Julz and Yvonne as they enter. A cheer goes up as they're recognized.

**EXT. THE FORGE TAVERN - NIGHT**

Paul and Roland stand outside, waiting for their wives.

ROLAND

I want to tell you something... I haven't been the best...

Chokes up. Paul puts his hand on his shoulder...

PAUL

Dad, you don't have to--

ROLAND

Shut up.

(deep breath)

The only real measure of a father's success is by how far his children end up surpassing him in life. I'm not good with words...but you should be very, very proud of yourself.

PAUL

Orgoglio.

ROLAND

What?

PAUL

Nothing.

CUT TO:

PAUL - TAKING A DEEP BREATH

**INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT**

He's standing back stage in a new tuxedo.

JULZ

Nervous?

PAUL

Always. Think I should open with a joke?

JULZ

Probably not.

PAUL

Yeah, probably not.

JULZ

If this ended tonight, I'd still love you forever.

PAUL

D'you wanna make a run for it?

JULZ

Up to you.

PAUL

Best not. See what happens.

Julz kisses him and puts something in his hand.

JULZ

For luck.

Paul looks down to see the 50p coin and the face of Queen Elizabeth II.

CUT TO:

THE ACTUAL FACE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**INT. EMPIRE THEATER, LIVERPOOL - NIGHT**

Sitting beside the DUKE OF EDINBURGH in the royal box as Simon, Amanda and Piers are on-stage.

SIMON

Now, of course, that was Paul Potts who went on to become the deserving winner of the whole competition. Since then, his first album has already sold over two million copies and he's been number one in fifteen different countries. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very proud to introduce Paul Potts.

TITLE:

*EMPIRE THEATER, LIVERPOOL, DECEMBER 3, 2007*

A flute plays as an enormous video screen shows images of Paul's audition and subsequent victory in the finals of Britain's Got Talent.

The screen rises and Paul walks out on stage alongside an entire orchestra and begins to sing...

Paul's nervousness gradually subsides and he looks out at the crowd, seeing the Queen and, several rows behind her, Braddon standing with a very pretty GOTH WOMAN. Braddon smiles and makes a ferret face, nodding over at the woman.

Paul smiles and continues the song as the CAMERA ORBITS around him, revealing him singing:

At the Sydney Opera House...

TITLE:

*PAUL'S DEBUT ALBUM "ONE CHANCE" OPENED AT NUMBER ONE,  
OUTSELLING THE REST OF THE TOP-TEN COMBINED.*

On the Oprah Winfrey Show...

TITLE:

*HIS SOLD-OUT TOURS HAVE CIRCLED THE GLOBE FIVE TIMES*  
Before 70,000 fans in Germany...

TITLE:

*IN 2008, HE HAD THE THIRD SURGERY OF HIS LIFE*

CUT TO:

**A PHOTO OF PAUL SMILING; HIS TEETH NOW CAPPED AND PERFECTLY  
STRAIGHT**

DISSOLVE TO:

**A PHOTO OF THE REAL PAUL AND JULIE-ANN POTTS; BOTH WEAR T-  
SHIRTS SAYING "BRAD" AND "CAMERON" RESPECTIVELY.**

CUT TO:

**THE FAMOUS VIDEO OF PAUL'S ACTUAL AUDITION FOR BRITAIN'S  
GOT TALENT PLAYING ALONGSIDE THE END CREDITS...**

