

Sound and Vision

by

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ONE

*Brendan, 17, a scar on his face, alone, in a space empty save for a few pieces of car wreckage. Two car seats set up as a sofa and a table made out of a bonnet maybe. He takes off his headphones, puts them around his neck.*

BRENDAN

Ok so we open on him

on his face

eyes closed

and we hear the first note of the piano at the exact moment his eyes open

and he begins to sing

he's looking at us

through the camera

he's looking at me

with his piercing blue eyes

and a little gap between his teeth

and it looks like he's lying down

the camera pulls away from him

and we can see he's lying on a mattress

but it's outside

he's not in a bedroom

he's outside on a mattress on the ground

and he doesn't look comfortable

his arms look weird

and his body starts to jerk kind of strangely

and then he gets up

and it's like the opposite of falling

and a boy on a bike rides past him but backwards

and you realize it's all backwards

it's reversed

it's all in rewind

and now he's standing and he's holding his left arm  
with his right arm

like this

and the camera spins around him and you can see some  
sunshine and some clouds and some blue sky

so you know it's the daytime outside

and the kid, the boy on the bike, does a spinny trick  
thing and then it cuts

the camera cuts

and now we're at the chorus for the first time

but it's still just piano we hear

and him singing

and he's walking

backwards

because it's in rewind

and he's on a street

just a normal street

then we see a wall and he jumps backwards over it,  
resting his hand on the bricks as his legs fly over the  
top

and we're back on a street as the chorus continues and  
a string arrangement starts to gently swell in the  
background

and in the background we see traffic lights and shops  
and cars and a black cab

and he leans up against closed metal shutters next to a  
place filled with washing machines like the places  
people used to wash their clothes before everyone had a  
washing machine in their kitchen

BRENDAN

then we see brown autumn leaves on grey concrete

so you know it's autumn time outside

then he does a kind of running backwards leap up on to  
a concrete area underneath a bridge with graffiti all  
over it

and the camera cuts to boys playing basketball under  
the bridge and the guitar's coming in now

the guitar's joining the strings and the piano and  
there's a build going on

and there's more momentum to it all

then it cuts to his feet meeting the pavement as the  
drums come in to meet the rest

and now we're cooking with gas

and he's running his hands through leaves

and he's at a railway station

and he's tip-toeing through the train tracks

and then we're in a clearing at the edge of a forest

and then we're among the trees

and night time is falling

and dead leaves are floating up towards the sky

and it's day time again

and his jacket flies to him and he puts it on

and now we're out of the woods

and into another clearing

and we can see in the background

as he continues to walk backwards

there's a body

there's a body on the ground and it's not moving

and then the camera cuts and now he's in the background  
and the body's in the foreground

on the ground  
not moving  
and it's a woman  
and he's still walking  
walking backwards  
walking to his car  
a black car  
I think it's a BMW  
and he opens the driver's side door  
and there's no glass in the window  
the window is empty space  
and so is the windscreen  
and he gets in  
and he puts his seatbelt on  
and he shakes his face like he's trying to wake himself  
up  
and his eyes close  
like he's going to sleep  
and we cut to the front left wheel and the car is  
bouncing up and down a bit  
and there's dust in the air  
and we're back at her body  
the woman's body  
on the ground  
and glass begins to rise up and float and muster around  
her body  
like a force field  
and she begins to rise up and float

BRENDAN

she's floating towards the car  
and the car is bouncing again  
and she floats into the car feet first  
into the passenger seat  
and the glass pieces itself together perfectly in the  
windscreen like a finished jigsaw  
and the car bounces one more time  
like an Olympic diver on the board about to make their  
dive  
and it launches itself into the air  
in a backflip  
and then it's on its side on a hill  
doing a sausage roll over and over up the hillside  
and then it's rolling backward to a broken fence  
and as it finds its way back through the fence the  
splintered beams of wood replenish  
and we're on a winding road and there's a pickup truck  
behind the car  
and they swerve violently around each other  
switching places  
and the truck is gone  
and the car is alone on the road  
and we see inside that he is laughing  
and we see her taking her jacket off  
and they're looking at each other and smiling  
and she throws her jacket in the back  
and she reaches for her seatbelt  
and she puts it on

BRENDAN  
 and the car pulls away from us  
 back down the road  
 and just before it fades to black  
 if you look really closely  
 you can see that they were happy

TWO

***Brendan** and his mum, **Kate**, sitting in the car seats, watching a film. The lights flicker on their faces. She's crying. He's expressionless.*

KATE  
 Oh Brendan it's so sad. That poor lassie.

*A shift.*

***Brendan** and **Kate**, watching a film. She's crying. He looks bored.*

KATE  
 Oh Brendan. Look at that. Isn't it beautiful?

*A beat. He sighs.*

*A shift.*

***Brendan** and **Kate**, watching a film. She's crying laughing. He's slumped in his seat.*

KATE  
 Oh Brendan, did you hear that? (*bad American accent*) "Ma'am, do ya got a light?" That's funny that is.

*He leaves the room.*

THREE

***Brendan**. Breakfast. He eats dry cereal from a box with his fingers and follows that with swigs of milk from the carton. **Kate** enters.*

KATE  
 Brendan! What have I told you about doing that? You're not the only one who uses those. There's a cupboard filled with things to help you eat your breakfast.

*Brendan takes his phone out and starts filming her.*

Put that thing away. What have I told you about doing that at the table?

*Brendan keeps eating and drinking.*

Fine. Be my guest. Treat this place like a bloody hotel.

*Brendan crushes his handful of cereal, films it.*

Brendan, for fuck's sake. Don't be a baby.

*He storms out. She calls after him.*

Brendan, get back here and clean this up. I am not your slave. You may treat this house like a hotel but it is my home and you will treat it and me with respect, do you hear me? If you don't want to play by my rules you can go find your own place and treat it however you bloody well like!

*He comes back in with his backpack, grabs his headphones, makes to leave.*

Look, I'm sorry I shouted but can't you just -

*He slams the door.*

Have a good day at college.

*Upset, she starts to clean up the mess.*

#### FOUR

*Brendan. He takes off his headphones.*

BRENDAN

We open on an overturned car

the wheels are still spinning

snap to black

we're in the suburbs

nice houses

the car

we zoom in

we zoom out

a hand pushes the driver door open from the inside.

he crawls out into the broken glass



his face is bleeding  
and he's singing  
he limps around the car to the passenger side  
a hand pushes the passenger door open  
a woman starts to emerge  
he opens the rear passenger door, another woman. He  
staggers away from the car  
the women are out  
and one of them runs up to him  
screaming  
and pushes him with hands covered in aquamarine blue  
gloves that go all the way up to her elbows  
he continues to stumble away from the car  
now the women don't follow  
they're standing by the car like  
what the fuck  
what the fuck just happened  
he sees two women on the pavement  
watching him  
and the blue-gloved woman is hitting him in the back  
again  
and holding her head like  
what the fuck  
what the fuck is going on  
and we can't see the other girl  
and then suddenly  
a bright light in the background of the shot  
and the car explodes

BRENDAN

smoke puffs like a cloud into the sky  
the sun is going down  
the car is lit up  
and the flames burn down  
then the sun is gone  
it's dark  
and he's limping to a house  
like a mansion  
he wanders the empty rooms  
the lights flicker  
he climbs the winding staircase  
his face is washed with red light  
he walks into a room  
clothes strewn across the floor  
everything bathed in the same red light  
and on the sofa  
two young women  
and an old man holding an apple  
their faces saying  
what the fuck  
what the fuck have you done

FIVE

***Kate. Brendan enters.***

KATE

How was college?

*He tries to walk past her. She blocks him. He looks at the floor.*

Your day ok? You don't have to talk. You can just give me a high five. Or a thumbs up. Or nod. Or at least

KATE

take the headphones off. Can you do that? Can you take them off pal? Please?

*He sighs. He takes them off.*

Thank you. And can you look me in the eye? Can you make eye contact with me?

*Silence.*

No? Ok. Baby steps then, eh? Right. Well. Tea's on the table in half an hour so if you've got college homework then -

*He puts his earphones on and exits.*

Right, ok. Don't forget to wash your hands!

*A shift.*

**Brendan enters.**

KATE

How was college?

*Brendan hugs her. She hugs him back.*

*A shift.*

**Brendan enters.**

KATE

How was college?

*He tries to walk past her. She blocks him. He looks at the floor.*

When are you going to talk to me? I know you're hurting pal but I'm hurting too. We used to be pals. You used to always want to talk to your old mum. That doesn't have to change.

*Brendan goes to speak, doesn't. He pushes past her.*

*A shift.*

**Brendan enters.**

KATE

How was college?

*Brendan pulls a toy car out his pocket, carefully places it on his palm, pushes it off the edge. He exits.*

SIX

**Brendan.** *He takes off his headphones.*

BRENDAN

we open on a road  
on the right side of the road  
we're moving  
we can see the bonnet of the car in the bottom of the  
frame  
and dirt and trees on either side of the road  
we cut to a hand on the wheel  
then the rearview mirror  
and a young man's eyes  
his eyes are closed  
then a speedometer  
50 and rising  
then trees passing  
then the wheels spinning on the road  
and suddenly there's a deer standing in the road  
then the young man's eyes open  
he twists the wheel sharply to the left  
the car flips and begins to roll and spin  
and spin  
and spin  
glass breaking  
the young man being thrown around like a rag doll  
the music kicks in  
gently  
and as the car continues to spin

the young man begins to see things appearing in the car  
a guitar  
a drum  
a torch  
a sheet in the shape of a tent appears above his head  
a letter flies into his hand  
and we're in his childhood bedroom  
a close up of a photo of a girl  
a close up of the letter next to it  
addressed to Sarah  
and then we see his face  
and I think it's regret on his face  
if I had to say what the feeling was on his face I  
think I'd say it was regret  
if that makes sense  
and then  
and then he's  
a child  
he's um  
a kid  
like his um  
younger self  
and he's at the dinner table with his  
with his  
opposite  
across from  
his

BRENDAN  
Dad

and he's playing with a toy car  
like this one

*Brendan pulls the toy car out his pocket. He puts  
it on his open palm, revs it back and forth.*  
and he's ignoring his plate of food and his glass of  
milk

and he races the car round and round his plate  
faster and faster  
until

he knocks the milk over

and his dad

his dad

sorry

I'm sorry

I need to stop

I need to stop

sorry

I need to stop

*He runs off.*

SEVEN

*Brendan watching MTV. Kate enters. He doesn't  
acknowledge her. He's not ok. He's trying to hold  
it in.*

KATE

Oh hiya pal. You're home early.

How was college? I'm thinking pizza for tea. How's that  
sound? If you let me know what you want I'll phone  
Franco's. What d'you fancy tonight? Eh?

You know what I'll get your usual and my usual and, eh,  
you can always have some of mine if you want. How about  
that?

You could at least nod.

*He nods.*

Right I'll get it ordered.

*She goes off. He silently screams. He composes himself. He takes out the toy car, moves it through his fingers. She comes back in.*

All ordered. They said about half an hour, so if you need to get homework done, you can... Are you alright pal? You look a bit pale. Are you sick? Did you come home early from college? Want me to get you anything?

Look I know you don't want to talk to me but could you just give me a sign or something? There's no point in making yourself feel worse. I want to help you, son. I don't know what's going on with you, well apart from the obvious, but I don't understand why you're shutting me out. All of this is me trying to help you. So let me help. Please.

*She goes to hug him. He shrugs her off.*

Ok. Ok. I don't need to touch you if you don't want me to. I don't need to do anything. We can just sit here or I can leave if you want. Do you want me to leave?

*He shakes his head.*

Ok. Can I sit down then?

*He nods. He breathes. She sits. A silence.*

I wish I had the words that would make everything better. And I don't. Of course I don't. I don't know how to help you. And I don't know how to help myself. But I'm going to keep going with this trial and error thing and get it wrong til I get it right. And I'm never ever ever going to give up on you. Ok?

*Slowly, he looks at her. They look at each other.*

#### EIGHT

**Brendan**, on a bridge, filming on his phone. We see and hear endless traffic, projected across the whole stage. We see cars on the motorway, as day turns to night and back to day. Gradually, the images blur. All we see are lights. The sound of the engines gets louder and louder until suddenly we hear an unbearable screech of brakes. Blackout.

NINE

*Kate*, with a letter in her hand, waiting. The TV's on. **Brendan** enters.

KATE

How was college?

*Brendan keeps walking.*

Brendan, get back here.

*He stops.*

Take off the headphones. Take off the fucking headphones.

*He does.*

How was college?

*He looks at the floor.*

Answer the fucking question. Get your eyes off the ground and look at me. Answer the question.

*He shrugs.*

Speak. It's about fucking time. Now speak.

*He looks at her, shakes his head. She holds up an envelope.*

Do you know what this is?

*He shakes his head.*

You don't know?

*He shakes his head.*

I think you do.

*Silence.*

I found it in your room.

It's a letter from college.

It says you quit. It's a letter confirming that you're off the course. Two months ago. This letter is dated the week after. So you've been lying to me for two months. You've lied to me this whole time.

Well not in so many words. You didn't lie to my face. You've just kept your little vow of silence or whatever the fuck it is going for the best part of a year.

Sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't have said it like that.

I don't want to be angry at you but we don't keep secrets, Brendan. This family doesn't keep things from



KATE

each other. And that's what we are, pal. You and me are this family now. We used to be three and now we're two and there's nothing we can do about that. And we've been sad for a long time and we're probably always going to be a bit sad and we're definitely going to be really sad for a wee while longer but it's going to be easier if we work together and we're honest with each other and we *talk* to each other.

There's so much I want to talk to you about. You were always such a chatty wee boy. And I want him back. Not that you're a wee boy anymore. But I want my pal back. I want to know what's going on in that beautiful head of yours. Just let me in. What's going on in there?

*A long silence. Then, **Brendan** reaches into his bag and pulls out a disc. As before, we see images projected over the stage. This time we see cars crashing, fires, car wrecks, smoke, people bleeding, people crying, people screaming. **Kate** watches in silence, increasingly upset.*

What is this? Brendan did you make this?

*He nods.*

Why? I don't understand how this could possibly help you?

*The video ends. They are bathed in the empty light of the projector.*

Brendan. Please. Say something.

BRENDAN

I...

KATE

Yes?

*He shakes his head.*

KATE

Come on, pal, you were about to say something.

BRENDAN

I...

KATE

Go on.

BRENDAN

I don't know what to say.

KATE

What was that?

BRENDAN

I don't know what to say.

KATE

That's alright, that's fine.

BRENDAN

No.

KATE

It's ok, pal.

BRENDAN

No it's not. It's not ok. I'm not ok.

KATE

And that's alright. Honestly, pal. It's fine to not be ok.

BRENDAN

No. No. Stop calling me pal. I hate it.

KATE

Eh? I've called you that since you were a wee boy.

BRENDAN

Exactly. I'm not a wee boy anymore.

KATE

I know. You're a man -

BRENDAN

No, don't patronise me. You don't need to explain who I am to me. You don't need to explain anything to me. I've had to listen to you explaining and patronising me for months now and -

KATE

Well hang on Brendan. You've not said a word to me since your dad died -

*Brendan flinches.*

I'm sorry. I know you don't like to hear it. But it's true. The last time you spoke to me was the day you got in that car with him and he drove off and I never saw him again.

BRENDAN

Well what is there to say? What do you expect me to say after you say something like that? I don't have the words.

KATE

Just talk to me. That's all I ask.

BRENDAN

My dad is... dead. The most important person in the world to me died.

*Now **Kate** doesn't know what to say.*

I mean, what - what is there left to say after something like that happens? Sorry? Am I supposed to say sorry like teachers and aunties and uncles and friends and neighbours and police officers and doctors and nurses and therapists and counselors and priests and - and you did? What's the point of sorry? Sorry isn't going to bring my dad back. Sorry isn't going to make me feel better about the fact he's gone and I'll never get to see him again. Sorry can't heal the fact that there is a gaping wide open hole in this house. There's a place at the table sitting empty. There's an empty driveway where his car used to sit. There's a cupboard filled with his video cameras and sound kit and lighting kit. There's a layer of dust over a part of everything in this house. There's floorboards not walked on and chairs not sat in and drawers not opened. There's a coldness where there was something warm. There's a silence where there was laughter. There's a gigantic emptiness that I can't see and can't touch but I can feel it all the time. And all people can say is sorry. Sorry isn't going to cover it. Not even close.

I'm just... I'm drowning. I don't know where I'm going or what I'm doing. I'm... I'm like a kid again. I'm like a fucking baby. I thought I was getting somewhere. I thought I was learning how to be a man. And he was leading the way and showing me how. But now I'm 17 and he's not here and I can't find my way back on to the path and there's no way to show me the way. I'm all alone.

*A silence.*

KATE

Is that really how you feel?

BRENDAN

Yes.

KATE

Well that just breaks my heart, Brendan.

BRENDAN

I'm...

KATE

What? Were you going to say you're sorry? I think you've established pretty well how redundant that word is in this hosue. But sometimes it's the only word we have. No one knows what to say to a child when they lose a parent. There's no formula. There's no right answer. When we don't have the words in this country, we apologise. We say sorry. And I know I must've said that to you thousands of times this year. And it's because I don't have the words. But that doesn't mean I close myself off to the world. That doesn't mean I don't let in the people who love me more than anything else in the world.

You haven't spoken to me in over nine months.

BRENDAN

Two hundred and ninety seven days.

KATE

Right. Two hundred and ninety seven days. I haven't heard your voice in all that time. Do you know how hard that is for me, pal?

BRENDAN

I told you to stop calling me pal.

KATE

Because you hate it, because you're not a wee boy anymore? See? I listen.

BRENDAN

If you listened, you'd stop doing it.

KATE

You might not be a wee boy anymore but you yourself just told me you're not a man yet. And it doesn't matter how old you are, when you lose a parent you feel like a child. I guarantee that.

BRENDAN

Don't call me pal.

KATE

Alright. I'll stop. But just know that you are my child and you always will be. You're my only child and for that you have to be my baby forever. I won't treat you like one, but that's what you'll be. And there's nothing you can do about it.

Now. Tell me why you spoke to me today. After two hundred and - how many days?

BRENDAN

Ninety seven. Two hundred and ninety seven.

KATE

Ok. Why?

BRENDAN

You scared me.

KATE

What?

BRENDAN

Because you scared me. You shouted at me.

KATE

And that's all it took? I should've shouted at you months ago.

BRENDAN

That's not funny.

KATE

No. It isn't. But if shouting at you is all it took, why wouldn't you respond when I asked you nicely? Why didn't you talk to me when I was being nice to you? Or when I was scared. And upset. Why would you walk on by or sit in silence when I needed you?

BRENDAN

I didn't know what to say! I didn't have the words.

KATE

Brendan, you're selling yourself short here. The second you started talking the chatty wee boy I remember came back. The one who used to chat my ear off when I was trying to feed him or bathe him. The one who loved the sound of his own voice. And knew how to use it. That's my boy. That's you. Don't sell yourself short. You've always known what to say.

BRENDAN

But what if I don't know anymore? Since - since -

KATE

You are not your dad. It might hurt to hear that, but you're not. You're your own man. And that's what he would've wanted you -

BRENDAN

Don't tell me what he would have wanted. You don't fucking know the first thing about what he wanted.

*A silence.*

KATE

I don't think you know as much as you think you do.

BRENDAN

What's that supposed to mean?

KATE

It means that things are complicated, marriages are complicated and there's things that kids don't know. Things they don't need to know.

BRENDAN

It's my family. I have a right to know what's going on.

KATE

It's my family too. And you kept me at a distance for nine months. You kept secrets from me.

BRENDAN

That doesn't make it right for you to keep things from me. What are you hiding from me?

KATE

It's not so much what I'm hiding, Brendan.

BRENDAN

What you talking about?

*She hesitates.*

What? What is it?

KATE

Your dad...

BRENDAN

Tell me!

KATE

Look, things aren't black and white, ok? Like I said, marriages are complicated. Families are complicated. And nobody's perfect.

I get that you looked up to your dad. Boy's dads are their heroes. But he was only human.

BRENDAN

Stop talking in circles. Just get to the point.

KATE

Your dad...

BRENDAN

What? He had an affair? Is that it?

*She looks at him.*

KATE

Yes.

BRENDAN

So what?

KATE

So what?

BRENDAN

It's probably not true. You're probably just lying to make yourself the better one in my eyes but I don't believe you.

KATE

Brendan, why would I lie to you?

BRENDAN

You just said you keep secrets. You told me this family doesn't keep secrets then you go and say it does. How am I supposed to know what to believe? Why should I believe a word you say?

KATE

Because I'm your mother and I don't lie to you.

BRENDAN

You just said you did. You're lying right now.

KATE

I never said I lied to you. I'm saying that things are complicated -

BRENDAN

Saying things are complicated is just a version of a lie. It's just another lie.

KATE

Brendan, listen to -

BRENDAN

No I won't listen anymore! I've listened to you rabbit on for two hundred and ninety seven days and I'm sick of it. I'm sick of you asking me if I'm alright then telling me it's alright to not be alright then saying sorry then crying then asking me to speak to you and asking for a hug and asking me to sit and watch films with you. I'm sick of it. I don't want to listen to

BRENDAN  
you. I don't want to touch you. We're the ones who  
still get to live but you make this house like hell.

*She's hurt.*

KATE  
Is that really how you feel?

*A silence.*

Is that really how you feel?

*Pause.*

BRENDAN  
Yes.

KATE  
Ok. Well I suggest you get your things and find  
somewhere else to live.

BRENDAN  
Wait. What?

KATE  
Get your things.

BRENDAN  
Why?

KATE  
If you don't want to live her, you don't have to.  
You're seventeen. Almost a man.

BRENDAN  
No.

KATE  
You can look after yourself.

BRENDAN  
No.

KATE  
No?

BRENDAN  
I can't.

KATE  
You can't what?



BRENDAN

I can't look after myself. I've got nowhere to go.

KATE

Course you do. Go stay with one of your pals.

BRENDAN

I don't have any.

KATE

You do.

BRENDAN

I don't! Mum, I don't have anyone.

KATE

Oh now it's mum, is it? Now you'll call me mum.

BRENDAN

Mum, please. I don't have anywhere to go.

KATE

What are you going to do then?

BRENDAN

I don't know!

KATE

Well maybe you should show me some respect in my house and listen to me rabbit on at least one more time, eh?

BRENDAN

Ok.

KATE

Your dad did have an affair. But I hate calling it that. It's a daft word. Sounds more grand and noble than it really is. I can't believe people still say it. Anyway, he did. And I hated him for it. And I forgave him for it. And things went back to normal. Or something approaching normality. Something I could live with at least. And then I found out the day he died that there was a baby. His baby. And another woman's. This other woman's sister called the house that day looking for him to tell him the baby was born and they'd been trying to reach him on his mobile but he'd had it off while out filming. I heard the voicemail and called back and told him I was his wife and the mother to his child, his *only* child and she told me I was a liar, it couldn't be true. A liar!

When he calls me later to say he won't be home for dinner, the shoot's going on late, he's going to be

KATE

there all night... I tell him I know. I say *I know*. And he's confused, he doesn't get it. He think I'm talking about the filming. So I tell him one more time, just so he begins to understand, I tell him that *I know* and hang up the phone. An hour later he's here, confused, sweating, crying, telling me he didn't know there was a baby. I don't know if I'm more upset about the baby or the fact he gave her my home phone number.

I tell him he has a choice. I tell him I'll forgive him one last time if he calls and tells them he wants nothing to do with the baby and never speaks to them again. Or he can go and see the baby and its mother in the hospital and never come back.

He chose her. He said he'd never be able to live with himself if he left her to raise the child alone.

I know you must think I'm heartless Brendan. I know it sounds like I pushed him out, but you have to know that I begged him to stay. He could be a stupid man but he was my husband and I loved him. And he was your father. I told him he was forcing me to raise you alone. Either way there was a child without a father. But I couldn't let him have both.

He chose the other woman and her baby over us. He packed his bags to go. You were with your pals after school. He didn't know what to say to you, how to explain it. I didn't have the words myself. I was in shock. I hadn't thought that far ahead. He probably hadn't either. He was about to leave when you walked in. He was on his way out the door.

I can picture all of it so clearly. It was like my brain knew to print every frame and burn every image in my memory because this would be the last time I ever saw him. I can't have known that, but somehow I knew.

He's packed a couple of bags and he's not crying anymore. And neither am I. I've got that feeling like a kid who's finished a long cry and now needs a nap. I can't stop yawning. But I'm alert at the same time.

The whole time he's packing he doesn't look at me. I follow him around the house, like a ghost haunting his footsteps. My arms are crossed the whole time. I don't know why. Maybe if I let go of my chest it'll explode. It must be annoying him that I'm following him around but he's probably too scared to say anything. Or maybe he doesn't notice me. He must have his mind on other things.

When he's done packing he finally looks at me and in that moment the years fall off him and he looks just like you. And that's the image I have of him in my head now. It's still so clear. That's the last photograph. That wee memory in my head.

So he's about to walk out the door and then you come in.

And we're both like deer in headlights. He'd clearly wanted to avoid this. Or maybe he hadn't thought that far ahead.

And then you walk in and that changes everything. And he panics. Starts banging on about having to get back to work. And you ask him what's in the bags and he tells you it's camera kit and he tries to push past you. He clearly can't cope with talking to you or even looking at you. You ask him why he's asking so weird and he can't answer and you ask him if you can go to work with him. You say you've done all your homework at Paul's house and you beg him to take you with him and he doesn't know what to do so he just says 'yes'. And you're all excited about getting to go with him because he's always finding excuses for why you can't go with him and despite myself, I'm smiling. For a second I think that's a brilliant idea, that he'll take you with him. Then I remember what's actually happening and I go to speak but nothing comes out. He walks out the front door and dump your bag next to the shoes and welly boots and you're off after him. He throws his bags in the boot and by that time you're already sitting in the front and you're so excited. I shout after you to put your seatbelt on and I can see even though it's already quite dark out as the clocks just went back and through that darkness I can see that you do. You put your seatbelt on. Good boy.

Your dad gets in the car and speeds off and only as I hear the screech of the tyres do I realise I have no idea where he's taking you. And my mind goes into fantasy land, racing through all the worst case scenarios of where he's taking you and what could happen and I know he shouldn't be driving in that emotional state and I think he must just be a mess and can't imagine what's going through his head and I actually start to feel sorry for him but that's quickly replaced by terror at what if something happens to you. And I don't know how long I stand there with the front door wide open and the cold air getting in before I snap out of it and shut the door and go inside and pour myself a glass of wine, large, and wait. I just wait. I think I should call you but I don't want to worry you.

KATE

I don't know if he's told you anything. I don't know if he's acting weird and you're worried. I don't know if everything seems perfectly normal to you. You're probably still just excited about getting to go to your dad's work. And that idea makes me smile. It's nice. No offence, but it's fucking hard trying to get a teenage boy excited about anything.

And then I sort of sit there. Stewing in some good thoughts and plenty bad thoughts and an expensive bottle of cheap white wine.

And I lose track of time and by now it's pitch black outside and I've barely moved a muscle other than to finish the bottle and the bell goes.

And I jump at how loud and piercing it sounds. And how quiet and empty the house sounds.

And I go to the door and it's the police. And before they can say a word I know you're dead. I just know it. I don't even think about your dad in that moment. I think of you. And I know you're dead. And they ask if they can come in and they sit me down and I clock the empty bottle of wine and the dregs at the bottom of my glass and I'm embarrassed. They must think I'm such a lush, I think.

And I must be zoned out because they're saying my name over and over and I look up at them and it's a young man who seems nervous and looking at him makes me think of you.

He's not doing the talking though. It's a woman, a bit older than him and she has a nice voice. Soothing. And she tells me you're ok. That you're hurt and you're in hospital but that you're going to be ok. And I breathe. And when I breathe I realise I mustn't have been breathing for the last five minutes. I breathe and it lets out something. And I catch it before it's too far gone. I don't want to embarrass myself in front of the nice police officers. I want to keep it together. But my cheeks are warm from the wine and they must be bright red and they can probably tell I was crying earlier and I wonder what they must think of me. And then they say there's more. There's more they need to tell me and I feel like an idiot. Of course! I hadn't even thought of your dad and then they get a little quieter and a little more polite and I don't really hear the words they say, something about a lorry, but it doesn't matter. I already know what they're saying. And then there's nothing more to say and they ask if I

KATE

want to go to the hospital and all these questions buzz around in my head about how hurt you are and if you're in a coma and will you be able to walk and again and will you remember me when you see me and then a big voice in my head tells all the little ones to stop and tells them that the police officers won't know the answers to any of this, so just shut up, nod your head and follow them to the car.

They take a coat off the back of the door and hand it to me. I put it on and we walk outside and they open the door of the police car for me and I get in. And I realise I've never been inside a police car before and it's quite exciting in a way then I remember to put my seatbelt on, I remember my own voice saying that to you hours before and I put it on. And we set off. And it's quiet. And I'm nice and cosy in my coat. And then I notice the smell. I can smell the collar of the coat wrapped around my face and I realise it's not mine. It's too big and it smells like a man and it's your dad's coat. And I remember his face earlier. When he looked like a lost boy. And I breathe again, deeper than before. I must have been holding it again. I let out a deep deep breath and I let everything out. Everything comes out and I cry and for my husband and my marriage and my house and myself and I cry for you. I cry for you, Brendan.

*A long, charged silence. They are both very emotional.*

BRENDAN

I wish I could remember his face like you do. That clear image. In my head it's blurry. I feel like the more time passes, the more blurry it is. I'm forgetting him, mum. I'm forgetting everything about him. And now you're telling me I'm remembering the wrong man.

KATE

No, Brendan. That man you remember is still your dad. And I still love him. In spite of everything. He's still the love of my life. And the father of my son. And that's why I mourn him. And that's why I'm sad all the time. And I'm sorry if I've made your grief even more difficult to deal with. What happens next is up to you.

BRENDAN

What do you mean?

KATE

If you want to go, that's fine. If you want to stay,  
please stay.

BRENDAN

I'm not going anywhere, mum.

KATE

Ok. So what do we do now?

BRENDAN

I don't know.

KATE

Do you want to watch a film?

BRENDAN

What?

KATE

Shall I put on a film?

BRENDAN

No.

KATE

Why not?

BRENDAN

Mum, it's just... A lot.

KATE

Yeah.

BRENDAN

I mean I just started talking to you again after -

KATE

Too long.

BRENDAN

Yeah. Yeah I'm sorry.

KATE

Don't be.

*A pause.*

Did you... did you talk to anyone? I mean when you  
weren't talking to me did you talk to anyone else? It's  
ok if you did. I know I've asked this before. You just  
didn't really answer.

*She laughs a little.*

BRENDAN

No. I didn't. Well... At college. A bit. They knew I wouldn't talk and I guess you'd explained our situation to the lecturers or whatever and asked them to go easy on me so I just kind of sat there most of the time and listened. And I was new so I didn't know anyone and the students probably just thought I was quiet. Or a weirdo. But we all had to get up and describe a piece of film we really loved and talk about it and I don't really know why we had to do it and I didn't know why I loved anything so I would just get up and describe the stories of music videos.

KATE

Like how they got made?

BRENDAN

No, like what happens in them. Like what you see.

KATE

Oh ok.

BRENDAN

Yeah. So I'd get up and tell the stories and then I'd sit down and I guess everyone would probably look confused but I always sat way at the back so I couldn't see their faces. And the lecturer would always say 'thank you Brendan. Very illuminating' or something like that and then someone else would go up. So I did that for a while and it felt ok. Like, I didn't even hesitate about going up. The first time they asked I was the first to put my hand up and I went up and basically explained everything you see in this Coldplay video that I'd memorised.

KATE

Coldplay?

BRENDAN

Yeah I like them.

KATE

No, that's fine.

BRENDAN

I mean, I used to like them.

*She looks at him.*

Well yeah, I still like them.

KATE

Ok then.

*He's embarrassed.*

So how come you could talk at school but not at home?

BRENDAN

Well, I felt like I couldn't talk anywhere. Not to people or *with* people. That's why I didn't want to go back to school and didn't want to talk to you or therapists or my friends. They thought they'd get round the problem by writing me notes or texting me but I just stopped replying. I deleted my Facebook and everything and I just didn't want to talk to anyone. Except my dad. And I thought doing the college course might be a way to do that. But I still didn't know how to talk to him. I got up and described my music videos and I sat back down and and I got up and I sat down and I got up and one day I was describing one and it was about a car accident, they were all about car accidents, but this one was one I couldn't stop watching. It's about a boy and his dad and how he takes his dad for granted as he grows up to be a man until what might be the moment of his own death, as he's in a car spinning off the road and memories and regrets flash before his eyes and he sees that his dad was always there for him and I don't think it was until I got up there and told the story of that video myself that I wondered what would have happened if I had died instead. I think before that I'd always wondered what would have happened if he'd lived. In my head it was always about *what if he was still alive and we were both alive right now* but in that moment I started to wonder what it would be like if I had died instead and I started to panic and I felt like I couldn't see and I couldn't breathe and I had to get out of there and this is going to sound stupid but it was like my scar started to feel hot -

KATE

Like Harry Potter.

BRENDAN

See? I told you it sounded stupid.

So I got my bag and I walked out and I just kept walking. I walked through the afternoon, as the light faded and it got dark. I walked through the streets as the streetlamps came on and went from white to orange. I walked until the buildings ran out and became houses then became trees. I don't know if my head knew where I was going but my feet did and they walked me all the way to the countryside and I kept walking until I found the bridge. I stood for a while in the spot where we crashed and I was shocked because there's still bits of broken glass and the sign we hit is still a piece of



BRENDAN

twisted metal and the old stone of the bridge is still crumbling and you can still see the shape of violence there. And it was so quiet. And dark. Late afternoon after the clocks have gone back. Then cars started to come. People finishing work and driving home. I climbed up the, what do you call it, the embankment or whatever next the road and I climbed on to the rail bridge and looked down and watched the cars and their lights as they passed by and after a while I took my phone out and I started to film them.

And then I walked home. And I went back the next morning and I stayed all day and I filmed. And I did that every day. And I came home at night and I made little films out of the footage. And I found footage of car crashes and I edited them together. And I added music. And I watched hours and hours of music videos. And I taught myself how it all works. And I think it's what I want to do with my life. And that's about all I have worked out so far, but I'm going to give it a go.

KATE

Well, I'm proud of you.

BRENDAN

Even when I make videos of car crashes?

KATE

Yes, even if I don't agree with everything you say or do, and I'm sure there'll be plenty more of that to come, I'll always be proud of you and I'll always love you. That's the contract I wrote and signed when you were born. And I'm sticking to it.

*They look at each other for a while.*

BRENDAN

Mum?

KATE

Yeah?

BRENDAN

I'm hungry.

*She laughs. Relieved to hear something mundane.*

KATE

Ok. I'm sure I can handle that. What do you fancy?  
Pizza?

*He smiles.*

KATE

Alright then I'll get it ordered.

*She smiles at him, squeezes his shoulder, walks past him, turns to look at him, breathes and exits.*

*He turns to the audience.*

BRENDAN

There's a music video in my head. It's the music video version of my life. It's so much better than the real thing. Well, it's easier than the real thing. Everything is in its right place. Everything makes sense in this version. And anything can happen. And maybe people don't care about music videos as much as they did and no one watches MTV anymore and we're all getting older and the videos we used to love on MTV are on VH1 now, if VH1 still exists and maybe my video isn't a cool video, but hopefully it's popular anyway. Maybe it's like a Coldplay video.

And it maybe isn't cool to like it and maybe it won't seem relevant or timely or connect in an emotional way with you but to me it means something, it tells me a story and it makes me feel something. I think that's what I like about music videos. You can leave out the boring bits. Or you can leave them in, but make them seem less boring by adding music, or really emphasising the boring bits to make them seem special and make them special in a way they never would be in real life.

*We hear music. And video floods the stage. Home video footage of Brendan as a child, playing with his mum and dad.*

So.

Um.

Yeah.

***Kate** enters. She stands next to him. They look out as the video continues. The music builds to a crescendo. The projector cuts out. They are bathed in the empty blue light. Blackout.*

END OF PLAY