

1

1

Claudie's bedroom and the sound of snoring is broken by an alarm clock ringing. CLAUDIE shoots up in bed. She slams the clock into silence as she registers the time 6.30am. She groans as she remembers what day it is and flops back down, placing the pillow over her head.

1a

INT. THE CHASE. ANNA'S BEDROOM - DAY

1a

MATT is still asleep. ANNA sits on the bed watching him. He opens his eyes and smiles self-consciously.

MATT

What?

ANNA

You looked so peaceful, I didn't want to disturb you but the children'll be up soon.

MATT

You want me to go?

ANNA

I don't want you to but.....

MATT silences ANNA with a kiss.

2

2

SEBASTIAN lies sleeping. SARAH is up and dressed. She fishes under the bed for her shoes and has to bend down beside SEBASTIAN. He murmurs as if he's about to wake and she holds

CLAUDIE
Have you forgotten what day it
is?

PAULA
(Realising) Oh, yeah. Five
more minutes.

CLAUDIE
(Irritated) Get up Paula, you
promised to help me.

PAULA
(Groaning) But we've sorted
what you're wearing.

CLAUDIE
I've changed me mind. It's not
me. I'm gonna wear me own
stuff.

PAULA drags herself out of bed. CLAUDIE puts her hand on a
tiger print dress.

PAULA
That's so last season.

CLAUDIE
Tough.

PAULA
Okay, don't listen to a
professional. It's your court
case.

CLAUDIE
(Urgent whisper) Shh! Someone
could be listening.

CLAUDIE puts her ear to the door.

PAULA
I don't know why you don't
tell em. They know about the
pensions anyhow.

CLAUDIE
Cause I don't want to give
them stuck up cows, another
reason to look down their
noses at me.

CLAUDIE yanks the door open as if she'll find someone
kneeling at the keyhole. She looks around suspiciously -
nothing. She hears the postman.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)
Post! I'll be back in a sec.

4

4

CLAUDIE speeds down the stairs overtaking a bemused ANNA.

ANNA
Good morning Claudie.

CLAUDIE
Yeah, morning.

CLAUDIE picks up the post. Looking through it her face momentarily breaks into a smile. Poker faced, she turns to ANNA.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)
Post. Nothing much, only one
for me, junk mail I spose.

CLAUDIE thrusts the remaining letters into ANNA'S hand and rushes back upstairs, squeezing past DAISY and LUCA on the stairs.

DAISY
Mummy says you shouldn't pass
on the stairs, it's bad luck.

CLAUDIE just smiles and rushes off as the children run down to ANNA, who is reading a letter she has opened.

DAISY (CONT'D)
Can I go to Molly's after
school?

ANNA
(Engrossed) Sorry?

LUCA
I've got PE today.

DAISY
(Impatient) Can I go to
Molly's after school?

ANNA pops the letter back into its envelope. She looks sad.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(Distracted) We'll see.

DAISY
Is anything wrong mummy?

ANNA
No, of course not, but thank
you for asking. (She hugs
Daisy and Luca) Come on you
two, breakfast.

The children run through to the kitchen.

CLAUDIE and PAULA bouncing up and down on the bed with their hands over their mouths to stop them shouting out. They both collapse in a giggling heap on the bed.

PAULA

(Excited whisper) I can't believe it! Two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. I've never seen so much dosh.

CLAUDIE

(Smirking) I can't believe that much money is actually in my bank account! People are gonna have to start takin' me seriously now. (Turns to Paula) Can you see why I don't want that pair knowing I'm going to court? I'm as good as them any day.

PAULA

Better, I bet they haven't got this much cash to play with.

CLAUDIE picks up a drab suit, hanging on the back of the door.

CLAUDIE

So I won't be needing to wear this. I'm going to walk into court, head held high. This is me Claudie Williams your worship, and I'll be happy to pay whatever fine you give me.

CLAUDIE discards the suit and hangs up the dress.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)

I'm going to make George proud. He loved me in this dress.

SARAH is drinking a coffee. ADRIAN rushes in the door.

ADRIAN

Thank God you're back. I've

ADRIAN

Sarah you just can't walk out the first time anything goes wrong.

SARAH

(Hurt) You have no idea how I feel. It's hard for me Adrian.

ADRIAN

Anna and I made a mistake. We should have said something to you, but you weren't completely honest either.

SARAH

(Sadly) So I'm to blame?

ADRIAN

No one's to blame. As long as we love each other, we can sort it out

SARAH

(Guilty) Can we? We've both said things and done things that we've...

ADRIAN

(Interrupting) What do you mean?

SARAH

I don't know. My head's all over the place. I need some space... I've got to go.

ADRIAN watches as SARAH obviously confused, picks up her vet's bag and leaves quickly.

7

7

ANNA is busy getting the kids ready for school. DAISY and LUCA are eating at the table. JAKE is playing under it and IMOGEN is in her high chair.

ANNA

Jake, sit up and eat your cereal.

JAKE/OOV

I don't like it.

ANNA

But you asked me to buy it specially.

DAISY
He j ust wanted the toy.

LUCA

ANNA
(Surprised) You have an aunt,
who's a hundred?

CLAUDIE
(Throwing a look at Paula) A
great auntie.....when we say
auntie, we mean like she's an
honoury auntie. (Changing the
subject) Er, anyone want
toast?

8

8

SARAH pulls into The Chase car park. She's on hands free and we can just hear the tail end of Sebastian's answer phone message.

MESSAGE
Please leave a message after
the tone.

SARAH
(Tentatively) Hi Sebastian,
it's Sarah. Sorry I had to
leave so early. Er, no message
really....just call me when
you get a chance.

The bashed up Land Rover is parked up at The Chase. As SARAH'S attention is back with her parking, she spots the Land Rover and almost loses control of her own car, slamming on her breaks. She sits staring out at the Land Rover.

9

9

See SARAH stood with ADRIAN in the garden, over by the Pagoda.

GEORGE turns to see SARAH, calls over to her...

GEORGE
Check that Anna's alright
darling, I've got to go to the
police station!

SARAH sees George's Volvo is blocked in.....

SARAH
Take the Land Rover Dad, keys
are in the ignition! Remember
it jumps out of second gear!

But GEORGE is already in the drivers seat.

We close up on SARAH as she watches her father drive the Land Rover out of the drive without stopping, her face crumples as she hears a screech of breaks and an almighty crash and a horn blaring away.

SARAH (CONT' D)
(Screams)

The children know ANNA means it and reluctantly leave. ANNA turns to LIAM.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(Urgent whisper) It's the Land Rover our father was killed in.

LIAM
How was I meant to know?

CLAUDIE
You can't blame our Liam.

ANNA
(To Sarah) We got a cheque in the post this morning. They'd agreed to pay the write off value and return the car.

SARAH
(Annoyed) And you didn't try and stop them?

ANNA
I didn't think they meant today.

SARAH
Do I have to do everything! Get on to them, tell them we don't want it.

PAULA
I'll have it. I could do with some cash.

SARAH
(Scathingly) I meant the Land Rover, not the money, idiot.

CLAUDIE
There's no need to talk to Paula like that. Anyway by rights, half that money is mine. He was my husband.

PAULA
You tell her.

SARAH
The Land Rover belonged to the Chase.

CLAUDIE
And half the Chase belongs to me.

ANNA
(Weary) Let's not get into
that now.

LIAM
(Seeing an opportunity) I
could get rid for ya.

CLAUDIE
(Backing Liam) At a price.

LIAM
Fifty quid and I'll get it
towed away for ya.

ANNA
Today?

LIAM
Might be pushing it but I'll
have a go.

ANNA
(Distressed) Liam, I mean it.
I want that Land Rover gone.

LIAM
Yeah, yeah, no worries...
I'll sort it.

SARAH throws ANNA a scathing look before she strides off.
LIAM leaves to check out the Land Rover followed by PAULA and
CLAUDIE.

12

12

The Land Rover stands looking ghostly. PAULA and LIAM stand
surveying it.

LIAM
All it needs are the dents
knocked out, a bit of filler
and a spray job and it'd look
like new.

PAULA
(Shivers) Grizzly in it, to
think someone croaked inside.

PAULA turns to see that CLAUDIE is standing back just staring
at the Land Rover, obviously upset.

13

13

From CLAUDIE'S POV.

CLAUDE

ANNA
How many hundred year old
aunts, have you got?

LIAM
(Confused) Sorry?

ANNA

PAULA

Good idea, we could do a
runner. You've got two hundred
and fifty grand. What's
stopping us.

LIAM LIAM

CLAUDIE

I need to think...what can I do? I'd never last in prison, me.

PAULA

What if a butch guard takes a fancy to yer? Or even another prisoner.

CLAUDIE downs her drink.

LIAM

(To Paula) You're not really helping are ya.

PAULA

You read about stuff like that.

CLAUDIE

Shut up! (Realization) Holy pooh, I feel sick. I was having such a good day with the money going into me bank account. It's that flaming car...it's cursed. I knew it as soon as I saw it.

LIAM

What are you gonna do?

CLAUDIE

What can I do?

PAULA

Leg it!

CLAUDIE

I'm not doing a runner after all I've been through to get here. That's just what them pair want. I'd be playing straight into their hands. (Decisive) George wanted me to stay put, so I'm gonna front up in court and pray that he's looking down on me.

LIAM

(Unconvinced) You'll be alright Sis, and like you said it was yer first offence.

CLAUDIE grabs a ball of cotton wool and starts to vigorously

PAULA
What yer doing?

CLAUDIE
I'm getting this crap off me
face. Liam, pick up that grey
suit I chucked in the corner
and hang it up, will ya.
Paula, work yer magic. I want
to look like butter wouldn't
melt.

We fade into the next scene.

18

18

CLAUDIE, as we've never seen her before, enters the court building, flanked by PAULA and LIAM. They look like three mannequins escaped from a shop window. CLAUDIE'S hair is pinned at the back and she's wearing the grey suit and sensible shoes. She's having trouble walking as she drags a large suitcase behind her.

CLAUDIE
How do people walk in flat
heels?

LIAM
Remember Sis, don't say owt.
Leave it all to your brief and
remind him to play on the fact
that you've been recently
widowed. Should go down well
with the Judge.

PAULA holds out a jar.

PAULA
Here, chest rub. Stick it
under yer eyes. A few tears
might come in handy.

CLAUDIE
(Refusing it) I don't need to
pretend to cry. I've got
bucketfuls of the real stuff.

LIAM
(Seeing Mr Alcott) There's yer
brief Claudie. You better get
ready.

CLAUDIE
(Shitting it) Sorry?

LIAM
Mr Alcott's waiting.

CLAUDIE
(Terrified) Oh me belly just
slipped... What if I don't come
out?

Out on CLAUDIE looking terrified.

19

19

TOM is getting a bottle of milk from the fridge. ANNA enters.

ANNA
(Annoyed) What are you doing,
Tom? You can't just walk in
here and help yourself. You
don't live here anymore.

TOM

ANNA
Which children are you talking about? Daisy, Luca, Theo?

TOM
(Scrutinizing Anna) You've changed.

ANNA
Yes I suppose I have. Thank God, I've wised up.

TOM
Are you the reason Matt's staying?

ANNA
I don't have to answer that.

TOM
(Staring) You already have. (Beat) He's not good enough for you.

ANNA
And you are?

TOM
Don't do this to me, Anna. For God sake I love you. Remember how good it was between us. Please why can't you give me another chance?

ANNA
I'm sorry Tom.

TOM
(Almost a whisper) I won't give up on us.

TOM leaves with the milk. ANNA can only stare after him.

20

20

We're at the back of the court with LIAM and PAULA as CLAUDIE is led back in.

PAULA
The Judge must be coming back.

LIAM
What do yer reckon?

PAULA
She's going down.

LIAM

She is, isn't she. Her brief was crap. I thought he'd make more of her being a widow and play the sympathy vote.

PAULA

She didn't even cry once, she should have used me rub.

CLAUDIE looks back at them for reassurance. PAULA and LIAM gives her the thumbs up as if it's all going great.

LIAM

(Fixed smile at Claudie) She's had it.

PAULA

(Scary smile) Poor cow. What we gonna do cause I can't see Anna and Sarah letting us stay on without Claudie.

LIAM

Yeah, I never thought of that.

PAULA

I was really settled there an all. Me business was booming. (Suddenly remembering) What about the money!

LIAM

What money?

PAULA

Our Claudie's. She'll have two hundred and fifty thousand just sitting in her account and we'll be skint with nowhere to live, and we won't be able to touch a penny. Have you got a pen?

LIAM

What do you need a pen for?

PAULA rummages in her bag. She hands LIAM one of two pens.

PAULA

Get practising.

LIAM looks confused until he sees PAULA scribbling out Claudie's signature on the back of an envelope. They are interrupted by the Court Usher.

COURT USHER

All stand.

We are down at the front as the JUDGE returns. The court sit.

JUDGE BENNETT
Claudie Williams will you

JUDGE BENNETT (CONT'D)
(Sternly) However, you were in charge of public funds and were working in a position of trust, which you flagrantly abused.

CLAUDIE
I can explain that your worshipness. I didn't really mean....

CLAUDIE'S SOLICITOR coughs to attract her attention and gestures for her to shut up, but this is lost on CLAUDIE.

JUDGE BENNETT
(Interrupting) If I may continue. I feel that in this particular case a custodial sentence will serve no real purpose, the prisons are overcrowded as it is.

CLAUDIE
I couldn't agree more your holiness. I mean what purpose would it serve to bang me up... and I wouldn't wanna share.

Her solicitor is now coughing frantically.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)
(Distracted) Could someone get Mr Alcott a drink of water?

The JUDGE bangs the gavel.

JUDGE BENNETT
(Irritated) Order!
Mrs Williams, I don't think you realise the seriousness of your situation. You are within a hair's breath of being sent to prison.

CLAUDIE
(Regaining her composure) Oh, er yeah, I was just... sorry your worship.

JUDGE BENNETT
As I was saying. You have abused your position within the community, and it is this court's decision that you make reparation to that community.

I am therefore sentencing you
to a three hundred hour
Community Service Order.

LIAM
(Shouting from the back) Way
to go our Claudie!

PAULA
Whoop whoop whoop!!! (Performs a
dance with her elbows) Go
girl! Go girl!

JUDGE BENNETT
(Bangs the table) Order! I
hope that you, Mrs Williams or
anyone else in this court,
does not look upon this
sentence as a soft option.

CLAUDIE
(Almost curtsyng) Not at all
your holiness.

JUDGE BENNETT
The order will be enforced
rigorously in accordance with
National Standards and if the
terms and conditions are not
met, the order will be revoked

LIAM

I wouldn't be so sure. Three hundred hours is a bit heavy. (To Paula) Have you got that pen and paper?

PAULA hands LIAM the pen. The paper with Claudie's signatures, flutters to the floor. CLAUDIE picks it up and stares at it.

PAULA

(Caught) Insurance, just in case you were sent down.

CLAUDIE raises an eyebrow. LIAM is busy working it out.

CLAUDIE

(Can't help but smile) Why you lying thieving little... How long you been practising for? It's better than me own.

LIAM

Just say you work seven hours a day for about three days a week that's.....twenty one. Divide into the three hundred, that's about fourteen weeks.... (Stresses) That's over three and a half months.

PAULA

I weren't really gonna do it

CLAUDIE

(Suddenly hearing Li am) Three and a half months? Nah, you've made a mistake.

LIAM

CLAUDIE rushes after him.

LIAM
(To Paula) For goodness sake
stop her before she really
does get banged up.

CLAUDIE trying to keep up with him.

CLAUDIE
Excuse me your worshipness,
er, remember me. I've just
worked out me time and I was
wondering if I made a small
donation to a local charity,
you might consider cutting me
hours.

The JUDGE stops and gives CLAUDIE a withering look. LIAM and PAULA catch up.

JUDGE BENNETT
Are you offering me a bribe?

CLAUDIE
It's not a bribe as such, just
a sort of compromise. Say ten
grand and two weeks communi ty
servi ce.

LIAM
Cl audi e!!!

JUDGE BENNETT
(To Liam) I would take her
away from here quickly, before
I'm forced to give her a
custodial sentence.

LIAM
Cl audi e, home. . . . now.

LIAM drags CLAUDIE away. A REPORTER rushes up with a camera.

REPORTER
Ms Williams! Ms Williams! Thi s
way Ms Williams.

PAULA seeing the camera is in there.

PAULA
I'm her sister and she had her
hair and nails done at Million
Dollar Beauty Parlour, Chevi n
Chase. (Grabbing her hand)
Show him your nails Cl audi e.

CLAUDIE obliges - A flash and we cut straight into the next scene.

22

22

We come up on a picture of CLAUDIE adorning the front page of Mr Roebottom's, evening paper, as he sits reading it with his DOG nestled under his chair. Afternoon surgery is coming to an end. DEBORAH is manning the desk. PAULA is collecting her own client.

PAULA
(Examining her nails) What
have you been doing with your
nails Carol, all your jewels
have dropped off.

PAULA stops in her tracks as she spots the paper.

PAULA (CONT'D)
Flaming Norah! Er, sorry, If
you could make you're own way
up, you know where it is.

CAROL nods as PAULA checks that DEBORAH is not looking. She approaches MR ROEBOTTOM. MARGARET comes out of the pharmacy.

PAULA (CONT'D)
(Snatching the paper) Sorry,
we can't allow that... some of
our animals are allergic.

MR ROEBOTTOM
(Surprised) To newspapers?

PAULA
You'll be surprised.

MARGARET
(Overhearing) Ooh... can I just
check me horoscope.

Before PAULA can protest, MARGARET grabs the paper.

PAULA
If you want a paper, buy yer
own.

MARGARET
Don't be so mean.

MR ROEBOTTOM
Er, I think you'll find,
that's actually my paper.

DEBORAH calls out.

DEBORAH

Mr Roebottom you can take
Doogle through now.

MR ROEBOTTOM leads his DOG from under the chair. PAULA yanks
the paper back from MARGARET.

MARGARET

You're welcome to it. I'm
still waiting for the windfall
it promised me last month.

MARGARET marches off to the link room. MR ROEBOTTOM can only
stand and stare.

PAULA

(To Mr Roebottom) You're gonna
miss your turn if you don't
go. You can have it back as
soon as yer finished.

MR ROEBOTTOM makes for the consulting room keeping a wary eye
on PAULA.

PAULA (CONT'D)

Smile it might never happen.

PAULA rushes off with the offending paper.

23

23

SARAH, heading out on a visit, has collared LIAM in the car
park. He has just fitted the new doors.

SARAH

Is that thing still here?

LIAM

I'm working on it.

SARAH

So I see. I thought we told
you to get rid of it.

LIAM

I'm doing the best I can.

PAULA turns up, but on seeing SARAH she hangs back.

SARAH

I'm warning you Liam. Aren't
you even bothered how it makes
Anna and I feel, having to
walk past it.

LIAM

It'll be gone at end of day,
that's what we agreed.

(Lying) I've er, got someone collecting it.

SARAH
I'm surprised Claudie hasn't said anything but then maybe it doesn't bother her.

LIAM
Of course it does. You don't realise how cut up she is about yer dad.

SARAH
No, because she hides it so well, swanning around, spending his money.

LIAM
That's not fair.

SARAH
No Liam, what's not fair is my father died and now we're saddled with you lot.

SARAH gets in her car and slams the door. She drives off as PAULA rushes up and waves the paper at LIAM.

PAULA
Have you seen this?

LIAM
I warned ya.

PAULA
You better get up the shops and buy every copy you can... Now Liam!

LIAM
Okay, I'm going... I dunno what's up with everyone round here.

LIAM pulls a face as he prepares to leave.

24

24

CAROL is lying on her couch soaking her cuticles with a flannel over her face. PAULA is fanning a prostrate CLAUDIE.

PAULA
Remember what I tell me clients, Claudie. Any publicity is good publicity.

CLAUDIE
(Urgent whisper) Not when it's
supposed to be a secret. I
made the flippin front page.

PAULA sees that CAROL is trying to peek.

PAULA
You've probably soaked em long
enough now Carol. Your
fingertips look like crinkle
cut chips. Let me just sort
Claudie out and I'll be right
with you.

CLAUDIE
How are you gonna sort this?

PAULA
It's only the same as when
Danny Boy, dumped me. Me
picture was all over the
papers.

CLAUDIE
Yer famous footballer
boyfriend?

PAULA
You never met him did ya?

CLAUDIE
You never met George. I don't
think getting dumped is quite
the same, is it Paula?

PAULA
It hurt, and I had to put up
with me so called mates,
having a laugh at my expense.

CLAUDIE
Spose.

PAULA
Don't you remember what mam
used to say?

CLAUDIE
Was that when she wasn't
cursing me.

PAULA
If you don't believe in
yourself, no other bugger
will.... So what do you care
what anybody else thinks.

PAULA becomes aware that CAROL is nodding in agreement. She smiles.

PAULA (CONT'D)
See Carol agrees.

CLAUDIE
(Calmly) Thanks Paula. I feel
heaps better.

Suddenly LIAM crashes in the door with a pile of papers.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)
(Manic again) Quick Liam hide
em in the towel cupboard.

As LIAM stuffs the papers in the cupboard, one falls to the floor. PAULA picks it up.

PAULA
(Looking at the picture) Yer
nails look good though. (To
Carol) This is how nails
should look.

CLAUDIE grabs the paper from PAULA'S outstretched hand, before CAROL has chance to see it.

25

25

A furtive CLAUDIE appears from behind the back of a parked minibus. BILL DRAPER, the Probation Service Officer, is addressing a GROUP of six. CLAUDIE, MIRIAM, an eccentric looking lady, and four other dubious characters.

BILL
(To Claudie) As I explained,
we are out and about trying to
make North Oxley a cleaner
place to live. Claudie, your
job will be to empty the dog
litter bins in the surrounding
area. Miriam you're on
dredging. (To others) You lot
are with me.

CLAUDIE
Dog litter? I've heard of cat
litter but not dog.

MIRIAM
He means shit, sweetie.

BILL
You can't miss them they're
bright red in colour.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)
Yeah, I've seen them. There's
one at The Chase where I li..

er, I like to take my dog a walk.

BILL

That's the area I want you to cover. Twenty four bins in all.

CLAUDIE

(Horri fied) I can't do that area, no way someone will see me.

BILL

I'm sorry but that's your designated route.

CLAUDIE

Can't someone else do it.

MIRIAM

We've already got our jobs. You're the newbe and newbe's always start on the shit bins.

BILL

(Interrupting) Yes Mi ri am, thank you. I think Cl audie gets the picture. I'll be checking up on you, so no slacking. Oh, and while I think of it, all mobile phones must be left in the mini bus.

CLAUDIE

Why don't you chop off me hands and have done wi th it.

BILL

(Smiles) That's a little drastic.

BILL (CONT'D)

Mi ri am, you can collect them while I sort out Cl audie.

BILL furnishes CLAUDIE with a wheelie bin to push, rubber gloves and a litter picker. MIRIAM holds her hand out and CLAUDIE reluctantly hands over her phone. BILL gestures for the OTHERS to follow and they walk off leaving CLAUDIE staring after them.

LIAM is outside The Chase. He's obviously just had the Land Rover sprayed and is removing the masking tape. He collects it up and walks inside The Chase grounds to dump it.

CLAUDIE, woolly hat pulled down over her head, sporting a high-vis jacket, leggings and high heels, surreptitiously pushes her wheelie bin along the same road towards The Chase. She's acting very strange as she tries to hide from any oncoming vehicles or passers-by, in case she's recognised. She passes the Land Rover, but no Liam. She ventures towards The Chase gates.

27

27

CLAUDIE pops her head around the gate of the Chase and sees LIAM walking to the outhouse with the old masking tape etc. She puts her head down and endeavours to get closer to him, to attract his attention. She moves from tree to tree.

CLAUDIE

Pss. . . . Liam.

LIAM doesn't hear but STAN bounds over to her excitedly.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)

Get off me you sappy thing.
Pss, Liam.

LIAM finally looks over.

LIAM

(Smiling) Claudie! What yer doing?

CLAUDIE

(Almost hysterical) What the flaming heck does it look like. They want me to empty all the flippin dog pooh bins in the area, including The Chase.

LIAM laughs.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)

It 'int funny. I feel sick, an someone's bound to see me. I don't deserve this. I need you and Paula to help.

LIAM

Paula's working and I'm trying to get the Land Rover finished.

CLAUDIE

Tough, you both owe me. You're living with me rent free, it's the least you can do. (Urgent) There's no way I'm doing this on me own. Go and fetch Paula. You've got five minutes!

CLAUDIE watches LIAM disappear inside. Suddenly she hears a voice.

CLARE
Stan? Is that you, come here
boy.

CLAUDIE ducks as she sees CLARE approaching. STAN is still sniffing around her.

CLAUDIE
Clear off you daft mutt,
before she spots me.

CLAUDIE realises that STAN is interested in the contents of her wheelie bin. Pulling a face she puts her hand in and takes out a small bag and throws it into the bushes. STAN scampers after it. CLARE catches up with him.

CLARE
(Bending down to him) What are
you doing out here on your
own. You should be on a lead.

CLAUDIE can't help grimacing as CLARE allows STAN to lick her face.

28

28

Reception is busy. LIAM walks through to fetch PAULA. TOM is collecting some drugs from the Pharmacy. His phone rings. TOM checks the caller and his demeanour changes as he realises it's Fiona. CUT BETWEEN TWO LOCATIONS FOR THIS SCENE

TOM
(Cautiously) Hi Fiona, is
there a problem?

FIONA is in the bar.

FIONA
No, I just thought how nice it
would be to have dinner
together tonight. You, me and
Theo.

TOM
(Wary) Yeah, er I'm just not
certain what time I'll be
finished.

FIONA
(To the point) I'd hoped that
now you're aware of the little
situation we're in
together...you might want to
spend some more time with Theo
and me.

TOM'S aware he's got to play FIONA'S game for now - at least until he's fully formulated his plan.

TOM
I do, it's just....

FIONA
(Interrupting) And we should tell him the truth about you being his dad.

TOM
(Taken aback) What!!!
(thinking on his feet) Don't you er, think maybe he's a bit young to be taking this on board.

FIONA
(Resolute) I think it's time.

TOM
Can't we talk about this later?

FIONA
(Ignoring Tom's concerns) Say about seven then. Is that okay with you?

TOM
(Trapped) Er, okay, I'll try and work something out.

FIONA
(Adamant) Make sure you do Tom.

FIONA closes her phone. FRANK enters.

FRANK
I'm going in to town, do you need anything?

FIONA
(Pleased) That was Tom, he's having dinner with us tonight.

FRANK
Is he? It's good he's making an effort for Theo.

FIONA
It isn't it. I'm going to cook something really special.

FIONA (CONT'D)
Oh and dad, Tom says it's okay
if you give me his keys, so I
can make a start.

FIONA smiles in anticipation. We are back with TOM as he walks through reception looking perturbed. DEBORAH answers the phone as LIAM and PAULA rush past the desk in their haste to help CLAUDIE with the bins.

PAULA
(To Deborah) Summat's come up,
so I'll be gone about an hour.
I'll put a note on the door,
but if any punters are
waiting, can ya keep em happy
for me?

DEBORAH
The Chase Veterinary practice,
Deborah speaking.....Yes, well
you've certainly come to the
right place.

DEBORAH
(Into the phone) Sorry, could
you hold just a minute.

LIAM
Come on Si s.....

RICK passes through reception from consulting room two, carrying an x-ray

PAULA
(To Deborah) I owe you one
thanks, Debs.

LIAM
Will you get a move on.

DEBORAH
(Shouting after Paula) I'm not
here for your benefit young
lady, and the names
Deb..o..rah. (Back to her
call) I'm so sorry about
that.....

RICK calls to TOM.

RICK
Have you got a minute Tom, to
take a look at this?

TOM gestures for RICK to go through.

29

29

RICK sticks an x-ray on the light box.

RICK
It's an unmated turtle.

As TOM studies it we can see the shadow of eggs.

TOM
It's fascinating.

RICK
I've given her a calcium and oxytocin injection.

TOM
I've seen it before, unmated turtles, developing eggs. Owners don't realise that they need a nesting place otherwise the turtles tend to retain them. If she doesn't expel them you'll have to operate. What do you think?

TOM becomes aware that RICK isn't listening as RICK stands staring at the x-ray.

TOM (CONT'D)
Is everything alright Rick?

RICK
Sorry, miles away... so I'll have to operate.

RICK notices TOM smiling.

RICK (CONT'D)
You just said that... thanks mate.

RICK takes the x-ray down and is about to leave, he turns.

RICK (CONT'D)
(Sighs, needing someone to talk to) Actually, it's Clare. I'm trying to do the right thing by her but I'm being pulled from all directions.

TOM
(Sympathetic) I know the feeling.

RICK
It's just that now we can actually be together, I don't know... it's like she's not as interested anymore... I can't explain it.

TOM
Maybe she misses the secrecy, the excitement.

RICK
No, Clare's not like that. I
know it must be hard for
her... what with Harriet and
Deborah.

TOM
Deborah's never going to make
it easy for you. TOM.) YesDebbeughathoi at simple.

RICK
We both know that, but I RICK
thought when Deborah and I
separated it meant Clare and I
had a chance, it was our
time...

TOM
If only it were that simple.

RICK
(Irritated) Yes but it should

TOM (CONT'D)
(Nervously excited) They need me to examine a cub so I'm going to have to dart the mother.

RICK
Do you want me to come and assist?

DEBORAH
You could have taken the call, Richard if you had bothered to listen to me and completed the appropriate training. I told you, you should.....

RICK
(Incensed after her interruption) For Christ sake Deborah... it's actually none of your business anymore.

DEBORAH glares at RICK. TOM looks exhilarated.

TOM
I need to dig out the dart gun. Er, Deborah, can you organise cover for me?

DEBORAH
Of course. Sarah's out on a call but I'm sure Richard won't mind stepping in.

TOM rushes off leaving RICK looking irked. DEBORAH throws him a look - serves you right.

31

31

CLAUDIE is lurking in the grounds as PAULA and LIAM approach.

PAULA
(Producing her protective gear) I wouldn't clean shit for just anyone you know.

CLAUDIE
I'm not just anyone though, am I, and I've just almost got caught..... (Seeing Paula) What yer doing?

CLAUDIE and LIAM can only stare as PAULA dons veterinary gloves almost up to her shoulders and then produces a pair of surgical tongs.

PAULA
I was a brownie remember.

CLAUDIE
For all of a week.

PAULA
Yeah, but you never forget.

PAULA tentatively approaches the first bin.

PAULA (CONT'D)
Come on then, I haven't got
all day.

CLAUDIE
Don't just stand watching
Paula, Liam, go and empty the
bins down the road.

TOM
(Holding out the gun) If you really want to...I don't mind.

ANNA
(Appreciating his sacrifice)
No Tom, you go. You always wanted to be the big game vet.

TOM
Yeah there was a time we thought this'd be routine. We were going to change the world.

TOM and ANNA share a moment.

TOM (CONT'D)
I better go...

ANNA watches as TOM leaves.

33

33

DEBORAH is dealing with the TURTLE owner, MR RICHARDS.

DEBORAH
We're going to keep your turtle overnight, Mr Richards, so we'll have to sort your bill in the morning.

One of Paula's irate clients, MS PARTRIDGE is not pleased at being kept waiting. MARGARET and CLARE are obviously amused.

MS PARTRIDGE
I'm not used to being kept waiting. I've got another appointment at two o'clock.

DEBORAH
(Annoyed but the consummate professional) I can only apologise Ms Partridge. Would you just mind waiting a second.

MARGARET
(Whispers) With a name like that, she should be seeing a vet.

DEBORAH gives MR RICHARDS, a card.

DEBORAH
It's probably best to phone
first thing to check on the
best time to collect her.

MR RICHARDS
Thanks luv.

MR RICHARDS leaves.

DEBORAH
(To Ms Partridge) I'm sorry
but it's no good complaining
to me I work for The Chase
Veterinary practice. I've got

MARGARET

I don't know how your Rick put up with her for all those years.

CLARE

God knows. He's not really my Rick though is he?

MARGARET

I hope you're not letting her come between the pair of you. You're made for each other.

CLARE

(Not convinced) Do you think so?

MARGARET

What's up? You haven't fell out.

CLARE

Sort of. It's just....It's not like I thought it would be.

MARGARET

Nothin ever is lovey. You have to work at it.

CLARE

I know but it feels like I'm doing all the work. I'm trying to make allowances for Debs and Harriet and yet Rick's the one acting all possessive. It shouldn't be this hard.

MARGARET

Ahh....I wish I could wave a magic wand for you, make the wicked witch over there, disappear.

CLARE

So do I Mags, and maybe you could arrange a happy ever after, while you're at it.

MARGARET follows CLARE into the Link Room.

CLAUDIE makes her way back to the minibus, smiling with self-satisfaction, she pushes her wheelie bin towards BILL who is talking to MIRIAM.

CLAUDIE
That's me done for the day. If
you sign me sheet Bill, I'll
be off.

BILL
Sorry?

CLAUDIE
I've emptied all the bins and
in record time, I bet.

BILL
Good, we're just about to have
lunch and then you can partner
Miriam, dredging the river.

CLAUDIE
You what? But I've done me
stint.

BILL
You were given three hundred
hours, Claudie. That means you
have to work for the full
three hundred. You've got at
least another four ahead of
you today.

CLAUDIE
Flippin heck, what do you
want, blood!



BILL

Don't be like that I have high
hopes for you.

BILL smiles as he walks away.

MIRIAM

He's not that bad really.

CLAUDIE

I just can't believe what they
expect us to do.

MIRIAM

We are repaying our debt to CLAUDIE exp?our debt to

MIRIAM

CLAUDIE

Yeah, you're right. It's just
a pity the Judge didn't see it

ADRIAN
(Getting out of his car) Can,
I have a quick word Seb?

SEBASTIAN
Er, I was just going for a
ride.

ADRIAN
It won't take long. It's about
Sarah.

SEBASTIAN
I was afraid you were going to
say that, look old chap.....

ADRIAN
I know you feel responsible.

SEBASTIAN
Well I.....

Sebastian's phone indicates a text message. SEBASTIAN
gestures to ADRIAN, he better check it - anything to divert
ADRIAN'S questioning. However when he opens it he sees it's
from SARAH. We read - Ring me. We need to talk. S SEBASTIAN
snaps his phone shut.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
(Awkwardly) Er, sorry about
that.

ADRIAN
I was just trying to explain.
Don't beat yourself up about
it. It's all my fault. I
should have told her I knew.

SEBASTIAN
(Off the hook) Well, I did
think you would have discussed
it....so I

ADRIAN
(Interrupting) She didn't come
home the other night.

SEBASTIAN
(Feigning surprise) Maybe she
stayed at The Chase.

ADRIAN
No, she's not talking to Anna
either.

SEBASTIAN
But she's home now?

ADRIAN
Sort of but she's still
furious with me.

SEBASTIAN
Just give her some time and
she'll come round.

SEBASTIAN almost feels guilty as he sees how worried ADRIAN
looks. .

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
God you look awful. I suppose
I've got time for a quick
drink with a mate. (Calling to
Amy) Forget my horse, Amy,
I've changed my mind.

ADRIAN
Thanks Sebastian, I really
appreciate this.

Out on SEBASTIAN as he smiles coolly.

38

38

LIAM is revving the engine of the Land Rover. RON comes out
with his DOG who is now wearing a protective collar. LIAM
jumps out.

RON
So! How many miles has it
done?

LIAM
Ninety nine. What would you
say to three thousand?

RON
Phh! Forget it.

LIAM
Negotiable of course. She goes
like a dream. Just have a test
drive, you know you want to.
Even if you not interested
it'll save you a walk home.

LIAM gestures to the DOG.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Poor dog needs a lift by the
look of it.

RON
Go on then, but I'm not
promising owt.

LIAM punches the air in anticipation of a sale as RON puts his DOG inside the Land Rover.

39

39

CLAUDIE and MIRIAM are knee deep in the water.

CLAUDIE
Urgh, don't let it scratch me.

CLAUDIE and MIRIAM untangle the OTTER. MIRIAM picks it up.

MIRIAM
I think it's bleeding,
probably from a hook.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
Oh bless its little cotton
socks, we need to get it seen
by a vet, before it goes into
shock.

CLAUDIE
What shall I do, fetch Bill?

MIRIAM
He could be anywhere.

CLAUDIE
(Pointedly) If I had me
mobile.

MIRIAM
Go and flag down a car, get
someone to ring for you.

CLAUDIE walks off.

40

40

The Chase is noisy and busy with vet and beauty CLIENTS.
DEBORAH is manning the desk. MARGARET and CLARE stand around
obviously waiting. MATT rushes in.

MATT
(Excited) They're here.
(Loudly) Right everyone, can
we clear reception.

The CLIENTS stare bewildered.

DEBORAH
(To Matt) Honestly! (Taking
Charge) Sorry, what Matt means
is that we are carrying a wild
animal through and we need you
to vacate the reception area.

Nobody moves.

MATT

(Loudly) We're bringing a lion
cub through and your pets may

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)
Of all the flaming gin joints
in all the flaming...

42

42

CLARE, RICK and MARGARET, have come to see the CUB in its cage. TOM with SIMONE the handler and MATT stand back.

TOM
(Addressing them all) I've
given him a pain killing
injection and brought him back
to x-ray.

RICK
He doesn't appear to be
displaying any stressful
behaviour, despite being in a
cage.

TOM
I know, I'm surprised.

RICK
And his body posture seems non
aggressive.

MARGARET
(Proudly) Can you imagine if
George Williams could see a
lion cub in his very own
practice.

CLARE
I could take him home with me.

RICK looks sadly at CLARE.

RICK
Lucky lion cub...

CLARE half smiles at RICK. ANNA comes through.

ANNA
(Seeing the cub) Oh, he's
so... beautiful. What symptoms
is he displaying?

SIMONE
We noticed him limping since
early this morning.

RICK
Could the mother have stepped
on him?

SIMONE
That's a possibility.

ANNA
Well if you need to operate,
I'd be happy to assist.

CLARE
Have you worked with big cats
before, Anna?

ANNA
(Smiling) Tom and I did a
stint in our gap year, didn't
we.

TOM
Yes, many moons ago. Anyway,
we'll know more when we've x-
rayed him.

CLARE
Will he need to be sedated?

ANNA
Not if we can help it.

TOM
We don't want to if we can get
away with it.

TOM and ANNA smile. They're in their element. MATT is looking
on, obviously left out.

RICK
How did the darting go?

SIMONE
(Cutting in) Actually, he got
her in one. We were very
impressed.

TOM can't help but smile.

MARGARET
Check out Indiana Jones, here.

ANNA
I need to get going, I've had
a call out. Make sure you wait
for me Tom.

TOM smiles as ANNA rushes off. MATT looks tense.

SIMONE
Can I just warn everyone.
Please make sure you always
stand at a safe distance from
the cage.

MARGARET
I don't think we need telling
twice, as cuddly as he looks.

TOM
(Beaming) Right everybody,
let's get on with it and give
him some space.

They all troop out leaving TOM mesmerised by the CUB.

43

43

CLAUDIE joins MIRIAM.

MIRIAM
Did you get help?

CLAUDIE
(Despondent) Yeah, you could
say that.

MIRIAM
What's wrong?

CLAUDIE
I flag a car down and it's
only Frank, someone I know and
now he's gonna call Anna to
come out.

MIRIAM
Who's Anna?

CLAUDIE
(Rambling to herself) And then
Anna will tell Sarah and
before you know it, the whole
flaming lot of em will find
out.

MIRIAM
I see...you've been keeping it
a secret.

CLAUDIE
Well, I'm not going to
broadcast it, am I.

MIRIAM
I better disappear
then. (Gesturing to Claudie's
overalls) And I think you
should ditch the designer
gear.

FRANK
So what are we going to tell
her about the otter?

CLAUDIE
I'll think of summat.

FRANK smiles at CLAUDIE.

45

45

ANNA is examining the OTTER on the bank.

CLAUDIE
Yeah so me and Frank were
having a picnic and I looked
over and there it was, wasn't
it Frank?

FRANK nods. ANNA carefully checks the OTTER'S wound.

ANNA
It's got a slight shoulder
wound caused by a fishing
hook. It's not too serious but
it could have been, if it was
left much longer.

CLAUDIE
So it's gonna be alright?

ANNA
I think so. The problem is the
fishermen who ditch their
lines without thinking. Otters
are such playful animals and
love to roll around on the
grass. She's a real beauty

FRANK
It's a she?

ANNA
Yes, and she's very lucky.
It's just a superficial wound.
(Opening her case) I'll give
her a shot of long acting
penicillin, to be on the safe
side but the best thing we can
do is release her straight
back.

FRANK and CLAUDIE exchange a smile of relief. ANNA gives the
OTTER the injection.

CLAUDIE
(Sincerely) Thanks Anna, your
dad would be proud of you.

A moment between them both. FRANK look on proudly.

ANNA

I've got to get straight back
but it might be wise to just
keep an eye on her, make sure
she swims off okay.

CLAUDIE

Yeah, of course. You'll stay
won't you Frank?

FRANK

I'd be honoured.

As ANNA packs away she can't help but wonder what the hell's
going on between these two?

46

46

Huntsman RON, is driving the Land Rover through the grounds,
music playing. AMY is exercising one of William's horses,
watched by SEBASTIAN. They are sharing a joke. RON waves at
them both but as he turns the car, the steering fails. RON
desperately tries to regain control but the car careers
forward towards the HORSE. SEBASTIAN makes a grab for the
reins but it's too late as the HORSE rears. RON slams on the
breaks, and as the Land Rover screeches to a halt, inches
from the group, the HORSE bolts across the fields.

SEBASTIAN

Ron! What the hell are you
playing at!

RON

I'm sorry, the ruddy steering
wheel locked.

SEBASTIAN

Are you all right AMY?

AMY

Yes, but what about Nero?

SEBASTIAN runs for his car followed by RON and AMY.

47

47

FRANK and CLAUDIE sit by the river watching the OTTER as she
sniffs around.

CLAUDIE

Thanks for not saying anything
to Anna.

FRANK

That's okay.

CLAUDIE
Do you think she believed me?

FRANK
I don't know about that, but I
bet she's wondering about us
picnicking together.

CLAUDIE
(Smiles) I hadn't thought of
that.

FRANK smiles. A comfortable moment. The OTTER almost
approaches them. FRANK gestures to stay still.

FRANK
It's beautiful here.

CLAUDIE looks around her.

CLAUDIE
It is int it. So peaceful.

48

48

In contrast, NERO is galloping across a field followed by
Sebastian's car. He eventually comes to a halt in a clearing.
SEBASTIAN stops the car and he, RON and AMY get out and
tentatively approach NERO.

AMY
Okay boy, come on let's get
you back home.

SEBASTIAN
(Wincing at the sight of the
leg) He's injured, look at his
leg. Ron you take my car.

AMY and SEBASTIAN lead NERO out.

49

49

CLAUDIE and FRANK watch as the OTTER runs down to the water.

CLAUDIE
She doesn't seem in a hurry to
leave here.

FRANK
She's just like another young
lady I know.

CLAUDIE
Are you talking about me?

FRANK
I might be.

CLAUDIE

I admit it, I love living around here. It's the first proper home I've ever had. I just wish the Brontes, weren't so against me.

FRANK

You can't really blame them. The Chase has been their home for as long as I can remember.

CLAUDIE

They've never accepted that George could love someone like me.

FRANK

I don't think it's that.

CLAUDIE

If you'd have seen the state he was in, when we met. He'd forgotten how to smile. I made him laugh.

FRANK

Maybe that's the problem. You've forced Anna and Sarah to face doY0.18 Tc -t, we I .. Tc -0. 1 00 05 met. He'd

CLAUDIE

Anna's gentle like George.
(Smiles) George could make you
feel special. I couldn't
believe it when he asked me
out, I thought I wer' out of
his league.

FRANK

He always got what he went
after, did George. I suppose I
was jealous of him.
(Reflective) Ended up he had
everything, everything I
wanted.

CLAUDIE

(Surprised) George did?

FRANK

(Remembering) Yeah.

CLAUDIE

What do you mean?

FRANK

(Said too much) You know, a
good marriage, a family.

CLAUDIE

You had Shirley and Fiona.

FRANK

You're right and look at the
pig's ear I made of that.
(Looking around) Hey, where's
the otter gone?

CLAUDIE

She must have swam off, while
we were gassing.

FRANK

Come on then love, I'll buy
you a drink to celebrate her
freedom.

CLAUDIE

I should wait for Miriam. Nah,
they've probably packed up and
gone home by now.

FRANK pulls CLAUDIE up from the grass. A moment as they smile
at each other.

50

50

SIMONE and TOM are in with the CUB, looking at the x-ray. ANNA enters.

ANNA
What have you got?

TOM
I was just saying to Simone,
It's a dislocated hip. Look
the femoral head is positioned
above the acetabulum.

ANNA
(Studying the x-ray) I can't
see any fractures.

TOM
No, but we're still going to
have a job to get it back into
the right position.

ANNA
So you'll need to
anaesthetise.

SIMONE
That's such a shame.

TOM
Yes I know.

TOM (CONT'D)
Let me just have another look.

TOM gestures to SIMONE to hold the CUB steady.

TOM (CONT'D)
Simone, If you could hold him
while I have a feel of the
back leg and if I just pull it
slightly toward me.....did you
hear that?

ANNA
(Amazed) Has it gone back in?

TOM
(Smiling) It felt like it.
Hang on let me just feel....
It feels firmly seated, and
it's in the correct position.

ANNA
That's amazing.

SIMONE
(Impressed) Congratulations!

TOM
I'll need to take another x-ray.

ANNA
(Maybe manipulating herself) I think you've done it Tom.

ANNA smiles and stares intently at a very satisfied TOM, as she recognises the man she married. Their eyes meet and as if TOM is reading her mind he smiles back and they connect. Spontaneously they hug. A very comfortable moment that feels so right. ANNA shivers as she realises how easily she could forgive him, but it's just too late.

ANNA (CONT'D)
(Pulling away) Em, I better get back to it.

ANNA makes to leave and then turns.

ANNA (CONT'D)
You did a great job. You should be proud of yourself.

TOM smiles sadly.

TOM
I got lucky. I've done nothing to be proud of.

ANNA leaves.

51

51

LIAM is sitting with CLAUDIE. Counting his money.

LIAM
Two thousand five hundred smackaroonies and it's all thanks to you, Claudie.

CLAUDIE
I'm just glad you got rid of the bloomin thing.

LIAM
I've made over two grand for a few hours work (Shouting over to Frank) Get the drinks in Frank, I'm buying.

LIAM beams with pleasure.

PAULA
Do you want a picture?

DEBORAH
No, I'll be speaking to your
supervisor if it's not here
tomorrow.

DEBORAH (CONT'D)
(To Bill) I'm sorry about
that, can I help?

BILL
I'm looking for Claudie
Williams.

DEBORAH
Can I ask what's it in
connection with?

PAULA stops in her tracks at the mention of Claudie's name.

PAULA
I'm Claudie's sister. Can I
help?(To Deborah) Are you
still nosing?

DEBORAH
I never nose, as you put it.
I'm simply doing my job.

PAULA
(Irritated) Well I'm here now.

DEBORAH turns with an air of disdain.

BILL
I'm Bill, I'm her.....

PAULA
(Interrupting) Er, we can't
speak here, could you wait a
sec while I just show me
client upstairs.

BILL nods. PAULA gestures for LINSAY to follow. ANNA walks
through to reception.

DEBORAH
(Determined to nose) Oh, Anna
this gentleman is looking for
Claudie Williams (To Bill)
This is Anna, she's er, Mrs
Williams... step daughter.

PAULA
(One eye on Bill) If yer could
make your way upstairs.

BILL
(Thinking he's talking to
family) I was just concerned
about Claudie when she wasn't
at the river, after finding
the otter.

PAULA
You'll need to get undressed
and pop up on the table with
yer undies off. Just drape a
towel over yourself.

ANNA

It was me who actually treated
the otter but I left Claudie
at the river bank.

The phone rings but DEBORAH is too busy being nosey to answer
it until ANNA throw her a look. DEBORAH reluctantly picks up
the receiver.

BILL

I must have missed her, it's
just that we insist that
everyone on community service
reports back at the end of the
day, to be signed off.

DEBORAH

The Chase veterinary practice,
Deborah speaking.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(Obviously surprised) Do you?
I never realised...

ANNA tries to hide her surprise. PAULA stands frozen, she's
obviously overheard. DEBORAH calls across to ANNA

DEBORAH

Anna, I'm sorry to interrupt
but there's been an accident
at The Montgomery's with one of
their horses. They need an
emergency visit.

ANNA

(Irritated at the
interruption) Sarah's out on
call, try her mobile.

PAULA shoots BILL a look as she rushes past and out of the
door.

53a

53a

LINSAY is lying on the couch with just a towel covering her
modesty. She hears a noise outside the door, which is
slightly ajar.

LINSAY

(Craning her neck) Hello! Is
there anybody there?

54

54

LIAM is playing pool. FRANK hands CLAUDIE a drink just as
PAULA arrives.

PAULA

(Animated whisper) Can I have
a quick word, about you know
what.

FRANK tactfully moves away.

PAULA (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry Claudie. I don't
know how to tell you.

CLAUDIE
Tell me what?

PAULA
Bill Draper has been to The
Chase and he's told Anna yer
doing Community Service.

CLAUDIE
(Gutted) Flippin heck, that's
ruined everything. After all
me flamin hard work to keep it
secret.

PAULA
(Upset) It wasn't my fault?

CLAUDIE
I didn't say it wer.

PAULA
Yeah, but I should have
stopped him. I'm so sorry
Claudie, cause you've always
been there for me.

CLAUDIE
(Surprised) It's okay, we'll
sort summat out.

PAULA
Same as you sorted those
bullies out at Brownies, cause
we couldn't afford the
uniform.

CLAUDIE
(Gently) What's brought this
on Paula?

PAULA
I just wanted to tell you how
grateful I am, for everything
you've done for me. The
business, everything.

CLAUDIE
Ahh, I'm proud of you Paula.
You're the one with the
certificates. Nobody does a
back, sack and crack, like you.

A tender moment and then PAULA suddenly jumps up.

PAULA
Shit...e! I've only gone and
left a client lying on the
table with no undies on.

CLAUDIE can only smile as PAULA rushes off. FRANK joins
CLAUDIE.

FRANK
Is she okay?

CLAUDIE
Anna has found out about me
Community Service, she'll tell
Sarah. What am I gonna do?
They are gonna be unbearable
to live with.

FRANK
It was bound to come out. Just
come clean, that's all you can
do. They'll respect you for
it.

CLAUDIE
I can't see that somehow. I
can just imagine the snide
comments.

FRANK
You might be surprised.
They're not ogres. Just front
up to them, and make like you
don't know, they know.

CLAUDIE smiles warmly at FRANK.

CLAUDIE
Thanks Frank.

FRANK

SARAH
(Curt) Hi, Amy.

SEBASTIAN
(Guarded) Sarah, I'm so glad you came out. I haven't been able to contact William.

SARAH
Let's see what we've got here then, Amy.

SARAH examines NERO'S leg.

SARAH (CONT'D)
It's nasty. It looks like he has lacerated the superficial tendon flexor tendon. I'll have to sedate him. How did it happen Amy?

AMY looks questioningly at SEBASTIAN.

SEBASTIAN
Ron lost control of his Land Rover and Nero bolted.

SARAH
(To Amy) Can you hold him for me, while I prepare the syringe.

Out on SEBASTIAN feeling the cold shoulder.

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TOM, ANNA and SIMONE are looking at another x-ray. The LION CUB is back in its cage.

TOM
It looks as if it's gone back perfectly. (To Anna) do you think I should use an ehmer sling?

ANNA
On a domestic animal I'd say yes, but this is very different. If it stays back in position there should be no need to immobilise.

TOM
Lets see how he fares overnight.

ANNA
(Excited) So we're keeping him here?

TOM
Yes, we should know by the morning and we can't really afford to put the mother through the trauma of darting her again.

Out on TOM and ANNA - a team.

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NERO has been sedated. SARAH has applied a large support bandage.

SARAH
(Professional) All I can do is stem the bleed and keep the injury stable. I'd like to refer him to an equine surgery hospital, I was thinking maybe Liverpool.

SEBASTIAN
I suppose racing is going to be out of the question with an injury like this?

SARAH
I can't say. We're not going to know until after surgery but it looks unlikely.

AMY
I'm so sorry Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN
It's not your fault Amy. Why don't you take a break, you must be done in after all the excitement. I'll let you know when I get in touch with William.

AMY
Thank you.

AMY leaves.

SEBASTIAN
I get the feeling you're ignoring me?

SARAH

Me ignoring you! Why haven't you returned my calls?

SEBASTIAN

I meant to but I've been really confused since you left the other morning and then Adrian came to see me earlier.

SARAH

You didn't say anything, did you?

SEBASTIAN

Of course not. Why would I do that?

SARAH

Just for the record Sebastian, I don't feel particularly proud of myself, but it happened and we can't ignore it.

SEBASTIAN

But he's my best friend. I think we should cool it.

SARAH

Sorry?

SEBASTIAN

The other night was wonderful, don't get me wrong. You're a beautiful woman Sarah and I was honoured to be there for you, but I can't do that to Adrian, I just can't.

SARAH

(Incredulous) You can't do that to Adrian? I'm sorry but I think you've got this completely wrong.

SEBASTIAN

Sarah, come on. We're both as guilty as hell. I think we should just try and forget about it.

SARAH

Yes, absolutely. I couldn't agree with you more.

SEBASTIAN

Really?

SARAH

So I'll er....arrange for the horse to be transported and then I'll get out of your hair.

SEBASTIAN

Don't be like that Sarah.

SARAH

My bill will be in the post.

SARAH strides off, hurt to the quick.

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ANNA is in the kitchen preparing vegetables. DAI SY is drawing a picture of a lion, crayons strewn across the table.

ANNA

(Looking over Daisy's shoulder) That's very good. You're going to have to clear away soon, for tea.

DAI SY

I've drawn a female lion, because they do all the hunting don't they?

ANNA

Yes, they do.

DAI SY

What do the male lions do?

ANNA

(Smiling) That's a very good question Daisy.

SARAH bursts in obviously upset. DAI SY smiles and holds up her picture.

DAI SY

Auntie Sarah, look what I've drawn.

SARAH

(Not interested) Very nice Daisy, can you give me a minute, I need to speak to your mum.

DAI SY looks disappointed.

ANNA
(Gently) Go and show Luca and
Jake, I'm sure they'll like
your picture.

DAISY shoots SARAH a disapproving look, and runs off.

SARAH
(Realising) I'm sorry. . . .

ANNA
(Taken aback) Don't take it
out on the children.

SARAH visibly backs down.

ANNA (CONT'D)
How long are you going to
punish me for? Adrian and I
were only doing what we
thought was right.

SARAH
I know, but it doesn't help

ANNA
Adrian phoned me.

SARAH
(Can't help herself) Really,
plotting again?

ANNA
He was concerned. He still
wants to know where you stayed
the other night.

SARAH
What did you tell him?

ANNA
The truth, I didn't know.

SARAH
You could have covered for me.

ANNA
Why, where were you?

SARAH
It's none of your business.

ANNA
Please don't be like this with
me Sarah, can't we just put it
behind us.

SARAH
It's easy for you.

An awkward silence as ANNA clears away the vegetable peelings. Both girls want to forgive each other but can't find the right words.

ANNA
(Breaking the silence) I think
Claudie's doing Community
Service.

SARAH
(Surprised) Since when?

ANNA
I don't know, but her
probation officer came looking
for her today

SARAH
Oh my God. (Can't help
laughing) That's the best
thing I've heard all day.

ANNA
Can you imagine her, picking
litter in those heels.

SARAH
I would love to be a fly on
the wall.

ANNA
(Feels like old times) I'm
sorry, Sarah... I promise I
will never betray your trust
again.

SARAH
(Miserable) I felt so alone.

ANNA
Ohh, come here.

ANNA holds her arms out. The girls hug.

SARAH
(Muffled) I've done something
really stupid Anna.

Before ANNA can respond they are interrupted by CLAUDIE entering.

CLAUDIE
I'm glad you're both here
I need to tell you summat.

SARAH

Really.

CLAUDIE

(Awkwardly) You know all about the mix up with the pensions.

SARAH

(On the nose) You mean the ones you fraudulently cashed.

CLAUDIE

(Stung) Yeah, well I was in court last week and was given community service. I've been too embarrassed to tell ya.

SARAH

So you obviously managed to con the Judge into letting you go free.

CLAUDIE

Paying it all back went in my favour.

SARAH

You mean dad, paying it back with the money you got from re-mortgaging this house.

CLAUDIE

(Upset) Please... I'm trying to explain to you.

ANNA dries her hands and sits next to CLAUDIE.

ANNA

Lets give her a chance Sarah.
(Pointedly) Everyone deserves a chance.

CLAUDIE

Anyhow, I've been given three hundred hours community service.

SARAH

Quite right too.

CLAUDIE

You really don't like me, do you Sarah?

SARAH

At last! The penny drops.

ANNA

Sarah. . . please.

CLAUDIE

What have I ever done to you,
except make your dad happy.

SARAH can only tut.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)

The sad thing is, I was
foolish enough to think
eventually we could be
friends. We've all lost
George, sorry your dad and we
all loved him, didn't we. You
do believe I loved him don't
ya?

An awkward silence.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)

Well think what you want. I
did, I do. He was the kindest
most generous man I ever met.
And when he used to talk about
you two, his face would light
up, full of pride and I
couldn't wait to meet his
wonderful girls.

SARAH and ANNA exchange uncomfortable looks.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)

I knew you'd think I was too
young for him, but he said you
wouldn't care how old I was,
as long as I made him happy.

ANNA

(Agreeing) You did make him
happy.

CLAUDIE

Yes I did, but you both made
it perfectly obvious that you
didn't think I was good enough
for yer dad.

ANNA

I'm sorry Claudi e

CLAUDIE

He was a gentleman.

SARAH

Yes, he was.

CLAUDIE

So how do you think he'd feel about all the bickering? He'd want us to help each other get over losing him. And I'm finding it really hard at times. Especially now. He was with me you know.

ANNA

(Confused) What do you mean?

CLAUDIE

In the courtroom. There I was, standing in front of a stuck up Judge who didn't know me from Adam, deciding whether I deserved another chance or not. But yer dad came through for me.

ANNA

(Ashamed) Why didn't you tell us you were in court?

CLAUDIE

So you could have come and had a good gloat?

ANNA

No, we would have liked to have been there to support you.

CLAUDIE

Are you being serious, can you put your hand on your heart and say that?

SARAH

(Still holding back) We're all going through it one way and another.

CLAUDIE

I know you needed him when you lost the baby. I just wish that maybe I could have helped a bit more....

SARAH

(Too painful) That's all dealt with now.

ANNA stares at SARAH, realising this is far from the truth.

ANNA

Maybe if we made more of an
effort to pull together.

CLAUDIE

Yer dad would like that.

SARAH

I suppose we could try.

WILLIAM
So sound that the steering
column sheared.

CLAUDIE
Liam! I told you that flaming
car was cursed.

WILLIAM
(Furious) Can you actually
comprehend what you have done?

LIAM
I sold that motor in good
faith.

WILLIAM
Faith being the operative
word. What did you do, cross
your fingers and pray?

LIAM
What do yer want me to do?

WILLIAM
You could reimburse Ron for a
start.

LIAM
No problem.

LIAM takes a wad of notes from his pocket and thrusts it at
WILLIAM.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Here. (To Claudie) Claudie,
I've spent fifty, can you lend
me?

CLAUDIE begrudgingly takes the money from her purse.

WILLIAM
That's something I suppose.

LIAM
It was an accident.

WILLIAM
I'm sorry but that's no
excuse. I have no option, but
to notify the police and I'll
be pressing charges.

LIAM turns to CLAUDIE.

LIAM
(Terrified) The police?

WILLIAM
I don't think you realise how
expensive an animal like that
is.

CLAUDIE
How about Twenty thousand.

WILLIAM
Oh please. . . .

SARAH
(Disdain) And the rest.

CLAUDIE (CONT'D)
Fifty then.

ANNA
You can't afford that.

SARAH
Where would you get fifty
thousand pounds from?

WILLIAM
I'm sorry Claudie but I'm not
really prepared to do business
like this. Come to me with a
sensible offer and I'll think
about it.

WILLIAM smiles sadly at ANNA and SARAH and takes his leave.

LIAM
Claudie, what we gonna do?
I'll be back inside if he
calls the police.

CLAUDIE runs after WILLIAM.

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CLAUDIE catches up with WILLIAM at reception. LIAM follows
with the others.

CLAUDIE
I'll give you one hundred
thousand pounds cash, if you
promise not to go to the
police.

WILLIAM
Where are you going to get
that kind of money from?

CLAUDIE
(Trying to 3(urin .9D 1 0 04wf2025 -0.189 1 144.9' 0 7d' dEl m

LIAM
(Shocked) I'm so sorry
Claudie, that's almost half
your insurance money.

SARAH
What's this another secret
you've been keeping from us?

CLAUDIE turns on SARAH.

CLAUDIE
You knew about it - it's yer
dad's insurance money. It's
finally come through and if I
can help my little brother
then I'm glad, cause at least
I know what family means,
unlike some I can mention. (To
Liam) Don't worry Liam, I
won't miss it, it was blood
money anyway.

CLAUDIE, head held high, pushes her way past a surprised ANNA
and SARAH.

60

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The kennel is bathed in a warm glow as TOM, DAISY, LUCA and
JAKE, crouch down in front of the lion cub's cage. ANNA joins
them.

JAKE
He's just like Simba.

DAISY
No, this is a real lion cub.

JAKE
So is Simba, tell her daddy.

LUCA
Is he vicious?

TOM
He's a wild animal so he has
to be able to protect himself.

TOM looks up and spots ANNA. She smiles warmly at him. In the
background we notice MATT is standing watching this cosy
scene.

LUCA
Where was he born?

TOM
He was born in a zoo, but
Lions originate from Africa.

DAISY
Our teacher said you shouldn't
keep animals in a zoo, it's
cruel.

TOM
In a perfect world all animals
would roam free but I'm afraid
life's not like that.

ANNA intervenes.

ANNA
Come on you lot, it's late.
Time for bed.

The children protest. MATT looks sad as he turns and leaves.

TOM
Shh!!! Do what you're told and
if you're good you can see him
tomorrow before school.

JAKE
I'm going to sleep straight
away, so morning comes
quicker.

TOM smiles as ANNA and the children creep out quietly.

FIONA sits waiting in Tom's room. The table is set for three.
Three home made place mats stand, one by each plate. They
read Mummy, Theo and Daddy. THEO lies asleep on the settee.
FIONA looks at her phone again.

FIONA (CONT'D)
(Shooting up smiling, but then disappointed) Oh! Hi.....

RICK
Sorry, Tom didn't say.....

FIONA
(Abruptly) He wanted to have dinner with us. Have you seen him?

RICK
(Cautiously as he surveys the table set for three) I er, think he's still working.

FIONA
Of course he is, an emergency I expect.

RICK
Er, yes. I'll er make myself scarce.

RICK almost backs out as FIONA stands looking agitated.

62

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TOM crouches checking on the CUB, listening to Fiona's message on his mobile.

FIONA VO
Theo and I are waiting for you. (Menacingly) Where the hell are you???

TOM is almost caught out as ANNA returns. He pockets his

For a moment ANNA melts and then she stands awkwardly.

ANNA
Don't Tom....I better get
back to the children.

TOM
(Tentatively) I had a phone
call tonight, from the zoo.
They wanted to know if I was
interested in a job.

ANNA
(Surprised) At the Zoo?

TOM
No, Botswana. Cross-border
conservation. It's a fantastic
opportunity.

ANNA
So you've said yes?

TOM
I said I'd think about it.

ANNA
Right.

TOM
If I take the job, they want
me to start next month.

ANNA
For how long?

TOM
It's a years contract.

ANNA
(Sarcastic) Wonderful!

TOM
I don't think you understand
what I'm trying to say.

ANNA
I understand all right. You've
got some romantic notion in
your head and you're running
off to fulfil it.

TOM
(Grabs Anna) I'm not running
off. I'm asking you to come
with me, Anna.

TOM (CONT'D)
(Urgent) We could get away
from here, make a fresh start.
You saw the children tonight,
they'd love it.

ANNA
Are you serious?

TOM
I've never been more serious
in my life.

ANNA
(Anna stares at him, tears
trickling down her face) Why
are you doing this Tom?

TOM
(Surprised) Doing what?

ANNA
Making me choose.

TOM
Choose what? Between me and
the children, or some kid who
doesn't know if he wants to be
a nurse or a pop star... E6 728. a-0.16 Tchus16 Tchus16/e0uch