

The Guiding Light

By

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INT. CAR - NIGHT

MICHAEL, a young married man at 25, is driving his car back from work. Rain beats off the windshield and the wipers attack it. Michael is a groundsman for the council. The street lights pave the way for him. It's been a long day and he can't wait to see his wife. He's clearly tired and isn't listening to the radio.

He stops at traffic lights and the red lights his face up. He continues to stare ahead of him until the green light fills the car up.

FADE TO WHITE

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

JESSICA, 25 and wife of Michael is getting the table ready for dinner.

We hear the front door open and then close. Heavy footsteps approach the room. Michael stands in the doorway and lets out a sigh of relief that the day is over.

JESSICA

Get caught?

MICHAEL

Only for a few moments then we ran for cover at a nearby bus stop when it got too heavy.

JESSICA

Well I heard on the weather that tomorrow should brighten up.

Michael kicks his boots off and puts his coat on the back of a chair. He kisses Jessica on the cheek and sits down. She exits the room to grab the plates.

MICHAEL

I hope so, we barely got anywhere today.

Jessica walks in with dinner and sets it down on the table

JESSICA

Salt?

MICHAEL

Please.

She goes out to get some and comes back with it.

(CONTINUED)

They sit down and begin eating.

JESSICA

Oh, the plumber called today and said he'll come by Monday to fix the sink.

MICHAEL

Why what's up with it?

JESSICA

Do you not remember? I thought I mentioned it Thursday.

Michael can't think of anything to say so instead he just nods at her.

They both carry on eating as we slowly pull away and the screen gets reduced to a small square. The sound gets fainter. It fades into a television screen.

FADE TO: A TELEVISION

INT. LIVING ROOM - MUCH LATER

There's a film playing on the television and we pull out to see Michael and Jessica now laying with each other on the sofa watching the film.

They don't look like they're paying much attention to the film and are visibly tired.

JESSICA

I'm going up. You can stay and watch the rest.

MICHAEL

No I'll come too. I wasn't really paying attention to it.

They get up and Jessica goes to pull the curtains shut but notices something outside.

JESSICA

My God, what happened to the car?

MICHAEL

Oh it's completely my fault. I didn't see the...other driver pulling...out and he clipped me. He was fine with there wasn't any hassle.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

You're not a very good liar Michael
but I love you anyway.

She fluffs the cushions up.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Just in future please be more
careful.

She puts her hand on his face and leaves the room.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Jessica is rubbing hand moisturizer on herself and then brushes her hair in the mirror. Michael walks past her and gets into bed. She finishes up then joins him.

He lifts his arm up and she rests her head on his chest.

Michael turns the light out next to him and they both go to sleep.

LATER

Jessica turns over and raises her head. Michael's gone. She feels around for him and then sits up to see him standing next to the window facing outside. It's bright outside. She calls out to him but he doesn't do anything. Her dialogue is inaudible. She calls him again and he slowly turns to the door and walks out.

Jessica gets out of bed slowly and follows him to the bathroom. Michael leans over the bath and pukes out a lot of black fluid. The white bath has turned a deep black colour. Jessica tries to stop him. There's a noise of static that comes into the room and Jessica covers her ears.

She wakes up to see that it's still night and that Michael is laying next to her. She then calms and hopes she didn't disturb him. She turns over and goes back to sleep. We then see Michael is staring outside the window from the bed. He's dead.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Jessica is alone in bed. She wakes up and calls out to Michael. Nothing. She then gets up and walks to the landing to see his florescent jacket is still hanging up.

She calls out to him again. A little worried now.

MICHAEL

I'm outside.

Relief passes through her body and she comes downstairs in her dressing gown.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Michael is sitting with his butt on the inside and his legs outside and the patio doors. He's smoking a cigarette and has a cup of coffee next to him.

He doesn't turn around but he knows she's there.

MICHAEL

I got up early. I had a bad night.

JESSICA

It must've been something in the dinner. What did you dream?

Michael tries to think of something to say

MICHAEL

It wasn't anything that I dreamt of, I just kept waking up. The night went by really quick.

JESSICA

Oh. I thought you had a nightmare like me. It was surreal. You kept vomiting black slime and you weren't listening to me then I woke up. After that it was nothing.

Michael turned to her.

MICHAEL

After dreams like that you need your head examined.

Jessica playfully slaps his shoulder and walks towards the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Goof. Do you want some breakfast?

MICHAEL

I can't hon. Richard is coming to pick me up any minute.

JESSICA

That's okay. Do you know what time you'll be back? It's cause I'm meeting with Kim later and we're going shopping.

MICHAEL

I don't. I'll take a key anyway. Love you bye.

She watches him walk down to the front door, stop, then come back for his florescent jacket. He walks back up to her and kisses her cheek.

She smiles. We hear the door shut.

JESSICA

Love you too.

EXT. MUDDY/STONY/DIRT-TRACK - DAY

Michael is standing holding out a blueprint. RICHARD, his best friend/co-worker joins him.

RICHARD

What's the plan?

MICHAEL

Well we're clear to try out sections six to eight but we'd have to wait for the ninth.

RICHARD

Any idea how deep the sixth is?

Michael folds the blueprint up and puts it in his back pocket.

MICHAEL

Not a clue.

Richard jabs a pitchfork into the ground.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

No it's too hard to get through,
we're gonna need the drill.

MICHAEL

From here till about twenty feet
over there it'll be hard. Are we on
the right part?

Richard shrugs and they both burst into laughter.

RICHARD

I'll get Frank on the phone.

MICHAEL

Do you think this is what our lives
are destined for?

RICHARD

Oh boy, here we go.

MICHAEL

No I was just saying, what's your
ideal job?

RICHARD

In college I had a passion for
writing stories, short ones. Maybe
advance on that and write a full
novel. What about you?

MICHAEL

Break into the magic industry.
Headline Vegas. I always loved
doing tricks. The old disappearing
coin, the card tricks, classic.

RICHARD

Well let me know when you've
mastered the disappearing act and
then get us out of this job.

Richard gets his phone out and walks away from the site.

Michael takes a cigarette out and goes to light it. Richard
intervenes.

RICHARD

Hey put that out. Frank would kill
you if he made a surprise visit.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Right, sorry.

RICHARD

It's not just your ass on the line here is it. He fires you, I go too.

MICHAEL

Is that a bad thing?

Richard leans back on the wall and so does Michael. He takes his gloves off.

RICHARD

You sound like you have some things on your mind, Mike. What's up?

MICHAEL

For a few months now, I just haven't be feeling right.

RICHARD

Then go and see your doctor.

MICHAEL

Doctor. No it's nothing that serious.

RICHARD

Then what is it?

MICHAEL

It. It's. It's not important, man. I've just got to ignore it as best as I can and get on with my life the best I can.

RICHARD

Is it Jess?

MICHAEL

No. She doesn't know that there's anything wrong with me.

RICHARD

Would you tell her if there was?

Michael pauses for a moment.

MICHAEL

It depends on how serious it gets.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD
You'll be fine.

MICHAEL
Can we just change the subject?
Just the thought of it is making me
feel lightheaded.

RICHARD
Take some water. If you didn't
bring any, I'll grab some for you.

MICHAEL
I'll be okay for now.

RICHARD
How about later we get some beers?
I'm buying.

MICHAEL
Deal.

They get their gear ready and begin work again.

Music fills the scene and drowns out the sound of the work.

INT. CAR - LATER

Richard and Michael are sitting in the front of the car. The light is on. Richard is in the driver's seat and Michael is drinking from a can. He looks at his house. All of the lights are off.

MICHAEL
It doesn't look like she's in.

Richard hands him his phone.

MICHAEL
Ah it's okay, she's probably not
back yet.

He drinks some more.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
We're lucky guys aren't we. Best
friends since school, married two
great girls, Can life get better?

RICHARD
You've changed your tone since this
morning. Feeling better?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Yeah. I'll be alright.

RICHARD

I'll be alright if I win that
lottery tonight. Rollover. 47 mill.

MICHAEL

Fuck. What would you do with that
kind of money? I wouldn't know what
to do with 10 million but 47?

RICHARD

I know.

Jessica turns the hallway light on and opens the front door.
She runs down the driveway towards the car.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

And here comes Mrs Michael.

Michael rolls down his window.

JESSICA

I was bored waiting for you two to
come in so I've come to get you.

They get out the car and walk to the house.

INT. HALLWAY

Michael walks through to the living room and Jessica picks a
few items up by the stairs.

JESSICA

Mike, dinner will be ready shortly.

MICHAEL

(OFF SCREEN)

Okay.

JESSICA

These are for you.

She hands Richard the items.

RICHARD

Okay what have we got here?

JESSICA

Kim left her coat here and there's
also a cookbook I was telling her
about that's in there too.

(CONTINUED)

We hear a thud from the living room.

RICHARD

Right okay then thanks for those.
Take care. See you tomorrow Mike.

Silence.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Is he deaf? I said I'll see you
tomorrow Mike.

Silence.

Jessica turns to go to the living room and Richard follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM

They enter the room and see that Michael is face down on the floor.

JESSICA

Oh my God, Michael.

She kneels down and shakes him. Richard kneels down and turns him over. He gets a cushion for his head.

RICHARD

Call for an ambulance.

Jessica rushes out of the room for the phone. Richard feels Michael's neck for a pulse.

RICHARD

Jessica, he's dead.

Jessica comes into the room with the phone slowly and confused.

JESSICA

He's dead?

RICHARD

I can't find a pulse on him, he's
not breathing.

Jessica tries to see him but Richard stops her so she can calm down.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Whoa just calm down.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA
I WANT TO SEE HIM!

She pushes him aside and looks at Michael. Dead. Lying there motionless.

She holds back the tears and turns back to Richard.

JESSICA
He's not dead, he can't be dead.
Check again.

RICHARD
Jessica, give me the phone and go
and sit down. I'll make the call.

JESSICA
Just check again.

RICHARD
He's gone. I don't know how but
he's gone.

Jessica wipes her eyes and kneels down to him as Richard dials. She feels around for a pulse too but can't find one.

She rests her head on his chest and curls up next to him. Crying.

RICHARD
(off screen)
Hi there I need an ambulance.

As she lays next to him a hand raises and strokes her hair. She lets the hand stroke her for a moment and then realizes whose hand it was. Michael. He's not dead. Her head slowly raises as he begins breathing again.

She slowly sits up in shock and looks at him.

Michael's eyes are locked onto hers. She backs away from him.

JESSICA
Richard!

Richard enters on the phone and sees Jessica propped up by the couch. Scared. Michael looks up to him.

RICHARD
Good God.

He nearly drops the phone.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

(on phone)

I'm sorry I...I can't explain right now. I have to go. Everything's alright now. You have a good evening.

He hangs the phone up and throws it on the couch. Jessica stands up and goes next to Richard.

Michael slowly sits up and props himself up with his arms.

MICHAEL

What happened?

RICHARD

You died.

Michael stands up and walks towards Jessica who backs off.

MICHAEL

Honey, it's me.

RICHARD

I felt for your pulse.

JESSICA

I felt for it too.

MICHAEL

But I'm here now.

RICHARD

I'm going to take you down to the hospital.

MICHAEL

No. That's not necessary.

RICHARD

For God's sake, Mike you were dead a minute ago. Now, unless this was one of your magic tricks you said about earlier I suggest you go to the hospital.

MICHAEL

It's not like that.

He looks at Jessica, who isn't sure if she knows him anymore.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I guess I've got some explaining to do.

He puts his hand on Jessica's shoulder and she looks uncomfortable.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's still the same old me.

Slowly she comes from next to Richard and puts her arm around Michael. They hug each other but neither one of them look like they're enjoying it.

Jessica breaks free.

JESSICA

I have to see to dinner.

She pushes past them and out of the door. We hear the kitchen door close.

Michael goes after her but Richard stops him.

RICHARD

Just give her time. She's had a hell of a shock.

Michael nods in agreement and then backs away.

Richard gets his belongings.

RICHARD

I'm going to head on home now. Let her come to you. Just keep your distance and she'll come to you when she's ready. I'll see you tomorrow.

Richard leaves and Michael stands along in the living room.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MUCH LATER

A clock shows us that it's 9:00pm. Michael has his back on the radiator. He looks up at the clock and then gets up and goes out of the living room.

INT. KITCHEN

He opens the door and sees Jessica sitting on the kitchen stool and a cup of coffee in her hand. She is looking blankly into space.

Michael slowly closes the door behind him and walks to her. He leans over into the space next to her.

She doesn't move.

MICHAEL

Hey.

Jessica slowly snaps out of it and manages a low smile.

JESSICA

Hi.

Michael's relieved that she hadn't entirely blanked him out.

He goes round and looks in the oven. Then looks in the bag next to the oven. She'd thrown it away.

MICHAEL

I really screwed up didn't I?

JESSICA

No. I just...I just overcooked it.

MICHAEL

So are we okay?

He leans in for a kiss but she leans away.

JESSICA

What happened? You knew something happened.

Michael leans on the work top and exhales.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Nobody can stop their heart like that only to come back moments later. What happened?

MICHAEL

I can't tell you.

Jessica throws her arms up in disbelief.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

In five years of knowing me THAT has never happened. You've never kept secrets from me so don't start now.

MICHAEL

It's not that easy Jess.

JESSICA

Michael. I lost you tonight.

She gets up and walks to him.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You have no idea, no idea, how relieved I am that I've got you back. That doesn't happen to everybody. I just want you to tell me what happened.

MICHAEL

Can I just ask how you know I had any knowledge that that would happen?

JESSICA

You refused to see a doctor. Pretty adamantly too. What are you hiding?

Michael brushes his hands through his hair and paces back and forth across the kitchen.

MICHAEL

You got me.

JESSICA

So there is something. Are you ill? What is it?

MICHAEL

It's not easy to tell you because...well I haven't told anybody. Not Richard, not my boss, any of my ex's. The only person who did know was my adoptive Mother.

Jessica takes him by the hand.

JESSICA

Tell me. I need to know so I can help you.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

You can't. It's something that only I can take care of.

JESSICA

Don't say that.

MICHAEL

But it's the truth.

JESSICA

I don't want the truth to make me feel useless to you.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. There's nothing anybody can do about it.

Jessica leans on the worktop next to Michael and slides down to the floor. Michael sits next to her.

There's a long pause. They don't look at each other. Michael goes to talk but stops. Then he manages his words.

MICHAEL

It's a rare disease called Lavery Syndrome.

Jessica turns to Michael.

MICHAEL

Had it since I was three. It's not hereditary nor is it contagious.

JESSICA

What does it do?

MICHAEL

It stops my life at random times. Sometimes for two minutes, sometimes two hours, and then maybe even longer. But I always come back.

JESSICA

How many cases are there?

MICHAEL

It's just me and some guy in Southurst. That's how rare it is. Still two out of eight billion isn't bad.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Please don't joke. Was earlier the first time it's happened since we've known each other?

Michael looks into her eyes, shyly, then shakes his head slowly.

Jessica starts to panic.

JESSICA

When? At work? At our wedding? Oh my God when you're driving?

Something clicks with her.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

That's why there's a dent in the car isn't it. You switched off when you were driving?

Michael nods.

Jessica stands up and holds her head. She's trying to piece the situation together.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I need some water.

Michael rushes to her aid with a glass of water.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. I didn't plan for any of this.

JESSICA

It's not your fault. I know that. I'm just trying to figure out what to do.

MICHAEL

We'll just carry on as normal -

JESSICA

No. No we can't.

MICHAEL

Of course we can. Like it never happened.

JESSICA

This is one of those life altering moments Michael. It's a big thing.

MICHAEL

Yes and it's something I've dealt with my whole life. By myself. I can handle it.

JESSICA

But that was just you. You're accounting for me now. We're married, we're a team.

She starts to get hysterical and begins to choke on her words with tears.

He hugs her and they both embrace in each others arms. Their voices fade out and become inaudible.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

They're both on the couch. The TV isn't on. They're staring, deep in thought. Michael's arm is around Jessica's shoulder and he is twirling her hair.

After a while.

JESSICA

So. How was work?

Michael begins to smile as does Jessica.

MICHAEL

Ah, you know the usual. Digging, reading maps, sitting on my ass and reflecting on life with Rick. How was yours?

JESSICA

My day was fun. Met with Kim, had coffee, popped to work to fax some files, did a bit of shopping then came home.

MICHAEL

Ain't life grand.

Jessica laughs and turns to him.

JESSICA

When I was sitting in the kitchen I had a question go through my head. Then when you told me what the problem was, I've never wanted to ask a question more than this one.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Fire away.

JESSICA

What's it like? Dying.

Michael thinks for a moment.

MICHAEL

It's like this.

He begins tickling her and she bursts into laughter. She gets his to stop eventually.

JESSICA

Seriously.

MICHAEL

Like going to sleep. You're awake one minute and then the next... you're not. You don't know it's happened but I guess I'm lucky because I get to wake back up to you.

JESSICA

What if one day...

MICHAEL

I will wake up. You just have to be patient.

Jessica pulls him in for a hug.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Jessica turns over to find Michael sitting up in bed looking outside.

JESSICA

Morning.

MICHAEL

Hello.

JESSICA

Good, so you're still with me then.

Michael turns and takes her hand.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Always. Did you sleep well?

JESSICA

Surprisingly yes. Better than the night before. I had a terrible nightmare then.

MICHAEL

I know.

JESSICA

Did I tell you?

MICHAEL

No. I guess now I've told you about the disease I can tell you the bizarre parts.

JESSICA

What do you mean?

MICHAEL

This may sound like an episode of The Twilight Zone but hear me out.

Jessica sits up.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

When I go, and you're in the room with me or near me, I enter your dreams.

JESSICA

Yeah okay.

MICHAEL

Don't believe me? You were calling out for me and I was spitting up the black stuff into the bath.

She stops from getting up and remembers

JESSICA

That's right. I called out to you. What was the black stuff?

MICHAEL

The disease.

JESSICA

What if you...die...and I'm not near you. Where do you go?

(CONTINUED)

A glimpse of Michael's dream is shown.

We see a man wearing a white skull mask. He looks at us and we then see he's looking at Michael. They both acknowledge each other then look ahead and start walking down an alleyway with trees either side.

MICHAEL

I don't know.

They look at each other and there's a pause. Suddenly the alarm sets off which causes them to jump.

JESSICA

I'll get the kettle on.

She leaves the room and Michael carries on laying there.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

A kettle is boiling and Jessica picks it up and pours the water into two cups.

She is fully dressed. Michael comes in putting on his florescent jacket.

JESSICA

Where are you going?

MICHAEL

Work.

JESSICA

No you're not. Not with your condition.

MICHAEL

You're kidding me right?

JESSICA

No I'm not, I messaged Rick and he agrees that you shouldn't come in. You need rest.

MICHAEL

We can't afford for me not to go in.

JESSICA

It's final, I'm looking after you.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I appreciate that Jess, but we need the money. If I don't go in today then I lose out on £90.

JESSICA

Your boss said -

MICHAEL

Oh fuck him, I have to work.

Michael goes outside and Jessica follows him.

EXT. HOUSE/DRIVEWAY

Michael gets in the car and is about to turn the keys but Jessica reaches in and takes them out.

Michael gets out of the car.

MICHAEL

What are you doing?

JESSICA

You're not going in. You have to take it easy.

MICHAEL

I wish I never told you about it all now.

JESSICA

Why, so I wouldn't help you?

MICHAEL

So you wouldn't fucking mother me all the time.

He goes to walk back inside.

JESSICA

Where are you going?

MICHAEL

I'm calling Richard to come and get me.

He storms off inside the house and we follow with Jessica.

JESSICA

If he has any sense he'll tell you the same thing so don't waste your time.

(CONTINUED)

We follow her into the house and she stops and sees Michael lying on the floor. Dead. Again.

Jessica leans on the wall and exhales.

FADE OUT TO BLACK

CUT-IN:

Jessica has slid down the wall and is sitting next to where Michael lies. She looks out of the window with no emotion. Tired, scared, waiting. There is an empty wine glass next to her.

It's quite dark, late afternoon by this point.

Michael starts to shift and she hides the glass.

MICHAEL

Sorry. How long was I gone?

JESSICA

Nine hours.

Michael turns over and sits up.

Jessica still has her back to him. He puts his hand on her shoulder.

MICHAEL

You've been here the whole time?

JESSICA

Yes. I never left your side.

MICHAEL

What were you doing?

JESSICA

Thinking.

MICHAEL

About what?

JESSICA

How I can help you.

Michael stands up and helps Jessica to her feet.

MICHAEL

This may sound incredibly selfish but I don't want your help. You can't do anything about it.

JESSICA

Something could be wrong with you.
Why has it just started up?

MICHAEL

There could be many reasons.
Stress, not enough fluid...

JESSICA

Are these just assumptions?

MICHAEL

No.

JESSICA

What about your doctor?

MICHAEL

What about him?

JESSICA

Would he know? Get in touch with
him.

MICHAEL

He retired and moved away.

Jessica walks past him and into the living room. Michael follows her.

INT. LIVING ROOM

She sits on the sofa.

JESSICA

It's starting to feel like you're
avoiding all forms of help.

MICHAEL

I knew I shouldn't have told you.

JESSICA

What and have me cart you off to a
morgue? Oh that's nice Michael,
that's real nice. If you'd told me
when we first met that this happens
to you...

MICHAEL

Then we wouldn't have gotten
married?

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

How dare you. Don't say that. I understand where you're coming from but can you see where I'm coming from? Five years of a great relationship and then this gets thrown over it.

MICHAEL

Jessica, I had five years of a great relationship too, except THIS was already over it to begin with. Since day one with you I've hoped that it wouldn't come back but it has and I'm stuck with it. Maybe the less we talk about it the quicker it'll get weaker.

He sits on the other couch and they both have a moment of silence.

JESSICA

What if it's you that gets weaker?

Michael looks at her and gives her a slow shoulder shrug.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Jessica is sitting there writing out on a pad of paper various Christmas items and cards for friends. Michael comes in with two cups. Filled with coffee/hot chocolate.

MICHAEL

I come in peace.

Jessica looks up and smiles at him. She takes the cup from him and sets it down. Michael sits down next to her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

JESSICA

I'm just writing out our Christmas cards. Wanna help?

MICHAEL

Yeah give me a pen.

He takes a small pile of cards and begins writing.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What's happening this year?

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA
Kim and Richard are joining us for
Christmas dinner.

There's a moment where they just write.

JESSICA
I'm sorry for shouting earlier.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry for making you shout.

Jessica laughs and they kiss each other.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Michael is in bed reading and Jessica sits next to him. She is wearing a dressing gown.

JESSICA
I'm going for a bath. I won't be
long. Promise you'll be here?

MICHAEL
Promise.

She grabs a towel and walks out of the room.

Michael sets his book down and looks at his glass and it's empty so he takes it downstairs to fill up with water.

INT. KITCHEN

Michael turns on the light and fills the glass up from the tap. He drinks from it then spits it back out in disgust. He looks in his glass and then fills it up again. Before he drinks from it he gets a foul taste in his mouth and spits out in the sink. He looks at it and it's black slime. The same stuff he puked out in the dream. He looks at the colour of his tongue in the mirror and then takes a drink. It's better this time.

FADE TO

INT. BEDROOM

Michael is back in bed reading and Jessica comes in wearing the dressing gown. She gets on the bed and lays on her stomach next to Michael.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

That was great. You sure you don't want one?

MICHAEL

No I'm sure.

Jessica spots a speck of black on Michael's white t-shirt.

JESSICA

You've got ink on your top, dope.

Michael looks at her for a moment. They share a moment when they lock eyes.

MICHAEL

Silly me.

Jessica lays her head down on his chest.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Jessica.

She looks up at him and is horrified to see that he has black goo coming out of his mouth. He repeats her name and it's gurgled. He smiles at her and takes a lunge at her.

Jessica then snaps out of it and wakes up and shoves her way backwards off of Michael. She's hysterical.

JESSICA

He's dead! Oh my God he's dead!

Jessica then opens her eyes for real and it's day light. She fell asleep on Michael's chest. Her head goes up and down from Michael's breathing. He's fast asleep. Jessica then lifts her head up and looks at the clock.

It's 7.29.

JESSICA

Wait for it.

The clock changes to 7:30 and it sets the alarm off.

Michael reaches over for it and shuts it off.

He looks at Jessica.

MICHAEL

Morning.

She smiles at him.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Michael is sitting on the sofa surrounded by pillows.
Jessica walks in wearing her suit.

JESSICA
What time will you be back?

She looks at him.

JESSICA (CONT'D)
Oh. What time are you going?

MICHAEL
I'm not. I already made the call to
the boss.

JESSICA
But Michael I thought you said we
can't afford to -

MICHAEL
I know what I said and it's fine.
If I die, I won't hit my head, just
as long as I'm sitting here.

JESSICA
Okay then well I'll give you a call
on my break, no in fact I'll come
home for lunch.

MICHAEL
I could start putting Christmas
decorations up?

JESSICA
I don't think that's a good idea.
I'll sort all that out soon.

She kisses him on the cheek and leaves.

Michael gets up and looks out the window at her. He waits
there until she's gone. Then he goes to the unit in the
living room and takes out a black book. He thumbs through it
and finds the right page. He grabs the telephone and starts
to dial.

MICHAEL
Is Doctor Lovelstein there? It's
Michael Langham.....It's very
important.

EXT. HOUSE/DRIVEWAY

Michael leaves the house and gets into his car and drives away.

INT. DOCTOR LOVELSTEIN'S LIVING ROOM

Michael sits on a chair waiting. A middle aged man walks in and takes a seat.

His name is ASHLEY LOVELSTEIN. The man who treated Michael when he was young.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Right. Michael, how are you?

MICHAEL
It's becoming more serious.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Where do we begin?

MICHAEL
I've been free from it for some years now.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
It's been seven since we've last met.

MICHAEL
Well in those seven years, I've met a wonderful lady who is now my wife.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Congratulations.

MICHAEL
Thank you. Anyway I've been cleared for seven years and then three days ago I died...twice.

There's a long pause between the two.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Are they the only times?

MICHAEL
No, I died again in the day and then the next day.

(CONTINUED)

DR. LOVELSTEIN
How did your wife react?

MICHAEL
She had no idea of the illness.
Personally I'd forgotten about it.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
So there was an argument?

MICHAEL
No, she's just scared. As am I. I
died when I was driving. Luckily it
was for a few seconds but it
could've been....well...fatal.

The Doctor takes out a notepad and makes a few notes.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
I presume you've told her
everything.

MICHAEL
More or less.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Why didn't you let me know when it
happened?

MICHAEL
I told her you'd retired and moved
on.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Why would you say that?

MICHAEL
I'm showing her that I can treat
this myself.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Sorry Michael but that was a pretty
stupid thing to do.

MICHAEL
It's not like me to show weakness
in front of her.

Dr Lovelstein takes his glasses off and stands up and paces
around the room.

(CONTINUED)

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Are you still at the same address?

CUT TO:

INT. MICHAEL AND JESSICA'S LIVING ROOM

Jessica walks in to see that the Christmas tree is up and there are decorations up. She looks round to the sofa and Michael isn't there.

JESSICA
Michael?

He comes up behind her and surprises her.

MICHAEL
You called?

JESSICA
I thought I told you about not getting the decorations down.

MICHAEL
I figured I'm not feeling woozy so I may as well do something instead of sit on my ass.

They hug and kiss each other.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Besides I also found time to get you a few gifts.

She looks at him interestingly.

JESSICA
Really? Where?

MICHAEL
Under the tree. But don't worry I'll let you have them in two days.

JESSICA
Christmas day?

Michael nods smugly and Jessica laughs.

JESSICA
Oh I have some bad news. Mister Cragg, the old man that used to look after me and my sister, he's been given a few weeks to live.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

That sucks. I'm sorry to hear that.

JESSICA

It's fine. Do you mind if I quickly call Caroline to tell her?

MICHAEL

Go for it, I'll make you a drink.

FADE TO:

Michael sitting on the sofa watching TV. It's a bit darker outside. He feels the inside of his mouth with his tongue and then quickly gets up to the kitchen sink.

INT. KITCHEN

He hangs his head over the sink and tries to make himself vomit. But to no avail. Then he coughs up more black fluid.

MICHAEL

There you are you son of a bitch.

He coughs more but nothing more comes out.

He runs the tap to wash it away then goes back to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

He sits back on the sofa and closes his eyes.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael is fast asleep and then the living room light turns on and Jessica enters. He opens his eyes.

JESSICA

I didn't mean to wake you.

MICHAEL

You didn't, don't worry. Besides with this illness I get more than enough rest.

Jessica gives him a stern look and then looks at the tree.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA
Oh the tree looks beautiful.

MICHAEL
Hey check this out.

Michael turns out the living room lights and then turns the tree ones on and it takes Jessica's breath away.

JESSICA
It's so lovely. Aw you.

She grabs him and hugs him.

MICHAEL
There's something else too. Follow me. Oh and close your eyes. Don't worry I'll guide you.

He walks her into the dining room where he'd moved the table and cleared a space on the floor.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Open them.

She does but can't see what the surprise is.

JESSICA
What is it?

He turns on the lights which are placed in the fireplace. He heart skips a beat.

MICHAEL
I know you're a fan of a roaring fire near Christmas so this is the best I could do.

JESSICA
It's perfect...and so sweet.

They look at each other and then kiss. Jessica takes her coat off and then Michael cradles her shoulders and lowers her on the floor.

We pan away and focus on the Christmas Tree.

JESSICA
Oh Michael!

FADE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Michael and Jessica lay on the floor with a cover over them. They lay looking at the fireplace. The lights twinkle. Jessica exhales smoothly. She looks at him and they both smile. Michael has his arm over her.

JESSICA

Even if you hadn't got me anything for Christmas, this would've made up for it for sure.

MICHAEL

This was for being an idiot the other day.

JESSICA

You weren't.

MICHAEL

I beg to differ.

JESSICA

Did anything happen today?

MICHAEL

No.

Jessica smiles.

JESSICA

Perhaps you're healing now.

MICHAEL

Perhaps.

They look on beyond the fireplace, unsure of what's to come in their future.

EXT. SUNSET - CHRISTMAS EVE

Series of images/clips of the outside world. Sun seen through the branches of trees.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jessica is sitting on the sofa with a pad in front of her. She's writing things down for her work. Michael comes in the room wearing his coat.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Right, I'm going to the shops to pick up some wine for tomorrow. Rich is outside.

JESSICA

The queues are going to be horrendous, are you sure we need wine I'm sure we have some.

MICHAEL

Cupboards are bare for drinks. I won't be long don't worry. I love you.

He leans in and kisses her cheek and then departs.

When he goes, Jessica carries on writing.

A card falls from the mantle piece and she picks it up and opens it. It's one from Michael.

She places the card back up and then there's a knock at the front door.

She opens it to reveal Dr. Lovelstein.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Oh good evening, I'm sorry to bother you but is Mr. Langham in?

JESSICA

No sorry you just missed him. Is there anything I can help with?

He extends his hand.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

My name is Ashley Lovelstein. I'm the doctor who saw to Michael during his youth about his condition.

Jessica's expression turns to relief.

JESSICA

You know about it? Oh thank God.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

I'm gathering from he didn't tell you that he came to see me the other morning?

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

No.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Right. I don't think he'd be pleased to see me here so I best shoot off.

JESSICA

Wait, can you please tell me about it? Is it curable?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

This disease, Mrs. Langham, doesn't come from his brain or his body but from somebody entirely different.

JESSICA

I don't follow you.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

I never came here tonight. This conversation never happened.

He goes to walk away but Jessica grabs his arm and fights back anger.

JESSICA

You can't come here, fill my head with information that could help my husband and then go away. What does this all mean?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(Giving up)

Go to Southurst and look up a David Banning. He's the one you want.

JESSICA

Is he another Doctor?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

No. He's Michael's twin brother.

Jessica's jaw drops in shock.

DR. LOVELSTEIN (CONT'D)

Don't question your husband about this.

JESSICA

Does he not know?

(CONTINUED)

DR. LOVELSTEIN
(Shaking his head)
No. They were separated at birth
and sent to different adoptive
parents. Listen, if you want to
know more I'll give you a card to
contact me on. It has to be away
from Michael. He must not know of
our encounter. Understood?

Jessica nods and Dr. Lovelstein starts to walk down the
driveway.

JESSICA
Merry Christmas.

Dr. Lovelstein turns around and smiles.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Same to you.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael and Jessica are sitting on the sofa. Michael's
watching the TV and Jessica is watching him. Michael
notices.

MICHAEL
No.

JESSICA
What?

MICHAEL
I said No.

JESSICA
I didn't say anything.

MICHAEL
You don't have to. I cant tell by
your eyes. You want to open a
present.

Jessica smiles faintly.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Oh go on then. As you asked so
nicely.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

It wouldn't feel right. I'll wait
till tomorrow.

MICHAEL

(Cupping his hands)

Boring.

He carries on watching the TV and we slowly tighten in on
Jessica's worried face.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - CHRISTMAS DAY

Kimberley and Jessica are sitting at the table with glasses
of wine in their hands. They're laughing.

JESSICA

I heard you met the CEO what's he
like?

KIMBERLEY

Oh please, he came in with this
asshole attitude and just threw his
weight around trying to be the big
guy.

JESSICA

Oh no.

KIMBERLEY

In the end though he just made the
shark in 'Jaws' look like fucking
'Flipper'.

Jessica laughs as Richard and Michael bring plates of food
in and places them in front of their respective spouses.

MICHAEL

Here we are. Christmas dinner a la
Mike.

They all pull the crackers and read out the jokes and then
put the hats on.

FADE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - CHRISTMAS DAY - LATER

Richard and Kim look uncomfortable. Jessica shows a bit of embarrassment. Michael's gone and is sitting with his head hung low. His wine glass is tipped over.

KIMBERLEY

You know, Jess, if there's anything you want help with, then please don't hesitate.

JESSICA

It's fine honestly. I'm just sorry it had to happen now.

RICHARD

Any idea how long this could go on for?

Jessica shrugs.

JESSICA

Whose to know?

She takes a sip of her wine and looks very upset.

KIMBERLEY

Come on. Let's sort you out.

Kimberley and Jessica stand and walk out to the kitchen. Richard, sitting opposite Michael, nods his head and raises his glass.

RICHARD

Merry Christmas my friend.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Richard and Kimberley are at the door.

KIMBERLEY

You know where we are.

Jessica nods and manages a smile.

JESSICA

I know. Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

They then leave. Jessica is on the sofa. No lights are on. It's getting dark outside. Michael is still at the table. She lays across the couch with a glass of wine and closes her eyes.

We hear laughing. Drunken laughing from outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Two people are walking down the street and one is stumbling. It's Michael and Jessica some years back. Jessica is wearing a Santa hat and she's drunk and starts to twirl around the lamp post. She stumbles and Michael is there to grab her.

She looks into his eyes.

JESSICA

My hero.

MICHAEL

I don't think you're capable of putting one foot in front of the other.

JESSICA

I am too.

MICHAEL

Prove it.

She tries but again stumbles.

Michael picks her up and carries her up the driveway.

He places her down and she laughs.

JESSICA

Thank you very much for that.

MICHAEL

That's alright. Are you going to be fine tonight? Is there somebody who can make sure you won't -

JESSICA

It's fine I've got my big brother staying with me.

Michael nods.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Right well, thanks for a great night.

JESSICA

Thanks for not leaving me on my own.

MICHAEL

Why would I?

JESSICA

Well I guess it's no secret that I can't handle my alcohol.

MICHAEL

No I think the whole town knows that now.

She laughs.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I'll call you tomorrow.

JESSICA

Yeah you have my number.

He kisses her on the cheek.

MICHAEL

Goodnight and Merry Christmas.

JESSICA

Hope you have a great day.
Goodnight.

She watches him go down the drive then she enters the house and closes the door.

Michael turns around and looks up at the house. The upstairs light goes out.

MICHAEL

Night Jessie.

He turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS DAY

Jessica is fast asleep and Michael 'wakes' up. He sits up, cracks his neck and then walks over to the couch and sees her asleep. He picks up a sheet and places it over her and then walks over to the mirror.

MICHAEL

Boy, you've really fucked up now.

He looks on in the mirror.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CHRISTMAS DAY - LATER

Jessica is still asleep on the sofa. Michael nudges her and she slowly opens her eyes and looks up.

Michael stands before her holding out his hand. She sits up and takes it. He stands her up and then turns to the corner of the room to press on the light. The room is filled with tiny white dots. He'd put a colander on a torch.

JESSICA

Michael, what is this?

MICHAEL

This is our Christmas. Our very own white Christmas.

They hug and slowly dance with each other. They're both clearly happy. The dots bounce off of their figures. He shows off a few moves which Jessica is very impressed with. They embrace again and there's a pause. Jessica is happy. Until she realizes that Michael's gone again.

JESSICA

No. No not now. Please.

She tries holding him upright but he slowly goes down, first on his knees and then lying on the floor.

Jessica stands there looking down on him. She exhales strongly and wipes the tears from her.

FADE TO BLACK

DR. LOVELSTEIN

When did you...come back?

INT. DOCTOR LOVELSTEIN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Michael is sitting opposite Dr. Lovelstein.

MICHAEL

A little after ten. Christmas night. I missed the festivities. I missed everything. I took the decorations down earlier. There's just no point in it all.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Did you make it up to her?

MICHAEL

Tried to. When I went upstairs she was fast asleep. She cried herself to sleep. The pillow was wet. She knocked herself out with sleeping pills.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Has she spoken to you since?

MICHAEL

The odd hello. I feel like she's going to divorce me. Can you blame her?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

That's none of my business to say. I'm sure she was like that because it was Christmas. You know a family time. You are her family but you weren't there mentally and I think that got to her.

MICHAEL

Mentally? Oh I'm mental alright. I may as well sign up to stay in a nut house.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

There won't be anything like that happening to you. I'm here to help.

MICHAEL

I've been hearing rumours through the grapevine that they're dropping people like flies at my work. You know, redundant.

(CONTINUED)

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Do you think you're one of them?

MICHAEL

I haven't been there for a couple of days. Only Richard, my best friend, knows the real reason as to why.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

What did you tell your boss?

MICHAEL

That I had the flu or something like that.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

That's common, especially at this time of year. I'm sure you'll still have a job. Although have you been considering other options.

Michael looks down and shakes his head.

DR. LOVELSTEIN(CONT'D)

What about helping others?

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Well, you certainly have a very unique condition. There are people out there who are frightened to death of...well...death. They can come to you for advice on what to expect.

MICHAEL

Doc, I die as if I'm falling asleep. What if people die in crashes? They'll feel pain. I don't.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Yes but what I'm saying is everyone is going to die. But everyone is afraid of the unknown. What IS on the other side?

Michael looks at the Doc and we see what he's thinking. It's the image of the man wearing the white, blank mask. They start walking down an alleyway with trees either side.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I don't know.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Well on that we're even.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Jessica pulls over to a house and we see her look at the address. She gets out and walks up the driveway.

She looks up at the house and then knocks on the door.

There's a moment where nothing happens. She looks behind her and hesitates whether or not to get back in her car and drive off.

The door unlocks and opens. She turns around.

JESSICA

Oh I'm sorry to disturb you -

She can't believe what she's seeing. We then see the person waiting at the door for a response. It's David. The man from Michael's vision. She can't believe the resemblance he has to Michael.

JESSICA

Michael?

DAVID

No, you got the wrong house.

JESSICA

I'm sorry I meant Mr. Banning?
David Banning?

He looks her up and down, trying to place her.

DAVID

Who are you?

JESSICA

My name's Jessica Langham and I'd
just like to ask you a few
questions.

DAVID

Ah shit, listen lady, I don't want
any leaflets or any religious crap
okay?

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA
No I'm not here for any of that.

DAVID
Then what did you want?

JESSICA
Are you married?

DAVID
Why, are you offering?

Jessica blushes a bit.

JESSICA
No I was just curious.

DAVID
Okay. No I'm not. Next.

JESSICA
Do you suffer with any diseases?

DAVID
(LONG PAUSE)
No.

JESSICA
I'm actually collecting on behalf
of a disease called Lavery
Syndrome.

DAVID
Well good luck to you.

He goes to close the door.

JESSICA
I know you're adopted.

The door slowly opens.

DAVID
What are you my sister or
something?

JESSICA
Well...

DAVID
I'm adopted. Yes. What's it to you?

JESSICA

I'm sorry I just have one more question. How often does it happen?

He looks at her. He knows that she knows. She's struck something with him.

DAVID

Whenever I decide.

JESSICA

You have control over it? How?

He holds his arm up on the door. Jessica notices it's covered in scars from where he's slit his wrists.

DAVID

Enough with your questions. Please leave.

JESSICA

But I -

He closes the door. Jessica gets back in her car and dials a number on her mobile. She holds it up to her ear.

JESSICA

Dr Lovelstein, please.

(PAUSE)

Doctor, It's Jessica Langham, I've just met David Banning. I really have to talk to you. Where can I find you?

(PAUSE)

Wait let me write it down.

She writes on a scruffy piece of paper the address.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Right, thanks I'll be there as soon as I can. Bye.

INT. DOCTOR LOVELSTEIN'S LIVING ROOM

Dr. Lovelstein puts the phone down and we see that Michael is still sitting opposite him.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

I'm ever so sorry Michael, my next patient is rather worried about something and would like to see me urgently. Do you mind?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

No that's fine. But I'll be giving
what you told me some thought. I'll
let you know what my plan is.

He gets up, shakes the Doctors hand and then exits.

Dr. Lovelstein takes his glasses off and holds them as he
thinks.

FADE TO:

INT. DOCTOR LOVELSTEIN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jessica enters the room. He stands up and greets her. She
sits opposite him.

JESSICA

Thank you for seeing me.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

That's fine. What did you and David
talk about?

JESSICA

I was so damn sure it was Michael
that opened the door. They're
identical right down to the bone
structure.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Did you tell him anything about
Michael?

JESSICA

No. He seemed agitated and so I
just told him that I knew he was
adopted.

Dr. Lovelstein stands up and walks to his window.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

How did he take that?

JESSICA

He asked if I was his sister.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Which technically you are.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Right, and then I asked him how often the disease happens and he says whenever he wants it to. Like he has control over it.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

He does.

JESSICA

What?

Dr. Lovelstein turns back around with his arms behind his back, pacing.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

David is the eldest twin. He'd have more control over it.

JESSICA

So does he pass it onto Michael? Does he make Michael suffer?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

I guess that's what he does. When the disease would make it's way to David he somehow manages to channel it to Michael.

JESSICA

Oh my God.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

This is getting much darker than I thought.

JESSICA

I don't know if this means anything but before he closed the door I noticed marks on his arm.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

What kind of marks?

JESSICA

As if he's tried to kill himself.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Good God. I had no idea he was suicidal.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA
So it could be ignored?

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Well I don't think it has anything
to do with you and Michael but I'll
get in touch with his Doctor about
it.

He puts his glasses back on.

DR. LOVELSTEIN(CONT'D)
Go home, be with Michael. You
weren't here.

JESSICA
Thanks Doctor.

She gets up and leaves.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael is standing in the middle of the living room waiting
for Jessica to get back. The front door opens and then
closes.

We follow Jessica into the living room. Michael stands there
with a big grin on his face and arms outstretched.

JESSICA
Hey.

MICHAEL
You remember I told you about work
laying people off?

JESSICA
Oh Mike I'm sorry to hear that.

She hugs him.

MICHAEL
What? No. They haven't made me
redundant. But if they do then I
have a back up.

JESSICA
Oh really what's that?

He sits her down on the couch and sits next to her.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I have a pretty unique condition,
right?

She nods.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Now this condition allows me to
experience things that nobody else
can. There are a lot of people out
there afraid of dying. I think I
can help them out. Soften the blow,
if you will.

JESSICA

That's a really nice thing to do.

MICHAEL

I knew you'd like it.

JESSICA

But this is only if you lose your
job?

MICHAEL

Let's be honest, with this hanging
over my head I don't think I'll be
going back to work. I went and
spoke with Rich today about other
options and this one sounded good.
People will pay money for it.

He sees her expression. It's pained.

MICHAEL

But you know what, strangely, it's
not the money that's making me want
to do it.

Jessica smiles and throws her arms around him.

JESSICA

I think it's a great idea. Let's
just wait and see what happens
first though. I don't want you to
enter the new year jobless.

MICHAEL

Everything will be fine from now
on. I'm prepared for the backlash.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Backlash?

MICHAEL

Yeah. People calling me a fraud and such. The only witnesses I have are you, Rich and Kim.

JESSICA

What about your doctor?

Michael looks away.

MICHAEL

He's retired but I'm sure he would back me up if he knows where I am.

Jessica bites her lip and nods.

Michael looks at her. She can tell when he lies and he was expecting a fight but Jessica stayed calm.

JESSICA

I picked up some things from the shop. I'll put them away.

She leaves the room and Michael looks back into the mirror.

FADE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Michael is changing a light bulb in the dining room, Jessica is standing next to him ready to hand him the next bulb and Richard enters the room.

RICHARD

Hey guys. How many people does it take to change a light bulb in THIS house?

They laugh.

MICHAEL

What's up man?

RICHARD

I just thought I'd tell you the news.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Are you out?

RICHARD

No. I'm very much in. I got a promotion.

JESSICA

Wow congratulations.

RICHARD

Thank you. The boss was the one that was getting fired. Not meeting targets and so on so I'm in charge of our division now. Which means you keep your job.

MICHAEL

Oh right.

RICHARD

Please don't sound too impressed about it.

MICHAEL

No I am. It's great. I was just, uh, thinking of doing something else.

RICHARD

Like what?

MICHAEL

Remember what we were talking about earlier on at your lunch break?

Richard looks confused and Michael signals for him to go along with it.

RICHARD

Oh yeah. That.

MICHAEL

I've been talking it through with Jess and I've been thinking about leaving the site and do something else with my life.

There's an awkward silence.

JESSICA

I'm going to check the dryer.

She excuses herself and leaves the room.

(CONTINUED)

Richard is clearly upset by the news.

MICHAEL

Rich, I -

RICHARD

So is this it? I get put in charge and I lose the best guy out there? How could you do that to me?

MICHAEL

I understand that but you have to see it from my view. I'm a liability out there. What if I'm in the JCB or forklift and I go?

RICHARD

So fucking what? You always come back anyway.

MICHAEL

What if I fall and break my neck?

RICHARD

Then it'll save me the job of doing it myself.

They look tense at each other but then Richard understands where Michael's coming from.

RICHARD(CONT'D)

But you know what, you do what you have to do. I'm your friend so I support you. No matter what.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

RICHARD

So what is this plan of yours that I heard about at lunch?

MICHAEL

I'm going to talk to people about what to expect from death. Ease their fears.

Richard tries not to laugh.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

Sorry but you sound like you've got a new outlook on life and you've turned into a preacher.

MICHAEL

If I talk about it to more than three people I'll eventually outgrow it. Like what people do when they're young and have a stutter.

RICHARD

Regardless of what you do, I hope you'll be happy doing it. I'll spread word around town if you want?

MICHAEL

That'll be cool.

RICHARD

Now you do realize people are gonna look at you differently? Your friends, your neighbours, your peers -

MICHAEL

I'm prepared for all of it.

He extends his hand and Michael shakes it.

RICHARD

Besides, If people see you as a crackpot, we can always have you back working for us. I'll make sure you get something in the offices. You could do that if you want.

MICHAEL

I want to see how far this goes. Thanks Richard.

RICHARD

(SHRUGGING)

You know what they say. What are friends for?

Richard then leaves the room and Jessica comes out of the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Oh Richard, are you and Kim coming for New Year?

RICHARD

What, and see the new year in with this waste of space? Sure I'm in.

He leaves and Jessica goes into the living room and sits down. Michael joins her.

MICHAEL

I thought we were going to have a scrap.

JESSICA

I saw a Doctor today.

Michael pauses.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Yours. Doctor Lovelstein.

She cringes because she thinks he's going to rage at her.

MICHAEL

Really?

She can't believe it. He's completely relaxed with it.

JESSICA

You're fine with it? It was just to ask him more about the disease.

MICHAEL

It was the Doc who suggested I help others.

Jessica smiles and leans her head on his shoulder.

JESSICA

I love you.

MICHAEL

I love you too.

JESSICA

Do you want me to make a notice for the newspaper about your new job role? Reach out to some people?

MICHAEL

Yeah, if you could. I tell you
Jess, it feels like everybody is
reaching out to help me.

JESSICA

We're happy to do it.

MICHAEL

What's on the TV?

INT. DAVID'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME

David walks around with some pills and a bottle of vodka. He
walks towards a drawer and takes out a knife. He lifts his
arm up and looks at the scars.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Michael starts to look very tired. Jessica looks at the TV
and doesn't realize what is happening.

INT. DAVID'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME

He downs more vodka and then slashes away at his arm. Blood
is spurting out everywhere.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Michael's eyes flicker.

INT. DAVID'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME

David then falls to the floor and after a few beats, starts
to have trouble breathing. He then loses conscience.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Jessica looks at Michael, who has now 'gone' and she closes
his eyelids.

She then rubs the side of his face and brushes his hair.

FADE TO

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jessica has fallen asleep and Michael is still 'gone'. The phone then rings and it startles Jessica awake. She comes to and then gets up to answer it.

JESSICA

Hello.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

Jessica, It's Dr. Lovelstein,
there's been an accident.

JESSICA

With what?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

It's David. He tried to kill
himself. Apparently he got into a
violent rage and the neighbours
called the police on him. They
found him just in time.

JESSICA

Oh my God. That's lucky.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

I've just spoken to his doctor.
It's the fifth time this year he's
done it to himself.

JESSICA

The wrists.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

The paramedics had to pump him and
they found a mixture of various
drugs and vodka.

JESSICA

What kind of drugs?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

Normal store brought stuff,
paracetamol, ibuprofen that sort of
thing.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Michael was fine earlier. He slipped away about an hour ago.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

That was the time they think David passed out.

JESSICA

Is David awake?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

No. He's breathing and his heart rate has returned to normal.

JESSICA

Are you there?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

I've just got back from seeing his Doctor. He may very well be awake now.

MICHAEL

(WHISPERING)

Who are you talking to?

Jessica is startled and she turns around to see Michael sitting up.

JESSICA

Michael, you're back. It's Doctor Lovelstein.

MICHAEL

Does he want me?

She passes the phone to him.

MICHAEL

Hi Doc. What's up?

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(ON PHONE)

I was ringing to see how you're feeling. I take it you two are both aware that you've been to see me?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
Yeah. We told each other tonight.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
(ON PHONE)
How are you feeling?

MICHAEL
Yeah I've just been out for about
an hour so it's not been bad today.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
(ON PHONE)
I see. Hold on a second.
(PAUSE)
It's great that you're making
progress. I'd best be off now
though. Take care and I'll be in
touch.

MICHAEL
Bye.

He puts the phone down.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
He had to go.

JESSICA
Let me go and put some dinner on.
Then I'll start with an
advertisement for you.

She leaves the room.

CUT TO

EXT. HOUSE/FRONT DOOR - DAY - DECEMBER 28TH

We're looking at the front door and a hand reaches out and
taps on it.

Michael opens it sees it's a young man called BRAD CAVERS.
He has a terrible stutter.

MICHAEL
Can I help you?

BRAD
Hi, are you the guy from the
newspaper?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
That worked fast.

BRAD
May I come in?

MICHAEL
Of course.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - DECEMBER 28TH

Brad and Michael enter the living room and he invites him to sit on a chair.

MICHAEL
Can I get you a drink?

Brad shakes his head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Now, before we start talking, this is the first time I've ever done this.

BRAD
This is the first time I've spoken to someone about this.

MICHAEL
Well first things first. My name's Michael Langham, you can call me Mike, what's yours?

BRAD
My name's Brad.

Michael studies Brad.

MICHAEL
Can I just ask you something?

BRAD
Fire away.

MICHAEL
I wasn't really expecting anyone under 20 to come here. Why would you be wondering what -

BRAD
What death is like?

Michael nods.

(CONTINUED)

BRAD TELLS MICHAEL A HARROWING STORY FROM A FEW YEARS BACK AND HOW IT LED HIM TO DRUGS AND HOW HE WAS NEARLY BEATEN TO DEATH.

Michael is stunned.

BRAD

I guess what I'm trying to say is I'm going to welcome death. Just so I know it's not a bad thing to kill myself.

MICHAEL

But it is. You'll be leaving behind your family, your friends -

BRAD

What friends?

MICHAEL

I'm your friend, Brad.

BRAD

No. You're not. You're the quiz master.

MICHAEL

The quiz master?

BRAD

Yeah. You have the answer to the most mysterious question in this universe.

Brad leans in and his stutter stops.

BRAD

What to expect from death. You know it. Nobody else does. You can lead.

MICHAEL

That's not my intention. What I intend to do is help you.

BRAD

Really?

MICHAEL

Yes.

BRAD

Well then tell me.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
About death?

BRAD
Yes about death. Tell me.

MICHAEL
It's like getting winded. Then you get pins and needles, then you just vanish from existence and placed on a long path to walk to your respective future.

BRAD
In death, there is no future.

Michael looks on at Brad.

MICHAEL
Maybe there is. Maybe there isn't. You've got to make sure you're on the right path to find out.

The stutter begins.

BRAD
I'm shouldn't argue with you. I'm sorry, I should get going. I appreciate you talking to me.

MICHAEL
It's no problem. You have any more you want to talk about, you know where I live.

BRAD
Thanks.

They get up and shake hands then Michael notices something at the window. It's a news reporter and camera man.

MICHAEL
What the?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY - DECEMBER 28TH - LATER

The news reporter walks up the driveway and knocks on the door. Michael opens it.

MICHAEL
Yes?

(CONTINUED)

NEWS REPORTER

Hello sir, My name's Simon Morse
and I'm from Good Morning Sussex.

MICHAEL

I know where you're from.

SIMON MORSE

I'm here to see if you'd like a bit
more publicity. I'm a huge fan of
all the weird and wonderful and so
I jumped at the chance to do this.
Is there any objections?

MICHAEL

Uh, I guess not. No.

SIMON MORSE

Great, so tell me a bit about
yourself.

MICHAEL

Uh well I'm married -

SIMON MORSE

Is your wife home? Would she like
to help you plug your new gift?

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

It's not a new gift.

SIMON MORSE

Are you kidding? I'd call it a
gift.

MICHAEL

Well yes but it's not new. I've had
this since I was three.

SIMON MORSE

So what do you want to do with it?
Help people?

MICHAEL

That's right. In fact I've just
spoken to somebody -

SIMON MORSE

Are they here?

BRAD

Yes I'm here.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON MORSE

Would you like to talk to the viewers?

BRAD

No. No thank you. I'm on my way out. Take care Michael, and thank you.

SIMON MORSE

Oh come on. That would've been perfect if he'd say something.

MICHAEL

It doesn't bother me.

SIMON MORSE

Well anyway we go live in a few minutes so I'll give you a brief rundown of what I'm going to ask you.

Jessica pulls up outside and walks up the driveway.

JESSICA

What's going on?

SIMON MORSE

Ah are you Mrs Langham?

JESSICA

That's right.

SIMON MORSE

Would you like to stand next to your husband whilst he tells us this story?

MICHAEL

You don't have to.

JESSICA

It's fine. I will.

SIMON MORSE

That's great. The other client didn't want to stay. I guess he didn't realize God blessed you a great gift.

MICHAEL

"Bless me"? Do you know what God did for me? He threw a disease at

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

me when I was too young to realize what anything was and fucked my life up for twenty six years! When I wake up, I pray that Jessica is still with me and she hasn't grown old without me... Blessed me? God's been a real sport to me. Now can we just get this over with?

SIMON MORSE

Sure. No problem. Are we good?

The cameraman gives him a thumbs up.

SIMON MORSE

I'm here at 7 Beeding Crescent where I have next to me a remarkable person.

INT. DAVID'S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

David is sitting on the couch with his arm bandaged up. He looks miserable and pissed off.

Simon Morse is reporting from the scene. David takes a puff from a cigarette and blows circles. We follow a circle towards the TV. Jessica is on the screen and David looks at her, trying to place her.

SIMON MORSE

(ON TV)

Tell me, how was your reaction to this?

JESSICA

(ON TV)

Surprised beyond belief. He'd kept it a secret for most of his life.

David wants the camera to show Michael. It does. David looks closer at the TV.

MICHAEL

(ON TV)

The main thing is I'm as normal as the next person and if anybody out there is scared...I can help.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON MORSE
(ON TV)

It's an extremely rare disease
called Lavery Syndrome that -

David pauses his TV on an image of Michael. He stares at it.

EXT. HOUSE/FRONT DOOR - DAY - DECEMBER 28TH - SAME TIME

SIMON MORSE
Well thank you for sharing this
extraordinary story. Back to you in
the studio.

He turns to Michael and Jessica

SIMON MORSE (CONT'D)
Well...thanks for that. I'll leave
you two alone. Let's go.

They walk down the driveway as Michael and Jessica look at
them. Michael puts his arm round Jessica's shoulders.

FADE TO

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Michael is sitting at the counter and Jessica boils the
water in the kettle.

JESSICA
So your story is out there for
people to know about it. Did you
ever think that there are others
out there with it?

MICHAEL
I've told you. Just me and another
guy from a couple of towns out.

JESSICA
Have you spoken to him?

MICHAEL
No I've never met the guy.

JESSICA
Oh okay. Here's your coffee.

The phone rings and Jessica answers it. She hands it to
Michael.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Hello?

DAVID

(ON PHONE)

Michael Langham?

MICHAEL

That's me.

DAVID

(ON PHONE)

I saw your interview on the news today.

MICHAEL

Oh right, did you want to arrange a meeting?

DAVID

No. No I don't. It caused me enough pain to sit through your interview, I couldn't bare to share the same room as you. But we have shared other things.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry who is this?

DAVID

Someone whose been in the back of your head for some time now.

Michael turns around and looks out the window. He can't see anyone as it's dark.

DAVID

Someone who knows your illness more than you do.

MICHAEL

You're the other guy with the disease.

DAVID

I've lived in this pained existence for far too long and then you come along and publicize Lavery Syndrome like it's a fucking joke. You dumb cunt, what makes you think people want to know about it?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I want to meet you.

DAVID

Oh don't worry, Michael. We'll meet up. We'll meet up and walk that long road together until we're lifted.

Michael thinks back to the dream.

MICHAEL

It's you.

DAVID

Perhaps we'll meet up sooner than you think. Oh by the way, your wife shouldn't get in the way of things.

He hangs up and Michael puts the phone down then looks at Jessica.

JESSICA

What is it?

FADE TO

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

It's dark and the wind is howling. All of the lights are off.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MICHAEL'S P.O.V

We walk around the living room then reach out for the light.

When the light comes on, we see our hands have dried blood on them. We hear heavy breathing, panicking.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael looks into the mirror, he's shocked at what he's just seen. We then see his reflection. It's the skull masked man.

He stares at us for a moment before slowly taking his mask off. It's David. His voice is echoed.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID

Hello Michael. I told you we'd meet up.

Michael touches his own face.

DAVID(CONT'D)

I know we look alike. Do you want to know why? Brothers. Twin brothers.

MICHAEL

Impossible.

DAVID

No. Not at all. You've treated this thing to be a disease.

MICHAEL

It IS a disease.

DAVID

This THING that we have was made just for us. You and I were chosen at birth when dear old Mum put us up for adoption.

MICHAEL

Chosen for what?

DAVID

A new breakthrough in medicine. We were the guinea pigs. It turned out to be a most spectacular fuck up. Millions of pounds went into the research. When it was put into our bodies, we kept dying then coming back to life. Instead of caring for us and being raised in a lab for our lives, they eventually sent us to different homes. Me to the Bannings and you to the Langhams. Our original surname was Lavery. Ring any bells?

Michael's eyes widen with shock.

MICHAEL

We're the only two people on Earth with it because it was only given to us.

(CONTINUED)

DAVID

Now here's the part you should really worry about. I suffer from extreme depression.

He holds his arms up to reveal the scars.

DAVID(CONT'D)

I can't kill myself because of you.

MICHAEL

Why me?

DAVID

We have to die together...brother. That long pathway leads to death for the dead. It's the place I've been longing to be for twenty six years but in order for me to get to it I need you. But you have this invisible rope pulling you back to the dreary existence known as reality. Believe me, Michael, that rope is gonna get cut.

MICHAEL

You can only try.

DAVID

You really have no idea how much power I have over this scientific abomination do you. Why don't you just have a look down at what you did to your wife.

Michael looks down and we see Jessica lying in front of him in her dressing gown and her eyes wide with fright. Her neck is covered in blood. Michael gasps and covers his eyes and David laughs.

MICHAEL

You murdering bastard!

DAVID

I can make you see the most unpleasant of things. But lucky for you, she's not dead. It's an illusion Michael. You and I share things. Mind is one of them. You've just seen into mine and the next time we meet will be the long walk to the great beyond. It's the reason I where the mask.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Why?

DAVID

This skull mask represents death
and I'm taking you there.

Michael lunges at him but instead he wakes up.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael sits up looking at the ceiling and gasping for air.
Jessica sits up and looks at him.

JESSICA

Michael are you okay?

Michael begins to gets his breath back.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

He breaths heavily then looks at his hands. They're clean.
He then looks at Jessica and hugs her.

When they finish, Jessica rolls back over and Michael looks
at his phone where he has a message from an unknown number.

The message reads "Thanks anyway"

Michael can't figure out who sent it.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Jessica is sitting at the table in the kitchen with a cup of
coffee and Michael is leaning back on the fridge.

JESSICA

Do you want to talk about it?

Michael shakes his head slowly.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Well it's the only way you'll get
through it. Talking to someone
about it.

MICHAEL

I'll talk when I'm ready.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Sorry.

MICHAEL

No I'm sorry I shouldn't take it out on you. Let's just leave it on the fact that it freaked me out.

JESSICA

Okay. Do you have many people to see today?

MICHAEL

Just a few. I'm going to try and get some sleep.

JESSICA

To try and see if you can find the guy again?

MICHAEL

No. I just feel exhausted.

JESSICA

I can stay here if you want.

MICHAEL

It's fine. You go on. By the time you're back I'd have eased down.

JESSICA

Okay. I'll see you around five but I'll try and see if I can finish early.

She kisses him on the cheek.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Everything's going to be fine. Just fine.

MICHAEL

I know.

She leaves the room and Michael exhales strongly. Preparing himself for the mental war he has to deal with.

FADE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael is on the couch reading a novel and drinking a coffee. The TV is on but he's not interested. Until the news comes on.

NEWS READER

The body of a young man was found in the fields behind Keynesville Cemetery today. It has been identified as Nineteen year old Brad Cavers.

Michael looks at the TV which shows a picture of Brad. Michael thinks back then realizes the text the night before came from Brad.

NEWS READER

Sources say that Mr Cavers was a drug addict and this could be the reason for his death.

Michael turns the TV off and marks out his book then closes it.

He stands up and walks slowly to the window. He overlooks the area outside his house. Then rests his head on the wall.

MICHAEL

God dammit Brad. Why'd you do it.

He takes his mobile and dials Jessica's number to it then holds it to his ear. Jessica answers.

MICHAEL

I know who the text was from.

JESSICA

(ON PHONE)

Who?

MICHAEL

Brad. They kid I saw with the stutter.

JESSICA

(ON PHONE)

Oh honey I'm so sorry.

MICHAEL

He came to me for advice. He came to me to find out if death is worth it. It's my fault.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

(ON PHONE)

Hey don't be stupid. It wasn't your fault. What if it was something else that pushed him over the edge?

MICHAEL

He was nineteen years old for Christ's sake what could've made him do that?

JESSICA

(ON PHONE)

Many people have hidden demons. Hidden so deep that they don't even know they're there.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

JESSICA

(ON PHONE)

Do you want me to come home?

MICHAEL

No. I have a client soon. I'm sorry to bother you at work. I'll see you at the normal time. I love you.

JESSICA

(ON PHONE)

I love you too.

He hangs up and looks up out of the window.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Jessica walks in through the front door and walks up through the hallway. She opens the living room door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

An middle aged woman is sitting on one of the couches and she looks over to Jessica and gives off a little wave. She looks at Michael and he has 'gone' in the chair.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Hello, I'm sorry but he went when I was in the middle of talking. He's been like that for fifteen minutes. I figured I'd wait with him until you got back.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

That's very sweet of you. Thanks very much.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

I'll be on my way then. When he wakes, tell him thank you for me would you.

JESSICA

Of course.

She opens the door for her and the Woman sees herself out.

Jessica takes off her coat and throws it on the other couch. She sits next to Michael and takes her shoes off. She reaches down to get something from her bag at the side of the couch.

MICHAEL

Has she gone yet?

Jessica looks at him and smiles.

JESSICA

Yeah she's gone.

Michael lifts his head up and opens his eyes.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Bored were you?

MICHAEL

A tad. I actually fell asleep at first then she used the toilet and the flush woke me up. I just carried on the charade.

JESSICA

You're not like that with all the others are you?

MICHAEL

No. In fact I'm thinking about not doing this.

JESSICA

Why not?

MICHAEL

I've just got Brad's death on my conscience. I feel I'm influencing death.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Did you tell him to go and kill himself?

MICHAEL

No.

JESSICA

Then I don't see how this affects you. It's not your fault. Please stop blaming yourself.

MICHAEL

No matter what you say, I'm still going to feel shitty about this.

He goes to get up but Jessica stops him and pulls him back on the couch. He tries again but she puts her legs over him like a seat belt.

JESSICA

You can stop right there. People are always going to have their own perspectives on death. No matter what YOU say, it will never change their outlook. You told Brad not to kill himself, he listened. His inner demons told him otherwise.

Michael looks at her.

The phone rings and Jessica gets up and answers it.

JESSICA

Hello...Oh hello Mrs Hooper how are you? Yes I heard about that I'm sorry to hear....Michael? Yeah he's here.....Okay.

She holds the phone to her chest.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I need a favour.

MICHAEL

What is it?

JESSICA

Mr Hooper has asked for you to go and talk to him about death.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Jess I don't know...

JESSICA

Mrs Hooper can I call you back in a matter of minutes? Okay talk soon.

She hangs up and goes to Michael then sits on her knees in front of him.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Michael, Mr Hooper is a dear old friend of my family. He's been battling cancer for a few months and he's been told he won't be seeing the New Year in.

MICHAEL

But Jess I don't have cancer. I can't relate to it. When I die, I just go like a form of narcolepsy. But cancer, I can only make it up for him.

JESSICA

He's asked for you. Just tell him what you have to. Tell him what you've told others.

Michael looks away.

JESSICA

So you'll go?

MICHAEL

You're coming with me.

Jessica picks up the phone.

INT. HOOPER RESIDENCE

MR. HOOPER is sitting in an armchair in the living room with Jessica. His eyes are closed. He opens them slowly and looks at Jessica who is sitting opposite him. He looks at her as if he doesn't know her. Then he does.

MR. HOOPER

Jessica.

JESSICA

Hello Mr. Hooper.

(CONTINUED)

MR. HOOPER

My goodness. Last time I saw you was at your Granddads 85th birthday. You were...

JESSICA

I was twelve then.

MR. HOOPER

Twelve. Yes that's it. You've grown into such a beautiful woman.

Jessica tries to hold the tears back.

MR. HOOPER (CONT'D)

You've always been beautiful. You've got your Mother's eyes.

Jessica smiles and a few tears drop.

JESSICA

I've brought someone to talk to you. My husband Michael.

MR. HOOPER

Yes I've asked for him didn't I.

JESSICA

You did. I told him to wait with your wife for a moment. Just so I could...make sure you're okay.

Mr. Hooper slowly nods.

MR. HOOPER

Thank you. How is he?

JESSICA

He's fine. He's just helping you today with what you want to hear. I'll go and get him.

She stands up and goes to the door. She smiles and waves him in.

Michael comes in. Mr. Hooper isn't looking.

MICHAEL

Hello sir.

MR. HOOPER

Please sit down.

(CONTINUED)

Jessica stands by the door and watches Michael sit down, looking uneasy.

MR. HOOPER

Jessica, can you go and sit with my wife please? Make sure she's fine.

JESSICA

Of course.

Before she leaves, she gives Michael a little smile to make sure he's okay.

MR. HOOPER

Michael is it?

MICHAEL

Yes sir.

MR. HOOPER

Work your magic. Tell me what dying is like.

Michael pauses for a moment. He's being held back by fear of the unknown. Exactly what death is.

MR. HOOPER(CONT'D)

Is it like a roller coaster? I used to love riding them of course it's been twenty years since I've ridden one.

MICHAEL

Well, it all happens so quickly. The buildup is like the way up on a roller coaster but then instead of going along the loops, you get.... you get...

MR. HOOPER

What?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

Mr. Hooper finally looks at him.

MR. HOOPER

That's what it should be like. Not knowing.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I'm sorry.

MR. HOOPER

Don't be. You've told me enough. I'm dying, Michael. I'm dying in a way that you aren't. Death comes in many ways, shapes and forms. It COULD be like a roller coaster. It COULD be like going to sleep. Or it COULD be the most uplifting experience you'll ever have.

MICHAEL

It could probably come to you in a way where you don't feel it.

MR. HOOPER

Exactly. Nobody knows. Knowing what death is like is the same as putting ketchup on a roast dinner...it just doesn't add up. It should be left as a mystery. It's life's biggest mystery. It's ironic isn't it.

MICHAEL

What is?

MR. HOOPER

Life's biggest mystery hasn't got anything to do with life at all.

Michael thinks about it for a minute and then smiles.

MICHAEL

You're right.

MR. HOOPER

Michael I'd like to thank you for being honest with me. When you leave here take good care of your wife. She's a great girl.

MICHAEL

I will.

Michael stands and Mr. Hooper holds out his hand.

MR. HOOPER

Happy New Year.

Michael takes the hand and they shake on it.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
Happy New Year.

Michael walks by the door and looks back at Mr. Hooper. He doesn't turn around but he simply lifts his hand up to say goodbye. Michael smiles and leaves the room.

FADE TO

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Michael and Jessica are watching TV and the phone goes. Jessica answers.

JESSICA
Hello...Mrs Hooper....

Jessica turns to Michael and he could tell that Mr. Hooper has passed away.

Jessica kneels down on the floor and continues to talk as Michael comforts her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jessica is sitting on the floor with her back to the couch and Michael has his legs around her shoulders. He's giving her a shoulder rub.

MICHAEL
Is there anything you want me to do for you?

JESSICA
No. No thank you. It's just a shock, you know. I suppose it's a good thing he died.

MICHAEL
What do you mean?

JESSICA
He was in a tremendous amount of pain Michael. It's a miracle he managed to talk to us without screaming in agony.

MICHAEL
Maybe he endured the pain?

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Perhaps.

She stops him from rubbing her shoulders and turns to him.

MICHAEL

What's up, did I hurt you?

JESSICA

No.

She rests her head on his knee.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Does it hurt you?

MICHAEL

You've already asked me -

JESSICA

No I asked you what dying was like.
I never asked if it was painful.

MICHAEL

You just switch off. If my heart
didn't stop I'd say it was like
narcolepsy.

Jessica looks at him worryingly. He runs his hand through her hair and she smiles then spots something on his arm. A bruise. A big, black bruise.

JESSICA

Michael how did you get that?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

He looks at it and then shrugs it off.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Must've hit it on the door or
something.

JESSICA

It's like you've been hit by a bat.

MICHAEL

Well I can't feel it so it looks a
lot worse then it actually is.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

There's some stuff in the cupboard
for it if you want.

MICHAEL

It's fine, honestly.

JESSICA

Are you sure?

She sits up and playfully tickles him. They laugh joyfully.
More than they've laughed in a long time.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Michael has 'died' in the bed. Jessica comes in and sits on
the bed. She leans over and closes his eyes. As she leans
away she notices something on his arm. The same arm as
before. Three more bruises. Black and yellow bruises. She
tries to figure out how he could've got them. Then she lifts
up his t-shirt so she could see his side and finds more
bruises.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - DECEMBER 30

Jessica picks up her mobile and starts to text somebody. She
waits a moment and then gets a reply. It's from Kimberley
saying that 'She'll be over a.s.a.p'

Jessica puts the phone down.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

A glass of red wine, half drunk, sits on the table. We then
see Jessica and Kimberley sitting on the couch.

KIMBERLEY

Has drinking this early become a
regular thing lately?

JESSICA

I don't...usually do this. It's the
worry, Kim. I worry so much. He was
'gone' for the whole day yesterday.
He came back this morning and
decided to go and see his doctor.

KIMBERLEY

I think you're doing great. You're
holding it together just fine.

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA

Thanks. I've always been an introverted person. You know that.

Kimberley nods.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I've been reading that for those people who hold all of their problems in and don't speak up will suffer the most. I don't want to be that person. I don't. This family has had enough problems lately.

KIMBERLEY

With all due respect, your problems seem microscopic compared to those of Michael.

JESSICA

I know. My problem IS Michael. I'm just a horrible person. I've been reading of a place where he has constant care. Twenty four, seven. But that's only half of me. The other half wants for me to be able to take that illness, that sick, sick illness and have it to myself so he doesn't suffer anymore.

She takes the glass and takes a big gulp out of it. Finishing it.

KIMBERLEY

Michael said he can deal with this on his own, you need to be there for him; just not like this.

Jessica places the glass down and then picks the bottle up and goes to the kitchen to pour it down the drain.

INT. KITCHEN

Kimberley walks behind her as she's doing it and rubs her shoulder in a friendly manner.

JESSICA

That's not all though. He takes it out on himself. He beats himself up and the bruises, oh my God the bruises. Also...

(CONTINUED)

KIMBERLEY

What is it?

JESSICA

He keeps talking in his sleep of a man in a skull mask.

KIMBERLEY

Who do you think it is?

JESSICA

I don't know. Michael said he saw him outside when he was awake.

EXT. HOUSE/DRIVEWAY

Michael walks out of the house and looks across the road. He does a double take.

The man in the skull mask was there. Just standing and watching Michael. He has a cigarette in his hand.

Michael looks down the street and back to where the man was but he's gone.

INT. KITCHEN

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I've never been so scared for him in my life.

KIMBERLEY

You know Richard and I are only a phone call away.

JESSICA

I know. Thanks.

They hug.

BLACK SCREEN

MICHAEL

(OFFSCREEN)

I fear he's going to attack me again. Only this time in person.

INT. DOCTOR LOVELSTEIN'S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

DR. LOVELSTEIN

When?

MICHAEL

I reckon it'll be a big time. His plan is to take me to death. He's already attacked and beaten me within an inch of my life when I've gone. I come out in bruises because of it.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

The next 'big' thing that's happening is New Year.

MICHAEL

We're having a party. I need you there.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

There's nothing I can do.

MICHAEL

Please.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(Pause)

I can try and help. You know that right.

MICHAEL

Trying is better than doing nothing.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

I'll be there. Just please don't put every ounce of belief in me. I don't want you to get your hopes up if I fail to help.

Michael looks at the floor.

MICHAEL

I know. I'll see you then, Doc.

Black screen.

White writing slams onto the screen. NEW YEARS EVE.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jessica is putting earrings in and Michael is spraying himself with aftershave. She looks at him and smiles. He looks back at her and stops.

JESSICA
Are you okay?

MICHAEL
Yeah. Yeah I'm fine.

JESSICA
They'll be here soon.

MICHAEL
Let's end this year on a high point.

JESSICA
Let's.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Music is playing and everyone is dressed smartly.

Michael has a glass of champagne whilst talking to Richard and then he sees Jessica sitting on the arm of the couch talking to Kimberley. Jessica hasn't got a drink so Michael excuses himself to pour her a glass. At first she's reluctant to have it but then gives in and drinks it. Michael looks at her surprised.

MICHAEL
That didn't take a lot of encouragement.

JESSICA
I'm just saying goodbye to a crappy year.

MICHAEL
Going out on a high. That's my girl.

There's a knock on the door. Michael goes out to get it.

RICHARD
Are we expecting anyone else?

(CONTINUED)

JESSICA
Not that I know of.

Michael enters the room with Dr. Lovelstein. He nods and waves at the people in the room.

JESSICA
Dr. Lovelstein?

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Oh at parties you can call me
Ashley.

He goes and introduces himself to the others.

Jessica goes to Michael.

JESSICA
Is he here with news?

MICHAEL
No. I invited him. As a friend.

JESSICA
Oh okay.
(To Dr. Lovelstein)
Can I get you a drink?

INT. DAVID'S LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

David is watching a TV show and smoking. He looks at his watch. It's 23:50.

He stands up and puts his cigarette out and then walks to the corner of the room and takes the plug adapter out of the wall. He walks to the exit of the room as he's winding the wire up. On his way he picks up a pair of scissors and puts them in his back pocket.

He walks up the stairs slowly.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Richard looks at his watch and announces to the room that there's 10 minutes to go. Please cheer.

INT. DAVID'S HALLWAY

A loft hatch is opened and then a light goes on. David drags a chair to underneath the hatch and then climbs up through it with the adapter.

He then hold the other end up and he's made it into a noose which he puts around his neck. He reaches down and picks up the skull mask.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Michael starts to sweat and blink a lot. He looks really pale. Jessica notices and goes over to him.

JESSICA
Are you okay?

MICHAEL
I'm fine.

INT. DAVID'S HALLWAY

David tilts the chair. The wire inside the loft tightens as the sound of the chair falling over is heard. His legs spasm briefly before settling.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Michael begins to choke and and his eyes go wilds. He throws himself around the room.

JESSICA
Ashley!

Dr. Lovelstein gets to him and tries to calm him down. He tries the Heimlich maneuver. Jessica then sees on Michael's neck a bruise forming around it. The bruise from a noose.

Michael looses the strength in his leg and crumples to the floor. He sits up with his back against the couch and his head tilted back with his mouth wide open. Then he stops moving.

Everyone is still. Dr. Lovelstein goes to him and feels his pulse. Jessica looks on and is scared. Richard is holding Kimberley.

Dr. Lovelstein takes his glasses and puts them to Michael's mouth. He takes them away and sees that Michael's fogged them up.

(CONTINUED)

DR. LOVELSTEIN
He's breathing but his pulse has
slowed right down.

JESSICA
That's never happened before.

Michael then starts breathing in loudly.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Michael is standing down the alleyway that leads him to the afterlife. He looks around to see only himself. Then David appears next to him. The skull mask is on but he takes it off.

DAVID
This is it brother!

His voice is all in an echo.

MICHAEL
No. No way.

DAVID
There's no way out of it now. We're
dead.

MICHAEL
I'm not dead and you're not taking
me with you.

Michael takes out the pair of scissors from his pocket.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
What's that for?

DAVID
Cutting you away from this life.
Your life.

He goes to cut the invisible rope holding back Michael so they can walk to the afterlife. Just as he does, Brad comes out from behind Michael and knocks the scissors away.

Mr. Hooper then comes out and holds David back. David pleads with them.

DAVID
What are you doing?! He's my
brother! He has to come with me!

Michael stands with his back to the wall in awe.

(CONTINUED)

Brad holds David back.

BRAD
It's not his time. But it is yours.

DAVID
No!

Brad then cuts the rope between them, holding them together.

Michael feels a rush of pain go through his body and falls to the floor.

DAVID
My brother.

He slowly glides away and then vanishes in a bright light.

Brad hold his arm out to Michael. He takes it and is pulled up.

BRAD
I wouldn't worry about him. He's with us on the other side now.

MICHAEL
Brad. You're alive.

BRAD
I'm afraid not but I am in a better place.

MICHAEL
Your stutter's gone too.

BRAD
Yeah it's pretty perfect now.

MICHAEL
So David's now dead.

BRAD
It's what he wanted. He'll be looked after now though. He was just misguided there.

MICHAEL
Is it my turn too?

MR. HOOPER
Oh no young man. You still have decades left in you.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I have to ask you two a question.
What is dying like?

Brad smiles.

BRAD

As if you haven't died enough times
already.

MR. HOOPER

Like a big roller coaster.

Michael smiles.

JESSICA

(off screen)

Michael, come back. If you can hear
me. Please come back.

Michael looks behind him.

BRAD

Go on Michael. You're wanted.

Michael shakes their hand and turns around.

BRAD

Oh when you get back, you may want
to give yourself one hell of a
cough.

MICHAEL

Why?

BRAD

Trust me.

Michael walks back to where the path begins.

There's a white flash and we are back in:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Michael gasps for breath. He leans forward. Jessica and Dr. Lovelstein both lean back out of the way and give him room. Michael coughs and then does it again. The third time, he musters up all of his strength and manages to cough up a black slab of slime. It spits out to the middle of the room. Everyone looks at it in confusion.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

I don't remember him eating that.

Michael looks around and then grabs Jessica and kisses her. Dr. Lovelstein looks exhausted but manages to check on Michael.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

Michael are you okay?

MICHAEL

It's over. It's all over. David's dead. He went and I got away.

Dr. Lovelstein nods and gathers his breath.

PULL BACK overlooking the scene in the living room.

The TV is still on and we hear people counting down as

FADE AWAY TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Michael and Jessica lay a flower down on a grave and stand there for a while. They're both dressed smartly.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

(OFFSCREEN)

So how has your life been since?

MICHAEL

I visit David's grave from time to time. He may have not liked me but in the end he was still my brother. Had the drug not been tested on us we could've been best friends.

DR. LOVELSTEIN

And what is your currant job role?

MICHAEL

Now knowing I'm not going to die out of the blue, Richard gave me my job back.

EXT. MUDDY/STONY/DIRT-TRACK - DAY

Michael walks up to Richard and shakes his hand.

JESSICA
(OFFSCREEN)
Only this time?

MICHAEL
Only this time he gave me a
promotion.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
And what about you Jessica?

JESSICA
I've been seeing some people who
have handled their drink the way I
used to. They've all turned their
lives around and they've helped me.
I haven't touched a drop for four
months.

INT. DOCTOR LOVELSTEIN'S LIVING ROOM

Michael and Jessica are sitting in front of Dr. Lovelstein.
They both look like life has been good to them.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Have you both looked at life
differently?

MICHAEL
Of course. We can actually live our
lives without having the illness
over our heads.

JESSICA
That we shouldn't take life for
granted.

DR. LOVELSTEIN
Absolutely. Now after knowing you
for a number of years I can see
you're happy. I mean truly happy.
You overcame unbelievable odds and
survived death a number of times. I
have to ask you this: What's next?

BLACK SCREEN

The End.

(CONTINUED)

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