

UNIVERSITY OF WALES
TRINITY SAINT DAVID

A TROUBLED DUET

By Thomas Matthew Chapman

Student Number: 26000551

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Contents

Abstract ~ ii

A Troubled Duet ~ 1

Synopsis for “A Troubled Duet” ~ 93

Character Profiles and Background Information ~ 95

Step Outline for “A Troubled Duet” ~ 98

Critique ~ 100

Abstract

This study comprises of two main pieces: an original screenplay, followed by a critique. The predominant theme throughout is the depiction of emotion within the world of screenwriting.

The protagonist's internal landscape is at the heart of the screenplay, specifically in relation to the theme of family. It visually depicts the protagonist's emotional world, how it was shaped during childhood, and subsequently how it forms a blueprint for his outward experiences. The piece is structured in order to elicit emotion above intellect and does so by portraying emotive childhood scenes and by favouring poignant imagery over dialogue.

The critique discusses the individual attributes of screenwriting, narrative and character that must be honed and harmonised in order to create a cohesive, affecting piece. It analyses the use of pace, lighting and music as methods to enhance the emotional impact of a screenplay.

A TROUBLED DUET

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING

Out across the rooftops of terraced housing, treetops are tinged with Autumn. There is BIRDSONG. An orange sun glows through the foliage of a large tree. An unseen DOG BARKS.

A BREEZE RUSTLES through the large tree, the leaves wave together. PIANO MUSIC BEGINS. Credits roll.

ZOOMING IN to a modest house below with drawn curtains. On the driveway is an old rusty Mini Cooper with a trailer unattached behind.

Hanging from the little porch roof above the front door is a homemade garden wind-spinner, fashioned from an empty Coke can, sliced and bent into a rounded shape to catch the wind.

CLOSE-UP of the rusty wind spinner, hanging completely still. There is the sound of the FRONT DOOR OPENING and a man STRUGGLING with something heavy.

On the pavement beyond the spinner, A YOUNG BOY with doe-eyes and a knitted bobble hat trundles behind his FATHER. The boy slows and looks at the house. The father keeps walking.

DYLAN, a man in his twenties, stands wedged in the doorway by an upright piano that is halfway out of the house. He rubs his forehead, then notices the boy.

CLOSE-UP of the boy's innocent eyes, watching, calm and curious. Suddenly he is jerked sideways.

The father has the boy's hand and pulls him onwards. The boy watches Dylan over his shoulder.

Dylan watches from the doorway, then looks at the piano. He squeezes himself onto the driveway and struggles to pull the piano out.

Dylan pushes the piano onto the sloped driveway then darts round to the front and steadies it, edging it to the trailer's ramp.

The piano resting against the ramp, Dylan pushes it, but each time he does, the trailer edges away. Dylan stops, straightens and closes his eyes.

Dylan pushes the piano angrily, but the trailer edges away again. Dylan attaches the trailer to the car, then carefully eases the piano on. Dylan enters the house.

The rusty wind-spinner hangs beside the open front door, totally still.

Dylan exits the house with tie-straps and struggles to secure the piano to the trailer.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Not seen one moved like that before.

An OLD MAN with a flat cap leans on his walking stick on the pavement.

DYLAN

(Stressed)

Yeah.

The old man watches Dylan struggle with the straps.

OLD MAN

Y' not coverin' it?

DYLAN

No.

The old man stares at the piano.

OLD MAN

Where y' takin' it?

Dylan stands up and stares at the piano.

DYLAN

To my father. (PAUSE) He's dying.

The old man looks at Dylan closely.

OLD MAN

Far to go?

DYLAN

Too far.

Dylan starts tightening the straps.

The old man opens his mouth, then closes it again. He looks the Mini up and down.

OLD MAN

You should take it slow. (PAUSE) The older models are not great with heavy stuff.

Dylan looks up.

The old man looks back, steadily. He nods.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Good luck.

The old man looks at the piano, then tips his cap before walking on.

Dylan enters the house and reappears moments later with a large rucksack. He pulls the front door closed, walks to the car and bundles his rucksack onto the back seat.

Dylan checks each of the straps around the piano, then opens the driver's door. He glances at the piano, then slowly up at the sky.

PANNING UP vertically, the sky has intermittent clouds. PANNING DOWN, Dylan is gone. The front door is open again.

Dylan exits the house with a tarpaulin, pulls the front door shut and puts the tarpaulin in the boot.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Dylan sits in the driver's seat, staring ahead.

CLOSE-UP of the rearview mirror which is filled with the view of the piano.

Dylan reaches into the back and retrieves a road map. Pages fall apart into his lap. He dumps them onto the passenger seat. Dylan starts the engine which COUGHS and WHINES reluctantly.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING

The ENGINE CHUGS as the Mini edges out of the driveway, the trailer just missing parked cars. The Mini pulls away, leaving a cloud of exhaust fumes. ENGINE SOUND FADES.

The wind-spinner twirls slowly. A DOG BARKS.

MONTAGE - 'RADIO BALLE' BY ELUVIUM CONTINUES THROUGHOUT

-- THE MINI CHUGS SLOWLY ALONG A RESIDENTIAL ROAD

-- THE TRAILER CLIMBS OVER SPEED HUMPS IN THE ROAD. THE PIANO HUMS AS IT HITS THE GROUND EACH TIME

-- THE MINI CHUGS ALONG A LEAFY STREET WITH SCHOOL KIDS AND PARENTS MOVING ALONG THE PAVEMENT. A FLUORESCENT LOLLIPOP MAN STEPS INTO THE ROAD. THE MINI SLOWS TO A STOP

-- CLOSE-UP OF THE LOLLIPOP SIGN WHICH SAYS "STOP" WITH A PICTURE OF ADULT AND CHILD WALKING HAND IN HAND

-- EXCITED SCHOOL CHILDREN CROSS THE ROAD WITH THE SOUND OF CHATTER AND LAUGHTER. THE LITTLE BOY IN THE BOBBLE HAT CROSSES AND LOOKS AT DYLAN

-- CLOSE-UP OF DYLAN'S FACE. HIS HEAD TILTS SLIGHTLY

-- THE LOLLIPOP MAN GIVES A THUMBS-UP TO DYLAN AS HE WALKS BACK. DYLAN RAISES A FINGER FROM THE STEERING WHEEL IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT. THE MINI CONTINUES

-- DYLAN GAZES STRAIGHT AHEAD, HANDS ON THE WHEEL.

-- THE MINI CHUGS ALONG A BUSY HIGH STREET. TWO CHATTING WOMEN, TURN AND WATCH AS THE PIANO GLIDES PAST

-- THE MINI DRIVES SLOWLY ALONG AN A-ROAD, PASSING A SIGN FOR 'NEWQUAY' AND 'PLYMOUTH' AS A STREAM OF CARS OVERTAKE

-- CLOSE-UP OF DYLAN'S FACE WHILE DRIVING, EYES GLAZED

-- DYLAN GRABS A HANDFUL OF PAGES FROM THE ROAD MAP, HOLDS THEM AGAINST THE STEERING WHEEL, LOOKING THROUGH THEM WHILE DRIVING

-- AERIAL SHOT OF THE CAR PULLING INTO A LAY-BY WITH A CAFE.

-- CLOSE-UP OF A SIGN IN THE LAY-BY: "SEXY SAL'S PARADISE PIT-STOP"
MUSIC FADES OUT

END MONTAGE

EXT. LAY-BY - MORNING

The Mini is parked. Cars ROAR PAST on the road. Dylan exits the car, locks the door, looks at the piano, then walks past large trucks towards a cafe in a large portable container.

INT. SEXY SAL'S PARADISE PIT-STOP - MORNING

It is busy with LOUD TALKING. Dylan enters. Nobody notices as he picks a route between chairs and tables.

Sat on a stool at the counter is KEVIN, a trucker who is bearded, balding and obese. He puts a half eaten bacon and egg sandwich down, revealing congealed yoke in his beard and a T-shirt with the phrase: "WITH A BODY LIKE MINE, WHO NEEDS HAIR?"

Dylan nods politely and waits to be served. There is a sign behind the counter which reads "WELCOME TO SEXY SAL'S PARADISE PIT-STOP."

KEVIN

(Shouting)

Sal. Waitin'.

From the kitchen comes SEXY SAL, a middle aged woman with a bulldog face and the dress sense of a colour-blind hooker. A little cigarette smoke escapes her nostrils.

SEXY SAL

(Husky and uninterested)

Welcome to Paradise. (PAUSE) What do you want?

CLOSE-UP of Sexy Sal. PANNING DOWN her body has rolls of fat beneath a stained leopard print top.

DYLAN

I...Could I...could I just have a coffee? (PAUSE) To go.

SEXY SAL

(Seductive)

You can have whatever you want, sweetheart.

KEVIN

You never call me sweetheart.

SEXY SAL

Kev, your heart's a lot of things, but it ain't sweet.

Kevin GRUNTS into his sandwich as Sexy Sal busies herself making coffee from a jar of "BASICS INSTANT COFFEE".

Dylan stands quietly. He watches Kevin from the corner of his eye.

Kevin uses his finger to mop up ketchup and yoke from his plate.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Dylan sits in the stationary Mini. CARS ROAR PAST. Dylan shuffles pages of the road map into order, throwing other pages onto the floor. He takes a sip of coffee, grimaces and places the cup on the dashboard.

With a pen, Dylan draws route along roads from "Exeter" to the top of the page, then puts that to the back of his bundle and continues the line up numerous pages, eventually stopping in the middle of the "Peak District".

CLOSE-UP of rearview mirror: the piano sits perfectly still as CARS ROAR PAST.

Dylan runs a hand through his hair and scratches the back of his head. He rests his head on the headrest, his eyes close. There begins the sound of "TWINKLE TWINKLE LITTLE STAR" on the piano. Dylan's eyes open. He looks around, then over his shoulder.

EXT. LAY-BY - MORNING

Dylan jumps out of the Mini.

A TEENAGE BOY stands playing the piano. Dylan squares up to him, raising a fist awkwardly, like someone who's never been in a fight before.

DYLAN

(Seething)

Get away. I mean it. Get away.

The boy staggers back from the piano, his hands up, staring at Dylan. The piano's fall board THUDS SHUT the PIANO HUMS.

BOY

(Defensive)

Hey, I'm sorry, alright? I didn't know you were there. I'm going. I'm going, okay?

The boy walks off to the cafe.

Dylan looks at his own raised fist. He lowers his arm and stares into the middle distance, dazed.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Dylan sits in the stationary car, gazing into the distance. CARS ROAR PAST.

A man and a woman walk towards the cafe, chatting happily.

Dylan lowers his head into his hands and rubs his forehead for a long time.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face raising from his hands with tears in his eyes. A slow, LOW MOAN comes from within him, getting louder and more manic until his hand swings across, smashing the coffee cup off the dashboard, spraying coffee all over the car - the interior steams.

EXT. LAY-BY - MORNING

The Mini is stationary. Behind coffee streaked windows, Dylan sits totally still. Eventually he leans forward and the engine CHUGS and WHINES to life. The Mini slowly pulls away.

EXT. RURAL B-ROAD - DAY

AERIAL SHOT of the Mini slowly driving a winding road, the sun glints off the roof. A car overtakes impatiently.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan is driving. He leans down to the passenger floor and picks up a page of road map.

CLOSE-UP of the page, showing the roads of Birmingham.

DYLAN

(To himself)

No one *chooses* to go to Birmingham.

Dylan leans forward and uses the page to wipe the coffee from the windscreen. He screws the page up and throws it onto the floor.

Dylan gazes ahead. A car towing a caravan slowly overtakes. As it begins to pass, Dylan glances over.

On her own in the back seat of the car is a LITTLE GIRL, about five. She smiles and waves.

Dylan waves.

The little girl points behind Dylan's car, with a curious expression.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, perplexed. He glances at his wing-mirror.

CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror which shows the caravan overtaking.

Dylan, confused, glances from wing-mirror to the girl.

The little girl holds her hands up in view and starts miming playing the piano, shy yet earnest.

Dylan smiles, lifts one hand from the steering wheel and mimes playing a piano. In the background, the little girl smiles shyly, playing imaginary piano with him.

As the girl's car overtakes, the girl waves.

Dylan waves.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, deep in thought.

Dylan winds his window down a little. The BREEZE blows through his hair.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. COTTAGE GARDEN - DAY (1987)

There is the sound of BREEZE THROUGH LEAVES and a BLACKBIRD SINGING. All is pink with a glowing centre - the colour of the sun seen through closed eyelids.

The pink slowly parts from the centre, revealing the rolling green Peak District. In the distance a golden sun is semi sunk into a hill. On the hill is the silhouette of a lone tree.

CLOSE-UP of SIX YEAR OLD DYLAN'S face, illuminated by golden sunlight, his fine hair ruffled by the BREEZE.

Dylan stands on a rung of the wooden garden fence, his face lifted upwards to the sun and his hands held out in front, clasped together and holding the homemade wind-spinner. It hangs on string twirling silently, sunlight glinting off the shiny metal.

Behind Dylan is a garden, blooming and bright. There is an old cottage with an open downstairs window.

Dylan carefully ties the wind spinner to the washing line.

Dylan sits in the garden, eating a strawberry and holding a furry caterpillar on his other hand. He watches carefully as it shuffles along his finger. Behind him, the wind spinner twirls silently.

PIANO MUSIC begins to play in the distance. Dylan looks to the open window, his head tilted.

Dylan quietly gets to his feet, holding the caterpillar and walks along the edge of the garden towards the cottage.

Dylan tiptoes along the wall of the cottage toward the open window. He gets on his knees and shuffles beneath it unseen. He sits cross legged, his back to the wall.

The PIANO PLAYS, the spinner twirls and the BREEZE RUSTLES through a large tree at the bottom of the garden. All the leaves wave.

The last of the sun illuminates the top of Dylan's head. He feeds a strawberry to the caterpillar on his finger.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, entranced. PANNING-UP to the open window, there is the shadowy outline of a man, back to the window, playing piano.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan drives with the sun shining on the top of his head. The BREEZE runs through his hair.

Dylan's fingers tap slowly and rhythmically on the steering wheel.

Dylan looks to his left. He leans forward and looks through the passenger window.

Through the window, on the hillside, is Stonehenge.

EXT. RURAL A-ROAD - DAY

AERIAL SHOT of Stonehenge. On the road beside is Dylan's Mini, pulling slowly past. Sunlight glints off the piano.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan's hands hold a page of road map against the steering wheel, his face frowning, eyes darting between map and road.

There is a vehicle twenty yards ahead of the Mini.

Dylan stares at the map, then back at the road.

The vehicle in front is very close, with brake lights on.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's foot slamming down the brake pedal.

The Mini stops inches from the car in front. There is a long line of slow moving traffic ahead.

Dylan leans over, looking up the road.

In the distance, by the side of the road, are two cars on the verge. There are TWO MEN SHOUTING. As the Mini approaches there is the sound of a CHILD CRYING.

One of the cars has crashed into the back of the other and two men argue. A LITTLE BOY stands alone on the grassy verge, CRYING. Getting closer, the ARGUING becomes comprehensible.

#1MAN

(Livid)

Do you *want* to kill yourself?

#2MAN

Listen, sunshine, it's up to you to keep a safe distance.

LITTLE BOY

(Crying)

Daddy.

#1MAN

Why the hell did you just stop like that?

#2MAN

You're liable. Your insurance company.

YOUNG BOY

(Crying)

Daddy.

#1MAN

Is that all you care about? Idiots like you shouldn't be allowed children.

#2MAN

This is your doing, not mine.

The Mini passes and the little Boy's CRYING PEAKS and FADES.

Dylan stares at his off-side wing-mirror.

CLOSE-UP of off-side wing-mirror: The two men gesticulate with their arms. The little boy stands with his hands on his head, crying.

MONTAGE - PIANO MUSIC PLAYS THROUGHOUT

-- MINI PULLS OFF THE A-ROAD AND ONTO A MORE RURAL ROAD

-- CLOSE-UP OF DYLAN'S FACE, CONTEMPLATIVE

-- CLOSE-UP OF THE COFFEE STAINED ROAD MAP PAGES ON THE SEAT

-- THE ROAD AHEAD GENTLY WINDS THROUGH BEAUTIFUL COUNTRYSIDE

-- PANORAMIC SHOTS OF THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE WITH THE PIANO GLIDING ALONG

-- CLOSE-UP OF A FLOWER

-- SUN SHINING DOWN BETWEEN THE LEAVES OF A LARGE TREE

-- CLOSE-UP OF A BUTTERFLY

-- A PERFECT BLUE SKY WITH FLUFFY CLOUDS

-- IN DYLAN'S CHILDHOOD GARDEN, MOVING VERY SLOWLY TOWARDS THE OPEN DOWNSTAIRS WINDOW OF THE COTTAGE. APPROACHING THE WINDOW, THE OUTLINE OF A MAN PLAYING PIANO CAN BE MADE OUT IN THE DARKENED ROOM

-- PIANO MUSIC IS SUDDENLY DROWNED OUT BY A LOUD HORN
(CONTINUES INTO NEXT SCENE)

END MONTAGE

INT. CAR - DAY

(LOUD HORN CONTINUES)

CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: a red car edges onto the other side of the road to overtake, then back to avoid on-coming traffic.

DYLAN (O.S.)

(To himself)

Idiot

The road ahead shows no more on-coming traffic.

Dylan puts his hand out the window and waves the car to pass.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: red car pulls up inches from the piano. Eventually it swings out to overtake and creeps alongside the trailer.

-- The road ahead goes round a bend.

-- CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: red car slowly pulling forward, then DEEP BOOMING HORN sounds

-- There is an on-coming truck, headlights flashing.

-- CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: red car drops back and swings behind the piano. The truck flies past. Red car's HORN combine's with the truck's HORN, making a DISCORDANT SOUND.

-- CLOSE-UP of Dylan's eyes, darting between road and wing-mirror.

-- CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: red car creeps back out and forward again. Once the bonnet is adjacent to the piano it starts to edge towards it.

-- CLOSE-UP of Dylan's wide eyes staring at wing-mirror. His ENGINE REVS LOUDLY.

-- CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: red car falls behind the piano, then edges towards it again until adjacent.

-- CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face perspiring, his eyes staring at his wing-mirror.

-- CLOSE-UP of the trailer's tyres moving to the edge of the road.

-- CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: red car almost touching trailer.

-- CLOSE-UP of trailer's wheels creeping over the edge of the road, gravel is kicked up.

-- Dylan's foot released from accelerator and slammed on brake pedal.

-- CLOSE-UP of rearview mirror: the piano rocks wildly from side to side.

-- Dylan's face, eyes wide. In the background the red car flies past, HORN BEEPING.

-- An open beer can flies from the red car's passenger window, spraying over Dylan's windshield before hitting it. The red car speeds off into the distance.

EXT. RURAL B-ROAD - DAY

Dylan wipes sweat from his forehead, staring straight ahead. He takes a deep breath.

The road ahead is clear. Off on the horizon are large hills and the afternoon sun descending.

Dylan turns on the radio, twisting the knob to tune.

NEWS READER

...was admitted to hospital today, and is thought to
be in a critical condition. A spokesperson for...

Dylan turns the knob to a music station with **ABRASIVE RAP MUSIC** on. Dylan turns the knob to the next station.

FEMALE PRESENTER

...an email from, *Widget*? Is that right? *Widget*? I'm
guessing that's not your real name! (LAUGHS)
Which is fine. As you know, here on Mandy's
Mid-Afternoon Natter we always respect your right
to anonymity. Anyway, back to the email, *Widget*
says:

(Changes her voice slightly)

"Dear Mandy, my husband has not seen his daughter from a previous relationship for nearly three years. I know they have never seen eye to eye, but I don't know how it's come to this. He won't talk to me about it but I can tell he's unhappy. All he does these days is sleep and work. I want to help. Is it none of my business? I can't help thinking he's just being stubborn. What should I do?"

(Back to usual voice)

Well, Widget, firstly I'd like to say that you've done the right thing emailing in today. Like I always say, (PATRONISING) the first step on the road to healing is *communication*. Now, obviously I don't know your husband personally, but I'm sure I speak for many girls out there when I say that you're not alone in having a man that won't talk about his problems! I always think that part of -

Dylan turns the radio off.

DYLAN

(To himself)

People actually listen to that shit.

The Mini begins an incline and REVS HARDER, slowing to a crawl.

CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: a small amount of fumes swirl round the piano.

Dylan's foot slowly presses the accelerator down.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Come on. Almost there.

The Mini struggles to the top, the road plateaus and the Mini picks up speed. There is a burst of POLICE SIREN and a flashing blue light.

CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: amid exhaust fumes is a police car.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Disbelief)

You're joking.

Dylan clicks his indicator on, pulls over and kills the engine. He stares ahead, still holding the wheel.

A small amount of steam creeps from the edges of the bonnet. Twenty metres along the road is a sign: "WELCOME TO DERBYSHIRE, HOME OF THE PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK. PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY" There are THREE KNOCKS on the window.

Dylan winds the window down slowly, the handle WHINING. A POLICE OFFICER, a middle aged man, peers in, examining front and back, his eyes narrowing.

Coffee stains the interior and streaks the windows.

The officer's eyes fix on Dylan then his face disappears as he stands upright again.

OFFICER (O.S.)

Would you like to step out of the vehicle, sir?

DYLAN

(To himself)

Not really, no.

The officer's face appears at the window again, eyes narrowed.

OFFICER

(Indignant)

Excuse me?

DYLAN

(Tired)

I said, absolutely, let's go.

EXT. RURAL A-ROAD - DAY

Dylan and the officer stand beside the road. The officer stands officiously upright, proudly holding a little notebook. He gives the trailer a judging look.

Dylan stands with hands in pockets, turned slightly away, staring at the horizon.

The road ahead is lined with trees which lean over, touching to create a tunnel of green. On either side of the road, the horizon is dramatic with rugged hills.

(THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION IS BARELY AUDIBLE AND INTERMITTENTLY DROWNED OUT BY PASSING VEHICLES. IT UNFOLDS WHILE ZOOMING IN ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY SLOWLY TO THE HILLS ON THE HORIZON WITH THE SOUND OF THE BREEZE)

OFFICER (O.S.)

Do you think this vehicle is road-worthy, sir?

DYLAN (O.S.)

It's just overheating.

Sound of cars ROARING past blocks out part of the conversation.

OFFICER (O.S.)

...least two things already that contravene the 1988
Road Traffic Act...

TRAFFIC NOISE

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

...to tell me why you think moving this piano is more important than abiding by legislation which everyone...

TRAFFIC NOISE

DYLAN (O.S.)

...my father. But it might be too late...

TRAFFIC NOISE

OFFICER (O.S.)

Oh. I see. (PAUSE) Well, have you telephoned?

DYLAN (O.S.)

He doesn't have one. I just have this letter.

Dylan hands over a piece of paper, then puts his hands back in his pockets and looks back to the horizon.

In the distance a huge flock of birds fly across the landscape slowly moving towards the horizon.

The officer reads the letter, then looks back at Dylan and straightens his posture.

OFFICER

I see. Well. I see your predicament. But protocol dictates that I seize your vehicle until such a time as you can make it road-worthy. As a police officer, it is my job to uphold the law and protect the public.

Dylan looks at the officer and then turns away.

The officer looks at the letter again and scratches the back of his head. His posture relaxes a little.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

You've not seen him in six years?

DYLAN (O.S.)

(Distant)

No.

The officer frowns at the Mini and then at the road ahead.

OFFICER

You barely made it up that last hill. I don't think it is safe for you to use this vehicle to tow this trailer any further. (PAUSE) I am prepared to let you continue in your vehicle, if you leave the trailer here. You can collect it when you have a suitable vehicle to do so.

Dylan turns and looks at the officer blankly

DYLAN

You don't understand. It's the piano that needs to get there, not me. There's no point me going on without it.

OFFICER

But surely...

The officer looks at the piano and then at Dylan sympathetically.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

I just don't think it's entirely safe.

Dylan leans against the Mini and looks across the landscape.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

How far have you come?

DYLAN

Cornwall.

OFFICER

(Disbelief)

Cornwall?

The officer looks at the piano, back at Dylan, then puts his notebook in his pocket.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Well, I can't say I understand your situation fully.

But I do sympathise. I have a son myself.

Dylan looks down to his feet and then back at the horizon.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

However, I also have a responsibility to keep this county's road safe.

Dylan looks up at the sky.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

You see that road sign up ahead?

Dylan lowers his head to look along the road.

The sign reads: "WELCOME TO DERBYSHIRE, HOME OF THE PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK. PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY"

DYLAN

(Resigned)

Yeah.

OFFICER

That sign there is where my jurisdiction ends. If you're able to get beyond that sign, then I suggest you do so now. From then on, I recommend you take it slowly and keep to quiet, rural roads that are not populated by jobs-worth police officers.

Dylan turns to face the officer.

The officer holds out the letter.

Dylan takes the letter. They stand in SILENCE for a moment.

The officer nods, his face serious, but compassionate.

Dylan returns to the Mini and opens the door.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

I hope you get where you need be.

Dylan looks up at the officer and nods.

DYLAN

Thank you.

The officer nods.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan indicates right, slowly pulls onto the road and away.

PIANO MUSIC PLAYS

CLOSE-UP of wing-mirror: The officer stands by the road, watching.

The road sign passes by on the left. As the Mini drives into the tree formed tunnel, the interior of the car is imbued with green and the acoustics change, everything sounds

closer. The engine PURRS blending with the sound of PIANO MUSIC and the BREEZE running through leaves.

EXT. A-ROAD - DAY

The tunnel of trees stretches into the distance. The BREEZE runs through the leaves, the Mini's ENGINE approaches.

The Mini and piano pass by, whooshing loose autumn leaves swirling into the air, then settling back on the road as the ENGINE FADES.

The sun shines through the leaves as the tunnel descends into pure calm green. The BREEZE WHISPERS.

DYLAN'S FATHER (V.O.)

(Weak)

Dylan. I write not knowing if this will reach you. I suspect the address I have is no longer current, but it is right that I attempt contact. I am unwell and whether you like it or not, you are my next of kin and will therefore be contacted when the time comes. I am tying up loose ends so that you won't have to, but doing such things by post is not easy these days. The world has moved on. (PAUSE)
Your tree is in bloom. I can see it in the garden as I write. It is remarkable how quickly nature takes over. The garden is now wild. Getting older, your world shrinks until you're left with just four walls and regrets. - Ron

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DAY (1987)

Young Dylan sits towards the bottom of the staircase in grey school shorts and a white shirt. He faces the front door, arms round his knees. Gentle PIANO MUSIC drifts from a nearby room. There are TWO GENTLE KNOCKS.

The silhouette of a person is in the stained glass of the front door. The door opens and MRS ROBINSON enters; a woman in her seventies with a kindly, gentle disposition.

MRS ROBINSON

(Loving)

Dylan! I hope you've not been waiting long.

Dylan stands, straight faced and shakes his head.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Would you like to help make dinner?

Mrs Robinson holds her hand out.

Dylan approaches and holds her hand. She leads him down the hall. As they pass the closed living room door, Dylan glances at it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

PIANO MUSIC plays in another room. Dylan sits on a kitchen chair, his hands in his lap. The kitchen blind is drawn, the room dim.

Mrs Robinson walks to the window and opens the blind.

A huge shaft of sunlight pours in, stretching across the sink, along the floor and up over Dylan, illuminating him as he watches Mrs Robinson.

Mrs Robinson opens the window. There is the sound of a BIRDS SINGING.

MRS ROBINSON

Now, *you* had a packed lunch. Do you know if your father has eaten today?

Dylan shrugs.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Okay then. Lets see what we can cobble together for you both. (PAUSE) How do you fancy jacket potatoes, cheese and tuna?

Dylan's eyes brighten, a faint smile glimmers across his illuminated face.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Now *that* is a look I know. Young man, I think we have a plan! Okay, are you feeling strong?

Dylan nods slowly.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Could you explore this cupboard for me?

Mrs Robinson opens a cupboard below the counter.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

I can't scabble around in awkward cupboards at my age anymore!

Dylan slides off the kitchen chair and sits cross legged on the floor in front of the cupboard, his hands in his lap.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Right, let me think. Can you find...two tins of tuna?

Dylan slowly peers into the cupboard, looking all around, hands in his lap. Eventually he reaches in and retrieves two tins of tuna.

Dylan looks up to Mrs Robinson, holding two tins of tuna.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Excellent!

Mrs Robinson takes the tins and puts them on the counter.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Okay, now we need potatoes. Is there a bag of potatoes in there too?

Dylan peers into the cupboard, his hands in his lap. He gets onto his knees and reaches to the back, pulls out a bag of potatoes with both hands and sits back down with them in his lap.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Now let's see if you can find a really big one for your dad, and a medium one for you.

Dylan begins examining each potato, carefully selecting two. He puts the bag back, stands up and holds them up for examination.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Very good. Nice big one for your dad too. He will appreciate that. Okay, now what do we do?

Dylan looks at the potatoes, then to Mrs Robinson with a frown. Then he earnestly looks to the sink.

Mrs Robinson smiles, turns the oven on and walks to the sink. Dylan follows and holds the potatoes up. Mrs Robinson places them by the sink and turns the tap on.

Dylan goes to the corner of the kitchen, picks up an empty bucket and carries it to the sink where he turns it upside down and puts one foot on it.

Mrs Robinson puts her hands under Dylan's arms and lifts him up onto the bucket.

MRS ROBINSON (CONT'D)

(Groaning)

My word! You get bigger by the day. You'll be a man before you know it.

Sunlight illuminates the running water. Dylan's little hands reach out, catching the water. The sound of RUNNING WATER mingles with the BIRDS SINGING and the PIANO MUSIC.

Mrs Robinson squirts liquid soap onto her hands, lathers them then cups Dylan's hands, gently rubbing them together.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, illuminated by sunshine, totally present, watching quietly.

Mrs Robinson's hands pull away from Dylan's slightly and Dylan's hands rub together under the water, glistening in the sunlight.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. CAR - DAY

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's hands on the steering wheel, illuminated in sunlight, thumbs stroking the wheel.

The road ahead winds round a hill. To the left is a huge valley, a river running through and dramatic, rugged hills beyond. A hazy golden sun is low in the sky.

Dylan looks out through the passenger window.

The road ahead winds between huge hills with streams cascading down, towering noble trees like guardians stand beside the road as the Mini begins to climb a hill.

In the distance over the valley a large bird glides through the air, alone and free above the river.

CLOSE-UP of the speedometer, slowly decreasing. The ENGINE REVS LOUDER.

CLOSE-UP of the temperature dial, the needle edging red.

Steam creeps from the edges of the bonnet as the car begins a gentle descent.

Dylan's foot slowly releases the accelerator and applies the brake. His other foot presses down the clutch.

Dylan's hand moves the gear stick into neutral.

The Mini glides serenely down the shallow descent, the sound of TYRES ON TARMAC.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, relaxed as the breeze dances through his hair.

On the road ahead is a lay-by. Dylan drifts the Mini calmly into it and comes to a standstill.

EXT. LAY-BY - DAY

The bonnet steams. Through the windscreen, Dylan leans down towards his feet. Far off, the bird CRIES. There is a CLUNK and the bonnet springs up slightly.

Dylan lifts the bonnet, props it open. The hillside breeze blows across the hot, steaming engine.

Dylan sits crossed legged on a rock overlooking the valley with an apple and a page of road map in his hand.

The lone bird glides and swoops in the distance.

Dylan places the apple on the rock and examines the coffee stained map. There is the sound of ROCKS CLUNKING against each other. Dylan looks over his shoulder.

On the other side of the road, climbing over a stone wall and onto the road is RUBY, a seventeen year old girl with a rucksack almost bigger than she is. She struggles down from the wall walks past the car, raising a hand self-consciously.

Dylan raises his hand.

Ruby keeps walking, then stops a little way past the front of the Mini. She looks at the engine, then at Dylan.

RUBY

Broken?

DYLAN

Kind of.

Ruby looks at the steaming engine and then at the trailer.

RUBY

What's with the piano?

DYLAN

(Defensive)

Taking it to my father.

Ruby stares.

RUBY

Good luck.

Ruby walks on. Dylan looks back out across the valley and bites into his apple.

The sun shines on Dylan's face as he chews slowly with his eyes closed.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DUSK (1987)

PIANO MUSIC plays distantly in another room as dusk sunlight illuminates the back wall of Dylan's childhood bedroom. In the centre is Dylan's shadow sat in the window.

The room is sparse, with only a mattress on the floor. There is a little pile of clothes neatly folded in the corner of the room.

The Sash window is pulled all the way up, Dylan sits outside it on the window ledge, legs dangling, with an apple in his hand. Beside Dylan is a Mimosa Pudica plant (Sensitive Plant) in a pot. Dylan runs the fingertips of his spare hand over the leaves, watching them slowly close in response.

The heels of Dylan's bare feet tap against the cottage wall.

The sun shines on Dylan's face as he takes a tiny bite out of the apple, chewing slowly.

A golden sun is setting in the distance above the hills.

In the garden below, a blackbird perches on a fence post.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, chewing slowly. Suddenly there is a MISTAKE in the piano music which then STOPS ABRUPTLY. Dylan stops chewing. The only sound is a BREEZE THROUGH LEAVES.

CLOSE-UP of the blackbird. Its head tilts to one side, listening, comprehending, waiting.

The PIANO MUSIC starts again, Dylan sits totally still. Eventually he starts to chew tentatively. There is another MISTAKE in the music and it STOPS ABRUPTLY.

Dylan's face is afraid, the apple drops from his hand and bounces off the windowsill.

The apple falls down, past the open living room window and SMACKS on the cracked path below.

CLOSE-UP of the blackbird FLAPPING LOUDLY and taking flight.

Dylan crosses his arms like a good boy and follows the blackbird with his eyes.

The blackbird flies off into the distance.

Dylan slams his eyes shut and clasps his hands over his ears.

CLOSE-UP of the green apple. ZOOMING OUT the apple lies on an uneven, neglected path with weeds sprouting through. There is total SILENCE. Then piano keys are ANGRILY THUMPED DISCORDANTLY five times. Then SILENCE.

CLOSE-UP of the fence post.

CLOSE-UP of the tree at the bottom of the garden, totally still.

CLOSE-UP of the underside of the apple, cracked where it hit the path.

Dylan's eyes open slowly. He looks from side to side then slowly pulls his hands away from his ears. All is still and SILENT.

Dylan's hand reaches to the Mimosa plant and touches the leaves gently. A DOOR SLAMS LOUDLY. Dylan hand jumps. SILENCE permeates.

CLOSE-UP of the Mimosa leaves closing slowly beside Dylan's finger.

CLOSE-UP of the fence post.

CLOSE-UP of the apple. There is the sound of Dylan quietly CRYING OUT and getting LOUDER.

CLOSE-UP of the Mimosa leaves, curled up.

Dylan pulls at his own hair. As he runs out of air, the CRY DIES. Dylan stares straight ahead with tears in his eyes.

Dylan's toes are curled and tense. Beyond is the path, blurred with the green apple on it.

The sun glows orange from the hills.

Dylan's shadow on the back wall of his bedroom is almost totally swallowed by sinking light.

Dylan stares out, tears in his eyes, dazed.

There is a small slither of sun above the horizon. It becomes blurry with tears and then closed into darkness as Dylan's eyes close. It is black.

In the blackness, Dylan HUMS, a continuation of the piano piece that had been playing.

Dylan sits upright in the window, his eyes closed, the palms of his hands planted on the window ledge.

Dylan's fingers go whiter as he applies weight on them.

Dylan's HUMMING gets more INTENSE. His bottom shuffles forward, closer to the edge.

Dylan's bare feet are pressed against the cottage wall, his toes curled.

Dylan's bottom shuffles forward a bit further.

CLOSE-UP of tears forming in the corners of Dylan's closed eyes.

Dylan's bottom shuffles forward a tiny bit, almost on the edge.

Dylan's elbows shake, his fingers white.

CLOSE-UP of a tear in the corner of Dylan's eye, reflecting the final arc of the sun. The tear releases and makes a slow descent down his smooth cheek.

Dylan's bottom shuffles forward, half hanging from the ledge.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's tear hanging from his chin. It releases and falls in SLOW-MOTION.

As the tear CRASHES into the path a BLACKBIRD SINGS SWEETLY.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's teary eyes opening and staring straight ahead. The song "BLACKBIRD" by THE BEATLES begins.

Perched on a branch of the large tree, the BLACKBIRD SINGS.

Dylan's head tilts slightly as if listening, comprehending, waiting.

LONG-SHOT of the cottage with Dylan in the window. The blackbird SINGS.

("BLACKBIRD" BY THE BEATLES CONTINUES THROUGH NEXT TWO SCENES)

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. LAY-BY - DAY

("BLACKBIRD" BY THE BEATLES CONTINUES FROM PREVIOUS SCENE)

The large bird rides currents of air over the valley, swooping and rising.

Dylan sits with the half eaten apple in his hand, watching.

Dylan stands up, takes one last bite from his apple and then throws it as far as he can into the valley.

Dylan looks at the car engine, then holds his hand just above it. He takes a deep breath and looks down the road.

In the distance Ruby trudges on slowly.

Dylan looks back at the engine and rubs the back of his head with a vague frown.

INT. CAR - DAY

("BLACKBIRD" BY THE BEATLES CONTINUES FROM PREVIOUS SCENE)

Dylan sits in the driver's seat, lowering the back all the way down.

The back rest touches the rear seat and stops.

Dylan winds down both of the front windows.

Dylan rests his head back against the seat, staring upwards. There is the quiet sound of a BREEZE running through the car.

There are spatters of coffee on the ceiling upholstery.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's eyes, closing drowsily.

("BLACKBIRD" SONG FADES OUT)

It is black. There is the sound of the BREEZE.

DREAM SEQUENCE SEEN FROM DYLAN'S POV AS A CHILD - CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - NIGHT

Dylan's bedroom is totally stripped bare. A naked light bulb hangs from the ceiling, shedding a dim, gloomy light over naked floorboards. There is an outline where the mattress once was.

The bedroom door is ajar. Dylan moves towards it, then stops.

The window is closed, it has no curtains and it is pitch black outside. Reflected in the glass is young Dylan with the dull light bulb above his head.

Dylan continues towards the door. Something CLATTERS across the wooden floorboards and STOPS.

Dylan's bare feet stand still on the floorboards, a plastic toy just in front of them.

Dylan's hand reaches down and as it picks the toy up it begins to play the TUNE "Row Row Your Boat".

Dylan's big toes rub slowly against the adjacent toes. The TUNE SLOWS and eventually STOPS.

Dylan holds the toy in one hand and uses his spare hand to tentatively open the door.

As the door opens, a shaft of light shines out onto the landing and staircase. PIANO MUSIC starts to play in the distance. Dylan steps out onto the landing.

Dylan is sitting on the stairs, his feet resting on the bottom step. His toes slowly grip and release the edge of it.

Straight ahead where the front door should be, is a brick wall.

Dylan stands in front of the living room door. His spare hand reaches out and carefully takes hold of the doorknob, then slowly turns it and pushes. The door does not open. He twists and pushes harder.

Dylan takes a step back and holds the toy in both hands.

The door frame has a warm light seeping through the edges.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's eyes, reflecting the oblong glow of the door frame.

DYLAN

(Whispered)

Dad?

Dylan steps forward, his fingers wrap around the doorknob very gently twisting and pushing.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Whispered)

Let me in. I need to come in.

PIANO MUSIC STOPS. The light around the door fades. Dylan opens the door.

Dylan enters the room. It is empty and unfurnished apart from curtains, flickering in the night breeze beside the open window. On the floor is a dust outline where the piano was.

Dylan stands in the kitchen. It is totally bare and all the cupboards are open and empty. The back door is open.

Dylan walks through the back garden and stands beside a fence post. He places the toy on it and turns to look at the house.

The house is dark. All the windows are boarded up. There is the sound of a BREEZE THROUGH LEAVES. Beyond the house in the distance, the hills are illuminated by the moon.

There is the sudden sound of FLAPPING WINGS. Dylan spins round.

The tree at the bottom of the garden has a BREEZE passing through it.

PANNING DOWN to the fence post, the toy is gone. Dylan's hand reaches out. As his fingertips touch the top of the wooden post, a BLACKBIRD SINGS.

The leaves in the large tree at the bottom wave gently in the BREEZE. Perched on a branch is a lone blackbird.

CLOSE-UP of the blackbird SINGING, its feathers gently ruffling in the breeze.

INT. CAR - DAY

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, his eyes closed. A BREEZE ruffles his hair. The far off bird CALLS OUT over the valley. Dylan's eyes open. He sits up.

Across the valley the sun is low in the sky, beneath clouds that drift. There is the sound of a CAR DOOR OPENING and then the sound of the BONNET CLOSING. Light floods into the car's interior. Sound of CAR DOOR CLOSING, followed by the ENGINE STARTING.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DAY

The Mini pulls onto the road and moves slowly into the distance.

Out across the valley clouds float in a pink sky, their shadows drifting silently across the hills, darkening and illuminating the landscape as they pass.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan has his left hand on the steering wheel, his other arm rests on the open window as he drives through the Peak District.

CLOSE-UP of the car radio being turned on. COUNTRY MUSIC plays and then STOPS as Dylan twists the knob until tuned into a station playing FLEET FOXES "Tiger Mountain Peasant Song".

**MONTAGE - 'TIGER MOUNTAIN PEASANT SONG' BY FLEET FOXES
CONTINUES THROUGHOUT**

-- THE ROAD AHEAD HAS TREES EITHER SIDE, CARESSING THE TARMAC WITH DAPPLED SHADE

-- DYLAN LOOKS STRAIGHT AHEAD. LIGHT AND SHADOW SWEEP ACROSS HIS FACE, HIS HAIR RUFFLED BY THE BREEZE

-- AS THE ROAD CURVES ROUND A HILL A GLORIOUS VISTA OPENS UP AHEAD WITH THE SUN JUST ABOVE THE HILLS IN THE DISTANCE

-- LONG SHOT OF THE GLORIOUS PEAK DISTRICT, GREEN HILLS AND AUTUMN TREES ROLLING OUT FOREVER. IN THE DISTANCE THE MINI GLIDES FORWARD WITH THE PIANO BEHIND

-- SHEEP ON A HILLSIDE STAND STARING

-- THE SHADOW OF THE PIANO SLIDES ALONG THE SUNNY HILLSIDE

-- CLOSE-UP OF THE WING-MIRROR REFLECTING DYLAN'S HAND RESTING ON THE WINDOW EDGE, TAPPING TO THE MUSIC

-- MOVING SLOWLY PAST A FIELD, A COW'S HEAD POPS UP FROM BEHIND A STONE WALL, STARING AND CHEWING GRASS. DYLAN'S HAND RAISES FROM THE WINDOW, A LITTLE WAVE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

-- DYLAN'S HEAD LEANS FORWARD, HIS EYES SQUINTING SLIGHTLY

-- IN THE FAR DISTANCE SOMEONE IS WALKING IN THE ROAD

-- DIRECTLY AHEAD, RUBY IS WALKING, HER RUCKSACK BOBBING UP AND DOWN. GETTING NEARER, RUBY TWISTS TO LOOK OVER HER SHOULDER

-- DYLAN TURNS THE MUSIC DOWN

INT. CAR - DAY

The Mini stops beside Ruby. Dylan leans forward.

DYLAN

You're meant to walk on the right in the countryside.

Ruby peers into the car, the sun setting behind her.

RUBY

(Dry)

Sure. Wouldn't want to get hit by all this traffic. It's mayhem.

The green hills roll on forever without a sign of humanity.

DYLAN

(Amused)

Absolutely. (PAUSE) Do you need a lift?

RUBY

(Defensive)

I dunno.

DYLAN

Where are you heading?

Ruby looks into the Mini.

The interior of the Mini is stained with coffee and strewn with pages of the road map.

RUBY

Somewhere.

DYLAN

That's a coincidence, I'm going somewhere too. I'll give you a lift if you like?

Ruby suppresses a smile.

RUBY

How do I know you're not some axe murderer looking for defenceless girls to kill?

DYLAN

(Sarcastic)

Yeah, all axe murderers drag a piano with them. We like to be inconspicuous.

Ruby rolls her eyes.

RUBY

Fine.

Ruby opens the passenger door. Dylan grabs all the loose pages of the road map and shoves them into the back.

DYLAN

You'll have to put your bag in the back with mine.

Ruby begins tugging on the passenger seat in vain.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

There's a thing, a lever, down the side.

RUBY

Oh.

Ruby presses the lever up, pulls the seat forward and starts shoving her huge rucksack into the back, struggling to fit it in.

DYLAN

You've got lot of stuff.

Ruby pushes the seat back which doesn't quite click. She shoves the seat angrily and gives up pushing.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Alright?

RUBY

(Irritated)

Fine.

Ruby gets into the Mini, cracking her head on the door frame. She sits down, her seat still tilted forward slightly.

DYLAN

Okay?

Ruby looks at Dylan, her face annoyed. She shoves her back hard against the seat three times until it clicks into place then looks up at Dylan with a smile.

RUBY

Much better. (PAUSE) Thanks.

Dylan smiles, amusement and curiosity.

Ruby looks out of the passenger window.

DYLAN

I'm Dylan.

Ruby looks at Dylan, trying to fit the name to the face.

RUBY

Ruby.

Ruby goes back to looking out of the passenger window.

DYLAN

So where are you heading?

RUBY

(Uninterested)

I said. Somewhere.

Dylan's head tilts slightly, watching Ruby.

Ruby rests her elbow against the window and her head in her hand.

DYLAN

(Hesitant)

Okay, well, I'm heading north, past Edale.

RUBY

(Uninterested)

Me too.

DYLAN

Right, okay. So I'll drop you off in Edale then?

RUBY

Okay.

Dylan starts the engine.

DYLAN

You going to put your seat belt on?

Ruby stares at Dylan blankly for a few moments, her emotions opaque. She CLUNKS her seat belt in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan drives. Ruby gazes through the passenger window. Dylan glances across, then back at the road. His thumbs tap the steering wheel impatiently.

DYLAN

So where are you from?

RUBY

Derby.

They sit in silence for a little while.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You good on the piano?

DYLAN

Haven't played in a long time.

Ruby stares straight ahead.

RUBY

Mum used to take me to piano lessons. But she wouldn't buy a piano until I got good. I had this crappy little keyboard to practise on. (PAUSE) I never got good.

DYLAN

You could always take it up again?

Ruby is looking back out of the passenger window.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

There's a train station in Edale. In case you need to get anywhere.

RUBY

Okay.

DYLAN

Or a B and B if you want one?

RUBY

I have a tent.

DYLAN

You're okay then?

RUBY

Mmm.

DYLAN

If you tell me where you're trying to get to I might be able to help.

Ruby looks straight at Dylan.

RUBY

You said you're taking the piano to your Dad? Is he a pianist or something?

DYLAN

(Hesitant)

Yeah. I guess he is. (PAUSE) Or was.

Ruby looks at Dylan intently.

RUBY

Okay...

Ruby looks out of the passenger window a while. Eventually She leans across and turns the radio on.

MONTAGE - MUSIC PLAYS THROUGHOUT

-- DYLAN DRIVES WITH BOTH HANDS ON THE WHEEL. THE WIND BLOWS THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOWS OF THE CAR, RUFFLING HIS HAIR.

-- RUBY HAS HER HEAD RESTING ON HER ARM WHICH RESTS AGAINST THE OPEN WINDOW. HER HAIR FLOWS IN THE WIND, THE SUN IS ON HER FACE

-- LONG SHOT OF THE MINI AND PIANO MOVING ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE, THE SUN ALMOST TOUCHING THE PINNACLE OF A HILL

-- CLOSE-UP OF THE WING MIRROR REFLECTING RUBY'S FACE, HER EYES WATCHING HERSELF, EMOTIONLESS

-- THE MINI MOVES PAST A SIDE ROAD TO THE RIGHT

-- DYLAN TALKING TO RUBY AND POINTING TO THE BACK SEAT

-- RUBY TAKES HER SEAT BELT OFF, TURNS ALL THE WAY ROUND SO SHE IS KNEELING ON HER SEAT AND REACHES INTO THE BACK, GATHERING PAGES OF STAINED ROAD MAP

-- DYLAN POINTS AT A SIDE ROAD TO THE LEFT AS THEY PASS IT BY AND THEN POINTS AT THE PAGES IN RUBY'S HANDS

-- RUBY IS LOOKING THROUGH THE CRUMPLED PILE OF PAGES IN HER HANDS, HOLDING THEM UP TO THE LIGHT TO SEE PAST COFFEE STAINS

-- DYLAN LEANS FORWARD AND POINTS UP INTO THE SKY

-- HIGH ABOVE THE CAR A LARGE BIRD OF PREY GLIDES AND CIRCLES OVER A COPSE

-- RUBY LEANS FORWARD AND POINTS WITH HER RIGHT HAND, SMILING

-- THE THROUGH WIND BLOWS THE PAGES OF ROAD MAP OUT OF RUBY'S HAND AND OUT OF THE WINDOW

-- LONG SHOT OF THE MINI, PAGES OF ROAD MAP FLUTTERING OVER THE ROADSIDE BARRIER AND INTO THE VALLEY

-- DYLAN LOOKS AT RUBY'S EMPTY HANDS, THEN THE PASSENGER WINDOW

-- RUBY LEANS OUT THE WINDOW, THEN SITS BACK DOWN LOOKING APOLOGETIC.

-- DYLAN LOOKS WORRIED

-- RUBY SMILES. SHE COVERS HER MOUTH WITH HER HAND AND TRIES TO STOP HERSELF LAUGHING

-- DYLAN LOOKS DISTRESSED

-- RUBY CAN'T CONTAIN HER LAUGHTER ANYMORE

END MONTAGE

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

On the side of a hill in the middle of nowhere, the Mini slows to a standstill. The ENGINE STOPS. Inside, Dylan sits with one hand on the steering wheel and the other running through his hair. The engine CLICKS as metal contracts.

INT. CAR - DUSK

Dylan stares straight ahead.

Ruby looks at Dylan, then looks ahead, nervously.

Out across the valley there is a glorious sunset over the hills in the distance with pink and orange clouds. THIS SHOT REMAINS THROUGHOUT FIRST PART OF THE CONVERSATION

DYLAN (O.S.)

(Angry)

You're coming. We're going to look until we find the page we need.

RUBY (O.S.)

It's gone.

DYLAN (O.S.)

What do you mean?

RUBY (O.S.)

Over the edge. In the valley, never to be seen again.

DYLAN (O.S.)

(Despondent)

So now we're lost.

RUBY (O.S.)

We already were.

Dylan sits frowning. Ruby looks bored.

DYLAN

How am I going to get back now? I can't find the way without a map can I?

RUBY

(Intentionally patronising)

Come on, *there's no "I" in team, Dylan.*

DYLAN

(Despondent)

No. (PAUSE) But if you jumble it up, there is "me".

RUBY

(Laughing)

You're an idiot.

DYLAN

(Despondent)

Thanks. I'm going to have a look anyway.

There is the sound of Dylan's DOOR OPENING and him WALKING around the car, then WALKING BACK. The door SLAMS SHUT. There is silence.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Sad)

I found a page.

RUBY

Yeah?

DYLAN

Yeah. But it's for North Wales.

Ruby looks at Dylan coyly as a smile creeps to the edges of her lips.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Trying to be serious)

Don't smile, this is your fault!

Ruby nods, trying to keep a straight face.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Do you have a mobile phone? The new ones have maps and internet and -

RUBY

(Interrupting)

Battery's dead.

DYLAN

Right. Okay.

Dylan rubs his face with his hands and takes a deep breath. He looks past Ruby towards the sun.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Well, sun's setting to our left still, so I guess we're still heading North.

RUBY

Someone's clever.

DYLAN

Can you keep an eye out for road signs?

RUBY

Okay.

Dylan starts the engine. Ruby gazes at the setting sun.

INT. CAR - DUSK

The Mini drives along an empty road, the sun is setting.

Dylan looks over at Ruby.

Ruby's head rests on her arm which rests on the open window. Her eyes are closed, her mouth ajar. The breeze flutters her hair, framed by the colourful dusk sky.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DUSK (1988)

Mrs Robinson is in the kitchen, stood at the sink washing the dishes. The kitchen window in front of her is open, BIRDS SING.

CLOSE-UP of the kitchen window. The sun is setting in the distance. RON is in the garden, his back to the window with a trowel in his hand.

Dylan sits on a kitchen chair. He slides off it and walks quietly out of the kitchen door.

INT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DUSK (1988)

Dylan stands in front of the living room door. His hand reaches out and carefully opens it.

The room inside is minimal, the only furniture is an armchair in the corner and a piano and piano stool, in the centre.

Dylan enters cautiously, eyeing the piano with curiosity. He wanders over to the closed living room window and looks out.

Through the window is the garden with Ron in the distance, bending down and pulling weeds.

Dylan walks to the piano and sits on the stool. He stares at the keys with his hands in his lap.

Dylan's right hand reaches out, his forefinger outstretched. It hovers over a key. Slowly his finger lowers and touches the key, resting softly on it. Very gently Dylan's finger presses the key, the NOTE plays softly.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, eyes wide. The NOTE FADES. Another NOTE PLAYS and FADES. Dylan's face shows extreme focus as NOTES PLAY and FADE. Then he plays TWO DISCORDANT NOTES together. Dylan glances over to the door.

Ron stands in the doorway, stern, watching.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face as he jumps, eyes wide.

Dylan's hands move away from the keys slowly.

Ron walks towards Dylan.

Dylan slowly slides off the stool, staring at his feet.

Ron walks behind Dylan and sits on the end of the stool. Dylan looks up hesitantly, Ron nods towards the piano.

Dylan's right hand reaches out cautiously and hovers over the keys.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, watching Ron.

Ron nods.

Dylan stretches out a finger, tentatively presses a key. A HIGH PITCH NOTE rings out and FADES.

Ron nods again.

Dylan's forefinger presses the NOTE again.

Ron's left hand plays a CHORD which harmonizes with Dylan's note.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, watching.

Dylan's finger plays the same NOTE and Ron plays the same CHORD.

Dylan's head tilts, listening. As the NOTES FADE, Dylan looks up and down the keys.

Dylan's forefinger moves down the piano a little bit and cautiously plays another NOTE.

CLOSE-UP of Ron's face with the faintest flicker of a smile as he plays another CHORD to accompany the new note.

Dylan's hand alternates between pressing three different NOTES. Ron's hand accompanies him with HARMONIC CHORDS.

In the doorway Mrs Robinson watches with a tea-towel in one hand and a plate in the other, smiling.

Golden dusk sun shines through the living room window, illuminating Ron and Dylan as NOTES and CHORDS ring out harmoniously and CONTINUE THROUGH NEXT SCENES

INT. GARDEN SHED - DUSK (1988)

(CHORDS CONTINUE FROM PREVIOUS SCENE)

Ron sits in the shed at a small table. He makes long incisions with a Stanley knife down the side of a Coke can.

Ron presses the ends of the Coke can so that the incisions fan out like a spherical propeller.

INT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DUSK (1988)

(CHORDS CONTINUE FROM PREVIOUS SCENE)

Dusk sunlight shines on the back wall of Dylan's bedroom. There is the shadow of Dylan's plant and above that, a round shadow hangs in the centre, causing light to dance across the wall.

Hanging in Dylan's window is the Coke can wind-spinner, twirling slowly and reflecting the dusk sunlight.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

(CHORDS CONTINUE FROM PREVIOUS SCENE)

Golden dusk sunlight illuminates the piano as it is pulled behind the Mini along the country lane. Beyond the piano, its shadow slides across the hill.

(CHORDS FADE OUT)

INT. CAR - DUSK

Dylan drives with dusk sunlight streaming in, illuminating his face. Ruby is MURMURING.

RUBY

(Pained)

No.

Ruby's head rests on her arm in the window, eyes closed. She lifts her head from her arm suddenly, looking at Dylan, then her surroundings. There is a small tear on her cheek which she quickly wipes with the back of her hand. She looks out of the passenger window.

DYLAN

You okay?

RUBY

I'm fine.

DYLAN

Bad dream?

Ruby continues to stare out of the window.

RUBY

(Sad)

I wish.

Dylan looks at Ruby, concerned. He then looks back to the road.

DYLAN

So what you going to do when I drop you off?

RUBY

Don't know. Tell me about you. Tell me about your family.

Dylan looks at Ruby seriously.

DYLAN

What do you want to know?

RUBY

(Enthusiastic)

I don't know. Tell me about your Dad, your Mum, anything.

Dylan glances at Ruby and then back to the road. He runs one hand through his hair.

DYLAN

(Detached)

My mother died when I was young. My father could barely look after himself, let alone me. I lived with him eighteen years and then I moved out.

RUBY

Who looked after you then?

DYLAN

There was a lady in the village, Mrs Robinson.
She'd come round. I still don't really know why. I
doubt my father would have asked for help.

RUBY

Do you hate him?

DYLAN

When I was eighteen, Mrs Robinson died. (COLD)
He refused to go the funeral. He wouldn't even
acknowledge it. He carried on like nothing had
happened. That's when I hated him. So I moved out.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DAY (1999)

In the centre of the kitchen is a large rucksack and a suitcase. Ron enters, stops and stares at it, emotionless.

Ron walks slowly and calmly through the house to the living room. He pushes the piano out of the room and down the hallway to the front door which he opens and continues to heave the piano out of the house.

EXT. FRONT GARDEN - DAY (1999)

Ron struggles, pushing the piano. Eventually he gets it out onto the path. He stands and looks at it a moment before gently covering the keys with the fall board and running his fingers over it. Ron enters the house. The front door closes quietly.

The piano stands alone on the garden path. A bumble bee HUMS. The piano stool CRASHES through the downstairs window, glass flying everywhere. The stool lands on its side in the grass beside the piano.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Ruby's pretty face gazes up at Dylan, illuminated by dusk sunlight.

DYLAN

I paid someone to pick me and the piano up and just left. (PAUSE) This is the first time I've been back since.

RUBY

Why now?

DYLAN

He's dying. I'm returning his piano.

RUBY

So you're going to make up?

DYLAN

No.

RUBY

No?

DYLAN

I'm just dropping the piano off.

RUBY

If you don't even try, then you're stupid. Really bloody stupid.

DYLAN

I'm stupid? This isn't my fault.

RUBY

It will be if you don't try.

Dylan glances over at Ruby, then back at the road.

RUBY (CONT'D)

(Distant)

You look at people and think '*they look normal, I bet they've got a normal life.*' But maybe everyone's as fucked up as each other.

DYLAN

Some people hide it better.

RUBY

(Distant)

Yeah.

Dylan glances at Ruby and then back at the road.

DYLAN

What about you? What's going on in your life?

As the car drives along the country lane there is the distant sound of an ALARM RINGING.

Ruby sits forward and looks all around.

RUBY

What's that?

The car goes round a bend and up ahead is a railway crossing with flashing red lights. Metal barriers slowly move down, blocking the road. The ALARM RINGS LOUDLY.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan applying the brakes.

The Mini stops just before the barrier.

Dylan and Ruby sit staring straight ahead.

DYLAN

Bet the train goes through Edale.

About twenty yards ahead, on the other side of the tracks, a beautiful fawn steps out from the trees by the side of the road. It stops in the middle of the road, leans down and sniffs the ground, then raises its head and looks straight at the car.

CLOSE-UP of the fawn's face, with large innocent eyes.

RUBY (O.S.)

(Matter-of-fact)

My Dad died yesterday.

LOUD TRAIN SLAMS past violently. The train ROARS past in front of the car, the sound mixing with the ALARM. Eventually the back of the train RATTLES off into the distance, leaving only the ALARM SOUND. The fawn is gone.

The ALARM STOPS and the barriers CLUNK up into an upright position. It is SILENT.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You can go now.

Dylan looks across at Ruby.

Ruby puts her arm down on the open window and rests her head on it, looking out. The Mini moves slowly on, driving through the hills. They are quiet for a while.

DYLAN

Do you want to talk about it?

RUBY

It doesn't matter.

DYLAN

It matters.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK (PIANO MUSIC PLAYS THROUGHOUT)

LONG SHOT of the Mini driving through the Peak District, the sun low in the sky.

CLOSE-UP of Ruby's face resting on her arm in the window.

CLOSE-UP of the off-side wing mirror: Ruby is looking into the distance, then looks directly into the mirror, at herself. Tears build in her eyes. Eventually they are freed and pushed across her cheeks by the BREEZE. She continues to stare at herself for a long time.

LONG SHOT of the Mini driving slowly through the Peak District, the setting sun straight ahead.

(PIANO MUSIC ENDS)

INT. CAR - DUSK

Dylan is driving. He glances towards Ruby, then reaches across to the glove box, retrieves a packet of tissues and hands them to her.

Ruby sits up straight and takes a deep breath.

RUBY

Thanks.

Ruby dabs her eyes and cheeks, looking straight ahead.

As the Mini rounds the corner of a hill, a beautiful view of hills and a valley with a river opens up in front.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Dad would to bring me out here, when I was young.
(PAUSE) I guess we've both not been here for a
while.

DYLAN

Yeah.

The sky ahead is a beautiful mixture of pink, orange and blue as the sun sets before them.
The Mini approaches a crossroads and slows to a halt in the middle of the road.

Dylan leans forward and looks right to left.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

I guess it's all guesswork and hope from now on.

RUBY

(Hesitant)

Yeah.

DYLAN

The sun's straight ahead. So I guess we go right.

Dylan points right.

RUBY

(Thoughtful)

Sounds about right.

The Mini turns right and starts driving along a country lane, flanked by stone walls. The
lane gradually narrows.

Ruby gazes out of the passenger window longingly.

The sunset on the horizon is beautiful.

The road ahead narrows further, now too narrow to turn in.

Dylan glances at the rear-view mirror.

CLOSE-UP of rear-view mirror: the piano fills the view.

Dylan looks back to the road, frowning.

DYLAN

I hope we made the right choice.

Ruby looks up at Dylan like a little girl, worried and guilty.

RUBY

(Sincerely)

I'm sorry.

Dylan glances across at Ruby, confused.

RUBY (CONT'D)

The map.

DYLAN

(Unconvincing)

We'll be fine.

RUBY

(Afraid)

I hope so.

Dylan's thumb taps the steering wheel nervously as he drives.

The Mini descends a small hill. At the bottom is a lot of standing water.

DYLAN

You might want to put your window up.

Ruby winds her window up as the Mini speeds up.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

The Mini pulls the piano down the hill, accelerating and REVVING LOUDER. It ploughs through the water which sprays up in two beautiful arches from each side of the car. The Mini drags the Piano out of the water and up the shallow incline on the other side.

INT. CAR - DUSK

Reaching a plateau, the engine begins to CHUG.

Dylan frowns. The engine gets QUIETER.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's foot pressing the accelerator slowly down to the floor as the engine FADES TO SILENCE.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

The Mini drifts SILENTLY onto the grassy verge beside the road. The sun has almost completely gone down in the distance. The sky is beautiful.

On the opposite side of the road is woodland.

CLOSE-UP of the piano, streaked with muddy water. CRICKETS CLICK in the distance.

INT. CAR - DUSK

Dylan and Ruby stare straight ahead. Dylan strokes his stubble. Ruby bites her bottom lip.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's hand turning the ignition key. The engine CLICKS and then stops. Dylan turns the key again - nothing.

Dylan and Ruby stare ahead, deep in thought.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's hand surreptitiously turning the ignition key again - nothing.

DYLAN

Can you open the glove-box? My RAC card's in there somewhere.

Ruby leans forward, opens the glove-box and rummages, collecting a pile on her lap; torch, car manual, mints, copy of 'Catcher in the Rye', old cassette tape, sunglasses, receipts, pen and eventually a scruffy RAC card which she passes to Dylan.

Dylan reaches into his pocket and retrieves an old Nokia phone.

RUBY

That's old.

DYLAN

(Distracted)

Yeah.

Dylan types in the number on the card and holds the phone to his ear. Then looks at the phone, frowning.

RUBY

Signal?

Dylan glances at Ruby and then back at his phone.

DYLAN

Yeah.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

Dylan exits the car with the mobile. He holds it high in the air and stares at the screen.

Ruby winds her window down and leans out.

RUBY

You get better signal if you hold it against your head.

Standing a few yards in front of the Mini, Dylan holds it to his head a few moments and then glances at the screen. He shakes his head at Ruby. He turns a full circle looking at the surrounding area, then back at the Mini.

Dylan takes a few steps back from the car, then runs towards it, leaping onto the bonnet and then up onto the roof which dents in the middle. Dylan holds the phone high in the air and stares at the screen.

INT. CAR - DUSK

Ruby bites her thumbnail.

CLOSE-UP of the coffee stained car ceiling, dented in the middle as LOUD STEPS pace around.

Ruby looks down at her feet. Past her face, through the passenger window, the last of the sun is setting. Ruby looks up at the ceiling and then opens her door.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

Ruby exits the car and looks up to where Dylan is. She covers her mouth, smiling.

Dylan stands on the roof, on tip-toes with the mobile phone held to the top of his head like an antenna.

DYLAN

(Concentrating)

I don't...think...it's going to work.

Ruby turns away, quietly laughing.

Dylan lowers his gaze to look at Ruby, still holding the phone on his head.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Confused)

What?

Ruby looks back and bursts out laughing.

RUBY

(Attempting seriousness)

No, this is very serious.

DYLAN

(Defensive)

It is serious.

Dylan's eyes look up at his hand holding the phone to his head, then looks down at his feet on tip-toes and laughs.

Ruby's laughter bursts forth, uncontrolled.

As the laughter dies down, Dylan sits down on the roof, takes a deep breath and looks all around.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Come up. The view is beautiful.

Ruby climbs up onto the bonnet.

Dylan stands up and extends his hand to Ruby who grasps it and is helped onto the roof.

PANORAMIC SWEEP of the beautiful dusk landscape, the sky a mix of colours with the sun nestling into the hills.

RUBY (O.S.)

Maybe someone will come past?

DYLAN (O.S.)

(Thoughtful)

Maybe. (PAUSE) But I think we've passed more
trains than cars.

RUBY (O.S.)

(Amused)

That's true.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

CRICKETS CLICK in the undergrowth. Far off west the last golden glow of the sun is
sinking into the hills, the sky a pallet of colours. We watch wisps of clouds drift serenely
across the landscape as Dylan and Ruby talk.

DYLAN (O.S.)

(Serious)

Are you dead?

RUBY (O.S.)

Not yet.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Close?

RUBY (O.S.)

Closer than most.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Do *you* like yourself?

RUBY (O.S.)

Yes.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Hmm. Are you sure I know you?

RUBY (O.S.)

If you don't know me I'll hit you.

DYLAN (O.S.)

That's not part of the game.

RUBY (O.S.)

It is now.

DYLAN (O.S.)

I give up.

RUBY (O.S.)

Dylan.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Yeah?

RUBY (O.S.)

Yeah.

DYLAN (O.S.)

What?

RUBY (O.S.)

That's it.

DYLAN (O.S.)

What?

RUBY (O.S.)

Bob fucking Dylan! I was thinking of Bob Dylan!

ZOOMING OUT, Dylan and Ruby are sat back to back on the roof of the Mini, silhouetted by the setting sun in the distance.

DYLAN

(Amused)

Damn. Yeah, I should've got that.(PAUSE) Aren't you too young to like Bob Dylan?

RUBY

That's a really stupid thing to say.

DYLAN

(Thoughtful)

Yeah. (PAUSE) Well said.

LONG SHOT of Dylan and Ruby sat back to back on the top of the car. Crickets CLICK.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

I don't think anyone is going to come past.

RUBY

(Sarcastic)

No shit.

DYLAN

(Thoughtful)

When I was a kid, Mrs Robinson used to say the quickest route to luck, is generosity.

RUBY

(Calm)

Karma and all that.

DYLAN

Yeah. (PAUSE) Tell you what, if someone comes past in the next hour I'll give you the car.

RUBY

Sounds fair.

DYLAN

Once I've got the piano to my Dad's.

RUBY

You drive a hard bargain, but okay.

Silhouette of Dylan and Ruby back to back on the car.

DYLAN

We're not seriously hoping someone's going to come past are we?

RUBY

I am now, I might get your car.

DYLAN

(Playful)

I knew it. You only want me for my car.

RUBY

Bloody hitchhikers.

DYLAN

No one's going to come are they?

RUBY

No

DYLAN

Unless someone else gets lost and comes this way
by accident.

RUBY

It'd be pretty rare. Two people to get lost in the
same place at the same time.

Silhouette of Dylan and Ruby's heads slowly leaning back and resting against each other.

DYLAN

(Thoughtful)

Yeah.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DUSK

The sky is deep blue. Stars peek through.

Dylan lies on his back on the car roof, staring at the sky. Ruby is leaning into the car,
through the passenger door. She stands up with a torch in her hand, CLICKS it on and
shines it at Dylan's face. He covers his eyes with his hand.

RUBY

Wood?

DYLAN

What?

RUBY

If we're here until morning then I'm making a fire.
I'm starving.

DYLAN

You serious?

Ruby holds the torch to her chin.

CLOSE-UP of Ruby's face, a picture of exaggerated seriousness, illuminated with light.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

From where?

Ruby shines the torch across the road at the woodland.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- LONG SHOT of a bonfire on the grassy verge beside the piano. The car's bonnet is propped open. There is the silhouette of Dylan and Ruby and a small tent behind them.

-- CLOSE-UP of a bonfire. Branches CRACKLE and POP.

-- Dylan and Ruby sit side by side on a roll-mat beside the fire, their faces illuminated by flickering light.

-- CLOSE-UP of a branch ROARING into flame.

-- A stick pokes at two tinfoil wrapped potatoes in the periphery of the fire.

-- Ruby has a plate in her lap with a baked potato and a small heap tomato ketchup beside it. She cuts a piece, puts it into her mouth, then passes the plate to Dylan.

-- CLOSE-UP of Dylan chewing and staring, the flames reflected in his eyes.

-- LONG SHOT of the bonfire in the distance, Ruby and Dylan leaning back on their elbows beside it.

-- The muddy piano is illuminated by flickering flames.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - NIGHT

Dylan and Ruby sit on the roll mat, staring at the fire.

RUBY

So you play then?

Dylan glances up at Ruby and then the piano.

DYLAN

I used to.

RUBY

Not anymore?

DYLAN

My father taught me. Haven't played since I left.

Ruby looks at the piano and then to Dylan.

RUBY

Play something.

DYLAN

Now?

RUBY

Yeah.

DYLAN

I don't think so.

RUBY

Go on.

DYLAN

I don't want to.

RUBY

I won't judge you.

DYLAN

Everyone judges everyone.

RUBY

(Thoughtful)

Yeah. (PAUSE) But I'll judge you worse if you don't.

DYLAN

(Amused)

No.

RUBY

Go on.

DYLAN

(Serious)

No. I really don't -

RUBY

(Interrupting)

I'm just going to keep asking until you do. I don't care what. Just something. Anything. It doesn't matter.

Dylan stares into the fire. He rubs his face and runs his hand through his hair. Eventually he stands up and slowly walks to the piano.

Dylan stands in front of the piano looking at it with his arms by his side. He lifts the lid, then puts his hands in his pockets and watches the keys.

Ruby sits beside the fare with her knees drawn up to her chest and her arms wrapped around them. She stares at Dylan, her head tilted, fascinated.

Dylan's fingertips gently rest on the keys, feeling them. He pulls one hand away and strokes his stubble, then the hair on the back of his head.

Dylan's fingers rest on the keys and start to PLAY "RADIO BALLETT" by ELUVIUM.

SERIES OF SHOTS WHILE THE MUSIC PLAYS

-- ZOOMING OUT SLOWLY from Dylan's fingers, revealing his arms, the piano, the car, the fire and Ruby watching.

-- CLOSE-UP of the CRACKLING fire.

-- LONG SHOT of Dylan's silhouette stood at the piano, the hills in the background below a starry sky.

-- CLOSE-UP of the side of Dylan's face, illuminated by flickering light.

-- SIDE SHOT of Ruby sat with her knees drawn up to her chest and her chin resting on them, watching the fire.

-- AERIAL SHOT of the fire, the piano, Dylan and Ruby.

-- CLOSE-UP of flames waving.

-- CLOSE-UP of Ruby's face, eyes watery as she stares into the fire.

-- As the MUSIC FINISHES, Ruby rests her cheek on her knee, her face turned away.

Dylan sits down beside Ruby and watches the fire.

Ruby runs her sleeve over her face and then turns her head and looks at Dylan, her eyes a little red.

Dylan looks up at Ruby.

Ruby gives Dylan a little nod, then looks back to the fire.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - NIGHT

Dylan and Ruby lie half in, half out of the pop-up tent, staring up at the sky. Dylan is propped up on his elbows while Ruby lies flat on her back. An opened sleeping bag is draped over their legs in the tent. The bonfire CRACKLES.

A vague trail of smoke drifts lazily up into a night sky, peppered with stars and wisps of moonlit cloud.

DYLAN (O.S.)

(Quietly)

It's hard to believe stuff can go wrong under a sky like this.

RUBY (O.S.)

(Thoughtful)

Dad would bring me camping out here when I was a kid. (PAUSE) Mum had these times when she was a total bitch, so Dad would take me away for a few days. On the way, we'd always stop in Matlock Bath for fish and chips. Dad always asked to put his own salt on because they never put enough on. We'd go to the bench by the river and eat them.

The fire CRACKLES and HISSES. Smoke reaches up to the stars.

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

Do you think when you die, your whole life flashes before your eyes?

DYLAN (O.S.)

I hope not.

CLOSE-UP of Ruby's face, looking up at the stars.

LONG SHOT of the makeshift campsite with Ruby and Dylan looking up at the stars.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Mrs Robinson used to say the purpose of life is to collect beautiful memories. (PAUSE) I remember the twinkle in her eye when she said that. Like she knew that moment would be one of those memories. (PAUSE) What's your favorite memory about coming here with your Dad?

CLOSE-UP of the grass nearby with little daisies and buttercups, flickering in the light.

RUBY (O.S.)

We'd always collect wild flowers together to make into a bunch. We never talked, just showed each other the flowers as we picked them. I remember I'd hold a flower up and then watch his mouth, waiting for the smile. It was the smile I liked, more than the flower. (PAUSE) Once we had enough, I'd find a thick piece of grass and Dad would tie the flowers with it. We'd take it home to Mum to cheer her up. (PAUSE) I never thought she deserved it.

DYLAN (O.S.)

She really that bad?

CLOSE-UP of Ruby's face, looking up at the sky.

RUBY

I didn't find out Dad had cancer until two months ago. She kept it from me.

The flames fire upwards from the wood.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Does she know where you are now? That you're okay?

RUBY (O.S.)

No.

CLOSE-UP of Ruby's face, looking up at the sky.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Ever since I can remember, I've always hated saying goodbye. I used to think if you said goodbye to someone, you might never see them again.

Ruby frowns.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I never said goodbye to Dad.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's head turning to the side, looking towards Ruby.

CLOSE-UP of Ruby's face, her head resting on the grass. She is looking straight up at the night sky. Her eyes close and a single tear rolls down her temple and into her hair.

LONG SHOT of the make-shift campsite in the distance, the bonfire a pile of glowing embers.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan looking up at the sky.

The sky is a million stars.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Promise me you'll go home to your mum. You need your family.

The fire glows orange.

Dylan glances over his shoulder.

Ruby is lying with her eyes closed.

Dylan sits up and turns the sleeping bag round so it is completely covering Ruby.

Dylan shuffles down into the tent on his back with just his head out. He looks up at the sky.

The sky is a million stars.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - MORNING

The bonfire lies dormant with the odd wisp of smoke rising up. BIRDS SING NEARBY.
The sun shines brightly.

LONG SHOT of the make-shift campsite. The car's bonnet is still open.

Dylan and Ruby are lying in the tent on their sides with their heads poking out.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - MORNING

Small flames come up from the bonfire. It CRACKLES.

Dylan sits beside the fire, poking at a tinfoil potato with a stick. There is the sound of Ruby MOVING IN THE TENT.

Ruby rolls onto her front and stares at the fire.

DYLAN

Potato?

Ruby rolls onto her side.

RUBY

(Croaky)

I've been called worse.

Dylan smiles and continues to poke at the fire.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - MORNING

Dylan stands on top of the mini, shielding his eyes from the sun and looking around.

Ruby sits beside the fire, eating a bit of potato.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Nothing. No houses, no landmarks, no nothing.

RUBY

I need to pee.

Ruby stands up and walks across the road, climbs over the stone wall and disappears.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - MORNING

Ruby climbs back over the wall and walks across the road.

Dylan is leaning against the wing of the car looking at his phone. The bonnet is open.

Ruby slumps into the driver's seat with her feet still on the road.

RUBY

Maybe we should walk.

DYLAN

Maybe we should go back and follow the train tracks.

RUBY

Okay.

Dylan puts his phone in this pocket, still leaning on the wing of the car.

Ruby lazily reaches into the car and turns the ignition key. The engine SPLUTTERS and then ROARS to life.

Dylan stands up and stares at the engine, then at Ruby.

Ruby's face lifts to look at Dylan, one eye brow raised.

Dylan steps back, smiling and shaking his head.

DYLAN

(Playful)

Don't look at me like that. I tried that already.

RUBY

(Teasing)

Sure you did.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - MORNING

The remnants of the bonfire smokes weakly.

Through the windscreen, Dylan and Ruby are sat in the front of the Mini. Dylan revs the engine LOUDLY a few times. Ruby gazes out of the passenger window.

DYLAN

I guess we should get going.

RUBY

(Deep in thought)

Yeah.

DYLAN

You alright?

Ruby glances up at Dylan and then straight ahead.

RUBY

Yeah. (PAUSE) Thanks.

DYLAN

You want me to drop you off in Edale?

RUBY

Yeah.

Dylan nods and the Mini pulls forward, onto the road and away.

The remnants of the fire smokes gently next to the flattened patch of grass where the tent was. The ENGINE SOUND FADES.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan is driving. The ENGINE CHUGS. Dylan points straight ahead.

DYLAN

There!

Ahead is a road sign for "Edale".

Ruby looks up and then stares out of the passenger window.

The Mini takes the road to Edale and drives slowly along the country lane. Eventually they pass a sign that says "Welcome to Edale".

They pull off the road and into a petrol station. The car stops by a pump.

EXT. PETROL STATION - DAY

Dylan exits the car.

Dylan places the pump into the Mini.

The pump metre rolls upwards to "£29.96" and stops. Then edges up slowly to "£29.99" stops. And then jumps to "£30.01".

DYLAN (O.S.)

(To himself)

Every bloody time.

Dylan open's the driver's door and leans in.

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

Do you want anything?

RUBY (O.S.)

No thanks. (PAUSE) Oh, yeah. Can you get me a coffee?

DYLAN (O.S.)

How do you have it?

RUBY (O.S.)

Milk, no sugar. Please. I'll give you the money.

DYLAN (O.S.)

It's fine, I'll get it.

RUBY (O.S.)

(Determined)

No. (PAUSE) I need to pay. Here.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Okay.

Dylan stands up and walks towards the shop. In the window is a sign that says: "Costa Coffee Available Here" Dylan enters.

INT. PETROL STATION SHOP - DAY

MUSIC PLAYS on the radio as Dylan walks over to the coffee machine and proceeds to make two cups of coffee.

Dylan walks over to the counter with the coffees.

The cashier is a woman in her twenties. She smiles.

DYLAN

Number four please.

CASHIER

Thirty pounds and a penny?

DYLAN

Please. And the coffees

CASHIER

That'll be thirty-four pounds and a penny please.

Dylan hands her two twenty-pound notes.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Thank you.

The till opens.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Dylan?

Dylan looks at the cashier, confused.

DYLAN

Erm, yeah...

CASHIER

It's Emma. (PAUSE) We went to school together? I knew I recognized your face!

DYLAN

Oh. Oh yeah, sorry.

CASHIER

Don't worry, I wouldn't remember me either!

DYLAN

It's been while.

CASHIER

It has. It really has. So you managed to get away then? God I wish I could escape this place. Where did you go?

DYLAN

Oh, to Nottingham, then moved down south.

CASHIER

Lucky you. I swear this place never changes. I was going to go to uni but dropped out of A-Levels. I keep meaning to go back, but you know, life gets in the way.

DYLAN

Yeah. It does that.

Emma hands Dylan his change.

CASHIER

What's with the piano?

DYLAN

Oh. I'm bringing it to my father. (PAUSE) Anyway,
it's good to see you again.

Dylan picks up the two coffees, holds them up and smiles.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

Thanks.

CASHIER

Yeah. Good to see you.

The cashier smiles and watches Dylan leave.

EXT. PETROL STATION - DAY

Dylan exits the petrol station shop and walks across the forecourt, watching the coffees, careful not to spill them.

Dylan places the coffees on the Mini's roof, then opens the driver's door. He picks up the coffees and bends down into the car.

The passenger seat is empty.

Dylan stands up and looks around.

The forecourt is empty.

The backseat of the Mini has only Dylan's bag on it.

Dylan stands with the two coffees, looking confused.

The road beside the petrol station is empty.

Dylan places the two coffees on the ground beside the car and sits on the driver's seat, his feet on the forecourt. He looks into to the car again.

Resting against the speedometer behind the steering wheel is a small bunch of wild flowers, tied together with a piece of grass.

Dylan picks up the flowers. They are delicate and colourful.

Dylan's looks at the flowers, then up at the road beside the petrol station.

On the road is a sign for the train station.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, affectionate.

Dylan reaches into the back of the car and retrieves a half empty bottle of water.

Behind the handbrake is a plastic cup holder which Dylan pours water into. He rests the bunch of flowers in it.

SIDE-VIEW of the Mini, the ENGINE STARTS. The car pulls off, the piano passes, leaving a view of the two cups of coffee, side by side on the forecourt.

INT. CAR - DAY

The engine WHINES and GRUMBLES as Dylan drives, staring straight ahead, deep in thought.

Driving out of the village, the Mini passes a road sign saying "Thank you for driving carefully".

SERIES OF SHOTS WITH PIANO MUSIC

-- The road ahead winds slowly, passing an occasional cottage

-- LONG SHOT of the Mini pulling the piano along a rural lane

-- CLOSE-UP of the piano moving along a rural road. It is splattered with mud

-- CLOSE-UP of the bunch of flowers in the drink holder

-- Far ahead in the distance is Dylan's childhood cottage

-- CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, staring straight ahead

-- CLOSE-UP of the speedometer reading 40 mph

-- The Mini drives up a long hill

-- The speedometer slowly decreases from 40 mph to 20 mph

-- Thick black fumes plume from the exhaust, engulfing the piano

-- There are a couple of BANGS and the Mini drifts to a standstill, beside the road

-- CLOSE-UP of the rearview mirror: black smoke billows around the piano

INT. CAR - DAY

Dylan stares straight ahead, holding the steering wheel.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DAY

The Mini stands still by the side of the road. There is the distant sound of BIRD SONG.

In the distance is Dylan's childhood cottage.

The driver's door opens, Dylan gets out and stands in the road. He looks at the piano and then up at the cottage in the distance.

EXT. PEAK DISTRICT - DAY

The cottage in the distance moves closer extremely slowly. There is the sound of SLOW FOOTSTEPS.

Dylan stands behind the trailer, his hands on the piano, pushing it slowly along the lane.

LONG SHOT of the Mini beside the road. Dylan is about fifty yards ahead of it, pushing the piano past a little red Royal Mail post box.

Dylan's childhood cottage is getting slowly closer. There is the sound of the TRAILER ROLLING and a BREEZE THROUGH LEAVES.

Dylan pushes the piano, dripping with sweat. PANNING SLOWLY SIDEWAYS: the trees stand with leaves RUSTLING IN THE BREEZE all waving together. PANNING SLOWLY BACK: Dylan has moved along the road just a couple of metres.

EXT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DAY

There is the front of Dylan's cottage. The curtains are drawn. The downstairs window is boarded up.

Dylan stands beside the piano, sweat pouring.

In the grass below the boarded window is the rotting piano stool among shards of broken glass.

Dylan rubs the sweat from his face and takes a deep breath.

Dylan's knuckles KNOCK on the front door. He turns around and looks at the surrounding land.

The leaves in the trees on the other side of the road RUSTLE IN THE BREEZE and wave together.

Dylan's knuckles KNOCK HARDER on the front door.

The leaves in the trees RUSTLE IN THE BREEZE and wave.

Dylan's hand reaches out and tries the door handle. The door opens.

INT. CHILDHOOD COTTAGE - DAY

Dylan stands in the dark hallway. It is SILENT.

DYLAN

(Apprehensive)

Hello?

Dylan takes a couple of steps towards the staircase and looks up.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Apprehensive)

Hello?

Dylan CREAKS up the staircase, along the landing and slowly opens his old bedroom door.

The bedroom is as he left it, empty but for a mattress on the floor.

Dylan walks down the hallway and opens his Dad's bedroom door.

The room is dark. There is a double bed with no bedclothes on. The room is scattered with clothes and mess. The curtains are drawn.

Dylan CREAKS down the staircase, past the closed living room door towards the kitchen door which he opens.

The kitchen is dim, the blinds drawn. Cups, plates and rubbish are everywhere.

Dylan turns back and stops at the living room door. His hand reaches out, fingers resting on the handle for a long time. Eventually he turns it and the door opens.

The room is dim and dusty. Dylan steps in slowly. Dust floats in the air, illuminated by a shaft of light firing between the curtains of the open window.

In the far corner of the room is a pile of blankets. Beside that is an armchair with Ron in, slumped, head bowed, chin against his chest.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, staring.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Childlike)

Dad?

Ron does not move.

Dylan steps forward.

DYLAN (CONT'D)

(Weak)

Dad?

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face, hand covering his mouth.

RON (O.S.)

(Weak)

Dylan?

Dylan's eyes widen.

Ron lifts his left hand and rubs his eyes with his fist.

RON (CONT'D)

(Weak)

I wasn't expecting you.

Ron looks at Dylan, squinting.

RON (CONT'D)

Help me up.

Dylan approaches cautiously, reaches out to Ron's right hand.

RON (CONT'D)

Not that one. Just the left now.

Dylan reaches to Ron's left hand helps him up onto his feet. Ron stands with one arm limp by his side. Dylan steps back a couple of steps.

The two men face each other, the shaft of light between them.

CLOSE-UP of Dylan's face.

CLOSE-UP of Ron's face. Sound of Dylan WALKING AWAY. Ron frowns. Eventually there is the sound of WHEELS ON WOOD. Ron's face tenses slightly, as if in pain. WHEELS GETS NEARER. Ron's head shakes slowly, disbelieving. The ROLLING STOPS.

The piano stands between the two men, keys illuminated by the shaft of light.

DYLAN

(Nervous)

I thought I should bring you your piano.

CLOSE-UP of Ron's face, staring at Dylan.

RON

(Weak)

You brought more than that.

Ron steps in front of the piano. His left hand reaches out, touching the keys. His forefinger presses a key, the NOTE RINGS and FADES. He plays the first NOTE of "RADIO BALLETT"

Dylan plays a CHORD that harmonizes.

Ron plays the FIRST TWO NOTES OF "RADIO BALLETT" and they FADE.

Ron looks up at Dylan and then down at the keys. Slowly, they begin to play "RADIO BALLETT" together, two hands playing one piece.

The narrow shaft of light shines through the dusty room, illuminating father and son.

ZOOMING OUT of the open window, the MUSIC PLAYS. We see father and son in the room, surrounded by the cottage and then the garden. The PIANO MUSIC mixes with the sound of a BREEZE THROUGH LEAVES. Then ZOOMING OUT further we come to rest in the branches of the tree at the bottom of the garden. Sitting on a nearby branch, a blackbird listens, its feathers ruffled by the breeze.

The End.

Synopsis of “A Troubled Duet”

Log Line: Dylan, a reclusive young man, discovers his estranged father is dying and is compelled to return the old family piano by towing it in a trailer across England with an old Mini Cooper.

Dylan, a quiet Englishman in his twenties, discovers that his estranged father is going to die and decides that he must return the one thing that ever truly bonded them - the old family piano. Setting out on a three hundred mile race against time from Plymouth to the Peak District, Dylan pulls the piano in a trailer, behind his rusty old Mini Cooper.

On the road, Dylan is faced with fleeting melancholic memories of childhood, entwined with images of nature, music, innocence and a desperate loneliness. Dylan lost his mother at a young age and therefore lived with his father, Ron, a withdrawn, unhappy man who would split his time between the piano and the garden, completely aloof from his quiet, sensitive son. It is when Ron catches Dylan playing his piano that father and son first connect in any way, causing the piano to become the sole representation of a love that neither can express.

Mrs Robinson, an elderly lady from the village, takes it upon herself to visit each day, helping to raise Dylan. She displays a genuine warmth and affection towards Dylan, and although as a child he refuses to speak, it is apparent that he takes huge comfort in the relationship. However, it is her subsequent death and Ron’s refusal to attend the funeral which causes the rift between father and son.

When Dylan’s Mini begins to overheat his pilgrimage home is eventually halted by a police officer who decides it is not roadworthy. These external obstacles that Dylan encounters,

mirror Dylan's conflicting internal landscape as he is forced to fight harder and harder to make it home, unaware if it is already too late.

In the Peak District, Dylan picks up Ruby, a reticent teenage hitchhiker, unwilling or unable to say where she is going and why. As the Mini chugs slowly through the stunning landscape, Ruby begins to open up, and the first shoots of companionship begin to grow. It becomes apparent they share a common ground.

In the heart of the Peak District, the Mini ploughs through deep standing water at the foot of a hill, causing the engine to stop. Unable to start it again, Dylan and Ruby build a fire beside the road and Ruby heats food up for them to share. In the fading dusk light they open up to each other, both touching on subjects they had never dare talk about before. Eventually Ruby convinces Dylan to play the piano and sits listening by the fire as the music expresses that which they never could.

The viewer wonders what will come of them, lost in the midst of the Peak District. Will Ruby return safely to her family? Will Dylan make it home with the piano? And if he does, will it be too late?

A Troubled Duet - Character Profiles and Background Information

Dylan Bloomfield

Dylan is a complex, intelligent yet troubled man in his twenties who is used to his own silence and throughout his life has always remained fiercely independent. Often he will disappear without any word to anyone, to go walking alone for hours or days. Dylan feels a deeper affinity to nature than to any human being alive. The only person to whom he ever felt close was Mrs Robinson, an elderly lady from the village who would care for him as a child; she died when he was a teenager. Dylan is handsome in a rough around the edges way, with stubble, unkempt hair and soulful eyes. He is more at home being lost in the middle of the Peak District in a storm than being in a room with a few other people.

Dylan's childhood was troubled and lonesome. Dylan was predominantly raised by Mrs Robinson, who had been good friends with his mother before she died. His mother died before he was old enough to remember her (both a blessing and a curse) and his father, Ron, was already socially and emotionally inept, but this event totally devastated him and rendered him even more incapable of taking proper care of Dylan.

Dylan stopped speaking at the age of four and did not start again until he was ten. Dylan's relationship with Ron was virtually non-existent, until the time when Ron caught him experimenting on his piano. It was at this moment that they finally had a genuine bond. Ron spent the next few years teaching Dylan how to play, but still withdrew in every other way.

When Mrs Robinson died, Dylan was devastated, as was Ron, but, true to form, he buried any sorrow deep inside and continued life as if nothing had happened. The fact that Ron refused

to attend the funeral broke Dylan's heart. All the resentment of his childhood came pouring out and this one event was deemed unforgiveable. Dylan moved out.

Ron Bloomfield

Ron came from an old fashioned family where the mother stayed at home, did all the housework and childcare, while the father spent his time out at work, or locked in the back room playing piano alone. Thus, Ron grew up to be quite withdrawn, socially inept and privately miserable. His only contact with his father was in either learning to play the piano, or receiving a swift whack for getting in the way.

Ron married young enough to be influenced and have his heart eased open a little. During the first few years of marriage, Ron began slowly allowing himself to be vulnerable, testing the safety of love. With the birth of Dylan, all seemed to be going better than he could have ever imagined. But his wife had post-natal depression and withdrew, leaving Ron totally confused and bereft. Eventually one day she left the house and never came back. She was found dead a week later. (Dylan did not find out these circumstances until his teenage years).

Subconsciously, Ron blamed Dylan for this turn of events and withdrew from the world again.

Ron's only escape was the piano, where he could find the emotional expression in music which he could never find in word or deed. Sometimes during long sessions playing alone, Ron would have streams of tears running down his face without realising it. When he caught Dylan playing on the piano he felt on a knife-edge; either Ron would hit him or encourage him. Choosing to teach Dylan gave meaning back to living for Ron, despite the fact that he struggled to connect with his son in any other area of their day to day life.

Ruby Turner

Ruby is a seventeen year old “Daddy’s girl”. She is strong willed, fiercely loyal and mistrusts those who talk a lot and predicate their personality on intellect and reason. She thinks of herself as being independent, but seeks confirmation from a male role-model. From a young age she developed a love of the natural environment and associates the beauty of nature solely with her father. She feels betrayed totally by her mother for not telling her about the declining health of her father until it was too late.

Like Dylan, she is an only child. Her mother is a local councillor, who works long, stressful hours. Her father worked for the forestry commission. Her mother brought most of the money into the family and had the least amount of time to devote to Ruby, who therefore naturally gravitated towards her father.

In extreme times of stress, her father would take her away for weekends camping in the Peak District. Those weekends were the most formative moments of her childhood: the one-on-one time and the exposure to nature truly shaped her.

On her very first proper day of nursery, she happily wandered in with her father. When her father said goodbye, she was painting a picture of a tree. She looked up briefly and said goodbye without giving him a kiss. When she realised he was really no longer there, she spent the entire day crying. Throughout the day, the nursery teachers told her that her daddy would pick her up, unaware that it was supposed to be her mother picking her up. But her mother got held back at work and Ruby had to sit crying thinking that her dad had abandoned her and that she should never had said goodbye. This made Ruby petrified of saying goodbye to anyone from then on and led her to being unable to say goodbye to her dad before he died.

Step Outline for “A Troubled Duet”

Step 1 – Dylan struggles to get the piano into the trailer, has conversation with old man.

Step 2 – Dylan begins his journey, with montage through town.

Step 3 - Dylan stops at Sexy Sal’s Diner for coffee. Raises fist to boy playing his piano.

Step 4 – Dylan resumes journey, has a moment with a young girl in a passing car.

Step 5 – Flashback – Young Dylan in garden with wind-spinner. Dad plays piano.

Step 6 – Dylan drives past Stonehenge and car crash - men angry, child cries.

Step 7 – Dylan driving montage with music and panoramic shots of beautiful countryside.

Step 8 – Dylan intimidated by red car, almost crashes and pulls over to calm down.

Step 9 – Mini smokes, pulled over by cop, explains situation, allowed onwards. Dad’s letter
V.O.

Step 10 –Flashback – Young Dylan cared for by Mrs Robinson. Undeniable closeness.

Step 11 – Mini breaks, Dylan watches bird, Ruby passes by. Dylan eats apple.

Step 12 – Flashback –Dad plays piano, Young Dylan sits on windowsill, almost jumps.

Step 13 – Dylan falls asleep in car, has a dream of his old home.

Step 14 – Dylan drives, picks Ruby up, they talk, then montage with music and map is lost.

Step 15 – Flashback – Young Dylan and Ron play piano together for first time. Ron makes
wind-spinner.

Step 16 – Dylan tells Ruby about family. Flashback of Dylan moving out with piano.

Step 17 – Ruby reveals her dad died. Fawn is scared away by train.

Step 18 – Car breaks. They make fire. Ruby talks of collecting flowers with Dad. Dylan plays piano.

Step 19 – Breakfast by fire. Ruby manages to start car. They continue onwards.

Step 20 – Petrol station in Edale. Ruby disappears, but leaves a bunch of wild flowers.

Step 21 – Dylan continues alone. Breaks down just short of cottage and pushes piano on foot.

Step 22 – Dylan searches cottage. Finds Dad with one arm paralysed. Brings piano in.

Step 23 – Dylan and Dad stand side by side and play a melancholy duet together.

Critique of “A Troubled Duet”

Creative writing can sometimes require courage. Often the writer must blindly navigate unfamiliar terrain: trampling new pathways through the undergrowth of the subconscious, armed only with a pen. It is impossible to know the exact destination of this process, but I imagine every writer does know the feeling of having invested a huge amount of time and care into a project, only for it to fizzle out and die. Inevitably, the writer’s home is strewn with the wreckage of abandoned projects; once bright ideas tossed aside and ignored.

In attempting to write this piece, I have abandoned numerous projects and written over fifty-thousand words that will never see the light of day. Knowing when to jump ship and when to persevere is a tough lesson to learn. However, when a good idea truly grabs you, it does not let go, it sits on your shoulder and whispers in your ear, it waits for you to wake up in the mornings and shouts until you pay attention. A worthwhile idea will cling on until you do something about it. This was my experience when the idea for *A Troubled Duet* surfaced.

I made the decision very early on that I wanted to write a screenplay predicated on emotion, as opposed to action or an intricate plot. Films such as *Lost in Translation*¹ and *Amelie*² inspired me to take an approach that relies on innocence and vulnerability as opposed to intellect. I believe films such as this are more impactful because the pallet of the heart is more varied and vibrant than that of the mind.

Looking back over my previous discarded ideas, it is clear that one of the main issues I had was the lack of well-rounded characterisation of the protagonist, and that his wants and needs were not strong enough to pull the narrative forward. The central narrative pull of this screenplay is Dylan getting his father’s piano back to him before he dies. This idea combines

¹ *Lost in Translation*, dir. Sofia Coppola, feat. Bill Murray, Scarlett Johansson (Focus Features, 2003)

² *Amelie*, dir. Jean-Pierre Jeunet, feat. Audrey Tautou (Claudie Ossard Productions, 2001)

a clear goal that *drives* the narrative forward, while also providing the necessary time and space for developed characterisation, that subtle colouring of a character's internal scenery.

It is important to note the difference between that which Dylan consciously wants and what he subconsciously needs. His want is simply to get the piano back in time. However, what he really *needs* is his father. This duality is an aspect that makes for a more engaging, realistic protagonist. The disparity between want and need provides a psychic space that the viewer can identify and occupy, inspiring emotional investment in Dylan's journey. With that achieved, it is a natural progression that the viewer will then hunger for that disparity to be resolved.

It was important to establish the conflict as early as possible in the screenplay, so that the foundations were laid for drama and tension. Therefore, Dylan and the piano appear in the very first scene, which also provokes intrigue, engaging the viewer. The drama stems from the revelation that the piano is to be returned to Dylan's dying father, a piece of knowledge which instantly makes the journey vital. The time constraint of his father's dying sharpens the tension, as the viewer hopes that Dylan will not be too late. Therefore, as Dylan encounters obstacles along the way, the viewer has a greater emotional investment in him overcoming them.

Superficially, this screenplay is a road movie which explores conflict within a family, questioning what binds them together and what propels them apart. The intention was to create a visual representation of those emotive, invisible, ties and barriers that exist between parent and child and to explore Dylan's inner emotional landscape, to discover how that terrain is shaped by childhood events and also how it remains unchanged, even into adulthood.

On a philosophical level, the screenplay is about the reflective nature of the human experience, how a person's outer journey becomes a reflection of their inner landscape. This reflective duality is a recurring theme throughout the screenplay, with Dylan serving as a reflection of his father and the precious load of the piano reflecting the emotional burden Dylan carries within. The reflective relationship between father and son subtly pushes and pulls, oscillating between longing and resentment. There is something almost rhythmic and musical about this connection, which is ultimately reflected by the climax of the film when father and son play a melancholic duet together.

During the creative process, it was valuable to be influenced stylistically and structurally by other films. The ambition of my screenplay was to elicit and explore emotion, leaving the intellect firmly in a secondary role. Therefore, the films I predominantly focused on were ones of atmospheric, emotive drama, facilitating me in making extensive notes on how external landscape and action can serve as a metaphor for the burning internal conflicts within the protagonist. A film that beautifully achieves this is *The Straight Story*³, in which the sweeping panoramic views of the Iowa landscape serve as a perfect visual reflection of the conflicts within the protagonist, Alvin:

the Iowa landscape is a large dark mass. An occasional burst of light races through the black clouds. A breeze blows dirt along the field. Alvin's gaze searches for shelter. There are no farms near. He cannot outrace the storm. He spots a small outbuilding alone in the field.⁴

In this scene, the black clouds are a metaphor for the fears which Alvin cannot escape. The light is an expression of Alvin's hope, barely shining through, and the lack of any farms

³ *The Straight Story*, dir. David Lynch, feat. Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek (Asymmetrical Pictures, 1999)

⁴ Mary Sweeney and John Roach, 'The Straight Story' http://sfy.ru/?script=straight_story_1999 [accessed 11/09/2013]

represents how alone he feels, stranded miles from family. Alvin eventually weathers the storm, (overcomes his fears) and continues his quest. The visualisation of the protagonist's fears serve as an entry point for the viewer, a window to the drama within.

There are various metaphors throughout my screenplay; a good example is the long and troublesome road which leads from Dylan's home back to his father's. This winding road, littered with obstacles is a metaphor for the troubled emotional chasm which lies between father and son that will take an uncommon bravery and honesty to overcome. In addition to this, the appearance of the blackbird is a poignant metaphor for Dylan's soul, portraying it as independent, free of his father, capable of beautiful music, transcendence and flight. The blackbird appears in pivotal scenes, such as the flashback scene in which Dylan almost jumps out of the window. The timely appearance of the blackbird symbolises a turning point for Dylan, as he realises there is always part of himself which is independent and free.

The drama of my screenplay ultimately stems from Dylan's relationship with his father and is explored externally by the obstacles which befall Dylan along the way. Lawson says of drama: "the essential character of drama is social conflict...in which the conscious will, exerted for the accomplishment of specific and understandable aims, is sufficiently strong to bring the conflict to a point of crisis."⁵ Within this framework, the social conflict of the screenplay is between father and son and the neglect of their relationship. The specific and understandable aim is to get the piano to his father before he dies. The climax occurs when Dylan reaches his father, with the eventual resolution being the duet.

Davis offers an alternative description of what good drama is by defining it as "the development of character through conflict."⁶ This is also applicable and relevant to this

⁵ John Howard Lawson, *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting* (New York: GP Putnam's, 1949), p.161.

⁶ Rib Davis, *Developing Characters for Script Writing* (London: A & C Black, 2001), p.80.

screenplay, which begins with Dylan as an unknown quantity, with little suggestion of the type of man he is. However, as it progresses, he encounters conflict, such as the boy who plays his piano, revealing Dylan's anger as boundaries are challenged. Later, when the car breaks down, we see Dylan respond with balance and compassion, as he chooses to engage with Ruby and listens to her story. These differing responses to conflict provide the viewer with clues as to who Dylan really is and what is going on internally. The contrasting reactions serve as vital flags planted at extremities of his character, providing poignant insight and characterisation.

One of the most challenging aspects of writing a screenplay in which the protagonist is alone for the majority of the film is being able to create the necessary drama to carry it from start to finish. In order to maintain that drama, it is necessary to understand who Dylan is and what has shaped him. As Seger states, knowing the backstory "can give us insights into motives and actions and responses. It shows us that it is the specific influences in the past that create a very specific character in the present."⁷ In order to develop the backstory, certain techniques were employed such as flashbacks and character interaction along the way. This constructs Dylan's character, setting the scene for the conflict to be explored.

Seger goes on to discuss the importance of understanding the psychology of characters when she states that: "just as part of constructing a character involves creating the outer character of physicality and behaviour, it also involves understanding the inner workings of the character – the psychology."⁸ It was for this reason that I wrote in-depth character profiles in which I explored their background and psychological make-up, allowing me to understand how they would operate in certain situations. For example, knowing the details of Dylan's childhood and the time he spent alone, allowed me to understand how Dylan might respond

⁷ Linda Seger, *Creating Unforgettable Characters* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1990), .p.54.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.63.

to certain social situations by being aloof or silent, such as the encounter with the police officer.

Initially, I found having all the background knowledge of the characters was a hindrance as it manifested itself in the characters unnecessarily explaining themselves in dialogue and relaying personal information that need not be said, which is a danger highlighted by Seger: “incorporating values into particular characters does not mean that your characters need to *discuss* what they believe. Instead, you communicate values through what the character does, through conflict and through character attitudes.”⁹ During the editing process I managed to rectify this problem and leave only the relevant and realistic dialogue. An example of this occurred in the first scene, where initially I had Dylan explaining his whole situation to the old man. This was eventually edited down so that Dylan merely mentions that the piano needs to get to his dying father, which has a greater dramatic impact.

Dialogue was also kept to a minimum because I wanted the film to journey through the organic landscape of emotions, poignant imagery and the senses, as opposed to being predicated on rational thought and structured sentences. This atmosphere of emotion over rationalisation was enhanced by Dylan being totally mute throughout the childhood flashbacks. Another example of a technique employed to prioritise emotion was used during the police officer scene, where the visual focus is on the natural surroundings and the conversation that unfolds is only partially audible. This develops a sense that the words are not as relevant as the emotional landscape that envelopes them.

In order to increase emotional impact and alter the overall tone, a lot of dialogue was either removed or edited during the re-drafting process. In the first draft I found a frequent disparity between the dialogue and what a person would realistically say. When listening to people talk

⁹ Ibid., p.41.

in everyday life, they are often indirect and do not say exactly what is on their mind. Often people will say everything *but* what they are thinking, a point made by Hunter, “good dialogue is dialogue that illuminates what the characters are *not* saying.”¹⁰ This is demonstrated by Ruby when she will talk to Dylan about anything but her reason for being alone on the road.

During the editing process, it became apparent how vital silences and gaps in dialogue are. These placid moments take on an almost ethereal quality and serve to magnetise the characters and their internal landscape. Potter says that it is “worth remembering that silence, in films, can be as powerful, if not more powerful, than long speeches or explanations.”¹¹ When reading the screenplay it becomes apparent that the most powerful, poignant moments are ones in which no words are spoken.

There was a conscious choice to favour sounds and music over dialogue or monologue because they invoke a more immediate and emotive response from the viewer. They elicit feelings without having to be processed and sterilised first by the analytical mind. This immediate, emotive style is intended to reflect the outlook and experience of a young child, living in a world of senses that cannot be comprehended logically. This is especially prevalent during scenes in which Dylan is a child. I found this stylistic choice to be an effective way to evoke spontaneous emotions and empathy in the viewer.

The idea of flowing imagery without explanation or intellectual dissection was inspired in part by the stream of consciousness style of writing employed by Virginia Woolf in which she beautifully evokes the simplistic visual immediacy of a child:

...seabirds and butterflies; people; while the sun poured into those attics, which a plank alone separated from each other so that every footstep could be plainly heard

¹⁰ Lew Hunter, *Screenwriting* (London: Robert Hale, 1994), p.124.

¹¹ Cherry Potter, *Screen Language* (London: Methuen, 2001), p.243.

and the Swiss girl sobbing for her father who was dying of cancer in a valley of the Grisons, and lit up bats, flannels, straw hats, ink-pots, paintpots, beetles, and the skulls of small birds, while it drew from the long frilled strips of seaweed pinned to the wall a smell of salt and weeds, which was in the towels too, gritty with sand from bathing.¹²

It is this stream of imagery without need for dialogue which really evokes the experience of a child and the raw, sensitive way in which they experience the world around them. In order to replicate this stylistic choice in screenplay format, it was necessary to develop imagery that flows past unceremoniously and without comment. Dylan slides in and out of flashbacks seamlessly and exhibits the observant sensitivity of a child throughout.

Another effect of minimising dialogue is that it puts more emphasis on a character's actions, meaning that it is imperative to choose the right actions, reactions and non-reactions in order to heighten drama and characterisation. As Davis says, "we learn more about characters through their *actions* than from anything else, and their actions result from the choices they make. These in turn arise out of conflicts."¹³ The extra focus on meaningful action means that a single gesture can become pivotal and have enormous consequences for the screenplay as a whole.

Because Dylan spends much of the time sat in a car driving, it means that any actions that he does make will have more impact. Lawson states that the "problem of action is the problem of finding the characteristic and necessary activity. It must involve physical movement (however slight) of a given quality and conveying a given degree of expressiveness."¹⁴ An example of this occurs when Dylan interacts with the little girl in the car that overtakes.

¹² Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Wordsworth, 1994), p.6.

¹³ Rib Davis, *Developing Characters for Script Writing*, p.87.

¹⁴ John Howard Lawson, *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting*, p.164.

Dylan does little more than smile and mime playing the piano with the girl, but this action is a defining moment, displaying his ability to identify with the child, his innocence shining forth. If a scene such as this were used in a film littered with action, the poignancy of such a moment would be lost in the melee.

When reviewing the first draft of the screenplay, it became apparent that the first fifteen minutes unfolded without any conflict in which Dylan could take meaningful action.

Therefore, during the editing process I decided to introduce the unexpected conflict scene in which Dylan raises his fist to the boy. In addition to the aforementioned characterisation of Dylan, this conflict manages to enliven the rhythm of the narrative, bringing to life what was initially a flat, monotone beginning. The contrast between this action and Dylan's previous actions provides a much needed focal point, a re-ordering of the viewer's ideas and emotions in relation to the protagonist.

There was a conscious effort to use contrast and light to evoke emotion and achieve certain atmospheres. In part, this was inspired by the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald, who manages to achieve great results in terms of atmosphere with his use of light. This is especially prevalent in *The Great Gatsby*, and is discussed by Reynolds when he describes it as being "tremendously atmospheric...the ambient effects rest on Fitzgerald's precise details of light and colour."¹⁵

The use of light and colour is a crucial factor in capturing mood and metaphor in the flashback scenes. A prime example is the use of light in Dylan's bedroom; as dusk sunlight pours through the window, it causes Dylan's shadow to be cast on the wall. This shadow is a metaphor for Dylan's internal state, whereby he sees himself surrounded by light and beauty, whilst he himself is the dark centre of that world. Reinforcing this metaphor, it is apt that it

¹⁵ Guy Reynolds, 'Introduction' in *The Great Gatsby* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2001), p.VII.

takes place inside Dylan's bedroom, in his personal space, representing his own interior; whereas the view *from* the window is filled with colour and natural beauty. This contrast between light and dark, between colour and shades of grey is pivotal in the portrayal of his interior and exterior perception.

The influence of Fitzgerald's use of lighting, especially the use of dusk, was also crucial in the editing process. In reviewing the first draft, it became apparent that virtually the entire screenplay took place in broad daylight, which created a homogeneous, bland backdrop, lacking in contrast and atmosphere. It was for that reason that certain scenes were edited, such as changing the dream sequence to take place at night and also the flashbacks to take place at dusk. Doing so allowed for the use of different lighting and colours, which not only imbued the scenes with a quiet sense of a longing, but also added a rhythmic feel visually, as the scenes rise and fall with light and dark.

A large influence on the style and structure of this screenplay came from the film, *The Tree of Life*¹⁶, written by Terrence Malick. It is a film of incredible sensitivity, filmed with beautiful shots of nature and with an impeccable talent for capturing those *moments* in people's lives, the poignant visual memories we each hold deep in our hearts. Scott encapsulates the film well by stating that there are 'very few films I can think of that convey the changing interior weather of a child's mind with such fidelity and sensitivity. Nor are there many that penetrate so deeply into the currents of feeling that bind and separate the members of a family.'¹⁷ This sensitivity and vision was an inspirational force in the writing of *A Troubled Duet*.

Scott also highlights how the film explores the truth that we are not alone in our experience of the loss of innocence. He asserts that this loss is "not a singular event in history but rather

¹⁶ *The Tree of Life*, dir. Terrence Malick, feat. Brad Pitt, Sean Penn (Cottonwood Pictures, 2011)

¹⁷ A. O. Scott, 'Heaven, Texas and the Cosmic Whodunit' (New York Times, 2011)
http://movies.nytimes.com/2011/05/27/movies/the-tree-of-life-from-terrence-malick-review.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 [accessed 11/09/2013]

an axiom of human experience, repeated in every generation and in the consciousness of every individual. The miraculous paradox is that this universal pattern repeats itself in circumstances that are always unique.”¹⁸ The unique yet shared experience of the loss of innocence is an aspect I have endeavoured to portray, predominantly by exploring Dylan’s childhood via flashback scenes, but also more expansively, via the meeting with Ruby.

An additional benefit of the childhood flashback scenes is that they serve to foreshadow Dylan’s idiosyncrasies. As Backer points out, “there may be a need for a scene that reveals an aspect of character the viewer needs to know in order to understand later actions by that character.”¹⁹ An example of this is how the flashback scene of Dylan playing the piano for the first time with his father foreshadows Dylan’s fear and initial reluctance to discuss or touch the piano after the car breaks down.

I also decided to use music as a means of foreshadowing a flashback or pertinent revelation. This was influenced by Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*²⁰ in which flute music is used to signal certain emotions or memories. I decided to use piano music to either foreshadow a childhood flashback, or as a way of expressing certain emotions. This method of expressing emotions was valuable because in doing so they retain their immediacy without being diluted and broken down into rational words and sentences.

The car breaking and other obstacles which befall Dylan on his quest, help to keep the viewer unsure of whether he will actually make it back with the piano in time. As Trottier states, “if there is a reasonable doubt about how the scene or movie is going to end, the suspense is intensified.”²¹ Each obstacle along the way is an unexpected surprise which stacks the odds against Dylan achieving his goal. As Dancyger highlights, “the element of surprise is

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Irwin. R. Blacker, *The Elements of Screenwriting* (New York: Macmillan, 1996), p.41.

²⁰ Miller, Arthur, *Death of a Salesman* (London: Heinemann, 1994)

²¹ David Trottier, *The Screenwriter’s Bible* (California: Silman-James Press, 1995), p.53.

important in a screenplay. Whether it refers to plot or character, unexpected revelation - no matter how trivial – maintains our interest.”²² There is a double surprise which occurs from the police officer incident, in that there is the initial surprise of being stopped, followed by the surprise of the officer’s sympathy. The officer turns out to be a father figure who permits Dylan to continue his quest. A surprising event such as this keeps the viewer engaged and alert.

One of the hardest, yet most valuable lessons I learned during the writing and research of the screenplay is the importance of avoiding self-censorship during the creative stage of writing. This issue is succinctly highlighted by Goldberg: “it is important to separate the creator and the editor or internal censor when you practice writing, so that the creator has free space to breathe, explore and express.”²³ I found I wasted vast swathes of time while writing the first draft, as I allowed my internal editor to criticise and stifle the inner creative voice, often before the words had even reached the page. Although both voices are vital components employed in the process, they need to remain independent so that the creative voice has total freedom of expression, unfettered by intellect.

Great care was taken reordering and removing scenes in order to achieve the desired pace, rhythm and tone. One of the scenes initially removed was the one in which Dylan is harassed by the red car, as I believed that it was too charged in what is generally a low-key, gentle screenplay. However, it was for that very reason that I chose to include the scene, for it provides a vital change of pace, giving important contrast to the journey and allows the viewer to see visually what is at stake as the piano’s safety comes under threat from the reckless driver.

²² Ken Dancyger and Jeff Rush, *Alternative Scriptwriting* (Boston: Focal Press, 2001), p.7.

²³ Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones* (Boston: Shambhala, 1986), p.26.

This project began with an idea that would not let me rest. I felt compelled to pursue it, not knowing where it would lead or even whether I would make it to the end. Now I look back and realise, perhaps fittingly, that Dylan's quest has become a metaphor for my own writing process. I too felt I had something worthwhile to deliver, something personal I needed to share. I too undertook that journey not knowing what obstacles and twists I might encounter along the way or where it might lead. I believe this is as it should be, for writing is a journey, not a destination.

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