

The Postman's Reign

by

Jan Wilson

Note: This script is written in British English and uses British punctuation and spelling rules. Example, 'Mr' and 'Mrs' do not have periods.

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EXT. S.E.15, SOUTHEAST LONDON STREETS - DAY

It's a grim, working-class neighbourhood in southeast London, postal code SE15; a typical assortment of terraced houses and semidetached homes. A string of small shops and cafes on the high street. A Sainsbury's here, a Boots there.

VARIOUS NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTS each open their door or look out their window after hearing the familiar "clank" of the post slots in their doors. Today's post has arrived.

A SLEEPY SLACKER appears in his front window, still in pajamas. Shuffles toward his front door. Yawns as he picks up his letters. On to the next home...

A HARRIED MOTHER scoots her TODDLER'S push-toys aside on the front porch, trying to make a path for the POSTMAN. She takes her post from him, barely looks up from her tidying duties. Her toddler WAILS nearby.

The Postman's path goes on to the next home.

The next untidy garden reveals a JAMAICAN MAN, early thirties, sprawled out in a garden chair despite the lack of sunshine on this gloomy day. He smokes luxuriously and chats on a mobile phone. He has all the time in the world.

The Postman slips past him, drops the post through the slot, then glides like a ghost back to the sidewalk.

The Postman, MILO FINCH, 40, slips unnoticed past most of the residents on this route. Milo is average height, average appearance, average demeanour. Average, average, average. In his drab, dark blue Royal Mail uniform, his existence barely registers at all.

A petite, old woman, MRS KENDALL, 70s, opens her door. Smiles at Milo as he reaches her doorstep.

MRS KENDALL

Hello, Milo. How are you today?

He beams at her. But there's a hint of sympathy in his eyes.

MILO

Aces, Mrs Kendall.

MRS KENDALL

Anything nice for me today?

She rubs her hands in anticipation as he hands over her post.

MILO

No, sorry, love. Mostly junk mail.

Her crestfallen face says it all.

MRS KENDALL

Nothing from my daughter? She promised she'd write. Usually sends a lovely birthday card.

Milo doesn't need to check. He shakes his head apologetically.

MILO

That catalogue looks really nice though. Hours of enjoyment there, you can look through it, pick things out.

She tries to summon some enthusiasm.

MRS KENDALL

Oh, yes, I suppose so. Do some armchair window shopping, eh? Jolly good.

She takes her post, and smiles weakly before going inside.

MILO (V.O.)

Number 28 Welling Street, student loans three years in default now, third letter re: threat of wage garnishments...number 30, child support payments stopped three months ago, new lawyer on the case...lots of typos...not terribly professional...

ROADSIDE GARDEN WALL -- Milo leans on a garden wall halfway down the road. Makes notes in a small, unofficial-looking notebook.

He glances surreptitiously back at the homes of the first mail recipients, now focusing on the Jamaican Man.

MILO (V.O.)

Number 32 Welling Street...mother of his child still in prison on charges of selling marijuana, child stays with his sister...cold bastard...

Milo narrows his eyes in concentration...straining to remember before continuing with his notes.

MILO (V.O.)

...two letters a week from Holloway Prison... childlike handwriting....

Glances at his large satchel -- an envelope with a loose flap catches his eye. He pries the envelope open expertly

with one hand, snatches several £10 notes out of it, and pockets them.

MILO

Stupid man ...sending cash to the insurance company. It says right on it, line five -- "do not send cash!" Leave it a drug dealer to pay his bills in cash.

MILO (V.O.)

And still nothing for Mrs Kendall, only bills and advertisement flyers. Daughter in...Nottingham? Son in Shropshire. But still...nothing.

A brash, loud voice breaks his concentration. Unnerves him.

KIKI

Milo! Hi Milo!

In a smooth, unobtrusive move Milo slips his notebook into his Royal Mail-issued coat pocket. Hops up, continues his route.

MILO

Hello, Kiki.

KIKI MONROE, a child-like presence in a chubby 23 year-old body with a moon-face, and a horribly unfashionable pixie haircut. She seems a bit over-excited to see him.

KIKI

Hi Milo. Hi. I saw you. I saw you a minute ago, and I ran down to see you. I ran down, just now!

MILO

Did you?

Milo starts on his route again, going from house to house, taking Kiki's following him in stride.

KIKI

You know where I just went? Milo?
Guess where I was!

Milo plays her game, patiently.

MILO

Does it start with a "b"?

She is joyous at his good guess. It is obvious by now that she is mildly retarded.

KIKI
 Yes! You know, Milo? Do you know
 where I was?

MILO
 I have a feeling I might.

She follows him as he drops more bundles of post into the
 front door slots along this quiet street.

KIKI
 Yeah, guess, Milo, guess! Keep
 guessing!

Her manner is blunt and demanding.

MILO
 And does it involve...hm...dog-racing?

She is ecstatic now at how good he is at her guessing game.

KIKI
 Yes! Yes!

Milo stops in his tracks, finally giving her his full
 attention, something she relishes in.

MILO
 Hm, let me see...

He pretends to be deep in thought, sorting out this puzzle.

MILO
 If I had to guess, I'd say you went to
 the bookie to place a bet on a dog.
 Although which dog, I can't say.

She jumps up and down, shouting her glee.

KIKI
 Yes! Mum gave me 28 p. and I placed a
 bet on "Wily Smiley." He's gonna win.

MILO
 What are the odds?

KIKI
 Eight to one.

MILO
 Twenty-eight pence? My God, Kiki, if
 you win, do you realize how much money
 you'll have?

She thrusts her arms up towards the heavens.

KIKI

Loads of money!

Milo can't help but smile at her glee. Her winnings might buy her a sandwich if she's lucky.

KIKI

You goin' to the Spanish cafe now? I can go, too. I've got my lunch, Maria lets me eat it there. I get tea. She brings me tea. I pay for it though.

MILO

Yes, she's very nice. It's not Spanish though, Kiki. It's Portuguese.

KIKI

Are you going now? It's 11:15. It's time, right? Time for the Spanish cafe?

Milo glances at his watch, amazed.

MILO

Cor, am I that predictable?

He hoists his big satchel onto his shoulder more securely.

MILO

I suppose I am.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

Kiki prances after Milo like a happy puppy. They cross the street, head for a small cafe, "Cataplana Cafe."

In the middle of the zebra crossing they pass a bookish-looking man, MR PERCY, 40s, with a large dog on a lead. The dog lags behind, eager to stop and sniff every new available tidbit in the street.

Kiki is delighted and tries to pet the dog as they meet half-way across the street - but Mr Percy yanks the lead harshly, drags the dog along.

Now across the street again from the dog and Mr Percy, both Kiki and Milo watch Mr Percy ramble down the street.

The poor, unknowing dog makes the mistake of stopping to sniff a promising-looking piece of rubbish. Feeling the tension in the lead, Mr Percy turns. Sees the dog lag behind.

MR PERCY

Come on, damn it!

With great strength he yanks the lead. The dog yelps in pain, momentarily knocked off her feet. Then literally dragged along the rough ground before skittering to her feet again.

Milo watches, jaw clenched. Silent, glaring contempt.

KIKI

He lives next door to me!

MILO

I know.

Kiki lunges forward.

KIKI

Hey! You! Don't pull that dog!
You're a mean man! You --

Milo stops her from darting out into the traffic-laden road.

Mr Percy, barely hearing, glances in their direction.

Milo pulls Kiki away. Turns them so they no longer face the dog man's direction. Feigns indifference to what has happened.

MILO

Shh!

He takes Kiki's arm, guides her with him toward the cafe.

MILO

That's no way to handle this.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - DAY

Lunchtime in the busy Mediterranean-themed cafe. Milo briefly jumps the queue at the cashier but only to hand over a stack of mail. The older gentleman manning the till, PEDRO, looks at the stack and jokingly waves it away.

PEDRO

No, no! Only bills! Take it away!

Milo laughs with him, but won't take the stack back, forcing Pedro to finally take it.

MILO

Sorry, mate. Got a stack of 'em myself
at home.

Milo pauses at a table for two. Takes his coat off, tosses it onto the back of a chair. Takes his satchel and heads for the loo.

After he leaves, Kiki slinks over, sits in Milo's chair, quite pleased with herself. She caresses the fabric of his jacket.

INT. CATAPLANA LOO - DAY

Milo washes his hands. Instead of drying them he uses the water left on them to slick back his hair. The slicked-back look? No, he doesn't like that. He roughs it up a bit, making it spiky. A few seconds deliberation. Nah. He puts it back the way it was...just plain.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - DAY

Milo sees Kiki sitting in his chair reading the menu. He sighs. His tolerance is running out. He sidles up next to her.

MILO

Say, listen Kiki, actually I'm meeting my brother-in-law for lunch today, and I'd like to sit alone with him so we -

KIKI

(reads)

"Mr Paddy - receives cheques on the second Friday of every month. Number 128 Cody Avenue, Mrs Gibson, goes for hair appointment every other Friday..."

Shit! She's not reading the menu, she's got his notebook!

KIKI

Why do you need to know those things?

Milo whips his notebook out of her hands. His voice low, but frantic.

MILO

Kiki! That's my personal book!

He checks to see who might be in earshot of her brash voice.

KIKI

Are they your friends?

Milo's voice is missing his usual tolerant tone.

MILO

You really shouldn't read other people's things, you know.

His menacing tone is lost on her childlike interest in the subject of conversation.

MILO

You're in my seat.

He stuffs his notebook into his satchel as she gets out of his chair. She pulls a tattered green spiral notebook of her own out of her purse.

KIKI

I have a notebook too. I have friends too. Look, see?

Milo gives a cursory glance at her notebook. She opens a page to show him. He reads as he sits down and settles in.

MILO

Uh huh. "Red trousers, blue jumper. Red trousers, white blouse. Black skirt, pink jacket." What's that then?

Not sensing his true disinterest, Kiki happily explains. Milo scans the throngs of people in the cafe.

KIKI

That's what my mother wore last week. See, and..."yellow boots, white skirt, white jacket. Blue scarf, red shirt..." that's MY page. All my friends have pages. And my dog, well, he doesn't wear clothes, but he has his page, I keep track of what he eats every day, see here?

Milo isn't even looking at her anymore. He's scanning the faces in the cafe.

MILO

Look, Kiki, I'm meeting someone here for lunch. Didn't you say Maria gives you tea?

It's hard to stop Kiki's train of thought once it gets going.

KIKI

Your page is easy, Milo, you always wear the same thing.

A slight chuckle from Milo -- he is touched that he merits a place in her book. She flips to another page.

KIKI

"Blue trousers, blue shirt. Blue trousers, blue shirt. Blue trousers, blue shirt. Blue trousers --"

MILO

Ah, yes, I think I sense the pattern emerging. Um, Kiki? Doesn't Maria give you your own table? Gives you tea?

KIKI

Yes. She lets me sit there every day. I have my very own table. And Maria brings me tea.

MILO

Yes, I believe I've heard about that.

Milo's getting tired of this, and cranky. She turns around, cranes to find her spot.

KIKI

I'm gonna go eat now.

MILO

If you insist. Off you go.

At long last, Kiki meanders off to her own table.

A waitress, MARIA, approaches, seen in his peripheral vision, from the waist down. He offers a polite, wan smile. At last he manages to speak, but without looking up at her.

MILO

Hello, Maria. Can I get a menu?

MARIA

A *menu*? Since when?

Her voice is mellow, feminine, with a heavy Portuguese accent.

MILO

Meeting a mate for lunch.

MARIA

Oh, I see. Yes, I'll get you one.

She hands him a menu from under her arm, then leaves.

A casual, yet dapper man, ARTHUR, mid-30s pulls out the other chair at Milo's table and plops down into it.

ARTHUR

Christ, I'm starving! Do we get bread to nosh on before we order?

Milo is at last at ease.

MILO

Well good morning, sunshine!

Arthur's good-looking, full of polite charm. Looks around.

ARTHUR

Oh, I don't know about this, mate. Spanish food usually does a number on my stomach. Janine will be grumbling all night.

MILO

Portuguese. Not Spanish, not at all like beans and rice and tacos. Christ, I've told you, *Portuguese*.

Looking at the menu Arthur finally clicks, points to the cafe's name printed on it.

ARTHUR

Ah, yes! "Cataplana Cafe"...it makes sense now.

Milo is none-the-wiser, laughs.

MILO

Does it?

ARTHUR

Yeah. "Cataplana"...those large hinged pans they use for steaming food in Portugal, big lid comes down like a clam shell, like this...

He "shows" Milo the shape by miming it for him.

MILO

Listen to you, Nigella. Doesn't know Spain from Portugal, but he knows what a cataplana is.

As Arthur pours over the menu, Milo takes a casual, but intentional, glance at the till...and the stack of mail that Pedro has tossed onto the counter. Milo freezes when he sees Maria, the waitress, pick the stack up and flip through it.

ARTHUR

Hello? Anyone home?

Milo snaps his attention back to Arthur.

ARTHUR

What do you recommend? I don't know what half of this stuff is. Crikey... clams, sausage and ham...and that's all in one dish! Not Spanish at all, is it? Indeed.

Milo makes a conscious effort to relax again and get back into the moment with Arthur.

MILO

I usually get the white beans, onions and sausage with a huge amount of some of the best bread you've ever had.

ARTHUR

Onions AND sausage. Yeah, Janine will love me for that as well.

MILO

Keeping your delicate stomach in mind, as well as Janine's well-being later in the evening, I also recommend the *acorda a alentejana*.

Arthur raises a sarcastic brow.

ARTHUR

Oo, someone's been listening to his language tapes.

MILO

Delicious. A type of egg-drop soup with coriander and thickened with bread. Although it *does* contain enough garlic to blow a small safe.

Without looking up from his menu, Arthur asks the big question.

ARTHUR

So. Which one is she?

Milo looks around to make sure no one is listening. No one is.

ARTHUR

Knowing the sneaky bastard you are, I'd bet that you already know which tables are hers, so twenty to one odds the waitress that comes to take our order is our girl.

Milo instantly tenses up as Maria comes back. This gives Arthur his answer.

MARIA

Hello. Ready?

Arthur looks up at her. The first real close look at Maria. Natural, pretty, demure, mid 30s. Not an absurdly stunning creature, but a simple, ordinary beauty. One look at her confirms it -- Arthur smiles.

ARTHUR

Ah, yes. Indeed.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - LATER

Evidence of a large and well-enjoyed meal litters the table.

MILO

My God, you've got all the time in the world. You've got no excuse! The world is at your feet! Just figure out what you want to do, and go do it. You've certainly got the time.

ARTHUR

This from a man who finishes work at half two every day.

MILO

Hey, that's because I work hard!

Milo plays at being insulted.

MILO

Okay, well actually it's because I walk fast. The other lads don't finish until about four. The faster you walk, the faster you finish.

ARTHUR

That's the secret to a successful career then, is it? Walk quickly?

They laugh. Finish their tea and coffee. Arthur shakes his head in mock disgust.

ARTHUR

Finishes at half two.

Arthur sees that Milo is distracted...

COUNTER -- Maria stands behind the counter, toys with her necklace. Winds the chain around her finger, then absent-mindedly brings the pendant to her lips, gently bites on it.

MILO AND ARTHUR'S TABLE -- Milo watches her play with her necklace, and has unconsciously mimicked her, his fingers are at his mouth, too. He nods over at her, with a shy smile.

MILO

She always does that...

Arthur hides his amused smile behind his cup of tea.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - LATER

Milo is all smiles and gregarious chat. That is, until Maria once more approaches the table. He then goes silent and awkward. Arthur, however, is still charming.

MARIA

How are we doing? Everything is okay?

ARTHUR

Delightful.

Arthur looks to Milo, a non-verbal cue to say something, say anything! Milo only nods with a silly fixed smile on his face. Arthur is amused at Milo's awkward situation.

ARTHUR

So...Maria is it? Your accent is beautiful. Isn't it Milo?

Again, Milo can only manage a "yeah" or "uh huh." Not much better than a schoolboy response.

MARIA

Oh, thank you very much. I am from Portugal. I've learned much English, but I still have this accent.

ARTHUR

It's nice, don't try and get rid of it.

MARIA

It's not...too much?

ARTHUR

Not at all. My wife...uh, Milo's sister...

Arthur uses any opportunity to throw the conversation to Milo...

ARTHUR

...teaches English as a second language to adults. I did that too for a while, so you can believe me when I say your accent is just fine. Isn't it Milo?

Milo nods enthusiastically.

MILO

Yeah!

Arthur rolls his eyes at Milo.

MARIA

That is very kind of you to say.

ARTHUR

And your English is excellent. My wife's students' English isn't nearly as good. Hell, my WIFE'S English even. Yours is top notch.

MARIA

Top notch?

ARTHUR

Yeah...uh...you know, first rate.

She nods and smiles.

MARIA

"Top notch"...that refers to what?

Arthur is stumped.

ARTHUR

I have no idea. Do you know the origins of that phrase, Milo?

MILO

Uh, I believe that...no, I do not.

Arthur gives up. He pats her on the hand.

ARTHUR

Just the bill please, love.

As soon as she is out of earshot...

ARTHUR

I don't know how she can resist you with your witty repartee. "I believe that...I do not." Good God man, please

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

tell me you're not that silent with her when I'm not here! You've got to at least SPEAK to her!

MILO

I do. In my own way.

ARTHUR

In your own way...? Oh Jesus, not the letters again.

MILO

Shut up. I'm not good in person.

ARTHUR

Gosh, really? Blow me down!

Milo shrugs it off, plays with his empty teacup.

MILO

Doesn't matter. She has a boyfriend anyway. I just do it to make her feel good. Why make myself known and ruin it all?

INT. CATAPLANA KITCHEN - DAY

Maria finds an out of the way corner in the back kitchen. Pulls a small pale blue envelope out of her apron. It is good stationery, obviously well-chosen. She looks around to make sure no one is watching. No one is. Opens the letter. Smiles before she even sees the words.

MILO (V.O.)

Maria, sitting in the park today I was surrounded by beauty. Tall magnificent trees, scented blossoms, the natural glory of the earth and could not help but be reminded of you...

Milo's voice is unlike we've heard before. Full of tenderness and charming resonance. Clear, strong, confident. She reads on, savours each line.

MILO (V.O.)

Inspired to share the resplendence of the moment with you, I plucked a leaf for you, but discarded it, then another, wanting to find one as perfect as you. But alas, none of them could equal your natural, luminous beauty. This one...

She finds the enclosed leaf...

MILO

...cannot compare to you, and it is humbled to be a token for you of my affection...

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - DAY

Milo and Arthur are at the till about to pay for lunch.

A scruffily handsome man, FRANCO, 30, saunters into the cafe. From his colouring and accent, probably Spanish or Portuguese.

FRANCO

Hey Pedro. Maria off yet?

PEDRO

Yeah, she's in the back.

Franco nods toward behind the counter.

FRANCO

Mind?

PEDRO

Course not. Take some oyster stew. And there's bread.

Franco goes behind the counter. Stirs the pot on the hot plate.

FRANCO

Mmm. Yeah, I think I will. Thanks.

Though the young man is nothing but polite and friendly, Milo's eyes shoots silent daggers into him.

INT. CATAPLANA KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MILO (V.O.)

To adore you from afar, as Dulcinea was cherished by Don Quixote, is all I need to brighten my days. Ever yours, "Browning."

Maria hears Franco's voice. Tucks her love letter away.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - DAY

Maria comes out from the kitchen, takes her apron off and reaches for her coat. She uses her sweetest tone.

MARIA

Hello, Franco.

Franco ladles oyster stew into a take-away container.

FRANCO

Maria, you want some of this too?

Out of Maria's eyeline Franco takes a small wrapped box from his pocket. Makes the "shh" signal to Milo, Arthur and Pedro.

MARIA

No. No offence to Pedro, but I'm sick of the smell of it.

She winks to Pedro.

MARIA

And that's the last thing I want to take home with me.

At the till, Milo, Arthur and Pedro watch. Wait for Franco to spring his surprise.

FRANCO

Maybe you'd like this instead...

Franco hands her the present and she squeals in delight. Opens it immediately. Bright, shiny, gold hoop earrings with small decorative beaded fringe. Slightly garish, and very modern-day looking.

MARIA

Oh, baby, I love them! Oh my God, are they real gold?

FRANCO

Yes, of course! Well, plated.

Milo has seen enough, turns away as Maria kisses Franco.

Arthur reaches for his wallet, but Milo waves him back.

MILO

No, no. My pleasure.

Milo takes out his ill-gotten ten pound notes.

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Milo's flat is small, but comfortable. Milo, wearing a well-worn track suit, drink in hand, turns on some lush music. He then does a graceful dance move over to his desk where he takes the lid off a shoebox. It's full of postcards.

MILO

What shall it be then?

Milo calls over his shoulder to someone.

MILO

Hm? Any preference? What do you think she'd like? You choose, Nicky.

Still no response from anyone else. He puts his drink down and flips through the cards.

MILO

Brighton? Nottingham? Ah...Loch Ness!

He pulls two postcards from the box and holds them up for NICKY to look at.

MILO

Which do you think? Brighton? Or Loch Ness?

Nicky - now seen to be a big, orange cat - looks at his master and gives an indifferent meow.

MILO

Yes, I think so too. Loch Ness it is!

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Milo lies on the floor, on his back, pen in hand. Chews on the end of it. Nicky saunters over and demands attention. Milo looks at the cat and asks in all seriousness...

MILO

Help me out here, what letter do most names begin with?

Nicky gives an abbreviated meow, more of a "mrah!"

MILO

M? You think? Yeah, you may be right. Michael, Mark, Martin, Mitchell...Milo.

Milo rolls over onto his stomach and writes on the postcard. Finishes it off with a quick, messy flourish.

Grabs Nicky, rolls him over onto his back and gives a series of rapid fire kisses to the cat, and a good long ear-scratching.

MILO

Look at you, you gorgeous creature. Look at this fur...silky and luxurious. Who does your fur, darling? You're magnificent!

Nicky loves it, luxuriates in Milo's loving attention.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Milo winds his way through the huge carts of mail waiting to be sorted or delivered. He spots a large box of official-looking letters, all alike, hundreds of them. A furtive glance around, then Milo swiftly nicks about four or five of them. Tucks them away in his jacket, keeps walking.

INT. POST OFFICE - LATER

Milo sorts some post for his route. Stops now and then to take a closer look at some of the more interesting pieces.

He pops over to the franking machine, takes the postcard from his jacket pocket, and runs the postcard through it. Quickly he takes the postcard back, licks his finger and intentionally smudges the newly-inked postmark. He waves the postcard like a fan quickly to dry it.

EXT. WILSON ROAD - DAY

It's raining quite hard, it's really coming down. Milo has his rain-gear on, hooded, but no umbrella. He takes a package from his satchel, approaches a house. The package is too big to fit through the slot. He knocks on the door.

Milo studies the return address name on the package as he waits. "Pyramid Products, Amsterdam". After a few seconds, Mr Percy - the man with the large dog - answers. The slanting rain enters the house.

MR PERCY

Arr! Come in, come in!

Milo darts in.

INT. MR PERCY'S LOUNGE - DAY

MR PERCY

Sorry about that, didn't mean to yell.
Just didn't expect the rain like that.

Milo hands his package to him.

MILO

You sure get a lot of packages.

Mr Percy takes his parcel. Milo's eyes take a few seconds to adjust to the dim interior.

But then he sees the dog, ECHO. Echo is in a cage that is FAR too small for her. She is forced to crouch in an unnatural position and she whines a pitiful cry. The dog

looks sick and beaten. Watery, bloodshot eyes peer up at Milo. Milo covers his shock at the hideous sight.

MR PERCY

No umbrella, huh?

Milo tries to recover from seeing the poor dog, but Mr Percy sees that Milo has noticed her.

MILO

Uh, no, too awkward. Need my hands free.

MR PERCY

Echo, she gets into so much trouble. Gotta just keep her caged up a bit while I get some work done.

Milo nods, as if he doesn't care.

MILO

Uh huh. Well, I'm off.

MR PERCY

All right then. Mind how you go, don't slip. Try and keep dry!

Mr Percy opens the door for Milo.

EXT. MR PERCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Once outside Milo closes his eyes. Takes a few deep breaths.

When he opens his eyes he sees Kiki staring at him from her side of the garden wall under a bright yellow umbrella.

KIKI

Are you okay, Milo?

Milo takes a few seconds to regain his composure. He smiles.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

Milo ducks in and out of the shops on the high street, his satchel lighter with each stop.

He nears Franco's Electronics, a small shop a few doors down from the Cataplana Cafe. He has the shop's post in his hand already. But before going in, he turns away from the shop.

He flips through the bundle of post. Removes some junk mail, a "Fly for Half-Off Oasis Travel" flyer, "Arrow's Florist" advert, and a few others. Slips them into his coat pocket.

INT. FRANCO'S ELECTRONICS - DAY

Maria's boyfriend Franco is behind the counter looking over a London A-Z book. A few customers mill around looking at radios and electronic gadgets. Milo pops in and hands the bundle of letters to Franco.

FRANCO

Thanks.

Before Milo can leave, Franco looks up.

FRANCO

Hey, Milo, maybe you can help. You know all the local addresses. Where the hell is 300 Denmark Hill?

MILO

Denmark Hill, that's over in Camberwell.

FRANCO

Yeah I know, but that street is like a million miles long. Which end should I aim for?

MILO

A bit out of my region I'm afraid....

FRANCO

It's the Camberwell Community Center.

MILO

Oh! Yeah, the Community Center... it's right up past Ruskin Park. Just past the park, on the east side.

FRANCO

Right, okay. Near the hospital, yeah?

MILO

Right. Just opposite the hospital.

Franco grins at Milo.

FRANCO

Thanks. They're having a flower show. I'm taking Maria. She loves flowers. Says she misses the flowers of Portugal.

Milo considers this, nods.

FRANCO

I know, I know, like they don't have
(MORE)

FRANCO (CONT'D)
 flowers here in England. Says she misses the semi-tropical ones that grew near her house as a child. She'll love it.

INT. POST OFFICE - BACK OFFICE - DAY

A COMPUTER SCREEN - It's the Google home page.

Milo taps away on a computer keyboard.

The office isn't personalized -- it's just a communal computer room. He keeps one eye on the office door in front of him. Luckily, the screen of the computer faces away from the door.

Milo watches the screen, clicks here and there, immersed in what the internet pages show him. He browses here for a minute, while still keeping an eye on the door.

Hearing VOICES in the hall, he clicks out of the site, gets up and leaves.

Male and female postal workers, ANDY and SANDY, coats in hand, pop into the computer room.

ANDY
 Hang on a tick, just wanna check on my reservations.

SANDY
 Careful, don't let Mr Stevens catch you using the internet for personal reasons. He yelled at Lenny for using it, so everyone's afraid to use it now.

Andy laughs at her.

ANDY
 Yeah, like no one else does it.

Andy sits in the chair Milo has just vacated.

ANDY
 Look...if you click on the scroll down arrow for this window, you can see all the sites that have been pulled up - bet you anything only about half are work-related. If that. Watch...

He does indeed click on it and pulls up the last site visited. They watch and wait while the site loads.

SANDY

Oh my God.

ANDY

That's disgusting. Who the hell was on here?

COMPUTER SCREEN - a few indecent pictures of boys and girls that seem to be *well below* the age of consent.

Andy and Sandy's faces register horror as they watch a few more photos appear onscreen.

SANDY

Jesus Christ, that's depraved.

INT. POST OFFICE - LATER

With his coat on and satchel on his shoulder, Milo stops at a 'bank teller's window' of an inner office. A YOUNG SALLOW MAN is busy making notes in a ledger alongside a MATRONLY WOMAN. Milo doesn't approach the glass, but hangs back a bit.

Milo gives a quiet whistle. This gets the Young Sallow Man's attention. He pulls a pile of papers off his desk and steps to the window. Milo slips a ten pound note through the hole in the window, and the Young Sallow Man slips a large pile of sheets of stamps through to Milo. Into Milo's coat pocket they go.

INT. THE FOX PUB - NIGHT

Arthur and Milo stand at the crowded bar sipping their lagers. For a change, Milo is out of his posting clothes, looking pretty decent in jeans, a black tee-shirt and black leather jacket.

MILO

...and the bastard just sits there sunning himself every day, like he's on bloody holiday or something.

ARTHUR

Doesn't even keep the kid, huh?

MILO

No! Shipped him off to his sister's in Cambridge. He's still dealing.

ARTHUR

And you know for sure he's letting her take the fall for him?

MILO

Oh yeah. I'm sure. She sends him letters, twice a week from Holloway. Bet he never even visits her. She's doing four years for him and she's still devoted to him. "It'll make our bond stronger...this is what true love is all about..."

Milo mimics her in an overly innocent tone.

ARTHUR

I don't even want to know how you know that. Ooh, now what about that one over there?

Milo follows Arthur's gaze over to a trendy, pretty WOMAN IN SUEDE JACKET.

MILO

You think? My league?

ARTHUR

Sure, why not? Now that you're out of your designer posting togs, you're looking mighty sexy, sweetheart.

Milo watches her casually for a few seconds. He takes a deep breath in, cringes, then looks to Arthur.

ARTHUR

Come on, you can do it. No problem. Turn the charm on.

Milo downs the rest of his lager. Then as casually as he can, makes his way toward the suede-clad woman who sits with her FEMALE FRIENDS at a table.

Milo just stands awkwardly in front of their table, they can't help but notice. Milo can only smile.

MILO

Hello.

The women are already leery and don't seem enthused.

WOMAN IN SUEDE JACKET

Hello.

Your turn Milo, speak! Say something!

Nothing.

WOMAN IN SUEDE JACKET

Did you want something?

Milo stammers. Leaves a far-too-long-pause. Awkward as hell.

MILO

No. No I didn't want anything.

He almost backs away, but seems caught halfway between leaving with dignity and facing her with courage.

MILO

Actually...I was wondering if YOU wanted anything.

The Woman in Suede Jacket seems incredulous at how bad his attempt to chat her up is.

WOMAN IN SUEDE JACKET

Do I want anything...?

She waits for more information from him.

MILO

To drink I mean...what I meant was, can I buy you a drink? Or *another* one after that one you already have there....

Oh *forget* it. He backs away apologetically as she shakes her head no, not hiding her disdain.

Milo slinks back to the bar.

ARTHUR

Another lager?

MILO

God yes.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Maria lies on her bed in her cozy flat. It is a tiny self-contained one-room flat, but very homey. No room for a sofa, just a bed. She sips a cup of tea, fluffs the pillows and gets settled in just right. It's a ritual. She takes the pale blue envelope from her bedside table. It's already been opened.

She closes her eyes and says the first line from memory.

MARIA

My Maria, a Portuguese ray of light and kindness in our drab, gray London days.

She opens her eyes and begins to read Milo's words, obviously not for the first time.

MILO (V.O.)

In my youth I spent many days in Brighton, for without your golden aura to warm me, I was forced to find warmth and sunlight on its pebbled beaches instead.

She snuggles down deeper into the bed. Gets as comfortable as possible as she continues to read. She holds a small stone in her hand.

MILO (V.O.)

It is said that stones that have natural holes in them provide protection, health, enhance psychic abilities and guard against nightmares. Brighton's beaches are known for having many holey stones. I found this one as a child, and have kept it as my own talisman. I now want to pass it on to you. It is my gift for Maria my love, something natural, wonderful and rare - a mirror of you. No store-bought shiny trinket will do for my earthy maiden.

She eyes the gift earrings from Franco that sit on her bedside table. Shiny. New. Garish.

MILO (V.O.)

Old stories tell that if you take the stone to a wild and lonely place, preferably by moonlight, and look through it, you will see visions.

She pauses, inspects the stone closely, rolls it in her fingers. She holds it to her eye and peers through.

MARIA

Who are you?

INT. THE FOX PUB - CONTINUOUS

ARTHUR

She was no good for you anyway. Come on....

Arthur struggles for something bad to say about the Woman in Suede Jacket.

ARTHUR

Suede...come on, who wears *suede*
anymore?

Milo laughs at his feeble attempt to make her seem undesirable.

ARTHUR

So how goes the wooing with the noble
Portuguese waitress?

Milo shrugs.

MILO

The same really.

ARTHUR

Still anonymous?

MILO

Better that way. I can be really
romantic in letters. When I have
time to plan what I'm gonna say, and
I can write and rewrite it, then I'm
fine. Finding that just-right piece
of poetry...you think that's easy?

ARTHUR

Yeah, yeah, you're Lord Byron at heart.
But listen, no one falls in love through
the post. Love poems, all that stuff -
they *enhance* the wooing, but you've
GOT to be there in person, Milo.

MILO

Oh yeah? What about Browning and
Barrett? They wrote epic love poems
and love letters to each other, and
fell madly in love! "How do I love
thee, let me count the ways..."

Arthur is really on his toes now.

ARTHUR

Ah yes! BUT! Did you know that even
though they are known for all those
love poems, that they never actually
showed each other the poems until
AFTER they were married?

Milo is stymied. He looks quite dejected.

MILO

You're kidding.

ARTHUR

No! Not many people know that. Sod this anonymous shit! Tell her how you feel!

MILO

Christ. I've based the whole foundation of my love life on a fallacy.

ARTHUR

Yeah, haven't we all? But come on, how can you say you're really in love with her? You hardly know anything about her.

MILO

Maybe that's why I like her so much.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Maria still looks at her magical stone.

MILO (V.O.)

No nightmares will touch you tonight. Sweet dreams. With my adoration, "Browning."

She basks in the letter a moment more, touches where he signed it. Then opens a small elaborately carved wooden box. Many more pale blue letters are inside. She tucks his letter away gently.

She places the stone on a saucer that holds many leaves, carefully arranged.

INT. THE FOX PUB - CONTINUOUS

Arthur polishes off his drink. Turns to Milo.

ARTHUR

One more? I'll buy.

MILO

Nah, I gotta get going. Got something to do.

EXT. MILO'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Milo squats down, watches while Nicky poops in the litter box.

MILO

A little more, please.

Nicky covers his poop and hops out. Milo picks up the entire litter box.

MILO

Thanks, Nick. Just what I needed.

He pours the poopy litter into a large bin liner. Then he opens his refrigerator and breaks about ten eggs into the liner, as well as some nasty-looking leftover fish and whatever else is in there.

By the time Milo finishes, the bag is quite full. But before he ties it off he takes the junk mail and adverts with Franco's address on them and plants them deep into the disgusting rubbish.

There are three more very full bags of rubbish on the floor. He manages to pick them all up and leaves.

EXT. HIGH STREET - NIGHT

Under cover of night, Milo trots down the high street. He unties the bin liners and dumps the rubbish on the front steps of various businesses near Franco's Electronics. There's a joyful bounce in his step as he flings the rubbish.

EXT. HIGH STREET - NIGHT

Now empty-handed, Milo heads home down the nearly deserted high street, hands in pockets. Big grin on his face.

INT. CHINESE TAKE-AWAY - NIGHT

Milo waits for his order in the brightly lit take-away. He sees a mini-poster/advertisement taped to the inside window. "Camberwell Flower Show".

With the grace of an experienced thief he glides over, pulls it down, rolls it up, shoves it in his pocket before anyone even looks in his direction.

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

With a mouth full of Chinese food Milo skillfully doctors the date on the poster. Instead of the date reading the 14th, it now reads "15th".

EXT. MRS KENDALL'S HOUSE - DAY

Mrs Kendall greets Milo, as usual, at her front door.

MRS KENDALL

Hello Milo. How we doing today?

MILO

Aces, Mrs Kendall. You know what?
Got something good for you today.

Her face lights up as he hands her the postcard.

MRS KENDALL

Ooo! Loch Ness! Oh my!

Milo beams at her delight.

MRS KENDALL

(reads)

"Vivian, thought I'd drop you a line.
I'm up in Loch Ness now. Thought of
you the other day, how kind you were
when I was a boarder with you years
ago. I go fishing out on the loch
quite a bit, in a spot that you can
see on this postcard, the small bay
on the bottom right hand corner..."

She turns the postcard over and finds that spot. She shows
it to Milo. He looks at it as if for the first time.

MRS KENDALL

Look, I bet that's it right there!

She continues reading.

MRS KENDALL

"I remember you and I would often
discuss fishing so know that someone
in Scotland thinks of you every time
he fishes!" Oh my!

She is truly touched.

MRS KENDALL

And it's signed....hmm...I can't quite
make it out...starts with an M I
think...Mmm...Can you make it out?

She hands it back to Milo who pretends to inspect the
signature.

MRS KENDALL

I've had so many boarders over the
years....

MILO

Yes, I *know*.

MRS KENDALL

Oh, yes, of course you do!

MILO

Uh, it looks like....Mmmm...Michael?
Mmm...Mark...?

No recognition from her at all.

MILO

Mmm...Mmmmaaarrtin?

MRS KENDALL

Oh! Could it be *Marshall*?

MILO

Yup! That's it! Marshall!

MRS KENDALL

Oh, my...Marshall. What a dear lad...
to think of me after all this time.

Milo hands back her postcard...another satisfied customer.

Still clutching her postcard, she goes inside. Waves goodbye through the window. Milo waves back as he walks toward the sidewalk.

Through her front lounge window Milo sees her re-reading her cherished postcard.

EXT. COPY SHOP - DAY

Milo makes a full size colour photocopy of the doctored flower show poster. Looks as good as new.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

Milo approaches Franco's Electronics. The door is propped wide open. From inside two arguing voices can be heard, Franco and somebody else. Milo pauses outside the door for a few seconds to catch the gist of the argument.

FRANCO (O.S.)

I told you! It's not mine! Why would
I do that?

ARGUING MAN (O.S.)

I should bring it over here and dump
it on YOUR steps!

Milo pops in for second, long enough to drop the post on the counter, then comes out again.

ARGUING MAN (O.S.)

You idiot! I know it was your rubbish!

Milo keeps on walking, with a smug little smile on his face. His smile can't help but turn into a joyous laugh.

Mid-laugh, Kiki appears out of nowhere and falls in step beside him. Seeing Milo laughing, she laughs too.

KIKI

What are you laughing at, Milo?

Now in a good mood, Milo puts his arm around her and jostles her good-naturedly. She continues to laugh with him, but without knowing why.

MILO

Hi Kiki! Wanna have lunch with me?
I'll buy!

She is wide-eyed. Nods vigorously.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Milo plonks the day's post on the counter. Heads to his normal table. Kiki traipses after him.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

At their table, Kiki is absorbed in the menu.

KIKI

I've never eaten here before!

Milo chuckles in surprise.

MILO

What do you mean you've never eaten here? You're here nearly every day.

KIKI

Yeah, but I always bring my own lunch. Maria lets me. She brings me tea -

Milo cuts off this familiar conversation immediately.

MILO

Okay! So, what'll it be then?

KIKI

Uh....

She scans the menu. Up and down, up and down. Overwhelmed.

MILO

You wanna just get what I get?

She nods, perfectly happy to copy him. Maria approaches.

KIKI

Milo is buying me lunch!

Maria looks at Milo with genuine adoration.

MARIA

That's very sweet of him. Plus you want your usual tea, Kiki?

Kiki nods.

MARIA

And you, Milo?

MILO

Yeah, give us the usual all the way round.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Kiki seems absorbed in the conversation of the group of old ladies at the next table. Kiki watches a GENTLE GRANDMA delicately sipping her soup.

GENTLE GRANDMA

...and I couldn't get my shoes on!
My feet had swollen so much. I didn't even get to Sainsbury's yesterday because I couldn't get my shoes on, and I surely wasn't going to wear my slippers!

The Gentle Grandma titters at her own story. A CRABBY OLD PORTUGUESE WOMAN seems intent on one-upping her.

CRABBY OLD PORTUGUESE WOMAN

Oh, that's nothing, Ellen. Your feet are fine *today*, aren't they?!

Her tone is a bit harsh considering the sweet demeanour of the Gentle Grandma.

CRABBY OLD PORTUGUESE WOMAN

You know nothing of suffering! Last month I accidentally ate some peanuts - some idiot put them in some Chinese food if you can believe that!

Milo smirks overhearing their old lady hypochondriacal talk, but Kiki fumes.

CRABBY OLD PORTUGUESE WOMAN

I ate half of it before I realized it had peanuts in it. My eyes swelled shut for three days! I couldn't see a thing! So don't you tell me about not wearing shoes!

KIKI

You shouldn't be so mean to your friend!

Milo cringes, embarrassed as the two old ladies - as well as about three other tables of people - turn and look.

KIKI

You sound mean! Her feet hurt! You're a nasty old lady!

Maria has by this time come back with bread, catches the tail end of the conversation. She and Milo share a smirk as Kiki yells the types of things that everyone else wished they had the guts to say but never do.

MILO

Okay, Kiki. That's enough. Here, try some bread...

But Kiki is hellbent on taking out her notebook and documenting the injustice.

KIKI

(writes in her notebook)

Nasty woman yells at friend with hurt feet...

Maria does her best to divert Kiki's attention. Maria waves off the Crabby Old Portuguese Woman.

MARIA

(to Kiki)

Don't you worry about her. So Kiki, how was your Scottish dancing class at the community center the other night?

The Crabby Old Portuguese Woman is now forgotten, and Kiki is thrilled to tell Maria about her dancing...

KIKI

It was fun! Mum let me stay out until ten! We danced, and we kept messing

(MORE)

KIKI (CONT'D)
up, but they had juice and crisps and
pie. They took pictures too!

Milo watches with adoration as Maria chats with Kiki, calms
her down.

MARIA
Good! Bring them, I would love to
see them. Let me go get your tea.

KIKI
Okay!

Kiki is happy again as Maria leaves.

MILO
Scottish dancing, huh?

KIKI
Yeah. Mum makes me go with my group
every week. To help me learn to
socialize.

Milo smirks.

MILO
Yeah, well, it's working.

KIKI
There's ten of us. Some of the men
are retarded though.
(off Milo's look)
I'm not retarded. Mum says -- I'm
not retarded, I'm just a little slow.

Milo nods, picking at the bread, tries to look involved in
the conversation.

KIKI
I have sex with some of the retarded
men though.

Milo does a double take.

MILO
You have...?

KIKI
Uh huh. They are funny, they like to
have sex with me. Sometimes they
like me to have oral sex with them.
The teacher likes it!

Milo is stunned. But fascinated....

MILO
Your teacher? Is he, uh, retarded too?

KIKI
No, silly!

MILO
Just slow?

KIKI
No. He's not slow. He's a teacher
at the center. He's our chaperone
when we go places. I like to go down
on him. He's nice.

MILO
Shhh. Not so loud.

Milo leans forward, morbidly interested in this.

MILO
I bet he really likes it, too.

She nods vigorously, and laughs. Kiki senses Milo's sudden
interest in the conversation. Leans in a bit.

KIKI
I could do it to you. I like you.

Milo blinks at her.

KIKI
My teacher says I'm very good at it!

INT. CATAPLANA KITCHEN - LATER

Another waitress, ALMA, about Maria's age, stands in the
back doorway smoking. Waves the smoke out the door. Maria
folds cloth napkins and piles them onto a tray.

ALMA
So how do you know it's not Franco
sending 'em?

MARIA
Trust me, it's not Franco. Franco's
nice, but he doesn't talk like that,
he isn't that romantic.

ALMA
And you get a lot of them?

MARIA

A few a week.

ALMA

Are you SURE it's not Franco? Just messing with you? Trying to stitch you up?

MARIA

Stitch me...?

ALMA

You know, trick you. Write you letters, see if you keep them a secret or not.

MARIA

No. It's not Franco. Can't be.

ALMA

One of Franco's cousins? You see them all the time right? Maybe someone from the disco?

Maria shrugs and dismisses the suggestions.

MARIA

Browning...he's so romantic without being, you know, macho.

ALMA

Browning?

MARIA

That's how he signs his letters. Told me that Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning started out writing letters. Says he was inspired to write to me by Browning, so that's how he signs his name.

Alma stubs her cigarette out. Shuts the door. Helps Maria stack the silverware and napkins.

ALMA

It's a bit creepy if you ask me. He obviously knows where you work, he could be watching you every day.

MARIA

I don't think it's creepy. He's noble. He's a gentleman.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Milo sits back in his chair. Tears a chunk of bread off and nibbles on it, but doesn't take his eyes off Kiki.

KIKI

Want to? We could do it in the loo
like we do at the community center.

He watches her. She eats the bread. Sloppy. Gets butter all over her face.

KIKI

I could go down on you, Milo.

He exhales long and hard.

KIKI

You'd like it.

He looks over his shoulder to the bathroom. It beckons. Looks back to Kiki. Butter glistens on her lips and chin.

MAXINE MONROE (O.S.)

Kiki! Where the hell have you been?!

MAXINE MONROE, 45, stands near the front of the restaurant.

KIKI

Hi, Mum!

MAXINE MONROE

We're supposed to be at the doctor in
twenty minutes. I told you to come
home straight away.

Kiki trudges toward her mum. Milo forgotten, they leave.

BEHIND COUNTER -- Alma and Maria file into the front dining area from the kitchen.

MARIA

I'm so embarrassed with Franco. I
can't believe he did that. All the
storekeepers are furious with him!

ALMA

Not very 'noble', is it?

MARIA

No!

Milo sits in the background eating his lunch. Alone, unnoticed.

MARIA

(to Alma)

I tell you, I've nearly had it with Franco lately.

ALMA

I always thought he was rather nice.

Milo, in the background, accidentally tips his tea over.

MARIA

Yes, yes, he is. He is very nice.

But...I don't know...

Milo walks over to the counter near Maria and Alma. Alma sees him out of the corner of her eye. Glances at him.

MILO

Made a bit of a mess with me tea...

Alma hands him some napkins, then turns her attention back to Maria.

MARIA

It's just a lot of little things lately...sometimes I wonder if I'm settling.

Maria sighs in frustration.

MARIA

God, I wish so much sometimes that I could have *him!* Be with *him!*

ALMA

Huh? Franco?

MARIA

No, no, no. "*Browning!*"

A stunned Milo nearly knocks over a sugar dispenser.

MARIA

Why won't he face me? He's just what I always dreamed of. Even the *WAY* he writes. One time he used ink...you know, the old-fashioned way? When you used to dip the pen...?

She mimes the process.

ALMA

Yeah. A fountain pen.

MARIA

It's so charming.

Maria gazes off into space with a star-struck expression.

MARIA

Browning, come rescue me!!

Wide-eyed shock for Milo.

INT. ELEGANT STATIONERY SHOP - DAY

PEN COUNTER -- A SALESMAN shows Milo several high-end fountain pens. Three or four already lay out on the counter on a black velvet tray.

SALESMAN

Oh, so you've used one before?

MILO

Yes. But I need an even better one.

INK AISLE -- Milo inspects several jars of the best brand of good quality Indian ink. He can't decide between black or blue. Obviously an important decision for him.

PAPER COUNTER -- Milo buys more pale blue stationery, not the cheap kind either.

EXT. TARVASH PARK - DAY

Milo, now in his regular clothes, sits on a park bench. On his lap is a stack of pale blue paper. A bottle of Indian ink sits beside him.

Milo is lost, deep in thought, fountain pen in hand.

He picks a leaf from the tree branch that dangles nearby. Not satisfied with the first leaf, he tosses it aside. Searches for a better better leaf.

MAN and WIFE stroll through the park. A FRECKLE FACE GIRL, about 7 years old, trails along behind them. The adults seem blissfully unaware of their daughter's woe.

MILO (V.O.)

Sometimes I allow myself a fantasy.
I wonder how you would feel if one
day you see my true name signed at
the bottom.

Milo looks up at the nearby statue of Copernicus. He stands resplendent in his cloaks, with an ornate mask of the sun over his face, with spiky sun rays soaring out radiantly

from his head. His arm held straight out in front of him, he holds the earth in his hand -- Copernicus demonstrates in bronze his incredible theory that the earth revolves around the sun.

MILO (V.O.)

How long shall you remain out of my grasp? You are my sun and I am trapped in your graceful orbit.

Something catches Milo's eye. He stops writing.

Milo keeps his eye on the pouting Freckle Face as she lags behind her parents.

INT. POST OFFICE - LATER

Milo takes a pale blue envelope from his pocket and is just about to run it through the postage meter, but is suddenly interrupted by BOB, a pale and weedy looking young bloke steps up to Milo. Another bored young postal worker, LENNY follows Bob.

Slightly flustered for nearly being caught about to steal postage for his love letter, Milo forgoes the postage and simply tosses it into his sorting box.

BOB

(re: Milo)

Ah, the master.

LENNY

Bet he can't do five. No way.

BOB

You're on. How much?

LENNY

Ten quid.

Bob looks to Milo for reassurance. Milo gives a confident nod.

BOB

You're on.

MILO

Hand 'em over.

LENNY

Wait, wait, make sure they're facing away...

Lenny makes sure the envelopes are all back to front, then hands Milo the five envelopes.

BOB

Watch this, you won't believe it.

Milo takes the one on top, looks only at the back of it.

MILO

Notice of disconnection from the water company. Blue envelope, smaller than average size. Recycle logo in blue, not black.

Then another...

MILO

Cheque issued from the national housing office...reimbursement department. Perforated edges means usually government issued, two main sizes, the larger ones are for housing.

And the rest...

MILO

Advertisement for "Buy six DVDs for One Pence." Light blue envelope, three pages folded twice over. And a late notice for a subscription to either Hello magazine, or one of its sister magazines -- pink envelope, "Basildon Recycled Paper Product" on the back.

The last one makes Milo roll his eyes.

MILO

Easy. Greeting card.

LENNY

Anyone can tell that, those are obvious.

Bob holds his hand up in a "wait, we're not done" gesture.

BOB

With...?

Milo takes the envelope again, holds it by the very edges, and tips it back and forth, then shakes it in a very particular manner. Listens carefully.

MILO

Cash, not cheque.

Lenny is amazed.

LENNY

How...?

MILO

Cheques are perfectly flat and slick and when you shake it like this...

(mimes how to
shake envelope)

...the cheque easily slides back and forth, you can hear it clack, clack, clack. But cash is more uneven, creased and not flat at all. When you slide it with cash, nothing happens, it's not slick enough to move back and forth. But you can feel it's thicker than a card with nothing in it at all.

BOB

See? Milo is the Master!

LENNY

All right then, Mr Master of the Royal Mail...how many pounds in there?

Milo takes the envelope and holds it to his head...he closes his eyes in concentration.

MILO

Forty two pounds.

Bob and Lenny are dumbfounded, staring in awe. Milo breaks into a grin and tosses it back to Bob.

MILO

I don't know, do I? What do you think I am, bloody psychic?

Bob takes the card and with the precision of a surgeon opens the envelope flap with his pocket knife. Sure enough, he pulls out a young child's birthday card with a colourful clown holding a balloon that says "You're SIX!" and a £20 note.

BOB

Pay up! Ten pounds please! Ladies and gentleman, the Postal Savant of S.E.15!

MILO

I should get a share of that! I do all the work. I feel like a bloody performing seal!

Lenny grudgingly hands over a ten pound note to Bob. Then Lenny gets his greedy hands on the little kid's birthday money. Bob plucks the ten pound note from Lenny's hand.

BOB

I'll take that.

Milo grabs the birthday card and birthday cash from Lenny.

MILO

And I'll take that.

LENNY

Hey, I gotta recoup my losses from somewhere.

Milo grabs some postal glue and expertly puts the birthday card back the way it was, cash and all.

MILO

Not from a six year-old kid you won't.

He tosses it into the proper cart to be delivered.

EXT. DERRICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Milo whistles as he goes on his route.

Milo drops the post through the door at number 14 Dogwood Place. He's almost to the front gate again when he hears the front door open behind him. He cringes.

DERRICK

Oi! Milo Finch!

Milo turns, and manages a smile for DERRICK JACKSON, 28, a macho dim bulb with a beer-addled brain in a tacky polyester track suit. The top is unzipped enough to show that he wears a vintage "Star Wars" t-shirt.

DERRICK

Oi, Milo Finch! What's up with all the junk and adverts?

Derrick has his pile of post in his hands.

MILO

Don't know, mate. I just deliver it.

Derrick comes out to meet Milo in the garden, still in his socks. His track suit top barely covers his beer gut.

DERRICK

Look at all this shite! Sale at Arrow's Florist, "Fly for Half" Oasis Travel... what do I need all this for?

Milo shrugs.

MILO

Don't know. Chuck it I suppose.

DERRICK

You know...gives me an idea though. I should advertize for my Star Wars collection.

Derrick seems to have hit upon an idea he likes. Milo nods as if he understands.

DERRICK

My Star Wars stuff. The original trilogy, not the prequels. Loads of stuff I've got. Worth a lot. Hey, you got any kids?

Milo edges towards the gate, desperate to escape.

MILO

Nope, no kids.

DERRICK

Nephews and nieces?

MILO

Uh, yeah. A nephew.

Derrick is excited now. He waves Milo inside.

DERRICK

Come look! Maybe you want to buy him something! Kids love Star Wars.

MILO

Well, to be quite honest, I don't even think he's seen the original. He's only ten.

Derrick grins, exposing more gums than teeth.

DERRICK

Doesn't matter. Kids love this stuff. Come on...or are you too good I suppose?!

Milo sighs.

INT. DERRICK'S BEDROOM - DAY

Derrick's bedroom is dark and untidy. You can practically smell the dirty laundry. Milo follows Derrick in.

Derrick gestures with pride to a bookcase. It is indeed full of Star Wars memorabilia. Some still in the box, some not. Milo just stands there, not knowing what he's supposed to do.

MILO

Wow. Yeah. Look at all that stuff.

Derrick stands there, hands in pockets. Grins at his collection.

DERRICK

Gonna sell it. This stuff is worth a fortune, some of it anyway. Just gotta find the right buyers. Think I'll put a flyer up in the window at the news agents.

MILO

How about eBay?

Derrick is clueless.

DERRICK

Where's that?

Milo almost laughs, but stifles it. Milo just stands there. Looks at the Star Wars toys.

MILO

Well...good luck with that.

Derrick doesn't sense when a conversation is winding down.

DERRICK

Eventually might open a shop. Something like a comic book shop, you know? Those types of things. But without the comic books.

Milo scans the bookcase. Though the stuff takes up the entire bookcase here, it wouldn't fill many shelves in a shop. Not much to build an empire on.

Milo picks up a boxed Yoda toy, pretends to be interested in looking at it. Derrick lurches forward, alarmed.

DERRICK
 Don't open it! It's worth way more
 unopened!

Milo - with no intention of opening it - places it carefully
 back on the shelf.

EXT. DERRICK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Milo escapes from Derrick's house, with Derrick still a step
 behind him.

DERRICK
 Ask around, see if anyone you know
 might want to see my collection.

MILO
 Will do, mate.

DERRICK
 Best to get 'em now, cuz once I make
 it big my prices will go way up.

MILO
 I understand.

KIKI (O.S.)
 Milo! You're late!

There's no mistaking Kiki's demanding tone.

She appears at Derrick's front gate, hands on hips. Milo
 almost looks relieved to see her.

MILO
 Kiki!

KIKI
 It's 11:35! You're late!

MILO
 Am I? For what?

KIKI
 You're suppose to be at lunch.

MILO
 Oh...well that's okay, no one's
 expecting me.

Derrick sizes Kiki up.

DERRICK

(to Milo)

Oh, is she that retarded girl from a few streets over?

KIKI

I'm not retarded! Mum says I'm not retarded, I'm just a little slow. And that's not polite you know, to say that.

She spots his "Star Wars" shirt, and her tone quickly changes from scolding to elation.

KIKI

Oh my God! I love Star Wars!

Derrick has an instant friend.

DERRICK

The original? Not the new ones.

KIKI

Yeah! Luke and Leia. And Han Solo! He's my favourite! Oh, he's so handsome! I love Han Solo!

DERRICK

He's my role model.

Milo is now forgotten. Kiki makes her way to Derrick, who seems to welcome her.

DERRICK

Hey, you wanna come see my Star Wars collection?

Kiki gasps in wonderment, she's in heaven.

KIKI

You have Star Wars stuff?

DERRICK

Loads of it!

Milo watches these two bond, with half horror, half amusement.

DERRICK

Just got a new Yoda mug.

KIKI

I don't like Yoda. He's ugly.

Derrick ushers Kiki inside and both leave Milo behind without a second glance. Milo stands alone, bewildered, but amused.

EXT. FRANCO'S ELECTRONICS - DAY

Milo drops the post on the counter.

MILO
Big night tomorrow night, eh?

FRANCO
Sorry?

MILO
Flower show. Taking Maria for the big surprise.

FRANCO
No, no, that's tonight!

Milo feigns confusion.

MILO
You sure, mate? Saw an advert...said tomorrow night.

FRANCO
No, no! Tonight.

MILO
No...

Franco watches through the shop window: Milo trots outside, tears a poster down from the outside wall next door, and brings it back in.

MILO
Says here it's tomorrow.

Franco reads the poster.

FRANCO
Oh shit. I had it planned for tonight!

INT. GRIMY WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A rough-looking FENCE counts a pile of sheets of stamps. Milo digs through his pockets.

MILO
And I've got some cheques...

FENCE

About two hundred pounds worth of stamps...give you sixty pounds.

Milo pulls the official-looking envelopes out, ones he took from the post office cart a few days earlier. Hands them to the Fence. The Fence looks insulted.

FENCE

You're gonna make me open 'em?

Milo takes the envelopes back, fumbles with them as the Fence glowers at Milo.

MILO

Sorry.

The Fence looks through the cheques, about eight of them.

FENCE

So...what...about eight hundred pounds worth? Give you three hundred pounds.

MILO

Three hundred?! For eight hundred's worth?

FENCE

YOU wanna fence 'em? You have any idea what I have to do to cash these? Ain't easy, mate.

MILO

All right, all right.

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Milo sits at his computer clicking away. He reaches for his little notebook. Leafs through the pages.

MILO

(reads in Jamaican
accent)

Welling Road, Jamaican, number 32, mon.

Finds what he was looking for. Transfers the information into his computer.

He looks over his handiwork for a moment, then prints it out.

PRINTER -- a stack of bright neon yellow paper begins to feed through the printer.

CLOSE-UP OF FLYER -- "Neighbourhood Pot Party -- Come one, come all! Join me in Celebration of Bob Marley's Birthday! B.Y.O.P! (Bring your own pot!) Free Samples Available -- Discounts to Neighbours!"

On the flyer is the time, date, address and other relevant information. Clip art images of marijuana leaves liven up the invitation.

Milo picks up a freshly printed flyer. Inspects it.

MILO

"Discounts to Neighbours!"

He laughs at his own work. He glances at Nicky.

MILO

Devious AND funny.

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - LATER

Milo, looking more weary after a night of printing and folding, is still at the computer. A stack of printed and folded bright yellow invitations sit on his desk. About 100 of them. He sticks on the last few address labels.

On his computer screen is a website for dog-racing. After a few clicks he finds the right thing -- he clicks on "CALENDAR OF SCHEDULED RACES". After a few more clicks, his printer cranks up again, but this time just one page prints out.

INT. DERRICK'S FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

CLANK! Derrick shuffles over, picks up today's post. He flips through his letters. Scrunches up his nose in confusion.

DERRICK

Monroe? Milo Finch...you messed up.

He shakes his head at Milo's incompetence. Looks at the flyer for the dog race, notices there's no stamp or anything. He's baffled. *Doesn't take much.*

EXT. DERRICK'S STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Milo keeps out of sight as he keeps his eye on Derrick's front door. Derrick finally comes out, post in hand.

Milo nods his approval.

MILO

Off you go, Romeo.

EXT. S.E.15 - LATER

CLANK! CLANK! CLANK!

Quick series of shots of bright yellow invitations go through the slots of many houses.

EXT. S.E.15 - LATER

Milo swaggers down the street despite his heavy satchel. He even starts to whistle a bit.

Stops dead in his tracks when he sees her.

Seven year-old Freckle Face leans on her front garden wall. She kicks at a piece of loose railing with no enthusiasm, still an unhappy child. Milo watches her for a moment, then continues on. Makes his way down his route, gets nearer.

He reaches her front gate. Her glum face looks up at him. He tries a sudden fake smile on her. She too makes an attempt at a smile. He goes to her front door, pushes the post through. Then goes out the gate again, and on to the next house.

But then he stops.

He turns to her. She looks at him. With a nod of his chin and a shift of his eyes he motions down a narrow side alleyway, then slips down the alleyway himself. Gestures for her to follow.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Milo sits on a low step halfway down the alley. After a few seconds she appears in front of him. He smiles.

MILO

You know, I was thinking about you
the other day.

He pats the seat next to him.

MILO

Come here, sit next to me.

EXT. WILSON ROAD - DAY

Kiki opens her front door to see Derrick standing there. She is flummoxed. *Doesn't take much.*

DERRICK

Milo Finch. He really arsed things up.

He hands her the post meant for her house.

KIKI
I'll give it to my mum.

She sees the flyer for the dog race and gasps in delight.

DERRICK
What?

KIKI
This race! Oh, I always wanted to go
to the races. But Mum won't let me
go alone. It's too far.

Still the idea hasn't popped into his head yet. Nor hers.

KIKI
Mum says I can't go alone.

Vacant nod from Derrick. Without saying goodbye Kiki abruptly
shuts the door.

Derrick is almost to her front gate before it occurs to him.

He goes back, knocks. Kiki appears again.

KIKI
Hi, Derrick!

DERRICK
Um, yeah...maybe I could take you.

KIKI
Take me where?

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Milo hunches over a bit, so he's more face to face with the
little girl.

MILO
When I was about ten my dad died.
And for a while it was just me and my
mum. But then, just like your mum,
my mum remarried.

Freckle Face is amazed.

FRECKLE FACE
How did you know...?

MILO
Been delivering mail along this route
for years. I remember when it was you
(MORE)

MILO (CONT'D)
 and your mum and dad. Then I remember
 when it was just you and your mum for
 a while. Now all of sudden, there's
 someone new, isn't there?

She wrinkles her nose up in disgust.

FRECKLE FACE
 Simon.

He laughs.

MILO
 Yeah, Simon. After my dad died my
 mum was really sad for a long time,
 and I tried to make her feel better.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - MUM'S BEDROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK

Ten year-old LITTLE MILO brings his MUM a cup of tea as she
 lies on her bed. She dabs a tissue at her nose and eyes.
 Her face is streaked with mascara. She gives Little Milo a
 weak smile. Strokes his cheek.

MILO (V.O.)
 I felt it was up to me to make her
 feel better, you know, to take care of
 her. I was the man of the house now.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Another day Little Milo struggles valiantly to take the
 rubbish out for Mum. She watches proudly, letting him do it
 for her, even though he makes a mess.

MILO (V.O.)
 And I suppose even though I missed my
 dad, that time alone with my mum was
 special, we got closer. I felt proud
 that I could take care of her.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - LOUNGE - DAY

Little Milo now sits with his mum on the sofa. He leans his
 head over on her shoulder as they watch TV. She strokes his
 hair as they munch on sandwiches.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Freckle Face looks up at Milo, enraptured by his story, obviously relating. He puts his arm around her as he continues his story. She leans into him a bit more.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - DAY**FLASHBACK**

Little Milo dashes into the kitchen, school books in hand. A strange man sits at the table with his mum.

MUM

Hello, love. This is Kevin.

KEVIN shakes hands with Little Milo, who is still stunned to see his mum flirt and laugh with a new man.

MILO (V.O.)

Soon she remarried, like your mum did.

EXT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - GARDEN - DAY

Kevin rakes leaves. Little Milo is relegated to helper now. Little Milo holds the bin liner open so Kevin can dump the leaves in.

MILO (V.O.)

I was happy she was happy again. And Kevin, well, he was all right.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Little Milo begins to perform his manly duty of taking the rubbish out for his mum. She watches him as she does the washing up.

But Kevin steps in and takes the rubbish from Little Milo. He winks at his new wife, and it makes her smile. Little Milo's power has been usurped. Little Milo scowls with displeasure.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Big Milo scowls with displeasure at the memory.

FRECKLE FACE

So he was okay?

Milo is drawn back into his story...

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

FLASHBACK

Kevin takes the rubbish, leaving Little Milo standing empty-handed in the middle of the kitchen. Little Milo fumes while Mum smiles coquettishly at her manly new husband.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

Little Milo takes a bottle of laxative tablets from the cabinet. He pours about ten of them onto the counter top. Crushes them by rolling the bottle over them back and forth until they are ground up pretty good.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Little Milo helps set the table for breakfast. Little Milo, being ever-so-helpful, pours the cereal into their bowls for them as Mum and Kevin grab toast and tea. Little Milo tosses his magical laxative powder into Kevin's bowl before filling it with cereal.

MILO (V.O.)

Yeah. He was fine. I decided to give him a chance.

Kevin sits down, pours milk into his cereal. Tousles Little Milo's hair. What a helpful little lad.

INT. MILO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - LOUNGE - DAY

Kevin and Mum now sit together on the sofa. Little Milo has to sit over on the side chair as they watch TV.

Kevin squirms in his seat a few times. Finally he hops up and rushes out of the room, running in a very peculiar way.

Little Milo tries to suppress a grimace.

MILO (V.O.)

Yeah, we were just fine after that.

Milo the Anonymous Meddler is born.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Milo squeezes her shoulders, brings her more into a hug.

MILO

Anyway, my point is, you had time
(MORE)

MILO (CONT'D)
 alone for a long time with your mum.
 And it was nice, wasn't it?

She nods.

FRECKLE FACE
 Yeah. We used to watch movies and
 make popcorn. Had movie night a couple
 of times a week.

MILO
 But your mum has found a man she loves
 now. Like she loved your dad. You
 want her to be happy, don't you?

FRECKLE FACE
 I guess.

MILO
 And I bet if you asked, all three of
 you could have movie night now. Doesn't
 mean you have to spend less time with
 your mum. Give it a chance. Huh?

She seems reluctant to agree. He jostles her around a bit,
 as if to threaten her with tickles if she doesn't agree.
 She laughs and squirms.

MILO
 Huh? Okay?

FRECKLE FACE
 Okay. I guess so.

MILO
 All right then. Off you go.

She hops up, disappears down the alley toward home.

EXT. WILSON ROAD - LATER

At the end of the road Milo leans against the back wall of a
 shop. Watches the goings-on of the entire street. From his
 slouch and the glazed look in his eyes, he's been there a while.

He watches Kiki's house in the distance where Kiki and Derrick
 still stand at the front door chatting. This goes on for a
 while. Milo sighs impatiently.

MILO
 Oh for God's sake, ask him in. Ask
 him in!

The two odd ducks chat and flirt for a moment more. Finally Kiki and Derrick go inside her house.

Milo springs into action.

MILO

Finally!

KIKI'S HOUSE -- Milo reaches Kiki's house, but continues on to the house next door. Dashes up the walkway...

MR PERCY'S HOUSE -- Milo knocks. Glances around to see that the street is still empty.

The door opens just a crack. Mr Percy peeks out warily. It's far too late for the post.

MR PERCY

Yes?

BAM! With a sudden surge of violence, Milo kicks the door wide open! Mr Percy flies backwards from the impact. Milo's inside the house like a shot. Door shuts behind him.

INT. MR PERCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Mr Percy scrambles to his feet. BAM! A brutal kick from Milo sends him down again.

MILO

Don't bother standing up.

Milo sees Echo, still caged up in the small cage. His rage refueled, Milo kicks Mr Percy furiously. And again. And again.

MILO

You sick fuck!

Milo sweats. He's exhausted, but still vents all of his rage on Mr Percy. Poor Echo looks on.

EXT. CAMBERWELL COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

Franco opens the car door for Maria. She's dressed up, a big night for her. He leads her up to the door. Door is locked.

He is dumbfounded. He tries all of the doors. All locked.

Maria can't hide her disappointment.

FRANCO

I don't understand it.

MARIA

Franco, it's dark in there. There's nothing going on tonight.

He presses his face to the glass, peers inside in disbelief.

FRANCO

But I planned this! You were gonna love it! It was a flower show, I had it all arranged!

Maria sighs. She heads back toward the car, dejected.

MARIA

Yes. I can see how much effort you put into arranging this.

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Milo is once again surfing the net on his computer.

MILO

"Northern Portugal...humid Iberia...essentially homogeneous vegetation zone..."

He squinches his face up, irritated as he reads.

MILO

"...Striking differences in floristic composition and physiognomy -" Oh for fuck's sake, gimme something I can use!

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - DAY

Not terribly busy today. Maria makes coffee behind the counter. Franco helps himself to some bread and soup.

Maria eyes the stack of letters next to Pedro at the till. But she doesn't make a move, not with Franco nearby.

She turns her attention to a UNIFORMED MAN coming in. Oh, he's not a customer. He's delivering a bouquet of flowers.

MARIA

Oh my, they're beautiful! Wild plum blooms! We used to have these in our garden at home!

The women swoon over the gorgeous delivery. Alma sees the card that sticks out from the bouquet. Snatches it. Gives it to Maria before Pedro and Franco notice. Maria reads it. Gasps. Mouths the word "Browning" to Alma. Alma gapes.

PEDRO

Very nice. Well? Who are they for?

FRANCO

Who are they *from*?

MARIA

It says they are for the whole cafe.
From a customer who really enjoyed
eating here.

PEDRO

Probably that family from last week,
here from America. You know how
Americans are.

The men's interest in the flowers doesn't last long. Maria is enraptured by them.

MILO'S TABLE -- As casually as he can, Milo relishes her enjoyment of his flowers.

He watches as Maria waits for the coffee pot to finish filling. Slowly she hooks her finger in the chain of her necklace, winds it around her finger again and again until, yes, what Milo has been waiting for, she absent-mindedly brings the pendent to her lips, and bites on it. He smiles at her adorable quirk.

COUNTER -- Franco passes behind her, his interest focused on the pile of letters. He squints and gets a closer look. He pulls one envelope out of the pile. A pale blue envelope.

MILO'S TABLE -- Milo quickly looks away. He stares down at his plate. But he breathes a bit faster.

MILO

Oh God, oh God, oh God.

COUNTER -- Franco inspects the envelope closely. Maria and Alma still fuss over the flowers.

MILO'S P.O.V. -- Franco lifts his head, does a slow turn. Stares directly at Milo.

MILO

(under his breath)

Oh fuck. Shit. Shit. Shit.

Milo's heart can almost be seen pounding beneath his shirt.

MILO'S P.O.V. -- Milo stares at his plate, his silverware, nervously fiddles with his fork. Suddenly a pale blue envelope is slapped down in front of him.

Milo looks up cautiously. Franco stands over him. Franco points to the envelope.

FRANCO

What's this, Milo?

Milo swallows hard.

MILO

What?

FRANCO

Look at it!

Milo does.

FRANCO

No stamp! That one got right by you, didn't it?

Milo laughs. Nervous. Giddy.

MILO

Oh, hey, you're right! That one slipped right by me.

Franco slaps him on the back, laughs. Takes the envelope back.

FRANCO

Getting slow in your old age, eh?

Franco takes the envelope back behind the counter. Tosses it down, not giving it another glance as he heads out the door.

Milo breathes a long, deep sigh of relief.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - LATER

Milo waits at the till. Maria, still radiant and in such a good mood, makes her way up to the till where Milo watches her approach. She has tucked one of the wild plum blooms in her hair, making her look even more lovely.

MILO

Nice flowers.

MARIA

Aren't they beautiful?

MILO

Yes, they are...just like...

You? He struggles for the words....

MILO

Just like...flowers tend to be.

She smiles. Admires them.

MILO

From anyone special?

She pauses, smiles demurely, then nods.

Another long awkward Milo pause. She hands him his change.

MARIA

There you go, Milo. See you tomorrow.

EXT. HIGH STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Around the corner from the cafe, Milo stops dead in his tracks. For a few seconds he just stands there. Looks like he's been hit by lightning or smacked in the face with a telephone book.

He looks up into the sky. Lets out a mighty roar of anguish.

MILO

Aaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrhhhhhhh!

EXT. HIGH STREET - DUSK

Milo sits like a lump on a bench. Across the street he sees Derrick and Kiki walking hand in hand, looking quite the couple. Even from far away, Milo can hear both of their loud, obnoxious voices; the mundane chit-chat of lovers.

For once, neither rush over to him. Don't even notice him.

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

MILO

Meet me, meet me, meet me!

Milo paces back and forth, frantic dictation into his cell phone voice memo app.

MILO

Tell her that...that...

He runs his hands through his hair. Struggles to find the right words.

MILO

Okay, say something like you've come to realize that sometimes even the

(MORE)

MILO (CONT'D)

most unlikely people can find love
and that you're tired of sitting this
one out. No, don't say "sitting this
one out." Say "the time has come for
us to meet, to see if we could exist
in a relationship beyond paper."
Beyond paper?

Back and forth he continues to pace. His voice isn't the
suave voice that usually relates these romantic yearnings in
her letters -- it's awkward and unsure.

MILO

"...could exist in a flesh and blood
relationship that exists beyond the
realm of pen and ink." Yeah, that
sounds better. No, wait, I said
"exist" twice, didn't I?

INT. MILO'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Milo soaks in the tub. Mobile phone is balanced on the edge
of the tub, voice memo still recording.

MILO

If my letters have touched you at
all.... Moved? Affected? No, touched
is good. Touched *your heart*...If my
letters have touched your heart at
all, then I feel, I suspect, I...hope,
I...sense in my heart that you
are...you will...that you're the
type...ARRRR!

He smacks his hands down into the water. Bath water splash
all over. Rants like a child.

MILO

*I want you to know who I am and love
me anyway!!!*

INT. MILO'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Milo sits alone at his dinner table. Eats a meagre meal of
ravioli that he spears with his fork straight from the tin.
Mobile phone is next to his plate.

MILO

I have faith that you will see past
my plain brown wrapping and discover
the true gift within me.

He wrinkles his nose up, not so sure about that last line.

MILO

You are my...uh...Maria, you are my
desert lily...come on Finch, just
brainstorm. My English rose. African
violet, Spanish moss. Portuguese...
what? My *corazon!* No wait, I think
that's Spanish. My Rock of Gibraltar.
No, that's Spain. Damn it, why couldn't
she be Spanish?

He takes his fork and glass to the sink. Tosses the empty
tin then - still dictating - he goes into...

INT. MILO'S LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Milo stands in the center of the room. Tries to find just
the right words for his voice memo app.

MILO

Portuguese what? Fisherman. Yeah,
she's my little Portuguese fisherman,
very romantic, Milo. Sausage...
cataplana...tropical...what? Is
Portugal really tropical? Semi-
tropical? My tropical bird.

He laughs at his joke.

MILO

No. British slang, she wouldn't get
that joke. Not the time to be funny
anyway. Come on...Portugal's not
tropical! How about exotic...? My
little...

INT. MILO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Milo lies in bed. Silent. Eyes shut. It's quiet. He's
still as a rock, steady breathing. Asleep?

Suddenly he shouts.

MILO

Wild plum!

He sits bolt upright in bed.

MILO

My little wild plum!

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - DAY

Maria sits on her bed. Reads her letter to Alma, who pours
their tea.

MARIA
 (reads)
 "...my sweet wild plum..."

Alma listens, quite transfixed.

MARIA
 "A kind of epiphany struck me. I'm not as handsome as your boyfriend - nor as young as your boyfriend - yet somehow this may not matter to you. Forgive me, I've been insulting to you to assume you could not be stronger than I am and let love bloom where hopefully I have planted the seeds."

Maria squeals in delight.

MARIA
 Finally!

ALMA
 What if he's really ugly? Or old?

Maria scoffs at her.

MARIA
 Oh, how bad could he be?

She continues to read the letter....

MARIA
 "If you are ready to face our future - together with me - then meet me Friday at 3 p.m. in Tarvash Park. But only if you truly think you could overlook my lack of grace...otherwise, please spare my heart. But I would plead to you, with the words of Rumi, "Don't be blurry-eyed, see me clearly - see my beauty without the old eyes of delusion."

She squeals again.

EXT. TARVASH PARK - DAY

Maria, in a pretty dress, walks through the park toward the Copernicus statue.

MILO (V.O.)
 ...there is a statue of Copernicus near the pond. Meet me under his
 (MORE)

MILO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 gaze. He shall watch over us and
 perhaps bestow us with a bit of his
 heavenly insight. As he holds the
 earth in his hands, you hold our future
 in yours.

Maria reaches the statue. Gazes up at him in all his
 Copernican glory.

MARIA
 Nice to meet you, Copernicus. Keep
 me company while I wait?

She fidgets a bit. Smooths her dress. Fixes her hair.
 Scans the park for anyone approaching her.

MARIA
 No, not nervous. Why do you ask?

MILO (V.O.)
 For all the security that my anonymity
 has given me, in the end I have found
 a painful truth in the Russian proverb:
 Love is heavy, but lack of love is
 heavier.

BEHIND GROUNDKEEPER'S SHED -- Milo watches Maria in the
 distance, as she stands with Copernicus. Exhales roughly.
 He's put some effort into his appearance. He's out of his
 uniform.

MILO
 She's here. She showed up. Jesus.

Still, he keeps himself well out of sight. Not ready. Takes
 a deep breath in, lets it out. Again. And again.

Looks back over at Maria. She waits patiently, like an angel.

He steadies himself. Turns and catches his reflection in an
 old, grimy window. Stares at himself.

INT. THE FOX PUB - NIGHT

There is a look of sheer horror on Arthur's face.

ARTHUR
 You fucking idiot, you did what?!

Milo nods glumly. Drowns his sorrows in a lager.

ARTHUR

Are you out of your mind?! You finally get her to agree to meet you in person, she's obviously open to giving you a chance, she actually shows up - this love of your life - and you stand her up?! You let her stand there waiting for what, an hour?!

MILO

One hour and eighteen minutes.

ARTHUR

And then you LEFT?!

MILO

I was just about to walk over. I look at my reflection, you know, one last look, and I just freeze.

Milo looks up at his reflection in the mirror behind the bar. He nods at himself.

MILO

It's me, innit? No matter how romantic and beautiful my letters are, it's still ME who's writing them. I don't know, I just saw my reflection there and I froze.

Milo turns to face Arthur again.

MILO

Maybe in my head I'd built myself up into some charming, suave guy, and I saw myself in that window and I was almost surprised to see myself. Like there was gonna be some ultra-sexy, suave man's reflection instead. But it was me.

Arthur covers his eyes in disbelief and horror. He sighs. Arthur finally calms down. Sips his drink. Turns to Milo.

ARTHUR

All right then, Tommy. So you're standing there looking at your reflection, struck deaf, dumb, and blind. How do you think she's gonna feel about you now?

Milo shrugs.

MILO

Like I'm an ass. Or she'll feel depressed. She got stood up. I AM an ass.

Arthur shakes his head in disbelief.

ARTHUR

Idiot. She waited an hour and eighteen minutes for you?

Milo nods sadly. Arthur seems almost impressed.

ARTHUR

Wow. She must really like you.

Arthur and Milo ponder this. Both take a long swig.

ARTHUR

And you walked away.

Arthur shakes his head in disgust. They both take another long drink of their lagers. Blank stares straight ahead.

MILO

I'll tell you one thing though.

Arthur and Milo look at each other.

MILO

I sure play a mean pinball.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Maria sits on the floor, leaning against her bed, her head flung back. Alma refills Maria's wine glass. They both look a bit toasted. Alma joins Maria on the floor.

MARIA

But why? Why? I was SO ready to meet him!

ALMA

Well apparently, my love, he was not ready to meet you.

MARIA

But it was his idea!

ALMA

What can I tell you?

Alma shrugs and takes another big sip of wine.

ALMA

You want my advice?

Alma allows a dramatic pause before sharing her wisdom.

ALMA

Men are just awful.

MARIA

Men are just awful?

Maria laughs, despite her obvious heartache. The wine has gone to their heads by now.

MARIA

That's not advice!

Alma struggles to keep up.

ALMA

Men are just awful...yeah, that's my advice. Oh! No, I mean *motto*!

Both Maria and Alma laugh until they can't breathe.

MARIA

I like it. And I think it's true.
May I borrow your motto?

ALMA

Keep it as long as you like.

Alma gets up and struggles to put on her coat.

ALMA

I gotta get home. Should I splurge
on a taxi? Or take the good old number
twelve?

MARIA

You know, maybe this was a lesson.
Not to throw away something you have
and should cherish.

ALMA

Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.

This phrase baffles Maria.

MARIA

What?! What the HELL does that mean?

Alma makes a very concerted effort to focus on answering that.

ALMA

I guess...I guess it means...not to throw away something you have and should cherish.

Alma's duplicate answer sends them into hysterics again.

MARIA

I can't breathe!

Finally, Maria can breathe. She becomes a bit more serious.

MARIA

I've been wondering if I should take Franco up on his offer.

ALMA

Yeah?

Maria shrugs.

MARIA

No reason not to, is there?

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

Milo and Arthur saunter down the road, away from The Fox.

MILO

No, Tommy wasn't *in* love with his own reflection. You're thinking of *Narcissus*.

ARTHUR

Yes, I know that's *Narcissus*!

They walk past shops and cafes, oblivious to all else but their debate.

MILO

It was just that his reflection was the only thing he could see. Me, I'm the opposite, I didn't even recognize myself in the reflection.

ARTHUR

Okay, but the parallel still applies.

Milo laughs.

MILO

You just can't stand to have holes in your analogies, can you?

ARTHUR

Look, TOMMY was immobilized. YOU were immobilized. You both looked at yourselves in a mirror. Window, whatever. You're both English, you both have blue eyes. The bloody analogy DOES fit.

Milo chuckles again. Arthur finally joins in.

ARTHUR

Tommy broke free though.

In desperation, Arthur "bitch slaps" Milo repeatedly on the arm and torso. Perhaps an effect of their many drinks.

ARTHUR

When are you gonna do the same?!

Arthur grabs him, shakes him.

MILO

Who are you, the Acid Queen? Trying to flog me out of my nice cozy complacency? Leave me alone!

ARTHUR

I'm trying to free you!

Milo laughs as he tries to break free from Arthur's grasp.

MILO

Fuck off! I don't wanna be free!

Arthur settles down again.

ARTHUR

But the whole gist of the film is that in the end, he is *free*!

MILO

Yeah, but everyone around him is dead!

ARTHUR

Are they?

MILO

Yes! Both Oliver Reed and Ann-Margret die in the end!

ARTHUR

Ah, that's right. Yes. Well, there is that.

MILO

He's left alone in his own world again.

ARTHUR

Yes, but now he is *enlightened*. He is free of the block that's held him back his whole life. Pete Townshend... bloody genius.

MILO

Okay, but it wasn't Tommy's parents' death that removed the block, it was Ann-Margret throwing him through a huge bloody plate glass window!

ARTHUR

Well, all right then!

Arthur grabs Milo and pretends to be about to throw him through the large window of the shop they walk past. They thrash around like schoolboys, each trying to get a hold of the other. They quickly wear themselves out.

MILO

I need to just stop writing to her. It's a fantasy that's not going to work out. I'm not what she really wants. Just shake myself out of it, and stop.

Arthur nods solemnly at Milo's sad declaration. They walk in silence for a while.

MILO

Imagine having Ann-Margret as your mum.

ARTHUR

Cor! Remember her in all those baked beans?

Milo laughs lustily.

MILO

Absolutely.

EXT. WILSON ROAD - NIGHT

Milo uses a key and lets himself into Mr Percy's house.

Once the door is open, Milo takes the untouched milk bottles from the front step, tucks them away inside the door. He notices some newspapers shoved into the post slot. He takes those and tosses them inside the door too.

Looks around for any other evidence in inactivity on the premises. Then goes inside and shuts the door.

EXT. WELLING ROAD - DAY

Relatively quiet on this side street, except for the ruckus around number 32. Panda cars parked all up and down the road.

The Jamaican Man is being led out of his house in handcuffs. Grumbles the whole time as POLICEMEN wander in and out of his house.

EXT. WILSON ROAD - DAY

KIKI'S HOUSE -- Milo leans against Kiki's garden wall as she regales him with her tale.

KIKI

Then we sat down, but our seats weren't very good. Mine had soda spilled on it. Well, it was MY soda, I spilled my soda on it. So then we moved down a row, and those seats were better. They were like those seats in the Day Center, you know those plastic ones? But ours were blue --

MILO

So Kiki, did your dog win?

KIKI

No. But that's okay. Derrick was fun to be with. He was yelling at the dogs, "Faster, faster, you dumb bitch!"

She snorts a bawdy laugh as she remembers.

MILO

I'm sure he was as charming as ever.

Milo tries to make his way to the gate, anxious to leave.

KIKI

And we went on the bus! It was far. Well, we took a wrong bus at first, but then Derrick asked the man at the petrol station and he told us how to get there. We took a bus! Derrick took me! We saw the dogs race!

MILO

You didn't spill your soda, did you?

She opens her mouth in amazement, but then remembers.

KIKI
Oh, I told you that already!

MILO
Can't fool you, can I?

She grins at him.

KIKI
No. You can't. Hey Milo, you going to the Spanish cafe now?

MILO
Portuguese. And no. Can't. Gotta go feed a dog. See you later.

He heads next door, but turns back to her.

MILO
(sincerely)
Kiki? Glad you and Derrick had a good time.

MR PERCY'S HOUSE -- After making sure Kiki has gone back inside, Milo lets himself into the house.

INT. MR PERCY'S LOUNGE - DAY

Milo puts his heavy satchel down and takes his coat off. MUFFLED GRUNTS fill the room. Milo ignores them. He takes a policeman's nightstick from his satchel.

INT. MR PERCY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Milo opens a can of dog food. Plops it on a saucer.

INT. MR PERCY'S LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Milo sits down with the dog food still in one hand. He looks down into the small cage that once housed Echo -- but now houses a beaten and gagged Mr Percy.

His body barely fits into it. His hands and feet are bound tight. He is a hideous sight. Naked, bruised, covered in dried blood. Starving, sores everywhere, bent in a horrible, awkward position inside the cage. Pants and moans in misery.

Milo sets the saucer of dog food on his own knee.

MILO
Hungry?

Mr Percy doesn't answer. Milo kicks the cage, frightens the crap out of Mr Percy.

MILO

Damn it, dog, I asked you if you were hungry.

Mr Percy nods quickly.

MILO

I thought so. How do you like being caged up in a tiny cage? Enjoying yourself? Getting some rest?

Mr Percy shakes his head no.

MILO

Now I'm gonna let you out for your walk, but be a good dog. Or I'll beat the shit out of you.

Milo - with his nightstick at the ready - opens the cage. Mr Percy, with much difficulty, finally scoots his way out. Racked with pain. He lies on the floor motionless. Barely able to stretch out. Milo puts the saucer of dog food down by Mr Percy's head.

MILO

Enjoy.

Milo takes the gag out from his mouth. Mr Percy sobs. Milo sits back down to watch him.

MR PERCY

How long are you going to do this?

MILO

I don't know, depends. How long are you going to fuck little kids?

Mr Percy looks up at Milo with bloodshot eyes. Milo relaxes, crosses his legs and sits back in the chair.

MILO

You know, a while ago I had a little peep into your parcels. Loads of films and magazines. Figured they were just porn. No big deal.

Milo brandishes the nightstick.

MILO

EAT!

Mr Percy -- hands and feet still bound -- lowers his face into the saucer. Tries to eat the dog food, but gags on it.

MILO

But then the other day I did a bit more digging. "Pyramid Products"... looked on the internet. You sick fucking paedophile!

Mr Percy tries to swallow the dog food -- bursts into tears.

MILO

Oh, and about your dog...

Mr Percy looks up, face smeared with dog food.

MILO

Had to have her put down!

Mr Percy sobs again, ugly, naked body heaving.

MILO

Poor creature! Had to put her out of her misery! After so long in the cage she could barely stand up! She had sores on her legs, she'd licked and licked them until they got infected. Eye infections. Starved half to death!

Milo watches Mr Percy for a moment.

MILO

Maybe I should have you put down.

Milo takes a bowl of water from the table. Sets it in front of Mr Percy.

MILO

Drink.

MR PERCY

(sobs)

I loved that dog. I did! You killed her!

Mr Percy slurps up the water. Milo watches, disgusted.

MR PERCY

(whimpers)

I loved her. In my own way. I loved her. In my own way.

MILO
 (sincere)
 Yeah, I bet you did. In your own
 sick way.

Mr Percy whimpers as he rolls around on the floor.

MILO
 Get back in your cage.

EXT. HIGH STREET - LATER

Milo, still a bit shaken, continues on his route. He goes into Franco's shop.

INT. FRANCO'S ELECTRONICS - DAY

Franco darts around the shop making sure his CUSTOMERS are taken care of. He's in a very good mood, practically dances across the floor as he demonstrates stereos and speakers. Milo stands, watches him for a moment, unnoticed by the door.

Eventually Franco makes his way to Milo.

FRANCO
 Good day! And how is our faithful
 postman doing?

Franco's good mood does not rub off on Milo.

MILO
 You're awfully cheerful today.

FRANCO
 I think Maria's going to marry me!

Once again, Milo looks like he's taken a blow. Speechless.

FRANCO
 Well, she said she'd think about it,
 but I know she will say yes. We've
 been a bit shaky lately, but I think
 this is the thing to do. It will
 bring us closer together, no?

MILO
 You proposed. When?

FRANCO
 Last week. And she put me off. But
 last night she called and said that
 she would seriously think about it
 and tell me soon.

Franco holds his hand out. Milo reluctantly shakes it.

MILO
Congratulations.

Franco laughs. After the handshake still holds his hand out.

FRANCO
No, no...my post?

Milo snaps out of it and hands the letters over.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

Milo walks in a daze down the street. The sounds of the street, the cars, the buzz of people don't affect him, all just a MUFFLED JUMBLE. He's not hearing them.

He doesn't see the people and shops he passes. Doesn't even stop to deliver the post at the shops. Just trudges on by.

He is headed for the "Cataplana Cafe."

He stops next to a tree. He looks up. The branches sway in breeze. Leaves swirl and twist. He's mesmerized by the gentle dance of the leaves. All other motion and sound not registering on his senses.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - DAY

The cafe is busy. Voices BUZZ, dishes CLATTER, WAITRESSES dart here and there. Milo is oblivious.

Milo stands there, dazed. No one notices him.

Pedro finally appears at the till to ring up someone's bill.

PEDRO
Oh, hey Milo.

Milo ignores Pedro.

PEDRO
No post today?

It's Maria Milo watches -- she glides from one table to another, smiles and chats with everyone. As friendly and luminous as ever.

Eventually she notices Milo waiting. She heads for the till. She writes up a bill, hands it to Pedro. Speaks to Milo without looking up at him.

MARIA

Hello, Milo. Be with you in a minute.

Alma refills a customer's coffee cup nearby.

MARIA

Alma, I took your tip off the back table, I'll put it in the cup for you.

Though Maria isn't really watching him, Milo holds his arm straight out in front of him, extending it toward Maria. Seeing this out of the corner of her eye, Maria looks up.

Milo offers a leaf to her, holding it up by its stem, in a stance that mimics Copernicus -- arm outstretched, the earth in his hand.

She sees the leaf, and it takes a few seconds for it to register. She freezes. Stares at it.

Pedro and Alma look at the leaf, then to Maria. Are they missing something? They look at Milo, and back to the leaf.

MILO

It's for you, Maria.

Slightly dazed, she takes the leaf from Milo's hand. He smiles.

MILO

I'm Browning.

Now THAT Alma understands. Alma's mouth hangs open, partly to laugh, partly to gasp.

MARIA

Milo?

Pedro looks around at everyone else, tries to figure out what the hell is going on.

Maria looks at the leaf in her hand, then up at Milo.

Standing, waiting for approval, Milo gives a very self-conscious, weak smile. Maria's long pause is unbearable.

Milo speaks hesitantly, unsure of himself.

MILO

I've come to rescue you.

Maria looks around to see that she has unknowingly become everyone's center of attention in this odd little display.

Maria stares, still shocked. Alma finally nudges the situation along.

ALMA

I'll cover for you.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND CATAPLANA CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Maria and Milo shoot through the back door. Maria shuts it tightly behind her.

Maria, still a bit in shock, just looks at Milo.

MILO

Um...maybe that wasn't the best time to come forward...in front of a restaurant full of people...uh...I guess I...

MARIA

Browning? YOU are Browning?

Milo nods glumly, almost as if admitting to a guilty deed.

MILO

I'm afraid so.

Almost as a reflex, she looks him up and down. And he catches her scan of him -- his schlumpy postman's uniform, his posture skewed from the heavy satchel on his shoulder.

MILO

I know. Not what you expected, huh?

She leans against the wall.

MARIA

Well. To be quite honest, I didn't really know what to expect.

MILO

But you must have had some sort of image in your mind when you thought of me...bet it wasn't anything like me.

He steps over and leans beside her.

MARIA

It's going to take me a while to get used to this...those beautiful words...those came from you. Oh! Those flowers! You sent them! And you were standing right there the whole time!

She shakes her head in wonder as it all starts to sink in.

MILO

Listen, I'm so, so sorry that I didn't
turn up yesterday. I don't know why
I did that...I just...

He shrugs helplessly.

MARIA

You weren't ready.

MILO

Yeah...

MARIA

But tell me Milo, why do you look
like a child who is being scolded?

MILO

I've put you on the spot. And I'm
embarrassed. I see Franco. I'm not
the type of man you're attracted to.
I tried to hide that as long as I
could.

Oo, he looks all vulnerable and childlike. She can't resist.
She smiles. She reaches out and touches his hair, his cheek.

Her smile turns into a big grin. She turns his face toward
hers, and he can't help but grin too.

They just look at each other for a moment.

MARIA

Milo, you are a strange man. But a
wonderful man.

She kisses him on the cheek. Quite a platonic kiss.

A burst of noise from the kitchen causes both their attention
to turn to the cafe.

MARIA

I better go back in there. It's busy.

Milo sighs and nods, deflated. At least he tried. She goes
to the back door. But before she opens it, she turns back.

MARIA

So Milo. You've come to rescue me.
Where are you going to take me?

He grins from ear to ear.

INT. MR PERCY'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Milo, now wearing jeans and a green jumper, lets Mr Percy out of the cage. Mr Percy collapses on the floor.

MILO

Christ, it stinks in here.

Milo flings open some curtains, opens the window.

After unbinding his hands, and ungagging Mr Percy, Milo sits on the edge of his chair, keeping his eye on him.

Milo tosses a wet flannel and a towel down to him. Then from a bag Milo pulls a fast-food hamburger, unwraps it and starts to eat it right in front of Mr Percy.

MILO

I just love Burger King, don't you?
Charbroiled really is the way to go.

Milo watches as Mr Percy wipes a layer of grime off his face, still sobbing.

MILO

I think we've learned our lesson,
haven't we, Mr Percy?

Mr Percy nods quickly.

MILO

One word about any of this, and the
entire neighbourhood will know they're
living near a paedophile. Think
they'll like that news?

Mr Percy, still frightened, obediently shakes his head no. Milo takes a big, juicy bite of his burger. He leans back and crosses his legs, savours his burger.

MILO

And the police? I think the police
are the last people you'll be wanting
to contact -- given your reading and
viewing habits.

Mr Percy nods.

MILO

Even if they can't prove it, you'll
be legally classified as a sexual
offender. It'll haunt you for the
rest of your life. You'll be ruined.

Milo takes another big bite from the burger.

MILO

And I feel it's my duty to monitor
your incoming parcels for a while,
don't you?

Milo takes a key from his pocket and puts it on the table.

MILO

Here's your key. And I know it's a
free country, but I strongly suggest
that you not get any more pets.

Milo smiles.

MILO

You're very lucky I'm in a good mood.
Got a date tomorrow night!

Mr Percy unbinds his feet, covers himself with a towel.
Looks up pitifully at Milo.

Milo grabs another hamburger out of the bag, tosses it to
him. Mr Percy rips the paper off, devours the burger.

MILO

Good boy.

EXT. WILSON ROAD - NIGHT

Milo lets himself out of Mr Percy's house. He's almost to
the sidewalk when he hears Kiki's voice, distant, but
definitely her voice. He strains to hear.

KIKI (O.S.)

Milo! I saw you!

Milo turns to Kiki's house next door. Looks up, sees Kiki's
form silhouetted in a top floor window. He moves closer.
The only light in the entire house comes from Kiki's room.

He walks over toward Kiki's house. Then around to the side
where her window is. He can hear and see her clearly now.

KIKI

I saw you!

Milo can just make out that she grabs her green notebook and
scribbles in it. Finally he turns. He sees it. The window
he had opened - the window with the curtains still flung all
the way open - provides a perfect view of Mr Percy's lounge
from Kiki's window!

MILO

Shit!

He looks back up at Kiki's window. She's gone.

INT. KIKI'S HOUSE -- BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Milo very slowly opens the back door to Kiki's house. The entire downstairs is dark. He doesn't go inside.

MILO

(whispers)

Kiki? Kiki?

Upstairs he hears Kiki's loud voice babbling on, but can't make out the words. Cautious, he steps inside the house. He creeps down the corridor to the bottom of the stairs. It's quiet again.

He looks around. Where to go? What to do? He looks at the back door again, beckoning him.

But suddenly Kiki's brash voice kicks up again. Milo can discern his name being mentioned a few times. Catlike, he maneuvers up the stairs in the darkness.

INT. KIKI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kiki's alone, but excited. Riled up. Scribbles in her book.

Behind her the door opens. Milo stands in the hall.

Sensing him, she slowly turns. They are both still and silent for a second as they size each other up.

Never too covert about her actions, she takes a long, deep breath and opens her mouth to yell.

KIKI

MU--!

She doesn't even have time to finish her "Mum!" He's on her in a second. Covers her mouth, holds her so she can't run.

Now she's more confused, excited, thrashes around. Milo manages to keep her mouth covered. But she doesn't exactly look scared.

MILO

(loud whisper)

It's just me! Don't scream, okay?

It's me, it's Milo!

She finally calms down a bit.

MILO
(loud whisper)
Shh, don't wake your parents up.
It's just me, okay?

He slowly takes his hand off her mouth. She instantly chatters and shouts.

KIKI
Milo! I saw you in there! Look!

She runs for her notebook, but she's still far too loud.

MILO
SHHH!

Milo grabs her again, swings her around, and she almost gets a scream out before he clamps her mouth shut.

MILO
(loud whisper)
Shut up! Shut up! Don't you know
what will happen if you parents catch
me up here and --?

She twists, squirms. Breaks free of him, runs toward her door.

KIKI
No, Mum'll be happy to see you!

Truly panicked now, Milo grabs her arm, flings her on the bed. He covers her mouth, but her mouth is no match for his hand. She flails and grasps thin air, but he won't let her up. Another shout almost gets out of her. He grabs her pillow and smashes it down over her face, holds it down.

MILO
(fierce whisper)
Shut up!

Still she squirms and flails, but Milo pushes the pillow down harder and harder. He kneels on the bed, using all his weight to bear down. He is sweaty now. Veins pop out on his neck and forehead as he struggles. He uses all his might to keep that pillow down.

And then it becomes easier. She doesn't squirm. Doesn't flail. She's still.

Milo flings himself off the bed. Looks back at her, open-mouthed, but finally silent. He looks at the pillow in his hands. Flings it aside.

One last look at her. Yup, she's dead.

Milo scrambles around looking for her green notebook. Finds it! Grabs it and hauls ass out of her room.

INT. MILO'S KITCHEN - LATER

Calmer now, Milo straggles in. Tosses the incriminating notebook on the table.

Pours himself a drink. Gulps it. Pours another one, brings it to the table and sits down.

He flips through the notebook until he comes to the last page. A messy scribble is Kiki's last entry:

"Milo: jeans, green jumper! Green jumper! Not blue trousers. Milo wore green!!!"

Milo thrusts his head into his hands in anguish.

MILO
Green jumper?! That's all she saw?!
Green jumper!! That's it?!

He hurls her notebook across the room.

INT. MILO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Milo lies in bed. Quiet. But his eyes are wide open.

MILO
Nobody saw.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Milo flips through a large reference book. Jots something down in his notebook as a BURLY MAN in a suit wanders past.

BURLY SUIT
All right, Finch?

Finch doesn't flinch, doesn't even look up. Continues to write in his notebook.

MILO
Just checking an address.

INT. POST OFFICE - BACK OFFICE - DAY

Milo is on the phone in a quiet back office.

VOICE ON PHONE (O.S.)
Metropolitan Police, can I help you?

MILO

Can I speak to someone involved in
"Operation Ore"?

(beat)

Yes. I've got information about a
man in possession of child pornography.

EXT. SOUTHEAST LONDON FLAT - DAY

This is a stop never seen on Milo's route before.

Milo takes one last look at the two parcels in his hand.
Both neatly wrapped in brown wrappers, with "Pyramid Products,
Amsterdam" in the top left corner, and both addressed - in
Milo's handwriting - to Franco.

Milo pops them through the post slot.

EXT. WILSON ROAD - DAY

MR PERCY'S HOUSE -- Mr Percy sits on his front step next to
a SQUATTING POLICE CONSTABLE. Milo slows down as he passes.
Mr Percy looks a bit better, but still not great. None of
his bruises are visible, his dressing gown is pulled tight
at his neck.

As Mr Percy is questioned by the Squatting PC, Milo stares
at them. When Milo catches Mr Percy's eye, Milo widens his
eyes, shakes his head -- an implied threat.

SQUATTING PC

(to Mr Percy)

So, you didn't hear or see anything
at all last night?

MR PERCY

No. I went to bed early. I've been
ill lately.

KIKI'S HOUSE -- At Kiki's house there are a few police cars
out front, and TWO POLICE CONSTABLES chat out on the front
steps in front of the open door. A few more POLICE CONSTABLES
mill around the side of the house.

Milo approaches the front steps with the post.

MILO

What happened?

PC ONE

Daughter murdered last night. Intruder.

MILO

Oh my God. Kiki? The retarded girl?

A teary-eyed Maxine Monroe shuffles to the front door with a DETECTIVE behind her.

MAXINE MONROE

She wasn't retarded. She was just a little slow.

MILO

Oh, hello. Of course. I'm so sorry. Let's go have a chat.

The Detective escorts her to the panda car.

PC ONE

You normally deliver about this time?

MILO

Yeah.

PC TWO

See anyone suspicious around here recently?

Milo shakes his head after some thought.

MILO

No.

PC ONE

I suppose you know just about everyone in this neighbourhood.

MILO

Well, I try and say hello to everyone. But other than that...

He shrugs it off.

PC TWO

Probably just a random break in. No sexual assault or anything.

Both Police Constables pretty much ignore Milo now. They go back to chatting with each other. He's in the clear.

On the way back to the front gate, Milo breathes a sigh of relief. Home-free. But then he turns back to them.

MILO

But you know...there was this guy she started seeing. He always seemed a bit...I don't know, *rough* to me. Like any little thing could set him off.

PC ONE

You know his name?

MILO

Hmmm. Over on the next street. Oh,
here, let me look...

He digs in his satchel. Pretends to locate a piece of mail
and reads the name.

MILO

Derrick Jackson.

EXT. PHONE BOX - DAY

Milo dials a number.

INT. BURGER KING - CONTINUOUS

A SLOPPY TEEN in his ill-fitting Burger King uniform picks
up the RINGING PHONE and answers with zero enthusiasm.

SLOPPY TEEN

Burger King. Can I help you?

Franco's flat can be seen through the window behind him.

EXT. PHONE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Milo perks up.

MILO

Hello. I was wondering if you might
be able to help me. I'm a bit worried.
Someone called me at work today and
said that they thought that someone
broke into my flat. I live right
across the street, see the flat with
the red door?

INT. BURGER KING - CONTINUOUS

The confused Sloppy Teen peers through the window.

SLOPPY TEEN

Uh, yeah.

EXT. PHONE BOX - CONTINUOUS

MILO

I rang my wife, but I don't think
she's there yet. Can you tell me if
the police have arrived yet? Do you
(MORE)

MILO (CONT'D)
 see anyone? I'm just a bit worried,
 you know, in case the door's unlocked.

SLOPPY TEEN (O.S.)
 Uh, no. I don't see anyone at all.

Milo groans quietly. Checks his watch.

INT. FRANCO'S ELECTRONICS - DAY

Franco greets Milo with a grin.

FRANCO
 Hey, what are you doing here this late?

MILO
 You know, I'm in here every day, and
 I keep looking at this...

Milo scans the shop and points to a random item.

FRANCO
 The karaoke machine?

MILO
 Um, yeah. Can you show me how it
 works?

FRANCO
 Well, I'm about to close...but for
 you, sure.

INT. FRANCO'S ELECTRONICS - EVENING

Franco and Milo stand side by side, with microphones. They watch the video screen of the little karaoke machine and sing their hearts out to "Tainted Love."

MILO AND FRANCO TOGETHER
 "Don't touch me please, I cannot stand
 the way you TEASE me! OH! Tainted
 love...tainted love...."

INT. FRANCO'S FLAT - EVENING

The "Pyramid Products" parcels still lay on Franco's floor.

INT. FRANCO'S ELECTRONICS - EVENING

Franco goes to the counter, but Milo waves him back over to the karaoke machine.

MILO

Come on, come on! I'm really liking this, might buy one! Come on, Franco, one more song...

Milo flips through the pamphlet.

MILO

Your choice, Franco!

Franco gives in, bounces back to Milo, who hands the pamphlet over to him.

MILO

I just gotta make a quick phone call, then we'll start our duet, all right?

Milo looks like he's actually having a good time, and Franco is as well.

EXT. FRANCO'S FLAT - EVENING

Several POLICE CONSTABLES mill around Franco's flat, look in through the windows. Chat with each other.

INT. FRANCO'S ELECTRONICS - EVENING

Milo and Franco sing an old Spice Girls song now, really belting it out! They even manage a few sexy kicks and some hip swaying before the song ends.

FRANCO

Oh, that's me finished then. I'm shattered.

MILO

Yeah, me too. Just as well though. I've got a date tonight!

INT. ARTHUR AND JANINE'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Milo's sister, JANINE, 30s, leads Milo into the kitchen. Arthur is doing the last of the washing up.

ARTHUR

Well, well, look who it is. Thought you had a big date tonight.

MILO

Yeah, I do. On my way home now. Just wanted to check on Echo.

Arthur nods to the window overlooking the back garden. Milo and Janine look out the window.

In the little daylight that's left they watch Milo's nephew, STEVIE, run around the garden as Echo chases after him. Echo looks good. A few bald patches, a bandage around her front leg, and a wee limp. But she has is having the time of her life as she chases after Stevie.

JANINE

You bastard. We didn't want a dog.

MILO

Aw, you kiddin'? Look at them go! They belong together! Every ten year-old boy needs a dog.

JANINE

I cannot believe you spent four hundred and fifty pounds on a stray.

MILO

Couldn't just let her wander around the neighbourhood, could I?

Janine wanders to the sink, picks up where Arthur left off.

ARTHUR

Where'd you get that type of dosh, anyway?

MILO

Sold a few things.

EXT. ARTHUR AND JANINE'S BACK GARDEN - EVENING

Arthur watches as Milo and Stevie kick a football around with each other, while Echo romps with them. Stevie makes Milo run all over, and he's gets winded.

BOOM! BANG! Everyone, including the dog, flinches.

MILO

What the bloody hell was that?!

Arthur seethes with rage.

ARTHUR

Idiot next door. Got a hold of some fireworks. Every night this week.

Milo takes the ball out of play, picks it up and brings it with him to talk to Arthur. Milo tries to catch his breath.

MILO

Is this the same git who always lets
(MORE)

MILO (CONT'D)

the oil from his car drain down the road when he changes it?

Exasperated, Arthur nods. Stevie contents himself with rolling around with Echo during Milo's time out.

ARTHUR

Been driving us mad for three years.

MILO

Send him a letter. No return address. Inside - page TWO says "...please respond immediately or we will be forced to take immediate action. As you can imagine, the penalties will be quite severe and we recommend you hire a solicitor. You have three days before we take action." Then sign it "Mr Blahbitty Blah, Chief Officer, Legal Department."

Milo grins. Arthur hasn't caught up yet.

ARTHUR

Huh? So what's on page one?

MILO

There IS no page one! You 'accidentally' leave it out. He will shit himself trying to figure out who you are and what the hell he's supposed to be doing.

Arthur grins.

ARTHUR

I bloody love it.

Milo drops the football, runs back into the game with Stevie.

ARTHUR

(to himself)

I said it before, I'll say it again. Milo Finch, you are one devious bastard.

Arthur glances at Milo's ever-present dull postal uniform.

ARTHUR

(shouts at Milo)

You're not wearing THAT on your big date tonight, are you?

Milo's "eat shit" look says it all. He stops to rest, hands on elbows. Struggles to catch his breath. Stevie kicks the ball, and Milo jumps to block it, but is way too late. Misses by a mile. Stevie strolls over to Milo with sincere concern.

STEVIE

Uncle Milo, maybe you're too old to play this.

MILO

(breathes hard)

Old? I'm not old. I'm just a little slow.

EXT. FRANCO'S FLAT - EVENING

As Franco approaches his flat, he's swarmed upon by the Police Constables.

DETECTIVE

Are you Mr Soares?

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Maria opens her front door, and there stands Milo. Black trousers, black shirt, dark gray blazer. He looks sharp. He's finally done something with his hair, too. It's a bit spiky, sort of a tousled 'do. He looks pretty damned sexy.

MARIA

Wow. Milo! Look at you.

There is genuine surprise and delight in her voice. A taxi idles in the background. He gestures toward the open door of the taxi.

MILO

Your chariot awaits.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Milo and Maria sit in the taxi as it leaves grim S.E.15.

MARIA

So where are we going?

MILO

At first I thought of the usual "nice" things...like the theatre. But then I thought that you've probably done those things a million times...

Not sensing he is about to go down a different path, she pre-empts him excitedly.

MARIA

No, not really, I hardly ever get to go to the theatre. I love the theatre!

He cringes a bit.

MILO

Well, actually, I was going to say that I thought maybe we'd try and do something a bit more... individualized.

She has a bit of trouble with this word.

MARIA

Individa--?

MILO

Um, personal.

MARIA

Ah. Okay, that sounds fun.

She really does sound sincere, but Milo's faith is clearly slipping. He quickly changes gears.

MILO

But you know, I could probably get theatre tickets if you'd like --

MARIA

No, no, I'm fine!

He checks his watch.

MILO

We could still make curtain time --

He's getting way ahead of himself.

MARIA

Milo...Milo! No! Whatever you have planned is fine. Honestly!

Her sweet smile nearly convinces him.

MILO

All right.

EXT. BLACKHEATH VILLAGE - NIGHT

The taxi winds through the quaint streets of Blackheath. A short ride from S.E.15, but a million miles away from the grime and working-classness of it all.

Their taxi stops on a charming side street. There's a row of small shops, an old Norman church and an Indian restaurant aglow with warm light and rich colours.

Maria gets out of the taxi first, while Milo lags behind to pay the DRIVER. She stands awed by the sight of the lovely street in front of her. The Indian restaurant directly in front of her is small, doesn't look very expensive, but it's incredibly inviting.

MARIA
Oh, Milo, it's lovely.

Milo catches up with her. Looks to see what impresses her so.

MARIA
And I love Indian food!

His shoulders slump, head drops down. Sighs again in defeat.

She now sees that Milo has a picnic basket in his hand. She cringes, this time realizing her faux pas. Tries not to laugh.

MARIA
Oh. Sorry.

His confidence is breaking off in chunks now.

EXT. BLACKHEATH PEDESTRIAN PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Milo leads Maria in between a few of the shops, down alongside an old school. They stop before a gate surrounding a brick-walled garden.

Sign on the gate: "Blackheath Arts Centre Herbal Nursery"

MARIA
I don't think it's open, Milo. What is it, a park? Probably only open in the day, no?

He holds up a key.

MILO
Ah, but I have the key!

He unlocks the gate and lets them in.

MARIA
Oh my, who did you have to blackmail to get that?

He laughs a knowing laugh - she's probably closer to the truth than she knows.

EXT. SMELL GARDEN - NIGHT

The dim ambient glow from the city lights of Blackheath are just enough to gently illuminate the garden.

The small garden -- no more than 100 feet across -- is really just rows and rows of flower beds built up at nearly waist-level filled with all types of plants and trees. The rows circle round the perimeter and there is a small grassy area in the center.

Milo and Maria stroll around the pathways. Gaze at the plants and flowers.

MILO

This is actually part of the school over there. My dad used to bring me here when I was a kid. To the garden I mean, not the school. They grow herbs and things for the arts centre, so most of the plants have a really strong smell. See, each one is labeled with the Latin name. Don't know if they use 'em for medicine, or what. Probably aromatherapy or something.

Maria alternates between looking at the plants and looking at Milo as he speaks.

MILO

Everything has a really strong and distinctive smell if you pinch the leaves a bit. Or just rub 'em a bit.

He stops and pinches a leaf. Smells his thumb, then lets her smell it. But he misjudges the distance -- and the fact that she bends forward a bit to smell it -- he sticks his thumb right up her nose! She flinches hard.

MILO

Oh Christ! I'm sorry!

If it weren't so dark she'd see him turn bright red. She plays it cool. He turns away from her, curses himself under his breath.

MARIA

Mmm. That's...lavender?

MILO

I think so, yeah. My dad said that this was a garden for blind people. We called it the "Smell Garden".

She laughs at this, making sure she understands.

MARIA

Smell garden?

MILO

Yeah, the Smell Garden. He said that since blind people couldn't enjoy a regular park, they planted these herbs and things so that blind people could come here, smell everything and enjoy the garden too.

This amazes Maria.

MARIA

Is that true?

Milo laughs.

MILO

Oh no! I don't think so. Just some rubbish my dad told me. Funny though, innit?

She chuckles too.

EXT. SMELL GARDEN - LATER

Milo and Maria dart from plant to plant, pick leaves, pinch them to get their scent. For every plant that she smells and calls him over to, he finds another good one and calls her over. Back and forth they go.

He pinches a leaf, and sniffs his fingers.

MILO

Ew!

He scrunches up his face in disgust. She leans over to him.

MARIA

Now you KNOW I have to smell that one, too!

She sniffs his hand, scrunches up her nose, but isn't quite as offended as Milo.

MILO

My hand smells like a dog's ass now!

She laughs. He tries to cover up his crude analogy.

MILO

I mean...that was a strange one...

EXT. SMELL GARDEN - LATER

Milo pulls a thin blanket from the picnic basket for Maria to sit on. He tries to do so with a dramatic flourish. Unfortunately the wind kicks up, wrenches it out of his hands. Off it flies, up, up, up into the top branches of a tree.

MILO

Fuck.

Milo is really irritated with himself.

MARIA

That's okay. I don't mind sitting on the ground.

MILO

No. It's cold. And dirty. Maybe there's a bench.

They look around. No benches.

MARIA

Oh, don't be such a girl, sit down. So what if we get dirty?

She takes his hand, leads him onto the grass. They plop down.

MARIA

I bet you have something nice for us to eat, no?

He opens the picnic basket. Another loud sigh. His shoulders slump. He shuts his eyes.

MILO

Shit.

CLOSE UP INSIDE OF PICNIC BASKET -- The containers have opened. All of the food is slopped all over the sides of the wooden woven basket.

MARIA

So what? We can mop it up with bread. Very Portuguese way to eat. Just watch for splinters.

Milo finds no humour in any of this anymore.

EXT. SMELL GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

They use their chunks of bread to sop up the gooey mess inside the picnic basket.

MILO

Was supposed to be Hungarian goulash.

MARIA

Still is.

Milo is less angry now. She feeds a bit of her bread to him, which he is all too pleased to take.

Things are getting a bit better now.

He in turn breaks off a piece of his bread, sops it up with a good dose of goulash goo. With lust in his eyes he watches as she opens her mouth for him. Just as the juicy bread touches her lips, she SCREAMS bloody murder!

Milo jumps back.

MARIA

Something just bit me!

She jumps up off the ground and grabs her hand. Milo scans the ground, squints.

MILO

What? What bit you?

MARIA

I don't know! Like an ant or something! Ow. Ow, ow, OOOWWWW!

Milo doesn't know what to do.

MILO

An ant? Ants aren't out at night!

She's upset now, and yelling for the first time.

MARIA

I don't know, Milo! Maybe we woke them up! OOOWWWWWW! It stings!!!
Something bit me!

That's it. Milo tosses everything back into the basket.

MILO

Date is OVER.

INT. S.E.15 IN MOVING TAXI - LATER

Milo is sullen as they are driven back to S.E.15. Maria peers at him. His scowl says "don't talk to me." But alas she does.

MARIA

Milo? I'm not mad at you.

He nods. Continues to look out the window.

MARIA

I had a good time.

He lets out a scoffing laugh. They drive on a bit further, things looking a bit more dingy and grim than Blackheath.

MARIA

My hand is okay. Just stings a bit.

MILO

Yeah, that's fantastic! What a glowing endorsement of our date! "How was the date, Maria?" "Oh, just great! I have splinters in my mouth, my ass is cold and my mangled hand only stings A BIT!"

MARIA

Oh Milo...

The taxi slows down, stops in front of her flat.

MILO

Christ, I'd just get out while you're still alive if I were you! "Why don't you take her out to a nice dinner and maybe a musical, Milo?" No, no, that's just not my style! I take you to a cold, dark park full of bugs and oregano, make you sit on the cold, wet, ground, scrape gravy out of a basket and stick my fingers up your nose!

Maria is rendered speechless by his outburst. He leans past her, opens her door and pushes it open for her.

MILO

Please, just go.

She gets out. Turns to face him.

MILO

We both know I'm a disaster in person.
Just go marry Franco.

Maria shouts at him in her bewilderment.

MARIA

I'm not going to marry Franco!

MILO

Marry him, don't marry him, whatever.
Let's face it, I'm not at all the type
of guy you were wanting or expecting.
You deserve better than me.

He shuts the taxi door gently. The taxi drives off, leaves her behind. She stands with her mouth agape.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Derrick sits at a table, head in hands. Sobs like a baby.

DERRICK

I don't know! I don't know nuffin!

The Plain-Clothes Detective from Kiki's house stands over him, exhausted. Another DETECTIVE sits nearby.

DERRICK

I didn't even know she was dead 'til
this morning! I was down the pub
that night! Everyone saw me!

The Plain-Clothes Detective sighs. Rubs his tired eyes.

DERRICK

I don't know nuffin! I don't know
nuffin!

Derrick puts his head down on the table. Bawls. The Detectives look at each other.

DETECTIVE

He's right, he doesn't know anything.
Man's a moron.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

Milo keeps a steady pace along the High Street. Pops into each shop, post in hand. But his pace slows to a dead stop before going into the Cataplana Cafe.

He peers through the front windows. Sees Maria, who looks miserable. She pours tea at a table with the Crabby Old Portuguese Woman.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - DAY

Milo slinks in, drops the post on the counter and heads back to the door.

The Crabby Old Portuguese Woman's voice seems pretty loud and shrill to be just ordering lunch. Milo sees that in fact the Crabby Old Portuguese Woman is not ordering lunch, but yelling at Maria.

They speak entirely in Portuguese, so who knows what the topic is, but the intonations and tone of voice is clear to anyone. Maria doesn't say much, just nods her head, tries to get a word in here and there.

Maria is clearly not having a good day.

Soon Maria cracks, begins to cry. But the Crabby Old Portuguese Woman doesn't let up. Finally Milo catches a few words of English.

MARIA

All right! I said I would! I will!

Milo's hackles are now up. How dare she make Maria cry!

Milo whips out his notebook and leafs through it. He looks back to the old woman. He's got that look in his eye.

Pedro appears at Milo's side.

PEDRO

Your table awaits!

Milo keeps his beady gaze on the Crabby Old Portuguese Woman.

MILO

Not today, Pedro.

Maria leaves the old woman's table. Sees Milo. Stops. Looks into his eyes. Cowardly Milo turns, slinks out of the cafe.

INT. MILO'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Milo sits at his table. His devious supplies spread out in front of him.

He pours an entire jar of peanuts onto the table. Takes the jar and begins to roll it back and forth over the peanuts, using enough pressure to crush them.

INT. MILO'S KITCHEN - LATER

A lovely box of chocolate sweets is open on the table. Next to that is a bowl of the ground peanuts, nearly pulverized.

With the precision of a surgeon Milo uses an X-acto knife to remove the bottom of one of the many pieces of gourmet bon-bons. He scoops out some of the filling.

He pours some oil into the peanut powder, mixes it into a gooey paste. The label on the bottle of oil: "Peanut Oil"

INT. MILO'S KITCHEN - LATER

The doctored box of chocolates is all wrapped up now, nice and pretty, bound with a ribbon. No need for regular postal packaging.

Milo writes a short note on a white postcard. "Thanks for being a good neighbour." Signs it with the familiar illegible scrawl that probably begins with the letter M, then tucks it under the ribbon.

He looks over to his notebook and finds her information.

MILO
Mrs Namora...784 Pilkington Street...

EXT. 784 PILKINGTON STREET - DAY

Milo plunks the pretty box of chocolates through the post slot.

MILO
Enjoy, you nasty old bitty.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Milo, still in posting clothes, gazes up into the eyes of the bronze Copernicus, standing where Maria once stood.

MILO
I really arsed things up, didn't I?

Milo, hands in pockets, strolls around the base of the statue.

MILO
(to Copernicus
statue)
Do you really think? I don't know
about that. Think that might be a
bit awkward, not sure she'd want me
in there again.

His stroll around Copernicus continues.

MILO
 Coward?! Me?! Fuck off, what do you know?! Although you DO seem to be quite a clever bloke, so maybe you do know a thing or two. Oh all right, all right! I'll go talk to her!

Milo stops. Leans against the base of the statue.

MILO
 Don't be so smug.

Copernicus holds the earth out to Milo - an intense, intimidating look on his bronze face.

MILO
 I suppose I should apologize anyway.

Milo looks up. Stares for a moment, then relents.

MILO
 Okay! Now! I'm going, I'm going!
 Nice hat by the way.

INT. CATAPLANA CAFE - LATER

Milo braves his way into the cafe, sits at his usual table. After a moment, Maria appears at his table, arms folded across her chest.

MARIA
 What do you want?

MILO
 Maria, I want...I wanted to explain...
 or maybe to --

MARIA
 No. To eat.

Her tone is very flat.

MARIA
 What do you want to order?

MILO
 Oh. I don't know...I'm not sure....

MARIA
 No, you don't know what you want, do you?

Milo flinches. Ut oh, ere it comes.

MARIA

Or maybe you are just not good at ordering in person. Maybe you want to write your order down, then secretly leave it on the counter?!

She storms back behind the counter.

MILO

(to himself)

Wow, you have to have a pretty good command of the language to be THAT sarcastic in it.

THE COUNTER -- Milo jostles through the lunchtime crowd, catches up with Maria near the counter.

MILO

Maria. I'm sorry. I'm sorry I'm not good at this! I'm sorry I took you to such a stupid place! I'm sorry I ruined our date --

She whirls around -- faces him with such a fiery look in her eyes that he stops mid-sentence, involuntarily takes a step back. A few nearby patrons can't help but take notice of her.

MARIA

It DID end up being ruined, but not because of where you took me!

She laughs sarcastically. Gestures broadly, angrily, speaks to an invisible audience.

MARIA

A woman being taken to a romantic park, somewhere that has a special meaning to him, something that he wants to share with her, wanting to have his own private picnic with her in the moonlight, putting more effort into the whole night than most men spend on a year's worth of dates, yes that would sound HORRIBLE to most women!

Sarcasm drips off her now. Some of the customers, now immersed in her description of the date, look curiously at Milo.

MARIA

What woman wouldn't think that was the most romantic date ever?! Do you know what I was doing that night?

More and more customers can't help but overhear now. She doesn't bother to keep her voice down. Milo is pretty speechless by this point.

MARIA

Each leaf we broke off to smell, I kept. I put them in my pocket. I was going to press them all and give them back to you later as a romantic gesture, you know, the way YOU always bring me leaves when you think of me. I had them all in my pocket, I wanted to remember the night forever.

Her words might be kind, but her delivery is still angry.

One of the WAITRESSES in the back is shocked, turns to Alma.

WAITRESS

(whisper)

Isn't that our *postman*?

Maria continues her tirade.

MARIA

It wasn't ruined by where we went, it was ruined by YOU! Your inability to trust that just being you was good enough, your need to try and live up to the fantasy you have in your head, some fantasy you think I am expecting! Yes, I loved your letters, but I don't expect you to be that way ALL the time! I like you, just how YOU are!

Her tone softens a bit.

MARIA

The other night, you were nervous and goofy, and trying a bit too hard, and I found it all...incredibly *adorable*. But no, you don't see that...you don't trust me when I tell you I was having a good time. I will always remember your Smell Garden, and no other date I ever have could possibly compare to that! It was strange and charming and adorable...just like you.

Maria starts heating up again, not giving in to the puppy-dog look on Milo's shocked face.

MARIA

So if you don't like being that person,
if you insist on trying to live up to
some impossibly literate and suave
personality that doesn't really exist,
then go on and do it with someone else!

She stops suddenly. Needs to blink back the tears and swallow
the lump in her throat as she goes on...

MARIA

This morning I got horrible news about
Franco. I learned something, something
horrible and unbelievable and
devastating.

She blinks away her tears at the mention of Franco's news.

MARIA

And you know what? After the initial
shock of it, you know what my first
thought was? I wanted to tell you
about it, to have you talk to me,
have you just listen to me. Not the
Browning of your letters, but YOU.
All I kept visualizing was that you'd
open your arms and you'd hold me while
I talked, cried. I'd see you just
opening your arms to me.

She closes her eyes, as if imagining it that very second.
Nearly half the restaurant listens attentively by now, but
she doesn't care. Pedro looks at Milo with a new curiosity.

MARIA

I keep seeing you walking around and
around in the Smell Garden with me.
Picking leaves with me.

Alma and the other Waitress exchange confused glances at the
words "Smell Garden."

MARIA

I wanted to be with that Milo again.
But if you refuse to be that charming,
goofy, romantic man that took me to
the Smell Garden, and made me smell
herbs in the dark, then you're right,
you're not the man I want you to be.

She spins around, disappears into the kitchen. Milo stands
there motionless, once again rendered deaf, dumb, and blind.

The customers eventually turn back to their meals. Milo comes to his senses.

INT. CATAPLANA KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Pedro and Alma hover over Maria, who is still a bit upset. Milo slowly walks into the kitchen. Pedro spots Milo, takes his pot of chicken off the burner, and pulls Alma with him as he heads for the kitchen door.

PEDRO

I can finish this later.

Milo and Maria are now alone, facing each other. No words.

Milo opens his arms wide open to her.

After only a few seconds hesitation, she goes to him, and he envelops her in his embrace. Finally -- he gets to hold her, and he doesn't let go.

MILO

Hello. I'm Milo. I'm terrible at chatting up girls, I stick my fingers up people's noses and I'm in love with you...and that was probably the stupidest way of telling --

She cuts him off with a sudden kiss. A kiss that he immediately surrenders to. Finally -- he gets to kiss her, and he doesn't hold back.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Maria leads Milo in. She turns a few lights on, he stands awkwardly in the middle of the room. He takes it all in, surveys her books, her paintings, her teacups, everything that is Maria.

MILO

This is really nice. You're not on my route, you know.

She looks at him with amusement. Or is it now lust?

He looks around the flat nervously.

MILO

You're just out of my district. But this is how I imagined it.

She ignores him, takes a hold of his hand.

MILO

And it's in a really nice...

She brings his hand up to her mouth. Gently kisses and sucks his fingers one by one.

MILO

...building.

Milo is in a trance. Watches her lick and suck his fingers. That shuts him up.

He is completely mesmerized. She kisses the palm of his hand, then his wrist.

She pulls his collar away, kisses and nibbles his neck. Finally her mouth meets his and they share an explosive, deep, sensuous kiss.

This is all he needed to get him past his awkwardness. He kisses her fiercely, no longer holds back his passion.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Milo and Maria fall onto her bed. Devour each other's mouths, their bodies. Hands everywhere, rubbing, stroking, grabbing each other...hot, desperate kisses...mercilessly pulling at each other's clothes.

They are an explosion of the pent-up passion and loneliness of years.

EXT. S.E.15 - SUNRISE

The grim streets of S.E.15 seem just a bit more golden this morning as the sun rises.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - MORNING

Milo wakes up -- Maria leans from behind him, gently kisses and tickles him on the ear and neck. She whispers into his ear.

MARIA

Good morning.

All he can do is moan his appreciation as she kisses and nuzzles him from behind.

MARIA

Now that Milo Finch I was with last night is the Milo Finch I was hoping for.

Milo is sleepy, but happy. He doesn't even open his eyes, he just basks in her attention.

MARIA

I'll tell you something. Once in a while I would think about leaving your letters around. For Franco to find.

MILO

Hmmm? Why?

MARIA

I know, it would be stupid. But part of me wanted him to see how I wanted him to be. I was wishing he could somehow maybe be more like "Browning."

He turns around and faces her, pulls her closer.

MARIA

But now I have the real thing.

She clings to him passionately.

MILO

Hey, why are you dressed? That's no fun.

She laughs and pulls away from him.

MARIA

I've got to feed my aunt's dog. She went to Portugal yesterday for three weeks.

MILO

No, no, no. Come back to bed.

Milo tries to entice her back to bed with a few well-placed caresses, but she still pulls away.

MARIA

I will, I'll come right back. It's just that I promised her I'd do this. Had a huge argument over it with her yesterday.

Milo gives up on trying to pull her back into bed. Props himself up on his elbows.

MARIA

Won't take long. She just lives down the road a bit.

MILO
I didn't know you had family here.

MARIA
Yeah. You know her.

MILO
I do?

MARIA
Yeah. Remember that cranky old lady
who is always in the cafe? The one
Kiki yelled at?

Milo laughs.

MILO
Yeah! I DO know who you mean,
actually.

Maria slips her shoes on. Pulls a jumper over her head.

MILO
She's your aunt?

Milo grimaces and cringes, not sure if it's funny or not.

MARIA
You wait here. In my bed. I want
you right here when I get back.

She leans over, plants a kiss on him.

MARIA
Milo? You rescued me.

She hops up, grabs her keys and she's out the door. Milo
lies back. Beams.

INT. 784 PILKINGTON STREET - DAY

Maria picks the post off the floor, a few letters, a catalogue
and the box of chocolates, and puts it on the kitchen counter.

MARIA
Mmm. Cremes.

She seems impressed with the sweets. She goes to the back
door, lets the OLD DOG in.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Milo makes himself a cup of tea in her tiny kitchen. He lovingly inspects her things. Photographs, the Mickey Mouse clock, the line of wine corks lined up on the window sill.

One prominently displayed item in particular makes him smile. His holey stone. She has slipped a ribbon through it and hung it from a cupboard door.

INT. 784 PILKINGTON STREET - CONTINUOUS

Maria stands at the counter, leafs through a catalogue as the Old Dog scarfs up his food. Sees the box: "Chocolate Cremes"

MARIA

Come on now, hurry up. Then back outside you go.

She takes the lid off the chocolate, pops one in her mouth. Hearing food being eaten, the Old Dog stops and looks up at her as greedy dogs do.

MARIA

What? Don't look at me like that! They'd be stale when she gets home anyway.

She pops another one into her mouth. He whimpers.

MARIA

No. Sorry, sweetie. Chocolate is not good for dogs.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Milo gets back into bed with his cup of tea. Rocks back and forth, trying to settle.

His face shifts from peaceful to curious alarm -- he reaches down under the sheets, pulls out something that pokes him. Maria's necklace -- the chain broken in a moment of passion.

He smirks and holds it up for a closer look. A chance to finally see it up close -- the pendant he so loves to watch her fiddle with.

He inspects her pendant. A look of sheer terror flashes across his face. He's frozen for two seconds -- then he leaps off the bed in a flash.

EXT. S.E.15 - MOMENTS LATER

Milo, barely dressed, no shoes, BOLTS down the street. Disregards traffic and pedestrians. He's in a full-out panic.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE UP OF PENDANT -- Maria's pendent is a Medic-Alert necklace. "Extreme allergy to peanuts"

EXT. PILKINGTON STREET - CONTINUOUS

Milo races toward the house, screaming as he goes.

MILO

Maria! Mar-iiii-aaaaa!

He's nearly there.

INT. 784 PILKINGTON STREET - CONTINUOUS

Maria, in full anaphylactic shock, writhes and gasps for breath on the kitchen floor. Eyes bulge, body in full seizure -- she can't breathe -- she gasps for air -- but it's not coming --

Milo bursts through the door. He sees her writhing on the floor and lunges for her -- full panic!

MILO

Oh my God, what do I do? What do I do?!

He dashes for the phone. Dials 999.

MILO

Come on, come on, come on!

(on phone)

Yes! Hello! She ate peanuts! She's got a severe allergy! She's writhing on the floor, she can't breathe!

Maria's time is running out. She is in the agonizing last throes of asphyxiation -- Milo watches in horror -- tears stream down his face -- he tries to listen to the medical officer on the phone, but she's dying in front of him!

MILO

Oh God! Maria!

(into phone)

HUUUURRYYYY!

He screams like a child -- tears his hair out -- what can he do?!

INT. 784 PILKINGTON STREET - LATER

Two EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHS carry Maria's dead body out the door on a stretcher. Milo sits like a lump on the kitchen floor, leans against the cabinets. Numb. He's a zombie.

A KIND NURSE bends down next to Milo. Puts a gentle hand on his shoulder.

KIND NURSE

It was too late when you got here,
she was already in anaphylactic shock.
Without an immediate shot of
epinephrine, there's nothing you could
have done for her.

Milo watches through the open door as they load her body into the ambulance.

KIND NURSE

It's not your fault.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Milo sits on Maria's bed, exhausted. His eyes are swollen and red from crying.

He looks at the saucer that holds all of the leaves from his past letters. That almost makes him start to cry again. But then he suddenly turns his attention to her coat that hangs on a hook by the door.

He makes a beeline for the coat. Dips his hand into the pocket. Sure enough, he pulls out four or five leaves from the Smell Garden. He is deeply moved seeing them. Just holds them all in his hand. He brings them all to his nose. Inhales deeply.

Searches for more, he tries the other pocket. A few more herb leaves. And a letter. Beige envelope. With his name written on the front.

INT. MARIA'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Milo sits on the floor, leans against the wall. He opens the letter and begins to read.

MARIA (V.O.)

Dearest Milo, please don't laugh at
my first attempt. I've never written
a love letter before. But after
receiving so many beautiful letters
from you that touched my heart, I was

(MORE)

MARIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
happy tonight that I now know who you
are, and will be able to give this to
you on our first date tomorrow night.

This is almost too much for Milo to bear.

MARIA (V.O.)
Your letters have made me become a
better woman. They have taught me
what is possible. I didn't think men
like you existed. I ended up with a
very nice boyfriend, and though 'nice'
isn't always enough, like many women,
I settled for that. I thought I would
marry him, he did ask me - many times -
and recently I thought I should just
give in and say yes. But I didn't.
I want a noble man, not one who is
simply 'nice'. Settling for what
comes easy is tempting. You didn't
do that, you have gone after what you
thought you could not have, and in
the end, faced me with courage even
though you said that you lacked it.

He can't hold back the tears, doesn't even try.

MARIA (V.O.)
I think you do not lack courage, Milo.
In my eyes you are noble, and will
always live up to what I expect of
the man who will win my heart.

Milo's a mess. Grieving, heart-broken. Horrified at himself.

MILO
Noble?! I am noble?!

Tears stream down his face. He stands up and catches his
reflection in a mirror. Stares.

MILO
I'm not fucking noble!!!

He can barely stand to look at himself -- but he forces
himself to look.

His heaves and sobs gradually subside. He looks himself
directly in the eye. Stands up straight. Takes a deep breath.

MILO
Be noble, Milo Finch.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Milo sits at the interrogation table. The Detective on Kiki's case sits across from him. Milo is calm and steady.

DETECTIVE

So what's this about?

Milo places Kiki's green notebook on the table in front of them.

MILO

I killed Kiki Monroe.

The Detective gives a scoffing laugh.

Milo puts his own notebook on the table next to Kiki's.

MILO

And there's a few other things I'd like to clear up.

INT. POLICE STATION - BOOKING ROOM - NIGHT

Milo sits calmly, almost numbly, while being fingerprinted. Deadened, he looks to the FINGERPRINTING GUARD.

MILO

Did you know that allergies to nuts tends to run in families?

The Fingerprinting Guard ignores his odd comment.

INT. POLICE STATION - BOOKING ROOM - LATER

Milo - now in handcuffs - makes his one phone call. The line rings.

ARTHUR (V.O.)

Hello?

MILO

Arthur? Milo. Listen, I'm going away for a while. Can you make sure you feed my cat?