

"BIRTHDAY GIRL"

Screenplay by

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FADE IN:

In a Russian summer meadow, a young girl spins around and around. A simple guitar theme plays as the low sun catches her hair. Around her neck is a pair of field binoculars, and she runs through the meadow with them pressed to her face, spying butterflies, birds, rabbits. She reaches the top of a hillock, and jumps into the air, and flies up into the sky. We float up and up with her as she aims the binoculars up, up, into the sun.

FADE THROUGH SUN TO:

An aerial shot of the rolling English countryside. Nothing but fields and trees for miles. The shot describes a panorama before looking directly down, at the earth, and we begin to move.

We fly low over a field, a ditch and straight out over six lanes of motorway. Cars and lorries tear below at a hundred miles an hour. We fly over the hard shoulder to another field beyond.

We descend on two young boys in the field. A pornographic magazine is spread out of the flattened grass. One of the boys puts a match to the centre page and as the flames lick up, we begin to move again, across the field, over a path and into a suburban garden.

We fly over five or six gardens, over a barbecue, over children splashing in a pool, over a woman sunbathing, a man mowing his lawn, a young boy bouncing up and down on a garden trampoline, to arrive on the patio of John Buckingham. He walks out onto the patio, where he sits in a chair, facing his house, setting down a mug of tea.

CUT TO:

A blurred face sharpening into focus, John Buckingham, about thirty-two, sitting on his patio, his garden behind, fields beyond.

JOHN

Hello.

His hand adjusts a microphone on his lapel.

JOHN

Hello, hello. Hello...

He shifts in his chair. Coughs. He looks straight at us.

JOHN

I don't believe in perfect love. You know, love that comes out of the sky like a thunderbolt and uh... This is ridiculous.

He removes the microphone. He sits there, thinking very hard.

JOHN

No. No no no. Nope.

He stands, turns and stretches.

BLACKOUT:

FADE UP:

He is sitting as before, looking at us.

JOHN

Running. Reading. Going out. Staying in. The countryside. Films, if they're good.

BLACKOUT:

FADE UP:

JOHN

Thoughtful. Outgoing. Ambitious.

Well-read. Reasonably popular.
Balanced. Trusting. Quite attractive.
Outgoing.

BLACKOUT:

FADE UP:

JOHN

Someone intelligent, of course. Kind.
Pretty I suppose. But its not
critical.

EXT. JOHN'S STREET - DAY

John watches while two removal men lift a new double bed
from the back of a van.

JOHN (V.O.)

Someone with a sense of humour.
Someone you can communicate with on
the same level. Someone you can really
talk to. I think communication is
key.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

John's hands smooth a crisp white sheet over the double
mattress. An ant runs across the sheet. John squashes it and
picks it carefully off.

JOHN (V.O.)

I think that by the time most people
turn thirty they know where they're
going.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

John encircles his house, leaving a thick trail of yellow
powder behind him.

JOHN (V.O.)

And where they've been. I suppose

they have some baggage stroke history.

EXT. THE GARDEN RECORDING - DAY

We see that John is talking to his PC. It has a small digital camera on the side.

JOHN

We all have someone in our past who uh... one skeleton, if you like. We've all got at least one person, as it were, under the patio. Not literally of course. I suppose I only say this because I always thought people who did this sort of thing were... I had an image that they were losers. Not losers. A bit sad. But I think this is the modern world. And I think really it's quite a brave move. Quite a brave, reasonable thing to do.

He smiles.

JOHN

Sorry can we start again?

SINGLE CARD ON BLACK:

BIRTHDAY GIRL

John's fingers in close-up, type JOHN BUCKINGHAM, and his AMEX number into his PC. Finished, he stops, and rests his face on his hands.

He hits SEND. That instant, a worry of black crows bursts up in the field behind him and takes to the swirling air.

Blackout. Music. Titles.

The titles pop and slide over footage of Russian women, on computer video, advertising themselves. They mostly speak in Russian, some of which is subtitled, some speak in English. The women slide on and off the screen, overlap and collide, as the titles appear. Close-ups on mouths and eyes, tight

and pixellated. It becomes a wall of image and sound.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY

The GIGANTIC UNDERSIDE of a Boeing 747 TEARS down the screen.

INT. AIRPORT TRAVELATOR - DAY

John slides across the screen, motionless, towards Arrivals.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY.

Last calls for flights leaving for the other side of the world.

Travellers criss-cross and swirl.

INT. AIRPORT MAIN ARRIVALS BOARD - DAY

BA 1880 MOSCOW On time.

INT. AIRPORT RESTROOM - DAY

He dries his face with a paper towel, then checks himself in the mirror. He looks okay, a little white.

INT. ARRIVALS GATE - DAY

The Arrivals gate slides open and passengers flood through. John stands among the chauffeurs and cab drivers, as the passengers trundle by.

We follow one young woman long enough to think this must be her, but it's a false alarm, she's lifted up and spun around by someone else.

They've all passed. That's that. She wasn't on the flight.

John wanders away from the gate. He stands about in the swirl in the middle of the airport. People bustle by. Everyone going somewhere.

Gradually, we get the sense we are being watched. A woman

stands nearby. She is about twenty, very beautiful, tired and laden with luggage.

JOHN
Nadia?

She nods.

JOHN
I'm John.

They shake hands.

JOHN
Welcome.
(pause)
Well. Look I didn't have a speech
but...

A distorted passenger announcement breaks above us. It's too loud to talk. It ends and they stand there in silence. He points to her luggage.

JOHN
Is that everything?

NADIA
Yes.

JOHN
Right. Okay. Good.

They stand there.

INT. AIRPORT LIFT - DAY

Nadia and John stand side by side in a huge lift.

JOHN
We can talk in the car.

A deafening roll of thunder.

EXT. AIRPORT CAR PARK - DAY

It's pouring with rain as they cross the car park towards a patched up yellow Rover. John stows the suitcase in the boot and opens the passenger door for her.

INT. / EXT. JOHN'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

John turns the key in the ignition. The MG wheezes and coughs. He tries again. Nothing. The third time it just catches and he coaxes it to life. The colour's drained from his cheeks.

They head for the motorway. The silence in the car lasts just long enough for John to feel he is breaking it.

JOHN

It's about forty miles from here. I don't know if you've looked at a map, it's close to London but it's a city in itself. A Roman city. It's a nice house. I'm having a problem with ants. I uh... It's the warmer weather. I can't seem to find the nest. Sorry, do you understand "ants"?

NADIA

Yes.

JOHN

I just can't find a nest. The root of the problem. I've looked everywhere. What's the Russian for ant? Sorry that's a stupid... Sorry. This is strange isn't it.

NADIA

Yes.

JOHN

I'm pretty nervous. Are you?

NADIA

Yes.

JOHN

I mean... "Ants." "I've got a problem with ants."

He shakes his head.

JOHN
I had this...

He pulls a sign from his jacket which says "Nadia!"

JOHN
As a joke but uh...

He tosses it onto the back seat.

They drive. He sees Nadia looking at England.

JOHN
So. Is it different to how you
imagined it?

NADIA
Yes.

JOHN
I bet.
(pause)
What about me? Am I how you imagined?

NADIA
Yes.

He double-takes, changes lanes.

JOHN
And how was the flight. Sorry, am I
speaking too fast for you?

NADIA
Yes.

John looks across.

JOHN
Do uh... Sorry. Can you follow me?
Do you understand what I'm saying?

NADIA

Yes.

JOHN

Good. Or should I speak slower?

NADIA

Yes.

JOHN

Do you follow or should I speak slower?

NADIA

Yes.

He looks across. Back at the road. He changes gear.

JOHN

Uh... Are you a giraffe?

NADIA

Yes.

John turns to face the road ahead.

JOHN

(to himself)

Oh Jesus.

He drives in silence.

JOHN

Oh Jesus.

Suddenly she winds the window down and vomits out of the speeding car. John panics and swerves onto the hard shoulder amidst loud horn blasts.

EXT. HARD SHOULDER - DAY

John navigates his way round the Rover in the rain to find her kneeling on the verge, throwing up. He puts a hand on her shoulder, but she stands up quickly, maintaining an icy dignity considering what has just happened.

EXT. JOHN'S CLOSE - DAY

It has stopped raining and a group of young boys are playing cricket in the road. They clear as a Yellow Rover pulls into the Close, and into the drive of the little house at the end.

As John climbs out of his car he eyes the boys. The boys eye him, and his new friend.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

The front door closes behind them. John and Nadia stand in the silence of his hallway. There is a small banner hanging there: "Welcome Nadia". They study the banner together, gravely.

Eventually he opens a door.

JOHN
(quietly)
Lounge.

She peers round him and looks inside. He leads her down towards the kitchen.

JOHN
Kitchen.

She glances around it. Then back at John. He nods to himself, looking tense and pale.

INT. JOHN'S UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

He puts her suitcase down on the landing, and opens a door. Without looking inside:

JOHN
Bathroom.

He closes it.

INT. MAIN BEDROOM - DAY

Standing in the doorway of John's bedroom.

JOHN
Bedroom.

There it is. The Double Bed. John frowns gravely.

Without warning, he marches out. She comes out onto the landing to catch John plus suitcase kicking open another door and vanishing inside.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - DAY

Nadia peers around the door to find John standing next to a narrow monk-like single bed.

JOHN
The uh... the other bedroom...

She looks at it, then up at John. She turns and walks out.

Now she's back, with her camouflaged hold-all, dumps it onto the floor, heaves the suitcase onto the bed and smoking no-hands, starts unpacking. John plugs in the lamp by the bed. To show Nadia how it works he switches it on, off, on, off, and then feels stupid.

JOHN
I'll get an ashtray.

With John gone, Nadia stops unpacking. She walks to the window and stares out over the rooftops of the estate.

CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

John on the phone.

ANSWER MACHINE
You have reached From Russia with
Love. Our office reopens on Monday.
If you are interested in our
services...
(etc. etc.)

Thank You.

JOHN

This is John Buckingham from St Albans. I need to speak to you urgently. There's a critical problem. It's... Call me back as soon as possible. It's critical.

INT. STAIRS / LANDING - DAY

John climbs the stairs holding a saucer for an ashtray. He knocks lightly on the spare room door.

INT. SPARE ROOM / LANDING - DAY

Nadia is lying asleep on the bed in only her black underwear. We duck straight back out.

John composes himself. He puts his head back round the door as if there's a real chance it will be shot off. She's facing away, arms folded, still holding the cigarette. It has burnt out, leaving a long curl of ash on her bare hip.

He approaches the bed with immense trepidation, eases the cigarette from between her fingers and drops it in the bin. He stares at her bare hip, with the ash on it. Holding the saucer under the ash, he blows on it gently. It takes three careful breaths before it drops in the saucer. Unseen by John, her eyes are wide open as he steals out onto the landing. We stay with her a moment.

CUT TO:

A pot of stew, bubbling on the hob.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John is stirring a pot on the hob. By his expression he might be defusing a bomb.

His head cocks, he stiffens. Nadia walks right into the kitchen. She's changed, jeans and a tee shirt. Nadia takes the spoon from him, says something in Russian, gestures for him to sit.

She tastes the stew. Now she stirs the pot. He watches her.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John and Nadia sit opposite each other. She takes a mouthful. They catch one another's eye. And again.

On the wall across, six ants careen in crazy circles. John can see them, but doesn't move.

He puts his fork down.

JOHN

I don't know what to say. Your letters were in English. Good English. You said you'd studied English.

Nadia reaches down into her bag and pulls out a small box wrapped in brown paper. She places it in front of him.

He warily unwraps a little wooden box. He opens the lid and fishes out a simple gold ring. He holds it in his palm.

JOHN

I can't take this.

He puts it back in the box, hoping it will disappear.

She fishes it out again and holds it on her palm for him to take.

JOHN

I can't take it. I'm not really a ring guy.

She takes his hand. He automatically yanks it away like he's been burned. She takes his hand again and to stop it becoming unbearable, he allows Nadia to push the ring onto his ring finger. It goes on easily.

JOHN

Okay. No big deal. Thank you. Yes

thanks. Thank you.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

John and Nadia sit next to each other on the couch watching T.V. John's gaze seems to go through the T.V. and a thousand yards beyond. Nadia is knitting a half-finished jumper, blood red.

John stands and disappears out of shot.

JOHN (O.S.)

If anyone gets this message please call as soon as possible. It's an emergency.

John sits back down. He steals side-glances at her. Her mouth. Her red-painted fingers knitting fast.

John flips through the channels –

The Money Programme.
Antique's Roadshow.
Cup Rugby.

Eventually he offers Nadia the remote control. She takes, aims it at the T.V. but doesn't press it. Just as it seems she won't, she does: University Challenge.

They watch University Challenge with Nadia still aiming the control and smoking. After another long pause she flips the button –

The Money Programme.
Antiques Roadshow.
Rugby.

She flips again then hands the controls back to John and they watch University Challenge.

Nadia puts down her knitting, stretches and yawns.

INT. LOUNGE / STAIRS - NIGHT

Nadia climbs the stairs. John watches her, hovering in the

doorway of the darkened lounge.

He hears the bathroom door close before venturing up.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

John sits on the edge of his bed. He cocks his head:

Door opening and shutting; feet padding along landing; door closing. Silence. He squeezes his door open and peers down the dark landing. The coast is clear.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Brushing his teeth, staring accusingly at his reflection. Spits. Finished, he takes a deep breath and opens the door, and gives a small shout.

Nadia is standing right outside the door; Nightshirt, damp hair, toothbrush in her mouth.

JOHN
Good night.

He squeezes past and quick-steps down the landing.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

He climbs into the big bed, fully clothed, turns off the light and lies there in the moonlight.

After twenty seconds, the bedroom door clicks open. John climbs out of bed as casually as possible and stands around.

JOHN
You should go now. We'll talk in the morning.

His eyes widen but he can't speak. He wants to but she's placed her hand across his mouth. She reaches down and takes his hand, and draws it towards her, slowly tracing his fingers across her breasts. She unbuttons her shirt and pulls his hand inside.

He's breathing hard, her right hand still clasped over his

mouth. Her free hand lowers to press against him, and unzip his fly. He lets out a moan.

We concentrate on their faces. Above the silence all we can hear is John's breathing – Before long Nadia looks down – He's come.

Nadia turns and walks out, leaving John marooned, gasping in and blowing out, angry almost, buttoning his trousers.

EXT. JOHN'S CLOSE - NIGHT

Exterior view of John's darkened house. A fox trots across the Cul-De-Sac and sits under John's car, where it curls up.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John lying in bed staring out at a streetlight.

INT. NADIA'S ROOM - DAY

The morning. Nadia opens her eyes in the sun-filled room.

INT. LANDING - DAY

She pads down the hall in her nightshirt and opens the door to the bathroom. There on the toilet, naked, is John. He gives another short shout. Nadia holds his eye for a couple of seconds too long, before shutting us inside with him.

EXT. JOHN'S GARDEN - DAY

John sprints down his lawn, scattering the big black crows eating his garden. He jumps the fence, and across the fields.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

John jogs along by a river in the countryside behind his house, wearing shorts and a tee shirt. His breath billows around him in the sharp morning air.

He stops running by a gate overlooking a small hill. He doubles up to recover, panting hard.

INT. JOHN'S GARDEN - DAY

Two wild rabbits are nibbling the remains of a big breakfast left on the lawn. John climbs heavily back over his fence.

There's a deck chair out there, surrounded by the remains of breakfast. Some glossy Russian magazines, a full ashtray, Nadia's knitting.

The patio door is ajar, the net curtain billowing. He scans the garden jumpily. The boy next door is on his trampoline, bouncing up and down, watching John at the top of each bounce.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

Sweating from the run, John peers up the stairs. The house is silent. In the lounge he picks up the phone and dials a number.

ANSWER MACHINE

You have reached From Russia With Love. If you are interested...

He hangs up.

INT. LANDING - DAY

John stands with his ear to the bathroom door. The shower's on.

INT. NADIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

It's empty. He slips inside.

Stuff everywhere. Cigarette cartons, several lighters, spare wool, suitcase, rucksack. Huge poster of Bruce Springsteen on wall.

Warily, he opens the bedside drawer: Different coloured bras and knickers.

In her open suitcase lies a small wooden chest. He lifts it out and puts it on the bed, hesitates, then opens it.

A pair of Russian Army field binoculars. He puts them on the bed beside him. A small silver pistol, the size of a

Derringer. He studies it, and pulls the trigger. It's a cigarette lighter.

A brochure of prospective husbands provided by the marriage agency. After a dozen or so photos he comes across his page but the photo has been cut out. He sees his name in the strange lettering, under the hole.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Nadia in the shower, eyes shut, water pouring over her face.

INT. NADIA'S ROOM - DAY

John flicks through a stack of photographs. One of Nadia as a young girl in a meadow, with binoculars around her neck – John looks at the same binoculars on the bed next to him. He turns them over in his hands.

He looks through them. He slowly lowers them. He's seen something. He stands and crosses the room.

On the mantelpiece, in a silver frame, is his picture, cut from the brochure. He holds it in his hands.

The shower has stopped. In a panic he replaces the picture, the photographs, the gun lighter, the brochure, and the binoculars.

INT. LANDING - DAY

Nadia leaves the bathroom, hair wrapped in a towel, and heads straight towards us.

INT. NADIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

John shuts the chest, drops it back into the suitcase.

The photo of the binoculars girl is on the pillow. He whips it under the bed just as Nadia enters.

She doesn't seem surprised to see him standing there, in her room, in his tee shirt and running shorts.

JOHN

Nadia. This isn't going to work. I'm sorry. It's been a terrible mistake. You must go.

He takes the ring off and holds it out to her. She doesn't take it. He puts it on the bed.

JOHN

I'm booking a flight for tomorrow.
I'm sorry.

John and Nadia on her bed, Nadia tearing off his tee shirt. She gets on top.

EXT. JOHN'S CLOSE - DAY

The milkman hops a low fence between two houses. He waves to a man watering his rose trees.

INT. NADIA'S ROOM - DAY

John and Nadia having sex. They don't take their eyes off each other.

EXT. JOHN'S CLOSE - DAY

A mother corrals her school children into a Volvo. They don't want to go.

INT. NADIA'S ROOM - DAY

John sits on the edge of the bed, holding his head in his hands. The door has just shut behind him. He looks at his left hand. He has the ring on.

VOICE OVER

Problem solving. John identifies most problems within appropriate time frames...

INT. NATWEST BANK, ST ALBANS - DAY

The large oak doors of the bank swing open.

VOICE OVER

Most of the time he develops several alternative solutions to problems...

We move fast through the banking hall to the furthest counter. The blind snaps up to reveal John, wearing a smart suit.

VOICE OVER

He usually resolves or minimises most problems before they grow into larger problems...

INT. BEHIND THE GLASS - DAY

John's skilled hands loading a stack of banknotes into a drawer. The cashier next along, Clare, smiles at him.

CLARE

Good weekend?

JOHN

Uh. Yeah. Pretty good.

CLARE

Do anything special?

JOHN

Uh. No.

VOICE OVER

Communications. John listens and comprehends well.

INT. BRANCH MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

John sits in front of a large desk, hands on knees.

BRANCH MANAGER (O.S.)

When communicating he is good at selecting the most efficient methods and displays effective verbal communication skills...

Across the desk the Branch Manager reads a report out loud in an impersonal, flat manner.

BRANCH MANAGER

On one occasion John showed first class communication skills in a delicate customer situation.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Nadia opens a kitchen cupboard and stares inside at John's groceries.

BRANCH MANAGER (V.O.)

Initiative. John is reasonably quick to volunteer whenever others need help. Although he is sometimes reluctant and or unwilling to ask for it himself...

She opens some pickled onions and pops one in her mouth.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cradling the jar of onions, she scans his bookshelf.

BRANCH MANAGER (V.O.)

He is adequate at resolving difficult or emotional customer situations...

Bluffers guide to the Internet. She opens an old copy of The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe. Inside is written 'John Buckingham Class 3F'.

BRANCH MANAGER (V.O.)

He usually fulfills commitments made to customers within expected time frames.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

She opens the wardrobe. In a shoebox she finds some photos.

BRANCH MANAGER (V.O.)

Customer Service. John shows a high degree of respect for customers...

One of John as a little boy, holding a football, flanked by

his parents. On the back someone has written "Summer 1973".

BRANCH MANAGER (V.O.)

John still has some reluctance to /
or has problems in, carving out new
relationships face to face.

There is a photo of John, about three years ago, arm in arm
with a plain, thin-looking girl, with small eyes. Another of
him kissing her on the cheek.

INT. BRANCH MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

John listening.

BRANCH MANAGER

Judgment – John makes able decisions
in most areas of his job.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nadia sees something at the bottom of the cupboard. She bends
down to retrieve a black dustbin liner. She reaches in and
pulls out a small stack of hardcore pornographic magazines.

BRANCH MANAGER (V.O.)

John follows instructions
conscientiously and responds well to
personal directions.

She opens the bag and a half dozen videos fall out. She
picks up a magazine and begins flicking through it
impassively.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

Nadia downstairs kneels in front of the T.V. and slips a
video into the machine. Nadia's face is lit up by the screen.
The sound of sex.

BRANCH MANAGER (V.O.)

John is normally very punctual and
in most situations assumes
responsibility for his own actions
and outcomes.

She pops a pickled onion in her mouth, and watches. We see the images close and pixellated, as we did the marriage videos in the titles. It's a bondage scene, the woman wears a gag.

INT. BRANCH MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

John back in the room. The report has finished and the manager is scrutinising him in silence.

JOHN

Thank you – I think that's very fair.

INT. / EXT. JOHN'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

John drives his Rover through the centre of town, the low orange sun on his face.

EXT. JOHN'S CLOSE - DAY

The Rover pulls into the driveway. John opens the glove compartment and removes the ring Nadia gave him, and puts it back on. He collects a brown paper package from the passenger seat.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

John and Nadia at the supper table. She is knitting the jumper. Despite the silence, John seems more relaxed, in shirtsleeves and loosened tie. He puts his fork down, and places the brown bag on the table, pushing it across to Nadia. She opens it and removes a big hardback Russian - English dictionary. John smiles and nods "open it". She flicks through it.

She turns it over in her hands, nods, puts the book down, reaches under the table and surfaces with the stack of porn magazines. She puts them on the table next to the dictionary.

John beholds the pile. "Wet N' Wild" is on top.

He rises slowly from the table and sleepwalks from the kitchen.

INT. JOHN'S HALL / STAIRS / LANDING / BATHROOM - DAY

John, frozen-headed, floats down the hall, up the stairs into the bathroom, locks the door, sits on the toilet.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Downstairs Nadia clears, the dishes. The porn stack still sits on the table, beside the dictionary.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Still on the toilet. He hasn't moved. He closes his eyes.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

It's dark. The bathroom door opens a crack. The coast clear, he dashes for the cover of his bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John rests his head against the doorframe and heaves a sigh of relief. He turns and freezes. Nadia is there next to him.

She slowly loosens his tie. Holding it in her hands she examines the strange little bank logo on it, before deliberately tying the tie over her mouth like a gag.

A second tie is pulled from a hanger in the cupboard. Quickly and skillfully she ties her hands together, pulling it tight with her teeth. Finished, she flicks her hair back, and gives him a long, level look.

VOICE OVER

It will feel very strange at first
but then you get used to it.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM IN THE BANK - DAY

A close up of John's face. He closes his eyes, falls backwards, and is caught in the arms of a colleague.

TRAINER

Good. Again.

John stands again and closes his eyes. After a short wait he falls back and again his colleague catches him just before he hits the ground.

TRAINER

Very good. How does that feel John?

JOHN

It feels good. Weird.

TRAINER

It's called Trust and Letting Go.

John nods.

TRAINER

Trust and Letting Go.

A simple guitar theme begins, and plays over the following sequence:

Kids playing cricket in John's Close. A boy hits the ball and others chase it as it bounces off cars.

John at dusk tied to the bed with his two bank ties. Nadia is on top. They are having sex.

Hands stacking bank notes into the back of a cash machine. Fast, mechanical.

At the bank, John walks to his desk. His phone rings. He answers it.

Silence. Then soft breathing. John listens intently and looks around.

"Nadia...?" – John sits there, surrounded by his colleagues, listening to Nadia breathe.

Close up on a man's hands tying a tie tight a-round a woman's wrist. Pull back to a close up of Nadia's face, her eyes fixed on John.

John running by the river.

John watches Nadia rise from his bed after sex and leave the room. He stares out the window.

Nadia's fingers, knitting skillfully.

Nadia sits on her bed alone, pulling on black stockings and attaching them to suspenders.

The street cricketers run for cover as a thunder storm breaks over the close.

Rain coming down in John's garden. The pair sit under the shelter of the back porch. John has his hands out as Nadia is winding red wool it into a ball. The jumper is half finished.

The rabbits shelter from the rain under broad leaves.

John in a pub with a four colleagues from the bank. He sips his half, half listening to the conversation. It all seems so dull. He finishes his drink and looks at his watch. They ask him if he's staying for another.

A knitting needle is drawn from a row of red stitches on the nearly-finished jumper.

Nadia kneels over John holding the knitting needles. She presses one to his skin and we watch it drawn across his chest in close up, up to his neck.

His eyes are fixed on hers.

Close up on Nadia's face. Her mouth is gagged and she's lying on her front, head half-buried in a pillow. We can just make out John behind, on top of her. Both are lying still and breathing hard, covered in sweat. Catching her breath Nadia yanks the gag off and wriggles out from underneath him. She snatches up a towel and covering herself hurries to the bathroom.

The guitar theme ends.

INT. LANDING - NIGHT

John presses his ear to the bathroom door. The sound of retching.

The toilet flushes. John pads back to his bedroom. Through the gap in the door he sees Nadia coming out, go to her room, and shut the door. He rests his head against the door frame.

CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

A beautiful morning. Through the patio window, John watches Nadia in the garden, sitting on the lawn reading her dictionary in the sunlight. In dungarees with her hair up, she looks very young.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

He walks warily out into the sunlight. She looks up, then back to the big book in her lap. He places the tea next to her on the grass.

JOHN
Are you O.K.?

She looks at him, then down at her tome. She speaks slowly, in a heavy accent:

NADIA
Today is bath day.

JOHN
Sorry?

She studies her book. Looks up.

NADIA
Today is bath day.

He shakes his head.

JOHN
Bath day?

She nods.

JOHN
I don't understand.

NADIA
Happy bath day.

The penny drops.

JOHN
Today?

She frowns. John leafs through the dictionary.

JOHN
Syevodnya?

NADIA
Syevodnya

JOHN
Happy Birthday. Happy Birthday.

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

NADIA
Party.
(pause)
Party. Syevodnya.

John nods, smiling.

JOHN
Yes. Party. Party syevodnya.

She lights a cigarette from the butt of her last. Blows smoke.
She holds the jumper up to John, as if to try it for size,
and the theme returns.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John is on the telephone.

JOHN

...It might just be a twenty-four
hour bug...

INT. BANK - DAY

Clare listens, concerned.

CLARE

Well you just get better. I'll tell
Beaky. You just get some rest, ok?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

John puts the phone down. He looks down the hall, where Nadia
is killing ants on the table, with her dictionary. He smiles.

EXT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

A shot from above, of the Rover's windscreen, reflecting the
passing trees.

The roof is down. We glide up the windscreen, up Nadia's
body, in the passenger seat. Her face is upturned slightly,
she's wearing sunglasses, which reflect the passing trees.

INT. JOHN'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Nadia sits alone at the dining room table. Suddenly the lights
go out. John enters, carrying a small birthday cake glowing
with candles.

The light throws huge shadows on the walls and flickers across
their faces.

He sets the cake down on the table and sits down opposite
Nadia

JOHN

Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday
to you. Happy Birthday dear Nadia...

The front doorbell rings. A loud long burst. Nadia's face
transforms into a big grin. She hurries out into the hall,
leaving John alone with the cake. Nadia whooping and shouting
excitedly. Other voices. Shouting. Shouting in Russian.

A man bursts in carrying Nadia in his arms. He spins her round in the candlelight, kisses her, puts her down and goes to the table where he blows out the candles. They are plunged into darkness.

Lots of whooping and laughing. A Zippo flares up and illuminates some faces, all laughing.

CUT TO:

John's hand groping along the wall. It finds the light switch.

There are two men here. One small and wiry, one big and dark, like Rasputin. They each carry rucksacks and a guitar case.

YURI

You must be John. You seem very nice.
Excuse me.

In Russian, the first man introduces Nadia to the other man, who is relighting the candles with a Zippo. It seems they haven't met before.

The first man, Yuri, pulls out a bottle of vodka and hands it to John.

YURI

How's that? We can't drink our piss
can we?

JOHN

Hang on hang on, sorry, but like,
who are you?

YURI

You must find some glasses, small,
for the toast, and some plates.

JOHN

What are you doing here?

Yuri stops.

YURI

Sorry. You've lost me...

JOHN

I'm asking what you're here for.

YURI

What?

Yuri speaks to Nadia in fast Russian.

YURI

(to John)

You don't speak Russian? Pratssteetye!
This explains your cold eyes.

Nadia begins gabbling to Yuri in Russian. Yuri says the English word – "Friends".

NADIA

(to John)

"Frenzy".

JOHN

Yes I know.

YURI

(himself)

Yuri.

(Rasputin)

Alexei. Alexei and Yuri.

Alexei speaks.

JOHN

What did he say?

YURI

He says he feels safe here.

Nadia talks fast to Yuri.

YURI

She says she wanted to tell you but
her English is shit. And no one speaks
Russian, it's very hard for her. The

light please.

Alexei turns off the light again. Nadia blows out her candles. They are plunged back into darkness. John turns the light on again. Yuri is already sitting down.

JOHN

I need to know who you are first please.

YURI

Oh.

(Yuri stands)

We are Russian.

JOHN

Yes. I know.

YURI

Good.

(he sits down)

JOHN

And...

YURI

And what? You mean from the beginning?

Jesus. Can I uh okay, as we say in

Russia can I cut a long story short.

Okay. Nadia is my little cousin.

Except she's not. But we say cousin.

This is for you.

He hands John another bottle of vodka.

JOHN

Hold on.

YURI

Toast first then we talk seriously,

I can see you are serious about us.

Vodka is splashed into their glasses. Yuri raises his glass and shouts a toast in Russian: "Vashe Zdarovye!". They down their vodka, John sips at his, then realises he must finish

it. Yuri makes as if to throw his in the fireplace.

YURI
Just kidding.

Sausages, cheese, bread and pickle bottles rain onto the table from Yuri's rucksack.

JOHN
(to Yuri)
So hang on. You're both Nadia's cousins?

YURI
(shaking his head)
Of course not. Alexei, he's is my problem.

JOHN
Right.

YURI
We better watch him. He's crazy.

JOHN
Right.

YURI
I am actor, he is actor, although he is an actor stroke musician. I just noodle along, I'm not so good. He makes me look like a retard – He smokes me. I don't mean he smokes me.

Yuri mimes giving a blow-job.

YURI
I mean he smokes me. Do you say "smoke" in U.K.?

He mimes the blowjob again.

JOHN
No.

YURI

Right. So I can say he smokes me.
So.

Pause.

JOHN

So?

YURI

So I come to England with other actors
to make shows, I meet this freak
from Novgorod I tell him of you and
Chicken and the birthday here we
are.

Yuri speaks to Nadia in Russian, she replies looking at John.

JOHN

What was that?

YURI

I asked her if you were happy to see
us. I find it hard to tell with you.

JOHN

Yes it's okay. Thank you for the
food.

Nadia lights a cigarette. John notices that on both wrists
she has bold red marks from the ties. He freezes.

YURI

She says you are a little shy. I
think I know this.

John is thrown, panicking that one of them will notice the
marks.

JOHN

So how long will you be in England?

YURI

Plans are for the architects,

politicians and so forth.

JOHN

You must have a visa or something...

YURI

You're asking for my documents?

JOHN

No, no...

Yuri laughs, translates for Alexei and they both get a big laugh out of this. Yuri gets his passport out and makes a big show of presenting it to John. But John keeps glancing at the marks on Nadia's wrists. We see a close up of her neck. There is the tiniest blood mark. John sees it and starts to sweat.

YURI

We are all Europeans here. Europe,
Tony Blair and Maggie Thatcher!

Yuri raises his glass and they all drink to Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher. John drinks his vodka in two hot gulps.

YURI

So. You have nothing to say to your
Fiancee? Maybe to wife of forty years
it's understandable. Come on. You
speak and I will translate.

John looks glazed. The room falls silent.

JOHN

Hello.

Yuri translates – She replies.

YURI

She says 'Hello' to you. Go for it
John!

JOHN

Uh. Do you like England?

YURI
Classic!
(he translates)
Thank God. She says 'Yes!'

John nods. He watches Nadia tap ash. The wrist again.

JOHN
Uh...

They all wait. Yuri nods encouragingly.

JOHN
I can't think of anything. Hang on.

Nadia speaks in Russian to Yuri.

YURI
She says she has a secret to tell.

JOHN
What?

Nadia speaks. John waits uncomfortably. Silence.

YURI
She says she watched you at the
airport.

John stops.

JOHN
When?

YURI
(translating)
"I saw you waiting there, by the
gate."

JOHN
I...

YURI
"I have these uh..." She explains to
you... "When I was a little girl my

father had these beautiful old glasses." Like... I don't know the word. Like for watching uh... for watching the birds.

We see John's face.

JOHN
Binoculars.

YURI
Binoculars. He had these Binoculars he has kept from the war.

CUT TO:

Scene 1 reprise.

EXT. SUMMER MEADOW - DAY

A young girl runs through a summer meadow with a pair of Russian Army field binoculars, around her neck.

YURI (V.O.)
I would run around with them taking pictures of things I liked with my mind. If I saw something beautiful I would take a picture.

With the binoculars pressed to her face, she spies butterflies, birds, a rabbit. She stops running and aims the binoculars up, up, into the sun

INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Yuri translates.

YURI
The day before I left Russia my father gave me the old binoculars. He said that when I saw you I was to stand far away and look at you with these, and to examine your face closely. And if you were a bad person I could run away.

Nadia looks at the table.

YURI

She says she took a picture.

John watches Nadia looking at the table. She glances up once and catches his eye.

Alexei suddenly slams his hand down on the table. He raises his palm. There is an ant squashed there. He shows Yuri.

ALEXEI

Nasyekski.

EXT. JOHN'S GARDEN - NIGHT

The small party has moved outside to the patio, where they sit around a low wooden table in the mellow candlelight. A huge late Summer moon hangs over the fields. Alexei tinkles beautifully on his guitar.

He stops asks a question in Russian.

JOHN

What was that?

YURI

Oh nothing.

JOHN

Tell me.

YURI

No. It is too judgmental.

JOHN

Tell me what he said.

YURI

He says why did you send to Russia for a wife.

Silence. John suddenly looks sick.

YURI

You are not ashamed of it? It's no surprise to want to love.

JOHN

No. It's not that.

YURI

Do you believe in love?

JOHN

I suppose it's... I mean define your terms.

YURI

It's very strange. How many people are truly themselves with their love? It is the greatest human disaster and it is never in the newspapers. There are no Marches Against Heartache, no Ministries Against Loneliness, no Concerts Against Disappointment. We look away. And still we know in secret that nothing is more important to us. The one thing we all share but don't say. Look John I will show you something.

He takes a plate and starts reaching for the food.

YURI

Here look, something beautiful from Russia. Here is Life, there, take it.

John accepts the plate.

YURI

Here is bread. Khylep. This is work. We all need this, here eat.

John eats.

YURI

Good. But we cannot survive with

just work, so here is meat and blood.
Myasa. This is family and country,
flesh, strength, eat.

John bites the sausage.

YURI

But again this is not life. Here is
joy and pain. Chyesnok. Without these
life has no flavour, is too serious.
Eat.

John nibbles some pickled garlic.

YURI

But this vodka.
(pause)

Is love. Only this magic changes you
inside. The moon and the stars and
the sun.

Yuri offers John the glass. He looks at Nadia, takes it and
swigs it down in one. He looks across at Nadia, wiping his
mouth, his eyes watering. She looks back at him.

Alexei begins softly singing a song. As he sings:

YURI

This is a love song, a soldier's
song to his beloved – Alexei, he's
Afghanstya, a veteran of Afghanistan.
He saw terrible things.

They listen to the beautiful, sad voice. For the second verse
Yuri joins in, a slow stirring lament. For the end Nadia
joins in too and the three of them begin harmonising
beautifully. John watches in the candlelight.

John, Nadia and Alexei pose with the cake. Nadia puts her
arm round John and Alexei. With a FLASH! Yuri takes a
Polaroid.

The guitar theme returns as we see the Polaroid on the table
in close up, developing speeded up. John comes into focus,
beaming.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

We track across the sleeping faces of Yuri and Alexei tucked into their sleeping bags with guitar cases for pillows. John switches the light off and closes the door.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John and Nadia seen from above lying asleep, with their heads together, in the moonlight. Nadia whispers something in her sleep, in Russian. Fast asleep John mutters something in English. Their sleeping, unintelligible conversation, drifts on in the night.

INT. BANK - DAY

John sits at his desk in the open plan office. He looks nervous.

This is because he is wearing Nadia's ring. People pass his desk, a couple say hello, but they don't notice. He rubs his chin. Nobody notices.

Eventually his manager approaches.

BRANCH MANAGER

Quick word John?

He leans over the desk.

BRANCH MANAGER

This is sensitive. Your car. Lovely car. Doesn't necessarily give the right impression.

JOHN

Ch...

BRANCH MANAGER

To customers approaching the bank from the rear

JOHN

(thrown)

Right.

BRANCH MANAGER

You can see why it's sensitive?

JOHN

Uh... Yes.

The manager smiles and taps the desk twice.

BRANCH MANAGER

I'll leave it on your desk.

John is left alone.

INT. HALL / LIVING ROOM - DAY

The front door opens and John walks into his hall. The two rucksacks are still side by side where they were the night before...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

He opens the fridge and pours himself a glass of orange. He stops – There on the draining board lies the bloody skin of a rabbit. John jumps out of his skin.

Next to the rabbit skin is a hand-drawn map. A dotted line winds around the map and ends with an X in a small wood.

He looks at the rabbit skin, with its eyeless sockets.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

John follows a path through a big silent wood, the low sun flaring and catching his white work shirt.

P.O.V. OF JOHN

through binoculars, a long way off and squinting into the sun.

Nadia lowers the binoculars and looks past us.

CUT TO:

John spots some figures lying on the grass in the distance. He heads towards them, and watches them for a moment from thirty yards away.

Alexei, Yuri and Nadia sit in a small clearing. A blanket, cushions, bread and vodka are scattered around. Yuri is strumming a guitar. Alexei and Nadia are laughing and chatting. He removes a small twig from her hair and flattens it under his big hand. John watches the gesture. It's so intimate they could be lovers.

YURI

(calls)

John. We can see you hiding.

John steps out of his hiding place and approaches the group. Alexei has Nadia falling about laughing about something. He smiles at her then nods to John.

Pieces of cooked rabbit lie in tin foil. Alexei feeds a piece to Nadia with a big hunting knife. Nadia smiles at John, and starts knitting.

YURI

How is bank?

JOHN

Fine. I thought you were leaving today.

YURI

To be indoors on such a day. It's crime.

Nadia stops knitting and takes her shirt off and stretches back to sunbathe in her black bra. Alexei takes the knife he has just finished cleaning and holds the cold wide blade flat above Nadia's bare stomach. Just before pressing it down he looks across at John. Nadia yelps and sits up. They laugh, and Yuri joins in. John laughs uneasily.

Alexei notices marks on Nadia's midriff. He asks her about them in Russian.

John goes white, unable to understand Nadia's explanation. He has no idea what she told him.

EXT. LAKE IN FOREST - DAY

At sunset, the four run towards a lake in their underwear. They jump and dive in, and begin splashing each other.

John duck-dives under the water and swims through the sunlit streaked green water. We see him under the water, swimming towards us, caught by the sun's rays.

John surfaces, and wipes the water from his eyes. He spots Alexei and Nadia playing in the water. Alexei grabs her and throws her in the air and she comes down with a splash.

John treads water nearby. He watches them both hold their noses and disappear under the surface.

They've both vanished. John ducks under the water.

John's underwater P.O.V.: It's too murky to see anything.

The two surface, breathing hard, laughing. John watches them.

Alexei holds Nadia tight and looks like he might even kiss her. But instead he ducks her and holds her under the water.

John treads water nearby. She's been under a long time.

JOHN

Hey.

John begins to swim toward Alexei. Just as he gets near, Alexei lets Nadia surface, coughing and spluttering – she shouts at Alexei in Russian, angry.

Alexei makes for her again but she pushes him away, twice, almost slapping him. She is very uncomfortable. She swims away.

Yuri admonishes his friend in Russian. Alexei stares at John, then swims off powerfully back towards the shore.

YURI

He's just having fun. He's maybe too strong you know...

John watches Nadia walk out of the lake towards her clothes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John walks into his bedroom. Nadia is on the bed with a dictionary. She puts it down. She speaks very slowly.

NADIA

They go. John. They go.

JOHN

What's wrong?

NADIA

They go.

JOHN

Of course. They go. Yes. Yes.

NADIA

They go.

INT. JOHN'S SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

John stands at the end of the two sleeping bags.

YURI

I understand. I'm so sorry

JOHN

You can stay tonight.

YURI

I have brought you trouble. Maybe I should have come alone.

JOHN

Good night.

Alexei stares at John as he backs out of the room.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John closes his bedroom door and slips back into bed. Nadia is already asleep. John lies back in the moonlight, and stares at the ceiling.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

A light summer rain. Drips fall from rose petals.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

John opens his eyes. He rolls over towards Nadia, but she's already up and about.

Alone in his bedroom, John holds the now-finished jumper up to himself. He tries it on. It's a good four sizes too big, the arms are too long and it hangs down to mid-thigh. He looks at himself in the mirror and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRS / HALL / KITCHEN - DAY

He pads downstairs in his pants, picks up his mail from the doormat and peers into the living room. The sleeping bags and guitar cases have gone. About to peruse his mail, his eye is caught by something else.

There is a small wild deer standing in the living room. Looking at him. John stares back at it transfixed, when he hears a scream. The deer starts and bolts out of the patio doors. John is thrown. It was a woman's scream. He goes back out and looks down the hall.

Twenty feet away, down the hall, is Yuri, sitting on the kitchen floor, his back to the cooker. He's crying.

YURI

John. You must call the Police.

Suddenly Alexei steps between them in the doorway. As he moves out of view, we see he is holding his hunting knife. John hears Nadia cry out, from inside the kitchen. He drops his mail and rushes forward.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Nadia is tied to a chair. Alexei pulls a gag tight around her mouth and holds the knife to her throat.

JOHN

What are you doing?

Alexei shouts at Yuri in Russian.

YURI

John, I'm sorry. It's my fault.

Alexei shouts again. Nadia is frozen with terror.

JOHN

What's he doing? What the fuck are you doing? Leave her alone.

Alexei addresses John.

YURI

He says sit down. Or he'll cut her.

Alexei and Yuri shout at each other. Nadia begins crying.

YURI

Sit down please.

John sits across the table from Nadia.

JOHN

Tell him to stop and let her go, and we'll talk.

The kettle boils. Alexei takes the kettle and holds it over Nadia's head.

John springs up.

JOHN

Put the fucking kettle down.

YURI

John.

JOHN

Put the fucking kettle down. Tell, Yuri, tell him put it down or I'm going to make him.

Yuri translates – Alexei replies.

YURI

He says you scare him so much he must go to the toilet in his trousers. John, he is a soldier. A trained killer. We must do what he says.

JOHN

What? What does he want?

Alexei speaks.

JOHN

What did he say? Tell me!

YURI

He says you are very sad ridiculous man. I don't agree of course. And that you must pay someone to have sex like a prostitute. Nadia is a prostitute. I'm sorry.

JOHN

What does he want. The Russian shithead. What do you want ?

YURI

He wants money.

JOHN

Tell him to put the kettle down and I'll give him money.

Yuri translates this for Alexei. Alexei has a reply.

YURI

He wants a lot of money.

JOHN

I'll give him money. Tell him to put
the...

YURI

He wants the money from your bank.

JOHN

I'll fuckin' give it to him! We'll
go down there.

YURI

You don't understand. He wants all
the money that is in your bank.

JOHN

I've got eight hundred pounds. Oh
Jesus.

The penny drops.

JOHN

Oh Jesus.

YURI

He is sure you can do this. Of course
you can not.

JOHN

Oh Jesus. Of course I can't.

Alexei doesn't need the translation he tilts the kettle, and
a small amount of boiling water trickles onto Nadia's hair.
She screams through the gag.

John tries to reach across to her but Alexei draws the knife
and holds it to his face.

JOHN

Just leave her alone.

YURI

I'm so sorry.

JOHN

Leave her alone.

CLOSE UP On Nadia's terrified eyes, imploring John to help her.

INT. / EXT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

John drives grim-faced through the morning rain. Yuri is next to him staring ahead at the road. Alexei is in the back with Nadia who is still bound and gagged. He's holding his knife to her ribs.

INT. MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK - DAY

The car parks on the top floor. John turns off the engine. He looks at Nadia in his rear view mirror but she seems in shock.

INT. HIGH STREET - DAY

John strides towards us down St. Albans High Street, carrying the two guitar cases, his raincoat flapping. His eyes look glazed, the busy street sounds around him muffled.

INT. NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK - DAY

The doors slide apart and John enters his branch. The place is full of customers. He checks himself through the security door and into the back.

INT. OPEN-PLAN OFFICE - DAY

John walks through the open plan office. His Branch Manager is there with another bank official, and Clare.

BRANCH MANAGER

Ah John. This is Robert Moseley,
Head of South East New Business.
Robert, this is John Buckingham.

MOSELEY

Hello John.

JOHN

Hello.

BRANCH MANAGER

I thought you could give us the tour
this morning. Sort of be our Indian
Guide.

JOHN

Right.

MOSELEY

(i.e. the guitars)

Do you play?

JOHN

Yes. I do.

CLARE

That's John. He's always surprising
you with hidden talents.

MOSELEY

I used to be in a band. Keyboards.
Sort of like very loud, uh – very
loud Marillion.

They laugh. Pause.

CLARE

(to John)

Well, Maestro, give us a tune.

They laugh. Pause.

JOHN

I'll give you a tune later.

The Branch Manager takes John to one side and stage-whispers.

BRANCH MANAGER

Take the ball and run with it John.

INT. BANK CORRIDOR - DAY

John leads the team down the corridor past the training room
where his colleagues are busy with Trust and Letting Go.

JOHN

This is uh... This is the uh...

A colleague passes carrying a file.

PASSING COLLEAGUE

Morning John. Give us a tune.

JOHN

I'll give you a tune later.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

They enter the training room.

JOHN

This is where we're doing Trust and uh... Trust and Letting Go.

MOSELEY

We're not doing this till the fourth quarter – Has it, uh – any results, has it been been beneficial?

JOHN

Yes.

CLARE

It's weird at first. Sort of exciting and frightening at the same time. Wouldn't you say John?

JOHN

Yes.

BRANCH MANAGER

We're starting to see results. This is Karen, who's uh... taking uh... it.

They say hello to each other and MOSELEY asks her a couple of questions.

JOHN

Excuse me.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

John nips out and fetches his guitar cases. He rounds the corner, down a couple of steps. He checks himself into the Safe Area. A Colleague passes him.

COLLEAGUE

Morning John. Hey, Moseley's here.

JOHN

I'll give you a tune later.

INT. SAFE ROOM DOOR - DAY

John punches in the security code. He opens the safe door and goes inside, closing it behind him. We see his stricken face peering through the toughened glass.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Robert Moseley falls backwards into the arms of an employee.

MOSELEY

It's weird isn't it.

A little bored perhaps, Moseley gazes out through the open door. He sees...

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

John bowling out of the safe-room backwards heaving two guitar cases. One bursts open spilling bundles of fifties onto the floor.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Moseley, the Branch Manager, Clare, and five Trust and Letting Go catchers all watch...

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

John scoops up the money, refasten the case and stand to see them all watching him, as the five Trust and Letting Go

fallers crash to the ground in unison.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

John hauls ass towards us straight down the middle of the road, a guitar case in either hand, footsteps clapping loudly on the wet cobbles. Alarms sound, dogs bark.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

He skis around a corner, and sprints up this other street. We are close by his head, as he sprints one hundred metres.

EXT. CAR PARK ROOF - DAY

Running flat out across the car park. Yuri throws open the car door and John hurls the guitar cases inside. He dives in, turns the key in the ignition. The Rover coughs and wheezes. He tries again. It spits and misfires. The third time it catches and lives. John grinds the gears and lurches off.

INT. MULTI STOREY CAR PARK - DAY

The Rover hurtles down the ramps.

EXT. STREET - DAY

It careens down a side-street.

INT. / EXT. MOVING ROVER - DAY

Alexei opens one of the cases and looks inside. He takes a deep breath and swears in Russian.

He shows what is in the case to Nadia. Her eyes widen.

Alexei gently lowers the gag and kisses her on the mouth. She returns the kiss hungrily.

John spots them in the mirror and nearly crashes the car.

He looks desperately across at Yuri. Yuri is now pointing the big knife at John's ribs. The Russian shrugs almost apologetically.

In the back seat Nadia has freed herself and is beginning to pull at Alexei's clothes. They begin making out passionately.

John's eyes slowly lose focus. He turns grey, then white. He drives and we watch the life seep out of him.

EXT. DUAL CARRIAGEWAY - NIGHT

Cars tear through the night along the carriage way, past a Happy Eater. We pan round, across the motorway to a single storey run-down Motel.

INT. MOTEL CHALET 17 - NIGHT

A crusty motel chalet. Yuri and Alexei are sitting on a double bed counting the money. The T.V. is on in the corner with the sound turned down and there are empty miniatures from the mini-bar scattered around.

Nadia appears from the kitchenette area. They all seem more relaxed, more themselves, as if what we've seen before was an act. For the first time in the film their conversation appears as English subtitles.

NADIA

So?

Alexei says "SSShhh" He is counting in his head. He stops.

ALEXEI

(to Yuri)

You first.

YURI

Fifty thousand. Almost exactly.

NADIA

Sixty four thousand, eight hundred.

ALEXEI

There's over eighty thousand here.

They look at each other, absorbing the moment.

YURI
Sweet Jesus...

He lies back on the bed and chuckles.

ALEXEI
Put it in the cases. Split it up.
And don't forget you owe me ,150.

YURI
What for?

ALEXEI
You know what for.

YURI
No I don't.

ALEXEI
I got you those trousers from Paul
Smith.

YURI
I've been buying you stuff all week.
I've been buying him stuff all week.

ALEXEI
Such as?

Nadia is smiling at them as they squabble.

YURI
When we went to the Hard Rock Cafe.
Who paid? When we went to see 'Cats'.
Who paid?

ALEXEI
Those aren't presents. That's normal
friendship stuff

YURI
I paid for those guitar cases.

NADIA
What was 'Cats' like?

YURI
It was alright.

ALEXEI
Yeah it was okay.

YURI
Yeah. It was quite good actually.
Some bits I really liked.

ALEXEI
The sets were good.

YURI
The sets were excellent. Everything
was big, you know, all the rubbish,
coke cans, sweet wrappers, dustbins,
so when you were watching it you
felt cat size. It was really clever.

Yuri goes into the bathroom, leaving Nadia and Alexei alone
on the bed.

Alexei runs his hand across Nadia's cheek.

ALEXEI
(softly)
So. How many times did you have to
fuck him?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Yuri in the bathroom, he undoes his flies pees. At the other
end of the bathroom, tied to the bidet, gagged, is John.

YURI
How you doing?

John refuses to meet his eye. Yuri flushes and wipes his
hands.

YURI
I'll show you something. It should
make all this easier I think.

From his back pocket, Yuri takes out an old envelope. He opens it and removes a dozen or so Polaroids.

John looks down at the first Polaroid. Nadia, Alexei and a man John doesn't recognise at a birthday party. There is a cake with candles and everyone is smiling. The next picture is the same. And the next.

Sometimes Germany, sometimes France, but otherwise the pictures are the same, each 'fiancee' beaming with his arm round Nadia, Alexei looking on.

John studies the faces of his fellow dupes and at last comes to his own picture. Despite himself tears come to his eyes.

YURI

Not all these bastards were like you, believe me. You should not too feel bad.

Yuri takes John's left hand and pulls off Nadia's ring. He puts it in his pocket.

INT. MOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alexei smokes on the bed. Nadia is lying the other way. She holds her hand out for his cigarette and he passes it. They have the relaxed air of longtime lovers.

Subtitles again.

NADIA

It's enough isn't it?

ALEXEI

What do you mean?

NADIA

You know what I mean babe, It's enough. We can stop.

ALEXEI

Do you want to stop?

NADIA

Yes.

ALEXEI

We'll stop then.

They kiss. He takes her hand, and notices the tie marks on her wrists.

ALEXEI

What's this?

NADIA

It's nothing. I burnt myself.

ALEXEI

That's not a burn.

NADIA

It is. I did it cooking.

They sit there looking at each other.

ALEXEI

On both wrists?

Nadia looks back at him. The seconds pass.

NADIA

What? I did it cooking.

Alexei studies her face. She pulls a face. He keeps staring.

NADIA

What?

They sit there in silence. Alexei is so big, and she is so small.

NADIA

Listen, I made you something.

Nadia leans over the bed, and searches in her bag. Alexei watches her closely. She comes back up with the jumper she has knitted.

NADIA

Put it on.

He looks at the jumper, then back at her.

NADIA

It's taken me weeks. I want to see you in it.

She starts pulling at his shirt. Eventually he pulls the jumper on. It fits perfectly.

NADIA

Do you like it?

ALEXEI

Yeah.

He is still staring at her.

NADIA

Say thank you.

ALEXEI

Thank you.

She takes his hands. He is still looking at her. He strokes his hair. He places his big hand around her throat and holds it there, holding her at arms length. She doesn't react, but just looks levelly back at him. They sit like this for about ten seconds, looking at each other.

NADIA

We're going to have a baby.

Alexei seems not to relax. He keeps his hand there.

ALEXEI

What?

NADIA

You heard what I said. I'm pregnant. I've been throwing up for weeks.

Alexei removes his hand. Now he seems shocked. He lights a cigarette.

NADIA
We're having a baby.

Pause.

ALEXEI
A baby? What are we supposed to do
with a baby?

NADIA
Name it.

She comes to him and holds him. He is still absorbing the news.

We see Alexei's face over her shoulder, behind her back, unreadable. Behind his back she rubs her wrists.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Some hours later, it's dark outside. John still tied to the bidet. The door opens a crack and somebody slips inside. We hear the toilet seat go down. As his eyes adjust he can dimly see Nadia sitting on the toilet. She doesn't look at him. As she finishes she finally turns and holds his eye. She stands and slips out the door, leaving him alone.

EXT. DUAL CARRIAGEWAY - NIGHT

Cars crawl by on the road outside, their tail-lights stretching over the hill.

The shot processes and fades into dawn and light.

The early morning commuters now use the carriageway.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Bright sunlight pours through a high window. John is still on the toilet. He begins to try to struggle free.

After a great deal of fierce deadpan shimmying and pulling,

he succeeds in loosening his bindings. Freeing an arm, he yanks the duct tape from his mouth and sits there panting.

The first thing he does is take a pee, then he drinks handfuls of water. He catches his reflection but can't look at himself.

INT. MAIN ROOM - DAY

John collapses in an armchair, rubbing his eyes. He looks shattered.

The Russians have gone.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

John in the shower, just standing there, letting the water hit him.

INT. MOTEL MAIN SUITE - DAY

John dries himself in silence. He pulls on his trousers, sits down to do his socks. One sock on, he walks to the smaller bedroom. He opens the door and peers inside.

INT. SMALLER MOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

Tied to the radiator, gagged with duct tape, is Nadia.

John looks down at her. She looks away as her eyes fill with tears.

He sits on the bed facing her. They stay like that for a long moment before he reaches over and starts untying her knots. He peels the tape off her mouth. Suddenly he slaps her across the face.

Her head hits the radiator. Nadia gasps hard from the shock of the blow. Without warning she slaps his face, equally hard.

This starts a long silent fight; kicking, hitting, biting, a real struggle.

Its intensity is almost sexual, but has the edge of real violence. They end up on opposite sides of the room, both

panting, hurt and beaten.

NADIA

(in English)

Great. You've split my fuckin, lip.

John lies there on the floor, panting, and he hears the English words.

Exhausted, John stands, wipes his mouth, and rushes her anew. Nadia dodges out the way and cuffs him painfully on the ear. The whole fight starts again and ends only when neither has the strength to go on. Nadia staggers into the bathroom where she shuts the door and begins to sob uncontrollably. John lies on the bed listening to her cry.

EXT. DUAL CARRIAGEWAY - DAY

The mid morning traffic flows by on the dual carriageway.

INT. HAPPY EATER - DAY

Nadia and John sit in silence in the half empty diner. Nadia has a cut lip and a graze on her chin. John has a Thousand Yard Stare and a lesion over his left cheekbone.

The Waitress comes over.

WAITRESS

Good morning. What can I get you?

NADIA

I'll have an espresso, with a small pastry, a croissant or something.

WAITRESS

We only do a croissant with the Continental breakfast.

NADIA

Just get me a coffee.

WAITRESS

One coffee. And for you Sir ?

John doesn't answer.

NADIA

He'll have a coffee.

The waitress leaves them. Nadia lights a cigarette and they sit in tense silence, the pain of betrayal, and recent violence, thick in the air.

JOHN

You can't smoke in here.

Nadia ignores him. John bellows

JOHN

YOU CAN'T SMOKE IN HERE!

The diner falls silent, people stare. She takes a last drag and crushes the butt on the floor. A waitress comes over and puts down two coffees.

NADIA

I don't expect you to understand.

It seems as if John has no intention of replying. He sips his coffee, and puts it down. He begins speaking very calmly.

JOHN

Oh, I don't know. In my job as Deputy Assistant of New Business at the bank would have to listen to the problems of a great many individuals. This took a lot of understanding and sympathy, to try to work out solutions to their problems. But, you see, I'm not in that line of work anymore. Nowadays I'm a bank robber.

NADIA

You don't understand anything.

JOHN

I think that about covers it. I think I have grasped the part about you being dumped though. That's got to

hurt, I imagine. That's got to smart a bit. I mean strictly in my observer's capacity it seemed you two were getting on Pretty Fucking Famously.

He sips his coffee.

JOHN

Unless. Unless this is part of the routine. You get tied up, stick around, distract me, they both bust in and Steal My Cup Of Coffee.

NADIA

It's makes it easier. Okay.

JOHN

I don't want to know.

NADIA

It makes it faster. If I don't speak to the men, they fall faster. It's pretty obvious why.

JOHN

That's a relief. It's nice to know I'm a regular guy.

Pause.

NADIA

So what are you going to do?

JOHN

I'm going to drink my coffee. Then, we're going to the police station. Where there will be lawyers, loss of job, house, humiliation, gutter press, and probably prison.

NADIA

They don't blame you. When a bank employee does this they understand. You get your life back. Anyway I bet

you hated that bank.

JOHN

Even so I always felt the decision to burst in and rob it very much remained with me.

NADIA

Why else would you send off for me? If you just wanted sex just go to a prostitute.

JOHN

Well as it turns out I did.

She slaps his face. He slaps hers back. The waitress comes over.

WAITRESS

More coffee?

JOHN

Yes please.

NADIA

No.

She pours for John.

JOHN

Splendid. Thank you.

WAITRESS

Pleasure.

She smiles and leaves them. John watches her walk away.

NADIA

John, I need your help.

This really tickles John. He has to put his coffee down.

JOHN

You must think... I'm the biggest pillock... In the world.

NADIA
No I don't.

JOHN
In the world.

NADIA
I know you just want to punish me –

JOHN
I do. I want to very badly.

NADIA
So you're just going to be vindictive

JOHN
In every sense. If at all possible.

NADIA
You can't hurt me more than I'm hurt
already.

JOHN
Well, Nadia, It it's all the same to
you, I'd like to give it a bash.

Pause.

NADIA
My name isn't Nadia.

John stares back at her.

EXT. HAPPY EATER CAR PARK - DAY

John drags her by the arm across the car-park towards the
Rover.

EXT. OUTSIDE POLICE STATION

John drags her out of the Rover. She wrestles her arm free
and walks up the steps on her own, with some dignity. John
follows her.

INT. POLICE STATION DUTY DESK - DAY

They sit side by side in the waiting room, not talking. Nadia looks resigned to her fate. John is tight-jawed, unyielding.

They wait as the the Duty Sergeant deals with a woman who's lost her hat.

NADIA
(quietly, to John)
Where's the restroom?

JOHN
What?

NADIA
I'm going to be sick. Where's the...

JOHN
What? No you're not..

NADIA
I'm going... I am... I'm going to be sick.

JOHN
(overlapping)
No you're not. How... Nice one. How dumb do you think I am ?

Nadia stands and addresses the Duty Sergeant.

NADIA
Where's the restroom?

SERGEANT
The what, love?

NADIA
The toilet. Where's...

SERGEANT
Down there on the left.

She heads off. John springs up. He seizes her arm as casually

as possible.

INT. POLICE STATION CORRIDOR - DAY

John frog marches Nadia down the corridor to the Ladies. She wrestles her arm free again and disappears inside.

John lurks outside. He seems certain she's got one leg out the window RIGHT NOW.

He can't bear it any longer. He looks both ways and nips inside.

INT. LADIES - DAY

Standing in the Ladies, John hears Nadia in a cubicle, throwing up. He hears the toilet flush.

Nadia comes out. He looks at her.

JOHN
You're pregnant.

Nadia looks at the floor.

INT. POLICE CORRIDOR - DAY

John walks out of the toilet and stands against the wall of the corridor. He looks both ways. After a few seconds Nadia appears in the corridor. They stand there. John isn't looking at her.

A policeman appears from round the corner, and walks towards them. He stops, and addresses John.

POLICEMAN
Can I help you?

John looks at the Policeman, then at Nadia. The seconds pass.

POLICEMAN
Sir? Can I help you?

John is still looking at Nadia – He closes his eyes.

JOHN

No.

EXT. OUTSIDE POLICE STATION - DAY

John walks back to the Rover, Nadia behind. They reach the car. Nadia looks at John over the roof of the car.

NADIA

What are you doing?

John looks sick. He speaks very quietly.

JOHN

Get in the car.

He gets inside. Nadia is left standing there. She gets in too.

INT. / EXT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

John driving with Nadia in the passenger seat. She is looking across at him.

He is taking no notice.

NADIA

Plenty of women have babies in prison.

John ignores her.

NADIA

(tersely)

You don't have to do this. I can look after myself.

JOHN

(flatly)

Have you got your passport?

NADIA

What?

JOHN

Shut up. Have you got your passport?

NADIA

Yes.

They drive along.

JOHN

We've got to get off this motor-way.

EXT. MOTORWAY JUNCTION - DAY

From above we watch the car turn off the motorway, around a roundabout and into a country B road.

INT. CAR - DAY

John is turning the pages in his Road Atlas. He is trying to drive and map read at the same time. Nadia is looking out of the window. Soon a big tear rolls down her cheek. She starts to cry.

John glances up from his map but ignores it. But she keeps crying. He tosses the map in the back, pulls the car to the side of the road and switches off the engine. As Nadia cries, John gazes impassively out of the window. This goes on for almost a minute, until Nadia pulls herself together, when without looking across John restarts the engine and pulls away.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

John's car pulling off a B road, into a slip road into a garage.

EXT. PETROL STATION - DAY

Stern-faced, John fills the car up with petrol. He eyes the Closed-Circuit.

JOHN

Give me some money.

NADIA

I don't have any money.

John stops squeezing petrol.

JOHN
What?

NADIA
I said I don't have any.

John stares at Nadia. He eyes the CCTV.

JOHN
Give me your sunglasses.

Nadia passes them and John puts them on, trying to look casual. He gives the pump a couple more squirts, hangs it up, nonchalantly sidles up to his door.

In one move he opens it, dives in, turns the key in the ignition. The Rover coughs. He tries it again. It howls, barks and sneezes. The attendant comes out onto the forecourt and starts approaching the yellow Rover.

Miraculously it roars throatily to life, he floors it and the Rover tears away from the station and off down the road

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

We see John at the wheel of his Rover, sunglasses on, wind in his hair, fleeing from the scene of the crime. Nadia watches him in the late sunshine, but John is too busy making a getaway to notice.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

John's car shimmering as it comes over the brow of a remote country lane, surrounded by fields and rolling hills.

INT. / EXT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Nadia puts a cigarette in her mouth and pops the dashboard lighter. John takes the cigarette and throws it out the window, followed by the lighter. Nadia just gazes out of the window.

JOHN

So, uh, Alexei, which I know isn't his name...

NADIA

I don't want to talk about him.

JOHN

Fine.

NADIA

It's none of your business.

JOHN

Fine. Absolutely. Must be disappointing though. Must come as a hell of a shock.

Nadia ignores him.

JOHN

So uh...

NADIA

Look, if you want to know is he better in bed than you then yes he is.

JOHN

Oh Jesus.

NADIA

If what you want to know is does he have a bigger cock than you, then yes he does.

JOHN

(overlapping – bigger)

Of course. Of course. Of course he does. Of course. Thank you. Thanks.

NADIA

But, you know, so what?

They drive.

JOHN

It's his baby I take it.

She doesn't answer.

JOHN

Not the kids type then is he? Not that broody. You must be pretty miffed.

NADIA

He will come back.

JOHN

Excuse me?

NADIA

He left me my passport and ticket. It's pretty clear he wants to see me again.

JOHN

Yeah. I tend to tie up and abandon women I really want to see again too.

NADIA

No. But you tend to tie them up.

John freezes. He looks across. Nadia gives nothing back.

JOHN

Fuck off.

Nadia is just looking at him.

JOHN

Fuck off. You started it.

She is just looking at him.

JOHN

I don't want to talk about it.

NADIA

Why not?

JOHN
Shut up. I'm not listening.

NADIA
You don't want to talk about it.

JOHN
No.

NADIA
Okay we won't talk about it.

Nadia looks out the window.

NADIA
We'll pretend it never happened.

JOHN
So. What's it like having to fuck
men you hate?

NADIA
I don't hate you.

JOHN
Okay. Let's... Okay. Okay. You have
had sex with people you don't like
haven't you? For money. To make money.

NADIA
And? What are you saying?

JOHN
And. It's wrong.

NADIA
And who says what is wrong.

JOHN
And that would be Morals. That would
be one's own moral sense of decency.

NADIA
What's a moral orgasm John? Tell me

how it feels exactly.

JOHN

So. What then? You just detach sex from everything..

NADIA

Whereas "Wet 'n' Wild" is an emotional journey. "Tied and Tethered". It's pretty moving huh? Like Anna Karenina.

JOHN

Listen. I didn't go rooting around in your private stuff.

John remembers he did. Nadia looks across knowingly.

NADIA

Funny. Usually it's the first thing they do.

Pause.

JOHN

So what? Do you just switch off in your head or do you imagine you're with him, or what?

NADIA

Sometimes.

JOHN

Sometimes which?

NADIA

Sometimes neither.

JOHN

Some... What does that mean?

NADIA

There's nothing wrong in liking sex, John.

JOHN

I don't like sex. I don't think I'll be having sex ever again.

NADIA

Why?

JOHN

Well, it's just that the thought trying to charm up an erection in front of a woman, or alone for that matter, makes me want to die.

NADIA

So now you hate all women?

JOHN

I think it's my safest bet, don't you?

NADIA

Oh. I think you will recover okay. I think you got what you paid for.

John looks across.

JOHN

What?

NADIA

You...

JOHN

I got what I paid for.

NADIA

You didn't mind too much.

Pause.

JOHN

(quietly)

It wasn't what I wanted.

NADIA

So what did you want? I think we

understand each other, no?

JOHN

(quietly)

You don't understand me.

NADIA

You don't understand you either.

John turns to her.

NADIA

It's no big thing. You are the same as most men. You are a man so you are a savage. Not a monster, but half animal. You put on a tie and you go to the bank, but really you are a beast. But also you are from woman so you have a soul. Half beast, half soul. But you hide your beast in the bottom of the wardrobe. It's not so healthy. It's fucked you up, no?

John stops the car.

JOHN

Get out.

She sits there.

NADIA

Excuse me?

JOHN

Get out

NADIA

You are throwing me out.

JOHN

Get out.

She collects her bag from the back seat, her cigarettes, gathers up her belongings, clicks open the door and gets

out, leaving the shot. John sits there staring ahead. We hear her voice offscreen.

NADIA (O.S.)

You prefer your women mute.

John turns the key in the ignition. The engine bellows and screams. Silence.

He tries again. The engine shrieks and wails like a soul in torment. A terrible, mournful grinding noise. Silence.

NADIA (O.S.)

Car trouble?

John tries to start it. It lets out a whimper, a crying, a few juddering moving sobs, and dies.

John sits in his dead car. He shakes his head. He rubs his face. He sits there.

EXT. ROADSIDE VERGE - DUSK

The two of them on a verge ten feet apart. John stares into the distance.

Nadia studies the map.

NADIA

It's another twenty miles. It's going dark.

She gets her holdall from inside the car and stuffs the map inside.

NADIA

What now?

Nadia scans the horizon with her binoculars. John watches her.

JOHN

Jesus. You weren't even on the plane.

Nadia lowers her binoculars and looks at John.

FLASHBACK - INT. AIRPORT - DAY

John watches the passengers stream out of the arrivals gate. A woman is greeted and spun around.

Across the airport, Nadia lowers her binoculars. We pull back to see she is standing next to Alexei.

They say goodbye in Russian. Even though we don't see subtitles, it's a telling exchange. She kisses him, and he watches her leave him and walk across the floor.

Alexei watches Nadia approach John, and see him shake her hand.

They walk away together.

FLASHBACK - EXT. JOHN'S STREET - NIGHT

Alexei, dressed in a suit, stands outside John's house, looking up. Nadia is in the window, her lipstick smeared. They gaze at each other.

EXT. DIFFERENT FOREST - NIGHT

In a clearing, John watches Nadia carry a pile of sticks to a fire she is building. She lights it with her gun cigarette lighter, and teases the flames to life.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

John and Nadia sit by the fire. She sits wrapped up to her neck in a blanket.

NADIA

You know, in Russia, there's no work for women. It's a different world.

JOHN

(interrupting on
"different")

You don't have to say anything

NADIA

(overlapping on "say")
What? I... I wasn't saying...

JOHN
(overlapping on
"saying")
Please, there's no... Oh.

NADIA
I wasn't saying anything.

JOHN
Then okay.
(pause)
So how old were you when you met
him?

Pause.

NADIA
Fifteen. You don't know him. He was
very kind and strong.

JOHN
Yeah. He's a smashing bloke.

NADIA
The rest of the world, John, it's
not all like St. Albans.

JOHN
Thank Christ for that.

NADIA
You are pretty naive if you think it
is.

JOHN
I'm pretty naive? Look at you. You
have to do all this, and what have
you got to show for it? Nothing.

NADIA
I don't have nothing.

JOHN
Well what have you got?

Pause.

NADIA
I have my baby.

They sit there in the lapping firelight.

JOHN
Do you know if it's a boy or a girl?

NADIA
No.

JOHN
Have you had any before?

NADIA
No.

JOHN
Are you scared?

NADIA
Not really. Maybe a little.

A fox cries out in the night.

NADIA
Listen. I think it's a fox.

She listens. It cries out again. She gets out her binoculars.

NADIA
It sounds close.

She looks through them and searches the brush. John watches Nadia with her binoculars. He looks suddenly very sad.

NADIA
I can't see anything. It's too dark.

She puts them back in her bag. John watches her. He sees her

wrist again. She lights a cigarette, and blows the smoke into the air.

NADIA

What happened between you and the blonde?

JOHN

What?

NADIA

The thin... the girl with small eyes.
The one in your cupboard.

JOHN

It's none of your business. She didn't have small eyes.

NADIA

Did she leave you? Come on. It's nothing to be ashamed of. Who did she leave you for? Your best friend? Her boss? A woman? Did she leave you for a woman, John?

JOHN

She's dead.

Pause.

NADIA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm sorry. That's awful. Forgive me.

Pause.

NADIA

I'm sorry.

JOHN

I don't know why I said that. She's not dead at all.

Nadia looks at John.

NADIA
What?

JOHN
I don't know why I said it. I'm sorry.

NADIA
She's alive?

Nadia starts to laugh. Long and loud. We have never seen her laugh before.

NADIA
She's alive!! She is not dead?

JOHN
Laugh it up.

She starts to cough. She gets on her hands and knees and coughs like fury.

JOHN
You should stop smoking. You're pregnant. You smoke like a fucking lab dog.

NADIA
I'm trying to quit.

JOHN
I've got news for you. It's not working.

NADIA
I smoke more these days. I smoke more when I'm unhappy.

JOHN
Nobody's that unhappy.

NADIA
Maybe I want to die. Don't you want me to die?

JOHN
I don't want anyone to die.

NADIA
Except for Small Eyes.

JOHN
Except for Small Eyes.

She laughs again.

NADIA
So why did it end?

John thinks. It looks as if he's going to tell the whole story. In the end he shrugs.

JOHN
I don't know.

NADIA
What was her name?

JOHN
What's your name?

The fox cries out again.

NADIA
Listen. It's definitely a fox. Now
I'm scared.

They listen to the fox crying in the night.

NADIA
You know you can come under the
blanket.

JOHN
It's alright.

The scene from bird's eye view. John lies back and stares at the stars. Nadia curls up on the other side of the fire, and hugs herself.

We push down closer and closer until we are on John's face.
The theme returns.

The cricket boys from John's Close stand in a line in the middle of the street, bathed in flashing blue light. We pan round and end on John's house.

It is surrounded with Police.

Police cars, Police Vans, plastic police tape "POLICE LINE. DO NOT CROSS."

John's neighbours press against the tape as officers come and go.

Inside the house is full of police, ransacking his possessions and dusting fingerprints. A policeman is standing reading The English-Russian Dictionary.

We push on upstairs and along the landing to the spare room.

An officer dumps a pile of porno magazines and videos on the bed. He then spots the belts tied to the bedstead and points them out to a detective. They exchange a knowing grin. A photographer steps up and snaps the paraphernalia in a blinding flash.

The birthday cake is there, half eaten. A Policewoman puts it in a baggy.

We pan across the bed, across the magazines and underwear in plastic bags, down below the bed, where we find the photograph of Nadia with the binoculars.

The young girl smiles hopefully out at us from the past.

Early dawn. A woodpigeon coos. John wakes up next to the dead fire. Nadia is gone.

EXT. FOREST SLOPE / STREAM - DAY

John slides down a rocky slope. He scans the forest, but there's no-one around. He hurries through high bracken then stops suddenly by a large oak.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

In a pool in a stream below, Nadia is washing herself. She has her back to us.

John watches her for a moment, before his eyes avert, and his head bows.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A shimmering sun. A giant combine harvester cuts a wide swathe through a field of high corn. As it passes we find John and Nadia coming towards us through the heat haze.

They aren't speaking and both look tired. As they pass we crane up out of the corn to catch an enormous 757 Jumbo Jet just above us, coming into land. We pan round to see, half a mile away, the massive airport beyond.

They walk towards it, two tiny figures.

CUT TO:

Aeroflot 1311. Boarding Gate 12.

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

An attendant pushes a train of trolleys past. Businessmen talk into mobile phones.

NADIA

I've got an hour. Can I buy you a coffee?

JOHN

No. I think I better just go.

NADIA

Okay. Thank you.

JOHN

Whatever.

Nadia hesitates. There's just a touch of regret in this goodbye.

NADIA
John. These are for you.

She hands him the binoculars case.

JOHN
Yeah. No thanks.

NADIA
Please. Why not?

JOHN
Because it was a lie.

She smiles.

NADIA
No it wasn't.

John shrugs. He takes them.

NADIA
Goodbye.

John nods and turns. Nadia watches him walk away.

INT. / EXT. AIRPORT EXIT - NIGHT

On the other side of the airport, John stands in front of the exit to the taxi ranks. He's got nowhere to go. Passengers swirl around him.

He looks at the binocular in his hands. He removes the binoculars and looks at them. Suddenly he stops. In the case is a folded note marked John. John holds it in his hands – Slowly, deliberately, he screws it up, and drops it in the case like a bin.

P.O.V. OF JOHN

Through the binoculars. Passengers criss-cross, but we find Nadia sitting alone, waiting for her call.

John lowers the binoculars and gazes across the airport. He

raises them for one last look.

Nadia, glimpsed through the crowd. We spy someone standing about twenty feet behind her. It is Alexei.

We watch Alexei approach her. She looks up and is completely thrown.

Yuri stands about ten feet away, in shades.

John lowers the binoculars, horrified. He looks again.

Nadia pulls her arm away. Alexei crouches down in front of her and puts a hand on her knee, coaxing her.

Alexei takes her by the arm and leads her away.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

John hurries out of the exit to catch the trio leaving a different exit fifty yards away, where they get into a taxi.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

John runs across a car park and over a low fence.

EXT. SLIP ROAD TO AIRPORT - NIGHT

He chases down a slip road, as the taxi rounds the corner behind us. He takes cover behind a van as they drive past, and away.

EXT. GRASS VERGE - NIGHT

John runs across a grass verge and another car park. He sees the taxi rounding the corner and head down the road in front of him.

John runs as fast as he can up this road, but the taxi is getting away. Eventually he gives up, and he drives away.

EXT. ROUNDABOUT - NIGHT

At the roundabout it turns round and starts coming back up the road. John hides behind a car, and watches the taxi pull

up outside a small hotel about fifty yards away. He watches the trio head into the hotel.

EXT. HOTEL PERIMETER - NIGHT

John skirts around the edge of the hotel. He peers in through one of the windows. It's the foyer. He heads around the back.

EXT. BACK OF HOTEL - NIGHT

At the back of the hotel he looks through another couple of windows. Suddenly he drops like he's been shot, and sits on the grass.

Warily he looks again.

EXT. / INT. THE VIEW THROUGH THE WINDOW

Alexei stands smoking in the middle of the room. Nadia is sitting in a chair crying.

Alexei kneels again and appeals to her. Nadia is resisting and yells back, but something Alexei says seems to melt her resolve.

He holds her face, and kisses it. She turns her face. He tries again, and this time she accepts the kiss. Slowly she kisses him back.

EXT. OUTSIDE ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

John stares through the window at the scene.

INT. INSIDE ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

In the room, Yuri pops his head round the door and says something to Alexei.

Alexei says he's coming. He kisses Nadia again and leaves.

Nadia is alone. She looks very sad and confused. She moves towards the window and stares out into the blackness.

EXT. OUTSIDE ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

John's face at the window. Almost cheek to cheek with Nadia.

INT. INSIDE ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

Inside the room, looking out. It is pitch black.

EXT. OUTSIDE ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

John watches Nadia walk over to the dresser and search the drawers. She goes over to the bed and looks under the pillow. There she finds what she is looking for. Alexei's hunting knife.

She hears Alexei coming and stands hard against the window. the huge knife behind her back.

EXT. OUTSIDE ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

John outside. He is four inches from the knife.

JOHN

Oh Jesus.

John ducks down, panting, swallowing hard. At once he springs up and skirts the building again. He finds a window to the next suite.

He tries to force it open. Suddenly Yuri's face appears in the window, cupped by his hands peering out into the blackness. John drops down holds his breath.

John scrambles back to the previous window. With real effort he presses it open. He pulls himself up and drops inside.

INT. ALEXEI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nadia still stands by the window, one hand behind her back. Alexei sits on the bed. The scene is subtitled.

ALEXEI

I love you. I don't need to tell you that.

Nadia looks at the floor.

ALEXEI

I wouldn't leave my child would I?
You know that. I was confused. That's
all.

INT. ALEXEI'S BATHROOM / HALLWAY - NIGHT

John opens the bathroom door a crack. He is at the opposite end of a corridor from the bedroom. He can hear Alexei's voice.

Breathing hard, he tiptoes out and stands in the corridor, his back pressed hard against the wall. He takes one step down the hall. The floor creaks loudly.

INT. ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

ALEXEI

It wasn't easy for me. You know what I'm like. I needed to know what I wanted. Now I know. It's simple. I'm happy.

INT. ALEXEI'S SUITE HALLWAY - NIGHT

John takes another step down the hallway. There, by the door are the two guitar cases full of money. Next to them is Nadia's bag. Crouching, John opens the bag and searches inside. He finds what he is looking for; the Silver Cigarette Lighter-Pistol.

We hear the Russian lovers' voices next door. John is absolutely terrified, breathing hard and shaking, holding the little gun.

INT. ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

ALEXEI

You still love me? Eh? Of course you do. Come here. Yuri won't be here for a while. Come on babe.

He takes his shirt off – Nadia glances up – With horror, she sees John in the doorway.

Alexei turns to see John stand by the door, holding a little silver gun.

NADIA

What are you doing here?

John and Nadia look at each other.

ALEXEI

What the fuck is he doing here?

He looks at the little gun.

ALEXEI

That's that cigarette lighter I gave you isn't it?

Alexei stands. John takes a step back. Alexei walks calmly towards John and throws a punch. It catches John right on the chin and he hits the wall and goes down very fast.

NADIA

Stop.

Alexei turns round to see Nadia holding the knife. He is dumbstruck.

ALEXEI

What? What are you doing?

NADIA

(to John)

What are you doing here?

Alexei kicks John in the ribs.

NADIA

(in Russian)

Stop it!

He looks at Nadia, the girl he came back for, angrily pointing the knife at him. He suddenly looks completely punctured. John has struggled up again and stands behind him. They are both looking at Nadia.

ALEXEI

What. You're what? You're with this creep now.

NADIA

Leave him!

ALEXEI

You have. You've actually fallen for this prick.

NADIA

No I haven't.

Alexei looks dumbstruck. He laughs emptyly

ALEXEI

Babe it's me. I won't let you get away.

Nadia stares back at him. The seconds pass. She speaks in a whisper.

NADIA

I'll kill you if you try.

In the impasse, John picks up a lamp and hurls it at Alexei's head. It is going to hit him, but reaches the length of its cord and stops six inches short. In the confusion, Alexei grabs Nadia's wrist and forces her to the ground. He grabs the knife, just as John brains him with one of the guitars. It emits a fruity final chord.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR / ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

Whistling, Yuri comes out of his suite, knocks briskly on the door of Alexei's and enters. We walk with him down the hallway into the bedroom to find Alexei, heartbroken, tied and bound to a desk chair.

Yuri murmurs something in Russian.

SUBTITLE

Fuck a duck.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXEI'S SUITE - NIGHT

Nadia stands at the window and stares at her reflection, or past it into the blackness.

NADIA

Get their passports.

John finishes tying up Yuri, and removes his passport from his jacket. Behind Nadia another plane arcs up into the night sky.

He takes Alexei's passport from his pocket, but Alexei is only watching Nadia.

ALEXEI

Don't do this.

She carefully places tape across his mouth.

Almost as if having second thoughts she bends down to kiss his cheek. The 'kiss' suddenly makes Alexei's eyes widen in pain. As she stands her lips are bloody. She's bitten him on the cheek. A single streak of blood runs from the gash.

NADIA

(to John)

Get your money.

John collects the cases and they head for the door. Nadia stops to look back at Alexei. A final look.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

The front of the terminal. Taxis pull up and idle at a rank, bringing travelers to their flights. The automatic doors slide back and forth.

INT. AIRPORT CHECKING IN DESK - NIGHT

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)

Last Call for Aeroflot flight 1311
to Moscow. Proceed immediately to

Gate 12.

John carries the guitar cases full of money. Nadia just has her small camouflaged hold all. They walk quickly together in silence and come to a stop at the departure lounge gate 12.

JOHN
Are you okay?

She nods.

JOHN
Okay. Goodbye.

NADIA
Goodbye.

They shake.

JOHN
What will you do now?

Nadia shrugs.

NADIA
Something else.

JOHN
Okay. Promise?

She looks at him.

NADIA
Promise.

They stand around. She takes the last cigarette from a pack.

JOHN
You can probably buy them on the flight.

NADIA
I'm quitting. This will be my last one. So. Goodbye.

JOHN
Goodbye.

NADIA
You didn't deserve me John Buckingham.

JOHN
Whatever.

NADIA
I'm sorry.

JOHN
Please.

Pause.

NADIA
You prefer your women...

She seems about to say something more when the tannoy interrupts.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)
Gate closing for Flight 1311 to
Moscow. Please have your tickets
ready.

She leans forward and kisses him. As they kiss, John puts a guitar case in her hand. Nadia looks down at the case.

NADIA
It's not mine.

JOHN
It's not mine either.

NADIA
It's what you came back for.

John frowns and looks a little embarrassed.

She speaks to him in Russian and we see the subtitles.

NADIA
(in Russian)
You're a big surprise, you know.

Pause.

JOHN
Yeah, you see when I said I didn't
speak Russian I wasn't actually just
making it up.

She leans forwards and whispers in his ear. John looks at her. He looks to the four corners of the airport. And back at her.

JOHN
Why?

NADIA
I'm not asking you to marry me.

JOHN
No. What? No. I know.

NADIA
It's more like a date.

JOHN
It's a long way to go for a date.

NADIA
Tell me about it.

Pause. She speaks softly in Russian. We see the subtitle:

NADIA
All that matters is to try...

John frowns.

NADIA
(in Russian)
We can only try. Say it.

John repeats the phrase in Russian.

JOHN
What does it mean?

NADIA
Maybe you will find out.

Pause. Nadia kneels and opens the guitar case. She stealthily removes about five hundred.

NADIA
Hurry. I'll wait for you here.

JOHN
Right.

INT. TICKET SALES - NIGHT

John runs across the airport to the ticket desk. He joins a queue of about three people. He works his way to the front.

JOHN
Is the flight full?

OFFICIAL
I'm sorry Sir. I believe the flight is closed.

JOHN
Please check. Is it full? Please could you check.

BACK TO:

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Nadia stands alone holding her unlit cigarette, thinking. She looks at the two guitar cases at her feet. She looks across at John, anxiously drumming on the ticket sales counter. What is she thinking?

INT. TICKET SALES - NIGHT

CLOSE SHOT on the photo of Yuri in his passport.

The Aeroflot desk official holds the passport and studies at John. With his four day beard there is a resemblance, but it's far from perfect.

OFFICIAL

You have excellent English.

JOHN

Thanks.

OFFICIAL

How do you want to pay?

JOHN

Cash.

John collects his ticket, turns and heads back to where he left Nadia with the guitar cases. He suddenly stops.

She's gone.

He looks all around. People swirl about. She's nowhere to be seen.

John hangs his head. He turns, and walks away.

INT. AIRPORT CAFE - NIGHT

John sits at a cafe table, and watches the people come and go. He looks strangely calm, resigned.

CLOSE UP: John's fingers uncrumple the note from the binoculars case. He smooths it on the table, then opens it.

Inside is written a short phrase in Russian:

Kam Kapsi Schta.

John looks at the note. He folds it closed and surveys the airport for an exit.

Through the crowd, fifty feet away, getting a light off two policeman; it's her.

Nadia blows out smoke, and speaks to the policeman. John

watches her. He smiles.

Suddenly she turns and points straight at John. The Policeman look straight at him. As they head towards him, Nadia picks up the cases and walks away.

John sits frozen as the Police approach.

POLICE 1
Excuse me Sir...

He takes John by the arm. John stands.

POLICE 2
Okay. Come with us now.

POLICE 1
He doesn't speak English. He's epileptic or something.

POLICE 2
Can he walk? Can you walk?

The Policeman help John to the front of the gate, where he is shown to the front of the queue. The Policeman explains to the airline staff.

We see that Nadia is one behind in the queue. The Police turn and walk away.

INT. AIRPORT BOARDING GATE - FLIGHT 1311 TO MOSCOW - DAY

John pushes his passport and ticket under the perspex window. He glances at Nadia, then looks at the young airport official, the blood beating in his ears.

For a few interminable seconds the official's eyes burn into John. John turns to Nadia and holds her gaze.

JOHN
Kam. Kapsi. Schta.

The subtitle appears: You've saved me.

Nadia looks down at the floor. She smiles.

CLOSE SHOT: The passport is snapped shut and pushed back through.

INT. AIRPORT BOARDING CORRIDOR - DAY

John walks without looking back. He turns to see Nadia is behind him. As they round the corner, she hands him a case.

They walk side by side without speaking.

Both look forward, straight-faced, as if both are thinking about what it is that they are actually doing. John looks back once, but he keeps walking. He looks across at Nadia, but she doesn't look back.

They stop opposite the automatic boarding doors. Nadia turns to John.

NADIA

My name's Sophia.

JOHN

Sophia. Hello Sophia. Mine's still John.

SOPHIA

Hello John.

The doors slide open. John and Sophia walk through, and disappear.

SFX. The roar of Jet engines.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - NIGHT

With a deafening roar, an Aeroflot Boeing 757 lifts slowly from the runway and climbs up into the night sky, where it becomes a distant star.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A distant aeroplane in a cobalt blue sky, through binoculars.

The young girl from the very first scene lowers the binoculars

and lets them hang around her neck. She squints up at the sun.

A voice calls her.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Nadia!

The girl looks round.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Nadia!

She runs past us and we follow to see a couple sitting on the grass having a picnic.

The girl hurries towards them and we realise the couple are John and Sophia, the girl her child. She sits down with them.

THE END