

ONE OF US

by
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A two part film for television

PART I

Draft I

Tim Corrie,
PFD.

OPENING SEQUENCE -

1987

EXT. BORDER COUNTRY. DAY

We are moving fast over beautiful, rolling hills. The border country between England and Wales. The sky is a perfect blue; the grass, the trees verdant green, the hills dark smudgy shapes. Gradually, we become aware of talking... Clapping... Speeches. The sound resolves into...

INT. LOBBY. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE. DAY

... moving fast through throngs of people, we glimpse Mrs. Thatcher and her entourage on a TV monitor. A Party in Government - Civil Servants scurry, the Press are busy and enthusiastic. We arrive at a window. Behind the window, the Conference Hall. In front of the window a TV news team -

TV FLOOR MANAGER

(on phone)

... yes, thank you London...

(to her gathered crew)

We're going live in five...four...

We discover a woman - Clara - standing with her back to the window, facing the news camera. She's in her mid thirties and although she is every inch the shire lady, she's nervous.

TV FLOOR MANAGER

And two... And one...

The floor manager cues the News Presenter.

NEWS PRESENTER

Hello and welcome to the
Conservative Party Conference...

But as the images remain the same, the News Presenters sound is removed and we hear...

MAN'S VOICE

(slow, emotional, heavy
with whiskey)

Clara - I'm not good with words.
You know that. You've got
understand that I can't look myself
in the eye anymore. I can't face
watching the children grow and know
what I am...

The news presenter turns -

NEWS PRESENTER

Clara Alexander - what was your reaction to today's debate?

CLARA

Yes. Hello. No. I really do believe the future is bright and that British farming is probably the best in Europe - the best in the world...

INT. FARMHOUSE. NIGHT

~~Alec - the man we heard~~ earlier - is sitting watching TV. Clara, his wife, is on the News.

CLARA

(continuing)

... The thing is it's rooted in a great tradition, d'you understand? A marvellous tradition that goes back in some families, in my family, ten generations. That's not to be sneezed at, you know...

Alec has drunk at least three quarters of a bottle of whiskey. Finally he stands and walks out of the room. As he goes we see that he has a white envelope in his hand.

For a moment, the camera finds a table covered in framed photographs. Alec and Clara, two children, happy smiling faces. A prized cow being hugged by Alec and his son. Clara proudly nesting a young baby to her bosom. These images of a happy rural life become the background to:

TITLES

INT. CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE. DAY

Clara is listening to Mrs. Thatcher's key note address when a steward taps her on the shoulder.

INT. LOBBY. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE. DAY

Clara is on a service telephone. Suddenly her legs give way.

EXT. MORTUARY. DAY

Clara and her two children Stephen (12) and Sarah (10) get out of a car. They look shot blasted.

INT. CHAPEL OF REST. MORTUARY. DAY

Alec's body in a coffin. Clara holds the children's hands so firmly we can see the whites of her knuckles.

INT. CORRIDOR MORTUARY. DAY

Clara and the children are leaving.

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

Mrs. Alexander, excuse me, may I have a moment -

He indicates away from the children. Moments later, the children watch their mother blankly, out of ear shot.

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

The Coroner has asked me to - your husband didn't leave a note?

CLARA

No - no, none.

MORTUARY ATTENDANT

The Police thought not. Sorry to ask but it can make the whole procedure so much easier.

CLARA

Yes.

EXT. MORTUARY. DAY

Clara drives the children away. The camera pulls up. The rolling hills, the blue sky.

EXT. FARM. DAY

Some days later. The farm nestles in a beautiful green valley. It is built around a farm house that goes back to the Normans. The only thing that blots the picture is a large modern milking parlour. Numerous cars in the yard.

INT. FARM. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Where Alec was watching TV. Now full of mourners. A wake.

SARAH

Would you like a tortilla chip, Gran?

Sarah (Clara's 10 year old daughter) holds a tray to Mary, Alec's mother. Mary smiles through her grief and slugs sherry.

SARAH

It's just that mum said -

On the other side of the room, Stephen (Clara's 12 year old son) is holding up a green bowl to Dougie Hunter a good looking fifty year old farmer, local Justice of the Peace and establishment all rounder. Clara stands besides him...

STEPHEN

Guac-ca...

CLARA

(smiling)

Guacamole. My sister's really rallied but heaven knows London tastes -

DOUGIE

(scooping Guacamole)

Looks delicious...

Across the room, Tom (a twenty year old farm hand) stands uncomfortably in his suit He is watching Dougie talking to Clara. Dougie catches Tom's stare for a moment, smiles and turns back to Clara. Hel', Tom's wife, slides beside him.

HEL'

There's some money here today.

TOM

(distracted)

What? Yes.

Back with Dougie and Clara.

DOUGIE

You do know Clara - dear - if there is anything I can do, anything at all - you only have to whisper and I will hear...

Clara's brother-in-law, Patrick, appears holding two bottles of wine. He is late thirties, sharp, charming lawyer.

PATRICK

You're running dry, Mr Hunter...

Dougie holds up his glass.

CLARA

Will you exc -

And she goes. Her emotions are swinging dangerously.

DOUGIE
How is she?

PATRICK
Remarkable.

DOUGIE
Terrible thing.

Hold on Stephen, uncertain how to wear his grief.

INT. FARM. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

A couple of villagers are making tea, but the centre of activity is Charlotte, Clara's younger sister. Clara comes in fast, she's burying her emotions with bravura.

CLARA
I don't think we've actually seen
Chicken Satay in the village do you
Mrs. Thomas?

Mrs. Thomas smiles. Clara turns to Charlotte.

CLARA
I'm so glad you both came.

CHARLOTTE
We wouldn't have missed it for the
world - oh God, you know what I
mean.

CLARA
(now subdued)
Yes. Thank you. Yes.

Patrick comes in.

PATRICK
Everyone OK?

CLARA
I'm fine. Really, mustn't let Mrs.
Alexander too loose with the
bottle, Patrick.

PATRICK
Right you are.

He goes back. Clara sits. Her face contorted with grief, then she realises that Sarah is at the door and rallies.

CLARA
Alright darling, mummy's alright.

CHARLOTTE

(real love)

Look you know you can count on us.
You know that. You tell her Sarah -
that mummy can always count on
Charlie and Patrick...

INT. FARM. LIVING ROOM. LATER

The wake has developed a momentum of sorts. Patrick is pouring more wine. Tom has his three year old daughter on his shoulders. Laughter... suddenly...

MARY

This farm never lost someone like
this. Like my Alec.

The conversation freezes. Mary stands. She's drunk.

PATRICK

Mrs. Alexander -

MARY

He was born upstairs and he...
He... Did this to himself in that
milking shed.

(she looks at Patrick,
Charlotte is with him)

People like you will never
understand farms, farming. You're
not from here. You people just see -
see this - as a gold mine. We used
to make milk for the village and
butter and a bit more.

She stares at Clara who is ashen, but holding it together.

MARY

Now? Now it's all about yield, and
protein quotas and profit
margins...

FARMER'S WIFE

Come on Mary now's not the time or
the place.

MARY

No. No. It's too late now. Too
late.

(she starts to sob)

I just don't understand why.

Tears pour down her cheeks. Clara steps forward, holds her.

CLARA

Come on. Mary. Come on. For Alec.

Then gently, Dougie Hunter takes Mary from Clara. He smiles reassuringly at Clara.

DOUGIE
It's OK. Let me.

And he gently leads Mary from the room.

EXT. FARM. NIGHT

Almost all the cars have gone. Patrick and Charlotte and their three children are getting into their smart BMW. Clara has Stephen and Sarah besides her. Tom approaches, his three year old daughter Allie is asleep on his arm.

CLARA
Tom?

He's uneasy. Clara, Patrick, Charlotte are quite a group.

TOM
Hel' says that I should tell you
Mrs. Alexander that...

Hel' is standing in the gloom holding a rusty buggy.

TOM
... that you're not to worry. I
know how the farm works. Every last
bit of it. I been working with Mr
Alec now for nearly six years. I
know the cows, also. You're not to
worry. Sorry to disturb.

CLARA
Oh Tom, you are kind. Quite
unnecessary. I know you. Really.

TOM
Night then.

He winks at Stephen, playfully.

CLARA
Yes. And thank you Hel' - for all
that washing up.

HEL'
Least.

And they go.

CHARLOTTE
You'll be OK?

Clara nods.

CLARA
Of course.

She holds her children a little tighter, smiles.

CLARA
Won't we!

Patrick and Charlotte are walking towards the car when Charlotte turns, an emotion bursts onto the surface.

CHARLOTTE
Clar' you can move, darling, you
can come back to London. This
place. You're not from around here.

CLARA
(calmly)
It's our home Chossie. We love it.
We've got a farm to run. It's OK.

Patrick is now besides Charlotte, leads her back to the car.

INT. FARM. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Stephen sits on his bed. He is playing his guitar. He has an earnest determination as he picks through a tune. Clara is watching him from the door, he looks up. She smiles.

INT. FARM. SARAH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Sarah is in bed. Clara sits. Stephen's guitar in the background. Sarah looks at her mother.

CLARA
(reading her question)
I don't know why he did it.

The guitar stops.

CLARA
I honestly don't.

She tucks Sarah up. Stephen appears in the doorway.

CLARA
We're going to have to be the
bravest team you know chump chops.

SARAH
Daddy called me that.

CLARA
We all need our sleep.

She kisses Sarah. A tear forms in Clara's eye. Stephen stands in the doorway. She reaches for the light. Switches it off.

EXT. BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET RAIL STATION. NIGHT

It's late. The place is chilly and abandoned. A forty five year old Asian man gets off a train. He is Professor Teddy Aspinall. He is scruffy but distinguished. He glances nervously around. He is carrying a heavy hold-all and a plastic bag stuffed with something. Moments later, Teddy goes through the unmanned platform gate. Somewhere in the distance two drunks are singing. It is menacing, echoing. Teddy goes down some steps below a sign for left luggage.

INT. NEW STREET RAIL STATION. LEFT LUGGAGE LOCKERS. NIGHT

Rows of left luggage lockers. They are all sealed.

TEDDY

Oh. Damn and blast.

A noise. Teddy turns, startled. A porter is passing.

PORTER

You can thank the IRA for that.

The porter's gone. Moments later, Teddy appears around a corner. There is a large caged left luggage area. The porter is turning off the lights.

TEDDY

Is there anywhere I can?

He holds the hold-all.

PORTER

I'm closed. What's in that?

TEDDY

Scientific material. Books. I don't really wish to lug it all to Edgbaston tonight.

EXT. BIRMINGHAM STREET. NIGHT

Teddy only has the plastic bag now. He moves fast, still nervous. The streets feel dangerous. Traffic hurtles past.

INT. 24 HOUR LAUNDERETTE. NIGHT

The place is virtually deserted. Teddy pushes clothes from his carrier bag into a washing machine. Camera in close - the clothes are filthy with blood.

PRESENT DAYEXT. DOVER. EARLY MORNING

The White Cliffs. This England. Camera follows a Florists van as it drops down into the town. It passes truck after truck exporting animals. It turns off the main road, swings around towards a small estate of recently built houses... The Everley Brothers are on the van's tape machine: Little Susie.

INT. VAN. DOVER. CONTINUOUS

The driver is Tom from the farm, fifteen year older. Singing.

EXT/ INT. VAN. ESTATE OF RECENTLY BUILT HOUSES. CONTINUOUS

Tom pulls up and gets out of the van. Opens the back. It is deserted but for a single bunch of begonias. He picks it up, slams the van door. Digs out his keys. Still singing.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Tom goes into the kitchen, flicks on the kettle, pulls out a vase, fills it with water and drops in the flowers. There is the sound of heels - clackity clack - down the stairs.

TOM
(calling)
Morning!

A pretty seventeen year old girl appears. She is dressed in a tight tank top, micro skirt and has three inch mules.

TOM
Get changed.

Allie - the three year old from the farm - ignores him and goes to a cupboard and takes out a mug, glancing at the flowers. The whole sequence is an argument between two people who love each other absolutely.

ALLIE
I like begonias.

TOM
You cannot go dressed like that.

ALLIE
How's the van, did they fix the indicator?

TOM
I phoned you last night but I
couldn't get this thing to work.

He holds the mobile phone as though it were an alien object.

ALLIE
Was it switched on?

TOM
Of course it was

She plops tea bags in the mugs and splashes on hot water,
takes the phone presses the on button. Phone beeps, she
kisses him and walks past Tom into...

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. DOWNSTAIRS LOO/HALL. CONTINUOUS

Allie sits on the loo. Tom appears as Allie shuts the door.

TOM
I'm too tired to argue but you
CANNOT go out dressed like that...

ALLIE (O.S.)
Dressed like what?

TOM
Well not dressed at all.

Loo flush. Allie emerges and walks past Tom...

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Allie swills down her tea and is heading to the front door.

TOM
What about breakfast?

ALLIE
I'll eat there.

TOM
Do you have to be naked to sell
donuts!?

ALLIE
(going through the door)
It helps. Missing you already.

And the door swings closed.

TOM
You too.

Hold on Tom - a smile of love.

match cut to:

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EXT. FIELD AND LANE. EARLY MORNING

Tom's face. He's twenty.

TOM
Come on girl - come on. You got to
be firm, Stephen...

Wide. Again the sheer beauty of the Border country. A herd of milkers are slowly being cajoled into a cluster. Closer - Clara, Tom, Stephen and Sarah are herding. They are enjoying themselves. The cows amble down a lane.

STEPHEN
(shouting)
Cummon -

TOM
Annie -

Stephen looks up.

TOM
That one's Annie Lennox. Chrissie
Hyde and she's Chantilly Lace.
(calling out)
Keep 'em in the lane.
(to the cows)
Cummon girls.

The lane is narrowing. Ahead, high above the embankment is a pretty house surrounded by an ornate garden.

CLARA
Gee up!

TOM
Keep them on the road!

The cows tension in the bottleneck. The mood is still light.

TOM
Cummon Suzie...

CLARA
That's it -

TOM
I say keep them in the lane.

A couple of the cows clamber onto the embankment. Clara runs to try and outflank them. The herd forces them further up. One loses her footing and slips. The other panics and climbs up into the garden. Tom is now shouting.

TOM

Get her out of there Mrs. There'll be hell to pay if she goes into Mr Storr's garden.

STEPHEN

Mum!

CLARA

Cummon on girl.

But Clara is inexperienced with the cows. She tries to follow, grabs at a bush but rips the skin on her hand.

TOM

You got to stop her - be careful. M'am I told you.

Clara pulls herself up after the cow that is now panicking in the open of the garden. Mr. Storr emerges from the house

MR STORR

What's she doing in my garden?

He runs at the cow which now reverses into his flower bed.

CLARA

I'm terribly sorry.

MR STORR

You bloody well will be.

Tom arrives in the garden and grabs the rogue cow.

TOM

Sorry Mr Storr. Sorry...

Mr Storr has walked away. Clara is flushed, embarrassed. A little later, Clara emerges from the bracken and drops into the lane. The others are fifty metres away - successfully moving the herd. Then, Clara senses that she is being stared at. A cow is standing dumbly in the middle of the lane.

CLARA

(quietly)
Cummon girl...

She moves towards it. Instead of bolting the cow shudders and flicks its head away in an odd compulsive twitch, it is almost aggressive. Clara is mystified.

CLARA
That's a good girl.

Clara starts to walk the cow down the lane. It tries to move but she is unstable and her legs wobble underneath her.

INT. FARM. BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. DAY

Clara's on the phone. She has a tea towel around her cut hand. She looks up, Tom stands in the hallway. She smiles.

CLARA
Oh that is kind. Yes thank you.
Three would be perfect. We'll see
him then.

She puts down the phone.

CLARA
He's coming this afternoon.

Tom is uneasy.

TOM
There's nothing wrong with the cow.

CLARA
Well she's acting very queer.

TOM
Cows are always acting queer. If we
got the vet' out every time one of
them acted strange he'd be living
here. You should look at that hand.

CLARA
(light)
Oh I'm tougher than I look.

Tom look at her - he seems confused. He turns and goes.

CLARA
Tom? Tom?

EXT. FARM YARD. CONTINUOUS

Clara follows Tom - he goes into the modern milking parlour.

INT. MILKING PARLOUR. CONTINUOUS

It is empty - the cows in the fields. Tom is pouring feed from a mechanised hopper into the feed runner. Clara appears.

CLARA

Tom?

Tom barely looks up.

CLARA

(suddenly with authority)

Tom you will listen to me.

Tom stops and then turns.

CLARA

Thank you. Now, whatever's the matter?

TOM

Please ma'm. All I'm saying is you can leave the cows to me.

CLARA

Tom -

TOM

I know about the feed, ma'm. I know about the yield. I know the cows.

Clara acquiesces. She shivers, her arms across her chest.

CLARA

Where was he exactly, Tom?

Tom is surprised, he looks up tense.

CLARA

Where?

Tom glances at a steel roof joist. Clara stares at it. Suddenly for a nanosecond she flashes to Alec dropping and then hanging. Its gone before she can focus on the image.

CLARA

What happened? What happened exactly Tom?

Tom shrugs, looks away.

CLARA

Please -

TOM

You should clean up that hand

CLARA

What happened. You see its the silence. The complete not knowing...

TOM
I came in. He was there. I called
the Police.

He turns away.

INT. FARM. KITCHEN. DAY

Clara runs cold water over her cut. She looks out the window. The farm is luscious green, cows munch happily in the fields. There's a noise. It is Hel' and baby Allie.

HEL'
Mind if I start in the bedrooms?

CLARA
Yes - no - that's fine. Just leave
mine, Hel' do you understand?
(she smiles at Allie)
How are you, you lovely lady?

HEL'
She's fine, Mrs.

CLARA
She's a beauty.

off allie:

PRESENT DAY

INT. HYPER MARKET DOVER. DAY

Vast. A DUNKIN' DONUTS concession. The 'overall' is so tight she might as well be naked. Allie loves her job... Her friend Sue - is removing the plastic covering from a tray of 'nuts. The whole process is mechanised - industrialised food. Allie is sorting the till. She has bags of small change and is emptying one when coins spill everywhere.

SUE
What you doin'?

ALLIE
Butter fingers.

Allie laughs loudly - and then tries to pick up the coins but this only makes matters worse. She laughs again.

SUE
You OK?

ALLIE
Great.

She tries again. This time the coins shower out of her hand.

SUE
Do the icing.

ALLIE
Hm?

moments later.

Sue is sorting the till. She looks up. Allie is standing over a tray of donuts confused to be weeping.

SUE
Al'?

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INT. SMALL MARKET TOWN. BANK. DAY

Clara sits facing the Bank Manager. She is tense, her handbag firmly clasped on her lap, a bandage on her hand.

CLARA
I have just had a most troubling
experience.

We recognise the Bank Manager from the wake.

CLARA
Mr Dekker, the vet -

MR MALAHIDE
Yes.

CLARA
- well, when I offered him a cheque
he implied that you would not
honour it. Let me finish, please,
Mr Malahide. He also told me that
he has not been paid by my hus - my
late husband in nearly a year? Is
that correct?

MR MALAHIDE
Yes.

CLARA
He said that we owed him over two
thousand pounds.
(slight pause)
What is going on?

Mr Malahide hovers on the edge of speaking, but can't.

CLARA

Please. I really must know.

MR MALAHIDE

Your husband was very seriously in debt. I assumed you knew.

Clara looks at him - she shows nothing.

MR MALAHIDE

He borrowed increasingly over the last year or so.

CLARA

What for?

MR MALAHIDE

What for? Well, for the farm. He didn't discuss these things with you?

CLARA

Don't make me lie. No.

MR MALAHIDE

I'm sure in the circumstances - tragic circumstances we will find a way to -

CLARA

How much?

MR MALAHIDE

What?

CLARA

How much do I owe the bank?

MR MALAHIDE

Its not uncommon, if you don't mind me saying so, with farmers. Keeping things to themselves.

CLARA

Please -

Mr Malahide opens a manila folder on his desk.

MR MALAHIDE

A mortgage of £590,000 on the new milking parlour, and two loans to support the financing...

(he looks at Clara)

I don't think it was the money that drove...

Clara looks at him.

MR MALAHIDE
I don't believe it was the money.

CLARA
(pushing on)
How big were the loans ?

INT. BANK. DOORWAY. SOMETIME LATER

Mr Malahide is showing Clara out.

MR MALAHIDE
Will you be alright?

CLARA
Heaven's yes.

INT. SUPERMARKET. DAY

Clara pushes a trolley. It is empty. She stares at the shelves of goods but can't take anything. Finally she is in the dairy section, a cardboard cow talks to her advertising: "Farm Fresh Milk..." Calmly, deliberately Clara reaches into the cooler and takes out a carton of milk. All the tension that Clara has held in check surges through her. Instead of putting the milk in her trolley she squeezes it in her hand until milk explodes all over the floor. She then drops the carton and takes another one and crushes it. Milk splashes onto the floor, onto her legs... The cow goes on talking. Other shoppers stop and stare. Clara now has a carton in each hand and squeezes both of them. Milk gushes everywhere.

GAUNT YOUNG MANAGER
Madam, excuse me, madam, can I help?

Clara ignores him and grabs two more cartons. A timid security man appears.

GAUNT YOUNG MANAGER (cont'd)
Can I help madam -

CLARA
Do you know how much you are paying farmers for milk?

She bursts the milk carton.

GAUNT YOUNG MANAGER
Madam?

CLARA
No, I thought not. My husband - my husband is dead, he killed himself, hung himself because...

The security men signals to his partner - get the Police.

CLARA (cont'd)

Because you cut the margins on a blessed pint of milk! He built that milking parlour because you said - you said you could sell the blasted stuff. Then suddenly, lo' and behold you dropped what you paid us and at the same time...

(but none of this is making sense, for Clara)

You squeezed the margins so much that Alec... That Alec... It's your fault. Your fault...

The manager is frozen. Clara is in tears, shivering.

CLARA (cont'd)

(quietly)

I'm terribly sorry. Frightfully sorry.

INT. MANAGERS OFFICE. SUPERMARKET. LATER

A woman shop worker sits opposite Clara, the Manager has given over his office. Finally, the door opens: Mary, Clara's mother in law. She is immaculate, holding onto her dignity.

EXT. THE SUPERMARKET. LATER

Mary sits Clara in the passenger seat.

INT. MARY'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

Mary gets in. She looks as though she's about to say something. Clara turns away. Mary fires the engine.

INT/EXT. MARY'S CAR. THE FARM. EVENING

Clara is still frozen. The farmhouse swings into view. Stephen and Sarah appear fast, followed by Charlotte. Clara tensions, smiles. Mary pulls the car up.

CLARA

(hoarse)

Thank you Mary -

Stephen opens his mother's door. Clara smiles. Sarah runs into her arms. The children are anxious.

CLARA

It's alright.

She stands. The kids around her.

CLARA
I must smell like an absolute
cheese shop.

Clara walks with the children towards the farm.

CLARA
(to Charlotte)
What are you doing here?

CHARLOTTE
Mrs Alexander phoned.

MARY
We needed someone to pick up the
children.

INT. FARM. BATHROOM. A LITTLE LATER

Clara sits in the bath. A glass of wine besides her. The kids
are watching TV somewhere.

INT. FARM. BOTTOM OF STAIRS. CONTINUOUS

Charlotte is on the phone in the hallway.

CHARLOTTE
(quietly)
No, not fine. I think really quite
doollaly.

There's a noise above her. She turns, Clara is in her
dressing gown looking down.

CHARLOTTE
(not missing a beat.)
Patrick there's a lasagne in the
freezer and darling tell Esthe to
give the kiddoes burgers...

Clara goes.

CHARLOTTE
(quieter, on the phone)
I tried to get her to a doctor but
she won't have any of it.

INT. FARM. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Much later. Charlotte has cooked them supper.

CHARLOTTE
The children seem OK.

CLARA
Yes.

CHARLOTTE
Mrs Alexander is a dragon but she
coped marvellously -

CLARA
She hates me.

CHARLOTTE
She doesn't -

CLARA
She thinks I killed Alec.

Charlotte puts some food in front of Clara.

CHARLOTTE
I'm sure she would have preferred
that to you making spectacle of
yourself.
(Clara doesn't smile)
Joke.

CLARA
I'm sorry but I'm not hungry.

CHARLOTTE
You must eat.

CLARA
Why?

Charlotte sits opposite Clara. Clara stares at the food.

CHARLOTTE
What are you going to do?

CLARA
Well I suppose I'm going to have to
find somewhere different to shop.

Charlotte didn't mean that, and Clara knows it.

CLARA
I didn't just marry Alec d'you
know. This farm was part of the...

CHARLOTTE
(interrupting)
In the long term. You can't go
on...

CLARA

Well I've got shares that Papa left me if things get really grim. It's a bit early for the long term, don't you think? And another thing - I'm not doollaly, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

No I know.

There's a silence. An air of betrayal. Clara looks down.

CHARLOTTE

Its a turn of phrase. I'm sorry.

CLARA

Do you talk to Patrick? Do you know what he earns?

CHARLOTTE

(uncertain where this is going)

Yes -

CLARA

And?

CHARLOTTE

A darn sight more now he's on the Board. Yes, he tells me everything.

CLARA

You suppose.
(Clara hears her own bitterness)
Sorry.

Charlotte shrugs, nothing.

CHARLOTTE

Do you know something? What really surprised me was that Alec...

Clara now is looking at her.

CHARLOTTE

Alec was one of the proudest men I knew. He was proud of you. He was proud of the children. He was proud of the farm. That's what surprised me most when you phoned.

Uncertain, embarrassed to have said so much, Charlotte stands to get the bottle of wine.

CLARA

Something happened.

CHARLOTTE
What do you mean?

Clara shrugs.

CLARA
I don't know. He must have done
something that he couldn't be proud
of.

CHARLOTTE
What - something?

Clara looks at her, smiles - I don't know.

INT. BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET RAIL STATION. LEFT LUGGAGE. NIGHT

Teddy - the Asian with the hold-all - dressed for travel,
hands in his ticket. He glances edgily over his shoulder as
he waits. Finally the attendant comes back with the hold-all.
It is heavy.

INT. NEW STREET. TICKET SALES. A LITTLE LATER

Teddy is at the window.

TEDDY
Gatwick please.

EXT. FARM. DAWN

Mist. Cows going out to pasture. Clara, working doggedly.

EXT. FARM. A LITTLE LATER

Stephen and Sarah, in school uniforms, in Charlotte's car.

CLARA
See you for tea kiddoes.

Charlotte goes to hug Clara.

CHARLOTTE
Now listen. I'm on the end of the
phone. I can be here in three
hours. And there's plenty of room
in Putney.

EXT. MILKING PARLOUR. LATER

A burly woman with a fag hauls the sick cow into the back of
the wagon. Tom pushes the gate closed.

BURLY WOMAN

Right there.

The sick cow stares at Clara from the truck.

CLARA

What happens to them?

BURLY WOMAN

School dinners. Hospital dinners.

(tugging on her fag)

I wake up in hospital half dead and
I'm strict vegetarian.

She walks around the front of the truck.

CLARA

(following)

I wonder, can I give you some tea -
would you both like a cup of tea?

Tom turns.

BURLY WOMAN

Not usual that we get tea when we
come down here.

CLARA

Well?

BURLY WOMAN

(shouting)

We got time for tea, Bill?

BILL

(shouting back, unseen)

No.

CLARA

Have you been here often, then?

Tom moves forward. The Burly Woman stops, looks at Clara.

CLARA

Is she the first sick cow, or have
there been others?

There's an uneasy pause. Bill appears.

CLARA

There've been others?

BILL

Come.

The Burly Woman drops her fag' and follows Bill.

CLARA

It's a simple question -

Bill fires the truck, pulls away.

CLARA

Tom?

TOM

It's nothing to worry about.

But Clara's has turned and is marching towards the Parlour...

INT. MILKING PARLOUR. CONTINUOUS

Clara strides through to an office area at the back.

TOM

(following)

Mr Dekker says its a virus in two
cows - the other cows are fine.
What are you doing?

In the office there are rows of neat box files and computers.
Clara is pulling files down. As she talks she is becoming
more frantic.

CLARA

Tom you seem to misunderstand
something. I am going to make this
farm work. I am not someone who
backs down. If there is something
wrong with the cows there is
something for me to worry about.
Now, where are the records of the
herd?

Clara pushes some files off the desk, to make room for more.

TOM

That's yield. Dairy notes.

CLARA

(irrationally loud)

So where are the records!?

Tom looks down.

CLARA

What on earth are you so frightened
of Tom?

TOM

I don't know where they are ma'm.

EXT. MILKING PARLOUR. CONTINUOUS

Clara storms out and across the yard. Mary appears at the kitchen door, she moves towards Clara

MARY

Clara?!

Hel' - Tom's wife - stands in the doorway watching, anxious.

INT. ALEC'S OLD OFFICE. CONTINUOUS

The office is an annexe of the main house. It is absolute chaos. Papers, boots, computer print-outs - an over-worked man fighting for his business. Alec's farm jacket still hangs on the back of his chair. Clara pulls at the paper mess of the desk. She finds a folder, opens it - bills fall out. Clara then goes onto her hands and knees. She empties an overfilled waste bin and is rummaging through the papers.

CLARA

There's nothing here. There's nothing here.

Mary watches her, from the door. Clara ignores her. Stands, goes back to the desk. She finds Alec's diary and leafs fast through the pages. She slows. There is an 'M' scribbled on every Thursday afternoon. Clara looks at it, mystified.

CLARA

There's got to be a reason.
(she is very close to
breakdown)
There's got to be a reason he did
it! Oh God there's got to be a
reason.

Clara is shivering and sobbing.

CLARA

I can't find the records of the herd. If we don't have the records!

MARY

(calmly)
This isn't the way. Clara. Making a scene.

CLARA

What should I do?

Mary stares at her. There's a beat.

MARY

Maybe you should look at yourself,
first, Clara.

INT. FARM. ALEC AND CLARA'S BEDROOM. EVENING

~~Like the office, the room oozes Alec. His clothes, his hat, photos, a packet of fags. Clara sweeps his stuff from the room, shoving it into a wardrobe.~~

INT. TOM AND HEL'S HOUSE. EVENING

The house is 1930's farm labourers tied cottage. There is a brand new suite sat, incongruously, in the shabby room. It is still covered in plastic. Allie plays with Tom on the floor. He looks up anxiously at Hel', who is on the phone...

HEL'

... Yes, thank you, that has put my
- our minds at rest. Tom didn't
know what to do.

(something is said at the
other end, she laughs)

He says what would Allie like?

(something)

You'd like a new buggy wouldn't you
princess?

(something)

Yes. You've put our minds at rest.
Thank you.

She puts the phone down. Tom looks up. Uneasy.

TOM

What did he say?

HEL'

Not to worry.

But Tom is worried.

INT. FARM. KITCHEN. LATER

Clara comes down. She is transformed, dressed as the good Conservative shire woman. Hair, make up perfect. Stephen is doing homework on the table, Sarah reads, Mary is cooking.

MARY

Don't you look nice.

CLARA

Thank you.

Clara smiles.

CLARA
You know where everything is?

MARY
(smiling)
Not so long ago it was my kitchen.

CLARA
Yes - yes, of course.
(She kisses Sarah, then
moves to Stephen)
Everyone OK?

SARAH
Do you have to go, mummy?

MARY
Oh come along - we're going to be
jolly as three peas in a pod.

CLARA
We've got to get on with our lives,
chump chops.
(looking at Mary)
We can't just mope about!

And she goes.

EXT/INT. FARM LAND/ CLARA'S CAR. DUSK

The sun is setting - a perfect rural evening. Clara drives up a lane before swinging into a drive towards a wealthy looking farm. Immaculate farm house. Several cars are parked.

EXT. FARM HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

Clara pulls the door bell. The door opens. Dougie Hunter - the farmer and JP - stands smiling.

DOUGIE
Clara!
(surprised to see her)
How nice. We really didn't expect -

CLARA
What would you do without the
minutes?

She holds up a file.

DOUGIE
I for one would have made a royal
hash, I'm sure.

INT. DOUGIE'S FARM. CONTINUOUS

Dougie leads Clara into a large drawing room filled with people - this is the local Conservative Association. As Clara enters the conversation shudders to a halt. Finally, a forbidding woman in her fifties finally steps forward.

MRS EAGLETON

How terribly ghastly for you.

CLARA

Thank you -

MRS EAGLETON

You are amongst friends. We were so particularly proud of you on the television.

Someone says: 'Here, here.' A little later, the members of the Association are sat. Clara is besides Dougie and Mrs Eagleton at a table. She is the Association secretary. Hold on her.

MRS EAGLETON

And finally we really must record Mrs Blacker's gargantuan efforts with her 'boot' sale.

(focusing on a blushing farmer's wife)

Our barns and out houses will never be safe again from Henny!

('Here here...')

Good - are there any matters arising?

A little later, business done, everyone is drinking.

CLARA

Dougie - did Alec say nothing to you?

DOUGIE

Me? No.

He takes out some cigarettes, lights one.

DOUGIE

That ruffian Thomas pulling his weight?

CLARA

Yes -

DOUGIE

I was as shocked as anyone.

CLARA

You see its the not knowing. I mean was it something I did? Was it the farm? I mean was I too - you know I spent a lot of time on the Association?

DOUGIE

Farms can be bloody hard - crude business really. Birth: life: dinner table or your daily pint. Its also damn competitive - you slip and there's a hell of a long way to fall. I always said to Alec: go for chickens. High yield, fast money. But Alec'd say: "Doug, I'm a cow man."

CLARA

He loved those cows.

Dougie looks at her.

DOUGIE

Alec was in a hole, financially.

CLARA

Yes.

(pushing)

Doug, the - one of the cows has been ill -

DOUGIE

Yes.

CLARA

You know?

DOUGIE

We're keeping an eye on you!

CLARA

(light)

Tom was all - well secretive - I suppose, and now I've discovered we've lost two cows. Same virus. Mr Dekker ...

DOUGIE

Yes I heard.

CLARA

Two cows wouldn't worry you, Doug?

DOUGIE

My dear Clara. There is nothing wrong with the cows.

CLARA

Well there is *something* wrong with them. I've never seen anything like it.

DOUGIE

From what we hear, you're not the most experienced cow person in Britain. Mr. Storr and his ornamental borders!

CLARA

Its a wonder I can brush my teeth without you knowing about it!

DOUGIE

The cows are fine.

Clara looks at him, uneasy. Smiles

DOUGIE

How are the children? These things can effect the children terribly you know.

EXT. DOUGIE'S FARM. NIGHT

Dark. A canopy of stars. Clara is walking back to her car. Mrs Eagleton is going towards her Volvo. She stops.

MRS EAGLETON

...if there's anything Clara, anything at all.

CLARA

Thank you.

MRS EAGLETON

I gather Dougie was a brick.

Clara is surprised.

CLARA

Elizabeth?
(pushing)

Dougie is in the doorway, saying goodbye to another guest

CLARA

What?

MRS EAGLETON

He came over. When Alec... He was there. The boy couldn't - didn't know what to do. Dougie did everything. Police. Doctor.

Clara glances at Dougie, back to Mrs Eagleton.

CLARA

Oh yes - yes of course.
(stunned by this news)
Dougie is a brick. Yes.

MRS EAGLETON

If there's anything I can do.

Mrs Eagleton gets into her car. Clara looks back at Dougie's house. The front door is now closed. She gets into her car.

EXT. MINNESOTA AIRPORT. NIGHT

A plane lands.

INT. MINNESOTA AIRPORT. A LITTLE LATER

We're with Teddy as he walks towards passport control. Everyone but Teddy is blurry with long-haul. He carries the hold-all. Moments later, the passport guy is looking at Teddy's photo. He stamps it. Then, Teddy is walking through the customs area. A customs official looks at him. Teddy walks on. He's nearly at the exit when...

US CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Hey - bud' -

MOMENTS LATER.

The Custom's Official pulls back the zip on the hold-all. He looks in.

US CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Holy Christ.

Camera in close, a huge eye stares back at us.

INT. MINNESOTA AIRPORT. CUSTOMS AREA. A LITTLE LATER

A white room. His hold-all is on a table. Three customs guys carefully open the bag. They are wearing gloves. Finally, a whole cows' head appears.

TEDDY

It is very important scientific material.

US CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Well, Professor, it's in contravention of just about every law I can think of and a few I never even heard of.

INT. MINISTRY OF FARMING AND FISHERIES. DAY

Clara is dressed in her best Tory wives attire as she faces three Civil Servants (two men and a younger woman).

MALE CIVIL SERVANT I

We are very grateful Mrs Alexander,
that you have taken the time and
brought your cows to our attention.

MALE CIVIL SERVANT II

Yes.

(slight pause)

Can you tell me - for the record -
the two beasts were sold on?

CLARA

Yes - to the knackerer...

MALE CIVIL SERVANT II

Houstons?

CLARA

(surprised)

Yes.

MALE CIVIL SERVANT I

We like to know exactly where the
infected material has got to. Don't
want it slipping into the wrong
hands.

CLARA

No.

Clara doesn't know where to turn.

CLARA

But you think its nothing to worry
about?

MALE CIVIL SERVANT I

I didn't say that. Anything that
effects our farmers is something to
worry about. No - our boffins are
saying the closest thing they've
got is scrappie. Nasty for sheep,
but harmless.

He stands. Clara stands. The camera holds on the female civil servant, tense.

MALE CIVIL SERVANT I

Its always good to meet someone
with your profile.

CLARA

Profile?

MALE CIVIL SERVANT I

Local Conservative Association.
Television. You're something of a
star.

(he smiles)

Rita will show you out. The
building's a labyrinth I'm afraid.
Rumour has it they're still finding
stragglers from the last Labour
administration.

He shakes Clara's hand.

MALE CIVIL SERVANT I

Can I offer our deepest condolences
on your husband -

CLARA

(surprised)

How kind.

Rita opens the door.

INT. MAFF CORRIDOR. DAY

Clara is thinking fast, as Rita leads her through the
labyrinth. Rita glances at Clara.

INT. MAFF. MAIN ENTRANCE. MOMENTS LATER

Clara turns.

CLARA

Well that is a relief.

RITA

Yes.

She holds out her hand. Clara takes it. Rita holds on.

RITA

They're lying to you Mrs Alexander.
There have been several vets now
coming in -

CLARA

What are you talking about?

RITA

Mrs Thatcher's made it clear. After
salmonella in chickens.. She
doesn't want anymore food scares.

RITA(cont'd)

So there are no more food scares.
But something is going on and
they're frightened
(suddenly her tone
changes)
Well, I hope we have put your mind
at rest, Mrs Alexander...

Clara looks up, a couple of Civil Servants are walking past.

RITA

I have to go. Some of the farmer's
are covering up... Maybe your
husband...

CLARA

My husband would never -
(reeling)
How do you - they - know about my
husband?

RITA

Excuse me, Mrs Alexander -

And she's gone.

PRESENT DAY

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY. DAY

Al' next to Sue, her friend from the Dunkin' Donuts. Both are
dressed in their tight t-shirts, micro skirts and heels. They
face a young doctor.

ALLIE

But what've I got to be depressed
about?

DOCTOR

It can happen to anyone.

ALLIE

(hating being patronised)
I'm not bloody depressed. I just
feel like shit. Sue?

Sue grins at the doctor, shrugs.

DOCTOR

I understand. Look, I'm going to
pop you on something called
Cypranol. Nowadays depression
really isn't a problem. We have
some super chemical ways of helping
you over the hump -

He starts to write a script. Al' looks to Sue, desperation.

SUE
Yeah - Al' wants me to tell you her
Dad... He's not to know.

DOCTOR
(surprised)
No - no, of course.
(glancing at his notes)
You live with him, still?

ALLIE
Yeah. Course.

SUE
Al'?

ALLIE
No he mustn't know.

1987

EXT. FARM. LATE AFTERNOON

Clara gets out of her car. The lights are on in the farm house. The cows moo happily.

INT. FARM KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Mary is cooking at the stove. Stephen sits at the table, homework spread around him. He is still wearing his school uniform.

CLARA
Hello.

Mary busies herself cooking. Clara looks over Stephen's shoulder.

CLARA (cont'd)
Latin declension! Oh crumbs I hate
Latin declension. How are you Mary?

MARY
Fine.

CLARA
Where's Sarah?

MARY
In her room.

CLARA
How is she? Stephen why don't you
clear to one side and help me lay
up the table.

Stephen gets up and violently shoves his homework off the table. Sarah appears in the doorway.

CLARA
What on earth...?

Stephen goes across to the drawer and pulls out cutlery.

CLARA (cont'd)
(uncertainly)
Are you going to pick those up?

MARY
(gently to Stephen)
There there.

Clara picks up the homework.

CLARA
(determined to be bright)
How's my chump chops?

Sarah comes and hugs her mum while Stephen lays the table.

CLARA
Can you hold the fort tonight Mary?

The children look at her.

EXT. DOUGIE'S FARM. NIGHT

Clara is ringing the bell when the door opens.

DOUGIE
Clara? What a surprise?

CLARA
I'm not interrupting anything?

INT. DOUGIE'S LIVING ROOM. EVENING

The room is gloomy. Dougie smokes. He is holding a bottle up for Clara.

CLARA
No thank you.

DOUGIE
(filling a glass)
I'll phone ahead. You could drive home in reverse and no one would so much as bat an eye lid.
(he turns)
So -

CLARA

Dougie - I - what precisely happened with Alec? The day he died. Its just that Elizabeth Eagleton said -

DOUGIE

That I went to the farm. I know.

Clara is stopped in her tracks.

DOUGIE

I did. That ruffian Thomas was in frightfully state and telephoned me. I didn't tell you because I didn't want to distress you. It wasn't... pleasant. Mea culpa.

Clara looks at him. Smiles, at last.

CLARA

I thought you were keeping something from me!

DOUGIE

Only the ghastliness of it all, I hoped.

Clara shakes her head, smiles.

DOUGIE

Are you alright, dearest?

CLARA

Yes?

DOUGIE

The - d'you know - terrible experience - can make you, anyone, uncertain. Unbalanced.

CLARA

No Dougie. I'm fine. Thank you.

She's firm, Doug is shrouded with his own cigarette smoke.

DOUGIE

Good. How was London?

CLARA

London?

DOUGIE

I thought you went to London.

CLARA
 Gosh yes. Of course. The dentist.
 Frightful bore.

EXT. ROAD. NIGHT

Clara is driving fast when she comes around a bend. She slams on the brakes. For a nanosecond, the sick cow she saw in the lane is standing in the middle of the road. Clara stops with the cow only a few feet away. In a flash the cow is gone.

INT. FARMHOUSE. BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. NIGHT

Clara is on the phone at the bottom of the stairs. She has a piece of paper and is writing on it. The TV is on in the living room. Mary is just visible.

CLARA
 News desk please - yes I'll hold.
 (after a few moments)
 Hello. Yes Clara Alexander here.
 Yes I'm a farmer. Yes...

She looks up Mary has crossed the hall to the kitchen.

CLARA
 Yes - would it be possible to meet?

Voice at the other end of the phone.

CLARA
 I think this could be of utmost importance locally... No, I can't speak on the phone. Who'm I talking to? ...
 (voice)
 Mr Hennessy. Right. Mr Hennessy...
 Tomorrow afternoon... Where?

INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Mary is listening. After a moment Clara appears in the doorway.

CLARA
 Goodnight -

MARY
 Goodnight.

In the depth of the shot, the piece of paper is still by the phone.

INT. FARM. CLARA'S BEDROOM. THREE AM

Clara is lying in bed. The room feels bare with Alec's things in the wardrobe. She can't sleep. She hears a noise, somewhere downstairs. She tensions. The noise again.

INT. FARM. STAIRCASE. MOMENTS LATER

Clara comes down the stairs slowly, very quietly. She's frightened. Finally she's in the hall. Nothing. Then another creak. Clara turns fast. Nothing, but she has noticed a light coming from the Living Room. Clara walks silently towards it.

INT. LIVING ROOM. MOMENTS LATER

Stephen sits on the middle of the floor.

CLARA

Stephen? What are you doing?

Stephen doesn't answer. Clara goes up to him. Looks over his shoulder. He has school work spread around him on the floor.

CLARA

Latin! It's three in the morning, darling?

Stephen goes on working. Clara touches him.

CLARA

Stephen -

He turns.

STEPHEN

(holding back tears)
I've got to. I want to work in London. I want to be a Lawyer - like Uncle Patrick. Patrick said I should be tip top at Latin...

CLARA

But...

STEPHEN

Mum I don't want to be a farmer like daddy, or like Grandpa, or his father... I don't... I don't. I don't want to die here. Like dad. Everything's wrong here.

Fast -

CLARA
What? It's not.

STEPHEN
Everything. Even I can see that.

CLARA
What do you mean?

STEPHEN
Everything -

CLARA
Your dad -

STEPHEN
My dad's dead. My dad's dead. I
want to go away from here. I don't
want to be here.

CLARA
No -

STEPHEN
Tell me why? Mum? Why should I want
to be here? Dad didn't.

CLARA
He did.

Stephen looks at his mother. The gulf is enormous.

CLARA
(lame)ly
He cared passionately about this
place. About the farm. I don't know
what happened but...

STEPHEN
I miss him.

CLARA
So do I. So do I.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. UPSTAIRS. DOVER. THREE AM

Tom is deeply asleep. Behind him a photograph, Hel' and Allie
aged about five.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. LANDING. NIGHT

The landing is empty. Then a grunt. Camera pulls back to find
Allie, in her nightie.

She is pulling herself along the wall, her legs are heavy. She pulls on the bathroom light. She looks down, urine is pouring down her legs onto the floor.

TOM
(blurry with sleep)
Are you OK, Allie?

Allie pushes the door - Tom doesn't see the urine.

ALLIE
Will you fucking leave me fucking
alone. Fuck off. Fuck off will you
fuck off... Fuck off...

Tom stares at her stunned.

1987

EXT. MOTORWAY SERVICE STATION. DAY

The motorway. Hold on a cattle truck before finding Clara.

INT. MOTORWAY SERVICE STATION. DAY

Clara sits at a table. She waits. She notices a young man hesitate before he comes upto her.

CLARA
Mr. Hennessy?

MALC'
You can call me Malc', Clara.

He sits opposite her. Clara is uncertain of him.

CLARA
Can I get you anything?

MALC'
It's self service.

CLARA
You're not what I imagined.

MALC'
No trilby?

CLARA
No. Do you want to take notes?

MALC'
I've got a good memory.

CLARA

Well here goes - I think there is a strange disease developing in cows. At least two of my - our cows have been infected and I have reasons to believe that other farms are, also. But are not letting on -

Clara studies Malc' for a reaction. Nothing.

CLARA

My - my husband hung himself -

MALC'

Yeh, I know. Sorry.

CLARA

(surprised)

You know? Oh.

(she's rattled by this)

So I think if you ran a story that told the truth - and I'm quite happy for it to be about me and my farm -

MALC'

Have you spoken to any other farmers, or MAFF, or anything?

Clara thinks for a nanosecond before answering.

CLARA

No. Of course not. You're the first person, Mr Hennessy -

MALC'

Good.

CLARA

So you're interested?

MALC'

I didn't say that.

CLARA

But I think it is terribly important. Trust in farming is of utmost importance -

MALC'

Its bloody dangerous is what it is, Mrs Alexander.

CLARA

(shaken)

I know exactly.

MALC'

No, Mrs Alexander, you don't know. So listen. Sick cows. Mysterious illness. No-one is going to be happy to hear all this. Not the farmers, not the meat boys, not all those people with their burgers. So if I was you I'd forget about it and get on with running your pretty little farm.

Clara stares at him stunned.

CLARA

Are you a journalist?

He stands fast.

CLARA

Who are you?

MALC'

Forget all about it. Alright?

Clara is frozen. Shocked. Malc' goes.

EXT. SERVICE STATION. CONTINUOUS

Clara runs out to see Malc' getting into a scruffy car and being driven away. Clara runs to try and catch it.

INT. COIN BOX. SERVICE STATION. MOMENTS LATER

Clara pull out the piece of paper she left on the hall table. Dials the number on it.

CLARA

(controlling her panic)
Hello, could you put me through to the news desk?...Yes, hello I had a meeting with Mr Hennessy.

(the blood rushes from her face)

You are Mr Hennessy? Its Clara Alexander we had a meeting -

(holding it together)

You were told I cancelled?

(voice on the other end)

No I just wanted to check the message got through. Thank you...

She puts the phone back on its cradle.

INT. FARM. KITCHEN. DAY

Clara holds a new piece of paper with a telephone number written on it. Stephen, Sarah and Mary are at the table.

CLARA
(mystified)
And they didn't leave a message?

MARY
No -

CLARA
But this is a London number!?

MARY
Would you like some more stew,
Stephen?

STEPHEN
Yes please.

Mary gets up and ladles more stew.

CLARA
I'm sorry but I am asking a
question.

MARY
Well I think perhaps we should talk
about it later.

CLARA
No - no. I want to know who left
this message Mary? And I want to
know what on earth is going on!

STEPHEN
(standing)
Mum!

CLARA
(quieter)
It wasn't a journalist from the
Border Times? Called Hennessy?

Silence. Mary gestures to Sarah to get her elbows off the table. Clara goes out to the hall phone. She is about to dial when she glances at Mary. Thinks. She puts the phone down.

INT. FARM. SARAH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Sarah is tucked in bed. Clara strokes her hair, gently.

CLARA
Now you sleep deep. Sleep deep.

SARAH
Granny says you're being very
silly, mum.

CLARA
Does she? Well maybe I am maybe I'm
not. Sleep deep.

INT. FARM. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Stephen has his light on.

CLARA
Lawyers need their sleep, also.
She bends over Stephen and turns his light off.

INT. FARM. KITCHEN. NIGHT

Clara washes the dishes. Mary comes in carrying laundry.

CLARA
I'm sorry, Mary.

MARY
For what, exactly?

CLARA
For shouting earlier.

Mary studiously walks past her to the washing machine.

CLARA
The children - Sarah says you think
I'm silly.

MARY
Maybe you should listen to the
children.

Mary continues loading the washing machine.

CLARA
(this is difficult)
I think... Mary, I... Did you tell
anyone who I telephoned or... about
the newspaper...

Mary turns. Uncertain where this is going.

CLARA
Or that I was going to London?

MARY

I'm not sure I know what you are saying.

CLARA

(deciding not to push it)
Perhaps I am just being silly.

MARY

Yes. Stephen needs his boots cleaned for rugby. "Rugby!" My son used to kick a ball across the common.

CLARA

I'll do them.

EXT. BACK DOOR. FARMHOUSE. NIGHT

A bright moon. Clara is scrubbing the boots. The milking parlour hums, across the yard. Clara makes a decision.

INT. ALEC'S OLD OFFICE. NIGHT

Clara has the scrap of paper with the London number on it. Nervously, she dials after a moment it is answered.

CLARA

Hello - this is Clara Alexander. I hope its not too late but you left your number with my mother-in-law...

(surprised, relieved)

Yes of course I remember you.

PRESENT DAY

EXT. DOVER. DAWN

Tom's Florist van drives along the front.

EXT. BLOCK OF FLATS. DOVER. DAWN

Tom is pressing the buzzer. He carries a large bunch of flowers. Finally the door is opened by Sue - Allie's friend. She's surprised to be got out of bed this early.

SUE

Tom! What are you doing here?

TOM

Sue, I'm sorry, but I have to talk to you.

SUE
Now? What time is it?

TOM
Five thirty. Here.

He holds up the flowers.

INT. BLOCK OF FLATS. KITCHEN. A LITTLE LATER

Sue is more awake, making tea.

TOM
It's nice here. Good view.

SUE
When its not windy. Sugar?

TOM
Two.
(slight pause)
D'you think Al'd like something
like this?

SUE
What a flat? Stays here often
enough. No, she's happy with you.
(light)
No bills.

TOM
You see I've been thinking about
her all night. Upto to Convent
Garden and back is a lot of
thinking time. Sue - well...

Sue stops stirring.

TOM
Al's not herself. You've not
noticed anything? The other night.
I was home, sleeping, Sunday night,
you understand.

SUE
No. How do you mean?

TOM
I don't know.

Sue hands him the tea.

TOM
When Hel' - Helen that Allie's
mother, when she, you know, left
Allie was seven.

TOM(cont'd)

I mean I would never criticize her for leaving - she wanted more out of life than I could give her. That's understandable. But you see Allie, that little girl, she chose to stay with me.

(he smiles)

So through everything - leaving the borders, leaving the farm. Starting up here. Everything its been me and Al'. She's grown up. I suppose you could say we've grown up together. I mean, Sue, I was such a fool back then, such a gullible fool. And through all of it Al' has been with me. You've not noticed anything?

SUE

No. No I can't say I have.

TOM

In the end it's all you've got. Your children.

(he sips)

Thanks for the tea.

1987

INT. ST JAMES PARK TUBE STATION. DAY

Clara's back in London clothes. Looks at her watch, the station clock. 12.30. Suddenly Rita - from MAFF - is beside her. Very tense.

RITA

Get on the next train, I'll sit besides you.

CLARA

(confused)

This is all frightfully OTT...

The tube train stops, doors open. The women get in.

INT. TUBE TRAIN. CONTINUOUS

The carriage is only half full. Rita gestures Clara to sit.

RITA

... My husband thinks I should have nothing to do with this but when I saw you the other day, and your poor husband and I heard your voice I thought I should.

(she pulls a piece of paper from her handbag)

RITA(cont'd)

Look - phone this man. He came into the department. He's very concerned. He said he thought that it was a 'nightmare scenario'.

CLARA

Why?

RITA

(standing)

I think you might be able to do something.

But tube doors open at the next stop. Rita moves fast out.

CLARA

Please!

INT. SLOANE SQUARE TUBE STATION. DAY

Clara starts to follow but Rita vanishes in the crowd.

CLARA

Excuse me - you haven't even told me his name.

INT. MILKING PARLOUR. DAY

Tom is working fast getting all the cows into their milkers. Clara is pushing a cow into it's booth, still no expert.

CLARA

They all look well.

TOM

They're good, ma'm. Yields up.

Tom pulls the hopper and releases the feed onto the conveyor belt. He then clambers down and shoves the cow Clara is struggling with. It moves sharpish into its booth. For a moment the cows looks like creatures from science fiction: their udders pumping milk, feed being mechanically moved to their mouths.

INT. FARM. BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. DAY

Clara is on the phone. Hel' is Hoovering in the living room. Clara looks up, she can Mary in the kitchen.

CLARA

I'm a bit weary actually. I think its probably accumulative... Oh they're fine but I bet they could do with their mother being a little more compus mentis...

Camera drifts down, Clara is holding down the phone's cradle.

CLARA
You are a darling. See you tonight.

She puts the phone down.

CLARA
(to Mary)
Charlotte says that's fine.

She walks into the kitchen. Allie, aged three, is playing on the floor.

MARY
Good. A rest will do you good.

CLARA
Yes.

MARY
You feel at home in London.

The hoovering stops. Hel' comes in - Clara and Mary freeze off their argument.

CLARA
Hel' great. I've got your money.

HEL'
Thanks. Allie -

She picks the child up.

CLARA
She's going to be quite a beauty.
(hands Hel' two fivers)

HEL'
Thanks.

Hel is opening a new buggy.

CLARA
Let me help -

She takes Allie.

CLARA
That is very smart vehicle.

HEL'
Silver Cross, other one failed its
MOT, Mrs Alexander, top of the
range.

Smiling she and Allie go.

CLARA
(going back to the
conversation)
Mary, I feel at home here.

MARY
Is that why you've been rushing
around here there and everywhere?

CLARA
Mary I don't know what I would have
done without you and the children
adore you but I honestly don't see
what crime I have committed?

MARY
Oh I think you have a pretty fair
idea.

CLARA
I'm sorry but I don't -

MARY
Alec was a good farmer. As good a
farmer as there is around here.

CLARA
I know that!

MARY
Then what are you doing accusing
him *after* he's gone... when he
can't talk back...

CLARA
I'm just trying to find out what is
going on!

MARY
(with finality)
My son was a decent man.

CLARA
Yes, I loved him for that. And
because of that... Because I know
he was a decent man I know he
wouldn't have killed himself unless
something terrible had happened.

Mary can hardly contain her grief -

CLARA
Before I met Alec -before I came
out to live here - I used to think
that farming was...
(she smiles)

CLARA(cont'd)

Charlotte and I used to play farmers. We had wooden cows, and wooden fences, and a wooden barn. It was lovely. The sun came up. It never rained. There were no chemicals. Heavens I know that Tom thinks I'm two left feet with the cows but I had no idea how we used antibiotics routinely. How - you know what that milking parlour is - really? Its a factory. Not making cars but making milk.

Mary looks at her. Both women are exhausted.

CLARA

What made a decent man - a man we all loved - do what he did? When I know the answer I'll... stop.

Tom stands in the doorway. He's embarrassed to have overheard so much. Mary wipes away the tear. Goes.

CLARA

Tom?

TOM

Sorry - Mrs. The feed's been delivered. Needs your signature.

CLARA

Yes. Yes - of course.

Tom watches Clara sign. Her hand shakes.

TOM

London'll do you good.

CLARA

Yes. Thank you.

He goes. The vast side of the feed delivery van stretches across the kitchen window. A Seal of Royal Approval below the words Redulit Inc..

EXT. BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET RAIL STATION. DAY

Clara appears and joins the line at the taxi rank.

INT. TAXI/BIRMINGHAM. DAY

The urban misery of parts of Britain in the late eighties. Kids hover. A burnt out car. Finally, the taxi stops.

CLARA
 Are you sure this is part of the
 University?

A row of Nissen huts tucked below the fly over.

INT. NISSEN HUT. DAY

~~Clara pushes through~~ the door. The hut is part tutorial room,
 part research room. A window has been smashed and a figure is
 sweeping up glass. In the half light, we can't make out who
 it is.

CLARA
 Excuse me?

The sweeper goes on.

CLARA
 I beg your pardon but I wonder if
 you could help me. I'm looking for
 Professor Aspinall.

The man turns and steps past Clara and goes. It is Teddy, who
 was trying to smuggle the cows head into the US.

CLARA
 (irritated)
 I wonder if you can help me?

Teddy re-appears with a dust-pan and brush.

CLARA
 I am looking for Professor
 Aspinall.

He starts sweeping up the glass.

TEDDY
 Who are you?

CLARA
 I think I'd rather talk to the
 Professor.

He has a full dust-pan. He stands...

TEDDY
 (walking past Clara)
 I am Professor Aspinall.

CLARA
 Oh good heavens. I'm terribly
 sorry, I thought you were the
 janitor or something.

Teddy goes. His dislike of Clara is immediate. He returns and continues sweeping up. Pause.

CLARA

I'm sorry Professor but actually I had to make quite some arrangements to get here.

TEDDY

Who gave you my number?

Clara thinks before answering.

CLARA

I spoke to your secretary or assistant or someone and they suggested I came now.

(Teddy goes, Clara continues)

I should say they weren't conclusively helpful. Is this your first break in?

TEDDY

(returning)

No.

He starts taping the window.

TEDDY

What do you want?

Clara

I am told you are an expert.
(the card Teddy is taping keeps slipping)
Would you like a finger?

EXT. PRIVATE SCHOOL. CONTINUOUS

A heavy sky. Sarah and Stephen are leaving school and while Volvos sweep other children away, they walk towards the bus stop carrying their bags and Stephen's guitar.

SARAH

Wait!

Sarah tries to keep up but can't. She then becomes aware that a car has slowed going the same direction. Inside the car, she can only make out the shadowy shape of the driver. It feels uncomfortable, menacing.

INT. NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

Teddy is putting the last piece of tape on the window.

CLARA

Some of my cows have got sick. The vet' thought it was a flu' of some sort but I didn't think that was the whole story, you see.

TEDDY

What happened to them?

CLARA

They became um dislocated - uncoordinated... Really rather appalling, actually.

TEDDY

Then?

CLARA

They went to the knackers yard.

TEDDY

Well then there's nothing I can do for you. Sorry.

EXT. ROAD/BUS STOP. CONTINUOUS

Sarah is running fast, frightened by the car. She catches up with Stephen. The car has stops on the other side of the road.

SARAH

He followed me.

Stephen looks up.

SARAH

Oh where's the bus.

INT. NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

Clara is firm with Teddy -

CLARA

Professor, I was told that you had described this as 'a nightmare scenario' or some such. I would like to know why?

Teddy looks at her.

TEDDY

Who said that?

CLARA

Isn't it funny how things that only a few days previous seemed completely inconceivable become almost normal: I'm afraid I can't tell you.

TEDDY

There are a great many people who want to stop me.

CLARA

Well I'm not one of them.

TEDDY

That is not my first break in.

CLARA

(dogged)

Professor Aspinall, what did you mean?

(quietly)

Do not underestimate me. Please. It ill becomes us both.

EXT. ROAD/BUS STOP. CONTINUOUS

The car is across the road from the children. They watch it intently.

SARAH

(relieved)

Its coming! It's coming!

The bus is chugging slowly up the hill towards them. The window on the car slides slowly down. Finally, the driver leans across. It is Dougie Hunter.

DOUGIE

(smiling)

I *thought* it was you two. Going to bucket and the bus'll be as slow as a snail.

INT. NISSEN HUT. A LITTLE LATER. DAY

TEDDY

None of the others are showing symptoms?—

CLARA

No?

TEDDY

Yield?

CLARA
Yield? Oh yes, I see what you mean -
no, I think fine.

TEDDY
Alien substances?

CLARA
Yes?

TEDDY
Power cables?

CLARA
What?

TEDDY
Are there power cables near the
farm -

CLARA
No good heavens no. It's rather
beautiful.

Teddy looks askance at Clara. She blushes.

TEDDY
Nitrates? Organophosphates?

CLARA
I'm sorry?

TEDDY
What about the water table? Are you
up on a hill or down in the valley?

CLARA
This really is the third degree -

EXT. ROAD/BUS STOP. CONTINUOUS

Stephen and Sarah climb glumly into Dougie's car. The air
inside is thick with cigarette smoke and leather.

INT. NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

Teddy faces Clara.

TEDDY
Feed?

CLARA
Yes?

TEDDY
Who from?

CLARA
Who from?

TEDDY
What age were the cows?

CLARA
Age? What's that got to do with
this? You think this might be more
than a local thing?

Teddy looks at Clara.

CLARA (cont'd)
Don't you?

TEDDY
Why did you come here, Mrs
Alexander?

INT. DOUGIE'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

Dougie looks at the children in his rear view mirror as
thunder rolls down the valleys.

INT. NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

CLARA
(deliberately)
I'm sorry but I have recently been
widowed so I'm not absolutely word
perfect on farming.

Despite herself tears form in Clara's eyes.

TEDDY
I think maybe you should go home.

CLARA
No. No thank you. Oh dear.
(Clara makes a decision)
No, you see I have reason to
believe that my husband may have
killed himself because of what is
going on.

INT. DOUGIE'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

He smokes as he drives. The road swings under the children.

DOUGIE

No mum?

STEPHEN

No.

DOUGIE

Back at the dentist?

Stephen looks up mystified.

SARAH

Actually she staying with our
Auntie Chossie and Uncle Patrick...

DOUGIE

Yes I know who Patrick is.

SARAH

They've got a guinea pig.

DOUGIE

Well you've got sixty eight cows!

INT, NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

The light is slanting with the afternoon.

TEDDY

They have a disease called Bovine
Spongiform Encephalopathy. It
destroys their brains.

Clara blinks.

TEDDY

The first known case appeared on a
farm in Sussex last year. I have to
say it didn't come like a bolt out
of heaven. Some of us have been
predicting a catastrophic crisis
for years. Would you like some tea?

CLARA

(bemused)

That would be nice. Catastrophic?

TEDDY

(going)

Why did your husband kill himself?
Most farmers are doing everything
they can to cover up.

He vanishes into a little room. Clara follows, confused by
Teddy's directness.

INT. LABORATORY. CONTINUOUS

Teddy has a saucepan on a bunsen burner.

CLARA

I think that's rather unfair. Why would they do that?

TEDDY

Do turkey's vote for Christmas?
(he turns)
Was he happy?

CLARA

(angry)
I really can't see what business that is of yours.
(Teddy shrugs)
As it happens, I don't now know. Anymore.

TEDDY

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy is a TSE - the T stands for transmittable. It is not a virus - like flu or a bacterial infection. You know meningitis: bacterial or viral? No, the TSE...

CLARA

I'm afraid the closest we got to science at Cheltenham was the domestic sort.

TEDDY

Then maybe you should be making the tea.

(he indicates a pot, Clara goes for it)

A Spongiform Encephalopathy is a condition that, crudely, triggers the perfectly normal proteins - the prions - in the brain to destroy each other. Eventually the victim's brain is like a sponge - utterly annihilated...

The water is boiling. Clara holds the pot, Teddy pours the water.

TEDDY

It is incurable, unstoppable.
Brainless, the victim dies.

Clara stares at him.

INT. DOUGIE'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

Its now raining. The car swings around the bend. A small farm shop is ahead.

DOUGIE
Would you like a coke?

STEPHEN
We're not allowed.

DOUGIE
Don't be a chump. I was one of your dad's oldest friends. Your mum came around for drinks.

He pulls the car in, crunching on the gravel.

INT. NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

Teddy and Clara come back into the Laboratory, carrying tea.

TEDDY
This place used to be Chemistry.

CLARA
(confused)
Oh?

TEDDY
We're now Epidemiology.

CLARA
Righto.

TEDDY
We try and predict the future.
(he smiles)
You will live a long and happy life.

CLARA
Oh I am relieved.

TEDDY
(back to the disease)
What is important here is that the condition is transmittable.

CLARA
Contagious?

TEDDY
No. No. We don't have many models of how TSE's work.

TEDDY(cont'd)

We don't even know how novel they are. The best was in Papua New Guinea.

CLARA

Are there cows in New Guinea?

TEDDY

In the 1960's scientists became aware of a disease that was doing terrible damage to a primitive tribe. They called it "Kuru" or the shaking disease.

CLARA

Human beings?

She is shocked.

INT. FARM SHOP. CONTINUOUS

Sarah has a Curly Whirly, Stephen has nothing.

DOUGIE

(to the shop keeper)

You can see who's son he is - can't you Mrs Jones?

SARAH

He thinks they're bad for you -

Dougie takes his change and his cigarettes.

INT. NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

The afternoon light is getting long, and frightening.

TEDDY

An epidemic was killing mostly women. For a long time no one could work out what the transmission route was until one thing emerged as completely unique. These people in Papua New Guinea were practising cannibals.

Clara stares at him shaken, Teddy's enthusiasm grows.

TEDDY

When they died it was regarded as respectful for their remains to be eaten. The men, the hunters, ate the red flesh and the women and children consumed the brain and the nervous system.

TEDDY(cont'd)

We don't know how the disease first started but we do understand how it has become an epidemic. Relative 1 somehow contracts Spongiform Encephalitis - maybe he ate a monkey that was infected, we don't know. Then some years later he gets ill - Its very important to understand that this disease has a LONG incubation period and is INVISIBLE before it attacks its victim. Well, our Relative 1 gets ill and dies. Then, ritually, his remains are eaten. Suddenly one victim has infected ten more. Then, twenty or thirty years later, the disease comes out of incubation killing those ten who were exposed as children. At their funerals they are then eaten. Women and children, remember, tending to be exposed to the infective material...

CLARA

And you think this is what my cows have got - this Bovine Sponge...

TEDDY

Spongiform Encephalopathy. Not just your cows. Did you declare your two?

Clara stares at him.

CLARA

No - I was advised not to -

TEDDY

No - who wants to declare that they've got some weird disease. Not good for profits -

CLARA

Professor, farming is an industry, like any other -

TEDDY

That places its own profits at the very top of the agenda.

CLARA

Professor do you make a habit of being offensive?

TEDDY

I say what I think is the truth, wherever that might lead.

Clara stands, frustrated.

TEDDY
Like you, maybe.

Clara turns.

TEDDY
(smiling)
I have just been deported from the
United States for cow smuggling.
We're both a little crazy, no?

CLARA
But cows don't eat their relatives,
honestly? Do they?

TEDDY
What do they eat?

CLARA
Grass, hay, feed.

TEDDY
What's in that feed?

INT. DOUGIE'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

Dougie is lighting a cigarette. Sarah chews on her Curly Whirly.

DOUGIE
(seeing Stephen in the
rear view mirror)
What do you want Stephen?

STEPHEN
(shrugging)
I'm fine, thank you.

DOUGIE
You'd like your dad back, wouldn't
you? I bet.

Stephen stares. Dougie, fires the engine.

INT. NISSEN HUT. CONTINUOUS

It's darker now.

CLARA
(stunned)
That is appalling.

TEDDY

It's protein. That's all. Why waste it? Where I come from the cow is regarded as sacred. Here every last bit of the creature is pulled to pieces and used. Everything. Human hormones - good things - insulin comes from the bovine pancreas, stitches used in surgery come from the cow's intestines, tallow is used in pharmaceuticals as the base of creams and ointments. Children learn about eyes' dissecting cows'. They turn up everywhere - in toothpaste, chewing gum, cat food. We wear their skin. So, it is hardly a surprise that when we have finished with everything we throw the last remnants - those last few pounds of protein - back into the very stuff we feed them.

CLARA

Turning our cows into cannibals?

Teddy nods.

CLARA

How absolutely ghastly.

TEDDY

(quoting back at her)
It's an "industry", like any other.

CLARA

(slowly)
And we eat the cows? Will we get it?

INT. DOUGIE'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

Down the lane to the farm. Sarah looks queasy, the rain torrents down. Finally the car pulls up at the bottom of the drive outside the farm. Stephen goes for the door handle.

DOUGIE

Now hold on their old chum.

He turns. The children look at him, frightened...

EXT. FARM. CONTINUOUS

Tom emerges from the milking parlour into the rain. It is bucketing down. He can see Dougie's car and make out the shapes in it.

another angle:

Mary comes out of the farmhouse. She is carrying an umbrella. She also can't see what is going on in the car. Finally Dougie gets out and opens the door. The kids look ashen.

DOUGIE

I saw these two orphans at the bus stop. Couldn't just drive by them, could I?

MARY

No - thank you. Have you said thank you?

DOUGIE

They have.

Sarah hugs her grandmother. Dougie scrunches Stephen's hair.

DOUGIE

He's a clever boy, Mrs Alexander, should go far.

He gets back into the car. Camera tracks into Tom.

TOM

(to himself, shocked)
No. (not the kids)

PRESENT DAYINT. TOM'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. LATE AFTERNOON

Close on Tom, walking into the house carrying some shopping. He comes into the kitchen. Allie is trying to pour boiling water from a kettle into a tea pot. It spills everywhere as she is unable to hold it still.

TEDDY (O.S.)

I was waiting to be deported. I was in Customs and Immigration at Minnesota airport when I first calculated what might be the scale of the epidemic if BSE crosses over to humans...

Tom is watching her. Allie turns, deep fear in her eyes.

TOM
Al?' Al? What's wrong?

1987

INT. NISSEN HUT. LATE AFTERNOON

It is nearly dark now, Clara watches Teddy steadily.

TEDDY
——(continuing)
I began by working out how many cows might be infected. The feed is mass produced by big mills nowadays. Its industrial. So if you get even a small amount of infective element into the feed there's everything to help it being spread to ever cow in the country. Then I realised that the animals that are slaughtered for beef will die long before they even begin to show any symptoms but will none the less be put into the food chain. So I calculated - lets imagine - that 750,000 infected animals actually get eaten.

(slight pause)
Then work out how much each animal supplies in the way of food. By my reckoning that means that something like 80% of the UK population will be exposed to an incurable and fatal disease -

He looks at Clara, smiles...

TEDDY
Of course we can hope exposure doesn't automatically mean infection, but it might...

INT. FARM KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Sarah throws up all over the kitchen floor and then sits slowly in a chair.

STEPHEN
Granny?

Mary appears.

SARAH
I'm sorry I don't feel very well.

MARY

Oh my little love.

Sarah runs to her grandmother, who embraces her. She starts to sob. She looks at Stephen. He is ashen.

MARY

You both look terrible. I think I'm going to phone your mother -

STEPHEN

(haunted by whatever
Dougie said to him)

No!

Mary looks at him.

STEPHEN

No I'm sure its just the car and Mr Hunter's cigarettes. Mum needs a rest.

Tom appears in the doorway.

TOM

Anyone want to give me a hand?

He's looking at Stephen.

MARY

Let me. Everyone's feeling a bit fragile.

She goes. Sarah looks at Stephen. He looks away.

INT. MILKING PARLOUR. MOMENTS LATER

Tom, Mary, a milker and another farm hand are putting the cows into their milking booths.

TOM

Janis - Janis will you be a good girl...

The camera travels to Mary. She is leading one of the milkers up the concrete slope when the cow's legs skid, and then buckle. Mary looks at the animal, mystified. Tom looks up. Notices Mary's confusion. He comes across.

TOM

It's nothing. Good Girl Emilylou.
Good girl.

Mary stares at the cow uneasily.

TOM
 (making bright)
 Yields up.

INT. SMALL HOTEL ROOM. BIRMINGHAM. NIGHT

Clara is alone. She is wrapped in a towel and has one on her head. A photograph of Alec and the children sits on the hotel's anonymous side board. Clara has a whiskey from the mini bar. She has a pad of paper and is scribbling names on it. One after the other...It is a plan. She is alive with determination.

INT. CHARLOTTE AND PATRICK'S HOUSE. PUTNEY. CONTINUOUS

Ten guests at a dinner party. Money and power, the rump of the Thatcher Lawson boom. Patrick is at the of table. The talk is light, confident, powerful. Eshe, a young aupair whispers in Charlotte's ear.

INT. FARM HOUSE. NIGHT

Mary stands holding the phone, she's uncomfortable making this call.

MARY
 Yes, good evening. I'm sorry to disturb you Charlotte but the children are feeling rather rattled and something has come up. So I wondered if I could speak to Clara...

INT. SMALL HOTEL ROOM. BIRMINGHAM. NIGHT

Clara is also on the phone. She is waiting for it to be answered.

INT. CHARLOTTE AND PATRICK'S HOUSE. PUTNEY. CONTINUOUS

CHARLOTTE
 Staying here? What makes you think that?

INT. SMALL HOTEL ROOM. BIRMINGHAM. NIGHT

Clara is on the phone.

CLARA
 Hello, Rita? Hello, this is Clara Alexander -

INT. FARM. LOOKING DOWN TO THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS.
CONTINUOUS

Mary is on the phone. Stephen is listening out of sight.

MARY

She phoned you this morning, I
heard her... No I don't think I am
mistaken.

INT. SUBURBAN LONDON HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

~~Rita stands in the kitchen on the telephone.~~ She is anxious.

RITA

How did you get my number?

INT. SMALL HOTEL ROOM. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

CLARA

That doesn't matter. I have been to
see Professor Aspinall...

INT. SUBURBAN LONDON HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

RITA

I'm sorry but I can't talk to you,
now.

INT. CHARLOTTE AND PATRICK'S HOUSE. PUTNEY. CONTINUOUS

CHARLOTTE

How strange!?

INT. SMALL HOTEL ROOM. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

CLARA

Listen to me, you are right
something has got to be done. I
need your...

INT. SUBURBAN LONDON HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

RITA

Please, I told you if they find
out.

INT. SMALL HOTEL ROOM. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

CLARA

(firm)

No - I really think I know what to do. I know who to talk to. If we just work together. I really do -

INT. SUBURBAN LONDON HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

RITA

I'm sorry. Now please go away.

And she slams the phone down. A man appears in the doorway.

RITA'S HUSBAND

Who was that?

RITA

(not a comfortable liar)

One of those double glazing companies. They're like a rash.

She walks away.

INT. FARM. BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. NIGHT

MARY

I'll telephone you Charlotte if something... Yes to put our minds to rest. Goodnight.

Phone down. Hold on Mary.

EXT. FARM. AFTERNOON

Clara drives down the lane. The farm is again idyllic, lush green, the blue of the sky. Clara pulls up outside the farmhouse. Gets out of the car and instead of going in marches towards the milking parlour. The camera swoops with her. Instead of going in she moves around to the side of the building and walks into the feed store.

camera with her:

INT. FEED STORE. CONTINUOUS

Clara goes to one of the great feed hoppers. Then she deliberately pulls up the lever. Feed starts to pour onto the ground. She goes out and grabs a hose, turns on the tap, and starts soaking the feed as it spreads on the ground - determined to ruin it.

She is about to open the next hopper when Tom comes in. He sees the mess, he sees the hose. He clambers across to the hopper, and tries to close it.

CLARA
Leave that Tom -

Tom tries to close it.

CLARA
I said leave it alone!

Tom slams the thing closed, and is pushing the bolt up when Clara pulls his arm away.

CLARA
Tom I said to leave it alone.

TOM
This is crazy, mam, just crazy.

CLARA
If you knew what was in that feed.

TOM
I do. I do and I don't like what's happening anymore than you do or Mr Alec did.

CLARA
What did Alec know?

TOM
This is a good working farm. Mrs Alexander. I need my job. Gary needs his job. And there's lots of others. All around people depending on this - an' the other farms - for their livelihood.

CLARA
What did Alec know?

Tom looks at her. He knows he's said too much. Mary is in the doorway.

TOM
Excuse me -

And he goes, fast.

CLARA
Tom! Tom!

And she follows behind him, pushing past Mary.

EXT. FARM YARD. CONTINUOUS

Clara runs out. Tom is on his scruffy motorbike and drives away. Clara runs to her car and jumps in. She slams it into reverse, swings round and drives fast down the drive.

MARY

Clara - stop.

INT. CLARA'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

The track bounces her around but she's driving fast.

EXT. ROW OF FARM WORKERS COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

Tom rides up. The cottages are harsh. The reality of rural life. Laundry hangs on lines. Tom gets off his bike.

INT. CLARA'S CAR. CONTINUOUS

The cottages Tom's bike is there. He's nowhere to be seen.

EXT. ROW OF FARM WORKERS COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

Clara gets out of her car. She is still dressed in her Town clothes. She strides upto Tom's cottage. She is about to ring when Hel' opens the door.

CLARA

Hel' I want to talk to Tom.

HEL'

Please Mrs Alexander.

CLARA

Tom knows something. He's got to talk to me.

Allie starts crying in the background.

HEL'

He's upset.

(she turns)

It's OK Allie...

CLARA

(with steel)

Helen let me in. Now.

Hel' stares at Clara and then lets her in.

INT. TOM & HEL'S COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

Allie is in the middle of the downstairs room. She's rattled by the commotion. The new sofa suite is conspicuous.

HEL'
It's OK Al' it's OK.

Clara can't see Tom.

CLARA
Tom, please!

HEL'
He didn't mean anything by it, did you Tom?

CLARA
No I'm sure. I just really do need to know, you understand, about Alec - about what Alec said ... to you. It's very important, you see, for me. And the children.

Tom appears out of the half decorated kitchen.

TOM
Please Mrs. Please.

CLARA
You have got to tell me what he said!

Allie is now crying.

HEL'
He doesn't know anything.

CLARA
This is between Tom and I.

TOM
Please -

HEL'
(to Clara)
You shouldn't be here!

CLARA
I think you'll find that this cottage is part of my property -

Tom turns and goes fast up the stairs.

HEL'
No Tom!

TOM
This is wrong.

After a moment he comes thundering down.

HEL'
What are you doing?

But Tom is intent. He holds a sealed white envelope.

CLARA
What's that?

TOM
(to Hel')
I should have burnt it like he
said. Then there'd be nothing to
hide.

He puts the envelope into Clara's hand. Beat.

HEL'
(sharp - to Tom)
You're a bloody fool you are. You
don't have any idea what's matters.

And she goes out, taking Allie with her. Clara stares at the envelope. Her breathing is heavy, she could almost be ill. The light is dim, Tom is in the shadows.

CLARA
(very quietly)
Like who said? Why did you keep
this from me?

Tom starts to weep.

Clara
That is unforgivable.

EXT. ROW OF FARM WORKERS COTTAGE. CONTINUOUS

Clara emerges blinking into the sun. Hel' is playing with Allie on a rusty swing in the cottage's garden. Clara goes to her car. The door is still open. She looks up. The farm is visible on the hill. Green, beautiful.

Her hand is shaking as she opens the envelope.

END OF PART I

