

ONE OF US

by
Paul Unwin

A two part film for television

PART 2

Tim Corrie,
PFD.

1987

INT. GENTLEMAN'S CLUB. PALL MALL. LONDON. DAY

Clara sits in her finest Tory wives attire. She looks fragrant, sexy. As she sips mineral water the camera goes in close. Her hand has a tremor. She looks at her watch. The paintings around her stretch back over three centuries of land and power. Out of the gloom a man appears in an immaculate pin-stripe suit.

IAN BLACKLAW

Clara I am so frightfully sorry.
Have they given you a drink?
(he gestures the waiter)
Oh my dear - you poor poor thing.
(Clara blushes)
How beastly.

He sits.

CLARA

Thank you Ian.

He studies her, for a moment.

IAN BLACKLAW

You do though look fabulous.
Perhaps I shouldn't say so?

CLARA

(laughs - he's charming)
Why ever not?

IAN BLACKLAW

Is flirting appropriate?

CLARA

Let's be inappropriate.

A little later champagne has been poured. The conversation is light, two old friends.

CLARA

Perhaps I am being stubborn but
when I married Alec, I married the
farm.

IAN BLACKLAW

Stubborn? You? After you went off
to Cheltenham I ran around half of
London announcing that on your
return I was going to mount a full
gun assault.

IAN BLACKLAW(cont'd)

But by then you'd got engaged to Alec and delighted as we all were some of us, yours truly in particular, could hardly stop ourselves joining the French Foreign Legion.

(Clara laughs)

But you seemed sublimely happy.

CLARA

(tinged with sadness)

I was.

(changing the subject)

How's Susan?

IAN BLACKLAW

Really terribly well. Discovered frescoes and now spends six months a year in Italy.

He drinks from his champagne. Clara looks at him. He's attractive, powerful, and alive.

IAN BLACKLAW

I've got a spare ticket for Cosi Fan Tutti tonight, come!

CLARA

No. Thank you. We're staying with Patrick and Charlotte. Half term.

IAN BLACKLAW

Yes. More serious things on Clara's mind. Lets order. I've a Select Committee at three...

Later, he is slicing into steak, she has half eaten fish.

CLARA

... So, you can see. I wanted to see you. As high as I could get.

IAN BLACKLAW

And here I was hoping that you had discovered that power is an aphrodisiac.

He chews on his food. Takes a sip of wine.

IAN BLACKLAW

Truth be told?

CLARA

Oh yes.

IAN BLACKLAW

We know about the cows.

CLARA

You do?

IAN BLACKLAW

(light)

Of course. You weren't the first farmer to turn up at MAFF. And these scientists? They are better at running up some horror story or other than all of Hollywood and the Royal Shakespeare Company put together. Its all about funding.

CLARA

Funding?

IAN BLACKLAW

Most of them want to sit about contemplating quite exactly what Karl Marx meant and expect the good old British Tax payer to foot the bill. Then when someone blows the whistle they drum up horror story after horror story. The next ice age is coming, global warming means Chichester will be a sub aquatic theme park by 2010, every damnable chicken is infected and this beef will rot my brains.

CLARA

I don't think its as simple as that.

IAN BLACKLAW

No? Look, there are nearly sixty million hungry mouths on these islands. Sixty million. They want their satellite TVs, their microwave ovens and their holidays in Toromolinos. They don't want to pay much for their food...

CLARA

But if it's poisonous.

IAN BLACKLAW

It's not, for heaven's sake.

CLARA

It might be.

IAN BLACKLAW

It might be!

(smiling)

What should we do?

IAN BLACKLAW(cont'd)

Those sixty million are fed by an industry that's worth twenty billion pounds. Heaven help the Government that says: "Wait a second chaps! We're closing you down because you might be infected by a disease that's done nothing but make a few cows sick!"

(slight pause)

Think about it.

He looks at Clara.

CLARA

I have - when prion disease got a mink herd in Minnesota it killed every single animal. The disease could be following exactly the same pattern in cows. And if it crossed species to cows there's no reason to be certain that it won't cross to us, eating beef.

(she smiles)

We can't in all conscience ignore that, Ian.

IAN BLACKLAW

Who have you been talking to?

Clara catches Blacklaw's look.

CLARA

No-one.

IAN BLACKLAW

And you think this might all be behind poor old Alec?

CLARA

No, Ian...

IAN BLACKLAW

Its beastly. The silence. The not knowing. Isn't it?

CLARA

This isn't about Alec.

IAN BLACKLAW

Dearest Clara.

(he takes her hand)

Don't confuse your feeling that life has been ripped away from you with something much more dangerous.

There's a beat. She stares at him.

CLARA
Let go of my hand

He does so. She stands. He's surprised by her steel.

IAN BLACKLAW
Clara, for goodness sake -

INT. GENTLEMAN'S CLUB. STAIRS. DAY

Clara comes fast down the stairs.

CLUB ATTENDANT
Excuse me madam, ladies are
requested to use the back stairs.

Clara ignores him, pushing through the revolving door into
Pall Mall.

EXT. PUTNEY PARK. LATE AFTERNOON

Stephen, Sarah, and their cousins are riding fast on bikes.
They are happier than they've been.

INT. CHARLOTTE AND PATRICK'S HOUSE. PUTNEY. KITCHEN. DAY

Charlotte and Clara are in the kitchen, preparing supper.

CLARA
(holding up some carrots)
Enough?

CHARLOTTE
Plenty. Do yours eat sprouts?

CLARA
Anything. Well Stephen turns his
nose up at sweets, which is no bad
thing, I suppose. Though odd?

CHARLOTTE
How is he... They?

CLARA
Fine.

CHARLOTTE
What about you?

CLARA
Me?

She turns. Tears rim in Clara's eyes.

CLARA
I'm really fine. I wouldn't know
where to start, honestly.

CHARLOTTE
(light)
Well you could start by not being
so secretive.

CLARA
Secretive? I'm not. Am I?

Charlotte shrugs - turns back to the oven.

CLARA (cont'd)
What?

CHARLOTTE
What what?

CLARA
Nothing, then.

CHARLOTTE
Well actually, yes.

Charlotte turns to face Clara, she's now emotional.

CHARLOTTE
The other night Mary Alexander
phoned.

CLARA
Oh?

CHARLOTTE
She wanted to speak to you. She
said that you had said that you
were staying here.

Slight pause.

CLARA
I needed to get away. I needed a
little break. My nerves.

CHARLOTTE
Patrick wanted to call the Police-

CLARA (cont'd)
I'm sorry. I stayed in a hotel.
Took the night off. Nothing more.

CHARLOTTE
Where?

CLARA

Where? What's that got to do with anything? Charlotte I simply needed to get away, that's all...

A gate bangs. The kids are coming in.

CLARA

(tense)

Do I need your permission Chossie?

CHARLOTTE

No. Of course not. It's Mary - the children -

CLARA

Mary never said anything to me.

Charlotte swings something out of the oven. Stephen, Sarah and the cousins come in bubbling with energy.

CHARLOTTE

Who's hungry?

INT. DINING ROOM. MUCH LATER

Patrick, Charlotte and Clara are eating a Curry take away. There's a pause, then...

PATRICK

Ian Blacklaw phoned, just as I was leaving the office.

Clara looks up.

CHARLOTTE

Ian? You know he's in the Cabinet now, Clara. Though I think he and dear Susan are in the last chance...

(she catches Patrick's look)

What?

PATRICK

He had a message for Clara.

Charlotte looks at Patrick and then Clara, surprised.

PATRICK

He said he'd enjoyed lunch and that if he could clarify anything you should talk to him, directly.

Charlotte looks at Clara, thoroughly confused

CHARLOTTE
Lunch?

CLARA
Will you excuse me.

She goes.

CHARLOTTE
Clara?!

PATRICK
He said she was in *Birmingham* -

CHARLOTTE
(standing)
What?

INT. HALLWAY/STAIRS. CONTINUOUS

Clara turns in the hallway. The kids are watching a video in a sitting room. Clara thinks of bolting out the front door but seeing Stephen turns -

CLARA
It's alright, Stephen -

And goes fast up the stairs. On the landing, she goes into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM. CONTINUOUS

Clara locks the door. The bathroom is lined with family snaps. Charlotte and Clara... Charlotte and Patrick... Patrick and Alec... Clara turns she is breathing fast...

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)
Clara? Clara? Are you alright?

CLARA
I'm fine. Chossie.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)
No mummy's OK. Just a bit upset.

INT. BEDROOM. A LITTLE LATER

Clara sits on the bed. She holds a glass of water, Charlotte is with her.

CHARLOTTE
Why did you tell me you were at the dentist?

CLARA
I don't know who I can trust
anymore.

CHARLOTTE
You can trust me. And Patrick. And
here.

CLARA
Yes. I am sorry.

CHARLOTTE
Look, listen, do you know what I
think? I really think you should
move back to London. Sell the
farm...

CLARA
I can't.

CHARLOTTE
You must - you're getting - the
pressure...

CLARA
No.

CHARLOTTE
Look at you. Look at the children.
Sarah could pack her clothes in the
bags under her eyes.

CLARA
I cannot leave the farm.

CHARLOTTE
Why?

CLARA
(looks at Charlotte)
Alec did leave a note.

CHARLOTTE
(stunned)
Where? What did he say? Was it
about this cow business?

Clara stares at Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)
What?

CLARA
What cow business?

CHARLOTTE

I thought you were worried about the cows. You know Birmingham, dotty professors. Come on darling, you're as vulnerable as an open wound -

CLARA

I don't think I told you about the cows.

CHARLOTTE

One of the kids then. I don't know.

CLARA

(tense with suspicion)
Of course, one of the kids.

Charlotte now sits besides Clara.

CHARLOTTE

I'm on your side. What did Alec say, in his note?

CLARA

(standing)
I think I should go.

CHARLOTTE

(really amazed)
Clara?

CLARA

We're going.

She goes to the door.

CHARLOTTE

Clara? Its the middle of the night!

CLARA

Perhaps you might consider for one second actually telling me the truth!

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry?

CLARA

(very quiet)
No, I am sorry. I never told you I went to Birmingham. I never said anything to you about the cows. Trust you? No -

And she goes out the door. All fast -

INT. CHILDREN'S ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Clara is shoving pyjamas into a bag... Charlotte comes in.

CLARA
I'm sure I'll forget something
perhaps you would be so kind as to
send it on -

CHARLOTTE
Patrick told me about Birmingham,
just now -

Clara pushes past her and out onto the landing.

INT. LANDING/ BATHROOM. CONTINUOUS

Stephen, Sarah, the kids and Patrick are now on the stairs -

CLARA
Children I think we should go home.

PATRICK
Clara!? This is madness.

CLARA
Is it?

INT/EXT. CAR. NIGHT

Clara is driving. Stephen and Sarah are asleep in the back. Trucks hurtle past. She is tense and tired. She looks in her rear view mirror. Lights splash across the back window. Clara frowns. Tightens her hold on the wheel. She looks up again. The lights seems to get closer. It feels as though the car is tail gateing her. Suddenly the hum of Clara's is replaced by the thwong thwong of wheels on cat eyes. Clara corrects, looks up and sees the lights of the car. She is now frightened. She accelerates. The car sticks with her. She indicates to pull out. The car indicates also. Clara suddenly indicates the other way and thunders across the cats eyes and finally comes to a halt on the hard shoulder. The other car shoots past; it is just a gang of kids goofing about. Clara's car shivers as trucks thunder past. Clara looks around. The kids are still asleep.

CLARA
(frightened)
Oh God - Oh God.

STEPHEN
(from out of the dark)
Mum, why have we stopped?

PRESENT DAYINT. CAT SCANNER. DAY

The weird ominous white steel of the scanner, slides over the camera. A woman's shoulder. A woman's hand limply holds a button. The noise is frightening. A technician leans into frame - says something incomprehensible...

INT. OBSERVATION WINDOW. CONTINUOUS

Through the window Tom watches as Allie is slid under the scanner. His positive smile is fixed.

TOM

What did she say?

DOCTOR

There's a button for Allie to press
if the thing gets too much for her,
it can be quite noisy.

INT. SCANNER ROOM. CONTINUOUS

The noise is now increasing. Camera goes in close. Allie's hand spasms but there's no way she can press the button. Tom watches.

off tom to:

1987

EXT. FARM. EARLY MORNING

Tom stands outside the milking parlour watching Clara open the car. He looks drawn, uneasy. He approaches Clara.

TOM

Yields up. Mrs Alexander.

CLARA

Yes, thank you.

But she turns away from him. She's still very angry. Tom wants to say something but can't. He looks upto to see Hel' and child Allie are walking towards the house. Hel' catches his eye but then turns away. Another angle, Mary come out with the kids and Stephen's guitar.

MARY

He's ready!

CLARA

Yes.

She smiles at Stephen who clambers into the back of the car, Sarah follows.

MARY

Clara. I was wondering if you would mind - I know that Stephen would like it - if I came too, tonight.

Clara looks at her surprised. Stephen and Sarah are expectant.

CLARA

No, Mary, of course. That would be super.

EXT. FARM. CONTINUOUS. DAY

Wide angle as the car pulls away. Hel' takes Allie into the farmhouse. Tom watches.

INT. FARM HOUSE. CONTINUOUS. DAY

Allie plays on the floor. Hel' looks over her shoulder before going to the hall table where the phone is. She quickly scans the bits of paper there... She is spying on Clara.

INT. LOCAL NEWSPAPER OFFICE. RECEPTION AREA. DAY

Clara sits nervously. The place is more Ricky Gervais than Windy City. Finally, a door opens.

CLARA

Mr Hennessy?

INT. EDITORS OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER. DAY

Clara faces Mr Hennessy and the Editor.

CLARA

The other day I had arranged a meeting with Mr Hennessy but when I got to the place we had agreed -

EDITOR

At the Service Station?

CLARA

Yes. You see I am aware that - well I didn't want our meeting to be conspicuous. You understand?

It's hard to judge how the men are reading her.

CLARA

Someone phoned you claiming that I had cancelled the meeting? Yes? And a young man - I have no idea who he was - was actually rather threatening...

(the men say nothing)

And that's not all. Things around my husbands de - suicide have been covered up.

(still no reaction)

I believe I, myself, have been followed. Well at least someone knows exactly my movements.

EDITOR

Why do you think this is happening Mrs Alexander?

CLARA

Why? Good heavens. I'll tell you why. There is disease in cattle that is very alarming. The more I know, quite frankly, the more alarmed I become.

(she has to calm herself)

I believe the Government knows what is going on. I know this from the highest authority. I believe that they are wrong in not alerting both the farming community and the general public. I've got some notes here...

As she reaches down, the men clock each other.

CLARA

The science as best as I understand it! Do you see, I am certain that if other farmers know that they are not alone facing the problem - And the vets who are being fobbed off by MAFF on nearly a daily basis - I think we would have the basis for changing something.

She puts the notes on the Editors desk.

EDITOR

Run and get Del' will you, Mr Henessy?

Henessy, looks surprised and goes to the door.

EDITOR

Ta.

(looking at the notes)
Why are you doing this, Mrs
Alexander?

CLARA

I'm sorry?

He looks at her.

CLARA

Because I believe one should take
responsibility, do you see?

The Editor smiles at Clara, then looks back down.

CLARA

It is very serious. And as a
farmer...

The editor reads. He turns a page.

EDITOR

And you worked this out yourself?
(he looks at her)
Where's this information from?

CLARA

I'd rather not say.

EDITOR

I'm on your side but I run on
twenty two pages of advertising.
Ninety percent of that is
agriculture. I'm going to be up the
Khyber without a camel if they see
me announcing KILLER DISEASE and
get it wrong.

He smiles. Clara smiles back.

EDITOR

So?

CLARA

Are you going to do a piece?

EDITOR

Well you can hardly sit here and
not pick up what's going on.

Clara looks at him, carefully.

EDITOR

But I need an answer to my question
first -

EXT. STREET. LOCAL TOWN. DAY

Tom is driving down the street. Ahead he sees a coin box -

INT. COIN BOX. CONTINUOUS

Clara is on the phone. She is excited.

CLARA

Yes. I really think I may be getting somewhere here: I have spoken to the local paper and they have agreed to do a piece -

INT. NISSEN HUT. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

Teddy is on the phone.

TEDDY

Good. What did you say to them?

EXT. STREET. LOCAL TOWN. CONTINUOUS

Tom has pulled over. He gets out of the car.

INT. COIN BOX. CONTINUOUS

Clara.

CLARA

They are aware of other farms...

INT. NISSEN HUT. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

TEDDY

OK.

CLARA (O.S.)

It will make a difference.

TEDDY

There is going to be a Parliamentary select Committee, also. I'm to be a witness.

INT. COIN BOX. CONTINUOUS

CLARA
Really? That is marvellous.
(the pips start to go)
Oh heavens...

INT. NISSEN HUT. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

CLARA (O.S.)
I'm in a coin box. I think they
might be tapping my phone,
Professor. Hang on - please...

INT. COIN BOX. CONTINUOUS

Clara is fumbling with coins, her handbag, and some shopping.
The coins drop onto the floor.

CLARA
Hang on -

She bends but it is tricky. Suddenly the door opens. Tom
picks up the coins and hands them to her. Clara stares at
him.

CLARA
Thank you.

He goes.

CLARA
Sorry Professor, sorry. I just
wanted you to know...

INT. NISSEN HUT. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

TEDDY
Mrs Alexander, you must remember to
be careful who you talk to. Do you
understand me?

INT. COIN BOX. CONTINUOUS

CLARA
Oh yes, yes of course. A
Parliamentary Select Committee!
When you present your evidence I
really do believe people will
listen -

INT. NISSEN HUT. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

TEDDY

What exactly did you tell them?

INT. COIN BOX. CONTINUOUS

Clara is slightly tenser.

CLARA

I explained everything as best that
I could, that's all. OK.

(something we don't hear)

OK. Goodbye.

She puts the phone down. Looks around. Tom is lingering a
polite distance from the coin box.

EXT. COIN BOX. CONTINUOUS

Clara comes out. She is ungainly with her handbag, groceries.
Tom is formal, embarrassed.

TOM

M'am, I meant nothing in the way of
harm, keeping the letter from you.
It was a bad thing. I know. I'm
sorry.

CLARA

I think it would be best if you did
your job and nothing more.

She turns and walks away.

TOM

Ma'm I was told to. Ma'm please -

But Clara gets into her car, fires the engine and pulls away.

EXT. FARM. DAY

Guitar music over. Clara stands nervously against a gate as
Del' photographs her.

INT. MILKING PARLOUR. DAY

Guitar music over. Clara stands in the Parlour. Tom is
driving a tractor with fork lift. Sacks of chemicals. Snap.

EXT. FIELD. DAY

Guitar music over. The Borders. Clara is in the middle of a field. Snap.

INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL. HISTORIC CHAPEL EVENING

On stage, Stephen is playing his guitar in a concert. Clara, sits besides Mary and Sarah. Clara beams. The camera moves to reveal Dougie Hunter in another row - amongst school luminaries. Stephen finishes playing. He's very good. Thunderous applause. A little later, parents are gathered congratulating their children. The Headmistress approaches.

CLARA

Wasn't that wonderful, Mrs
Mortimer?

MRS MORTIMER

Yes -

CLARA

Mrs Mortimer?

INT. HEADMISTRESSES STUDY. EVENING

Mrs Mortimer faces Clara, the bursar at her side.

MRS MORTIMER

We are proud of both Stephen and Sarah and have high hopes academically for them, particularly Stephen. Sarah is delightful. However we do have to draw the line, somewhere.

CLARA

But I assumed -

Clara stands, stunned.

CLARA

You'd think the bank would tell you before they stopped payments.

BURSAR

Yes.

(carefully)

There are people who I understand would be prepared to help, Mrs Alexander, locally.

MRS MORTIMER

We shall miss them both terribly
and I dare say they will be sorry
to go -

CLARA

Who?

The Bursar looks at Clara.

CLARA

Who is prepared to help?

BURSAR

This is a rural community.

INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL. CONTINUOUS

Clara comes back into the hall. Parents are still milling.
Mary, Sarah and Stephen are happy. Clara storms upto Dougie

CLARA

You are not going to buy me!

The chatter thins to a stop. Dougie turns.

DOUGIE

Clara?

CLARA

You know exactly what I mean.

DOUGIE

My dear, I have no idea what you
are talking about?

STEPHEN

Mum?!

And she turns and goes.

INT. CAR. NIGHT

~~The atmosphere~~ is grim. Then...

MARY

I thought that was the best I'd
heard you play, Stephen.

STEPHEN

I'm not sure about the adagio -

MARY

Well I wouldn't know an adagio from
a pogo.

Sarah laughs. Clara glances at Mary, smiles.

PRESENT DAY

INT. BOWLING ALLEY. DOVER. NIGHT

Camera travelling fast with a bowling ball - wham! Ten skittles fall. Another angle... Tom has just bowled. Sue - Allie's friend, her boyfriend, three or four other and Allie are out bowling.

TOM

Beat that!

Sue - mini skirt, tank top, bowling shoes - raises her ball.

SUE

This is for you...

She smiles at Allie, who sits grinning. The ball travels along the run...

TOM

Al's turn, now.

Sue turns, surprised. Tom goes upto Allie and gently pulls her up. She laughs. A strange, slightly dislocated giggle. The others look on uneasily.

TOM

She can do it. Can't you girl. Pass us the ball, Dean.

Sue's boyfriend looks uneasy as he shuffles forward with a ball.

SUE

Tom, for fucks' sake.

TOM

She can do it.

Allie smiles. Dean holds the ball near her hand.

TOM

(calm)

Sue put her fingers in, she needs a hand, there.

SUE

She'll break them.

TOM

It's her birthday party. She's going to bowl, aren't you Al?

Sue comes forward. Dean lifts the ball, Sue puts Al's fingers in the hole.

TOM

There -

He is holding Allie around the waist.

TOM

You can do this. You can.

And he carries/draggs Allie towards skittles. Dean holds the ball.

TOM

That's it.

Camera pulls back. Tom, Allie and Dean look like a strange dance.

TOM

Now let go. Al, let go.

With a thunk the ball lands on the wood and dribbles into the side track...

1987

INT. BANK. MANAGERS OFFICE. DAY

Mr Malahide is behind his desk facing Clara.

MR MALAHIDE

The bank cannot go on supporting you for ever, Mrs Alexander.

CLARA

You're not supporting me! You're bouncing my cheques...

MR MALAHIDE

We wrote advising you.

CLARA

(defiant)

Well I'm sorry I have been rather busy.

MR MALAHIDE

Yes.

(slowly)

We have bent over backwards to help you in a very difficult time but the bank has a policy.

CLARA
What has changed?

MR MALAHIDE
Nothing has changed it's just that -

CLARA
That what? You got tired of me
farming for you. Because that's
exactly what I'm doing -

MR MALAHIDE
This is a small community. We have
to rely on one another.

Clara stares at him.

CLARA
And what does that mean?

MR MALAHIDE
I think you know full well.

CLARA
(ignoring this)
Mr Malahide I have here seventeen
thousand pounds worth of shares in
Redulit Inc. They are as blue chip
as they come...

She puts a folder on the desk.

CLARA
I inherited these from my father.
My husband knew nothing of them.
This was not subterfuge but rather
a small flickering torch of
independence. I am now prepared to
sign them over to this bank if you
will continue supporting the farm
as you have.

A moment.

MR MALAHIDE
I'm sorry.

CLARA
(furious)
I didn't invent these sick cows!

MR MALAHIDE
I actually have a meeting -

Tears fill Clara's eyes, to her frustration.

CLARA

Do you want me to bury my head in the sand, ignore what is going on...

MR MALAHIDE

No. What we want is you to leave this to the experts.

CLARA

No-one is listening to the fucking experts, Mr Malahide! I'm sorry, but I am learning to swear. Good day.

EXT. COUNTRY TOWN STREET. DAY

Clara emerges from the bank. A rural town as ever - the market is closing down, a bell tolls.

PRESENT DAY

INT. LONDON TEACHING HOSPITAL. DAY

A grim corridor. Allie is in a wheel chair. Sue (Al's friend) and Tom are with her. Sue's heels are if anything higher, her skirt tighter. Finally a door opens.

MS MALICK

Alison?

There's no way Allie's can react.

TOM

(bright)

Cummon - say hello.

1987

INT. STATE SCHOOL. CORRIDOR/CLASSROOM. DAY

Clearly run down. The headmistress opens the door on a class.

HEADMISTESS

I'm sorry to interrupt year nine Miss Theakston, but I'd like to introduce Simon Alexander...

CLARA

Stephen.

HEADMISTESS

He'll be joining you from today.

Stephen goes into the classroom and sits at an empty desk. Other children stare at him as though he had three heads.

PRESENT DAY

INT. ANONYMOUS ROOM. DAY

Tom, Allie and Sue face five people from the nvCJD surveillance unit. Ms Malick is filling in a form.

MS MALICK
Alison is female. Yes?
(Tom nods)
Born?

TOM
July 21st 1984.

MS MALICK
Where?

TOM
In Wales -

1987

INT. STATE SCHOOL. CORRIDOR. MOMENTS LATER. DAY

Sarah is desperately hanging onto Clara's hand as they walk.

HEADMISTRESS
We're always delighted to welcome new children. Numbers have been falling - well to do farmers are sending their children away to boarding school. I think the local authority would love to see us finished with but we're a defiant bunch. Here we are Sarah -

She opens a door. A class of ten year olds stare.

PRESENT DAY

INT. ANONYMOUS ROOM. DAY

Allie is grunting and spittle runs down her chin. Sue stands and totters around to wipe it away.

MS MALICK
What about dental treatment? Can you give me a full record?

moments later:

MS MALICK
Has she had her tonsils out?

moments later:

MS MALICK
Any transplants including corneal
or bone marrow?

Tom nods no.

1987

EXT. STATE SCHOOL. DAY

Clara is crossing the deserted playground towards the gate when she sees a woman stirring a large pot in a kitchen - the window is open.

CLARA
What's that you're cooking, if you
don't mind me asking?

The woman stares at her.

PRESENT DAY

INT. ANONYMOUS ROOM. DAY

Allie is quieter, possibly asleep. Tom is focused. Sue stands gagging for a fag'.

MS MALICK
Has Alison ever received a blood
transfusion?

TOM
No - no need.

moments later:

MS MALICK
Now, any relatives?

TOM
What?

MS MALICK
With dementia?

TOM
No.

Sue laughs.

TOM

Sue?

SUE

Well you're demented for a start!

She laughs, the research people freeze with po-facedness.

1987

INT. CAR. DAY

Clara climbs into her car. Looks at the school. Thinks.

PRESENT DAY

INT. ANONYMOUS ROOM. DAY

Sue has taken Allie out. Tom faces the inquisition alone.

MS MALICK

(reading)

Since the beginning of 1980 has the
subject - sorry, Alison - ever
eaten animal food or pet food?

TOM

No - I don't think so.

MS Malick

How often, on average did Alison
eat brains?

TOM

Brains?

MS MALICK

Eyes?

TOM

No?

1987

INT/EXT. CAR/STATE SCHOOL.DAY

Clara gets out of the car and starts walking towards the
school. Ms Malick's questioning of Tom continues over.

MS MALICK (OS)

Tripe?

TOM (OS)

I don't know?

MS MALICK (OS)

Kidney?

Tom just grunts. Clara is walking faster and faster towards the school. Ms Malick's questions become a litany...

MS MALICK (OS)

What about roast lamb? Roast chops?
Beef stew? Hamburger? Minced beef?
Kebab? Lasagne? Veal? Venison?
Chicken? Steak tartare? Carpaccio?

TOM (OS)

What?!

MS MALICK (OS)

What about cows milk? For
breakfast? On her porridge?*

* (All Ms Malick questions come directly from the nvCJD Surveillance Unit Questionnaire.)

1987

INT. STATE SCHOOL. DAY

Bang - Clara pushes through the doors into the corridor. The bell rings. Suddenly she is in a sea of children. She can't see Sarah or Stephen anywhere. The headmistress appears.

HEADMISTRESS

Mrs Alexander?

CLARA

Yes - I forgot to say something to
the children, I wonder if you'd
tell me where -

The tide of children goes, Stephen is left in the corridor.

STEPHEN

Mum?

CLARA

Yes, listen to me. I want you to
make sure that neither you or Sarah
eat the food. OK?

HEADMISTRESS

Mrs Alexander?

CLARA

I'll give them packed lunches from
tomorrow.

The bell rings again. The children start to go towards their next class. Stephen stands there looking bruised.

HEADMISTRESS
Stephen you will be late.

He goes.

HEADMISTRESS
Mrs Alexander you really must -

CLARA
I'm only trying to protect my children.

PRESENT DAY

INT. HOSPITAL. AN ENTIRELY ANONYMOUS ROOM WITH A VIEW OF WESTMINSTER BEHIND. DAY

A neurologist and three or four young doctors face Allie and Tom.

MR HEALY
New Variient Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease. CJD.

TOM
OK. But you said nothing showed up on the scan?

MR HEALY
That's correct.

Tom grabs hold of Allie's hand. Squeezes it. She laughs. It is now a frightening, abnormal laugh. The doctors look down.

TOM
Where'd you pick up something like that?

He pushes a tear out of his eye.

MR HEALY
Probably something she ate twenty years ago.

TOM
Right. So - what do we do, you know. What do we do?

MR HEALY
Well one of my colleagues will see you and explain the procedures in terms of hospitalization, home help and so on.

TOM
No I mean to stop it?

Beat.

MR HEALY
There is nothing we can do to stop
it, I'm afraid.

TOM
Oh. OK. Nothing? Right.

MR HEALY
It is incurable. Allie's - the
proteins in Allie's brain have been
triggered and, to put it crudely,
are destroying the healthy brain.

The full enormity of what has happened now hits Tom.

MR HEALY
Have you got any questions, Tom?

Tom stares numbly.

MR HEALY
As I say one of my colleagues will
be along shortly.

He stands.

TOM
No. No.
(getting louder)
No. She's going to be alright.
You're going to be alright Al'...
(back to the startled
doctors)
I'm not going to let this happen.
Do you understand me?

MR HEALY
I'm sorry.

And he and his cohort go.

TOM
It's going to be OK, Al'. I don't
want you to be frightened.

He squeezes her limp hand.

1987

EXT. STATE SCHOOL. DAY

Clara stands by the car as she waits for the children. Everything about her is conspicuous. Class - rural divide - her hauteur. Finally, the kids come out of school. They look desperate. Stephen carries his guitar. Clara smiles warmly, the kids walk around her and get into the car.

INT. CAR. A LITTLE LATER

The kids sit glumly in the back. Ahead is the farm shop the children stopped at with Dougie in Part One.

CLARA

Listen - who feels like a treat?
You've done terribly well today.

STEPHEN

No - no, its OK.

CLARA

Sarah?

Sarah looks up, glumly.

CLARA

Come on everyone. First days are
the hardest...

STEPHEN

(of the Farm Shop)
No, mum.

CLARA

Well I'm going scoff a whole packet
of Maltezers on my own, then.

STEPHEN

(shouting)
Please, mum!

The car crunches to a stop. Clara turns, startled by Stephen's vehemence.

CLARA

Why ever not? A few sweets aren't
going to kill anyone.

INT. FARM SHOP. MOMENTS LATER

Clara has her Maltezers, Sarah holds up a Curly Wirly. Stephen is in the shadows.

SHOP KEEPER
Same again, young lady?

Clara notices this and the way Sarah looks down, embarrassed.
Stephen leaves the shop.

EXT. FARM SHOP. MOMENTS LATER

CLARA
Stephen?

STEPHEN
Can we go home now?

Mystified, Clara opens the car.

INT. CAR. CONTINUOUS

Sarah looks at her Curly Wirly as though it were poisonous.
Clara turns to face the children...

CLARA
Kiddoes - look - listen, I know you
have been through a lot recently.
But I must know why Mrs Jones said
"same again...". I -

STEPHEN
(deflecting)
There's nothing wrong with eating
sweets, you know, mum!

CLARA
What did she mean?

STEPHEN
I've got homework.

CLARA
Sarah?

STEPHEN
We went with dad. Dad took us.
That's what she meant. Please mum.

Clara is shocked. This is a lie, but a powerful one.

CLARA
With dad? When?

Tears start to well in Sarah's eyes.

STEPHEN
Before.

CLARA

Sarah?

Sarah looks away.

STEPHEN

(furious)

We want to go home.

CLARA

(shouting)

And I now want to know what the truth is!

(change)

Sarah?

STEPHEN

It was Dougie Hunter. He brought us. It was raining. He gave us a lift home.

CLARA

What did he want?

STEPHEN

Nothing.

CLARA

This is terribly important!

(nothing)

What did he say to you?

(nothing)

Please kiddoes, please -

SARAH

He said we should make you look after us more.

CLARA

(thinking fast)

Look after you more? Listen, darlings -

Stephen looks at Sarah.

STEPHEN

He said you would end up like dad.

Clara gasps.

CLARA

He said that?

And she gets out of the car, swings open the passenger door and with a primitive force pulls her children to her...

CLARA

No - no they are not going to do
that to me. They are not going to
take me away -

THE PRESENT DAY

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. UPSTAIRS. DOVER. DAY

A strange light, its bright outside but the curtains are drawn. Start in close on Tom, he's perspiring.

TOM

(bright, gentle)

There you go, there we go. Now
there's a good girl. There's a very
special girl.

Allie's incontinent, Tom has just finished wiping her down. He has a plastic sheet on the bed. A box of wet wipes, toilet paper is visible on the edge of frame.

TOM

There we are. That's a bit fresher.
My beautiful girl. Now lets sit you
up.

He heaves her towards him and then with some dexterity pulls a t-shirt over her head and down.

TOM

There we are. Now -

Allie sits in an arm chair beside the bed. Tom pulls the shitty material together and walks out onto the landing.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. LANDING/STAIRS/KITCHEN. DAY

Camera goes with Tom down the stairs, into the kitchen. He opens a drawer. Pulls out a bin bag. Shoves the material into it. Gradually we realise that he is weeping. Then his weeping turns to rage and he kicks the cupboard door. Again and again until suddenly it disintergrates. The moment there is silence - just his breathing - he realises that Allie is moaning upstairs and the door bell is chiming.

INT. FRONT DOOR. MOMENTS later

Sue (Allie's mate) stands there. Heels higher, skirt shorter.

SUE

Are you alright Tom?

TOM
 (sweating, his smile
 immediately reinstated)
 Yeah - yeah I'm fine. How are you?

SUE
 Need of a cup of tea and a chat
 with my best mate.

INT. KITCHEN. MOMENTS LATER

Sue is at the kettle. She glances at the shattered cupboard door. Smiles at Tom.

TOM
 Lost it.

SUE
 Not surprised.

She pours water onto two mugs. She looks at Allie's computer propped on the table.

TOM
 I got to do something, Sue!

SUE
 You are doing everything. Suppose
 down-loading dirty pictures will
 only make you blind.

TOM
 Its Als', not sure I even know how
 to switch the blinking thing on -
 let alone 'down-load'.

INT. ALLIE'S ROOM. MOMENTS LATER

Sue sits with Allie. Sips her tea and begins to talk to her.

1987

INT. FARM. KITCHEN. EVENING

Clara is cooking while giving instructions - the children are beaming.

CLARA
 We are having a concert after
 dinner, Mrs Alexander!

MARY
 Is it completely sold out?

CLARA

I think there may be a seat in the stalls. But everyone has got to change and Sarah I want to see you in your pyjamas. Who has my mushrooms?

Sarah comes forward with a plate of cut mushrooms -

CLARA

Thank you. Stirrer?

Stephen comes forward holding a wooden spoon...

CLARA

Good. Now quick as you can.

Mary starts laying the table as the children go upstairs. Clara gives the cooking a stir and then...

CLARA

Won't be a second -

INT. HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS

Clara comes out into the hall. She glances up the stairs. The kids are changing happily. Clara glances back, Mary is busy in the kitchen. Clara scurries fast along the corridor. Goes out and turns into...

INT. ALEC'S OLD OFFICE. CONTINUOUS

Clara comes in. She switches the light and breathing fast goes to the phone. She picks it up and is about to dial when she realises that Mary is standing in the doorway.

MARY

Clara, what are you doing?

CLARA

(fast)

I need to make a telephone call.

MARY

To Dougie Hunter. Yes?

Clara looks at Mary. She is very tense.

MARY

I know what he did.

(Clara is surprised)

Its unforgivable. But don't pick a fight with him.

CLARA

I am getting somewhere, I will win,
now please before the children -

Clara goes to pick up the phone, Mary presses down on the
cradle.

MARY

What about the children Clara?

CLARA

The children are OK.

MARY

You can't just kiss them and cook
them supper and think they are OK -

CLARA

If we don't stop what is going on
there's a real - there's a danger
of hundreds of children...

MARY

I know about the disease, Clara.

CLARA

What do you mean?

MARY

I've seen it.

CLARA

Where?

MARY

Here -

CLARA

Why didn't you tell me?

MARY

You weren't here.

CLARA

Where's the cow now?

MARY

Tom sent it away - Houstons - the
knackerer.

CLARA

(really angry)
Why is Tom keeping all this to
himself?

MARY

He doesn't want to lose his job.
He's got the baby. You are asking
too much of everyone, Clara!

CLARA

If you weren't all so busy
protecting each other something
might change!

MARY

(pushing)

Can't you see what you're doing?
Clara? To the children. And to you?
I've seen the disease but there are
hundreds of diseases cattle get -

CLARA

This is different!

MARY

How do you know? You don't know
what calf scour is, or pinkeye, or
Johne's disease, or foot and mouth?
Do you? Now listen to me, for the
sake of those children, for Alec,
for you. Stop.

Clara looks at her.

INT. LIVING ROOM. LATER

The room is dimly lit. Stephen is playing his guitar. Sarah
sits on Clara's lap. Mary nearby. Camera goes in close to
Clara. She's tense, staring ahead, torn.

EXT. FARM HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

Tom is pushing Allie along in her buggy. Neither of them are
sleeping and he's taken her out. He can hear the guitar
music.

CLARA (OOV)

Bravo really very good, darling.

Another tune starts.

off tom to:

PRESENT DAY

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The television is on in the next room. Allie lies on the sofa, wrapped in a blanket. Staring blankly. Sue sits on the floor. Bag of tortillas between her legs.

SUE
 (imitating, laughing)
 Big Brother would like to talk to
 Derick...she snogged him, Al'. She
 bloody well did too.

Tom is hunched over the computer. He has a modem cable plugged into the wall socket.

TOM
 There. Sue?

SUE
 Is the modem configured?

TOM
 Is the modem configured?

1987

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM. A BIT LATER

Clara is tucking Sarah up in bed.

INT. STEPHEN'S BEDROOM. MOMENTS LATER

~~Stephen is playing still, now in his pyjamas. He finishes.~~

CLARA
 Good. You're really getting very
 good.

Clara takes the guitar and puts it on the chair.

STEPHEN
 I want it to be like before.

CLARA
 It will be. Promise.

STEPHEN
 I'm sorry that I lied to you mum.

CLARA
 (kissing him)
 You were frightened.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. WELL AFTER MIDNIGHT

Allie is asleep. Sue has gone. Tom grunts as he stares at the computer screen. Then he smiles.

TOM
Contacting PPP
server....authenticating user...

His smile turns to a grin and then, finally, a little dance of triumph as he gets on line.

TOM
Authenticating user!
(he reads something on the
screen)
Password? Al' what'd be your
password?

1987

INT. FARM HOUSE. VERY EARLY MORNING

Clara holds her shoes as she slips down the stairs. Camera finds Stephen at the top of the stairs watching her go. Dark, brooding eyes.

EXT. FARM HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER

Clara gets into the car.

PRESENT DAY

EXT. DOVER. MEMORIAL PARK. EARLY MORNING

Tom looks ashen as he pushes Allie in a wheel-chair. She is wrapped in a blanket. He is determined. The sea glints in the early light. The white cliffs shimmer above him. Camera goes in close.

TOM
(realizing the password)
White cliffs? Its that, isn't it?

INT. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER. DAY

Teddy Aspinall stands nervously. He has two brief-cases stuffed with material and is wearing his prehistoric mac'. Magnificent but scruffy. Moments later, Clara arrives at the top of the stairs, again dressed for London she is approaching Teddy when Ian Blacklaw comes towards her.

IAN BLACKLAW
 (kissing her)
 Clara, how delightful. What are you
 doing here?

CLARA
 I thought your spies would have
 told you?

IAN BLACKLAW
 (laughing)
 Spies? Whatever for?

He gestures at Teddy.

IAN BLACKLAW
 (of Teddy)
 Those that are about to die salute
 you.
 (back to Clara)
 Remember, in the end Clara, that
 you are one of us.

He goes. Clara goes to Teddy.

CLARA
 (smiling)
 Professor how are you?

TEDDY
 Nervous.

CLARA
 I'm sure when they hear the
 evidence.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TOM'S KITCHEN. DAY

Tom is spooning yoghurt into Allie's mouth as he surfs the
 net.

TOM
 There's pages of it. Pages: BSE/
 CJD. It's in France - Germany!
 Japan...
 (reading)
 The latest figure for cases of vCJD
 in the UK have been released by the
 Department of Health. The September
 2002 figures show a new total of
 127 vCJD cases (definite and
 probable) of which 12 are still
 alive.

TOM(cont'd)

This represents an increase in the total of two cases over the past month...

He wipes the yoghurt from Allie's chin.

TOM

My beautiful girl.

1987

INT. SELECT COMMITTEE. DAY

Everyone is taking their seats. Teddy faces a Parliamentary Select Committee. The PSC chairman is a Conservative Grandee, he is flanked by MP's. A handful of people, including Clara, sit in the observer's seats. Blacklaw stands at the back of the room. Two Civil Servants with him. Clara looks up, Rita (the MAFF civil servant) sits. She ignores Clara.

TEDDY

(introducing himself)

Professor Teddy Aspinall. I am an epidemiologist. I have a special interest in novel diseases and their uptake.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

Thank you Professor. We have already had submissions from both the Ministry of Agriculture, Farming and Fisheries, the Veterinary Services and the Department of Health. They all re-assure us that this Bovine Spongiform Enc... I say you chaps do come up with some mouthfulls... is harmless to humans. But you differ?

TEDDY

Yes.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

As you say you have an interest in 'novel' diseases, perhaps you'd like to tell the committee why you differ?

Hold on Clara.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. DAY

Allie is now on the sofa. Tom is still at the computer. The printer hums. He has pasted documents up on the kitchen units.

TOM

Dear Sir, my daughter Alison has recently been diagnosed I believe...No. Dear Sir - I am looking for a cure...

1987

INT. SELECT COMMITTEE. DAY

Teddy has just finished his submission.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

Are you sure you haven't been reading too much science fiction, Professor Aspinall?

Clara tensions. Others laugh.

TEDDY

Sir, I am trying to point out that there is an indefinable risk...

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

An indefinable risk, with no evidence of threat -

TEDDY

I'm not sure, sir, that absence of evidence can be read as evidence of absence. I have figures here...

He reaches down for some papers from his case.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

(dismissing this)

However compelling your figures are. Statistics, damn statistics and lies.

(general laughter)

You yourself said and we have heard again and again this afternoon of sheep suffering from scrappie -

(he looks at his notes)

That sheep have had scrappie for the last two hundred and fifty years and not once has the disease crossed to humans...

TEDDY

BSE and scrappie may be similar,
but they are not the same.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

Similar? But not the same?
Different. Can you prove that.

TEDDY

The Government is making it
virtually impossible to prove
anything.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

How so, Professor?

TEDDY

By prohibiting us getting access to
the infected material.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

Surely quarantining infected
animals is a wise precaution, by
your logic, Professor?

TEDDY

(flustered)

Yes but we need sick cows to see
whats making them sick!

Clara looks down, Teddy's not holding his ground.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

Would you eat beef, Professor
Aspinall?

Teddy stares at him.

TEDDY

I can't see what that has to do
with my evidence?

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE

Would you?

TEDDY

I'm a vegetarian, sir.

The Grandee smiles.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TOM'S HOUSE FRONT DOOR. DAY

Tom open the front door. Sue stands there.

TOM
Sue - listen thanks.

SUE
What you talking about!

INT. BEDROOM. A LITTLE LATER

Allie lies propped up on the bed. She is surrounded by Beckham Posters, not that she'd know it. Tom is showing Sue where everything is...

TOM
There's wet wipes here.
He produces a box full of Jumbo packs...

SUE
You been to the cash and carry?

INT. GARAGE. A LITTLE LATER

A small garage beside the house. Tom reverses the car out.

INT. KITCHEN. MOMENTS LATER

Tom opens the airing cupboard. Sue stares at the room. It is covered in print outs from the Internet. Telephone numbers have been scribbled on the fridge.

TOM
Track suit trousers. Three. T-shirts. There. I don't think Al' likes the pink one.

SUE
OK -

TOM
You're going to be OK?

Sue smiles.

TOM
The car's outside. If anything happens you can put Al' in the car. I've told the Surgery and the numbers on the board -

SUE
Tom.

TOM
Yeah?

SUE
 I'm a big girl, you know.
 (Tom blushes)
 You're sure this man knows what
 he's talking about?

1987

INT. SELECT COMMITTEE. DAY

The atmosphere in the room is tense.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 And Professor what do you think of
 British farming since, say, the
 Second World War?

TEDDY
 I am here to give my evidence on
 Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 And I am here to spot axes being
 ground.

Laughter, Clara stares furiously.

PRESENT DAY

INT/EXT. COACH. DAY

Tom sits on an intercity coach. Stark, ordered, rural
 landscape whizzes past the windows.

1987

INT. SELECT COMMITTEE. DAY

~~—————~~ TEDDY
 (unhappy)
 It has certainly been intensive.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 But has British Agriculture been a
 success?

TEDDY
 'Success' would depend on your
 criteria.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 And you have your own criteria;
 some other way of judging it?

TEDDY
 (repeating his defence)
 I am in front of the Select
 Committee, sir, to give my expert
 advice on Bovine Spongiform
 Encephalopathy, not farming in
 general.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 Surely one informs the other?

Pause. The two men are at deadlock. Clara looks down.

TEDDY
 (very carefully)
 I think, sir, that farming has been
 placed under particular pressure.
 This has led to an erosion in
 traditional techniques. This,
 coming hand in hand with
 deregulation has led to a
 potentially dangerous...

Clara looks at Rita, Rita looks away.

INT. RUN DOWN MEDICAL SCHOOL. DAY

Students come and go. After a moment the camera discovers
 Tom, dressed in his Sunday best. He looks out of place.

INT. SELECT COMMITTEE. DAY

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 Professor, the committee
 understands that you were recently
 deported from the United States?

Teddy is now miserable.

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 Why was that?

TEDDY
 I was trying to get scientific
 material to colleagues...

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 By smuggling a cow's head in your
 hand luggage?

Generally consternation and surprise.

TEDDY
 (over the hubbub)
 Yes I was trying to find out what
 we are dealing with!

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 Thank you, Professor. You have been
 most forthcoming.

TEDDY
 This is potentially a real threat
 to public health -

CONSERVATIVE GRANDEE
 And we are taking it very
 seriously. But you will understand
 we have to distinguish the various
 cranks and lobbies that come before
 us from the real thing.

He smiles. Teddy stands and picks up his still unopened
 briefcases. He goes to the door.

PRESENT DAY

INT. RUN DOWN MEDICAL SCHOOL. DAY

Teddy emerges from a lecture room. The transformation in him
 is shocking. Fifteen years later, he looks thirty years
 older. Tom is standing looking very uneasy.

TOM
 Professor Aspinall?

TEDDY
 Yes?

TOM
 I - er we e-mailed each other. You
 said you'd be able to talk to...
 that I could talk to you.

TEDDY
 Yes, of course. How is Alison?

Tom stares at him - stunned that someone else should even be
 thinking of her, let alone knowing her name.

TOM
 She's good. She's fine.

TEDDY
 (knowing that she's not)
 That is good.

INT. PALACE OF WESTMINSTER. DAY

Clara comes out of the Select Committee to see Teddy going fast down the broad stairs. She catches up with him.

CLARA

That was outrageous. I've never seen anything like it. I mean damn them.

Teddy turns and looks at her.

TEDDY

It's a way of governing, Mrs Alexander. Excuse me.

He goes. Clara turns. Rita and some Civil Servants are walking down past her.

CLARA

Miss!

Rita turns. The other Civil Servants hover.

RITA

Yes?

CLARA

Clara Alexander we me -

RITA

(staring at her)

No I don't think so. I've never met you before.

She goes. Clara stands stunned.

EXT. WESTMINSTER. MOMENTS LATER

Rita and her colleagues are outside the Houses of Parliament. Rita sees Clara approaching.

Rita

(making an excuse)

I've er Chemist...

Clara follows. Rita speeds up, but Clara is fast. Rita dodges across the traffic. Clara is onto her... Rita glances back... Desperate not to look conspicuous, Rita moves fast through the crowd. All the while Clara is gaining.

INT. TOURIST SHOP. MOMENTS LATER

Filled with Union Jack Post Cards, images of the Queen and Mrs Thatcher. Rita pretends to pick a post-card.

RITA
(sharp)
Please leave me alone.

CLARA
No look - I have had another cow
with the disease. It is only a
matter of time before we get
another and if you tell me who else-

RITA
Please.

CLARA
The local press on the Borders are
running an article. That will be
picked up nationally.

RITA
(sharp)
Don't you understand anything Mrs
Alexander?

CLARA
Well at least you recognise me! We
have got to stop this.

RITA
They know who you are.

CLARA
All I want is some serious research
to be done -

RITA
You frighten them -

CLARA
That is absurd.

RITA
When you speak. People like you.
You are going to get heard.

CLARA
Well I don't jolly well mind
shouting!

RITA
(interrupting)
You should be very careful.

RITA(cont'd)

They will find a way, Mrs Alexander
and they will silence you.

She slips past Clara and out. Hold on Clara - disbelief.

PRESENT DAY

INT. BIRMINGHAM BUS STATION. AFTERNOON

Wide angle - a million people going a million ways. Closer,
Teddy and Tom face each other over a cafe table.

INT. CAFE. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

TOM

...what about this quinacaine?

TEDDY

(carefully)

There have been tests. I think
maybe, in time, it will - they will
find a way to balance it so that it
helps but doesn't do so much
damage...

TOM

What damage? I mean Al's damaged
already -

TEDDY

It damages the patient's liver.

TOM

(grinning)

She can stop drinking!

TEDDY

It kills them, Tom.

TOM

What about this cluster in
Leicestershire - isn't there
something in that?

TEDDY

I don't know. I don't see how they
can be put down to the way one or
two butchers operated. If it did
we'd have other clusters around
other butchers who did the same
kind of things. I think its more
likely to do with exposure to
another factor -

Tom looks away.

TOM
So there's nothing I can do?

TEDDY
Well by the sounds of things you
are doing fantastically.

Tom clenches his fist.

TOM
It's not right.

1987

EXT. FARM. LATE AFTERNOON

Clara pulls up and gets out of her car. She notices a smart car parked beside the farm house. She moves fast...

INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Clara comes in. The children sit at the table. Their eyes locked on their homework, Mary comes upto Clara...

MARY
I didn't know what to do -

Clara sniffs - almost feral. She follows her nose into...

INT. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Dougie sits smoking.

CLARA
What are you doing here?

DOUGIE
(without taking his eyes
off her)
How was the dentist? Frightful.
They inflict pain without batting
an eye-lid. I often think I'd have
been happier if I lived a hundred
years ago and then I think of the
dentistry.

CLARA
Get out of my house.

DOUGIE
You have got to distinguish, Clara,
your friends from your enemies.

CLARA
Do you know what you did to my
children!?

DOUGIE
What I did?

CLARA
(shouting)
Get out of my house!

Stephen appear in the doorway behind Clara.

DOUGIE
I think its time we got things a
little clearer, Clara.

Dougie is holding Alec's diary.

CLARA
What are you doing with that?

Dougie's eye catches Stephen behind his mother, Clara turns.

CLARA
Its OK darling - its OK. Mary?

Mary appears, takes Stephen away. She is furious with Clara,
furious with Dougie. In a fast, deft move Dougie closes the
door.

CLARA
I want you to go -

DOUGIE
(ignoring her)
Does the name Monica McKee mean
anything to you? She's what school
boys in their wicked humour might
call 'an old bike'.

The blood drains from Clara's face. Its clear this is going
somewhere nasty.

DOUGIE
I suspect there isn't a chap who's
grown up around here who hasn't had
a go on poor old Monica: present
company excepted of course.

He opens the diary.

DOUGIE
(reading)
Monday - nothing - Tuesday, pencil
hieroglyphic: phone vet, do VAT?

DOUGIE(cont'd)

I find that its often only wives
can read a husbands handwriting
while no-one else on earth can...

He holds up the diary for Clara to read.

DOUGIE

Wednesday - now here! Thursday
eleven o'clock M. And here a week
later: M. You've got this very
wrong. Alec's suicide had nothing
to do with some sick cows, Clara -
(beat)

I think his marriage was on the
rocks and he was spending his
Thursday mornings with a whore. In
the end that's enough to persuade a
chap to put a nylon line around his
neck -

Hold on Clara -

PRESENT DAY

INT. CAFE. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

TOM

Maybe there are loads more cases -
the GP's aren't spotting it - Allie
was put on anti-depressants.

TEDDY

I think there's been some mis-
diagnosis.

TOM

(emotions bubbling near
the surface)
Perhaps they are calling it
Alzheimers, I don't know?

TEDDY

Certainly, they don't know how many
people are carrying vJD in the
population: there is concern about
the blood supply - why else import
ALL plasma for children under
three?

The blood runs from Tom's face - he'd completely forgotten.

TOM

My coach - oh heavens, what time?

Tom stands fast, followed by Teddy.

TEDDY
We've been here three hours...

INT. BUS STATION. CONTINUOUS

Tom and Teddy move as fast as they can between the coaches...

TOM
(searching for his bus)
Number 26. Dover. What about the
Americans? aren't they nearer to a
cure?

Teddy is not as young as a he was but he's moving with Tom.

TEDDY
They always took it more seriously
than we did - wouldn't you? Their
beef industry is worth nearly one
hundred billion dollars; that's
larger than most of the small
countries on the planet. No, they
had every cow that had even thought
of the UK immediately quarantined
onto Plumb Island in 1987, within a
month of the disease being
notified. Number 26 - Yes?

Teddy points at a bus. The doors are closing.

TOM
(shouting)
Hang on - hang on mate.

TEDDY
Run -

TOM
What about foot and mouth I want to
know -

The doors close.

TEDDY
I'll e-mail you.

Tom turns and runs towards the reversing bus.

TOM
I've got to get home!

The bus turns slowly and with a cloud of diesel exhaust,
goes. Tom is left in the middle of the oily concourse.

EXT. STREET. BIRMINGHAM. MOMENTS LATER

Tom is on his mobile phone. Teddy's nearby. There's a strange howling in the background.

TOM

... There's some biscuits. She likes it if you dip them in warm milk...

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Sue is on the phone. The TV's on. Allie lies wrapped in a blanket, howling.

SUE

Its OK, Tom. Really. Del'll bring me some fish'n'chips. Do you want to say goodnight?

EXT. STREET. BIRMINGHAM. CONTINUOUS

TOM

Yes.

The howling gets louder.

TOM

Hello darling.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

~~Sue holds the phone to Allie who howls.~~

TOM (O.S.)

I phoned to say I loved you.

1987

INT. CLARA'S CAR. NIGHT

The car swings uncomfortably down the narrow lanes. The children sit in the back. Clara glances up. There is something new in Clara: she is hurtling forward now, emotionally. She is grey in the night light.

EXT. EDGE OF VILLAGE. NIGHT

Camera inside the car with the kids. Clara has pulled up outside a scruffy parade of shops and is in a chip shop. A couple of kids do wheelies between her and the car.

The scene is lit by the sulphur glow of neon. Clara is gesticulating, asking for something. The chippie, finally, leads her out of the shop and point down the road. Giving directions. The focus comes back to her children.

EXT. ROW OF HOUSES. A LITTLE LATER

The houses are poor - rural desperation. Clara stands in front of a house. She is pressing a bell. It rings and rings. The children are in the car. Finally, a woman in track suit trousers and a cardigan opens the front door. She is shocked to see Clara there.

CLARA
Mrs McKee?

MONICA
Yes?

She is surprisingly dignified.

CLARA
Hello - I'm Clara Alexander.

MONICA
I know who you are.

Clara's exhausted. Tears are forming.

INT. MONICA'S HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER

Clara and children stand uneasily in the lounge.

MONICA
Do you like coke, Sarah?

Clara and the children look up surprised that she knows their names.

SARAH
(shy)
Mum -

CLARA
Just water, please.

MONICA
What about you Stephen?

STEPHEN
I don't want to be here.

Monica looks at him. She sees something of his father, she smiles.

MONICA

No.

INT. MONICA'S HOUSE. A LITTLE LATER

Sarah and Stephen sit in front of a TV in the kitchen/diner. Clara sits uneasily in an arm-chair. Monica lights a cigarette.

MONICA

What did you want bringing them here?

CLARA

I don't - I can't trust them with anyone.

Pause.

CLARA

I can't really see Alec, here.

Pause.

MONICA

He loved you if that's what you needed to know.

Clara looks up, surprised.

CLARA

(finally)
Thank you.
(pause, tentative)
I suppose I never really understood how frustrated he was?

Something makes the children laugh on the TV. The women look up. A question hangs between the women.

MONICA

Actually he hardly ever had sex with me.

Clara stares at her stunned.

MONICA

Who told you about me?

CLARA

So what did he come here for?

Monica looks at her.

MONICA

He came to talk.

CLARA
 (worse than him coming for
 sex)

Oh.

MONICA
 Do you want a drink?

CLARA
 Yes. I'm sure.

moments later:

Clara drinks her drink in one gulp.

CLARA
 Gosh.

Monica lights another cigarette. The light is long and shadowy.

CLARA
 What did he talk about?

Clara looks up.

MONICA
 You, sometimes. The kids. Was I a surprise?

CLARA
 What? Yes - I suppose somehow one knows thing deep down but doesn't let ones self... And spend a lot of energy denying them.
 (changing tack)
 He left a letter.

Monica is now surprised.

CLARA
 In it... In it he talked about shame? What was he ashamed of?

Monica looks up, Stephen has turned cautiously and is looking at them. Monica stands and gently closes a glass door between the lounge and the kitchen.

MONICA
 He had always wanted Stephen to take over the farm. Like he had. Like his father had but I think... But he said...

She looks at Clara.

MONICA

He was drinking also. You didn't notice?

Clara nods, no.

MONICA

Like a lot of them, he said farming had been taken away from him. Had been cursed. He knew that there was no going back but he couldn't stay where he was.

(she stands)

He didn't know what to do and when the first cow got ill - he came to me that Thursday. He knew, do you understand? He knew that this was something new. Then -

She looks at Clara.

MONICA

He thought that it came from the chemicals, or the feed, he knew that it came from something that he had done. Something that he had given his cows to increase their yield. Something unnatural. He came here. I'd never seen him like it. He was so angry, so tired.

CLARA

(desperate)

But why didn't he talk to me. Together we could have done something.

Monica looks at her. She wants to say Alec couldn't talk to Clara, but holds her silence: just the TV in the background.

CLARA

(fighting back tears,
understanding Monica's
silence)

He was so bloody stoical.

MONICA

I'm sorry.

CLARA

I'm not going to leave it there.

MONICA

He said you were like a gladiator - going into battle.

CLARA
I have to do something, don't you
understand?

Monica looks at her, more piteous than anything.

CLARA
Thank you, Mrs McKee.

Clara goes and opens the lounge door.

CLARA
We ought to get you chaps to bed...

MONICA
(alarmed)
You'll be... You're alright?

CLARA
We're fine. Come along -

PRESENT DAY

INT. TEDDY'S FLAT. NIGHT

The flat is small and very tidy. The hall is lined with shelves, the shelves strain with pamphlets, box files, magazines. Numerous locks are turned before the door opens. Teddy leads Tom in. A cat miaows.

TEDDY
I'm sorry we're not used to
visitors.

TOM
Er if this is a problem I'm sure I
can get some shut eye at the bus
station.

Tom follows Teddy into the heart of the flat. The rooms are lined with books, a computer sits on a desk. The windows have bars on the inside.

TOM
You certainly take your security
seriously.

TEDDY
Would you like some tea? I have
something stronger, somewhere,
something green, I think?

TOM
No tea's fine.

Teddy goes into a small kitchen.

TEDDY

Pick up the phone, please.

Tom picks up the phone.

TEDDY

What do you hear?

TOM

The dialling noise.

TEDDY

No echo?

Tom listens closer. He looks up, bemused. There is an echo.

TEDDY

For work that is constantly
discredited and mocked they
certainly keep an eye on me.

TOM

Who?

Teddy vanishes back into the kitchen.

TEDDY (O.S.)

Whoever breaks in. Taps my phone.
Hacks into my computer.
(Teddy is feeding his cat)
Here you are.

Tom follows him into the kitchen. Tom looks past him - just natural curiosity - on a board in the kitchen are a series of newspaper clippings. On one of them, yellow and frayed, is a photograph of Clara standing in the farm in 1987. Tom freezes. Teddy is oblivious. The kettle boils.

TEDDY

We live, I fear, in a country in
which we feel free so long as we
don't step out of line. If we do.
Milk?

TOM

(in shock)
What? Yes please. Three sugars.

Teddy walks past Tom back into the small sitting room and sits.

TEDDY

You OK?

TOM

Very tired.

TEDDY
 Of course, look -
 (he stands.)
 I'll get a blanket and a pillow.

TOM
 No I want you, please, to tell me
 how this all started?

1987

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Clara is tucking Sarah up when the child turns away.

CLARA
 Sarah?

Pause. Clara pats the bundle in the bed. Stands and goes.

INT. HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS

Stephen's door is closed.

EXT. THE FARM. NIGHT

A mist is rising.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TEDDY'S FLAT. NIGHT

Tom is watching Teddy intently, he is telling him his story.

TEDDY
 In 1990, after six years of every
 Government scientist pronouncing
 there was no danger of the disease
 crossing species...
 (on cue the cat leaps onto
 his lap)
 ...a domestic cat exhibited TSE
 symptoms and died. Now, everyone
 realized that oh Lord it can cross
 species but hey relax only to cats
 and only in very rare cases. And
 besides, they argued, by this time
 they had got the disease totally
 licked so cat or no cat the farmers
 and the meat industry could go on
 exactly as it was.

TEDDY(cont'd)

The Minister of Agriculture fed his child a hamburger on TV to prove how safe it was. And all the time people went on eating beef. Innocent, trusting, honest people took them at their word -

He stands.

TEDDY

I'm sorry I get very angry, you see I don't think... I don't know... I don't think those in power took responsibility. They could have done something but it went against everything about the way they thought. 'De-regulation', 'the marketplace', 'every man to himself'. Then, in 1994 a sixteen year old girl - Victoria Rimmer - contracted a strange terrible new brain disease. New Variant CJD. No more hamburgers in front of the TV. Now the agony begins. It didn't need to be like that. If they had listened. If they weren't so obsessed with self interest -

Tom is sweating. Teddy continues.

TEDDY

No whatever they say now Tom, whatever line they spin you, they did everything in their power to protect beef - and the farmers - and the feed industry. And they are still ignoring BSE now! I mean look at foot and mouth. Some of those carcasses MUST be carrying the prion. You make a pyre of them and you guarantee the prion has a safe journey onto the water table. A prion that is virtually indestructible! And then they say there's no significant sign of the disease but I say...

(shouting)

Of course there's no sign: we are slaughtering the herd before the time we know the disease takes to incubate!

He looks at Tom who is ashen. Teddy smiles.

TEDDY

Sorry - you look like... I'm sorry, Tom. Tea?

TOM

No. No, I'm fine.

TEDDY

I have given this my life, you understand. And often people like you - with children - come to me and there's nothing I can say!

TOM

Why is it in France, Italy, Africa, Japan now?

TEDDY

OK OK. The feed - the feed that triggered all this off was banned after a fashion and slowly in 1988. A venerable Government Committee met and concluded eventually what we had been saying for nearly three years was correct. BSE was caused by feeding animals - grass eating animals - feed enhanced with protein that came from other animals. The feed is in pellets...

TOM

Yeah I've seen the feed.

TEDDY

Have you? Well when they finally banned it the feed manufacturers did a deal with the Government and exported all the feed they had left.

(slight pause)

They guaranteed that it became a global disease.

Tom is sitting with his face in his hands.

TOM

Oh God.

TEDDY

(surprised at him)

Tom?

TOM

Were you ever married, Professor?

TEDDY

I was but we soon discovered it was a case of mistaken identity. Are you OK?

Tom looks at him.

TOM

My Hel' she left me. Long time ago now. Her boys must be twelve and ten now - I think she's happy, started again. Nice enough bloke. Can't get her to come and see Allie.

(there are tears in his eyes)

You see Professor I used to work on a farm. I threw it all in after... Worked for a florist. But I used to work on a farm -

He looks at Teddy.

1987

EXT. THE ROADS ABOVE THE FARM. JUST BEFORE DAWN

It's incredibly misty. Out of the gloom we can just make out the single light of a motorbike. It stops on the road. Camera in close: it is Tom. He looks up and down the road. Then we hear a deep rumbling.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TEDDY'S FLAT. NIGHT

Tom looks at Teddy.

TOM

I didn't want to lose what I had, I believed that it was for the best... I wanted everything for Hel' and Al'. I was just a farm labourer but we wanted so much for Allie. Hel' - she always wanted the best. A new settee, new clothes, a new buggy for Allie. But I was just a farm labourer.

1987

EXT. GATES. MOMENTS LATER

~~The mist is still impenetrable.~~ Tom opens the gates. He looks up. The rumbling is getting closer.

INT. CLARA'S BEDROOM. JUST BEFORE DAWN

Clara is asleep. The rumble...

INT. MARY'S ROOM. MOMENTS LATER

In the half light Mary is pulling on a dressing gown.

TOM (V.O.)

You see I did what they said. I was frightened when I found Mr Alec hanging I didn't know what to do. I phoned Mr Hunter. He came before the Police. He told me to get rid of everything. The herd records, the whiskey, Mr Alec's letter. I put everything on the fire but I kept Mr Alec's letter. I don't know why. I suppose I knew it was wrong. But once I done that, I had to do what they said...

EXT. THE FARM. MOMENTS LATER

Out of the mist, three trucks rumble towards the cow sheds.

INT. KITCHEN. MOMENTS LATER

Mary runs through the kitchen. In the mist she can just make out figures clambering out of the truck...

INT. CLARA'S BEDROOM. MOMENT LATER

Sarah stands in the doorway, in her nightie.

SARAH

Mummy I'm frightened

Clara wakes with a start.

EXT. THE MILKING SHEDS. MOMENTS LATER

Mary runs through the mist and walks bang into Tom.

MARY

Tom? What's going on?

TOM

It's alright, Mrs Alexander.

INT. STAIRCASE. FARM. MOMENTS LATER

Clara is running down fast. The rumble is now dominant.

CLARA
Sarah - you stay there.

INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS

Mary is coming back into the house as Clara runs out.

CLARA
What's happening?

MARY
I don't know.

EXT. THE YARD AND THE MILKING SHEDS. CONTINUOUS

Camera with Clara as she runs out. The mist is obscuring everything but we can just make out strange white figures.

CLARA
(shouting)
What are you doing?

As Clara gets closer she can see men in protective clothing with breathing apparatus. The cow sheds are being opened and the cows pulled out.

CLARA
(shouting)
What are you doing?! Get off my land!

Mary comes running up behind her.

MARY
There's men in the house, they said they need to talk to you.

CLARA
Call the Police. I'm going to stop this -

MARY
They told me not to!

Clara runs back down to the milking sheds. The cows are now alarmed, the mist is still impenetrable. Tom comes around the corner

CLARA
Tom! Thank heavens. What's going on?

He looks at her, he is holding deep emotions in check.

TOM
I'm sorry Mrs Alexander. It's for
the best.

He turns and goes...

TOM
(calling)
That's my Bessie Smith, good
girl...

INT. FARM HOUSE. MOMENTS LATER

Clara comes in fast. Stephen now stands blurry in the
kitchen, Sarah is with Mary.

INT. BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS. CONTINUOUS

Clara is just about to pick up the phone when she realizes
that there is a man standing in her living room.

SUIT I
Mrs Alexander?

CLARA
(pulling her dressing gown
around her)
Who are you?

SUIT I
Ministry of Agriculture Farming and
Fisheries. We'd like you to sign
this, please?

CLARA
What's going on?

SUIT I
We have reason to believe that this
farm is harbouring Bovine
Spongiform Encephalopathy. Under
the Animal Health Act 1981 we are
removing your herd for compulsory
slaughter.

Clara is stunned.

SUIT I
We require you to sign this, Mrs
Alexander.

CLARA
What is it?

SUIT I

Your agreement to have the herd culled.

CLARA

But I don't agree.

SUIT I

Under current Emergency legislation you don't haven't a choice.

CLARA

Who told you to do this?

Clara senses movement behind her, turns. It is Dougie Hunter, he smiles warmly.

DOUGIE

Gentlemen, there's tea and sandwiches outside the quarantine area. Mrs Alexander has been through hell and high water and I'm sure this will all feel like the last straw, won't it Clara?

The men from MAFF go.

DOUGIE

We thought breakfast was the least we could offer. Have you actually tried on that breathing apparatus. Horrible.

CLARA

BSE can't be transmitted through the air. You can't take away my cows.

DOUGIE

I'm not taking anything away. This has got nothing to do with me! I'm here as a good neighbour. Momentous times, need good neighbours. But they are taking your disease frightfully seriously. What more did you want?

CLARA

Why?

Dougie doesn't understand her.

CLARA

Why are you doing this?

DOUGIE

We wanted you to stop. We wanted you to let us handle this. It's a country matter, you know. The country - the heart of old England.

He carefully puts the Border Times on the table. On it a photograph of Clara.

DOUGIE

You made the front page.

It is the same page Teddy has pinned in his flat.

PRESENT DAY

INT. TEDDY'S FLAT. NIGHT

Tom sits holding the cutting. Teddy stands nearby.

TOM

They made a fool of her. Even then, even when they did the article it was about her grief, about how Mr Alexander had hung himself. It wasn't about the cows.

The camera drops onto the head-line: RURAL TRAGEDY

1987

INT. MODERN MILKING PARLOUR. LATER

It is ghastly. Completely deserted. Clara comes in. She is shivering.

TOM (V.O.)

The truth is... The truth is I lied to her, Professor. Helen told Mr Hunter everything she was doing. He gave us money.

Split, empty, feed bags with Redulit Inc printed on them scrunch under Clara's feet. There's a noise. She turns. Tom stands with a broom, looking lame, pointless. Clara looks at him with absolute contempt. She walks past him...

PRESENT DAY

INT. TEDDY'S FLAT. DAWN

~~Tom faces Teddy.~~

TOM

But it wasn't just about the money. Hel' - I mean you can understand her - she wanted more than I could ever give her. But for me - I just wanted to hang onto something I had. A way of living. I know, now, you can't do that...

PRESENT DAY

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE. DOVER. DAY

Tom - dressed as he was with Teddy - gets out of a mini-cab and walks fast upto the house. Takes out his keys and is about to open the door when Allie comes out. She's dressed in her shortest mini-skirt...

ALLIE

Hi-bye.

She kisses him and totters down the street.

ALLIE

Love you more if I wasn't late for work.

Tom turns back to the door, goes in...

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Continuous shot - Allie is on the sofa, wrapped in a blanket. Dribbling and nearly comatose. Sue is fast asleep, with an arm around Allie. The room is covered in detritus - Chip papers, girlie mags, mingle with wet wipes, the plastic sheeting. Calmly, Tom starts to tidy up.

1987

EXT. WESTMINSTER. QEII CONFERENCE CENTRE. DAY

The Palace of Westminster deep in shot. A line of people are going into the Conference Centre. Clara emerges from a taxi. She is again dressed for London, but is gaunt.

INT. QE II CONFERENCE CENTRE. DAY

Tables are lined across the lobby. Clara is signing in at one. She faces a Security woman.

SECURITY

I'm afraid you're not on the list,
madam.

CLARA

I am a share holder.

She holds up the folder she took to the bank.

SECURITY

Share holders were asked to fill in
one of these forms, Mrs Alexander.

She holds up form

CLARA

(very polite)

Silly me. Couldn't we make an
exception in this case?

SECURITY

No, I'm very sorry. Its policy.

She smiles glacially at Clara who smiles back.

CLARA

(reading her badge)

Mrs Johnstone, I'm sorry to be
blunt but do you actually need your
job?

SECURITY

What?

CLARA

Because if you're here for pleasure
I completely understand your
position, if not...

The Security woman stares at her and then stands.

SECURITY

I'll go and check if there's
anything we can do.

CLARA

That is a first rate idea.

As soon as the Security woman's back is turned Clara takes a
card with a share-holder's number on it.

INT. QE II CONFERENCE HALL. DAY

On the stage a table, with microphones and glasses. A vast
projector screen behind it. Camera finds Clara in the middle
of the hall, making her way along a row of seats.

She glances around. Back of the hall, Security men are looking for her. Clara sits. Looks up, she has been spotted and stands.

CLARA
Frightfully sorry -

Voice of a Famous British Actor booms, he has been employed to introduce the Redulit Share Holders Annual Meeting...

FAMOUS BRITISH ACTOR (V.O.)
We are proud that the last year has seen sustained growth in all our activities. Across the globe people are benefiting from our work in fields as diverse as agro-chemicals, pharmaceuticals and - one for the ladies - cosmetics...

Clara sidles along a row, to get away from the Security men. At the end are a group of Share Holders. Clara charges up.

CLARA
Edward!

The Share Holders look nonplussed.

CLARA
I'm frightfully sorry. You must have an identical twin. Clara Alexander...

She holds out her hand.

SHARE-HOLDER
Three sisters, I'm afraid.

They shake.

FAMOUS BRITISH ACTOR (V.O.)
And so without further ado, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you to your tireless board of directors.

The Share Holder, as Clara anticipated, lets her into the row first. Applause. The Chairman - Eddie Young - is at the microphone, reading the annual statement.

EDDIE YOUNG
1987 has been a good year for Redulit. We have seen growth in existing market areas and considerable penetration in new ones and with our advances in technology we can safely say we look forward to achieving, if not exceeding, our goals for...

Camera in close. She glances around. Security is searching.

EDDIE YOUNG
... the next year and can reassure
you our share-holders of healthy
and increasing profits...

Security have spotted Clara. She raises her hand.

CLARA
Excuse me... Excuse me -

She is having to project across the hall.

EDDIE YOUNG
There will be a chance to put
questions from the floor shortly.

CLARA
Yes, thank you - but this really is
rather urgent. I would like to know
what our position on animal feed
is?

EDDIE YOUNG
We are coming onto agriculture in
section... section, what section is
it Sandy?

CLARA
Particularly bovine material being
included in cattle feed?

Members of the Board look bemused. Security move towards Clara.

EDDIE YOUNG
Now if I may -

CLARA
I really think this must go to the
top of the agenda.

The audience around Clara have all become very British, ignoring what is going on.

EDDIE YOUNG
Can we proceed in an orderly
manner?

CLARA
(her voice quivering)
I'm sorry but I have been trying to
proceed in an orderly manner for
months but I have been brushed
aside, threatened and ignored.

CLARA(cont'd)

What is going in Britain at the moment is terrifying...

Another member of the Board now takes the microphone.

OTHER MEMBER

Security please -

Security people are trying to get to Clara. The Share Holder next to Clara is looking at her aghast.

CLARA

I am so sorry.

Back to the crowd.

CLARA

This company of which I am a share holder - this company that goes back to making Soap for Queen Victoria - is involved in potentially one of the greatest health scandals...

Security are now at the end of Clara's row. Shareholders stand to let them in.

CLARA

(now strident)

Unwittingly, ladies and gentlemen, you - we - are all shareholders in a company that is producing animal feed that is being linked with an epidemic in cows called Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy.

(glancing at Security)

I suspect most of you have never heard of it. However, our government knows what is going on, and are doing nothing -

EDDIE YOUNG

The feed containing MBM ...

CLARA

That's meat and bonemeal, ladies and gentleman -

EDDIE YOUNG

...is in the process of being removed!

CLARA

At last! But the damage is done -

ANOTHER SHAREHOLDER

What damage?

CLARA

A lot of cows have become ill but
that isn't my point -

AGGRESSIVE SHAREHOLDER

What is your point?

The Security men are now a couple of seats from Clara.

CLARA

My point is this. When this disease
spreads to human beings as many
serious scientists believe it will,
and when the link between our feed
is established...

One of the security men goes to grab her, but the Share
Holder who let Clara in stands.

SHARE-HOLDER

I think we'd better hear her out,
don't you?

CLARA

Thank you.

(back to the hall)

When that link is established and
using even the most optimistic
figures hundreds of people are
dying don't you think they will
want to know the cause? And when
they know the cause don't you think
they are going to take big rich
companies like ours - like Redulit
Inc. - to Court.

Consternation.

CLARA

Because when their lovers, the
mothers of their children, their
husbands, their sons, their
daughters are dying are they going
to be sympathetic to the FACT that
our share dividend went up twenty
two percent year on year right
through the decade in which they
were all infected.

(slight pause)

I think not.

(slight pause)

I think they will seek compensation
for their terrible loss.

There's now stillness in the hall.

EDDIE YOUNG
 (finally)
 There is no evidence of the link
 between our feed and BSE...

CLARA
 Yet, Lord Young.

EDDIE YOUNG
 BSE cannot cross species!

CLARA
 Do you know that Lord Young?

Shareholders start to murmur amongst themselves.

CLARA
 (to fellow share holders)
 It is our responsibility, ladies
 and gentlemen. We must take
 responsibility.

As Clara goes on talking it becomes a montage. First out on
 the street to a group of journalists, then in a radio
 station, then to a TV studio...

EXT. QE II CONFERENCE CENTRE. DAY

Clara is being photographed while talking to a group of
 Journalists...

CLARA
 What I am talking about is the
 responsibility for putting profit
 before everything.

INT. RADIO STATION. DAY

CLARA
 The demand for cheap food, no
 matter what the cost. That has
 forgotten that human health and
 animal health...

INT. NEWSNIGHT STUDIO. DAY

CLARA
 That has forgotten that this tiny
 world we live on is more fragile
 than...

But there is no metaphor for the fragility.

CLARA

I want to take responsibility for my share. I think that's what my husband, meant by what he did. And I think he was wrong. I think there's got to be another way, besides despair.

INT. WESTMINSTER FLAT. CONTINUOUS

Clara is on TV. The camera pulls back to reveal that she is being watched by Ian Blacklaw. An echo of the beginning.

Blacklaw

Oh fuck.

He reaches for a telephone.

INT. RURAL TRAIN. NIGHT

Clara sits on the train. It is empty but for a couple of young lovers on their way home. She looks out of the window but in the darkness, against the brightness of the carriage, all she can see is herself. Something has been lifted from Clara, but the camera tells us the danger isn't over.

EXT. RURAL STATION. NIGHT

Clara emerges and crosses the car park to her car.

INT. CAR. NIGHT

Clara starts the engine.

INT. CAR. NIGHT

Clara is driving. There are no other lights about.

EXT. FARM. NIGHT

Relieved, Clara swings down the drive towards the farm. Lights are on beckoning her home.

INT. FARM. NIGHT

Clara pushes open the door to discover Mary.

CLARA

Mary? What are you doing up? It's one o'clock in the morning?

Behind Mary, Clara can see that the kitchen door is open.

MARY

I'm sorry. They just appeared.

Clara pushes past her into the kitchen, Stephen's guitar rests against a chair. As she arrives Patrick - Clara's brother-in-law - comes in from the yard.

PATRICK

(to himself)

Oh carumba.

(calling)

Charlie, darling -

CLARA

What are you doing here?

Charlotte appears, she's holding a case.

CHARLOTTE

We didn't know where you'd gone.

CLARA

What are you doing here?

CHARLOTTE

We are taking the children to London. It's for their own good. They have got very distressed by what's going on. It's for the best, Clara.

She turns and takes the case back out to the car in the kitchen yard. Hold with Clara. Patrick comes through carrying another case.

CLARA

Who asked you to - why - where are they?

PATRICK

They're in the car.

Charlotte reappears.

CHARLOTTE

Lets get the children home safely, we can talk in the morning.

She goes out to the car.

CLARA

This is their home!

She follows out into the yard.

EXT. KITCHEN YARD. CONTINUOUS. CONTINUOUS

Patrick's car has its doors open. Sarah sits in the back seat nearer the kitchen door. She has a comfort blanket and is sucking her thumb. Stephen sits besides her. Strangely, reading a book. Charlotte puts the case in the boot.

CLARA

You can't do this, Charlotte, you can't just steal my children.

CHARLOTTE

We're not stealing them. I - look, this is terribly upsetting...

PATRICK

(stepping in)

Clara, dear Clara. No-one's stealing anything. The children have got very troubled by you being so... So absent...

CLARA

I'm back now.

PATRICK

It's for the best. Now please -

CLARA

No. No.

PATRICK

Let go of me Clara -

CHARLOTTE

Darling -

CLARA

No! You have no right -

PATRICK

And you have no right to put them through hell. Vanishing before they wake in the morning. Embarrassing them in a local shop. Putting them on a starvation diet at a damn village school. Dragging them to visit the local whore!? No, Clara, before you talk about rights I should think very carefully. Please let go of my arm.

(Clara does so.)

Thank you.

Clara and Charlotte stand facing each other. Mary stands near the farm, Patrick by the open door of the car.

CHARLOTTE
 (finally)
 I'm sorry.

CLARA
 What do the children want?

PATRICK
 Come on lets just go.

CLARA
 No Patrick, damn it. I want to know
 what the children want.

Sarah, from inside the car, is looking at Clara. Stephen
 still reads his book.

PATRICK
 I've had enough of this.

He strides around to the drivers seat of the car.

CLARA
 (half mad, half logical)
 No - you - you all have betrayed
 me. Everyone. Telling them where I
 am, who I'm talking to. Birmingham!
 Ian Blacklaw. All of you - didn't
 you?

PATRICK
 You are talking like a lunatic.

CLARA
 I want my children back with me,
 now.

PATRICK
 This is the stuff of the funny
 farm.

Clara walks to the car starts pulling at Sarah who is crying.

CLARA
 Come on - come on - It's alright,
 mummy's here.

But Sarah cowers into her blanket.

CLARA
 Stephen?
 (he doesn't look up)
 Look at me, darling boy. Come on,
 it's alright.

PATRICK
 (brutal)
 Ask him -

CHARLOTTE
 (to Patrick)
 For God's sake.

Stephen opens the door of the car.

CLARA
 Good boy. Come home.

He walks around the car. He is dressed in his pyjamas with a fleece over. Finally he is facing Clara. His breath steams.

STEPHEN
 We want to go, mummy. We want to go
 with Auntie Charlie and Patrick.
 (he looks at his mother)
 We want to be normal.

With the same formality, he walks back round to the back passenger seat.

CHARLOTTE
 (to Clara)
 I'm going to phone you tomorrow
 morning. You're going to come to
 London. It's going to be OK.

She goes to kiss Clara but she is frozen. Charlotte walks to the passenger seat. Gets in. Patrick fires the engine and reverses before pulling away down the farm drive.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

Sarah unbuckles her seat belt and turns to stare out the back window. As soon as the lights of the car have swung away. All she can see of Clara is a shadow.

SARAH
 Mummy.

EXT. FARM. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

Clara stands, darkness around her. Mary stands in the light of the kitchen door. Then Clara turns and moving fast pushes back into the house...

INT. KITCHEN. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

Clara pushes through the kitchen.

MARY
What are you doing?

Clara grabs her bag and pulls out her car keys.

CLARA
His guitar. Stephen has forgotten
his guitar.
(she picks it up)
You should never have phoned them.
It was over. I'd done it.

MARY
I didn't, Clara.

EXT. FARM. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

But Clara runs out and gets into her car.

MARY
Please, Clara, listen to me -

INT. CLARA'S CAR. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

Clara fires the engine, the guitar beside her.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

Sarah is looking out the back window. Stephen holds his book
as though he's still reading it.

sarah's pov:

The receding dark lump that is the farm is suddenly lit up as
Clara's car lights swing out.

INT. CLARA'S CAR. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

She drives up the lane fast. Bellying the car on the ruts.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

Sarah is facing backwards. Stephen looks out the window.
Charlotte has tears in her eyes. Patrick drives.

CHARLOTTE
Who phoned Patrick?

Patrick is silent.

CHARLOTTE
 (loud)
 Who asked us to do this?

sarah's pov:

The road is dark behind the car.

INT. CLARA'S CAR. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

Clara is pushing her car faster.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR. NIGHT

Patrick accelerates as he gets onto the main road.

CHARLOTTE
 (appalled)
 It wasn't Mary?

PATRICK
 Clara should have listened.

sarah's pov:

The road is dark and then suddenly in the distance two headlights. Two distant blobs of light hanging a mile or so behind the car. Vanishing occasionally when the road drops or swings in another direction. Close up on Sarah staring. The lights bob a little closer, going faster. Stephen turns. He is looking at the two blobs of light...

INT. CLARA'S CAR. CONTINUOUS. NIGHT

She is driving fast now to catch the two red lights that zoom away from her. The lights that are her children.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR. NIGHT

Charlotte turns to see Sarah and Stephen staring out the window.

CHARLOTTE
 Come on, children, you'll make yourselves sick.

Clara's lights seem to be getting closer. They hover and then leap forward. Then suddenly they vanish.

in the car:

Sarah and Stephen turn slowly to sit forward. The car drives on.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. NIGHT

Clara's car lies on it's roof, crushed against a tree.

dissolve to:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. DAWN

Clara's wreck is being hauled away. Police cars' lights flicker in the grey light. Beyond the trees hundred of cows munch through their breakfast. A Constable painting with a car wreck scaring the middle.

NEAR FUTUREINT. MODERN HOSPITAL WING. DAY

Camera follows a woman as she walks through a ward with cubicles. From all around comes strange, frightening, moans. Every so often the camera lingers in a doorway. A young person is catatonic, or struggling, some have relatives and friends near them, some are alone. Pop music plays, TVs are on - anything to maintain some kind of normality. The woman stops at a nursing station. We can't make out what she says... Just the nurse pointing down the ward.

Finally, the woman stops in a doorway. Tom is leaning over Allie. She is dying. Tom is wiping her face with a flannel. Sue - her friend - and her boyfriend sit. Sue is smiling. The boyfriend looks like he'd rather be anywhere.

Tom looks up. He frowns. He pulls away from Allie. On the cut we see that the woman is Clara. She is very changed. Much older, she is dressed very differently. An eccentric activist. Her face is tanned.

TOM

Mrs Alexander?!

CLARA

Tom. I heard about Allie from Sarah. I do hope you don't mind I just terribly wanted to see her, and of course you...

TOM

No - no of course. No.

Clara moves forward.

CLARA

Allie.

She's deeply shocked.

TOM
 (seeing this)
 Er sorry - this is Sue and Den'.
 Sue this is Mrs Alexander. Yes.

Clara looks at Allie. It is unbearable. Her brain is gone.
 She is "back to before a primate in the evolutionary scheme."

CLARA
 Oh Tom.

TOM
 I don't want -

CLARA
 No. I -

Clara looks at him. He smiles, bravely.

CLARA
 Can I sit with her, or something?

TOM
 She'd like that, I'm sure. She used
 to talk of you when we first left.
 She remembered you.

CLARA
 Yes -

TOM
 Not now.

CLARA
 No - no of course.

Clara sits. Sue and Den' go. Tom hovers.

TOM
 Ma'm -

CLARA
 Please.

TOM
 I've whipped myself you know. If
 I'd not kept the letter from you -
 If I'd told you - I used to think
 this was my punishment but I don't
 any more. This goes beyond being a
 punishment. This goes beyond having
 a reason. Thank you for coming.

Clara looks at him.

CLARA
I'm so sorry. Tom. I'm so very
sorry.

TOM
It's Al' who's lost everything. Her
life, her future.

CLARA
Yes.

Slight pause.

TOM
What did Mr Alec say?

CLARA
Tom?

TOM
In the letter?

CLARA
Oh.

Slight pause

CLARA
That he'd lost hope.

TOM
You should never do that, Mrs
Alexander, not ever.

CLARA
No.

They both look at Allie.

END

14.10.02

*