

BETTER MAN

A Musical Biopic by

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DARKNESS

The dynamic introduction to **LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU** strikes up.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

(as if rehearsing)

Good evening folks. Good evening
you slags. No, good evening folks.
So, who is Robbie Williams? Well
I've been called many things -
narcissistic, punchable, shit-
eating twat. But while I'm all
those things, I want to show you
how I really see myself. So sit
back, relax, while I give you a
right fucking entertaining. So, the
story starts...

The bass line to **KIDS** kicks in.

EXT. VACANT PLOT. STOKE-ON-TRENT - AFTERNOON

ROBBIE (V.O.)

1982, Stoke-on-Trent.

CLOSE ON: the wide-eyed, CHIMP face of ROBBIE WILLIAMS (9).
His eyes scan left and right as names are called out.

LUKE (O.S.)

Troy.

ANDY (O.S.)

Wayne.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

The arse-end of the north of
England. It may look grubby and
deprived but deep down... it was
grubby and deprived.

Young Robbie grows more desperate. His smile sets like
concrete.

ANDY (O.S.)

Crystal.

DISBELIEF flashes over Young Robbie's face. Dressed in an
oversized PORT VALE FC jersey, he's the last to be picked.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

I didn't have much. But at least I
had the respect and admiration of
my peers... they just had trouble
showing it.

An older boy, LUKE takes a drag of his cigarette.

LUKE
(underwhelmed)
Robert.

YOUNG ROBBIE
Yes! Come on!

Young Robbie grinds playfully against his best friend, NATE. The ragged pitch is wedged between rows of council flats. BOTTLE KILNS loom in the distance.

LUKE
(to his team)
Right, knobheads. Pass the ball to Nate and let him do the rest.

Nate expertly juggles the football with his feet.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Positions!

The kids fan out. Young Robbie steals the football and runs to start the game.

LUKE (CONT'D)
(to Young Robbie)
Oi! Fuck you off to? You're in goal.

YOUNG ROBBIE
But—

LUKE
Don't fuck it up.

Young Robbie makes his way to the outline of a goal which has been haphazardly drawn on a wall in chalk.

YOUNG ROBBIE
I'm like a chainmail condom,
nothing's getting through. Let's go slags!

ROBBIE (V.O.)
I had plenty of balls. But I couldn't stop a single one.

MASH UP of Young Robbie's disastrous attempts to defend the goal - diving the wrong way, taking multiple body shots as the ball smacks into the goal. The final humiliation is the ball hitting the wall and smashing into the back of his head, knocking him to the ground.

He lifts his mud-soaked face to a chorus of laughter.

LUKE
You really are fucking useless,
aren't you.

Nate helps him to his feet.

NATE
It's alright, Rob.

YOUNG ROBBIE
Nate, just leave it.

He walks off in SHAME.

LUKE
Yeah, jog on, you tit.

Young Robbie flips him the bird.

LUKE (CONT'D)
You're a fucking nobody!

The song fades away, drowned out by the laughing kids.

EXT. STREET. STOKE-ON-TRENT - MOMENTS LATER

Mud-stained and bruised, Young Robbie fights back tears as he trudges home past graffitied walls and boarded-up shops.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
See, where I grew up, you were
meant to act small. But the thing
is, my DNA is cabaret. I came out
of the womb with jazz hands...
which was very painful for my mum.

INT. RED LION PUB. UPSTAIRS. LOUNGE ROOM - DUSK

Young Robbie's awestruck face is lit up by a TV, which shows FRANK SINATRA on stage in front of an orchestra. Young Robbie's nan, BETTY is beside him, smoking. The intro to **MY WAY** begins.

Glued to the TV, Young Robbie licks a crisp and shoves it in his mouth as his mother, JANET, hurries in.

JANET
Heading downstairs for a bit. One
of the barmen's called in sick.
(to Young Robbie)
Goodnight sweetheart. Straight to
bed.
(to Betty)
Don't let him ruin his dinner.

Janet rushes out.

BETTY
Bye love.

She WINKS at Young Robbie and offers him more crisps. In a hushed voice, he sings along with Sinatra.

YOUNG ROBBIE
AND SO I FACE THE FINAL CURTAIN.

An **EMPHATIC** voice fills the room.

PETER (O.C.)
MY FRIEND, I'LL MAKE IT CLEAR.

Young Robbie's father, PETER, dressed in a police uniform, enters as if performing at the ROYAL ALBERT HALL. He uses his BEER BOTTLE as a microphone.

PETER (CONT'D)
How's about a warm hand on my entrance.

With a wide smile, Young Robbie applauds his dad.

PETER (CONT'D)
... OF WHICH I'M CERTAIN.

Young Robbie jumps up and joins Peter's enthusiastic interpretation.

YOUNG ROBBIE

PETER (CONT'D)
I DID IT MY WAY.

Peter downs his beer and moves to the TV screen.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
My dad was well enamoured by the stars of the day - Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr and of course, Sinatra. They were *gods* to him.

The TV displays a shot of Sinatra's **APPLAUDING** crowd.

PETER
Youth, you hear that? That's pure love, that is. It don't come cheap, mind. You got to risk it all, whatever it takes. Because if you make it, it's paradise.

Young Robbie hangs on every word.

PETER (CONT'D)
Thing is, you can't learn it.
You're either born with it... or
you're a nobody.

A seed of DOUBT lodges deep inside Young Robbie.

Peter takes out a TORTOISE SHELL COMB from his jacket pocket and suavely runs it through his hair. Young Robbie conceals his apprehension and mimics Peter with his hand.

YOUNG ROBBIE
Light 'em up!

PETER (CONT'D)
Light 'em up!

Peter turns up the volume. As they sing, Young Robbie tries to catch his father's eye but Peter is too engrossed in Sinatra's performance.

YOUNG ROBBIE (CONT'D)
AND MORE, MUCH MORE THAN
THIS, I DID IT-

PETER (CONT'D)
AND MORE, MUCH MORE THAN
THIS, I DID IT-

Before the big finish, Young Robbie does an extra spin, bumping the TV which distorts and goes black.

PETER (CONT'D)
Ah, fuck it! Now look what you've-

YOUNG ROBBIE
Sorry.

He jiggles the aerial, desperate to fix the picture.

PETER
I had a full head of steam and all.

YOUNG ROBBIE
I can fix it.

PETER
Out of the way.

Peter moves Young Robbie aside to grapple with the aerial.

YOUNG ROBBIE
We can sing without it.

PETER
(banging the TV)
It's not the same.

YOUNG ROBBIE
Or... or we could-

PETER
Robert!

Betty clocks Young Robbie's fallen face.

BETTY
I think it's time for a bath.

YOUNG ROBBIE
But I want to keep going!

PETER
Just go with your Nan will you.

BETTY
Come on, love.

INT. RED LION PUB. UPSTAIRS. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Young Robbie is in the bath surrounded by soap bubbles. The setting sun SPARKLES off the water, painting the room in a warm glow. Betty washes his back.

YOUNG ROBBIE
Nan, what is... *it*?

BETTY
What do you mean?

YOUNG ROBBIE
Dad said you have to be born with
it... and maybe I wasn't.

BETTY
Believe me, whatever '*it*' is, you
got more than your share.

YOUNG ROBBIE
You're just saying that.

BETTY
I'm bloody well not. I wouldn't
change a hair on your head.

Young Robbie looks up, tears in his eyes.

BETTY (CONT'D)
What is it, love?

YOUNG ROBBIE
I don't want to be a nobody.

BETTY
Oh, love, there's no such thing as
a nobody. Remember...

She tilts the shaving mirror, sending a bright refracted SUNBEAM to rest on Young Robbie's face.

BETTY (CONT'D)
This might feel good.
(swinging the light onto
his chest)
But this... this is what matters.

Young Robbie looks at the light on his chest.

BETTY (CONT'D)
You're enough.

INT. LOCAL THEATRE. SIDE OF STAGE - NIGHT

Young Robbie is an ANXIOUS mess. He is dressed in a shabby PIRATE costume. On stage, the ENSEMBLE of kids deliver a mediocre rendition of the opening song from the 'Pirates of Penzance', **POUR, OH POUR THE PIRATE SHERRY.**

ROBBIE (V.O.)
I was nine-years-old when I got my
first real taste of the limelight.
And I still remember that taste -
pure, unadulterated terror.

CANDICE (12), chewing bubblegum, scans the crowd through a gap in the curtain.

CANDICE (O.C.)
(whispers)
Have you seen the fit one
with the big bulge? After the
show I'm going to touch him
where his bathing suit goes.

ENSEMBLE
POOR, OH, POUR THE PIRATE
SHERRY; FILL, O FILL THE
PIRATE GLASS.

YOUNG ROBBIE
I'm going to fuck it up, I
know it.

ENSEMBLE (CONT'D)
HERE'S GOOD LUCK TO FREDRIC'S
VENTURES!

CANDICE
So what, no one will notice.

YOUNG ROBBIE
My dad will.

CANDICE
Just go out there, sing your
fucking song and walk off.

YOUNG ROBBIE
That's not enough! He'll see right
through me. What am I going to do?

CANDICE
(spying the audience)
I don't know. I'm just doing this
for the sausage.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
In the next three seconds I'm going
to be found out. They'll see that
I'm ugly, I'm stupid, I'm
untalented. I'm not good at
anything.

Young Robbie makes his entrance swinging out on a rope only to crash down centre stage. The audience GASP. Young Robbie looks out, desperate and insecure.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
But there is one skill I'd
practised more than any other child
in the world.

INT. GOLDEN HILL PUB. COMEDY NIGHT. SIDE OF STAGE - SAME

CLOSE ON: Peter dressed in a VELOUR BURGUNDY JACKET. His face is illuminated by the spill of stage lights. He runs his COMB through his hair.

PETER
(to himself)
Light 'em up.

INT. LOCAL THEATRE. SIDE OF STAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Young Robbie snaps back into the moment.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
And that's for showing off.

He takes a breath - time for something brilliant. A TWINKLE in his eye, he props up casually on his elbow and breaks the fourth wall.

YOUNG ROBBIE
How's about a warm hand on my
entrance?

The audience laugh and APPLAUD.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
You see, I thought to become famous
you had to be really, really good.
Turns out you just have to show off
and be a bit cheeky.

INT. GOLDEN HILL PUB. COMEDY NIGHT - SAME

The dimly lit CROWD fall silent as a voice rings out over the dodgy PA system.

PUBLICAN (O.S.)
Put your hands together for our
next contestant... Peter Williams.

A smattering of applause. Peter runs onto the makeshift stage.

PETER

Thank you very much.

Under the glare of a spotlight, he raises the mic stand and pretends to thump the mic into his nose. He throws his head back in mock pain. The audience 'oooh' in unison.

PETER (CONT'D)

You know the difference between an 'oooh' and an 'aaaah'? About three inches.

Peter's eyes widen as the audience crack up laughing.

INT. LOCAL THEATRE. AUDITORIUM - SAME

Young Robbie steals the spotlight singing, **OH, BETTER FAR TO LIVE AND DIE.** His energy is catnip to the audience.

YOUNG ROBBIE

FOR I AM THE PIRATE KING!

YOUNG ROBBIE/ENSEMBLE

HURRAH FOR THE PIRATE...

Young Robbie adds in hip thrusts.

YOUNG ROBBIE

(to the audience)

Eyes off my bum.

The audience laugh.

YOUNG ROBBIE/ENSEMBLE

KING!

The final image is Young Robbie, centre stage, SWORD in hand on Candice's shoulders - arms out, breathless and beaming.

He is shocked as the audience give him a STANDING OVATION. He smiles at Betty, Janet and Nate who are on their feet, applauding. His smile fades when he spies the EMPTY chair next to them, where his dad should be.

YOUNG ROBBIE (V.O)

(as if hearing his inner thoughts)

You're useless. You're a disgrace.

INT. LOCAL THEATRE. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Young Robbie slams his pirate hat on the bench and glares into his dressing room mirror. SELF-HATRED stares back.

YOUNG ROBBIE (V.O.)
 (as if hearing his inner
 thoughts)
 You're a fucking nobody. Look at
 you. I fucking hate you.

INT. GOLDEN HILL PUB. AMATEUR COMEDY NIGHT - SAME

Intro to the song, **FEEL**. As Peter eagerly accepts his prize from the publican, a ticket to 'Pirates of Penzance' falls from his pocket.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 My dad won five quid that night -
 although it might as well've been
 five million.

He takes in the applauding audience and feels PURE LOVE.

PETER
 Thank you very much. You've been
 wonderful and I've been Peter Will-

The possibility of a new life dawns on him.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Conway. I'm Peter Conway.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 Not only did he change his name, he
 changed his life.

Peter has found his calling.

EXT. RED LION PUB. STOKE-ON-TRENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Peter, dressed in Manchester United FC colours, nods farewell to Young Robbie and climbs into a bus filled with Manchester United FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS who are singing, 'She Wore A Scarlet Ribbon' at the top of their voices.

ROBBIE (V.O.) One day he went to watch the FA Cup final. Unfortunately, he didn't come back. The audience beckoned and he left us to be one step closer to his gods.	SUPPORTERS (singing) "WEMBLEY, WEMBLEY".
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Peter CONDUCTS the supporters as the bus heads off.

YOUNG ROBBIE
 COME ON HOLD MY HAND I WANT TO
 CONTACT THE LIVING.

INT. RED LION PUB. UPSTAIRS. LOUNGE ROOM - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Young Robbie watches Janet sort through LP RECORDS. She discards a few and packs the rest. Young Robbie grabs the discarded records - Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra.

YOUNG ROBBIE
I SIT AND TALK TO GOD. HE JUST
LAUGHS AT MY PLANS.

He surreptitiously slides the discarded LPs into an open box.

INT. RED LION PUB. UPSTAIRS. YOUNG ROBBIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

In his empty room, Young Robbie watches a REMOVALIST LORRY pull away with their possessions. He spies Janet carrying a rubbish bag. Peter's burgundy jacket spills over the side.

YOUNG ROBBIE
I JUST WANNA FEEL REAL LOVE, FEEL
THE LIFE EVER AFTER.

She dumps the bag inside a large industrial bin.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL BIN - MOMENTS LATER

Standing on an empty keg, Young Robbie retrieves the burgundy jacket and pulls the tortoise shell comb from the pocket. He runs his fingers lovingly over the teeth of the comb.

YOUNG ROBBIE
I CAN NOT GIVE IT UP.

A car BEEPS. He hides the jacket and comb in his backpack and runs to the car.

EXT. RED LION PUB. STOKE-ON-TRENT - MOMENTS LATER

Young Robbie hops into the car. Janet strokes his head.

YOUNG ROBBIE
Don't worry mum. We'll be alright.

They take a longing look at the pub before driving off.

INT. FAMILY HOME. LOUNGE ROOM. STOKE-ON-TRENT - NIGHT

Unpacked boxes line the walls of the small lounge room. With gusto, Young Robbie runs the comb through his hair.

YOUNG ROBBIE
Light 'em up.

Next to him is an empty DINING CHAIR with Peter's jacket draped over the back. Young Robbie belts out the song as if performing with the DINING CHAIR to a packed audience.

YOUNG ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I JUST WANNA FEEL REAL LOVE.

CLOSE ON: Young Robbie eyeing the chair, willing his dad to appear.

YOUNG ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I GOT TOO MUCH LIFE RUNNING THROUGH
MY VEINS, GOING TO WASTE.

We pull back to find the empty chair has magically vanished. Peter, wearing the jacket, is in its place. SPOTLIGHTS beam onto them. The lounge room wall has magically disappeared, replaced by a packed, adoring audience. Peter looks deep into his son's eyes, beaming with PRIDE.

YOUNG ROBBIE (CONT'D) PETER
THERE'S A HOLE IN MY SOUL. THERE'S A HOLE IN MY SOUL. *

CLOSE ON: Young Robbie, basking in his father's love. We slowly pull back to reveal he's alone once more with his father's jacket draped over the empty chair.

YOUNG ROBBIE (CONT'D)
NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.

Reality settles in. He pockets the comb, sits in the chair and pulls the arms of his father's jacket tightly around him.

YOUNG ROBBIE (CONT'D)
NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.

The song ends.

----- TITLE ON SCREEN - BETTER MAN -----

INT. CAREERS OFFICER'S OFFICE - DAY

Robbie (15) is at the head of a line of students outside a door with a tarnished sign reading 'Careers Officer'.

A STUDENT walks out of the office to reveal SIR (41), receding hair and dodgy Farah trousers. He sits behind a desk cleaning his nails with a pen lid.

SIR
Next.

Robbie enters. The desk is bare except for a clipboard with a form and a pen, and two piles of pamphlets - one for a career in NURSING, the other for a career in the MILITARY.

SIR (CONT'D)
(as if by rote)
Take a pamphlet, sign the form,
shut the door on your way out.

Robbie scans the pamphlets.

ROBBIE
No, you're alright. I know what I'm
going to be.

SIR
Oh yeah? What's that then?

ROBBIE
Famous.

Sir looks up from his fingernails.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I'm going to sing and dance.

He whips out a NOTEBOOK.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I'm writing lyrics and all.

SIR
(snatching the notebook)
I've seen your grades, lad. You
couldn't rub two words together.
(reading, monotonally)
'The world is mine to claim. All I
need is a fuck load of fame. Ooh,
ooh, yeah.'

Sir slips a military pamphlet into the notebook and slides it to Robbie.

SIR (CONT'D)
Listen, don't embarrass yourself,
yeah? It's not for you. Keep your
feet on the ground.

Robbie scoops up the notebook. Signs the form.

ROBBIE
You might want to frame that.

As he leaves, he scrunches the pamphlet and throws it at a waiting student. He laughs as he walks off down the corridor.

STUDENT
(to Robbie)
Tosser.

Sir's face hardens. Robbie's drawn a cock and balls. His signature is the jizz.

SIR

Next!

EXT. BILLBOARD. STOKE-ON-TRENT - NIGHT

Robbie struts as he sings along to **THE POWER**. There appears to be an enormous crowd behind him. The billboard lights hit him like SPOTLIGHTS.

Pull out to reveal he's on a scaffold in front of an advertisement for a KNEBWORTH CONCERT, which features a huge outdoor crowd. A tape deck is at his feet.

Pulling out further we reveal Nate, cigarette in one hand, beer in the other. Robbie grinds against Nate's head. Nate turns off the tape in protest. Robbie sits beside him. They look out over a highway to endless rows of council flats.

NATE

You'd make a fucking awful stripper. You know that?

ROBBIE

Fuck off, that's my backup plan.

NATE

You should come work with me.
Flint's always looking for people.

ROBBIE

Isn't he that flashy cunt with the coupe?

NATE

Yeah, but he's proper. Double glazing. Easy job. Easy money.

ROBBIE

How'd you meet him?

NATE

Shagged his mum.

ROBBIE

Fucking hell.

NATE

It's alright, he knows. His dad wouldn't be best pleased though.

They crack up laughing. Nate lobs his beer bottle. It shatters in the darkness below.

ROBBIE

So have you told him about the trials?

NATE

Nah.

ROBBIE

You better. That scout was fucking excited. I thought he was going to blow you right there on the pitch.

NATE

I'm not going to the trials.

ROBBIE

Rubbish.

NATE

I'm not.

ROBBIE

What? Think of the money, the supermodels, the fans screaming for you!

NATE

I don't need all that fancy shit.

ROBBIE

Fucking hell, Nate!

NATE

(laughing)

Alright, calm down.

ROBBIE

You've got a ticket to heaven and you're going to stay here?

NATE

It's like you with your singing, isn't it? I just do it because I love it.

ROBBIE

Who gives a fuck if you love it? What matters is that other people love you doing it.

INT. FAMILY HOME. KITCHEN. STOKE-ON-TRENT - NEXT MORNING

The kitchen table is piled with FLOWERS, which Janet arranges into bouquets. Robbie, hungover, has an oatcake in one hand and a pen in the other, which is poised over his notebook.

JANET

You'll have to get yourself to school.

ROBBIE

I can't face it. I have a bastard
of a headache.

JANET

And an exam, which you better have
studied for.

ROBBIE

Why do you think my head's
pounding?

JANET

You'll have more than a pounding
head if you haven't.

ROBBIE

(to Betty)

I love it when she talks dirty.

Betty laughs and pours Robbie a cup of tea with two sugars.
His ears prick up at an announcement on the radio.

JANET

You're going. I'd take you
but I've a million
deliveries.

RADIO ONE DJ (O.S.)

*Now for something closer to
home, if you've ever dreamt
of pop stardom, this next
story could be music to your
ears.*

Betty adds another sugar to Robbie's cup.

JANET (CONT'D)

God knows I've already had
one man lounging about. I'm
not having another one. You
can-

RADIO ONE DJ (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*A music manager in Manchester
is holding open auditions for
young men with a keen
interest in singing and
dancing.*

ROBBIE

Shhh!

JANET

Don't you bloody shhh me.

ROBBIE

Mum, shoosh!

Robbie turns up the radio.

RADIO ONE DJ (O.S.)

*The man behind the venture, Nigel
Martin Smith, is creating a new
boyband...*

JANET

I didn't think you were interested in boybands.

RADIO ONE DJ (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If you think you've got what it takes, head to Vanity Model Agency, this Saturday the fifteenth. Doors open at nine am and all applicants are to bring a current headshot and CV.

ROBBIE

Quick, mum! Write it down!

Janet jots down the details on some wrapping paper. Robbie heads to the back door, stars in his eyes.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

This is it. This is it!

He bursts out the back door.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I'M GOING TO BE FUCKING FAMOUS!

NEIGHBOUR (O.C.)

SHUT UP, YOU TIT!

ROBBIE

Oh, fuck off, Glen!

Robbie raises the radio in triumph. He's wide-eyed and full of hope. The intro to **LA BAMBA** begins.

INT. VANITY MODEL AGENCY. CORRIDOR. MANCHESTER - DAY

Sporting a tight perm, Robbie waits at the front of a long QUEUE snaking out of a seedy model agency. He clutches his schoolboy HEADSHOT - a stark contrast to the photos of the scantily clad models on the walls.

Through the window, he watches a SALSA BOY singing and dancing with hip-popping gusto.

A male ASSISTANT bops to the music next to Robbie. He's loving the dance, but loving the Salsa Boy even more.

ASSISTANT

He makes my tizzer go foo, he does.

Robbie runs his father's COMB through his hair.

ROBBIE

(to himself)

Light 'em up.

The Salsa Boy exits and the assistant ushers Robbie into the office while his eyes stay on the Salsa Boy's retreating backside.

INT. VANITY MODEL AGENCY. OFFICE. MANCHESTER - CONTINUOUS

Robbie makes his way towards NIGEL MARTIN SMITH, who is busy studying the Salsa Boy's headshot. Robbie places his headshot on Nigel's desk.

ROBBIE

I'm Robert.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Nigel Martin Smith was, for legal reasons, an absolute... sweetheart.

Nigel looks up, emotionless.

NIGEL

Well, go on then.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

And a first class cunt.

Robbie takes a breath and closes his eyes. When he opens them, he is framed in a SPOTLIGHT and dressed in a tuxedo. The room magically transforms into a LAS VEGAS SHOWROOM as he launches into a big band version of **STRAIGHTEN UP AND FLY RIGHT.**

ROBBIE

A BUZZARD TOOK A MONKEY FOR A RIDE
IN THE AIR.

Nigel is in the dark behind his desk lit by the spill of Robbie's stage lights. Robbie is shaken to see Nigel drift off to study the Salsa Boy's headshot.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

STRAIGHTEN UP AND FLY RIGHT.
STRAIGHTEN UP AND STAY RIGHT.

Robbie's in free-fall. His chance at FAME vanishing.

He JOLTS at the sight of his nine-year-old PIRATE KING self standing deathly still in the corner. The version glares back. Robbie's mind fills with words of SELF-LOATHING.

YOUNG ROBBIE (V.O.)

(as if hearing his inner
thoughts)

He's bored of you. Look at you.
You've got no talent. You're not
fucking Sinatra.

*
*
*

Rattled, Robbie tries to pull himself together. He does a spin. When he looks again, the version has disappeared.

ROBBIE

STRAIGHTEN UP AND FLY RIGHT.
COOL DOWN PAPA DON'T YOU BLOW-

NIGEL

Ok, that'll do, lad.

The music cuts off. The room SNAPS back to it's original stark appearance.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

You do know this is a *pop* band.

ROBBIE

Yeah. Tell you what, I'll do Milli Vanilli's-

NIGEL

No.

ROBBIE

Cheers then.

He heads for the door, crestfallen. Seeing the young hopefuls outside, he realizes he can't let this opportunity slip. He turns on the bravado and struts back to Nigel.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

So, shall we tell them you've found your man and they can all fuck off home then, yeah? No, don't get up. It'll be my pleasure.

He flashes Nigel a **WINK**. FREEZE FRAME.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

And if I hadn't winked in that moment. None of this would've happened. I wouldn't even be here talking to you.

Robbie smiles, flirts with the assistant on his way out the door and heads off through the crowd of hopefuls.

ROBBIE (O.C.)

(to the auditionees)

Break a leg, you slags.

Nigel's impressed by his BOLDNESS. He ponders Robbie's headshot.

NIGEL

Cheeky little bastard.

INT. FAMILY HOME. LOUNGE ROOM. STOKE-ON-TRENT - LATER

Betty smokes on the couch as Robbie PACES the lounge room, clutching the HOME PHONE. The TWO RONNIES plays on the TV.

ROBBIE

He wouldn't know talent if it
jumped up and bit him on the cock.

BETTY

It's only been a few hours, love.

ROBBIE

He's got no eye for it, Nan.

BETTY

You have to wait.

Robbie's false bravado disappears.

ROBBIE

I fucked it! He saw right through
me.

He catches his reflection in the window.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I mean, look at me. Do I look like
a pop star to you?

BETTY

You look like you always look.

ROBBIE

Exactly.

He SLAMS the phone on the table.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Like a talentless fuck who's going
to die alone and fat and be craned
out of his shitpit in Stoke.

He storms down the hallway. The phone rings.

ROBBIE (O.C) (CONT'D)

AAAGH! Fuck nan!

He sprints back, hurdles the couch and picks up the receiver.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Hello?

PETER (O.S.)

Youth?

ROBBIE

(stunned)

Dad.

PETER (O.S.)

You're voice is so low now. I
thought I had the wrong number.

ROBBIE

How are you dad?

PETER (O.S.)

Never better, never better. Listen,
I haven't got long but I was
thinking, how about you come visit?

Betty smiles as Robbie's eyes glow with excitement.

ROBBIE

Really?

PETER (O.S.)

Why not? The school holidays are
coming up. You should come see what
the old man's been up to.

ROBBIE

I'd... I mean, yes! Definitely.

PETER (O.S.)

Smashing. I better go - a full
house waits for no man and all
that. It'll be good to see you,
lad.

ROBBIE

Light em' up, da-

The line goes dead. Robbie hangs up the phone and turns to Betty. His shocked face breaks into a huge SMILE. He dances around the couch and falls into her embrace.

EXT. PERRAN SANDS HOLIDAY CAMP - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

Through drizzle, we fly over a holiday camp. It's a caravan park with an entertainment centre in the middle.

INT. PERRAN SANDS HOLIDAY CAMP. ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE - SAME

Robbie looks on in WONDER as he mans the SPOTLIGHT. He has the beam squarely on his father's face. Peter is in his element before a crowd of unruly PUNTERS.

PETER

You having a good time?

The crowd cheer.

PETER (CONT'D)

Now, I was lucky enough to grace
the stage with this next act at a
talent competition. I'll never
forget it, he gave me a five.

The crowd sigh.

PETER (CONT'D)
Oh, it was sadder than that!

Robbie joins in as the crowd sigh louder.

PETER (CONT'D)
Please put your hands together for
the irresistible, the
irrepressible, the irreplaceable, I
give him ten out of ten... Mr.
Terry Swinton!

Robbie swings the spotlight to pick up TERRY SWINTON, past
his prime but every inch the old style crooner. The PIANIST
begins **MACK THE KNIFE**.

Peter grabs a beer as he sidles through the crowd to Robbie.

PETER (CONT'D)
Thought I was losing that stage
left table for a bit... but I won
them back, didn't I?

ROBBIE
Yeah.

They watch Terry Swinton work the crowd.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I'm glad you reached out. It was a
shock but, you know, in a good way.

PETER
Thought it was about time, youth.

ROBBIE
Hey, I forgot to tell you... I'm
joining this pop band.

Peter turns, suddenly interested.

PETER
Really? When do you start?

ROBBIE
Well... I mean... I'm not
definitely in yet but-

PETER
Oh.

ROBBIE
No, it's just that I haven't heard
back from the audition.

PETER

Watch it!

Robbie has let the spotlight slip to Terry's chest. He quickly trains it back onto Terry's face as Terry plucks a plastic flower from a table arrangement and places it behind an ELDERLY WOMAN'S ear.

PETER (CONT'D)

Terry's the bollocks, isn't he?

ROBBIE

Yeah. Actually... you might want to keep that bed out for me. I failed my exams. Complete fucking balls up. Mum's going to put me on the first bus back when I tell her. Fucking hopeless.

PETER

You got to learn from this.

ROBBIE

You're right.

Robbie looks at Peter who's still enthralled by Terry's performance. He hasn't heard a thing.

PETER

All of this. 'Cause, you know, you're learning from the best.

Peter runs back to the stage as the crowd applaud the end of Terry's song.

EXT. FAMILY HOME. STOKE-ON-TRENT - LATER.

Robbie trudges across the rain-soaked street.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Seeing my dad surrounded by the stars of yesteryear galvanised my need to become famous. But I had a more immediate problem...

He triggers the sensor light. Hit by the SPOTLIGHT, he can't help doing a spin.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

What's mum going to be like when I tell her I've failed my exams? I've fucked up the rest of my life.

Janet makes her way outside.

JANET

Did you have a good time?

ROBBIE
Yeah, smashing.

JANET
How is he?

ROBBIE
Great.

Robbie takes a breath. Time to face the music.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I've got something to tell you.

JANET
So have I.

ROBBIE
I failed - JANET (CONT'D)
You're in that band!

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
What?

JANET
You got in. You're in that band!

The intro to **CANDY** plays under as Robbie YELLS with delight and embraces Janet.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
And I never had to tell her I
failed my exams... until now. Sorry
mum.

They DANCE around the small front yard, knocking over a bin full of GLASS BOTTLES. A NEIGHBOUR'S light comes on.

NEIGHBOUR (O.C.)
SHUT UP, YOU TIT!

JANET
Oh, fuck off, Glen!

Robbie and Janet burst out laughing. It's a glorious moment of CELEBRATION.

INT. DANCE STUDIO. MANCHESTER - DAY

The song continues. Robbie follows Nigel down a corridor.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
Nigel was my introduction to the
adult world. He was fucking
terrifying... like Willy Wonka. But
what did I care?
(MORE)

ROBBIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was fifteen, I was going to have
four older brothers and we were
going to take over the world.

Nigel leads Robbie into a dance studio. Three young men are dotted across the room.

CLOSE ON: HOWARD DONALD (21), vacant and chiseled, warming up with some standing twists. WHIP PAN to the studio MIRROR. Howard's section of the dance studio has been converted into a run-down GARAGE. Now dressed in dirty dungarees, he smashes out a car panel, muscles glistening.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Howard Donald, panel beater. If you
got a dent on your car, Howard
would pound it out.

Howard works as if posing for a CHIPPENDALES CALENDAR.

Whipping back from the mirror to JASON ORANGE (19), a lithe, beautiful-looking youth. He bends over in a stretch. Moving back to the mirror, Jason's section of the studio transforms into a packed NIGHT CLUB.

Jason performs an acrobatic flip dance with a MALE DANCER.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Jason Orange was a featured dancer
on a genre-defining TV music show
called *The Hit Man and Her*.

Moving back from the mirror, we land on MARK OWEN (17), short with boy-nextdoor good looks. He sits, nervously TAPPING his fist on his knee. WHIP PAN to the mirror, Mark's section of the dance studio has transformed into a BANK TELLER COUNTER. Mark, dressed in a suit, tries to open a roll of coins by banging them against the edge of the counter. A CUSTOMER waits impatiently.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Mark Owen. Little Marco was...

The coins break open and spill everywhere. Mark looks up to the customer with a winning SMILE.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Lovely.

The song ends.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

And then of course there was Gary
Barlow.

Everyone turns as GARY BARLOW (18) enters dressed in an Italian jumper, dated trousers, and CONVERSE 100s. He carries a briefcase.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 And my first thought was, 'who's
 this dickhead in those trainers?
 They're so three years ago.'

Nigel gives Gary a HUG. Gary takes a seat at the piano and puts his hands on the keys. In the mirror, Gary's section of the studio has been converted to a WORKING MEN'S CLUB.

Gary (12) performs the chorus of **TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE HEART** on the piano in front of an AUDIENCE.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 Gary was a genius. An actual genius. He'd been playing the working men's clubs since he was twelve-years-old and was earning more money than his teachers.

YOUNG GARY
 ONCE UPON A TIME I WAS
 FALLING IN LOVE. NOW I'M ONLY
 FALLING APART. THERE'S
 NOTHING I CAN DO. TOTAL
 ECLIPSE OF THE HEART.

The audience cheers. CASH rains down on Gary. The song ends.

INT. DANCE STUDIO. MANCHESTER - LATER

Gary is a step behind as a CHOREOGRAPHER teaches the boys a sexualised dance routine to the song, **IT ONLY TAKES A MINUTE**.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 Trouble was, Gary sang like an angel, but he danced like a twat.

The boys are having the time of their lives.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 I recall thinking two things that day: 'a fifth of the spotlight is better than nothing' and 'if anyone from Stoke sees me, I'm fucking dead.'

FREEZE FRAME: Robbie, beaming, mid air in a split jump.

INT. INDIAN RESTAURANT. MANCHESTER - NIGHT

Nigel and the boys are at a small table, laughing and joking. A WAITER attempts to hand them menus.

NIGEL
 Tikka masalas all round, no coriander for the boys.

The waiter leaves.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 Whenever Nigel took us out for dinner he would always say...

NIGEL
I'll put this on your account.

The boys laugh.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
He wasn't joking. He recouped it all.

Nigel leans in, conspiratorially.

NIGEL
Look around the table.

The boys share an awkward look.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
In five years we're all going to hate each other... but we'll be fucking rich.

It's not the pep talk they envisaged.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
Now, first things first, we work up our act. Take it on the road.

GARY
What about a record deal?

NIGEL
That'll come. We'll get your demos sent out, let the bidding war begin. But before that, let's sure-up your backstories.

The boys share a quizzical look.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
Mark and Jason, you were in a breakdancing group together. Gary and Howard, you were in a band called 'The Cutest Rush.'

HOWARD
Was I the lead?

NIGEL
You weren't then, my chicken, and you're not now. Robert, you had a bit part in 'Brookside'.

ROBBIE
I was fucking great, wasn't I?

NIGEL
You were a bit much, frankly.

ROBBIE

Nige, can't we just say I'm a songwriter? I've got a ton of lyrics.

NIGEL

Well, I can hold my breath for two minutes but I'm not trying to be a fucking submarine am I? Gary writes the songs, you lot toe the line.

Gary smiles as Robbie shrinks with embarrassment.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

And also, your name's not Robert anymore. It's Robbie.

Robbie grits his teeth as the waiter delivers the meals.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

I fucking hated the name Robbie but it was the single best thing Nigel did for me. Robbie became a character. Something I could hide behind.

NIGEL

Now, the name of the band—

HOWARD

I've got a good one... Kick It!

NIGEL

That's fucking awful. I've already got the name and it's brilliant.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - FLASHFORWARD

Nigel is behind a camera. The boys have a letter stuck to each BUTT CHEEK spelling out: **TAKE THAT.**

NIGEL

And clench!

The boys clench their butt cheeks as Robbie spins around and slaps Howard and Mark's butts.

ROBBIE/GARY/HOWARD/MARK/JASON

Take That!

The camera FLASHES and the introduction to **I FOUND HEAVEN** begins.

END FLASHFORWARD.

EXT. LA CAGE AUX FOLLES CLUB - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

A neon LA CAGE AUX FOLLES sign flashes on top of a rundown converted warehouse. A YELLOW HIRE VAN pulls up beside a bustling queue of MEN waiting to get into the club.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Initially, Nigel's plan was for us
to be a band for the gay scene.

INT. YELLOW HIRE VAN - CONTINUOUS

The intro continues as Robbie takes a nervous breath. Behind him, the boys file out of the van. Mark grabs Robbie's shoulder to check he's ok. Robbie smiles back weakly. He runs his hand through his hair.

ROBBIE

(to himself)

Light 'em up.

INT. LA CAGE AUX FOLLES CLUB - LATER

We follow Nigel, Midori in hand, as he walks through the packed club. This is his domain.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Now, for years people have rumoured
about my sexuality. The worst one
was that all my gay friends have
slept with me and said I was crap.
I'm not bothered they said I slept
with them.

NIGEL

(pointing to the dance
floor)

These are my boys!

ROBBIE (V.O.)

It's me being 'crap' I'm worried
about.

Nigel reaches across the DJ to turn up the volume. The camera flies over the heaving dance floor to reveal Take That starting their performance.

ROBBIE/GARY/MARK/JASON/HOWARD

WOAH, WOAH, WOAH, WOAH, WOAH, YEAH,

The choreography is LOOSE but the boys are giving it everything. There's no sign yet of their individual charisma.

GARY

I THOUGHT I FOUND LOVE WITH
SOMEBODY ELSE'S GIRL, YEAH.

We close in on Robbie, performing his heart out while he scans the fun, UNCRITICAL crowd, who dance as one.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

That night I discovered a wonderland. It was welcoming and non-judgmental. I'd found my people. I'd found the promised land.

INT. YELLOW HIRE VAN - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - NIGHT

The song continues over a MASH UP of hundreds of post performance evenings. During the MASH UP, the boys are PASSED OUT except for Robbie who smokes six cigarettes at a time, bounces off the windows, drops ecstasy, hangs upside down from the sunroof, sculls drinks, and draws on the boy's faces while they remain asleep in the same position. Outside, NEON SIGNS of various clubs change in rapid-fire.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

For the entire first eighteen months we made one hundred and eighty pounds each. We played gay club after gay club. Two a night.

Their COSTUMES magically change, becoming more elaborate with each location.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Until out of nowhere, Nigel booked us a club full of girls.

END MASH UP

INT. LEXINGTON AVE CLUB. HULL - NIGHT

The song continues, accompanied by screams from the crowd of girls. The boy's choreography is now stamped with their individual styles - a well-oiled machine. Robbie spies Nigel side of stage, judging every move. Robbie feels a newfound pressure as the girls clamour for the boys. It's WILD.

His breath catches when he sees an ominous VERSION of himself dressed in his Take That audition outfit. The version glares at him with loathing. Anxious thoughts fill his mind.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

(as if hearing his inner thoughts)

You're going to fucking listen.
Fucking useless prick. I'm warning you!

In a choreographed move, Robbie's head turns away from the version. When he looks back, the version has DISAPPEARED.

GARY
SWEET BABY, BE MY ANGEL.

ROBBIE/GARY/MARK/JASON/HOWARD
HEAVEN, SWEET HEAVEN, BABY.

At the end of the song, the place ERUPTS. Robbie exhales in relief. The boys milk the attention.

INT. LEXINGTON AVE. CLUB. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boys, charged with post-show energy, HOLLER as they rush into the room.

NIGEL
Alright settle down. Will you lot shut up!

ROBBIE
(to Mark)
I felt like Elvis, but thin.

NIGEL
I've got good news. I've had some interest from a few record labels... in London.

The boys burst into celebration.

GARY
That's absolutely fantastic! Thank you so much.

NIGEL
Well, you deserve it. You've all done really well.

The boys soak up this rare moment of encouragement.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
Except for one of you. And we all know who that is, don't we?

The boys look away, not wanting to catch his eye.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
Robbie talked to a local reporter.

Nigel reads from a tiny article ripped from a local paper.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
'We're like the A-team. I'm the sexy, talented one.' Who the fuck gave you-

ROBBIE

I didn't know she was a reporter
Nige—

NIGEL

You know, I almost started to like
you but you've fucking ended that,
haven't you.

ROBBIE

(under his breath)

Fuck off.

NIGEL

What was that?

GARY

(placating)

I think Robbie's developing a sense
of humour, Nige.

NIGEL

(to Robbie)

You think it'd be difficult to go
to Stoke-on-Trent, get another
scally with ratty hair and call him
Robbie?

The threat lands on all of them.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

The club wants us to do a meet-and-greet. There's going to be lots of girls in here so let's get one thing clear - Keep it in your pants. No touching. No telephone numbers. No dating. Ever.

The boys turn to each other, ASTONISHED.

JASON

Ever?

NIGEL

Ever. Let's get this done.

Nigel gestures downstairs. The boys try and hide their disappointment as excited girls STREAM in.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Nigel had many rules for Take That.
The most important was that we
always appeared attainable.

INT. CLASSROOM. FLASHBACK - DAY

CLOSE ON: Mark delivering a speech in front of a banner reading 'Family Planning Association.'

ROBBIE (V.O.)

He even made us do a Safer Sex tour
for the Family Planning
Association.

Uniformed SCHOOL GIRLS stare back, wide-eyed. We pull back to reveal the boys standing awkwardly at the front of the packed classroom in revealing SEXY COSTUMES. Mark's safe sex speech ends with a choreographed chant.

MARK/GARY/ROBBIE/HOWARD/JASON

Don't be a fool, cover his tool.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Naturally, I took it all to heart.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LEXINGTON AVE CLUB. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

In the corner, Robbie's backed up against the wall. His face is a picture of amazement as STACEY unzips his trousers.

STACEY

I love the way you move, Gary.

From the way Stacey's arm moves, we can tell she's WANKING Robbie off.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

I was happy to play Gary for the moment.

STACEY

I'll never wash my hands again.

Robbie spies Nigel snaking his way through the crowd.

ROBBIE

(whispering)

Oh my god!

STACEY

Yeah!

ROBBIE

Hurry up. Quick! Oh, that's it.

Stacey slowly raises her hands. Robbie has taken over.

STACEY
(confused)
Gary, I already stopped.

Like guns at dawn, Nigel locks eyes with Robbie. Concealed by the crowd of girls, he can't see Robbie is wanking.

ECU of Robbie's eyes.

ECU of Nigel's eyes - suspicious.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
And there it was, the one time in Nigel's life, he wasn't the biggest wanker in the room.

ECU of Robbie's eyes as he tries to hide his CLIMAX.

INT. RECORD LABEL OFFICE. LONDON - DUSK

Nigel and the boys huddle on the opposite side of an imposing desk as a powerful record EXECUTIVE gets straight down to business.

EXECUTIVE
Right. Straight up - there's no appetite, want or need for boybands. They died a death. It's all grunge now.

Nigel and the boys are crushed. Robbie sets off a NEWTON'S CRADLE on the desk. The balls ping incessantly.

NIGEL
Did you hear our demo?

EXECUTIVE
Yes.

Nigel and the boys sense their dream fading away. Nigel stares down the executive.

NIGEL
These boys are going to take this country by storm. And if you don't sign them right now, I'll take them to another label and you'll be the twat that let the biggest band in history slip through your pudgy fucking fingers.

The boys and Nigel hold their breath. The executive stops the Newton's cradle.

EXECUTIVE

You won't do any of that... because everyone else said 'no'. I only agreed to see you because...

With paternal pride, he turns a framed photo on his desk.

EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)

My daughter saw you boys live and she's obsessed.

Robbie's eyes nearly pop out of his head. It's a photo of STACEY, the girl that WANKED him off.

EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)

She assures me you were amazing in the flesh.

(to Nigel)

So... I'm going to take a punt that you're right about these boys.

(to the boys)

Now, which one of you is Gary?

Robbie gives a cheeky smile as the song **ROCK DJ** begins.

EXT. RECORD LABEL BUILDING. REGENT STREET. LONDON - LATER

A WOMAN heads for the entrance doors. She reaches for the handle when the boys and Nigel BURST out, unknowingly opening the door into her face.

ROBBIE

ME WITH THE FLOORSHOW,
KICKIN' WITH YOUR TORSO.

A POSH MAN has his hand raised to hail an approaching black cab. Robbie gives him a stinger of a high-five.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

WAVE YOUR HANDS IF YOU'RE NOT WITH
A MAN.

The black cab drives past, infuriating the posh man.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

CAN I KICK IT?

NIGEL/GARY/HOWARD/JASON/MARK

YES YOU CAN.

The boys steal a FOOTBALL from a group of SCHOOL KIDS and pass it, keeping it off the ground as they dance.

Robbie boots the ball as hard as he can. It shanks off the side of his foot and into the head of a YUPPIE MAN on his brick of a mobile. The boys dance away, completely unaware.

NIGEL/GARY/HOWARD/JASON/MARK (CONT'D)
IT'S TIME TO MOVE YOUR BODY.

Nigel disappears into a SHOP as the boys come upon racks of clothes outside a MEN'S SUIT STORE.

ROBBIE
BABYLON BACK IN BUSINESS, CAN I GET
A WITNESS, EVERY GIRL, EVERY MAN?

They disappear into the racks, reappearing with new HAIRSTYLES and MATCHING SUITS. The boys push the racks down the street. Robbie rides on top as pedestrians scurry out of the way.

He dismounts the racks, sending them CRASHING into a large GUMBALL machine outside HAMLEYS TOYS. Gumballs career towards the boys and oncoming PEDESTRIANS.

The boys and pedestrians are in choreographic unison in the middle of the street as they try to regain their balance on the gumballs.

ROBBIE/HOWARD/GARY/MARK/JASON
I DON'T WANNA ROCK DJ 'CAUSE YOU'RE
MAKING ME FEEL SO NICE.

The pedestrians slip and fall in sync as the boys snatch Union Jack graphic POGO STICKS from the front of a SOUVENIR SHOP. They bounce down the street, unknowingly destroying freshly troweled pavement to the dismay of two WORKERS.

The boys dismount the pogos, flinging them in the air. One lodges in a car's windscreen. They dance into a RECORD STORE.

INT. RECORD STORE. REGENT STREET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Browsing CUSTOMERS stare as the boys dance through the store.

ROBBIE
GIVE NO HEAD, NO BACKSTAGE PASSES.

A MOTHER puts her hands over her DAUGHTER'S ears.

Amongst Take That & Party advertising is a life-sized CARDBOARD CUT-OUT of the boys JUMPING in WHITE outfits. We lose the boys behind the cut-out, except for Robbie who SNAPS off the cardboard mic in cardboard Gary's hand.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I ROCK THE MIC RIGHT.

The boys kick the cardboard cut-out over, revealing themselves in the same WHITE outfits and JUMPING pose. They dance to a Listening Station and don the headphones. The boys boogie as Rock DJ blasts into their ears.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
IT'S TIME TO MOVE YOUR BODY.

As they head for the exit, Robbie plays the BUTT bongos on a CUSTOMER who is showing some 'plumber's crack' as he picks up a CD from the floor. The rest of the boys toss Take That & Party CD's in the air as they dance out.

EXT. REGENT STREET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

The boys leap onto five SENIOR CITIZEN'S scooters, manoeuvring them into a BUSBY BERKELEY inspired routine.

ROBBIE
SINGING IN THE CLASSES. MUSIC FOR
THE MASSES.

They jump off the scooters and groove down the footpath, passing posters of their second album, 'EVERYTHING CHANGES' plastered on the walls. Their FAME is growing. People on the street begin to point and smile.

ROBBIE/HOWARD/GARY/MARK/JASON
I DON'T WANNA ROCK DJ 'CAUSE YOU'RE
MAKING ME FEEL SO NICE.

Dancing against pedestrian traffic, they pinch clothing from different pedestrians. At the end of the crossing is a wall of TVs in an ELECTRONICS STORE displaying Take That accepting an award. They are taking the country by storm!

ROBBIE
PIMPIN' AIN'T EASY. MOST OF THEM
FLEECE ME EVERY NIGHT.

The boys strike dynamic poses, now styled in the outfits from their BACK FOR GOOD music video.

ROBBIE/HOWARD/GARY/MARK/JASON
BUT IF YOU'RE SELLING IT, IT'S
ALRIGHT.

Startled by screaming FANS, the boys race into a MUSIC SHOP.

INT. INSTRUMENT STORE. REGENT STREET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

CUSTOMERS play various instruments while the boys, under dynamic lighting, perform an exuberant dance on GRAND PIANOS.

ROBBIE
Come on!

The fans join the dance.

ROBBIE/JASON/GARY/MARK/HOWARD

I DON'T WANNA ROCK DJ. 'CAUSE
YOU'RE MAKING ME FEEL SO NICE.

Heading for the door, the boys take off their coats to reveal colourful BRITISH KNIGHTS jackets. Everyone follows as they rush out of the shop.

EXT. REGENT STREET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

The hanging CHRISTMAS ANGEL LIGHTS across Regent Street sparkle as the boys dance onto the street.

ROBBIE/JASON/GARY/MARK/HOWARD

I DON'T WANNA ROCK DJ 'CAUSE YOU'RE
MAKING ME FEEL SO NICE.

Robbie parkours off a parked MOTORCYCLE, onto a BLACK CAB to land on the open roof of a double decker TOURIST BUS. He dances among the TOURISTS who jig in time and take photos.

ROBBIE

WHEN'S IT GONNA STOP DJ? 'CAUSE
YOU'RE KEEPING ME UP ALL NIGHT.

Arms outstretched, Robbie is perfectly framed in one of the Christmas Angel lights. He falls backwards off the bus to be caught by the Take That boys just before he hits the ground.

ALL

WHEN'S IT GONNA STOP DJ? 'CAUSE
YOU'RE KEEPING ME UP ALL NIGHT.

Regent Street grinds to a halt. The entire street joins in as Robbie leads everyone to a climactic finish.

INT. FAMILY HOME. LOUNGE ROOM. STOKE-ON-TRENT - NIGHT

Janet looks out the window at the SCREAMING fans camped on the pavement. Robbie, beer in hand, lounges on the sofa next to Betty.

JANET

Every day there's a new lot. The coach brings them in. They come into the garden, nick the wood off the fence, the clothes off the line. Someone should do something about this.

ROBBIE

Mum, they want this to happen.

JANET

I went down to the post office the other day and someone called me a posh slag.

BETTY

Oh, love, you're not posh.

JANET

It's not funny. I can't make my deliveries anymore. I'm having to shut the business, Robert.

ROBBIE

Guess who's recording the lead vocals for our new song? I'll get us out of this shit hole and buy us a fortress, just like Gary.

JANET

And why would I want a bigger house to hide in?

She pulls the curtains closed.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

That was the first time my mum closed her curtains. She didn't open them for another ten years.

Janet heads for the door.

JANET

I'm going to bed. If they'll let me.

She leaves. Betty gently raises Robbie's sunglasses. His eyes are red-rimmed, pupils like side plates.

BETTY

Hey love, where's my little Robert gone?

Robbie flips his glasses back on and heads to the window.

ROBBIE

I'm a pop star, Nan. Fat little Robert isn't going to sell albums, is he? I'm just giving the people what they want.

He parts the curtains. Fans go CRAZY as he plays up to them.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I go onstage and act like a gladiator and pretend that the whole world is lucky to see me. And they all act accordingly.

He catches his reflection in the window as the fans chant his name. He stares at himself in DISGUST.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
They don't see what I see.

Betty appears behind him.

BETTY
Then stop.

ROBBIE
That's the craziest thing. I can't.

He blows a kiss against the glass. The fans scream.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
(to the fans)
Now fuck off!

He snaps the curtains shut.

INT. FAN CLUB HQ. MANCHESTER - DAY

White envelopes rain down on a cheery TV HOST.

HOST
(to camera)
I'm here at Take That HQ with the
man responsible for the band's
success, Nigel Martin Smith.

We pull back to reveal a TV CREW huddled around Nigel who is in front of a wall of MERCHANDISE. A TV silently plays the **DO WHAT YOU LIKE** music video.

HOST (CONT'D)
It's quite a display.

NIGEL
It is. We have Take That calendars,
Take That pillows so you can sleep
with Take That.
(to camera)
Just kidding. Probably cut that bit
out.

He moves to a set of Babushka Dolls.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
For our ethnic fans we have Take
That Babushka Dolls.
(indicating to each doll)
Robbie's inside Mark, who's inside
Jason. Jason's inside Howard and
they all fit snugly in Gary.

In an adjoining room, Robbie lounges on sacks of FAN MAIL smoking and writing lyrics in his notebook. He looks WASTED.

GARY (O.C.)
Lyrics?

ROBBIE
Just some ideas.

Robbie snaps the notebook shut as Gary sits next to him.

GARY
Come on then. Give us a look.

ROBBIE
Will I get a credit?

GARY
I don't know. Are they any good?

Robbie can't bring himself to hand it over. He hides his insecurity with bravado.

ROBBIE
Wouldn't you like to know.

GARY
Whatever.

The rest of the boys enter. Jason takes Robbie's smoke out of his mouth and stubs it out.

JASON
You can at least pretend to give a toss.

ROBBIE
(indicating the merchandise)
What, about all this? Are you kidding? Do you have any idea how naff people think we are?

HOWARD
Fuck off Robbie, they love us.

ROBBIE
You think Oasis does this shit? We need to branch out. Write something that's not so fucking cringeworthy.

GARY
And this coming from you. The one who only shines when the light's on him.

MARK
Alright, Gaz.

HOWARD

No, let him speak.

GARY

You think you can just turn up,
scribble some worthless shit and
get your name next to mine in the
song credits? You add nothing to
this. Any of it.

Desperate to cover his hurt and fear, Robbie tries to laugh it off.

INT. RECORDING BOOTH/STUDIO. MANCHESTER - NIGHT

We can just make out the tinny backing to **RELIGHT MY FIRE** in Robbie's headphones. His natural flair has vanished as he desperately tries to perfect the song.

ROBBIE

TURN BACK THE TIME TILL THE DAYS
WHEN OUR LOVE WAS NEW. DO YOU
REMEMBER?

Through the recording booth window, DECLAN, a sound engineer, works the mixing board while Nigel and Gary judge every note. Howard, Mark and Jason are slumped on sofas, bored. It's clear they've been there for some time.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

NO MATTER WHAT WAS HAPPENING, I WAS
THERE WITH YOU. UH HUH.

The music cuts off.

DECLAN

(through the PA)
Hold it there for a second, Robbie.

ROBBIE

That felt better, yeah?

Robbie notices Gary rolling his eyes.

DECLAN

(through the PA)
You're still a little behind, I'm
afraid.

ROBBIE

I've always liked a little behind.

DECLAN

(through the PA)
How about we do it line by line and
we'll stitch it together later?

ROBBIE

No, I can do it all at once.
Just... let's just go again.

DECLAN

(through the PA)
Ah... ok. Sure. Here we go.

Robbie shuffles nervously as the playback begins.

ROBBIE

TURN BACK THE TIME TILL THE DAYS
WHEN OUR LOVE WAS NEW.

Robbie is thrown as Nigel sighs and checks his watch.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

NO MATTER WHAT WAS HAPPENING, I WAS
THERE WITH YOU. UH HUH.

His confidence withers away as Gary winces at his singing.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

BUT IF WE ALL STAND UP FOR WHAT WE
BELIEVE.

Robbie's insecurity gives way to fear when he spies a haunting VERSION of himself, dressed in his school uniform, in the corner of the studio. Haunting voices of SELF-DOUBT seep into his mind.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

(as if hearing his inner
thoughts)

You're worthless. You can't do what
Gary does. They're all laughing at
you.

ROBBIE

THE WORLD WOULD BE WILD FOR THE
DREAM.

When Robbie looks back, the version has disappeared.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

SO BABY DON'T TURN AWAY. LIS-

The music abruptly stops.

DECLAN

(through the PA)
That's great. Give us a second.

ROBBIE

(under his breath)
Fuck me.

The room falls SILENT. Nothing but Robbie's quickening breath amplified through his headphones. Through the window, Nigel gestures to Robbie while shaking his head. He points to Gary who says something that makes the room laugh.

Robbie tries to decipher what Nigel is saying about him. Finally, Declan's voice rings through the booth.

DECLAN

(through the PA)

OK mate, I think we might have it.
Thank you.

ROBBIE

(humiliated))

OK... great.

DECLAN

Cheers Robbie.

In the studio, Nigel and the boys come to life, relieved to be moving on. On the other side of the glass, Robbie can't hear their conversation.

NIGEL

Give it a sec, Gary, before you
head in there.

GARY

You did your best.

NIGEL

Yeah, you know, and now I feel like
the bad guy.

Back in the booth Robbie grabs his jacket. Everyone in the studio is too engrossed in conversation to notice him leave.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Robbie walks past the studio door as the Relight My Fire playback blares out. He stops when he hears Gary's voice singing the SOLO he had just been trying to record.

GARY (O.C.)

TURN BACK THE TIME TILL THE DAYS
WHEN OUR LOVE WAS NEW. DO YOU
REMEMBER?

Through the open door, Robbie sees Nigel and Declan nodding their heads in time as Gary nails the song.

NIGEL

It's already good. Fucking hell,
the difference!

DECLAN

It's like night and day, isn't it.

NIGEL

This is a hit.

Robbie, gutted, walks on.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - LATER

Robbie finishes a bottle of VODKA letting the liquid spill down his chin.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

As Robbie trudges to his room, he dumps the vodka bottle and swipes some left over fries from an abandoned tray.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

I didn't know it but I was suffering from depression. I hate that phrase, 'suffering from depression.' Sounds so Scarlett O'Hara - 'I do declare Mr. Butler, I have been suffering with a bout of depression.' 'Clinically depressed' is better. Way more lab-coaty.

INT. ROBBIE'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Robbie stops in his tracks. Peter is on the sofa eating and drinking from the minibar.

ROBBIE

Dad!

PETER

Here he is! Here he is!

ROBBIE

I didn't know you were—

Robbie is startled by a loud SCREAM. MELISSA (25), dressed in a Take That t-shirt is overcome with excitement.

MELISSA

Oh my god!

PETER

(to Melissa, laughing)

I told you, didn't I. You owe me a pint, love.

MELISSA
(to Robbie)
Can I get a photo?

PETER
Course you can. I'll take it for
you.

Melissa hands Peter her DISPOSABLE CAMERA.

PETER (CONT'D)
Say fuzzy pickle.

ROBBIE MELISSA
Fuzzy pickle. Fuzzy pickle.

Melissa places Robbie's hand on her butt as Peter takes the photo. Robbie tries to escape Melissa's embrace.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
(to Melissa)
Lovely. Thank you so much.

PETER
(to Melissa)
Do you want one with me in it?

ROBBIE
Great idea!

PETER
(to Melissa)
Yeah, course you do.

Melissa is less than enthusiastic but accepts the camera from Peter. He puts his arm around Robbie's shoulder.

PETER (CONT'D)
Look at that. Peas in a pod.

Robbie smiles as the camera CLICKS.

MELISSA
Can I use lose you... use you...
can I use your loo?

ROBBIE
Yeah.

MELISSA
It's a number two.

ROBBIE
Be my quest.

MELISSA

Melissa squeals as she disappears into the bathroom. Peter looks out the window at the horde of FANS below as Robbie pops a couple of PROZAC PILLS, washing them down with a mini vodka.

ROBBIE

She seems nice.

PETER

Terrific. Terrific. You know they've cordoned off the whole street? Girls everywhere. And they're not playing nice either. It's like a bloodsport out there. I told the security lads you were my son. Nearly got torn apart.

ROBBIE

You in town for long?

PETER

Just passing through. Back home tonight.

(motioning to the loo)

After I collect my pint.

ROBBIE

I wish I'd known you were coming.

Peter spies the packet of Prozac.

PETER

What's this?

ROBBIE

Nothing.

PETER

(checking the packet)

Prozac? What've you got to mope about? You boys are flying. Brits nomination... I've been telling everyone about that.

ROBBIE

I know. It's just... It's all a bit overwhelming, dad. It's like I can't keep track of who I am anymore.

PETER

(gesturing to the fans)

Well, go and ask that lot out there. They know exactly who you are. The other lads you'd be hard pressed to pick out of a police line up.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Not Gary obviously 'cause he's the creative one, but you, you're living the dream, youth. How can you not know who you are when there are thousands of people screaming your name?

Robbie lies back on the bed and drains the mini vodka.

INT. MANCHESTER CENTRAL CONVENTION COMPLEX. SUBSTAGE - NIGHT

Darkness. The sound of a body collapsing and panicked voices.

MARK (O.C.)

Jesus! Rob!

Robbie's eyes flicker open for a moment before he lapses back into unconsciousness.

NIGEL (O.C.)

What did he take?

HOWARD (O.C.)

Could be anything.

NIGEL (O.C.)

Hold the show until I say.

Robbie tries to focus as Nigel zeros in on him.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

You were an afterthought. Couldn't sing, couldn't dance. Looks... five at best. Everything you have, everything, I've given you. And you don't deserve any of it.

The audience roar as MUSIC blares from the stage, heralding the start of the show. Nigel and the boys jump up in alarm as Robbie remains passed out.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

(to the stagehand)

Are you fucking retarded?

STAGEHAND

I fucking told them...

NIGEL

(to the boys)

Get in position.

The boys go to protest but Nigel cuts them off.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

I said get in position. Now!

The shocked boys strike their opening poses.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
(to Robbie)
WAKE UP YOU FUCKING BABY!

Robbie vomits and weakly pushes Nigel away.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
(to himself)
All this because of a fucking wink.

He slams a button and the platform rises to the stage.

INT. MANCHESTER CENTRAL CONVENTION COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Gary, Mark, Howard and Jason appear on the platform holding their dynamic poses. But no Robbie.

In the crowd, Betty and Janet share a look as Robbie finally comes into view lying on the platform. The **RELIGHT MY FIRE** beat kicks in.

GARY
HELP ME ESCAPE THIS FEELIN' OF
INSECURITY.

Robbie, getting his bearings, takes in the enormous CROWD. He is startled to see the others dance off in perfect unison. He stumbles up to join them, the drugs and alcohol SEETHING through his system.

A breathless Nigel arrives in the wings and watches Robbie.

GARY (CONT'D)
I NEED YOU SO MUCH BUT I DON'T
THINK YOU REALLY NEED ME.

Onstage, the boys throw Robbie withering glances as he struggles to keep up with the choreography.

ROBBIE/GARY/MARK/JASON/HOWARD
ALL STAND UP.

GARY
IN THE NAME OF LOVE AND STATE THE
CASE OF WHAT WE'RE DREAMING OF.

The boys deliver a high-energy performance.

GARY (CONT'D)
I GOT TO SAY I ONLY DREAM OF YOU.

Robbie is startled at the sight of an ominous version of himself in the audience. He shakes off the image and joins the others.

ROBBIE/GARY/MARK/JASON/HOWARD
RELIGHT MY FIRE 'CAUSE I NEED YOUR
LOVE.

While Mark and Howard seductively strip off their jackets in a choreographed move, Jason, Gary and Robbie exit the stage.

INT. MANCHESTER CENTRAL CONVENTION COMPLEX. SIDE OF STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Gary, Jason and Robbie quickly remove their suits. They are under-dressed in their next costume.

JASON
Passed out! That's a new low.

ROBBIE
It was a dodgy curry.

GARY
You're job is simple - sing the harmonies and toe the line.

ROBBIE
You'd like that wouldn't you?

GARY
Know your place.

JASON
You're making us look like fucking idiots.

Gary and Jason race back on stage wearing DEVIL HORNS and HOT PANTS. Robbie follows dressed in a similar costume.

INT. MANCHESTER CENTRAL CONVENTION COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Robbie rushes on stage to find he's forgotten his microphone.

ROBBIE
(under his breath)
Oh, fuck.

Gary serves him a filthy look.

GARY
BUT IF WE ALL STAND UP FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE-

Robbie has had enough. He snatches Gary's microphone. Gary has no option but to join the backing choreography with the other boys. In the wings, Nigel is incredulous.

ROBBIE
THE WORLD WOULD BE WILD FOR THE
DREAM.

Robbie is in full PEACOCK mode.

ROBBIE/GARY/MARK/JASON/HOWARD
'CAUSE I NEED YOUR LOVE.

Robbie dances, wide eyed and MANIC. Concern washes over Betty and Janet as they contemplate Robbie might be slipping away. The boys complete the routine. Robbie passes the mic back to Gary as the intro to **COULD IT BE MAGIC** rings out.

EXT. GARY'S MANSION - DAY

Robbie parks Janet's FORD ESCORT next to Gary's 1995 Ferrari Testarossa. The license plate reads 'GAZ 01'.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
Because he writes all the songs,
Gary makes all the money. He's got
a mansion in the north of England
with a driveway full of cars.

ROBBIE
Fuck me.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
And a butler.

A BUTLER, dressed in full livery, stands to attention outside the mansion's front door.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
While I'm still living at mum's.

ROBBIE
He's Elton now.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
And they're all waiting for me in
the garden. And it's to talk about
the problem and I am the problem.

He snorts some COCAINE and slaps his cheeks.

EXT. GARY'S MANSION. GARDEN - LATER

Robbie's on a SWING attached to a glorious oak tree. The boys sit around him on deck chairs. A linen-clothed table offers an array of fruit, including a WHOLE WATERMELON.

Silence, punctuated by birdsong and the creaking swing.

HOWARD

Robbie, so... well, we've all been having a think. And... we'd quite like to do the next tour as a four-piece.

MARK

Just to see if we can do it.

A flicker of shock passes over Robbie's face.

JASON

Yeah... to see if we can do it.

HOWARD

Perhaps you could focus on some of that solo material you've been working on or-

GARY

To be honest, Rob, we've been doing it as a four-piece for a while.

Nothing but the creaking of the swing. It takes all Robbie's strength not to burst into tears.

ROBBIE

(almost upbeat)

I think you should.

The boys are shocked.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

(fake nonchalance)

That it, then?

The boys are thrown by Robbie's response.

GARY

Yeah.

Robbie lifts his legs up, pulls back on the swing and sends himself into the AIR.

ROBBIE

WEEEEEEEEE!

The action cuts through the moment and the boys laugh. Robbie LAUNCHES himself off the swing. He grabs the whole watermelon from the table.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Can I take this?

MARK

Yeah, Rob. If you want.

Robbie walks away then, for dramatic effect, turns back and raises the watermelon in the air.

ROBBIE

This is it! This is the end!

The boys laugh as Robbie ducks out of sight.

INT. FORD ESCORT - MOMENTS LATER

Robbie places the watermelon on the passenger seat, securing it with a seatbelt. He disregards his own. Nigel, champagne in hand, looks down from the first floor window.

Desperate to escape, Robbie turns the ignition, nothing. Frustrated, he tries again. Finally, the car starts. He grits his teeth and stamps on the accelerator. The tyres spit dust as he heads down the long driveway. The enormity of leaving the band washes over him. The song **COME UNDONE** begins.

ROBBIE

SO UNIMPRESSED BUT SO IN AWE.
SUCH A SAINT BUT SUCH A WHORE.

Gary's imposing front gates come into view. Robbie's jaw sets. He moves quickly up the gears.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I'M CONTEMPLATING THINKING ABOUT
THINKING.

Seeing Robbie's car approach, waiting FANS swarm the gate.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

THEY'RE SELLING RAZOR BLADES AND
MIRRORS IN THE STREET.

Robbie honks the HORN. Fans scatter as he bursts through the gate. He skids onto the road, clipping a LARRY that blares its horn in protest.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I COME UNDONE.

Robbie white-knuckles the steering wheel. His shock giving way to a rising rage. A dense, ominous FOG appears up ahead, blocking the sun. We hear quick fire announcements as if playing from Robbie's car radio.

ANNOUNCER 1 (O.S.)

Fans are still reeling from the announcement on Monday that Robbie Williams split from Take That.

ANNOUNCER 2 (O.S.)

Help Line switch boards, set up
after reports of suicides have been
flooded by tearful Take That
fans...

ANNOUNCER 3 (O.S.)

He has built up a reputation as a
party animal...

A car rockets past in the opposite lane, its HEADLIGHTS blinding in the gloom.

ROBBIE

SO ROCK N' ROLL SO CORPORATE SUIT.

Tail lights appear out of nowhere. Without checking if the coast is clear, Robbie pulls out to overtake, nearly clipping the car as he swerves back into his lane, just avoiding an approaching car that shoots by in a blur.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

SO FUCK YOU ALL.

The speedometer climbs. Through the fog, Robbie spies two sets of oncoming HEADLIGHTS taking up both lanes. He closes his eyes for impact.

While the car in the opposing lane races by, Robbie opens his eyes to discover the headlights in his lane are coming from a familiar looking BUS speeding in REVERSE.

Overtaking the bus, Robbie is unnerved to see it packed with Manchester United fans focused on someone at the back of the bus. His face falls when he spies Peter conducting the fans. The memory of his dad leaving remains an open wound.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

BECAUSE I'M SCUM AND I'M YOUR SON.

Focused on his dad, Robbie fails to notice a car approaching at speed. At the last second he turns to the approaching headlights. His eyes widen in the beam as his mirror image is reflected in a WALL OF WATER. He braces for COLLISION.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I COME UN-

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

The Escort SHOOTS through the wall of water with a trailing jet stream of BUBBLES. The car tilts forward and slowly sinks to the bottom.

The song continues - sub-aquatic, dream-like as the car's headlights pick out Robbie, sinking like a rag doll.

CLOSE ON Robbie. The sound of a DROWNING FAN seeps in. Desperate, CRYING. Her voice grows more hysterical.

DROWNING FAN
*How could you do this, Robbie!
Don't go!*

Robbie's eyes open to find the drowning fan clutching onto his face. BLOOD fills the water from her SLIT WRISTS. He tries to take her hand but she slips away into the depths.

WHOOSH. Another fan torpedoes into the light followed by another and another. He's BOMBARDED. They unsuccessfully try to clutch onto him before disappearing into the darkness. Terrified, he swims for the surface.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

The cheeky member of Take That is now the fucked-up messy one who's gone and broken up the band. And people hate me for it. But really, they're only saying what I think about myself. I've a raging cocaine habit, I'm a full-blown alcoholic and I'm twenty-one.

Struggling for breath, he finds the surface covered in thick ICE. He BEATS at the ice, desperate to smash through.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

I think I was always going to be an alcoholic or an addict, I just had the money and the means to get there quicker. But I'm also incredibly competitive. I mean, I've no idea how I'm going to pull off a solo career.

He's thrown by a FLASH of a camera, followed by another and another as a horde of PAPARAZZI crowd above him. The ice CRACKS under their weight, plunging the paparazzi into the water. Like a shoal of fish they swarm around him, trapping him under as he fights to swim to the surface.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

But there's an energy to revenge.
And it's very, very seductive.

The song ends.

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - NIGHT

Perched at the end of a DIVING BOARD, Robbie studies the water shimmering in the moonlight, like the reflection of one thousand camera flashes. The diving board is attached to an enormous YACHT. A crowd of celebrities pack the deck. They wear individual party MASKS.

CELEBRITIES
Five, four, three, two, one...
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

FIREWORKS. Robbie lifts his MOUSE MASK to swig his beer.

ROBBIE
(to himself)
It's going to happen. No ifs, no
buts. No left, no right. Straight
ahead. I'm going to be fucking
massive.

MASKED WOMAN (O.C.)
A massive what?

Robbie spins to see a striking woman standing on the deck
wearing a DOVE MASK.

ROBBIE
Fuck! You scared the shit out of
me.

MASKED WOMAN
You said you wanted to be massive?

ROBBIE
I was just...
(indicating to his penis)
Wishing for a little extra girth.

MASKED WOMAN
What is it you do?
(off Robbie's surprise)
Sorry, should I already know that?

ROBBIE
No, no. I'm... I'm a singer and
songwriter.

MASKED WOMAN
Really?

ROBBIE
Yeah, just starting out on my own.
I was in Take That and—

MASKED WOMAN
The boyband?

She bursts out laughing.

ROBBIE
Don't mind me.

MASKED WOMAN
Sorry.

Robbie joins her on the deck.

ROBBIE

No, you're alright. That's why I left. Dancing around in the background like a camp sadomasochist.... I mean, if I'm going to look like a tosser, I might as well do it down stage centre.

MASKED WOMAN

So it's all about the spotlight?

ROBBIE

Wow, not even any lube - just full fist.

MASKED WOMAN

I'm just saying, if you're going to start out on your own, you might as well be honest about why.

ROBBIE

Shit, are you a journalist?

MASKED WOMAN

Fuck, no. Just curious.

ROBBIE

I'm not sure you'd understand.

MASKED WOMAN

Try me.

Robbie launches his empty beer bottle into the water.

ROBBIE

I was given the golden ticket but it felt like I was bound and gagged for the last five years. And not in a hot way, either. In a battery to the scrotum sort of way.

(Masked Woman laughs)

I don't know sexy, mysterious masked lady... I guess I've reached a point where I want to prove I can make it on my own.

MASKED WOMAN

Prove to who?

ROBBIE

Everyone.

The Masked Woman looks at him intently.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

See, I told you you wouldn't understand.

The Masked Woman lifts her mask to reveal - NICOLE APPLETON

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

(embarrassed)

Fuck me.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Nicole Appleton. She and her sister were members of the girl band, All Saints.

RAPID IMAGES - cheesy 90s posters and paparazzi photos of the UP-AND-COMING band, ALL SAINTS. Several of the photos feature the All Saint's stern LABEL EXECUTIVE.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Their manager was a cunt, too.

Nicole leans on the handrail of the yacht.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

She was absolutely lovely - with the single worst taste in men.

They lock eyes as he hands her a beer. A CELEBRITY throws them a dirty look as he walks by.

ROBBIE

(to the celebrity)

Yeah, you right?

NICOLE

Fame is so fucking weird isn't it?
It's like that uneasy feeling you get when they bring the cake out and the whole restaurant sings *Happy Birthday* to you and you can't wait until *Happy Birthday* stops being sung. I mean, people are doing a really nice thing but you just want it to stop so you can-

ROBBIE

Eat the fucking cake.

NICOLE

Yeah.

It's like they've seen into each other's souls.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Well, now you've got your gag off, what're you going to say?

ROBBIE

I've got some lyrics. They're basically different takes on how much I hate myself.

NICOLE

So a Christmas album then?

ROBBIE

I'm not sure about an album. At the moment I'd just like to write one good song.

NICOLE

You're overthinking it. Just write about whatever's in front of you.

Looking across the water she launches into a deliberately stupid melody.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I'VE GOT A BOAT BUT MINE'S MADE OF RUBBER-

ROBBIE

I CUT A HOLE IN THE BACK AND USE MY COCK AS A RUDDER. Yes! It's a hit!

NICOLE

See, you're gonna be massive in no time.

Robbie looks at her in wonder. He's found his SOULMATE. As if improvising, he starts **SHE'S THE ONE**, a cappella.

ROBBIE

I WAS HER, SHE WAS ME.

Nicole raises her eyebrows, anticipating a filthy rhyme.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

WE WERE ONE. WE WERE FREE.

It dawns on Nicole he might be singing from the heart.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

AND IF THERE'S SOMEBODY CALLING ME ON. SHE'S THE ONE.

The music kicks in. She's HYPNOTISED.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

SHE'S THE ONE.

They sweep into a ROMANTIC dance along the deck under the light of the full moon.

NICOLE

WE WERE YOUNG. WE WERE WRONG. WE
WERE FINE ALL ALONG.

Robbie spins Nicole along the deck.

ACTION CUT TO:

INT. RED CARPET. LONDON - NIGHT - FLASHFORWARD

Robbie joins Nicole as she spins along the red carpet. It's their first outing as a couple. They are lit with FLASHES from the waiting PHOTOGRAPHERS. Robbie dips Nicole.

ACTION CUT TO:

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - NIGHT

Robbie lifts Nicole from the dip. They dance along the deck.

ROBBIE

YOU'LL BE SO HIGH YOU'LL BE
FLYING.

NICOLE

YOU'LL BE SO HIGH YOU'LL BE
FLYING.

Nicole ducks under Robbie's arm.

ACTION CUT TO:

INT. THE END NIGHTCLUB. LONDON - NIGHT - FLASHFORWARD

Nicole ducks to take a shot of VODKA in the corner of the club. Strobe lighting kicks in as she dances with Robbie, who is as high as a kite.

ACTION CUT TO:

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - NIGHT

Robbie and Nicole, framed by STARS, whirl across the deck.

ROBBIE

IF THERE'S SOMEBODY CALLING
ME ON.

NICOLE

IF THERE'S SOMEBODY CALLING
ME ON.

Robbie spins Nicole.

ACTION CUT TO:

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. LONDON - NIGHT - FLASHFORWARD

Nicole opens the door to be struck by CANDLELIGHT. The MOUSE AND DOVE MASKS are at her feet.

A line drawn in chalk extends from the masks to Robbie who's on one knee holding an ENGAGEMENT RING. She leaps into his arms.

ACTION CUT TO:

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - NIGHT

Nicole and Robbie spin at the end of the DIVING BOARD.

ROBBIE NICOLE
YOU'RE SMILING. YOU'RE SMILING.

She turns in front of Robbie who holds her stomach.

ACTION CUT TO:

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. BEDROOM. LONDON - DAY - FLASHFORWARD

Robbie stands behind Nicole, holding her stomach as she spins a mobile of MICE and CHICKENS above a new COT. He grabs her breast. Nicole laughs and pushes him away.

ACTION CUT TO:

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - NIGHT

As Nicole and Robbie dance, the stars magically shoot from the sky and light up the sea.

ROBBIE NICOLE
YOU'LL BE FLYING. YOU'LL BE FLYING.

As they dance, she moves to take Robbie's hand.

ACTION CUT TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO. LONDON - DAY - FLASHFORWARD

Nicole grabs the hand of her LABEL EXECUTIVE, holding him back as her bandmates file out of the room.

Through the mixing desk window, Robbie watches Nicole hold her stomach and share her exciting news with the label executive. He berates Nicole before storming out.

Devastated, Nicole locks eyes with Robbie who fixes her with a scared, questioning look.

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - NIGHT

Nicole's eyes sparkle as Robbie holds her in a dance lift. He lowers her into an EMBRACE.

ACTION CUT TO:

INT. ABORTION CLINIC. NEW YORK - DAY - FLASHFORWARD

Robbie and Nicole hold each other, fighting back tears. The label executive separates them and leads Nicole down a grim looking corridor. Devastated, Robbie races after them.

ACTION CUT TO:

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - NIGHT

Robbie, love-struck, catches up with Nicole. They dance on the stairs, twirling to sit side by side.

ACTION CUT TO:

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. BEDROOM. LONDON - DAWN - FLASHFORWARD

Sitting next to the now DISMANTLED cot, Robbie kisses his fingers and places them against Nicole's lips. Their GRIEF is overpowering. The rising sun casts the shadow of the chicken and mouse mobile which hangs, STILL.

ACTION CUT TO:

EXT. SOKAR LUXURY YACHT. SAINT-TROPEZ - DAWN

As the sun breaks the horizon, Robbie and Nicole lock eyes, amazed they may've found 'the one'.

ROBBIE
SHE'S THE ONE.

NICOLE
HE'S THE ONE.

They KISS. The song ends.

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. BEDROOM. LONDON - NIGHT

Lamplight. Robbie sits against the wall next to an open fire. It's late and SILENT. Nicole is asleep. He lovingly pushes a strand of hair from her face.

Robbie spies remnants of the chicken and mouse mobile wedged under the heater and is hit by a fresh wave of grief. He takes up his notebook and pen.

CLOSE ON: words flowing across the page, 'You can't manufacture a miracle, the silence was pitiful...'

Inspired, Robbie sits up. The lamplight shifts to his CHEST. He spills his heart onto the page.

INT. PRIVATE MEMBER'S CLUB. LONDON - NIGHT

Nicole, her band, the label executive, and friends are huddled around a tape deck which plays *Pick of the Pops* on BBC 2.

LABEL EXECUTIVE

It's not a competition girls. It's just hard work.

Robbie, smoking off to the side, fixes the executive a scathing look. Nate, out of place in the swanky club, arrives with drinks.

NATE

(handing Robbie a drink)

Here you are. This place is posh as fuck. You know, I've just seen fucking Bono in the toilet. Had a look... tiny.

Robbie can't help but smile.

NATE (CONT'D)

You've missed me, haven't you.
Yeah, course you have.

Robbie locks eyes with Nicole. She smiles with nervous anticipation. Robbie gives her a flirty wink.

NATE (CONT'D)

So... you know my girlfriend Kayleigh.

(off Robbie's confusion)

Kayleigh.

ROBBIE

The one with the club foot?

NATE

She ain't got a club foot. Her pelvis is out. Anyway, she's up the duff. I'm going to be a dad.

The news is like a gut punch to Robbie. He paints on a smile.

ROBBIE

That's amazing.

(lunging at Nate's cock)

I'm just surprised the little thing still works.

NATE
(laughing)
Fuck off.

NICOLE
(to the group)
Shut up! Shut up! Here it is.

Everyone falls silent as they lean towards the tape deck.

RADIO DJ (O.S.)
*The wait is over! Coming in at
number one, it's new, it's
brilliant, it's... 'Never Ever' by
ALL SAINTS.*

The party EXPLODES with excitement as the song **NEVER EVER** blares from the speakers. Robbie hides his jealousy as Nicole runs to embrace him.

NICOLE
I can't believe it!

ROBBIE
Well done, babe. You deserve it.

NICOLE
(whispering in his ear)
It'll be your turn next.

Over her shoulder, Robbie locks eyes with LIAM GALLAGHER, who scans the room with disgust before walking on.

LABEL EXECUTIVE (O.C.)
Nicole, give us a few words!

The crowd egg her on.

NICOLE
Ok. Umm ... I just... I can't
believe we did it. Number fucking
one! To everyone who has supported
us through the years. You're
family. And we love you.

She's cut off by the popping of a champagne bottle to the delight of the party.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
And to my...

She turns to Robbie, only to find him walking out the door.
She turns back to her bandmates.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

To my best friends. Having a number one is amazing but getting to celebrate it together... it's the best.

CHEERS ring out.

We follow Robbie as he approaches Liam, bent over as if lining up for a snooker shot. An acoustic guitar is heard.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Liam Gallagher was the lead singer of Oasis, the biggest band on the planet. I'm in love with their songs. I'm in love with the lyrics. I'm in love with how provocative they are. I'm just totally in love with them. And I want to be them.

INT. PRIVATE MEMBER'S CLUB. SNOOKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

All eyes turn to Robbie as he enters. Liam's brother, NOEL GALLAGHER is playing the guitar while their ENTOURAGE lounge on armchairs, smoking and drinking.

A WOMAN in a low cut top lies seductively on the table in front of Liam. He SPRINKLES some coke along her cleavage.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Fame is a powerful aphrodisiac. It means even ugly people can get laid.

Liam snorts the coke. Robbie turns to Noel, who gives him the 'fuck off' eyes while he strums his guitar.

ROBBIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Mind you, guitars do that, too.

As the woman climbs off the table and slinks away, Liam frowns at the sound of Nicole and her friends celebrating.

LIAM

What's all that about?

ROBBIE

They got a number one.

LIAM

Is that all? Fucking hell. If I orgasmed every time I had a number one I'd be fucking dry.

ROBBIE

Yeah.

LIAM

(to the others)

Listen to this cunt - "Yeah" - like he knows what we're fucking talking about. You want a number one, you should've stayed Gary's back up dancer.

Liam's entourage laugh. Liam chalks his cue.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Guess who's had the largest ever demand for concert tickets in British history? Me.

ROBBIE

And the band-

LIAM

Knebworth. One hundred and twenty five thousand screaming cunts.

ROBBIE

That's insane.

LIAM

It's how you know you've made it, you fucking knobhead.

He throws the chalk at Robbie's head. The entourage laugh.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Me and Liam wouldn't always be so cuddly.

INT. BRIT AWARDS - FLASHFORWARD - NIGHT

Robbie, holding a Brit Award, is giving an acceptance speech.

ROBBIE

Would anyone like to see me fight Liam?

The crowd cheer.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Liam. Hundred grand of your money. Hundred grand of my money. We'll get in the ring and we'll have a fight and you can all watch it on TV. What do you think about that?

(to camera)

Now are you going to do it or are you going to pussy out you fucking wimp?

The crowd cheer.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
Thankfully, he wasn't in the
country at the time.

END FLASHFORWARD.

INT. PRIVATE MEMBER'S CLUB. SNOOKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A rekindled yearning fires in Robbie.

ROBBIE
(to himself)
Knebworth.

He's shaken from his dream as Liam takes his snooker shot, smashing a pint glass.

LIAM
(to his entourage)
Let's go. This is shit.

The room empties.

ROBBIE
Nice chatting to you, Noel.

NOEL
Fuck off, cunt.

Robbie, alone, spies some cocaine on the table. He dips his finger in it and raises it to his nose. Liam reappears.

LIAM
Hey twinkle toes! You coming or what?

Robbie can't believe his luck. He jumps up and follows Liam down the corridor, taking the cocaine as he goes.

He looks back at Nicole who's dancing on a chair, having an amazing time with her friends. Robbie follows Liam out.

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. LONDON - LATER

Robbie opens the fridge. The light hits him like a SPOTLIGHT.

ROBBIE
Good evening, Knebworth. You all look gorgeous tonight. Here's one from my new album.

He grabs a plate of RED VELVET CAKE and closes the door.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Thank you very much.

NICOLE (O.C.)

Hiya.

He swivels to find Nicole on the sofa in her pyjamas.

ROBBIE

Fuck me, aren't you Miss Number One
of the United Kingdom of Britain?

NICOLE

Maybe.

He slumps next to her on the sofa. They kiss.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Where did you end up?

ROBBIE

I got kidnapped by Liam Gallagher.
And you looked like you were having
a good enough time. Anyway, I was
just trying to make sense of it.

NICOLE

Of what?

ROBBIE

Never Ever.

NICOLE

What... you don't like our song?

ROBBIE

It's fine. I mean, I'm not sure
it's a number one but...

NICOLE

Well, people seem to like it. It
would be nice if-

ROBBIE

You screaming, jumping around,
making fucking speeches... and all
that bullshit about family.

NICOLE

It's not bullshit. It's everything
to me.

ROBBIE

Right. So, did you tell them you
gave up our family to get that
number one then?

Nicole looks as if she's been stabbed.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Nah, I bet you left that bit out of
your little speech, didn't you?

Nicole gets up from the sofa.

NICOLE

You're so fucking ugly when you're
wasted.

ROBBIE

Well, I'll be sober tomorrow.

NICOLE

Won't that be nice. I can't believe
I had to tell everyone you left
tonight because something important
came up.

ROBBIE

It did.

NICOLE

Getting fucked up with your mates?

ROBBIE

At least they know how to write a
proper number one.

NICOLE

Which is more than you can.
Scribbling lyrics in your little
notebook, but you're too scared to
show them to anyone.

ROBBIE

A number one and she's giving out
the advice. I didn't ask you to lie
to your friends because guess what,
I don't give a fuck what they
think.

NICOLE

You give a fuck what everyone
thinks, Rob. That's all you give a
fuck about.

She leaves. Robbie throws his plate of cake, smashing the
plate to pieces. The sound of a LAUGH TRACK seeps in as
Robbie holds his head in self-loathing.

INT. FAMILY HOME. LOUNGE ROOM. STOKE-ON-TRENT - DAY

Robbie and Betty are on the sofa eating crisps and watching
THE TWO RONNIES on TV. He laughs at the sketch and turns to
Betty to see a glazed look in her eye.

BETTY
We need crisps.

She gets up. He eyes the half-full bag of crisps in his hand.

ROBBIE
We're alright, Nan.

BETTY
I don't want you wasting away on
me.

On her way to the kitchen, she passes Janet entering with a load of Robbie's washing.

JANET
They don't have washing machine's
in London?

ROBBIE
Yeah, but you do it with love.

JANET
You bugger.

She starts folding the washing as Betty hums in the kitchen.

JANET (CONT'D)
You should come home more often,
you know.
(looking to the kitchen)
She's slowing down.

ROBBIE
Rubbish. Nan'll outlive all of us.
Anyway, I'm about to be very busy.
I rang around and I've a meeting
with a producer called Guy
Chambers.

Betty returns with Salt and Vinegar crisps.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Nicole's got a number one. Fucking
Gary's got number ones and here I
am turning into a farmyard animal.

BETTY
I wouldn't change a hair on your
head.

ROBBIE
Bless you, Nan.

BETTY
(excited)
Now, I spoke to your dad.

ROBBIE

That makes one of us. It's been
radio silence since I left the
band.

BETTY

He's agreed to see you again.

ROBBIE

Agreed? What do you mean?

BETTY

To have you visit on your school
holidays.

Janet's face falls as Robbie struggles to comprehend.

ROBBIE

He called me remember? He said it'd
been too long. He invited me.

BETTY

That's right. I told him to.

She clocks Robbie's shattered face and snaps back to the present, confused and mortified she's let the secret slip.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Oh, Jesus...

JANET

Oh, Betty. It's alright, duck.

BETTY

Oh, love... Robert, I'm so sorry.
My mind is all... jumbled.

Robbie puts his own feelings aside to comfort Betty.

ROBBIE

(takes her hand)

It's alright, Nan. Don't cry.
You're alright.

EXT. GUY CHAMBERS FLAT. LONDON - ESTABLISHING - DAY

An innocuous brick flat, one of many, looking dreary under the cold, grey London sky.

INT. GUY CHAMBERS' FLAT. LOUNGE ROOM. LONDON - DAY

Recording equipment fights for space with old records, guitars, and stained teacups. GUY CHAMBERS stares blankly from his keyboard as Robbie performs an *a cappella* rap.

ROBBIE

SO I POP IT OUT LIKE THE LITMUS
TEST AND SHE'S LIKE "AM I ALLOWED
TO LICK THIS YET?"-

GUY

OK. Hang on, hang on. Listen, I
appreciate you coming over but this
isn't going to work.

Guy eyeballs Robbie as he takes a slow sip of tea.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Guy Chambers. Guy likes it when I
talk about the holidays we shared.

EXT. BEACH. ITALY - DAY - FLASHFORWARD

An aerial shot of Guy and Robbie laying side by side on towels on the sand. Both are wearing speedos. Guy's pasty skin is blinding under the SCORCHING SUN.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

And I like it when he agrees to let
me sing our songs.

Guy turns to Robbie. He holds up a bottle of TANNING OIL.

GUY

You don't mind, do you?

ROBBIE (V.O.)

So our lawyers had a chat... and
here we are on a beach.

Guy rolls onto his front and slides his bathers down a little. Robbie oils his back.

GUY

(wiggling his butt)

Lower.

END FLASHFORWARD

INT. GUY CHAMBERS' FLAT. LOUNGE ROOM. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

ROBBIE

You've only heard half of them.

GUY

And they're all the same. I can't even tell when one ends and the next one begins. It's like you've written lyrics you think other people want to hear.

(MORE)

GUY (CONT'D)

I don't know... that might be ok in
a boyband...

ROBBIE

So you want me to get naked on the
first date?

GUY

It's the only way this works. Songs
are only valuable if they cost you
something.

This hangs in the air. Robbie takes a breath and retrieves his notebook from his jacket.

ROBBIE

Luckily, I'm always naked on the
first date.

He tentatively flips through the notebook and pauses on the lyrics to **SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL**. He looks out the window.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

If you're going to laugh, do it on
the inside, yeah? I dent easily.
Can you give me a C?

Guy gives Robbie a starting chord.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

YOU CAN'T MANU-

His voice CRACKS. The nerves have gotten the better of him.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Fuck me. Better make it a B flat.

Guy plays the lower chord.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

(singing, tentatively)

YOU CAN'T MANUFACTURE A MIRACLE,
THE SILENCE WAS PITIFUL THAT DAY.

As Robbie sings, Guy finds the chords on the keyboard.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

IF YOU'RE LOST, HURT, TIRED OR
LONELY SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL WILL
COME YOUR WAY. Second verse. THE DJ
SAID ON THE-

GUY

No, hang on. We have to double the
chorus or it'll sound crap.

Robbie's taken aback by Guy's HONESTY.

GUY (CONT'D)
What was that list... lost...?

ROBBIE
HURT, TIRED OR LONELY.

GUY
Well, that's the hook. That's the gold. The 'something beautiful' bit is cream on top. You got...
(playing the piano)
LOST, HURT, TIRED OR LONELY...

He improvises new chords and melody.

GUY (CONT'D)
And then you repeat. Understand?

ROBBIE
Yeah.

GUY
Pick it up from the chorus. And
give it some welly. Even if it's
shit, you got to make it your shit.

As Guy begins to play, Robbie summons his inner SHOWMAN.

GUY (CONT'D)
(counting Robbie in)
Two, three.

ROBBIE
IF YOU CAN'T WAKE UP IN THE
MORNING.

TIME LAPSE of Robbie and Guy in different positions in the room as they create the song together. Day turns to night.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
CAN'T CONTROL IT, TRY AS YOU MIGHT.

GUY
There you go.

Robbie joins Guy on the piano stool and puts his notebook on the music rack.

ROBBIE GUY (CONT'D)
SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL WILL COME SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL WILL COME
YOUR WAY. YOUR WAY.

The song ends. It's a magical moment. Robbie's found his creative soulmate.

GUY (CONT'D)
You're not as crap as I thought.

ROBBIE

Thanks.

GUY

We need to clean it up but it's a start.

Guy points to the notebook, his interest piqued.

GUY (CONT'D)

Now, what else have you got in there?

INT. BLACKPOOL RADIO STATION. STUDIO ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A tacky RADIO JINGLE for THE NEW WAVE, 86.5.

DJ SEXTON and DJ JEN are behind outdated microphones and recording equipment.

DJ SEXTON

And coming up we have a surprise guest in the studio. It's none other than ex-Take That bad boy, Robbie Williams!

In an adjoining room, little more than a broom cupboard, Robbie and Guy wait to make their entrance. Guy is a picture of indifference while Robbie is riddled with ANXIETY. He tries to calm himself with a snort of COCAINE.

Beside them is Robbie's new manager, CHRIS BRIGGS. He's taken aback by the intensity of Robbie's nerves.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

Chris Briggs. Manager to the stars. Amazingly, he saw something in me... I mean, besides monstrous amounts of drugs and booze.

BRIGGS

It'll be nice and intimate. Fifty people or so - contest winners, so they'll be super excited. And just remember it's going out live so mind your 'shits' and 'fucks'. You should start with a cover, something people recognize.

GUY

We want them to recognize our songs.

BRIGGS

And they will. But you have to woo them first.

ROBBIE

(to Briggs, serious)
You got to get me to Knebworth.

BRIGGS

How about you get through this one
without giving yourself a heart
attack.

ROBBIE

Just get me there, alright?

BRIGGS

Baby steps, mate. Look, I know this
isn't much of a gig-

GUY

Oh, I don't know - Blackpool,
Knebworth...

Guy disappears through the narrow opening, waving to the crowd, who completely ignore him.

BRIGGS

Plus, we need the air time. What've
you got to lose?

ROBBIE

I would've said my dignity but Take
That already stole it so... I mean
it, Briggsy, I've got to play
Knebworth. Whatever it takes.

BRIGGS

It'll take everything. Sure you're
ready for that?

Robbie nods.

BRIGGS (CONT'D)

Then make every performance count.

Robbie nervously runs Peter's comb through his hair.

ROBBIE

Light 'em up.

He gives Briggs a wink, races out the door and launches into
LAND OF 1000 DANCES.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR.

Guy strikes the keyboard and Robbie begins dancing his heart out. The fourteen seated CONTESTANT WINNERS, engrossed in their food from the BUFFET, snap to attention.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
YOU GOT TO KNOW HOW TO PONY
LIKE BONY MARONIE.

Robbie swipes a sprig of parsley from a FEMALE CONTESTANT'S plate and places it behind her ear. He straddles a MALE CONTESTANT and grinds against him.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
LET YOUR BACKBONE SLIP.

He dances to the glass window of the DJ booth and performs his best stripper moves to the delight of the DJs. In the reflection of the glass, he spies two threatening VERSIONS of himself.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
(as if hearing his inner
thoughts)
You're going to die!

He swings around only to find they've disappeared.

Guy, quizzical, gestures for him to keep performing. Robbie pushes through his fear.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
NAH, NAH NAH NAH.

INTERVIEWER 1 (O.S.)
*You've left the safety of the band
and now you're going out on your
own. How does that feel?*

ROBBIE (O.S.)
*I couldn't be happier. I'm finally
free, you know, and this is only
the beginning...*

Robbie jumps up on a chair and belts out the song.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
COME ON!

INT. FREEDOM NIGHTCLUB. SIDE OF STAGE. LONDON - NIGHT

The song continues. Robbie, full of nerves, is at his ROAD CASE. Headshots of the RAT PACK hang on the case. He kisses his shaking fingers and places them on each of the Rat Pack's headshots before running Peter's comb through his hair.

ROBBIE
Light 'em up.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Well, the first punches have been thrown and it's Gary Barlow at number one, while Robbie's first album, "Life Thru A Lens" has debuted at number eleven. Robbie's fate now rests on a national charm offensive tour...

Robbie snorts a line of cocaine. Fidgety. Frightened.

NIGHTCLUB ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Lock up your daughters, lock up your sons. It's Robbie Williams!

He rushes on stage to an audience of FOUR HUNDRED. He's in full entertainer mode and the CROWD love him.

ROBBIE

You know what I need you to do.
One. Two. Three. Four.
NAH. NAH NAH NAH.

He stops dead at the sight of a VERSION of himself in the audience. Menacing. Dangerous.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

(as if hearing his inner thoughts)

I'm going to rip your fucking eyes out.

He overrides his fear and continues the performance.

INTERVIEWER 2 (O.S.)

With his new album rocketing up the charts - ladies and gentlemen, Robbie Williams!

Robbie reaches out to the front row of crazed fans. A MONKEY hand grips his arm and tries to drag him into the audience. Robbie's mind is swamped with words of SELF-DESTRUCTION.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

(as if hearing his inner thoughts)

We're coming for you. You've got nothing. You are fucking dead!

Robbie recoils, pulling free. When he looks back, the VERSION has disappeared, replaced by a delighted fan. Robbie barely masks his FEAR as he parades down the THRUST of the stage. The crowd EXPLODES with excitement.

Robbie falls to his knees.

ROBBIE

NAH, NAH NAH NAH.

AUDIENCE

NAH, NAH NAH NAH.

The hands of the crowd COVER his body.

INT. COLUMBIA HOTEL. BEDROOM. LONDON - NIGHT.

The song continues as the hands of four WOMEN grope Robbie's half-naked body.

ROBBIE (O.S.)

(as if in an interview)

Being a pop star means you can live all your fantasies. I think it's what's known as the 'lucky bastard'.

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. BEDROOM. LONDON - NIGHT

The song continues as Nicole enters to find an UNCONSCIOUS Robbie on the bed. His pillow is caked with vomit. She sits on the edge of the bed, unsure of how much more she can take.

INT. VARIOUS PERFORMANCE VENUES - NIGHT

QUICK CUTS of Robbie performing. The crowd size increases with each venue, as do the VERSIONS of himself that threaten him with ever increasing VIOLENCE. Summoning all his strength, he battles through his fear.

ROBBIE (O.S.)

(as if in an interview)

You know, the great thing is I've actually arrived now because back at home I've been voted the 'rear of the year'

INTERVIEWER 3 (O.S.)

Is that right? You going to show us?

Robbie, on set for the Rock DJ music video is dressed in a SKINLESS SUIT. He slaps his blood-soaked, fleshy arse.

INTERVIEWER 4 (O.S.)

It's fair to say you're box office right?

ROBBIE (O.S.)

I've got me platinum disc and then I'm getting a double platinum disc now. It means I'm very famous.

QUICK CUTS: Robbie's pre-show ritual, opening the ROADCASE and touching the RAT PACK headshots; travelling the world, going wild in hotel rooms; ingesting copious amounts of pills, cocaine and booze;

dancing out of control in various NIGHTCLUBS and finally vomiting on a dance floor, eyes open but unable to move.

ANNOUNCER 3 (O.S.)

*And the winner is, Robbie Williams!
A perfect end to a great night for
Robbie Williams.*

INT. PERRAN SANDS HOLIDAY CAMP. ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

The Christmas carol, 'Oh Come All Ye Faithful' bleeds in as Peter, in a SPOTLIGHT, holds up the cover of a MAGAZINE with Robbie's face front and centre.

PETER

I'm sure you all recognise this young man, but did you know he had a famous father?

INT. FAMILY HOME. KITCHEN. STOKE-ON-TRENT - DAY

The Christmas carol continues. Janet and Betty have just finished Christmas lunch. They wear PAPER CROWNS from their Christmas crackers.

PETER (O.S.)

*If any of you lovely ladies want to come up and sit on Santa's knee,
I'll see what I've got in my sack for you.*

Janet looks longingly at the untouched plate setting and empty seat where Robbie should be.

INT. BRIT AWARDS. SIDE OF STAGE. LONDON - NIGHT

Dressed in tight leather, Robbie is desperately trying to calm himself. His fear is SKY-HIGH. On stage, LAND OF 1000 DANCES blares out. He runs Peter's comb through his hair.

ROBBIE

Light 'em up.

Terror coursing through him, Robbie rushes on stage.

INT. BRIT AWARDS. AUDITORIUM. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Robbie bounds out to join TOM JONES (58) who wears a black suit, colourful tie and wicked perm.

Robbie dances like Tom Jones circa 1987 - but as if Tom had taken a drug mule's colon worth of speed.

TOM JONES
YOU GOTTA MASH POTATO.

ROBBIE
YOU GOTTA ALLIGATOR.

Robbie spies Peter side of stage, proud as punch. He takes his performance up a gear, grinding against Tom who's wondering 'what is this lunatic doing'? The crowd go WILD.

TOM JONES (CONT'D)
Sing it with us now!

They hold their microphones out as the audience sings along. Robbie FREEZES. Half the audience have turned into sinister, VERSIONS of himself. They edge towards the stage.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
(as if hearing his inner
thoughts)
We're going to peel your skin off.
Slit your throat. We're going to
fucking murder you.

Noticing something's wrong, Tom puts his hand on Robbie's shoulder. Robbie snaps back into performance mode. With a primal ROCK-SCREAM he launches into a wild dance, right up in Tom Jones' face.

At the end of the song, they hug and head off on opposite sides of the stage to rapturous applause. As he exits, Robbie glances to the crowd. This time, the VERSIONS remain.

ROBBIE (VO) (CONT'D)
(as if hearing his inner
thoughts)
Where are you going to run? Where
are you going to fucking hide?
You're going to die alone, you
cunt! You can't escape this!

INT. BRIT AWARDS. SIDE OF STAGE. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Robbie STRUTS offstage like he's conquered the world. The moment he's out of the audience's sight, the facade drops and he looks as if he's just escaped death.

PETER
Fan-bloody-tastic!
(gesturing to the
auditorium)
Listen to that. It's deafening.

Robbie continues to his dressing room with Peter and Briggs a pace behind. FANS applaud as they pass.

PETER (CONT'D)
(to the fans)
Thank you, thank you. Taught him
everything he knows.
(high-fiving a fan)
Peter Conway.
(to Briggs)
You know what Chris, entrances and
exits. No one cares about that
stuff anymore.
(to Robbie)
But tonight, you outshone Tom
Jones, lad!

Peter notices Robbie's lost in thought.

PETER (CONT'D)
Look at him. Just another day at
the office.

BRIGGS
(to Robbie)
Well, this is going to knock your
socks off.

Robbie ignores him, desperate for the sanctuary of the dressing room.

BRIGGS (CONT'D)
Rob!

Robbie reluctantly turns back.

BRIGGS (CONT'D)
Guess who's playing Knebworth next
summer?

Robbie is too stunned to talk. Peter hugs him in delight.

PETER
Knebworth! Wait till I tell the
lads!.
(to Briggs)
Hey, have you thought about a
support act? I could do you a
couple of numbers. Four at most.

ROBBIE
(half-hearted)
It's incredible...yeah.

BRIGGS
It also comes with a new record
deal. It's obscene.

PETER
(to Robbie)
Look at you! You're bullet-proof.

Briggs ushers Peter and Robbie into the dressing room.

PETER (CONT'D)
(grabbing a bottle of
champagne)
Look at this! Just what the doctor
ordered.

Briggs stops at the door.

BRIGGS
I'll leave you two to celebrate.
(to Robbie, heartfelt)
Congratulations.

Robbie can only manage a nod.

PETER
Thanks, Chris.

INT. BRIT AWARDS. DRESSING ROOM. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Robbie slides to the floor. The horror of the threatening
versions play in his mind. Peter pops the champagne.

PETER
Knebworth. You must just... how
does it feel?

ROBBIE
Crippling.

PETER
It'll sink in.

ROBBIE
It's like someone's picked sides
for an after-school game and it's
all gone horribly, horribly wrong.
It's one against thousands.

PETER
Bollocks. The audience loves you.

ROBBIE

I can't do it. I can't carry
Knebworth. I'll be like a lamb to
the fucking slaughter, dad.

Peter fills his glass with champagne.

PETER

It's just stage fright.

ROBBIE

You're not listening!

PETER

It's normal. You know what's always
helped me?

(offering the champagne)

A little bit of Dutch courage.

ROBBIE

(pointed)

Don't I know it.

Peter's face darkens.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Dad, I'm sorry.

Peter puts the glass down and gets up.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Dad—

PETER

No one buys a ticket to hear your
problems, son.

He indicates the headshots of the Rat Pack hanging on
Robbie's roadcase.

PETER (CONT'D)

You know why these people are gods?
Because they make other people's
problems go away.

He heads for the door.

ROBBIE

Stay, Dad. Please.

Peter leaves. Robbie's PHONE buzzes on the table. The display
reads 'MUM'. He ignores the call, racks up and snorts a line
of cocaine. His ANGUISH is overpowering.

PARKINSON (PRE-LAP)

Our next guest is climbing the
charts and conquering the world...

INT. NATE'S FLAT. LOUNGE ROOM. STOKE-ON-TRENT - NIGHT

Nate bounces his daughter, BRITNEY (5) on his lap as they watch legendary British interviewer, MICHAEL PARKINSON on the small TV.

Despite his best efforts, Nate's lounge room is the epitome of a depressing COUNCIL FLAT - cramped, dull and mouldy.

NATE
(to Britney)
Here he is! Here's daddy's best mate.

On the TV, MICHAEL PARKINSON eyeballs the camera.

PARKINSON (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen - Robbie Williams!

On the grainy TV, Robbie struts across the studio, waving to the ecstatic CROWD.

INT. BBC TV STUDIO. PARKINSON SET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

PARKINSON
Well, it's been a sudden change in fortune for you, has it not? You're flying high.

ROBBIE
Sober as a judge, Parky.

The audience laugh.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Sorry, I have to do this.

He jumps up and sits on Parkinson's lap.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Look Nan, it's Parky!

The studio crowd erupt.

INT. FAMILY HOME. LOUNGE ROOM. STOKE-ON-TRENT - CONTINUOUS

Janet brushes Betty's hair as they watch the interview.

JANET
(pointing at the TV)
Look, Betty! It's Robert.

Betty stares, expressionless, her memory ravaged.

INT. BBC TV STUDIO. PARKINSON SET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

PARKINSON

Let's talk if we may about this success you've been having. It's not the first time. You had it before with Take That. Would you say this is a different kind of success?

ROBBIE

It means a great deal more to me now. I'm about to perform in front of a record crowd at Knebworth in a few weeks.

The audience cheer.

ROBBIE (ON TV) (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

No, no, stop it. It's nothing. It's only the biggest music event in British history.

The audience cheer louder.

INT. PETER'S CARAVAN - CONTINUOUS

Peter, watching the interview, feasts on beer and Branstons.

PETER

That's my boy.

INT. BBC TV STUDIO. PARKINSON SET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

PARKINSON

But Knebworth's not the only record you've broken recently. Your new deal with EMI - eighty million pounds. How does that feel?

INT. NATE'S FLAT. LOUNGE ROOM. STOKE-ON-TRENT - CONTINUOUS

Nate smiles at the ludicrous amount of money.

NATE

Fuck me.

INT. BBC TV STUDIO. PARKINSON SET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

ROBBIE

Ah... I don't know...

(raising his fists)

I'M RICH BEYOND MY WILDEST DREAMS!

He nods his head as Parkinson look on, confused.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

I thought I was quoting that lady
who famously won the lottery. But
she said-

CUT TO:

A 1961 VIDEO of VIV NICHOLSON accepting her lottery prize.

VIV NICHOLSON

SPEND, SPEND, SPEND!

ROBBIE (V.O.)

So no one got it. Mind you, I've
said worse things in interviews...

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY - FLASHBACK

JOURNALISTS jostle for Robbie's attention.

JOURNALIST

How would you describe your time
with Take That?

ROBBIE

I was very fortunate to be in Take
That... and four out of the five
Spice Girls.

JOURNALIST

Posh said 'no' didn't she.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BBC TV STUDIO. PARKINSON SET. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

PARKINSON

Now, you've connected with many
women in the past—

ROBBIE

Oh, we're going to talk about my
sex life. There's nothing to write
home about, which is a shame 'cause
Mum loves getting those letters.

The audience and Parkinson laugh.

PARKINSON

But you're finally settling down?

ROBBIE

Well, you know, I've got to be a realist. We're both on tour a lot and, you know, it can be difficult.

PARKINSON

What's it like for Robbie Williams to be in love?

ROBBIE

Well that's difficult too. Flings are a much easier.

The audience laugh.

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. BEDROOM. LONDON - NIGHT

Robbie and Nicole struggle in with her luggage. She takes in the DISHEVELLED state of the room - empty wine bottles, full ashtrays, clothes everywhere.

NICOLE

I mean, how many flat tyres can you have? Well, the second one we didn't even get out of the car. There was no way Natalie was going to ruin her hair, so they just jacked it up with us all inside. The weather was -

Robbie's phone rings.

ROBBIE

Just going to the loo.

NICOLE

The weather was horrendous. At least the sound was good... My voice was tired though.

He checks his buzzing phone as he heads to the ensuite. The display reads 'MUM'. He ignores it and closes the door.

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. ENSUITE. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Robbie's sits on the toilet, fully clothed, and unties his shoelace.

NICOLE (O.C.)

Probably because I wasn't sleeping, which is weird because the bed was insanely comfortable. I even got the name of the mattress in case we wanted to-

Nicole falls quiet. The silence makes Robbie uncomfortable.

INTERCUT ROBBIE/NICOLE

Nicole's face drops as she retrieves an unfamiliar FALSE NAIL from the bedsheets. Shattered, she sits against the ensuite door.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
You make me feel so small...

In the ensuite, Robbie uses his shoelace as a makeshift tourniquet. He prepares a shot of HEROIN.

NICOLE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
... and I've hated you for it...
for making me feel so...
unnecessary.

Back in the bedroom, Nicole works the false nail through her fingers. Tears stream down her face.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
The fucking awful things you do...
I thought you couldn't help it. But
you just don't want to. And I can't
help you anymore.

A scratching sound as not the false nail but Nicole's ENGAGEMENT RING is pushed under the ensuite door.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Rob? Rob?

In the ensuite, Robbie injects himself. Black OOZE seeps through the tiles as the drugs hit his system.

NICOLE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Rob? Please say something.

Nicole leans her head on the ensuite door. It opens to reveal Robbie on the toilet with the needle stuck in his arm. Drug-addled, he smiles at her.

ROBBIE
Babe.

Nicole's tear-stricken face hardens. She storms off. Robbie STUMBLES after her.

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. HALLWAY. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Robbie pinballs off the walls, trying to catch up to Nicole.

ROBBIE
Nic, please!

NICOLE
You're a fucking animal!

ROBBIE

Babe, you need to calm down.

NICOLE

Don't tell me what I need.

She opens the front door, shoving him out.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Get out.

ROBBIE

I can fix it.

NICOLE

You're too fucking late.

She SLAMS the door, sending Robbie sprawling.

ROBBIE

But I love—

INT. NICOLE'S FLAT. SHARED HALLWAY. LONDON - CONTINUOUS

All cares and worries fade away as the heroin takes hold. **SOMETHIN' STUPID** plays. In SLOW MO, Robbie free-falls backwards through the middle of the winding staircase. Through the glass ceiling, the moon transforms into a SPOTLIGHT. He smiles as he falls through feathered fans held by LAS VEGAS STYLE DANCERS.

His smile disappears as the spotlight goes out. His fall increases in speed, quicker and quicker into the void.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM. TOP OF THE POPS. LONDON - NIGHT

Robbie is engulfed in suits and sequined jackets as he drunkenly takes down a clothes rack.

BRIGGS

Woah, easy. Easy now. Come on.

Robbie laughs as Briggs helps him up from under the pile of clothes. He is dressed in a shirt and black baggy jeans.

GUY (O.C.)

Oh, what the fuck.

Robbie and Briggs turn to find Guy in the doorway. Guy spies an almost empty bottle of VODKA on the dressing room counter.

BRIGGS

He's alright.

ROBBIE

Course I am.

Briggs wrangles Robbie into a chair. Robbie immediately racks up and snorts a line of cocaine.

GUY

(to Briggs)

Shit. You should've said 'no' to this one.

BRIGGS

To *Top of the Pops*? You can't buy this kind of promotion.

GUY

What's to promote? Knebworth's sold out.

BRIGGS

The world tour. What, he just does Knebworth and pops his feet up, does he?

Robbie checks himself in the mirror. The words feel like a life sentence.

BRIGGS (CONT'D)

You thought getting to the top was hard. Try staying there.

A knock on the door.

STAGE HAND (O.C.)

On in five.

BRIGGS

(to Robbie)

Come on, you're up.

Robbie's phone rings.

GUY

Leave it.

Robbie checks the number and gives Guy a cheeky smile.

ROBBIE

It's a woman!

He answers the call.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Hi mum, I'm about to go on Top-

JANET (O.S.)
*Where have you been? I've been
trying to reach you for-*

ROBBIE
I know but listen, I'll have to
talk to you later, ducky head.
(eyeing Guy)
My pianist has accidentally shat
himself and it's a horror show-

JANET (O.S.)
It's your Nan.

Robbie stops dead - instantly sobering up.

JANET (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*She kept asking for you. I tried
calling but... I'm so sorry,
love... she's gone.*

It's as if the air is sucked from the room. Time slows.

BRIGGS (O.C.)
(taking the phone)
Come on, mate. Let's go.

Robbie is too stunned to protest as Briggs guides him past a crowd of fans and leads him to the waiting cameras. We hear the voice of a lively TOP OF THE POPS ANNOUNCER.

TOTP ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
He's here tonight to sing what has
become the unofficial national
anthem.

The microphone looms large as Robbie approaches it.

TOTP ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's the song on everyone's lips
and in everyone's hearts. Ladies
and gentlemen, the ego has landed.

SILENCE. The cameras fix on Robbie. The audience hold their breath.

INT. RED LION PUB. UPSTAIRS. BATHROOM - FLASHBACK

Young Robbie (9) is in the bath surrounded by soap bubbles, engrossed in Betty's story.

BETTY
Whoever pulls the sword out of the
stone gets to be the new King of
England.
(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

So the next thing you know, all the knights are straining and turning red but nobody could budge it. So you can imagine how everyone laughed when little Arthur stepped up for his turn. Everyone except Merlin. Merlin just stroked his beard and whispered, 'Arthur, I know those sexy, muscular knights couldn't do it and you're just a little fart of a child with puny little arms. But I believe in you.'

Betty looks at Young Robbie with UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

EXT. CEMETERY. STOKE-ON-TRENT - DAY

RAIN falls. Robbie is alone at Betty's graveside, standing before a MICROPHONE. The Top Of The Pops performance and Betty's burial muddle in Robbie's grief-stricken mind.

INTERCUT TOP OF THE POPS/CEMETERY.

Robbie closes his eyes and summons the strength to sing.

ROBBIE

I SIT AND WAIT. DOES AN ANGEL
CONTEMPLATE MY FATE?

At the graveside, Janet, umbrella in hand, puts her arm around Robbie.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

'CAUSE I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT
SALVATION LETS THEIR WINGS UNFOLD.

Pull back to reveal Peter, head bowed amongst a crowd of MOURNERS, oblivious to the Top Of The Pops audience relishing Robbie's singing.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I'M LOVING ANGELS INSTEAD.

Under the studio lights, the TV audience join in the chorus, blissfully unaware of the falling RAIN and Robbie's anguish.

ROBBIE/AUDIENCE

AND THROUGH IT ALL SHE OFFERS ME
PROTECTION, A LOT OF LOVE AND
AFFECTION.

Standing before Betty's coffin, Robbie pours his heart out.

ROBBIE

SHE WON'T FORSAKE ME. I'M LOVING
ANGELS INSTEAD.

The instrumental kicks in. We rise above the studio audience to reveal Betty's coffin being lowered into the sodden earth by Nate and three mourners.

One by one the mourners trail off leaving Nicole and Robbie on opposite sides of the grave. Putting aside her own pain, Nicole kisses her fingers and holds them up to Robbie in sympathy before walking away. She takes no notice of the Top Of The Pops fans as she passes.

Alone at the cemetery, Robbie's grief is overpowering.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
AND THROUGH IT ALL SHE OFFERS ME
PROTECTION.

He drags himself from Betty's grave only to be ambushed by PAPARAZZI who jostle and strobe-fuck him as he fights his way to a waiting car. A DRIVER holds the paparazzi back and ushers Robbie into the safety of the car. The door closes to a volley of camera flashes.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BETLEY HOUSE. LOUNGE ROOM - DAWN.

Light from a TV flickers onto Robbie's face. He is in his funeral clothes, sitting in the middle of his enormous sofa with a packet of crisps at his side. THE TWO RONNIES play on the TV.

ROBBIE
AND DOWN THE WATERFALL, WHEREVER IT
MAY TAKE ME.

We see a REFLECTION in the TV screen - Betty sitting next to nine-year-old Robbie on the sofa holding a packet of crisps.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I KNOW THAT LIFE WON'T BREAK ME
WHEN I COME TO CALL.

In the reflection, they laugh at the comedy sketch. Betty motions for Robbie to lay his head on her lap. He lies down and looks up at her as she lovingly strokes his face.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
SHE WON'T FORSAKE ME.

We leave the reflection to focus on adult Robbie, tears pooling in his eyes, curled up ALONE on the vast sofa.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I'M LOVING ANGELS INSTEAD.

When Robbie looks back to the TV, the Two Ronnies have been replaced by a music video featuring Robbie strutting and playing up to the camera in outlandish make-up inspired by the band, KISS.

Robbie's grief turns to self-loathing and RAGE. He leaps from the sofa and smashes the TV before tearing a platinum album display from the wall, trashing a cabinet full of awards, and destroying anything he can lay his hands on.

Breathless, he hurls a toaster, smashing a mirror into pieces before passing out amongst the wreckage of the room. The first rays of dawn sweep across his face.

The song ends.

EXT. BETLEY HOUSE - AFTERNOON - ESTABLISHING

Nate's car pulls up to the imposing country house. He takes in the view across the beautiful LAKE.

INT. BETLEY HOUSE. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Robbie butters bread on the bench, which is covered with dirty plates and empty bottles. Nate drops a packet of crisps on the counter.

NATE

They were out of salt and vinegar.

Robbie looks up, eyes ping-pong.

ROBBIE

I don't want them.

Nate opens the crisps and grabs a handful.

NATE

We should get the boys together. A little knees up before your concert tomorrow. It'd do you good.

ROBBIE

I can't face it. Zip me up.

He steps from behind the counter to reveal he's wearing the legs of a VACUNAUT jump suit, which has multiple tubes attached to a pump. He squeezes his arms into the suit.

NATE

(zipping up the suit)

Fucking hell. What time's lift off?

ROBBIE

It helps hide the fat. You've no idea what it takes to get up there. I can't sleep. My back's fucked.

He flicks on the pump. It makes a loud sucking sound.

NATE

Yeah, but once you're up there you're smashing it.

ROBBIE

See, that fucks me right off when people say that. Being up there's the worst bit.

NATE

Pays alright though.

Robbie begins to SWEAT in the Vacunaut suit.

ROBBIE

Fuck, you don't understand.

He snorts a line of coke.

NATE

No I don't understand. But at least I'm trying. All I wanted was for you to ask me, just once, how I'm doing with work, or my little girl—

ROBBIE

I'm about to walk out to one hundred and twenty five thousand people. You've got no fucking idea what that feels like.

NATE

Yeah and you've no idea that I earn in a month what you fucking snort in a minute... or that Kayleigh's shacked up with some fucking butcher so I'm living in an estate surrounded by psychopaths... or that I only get to see my kid for two hours every fortnight or—

ROBBIE

So you need money—

NATE

Fucking hell!

ROBBIE

Jealousy doesn't suit you, Nate.

NATE

Jealousy? Are you fucking kidding?
Alright, I might have close to fuck
all but you have fucking nothing.

ROBBIE

And this coming from you - a
nothing, nobody cunt. The
difference between you and me, Nate
isn't my money or your kid. It's
the fact that I had the fucking
balls to make something of myself.

NATE

You bought a ticket to the dream
and the dream came true - and yeah,
fuck it, I'm jealous of that. But
you can keep the fucking rest.

He walks out.

Robbie hears a car start. He frees himself from the Vacunaut machine and races to the door only to see Nate speeding off. Robbie white knuckles the door and repeatedly bangs it against the wall, tearing it from its HINGES.

EXT. BETLEY HOUSE. LAKE - NEXT MORNING

Hovering high above the lake in the morning mist, we see a figure floating on a DOOR. A voice echoes across the water. An exuberant a capella version of **BEYOND THE SEA**.

PETER (O.C.)

SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE SEA. SOMEWHERE
WAITING FOR ME.

Dancing to the water's edge, Peter belts out the final notes.

PETER (CONT'D)

THE SHIPS THAT GO SAILING.

(silence)

And the crowd goes mild.

Robbie floats helplessly on the door in his Vacunaut suit.

PETER (CONT'D)

Time to get ready, youth. We're
going by helicopter and all...
Youth!

Robbie remains motionless on the door.

PETER (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Jesus christ.

Peter removes his shoes and jacket and wades into the lake. His breath catches as he goes in deeper. He stops when he hears a rueful laugh.

PETER (CONT'D)
You bastard! I thought you'd passed out.

ROBBIE
I've waited my whole life for you to step up and all it took was booking the biggest concert in British history.

PETER
What're you going on about?

ROBBIE
When you left us--

PETER
Where's all this coming from?

ROBBIE
All those years I thought, he's just sorting himself out. He'll miss me so much and he'll come back.

PETER
And I did.

ROBBIE
Yeah, because Nan made you.

Peter is STUNG.

PETER
I didn't leave you with nothing, though, did I? Where do you think your talent comes from--

ROBBIE
Jesus Christ.

PETER
You've forgotten how fucking lucky you are, that's your problem. It's a privilege to do what we do.

ROBBIE
What we do? You live in a caravan. You perform to fifteen fucking people a night.

PETER

And I love every second of it. And
I don't need pills to get me
through.

ROBBIE

Fucking hell-

PETER

Sure, I'd give anything to play to
a big crowd. Of course I would. But
if I only played to one person for
the rest of my life, I'd be happy
giving them everything I've got.

ROBBIE

Unless that person was me though,
right?

PETER

Really? Who's been cheering you on
from the wings? Who stopped you
ruining your career? There wouldn't
be a Robbie Williams if it wasn't
for me.

ROBBIE

You've always been there for Robbie
Williams, dad. Why couldn't you
just be there for Robert?

Peter starts wading back to the shore. The pulsating sound of
a helicopter grows nearer and nearer.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You off to watch the football yeah?
Nice one. See you in six years.

Peter continues to the shore. Robbie fights the urge to call
him back. Instead, he doubles down.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You don't have it. That's why you
never made it. Not as a husband,
not as a father, not as anything.
Peter Conway doesn't fucking have
it!

Peter walks away. The helicopter disrupts the water around
Robbie. His scream is lost in the deafening noise.

EXT. KNEBWORTH. STAGE - DUSK

CLOSE ON: Robbie, the veins in his forehead throb.

ROBBIE

(to himself)

Everything has come down to this.
They've come for me. And I'm going
to die out there. This is the end.

Messianic CHORDS blare out from the mountain of speakers.

The SCREEN parts revealing one hundred and twenty-five thousand SCREAMING fans. Robbie hangs SUSPENDED upside down with his arms outstretched like Jesus. He is sent flying over the audience. The SEA of fans go INSANE, reaching up to get a piece of him.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

(terrified)

Light 'em up.

The intro to **LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU** begins. The world flips. Robbie is the right way up, strutting in full peacock mode.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

HELL IS GONE AND HEAVEN'S HERE.

NOW SCREAM.

Despite his outward bravado, there's pure TERROR in his eyes.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

SO COME ON, LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU.

The enormous crowd are oblivious to his torment. They scream and bounce in time with the music.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

Good evening Knebworth. My name is
Robbie Williams, this is my band,
and for the next two hours your
arse is mine!

The crowd scream in unison, except for a terrifying, bloodied SKINLESS VERSION of himself. The voices of self-hatred ring in his ears.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

(as if hearing his inner
thoughts)

We're going to slaughter you.

Robbie forces himself to continue.

ROBBIE

SEPARATE YOUR RIGHT FROM WRONG
COME AND SING A DIFFERENT SONG.

His anxiety surges as more and more versions appear, now brandishing WEAPONS. Robbie stops dancing and stares out, wide-eyed and terrified.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
(as if hearing his inner thoughts)

There's only one way out. You don't deserve to fucking live. You will never be enough.

Robbie screams into the microphone in an attempt to silence his inner voices.

The sky darkens as more versions appear until finally he's confronted with one hundred and twenty-five thousand armed versions of his chimp self.

ROBBIE
YOU GOTTA GET HIGH BEFORE YOU WOAH!

The song crescendos. As the horde of versions rush forward, Robbie's face hardens with intense HATRED. Out of options, he LEAPS into the crowd, wielding his microphone stand.

He strikes a version of himself dressed in RED ADDIDAS who drops his LONG SWORD. Robbie picks it up and an epic battle ensues. The versions clamour for him, stabbing and slashing each other as they bear down like a tidal wave.

Fuelled by bitter hatred, he battles over and over, killing the versions of himself with sickening blows.

TIME LAPSE of the stage being dismantled and rebuilt as Robbie continually battles through six months of a world tour. The sun tracks across the sky, stars spiral, SEASONS CHANGE. The world seems out of control.

He confronts his SKINLESS self, swinging a spiked BATTLE MACE. He slices off the version's head.

Robbie suddenly screams in pain. His nine-year-old PIRATE self has plunged a dagger into his back. Robbie smacks his younger self to the ground and raises his sword. His PIRATE self screams in fear. Robbie hesitates for a moment before driving his sword into his PIRATE self. The effort leaves him lying face to face with his younger self, sobbing as the life drains from the young version's eyes.

Robbie lies EXHAUSTED. The horde of versions have disappeared. He jolts when a voice pierces the silence.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
COME ON, COME ON, COME ON, COME ON.

He turns to discover there is one version left to fight - his exact MIRROR IMAGE, dressed in the same black outfit. In perfect unison, they rip off their vests, exposing beaten and tattooed torsos. They strike in perfect synchronicity, neither one able to gain an advantage.

Devoid of hope, the identical Robbie's face off for one final attack. In a sickening move, they slice their wrists.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. BETLEY HOUSE. LAKE - DAWN

We're thrust back into REALITY as Robbie looks down at his bleeding wrist. In the other hand, he clasps a RAZOR BLADE. Betley House looms in the distance.

Eerie SILENCE. Nothing but the crunch of his feet across the ICE covered lake. A lone figure in a white, snowy void. Drops of BLOOD trail behind him.

He sings **BETTER MAN**, *a cappella* and pained.

ROBBIE

SEND SOMEONE TO LOVE ME. I NEED TO
REST IN ARMS.

Robbie takes the blade in his bloodied hand. He drops to his knees. Time to finish it.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

LORD, I'M DOING ALL I CAN.

As the blade touches skin, the first RAYS of sunlight sweep magically through the trees. Just as Betty refracted the sunbeam in the bath when Robbie was a child, the light sweeps across the snow to rest on Robbie's CHEST. He looks down at the warm glow, feeling his Nan's guiding presence.

He raises his chin to the sun. Tears fill his eyes. He drops the blade and gets to his feet. A RESOLVE washes over him.

INT. REHAB CENTRE. ROBBIE'S ROOM - DAY

The song continues as Robbie enters his room. Bleak furnishings, dull walls.

ROBBIE

SEND SOMEONE TO LOVE ME. I NEED TO
REST IN ARMS.

TIMELAPSE of Robbie's DETOX - writhing in bed and smashing his bedside lamp. Through the blades of the ceiling fan, Robbie and the room rise up. With each turn of the fan, his terror grows as the blades threaten to slice him apart.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

FEEL I'm GETTING OLD BEFORE MY
TIME.

In a desperate attempt to shield himself, he jams his NOTEBOOK into the fan, sending the pages flying.

INT. REHAB CENTRE. ROBBIE'S ROOM - ONE WEEK LATER

Sitting on the floor, Robbie picks up a torn magazine cover announcing the arrival of Nicole and Liam's baby.

ROBBIE
AS MY SOUL HEALS THE SHAME, I WILL
GROW THROUGH THIS PAIN.

He leafs through the pages of his tattered notebook, landing on the lyrics - 'The world is mine to claim. All I need is a fuck load of fame.'

INT. REHAB CENTRE. COMMON ROOM - DAY

The song continues. Robbie is part of a circle of patients.

MIA
I lost the house but the worst
thing was I lost the ability to
care.

A THERAPIST takes the floor.

THERAPIST
(to Robbie)
You're next, if you want to share.

Robbie shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

ROBBIE
I feel a bit stupid to be honest.
I'm just a chav who got everything
he ever wanted. It's a bit fucking
embarrassing to be frank.

Empathetic eyes stare back. He takes a breath.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I was taught that fame would solve
everything. But fame's got fuck all
to do with me. It's about acting
out everyone else's fantasies. The
shagging, the boozing, the showing
your bollocks on TV and people
cheering you for it. Fame looks
good in a photo. They say your life
freezes at the age you become
famous. So I'm fifteen. I'm
stunted. I'm unevolved. That's why
I'm always 'It's ok, I think I'm a
cunt. I'm fine with it.' It's so I
get in there before you do. And I
fucking hate myself for it.

THERAPIST

Sometimes it's a curse to get
everything we want.

CLOSE ON: Robbie, unguarded.

THERAPIST (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Repairing close relationships is a
good first step to repairing
ourselves.

INT. BETLEY HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY

Surrounded by his scattered possessions, Robbie shaves his head in front of a mirror, shedding his anger and fear with each pass of the razor.

ROBBIE

GO EASY ON MY CONSCIENCE 'CAUSE
IT'S NOT MY FAULT.

At the bench, which is now clean, he throws a final beer bottle in the bin.

EXT. GARY'S MANSION - DAY

Robbie knocks on the front door. No answer. With a smile, he heads to his car and drives away.

Gary opens the door to find a WATERMELON at his feet carved with the word 'SORRY' and a cock and balls. He smiles at Robbie's car as it disappears down the driveway.

INT. ROBBIE'S CAR. LONDON - DAY

ROBBIE

GIVE ME ENDLESS SUMMER. LORD, I
FEAR THE COLD.

Robbie listens as Nicole expresses the words she's held in since their break up. As they hug goodbye, Robbie spies Liam on the footpath. Liam gives Robbie the finger. Robbie laughs to himself.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

I WILL GROW THROUGH THIS PAIN.

INT. NATE'S FLAT. SHARED HALLWAY. STOKE-ON-TRENT - DAY

The song continues as Robbie knocks on Nate's door. He braces himself, unsure of the reception he'll receive. Nate opens the door.

ROBBIE
LORD, I'M DOING ALL I CAN.

They stare at each other for a moment before Nate EMBRACES Robbie. Over Nate's shoulder, Robbie spies Britney. She runs over and joins in the hug.

EXT. CEMETERY. STOKE-ON-TRENT - DAY

Robbie plugs a long, bright ELECTRICAL CORD into a socket. It is attached to his PORTABLE TV/VHS SET, which he carries to Betty's gravesite.

ROBBIE
LORD, I'M DOING ALL I CAN TO BE A
BETTER MAN.

He pushes a VHS tape marked '2 Ronnies' into the slot and positions the TV to face Betty's headstone. He sits next to the headstone and grabs a handful of CRISPS as The Two Ronnies appear on the screen. The song ends.

INT. PETER'S CARAVAN - DAY

CLOSE ON: A hand opens an envelope and pulls out a ticket reading 'ROBBIE WILLIAMS - LIVE AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL.'

ROBBIE (O.S)
(as if rehearsing)
Good evening folks. Good evening
you slags. No, good evening folks.
So, who is Robbie Williams? Well
I've been called many things -
narcissistic, punchable, shit-
eating twat. But while I'm all
those things, I want to show you
how I really see myself.

Peter looks at himself in the mirror, trying to decide whether or not to attend.

INT. ROYAL ALBERT HALL. DRESSING ROOM. LONDON - NIGHT

We hear the excited buzz of a crowd and an orchestra tuning up. Robbie fixes his tie in the mirror.

ROBBIE
(as if rehearsing)
So sit back, relax, while I give
you a right fucking entertaining.
So, the story starts...

He kisses his fingers and places them one by one on the headshots of the RATPACK before pausing on a new photo - a beaming nine-year-old Robbie with an equally happy Peter. He taps the photo and heads off to the stage.

INT. ROYAL ALBERT HALL. AUDITORIUM. LONDON - LATER

Robbie's near the end of the concert. He sits on a stool in the centre of the black lacquered stage, framed by giant R.W initials.

Cuffs rolled up, tie loose, he's worked hard and given it his all. Now for the FINALE.

ROBBIE

This is the last song of the evening.

Disappointed SIGHS bounce around the auditorium.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

It's sadder than that.

(audience sighs louder)

It's much sadder than that. Thank you for being a wonderful audience tonight and making my dream come true. I want to thank my mum, for being there when I needed you, always.

Janet blows a kiss from her seat as the audience cheers. On the other side of the room, Peter joins in the applause. He readies himself for a shoutout from his son. But it doesn't come. Instead, Guy begins the piano introduction to **MY WAY**. Peter is hit with the memory of singing with nine-year-old Robbie in the family lounge room.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

You guessed it folks!

AND NOW THE END IS NEAR...

If you know the words, sing up. If you don't, shut up, it'll sound crap.

THE FINAL CURTAIN.

Robbie gestures to the audience to take up the song.

AUDIENCE

I DID IT MY WAY.

ROBBIE

Now, I couldn't finish the show without mentioning someone else here tonight. I share a lot of the same mannerisms as this person and people say I sing a bit like him too.

He turns to his dad. The rest of the room seems to disappear. Through decades of resentment and regret they truly see each other for the first time.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)

He's made me who I am - all the good things and a touch of the bad. And I wouldn't be where I am without him. We haven't performed together for... twenty five years. But I've wanted to every day since. Please welcome to the stage... my dad.

The crowd applaud as a SPOTLIGHT picks up Peter, deeply moved by his son's words. The cheers crescendo as he walks onto the stage.

Robbie smiles as Peter looks out to the packed crowd in WONDER. He joins Robbie centre stage - two peas in a pod. Peter clicks into ENTERTAINER MODE.

PETER

(to the crowd)

Thank you very much.

(to Robbie)

What do you think, youth, shall we light 'em up?

ROBBIE

Tell it like it is, Dad.

The ORCHESTRA strike up.

PETER

REGRETS, I'VE HAD A FEW.

ROBBIE

Me too.

PETER

BUT THEN AGAIN, TOO FEW TO MENTION.

ROBBIE/PETER

I PLANNED EACH CHARTERED COURSE,
EACH CAREFUL STEP ALONG THE BYWAY.

Robbie throws it to the audience, who take up the song. Peter puts his arm around his son.

PETER

I'm sorry, Robert.

ROBBIE

I know, dad.

PETER
(tapping Robbie's chest)
You always had it. Now look at you,
you're one of the gods.

Robbie swells with PRIDE. Together, they belt out the song.

ROBBIE/PETER (CONT'D)
I FACED IT ALL AND I STOOD TALL...
AND DID IT MY WAY.

ROBBIE
Peter Conway, everybody.

Peter EMBRACES him and gives him a kiss on the cheek. Robbie gestures to Peter who bows and leaves the stage.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
(to the audience)
My dad - at least that's what mum
told us.

Audience laughs. With his father's words echoing in his ears, Robbie feels BULLET-PROOF for the first time in his life.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
I'VE LOVED, I'VE LAUGHED AND CRIED.

Robbie works the crowd. Suddenly, his voice catches in his throat as he spies an ominous VERSION of himself in the crowd followed by another and another until half the audience has been replaced with various VERSIONS of himself.

For the first time in his life, Robbie addresses the past versions of himself. He's open, passionate and HONEST.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
FOR WHAT IS A MAN? WHAT HAS HE GOT?
IF NOT HIMSELF, THEN HE HAS NAUGHT.

Without fear or judgement, Robbie acknowledges the versions, who, for the first time, watch on with PRIDE.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
THE RECORD SHOWS I TOOK THE BLOWS
AND DID IT MY WAY.

With tears of JOY in his eyes, Robbie walks upstage climbing the orchestral BLEACHERS. He turns and faces the audience. The original audience are standing in RAPTUROUS applause. Robbie looks to the heavens.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Nan, this is your grandson singing
and I love you.

As he sings, Robbie hones in on the only remaining version - his nine-year-old self in his PORT VALE JERSEY eating crisps. His nine-year-old face fills with hope and love.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
YES, IT WAS MY WAY.

He LOOKS into camera and raises his fist triumphantly. We slowly CLOSE IN on Robbie's EYES.

ROBBIE (V.O) (CONT'D)
Who did I love when I was a kid? I loved Frank Sinatra... and I love my Dad and he's an entertainer. Shit that's who I am, that feels good to me. I want to make the twelve-year-old at my nan's watching TV on a Saturday night feeling safe... I want to make that same twelve-year-old feel safe onstage. I'm a fucking entertainer. It might be cabaret, but it's world class cabaret, and I'm the fucking best at it. Fuck yourselves.

CLOSE ON Robbie's EYES creasing into a SMILE.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.

The song **FORBIDDEN ROAD** plays over the credits.