

Team Sports

BARNES – *Late 20's/Early 30's. Dressed in sports gear ready for a game of football, also in possession of a football. Barnes is boisterous, a lover of banter. Bulkier than Martin.*

MARTIN – *Late 20's/Early 30's. Definitively not dressed for a game of football. Martin is dour and worn out, generally ground down by life. Noticeably slimmer than Barnes.*

- **PLAY START** -

- **CURTAIN** -

MARTIN *is by himself, waiting restlessly. After a short while, MARTIN goes to leave.*

BARNES: *[Off-stage]* Oh ho ho, running away at the sight of me are you?

MARTIN *stops as BARNES enters, holding a football.*

MARTIN: Hey Barnes.

BARNES: Where are you off to so quick?

MARTIN: I just thought no one was-

BARNES: *[Starts to play with the ball]* Terrified I'm gonna upstage you? The old star making way for the new, eh?

MARTIN: I seriously doubt that.

BARNES: *[Still playing with the ball]* Oh I'm gonna be well ahead of you on goals in no time Martin, I'd put money on it!

MARTIN: Is that including the three own goals you scored in our last session before Covid?

BARNES: I, eh- [*Stops playing abruptly*] Hey let's not dwell on the past, let's look forward to the future, focus on the new!

MARTIN: You got fat, that's new.

BARNES *gives a loud laugh.*

BARNES: And you're as much of a prick as ever.

MARTIN *laughs despite himself.*

BARNES: Why were you running off anyway?

MARTIN: I just...I thought maybe no one else was coming

BARNES: Well so did I when I first texted into the group mate, it's been a whole year. No, more!

MARTIN: Almost two.

BARNES: Christ you're right! Covid's really screwed with my sense of time.

MARTIN: It's screwed with a lot of things honestly.

BARNES: Apologies for not trying to get everyone back together before now, I was just busy with...well life.

MARTIN: I get you. Honestly don't think I was up for it till now anyway.

BARNES: Well we're here, 2 out of 4 already, and the rest will be along soon!

MARTIN: What? Why only 4?

BARNES: You didn't hear about Paul?

MARTIN: No, why?

BARNES: Oh boy, it's pretty grim man.

MARTIN: Well tell me already.

BARNES: I'm not sure you want to know Mart, it's a fate far worse than-

MARTIN: Tell me right fucking now!

BARNES: Ok, Jesus! I'm only having a laugh mate. He went bust and had to move back home with his folks, up the country, keeps posting nature bollocks on Instagram every weekend, that's all.

MARTIN: But he didn't do anything-, wait how did he even lose all of his-

BARNES: Remember how much he was into that crypto stuff? [*Mimes a market collapse*]

MARTIN: Oh thank God.

BARNES: Well don't shed too many tears. You know he got me to put a grand in there with him? Think I can just about afford a pizza with it now.

MARTIN: I'm sorry, it's just I'm really on edge since...well I'll wait till Tarik shows up to explain, but Sam-

BARNES: Ah right yeah, where's your boyfriend then? Hardly used to seeing you two apart.

MARTIN: Ah shut up Barnes.

BARNES: Oh ho ho, Sarah starting to get a bit jealous of you two?

MARTIN: Sarah and I broke up actually. Just after the first lockdown.

BARNES: Oh bad luck mate, sorry to hear that.

MARTIN: Moving in together seemed like a good idea when it started but we...well I'm still stuck with the lease but at least I have all that space. And Sam even crashed with me for a little while before he had to, well....

BARNES: You know, I never said this while you two were still together, but she was an absolute bloody pain mate.

MARTIN: Never said-, you couldn't go ten minutes without saying it!

BARNES: Well I was right wasn't I? You're free now, you can admit it.

MARTIN: Whatever her flaws were, I loved her. I loved her and she broke my-

BARNES: Well that shows how nuts you are. It's just like Sam would always say whenever you were pelting ahead of us down the pitch.

MARTIN: [*Alert*] What? What did he say?

BARNES: [*Playing with the ball again*] Oh I'll never tell, you'd be so devastated.

MARTIN: Spit it out already and stop acting like such a cunt!

BARNES: Hey, hey, save the fighting words for the pitch eh?

MARTIN: I'm not here to-

BARNES: [*Suddenly kicking the ball to MARTIN*] Think fast!

MARTIN: [*Ignoring the ball*] I'm not playing any of your fucking football!

BARNES: What? What'd ya mean? Hey where's your gear anyway? You really planning to play like that?

MARTIN: I told you already I'm not- oh forget it.

BARNES: Hey, what's the matter?

MARTIN: I'm not going to be playing today. I'm gonna head home as soon as Tarik shows.

BARNES: You're what? Come on, where's that famous fighting spirit?

MARTIN: I'm just not up to it man I-

BARNES: Not up for it? I can't believe what I'm hearing!

BARNES *steps up to MARTIN, jiggling his midsection.*

BARNES: Look at you, you're fit as a fiddle!

MARTIN: Leave off!

BARNES: Skin and bones compared to me, look how much I've packed on. [*Slaps stomach*] You'll wipe the bloody floor with the rest of us!

MARTIN: I'm not well Barnes I...I haven't been eating much.

BARNES: Ah on a diet? Sam finally get you on that keto nonsense he'd always been peddling?

MARTIN: No. I just haven't really been eating. At all.

BARNES: Well no wonder you're in a bloody mood then. But don't expect me to go easy on you.

BARNES *looks around.*

BARNES: Here where is Sam anyway, he's starting to take the piss now.

MARTIN: He's not coming.

BARNES: What? Why not?

MARTIN: Let's wait for Tarik a few more minutes then I can-

BARNES: Why? Just tell me what the hold up is and we can do some one on one until they come.

MARTIN: It's not...Sam won't be coming, full stop.

BARNES: Well he better have a bloody good excuse.

MARTIN: Just wait until Tarik is-

BARNES: And why'd he send you out here like some kind of messenger when he could have just texted us himself?

MARTIN: It's not like that, it's- he would have wanted to but-

BARNES: Just bloody well spit it out already!

MARTIN: He's dead! Sam is dead, alright?

BARNES: Jesus Christ...[*Takes a moment*] When did he...?

MARTIN: About a year ago. They couldn't have a real funeral cos it was lockdown, but there's going to be a memorial in a few weeks and...his family told me and I wanted you guys to know about it.

BARNES: What did he-, no, there's no way Sam could've...I mean how? What happened?

MARTIN: It's a long story, he had a tough time man. [*Swallows, looks away from BARNES*] They couldn't keep the cafe open so he got furloughed and then fully let go, so he couldn't keep his flat. He crashed with me and Sarah, but they fought and she left and Sam...well with the gyms closed

and everything else shut down we both just kind of went stir crazy. We had a bit of a row and then he went to live with his parents up North and...one morning I just got a text to say he was gone.

BARNES: Gone? [**MARTIN** *nods without looking up*] Gone how?

MARTIN: I, uh, well he caught Covid and then it got complicated and-

BARNES: What? He died of Covid? Sam? The beast himself? No fucking way.

MARTIN: I'm sorry Barnes, but...it happens. I mean we don't really know-

BARNES: [*Taking a step forward*] Hey! Look at me. Look me in the eyes.

MARTIN *looks up at BARNES.*

MARTIN: What?

BARNES: I know you Martin. Tell me right now, to my face, that Sam is dead.

MARTIN: [*Looking away*] Fuck off Barnes, Sam's dead, can you please just respect the-

BARNES: Look me in the fucking eyes when you say this shit!

MARTIN: Fuck off, I'm not-

BARNES: Is this your idea of a joke, is it? Hey! Look at me! Did Tarik put you up to this, is that it? It's his sick sense of humour alright, but Sam wouldn't find this funny in the slight-

MARTIN: He killed himself! That's what happened! He got up one morning, tied a fucking rope in his parent's garage and-, and he-, he-

BARNES: Oh fuck me...

MARTIN: And they didn't even tell me until I went all the way up there myself and said right to their faces that there was no way my friend was dead, and I knew it was hard for them but there was no way I could believe for a second that-

BARNES: Jesus Martin, this is-

MARTIN: I told them I'd had enough of all the lies and half-truths and they needed to tell me! And...they told me. All the shitty little details. He'd had a complete breakdown, I thought he wasn't returning my texts cos he was still mad at me, but he was in and out of the psych ward and just going downhill, his hair was falling out and he was so out of shape, they tried to help him but he pushed everyone away just like he did with-, and then one morning he just...

BARNES: Oh God. Sam...

MARTIN: And now it's you.

BARNES: What?

MARTIN: Now you're hiding something! You need to tell me what he said!

BARNES: The hell are you talking about?

MARTIN: Earlier you said that Sam-, you said he said something about me and- he left a note in the garage but they wouldn't let me read it and I-, and you have to tell me what he said, please!

BARNES: Martin that's not important, it's got nothing to do with-

MARTIN: Mate, please, I can't take it, I need to know!

BARNES: It's not relevant, it's just some-

MARTIN: You don't know that! Me and him had our own way, you don't know what he might have meant, ok? So please just tell me so I can-

BARNES: No Martin, it's not-

MARTIN: You have to tell me now because he can't do it himself! He's in the fucking ground now and he's never coming back, so tell me!

BARNES: He said you were hopeless.

MARTIN: What? Hopeless?

BARNES: He would always say that whenever you got the ball, wherever you were, no one could stop you having a go of it. You'd run the whole bleeding pitch if you had to, and more than a few times you did. Even if it was some bloody stupid ball with nothing going for it. You were hopeless and you had to learn to cut your losses on a bad turn and just let things go once in a while.

MARTIN *stares back at BARNES for a moment and then begins to break down, blubbing in a mixture of laughter and sobs as BARNES comes to his side.*

MARTIN: He was right! He was so fucking right and he didn't even know it, he-

BARNES: Hey now, there there, shh now.

MARTIN: [*Calming*] I...I needed to hear that.

BARNES: I know.

MARTIN: Thank you.

BARNES: Fuck don't thank me man, it was Sam. You know he thought the world of you. We all do.

MARTIN: I know, I know...

BARNES: [*Pulling MARTIN up*] Here get up and let's start a kick about, alright? You'll feel better then.

MARTIN: No, really, I should head home, you stay and tell-

BARNES: Oh piss off!

MARTIN: What?

BARNES: Because that's what he'd want, isn't it?

MARTIN: Mate, I'm sorry I just don't have the energy to-

BARNES: Right, yeah, cos we'll all rest easy knowing you're sitting alone in an empty flat, starving yourself while you flake out on your friends, won't we?

MARTIN: I'm sorry man, I just don't feel like I'd be any good anymore or-

BARNES: Fuck's sake just kick about a bit and then see how you feel. One little kick about. For Sam's sake.

MARTIN: *[After a deep inhale]* Ok. Alright.

BARNES *smiles as he kicks the ball to MARTIN who begins to dribble the ball toward BARNES as both to move off-stage.*

BARNES: Yes man, here we go! Lionel Messi's back on the warpath again, the hunger's in his eyes and he's- hey! [**MARTIN** *laughs as he goes off-stage past BARNES who chases*] There's the smile, there's the old warrior, there's- oi! Stop, don't! Tarik! Tarik, if you're out there now would be a fantastic bloody time time to-

MARTIN: GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAL!

- CURTAIN -

- PLAY END -