

THE LATE SHIFT

"Ménage à trois"

FADE IN:

SERIES OF IMAGES

INT. MARK'S FLAT - BEDROOM - MORNING

NICOLE (27) applies subtle make-up in a swanky bedroom. She has injected some quirky style into her business attire. She pauses to admire her sparkler of an engagement ring.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - JACK'S BEDROOM - MORNING

JACK (31) lays at the far edge of a king-sized bed, lamenting the vastness of the empty space next to him.

Sighs, pulls the covers over his head.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - PIERRE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

PIERRE (26) - good-looking and he knows it - lays in bed next to a sleeping ATTRACTIVE WOMAN (20).

He smiles to himself, kisses her neck - a well-practised move. She wakes with a lazy moan.

End SERIES OF IMAGES

INT. MARK'S FLAT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Nicole slips on a jacket and grabs a handbag.

MARK (37) idles in bed, stirring awake. He eyes her with a cocky smirk.

MARK

Going already? Sure I can't tempt you back into bed?

NICOLE

I wish! Big day today. Some of us have actual work to do, you know.

MARK

Hah, well some of us are enjoying the perks of working from home.

Mark buries his head back into the pillow.

NICOLE

I'll try not to get too jealous.  
Sorry I haven't been around much. Not  
long now.

MARK

Don't worry about me, I'm keeping  
myself entertained.

NICOLE

I dread to think. See you later. Love  
you.

Nicole gives Mark a quick peck on the cheek.

MARK

Good luck, babe.

Nicole bustles off, not noticing Mark's non-committal  
farewell.

Mark reaches for his phone the second Nicole is out of view.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MARK'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole bumps into her FEMALE NEIGHBOUR (25) in the corridor.  
They acknowledge each other.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - MORNING

*Note: English translations in [brackets] unless translated  
during dialogue or commonly used phrases*

Pierre kisses the Attractive Woman goodbye at the doorway of  
the flat.

An open plan flat, with a well-presented, large living/  
kitchen area. Decor screams "bachelor pad".

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN

So, you'll call me?

Pierre responds with smouldering eyes and a pronounced  
French accent as he leans nonchalantly on the door.

PIERRE

What do you think?

Attractive Woman's gaze lingers on Pierre, drinking him in.

Pierre laps up the attention. Attractive Woman sashays away,  
giving him a backwards glance.

Pierre closes the door, saunters to the kitchen area.

Jack loiters in the kitchen, making coffee, eyebrows raised in mock reproach.

JACK  
So, will you call her?

Pierre shrugs.

PIERRE  
What do you think?

JACK  
Bet you're glad people don't have little black books any more. You'd have run out of space long ago.

PIERRE  
Well, I wouldn't have had just one. A real one and a decoy - you know, make them feel better. I'm not a complete monster.

Jack looks at Pierre in despair. Pierre juts out his chin in defiance.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Could be worse, Father Jack.

Jack gives Pierre a look that could curdle milk. Returns to making coffee.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
You're way over thinking it. How long has it been now?

JACK  
2 years, 4 months. Not that I'm counting.

PIERRE  
Seriously, you are not normal. Surely anyone would do right now, n'est-ce pas [no]?

Jack gives a pained smile, failing to look casual about his dry spell.

INT. HIGH-END RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nicole and Mark dine in a high-end restaurant, full of smiles as a waiter finishes pouring their champagne.

Mark grabs his flute, toasts Nicole.

MARK

To you.

Nicole beams.

NICOLE

To me. Resident genius.

MARK

I had every faith in you, babe.

NICOLE

Thanks. Maybe now we can have more nights like these.

Mark looks around the posh restaurant in an exaggerated way.

MARK

Well, not too many nights like these, we do have a wedding to pay for.

NICOLE

Oh you know me, I don't need all this. As long as I've got you, the rest is just-

Nicole shrugs.

NICOLE (cont'd)

-nice to have.

Mark gives Nicole a winning smile.

EXT. SWANKY OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Nicole blunders out of the office, into the street.

She calls Mark as she slumps down on a bench. No answer.

Nicole calls BESTIE. Time on her phone shows mid-afternoon.

Phone rings a few times, before Bestie answers.

BESTIE (V.O.)

Hi hun, what's up?

NICOLE

Sorry, I know you're probably working.

(MORE)

NICOLE (cont'd)  
I didn't know who else to call, Mark  
wasn't picking up, and I just needed  
to talk to someone, and...

BESTIE (V.O.)  
Why, what's happened?

NICOLE  
I just got laid off.

Nicole struggles to talk through her angry sobs.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
All that frigging work I did for  
those arseholes, and they're moving  
it all to a cheaper office.

BESTIE (V.O.)  
Oh shit, no way. Wankers. Right, get  
yourself home, big hug from Mark and  
a ginormous glass of wine. I'll be  
around tonight for more hugs and  
wine.

NICOLE  
Thanks hun. I might hold you to that.

Nicole ends the call, slouches down the street.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MARK'S FLAT - LATER

Nicole inserts a key into a lock, hesitates as if something  
doesn't feel right. Unlocks it and shuffles in.

INT. MARK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - SAME

Mark wears a robe as he uncorks a bottle of wine, his back  
to the doorway. Two glasses lay on the kitchen counter.

Hearing Nicole enter, he slides one of the glasses behind  
the kettle, wipes the sweat from his brow, whips around.

MARK  
(unnecessarily  
loudly)  
Hey! Nicole!

Downcast Nicole, in a miserable trance, is oblivious to his  
shifty behaviour.

She plods over to Mark, slumps onto his shoulder. He drapes  
his arms around her.

NICOLE  
Can you believe those treacherous  
arseholes.

Mark acquires a guilty look.

MARK  
Wh-who...?

NICOLE  
Not checked your messages, then.

Mark reaches for a phone that is charging on the kitchen counter. Scans missed calls and messages from Nicole.

He gives Nicole an empathetic squeeze, she grips him tight. He peels her off him.

MARK  
They didn't deserve you anyway.

Nicole gives Mark a gloomy smile, taking in his attire.

NICOLE  
Bit early for bed, isn't it?

MARK  
Er, you know, when I'm running, I'm thinking, and I couldn't just sit there sweating everywhere when I got back.

Mark gives Nicole an angelic look.

MARK (cont'd)  
So no, you did not just catch me slacking off.

Nicole slides her hand under Mark's robe, squeezes his bum.

NICOLE  
Oh, I'm not complaining.

Mark extricates himself from Nicole's wandering arms. Puts his hands on her shoulders, holding her away from him.

MARK  
Not right now, I've got, like, a hundred ideas popping through my brain. Gotta catch them before they float away.

Mark glances at the bathroom door.

MARK (cont'd)  
Tell you what - why don't you go run  
a nice, hot bath - you know, bubbles,  
candles, wine, the works.  
(seductively)  
I'll join you when I'm done.

NICOLE  
Now you're talking my language.

Nicole gives Mark a lingering kiss.

Mark pours a glass of wine, hands it to Nicole.

Nicole sashays to the bathroom, closes the door. Sound of  
BATH RUNNING.

INT. MARK'S FLAT - HALLWAY - SAME

As the bathroom door closes, Mark dashes to the bedroom.

He ushers Female Neighbour out of the room.

She appears, barefoot, dressed in his t-shirt, clutching her  
own clothes and shoes.

He puts a finger to his lips, urging her to be quiet. She  
looks daggers at him.

As Female Neighbour reaches front door, Nicole shuffles out  
of the bathroom in a robe, eyes down, unwrapping a candle.

NICOLE  
Got anything to light this?

In B/G, Female Neighbour eases the door handle down. Her  
shoe drops to the floor - THUNK! Nicole glances round.

Both ladies FREEZE, eyes locked on each other.

Shock subsides to fury as Nicole rounds on Mark.

Female Neighbour scuttles out of the apartment.

Mark stutters, unable to find words.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
It begins with "s" and ends in "y".

MARK  
Sorry, I just... well, it's not like  
you've been around much.

NICOLE

Oh silly me. Please do allow ME to  
excuse myself for YOUR infidelity.

She wiggles her engagement ring off, WHACKS it on the hallway table, grabs her handbag.

RAGES out of the flat, fighting back angry tears.

Reappears seconds later, dashes into the bathroom. STOMPS back out carrying her clothes and shoes.

SLAMS the front door extra hard as she stalks out for the second time.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MARK'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole shoves her clothes on with such ferocity that they keep getting tangled up.

NICOLE

It's alright for Gwyneth *sodding*  
Paltrow. At least she had her bloody  
clothes on.

INT. THE HIDEAWAY CAFE - DAY

SUPER: One frustrating month later

The anti-Starbucks of cafes - intimate, calming, mismatched second-hand furniture giving it a cosy charm.

A subtle sign on the counter reads: "NOW OPEN LATE".

Pierre lounges against the counter as he waits for CAM (29) to serve his coffee. Cam has a pleasant, open demeanour, and performs his task with the grace of an expert.

Pierre scouts around the cafe, his eyes settle on Nicole. Cam's eyes settle on Pierre.

Nicole sits at a table on her own, reading a Kindle, wearing a smart but sexy, single colour, bright dress.

Pierre appraises her, shrugs to himself. As Cam delivers his coffee, Pierre responds with a smile and slight nod, grabs the cup, saunters over to Nicole's table.

Cam glances over at their table, then busies himself behind the counter.

PIERRE  
Mind if I sit here?

Nicole plays it cool, despite Pierre's evident appeal.  
She looks pointedly at some empty tables.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Oh, not because there's no free  
tables, I just figured this seat-

Pierre indicates the seat opposite Nicole.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
-has got the best view.

NICOLE  
Well, I was planning to read my  
Kindle, but I guess I could get back  
to that later when I'm having a long  
soak in the bath.

PIERRE  
Oh that's clever, now I'm picturing  
you... in the bath.

Nicole bats her eyelashes, brimming with false innocence.

NICOLE  
Oops!

PIERRE  
And I don't even know your name yet?

Pause, as Nicole contemplates.

NICOLE  
Nicole.

Nicole offers her hand to shake, Pierre kisses it.

PIERRE  
Enchantée. Je m'appelle Pierre [Nice  
to meet you, I'm Pierre].

Nicole laughs, shaking her head at his cheesy gesture.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
So, can I sit here?

NICOLE  
Yeah, I guess. I mean, you have  
already seen me "naked".

Pierre gives Nicole a cheeky look. Parks himself opposite her.

PIERRE

What brings you here?

NICOLE

Haha, and what, do I come here often? You're gonna have to work on your chat up lines, you know.

PIERRE

Well the first one got me a seat at your table, so I respectfully disagree.

NICOLE

Hmm, fair point. So you wanna know what I'm doing here. Do you want the long version or the short one?

PIERRE

Start with the short one.

NICOLE

Killing time. Between a job interview and a flat viewing.

PIERRE

OK so, a new start. Continuez [Go on].

NICOLE

Ha, how long have you got?

Nicole takes a deep breath, proceeds with bitter calm.

NICOLE (cont'd)

About a month ago, I was working super hard to land a big client. Obviously, I am a genius, and we landed the deal. Next day, I'm on the bloody street.

Nicole clenches her jaw.

NICOLE (cont'd)

Un-fucking-believable, the ink wasn't even dry on the signatures! So, I head home to drown my sorrows, and what do I find? My neighbour, standing there in just my fiancé's t-shirt.

(MORE)

NICOLE (cont'd)

Landed up on a mate's sofa for the night, still there now. Bet you wish you'd never asked, eh?

PIERRE

Wow, yeah, should've kept it simple. It'll come good, don't worry. And in the meantime, I could be a welcome distraction?

NICOLE

Well, now's not the time for forming lasting relationships... But a little fun wouldn't go amiss.

PIERRE

I can definitely help you there.

NICOLE

Why don't you start by telling me your story.

PIERRE

What do you want to know?

NICOLE

OK, let's start with the obvious question... If someone was making a film of your life, which band would do the soundtrack?

Pierre looks bemused, but charmed, by the odd question.

Nicole fixes him with an expectant look.

PIERRE

Er, that's not an obvious question! I need time to think about that one. Maybe you could tell me your answer to that whilst I think about mine?

NICOLE

Right now, I would have to say Queen.

PIERRE

Queen? Wow, you look great for a 50 year old.

NICOLE

See, that's what makes this a great question, it's very revealing. Now you know that I'm achingly uncool, but also that I totally own it.

Pierre guffaws.

PIERRE

And I also know you're a bit weird!

NICOLE

Yep, I own that too.

PIERRE

So, dare I ask... why Queen?

NICOLE

Where do I start? "The Show Must Go On", "Don't Stop Me Now", "Another One Bites The Dust"... So, did my rambling give you a chance to think of an answer?

PIERRE

Actually, still not! How about I tell you over dinner one night?

Nicole checks her watch.

NICOLE

Shit, I've gotta run... Flat viewing beckons.

Nicole stands to leave.

Pierre stands, loosely blocking her exit.

PIERRE

Wait a sec. Would you mind if I did a picture of you, for my portfolio?

NICOLE

Portfolio? Is that what they call it these days?

PIERRE

No, seriously! I do a bit of painting in my spare time, and when I saw you sitting there - la femme, le livre, la robe [the lady, the book, the dress] - it really inspired me.

NICOLE

Really? This isn't just some cheesy line?

Pierre crosses his heart.

PIERRE  
Do you mind?

Nicole fidgets, self-conscious.

NICOLE  
Look, I'm not exactly canvas material...

PIERRE  
I'll be the judge of that. I'll show you the painting when it's done.

NICOLE  
So, I suppose I'll have to give you my number now. Maybe you're better at this than I gave you credit for.

Pierre looks a little smug as he hands his phone to Nicole. She enters her number.

PIERRE  
I look forward to showing you what I'm capable of.

NICOLE  
Je m'intrigue. Au revoir. [I'm intrigued. See you.]

PIERRE  
Au revoir. [See you]

Nicole slinks away.

Pierre watches her leave with a bemused smile.

INT. BISTRO - DAY

Jack and MARSHA (30) sit stiffly at a table, empty plates in front of them. ZERO chemistry.

Marsha checks her watch.

MARSHA  
Anyway, I'd better be off, gotta get back to work. Nice to meet you, Jack. Good luck with the website... erm... thingy.

Jack gives a tight-lipped smile.

JACK  
Thanks Marsha. See ya.

Marsha darts out of the door, avoiding any physical contact with Jack.

JACK (cont'd)  
(muttering to  
himself)  
That went well.

With a pissed-off sigh, Jack retrieves a phone from his pocket, deletes Marsha from a dating app.

Shoulders drooping low, he drags himself out of the bistro.

MONTAGE

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Nicole at a table in a typical office meeting room, with two people interviewing her.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Nicole kisses Pierre, hails a cab. Jumps into it, alone.

INT. EMPTY FLAT - DAY

An estate agent shows Nicole around an empty flat.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nicole and Pierre stumble out of a restaurant.

After a lingering kiss, Pierre drapes his arm around Nicole's shoulder, guiding her down the road with him.

She ducks out of the embrace, flounces off in the opposite direction, leaving Pierre stranded.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - MORNING

Jack scrolls through a dating app. Swipes left on a few women, pauses on ALANI (28), who has a pretty smile. Swipes RIGHT.

End MONTAGE

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Jack sits on the sofa, scrolling through his phone. Pierre swaggers past with Nicole.

Jack glances up just in time to see Nicole from behind, leaving the flat. Pierre pats her bum as she leaves. She laughs as the door closes.

Pierre turns, grinning.

Jack purses his lips, returning his attention to his phone.

JACK  
Another one bites the dust?

PIERRE  
Actually, no. Not yet anyway.

Jack looks up from his phone, intrigued.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Met her in a coffee shop, seen her a few times, she's pretty cool.

Pierre reconsiders for a moment.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Or not.

Pierre ambles to the kitchen. Jack scurries over.

JACK  
A few times? Do I hear wedding bells?  
Shall I start looking for a new flatmate?

Pierre gives Jack a withering look whilst popping some bread in a toaster.

PIERRE  
Anyway, it's her who doesn't want anything serious.

JACK  
Well then, she came to the right place.

Pierre shrugs, contemplating as he leans against the counter.

PIERRE  
Went a bit off-piste with this one, actually.

(MORE)

PIERRE (cont'd)  
She doesn't take herself too seriously. A bit weird. Maybe I have hidden depths, after all.

JACK  
Wonders will never cease.

EXT. MUSEUM - EVENING

Nicole has a playful smile as she and Pierre wander towards a museum, hand-in-hand. He hangs back, dragging on Nicole's arm to bring her to a gentle stop.

PIERRE  
So tell me, what's so sexy about a date in a museum?

Nicole responds in an exaggeratedly seductive way, channelling her inner Jessica Rabbit.

NICOLE  
Delayed gratification can be a very powerful aphrodisiac. All the time we're in there, you can look as much as you want... admire the exhibits... but touching is prohibited. I guarantee that when we get out of there you will want to touch me, and kiss me-

Nicole leans in to Pierre's ear.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
-all over.

Pierre's eyes widen. He shrugs, indulging her.

Nicole skips to the museum, Pierre trailing behind her.

INT. BOLTHOLE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Alani skulks into a trendy, bustling restaurant.

She looks at her phone, glances around, trying to identify her date. Locks eyes with a waiter, WARREN (25).

She seethes at him, pure hatred rippling out of her.

He gives her a furious warning glare, his grip tightening on his pad.

Alani looks away, face in her phone for a moment whilst she gathers herself.

She drags her head back up, identifies Jack, sidles to his table, tensed with nerves.

ALANI  
I guess you're Jack.

Jack looks up. Sweating a bit, also nervous.

JACK  
And that would make you Alani.

Jack indicates for Alani to sit opposite him. Alani perches on the edge of the indicated chair.

JACK (cont'd)  
Lovely name, by the way. I bet you get that a lot.

Jack cringes. More sweating.

ALANI  
Sometimes, I guess.

JACK  
OK, awkward introduction - done! And to think, I've been dreading that all day.

Alani softens her expression, warming to him.

ALANI  
So, we can both relax a little, now. Would it help if I took this-

Alani indicates her coat.

ALANI (cont'd)  
-off? Less of a flight risk?

Jack titters.

Alani smiles, stands and removes her coat, revealing a pretty but demure dress. Jack appraises Alani, pleased with what he sees.

She hunches back into her seat, trying to conceal herself.

ALANI (cont'd)  
Better?

Her nerves embolden Jack, who leans forward.

JACK

Much better. Now you'll have to go to all the trouble of putting that back on if you wanna bolt. Way too much like hard work.

Alani smiles, still hunched.

JACK (cont'd)

But you know what would make me relax even more?

A quizzical glance from Alani. A conspiratorial smile from Jack as he leans further forward.

JACK (cont'd)

If you could relax more. Someone once told me this neat hack.

Jack mimes the following moves as he describes them:-

JACK (cont'd)

Imagine that someone has a string tied to the top of your head, and they're pulling it, almost hard enough to pull you up off your seat.

Alani looks wary at first, but then plays along.

By now she sits upright, eye-to-eye with Jack, both smiling.

In B/G, Warren throws filthy looks at them.

JACK (cont'd)

Better?

Alani giggles and shakes her head in bemusement.

ALANI

Strangely effective. Thanks.

Jack chuckles.

JACK

Whoever thought that I would be the one giving advice on confidence! All that's missing now is a drink. What do you fancy?

Alani gives him a coquettish smile.

ALANI

Gin and tonic please.

Jack calls the waiter over.

Warren approaches, shooting a disparaging look at Alani.

WARREN  
(to Alani, through  
clenched teeth)  
Have some self respect, love.

JACK  
Excuse me?

Alani and Warren's eyes lock on each other, ignoring Jack.

ALANI  
Where I go on my date is my choice.

WARREN  
You must have known there was a good  
chance I'd be working here tonight.

ALANI  
Don't flatter yourself.

Warren jabs the side of his head.

WARREN  
You need to sort your head out.

ALANI  
Fuck you Warren, I'm not here for  
you. And my head is no longer your  
business.

WARREN  
It's pathetic. Whatever you're trying  
to pull here, it's not gonna work.  
Get. The fuck. Over it.

Warren stalks away.

Alani hangs her head, mutters under her breath, fights back  
angry tears.

ALANI  
Self-obsessed prick.

She takes a deep breath, looks at Jack.

ALANI (cont'd)  
Sorry. Excuse me a minute.

Alani stands, turns towards the Ladies, turns back.

ALANI (cont'd)  
Please don't leave.

Jack looks uncertain. Alani hurries to the Ladies.

Jack sips his drink, glances at the exit, then at the door of the Ladies, contemplating leaving.

Moments later, Alani breezes back to the table, more composed. She smiles as she sees Jack.

ALANI (cont'd)  
Sorry, that wasn't the best first impression, was it?

JACK  
Ex, I take it?

ALANI  
In my defence, I didn't know he'd be working tonight.

JACK  
But you knew there was a chance?

ALANI  
I didn't think... Oh, I don't know what I thought. Shall we go somewhere else?

JACK  
That would be better, yeah.

As they don their coats, Jack catches Alani glancing at Warren, her face glum.

JACK (cont'd)  
On second thoughts, I'm gonna head off.

ALANI  
No, look, it'll be fine once we get out of here.

JACK  
Somehow I doubt that. Maybe some other time, yeah? Bye, Alani.

Jack slopes out of the restaurant, despondent.

Alani watches him go, looking lost as she stands alone.

In B/G, Warren wears a contemptuous sneer.

Alani shoots Warren a killer look, thunders out of the restaurant in a fog of anger.

EXT. MUSEUM - NIGHT

Nicole and Pierre smooch, hands all over each other.

Passers-by stare, tut or try to ignore them.

Pierre extricates himself to hail a cab.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Jack slouches on the sofa with a brandy, flicking through his phone. He is a picture of loneliness.

Front door bursts open. Nicole and Pierre stumble inside, giggling.

Pierre sees Jack from the corner of his eye, stops in his tracks, stifling his giggles.

PIERRE  
Hey, you're back?

JACK  
Yep.

PIERRE  
Hmm.

Jack squirms.

JACK  
Sorry, forgot I was supposed to be making myself scarce. Didn't quite go to plan.

PIERRE  
Non, ça va [No worries].

Pierre gives a tight smile.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
This is Nicole, by the way. Nicole - Jack.

Pierre indicates between the two. Nicole and Jack acknowledge each other, with subtle appraisal.

Pierre turns to hang up his and Nicole's coats, fumbling.

Nicole and Jack glance at each other again. The glance becomes a lingering gaze, tinged with longing. They exchange a shy smile.

They break the gaze, blushing.

Pierre turns back, unaware of the sizzle that has just passed between Nicole and Jack.

Pierre looks at Jack with compassion.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Alors [Right], it's early, fancy  
joining us for a drink?

Jack hesitates, processing an appropriate response.

JACK  
I suppose it beats scrolling through  
dating apps all night. I don't want  
to intrude though.

Pierre shrugs, looks over at Nicole, who suppresses her excitement with a subtle nod.

JACK (cont'd)  
Cool, I'll get us some drinks.

Jack takes a deep, steadying breath as he heads to the kitchen area.

Nicole perches on the sofa, such that there is a seat either side of her.

Pierre positions himself next to her on the sofa, giving her an apologetic grimace. Nicole winks.

NICOLE  
You know my position on delayed  
gratification.

Pierre squeezes her knee.

Jack returns with a bottle of wine and some glasses, parks himself on a separate chair, the other side of Nicole.

Nicole is the focal point.

PIERRE  
(to Jack)  
Dare I ask?

Pierre pours three glasses of wine.

JACK

It turns out I was just being used,  
to make her ex-boyfriend jealous. She  
only went and arranged to meet at the  
restaurant where he works. Didn't  
even last ten minutes!

NICOLE

Bummer.

Pierre hands a glass to Nicole.

PIERRE

Look, they're not all like that. And  
you're doing the right thing, going  
on the dating apps again. Get back on  
the horse. So to speak.

(to Nicole)

Sorry, I didn't mean to be  
disrespectful to women.

Pierre leans towards Jack with a glass of wine.

JACK

No, perish the thought!

Pierre whips the glass away before Jack can take it.

PIERRE

Hey! I respect women!

JACK

Well if that's the case, you respect  
a LOT of women.

Nicole raises her eyebrows at Pierre.

PIERRE

It's better than sitting there  
waiting for life to happen. The world  
won't stop turning and wait for you  
to catch up, you've gotta jump on  
board.

Jack holds his hand out with a pointed look at Pierre.  
Pierre hands him the glass of wine.

NICOLE

Another interesting choice of words.  
God, I hate dating apps though.

(MORE)

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Soul-destroying, objectifying,  
confidence-leeching hellholes, that  
reduce everyone to just profiles and  
ratings. Might as well be shopping on  
Amazon!

Nicole cringes at Jack.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Sorry, that wasn't exactly helpful.

Pierre purses his lips in agreement - indeed, that was not helpful.

JACK  
She's right though. I just don't have  
any better ideas right now.

Jack looks downcast as he sips his wine. Nicole looks awkward, fidgeting with her glass.

INT. THE HIDEAWAY CAFE - NIGHT

Alani nurses a gin and tonic as she deletes Warren from her contacts and messages, tears welling.

A moment's hesitation, then she deletes Jack. She thrusts the phone into her handbag.

Cam glides over to Alani's table, gives her a serviette, smiles empathetically.

Alani dabs at her eyes with the serviette.

ALANI  
Thanks.

Cam responds in a soothing Irish lilt.

CAM  
Rough night?

ALANI  
Could say that.

CAM  
If you want to talk to a total  
stranger about it, give me a shout. I  
only charge a small fee.

A small smile from Alani, a moment of silence.

Cam turns to leave her table.

ALANI

Just-

Cam turns back, all ears.

ALANI (cont'd)

-trying to get someone out of my head. Not very successfully.

CAM

Have you tried, erm, distraction techniques?

ALANI

If you mean "get under a guy to get over a guy" - I just tried that, and that was an epic fail too.

CAM

Hmm. Doesn't always work out, to be fair. You're definitely not alone on that front.

ALANI

No. Just alone.

CAM

How about calling a mate? Getting outrageously drunk can also be a good distraction technique, although you might not thank me tomorrow.

ALANI

My bestie is out tonight, but maybe another night.

CAM

So, what now? Promise me you're not gonna spend all night flicking through dating apps. Do something that makes you happy.

ALANI

You're right. Bath, book, movie, bed. Gin. Lots of gin! Tomorrow's another day. Thanks for the pep talk.

Alani stands to leave, having softened a little.

CAM

Anytime. Well, anytime I'm on the late shift, anyway. I'm Cam, by the way.

ALANI

Alani. Thanks again. I really needed someone to rescue me from my thoughts. See ya.

Alani smiles but the smile doesn't reach her eyes. She traipses to the door.

CAM

Bye, Alani. Good luck.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - LATER

Bottles and glasses adorn the table, in varying stages of emptiness.

Nicole, Pierre and Jack, already pleasantly tipsy, continue to drink throughout the scene.

Nicole focuses on Jack, absent-mindedly playing with a lock of her hair.

JACK

I'm a freelance graphic designer. Ended up taking in a lodger when the jobs dried up a bit. All sorted now but I still tolerate him, a year later!

PIERRE

Tolerate? You're lucky to have me here! I don't even know what you did for fun before you met me.

JACK

Hey, I've got friends!

PIERRE

Yeah, friends like you, not like moi [me]. Tu le sais [You know it].

JACK

Je ne le sais pas [I do not know it].

NICOLE

Bickering in French - adorable!

JACK

Had to brush up on my "français". He slips into it when it suits him.

Pierre gasps with mock indignation. Nicole titters.

NICOLE  
You're like brothers or something.  
You moan at each other and take each  
other for granted, but you'd be  
totally lost without each other.

Pierre shakes his head with a smile on his face, not quite disagreeing.

Jack raises a sceptical eyebrow.

JACK  
You reckon?

NICOLE  
Totally.

PIERRE  
You're so weird.

NICOLE  
Totally!

JACK  
(to Nicole)  
So, what do you do?

Pierre winces.

NICOLE  
Currently back on the job market. In  
fact, I hit every market in one day,  
that day. I'm not one for one-  
upmanship normally but I could tell  
you a tale of woe that will make you  
feel way better about your disastrous  
date.

JACK  
That kind of one-upmanship, I can  
handle. What happened?

NICOLE  
Long story short, I got laid off and  
caught my fiancé cheating on me, on  
the very same day.

JACK  
Fuck. What did you do?

Nicole shrugs.

NICOLE

Soldiered on. Anyway, I'm a great believer that everything happens for a reason, even if it's really hard to see it at the time.

Nicole sips her drink as she chooses her next words.

NICOLE (cont'd)

Like, that awful day almost certainly saved me from a doomed marriage. And like, you wouldn't have met Pierre if you hadn't been through a hard time. Actually, neither of us would. Funny, that.

PIERRE

What can I say, je suis un héros [I'm a hero].

JACK

Who'd have thought?

PIERRE

This is how you talk to a hero?

Nicole looks at them knowingly.

NICOLE

Brotherly love. Back in a mo.

Nicole totters to the bathroom.

Jack's admiring eyes follow her across the room.

JACK

You're right, she is way off-piste for you.

Jack fails to keep the envy out of his voice.

JACK (cont'd)

Fair play, mate.

Jack purses his lips. Pierre briefly scrutinises Jack's reaction, shrugs it off.

PIERRE

She's intrigued me enough to last a few weeks.

JACK

Few weeks? What a waste!

PIERRE

Look, it's not just me this time,  
remember?

Jack sighs. Pierre, deep in thought, tops up the drinks.

Nicole slinks back to the sofa, fixes Jack in her cross-hairs.

NICOLE

So Jack, looks like you've got  
yourself back on track with all the  
boring stuff. Now for the love life.  
How come you're still single?

Nicole clutches her chest in mock drama.

NICOLE (cont'd)

It's a travesty!

Nicole giggles. Jack grimaces.

JACK

I'm just not very good at meeting  
people. Like you said, dating apps  
are awful and they don't do me any  
favours.

NICOLE

Yeah they are the ninth circle of  
hell, but a necessary evil these  
days. Just try to be positive.

Nicole beams at Jack, who cringes.

NICOLE (cont'd)

The problem with self-deprecation is  
that it doesn't exactly lure people  
in, you know? Lure them in, then hit  
them with that shit. Show me your  
profile, maybe I can help you?

JACK

What, now?

NICOLE

No time like the present!

Nicole raises her eyebrows and glares at Pierre, a smile  
playing on her lips.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Seems there might be a queue forming  
behind me already. Who knows if  
you'll ever see me again?

Pierre returns her cutting glare, accompanied by a cheeky smile.

Nicole returns her attention to Jack. She holds out her hand expectantly. Jack squirms.

JACK  
OK, I'll show you. It's pretty bad  
though.

NICOLE  
Well if that's the case, you  
definitely need my help.

Jack retrieves his phone, pulls up his profile on the dating app, passes the phone to Nicole's waiting hand with great reluctance.

Nicole's face says it all - it really is that bad. Nicole inhales and exhales theatrically.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
OK, where do I start? Interests:  
Music, Reading - yawn, yawn!

Nicole pretends to nod off.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
No wonder nobody's responding,  
they're probably all in comas!

JACK  
Hey, what's wrong with music and  
reading?

NICOLE  
Nothing! I love those things too. But  
reducing it to one word doesn't tell  
me anything.

Nicole gesticulates, getting increasingly animated.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
What's your favourite book? What  
genre of books or music are you into?  
Do you play music, listen to it, go  
to gigs... Whatever, you know? Tell  
me more about-

Nicole does air quotes as she gives Jack a piercing look.

NICOLE (cont'd)

- "Music".

JACK

Well, I can't play music, I wish I had that kind of talent...

NICOLE

Positive, dig deep!

Jack closes his eyes, sighs, thinking hard.

JACK

Music is there throughout everything I do. It enhances my mood or can change it if I need to. I love going to gigs and festivals... Music makes me happy, I guess.

Jack opens his eyes, looks at Nicole defiantly.

JACK (cont'd)

There!

NICOLE

OK, that was great! Let's just repackage it slightly. How's this: "Music is my happy place. I come alive at gigs and festivals, and would love to share my playlists with someone special".

JACK

That's pretty spot on actually, if a bit OTT. You're pretty good at this.

Nicole grins.

NICOLE

Well, that was easy, I basically just described myself! Now do the same thing with "reading", and you'll be reeling them in. Anyway, I  
(indicates herself)  
am a genius, and you  
(indicates Jack)  
are welcome.

Jack shakes his head with bemusement.

JACK  
 (to Pierre)  
 Where did you find this one again?

PIERRE  
 Sitting in a cafe, reading a book.

NICOLE  
 (to Jack)  
 You should try that approach too.  
 Apps aren't the only show in town,  
 thank god.

JACK  
 I haven't exactly got Pierre's "je ne  
 sais quoi".

PIERRE  
 (mumbling)  
 À ton avis. [In your view].

Nicole and Jack are so engrossed in each other that they do not register Pierre's interjection.

NICOLE  
 So, play the bumbling but charming  
 Englishman card.

Jack scrunches his nose.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
 OK, play the geek card, then. Us  
 ladies love a cute geek.

Jack squirms, Nicole bites her lip, noting her Freudian slip.

She clears her throat, turns her attention to Pierre.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
 So Pierre, talking of the cafe, did  
 you think of an answer to that  
 question yet?

PIERRE  
 I'm not very good at this kind of  
 thing.

NICOLE  
 Come on, it's just a bit of fun!

JACK  
 What question was this?

NICOLE

When we met in the cafe, I asked Pierre - if a movie were made about your life, who would do the soundtrack?

JACK

I love that question! Really gets you thinking.

NICOLE

Yeah, right? So, come on Pierre, who would do your soundtrack?

Pierre glances at Jack, then fixes his gaze on Nicole, commanding her attention.

PIERRE

Well, music doesn't really inspire me the way that art does. So I'm gonna answer the question that I would have asked.

Pierre gets his phone out, searches.

PIERRE (cont'd)

If you were to ask me who would paint my life, it would be John Marin.

Pierre shows Nicole some pictures of John Marin's art. Nicole scrolls through the pictures, transfixed.

PIERRE (cont'd)

Great use of colour to depict beautiful scenes... I guess that's my life.

Nicole admires Pierre.

NICOLE

Wow, that's... poetic. See, you are good at this, just needed the right inspiration. Hey, you haven't shown me that painting yet, is it ready?

PIERRE

Mais bien sur, Mademoiselle [But of course, Miss]. I'll go get it.

After eyeing Jack, Pierre nips off to his room.

Nicole fidgets and stares into her glass.

Jack cannot take his eyes off Nicole.

She glances at him, looks away, self-conscious but smiling.

She returns his gaze, they exchange a small smile. Nicole gulps, then both look helpless, rooted to their seats.

Pierre saunters back in, bestows the picture upon Nicole.

A watercolour of a lady drinking coffee at a bistro table and reading, monochromatic apart from the bright dress.

Nicole is taken aback by it's simplistic beauty. Speechless.

Jack perches on the arm of the sofa, leans against Nicole, ostensibly to see the picture.

A crackle of sexual tension sparks as their bodies collide.

Pierre notices.

JACK

Stunning.

PIERRE

I called it "Tue le Temps"...  
"Killing Time".

Nicole rushes to the bathroom in a fluster, tears welling up, slams the door behind her.

Jack perches back on his seat, gripping the edge of the chair.

Pierre eyes flicker to bathroom door, to Jack. Jack shrugs and looks away.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - BATHROOM - SAME

Nicole hunches on the side of the bath, swaying slightly, overcome with a heady mixture of alcohol and conflicting emotions.

She steadies her breathing, trying to pull herself back together.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole emerges from the bathroom, flops back down next to Pierre.

NICOLE

Sorry, that just really got to me,  
made me emotional. In a good way.

Nicole smiles at Pierre, presses her lips to his cheek.

Jack deflates, stands to leave.

Nicole grabs his hand, gently guiding him back down. He is entranced.

Throughout the following animated exchange, Jack and Nicole spark off each other.

Pierre appraises them both, jealousy subsiding to calculation.

NICOLE (cont'd)

No, you can't go, you haven't answered my question yet! You've had a whole five minutes to think about it. No excuses.

Nicole slowly slides her hand off Jack's. Jack blushes.

JACK

Well, I reckon The Smiths could squeeze a whole new album out of my life!

NICOLE

The Smiths! Great choice. The band, that is. Not the life. Should we be worried?

JACK

What... "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now", "Last Night I Dreamt that Somebody Loved Me", "Please Please Please, Let Me Get What I Want"...

Jack gives Nicole a coy smile.

JACK (cont'd)

"This Charming Man"?

Jack laughs, but soon squirms, returning to his self-conscious default position.

JACK (cont'd)

OK, that was a bit of a stretch. So go on, what was your answer?

NICOLE

Queen!

JACK  
Queen, legendary! What's your favourite Queen song?

NICOLE  
Well, a lot of people would say "Bohemian Rhapsody", and that's definitely my number... 3. Hey, shall we do top 3 - what's your 3?

JACK  
"Under Pressure".

NICOLE  
Yeah, that's pretty good.

JACK  
Pretty good? Genius, you mean!

NICOLE  
Yeah, but not enough to make my top 3. So, what's your 2?

JACK  
"I Want to Break Free"

NICOLE  
Also good, also not in my top 3.

JACK  
Seriously? What's your 2?

NICOLE  
"The Show Must Go On"

JACK  
Really? Not even in my top 5!

Nicole shakes her head.

NICOLE  
So what's your number 1? I know, let's say it at the same time!  
3,2,1...

NICOLE  
"Don't Stop Me Now"!  
(singing)  
Don't stop me now, I'm  
having such a good time, I'm  
having a ball.

JACK  
"Don't Stop Me Now"!  
(singing)  
Don't stop me now, I'm  
having such a good time, I'm  
having a ball.

Nicole and Jack collapse into giggles.

NICOLE

Yes! Finally we agree on something!

PIERRE

Oh, I think you guys agree on plenty.

Jack and Nicole's excitement subsides as they return to the room with a jolt. Jack cringes.

JACK

Aaaand, I think I may have definitely outstayed my welcome this time.

PIERRE

Not necessarily.

Jack looks at Pierre with wary interest.

Nicole looks apprehensive.

Pierre responds tentatively.

PIERRE (cont'd)

Well, what if both you guys and us could be together?

Nicole looks shocked and offended, mouth agape.

NICOLE

Are you proposing I see both of you?

PIERRE

Not quite, no... Just, right now, we could all be together. You know, a "ménage à trois".

SILENCE as Nicole and Jack stare at Pierre.

PIERRE (cont'd)

Look, there's sparks flying everywhere, why not?

Jack shrinks backwards.

JACK

Er, no, no offence, mate, but I just don't think I wanna...

Jack grimaces at Pierre.

PIERRE

Don't overthink it, it's just a bit of fooling around.

(MORE)

PIERRE (cont'd)  
If any of us isn't into it, then we  
just have to say, and that's that.

Pierre shrugs, playing it cool.

NICOLE  
Yeah, we'll have to agree a safe word  
or something.

Jack gapes at Nicole with a mixture of amazement and horror.

JACK  
Are you seriously considering this,  
then!?

NICOLE  
You only live once, right? Just  
wondering how it would work though.  
Logistically.

Nicole considers it and sniggers, flushed with alcohol.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
I could be a bit... busy!

Pierre chuckles.

PIERRE  
We'll work it out, or at least have  
fun trying.

Jack looks at Nicole with desire in his eyes, which turns to  
doubt when he looks at Pierre.

Nicole slides over to Jack, her lips brush against his, he  
sinks into the KISS.

Pierre watches, enjoying the show.

Nicole takes Jack by the hand and guides him up off the  
chair. He is on edge, breathing hard.

Nicole leans in, Jack leans in too.

A long, intense kiss, then she reaches down to touch him  
through his trousers. He flinches with pleasure.

Pierre joins them, hands and lips all over Nicole, then  
reaches around to touch Jack's bum.

Jack is so lost in Nicole he doesn't notice it is Pierre's  
hand. Pierre looks increasingly turned on.

JACK  
Oh my god, what am I doing.

Nicole's lips brush against Jack's ear as she whispers into it.

NICOLE  
Seizing the moment.

Jack quivers.

Pierre takes Nicole by the hand, leads the way to Jack's bedroom.

Nicole drags Jack along, the latter looking terrified.

Bedroom door closes behind them.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - BATHROOM - LATER

Jack stands in the shower, letting water cascade over his head, as if he is trying to wash his mind clean, not just his body.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - JACK'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole lays next to Pierre in bed.

Jack cringes into the room, wearing his robe, wet hair.

NICOLE  
Shower, good call, mind if I grab one?

JACK  
Be my guest.

Nicole sidles out of the room, grabbing her discarded clothes to preserve her modesty.

Jack looks painfully shy as he removes his dressing gown, despite wearing boxers underneath.

He climbs into bed at the opposite side to Pierre, avoiding his glare.

PIERRE  
Shower, huh? It's not like you really did much to need one.

JACK

Well, it was more to give you guys  
some space really, I didn't know  
where to put myself, once my bit was  
over...

Jack rubs his hands over his face.

JACK (cont'd)

Sorry mate, I don't really think I  
got into the spirit of it there. I  
did try to warn you.

Pierre doesn't respond, waves of frustration rolling off  
him. Jack continues awkwardly.

JACK (cont'd)

I don't even know why I agreed in the  
first place.

PIERRE

Oh, I think you do.

Jack cringes. Pierre exhales deeply.

PIERRE (cont'd)

Ce soir est ce soir [tonight is  
tonight], and after, well, we'll see.

Jack does a double-take.

JACK

What's that supposed to mean?

PIERRE

You'll work it out.

Nicole returns, noticing the thickness of the atmosphere,  
and the space between the two guys.

PIERRE (cont'd)

I'll leave you guys to have your  
tête-à-tête now, I guess.

Pierre makes himself scarce.

Jack stares after him, grimacing with confusion.

Nicole gets in bed, snuggles into Jack with great ease - a  
natural fit, like they've done it a hundred times before.

Jack wears an expression of desperate hope, tightens his  
hold on Nicole, just a fraction.

Nicole is oblivious.

NICOLE  
What was that all about?

JACK  
You don't wanna know.

NICOLE  
Oh, you've gotta tell me now.

Jack continues with hesitation, not quite believing the words.

JACK  
Oh God... He was being quite cryptic  
but it sounded like he was, um...  
this is gonna sound so weird... it  
sounded like he was-

Jack clears his throat.

JACK (cont'd)  
-giving us permission to be together  
tonight.

Nicole snorts.

NICOLE  
What?!

JACK  
He said I'll work it out, who the  
hell knows! My head is spinning.

NICOLE  
That'll be the brandy.

JACK  
You're way more intoxicating than the  
brandy.

Nicole blushes.

NICOLE  
Me, intoxicating? Weirdo!

JACK  
Yeah, that too!

A knowing smile from Nicole, revelling in her weirdness.

Jack kisses her head in wonder. His breathing intensifies,  
and he tenses up.

JACK (cont'd)  
Thanks, by the way, for...

He tails off, embarrassed. Nicole interjects, unabashed.

NICOLE  
What are you thanking me for! Now  
who's the weirdo.

Nicole digs Jack in the ribs.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Giving can be just as much fun as  
receiving, you know. Like at  
Christmas, I love seeing the look on  
someone's face when I've given them  
the perfect gift.

JACK  
Well you couldn't see my face just  
then, but trust me, I loved my  
perfect gift.

Nicole smiles, Jack titters.

JACK (cont'd)  
I'm just glad you didn't freak out on  
me.

NICOLE  
A ménage à trois is hardly a great  
time to freak out, is it?

Nicole giggles.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
I mean, I would've been letting two  
people down.

Jack laughs.

The tension then returns - Jack fidgets, gulps.

JACK  
I wasn't really talking about the  
situation freaking you out, more...  
me... my... um... I guess I should've  
warned you, but things kinda, just,  
happened, and...

Jack tails off again, his skin crawling.

Nicole roams her hand around Jack's chest, smiling.

NICOLE

Oh, that! Well, I kind of expected a threesome to be kinky, but that wasn't quite the kind of kinky I was thinking of!

JACK

Seriously, you weren't... bothered?

NICOLE

Why would I be bothered?

JACK

That's the general reaction. Why do you think I don't exactly do this a lot? I mean, I'm not exactly-

Jack squeezes his eyes shut.

JACK (cont'd)

-normal.

NICOLE

Honestly, those women need to get over themselves. Who wants normal, anyway?

Jack gapes at Nicole in complete awe, infatuated.

JACK

You're incredible, you know that?

Jack beams. Nicole smiles to herself.

Jack's frown soon returns.

He glances towards the bedroom door, uneasy.

He caresses Nicole's cheek with sadness in his eyes, relaxes his hold, shifts away from her.

Nicole pulls him back towards her, gives him a reassuring kiss.

Jack's pained expression fades to desire as they lose themselves in the embrace.

Pierre STRIDES into the bedroom, snapping them out of it.

Nicole turns to face Pierre with a sheepish grimace.

NICOLE

Sorry, got a bit carried away there.

Pierre shrugs, his expression tight.

PIERRE  
I suggested it, so I have to be cool  
with it. Tonight is tonight.

NICOLE  
Yeah but we said if any of us isn't  
into it, then it's done.

PIERRE  
Yes, we said that.

NICOLE  
You OK?

PIERRE  
Just need some sleep.

Pierre slips into bed, on the other side of Nicole, sulking.  
All look deep in thought, and awkward as hell.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - JACK'S BEDROOM - LATER

Jack lays wide awake, still deep in thought. He runs his  
fingertips along Nicole's arm, waking her.

Nicole turns to face him. Their lips meet.

Jack winds a strand of Nicole's hair around his fingers.

JACK  
(murmuring)  
I haven't slept a wink... All I could  
think about was how much I want to be  
with you... Properly.

They gaze at each other for an agonising but beautiful  
moment, staring into each other's souls - seeking, finding.

Their breath is heavy on the air.

NICOLE  
This is insane.

They kiss again, with magnetic energy.

Pierre stirs.

PIERRE  
Started without me?

Nicole and Jack JUMP apart.

Pierre pouts.

Nicole's awkwardness belies her guilt.

NICOLE  
Sorry... Care to join us?

PIERRE  
No.

Pierre huffs out of bed, gathers his clothes, avoiding looking at Jack and Nicole.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Looks like you two have unfinished business.

Pierre stalks out of the bedroom.

Nicole flops heavily onto the bed, guilt weighing her down. Jack only has eyes for Nicole.

Jack draws Nicole into an embrace, tentative at first but the passion level rising by the second, purely focused on each other.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - SAME

Pierre perches on the sofa, gripping a glass of brandy, fully dressed.

A moan can be heard. He dumps the glass on the table, freeing his hands to cover his ears. Closes his eyes.

CHARGES to the front door, grabbing his coat.

EXT. LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD - NIGHT

Pierre wanders around looking for somewhere to go for a drink.

Everywhere is closed, too lively or full of drunk people.

He finally lands at The Hideaway Cafe.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - JACK'S BEDROOM - LATER

Jack and Nicole snuggle together in bed, breathing hard.

JACK  
 (self consciously)  
 So it was OK then?  
 (relaxing a little)  
 You liked your present?

NICOLE  
 I feel like all my Christmases just  
 came at once.

They giggle, Jack beaming with pride.

Nicole's face shines with adoration as she turns to Jack. He mirrors her look.

Jack's face falls. Nicole notices.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
 'sup?

Nicole deflates as she crashes back to reality.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
 Oh. Yeah. I'd better go see him.

JACK  
 No. Not yet, can't we pretend this is  
 normal, just for a bit? I like having  
 you in my arms. Feels like you belong  
 there.

Nicole snuggles closer into him, in no hurry to leave.

INT. THE HIDEAWAY CAFE - NIGHT

Pierre slopes in through the cafe door. The only customer.

Cam, behind the counter, greets him with a warm smile.

Pierre perches at the bar, still tense.

PIERRE  
 Double whiskey, please.

Cam reaches for the whiskey bottle.

CAM  
 I should warn you, this stuff's  
 pretty rank.

PIERRE  
 I'm not here for the quality of the  
 whiskey.

CAM  
So what does bring you here?

Cam pours the whiskey, slides it to Pierre, appraising him.

PIERRE  
Had to get out. Some crazy shit going  
on chez moi [at home].

CAM  
Care to share?

PIERRE  
Not sure you'd believe me, even if I  
did.

CAM  
I've heard some pretty strange things  
in my time.

Pierre sits in silence for a few moments, considering,  
looking anywhere but at Cam.

Cam busies himself.

Pierre becomes agitated.

PIERRE  
Argh, it's just so fucked-up. Trying  
to sort my head out without the sound  
of my girlfriend and flatmate *baisent*  
[shagging] in the background.

CAM  
OK, my French is a little rusty. They  
were... Kissing?

PIERRE  
Un baiser - A kiss. Ils baisent -

Pierre hangs his head. Pinches the bridge of his nose.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
They're fucking, OK?

Cam's eyes widen.

CAM  
Oh shit. Sorry to hear that.

They sit in awkward silence for a long moment.

CAM (cont'd)  
Did it just come out of the blue,  
or...?

Pierre gives an ironic snort.

PIERRE  
Could say that. She only met him  
tonight.

Cam raises his eyebrows.

CAM  
Woah. She doesn't waste any time.  
Sounds like you're better off out of  
that one. And as for him...

Pierre shakes his head.

PIERRE  
Let's not go there. It's not as bad  
as it sounds. Or maybe worse, I  
dunno. I was the one who pushed them  
into it.

CAM  
Look whatever you did, you can't  
blame yourself. It's not like you  
physically dragged them into bed  
together.

Pierre throws his hands up, frustration spilling over.

PIERRE  
Yeah, coz THAT would've been stupid.

Cam has a furrowed brow.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
At one point, we were all together,  
if you know what I mean.

CAM  
Oh. And she went off with him  
afterwards? That sucks.

Pierre's face contorts with shame, he hides himself away  
behind his hands.

PIERRE  
Even that was kind of my fault.

CAM  
What?! How could THAT be your fault?

PIERRE  
I kind of... Ah, mon Dieu [my God]...

A few moments of silence. Pierre grips his whiskey glass tight as he takes a few sips.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
I kind of said it was OK for them to be together afterwards.

Cam gapes briefly, then forces his expression to relax. Clears his throat.

CAM  
What was going through your mind, when you did that?

PIERRE  
Exactly, what the fuck was I thinking? It's clear they were into each other, and I encouraged it! To be fair, it's not like she and I were serious. Just a few dates, but-

CAM  
-So then, why is it bothering you so much?

PIERRE  
You mean, apart from the massive dent to my ego?

Pierre exhales slowly, focuses on his glass as he swirls the whiskey around it.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
I keep turning it over in my head. I think it just made me think about things that are missing from my life.

Pierre sips the whiskey. Cam maintains a respectful distance.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Never feeling like I want to settle down. I could tell they were really connecting, and it messed with my head, I guess.

Pierre clams up again. Cam nods slowly.

CAM

So, you're not jealous that she's gone to him, but more of them finding each other?

PIERRE

Wouldn't that be nice and straightforward, huh.

Pierre BOLTS to the Gents, dodging Cam's scrutiny.

Cam's eyes follow him, contemplating.

INT. THE HIDEAWAY CAFE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Pierre blunders through the door, leans his forehead against the wall, trying to regain his composure.

He bangs his head against the wall a few times.

INT. THE HIDEAWAY CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Pierre lurches out of the bathroom, grabs his coat, heads for the door. Cam looks contrite.

CAM

Sorry.

Pierre stops in his tracks.

CAM (cont'd)

I was just trying to help. Don't let me scare you off. I can give you some space.

PIERRE

I need more than space.

Pierre paces, unsettled. A few moments of silence.

CAM

Look, you don't have to tell me, but if you wanna test your thoughts on a safe audience, you came to the right place. You never have to see me again, if you don't want to.

Cam inches closer to Pierre.

CAM (cont'd)

But if you don't tell me then please, for God's sake, tell someone.

(MORE)

CAM (cont'd)  
Otherwise that shit is just gonna eat  
you up.

Pierre throws his gaze to the ceiling, struggles against  
himself to get the next words out.

PIERRE  
Zut alors! [Damn it]! It was...

Heavy pause. Pierre clutches his own throat, in anguish.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
Him.

Cam breathes out at length.

Pierre's phone buzzes, a message notification.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - SAME

Nicole and Jack skulk out of his bedroom.

She WEARS HIS T-SHIRT, he wears his robe.

They look around, realising Pierre is not there.

NICOLE  
Shit.

Nicole grabs her phone, sends a message:

NICOLE (TEXT)  
Sorry. I think I may have just  
crossed the line.

PIERRE (TEXT)  
Just sorting my head out. Speak  
later.

Nicole tosses her phone onto the sofa.

Jack wanders over, puts his arm around her.

NICOLE  
What a mess.

JACK  
I wouldn't worry too much. He moves  
on quickly. Although usually at his  
own behest.

Nicole appraises herself, face twisting with self-loathing.

She RUSHES off to Jack's bedroom.

Jack stands rooted to the spot, alarmed by her sudden reaction.

Nicole reappears moments later, dressed, in a fluster.

JACK (cont'd)  
Something I said?

NICOLE  
Let's just say the irony was not lost on me.

Shame prevents Nicole from meeting Jack's eyes, she buries her face in Jack's chest. Jack strokes her hair.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
When I found out about my fiancé cheating, it was when I found her in our flat, wearing his t-shirt.

JACK  
Oh. This isn't quite the same though, I mean, you guys weren't engaged and besides, he practically threw us together! Don't go now. Please.

NICOLE  
No. I'll stay and play it out.

Nicole parks herself on the sofa.

JACK  
I'll wait with you.

Nicole shakes her head. Jack slopes off to his room.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - JACK'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jack rummages for a blanket in the wardrobe. He retrieves it. Stands for a moment, staring at it. Holds the blanket tight to his face, muffling a frustrated howl.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Jack hands the blanket to Nicole, perches next to her.

JACK  
Will you then... stay?

Nicole hangs her head.

NICOLE  
Ball's in his court now.

Jack's shoulders droop.

Nicole reaches out for a hug, Jack hugs her back, so tight they practically fuse together.

INT. THE HIDEAWAY CAFE - SAME

Pierre slumps on a chair, at a table on his own. Closed body language belies his embarrassment.

Cam hovers behind the counter, so as not to scare Pierre off.

CAM  
OK, there's a lot to unpack there.  
How much do you like him?

Pierre gapes, appalled.

PIERRE  
Like him? Non, mon Dieu [No, my God]!  
Just a guy, any guy. Even just a  
kiss. But he wasn't really into it.

Cam breathes a sigh of relief.

CAM  
Yeah, no shit. Trying to work out if  
you're bisexual by dragging your  
straight flatmate into a threesome?  
That was never gonna end well.

The cutting look that Pierre gives Cam implies that this is stating the obvious.

CAM (cont'd)  
But at least you're not in love with  
him. Even I would have struggled to  
help you there. The rest of it, I  
might be able to help you with.

Pierre regards Cam with wary interest.

Cam - every inch the Good Samaritan - beams.

CAM (cont'd)  
You are so lucky I'm working tonight.  
If you wanna explore that further...

Cam shrugs.

CAM (cont'd)  
Not personally - I don't do bi guys,  
and especially not curious ones. But  
I could be your mentor, friend,  
whatever. Take you to places where  
you can meet like-minded individuals.

Pierre withdraws into himself.

Cam joins him at the table, lays his hand over Pierre's.

CAM (cont'd)  
It's OK. We don't bite, you know.  
Well, not unless you ask nicely.

Pierre chuckles, raising his head for the first time since  
his revelation.

Wracked with doubt, Pierre withdraws his hand.

PIERRE  
I dunno. I'll think about it.

CAM  
Haven't you done the thinking bit  
already?

PIERRE  
But why would you do that for me? You  
don't even know me.

CAM  
It's only a drink, I'm not signing  
your passport form or anything.  
Besides, no offence, but you'll make  
me look good. You're basically a  
virgin again now.

Pierre gapes with horror. Cam cringes and backtracks.

CAM (cont'd)  
Sorry, I shouldn't have said that.  
Don't be worrying about it, I sense  
you'll be just fine. And if you like  
the destination then hopefully the  
journey will be worth it.

Cam leans forward, conspiratorially.

CAM (cont'd)  
In the meantime, I get some great  
anecdotes for my memoirs.

Cam's cheeky smile is met with Pierre's nervous one, as they regard each other for a long moment.

CAM (cont'd)  
Do you know what it feels like yet?  
To kiss a guy?

Pierre grimaces, shaking his head.

CAM (cont'd)  
Do you wanna know? Before you jump in  
with both feet?

PIERRE  
But you said-

CAM  
-Just to see. That's all.

Cam fixes Pierre in his sight-lines, leans in, inviting a kiss.

Pierre edges towards Cam, struggling against himself.

A tentative lingering kiss belies Cam's true desire, despite his protestations to the contrary.

Cam forces himself to pull back.

Cam and Pierre regard each other, breathing heavily.  
Fascinated.

CAM (cont'd)  
OK, then.

Cam breaks the gaze, clears his throat, scurries back behind the counter.

Pierre reels. He shifts in his seat, rearranging his suddenly tight trousers.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - LATER

Nicole and Pierre deep in conversation on the sofa, shock plastered all over Nicole's face.

PIERRE  
So, now you know why my head was a  
bit fucked up.

NICOLE  
Yeah, that explains a lot. Wow. Shit.  
Didn't turn you gay, did I?

Nicole cringes at her lack of tact.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Sorry, lame humour is my default  
position.

Pierre chuckles.

Nicole swings a friendly arm around him. He flops into her hug, exhausted.

PIERRE  
Anyway, you can like both, you know.

Nicole squirms, out of her depth.

They linger in the hug a few moments longer, then Nicole stands to leave.

NICOLE  
Well, that rounds off quite literally  
the weirdest night of my life. I  
think I should go, before things get  
any weirder.

PIERRE  
No. You don't have to go.

A knowing look passes between them.

PIERRE (cont'd)  
In fact, could you do me a favour?  
Could you tell him for me? I don't  
wanna have to explain that again.

NICOLE  
Sure, no worries. I'll tell him it's  
me you're jealous of, not him.

Nicole's teasing elicits a withering glare from Pierre.

They shuffle to separate bedrooms looking dishevelled,  
weirded-out, but happy.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - JACK'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole slides into bed with Jack. Jack draws her into his arms with a relieved smile.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - PIERRE'S BEDROOM - SAME

Pierre flops onto the bed, sprawling as wide as he can, to fill the space.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - KITCHEN AREA - MORNING

Jack makes breakfast, Nicole drinks coffee at a breakfast bar.

They are comfortable in each other's company. Laughing, smiling, eyes drawn to each other.

NICOLE

So, would The Smiths still be doing your soundtrack?

JACK

I guess that was the selection of a man who's not happy with his life. I'm feeling more Pet Shop Boys this morning. "Opportunities"?

NICOLE

"It's Alright"?

JACK

"It's A Sin", more like!

NICOLE

Fair point! "Heart"?

JACK

"Always On My Mind"? Although only the Introspective version.

Nicole nods, impressed with his choice.

NICOLE

Nice! You might be a keeper!

Jack beams.

Pierre materialises in the living area, awkward, like an outsider in his own home.

The atmosphere tightens.

Jack looks anywhere but at Pierre.

Nicole faces it head-on, looking straight at Pierre.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
(with forced cheer)  
Good morning and welcome to probably  
the most awkward breakfast you've  
ever had.

PIERRE  
Normally I don't make it as far as  
breakfast.

NICOLE  
Yeah. Technically, you still didn't.

Nicole cringes.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Sorry, couldn't resist.

PIERRE  
Not for the first time.

NICOLE  
Touché!

They both laugh a little at the banter.

Jack squirms.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
OK, maybe this is my cue to go, so  
you guys can try desperately to avoid  
making eye contact.

Nicole stands, grabs a plum from a fruit bowl.

Jack pouts. He glances at the half-made breakfast,  
irritated, then at Pierre, nervous.

Nicole pecks Jack on the cheek, turns to Pierre.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Hug it out, Bi BFF?

Nicole gives a cheeky grimace.

Pierre throws her a mock withering look.

Nicole gives Pierre a hug that's awkward at first but they  
both relax into it.

Nicole flounces to the door, Jack trailing her.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE JACK'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole and Jack canoodle, Nicole still holding the plum in one hand. Jack grins.

JACK  
That's better. Sure I can't tempt you back in?

NICOLE  
That is tempting, but you've gotta sort stuff out here.

Nicole gives him a meaningful glare.

Jack sighs, lips pursed, reluctantly conceding.

Nicole attempts to bite the plum in a seductive fashion, but it is hard, her teeth get stuck.

She pulls it off with a chuckle. Jack creases with laughter.

NICOLE (cont'd)  
Besides, I need some alone time, take all of that in.

JACK  
Yeah that was pretty...

NICOLE  
Fucked-up!

JACK  
Intense!

They both laugh as they amble to the exit.

JACK (cont'd)  
Yeah, all of the above! Not gonna bail on me are you?

NICOLE  
Are you kidding? You don't get rid of me that easily. Oh and you'd better take down that dating app profile, kinda regretting helping you out now.

JACK  
Funny, you were so good at it that you reeled yourself in.

NICOLE  
I think it was more than the app. So, you'll call me, then?

JACK  
What do you think?

Jack holds the door open, Nicole pecks him on the cheek as she slips outside. Jack watches Nicole until she is out of sight.

He changes the profile on his dating app to "Not Available", dawdles back to the flat.

It takes him way longer to open the door than it should.

INT. JACK'S FLAT - LIVING AREA - SAME

Pierre sits at the table, two places set, breakfast ready to be pushed around the plates. A tight expression on his face.

Jack drags himself through the front door, inches to the table.

INT. ALANI'S FLAT - LATER

Nicole schleps in through a front door.

Her female flatmate is at the kitchen counter and can only be seen from the back.

She turns around as Nicole mooches into the flat - it is ALANI!

FADE OUT