

TEASER

The camera starts with a breathtaking shot of the idyllic Cotswolds countryside, all rolling green hills and quaint stone cottages. The view pulls back, further and further, until the picturesque landscape shrinks into an insignificant smudge on the horizon. The focus then lands on a stark, grey tower block, its worn facade a jarring contrast to the tranquil scene that came before.

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INT. TOM AND LUCINDA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

1

The apartment is a vibrant juxtaposition on the building's bleak exterior, bursting with colour from hand-woven tapestries, dangling dreamcatchers, and an array of brightly coloured trinkets on every surface. It is aggressively cheerful, almost threatening.

BEDROOM

A ridiculously upbeat alarm tune blares, filling the room.

TOM (early 30s) grumbles awake, before shoving the pillow over his face.

His partner, LUCINDA (mid-30s) is already on her feet, dancing in sync with the tune, full of delight.

A loud banging from the adjoining wall cuts through the sound.

NEIGHBOUR (O.S.)

*Shut that thing off, will you?! Christ,
every sodding morning!*

Lucinda switches off the alarm, stretches, and smiles. She opens the curtains to a classic British summer morning: grey, drizzly, and profoundly miserable.

LUCINDA

The universe has aligned, Tom. I can feel it. Today, we bring home our puppy! Our little bundle of joy!

TOM

I'm already dreading the extra vets and insurance bills.

LUCINDA

You cannot put a price on giving a rescued puppy a loving home, Tom.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

The adoption agency has given it a good go. Since when do charities dictate how much a donation should be?

Lucinda sighs, her smile faltering for a moment. Tom's relentless misery is a powerful force, capable of wearing down even her unshakeable cheer. She slips on a dressing gown.

LUCINDA

You do remember it was actually you who wanted to adopt a dog in the first place, right? "Let's have a dog or a baby," you said.

TOM

How was I to know I'd have such a low sperm count?

LUCINDA

Don't go back to sleep! We can play Wordle before you have to go to work.

She heads out of the room. Tom gives her a half-hearted smile, but as soon as the door closes, he curls back under the covers in pure relief.

Suddenly, a new, obnoxious alarm begins to blare from the adjoining wall. It's a high-pitched air-raid siren, wailing mercilessly. Tom sits up in confusion, searching for his phone on the empty bedside table.

NEIGHBOUR (O.S.)

See how you like it, you selfish bastards!

MAIN TITLES.

INT. LUCINDA AND TOM'S FLAT - KITCHEN - LATER

A cluttered kitchen. Paintbrushes and half-finished canvases share space with dog paraphernalia: a chew toy, a bag of dog food, a bright red lead.

Lucinda irons a tiny dog blanket, glancing at her watch. Tom presses buttons on the microwave, eyes fixated on the spinning mug inside.

LUCINDA

I just don't understand why you can't make your coffee with a coffee machine, Tom. We own one.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

You know, that big, shiny thing over there that's specifically designed for making coffee?

TOM

This isn't coffee, Luce. It's a latte. And it's quicker this way.

He gestures at the mug, which has a suspicious-looking, bubbling foam. He pulls a pre-packaged bacon sandwich from a multipack on the counter.

LUCINDA

A microwave latte and a six-day-old bacon sandwich? Are you actively trying to die young?

TOM

It's cheaper than going to Greggs everyday. Gonna think of the pennies at the moment. Now, what time did they say they'd be arriving with the dog?

LUCINDA

Four.

TOM

I'll try and finish work early.

LUCINDA

Oh God, I feel sick.

TOM

Or not...

LUCINDA

No, it's just that we're so not ready for this. Did you measure the dog gate? Get the dog bowls? The special shampoo? Did you read the third chapter of that dog psychology book? You said you would!

TOM

Calm down. It's a rescue dog, not a Harvard graduate. And yes, I measured the dog gate. We have dog bowls—they're called Tupperware. And the psychology book? I looked at the pictures.

Lucinda paces.

(CONTINUED)

LUCINDA

But what if we've forgotten something essential? A chew toy that only a dog from the Midlands would appreciate? A tiny, waterproof mac? I've even bought a little dog bed that matches the sofa.

Tom takes the steaming mug from the microwave and sips the questionable froth.

TOM

Luce, it's just a dog. All we need is a bone, a place to sleep, and something to eat. And from what I gathered, the adoption people are just happy we aren't on drugs or psychopaths.

Lucinda stops, a small smile appearing.

LUCINDA

*You're right. We've got this. What could possibly go wrong?
(suddenly realises)
Oh, no. No, no, no. Tom!*

TOM

What?

LUCINDA

I completely forgot I said we'd do that indoor family barbecue thing today with Mum, Rosy, and her husband.

Tom groans, clutching his head.

TOM

What the hell is an indoor barbecue? We don't even have a garden.

LUCINDA

Hence the term "indoor barbecue."

TOM

When did you set this up?

LUCINDA

Oh, weeks ago. This is your fault too. I wrote it in my journal, which I read to you before bed each night.

Tom just stares at her, a silent plea for sanity in his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

TOM

You can't relay important messages to me that way. Last night you spent ten minutes describing a cloud that looked like a dolphin.

LUCINDA

What are we going to do? Rosy already thinks I'll forget or screw it up. I will not give her the satisfaction of being right.

TOM

Just tell them plans have changed.

LUCINDA

We can't. Not again. You don't know what's it like, they'll just judge me forever more. It'll be all over Facebook.

TOM

This is why I keep my family at a safe distance. It's just not worth the hassle. Just call Rosy, explain we're adopting the dog and can't have guests. Or text her, always easier to read bad news than hear it. Now, I really have to get to work.

He picks up his lunch, heading for the door.

LUCINDA

(grabbing her car keys)

Wait. I need to get some veggie treats for the dog.

(off Tom's look)

What? We don't know his dietary preferences yet.

Tom wants to say so much, but instead just smiles. As Tom goes to head out, Lucinda opens the window.

TOM

What are you doing? It's raining out.

LUCINDA

The experts say dogs need fresh air.

TOM

We don't even have the bloody dog yet.

(CONTINUED)

LUCINDA

I know, but it's still good preparation.

She exits. Tom sighs and exits. A moment later, the door reopens. Tom rushes back in, closing the window with furious energy.

LUCINDA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We live on the seventeenth floor, Tom, we're not going to be burgled.

TOM

There are such thing as cat burglars, Lucinda. They're very nimble.

He checks his watch. He's already late. He rushes out.

INT. NEWSPAPER EDITING ROOM - DAY

Tom stares blankly at a computer screen. Next to him, JACK (mid-70s) fiddles with a dusty typewriter. SONIA (early-50s) scrolls through her phone, defeated.

A series of bizarre headlines flash on Tom's screen:

LOCAL MAN DISCOVERS HIS SCARECROW IS A VERY TALL, CONFUSED TOURIST.

A COW, A PIG, AND A CHICKEN WIN THE WEEKLY QUIZ NIGHT.

AN ENTIRE FIELD OF SUNFLOWERS MYSTERIOUSLY TILTS TO FACE THE LOCAL BUTCHER SHOP.

VILLAGE CLOCK, STUCK AT 4:20 FOR A MONTH, IS NOW A POPULAR TOURIST ATTRACTION.

SONIA

(re: latest story)

I took my mother-in-law to see that. Out of spite, I might add.

TOM

Another Thursday, another dead end.

JACK

What about that cat stuck up a tree? People love cats.

TOM

That was last week, Jack. We gave the binmen a front page for getting a five-pound bonus. That's how desperate we are.

(CONTINUED)