

HIS OWN DEVICES

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GARETHS IPAD SCREEN - FILM CLUB.

ZOOM call. Three boxes on screen. GARETH, 41, dark haired and dishevelled. ALED, 36, designer beard and black hair. JOE, 40, bald. All have beers. Gareth is on his iPad, wobbly, too close and looking up his nose somewhat.

GARETH

We've been on a long journey, we've been imprisoned by invisible forces, and now we've been reborn with an opportunity to be a better version of ourselves.

ALED

No, it's just a giant baby in space!

JOE

It's a normal sized baby, it's just close.

ALED

It is a giant baby! Everyone knows the giant baby at the end of 2001.

Gareth picks a quaver out of his packet. Holds it up.

GARETH

Aled, this is a quaver. A normal sized quaver.

He holds it close to the camera.

GARETH

This is NOT a giant quaver. It's just close.

ALED

Well however big it is, it's not humans reborn, it's just a nice baby in space. Not everything has to be complicated.

GARETH

It's not complicated! Advanced alien species helps man evolve, waits for us to invent space travel, observes us in a zoo for a while then sends us back to earth as superior beings!

JOE

Hey, what's the first rule of Film Club?

GARETH AND ALED

No one is wrong.

JOE

What's the second rule of Film Club?

GARETH AND ALED

No one is right.

GARETH

Except I AM actually right.

ALED

No you're not!

Joe is jumped on by his two kids, SCOTT and MEGAN, as the others answer, then he shoos them away.

JOE

Anyway, Gareth, what's the latest with the kids?

GARETH

Still not allowed over.

ALED

Cos of the diabetes?

GARETH

And the asthma. She said knowing her luck they'll both have it and then they come over here and kill me.

JOE

Knowing *her* luck?

ALED

Right, well listen. We don't mind looking up your nose every Thursday but your kids will wanna see your face... Do me a favour and get a laptop.

Gareth self-consciously moves the iPad away from his nostrils.

ALED

And either grow a beard or shave it off.

GARETH

I am growing a beard. This is me growing a beard!

ALED

No, this is you not shaving. Shave your neck at least. A beard needs defined borders. Look...

Aled pushes his exhaustively designed beard to the camera.

JOE

Fuck me, he's not going on ITV2 Al...

GARETHS LAPTOP SCREEN - KIDS CATCH UP.

Now on a laptop, there are two boxes. Gareth in one, his wife SARAH, 36 and two kids GWEN, 9 and ARTHUR, 5, huddled together in the other. Sarah is petite with long mousey brown hair.

GARETH

So I bumped into Jim today.

SARAH

Jim we bought the house off?

Sarah's sister, LUCY, 32, briefly arrives in shot. Like her sister, she is petite and attractive, but has shorter hair.

LUCY

Hello Gareth!

GARETH

Hey Lucy.

LUCY

Nice beard!

Lucy disappears.

GARETH

Aye, Jim, so I got talking to him outside the Spar. He asked me whether I'd seen anything funny in the house.

SARAH

What do you mean?

GARETH

Well... and I wish he'd told us this before, but he said this house was built on land owned by a mean old Shepherd.

GWEN

Was it!?

GARETH

And when they were pouring the cement into the foundations a hundred years ago, this mean old shepherd came along, drunk as a skunk, railing against his land being built on...

Sarah's face relaxes, she knows what's going on. She glances at Gwen and Arthur, who are hooked.

GARETH

...I mean it wasn't his land any more.
He'd sold it. But along he comes waving
his crook around in anger and he falls
into the cement and drowns!

Gwen and Arthur gasp.

GARETH

Anyway, rather than waste all that
cement, they decided nobody would miss
the old bugger and they carried on
building the house.

ARTHUR

There's a man in the floor?

GARETH

Apparently! Jim said he'd see the shadow
of this old shepherd wandering the
house, waving his crook... Vowing
vengeance on those who dwell within.

Sarah glances again at the kids, who are wide-eyed.

GWEN

Our house?

GARETH

This very house.

Gwen shoots a querying look to her Mother. Sarah shrugs her
shoulders.

GARETH

Anyway, I'm sure it's fine. I mean I've
never seen anything.

Arthur turns to Sarah.

ARTHUR

Mam, has the mean old Shepherd gone
away?

SARAH

Yes, I'm sure he has lovely. Anyway,
Gareth what's this fancy new screen,
you've bought a laptop have you?

GARETH

Yeah, work want to have a call tomorrow
so I thought I better get something with
a decent camera.

SARAH

Ooh, do you reckon they're gonna pull you back off furlough?

GARETH

Hope so. I mean people still need car engines.

SARAH

Wear a shirt and tie.

GARETH

Why?

SARAH

I don't know. I just want you to look... strong. Capable.

GARETH

They know I'm capable.

SARAH

Yeah, I know, but... you know.

GARETH

Aye alright I get you. Anyway, I've bought more than a laptop...

Gareth stands and walks around to the back of the settee.

GARETH

I've had a new basement installed!

Gareth performs the 'man walking down the stairs' routine behind the settee. Gwen and Sarah laugh. Arthur looks thrilled.

SARAH

What's he like.

ARTHUR

Have we got a new basement?

SARAH

No Love. Daddy's joking.

Gareth's head freezes just above the settee, he looks worried.

GARETH

Shit.

SARAH

Yes, you can come back up from the basement now Daddy.

GARETH

My knee's gone.

He puts his elbow on the back of the settee, tries to stand up, there is an audible click from his knee.

SARAH

Oh no, Gareth not again.

GARETH

I'm alright...

SARAH

You're too old for all that now.

GARETH

Bloody rugby. Hang on...

Gareth crawls on his hands and knees around from the back of the settee, goes out of shot, then looms up in front of the camera.

GARETH

Can you see my bogeys?

He tilts his head backwards.

GWEN AND ARTHUR

Eeeewwww!

GARETH

Hang on, can you hear that?

He looks around the room. All go quiet for a few seconds. Gwen starts looking uncomfortable.

GWEN

What is it Mam?

As Gareth looks around the room, a crook slides into shot behind his neck. Gwen and Arthur scream.

GWEN AND ARTHUR

AAAAAHHHH!

The crook hooks around Gareth's neck and he is yanked out of shot.

GWEN AND ARTHUR

AAAAHHHH!

ARTHUR

(Nearly sobbing)
Daddy!

SARAH

Oh honey, he's only joking. Daddy,
that's enough!

Gareth appears in shot again, beaming.

GARETH

Ah! I had you!

Arthur smiles through newly forming tears. Gwen is exhilarated
but cross.

GWEN

Daaaad!

SARAH

Right, go and get the collages to show
your father. Landing cupboard.

The kids race off. Sarah smiles at Gareth.

SARAH

They'll be terrified to come back now!

Gareth's expression changes from mischief to hope.

GARETH

Come back? What, you're coming back?

SARAH

Well, you know... After covid when they
can visit.

GARETH

Oh.

SARAH

But, I don't know, let's see...

Gareth looks behind Sarah to make sure the kids are not within
earshot. He speaks quietly.

GARETH

Sarah, I told you, I was hammered.

SARAH

That's not the point.

GARETH

It was only a kiss.

SARAH

Only a kiss... Gar, a kiss is such an
intimate thing.

GARETH

I would never have gone further.

SARAH

In a way it's more intimate than sex. I mean sex is like a carnal mechanism, kissing is... you really make an emotional choice to kiss someone.

She looks down to hide the fact she is welling up.

GARETH

What do I need to do?

SARAH

Nothing. It's me. I need to have complete confidence you won't kiss someone next time you get pissed.

GARETH

I'll stop drinking. Tea total.

SARAH

Don't be daft. There's nothing wrong with a couple of beers.

GARETH

Sarah, I'll do anything. I need you back. I need you all back.

Sarah takes a deep breath. Gareth senses it's time to back off. He resets, smiles.

GARETH

How's the home schooling going?

SARAH

Oh don't. It's hell. You just can't keep their attention for a second.

GARETH

I was reading it's impossible. Cos home is where they play.

SARAH

Exactly! I just can't hold their attention like you can...

There is a long pause. Sarah and Gareth look at each other. There is longing on both sides. Then, Sarah looks sheepish.

SARAH

I've just had them watching videos since Tuesday.

GARETH
Videos? Haha!

SARAH
Educational videos!

GARETH
Like what?

SARAH
Home Alone?

GARETH
Home alone!

SARAH
Practical skills! DIY. You know.
Personal security.

GARETH
Haha course, yeah.

SARAH
'Up'. That was the um... sociology.

GARETH
And Geography...

SARAH
Aye! And don't forget, they're all
language lessons, cos they're learning
how people all over the world speak.

GARETH
Well, America anyway.

Gareth and Sarah's love for each other shines through in their smiles.

SARAH
Thank you for entertaining the kids
today, they've been so bored. This is
just what they needed.

GARETH
It's just what I needed too, believe me.

Gwen and Arthur thump back into the room and race to the camera with their collages. The screen is filled with Gwens first, then Arthur bumps his sister out of the way.

GWEN
MINE'S A CAT AND IT'S MADE OF PICTURES
OF CAT'S AND LOOK IT'S THE OVERALL SHAPE
OF A CAT OI ARTHUR!!!

GARETHS LAPTOP SCREEN - ZOOM WORK MEETING.

On the screen, the words 'Please wait, the meeting host will let you in soon.' Then, a beep, and we hear one sentence.

DONALD (O.S)

Bloody hell Karen!

Now Gareth appears with two colleagues in separate boxes. DAVE, 54 is thick-necked with thinning brown hair, BLEDDYN, 53, red haired with a full bushy beard.

DAVE

Gareth, look at you with your shirt and tie on!

GARETH

My missus told me to wear it. Blod, what the fuck is that?

BLEDDYN

What?

GARETH

Behind you, is that your shower?

BLEDDYN

Yeah, so what?

DAVE

Bloody hell Blod, are you sat on the shitter?

BLEDDYN

No! Well yes, but I'm not... you know. It's the only place in the house the little bastards can't get to me.

TONY, 29, appears on screen. A dark haired Londoner, settled in South Wales. Witty and gregarious.

TONY

Oi Oi! Here they are, Last of The Summer wine!

BLEDDYN

Cheeky fucker.

TONY

I can't believe you've got computers! Did your Grandkids turn them on for you?

GARETH

I'm only 41, don't mix me in with these old farts.

DAVE

What's this about anyway, they pulling us back off furlough?

TONY

Hope so.

BLEDDYN

I don't even know if I'm allowed to come back to work with my asthma.

GARETH

I was thinking that with mine, and my diabetes.

TONY

What does it say on the internet?

GARETH

It says about fifty different things.

DAVE

Is it just us in this meeting?

BLEDDYN

Looks like it. Must be chief engineers.

TONY

At least they're not closing the plant then, it would be everybody if they were doing that. Hey up, the boss is here. Alright gaffer!

Line manager DONALD, 62, has just appeared on screen.

DONALD

Alright lads. I was in here first but had to go out. Karen walked in with her nightie on.

TONY

WAHEEY!

DAVE

Don't worry, Blods on the shitter.

Gareth notices that there is a black box at the bottom of the screen with the white initials AT on it.

GARETH

Hang on lads... Mr Thomas, is that you?

TONY

Shit.

The black box now becomes the ominous large centre image as host MR THOMAS, 61, speaks.

MR THOMAS

Andrew, please. Yes, morning everyone.
Sorry, I can't get this blasted camera
to work. Oh, what's this, start video...

Mr Thomas appears. Bespectacled, smart suit. Bookcase in the background.

MR THOMAS

Ah! There we go. Now, thank you for
coming everyone. I'll keep it short.

His mic is set very low, but no-one is brave enough to tell him. The five faces around the outside of the screen lean in.

MR THOMAS

Now, as Tony quite rightly said, we are
NOT closing the plant. No plans
whatsoever to do that. But... we are an
agile company in a volatile industry,
and as such we will need to... reorganise
resources.

The loud sound of a toilet being flushed.

BLEDDYN

Shit. I'm sorry, I was just resting my
arm on the flush!

There is silence for several seconds.

BLEDDYN

I've been telling Sandra it's too...
honestly, I was just resting on it!

MR THOMAS

It's ok Bleddyn, you were just trying to
find a quiet room. And I appreciate
that. Anyway, as I was saying..

He looks down at papers on his desk.

MR THOMAS

...yes, reorganising our resources. And
with that in mind, we have decided to...

Mr Thomas freezes. For several seconds the rest think he is just pondering his next words carefully. Then Tony twigs.

TONY

His internets gone down.

DONALD

Andrew?

Gareth is white faced and silent.

DAVE

We have decided to what??

Mr Thomas is suddenly re-animated.

MR THOMAS

...guaranteed interview for vacancies
elsewhere as soon as they arise.

DONALD

Woah, sorry Andrew, we lost you then.

GARETH

(Quietly)
Oh God.

MR THOMAS

Did you? Where did I get to?

TONY

We have decided to...

MR THOMAS

Oh, sorry. God, these computers. Right...
We have decided to scale down on a
couple of layers within the company, but
everyone within those layers will have a
guaranteed interview for vacancies
elsewhere as soon as they arise.

DONALD

You're getting rid of Chief Engineers
aren't you.

MR THOMAS

'Getting rid' is not the phrase I would...
But we've been aware for a while that
you chaps have done such a good job
mentoring the standard engineers that
they've become almost self-reliant.

TONY

He didn't just say that.

MR THOMAS

Look, we're *creating* two new positions
in standard. And we're not even
advertising. We've already got a short
list of five!

There is a period of silence as the five angry men strain to hold their tongues.

MR THOMAS

As in, you! You are the shortlist!

Gareth rubs his temples, eyes closed.

TONY

He wants us to be happy.

DONALD

Andrew, what you're saying is we've lost our jobs but us five will be interviewed for two positions in Standard.

MR THOMAS

We couldn't have predicted this dreadful...

DONALD

Which is fifteen thousand less than our current salary.

MR THOMAS

We are saying that, as an agile company...

Mr Thomas looks down. Not at his papers. He takes a deep breath. He looks back up at the camera with tears in his eyes. The silence is deafening. His mouth tries to form words.

MR THOMAS

Guys...

A deafeningly loud flushing toilet.

BLEDDYN

Shit!

TONY

Fucking hell Blod, get out of the shitter will you!

BLEDDYN

I'm sorry! Oh my God, this flush is ridiculous...

GARETHS LAPTOP SCREEN - KIDS CATCH UP.

Two boxes. Gareth in one, Gwen and Arthur in the other. No sign of Sarah. Gareth and Arthur are each holding a copy of Roald Dahl's BFG. Gwen is scribbling on a pad.

ARTHUR

(Slowly)
A brilliant moonbeam was slanting
through a gap in the curtains. It was
shining right onto her pillow. The other
children in the dor... in the dor...

GARETH

Speak it out.

ARTHUR

D-O-R-M-I-T-OR-Y Dormitory! The other
children in the dormitory had been
asleep for hours.

GARETH

Sophie closed her eyes and lay quite
still. She tried very hard to doze off.
It was no good. The moonbeam was like a...

GWEN

Dad, this ones too hard.

Gareth picks up his copy of the test he has written for Gwen.

GARETH

Which one?

GWEN

Number four. Its three sums in one go.

GARETH

Right, what's that word I told you.

GWEN

Um... Bodmas. Brackets, something,
division, multiplication, addition,
subtraction.

GARETH

Right, so...

Sarah rushes past in the background. Gareth peers into the
screen to try and see where she's gone.

GARETH

There she is. Sarah!

GWEN

She's getting ready.

GARETH

Ready for what?

End Of Sample