

MR BROWN LEAVES
WITCH STREET

by

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WGA 1033487

FADE IN:

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

A dull, windy morning. Orange streetlights still shine. Old newspaper wraps itself round a sign, blows free. The gallows-shaped sign reads:

"WITCH STREET
est. (1666)"

DR MCGREGOR (50), the local doctor, walks with MR BROWN (42), local school headteacher. Both wear raincoats and carry umbrellas.

MR BROWN

Bad night?

DR MCGREGOR

Aye.

A distinctive yellow car toots as it clatters past them, engine spluttering. Its driver waves. Mr Brown waves back.

MR BROWN

Same nightmare?

DR MCGREGOR

Aye.

MR BROWN

It's all in your mind, Mac. Good morning, Mrs B!

MRS BRADLEY (33) unlocks her grocer's shop. She raises a hand in greeting without turning round.

MR BROWN

You should see a doctor.

DR MCGREGOR

Aye, verra funny.

He stomps off into WITCH STREET DOCTOR'S SURGERY.

EXT. WITCH STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Mr Brown cuts through the exit of WITCH STREET SCHOOL car park as a small car drives through the entrance and parks. It disgorges MISS WIGG (35), severely attractive.

MR BROWN
Good morning, Miss W!

MISS WIGG
It might be for you,
headteacher.

As she speaks, all the streetlights go out.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

A sign on a door:

"MISS WIGG
HISTORY"

moves back as the door swings open.

MR BROWN (OS)
A prank, Miss W. Just a

Miss Wigg clicks on the light. Both teachers stare at the blackboard. In big green letters, someone has scrawled: MR BROWN FANCIES MISS WIGG.

MR BROWN
- harmless prank.

MISS WIGG
The first recorded instance took
place on eleventh August. It
read 'Miss Wigg's got one'.

Mr Brown can't meet Miss Wigg's eye.

MR BROWN
Billy Wilson. In your class,
isn't he?

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

BILLY WILSON (14), in scruffy track suit, football under one arm, stares at a garden full of garden gnomes. One of the gnomes holds a fishing rod in its right hand.

SEAMUS (OS)

Come on, Billy.

SEAMUS O'HANLON (14) speaks with a Irish accent. Billy turns to look at him.

BILLY

'Come on, Billy.' Afraid of
being late?

He looks back at the garden. Now the fishing rod is in the gnome's left hand. Billy frowns.

A few raindrops fall. Billy scowls up at the sky.

BILLY

All right, all right.

He turns, bounces the ball, sets off to join Seamus. Despite his sporty clothes he walks with a pronounced limp which produces a distinctive 'clump-scrape' sound.

INT. BRADLEY'S STORES - DAY

MRS FULLER (40), a small, nervous woman with a high pitched voice, jumps as the door jangles open to admit the boys.

Mrs Bradley, hair done up in a severe bun, looks curiously at Mrs Fuller.

MRS BRADLEY

Nothing else? Just five pots of
English mustard?

Seamus approaches the counter, proffers cash for sweets. Mrs Bradley rings up the sale. In the bg: Billy steals a handful of sweets, stuffs them into a stray paper bag.

The boys leave.

MRS FULLER

Did you see what that boy did?

MRS BRADLEY
I did that, Mrs um

MRS FULLER
Fuller.

Mrs Bradley arranges five pots of mustard on the counter.

MRS BRADLEY
You'd be surprised at the things
I see, Mrs Fuller. Will that be
all?

Under the surprised gaze of Mrs Fuller, she detaches a paper bag from under the counter, replaces the one Billy used.

EXT. WITCH STREET - SAME

JONATHON JONES (14), hair sticking out every which way, passes a house boasting a sign: FOR SALE. BRIGHT & SPARK ESTATE AGENTS. He shrugs his jacket higher on his shoulders as more raindrops fall.

Opposite the school he meets Billy and Seamus coming in the other direction. Both are eating sweets.

BILLY
What happened to you? You seen
a ghost?

JONATHON
No, not that.

As he speaks they are joined by PETER ROBINSON (14), thin, very pale, wide staring eyes.

BILLY
I get it, you saw Pete.

He laughs loudly. Seamus giggles nervously. Jonathon doesn't react. All three stare at Peter.

PETER
I don't feel so good.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

MISS HENDERSON (27), bespectacled school secretary, fusses with her hair in front of a mirror. Suddenly daring, she lets it all loose in a blonde cascade.

She pushes her shoulders back, breasts forward, knocks on the door marked MR J BROWN, HEADTEACHER, and marches in.

MISS HENDERSON (OS)
Time for assembly, headteacher.

MR BROWN (OS)
What? Oh, thank you, Miss H.

Miss Henderson returns reluctantly to her office. Her shoulders slump.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL HALL - DAY

The entire school is at assembly. Jonathon stands next to Billy, who ostentatiously chews gum.

Mr Brown, centre stage, rubs at the top of his head.

MR BROWN
The police rang. The remains of a deer were found. Not far from here. Several pets are missing. The police warn that a dangerous animal is on the loose. A wild dog or even a big cat.

Billy mutters to Jonathon.

BILLY
Cool.

But Jonathon just looks worried.

MR BROWN
Well. You all know how big a deer is.

BILLY
(to Jonathon)
As big as a teacher.

MR BROWN (OS)

So. No playing in the woods.
Stay inside at night. Careful's
the word. Careful!

Jonathon bites his lip.

EXT. ESTATE AGENTS - DAY

Rain hammers down on the distinctive yellow car parked outside BRIGHT & SPARK ESTATE AGENTS. Part of the rear bumper sags downwards beneath the deluge.

INT. ESTATE AGENTS - DAY

PAT O'HANLON (39) sits behind his nameplate at his desk, and surveys customer GEORGE HATFIELD (33). Like his son, Pat speaks with an Irish accent.

PAT

Forty four Witch Street, eh?
It's a nice place, so it is, but
have you considered one here in
Main Street, carpets and
curtains included, at

GEORGE

No, I'm going to be teaching at
the school after Christmas.
Witch Street is much more
convenient.

PAT

I understand, sorr. Let me see,
Witch Street. As luck would be
having it, there's another
property coming on the market
quite soon, January or February,
large garden and

GEORGE

I really need to move before
Christmas. Number forty four
looks ideal to me.

PAT

To be sure, fine property.

He stares worriedly at George.

GEORGE

So can I borrow the keys?

PAT

The keys, sorr, yes, to be sure.
Fine keys. I mean, I'll find
them for you.

His worried gaze travels to the window, in time to see the rear bumper of his car drop off completely.

INT. WITCH STREET CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr Brown dramatically winds up a scary story.

MR BROWN

He raised a hand to wipe away
his tears, and as he did so the
sun dropped behind the sea, and
all the world turned dark.

There is a stunned silence. Every single one of the class of twelve year olds sits with his or her mouth open in a round O of surprise.

The school bell rings.

INT. WITCH STREET CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As the class noisily files out, CAROLINE nervously confronts Mr Brown. She tugs hard at her pony tail. Mr Brown winces.

MR BROWN

It's just a story, Caroline.
Nothing to worry about. It's
not real. None of the Witch
Street stories are real.

CAROLINE

It's not that, sir.

She looks at the floor, the window, longingly at the door.

MR BROWN

Out with it. What's the matter?

CAROLINE

I don't want to upset you, sir.

MR BROWN

Oh, good.

CAROLINE

But I wondered, I mean, you always tell a spooky story, a scary story, but we just wondered if you ever told any different sorts.

MR BROWN

Well, I

CAROLINE

Like a funny story, sir. Or an adventure, or a mystery, or even a love story. We wondered if you could tell those sort of stories, sir, or anything else, you know, but just different.

Caroline, red-faced, tugs even harder at her pony tail. Mr Brown winces again, stares with astonishment as she turns and runs out. The door swings shut behind her, cuts off the sound of girlish giggles.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

In the mirror, Miss Henderson studies the effect of pursing her lips, now painted with bright red lipstick. Her hair is still long and loose.

She turns as Mr Brown comes in.

MR BROWN

A love story, indeed.

MISS HENDERSON

Headteacher?

Mr Brown rubs the top of his head absently.

MR BROWN

Oh, Miss H. Remind me to call the police. In the morning.

MISS HENDERSON

Yes, headteacher.

Her shoulders slump as Mr Brown vanishes into his office.

EXT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

A dull, wet, windy afternoon. Children stream out of the exits. Buses and cars wait for most, others start up the street. Billy limps up to Jonathon.

BILLY

Here.

He passes Jonathon his bag of sweets.

BILLY

Don't say where
they came from.

JONATHON

Don't say where
they came from.

Billy claps Jonathon's shoulder and lurches off, bouncing his football. He loses control of it. A father at the roadside grabs it, passes it back with a reproving look.

Mr Brown watches from his office window.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Jonathon keeps an eye on the big house on the other side of the street as runs to the front door of the Jones' house.

INT. JONATHON'S HOUSE - DAY

Jonathon bursts in, slams the front door.

JULIA (OS)

That you, Jonathon?

JULIA JONES (36) comes into the hall, wiping flour off her hands. JACQUELINE(8), in a wheelchair, awkwardly follows.

JONATHON

No, mum, it's the bogeyman.

Jacqueline giggles. Her head rolls, slightly out of control.

JULIA

Have you heard? It's been on the radio, two dogs and a guineapig or was it two guineapigs and a dog?

Jacqueline mumbles.

JULIA

What was that, dear?

JONATHON

She says the bogeyman doesn't have a mum.

JULIA

And Sugarplum. They interviewed Mrs Bradley on the radio.

Jonathon notices tears in Jacqueline's eyes.

JONATHON

Here, these are for you.

He hands her the bag of sweets. Julia tousles his hair, leaving flour marks.

JULIA

You're a good boy, Jonathon.

Jonathon looks awkward and embarrassed as he runs up the stairs into his

BEDROOM

where he looks out of his window. It is almost dark. A light glows in the small-paned side window of the big house opposite. A grey shape blurs behind the glass.

Jonathon pulls the curtains closed.

EXT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr Brown peers out of his window into the windy night. Next to the window three stone steps lead up to an imposing front door that boasts a big brass knocker.

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An untidy lounge with shelves of books. A PC stands on a desk. There is no woman's touch. Mr Brown lives alone.

He closes the curtains, sits at his PC, fires it up.

MR BROWN

Different kind of story indeed.

He checks his email box.

ONSCREEN

"No new messages."

MR BROWN (OS)

Different kind of story? Why not?

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A bright sunny day. The sky is very blue, grass very green, sun very yellow. Motionless trees cast sharp black shadows.

TOM, DICK and HARRY (all 19) shout and joke as they cycle quickly along a woodland path.

TOM

Branch!

Dick and Harry laugh and duck under a tree branch as they speed past.

TOM

Bend!

The three pedal furiously round a bend, emerge from the trees into more open country.

TOM

Girl! Girl!

A pretty girl in a long white dress is in the way. The cyclists swerve left, left and right. Harry catches a glimpse of her startled face before he tumbles over his handlebars. Ground and sky blur together.

INT. MR BROWN'S BEDROOM - DAY

A digital alarm clock shrills in the darkness. Mr Brown fumbles it to silence. Its display reads: 7:15.

INT. Dr MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM - SAME

Dr McGregor, tired and haggard, rubs at the window, peers outside. Streetlights colour the boarded-up Old School a faint orange.

INT. JONATHON JONES' BEDROOM - DAY

Jonathon opens his curtains. Streetlights illuminate the big house opposite. There are no lights on in the house.

EXT. PAT O'HANLON'S HOUSE - DAY

Streetlight glints on the distinctive yellow car parked in the driveway, rear bumper tied up with string.

INT. PAT O'HANLON'S HOUSE - DAY

Pat O'Hanlon, already dressed smartly in his suit, sits opposite his wife MAEVE.

MAEVE

We're to get things called
wheelybins and fill them just so
and put them out just so. Tell
that to the marines.

PAT

Toast, dear? Fine toast, easily
spread.

MAEVE

We all have a cross to bear, I
suppose. Wheelybins.

PAT

Remember the old Sharples'
place? I'm thinking we sold it,
so we have. Couldn't put him
off.

MAEVE

Truth will out. Does he know
the history?

PAT

You get Seamus up, I'll make
coffee. Is that a bargain or is
that a bargain?

INT. SEAMUS O'HANLON'S BEDROOM - DAY

The door opens. Light spills in. Seamus starts awake.

MAEVE

Rise and shine, the angels are
calling.

Gus, a big brown soppo dog curled on the foot of the bed,
looks up, yawns, lets his head drop back down.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

The door marked "MISS WIGG, HISTORY" swings open on the
empty classroom. Inside, more big green letters scrawled on
the blackboard: MISS WIGG'S SISTER IS A MOP.

MISS WIGG

But there is no record of my
ever having a sister,
headteacher

MR BROWN

Not the point, Miss W. Not the
point. Just leave this to me.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - LATER

Mr Brown swings round to face the class.

MR BROWN

Who wrote this?

Silence.

MR BROWN

Someone came into the school during the night. Someone wrote this silly message. Silly's the word! I want to know who it was.

Silence.

MR BROWN

You've got till the end of the day. Somebody had better come to see me in my office.

As he grimly surveys the class, Billy whispers to Jonathon.

BILLY

Or what?

MR BROWN

Wilson. I saw what happened last night. I suggest you leave your football at home.

Mr Brown notices an empty seat.

MR BROWN

Where's Robinson?

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S SURGERY - DAY

Peter sits pale, motionless. His mother speaks excitedly.

MRS ROBINSON

I dunno what's the matter wiv 'im, doctor, 'e seems to be orf 'is food, and that's not like 'im.

DR MCGREGOR

Guid mornin', Peter. How're ye feelin'?

MRS ROBINSON

'E sleeps all the time, doctor, and that's not like 'im eiver, I mean 'e even missed Jack Bailey's birthday party!

DR MCGREGOR

Aye, Mrs Robinson. And have ye any aches or pains, Peter?

MRS ROBINSON

And 'e's not talking, doctor, you can see that, an' that's not like 'im at all.

Dr McGregor sighs.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S SURGERY - LATER

Instead of the Robinsons, CATHY THOMPSON (13), pigtailed, and MRS THOMPSON occupy the two seats. Cathy is white, unmoving. Mrs Thompson looks at her, then at Dr McGregor.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah cannae say fur certain, Mrs Thompson, but Ah'm thinkin' it's a virus doin' the rounds.

MRS THOMPSON

I tried giving her porridge this morning, doctor. You'd approve of that.

DR MCGREGOR

A guid try, Mrs Thompson, but ye cannae give her anything fur a virus.

Mrs Thompson nods without understanding.

DR MCGREGOR

Just tae be safe, Ah'll make a hospital appointment for ye. January the fourth. They'll write tae ye wi' the time. Do ye understand, Mrs Thompson?

Mrs Thompson nods again.

Dr McGregor stands as Cathy and Mrs Thompson leave, then sits back down and swivels his chair so that he can see out of the window.

DR MCGREGOR

Number eight. The Robinsons. A virus. Aye, that'll be right.

A car driving slowly past catches his eye.

DR MCGREGOR

Number ten. The Thompsons. Run it's course. Aye, that'll be right.

The car pulls up outside the house FOR SALE.

DR MCGREGOR

Number twelve. The Crenshaw twins.

The intercom on his desk buzzes.

DR MCGREGOR

Let me guess.

RECEPTIONIST (ON INTERCOM)

Mrs Crenshaw to see you, doctor. Shall I pull the files?

Dr McGregor continues to look pensively out of the window. He sees someone get out of the parked car.

EXT/INT. 44 WITCH STREET - DAY

George Hatfield jumps out of the car, makes his way to the front door, past a ragged hedge. He puts the key to the lock, realises that the door is open.

He pushes it open to reveal a dark empty hall. Curious, he steps in. Clicks the light switch. It doesn't work.

He examines the empty, dark downstairs rooms. He backs out of the lounge, turns quickly. No-one there. He looks at the shadowed stairwell.

UPSTAIRS

the bedrooms and bathroom contain no furniture, only dust and a few spiderwebs. He sees a single footprint in the dust at the top of the stairs.

GEORGE

So. Not the only one
interested.

DOWNSTAIRS

As George takes a last look at the kitchen, the nearby
school bell rings.

GEORGE

Perfect.

EXT. 44 WITCH STREET - CONTINUOUS

George locks the front door, turns. Children are boiling
noisily out of the school into the playground. A football
bounces over the fence into the road.

Billy Wilson climbs the fence.

A big lorry passes George. Just before it obscures his view
of the school, he sees Billy land on the pavement, lurch
awkwardly on his bad leg, out into the road.

The rear lights of the lorry flare. Brakes screech, tyre
rubber smokes as it careens sideways, knocks over a vacant
bus stop, eventually comes to a throbbing halt.

Its engine cuts out. In eerie silence, all the
schoolchildren stand rigid, shocked.

The driver climbs from his cab, carefully closes the door,
and keels over in the middle of the road.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. 44 WITCH STREET - DAY

SUPER: "FIVE WEEKS LATER"

The scene changes. The lorry fades. A footbridge spans the
road by the school. The hedge is no longer ragged. The
"FOR SALE" sign has gone.

Children boil noisily out of the school into the gloomy late
afternoon, to be picked up, walk up one side of the road, or
cross the new bridge to the other side.

George Hatfield, a Bradley's plastic bag in hand, pushes open the garden gate and uses a key to open the front door.

INT. 44 WITCH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Packing cases and cardboard boxes clutter the hall. A phone rings. George dashes to the lounge to answer.

GEORGE

Hello?

TELEPHONE VOICE

Mister George Hatfield?

GEORGE

That's me. Who is this?

TELEPHONE VOICE

I just thought you should know about Witch Street, so I did.

GEORGE

Pardon?

TELEPHONE VOICE

Witch Street. Are you in the way of knowing anything about it?

GEORGE

Not really.

TELEPHONE VOICE

The previous owners of number forty-four just vanished. Two years ago. One night, there they were, and the next morning, there they weren't. A Mr and Mrs Sharples, so they were.

GEORGE

Oh.

TELEPHONE VOICE

To be sure, the stories about Witch Street are powerful strange. Too many to be telling on the telephone.

GEORGE
Strange stories?

TELEPHONE VOICE
Find them in the newspapers if
you've a mind. Mrs Bessett, she
burned down her own house, so
she did, and the Old School
that's all boarded up now, and
the coach and horses that

GEORGE
You said there was too much to
tell me on the phone.

TELEPHONE VOICE
So I did, sorr.

During the ensuing pause George sees his reflection in the
lounge window as darkness gathers outside. Receiver
clutched in one hand, bag of shopping in the other.

TELEPHONE VOICE
I thought someone should be
warning you, sorr.

GEORGE
Warned? Perhaps we could meet -

The telephone goes dead.

GEORGE
- up.

George hangs up slowly. He heaves his bag of shopping onto
an unpacked box, stares at it thoughtfully.

GEORGE
Dammit. Bread. I knew there
was something.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

The street is quiet now. George buttons up his coat. His
breath mists.

He raises his hand to greet an old lady tottering in the opposite direction, but she doesn't seem to notice. She veers into the front garden of a house two doors down from Bradley's Stores.

The lights of the shop are bright in the dark evening.

The old woman walks straight through the green front door of her house without bothering to open it.

George stops, rubs at his eyes, shakes his head. He keeps a nervous eye on the house as he hurries past.

INT. BRADLEY'S STORES - NIGHT

George comes in and closes the door smartly, leans back on it as if to prevent anyone else coming in.

MRS BRADLEY
Are you all right, Mr um

GEORGE
(whispers)
Hatfield. George.

MRS BRADLEY
Do you want to sit down?

GEORGE
No, no, I'll be fine. I just
thought I saw something strange,
that's all.

MRS BRADLEY
And what would that be, Mr um?

GEORGE
Hatfield. Just, oh it was
nothing. An old lady going into
the house with the green door -

MRS BRADLEY
That'll be Mrs um, bless her
soul. She died a few weeks ago.
Gardner.

GEORGE
What?

MRS BRADLEY

Mrs Gardner. Lived there for
nigh on forty years. I don't
suppose she wants to leave her
old house.

George grabs the corner of the counter to steady himself.

MRS BRADLEY

What can I get you?

George's eyes roll up into his head and he collapses in a
faint. Mrs Bradley looks down at him, perplexed.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Spindly trees tip-toe up a lawn to tap on a window.

INT. JACQUELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jacqueline scrambles out of bed, runs to the window, hops to
keep her bare feet off the cold floor. She yanks open the
curtains, throws open the window.

Tree branches snake in and lift her bodily outside.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

The trees lower Jacqueline to the ground but tiny branches
keep hold of her hands. As she dances with them her feet
leave tracks in the frosty grass.

Jacqueline LAUGHS.

A CLICK. A window in the house lights up, brightens a
rectangular patch of the garden. Instantly, the trees are
gone and -

INT. JACQUELINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

- Jacqueline, in bed, opens her eyes. Light from the
hallway silhouettes Julia and faintly picks out the shape of
Jacqueline's wheelchair.

JULIA
Did you call, dear?

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr McGregor moans and thrashes about in his sleep. His eyes move behind their lids.

EXT. OUTSIDE OLD SCHOOL - DAY

A clear, sunny morning in the wasteland by the boarded-up Old School.

A brightly coloured empty crisp packet sails through the air on the wind to land at Dr McGregor's feet. He bends to pick it up.

A host of small, white hands and arms shoot up out of the earth and grab at him - at his ankles, legs, hand - and drag him down into the shifting earth.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr McGregor's eyes snap open. He breathes heavily, misting the night air. He looks fearfully at the curtained window, faintly lit by orange streetlight.

Nothing happens. He rolls over, pulls blankets over his head.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Mr Brown, on all fours, trots onto the stage with a rabbit in his mouth.

The entire school - children and teachers - applaud furiously.

Two huge guineapigs in police uniform rush onto the stage. One has a thatch of black hair, the other a ginger beard.

CHILDREN AND TEACHERS
Behind you! Behind you!

Mr Brown leaps an impossible height to a small-paned window almost in the roof, and blurs into a grey shape as he disappears through it.

INT. JONATHON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The howl of a dog or some other animal drifts through the window.

Without waking up, Jonathon buries his face in the pillow.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A bright sunny day. Blue sky, green grass, yellow sun. Motionless trees cast sharp black shadows.

Harry stands by a tree on the edge of the wood. He checks his watch, looks anxiously down the path. A bright white shape appears in the distance.

HARRY

My name's Harry, I nearly ran you down the other day. No, that won't do. Hello, I just happened to be passing. No, that won't do. Nice weather we're having, don't you think?

He groans.

The girl approaches. Harry steps out to meet her.

Unexpectedly, she looks past him, over his shoulder, directly at the camera.

GIRL IN WHITE

Hi.

INT. MR BROWN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mr Brown's eyes snap open. He looks both puzzled and frightened for a moment. The alarm shrills.

He bangs a hand on the clock, silencing it, swings himself half out of bed, sits. He yawns, stretches, rubs at the top of his head.

INT. MR BROWN'S LOUNGE - LATER

Mr Brown yawns again as he shuffles into the lounge. He sips a cup of coffee as he looks down at the flickering screen of the PC.

MR BROWN

Nice weather we're having, don't you think?

He straightens, goes to the window, jerks open the curtains. Rain falls heavily outside.

MR BROWN

No, Harry. Not in this world.

He returns to the PC, sits down and clicks open his email. To his surprise, he finds a message there.

INSERT: ONSCREEN

From: rosie@worldonline.nz
To: spook@globenet.co.uk
Sent: 29th November
Subject: Hello
Hello, I got your name from the white pages. If I'm right and that's 121 Witch Street, then I used to live there 25 years ago. What a small world it is now! Would you like to chat?
Rosie

BACK TO SCENE

Mr Brown raises his eyebrows.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Mr Brown and Dr McGregor, umbrellas up, fight their way against wind and rain. Dripping wet wheelybins line the street.

MR BROWN

Just the five?

DR MCGREGOR

Aye. It doesnae make sense. A virus would hae emptied half your school by now.

Pat O'Hanlon toots as he rattles past in his yellow car. The engine backfires. Dr McGregor glares after him.

DR MCGREGOR

Watch us drown, ye damned Irish.

MR BROWN

I got an email. This morning. From New Zealand.

DR MCGREGOR

Warmer in New Zealand. Ye've kin there?

MR BROWN

No. Nobody. Morning, Mrs B! Any sign of Sugarplum?

Mrs Bradley, bundled up against the weather, passes them on the way to her store. She shakes her head.

Dr McGregor raises a eyebrow.

MR BROWN

Her cat. Vanished. Still, you can never tell with cats.

DR MCGREGOR

Damned cratur's carry diseases.

MR BROWN

So do humans, Mac.

Dr McGregor looks thoughtful, turns off towards his surgery.

Mr Brown continues up Witch Street. He passes the new footbridge. A plaque built into the side reads: WILSON'S FOOTBRIDGE, and in smaller letters: REST IN PEACE, BILLY.

Mr Brown passes Miss Wigg's parked car en route to the school entrance, shakes out his umbrella.

He hears SCREAMS from inside.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

Mr Brown runs down the corridor.

Miss Wigg stands outside her classroom, hands to her face. Her eyes bulge at the closed door.

Mr Brown edges past her, cautiously opens the door. He looks around quickly. The room is empty, but on the blackboard in uneven, scrawled green chalk: I'M COLD.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - OFFICE

Miss Henderson turns from the mirror as Mr Brown bursts in. She has long hair, red lips. She no longer wears glasses.

MISS HENDERSON

Good mor

Mr Brown sweeps past without a glance, into his office. Slams the door. Miss Henderson's shoulders slump.

The door opens again.

MR BROWN

Oh, Miss H?

She perks up.

MR BROWN

Make a cup of tea for Miss W,
will you? She's had a bit of a
shock.

He closes the door. Miss Henderson's shoulders slump again.

MISS HENDERSON

Miss holier-than-thou
historically accurate Wigg. One
tea with strychnine coming up.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Julia pushes Jacqueline in her wheelchair out of the house, onto the pavement. The ground and surrounding wheelybins glisten wetly, though it has stopped raining.

JULIA

Won't be a minute, dear, I
forgot my shopping list.

She returns to the house.

Jacqueline's eyes roll nervously as she surveys the
wheelybins.

Several of them shudder in the wind. One moves slightly on
its wheels.

The lid of the closest isn't properly shut - it looks as if
it is grinning. Another has the remnant of some stickers
stuck to its side - it looks as if it has eyes watching her.

Jacqueline pants with fear. Three or four of the wheelybins
move closer, grinning, showing teeth.

Jacqueline jumps up and runs frantically up the street.

EXT. WITCH STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Julia returns. Jacqueline swings her head round as the gate
bangs shut.

JULIA

Okay, dear, let's go find out if
Sugarplum's back yet.

She wheels Jacqueline up Witch Street.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S SURGERY - DAY

Peter Robinson, pale and painfully thin, sits with his eyes
closed. Mrs Robinson, anxious and pale herself, watches as
Dr McGregor writes out a prescription.

MRS ROBINSON

Only I'm at me wits end, doctor,
and no mistake, 'e's 'ardly
eatin' and sometimes 'e's so
quiet you'd think 'e wusn't
there at all.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah understand, Mrs Robinson.
Ah've made an appointment at the
hospital fur ye - January fourth.

He hands her the prescription.

MRS ROBINSON

I thought you said -

DR MCGREGOR

It's fur yoursel', Mrs Robinson.
A wee tonic to pick you up.

Mrs Robinson, for once wordless, takes the prescription and
stuffs it in her handbag. She jumps up.

MRS ROBINSON

Come on, Peter, time to go.

Peter opens his pale eyes.

DR MCGREGOR

Be careful o' that door, Mrs -

Mrs Robinson opens the door. Just outside, a painter lets
go a pot of paint as he grabs at the top of his ladder. It
falls directly towards Mrs Robinson.

Before anyone can react, Peter moves from his chair, passes
his mother, catches the paintpot. His movements are too
quick for the eye to follow.

Mrs Robinson and Dr McGregor look at each other, not quite
sure of what has just happened. Dr McGregor shakes his head
slightly, picks up his notes.

DR MCGREGOR

Ye'll get a letter tae confirm
the time. Guid day, Mrs
Robinson, Peter.

INT. 44 WITCH STREET - DAY

George Hatfield, unshaven and haggard, peers from behind his
curtain.

He sees Peter Robinson trail along behind his mother. They meet up with Julia and Jacqueline in her wheelchair.

The two women stop to talk. Jacqueline awkwardly tries to hold out a paper bag towards Peter, but he ignores her. Mrs Robinson tousles her hair.

Jacqueline rolls her head, looks directly at the front window of no.44. George moves away from the window, sits on an unopened crate.

He is surrounded by binoculars, telescopes, cameras. He looks at his watch. His gaze travels to a set of dark clothes hanging on the back of the door.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

Mr Brown sits with his head in his hands. After a few moments, he gets up, stands at the window, clasps his hands behind his back, stares out at Wilson's footbridge.

INT. DR MCGEGOR'S SURGERY - DAY

Dr McGregor stands at his window, hands clasped behind his back. He watches Julia push Jacqueline past. After a few moments, he returns to his desk, puts his head in his hands.

INT. BRADLEY'S STORES- DAY

Mrs Bradley polishes her counter, tidies a shelf, counts some money. She avoids looking at one corner of the shop where an empty cat basket sits.

The door jangles. She looks up. Her expression hardens.

WILLIE FORBES slinks in. He wears a scruffy raincoat and a low-brimmed hat. As if by habit, he checks the lock on the door. His eyes dart this way and that.

MRS BRADLEY

So you're out again. You've got a nerve coming here.

WILLIE

Come on, it was only a few quid.

MRS BRADLEY

My quid.

WILLIE

I thought you'd be pleased to see me.

MRS BRADLEY

You thought wrong. Keep your thieving hands to yourself.

WILLE

Come on, I just need something to tide me over.

Mrs Bradley sighs.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Miss Henderson's intercom squawks.

INTERCOM

Miss H! Pop in, please.

Miss Henderson straightens her clothes, wiggles into

MR BROWN'S OFFICE

where he looks up from his desk.

MR BROWN

Take this to Miss Wigg, please.

He hands her an envelope. Miss Henderson returns to

HER OFFICE

where her shoulders slump. She regards the note with distaste. She checks that she's alone, carefully opens it.

INSERT ON THE NOTE

Miss W. I'll be there tonight.

Mr B.

BACK TO SCENE

She raises her perfect eyebrows thoughtfully.

MISS HENDERSON
Miss W? Mr B? Aren't we
polite?

A knock at the door. A distinguished middle-aged man looks in, sees Miss Henderson, enters.

DISTINGUISHED MAN
I'm here to see the headtacher.
My name's Peterson, Director of
education.

MISS HENDERSON
Oh, I'm just - this way, Mr
Peterson.

She opens Mr Brown's door. The distinguished man goes in. Miss Henderson starts to leave when the intercom blares.

MR BROWN (on intercom)
Miss H. Pop in.

She scurries back towards Mr Brown's office as the distinguished man hurries out, clutching his briefcase.

INT. MR BROWN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Miss Henderson switches her gaze from the retreating distinguished man to an angry Mr Brown behind his desk.

MR BROWN
He was a salesman, Miss H.

MISS HENDERSON
I'm sorry, headteacher. He said
his name was Peterson.

MR BROWN
Anyone can say their name is
Peterson. He was selling
calculators. Calculators!

He catches sight of the note still in Miss Henderson's hand. He sighs.

MR BROWN

You'd better take that to Miss
Wigg now.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Jonathon keeps an eye on the big house opposite as he runs
the last few yards to his home,

INT. JONATHON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jonathon drops his school bags en route to the window. He
peers out into the gloomy late afternoon.

A dark shape moves behind the small-paned window in the big
house.

Jonathon jerks the curtains closed, sits on his bed,
swallows nervously. His gaze travels to some dark clothes
on the back of a chair.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr McGregor rubs at condensation on his window, leans
forward intently. A white shape with a hint of pig tails
blurs momentarily at one corner of the Old School.

He sees no further movement. He closes his curtains, lies
on his bed and picks up a textbook.

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

INSERT ONSCREEN

From: rosie@worldonline.nz
To: spook@globenet.co.uk
Sent: 5th December
Subject: re: Hello
I'm glad you wrote back. What
do you teach? I used to work as
a librarian, but I've stopped
now. What's the weather like in
Scotland?
Rosie

MR BROWN

smiles. He pulls his chair closer to the PC on the table, starts to type.

LATER

he stands up, stretches, goes to the window to look out. It is very dark. The wind gusts. Tree branches sway across orange streetlights.

He returns to his desk, gazes pensively down at the screen.

INSERT ONSCREEN

From: spook@globenet.co.uk
To rosie@worldonline.nz
Sent: 5th December
Subject: PS
Dear Rosie
I look forward to seeing your
name pop up in my Inbox. I look
forward to receiving your
messages. I hope you don't
mind.
Jim

BACK TO SCENE

Mr Brown licks his lips nervously, then leans forward and hits the 'enter' key before he can change his mind.

ONSCREEN

"Message sent."

BACK TO SCENE

Mr Brown looks at his watch. As the hands sweep round to 9:15, the watch morphs into -

INT. 44 WITCH STREET - NIGHT

- George Hatfield's watch as he checks the time. He's dressed in black clothes, has a camera slung over one shoulder, a small rucksack over the other.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

A black garbed figure exits a front door, closes it carefully, turns. It's Jonathon.

He checks that he is alone, then sprints across the road. He crouches in the lee of a hedge fronting the big house.

He looks up at the dark sky as the wind moans eerily.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

The wind swirls leaves across the night sky. Mr Brown looks from them to the key in his hand, purses his lips.

He makes his decision, puts the key into the lock of the school's door, pushes it open and slips inside.

EXT/INT. MRS GARDNER'S HOUSE - SAME

George pushes open the green front door, slips inside. When he closes the door behind him it is almost pitch dark. He hastily fumbles a torch out of his rucksack, turns it on.

With his other hand he stuffs a jemmy into the sack without watching what he's doing. He shines the torch round the hall, up the stairwell, towards an open doorway at the end of the hall.

He's terrified. His breath comes in short gasps.

The torchlight moves in short sideways arcs as he moves forward and places a foot on the first stair.

UPSTAIRS

he moves between rooms. They are all empty. In the front bedroom he pauses to look out the window at the windy night.

He jumps nervously when floorboards creak as he makes his way back to the stairs.

DOWNSTAIRS

he checks out the kitchen, then moves into the front room. A sheeted shape looms.

GEORGE

Aaaarghh!

The torch goes flying. He dives after it. Grabs it. He's on the floor, pressed up against the wall by the window. He aims the torch - it doesn't work. He shakes it and the light beams out to show furniture covered in white sheets.

His hand shakes as he shines the torch round. Sofa, chairs, cupboard, table - all covered with white sheets.

GEORGE

Get a grip.

Through the window, the moon appears from behind rapidly-moving clouds, illuminates the room with a ghostly white radiance.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

Jonathon starts and looks up as moonlight washes over him. He's crouched down by a hole in the hedge. He glances behind at the safety of his own house.

He peers through the hedge, at the forbidding big house.

JONATHON

You gonna stay here all night?

He pushes into the gap. The moonlight vanishes. He gasps, struggles through, finds himself at the edge of a lawn.

He looks left and right - there's no way round it. The lawn has to be crossed.

JONATHON

Okay.

He takes a deep breath, sprints as fast as he can in silence across the lawn. A few metres from the house the lawn gives way to gravelled drive. His feet crunch noisily. He tries to run quietly, to slow down.

He fetches up a scant metre from the house, gasping. He looks this way and that, even upwards where the house seems to stretch forever up into the dark sky.

The moon chooses that moment to reappear.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

The moonlight illuminates the big blackboard in Miss Wigg's classroom. There is no writing on it.

Mr Brown backs away, looks about the black-and-white classroom. He carries a chair to the back, behind the door and close to the light switch. He surveys the room from this vantage point. Sits down.

MR BROWN

Mr Brown fancies Miss Wigg, eh?

The moonlight vanishes as he tries to read his watch. He makes a disgusted noise, draws his coat tighter.

MR BROWN

Come on. Let's be having you.

INT. MRS GARDNER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

George nervously lifts one of the sheets. A cloud of dust flies up. He shines his torch on an old-fashioned armchair.

He considers for a moment, then sits down and tucks the sheet round his legs. He arranges his camera on his lap. After a last look round, he turns off the torch.

His eyes glint in the darkness as he tries to look everywhere at once. He turns the torch back on.

No-one there. He turns the torch off again.

He pants fearfully.

EXT. BIG OLD HOUSE - NIGHT

Jonathon pants fearfully. Almost right in front of him, a light comes on inside the house and a window shoots up.

MRS FULLER

Who's that? Quick now, speak! Or I'm shutting this window right now.

JONATHON

I, er, ulp.

MRS FULLER

Ah, I see you now. Too small,
too small - better and better. A
child, I suppose. Come here,
child. I can't see that well in
the dark.

Jonathon drags forward a few noisy steps in the gravel.

MRS FULLER

What are you doing out there?
Don't you know it's dangerous?
Didn't they tell you at school?

JONATHON

I, er, that is I, er

MRS FULLER

I know you. I've seen you
before, over the road, and I
can't remember your name, but
that's not important, is it?

Mrs Fuller leans out of the window and looks to the left,
then to the right, and whispers:

MRS FULLER

Do you know, child, that Mr
Fuller hasn't been eating his
breakfasts?

She stares at Jonathon with wide, unblinking, slightly
yellow eyes. He stares back as if hypnotised.

MRS FULLER

No, I suppose you wouldn't know.
I said to him this morning, I
said do you want your tea and
toast? but he only shook his
head and said he wasn't hungry.
What do you make of that,
child?. Eh?

Jonathon shakes his head. Mrs Fuller continues to stare at
him. She licks her lips and hisses:

MRS FULLER

Bones!

Jonathon jumps. The gravel crunches beneath his feet.

MRS FULLER

We told the police, oh yes. We found them, you know, down by the woods at the bottom of our garden.

JONATHON

F-found the police?

MRS FULLER

Don't be so stupid, youngling. We found the bones. Not fairies at the bottom of the garden, oh no, not us. That's what I said to Mr Fuller. No, not fairies but bones. A pile here and a pile there looking, you know, as if they'd been chewed. You know

Jonathon shakes his head, and then nods it rapidly.

MRS FULLER

So we told the police, and they told everybody that something must have escaped and to be careful.

JONATHON

C-careful's the word.

MRS FULLER

Yes. But in spite of the warnings, you have to come here, after dark, with the full moon shining. Oh you so-clever youngling! Will you ever learn? Will you ever have the chance to learn?

Jonathon takes a step back, startled by her vehemence. His feet crunch on the gravel.

Her eyes lift to look behind him.

He stops, but a weight still crunches the gravel and a giant shadow covers him.

Mrs Fuller emits a shriek and slams down the window.

Without looking round, Jonathon takes off in a wide loop, first on the gravel, then onto the lawn.

Heavy steps thunder behind him as he flees, and hoarse growling. He fixes his eyes on the hedge and redoubles his speed.

JONATHON

Aaaaaaaaaaaaarrghhhhhhhh.

Something snags at his dark jumper but he leaps forward even faster. The jumper unravels behind him.

Tree branches lash at his face as he reaches the end of the lawn. He takes off in a long flat dive and slides through the small gap in the hedge.

A frustrated HOWL shivers into the night air.

He scrambles out the other side into Witch Street, stumbles to his feet, staggers across the road, clings onto one of the streetlights. Turns apprehensively.

Nothing. Just a long trail of wool stretching across the road from his almost completely destroyed jumper.

His gaze jumps from the hedge to the house, to the trees, back to the hedge. Still nothing. His breathing eases. He rests his forehead against the streetlight, closes his eyes.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr McGregor looks up at the sound of a distant HOWL. He puts his book aside and goes to the window. Rubs at the condensation and looks out.

The Old School glistens in orange streetlight. Two or three white flashes move up its side. Dr McGregor rubs again at the window, is suddenly transfixed as what looks like several sets of yellow eyes turn in his direction.

He jerks the curtains closed.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

The headteacher jumps out of a doze at the sound of the HOWL. He rubs at his eyes, looks quickly round the classroom.

Nobody there.

At a sudden thought, he leans forward and squints at the blackboard at the far end of the room. It's hard to see, but there is no writing.

He leans back, folds his arms around himself in an effort to keep warm. He closes his eyes.

INT. MRS GARDNER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

George's eyes fly open as the HOWL wakens him. He hastily flicks on the torch and shines it round the room.

No-one there. He turns off the torch.

As he settles back, the wind blusters against the window and the house creaks eerily. His eyes glisten in the darkness.

Footsteps outside, on the pavement. George sits bolt upright. The footsteps come closer, pause outside the house. George pants in terror, tries to get his camera ready. His shaking hands almost drop it.

The footsteps start again, move further up the pavement.

George collapses back into the chair.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

Willie Forbes walks briskly past number 44, hat pulled low over his face. His eyes flick left and right, studying the houses on both sides of the street.

He sees one house with an open gate between front and back. He carries on past, then slows down and stops at a bus stop. He pretends to look at the bus timetable but all the time looks up and down the street.

It is deserted. Wind tosses dead leaves into the air, bends tree branches. Willie grabs hold of his hat.

He scurries across the road, flattens himself against the wall of a garden, looks round again.

Still nobody.

He runs stealthily, bent almost double, back to the house with the open gate. Swerves in without hesitation. Out of the streetlight, he straightens to examine his surroundings.

He is in a back garden. A wheelybin stands to one side of the open gate, against the wall of the house. A folded garden stepladder leans against a side wall. Willie steps back so he can get a good look at the back of the house.

A window-light on the ground floor is open. Willie looks at it, then at the step-ladder. He grins.

MOMENTS LATER

he has the ladder positioned under the window. The wind gusts. The wheelybin trembles. Willie clutches at his hat and starts to climb.

He doesn't notice that one of the steps is missing. Half way up, his expectant foot meets thin air and he almost tumbles. He clutches at the sides, bangs against the wall.

WILLE

Aaaaaarghh!

He regains his balance, tensely waits to see if anyone has heard him. Wind moans in the eaves of the house.

INT. JACQUELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jacqueline shifts in her sleep as the wind moans.

Her eyes spring open as something bangs on the wall close to her window. She jumps out of bed, runs across the room, pulls open the curtains, unlatches the window to look out.

A black spidery creature clings to the side of the house. Jacqueline clasps her hands to her chest and emits a small shriek.

JACQUELINE

Save me, oh somebody save me.

The wind howls. The wheelybin runs on tiptoes along the front of the house. Its lid flips open and a long tongue snakes out, plucks the spidershape from the wall, slurps it inside. The lid bangs shut.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

The wheelybin, lid open, is blown along until it crashes against the step-ladder. Willie loses his balance, falls headlong into the bin and into DARKNESS.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A bright sunny day. Blue sky, green grass, yellow sun. Motionless trees cast sharp black shadows.

The girl steps forward, past Harry, into the shadow of the trees. Her hair changes from blonde to chestnut. Her figure fills out. Her young face changes into that of a beautiful woman.

Another step. The shadow deepens. Harry vanishes. The sunlight and trees vanish. The woman moves into a swirl of grey nothingness.

A single thunderclap sounds.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

The door by Mr Brown clicks shut. He doesn't stir.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

A young girl (7) in a white dress stumbles out of mist onto Witch Street. She runs across the road, climbs three steps to an imposing front door with a big brass knocker.

She runs straight through the big door as if it wasn't there and disappears.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

she scampers up the stairs, runs though another closed door into a

BEDROOM

where she already lies asleep, in bed. The scampering girl jumps onto the bed and lies down, becomes one with her sleeping double.

Her eyes open. She jumps out of bed, moves cautiously in the gloom to one corner where she kneels down, fiddles, pulls up a loose piece of floorboard. She reaches inside, brings out an exercise book.

Still on her knees, she smiles straight at the camera.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

Mr Brown's eyes open.

He stares unseeing into the darkness, then blinks and looks round as he remembers where he is. He shifts and stretches but freezes in place.

He is no longer alone.

A dark figure hunches over a desk near the back of the class. Mr Brown's eyes bulge with astonishment and fear. A faint scratching comes from the direction of the figure.

Mr Brown's hand creeps towards the light switch, gropes in the darkness, flips the switch.

Nothing happens. The room remains dark. But the click of the switch sounds tremendously loud in the night.

The dark figure freezes for a moment, then slowly starts to straighten and turn. Mr Brown jumps to his feet. He pants hard. He looks at the figure, to the door, to the figure, back to the door again.

EXT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

MR BROWN (OS)
Aaaaaaaaaaargghhhh!

The school door bangs open. Mr Brown hurtles out, sprints across the car park, runs up the road. His coat and scarf billow out behind him.

INT. MRS GARDNER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

George stirs and mumbles as footsteps speed past. His camera rolls off his lap and clunks onto the floor.

George's eyes open briefly, then close again. He curls up into an even smaller ball in the armchair, and sleeps.

INT. JACQUELINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jacqueline stands at the window. She jumps up and down excitedly as strings of Christmas tree lights, all shining on and off though they aren't plugged in anywhere, drift down from the sky.

The sound of frantic running footsteps grows louder, passes, fades away.

Jacqueline's room brightens.

INT. JACQUELINE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Julia stands in the doorway, silhouetted by the hall light outside. Jacqueline, in bed, half opens her eyes.

JULIA

Jacqueline? Did you hear something?

Jacqueline mumbles sleepily.

Julia frowns, puzzled.

JULIA

Didn't I close the curtains?

She goes to the window, looks outside before drawing the curtains. Her eyes widen. She screams.

EXT. BACK GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

JACK JONES (31) advances on the wheelybin carefully, torch in one hand and golf club in the other. Julia watches from the safety of the back garden gate.

Willie Forbes' legs protrude from the wheelybin. The garden steps lie on their side not far away.

Jack glances from the steps to Jacqueline's open window-light.

JACK

Why, you -

JULIA

Careful, dear.

Jack reaches the wheelybin, cautiously lifts the lid, uses the torch to peer inside. His tense body relaxes.

JACK

He's out cold.

JULIA

I'll call the police.

Jonathon appears as Julia goes back inside. His hair sticks out every which way and he looks extremely tired.

JONATHON

What's going on?

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dr McGregor lies on his bed, books scattered round, asleep.

He opens his eyes at the sound of stealthy scratching. He does not move, but his gaze travels to the big mirror opposite his bed. Some Christmas cards are arranged on the shelf in front of the mirror.

In it, he can see a short hall and his front door. The key in the door rotates slowly.

Dr McGregor strains to move, to get up from his bed but succeeds only in twitching his fingers. His terrified eyes are glued to the mirror.

The key has almost completely rotated.

Flashes of blue-white light suddenly bathe the inside of the flat as a police car roars past outside. The key abruptly clicks back into place.

Dr McGregor finds he can move again. He leaps up, rushes to the door, grabs the key from the lock. He sags back against the wall as if he has just made the most tremendous effort.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

The sun rises, casts oblique bright rays along one side of the street.

INT. MRS GARDNER'S HOUSE - DAY

George stirs as sunlight spears through the window. He sits up, stretches, looks round the room. He rubs at his thick stubble, spots the camera on the floor. He picks it up and stuffs it, together with his torch, into his rucksack.

MOMENTS LATER

he cracks open the front door, waits for cyclist to pedal out of sight, then sneaks out quickly.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

George rubs at his eyes, sets off in one direction, then stops. He glances at his watch, turns, sets off purposefully the other way, towards Bradley's Stores.

The windows of the shop have been spray-decorated with fake snow.

INT. BRADLEY'S STORES - DAY

Mrs Bradley looks up as the door jangles open to admit George. She raises her eyebrows at his dishevelled state.

MRS BRADLEY

Good morning, Mr um

GEORGE

Hatfield. George.

MRS BRADLEY

Have you joined the army?

GEORGE

What? Oh, this. No, no - I, er, just carried out an experiment. Pint of milk, please.

Mrs Bradley turns to the glass-fronted refrigerator and extracts a carton of milk.

MRS BRADLEY

Oh? It wouldn't have anything to do with Mrs Gardner, would it?

GEORGE

What? Small cut loaf, please.

Mrs Bradley produces a small loaf of bread.

MRS BRADLEY

Your experiment.

GEORGE

I, um. I just checked it out, you know. Nothing happened.

MRS BRADLEY

You stayed there overnight?

GEORGE

Snug as a bug in a rug. Curled up in an armchair and slept the night away. Nothing happened.

MRS BRADLEY

Well. Will there be anything else?

GEORGE

No thanks. Well? What do you mean, well?

MRS BRADLEY

Seventy three pence, please.

GEORGE

Well?

He hands over some coins. Mrs Bradley rings up the sale and returns a few pence change.

MRS BRADLEY
You curled up in her armchair,
did you say?

GEORGE
Yes?

MRS BRADLEY
Then something did happen. You
see, there's no furniture in Mrs
Gardner's house. It was all
taken out weeks ago.

George clutches at the counter.

GEORGE
But -

MRS BRADLEY
Check if you like. There's
nothing in there. I don't know
how you did it, but you slept in
furniture that isn't there.

George's eyes roll up. He collapses to the floor in a dead faint.

MRS BRADLEY
For goodness sake.

The door opens again, to admit two policemen. One has a mass of black hair, the other a ginger beard.

BLACK HAired POLICEMAN
Morning, Mary. Did you know
there's a man on the floor?

MRS BRADLEY
He'll be fine. He just moved in
recently.

Both policemen nod understandingly.

BLACK-HAIRED POLICEMAN

We arrested Willie again last night. He knocked himself out trying to break in.

He turns to his colleague.

BLACK-HAIRED POLICEMAN

Did you hear that? He knocked himself out, trying to break in.

MRS BRADLEY

For goodness sake.

GINGER POLICEMAN

He shoulda known better.

George stirs, opens his eyes groggily, tries to focus on the blurred outlines of the policeman.

MRS BRADLEY

You mean, in Witch Street? The idiot. What happened?

George struggles to a sitting position.

BLACK-HAIRED POLICEMAN

The wheelybin got him, torch and all.

Both policemen smack their lips. George's eyes roll up again and he slumps back full-length on the floor.

EXT. WASTELAND OUTSIDE OLD SCHOOL - DAY

A brightly-coloured crisp packet caught up in thistles. A foot crunches down by the side of it.

DR MCGEGOR

looks from the packet to the Old School, which looks plain and unremarkable in the morning sunlight.

Dr McGregor kicks at the crisp packet. It flies away a few yards before more thistles snatch it out of the air.

Dr McGregor returns his attention to the Old School. He paces forward slowly, face grim.

He turns round, regards the block of flats behind. He squints at the top window, sizes up the angle of view. Satisfied, he approaches the Old School.

Within a few metres, he stops again to survey the decrepit building. Door and windows are boarded up. Graffiti adorn the walls. Brick rubble clutters the base of the building.

He cranes his neck and looks higher, where more windows are boarded up. Suddenly his gaze stops, transfixed. Blood drains from his face.

At one high window, the boards have been burst open from the inside, to leave a dark, gaping hole.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

A big old car draws up outside Dr McGregor's block of flats. The driver toots, leans sideways to look through the passenger window. It is Mr Brown.

The entrance door to the flat opens. A bag of golf clubs appears, followed by Dr McGregor. He opens the boot of the car, puts his clubs on top of the bag already there, then slides into the passenger seat.

The car moves off.

MR BROWN

Cold today.

DR MCGREGOR

Aye.

MR BROWN

Clear though.

DR MCGREGOR

Aye.

MR BROWN

Might snow later.

DR MCGREGOR

Wouldnae surprise me.

Mr Brown steers carefully past a big removal lorry going in the other direction.

MR BROWN

So, you reckon you're going mad.
Why's that?

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Julia wheels Jacqueline out of the garden gate. Their breathing mists in the cold air. Julia stops just by the wheelybin with police DO NOT TOUCH ribbons tied round it.

JULIA

Oh, just a minute, dear, I
forgot my list.

Jacqueline is left alone close by the wheelybin. She has a bag of sweets in her lap. The wheelybin shivers.

Jacqueline rolls her eyes at it and mumbles.

The wheelybin shivers again.

Jacqueline rolls her head in a circle to check she is alone. She grabs at the wheelybin's lid, jerks it up a few inches, fumbles a sweet inside, and drops the lid back down.

The tip of a long tongue wipes round the outside edge of the bin. The wheelybin swells, contracts, and belches. The air mists around its base.

JACQUELINE

Ewwwww.

She rolls her head away. A big removal lorry drives slowly past the house, stops, then backs carefully into the driveway of the Fuller's house opposite.

Julia returns, wheels Jacqueline towards the pavement.

JULIA

Are you warm enough, dear? The
radio says it's going to snow.

Jacqueline mumbles. Her arms flap in the direction of the Fuller's house.

JULIA

Moving? So they are. Have you
got your gloves on?

Jacqueline shoves her gloved hands up in the air. The wheelybin that looks as if it has two eyes winks at her.

She laughs happily.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Mr Brown drives. He and Dr McGregor watch the ball, barely head height, shoot forward about a hundred yards.

DR MCGREGOR
Straight enough.

Mr Brown doesn't respond. He bends to pick up his tee.

Dr McGregor places his own tee and ball, takes up his stance, swings. They watch the ball carve up into the air in a big slice and plunge into a distant bunker.

MR BROWN
Good distance.

They both replace their clubs in their bags and set off up the fairway. Both seem lost in their own thoughts.

INT. JONATHON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jonathon wakes, disturbed by what sounds like deep growls. He jumps up, pulls open his curtains.

OUTSIDE

the removal lorry adjusts its position in the Fuller's driveway. It comes to a halt. The driver alights from the cab. An assistant jumps down on the passenger side.

Mrs Fuller comes out of the house. Before she reaches the two men, she looks up at Jonathon. He retreats behind the window frame, but continues to watch.

A big white estate car drives past.

Mrs Fuller points to the side of the house. Both men disappear in the direction she indicates.

Mrs Fuller glances one more time up at Jonathon's window before she returns into the house.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Mr Brown hits a carbon copy of his first shot, shoulders his bag and the two men continue up the fairway.

Mr Brown ticks off points on his gloved fingers.

MR BROWN

Five children have an odd illness. Only five, all local. You've referred them to hospital. You get bad dreams. Something funny about the Old School. That it?

Dr McGregor hesitates.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah'm going tae retire. January fifth.

MR BROWN

Fifth of January? A recent decision, Mac? Connected to recent events?

DR MCGREGOR

Aye.

They reach the bunker. Dr McGregor carefully takes up his stance, waggles the club a few times, swings. An enormous cloud of sand temporarily obscures the view.

When it clears, his ball is still in the bunker.

Without speaking, he advances a few inches, repeats the shot. This time the ball flies almost straight up, comes to a rest within a couple of feet of Mr Brown's.

Impassive, Dr McGregor wipes his clubface, replaces it, shoulders his bag. The men continue up the fairway.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah notice ye havenae called me daft.

They reach their golf balls. Mr Brown looks ahead, towards the green, but the inward expression on his face indicates that he sees something else altogether.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

The big white estate car pulls up outside the O'Hanlon's house. Pat jumps out as Maeve, Seamus and a barking Gus pile out the front door.

He strikes a pose, arm on top of the car. Maeve laughs and claps her hands.

SEAMUS

Let me see.

He runs out the gate, peers at the front of the car. Its number plate reads SH04 GUS.

Gus barks excitedly, jumps up at Seamus when he pretends to pat the car.

SEAMUS

Hello, Gus. Welcome home.

Maeve shivers, wraps her arms round herself. She looks up at the sky, which is growing cloudy.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Dr McGregor misses a putt. He marks his ball, watches as Mr Brown misses one. They each miss another putt.

MR BROWN

Give you that.

DR MCGREGOR

Aye, and you.

They both pick up their balls, move away from the green. They both take scorecards from their back pockets.

MR BROWN

Four, give or take.

DR MCGREGOR

The same.

MR BROWN

A half, then.

DR MCGREGOR

Aye.

They pocket the scorecards, shoulder their bags, move off to the next tee.

DR MCGREGOR

So this teacher's findin'
messages on her board, and ye're
dreamin' your oan story, and
getting' emails fae some far-off
lassie? That's it?

Mr Brown hesitates.

MR BROWN

Yes.

Dr McGregor grunts. He watches as Mr Brown lines up his shot, swings and connects. The ball shoots off the usual hundred yards.

DR MCGREGOR

Consistent.

He takes his place, waggles his club, swings. The ball carves off to the right again, disappears into trees. They continue to watch. After a few seconds, the ball reappears almost as if somebody threw it.

They pick up their bags and set off up the fairway.

MR BROWN

There is something else. I went
back. To the school. At night.

He shifts his clubs from one shoulder to the other.

MR BROWN

I had a dream. I don't remember
exactly. I woke up. There was
someone there. But I ran away,
Mac. I ran away.

They reach his ball. He selects a club, swishes angrily. The ball sails into the air and lands on the green.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah'm no surprised.

MR BROWN

I've never done that. Ever. Must be two hundred yards if it's an inch.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah meant the runnin' away. I didnae tell ye everythin', either. Last night, somethin' tried tae get in. A polis car scared it off.

MR BROWN

It was probably just O'Hanlon or someone.

DR MCGREGOR

Whit, tryin' tae get in ma flat?

MR BROWN

In the classroom. Picking up where Wilson left off. But it was dark, Mac. It was so dark.

DR MCGREGOR

I couldnae move. Somethin' had hold on ma mind. Ye still laughin' at me?

They reach Dr McGregor's ball. Mr Brown looks at the tree where it originally landed.

MR BROWN

I don't know. That was a damned lucky shot, you know that?

DR MCGREGOR

Niver crossed ma mind.

MR BROWN

Let's finish this round. No more talk.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

The O'Hanlon family, all dressed up to go out for a walk, stand round the new estate car.

PAT
In, Gus. In!

Gus whines, backs away from the car.

SEAMUS
What's the matter with him, dad?

PAT
How should I know? Stupid dog.
Come on, get in. Get. In.

Maeve puts a hand on Seamus's shoulder, gives him a warning glance.

Pat grabs Gus's collar, tries to drag him to the car. Gus resists. Pat loses patience, picks him up and throws him in.

Gus gives a dreadful whining howl, clammers over into the back seat, sits there and shivers.

PAT
Fine. Whatever.

He slams the tailgate door down.

A few flakes of snow drift down, land on the back window. Pat sees them. He spreads his arms, turns his face up to the lowering sky.

PAT
Aaaaaaarghhh!

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mr Brown bangs into the house with his clubs, stuffs them into a cupboard, makes a beeline for the PC. Turns it on, waits impatiently for it to fire up.

A number of Christmas cards adorn a shelf above the PC.

MOMENTS LATER

he scans his Inbox, finds he has a new message.

INSERT ONSCREEN

From: rosie@worldonline.nz
To: spook@globenet.co.uk
Sent: 13th December
Subject: Re: PS
I think Harry and the girl
should link arms and walk along
under the summer sun. How about
this?

BACK TO SCENE

MR BROWN

She recognised him straight
away, of course - one of the
trio of laughing, shouting young
men who had almost run her over
a few days ago. That was why
she left the path and headed
over towards him - she was going
to give him a piece of her mind!

Mr Brown sits slowly. His lips move as he reads. When he
gets to the end, he stares at the screen for a moment, then
starts to type furiously.

Onscreen in front of him, a picture of Harry and the girl
appears. They link arms. The girl laughs. Harry looks
happy. They walk towards the shadow of the trees.

Mr Brown's typing slows.

Harry and the girl reach the trees. As they move into the
shade, the girl changes, becomes a beautiful woman. Harry
disappears.

Mr Brown's typing stops.

The beautiful woman looks back once as she disappears into
swirling greyness.

A very young girl in a white dress stumbles out of the greyness, runs up the steps of Mr Brown's house, through the closed front door.

The picture onscreen fades into normal wordprocessor view.

Mr Brown suddenly looks up to the ceiling.

UPSTAIRS

he hesitates outside his bedroom, opens the door.

IN THE BEDROOM

he goes to the corner of the room, kneels, knocks and prods at the floorboards. One of them moves.

He stares at it, swallows nervously. He pries it up and looks at the dark, narrow hole underneath. Puts his hand in before he can change his mind and rummages about. Stops. His eyes widen.

He withdraws an old, dusty exercise book.

MR BROWN

No.

He blows and shakes off the dust. Printed on the front, in childlike capitals: THE OLD MAN.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S FLAT - DAY

Dr McGregor hammers a nail to fix his bedroom window shut. Then another. Stands back to survey his handiwork.

His gaze lifts from the windowframe to the view outside. He rubs at condensation on the window. Outside, swirling snowflakes almost obscure the Old School.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

George Hatfield, muffled up against the weather, approaches Bradley's Stores. He hesitates at the door, which displays a CLOSED sign.

He raises a gloved hand and bangs on the door.

He flaps his arms and stamps his feet to keep warm as he waits. The snow has eased, but low clouds turn the evening dark and gloomy.

The door opens. Mrs Bradley, her hair down, looks much younger. She and George look at each other.

MRS BRADLEY

I'm closed. I'm going home.

GEORGE

I chatted with the police when they dropped me off. They told me about your brother. Willie.

MRS BRADLEY

Oh yes? What else did they tell you?

GEORGE

They told me your husband left ten years ago. They told me you run this shop on your own.

MRS BRADLEY

Did they indeed, Mr um?

He looks at her steadily.

MRS BRADLEY

George.

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr Brown sits in his lounge, exercise book on his lap. He turns the front page.

IN THE EXERCISE BOOK

A childlike drawing of a man with his hair awry.

BACK TO SCENE

Mr Brown rubs at the top of his head, then lowers his hand and looks at it wonderingly.

IN THE EXERCISE BOOK

Another page. A picture of a man coming through the wall.
Another page. A picture of a man holding a book.

MR BROWN (OS)
I am not frightened. He is kind.

Another page. A picture of a Christmas tree with one parcel at its foot.

MR BROWN (OS)
Daddy is sad at Christmas.

Another page. A girl sits on the edge of the bed, a speech bubble coming from her mouth.

MR BROWN (OS)
Daddy says we are going away.

Another page. A man's face, hair awry, looks out of the window by the big front door. The steps and big brass door knocker are prominent.

Another page. A small picture of a house. Words scrawled underneath.

MR BROWN (OS)
He is always there.

BACK TO SCENE

Mr Brown closes the exercise book.

MR BROWN
It isn't possible.

He jumps up, crosses to his PC, hurriedly types.

ONSCREEN

From: spook@globenet.co.uk
To: rosie@worldonline.nz
Sent: 20th December
Subject: Re: re: PS
The old man is always there.
Rosie, can I ring you?

BACK TO SCENE

Mr Brown hits the SEND key. Laughs shakily.

MR BROWN
Now who's going mad?

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

The orange streetlights gleam against a grey sky. Mr Brown and Dr McGregor breathe out clouds of cold air.

MR BROWN
Snow at Christmas?

DR MCGREGOR
Could be.

A white estate car toots as it roars past. Mr Brown waves.

MR BROWN
Nailed up your windows, eh?

DR MCGREGOR
Aye.

They pass Bradley's stores. Mrs Bradley, in the process of opening up, turns, waves cheerfully at them.

MRS BRADLEY
Good morning!

Both men wave back.

MR BROWN
She's cheerful today.

DR MCGREGOR
Flirtin' with a lass on the internet, are ye?

MR BROWN
I didn't say that.

Dr McGregor angles towards the surgery.

DR MCGREGOR
Ah'll see ye in the asylum.

MOMENTS LATER

Mr Brown approaches the school entrance. Miss Wigg waits for him anxiously.

MR BROWN
Good morning, Miss W.

All the streetlights go out.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

Mr Brown and Miss Wigg stand in the classroom entrance. Christmas decorations hang from ceilings and walls, but they stare at the blackboard, where someone has used green chalk to scrawl unreadable nonsense.

MISS WIGG
Did you stay behind on Friday,
headteacher?

MR BROWN
I, yes, I did.

MISS WIGG
But I take it you did not
apprehend the culprit?

MR BROWN
No, I, they must have come after
I went home.

Mr Brown does not look at Miss Wigg.

MISS WIGG
I see. Of course, this could
have been done over the weekend.

MR BROWN
Yes. Of course.

Miss Wigg advances into the classroom, seizes the blackboard rubber, and starts to erase the scrawl. She pauses.

MISS WIGG
I'm sorry, headteacher. But I
don't think this actually means
anything, do you?

MR BROWN

No, Miss W. Go ahead. By all means.

INT. MR BROWN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr Brown tries to concentrate on some papers, sighs, puts down pen and gazes out the window. A small Christmas tree perches on the sill.

He clicks his intercom.

MR BROWN

Miss H, pop in, will you?

He rubs the top of his head. The door opens. Miss Henderson trips in - hair loose, red lipstick, no glasses and now a short red skirt and high heels.

MR BROWN

Ah, Miss H, I - have you done your hair? Or something?

MISS HENDERSON

Yes, headteacher.

MR BROWN

I thought so. Very nice. I'm not feeling well, Miss H. I'm going to pop home. Tell Mr G, will you?

Mr Brown gives Miss Henderson another puzzled look, shakes his head.

MR BROWN

Yes. Very nice.

He picks up his coat, hurries out. Miss Henderson's shoulders slump.

Mr Brown pops his head back round the doorframe.

MR BROWN

Oh, and get someone in to repair Miss Wigg's lightswitch, will you?

He disappears again. Miss Henderson scowls.

MISS HENDERSON
One electrified light switch
coming up.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Mr Brown buttons up his coat as he walks quickly out of the car park onto the street.

Pat O'Hanlon pulls up in his white estate.

PAT
Want a lift?

Mr Brown nods, slides into the passenger seat. He has to fend off the tip of a Christmas tree as he does so.

MR BROWN
Thanks. Not feeling so good.
Day off?

PAT
Yes. Got to check out the car.

MR BROWN
Seems to be running okay.

PAT
Oh, it's running okay. But I
got to check it out.

Mr Brown looks puzzled.

MOMENTS LATER

Mr Brown climbs out of the car, bangs on the roof. The puzzled expression remains on his face as the car roars off.

INT. MR BROWN' HOUSE - DAY

Mr Brown closes the door behind him. He goes straight to the PC in the lounge, turns it on, shrugs off his coat while it fires up.

He checks the email inbox. No messages.

He sits down and runs his fingers through his hair.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Pat O'Hanlon pulls up outside a house with a sparse, pebbled front garden. The number on the gate: "83". He sits for a moment staring at the house, then thrusts open the car door and gets out.

EXT./INT. 83 WITCH STREET - DAY

The door opens before he can deliver a knock.

The owner of the house is MR ZHANG, a small, sad-eyed Chinese man.

PAT

Mr Zhang?

ZHANG

You have come about car.

Pat raises his eyebrows, surprised.

ZHANG

I have frontal window. Out of it I see my old white car. Is not difficult. Please come in.

Inside, lots of photographs line a long, narrow hall. No Christmas decorations. In the distance, light spills into the hall from an open door.

Pat raises his eyebrows again, this time at the strange geometry of the house. He walks ahead of Zhang, looks curiously at the photographs.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPHS

A black-and-white collie in mid-jump over a stream. The same dog with its nose buried in a bowl full of food. A beach, with the dog silhouetted far off against white-topped waves. A younger Zhang wrestles with the dog on a bed.

ZHANG (OS)

Shu. For fifteen years, we lived this house, but she passed on. You like the pictures?

PAT (OS)

Very much. There's the beach where we take Gus.

BACK TO SCENE

ZHANG

Gus?

PAT

Our dog. His name's short for disgusting.

ZHANG

Ah, a joke. But so is Shu. I used to go to the end of garden and shout loudly Shu! Shu! and neighbours thought -

PAT

- you were chasing something away.

Pat laughs.

They reach the open door and pass inside.

ZHANG

She was good dog. Always stay when told. Always come when told. Never jumped to person. Please sit. I will make tea.

LATER

They sit in armchairs, cradling small cups with no handles.

ZHANG

Cold inside of car?

PAT

All the time. Not the heating. Just cold.

ZHANG

I do not have this trouble. I sold it to the garage man. I thought he was going to use it. He sold it to you?

PAT

He sold it to me.

ZHANG

Used to take Shu to the beach, to the woods. But, no more Shu, no more use for car. So I sell it.

Mr Shu takes a sip of tea. His eyes never leave Pat.

The back window catches Pat's eye: snow swirls outside.

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mr Brown stands at the window He cradles a cup of coffee in his hands, looks out at the swirling snow.

His computer sounds a note. He turns, quickly returns to the desk and PC.

ONSCREEN

From: rosie@worldonline.nz
 To: spook@globenet.co.uk
 Sent: 21st December
 Subject: Re: PS
 It's nice to think of them walking under the summer's sun, isn't it? You will have to give her a name. How about Rose?
 I'm sorry, Jim, I am not near a phone at the moment. Perhaps some time in the future.

BACK TO SCENE

MR BROWN

Not near a phone at the moment? That doesn't make sense. You sent emails, didn't you?

He reaches out for the phone.

INT. 83 WITCH STREET - DAY

Pat follows Mr Zhang back up the hallway towards the front door. He glances at the photographs, stops in mid-stride, frozen with shock.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPHS

Shu, landing after a jump over a stream, front paws sending up small sprays of mud and water. Shu licking round an empty bowl. The beach, with Shu jumping up close to the camera, white-topped waves far behind.

Pat tugs his coat collar tight round his neck and shivers. Mr Zhang opens the front door to a swirl of snow.

ZHANG

Winter, neh?

PAT

Yes - yes. Thank you.

With a last disbelieving glance at the photographs, he steps outside, turns to say goodbye but finds Mr Zhang has already shut the front door.

He dashes into the snow, towards his estate car.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Pat rubs furiously at his windscreen, turns carefully into his drive. Pulls up, yanks on the handbrake, sits back with a sigh.

He gets out, rings the front door bell, goes back to the car and opens the tailgate door. Starts to manhandle the Christmas tree out of the car.

The front door opens. Seamus runs out, helps Pat with the tree. Gus barks excitedly. Maeve comes to the front door.

MAEVE

Pat! Phone!

Pat and Seamus get the tree through the front door, prop it up against the wall. Decorations hang from the ceiling.

PAT
Get the boot, Seamus.

Seamus runs back outside to the car. Gus follows. Pat picks up the phone in the hallway.

PAT
Hello?

MR BROWN (VO)
It's Jim Brown, Mr oh H.
Looking for a favour.

INTERCUT

Pat sits on a phone stool, Mr Brown at his desk at home.

MR BROWN
This house. Who was here before me?

PAT
Your house?

MR BROWN
Yes. Number one two one.

PAT
Research, eh?

MR BROWN
Yes.

PAT
I expect I can find out.

MR BROWN
Twenty five years ago?

PAT
Ah, a bit before my time. But I'll check it out.

MR BROWN

Thanks. I'll be back in school tomorrow. You can get me at the office.

With a distracted air, Mr Brown hangs up.

END INTERCUT

PAT

Remember to write yourself a note, eh?

But the phone has gone dead.

Seamus chases Gus back in. Maeve closes the door behind them.

Pat raises his eyebrows at the receiver, replaces it thoughtfully.

SEAMUS

You could of got a better one, dad.

PAT

What?

Seamus indicates the base of the Christmas tree, which is shredded and torn, as if it has been chewed.

Gus sniffs at the damage and growls.

INT. PAT O'HANLON'S HOUSE - LATER

Seamus and Maeve put finishing touches to the Christmas tree. Pat looks out of the window. The snow has stopped. A thin covering conceals the ground.

PAT

I'll take Gus out.

MAEVE

Seamus, go and -

PAT

No, I'll go on my own. Come on, Gus.

He sweeps out into the hall. Gus follows.

INT. WHITE ESTATE CAR - DAY

Pat eases the car out of his driveway, rubs at condensation on the windscreen. Gus, seatbelt across his chest, sits in the passenger seat.

As they pass the Jones' house, Jonathon runs down the path leaving a set of footprints. He waves, but Pat doesn't notice.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

The white estate pulls up in late afternoon sunlight. Pat exits the driver's side, goes to the passenger side, opens the door and releases Gus.

Gus runs away up the beach. His pawprints remain in the wet sand. A flock of seagulls scatters upwards from his path.

Pat walks to the back of the car, looks round. He is alone. He raises the tailgate door.

ZHANG (VO)

Always stay when told. Always
come when told.

Pat checks again that he is unobserved.

PAT

Come on, Shu. Good dog. It's
time for you to go.

For a moment nothing happens. Then the car rocks slightly. The wind gusts. Another set of pawprints, faint but clear, appears beside Gus's. They too extend out onto the beach and more seagulls whirl into the air.

Pat rubs at his nose, sniffs. His eyes glisten with tears.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

The orange streetlights shine as the estate, headlights on, noses into the street.

Pat rubs at condensation on the windscreen.

Gus sits in the boot.

The car passes the empty Fuller's house. Jonathon walks along the pavement, Bradley's plastic bag full of shopping. This time Pat sees him, and toots.

Jonathon waves.

The car moves on up the street.

EXT./INT. JONATHON JONES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Jonathon hops and skips in his own footprints, to the front door. He goes in, where the hallway is festooned with decorations. He finds a Christmas card stuffed through the letter box. There is no writing on the envelope.

He opens it.

INSERT - THE CHRISTMAS CARD

An old-fashioned Christmas scene - a snow-covered church. Inside the card is a smudged, illegible green scrawl.

BACK TO SCENE

Jonathon suddenly looks at the footprints outside - there are none except his own - and at the letterbox. He scratches his head, puzzled.

JULIA (OS)

That you, Jonathon?

JONATHON

(to himself)

No, it's the bogeyman.

The wind gusts as he closes the front door.

LATER

Jonathon drapes red tinsel round their Christmas tree. As he picks up the first of a pile of blue tinsel, the door quietly opens and closes behind him.

JONATHON

You want to put some up?

He turns, holding out the blue tinsel. There's nobody there. Puzzled, he goes to the door, opens it and looks outside. Nobody there either. He closes the door, shrugs.

When he turns back to the tree, a blue piece of tinsel hangs awkwardly from the lower branches.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

The wind howls, whips up snow into miniature snowstorms. The streetlights paint the snow orange.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S FLAT - NIGHT

Dr McGregor sleeps at his desk, head on his arms. His eyes flick open at a scratching from the window. For a moment he doesn't move, then he sits up slowly, turns to the window.

The curtains jerk open. White faces blur on the other side of the condensation-covered window. The scratching redoubles. The windowframe shivers, strains against the nails. One nail starts to ease up out of the woodwork.

Dr McGregor suddenly loses his temper. He fumbles under the desk, comes up with a big flashlight, aims it at the window, clicks it on.

DR MCGREGOR

Take that, ye heathenish cratur!

The window lights up in a brilliant flash as the water catches and magnifies the flashlight beam. White faces and bodies disappear in a blur of movement.

Dr McGregor stands up, forces himself to walk to the window, keeps the flashlight trained on it. As he gets closer, the beam shines out into the night, illuminates falling snow. For a moment he looks out into the night. The Old School isn't visible beyond the snow storm.

He drags the curtains closed again, staggers back, slumps into his chair.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

Mr Brown, huddled on the seat at the back of the class, opens his eyes. A shape bulks in moonlight by the blackboard. Mr Brown reaches out, clicks on the light.

Scrawled on the blackboard: ROSIE

The shape, in tattered track suit, starts to turn. It's unmistakably Billy Wilson. Mr Brown's eyes bulge. He opens his mouth to scream when abruptly he WAKES.

He is huddled on the seat at the back of the class. There is no moonlight, only a faint orange glow from streetlights. The wind moans eerily. A shape bends over one of the desks near the back of the class, just as on Mr Brown's earlier late night expedition.

Mr Brown reaches out and carefully clicks on the light.

The blackboard is empty. The figure gives a shout of fright, jumps up and turns. It is Seamus O'Hanlon.

Mr Brown also jumps up, stalks angrily into the gangway between desks.

MR BROWN

Got you. What do you think you are doing, O'Hanlon? What?

Mr Brown reaches Seamus. Seamus backs up nervously.

MR BROWN

Well, what? Why even an idiotic boy like you would scribble and write messages on the board is - what?

SEAMUS

But sir! Sir!

MR BROWN

Come on. What have you got to say?

SEAMUS

I didn't -

MR BROWN

Yes you did. On the blackboard.

SEAMUS

Yes. No. I mean -

MR BROWN

What? Come on, O'Hanlon.

SEAMUS

I was going to write a message.
But I didn't do any scribble. I
never did any scribble!

MR BROWN

(shouts)

Well then, who did? Are you
trying to tell me there are two
silly boys? Two silly boys
writing messages?

He pauses for breath, stares angrily at Seamus. A faint
sound of limping footsteps. Fades.

SEAMUS

What was that?

MR BROWN

What was what, boy?

SEAMUS

I thought I heard footsteps.

Mr Brown straightens to listen.

MR BROWN

There's nothing. Don't try to
distract me. I'm going to write
to your -

SEAMUS

There it is again.

MR BROWN

There's what again? You listen
to me, not to anything else. Do
you understand? I'm going to -

Seamus holds up his hand. The footsteps sound quietly again, grow louder.

SEAMUS
Sir, there they -

Mr Brown looks at the door, then back at Seamus.

MR BROWN
If this is one of your tricks.

SEAMUS
It's not me, sir! It's not me!

The footsteps grow louder. Seamus pants desperately.

SEAMUS
It's not me!

Abruptly, Mr Brown grabs Seamus by the arm, drags him to the door. They pause for a moment, look at each other, then Mr Brown pushes it open and they make a run for it.

EXT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

Snow covers the school, partly obscures the streetlights, though it has stopped falling.

MR BROWN (OS)	SEAMUS (OS)
Aaaaaaaaaaarghhhhh!	Aaaaaaaaaaarghhhhh!

The school door bursts open. Mr Brown and Seamus hurtle out, slip and slide to a halt in the car park. Both gasp and pant.

MR BROWN
Okay. Okay. We're out.

SEAMUS
Yes. Sir.

MR BROWN
You. Go home.

SEAMUS
Yes. Sir.

Seamus turns to go.

MR BROWN

Oh. Where. You get in?

SEAMUS

Kitchen. Broken window.

Mr Brown nods. He bends over, hands on knees, draws great gasps of air.

Seamus wipes the back of his hand across his mouth, casts a terrified look at the school, and runs away.

Mr Brown straightens. It becomes evident that his gasps are those of suppressed laughter.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL - NIGHT

Mr Brown returns to the bright classroom. He reaches under the chair at the back of the class, pulls out a tape recorder. It whirrs quietly. He clicks it off.

MR BROWN

Witch Street stories.

He clicks off the light. His hand, painted in streetlight orange, reaches for the door handle.

A faint sound of dragging footsteps.

Mr Brown freezes, listens intently. He checks the tape recorder. It is definitely off. The sound of the footsteps swells into a clump-scrape pattern, then fades away.

Silence.

Mr Brown opens the door, walks extremely briskly up the corridor and

OUT OF THE SCHOOL

into the snow. As he locks the door his eyes search the dark corridor inside and his fingers tremble.

EXT. WITCH STREET - NIGHT

Mr Brown hurries home.

MR BROWN

I imagined it.

As he passes Bradley's Stores, something small runs out at him. He jumps in fright, almost slips over.

MR BROWN

Aaaarghh!

It is a cat. It miaows loudly as it rubs against his legs.

MR BROWN

Well, well. Mrs B will be pleased. Come on.

He picks the cat up, hurries on up the street.

The street behind him lies still and silent.

The dark night slowly changes to a dull grey morning.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S FLAT - DAY

Dr McGregor, fully dressed, struggles up off the bed, goes to the window, hesitates, pulls open the curtains. Outside, lying snow tries to brighten the gloomy morning.

Dr McGregor peers at the dark shape of the Old School, rubs absently at condensation on the window.

It doesn't rub off.

Dr McGregor tries again, but there is no doubt about it. The condensation lies on the other side of the glass.

INT. SEAMUS O'HANLON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Seamus stirs as his bedroom door opens.

MAEVE

Come on, come on, the angels are calling you.

Seamus rises up on one elbow, struggles to open his eyes, fails, collapses back into bed. Gus doesn't even bother to lift his head.

MAEVE

The early bird catches the worm.

Seamus groans.

INT. JONATHON JONES' BEDROOM - DAY

Jonathon groans, sits up, stretches. His eyes suddenly focus in shock.

The smudged-green-writing Christmas card sits neatly on his bedside table.

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mr Brown slumps gloomily in front of his PC.

ONSCREEN

"No new messages"

BACK TO SCENE

Sugarplum jumps up onto his lap. Purrs.

MR BROWN

I don't know what you're so happy about.

EXT. WITCH STREET - DAY

Dr McGregor and Mr Brown crunch through the early morning snow. Mr Brown carries Sugarplum under one arm.

DR MCGREGOR

Last day?

MR BROWN

Yes.

He kicks at the snow.

MR BROWN

Bookmakers will be getting worried. You look tired.

DR MCGREGOR

So dae you.

MR BROWN

Stayed back at the school again.
It was O'Hanlon.

Dr McGregor grunts.

MR BROWN

Same nightmare?

DR MCGREGOR

Somethin' at the window. I
scared it off wi' a light.

MR BROWN

Really?

The two men walk in silence for a moment.

DR MCGREGOR

I notice ye havenae been callin'
me daft.

Pat O'Hanlon drives past in his estate, toots. Dr Brown
glares after him.

MR BROWN

(shouts)

I'll be calling you later!

They reach Bradley's Stores. Mr Brown lets Sugarplum down
at the doorstep.

MR BROWN

Not like Mrs B to be late.

DR MCGREGOR

That's Sugarplum? Ah wondered.

Mr Brown straightens, glares at him.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah didnae like tae ask.

He turns, waves a hand as he slips and slides towards the surgery. Mr Brown glances at his watch, strides carefully up the street.

INT./EXT. JONES' HOUSE - DAY

Jonathon, dressed ready for school, carefully places the Christmas card on a shelf in the hall. Julia comes out, wiping her hands on her apron. Jacqueline, in her wheelchair, awkwardly follows. She has a bag of sweets on her lap.

JULIA

It says on the radio it's going
to snow some more today.

Jacqueline mumbles. She smiles, fingers clutching the sweets. Jonathon stares.

JONATHON

But I didn't -

JULIA

Go along with you. You're a
good boy.

She reaches out to tousle his hair, but he evades her and slips out the front door.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr McGregor presses the telephone receiver to one ear.

DR MCGREGORE

Aye. Ye confirm that? All
five?

He doodles on a prescription pad with his free hand.

DR MCGREGOR

Ye'll notice Ah requested
overnight observation. Aye, all
five. Ye confirm that?

He glances out of the window, sees Mrs Bradley and George Hatfield stroll past, arm in arm.

DR MCGREGOR

January fourth, aye. Guid.
Thank ye verra much.

He puts the receiver down, stares absently at his doodle. It shows a motley collection of badly-drawn faces, all with wide eyes and sharp teeth. One of them has pigtails.

INT. MR BROWN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr Brown presses the telephone receiver to one ear.

MR BROWN

Mr oh H, about your son -

PAT (VO)

No, it's about your house.

MR BROWN

What?

PAT (VO)

You asked me to find out about
your house.

Mr Brown smacks his forehead.

MR BROWN

Yes. Yes, I did. Any luck?

PAT (VO)

Well, there was nothing in our
records, at all, but Mr Bright
happened to remember he sold the
house for a - wait for it - a Mr
Gorgeous.

MR BROWN

Gorgeous?

PAT (VO)

To be sure, it's a powerful
strange name which is why Mr
Bright remembered it after all
this time. He moved to New
Zealand, him and his daughter.

The receiver creaks as Mr Brown's grip tightens on it.

MR BROWN

Daughter?

PAT (VO)

That's what Mr Bright remembered
first, the daughter's name.
Rose. Rose Gorgeous -

Pat's voice burbles on. Mr Brown isn't listening.

INT. MISS HENDERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

The tinsel-covered intercom squawks. Miss Henderson stands by a filing cabinet, papers in her hands. She leans over.

MISS HENDERSON

Yes, headteacher?

MR BROWN (on intercom)

What's the number for
international enquiries, Miss H?

MISS HENDERSON

I'm sure I don't know,
headteacher, but I could find
out for you.

MR BROWN (on intercom)

Yes please, Miss H. Quick as
you like.

The intercom falls silent. Miss Henderson looks at it with a surprised expression on her face.

A knock at the door. DANIEL PETERSON (29), smart, carrying a slim briefcase enters briskly. Miss Henderson turns from the filing cabinet. They appraise each other.

PETERSON

I'm here to see the headteacher.

MISS HENDERSON

Oh yes?

PETERSON

My name's Peterson. I'm
Director of Education.

MISS HENDERSON

Oh yes? And what have you got
in your briefcase? Calculators?

Peterson blinks, glances at his briefcase, smiles slowly.
He's one step ahead of Miss Henderson.

PETERSON

Papers - ah, paper, mostly.

Miss Henderson glides to her desk, perches on the edge.

MISS HENDERSON

The headteacher lets me deal
with the stationery.

PETERSON

Oh yes?

Miss Henderson flips through her diary, purses her red lips.

MISS HENDERSON

Lunchtime. I'm free at
lunchtime.

She raises her eyebrows at Peterson.

MR BROWN (on intercom)

Miss H?

MISS HENDERSON

Yes, headteacher?

MR BROWN (on intercom)

I forgot to say. Dan Peterson's
coming this morning. The
Director. I phoned him last
night. Look out for him, will
you, Miss H?

MISS HENDERSON

Yes, headteacher. I, he's here
now.

She jumps up, flustered. Peterson smiles as he follows her
to Mr Brown's door. She shows him in.

He turns in the doorway.

PETERSON

So, lunch. Twelve thirty?

Miss Henderson, dumbstruck, can only nod. He smiles again, closes the door.

Miss Henderson collapses into her chair. A huge grin spreads across her face.

INT. WITCH STREET SCHOOL, MAIN HALL - DAY

The entire school is assembled. Mr Brown stands centre stage. He rubs at the top of his head, lowers the papers that he has been reading from.

MR BROWN

That's it. Only one thing left to say. Happy Christmas!

CHILDREN AND TEACHERS

Happy Christmas!

A noisy mass exodus ensues. Teachers herd children out of various doors. Jonathon leaves alongside Seamus O'Hanlon. Miss Wigg sternly stops a pair of girls and compels one of them to remove gum from her mouth.

Mr Brown smiles faintly.

The hall gradually empties until only he remains.

MR BROWN

Happy Christmas. One and all.

INT. JONATHON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jonathon hurries into his room, stuffs his school bag into a cupboard, takes off his school tie. Freezes.

The Christmas card is back on his bedside table.

A door bangs OS.

JULIA (OS)

Jonathon, that you?

Jonathon drags his gaze from the card, turns away.

ON THE UPSTAIRS LANDING

he looks down the stairwell. Julia, in the downstairs hall, wipes her hands on an apron. She looks puzzled.

JONATHON

I'm up here, mum.

JULIA

Oh. I thought I just heard the door.

Jacqueline, just behind Julia, becomes agitated. Her head rolls, but her eyes are fixed to a spot by the front door. Jonathon and Julia look, but can see nothing.

Outside, the wind gusts noisily.

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mr Brown sits moodily in front of his PC screen. His gaze shifts to the old exercise book also on the desk. Shifts again to a scrap of paper with a telephone number on it.

He picks up the phone, carefully dials the long number from the scrap of paper. Sits back with the receiver to his ear.

The sound of a phone ringing.

He gazes at the screen, not seeing it. A picture forms slowly.

ONSCREEN: "SUMMER MEETING BY JIM BROWN"

The ringing stops.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)

Hello?

He speaks with a New Zealand accent.

ONSCREEN: three young men cycle along a woodland path. Although they are clearly shouting and laughing, the film runs in silence.

MR BROWN

Hello, is that Mr, ah, Gorgeous?

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Speaking.

MR BROWN
My name's Brown. Jim Brown.
I'm ringing from Scotland. From
Witch Street.

ONSCREEN: the cyclists swerve round a bend, out from under
the trees into more open countryside.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
My goodness, from number one two
one, I suppose?

MR BROWN
Yes. I' trying to contact your
daughter.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Rosie?

ONSCREEN: the cyclists unexpectedly come upon the girl in
white, ride off the path to avoid her.

MR BROWN
Yes. Is she there?

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Why do you want to speak to
Rosie?

MR BROWN
We've been in email contact. I
thought it's time we spoke.

ONSCREEN: Harry steps forward from the tree as the girl in
white approaches. She looks past him, over his shoulder,
directly at Mr Brown on the telephone.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Rosie's been in email contact
with the old house?

MR BROWN
Well, with me.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Why would she want to do that?

MR BROWN
That's what I want to ask her.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
I suppose you're wondering why
she hasn't written lately?

ONSCREEN: the girl in white passes under the trees and the
screen darkens. The girl morphs into a beautiful young
woman. Harry disappears.

MR BROWN
We've been writing the last
month. Or so.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Is this some sort of joke? Mr
Brown or whoever you are.

MR BROWN
Jim Brown -

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Because if it is, I'll go to the
police, don't think I won't.

MR BROWN
I don't understand.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
What do you want? What are you
trying to do?

MR BROWN
Mr Gorgeous, I have no idea what
you mean. I am the headteacher
of the local school. And Rosie
has been emailing me.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
No, she hasn't.

MR BROWN
Yes, she has.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
No, she hasn't. She's in
hospital, in a coma, and she's
been there for two months.

ONSCREEN: the woman, looks over her shoulder at Mr Brown as
she vanishes into the darkness.

MR BROWN
What?

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
So you see, she can't have sent
you any messages.

MR BROWN
What happened?

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
She was walking home and three
boys were cycling down the
pavement. She stepped off
the..... she didn't see the car.

ONSCREEN: the young girl scampers back from the corner of
her bedroom to her bed with her exercise book. She jumps
into bed, stares out of the screen, directly at Mr Brown.

Both Mr Brown and Mr Gorgeous are emotionally exhausted.

MR BROWN
Is it summer in New Zealand?

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Yes, we've had a fine spell for
weeks now.

ONSCREEN: Mr Brown kneels in the corner of the bedroom,
disbelievingly retrieves the exercise book.

MR BROWN
There's something odd going on.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Yes.

MR BROWN
I need to forward these emails.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
Gorgeous at worldonline dot en
zed.

MR BROWN
Thank you. I'm going to forward -

ONSCREEN: Mr Brown sits at the PC, types furiously. The screen of the PC in the film shows the three young men cycling along the woodland path.

MR BROWN
- something else, too.

MR GORGEOUS (VO)
All right. You do that.

The onset of the dialling tone coincides with

ONSCREEN: the film dissolves into grey static.

Mr Brown replaces the receiver. Almost immediately, the phone rings. He snatches it up.

MR BROWN
Yes. Gorgeous?

DR MCGREGOR
Ah didnae know ye cared. Fancy
a wee dram the night?

MR BROWN
Aye, Mac, that I would.

INT. CAT AND BROOMSTICK PUB - NIGHT

Dr McGregor and Mr Brown sit in a corner of a quiet pub decorated for Christmas. The general décor shows witches, broomsticks, black cats.

DR MCGREGOR
So ye got the phone number o' a
lassie fae your oan story. Nae
doubt ye'll have a rational
explanation.

Mr Brown takes a drink, looks round without meeting Dr McGregor's eyes. Doesn't answer.

DR MCGREGOR

Ah saw Mary Bradley wi' a new man this mornin'.

MR BROWN

Really? And Miss H - my secretary? - I think she's met someone. She's all dressed up these days.

DR MCGREGOR

Nae doubt ye'll be taking a wee holiday yorsel'?

Mr Brown rubs at his head.

MR BROWN

Yes. Fourth of January, I think. Should get confirmation after Christmas.

DR MCGREGOR

Guid. Guid. Best o luck.

The two men shift awkwardly.

DR MCGREGOR

Ye doing anything for Christmas?

MR BROWN

No.

DR MCGREGOR

New Year?

MR BROWN

No. Packing. I got a flight at two in the morning. I'll miss your send off, Mac. Sorry.

DR MCGREGOR

Doesnae matter.

His eyes take on a distant look.

DR MCGREGOR

Maybe Ah can dae it mahsel'.

INT. MR BROWN'S BEDROOM - DAY

His clock shows 7:15 but no alarm shrills. Mr Brown rolls over and mumbles in his sleep.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S BEDROOM - DAY

Only the top of Dr McGregor's head is visible. It wears an old-fashioned night-cap. The rest of Dr McGregor snores vigorously beneath the bedclothes.

INT. SEAMUS O'HANLON'S BEDROOM - DAY

Seamus sits up, sees a stocking full of presents at the foot of his bed.

SEAMUS

Yes!

Gus opens his eyes. Two presents, one ball shaped and one bone-shaped, sit right in front of his nose. He barks with excitement as Seamus scrambles out of bed. In the

NEXT ROOM

Pat puts the pillow over his head.

MAEVE

Tell you what, dear, you make
the coffee while I stay in bed.
You can't say fairer than that.

Pat groans.

INT. JULIA AND JACK'S BEDROOM - DAY

The door bangs open. Jonathon wheels in Jacqueline, who has two stockings full of presents on her lap.

JONATHON

Happy Christmas!

Jacqueline laughs happily. Jack puts the pillow over his head and groans. Julia struggles upright.

JULIA
Happy Christmas, darlings.

Jonathon sits on the end of the bed. As he reaches for the first of his presents, footsteps sound in the room above.

Jack emerges from beneath the pillow.

The footsteps clatter down the stairs. Then stop.

Julia and Jack share a look. He swings his legs out of the bed, stands quietly, moves to the door. He opens it with a quick movement.

Nobody there.

Jack scratches his head, puzzled.

JACK
Nothing. Must've been, uh.

He looks at Julia for inspiration.

JULIA
Someone walking along the street.

JACK
Yes.

As he starts to shut the door, Jacqueline tries to shake her head. She mumbles excitedly.

JACK
Leave it open? It's cold.

Jacqueline becomes agitated.

JACK
All right, all right.

INT. JONES'S HOUSE - LATER

Jacqueline dozes in her wheelchair. Her eyes flick open to see Jack with his back to her, poking at the log fire. Stealthily she slips out of her chair, creeps out into the

HALL

where she puts on a coat. She cracks open the front door and slips

OUTSIDE

into the snow.

Through the window she sees Jack still stabbing at the fire. The wheelchair faces away from the window so it is not possible to see if it is occupied.

Jacqueline creeps round the corner of the house to where the wheelybin sits. It shivers, its lid rattles slightly as if its teeth are chattering, its colour is a frozen blue.

Jacqueline produces a bag of sweets from her pocket, unwraps several, thrusts them under the wheelybin's lid. It belches, turns a more normal shade of green.

JACQUELINE
Happy Christmas.

INT. JONES' HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jack turns from the fire. Jacqueline lolls in the wheelchair.

JACK
And you, Jacqueline my love.
Happy Christmas to you.

He comes over to give her a kiss and cuddle.

JULIA (OS)
Dinner!

INT. JONES'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Jack wheels Jacqueline in. Julia and Jonathon follow. They carry plates and food.

Jack laughs.

JACK
Your mother can't count. See?

There are five places set at the table instead of four.

JULIA
Jonathon?

Jonathon shakes his head. Jack gives Julia and Jonathon a confused look.

JULIA
I didn't set the table. I
thought you did.

The wind gusts outside, throws snow against the window.

JACK
That's it. That's really it.
This is a family Christmas and
if anyone thinks - if anything
thinks -

Julia lays a hand on his arm.

JULIA
Not everyone has a family, dear.
Does it really matter?

Jack calms down, looks at her, then at Jacqueline who watches him anxiously. He takes the plates, sets them out. Sighs.

JACK
Jon. Seems like we're a plate
short. Can you fetch one in?

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Maeve and Pat walk arm in arm while Seamus throws a rubber ball for Gus. He chases in front of the O'Hanlons, while behind them a flock of seagulls whirls into the air.

Pat glances behind, smiles.

MAEVE
What is it, dear?

PAT
Nothing. I thought I saw
another dog, that's all.

He puts an arm round her and squeezes.

PAT
Happy Christmas.

INT. MR BROWN'S ROOM - DAY

Mr Brown places some tinsel round his PC screen, grabs a glass of wine, sits back. Toasts the computer.

MR BROWN
Fancy going out for a mega-bite?

He giggles. Unexpectedly, the computer sounds a note. He leans forward, struggles to focus on the screen.

ONSCREEN

From: gorgeous@worldonline.nz
To: spook@globenet.co.uk
Sent: 25th December
Subject: summer meeting
I see what you mean. Confirm
jan 7 ok. Will meet you at
airport.
GG
PS Happy Christmas

BACK TO SCENE

MR BROWN
Whoa.

He stares at the screen, then rather fuzzily round the room. It is not very tidy.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

the room, much more tidy. The PC is switched off and unplugged. In the

BEDROOM

Mr Brown packs several suitcases.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S FLAT - DAY

Dr McGregor hunches in a chair at the window overlooking the street. He looks through a pair of binoculars.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

Mrs Robinson half carries, half drags Peter out of the door, down to the pavement.

BACK TO SCENE

Dr McGregor crosses something out on a pad of paper.

DR MCGREGOR

Robinsons.

He glances out the window, scrabbles for the binoculars, follows a car as it drives past. Lowers the binoculars, makes another mark on the paper.

DR MCGREGOR

Cathy Thompson. Guid.

EXT. MR BROWN'S HOUSE - DAY

A taxi pulls up outside the house. Mr Brown staggers out with several cases. The taxi-driver helps him stow them in the back of the taxi.

Mr Brown locks the front door, takes a long look at the front of the house, climbs into the taxi.

As it drives off, all the streetlights spring on.

INT. DR MCGREGOR'S FLAT - NIGHT

An old-fashioned alarm clock rings. Dr McGregor slaps it into silence, checks the time on the face: 1:30

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Mr Brown files with other passengers into a big jet. Finds his seat, stows coat and luggage in the overhead locker, sits in the seat with a thin briefcase on his lap.

EXT. OLD SCHOOL - NIGHT

Streetlights pick out the shape of the Old School.

A foot crunches down, a gloved hand carrying a petrol can swings into view.

Dr McGregor walks purposefully towards the Old School.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Mr Brown straps in. Most of the other passengers are seated and strapped in. He rubs at the tiny window and peers out.

EXT. OLD SCHOOL - NIGHT

Petrol glugs as Dr McGregor circles the Old School building, dousing anything flammable but especially the plywood sealing up windows and door.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

The plane jolts. Lights move past the tiny window as it moves forward. Mr Brown looks at his watch.

ON MR BROWN'S WATCH: 1:58.

The watch morphs into

EXT. OLD SCHOOL - NIGHT

DR MCGREGOR'S WATCH: 1:58

He takes out matches, strikes one, lets it fall into the petrol. A fire flares into life. Dr McGregor jumps backwards to avoid the flames.

Within seconds the school is ablaze. Sparks trail high into the sky. Dr McGregor shields his eyes and looks up.

The lights of a plane climb into the sky, towards the stars.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Mr Brown rubs at the window, looks down. He can see the red flare of a fire, but it means nothing to him.

He settles back, opens his briefcase, extracts the exercise book. He flips through the pages, then absently looks at the back cover.

ON THE BACK COVER

"I think the old man will come
when I need him."

EXT. THE PLANE - NIGHT

The plane arrows into the night sky.

FADE OUT