

HIS OWN DEVICES

Written By Jack Hamer

SUPER OVER BLACK: APRIL

Two zoom boxes appear. In one, SARAH (30's), a slim woman with dark hair. She is sat on a settee, her eyes red from crying.

SARAH
(Murmur)
Oh, he's gone again.

In the other, GARETH (40's) has clearly frozen mid-word, his mouth agape and his eyes closed. He has scruffily long hair and an uneven beard.

SARAH
Gareth, you've frozen again, mun!

Sarah's sing-song accent is pure Welsh Valleys.

GARETH
It was only a kiss I was fucking hammered
honest I don't even remember anything

Gareth's zoom app, in a bid to get the sound back up to speed with the pictures, has compressed his words into one long stream. Finally, it catches up and returns to normal speed.

GARETH
...after the shots to be honest.

SARAH
You froze again.

GARETH
It was only a kiss, I was saying it was
only a kiss! I was hammered!

Sarah shakes her head. She is hurting, her voice cracking.

SARAH
A kiss is such an intimate thing. In a
way, it's more intimate than sex. That's
just carnal. You really make an
emotional choice to kiss someone.

Gareth hangs his head.

GARETH
But you're coming back? After lockdown?

SARAH
I don't know. How do I know you won't do
it again next time you get pissed?

GARETH
I'll stop drinking. Tea-total, I'll go--

Gareth stops himself at the sight of ARTHUR (8) rushing into the room with Sarah, holding a colourful drawing.

Sarah quickly wipes her eyes and plasters on a smile for Arthur, who comes right up to the camera and thrusts the picture at the lens.

ARTHUR

It's you and Mammy, look! See, there's me in the middle!

SARAH

Ooh look, are we on holiday?

ARTHUR

Yes, Toller... Tollemareelos. Look, Daddy's got muscles cos he's strong!

GARETH

Ha! That's awesome, butt!

Sarah's sister, LUCY (30's), moves past in the background.

LUCY

Hiya Gareth!

GARETH

Hiya Luce!

Lucy exits the shot.

GARETH

How's the home-schooling going?

SARAH

Oh don't. It's hell. I just can't hold his attention like you can. He's like a whirling dervish.

GARETH

Don't beat yourself up, love.

ARTHUR

What's a whirling dervish?

GARETH

Got a call with work Friday. Blod reckons they're pulling us off furlough.

SARAH

You're shielding though?

GARETH

Dunno. Maybe they've sorted something out.

SARAH

Right, well buy a new shirt and tie.

GARETH

What for?

SARAH
I just want you to look... capable.

GARETH
They know I'm capable, love.

SARAH
I know, but you know.

GARETH
Anyway, I can't afford to buy a shirt
and tie...

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

GARETH
I've had a new basement installed!

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

SARAH
What's he like.

ARTHUR
Have we got a new basement?

SARAH
No Love. Daddy's joking.

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

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

GARETH
Shit. My knee's gone.

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

BLANK SCREEN

Appearing onscreen, the zoom UI. 'Please wait, the meeting
host will let you in soon.' Then, Gareth appears with two
colleagues in separate boxes. BLOD (50's) is red haired with a
full, bushy beard. Annie (30's) is tattooed and gregarious.

ANNIE
Look at Gareth with his shirt and tie!

GARETH
Blod, what the fuck is that?

BLOD
What?

GARETH

Behind you, is that your shower?

ANNIE

Are you sat on the shitter?

BLOD

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

ANNIE

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

GARETH

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

BLOD

Whatever it is, it's chief engineers
only.

ANNIE

Least they're not closing the plant
then. Oop, watch out...

A black box with the initials 'AT' now becomes the ominous
large centre image as host MR THOMAS (60's) speaks.

MR THOMAS

Yes, morning all. Sorry, I can't get
this blasted camera to work. Ah!

Mr Thomas appears. Bespectacled, smart suit. Zoom-generated
bookcase in the background.

MR THOMAS

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

As he speaks, Mr Thomas's super-imposed bookcase is 'invaded'
by the edge of a woman in a nightie doing the ironing, but no-
one is brave enough to tell him.

MR THOMAS

As Annie deduced, we are NOT closing the
plant. However, as an agile company in
an industry deeply affected by recent
events, we do need to reorganise
resources--

The loud sound of a toilet being flushed.

BLOD

Shit. Sorry, I was just resting my arm
on the flush!

Silence for several seconds.

BLOD
I'm not having a shit!

MR THOMAS
--It's ok Bleddyn. Yes, reorganising our resources. And with that in mind, we have made the decision to scale down on certain layers within the company.

GARETH
(Quietly)
Shit.

MR THOMAS
Of course, everyone affected will have a guaranteed interview for vacancies as soon as they arise.

ANNIE
It's just us, isn't it. You're getting rid of chief engineers.

MR THOMAS
I'm truly sorry. We couldn't have predicted these dreadful events.

Silence as the bad news sinks in among the staff members.

MR THOMAS
Look, two new positions are being created in standard, and we obviously welcome applications from all of you.

ANNIE
Oh great, thanks! So, you're basically demoting two of us and binning off the other one!

MR THOMAS
As an agile company in a period of unprecedented tumult, we've had to...

Mr Thomas looks down. Takes a deep breath. He looks back up at the camera with moist eyes. His mouth tries to form words.

MR THOMAS
Look...

A deafeningly loud flushing toilet.

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

BLANK SCREEN

Two zoom boxes. A stressed Gareth in one, and JOE (40's) a big, pink-faced lad with long hair and beard, in the other. They both have pints and zoom backgrounds of the Queen Vic pub from EASTENDERS, complete with Peggy Mitchell mid-yell.

GARETH

It's like... It's like it's all slipping away, mate. My job, Sarah and Arthur.

JOE

Ha don't be daft mate, they'll be back!

Joe takes a sip of his pint.

JOE

Mind you, of all the times to fuck up and have your missus pack her bags, trust you to do it three days before a national lockdown.

GARETH

Alright Saint Joe of Assisi.

JOE

Reminds me, hear about Dai Talbot?

GARETH

No?

JOE

Went to stay at his in-laws for a couple of days while they completed on the house. Ended up stuck there five weeks. No garden. Saying grace, he was, before every meal. Singing hymns around the piano every Sunday morning.

GARETH

Jesus.

JOE

Flipped his lid in the end and made a break for it, 3am. Tried to break into the new house before he owned it. Got pulled by the police. They said you can go back to your in-laws or you can go to the nick.

GARETH

Fucking hell.

JOE

He chose the nick. He's divorcing her now. Said he'd rather die alone than have to sing Hark the fucking Herald Angel's Sing one more time.

GARETH
Don't blame him, mind.

JOE
That's the thing about Corona, it—

GARETH
TWO FINGERS!!

JOE
SHIT!

Joe downs two fingers of his pint. Burps.

JOE
Getting cuntted here, I am.

Gareth analyses his mate.

GARETH
Time Helen gave you a trim mate.
You look like Jesus had an allergic
reaction to his washing powder.

JOE
Corona hair they're calling—

GARETH
TWO FINGERS!!

JOE
OH CORONA, CORONA, CORONA!!!

Joe downs the entire rest of his pint.

GARETH
You're shit at this, mate.

SUPER OVER BLACK: MAY

Two boxes appear. Gareth in one, hair and beard starting to look very ragged. Arthur in the other, sat upside down on the settee, legs over the back. They are each holding a copy of Roald Dahl's BFG.

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

GARETH
Speak it out.

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

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

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

GARETH
There she is. Sarah!

ARTHUR
She's getting ready.

GARETH
Ready for what?

Sarah appears and plonks down on the settee next to Arthur.
She wears makeup and a low-cut top.

SARAH
Arthur, sorry but you're going to
Grannies. Gar, he can call you from
Grannies.

GARETH
Oh, ok. Do I have to talk to Granny?

SARAH
Well, you could say hello, Gareth.

GARETH
You look nice. You going out?
Hang on, you can't?

SARAH
No, I'm not going out.

GARETH
(Smiling)
You wore that top on our first date.

Gareth smiles at the memory. Arthur seems to be analysing him
through the screen.

GARETH
I spent the entire time trying to keep
my eyes up on your face.

ARTHUR
Dad, your face is wrinkly.

GARETH

Is it?

SARAH

Arthur, I said wrap it up. You can call Daddy from Grannies iPad.

ARTHUR

Is your skin getting bigger or are you getting smaller?

GARETH

Why can't he just take the laptop?

SARAH

I need it.

GARETH

What for?

SARAH

Come on Arthur, ship-shape.

GARETH

(Suddenly worried)

Sarah, why do you need the laptop?

ARTHUR

Mammy, is Daddy ok? He looks sad.

GARETH

I'm fine butt!

SARAH

Course he is, love! (To Gareth) Sorry Gar, gotta go or I'll never get him moving. I'll speak to you soon ok?

Sarah reaches toward the screen. 'Call Ended'.

BLANK SCREEN

Two boxes. Mr Thomas in one, Gareth in the other. Gareth is wearing a shirt and tie but looks harassed, uncomfortable.

GARETH

You know my main strengths! I've worked for you twenty years.

MR THOMAS

Imagine I don't know you.

GARETH

Accuracy. I've only had one come back down in the last nine years.

MR THOMAS

Would you say it's accuracy to the detriment of speed?

GARETH

No. I hit my targets on speed. Anyway, I'm mentoring now too. I thought that was taken into account?

MR THOMAS

I have to say, Annie and Bleddyn have superior numbers over the past year.

Gareth shakes his head. He is conflicted.

GARETH

I know, but... Look you're putting me in a position here. I don't want to bad mouth my friends.

MR THOMAS

For the purposes of this interview they are not friends, they are competitors.

GARETH

Well, Blod, the standards don't go to him cos he's... Well, he's a bit... I don't need to tell you Mr Thomas.

MR THOMAS

Imagine I don't know any of you.

GARETH

Grumpy.

Gareth immediately flinches and looks down. He hates himself.

MR THOMAS

Are you saying he's unapproachable and so receives less queries from standards?

GARETH

Not unapproachable exactly. It's just his demeanour. Look, I can't do this.

MR THOMAS

How about Annie? She's 4% up on you.

GARETH

I can't sit here and slag off my friends.

MR THOMAS

Competitors! How about Annie?

End of sample