

BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS

by

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1. EXT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - MAIN ENTRANCE. DAY

An anxious **TRISTAN** (30's) stands outside a large office building, looking for someone. As he waits, we hear a radio advert: Sombre music accompanied by a stern, humourless voice.

VOICEOVER

Sixty percent of UK marriages end in divorce. Over fifty percent of couples, aged eighteen-to-thirty-five, meet online. A screenshot, brief paragraph, and small talk over a website; today it's normal.

Reaching for his PHONE, TRISTAN taps the screen, sending a message. Unable to keep still, he wanders aimlessly.

He takes out his phone again, looks round, muttering, punching the screen with his fingers as he sends another message.

VOICEOVER (cont.)

Consider the cost of ending a relationship. Not just financially; you've put your trust, your faith in someone, only to be let down.

From OFFSCREEN, a car screeches round a corner and parks slantways between two spaces. Engine off, the driver's door is flung open. **SETH** (20's) gets out, slamming the door shut and marching towards the office.

Tristan stares at Seth, about to ask where he has been. Seth storms straight past him and into the building.

2. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - RECEPTION. DAY

We follow Tristan hurrying after Seth. The radio advert continues.

VOICEOVER (cont.)

Worried about a messy divorce? Scared of being alone? Or maybe you don't want to hurt that person who's been your best friend for so long?

Seth is at the reception desk, asking for directions. A **RECEPTIONIST** (50's) points. Not waiting for Tristan, Seth stomps off.

Tristan, almost breaking into a run, gestures to the receptionist to say he is with Seth.

CUT TO:

3. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CORRIDOR. DAY

Seth charges down the corridor. We hear the rest of the advert.

VOICEOVER (cont.)

With Brand New Beginnings, you don't have to go through the pain, the self-loathing of a failed relationship. You can be happy; you can stay happy.

The door to one of the rooms is open, Seth darting inside. Struggling to keep up, Tristan rushes in.

On the door, in large print, is the LOGO for Brand New Beginnings. Underneath are the words, Consultation Room. Tristan closes the door.

4. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY

From across an empty desk, we see Tristan and Seth sat down. They do not sit together or look at each other. Tristan is guilt-ridden, while Seth gazes out of a window. Seth flinches, pulling away as Tristan tries holding his hand.

SETH

Don't.

OFFSCREEN, a door is slammed. **KATE** (40's) strides towards the desk wearing a smart, expensive suit.

KATE

Tristan, Seth, my name is Kate. I'm here to explain today's procedure.

KATE does not shake Tristan or Seth's hand; she sits down in a large chair behind the desk.

SETH

Yeah, we've seen the adverts.

KATE

You saw some models from a talent agency. That's not real life; what's about to happen is very real. It's not something

KATE (cont.)

you can post on social media, then take down because you didn't get enough likes; the procedure is irreversible. Your memories will be sifted, altered. Cut up.

Tristan and Seth glance at each other.

5. FLASHBACK. INT. TRISTAN'S HOME, BEDROOM. DAY

Seth and Tristan are in bed, spooning. Tristan is asleep, while Seth's eyes are open. Carefully pulling away, Seth gets up. OFFSCREEN, Seth can be heard getting dressed.

Tristan wakes. Seeing Seth out of bed, he props himself up on his elbows.

TRISTAN

Are you going?

Seth is dressed, bent forward, fighting to put a shoe on.

SETH

Yeah, the morning after; I hadn't planned that bit.

TRISTAN

Don't go; not yet. I could make us some pancakes.

Thinking, Seth gives a shy smile.

6. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY

Tristan and Seth sit across from Kate.

TRISTAN

Are there risks with the procedure?

KATE

There are risks with any surgery, no matter how routine. (beat) If you're worried you'll end up in a coma, develop a blood clot, believe your partner is a hat, I assure you, nothing like that has ever happened.

SETH

So you restart the clock, take us back to when we met; cut out all the shit that happened after.

Wounded, Tristan looks over at Seth. Noticing, Kate cannot help but smile.

SETH V/O

Best holiday you've been on?

7. FLASHBACK. INT. TRISTAN'S HOME, LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

Seth and Tristan are playing JENGA. Tristan sits on the sofa, while Seth is on the floor. There is a coffee table between them, the Jenga tower on top of it. Seth removes a piece: the tower does not move.

TRISTAN

Ölüdeniz, Turkey. We went paragliding, ate fish straight out of the sea.

SETH

We?

Not a word from Tristan. He takes out a block; the tower wobbles but stays in place.

TRISTAN

Why are you scared of us?

Seth is caught off guard; Tristan expecting an answer.

SETH

Remember when you were first dating? You start off like a smooth stone, then you're hurt, let down. That's a mark right there, but you keep trying, keep getting scuffed, chipped. That stone - looks perfect in a gift shop - given time, grinds down to nothing.

Tristan sits next to Seth, Tristan giving him a hug.

TRISTAN

I'd love a gift shop; I'd be great selling all that tat.

SETH chuckles, tries taking out a Jenga block, Tristan wincing. Seconds later, the tower comes crashing down.

8. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY

Kate stands by a window, staring out at the view.

KATE

We take everything that's wrong with your relationship, and replace it with our own, manufactured memories. That time you argued on a night out? Gone. Instead, you had a romantic meal at home.

TRISTAN

What we're left with, we won't know if it's real or created in some lab.

KATE

You won't know the difference. You'll be oblivious. You'll be happy.

9. FLASHBACK. INT. TRISTAN'S HOME, BEDROOM. NIGHT

Tristan and Seth are on the bed, dressed for a night out. Seth is sat up, concentrating on his phone. Tristan is lying down. Getting up, Tristan stands by a MIRROR, frowning at his stomach.

TRISTAN

Am I fat?

Seth does not glance up from his phone.

SETH

No, you're not.

TRISTAN

I think I'm getting a beer belly.

Putting the phone down on the TABLE, Seth shuffles over to Tristan. Taking Tristan's hand, he gives it a squeeze.

SETH

Even if you were fat, I'd still love you.

Hearing this, Tristan beams.

SETH (cont.)

I'd just stare at you from the neck up.

From OFFSCREEN, a pillow is chucked at Seth's face.

10. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY

Tristan and Seth struggle to take in what Kate tells them.

SETH

What happens? Is there a headset we wear?

Turning from the window, Kate walks back, and sits down.

KATE

God no, this isn't some cheap sci-fi. The procedure's happening right now.

Both men panic.

KATE

It's airborne. While we've been chatting, surgeons have scanned your brains, gone through your memories, and are removing all the things you would rather forget.

Kate glances at her hand; there is no wedding ring on her finger, just a mark where it used to be.

TRISTAN

But we've not signed anything.

Reaching into a drawer, Kate places two SYRINGES filled with a clear fluid in front of Seth and Tristan.

KATE

Call them a reset button, if you change your minds. Use them, and your memories stay just as they are. I hope you're not scared of needles.

Seth and Tristan are overwhelmed.

KATE

I'll leave you two to talk.

Calmly getting up, Kate leaves the room.

TRISTAN V/O

Do you love me?

11. FLASHBACK. INT. TRISTAN'S HOME, BEDROOM. NIGHT

Tristan and Seth are in bed, arms around each other; Tristan resting his head on Seth's chest.

SETH

What?

TRISTAN

Do you love me?

SETH

What sort of question is that?

TRISTAN

When we, you know, it doesn't feel like love anymore. I mean, it's good, it's amazing. I just wonder...

Tristan struggles to come up with the words.

TRISTAN

Are you thinking about me, about us?

Not answering, Seth pulls away, gets out of bed. Tristan stares at the ceiling, wishing he had not said anything.

12. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY

Tristan and Seth do not look at each other.

SETH

I knew you'd bottle it; I knew it.

Tristan turns to face Seth.

TRISTAN

Did you listen to any of that? There are men in white coats flicking through my brain like it's an Argos catalogue.

SETH

You mean surgeons, but men in white coats sounds about right.

TRISTAN

Why are we bothering? What's the point? The fairy godmother waves her magic wand, and then what?

Quiet, Seth's eyes meet Tristan's. Seth's face says it all: he doesn't know. Frustrated, Tristan goes over to the window.

TRISTAN

You don't pick or choose your memories;
that's not how it works. "They're the
closest thing we have to a time machine."

SETH

Did you read that off a fridge magnet?

Tristan does not turn round.

TRISTAN

Dad told me that.

Seth hangs his head, hating himself.

13. FLASHBACK. INT. TRISTAN'S HOME, HALLWAY. NIGHT

The door opens. Seth stumbles in, drunk. He tries taking off his shoes, almost topples over. Giving up, he takes out his MOBILE and totters towards the lounge. His face is inches away from the phone. Stopping, he uses the doorway to stay standing.

TRISTAN O.S.

No need to ask if you had a good night.

Seth does not look up from his phone.

TRISTAN O.S. (cont.)

My dad, he never answered his phone. He was in his fifties, kept leaving it in a drawer; what's your excuse?

SETH

I was going to ring back, I just got distracted.

TRISTAN O.S.

"Won't be late", you said.

SETH

Is this going to be a lecture, because I really can't be...

Glancing up, Seth stops mid-sentence.

14. FLASHBACK. INT. TRISTAN'S HOME, LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

A trail of TEA LIGHT CANDLES leads from the lounge, all the way to the bedroom.

Tristan sits on the sofa. Angry, he stares at Seth.

Seth is speechless, guilt-ridden. He hurries to the sofa, kneeling in front of Tristan.

SETH

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Please don't be angry. We don't have to spoil tonight.

Seth tries pulling Tristan in for a kiss. Wrenching himself away, Tristan marches towards the bedroom. Seth looks hopeless.

15. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY

Tristan is stood by the window, while Seth sits near the desk, listening.

TRISTAN

"Knock-off Dali Lahma," that's what mum called my dad; "He had a stupid saying for everything." (beat) "When someone does your head in, but you love them anyway, that's happiness. Because you know they feel the same, and life would be boring without them."

TRISTAN turns, faces SETH.

TRISTAN (cont.)

"Every couple has blips. The trick is to make sure there's plenty more good times than blips."

They both smile; pained, sad smiles.

16. FLASHBACK. INT. TRISTAN'S HOME, BEDROOM. DAY

Seth is hunched forward on the bed, smoking a JOINT. Tristan bursts in, plucks the spliff from Seth's mouth, and tosses it out of an open window.

SETH

What the fuck?

TRISTAN

How long have you smoked that shit?

Seth does not answer, thrown by how furious Tristan is.

TRISTAN

How long?

SETH

Years, ages, I don't know.

TRISTAN

Bullshit. So what, you need to get high just to be around me, is that it?

Seth takes too long to reply.

TRISTAN

So that's a yes, then.

Standing up, Seth walks towards the door.

TRISTAN

Where are you off to?

Seth has gone, slamming the door, leaving Tristan seething.

17. INT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - CONSULTATION ROOM. DAY

WIDE SHOT from Kate's side of the desk. Tristan and Seth are both sat down, space between them. Seth stares ahead, drained, thinking. Pained, Tristan glances at Seth.

SETH

We're broken. We've not been right for ages.

TRISTAN

And this is the answer? Six months, a year from now, can you promise we won't be at each other's throats again?

SETH

We love each other, we both said it; that's why we're here.

TRISTAN

Having someone's grubby fingers going through our memories? How did it all get so shit?

Getting up, Seth kneels in front of Tristan.

SETH

You are, by far, the best thing that's happened to me, and if there's the smallest chance that things go back to when we were first seeing each other, then I will fight for it, I will do anything.

TRISTAN

Then we try something else: counselling, time apart. We don't need this place.

Seth kisses Tristan; it is forceful, passionate, like he has wanted to do this for far too long. Breaking the kiss, Seth rests his head against Tristan's; they both start to cry.

SETH

Love you.

TRISTAN

Love you too.

Tristan stands, goes to the desk, and picks up one of the SYRINGES. He places the needle on his arm and, without hesitating, injects himself.

C/U of the NEEDLE MARK on Tristan's wrist. Tristan picks up the other syringe.

TRISTAN

Our memories are the closest thing we have to a time machine. I want to remember everything. You're selfless and selfish. You understand me, then sometimes you don't have the first clue about me. That's what makes you, you.

Tristan walks towards Seth, offers him the syringe.

TRISTAN

We can lie to each other, ignore the past, and hope that's enough. Or we remember the truth; we remember us.

Overwhelmed, Seth takes the syringe, gazes at it. Tristan steps towards the door, he does not look at Seth.

TRISTAN

It's your choice.

Tristan leaves the room. Seth does not move, his eyes fixed on the syringe in his palm.

18. EXT. BRAND NEW BEGINNINGS - MAIN ENTRANCE. DAY

Tristan is anxious, waiting, wanders up-and-down the pavement, staring at the entrance to the building.

Seth wanders out of the doorway. He sees Tristan, rushes over to him. Seth puts his arms around Tristan, kisses him, taking Tristan by surprise.

SETH

Hey.

TRISTAN

Hey.

Seth takes Tristan's hands, kisses them. Tristan frowns. Seizing Seth's arm, Tristan turns it over: Seth does not have a needle mark. Reaching for Seth's other arm, Tristan inspects Seth's wrist: nothing, no wound or blemish.

Dropping Seth's arm, Tristan steps back.

Stood at a window, Kate, with a callous smile, watches them. In her hands is an UNUSED SYRINGE.

THE END