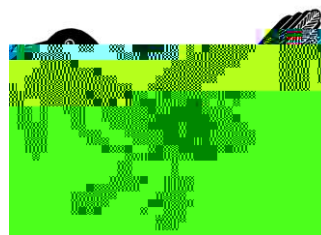


MAGPIE

by Lee Mattinson



SCENE 1

(14:00)

LANCE: (V.O) Down here. In my gut. That's where I feel it.

F/X RELAXED BREATHING, SMALL SWALLOWS, THE FLUSH OF FOOD.

LANCE: (V.O) This is what I want it to sound like inside of me. The clarity and precision and beauty of digestion. My shimmering pink stomach. My luminous large intestine. A single miraculous machine where bread is processed like boxes.

F/X PANICKED BREATHING, PAINFUL SWALLOWS, A STOMACH WORKING TOO HARD.

LANCE: (V.O) But I chose needles and pins instead of bread. I chose puncturing and pain and an ultimately more dangerous digestion. My scarred red stomach. My lanced large intestine. A single broken bag of bile that eventually ripped in on itself, burning and blistering itself.

Until today.

MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.

SCENE 2

HOSPI/7

F/X **DOCTOR TATE FLICKS THROUGH HIS FILE OF
NOTES**

SCENE 3 STREET - OUTSIDE THE REID HOUSE (15:00)

F/X DOGS BARKING BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR.

F/X A METAL GARDEN GATE RATTLES SHUT.

GLADYS: You're back then, lad.

LANCE: It looks like it.

GLADYS: Neither hide nor hair of your mother, if that's what you're expecting.

LANCE: She's away abroad.

GLADYS: Sixteen weeks late on her catalogue, Payday Paula's words not mine.

LANCE: I start at the council tomorrow. I'll sort it.

GLADYS: Get you, moneybags.

Where's she this time?

LANCE: Who?

GLADYS: Your mam.

LANCE: Spain. She's met the love of her life.

GLADYS: God. Been there, got the boob tube, honey.

F/X DOGS BARKING, LOUDER, MORE FEROCIOUS.

LANCE:

Breathe. In time with me. In and out, Lance. In and out.

You're in your gut. Feel it. Feel it. Being back there. But, this time, you are braving it.

Conquer it, Lance.

F/X

AND INTO HIS STOMACH.

SCENE 6

(08:02)

MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.

LANCE: (V.O) Things I'm bad at.

Being called Lance. Looking nice. Having more than one wild and wonderful dream. Wrapping Christmas presents. Eye contact.

~~LANCE:~~ ~~Being proper food le(d)6(c3(USI)-2(C))TJETBTme-3(r)13(f)-11(u)-3(l) d~~

SCENE 7 **CITY COUNCIL - RHONA** **(09:30)**

RHONA:

F/X THE OFFICE DOOR CLOSES.

RHONA: Strengths?

LANCE: First and foremost, I've a keen eye for detail.

RHONA: As trainee town planner that will be paramount.

Goals?

LANCE: First and foremost, to have the ability to work well on my own but also as part of a multicultural team?

RHONA: Diverse aware. I like it.

Well, I suppose that's it from me. Never been the brand of boss to stand on ceremony. But that's just my style. I'm Rhona and people round here know it.

SCENE 10

(20:02)

MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.

LANCE: (V.O) I find it extremely important to determine whether things are good or bad.

But that's not as simple as it might sound. There are hundreds of questions involved. Thousands of decisions.

Doctor Tate taught me that food is good. And that needles and pins are bad.

And I have to remember that. Because that's what matters.

Magpie

MAM: And so when his only son was old enough, he took over his father's affliction and had the needles and pins transferred into his own blood in order that his father might find work in a local factory.

'You're my brave little boy, pal,' his father would say at the end of each day.

LANCE: That's enough –

MAM: And this made the little boy forget all about his forever-present pain. This wiped it away. If only for a few precious seconds.

LANCE: Done.

MAM: (QUICKER) Until one day the little boy pricked his finger and the thousands of needles and hundreds of pins began to pour out of him at such a miraculous rate that he was unable to push them back in –

LANCE: I said –

MAM: (QUICKER) Because the quicker he reinserted them, the faster they escaped through the pinprick in his finger –

LANCE: Eat up –

MAM: And so the father stopped returning from work –

LANCE: (SNAPS) I don't want to know, that's enough.

MAX: I'd best go anyway. My mam worries. You know what parents are like.

High five? No? Right.

See you soon, best pal.

F/X MAX EXITS, SLAMS THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.

SCENE 13

(20:10)

MUSIC THROAT SINGING STING.

LANCE: (V.O) When I was seven there was no good and no bad.
There just was.

My dad was strong. My mam was beautiful. The house
was always clean. Tea was always on the table and
mine was always a clean plate.

But then everything was different. Everything was all of a
sudden wrong. He became ill and couldn't speak. She
started drinking and would only ever scream. The family
was splintered. And it all began to fall away in front of
me.

It was all, and all of a sudden, bad.

SCENE 14 CITY COUNCIL - MEETING ROOM (11:00)

**F/X BACKGROUND EMPLOYEE CHIT CHAT OF A
 MEETING ABOUT TO BEGIN.**

RHONA: This may be somewhat of a baptism of fire but if you
 ne

LANCE: Not at all.

RHONA: Because I can be quite the opposite when the mood takes us.

LANCE: I've no doubt you can.

RHONA: I have an ex who grew chillies in a window box.

LANCE: I didn't know you could grow chillies in a window box.

RHONA: You can. He did. And do you know what I did one day?

LANCE: Eat one?

RHONA: Yes. A big fiery, hot one.

Who's tedious now, Lan

RHONA: (SNAPS)

SOPHIE: You getting this, Lance?

LANCE: I'll just be a second –

(WHISPERS) What are you doing hiding in the cupboard?

MAX: (WHISPERS) How exciting is this?

F/X LANCE SLAMS THE CUPBOARD DOOR, SHIFTS HIS CHAIR OVER TO JUST IN FRONT OF IT.

SOPHIE: Lance?

LANCE:

RHONA: I actually give two pounds a month to the RSPB.

MAX: (WHISPERS) She talks like a book.

F/X **A**

SOPHIE: You getting this, Lance?

LANCE: Getting it.

MAX: (WHISPERS) You can do this.

LANCE: (WHISPERS) Shut up.

F/X **A**

SOPHIE: You ok there, Lance?

LANCE: Fine.

MAX: (WHISPERS) Give her eye contact.

RHONA: He's fine.

F/X **A**

LANCE: What was that re the Neighbourhood Watch pending?

MAX: (WHISPERS) Be professional.

LANCE: I'm being professional.

RHONA: Sorry?

MAX: (WHISPERS) Take the pen out of your mouth.

SOPHIE: He looks a tad peaky.

MAX: (WHISPERS) Tell her you're fine.

LANCE: I'm fine.

F/X SNIGGERS FROM THE ASSEMBLED EMPLOYEES.

SOPHIE: Does someone want to get him a glass of water?

RHONA: Do you need to take a minute?

MAX: (WHISPERS) She's pretty when she's angry –

SOPHIE: Lance?

MAX: (WHISPERS) Pretend I'm not here –

LANCE: (SNAPS) Shut. Up.

F/X THE CUPBOARD DOOR SLAMS SHUT.

RHONA: (BEAT) Lance?

F/X WHISPERS FROM THE ASSEMBLED EMPLOYEES.

SOPHIE: Was that directed at me?

SCENE 16

CITY COUNCIL - RHONA

(11:15)

RHONA: I have never been so mortified in my whole entire life.
Is this something to do with your allergies? It is me?
(SNAPS) Well, don't just stand there like a documentary
on crabs on pause.

LANCE: It won't happen again.

RHONA: No, it will not.

Because I will no longer be breaching the company policy
on inter-office relationships by offering out my niks or my
naks.

You won't be emailed the job description for the opening
in urban design suffixed with a winky-face emoticon.

And I will not be publically humiliated like that again.

Are you even listening to me, Lance?

LANCE: I'm sorry, Rhona.

RHONA: Then I suggest you issue a formal apology to the whole
office in the form of an email reflecting that sorrow. That
embarrassment. A

SCENE 17 THE REID HOUSE - VARIOUS (20:00)

F/X A BIRO SCRIBBLES AT A NOTEPAD.

LANCE: Dear City Council colleagues.

I would like to begin by saying how very sorry I am
regarding today's incident –

F/X THE BIRO CROSSES SOMETHING OUT.

LANCE: Today's unforgivable incident.

F/X

LANCE:

LANCE: What are you doing?

MAX: You basically just admitted that she's your girlfriend, pal –

LANCE: Get out.

F/X MAX CLAMBERS OUT OF A CARDBOARD BOX.

MAX: I just wanted to make sure you were ok.

LANCE: I was before you turned up.

Do your mam and dad know you're here?

MAX: They'll not even notice I'm gone.

LANCE: I'm sure that's not true.

MAX: What's your dad like?

LANCE: Dead.

MAX: Did he die in the dining room? Is that why you'll not go in there?

He did, didn't he, pal?

I'm dead good at guessing games. Better even than hide and seek –

LANCE: Unless someone told you.

MAX: I don't taf160051>300B60057]T Jf160051>303004]TET EMTBT1 0 0 1 234.1

LANCE: Her next door told you my name.

MAX: Do you eat your tea on your lap, then?

LANCE: I don't really eat tea.

MAX: Are you one of them diabetics?

LANCE: What do you want, Max?

MAX: What's wrong with you, pal?

LANCE: (BEAT) I was in hospital.

MAX: Did you have a stroke? Cos I know what one of them is.

LANCE: I had a condition.

MAX: In your body?

LANCE: And my head.

It made me want to eat certain things. Things that made my stomach poorly –

MAX: Like what?

LANCE: Metal.

MAX: Y1 5TJETBT1 0 0 1 119. 0 1 90.024 158.548.548.548.548.54 1 301 162.BT

MAX: Course. Love you, pal.

**F/X MAX EXITS, THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS. LANCE
HEAVY BREATHING**

**F/X THE NOTEPAD IS VIOLENTLY RIPPED APART,
CRUMPLED UP, THROWN AGAINST THE WALL.**

F/X (OFF) THE BING BONG OF A DOORBELL.

**F/X LANCE STANDS, WALKS THROUGH TO THE HALL,
PICKS UP THE DOORBELL.**

F/X THE BING BONG OF A DOORBELL.

**F/X LANCE QUICKLY DISMANTLES IT
PIECES INTO HIS MOUTH, METAL AGAINST TEETH,
TIN AGAINST TONGUE AND PAINFUL SWALLOWS.**

DOCTOR: (V.O) I fear we may be up against a condition known as Pica. Latin for Magpie. Although the condition is characterized by a hunger for substances of non-nutritive value.

Max: Like what?

Lance: Metal

Doctor: (V/O) For you, it seems to be a hunger for feelings but characterized by the consumption of nothing but hurt.

It's a one in a million case Lance, this. The extremities, the rarities.

Magpie

LANCE: I'll pop back up for your dirty plate. You might end up fancying some –

MAM: Leaving me, are you?

LANCE: It's not nice, is it?

MAM: (SNAPS) Don't you dare.

LANCE: (BEAT) I was seven –

MAM: And yet you're still bleating on about it.

LANCE: You cou t ...

SCENE 19 CITY COUNCIL - MAIN OFFICE (16:00)

F/X OFFICE ACOUSTIC.

**F/X RHONA STRUTS OVER TO LANCE, SLAMS A SHEET
OF PAPER DOWN ON THE DESK.**

RHONA: I'm professionally obliged to draw your attention to this.

RHONA:

LANCE: Rhona?

RHONA: It's a poster for the proposed company-wide paintballing
extravaganza for Siobhan's leaving do.

LANCE: Am I invited?

RHONA: You'll notice little speech bubbles have been added to
each and every gun-wielding maniac with 'shut up'
inserted into the aforementioned speech bubbles.

LANCE: I see.

RHONA: Now, I'll circulate my standard email re inter-office
bullying but I just wanted to make you aware of the
vendetta personally.

LANCE: I'm just about to ping off an email that explains
everything. That truly apologises –

RHONA: Does it explain why you took it upon yourself to make a

RHONA: And to think I thought I might one day prepare you a seven, not three, Lance, seven-course fusion cuisine banquet with banana fritters for after.

Well?

Lance?

LANCE: What you got for lunch today, Rhona?

RHONA: Battered heartbreak on burnt toast, goodbye –

F/X RHONA STRUTS OFF.

F/X LANCE PICKS UP THE POSTER.

LANCE: (READS) Shut up.

F/X LANCE BLIND-FIRES STAPLES OUT OF A STAPLER.

LANCE: (READS) Shut up.

F/X LANCE BLIND-FIRES STAPLES OUT OF A STAPLER.

LANCE: (READS) Shut up.

**F/X HE PLOUGHS THE STAPLES INTO HIS MOUTH,
CHEWS, PAINFUL SWALLOWS.**

F/X THE PHONE ON HIS DESK RINGS, HE PICKS IT UP.

LANCE:

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Max?

MAX: (ON PHONE) I could come to your house?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) How did you get this number?

MAX: (ON PHONE) You've not eaten already, have you?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) No.

MAX: (ON PHONE) 'No' you've not eaten or 'no' you don't want to meet?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Both.

MAX: (ON PHONE) But I can hear something in your mouth. (ON0059 0 1 244.s

LANCE: It's an emergency.

RHONA:

LANCE: (SNAPS)

Magpie

MAX:

LANCE: I won't tell you again.

MAX: Like records. Papers. Letters.

LANCE:

SCENE 23 THE REID HOUSE - HALL (17:07)

F/X A CARDBOARD BOX DROPS TO THE FLOOR AND A PILE OF RECORDS, PAPERS, LETTERS TUMBLE OUT.

LANCE: Records, papers, letters. Nosey.

F/X LANCE PICKS UP AN ENVELOPE.

LANCE: (READS) Dear Father Christmas?

F/X AN ENVELOPE IS TORN OPEN, A LETTER REMOVED AND UNFOLDED.

LANCE: (READS) My name is Lance Reid and I've recently moved to a new home in Newcastle. Which is upon a Tyne to make me easier to find.

Two months ago my dad died of something that was all my fault. Because of an accident with his needle when I was feeding him. And so I don't deserve things like other boys.

Except the chance to say sorry to my dad for killing him.

LANCE: (READS) And so all I want for Christmas is to have him back. Even just for a little bit to say sorry. To help with the pain. To wipe it away. If only for a few precious seconds.

Lance Reid. Aged seven years old.

PS. I've included his passport so

RHONA: (ON PHONE) It's not. Cos that meeting with Sophie. I wish that could be me. I wish I could be better –

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Listen, Rhona –

RHONA: (ON PHONE) And I know, I know you've probably got much bigger fish to fry than me. I imagine you're sat there now with all your friends living life. Telling them about your allergies.

But I'm not. I'm sat here on my own thinking about you –

F/X (OFF) A SWIFT KNOCK AND AN OFFICE DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

RHONA: (SNAPS) Not now, Tanya.

F/X (OFF) THE OFFICE DOOR CLOSES.

RHONA: (ON PHONE) I think I could love you, Lance.

Are you there?

Are you listening?

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) Yes.

RHONA: (ON PHONE) I've had a glass of white.

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) I'm sorry.

RHONA: (ON PHONE) I don't want you to be sorry.

LANCE: (INTO PHONE) I need to go.

F/X LANCE ENDS THE CALL. BEEP.

GLADYS: You lost someone, lad?

LANCE: Have you seen a little boy?

GLADYS: What's his name?

LANCE: Max. He's not long moved in along the road. Knocked at yours the other day and asked my name.

GLADYS: I've not. Though you might care to flick your music off next time you leave the house.

LANCE: Sorry?

GLADYS: That garish blare coming from yours. I was forced to Sky Plus and pop up the Spar –

F/X LANCE DASHES OFF.

LANCE: I need to go.

GLADYS: (SHOUTS) You seen Payday Paula about that catalogue yet?

SCENE 25 STREET - OUTSIDE THE REID HOUSE (18:45)

F/X DOGS BARKING BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR.

F/X LANCE RUNS UP TO THE HOUSE.

WENDY: Mr. Reid? It's Wendy.

LANCE: She said there was a blare.

WENDY: I'm assuming you're fully aware that I've been trying to
get in touch –

LANCE: You'll have to come back –

WENDY: I have already frequented the property on a number of
occasions, Mr. Reid –

**F/X THE FRONT DOOR IS UNLOCKED AS LANCE RACES
INSIDE, SLAMS IT BEHIND HIM.**

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) Please, Mr. Reid?

SCENE 26 THE REID HOUSE - VARIOUS (18:46)

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) Lance?

**F/X LANCE RACES THROUGH THE HOUSE, RIPPING
CARDBOARD BOXES FROM HIS PATH.**

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Mam?

F/X HE RIPS THE CONTENTS FROM THE BOXES.

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Where are the photo albums? The ones of
dad –

F/X HE EMPTIES MORE BOXES.

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Where are you?

F/X HE EMPTIES MORE BOXES.

LANCE: (SHOUTS) Max?

**F/X A DULL THUD AS A FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM FALLS
OUT. LANCE STOPS, PAUSES, PICKS IT UP.**

WENDY: (OFF, SHOUTS) I'll wait all night if I have to –

**F/X LANCE OPENS THE ALBUM, TURNS ITS TACKY
PAGES, PEELS A PHOTOGRAPH FROM PLASTIC.**

F/X **HE TURNS ANOTHER PAGE, PEELS ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH FREE.**

LANCE: (READS) Michael Max Reid. Aged seven. Tynemouth.

MUSIC **NEIL**
SEDAKA PLAYS IN THE NEXT ROOM, MUFFLED BEHIND CARDBOARD BOXES.

F/X **APPREHENSIVE FOOTSTEPS ALONG A WOODEN FLOOR.**

LANCE: You can't be in there. Of anywhere. Are you listening?

We're not allowed –

F/X **LANCE REMOVES CARDBOARD BOXES FROM HIS PATH AS NEIL BLARES INTO BEAUTIFUL CLARITY.**

MAX: Hiya, pal.

LANCE: It's time for you to leave.

MAX: But we're having a welcome home party.

MAM: It was Max's idea –

LANCE: That's not his name.

MAX: It is.

LANCE: Not your real name. Your first name –

LANCE: Because I was on the mend. I am on the mend. I've never once seen people that weren't really here. And so I know you're not sitting there. I know you're not talking. That it's not you.

I am better.

MAM: He's just showing off, Dad –

MAX: (SNAPS) Don't snap at your mother like that.

LANCE: (BEAT) You're not him.

MAX: But I've put our favourite record on –

LANCE: Mine and his. Not yours. (SHOUTS) Never yours.

MAM: Will I put my favourite record on?

LANCE: I don't know who you've been talking to –

MAM: We can all have a bop –

LANCE: Or what you think you know –

MAM: You used to be such a bonny little mover, Lance –

LANCE: Or what you're really doing here but –

MAX: I know what happened that day.

LANCE: She shouldn't've left me alone with him. I was only your age, did she tell you that?

Look how little he is, mam.

MAM: I couldn't watch him disappear –

LANCE: So you just left me to?

MAM: We used to dance on tables to this song, me and your dad –

MAX: Put this world to rights like there was no tomorrow –

MAM: And sing in that street at the top of our voices –

LANCE: You're a bitch. And a very bad drunk.

MAX: Once upon a time she wasn't –

LANCE: Get out –

MAX: Because once upon a time you were just a boy –

MAX: But where he once fed you, there came a time that you had to feed him –

LANCE: I didn't have to –

MAX: With tiny hands that could barely hold the syringe –

LANCE: I wanted to. I could hold it.

MAX: You stepped on my lead and the needle came out.

LANCE: I know.

MAX: The cannula. My line.

LANCE: It was an accident.

MAX: I know it was.

I know you tried to feed it back in. I know you couldn't.
That you sat with me until your mam came home –

LANCE:

LANCE: It's fine.

DOCTOR TATE: And the job? Settling in? Making new wee pals?

LANCE: I feel right at home.

DOCTOR TATE: And is there to be an erection with your name all over it popping up in the city centre any time soon?

LANCE: I'm more lampposts and pavements.

DOCTOR TATE: Super. And where are we at with Wendy the Clutter Wizard?

LANCE: I'm meeting her in an hour.

DOCTOR TATE: Now is that prospect conjuring up any degree of anxiety?

LANCE: Not really.

DOCTOR TATE: On our zero to ten point scale, zero being relatively calm and ten being quite frenzied.

LANCE: Zero, Doctor Tate.

SCENE 28 THE REID HOUSE - DINING ROOM (15:00)

**F/X A CLINICAL RUBBER GLOVE IS SNAPPED AROUND
A FAT FIST.**

WENDY: You are aware I am at liberty to inform the hospital as to
my findings?

LANCE: I am.

WENDY: And where to start.

**F/X A FINGER SLIDES ALONG SURFACES, IS RUBBED,
SNIFFED.**

WENDY: Spotless skirting boards.

F/X A CUSHION IS PUNCHED.

WENDY: Matalan cushions.

F/X AN OLD OAK TABLE IS TAPPED.

WENDY: And a keen eye for pre-war décor. You remind me of a
young me. It's gorgeous, Lance.

LANCE: Thank you.

WENDY: And is that the distinct blast of bergamot I detect?

LANCE: It's a seven-course fusion cuisine banquet with banana
fritters for after.

WENDY: A what, my love?

LANCE: I was just about to sit down to my tea.

WENDY: Tha

MAM:

(ANSWERPHONE MESSAGE) Anyhow, I'm coming home. Quelle surprise it went belly up with Diego but I won't be accused of being bitter. It's his loss and that Spain's not all it's cracked up to be; Eurovision's got a lot to answer for.

I've 554.83ETBT1 0 0 1 ETBT1 0 0 1578-303IC005F5 12 Tf1 0 0 1 198.05

SCENE 29 **CITY COUNCIL - MAIN OFFICE** **(10:30)**

F/X **OFFICE ACOUSTIC.**

RHONA: We appear to have navigated quite the U-turn, Lance.

LANCE: Sorry?

RHONA: Your draft plan for the Elswick Park Regeneration Project.
It's really good, clearly written, precise.

LANCE: Thank you.

RHONA: Keep turning in reports like this and you might just be
urban design material after all.

LANCE: I will. I promise.

Was that all, Rhona?

RHONA: Well. Um. I would also like to thank you for last night.

LANCE: You're very welcome.

RHONA: And I did also just want to say, without sounding –

LANCE: What?

RHONA: In terms of dating and mating –

LANCE: Was it the sweet and sour dipping sauce?

RHONA: Sorry?

LANCE: Was it too spicy?

RHONA: Cool.

F/X **RHONA WALKS AWAY.**

MUSIC **COMFORT BLANKET WHISTLING TRACK UNDER.**

LANCE: (V.O) I have one wild and wonderful dream where a magpie swoops down to steal me away.

He flies me to France where we have a baguette. No butter. No French filling. Brie, onions or snails. Just baguette. Just bread. Just flour and yeast and a pinch of salt.

Just food. Just food that's good for me.

Like it's nice. Like I deserve it. Like I'm finally good.

MUSIC **WHISTLING TRACK OUT.**

CREDITS.

END.