

FADE IN:

A BLACK SCREEN. TIMECODE COUNTING, 'REC' LIGHT FLASHING.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
(as Kermit the Frog)
It's the Muppet Show, with our very
special guest, Greta Garbo, yaay...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Oh shit, wait a second...

A LENS CAP is whipped off, the DV CAMERA shifted into place.

INT. LIVING ROOM, GRETA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

DV CAM POV: A low coffee table loaded with the remnants of a meal, WINE BOTTLES, ROLLING PAPERS. On a beanbag sprawls GRETA, attractive, mid-20s. She's wearing a thick towelling robe, holding a LARGE JOINT and right now is centre stage.

GRETA
Oh, darlink, I hev already tolt
you, I want to be alooone...

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)
Was that Garbo or Bela Lugosi?

GRETA
(laughing)
Fuck you. Darlink.

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)
Back up and do Kermit again.
Please... just do the arms...

A beat. She tokes hard on the joint - then suddenly flings her arms about in an uncannily Kermit-like way. She passes the joint to a HAND behind the camera, shaking with laughter.

CAMERAMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You know who did a great Dracula?

GRETA
Yes. Mainly 'cos of his enormous
fangs. They could scare small kids.

A beat. The camera ZOOMS IN on Greta's face.

CAMERAMAN (O.S.)
Do you miss him?

GRETA
Turn it off, you arse.

JUMP CUT TO:

DV CAM POV: Greta up close to the lens, examining the camera.

CAMERAMAN (O.S)
 Do you see a red light? So it isn't
 recording, right?
 (she sits back)
 So do you? Miss him?

Greta starts to speak, then gets up and walks out.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

DV CAM POV: TRACKING hesitantly to the BEDROOM DOOR.

CAMERAMAN (O.S)
 Hey, I don't want to be alooone...

Greta, FAG in hand, YANKS the door open, staring hard.

GRETA
 What? What are you doing?
 (glaring into the lens)
 Is this what you want? Happy now?

EXT. SPACE - DAY / NIGHT

Deep in the galaxy streaking past an endless stream of
 BLURRED BALLS OF LIGHT. AMBIENT MUSIC builds.

The words 'LAST STAND PRODUCTIONS PRESENT' flicker into life
 in the distance, drift forward and dissolve again.

The title 'FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIES' does the same.

WOMAN (V.O)
 It's too fast...

The glowing auras take shape: STARS shooting towards us, then
 gone in an instant.

MAN (V.O)
 I don't remember most of the stuff
 I got taught at school. Especially
 science, that was the worst...

We speed onwards towards PLANET EARTH's iridescent blues,
 abruptly hurtling through layers of ATMOSPHERE and CLOUD...

MAN (V.O) (CONT'D)
 ...formulae, circuits, equations
 they all washed right over me. But
 one thing did fix in my brain, one
 of the first rules we learned...

We're now bearing down fast upon a MULTITUDE OF CITY LIGHTS -

MAN (V.O) (CONT'D)
 Speed equals Distance over Time...

- and as we hit STREET LEVEL, suddenly everything SLOWS:
People float by, taxis and cars coast down packed streets.

A YOUNG MAN drifts slowly through the London crowds.

MAN (V.O) (CONT'D)
Speed. Equals Distance. Over Time.

Head bowed, he blends into the night. The NEON STREET LIGHTS
LOSE FOCUS, BLUR, merge with the ONRUSHING STARS from before.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O)
I've got to tell you something...

INT. LIVING ROOM, WOMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The YOUNG WOMAN, PALLID, SHAKING, paces back and forth.
Standing stock still in the centre of the room is the YOUNG
MAN, face taut with tension. She stops pacing, faces him.

WOMAN
I don't think I can come with you.

MAN
Do you think I should stay?

WOMAN
No, it's a great chance for you...

MAN
I thought it was a chance for us.

WOMAN
It was...is...

MAN
Last night we said goodbye to most
of our friends. What the fuck
changed in 24 hours?

WOMAN
It's not these past 24 hours, it's
more... I mean, I love you, but -

MAN
Stop. Before you say anything else,
understand one thing - I won't be
the best friend who holds your hand
while you break up with me.

WOMAN
What?!?

MAN
No, fuck that, there's no way.

WOMAN
Who said anything about splitting up?

MARSHALL
Greta? Greta! Hello!

She can't hear him. Marshall hangs up and speeds dials.

GRETA (PHONE)
'Close Up', Features.

MARSHALL
You know, I keep getting these anonymous calls from some no doubt desperate woman, but the tease never says a word. Least not to me.

INTERCUT WITH: INT. 'CLOSE UP' MAGAZINE OFFICE - SAME
GRETA is at her desk in a bustling open-plan office.

GRETA
Huh? Marshall?

MARSHALL
It's a real disappointment. I mean, no heavy breathing, no kinky suggestions. What's all that about?

Greta rummages in her pocket. Sure enough, her MOBILE'S UNLOCKED KEYPAD has dialled Marshall's.

GRETA
Oh shit, not again.

MARSHALL
How is it you still never lock your keypad? Wasn't the last enormous bill motivation enough?

GRETA
A full bikini wax gone, never to return. But, actually perfect because I needed to call you.

MARSHALL
Ditto. Hey, I burnt this top CD for you - Best Cover Versions: 'It Must Be Love', Madness; 'Hallelujah', Jeff Buckley; 'Respect', Aretha, 'Dub Be Good To Me', Beats Internat-

GRETA
Argh! That crappy Fatboy Slim rip-off of one of my favourite tracks?

MARSHALL
Nobody remembers the SOS Band.

GRETA
I do. Some things you don't mess with. Shame on the thieving Fatboy. And on you, sir, for promoting him!

MARSHALL

And thieving Jeff or Aretha?

GRETA

They're geniuses. They don't copy, they transcend. Whereas your Fatboy-

MARSHALL

OK, OK, consider him gone... So what time do you want me to come by? I can finish filming by 8.

GRETA

Yeah, listen, that's why I wanted to call. Something's come up and I don't know if I can make tonight.

MARSHALL

Christ, they work you. What else do we need to know about J.Lo's arse?

GRETA

It's not work, actually.

MARSHALL

Right... So what's so important it torpedoed our regular Wednesdays?

GRETA

Well...oh fuck it, I'd have told you by tomorrow morning anyway. I'm... meeting 'someone'...

From inside, Marshall's LANDLINE PHONE rings. He ignores it.

MARSHALL

Right. You kept that pretty quiet.

GRETA

No big deal. It's only dinner. Maybe a quick shag if all goes well...(silence) That's a joke.

Marshall walks back inside. The landline continues to ring.

MARSHALL

Anyone I know?

Greta's boss, HAL, a ruddy, imposing figure, pokes his head out of his office, beckons her over. She nods.

GRETA

(to Marshall)

I gotta run. Thanks for being a love about this. All the gossip tomorrow, promise.

MARSHALL

Can't wait. Have fun.

GRETA

Bye, darling.

INT. MARSHALL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marshall hangs up, entering an OLD-FASHIONED DRAWING ROOM, a riot of DIFFERENT FABRICS, PATTERNS, STYLES, all violently battle for your attention. The ANSAPHONE clicks into gear.

MESSAGE VOICE

"Hello this is Millie Graham. I'm sorry I can't come to the phone but please leave a message and I'll call you back. Thank you."...Dear, who am I calling? (BEEP)

Marshall absent-mindedly flicks dust from the sideboard, brushing a photo of himself and an ELDERLY LADY. It's flanked by CARDS titled 'With Deepest Sympathy' and 'In Memoriam'.

The phone message starts: CRACKLE, LOUD BACKGROUND NOISE, an indecipherable TANNOY ANNOUNCEMENT. Then it clicks off.

INT. BAGGAGE HALL, HEATHROW AIRPORT - DAY

Yet another YOUNG GUY hangs up the phone. Late 20s, weather-beaten but good looking. This is JACOB.

INT. MEN'S ROOM, HEATHROW AIRPORT - DAY

Jacob splashes cold water on his face, checks his reflection in the mirror. He glances at his watch and heads off.

INT. BASEMENT EDITING SUITE - DAY

Marshall sits distractedly at his desk, clicks the mouse.

MAN (ONSCREEN)

I don't buy it...

INT. BEDROOM, WOMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

MARSHALL'S FILM CONTINUES: The Young Man sits upright on the edge of the bed, the Young Woman perches on the window frame, the sash slightly open to allow cigarette smoke out.

MAN

... you playing the martyr. Either tell me that the relationship isn't working, or that you don't want to be in the relationship-

The Woman slams her hand almost through the window.

WOMAN

Why do I always have to make the fucking decisions for us? Can't you be the sodding adult just once?

INT. TUBE (MOVING) - DAY

Jacob's body gently vibrates to the rhythm of the train. He stares out at the black tunnels as they shoot by.

MAN (V.O.)
Listen, you can say that, but I
refuse to accept that as an excuse.

INT. BUS - DAY

Half of LONDON'S COMMUTERS pile into Greta's bus. She all but disappears as the doors shut and it pulls away.

WOMAN (V.O.)
You're so unfair! Can't you see
what you're doing?

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY (EVENING)

Jacob steps out from the underground, backpack slung over his shoulder, into a familiar city. He gazes around. He's back.

MAN (V.O.)
Hey, we agreed to go to New York. We
agreed to try and get some space for
ourselves. Yes, I'm the one with a
chance to work - which makes a change
from the last fucking six months -
but last I remember, you saw a lot in
it for you too.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY (EVENING)

Greta at the bedside of a COMATOSE YOUNG WOMAN, connected to various MEDICAL MONITORS, A DRIP. Greta strokes her face.

WOMAN (V.O.)
How can you be so fucking
insensitive when you know what's
happened to her?

MAN (V.O.)
It's been a year. It could be ten.

WOMAN (V.O.)
You think the whole world revolves
around you and me? Sorry, of course
you do - you're an actor.

INT. JACOB'S FLAT - DAY (EVENING)

A stack of UNTOUCHED WINDOW ENVELOPES. Jacob turns on his stereo without checking its contents, hits 'Play'. The Jayhawks' 'Sound of Lies' CD starts. He quickly turns it off.

MAN (V.O.)
That's just it. Our relationship's,
never been just about you and me.

INT. BEDROOM, WOMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The couple sit side by side on the bed, somehow look smaller.

WOMAN
It's too fast.

MAN
What do you mean, "it's too fast"?

WOMAN
(anguished)
It all feels a little too fast...

MAN
What...what does that mean?

Silence. Suddenly, the vintage BELL ALARM CLOCK on the
bedside table TRILLS like a fire alarm. They both jump.

She flicks it off, apologetically. They both almost smile.

INT. GRETA'S KITCHEN - DAY (EVENING)

Greta finishes off a MICROWAVE PASTA BAKE. She spits out some
CELLOPHANE, scoops the whole package into the bin in disgust.

MAN (V.O) (CONT'D)
Listen, it all comes down to what
do you want. It's very simple. And
maybe you don't know about other
stuff but this I thought you knew.

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - DAY (EVENING)

Jacob unpacks his duffle bag. From the open top bedside
drawer he takes out a FRAMED PHOTO. Him and Greta.

MAN (V.O) CONT'D)
I don't know what else you want. I
don't know what else to offer.

He replaces the picture beside a COLLECTION OF VIDEO TAPES,
closes the drawer.

INT. GRETA'S BEDROOM - DAY (EVENING)

Greta stares back at her unadorned face in the mirror. She
dabs MOISTURIZING CREAM in languid circles around her cheeks.

WOMAN (V.O.)
What do you think? What do you
think I want you to do?

INT. SHOWER, JACOB'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jacob sits in the shower, water splashing wildly off his body.

MAN (V.O.)
 I think you think you're sparing
 me. That you're going to call this
 off before you hurt my feelings.
 Let me tell you, you're too late.

INT. GRETA'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Greta, beautifully dressed and made-up, dials her phone. It rings and rings. She checks her watch, pacing.

GRETA
 Uh, hi Mum, it's me again... I've
 left a couple of messages now, hope
 you're getting them. I saw Anna
 today...Uh, anyway, hope you and
 Dad are well. Call me when you can.

WOMAN (V.O.)
 OK. I suppose you're right. Well, I
 guess there's nothing more to say.

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jacob pulls on his jacket, checks the flat.

MAN (V.O.)
 I'm leaving now. And I'm getting a
 plane tomorrow morning, as planned.

Jacob leaves, pulling the door behind him.

INT. BEDROOM, WOMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Young Man throws a PLANE TICKET to the floor.

MAN
 Here's your ticket. Do whatever you
 want with it.

WOMAN
 That's your final word, is it?

MAN
 Actions, not words. Do it or don't.
 The rest is fucking hot air.

He strides out. She waits. The door closes sharply. The CAMERA DRIFTS TOWARDS THE WINDOW, lifting up towards the STARS, strangely clear on a cloudless night.

The picture FREEZES.

INT. BASEMENT EDIT SUITE - DAY

Marshall surrounded by these frozen images on the monitors, the Young Man's voice continues as...

MAN (V.O.)
 Supposedly time isn't this linear thing and it can be proved that past, present and future are all eternal. There is no beginning...

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

...he sits in a HUGE BLACK LEATHER SWIVEL CHAIR, spotlit by a LOOMING 'REDHEAD' LAMP, talking directly into a DV CAMERA.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)
 Thing is, if that's true, why do 'endings' feel so final...

MARSHALL (O.S.)
 Cut.

The main light clicks on. Behind the DV camera Marshall checks the MONITOR. The Young Man turns towards the Young Woman on the bed beside him - but enough 'Man' and 'Woman':

Meet KATIE, a slim brunette with a permanently creased brow; and LEO, smooth angular features, lovingly mussed hair.

Further back, A GANGLY YOUTH, late teens, wearing headphones, gently lowers the BOOM MIC and examines it. This is JEAN-LUC.

LEO
 (to Katie)
 Have I got something in my teeth?
 (to Marshall, garbled)
 Well?

MARSHALL
 Yeah... How did it feel for you?

LEO
 Honestly? Like being on Sigmund Freud's couch. Maybe I should do the scene holding a big cigar.

KATIE
 (examining Leo's teeth)
 Why, is he a big smoker?

MARSHALL
 Constructive as ever, Leo, thanks.

LEO
 You asked.

MARSHALL
 (to Jean-Luc)
Jean-Luc, qu'est-ce que tu penses?

Jean-Luc shrugs and adjusts the boom pole.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
I'm open to suggestions.

LEO
(under his breath)
Obviously.

Silence. Leo swivels his chair around, digging at his teeth. Katie absently spills some A4 SCRIPT PAGES to the floor.

MARSHALL
OK, try it one more time as before -

LEO
(swinging back round)
Seriously?

MARSHALL
Yes, seriously. Places everyone.

Marshall repositions the camera, turns the main lights off. Leo adjusts himself in the chair, muttering unhappily. Katie hunkers down out of sight, grabbing at spilled script pages.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
(to Leo)
How about trying it quite wry - you know it's a little precious - but you do believe what you're saying and ultimately, it still hurts.

LEO
Fine.

Marshall checks the camera. Jean-Luc gives him the nod. He presses the 'RECORD' button. DV CAM POV, flashing 'REC'.

MARSHALL
Leo, move a fraction left. Good. Ready? Let's give it a shot.

Jean-Luc puts on his headphones and steadies the boom...

Leo settles down, eyes alert...

Marshall checks the monitor one last time...

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Speed... and...

A faint 'KLINK' as the REDHEAD bulb blows. Total darkness.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
Cut. Jesus Christ...

He flails about for the main light switch and flicks it on.

LEO
Never trust a redhead, eh? Mind you
if they blow when you least expect
it that's not such a bad thing.

KATIE
Charming.

MARSHALL
(to Jean-Luc)
You bought spares, right?
(Jean-Luc winces)
Shit. Wait there...

Marshall stomps out, cursing. Jean-Luc shrinks back into the corner, boom mic still on, opens up a LAPTOP, starts typing and clicking away. Katie drifts back over to Leo.

LEO
The glamour of indie filmmaking.