

9 Brayford Close

By

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EXT. LATE AFTERNOON - LONDON CITY STREET

SOUND: FX OF CARS DRIVING AND BEEPING IN BUSY TRAFFIC. FEET SHUFFLE ALONG CONCRETE FLOOR.

OTIS (38) walks through the bustling city where he lives out his days. His clothes are tattered and his breath shakes from the cold.

OTIS (V.O)

There's not much a father wont do for his kid. But there's not much an alcoholic wouldn't do for that sweet stuff. I've made my fair share of wrong choices, and look where they got me. Living on the streets on the day a father is meant to be with his kid.

SOUND: GROUP OF CAROL SINGERS LIGHTLY SINGING 'SILENT NIGHT'. MUMBLING CHATTER OF PASSING STRANGERS. A MAN BUMPS INTO OTIS, KNOCKING HIS BREATH.

STRANGER

(angrily)

Oi, watch it, drifter.

OTIS

I...I'm sorry.

SOUND: OTIS MOVES INTO AN ALLEYWAY WHERE HIS STEPS ECHO.

Otis's clothes rustle as he sits down on the wet floor. Another pair of steps echo shortly after his.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ECHO AND RUSTLING CLOTHES.

DANNY

(sarcastially)

Wow, don't you have the christmas spirit bubbling out of you, mate.

OTIS

Not now, Danny.

DANNY

Come on now, Otis. Don't be a spoil sport. You know what'll cheer you up?

SOUND: FX LIQUID SPLASHING ON THE INSIDE OF A BOTTLE.

(CONTINUED)

OTIS
Drinking is the reason I'm in this
mess in the first place.

He shakes his head, his whole body heavy with grief.

DANNY
You could always head home for
Christmas. Might be a nice surprise
for the little one, eh?

OTIS
(bleakly)
That would be a miracle...

Danny stuffs his hand into his coat pocket and pulls out
some change.

SOUND: COINS CLATTER AGAINST EACH OTHER AS THEY'RE DROPPED
INTO OTIS' HAND.

DANNY
Here you go, mate. Call it your
Christmas present this year.

EXT. LATE AFTERNOON - OUTSIDE KENSINGTON GARDENS

Otis fiddles with the change as he stands next to a
telephone box. He shifts his weight nervously from one foot
to the other.

DANNY
It'll be Christmas Day by the time
you pick up that phone. Hurry up,
mate, I'm freezing my bollocks off
here.

SOUND: OTIS PICKS UP THE PHONE AND DIALS THE NUMBER. THE
PHONE RINGS. HIS BREATH IS HEAVY WITH ANXIETY.

A soft, female voice answers. Light Christmas music is
playing in the background.

LINDA
Hello?

Otis falls silent with nerves.

LINDA
(agitated)
Hello? If this is a prank call then
I'm hanging...

(CONTINUED)

OTIS
Linda?

Linda pauses before speaking.

LINDA
(angrily)
Why are you calling the house?

OTIS
Honey, it's Christmas Eve...

LINDA
Why are you calling the house,
Otis? I told you, you can't have
anything to do with us anymore.
You're not safe to be around.

OTIS
I know...I know. I just...I just
wanted to talk to her.

SOUND: DISTORTED HARSH LAUGHTER CAN BE HEARD THROUGH THE
PHONE LINE.

LINDA
You've got to be kidding me. You
have never been a father to our
little girl. You have some nerve,
Otis...

OTIS
Please. If I could just see her, or
maybe just wish her a...

SOUND: THE DULL RING SOUNDS AS LINDA HAS HUNG UP, THE MUSIC
NOWHERE TO BE HEARD.

OTIS
(hopelessly)
...A merry Christmas.

SOUND: OTIS LOUDLY PLACES THE PHONE BACK ON THHE HOOK.

DANNY
Hey, look. At least you tried?

Otis shakes his head angrily.

OTIS
I ain't done yet.

EXT. EARLY EVENING - UNDER A TUNNEL

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ECHO SLIGHTLY UNDER THE BRIDGE AS PEOPLE RUSH HOME FOR CHRISTMAS. SOUNDS OF CARS DRIVING OVERHEAD CAN BE HEARD.

Otis holds out his cap as he begs for money from passing strangers.

OTIS

(rushed)

Excuse me sir, could you spare some change...Miss? Any spare change? You sir, please lend us a few pennies.

OTIS (V.O)

There aren't many of those on Christmas Eve who are keen to part with their earnings. And who could blame them? I spent every moment and every pound I had on booze. I would have done anything to make that up to my little girl. All it would take was one kind stranger on a cold Christmas Eve.

A large, grey-bearded man in a puffy coat waddled over to a downhearted Otis.

LARGE MAN

Here. It isn't much. It's all I have on me.

The man digs in his pocket for a ten pound note and hands it over to Otis.

OTIS

Thank you. That's very kind.

LARGE MAN

Well, we'd all be doomed without a little bit of kindness. Put it to good use, you hear?

OTIS

I will. I will, thank you!

The large man gives a chuckle and begins to walk away.

EXT. EARLY EVENING - LONDON STREET

Otis walks along the street, clutching his ten pound note in his gloved hand. Shops begin to close for Christmas. Vendors advertise their christmas stock and roasting chestnuts out loud as Otis window shops.

SOUND: VENDORS VOICES FADE IN AND OUT OF EACH OTHER AT OTIS PASSES.

VENDOR 1

Chestnuts! Get your delicious roasted chestnuts here!

VENDOR 2

Santa hats, christmas stockings, going for two pounds! That's two pounds, ladies and gents, last chance!

VENDOR 3

Get your warm cup of mulled wine, ready to go. Finest you can find, mulled wine, right here!

Otis slows down to the mulled wine stall, his eyes fixed on the red, hot liquid.

OTIS (V.O)

Now that's problem with addictions, you see. They pop up, ready for you at your weakest moment. Just look at it: so delicious. I can almost taste it...

VENDOR 3

Oi you, get out of here! Don't need no homeless man scaring away my customers. Go on, get!

INT. EVENING - TOY SHOP

SOUND: FX THE RING OF A BELL ABOVE THE DOOR. THE SONG 'STEP INTO CHRISTMAS - ELTON JOHN' PLAYS OVER THE SPEAKERS.

Otis walks into the small toy store. The elderly owner looks up and notices his customer. He rushes from his desk, waving his hands dismissively.

OWNER

No, none of that. You people, every year! This is a shop, not your one-stop heating system.

(CONTINUED)

OTIS
No, please...

OWNER
Years I've owned this shop and had
no trouble. Yet every Christmas,
you people are like clockwork. Go
on. Out.

Otis pulls the note from his pocket and waves it in front of
the owner's face.

OTIS
Look, I have money. I have money.

The owner pauses and points at the ten pounds.

OWNER
Did you steal that money?

OTIS
No, sir. Please...I just wanna
treat my little girl. She'll be so
disappointed. I can't let her down.
I just can't.

SOUND: THE OWNER HUFFS.

OWNER
Well, what kind of thing were you
looking for?

OTIS
Anything ten pounds can get me. And
pink! She likes pink.

The owner's surprise at Otis' persistence wins over and he
chuckles lightly.

OWNER
Well now, let's have a look see.

SOUND: A BOX WITH PIECES INSIDE IS SHOOK

OWNER
Does she like puzzles? No? Looking
to win her over, are you?

OTIS
(sighing)
I just want to give her something
special...

(CONTINUED)

The owner pauses, realising it must be a sensitive subject. He walks over to a shelf.

OWNER

Let's see...

SOUND: HE SHUFFLES THROUGH SOME TOYS, SOME RATTLE, SOME SQUEAK.

OWNER

Ah, a little doll for a little girl. That'll do the trick.

The shop owner presents Otis with a beautifully woven doll with candy-floss hair.

OTIS

It's perfect. But I don't have quite enough...

OWNER

It'll be our little secret.

INT. EVENING - TOY SHOP CONTINUES

SOUND: FX TILL OPENING, CHANGE RATTLING AND A RECIEPT PRINTING.

Otis pays for the doll and looks at it, a pleased smile gracing his face.

OWNER

Here. Let me wrap it up for you.

SOUND: A LARGE SHEET OF WRAPPING PAPER IS PLACED ON THE PAPER AND NOISILY FOLDED OVER THE DOLL. HE STRETCHES SOME CELOTAPE AND CUTS A PIECE.

OWNER

So how far have you gotta go? It's real dark out.

OTIS

Brayford Close.

SOUND: THE OWNER TUTS.

OWNER

That's miles out! You can't walk that on a night like this. You'll freeze to death.

(CONTINUED)

OTIS

With all due respect, mister, I don't have a choice. I've been a terrible father, and ruined my family. I ain't gonna ruin Christmas for her too.

SOUND: THE OWNER SIGHS.

OWNER

Now I can't say much for you past. But you seem to have good intentions for now at least...Tell you what? I'll drive you. I'll close up, grab my keys and we'll go make your kid's christmas right, how's that?

OTIS

I couldn't ask...

OWNER

You're not asking. I'm telling.

The owner passes the wrapped up present to Otis and gives a firm nod.

EXT. LATE EVENING - LINDA'S HOUSE

SOUND: CAR PULLING OVER, BREAKS PROTESTING SLIGHTLY. OTIS OPENS THE CAR DOOR AND SHUTS THE CAR DOOR BEHIND HIM. OTIS WAVES AND THE CAR PULLS AWAY, GIVING A LIGHT HONK OF THE HORN. 'ROCKING AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE - BRENDA LEE' CAN BE HEARD PLAYING LIGHTLY FROM THE HOUSE.

OTIS (V.O)

Everybody is capable of kindness. But not everybody chooses to show it. Everybody is capable of messing up what's good in their life. But not everybody chooses to right it.

SOUND: OTIS PLACES THE PRESENT AT THE DOOR AND KNOCKS LOUDLY, RUNNING AWAY FROM SIGHT. THE DOOR OPENS. THE MUSIC GETS LOUDER.

A little girl in pink pyjamas steps out onto the cold, wet steps.

DAUGHTER

Hello?

(CONTINUED)

She notices the present waiting on the step. She picks it up.

SOUND: SHE SHREDS THE WRAPPING PAPER AND SQUEALS.

DAUGHTER
(excitedly)
Mummy! Mummy, look at the dolly!
Santas been! Look, look!

Linda walks over to her daughter and picks her up, looking outside curiously to find the person who made her daughter's night.

OTIS (V.O)
Seeing my little girl's face light
up that night made one thing clear.
Not all the booze in the world
could warm my heart like it did in
that moment. I just hope I'll be
there to share it with her this
time next year.

SOUND: THE END OF THE SONG PLAYS AS THE VOICEOVER FADES OUT.

THE END.