

THAT'S LIFE AND ...

A short screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. CITY STREETS, UK - A SATURDAY AFTERNOON

A man in his 30s, wearing jeans and a polo-necked sweater, marches in a demonstration against public sector cuts. He is in a group of protestors wearing white coats and nurses uniforms, and carrying banners reading: KEEP OUR NHS PUBLIC.

PROTESTORS
(shouting)
Patients not profits! Patients not profits!

The man looks at his watch, rolls up his banner, indicates to colleagues he must go, runs down a side street, enters the grounds of a hospital, and runs up the steps.

2 INT. HOSPITAL LOCKER ROOM AND CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

The man squashes his banner into a locker, puts on a white coat, and pushes a stethoscope into his side pocket. Now seen to be a doctor, he walks hospital corridors to a ward, where he enters a side room.

3 INT. WARD SIDE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A curtain is drawn over a window that looks from the room into the ward. In bed is an old man, who looks ill. Above his head is a sign reading: DO NOT RESUSCITATE.

As the DOCTOR enters, the PATIENT opens his eyes. When he speaks it is with a central European accent.

PATIENT
Hello, doc. How are you, then?

The DOCTOR takes a chair to the bedside and sits down.

DOCTOR
I'm good. And you, young man?

PATIENT
Who's the doctor here? You tell me.
But your demo - how was it? Many people?

DOCTOR
Not too many.

PATIENT
People are beaten down now. In my day ...

He stops.

Well, it's not my day any more.
It's my late-at-night.

This prompts him to a thought and he nods toward the sign above his head.

PATIENT (CONT'D)
You're not going to mess me about
on this, are you?

The DOCTOR does not reply.

PATIENT (CONT'D)
(challengingly)
Are you?

The DOCTOR shakes his head.

DOCTOR
Have you got enough medication?

The PATIENT nods.

PATIENT
Off you go. I'll rest now. I'll
even dream myself into a world
where demonstrations are huge.

The DOCTOR gets up. The PATIENT lays his hand on the DOCTOR's arm and they look into each others' eyes for a moment. The PATIENT takes his hand away and the DOCTOR goes to the door. He looks back. The PATIENT has turned his head towards him. They exchange another look and the DOCTOR leaves.

4 INT. CORRIDORS AND A&E WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The DOCTOR continues through the hospital and takes a short cut through the A&E department.

In the waiting area, he sees a man and a teenage girl sitting to one side. They are dressed in black motorcycle leather, and their faces and hands are grazed and smeared with oil. Two helmets are on the floor by their feet. The man has a distraught expression on his face and the girl has her face buried in his lap, sobbing uncontrollably. The girl sits up, and a third helmet and a blood-stained woman's scarf are seen between her hands.

A nurse standing nearby speaks to a colleague.

NURSE 1
(in low voice)
The sidecar was sliced right away.

The colleague closes her eyes, shakes her head, and turns away.

The man and the girl look at each other. The girl puts the scarf to her face and smells it. She breaks into another burst of heartfelt sobbing, as she bends over the man's lap again, closeting the third helmet with her body.

5 INT. A&E WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of the waiting area, a group of teenage girls sit in a row, evidently drunk. They are wearing almost identical short tight dresses and high heel shoes.

One of the girls looks pale and starts to retch. A nurse sitting behind a staff station spots her, rushes round, and shepherds the girl, swaying unsteadily, to a women's toilet.

NURSE 2

Come on, missy, you don't want to
mess up your lovely evening gown -
not to speak of the hospital floor.

6 INT. A&E TREATMENT ROOM AND CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The DOCTOR continues through A&E and enters an emergency treatment room.

A middle aged man is wheeled in on a trolley. He is pale, sweating and barely conscious,. The DOCTOR leans against a wall and watches as the emergency team descends on the patient.

Speech in this scene is mostly inaudible amidst the natural sound of busy activity.

Team members speak to the patient, listen to his heart, take his blood pressure, apply heart leads to his chest, and clip an oximeter to his finger. A monitor displays his vital signs. The heart beat is fast.

A junior doctor attempts to put up a drip in the patient's arm, but is unsuccessful. A woman doctor in her 30s enters the room and assesses the situation. She is in charge. She stops the young doctor from attempting the drip.

WOMAN DOCTOR

You can't use a peripheral vein in
a shocked patient. We need a
central line. Watch.

Under ultrasound guidance she deftly inserts a central line into the patient's neck. The patient's heart arrests and a warning signal is heard. The heart monitor shows a disorganised wavy line.

WOMAN DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 Shit!
 (shouts)
 Quiet!

Silence descends on the room.

WOMAN DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 Pads!

The defibrillator pads are quickly applied.

WOMAN DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 Clear!

Everyone stands back.

An electric shock is delivered. The monitor shows the heart has resumed beating, although very fast and irregularly. The hubbub resumes. The WOMAN DOCTOR orders drugs to be administered through the central line and the heart stabilises into a steady rate and rhythm. The team relaxes.

The observing DOCTOR catches the eye of the WOMAN DOCTOR.

DOCTOR
 Need any help?

The WOMAN DOCTOR feigns indignation.

WOMAN DOCTOR
 (nodding towards the
 monitor)
 What!?

They smile faintly and leave the room together.

7 INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The DOCTOR and WOMAN DOCTOR exchange a quick kiss on the lips.

WOMAN DOCTOR
 (whispering)
 See you later.

8 INT. CORRIDORS, PAEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY WARD AND HOSPITAL CAR PARK - CONTINUOUS

The DOCTOR continues through the hospital and follows signs reading: PAEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY. He enters a ward and shakes hands with the parents of one of his child patients. They look happy.

DOCTOR
 I'm sorry I'm late. I was held up.

MOTHER
Come and look.

The DOCTOR joins the parents as they look through a window into a play room. Here their 8 year old daughter, dressed in outdoor clothes, plays with her friend from the ward. The friend is in pyjamas, while both children wear woolly hats. The daughter looks the picture of health. The friend is pale and has bruises on her face. The children are absorbed in assembling a model train set, which occupies half the floor of the play room.

The three adults enter the play room and the MOTHER goes to her daughter.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Come on, darling, we must go.

The daughter pushes her away and the adults sit to one side to watch the children. It is time to switch the set on. Looking at each other, the children go to opposite ends of the track and press remote controls at the same time. Two trains set off in opposite directions from opposite ends of the line, careering round the track, seemingly destined to crash head on, but somehow in the end just missing.

The MOTHER tries again.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Come on, darling. We really must go.

The daughter gets up and hands her remote to her friend. As she reaches the door, she turns back and the girls' eyes meet for a moment.

In the ward, the adults shake hands again.

FATHER
Thank you for everything.

DOCTOR
She has her tablets?

The MOTHER nods. The DOCTOR shakes hands with the daughter and then crouches down.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
(pointing to his cheek)
I feel there's something missing here.

The daughter gives him a quick peck.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
We all love you, but we don't want to see you here again.

The daughter is now full of smiles. The family leaves.

The DOCTOR goes to the window and watches the family as they walk to their car. They look back, see the DOCTOR at the window, and wave to him cheerfully.

The DOCTOR raises his hand with the palm towards the window. He has a thoughtful expression on his face.

FADE TO BLACK.