

Reason

By

Craig Macintosh

The human population becomes consumed by a contagious
laughter save one man, who attempts to convince four people
living in a secluded valley, yet untouched by what is
happening, that what is is the truth.

EXT. SMALL BUS STOP ON A COUNTRY ROAD (FRIDAY, 10 AM)

An old lady is waiting at the bus stop, a man in his forties sits down next to her, they sit in silence for a while, then he turns to speak. She listens as he talks, nodding and smiling. The traffic passes by in front of them. He finishes talking and she starts to laugh, and laugh and laugh. She cannot stop laughing. The shot holds on her for an uncomfortable time and then cuts.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NEXT

A young mother is driving along a country road with her two children, when up ahead she notices a bus upturned and smoking in a field. There are a few empty cars parked by the side of the road and a scattering of people in contortions around the bus. The young mother tells her kids to stay in the car and she gets out to see if she can help. On approaching the people she sees that some are badly cut up, some have broken limbs, others appear to be fine, but all are laughing hysterically. She approaches one man whose shin is popping out, and tries to communicate with him, telling him she will call for help. She takes out her mobile and dials 999. As she does so she starts to chuckle and before she is able to explain the accident fully to the operator, she is in fits, unable to speak. Her contortions of laughter force her to drop the phone and she falls to the ground, paralysed with laughter. Camera cuts to her children looking out of the car window, smiling.

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN (MIDDAY)

Steadicam Long Take

Alex, (25) is sitting on the tube, staring into nothing. The train pulls up at a station and with the hustle and bustle, he gets off. The camera follows him from behind and as he nears the exit to the station he begins to hear, emanating from the street above, a sound like that of a crowd at a football stadium. As the street comes into view he sees the entire landscape in front of him filled with people rolling around and staggering in fits of laughter. All the traffic is stationary; a number of vehicles having formed a pile up, a police car's rear end sticks out from the shop window it has crashed into, around which the crowd is thickened, an alarm sirens. The noise from the crowd is deafening. His fellow arriving passengers who are around him look on, as he is, dumbstruck in bewilderment and fear, but within little time, their chuckling begins. Some almost immediately burst into fits, others take a little longer, but before Alex has found time to realise what he's witnessing isn't a dream,

there isn't one person left who isn't paralysed with laughter, apart from him.

EXT. STREET - NEXT

Zombie like, Alex sifts through the crowd - Old people, children, parents, teenagers, everyone, swaying like drunks, on their knees, holding their stomachs, crying with laughter. He tries to provoke a response in some, but to no avail - everybody is looking but seeing nothing. He arrives at a road that leads through an underpass to the left and abruptly out of the shopping area, where, like with any other day the crowd thins, and he takes it, but to no offering of normality. Up ahead in the semi darkness of the tunnel he sees a family of four rolling around on the pigeon-shit-chip packet-covered-pavement. The kids are screaming in hysterics, the mother is crying and the father's face is brimming with a grimace of pain and pleasure. Suddenly the man throws up a sprayed burst of sick - He then begins to choke, throws up again, and choke again - at this point Alex runs over to help. The man is extremely malleable and with ease Alex gets him into position - Reluctantly, he puts his hand down the man's throat and out comes a torrent of remaining puke. His wife and children continue to laugh hysterically, and within moments of getting his breath back the father has rejoined them. The horror of what is happening starts to rush through Alex and he begins to run; frantically trying to find someone like him as he passes through street after street, motionless road after road. Stopping for breath he takes out his mobile from his pocket and calls his sister. The line is engaged. To his right on the road he sees a taxi with the driver inside banging his steering wheel in crazed amusement. Guessing the response, he nonetheless tries...

ALEX

Can you take me to Grosvenor
Crescent in the West End please?

The man turns like a robot towards the direction of Alex and though his tears, looks right by him. Alex walks around to the driver's side, opens the door and pulls the man out of the car with only the resistance of his weight against his seat. The man flops to the roadside and Alex drives off towards his sister's house.

INT. TAXI - NEXT

Driving through the motionless traffic towards the West End Alex eventually gets through to his sister.

SUSAN
(coldly)

Yes?

ALEX
Are you ok?

SUSAN
What do you mean?

ALEX
Stay in the house, don't leave.
I'll be over in five minutes.

SUSAN
What's wrong?

ALEX
I...I don't know...Please don't
leave the house.. And don't let
anyone in.

SUSAN
what is...

Alex cuts in

ALEX
Please... Something terrible is
happeni....

DOOF. The taxi hits something on the road. Alex drops the phone and screeches to a stop.

SUSAN
Alex? Alex!!

EXT. STREET - NEXT

Alex opens the taxi door to a roar of laughter coming from a pile up on the other side of the road, he looks back down the road to see a dog lying twenty metres away. He approaches it. It's on a lead. One side of it's head is completely bashed in, from which blood pours. It's already dead. He stares at it. (Beat.)

INT. TAXI - NEXT

Alex enters the taxi and sets off again towards his sister's house. He picks up his mobile and notices the call to his sister is still connected.

ALEX

Susan, you still there?

*Something he had not heard from her for a long time -
Laughter.*

EXT. OUTSIDE SUSAN'S APARTMENT BLOCK - NEXT

Alex sounds the buzzer to his sister's flat. There is no answer. He looks along the street to a man laughing. He presses all the buzzers and waits for a reply. Still nothing. As he prepares himself for smashing through the door, a buzz eventually sounds and he enters.

INT. OUTSIDE SUSAN'S APARTMENT - NEXT

Alex knocks on the door loudly.

ALEX

Susan!! Susan!!

He kicks violently at the door three times. The latch breaks and he enters.

INT. INSIDE SUSAN'S APARTMENT - NEXT

Susan's flat is dark, immaculately clean and unimaginative. She is sitting on the couch appearing to stare at an Ikea bookshelf, pissing herself in amusement. Alex shakes her.

ALEX

Susan!!

Her response is dead, like the taxi driver's, like everyone else's. He turns her head to him but her glazed eyes look nowhere.

ALEX

Susan! It's me. Alex.

He shakes her again. Nothing. He looks toward the bookshelf. (Beat.) He picks up the remote control and switches on the television - the first channel is dead, the next also, the next is playing a black and white film, the next is a

(CONTINUED)

newsreader laughing into the camera. He stares at the TV. He opens the blinds and looks down into the street. The man he saw near the entrance to Susan's flat is still there, still laughing. Alex's eyes move down along the pavement; there is a couple, followed a few metres down by three school kids, followed about ten metres down by a man with groceries scattered around him. As if they have all been stopped in their tracks....

(Beat.)

ALEX

We're going to Mum and Dad's

He picks up Susan and exits the apartment. At the the bottom of the stairwell he looks back up it.

ALEX

(loudly)

Hello!!

There is no reply. They leave.

EXT. ON THE ROAD LEAVING THE CITY - NEXT

Driving out of the city, apart from the motionless traffic and pedestrians, everything else looks normal - the grey clouds loom above, scattered by patches of blue, birds are flying, the trees are green, and the traffic lights are working.

As they leave the city's outskirts, the road starts to clear and upon hitting the countryside they become almost entirely empty, save the odd car once every 500 metres or so. On entering the next town on the way, the images of traffic pile-ups and people motionless return. Alex keeps on driving.

INT. TAXI - NEXT

Alex notices the taxi is low on fuel.

EXT. REMOTE PETROL STATION - NEXT

The taxi pulls into a remote petrol station. Alex exits the car and fuels up. As he is doing so he looks inside the shop - It is small but big enough to sell sandwiches and magazines. There is no one inside.

INT. PETROL STATION SHOP - NEXT

Alex enters the shop. He picks up some food. There is the sound of flushing followed immediately by a young man barging in through a side door behind the till.

YOUNG MAN
(slightly disheveled)
Sorry about that, I thought the world had disappeared... You're the first person I've seen in about 3 hours.

Alex looks at him, wondering what to say. He reacts to speak but hesitates. He puts the food on the counter. The young man watches him.

YOUNG MAN
£34.78.

Alex doesn't react - his mind being somewhere else.
£34.78.

Alex responds...The young man is looking at him intently...Alex pays him....(Beat.)
Are you alright?

INT. PETROL STATION SHOP - NEXT

Alex has told the young man everything that's happened. We reenter at the end of his monologue.

ALEX
...my sister..has it. (Alex looks towards the taxi).... We're driving up to my parent's house.

The young man looks out towards the taxi, but from where he is standing, the petrol pump blocks his view of the back seat and so he goes around the side of the till to get a better look.

ALEX
(reacting, standing in the way of the young man)
Don't go out.

The young man pushes Alex's arm away. He approaches the glass door and looks through it. (Beat.)

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG MAN
(without taking his eyes off
Susan)
So why aren't you laughing?

Alex looks towards his sister

ALEX
I don't know.

The young man grins.

INT. TAXI ALONG RURAL ROAD - AFTERNOON

ALEX
(directing his words with
glances at his sister in the
car mirror as he drives)
This is ridiculous...How is this
happening? (Beat.) Why are you
laughing?! (Beat.) Su????! Susan!!
(Beat.) (he scans his eyes around
the landscape)...What is so
funny?!...(Beat.)(he looks at the
front of the car, where he hit the
dog)...(Long Beat.)

Yesterday I read about a dog that
had been found tied to a tree and
set on fire.

Laughter.

Someone had burned it alive.
(Beat.)

There was a story on the radio the
other month about a woman who was
diagnosed with cancer and told she
had three months to live - so her
and her boyfriend decided to do a
big rushed wedding. Two weeks
later, hundreds of friends and
family had come together to
celebrate at the local church in
their hometown. As the girl arrived
in a horse and cart, her dress
caught the wheel of the carriage
and pulled her off onto the road,
ripping both her arms off on the
way.

Laughter.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (cont'd)

A few days ago the same station returned to the story - She survived the accident, but the cancer took a turn for the worse. She never made it back out of the hospital.

Laughter. Alex stares at his sister as his mind runs with thoughts.

(*Long Beat.*) Mum is dying.

Laughter.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO PARENTS ESTATE "PARK MILL" - LATE AFTERNOON

(*Ten years ago, having retired from successful jobs in the city in their mid forties, Alex's parents (Alistair and Kate) decided to buy thirty acres of land, a ruined mill and two outhouses, situated in a beautifully overgrown valley with a river running through it. Having renovated everything themselves they now live a life of self sufficiency; growing their own crops, rearing their own goats, sheep and chickens and using renewable energy from wind turbines and solar panels*)

Alex pulls up at the entrance of his parent's estate, and leaving his sister in the taxi, walks down the drive.

150 metres before arriving at the house, he passes one of the outbuildings - there is a car sitting outside it. He continues.

INT. HOUSE - NEXT

Alex enters the front door.

ALEX

Mum! Dad!

He walks through the entrance hall and opens a door into the kitchen.

ALEX

(*loudly*)

Mum!.....Dad!

No reply. He looks at the stove. There is a pot slightly steaming.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE - NEXT

Alex walks outside through the back door and heads towards where his parents grow their crops.

ALEX
(shouting)
Mum! Dad!

He stops. In the distance appears his mother coming towards him, smiling and waving.

The shot holds behind Alex, and we see her approaching from background to foreground - understanding from her eyes what she is realising as she nears, her emotions changing.

KATE
What's wrong?

Alex wraps his arms around her and a split second later she reciprocates.

ALEX
Where's Dad?

KATE
He's with the sheep. (Beat.)
(Stepping back) What's wrong, Alex?

ALEX
I don't know (Beat.)...Let's get
dad, and I'll try and explain.

EXT. PARK MILL GROUNDS - NEXT

Alex and his mother walk together in silence through the grounds towards Alex's father. On their way, ahead, Alex notices a couple in their mid forties collecting potatoes.

KATE
(quietly upon approaching the
couple)
It's John Macmillan and his wife.
They've been staying with us for a
few days.

JOHN
(getting to his feet and
calling out)
Alex! Long time.

They shake hands. Failing at the formalities, Alex's mind is clearly somewhere else.

(CONTINUED)

It's John. I used to work with your father. *(he turns around to his wife, to help the recognition he assumes Alex needs)*...And Pam, my wife.

PAM
(smiling, with a short wave)
Hi Alex!

ALEX
(with a smile that isn't meant to be)
Hi.

(Awkward Beat.)

KATE
(interrupting the silence)
We're just going to see Alistair.
We'll see you in a bit.

(Slight Beat.)

JOHN
Ok. See you in a bit.

EXT. PARK MILL GROUNDS - NEXT

Alistair is reading a book, sitting against a tree next to an open field with sheep in it. He doesn't notice his wife and son approaching.

ALEX
Hi Dad.

ALISTAIR
Alex!! *(he gets to his feet and walks the remaining short distance towards his son)*...What's wrong?

He glances at his wife and back to Alex, and saving hearing the reply, hugs his son. After they have parted, Alex looks both his parents in the eyes.

ALEX
Something terrible is happening

...

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT

The five of them are around the rectangular kitchen table, Alex at one head, his father at the other, his mother to his right and John followed by Pam to his left. (We enter after Alex has just described what's happened, against "wind up" accusations that waned and diminished as he continued with unfaltering sincerity).

They are all staring at him, looking out for any nuance that reveals it to be the joke they believe it must be - something to suggest they don't have to worry - that he's not gone mad.

JOHN
 (overly enthusiastic conviction)
 Brilliant!... That really is a goodie.

ALEX
 I do know how this sounds.

(Long Beat.) They are all staring at him. Reading him.

KATE
 (calmly but affirmatively)
 Let's go and get Susan.

ALEX
 No. I don't think you can...I think that you, get it even by seeing someone with it... I think that's what happened with the guy in the petrol station.

KATE
 Alex, this is ridiculous... it's not possible.

They continue to stare at him, trying to work it out from his eyes, but from which give no answer that can be understood.

(Beat.)

Pam gets up and walks to the dresser where her handbag is and takes out her mobile.

PAM
 I'm going to phone Evelyn.

(CONTINUED)

Alex reacts, as if about to say something, but doesn't, and she leaves the room. (Long Beat.) A minute passes and John gets up and leaves to find his wife, confused at himself for doing so. (Beat.)

ALEX

(To Alistair)

I thought there was no reception here.

ALISTAIR

(honoring the question)

John discovered one up by where the sheep are...(returning to the matter at hand)...Alex - why are you ok?... If everyone else has, it, then why don't you?

The significance of those questions hang differently on Alex and he responds with nothing but the slightest shake of the head.

Silence. Looking. Judging.

As Liz realises the certainty that one of her children, but without knowing absolutely for sure which, is unwell, her eyes begin to redden - She turns from looking at her son to her husband.

KATE

(to Alex but looking at Alistair)

Why are you doing this?! (she looks back at Alex)

Alex doesn't respond.

(Long Beat.)

Kate continues her train of thought: her children; knowing for sure, seeing Susan - and she makes a suggestion...

KATE

Ok, walk me up to your sister - blindfold me, so I can at least hear her.

ALEX

(Beat.) I don't think you can do that either. I think that's how Susan got it, through hearing it over the phone. (Beat.) Look... I do know how this sounds. And I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (cont'd)
know that it makes no sense...but
it's the truth... I know if you saw
Susan then you'd *know* for
yourselves, but you can't...You
cant.

ALISTAIR
(despondently)
So we just have to believe you.

(Beat.)

ALEX
Maybe John's got through to Evelyn.
They might have some news.

KATE.
(getting to her feet)
This is insane.

She heads to the door.

ALEX
What are you doing?

KATE
I'm going to see if you're sister
really is here!

Alex gets up and grabs her.

ALEX
Please mum. Please.

KATE
My god Alex, stop this!

ALEX
Mum, I promise you.. I *promise* you
this is happening.

KATE
How can we believe that Alex! (She
pushes to get out of his grasp)

ALISTAIR
Liz!...Just wait...(he sighs)...
Let's just wait for John and Pam to
get back.

EXT. TO INT. PARK MILL GROUNDS TO HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT

Steadicam shot following Pam as she approaches house, enters and walks through to the kitchen. Shot reveals faces of Kate, Alistair and Alex as they read her's.

PAM

We can't get through to her. We can't get through to anyone. Everyone is ringing out or it's going to their answering machines. John's still trying but...Alex -.. my daughter...Is this...Is this really happening?

ALEX

(earnest conviction)
Yes.....Where is Evelyn?

PAM

(Beat.) She's at home...In town...And Caroline.. my sister's looking after her. We have to go back.

Alex subtly shakes his head and then turns to everyone.

ALEX

This is happening... You can't get hold of anyone at (*he looks at his watch*)... 2.30 on a Friday afternoon. Not one person. After me just explaining that the world has stopped in its tracks...There is no point in you going back, Pam... I'm sorry but... if Evelyn is ok then... then she'll get in touch.. It would be for nothing if you go to look for her..you wouldn't make it five miles, I swear.....

They are all staring at him, each with differing emotions - Kate is staring but looking everywhere, Alistair is staring into his eyes, and Pam is staring right through him.

ALEX

I think we're at least safe here.. We can see how things go... It might just be temporary... I mean in all other aspects everyone seems fine, Susan is fine, apart from.. the laughing she seems normal...and I'm, somehow it seems - immune to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (cont'd)
it. We can use that. (Beat.) Let's
stay together here and see what
happens...

(Long Beat.)

Pam lets out a desperately helpless wail.

(Beat.)

ALEX
I'm gonna go and check on Susan.

*He stands up, grabs a bottle of water from above the fridge
and leaves the room.*

(Beat.)

KATE
What's going on Ali?

(Beat.)

ALISTAIR
He believes what he's saying.

KATE
So our son is crazy... everyone has
turned into laughing zombies!...Oh
god. (Beat.)..(quietly) It's
impossible.

PAM
(without looking up)
Then why don't you follow him to
find out for sure?

(Beat.)

KATE
It's impossib...

Alistair cuts in.

ALISTAIR
Lets just see this through a little
while longer, talk to him, see if
we can - understand more. I know
it's impossible but..I don't
know... I know our son.

PAM
And the phone lines?

ALISTAIR
(Slight beat.) That could just be
something to do with the reception.

PAM
(unconvinced)
A coincidence.

ALISTAIR
Yes.

(Beat.)

KATE
What if he is telling the truth, at
least with Susan, she could be here
and it could be something else
that's wrong.

ALISTAIR
(after thinking about this for
a moment)
Are you absolutely certain that
we'd be fine if we went up there?

KATE
(in disbelief)
Oh come on!

ALISTAIR
Well?

INT. TAXI - NEXT

*Alex is in the taxi with Susan. She is still laughing in the
back seat. He is trying to give her the water but it's not
going down. She keeps on convulsing. He keeps on trying. She
then throws up all over Alex. He stops her from choking -
watches over her.*

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT

Back around the table. John has just returned. He is pacing.

JOHN
The reception's completely gone.
(Beat.) Jesus, this is fucking
bullshit... I'm going to go to the
village.

(CONTINUED)

PAM

No. Don't.

JOHN

What! you don't believe this! I'm sorry Ali, Kate, but this is a pretty sick trick Alex is pulling. Maybe something has happened which is why the line's down, but to create this story, for god knows why...*(continues to pace)*...I'm not prepared to just..sit here... I'm going to find out what's going on.

PAM

(in mild desperation)

Please, John.

JOHN

Pam! I'd like to know our daughter is ok.

The door opens and in comes Alex, he looks at John first, who is on his feet. John looks down to Alex's jumper and trousers to see they are covered in sick.

ALEX

I need to get Susan out of the car.

Everyone is stunned - staring - in horror - unknown thoughts running through their minds.

Alistair cuts the silence.

ALISTAIR

What's happened?

ALEX

(mildly taken aback with surprise at the question)
She wont take the water. *(Beat.)* I should move her to somewhere more comfortable. *(He looks at John and then Pam)*... She should go to the cottage.. You should get your things and bring them here.

(Beat.)

JOHN

(calmly)

What the fuck are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

PAM
 (with equal calmness)
 John.

Suddenly John squares right up to Alex's face and grabs him.

JOHN
 (shouting)
 What the fuck are you doing! Tell
 us the truth!

Alistair and Pam get to their feet

ALISTAIR AND PAM
 John!

ALEX
 (face to face with John,
 matter-of-factly)
 This is the truth.

John stares at him. He realises he didn't smell any sick from Alex's breath when he spoke. He lets go of him and walks out the door and out of the house.

Pam follows after him - puts her hand out to the rest in a gesture telling them to remain, and leaves also.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE - NEXT

John is walking towards the cottage, Pam is following a few metres behind.

JOHN
 This is absolute madness what he's
 doing to us. (Beat.) Is it not!?

Pam doesn't reply
 Do you really believe what he is
 saying! A fucking laughing
 pandemic!...Jesus..There's nothing
 to believe.

PAM
 So why do you think the lines are
 down?

JOHN
 I have no idea Pam... But yeah, it
 is weird..... hence why I'd like to
 get the hell out of here and find
 out where my daughter is!

(CONTINUED)

PAM

You think I don't want to know that either?!

JOHN

Well, believing the impossible isn't helping.

PAM

You're so sure he's lying then are you?!

JOHN

Yes. I am.

(Beat.)

PAM

And what about the sick?

John doesn't reply. They continue walking and approach their car which is parked twenty metres from the cottage. John stops.

JOHN

(affirmatively)

Enough of this.

He opens the car door and gets inside.

PAM

(nervously)

What are you doing? (He switches on the radio) Stop! (No sound. He turns the volume up - nothing. He changes the channel - nothing) Stop it!!

Pam gets in the car and tries to switch off the radio. John tries to push her off. They struggle. Pam screams ferociously. John is taken aback. She switches off the radio. She begins to cry. John looks at her.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Silence. Thinking. Confusion. Kate is looking at Alex, his clothes. Alex is looking at both his parents. Alistair is looking everywhere slowly, thinking.

ALEX

How are you mum?

(CONTINUED)

She lets out a hiccup laugh. She understands the question, but it means nothing.

KATE

Confused, Alex. (*Alex keeps his eyes on her*) Either you're crazy or it's the end of the world.

Alistair looks down at the table, then looks up to his son...

ALISTAIR

(to Alex)

What do you think is happening?

(Beat.)

ALEX

I don't know *why* this is happening, I...It just is... I don't know. (*He shakes his head*)

(Beat.)

KATE

(without looking at her son)

You should change out of those clothes.

He looks down at the sick.

ALEX

(quietly, almost apologetically)

Once I've moved her.

Kate starts nervously.

KATE

So Susan is up there...(*Her eyes redden. She blinks long...in a mix of mocking and despair-*) Dying for all we know.. And there's *nothing* we can do about it.

Alistair cuts in..

ALISTAIR

Is she..(*he corrects himself*)...Is there any reaction? Anything to suggest that she recognises you?..Or hears you? or anything?

ALEX

No. I don't know...No..There doesn't seem to be.

ALISTAIR

(tiredly)

There's just laughter.

INT. COTTAGE - NEXT

Pam and John are collecting their things. Pam enters the living room in front of John, switches on the light and goes to the coffee table to pick up her laptop.

JOHN

(looking to the light)

Do you know how this light switches on?

PAM

What?

JOHN

Do you know what makes that light work?....*(She just looks at him)*...150 years ago a scientist realised that if you charge atoms with an electrical current, they produce particles called *light* photons.. And here we are, seeing in the dark.*(Slight Beat.)* Because that light bulb works, there is no laughing apocalypse.

PAM

What are you talking about John?

JOHN

Science, truth..We've proved that there can be no truth in Alex's story.... you don't catch the cold because you saw someone sneeze do you? you catch it because a virus *physically* enters your body, and *that* makes you feel bad. Clear, no? *That* is the truth... And if some kind of *pandemic* is really happening like he's saying, then us being in the same *room* with a so called infected girl's puke burning our noses should be enough to pass it on, don't you think? But are we laughing?

(CONTINUED)

PAM

But I don't think it would be physical.

JOHN

What do you mean? What else could it possibly be Pam? A psychic suicide?

She looks at him, as if agreeing he is on the right lines. (Beat.) John laughs hard...

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA....

Pam stares at him in horror. He stops laughing and goes serious again. (Beat.)

You're not laughing.

Pam turns looks away from him and continues collecting her things (Long Beat.)

PAM

It must be the way they laugh, the way their laugh sounds.

John shakes his head in frustration.

JOHN

It doesn't matter. That would still rely on *interpretation*.. what difference would it seem to you, seeing someone with it, or seeing someone *acting* with it? (*muttering to himself*) God, I cant believe this.....(*back to Pam*).. both would appear, to you, as being infected. You don't know....your reaction would be completely dependent on whether you *choose* to believe it or not. And I choose not to laugh.

(Beat.) *Pam gets her thoughts around what he is saying.*

PAM

It could be something more subconscious, John, something we just cant understand or control.

JOHN

Pam, it would still require a will to self destruct. And no species is capable of having that, not even us.

(CONTINUED)

PAM
(unconvinced, mocking)
No?

JOHN
(desperately)
Please believe me...This is
ridiculous...Please...It's
impossible.

She looks long but blankly at him, (Short Beat.) then turns to walk out the door, stops, turns back to him, looks at him again, then turns and walks out.

INT. HOUSE, BATHROOM - EVENING

Alex is in the shower

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT

Kate making tea. Alistair sitting at the table.

EXT. PARK MILL GROUNDS - NEXT

John trying to use his phone. Pam is with him holding a torch.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - NEXT

Susan in bed. Laughing.

INT. HOUSE, ALEX'S BEDROOM - NEXT

Alex is in his room, he plugs headphones into the radio that's on his bedside table, and switches it on.. We hear what he hears - nothing, he turns the dial, nothing, he turns again.. laughter, nothing, laughter, nothing, he switches to long wave - nothing, laughter, nothing, laughter laughter laughter, laughter.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT

Kate is leaning against the fridge in the kitchen holding a cup of tea, her arm shakes slightly and she drops the cup, it smashes on the floor. Alistair gets up and sits her down, then begins to clean away the mess, neither show any emotion nor say anything to one another.

INT. HOUSE, SPARE BEDROOM - NEXT

Pam and John are in the spare bedroom, sitting together on one side of the bed. In his hands, John is holding his mobile - the screensaver shows a picture of his wife and daughter. (Beat.)

JOHN

I'm going...You can stay...

She says nothing, and hangs her head.

JOHN

What you think it happening is not,
I promise you.. (He looks at her
and she looks at him)... (Beat.)
Believe me Pam.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - NEXT

Alex is with Susan, helplessly looking over her, when through the blinds he notices light shining momentarily on the ceiling. He looks back to Susan and then gets up and walks out the room, through to the front of the house and opens the door to see John's car has gone.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT

Alex enters the kitchen - looks to his parents and gathers from their reaction that they aren't aware of John's departure.

ALEX

John's gone.

He turns and heads up the stairs.

INT. HOUSE, SPARE BEDROOM - NEXT

Alex is outside the spare bedroom. He knocks the door.

ALEX

Pam.

He knocks again.

Pam!

Nothing. He enters to find it empty.

INT. HOUSE, PARENTS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alistair is lying in his bed, looking up at the ceiling with the lamp light low. He is blinking enough for it to not be a stare...thinking... looking.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - 2 AM

Kate is sitting by the table, drinking a cup of tea and staring. She gently reacts as Alex enters having just been looking over Susan again, she then tenses as she looks up to him approaching the table...they are both looking at each other.

ALEX

Nothing's changed.

Kate's tension holds then releases a little, she looks away. (Beat.) She looks back.

KATE

What do you expect me to think,
Alex?

(Beat.)

ALEX

Everything that you are probably
thinking...You don't know...and
that you hate that...But either
way.. This is not good. *(Beat.)* I
love you mum...I'm sorry..This is
happening.

(Long Beat.) She moves and he understands, and they hug each other...she cries in his arms and holds him tighter...(Beat.).. she pulls back, wipes her eyes with her hands

KATE

You should go and lie down for a
little bit. *(Alex looks at her
intently)*...You should.

(Beat.) Alex slowly turns and leaves the room. Kate falls back to a stare and we hear Alex's footsteps climbing the stairs.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE - NEXT

Steadicam continuous shot follows Kate as she walks in the darkness towards the cottage, she opens the front door and enters, looks to her right and then turns to the left and heads directly towards the room with Susan in it. She opens the door and sees her daughter. She approaches her and takes her in her arms.

KATE

Oh no, no , no.(she rocks Susan)...
no no n-o-o-o-o.

Her "no's" begin to stutter. Her face begins to change and her gaze glazes over. She begins to laugh, and laugh, and laugh.

INT. HOUSE, ALEX'S BEDROOM - NEXT

Alex is lying in bed awake, looking up at the ceiling. His dad opens the door.

ALISTAIR

I can't find you're mother.

Alex knows.

EXT. PARK MILL GROUNDS - DAWN NEXT DAY

(The following scenes - until the next set of dialogue - are set together as a montage of loosely composed grainy vignettes)

Alex and his father are walking through the morning dew towards the top of the hill.. Alex tries to get a connection on his mobile but to no avail. Alistair keeps his eyes on his son.

EXT. PARK MILL GROUNDS - SUNSET

Alistair is staring into the river

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex is looking over his mother and sister.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - DAYTIME NEXT DAY

Alex is trying to force pills down Kate and Susan's throats but they keep gagging. Kate throws up. Nothing is going down.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - NEXT

Alistair is looking at the radio... contemplating.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - EVENING NEXT DAY.

Alex and Alistair are in the kitchen, Alistair reacts to reveal desperation.

INT. HOUSE, PARENT'S BEDROOM - 3 AM

Alistair is lying in bed, staring at the ceiling in the moonlight.

INT. HOUSE, BATHROOM - 4 AM

Alistair is in the bathroom, his eyes are red.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - NEXT

Alex is looking over Susan and Kate, Alistair enters the room, Alex turns, Alistair stares at his wife and daughter, breaks down, goes to them, holds his daughter, crying...he does not laugh,, he stares at them in utter pain and suffering. Alex is looking at his father.

ALEX
(calling calmly)
Dad.

Eventually, Alistair turns. He has reacted.

EXT. PARKMILL GROUNDS - AFTERNOON

Alex is collecting potatoes.

INT. COTTAGE, BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

The blinds are open. Alistair is heartbroken, looking over his wife and daughter. They are both looking very ill, withered and tired. But still they laugh.

INT. HOUSE, KITCHEN - EVENING

Alistair is in the kitchen, he has the radio in his hands, he turns it on, and turns the dial, nothing, nothing, laughter.. he listens, he listens... he smiles...

Fade out.

INT. ALONG COUNTRY ROAD IN TAXI - MORNING

Fade in.

Alex is driving the taxi, his face is cold.

INT TO EXT. ARRIVING INTO CITY IN TAXI - MIDDAY

One long continuous shot beginning inside the taxi. Alex is driving through the city, everyone in the street is dead, he drives slowly, everything is quiet, there are birds in the sky, the trees are green, a dog crosses the road, all the bodies are smiling, dead in their clothes, the clouds pass above, he drives slowly, passing cars with the dead in their seats - in their seat belts, with stony grimaces of ecstasy on their faces.. he drives into the pedestrian area of the city where the dead thicken, he stops the car and gets out and begins to walk through the street, bags of shopping on the ground, seagulls and crows picking at the dead and their ecstatic faces. He stands looking down upon the street where he first saw it happen, hundreds of bodies, silence...

The end.