

THE TWO MINUTE SILENCE

A short screenplay by

Paul Laight © 2006

(Sixth Draft)

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FADE IN:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

CLOCK locked in time reads 11:54AM. While it is stuck TICKING is audible.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

THE LIFE TIMES TEAM sit around the table quietly waiting. You could hear a pin drop.

The TEAM are introduced as follows:

ALLIE O'BRIEN (20's), power-suited, blonde and very attractive. She sits poised at the shiny desk preparing the lap-top.

JASON LOVELL (20's), bright, optimistic and very smart sits sharing furtive looks with:

ROBIN BOOTH (20s), tanned, pretty. She struggles to control a glowing inner joy.

BROWN-SHOED feet of GRIFF McDONALD (40's). Besides Griff's feet are a carrier bag (contents: soft drink, pre-packed sandwich, crisps and chocolate bar). A careful-not-to-make-a-sound hand reaches in and lifts out a pre-packed sandwich.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

WATCH on a suited MALE WRIST fills the frame. Finger TAPS the face reading 11:55 and counting.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Blackwall tunnel yawn from DAZ BOGALL (early 20's), a slouching permanently hungover scruff-bag.

PHIL HEDD (mid 20's); stares into space full of contemplative thought. He clings onto a bottle of water.

AMBER PENN (mid 50's); proud-looking woman, a cross hangs prominently around her neck.

SAM CRANE, a laddish twentysomething doodling something on the pad in front of him. He wears massive Bono type sunglasses to look cool.

JOHN STONE (20's); suited, top button secure, tie tied tightly. Head is down reading something apparently NOT work related.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Introduce sharp, serious-looking, yet handsome, twentysomething, BARRY CANTRELL, as he strides confidently towards the Boardroom door.

Hand reaches for the door handle.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Barry enters the room. Immediately, Allie stands up and moves to him.

BARRY
Everyone here, Allie?

ALLIE
Jenny Bernard is unwell, Barry.

Barry notes this without passion. Checks his watch again, dipping a little, his face coming close to her.

BARRY (CONT'D)
I make it. . . just under three
minutes too.

ALLIE
And counting.

TWO WRISTS meet side-to-side confirming temporal synchronicity. He moves his hand closer, virtually touching hers.

ALLIE
Meeting go well?

BARRY
Like clockwork.

(whisper)
Delightful scent by the way.

Allie eyes flicker.

Barry looks at the clock on the wall then casts a steely gaze across the floor. Daz is out of his chair.

BARRY
Where're you going, Darren?

DAZ
Uh? What?

BARRY
Where're you going?

DAZ
Khazi.

BARRY
(points to watch)
It's almost time.

DAZ
For what?

BARRY
The silence.

DAZ
I'll only be a minute.

BARRY
Sit, Darren.

DAZ
(under his breath)
It's Daz.

Barry watches intently as Daz slumps back into his chair.

BARRY
(Daz in mind)
Looking sharp today, Jason.

JASON
Cheers, boss.

Barry checks his watch once more. It reads: 11:59am.

BARRY
Before the meeting we'll do the
silence. A time to consider last
week's tragic events. I want this
done. . . Properly. Sam.

Barry looks at Sam. Points to his own face. Sam feels the
pressure and removes the sunglasses.

BARRY
Better. Okay. Three. Two. . .

The clock ticks up to 12:00pm. Everything goes SILENT. The world
has stopped. The characters ponder the moment.

CUT TO:

BARRY

wristwatch in hand.

BARRY (V.O.)

Time to reflect. Time to be thankful --
for what you've got. Time to think of
those who lost their lives. . . Note to
self: how much are these silences
actually costing me? The majority of
these time-stealers don't need a second
invitation to join the slackers union.

Barry looks at each team-member individually.

BARRY (V.O.)

God-squad Amber. Feckless Sam. Orange
Robin. Pointless Daz. Work-to-rule
Griff. John. He worries me.

(on Phil)

I don't even know who that is?
Why can't they be like Jason and Allie?
Committed, conscientious, fired with
enthusiasm. I've got a tough choice
between the two re: the promotion.
Which way should I go?

CUT TO:

ALLIE

staring at the lap-top ahead of her which says: LIFE TIMES
LUNCH MEETING - 11th MAY 2006 - 12.00PM.

ALLIE (V.O.)

I'll get the promotion on merit. Not
just because I'm screwing. . . Sleeping
with him. I'm ambitious. Why wouldn't I
use all my talents get ahead. It's not
just that his Dad owns the company.
Barry's very attractive! But, it's
business. I don't love him. I don't do
love.

CLOCK ON LAP-TOP IS OPEN AND COUNTS: 12:00:15

CUT TO:

JASON/ROBIN

gazing into one another's eyes. Dialogue to ping-pong.

JASON (V.O.)

Tonight's the night. . .

ROBIN (V.O.)
It's now or never. . .

JASON (V.O.)
Our anniversary. . .

ROBIN (V.O.)
One year together. . .

JASON (V.O.)
Don't be nervous. . .

ROBIN (V.O.)
Nothing to fear.

JASON (V.O.)
Just take the plunge.

ROBIN (V.O.)
In at the deep end.

JASON (V.O.)
What if she says no?

ROBIN (V.O.)
What if he runs a mile!?

CUT TO:

DAZ

hands clenched, shifting on his seat, trying to hold something in.

DAZ (V.O.)
Shit! I knew I shouldn't have had that ruby last night. Two minutes. Just two minutes to hold out. Maybe if I farted? I could create some space. Can't. Might follow-through. Think of something else? Tragedy. Terrible. Lives lost. No! It's not working. God! Help me!

CUT TO:

CLOCK READS: 12:00:30

CUT TO:

AMBER

praying, crucifix hanging over her clenched knuckles.

AMBER PENN (V.O.)

Lord, please gift remembrance to those souls who lost their lives in the tragedy. May they find safe haven in your kingdom on high. Lord, I thank you for the gift of life. Take care of the children, the sick and the needy. Also, protect the weak. The weak who err from the road of righteousness. .
.

CUT TO:

SAM

eyes glazed over.

SAM (V.O.)

When I get home I'm going to stretch my legs as wide as I can and wank myself to death. . .

(beat)

I could give her a call though. Get her to do it. But I'd have to precipitate emotional contact. Engage in mutual dialogue. She'd go on about her work. Before long it'll be marriage. Living together. Settling down. Kids. Fuck that. Bird'll put me right off my stroke.

CUT TO:

CLOCK READS: 12:00:45

CUT TO:

GRIFF

staring down thoughtfully. Hold on him for a moment until WE think he has the tragedy on his mind.

CUT TO:

Griff's POV: the pre-packed sandwich is in his lap. THIS is what he is really thinking about.

GRIFF (V.O.)

Lunchtime meetings! They're not part of my contract. Millionaire son of the MD but can't even put out a couple of sandwiches. I'm tired of working for those who make a living alienating the workforce.

John stands up. Pulls out a HANDGUN. Coldly picks off various members of the team, notably Cantrell, before turning the gun on himself.

JOHN (V.O.)
See you in the next lie you. . .

CUT BACK:

John, back at the desk.(The shooting was imagined.)

JOHN (V.O.)
You, you? What's the line?

CUT TO:

BARRY'S WATCH: Forty seconds to go.

CUT TO:

BARRY (V.O.)
Jason's an old school friend. But Allie's got so much potential. I see a lot of me in her. There will be tonight, anyway.

CUT TO:

ALLIE (V.O.)
Tonight. Wednesday. As usual. The hotel room's booked. Got to keep Barry sweet and the junior executive position will be mine.

CUT TO:

BARRY (V.O.)
Allie's ready for the promotion but I prefer her where she is. By my side. A rejection now will make her stronger. More determined. More ruthless. I'll give Jason the job. Be a nice surprise for him. I know he talked about settling down with Robin. Allie's time will come.

CUT TO:

JASON (V.O.)
You love her. Just ask her.

ROBIN (V.O.)
You love him. Let him know.

JASON (V.O.)
Four little words.

ROBIN (V.O.)
Four big words.

JASON (V.O.)
Will you marry me?

ROBIN (V.O.)
We're having a baby.

CUT TO:

DAZ (V.O.)
If I shit myself again I'm going to
kill Cantrell. Twice in a month months
isn't good.

CUT TO:

Griff's finger picking at the sandwich corner.

GRIFF (V.O.)
Two minutes seems to be the vogue
for these things now. A minute is
ample time for remembrance?

Griff's finger misses the sandwich corner again.

GRIFF (V.O.)
For the love of god! Almost had
it!

CUT TO:

John's POV: at the desk, which contains as he looks down at the
screenplay he's trying to learn. It's called LIFE CRUSHED OUR
SOULS by PAUL LAIGHT.

JOHN (V.O.)
Line. Line. What is it? "See you in
the next lie, you scum-sucking mother
bitches!" Is it lie or life?
Life Crushed Our Souls. Worst script
I've ever read. Gotta start somewhere
I suppose. Shooting starts this
weekend.

CUT TO:

LAPTOP CLOCK READS: 12:01:55

CUT TO:

 DAZ (V.O.)
Five. . .four. . .Hold on arse. . .
three. . . This has been the longest
two minutes of my life.

Daz looks around. Starts shuffling.

CUT TO:

Sam's smirking face.

INSERT: fingers furiously typing words into Internet Search
Engine. Words such as: HARDCORE; TITS; PORN SWEET etc.

 SAM (V.O.)
Yeah baby! Can't wait to get in and
knock one in! Crack one out! Sweet.
Fuck. . .

CUT TO:

 AMBER PENN (V.O.)
. . . you Lord. Amen.

CUT TO:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Barry's puts his watch back on. Silence is over.

 BARRY
Okay. Time is money. My money!
Let's get started.

Griff's sandwich RIPS open.

Daz has his hand up. Barry pauses in despair. Nods in the
direction of the door. Daz shuffles-races out the door.

FREEZE FRAME on the TEAM. Sound of CLOCK ticking over.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENOTAPH - LONDON - DAY

Phil lays a Wreath of Remembrance at a Memorial Steps.

FADE OUT.