

JIMMMY HERD

A FILM FOR TELEVISION

(The Ghostwriter)

(commissioned by the BBC drama department and copyright The  
Ghostwriter)

INT. PRESBYTERREAN CHURCH. DAY.

We are very close on the face of a middle aged man. He is tanned, his face beaten by weather. His neck seems swollen, tight and red in the too tight Sunday best white collar. His mouth open, eyes bulging, he sings with rapturous enthusiasm and beauty the hymn 'O Love That Will Not Let Me Go.' He sings the hymn as a solo at Sunday Church in Breasclate. As he sings we cut to another face. It is that of a young man whose eyes are peculiarly shifty, whose look is withdrawn and lonely. He silently mouths the words of the hymn but as he does so he dribbles from the corner of his mouth. He seems unaware of the dribble as it gathers and flows down his chin. He is Jimmy Herd.

Dissolve to

**EXT.HILL ROAD NEAR THE HERD'S HOUSE.DAY.**

The hymn continues over the following.

A Hill road in Great Bernera the small island a hundred yards off the coast of North West Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides.

A clear blue sky. A hot sun. A Sunday Lunchtime.

In the distance a figure, Mary, toils up the hill road. She is twenty five years old, thin and more attractive than pretty with animated looks and vivacious energy - right now this energy is being used to push a wheelchair. Her head is down. Her back arches against the strain. She is dressed in a slightly unfashionable, slightly too long summer frock. Because she is very far away we cannot see who it is in the chair. The figure in the chair sits very limp, although his head rocks from side to side.

As Mary pushes we CUT TO

**INT.HERD'S KITCHEN. DAY.**

It is a few moments later.

Jessie Herd is Mary's Mother. She is thin but wirily strong. The lines on her face are less from age than from the strain of surviving on a small croft, of doing endless piece work in the knitting industry and of stretching the DHSS supplements.

At the moment she stands in the simple kitchen cutting vegetables for the Sunday lunch. She looks up as she hears the front door open and close.

**JESSIE**

(Calling out)

Is that you Jimmy..? Put him by your Da's chair, Mary. . .And lay the table will you -your Tom will be here soon.

CUT TO

**INT. THE HALLWAY. DAY.**

We are close on Mary's face. She looks briefly up to Heaven.

CUT TO

**INT. THE KITCHEN. DAY.**

Jessie hums and half sings a few bars from a Hymn as she goes about her work. Then she calls over her shoulder.

**JESSIE**

Did you see the Minister after the Service, Mary?

**MARY <OOV>**

Yes Ma....

CUT TO

**INT. THE FRONT PARLOUR.DAY.**

**MARY**

(Quietly, to herself as they  
enter the room)  
We always see the Minister,  
after the service.

She busies herself manoeuvring the chair and its occupant into a place by the dining table. Then she squats low by the figure. This is her brother, Jimmy. Jimmy is twenty years old and he has spasticity of the arms and legs. Although he can occasionally walk with sticks he is usually confined to a wheelchair. Jimmy is severely autistic. That is to say he has a very low IQ, tends to be 'non' Social in his behaviour and withdrawn. He seldom communicates with the world around him but he is echo-lallic, that is to say he will repeat, often at random, words that he hears.

**MARY**

(To him, slightly mockingly)  
And what did the Minister say to  
you, Jimmy?

**JESSIE (OOV)**

And what did the Minister say to you Jimmy?

**MARY**

(Calls)  
How are you Jimmy, he said.  
(Quietly)  
And before you ask Mother,  
Jimmy said Bugger all back to him.

**JESSIE(OOV)**

And what did you say back, Jimmy?

**JIMMY**

(Grinning but to no one in  
particular)  
Bugger all, Jimmy said...

**MARY**

(To Jimmy - Sotto)  
Shut up!  
(Calls)  
Not a lot Ma. He seems a bit quiet today.

She rises and looks down at her brother.

**MARY**

(To Jimmy)

There we are then. By our Da's chair, as we so quaintly call it - wherever the silly old sod maybe. Now you stay there Jimmy while I go and get a big cleaver to cut off your head.

For the first time he looks up at her. But almost at once he avoids her gaze.

The door opens and Jessie enters with a large jug of water.

**JESSIE**

Have you not laid the table yet, Mary?

CUT TO

**INT . BEDSIT . STORNOWAY . DAY .**

Tom stands before a mirror adjusting his tie. He has got his best Sunday clothes on, not that best means very much to Tom, the jacket and trousers although fairly well cut and fashionable are badly pressed and crumpled but as he admires himself in the mirror he seems to like the effect.

Tom is twenty seven and a Glaswegian implant into the island. He has come here, surprisingly, for the work. Although there is high unemployment on Lewis there is a demand for skilled engineers to work in the Oil Rig refitting centre just off the coast of Stornoway. Tom with his degree in engineering was unemployed in Glasgow but has work here.

Apparently pleased with the badly knotted tie he turns to the door whistling tunelessly.

CUT TO.

**EXT.WEST LONDON BEDSIT.DAY.**

We are looking up at the exterior of a crumbling Victorian mansion in Wandsworth, London. The place is sad, rundown and badly converted into bedsits. It is the home of the yuppies to be. The young London things who will make it one day but not just yet - students, actors, Journalists perhaps a budding novelist or three.

we zoom in on one particular first floor window.

CUT TO

**INT.BEDSIT. WEST LONDON.DAY**

A suitcase open on a bed. Piled high with girl's clothes, make-up, perfume, a Marilyn Monroe like scarf. A feminine hand, nails painted, comes into shot. Lifts a garment turns it over. Squashes it flat. Tries to close the lid on the bulging contents. Fails. Opens the lid. Dithers over what to remove. Decides. Changes mind. Decides again. Fails once more to close the lid. We hear a sigh from OOV.

CUT TO

**INT.PARLOUR.HERD'S.DAY.**

The table is fully laid and plates of steaming vegetables have been put out ready. Jimmy plays with his knife and fork. Mary stands back to admire her work and then calls out to her Mother in the Kitchen.

**MARY**

Will we have the music afterwards?

**JESSIE (OOV)**

We always do.

**MARY**

I meant us - not Tom.

CUT TO

**INT. KITCHEN. HERD'S. DAY.**

Jessie's face breaks into a smile. A secret self satisfied smile.

**JESSIE**

(Calling)

Aye. If he's in the mood.

CUT TO

**EXT. BEDSIT. STORNOWAY. DAY**

Tom opens the front door and walks down the path to his parked car. As he climbs in, a window opens in the top floor of the house. Eric, his friend leans out and calls to him.

**ERIC**

The Crown. Seven o'clock tonight.  
Don't forget!

Tom waves a V sign at him. Eric smiles. The window slams shut.

CUT TO

**INT. WEST LONDON. BEDSIT. DAY.**

A rounded bottom in tight jeans sits on the lid of the suitcase. Hands reach down to fiddle with the clasps. Failure. The fingers drum against the sides of the case.

CUT TO

**INT. KITCHEN. HERD'S COTTAGE. DAY.**

Jessie is stirring a casserole on top of the oven, Mary Mashes potatoes.

**JESSIE**

Will your Tom eat Mutton, do you think?

**MARY**

I should think so Ma. You give it to him every week.

CUT TO

**EXT. ROADS AND HILLS, ISLE OF LEWIS.DAY.**

Tom's car speeding its way through the moorland outside of Stornoway. As he gets nearer to the highland area we rise up and this shot develops into a high aerial view of the island with Tom's car making its way from East to West.

**ROLL CREDITS OVER AND MUSIC UNDER:-**

Tom's car passing through the winding mountainous roads, with the lochs and then the coastline below.

Tom's car slowing and passing over the bridge that connects Great Bernerra to Lewis, with the water rushing below it and a man sea fishing off it.

Tom winding his way through the hill road past the turning to Croir graveyard and onto Croir itself with its few lonely cottages.

Tom pulling up outside of the cottage nearest the cliffs and the sea below and drawing in a deep breath of the clean salt air as he trudges to the front door and bangs on it.

The door opening.

Tom entering and the door closing, filling our picture as we run the last few credits over it's dull peeled paint before we dissolve inside to...

DISSOLVE TO