

BEVAN

The Struggle for the NHS

BY

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FADE IN

INT. 23 CLIVEDEN PLACE, LONDON -- MORNING

Subtitles: 5th July 1948.

The sun streams through the window as a woman, small, dark-haired, sits at a kidney-shaped dressing table with a large mirror on the top. JENNIE LEE, 44, Scottish, MP for Cannock is combing her hair. In the mirror we see the reflection of her husband, ANEURIN BEVAN, 51, Welsh MP (Ebbw Vale), who is putting on his tie.

JENNIE LEE
(talking to Bevan's
reflection)
It's Manchester today?

BEVAN
Yes. Park Hospital, Manchester. The very
first NHS hospital.

JENNIE LEE
The first hospital in the world to offer
free healthcare to all at the point of
need.

BEVAN
I get the keys from the council. It's a
symbolic handing over of responsibility
from the local council to the government.

JENNIE LEE
What time will you be back?

BEVAN
Around nine. Have tea without me.

JENNIE LEE
I'll ask mum to put something by for you
and you can warm it up when you get back.

BEVAN
I love the way you handle your domestic
duties.

JENNIE LEE
Now, Nye Bevan. You know better than to
patronise me.

BEVAN
I know I'll never win the argument.
You're the hardest foe. It's a good job
you weren't in charge of the BMA.

He walks over to the dressing table and puts his arms around Jennie as they both look into the mirror. He kisses her cheek.

BEVAN (CONT'D)
Cheerio then.

JENNIE LEE
See you later.

EXT. PARK HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER - LATER --

BEVAN gets out of the ministerial car at the bottom of the drive to the hospital and is welcomed by a white haired matron dressed in a grey uniform with a long white cap and three representatives of the county council. A guard of honour of 60-70 nurses in their uniforms lines the long, curving drive to the hospital.

MATRON
Good day, Mr Bevan. Welcome to Park Hospital.

BEVAN
Thank you Matron. I can't tell you how excited I am to be here. It's been a long journey.

MATRON
Have you come from London?

BEVAN
No, much further than that.

Matron leads Bevan to the bottom of the drive where a throng of photographers lies in wait. Camera shutters click furiously as the party walks between the guard of honour.

INT. PARK HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER -- MOMENTS LATER

Bevan and the party enter a hospital ward. Patients lie in beds with a few cameramen positioned at the bottom of the ward. Matron introduces Bevan to a small boy, Johnny. All eyes are on Bevan as he approaches Johnny and holds out his hand to shake with. The boy holds out his LEFT hand.

BEVAN
You're left handed! Good for you boy.

The boy nods shyly.

BEVAN (CONT'D)
So am I.

Bevan gives up his left hand and shakes the boy's hand.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

You know all the best people are left handed.

The boy's embarrassment leaves him and he smiles at Bevan.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Don't let anyone force you to use your right hand. My teacher forced me to use my right hand, and now I can't write with either.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

1907. Tredegar. A welsh mining town. Diligent school pupils look forwards to the teacher who stands with his cane pointing at the blackboard. The teacher is Mr Orchard - frightening, abusive and a bully. But we focus on Aneurin Bevan, 10 - rebellious, bored, who is writing on his chalkboard on his desk. Mr Orchard starts walking around the desks in the class room. He approaches Bevan's desk and raps the knuckles on his left hand with his cane. Bevan flinches from the pain.

MR ORCHARD

I've told you before, Bevan. There'll be no cack-handed boys in my class. Write with the hand that God gave you to write with, boy.

MR BEVAN

Y-y-yes, sir.

Mr Orchard walks back to the blackboard as we focus on Bevan who is now looking out of the window.

MR ORCHARD (OOV)

(shouting)

BEVAN!

Bevan abruptly turns his whole body around, away from the window and towards Mr Orchard. His hands are now on his desk, his body bolt upright.

Yes, sir?

MR ORCHARD

What are you doing, Bevan?

BEVAN

N-n-n nothing, sir.

The class snigger at his stutter.

MR ORCHARD

Ah, but you must be, Bevan.

(MORE)

MR ORCHARD (CONT'D)

Everyone is doing something. I am teaching and everyone is listening while you are (beat) doing what exactly?

BEVAN

T-t-then I'd be looking out of the window, sir.

MR ORCHARD

Yes, and why is that?

BEVAN

(gulping)

B-b-because the view is b-b- better than trigonometry sir.

The whole class titter in agreement. Mr Orchard is now furious, he stares at Bevan with his cane in his hand as his whole body tenses.

A small young boy, Trevor Davies - shy, wary - opens the door to the classroom, walks cautiously to his desk and sits down.

MR ORCHARD

(slowly breathes in)

And what time to do you call this, Davies?

TREVOR

Sorry I'm late, sir.

MR ORCHARD

Late? But what about yesterday, you miserable little boy?

TREVOR

Sorry sir, but yesterday was my brother's turn to wear the boots?

MR ORCHARD

Only one pair of boots? Between you and your brother?

TREVOR

No sir, between me and my two brothers.

MR ORCHARD

Couldn't you have put newspaper on your feet?

BEVAN

Sir.. it's not Trevor's fault if he has to share shoes

MR ORCHARD

Now getting very angry - his eyes narrowing and his brow travelling further down towards his eyes as he regards Bevan. He grips his cane more tightly with one hand and taps it in his other hand.

Bevan, you'll be feeling the tip of this piece of wood in a minute if you're not careful.

Bevan grabs the inkwell from his desk and throws it at Mr Orchard. The inkwell misses him but the ink hits the blackboard. The ink travels all the way down Mr Orchard's trigonometry lesson.

We see a close up of MR ORCHARD, now raging and his eyes narrowing as he stares at BEVAN.

INT. MR ORCHARD'S STUDY - EARLY EVENING

Mr Orchard sits behind a desk. At the other side sit Bevan with Bevan's parents.

MR ORCHARD

I'd like to speak about Aneurin's behaviour, Mr & Mrs Bevan.

MR BEVAN

Is it about the ink well?

MR ORCHARD

Yes, that and other things. Aneurin is quite insolent.

BEVAN

(turning to his mum,
whispering)

What's insolent mean?

MRS BEVAN

Shush.

MRS BEVAN (CONT'D)

(now turning to Mr
Orchard)

I'd like to speak about Aneurin's stutter, Mr Orchard.

MR ORCHARD

I see.

He looks down at Bevan accusingly.

BEVAN

Yes, it seems to be getting worse.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Is there anything that can be done - are there special lessons he can attend?

MR ORCHARD

There's nothing of the sort, Mrs Bevan, not in Wales at least, and you would have to pay for it.

MRS BEVAN

I see.

During this conversation, Bevan looks down at the floor. He is embarrassed and his cheeks are red.

MR ORCHARD

I'm sorry Mr & Mrs Bevan, but I have to tell you that it seems very unlikely that Aneurin will pass the test necessary to enter the secondary school.

MRS BEVAN

I see, Mr Orchard.

MR ORCHARD

I'm sure you'll appreciate that there is no point in his entering if it is obvious there will not be a happy outcome. There is a reason why I made Aneurin repeat a year.

MRS BEVAN

(resigned, but now
defiant)

Of course, Mr Orchard. We wouldn't want to waste your time.

Mrs Bevan stands up, closely followed by Bevan and Mr Bevan.

EXT. STREET - LATER

The Bevans are on their way home along dark cobbled streets. Ma Bevan leads the way as Bevan and his father follow.

Nye's head is down, staring at the cobbles as he walks. The grim reality of his future hits him. His father looks at him and notices his despondency.

MR BEVAN

Looks like you're coming down the pit with me, lad.

Bevan continues to stare at the cobbles. Says nothing.

MR BEVAN (CONT'D)
Never mind lad, I've done all right
haven't I?

Cut to a scene of many hobnail boots 'marching' to the local pit on the same dark cobbled streets at 5.30am.

INT. TY-TRYST (HOUSE OF SADNESS) COLLIERY - DAY

1910. Bevan aged 13, has a pick-axe, hitting the coal in the seam, next to other miners doing the same. In the background are pit ponies whinnying, kicking and mauling in the dark. Sweat pours off Bevan's face. Shouts go up that echo around the seam. Then we hear a whirling, swooshing sound that gets louder. As a runaway tram hurtles down the tracks, Bevan falls to the ground. His new mining friend, Bill Hopkins, helps him up.

BILL HOPKINS
Stand well clear of those tracks, Nye.
The trams are often running away with
themselves. You never know where they're
coming from next (A beat). It's worse
than Mr Orchard's cane.

BEVAN
I see what you mean. Is there anything
else I should watch out for?

BILL HOPKINS
Everything. Fire. Explosions.
Drownings. Kicks from the pit ponies. But
most of all the dark. It's your closest
friend but also your worst enemy.

BEVAN
(now looking worried)
Thanks.

INT. PARK HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER - CURRENT DAY

Matron leads Bevan and the party to another bed. This one is occupied by a dark-haired young girl. A book lies on the bed, un-opened. The matron introduces him.

MATRON
This is Sylvia, minister. Sylvia is 13
and the first patient to be treated on the
National Health Service.

BEVAN
(shaking hands)
Hello. Sylvia. Do you know Sylvia that
it's an historical occasion today?

SYLVIA

Yes I think so. I've been here for two
weeks and from today my mum and dad don't
have to pay any more.

BEVAN
Yes that's right. It is a milestone in
history - the most civilised step any
country has ever taken, and a day you will
remember for the rest of your life.

Bevan looks down at the book on her bed.

BEVAN (CONT'D)
Enjoy your book. Books should be savoured
as though they are the best in high class
cuisine. Like oysters. I wouldn't be here
today if it weren't for books.

Sylvia smiles as Bevan affectionately puts his hand on her head.

INT. BEVAN HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT.

At the tea table with ma, da and Bevan's 8 brothers and sisters.
Bevan is face down snoozing on the table with his hand on an open
book as the melee of tidying up takes place around him. Arienwen,
Bevan's sister is helping Ma to tidy up.

ARIANWEN
Nye, I wish you'd not sleep on the dinner
table, it's bad manners.

BEVAN
Arienwen, I'm just a little tired.
H-h-have some pity, please. I've been
down the pit since half past five. All for
ten s-s-shillings a week....

ARIANWEN
If you didn't spend all night reading all
those books from the institute you might
be able to keep awake. And stop using my
name to borrow them. You could get me into
trouble with the institute.

BEVAN
(quoting from a poem,
looking sarcastically
lovingly at Arianwen)
A thousand years have I loved thee and
wilt thou desert me now?

ARIANWEN
Stop that nonsense now, Nye Bevan. You'll
never make a poet.

She stops moving around the tea table and regards Bevan with
surprise.

ARIANWEN (CONT'D)
Nye! You've just said that whole line
without stuttering.

Nye, smiling at Arianwen, snaps his book shut, rises from his chair
and leaves the room.

INT. MINE MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

MR REYNOLDS
So, this is the great Aneurin Bevan. Come
to this mine as a result of
insubordination.

BEVAN
I actually w-w-won the victimisation
trial, Mr Reynolds. The Pit Manager had
it in for me.

MR REYNOLDS
Well I hope you don't give this pit so
much trouble. Some say you're 'that
bloody nuisance Bevan', son of David
Bevan, I believe. I used to know him well.

BEVAN
In that case, you know a better man than
yourself.

MR REYNOLDS
I'll expect no nonsense in my pit, Bevan.
I hope you remember that.

BEVAN
I never look for trouble, Mr Reynolds.
But as a worker and a trade unionist I
know the law through the Mines Act and
what management think they can do and
what they can do in law are sometimes
quite different.

MR REYNOLDS
Just remember that I'm in charge here.
Now you can go and get started.

Mr Reynolds waves his hand at Bevan, to dismiss him. Bevan leaves the room.

INT. BEVAN HOUSEHOLD - EVENING

1914. Nye walks through the door and is met by his mother, father and two of his sisters, Arienwen and Blodwen.

MRS BEVAN
Nye! Thank God you're here. How was your speaking tour?

BEVAN
Tiring, but I think we're getting our message across. Where's Margaret May?

MRS BEVAN
She's not well.

ARIANWEN
Not well at all. She's asleep.

A loud knock at the door. As Mr Bevan opens it we see two police officers.

POLICE OFFICER
We've come for Aneurin Bevan, who hasn't answered his call-up papers.

BEVAN
B-b-but I haven't received any papers.

ARIANWEN
(sotto)
I think Blodwen (a beat) may have thrown them on the fire

BEVAN
Oh bloody hell.

MRS BEVAN
Aneurin! What's going to happen?

BEVAN
Everything will be alright, mam.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

(To the police officers)

My sister's not well. If you make a noise and wake her up I'll kill you. Now come inside and have a cup of tea.

INT. EBBW VALE COURT HOUSE - A MONTH LATER

Bevan is conducting his own case.

BEVAN

Sir, do you shoot rabbits or such like?

MAGISTRATE

What has this got to do with the case, Mr Bevan?

BEVAN

It has everything to do with the case, sir. I am establishing a defence. (a beat) Do you consider it a skill, shooting?

MAGISTRATE

(now tired of the question)

I would imagine so.

BEVAN

Then it is important, is it not, to be able to see properly out of both eyes in order to fire a bullet and hit a target? God forbid, you miss the rabbit and get the gamekeeper instead?

MAGISTRATE

Yes, yes, most unfortunate.

BEVAN

Is it not a fact also that the War Office would never call up a miner suffering from nystagmus? Nystagmus, as I'm sure you know is an eye disease caused by working in bad light; a disease which afflicts miners in particular.

MAGISTRATE

Get on with it.

BEVAN

Then I would like to produce as evidence a certificate stating that the defendant has the condition nystagmus which exempts him from military service.

A clerk takes the certificate to the magistrates. The magistrate looks at it, looks at Bevan and knocks his hammer down.

MAGISTRATE

Case dismissed.

Bevan has a small wry smile to himself. Mrs Bevan, Arianwen and Bill Hopkins in their seats heave a sigh of relief and smile at each other.

INT. BEVAN HOUSEHOLD - DAY - AN HOUR LATER

Bevan, Mrs Bevan, Arienwen and Bill Hopkins are sitting round the table drinking tea.

BILL HOPKINS

Why did they pick you up without first consulting with the pit committee? They would have told them about your eye condition.

BEVAN

They have their reasons. I'm sure some people would prefer me out of the way. I am not a conscientious objector. I will fight, but I will choose my own enemy and my own battlefield and I won't have them do it for me.

MRS BEVAN

You should become a lawyer, son. You wiped the floor with 'em.

At this, the tea drinkers, with big grins, raise their tea cups in celebration. But as they do, Mr Bevan starts coughing.

INT. HILLS OUTSIDE TREDEGAR

1916 - Bevan and his friend Archie Lush are on a hill overlooking the valley of Tredegar, with a thesaurus in hand.

ARCHIE LUSH

I hear you're making some changes at the pit you're at now. Looking more at workers' interests than the interests of the owners.

BEVAN

The usual management tricks but I've learnt that bullies are usually cowards and if you stand up to them they usually back down.

ARCHIE LUSH

And you're now the chairman of the mining lodge. Youngest in its history. You're getting quite a reputation.

BEVAN

Yes, but not all good.

They both laugh.

ARCHIE LUSH

Let's get back to the thesaurus. What other words do you have difficulty with?

BEVAN

How about c c capitalism or mmm arxism?

ARCHIE LUSH

We'll probably have difficulty finding substitutes for those.

They laugh again as we view over the lush green valley.

INT. MINE - DAY --

Mr Reynolds, mine manager comes upon Bevan and other workers, including Bill Hopkins in a cold downshaft. Bevan is working with his overcoat on.

MR REYNOLDS

Fancy a man down a pit dressed like that. Why don't you take that thing off?

BEVAN

There's nothing in the mine's act which says I have to. Besides, it's damned cold down here.

MR REYNOLDS

Look here Bevan, there's not enough room in this company for you and me

BEVAN

I agree (a beat) and I think you ought to go.

Mr Reynolds walks off in a rage.

BILL HOPKINS

That told him.

As Mr Reynolds walks off, Bevan, Bill Hopkins and the rest of the workers look around and try to withhold their sniggers.

INT. BEVAN HOUSEHOLD - DAY -- AFTERNOON

The kitchen is a hive of activity as Ma Bevan, Arianwen and other sisters are busy in the kitchen preparing the tea. The door to the house is 'blasted open' and Bevan walks through with a huge grin on his face.

MRS BEVAN

What's got you then, Nye? Have you come into a fortune?

BEVAN

No. Better. I've only just found out from Bill Finch I've got the scholarship to the Central Labour College in London.

MRS BEVAN

Well done son. I'm right pleased for you. When do you go?

BEVAN

In two months' time. I have to give my notice to the pit and then I go to the big city. London.

ARIANWEN

Well, well. My brother leaving us. Whatever next?

MRS BEVAN

How long do you go for?

ARIANWEN

Won't be long enough I bet, will it Nye?

BEVAN

Two years.

Mrs Bevan drops her pan on the table with a bang.

MRS BEVAN

Two years? Where will you live? It's a big city, you can't trust anyone Nye. It's not like here. And what about your job down the pit? Will they keep it open for you?

BEVAN

Only one way to find out.

MRS BEVAN

What if they don't Nye? What will you do then?

BEVAN

Don't worry, ma. It'll be alright. This is a chance of a lifetime I can't pass on.

ARIANWEN

So what is this Central Labour college then?

BEVAN

(in a 'grand' pose; as if reading from the prospectus)

It's a training establishment for young trade unionists in Marxist economics and labour history. It is based upon the recognition of the antagonism of interests between capital and labour

MRS BEVAN

Oh my. I don't even understand the prospectus!

EXT. CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE, LONDON - DAY

Bevan walks with his suitcase towards the college in Earls Court. It is a terraced georgian building on a long narrow street of similar structurally imposing terraces. Before he enters he stands outside and looks up at the building and its grand entrance.

INT. CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE, LONDON - NIGHT

Bevan and his two bed sitting room mates (George Phippen and Jim Griffiths) are lying on their beds discussing the day's lectures. Nye is reading Marx's communist manifesto.

JIM GRIFFITHS

(sarcastically)

Doing homework, Nye?

BEVAN

The communist manifesto stands in a class by itself in Socialist literature. Its note of passionate revolt throughout make it for all rebels an inspiration and a weapon.

JIM GRIFFITHS

oooh.

(turns to George
Phippen, smiling)

BEVAN

Like all historic documents though, it is
at the mercy of the march of time.

JIM PHIPPEN

You mean it's out of date?
(He looks round to his
two friends, laughing)

BEVAN

We have to remember that Marx wrote his
manifesto at a time when revolution on
the streets of Paris was a familiar
phenomenon. Times change and people move
on and we must also adapt. The central
tenet of our struggle must be 'how do we
obtain power'. Is it through revolution
and overturning the present system or is
it through using the present system by
the ballot box?

JIM GRIFFITHS

The present system is hardly democratic
when 50% of the population are unable to
vote. Once women have the vote, maybe
things will change, but until then..

BEVAN

How CAN we change things to make a fairer
society? One where we don't have to live
in poverty and work till we die so that
others can have a life of idleness? Is it
only through the ballot box? Is that the
only way?

JIM GRIFFITHS

That big house in London is certainly
where they can change things, but even
there you'd be outvoted by so many Tories
upholding the system for themselves and
their mates.

BEVAN

But we MUST fight. We must fight to
overturn the injustices that are heaped
on ordinary workers.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

D'you know I went to Golders Green a few weeks ago and I heard Jimmy Thomas, you know, the railwaymen's leader talk about why the unions had capitulated in the recent clash with the government. At the end, I was one of many who clustered round him, only to hear him say to one of his aides, 'when the buggers are giving you trouble, give 'em a mass meeting, it gets it out of their system'.

JIM PHIPPEN

That's shocking.

BEVAN

The only place the workers have any semblance of power is in the organised trade union movement, and when that movement treats them shabbily, we stand no chance of ever improving the plight of millions.

JIM GRIFFITHS

(to Bevan)

So what will you do? What's the big plan, Nye?

BEVAN

I shall stand for election as an MP. I will bide my time here, but at such times as these my time is better spent taking the fight to the Tories.

Jim Griffiths and Jim Phippen go back to reading their books while Bevan daydreams.

INT - CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE, LONDON - DAY

Nye is taking elocution lessons from Miss Clara Bunn. He is reciting William Morris.

BEVAN

(reading from a book)

Rest, comrade, rest:
Cull we sad flowers to lay on your sad
breast:
There till the world awakes to love, we
leave you:
Rest, comrade, rest.

CLARA BUNN

That's much better.

(MORE)

CLARA BUNN (CONT'D)

Don't forget your breathing; that will make all the difference to help pronunciation, Nye. Shall we say next week?

BEVAN

Yes, very well Miss Bunn. See you next week.

Nye picks up his books and exits through the door.

EXT. LONDON - NIGHT

Bevan is walking along the streets of Earls Court. He buys a ticket from a booth and enters a cinema.

Inside the cinema Nye is seated in the middle row of a near-empty cinema. We see him notice the ice cream girl at the bottom of the cinema in front of the screen. Then as she walks up the aisle and his eyes follow her, she notices him and we see the film titles roll 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' in titles with music on the screen.

Later, Nye comes out of the cinema and notices the ice-cream girl who is now doing up her coat by the cinema entrance.

BEVAN

Nice weather tonight.

ICE CREAM GIRL

I'm going to get soaked on the way home.

BEVAN

I always say on nights like these you have to go home in stages, via the pubs along the way home. Like staging posts. There's always that one across the road first. Do you fancy a drink there?

ICE CREAM GIRL

Oh, alright then. Just a quick one mind.

Nye offers his arm, she puts her hand in the crook of it and they cross the road.

INT. PUB, EARLS COURT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The pub is busy and the air is hazy with cigarette smoke. They are in the snug, seated in a corner.

ICE CREAM GIRL

What are you doing in London? I can tell from your accent you're not from here.

BEVAN

I'm at the Central Labour College for 2 years.

ICE CREAM GIRL

What's that? Never heard of it.

BEVAN

It was set up to provide university education for the working classes; it's funded by two unions, the railwaymen's union and my union, the South Wales Miners Federation.

ICE CREAM GIRL

So you're going to be a union leader at the end of it?

BEVAN

I don't know. What I do know though after being here, is that the union leaders need shaking up a bit.

ICE CREAM GIRL

What do you study?

BEVAN

Politics, economics, history, and yesterday I finished a course in accounting. Scintillating, you know.

ICE CREAM GIRL

I bet.

BEVAN

What about you? Are you a cockney?

ICE CREAM GIRL

To be a proper cockney you've got to have been born within the sound of Bow Bells, so no I'm not, but I've lived in London all my life.

BEVAN

As long as you don't start talking cockney rhyming slang I'll be able to understand you.
How long have you been working in the picture house?

ICE CREAM GIRL

Only about six months.

(MORE)

ICE CREAM GIRL (CONT'D)

I had to find an evening job so that I could look after my little boy during the day. My parents look after him at night.

She looks coyly at Nye to see his reaction.

ICE CREAM GIRL (CONT'D)

His father deserted me when he was born.

BEVAN

Does he not give you any financial support?

ICE CREAM GIRL

No. My parents do what they can, but they're getting older now and I can't always rely on them for support. I have to get work where I can.

BEVAN

(moving his hand to the table to rest on the top of hers)

I'm very sorry.

INT. CENTRAL LABOUR COLLEGE, LONDON - MORNING - THE FOLLOWING DAY

Nye's eye slowly opens and he looks around him. We pan around the bedroom and finish on Nye as he realises he is the only one in the bed and that the girl has gone. Nye perches on the edge of the bed and looks around. He looks at his bedside table and cannot see his pocket book (wallet). Growing panic forms in his chest as he walks over to his study desk and still cannot see his wallet. A knock is heard at the door and Jim Phippen peers round the door.

JIM PHIPPEN

Morning Nye. Thought you were on your own.

Jim walks in through the door.

JIM PHIPPEN (CONT'D)

She's gone then. I thought I heard her leave.

BEVAN

Yes, she's gone, with my pocket book.

JIM PHIPPEN

What?

Jim sits down on the bed, next to Nye.

BEVAN

I left it on the bedside table. It had all my money for the month in it. It's all I had.

JIM PHIPPEN

Oh bloody hell.

BEVAN

I suppose I can go back to the picture house where she works.

JIM PHIPPEN

You could, but I bet she's gone from there now.

BEVAN

Yes, you're probably right. Probably found herself another mug by now. Ah well, the ways of the big city an' all that.

JIM PHIPPEN

It could happen anywhere Nye, yes even in the Welsh valleys.

BEVAN

I suppose you're right.

JIM PHIPPEN

Now, get up, get dressed, we've got a lecture to get to.

Nye smiles at Jim, gets up from the bed and starts to get dressed.

INT. PARK HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER - CURRENT DAY

Matron shows Bevan to a man in his 50's with his leg in plaster. It is suspended from a contraption above his bed.

MATRON

This is Mr Carter, Minister. Mr Carter has been in an accident.

BEVAN

Oh dear, what have you done?

MR CARTER

I fell off a ladder at work, sir.

BEVAN

Oh please, I'm no sir. You'll be off work for a while?

MR CARTER

They've sacked me.

BEVAN

Oh dear.

MR CARTER

At least I won't have to go to the workhouse. I'll be able to claim assistance, and that should hopefully get me through, all thanks to you.

BEVAN

I claimed assistance once. It's a long time ago now though. Back in South Wales.

INT. MINE MANAGER'S OFFICE - -- DAY -

1921. Bevan has returned home from Labour College and is now standing in front of Mr Reynolds. Mr Reynolds is seated behind his desk, his spectacles perched on the end of his nose. He is doing paperwork and does his paperwork as he speaks to Nye, occasionally looking at him over the edge of his spectacles.

MR REYNOLDS

No, I can't take you on. Haven't you got nystagmus?

BEVAN

Yes, but isn't it true Mr Reynolds that nearly every miner in this mine also has nystagmus?

MR REYNOLDS

That might be true, but I didn't take them on WITH nystagmus, they contracted it while they were down the mines.

BEVAN

Look you, I know you need workers, Mr Reynolds, it's common knowledge. I'm an experienced miner and I can't see why you can't take me on.

MR REYNOLDS

I've told you Bevan, I'll not take you on with nystagmus. You'll have to find something else.

BEVAN

But I've been round all the pits in the valley. I know they want workers, but they're the same as you, when it comes to me, they're not taking workers on.

MR REYNOLDS

I can't answer for them. I just know about my own pit. I have another meeting now. Good day to you, Bevan.

Bevan looks down, turns around, puts his hat on and leaves the room.

EXT. HILLS OF TREDEGAR - DAY -- LATER

Bevan and Archie Lush are walking the hills around Tredegar.

ARCHIE LUSH

You went to Mr Reynolds?

BEVAN

Yes, I went cap in hand to my old foe, Mr Reynolds.

ARCHIE LUSH

That was very brave. What did he say?

BEVAN

That he wouldn't take me on. I think I've been blacklisted. No mine will take me on.

ARCHIE LUSH

Something will come up, I'm sure. Can't the union do anything?

BEVAN

They won't take my case on because I had a break in employment when I went to London.

ARCHIE LUSH

That doesn't seem fair.

BEVAN

I agree, but it's their rules.

ARCHIE LUSH

What are you going to do next?

BEVAN

I've claimed assistance. Not the best moment in my life; quite degrading.

INT. BEVAN HOUSEHOLD - DAY -- MORNING

Bevan comes down the stairs to the round table in the kitchen and picks up his post. His Ma is making tea and his da is sitting at the table.

MRS BEVAN
Want a cup of tea, Nye?

BEVAN

He opens the letter and starts reading it.
Yes please ma.

MRS BEVAN
Something interesting?

Bevan is silent as reads his letter. He finally puts it down on the table.

BEVAN
They have refused my application for assistance.

MRS BEVAN
Why?

BEVAN
Because Arienwen has started working and gets paid two pounds a week, they say 11 shillings is to keep you, mam, and 11 shillings is to keep me. They say it's Arienwen's responsibility to keep us, seeing as she's working.

His father starts coughing.

MRS BEVAN
Why, that's ridiculous. Why should she have to keep me?

BEVAN
I don't see why she should have to keep me either. But that's what it says.

MRS BEVAN
Surely we can appeal?

BEVAN
We certainly are.

Nye gets up from the table, letter in hand and goes out the door. The door closes.

MRS BEVAN (O.S.)
Nye, your tea, love.

INT. BEVAN HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT - ONE YEAR LATER

Bevan and his father are sitting by the fire. It is evening and everyone else has gone to bed.

MR BEVAN

Dai the fish was looking for you today.
Called at the house.

BEVAN

What did he want?

MR BEVAN

Wanted you to help him with his claim for assistance. That's the third this week. Ever since you won your claim, they've all been asking you to help with theirs.

BEVAN

I'll do what I can to help. God knows we all need it. I know what it's like, having no work, especially after 3 years of it.

MR BEVAN

Did you know Jim Minton from Blaine is emigrating to Australia?

BEVAN

Yes.

MR BEVAN

Have you ever thought about it? Not that I want to see you go son, but you'd be better there than here.

BEVAN

I've told Jim I wish him all the luck in the world, but I'm going to stay here and fight it out. If we all leave, they've won and I don't like the thought of that.

MR BEVAN

I think you've made the right decision, but it will be a bloody long fight.

BEVAN

I know you're right, da. But we've already started to query the way things are being done here and we can only go from strength to strength. Fighting the system and the injustices it forces on us makes me feel better.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

It's better than doing nothing and tacitly accepting what crumbs they decide to shake off the table for us.

MR BEVAN

Look you, your ma is right. You should really think about becoming a barrister or something. You've got a talent for this sort of thing. It comes natural to you.

BEVAN

It's not about me, da, it's everyone. It's not about 'what shall I be', it's about 'what shall WE do'.

MR BEVAN

Are you still thinking of running for the local council?

BEVAN

Yes, the more I think about it, the more I realise that the only way to get the power to change things is to get INTO power. And the way I see it, that power is at the council. We can't change it by protesting about this or protesting about that, or being on the picket line, they just don't listen; they don't want to listen. They ignore us because they can. Because we have no power. The only way to make them listen and to change things is through the ballot box. There's more of us than them and if people vote for us, then, and only then will we be able to make a difference.

MR BEVAN

Just think of the possibilities if *all* the electorate turned up to vote. We outnumber them, and yet they have all the power...and money.

BEVAN

Anyway, I'm going to bed. Night da.

MR BEVAN

Night son.

INT. COUNCIL HALL - NIGHT --

1922. Bevan has been elected councillor to Tredegar Urban District Council. A small number of the public is present in the gallery, including a reporter taking notes for the Argus, the local newspaper.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

The motion which is put forward states that as a condition for this council accepting tenants that they must prove their cleanliness.

BEVAN

Mr Chair, I find the motion quite impossible to approve. It is impossible for women to keep houses clean with coalminers coming home on cross shifts. In fact this motion is a damned h-h-hypocrisy.

COUNCIL MEMBER 1

(whispering to person
next to him)

He can't even speak properly.

Bevan hears this and looks at the council member.

BEVAN

I may be not as good as speaking as most members here, but I WILL be heard. It is not just me who is speaking, I represent thousands of residents of this council.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

I would like to remind Mr Bevan of the advantages of cleanliness. I would also like to remind him that some tenants already contravene tenancy agreements by keeping chickens and pigeons and we must abide by the law of that agreement.

BEVAN

The council can choose to not enforce such things if it chooses, and I appeal to this council not to enforce this decision. Houses in Tredegar are appalling. People are living in conditions not fit for criminals.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Horses, especially race horses are housed much better than some of our citizens and it should be up to the residents of Tredegar whether or not they choose to rear their own food or indulge in entertainment in or outside a house they have paid to rent from this Council.

I myself do not want to keep chickens or pigeons; I am quite satisfied with the natural history the Council provides.

Bevan sits down. Laughing comes from members of the public in the gallery. The reporter scribbles furiously.

INSERT: Headlines of the local newspaper, the Argus stating 'Bevan: 'damned hypocrisy''.

BEVAN HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT

1925. Bevan, his father, mother, Arienwen and the other children are at home. Bevan's father is upstairs in bed, stricken with pneumoconiosis. His breathing is laboured and shallow. Mrs Bevan is tidying around the bed. Bevan and Arienwen are downstairs.

ARIANWEN

The Doctor says it's only a matter of time now.

BEVAN

That's the Doctor from the Medical Aid Society?

ARIANWEN

Yes. He's been very good, he even came out to see Da yesterday.

BEVAN

Thank God for Tredegar Medical Aid Society. Where would we be without it.

ARIANWEN

Nye, do you believe in the afterlife?

BEVAN

I would like to. My heart tells me so, but my head will not let my heart be at rest. Da always says 'try and work out what is the argument against what someone is saying to you' and that is too strong for me on that issue.

ARIANWEN

Da is very proud of you, you know. He says you're the most talked of figure in the life of Tredegar.

Bevan allows himself a small laugh but the gravity of the situation above his head takes over as Mrs Bevan comes down the stairs.

MRS BEVAN

You'd best come upstairs now. I think it's time.

They enter the bedroom and Bevan is immediately struck by his father's pallor and the 'death rattle' that is noisily evident. Bevan sits on the side of the bed and takes his father's hand in his. Bevan holds his dad in his arms. His father's breathing becomes more and more shallow and eventually stops.

BEVAN looks at his mother, tears in his eyes, and buries his head in the bedclothes.

EXT. HILLS OF TREDEGAR - DAY -- MORNING

1928. Bevan and Archie Lush are walking on the Llangynydr mountain above Tredegar. The sun shines down and highlights the lines of houses and the pit wheels below.

ARCHIE LUSH

There's growing criticism of Evan Davies.

BEVAN

Why?

ARCHIE LUSH

He's in financial difficulties and he's been ill recently. Some thought he would give it up altogether. He also cancels constituency meetings at the last minute.

My report to the divisional management committee on his activities in the House show that he rarely intervenes in Commons debates. And on Neville Chamberlain's removal of the Board of Guardians in the Bedwellty Union he didn't take part at all. That hasn't gone down well seeing as he's an MP in a predominantly mining constituency.

BEVAN
But the old miners like him.

ARCHIE LUSH
That may be at the moment, but younger men feel that they should be able to challenge, such as Bryn Roberts from Rhymney.

BEVAN
Bryn? It goes against the grain though; we have a history of supporting our MP, not challenging him.

ARCHIE LUSH
But when he's not working in our interests, it's only right that we should be able to challenge him, to get someone in parliament who works for us. (A beat) I was wondering whether you would think about standing against him.

BEVAN
Me?

ARCHIE LUSH
Why not?

BEVAN
I don't know.

ARCHIE LUSH
We'd have to be careful, because we'd face some criticism ourselves; of maybe organising a coup. But I think you'd be a good challenger.

BEVAN
I don't know. I'd have to think about it. It's a big responsibility to take on - the dreams and hopes of everyone down there.

ARCHIE LUSH
Well don't take too long. We'll have a lot of work to do.

EXT. NEWPORT RAILWAY STATION - MORNING

Six months later, Archie Lush walks along the platform with Bevan. Bevan has a large, battered case but he is dressed in a new pin-stripe suit and has had a hair cut.

ARCHIE LUSH
Don't forget they're no better than us.

BEVAN

Archie Lush opens the door of the train and Bevan gets on board. Bevan pushes the window down as the guard blows his whistle and a puff of smoke goes skyward.

ARCHIE LUSH

Who are those people up there? What's the matter with you? We're as good or better than they are.

The train pulls away and Bevan pulls up the window.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. DAY

1929. Bevan asks his first question in the House as MP for Ebbw Vale.

BEVAN

I ask whether the Government intends before the Summer recess to introduce legislation to deal with the iniquities of the unemployment insurance administration.

The government's insistence that family incomes must be taken into account in deciding what help is to be given to the growing number of people who are, through no fault of their own, unemployed, will undermine the foundation of family life in this country as nothing else will. The purpose of this government's means test is not to discover a handful of people receiving public money when they have means to supply themselves. The purpose is to compel a large number of working-class people to keep other working-class people therefore balancing the budget by taking £8 to £10 millions from the unemployed. What a mockery it makes of the government's appeals for thrift and will only result in making whole communities of families paupers.

At this, a member opposite laughed.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

I do not want to threaten the noble Lord, but had he been near me, I would have wiped that grin off his face. We know the noble Lord has no need to pass a means test.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

He and his family have thriven on the proceeds of banditry for centuries.

There is uproar from the government benches.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

(standing up)

Order. Order.

That is unparliamentary language and the honourable gentleman will issue an apology immediately.

BEVAN

I apologise for my words to the honourable gentleman. But no apology will be forthcoming for his thievery.

As for the government's new body, the Unemployment Assistance Board, which gives new division between shorter-term and long-term unemployed, the excuse is unsupportable. On the pretence of sustaining the insurance principle, you punish a man for being idle longer than his fellows. This Board will mean that an individual objecting to harsh treatment would not be able to have his case raised by his MP in the House of Commons. This is a Bill to take poverty out of politics and to make the poor dumb... the only way for a man to protest will be to throw a brick through a window. You want to suffocate the unemployed man's cries in a maze of bureaucracy. Yet when it comes to election time you will bend over backwards in an hypocritical way of attracting votes. If this is democracy, it's a sham of a democracy.

Bevan sits down and we see Jennie Lee leaning to whisper to the person next to her.

JENNIE LEE

Who's that?

MP

That's Nye Bevan. Ex-miner. Bit of a firebrand. New to the house. Dines with Lord Beaverbrook. They call him a 'Bollinger Bolshevik'.

NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN

I must take issue with the honourable gentleman over the Bill. Human nature being what it is, to show people that they can be maintained by somebody else in idleness, at the same standard of living as those who are doing an honest, full week's work is something which might, if it were carried on, undermine and weaken the fibre and character of the people.

BEVAN

I hope that if the Regulations worsen the conditions of the people in my district, they will behave in such a manner that you will require to send a regular army to keep order.

Cries of 'shame' went up from the benches opposite.

BEVAN

(spurred on)

It is a shame, Mr Speaker, that when income tax is under consideration, those benches are packed. If electricity is under consideration, those benches are packed. If there is some opposition to a little Municipal Bill, for which honourable members opposite have been subsidised by private concerns, those benches are packed. If it is a sugar subsidy, those benches are packed. If it is swag, those benches are packed, but if it is the poor, they are empty. Men and women are rotting to death in the midst of industrial graveyards. No one cares to heal the wounds of these victims of economic lunacy; instead acid is poured onto them. One little collier boy fifteen years of age went home to his parents the other day and proudly announced that he had an increase of three shillings a week; the following week the Board reduced the allowance of his unemployed father.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Christ drove the moneychangers out of the temple, but you inscribe their title deeds on the altar cloth.

Bevan sits quickly sits down.

Cries of shame are again heard on the benches opposite, this time louder. Papers are waved on the other benches.

EXT. HOUSE OF COMMONS TERRACE. DAY - LATER

Jennie walks out to the terrace overlooking the Thames. She sees Nye who is leaning over the parapet. She walks towards him.

JENNIE LEE

Good speech. I'm Jennie Lee. MP for North Lannark.

They shake hands.

BEVAN

Nye Bevan. Ebbw Vale. (A beat). Thank you. But I think personal experience is always an advantage in speeches.

JENNIE LEE

I agree. I also come from a mining community. The despair that runs through its veins haunts me; especially here in this ivory tower.

BEVAN

Was your Dad a miner too?

JENNIE LEE

Yes. It's one thing to put up with discomfort if it is only for a short time; quite another if you feel it is your lot to be an underdog for the rest of your life.

Bevan regards Jennie with a new interest, a new appreciation. Their gaze is interrupted by the division bell calling them back to the chamber. They start to walk back.

JENNIE LEE (CONT'D)

You know, Nye, we could be brother and sister.

BEVAN

(with a mischievous
gleam in his eyes)

Yes, with a tendency to incest.

Jennie ignores him as they walk back together.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. DAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Bevan sits down and watches Jennie as all the seats are quickly filling. Bevan leans forward to the elderly MP seated next to him.

BEVAN

What's Jennie Lee like, North Lanark?

JENNIE LEE

Headstrong. Ambitious. Frank Wise's mistress.

The elderly MP points out a thin, tall MP with glasses making his way to his seat.

INT.HOUSE OF COMMONS DINING ROOM - DAY

1930. Bevan enters the dining room and spots Jennie Lee sitting alone at a table. She is looking at the menu.

BEVAN

May I join you?

JENNIE LEE

Of course.

As he sits, two MPs pass their table complaining about the food not being up to standard and about the price of it. Bevan is wearing a black suit and striped trousers.

JENNIE LEE (CONT'D)

Those two are always complaining.

BEVAN

Isn't this taxpayer subsidised?

JENNIE LEE

Very heavily, although you'd never know listening to some of their comments.

A waiter approaches them and gives them a menu.

JENNIE LEE (CONT'D)

What do you think of the the House of Commons?

BEVAN

It reminds me of a church. It's not just the vaulted rooves, stained glass windows and whispered conversations. MPs are tribunes of the people, here to make their voices heard in the corridors of power.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Instead I'm expected to worship, and ancestor worship at that. It's very different to the hustle and bustle back home.

He looked at Jennie and smiled. She returns the favour.

WAITER

Are you ready to order?

BEVAN

Yes, thank you. I'll have the dover sole.

JENNIE LEE

And I'll have the kedgereee.

The waiter takes their menus and walks away.

JENNIE LEE (CONT'D)

Don't you feel guilty being here, when our constituents are struggling so much?

BEVAN

All the time. But I'm determined to change things for their better. And anyway I believe everyone should live like a millionaire, even for five minutes.

JENNIE LEE

Especially the Cafe Royal?

BEVAN

When I can afford to. I also like painting, music and poetry, and sometimes I go to the ballet. Should someone like me not appreciate such things? I also read profusely and visit the many free London museums and libraries. Knowledge is the one armoury they can't deny us.

JENNIE LEE

And friends with Lord Beaverbrook?

BEVAN

I don't believe in never talking to the enemy. How else will you get your point of view across and get them to listen to you? Ecclesiasticus said 'Stand not too near the rich man lest he destroy thee - and not too far away lest he forget thee'. I think he has a point, don't you?

JENNIE LEE

Do you really think you can even remotely get Beaverbrook and his ilk to see your point of view?

BEVAN

Probably not. But when I talk to the Beaverbrooks of this world and I see the well -nourished bodies of the wealthy I see also the tired, haggard faces of my own people. In a sense you could say that it urges me on in my fight. I don't regard myself so much as a politician but as a projectile discharged from the Welsh valleys.

JENNIE LEE

Changing the system is an almost impossible task, such an uphill struggle, and you'll probably never get to the top of that hill. You know that, don't you?

BEVAN

But that's the only reason I'm here. I've walked enough miles on marches and protests in my time and yet we made no changes. My father told me that the place to get to is the council. That's where the power is. I discovered when I got there that the power had been there, but it had just gone. So I made some enquiries and I learned that the power had slipped down to the County Council. So I worked very hard again and when I got there and it had gone from there too. So I'm here now, with nowhere else to go. This is the end of the line.

The waiter brings their meals and, smiling they begin to eat whilst maintaining constant eye contact.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

That's enough about me. What about you, especially after the 'incident' last week?

JENNIE LEE

Frank's wife turning up at the House of Commons making a scene was a bit embarrassing. But it is a mistress' role never to complain. After all, if he left his wife for me it would be disastrous for all concerned.

(MORE)

JENNIE LEE (CONT'D)

There would be more gossip than there is now. And there is no question of Frank withdrawing his protective love and care from his wife and children and I certainly don't blame him for that.

1932. Bevan returns to parliament unopposed. Excerpt from newspaper 'The Argus'.

INT. 28 DEAN STREET, SOHO. EVENING

1933. Jennie Lee's flat comprises two rooms divided by a curtain. Jennie and Bevan are seated on a sofa. Jennie is upset and has a handkerchief to her nose. A pile of opened letters lies between them.

JENNIE LEE

Thank you for coming.

BEVAN

It was the least I could do. How are you now?

JENNIE LEE

I can't believe that Frank's gone. He was at the height of his physical and intellectual strength. Thank you for going to his flat and getting my letters. It's best that they're not seen.

BEVAN

Look, I think it's best if I move in for a while. You're not functioning properly, you can't make sensible decisions; you're not yourself at the moment. I can look after you. Till you're better.

JENNIE LEE

You're a good friend, but I can't impose that on you.

BEVAN

I insist. It's what a brother would do for a sister.

INT. CAFE ROYAL -- NIGHT

1934. Bevan and Jennie are seated at a table in a private dining room at the Cafe Royal. Two waiters are in attendance. Jennie is wearing an emerald green dress.

JENNIE

(looking around)

This is very nice.

(MORE)

JENNIE (CONT'D)

We don't normally do a private dining room, do we? Can you afford it?

BEVAN

Like I said, everyone has the right to live like a millionaire for five minutes, you know. Although I do have an ulterior motive for bringing you in here.

JENNIE LEE

Oh?

BEVAN

It's about time I made an honest woman of you.

The waiters, standing at the back wall look at each other.

JENNIE LEE

What?

BEVAN

We must get married. It would do us no good if word got out that we were living in sin - not in my Welsh non-conformist constituency, nor in North Lanark where you are prospective candidate. We have serious work to do and we mustn't let such trivialities as a bit of paper get in the way. We cannot afford a scandal. What do you say?

JENNIE LEE

(almost breathless)

I don't know. I like being a free spirit, and I'm not the marrying type. I don't even want children - they would get in the way of my work.

BEVAN

Oh, I know you can't cook and don't conform to the qualities normally bestowed to a wife, but I don't want just a wife, I want a partner in life, not just in marriage. I wouldn't try and hold you back. I wouldn't ask you to behave any differently than you do now. We would work well together.

JENNIE LEE

I suppose so.

BEVAN
What do you say then?

JENNIE LEE
(thoughtful)
Alright then.

Bevan sits back in triumph, his eyes on Jennie.

BEVAN
Good. Let's do it as soon as we can.

JENNIE LEE
No rings though. I don't like them. And you've got to get a new suit.

BEVAN
A new suit? There's nothing wrong with this one! My mother chose this from the Co-operative, especially for when I became an MP.

JENNIE LEE
Oh, I didn't know that.

BEVAN
It's alright, I'll get a new suit. It's a deal then?

JENNIE LEE
Yes, it's a deal

Bevan turns to one of the waiters

BEVAN
Waiter, champagne!

INT. COUNCIL HOUSE, EBBW VALE - NIGHT

1945. Rows of tables are set out in the council house. Council workers sit at these tables. The count has finished and the workers are sitting, chatting and pulling rubber bands between their fingers. Bevan is on the stage and Archie Lush and Arienwen are in the audience standing around the tables. Officers of the count are walking between tables. Gradually everything becomes quiet and attention is given to the returning officer who mounts the steps to the stage.

RETURNING OFFICER
As Returning Officer for the parliamentary election for Ebbw Vale, I declare the following results of the election for the member of parliament.

Parker. Carstairs Steven. Conservative Party. Six thousand seven hundred and fifty eight thousand.

Muffled cheers are heard throughout the hall.

RETURNING OFFICER
Bevan. Aneurin. Labour Party.

Much louder cheers reverberate throughout the hall.

RETURNING OFFICER (CONT'D)
Twenty seven thousand, two hundred and nine.

A great uproar now, as Bevan's supporters cheer and clap.

RETURNING OFFICER (CONT'D)
I hereby declare the said Aneurin Bevan the member of parliament for the constituency of Ebbw Vale.

The cheers and clapping continue as Bevan climbs the steps to the stage.

BEVAN
I would like to thank the people of Ebbw Vale for returning me to parliament to represent them. I will always remember them in my heart when I am away from them in London.

Cheers from the crowd.

BEVAN (CONT'D)
And I hope that we will win many more seats. We did not fight this election in order to perpetuate the spirit of the Coalition

The audience shout 'no'.

BEVAN (CONT'D)
This election has been about a real struggle for power in Britain. It is a struggle between big business and the people.

The audience shout 'yes'.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

It has been about a new world, both at home and abroad, it has been about ordinary people wanting a change, a better life not just for them, but for their children, whether it is the miner, the housewife, or the war-weary soldier returning from the battlefield. Let us face the future with renewed hope, vigour and look forward to a better world for all of us, not just for the few.

The audience clap and cheer again and we focus on Archie Lush clapping.

ARCHIE LUSH

Do you think Attlee will offer him anything?

ARIANWEN

I doubt it. He says he'll only accept a real job anyhow - he won't accept an Under-Secretary post where he has little power in shaping policies.

ARCHIE LUSH

I wouldn't expect anything less of him. But if Attlee wants to keep him occupied and quiet, he'll offer him something substantial. But he'd be the youngest in the Cabinet, that may go against him. Has he said what he would prefer?

ARIANWEN

He says if he had a choice, he'd choose the Ministry of Health.

ARCHIE LUSH

Not much chance of that then.

INT. PARK HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER - CURRENT DAY --

MATRON

(in hushed tones)

The next patient is Mrs Collins. She's got a womb prolapse. She's held it in place for ten years with a sanitary towel.

The party walk to Mrs Collins' bed. Bevan shakes hands with her.

BEVAN

When do you have the operation Mrs Collins?

MRS COLLINS

Tomorrow. I'm very glad. I'm so pleased to have seen you. Thank God for the NHS. I don't know what I'd have done. I was coming to the end of my tether.

She grasps Bevan's hand in both of hers.

MRS COLLINS (CONT'D)

And - I've just moved into one of your council houses. Wonderful they are. Downstairs loo an' all. Makes a change from traipsing to the outside privvy all the time. Bloomin' freezin' it was. Homes fit for heroes, that's what they are.

BEVAN

That was the plan, Mrs Collins. I'm glad you like it.

MRS COLLINS

And when you're next up here you can come and have a cup of tea at my house. 198 Victoria Road. Don't you forget Mr Bevan. God bless you and God bless the NHS.

INT. CLEMENT ATTLEE'S OFFICE -- DAY -

1945. Attlee is working behind a large desk. A knock is heard at the door.

ATTLEE

ENTER!

Bevan walks in to Attlee's office and offers his hand to Attlee. Attlee shakes it and offers Bevan a seat. Bevan sits.

ATTLEE

I understand that you have much experience of negotiation, Bevan. That is why I am offering you the post of Health. God help you as you will need it. The previous incumbant couldn't get anyone to agree to anything.

BEVAN

Thank you.

ATTLEE

And the post of Housing.

BEVAN

And the post of Housing? Thank you, I'm honoured to have been chosen for two such important tasks in the Beveridge Report.

ATTLEE

You will be responsible for preventative medicine in the form of clean and hygienic homes; and curative medicine in the form of doctors and hospitals.

Although your abilities have only so far been displayed in opposition, I'm sure you have it in you to do good service. You are the youngest member of the Cabinet. Now it's up to you. The more you can learn the better.

Attlee stands up and offers Bevan his hand again. Bevan rises and takes Attlee's hand.

BEVAN

Thank you Prime Minister.

Bevan leaves. As he shuts the door behind him Bevan's face shows astonishment and puzzlement.

INT. CLIVEDEN PLACE - EVENING

Jennie and Nye are at the kitchen table. Jennie's mum is washing up.

JENNIE LEE

And Housing?

BEVAN

And Housing.

MA LEE

He's asking too much of you.

BEVAN

Maybe, but it's maybe the only chance of making a real difference to people's lives..a chance to improve things. I've got to take it.

JENNIE LEE

He's making sure you're too busy to cause trouble for him.

BEVAN

I know. But I'd rather be the one in charge of these two departments, rather than someone else.

MA LEE

Well Nye, I'll be making sure you're not working too hard. I'm sure Jennie will too.

BEVAN

That's not fair. Two matriarchs on my back, not just the one...

INT - HOUSE OF COMMONS --DAY

Nye and his Parliamentary Private Secretary, Donald Bruce are walking down a long dark wooden corridor. They stop at a door and Donald Bruce opens it and shows Nye in to the room. Inside, a large wooden desk is in the centre of a small room, surrounded by a large dark wooden bookcase full of books and pamphlets. Nye looks round the room and his eyes rest on the large leather chair behind the desk. He walks round the desk and puts his hand on the chair.

BEVAN

No, no, no. This won't do. It drains all the blood from the head and explains a lot about my predecessors.

BRUCE

We can get that changed, minister.

BEVAN

Nye will do, not minister. I am no better than anyone here and do not require such patronage.

BRUCE

Yes sir.

Nye looks at Bruce from under his fringe.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson, the President of the Royal College of Surgeons has asked if you would meet him and a representation of other Doctors to discuss the NHS proposals. He would like to meet on an informal basis, to help get you up to speed.

BEVAN

He would, would he?

Bevan slowly swings round in his chair, his hands clasped behind his head. As he turns to face Bruce again he is alert again and quickly sits up behind his desk.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Organise a meeting with them. Book a private room at the Cafe Royal.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, CAFE ROYAL - DAY -- AFTERNOON

The oppulent gilt mirrored room has a large table in the middle bedecked with a large brass candelabra. Three elderly Doctors await Bevan. They are huddled together, talking quietly. The Doctors are Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Mr Eardley Holland, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and Dr Hill, the BBC's Radio Doctor.

SIR WEBB-JOHNSON

It is important, is it not gentlemen, that the Minister sees the medical profession as allies and seeks our advice.

DR CHARLES HILL

Yes, certainly. We need to be able to direct the Minister to the best course of action suitable to our needs and our profession. It's important to have our say in these proposals.

Bevan opens the door to the private room. The Doctors turn around to see Bevan stride in as if he owns the establishment.

BEVAN

(looking around him,
walking to the table)

This place is not quite what it once was, when I, and others before me such as Oscar Wilde frequented it and made it famous.

Shall we sit down, gentlemen? No use in beating about the bush now is there?

Bevan takes the seat at the head of the table. The Doctors follow his lead and seat themselves close to him at the table.

BEVAN

(to the waiter)

We'll have a large plate of oysters
please for us to share to start with.

THE WAITER

Yes sir.

BEVAN

Now, gentlemen, let's get down to
business. How can I help you?

SIR ALFRED WEBB-JOHNSON

We would like to help YOU, Mr Bevan. As
a minister new to the post of Health, we
would like to give you the advantage of
our years of experience to help with your
Health Service Bill.

DR CHARLES HILL

Although we are concerned with some of
the proposals in the Bill, are we not
gentlemen?

The other two Doctors nod in agreement.

DR CHARLES HILL (CONT'D)

You see, Minister, we are concerned that
this new Bill will demote Doctors to
glorified salaried civil servants. We
can't have that. We need our independence
from state control.

SIR WEBB-JOHNSON

And neither can we have our freedom to
practise anywhere curtailed.

MR EARDLEY HOLLAND

Yes. We need a planned hospital service,
based on teaching hospitals.

Throughout the Doctors' demands, Bevan listens intently with his
hands forming a bridge underneath his chin.

The waiter enters the room and places a large plate of oysters in
the centre of the table.

BEVAN

When I was a nipper, we could buy that lot
for a few pence; then the price went up
when Mayfair thought they were
aphrodisiacs.

Bevan's guests laugh and the immediate seriousness is shattered.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

The truth is, gentlemen, the doctor-patient relationship in its modern form needs improvement rather than preservation: it can never be wholly satisfactory while the doctor is not only a friend in need but also a friend in need of his patient's money. Whether that be through a teaching hospital or a voluntary hospital.

There is one particularly shocking story of a mother, a pregnant mother, who was entering hospital and was asked if she could make a contribution. She said unfortunately she couldn't because she didn't have very much money and what she had she'd need for the baby. The baby was stillborn, and they then said 'Well you won't be needing that money now - can you contribute it instead to the hospital?' There are also local authority hospitals based on means-testing as payment but these are also flawed in that if one council is smaller than another it cannot provide as good a service as the larger and better ones, also its service is uneven and prone to fraudulent activity; councillors have got their relatives and friends admitted before other people. And of course the voluntary hospitals, financed by contributions are in so much difficulty that over 80% of them are funded from public money anyhow. How is it gentlemen that the efficiency of hospitals varies enormously? How can that be put right?

SIR WEBB-JOHNSON

Well, you will only get one standard of excellence when every hospital has a first-rate consultant staff. At present the consultants are all crowded together in the large centres of population. You've got to decentralise them.

BEVAN

That's all very well, but how are you going to get a Doctor to leave his teaching hospital and go into the periphery? You wouldn't like it if I began to direct labour now, would you?

SIR WEBB-JOHNSON

They will go if they get an interesting job and if their financial future is secured by a proper salary.

BEVAN

(After a long pause)

Only the State could pay those salaries. This would mean the nationalisation of hospitals.

MR EARDLEY HOLLAND

Oh, I don't know about that, Minister.

BEVAN

But a patchwork quilt of local paternalism is the enemy of intelligent planning. Don't you see boy?

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, CAFE ROYAL - DAY -- LATER

MR EARDLEY HOLLAND

You see, Minister, this is a matter of great importance to me, for I am responsible for all the pregnant women in the country.

BEVAN

That's some boast, Mr Holland.

The Doctors laugh as the door to the room opens and waitresses bring in the main course. Bevan recognises one of the waitresses as she puts down his meal in his place setting. He catches her eye and she looks back at him. He recognises her from his time at Central Labour College in London as his pocket book thief. She obviously recognises him, and faints. The head waiter immediately rushes to her aid.

MR CHARLES HILL

Take her away, lay her down and raise her legs higher than her head. She'll come round in a minute or two.

The waiter indicates for another waiter to help carry her out of the room.

MR EARDLEY HOLLAND

Well, Minister. It looks like you don't do so bad yourself.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, CAFE ROYAL - DAY -- LATER

Waiters are busy taking away the empty dessert plates.

BEVAN

(shaking the Doctors
hands in turn)

Thank you gentlemen for a very enlightening discussion. I will consider everything we have discussed and I can assure you I have your interests at heart.

SIR ALFRED WEBB-JOHNSON

Thank you Minister. We are very pleased to have seen you. May I assure you we will continue to do what we can to help.

Bevan leaves the room and enters the main hall. The waitress who fainted is sitting on the stairs being seen to by the head waiter. She looks white and weak.

BEVAN

(to the head waiter)

Thank you very much, and make sure she gets home safe.

HEAD WAITER

Yes, sir. Thank you very much, sir.

INT. BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION - DAY

Subtitles: 8th January 1948. Suited members, some with briefcases, of the BMA special representative meeting walk through the ornate iron gates and towards the grand entrance at BMA House, Tavistock Square. They are nearly all male - just two female members accompany them. Inside, members are seated in rows facing the chair of the meeting. They are discussing the NHS Bill. Members rise, in turn, to speak.

COUNCIL MEMBER 1

It is not to every doctor's taste to work 20 hours a day in the slums to earn as much as he could in 3 hours in a more congenial locale.

COUNCIL MEMBER 2

We are fighting against the enslavement of the profession and are engaged in a life or death struggle for our freedom and independence. How long has all the wisdom on this matter resided with this ridiculous theorist who swaggers at the Ministry of Health? He is so full of his own importance he's prepared to put his wits against the accumulated experience of this council, which is to be butchered like a Welshman's holiday.

INT. 23 CLIVEDEN PLACE - NIGHT -- EVENING

Ma Lee and Bevan are cooking in the kitchen. Bevan is wearing a pinny. Jennie is sitting at the kitchen table reading a book. Pots and pans are being moved around. Handel's Water Music is heard playing from the gramophone in the living room. The mood is light.

BEVAN

Ma, how much longer for the sauce?

MA LEE

Five minutes, chef

JENNIE LEE

(looking up from her
book)

You've missed your vocation. You should have been a chef, not a politician.

BEVAN

(exaggerating with his
hands)

It's just that I have many talents, my dear. If only you would try, maybe you would also have a talent for cooking instead of merely watching and being jealous.

JENNIE LEE

humph

MA LEE

She was never interested in cooking, Nye. Always books took precedence to anything else.

BEVAN

Maybe you should have learnt the skill from your mother when you were younger. Your mother's an excellent cook.

Ma Lee turns round as she's stirring the sauce in the pan and smiles.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

I had to marry the girl to get the mother
in law.

Ma Lee and Bevan look at each other and laugh.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

And she cost me two guineas, what an
expense for a special licence!

Jennie realises she cannot win this conversation and goes back to reading her book and conspiratory smiles exchange between Nye and Ma Lee.

JENNIE LEE

You two are incorrigible.

BEVAN

Good. I like being a rebel.

Jennie continues reading as the cooking continues. After a few moments she looks up again.

JENNIE LEE

Did you go shopping today ma?

MA LEE

Aye.

JENNIE LEE

Not all over London again just so you can
shop at the Co-op?

MA LEE

(High-handedly)

It's better letting the Co-op have your
money than someone else.

Jennie returns to her book.

INT. CLIVEDEN PLACE - NIGHT -- LATER

Nye & Jennie are in the front sitting room in chairs either side of the fire place in which a real fire is burning. The flames light both their cheeks. Nye and Jennie are reading a daily newspaper. Music comes from the radio on the sideboard. The music gradually recedes and an announcer speaks.

ANNOUNCER

And now it's time for the Radio Doctor,
brought to you by the Ministry of Food.

MA LEE (O.S.)
(shouting from
upstairs)
Dr Death's on the wireless.

JENNIE LEE
(shouting back)
Yes, mother. We're listening.

Dr Charles Hill, Secretary of the BMA, in his role as the 'Radio Doctor' addresses the nation.

DR CHARLES HILL

Bacon and tomatoes, a juicy kipper, duck and green peas, steak and chips, cheese and onions. Ooh! our mouths water at the thought of them. But is our health suffering for the loss of some of these luxuries?

The radio quietens as Nye and Jennie talk over the radio.

JENNIE LEE
Oh, here we go again, it's Doctor Constipation.

BEVAN
(sarcastically)
You mustn't skit Jennie, it's important for the nation's health to ensure the bowels are regular.

Doctor Radio continues..

DR CHARLES HILL
In other words, can we keep fit without them? The plain truth is that we can. We can be fitter. Most so-called extracts of meat aren't really foods.

JENNIE LEE
I can think of one way to relieve the nation's constipation...

BEVAN
It doesn't involve the Tories, does it?

JENNIE LEE
Maybe.

DR CHARLES HILL

They may look nice, taste nice and smell nice, but their food value is practically nil. It's heartbreaking to see so many people spending money they can ill afford on foods.

Bevan and Jennie continue to read their papers as Doctor Radio continues.

DR CHARLES HILL

We can do without these and certainly be no less fit. We can do without some other foods because we can replace them by something else equally good, or better. We could do without sugar, without meat, without butter, without eggs, and without apples, and yet be perfectly fit.

BEVAN

This is Dr Charles Hill, secretary of the BMA

JENNIE LEE

How do you know that? No-one knows who he is due to the BBC's strict guidelines.

BEVAN

(with a twinkle in his
eye)

Ah, there may be one or two benefits to being Minister of Health.

DR CHARLES HILL

We could do without meat - if we had to. It's a builder. It's the stuff we are made of. The body must have builders if it is to make new flesh, new blood and new bone. Meat's a very appetising builder. Cheap cuts of meat, by the way, are just as good food, just as good building material as dear cuts. Imported meat is as good as home killed. There's a lot of pride and prejudice about home killed, and the best cut of sirloin. But meat isn't the only builder, and if the ration weren't enough I would say more about cheese.

BEVAN

(looking at his
newspaper)

There's a letter here from a doctor. Listen to this. 'Our independence will have been sacrificed to a soul-less machine governed by ex-miners, trade unionists or even marxists. This is part of a socialist plot to convert Great Britain into a national socialist economy'.

JENNIE LEE

((laughing)

Oh, if only.

There's another one that refers to you as a 'fuhrer' and Satan's architect.

DR CHARLES HILL

But now I want to say something to you about the national health service that the government is proposing. (A beat) We all want better health services and better health. But in organising them, let's make sure that your doctor doesn't become the State's doctor. No longer your friend or your advocate and you'll have done some damage to medicine that it will be impossible to repair.

Thank you and goodnight and always make sure the bowels are well open.

Jennie gets up from the armchair and switches off the radio. She walks round to the back of Nye's armchair and massages his shoulders. He immediately relaxes, closes his eyes and puts the newspaper on his lap.

JENNIE LEE

When do you think they will stop all this?

BEVAN

When the national health service is implemented and people can see the benefits. First though I must placate the doctors.

JENNIE LEE

How will you do that?

BEVAN

Find a compromise, and probably 'stuff their mouths with gold'. Has there been any more unwanted post?

JENNIE LEE

Yes. This morning it was dog mess.

Jennie stops massaging Nye's shoulders and walks round to her chair and sits down.

JENNIE LEE (CONT'D)

I feel like a security guard.

BEVAN

Politics is a blood sport. We both know that. Anyway it won't last forever, I promise.

They look at each other. They both know that Bevan's promise is empty as Bevan puts his eyes down to his paper.

JENNIE LEE

Are you coming to bed?

BEVAN

No, I've got a bit of work to do.

JENNIE LEE

Don't be too late.

BEVAN

No, I won't.

INT. CLIVEDEN PLACE - NIGHT -- LATER

Jennie awakes upstairs in the dark twin-bedded room. Only a small gap in the curtains gives any sense of the time. Jennie lifts her head and looks over to Nye's bed. It is empty. Jennie reaches out to the clock on the bedside table, grabs it and sees that it is almost 3am. She puts the clock back down and turns over.

INT. PARK HOSPITAL - MANCHESTER - CURRENT DAY

Bevan has finished his visit and the party walk out of the ward. They reach the stairwell but the stairs are completely covered with reporters with cameras. As Bevan gets nearer flashes go off incessantly. Bevan puts his hand up to shield his eyes.

EXT. EMBANKMENT, LONDON - EVENING

1947. Nye is walking towards the Embankment. Ahead of him he notices a young lady walking towards him. She is dressed very cheaply with short skirt, bright red lipstick and low-cut top. As she gets nearer suddenly her mouth opens and she smiles, she opens her arms ready to embrace Nye who is defenceless as flash after flash goes off, almost blinding him. First with incredulity but then with anger, he quickly realises it is a set-up. He pushes her arms away and walks away as quick as he can with his stick, some of them following behind him shouting 'Mr Bevan, Mr Bevan'.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS - DAY -- AFTERNOON

Subtitles: 9th February 1948. The benches are packed and as Bevan rises slowly to the despatch box slight groans are heard from the other side of the House.

BEVAN

I beg to move:

That this House takes note that the appointed day for the National Health Service has been fixed for July 5th; welcomes the coming into force on that date of this measure which offers to all sections of the community comprehensive medical care and treatment and lays for the first time a sound foundation for the health of the people; and is satisfied that the conditions under which all the professions concerned are invited to participate are generous and fully in accord with their traditional freedom and dignity.

During the last six months to a year there has been a sustained propaganda in the newspapers supporting the party opposite, which has resulted in grave misrepresentation of the nature of the Health Service and of the conditions under which the medical profession are asked to enter the Health Service.

(CONT'D)

There has been even worse misrepresentation, sustained by a campaign of personal abuse, from a small body of spokesmen who have consistently misled the great profession to which they are supposed to belong.

(CONT'D)

I would like to make one personal reference. It has been suggested that one of the reasons why the medical profession are so stirred up at the moment is because of personal deficiencies of my own. I am very conscious of these. They are very great.

A chorus of approval goes up from the benches opposite, before Bevan continues.

(CONT'D)

Absence of introspection was never regarded as part of Celtic equipment; therefore, I am very conscious of my limitations. But it can hardly be suggested that conflict between the British Medical Association and the Minister of the day is a consequence of any deficiencies that I possess, because we have never been able yet to appoint a Minister of Health with whom the B.M.A. agreed. I am a Welshman, a Socialist representing a Welsh constituency, and they find me even more impossible.

(CONT'D)

Therefore, it is absolutely vital, not only for the physical good health of the community, but in the interests of all social groups, that they should all be put in the system on 1st July and that there should not be some in and some out of the scheme.

(CONT'D)

Finally, we ought to take pride in the fact that, despite our financial and economic anxieties, we are still able to do the most civilised thing in the world - put the welfare of the sick in front of every other consideration. I hope the House will not hesitate to tell the British Medical Association that we look forward to this Act starting on 5th July, and that we expect the medical profession to take their proper part in it because we are satisfied that there is nothing in it that any doctor should be otherwise than proud to acknowledge.

Papers are waved from the government benches, and groans come from the opposition benches as Bevan sits down and wipes his fringe to the side of his head. He receives pats on the back from those sitting behind.

CHURCHILL
(mumbling to his deputy,
Anthony Eden)
Squalid nuisance. We can't afford it
anyway. Doesn't he realise the country's
broke?

INT. BMA HOUSE - DAY -- MORNING

The votes are counted in a sealed room. 30,000 (over 85%) vote
against the reforms. Insert scene of historic news report
indicating result.

INT - BEVAN'S OFFICE - HOUSE OF COMMONS -DAY

Bevan is sitting (in his new, lower backed chair) working at his
desk. His PA, Donald Bruce walks in with papers in his hand.

BRUCE
The results of the Gallup poll are in.
Only 13% of the public are on the side of
the doctors.

BEVAN
Good.

BRUCE
And there's to be another plebiscite at
the BMA. After the doctors voted
overwhelmingly against the NHS last time
round, we're predicting a different
result.

BEVAN
Good.

BRUCE
(now looking at the
papers in his hand)
Unfortunately there are more ascerbic
stories and letters in the press again
this morning. And a new organisation has
been set up. It's called the Socialist
Medical Alliance. They say Doctors
should be servants of the state and your
NHS proposals are leaning too much
towards the Doctors. They don't agree
that there should be any private practice
wings in any NHS hospitals.

BEVAN
I agree with them, but do they want an NHS
or not?

BRUCE

Critics are calling for your resignation. One member of the BMA is asking how you propose to run the NHS with only 30% of Doctors, after all you can't bring in the troops and another says 'this totalitarian socialist government will soon be superseded'.

BEVAN

They're making socialism a dirty word. Yet it's the basis of society.

INT. CLIVEDEN PLACE - NIGHT -- EVENING

Jennie is lying on the sofa, reading and smoking. Her mother is in the kitchen, tidying away from supper. Jennie hears a noise emanating from the front door. As she hears nothing else she continues with her book. After a few moments she looks up again, puts down her book and cigarette and rushes to the door. She has smelt smoke. In the doorway we see a small fire and a firework (a Catherine Wheel) nearby. Startled, Jennie rushes to the kitchen and pushes her mother away from the sink as she grabs the sink bowl and turns on the tap to fill it.

MA LEE

What's going on?

JENNIE LEE

Someone's thrown a firework through the letterbox.

MA LEE

Oh my God.

Ma Lee grabs a saucepan and also starts filling it with water. Jennie throws the bowl full of water over the fire as Ma Lee comes into the corridor holding a saucepan full of water.

JENNIE LEE

It's alright now, ma. It's out.

MA LEE

Thank God for that.

JENNIE LEE

Will you be OK on your own if I pop round to the Police Station and report it.

MA LEE (OOV)

(shouting)

I was ne'er a cooward!

Jennie picks up her coat from the hat stand, treads carefully round the remnants of the fire and opens the front door.

EXT. TREDEGAR TOWN HALL - EVENING

Subtitles: 20th February 1948. Two days after the plebiscite result, Bevan is in his home town. People fill the room at Tredegar Town Hall. They are standing up, facing the stage where Nye has the platform.

BEVAN

No matter what harsh words may come from the mouths of the great, kind words lie in the mouths of the weak and the sick and the poor who will now have access to what was formerly held from them. When I hear the cacophony of harsh voices trying to intimidate me, I close my eyes and listen to the silent voices of the poor. I know that the Doctors feel anxious lest there should close upon them a national machine which would obliterate their individuality. They need have no fear, no fear at all. I conceive it the function of the Ministry of Health to provide the medical profession with the best and most modern apparatus of medicine and enable them freely to use it, in accordance with their training, for the benefit of the people of the country. After all, no society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid simply because of lack of means.

INT. ST GABRIEL'S CHURCH, CRICKLEWOOD - DAY

A large bell-towered church, St Gabriel's sits on a bend in the road in Cricklewood surrounded by trees. Its Reverend, Revd Irving Bulman is giving the weekly sermon to his Sunday congregation. Most of the congregation listens intently, while some are bored, and two children are being shushed; white lower middle classes, men in suits and women with hats.

REVD IRVING BULMAN

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

(MORE)

REVD IRVING BULMAN (CONT'D)

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

And here endeth today's lesson.

The Reverend closes his bible, takes off his glasses and looks to the congregation who shift in their seats and mute coughs are heard

And now I would like to talk to you about the new health swindle.

(CONT'D)

If you are going to be ill, be ill now, because heaven knows what will happen to you if you don't. If you leave it till after 5th July you will probably make a job for me. This is what the Socialists call planning, but some of us call the new lunacy. See what we have been brought to by a set of political tom-tits.

We scan the congregation who are all still listening intently and staring at the reverend.

INT.BLUE BALL PUBLIC HOUSE - NIGHT -- NIGHT

The Blue Ball lies 'down the road' from the Bevans' Buckinghamshire farmhouse. The bar is crowded with

regulars from the village dressed casually, mainly around the bar and augmented by journalists dressed in suits dotted around the pub, some on their own, some in small groups chatting. We focus on an elderly farmer leaning on the bar, chin in hands, newspaper on the bar.

MAN IN PUB

(talking to barman)

Do you know when this lot are going back home?

BARMAN

No. Doesn't look like any time soon. Looks like they're here for the duration.

MAN IN PUB

That's what I thought. Damned nuisance, all of 'em.

BARMAN

(to new customer)

What can I get you sir?

NEW CUSTOMER

A pint of your best please landlord. So this is the local pub of Aneurin Bevan, famed politician then? Does he come down here often?

BARMAN

Yeah, quite often.

The reporter smiles.

BARMAN (CONT'D)

Who does he come down with? Anyone in particular?

MAN IN PUB

Yeah, he comes down with the Prime Minister a lot.

NEW CUSTOMER

Oh really?

MAN IN PUB

Yeah. Sometimes the Prime Minister of India comes as well. What's his name - Gandhi?

BARMAN

(laughing)

Yeah, that's him.

MAN IN PUB

Walks down in his bare feet, he does.

The two men laugh as the journalist picks up his pint and starts to walk away.

NEW CUSTOMER

Ha ha. Very funny.

INT. 129 HARLEY STREET, LONDON.

Wed, 10th March. Bevan is meeting Lord Moran, President of Royal College of Physicians. The room is painted dark with three large floor to ceiling windows and a large ornate ceiling fresco overlooks the large carpet in the middle of the room.

LORD MORAN

Mr Churchill said you'd probably come to see me. He calls you the 'Minister of Disease'. He also says you're one of the few people he would sit still and listen to.

BEVAN

The Prime Minister thinks I'm scruffy. At a posh do recently he berated me for not dressing appropriately.

LORD MORAN

(amused)

What did you say?

BEVAN

Prime Minister, your fly's undone.

Lord Moran's son enters with two whisky toddies on a silver tray. He hands one to Bevan and the other one to his father.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Thank you very much. That will go down very well, especially as I have a cold.

Bevan takes a sip and obviously enjoys it.

LORD MORAN

Let's cut to the chase. The Doctors feel threatened that the NHS will be the end of their independence. They fear becoming slaves of the state. You're unlikely to get the NHS up and running without the vast bulk of them on your side.

BEVAN

On the other hand, the NHS could be their saving grace. Hospitals as they stand at the moment are financially unviable.

(MORE)

BEVAN (CONT'D)

The NHS could help boost their ailing funds. Also, newly qualified doctors have to go into debt to get a practice up and running. We could help with that too. After all, it's in our mutual self-interest. What should be the glory of the profession is that a Doctor should be able to meet his patients with no financial anxiety. The same applies to the patient. As for hospitals, if we allowed a private ward for private patients in every NHS hospital that would mean that specialist physicians would also be available on site to see to the NHS patients. Doctors could work for the NHS and still have their private patients. We both win.

Moran stands up and looks out of the window with his whisky toddy in his hand.

LORD MORAN

It's the independence that worries them most. If you amended the NHS act to guarantee that they would never become salaried civil servants or wage slaves without an entirely new act of parliament that might just assuage their fears.

BEVAN

I could do that.

LORD MORAN

Good. That is the policy I will be standing on when I fight the re-election for the RCP. Lord Hoarder, my challenger, is campaigning on an anti-NHS ticket. He says the NHS is the 'mad march of totalitarianism'. If he wins, we've both lost.

Lord Moran's son re-enters the room.

LORD MORAN'S SON

Another whisky toddy?

BEVAN

Certainly!

INT. ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS. LONDON - DAY -- MORNING

Friday 26th March. Members of the RCP gather to vote for their next president. Two men in suits stand at the top of the room.

RCP MEMBER

The votes for the presidency are: Lord
Hoarder 165. Lord Moran 170.

Lord Moran smiles as he receives pats on the back from his fellow members.

INSERT: Clip of NHS Advert 'National Health Service' 1948
(available on YouTube)

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS - DAY -- AFTERNOON

Monday, 12th April. Bevan is meeting his friend Archie Lush on the House of Commons' terrace.

ARCHIE LUSH

How's Jennie?

BEVAN

I haven't seen her for two weeks. She's off on one of her foreign jaunts. She'll be back Saturday.

ARCHIE LUSH

I saw the NHS advert in the cinema this afternoon.

BEVAN

Is it any good?

ARCHIE LUSH

A cartoon of a little man on a bike? Could be better.

BEVAN

There's another one coming out. It'll be better.

ARCHIE LUSH

How many Doctors have signed up to the scheme?

BEVAN

None.

ARCHIE LUSH

Not one?

BEVAN

No.

ARCHIE LUSH
And it goes live in July?

BEVAN
July the 5th.

ARCHIE LUSH
And what are the contingency plans?

BEVAN
None.

ARCHIE LUSH
Still have no doubt it will be a success?

BEVAN
Absolutely none.

ARCHIE LUSH
They say it will be the biggest 'free for
all' we've ever seen.

BEVAN
We'll never have all the resources we
need. Yet there's no price to be put on
the health of a nation. 10,000 children
die from diphtheria in this country every
year. How can we call ourselves civilised
when this is preventable? Gallop's
latest opinion poll says that only 13% of
the country are on the side of the
Doctors.

ARCHIE LUSH
But the BMA are threatening to strike.

BEVAN
They are. But they won't.

ARCHIE LUSH
You're a confident bugger.

BEVAN
That I am.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS - DAY -- MORNING

2nd June. Bevan is chairing a meeting on the introduction of the
NHS.

BEVAN

Some of the Doctors have been suggesting that the introduction of the National Health Service should be postponed because there is a shortage of nurses, doctors, dentists, hospital equipment and things of that sort. That is a lot of stupid nonsense for we shall never have all that we need. If we are short it is all the more reason why we should use intelligently what we have got. The BMA wants a delay to the appointed date of 5th July. I must re-iterate that the date will NOT be put back. They say I am doomed as a politician. I would rather go down trying to do something to benefit the whole of the country than be an MP who doesn't dare put his foot in the water. Are we clear? No going back.

The meeting attendees all nod but it is done reluctantly with very little conviction.

INT. 23 CLIVEDEN PLACE, LONDON. MORNING

Jennie walks back from the front door with the morning newspaper in her hand. She stares at Nye.

BEVAN

What is it?

JENNIE LEE

The BMA are now telling its members to join up for the NHS.

BEVAN

They had no other option. 75% of the British public have completed NHS registration forms. If the BMA didn't get on board their members would have had no patients left.

JENNIE LEE

You've won.

BEVAN

Yes, of course. I always was going to win.

JENNIE LEE

You're incorrigible.

PARK HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER - CURRENT DAY -

Bevan and his party, together with Matron, walk back down the drive. The nurses who formed the guard of

honour earlier now form part of a crowd and a few ordinary people hold up banners in favour of the NHS. Donald Bruce leaves the ministerial car.

BRUCE

The radio announcer has just said that waiting rooms all over the country are overflowing with patients, some with queues out onto the streets.

BEVAN

Good.

Bevan's car door is opened for him. He turns round and speaks to Matron.

BEVAN (CONT'D)

Thank you very much Matron. Keep up the good work.

MATRON

Thank you Minister.

Bevan gets in the car, but Matron hesitates and it is obvious Matron still has something to say. He winds the window down.

MATRON (CONT'D)

You know Minister, you are the most hated man in Great Britain. (A beat) *and* the most loved.

Bevan smiles as he winds the window up and the car pulls away.

1960. Asheridge Farm, The Chilterns. The mantelpiece is full of get well cards and every shelf has flowers. Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata is playing in the background. Nye is in a wheelchair near a window overlooking the garden. Archie Lush is present, drinking tea. Jennie walks in the room from picking up the post in the hallway. In her hand are more than a dozen letters. She puts down the pile on the table and picks one up and opens it. She reads aloud.

JENNIE

Please fight and win Mr Bevan. I have just been discharged from hospital where I have been overwhelmed and humbled by the charity of the Health Service you have created. To preserve this service you must live.

(MORE)

JENNIE (CONT'D)

I pray to God that if your affliction cannot be destroyed that I might bear it for you. God bless you sir. Please live. Many are praying.

Jennie puts the letter down and opens another one.

JENNIE (CONT'D)

Dear Sir, I am no friend of the Labour party but I find myself praying for your recovery. I pray when I am washing up, making the beds and all sorts of times when I have been working around the house. Our window cleaner also sends his best wishes from Wormwood Scrubs.

BEVAN

Archie, push me out onto the patio, will you? It's a lovely day. It reminds me of those days we used to climb the mountains back home years ago.

Archie gets up and starts pushing Bevan to the window.

ARCHIE LUSH

So it is. We were fit in those days.

Archie retreats to his cup of tea inside. Bevan inhales deeply and eyes the view of the chilterns beyond.

BEVAN

God, why have you made the world so beautiful and the life of man so short? (a beat) I wish I could live. There are one or two things I would like to do.

FADE OUT:

SUBTITLES: FIRST SCREEN: A month later Nye Bevan was dead. His death stunned the nation.

Second Screen: Aneurin Bevan is credited with creating the greatest and most loved British institution of all time.

(CONT'D)

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