

# **KEY OF GENIUS**

Screenplay by

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Based on

*In the Key of Genius: The Extraordinary Life of Derek Paravicini*

by Adam Ockelford

CLOSE ON:

A PIANIST'S HANDS. Strong, nimble fingers. Swiftly dancing across black and white keys, performing the lyrical *Sonatina Romantica Nocturne* by Benjamin Britten.

The PIANIST flips the page of a thick, worn music binder. Working through a vast collection of solo piano works.

A WAITER glides past the Pianist, revealing:

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - ASCOT, ENGLAND - NIGHT

The Waiter carries a chilled bottle of champagne through a fine dining room packed with the upper crust of British society.

POP! The Waiter is about to pour for MARY ANN PARAVICINI (mid 30s), elegant and glowing, but she covers her glass.

MARY ANN  
None for me, thank you.

WAITER  
Very good, madam.

Turning to the other side of the table, the Waiter pours for NIC PARAVICINI (early 40s), a refined English gentleman.

The Waiter leaves the bottle in a shiny ice bucket and lets them enjoy their dinner.

CAPTION: JULY 1979

NIC  
Think Libbet would like to see the match?

MARY ANN  
Please, Nic. You already have a son who loves polo.

NIC  
And what would be so wrong with our daughter cheering on her bold and dashing father?

MARY ANN  
Bold and dashing, hmmm?

NIC  
My darling, I'm so glad you agree.

Nic jovially raises his glass and sips his champagne.

As Mary Ann bites into her salmon, something doesn't feel right. CLANG - her fork drops.

NIC (CONT'D)

Mary Ann?

Mary Ann doubles over in pain, and for the first time we see that she's 6 MONTHS PREGNANT.

As Nic rushes to her side, Mary Ann looks at him with terrified eyes, gripping her aching belly...

INT. ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL - READING, ENGLAND - NIGHT

The RATTLING of gurney wheels.

Mary Ann flies down a fluorescent-lit corridor on the gurney, GROANING from horrific discomfort, her face pale and sweaty. Nic runs beside her, clutching her shaking hand.

MARY ANN

Nic, this place... It isn't right...

NIC

My darling, it was the closest option. But I spoke to the staff - they're going to do all they can.

Mary Ann's body convulses with contractions.

MARY ANN

Not again, not again... I can't bear to lose another two.

Tears well in her eyes as she's wheeled away from Nic into:

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT

A pair of NURSES lift Mary Ann onto a bed.

Mary Ann writhes with pain, the contractions growing in frequency and intensity.

A sparse DELIVERY TEAM trickles in - the staff is thin at this late hour. A young DOCTOR rushes through the door, trying to maintain her composure, despite it being one of her first nights in charge.

Mary Ann's eyes land on TWO INCUBATORS.

MARY ANN

Please... It's too soon...

DOCTOR

We're going to do everything possible, Mrs. Paravicini. I promise.

MARY ANN

But I have another three months...

As her pain intensifies to an excruciating level, the room swims around Mary Ann. Through blurry vision, she catches glimpses of:

Nurses lifting her legs into stirrups...

The Doctor wheeling in a stand of instruments...

Her belly bulging in a long, sustained contraction...

The Doctor reaches between her thighs and carefully withdraws something small and limp.

DOCTOR

Quick, clear her airway! See if she'll breathe!

Mary Ann looks to the side as a tiny, motionless BABY GIRL is placed in the first incubator. The Girl is surrounded in a swarm of activity.

Through all the chaos, Mary Ann listens. Praying for any sign of life...

Not a cry. Not a murmur.

The room grows silent. The mournful looks exchanged by the Nurses tell Mary Ann everything she needs to know.

Mary Ann sinks into her pillow, wishing an end to this nightmare.

Suddenly, a second wave of contractions floods her body.

Quickly, the Doctor rushes forward, helped by the surrounding Nurses. The Doctor reaches in and pulls out a pitifully small BABY BOY. Flabby and unmoving. The Doctor places him into the second incubator.

Mary Ann holds her breath, waiting for the verdict...

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

Mary Ann closes her eyes. Too weak and devastated to respond. The worst moment of her life.

The Doctor slowly slips off her gloves. Nurses quietly work together, tidying up. And then there it is:

The FAINTEST OF WHIMPERS.

Mary Ann holds her breath. Aware that everyone else has gone silent too. Everyone turns towards the two babies. Miraculously, the baby boy's matchstick ribs rise and fall.

A Nurse spins towards the Doctor, urgency in her eyes.

NURSE

What... Shall we do?

Before the Doctor can answer, Mary Ann gathers all the strength she has left:

MARY ANN

Go with it...

In a flash, the Nurses and Doctor spring into a furious battle to save the infant.

As they wheel the baby and the incubator out of the room, an exhausted Mary Ann closes her eyes and passes out.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

A hand gently shakes Mary Ann, waking her up. It's Nic.

NIC

My love... Everyone's ready.

MARY ANN

(still groggy)

For what?

INT. NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE - NIGHT

Nic pushes Mary Ann in a wheelchair as a Nurse brings them before their son.

Mary Ann looks through the clear plastic of the rudimentary incubator. Lying face down on a small blue mattress is her baby boy, dwarfed by a tiny diaper. An alarming tangle of tubes and wires connect machines to his teeny arms and nose.

The energetic SISTER WALKER gently consoles Mary Ann.

SISTER WALKER

And what do you think of your new son?

Mary Ann barely smiles as she fixates on the boy's two little pink feet, which are no bigger than the tips of her fingers.

SISTER WALKER (CONT'D)

He's a record breaker! The smallest we've ever had - just over 700 grams. He keeps us on our toes, doesn't he? Every now and then he forgets to breathe, so I have to remind him!

NIC

Darling, may I introduce...

Mary Ann barely glances up at the CHAPLAIN, too focused on her boy. His tiny shut eyes. His thin, translucent skin.

CHAPLAIN

Christ claims you for his own.  
Receive the sign of the cross.

The Chaplain dips his finger in oil and draws a cross on the incubator.

As the Chaplain gives his christening SPEECH, Mary Ann listens only to her son, drowning out all other sounds:

The tube of oxygen HISSING into his nose.

Liquid PUMPING into his thread-like veins.

The erratic BEEP BEEP of his heart monitor.

NIC

Mary Ann... The names we discussed?

MARY ANN

Yes. Fine.

Nic nods at the Chaplain:

CHAPLAIN

We welcome Derek Nicolas Somerset Paravicini into the house of the lord.

Nic grips Mary Ann tightly but she can't do anything but stare at DEREK. His little wisps of curly blond hair.

As the sympathetic Chaplain offers a few comforting words to Nic, Mary Ann notices that Derek's ribs have stopped moving.

MARY ANN

Pardon me...

The heart monitor ALARM goes off. Derek is FLATLINING.

The room explodes with activity as Nic quickly wheels out Mary Ann.

INT. ICU HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nic wheels Mary Ann away as Nurses and the Doctor burst in and out of the ICU. Through the rapidly opening and closing swinging door, Mary Ann catches glimpses of medical activity:

The Doctor repeatedly compressing Derek's tiny chest.

Nurses rapidly adjusting Derek's oxygen levels.

Nurses darting out of the way as the Doctor readies the defibrillator...

The door stops swinging. All is still.

Mary Ann and Nic freeze. Expecting the worst.

After a few moments, the Doctor steps out of the room. Mary Ann and Nic hold their breaths as she lowers her mask.

DOCTOR

It appears your little Derek is  
rather determined to survive.

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - SEVERAL MONTHS LATER - EVENING

A MERCEDES 450SEL navigates a long, private driveway, passing a fenced field full of grazing polo ponies and finely bred racehorses.

The big Mercedes pulls up in front of an old, stately, stone manor.

The front door flies open, revealing a tough, 5'0" firecracker of an Englishwoman in her 60s. With perceptive eyes peering through thick-rimmed glasses and a lifelong Virgin Mary pendant hanging around her neck, this is Winifred Daly, better known as NANNY.

Nanny rushes to the Paravicinis before they can even step out of the car.

NANNY

For goodness sake, Mary Ann - you  
can't let him outside with only  
that. He'll catch his death!

Before Mary Ann can interject, Nanny snatches baby Derek out of her hands and bundles him up in a thick blanket. Derek is slightly bigger and healthier now, although he's still well below the size of a normal infant.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Yes, yes, Derek. We're going to  
have a wonderful time together,  
aren't we.

MARY ANN

Thank you, Nanny.

Nanny turns to the manor, where two well-dressed CHILDREN wait anxiously in the doorway.

NANNY

Come now Libbet and Charles, don't  
be shy! Your baby brother awaits!

LIBBET (9) and CHARLES (11) hurry forward. Excited to meet their brother but too nervous to hold his tiny body, they softly kiss him on the forehead.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Holding Derek in one arm, Nanny pokes her head in and out of bedrooms, a relentless taskmaster.

NANNY

Time for bed, children!

LIBBET/CHARLES (O.S.)

But Nan...

NANNY

Not another peep! We've all had a  
long day. Haven't we, Derek.

She carries the quiet baby into:

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

Nanny gently places Derek in a CRIB right next to a regular bed: Nanny's bed.



She holds up a bottle before Derek, who is incredibly calm and relaxed.

NANNY

You're such a quiet little one,  
aren't you.

She lowers the bottle. Derek lies still, only reacting when the nipple touches his mouth. He eagerly feeds.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Isn't your new home lovely, Derek?  
I'm sure you'll like it very much.  
Especially once you're a big boy.

Nanny covers Derek with a blanket and sings her favorite tune, the Irish folk song *Molly Malone*.

NANNY (CONT'D)

*In Dublin's fair city, where the  
girls are so pretty, I first set my  
eyes on sweet Molly Malone...*

She flips off the light, then settles into bed, HUMMING the tune in the darkness.

CLICK. The light flips on.

LIBBET

Nanny, could you read us one more?  
Please?

NANNY

No no! Back to bed!

She glances at Derek, who stares straight up at the light, his eyes wide open.

Nanny instinctively holds her hand over Derek, blocking the bright light. Derek remains still, not reacting one bit.

Nanny moves her hand in front of his face. Derek doesn't even blink.

Nanny flips off the light. Then on again. Derek still stares straight up at the bright bulb, his eyes frozen.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Mary Ann!

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - DRAWING ROOM - NEXT MORNING

The Doctor that delivered Derek sits across from Mary Ann and Nic, who look like they've been hit by a truck.

MARY ANN

Pardon - retro what?

DOCTOR

Retrolental Fibroplasia. Likely a consequence of the uncontrolled levels of oxygen in his blood.

NIC

Oxygen levels? What do you mean?

DOCTOR

The life support systems. The optic nerve is extremely sensitive to fluctuations in...

NIC

How long will it take to heal?

DOCTOR

It's not that simple, I'm afraid. Derek's retinas suffered permanent damage.

NIC

There must have been another way. Perhaps a more seasoned doctor...

DOCTOR

With all due respect, given the severe premature nature of his birth, we had no choice. It's a miracle he is with us at all.

NIC

So nothing can be done? This is unacceptable!

MARY ANN

Nic...

NIC

Please, doctor!

DOCTOR

I'm very sorry, Mr. Paravicini. I'll add Derek to the registry for the blind as soon as I return to the office.

Nic paces back and forth, unable to meet eyes with Mary Ann.

MARY ANN

Doctor, thank you for everything.  
Truly.

DOCTOR

Of course. And do continue to  
monitor him. There's very little  
precedent for a case like Derek's,  
so please ring me if you notice  
anything else out of the ordinary.

As the Doctor leaves, Derek just lies quietly in his crib,  
content and oblivious to the stunned stares of his parents.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

Morning sounds, audible through an open window. Birds  
CHIRPING. Wind RUSTLING.

CLICK. A door opens.

FOOTSTEPS. Moving from left to right.

NANNY (O.S.)

Time to wake up, Derek! It's a  
cheery, sunny day today.

THWAP! The sound of curtains flying open...

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - DEREK'S ROOM - MORNING

Blinding sunlight strikes the flowing blond locks and face of  
a FIVE-YEAR-OLD-DEREK, lying in his bed. His striking blue  
eyes are wide open, unblinking in the bright light.

CAPTION: SEVERAL YEARS LATER

Derek GIGGLES mischievously as he buries himself under a  
handmade, TEXTURED QUILT. Nanny quickly yanks it off the  
bed.

NANNY

Time to get dressed.

Nanny raises Derek's arms to remove his pajamas. Derek  
lowers his arms in defiance and clumsily rolls off the bed.  
SQUEAK SQUEAK! He accidentally steps onto a stuffed rabbit.  
Derek grabs the noisy toy, squeezing it repeatedly.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
This simply will not do, young man.  
Come come!

Nanny pulls away the toy and plops it onto a neatly organized toy shelf. She raises Derek's arms, not giving him another chance to resist. Derek GROANS but relents.

Nanny quickly slips off his pajamas and holds up a crisp, ironed polo, touching it to Derek's hand.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
And here we have a polo shirt just  
like your daddy's. How do you feel  
about that?

Derek gives the polo a long SNIFF, then nods his head enthusiastically. Nanny dresses him.

As soon as the polo is on, Derek tries to escape but accidentally bumps into his nightstand.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
Careful, Bumpy. That night stand  
is even more stubborn than you are.

Frustrated, Derek SCREAMS, then clenches his fists and rubs them into his eyes. Nanny pulls his fists away.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
No need to hurt yourself now.  
Let's get you to breakfast.

Nanny HUMS *Molly Malone*. Derek forgets his fists as he listens to the music, loving every last note. He rocks to and fro, his head weaving from side to side.

Nanny gently takes Derek's hand and leads him out of the room.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Nanny brings Derek into a noisy kitchen, his head jerking back and forth as he hears all the different sounds:

The HISS of a gas burner. A tea kettle WHISTLING. Mary Ann CRINKLING the pages of a newspaper.

MARY ANN  
Good morning, Derek.

NANNY  
What do you say, Bumpy?

Derek MUTTERS a slight greeting.

Nanny pulls out a chair for Derek, purposely DRAGGING it so he can hear exactly where it is. He plops down.

Nanny grabs the kettle and POURS a steaming cup of tea for Mary Ann.

Derek perks up as he hears approaching CHAOTIC FOOTSTEPS:

Libbet and Charles, who are now teenagers, stumble into the kitchen, struggling with heavy SUITCASES. They BANG several walls before Nanny grabs the suitcases and sets them down.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Come now children, Alice and Ester  
will take care of those for you.  
Are we excited for the new term?

LIBBET

Yes, Nanny.

CHARLES

Very much so.

Libbet playfully tickles Derek and Charles rustles his hair.

Two maids, ALICE and ESTER, quickly grab the suitcases.  
Derek listens as they CREAK open the front door.

Nanny sets cups of orange juice in front of the children.  
She taps Derek's glass - CLINK - Derek reaches precisely for its location and sips the juice.

Nic hurries to the table, CLICKS his briefcase shut, then grabs JINGLING keys.

NIC

Off we go, troops.

LIBBET

Daddy, when will Derek be ready for  
school?

NIC

In good time, darling.

NANNY

He'll be ready when he's ready.

Rushing out the door, Mary Ann and Libbet kiss Derek on the cheek. Charles rustles his blond hair one last time. Nic pats him on the back.

The doors SLAMS shut.

Derek hears the Mercedes REV and drive off, leaving him and Nanny in relative silence.

The house is quiet. Derek quickly grows lonely and bored. He sticks both thumbs in his mouth and extends his forefingers upwards, poking at his eyelids.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Let's not start that again. Why don't we spend today learning about shapes.

She sets a basket WOODEN SHAPES in front of Derek and places a TRIANGLE in his hand.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Here we have a triangle. Feel the sides? One, two, three.

Derek HURLS the triangle across the room.

NANNY (CONT'D)

No need for dramatics, young man!

She wheels a TOY FIRE ENGINE across the table, hoping the sound of spinning tires will entertain Derek. The boy steps away from the table, his mind elsewhere.

NANNY (CONT'D)

What is it, Derek? What is it that you want?

Derek feels around the kitchen, TAPPING on pots and pans.

NANNY (CONT'D)

You know, you're just as restless as your namesake. Your grandfather Derek could never sit still, even into his later years. Except when it came to his electric organ. Oh how he loved his music...

Derek BANGS away at the pots and pans, enamored by all the CLANGING sounds.

Nanny listens to the racket and an idea forms...

INT. ATTIC - DAY

The CREAK of old, warped floorboards. Nanny pushes aside ski gear, hatboxes and a croquet set, searching the dark, cramped attic. Her eyes land on a MASSIVE STORAGE CHEST.

She CREAKS open the antique chest and dust flies everywhere, nearly blinding her. As the particles settle, she inspects the unseen object before her.

NANNY  
Ester! A hand please!

INT. DEREK'S ROOM - DAY

Nanny and Ester carefully carry in a SMALL ELECTRIC ORGAN. It's an old, wooden box model from the early 1970s, and features a music rack and a short row of dials.

Nanny wipes down the several octaves worth of keys - it's far smaller than a standard piano. She cautiously plugs it in and steps back, half expecting the ancient device to go up in flames. The organ WHIRS to life.

Nanny tries the notes one at a time. A few keys stick and several don't sound at all but most of the keyboard is in fine working condition.

SCRAMBLING FOOTSTEPS...

Derek fumbles his way into the room, curious about the unfamiliar sound. Nanny sits him down in front of the organ.

NANNY  
This is your grandfather's organ,  
Derek.

Nanny plunks several NOTES. Before she can finish, Derek SHRIEKS with delight and reaches out both hands, urgently trying to locate the source of this bewitching sound.

He pushes down keys with his palms, producing a chord cacophony that only energizes him more. He SLAPS at the keyboard harder and harder, beside himself with excitement.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
Derek!

But Derek is too enthralled with this magical device. He drops his fists, pounding the keyboard repeatedly, exhilarated by all the new sounds.

He raises his fists once again, brings them down and...  
Nothing. The organ remains silent.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
That's enough!

Nanny holds the power cable in her hand. Unplugged.

Nothing can prepare her for the resulting meltdown: Derek's face flushes bright red and he erupts with a fiery rage. He SCREAMS violently, kicking and hitting everything in sight, a fury unimaginable for a kid so small.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
Young man, this simply will not do!

She grabs Derek forcefully and drags him out of the room.

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - DAY

A serene cloudless day outside the stately manor. Swans calmly swim through the tranquil waters of a picturesque lake located on the grounds.

It's a stark contrast to the violent tug-of-war being played between Nanny and Derek. Nanny drags Derek by the wrist, hellbent on getting him to submit and walk with her.

Derek stubbornly digs his nails into her skin, kicking against the ground, fighting desperately to escape. The more he struggles, the more Nanny tightens her grip, a force to be reckoned with.

Derek finally wears himself out and gives up. Submitting to Nanny's iron will. They walk slowly past the peaceful lake.

NANNY  
Lovely day out isn't it, Bumpy.

INT. DEREK'S ROOM - DAY

The moment Nanny opens the door, Derek pushes his way inside and frantically feels for the organ.

NANNY  
Wait!

Derek freezes, obeying her instruction. Nanny plugs in the organ. Derek recognizes the WHIRRING sound and rocks back and forth with excitement.



NANNY (CONT'D)

Now. Gently.

Derek leans forward and feels for the keys. The music brings pure joy to his face as his little fingers try out different notes.

Nanny relaxes. Derek is finally learning.

BANG! Derek pounds violent chords left and right, unable to restrain himself!

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - DAY

Another walk around the lake.

It's a battle of wills between Nanny and Derek.

INT. DEREK'S ROOM - DAY

Derek sits at the organ, his hands at his sides, patiently waiting for Nanny's permission.

CLICK. She plugs it in. WHIR. The organ sparks to life.

NANNY

Gentle...

Derek pauses, then reaches for the keys. More respectfully this time. His hands explore the keyboard, clumsily moving higher then lower.

Nanny nods. Satisfied.

FADE TO:

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBBET'S ROOM - SIX WEEKS LATER

Libbet's suitcase from school lies open on the floor. It's filled to the brim with textbooks.

Libbet sits at her immaculately organized desk, fixated on her reading assignment for the half-term holiday: Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

PLINK. PLINK.

Libbet leans closer to the page, trying to focus.

PLINK. PLINK. Keyboard sounds from next door.

She SLAMS the book shut.

INT. DEREK'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Libbet finds Derek PLINKING away at his electric organ.

LIBBET  
Could you please keep it down?

PLINK PLINK.

Frustrated, Libbet turns down the volume dial herself. Plink plink - Derek keeps playing, unfazed by the volume change.

Libbet notices that Derek is playing the same sequence of chords. Systematically.

She shrugs it off and rushes back to her room, annoyed.

INT. MERCEDES - SUNDAY

Charles and Libbet help Derek into the backseat as Nic and Mary Ann slide into the front. With Nic at the wheel, they drive away from a centuries-old, stone church.

Together, they sing *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, a jolly CHURCH HYMN:

FAMILY  
*All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful,  
The lord God made them all...*

Derek happily sways along to the music.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LATER

As the family returns home, Derek shoves past everybody and hurriedly feels his way to his room, clumsily bouncing off walls and objects along the way.

NANNY  
Careful now, Bumpy!

Several moments later: PLINK PLINK.

INT. LIBBET'S ROOM - NIGHT

Libbet scribbles with a pen, writing an extensive paper.

PLINK PLINK.

She glares at the wall.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE DEREK'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Libbet is about to barge into Derek's room when she stops.  
And listens.

She hears a rudimentary version of *All Things Bright and Beautiful*...

INT. DEREK'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Libbet slowly steps in and studies her brother.

Despite his blindness and lack of technique, Derek is somehow using a jumble of fists, palms, knuckles and fingers to systematically play the organ's black and white keys. His head rhythmically weaves back and forth.

Without a doubt, he's playing the church hymn!

LIBBET  
Mummy! Daddy! Quick!

As Nic and Mary Ann rush into the room, Derek finishes the hymn.

NIC  
Libbet, what's the matter?

LIBBET  
Go on, Derek. Play it again.

Derek pulls Libbet's hair, thinking it's a joke.

LIBBET (CONT'D)  
No, Derek - the hymn from church!

But Derek doesn't understand. Nic and Mary Ann shrug at each other and walk away.

Thinking quick, Libbet HUMS the tune. Instantly, Derek's hands shoot back to the keys and he plays along.

Nic and Mary Ann freeze in place, mesmerized. Shocked to see their son so skillfully playing this instrument.

MARY ANN  
Derek... That's lovely.

NIC  
How remarkable...

Nanny rushes into the room, followed by Charles.

NANNY  
What's all the fuss about?

Hearing her voice, Derek breaks into a rudimentary arrangement of *Molly Malone*.

Nic, Mary Ann, Libbet, Charles and Nanny listen with wide eyes, amazed at what they're seeing and hearing. Derek has somehow taught himself how to play the organ.

As the music crescendoes, Nanny can't help but join in:

NANNY (CONT'D)  
*Crying cockles and mussels, alive,  
alive oh!*

Nanny and Derek finish the song together and everyone breaks into tremendous APPLAUSE.

Derek's face erupts into a massive smile and he APPLAUDS along with them!

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - DEREK FLYING THROUGH PIANO REPERTOIRE:

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Nanny places a NEEDLE onto a RECORD. Derek tilts his head, the CRACKLE OF STATIC catching his attention.

He listens intently to a recording of *I Can Sing a Rainbow*, a sweet and simple song.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - HALLWAY - DAY

The recording resounds from the library.

WHIP PAN to Derek's door: we hear Derek PLINKING away at his electric organ, repeating the same song.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Derek eagerly climbs onto the couch, ready for more. Nanny loads another record, playing the peppy, energetic song *In an English Country Garden*.

Derek can't contain himself and feels his way to the record player, listening to every SCRATCH of the needle as the record spins round and round. The music notes soaking into his memory.

As the same song ECHOES on the electric organ, the stack of RECORDS grows. The record player spins faster and faster...

INT. BRITISH ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Nic brings in their BROKEN RECORD PLAYER and shows it to a MANAGER. The Manager enthusiastically leads Nic to an aisle with brand new CASSETTE PLAYERS.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Nanny turns a CASSETTE different ways, unsure how to load it into the new player. She pulls out a long stretch of magnetic tape, struggling to play the damn thing.

Derek reaches out, grabs the cassette and yanks out more and more tape, surrounding them in a twisted mess.

INT. BRITISH ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

A defeated Nic brings in the cassette player and receipt. All he can do is shrug at the Manager.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

SCRAAAATCH. The needle of a NEW RECORD PLAYER hits a vinyl surface. Derek leans in, listening closely.

The SOUNDS OF RECORDS SPINNING...

INT. DEREK'S ROOM - DAY

Derek bangs away at his electric organ, using different parts of his body (hands, arms, elbows) to play in an incredibly unorthodox manner. But he's somehow playing the lush, lyrical *Don't Cry for Me, Argentina* by Andrew Lloyd-Weber.

Mary Ann, Nic and Nanny stand in the doorway, completely transfixed. As Derek finishes the piece, Mary Ann has tears in her eyes.

MARY ANN

Bravo.

Derek stops, looks in the direction of his mother's voice.

DEREK  
(perfect imitation)  
Bravo.

FADE TO:

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - WINTER - DAY

A BOX TRUCK rumbles along the snowy driveway, tires kicking up fluffy powder, sliding to a stop in front of the manor.

Two DELIVERY MEN hop out. RATTLE RATTLE - they fling open the rear gate, revealing a LARGE OBJECT HIDDEN BENEATH A BLANKET.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

The family gathers around a decorated Christmas tree as the Delivery Men carry in the blanketed object, straining under its considerable weight.

Nanny brings in Derek, who listens intently as the Movers SET DOWN the hefty object.

The Movers slide off the blanket, unveiling a WELMAR UPRIGHT PIANO.

PIANO MOVER  
It might take a bit 'o time to  
settle in. The tuner'll be along  
in a few days.

As they gather the blankets...

Nanny helps Derek run his hand over the piano's smooth wooden surface.

NIC  
Merry Christmas, Derek.

DEREK  
Merry Christmas, Derek.

NANNY  
No, Derek.  
(annunciating clearly)  
Merry Christmas, Daddy.

DEREK  
 (perfect imitation)  
 Merry Christmas, Daddy.

Nanny sits Derek down on the piano bench. He's so small that his feet don't even reach the pedals, dangling in the air.

Nanny carefully lifts open the cover, revealing 88 glistening keys - a full size keyboard.

NANNY  
 Alright, Bumpy. Gently now.

DEREK  
 Gently now.

Nanny PLUNKS a note. Derek cocks his head, responding to the rich, yet unfamiliar sound of a real piano.

He reaches out, his little hands feeling for the keys. He pushes down, making contact with the piano - HIS piano - for the first time.

As he explores the new instrument, a beaming smile spreads across his face. He can hardly contain his excitement as he familiarizes himself with the new instrument.

NANNY  
 Why don't you play us the *Turkish March*.

Derek instantly snaps into gear, his limbs flailing in an exploratory performance of Mozart's whimsical masterwork. It's a complex, intricate piece, but Derek is somehow getting through it, hitting nearly all the notes.

The more Derek plays, the more excited he gets. His hands push down harder and harder, exploring the pressure-sensitive keys. Within moments, he's using his fists to bang away at the piano, playing way too loudly.

Libbet and Charles cover their ears. Mary Ann steps back. Even Nanny flinches. The volume is excruciating.

Derek repeatedly hits one particular white note two-thirds of the way up the keyboard.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
 Gentle, Derek! Like we practiced...

But Derek can only hear the piano now. He fixates on that one note, banging with increasing force.

Even the piano movers stop in their tracks, witnesses to this train wreck.

NIC

What in the world's got into him?

PIANO MOVER

Sir? Your son seems to have found  
an out of tune note...

Derek obsesses over the note, pounding the poor piano.

NANNY

DEREK SOMERSET PARAVI...

SNAP! TWANG! A horrific sound rumbles within the piano.

Derek repeatedly pushes down on the now useless note, only getting a DULL THUD.

Nic flings open the piano's top panel and peers inside. He looks helplessly at the Piano Movers.

PIANO MOVER

I reckon the tuner can help with  
that too...

INT. LIBRARY - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

MR. SUTTON, the piano tuner, performs surgery on the poor piano. The entire back cabinet has been opened up, revealing a sea of felt hammers, strings and tuning pins.

Mr. Sutton spools out the BROKEN STRING and replaces it with a brand new one.

INT. DEREK'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Derek sits at the edge of his bed, extremely tense.

He can hear the PLINKS of Mr. Sutton pressing individual notes on the piano. HIS piano.

Nanny restrains Derek, holding him back.

INT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

The PLINK PLINK of piano tuning.

The door CREAKS open.



Nanny leads Derek into the room, holding him tightly by the wrist. He squirms but can do nothing in her iron grasp.

NANNY

Good morning, Mr. Sutton.

She squeezes Derek's hand.

DEREK

Good morning, Mr. Sutton.

MR. SUTTON

Ah, this must be our eager little performer.

NANNY

Indeed.

She sits Derek down several feet away from the piano. Still holding him back.

Derek rocks back and forth, anxious as Mr. Sutton PLINKS keys and tunes the piano. Derek hears every last note and mechanism - the TAP of the keys, the felt hammers PINGING the strings, even the tuning lever CREAKING the pins.

MR. SUTTON

That should do it.

NANNY

Derek, would you like to play for Mr. Sutton? Gently?

DEREK

Gently.

Nanny leads him to the bench. Sits him down. Making sure the kid behaves.

NANNY

How about *The Swan*.

Derek's hands reach for the piano. Struggling to contain his excitement.

He launches into *The Swan* from *Carnival of the Animals* by Saint-Saëns. It's a beautiful, expressive melody. Even when played by a strange combination of hands, arms and elbows.

Mr. Sutton is visibly moved by the performance, floored by this blind little pianist. And more than amused by his unorthodox technique.

Reunited with his precious piano, Derek leans in, his excitement growing. Swimming in the music, he presses down firmly, the volume increasing...

NANNY (CONT'D)

Derek...

Derek settles down. And with a few gentle notes, he finishes the piece.

MR. SUTTON

Tremendous. How long have you been practicing that piece, Derek?

NANNY

Well he heard it for the first time on the radio last Thursday. It was the original cello version, but he's somehow figured it out.

MR. SUTTON

I... I see. But surely he's covered it with his music teacher?

NANNY

I'm afraid not. He's never had any lessons.

It takes Mr. Sutton a moment to swallow this insane fact.

MR. SUTTON

Hmmmm. I suppose that explains his rather unusual technique... Derek, if I may. Why don't we try placing our thumbs on middle C and E.

Mr. Sutton reaches out and taps those notes. Derek violently shoves him to the side, protective of his precious piano.

NANNY

Derek!

MR. SUTTON

It's quite alright. Perhaps we can try a different approach. Derek, let's start by relaxing your hands. Elbows at your sides.

He tries to adjust Derek's hands. SLAP! Derek violently whacks him away. A startled Mr. Sutton jumps back, avoiding a tirade of punches and kicks...

NANNY

That's enough young man! Mr.  
Sutton, I do apologize. I don't  
know what's got into Derek.

She closes the piano cover and pulls Derek away.

INT. NIC'S OFFICE - DAY

Nic works at his stately wooden desk when Mary Ann enters,  
looking exasperated. She's holding a recently opened LETTER.

NIC

What is it, my darling?

MARY ANN

The education authority... They're  
requesting a meeting to discuss  
Derek's school placement.

NIC

I am sure we can decide what is  
best for our son.

MARY ANN

It appears we don't have a choice  
in the matter.

She hands the letter to Nic. As he reads it, his frustration  
builds.

NIC

What's this about an assessment?  
They know he's blind, don't they?

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Nanny ushers in a neatly attired PSYCHOLOGIST, who carries an  
ominous black leather briefcase.

NANNY

Come come, don't be shy. Miss  
Edwards, I'd like to introduce you  
to Mrs. Paravicini.

Mary Ann stands tensely by the fireplace, uncomfortable with  
this meeting. She extends her hand.

MARY ANN

How do you do. Please - sit down.

She gestures to a seat next to an immaculately dressed Derek. Sensing the anxiety in the air, he fidgets, his fingers twisting awkwardly over and under each other.

PSYCHOLOGIST  
Hello there.

She tries to shake Derek's hand. He SNIFFS her hand instead.

PSYCHOLOGIST (CONT'D)  
And what's your name?

Derek remains silent.

NANNY  
Derek.

The Psychologist casts a questioning glance at Nanny. Then at Mary Ann.

MARY ANN  
Would you care for some tea?

PSYCHOLOGIST  
That would be lovely.

NANNY  
Of course. Right away.

Once Nanny leaves the room, the Psychologist takes out her clipboard.

PSYCHOLOGIST  
And who's she exactly?

MARY ANN  
Nanny.

DEREK  
Nanny...

PSYCHOLOGIST  
Does Nanny have, er... a particular name?

MARY ANN  
Yes. Nanny.

The embarrassed Psychologist looks back at her form. She's unsure where to put the name Nanny: title, first name or family name? She leaves the line blank.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Derek, it must be wonderful living  
on a farm. All those real animals.  
Do you know any of their names?

Derek rocks back and forth.

NANNY (O.S.)

How about Sefton?

She reenters the room, carrying a tray of tea. The  
Psychologist stares at Nanny, processing what she just said.

Nanny sets down the tray, picks up a framed PHOTO from the  
mantel and shows it to the Psychologist: the photo shows  
Derek sitting astride a majestic horse, a joyous grin on his  
face.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Isn't that...

NANNY

The cavalry horse famously injured  
by the IRA? Why yes. Derek's  
uncle is the regimental commander  
of the Household Cavalry.

PSYCHOLOGIST

How... Lovely. Moving on - why  
don't we try some activities.

From a cloth bag in her briefcase, she withdraws two SHAKERS -  
one small and one large.

PSYCHOLOGIST (CONT'D)

Here you are, Derek.

She places the shakers in Derek's hands. He SHAKES them  
vigorously. Nanny CLEARS HER THROAT. The shaking stops.

PSYCHOLOGIST (CONT'D)

Now Derek. Can you give me the big  
one?

DEREK

The big one...

PSYCHOLOGIST

Yes, that's right.

Derek throws the shakers on the floor. Mary Ann stares at  
the fire, trying to hide her embarrassment.

NANNY

Derek!

PSYCHOLOGIST

How about we try something easier.  
Derek, can you please raise your  
left hand for me?

Derek fidgets.

NANNY

Bumpy, go on, raise your left hand  
for Miss Edwards.

Derek cocks his head, trying to understand.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Can you raise your hand? Your left  
one?

Slowly, Derek raises his right hand. But not even to answer  
the question - he's reaching for the Psychologist's hair...

NANNY (CONT'D)

(quickly corralling Derek)  
He may not know his left from his  
right but you should hear him play  
the piano!

PSYCHOLOGIST

I'm sorry, come again?

OVER THE SOUNDS of Derek playing the smooth, more  
contemporary song *Streets of London*...

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LATER

The Psychologist stumbles out of the manor, her eyes wide  
with disbelief. As she hurries to her car, she casts a  
frazzled look at the stately home, trying to make sense of  
the strange juxtaposition she just witnessed.

INT. EDUCATION AUTHORITY OFFICE - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Nic and Mary Ann sit across an imposing table from the  
Psychologist, a SOCIAL WORKER and an EDUCATION OFFICER. A  
high tension hangs in the air.

EDUCATION OFFICER  
 Bearing in mind all we've heard,  
 we've been thinking about which  
 school would be best suited for  
 Derek. Do you know Westmead?

MARY ANN  
 Is that a music school?

EDUCATION OFFICER  
 It's a special school - for  
 children with a wide range of  
 disabilities.

NIC  
 That doesn't sound right for our  
 son.

EDUCATION OFFICER  
 Respectfully, we disagree. It's  
 our duty to place him correctly.

NIC  
 Surely a school for the blind will  
 suffice?

PSYCHOLOGIST  
 If I may. Derek's condition is a  
 bit more... Complex.

MARY ANN  
 Complex how, Miss Edwards?

NIC  
 The boy needs to learn Braille.  
 There's nothing complex about that.

MARY ANN  
 Nic...

Nic takes a deep breath.

PSYCHOLOGIST  
 Mr. Paravicini, we need to make  
 sure all Derek's special needs are  
 met...

NIC  
 Yes, and being with other blind  
 children will guarantee that.

The authority members exchange looks. They aren't accustomed  
 to dealing with an upper class family like this. And Nic  
 clearly isn't hearing them.

EDUCATION OFFICER

I suppose we could explore some other options...

NIC

Outstanding. Are there any such schools for the blind near us in Berkshire?

The defeated Education Officer nods at the Social Worker, who pages through a thick document.

SOCIAL WORKER

Well there are a few possibilities closer to London...

EXT. LINDEN LODGE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND - DAY

On a quiet, tree-lined street in the upscale, suburban neighborhood of WIMBLEDON...

The Paravicini Mercedes glides over pavement, then makes a turn into a driveway and RUMBLES over cobblestones.

The car slowly pulls up to an impressive brick Tudor style building. They've arrived at:

INT. LINDEN LODGE - DAY

Derek holds his parents' hands as they wind through the school, following HEADMISTRESS BRUMM, who gives them a tour.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Linden Lodge was established in 1902 as a school for blind boys. After the war, we took in a class of girls from Elm Court, which was damaged during the Blitz, and we became a coeducational institution.

They pass numerous BLIND STUDENTS. Derek jerks his head left and right, soaking in all the strange sounds, trying to make sense of his surroundings. He quickly becomes overwhelmed and pokes at his eyes.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM (CONT'D)

We pride ourselves in being at the forefront of education. In fact, we were one of the first schools to integrate Braille throughout our curriculum.



Derek perks up as he hears a familiar PLINKING: the unmistakable sound of a PIANO. Without hesitating, he wriggles free of his parents...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

KELLY (6), small, cute and blind, sits at a piano, attempting to play ABBA's *Super Trouper*.

Sitting next to her on the piano bench is her teacher, a patient man with kind yet sharp eyes, and a beard that despite its bushiness, can never conceal a welcoming expression. This is ADAM OCKELFORD (30s).

ADAM

Yes, very good Kelly. Can you try that scale again for me?

As Kelly starts again, the door behind them CLICKS open. Kelly stops. Adam turns and sees a small blond boy standing in the doorway.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Kelly, I believe we have an audience. Would you like to play for our visitor?

Kelly reaches for the piano and plays once again, focusing extra hard for this impromptu performance.

Adam hears SCRAMBLING FOOTSTEPS, then a SQUEAL - almost a shriek - and feels something WHACK him in the back.

He turns right into a mop of blond hair flying into his face. A bundle of daemonic energy, Derek tries to push Adam away from the piano.

MARY ANN (O.S.)

Pardon the interruption...

Mary Ann and Nic hurry into the room, followed by an irritated Headmistress Brumm.

Hearing another voice, Kelly starts playing again. Derek zeroes in on this piano intruder and shoves her off the bench. Adam catches Kelly - just barely - and puts himself between her and the little blond menace.

NIC

Derek!

ADAM

Don't worry. Are you all right,  
Kelly? Good good. It appears we  
have a visitor. Up you come,  
Derek.

Adam lifts the wriggling Derek in the air and plunks him down  
on the piano bench between himself and Kelly, who scoots as  
far away as possible.

Immediately, like someone possessed, Derek attacks the  
keyboard, a frenzy of fingers, knuckles, thumbs, karate chops  
and elbows.

NIC

Our apologies. He's already broken  
our piano at home once...

But Adam isn't paying attention to Nic. He can't tear his  
eyes away from Derek and his insane technique. Through all  
the banging notes, he listens to the unmistakable strains of  
*Don't Cry for Me, Argentina*.

And just as quickly, the music morphs into Mozart. Then *In  
an English Country Garden*. Then Saint-Saëns. A dizzying yet  
incredibly coherent kaleidoscope of different music.

Adam can't believe what he's seeing and hearing. Even Kelly  
listens with astonishment, her face lighting up.

Instinctively, Adam tries to join Derek with a bass line.  
Derek redirects a left elbow his direction, cutting him off.

Adam tries playing a note an octave lower. THWAP! He gets  
karate chopped.

Adam can't help but LAUGH out loud.

ADAM

How many pieces does he knew?

NIC

We lost track after the first few  
dozen. The boy hears a piece once  
and he knows it.

ADAM

And who is his teacher?

NIC

Well... No one, actually. We  
don't think he is ready yet.

ADAM

It's never too soon to start.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Thank you so much for your time,  
Adam. Let's resume the tour and  
give Kelly her piano back, shall  
we?

As Nic lifts Derek away from the piano, Derek SCREAMS and  
kicks at the air, nearly hitting Adam in the face.

Adam stares at the boy, fascinated, as his parents carry him  
out of the room.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - OFFICE - EVENING

Adam tracks down Headmistress Brumm at her desk.

ADAM

Miss Brumm, could I trouble you for  
the information of that couple  
whose boy played the piano?

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Certainly. Should be right here in  
my intray...

She glances at a black hole of papers, notes and messages.  
She riffles through and finds nothing helpful.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM (CONT'D)

If I recall... The surname - it  
was "Para" something or other.  
Sounded rather Italian.

ADAM

Any idea where they live?

Headmistress Brumm racks her brain, struggling to remember.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Anything else at all?

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Tanks. That's it - tanks.

ADAM

Tanks? They live near tanks?

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

No no. The father's company is  
named after some sort of tank...

ADAM  
Water tanks perhaps?

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
No, the armoured vehicle variety.  
Begins with the letter "S."  
Somewhere in London.

Adam scribbles down all the hazy details.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM (CONT'D)  
But if I were you, I wouldn't  
bother.

ADAM  
Why not?

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
They're looking at a number of  
schools. And ours is quite out of  
their way.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - LIBRARY - DAY

Adam passes STUDENTS running their fingers over blank pages -  
they're reading Braille.

He navigates past stacks filled with BRAILLE BOOKS.

When Adam arrives at a much smaller section of regular books,  
he searches and finds an ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA (if  
Americans read that, does that mean Brits read the  
Encyclopedia Americana?). He plucks out the "T" volume.

He flips open the heavy book and finds an entry about TANKS  
AND ARMOURED VEHICLES. He finds a list of vehicle names and  
scribbles down those that start with "S": Saladin armoured  
car, Saracen personnel carrier, Sherman tank.

INT. LINDEN LODGE FACULTY HOUSING - ADAM'S FLAT - DAY

Adam lives in a small studio on the Linden Lodge campus. The  
cramped space is littered with scattered piano parts and  
piled up sheet music.

Adam sits on the edge of a floppy twin sized mattress,  
several feet away from an old upright piano that was somehow  
squeezed into this tiny space.

He pages through a YELLOW PAGES, scanning through businesses  
named Saladin, Saracen and Sherman.

The first one is "Saladin Securities." He grabs an antiquated rotary phone and dials the number.

ADAM

Yes, hello. This may be a bit of an odd request but is there a gentleman there whose last name begins with "Para"? No? Thank you so much for your time.

He SLAMS the phone. Crosses out the listing.

He finds the next business. Dials the next number.

The phone SLAMS over and over again. Adam crosses out more listings. Within moments, no more possibilities remain.

As he gazes at the crossed out listings, his eyes shift to one other company: *Sarasin Investment Management*. Sarasin, Saracen... Same pronunciation, different spelling.

He shrugs and dials, expecting another dead end when a SECRETARY answers:

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Nic Paravicini's office - may I help you?

Adam's eyes light up.

INT. TRIUMPH VITESSE - WINTER DAY

Adam shivers behind the wheel of his Triumph Vitesse, an old putrid green saloon from 1970.

He can see his breath as ice cold wind blows inside through the car's ill-fitting window seals.

His wipers are no match for the snow that swirls outside.

He glances at the passenger seat, at a note with hastily scribbled directions. He peers outside, struggling to locate street signs in the wintry British countryside.

Finally, he comes across FOREST ROAD, double checks his directions and makes a quick turn, his car's worn tires sliding through slush.

He passes several large country estates before arriving at NORTH LODGE FARM. The stately manor awaits.

CAPTION: FEBRUARY 1985

Adam consults his directions one last time and turns up the driveway.

The Vitesse CLUNKS over a cattle grid and shakes up the long gravel drive. Poor car.

Adam struggles to figure out where to park: near the stable yard? Between two luxury cars near the manor entrance?

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - MOTOR COURT - SAME

The Vitesse edges between Nic's Mercedes and a Jaguar.

Adam steps outside and SLAMS his driver's door. A large flake of rust falls into the fresh snow.

Adam approaches the grand house entrance, passing Georgian-style columns, two imposing stone dogs and a more down-to-earth hedgehog boot cleaner.

Adam RINGS the bell. Huddling to stay warm in the cold.

The door flies open. Nanny materializes and gives Adam a quick once over, scrutinizing him through her thick glasses.

NANNY

Mr. Ockelford? Good afternoon. Do  
come in. I'm Nanny. Bumpy's  
waiting for you.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - HALLWAY - DAY

Adam enters and nearly runs into Alice.

NANNY

Alice will take your coat.

Adam hands her his coat, feeling a bit out of place.

Nanny ushers Adam through a hallway dominated by an ornate wooden staircase. Old paintings of champion race horses line the walls.

They pass the sitting room. The door is ajar, and Adam catches a glimpse of Mary Ann and Nic inside. Adam raises his hand, about to greet them when Nanny gently shuts the door.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Right this way.

She leads Adam into:

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBRARY - DAY

Sitting on a couch is Derek, smartly dressed in white trousers and a blue sweater. He rocks in place and fiddles with his hands, nervous but excited.

NANNY

Bumpy! You remember Mr. Ockelford, don't you?

ADAM

Please, call me Adam.

NANNY

(annunciating for Derek)  
Good afternoon, Adam.

DEREK

(perfect imitation)  
Good afternoon, Adam.

ADAM

Hello, Derek. Shall we play the piano?

DEREK

Play the piano.

Nanny shows Adam to a dining room chair, prepared just for him a few feet away from the piano. Adam takes a seat, trying to ignore the staring gazes of all the Paravicini ancestor paintings that line the walls.

Nanny lifts Derek onto the piano bench.

NANNY

Now, I expect Adam would like to hear some Beethoven, wouldn't you, Adam? How about the *Cantabile*?

ADAM

The *Cantabile*?

Derek's hands reach out. Somehow knowing precisely where the keys are (and the key of the piece), he launches into the tranquil slow movement from Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Ah, the *Pathétique*...

NANNY

We call it the *Cantabile*.

Adam marvels at Derek's ability to play the difficult piece with his unique combination of thumbs, knuckles and elbows. As Adam listens closer, he catches a bizarre detail.

ADAM

One moment... Why is he playing in E flat?

NANNY

I'm not sure what you mean.

ADAM

This movement is written in A flat.

NANNY

Hmmm. I suppose Bumpy just plays it like he hears it. Tea?

ADAM

Thank you.

Nanny leaves the room. Puzzled by this mystery, Adam studies Derek, then notices the record player, which holds a recording of the Beethoven. He hits PLAY. Derek perfectly follows the recording.

But something still doesn't sound right to Adam. He checks the settings: the record speed is 45RPM. Aha! Adam adjusts the dial down to 33RPM. The record slows and the MUSIC SHIFTS from E flat major into A flat. The correct key.

Adam can't believe what happens next: Derek quickly adjusts both hands and continues playing the piece in this different, correct key. Seamlessly changing to A flat on the fly!

Adam shakes his head - amazed.

The mystery solved, Adam decides to take charge of this lesson. He sneaks next to Derek and tries to join in with a bass line. Derek's left hand swats away Adam's fingers.

Adam steps to the other side of the piano and tries to echo the melody, playing notes high up and as far away from Derek as possible. In a flash, Derek pushes him out of the way.

Seeing an opening in the middle of the keyboard, Adam quickly leans over Derek's shoulder and adds in a quick note. WHAM! Derek hits him away with the back of his head.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Won't you allow me to join in, Derek?



But before he can make another attempt, Nanny reenters with two fresh cups of tea.

NANNY

How are we getting on?

Derek smiles at the sound of her voice and concludes the Beethoven with a few whimsical chords of his own.

ADAM

Interesting ending there, Derek...

NANNY

Wasn't it lovely? What shall we  
have next? How about *A Nightingale*  
*in Berkeley Square*?

Before Adam can interject, Derek dives into the more poppy British song. All Adam can do is sip his tea and munch on a biscuit.

Under Nanny's watchful gaze, Adam makes several more attempts to play with Derek but he gets WHACKED away every time. Nanny just smiles, enjoying the music.

The theme repeats and Adam notices Derek playfully adding a few improvisations, making the piece his own.

As Derek reaches the final chorus, Nanny joins in, belting at the top of her lungs.

NANNY (CONT'D)

*Aaaaaand like an echo far  
awaaaaaay, a nightingale sang in  
Berkeley Square!*

Derek leads her along, even changing keys to accommodate her inability to hit higher notes.

They finish the song. Nanny APPLAUDS, gesturing Adam to do the same. Derek APPLAUDS back.

NANNY (CONT'D)

How about another...

As she suggests another piece to Derek, Adam sits in silence, unable to get a word in.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - HALLWAY - LATER

Walking hand in hand with Derek, Nanny escorts Adam out.

NANNY  
 What a lovely lesson.  
 (to Derek)  
 "Thank you, Adam."

DEREK  
 Thank you, Adam.

ADAM  
 You're very welcome, Derek.

They step in silence to the front door. Nanny assumes this means they won't be meeting again.

NANNY  
 We very much appreciate your time,  
 Adam. Best of luck with all your  
 endeavors.

She opens the front door. Adam's mind races.

ADAM  
 Next Saturday at eleven if that  
 suits?

Pleasantly surprised, Nanny's face brightens.

NANNY  
 Very well then.

INT. LINDEN LODGE FACULTY HOUSING - ADAM'S FLAT - NIGHT

It's the middle of the night. Adam's bed is vacant, the comforter tossed aside haphazardly.

Unable to sleep, Adam sips tea in his small kitchenette (if one counter with half a refrigerator and a tiny cooktop can even be called that). His eyes fixed on his old piano.

He sets down the tea and digs through his numerous piles of music. After much searching, he finds the sheet music for Beethoven's *Pathétique* sonata.

He sits at the piano and flips open to the second movement - the *Adagio Cantabile*. The same piece Derek played for him.

Adam extends his hands and plays the piece, quietly, trying not to wake the neighbors. His fingers move fluidly over the keys, playing beautifully in the correct key of A flat major.

After a moment, he stops and adjusts his hands. Trying to modulate to a different position and play in E flat major.

He slowly trudges through the first few notes and chords and then fumbles the harmonies, unable to fully play in this unnatural feeling key. After a few attempts, he gives up.

He glances at his hands and can't help but smirk.

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - ONE WEEK LATER - MORNING

Adam's clunker of a car GRINDS to a stop.

He approaches the manor entrance. Before he can even knock, Nanny flings open the door.

ADAM

Oh. Hello. Good timing.

NANNY

Derek heard you pull up.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Derek hears FOOTSTEPS and looks up just as Nanny brings in Adam.

ADAM

Good morning, Derek.

Derek rocks back and forth, anxious and excited. Adam places his hand on Derek's shoulder, reassuringly calming him down.

NANNY

Up you go, Bumpy.

She reaches for Derek, about to lift him onto the piano bench, when Adam CLEARS his throat.

ADAM

Nanny, if I may...

NANNY

Yes?

Derek wriggles, desperate to get to his piano.

ADAM

Derek has tremendous musical potential. More than I've ever seen - in anyone. But unless he'll allow me to help sort out his technique, his playing will always be limited.

NANNY

That's why we're having lessons,  
aren't we?

She plops Derek onto the piano bench.

ADAM

What I mean, actually, is...

Nanny turns, displeased, unused to being challenged.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Derek needs to learn to relate to  
me. To trust me completely.

NANNY

Meaning?

ADAM

I'll need to work with him on my  
own.

Nanny processes.

NANNY

I see.

(moving on)

Bumpy, how about we play some  
Debussy for Adam.

Before Adam can interject again, Derek dives into Debussy's  
impressionistic *Reverie*.

Adam sits back, listening patiently. But he's not watching  
Derek - he's watching Nanny. She studies Derek's bizarre  
elbow and karate chop technique that, while impressive, is  
clearly hindering the flow of the tranquil song.

Derek finishes the piece. He spins around, expecting  
applause, but receives none. Adam remains silent.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Right, Bumpy. I have some sorting  
to do upstairs. Play nicely and  
I'll see you later.

She gives Derek a big kiss and leaves. Adam nods in  
appreciation, surprised by Nanny's decisiveness. The moment  
the door shuts...

ADAM

Right.

He sits down next to Derek on the piano stool, feeling the little boy tense up. Adam plays a quick middle C, rapidly retreating his hand before SMACK! Derek's hand crashes down on the keys, just missing him. Derek then plays the same C.

Adam grips Derek's wrists. Derek wriggles to no avail as Adam wedges both of his little wrists into his left hand, then plays a quick C major chord with his right.

Derek SCREAMS, somehow frees his little hands and pushes Adam away. And then plays the same C major chord perfectly.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Ok, Derek. How about we play a  
little game.

Without warning, he lifts the child into the air, carries him to the far end of the room and sets him down. Adam quietly steps back to the piano, leaving a very confused Derek.

Returning to the piano, Adam plays a one-handed five-finger exercise: one white key per finger and the thumb - C D E F G.

PITTER PATTER PITTER PATTER. Derek scrambles back to the piano, crashing into lamps and chairs along the way. Within seconds, he pushes Adam away from his precious instrument.

Adam whips around to see what Derek will do next: the boy quickly presses down on the keyboard, playing the five notes simultaneously.

Adam can't help but LAUGH at his antics.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
You like this game, don't you?

As he lifts Derek and carries him to the other side of the room again...

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - DEREK'S ROOM - SAME

Nanny sorts clean clothes into Derek's dresser, neatly organizing shirts, pants and socks. She softly hums *Molly Malone* to herself.

Suddenly, she hears YELLING. Back and forth STAMPEDING FOOTSTEPS. The BANGING of piano keys.

Off her shocked face...

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Nanny bursts in on a bizarre sight:

Adam sets Derek down on the far end of the room and the two of them race back to the piano. Derek lags a split second as he listens to the direction of Adam's footsteps, then takes off in hot pursuit, chaotically BUMPING things along the way.

Because of that split second and his longer legs, Adam reaches the piano first, with just enough time to PLAY the five-finger exercise before a chasing Derek shoves him away.

An out-of-breath Adam watches as Derek imitates him, this time playing one note at a time: C D E F G.

An appalled Nanny CLEARS her throat, grinding the lesson to a screeching halt.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Adam sits across from Nanny, sheepishly sipping tea.

Nanny stirs her tea rhythmically, a tight grip on her spoon.

NANNY

Tell me, Adam. Are such unusual methods tolerated at your school?

ADAM

Yes - when that is what an unusual child requires.

Nanny stirs her tea a bit more aggressively.

NANNY

How long have you been teaching at Linden Lodge?

ADAM

Well my full-time appointment as Head of Music only started recently but...

NANNY

Recently. I see. And before that?

ADAM

I volunteered in the evenings.

NANNY

So no other teaching experience...

ADAM

No - I was too busy with my piano and composition studies. At the Royal Academy...

He sips his tea, letting that fact sink in.

NANNY

Ah. I see. You wanted to be a professional musician.

ADAM

Yes, exclusively. That is, until my first visit to Linden Lodge.

NANNY

Oh?

ADAM

It was quite the humbling experience, actually...

FLASH TO:

INT. LINDEN LODGE - SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER - DAY

A younger Adam follows his friend PAUL down a long, narrow and dimly lit corridor - many of the bulbs have burned out.

ADAM (V.O.)

It was a complete chance encounter as these things so often are. My landlady's son Paul happened to be a musician. Or so he claimed. So you can imagine my skepticism when he told me about these incredible, blind children.

As they pass several doors leading to practice rooms, Adam hears a PIANO... Someone is playing highly technical passages with remarkable finesse.

Paul CREAKS open a door, revealing:

A PITCH BLACK PRACTICE ROOM. Barely illuminated by the gloomy hallway light.

Through the darkness, Adam sees a child's hands dancing across a keyboard, playing the chilling *Prelude & Fugue in c minor* by Bach. An impressive feat for any music student.

Paul flips on the light, revealing TOBY, an 11-YEAR-OLD BLIND BOY. Adam is stunned.

ADAM (V.O.)  
I had never seen anything like it.  
I quickly grew to understand that  
Toby wasn't the only one.

RETURN TO:

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Nanny listens to Adam's story with great interest.

ADAM  
Just like Derek, many of these  
blind children had perfect pitch.  
About forty percent. Considerably  
more than my peers at the Academy.

NANNY  
So that's why they gravitated  
towards music?

ADAM  
That's right. But these children  
didn't just love the music - they  
needed it. It was their form of  
expression and communication.  
After that, I couldn't stay away.

NANNY  
What happened to Toby?

ADAM  
He was quite a bit older than Derek  
when I met him. No one really knew  
how to handle all his disabilities  
back then, so he was never treated  
like a serious music student.

Adam takes a long sip of tea.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
I tried all that I could. Evolving  
his technique, putting him in  
ensembles... But it was too late.  
He was too set in his ways. If  
only I had met him earlier...

Adam finishes his tea, contemplative.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
But you should have heard him. He  
was a remarkable talent.



NANNY

And you see that same potential in Derek?

ADAM

If not more. The thing with Derek is that he doesn't just mimic what he hears. The way he modifies and combines pieces - it's genuinely creative. And how he guards that piano!

NANNY

Bumpy's quite possessive, isn't he.

ADAM

Positively obsessed! But that's just his way of showing his passion. I see that as a tremendous asset. At least it will be, once I get him to let me in.

Nanny process all this. She finishes her tea.

NANNY

Very well. Next Saturday then?

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - DRAWING ROOM - ONE WEEK LATER - DAY

The door CREAKS open. Nanny shows Derek into the room. He SNIFFS the air.

NANNY

That's right, Bumpy. We're in the drawing room.

She allows him to feel his way across the room.

At the far end stands Derek's piano. Moved here from the library. And waiting in silence is Adam, ready to do things a little differently.

Without a word, Adam PLAYS the five-note exercise.

Derek SCREAMS, slips out of Nanny's grasp and flails towards the piano, BUMPING a table along the way. He reaches the instrument and tries to shove Adam out of the way. But Adam is long gone, having stood up a second earlier.

ADAM

Good morning, Derek.

Derek whips his head in Adam's direction and simultaneously imitates the five-finger exercise.

Adam glances at Nanny, who nods and leaves.

Adam sits down next to Derek, who pushes him right off the bench again.

Adam closes the piano cover, preventing Derek from playing.

ADAM (CONT'D)

We can wait as long as you'd like.

Derek SCREAMS and BANGS the piano cover, fighting to free the keyboard. Adam holds it down firmly and remains silent, patiently waiting out Derek.

Derek pokes at his eyes out of frustration, then settles down. Rewarding the calm behavior, Adam slowly lifts up the cover and plays the five-finger exercise.

Derek SLAMS the piano cover right onto Adam's hand!

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Nanny hands Adam an ICE PACK for his hurting hand.

NANNY

He's a rather determined one, isn't he.

ADAM

Not as determined as I.

Derek eats biscuits at a small table nearby.

CREAK. He hears Nanny open the fridge and POUR a glass of milk. Derek sits up straight and waits patiently. Nanny sets down the milk and CLINKS the glass. Derek reaches directly for it and drinks.

ADAM (CONT'D)

He seems to have no problem following your rules.

NANNY

He knows better. I've lived through two world wars and raised three generations of Parker-Bowles children. I am not easily beaten.

ADAM

They're lucky to have you.

NANNY

Helping to raise Derek brought me out of retirement. It's my duty.

ADAM

Did you ever fancy children of your own?

NANNY

These are my children. Some are just a bit more stubborn than others. Isn't that right, Bumpy.

Derek rocks back and forth, in his own world.

ADAM

I wonder if he isn't ready for a change of scenery.

NANNY

How so?

ADAM

You've created a terrific structure for Derek - here. But what happens when he's sent out into the world?

NANNY

We're quite some time away from that. He isn't ready.

ADAM

The education authority may have a different opinion. Is there any news on his school?

NANNY

Mr. and Mrs. Paravicini are still exploring their options.

ADAM

I'd be happy to speak to them about Linden Lodge.

NANNY

And I'd be happy to pass along your thoughts, Adam.

Adam pauses. Choosing his words carefully.

ADAM

It's a perfect place for a child like Derek.

(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Highly structured, yet filled with  
ample opportunities for growth.

NANNY  
I am sure it is lovely. But Bumpy  
simply isn't ready yet.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - ONE WEEK LATER - DAY

Nanny brings in Derek and leaves.

The moment Nanny is gone, Derek hears a MINOR SCALE. As his little legs scramble in the direction of the piano, Adam jumps up and quickly gets out of the way, determined to win this battle once and for all.

Derek feels for Adam, doesn't find him, then imitates the scale. He listens carefully, ready to swat Adam away. But Adam isn't anywhere near...

Adam plays a MAJOR SCALE - on a PORTABLE ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD positioned on the opposite side of the room.

Derek leaps up, then sits down again, unsure if he should abandon his piano or not.

Adam plays the scale again. Derek SHRIEKS and hurries in the direction of the sound. As he feels his way across the room, Adam heads the other way. Derek reaches the electronic keyboard. Adam reaches the piano.

Derek plays the major scale on the keyboard. Adam plays a MINOR ARPEGGIO on the piano. Derek SHRIEKS LOUDER, his frustration building. He scurries back to the piano. Adam calmly steps back to the keyboard.

Derek plops onto the piano bench, panting heavily.

ADAM  
We can do this for our entire hour  
if you'd like.

He plays the minor arpeggio on the keyboard. A defeated Derek stays at the piano and repeats him.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
That's more like it.

Adam plays a MAJOR ARPEGGIO on the keyboard. Derek imitates on the piano.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Now we're getting somewhere.

Adam lifts the keyboard stand and brings it closer to the piano. He plays a HARMONIC SCALE. Derek repeats. A WHOLE TONE SCALE. Each time, Adam moves the keyboard closer.

Within several scales, the keyboard and piano are side by side.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Can we play nicely, Derek?

DEREK  
Nicely, Derek...

Adam sits on the piano bench next to Derek, who tenses up for a moment, then relaxes. Allowing Adam to stay.

Adam plays a MAJOR CHORD, fully expecting to get shoved. But Derek leaves him alone and repeats the chord. Finally, the student is accepting the idea of having a teacher.

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - WEEKS LATER - DAY

Nanny walks Adam outside to his rusty car, which really has no right to still be drivable.

Summer is fast approaching - colorful flowers bloom around the estate. The surrounding grounds flourish with the fresh green of growing grass.

NANNY  
Have yourself a wonderful summer,  
Adam. We very much look forward to  
continuing Derek's studies after  
the holiday.

ADAM  
Nanny, has any decision been made  
about Derek's schooling?

NANNY  
I... Don't believe so.

ADAM  
Are Mr. and Mrs. Paravicini in?

NANNY  
Unfortunately, they are not...

She sees Adam eyeing the parked Mercedes and Jaguar.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
...available at the moment.

ADAM  
I can wait.

NANNY  
It might be some time.

ADAM  
My day is clear.

He plops down on a bench by the front door.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - FOYER - DAY

Adam now waits patiently on a small stool inside.

The door to the sitting room CREAKS open. Nanny waves Adam in.

NANNY  
(not pleased about this)  
Do come in.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - SITTING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Adam enters quietly, sheepish in front of Nic and Mary Ann.

NIC  
Please, Adam. Have a seat.

Adam does as he is told. Nanny remains by the door, listening in.

MARY ANN  
Adam, we very much appreciate all the time you've put in with Derek.

ADAM  
The pleasure has truly been mine, Mrs. Paravicini.

MARY ANN  
Please, call me Mary Ann.

ADAM  
Very good. I assume Nanny has filled you in on our discussions?

NIC  
Why yes. It seems that Derek's playing is progressing rather finely, is it not?

ADAM

Indeed. But I was referring to his future education...

MARY ANN

Oh?

Adam glances at Nanny, who avoids his gaze. Adam chooses his words carefully.

ADAM

This home has been an invaluable starting point for Derek. But he's old enough for school now. He's ready to be challenged by teachers that can meet all his special needs.

NIC

You mean his blindness...

ADAM

Of course. Along with his other disabilities, which I believe are actually responsible for his remarkable memory, as well as his complete obsession with music.

Nic and Mary Ann exchange a confused look.

NIC

I'm sorry... Other disabilities?

ADAM

Well, yes. Derek's cognition is very much behind that of other blind students his age. There's a diagnosis that's being used more commonly these days - autism.

Nic and Mary Ann are rendered speechless.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Surely someone has mentioned this before? His premature birth... The lagging brain development...

Nic and Mary Ann just shake their heads. They truly had no idea. Mary Ann reaches for Nic's hand. Nic rises and paces, unable to hide his frustration.

NIC

Well this certainly explains the damn rejections.

MARY ANN

Nic...

ADAM

Pardon? Rejections?

NIC

All of the schools. Every last one of them. Except yours - we haven't heard from them yet.

ADAM

But letters should've gone out weeks ago...

NIC

Then perhaps they aren't as keen on Derek as you are.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Adam paces in front of Headmistress Brumm and other TEACHERS, in the midst of an intense staff meeting.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

We understand your frustration, Adam. But we simply weren't prepared to make a decision given the contradictory information.

ADAM

What information? Derek has a musical gift. More than I've seen in anyone, disabled or not. He deserves this opportunity.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Yes, but the report from the education authority is rather... Alarming. It suggests a very different child from the one you've described to us.

ADAM

They just don't know how to handle him.

Headmistress Brumm reads from a lengthy report.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

"Derek won't do as he's told. He's disruptive. Has a tendency to bite..."



ADAM

When he's with people he knows and has structure, he's fine. Surely we can provide an environment that minimizes his stress.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Undoubtedly. But let's remember that this is an institution for the blind. We're simply not equipped to handle someone with all of Derek's disabilities. We've tried before and it didn't work out.

ADAM

Then we need to evolve. We've all read the reports. Medical advances are helping children survive birth defects that would have been fatal just a few years ago.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

No one is debating the value of modern medicine, Adam. We are all thankful that these children have been given a chance at life.

ADAM

So what happens when they all come knocking on our door? We ought to be able to help them.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

In good time, perhaps.

ADAM

If not now, when? Our future rests with children with complex needs like Derek. This is an opportunity for Linden Lodge to lead the way.

Several teachers nod their heads in agreement. Headmistress Brumm glances back at the report.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

There's still the issue of his learning difficulties. I understand you would take charge of his musical studies, Adam. But what about everything else?

The room is silent as Adam considers this.

All heads turn as a tiny, seasoned Linden Lodge teacher stands. This is the Head of the Junior Department, MAUREEN LINGARD.

MISS LINGARD

I could take him in my class for a term and see how he does. And then we could go from there.

Everyone turns to Headmistress Brumm, awaiting the verdict. She weighs the gravity of this massive choice.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

The steady HUM of a car motor.

Tires SPINNING smoothly over pavement, then BUMP BUMP BUMP - RUMBLING over cobblestones.

The MUFFLED YELLS of playing children, audible through glass.

The SQUEAL of a car braking to a stop.

A car door CLICKS open.

NANNY (O.S.)

Up we go, Bumpy.

The sound of a seat belt UNFASTENING, then shoes standing up on PAVEMENT.

Then there's the chaos of approaching FOOTSTEPS and VOICES.

ADAM (O.S.)

Well good morning, Derek.

DEREK (O.S.)

Good morning, Adam.

EXT. LINDEN LODGE - DAY

Gripping Nanny's hand, Derek steps away from his father's Mercedes (which has a DRIVER). With a crisp haircut and a tie visible beneath a V-neck navy jumper, Derek looks fresh.

Adam and a small welcome party of TEACHERS, including Miss Lingard, greet their newest student.

## TEACHERS

Hello, Derek... Welcome to Linden Lodge... We're so happy to have you here...

As each person greets Derek, he listens intently to their voices and shakes their hands, making sure to SNIFF them too.

Derek rocks back and forth with so much nervous excitement that Nanny can barely hold him.

Nanny studies the school, her eyes clouded with doubt. She shifts her gaze to Derek - a child that hasn't been out of her charge once since he first arrived at North Lodge Farm.

Nanny shoves a paper bag in Adam's hand.

## NANNY

He takes his lunch at noon. Crisps and a crustless Marmite sandwich, just as he likes it.

## ADAM

Yes, Nanny.

## NANNY

He needs his nap immediately after he eats. You know how he gets without his nap.

## ADAM

Absolutely, Nanny.

## NANNY

And I'll be back precisely at 4 to pick him up. You haven't forgotten our arrangement, have you?

## ADAM

Of course not.

Nanny is having trouble releasing Derek.

## ADAM (CONT'D)

It's ok, Nanny. He's in good hands here.

Nanny pauses, then finally lets go. Without another word, she quietly climbs back into the Mercedes and shuts the door. The car drives off.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - HALLWAY - DAY

Derek holds the shoulder of ANDREW, a blind student who follows a guiding handrail, leading them through the school.

They pass a calendar that shows the date in print and in BRAILLE: SEPTEMBER 1986

ANDREW  
I bet you'll enjoy Braille class  
very much, Derek.

Derek remains silent, unused to social interactions with strangers. He pokes at his eyes, uncomfortable.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
I've learned 5 new signs just this  
week!

Derek's head swivels back and forth, taking in all the strange new sounds of the school.

ANDREW (CONT'D)  
And is it true that you play the  
piano? I wish I could play too.

Adam and Miss Lingard follow a safe distance away, discreetly listening to this one-sided conversation.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Adam brings Derek into the music room. Derek SNIFFS the air, recognizing the scent.

ADAM  
Remember this place, Derek? It's  
where we first met.

As Adam leads Derek to the piano, the little boy feels his way around the room, touching things with nervous energy. The walls. THUMP THUMP - drums... CRASH! Cymbals...

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Up you go, Derek.

Derek raises his arms instinctively, familiar with the drill. Adam lifts him onto the bench and sits down beside him.

Derek seems a little tense, but relaxes as he feels out the piano. He jumps into a SCALES routine.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Very good, Derek. But today, I'd  
like to try something different.

Adam gently takes Derek's hands. Derek jerks his hands back.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Derek, how about we work on your  
technique?

DEREK  
Technique?

Adam takes Derek's hands again. Derek swats him away.

ADAM  
I'd like you to learn some more  
challenging pieces, Derek. But  
first, we'll need to get your  
fingers sorted out.

As Adam reaches for Derek's hands once again, Derek SCREAMS  
and sticks his fingers in his own eyes.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Ok, ok, let's go back to the  
scales.

Adam tries playing a simple SCALE but Derek just BANGS on the  
piano and jumps off the bench, ending the lesson.

EXT. LINDEN LODGE - AFTERNOON

As the Mercedes pulls up, Adam waits on the curb, a firm grip  
on an anxiously wriggling Derek.

Nanny jumps out of the car and immediately smothers Derek.

NANNY  
My little Bumpy...  
(to Adam)  
How was he today?

ADAM  
Still settling in.

NANNY  
Perhaps it was too soon.

ADAM  
Nothing wrong with challenging the  
boy, Nanny. Just like one would  
any child. See you in the morning.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MISS LINGARD'S CLASS - DAYS LATER

A disheveled-looking Adam leads a fidgety Derek into Miss Lingard's classroom, an orderly environment where other BLIND STUDENTS take their places at group desks. Given his autism, Derek is by far the most disabled amongst his blind peers.

Adam hands Derek off to Miss Lingard.

MISS LINGARD  
Another rough one?

ADAM  
You should see the piano.

Miss Lingard walks Derek to a group desk he shares with Andrew and Kelly (the blind piano girl whose lesson Derek once interrupted).

ANDREW/KELLY  
Hello Derek.

Derek retreats, fidgeting with his hands.

ADAM  
I just can't seem to get him to listen.

MISS LINGARD  
Be patient. Routine is everything with these children - he'll adjust soon enough.

ADAM  
Half the time, I wonder if he even understands what I'm saying.

MISS LINGARD  
Sometimes the trick isn't to get them to speak your language. It's to speak theirs.

Adam considers this.

EXT. LINDEN LODGE - AFTERNOON

As Nanny opens the Mercedes, Derek stumbles to her from a frazzled Adam.

NANNY  
You know Adam, if you require my help, you just need to ask.

ADAM

I'll be sure to let you know if  
that's ever the case, Nanny.

As Nanny helps Derek into the Mercedes, she HUMS *Molly Malone*. Derek listens to the gentle melody, gradually settling down.

Adam carefully watches their interaction, his mind racing.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

As Adam enters with Derek, he closes the window shutters, MUFFLING outside noises.

He PLOPS Derek onto the bench.

Adam studies his pupil for a moment. A bold idea spinning in his head. Will it work? He decides to find out.

Adam plays a quick one-handed SCALE. Derek imitates.

Adam plays a quick one-handed ARPEGGIO. Derek imitates.

No words are exchanged. Only music.

Adam plays a complex two-handed CHROMATIC SCALE that requires extremely precise finger placement and accuracy.

Derek struggles to imitate, his karate chops and awkward hand movements too cumbersome to smoothly play the scale.

Adam plays the complex scale again. Derek fails a second time. Frustrated, he BANGS the piano and pokes at his eyes. Adam doesn't react, waiting for Derek to calm down.

After several seconds of quiet, Adam plays the complex scale once again. But this time, extremely slowly, his fingers crawling past Derek. His knuckles and joints purposely exaggerated in their piston-like movement.

Derek tries to butt in but Adam's hands keep playing. Continuing the scale past the child.

Derek feels Adam's hands. Touching his fingers. Processing their mechanical movement.

Adam plays the last note. Then stops.

Derek attempts the scale using only his fingers. His hand movements jerky but attempting the new technique. He gets it 50% right.

Adam gently takes Derek's fingers and demonstrates the correct movement. At first, Derek tenses up, unused to being handled this way. But then he slowly relaxes, allowing Adam to sculpt his fingers.

Adam plays the scale again. This time, Derek immediately puts his hands on top of Adam's, following the movement. His mind rewiring the way he plays.

The moment Adam finishes, Derek puts his fingers down and plays a slow but technically accurate rendition of the scale, using only his fingers.

Adam smiles. The WORDLESS LESSON a tremendous success.

EXT. LINDEN LODGE - AFTERNOON

Nanny looks out from the stopping Mercedes. Adam is all smiles. Derek holds his hand patiently.

Nanny opens the door. Derek waits. Adam calmly walks the boy to Nanny, then hands her a HAND-WRITTEN LIST.

NANNY

What's this?

ADAM

Derek's new prescription.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Rows upon rows of colorful records, the air thick with dust and the nostalgic smell of vinyl.

Nanny wanders different aisles, lost in a sea of recordings.

RECORD STORE CLERK

Anything I can help locate, madam?

NANNY

The classical section would be a splendid start, thank you.

She shows him the list of SPECIFIC RECORDINGS from Adam.

RECORD STORE CLERK

Quite the comprehensive list... Is this for you?

NANNY

No. A student.



RECORD STORE CLERK  
Ah, very good. Must be the first  
year of conservatory.

NANNY  
Oh no, dear. He's only six and a  
half.

The Clerk's eyes WIDEN with surprise.

RECORD STORE CLERK  
I... See.

He leads her away from the dusty records to a far more  
expansive section filled with CASSETTES.

RECORD STORE CLERK (CONT'D)  
I believe we have most of these  
recordings on cassette.

NANNY  
Oh no, cassettes won't do. Not one  
bit.

Examining the list once again, the Clerk shakes his head.

RECORD STORE CLERK  
I'm afraid our record selection may  
be too limited.

Off Nanny's horrified expression...

INT. LONDON FLAT - EVENING

Nanny's flat overlooks the River Thames. It's comfortable  
and quaint, without a dust spec in sight. Every shelf is  
packed with religious items, from icons to crosses to the  
Virgin Mary herself.

Nanny anxiously looks on as Adam unpacks and plugs in a shiny  
silver CASSETTE BOOMBOX.

ADAM  
That should do it. Nanny, care to  
do the honors?

He offers Nanny the inaugural cassette tape.

NANNY  
Heaven forbid.

She stares at the damn cassette like it's the devil's work.

Derek listens carefully as:

Adam PUSHES EJECT, opening the cassette holder. CLICK - in goes the tape. He PRESSES PLAY...

The boombox crackles to life, a gentle piano duet flowing out of the speakers and filling the room.

Derek is all smiles as he listens to William Walton's *Duets for Children*, a collection of charming movements written for 2 pianos. The first movement is appropriately titled "*The Music Lesson*."

A simple up and down scale of the first pianist is joined by a graceful melody played by a second pianist...

OVER THE SAME MUSIC:

SERIES OF SHOTS - DEREK'S TECHNIQUE EVOLVING:

MUSIC ROOM

Derek's little hands ride Adam's, which play the up and down scale of Walton's duet. Their hands fly together over the glistening keys of the piano.

NANNY'S FLAT

Derek DRAGS a chair next to the boombox and listens intently to the same Walton recording.

MUSIC ROOM

Derek plays the up and down scale with his customary karate chops and elbows.

Adam gently lifts Derek's hands, places them on his, and plays with the correct technique - only using his fingers.

Adam then takes Derek's hands and puppeteers his fingers, acting out the correct motion.

Derek tries again, using only his fingers this time. As Derek's hand successfully plays the up and down scale, Adam, who sits to his right, joins in with the other part, the main melody.

THE FLAT

Derek rests his head on the boombox, listening to the music and feeling the vibrations.

THE SOUND OF A CASSETTE REWINDING...

## MUSIC ROOM

Derek now feels Adam's hands playing the main melody.

As we focus on Adam's hands, gracefully dancing over the keyboard...

We're now looking at Derek's hands. Playing the main melody, with only his fingers. Adam now sits to his left and plays the supporting part's up and down scale.

They finish the short little gem of a piece.

CLICK - A CASSETTE EJECTS...

## THE FLAT

CLUNK: Adam looks on as Nanny awkwardly tries to load another cassette into the boombox. Adam nods his head, supportive.

EJECT. CLICK. PLAY.

Another Walton duet plays. This one's called *The Silent Lake* and has a more melancholy tune. Unlike the previous duet, which had individual notes playable by single fingers, this one is filled with chords that require multiple fingers...

## MUSIC ROOM

Adam's hand stretches out over the keys, playing a chord with several fingers simultaneously, continuing *The Silent Lake*.

Derek feels Adam's hand. Trying to comprehend how one hand can play multiple notes at the same time. When it's Derek's turn to imitate, he plays the chords with two hands, unable to correctly replicate the technique.

Adam lifts Derek's hands and gets him to feel the correct technique again. He then adjusts Derek's fingers, illustrating the motion.

Gradually, Derek's fingers spread out, fanning out like a flower, his hands able to cover more keys now. He takes over the piece, able to play chords with individual hands.

MORE RECORDINGS. EJECT - CLICK - PLAY - REWIND. And repeat.

Nanny loads more and more cassettes into the boombox, growing more comfortable with the technology. Faster and faster, accelerating to the tempo of one more Walton duet: *Pony Trap*.

## MUSIC ROOM

As Adam plays the quick tune of *Pony Trap*, Derek's hands try imitating an octave higher, struggling to keep up with the speed of the piece.

Adam slows down the tempo a hair. Derek can keep up this time, his technique more precise.

Establishing a starting point, Adam increases the tempo bit by bit. Derek concentrates and stays fully in sync, his new technique allowing him to keep up.

Adam's hands. Derek's hands. A blur of rapid finger movements, moving like efficient clockwork. Derek's hands starting to move increasingly like Adam's, his technique evolving into a perfect imitation.

And with one final chord, the piece is done.

INT. NANNY'S FLAT - NIGHT

The cassette ENDS.

Adam turns off the boombox.

ADAM  
Well I suppose that does it.

NANNY  
So it does.

ADAM  
Have yourselves a lovely summer.

NANNY  
Thank you. And to you as well.  
What do you say, Bumpy?

DEREK  
To you as well, Adam.

Adam nods kindly and turns to the door.

NANNY  
Oh Adam...

She hands him an ORNATE ENVELOPE.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
Mary Ann would very much like for  
you to join us.

Adam opens the invitation...

EXT. NORTH LODGE FARM - JULY - DAY

WHACK! A beach ball rolls across a lush green backyard.

Libbet and Charles WHACK the beach ball across the thick lawn, playing with Derek, who wears a BIRTHDAY CROWN. He listens carefully for the WHACKS of the ball, surprisingly good at anticipating when to grab it.

The sweltering summer sun glistens over a throng of GUESTS: family and friends gathered to celebrate Derek's 8th birthday.

Adam hides under a sunshade, enjoying a PEACH COCKTAIL. He notices Mary Ann and Nic on opposite ends of the party, apart from each other, talking to different people.

Mary Ann spots Adam and greets him warmly.

MARY ANN

So glad you could join us, Adam.  
How ever have you managed to elude  
Nanny?

ADAM

Just give her a bit more time. No  
one is safe.

Nanny grabs different guests, forcing them to participate in the beach ball game, now with Derek in the middle.

MARY ANN

So how did our little Derek do this  
year?

ADAM

His technique has come a very long  
way.

MARY ANN

Wonderful. I can't thank you  
enough.

ADAM

The pleasure is mine. The boy has  
quite a gift. In fact, I believe  
the next step is for him to  
perform.

MARY ANN

You think he's ready?

ADAM

No one is ever truly ready for a first performance. Typically, the way to find out is simply to try. But you're right to ask - Derek likely isn't ready yet. He needs to grow a bit more socially.

MARY ANN

How so?

ADAM

It's one thing to play in front of familiar people in a familiar setting. A recital is an entirely different matter.

MARY ANN

I see. Then what would you suggest?

ADAM

Spending more time around people he doesn't know. Strangers, his peers... And not just in the classroom.

NANNY (O.S.)

Don't think you two are getting off that easy!

All 5 feet of Nanny rushes in and pulls Adam and Mary Ann into the midst of the beach ball game.

MARY ANN

Adam here was just saying...

ADAM

No no, it's quite alright. We can discuss another time.

NANNY

Please, Adam. Go ahead.

WHACK. She passes him the beach ball. Adam is not getting out of this one. Adam TAPS it away.

ADAM

Well... I believe Derek could use some help with his social development.

NANNY

Oh?

ADAM

Yes. So perhaps he ought to board  
at Linden Lodge. Full time.

WHACK. He gets smacked by the ball - hard. Thanks Nanny.

MARY ANN

What do you think, Nanny?

NANNY

It's an interesting thought. But  
I'm not sure Bumpy is ready...

Adam BATS away the ball, a bit aggressively.

ADAM

We all know that Derek requires  
special handling. However, he's  
grown immensely with every  
challenge we've thrown his way. I  
genuinely believe he could handle  
the change.

MARY ANN

That's very kind. Perhaps in due  
time.

WHACK! Adam reaches for the incoming ball but Nanny beats  
him to it and SMACKS it away, cutting him out of the game.

Alice and Ester bring out a massive BIRTHDAY CAKE WITH 8  
CANDLES and set it on a table near Derek's electric organ,  
which has been moved outside for the grand finale.

Nanny walks Derek to the cake. He rocks back and forth,  
excited.

NANNY

Derek, can you thank everyone for  
attending your party?

DEREK

Thank you everyone for attending  
your party!

The Guests sing HAPPY BIRTHDAY. Derek happily plays along on  
the organ, repeating the song over and over again, even  
improvising several verses in his own jazzy style.

Mary Ann and Nanny watch Derek play for everyone. He feeds  
off the applause, relishing this performance.

NANNY

He's quite the performer, isn't he.

MARY ANN

Why yes. He certainly is. Perhaps  
he could handle a recital.

NANNY

What a wonderful idea, Mary Ann.

ADAM

Everything here is known to Derek.  
What happens with an audience of  
unknown people?

MARY ANN

Isn't the way to find out simply to  
try?

Adam has no argument against his own words. All he can do is  
watch Derek play Happy Birthday over and over again, unable  
to stop...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - GYMNASIUM - DAY

An intimate RECITAL for faculty and students:

Children and their teachers sit on the floor before a raised  
stage, hidden behind a musty green velour curtain that has  
seen better days.

Mary Ann and Nanny stand off to the side, the special guests  
of the occasion. Miss Lingard offers them two CREAKY,  
foldable chairs. They graciously sit and glance at each  
other with anxious excitement.

INT. BACK STAGE - DAY

A LONE WORN UPRIGHT PIANO waits patiently behind the old  
curtain.

Derek and Adam huddle together in the tiny, cramped wing.

Derek, dressed in a crisp new jacket, moves his head back and  
forth, excited by the HUSHED VOICES emanating from beyond the  
curtain.

Wearing an old, tired suit, Adam gently taps Derek on the  
shoulder.

ADAM

Ok, Derek. Ready?

DEREK

Ready, Adam.



Adam operates the rope controls and RAISES THE CURTAIN.

Derek is taken aback by the initial APPLAUSE, unsure why that is happening before his performance.

Adam takes him by the hand and leads him onto:

THE STAGE

Derek shakes with anticipation, feeding off the applause and the audience's energy.

ADAM

Ok Derek - let's bow like we practiced.

Derek bows lower and lower and holds the position. And holds it some more. After a moment, Adam gently raises him back up.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Time to play now.

The applause dies down. In the audience, Nanny crosses herself.

Adam steps to the piano bench but before he can sit down...

Derek starts playing!

Adam quickly sits, getting out of Derek's way as the boy explodes into a rapid fire exchange of notes between the left and right hands. He's performing *Ragtime Parade* by Erik Satie, a fun, playful piece that hints at the more contemporary styles Derek will explore in years to come.

The music shoots out of the small tired piano, rocketing over the enraptured audience. The blind students sway to the mesmerizing sounds flooding their ears.

Mary Ann and Nanny listen with joy, proud of their little Derek.

Derek is all smiles, flying through the piece, more energized than he's ever been before. His fingers dance over the keyboard, his improved technique effortlessly allowing the energetic melody to flow into the air.

Adam even leans back and relaxes, letting his brilliant student work his magic.

Derek nears the ending, his hands a blur of activity over black and white keys. He reaches the last few chords...

Mary Ann and Nanny raise their hands, ready to applaud...

But Derek keeps going! Unable to stop, he repeats the piece once again, even adding a few improvisational flourishes of his own.

Adam quickly sits up, anxious and unsure how to control the situation.

Derek jumps back towards the end, close to finishing for a second time...

ADAM (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Let's finish up now, hmmm?

Several ending chords... And then another spontaneous repeat!

Mary Ann and Nanny exchange an anxious look.

Adam inches closer to Derek, making sure he can hear...

ADAM (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Derek, you need to end it!

But Derek is completely absorbed in the music. Obsessively focused on the sounds flowing out of the wooden box. He hears nothing else.

Panicking about what to do, Adam presses the soft pedal, DAMPENING the sound of the piano. But Derek just HITS the keys harder, unwilling to stop!

Adam glances nervously at the audience, unsure what to do. He studies Derek's hands. And an idea sparks...

Adam reaches to the lower register of the keyboard. He listens to Derek carefully, watching his hands like a hawk, and at the perfect moment...

Adam JOINS IN THE PIECE - playing a supporting bass line.

Derek jerks his head Adam's direction but doesn't seem to mind the duet. He flies towards the end once again...

But this time, Adam forces the chord progression with his bass line. Purposely playing notes that Derek will have to follow. Derek senses the challenge and only plays faster.

Adam is a pro and keeps up, but not without droplets of sweat appearing on his brow.

Adam reaches the last chord, playing it several times, forcing Derek to do the same. Finally, the little boy has no choice but to play along, the bass line and melody merging into one.

And with one FINAL CHORD, Adam lifts his hands! Derek plays the chord one more time for effect, then lifts his hands!

The audience of students and faculty bursts into APPLAUSE! Derek nearly falls off his chair, then joins in the APPLAUSE, unable to restrain himself!

Mary Ann and Nanny EXHALE in relief, applauding wildly.

Adam gently pushes Derek into a bow, then leads the boy off the stage.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Outstanding, Derek.

DEREK  
Outstanding, Adam.

BACKSTAGE: Adam hands Derek off to Miss Lingard, who waits in the wings with Kelly.

ADAM  
Ok, Derek. Miss Lingard will show you to your seat.

Adam walks Kelly out onto the stage.

Derek tenses up at the sound of the APPLAUSE...

ON STAGE

Adam and Kelly sit down on the piano bench. Kelly gently feels the keyboard, orienting her hand position.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Go ahead, Kelly. Whenever you are ready.

Kelly takes a small, cute breath. Then softly launches into the adorable *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* from the *Nutcracker* ballet.

Miss Lingard tries to escort Derek into the audience but he stops as he hears someone else playing the piano. His piano. He pokes at his eyes...

Kelly's fingers slowly crawl over the fingerboard, tentatively playing for the first time in front of an audience.

The playing is pleasant and quaint and all but it's nowhere near the brilliance of Derek.

SCRAMBLING FOOTSTEPS...

Just like several years earlier, Adam and Kelly are pushed off the bench by a charging Derek!

GASPS from the audience - both from the seeing faculty and the blind students that hear everything! And no one is more horrified than Mary Ann and Nanny, who can barely watch.

Derek takes over the piano and improvises an insane version of *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy*. The cute melody replaced by virtuosic passages on steroids. Derek is completely schooling Kelly.

ADAM (CONT'D)

This simply will not do, young man!

He tries to lift Derek off the piano but Derek fights back, pushing the piano so hard that the BRAKE on the wheel CRACKS!

Suddenly, the piano starts rolling down the stage! Derek hops off the bench and keeps playing, following the piano!

Adam has no idea what to do - he hurries after the boy, then waves to Miss Lingard, who waits in the wings, paralyzed with confusion. Adam gestures to lower the curtain!

Miss Lingard frantically works the controls, unsure how the hell to do it. She hastily pulls different levers...

The curtain FALLS and hits the stage, finally hiding the chaos from the audience!

But Derek's PLAYING continues to waft through the old dusty velvet. In the audience, Mary Ann and Nanny look completely mortified.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - DORMITORY - DAY

CLUNK. A CARE ATTENDANT drops several suitcases in Derek's new room.

Nanny sighs in resignation, examining the small simple space:

Derek's stuffed rabbit is lovingly tucked under his textured quilt in the single bed. A small desk is a shrine to the precious boombox, flanked by neatly organized stacks of Derek's favorite cassette recordings.

Derek clutches Adam's hand, anxiously listening to all the strange new sounds.

ADAM

He'll be well taken care of, Nanny.  
The staff are here around the  
clock, available for all of Derek's  
needs.

Nanny doesn't look too sure. Staying silent for the first time in her life.

ADAM (CONT'D)

This is so important - for Derek  
and other children like him. The  
school is taking on far more  
students with special needs.  
Giving them a real chance.

Nanny glances in the HALLWAY. She sees the STAFF walking different STUDENTS to their rooms - not just BLIND KIDS but more handicapped ones too, including a GIRL IN A WHEELCHAIR. Linden Lodge is evolving into a more special needs school.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Of course, his weekends will still  
belong to you...

He smiles politely, trying to make this easier for Nanny. She simply pecks Derek on the cheek and quietly leaves.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MUSIC ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Adam bursts into the room, frantically trying to balance a stack of music books.

ADAM

Sorry I'm late, Derek...

The room is vacant.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - DORMITORY - SAME

The Care Attendant accompanies Andrew to Derek's doorway.

ANDREW

Let's go, Derek! We can walk to  
our classes together.

Derek doesn't budge from his bed, rocking back and forth.

The Attendant puts his hand on Andrew's shoulder, comforting.

CARE ATTENDANT  
Thank you for trying, Andrew. Now  
Derek...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Adam waits on the piano bench, checking his watch.

The door SLAMS open and the Care Attendant drags in a kicking, SCREAMING Derek.

ADAM  
What happened?

CARE ATTENDANT  
Readjustment...

Derek tears away from the Attendant and scurries to Adam, bumping into chairs along the way.

ADAM  
Derek, you need to be calm. Linden  
Lodge is your home now.

Derek shoves him aside and plops down on the piano bench.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Derek!

Derek POUNDS the keyboard, creating a horrific cacophony of sound.

Adam lifts the flailing boy away from the piano, then sits down and blocks Derek from touching the keys. He's hit with a volley of violent PUNCHES and SLAPS.

Immovable, Adam plays Chopin's *Raindrop Prelude*. Derek instantly quiets down, his mood softening. The gorgeous, gentle music calming him down.

The Attendant observes from the doorway.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

The Care Attendant relocates the boombox to Derek's night stand and connects a set of HEADPHONES. He attempts to put them on Derek, who initially freaks out, fighting against this foreign object that's touching his precious ears.

The Attendant CLICKS PLAY. Hearing a recording of Chopin's *Raindrop Prelude*, Derek relaxes and eagerly allows the Attendant to put the headphones on him.

The boy falls asleep to the gentle music.

INT. DORMITORY - MORNING

Andrew feels his way down the corridor and arrives at Derek's room.

ANDREW  
Good morning, Derek...

He waits respectfully, then turns to leave.

DEREK  
Good morning, Andrew!

As they head to class, we see the headphones connected to the boombox, the music still PLAYING.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - HALLWAY - DAY

Andrew and Derek both follow the handrail as they march to class.

ANDREW  
Miss Lingard says she's very happy  
to have you back this year.

DEREK  
(no idea what Andrew is  
talking about)  
Yes, Andrew.

ANDREW  
And I heard that we're having fish  
and chips for lunch today!

DEREK  
Yes, Andrew.

ANDREW  
I love fish and chips. Did you  
know that in America, chips are  
called fries? And crisps are  
called chips? Or is it the other  
way around...

DEREK  
Yes, Andrew.

VAL THE SCHOOL SECRETARY hurries past them into...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - OFFICE - DAY

Adam is in the middle of transcribing a song sheet into Braille...

VAL THE SCHOOL SECRETARY  
Mister Ockelford, someone from the  
Local Authority here for you?

ADAM  
Come again?

EXT. LINDEN LODGE - DAY

A confused Adam circles a banged up LORRY that's far too big to be in the school's parking lot.

The passenger hops out and greets Adam. He's a loud-mouthed LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICIAL who is about as jovial as Santa Claus.

LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICIAL  
Very good very good! Where would  
you like them?

ADAM  
Where would I like what...

LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICIAL  
Your students love music, don't  
they?

ADAM  
Yes, many do, but... Do we know  
each other?

LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICIAL  
How fortunate that my meeting with  
the headmistress was on the day of  
your recital. What an exceptional  
young pianist! What's the lad's  
name again?

ADAM  
Derek...

LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICIAL  
Of course - Derek! Simply  
marvelous. What he did to that  
poor piano! So naturally, when one  
of our schools closed and we had  
our redistribution issue, I  
immediately thought of you...



He gestures to the BURLY DRIVER, who hops out and ROLLS UP the rear gate. What Adam sees makes his eyes BULGE.

ADAM

We better go around back...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The RATTLE OF SHAKY WHEELS. Then quiet.

Adam peers around the corner - the coast is clear. He darts out of view...

RATTLE RATTLE...

Adam pushes an UPRIGHT PIANO down the hall!

Followed by the Burly Driver pushing another piano!

Followed by the Local Authority Official pushing a third piano!

Teachers stick their heads out of classrooms, wondering what the commotion is all about.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MUSIC ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The third piano grinds to a halt next to the other two. Adam inspects the three barely used instruments, ecstatic about this unexpected donation.

LOCAL AUTHORITY OFFICIAL

And what about the grand?

ADAM

The what??

INT. LINDEN LODGE - FACULTY LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Headmistress Brumm cuts into a shepherd's pie, enjoying her lunch.

Behind her, visible through a window, Adam quickly waves to his two accomplices. The Burly Driver and the Local Authority Official push a hulking BABY GRAND PIANO on a dolly, wheeling the covered monstrosity as fast as they can.

Headmistress Brumm takes a big bite, completely oblivious.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

CLICK CLACK: Headmistress Brumm marches to a classroom when she hears... PAINED GROANS? She heads off to investigate.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - GYMNASIUM - MOMENTS LATER

The three gentlemen strain with all their might, pushing the gargantuan piano up a ramp onto the open stage.

The moment the piano is up, a red-faced Adam quickly lowers the curtain.

Hidden behind the curtain, they hear the gymnasium doors FLINGING OPEN. Then the CLICK CLACK OF HEELS.

Adam turns to the Burly Driver and Local Authority Official and zips his lips: SILENCE.

Seconds pass. Then the heels CLICK AWAY.

INT. DORMITORY - MORNING

Derek sits at the edge of his bed fully dressed, ready for the day ahead. KNOCK KNOCK.

DEREK

Good morning, Andrew!

ADAM

Actually, Derek, it's me. Good morning.

DEREK

Good morning, Adam!

ADAM

I have a little surprise for you today. Care to come with me?

Derek eagerly takes Adam by the arm.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - GYMNASIUM - DAY

Adam gently places Derek's hand against the massive body of the baby grand piano.

ADAM

You're allowed to play it, Derek. But only if you're extra careful.

DEREK

Careful...

Adam shows Derek to the fancy plush bench. From the moment he sits down, Derek can feel that something different is happening.

Adam lifts up the cover, revealing 88 perfectly polished white and black keys. The grand piano is in immaculate shape.

ADAM

Go ahead. Gently.

Derek reaches forward, his hands unsure about what they're about to find. His fingers land on the glass-like, spring-loaded keys.

He plays a simple chord. His face enlarges with surprise, the vibrations of the massive piano shaking his entire body.

After the initial sound washes over him, Derek explores the keyboard, his little fingers moving faster and faster, fascinated by the sensitivity and grandeur of his new best friend.

Adam props up the lid, revealing the spectacular golden innards of the mechanical beast. The piano's rich sound is now free to escape into the world.

GORGEOUS NOTES reverberate throughout the dark gymnasium, filling the empty space with extraordinary sound.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MISS LINGARD'S CLASS - LATER

Adam delivers Derek to Miss Lingard's classroom. In addition to the blind students we've seen here before, the class is populated with several NEW STUDENTS who are more disabled like Derek.

Derek calmly takes his place at the group desk with Andrew and Kelly.

ANDREW/KELLY

Hello Derek.

DEREK

Hello Andrew. Hello Kelly.

Adam smiles to himself and leaves. And gets cornered by:

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Adam, a word please.

ADAM  
Of course...

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
When were you going to inform me  
about our newest additions?

ADAM  
(getting nervous)  
Additions...

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
Yes, your tuneful little trio. You  
know my policy about clutter.

ADAM  
(relieved)  
Ah. Right. We can certainly move  
the three pianos into classrooms  
that don't currently have one.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
And what about the fourth?

Busted.

ADAM  
Right... The fourth...

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
Surely you didn't think you could  
hide that monstrosity forever?

ADAM  
It's a tremendous asset to the  
school...

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
Tremendous is one way to put it.

ADAM  
How about we put it to good use and  
hold a more formal concert? We  
could showcase a number of our  
talented students and...

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM  
After the last incident? Mind your  
ambition, Adam.

She departs before Adam can squeeze in another word.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - GYMNASIUM - DAY

INSIDE THE GRAND PIANO

It's a beautiful symphony of pounding hammers and ringing strings as Derek practices the middle section of Chopin's *Raindrop Prelude* on the monumental instrument.

Derek is visible at the end of the long strings, shifting on the bench as he navigates the keyboard.

ADAM (O.S.)  
Gently now...

The piano simmers down as Derek checks his playing. He flows through a serene phrase, then throws in a few of his own playful embellishments.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
No twiddly bits please...

Derek plays the piece as written.

ADAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
And finish the phrase...

Derek gracefully ends the melody and stops. The mechanical monster silent for a brief moment.

Adam pats Derek on the back.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Very good. Now Derek, what would you like to play?

DEREK  
Like to play?

ADAM  
Yes. Anything you like. You can choose.

DEREK  
Choose...

Derek remains still, puzzled by the concept of making a choice.

ADAM  
It's ok. How about we play the Chopin again.

Derek instantly jumps back into the *Raindrop Prelude*, the hammers of the grand firing to life.

Adam steps far into the gymnasium, admiring the sight and sound of the little boy playing the giant instrument. Studying his student and the piano, Adam gets an idea...

IN BLACK AND WHITE:

Derek sits at the grand piano. Then launches into the Chopin.

PULL BACK, revealing that we're watching through the black and white viewfinder of a RCA VHS CAMCORDER. The red record light is on, a VHS tape turning inside.

Adam stands next to the recording camcorder, patiently watching Derek play...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - OFFICE - DAY

Adam stuffs numerous envelopes with VHS tapes, preparing to send Derek recordings to mysterious recipients...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - FACULTY LOUNGE - DAY

Headmistress Brumm finds Adam on his lunch break, a rare quiet moment in his day. He enjoys a simple ham sandwich, potato crisps and tea.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Adam, what did you do?

ADAM

I'm not sure what you mean...

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

For some reason, a number of organizations have suddenly expressed interest in sponsoring a charity concert for us.

ADAM

You don't say...

He tries to hide his glee.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I mean, how wonderful! Which one did you go with?

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

I didn't say I had.

ADAM

Right...

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

Although I'm leaning towards the Rotary Club of Tooting.

ADAM

They've always been our most generous patrons. Did they mention anything else?

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM

They had the odd idea of doing the event here at Linden. Something about utilizing our grand piano?

Adam shrugs innocently. The Headmistress is onto him, her hawk-like eyes piercing.

HEADMISTRESS BRUMM (CONT'D)

And Adam... Let's be sure to avoid mishaps like last time, shall we?

INT. LINDEN LODGE - GYMNASIUM - EVENING

Royal blue and gold balloons adorn the stage - the colors of Rotary International.

The gymnasium is now filled with several dozen FAMILY MEMBERS and FRIENDS, as well as ROTARIANS and GUESTS, sitting in rows of creaky foldable chairs. A sizeable enough audience for a modest fundraising event.

The lights dim. Miss Lingard takes the stage.

MISS LINGARD

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We have a wonderful program tonight featuring many of our talented musicians. First up, I would like to introduce Derek Paravicini, who is performing for the public for the first time tonight. He's going to play the Finale from Elgar's Enigma Variations.

APPLAUSE

Derek and Adam take the stage. As Derek bows low and long, Adam meets eyes with Mary Ann and Nanny, who sit directly in the middle of the audience with Libbet and Charles, all watching with nervous anticipation.

Derek takes his seat on the bench of the grand piano.

ADAM

Ok, Derek. Wait for me please.

DEREK

Yes, Adam.

Adam steps OFF STAGE, then takes his place at an ELECTRIC KEYBOARD hidden from the audience.

Derek rocks slowly on the piano stool, his fingers fidgeting in readiness for their forthcoming workout.

Backstage, Adam quietly plays the opening note of the Elgar - just loud enough for Derek to hear. Derek immediately launches in, playing a magnificent yet effortless cascade of melodies and harmonies. The piece highly invigorating.

Adam plays a few notes in the background, keeping Derek's tempo under control, asserting his authority.

The audience is transfixed, marveling at the ability of this tiny young boy.

IN THE BACK ROW

An ENTHUSIASTIC ROTARIAN sneaks out of her seat and hurries to the back of the gymnasium. She searches the walls, then quietly steps into the HALLWAY, where she finds what she's looking for:

A WALL PHONE. She frantically dials a number, then waits. The moment a VOICE picks up...

ENTHUSIASTIC ROTARIAN

Neil, darling! You absolutely need to hear this!

She extends the phone as far as it'll go, slipping through the gymnasium door so the receiver can catch the sounds of the performance...

BACK STAGE

Adam sits back, allowing Derek an opportunity to fly on his own. As Derek adds a few notes and flourishes of his own, Adam plays a chord progression to bring him back down to earth. Derek follows along perfectly.

Adam plays several notes a hair slower, just enough to signal a return to the opening tempo. Derek falls back into step, then erupts into a series of expansive chords that lead to the coda.



Adam hits one chord after the next, herding Derek to the end, preventing any unplanned repeats.

Derek holds the last fortissimo cluster of notes, waiting for Adam to lift his hands up first, then immediately PLONKS one final note with his left hand!

RAPTUROUS APPLAUSE!

Derek beams at the audience and bows. Adam joins him on stage and then escorts him off.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Mary Ann, Nanny, Libbet and Charles applaud proudly. Mary Ann lowers her hands first, a bit nervous about what could happen next.

BACK STAGE

The next performer, a BLIND VIOLINIST, is escorted out onto the stage. Adam monitors Derek, ready to pull him back if necessary. But Derek just listens patiently.

The Violinist plays a short, easy piece like *Over the Rainbow*. APPLAUSE.

Several other children perform, one playing a RECORDER and the other SINGING. APPLAUSE.

When the stage is clear, Miss Lingard takes the stage one last time.

MISS LINGARD

How wonderful. And now I'd like to  
invite our students back to perform  
together.

Adam leads Derek to the piano. The other students gather around. They perform a simple arrangement of *Here Comes The Sun* by The Beatles.

Backstage, Adam watches Derek like a hawk. But the boy is playing along splendidly with the other musicians.

Derek is in the zone. Focused on the peppy passages of the piano. His hands gliding across the keys.

But his focus is interrupted by the VIOLIN, which seems to be playing over him. Followed by the RECORDER. And then the SINGER. So many different NOISES, attacking from all sides, overwhelming his senses.

Adam helplessly notices Derek poking at his eyes with his left hand while continuing to play with the right...

Suddenly, Derek crescendoes, his hands aggressively pounding the keyboard.

The other musicians respond in kind, playing louder.

For Derek, it's a musical mutiny. So he takes control by playing the OTHER PARTS on the piano. First the violin. The Violinist struggles to play along but can't fight the power of the massive piano. He quickly stops playing.

SINGER

*Here comes the sun, here comes the  
suuu...*

Derek takes over the Singer's part, silencing her. Before Adam can even figure out what to do, Derek is playing the whole song by himself, the other musicians giving up. He's John, Paul, George and Ringo, all in one.

Derek performs the rest of the cheerful song on his own. The other musicians stand helplessly, unsure what to do.

And with one last chord, Derek finishes! He jumps up, waiting for the grand applause.

Soft CLAPS from the confused audience.

Mary Ann and Nanny sink in their seats.

INT. BACK STAGE - NIGHT

Embarrassed PARENTS collect their musician children, avoiding Adam and Derek like the plague. Teacher and student stand in awkward silence.

A humiliated Mary Ann weaves through the crowd, her head hung low, Nanny struggling to keep up.

Mary Ann reaches Adam and purposely avoids eye contact. Without a single word, she grabs her son and whisks him away.

Merely a moment passes...

ENTHUSIASTIC ROTARIAN

Mr. Ockelford!

ADAM

Yes...

ENTHUSIASTIC ROTARIAN  
It's wonderful. Most wonderful.  
Neil Richardson would like to  
feature Derek in an upcoming  
concert!

ADAM  
Neil Richardson? Of the Royal  
Philharmonic Pops?

ENTHUSIASTIC ROTARIAN  
Indeed!

ADAM  
He was here? Tonight?

ENTHUSIASTIC ROTARIAN  
Well not in person but he heard  
Derek's first piece and loved it!

As she babbles on more details, Adam searches the crowd for  
Mary Ann...

EXT. LINDEN LODGE - NIGHT

Adam catches up to Mary Ann and Nanny just as they're helping  
Libbet and Charles load Derek into the back seat of the  
Mercedes.

ADAM  
Mary Ann, if I may...

NANNY  
Come now, children. Quickly.

ADAM  
I have tremendous news: Derek has  
been invited to play with the Royal  
Philharmonic Pops Orchestra!

Confusion floods Mary Ann's face.

MARY ANN  
After what happened tonight? Why  
would they ever suggest that?

ADAM  
They see the same potential in  
Derek that we all do. They even  
proposed the last movement from  
Gershwin's Concerto in F, which I  
think is simply extraordinary...

MARY ANN

Aren't we getting a bit ahead of ourselves? He couldn't even play with other children in a simple social setting!

ADAM

I don't believe tonight was an issue of socialization.

MARY ANN

No? Then what was it?

ADAM

All those other instruments - he was overwhelmed and it became too much. So he drowned them all out.

MARY ANN

So what will he do when he's on stage with a hundred professional musicians and an audience of thousands?

ADAM

Perhaps we can work him up to it.

MARY ANN

Perhaps not. Derek shouldn't be subjected to any more public embarrassment.

ADAM

But what if this opportunity is something he wants?

MARY ANN

How can you know what he wants when he can't even express it himself?

ADAM

He lives for music. We all know that. He deserves this chance.

MARY ANN

He does or you do, Adam?

Adam is speechless.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

I can't see this performance working out. Now we must get going. Enjoy your summer holiday.

She SLAMS the door and the car drives away, leaving Adam alone in the dark parking lot.

INT. LINDEN LODGE FACULTY HOUSING - ADAM'S FLAT - EVENING

Adam droops over his piano, using only his right hand to plunk a few keys over and over again, repeating a bare bones JAZZY THEME.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBRARY - EVENING

An uninspired Derek also droops over his Welmar upright, noodling through some random passages and tunes.

INT. LINDEN LODGE - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Adam sits next to Kelly on the piano bench, in the middle of a lesson.

As Kelly plays, Adam stares into space, checked out.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBRARY - DAY

Derek is in the same position, still noodling in a dispassionate manner.

Nanny stands in the doorway, studying him. Noticing how disengaged he is.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Nanny peruses the classical section. The Record Store Clerk walks by and recognizes her.

RECORD STORE CLERK  
Ah, welcome back, ma'am. Sadly,  
our record selection is even  
smaller than it used to be.

Nanny selects a cassette from the display.

NANNY  
Thank you - this will do just fine.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - LIBRARY - DAY

Nanny checks the hallway to make sure Mary Ann is nowhere to be seen.

As Derek waits patiently at the piano, Nanny inserts the cassette into Derek's boombox, drapes headphones over the boy's ears and hits PLAY. Derek listens intently to the new music, his head swaying to the beat.

Within seconds, Derek's hands light up the keyboard, trying to keep up with the recording with a speedy volley of notes. His energy returning, he repeats the same JAZZY THEME Adam was just plunking in his flat.

Nanny sits on the couch, listening avidly.

Mary Ann walks by, hears Derek playing, and walks on.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mary Ann carries a glass of water to her room when she hears the piano. Derek is playing the same JAZZY THEME as before.

She passes the library and sees her son at the piano, repeatedly playing the piece. Why the obsession?

Mary Ann enters the LIBRARY and notices the open cassette case by the boombox.

The sleeve reads: GEORGE GERSHWIN - CONCERTO IN F.

Mary Ann studies Derek. He's enraptured by this music. Choosing to play it over and over again.

INT. LINDEN LODGE FACULTY HOUSING - ADAM'S FLAT - MORNING

Adam snoozes in his twin bed, surrounded by loose pages of music and half read books.

BUZZ, BUZZ. His eyes peel open. He gets his bearings, slowly rolls out of bed and hits the DOOR INTERCOM.

ADAM

Yes?

MARY ANN (FILTERED)

Good morning - it's Mary Ann. May I come up?

Adam's eyes widen as he quickly scans his flat, which is a total mess of dirty plates and glasses...

INT. ADAM'S STUDIO FLAT - FRONT DOOR - MORNING

A KNOCK on the door.

Adam hastily buttons a shirt, scrambling to tuck it into his pants as he ZIPS the zipper.

Still sockless, he awkwardly steps into shoes as he flings open the door, revealing a put together Mary Ann, wearing her weekend finest. She glances at Adam's disheveled state.

MARY ANN

Perhaps I can come back another time...

ADAM

No no. Please come in. Could I get you anything?

MARY ANN

Coffee would be fine, thank you.

Adam disappears behind a freestanding zigzag partition, ducking into his kitchenette.

Unsure where to sit, Mary Ann takes in the small flat. The piano is covered in stacks of disorganized music. A blanket has been hastily thrown over the tiny bed (books poking out at the edges).

Adam maneuvers through his kitchenette. It's a complete disaster area: the dirty plates and glasses have all been chaotically tossed in here.

In a serious panic, Adam flings open the drawers - all 2 of them. He only finds a half empty bag of crisps and a lone tea box.

ADAM

How about tea?

MARY ANN (O.S.)

Lovely.

Adam reaches for the tea box.

MARY ANN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What a... Cozy space.

ADAM

Thank you. It's nearly double the size of my last one!

Adam opens the tea box: there's only one bag inside...

THE SHRILL WHINE OF A TEA KETTLE

Adam pours one steaming cup of tea and sets it in on the piano, directly in front of Mary Ann.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Please. Do sit.

He drags over the piano bench, offering it to her. Mary Ann is puzzled by the one cup of tea.

MARY ANN  
None for you?

ADAM  
Oh no, I'm fine. I... Already had one.

He plops down on the edge of his bed.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
So - what can I do for you?

MARY ANN  
Well. I was thinking about our last conversation and, how do I put it... Is that concert you mentioned completely off the table?

INT. MERCEDES - DAY

Mary Ann sits up front next to the Driver, who navigates a busy London road.

In the back seat, Derek is sandwiched between Nanny and Adam. Nanny quietly hums *Molly Malone*, filling in the tense silence.

They drive towards a towering collection of buildings, built with concrete and glass in a brutalist architectural style. This is the BARBICAN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER.

As they near the entrance, they hear a BUZZING CROWD...

EXT. BARBICAN CONCERT HALL - DAY

A throng of REPORTERS swarm the Mercedes, snapping photos as Mary Ann and Adam struggle to climb out of the vehicle.

REPORTERS  
Mrs. Paravicini! Derek!

Nanny protectively waits with Derek inside the car, sheltering him from this swirling madness.



RADIO REPORTER

Mr. Ockelford! It must be so exciting to have your student perform with a professional orchestra for the first time.

ADAM

It's truly a wonderful opportunity. But first he needs to rehearse!

He opens the door for Derek, guarding him against the mob of Reporters. Derek whips his head left and right, overwhelmed by the chaotic noise.

TV REPORTER

Mrs. Paravicini, how is your son responding to all this?

MARY ANN

Derek will be just fine, thank you.

TV REPORTER

But is it right to put him into such a new, pressure-filled situation?

MARY ANN

He is a very capable and resilient little boy.

TV REPORTER

So no one is concerned about his... condition?

MARY ANN

You are welcome to come and see for yourself. You would also be contributing to our Fight for Sight charity, which we would all very much appreciate.

More Reporters surround Mary Ann. She frantically searches for Nanny, who won't stand for any more nonsense.

NANNY

Make room, make room! No time for dilly dallying!

She erupts from the car and pushes her way through the crowd like a steamroller, all 5 feet of her shielding and pulling a confused Derek into the building.

INT. BARBICAN CONCERT HALL - GREEN ROOM - DAY

An ORCHESTRA AIDE flips on the light in a spacious green room, where two upright pianos have been placed back to back.

ORCHESTRA AIDE  
Here we are, Mr. Ockelford. Just  
as you requested.

ADAM  
Thank you.

DEREK  
Hello, I'm Derek!

He extends his hand into the air, aiming in the direction of the Aide's voice.

ORCHESTRA AIDE  
Oh. Hello.

She quickly shakes Derek's hand and hurries out.

Adam plops Derek onto a piano stool.

ADAM  
Ok, Derek. G minor scale please.

Derek plays a slow, steady scale. The rich sounds from the piano are absorbed by the sound proofed walls.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Excellent. F Major.

Derek effortlessly executes the scale.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Wonderful. Now - just like we  
practiced. Stick to your part.  
And no twiddly bits.

DEREK  
No twiddly bits, Adam.

Adam sits down at the other piano. Without another moment's notice, he bursts into an energetic ACCOMPANIMENT, starting the last movement of the Gershwin Concerto in F.

Mary Ann and Nanny watch Derek, who waits patiently, not interrupting Adam's part. Adam crescendoes, the 20 second introduction coming to an end...

And Derek is off, the rapid SOLO flying out of his fingers. He's incredibly focused on his solo part and allows Adam to play the accompaniment in the background, the two parts coexisting harmoniously.

Adam meets eyes with Mary Ann - both are pleased that Derek is under control.

INT. BARBICAN CONCERT HALL - DAY

Derek grips Adam's hand as he's led into the actual hall. Soft house lights illuminate a sprawling auditorium of warm wood that can seat nearly 2000. But today the hall is empty.

Except for the stage...

Derek is overwhelmed as he hears a sea of MUSICIANS warming up: a FRENCH HORN testing out a note. A FLUTE practicing a melody. STRINGS bowing nimble passages. The sudden taps of a TIMPANI.

All 70 members of the ROYAL PHILHARMONIC POPS ORCHESTRA are there, ready for rehearsal.

Derek shakes with nervous excitement, thrilled yet puzzled by the literal symphony of sounds that surrounds him.

Adam and Derek are greeted by the sophisticated conductor, NEIL RICHARDSON.

NEIL

So wonderful to see you both.

ADAM

And you, Mr. Richardson. Thank you for having us.

DEREK

Hello, I'm Derek!

He extends his hand into the air. Neil shakes his hand.

NEIL

Very good, Derek. It's great to meet you.

DEREK

And you, Mr. Richardson.

Neil leads them to the middle of the stage, to a majestic STEINWAY CONCERT GRAND PIANO, a 9 foot colossus that is the ultimate weapon of a concert pianist.

NEIL

Shall we?

Adam gently places Derek on the comfortable, cushioned piano bench. Derek's entire body trembles as he struggles to process what is happening around him.

Neil TAPS his stand with the baton and the orchestra instantly quiets down, the warm-ups shifting to silence.

ADAM

Ok, Derek. Just like we practiced.

Derek anxiously reaches forward and feels the perfect, shimmering keys of the piano. His head continuously swivels, hearing every BREATH and CHAIR SHIFT and sound from the orchestral musicians. He feels the hot lights bearing down on him.

Confused and disoriented, Derek launches right into the piano solo. Before the orchestra can even start playing.

BACKSTAGE: Mary Ann and Nanny can barely watch.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Derek...

He taps the boy on the shoulder, stopping the playing. Derek pokes at his eyes uncomfortably.

NEIL

It's quite alright. Whenever he is ready.

Adam holds Derek back, pulling him away from the keyboard. Once Derek has settled down, Adam nods at Neil.

The conductor raises his arms. The orchestra members raise their instruments.

And with one WHOOSH of the baton, they're off! Playing the 20 second orchestral introduction before the soloist's entrance.

It's an amazing experience being there - right in the middle of an entire symphony orchestra, all the instruments playing simultaneously in sync, glued to the conductor's movements.

And nobody is more amazed than Derek, who hears every individual instrument, each melody and harmony and beat, coming from every direction. He can hardly breathe, the experience beyond overwhelming.

Adam taps Derek on the shoulder - they're almost at the point of his solo entrance...

But Derek is so enamored by the surrounding sounds that he stays frozen, entirely missing his entrance!

Neil stops the orchestra. Smiles politely at Adam.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Again from the top?

ADAM  
How about a few bars before his entrance.

NEIL  
Very good.

ADAM  
Ok, Derek. Let's remember when to come in now.

Neil conducts and the orchestra plays again. Neil watches Derek expectantly as they near his entrance...

Derek snaps out of his funk and explodes onto the keyboard! His fingers flying into the energetic solo.

Orchestra musicians exchange understanding looks with one another, impressed by this small boy's skill.

Derek dances across the keyboard, in the zone with this booming new piano, but he can't quite escape all the interrupting orchestral sounds. A short FLUTE passage. A riff from the VIOLINS. A descending XYLOPHONE scale...

Very quickly, each surrounding sound becomes overwhelming and Derek's hands start flying across the keyboard even faster, playing his part as well as the accompaniment.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
No, Derek, stick to your part...

Neil glances back at Derek, wondering what the hell he's doing.

Growing even more excited, Derek completely forgets his solo part and plays along with the orchestra. Matching a passage in the LOWER STRINGS. Then the WOODWINDS. Abandoning his part. Even adding his own improvisations to the mix.

Neil stops the orchestra and Adam takes a deep long breath.

INT. BARBICAN CONCERT HALL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

As Adam walks Derek offstage, Mary Ann takes her son.

MARY ANN  
Perhaps we should call off the  
whole thing.

ADAM  
It may be too late for that.

MARY ANN  
He isn't ready...

NANNY  
Come now, Bumpy.

Nanny takes Derek by the hand and leads him away so he  
doesn't hear the rest of this.

MARY ANN  
What if he reacts that way in front  
of the audience? He likely won't  
perform ever again.

ADAM  
I know.

Adam studies Derek, who is completely oblivious to the  
worries of his mother.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Just give me a minute.

Adam head back out to the stage. He speaks to Neil on the  
podium, animatedly pointing to the two microphones hanging  
above the orchestra...

INT. LINDEN LODGE - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

A JANITOR mops the floors in the quiet, abandoned gym.

Derek sits patiently on the piano bench as Adam finishes  
setting up 4 LARGE SPEAKERS, arranged in a semi-circle around  
the baby grand - a surround sound setup.

Adam connects the speakers to a receiver and cassette player.  
He pulls out a padded envelope from Neil Richardson. Inside  
is a tape with a hand written label on it.

ADAM  
Ok Derek. Time to perform.

DEREK

Yes, Adam.

Adam pops the cassette into the player. CLICKS play.

BOOM! Derek nearly flies off the bench as the 4 speakers explode with sound: it's a recording of the Royal Pops playing the Gershwin orchestral part.

Adam has created a setup that imitates the experience of playing with the live orchestra. Derek shakes with nervous excitement as the tremendous sound washes over him. Unable to restrain himself, he plays along with the accompaniment.

Adam hits STOP. The music grinds to a halt.

ADAM

No Derek.

He REWINDS the tape.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Just your part...

PLAY. He starts the recording from the beginning again.

This time, Derek sits at the edge of his seat, barely restraining himself. And then he jumps in at the right time with his solo. So far so good...

Adam slowly cranks up the volume, the speakers overpowering Derek's solo. Derek can barely hear his own playing, surrounded by a deafening noise of strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion, blasting at him from all 4 speakers.

Within moments, Derek's hands shift and he breaks out of his solo, playing along with the accompaniment.

STOP. REWIND.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Focus on the solo, Derek.

Derek BANGS the keyboard in frustration. Adam crosses his arms, waiting patiently, not responding to Derek's behavior. After a moment, the boy settles down.

PLAY - the recording starts over from the beginning.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Focus...

Derek plays his solo.

The speakers blast in his ears.

Derek plays his solo part, then can't help himself from playing the orchestra accompaniment and improvising over the top.

STOP. REWIND. PLAY.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Your part. And no twiddly bits.

The Janitor watches this whole exchange, a bit confused.

EXT. NANNY'S FLAT - NIGHT

A row of terraced houses.

Adam's Triumph Vitesse clunks to a stop in front of Nanny's residence.

Derek is practically falling asleep in the front seat.

Nanny rushes outside to greet them. Adam quickly hops out and opens Derek's door.

ADAM  
So sorry we're later than expected.

NANNY  
Quite alright.

Adam helps an exhausted Derek out of the car.

ADAM  
It's just, he was making such remarkable progress and...

NANNY  
Adam. It's alright. Truly.

She puts her hand on Adam's shoulder, comforting. Then gently takes Derek.

NANNY (CONT'D)  
Thank you for everything. Derek very much appreciates it - as do I. Now get some rest. Tomorrow is a big day.

As she leads Derek inside, Adam takes in the moment. Moved by this warm exchange.



INT. ADAM'S STUDIO FLAT - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Adam lies in his bed, staring at the ceiling. Too many worries spinning through his mind.

INT. NORTH LODGE FARM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Mary Ann tosses and turns in bed, unable to fall asleep.

INT. NANNY'S FLAT - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Derek fidgets in bed, an excited smile on his face. He wears his headphones, the faint sounds of the GERSHWIN RECORDING spilling out from his ears.

In the other room, Nanny SNORES.

INT. BARBICAN CONCERT HALL - GREEN ROOM - DAY

A concert dressed Adam sits at one of the pianos, waiting patiently. He studies the cover of the concert program: the event is called BLUES TO BROADWAY and Derek has star billing. The date is JULY 18th, 1988.

Mary Ann paces back and forth, the most anxious person in the room.

Nanny tucks Derek's lustrous white silk shirt into his shiny black trousers. She slips a new cummerbund around his waist and quickly fastens it in back with safety pins.

NANNY

Isn't that comfy now.

DEREK

Yes, Nanny.

Derek rocks in place, visibly excited. He continuously turns towards the door, listening to the commotion of VOICES outside.

Suddenly, the door bursts open, revealing a CROWD OF REPORTERS. They immediately YELL for Derek, who quickly retreats behind Nanny.

A PHOTOGRAPHER pushes his way into the green room, raising a camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER

If I may, please! Just a quick shot for the Telegraph.

Before anyone can stop him, SNAP! A flash blinds all of them (except Derek of course).

Nanny shoos the Photographer out of the room and SLAMS the door.

NANNY

It appears our Bumpy is quite the sensation.

KNOCK KNOCK!

NANNY (CONT'D)

Please go away! Derek is warming up!

The door CREAKS open, revealing Nic, Libbet and Charles.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Oh! Hello Mr. Paravicini.

NIC

Nanny. Adam. Mary Ann.

MARY ANN

Nic. Thank you for bringing the children.

They're perfectly polite with one another.

Libbet and Charles run up and hug Derek dearly. Nic gently pats Derek on the back.

NIC

Best of luck, Derek.

NANNY

What do you say?

DEREK

Thank you, Daddy.

Nic smiles politely and walks out with the two children.

Nanny adjusts Derek's recently trimmed hair.

NANNY

There we are, Bumpy. Very handsome.

She inspects Derek one last time. He's ready.

NANNY (CONT'D)

Come now, Mary Ann. It's time we  
took our seats. It's all up to  
Bumpy and Adam now.

MARY ANN

Yes. Very good.

She gives Derek the biggest hug of her life, pecks him on the  
cheek and rushes out with Nanny, who clears a path through  
the lurking reporters before shutting the door behind them.

ADAM

Well then, Derek. How about we  
start with a slow g minor scale...

INT. BARBICAN CONCERT HALL - BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Adam slowly walks Derek through the darkness, nearing the  
stage. One tall, one small, silhouetted by the blinding  
lights out in the auditorium.

They wait in the wings - Adam sees waves of movement rippling  
on the orchestra-filled stage and in the audience-packed  
hall: it's a full house.

Derek shakes with nervous anticipation, his head darting back  
and forth with every VOICE, MURMUR and MOVEMENT emanating  
from the awaiting audience.

A tuxedo-clad COMPÈRE touches Adam and Derek on the  
shoulders.

COMPÈRE

Almost showtime, gentlemen.

Adam can barely hold Derek still. The boy anticipating a  
thrill of a lifetime...

As the Compère steps out onto the stage to take the mic, the  
house lights dim. Darker and darker as Derek listens in, all  
light fading away...

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

COMPÈRE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And now, ladies and gentlemen. I  
would like to introduce you to a  
truly remarkable young man...

Derek's RAPID BREATHS.

Adam CLEARING HIS THROAT.

COMPÈRE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Playing tonight for the very first  
time with an orchestra. Please  
welcome Derek Paravicini.

A WAVE OF APPLAUSE ERUPTS in the distance.

ADAM (O.S.)  
Here we go, Derek...

And then CHILD FOOTSTEPS next to ADULT ONES, walking out onto the stage.

The applause grows DEAFENING as they exit the wings.

TAP TAP TAP: there's a repetitive sound coming from all directions...

INT. BARBICAN CONCERT HALL - SAME

Adam leads Derek between the first and second violin sections, the violinists all TAPPING their metal music stands with their wooden bows.

The same height as the seated musicians, the little boy practically skips along with Adam.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Mary Ann and Nanny anxiously CLAP, watching as their little Derek's blond hair moves past the seated violinists, nearing the glimmering grand piano that awaits him. Derek looks absurdly small and vulnerable on the packed stage.

Elsewhere, Nic sits with Libbet and Charles, APPLAUDING with tremendous pride.

In fact, numerous people from Derek's life are all there for this monumental event: Headmistress Brumm, Miss Lingard, the piano donating Official, the Doctor that delivered Derek, Sister Walker, the Enthusiastic Rotarian, Mr. Sutton the tuner, and even Linden Lodge students like Andrew and Kelly.

ON STAGE

Neil, standing on the podium and dressed in tails, awaits Adam and Derek, a noble, welcoming expression on his face.

Adam lifts little Derek onto the piano bench, plopping the boy on the cushioned seat, positioning him the perfect distance away from the instrument.

The applause dies down.

ADAM

Ok, Derek. I have to go backstage now. Just remember: focus. It's all up to you.

It pains him to leave Derek but he has no choice.

The teacher departs. Leaving the student all alone.

Derek listens to Adam's FOOTSTEPS disappearing into the distance.

Adam peers out from the backstage darkness. The stage is still - the calm before the storm.

Mary Ann fiddles with the program on her lap. Nanny uses her program to fan herself. Both women equally nervous.

Ever so slightly, Neil TAPS his conductor's stand with his baton. Just loud enough for Derek to hear and turn his head. Signaling that they're about to start.

All the musicians raise their instruments...

Mary Ann shifts in her seat. Unable to contain her nerves.

And with a quick wave of the baton...

THE ORCHESTRA IS OFF, playing the 20 second introduction before Derek is supposed to come in.

IN THE AUDIENCE, Mary Ann's eyes remain glued to Derek. Her little baby boy. Wondering what he'll do.

Derek's hands move inexorably up towards his eyes. Mary Ann suppresses the impulse to scream.

BACKSTAGE, Adam watches Derek touching his eyes. Adam rubs his beard anxiously, helpless to do anything.

As the orchestra nears Derek's solo entry point, Neil glances over his shoulder to see if Derek is readying himself. The boy lowers his hands to his sides...

IN THE AUDIENCE, Mary Ann breaths a sigh of relief, then realizes that Derek hasn't even felt for the piano yet. How does he know where the keys are?? She closes her eyes, unable to look.

BACKSTAGE, Adam notices Derek rocking back and forth. Is he going to come in on time or not? Adam closes his eyes, unable to look either.

IN THE AUDIENCE:

Nanny, meanwhile, lovingly watches her little Bumpy. Maybe it's through blind faith in God or in the boy, but she has a little smile on her face, at peace with whatever is about to happen.

Neil nervously glances at Derek's hands, which haven't at all moved towards the keyboard.

Nanny is the only one that notices Derek finally feeling the piano pedals. Orienting himself perfectly with the keyboard.

And at the very last moment...

Derek reaches forward and brings his hands down perfectly on the correct keys, launching into his SOLO!

Mary Ann's eyes shoot open! As do Adam's! Locked in on Derek, who is completely in the zone.

Neil relaxes, letting the baton flow as he follows his bold little soloist.

As the piano notes join with the orchestra, Derek's face breaks into the broadest, most radiant smile any of them have ever seen.

Neil cautiously brings in different instruments: the trumpets, the clarinets, the violins... All their sounds attacking Derek from every direction.

BACKSTAGE: Adam pays close attention, studying Derek's every last movement to see how he'll react.

Derek soaks in those sounds, listening to every last melody and harmony. A seemingly overwhelming cacophony of different sounds. But this time, the presence of the other instruments only increase Derek's focus...

He lasers in on the piano... His fingers STRIKING the keys. The hammers HITTING the strings. The gorgeous Steinway sound BOUNCING off the propped up lid and erupting into the audience.

BACKSTAGE: Adam practically rocks back and forth himself, riveted by Derek's performance.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Mary Ann can't help but grab Nanny's hand, steadying herself.

Freeing himself from the shackles of his disabilities, Derek engages with the orchestra in a mature, witty and joyous conversation in sound.

The musicians are having the time of their lives, performing passionately in sync as one giant, coordinated instrument.

And before anyone can even breathe, Derek leaps into the energetic CODA of the piece, his fingers flying across the keyboard, faster and faster. Neil accelerates his baton movements, trying to keep up with this brilliant soloist.

But Derek isn't a runaway train. He's guiding the music. Moving the sound exactly how he wants to. Somehow imposing his will on this most complex of social situations, gripping the audience with his powerful musical communication.

Every last person in the Barbican sits at the edge of their seat as Derek explodes into the ending cadence...

And before the FINAL NOTE stops echoing in the hall...

The APPLAUSE hits Derek like a clap of thunder, lifting him off his feet.

Mary Ann and Nanny simultaneously leap out of their chairs. Mary Ann struggling to applaud and wipe tears from her eyes at the same time. Nanny blinks extra deeply, forcing her own tears back inside - because Nannies don't cry.

Nic, Libbet and Charles jump to their feet, followed by the entire audience: Derek's family, friends and strangers alike, rejoining at this brilliant, moving performance.

BACKSTAGE: Adam finally exhales. He watches Derek proudly, this little boy who is physically shaking with excitement, laughing and applauding himself.

Neil gestures backstage, inviting Adam to join them. Adam shyly comes forward, putting his arm around Derek.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Well done, Derek. Very well done.

He helps the boy take a bow against the endless sea of standing, applauding audience members.

But the applause doesn't stop. It only GROWS. Adam glances at Neil, who nods and gestures to the piano. Adam puts his hand on Derek's shoulder.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I think they'd like you to play an encore...

Derek cocks his head slightly, trying to understand what Adam is saying.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Can you play something else for  
them, Derek?

Derek nods slowly as Adam's words sink in. He feels for his piano bench, sits down, then moves to the side, glancing back at Adam. An invitation.

Adam takes a seat next to his student. The applause dies down.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
You get to choose, Derek. Anything  
you'd like.

Derek soaks this in. Weighing these unfamiliar instructions. He remains still, his face impossible to read as the whole hall waits for him.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Mary Ann and Nanny wait with great anticipation.

ON STAGE: Derek fidgets with his hands, his brain processing.

DEREK  
Anything I'd like...

Slowly, he reaches for the keyboard. Finally making his choice - a seemingly trivial act but a monumental leap for someone like Derek.

2000 people wait in complete silence.

Derek plays a soft, nearly imperceptible CHORD. Then another. His hands slowly flowing across the white and black keys, the notes crystalline like rain drops.

A simple, lovely MELODY.

Mary Ann inches forward in her seat, the music sounding familiar...

Adam leans back as he understands...

And that's when Nanny's tears come - she really can't stop them now. For Derek is playing *Molly Malone*. The piece of music she always sang to him.

Derek is reaching as far back into his musical memory as he can remember. Playing the very first song he ever heard, when he arrived at North Lodge Farm for the first time nearly 9 years ago.

And there's not a dry eye in the hall.



And as Derek makes the piece his, elaborating with beautiful improvisations, transforming this version of *Molly Malone* into something truly transcendent...

FADE TO:

FOOTAGE OF THE REAL DEREK PARAVICINI:

Playing at the Barbican with the Royal Philharmonic Pops Orchestra.

Playing for his family at North Lodge Farm.

Studying piano with Adam at Linden Lodge.

Growing over the years into the Derek of today, a brilliant performer who has played for countless audiences all around the world.

FADE OUT.

(turn)

















