

THE BIGGER SLEEP

by

Mikey Jackson

Short audio play

Characters: (in order of appearance)

DAVE (timid man, too soft for his own good)

MUM (quite the opposite, overbearing)

DOCTOR (well-spoken, male)

SANDRA (Dave's girlfriend)

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ATMOS: INT. HOSPITAL WARD.

F/X: CONSTANT BEEP BEEP OF A HEART MONITOR.

DAVE: (V.O.) The doctor reckons I've been unconscious for two weeks now. Have I missed much? Mum reckons I have.

MUM: Wake up, Dave. You're missing loads of good TV.

DAVE: (V.O.) Funny old things, these comas. They say your body totally shuts down, and that you can't actually do anything. But I've been able to think. And I-

F/X: WE'RE SUDDENLY MET BY THE ROARING DRONE OF AN INDUSTRIAL VACUUM CLEANER.

DAVE: (V.O.) (LOUDER VOICE OVER THE DIN) Oh, God, it would be such a relief to get away from that damn cleaning lady every single morning with her 1000 decibel vacuum cleaner!

F/X: AS IF ON CUE, THE VACUUM CLEANER DIES.

DAVE: (V.O.) Oh, thank goodness for that. With any luck, a fuse has blown. -- Now, as you've probably gathered, I can hear things in this hospital ward. Not all the time though. Little snippets every now and then. Mostly the times when Mum bangs on about her stupid sherbet lemons.

MUM: I do love my sherbet lemons. They're my favourite sweeties.

DAVE: (V.O.) That's the reason why I'm in this sorry state. Mum sent me to the convenience store round the corner to buy her a bag. You see, she had the urge. When she gets the urge, sherbet lemons are more important to her than oxygen.

MUM: Don't you worry about failing to get me my bag of sweets, Dave, my dear. You just concentrate on getting better.

DAVE: (V.O.) Awww, that's nice of her to say. Really cheered me up, that has.

MUM: (THEN, SARCASTIC) Rita at Number 12 was kind enough to finish what you started.

DAVE: (V.O.) Oh, for...! It's not like I planned to end up practically braindead in a hospital ward.

MUM: Ooh, look at the time. Visiting hours are up.

DAVE: (V.O.) And not a moment too soon either.

MUM: See you tomorrow, dear.

DAVE: (V.O.) Not if I see you first. Huh, which I suppose is a ridiculous statement for somebody in a coma. I can't avoid anybody in this vegetative state. I mean, it's not as if I can hide behind the proverbial sofa when unwelcome relations come a-knocking. No, I must resign myself to the deathly nightmare of being one hundred per cent stuck here. (A SIGH) I remember overhearing the doctor briefing Mum on the day of my hospital admission.

DOCTOR: I'm afraid your son has been knocked over by a car.

DAVE: (V.O.) Yeah, tell me about it. Came out of nowhere, it did.

F/X: END HEART MONITOR BEEPS.

ATMOS: EXT. BUSY STREET.

DAVE: (V.O.) Actually, that's not entirely true. The car was always there. I just didn't bother to look when I stepped out into the road.

F/X: A CAR HORN, A GOD-ALMIGHTY SCREECH OF TYRES, A DULL THUD.

ATMOS: INT. HOSPITAL WARD.

F/X: BEEP BEEP OF THE MONITOR AGAIN.

DAVE: (V.O.) What I can't understand is why I was crossing the road in the first place. The convenience store is on our side of the street.

DOCTOR: It does help if you keep talking to him.

DAVE: (V.O.) Oh, Doc, don't encourage the woman. You're supposed to be on my side.

MUM: Ooh, goody, I've got shedloads of gossip to get off my chest.

DAVE: (V.O.) (GROANS) Too late. Old motor-mouth has started. Makes me wonder why I still live with Mum. I'm thirty years of age, for pity's sake. By now, I should be leading my own life. A loving wife, a dog that poops on the lawn, two point something children, a family home with negative equity. Mind you, two weeks ago, I did actually start the ball rolling. I spoke to my other half Sandra about tying the knot.

F/X: END HEART MONITOR BEEPS.

ATMOS: INT. LOUNGE.

**F/X: THE TV BLASTS OUT, BUT IS SHUT OFF
ABRUPTLY BY A REMOTE CONTROL.**

SANDRA: Oh, Dave, I was watching that.

DAVE: I've got something important to ask you.
(CLEARS THROAT) Darling. Sugarplum.
Honeybunch. Will you marry me?

SANDRA: Um. Don't you think it's a bit... sudden?

DAVE: Sudden? We've been going out together for quite some time now.

SANDRA: I'm not sure, Dave. Marriage is such a big step. I honestly don't think I'm ready for that kind of commitment.

DAVE: We're not getting any younger, babe.

SANDRA: Look, tell you what, I'll think about it, okay?

DAVE: Great. Sounds good to me.

SANDRA: No promises, mind.

DAVE: Okay. No promises.

ATMOS: INT. HOSPITAL WARD.

F/X: BEEP BEEP OF THE MONITOR AGAIN.

DAVE: (V.O.) Oh, that reminds me. Sandra hasn't visited me yet. I wonder wh-

**F/X: AGAIN, THE VACUUM CLEANER BURSTS INTO
LIFE. AND OVER THE NOISE -**

DAVE: (V.O.) (LOUDER) Oh, for...! Doesn't that cleaner ever have a day off?

F/X: THE VACUUM CLEANER STOPS ABRUPTLY.

MUM: Morning, dear. I've brought you some grapes.

DAVE: (V.O.) (SARCASTIC) Oh, great idea for somebody in a coma.

F/X: APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS.

DOCTOR: Ah. How is our coma patient today?

DAVE: (V.O.) I'm bored to tears, Doc, but I can't tell you that, can I? For some strange reason, my mouth isn't working at the moment.

DOCTOR: Hmm. Pupils are still fixed.

DAVE: (V.O.) Does he really need to keep shining that little torch thing in my eyes?

DOCTOR: No signs of any improvement at all.

DAVE: (V.O.) Give me a chance, Doc, it was a big car I lost that argument with.

MUM: Hey, Dave. I know you can't hear me...

DAVE: (V.O.) Then why bother saying anything?

MUM: ...but you'll never guess who I saw on the way here. Sandra, your ex-girlfriend.

DAVE: (V.O.) (HAPPY) Ooh. Sandra. Hey, maybe she's coming to visit. (THEN EH?) Oh, wait a minute. What did Mum mean by ex-girlfriend?

MUM: She was with your best mate Andy. Had his arm around her, he did.

DAVE: (V.O.) He had his what around her?

MUM: I guess he was trying to console the poor lass. Aw, he's such a thoughtful chap. Mind you, that kiss he gave her was a bit too "how's your father" for my liking. It was like... like they were boyfriend and girlfriend.

DAVE: (V.O) Oh, God. Now I remember what happened. It all started with that phone call from Sandra.

F/X: END HEART MONITOR.

ATMOS: INT. LOUNGE.

**F/X: A MOBILE PHONE SHRILLS FOR ATTENTION.
THEN THE BEEP OF THE CALL BEING TAKEN.**

DAVE: (INTO PHONE) Hello?

SANDRA: (D) Hi, Dave, it's Sandra. I've considered your proposal of marriage very carefully. And now I've reached a decision. The answer is... it's over between us. Byeeeeee.

DAVE: What?

**F/X: THE BEEP OF THE MOBILE PHONE CALL
HURRIEDLY TERMINATED AT HER END.**

DAVE: Hello? Hello? Oh, damn, she's hung up on me!

MUM: Oi, you! Watch your language.

DAVE: It wasn't anything bad, Mum. Just the D-word.

MUM: Yes, but that's where the problems start. You think you're in control, spouting out the soft phrases, and next thing you know, you're hooked on all the hard stuff.

DAVE: Oh, spare me the lecture, Mum, I'm not a child anymore, I'm thirty years old. And besides, I've got far more important things to worry about. Sandra's just dumped me.

MUM: I knew that floozy was no good for you. Her eyes, they were too close together for my liking.

DAVE: There's nothing wrong with her eyes.

MUM: Don't you start getting obsessed about that girl.

DAVE: I'm not.

MUM: Glad to hear it. Now, there's no use in you moping around the house all day with suicidal tendencies. I need you to pop down the shop for me. I've got the urge.

DAVE: Okay, fine, I'll get my coat.

ATMOS: EXT. BUSY STREET.

DAVE: (V.O.) I was on my way to the convenience store to buy Mum her sherbet lemons when I had the shock of my life. I spotted Sandra on the other side of the road... holding hands with my best mate Andy... and kissing him... with tongues. She never kissed me with tongues.

DAVE: (CALLING) Oi! Sandra! What do you think you're doing?

SANDRA: (FAR) Go away, Dave. I told you, it's over.

DAVE: Andy, you backstabber! How could you do this to me? You're supposed to be my best mate! Just you wait until I get across that road!

F/X: DAVE'S HURRIED FOOTSTEPS UPON TARMAC.

SANDRA: (FAR) Dave, look out!

F/X: CAR HORN, TYRE SCREECH, DULL THUD.

ATMOS: INT. HOSPITAL WARD.

F/X: THE BEEP BEEP MONITOR.

DAVE: And of course, the rest is history. One big game of winners and losers. In one fell swoop, I've lost the love of my life and my best mate. Meanwhile, Sandra has won herself a new boyfriend with the added bonus of kissing with tongues. And Mum, well, she's happy as Larry with her bag of sherbet lemons, courtesy of Rita at Number 12.

MUM: Ooh, I do love my sherbet lemons.

F/X: ROAR! IT'S THAT VACUUM CLEANER AGAIN.

DAVE: (V.O.) (LOUDER) Oh, please go away! I'm all in favour of cleaner hospitals, but this is ridiculous! Can't you see I'm trying to be morbidly comatose?

F/X: AND THE VACUUM'S GONE AGAIN.

DAVE: Ahhhhh. Silence.

MUM: Morning, dear, it's your Mum again.

DAVE: (A GROAN) A silence that is now well and truly broken.

MUM: I've brought you some more grapes. Oh. You haven't eaten the last lot yet.

DAVE: (V.O.) (SARCASTIC) Oh, I do apologise, Mother dearest. It's just that, being stuck in this coma, I can't exactly do things for myself. The nurse, bless her, she tries her best, but the poor lass finds it extremely difficult to push the grapes one by one down my intravenous drip.

DOCTOR: Good morning. How's my favourite patient today?

DAVE: (V.O.) Favourite patient? Yeah, right, I bet he says that to all his customers. Now, where was I? Ah, yes. I've come to the conclusion that Sandra's not worth it after all. In fact, Andy's welcome to the two-timing so and so. Therefore, now that I've woken up to the truth, it's high time my body did the same.

The Bigger Sleep by Mikey Jackson

MUM: Ooh, Doctor, look! My son is opening his eyes!

DOCTOR: Excellent. I wonder what his first words will be.

F/X: THE DREADED VACUUM CLEANER RETURNS.

DAVE: Oh, shut up!!!

F/X: AND THE VACUUM CLEANER COUGHS AND SPLUTTERS TO NOTHING, DYING WHAT APPEARS TO BE A HORRIBLE DEATH.

END