

ASHES 2019  
THE MOVIE

a screenplay by

Dan Liebke

based on the cricket series by Tim Paine, Joe Root, et al

1 August 2019

Made in Highland

**FADE IN**

**EXT. EDGBASTON, DAY 1**

JOE ROOT, the England captain, late 20s, blue-eyed and baby-faced, tosses a COIN in the air. His counterpart, TIM PAINE, mid-30s, a man who has never seen a hand he doesn't want to shake, calls.

TIM PAINE  
As Winston Churchill once said,  
'Heads'!

CUT TO:

The COIN landing on the ground. It is a HEAD!

TIM PAINE  
We'll have a bat.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE of early wickets falling as Kenny Loggins' 'Danger Zone' plays. STUART BROAD, early 30s, tall, funny, the kind of bowler who loves to not pitch it up, is PITCHING IT UP, and being rewarded with wickets.

UMPIRE WILSON and UMPIRE DAR, meanwhile, comically shake their heads at obvious wickets and raise their respective fingers for shouts that are definitely not out. At the end of a CHRIS WOAKES over, they bump into one another and fall down.

Eventually, TIM PAINE joins STEVE SMITH, 30, eccentric, fidgety, the best batsman in the world but doesn't know it, at the crease.

TIM PAINE  
(waving to crowd)  
Hello... (checks notes) Edgbaston!  
I've just arrived at the crease  
and boy, I gotta say... (pauses for  
effect) you guys really ARE one  
of the most intimidating grounds  
in the world.

The EDGBASTON CROWD whoops with delight, temporarily forgetting to wave their HILARIOUS SANDPAPER.

TIM PAINE immediately pulls a short ball from STUART BROAD into the outfield where he is CAUGHT.

TIM PAINE  
Gotta go!

He waves to the crowd as he leaves. He has won them over with his OUTSTANDING SHOWMANSHIP.

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CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP of STEVE SMITH

STEVE SMITH  
(glowering)  
Fine. I'll do it myself.

The soundtrack swells as we watch STEVE SMITH in slow motion, touching every part of his body. This is part of his PROCESS. By the time he has finished, JAMES PATTINSON and PAT CUMMINS are both out.

STEVE SMITH  
(unperturbed)  
You. Siddle. Stay with me.

PETER SIDDLE  
(not eating a banana)  
You got it, Skip.

STEVE SMITH  
I'm not the skipper any more, Siddle.

PETER SIDDLE  
If you say so, Skip.

EDGBASTON CROWD  
Boooooooo!

CUT TO:

**EXT. EDGBASTON, DAY 2**

JAMES PATTINSON, late 20s, tall, mean, tattooed but doesn't know it, charges in to bowl at JOE ROOT. There is the sound of leather striking wood as the ball passes JOE ROOT's defensive stroke and lands in TIM PAINE's gloves. The Australians appeal.

UMPIRE DAR immediately raises his finger, which is the surest possible sign that JOE ROOT is not out, and he therefore REVIEWS THE DECISION.

CUT TO:

**INT. THIRD UMPIRE'S BOX**

The THIRD UMPIRE looks at the video footage of the dismissal. It turns out that instead of JOE ROOT being out, caught behind, he is instead bowled, but not out, because the bail wasn't dislodged.

THIRD UMPIRE  
(mutters)  
You've got to be f'en kidding me.

CUT TO:

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**EXT. EDGBASTON**

UMPIRE DAR receives word of what's happened.

UMPIRE DAR  
You're got to be f'en kidding me.

He reverses the decision. JOE ROOT is not out.

JAMES PATTINSON  
You've got to be f'en kidding me.

JAMES PATTINSON tests the weight of the bails as JOE ROOT deliberately smiles like an angel at him.

JOE ROOT  
(whispers)  
You can't dismiss me, James. I'm  
Joe Root, the England captain,  
Lord of All I Survey, Root 666,  
the Prince of Darkness. And I.  
am. invincible.

He is dismissed shortly after by PETER SIDDLE.

CUT TO:

**INT. AUSTRALIAN DRESSING ROOM, TEA**

The Australian coach JUSTIN LANGER, late 40s, intense with piercing eyes and nonsensical mantras, leads the team in a TAI CHI SESSION.

JUSTIN LANGER  
Okay, everybody. I've just been  
speaking to Tubby. Channel Nine  
are pretty annoyed that all the  
best Australian action took place  
last night after everybody back  
home went to bed. Looking at you,  
Smudge.

STEVE SMITH shadow-bats sheepishly.

TIM PAINE  
What are we supposed to do, then?  
Not take any wickets in this  
final session?

JUSTIN LANGER  
No. You can take one or two. Just  
don't get carried away. Bowl  
Wadey for a while.

TIM PAINE  
Can we dismiss Rory Burns yet?

CLOSE-UP on JUSTIN LANGER, who strokes his chin diabolically, as SUSPENSEFUL MUSIC plays beneath.

JUSTIN LANGER

Not yet. Rory Burns is the key to everything. He must remain out there for my master plan to succeed. Don't review him when he's LBW. Don't put a slip fielder anywhere in the cordon near where he's edging it, over after over. Just let him continue on. Every run he makes is a nail in the England coffin.

JUSTIN LANGER laughs maniacally.

PAT CUMMINS

I still don't get it.

JUSTIN LANGER

Shut up, Pat. You don't have to get it. You just have to trust me. Like I trust Steve Waugh. Who wants to see me run through a brick wall for Steve Waugh?

Nobody says anything. JUSTIN LANGER asks them this question every session break.

JUSTIN LANGER (CONT'D)

I'll bloody well do it. Who wants to see it?

In the corner of the dressing room, STEVE WAUGH, early 50s, hard, squinty-eyed, a twin but doesn't know it, shakes his head almost imperceptibly.

JUSTIN LANGER (CONT'D)

Fine then. Almost time for play to resume anyway. Clothes back on everybody.

CUT TO:

**EXT. EDGBASTON, DAY 3**

MOEEN ALI has just been bowled by a NATHAN LYON straight ball. The stump cartwheels out of the ground in a stunning rebuke to JAMES PATTINSON.

The Australians react to the MOEEN ALI dismissal with ASHES BANTER that demonstrates a more sophisticated understanding of BREXIT POLITICS than one might have perhaps expected.

NATHAN LYON

It appears, like 52% of your countrymen, that you have chosen to leave. Do you regret this decision now?

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MOEEN ALI  
 (with good humour)  
 Ha! Good one.

TRAVIS HEAD  
 'Invoked Article 50?' You haven't  
 even invoked Article Get Off The  
 Mark!

MOEEN ALI  
 (nodding)  
 Yep. Fair play.

CAMERON BANCROFT  
 You should have built a wall  
 along the Mexican border!

MOEEN ALI  
 (frowns)  
 I think you're thinking of  
 Trump now.

TIM PAINE  
 Never in the field of human  
 conflict was so much owed by so  
 many to so few runs.

MOEEN ALI  
 Well, that's Churchill.

DAVE WARNER  
 Lock her up! Lock her up!

MOEEN ALI  
 Um, that's Trump again.

MATTHEW WADE  
 (with good old-fashioned  
 Aussie mongrel)  
 This 'super-man' is nothing of  
 the sort. I've discovered his  
 weakness. He cares... he actually  
 cares for these people.

MOEEN ALI  
 And that's General Zod.

MATTHEW WADE  
 Kneel! Kneel before Wade!

But MOEEN ALI has already exited this INCREASINGLY MUDDLE-  
 HEADED SCENE and made his way back to the ENGLAND DRESSING  
 ROOM. He is joined by the rest of the English batting line-up  
 just as soon as PAT CUMMINS remembers that bowling short to  
 STUART BROAD for one over dismisses him much more quickly  
 than not bowling short to him for twenty-three overs.

FADE TO:

TIM PAINE leading his team from the field.

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TIM PAINE  
Right. Only ninety behind. Who  
wants to make all of the runs in  
the second innings?

STEVE SMITH raises his hand, quick as a shot.

STEVE SMITH  
Ooh! Ooh! Ooh! Me, sir. Pick me.

TIM PAINE  
(looking around at the rest  
of the top order)  
Anybody?

STEVE SMITH  
(raising his hand as high as  
he possibly can)  
Ooh! Ooh! Ooh! Tim! Tim!

TIM PAINE takes one more long look around the team. STEVE SMITH is bouncing in front of him like a coked-up kangaroo that badly needs to pee.

TIM PAINE  
Fine. Steve can do it again.

STEVE SMITH  
Yippee!!

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM, DAY 4**

JOFRA ARCHER and JIMMY ANDERSON watch as STEVE SMITH inexorably makes his way to yet another century.

JIMMY ANDERSON  
Why don't they just get him out?  
I would have got him out by now.  
Pitch one up, swing it in, hit  
him on the pad in front. Easy.

JOFRA ARCHER pulls out his iPhone XR and searches Twitter. He finds one of his tweets from 2014.

JOFRA ARCHER  
(holding up his phone for  
Jimmy to read)  
'Jimmy is charging in'

JIMMY ANDERSON  
Cheers. You'd probably have got  
him out by now too.

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JOFRA ARCHER  
 (via a tweet from 2013)  
 'All batsmen buy 2 helmets cause  
 went we meet they will be in  
 use ..'

JIMMY ANDERSON  
 Boy, you said it, Jofra.

CHRIS WOAKES  
 (interrupting)  
 I'd just toss one outside off  
 stump, tempt him into playing and  
 get the outside edge.

JIMMY ANDERSON  
 Woakesy? What are you doing up  
 here? You're supposed to be out  
 in the middle. This is only for  
 injured and recovering-from-  
 injury players.

CHRIS WOAKES  
 But--

JOFRA ARCHER  
 (via a tweet from 2015)  
 'Get one woakes'

JIMMY ANDERSON  
 Go on. Shoo!

CHRIS WOAKES shoos. JOFRA ARCHER searches his Twitter  
 feed again.

JOFRA ARCHER  
 (via a tweet from 2014)  
 'Dumb dumb dumb'

CUT TO:

**EXT. EDGBASTON**

TIM PAINE has arrived at the crease. He waves to the sky.

TIM PAINE  
 Thank you, Steve! We'll take it  
 from here.

But a DEAFENING SONIC BOOM indicates that STEVE SMITH Has  
 already gone, flying off to the CANADIAN PREMIER LEAGUE to  
 rescue a team in danger there.

We PAN DOWN from the sonic boom, past a BARMY ARMY PLANE that  
 inexplicably proposes BEN STOKES be knighted, down to a  
 CLOSE-UP of MATTHEW WADE, early 30s, foul-mouthed, snarling,  
 full of good old-fashioned Aussie mongrel but doesn't know  
 it.

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TIM PAINE  
Oh. Hello, Matthew.

MATTHEW WADE  
(growling)  
Tim.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE of the pair putting on SEVENTY-SIX VITAL RUNS together, pushing the Test out of England's reach, as Kenny Loggins' 'Danger Zone' plays. Every shot that TIM PAINE plays is echoed in a twisted and distorted fashion by his TASMANIAN, AUSTRALIAN AND FORMER WICKET-KEEPING COUNTERPART. It is terrifying, like something out of Jordan Peele's 'Us', but without any of the underlying THEMES OF RACIAL TENSION.

Eventually, MATTHEW WADE brings up his century. TIM PAINE takes the opportunity to shake his hand.

TIM PAINE  
Well batted, Matthew.

MATTHEW WADE  
(spitting)  
Yeah, no shit.

TIM PAINE  
Boy, Matthew. You really are a dark and twisted doppelgänger of me, aren't you?

MATTHEW WADE  
(shaking his box out beside the pitch)  
Oh, Tim. Haven't you worked it out, yet? I'm not the dark and twisted doppelgänger of you. You are the dark and twisted doppelgänger of me!

DOLLY ZOOM on TIM PAINE as he screams and screams and screams...

Eventually, he stops screaming long enough to declare the innings closed.

EDGBASTON CROWD  
Boo!

TIM PAINE screams some more.

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM, DAY 5**

JOE ROOT gathers his team together after their 251-run defeat in the FIRST TEST.

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JOE ROOT

Right, lads. Good effort. No need to panic. We're not far off. If you take out Steve Smith's runs, we actually won that Test by 35 runs. So, hands up if you've got any suggestions on how we can dismiss Smith for a pair at Lord's.

Nobody says anything at first.

JOE ROOT

Come on, lads. No bad ideas in a brainstorm, remember.

JASON ROY, late 20s, aggressive, right-handed, the key to England's 2019 World Cup campaign but doesn't know it, shuffles his feet, then looks up to his captain.

JASON ROY

(hesitantly)

We could trick him into sprinting down the crease to have a wild swing at the ball only to be bowled through the gate.

JOE ROOT

(equi-hesitantly)

Okay. Sure. Let's write that down.

He goes to the whiteboard but the marker doesn't work. He turns back to the team.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)

Oh come on, fellas. How often have I told you that we have to put the lids back on the markers when we're done with them?

JOS BUTTLER

(consulting his notebook)

Fourteen times now, Joe.

JOE ROOT

(sighing)

Yes, thank you Jos.

He puts down the marker and turns back to the team.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)

Okay, any more ideas on how we can dismiss--

Out of the corner of his eye, JOE ROOT spots something in the top corner of the whiteboard.

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JOE ROOT  
Who drew that?

Again, nobody says anything.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)  
Ben? Can you help me out here?

BEN STOKES  
(under his breath)  
Sir Ben.

JOE ROOT  
Not yet, Ben. Now, can you help  
me out with who drew this?

BEN STOKES  
(petulantly)  
Nope.

JOE ROOT  
(sighs)  
You didn't draw this?

BEN STOKES  
Why are you always blaming me?

JOE ROOT  
Well, it's a stick drawing of a  
man dressed in a suit of armour  
holding the World Cup aloft, with  
a word balloon coming from his  
mouth that says 'suck it, New  
Zealand'.

JOS BUTTLER  
Just the top half of a suit of  
armour, Joe.

JOE ROOT  
Yes, thank you Jos.  
(turning back to Ben)  
Holding the World Cup aloft  
without using your hands is just  
one of the many things I find  
disturbing about this drawing.

BEN STOKES smirks at JONNY BAIRSTOW, who smirks back, then  
headbutts him. In reply, BEN STOKES punches JONNY BAIRSTOW in  
the jaw. It is all in GOOD FUN.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)  
Lads, lads, lads. Can we please  
focus on how we get Steve Smith  
out.

MOEEN ALI

Maybe if we bowl one straight at his stumps, he'll just leave it and be bowled.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

**EXT. LORD'S, DAY 1**

A spectator walks up to the ticket counter.

TICKET SELLER

Good morning, Sir. Welcome to the Home of Cricket.

SPECTATOR

Ah thank you my good man.

TICKET SELLER

What can I do for you, Sir?

SPECTATOR

I want to watch some cricket.

TICKET SELLER

Certainly, sir. What would you like?

SPECTATOR

Well, eh, how about a little Jimmy Anderson?

TICKET SELLER

I'm, afraid we're fresh out of Jimmy Anderson, sir.

SPECTATOR

Oh, never mind, how are you on Nathan Lyon?

TICKET SELLER

I'm afraid we never have Lyon on Day One, sir, we get him fresh on Day Five.

SPECTATOR

Tish tish. No matter. Well, stout yeoman, four overs of Jofra Archer, if you please.

TICKET SELLER

Ah! He's been on order, sir, for two weeks. Was expecting him this morning.

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SPECTATOR  
Not my lucky day, is it? Aah,  
Jonny Bairstow?

TICKET SELLER  
Sorry, sir.

SPECTATOR  
Pat Cummins? Stuart Broad?

TICKET SELLER  
No.

SPECTATOR  
Joe Root?

TICKET SELLER  
No.

SPECTATOR  
Dave Warner?

TICKET SELLER  
No.

SPECTATOR  
Jos Buttler? Travis Head? Chris  
Woakes? Tim Paine? Joe Denly?  
Cameron Bancroft?

TICKET SELLER  
No.

SPECTATOR  
Steve Smith, perhaps?

TICKET SELLER  
Ah! We have Steve Smith, yessir.

SPECTATOR  
(surprised)  
You do! Excellent.

TICKET SELLER  
Yessir. He's ah... he's a  
bit runny.

SPECTATOR  
Oh, I like him runny.

TICKET SELLER  
Well... He's very runny,  
actually, sir.

SPECTATOR  
I don't care how excrementally  
runny he is. Show me him batting  
with all speed.

TICKET SELLER  
Oooooooooohhh.....!

SPECTATOR  
What now?

TICKET SELLER  
He's in the nets.

SPECTATOR  
Usman Khawaja?

TICKET SELLER  
No.

SPECTATOR  
Ben Stokes?

TICKET SELLER  
No.

SPECTATOR  
It's not much of a home of  
cricket, is it?

TICKET SELLER  
Finest in the world sir!

SPECTATOR  
Explain the logic underlying that  
conclusion, please.

TICKET SELLER  
Well, it's so clean, sir!

SPECTATOR  
It's certainly uncontaminated by  
cricketers. Tell me...

TICKET SELLER  
Yessir?

SPECTATOR  
Have you in fact got any cricket  
here at all?

TICKET SELLER  
No. Not really, sir.

SPECTATOR  
You haven't.

TICKET SELLER  
No sir. Not a scrap. I was  
deliberately wasting your time,  
sir. It's raining, sir.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL:

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STUART BROAD watching the previous scene on a television set.  
JOE ROOT pokes his head around the corner.

JOE ROOT  
Show any good, Stu?

STUART BROAD  
Nah. Monty Python rip-off.

JOE ROOT  
A few of us are gonna play a game  
of Secret KP. You in?

STUART BROAD  
(turning the TV off)  
Yeah, all right.

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM, DAY 2**

STUART BROAD, early 30s, tall, hilarious, Slytherin but  
doesn't know it, is playing a game of SECRET KP with the  
other bowlers.

STUART BROAD  
(pointing)  
I think... Chris is KP!

CHRIS WOAKES  
Nope.

CHRIS WOAKES turns over his identity card. He is, in fact,  
'Andy Flower'.

STUART BROAD  
Bloody hell. Jofra? Were you KP?

JOFRA ARCHER  
(showing one of his tweets  
from 2015)  
'Hard luck cook'

JOFRA ARCHER turns over his identity card to prove that he  
was 'Alastair Cook'. BEN STOKES turns over his identity card.  
He was KP.

BEN STOKES  
I win again. When's Liz gonna  
knight me already?

Suddenly, JOS BUTTLER bursts in.

JOS BUTTLER  
(excited as all get out)  
Lads, lads. The rain's stopped.  
We're going to get to play.  
(MORE)

JOS BUTTLER (CONT'D)  
 Joe's out there at the toss right now. Isn't that just grand?

STUART BROAD  
 (dismissively)  
 Yeah, yeah.

He stubs out his cigar on a box that SIR IAN BOTHAM donated to the Lord's Museum. BEN STOKES downs his whiskey shot and rakes in his winnings. CHRIS WOAKES spits. JOFRA ARCHER tweets something that will only make sense in 2023.

CUT TO:

**EXT. LORD'S**

TIM PAINE exchanges team sheets with JOE ROOT.

TIM PAINE  
 (surprised)  
 Boy, a lot of players with first names beginning with J in your team this time around.

JOE ROOT  
 (slowly)  
 I. am. Jroot.

TIM PAINE  
 Uh, yes. Yes you are. Anyway, we're going to have a bowl.

JOE ROOT  
 (nodding)  
 I. am. Jroot.

TIM PAINE  
 Okay. Looking forward to a good game.

TIM PAINE, having bided his time, now, inevitably, offers to shake JOE ROOT's hand.

JOE ROOT  
 (accepting the handshake)  
 I. am. Jroot.

TIM PAINE  
 (sighing heavily)  
 Look. I know you're pleased with this whole 'most players whose first name begins with the same letter in the history of Tests' stat, but this is a really weird way to express it.

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JOE ROOT  
 (angrily)  
 I. AM. JROOT.

TIM PAINE  
 Frankly, this is the kind of  
 bizarre behaviour that makes some  
 of your teammates question your  
 worth as a leader.

JOE ROOT  
 (curiously)  
 I. am. Jroot?

TIM PAINE  
 No. I won't name names.

JOE ROOT  
 I. am. Jroot?

TIM PAINE  
 No. No hints either. Just... just  
 think about what you're doing  
 here. What you're trying to  
 achieve by behaving this way.

JOE ROOT drops his head. TIM PAINE doesn't notice. He is walking away, allowing himself the smallest of smiles. It is difficult to keep up the GRUESOME FACADE of being Australia's nicest ever captain, but it's worth it for moments such as these.

He taps an earpiece.

TIM PAINE (CONT'D)  
 Operation Whipper Snipper has  
 commenced...

He laughs maniacally, until a LORD'S MEMBER insists that he stops.

CUT TO:

**EXT. LORD'S, DAY 3**

England are in a celebratory huddle. JOFRA ARCHER, mid-20s, quick, smooth, inexperienced at international level but doesn't know it, has just taken the wicket of CAMERON BANCROFT.

Suddenly, there is a WHOOSH OF AIR. Both the England team and Australia's not out batsman, USMAN KHAWAJA, look to the sky.

Using whatever VISUAL SFX we can afford given what is sure to be an EXTREMELY LIMITED PRODUCTION BUDGET, we see STEVE SMITH swoop down from the sky. He lands at the batting crease and the earth itself trembles in acknowledgment of his arrival.

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USMAN KHAWAJA  
Thank goodness you're here,  
Smudge. We're in trouble and need  
your help.

STEVE SMITH  
What seems to be the  
problem, citizen?

USMAN KHAWAJA  
(realising he's out)  
Travis will have to tell you.  
I've just been dismissed.

USMAN KHAWAJA leaves the middle and is replaced by  
TRAVIS HEAD.

TRAVIS HEAD  
As Usman was saying, we're 3/60--

STEVE SMITH  
(interrupting)  
The scoreboard says 60/3.

TRAVIS HEAD  
Well, yes. But we don't have time  
to get into that now.

STEVE SMITH  
You're sixty wickets down for  
just three runs? This is a job  
for--

TRAVIS HEAD  
(also interrupting)  
No, no, no. It's just three  
wickets down for sixty. But we  
could still use your help.

STEVE SMITH  
Very well. Let us put on a  
partnership together, Trevor.

TRAVIS HEAD  
Uh, it's 'Travis', actually. But  
you'll have to do it with Matthew  
anyway. Because I've just been  
dismissed too.

TRAVIS HEAD leaves the middle and a foul-mouthed MATTHEW WADE  
replaces him.

MATTHEW WADE  
(snarling)  
Right. Are you gonna help us  
or what?  
(MORE)

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MATTHEW WADE (CONT'D)

Because that idiot knobstick  
Paine put the Poms in to bat  
first, which means we now have to  
bat in these ratshit conditions.

STEVE SMITH

I will help you. I have  
successfully batted in rodent  
faeces on many occasions.

MATTHEW WADE

(snorting a slimy booger  
from each nostril)

I bet you have. But you'd better  
hurry. Because now I'm dismissed  
as well.

STEVE SMITH

No! I shall have no more of this.

He snaps his fingers, and the LBW DISMISSAL of MATTHEW WADE  
is immediately overturned on review.

MATTHEW WADE

(with renewed mongrel)

Okay. Thanks, I guess. But it  
doesn't really change things.  
I'll be proper out soon. This is  
not a good day for batting.

STEVE SMITH

(emphatically)

THEN. WE. SHALL. BAT. NO. MORE.  
THIS. DAY.

STEVE SMITH performs a series of leaves, each more elaborate  
than the last. With each ludicrous movement of his body,  
clouds are summoned ever closer. Finally, STEVE SMITH does a  
SPINNING LIGHTSABER LEAVE that ends with him crashing his bat  
into the ground. A BOLT OF LIGHTNING lands at the point of  
impact with a SATISFYING CRACK, and an enormous downpour  
commences that washes out the remainder of the day.

CUT TO:

**EXT. LORD'S, DAY 4**

The YELLOW SUN OF EARTH is out at Lord's, augmenting STEVE  
SMITH's cricketing abilities to superhuman levels. Even as  
wickets fall around him, he continues on, surging yet again  
past FIFTY RUNS as he looks to match England's first innings  
total.

JOE ROOT is about to toss the ball to JACK LEACH, an inhuman  
creature GENETICALLY DESIGNED in the ECB laboratories to  
combat STEVE SMITH'S batting.

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The sinister creature has had his DNA twisted to ensure that he rotates the ball not with the right hand, but, impossibly, with the left. This, ECB scientists hypothesise, will be enough to topple STEVE SMITH.

JOFRA ARCHER  
(via a tweet from 2015)  
'No root.'

JOE ROOT  
(surprised)  
Do you want to keep  
bowling, Jofra?

But there is no reply. JOFRA ARCHER is in a PRECOGNITIVE TRANCE.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE of JOFRA ARCHER's vision of the future.

We cut rapidly between snippets of various future Ashes timelines. LLOYD POPE takes a hat trick at Adelaide Oval. A greying and bearded SIR IAN BELL raises his bat for a double century at Trent Bridge. AUSTIN WAUGH holds the Ashes trophy aloft at the SCG. Edgbaston crowd members continue to HILARIOUSLY WAVE SANDPAPER long after anybody can even remember why they're doing it.

And then, finally, out of the corner of his eye, JOFRA ARCHER spots the moment he traveled to the future to see.

A STEVE SMITH wicket!

It is too fleeting to fully grasp, however, and before he can prevent it, JOFRA ARCHER is pulled back to the present.

JOFRA ARCHER  
(in despair, and via a tweet  
from 2014)  
'Nooo'

Frustrated at his inability to discover the secret to how to take the wicket of STEVE SMITH, JOFRA ARCHER instead unleashes a TERRIFYING SPELL of fast bowling. As 'Danger Zone' by Kenny Loggins plays, we see a MONTAGE OF SHORT-PITCHED AND FAST BOWLING.

STEVE SMITH is struck on the arm, receives treatment but remains not out. He is struck on the neck, receives treatment but remains not out. He is removed from the ground by medical staff, receives treatment but remains not out.

He then eventually returns to the crease and strikes THREE QUICK BOUNDARIES.

JOS BUTTLER, wide-eyed with panic, runs over to JOE ROOT.

Made in Highland

JOS BUTTLER

What are we going to do, Joe? He can't be dismissed.

JOE ROOT

(furiously)

Don't you think I know that, Jos? Do you want to be captain then? Is that what you're saying?

JOS BUTTLER

Of course not, Joe. I just don't know what we can do to get him out. No matter what we do, he's always there. I'm... I'm scared, Joe.

JOE ROOT

I'm scared too, Jos. But we have to keep a brave face. Yes, he may well bat forever. We may never leave this ground. But the import--

He is interrupted by CHRIS WOAKES tapping him on the shoulder.

CHRIS WOAKES

Just trapped him in front, skip.

JOE ROOT

(confused)

Huh? (he peers at the replay). Ah. Yes, well, uh, well done then, Chris. Never doubted you.

CUT TO:

**INT. AUSTRALIAN DRESSING ROOM**

The Australians are about to take the field. DAVE WARNER pulls as many of his team mates to one side as he can.

DAVE WARNER

Come on, guys. Let's go over my plan again.

CAMERON BANCROFT

(rapidly leaving the scene)

I don't want to know.

DAVE WARNER

Ignore him, fellas. He's no fun any more.

(MORE)

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DAVE WARNER (CONT'D)  
 (whispering to the  
 handful remaining)  
 Now, remember, whatever we do,  
 nobody take a catch off Peter's  
 bowling, okay?

The others nod in mildly befuddled agreement. Eventually,  
 USMAN KHAWAJA hesitantly raises his hand.

USMAN KHAWAJA  
 Why are we doing this again?

DAVE WARNER  
 Because it's funny, isn't it?  
 (clapping his  
 hands together)  
 Come on then, let's go.

The others sigh and follow him out to the ground. In the  
 background, JUSTIN LANGER runs into, but not through, a brick  
 wall, as STEVE WAUGH shakes his head in disappointment.

CUT TO:

**INT. AUSTRALIAN HOTEL ROOM, DAY 5**

STEVE SMITH and the AUSTRALIAN TEAM DOCTOR are knocking on  
 JUSTIN LANGER's hotel room door.

JUSTIN LANGER (V.O.)  
 Just a minute.

From inside JUSTIN LANGER's room we hear a myriad of peculiar  
 noises, including the crash of at least ten milk bottles, the  
 mooing of a cow and the audiobook reading of The Complete  
 Matthew Hayden Cookbook.

The AUSTRALIAN TEAM DOCTOR shrugs. STEVE SMITH smiles grimly.

Eventually, the door opens a crack and JUSTIN LANGER pokes  
 his head out.

JUSTIN LANGER  
 Yes?

AUSTRALIAN TEAM DOCTOR  
 I've got some bad news, Justin.

JUSTIN LANGER  
 Well, you'd better come in then.

JUSTIN LANGER opens the door fully and ushers them inside.

JUSTIN LANGER (CONT'D)  
 Just, uh, just ignore the  
 rhesus monkeys.

Made in Highland

CUT TO:

**INT. JUSTIN LANGER'S HOTEL ROOM**

JUSTIN LANGER  
What's the problem?

AUSTRALIAN TEAM DOCTOR  
It's Steve. He's woke up  
concussed. We need to rule him  
out of the rest of the Test.

JUSTIN LANGER  
(grimacing)  
Is Marnus ready to substitute?

STEVE SMITH  
You tell me.

And suddenly he pulls off a RUBBER MASK to reveal that it's been MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE, mid-20s, eccentric, excitable, widow-peaked but doesn't know it, standing in front of him all along.

JUSTIN LANGER claps with delight. As do the rhesus monkeys.

JUSTIN LANGER  
Like. for. like.

CUT TO:

**EXT. LORD'S**

England have batted their way to safety and are now looking to set Australia a target. Suddenly, out of nowhere, JOS BUTTLER hooks a short ball from PAT CUMMINS straight down to JOSH HAZLEWOOD in the deep for a catch.

The team rush to embrace both fast bowlers.

USMAN KHAWAJA  
Great bowling, Pat.

PAT CUMMINS  
It's not Pat. It's me.

And he pulls off a rubber mask to reveal it's MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE again.

USMAN KHAWAJA  
Oh. Then, uh, great  
bowling, Marnus.  
(He turns to the catcher)  
And a good catch, Josh.

JOSH HAZLEWOOD  
(shaking his head)  
Nuh-uh.

And, again, he removes a rubber mask to reveal that it was MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE who took the catch.

USMAN KHAWAJA  
 (confused)  
 Wha--?

He looks around, but both PAT CUMMINS and JOSH HAZLEWOOD seem to be themselves again. And MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE is somehow running out the drinks.

CUT TO:

**EXT. LORD'S**

The Test is drawing to a close. And closing to a draw. Eventually, there are fewer balls remaining than wickets to take and JOE ROOT shakes hands with PAT CUMMINS to confirm the draw.

PAT CUMMINS  
 (laughing)  
 I've got you again, Joe!

And he pulls off a PAT CUMMINS mask to reveal that he is, in fact, MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE. And then a MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE mask to reveal he's TIM PAINE. He cackles with delight at having got a bonus handshake out of JOE ROOT.

JOE ROOT  
 Not so fast, Tim.

And JOE ROOT pulls off a rubber mask to reveal that he was, in fact, MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE all along.

As TIM PAINE looks around in confusion, he sees that the entire England team is now wearing a MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE MASK.

TIM PAINE  
 Wait, what? Which one of you is  
 the real Marnus?

TIM PAINE runs to each of the England players, pulling at their faces. Each one is a mask. The real MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE is nowhere to be found.

He slumps to the ground in frustration. TRAVIS HEAD comes over to him and pats him on the back.

TIM PAINE turns around.

TIM PAINE  
 (whispering)  
 You?

TRAVIS HEAD pulls off his mask. It's MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE. He throws down a smoke bomb and disappears into nothingness as the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC plays.

FADE OUT:

Made in Highland

FADE IN:

**EXT. HEADINGLEY, DAY 1**

DAVE WARNER, early 30s, aggressive, punchy, banned from any leadership role in the Australian cricket team but doesn't know it, is facing STUART BROAD.

He plays and misses.

HEADINGLEY CROWD  
(already drunk)  
Ooooh!

STUART BROAD bowls again. This time, DAVE WARNER plays, misses and bops himself on the nose with his bat.

HEADINGLEY CROWD  
Ooooh!

STUART BROAD bowls once more. DAVE WARNER plays, misses and falls on his bottom.

DAVE WARNER  
I fell on my bott-bott!

HEADINGLEY CROWD  
(chanting)  
Cheat! Cheat! Cheat!

Despite his incompetence with the bat, DAVE WARNER is not dismissed. Instead, MARCUS HARRIS and USMAN KHAWAJA are both out to have Australia in trouble early.

DAVE WARNER  
(to England)  
You fools! All you've done is  
bring Smudge to the crease.

But what he has momentarily forgotten is that STEVE SMITH is on a mission in deep space.

DAVE WARNER (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Uh-oh. Who will save us now?

CUT TO:

**EXT. STREETS OF LEEDS**

A shiny black limousine, souped up like nobody's business, is racing through the streets. It roars around corners, swerving and accelerating past startled pedestrians. It zips in between a pair of buses, past a motorcycle and around several cars before screeching to a halt in front of HEADINGLEY STADIUM.

The door of the limousine opens and we hear the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC.

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Out of his PATENTED LIMOUSCHIGNE steps MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE, fully padded up and ready to bat.

The MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC gets even louder as he strides to the middle.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE  
(taking guard)  
Don't worry, David. I've  
got th--.

But before he can finish his sentence, the umpires take everybody off for bad light.

FADE TO: BLACK

FADE IN:

**EXT. HEADINGLEY**

It is now several hours later. DAVE WARNER was out long ago, having played and missed and stumbled down an open manhole at square leg. Many other Australians have also been dismissed, their names lost to history.

But MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE remains. At the crease with him is JAMES PATTINSON.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE  
Stick with me, James. We're still  
a chance to get out of this  
pickle.

JAMES PATTINSON  
Will do, Marnus.

But JAMES PATTINSON has already edged JOFRA ARCHER to slip.

HEADINGLEY CROWD  
(roaring)  
Get out of here, you cheat!  
You're the worst of the lot. You  
should have been banned for life.

JAMES PATTINSON  
I wasn't even there.

HEADINGLEY CROWD  
(adamantly)  
Banned. For. Life.  
(then)  
And take that convict Cummings  
with you too.

Because PAT CUMMINS has also been dismissed. JOFRA ARCHER has a five wicket haul.

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HEADINGLEY CROWD  
Well done, Joffrey!

While everybody is distracted by JOFRA ARCHER's five wicket haul, MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE presses a button on his helmet, which activates his jet pack and he disappears into the clouds above.

He will live to fight another day.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP of MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE flying away.

He winks at the camera. We FADE OUT as the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC plays one more time.

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM, DAY 2**

JOE ROOT addresses his team before play begins.

JOE ROOT  
Right. Really good day of bowling yesterday, lads. Top notch stuff. Congratulations Jofra on your first five wicket haul.

BEN STOKES  
(in cruel, quiet mimicry)  
'Congratulations Jofra on your first five wicket haul'

JONNY BAIRSTOW giggles and low fives BEN STOKES. They wrestle playfully.

JOE ROOT  
(trying to ignore them)  
Today's a really great opportunity to bat Australia out of this game, so I want to see some really solid concentration and partnerships.

BEN STOKES  
'I want to see some really solid concentration and partnerships'

There is more giggling from JONNY BAIRSTOW which emboldens BEN STOKES sufficiently for him to put his red-headed comrade into a headlock until he is on the brink of passing out. It is all GOOD, HARMLESS FUN.

JOE ROOT  
So, uh, who, uh, who thinks they can bat large today?

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JOS BUTTLER  
 (raising his hand)  
 Oooh! Oooh! I do, Joe.

JOE ROOT  
 (sighing)  
 Yes, thank you, Jos. Anybody  
 else? Ben?

BEN STOKES  
 Hmmmm?

JOE ROOT  
 Can you bat large today?

BEN STOKES  
 (shrugging like a  
 sullen teenager)  
 Dunno. I guess.

JOE ROOT  
 Well, uh, just, uh, just do your  
 best okay?

BEN STOKES  
 Sure. Whatever.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HEADINGLEY**

We see a MONTAGE of England's innings, set to the music of 'Danger Zone' by Kenny Loggins. Before the first verse is even completed, the montage and music is abruptly halted, much like England's innings itself.

CUT TO:

**INT. AUSTRALIAN DRESSING ROOM**

It is the innings break. TIM PAINE and JUSTIN LANGER are in quiet meditation together. Suddenly, they are interrupted by STEVE WAUGH, who hands TIM PAINE a BAGGY GREEN TELEPHONE.

TIM PAINE shakes STEVE WAUGH's hand, then tries to use the phone but with limited success.

TIM PAINE  
 Can't we just use a  
 regular phone?

JUSTIN LANGER  
 (glancing sideways at Steve  
 Waugh in horror)  
 Did you hear that, Steve? A  
 'regular phone'?  
 (MORE)

Made in Highland

JUSTIN LANGER (CONT'D)

What, the baggy green phone isn't good enough for you?!

TIM PAINE

It's not that it's not good enough. It's just that it's not, well, rigid enough. I can't talk into the mouthpiece properly because it just flops down on my shoulder.

JUSTIN LANGER

Of course it flops down. It's a baggy green phone. It's designed to flop. Right, Steve?

But STEVE WAUGH is deliberately looking elsewhere.

TIM PAINE

Sure. But there are some things where bagginess is useful and some things where it, frankly, isn't. A baggy green cap is fine--

JUSTIN LANGER

'Fine'? You hear that, Steve? He says the baggy green cap is 'fine'!

STEVE WAUGH continues to ignore him, instead trying to install Spotify on his Nokia 3310. He fails to do so.

TIM PAINE

(hurriedly)

It's great. The baggy green cap is great. But I just want a phone that's... well, less baggy, if I'm honest. It can still be green.

JUSTIN LANGER

(sarcastically)

Oh, thank you soooo much, Tim.

(dropping the sarcasm)

No. You've got the baggy green phone and you're going to respect it. Now who was calling?

TIM PAINE

Agent B. They confirm that the England dressing room is in complete disarray. Operation Whipper Snipper can enter the final phase.

STEVE WAUGH suddenly straightens. He snatches the baggy green phone from TIM PAINE and talks, unhindered by the phone's bagginess.

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STEVE WAUGH  
 (with true Aussie grit)  
 Do it.

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM**

A shadowy figure in the corner of England's dressing room speaks into their phone.

AGENT B  
 Yes, sir.

CUT TO: BLACK

FADE IN:

**EXT. DEEP SPACE, DAY 3**

STEVE SMITH is on a mission in the cold depths of space, wielding his all-powerful bat in an attempt to save Planet-IMBB1 from SPACE DISASTER. One of the many stars around which the planet revolves has broken from its orbit as a result of a GRAVITATIONAL FLUKE.

STEVE SMITH is mustering all the power he can from his EXTRAVAGANT LEAVES to destroy the ROGUE STAR before it crashes into the world, killing all its inhabitants.

Suddenly, another superhuman flies onto the scene. It is ELLYSE PERRY.

ELLYSE PERRY  
 I bring news from Headingley.

STEVE SMITH  
 (holding his hand to  
 his ear)  
 What??

For they are in the VACUUM OF SPACE, where no sound travels. ELLYSE PERRY switches instead to communicating via SPACE TELEPATHY.

ELLYSE PERRY  
 (via space telepathy)  
 I bring news from Headingley. Joe Root is trying to impossibly win the Test.

STEVE SMITH  
 But I thought Operation Whipper Snipper had entered its final stages and Root was doomed?

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ELLYSE PERRY

Apparently not. He put on a century partnership with Joe Denly.

STEVE SMITH

Joe Denly?!? What on Earth is going on on Earth?

ELLYSE PERRY

I'm not sure.

STEVE SMITH

Any word from Agent B?

ELLYSE PERRY

Not since the end of the second day.

STEVE SMITH

Well, darn it all to heck. I'll have to go back and sort this all out. You stay here and save this planet.

ELLYSE PERRY

But there's nothing you can do, Steve. The batting's all done. Without any concussion substitutes you won't be able to bowl either. Maybe you can field a bit, maybe even take a catch or execute a run out, but...

Her protests fade away as she realises that STEVE SMITH has already accelerated to FASTER THAN LIGHT SPEED and is racing back to Earth.

ELLYSE PERRY sighs and surveys the MISSION IN DEEP SPACE that has been left to her. But instead of destroying the ROGUE STAR as STEVE SMITH was attempting to do, she simply uses her ULTRA-ABILITIES to pick it up and put it back in its original location.

The inhabitants of the planet, a sentient race of INFLATABLE MELON BEACH BALLS, cheer and thank her profusely.

ELLYSE PERRY waves to them, then notices via her ENHANCED MEGA-SENSES that JIMMY ANDERSON is hovering nearby in his PERSONAL SPACE ROCKET.

ELLYSE PERRY

Oh, hey, Jimmy. What are you doing here?

JIMMY ANDERSON

Just thought I'd swing by and see  
how this mission in deep space  
was getting along.

(beat)

Get it. 'Swing by'?

ELLYSE PERRY

(tapping her forehead)

Sorry, Jimmy. Space telepathy is  
busted today.

And before he can question how then she's communicating with him, she also accelerates to HYPERLIGHT SPEED and flies far, far away.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HEADINGLEY, DAY 4**

BEN STOKES, late 20s, redheaded, aggressive, mathematically certain to lose important cricket matches but doesn't know it, has just played one of the SINGLE MOST ASTONISHING INNINGS OF ALL TIME to win the Test.

The HEADINGLEY CROWD lose absolutely their entire shit. And rightly so.

BEN STOKES steps forward to receive the Player of the Match award from some person self-evidently inferior to him in every way.

The gates to the stadium open and HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN rides in on a chariot. She pulls out a sword and knights BEN STOKES on the spot.

SIR BEN STOKES

What kept you?

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

(tittering)

Oh, Sir Ben. You are a rascal.  
Why don't I make you the Duke of  
Stoke, as well?

SIR BEN STOKES

I dunno, why don't you?

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN titters again and awards him this title. She also gives him FIFTY POUNDS from her own purse.

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

Go buy yourself something pretty.  
You've earned it.

SIR BEN STOKES

Damn straight I have.

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The awards don't end there. PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON arrives via zipline. He blusters his way over to SIR BEN STOKES.

PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON  
I'd like to invite you to dinner  
at Number 10.

SIR BEN STOKES  
Sorry, Boris. I'm not doing  
double figures today. Number 100  
at least.

PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON  
Done!

PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON scurries off to renumber all of London's streets so that SIR BEN STOKES will dine with him.

We CUT QUICKLY between various other offers for SIR BEN STOKES. Within a handful of minutes he has been named the Sports Personality of the Year, England's 2020 Eurovision Entry and the official Big Ben Timekeeper. He is also THE NEXT JAMES BOND, THE NEXT DOCTOR WHO and THE NEXT HUGH GRANT.

The HEADINGLEY CROWD cheers every single award given to him with ever-increasing ecstasy. But as they do, we SLOWLY PAN to JOE ROOT, standing off to one side, with narrow eyes.

JOE ROOT  
(to himself)  
Agent B! I knew it.

FADE TO: BLACK

FADE IN:

**EXT. LEEDS STREET**

An empty side street in the centre of Leeds is suddenly struck by a powerful gust of wind. Bins are knocked over. A cat yowls in terror. A newspaper blows past, somehow already with the headline SIR BEN STOKES SOLVES BREXIT CRISIS TO SATISFACTION OF ENTIRE COUNTRY AND EU on it. And then, a figure shoots down from the sky and lands with a BOOMING THUD on the ground.

STEVE SMITH  
(with electricity glowing  
all around him)  
Right. Let's get back to work.

CUT TO: BLACK

FADE IN:

Made in Highland

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD, DAY 1**

STUART BROAD has dismissed DAVE WARNER in his very first over, yet again.

DAVE WARNER  
Oh, fuss and bother.

As DAVE WARNER leaves the ground, we hear the familiar strains of the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD CAR PARK**

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE screeches to a halt in his GREEN AND GOLD LAMBORSCHIGNI. He leaps out of the car and sprints into the ground to take strike.

We suddenly FLASH BACK to the THIRD TEST, where MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE is effortlessly accumulating as many half-centuries as he feels like accumulating.

But when we return to the current Test, MARCUS HARRIS, late 20s, left-handed, compact, too bland to have any further descriptors but doesn't know it, continues to take far too literally the concept of 'replacing Cameron Bancroft in the team' and is dismissed cheaply.

STUART BROAD  
(celebrappealing)  
Yeessssss!!!!

UMPIRE DHARMASENA  
(surprised)  
Oh, I guess he's out.

UMPIRE DHARMASENA raises his finger.

But while MARCUS HARRIS reviews the decision, we suddenly FLASH BACK AGAIN, this time to the FIRST TEST, where Steve SMITH is effortlessly accumulating as many 140s as he feels like accumulating.

On SPLIT SCREENS, we now have both FLASHBACKS going simultaneously. MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE making a half-century, STEVE SMITH on his way to a century.

It takes several overs for the ENGLAND FIELDERS to realise these aren't TWIN FLASHBACKS at all, but instead the current partnership. Indeed, it isn't just the ENGLAND FIELDERS who struggle to realise this, but also the OLD TRAFFORD CROWD, the VIEWERS AT HOME and STEVE SMITH himself.

STEVE SMITH plays an emphatic JEDI LEAVE to end the over and wanders through the SPLIT SCREEN to MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE. This is the kind of CONCEPTUAL PLAYING WITH THE FORM that could win me a BEST DIRECTOR ACADEMY AWARD.

Made in Highland

STEVE SMITH  
 What's going on here? Who am I  
 really battling with?

STEVE SMITH grabs at MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE's face, trying to  
 remove the mask. But it is not a mask. It is a face.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE  
 (in pain)  
 Ow!

STEVE SMITH  
 You!

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE  
 Yes.

The MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC suddenly kicks in again.  
 This is real. This is happening.

Except it's not, because we suddenly FLASH BACK again, this  
 time to the SECOND TEST, where it's PISSING DOWN RAIN.

CROSS-FADE TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM**

A feverish and mumbling SIR BEN STOKES is in bed, surrounded  
 by the rest of the England team. They have rescued him from a  
 MANCHESTER TORNADO and are now desperately hoping he wakes  
 up.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 (feverish and mumbling)  
 There's no place like Headingley.

JONNY BAIRSTOW  
 (mopping his brow)  
 There, there. You've just had a  
 terrible dream.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 Jonny. I had the weirdest dream.  
 But it wasn't a dream. It was a  
 place. And you were there.

JONNY BAIRSTOW shrugs in red-headed confusion.

SIR BEN STOKES (CONT'D)  
 (pointing at CRAIG OVERTON)  
 And you were there.

CRAIG OVERTON  
 I don't think I was.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 (pointing at JOE ROOT)  
 And you were there.

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JOE ROOT  
 (concerned)  
 I am JRoot.

SIR BEN STOKES turns back to JONNY BAIRSTOW.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 Oh, Jonny. There's no place like  
 Headingley.

The two of them WRESTLE PLAYFULLY until JONNY BAIRSTOW cops  
 an elbow to the larynx and is rushed to hospital.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD, DAY 2**

STEVE SMITH is, I dunno, FOUR MILLION NOT OUT. His shots grow  
 ever more ridiculous, but one thing is certain, there is no  
 human bowler capable of getting him out.

Fortunately, England have JACK LEACH, an inhuman creature  
 GENETICALLY DESIGNED in the ECB laboratories to combat STEVE  
 SMITH'S batting. JACK LEACH'S distorted DNA has been  
 specifically designed to rotate the ball with the WRONG ARM,  
 a freakish trait sure to unsettle the former Australian  
 captain.

JOE ROOT  
 (tossing JACK LEACH  
 the ball)  
 Righto, Jack. Time for you to  
 finally make a contribution to  
 this series.

JACK LEACH  
 (removing glasses  
 in surprise)  
 Wait, what?

JACK LEACH tosses one up, takes the outside edge of STEVE  
 SMITH'S bat and SIR BEN STOKES takes the catch.

JOE ROOT  
 (running over to  
 embrace them)  
 Really good teamwork from you  
 two. Pleased to see you working  
 together for once to help England  
 in a vital Ashes moment.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 (removing JACK LEACH'S  
 glasses in surprise)  
 Wait, what?

But the surprise of SIR BEN STOKES and JACK LEACH is suddenly  
 interrupted by a SUPERHUMAN CRY OF DESPAIR that ECHOES AROUND  
 MANCHESTER.

STEVE SMITH  
 (in Dolby Surround Sound)  
 Noooooooooo!!!!!!

STEVE SMITH shoots up into the sky at superspeed, furious with himself. He hesitates in the clouds for a moment, as he hears the voice of THE GHOST OF SIR DONALD BRADMAN.

THE GHOST OF SIR DONALD BRADMAN  
 It is forbidden for you to  
 interfere in human history.

But STEVE SMITH will not listen to THE GHOST OF SIR DONALD BRADMAN. He is too distraught by the loss of his wicket, the ONE THING HE TRULY LOVES.

He starts flying around the world, faster and faster, until TIME BEGINS TO REVERSE.

The ball flies back from SIR BEN STOKES hand to the edge of STEVE SMITH's bat and then loops back to JACK LEACH's hand.

OLD TRAFFORD CROWD  
 !oooooooooooooB

JACK LEACH  
 !tazwoH

JACK LEACH takes a few steps back to his mark.

CUT TO:

#### INT. CORE OF THE EARTH

At superspeed, STEVE SMITH now flies down to the core of the Earth, where he uses the RAW POWER OF HIS JEDI LEAVES to adjust the Earth's tectonic plates in such a way that the bowling crease is moved half a centimetre closer to the stumps.

CUT TO:

#### EXT. OLD TRAFFORD

STEVE SMITH then bursts out from the MOLTEN LAVA, back up into the sky before landing back at the batting crease, still smouldering.

The THIRD UMPIRE has inspected the replay. In this ADJUSTED TIMELINE, it turns out that JACK LEACH has overstepped the crease and the ball that dismissed STEVE SMITH was a no ball. STEVE SMITH may bat on.

He does so, until approximately NINE MILLION RUNS later, he gets bored and allows JOE ROOT to dismiss him.

Made in Highland

JOE ROOT  
 (triumphantly)  
 I am JRoot!

But his team mates can barely be bothered to embrace him.

CUT TO:

**EXT. AUSTRALIAN BALCONY**

TIM PAINE peers at the dispirited England team through his binoculars. Satisfied, he goes to shake JUSTIN LANGER's hand.

TIM PAINE  
 Agent B has done it, Justin.  
 Operation Whipper Snipper is a  
 complete success. England's  
 confidence is in tatters.

JUSTIN LANGER  
 (refusing to shake his hand)  
 You naive fool. This is when  
 they're strongest. Have you  
 learned nothing from Headingley??

TIM PAINE  
 (proudly)  
 Nope.

TIM PAINE declares, takes an early wicket and immediately sets the field back, allowing the single to get the weaker batsman on strike.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD, DAY 3**

The current England captain JOE ROOT is batting with RORY BURNS, late 150s, debonair, chancy, a nineteenth century street magician but doesn't know it. They have put on a solid partnership after early wickets, thanks primarily to RORY BURNS' sophisticated use of misdirection and mirrors.

Suddenly, MITCHELL STARC hits JOE ROOT in the dick. The ball deflects for FOUR MORE RUNS.

JOE ROOT  
 (tumbling to the ground)  
 I (gasp) am (gasp) JRoot.

As JOE ROOT writhes on the ground in agony, we FLASH BACK to...

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM, A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO**

JOS BUTTLER is talking to JOE ROOT in the corner of the dressing room.

JOE ROOT

I. am. JRoot.

JOS BUTTLER

Sorry, sir. I love that bit - I really do - but we don't have time for it just now.

JOE ROOT

(sadly)

Oh.

JOS BUTTLER

Sorry.

(he clears his throat)

I've just received word from our deep undercover agent in the Australian dressing room that the Australians have a deep undercover agent in our dressing room.

JOE ROOT

(startled)

What?? Who?

JOS BUTTLER

All we know is that he's called 'Agent B'. And his mission is to destroy your captaincy. The Australians call it...

(he consults his notes)

... 'Operation Whopper Stropper'.

JOE ROOT

(muttering to himself and peering around the dressing room)

Agent B...

We CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT DAY where JOE ROOT has been revived by the application of smelling salts to his INJURED DICK.

FADE TO:

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD, DAY 3**

PAT CUMMINS hits JOE ROOT in the knee. TIM PAINE immediately decides to burn a review.

Made in Highland

JOE ROOT  
 (tumbling to the  
 ground again)  
 I (gasp) am (gasp) JRoot.

As JOE ROOT writhes on the ground in agony again, we FLASH FORWARD to...

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM, A COUPLE OF WEEKS FROM NOW**

LORD HAUGHTINGTON, THE EARL OF POMPOUSBOROUGH and new ECB CHAIRMAN approaches RORY BURNS.

LORD HAUGHTINGTON  
 You! Magician. Because of your continued excellence in wielding sorcery to make multiple centuries in the final Tests of the series and regain the Ashes, I hereby dub you the new England captain!

The rest of the team cheers. All except for JOE ROOT who peers furiously at the new captain.

JOE ROOT  
 (to himself)  
 Agent B...

We CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT DAY where JOE ROOT has been revived by the application of smelling salts to his INJURED KNEE.

He knows he must stop this vision from coming true.

JOE ROOT  
 Get out, Rory.

RORY BURNS  
 Righto, Skip!

RORY BURNS is immediately dismissed by JOSH HAZLEWOOD. JOE ROOT then becomes instantly concerned that RORY BURNS will be turning the dressing room against him while he's out in the middle. So he is dismissed by JOSH HAZLEWOOD too. JASON ROY is under no obligation to be dismissed by JOSH HAZLEWOOD but, of course, is anyway.

JONNY BAIRSTOW and SIR BEN STOKES then bat together for a bit before a stray missile from one of their ROCK FIGHTS hits a floodlight and breaks it. Play ends for the day.

CUT TO:

Made in Highland

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM**

As JONNY BAIRSTOW and SIR BEN STOKES return to the dressing room, an increasingly paranoid JOE ROOT intercepts them on the stairs.

JOE ROOT  
(hissing)  
You two had better not make any runs tomorrow and outshine me. The captaincy is mine, damn you. Mine. Nobody is taking it from me.

SIR BEN STOKES  
But if I don't make runs, Joe, we'll lose the Test and lose the Ashes and you'll lose the captaincy anyway.

The revelation hits JOE ROOT in the gut. He writhes on the ground in agony.

JOE ROOT  
(in existential despair)  
I am JRoot.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD, DAY 4**

JOS BUTTLER hits a ball over the infield for four and the follow-on is saved. The KNOWLEDGABLE OLD TRAFFORD CROWD cheers in ecstasy.

TIM PAINE  
(unimpressed)  
We weren't going to enforce the follow-on anyway.

JOS BUTTLER  
(miffed at the suggestion)  
Haww! You were so.

TIM PAINE  
No we weren't.

JOS BUTTLER  
You're just saying that.

TIM PAINE  
No, I'm not. I was always going to bat again.

JOS BUTTLER  
You were not.

Made in Highland

TIM PAINE

Was.

And so on. They bicker so long that eventually JOS BUTTLER is dismissed and neither of them notice.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD**

Inevitably, DAVE WARNER and MARCUS HARRIS are dismissed early in the Australian second innings by STUART BROAD, bringing MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE and STEVE SMITH to the crease together.

But just as the ECCENTRIC DUO prepare to rescue Australia once more, STEVE SMITH's enhanced senses detect a cry for help from MARK TAYLOR, mid-50s, tubby, interested in air-conditioning, an ex-cricket commentator but doesn't know it. He is still fuming about JACK LEACH not being given out LBW when England were nine wickets down.

STEVE SMITH prepares to fly off to the rescue.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE  
(holding up a hand)  
No, Smudge. I've got this.

And MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE allows himself to be struck on the pad. He is given out.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE immediately reviews the decision. But while everybody is preoccupied with checking the replay, MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE pulls the leg stump towards him, opening a trapdoor that he slides down, through the centre of the Earth, back to the CHANNEL NINE STUDIOS, where he assures MARK TAYLOR that everything will be okay.

Nobody at Old Trafford notices this.

SIR BEN STOKES  
(looking around)  
Wha--? Where did he go?

STEVE SMITH doesn't answer, instead offering the cheeky grin of an omnipotent child, and the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC surges in triumph.

The MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC then cross-fades into 'Danger Zone' by Kenny Loggins, as we see a MONTAGE OF STEVE SMITH PLAYING RIDICULOUS CRICKET SHOTS. He leaves a ball that still somehow flies through the covers for two. He scores a boundary by securing overthrows after sending TRAVIS HEAD back to the non-striker's end. He falls on his back and practises a shot from a prone position. He dances back and forth in his crease. It is an AVANT GARDE PERFORMANCE that should be considered for use in the TEASER TRAILER and also the SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL.

Made in Highland

JOE ROOT  
 (mumbling to himself)  
 What we need to do here is waste  
 as much time as possible. That  
 will give us the best chance of  
 securing a draw.

JOS BUTTLER  
 You hear that, lads? Joe wants us  
 to waste time.

The England team immediately pull out all their best time-wasting tricks. JASON ROY falls on the ground and gets a boo-boo that needs medical attention. JOE ROOT reviews decisions that are definitely not out. STUART BROAD loses a shoe. JACK LEACH cleans his BRAND NEW SPECSAVERS GLASSES. JONNY BAIRSTOW headbutts one of the umpires, but with no malice, in a simple case of 'boys being boys'. JOFRA ARCHER plays hackysack with an inflatable beach ball. SIR BEN STOKES has a criminal trial. The over rate slows considerably as a result.

Eventually, TIM PAINE gets fed up and declares.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 Ha! Made you declare.

TIM PAINE  
 Did not. I was going to  
 declare anyway.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 You were not.

TIM PAINE  
 Were so.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 Nuh-uh.

TIM PAINE  
 Uh-huh.

We FADE OUT on this squabbling, and FADE BACK IN just long enough to see PAT CUMMINS dismiss JOE ROOT first ball. This wastes far less time than JOE ROOT might have hoped.

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM, DAY 5**

A bedraggled and sleepless JOE ROOT sits alone in a darkened corner of the England dressing room, making furious notes on his team sheet as he tries to determine which of his team mates might be the mysterious AGENT B, working with the Australians to bring down his captaincy.

Made in Highland

JOE ROOT  
 (to himself)  
 Rory? Has made runs throughout  
 the series to make himself look  
 good. But not in this innings,  
 making me look bad...

He puts a question mark beside RORY BURNS' name.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)  
 Sir Ben? Showed off like nobody's  
 business at Headingley. Walked  
 here.

He puts multiple question marks beside SIR BEN STOKES' name.  
 As he prepares to assess the next team member, there is a  
 loud cheer from the middle. JOS BUTTLER is finally out,  
 having left a ball from JOSH HAZLEWOOD that took out off  
 stump.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)  
 Jos? Surely not my beloved Jos...

But he puts a sad, tentative question mark beside JOS  
 BUTTLER's name.

FADE TO:

**EXT. OLD TRAFFORD**

CRAIG OVERTON and JACK LEACH have defied the Australian  
 bowlers for an hour, using both a solid defence and the BASIC  
 PRINCIPLES OF TIME-WASTING to bolster England's cause.

As JACK LEACH consults a PASSING OPTOMETRIST about a new  
 prescription for his glasses and CRAIG OVERTON whittles a new  
 bat, TIM PAINE puzzles over what to do next.

TIM PAINE  
 (looking at his  
 bowling options)  
 Curse these two. They look solid  
 against everybody we have.  
 Unless...

And finally, after a slow crescendo that has lasted virtually  
 the entire partnership, the sound of the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE  
 THEME MUSIC becomes audible to human ears.

TIM PAINE whips his head around, trying to work out where the  
 music is coming from, and what the 'chooga-chooga-chooga'  
 noise that can be heard beneath it is.

TIM PAINE (CONT'D)  
 Of course!

Made in Highland

It's MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE racing to the bowling crease in his LABUSCHTRAIN, a self-railing one-man bullet train, like something from a 'Wallace and Gromit' cartoon. MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE slams on the brakes, the rails retract back into the LABUSCHTRAIN and he bursts out to give the umpire his cap.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE  
Leave this to me.

The MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC now soars, played by a full symphony orchestra, and it inspires MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE to almost immediately dismiss JACK LEACH.

The Australians embrace MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE in SLOW MOTION. The MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC becomes somehow even more epic.

DAVE WARNER  
(joyously)  
All aboard the Labuschtrain!

The rest of the team cheer and start clambering aboard.

STEVE SMITH  
Wait! Wait! There's still one  
more wicket to take!

TIM PAINE  
He's right.

He goes to toss MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE the ball, but the MARNUS OF MYSTERY, the LABUSCHAGNE YOU CAN'T RESTRAIN has already disappeared along with the LABUSCHTRAIN, leaving behind only a note that reads 'I'll be there when next you need me'.

So JOSH HAZLEWOOD takes the last wicket instead.

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM**

JOE ROOT looks contemptuously at the celebrating Australians.

JOE ROOT  
Look at those idiots celebrating  
like they've retained the Ashes.

JOS BUTTLER  
Uh, sir. They have retained  
the Ashes.

JOE ROOT  
Not necessarily. We could win the  
final Test. That would make it a  
tie. And we all know who wins  
when it's a tie.

Made in Highland

He does the 'who has two thumbs and wins even when they tie' gesture.

JOS BUTTLER  
Ummm... that's just the World  
Cup, Joe.

JOE ROOT narrows his eyes in frustration. Why does EOIN MORGAN get it so easy!

JOE ROOT  
(furiously)  
Get out.

A sad JOS BUTTLER leaves JOE ROOT by himself. JOE ROOT pulls out a phone and puts in a call.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)  
Okay. The Australians may well have destroyed my captaincy. But before this series ends, I'll take them down too. I'll take all of them down. And you're going to help me, Mr M.

CUT TO:

**INT. AUSTRALIAN DRESSING ROOM**

A shadowy figure stands away from the beer that is being thrown about.

MR M  
It will be my pleasure.

CUT TO: BLACK

FADE IN:

**EXT. THE OVAL, DAY 1**

TIM PAINE and JOE ROOT come together for the toss. They exchange team sheets.

JOE ROOT looks down the Australian lineup and smiles. The reports he'd heard from MR M, his deep undercover agent in the Australian dressing room, were correct.

TIM PAINE  
(wearing glasses that make  
him look like Chris Rogers)  
Heads!

Made in Highland

TRAVIS HEAD  
 (popping in from nowhere,  
 also wearing glasses that  
 make him look like Chris  
 Rogers)  
 You called?

TIM PAINE  
 No.

TRAVIS HEAD  
 I thought you said 'Head's'. You  
 know, like it was my coin.

TIM PAINE  
 (coldly)  
 I said, 'No.'

TRAVIS HEAD skulks away. TIM PAINE learns that he has won the toss.

TIM PAINE (CONT'D)  
 We'll have a bowl.

JOE ROOT  
 Really??

He starts sniggering and rushes off to tell his team.

TIM PAINE smiles as JOE ROOT leaves. If the reports he's heard from AGENT B, his deep undercover agent in the English dressing room are correct, everything is falling into place.

FADE TO:

**EXT. THE OVAL**

JOE ROOT hits a ball into the air. One of the fielders - let us say, NATHAN LYON wearing glasses that make him look like Chris Rogers - leaps at the ball and fumbles the chance.

The bowler, PAT CUMMINS, wearing glasses that make him look like the handsomest Chris Rogers you've ever seen, shakes his head in fury.

DAVE WARNER  
 (whispering, while wearing  
 glasses that make him look  
 like Chris Rogers)  
 Should we have told Pat what we  
 were doing?

TIM PAINE  
 No. Do you think somebody as  
 handsome and pure as him would be  
 willing to keep Root in?  
 (MORE)

Made in Highland

TIM PAINE (CONT'D)  
 Even if it is a brilliant long  
 term scheme to ensure there's  
 ongoing tension between him and  
 the next England captain in  
 2021/22?

DAVE WARNER  
 Oh. Is that what we're doing?

TIM PAINE  
 Agent B guarantees it will work.

Eventually, PAT CUMMINS gets the irrits with this and bowls  
 JOE ROOT instead.

TIM PAINE (CONT'D)  
 Oh, FFS.

FADE TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM**

JOE ROOT watches as CHRIS WOAKES succumbs to the swing  
 bowling of MITCHELL MARSH, late 20s, vice-captain, beloved by  
 the team, wearing glasses that make him look like Chris  
 Rogers but doesn't know it.

JOE ROOT  
 (to himself)  
 Yes!

RORY BURNS  
 (looking up from sawing JOE  
 DENLY in half)  
 Are you sure this plan is going  
 to work?

JOE ROOT  
 Of course I am. Wickets here  
 today will almost certainly  
 secure his spot until the 2021/22  
 Ashes. And that's when I'll have  
 my revenge.

RORY BURNS  
 (pulling a coin from behind  
 JOE ROOT's ear)  
 Seems risky.

JOE ROOT  
 Mr M guarantees it will work.

And JOE ROOT goes back to pondering. He is playing FOUR  
 DIMENSIONAL CHESS against TIM PAINE, and he is pretty sure  
 he's winning. All he has to do is lose.

Made in Highland

Suddenly, JOS BUTTLER tees off, smashing JOSH HAZLEWOOD for multiple sixes, as the partnership with JACK LEACH, wearing glasses that make him look like Chris Rogers, passes fifty.

JOE ROOT

Oh, FFS.

CUT TO:

**INT. AUSTRALIAN DRESSING ROOM, DAY 2**

As the Australians towel off after their pre-match NUDE YOGA SESSION, coach JUSTIN LANGER walks around the dressing room.

He hands an envelope reading 'Tim Pain' to TIM PAINE.

TIM PAINE

What's this?

JUSTIN LANGER

Invitation to Warney's fiftieth birthday party. Tonight. It's going to be huge.

JUSTIN LANGER moves on, handing an invitation to MITCH MARSH. The invitation reads 'Mich Marsh'.

MITCH MARSH

(reading it)  
Jelly wrestling!

NATHAN LYON's invitation is addressed to 'Natham Lion'.

NATHAN LYON

(reading it)  
Naked waiters!

JOSH HAZLEWOOD ('Jos Hazelwood') opens his invitation excitedly.

JOSH HAZLEWOOD

(reading it)  
Gnome tossing!

JUSTIN LANGER gets a concerned look on his face at that particular element. Nevertheless, he continues moving around the room, handing out erroneously spelled invitations to the various players. He gets to MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE, whose name is attempted on at least nine occasions, each one crossed out before finally being addressed, simply, to a begrudging 'M'.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE

(reading invitation)  
Batting nets!

STEVE SMITH overhears this and excitedly scurries over. JUSTIN LANGER gives him his invitation ('Stephen Smeth'). STEVE SMITH reads it and confirms that there are nets.

Made in Highland

STEVE SMITH

Yippee!

Eventually all the invitations are handed out. Everybody is chattering excitedly about SHANE WARNE's fiftieth birthday party. Everybody, that is, other than MITCHELL STARC, who wasn't invited.

He sits sadly in a corner, exhibiting exactly the kind of POOR BODY LANGUAGE and LACK OF INTENT that justified SHANE WARNE not inviting him in the first place.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE OVAL**

NATHAN LYON and PETER SIDDLE are batting together.

PETER SIDDLE

I hear that Jack Nicholson is going to be there! He's bringing a slab of VB!

NATHAN LYON

Carton of VB.

PETER SIDDLE

What?

NATHAN LYON

What?

PETER SIDDLE

Also, Bruce Springsteen! And Sharon Stone!

NATHAN LYON

I heard Elvis was going to be there. And Frank Sinatra.

PETER SIDDLE

Amazing.

NATHAN LYON

Amazing.

PETER SIDDLE

Pup too.

NATHAN LYON

Oh.

PETER SIDDLE

Yeah.

(he shrugs)  
I'm still going though.

Made in Highland

NATHAN LYON  
 (after a pause)  
 For sure. Marilyn Monroe is going  
 to be there.

PETER SIDDLE  
 It's going to be great. Anyway, I  
 think you're out.

And he is, bowled by JOFRA ARCHER.

NATHAN LYON  
 Who cares! Warney's fiftieth!

PETER SIDDLE  
 Yes!

And then he, too, is out. They both race off to get ready for  
 the party.

FADE TO:

**INT. AUSTRALIAN HOTEL, SEVERAL HOURS LATER**

MITCHELL STARC, sitting alone in the hotel room, playing  
 Minesweeper on his laptop. He clicks a square that reveals a  
 bomb. It explodes.

He sighs and starts a new game.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE OVAL, DAY 3**

SIR BEN STOKES and PAPA JOE DENLY are batting. At short leg  
 is MATTHEW WADE, sledging up a storm.

MATTHEW WADE  
 (spitting)  
 ... and JFK was there. And  
 James Dean.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 Impersonators.

DAVE WARNER  
 (chiming in from slip)  
 Nope. The real deal. Slamming  
 down dirty rottens. Real thirsty  
 types.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 They're both dead, mate.

MATTHEW WADE  
 (squeezing out a fart)  
 Yeah, like Warney would invite  
 dead people to his fiftieth.  
 Muhammad Ali, Marilyn Monroe,  
 Elvis. All there.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 All dead. Were Prince and Bowie  
 there too?

DAVE WARNER  
 (effortlessly lying)  
 Yes.

SIR BEN STOKES  
 Mugabe?

MATTHEW WADE  
 (wiping a booger on  
 the pitch)  
 I think so.

DAVE WARNER  
 It was the best party ever. And  
 you didn't get to go!

SIR BEN STOKES  
 (finally earning this movie  
 an 'EXPLICIT LANGUAGE'  
 rating)  
 You're a fucking prick.

The umpires are forced to step in and give DAVE WARNER and  
 MATTHEW WADE a warning about teasing SIR BEN STOKES.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE OVAL**

MONTAGE of England batting all day, set to the music of  
 'Danger Zone' by Kenny Loggins. SIR BEN STOKES makes runs,  
 JOS BUTTLER makes runs. Hell, even PAPA JOE DENLY makes runs.

CUT TO:

**INT. ENGLAND DRESSING ROOM**

JOS BUTTLER and JOE ROOT watch the final overs of the day  
 play out.

JOS BUTTLER  
 Are you going to declare  
 tonight, Joe?

Made in Highland

JOE ROOT  
(giggling insanely)  
Wouldn't you like to know?

JOS BUTTLER  
Uh, yes sir, I would. A few of  
the bowlers were wondering if  
they should warm up.

JOE ROOT  
Tell them they can  
keep wondering.

JOS BUTTLER frowns but begins to head off and do as instructed. But JOE ROOT suddenly grabs JOS BUTTLER by the shirt and pulls him in close to his face.

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)  
(with furious intensity)  
I don't know who in this side ran  
the campaign against me. I don't  
know if it was Sir Ben, or Rory,  
or Jonny, or Stuart, or Trevor,  
or you--

JOS BUTTLER  
(hastily)  
It wasn't me, sir.

JOE ROOT  
(ignoring him)  
I don't care any more. All I care  
about is bringing down this  
Australian side before I go. And  
now, finally, the pieces are in  
place.

JOS BUTTLER  
How so?

JOE ROOT  
If we win, it's 2-2 and they'll  
implode with frustration at being  
constantly corrected about the  
differences between 'winning the  
Ashes' and 'retaining the Ashes'.  
I already have some of my media  
stooges working on this.

JOS BUTTLER  
And if we lose?

JOE ROOT  
If we lose, Smith will have to  
make more than two hundred runs.  
(MORE)

JOE ROOT (CONT'D)

He'll surpass Bradman as top run scorer in a Test series and the Australian public will insist he be reinstated as captain. Paine will be gone, Smith will be suspended again within a year, and my revenge will be complete.

JOS BUTTLER

And if it's a tie?

JOE ROOT

Oh, shut up, Jos.

JOE ROOT releases JOS BUTTLER, who heads off to iron his shirt. JOE ROOT cackles insanely, continuing long after stumps are drawn and throughout the press conference, becoming even more frenzied as TIM PAINE starts explaining about lines and whether MATTHEW WADE and DAVE WARNER crossed them.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE OVAL, DAY 4**

After DAVE WARNER and MARCUS HARRIS didn't even bother coming to the crease, Australia start their chase of 399 with MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE and STEVE SMITH.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE is the first to arrive, via the LABUSCHPLANE. He leaps out of the aircraft and skydives down to the middle, bat strapped to his back, the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC blaring loudly. Approximately two-thirds of the way down he realises that he has forgotten to strap on the parachute, and this becomes a THRILLING ACTION SET PIECE as he tries to slow his fall using only his box and his shoelaces.

Just as he's about to crash into the middle of The Oval, there is a sudden WHOOSH as STEVE SMITH swoops in and catches him.

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE

Thanks Smudge.

STEVE SMITH

Any time. Ready for a rescue?

MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE

Always.

The pair of them land at the crease, perform an ELABORATE HANDSHAKE that revolves primarily around INCREASINGLY LUDICROUS REJECTIONS OF THE OTHER'S HAND, and begin batting.

Made in Highland

Suddenly, there is a record scratch as the MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE THEME MUSIC is halted. He is stumped by JONNY BAIRSTOW, who celebrates by sweep-kicking SIR BEN STOKES' knee and piledriving him into the pitch. It is all in good fun.

STEVE SMITH  
Just me, then, is it?  
(taking an almighty breath)  
Okay.

MATTHEW WADE  
(arriving at the crease)  
Um, hello? What am I, a discarded  
piece of puss?

STEVE SMITH  
Just relax, citizen. I have this  
under control.

MATTHEW WADE  
Oh, for fu--

But before he can finish his foul-mouthed statement, STEVE SMITH is exposed to a rare radioactive mineral from his home planet. It is like something out of 'Chernobyl', except infinitely less gross and also much less likely to achieve critical acclaim. It's instead one of those light-hearted bursts of radioactivity that merely weakens his powers, allowing SIR BEN STOKES to catch him at leg slip.

STEVE SMITH  
I don't understand. I'm... out?

SIR BEN STOKES celebrates the catch by grabbing JONNY BAIRSTOW and tearing him in half, straight down the middle, with his bare hands. It is all in good fun.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE OVAL**

The twin dismissals of MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE and STEVE SMITH mean that England win the Test despite a century from MATTHEW WADE.

TIM PAINE emerges from the dressing room and shakes JOE ROOT's hand.

TIM PAINE  
Well done on winning this Test.  
Shame you lost the series.

JOE ROOT  
Drew the series.

TIM PAINE  
Well, we did win the Ashes.

Made in Highland

JOE ROOT  
Retained the Ashes.

TIM PAINE  
They're ours, anyway. That's the important thing.

JOE ROOT  
Every Test match is important.

TIM PAINE  
Not so much this one. Mission accomplished.

JOE ROOT  
You said it was your Grand Final.

TIM PAINE  
A Grand Final we didn't have to win.

JOE ROOT  
Not much of a Grand Final then, is it?

TIM PAINE  
Now you're getting it.

And so on and so on and so on. We slowly pull back from the two of them bickering, past SIR BEN STOKES and STEVE SMITH also sharing a PLAYER OF THE SERIES AWARD, past MATTHEW WADE angrily abusing the editor of this film, demanding the deleted scene of his century be reinstated, past a cloud of smoke where MARNUS LABUSCHAGNE was last seen, past JOFRA ARCHER tweeting on his phone, past the remains of JONNY BAIRSTOW and past RORY BURNS performing stage magic for both teams.

Until finally, all we see, is a cricket ground, filled to capacity, celebrating cricket and, in particular, THE ASHES.

END CREDITS ROLL

CUT TO:

#### MID CREDITS SEQUENCE

#### INT. COMMENTARY BOX, DAY

SIR IAN BOTHAM and SHANE WARNE smile at one another.

SHANE WARNE  
Nicely done, Beefy. Or should I say, 'Agent B'?

IAN BOTHAM  
Thank you, Mr M.

Made in Highland

SHANE WARNE

It's Mr W. You're looking at the initial upside down.

IAN BOTHAM

You bloody Australians! Always doing everything the wrong way around.

SHANE WARNE

Ha ha!!!!!!!

IAN BOTHAM

Anyway, thanks to us, another Ashes series has held the interest of the entire cricketing world.

SHANE WARNE

Without being as good as our Ashes.

IAN BOTHAM

Precisely. Just like I told you at your birthday party the other night.

SHANE WARNE

I'll tell you what, Beefy, we really are the best.

IAN BOTHAM

That we are, Shane. That we are.

CUT TO:

FURTHER CREDITS

FADE TO:

## END CREDITS SEQUENCE

### INT. COMMENTARY BOX, DAY

IAN BOTHAM and SHANE WARNE are still yammering on about their feats on and off the cricket field. We PULL BACK to reveal DAN LIEBKE, late 40s, struggling screenwriter, bald, going far too meta in this post-credits sequence but doesn't know it, sitting on his couch, half-asleep, watching these two on television. He suddenly leaps for his remote control.

DAN LIEBKE

Mute, mute, mute!

He successfully mutes the droning of IAN BOTHAM and SHANE WARNE and leans back on his couch, satisfied. He slowly drifts off to sleep.

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CUT TO: BLACK

SUPER: The Ashes will return

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