

KARMA MAGNET

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. CLINIC, CARPARK - NIGHT 1

Rain lashes down on the carpark. Police struggle to control a crowd of gawking onlookers, who crane their necks in an attempt to see the top of the tall building.

POLICE OFFICER  
Back! Get back, will you? I'm not  
telling you again.

MARY RONSON, a TV reporter, arrives on the scene with her  
CAMERA MAN.

MARY  
Are we good to go?

The camera man fiddles with his camera.

MARY  
Dan? Come on!

He points his camera at her and adjusts the focus.

MARY  
I want you over there and I want  
the crowd in shot. Okay? Are we  
good to go? Dan? Dan, are we --?

The camera man nods. Mary composes herself and stares  
straight into the lens.

2 EXT. CAMERA'S POV - NIGHT 2

Mary addresses her camera. A publicity photo of celebrity  
chef JOEL MANNERS (40) appears in a title bar at the bottom  
of the screen.

MARY  
You're joining me live at the  
Amicus Clinic where celebrity Chef,  
Joel Manners, clings precariously  
to life on the hospital roof.

3 EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT 3

High above them: Joel stands on the raised lip of the corner  
of a flat roof. The rain lashes his tear stained face as he  
gazes mournfully over the city. Behind his back, his hands  
grip tightly to a tall brick chimney.

MARY (V.O.)

The popular television personality was admitted last night after a failed suicide attempt. Fifteen minutes ago he climbed onto the roof, apparently intent on jumping. A detective has joined Mr Manners and is attempting to engage him in conversation.

Lightning splits the clouded sky. Joel looks glumly at the crowd below and dangles a foot over the dizzying drop.

MARY

We can only hope he succeeds in dissuading him from this desperate act. For now, the question on everyone's lips is this: what could drive the self-professed 'luckiest man in the world' to attempt to take his own life?

DETECTIVE WILSON hovers nearby, hunched in a vain attempt to protect himself from the freezing downpour.

DETECTIVE WILSON

Mr Manners? Won't you at least come over here and talk about it?

JOEL

What's there to talk about? I have to die.

DETECTIVE WILSON

Now, now, no one has to die.

JOEL

It's for the good of humanity. Don't you understand?

DETECTIVE WILSON

Not really, sir. Why don't you come down here and explain it to me?

Joel chokes back a bitter laugh.

JOEL

You wouldn't believe me anyway.

DETECTIVE WILSON

Try me. I'm a good listener.

JOEL

A last testament?

DETECTIVE WILSON

Let's just go for an explanation, see where we go from there.

Joel closes his eyes and remembers.

JOEL  
I've always been lucky.

DETECTIVE WILSON  
The luckiest man in the world,  
that's what they call you, isn't  
it?

JOEL  
Yeah, that's what they call me.  
Nothing bad has ever happened to  
me. Me and my mate Rajeev noticed  
it when we were just kids. Small  
things at first ...

4 EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY - FLASHBACK 4

YOUNG JOEL (14) and his friends: YOUNG RAJEEV and SIMON, hide behind a high wall, smoking.

JOEL (V.O.)  
... things you'd think were just  
coincidence.

MR WOODROW, a teacher, rounds the corner. Joel is hidden by an angle in the wall; the rest are not so lucky.

MR WOODROW  
What the hell are you doing?  
Inside, now!

He grabs the cigarettes from the startled boys and shoves Rajeev and Simon towards the school. Rajeev looks over at Joel. Joel silently implores his friend not to give him away. Rajeev scowls, but says nothing.

5 INT. CATERING COLLEGE, KITCHEN - DAY - FLASHBACK 5

Young Joel, Young Rajeev and other trainee chefs bustle about the college kitchen.

JOEL (V.O.)  
Thing is, how many times does it  
have to happen before you realise  
the truth? How many times can you  
just pass it off as coincidence?  
Every time something bad happened,  
every time, you could bet it  
wouldn't happen to me.

A rusty gas pipe leads into an ancient oven.

Joel frantically chops vegetables as he hops from foot to foot, desperate for the toilet.

YOUNG JOEL

Rajeev, mate. Can you check my  
roast?

Incredulous, Rajeev looks up from his own food preparation.

YOUNG RAJEEV

You're taking the piss, right?

YOUNG JOEL

No, mate, no. I gotta piss.

Annoyed, Rajeev grabs a dishcloth.

Joel speed walks to the door.

6 INT. CATERING COLLEGE, CORRIDOR - DAY - FLASHBACK 6

Joel leaves the kitchen and hurries along the corridor.

7 INT. CATERING COLLEGE, KITCHEN - DAY - FLASHBACK 7

Rajeev yanks open the battered oven.

The gas pipe snaps. Gas hisses as it floods the room.

8 INT. CATERING COLLEGE, CORRIDOR - DAY - FLASHBACK 8

Joel trots up a flight of stairs.

JOEL (V.O.)

Rajeev was the first to notice it.

BOOM! Behind Joel, an explosion rips through the kitchen,  
spewing smoke and debris into the corridor.

Joel turns in shock.

Rajeev, clutching his face, staggers out of the kitchen and  
collapses. Smoke roils from his charred catering whites.

Joel looks down from his safe vantage point, horrified at the  
fate of his friend.

END OF FLASHBACK.

9 EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT 9

Joel leans back against the antenna. Detective Wilson edges  
slowly closer to him.

JOEL

Random events, you couldn't connect  
them except for one thing;  
(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)

they never happened to me. None of it ever happens to me, I'm safe and sound in the eye of the storm.

DETECTIVE WILSON

Like you say, you're just lucky.

JOEL

Yeah, lucky. That's obvious, but you ever stopped to wonder why? Why am I so lucky?

DETECTIVE WILSON

It's just the way it is. Some people are, some people aren't.

JOEL

No one is as lucky as me. No one. Thing is, you don't get something for nothing, everything has a price. I never knew, never understood what that price was. Not until that day. Not until the luckiest day of my life.

10 EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK 10

A newsagents in a row of shops.

11 INT. NEWSAGENTS - DAY - FLASHBACK 11

SANDRA (28), pretty and bored, flicks through a magazine behind the counter. Joel (34) stands before her, trembling with excitement.

JOEL

Sandra, you want to go out tonight, or what?

Sandra fires a dismissive glance in his direction and returns to her magazine.

SANDRA

I keep telling you, love; you can't afford me.

Joel grins, he's been waiting for this. He slaps a scratch card down on the counter. Sandra double takes.

SANDRA

Joel, this is ... you won a hundred grand!

Joel nods.

SANDRA

This is ... this is a hundred  
grand!

Sandra picks up the winning card and grips it tightly.

JOEL

That not good enough for you? How  
about Britain's newest celebrity  
chef?

Joel holds up a BBC press photo for his new cookery show.  
Sandra gazes at it in amazement.

SANDRA

Pick me up at eight.

Joel's grin nearly splits his face in half.

12

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

12

Joel strides out of the newsagents, his pace calm and  
measured. As soon as he's out of Sandra's sight, he throws  
his arms wide and yells.

JOEL

YESSSS!

Joel looks around: the street is deathly quiet. A crowd  
glances disapprovingly at him as they cluster around a TV  
shop window.

Curious, Joel wanders over. His eyes widen in shock.

REPORTER (V.O.)

(filtered)

... first plane hit the north tower  
at 8.46 this morning, it appeared  
to be a terrible tragedy. When the  
second plane hit the south tower,  
barely twenty minutes later, there  
could be no doubt.

Joel sags.

REPORTER (V.O.)

(filtered)

This day, September 11th 2001, is a  
day which will live in infamy for  
generations to come. At 9.59, the  
south tower collapsed under the  
extent of the damage, the north  
tower followed shortly afterwards  
at 10.28.

(MORE)

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The clouds of smoke and debris continue to envelop the New York skyline, severely hampering the emergency services and their struggle to provide any kind of aid for anyone who may still be alive, trapped in the rubble. The extent of the damage may well be beyond the capacity of the emergency services to cope, with several firefighters believed to have been killed when the towers collapsed. The number of fatalities is estimated to be in the thousands, but it will be many days before the true extent of the tragedy becomes clear. All international civilian air traffic has been banned from landing on US soil; aircraft already in flight is either being turned back or redirected to airports in Canada or Mexico. Reports suggest a car bomb had been detonated at the U.S. State Department's headquarters, the Truman Building in Foggy Bottom, Washington, D.C. but these have yet to be confirmed. A third plane appears to have crashed into the Pentagon, but details are sketchy.

Joel staggers off along the street.

JOEL (V.O.)

It's all my fault.

13 INT. RAJEEV'S LOUNGE - DAY - FLASHBACK

13

Joel sits with Rajeev (34), one side of his face still bears the scars of his childhood accident.

RAJEEV

Fuck you, mate.

JOEL

It has to be. I can't believe this sort of thing can happen on a day like this. I should be celebrating but ...

RAJEEV

But fuck you, that's what. My cousin was in there, he could be dead, yeah? And you're sitting here talking shit?

JOEL  
I'm sorry, I just ...

Joel lapses into a brooding silence.

END OF FLASHBACK.

14 EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

14

Detective Wilson looks quizzically at the distraught Joel.

DETECTIVE WILSON  
You can't possibly believe --

JOEL  
Can't I? It just got worse and worse. Every time something good happens to me, something equally bad happens to someone I care about. I'm married, I have responsibilities, I ... oh my god, Sandra. If anything ever happened to her ...

DETECTIVE WILSON  
You've got to think of her, think of Sandra. What would she do if you did this? Come on, Joel, think of your wife, think of--

JOEL  
I am thinking of her. I love her, I love her so much. She's always been there for me, been at my side no matter what. My beautiful ... oh god, Sandra.

DETECTIVE WILSON  
She wouldn't want you to do this.

JOEL  
You don't understand. I have no choice. It's not going to get any better, it'll never get any better. Always, as my life gets better, everyone else's falls apart. When I opened my first restaurant ...

15 INT. RESTAURANT - DAY - FLASHBACK

15

Joel and Sandra, dressed up to the nines, prepare to face the press queuing up outside the new restaurant. Sandra hangs up her mobile.

SANDRA  
It's Rajeev, he's in hospital, he's  
been in a car crash.

JOEL  
Shit. I can't go. I can't leave --

SANDRA  
I'll go, you look after things  
here.

Sandra pecks him on the cheek and rushes for the back door.  
Joel shakes off his guilt and steps out to meet the press.

JOEL (V.O.)  
My luck got better and better ...

16 INT. JOEL AND SANDRA'S LOUNGE - DAY - FLASHBACK 16

A small urn sits on a table.

JOEL (V.O.)  
My little TV show only went and won  
a BAFTA, we sold it all around the  
world ...

Joel, dressed in funeral black, stares glumly at the urn.

JOEL  
I'm sorry mum.

Behind him, Sandra and Rajeev, both in black, share an  
annoyed glance.

Joel gets up and walks out.

17 EXT. JOEL AND SANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK 17

A NEIGHBOUR cranks the engine of his new car. It shudders and  
grinds, but refuses to start.

Joel leaves his house and strides towards the road. Sandra  
rushes out after him.

SANDRA  
It's your imagination!

JOEL  
No. No it can't be. It happens too  
often.

SANDRA  
Bollocks! It's all in your mind.

JOEL

Somehow, my good luck is linked to everyone else's bad luck. I need to find out how.

SANDRA

You need your head examined, that's what you need.

JOEL

I'm doing this for you.

SANDRA

I can't talk to you, I just can't...

Sandra storms back into the house. Rajeev is at the door.

JOEL (V.O.)

That was the day I finally got what I'd always wanted.

RAJEEV

Nice one, mate. She's fucking pregnant, yeah? She don't need the stress.

Rajeev closes the door.

Joel stares in shock.

JOEL

But ... but I thought we couldn't get pregnant?

JOEL (V.O.)

How could that be a coincidence?

JOEL

(glumly)  
It's a miracle.

18 EXT. HARLEY STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

18

Joel checks an address on a piece of paper as he passes a sign: HARLEY STREET.

JOEL (V.O.)

I had to do something about it.

19 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

19

DOCTOR HARMON finishes his examination of Joel.

DOCTOR HARMON

As far as I can tell, you're fit and well.

JOEL

There must be something unusual?

DOCTOR HARMON

Nope. You know, it's easy to understand how one can be convinced the universe revolves around us. It's the nature of human belief, we're each the centre of our own personal universe. The human brain is designed to look for patterns. Indeed, pattern recognition is the basis of all our thinking. It's not surprising we occasionally make connections which just aren't there.

JOEL

No, there has to be more to it than that, there has to be.

DOCTOR HARMON

Perhaps you'd like to see a psychiatrist?

JOEL

Perhaps you'd like to fuck off?

21 EXT. JOEL AND SANDRA'S HOUSE - DAY - FLASHBACK 21

The neighbour, car bonnet open, tools strewn around, tries once more to start the engine. No luck. Joel trudges miserably up to his front door.

JOEL (V.O.)

I tried Doctors, astrologers, psychics, scientists, even men of God, but no one knew the answer.

22 INT. JOEL AND SANDRA'S LOUNGE - DAY - FLASHBACK 22

Sandra and Rajeev form a united front against Joel.

SANDRA

You're out of your mind; and you're wasting our money. Nothing's going to happen to me or the baby.

JOEL

But what if it does?

RAJEEV

He's right.

JOEL

Really?

What?

SANDRA

RAJEEV

Maybe. I met this guy.

SANDRA

Oh for ... Don't you fucking start.

RAJEEV

No, hear me out, babe. This guy, he's a spiritualist, yeah? I told him what you was doing, and he thinks he can help.

Joel hugs his friend.

JOEL

Thank you.

RAJEEV

It's alright, mate, it's alright.

23

INT. SPIRITUALIST CENTRE - DAY - FLASHBACK

23

Joel meets with ABHIJAT, an Indian guru. They both sit cross legged as Abhijat mutters and waves incense at him.

ABHIJAT

You are being Karma magnet.

JOEL

I ... I don't -- ?

ABHIJAT

Karma magnet. The universe is being a careful cosmic balance of right and wrong, good and bad, lucky and unlucky. Most people are getting their fair share of both. Occasionally someone is being born who upsets this balance. You are this man. You are like magnet, see? Yes, yes, you draw good luck to you; and since there is only being so much to go round, there is not being enough for anyone else.

JOEL

Of course. It all makes sense. How do I stop it?

ABHIJAT

Oh no, no, no. You cannot stop anything. Life is motion, circles and karma is karma. As long as you live, you will always be magnet.

Joel slumps in despair.

END OF FLASHBACK.

24 EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

24

Detective Wilson stares at Joel in disbelief.

DETECTIVE WILSON

You don't seriously believe that, do you? It just ... it doesn't sound right.

JOEL

I found a fifty pound note yesterday morning.

DETECTIVE WILSON

Yeah, and--

JOEL

Yesterday afternoon, Rajeev was stabbed in the street.

DETECTIVE WILSON

Joel, I ... is he alright?

JOEL

He's still alive, no thanks to me. You see now? You understand? I had to stop it, so I checked into this cheap hotel.

24A INT. CHEAP HOTEL, BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

24A

Joel stares mournfully into a grubby mirror. He holds two half empty bottles: whisky and pills.

JOEL (V.O.)

And right there and then, in the bathroom, I decided to finish it.

Joel empties the last of the pills into his hand, swallows the small handful and swigs heavily from the whisky bottle. He staggers and falls against the bath.

The room spins around him, colours blur and drift out of focus. Joel struggles briefly and gives in, his eyes close and he slips into unconsciousness.

FADE TO BLACK.

In the darkness: a regular, repeated squeak.

DOCTOR RAYNER

Mr Manners? ... Joel? ... Can you hear me?

24B INT. CLINIC, CORRIDOR - DAY - FLASHBACK

24B

With difficulty, Joel opens his eyes.

DOCTOR RAYNER, a kind-faced older woman, pushes Joel along in a wheelchair with a squeaky wheel. In Joel's fragile mental state, the clinic is like a living nightmare.

Inmates wander aimlessly in the corridors, gibbering to themselves. One conducts an imaginary orchestra, another stares at some invisible horror in his hands.

DOCTOR RAYNER

Ah, there you are.

Joel starts and looks around. Doctor Rayner puts a restraining hand on his arm.

DOCTOR RAYNER

Don't try to get up, we've pumped your stomach, but the drugs will take a while to work their way out of your system. We nearly lost you. If the maid hadn't found you when she did ... well, you're a very lucky man.

Joel sags back in the chair and chokes back a sobbing laugh. He doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

A haggard OLD WOMAN lurches out of a cross corridor, pursued by two orderlies. She screams as they grab her arms and lead her back the way she came.

Out of the corner of his eye: Joel sees Abhijat standing beside her; but when Joel looks again, the guru has gone.

24C INT. CLINIC, DOCTOR RAYNER'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

24C

Joel perches nervously on the edge of a couch. Doctor Rayner sits in a comfortable chair nearby. A mirrored wall bears the scars of a violent outbreak: two fist sized holes smashed through the glass.

DOCTOR RAYNER

Joel, we phoned Sandra, she told me about your delusions--

JOEL

They're not delusions, I'm still here. I tried to kill myself, I should be dead.

DOCTOR RAYNER

Yes, and you were ...

JOEL

Lucky?

DOCTOR RAYNER

Yes, no. Look, Joel ...

(beat)

My brother ate fish, the next day he was hit by a bus. Do you think eating fish caused the bus to hit him?

JOEL

What? No--

DOCTOR RAYNER

Yet nearly everyone in the world who's been hit by a bus has had fish at some point in their lives. Are you sure there's no connection?

JOEL

Doc, I'm not crazy.

DOCTOR RAYNER

We're all a little crazy, Joel.

An eye appears in one of the smashed holes and stares at Joel. Joel shudders.

JOEL

Oh God, Sandra, you said ... where is she?

DOCTOR RAYNER

We spoke on the phone. Her contractions have started, she's not in labour yet, but ...

JOEL

There's not much time.

Joel gets shakily to his feet and crosses to the window. He looks out at the drop below.

24D EXT. CLINIC, CARPARK - DAY - FLASHBACK 24D

Abhijat stares up at Joel.

24E INT. CLINIC, DOCTOR RAYNER'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK 24E

Joel pushes gently on the window - it's locked.

DOCTOR RAYNER

Joel, we're going to keep you in  
for observation. I'm sorry, but I  
can't allow you to--

JOEL

It's okay, Doctor. I think I'd like  
to go back to my room now.

Doctor Rayner goes to say something, but changes her mind.

DOCTOR RAYNER

Of course, I'll get the orderly.

END OF FLASHBACK.

24F EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT 24F

Joel stares out over the drop.

JOEL

So I waited until dark, stole a key  
to the roof and ... here we are.

DETECTIVE WILSON

Joel, that psychiatrist's right;  
there's no fate, there's no rules  
to luck. You make your own luck,  
you--

JOEL

Sandra must be in labour by now, I  
have to protect my family.

DETECTIVE WILSON

No, listen to me, Joel. Please,  
just listen. They teach us, yeah?  
They teach us the theory has to fit  
the evidence, not the other way  
round. Which is what you're doing,  
you've--

JOEL

I've accepted the truth.

DETECTIVE WILSON

No! Look ... just ... You love your wife, yeah? Nothing bad happened on your wedding day, right?

JOEL

There's no more time.

Joel lets go of the chimney and steps out into space.

DETECTIVE WILSON

No!

Detective Wilson lurches forward, but he's too late. Joel plummets to his death.

25 EXT. CLINIC, CARPARK - NIGHT 25

The crowd screams as Joel's body thuds into the ground. Abhijat, in everyday street clothes, watches him dispassionately from the crowd.

26 EXT. CAMERA'S POV - NIGHT 26

Mary looks at the twisted body with disgust.

MARY

Oh my god, oh my god. He did it ...

27 INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT 27

Rajeev, a blood stained bandage around his chest, and an exhausted Sandra, with her new born baby, watch the TV.

MARY (V.O.)

(filtered)

He actually did it. Right in front of my eyes, celebrity chef, Joel Manners has ... I can't believe it ... Joel Manners is dead. He's jumped to his death and ... why would he do that? Why would ... ? What drives a man who has everything to throw it all away? There's no reason to it, there's no ... I think we should go back to the studio. I need ... I think I'm going to be sick. Joel Manners, TV personality, celebrity chef and BAFTA award winning host has killed himself live on television. This is ... this is unbelievable.

Rajeev clicks off the TV and looks quietly at Sandra.

Rajeev peels away his bandage - the flesh is perfect and unmarked underneath. He leans over and pulls the blanket away from his half-Indian child's face. Sandra looks adoringly up at him and smiles. They kiss.

SANDRA

We're rich. It's all ours now. All of it.

RAJEEV

(smiles)

Some people will believe anything.

28 EXT. JOEL AND SANDRA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 28

The neighbour's car engine roars into life.

29 EXT. AFRICAN DESERT - DAY 29

A AFRICAN CHILD looks up at the sky. His face breaks into a grin as the first drops of rain spatter the dusty ground.

30 EXT. EARTH FROM SPACE - NIGHT 30

The planet turns slowly against the stars. Millions of voices babble, occasionally one can be heard over the others.

VOICE #1

I thought she was dead, but she just started breathing--

VOICE #2

After all these years and I just bumped into him in--

VOICE #3

Fourteen thousand pounds, can you believe it? I never win nothing--

As the planet turns, Antarctica comes into view. Clouds rush through the atmosphere, boiling as they reach the south pole.

VOICE #4

It's just closing up. It's like the ozone's just replacing itself.

VOICE #5

Impossible, I know; but it's true!

FADE OUT.

THE END