

NORMAN'S CONQUEST (WORKING TITLE)
THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF
NORMAN WISDOM

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EXT. LONDON STREET - BAFTA AWARDS 1954

SUPERIMPOSE: BAFTA Awards, London 1954.

In the style of BLACK AND WHITE BRITISH PATHE' Newsreel, with the recognisable period sound of the stiff upper lipped NARRATOR describing the scene. NORMAN[37], his mother MAUD and agent BILLY MARSH are seen arriving at a grand event in a LIMOUSINE, before climbing out to be welcomed by adoring CROWDS of FANS and FLASHES from snapping PRESS as they arrive at the BAFTA AWARDS.

NARRATOR

The country's favorite comic, Norman Wisdom, arrives with his mother Maud and agent Billy Marsh at this years BAFTA ceremony. Norman will be hoping to pick up an award for his new film, Trouble in Store.

As the car door slams shut the images become FULL COLOUR. Maud is taken aback at the crowds and the press.

MAUD

Oh Norman! What have you done?

NORMAN[37]

Come on Mom, enjoy it. Keep up and keep smiling.

Norman does one of his trademark trips over his own foot and the crowd lap it up. The bulbs continue to flash and the trio smile and wave in every direction making their way along the red carpet.

BILLY MARSH

Well Norm, I think you've arrived my friend. They love you!

The bulb flashes intensify making Norman squint as he turns to make sure his mother, who is loving the attention, is coming along.

NORMAN[37]

You know me Billy, I've always been a lucky little devil.

The flashes intensify further and Norman has to hold a palm out to shield his eyes as he looks back towards the crowds to locate Maud. FLASH, FLASH.

NORMAN[37] (CONT'D)

Mom?

A blinding WHITE FLASH fills the screen.

CUT TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

FLASHBACK - EXT. LONDON STREET - 1923 - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: London 1923.

Scruffy urchin like children, including NORMAN[8] and his elder brother YOUNG FRED, (aged around 8 to 10 respectively), are play fighting with OTHER BOYS in the drab street. Norman does one of his trademark trips over his own foot pretending to be hit. Parked in the road outside one of the houses, looking totally out of place is a very smart and EXPENSIVE CAR. Norman[8] happens to catch sight of a woman, MAUD, his mother, hurrying out of the front door of the same house, carrying a SUITCASE. Norman[8] stops in his tracks and watches with a puzzled look as his mother scurries away quickly.

NORMAN[8]

(Shouts after his mother)

Mom! Mom?

She doesn't look back and instead disappears down the street, as fast as her legs will carry her, or as fast as she can carry the suitcase. Young Fred stops what he's doing now too and looks as equally concerned. They look at each other for a second then dart towards the house.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - 1923

The room is dark. NORMAN'S DAD sits in a CHAIR biting at the thumb of a clenched fist, staring with menace at the floor in front of him. Visible in the background, hanging up on a hook, are their father's CHAUFFEUR UNIFORM, JACKET AND CAP. Off screen the sound of the BOYS rushing in.

YOUNG FRED

(O.S)

Dad?

Norman[8] and Young Fred come bursting into the room.

YOUNG FRED (CONT'D)

(Scared of the answer)

Dad? Where's Mom gone?

NORMAN'S DAD

(Abrupt)

She's gone. That's all you need to know. And she ain't coming back.

Fred starts to cry. Norman doesn't. He stands forward.

NORMAN[8]

She is coming back. Don't say that.

NORMAN'S DAD

(With anger, torment)

She's ain't coming back and good riddance to her. Now you two get out of my sight.

Norman's Dad gets up to walk away.

NORMAN[8]

(Angry)

No! She ain't..!

Before he can finish his sentence, Norman's Dad flexes his arm and with the back of his fist hits Norman in the stomach and sends Norman[8] sprawling across the room in pain. Young Fred rushes to help him up.

NORMAN'S DAD

We're all on our own now. Get out!
Both of you!

Norman's Dad glares at them both and turns his back and carries on walking and a DOOR SLAMS off screen. Young Fred and Norman[8] are left alone and they console each other huddled together on the floor.

CUT TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

EXT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: London, 1928.

We transition to an older NORMAN[13] who looks like a very small, lost fish out of water searching for an address in the hustle and bustle of London. He stands in the busy street motionless as the crowds part a little as they rush past him. He looks up at the illuminated sign of the London hotel and checks the address against a SCRAP OF PAPER from his pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - MINUTES LATER

A young boy, JOE, who speaks with a very strong Welsh accent welcomes Norman[13] and they walk through the hotel sharing a joke. A young girl, SALLY, catches Norman[13]'s eye as she walks past.

SALLY

Morning.

JOE

Morning.

NORMAN[13]

Morning.

Norman does one of his trademark trips over his own foot. The girl walks past.

JOE

(Knocks Norman's arm and
speaks in a whisper)

Like her do you? That's Sally. Just one of the many benefits of working here Norman. This place is a cushy number. If you keep your head down and do as you're told you'll be alright.

NORMAN[13]

(Fake Welsh accent)

Alright Boyoh.

They laugh. Joe puts his hand on Norman[13]'s shoulder as they walk away both smiling.

JOE

That's funny. You like a joke do you? I like someone who can take a joke. You can take a joke can't you?

NORMAN[13]

Nothing I like better.

JOE

Good man!

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - KITCHEN

They arrive in the kitchen. KITCHEN STAFF are busy working and there is FOOD everywhere. Norman[13] stops in his tracks. He has never seen the like of it and just looks around the kitchen in amazement.

JOE

(smiles)

One thing for sure, you won't go hungry working here. You can have anything you want. Just help yourself.

Joe gestures with arm movements to the mountains of food in front of them.

Norman[13] smiles and in "insecure" Norman style he looks at the CAKES and looks back at Joe for confirmation, giggling in excitement but hesitating. Looking back and forth as he plucks up the courage to pick up a cake from a FANCY CAKE STAND which Joe encourages.

JOE (CONT'D)

(Very quietly to Norman)

Go on Norm. You lucky little devil!

Norman[13] really can't believe his luck. He gives his trademark Norman cheeky giggle and smile as he slowly brings the biggest cake he could select to his mouth to take a bite. Before he can get satisfaction, a mighty SMACK comes from behind on to the back of his head sending the cake into his face. Everywhere but his mouth.

When Norman composes himself he turns round, covered in CREAM, to see the head of the hotel staff, MR. GRACE, standing there. Very tall, very grand and very formal in full BLACK SUIT AND TIE.

MR.GRACE

What exactly do you think you're doing?

NORMAN[13]

I.. I...

Joe is sniggering to himself but cuts in before Norman[13] can speak.

JOE

He's new Mr. Grace. The job centre sent him. I'll soon sort him out.

MR.GRACE

Get out of my kitchen, get into your uniform and get to work! In that order.

Joe can hardly contain himself but he grabs Norman and leads him away.

JOE

He's going Mr. Grace.

They walk away.

NORMAN[13]

You said I could have anything I liked.

JOE

Yes Norm, I did, but I forgot to say you can only do that when no one is looking.

Norman is covered in cream and speechless.

JOE (CONT'D)

(Laughing, sarcastic)

I thought you'd know that. My mistake. Oh, you working here is going to be great Norm. We're going to have such fun. Come on.

Norman is led away still dripping cream.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - MONTAGE

Time passes. Norman[13] is settled in and working hard. He is seen carrying TRAYS to and from the rooms. Cleaning SHOES and carrying CASES, running errands. We see him smarten up, looking at himself in the MIRROR as he can afford better CLOTHES. He's learning the ropes and tries to get on Sally's good side with not much luck. Rising early morning, rushed off his feet and dropping into his BUNK late at night.

END OF MONTAGE

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - SCULLERY - EVENING

It's late and Joe and Norman[13] drop down in CHAIRS, exhausted but not finished. In front are a pile of guest's SHOES. They start the cleaning and polishing task they must complete before bed.

JOE

Do you miss home Norm?

NORMAN[13]

No, not a bit. You?

JOE

Oh Yes. Wales is fantastic see. You should come back with me. We could clean up there.

NORMAN[13]

We're cleaning up here ain't we? Anyway, you're not planning to go home are you?

JOE

Sorry Norm. I know you'll miss me but I am indeed, any day now.

NORMAN[13]

How come?

JOE

Things are picking up back home and I don't want to miss out. My Dad, my Uncle and all my brothers, they all work down the pit and they're all picking up decent money. Even the youngest and he's only 12.

NORMAN[13]

(Interested)

Really?

JOE

(Nods)

Oh yes. Better money than we'll ever see here anyway. And the girls are better in Wales too. Not stuck up like they are round here.

NORMAN[13]

I don't know. Sally's nice.

JOE

(Mocks)

Oh, "I don't know, Sally's Nice".
You've got no chance mate.

NORMAN[13]

She always says hello.

JOE

She probably feels sorry for you
and let's be honest no one can
blame her for that. But wake up
Boyoh. You're a Page Boy. The
lowest of the low round here. Like
something on the bottom of one of
these shoes.

Norman[13] can't argue with that.

JOE (CONT'D)

Look, why don't you come with me?

NORMAN[13]

Eh? I couldn't do that.

JOE

Why not? Have you ever been to
Wales?

NORMAN[13]

No..but..

JOE

Well then. That's even more reason
you should come. You're a man of
the world ain't you? Or do you want
to be cleaning dirt off other
people's shoes all your life?

NORMAN[13]

Yes, I mean no. Oh! How would we
even get there?

JOE

Err.. We walk. How else?

NORMAN[13]

Walk?

JOE

Yes, you know. Put one foot in
front of the other. Why not? Take
our time. The weather's nice.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

We can sneak as much food as we need from the kitchen. It'll be an adventure. Our own adventure!

Joe is too busy looking at Norman[13] to notice that he has picked up a light coloured shoe and is polishing it with black polish. He rubs the brush across the shoe oblivious while still, looking at, and talking to Norman[13].

JOE (CONT'D)

What do you think?

Norman sees what is happening and is smothering his laughter. Joe thinks Norman[13] is softening to the idea so he goes in for the kill.

JOE (CONT'D)

Look, it's perfect. You can board with my folks. I'll write home and by the time we get there they'll have jobs waiting for both of us. Good pay and not boring either, like this.

NORMAN[13]

(Holding back his laughter)

Joe..

JOE

Yes?

NORMAN[13]

You're blacking brown leather.

Joe now looks at the shoe in front of him and realises what he's done. Joe throws down the shoe in disgust.

JOE

Never mind that now! What about it?

NORMAN[13]

(Still partially laughing)

I don't know Joe. I wouldn't want to be you when Grace'y finds out you're planning to leave.

JOE

I won't be giving him the chance to be any worse to me than he is already. I'll tell him to his face what I really think and quit on the spot. That's it! He can like it or lump it.

Norman[13]'s laughing reduces as he contemplates the idea.

JOE (CONT'D)

When I leave here, I'll walk out
with my head held high. How do you
like those eggs?

Norman[13] seems to be coming around to the possibility.

JOE (CONT'D)

Think about coming with me Norm. I
know you want to. It would be
great.

Norman[13]'s laugh dries up and he is left pondering.

JOE (CONT'D)

(Teasing)

Come on. You've got a couple of
days tops to choose. Me or Sally.
Whose it gonna be?

Norman[13] sniggers and jokingly throws a show at Joe.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 LOBBY - NEXT DAY

In the lobby is the maid Sally. Norman[13] is busy doing
nothing and keeps looking over to her to catch her eye.
Pretending to move things around and tidy up. He edges closer
and closer. Sally is busy and doesn't notice him until
eventually he's within speaking distance and plucks up the
courage to lean even nearer, round an expensive looking VASE,
to speak.

NORMAN[13]

Hello Sally.

She initially jumps.

SALLY

(Not overly interested)
Oh! Hello Norman.

NORMAN[13]

Sally?

SALLY

Yes Norman.

NORMAN[13]

I was wondering...?

SALLY
Wondering what?

NORMAN[13]
Well they're showing a new film at
the Plaza tonight.

SALLY
Are they? That's nice.

NORMAN[13]
Well I was wondering...?

SALLY
You do a lot of wondering don't
you?

NORMAN[13]
Eh? Oh yes. I'm always wondering
here and wondering there.

SALLY
Oh right. Funny too!

NORMAN[13]
(Pleased)
Oh do you think so?

SALLY
Not really Norman.

NORMAN[13]
(knocked back)
Oh, well anyway, I was wondering..?

SALLY
Yes Norman I know. You're wondering
if I'd go with you.

NORMAN[13]
Oh, eh? Yes. Well would ya? My
treat.

SALLY
(Interested)
I'm not a cheap date Norman so if
you think you can really afford to
take me out I finish at six.

He wasn't expecting that.

NORMAN[13]
A date? Oh! Right! Brilliant.

Norman almost knocks the vase over in his excitement and they both have to scramble to catch it. Leaving Norman gazing into Sally's eyes.

NORMAN[13] (CONT'D)
Right then, I'll see you at six?

SALLY
Go on Norman get away before you do any damage or Mr. Grace sees you.

Norman almost skips away but can't resist turning his head for one last word.

NORMAN[13]
Six!

And promptly turns back and walks into a PILLAR before walking away hoping Sally didn't notice.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - EVENING

Norman, in his Sunday best, is pacing up and down outside the rear entrance to the hotel waiting for Sally. He's kicking STONES in the street, hands in pockets and looking very nervous. He repeatedly checks his MONEY in his pocket and makes sure he puts it away safely. Sally appears.

NORMAN[13]
Hello Sally. I'm here.

SALLY
I'm not blind Norman. Come on let's go.

Sally walks on and Norman[13] skips to follow like a small puppy.

CUT TO:

INT. CINEMA - 1928

It's dark and Norman and Sally walk in to the cinema that already has many OCCUPANTS. Norman[13] starts to move along the back row to the annoyance of the people seated who all have to unravel themselves to allow him to pass.

NORMAN[13]
(Whispered)
Sorry. Excuse me. Sorry...

He's half way across when he turns and realises Sally isn't following him. She has gone to a seat nearer the front.

NORMAN[13] (CONT'D)
 (Shouts, then realises he shouldn't)
 Sally! Sa..

Sally continues, Norman[13] has to disturb everyone again. He ends up sitting on a woman's lap as he shuffles back out and eventually runs to catch up with Sally tripping in the process.

NORMAN[13] (CONT'D)
 (Whisper)
 Sally...

Sally sits down in the row and finally Norman[13] fights his way through and sits next to her.

NORMAN[13] (CONT'D)
 (Turns to Sally)
 S....

SALLY
 Shsss., it's starting..

Norman[13] and Sally watch the movie. Norman[13] slowly tries to put his arm around Sally who's having none of it and wriggles her shoulder to make his arm move. Norman[13] reluctantly settles down resting his head on his hand to watch the movie.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CINEMA - 1928 - LATER

The movie finishes and the lights come up. Norman has fallen asleep with his head on his hand. Sally knocks his elbow which slips from the arm of the chair and he quickly wakes. Everyone is leaving. They join the QUEUE.

NORMAN[13]
 That was good wasn't it?

Sally's expression says it all.

SALLY
 Where are you taking me for supper Norman? I'm feeling really rather peckish.

NORMAN[13]
Oh, right. I know just the place.

While Sally is distracted, looking ahead, waiting for the line of people to move, Norman[13] sneaks his money from his pocket and quickly counts it to make sure he has enough. He's happy that he has sufficient funds and puts his money away before Sally sees him.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON GRUBBY CAFE - 1928 - LATER

Norman[13] and Sally are seated at a very basic looking TABLE in a less than basic cafe. Sally does not look impressed and even less so when a less than courteous CAFE WAITRESS drops two PLATES of EGG AND CHIPS on the table.

Norman[13] is thrilled, Sally is not. Norman[13] tucks in while Sally eats reluctantly and in silence. Norman[13] dips a chip in Sally's egg and thinks it's funny but if looks could kill.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - NEXT DAY

The next day, Norman is fiddling around trying to look busy in the lobby again waiting to see Sally. When she finally appears Norman[13] rushes over.

NORMAN[13]
Hello Sally. Last night was good,
wasn't it?

SALLY
Norman?

NORMAN[13]
Yes Sally.

SALLY
Would you do me a favour?

NORMAN[13]
Anything for you Sally.

She takes a moment to make her words count by looking directly into Norman[13]'s eyes and speaking very quietly and deliberately. Norman[13] is hanging on her words.

SALLY

Don't ever speak to me again.

Norman[13] shocked, goes to speak

NORMAN[13]

But Sal..

Sally simply raises a finger to his mouth to stop him speaking. There is a moment of stillness as Norman[13] is frozen in time with his lips puckered against Sally's finger, waiting for the words to come out. Then Sally removes her finger and promptly and efficiently walks away leaving Norman[13]'s part formed words hanging in the air.

It seems like moments before Norman[13] unfreezes and realises what has happened. Then a sudden look of angry determination comes over his face and he marches off.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON HOTEL - 1928 - LATER

Joe is busy polishing the brass on the LIFT when Norman comes bounding up in his own clothes and carrying a small BAG.

JOE

(Surprised and puzzled)

Norm? What you doin'..?

NORMAN[13]

I've done it. I couldn't wait any longer. I'm ready when you are.

JOE

(Concerned)

Done it? Done what?

NORMAN[13]

I've told Grace where he can stick his job. I'm going to be a coal miner - in Wales!

Joe almost convulses.

JOE

You've done what? Are you mental?

NORMAN[13]

We're going to Wales aren't we?

JOE

We? You didn't mention me did you?

NORMAN[13]
Well no, but, we..

JOE
That was two days ago Norm. I've
been to bed since then and I
haven't had chance to finalise my
plans yet. I'm not ready to leave.

Confusion from them both.

NORMAN[13]
But you said...

Joe throws his hands in the air, on his head and over his
mouth. He almost spins around total panic.

JOE
Oh my God. What have you done?

There is silent confusion as they both try to grasp the
situation.

JOE (CONT'D)
You better go Norm, I don't want
Grace seeing you talking to me.

NORMAN[13]
I better go?

JOE
Yes. Go, go.

Joe gets inside the lift and closes the door on Norman and
holds it shut but Norman[13] carries on talking through the
door.

NORMAN[13]
I'm going to be a coal miner and
nothing's going to stop me!

Norman[13] turns to walk away and then turn's back.

NORMAN[13] (CONT'D)
Which way's Cardiff?

He doesn't wait for a reply. Norman[13] turns again and
marches off.

CUT TO WHITE:

FADE IN: