

SIGN LANGUAGE

by
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Black. Noises of Oxford Street slowly fade in.

BEN (V.O.)
I love my job. And I love my
workplace. London is the most
exciting city in the world, and
I'm at the very heart of it.

EXT Oxford Street. BEN, mid-30's, is standing among the
crowds with a big sign on a pole reading "Golf Sale".

BEN
My name is Ben and I'm a Static
Outdoor Information Technician. A
board guy. I've been doing it for
almost 15 years. But I've just
been promoted, so today is my
last day here.

MONTAGE of Ben arriving at work, walking onto Oxford
Street. His sign has a protective covering like a tennis
racket cover. He walks past ANYA, a mid-20's woman, handing
out leaflets. Ben takes a leaflet from her without making
eye contact. He sweeps his spot with a hand-brush, does his
stretches, unzips his sign and starts work.

BEN (CONT'D)
I'm really going to miss the
place. My workmates are amazing.
Look, that's Harry...

Shot of HARRY, 20s/30s man, very serious looking, holding a
sign which says "Tan For Less".

BEN (CONT'D)
He's the joker. Always larking
about. Last year he held his sign
upside down all day, just for a
laugh. He's crazy.

Ben raises a hand in greeting.

Alright 'Ary!

Harry does not react at all. He even turns away slightly.

Must be planning some lark.
There's also Steve and Chris...

Shot of STEVE and CHRIS, both 20-something, standing very
close to each other with identical signs reading "Discount
Socks".

BEN (CONT'D)
Completely inseparable. Peas in a
pod, they are. And there's Alex:

Shot of ALEX, teenager, holding a huge sign with a mixture of lots of smaller signs offering all sorts of products and services, all with arrows pointing the same way.

BEN (CONT'D)

Work experience. HND in International Sign Management, but he still has lots to learn. Reels off 'Display Theory' to the boss but half the time he points it in the wrong direction.

Shot of Anya handing out leaflets.

BEN (CONT'D)

And then there's Anya. She only started last month, working for the 'English School For Teaching English To The Non-English'. She's non-union though, so I can't talk to her.

He stares at her.

I can't talk to her.

There's a large wad of her distinctive leaflets sticking out of his rucksack.

BEN (CONT'D)

I started out in provincial towns, learning the trade and getting qualified. Worked the nightshift for a few years. Then my Dad retired and passed his patch on to me. It's tradition, but I did have to earn it. This is Grandad's pole, actually.

Montage; Ben providing tourist with directions, giving someone the time and waving at tourists atop a sightseeing bus. Then he's looking at Anya again. She looks back at him and he looks away.

BEN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I am sad to leave. Don't get me wrong the promotion is... great. It's an honour to be recognised and Dad's over the moon - it's just - this place. When I first started I used to be like everyone else - always stressed; super focussed. Look at them.

Busy people on Oxford Street - grim and determined.

BEN (CONT'D)

Too busy being busy. But they're on a road built in the 12th century, next to 19th century buildings, beneath which runs an underground river. And they never stop to marvel. These buildings are works of art, but most people can't see past the neon. This job teaches you about things like that. We're here to point to less obvious things. There's so much beauty - so much opportunity right under our noses. Shouldn't just ignore it.

Ben is gazing at Anya again, almost in a dream-world. His mobile rings loudly. He answers it.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hello?... Oh hi, Dad. No, first day at the new post is tomorrow... Yes, very excited. Can I call you back later, I'm at work? Ok, bye.

Montage showing the day coming to an end. Ben's watch beeps at him.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well, that's it. Shift over.

He looks around.

Thought the guys might give me a sendoff or something.

More shots of the others being totally disinterested in Ben.

Guess they're busy. Oh well.

Ben sighs. He begins to zip up his sign, but the camera operator taps him on the arm and points at Alex, who is smiling and waving. Ben looks and brightens. Alex points up at his sign, then spins it around. Ben is amazed. It reads "BYE BYE BEN". Alex points at Chris, who spins his sign to read "WE'LL MISS YOU". Chris points to Steve who's sign now reads "BUT BEFORE YOU GO"; He gestures to Harry, who spins his sign to reveal "JUST TALK TO HER!" with a big arrow pointing at Anya. She is facing away and oblivious. All four point at Anya. Ben stands there for a second, dumbfounded, then takes a deep breath and head over to talk to her.

Fade out.

OVER CREDITS -

they are chatting and laughing as he shows her all his collected leaflets.

OR - IF WE CAN...

OVER CREDITS -

Ben in CU with neat hair in a white collar and tie.

BEN

Yeah, it's not so bad. Not as glamorous as before but it has upsides... oh, thanks.

Anya - also well dressed - has brought him a cup of tea. They exchange smiles and she goes. Ben's watch beeps.

BEN (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry, that's me - must get on.

He leans forward out of sight, there is a roar and a wide shot reveals he is in the cockpit of a plane.

An early evening sky over Oxford Street. In it the words GOLF SALE are written in gently drifting smoke trails. A plane is just finishing off the downward-pointing arrow.

FADE OUT