

**CUE: Now on BBC R4, "IT'S MY STORY". This edition is about Seymour - a man who's been in and out of prison many times over many years. "LET ME IN" is produced and narrated by Steve Urquhart.**

OPENING MONTAGE 45"

(SEYMOUR) *The transition from prison to freedom is where you're most vulnerable.*

(SEYMOUR) *In the community, if you have no work, no means of income - life becomes very difficult.*

(CAROL) *He feels important in prison...*

(SEYMOUR) *If I could feel out here, how I can feel in prison...*

(CAROL) *...he can achieve things in there.*

(PAUL) *I believe he's really come a very very long way...*

(CAROL) *I need Seymour to be strong, cos when he's strong I'm really strong... when things go wrong for him it makes me weak.*

(SEYMOUR) *I've just gotta prove that I can change.*

(PAUL) *The biggest concern is if he ends up back inside here.*

(SEYMOUR) *I'd be happy to turn my back on this. Everything's down to me now.*

*We're inside my cell here at HMP Wormwood Scrubs... pretty much a normal-sized cell, with an en suite bathroom and toilet, which I really like...*

**This wasn't the first time I'd met Seymour. That was in another prison, Brixton, in south London, when he was 43. I was working there, and he was... living there.**

*Some nice plants, mat, quilt...*

**For a prisoner, he always looked smart, fit and healthy. He did a variety of prison jobs - he generally got the best ones. And he was clearly well respected by other inmates, and by staff.**

*I've got a couple of pictures of my grandchildren... I've met one of them, got another one that I haven't met yet, and I can't wait to spend some quality time with them, and THEIR mothers and fathers, who are my children, yeah.*

**Fast forward a year and a half from our first meeting. Although Seymour had been moved to The Scrubs in west London, we'd kept in touch - and he agreed to the making of this documentary. Here, just days away from release, he IS excited - but above all, he's scared.**

*There is that fear of repeating the same behaviours, spiralling out of control again - but, when I'm in prison I focus on the changes I wanna make.*

**The "behaviours" he talks about are theft, burglary, handling stolen goods - all tied in with a crack cocaine habit that dates back some thirty years. In prison, Seymour gets clean, and sorts himself out. Outside, he starts off with good intentions... but sooner or later, with no job and few prospects, he falls into old habits, and loses his way. This has happened every year for more than a decade. Last time, just a few months after getting out, he was seen sat on a bench outside the prison gate with his head in his hands. What went wrong?**

*After a while, the wear and tear got to me - and before I knew it I was taking numbers off old associates, and, I'd kind of lost my vision, I just completely naused it all up. So, my head told me I knew I was going back to prison - and I kinda went into sabotage mode, and that's what I do. Unfortunately I was arrested one night with some stolen goods, and that was enough.*

**In prison, Seymour soon begins to thrive. He fills his time with education, work, planning a business. Everything's geared towards the future - getting out and being back with his family - but after so many years of this, he's under no illusions.**

If you have no means of income, life becomes difficult in the community, you can't buy what you want for your 5 children – so life becomes difficult. In prison, within first 3 or 4 weeks I get a job, can buy tobacco and provisions, and I don't have to provide for my kids. All that added pressure's gone. (Who provides for your children when you're in here?) That's a sore subject... erm, the mothers have to provide. That makes me feel guilty and upset, that she has to struggle by herself (sigh).

### **Before I leave the prison, I have a word with Paul – Seymour's careers adviser.**

(PAUL) He's really come a very very long way... he's doing a distance learning course, life coaching skills, and I believe Mr Seymour will be brilliant at it, because he's got the aptitude and he's also got the right attitude as well... so once he goes out I just beg him don't come back here.

(SEYMOUR) You know, I'm gonna try my hardest to make sure it's the last time – I'm not a violent or angry person, I seem to get caught out because I use recreational drugs and stuff to cope with my problems. I'm more than willing for the challenge of facing my problems now. I don't want anything to help me change the way I feel any more – I want to be somebody, I wanna be successful, and, watch this space.

It's Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August and I'm in Brockwell Park. Sitting down watching the grass blow in the breeze, nice sunny day.

My first night out was a lonely-ish one, fell asleep at half nine, woke up in middle of night, but then I thought hold on a minute, it doesn't matter, you've just been released. That was a nice feeling.

I have a tag on, it's on my right leg, it's a grey, like a watch strap with a cover on it – and it just fits round your ankle under your clothes, and yeah, I'm answerable to that. Have to be where it says I have to be, on time as well. (Would you wear shorts at the moment?) I would – I'm not bothered – if you're on tag you're on tag innit... I'm not ashamed. I'm proud of it really. (Proud?) - yes, under the circumstances, I'm fortunate to be on HDC... I could be still in the prison cell eating goulash.

Earlier on, after I left probation, I ran into an old “using” associate of mine – as soon as I saw him I could see he was using. (How did you know?) His appearance, his clothes looked dull. I didn't let it bother me... we talked... I definitely know I don't wanna be going back down that road... I definitely know I don't wanna be going down that hard drug road – definitely, definitely, definitely.

Here we are at my flat, Flat A, main door, small corridor... in my bedroom I've got a stereo, a little TV, DVD player...

### **It's been six weeks since our recording in Seymour's cell, and two weeks since we sat in the park.**

Looking at it, I need to do some work, to change the whole way it is – this is not my idea of home looking... but yeah, that will happen.

### **He's still looking well – but the glow he had after his release has faded a bit, as he struggles to get himself motivated.**

In prison, one thing I did have was my work routine. Out here if you don't have that it can have a domino effect on other stuff. So I have to be 100 per cent aware of that today, and where that can lead, seriously. (Yeah. Are you comfortably away from drugs?) It hasn't really been hard, I don't get urges to use hard drugs, erm... (You've say HARD drugs a couple of times, are you making a distinction between hard drugs and soft drugs?) I'm not making a distinction..... (but why do you say hard drugs?) I said hard drugs because they became a problem for me at some stage, but, drugs are drugs, really.

Hi I'm Carol, I'm Seymour's partner, of 25 years on and off...

I fell in love with him straight away. I just felt this person's gonna look after me, and I'm gonna spend the rest of my life with him.

**Over the years I've known him, Seymour's talked a lot about Carol. Right now, she's telling me about him.**

When I first met him I was 15, he was just turning 21... I think that's when you'd say ecstasy and stuff first come out, so he'd go off to the odd big rave, but maybe four times a year... then after I had my second child in 1993, he started doing cocaine... in 1998 I noticed the drug problem got really out of hand, he started taking crack and stuff. I did think for the first couple of years, until 2002, that it was a phase... Ibut I never thought he'd stay on crack... cos I didn't meet him that way, and saw this other side to him, where he can be clean, chatty, really really lovely. (But he appears to be clean in jail, as far as you and I know?) Yes totally, I'm confused on that one, cos that's normally where they abuse even more. Maybe because he's so aware of the dangers in jail - he says he sees people looking old etc - so he's really aware of that in there, I don't think he sees it on the outside.

**It's Autumn... and two months since Seymour was released. He's done some bits of work - painting, gardening, tiling - but nothing sustained. When we meet for a cup of tea in Brixton Village, he's thinking a lot about prison.**

When I first come out I felt on top of the world, and I still do, but if I could feel out here how I can feel in prison, you know - unless something can pick me up, and the only thing that can pick me up now is... work, regular work.

**But it's not just work, and prison, that's on his mind. It's also this environment.**

Brixton Village was Brixton Market, and Brixton Market in my darkest days was a place I came to find drugs. I've had fights in here, I stole stuff and had to run for my life... I was chased up to the Town Hall once... another time I was chased IN to the market, by a load of police, and I hid under a vegetable stall... you know I spent some of my worst days walking around here here, some days I'd think OMG I'll see my mum or my sisters out shopping... they're out shopping for meat and I'm out shopping for crack, you know? But yeah.

**Seymour reassures me that those times are past. But then he tells me what happened a few days earlier.**

I saw a friend, and they said to me, are you using - or when last did I use? And I said, last week. And I don't know why I said that. So yeah, I rode home at about 900 mph after that - because to me it meant I was feeling vulnerable. Why did I need to tell them I was smoking last week when I wasn't? Maybe I didn't want them to judge me, maybe it was a safety net, maybe I wanted to use... I DON'T want to use... but people stick pipes in their mouths when they don't want to use. So I have to look at all that on a daily basis. I have to be very very careful the company I keep, because, as a recovering addict you're never out the woods, it's always round the corner waiting, when you least expect it... I'm in wait, I'm lying in wait for my addict. I'm so scared, but yet, I've got vision, you know? I spent the last 20 odd years going in and out of prison. I first went to prison in 1985, and despite a 4 or 5 year gap, you know, it's still been quite constant.

**Seymour tells me how sorry he feels towards the victims of his crimes. He also talks about the effects of his drug habit on his family.**

If I started using again it'd kill them..... if I started using again, they'd be absolutely devastated, so, it can't happen. It can't happen. But yet it nearly happened the other day. Nearly happened, man. And my kids and partner and stuff, they're all on edge - they think when the tag comes off they won't see me, he'll be off doing his madness again, I don't know. They have a fear, I have a different fear. And it hurts me to know I've left - this is how I've got my family. But onwards and upwards, I just have to prove that I can change, erm,

*and show them that I do care and I do love them.*

**How does a father like Seymour begin to repair the damage, and try to show his children that he loves them?**

*(Just go and look at them now – I can't go in there right now!)*

**When we go back outside, there are temptations of a different kind.**

*Me don't want a coat for myself – for a woman, for me daughter-dem. (Who you trying to get a coat for?) See what I'm saying, familiarity...he thinks I'm exactly how I was before... go in there, have a quick look – I'm not going! If you have a jacket to sell I might buy it, but I ain't going in no shop... I ain't no looker and I don't want nothing for free.*

*(If, in a worse case scenario, if you bought a stolen jacket what would happen to you, because of your situation?) If they could prove I knew it was stolen, I'd get charged for handling stolen goods.(But would you go back to jail?) Oh yeah! Especially if I got nicked during the tag. (So you need to be mindful of that? The consequences could be huge?) Very.*

**Five weeks later: Seymour invites me to his flat, where his tag's about to be removed. I ask him how significant this moment is.**

*It's just part of the journey, it's not the beginning or end, I still have over a year's worth of licence, and every single time I've come out before I've tested positive for cocaine... they still test me twice a week, religiously... as far as they're concerned if I'm back on cocaine I must be committing crime to feed it, you know, and that part of it I don't wanna do anymore.*

**Then...**

*Hello?*

**...the woman arrives, to take the tag off.**

*Where's the box, in there? Remove them... out of the house!*

**Within just a few moments...**

*Let me cut the tag off, I'm sure you've had enough of it.*

**...it's all done.**

*Click – you're free! (laughs)*

**Off she goes...**

*Nice to have met you all – thank you darling – have a good evening!*

**...and Seymour returns to the subject of drugs...**

*Click FX (lighter)*

**...literally.**

*Light up a spliff in a Buckingham Palace!*

**I challenge him about this.**

*What's wrong with that – what, people don't smoke roll ups? Why are you judging me? (This isn't judging...) They're Serco – they come to my house to a job... unless you've got handcuffs on you... (discussion fades)*

**Another six weeks pass.**

*Nice to meet you – I'm Steve – Isabelle...*

**I've asked Seymour if I can meet his mother.**

*I'm Seymour's mam – Isabelle... (what was he like as a boy?) he used to work hard at school, and teacher beg him not to leave because they see something in him... but he was determined. He was doing well. ... after he left school he was at home ... Dad and him used to wrestle. But one thing, I never give up on them, or forsake them or turn my back on them. I don't encourage them in wrongs but I never give up on them or turn them away. If I do that, who does he have to turn to? Never. And if he finds he has no money, I will help him. I can't do much, I'm a pensioner, but I will stay without and help him. (Are you proud of your son?) I am, and I love him too. (SO what's your greatest wish for him?) The best, best in life. May be late but we can still make it up. (SO this time he's gonna do it?) By God's grace, I'm praying... by God's grace my brother.*

**The next time I meet Seymour, he's passed something of a milestone. He's been out of prison for just over six months, which is the longest period he's been out in ten years.**

*Hello! What's happening?*

**He's getting some work done on his flat, and it's starting to look more like home.**

*Yeah I'm in my flat at the minute with Steve, doing some of that documentary.*

**He's almost completed training to be a peer mentor.**

*Yeah all right, yeah, I'm in good spirits.*

**It SEEMS like he's making progress.**

*Since I've been out this time, I can put my hand on my heart and say I haven't committed any burglaries, no stealing cars, and I've done a lot of the thing that WERE suggested... training and voluntary work, put the kids first... put yourself first... I'm trying my hardest to do all those things.*

**But money's still an issue. A MAJOR issue. And then... comes this revelation.**

*I must add, in the last six months I haven't been totally drug free... at the minute I won't go into what drugs I have and haven't taken... but what I will say is that if I hadn't done the relapse prevention work, I could quite easily have gone all the way down the spiral. I'm not gonna sit here and talk like a saint because that wouldn't be appropriate... but, today I'm a hard trier.*

**Seymour IS trying – he's not ready to give up. This afternoon he's got his first proper job interview in years... with a security firm.**

*There's nothing in this side...*

**He just needs something to wear.**

Looks like it might be a pair of jeans... might need to go to Carol's to get some trousers... (phone dialling) hi Carol - yeah - I've found some jeans for this interview - okay - so I'll come down there and you can tell me thumbs up or thumbs down, ok? - all right then buddy...

**At Carol's house, the three of us talk about their 25 years together, and about their children. I ask Carol why she's stuck with Seymour... despite all they've been through.**

C: Why? Cos he's the love of my life... for better for worse... I still wanna get married... I still have all those dreams... I do, I love him! (What's stopping you getting married?) If we make it through the next year, we will.

S: When I'm working for a while, and feel like I've got control, then we'll join in holy matrimony, hey! I am working towards that and I hope that's the way it will be.

**It's hard to tell what Seymour REALLY wants. I'm not even sure HE knows.**

C: Do you remember what the kids said to us the other day? Would you go to jail for a year for a million pound, and you said yes? And I said I wouldn't even go for a week. There's no money in the world worth my freedom and waking up and seeing my children, nothing.

S: But I'd take the money and then come out and look after them.

(You'd go for a year?) Yes man. (Really?! ) I believe I'd go for two. (Why?) Well, long term I can look after them, their future's set.

C: You think that's crazy!

(Have you not had enough of that place?) S: No comment. But... that's my view, couple of years for a million pound.

C: Cos you always had it cushty in there!

S: Not only that, I'd go to the hardest prison for a million pound, for two years.

C: In prison he was called by his first name... it was like he worked in there. If he had a job in there he'd probably be the governor now.

(But, surely you've had enough of it?)

S: I HAVE had enough - but if you offered me a million pounds to go back, that's going back to the Celebrity Big Brother house innit.

(It's like Celebrity Big Brother?)

S: Yes, it'd be the Celebrity Big Prison Brother House if someone's paying me.

(Half a million?) Yes. (Hundred thousand?) Not for two years. (For six months?) Yes. (Ten grand for a week?) Yes. Easy.

**As I leave them to prepare for Seymour's job interview, Carol suggests that we arrange to meet up again.**

C: We should redo this maybe in six months, and see where we are. S: Yes man.

**Six months later...**

C: Hi, it's Carol again - it's the end of September, and Seymour's not here - he is back in jail.

**Just a few weeks after I'd last seen them both - and despite him getting the job - Seymour stopped responding to any of my messages. His mobile phone went dead... and I began to fear the worst. Carol tells me what happened.**

C: Things were ok, we still had a lot of problems we were working on but we were working on them, I'd fallen back in love... He was going out a lot to clubs still, which I don't go to, and I just started to notice the old signs, then I noticed he'd been on drugs, I could tell - eyes, the way he was talking, behaviours, and when I really put it to him, he decided to walk - and walked out the door, and didn't come back.

C: I did see him, went to his flat to see him, he's not in a good way, mumbling, doesn't look the same, lost weight, his clothes, everything, he's gone back to looking like a drug user, a complete drug user, a "junkie" I suppose is the word.

S: His appearance, you know his clothes looked dull – as soon as I saw him I could see that he, he's using.

C: I think he thought – well he even said it to me – he thought he could try and have a little bit of drugs on a bad day... and move on from it – and he told me the first few times.

(S: In the last 6 months I haven't been totally drug free...)

C: He used the word "I've had a relapse", and I said I'm glad you've told me, we'll get over this, but he'd spent £200 each time, hell of a lot of money... and we got over it but then it got to the stage where he just couldn't get over it.

(S: I kind of went into sabotage mode, my head told me, you know what you're going back to prison...)

C: We know he's going jail, HE knows he's going jail... it's like part of, you know, I take the drugs, I get out of my head, and I go back to prison.

(Does he LIKE prison?) I think he likes the fact that he feels important in there, and he can achieve things in there – qualifications – I don't think he likes it but it definitely doesn't scare him, it hasn't scared him nor done the job it's supposed to, neither. He's had it too easy in there. (What's the job it's supposed to do?) It's supposed to scare the living daylights out of you, make you not wanna go back, no matter what – you'll try anything rather than go back to prison. Some people it works, some people it don't – it just didn't work with him. He seems more able in there than he ever does outside.

S: I come into prison... within the first 3 or 4 weeks I get a job... and all that added pressure's gone.

**Since he went back in, I've been to visit Seymour, and we've also kept in touch by letter. In his own words, he says: "I'm fine, I'm well. I've just been keeping my head down. I carry a lot of guilt – and I promise to take a better grip on things. I'm a fighter, and I refuse to give up. Watch this space."**

S: .....I wanna be somebody, I wanna be successful – and, watch this space.

**IT'S MY STORY: LET ME IN was produced and narrated by Steve Urquhart. It's a PRA Production for BBC Radio 4.**