INT. TOILETS. ALEXANDRA PALACE. LONDON - EVENING 1, 1858

CLOSE UP ON FREDDIE, looking straight to camera, playful, as if in an interview, he clutches a sheaf of paper/ manifesto, a pencil in his other hand-

FREDDIE
The newsreels are dead. We’ve bored the public for too long. Give me this opportunity and I’ll prove it.

FREDDIE struggles with his pencil, the lead snapping on the page as he corrects some piece of a manifesto.

A pencil appears from his left. FREDDIE takes it, resumes correcting.

FREDDIE (CONT’D) (cont’d)
Of course I’ll need an assistant.

PULL OUT TO REVEAL-

ISAAC standing in the doorway, beams on hearing this.

ISAAC checks his watch-

ISAAC
(on tenterhooks)
Two minutes Mr Lyon.

FREDDIE nods, washes his hands, straightens his tie, looking at himself once more in the mirror.

FREDDIE
But may I say one more thing...You haven’t seen my best yet.

FREDDIE smiles-

THE TICK TICK of a clock overhead-

CUT TO:

OVER A BLACK SCREEN-

The TICK TICK of a stopwatch through-

WITH CREDITS-

FREDDIE VO
Standby studio..

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRS. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1900

The sway of a silk chiffon ball gown, a WOMAN’s footsteps across marble, her breath, close, quickening with every step-
CONTINUED:

FREDDIE VO
Fade up newsreel-

RUTH ELMS [21 yrs], a nervous, gauche beauty, hurrying down towards a distant lobby.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP ON SCREEN-

FREDDIE VO (cont’d)
...cue grams.

ARCHIVE BBC FOOTAGE of a smiling group of debutantes cheering on a winning horse at Ascot.

NEWS READER VO
...And here they are, the debutantes of 1956. Young ladies of distinction -

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1901

A cold wind grazing the mink coat of an arriving GUEST-

NEWS READER VO
....enjoying a day at Royal Ascot.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1902

An elegant lobby-

RUTH ELMS, eyes searching until-

A walnut telephone booth illuminated across the lobby, RUTH, steady on the approach.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP ON SCREEN-
CONTINUED:

BLACK AND WHITE FOOTAGE of the same beautiful young woman, RUTH, gripping the arm of ADAM LE RAY [mid/late 20’s], a handsome young actor waving a winning ticket on a racecourse.

NEWS READER VO
And one young woman in particular has caught the eye of a certain leading man, actor Adam Le Ray-

The stiff RP of the NEWSREADER heard through-

NEWS READER VO (cont’d)
Engagement looks set for the Honourable Ruth Elms, daughter of Lord Elms of Framlingham, to this eligible young bachelor-

PULL BACK TO REVEAL-

INT. GALLERY. STUDIO. ALEXANDRA PALACE - EVENING 1, 1904

The same BLACK AND WHITE FOOTAGE, now on a bank of monitors-

NEWS READER VO
...All of London society awaits the peal of wedding bells.

FREDDIE LYON [mid/late 20’s], dishevelled yet fizzing, pencil scratching away at a crossword, sitting in a cramped gallery looking out on a small archaic studio. The steady pace of a stopwatch in a FEMALE SECRETARY’s hand-

FREDDIE
Cue foreign newsreel-

Through the gallery window, a WEARY FLOOR MANAGER just visible in a poky studio, scrawls a cue on a piece of paper, holding it up to a STIFF NEWS READER seated behind a desk, talking into a microphone.

CUT TO:

SCENE 5 CUT AT GREEN AMENDMENTS

INT. CORRIDOR O/S STUDIO. ALEXANDRA PALACE - EVENING 1, 1906

The TAP TAP of heels along a corridor-

BEL ROWLEY, exquisite moving along at a pace. She stops on seeing the red light of transmission, checking her watch, excited. She hovers, waiting, like a whippet before a race.

Suddenly LIX STORM passes, looking up, catching BEL’s eye in anticipation-
LIX
Did you get it?

BEL
We got it.

LIX points at her-

LIX
Producer?

BEL nods-

BEL
(pointing at LIX)
Foreign desk.

YELPS and CHEERS. BEL hushing her, suppressing her excitement.

LIX
Bravo..Bravo...

BEL
(hushed and awkward)
I haven’t told Freddie yet.

LIX
Christ.

LIX smiles, moving on-

LIX (CONT’D) (cont’d)
Good luck.

The red light of transmission goes out-

BEL enters, with growing determination-
FREDDIE’s eyes dart over to BEL just visible through the gallery window crossing the back of the studio, pulling on gloves, clutch in hand, standing by the FLOOR MANAGER.

FREDDIE
Fade up foreign newsreel-

FREDDIE clicks his fingers, pointing to a screen.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
And thanking you, gentlemen-

FREDDIE pulls on his jacket, smiling his thanks to his GREY-SUITED COLLEAGUES-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
...for another fascinating evening...
May you go home once again happy in the knowledge that we have delivered the important news of the day with the same brisk banality as a debutante coming out in Mayfair.
(counting down)
Three two one...

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP ON SCREEN

NEWS READER VO
...In Egypt, election victory for the Arab Nationalist, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser.

ARCHIVE BBC FOOTAGE of a smiling Colonel Nasser waving to his joyous electorate in Cairo, jump cut to NASSER shaking hands with British Prime Minister Eden.

NEWS READER VO (cont’d)
...Here he is with Prime Minister Anthony Eden during last year’s visit to Cairo where they discussed the future of the Suez Canal company-

CUT TO:

SCENE 8 CUT AT SHOOTING SCRIPT

CONTENTS MOVED TO SCENE 9A

INT. LECTURE HALL. LCES - EVENING 1, 1912

A packed auditorium in the London College of Eastern Studies.
Bright-eyed STUDENTS listening, PETER DARRALL [early 30's] midway through a lecture; an image of an ancient papyrus projected across the wall overhead, rippling over his face—

PETER DARRALL
..so you see it was not only the Pharaohs who failed to write to their mothers.

LAUGHTER—

PETER quietly captivating, regaling the bright-eyed STUDENTS with his words, eyes hesitating on—

The SCRATCH of a 2B pencil against newspaper—

A DARK-HAIRED MAN sitting in the middle of a row, looks up from his crossword, holding PETER with a cool gaze.

PETER hesitates, resumes talking, yet he is unsettled, fingers nervously tapping the paper notes resting on the podium in front.

PETER DARRALL (cont’d)
And on that note...Papers in by Friday please...

PETER’s eyes flick to the TICK TICK of the clock overhead.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1913

The shake of RUTH’s hand, cupping a telephone receiver—

RUTH
Hello operator. Put me through to Bloomsbury 7428.

RUTH’s eyes anxiously scour the arriving GUESTS, her warm breath misting the glass, obscuring her face—

FREDDIE VO
Counting down—

CUT TO:

INTER. OFFICE. LCES. LONDON - EVENING 1, 1914

A neat office—

PETER entering, tailed by a PRETTY, FLIRTATIOUS STUDENT—

PETER DARRALL
Come back tomorrow.

PETER DARRALL already reaching behind the door for his coat.
PRETTY STUDENT
But have I passed, Professor-?

PETER smiles but there is an urgency, hurrying the PRETTY STUDENT on.

PETER DARRALL
Go out. Go play.

A PROFESSOR BECKETT (BECCKETT) just leaving the office-

PROFESSOR BECKETT OOV
Night Peter.

PETER nods in passing, gathering the last of his books, eyes quietly searching the room, littered with books and a series of beautiful Middle Eastern drawings pinned above a desk, with a growing urgency.

PETER DARRALL
(flicking off the light)
Night Gerald.

PETER shoves the last of his things into his briefcase, a light sweat beading his forehead until-

The CLICK of the DOOR closing as PETER exits, footsteps descending down a corridor, oblivious to-

Suddenly the phone rings and rings and rings-

A photo of PETER with his class of pupils resting against the base of a lamp, one particular student, RUTH, just visible, smiling and happy in the photograph.

CUT TO:

SCENE 11 CUT AT SHOOTING SCRIPT

INT. LOBBY. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1918

RUTH, quietly frantic, breath heavy, phone pressed to her cheek, waiting-

The DEAD RING of an unanswered call throbs on the other end of the line until-

LADY ELMS OOV
(through glass)
Darling-

The TAP of knuckles against glass-

RUTH turns, shaking on seeing-
LADY ELMS
(through glass)
Our guests are arriving.

LADY ELMS [early 50’s], RUTH’s mother, smiles with flickering concern. RUTH puts down the phone, struggling to rest it on its carriage as she steps out of the booth.

RUTH
Lipstick.
(making to go)
I left my lipstick in the-

LADY ELMS smiles, plucking a lipstick from her clutch. LORD ELMS [late 50’s/early 60’s] stands some way across the lobby.

RUTH hesitates, hands shaking as she takes the lipstick.

LADY ELMS
Ssh...

LADY ELMS smiles, helping her, gently taking the lipstick and applying it for her.

LADY ELMS (cont’d)
No need to be nervous.

RUTH nods, tears pricking. LADY ELMS smiles, with quiet steely determination, waiting to lead RUTH through. RUTH looks beyond to LORD ELMS waiting to lead her in.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO. ALEXANDRA PALACE – EVENING 1, 1920

The frantic fall of paper-

NEWSREADER
And that is the end of the news.

FREDDIE heading towards BEL, passing the STIFF NEWSREADER, eyes on the FLOOR MANAGER waiting for a countdown-

The FLOOR MANAGER counts down with splayed fingers, the NEWSREADER visibly relaxing, a relieved calm descending across the studio, basically a makeshift corner strung with curtain and desk.

FREDDIE
(in passing)
Impeccable as ever, Johnny. Thank you.

FREDDIE smiles at BEL, clearly waiting, she hands him a sheaf of papers-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
Moneypenny.
BEL
James.

FREDDIE’s eyes gaze down the list of news stories for the following day.

BEL (cont’d)
Friday’s running cue and I am not your secretary. Next time do it yourself.

ISAAC WENGROW [early 20’s], the eager and earnest office runner, wheels a trolley past.

FREDDIE
And what of tomorrow Mr Wengrow? I’m gunning for Kennedy for the VP nom but who knows...

FREDDIE slides a roll of newsreel onto its shelf, barely wavering in his step.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
A new hat for the Queen Mother or a rare sow with twenty in her litter...?

FREDDIE passes GEORGE HEMMINGS [mid 40’s], his grey, weary editor looking on as he bins the first paper, moving onto the next sheet of paper-

GEORGE
Lyon. Tonight. The Claringdon. You’re covering the engagement.

FREDDIE
How could I forget, Georgie?

BEL
Who’s getting married?

FREDDIE
Just another debutante.

GEORGE
(moving off)
Camera’s gone ahead.

BEL
{(calling back)
Night George.

FREDDIE eyes the papers, reads as he tails her across the floor.

FREDDIE
How was I?
BEL
A little slow on that last cue.

FREDDIE’s eyes flick suspiciously to a heavy, expensive man’s watch on BEL’s wrist.

FREDDIE
Nice watch. Does the broker know it’s missing?

BEL
Banker.

The flick flack of doors, FREDDIE tails BEL out through to-

FREDDIE
Please...The details of your love life do not interest me at all.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. STUDIO FLOOR. ALEXANDRA PALACE - NIGHT 1, 1922

...an endless corridor, flagged by open doors revealing distant studios-

FREDDIE
Where did you dine?

BEL slides memos for the next morning into passing pigeonholes as they walk.

BEL
Sheekey’s. We ate oysters. And afterwards he took me to the theatre.

BEL takes a left, heading down a stairwell, FREDDIE close behind.

FREDDIE
Dinner then the theatre. I do like a man who plans. That way round no one goes to sleep on a full stomach.

BEL hesitates, eyeing FREDDIE, ever-wicked, a pencil still scratching at the crossword in his hand-

BEL
(floundering)
Can I cadge a lift?

FREDDIE deflects-

FREDDIE
Eight letters. 14 down. Treacherous foe in bad or in good faith. Something o something f something d.
14 CONTINUED:

Distant laughter of an audience—

BEL
Bona fide.

A wide doorway into an open BBC studio, a smiling CLEAN-CUT PRESENTER talking straight to camera, standing beside a trio of YOUNG GIRLS; one is holding a ventriloquist’s dummy—

PRESENTER
...and so ladies and gentlemen after another delightful evening, we ask the charming Winnie Sisters to play us out.

FREDDIE curses, scores out his last answer, the scratch of a 2B pencil against his Evening Standard blending into...

The trio of YOUNG GIRLS, one holding the ventriloquist’s dummy, stand hunched by a microphone, singing along—

CUT TO:
14A EXT. STREET. NEAR LCES. – NIGHT 1, 1925

PETER walking, passing endless railings, a sense of footsteps behind him. PETER picks up his pace.

The DARK HAIRED man just visible as PETER disappears towards a distant tube station.

CUT TO:
15 INT. KIOSK. TUBE – NIGHT 1, 1930

PETER moving through, the sense that he is being watched—

Pausing at a newspaper kiosk, PETER is caught in brief exchange as he buys cigarettes. Moving on, PETER disappears towards the escalator—

...the scratch of a 2B pencil against a newspaper, the DARK-HAIRED MAN lost in his crossword. He discreetly follows PETER several yards behind.

CUT TO:
16 SCENE 16 CUT AT SHOOTING SCRIPT

CONTENTS MOVED TO SCENE 17A

17 INT. RECEPTION ROOM. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR – NIGHT 1, 1936

The POP of champagne corks—

The CHINK of CUTLERY—

The murmur of polite conversation—
The SMILES and CHEERS of a HOTEL BAND picking up the same song—
The swirl of chiffon as ADAM LE RAY twirls RUTH in quickening step around a dance floor.

CUT TO:

**INT. CORRIDOR. TUBE - NIGHT 1, 1939**

PETER, moving steadily along an empty winding corridor. The TAP TAP of his footsteps as he walks. Slowly PETER becomes aware of a second set of footsteps. He turns, just seeing the DARK-HAIRED MAN several yards behind following him-

Suddenly a PERT OLD LADY passes with her COMPANION-

PETER nods in passing, picking up his pace.

CUT TO:

**SCENE 18 CUT AT SHOOTING SCRIPT**

CONTENTS MOVED TO SCENE 20A

**SCENE 19 CUT AT SHOOTING SCRIPT**

CONTENTS MOVED TO SCENE 20C

**INT. RECEPTION ROOM. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1942**

The SWIRL of faces as RUTH is spun across a lively dance floor-

The sense of the MUSIC QUICKENING, of the blood pumping fast in RUTH’s head.

ADAM LE RAY grips her hand tightly, pulling her once more around the room.

CUT TO:

**INT. CARRIAGE. TUBE. NORTHERN LINE - EVENING 1, 1944**

PETER, standing in a packed carriage, several COMMUTERS lost in reading their newspapers, eyes silently scouring, wavering on seeing-

The DARK-HAIRED MAN just visible further down the carriage.

Squeezing past those all around, PETER peers out, beads of sweat breaking across his forehead.

Pushing through, the DARK-HAIRED MAN quickens his pace, the lights overhead momentarily hovering into darkness until-

The scrape of the wheels, as the DARK-HAIRED MAN continues close on PETER’s tail.

CUT TO:
20B **INT. RECEPTION ROOM. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1946**

The FLEETING GLIMPSE of faces, a sense of a quickening in RUTH, anxiety pricking her face as ADAM spins her faster and faster around the dancefloor.

**CUT TO:**

20C **INT. STAIRS. TUBE - EVENING 1, 1949**

PETER fleeing up stairs, pushing COMMUTERS out of his way, as he moves up and out. The DARK-HAIRED MAN gaining on him now.

**CUT TO:**

**SCENES 21 & 22 CUT AT SHOOTING SCRIPT**

23 **INT. CORRIDOR. TUBE - EVENING 1, 1953**

PETER running now, an endless winding corridor, PETER’s hands slapping against the wall until-

PETER takes a sharp left, heart beating, beads of sweat breaking across his forehead as his hand slips inside his briefcase-

The glint of a knife-

PETER hesitates waiting-

A lone set of FOOTSTEPS steady on the approach-

The glint of the knife, ready for the kill as PETER expertly grabs the DARK-HAIRED MAN, pulling him into a locked embrace. The DARK-HAIRED MAN’s fate, evident in his eyes until-

One swift move, and PETER is on the ground, suddenly gripping his neck, looking in shocked horror. The DARK-HAIRED MAN steps back, the knife now in his hand, the job done. A steady seep of blood, PETER’s gasping death rattle audible as the DARK-HAIRED MAN wipes the knife on a handkerchief shaking in his hand-

DISTANT FOOTSTEPS. ECHO OF PASSING CHATTER. The DARK-HAIRED MAN tensely waits until-

The FOOTSTEPS and CHATTER dissolve away-

The DARK HAIRD MAN turns back to PETER; the sense of worse still to come.

**CUT TO:**

24 **INT. RECEPTION ROOM. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 1, 1958**

The HOTEL BAND coming to a triumphant end-

The ripple of APPLAUSE-
ADAM LE RAY smiles, revelling, RUTH spun in a dramatic flourish in his arms.

Head thrown back, RUTH is pulled to a standstill, offering a forced smile to the DELIGHTED GUESTS all around until-

The applause subdues to a silence, the faces fall in growing concern.

RUTH stands, the trickle of a nosebleed spilling down her chiffon dress.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. ALEXANDRA PALACE. LONDON - EVENING 1, 1959

FREDDIE moving along the corridor, BEL on his tail, he is fizzing, on a high, excited-

FREDDIE
We are calcifying in television news-

BEL slides paper into a memo board in passing, hurrying to keep up with him, clearly wanting to tell him something-

BEL
Agreed.

FREDDIE
Hell, martial law may have been imposed in Poland but we’ve got footage of Prince Rainier on honeymoon with his show girl. And Hallelujah they are dining with the queen.

FREDDIE opens the door for her-

FREDDIE (CONT’D) (cont’d)
We are the nightly dose of reassurance that everything is alright in the world.

BEL smiles, with a growing urgency, clearly with something to say.

BEL
Agreed...agreed...agreed.

FREDDIE
Because some edict sent down from God knows where tells us what we broadcast and how we broadcast.

BEL smiles, FREDDIE smiles, both infectious and a little giddy.
FREDDIE (CONT’D) (cont’d)
We are going to escape.

BEL
Yes but Freddie...

FREDDIE
Don’t worry, Moneypenny. I’ll put in a good word.

BEL’s gaze wavers, she wants to tell him but can’t.

BEL
You’re coming with me.

FREDDIE moving on, BEL with rising concern, hurrying to keep up with him, the moment missed.

BEL (cont’d)
Freddie...?

CUT TO:
Distant laughter-

The jaunty song of the distant HOTEL BAND.

BEL
Freddie this is a new programme, this is everything that we’ve been waiting for.

FREDDIE looks at her-

BEL (cont’d)
Working together. It’s exciting. I wanted to talk to you about your interview tomorrow.
(with a smile)
Come on, stay and have a drink with me..

FREDDIE
And miss all the fun?

FREDDIE makes to go, heading towards the distant reception

FREDDIE (cont’d)
He’ll be late.

FREDDIE reaching for a Martini from a WAITER holding a tray, looking on at the distant party with growing dread-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
They’re always late.
If he’s still not here by nine, come and find me.
FREDDIE knocks back a drink.

BEL
At least try and keep a clear head.

FREDDIE reaches for a second drink hesitates on seeing—

BEL (cont’d)
You are impossible.
BEL catches FREDDIE seeing her scouring the GREY SUITED MEN in a distant bar.

FREDDIE
You know we’re both worth more.

RUTH just visible, through an ajar door, being introduced to more GUESTS. FREDDIE looks at RUTH, no longer listening-

BEL (calling after)
Freddie-

BEL bottles it, shakes her head, dismissive yet inwardly kicking herself.

BEL (cont’d)
Don’t you be. Late? Tomorrow?

FREDDIE nods, distracted, moving off to a distant CAMERAMAN and SOUND ENGINEER bored and waiting, cocktails in hand.

BEL waiting, heads off, taking a stool at the bar. She sits, waits, something she is clearly used to.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION ROOM. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR – EVENING 1, 2025

The TING of a fork against glass-

A lively party, quietened to a hush-

The cameraman focusing on ADAM LE RAY, capturing him through the lens-

ADAM LE RAY
It is truly wonderful to be able to share our engagement with so many loved ones.

ADAM stands at its heart, close to RUTH, surrounded by FRIENDS and FAMILY, the GREAT and the GOOD. He turns to LORD and LADY ELMS standing close by-

ADAM LE RAY (cont’d)
Lord and Lady Elms, it is an honour and a privilege to be joining this eminent family-

FREDDIE reaches out for a canape, stuffing it into his mouth, eyes catching on-
ADAM LE RAY (cont’d)
And so without further ado, I ask you
to raise your glasses to my beautiful
fiancée. We look forward to seeing you
all a week on Saturday.
RUTH, briefly glimpsed, smiling by ADAM’s side. FREDDIE hesitates, oddly drawn, her eyes briefly catching his, a flicker of recognition.

ADAM LE RAY (cont’d)
Do cross your fingers and let us hope the sun shines.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAWING ROOM. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR – NIGHT 1, 2050

An empty drawing room–
The distant noises of the party, far off–
FREDDIE goes over to a drinks cabinet, pours himself a whisky–

RUTH
Martini then whisky. Beware.

FREDDIE hesitates, seeing RUTH sunk in a chair, oddly broken.

RUTH (cont’d)
The hangover will get you.

FREDDIE considers, clocking the whisky glass in her hand. He holds up the bottle. She hesitates, lets him top up her glass.

FREDDIE
Are you hiding?

RUTH
No...Yes. I hate parties.

RUTH hesitates, drinks.

FREDDIE
And I’d just written ‘the newly engaged the honourable Miss Elms was glowing’–

RUTH
Hello Freddie.

FREDDIE hesitates, smiles–

FREDDIE
Miss Elms–
(beat)
Would you like to comment?

RUTH
Yes, if you pour me another one of those.

RUTH holds up her whisky glass–
FREDDIE
I’d say you’d had enough.

RUTH stands, wobbles a little, FREDDIE steadies her-

RUTH
What is enough if it doesn’t make you feel any better?

FREDDIE hesitates, RUTH’s sad pretty face jarring as she holds up her glass for more-

FREDDIE
How old are you now? Twenty?... Twenty one?

RUTH (cutting him off)
Old enough-

FREDDIE hesitates, laughs at the absurdity of this line, the evening suddenly overwhelming him.

RUTH (cont’d)
I was ten when you left.

FREDDIE deflects, drinks. He needs to go home.

FREDDIE
Well...congratulations. I wish you... the absolute best-

FREDDIE slides his glass down on the table, signalling his exit.

RUTH
A conspiracy is nothing but a secret agreement of a number of men for the pursuance of policies which they dare not admit in public.

(beat)
You wrote that-

FREDDIE
Actually Mark Twain did but-

Suddenly a drip of blood falls from RUTH’s nose.

RUTH
Damn-

RUTH searches for a handkerchief in her clutch. FREDDIE hands her his, one hand cradling her neck-

FREDDIE
Tilt your head-
RUTH leans back, FREDDIE’s hand cups hers, pinching the bridge of her nose-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
Pinch the bridge.

RUTH
I’m sorry.

RUTH nods, her hand gripping FREDDIE’s, tears suddenly welling-

FREDDIE
It’s only a handkerchief.

RUTH suddenly looks at him, eyes searching his with quiet desperation-

RUTH
You see it don’t you, Freddie? You always have.

FREDDIE looks at her, bemused.

RUTH (cont’d)
The lies-

FREDDIE wavers, RUTH’s quiet desperate despair oddly unsettling-

ADAM LE RAY
There you are, darling.

FREDDIE looks up, seeing ADAM LE RAY standing in the doorway. He withdraws his hands.

FREDDIE
Good night, Miss Elms.

FREDDIE exits, RUTH looks down, FREDDIE’s handkerchief still in her hands, the initials F.A.L. embroidered in one corner.

ADAM LE RAY
God, you’re drunk.

RUTH looks up, about to call after FREDDIE, just visible, disappearing out into the lobby-

RUTH
Not nearly enough.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 1, 2105

FREDDIE collecting his coat from the cloakroom, brightens on seeing BEL-
FREDDIE (calling out)
Bel-

FREDDIE hesitates, BEL entering a lift with her BANKER, his arm discreetly steering her up to another floor. A wedding band clear on his finger as he taps her arm.

BEL’s eyes dart back to FREDDIE, pleading for his silence-

The glide of the doors closing-

CLOAKROOM GIRL
Would you like to take the lady’s coat sir?

The CLOAKROOM GIRL holds up BEL’s coat, clearly on the same ticket-

FREDDIE (shakes head)
I’m sure she’ll pick it up later.

FREDDIE moves off, quietly irritated, wanting to get home.  

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. NOTTING HILL - NIGHT 1, 2130

FREDDIE passing a gang of BLACK TEENAGERS standing on a corner, hanging out.

Two YOUNG WHITE WOMEN wheeling prams, lost in chat. FREDDIE steps out their way, carrying a bag of fish and chips as he passes-

A LANDLADY cleans the front step of a grubby B&B.

A ‘No Coloureds. No Irish. No Children.’ sign visible in her window.

FREDDIE steps into the gutter to cross the road.

Across the street, an illuminated cinema sign/poster advertising-

Invasion of the Body Snatchers-

FREDDIE heads towards a distant run-down row of terraces-  

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. MALCOLM’S HOUSE. NOTTING HILL - NIGHT 1, 2142

The click of the door closing-

A shabby hallway, neat but austere and thoroughly lower middle class-
The distant murmur of the television.

MALCOLM OOV
(calling out)
Hello-

FREDDIE hesitates, hanging his coat on the wall, knocking a photo of FREDDIE aged six askew. He stands with fishing net or the like, smiling between his parents on a wet beach. FREDDIE contemplates it, straightening it.

FREDDIE
(calling back)
It’s just me, Dad.

FREDDIE picks up the fish and chips, moving through-

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. MALCOLM’S HOUSE. NOTTING HILL - NIGHT 1, 2144

Darkness-

MALCOLM LYON [late 50’s], a neat little man in shirt and pressed, if frayed, trousers, illuminated by the TV screen, lost in watching ‘Dixon of Dock Green’.

MALCOLM
Good day, Frederick?

FREDDIE nods and slides a packet of fish and chips onto his lap.

FREDDIE
You should have a light on.

FREDDIE reaches for the lamp, switching it on. The bulb has gone.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
Has Mrs B. not been in? The washing up’s still in the-

FREDDIE looks at MALCOLM, sees he’s not listening.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
What are you watching?

FREDDIE sinks down next to him on the threadbare sofa.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
Did you see the news tonight?

SILENCE-

FREDDIE, resigned, resumes eating chips, turning back to watch the TV.
MALCOLM

(beat)
The usual rubbish.

FREDDIE’s gaze wavers, a familiar sting.

MALCOLM (cont’d)
How’s that nice girl?

FREDDIE
Miss Rowley. She’s-

FREDDIE stops, suddenly at a loss-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
...fine.

They sit and eat in silence. MALCOLM suddenly turns and looks at FREDDIE as if for the first time.

MALCOLM
Good day, Frederick?

FREDDIE hesitates, nods, used to this eternal loop. FREDDIE looks at MALCOLM, already lost, back in his television programme. FREDDIE reaches for the crossword, filling in the final clue.

DIXON ON TV
Look, will you leave this with me for a day or so?

FREDDIE looks down, suddenly clocking the cuff of his shirt, still spotted with RUTH’s blood.

The TICK TICK of a carriage clock on a mantelpiece-

CUT TO:

INT. MORTUARY. POLICE STATION. NORTH LONDON - NIGHT 1, 2147

A cold dark mortuary-

PETER DARRALL’s body lies on a marble slab, a savage wound to his neck just visible.

DIXON ON TV
I just want to give it some thought-

A closer inspection reveals every seam of his suit and shirt has been expertly cut-

DIXON ON TV (cont’d)
....chew it over.

CUT TO:

FADE TO BLACK
CONTINUED:

The TICK TICK of a clock through-

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION. BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE – DAY 2, 0850

A clock edges towards nine o’clock-

BEL stands underneath it, eyeing the time with growing concern until-

BEL
8.30...We said 8.30-

FREDDIE, dishevelled, tails BEL towards the reception, she is nervous, edging to say something.

FREDDIE
Don’t mix single malt with Martini.

The PING of the LIFT-

BEL
Wonderful.

BEL smiles at the RECEPTIONIST as FREDDIE knots his tie-

BEL (cont’d)
Frederick Lyon to see the Director of Programmes.

FREDDIE rifles through his pockets, pulling out several sheaves of hand written paper-

FREDDIE
I’ve brought the manifesto.

BEL
That was written years ago when we were very drunk.

FREDDIE reaches for a pencil, scribbling something down.

FREDDIE
You were drunk. I was sober.
(reading)
You’ve put three ‘t’s’ in topicality.

RECEPTIONIST
7th floor.

FREDDIE already making his way over to distant lifts-

BEL
(calling after)
Lyon-
BEL hurries after him-

CUT TO:

INT. LIFT. BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE - DAY 2, 0854

FREDDIE entering the lift, scratching down a new line onto the manifesto, BEL close behind-

FREDDIE
Do you think I should start with the Marx quote?

BEL
Freddie you really need to focus now.

FREDDIE scratches it out-

FREDDIE
You’re right. Don’t want to scare them off straight away. Not when one is looking to run-

BEL
It hasn’t got a name yet...

The GLIDE of the LIFT rising-

FREDDIE
...this changing face of television news programme that hasn’t got a name yet-

BEL
I’d pitch hard on balancing London news with the provinces. It’s important that they know you are interested in stories in Manchester, Bradford, Leeds.

FREDDIE
Why?

BEL
Because you need to show them..

FREDDIE
Show them what?

BEL
That you’re familiar with the demands of home affairs.

FREDDIE
That’s your job.
BEL
You need to keep your options open.
FREDDIE scrutinises her—

FREDDIE

Moneypenny your eyes look piggy when you lie.

The PING of the lift—

BEL

(sudden)

I’m the producer. The new programme? Clarence wants me to be the producer.

FREDDIE looks at her aghast until—

FREDDIE

Right—

BEL

Freddie—

Two GIGGLING SECRETARIES get in on the sixth floor, lost in their own chat. The lift ascends on.

FREDDIE

(deflects)

How many floors up would you need to jump from to really make it worth it?

The PING of the LIFT—

FREDDIE (cont’d)

Four? ..Five?

FREDDIE looks at BEL with growing fury as the lift doors slide open—

FREDDIE (cont’d)

Fine. You produce, I’ll present.

FREDDIE turns, mind racing, quietly falling apart.

CLARENCE OOV

There you are.

CUT TO: 36

INT. RECEPTION. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES’ OFFICE – DAY 2, 0857

CLARENCE FENDLEY [late 40’s/mid 50’s], Director of News, stands as FREDDIE steps out of the lift—

CLARENCE

Now breathe, Freddie—

FREDDIE nods, suddenly speechless—
BEL

Clarence-

CLARENCE ignores her, clearly they are late.
CLARENCE
He is waiting but he has a packed day.

CLARENCE’s eyes dart to BEL as he leads FREDDIE towards an endless corridor, leaving BEL far behind.

CLARENCE (cont’d)

Later-
The swing of distant doors, FREDDIE and CLARENCE gone.

Behind BEL, a poster reads—

PERSONAL PROTECTION UNDER ATOMIC ATTACK. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

An image of a perturbed housewife in her kitchen, her children playing close by, looking on with similar concern.

BEL taking a seat in the reception. She sits, stands, waits, suddenly aware of someone watching her—

HECTOR MADDEN [mid 30’s], handsome, intriguing and everything that FREDDIE is not, smiles at her across a distant coffee table.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE - DAY 2, 0859

CLARENCE with FREDDIE passing photographs of Alexandra Palace, Lime Grove Studios, and Broadcasting House. A sense of history along the hallowed corridors of the Director of Programmes’ offices. FREDDIE blindly follows, struggling to take CLARENCE’s words in.

CLARENCE
We speak in full sentences. We listen.
We don’t try any funnies.

FREDDIE
Yes..Right..

CLARENCE
Your reputation goes before you. The good I have been able to confirm. The bad was youthful recklessness, which in your more mature years you have left behind.

FREDDIE
Clarence I—

CLARENCE taps his mouth, clearly nervous.
CLARENCE
Freddie this is my programme. It’s very important that I get the best team and that you are part of it. Ditch the manifesto. Bel told me.

CLARENCE takes a side glance at FREDDIE, taking in the familiar disarray.

CLARENCE (cont’d)
(pointing to collar)
Top button.

FREDDIE hesitates, nods, scrunches up the paper in his hand, binning it as he takes a left, following CLARENCE towards a distant office, trying to hold it together.

CUT TO:

INT. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES’ OFFICE - DAY 2, 0901

A darkened office, wall-to-wall walnut-

Mr DOUGLAS OWEN [mid/late 50’s] stands looking over a reel of film, black and white footage of Gordon Pirie, a tall South London Harrier, making history as he runs 5,000 metres in Norway, just visible projected on the wall.

DOUGLAS
13 minutes, 36.8 seconds - remarkable.

FREDDIE blindly nods, looking to CLARENCE, adopting the same forced interest. DOUGLAS suddenly stops the film, rewinding the reel by hand.

DOUGLAS (cont’d)
(pointing)
There. There...

DOUGLAS freezes the frame, one hand on the reel, the other jabbing the screen.

DOUGLAS (cont’d)
Ballsed it. Left corner.

FREDDIE and DOUGLAS peer closer, just clocking the boom.

DOUGLAS (cont’d)
 Bloody boom. How do we run that? I want two men at Lord’s when Jim Laker bats next week. One to hold the camera, the other to keep the bloody boom out of sight...You play?

FREDDIE scrabbles for words-
CONTINUED:

FREDDIE
Yes. No. Do I need to?
FREDDIE’s eyes dart to CLARENCE. CLARENCE silently urging him on.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
I like football.

DOUGLAS
Which team?

FREDDIE
Derby County. My mother was born-

DOUGLAS
So not really...

FREDDIE hesitates, momentarily at a loss.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES’ OFFICE - DAY 2, 0905

The TICK TICK of a clock on a wall edging past 9am-

HECTOR and BEL sit waiting, BEL flicks through a magazine with growing irritation, time crawling by-

HECTOR
You’re something to do with natural history.

BEL considers HECTOR sitting calmly, a cigarette smoking in his hand.

HECTOR (cont’d)
I heard a rumour they were setting up a unit somewhere in the BBC.
I’m a big fan of animals.

BEL
Let me guess. Accounts?

HECTOR hesitates, enjoying the game-

HECTOR
Researcher. You fly out with a crew to the Amazon Monday.

BEL barely looks up from reading her magazine, seemingly indifferent.

BEL
Something like that.

A PRETTY SECRETARY slides a coffee down on the table in front of him.
CONTINUED:

PRETTY SECRETARY
Do you take sugar?
HECTOR smiles, shakes his head, stirs-

HECTOR  
(to SECRETARY)  
That’s a very pretty blouse.

The PRETTY SECRETARY smiles moving on, BEL looks at HECTOR wearily-

HECTOR drinks his coffee, enjoying himself, eyes grazing over BEL’s shapely legs.

CUT TO:

INT. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES’ OFFICE - DAY 2, 0909

DOUGLAS sits behind a sweeping desk, flicking through FREDDIE’s CV-

DOUGLAS  
Clarence tells me you are a brilliant journalist.

FREDDIE darts a look to CLARENCE-

DOUGLAS (cont’d)  
Give me tomorrow’s news.

FREDDIE  
A lot can happen in 24 hours. Eisenhower looks like he’ll run for another term. But that’s obvious. I’m more interested in the underdog. Rumour has it the young Mr. Kennedy is a contender for the VP democratic nomination but in newsreels, we don’t do scoops.
DOUGLAS
So sixty minutes, six days to get it together. Seventh day it’s out there. Three slots. Tell me how it looks.

FREDDIE takes a moment, he’s got five minutes to nail this.

FREDDIE
At the top, New Commonwealth immigration. 75,000 people arriving every year from the colonies. But what does it really mean? Martin Luther King gives a public address in San Francisco. The birth of the new Negro, one who is not crippled by fear and self loathing but driven by dignity and destiny. Yet we don’t even challenge the fact that in every hotel window we still without shame say ‘No Coloureds. No Irish.’

DOUGLAS looks to CLARENCE, silent, but listening, clearly impressed-

FREDDIE (cont’d)

DOUGLAS
And third?

FREDDIE’S eyes fall back on the projected image, the image just visible, frozen, the runner crossing the finishing line-

FREDDIE
13 minutes, 36.8 seconds. It’s a good story.

DOUGLAS
You’ve got a boom tracking in every shot.

FREDDIE
Seeing him cross that finishing line’s the thing. It makes it more real. Seeing the boom. The mechanics of how we bear witness. Because that’s what we do. What one tries to do. Reveal fleeting moments in history, not with apology, not as it is now, endless static newsreel, a man who never leaves his desk delivering the story as if it is the dry five minute warm-up act before Hancock’s Half Hour.

(MORE)
Of course everyone wants to be entertained, but while we are all busy laughing...Russia is aligning its missiles and declaring World War III. It has to be the hour you can’t miss. The hour you have to see.

FREDDIE racing and over-excited.

Putting real journalists in front of the camera sends out the message that you are taking news seriously.

DOUGLAS hesitates, Freddie fizzing.

So you see yourself in front of the camera Mr Lyon?

BEL slams down her magazine, bored. HECTOR smiles.

I never understand women and magazines. They only ever buy them for the pictures.

BEL looks at him, wavering on HECTOR’s mischievous smile.

You’re so right. And those things called novels. Impossible. So many words...

This is where I ask you for a drink.

She hesitates, something dangerous in this game.

Sorry. I’ve got to pack for South America.

Footsteps fast along the corridor, BEL and HECTOR turn just seeing FREDDIE on furious approach, tailed by CLARENCE, with a face like thunder.
FREDDIE
Home affairs! House of Lords garden parties and outbreaks of foot and mouth in Keswick?
FREDDIE hesitates, eyes grazing over HECTOR and BEL with quiet suspicion.
CLARENCE
The audacity to even think you could present this programme!

FREDDIE
He asked for my opinion.

CLARENCE
And you gave it, very eloquently—
(hushed)
...including telling him to stuff it!

CLARENCE spies BEL standing, looking on with growing concern.

CLARENCE (cont’d)
(to BEL)
This is your fault. I said talk to him, calm him down. I said he’s a risk...He’s always a bloody risk. But you said ‘NO’. You don’t lead the story. The story leads you, Freddie. First rule of news.

CLARENCE stops at a loss, furious and pacing.

CLARENCE (cont’d)
(moving off)
Maybe you are better where you are.
(to HECTOR)
Two minutes.

CLARENCE moves off, BEL looks at HECTOR with growing suspicion.

BEL
You’re not in accounts are you?

HECTOR
No.

FREDDIE stands furious—

HECTOR (cont’d)
Mr Lyon. I am a big fan of your work.

HECTOR holds out his hand. FREDDIE looks at it.

FREDDIE
How exactly? I mean which bit? Of my work?

BEL
Freddie—

CLARENCE suddenly appears—
Mr Madden...My apologies...This is Miss Rowley-

BEL turns with realisation to HECTOR-

HECTOR
Yes, I know exactly who Miss Rowley is.

HECTOR smiles wickedly, she’s been had.

CLARENCE
(to BEL)
May I introduce you to the face of our new programme.

CLARENCE looks pointedly at FREDDIE-

CLARENCE (cont’d)
(to HECTOR)
If you’d like to come this way.

HECTOR smiles, moving off-

FREDDIE
(almost to himself)
Christ, he’s charming as well.

FREDDIE’s gaze catches on HECTOR being greeted warmly by DOUGLAS. FREDDIE turns, the wind knocked out of him-

BEL
Lyon-

The PING of the LIFT-

FREDDIE enters, BEL close behind.

The magazine left half-open on a distant coffee table-

An advert for Marlboro or the like just visible. An image of a swarthy man clasping a cigarette between his fingers. It is ADAM LE RAY.

CUT TO:

INT. LIFT. BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE - DAY 2, 0934

FREDDIE stands, punch-drunk, BEL by his side-

FREDDIE
How could you do that?

The glide of the lift down-
FREDDIE (cont’d)
How could you not warn me what I was being interviewed for?

BEL
If you would just listen to me -

FREDDIE
And I thought it was so sweet you wanted to meet me beforehand.

BEL
It’s still home affairs. You’re still part of the team and it’s the team that Clarence believes in.

FREDDIE

FREDDIE looks at BEL, with disgusted realisation-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
Of course. You find him attractive. You’re pathetic.

BEL
It’s you who said you are calcifying in newsreels. Do you seriously want to die there? The last job I got you. You nearly closed us down because you accused the then Minister of Trade of accepting bribes.

The PING of the lift-

A couple of GREY-SUITED MEN enter. FREDDIE and BEL continue their argument, if a little hushed.

FREDDIE
(close to/hushed)
He had. He was.

BEL
(close to/hushed)
Clarence has championed you since day one. He was giving you an opportunity and you have just thrown it back in his face. You could be even more brilliant than you know, but you just have to ruin it. A new programme, a new era. And they want me as Producer.

BEL pulls on her gloves, struggling with each fiddly finger. FREDDIE by her side.
CONTINUED: 42 42

FREDDIE
They’re humouring you.

BEL inwardly winded, humiliation threatening until-
FREDDIE (cont’d)

They don’t want a woman. A woman is difficult. Hysterical. And you can never really find one who will ever stay. A couple more years and you’ll probably want a baby and then-

BEL

Don’t speak-

FREDDIE

Even if they don’t say that to your face then it is what they are thinking. Anything else is your vanity making you believe-

BEL

What? That I can do it? That I can actually do this? Watch me. I have a contract on my desk, just waiting to sign.

BEL suddenly looks at the GREY-SUITED MEN, listening to her outburst.

BEL (cont’d)

(close to)

What have you got?

The PING of the lift-

BEL exits. FREDDIE stands, not moving, letting the rest of the lift spill out around him.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE - DAY 2, 1140

The THUDDER of a row of telex machines, keys frantically banging against metal rolls, spilling out reams of paper, with incoming news-

The PING of the lift-

FREDDIE steps out, crossing a run-down poky reception, spying BEL working at a distant desk-

LIX OOV

(roared)

Lyon.

LIX STORM [mid/late 40’s], the BBC’s leading foreign correspondent, already in some rage, pokes her head out of a doorway. A cigarette smoking in her hand.
LIX
George wants to bump the VP Nom for the Duke of Edinburgh at some-
FREDDIE keeps walking—

FREDDIE
Not guilty. Mr Wengrow—

ISAAC passes, carrying a tray of teas.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
...is on Royal Duty.

LIX, unamused, tops up her tea with brandy and drinks as FREDDIE pulls at a reef of paper from a telex machine in passing—

ISAAC
He does look very smart on his horse.

FREDDIE’s eyes absently flick over the list, his gaze briefly catching on—

Body of man found in North London, throat cut. Suspected robbery....Identified as Peter Darrall...

GEORGE passes—

GEORGE
Copy in by four, ladies and gentlemen, copy in by four.

GEORGE stands looking at the incoming news lists, FREDDIE spies BEL doing much the same. They ignore one another.

BEL
Plane crash, Nigeria, 26 dead.

GEORGE
And—?

BEL shakes her head—

BEL
Does your wife find you amusing, George?

BEL moves off, reading through the news list.

LIX
A doctor’s been seen arriving at number 10. Rumour has it he’s unwell again.

GEORGE
(already moving off)
You know where rumour gets us.
Then Cairo?
GEORGE
I’m running the Bobsleigh at Bergen then-

FREDDIE barely looking up from his news list-

FREDDIE
What to you is rumour, to the rest of the world is foresight, Georgie.

GEORGE stops in his tracks, calmly turns. BEL looks up from reading, sensing danger-

GEORGE
Done your copy for the Elms’ engagement yet, Mr Lyon?

FREDDIE looks up, holding GEORGE’s gaze with quiet challenge.

FREDDIE
Not remotely.

GEORGE
I have any number of men who would happily fill your post Mr Lyon -

The tension bristles, stilling all to a silence-

FREDDIE
Is that a threat?

GEORGE does not waver. BEL looks at FREDDIE, desperately wanting to shut him up but-

LIX
(aside)
Hush now my boy.

FREDDIE turns in a fury-

GEORGE
Four o’clock. No Eden. No Cairo.

BEL looks on, looking back, watching GEORGE head off down the corridor.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE – DAY 2, 1152

FREDDIE sinks down in front of his desk, a sense of a makeshift office in the corner. His eyes absently graze over the collage of conspiracy theories and bleak news articles, mushroom bombs and images of Hiroshima vying for attention with smiling images of a winning match for Derby County and alien sightings in Utah pinned to the wall.
FREDDIE scoops up a well-thumbed copy of *Diamonds Are Forever* by Ian Fleming resting on his desk. He absently flicks through it—

LIX
She left it for you.

FREDDIE looks over at BEL, just taking a seat at a distant desk. He looks back at the book hating himself, deflects to LIX across the corridor, just sinking down in front of her desk.

FREDDIE
They could have at least offered me foreign affairs.

LIX
Already taken.

FREDDIE looks at LIX with sudden realisation.

FREDDIE
Traitor.

LIX smiles, tapping another cigarette on her desk.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
I want my desk back.

LIX
As I recall I won this desk.

FREDDIE
You scored your cards.

LIX
Didn’t need to, sweetheart.

FREDDIE looks beyond, BEL just visible heading out.

LIX (cont’d)
(close to/passing)
You have absolutely no poker face.

FREDDIE wavers, LIX has got him.

FREDDIE’s eyes graze frantically over the news list. Nothing. He scoops up the copy of *Diamonds Are Forever*. He flicks it open, eyes recognising BEL’s familiar hand, funny comments written for his benefit in the margin.

ISAAC
Mr Lyon, there’s a lady to see you.

FREDDIE looks up, with surprise on seeing—
ISAAC (cont’d)
She said you’re old friends.

RUTH seated in a distant corridor. She looks the image of the modern young teenager, in pumps, leggings and heavy leopard print coat, checking her lipstick in a tiny compact.

FREDDIE looks down at the copy of Diamonds Are Forever in his hand, shoving it across his desk as he exits.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. ALEXANDRA PALACE - DAY 2, 1159

A corridor, FREDDIE stands buying a cup of tea for RUTH from a trolley. He hands the cup and saucer to RUTH, a wrapped sugar cube resting in the saucer.

FREDDIE
Nice coat.

RUTH smiles, bundled up in her coat, oddly out of place. He sits down next to her, drinking his tea.

RUTH
Mother hates it. I wear it to annoy her.

Two STIFF-LOOKING SECRETARIES pass, lost in hushed conversation.

RUTH (cont’d)
Fashion is a terrible evil, Freddie. You wouldn’t believe the awful things one has to do in the name of beauty. The hats, the gloves, the underwear. The way it stifles you. One needs to find tiny acts of rebellion where one can.

FREDDIE
(laughs)
Is this a joke?

RUTH smiles, sliding her cup and saucer onto a nearby windowsill.

RUTH
That’s funny. Most people think I’m too serious.

RUTH reaches in her bag for a packet of cigarettes. She offers one to FREDDIE. He declines. She taps a cigarette against the box, lights, smokes.
RUTH (cont’d)
You’re so serious. Don’t take life so seriously. Well I find it very serious indeed. The world.

FREDDIE
You have grown up.

RUTH
Don’t patronise me.
(silence)
Why didn’t you ever reply to my letters?
(silence)
It didn’t matter. I’ve kept up with what you are doing. Read your odd articles-

FREDDIE
Well then that makes you quite unique.

RUTH
I even found a short story you wrote in The Listener which I may add was not very good. Though I suppose the novel is perhaps still the last domain of the free mind, where they can’t tell you what to think, what to say. That and art I suppose.

FREDDIE
They? Who are they? What are you talking about?

RUTH’s eyes dart over to a distant office of GREY SUITS lost in muted stiff conversation.

RUTH
They are everywhere. Here in this building. Out on the street. In your office. They even control what you write.

RUTH falters, a group of TYPISTS pass, lost in giggling conversation. RUTH’s eyes dart around her, she moves in closer, fingers playing with a sugar wrapper scrunched in the saucer of her cup.

RUTH (cont’d)
Have you heard of Peter Darrall? He is...was one of the leading political minds this country had. He was killed last night.

RUTH silently turns the sugar wrapper between her fingers as she smokes.
RUTH (cont’d)

It will be reported in the evening papers as a robbery. It wasn’t. There will be no investigation. Even those who loved him the most will be told to forget him. They will weave a web of deceitful lies-

FREDDIE laughs-

RUTH (cont’d)

You think it’s ridiculous? I wish it were.

(close to)

I want you to find out why he was murdered.

FREDDIE

Go to the police-

(seeing look)

I am not the right person-

RUTH

Yes you are. You are a man. And the world listens to men.

RUTH reaches out, touches FREDDIE’s hand.

RUTH (cont’d)

You think you live in a democracy, you think this country stands for freedom of speech? It does not.

RUTH releases her grip on FREDDIE.

RUTH (cont’d)

I never forgot you, Freddie.

RUTH stubs out her cigarette, eyes flicking to the clock.

RUTH (cont’d)

No-

FREDDIE makes to stand-

RUTH (cont’d)

...I’ll make my own way out.

RUTH leans in close to FREDDIE, her lips brushing his cheek, seemingly saying goodbye.

RUTH (cont’d)

(close to)

They will kill me if they know I am talking to you.
FREDDIE watches RUTH exit, disappearing down an endless corridor, passing a GRIP in conversation with an ELECTRICIAN by a doorway.

FREDDIE looks down at the cup and saucer resting on the windowsill. The sugar wrapper, lies in the saucer, artfully folded into-

A perfect tiny paper rose.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE - DAY 2, 1221

The thudder of the telex machine-

FREDDIE, one finger tracing along the wire service news feeds spilling out of the machines, frustrated, moving on.

FREDDIE rifles through the chaos of his desk, LIX puffs on her cigarette, lost in her own work-

FREDDIE
Man...stabbed...North London...Did you see it? Came in this morning?
Peter...His name was Peter something-

ISAAC hands FREDDIE a piece of paper, FREDDIE’s eyes scanning down the list until-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
(almost to himself)
Throat slashed.

FREDDIE already reaching for his coat-

GEORGE
(in passing/calling after)
We don’t report gangland spats.

CUT TO:

INT. BENTLEY’S RESTAURANT. LONDON - DAY 2, 1300

A lively restaurant, BEL crossing towards a distant table, suddenly seeing HECTOR segueing close to her, on the same route-

HECTOR
Did he forgive you?

BEL looks at HECTOR sharply-

BEL
Who?

HECTOR
Mr Lyon?
BEL ignores him, smiling at CLARENCE, as they approach his table.

HECTOR (cont’d)
You really should have told him.

BEL
(aside)
He’s a big boy.

CLARENCE is already standing, to greet them–

CLARENCE
You found one another.

HECTOR pulls BEL’s chair out. She hesitates, sits–

CLARENCE (cont’d)
Douglas is on his way.

CUT TO:

INT. RECEPTION. POLICE STATION. HIGHGATE – DAY 2, 1305

A dingy police reception–

A WOMAN juggles a wailing BABY in a sodden nappy.

A DRUNK mutters to himself.

A poster on the wall warns BE CAREFUL SOMEONE’S LISTENING with an image of two suited men on a tube train, one clearly listening in on the other’s conversation, one ear trained.

The POLICE OFFICER at the reception looks away, trying to avoid Freddie–

FREDDIE
Alright Charlie?

FREDDIE takes a scrap of paper, a rolled pound note just visible, which FREDDIE slides underneath–

POLICE OFFICER
No–

The POLICE OFFICER considers, the pound note tempting–

FREDDIE
Suspected robbery. Came in last night.

The POLICE OFFICER looks down, reads FREDDIE’s scrawl–

It reads–

Take the money or the baby gets it.
The POLICE OFFICER looks at FREDDIE, discreetly taking the note-

POLICE OFFICER (hushed)
Plain clothes were in an hour ago.

CUT TO:

INT. BENTLEY’S RESTAURANT. LONDON – DAY 2, 1309

BEL peruses the menu, a WAITER hovers pouring water and wine.

BEL
Alexis Storm will be heading the foreign desk.

BEL mid-sip of her glass of water, considers HECTOR. He smiles, playful.

BEL (cont’d)
She covered-

BEL flushes, aware of HECTOR quietly studying her. She forces herself on-

HECTOR
...the Spanish Civil war in Madrid, broke the news in ’40 that British troops had arrived in France.

BEL hesitates, quietly impressed-

BEL
Her network of stringers is extensive in Europe, the Middle East, Africa-

HECTOR
I am presuming you have resolved the issue of the home desk-

CLARENCE
There are a number of faces in the frame...

BEL
Clarence, I know Freddie was not at his best today-

CLARENCE studies his menu, yet BEL is not giving up.

CLARENCE
You don’t need him.

BEL
He’s passionate.
CLARENCE
He’s dangerous.

HECTOR
There’s that very nice chap on that
Sunday news review. He might be an
idea.

BEL
No-

HECTOR smiles, surprised by the fire-

BEL (cont’d)
He’s infuriating and outspoken but he
sees the extraordinary in the
ordinary. I truly believe we need him.
I need him to make this programme the
best it can be.

HECTOR
And what is that?

BEL
The world that Freddie sees. When
you’re with Freddie you suddenly see
the world as he sees it, in all its
extraordinary detail. He spots folded
corners that the rest of us don’t even
notice and he just can’t resist
peeling them back. A train crash. A
labour strike and somewhere you will
find Freddie, away from the other
journalists, talking to the last
person that seems to matter and yet
that’s the story that matters most to
ordinary people. He finds them.

BEL smiles, giddy, quietly captivating HECTOR and even
CLARENCE-

HECTOR
And you really think you can’t do
that?

Their eyes lock, BEL clearly flattered by HECTOR’s words.

CLARENCE
Douglas-

DOUGLAS just visible, steady on the approach, taking a seat-

DOUGLAS
I hope you ordered for me.
The dull chill of the mortuary-

The body of PETER DARRALL lies flat on a marble slab-

FREDDIE peers close, a young POLICE OFFICER keeps watch close by-

FREDDIE
How many men?

POLICE OFFICER
Five.

FREDDIE nods, eyes tracking slowly over PETER’s body.

FREDDIE
MI5?

FREDDIE looks to the loitering POLICE OFFICER, sensing his discomfort. The POLICE OFFICER shakes his head-

POLICE OFFICER
Box 850, governor says.

FREDDIE
SIS? You know you’re someone when MI6 come to pay respects.

Using his pen, FREDDIE gently lifts up the corner of PETER’s jacket, revealing-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
Did they do this?

Every seam has been cut, every cuff and collar, the stitching neatly sliced as if in search-

POLICE OFFICER
(going)
No...Came in like that. Someone was looking for something.

FREDDIE considers, eyes lingering on the neat wound, perfectly executed on PETER’s neck. FREDDIE’s gaze falls on a watch in a plastic bag, resting on the marble counter. A wallet, including a library card and money-

FREDDIE
It wasn’t much of a robbery.

FREDDIE slips a hand in PETER’s jacket pocket, everything gone but for a crushed packet of empty cigarettes.
FREDDIE (cont’d)
Unless they took his last cigarette.
FREDDIE considers, pocketing them.

POLICE OFFICER
Five minutes. We’re done.

FREDDIE considers, he absently leans over, turns off a dripping tap.

FREDDIE
Yes we’re done.

CUT TO:

INT. BENTLEY’S RESTAURANT. LONDON – DAY 2, 1340

The aftermath of lunch–

CLARENCE
McCain’s in.

HECTOR darts a look over to a distant table, ANGUS MCCAIN [late 40’s], neat, if prematurely grey, lost in conversation with several GREY-SUITED MINISTERS. He throws DOUGLAS a wave.

BEL
(hushed aside/to HECTOR)
One of Eden’s press minions.

MCCAIN stands, ready to make an approach.

CLARENCE
(aside)
Christ, he’s coming over.

DOUGLAS
Leave it to me.

DOUGLAS smiles, taking ANGUS’s outstretched hand–

DOUGLAS (cont’d)
So this is how Westminster feeds you?

MCCAIN already moving on to CLARENCE to shake his hand–

MCCAIN
Clarence. What a gathering this is. Mr Madden–

HECTOR smiles, surprised–

HECTOR
Yes.

MCCAIN shakes hands moving on–
Miss Rowley. I almost didn’t see you there.

(MORE)
MCCAIN (cont'd)
You did that lovely piece 'At Home With Lady Eden'. My wife so enjoyed it.

BEL
Prime Minister Eden’s in good health?

MCCAIN
He is, thank you.

BEL
Only I hear he has been unwell again.

MCCAIN
Miss Rowley, such maternal instincts, you do seem so wasted in news.

BEL’s bites her tongue, silent as MCCAIN turns his attention back to DOUGLAS-

MCCAIN (cont’d)
I was hoping I’d see you today. Michael was very keen to have a word. Pandit Nehru’s coming into town. I’ve had Barton on the phone banging on wanting an interview for weeks. I told him, sorry BBC gets first dibs.

The ripple of male laughter; BEL looks on, unsettled.

MCCAIN (cont’d)
Are we celebrating?

DOUGLAS throws a smile and a wave, getting up to join a distant gathering of WESTMINSTER MINISTERS.

DOUGLAS (CONT’D)
...We’re launching a topical news programme-

MCCAIN wavers, unsettled-

MCCAIN
Really? Marvellous. Does it have a name yet?

DOUGLAS (CONT’D)
Working on it. Mr Madden will present it, Clarence at the helm and Miss Rowley as Producer.

MCCAIN
(looking to BEL)
That must have been a surprise. What a coup Miss Rowley!

(MORE)
Douglas I must introduce your team to-
DOUGLAS smiles on seeing a familiar MINISTER, offering a discreet wave.

MCCAIN (cont’d)
Clarence, now second to left is the man you’ll want to talk to.

MCCAIN smiles escorting CLARENCE and DOUGLAS across the room—

MCCAIN (cont’d)
(calling back)
Mr Madden?

HECTOR nods, eyes darting to BEL, MCCAIN ignoring BEL.

HECTOR
Of course. Miss Rowley will you—

BEL shrugs smiles—

HECTOR follows CLARENCE across the room, leaving BEL seated on her own. The loud GUFFAW of male laughter. BEL sits quietly stinging. She looks around the room, eyes quietly watching—

TWO PRETTY WIVES lost in lunch, heavy diamonds on their fingers.

And then table after table of MEN.

BEL sinks a little, sips her water, clinging onto a waning confidence, with quiet defiance. HECTOR looks back, clocking her alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOBBY. BENTLEY’S RESTAURANT. LONDON - DAY 2, 1414

A muted lobby—

BEL waits for the CLOAKROOM ASSISTANT to get her coat—

BEL
(to CLOAKROOM ASSISTANT)
It’s the blue—

A distant drawing room, DOUGLAS, McCAIN, CLARENCE and OTHERS lost in smoking and port.

HECTOR
You left it on the table.

HECTOR stands, BEL’s purse in his hands. He holds it out. BEL takes it, their fingers brushing in brief exchange.

BEL
Thank you.
Distant laughter, HECTOR follows BEL’s gaze -
HECTOR
What about a brandy to celebrate?

BEL smiles, HECTOR follows her gaze falling on a sign overhead-

BEL
I’d love to but-

Could ladies refrain from entering the drawing room, or the like-

BEL
What is it about you men? You always need a tiny corner where we can’t quite reach you.

HECTOR laughs, BEL turns to go, pulling on her hat and gloves.

HECTOR
Then we will have to take you elsewhere.

BEL looks at him, with quiet surprise.

HECTOR (cont’d)
I’m good at smuggling contraband.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR. UPSTAIRS. BENTLEY’S RESTAURANT. LONDON – DAY 2, 1420

An empty bar, closed from guests, chairs upturned on tables, in waiting for use another day-

Distant male laughter-

HECTOR leading BEL, peering around a corner. He scoops up two glasses and a brandy bottle from behind the bar. He pours-

BEL
This is highly illegal.

HECTOR slides a brandy glass across the counter to her.

HECTOR
That’s what makes it so much more enjoyable.

BEL hesitates, drinks, aware of HECTOR’s quiet gaze.

HECTOR (cont’d)
How can you bear that man talking to you like that?

BEL hesitates, unwilling to speak and yet-
BEL
We’d be foolish to make an enemy of anyone close to government, Mr Madden-

HECTOR
Hector-

BEL
Hero of Troy.

HECTOR
Father with pretensions of a scholar.

BEL
And mother?

The swirl of brandy in BEL’s glass, dangerously heady.

HECTOR
Died when I was ten.

BEL hesitates, something about HECTOR catching her heart, but she resists-

BEL
And I’ve been out long enough.

BEL finishes her drink, sliding it down on the counter.

BEL (cont’d)
Some of us have work to do.

HECTOR
So it’s true what they say?

BEL smiles, quizzical-

HECTOR (cont’d)
You work twice as hard as any man and none are half as good as you.

BEL
I enjoy the company of men.

HECTOR
Is it true you covered McCarthy’s Lincoln Day speech?

BEL
With a tape recorder that didn’t work.
HECTOR should smile, impressed.

HECTOR
I don’t believe you’re prepared to
give up this job for Mr Lyon. I think
you’ll do whatever it takes.

BEL wavers, quietly thrown, the air is crackling with sexual
tension. He touches her arm-

HECTOR (cont’d)
Take the afternoon off. You’ll be out
by the end of the week anyway.

BEL
I hope you’re not going to be this lax
when I’m your producer.

BEL looks down at his hand still resting on her arm. He
releases his grip yet his gaze lingers.

HECTOR
Talk to Mr Lyon.

BEL
I intend to but-

BEL keeps walking, heading out.

BEL (cont’d)
He doesn’t listen to anyone but
himself.

CUT TO:

SCENE 54 CUT AT SHOOTING SCRIPT

INT. OFFICE. LCES. LONDON - DAY 2, 1615

A neat office-

The click of the door, FREDDIE enters, taking in the room; art
books covering the wall. FREDDIE’s eyes graze over a collage
of newspaper articles including one of FREDDIE’s own. One
reads-

Nasser: Friend or Foe?

PROFESSOR BECKETT
This shouldn’t be open. They locked
it.

PROFESSOR BECKETT stands hesitant in the doorway-

FREDDIE
They?
55 CONTINUED:

PROFESSOR BECKETT wavers-
FREDDIE (cont’d)
I have an appointment with Mr Darrall.

FREDDIE pushes a key, flat in his palm, deep in his pocket.

PROFESSOR BECKETT
Professor Darrall sadly passed away last night–

A swell of STUDENTS just visible through a wide window–

FREDDIE
I’m so sorry–

PROFESSOR BECKETT
You knew him–?

FREDDIE
(shakes his head)
No, but I hoped to. You work in the same department?

PROFESSOR BECKETT
(nods)
Our paths crossed at this time of the year–

FREDDIE looking out of the window at the small clutch of STUDENTS lost in conversation on the street below.

PROFESSOR BECKETT (cont’d)
We have a number of international students who take summer courses.
Mainly French–

A YOUNG COUPLE hold hands, laughing across a distant square–

PROFESSOR BECKETT (cont’d)
Though London is hardly Paris.

The YOUNG COUPLE kiss–

FREDDIE
Oh, I don’t know.

PROFESSOR BECKETT holds the door open, waiting–

PROFESSOR BECKETT
If you’d like to talk to the bursar, I could–

FREDDIE
(beat)
Was he married?

PROFESSOR BECKETT’s gaze wavers–
FREDDIE peers at some beautiful Arabic paintings on the wall. PROFESSOR BECKETT follows FREDDIE’s gaze—

PROFESSOR BECKETT (cont’d)
He had a love of Middle Eastern painting—

FREDDIE nods, hesitating on seeing—

A group photograph resting by a lamp close by, PETER DARRALL standing with a class of STUDENTS. RUTH ELMS just visible in the front row, smiling—

FREDDIE
Tragic.

FREDDIE nods, concern growing—

PROFESSOR BECKETT
Apparently it was a robbery—

FREDDIE looks at him with surprise—

FREDDIE
You’ve spoken to the police?

PROFESSOR BECKETT hesitates, quietly caught out.

PROFESSOR BECKETT
I’m sure it will be in the afternoon press.

FREDDIE nods, quietly clocking—

A cold sweat just visible breaking out on PROFESSOR BECKETT’s forehead.

They make to exit—

The photo of PETER with his class gone from beside the lamp.

CUT TO:

INT. KIOSK. TUBE. RUSSELL SQUARE — DAY 2, 1631

FREDDIE’s eyes darting to the clock, edging past 4.30pm as he hurries down the stairs—

He hesitates, taking in the flight path of a passing COMMUTER—
Going over to the newspaper kiosk, FREDDIE scoops up a newspaper, mild irritation on catching an article on the front page-
Kennedy Tipped for VP Nom...

NEWSAGENT
Alright, Sir?

FREDDIE nods, searching through the newspaper until-

Two columns, a few lines just visible...

...murder of North London academic believed to be robbery...

FREDDIE considers, standing back to let another COMMUTER pay for a newspaper, buy cigarettes. His gaze catches on the brand, feeling his pocket, pulling out the crushed packet. He considers-

FREDDIE
Do you recognise this man-?

FREDDIE flicks out the photo of PETER. The NEWSAGENT looks at it, considering-

NEWSAGENT
Tall fella...Yes...Came in last night, I was just closing up. He didn’t have no change.

The NEWSAGENT rifles behind his kiosk, finally pulling out a silver cigarette case, handing it to FREDDIE, the initials ‘PD’ just visible in one corner.

NEWSAGENT (cont’d)
I told him to pay me in the morning, but he insisted I take it as security. It seemed a lot for a packet of smokes but-

Flipping it open, FREDDIE considers a lone cigarette inside-

NEWSAGENT (cont’d)
He never came back.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE - DUSK 2, 1810

A beautiful orchid flower arrangement newly arrived on her desk-

BEL plucks a card, reads-

Congratulations, Producer. From a Hero of Troy.

BEL considers, quizzically, looking up to see FREDDIE just passing, pulling off his coat, clearly on the trail of a scent. He briefly looks over at the orchids resting on her desk.
FREDDIE (in passing)
Orchids. You ought to talk to your banker-

BEL, already fizzing with irritation-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
(moving off)
...they really are an awful cliche.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. NEWS DIVISION. ALEXANDRA PALACE - DUSK 2, 1816

BEL watching FREDDIE moving along the corridor, heading towards a distant desk.

BEL
George-

GEORGE stops, by a pinboard.

BEL (cont’d)
You know don’t you? I’m leaving.

GEORGE deflects, pinning up a series of call sheets on a pin board.

GEORGE
(seeing BEL’s look)
What? If I’m about to lose two of my best journalists I’m entitled to feel a little sore. You’re a big girl, Bel. So I’ll tell you this for nothing. I know because there are no secrets in this place. You’ll have your strings yanked like the rest of us.

BEL hesitates, unsettled yet determined.

BEL
No, George.

GEORGE
You’ll see.

FREDDIE stands in his doorway hearing it all-

FREDDIE
There you are Georgie-

FREDDIE slams a sheet of copy into GEORGE’s hand-
FREDDIE (cont’d)
An eminent professor is found with his throat cut and it’s reported as a robbery. No inquest.
(MORE)
FREDDIE (cont’d)
No search for suspects. Every seam in his suit has been cut. MI6 visited the mortuary.

GEORGE turns to go, heading towards his office, absently reading the copy.

GEORGE
You missed your slot. Programme’s filled.

FREDDIE ignores him, hard on GEORGE’s tail. BEL close behind.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE - DUSK 2, 1819

GEORGE takes a seat at his desk, going through his work, FREDDIE takes a seat opposite GEORGE refusing to move-

FREDDIE
When does MI6 visit the body of a robbery victim? They won’t even answer my questions.

GEORGE searches in his drawers for cigarettes, finally finding a packet, infuriated when he sees they are empty. He rifles through his pockets.

GEORGE
Why would they? They’re MI6.

GEORGE finally finds a packet of cigarettes-

FREDDIE
What? And we can never challenge that? He still had his wallet and his watch. Give me another 24 hours and I know I can follow it up, George.

GEORGE lights a cigarette, reading FREDDIE’s copy, leaning far back in his chair.

GEORGE
Though I share your desire to live in the pages of an Ian Fleming novel, Mr Lyon, I prefer to keep life separate from a work of fiction-

GEORGE slams the page of copy back into FREDDIE’s chest, reaching for his jacket, making to go-
NO! This is happening now, right now outside this building, down on those streets, in this world and we are doing a disservice to the public to deny it.

(MORE)
You won’t run this, but you’ll run footage of Ruth Elms smiling at her engagement-

FREDDIE reaches out a hand to stop GEORGE by the door-

GEORGE
No, film blew. That and the bobsleigh both gone.

FREDDIE hesitates, suspicious, GEORGE’s gaze wavering-

GEORGE (cont’d)
Eddie thinks there’s something wrong with the machine.

FREDDIE
For God’s sake, George. Have you had a single original thought in your life? Do you want to die knowing you were a yes man all your life?

GEORGE
If you’ll excuse me I have a news programme to get out.

GEORGE makes to go-

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. NEWS DIVISION. ALEXANDRA PALACE – DUSK 2, 1822

FREDDIE stands at a loss watching GEORGE disappear up an endless corridor until-

FREDDIE
Do you know more people watch The Sooty Show than us, George?

GEORGE inwardly snaps-

GEORGE
You’re sacked.

BEL looks up from reading on the pinboard, eating her banana-

FREDDIE
Accepted.

FREDDIE turns tail, heads back towards his desk-

BEL
(calling after)
Freddie-

CUT TO:
INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE – DUSK 2, 1824

FREDDIE kicks his bin, sending paper flying-

BEL stands nearby waiting until-

FREDDIE
Buzz off, Moneypenny.

FREDDIE sits fuming at his desk, refusing to look up from his work.

BEL
It is true, I am asking myself why I am doing this, when of course it should be you apologising to me. But that’s what you do when you believe in someone-

FREDDIE
You let me go in there-

BEL
I should have told you. I’m sorry. But home affairs is-

FREDDIE
Not presenter. Not good enough...

FREDDIE reaches for a box, hurling his stuff from his desk into it, ignoring BEL standing nearby.

BEL
And most of all not here.
(beat)
Who else is going to have you?

FREDDIE turns his back, slamming the last of his things in a box. FREDDIE sinks down in his chair, oddly broken.

BEL (cont’d)
You know some nice girl needs to rescue you.

BEL reaches a hand out, touches his, genuine, caring-

FREDDIE
(sudden/wretched)
Who? There’s only ever been you.

BEL hesitates, the moment dangerous between them. FREDDIE looks away, deflects, absently slamming the last of his things into the box.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
And you’re not even that nice.
BEL laughs, oddly moved-

BEL
Alright you sit here carbonating in your bitterness, pulling apart some stupid cigarette case-

FREDDIE looks up from snapping open and closed the cigarette case on his desk.

BEL (cont’d)
...when next week you could be-

FREDDIE
Before it was an offer I declined. Now it is a pity post, which I just can’t-

BEL
Won’t.

FREDDIE finally accepts her gaze, his cold dark pride unwavering-

FREDDIE
No.

(beat)
And don’t ask again, because quite frankly, it’s getting very tedious. Your inability to stand on your own two feet. But then I suppose one should expect that of you. I mean for all your strong talk, Moneypenny, you really are hopeless aren’t you? You want to be oh so independent but you just can’t quite cut it alone. Why else do you throw yourself at such unavailable men?

BEL hesitates, cut to the quick.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
I suppose I’m just another one.

BEL looks at FREDDIE, deeply injured and yet determined to smile.

BEL
Bravo.

BEL exits, FREDDIE looks on, hating himself, watching BEL return to her desk, pack up her things-

Suddenly the phone rings, FREDDIE scoops it up, distracted, irritated.
FREDDIE
(into phone)
Yes-

Silence-

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM. SUITE. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 2, 1827

RUTH, perched on a toilet, naked but for a man’s shirt and her underwear, smoking a cigarette. She looks far from the debutante of yesterday, eyes distracted watching a distant television; ARCHIVE BBC FOOTAGE of the DUKE of EDINBURGH marching on his horse, the Queen looking on-

RUTH
There’s nothing. They’ve reported nothing.

RUTH hesitates, tears welling-

FREDDIE ON PHONE
...I’m sorry but-

A click on the line-

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE - EVENING 2, 1828

FREDDIE stands, phone pressed to his ear, a sense of the day winding up around him, trying to ignore BEL across the room, clearing her desk.

FREDDIE
...you were stupid to ask me to help you and I was even more stupid to think I could.

FREDDIE sinks into his seat, suddenly exhausted.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM. SUITE. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - EVENING 2, 1829

RUTH’s fingers touch her top lip, a sense of her growing distress-

FREDDIE ON PHONE
Are you still there?

The familiar trickle of blood from her nose, RUTH raises up FREDDIE’s handkerchief to her nose, FREDDIE F.A.L initials clear-

RUTH
(nods)
Yes.
RUTH’s tears pouring down her face, fighting them back.

RUTH (cont’d)
Two things are infinite. The universe and stupidity. And I’m not sure about the universe.

FREDDIE ON PHONE
Well if you’re going to start quoting Albert Einstein then-

RUTH
(cutting in)
Never give up, Freddie. Never.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE – EVENING 2, 1830

FREDDIE turns to look at BEL, across the corridor, eyes constantly watching her, aware he is losing her-

RUTH ON PHONE
If it’s something you truly care about, believe in, then you have to keep kicking back. Let the rest of them give up if they must but if that is being a grown-up-

FREDDIE looks across at a GREY-SUITED COLLEAGUE, weary and jaded and yet carefully ordering a row of pencils on his desk before heading home for the weekend.

RUTH ON PHONE (cont’d)
...I’d rather stay twenty one forever-

A click on the line-

FREDDIE
(sudden)
Ruthie-

The line suddenly goes dead-

FREDDIE sits, suddenly impotent.

OPERATOR OOV
Sir, could you please hang up-

FREDDIE
Where is this call being made from?

OPERATOR OOV
The Claringdon Hotel, Sir.

He slams down the phone looking up to see LIX standing in the doorway, a typewriter and a bottle of whisky in her hand.
LIX
When I was in France, there were these men, I’d loosely call them journalists. Never went to the front line, never really put their head above the parapet, terrified of getting shot. Yet they wrote some of the best battle reportage I’ve ever read, filching from the rest of us. You’re not one of them but you’ll never truly know, will you Freddie, if you don’t stick your neck out, get yourself a bit muddy...

LIX slops a large whisky into a chipped cup on his desk, moving on, pouring one to anyone in passing, in celebration.

LIX (cont’d)
I dare you-

FREDDIE scoops up more stuff, dumps it in the box, sinks down on his chair. He looks at the copy of the day’s Evening Standard resting on his desk, the crossword half-finished. He deflects, reaching for a pencil, considers, suddenly defeated. His eyes go back to BEL, finishing up the last of the packing up. She moves out of her office, FREDDIE stands, eyes silently following her-

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE - EVENING 2, 1832

FREDDIE stands, watches BEL further down the room, piling up her belongings. He sips his whisky considering, spying a note just visible on LIX’s desk. FREDDIE gets up, goes over, reads it-

Enjoy.

He looks across at BEL almost ready to leave-

ISAAC
Coming for a drink?

FREDDIE snaps closed the cigarette case he is playing with in his hands, taps the cigarette on the desk. He sips his whisky looking up at ISAAC standing in the doorway clearly at the end of a long day.

FREDDIE
Already drunk.
FREDDIE slides the cigarette behind ISAAC’s ear in passing.

ISAAC
I don’t smoke.

FREDDIE
Save it for later.

ISAAC hovers, suddenly pulling a sheet of copy out of his pocket.

ISAAC
I wondered if you’d look at this Mr Lyon. I’d really appreciate your opinion.

FREDDIE looks beyond to BEL, just scooping up the last of her things, lightly touching the orchids on her desk.

FREDDIE
(reading/murmuring to self)
The tradition of Freedom of the City of London dates back to the 13th century when it attracted privileges including being allowed to go about the city with a drawn sword.
(wearily)
Did George ask you to write this?

ISAAC nods, FREDDIE moves on, murmuring as he reads, quietly distracted by BEL just leaving, reaching for her coat, turning off her desk light.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
It’s very...nice and clear.

ISAAC
It’s boring.

FREDDIE looks at ISAAC, sees this fresh-faced boy already tinged with years of future defeat.

FREDDIE
Yes.

FREDDIE looks out across the empty office, the last of the GREY-SUITED COLLEAGUES heading home like worker ants.

ISAAC
Thought so.

ISAAC takes the copy, disappointed, shoving it into his pocket about to move on. FREDDIE watches BEL, she considers a yellow angelpoise light on her desk then leaves it, heading out. 

CUT TO:
The hum of a taxi waiting-

LIX just visible, the door open, illuminated inside-

FREDDIE
You forgot your lamp.

BEL turns, surprised to see FREDDIE holding the lamp, ISAAC close by. FREDDIE shoves it in after her-

BEL
(reluctantly taking it)
It’s just a piece of tat I picked up somewhere.

FREDDIE clambers in after her-  

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI. OUTSIDE ALEXANDRA PALACE - NIGHT 2, 1848

LIX smiles, looking at FREDDIE with growing amused curiosity, seated wedged in opposite BEL in the crammed taxi.

FREDDIE (CONT’D)
April. 1952. Your birthday. I bought it at John Lewis.

BEL
A yellow desk light. Just what every girl needs.

FREDDIE looks to ISAAC, still standing on the pavement.

FREDDIE
Isaac in.

ISAAC reluctantly enters the crammed taxi, squeezing in next to FREDDIE.

BEL
What are you doing?

FREDDIE
We thought we might ‘come along for the ride’.

BEL
Sir Douglas has invited us for drinks at Lime Grove Studios.

FREDDIE
Goody.

BEL quietly fumes, staring out of the window. LIX smiles.
LIX
Children. There will be tears.

London skyline streaking past-

CUT TO:

EXT. LIME GROVE STUDIOS - NIGHT 2, 1923

The taxi carrying FREDDIE, LIX, BEL and ISAAC arrives at Lime Grove studios.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRS/CORRIDOR. LIME GROVE STUDIOS - NIGHT 2, 1925

Distant laughter-

FREDDIE, BEL, LIX and ISAAC walking along a corridor. They stop, momentarily silent-

Through an open door....

The wide sweep of a studio, a set midway through being built-

TECHNICIANS rig lights-

CARPENTERS hammer sets-

FREDDIE considers, watching as LIX and ISAAC enter, quietly marveling.

BEL hangs back, FREDDIE seeing this, a few steps behind.

FREDDIE
What?
(beat)
Falling at the first hurdle?

BEL hesitates, pressing her palms against her skirt, trying to blot the sweat.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
You can do this job standing on your head, Moneypenny, and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise. Not me, not George, not your stupid bloody banker. You’re the best ‘man’ for the job and you know it-

BEL turns, tears pricking, looking at FREDDIE-

BEL
If that’s your idea of an apology-

A LIGHTING TECHNICIAN fires orders in the distance, FREDDIE and BEL entering, taking in the wide sweeping space-
FREDDIE
And after I gave you that lamp-

BEL hesitates-

CUT TO:
FREDDIE
...we ate at that terrible Chinese-

BEL shakes her head, weary and at a loss with FREDDIE-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
It’s an anglepoise because you press your face too close to the page when you read and there’s never enough light. And you won’t wear glasses because you say your nose is too small and with glasses you’d look like a mole...Which you don’t...wouldn’t...They’d suit you...You’d look just as...fairly beautiful as you are...It’s yellow because...you said no one wants a yellow lamp. So I thought if I got you it in yellow then maybe for once someone wouldn’t steal it off your desk.

BEL oddly touched but confused by FREDDIE-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
I do give these things quite a lot of consideration you see...The devil is in the detail...

(beat)
You’re right. George will never run it. An academic, seemingly eminent, has his throat slit on a suburban street. Who wants to hear about that?

FREDDIE looks at her, suddenly aching, needing her to understand.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
But it shouldn’t stop me trying-

FREDDIE looks to BEL, eyes quietly imploring, BEL enjoying this moment of victory.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
That is why I am pulling apart a cigarette case, that is why-

FREDDIE momentarily at a loss. BEL looks at him, playful.

BEL
I want to hear you say it.

FREDDIE inwardly curses, clearly struggling-
FREDDIE
I get first choice of desk. And I want an office with a window.
(MORE)
And an assistant. I’ll absolutely need an assistant.

FREDDIE looks to ISAAC, ISAAC hesitates, clearly surprised, realising he means him—

FREDDIE (cont’d)
And I won’t do the farming slots.

A sweeping desk with two seats on a stage. FREDDIE nods to passing TECHNICIANS as he takes a look.

BEL
And?

FREDDIE
(struggling)
May I accept the offer that I so-

BEL
Rudely-

FREDDIE
(beat)
...so rudely declined?

FREDDIE’s eyes fall on a huge programme logo, hands of a clock ticking, the words The Hour half painted, just taking shape.

FREDDIE (cont’d)
The Hour?

FREDDIE turns to look at BEL—

FREDDIE (cont’d)
It’ll never run.

BEL smiles just seeing HECTOR standing in the wings holding up a champagne glass—

HECTOR
Mr Lyon.

FREDDIE hesitates, considers the outstretched hand.

FREDDIE
Mr Madden.

HECTOR
(they shake hands)
I look forward to working with you.

FREDDIE
Well at least that makes one of us.

BEL looks at FREDDIE, with a warning glance.
The pop of a champagne bottle, beyond-

DOUGLAS, CLARENCE, LIX, ISAAC and OTHERS gathered.

FREDDIE looks to BEL. She hesitates. Scooping up a glass, she chinks with his, going to join them.

BEL
(whispered in ear)
Welcome on board, comrade.

FREDDIE smiles, sips, in silent truce.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO FLOOR. LIME GROVE STUDIOS - NIGHT 2, 2105

Later-
The impromptu party in full flow-

CLARENCE stands in the wings, watching FREDDIE standing, sipping champagne, taking in the studio-

FREDDIE
(seeing CLARENCE)
Clarence-

CLARENCE
Don’t say it. New slate, new day.

CLARENCE taps his cigarette against a silver cigarette case. It catches FREDDIE’s eye.

FREDDIE looks beyond to BEL, laughing with HECTOR across the studio, his eyes catching on her leaning into HECTOR as he lights her cigarette.

The familiar flirtatious body language stirring FREDDIE’s suspicion and yet also something beyond that-

HECTOR
(on the approach)
You’re always watching.

FREDDIE shakes his head, declining the cigarette-

FREDDIE
I find it helps. Otherwise one does find oneself walking into doors, walls, that sort of thing.

HECTOR
She said you were witty.

FREDDIE inwardly flinches.
She’s easy to make laugh.

Across the studio floor, LIX stands, with a smoking cigarette talking to DOUGLAS; once more FREDDIE clocks this, a seeping realisation gradually dissolving over him.

HECTOR
So tell me about yourself Mr Lyon.

FREDDIE
(absent)
No-

HECTOR hesitates, laughs, oddly wrong-footed.

FREDDIE is suddenly walking away, CLARENCE looking on bemused.

INT. STUDIO / SCENERY DOCK. LIME GROVE STUDIOS – NIGHT 2, 2109

Distant pop of a champagne bottle-

Far off down a corridor, ISAAC flirts with the PRETTY SECRETARY. This is SISSY COOPER[19yrs]. ISAAC helps her carry an ice bucket and glasses towards the studio-

FREDDIE
Isaac, the cigarette...the cigarette...that I...

FREDDIE suddenly plucks the cigarette from behind ISAAC’s ear. He licks it, carefully unpeels the paper from the cigarette, tiny speck of spit, wet on his thumb blotting it to reveal-

A tiny corner of illuminated perforations in the paper. FREDDIE holds it up to the light, to reveal some kind of intricate pattern made up of these perforations, tiny holes puckering the cigarette paper. FREDDIE considers, eyes tracing over them with growing realisation-

FREDDIE (cont’d)
(hushed)
Bingo!

INT. STUDIO FLOOR. LIME GROVE STUDIOS – NIGHT 2, 2120

The party in full swing-

TECHNICIANS have downed tools and are sharing a drink with LIX, DOUGLAS, CLARENCE and OTHERS. BEL and HECTOR look on-

BEL
So how did you know I like-?
HECTOR
All beautiful women like orchids.
BEL hesitates, the moment is electric between them until-
BEL
Do they really fall for that line?
They laugh-
HECTOR
Bad?
BEL
Very bad.
From across the studio floor-
MARNIE OOV
(calling over to HECTOR)
Darling, there you are-
BEL’s gaze looks beyond just seeing WALLACE SHERWIN [mid 50’s], a distinguished looking man crossing the studio with MARNIE MADDEN [mid 20’s], pretty and chic, close behind. The way she looks at HECTOR, BEL just knows-
BEL
But it obviously worked on somebody.
BEL turns, flushed and oddly humiliated, stalling for time a little.
BEL (cont’d)
That’s your-
HECTOR
Wife.
BEL
Of course. With your-
BEL watches MARNIE and WALLACE as they are greeted by DOUGLAS-
HECTOR
...father-in-law. He and Douglas have been friends for years-
BEL, angered, momentarily locks gazes with HECTOR, eyes searching, trying to understand, seeing a flicker of defeat in HECTOR’s eyes.
BEL
And I thought it was because you had such a pretty face-
CONTINUED:

From behind-
CONTINUED:

WALLACE OOV

Here he is-

BEL hesitates, HECTOR’s hand briefly grazing her back as he smiles, ready to greet WALLACE-

WALLACE

The face of tomorrow.

MARNIE kisses HECTOR on the cheek, smiling with pride. HECTOR looks back, holding BEL’s look, helpless as the party swirls around them, watching as BEL shrinks back. All listen to DOUGLAS speak-

DOUGLAS OOV

(raising glass)

Ladies and gentleman may I have your attention. We are embarking on what I hope is to be a truly exciting journey.

(raising his glass)

To the dawn of a new era-

HECTOR looking beyond, watching BEL determinedly raising her glass.

DOUGLAS OOV (cont’d)

...'The Hour’ is coming-

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM. SUITE. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2155

The murmur of the television-

RUTH sits, curled in a chair, wearing only a man’s shirt, a cigarette clasped between her fingers, glassy-eyed, nursing a large G&T in her lap-

Distracted, RUTH reaches a hand out, turning the dial on the television, flicking between channels until-

RUTH considers. Suddenly it is all too unbearable. She knocks back her drink, eyes welling with tears, looking towards the bathroom-

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2220

Darkness-

FREDDIE crossing onto the pavement, the Claringdon Hotel glittering in front of him-

A sense that he is being watched as he enters, passing the DOORMAN. FREDDIE just visible heading towards the reception-
The scratch of a 2B pencil against newspaper-

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO FLOOR. LIME GROVE STUDIOS - NIGHT 2, 2229

HECTOR standing eyes searching beyond, scouring the party but BEL has gone-

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2231

The ping of the lift-

FREDDIE stepping out along an endless corridor. He walks, passing endless doorways, stopping at the door of a suite-

He goes to knock and sees the door is ajar-

FREDDIE tentatively pushes it open-

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM. SUITE. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2233

Darkness-

The TV illuminates the room, ARCHIVE BBC FOOTAGE of Elvis Presley just visible, lost in wild pelvis shaking for a screaming studio audience-

FREDDIE peers around him, searching for signs of life. He puts down his folded newspaper, the crossword, half finished. Looking about him, he hesitates on seeing-

The seep of light from under the bathroom door.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM. SUITE. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2234

FREDDIE taps lightly on the bathroom door-

FREDDIE

Hello-

FREDDIE hesitates, pushing the door open-

The rise of steam, FREDDIE peers through just seeing-

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM. SUITE. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2235

RUTH hangs, a belt around her neck, swinging from a shower head, arms clawing the air, legs frantically pedalling. FREDDIE lunges, arms outstretched, slipping on a wet floor, desperately trying to unhook her.
Grappling, FREDDIE releases the belt, cradling her in his arms, desperately trying to revive her. RUTH gasps, eyes suddenly locked on his, mouth gaping, almost as if she is smiling, until-
CONTINUED:

FREDDIE

No...No...No...

RUTH, glassy-eyed, all life suddenly drained from her. A single drip of blood trickles from her nostril-

FREDDIE kicks his foot hard against the bath panel in frustration, again and again and again.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM. ALEXANDRA PALACE - NIGHT 2, 2240

An empty office-

GEORGE pulling on his coat, the end of a long day, the last man out-

The phone rings-

GEORGE picks up the phone-

GEORGE

Hello-

MCCAIN ON PHONE

Did you fire Mr Lyon-?

GEORGE wearily considers, FREDDIE’s empty desk in the distance.

GEORGE

Yes, Mr McCain.

(beat)

He’s someone else’s problem now.

The phone hangs up-

GEORGE flicks off his desk light. Darkness. GEORGE sinks down in his seat, sitting in the dark.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE. WESTMINSTER - NIGHT 2, 2241

A glittering skyline-

McCAIN just putting down the phone, considering the glittering skyline, a whisky in his hand.

CUT TO:

INT. RIVOLI BAR. WEST LONDON. NIGHT 2, 2245 (SCENE REINSTATED)

An elegant bar-

BEL sits, alone at a bar surrounded by BUSINESSMEN, watching the ROUGED WOMEN working in couples, smiling and escorting the BUSINESSMEN.
An ATTRACTIVE MAN smiles at her from across the bar, an invitation lingering in his gaze.

BEL considers. Suddenly getting up to leave, she reaches for her gloves, starting to pull them on until-

BEL looks down at her hands, suddenly overwhelmed and irritated with the effort of it all. She pulls off her gloves with quiet defiance, shoving them in her bag, as she pays the cheque.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM. SUITE. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2247

FREDDIE moving through, reaching for the telephone-

FREDDIE
(into phone)
Hello...Yes...I’m afraid...the police...Could you call the police?...
Yes this is room 214-

A tiny click on the line-

FREDDIE listens, deeply unsettled, looking around the room, the front door ajar, the world will never be the same-

Resting on the chair, nearby, the crossword half-finished, almost in waiting-

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET. CLARINGDON HOTEL. MAYFAIR - NIGHT 2, 2249

Across the street, the DARK-HAIRED MAN just sliding a distinctive BBC issue 2B pencil into his top pocket-

He slides the newspaper into his jacket.

Above, the illuminated bathroom window. The DARK-HAIRED MAN considers, turning and walking away.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO FLOOR. LIME GROVE STUDIOS - NIGHT 2, 2300

The still of a television studio, The Hour logo just visible, as if in waiting, for what’s to come.

CUT TO:

END OF EPISODE ONE