

GENTLY WITH CLASS

Written by

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PINK AMENDMENTS - 20.03.12



1 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT 1. 01:50**

1

A car flashes through the frame. Too fast.

2 **EXT. A BEND IN THE RIVER - NIGHT 1. 01:52**

2

A hill with a bend and a bridge at the bottom. We hear the sound of the car approaching on the far side of the hill. Its beams light up the sky.

3 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT 1. 01:53**

3

The car gathers pace as it crests the hill heading away from us and down towards the bend in the river and the bridge.

CAPTION: NORTHUMBERLAND 1968.

4 **EXT. A BEND IN THE RIVER - NIGHT 1. 01:54**

4

The car comes downhill towards us. The bend in the road, the low bridge parapet, the cold water - all arrive too soon for the unseen DRIVER. A scream of brakes.

5 **EXT. THE RIVER - NIGHT 1. 01:55**

5

The car is upside down in three feet of water. The still unseen DRIVER is kicking at the door from the inside. That's the only sound in the quiet night. The buckled metal of the door starts to give way to the blows and it starts to edge open. We hear a feeble voice, dazed, pleading.

ELLEN (O.S.)  
I'm stuck. Help me. I'm stuck.

6 **EXT. DURHAM - DAY 2. 10:00**

6

An establishing shot of the cathedral on this sunny morning.

7 **INT. A DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY 2. 10:01**

7

GENTLY is having his annual check-up. A stethoscope on his back, under his vest, as he takes deep breaths, his mind elsewhere. It's a nice room. You can see the cathedral through the window. The stethoscope belongs to DOCTOR ARNOLD.

8 **INT. A DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY 2. 10:05**

8

A few minutes later. GG is tucking in his shirt, replacing his cufflinks and putting on his jacket as ARNOLD (60) scribbles notes at his desk.

(CONTINUED)

GENTLY

Did I survive another year, Doctor?

ARNOLD (SCRIBBLING)

Yer as fit as a lop. As they say up here. No idea what it means. Lived here for 26 years, still no idea ....what anybody's ...saying.

He finishes his notes and looks at GG. This is a man who sees into people. GG likes him very much.

GENTLY

My Sergeant - John Bacchus of this parish- has a joke on the subject. Geordie goes to get his eyes tested and the optician says "Can you read me the letters on that board, please?"

ARNOLD

And Geordie says "Board? What board? A cannit even see its cage!".

It's a good accent.

GENTLY

Very good.

He's ready to go and is completely taken aback by:

ARNOLD

So tell me, Chief Inspector. When does it hurt the most? First thing in the morning - or last thing at night?

Their eyes meet.

BACCHUS face down on his pillow, snoring softly. A phone starts ringing downstairs. He doesn't wake up. A WOMAN considerably older than him is beside him, waking up, trying to figure out where she is. She nudges him awake.

WOMAN (SHYLY)

Erm ....yer phone....?

They stare at each other.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

No, I can't remember either, pet.

10 **INT. BACCHUS' HOUSE, A STAIRCASE - DAY 2. 10:12.**

10

JB, half asleep and hungover, negotiates the stairs, tripping over shoes and clothes. Not his own.

11 **INT. A DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY 2. 10:15.**

11

They're smoking cigarettes.

GENTLY

Grief. Is like ...chronic pain.  
Always in the room somewhere. But,  
yes: the mornings are the worst. I  
don't miss her any less as time  
passes. I just miss her  
differently.

ARNOLD (NOT EXACTLY SURE)

How long?

GENTLY

Four years. Four years, three  
months, two weeks, and...

He smiles and doesn't bother with the rest. Point made.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

It's the "never again", you know?  
The "never"...

ARNOLD

Do you talk about this with  
anybody? Your Sergeant perhaps?

GG thinks about Bacchus and has to smile at that notion.

GENTLY

It's a thought...

12 **I/E. BACCHUS' CAR TRAVELLING ALONG COUNTRY ROADS - DAY 2. 12 10:20.**

He's pissed off, shouting into his radio mouthpiece as he drives the roads at speed.

BACCHUS (ALREADY REPEATING HIMSELF)

Is she identified? Is. The. Woman.  
Identified?

VOICE

What woman you talking about?

BACCHUS

"What woman" do ye **think** I'm talkin  
about? Twiggy?  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

12

CONTINUED:

12

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

The one in the car, dumbo.  
 (Pointless pursuing this, so:) Tell them: do not move the car till I get there, understood? Where's Gently - anybody found him yet? Is he fishin? Has he gone fishin again and not said?! (Just crackle, so he slams the receiver back down)  
 Great! I'll deal with the dead woman then, cheers, George!! On my **only** morning off this month!!  
**Thanks**, pal!!

13

INT. A DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY 2. 10:22.

13

GENTLY

Do you believe in dreams?

ARNOLD

Try me.

GENTLY

I'm having the same one time and again. I go back to a house I used to live in. I meet a woman on the doorstep. She's leaving. Her hand brushes mine and she tells me she'll see me again later.

ARNOLD

Your wife?

GENTLY (SHRUGGING)

I don't see her face. Then I go through the door and I'm glad to be back. But slowly I realise all the rooms are different. Different shapes, different sizes, different things in them. Everything's changed.

ARNOLD

Then what?

A beat.

GENTLY

Then there's water pouring down the walls and across the floor. And I'm drowning. Helpless and drowning.

14

EXT. THE RIVER - DAY 2. 11:00.

14

The camera is under water as the car lifts upwards.

\*

(CONTINUED)

BACCHUS, in waders, stands in the water and watches as the car is lifted by a recovery vehicle from the river. As it clears the river, water spills from it and we see an arm sticking out. Water pours from the car as it twists in the air and we catch a glimpse of the dead ELLEN MALLAM (19), inside.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

14A

EXT. THE RIVER. DAY 2. 11:15

14A

\*  
\*  
\*

The car is now on the bridge. GG is getting out of his car a few yards away. Curious. JB is taking off his waders.

BACCHUS

I wanted to have a look at her before they disturbed anything. There's a bruise on her head. Could've been unconscious.

GENTLY

Let's hope so.

JB is handed a violin case.

\*

BACCHUS

This was inside.

He opens it. A soggy violin. Nothing to identify the owner.

GENTLY

Driver?

BACCHUS

No sign of him.

GG shakes his head at the implications. They look into the car and see ELLEN, very beautiful and very dead, in the passenger seat. They examine her side of the car, gingerly, sadly.

\*  
\*  
\*

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

The metal was caved in by the impact, guv. Left foot's trapped. OK, we have to cut her out!

This was to the RECOVERY MEN, who prepare their equipment. JB and GG stand back.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

I don't think she **was** unconscious.

GENTLY

Either way... he didn't call for help. Panicking because he'd nicked the car, maybe? Young man, too much to drink? Older man with a wife somewhere...?

(CONTINUED)

14A

CONTINUED:

14A

JB thinks this sounds like the speech for the defence.

BACCHUS

He left her to drown, guv! She was helpless.

GG's face. Helpless and drowning.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

Dead and **alone**. All night. Out here. Didn't even make an **anonymous** phone call, ye know...?

GENTLY

If she was already drowned what difference would it make...?

JB should just get on with it, but:

BACCHUS

Do ye ever **have** any feelins?

GENTLY

Scuse me?

RECOVERY MEN are using an angle grinder to cut the body free. \*

JUMP CUT TO: \*

GENTLY (CONT'D)

You all right?

BACCHUS

Woke up with a complete stranger next to iz.

GENTLY

Some men pay money for that.

BACCHUS

Shoulda seen the state of her. Like wakin up next to ya Grannie. Her hair was all stickin up, an all.

The radio in JB's car starts to crackle. He goes to it.

BACCHUS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Guv?

GG joins him.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

We've traced the car. (Into the radio:) Say that again for Mister Gently, would you?

(CONTINUED)

14A CONTINUED: (2)

14A

VOICE  
Abberwick Hall.

(CONTINUED)

14A

CONTINUED: (3)

14A

He replaces the radio and smiles.

BACCHUS

Registered to Hector Blackstone.  
The 13th Earl of Guyzance.

GENTLY

Friend of yours?

BACCHUS

Nope, but I know his son pretty well. James Blackstone. Nicked him twice for being drunk in charge of a vehicle.

GENTLY

And?

BACCHUS

Mummy and Daddy got him expensive lawyers. Mummy and Daddy waved a magic wand over the charge sheet and it disappears into thin air. Mummy and Daddy got **me reprimanded for victimization**.

Hard to tell which of this litany has angered him the most. GG watches as the body is lifted free by 2 AMBULANCE MEN and carried to the ambulance.

PC 2

Nothin on her, sir, except this.

He hands him a key.

GENTLY

We don't even have a name.

BACCHUS

Bet you a hundred quid the Right Honourable James Blackstone'll know her name.

GENTLY

OK, let's ask him. Nicely.

15

**EXT. ENTRANCE TO ABBERWICK HALL ESTATE - DAY 2. 12:00.**

15

GG's car goes through the impressive gates and heads up a drive through woodland.

16

**I/E. IN GG'S CAR TRAVELLING - DAY 2. 12:10.**

16

Pasture land now. Still no sign of the Hall.

(CONTINUED)

BACCHUS

"Are we nearly there?" I mean: how  
much of England is one bloke  
allowed to own?

They see a man, BILLY MALLAM, (50) who is mending a fence.  
They pull up. JB winds down a window.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

Scuse me. Do we get to Abberwick  
Hall if we keep going?

BILLY comes over, smiling as he sticks his head right into  
the car. He has virtually no voice, which comes as a surprise  
at first until you get used to his hoarse whisper.

BILLY

Did yous come through a big gate  
marked "Abberwick Hall"?

BACCHUS

Yeh.

BILLY

And have yous turned off the road  
since?

BACCHUS

Got a cold or somethin?

BILLY

Throat cancer.

A glance between GG and JB as BILLY comes round the car and  
talks to GG instead.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You look a bit more intelligent.

GENTLY

Faint praise.

BACCHUS

Scuse me, I've got 4 "O" Levels.

BILLY

Tell iz who wrote this and I'll  
tell yiz the way.

GG likes him. He's right in your face, but there's a warmth  
there. JB doesn't get him at all.

BACCHUS

We haven't got time for Double Yer  
Money, pal.

BILLY

"Who is there that has not jeered  
 at the House Of Lords, the military  
 caste, the Royal Family, the public  
 schools, the huntin and shootin  
 people, the horrors of country  
 society...?"

A beat.

GENTLY

Don't know, I'm afraid.

BACCHUS

Rudyard Kipling.

BILLY (WHAT A STUPID ANSWER)

Kiplin was a King n Country  
 Imperialist, ye clot. George  
 Orwell. And Orwell knew summit that  
 gets forgot these days. The English  
 rulin class are not as stupitt as  
 the look. Looker the workas in  
 Paris last night. Pullin up the  
 pavements and chuckin them at the  
 boss class. Now looker me: repairin  
 the boss's fences to keep his deer  
 outtiv his rose gardens. Makes ye  
 think about this country, dinnit,  
 bonny lad?

This last bit to JB, who's just getting irritated now.

BACCHUS

Sorry...?

BILLY

Two hundred yards.

He points up the winding road and steps back, smiling. They drive on.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hang onto ya wallets! Thi'll have  
 the rings off ya fingaz! Thiv stole  
 England off the workaz!

He really enjoys his rants. GG laughing, partly at JB's discomfort.

BACCHUS

Hell was that all about?

GENTLY

Did you ever meet the Earl and his  
 good lady?

BACCHUS

Oh my golly goodness me, I was never granted an audience. But if they're anything like the son, get ready to throw up.

They turn a bend and there is the splendid Hall before them. They stop and get out, rather overawed by the place.

17

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, ENTRANCE HALL - DAY 2. 12:20.**

17

GG and JB wait in the entrance hall. HECTOR BLACKSTONE (60s, dressed in a boilersuit, wiping his oily hands on a rag) comes barrelling towards them with a smile. As friendly an old cove as you're likely to meet.

HECTOR

Inspector Gently, Sergeant Bacchus, so sorry. I was in the stable working on my motorcycles. Something about a car I'm told...?

GENTLY

Yes, a car registered to you has been involved in a fatal accident, your .. Erm.....?

HECTOR (STUNNED)

Fatal accident...? Oh... Hector... just call me Hector.

BACCHUS

Is your son James in at the minute? Hector.

HECTOR

Fatal to whom?

GENTLY

A young woman, late teens, early 20s...

HECTOR

Oh, dear Lord...

BACCHUS

Your son have a girlfriend, Hector?

HECTOR

Which car was this?

BACCHUS

Austin A40 'Farina', blue - registration number 209 NWW.

(CONTINUED)

GENTLY

Are you saying you're unaware of  
this car even being missing?

HECTOR

Totally.

JB thinks they're being given the run around.

BACCHUS

Any chance of talking to your son,  
please?

HECTOR

I don't even know if he's here,  
Sergeant. My wife may know.

They walk past French windows which are being repaired by a  
HANDYMAN (40s).

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Have you seen my wife, Colin?

The HANDYMAN points towards the Day Room.

No sign of Alethea, but a TV is on showing news footage of the Paris riots of the previous night. The Night of the Barricades. France on the edge of civil war, the ruling class in full flight, the workers and students triumphant.

HECTOR

Alethea?

A hand snakes up from a big chair near the TV.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Ah, there you are, dear, these  
gentlemen are-

ALETHEA (O.S.)

Just give me a second.....

She's enveloped in the high-sided chair. And still she  
watches TV.

ALETHEA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

This man Cohn-Bendit. Someone  
should shoot him, shouldn't they?  
Like they did the German. Red Rudi.

She gets up, goes to the TV, turns it off, and turns to the room.

(CONTINUED)

This is their and our first sight of ALETHEA BLACKSTONE, COUNTESS of GUYZANCE, (40s, striking, intelligent, and absolutely self-assured). She raises a limp-wristed clenched fist.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

"Be realistic: demand the impossible". The naivety. Do they reaaaally think they can overturn the natural order by throwing a few stones? De Gaulle's run away, of course. So...? Hector?

She looks right into his eyes for a second.

HECTOR

Chief Inspector Gently and Sergeant Bacchus.

She takes them in properly. Not impressed. Specially JB, who probably doesn't rank highly in the natural order.

ALETHEA

Is there a problem...?

HECTOR

A fatality. A young woman.

ALETHEA

Oh, dear...

BACCHUS

We found your husband's car, Mrs. Blackstone, upside down in-

ALETHEA

I beg your pardon?

A beat.

BACCHUS

Sorry, you hard of hearing?

HECTOR

My wife prefers to be "your ladyship".

A beat.

BACCHUS

Well, I wouldn't mind bein Bobby Charlton, but-

GENTLY (LET'S GET ON WITH IT)  
 Your ladyship, an Austin car  
 belonging to your husband has been  
 found five miles from here, upside  
 down in a river. With a dead girl  
 inside.

She doesn't bat an eyelid. She takes a cigarette from a box  
 and lights it.

ALETHEA  
 Well then. Somebody stole one of  
 our cars. Is it a write-off?

BACCHUS  
 Don't you care about the dead girl?

ALETHEA  
 Why should I care about a car  
 thief?

BACCHUS  
 What if it wasn't stolen?

ALETHEA  
 What other explanation is there?

BACCHUS  
 Is your son at home?

ALETHEA  
 He may be. It's a large house.

BACCHUS  
 Want me to organize a search party?

GENTLY  
 Was he here last night, your  
 ladyship?

ALETHEA  
 Yes. We had a late supper together.  
 Hector was at one of his musical  
 self-flagellation evenings in the  
 village. James and I sat talking  
 and playing backgammon till the  
 early hours. Then he went to bed.

GENTLY  
 Musical what, sorry...?

ALETHEA  
 My husband likes the music of the  
 downtrodden workers. Fiddles and  
 squeezeboxes, starving children,  
 wicked mineowners, tragic  
 underground explosions.

(MORE)

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Singers with their fingers in their ears. That sort of thing.

GG notices HECTOR staring silently at her.

GENTLY

So you stayed in with your son.

HECTOR seems about to say something, but stays silent.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

When did you last see him?

ALETHEA

I kissed him "goodnight" at 1 a.m.

GENTLY

And you haven't seen him this morning.

ALETHEA

I'm his mother, not his maid.

BACCHUS (HAD ENOUGH)

Could you go and find your son?  
Now.

ALETHEA

What sort of school did you go to,  
Sergeant?

BACCHUS

One with an outside lav.

ALETHEA

And did they teach the word  
"please"?

A beat.

BACCHUS

Please.

ALETHEA

Thank you.

A beat. She stubs out her cigarette and leaves. A silence.

GENTLY

When did you last use your car,  
sir?

HECTOR

It was the Austin, you say..?

BACCHUS (EXASPERATED)

How many cars you got?

HECTOR

There are seven or eight dotted around the estate, all registered to my name for insurance purposes, but intended for common use.

BACCHUS (FOR THE SECOND TIME)

Austin A40 'Farina'. Blue.  
Registration number 209-

HECTOR

Yes, yes, yes, I'm sorry. No, no, I've no idea when I last drove it. I avoid cars if at all possible. Prefer my motorcycles. You don't know who the girl was then?

GENTLY

Not yet, no. So various people had access to this car?

HECTOR

Yes, it's a very large estate.

BACCHUS

Well who keeps the ignition keys?

HECTOR

Actually.. They're usually just left in the cars.

A beat.

BACCHUS (UNBELIEVABLE)

Right. I'll need a list of employees.

HECTOR

Of course.

JB moves past GG towards the fireplace, muttering.

BACCHUS (SOTTO VOCE)

More money than sense.

HECTOR

My wife has misremembered one thing: James did in fact come with me to the village last night to hear the music. He then had a late supper with his mother after our return.

GENTLY

But not you.

HECTOR

No, I went straight to my rooms.

GG gets the picture. He nods.

GENTLY

Your wife's a very forceful woman.

JB is at the far end of the room now, looking at a full-length portrait of Hector in military uniform. Boring. He heads towards the windows.

HECTOR

Alethea's my second wife ...hence the ..discrepancy in our ages. My first wife died 30 years ago. Bonny. That was her name. Though in fact she **was** very "bonny". An incurable disease.

A lost love. GG can't resist.

GENTLY (QUIETLY)

Do you still miss her?

HECTOR

Miss her? Well... that would be ...disloyal, wouldn't it?

So the answer is "yes". JB becomes alert.

BACCHUS

Guv.

GG joins him at the windows. ALETHEA and her son JAMES are on the lawn in huddled conversation.

**EXT. ABBERWICK HALL, LAWN OUTSIDE DAY ROOM - DAY 2. 12:30. 19**

JAMES BLACKSTONE (24, with his mother's looks but none of her formidable self-possession) is a highly strung man only just holding onto a life he feels is unravelling quickly. Just now he's angry with his Mother. And he has a livid cut on his forehead/scalp.

ALETHEA (QUIETLY, URGENTLY)

James, you must not say anything at all.

He turns and sees JB coming towards him.

JAMES

Ah! Of course. It would be you.

He points his finger at JB, trying to remember something. JB can't stand him - the floppy hair, the arrogance, the superciliousness.

BACCHUS (HELPING HIM OUT)  
Bacchus.

JAMES  
Sergeant **Bacchus**. Of course. How splendid to see you again.

BACCHUS  
That's a nasty cut, yer Highness.  
Get it playin backgammon?

GENTLY (QUIETLY)  
Sergeant.

This public rebuke offends JB, and pleases ALETHEA. JAMES genuinely wasn't offended in the first place:

JAMES  
I actually don't mind what he calls me, Chief Inspector.

GENTLY  
Well, I do. So now: how **did** you come by that injury?

JAMES  
I fell into the French window and broke a pane.

GENTLY  
Can anybody corroborate this?

ALETHEA  
I can. If you are actually doubting my son's word.

GENTLY  
And what made you fall into a pane of glass?

JAMES  
Brandy.

BACCHUS  
When was this **exactly**?

JAMES  
I can't **exactly** remember.

This is a desperately unhappy man who finds himself ridiculous sometimes.

BACCHUS

Can't remember? A whack like that?

ALETHEA (TOUCHING JAMES TENDERLY)

Of course he can remember. It was -

BACCHUS

I'm not askin you, I'm askin him.

ALETHEA

It was just after supper.

JB hacked off. She answered for him.

JAMES

Yes. It was.. just after supper.

JB notes down what he regards as a pack of lies. GG makes a decision. Got to remove him from his mother.

GENTLY

I'd like you to come to  
headquarters and answer some-

She's like a tigress defending her cub:

ALETHEA

Are you harassing my son again?

GENTLY

No, I'm asking him to-

ALETHEA

Are you arresting my son?

GENTLY

No. But if he won't come  
voluntarily I'll get a warrant and  
I **will** arrest him.

A beat.

ALETHEA

There will be a lawyer present at  
all times.

BACCHUS

He doesn't need a lawyer, he's not  
bein charged with-

ALETHEA

Our solicitor will be present at  
all times. Hector, get on the  
phone.

HECTOR goes inside. JB's glance at GG says "See what I had to  
put up with?"

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

You had better be SO careful,  
Mister Gently. This could go very  
badly for you.

GG smiles gratefully. Nice of you to care. He holds out his arm to JAMES, who stands. GG guides him towards his parked car across the lawn. JB should follow them, but he has unfinished business - and the opportunity to be even ruder.

BACCHUS

Know what makes me laugh, yer battleship?

ALETHEA

Your career prospects..?

BACCHUS (WITH QUIET PLEASURE)

After all yer greed and yer privilege and wealth's been shown up, and the whole country's laughin at yiz for runnin round in tweed underpants shootin furry animals and goin "yah, yah, Gertrude", yiz **still think yiz should be runnin the country, don't yiz?**

A beat.

ALETHEA

You know, I took you at first for one of those Angry Young Men with a chip on his shoulder. But now I see you're actually quite well balanced. You have a chip on both shoulders.

BACCHUS

Yer all on yer way to the knacker's yard, Mrs. Blackstone.

GG has put JAMES in the back seat of his car. He sees JB is up to no good.

GENTLY

Sergeant.

ALETHEA smiles at JB, as you would at a simple-minded child.

ALETHEA

Tell me, Sergeant, who **does** "run the country"? Grammar School boys like Mister Wilson? Clever little men like David Frost? The Boilermakers Union? The Marxists in the BBC? The Royal Homo Shakespeare Company...?

Her self-belief is unnerving, her smile withering.

In the sunlight. POLICE PERSONNEL coming and going.

GENTLY (V.O.)

OK, you're the expert on the Right Honourable James Blackstone...

GG and JB looking through a window at JAMES, who is in the interview room with his head bowed.

BACCHUS

24. Just resigned his Commission in the Coldstream Guards -anybody got any idea what they're guardin? - which was Hector's regiment-

GENTLY

You and me.

BACCHUS

Pardon?

GENTLY

They spend their time guarding our safety. Could I have some facts, please?

BACCHUS

Sorree. Marlborough Public School, then St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, which is apparently where the thick ones with money get in.

GENTLY

Says who?

BACCHUS

Well I asked this bloke I know.

GENTLY

Good work, Sergeant. How many "O" Levels did you say you got?

BACCHUS

General Science, Biology, German and Tech Drawing, OK?

GENTLY

Fully rounded human being.

BACCHUS

Are we discussing me or him?

GENTLY

Carry on.

BACCHUS

Continuing the military theme, he got made the General of the Bullingdon Club, whose main activity is getting plastered, smashing restaurants up, throwing loads of money on the floor and leaving with stupid grins on their faces. Now about to "take up a position" -known to the rest of us as "get a job"- in The City, Lloyds, where he'll no doubt sit on his backside till it's time to shoot pheasants or kill young women in car crashes.

GENTLY

I don't think James'll be sitting on his backside. Not with a mother like that. I think James is being groomed for great things.

BACCHUS

No chance.

GENTLY

These other incidents involving him and cars. Were there girls?

BACCHUS

Er... no. Both times he was just with his drinkin mates.

TAYLOR appears at the end of the corridor.

TAYLOR

Sir?

BACCHUS

Busy!

TAYLOR

Bob Anderton's ready for you.

So the preliminary autopsy's done. They walk briskly towards where TAYLOR is.

22

**INT. POLICE HQ, MORTUARY - DAY 2. 15:05.**

22

BOB ANDERTON (50s), a forensic pathologist, GG, JB. The body is uncovered by BOB. She still looks beautiful. GG shakes his head sadly. His eyes ask BOB for his report.

BOB

Unknown female, approximately 20 years of age. No distinguishing marks or features. Except the fingers, which are cut and scratched. Death was by drowning.

GENTLY

The bruise on the head?

BOB

Consistent with the crash, but a glancing blow. I doubt she lost consciousness.

GENTLY

Because the fingers tell us she was trying to free her trapped foot, yes?

He nods. Silence.

BACCHUS

Left her fightin for her life. And he's gunna run the country, is he?

BOB

Sexually active.

GENTLY

Recently?

BOB

I'd say fairly recent. Fingernails of her left hand much more worn than the right, presumably she was scrabbling at the door with that hand.

GENTLY

Or maybe because she plays the violin. Anything else I should know at this point, Bob?

BOB

Yep. A sample of blood from the metal frame on the driver's side.

BACCHUS

Oh yeh...?

(CONTINUED)

BOB

It's a pretty rare type actually,  
which might help you. A2B Positive.

GENTLY

After all night in the water?

BOB

Apparently the car was at a slight  
angle - not all of the frame was  
submerged....?

GG looks right into BOB's eyes, which don't blink. GG nods.

GENTLY

I see. OK, we're done here.

They watch BOB covering her up and wheeling her away.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Does James Blackstone have a rare  
blood group?

JB puffs out his cheeks. Wishes he could remember.

BACCHUS

Can't remember. Let's ask him.

GG knows exactly what's going on here, but shows nothing to JB. But we see his eyes as JB exits frame.

GG and JB walk briskly towards the interview room.

GENTLY

I'll ask the questions. You take a  
back seat.

But the interview room is empty. TAYLOR arrives.

TAYLOR

Sir. Assistant Chief Constable's  
waiting for you in your office.

GG and JB arrive to find the ACC (50s, uniformed), JAMES, ALETHEA, and a female solicitor called ACKLINGTON (40s) are already there. ACC takes charge.

ACC

Your questioning of His Lordship will take place here, with Mrs. Acklington in attendance. I'll remain but will play no part.

GENTLY

You already have.

ACC

This is not for discussion, Chief Inspector. (A glance at JB). It's a necessary precaution given the history.

He sits to one side. GG nods politely to MRS. ACKLINGTON, who nods back. Then he looks at JB, who shakes his head and almost laughs. JB leans against a wall, in GG's eyeline.

GENTLY

Very well. How would you like me to address you?

JAMES

"James" is fine.

GENTLY

James. May I ask you again how you came by that cut on your head?

ACKLINGTON

You don't have to answer that.

GENTLY

He's already told us, in fact, that he fell into a window frame while under the influence of alcohol. Would he like to elaborate on that? Were the French windows open or closed, for instance?

ACKLINGTON nods to JAMES. ALETHEA watching GG like a hawk.

JAMES

They were open. I was talking to my mother. Not paying attention properly...

GENTLY

Why were they open?

JAMES

That's what French windows are for.

GENTLY

Quite. So were you on the inside or on the outside?

JAMES

We were outside.

GENTLY

Just the two of you?

JAMES

Yes.

GENTLY

Nobody else present? Nobody distracting you?

JAMES

No, I was just drunk.

GENTLY

You'd been drinking with your father.

A beat. JAMES looks to ALETHEA. She thinks and nods. JAMES nods. GG is convinced JAMES would speak more freely if he wasn't being watched over.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

At a music event in the village. Though Her Ladyship first told me you'd spent the evening together having supper and playing backgammon. So, which is true?

ACKLINGTON

The Countess isn't here to answer questions.

GENTLY (TO ACC)

The question is to James.

JAMES looks to his MOTHER, unsure what the party line is.

ALETHEA

They're both true. James and his father came back at about eleven.

GENTLY

So why did you first tell me-?

ACC (NOT HEAR THE FIRST TIME?)

The Countess isn't here to answer-

GENTLY

She has no trouble answering for her son, I notice!

A beat. JB clears his throat noisily so that GG looks at him. JB mouths silently "Blood. Blood".

The OTHERS turn to see what GG is looking at. JB looks innocent. GG goes in a very different direction.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

James. We have a car upside down in a shallow river. And a young girl dead. Do you know what happened to her last night?

ACKLINGTON

The Chief Inspector must ask specific questions, not go on a fishing trip.

ACC

Agreed.

JB agrees too. He coughs again. Everybody looks at him except GG.

GENTLY

I'm asking James what he knows about a young girl whose life ended in the early hours of this morning. Trapped. Frightened and helpless in a metal tomb, waiting for cold river water to fill her lungs and drown her. Just her name would help. A tiny bit of dignity for her.

Silence. JAMES starts to crack.

JAMES

I think I might know her.

Electricity in the room.

ALETHEA (TO ACKLINGTON)

Put a stop to this.

ACKLINGTON

James, there's absolutely no-

GENTLY

Why might you know her, James?

A beat. He's on the verge of something.

JAMES

Just... I just... If she's local, I might recognize her...

ALETHEA and ACKLINGTON relieved that he's rowed back a bit. But they're way behind GG, who now sees what JAMES wants.

GENTLY

Would you like to see her, James?  
She's here. Just down the corridor.

Alarm from ALETHEA and ACKLINGTON. But JAMES is nodding, grateful.

JAMES

Yes, I would. Very much.

GG already has JAMES on his feet, heading him for the door.

ALETHEA (TO ACKLINGTON)

Stop this. James, I **forbid** this!

ACKLINGTON (TO ACC)

I strongly object to this procedure-

GENTLY (TALKING OVER THEM)

Mister Blackstone has volunteered  
to help identify the body. This  
way, please, James.

And they've got him out of there before he can be physically restrained by his mother. ALETHEA turns her venom on the ACC.

ALETHEA

You said you could control this man!

GG and JB practically frogmarching JAMES through a door at the end of the corridor. They turn right and disappear.

BOB uncovers the head and shoulders. GG watches JAMES closely. BOB glances at JB, but JB is watching JAMES. When BOB glances at GG he is disconcerted to find that GG is scrutinizing him. BOB looks away. GG returns his gaze to JAMES.

GENTLY (SOFTLY)

James...?

JAMES

Ellen. Her name's Ellen.

He reaches out his hand to stroke the cold face. But:

GENTLY

No. You can't touch her, James. You can never touch her again.

The word registers with him.

JAMES (QUIETLY)

Never?

GENTLY

Never. Were you driving the car,  
James?

JAMES doesn't take his eyes off her face. Tears fall silently.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Were you driving the car, James?

INT. POLICE HQ, GENTLY'S AND BACCHUS' OFFICE - DAY 2. 15:30Z

ALETHEA, ACKLINGTON and the ACC wait in silence. ALETHEA smoking. GG and JB come back.

GENTLY

Your son's waiting in Reception.

Relief for all three. JB's not exactly doing cartwheels.

ALETHEA

What did he tell you?

GENTLY

He told us the name of the dead  
girl. Nothing more.

She again seems relieved. She nods. And is ready to go.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Aren't you curious to know it?

ALETHEA

Yes, of course.

GENTLY

Ellen Mallam.

ALETHEA

Well that begins to make sense.  
Her father works for us.

GENTLY

Did he have access to the car?

ALETHEA

He's free to use it anytime. Gosh.  
What a run of bad luck he's had.  
Lost his wife, lost his job at the  
pit, then throat cancer, now this.

27

CONTINUED:

27

GENTLY  
Throat cancer?

28

**EXT. ENTRANCE TO ABBERWICK HALL - DAY 2. 17:00.**

28

For the second time today, GG drives them through the gates.

29

**I/E. GG'S CAR TRAVELLING - DAY 2. 17:10.**

29

And on towards BILLY at his fencing work, where they pull up. BILLY sees them and sticks his head in through GG's window again - again disconcerting JB by doing so.

BILLY

Yiz wanta buy a compass, you two.  
Straight past the House of Lords  
stableblock- gan quiet cos tha fast  
asleep in the aftanoons- torn right  
at the Profumo Swimmin Pool, ower  
the bridge at the Christine Keeler  
Goldfish Pond-

He finds GG's warrant card under his nose.

GENTLY

William Mallam?

BILLY's taken aback. His twinkling eyes fill with worry.

BILLY

Aye...?

30

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, ESTATE WORKSHOP - DAY 2. 17:20.**

30

GG and JB standing, BILLY slumped in a chair at a trestle table in a corner which is used as a tea-break station. Music from the next scene is already fading in. Folk rock. A bass is joined by drums is joined by violin is joined by lead guitar. The song is "Matty Groves", all about an illicit love affair between high born and low, and the violent deaths that ensue. But we are focussed on BILLY.

BILLY

I went ower the watta to see Ellen  
Wilkinson speak the day the Jarra  
March set out. "The Fiery Spark"  
the called a. Ye knaa, she had that  
thing aboot a... ye moved towards  
a, ye knaa...? And I thought to  
mesell -and I hadn't even met a  
mutha yet- "if a ever have a girl  
child I'll call a Ellen". And my  
Ellen had that fiery spark an all.

31

**INT. THE MINERS WELFARE CLUB - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 20:30.** 31

The band is playing on the stage and the packed AUDIENCE is enjoying it. Taking the eyes so far is the guy playing lead guitar - ANTHONY BAUGH (24) - his long hair held out of his eyes by a bandana. But the real star is about to appear. As the song arrives at the vocals, ELLEN arrives from the wings, already playing her violin, and starts singing. Perfectly timed arrival, and what a voice.

ELLEN (SINGING)

A holiday, a holyday, and the first one of the year. Lord Arlen's wife came into the church, the gospel for to hear. And when the meeting it was done, she cast her eyes about. And there she saw little Matty Groves, walking in the crowd.

She's dressed in vintage. Very sexy. She is much admired. Not least by ANTHONY, with whom she has flirtatious eye contact as she sings to him:

ELLEN (SINGING) (CONT'D)

"Come home with me, little Matty Groves, come home with me tonight. Come home with me, little Matty Groves, and sleep with me tonight".

ANTHONY (SINGING)

"Oh, I can't come home, I won't come home, and sleep with you tonight. By the rings on your fingers I can tell, you are Lord Arlen's wife."

He's not as good as she is, but good enough. They shared raised eyebrows as she sang the bed invitation.

32

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, ESTATE WORKSHOP - DAY 2. 17:32.**

32

GENTLY

And this was last night. The last time you saw Ellen. In the Miners Welfare in your village.

BILLY

Who was drivin the car, Mista Gently?

GENTLY

We don't know yet. Do you ever drive one of the cars home?

BILLY

A walk to work.

(CONTINUED)

GENTLY

What's that - five, six miles?

BILLY

If ye folla the road, aye. If you  
gan through the woods an ower the  
wall it's aboot a mile and a half.

BACCHUS (NOTEBOOK)

I'll need the names of the other  
band members.

BILLY

I divven reelly knaa them. It was  
whoever was free. Except Anthony.  
Anthony always played.

BACCHUS

Anthony?

BILLY

Anthony Baugh.

BACCHUS

Where will I find him?

BILLY

Here usually. In the library.  
Eez writin some kinda book.

GENTLY

Mister Mallam, weren't you  
concerned when Ellen didn't come  
home?

BILLY

Nah, cos she told iz she was gettin  
the bus outta Newcastle for London.  
Bus leaves at three o'clock in the  
mornin. A bags wa packed, sittin on  
the floor. She was gunna slip in  
and get them after a went to bed.  
The wa still there this mornin. So  
was a bus ticket.

GENTLY

And again that didn't concern you?

BILLY

Well, nah, cos a just thought she'd  
gone off with a mates, mebbies  
changed a mind.

GENTLY

She have a boyfriend up here?

32 CONTINUED: (2)

32

BILLY

Nah, nah. Just mates she stayed  
with sometimes in Newcastle or  
Morpeth.

GENTLY

And how long had she been home from  
London?

BILLY

3 or 4 days.

BACCHUS

She was a student.

BILLY

At the Royal College of Music. From  
a bairn, Mister Bacchus, she could  
pick up any instrument and play it.  
Dunno where she got that from. Not  
me or her Mam. And what a voice.  
She made the angels weep.

33

INT. THE MINERS WELFARE CLUB - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 20:32. 33

The song has intensified in pace, narrative drive and volume.

ELLEN (SINGING)

Saying "How do ye like my  
featherbed, and how do you like my  
sheets? How **do** you like my lady,  
who lies in your arms asleep?!"

ANTHONY smiles to himself, and glances up to see HECTOR's  
eyes are on him.

34

INT. ABBERWICK HALL, ESTATE WORKSHOP - DAY 2. 17:35.

34

GENTLY

Who was in the audience?

BILLY

People from the village, the farms  
round aboot, people from the Hall.

BACCHUS

Who from the Hall?

BILLY

Well Hector. He always went when  
Ellen sang.

A beat. JB surprised at this familiarity.

(CONTINUED)

BACCHUS

You call him "Hector"....? The class enemy that stole the country off the workers....?

BILLY

Aye, I knaa, but me n Hector's been friends for donkeys. Forst time I ever had a drink with Hector he still owned the pit and I was the Deputy. I was supposed to fight him over conditions, like. Which I did. But ye couldn't help likin the man. He sez tiv iz one day "William, my dear, isn't it **marvellous** that two chaps with nothing in common can share a bottle of beer?" I sez "Hector, we **have** got summit in common: wa both traitors to wa class!"

GG smiles along with him, though there are tears mixed in with the smiles for BILLY himself. He likes this guy. But:

GENTLY

So Hector has known Ellen all her life?

BILLY (NODDING)

Used to always tell a she was beautiful, ye knaa... Give a presents on a birthday an that. She used to give him that big smile and say "Hector, give all the land and money yiv pinched back to the workaz an I'll have a dory weekend with ye". She used to make me blush sometimes. She reminded him of eez forst wife, I think.

GG absorbing all this. JB has a set idea though.

BACCHUS

Yeh, OK, so Hector was there. But why was James there?

BILLY

I divven knaa. But I knaa he never took his eyes off Ellen all neet.

ANTHONY is looking out at the crowd as they play the riff. His eyes meet those of JAMES, who gives him a mock salute. ANTHONY bows his head to acknowledge him. There's something between them. A rivalry of some kind. And something shared?

Beside JAMES, HECTOR is thoroughly enjoying the music and the whole atmosphere. The vocals start up again.

ELLEN (SINGING)

Then Lord Arlen he jumped up. And loudly he did bawl. He struck his wife right through the heart. And pinned her against the wall.

Hearing this image, HECTOR finds his tie getting a little tight. He has to give himself a little air, with his finger in the collar.

ELLEN (SINGING) (CONT'D)

"A grave, a grave", Lord Arlen cried, "to put these lovers in! But bury my Lady at the top, for she was of noble kin!".

Her eyes briefly meet those of JAMES, who is totally focussed on her again, as the band plays out with a flourish. Huge applause, over which ELLEN speaks. Some carry on applauding, others are replenishing drinks at the bar, others going home.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Thank you. You've been listenin to The Fiery Spark. Please give generously to the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Support the people of Vietnam. Victory to the Vietcong! America out!

She goes into the audience with a bucket, collecting.

ANTHONY

Ladies and Gentlemen, one last time: Ellen Mallam!

Another swelling of applause for her. And she does a dainty and beguiling slow curtsy, as befits the world of the song. HECTOR is putting a pound note in her bucket.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

If you want her to sing one more, better let her know!

AUDIENCE

More, more, more, more.

In the audience, BILLY couldn't be more proud. His beaming happiness leads us back over to:

His face now. Broken. No more smiles. It's still day, but the light is fading towards dusk.

GENTLY

She had your politics.

BILLY

She believed in justice and fair  
shares. She hated big countries  
like the US of A invadin little  
places like Vietnam.

BACCHUS (BORING)

Did James have a gash on his head,  
Mister Mallam?

BILLY

A gash? Nah, why?

BACCHUS

Sure?

JB is note-booking the reply he wanted and expected.

BILLY (FIGURING IT OUT)

Has he got one now, like?

GENTLY

He says he walked into the French  
windows.

BILLY looks into JB's clearly disbelieving eyes, and starts  
to get angry.

BILLY

Eez done this before. Crashed cars  
an got away with it.

GENTLY

Is there any reason you know of why  
Ellen would be in a car with James  
Blackstone late last night?

BILLY thinks.

BILLY

They were talkin. After the  
concert.

BILLY comes out of the door swapping "good-nights" with BAND  
MEMBERS (not ANTHONY) who are loading their instruments into  
a van. He sees ELLEN and JAMES across the street in deep  
conversation. It ends with a big hug, a kiss on his lips and  
an encouraging grasp of his hand. She watches JAMES walk a  
little unsteadily towards his car, which is a Scimitar.

BACCHUS (V.O.)

What were they talkin about?

BILLY (V.O.)

Ah, the were too far away. All I remember was thinkin "there he goes again: drunk behind the wheel".

He looks for ELLEN, but she's gone.

GENTLY

Could he have been offering to come back later and give her a lift to the coach station in Newcastle?

BILLY

She did say she had a lift.

BACCHUS

From James?

BILLY

Well I assumed Anthony.

This knocks JB off course.

BACCHUS

Anthony Baugh the guitarist who's writin a book? Why did you assume that?

BILLY

Cos that's what usually happened. The wa close. The grew up together.

GENTLY

Does he have a car?

BILLY

Nah, he uses the ones from the estate.

GENTLY

So, if he thought he might be needing a car last night, he-

They are interrupted by the shy arrival of HECTOR, who is devastated.

HECTOR

So sorry, Inspector. Billy... this is appalling.. appalling..

BILLY stands. They clap each other on the back. It very nearly turns into an embrace, but neither man can manage it. So it peters out. And besides: a serpent has entered BILLY's heart. HECTOR apologizes again to GG and JB for interrupting.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Sorry, I just wanted...

GENTLY (UNDERSTANDS)

We were finished anyway. We want to talk to Anthony Baugh.

HECTOR

I'm afraid he isn't here today.

GENTLY

Could he have borrowed the Austin yesterday?

HECTOR (IT'S A POSSIBILITY)

Yes. Of course. He frequently took a car.

BILLY's eyes have hardened.

BILLY

We need to find out who left a to drown, Hector.

HECTOR

Mister Gently will. I'm sure of it.

BILLY

Whoever it is, Hector.

A beat.

HECTOR

Of course. Whoever.

He tries his best to hold BILLY's gaze. He fails. He goes. BILLY is starting to look lost and bitter.

BILLY

He won't hesitate.

GENTLY

To do what?

BILLY

Pull whatever strings it takes to save his son's neck. Why aye, he's gunna be Prime Minister one day, we keep gettin told.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (2)

38

BILLY (CONT'D)

Whereas a young lass like Ellen,  
 who had more brains and more heart  
 in a little finka than he'll ever  
 have...! Her life can be snuffed  
 out like ...!

He snaps his fingers. He's right on the edge.

BACCHUS

Mister Mallam, could there've been  
 something goin on between James  
 Blackstone and Ellen?

BILLY's anger is growing.

BILLY

She used to stick up forrim. Even  
 when he was a kid. Used to say he  
 was better than he seemed. Nobody  
 else could stand him. Sept eez Mam.

BILLY's anger erupts.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Eez killed a, hasn't ee...? The  
 only one who had any time for him.  
 An eez killed a. Why's he not  
 locked up?

JB's look at GG says he couldn't agree more.

39

**INT. POLICE HQ, GENTLY'S AND BACCHUS' OFFICE - NIGHT 2.**

39

19:30.

GG and JB smoking. Having a whisky. But nothing shared or convivial about this scene. They are pissed with each other. So they stay in their own thoughts. GG's thinking about this long day. Started with that dream again, then that unexpected chat with Arnie, then this wasted life and grief. JB yawns. Both really tired. TAYLOR arrives.

TAYLOR

There's still nobody in at Anthony  
 Baugh's house, sir.

Silence. He looks to GG and gets nothing. So he looks to JB and gets:

BACCHUS (DON'T LOOK AT ME, MATE)

I don't care.

More weary silence. GG glances at JB.

TAYLOR

So what do you want iz to do?

(CONTINUED)

Silence. He's desperately hoping GG will say:

GENTLY

Go home.

He goes, fast. GG has drawn a map on a blackboard. He goes to it. JB's eyes go to the ceiling. What a waste of time.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Hall here. Village here. Al to Newcastle and the coach station off this way. River winds round like this. Death occurred here at the bridge.

BACCHUS (FASCINATING, BUT)  
Is there a point to this, cos-?

GENTLY (OVER HIM)

She had a ticket to London. So..  
**Whoever** was driving her was presumably taking her to her Dad's to pick up her luggage.

BACCHUS

Yeh. So?

GENTLY

But she did have her violin with her. Why's that, you think?

BACCHUS (ARE WE REALLY DISCUSSING THIS?)

No idea, guv.

GENTLY

Maybe she took her violin with her wherever she went.

BACCHUS

Yeh. Good job she didn't play the piano.

GENTLY

Or maybe: she was playing it somewhere. If so: Where? Who with? Her band had all gone home in their van. Except Anthony Baugh. Who we can't find. And that's why **I** care.

JB's losing the will to live. GG blows out his cheeks, feels the tiredness and makes a decision. He stubs out his fag and stares at JB, who has also made a decision.

BACCHUS (PUTTING ON HIS COAT)

Honest, guv, me brain's gone. See ye the morra.

(CONTINUED)

GENTLY

Nothing to say to me?

BACCHUS (KNOWS WHAT'S COMING)

About what?

GENTLY

OK, let **me** tell **you** just **one** of the vast array of things that's wrong with planting false evidence.

BACCHUS

Whoa, Nelly. "False evidence"?

GENTLY

The blood sample. I take it James Blackstone is A2B....?

JB shrugs, innocently.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Come on, you know that from the times you tried to nick him.

BACCHUS

So?

GENTLY

And a smear of it conveniently turns up on the car frame.

Silence. Eye contact.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Do I look like I came down the Zambezi on a banana boat? The blood sample doesn't exist, does it?

BACCHUS (HAD ENOUGH)

Eez got a three inch gash across eez head! Eez got previous for drinking and driving! Thiv stopped iz puttin him away **twice** before and -guess what- now eez **killed** somebody! And **you're** tryin to stop iz a third time!

GENTLY

I'm trying to stop you perjuring yourself! And ruining Bob Anderton's career. He's got a wife and four kids relying on his salary! He's risking it all because you are SURE you've got the right man, you just need the evidence to prove it!

A beat. JB just shakes his head at all of this.

BACCHUS

Blokes your age can't help yerselves, can yiz? "Oh, this bloke was in the army, he'll be a good bloke". "Oh, this bloke's got a posh accent, he'll never tell iz a pack of lies"!! How many times do these guys get a free pass just cos they won the pools the day they were born?!

Silence. GG pretty hurt by that.

GENTLY (QUIETLY)

That's how you see me, is it? A man who knows his place.

A beat. JB should shut up, but:

BACCHUS

You... These people've been fartin in wa faces for centuries and now we don't have to take it anymore... and there was you... my Guvnor.. calling this stuck up cow "Yer Ladyship"...

This is said more in sadness than anger. Silence.

GENTLY

And this excuses you inventing evidence against her son.

JB sighs.

BACCHUS

A: I'm doin nothin of the kind, yer imaginin it. B: He's guilty. And C: Do you think this lot got all tha land, all tha wealth, all tha titles - by **stickin to the rules?**

How depressing it is for GG to hear this.

GENTLY

Go home.

BACCHUS

Guv...

GENTLY

Just go. You disappoint me, John.

A beat. JB goes: well, fuck you then. GG lights another fag and pours another Scotch.

Music starts. Tim Buckley "Once I Was", perhaps. Slow and moody, anyway. Once I was a soldier. Once I was a hunter. Once I was a lover. And sometimes I wonder, just for a while, will you ever remember me....?

GG's face. The music continues over the following sequence.

40

**EXT. MOORS OF NORTHUMBERLAND - NIGHT 2. 21:00**

40

The bright moon shining on the landscape, lonely and empty.

41

**EXT. A BEND IN THE RIVER - NIGHT 2. 21:01.**

41

The car has been removed. Only the tracks it made as it skidded into the river can now be seen. A forlorn sight.

42

**INT. A SMALL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 2. 21:30**

42

JB, still in his coat, is slumped in a chair staring at static on the television, smoking a fag. He wishes he hadn't said all that. The scene is mute, the song continuing. Something under the cushion. He fishes out a pair of big knickers. A sudden avalanche of memory. He groans.

43

**INT. BILLY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 2. 21:32**

43

BILLY cannot stand still or sit. He looks mad with grief and anger. On the wall beside him is a framed photograph of his wife and their 5 year old daughter. He stands and stares at it. Leaning against the wall in the corner is a shotgun. He looks at it. He looks up because there was a knock at the door. He opens the door, which gives straight onto the street. There stands HECTOR with a bottle of whiskey and a sad smile. BILLY slams the door on him. He looks again at the shotgun.

44

**INT. POLICE HQ, GENTLY'S AND BACCHUS' OFFICE - NIGHT 2. 21:35.**

44

GG looks at the framed photograph of Isabella as he slugs his whisky.

45

**I/E. WOODLAND - NIGHT 2. 21:40**

45

BILLY's determined face as he runs through the woods like Hawkeye, the shotgun in his hand.

46 **INT. POLICE HQ, GENTLY'S AND BACCHUS' OFFICE - NIGHT 2.** 46  
**21:42.**

GG's face. He's thinking about "helpless and drowning". And "never". Another slug of anaesthetic. Nearly there, George.

47 **I/E. THE CAR UNDER THE WATER - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 01:57** 47

ELLEN motionless, her hair floating around her face as the car fills with water.

48 **INT. POLICE HQ, GENTLY'S AND BACCHUS' OFFICE - NIGHT 2.** 48  
**21:45.**

GG slumped face down at his desk, passed out. No more pain tonight.

The song ends and we are back into real sound as we move to:

49 **INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY 3. 04:55.** 49

GG and JB are marching along corridors, not connecting with one another at all. They pass CLEANERS, mopping floors.

BACCHUS

This wouldn't've happened if we'd arrested him yesterday.

GENTLY

4 'O' Levels **and** 20/20 hindsight.

50 **INT. HOSPITAL CANTEEN - DAY 3. 05:00.** 50

It's only 5 a.m. so the place is barely up and running, and sparsely populated. A few YAWNING PORTERS with tea and fags. Hot drinks are coming not from the unmanned counter but from a vending machine, in a far corner, which has a queue waiting to use it. In the queue is ANTHONY. In the other far corner sits ALETHEA, arms folded, legs crossed. Very very angry with the world. Beside her is HECTOR, lost in thought. JB and GG enter and look around. She looks up and sees GG and JB approaching.

ALETHEA

What business is this of theirs!?

GENTLY (ARRIVING)

How's your son?

HECTOR

They don't really know yet. Would you like a cup of tea, Inspector?

GG shakes his head, but:

BACCHUS  
Yeh, wouldn't mind.

HECTOR (CALLING OUT)  
Anthony?

GG and JB look over and realise it's **the** ANTHONY.

HECTOR (CONT'D)  
A tea for Sergeant Bacchus?

BACCHUS (QUIETLY)  
Anthony Baugh, guv.

GG moves quickly into action.

GENTLY (QUIETLY)  
Find out all you can. I'll take him outside.

He heads for ANTHONY.

**INT. HOSPITAL CANTEEN - DAY 3. 05:10.**

JB sitting at the table with ALETHEA. She's barely acknowledging him. JB notices blood on her peignoir, which is visible because her overcoat has fallen open.

BACCHUS  
Is that your son's blood?

She covers it with her coat. Doesn't even look at him.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)  
What happened to James?

ALETHEA  
Why doesn't he make them open the kitchen? Is there reaaaaally not a woman here to boil a kettle?

A beat. She's talking about HECTOR, who has taken Anthony's place in the queue.

BACCHUS (PERSISTING, QUIETLY)  
What happened to your son?

ALETHEA (FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGING HIM)  
Well I wasn't there, was I? He'd been drinking. He used be a soldier, they play with death. They're reckless.

BACCHUS (HARD TO BELIEVE)

Sorry, are you saying James  
accidentally cut his own throat...?

Suddenly a crack in her armour.

ALETHEA

He isn't going to die. He's not.  
He's just hurt himself very badly.  
He'll get better, things will be  
different.

BACCHUS

What things?

ALETHEA

He is quite unbelievable, isn't he?

JB thinks she's still talking about James here, until he sees she's again watching HECTOR, who's now at the front of the queue holding a five pound note, looking slightly lost.

HECTOR (CALLING ACROSS)

Darling? Do you have any shrapnel?

She shakes her head in despair. He leaves the queue and starts asking the YAWNING PORTERS if they can change a fiver.

ALETHEA

My husband was conceived upon a  
flannel. Did you know that,  
Sergeant?

BACCHUS

I beg your pardon...?

JB has no idea where that came from.

GG and ANTHONY are walking and smoking.

ANTHONY

Apparently Alethea heard a noise  
from the garden, looked out of the  
window and there he was.

GENTLY

So Alethea found James with his  
throat cut?

ANTHONY

Yes.

GENTLY

And did James manage to say anything?

ANTHONY

Well presumably not, with his throat cut...

Not dying of grief, then.

GENTLY

Were you at the Hall last night?

ANTHONY

At night? Of course not.

GENTLY

Do you think he tried to kill himself?

ANTHONY (THAT'S OBVIOUS)

James was... is probably the most unhappy human being I've ever met. And one of the least likeable.

GENTLY

What makes him unhappy?

ANTHONY

I'm not a psychiatrist.

GENTLY

What makes him unlikeable?

ANTHONY

Proximity to him.

A beat. GG trying to figure this guy out.

GENTLY

How do you fit in at Abberwick Hall, Anthony?

ANTHONY

The ruling class of England went mad about ten years ago -shortly after Suez- didn't you notice? I'm writing a book about it. "Through A Class Darkly - The Decline Of The Old Order". Think it'll sell?

HECTOR has got some change and is once more in the queue.

ALETHEA

His mother - my predecessor as The Countess of Guyzance - was a notorious "horizontale".

BACCHUS

Sorry?

ALETHEA

Rarely in the vertical plane.

BACCHUS (GETS THERE)

Oh.

ALETHEA

Why am I telling you all this?

She looks him right in the eyes. He clears his throat.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Because sometimes you just need to talk, don't you?

And he starts to fall for it. He nods. She starts to cry. She needs a hankie. He hasn't got one. He dives to a table and gets an abandoned paper napkin for her.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Thank you. I'm sorry I was rude to you yesterday. What's your name?

BACCHUS

John.

ALETHEA

Well, John. She slept with everybody. Except Hector's father, whom she couldn't abide. You'll never repeat a word of this, will you? Promise.

BACCHUS

No, no, promise.

ALETHEA

So. There came a point when they hadn't had "conjugale" for six years at which point the old bird announces she's pregnant. Well even Hector's father- who was given dinners at Eton for his imbecility- even he could do simple arithmetic, so he sued her for adultery in the High Court and tried to have Hector declared a bastard.

She seems content to leave it there. JB riveted though.

(CONTINUED)

BACCHUS

Well what happened?

HECTOR raises his arm in salute. Nearly at the front.

ALETHEA

Mm? Oh, he lost his case,  
obviously.

GENTLY

How do you know James so well?

ANTHONY

My parents owned the village shop.  
James and I were at school  
together.

GENTLY

You went to public school..?

ANTHONY

Yep.

GENTLY

Thrifty shopkeepers.

ANTHONY

Yes. But not that thrifty. Hector  
paid for my education. And no, I'm  
not his illegitimate offspring, it  
was pure philanthropy. Hector does  
a lot of good in the world. All he  
asks in return is that you try and  
do the same.

GENTLY

And will you?

ANTHONY

Well that's debateable. I'd like to  
go into politics.

GENTLY

As James is meant to do? Except he  
has a mother who controls the local  
Tory Party and decides who the MP  
will be.

ANTHONY

Lucky boy, eh?

GENTLY

But. If James were no longer a  
candidate..?

ANTHONY

Oh, crikey. Am I a suspect?

But GG isn't laughing.

GENTLY

Tell me why you shouldn't be...?

HECTOR is putting one tea on a tray, while another is filling under the automatic spout. He's asking the rest of the queue if he can get them anything. They're shaking their heads. He doesn't really get this whole self service thing. JB wants the rest of the story before he comes back.

BACCHUS

Well, how? How did the "old bird" get away with that?

ALETHEA

She simply told the Judge the facts of the matter.

BACCHUS

Which were...?

ALETHEA

That because he wasn't getting any sex, Hector's father was in the habit of relieving himself on a flannel in her bathroom. One night in her bath she'd used the flannel to wash herself down there, thus impregnating herself with his sperm.

A beat. HECTOR's on his way.

BACCHUS

And the judge believed that!?

ALETHEA

Of course he believed her. Her father was a Duke.

HECTOR's nearly arriving. A thought occurs to JB:

BACCHUS

So ...who's your husband's real father?

ALETHEA

God knows. Probably some horny-handed son of toil from the local coal mine. That would explain a lot about Hector.

HECTOR

Tea at last. Getting to know each other?

He knows exactly how his wife operates. A NURSE arrives near the doors.

NURSE

Is there a "Mr. and Mrs.... Guyzance?" here?

ALETHEA straight to her feet, fearing the worst.

GENTLY

So where exactly **were** you last night, Anthony? I sent officers to bring you in.

ANTHONY (WORRIED)

Why?

GENTLY

Answer me, will you?

ANTHONY

I was at my parents' bungalow on the coast.

GENTLY

Will they corroborate that?

ANTHONY

Yes.

GENTLY (LOOKING AT HIS WATCH)

It's 6 a.m. How did you find out about James so quickly?

A beat.

ANTHONY

The Countess telephoned. She was erm... very upset. I came over.

GENTLY

Why you, Anthony?

He doesn't answer. He shrugs.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Why had you gone to your parents?

ANTHONY

Why shouldn't I?

GENTLY

A friend of yours had just lost her life in a car crash. Someone you were close to, according to her father. Is that true?

He seems to falter. He nods.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Why wasn't it you driving that car? Billy assumed it would be you giving her a lift to the coach station. Why didn't you?

A beat.

ANTHONY

Because she wasn't going to the coach station. James was driving them both to London.

GENTLY

How do you know this?

ANTHONY

She told me.

GENTLY

How close were you, Anthony?

Again he won't answer. He no longer seems cocky.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Did you love Ellen Mallam, Anthony?

A beat.

ANTHONY

All my life.

JB arrives at a distance.

BACCHUS

Guv?!

GG and JB find HECTOR on the end of a row of chairs, looking at the liver spots on his hands. He greets them with sad eyes and a shake of the head.

HECTOR

He'd lost too much blood. They  
couldn't bring him back.

ANTHONY arrives too. He sits at a distance.

GENTLY

I'm very sorry. What can you tell  
us about what happened?

HECTOR

Very little. I heard my wife's  
screams, I went to the window, saw  
the scene and immediately phoned  
for help. When I got outside...  
well there was blood everywhere and  
James was barely alive. We bandaged  
his neck, but... He was drowning in  
his own blood. The ambulance took  
an age.

GENTLY

And you saw nobody else?

HECTOR

Such as who...?

GENTLY

Anthony Baugh, for instance?

HECTOR

No, of course not.

GENTLY

And the previous night. The night  
Ellen met her death? Was he at the  
Hall then?

HECTOR

Why on earth would he be there in  
the evening?

Beat. JB and GG share a look. They know something's being  
hidden.

BACCHUS

I'm very sorry as well. Hector.  
Before your wife's screams - did  
you hear anything? Raised voices, a  
car engine, anything...?

HECTOR

No.

BACCHUS

This silver knife that was found  
beside James...?

HECTOR

It's a letter opener. I don't know what's happened to it.

BACCHUS

It's in a forensics lab.

GENTLY

Was it familiar to you?

HECTOR

It's my wife's. A gift from James on her 40th birthday. It has an inscription on it: "To Mummy from James". It normally lives on her desk in the day room.

GENTLY

Do you think your son took his own life with it, sir?

A pause.

HECTOR

Yes. I do.

GENTLY

And why would he do that?

Another pause.

HECTOR

I don't know.

GENTLY

Were the three of you at home together yesterday evening?

HECTOR

I don't know about Alethea. We live rather separately. I didn't see James until .... I myself went out for a while.

GENTLY

To go where?

HECTOR (RELUCTANTLY)

I went to Billy Mallam's house, to share a drink with him. But he slammed the door on me. There was real hatred in his eyes. (He looks at JB). I fear he may have been led to the wrong conclusion about his daughter's death.

A beat. JB hunkers down beside him.

(CONTINUED)

BACCHUS

I think your son killed himself last night because he was responsible for Ellen Mallam's death. So why do you keep pointin yer finger at other people, I wonder?

HECTOR

Confucius had a saying, Sergeant. "When a wise man points at the stars, only a fool stares at his finger".

Footsteps. ALETHEA is walking slowly towards them, looking straight ahead, hugging a polythene bag containing James' bloody clothes. HECTOR stands and steps towards her. She walks round him, avoiding his touch, and away towards the exit. As she passes ANTHONY, he stands and steps towards her. He gets the same treatment. HECTOR waits a moment, and then leaves. ANTHONY waits a moment and follows.

BACCHUS

Are we lettin Anthony Baugh go?

GENTLY

For now.

They light up fags.

BACCHUS

These people are weird, guv.

GENTLY

We better question Billy Mallam.

BACCHUS (CAN'T BELIEVE IT)

Oh, right. Billy Mallam went to the Hall to open James Blackstone's throat with a silver dagger that belonged to Alethea. And all because of me, apparently. You're takin this rubbish seriou-?

GENTLY

I have to.

BACCHUS

Well, obviously... if an Earl says somethin's true, it must be..

GENTLY

You as good as told Billy Mallam that James was driving the car!

BACCHUS

It's just a smokescreen, guv! The truth just walked out the door!

GENTLY (HAD ENOUGH OF THIS)

You don't have to be there. I'll question Billy Mallam myself.

BACCHUS (POINT TO BE MADE HERE)

No, no, no! It's all my fault, so I'll do it!! I will **do** it!

Full of smoke and old tea cups. We arrive in the middle of a loud and aggressive interrogation. GG, JB, BILLY, and a PC taking notes. JB is holding up a photo of the knife.

BACCHUS

This was meant for slittin envelopes, not throats. It's like a razor. What did ye sharpen it on? A dry-stone wall, mebbies?

BILLY

Is this lad on drugs?

BACCHUS

Pardon?!?

BILLY

How would I get hold of the thing?

BACCHUS

You work there!

BILLY

Aye, in the fields, not in the Hoose.

BACCHUS

The place leaks like a sieve, man, it's got twenty five back doors! You tellin iz Hector goes round checkin window latches every night?

BILLY

There's easier ways of killin a man than that, bonny lad.

GENTLY

Such as?

BILLY

A shotgun....?

BACCHUS

Yeh, but you wanted poetic justice,  
didn't ye, for yer gorgeous  
artistic daughter?! Cut her  
killer's throat with a knife  
inscribed to his "Mummy"! What  
could be sweeter than that?!

BILLY (GETTING DISTRESSED)

Havin Ellen alive would be sweeter,  
bonny lad.

BACCHUS

But she's not, Billy. You'll never  
see her again. Never.

GG winces. BILLY takes deep breaths to steady himself.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

You had hate in your heart last  
night, Billy.

BILLY

Sez who?

BACCHUS

Who came knockin on yer door?

A beat. BILLY can hardly believe it.

BILLY (TO GG)

Hector put yiz up to this?

GG can't deny it. BILLY even more distressed.

BACCHUS

James Blackstone leaves Ellen to  
drown. James Blackstone drowns in  
his own blood. Nobody on this earth  
would blame ye, Billy. Nobody.

Silence.

GENTLY

Did you leave the house after  
Hector came to see you?

A beat. BILLY nods. JB surprised.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Where did you go, Billy?

His face takes us over to:

59

**EXT. A BEND IN THE RIVER - NIGHT 2 FLASHBACK. 21:45**

59

BILLY stands looking into the inky black water of the river. He has the shotgun in the crook of his arm.

BILLY (V.O.)

To the river. I went to the river.

60

**INT. POLICE HQ, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY 3. 09:05.**

60

BILLY

To see where me bairn lost a life.  
Thinkin a might die there in the  
same spot.

Silence. GG nods. JB leans against a far wall. BILLY looks right into GG's eyes.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Mister Gently, soona or later, many of we get to a place in life where wiv lost everythin. And there we meet despair. A couldn't kill mesell last night. And this was not simple cowardice. At age 19, I spent 6 days trapped by a rockfall underground on me own. So, I've met despair before. Wrapped tight round me throat in the dark. But a survived it. As a will the loss of Ellen. As a have everythin else. So: if James Blackstone met despair last night and couldn't see a life beyond it... well, whatever else he may or may not've done: God rest eez soul.

Silence. They are both moved by him. What a big heart. But:

GENTLY

Anthony Baugh thinks Ellen and James were leaving for London together.

BILLY shakes his head. Daft idea.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Knows it for a fact, he says.

BILLY

He only knows one thing for a fact: that Anthony Baugh will one day be at the top of the greasy pole. I've watched that lad grow up. He believes in nothin except heself.

(CONTINUED)

Not really an answer to the question, say GG's and JB's faces. But it's all they're going to get, it seems.

BACCHUS

All the same: why would he make this up? You told us yourself. She held onto James's hand, she kissed him. Funny thing for a fiery workin class lass to do. Stand neckin in the street with a bloke whose mother's posher than the Queen.

GENTLY

Billy. The post-mortem told us Ellen had sex with somebody in the few days before she died.

BILLY

Did yiz have to telliz that?

GENTLY

Could it have been James?

BILLY

Nevva in a million year.

GENTLY

Anthony...?

A pause. BILLY shrugs.

BILLY

I think the used to, but that was years ago...

GG nods. Enough pain for this man tonight.

GENTLY

I'll get a squad car to take you home, Mister Mallam.

BILLY shakes hands with them both. He accepts that JB was just doing his job, however loathsomely. JB humbled. The PC escorts BILLY out. JB breathes out. Sometimes he hates this fucking job. A WPC arrives and hands GENTLY a written report on the knife, and the item itself, bagged and tagged. She goes.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Only one recognizable set of prints on the weapon. James Blackstone's.

GG picks up the polythene bag and looks at the knife.

BACCHUS

Thinkin, guv?

GENTLY

What am I thinking? I'm thinking  
 "Why have I got a total liability  
 for a Sergeant?"! You spend half an  
 hour talking to Alethea Blackstone  
 and what do you bring me? A clue  
 about how or why her son might've  
 met this grotesque death? Oh, no!  
 Some load of rubbish about his  
 Granny's flannel!!

JB is a bit red-faced.

BACCHUS

I'll go and see her again.

GENTLY

Oh, no you won't. I'll do it  
 myself. Go and get Anthony Baugh.  
 "Was he still going to bed with  
 Ellen or not?" If so, "What was she  
 doing running off to London with  
 James?" And how angry was Anthony  
 about that? The man he despised  
 heading off to London with the girl  
 he loved.

A catafalque awaits the coffin. Flowers have been brought in and candles are waiting to be lit. Stone plaques adorn the walls in memory of previously departed Guyzances. ALETHEA is arranging flowers, pale, beautiful, and dressed simply in black. GG is sitting in a pew. He glances at a plaque which tells him that the 1st Earl, Cornwallis Blackstone, died at the Battle of Malplaquet in 1709.

ALETHEA

When the undertakers have done  
 their work, people can come and pay  
 their respects. He was so... so  
 very loved my son. England has lost  
 a future leader.

GG not sure about that one. There are suddenly tears in her eyes and she needs a little assistance. A handkerchief would be favourite. A beat. GG takes a clean one from his pocket and holds it out. She comes and gets it. And dabs her eyes as she slips into the pew alongside him.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Have you ever lost anyone you were  
 really close to, George?

He doesn't reply, but his eyes go to his hands.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Of course you have. We're the generation, aren't we? I lost my father and my brother in the war. In the same week.

GENTLY

I lost some comrades. Anzio. Sicily before that. I also lost my wife a few years ago.

She touches his arm, gives it a little rub.

ALETHEA

I'm so sorry.

GENTLY

It's been very much on my mind recently. Can't quite work out why.

ALETHEA

Because you're a sensitive man, George. But life will be good again. Life always works out well in the end for good men like you.

He's actually quite moved. She is rather brilliant at this.

GENTLY

Your ladyship, I need to-

ALETHEA

Why don't you call me Alethea? When no-one else is around.

A little smile for him. Comrades in loss. He drags himself out of the quicksand of her charm.

GENTLY

No, I'll call you "Your Ladyship" if it's all the same to you. The night Ellen died.

Her manner changes. She goes back to flower arranging.

ALETHEA

Back to that again, are we?

GENTLY

Anthony Baugh says Ellen and James were going to London together.

Busy with the flowers. A slight hesitation over a rose, then it slots into place and:

ALETHEA

Gosh, hasn't he got a lot to say  
for the son of village  
shopkeepers...? Complete nonsense.

ANTHONY sits waiting. BACCHUS comes in, breezily. He sits down and smiles. And smiles.

ANTHONY

Can I help you in some way?

BACCHUS

Yeh. Sometime before she died,  
somebody shagged Ellen. Any idea  
who?

ANTHONY has to stop himself attacking him. He simply stares at him. And he seems a bit stunned.

ANTHONY

You really are.... Something.

BACCHUS

All right, an easier one: was it  
you? Or was it James?

ANTHONY

Body's hardly cold, Sergeant.

BACCHUS

Oh, sorry, if you want cops with  
good taste they should send us all  
to public school so we can learn to  
cane each other. I just went to the  
local Grammar, though. So... never  
got into bondage.

ANTHONY (WITH DIGNITY)

This is an... amazing, kind,  
beautiful, talented human being  
who's lost her life in tragic  
circumstances. The fact that you  
think it's funny. The fact that you  
think she's to be mocked..... does  
you no credit. And actually maybe  
that **is** something to do with your  
education.

BACCHUS

Oh, where did I go wrong?

Eyeball to eyeball.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

Let me tell you what I'm thinkin,  
 Ant. I'm thinkin this. There's you  
 sent off to school to learn how to  
 parrot the upper classes, and it'll  
 always be all right cos there's yer  
 childhood sweetheart Ellen, the  
 Fiery Spark, Red Ellen, and as long  
 as she still loves ye, ye haven't  
 turned into a complete toady. But  
 one day: disaster. Red Ellen thinks  
 to herself "why am I botherin to  
 drop me knickers for a pretend  
 Upper Class Twit when I can have a  
 real one?" James never took eez  
 eyes off her at the concert. That  
 musta made you angry, did it? Then  
 he leaves her to drown in the  
 river. And ye expect iz to believe  
 you sat all last night playin  
 draughts with yer Mam and Dad in  
 Seahouses?

ANTHONY

Ask them.

BACCHUS

I have, and thiv said "yes, he was  
 here all the time, honest". What  
 are Mams and Dads for?

She finds GG standing right beside her.

GENTLY

What was James' relationship with  
 Ellen Mallam?

She smiles at the idea.

ALETHEA

"Relationship"? James was a man of  
 action. A soldier. They're allowed  
 to sow their wild oats. And village  
 girls... well sometimes they get  
 the wrong idea. She laid herself  
 down for him - and then expected a  
 wedding ring.

GENTLY

So she threw herself at him?

ALETHEA

She'd ensnared him with sex, it was  
 obvious.

GENTLY

This proud working class girl,  
named after a famous working class  
heroine, wanted a life with your  
son?

ALETHEA

And isn't that typical of the  
working class, once they smell  
money and opportunity...?

GENTLY

They envy wealth, success,  
brilliance. All the things James  
had in spades.

ALETHEA

Exactly.

GENTLY

So why did he kill himself?

She falters for a moment.

ALETHEA

He didn't kill himself. Only  
cowards and second rate people  
destroy themselves.

GENTLY

So somebody killed him?

ALETHEA

It was an accident...

GENTLY

Your husband says suicide.

ALETHEA

How would he know?! He wasn't  
there!

GENTLY

And nor were you...

ALETHEA

Exactly. Nobody was. So nobody can  
say that James killed himself.

GENTLY

It's what Anthony Baugh says too.

A beat. She's struggling with big feelings.

ALETHEA (QUIETLY)

Well, God damn Anthony Baugh. He  
would say that, wouldn't he?

GENTLY

Why?

ALETHEA

Because he hated my son. Hated and envied him. Because you can give a boy an education. But you can't give him breeding.

GENTLY

Oh, but Anthony's family, really, isn't he? Why else would you ring him at his parents at 2 in the morning and ask him to comfort you?

Silence. Her face. She won't look at him.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

How long has Anthony been your lover, Alethea?

A movement in the doorway. HECTOR has come in. He clearly must have heard that last question. And they know that.

HECTOR

James is home, my dear.

ALETHEA

Would you excuse us now, please.

She walks towards him.

GENTLY

One more question.

She turns to look at him, standing beside HECTOR.

ALETHEA

Did Ellen come to visit you the night she died?

A beat.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

What an absurd idea.

HECTOR looks at the ground. GG's face.

The coffin is wheeled on a gurney towards the Chapel. HECTOR and ALETHEA fall in behind it. GG watching. Their hands find one another's as they walk. The perfect image of the grieving parents. GG heads for his car.

65

**INT. POLICE HQ, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY 3. 11:15.**

65

BACCHUS

It's a simple question: was it you or James shagged Ellen shortly before she died?

ANTHONY

Well. It wasn't me, no.

JB grins.

BACCHUS

Oh, dear. The thought of her and James woulda hurt ye, wouldn't it. But it wasn't James either, was it?

Silence. ANTHONY meets his gaze and waits.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

I nicked him twice for bein drunk behind the wheel. Both times he was with a lad. Different lads, but never any sign of lasses. And Billy just laughed at the idea of Ellen and James.

ANTHONY nods.

ANTHONY

James was queer. Everybody knew that. Except one person, of course.

66

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, CHAPEL OF REST - DAY 3. 11:18.**

66

ALETHEA and HECTOR stand looking down on the coffin on its catafalque. The top portion of the lid has been removed, revealing JAMES' head and shoulders. The undertakers have made a good job of it. She speaks into JAMES' ear.

ALETHEA

Four prancing horses will draw your carriage. You will be engraved in marble. Dukes and Earls will attend you. And men and women everywhere will weep for their fallen hero.

67

**INT. BILLY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY 3. 11:20.**

67

BILLY is leafing through a catalogue of coffins, watched by a FUNERAL DIRECTOR. He's staring at the ornate ones at the front. The FUNERAL DIRECTOR moves the pages further towards the back.

(CONTINUED)

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

The more reasonably priced items  
are towards the .....

BILLY nods.

67A

INT. POLICE HQ INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY 3 11.21

67A

BACCHUS

So who was it then, Anthony?

A beat.

ANTHONY

I don't know. But you could tell  
just by looking at her she'd met  
someone. I've never ever seen her  
more happy.

68

EXT. THE MINERS WELFARE CLUB - DAY 3. 11:22.

68

The CARETAKER (70) is removing the poster advertising The Fiery Spark from the glass-fronted display beside the door as GG's car arrives and parks. GG gets out.

GENTLY

Excuse me, is it all right to leave  
my car-?

CARETAKER

Does it eat meat?

GENTLY

Pardon?

CARETAKER

Nee botha, hinny, it can stop there  
all day.

OK, it's a foreign country.

GENTLY

Were you here the night Ellen  
Mallam was playing?

CARETAKER

Wadden miss it.

Possible yes. Worth persevering.

GENTLY

What sort of music is it?

(CONTINUED)

CARETAKER

Like folk-rock, ye knaa. Songs  
aboott the common people. In  
yesteryore. But wi drums and  
guitars an all that.

GENTLY (STRUGGLING)

Like "Hey, nonny, no" on LSD...?

CARETAKER

Nah, nah, like she would do a sorta  
rock n roll version of an owld  
ballad like Matty Groves, where the  
peasant lad gets killed for gannin  
to bed wi this posh tart. Aboot how  
the upper class always stuffs the  
lower class in the finish.

A beat. This sounds interesting.

GENTLY

Yeh...? What else?

CARETAKER

Er... she done a one called "Silver  
Dagger". Was one of a best ones.

GENTLY

Silver Dagger? How does that go?

CARETAKER

Ah, hey, when ah sing the mice  
throw thasells on the traps, man.

GENTLY

No, I mean what's it about?

CARETAKER

Ah, it's aboot this lad and eez  
mutha. She won't let go of him.

ANTHONY

Ellen gave him hope. For the first  
and only time in his stupid life,  
he had hope.

BACCHUS

How did she do that?

ANTHONY

By singing to him. A song called  
"Silver Dagger".

BACCHUS  
"Silver Dagger".....?

ANTHONY  
It was the last song she ever sang.

ANTHONY's face takes us over to:

70

**INT. THE MINERS WELFARE CLUB - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 20:45.** 70

ANTHONY, on acoustic guitar, is playing a kind of Country and Western version of a traditional ballad called "Silver Dagger". A violin briefly joins, played by ELLEN, with her back to the audience. Then she turns and steps into the mike, as we join the scene.

ELLEN  
One more then. This is for mothers  
everywhere.

She doesn't look at JAMES, but he knows who she means and she looks mischievous.

ELLEN (SINGING)(CONT'D)  
Don't sing love songs. You'll wake  
your mother. She's lying there.  
Right by your side.

ANTHONY glances at her and smiles to himself.

ELLEN (SINGING)(CONT'D)  
And in her right hand. A silver  
dagger. She says that I can't be  
your bride.

JAMES' face. Enraptured, troubled. HECTOR glances at him, and back to the stage. It's an enchanting song, and she's singing it brilliantly.

ELLEN (SINGING)(CONT'D)  
"All maids are false". Says your  
mother. "They'll tell you wicked,  
winning lies. And the very next  
evening, they'll love another.  
Leave you alone, to pine and cry".

Her violin comes back to play the refrain. Then it's the last verse and she's pretty much singing it to one person.

ELLEN (SINGING)(CONT'D)  
Go find yourself a rich young  
maiden. And hope that she will be  
your wife. For I have been warned  
and I've decided. To live alone all  
of my life.

(CONTINUED)

The violin ends the song. She's looking straight at JAMES in the ensuing silence. JAMES' face. HECTOR looks at him. She bows. The audience applauds.

GENTLY

You knew Ellen, I assume?

CARETAKER

Watched a grow up. Lovely lass.  
Breaks ya heart, ye knaa.

GENTLY

Was there anything different about  
her that night? Did anything  
unusual happen?

CARETAKER

Why she was nevva usually short of  
a lift.

GENTLY

Sorry?

CARETAKER

A locks the place up and torns the  
lights off, and there she is:  
sittin on the wall on a own.

GENTLY

What did she say?

CARETAKER

Just a lift hadn't torned up.

GENTLY

Did she say who her lift was?

CARETAKER

Nah. She just said "I don't care,  
I'll walk". Like determined, ye  
knaa?

ELLEN kisses the CARETAKER extravagantly.

CARETAKER (V.O.)

And she gives iz this big smacker  
on the lips. She was **happy**!!

ELLEN

If I don't see ye through the week,  
I'll see ye through the winda.

72

CONTINUED:

72

And off she goes, with her violin.

73

**EXT. THE MINERS WELFARE CLUB - DAY 3. 11:28.**

73

GENTLY

Heading which way?

CARETAKER (POINTING)

That way.

GENTLY

Towards Abberwick Hall. With her violin.

74

**INT. POLICE HQ INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY 3. 11:50.**

74

BACCHUS

What were your movements after the concert ended?

ANTHONY

Packed up the instruments. Offered Ellen a lift; she declined because she was-

He breaks off because GG is slipping into the room.

GENTLY

Carry on.

ANTHONY

She was waiting for James to come back and pick her up. Which obviously he did.

GENTLY

Why do you say that?

ANTHONY

Come on, we all know who was driving the car.

GENTLY

But it wasn't James' car that crashed. It was an old Austin.

ANTHONY

Well then that's the car he was driving that night.

BACCHUS

No. He was in his Scimitar earlier - outside the Miners Welfare.

(CONTINUED)

74

CONTINUED:

74

ANTHONY

Well then... for some reason he  
must've come back for her in the  
Austin.

BACCHUS

Why?

ANTHONY seems at a loss to explain it.

GENTLY

What car were you driving, Anthony?

ANTHONY

Just one of the Abberwick cars. I  
don't remember which.

GENTLY

Don't you?

He won't look at them.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Ellen walked to the Hall. I have an  
eye witness. 5 miles. In the dark.  
On her own. She could've taken the  
short cut through the woods. But  
she didn't. Because she didn't want  
to miss James driving back for her.

75

**EXT. ENTRANCE TO ABBERWICK HALL - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 12:55.75**

75

ELLEN reaches the locked gates. She puts her violin through  
the bars, hitches up her skirts and climbs over.

GENTLY (V.O.)

By now it's nearly one in the  
morning and Ellen will soon get  
into the car that will crash and  
drown her. Where were you?

76

**INT. POLICE HQ, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY 3. 11:53.**

76

ANTHONY

I was at home.

GENTLY

Stop wasting our time, please. You  
were about to get a surprise,  
weren't you? Not to mention the  
Countess...

JB has cottoned on.

(CONTINUED)

BACCHUS

Oh. This why he paid to send you to a posh school, Anthony? So's eez wife would have a bit of well-spoken rough? Or was this just your way of sayin "thank you" to Hector?

He'd like to kill JB. But he takes a big breath and lets it out.

ANTHONY

I was with Alethea when Ellen arrived.

BACCHUS

Doin what exactly?

ANTHONY looks him right in the eye.

ANTHONY

We were discussing... the uprising.

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, ALETHEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK 77  
01:05.**

She's cross-legged on her messed-up bed, half-wrapped in a peignoire, smoking the biggest joint in the world. And it's not the first of the night. Facing her, semi-naked, with his acoustic guitar tossed aside, ANTHONY is sharing the joint. Their elbows are on each others' knees. The radio at the end of the bed is quite noisy, covering the Paris riots. Molotov cocktails, burning buildings, breathless reporting. They are both off their faces and having a whale of a time.

ANTHONY (SINGING)

It's the same the ol world ovaaa!  
It's the poooo what gets the  
blayme! It's the rich what gets the  
pleshhha!

BOTH (SINGING)

... ain it all a bleedin shayme?!

That line always creases them, and causes a hiatus in the song while they laugh and she says:

ALETHEA

How's the uprising doing, village boy?

He looks down.

ANTHONY

Oh, it's coming along. Somma that.

She takes a huge drag on the spliff, which she then blows into his mouth. She leaves the spliff with him, and lays back.

ALETHEA

Good. Because I'm ready.

**EXT. LAWN OUTSIDE DAY ROOM, ABBERWICK HALL - NIGHT 1**

**FLASHBACK. 01:07**

In the moonlight, ELLEN positions herself in the middle of the lawn and takes the violin from its case. She taps four times on the corners of the violin with the heel of her bow to set the time. And starts playing "Silver Dagger".

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, ALETHEA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK.01:08.**

He's on top of her, the remains of the joint in an ashtray. A huge explosion on the radio. Sirens too.

ANTHONY

That will be you one day, my lady.  
Your house will burn, baby, burn.

ALETHEA

Oh, reaaaally, I'm so scared. The working classes on the rise, at last seeing through all our ruses to keep them enslaved. Lord, what shall become of me...?

He's inside her now, by the look on her face.

ANTHONY

You'll be up against a wall.

ALETHEA

Oh... will I? Up against a wall.

Very sexy idea to them both.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

And where will you be, village boy?

ANTHONY

I'll be standing right behind you with my gun in my -.

But she's already been distracted by some noise from the garden or something. She turns off the radio and shushes him. She was right. It's a violin. That fucking girl again. She disconnects from him, heads for the window, tying the cord on her peignoir, and throws open the drapes.

There is ELLEN playing her violin on the lawn. He looks too, but doesn't want to be spotted.

ALETHEA

This girl is insane!

ANTHONY (REALIZING WHY SHE'S HERE)

She's come to collect James,  
Alethea. He wants to go to London  
with her. Wants to drop out. Find  
his own space, whatever.

Didn't even bother to hear that stupid notion.

ALETHEA

The police can deal with this. Tell  
her she has ten minutes to get off  
my property!

ANTHONY (PANIC)

I can't talk to her! She-

A beat.

ALETHEA

Oh, she still doesn't know. Well  
it's about time she did.

She heads for the door.

ANTHONY

Alethea. Why not just let him go  
with her? He isn't what you think  
he is. He isn't clever enough.

ALETHEA

Oh, and you **are**, I suppose...?  
Don't get ideas above your station,  
Anthony. Your parents ran a shop.

ANTHONY

He's weak, Alethea. And not very  
bright.

ALETHEA

Have you ever met any Government  
ministers?

ANTHONY

I wrote his essays for him all  
through school and Oxford.

ALETHEA

And were amply rewarded!

ANTHONY

Can't you see what you've turned  
him into? A vain, stupid, lazy-!?

She slaps him. Hard. A beat. We can hear ELLEN singing up at the windows now:

ELLEN (O.S.)(SINGING)

Don't sing love songs. You'll wake  
your mother.

GENTLY

Then what?

This is the most painful bit for ANTHONY.

ANTHONY

One of the things I loved most  
about Ellen was she told you  
exactly what she thought.

ELLEN. ANTHONY comes out. She stops playing and stares at him.

ELLEN

Anthony...?

Then she sees ALETHEA arrive from the day room, still in her peignoire. And she realises the story. It makes her sad.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Oh, Anthony. You're better than  
this.

He's shame-faced. She smiles at him.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I always worried you might **sell** yer  
granny, but I never thought you'd  
**shag** her!

ALETHEA

Make her shut up.

ELLEN

You are a total nightmare, Missis  
Guyzance, do you know that? Does  
Hector know?

ANTHONY nods, even more shame-faced.

(CONTINUED)

81

CONTINUED:

81

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Well, good luck.

She shakes her head in disbelief at them and starts playing again, looking up at the windows.

ALETHEA

Get rid of her.

ANTHONY

I'll take you to the coach station,  
Ellen.

He indicates the Austin parked nearby.

ELLEN

No thanks. I've got a lift.

82

**INT. POLICE HQ, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY 3. 11:58.**

82

BACCHUS

But she did get in that car. Who with, Anthony?

A beat.

ANTHONY

I don't know. I went back upstairs.  
And that was the last I ever saw of Ellen.

83

**EXT. ABBERWICK HALL - DAY 3. 12:30.**

83

GG's car pulls up and they get out. ANTHONY is in the back seat.

GENTLY

Stay there and talk to nobody.

They hear the sound of a motorcycle engine being revved, somewhere behind the house. They make for it.

84

**EXT. ABBERWICK HALL, STABLEYARD - DAY 3. 12:32.**

84

HECTOR is tuning the engine of one of his bikes. He sees them arrive and turns it off. He's affable, as usual. There are other bikes nearby.

HECTOR

I call them my steeds. They're like old friends really.

And GG realises how terribly lonely this man's life has been since his first wife died.

(CONTINUED)

"Lonely enough to become obsessed with a young girl?", he wonders. But JB wants progress. He's to one side, and quite aggressive. For a change.

BACCHUS

Ellen Mallam came here the night  
she died. You've been lying to us.  
Isn't that against the rules for  
barons?

A beat. HECTOR nods. Might as well come clean.

HECTOR

Yes. She came here.

GENTLY

Were you expecting her?

HECTOR

No. I thought I was dreaming.

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, HECTOR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 85  
01:07.**

HECTOR's asleep in the bed he shares with nobody. On his bedside table is a photograph taken with his bride on the day of his first wedding. The violin music drifts up through his open window and he stirs, his eyes opening, his head turning towards the beguiling sound. He gets up, in his pajamas, and goes to the window. He looks down on her.

HECTOR (V.O.)

Shall I tell you something, Chief  
Inspector? If I'd been 40 years  
younger... I wouldn't've hesitated.  
I'd've run off with her myself.

**EXT. ABBERWICK HALL, STABLEYARD - DAY 3. 12:18.**

GG and JB are exchanging a look about that last remark.

GENTLY

You knew why she'd come then?

HECTOR

To rescue James.

**EXT. ABBERWICK HALL, LAWN OUTSIDE DAY ROOM - NIGHT 1  
FLASHBACK. 01:08.**

ELLEN playing and singing.

ELLEN (SINGING)

Don't sing love songs. You'll wake  
your mother. She's lying there.  
Right by your side.

88

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, DAY ROOM - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 01:10.** 88

Drawn by the voice, JAMES has come down to the day room in his pyjamas and dressing gown. He watches her from the shadow of the drapes fringing the large windows.

HECTOR (V.O.)

James wasn't at all what he  
appeared to be.

89

**EXT. ABBERWICK HALL, STABLEYARD - DAY 3. 12:36.**

89

HECTOR is talking specifically to JB.

HECTOR

He was a frightened young man,  
really. Desperately unsure of what  
he wanted of life; desperately  
unsure he could deliver what life  
seemed to be asking of him.

GENTLY

What life was asking of him? Or his  
mother?

HECTOR hears the question and looks at him, but doesn't need to answer.

BACCHUS

And where was she while this was  
going on?

HECTOR's face is sad.

HECTOR

You'll have to ask her that.

BACCHUS

I'm askin you.

GENTLY (ENOUGH)

We've spoken to Anthony Baugh. We  
know where your wife was.

HECTOR nods. JB just thinks GG is going soft.

BACCHUS

Where is your wife now, please?

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

She's asleep. Exhausted. You can appreciate that, I'm sure, Sergeant.

BACCHUS

Somebody is responsible for the death of Ellen Mallam. I think your wife knows who. So could you go and tell her "wakey, wakey", please?

HECTOR goes. GG glances at JB. Does he have to be so offensive?

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

You do it your way, I'll do it mine, OK? I've had enough of this bunch of toffee-nosed hypocrites.

GG stares at him.

GENTLY

OK. Your way if you must.

GG, JB, HECTOR and ANTHONY. Enter ALETHEA looking fragile now. She takes a cigarette from the ornamental box on the table, lights it, and turns to face them. She lets her gaze rest on ANTHONY first, with disdain. He can't hold her gaze.

ALETHEA

You wish to speak with me yet again?

BACCHUS

Ellen Mallam walked here at 1 a.m. the night she died. According to your husband, she came to talk to your son. You were in your bedroom. With Anthony Baugh.

A beat. She gazes at ANTHONY again.

ALETHEA

Goodness, Anthony. You have been talkative.

JB is totally in charge. He thinks he's got this sorted. GG finds him distasteful.

BACCHUS

Yep, he's give we all the gory details.

Her face. HECTOR's face - he's trying to be stoic in the face of this complete humiliation.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

So what happened next? When Ellen tried to take your son away from you?

**EXT. ABBERWICK HALL, LAWN OUTSIDE DAY ROOM - NIGHT 1**

**FLASHBACK. 01:17.**

JAMES finds the courage to step out of the shadows of the drapes. ELLEN sees him and smiles. She stops, lowers her violin, and holds out her hand to him. He steps through the French windows. He hasn't yet seen ALETHEA in the shadows.

ALETHEA

Go back to bed, James. I'm dealing with this.

He sees her and stops walking.

ELLEN

It's not as hard as you think, James. Just take the first step. Come with me. Do you really want all this rubbish for the rest of your life...?

She means the whole place, and the people in it.

ALETHEA

Go inside, James.

ELLEN

Don't let her do this to you. There's an amazin world out here, beautiful man. You'll find different friends, do different things. I promise. I'll help you.

She holds out her hand. He might almost do it, though he's swaying under the influence of the bottle of brandy he has in his hand. But he shakes his head. Can't do it.

JAMES

Just forget about me, Ellen.

ELLEN

No, I won't just forget about you.

ALETHEA

The police will be here shortly, my dear, so I suggest you pack up your fiddle and clear off back where you belong.

ELLEN

Let him choose his own life,  
Alethea.

ALETHEA

He's chosen. Haven't you, James?

ELLEN

James? It's now or never, babe.

JAMES steps forward, unsteadily.

ALETHEA (LIKE TALKING TO A DOG)

Get back in the house! Now!

He hesitates, then turns and stumbles. He drops the brandy bottle, stoops to pick it up and smashes his head through a window pane. HECTOR arrives and starts to help him. ALETHEA turns on ELLEN again.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Now see what you've done!

BACCHUS

Anthony had gone back upstairs,  
yes?

ALETHEA

Yes, another man she had twisted  
around her little finger. Really,  
what was the attraction..?

HECTOR

Alethea...

GENTLY

What happened next?

ALETHEA

She left. Why all this fuss about  
her?

The sharpness and the volume are about as big as HECTOR ever gets:

HECTOR

For goodness sake, Alethea! She was  
an extraordinary creature!

She just glares at him. Silence.

GENTLY

So. "She left". In a car driven by  
whom?

ALETHEA

We have no idea. We were busy with James and his cut head. Perhaps she drove herself - does that never occur to you?

GENTLY

She was in the passenger seat when the car crashed.

A beat. ALETHEA shrugs. HECTOR's eyes bore into her. JB glances at GG. We can't just let them get away with this, for lack of a bit of evidence.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

James was drunk and now bleeding profusely from a head wound. I don't believe he drove the car.

HECTOR

James was barely conscious.

It's a stand off, and ALETHEA knows it.

ALETHEA

Chief Inspector, it seems to me you'd like us to solve this mystery for you - but I'm afraid we can't. And you've obviously failed to come up with any evidence of who was behind the wheel, or you'd have produced it by now.

Silence. GG waits. He knows what comes next. JB glances at him.

BACCHUS

Well that's where you're wrong.

GENTLY (QUIETLY)

Sergeant...

BACCHUS (QUIETLY)

No, no, they're not gettin away with this. (To them:) We have a blood sample.

GG shakes his head at him.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)

Taken from the crashed car. Quite rare. A2B. James's blood type. But also... presumably one of yours as well.

He looks at them. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. ALETHEA not liking all this.

(CONTINUED)

ALETHEA

Blood types...?

BACCHUS

It's quite simple. James was A2B,  
so one of his parents must be.  
So. What are you?

ALETHEA

"O".

JB nods. Disappointing. But that leaves the obvious.

BACCHUS

Oh. What about you?

HECTOR thinks. GG looks at him.

HECTOR

It's my blood. I drove the car.  
Somebody had to. James was  
incapable. My wife... was under the  
influence.. So I took the nearest  
car and drove Ellen home for her  
luggage. Except we didn't get  
there. I drove too fast. I lost  
control of the car on a bend. I  
lost consciousness for a while.  
When I came to, we were upside down  
in the river. Ellen was trapped. I  
tried to free her. The water was  
rising. I kicked open my door and  
scrambled out. God help me, I tried  
to save her. But I couldn't free  
her foot. I talked to her. Held her  
hand. Till the water covered her  
and she died...

Silence. They all find this harrowing. Even ALETHEA has to  
swallow hard. ANTHONY is crying softly.

BACCHUS

You could've just told us all of  
this at the beginnin.

HECTOR glances at his wife and ANTHONY.

HECTOR

And have all of this held up to  
public scrutiny? My life -our lives-  
a laughing stock? There go the  
aristocracy again... mad,  
degenerate... sexually  
incontinent... no longer fit to  
lead...

Silence. JB has no sympathy. GG looks as if he has.

BACCHUS

Well. Who wants to be "led" by people who can leave a dead girl out in a drowned car all night...? You're under arrest.

GENTLY

Just a second. He's under arrest when I say so. Your blood type is "B", Hector. I checked with the hospital.

BACCHUS

Eh?

GENTLY

Basic police work, Sergeant.

ALETHEA onto it straightaway.

ALETHEA

Then how could there be an A2B blood stain in the car?

All eyes on JB.

GENTLY

Yes. How could there be, Sergeant?

A beat.

BACCHUS

Musta been... some sort of mistake.

GENTLY

A very serious mistake I think.

Will JB show shame and be quiet now? No.

BACCHUS

Like Hector thinking James was his son.

A beat.

HECTOR

I was never under that misapprehension, Sergeant.

GG is really sorry for him. ALETHEA helps herself to a cigarette.

GENTLY

We have no evidence except your confession. Do you wish to retract it?

HECTOR

No. Someone should pay. I was brought up to honour a debt.

Silence. She's looking at him.

ALETHEA

You're a fool, Hector.

HECTOR

Perhaps so. But I can live with being a fool, Alethea. What I wouldn't be able to live with, however, was knowing that I'd as good as killed my own son.

That gets her right in the solar plexus.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

How could the poor chap live, after all you'd done to him?

ALETHEA

No, no... it was a silly accident..

HECTOR

I saw it, Alethea. I saw it.

She's shocked.

ALETHEA

No. Hector... no. Please.

ALETHEA (V.O.)

Please. Please. Darling. Please.

ALETHEA

Hector...? Please...?

ALETHEA (V.O.)

Please. James. Please.

ALETHEA is on her knees in supplication.

ALETHEA

I'm begging you. Sweetheart.  
 Please. Don't. Don't.

Now we see JAMES twenty feet away with the 12 bore pointed at his chin. There's a brandy bottle beside him on the lawn. She is in great distress, but trying to gently talk him round. But he gets pleasure from hurting her. And this is what will hurt her the most.

JAMES

Why not, Mummy?

ALETHEA

I can give you twenty good reasons, my precious, a hundred. Because you are the most precious creature in all the world.

JAMES

I'll count to ten. One.

She almost gives way to tears and despair, but:

ALETHEA

No, no, please. James. Because you are brilliant.

JAMES

Two.

ALETHEA

Darling, let's go inside and talk. This is **us**. We can talk any problem away.

JAMES

Three.

ALETHEA

Because I love you with every fibre of my being.

JAMES

Four.

ALETHEA

What if I do this? What if I crawl to you?

She crawls slowly across the lawn. He laughs. We see HECTOR watching from the shadows at the edge of the lawn, resigned to what he knows must happen.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Yes, laugh at me, but don't destroy yourself. Not after all we've done together.

JAMES

What've **I** ever done?

ALETHEA

So much - and so very much more to come. The world is waiting for you.

JAMES

Ah. The world. Five, six.

ALETHEA

Please. Please, please, please.  
James, let me hold you, let me take  
all the pain away.

She kneels up and opens her arms to him. She's only eight feet away now.

JAMES

She was the only real friend I've ever had, because she didn't want anything from me. She only wanted to help me. So tell me, Mummy, why did she have to die...?

ALETHEA

Oh, it's so, so hard to lose what's precious. Which is why you mustn't do this.

JAMES (SMILING)

Because it'll hurt you?

ALETHEA

Because the world needs you. You know that, James. You've always known that. We've always said that, haven't we? Since you were a little boy...

JAMES

You've always said it. I just wanted... a life to live.

He no longer seems desperate. Just sad. He lays down the 12 bore on the lawn. He takes a swig from the brandy bottle.

ALETHEA

Darling. You don't need that. You don't need anything. You are the master of your own destiny. And one day: of all our destinies. Come here.

She thinks she's won. She stands and walks slowly towards him.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

My darling son. My brave, brave boy.

JAMES

She was right about you. You are a nightmare.

ALETHEA

James?

She stops walking. A moment of stillness. He reaches into his pocket. He pulls out the silver handled letter opener.

ALETHEA (CONT'D)

Oh, no...

JAMES

Seven, eight, nine, ten, Mummy.

He stabs himself in the neck. Her face, with his blood splattered across it. HECTOR in the shadows. He stays where he is.

Their faces. ALETHEA's is like a mask of pain. No pretending anymore. Silence.

GENTLY

Stand up, would you, please?

HECTOR stands up.

GENTLY (CONT'D)

Hector Blackstone, I'm charging you with causing death by dangerous driving and attempting to pervert the course of justice. You do not need to say anything but anything you do say may be used in evidence. Do you understand?

HECTOR

Perfectly, thank you.

GENTLY

Is there anything?

HECTOR

Yes.

ALETHEA starts to head for the door.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

Oh, no, I'd like you to hear it too, Alethea.

She stops and turns, reluctantly. HECTOR looks her right in the eye.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR (CONT'D)

I want you to know exactly what happened, because I will never tell a court.

His eyes take us over to:

95

**I/E. THE CAR TRAVELLING ALONG COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT 1**

95

**FLASHBACK. 01:30.**

ELLEN

Hector. Stop for a minute. I want to talk to you.

The Austin pulls into a lay-by. Fields all around. The moon shining.

96

**I/E. IN THE CAR - NIGHT 1**

96

**FLASHBACK. 01:32.**

She looks at him.

ELLEN

Hector... When did you stop breathin...?

A beat. He knows exactly what she means, but:

HECTOR

As you get older, Ellen, things like one's personal happiness don't really matter quite so-

ELLEN

No, no, no. Sorry, I don't want to hear anything about "duty" and all that.

He looks at her and is engulfed by sadness.

HECTOR

My life has been so lonely, Ellen. For so long.

ELLEN

Let's go for a walk.

He's taken aback.

HECTOR

But-

ELLEN

There's bags of time.

She's already getting out of the car.

97

**EXT. A HILLSIDE - NIGHT 1 FLASHBACK. 01.40**

97

They are looking out at the lunar landscape. She is sitting. He has his head resting in her lap. She is singing to him.

ELLEN (SINGING)

My Daddy he's a handsome devil.  
He's got a chain five miles long.  
And on every link a heart does  
dangle of another maid he's loved  
and wronged.

He's smiling and relaxed. He opens his eyes to find her smiling radiantly.

HECTOR

What are you thinking of? Or is it  
"who" . . . ?

She blushes. She nods.

ELLEN

I've never ever been so happy in  
all my life.

HECTOR

Is he waiting for you in London?

She nods. Then she looks him right in the eye.

ELLEN

It can happen for you as well,  
Hector. I want you to believe that.  
Can you?

A beat.

HECTOR

I could try to believe it.

ELLEN

Good. When you get home. Start  
making changes. OK? Promise?

HECTOR (LYING)

I promise.

She looks at her watch and gasps.

ELLEN

Look at the time!

They get up. She kisses him. They run laughing towards the car.

98

**INT. ABBERWICK HALL, DAY ROOM - DAY 3. 12.55**

98

ALETHEA has become transfixed by him.

HECTOR

It's perhaps hard for you to understand what those few minutes meant to me. Just to be touched by a beautiful young woman. It was only when Ellen kissed me that I realised the truth of what she'd said. I **had** stopped breathing. I had stopped breathing the day Bonny died.

Silence. ALETHEA walks out, slowly.

HECTOR (CONT'D)

A man can drown in air if he has no-one to breathe for. Can you possibly understand that, Inspector Gently?

Silence. GG's face.

GENTLY

Yes.

Silence.

HECTOR

We were late. I wanted Ellen to get to London to meet the man she'd fallen in love with. I drove too fast.

His face.

98A

**INT. POLICE HQ, CELLS - NIGHT 3. 19:00**

98A

HECTOR, in his stocking feet, is handing over his watch, his braces and his tie to the CUSTODY SERGEANT. Then he walks through the door into the tiny cell. JB and GG watch him. The door closes on him.

99

**INT. POLICE HQ, GENTLY'S AND BACCHUS' OFFICE - NIGHT 3. 19:30.**

99

Whiskies. And cigarettes. And some unpacking of minds to do.

BACCHUS

He'll get off. His posh lawyer'll say he was in shock.

(CONTINUED)

GENTLY

Which he was. He held her hand till she died, John. Then he walked home to tell his wife and his wife's young boyfriend what had happened.

Silence. JB shakes his head at it all.

BACCHUS

I don't understand these people. It's like The Wizard of Oz, isn't it? Everybody thinkin there's some amazing brains running the place, but when you look behind the curtain, it's just some weird Hurray Henry who used to be in the Bullingdon Club. England, eh? You know: David Frost and Private Eye and them have pulled the curtain aside and we can all see the.. you know: the pyramid.

GENTLY(WHAT THE FUCK'S HE ON ABOUT  
NOW)

What pyramid's this?

BACCHUS

The pyramid with Queenie at the top. Serried ranks of landowners, all went to public school together, all married each other's sisters, so the kids've all got webbed feet, and none of them's got a proper job. The game's up, though. Cos once you start laughin at the high-ups - they lose their power.

GENTLY

Right. Well I wouldn't worry too much on their behalf. It may be all over for the toffs, but they've trained the Anthony Baughs of this world to carry on the good fight.

ANTHONY is in front of a triptych mirror, practising.

ANTHONY

Hi. I'm Anthony. I think... you know.. People like me cos I'm a straight sorta guy... that's why people trust me..

Again.

100

CONTINUED:

100

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Hi. Call me Tony. Ok, why **should**  
you vote for me?

101

**INT. POLICE HQ, GENTLY'S AND BACCHUS' OFFICE - NIGHT 3. 101  
19:35.**

Silence. JB knows what GG's waiting for. And there's no putting it off any longer.

BACCHUS

All right. The blood thing was a mistake. But it got us a confession. So: bingo.

GENTLY

No. Not bingo.

BACCHUS

I wouldn't've **had** to make it up if he'd just coughed in the first place. What were the lies all about?

GENTLY

Honour, I think. Dignity. Memory.

BACCHUS (NO IDEA WHAT HE'S ON ABOUT)

Well, like I said: I don't understand these people.

GENTLY

Just out of interest: what sort of people **do** you think should run the country?

A beat. He thinks.

BACCHUS

People like me.

GG nods. He thought so.

GENTLY

Give me one good reason why I shouldn't put you on report.

BACCHUS

Because... because I promise... I promise that I have learned a lesson today... and I will never.. Ever do that again. Ever.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED:

101

GENTLY  
On your honour?

He holds up his glass to chink.

BACCHUS  
On my absolute honour.

We see, but GG doesn't, that JB has his fingers crossed. He chinks glasses. They smile. He's forgiven.

GENTLY  
That was a solemn promise.

BACCHUS  
Cross me heart and hope to..

He crosses his heart and cuts his throat. Then realises.

BACCHUS (CONT'D)  
Oh. Sorry. That was a bit...

He starts to chuckle. Ellen's "Matty Groves" starts up as we play out. JB chuckling and GG shaking his head in disbelief. And drinking. And smoking. Time to go. Her voice plays us out.

102 OMITTED

102

103 OMITTED**s**

103