

MRS WILSON

Inspired by the true story of
Alison and Alexander Wilson

EPISODE TWO

Shooting Script

By Anna Symon
Directed by Richard Laxton

THIS SCRIPT IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

PLEASE DO NOT DISCUSS OR DISSEMINATE THE CONTENTS OF THIS SCRIPT WITH
ANYONE OUTSIDE THE PRODUCTION. THE SENDING OF THIS SCRIPT DOES NOT
CONSTITUTE AN OFFER FOR ANY PART IN IT.



Snowed-In
Productions

1 **EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE, 14TH JULY 1963 - DAY**

1

Morning sun lights the 1930s semis of Ealing. A newspaper boy does his rounds. Curtains are opening - except in Alison's house. Here, the curtains are still closed.

We start to hear the electric WHIRR of the slide projector.

2 **INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, BEDROOM, 14TH JULY 1963 - DAY**

2

The room looks like a research lair:

Alec's twenty novels are spread out on the bed in various stages of being read and annotated. We move across titles - "CONFESIONS OF A SCOUNDREL", "DOUBLE MASQUERADE" - to find an open book. A sentence has been underlined in red:

'Wallace turned to his Indian handler and asked: "Can you love two women at the same time?"'

We move on - past a bright white wall [no slide in the running projector] to look out the open door to the landing -

There, we can see Alison - or at least her bare legs - on the rungs of a ladder up to the attic.

She steps down clutching a box file and comes back into the bedroom. We now see she's wearing a cream petticoat and she looks absolutely exhausted.

The file is marked INDIA. She plonks it on the bed, opens it, pulls out a box of slides, and slots them into the projector.

Click: It's Alec, 30s, in India. He's at his typewriter, caught unawares, moody, by the light of a kerosene lamp.

Click: A paternal Alec with a couple of Indian servants.

Click: Alec at a cocktail party in the Governor's residence.

Brilliant white. The end of the slides?

Alison checks, clicking on. Nothing. Nothing. Then -

Click: A WOMAN in plus fours [Dorothy] on the verandah of a bungalow, holding a tiger skin. She stares at camera, amused.

Alison stares at the slide, recognising her. It's the woman from the funeral.

Heart pounding, Alison reaches into the carousel and pulls out the slide. Marked on the white border: Dorothy.

A moment. Alison clicks again.

Dorothy stands, dressed as Cleopatra.

Alison walks up to the wall so the image laps right over her, engulfs her. Colour drains from her face.

Alison stares at her: a magnified imposter in her bedroom.

GORDON (O.S.)

Mum?

Alison flicks her head round. Gordon stands in the doorway.

He sees Dorothy on the wall.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Blimey. Who's she?

Alison tries to feign nonchalance, walking to the door.

ALISON

An actress by the looks of things.

Gordon peers closer -

GORDON

Is that in India? Was she a friend
of Dad's?

ALISON

Look - I'll be down in a minute -

Alison starts to close the door -

GORDON

Mum? What are you doing?

Alison ignores him and closes the door.

ALISON

I said I'll be down in a minute -

GORDON (O.S.)

I'm leaving this afternoon - if
you're interested -

Alison isn't listening. She stares at Dorothy before pushing the carousel off the bed, ripping its plug out of the socket.

Dorothy disappears - and the room is plunged into dark.

3 **INT. COLEMAN'S FLAT, 14TH JULY 1963 - DAY**

3

CRACK CRACK. Nicotine-stained, rheumatic fingers crack open an egg on the side of a grease-encrusted cooker. The egg is dropped into a pan swimming in hot fat.

Coleman is making breakfast. She smokes at the same time.

Alison stands by the window. She's pale, with deep shadows under her eyes.

Coleman inhales sharply and turns to assess Alison.

COLEMAN
You've stopped eating.

ALISON
I just don't want an egg. Thank you.

Coleman adds bread to the pan. It frazzles in the dripping.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Who's Dorothy? - she came to the funeral -

COLEMAN
You'll have to do better than that.

ALISON
I don't know her surname - an actress maybe - someone Alec -

COLEMAN
You want a list of all the women he went to bed with?

A moment. Alison pushes on.

ALISON
An Indian man turned up at the burial, said he was Alec's friend - before the war.

An almost imperceptible flicker of alarm crosses Coleman's face. Alison doesn't see this.

COLEMAN
His handler in Lahore - Shahbaz Karim. What did he want?

ALISON
He said I should talk to you -

COLEMAN

Right.

ALISON

'There are things I don't know about' - his work in the war - his relationship with this Dorothy -

Alison looks over at Coleman, vulnerable.

ALISON (CONT'D)

But before he met me, he was with Gladys - so - so that's just not possible, is it?

Coleman spoons hot fat over her egg. Alison watches her.

COLEMAN

You know as well as I do that we gave our agents new identities if we needed to. Created wives for them, if necessary.

Alison brightens up.

ALISON

You think it was a marriage of convenience - an arrangement. While Alec was working out in India.

Coleman tips the fried egg and bread on to a plate. She rains salt down on it and looks up at Alison.

COLEMAN

It could have been.

ALISON

But can you say for sure?

Coleman has a mouthful, and looks up.

COLEMAN

You married, had two healthy sons, why isn't that enough for you?

ALISON

I need to know who he was.

COLEMAN

You know all you need to know.

Coleman continues to eat. Alison, increasingly frustrated.

ALISON

You met every week - he confided in
you - what did you talk about?

COLEMAN

You signed the Official Secrets
Act. You know I can't disclose
that.

ALISON

Just tell me - please - what else
did he lie about?

Coleman pushes aside her plate and rises.

COLEMAN

One son in the Navy - and the other
off to University -

ALISON

What are you saying?

COLEMAN

Don't jeopardise their futures -

Alison looks at her in shock. Coleman looks back at her,
deadly serious.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

Stop digging, Alison.

Alison turns away.

4

EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE, 14TH JULY 1963 - DAY

4

Alison hurries home, looking at her watch, aware that she's
been out for some time.

5

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, 14TH JULY 1963 - DAY

5

Alison walks in without taking her jacket off.

Her eyes flick from Gordon, typing, to Nigel, sitting on the arm of his chair, holding a framed PHOTO of a beaming Alison picnicking at Blakefield. [The large house in the background, the wounded soldiers in the garden.]

ALISON

Hello - what are you up to?

Gordon looks up, cigarette in mouth, looking just like Alec. A wariness in his expression now. Tension between them.

GORDON

We didn't know where you'd gone.

ALISON

Well, I'm back now -

Alison takes the photo.

ALISON (CONT'D)

What are you doing with this?

GORDON

Dad always said that if something happened to him I should step up.

He looks at Alison, challenging her to deny him this role. She nods - go on -

GORDON (CONT'D)

I've written to the government -

ALISON

What?

Alison looks at him, concerned, thinking about Coleman's warning.

GORDON

The Ministry of Works - asking them to return Blakefield.

ALISON

But Dad's house was requisitioned during the war - you know that -

GORDON

The war ended eighteen years ago - and yet here we are still -

He gestures around their house.

ALISON

It's tied up in a legal wrangle -
Dad's been writing for years - I
honestly think -

NIGEL

We think Dad was too patient. All
these years we've talked about it.

Alison looks at her sons, weighing it all up. She wants the answer, but she has to protect her sons.

ALISON

It would be better coming from me -
I'll sign the letter.

(Beat)

You should get going, shouldn't
you?

Gordon nods and rises, taking the letter out of the typewriter and handing it to Alison. She signs it with the pen Alec gave her.

Alison hangs the photo of Blakefield back on the wall - she looks at it -

ALEC (V.O.)

Close your eyes - Alison -

6

EXT. BLAKEFIELD HALL, DRIVE / INT. ALEC'S CAR, 3RD MAY 1941 6-DAY

Alec and Alison pull up. Alison has her hands over her eyes. They're both delightfully happy. A sense of real fun.

ALEC

Now - open -

Alison looks up at the house, she's clearly impressed.

ALISON

It's all right, I suppose.

He grins and gets out, opens her car door. They walk to the house together.

ALEC

Right - let's see if Nanny B's in -
I can't wait to introduce you -

ALISON

Your old nanny?

ALEC

They took her on as a matron -
until the war's over -

NURSE ANDREWS comes out, pushing a soldier in a wheelchair.

ALEC (CONT'D)

(calling to Nurse Andrews)
Morning nurse - is Matron in? I
called ahead

NURSE ANDREWS

She apologises, Major Wilson, but
she's had to pop into town.

Nurse Andrews Walks on leaving the pair alone.

ALEC

How about a picnic?

She nods. Alec takes her hand and they walk to the boot of
the car. Alison is thoughtful, there's something preying on
her mind.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Is something the matter?

Alison looks down.

ALISON

I'm late, Alec - I'm pregnant.

A flash of shock crosses Alec's face before he smothers it.

ALEC

But that's wonderful news - unless
you can't bear to spend the rest of
your life with me?

Alison stops walking, dumbstruck. Has she heard correctly?

ALEC (CONT'D)

Alison, I'm asking you to marry me.

Alison's face blossoms. She is consumed with joy.

Alison hugs Gordon really tightly, wanting to hold on to him,
filled with love. A taxi idles in the street.

ALISON
Safe journey, look after yourself.

He pulls away, thoughtful.

GORDON
Things don't seem to add up -
Blakefield - Dad's job - those
strange cousins at the funeral -

ALISON
Gordon -

GORDON
I'm going to make some calls - look
into Dad's affairs -

ALISON
No. Don't.

GORDON
What? Why?

ALISON
I've got the time - I'll do it.

Alison looks at her watch. She turns and calls inside.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Nigel. Get a wiggle on. He's got a
train to catch -

GORDON
Mum?

Nigel comes out with a packed lunch for Gordon.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Thanks Nigel -

Gordon looks at Alison, turns so Nigel can't hear.

GORDON (CONT'D)
(lowering his voice)
I don't know what you're up to, but
don't forget about Nigel, will you?

Alison nods, struck with guilt.

Alison shuts the front door. She and Nigel stand in the hall.

ALISON

Why don't we get away for a few days? - get some sun down on the coast -

NIGEL

I'm going camping with my friends - once I've heard from Oxford.

ALISON

Oh - oh right.

Relief on both sides.

ALISON (CONT'D)

When will you hear?

NIGEL

Any day now - fingers crossed -

Nigel turns, looking very nervous all of a sudden.

ALISON

You'll be fine, Nigel. They'd be mad to turn you down -

Nigel smiles, grateful, and leaves to go upstairs.

She stands there, alone, with her thoughts and memories.

9

EXT. HENDON CENTRAL TUBE STATION, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY 9

Alison emerges from the large art deco tube station.

There's a red post box in front of her. She opens her handbag and drops in the letter to the Ministry of Works.

She turns right. She knows exactly where she's going.

10

EXT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY

10

Alison arrives outside a mansion block. She rings: BASEMENT FLAT. Waits. No answer.

She thinks, then rings: TOP FLAT. It's picked up: a crackle.

ALISON

Hello - I used to live here - I'm trying to track down the landlord.

The door is buzzed.

11

INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, LANDING / STAIRCASE, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY 11

Alison looks up the bannisters, memories flooding over her. The grotty staircase spirals up five floors above her.

She walks up, her black patent court shoes incongruous on the threadbare carpet. She arrives at the attic door. She looks around, nervous, before knocking.

Alison waits. Footsteps on lino. Laboured breathing.

The door opens to reveal a skinny man, 80s. Clumps of dandruff on his jacket. They recognise each other straight away. Alison is surprised to see him there.

LANDLORD

You owe me rent, Mrs Wilson.

12

INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY 12

Alison looks around, memories washing over her.

We recognise it as Alec's flat in the eaves but it's a little down-at-heel now, the flat of an elderly man. A clutch of asthma inhalers.

LANDLORD

I moved up a few years back. The damp in the basement - bad for my chest -

ALISON

Yes - I see -

But she isn't really listening. She's heading for the window - she walks past a bookshelf under the eaves. A few of Alec's books are on it from the Wallace series.

Alison clocks the books. The landlord watches her, amused.

LANDLORD

I've read them all - he could spin
a good yarn, your Alec.

Alison walks on, to the window. She looks out.

13 **EXT / INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, 30TH JUNE 1942 - DAY** 13

In the street, in the shadows, Alec argues furiously with an unseen person.

We pull back to reveal Alison is at the window, baby Gordon in her arms. She's craning her neck to see the hidden person.

Now, Alec is handing money over. The figure walks away - and as she does so - we can see that it's the same woman again: Dorothy.

14 **INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY** 14

Alison turns back into the room, pale, sick. Her memory confirmed.

ALISON

I'm trying to find someone - a colleague of Alec's - she used to come here.

The landlord goes to sit at a desk. It's crowded with rent books, a petty cash tin, bottles of pills. A few half-drunk glasses of orange squash.

He pulls up a second chair. And pats it. A bit creepy.

Alison sits down and gets the slide of Dorothy out of her bag. She hands it over and he views it under the light of his angle-poise lamp.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Do you remember her? Did you ever see her?

He takes his time, then looks back at Alison, enjoying this.

LANDLORD

And my rent?

He stares at her, the implication is clear.

ALISON

How much do you want?

LANDLORD

Ten shillings - and I'll let it go.

Alison gets out the money. He puts the money in a battered
petty cash tin and writes her a receipt, taking his time.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)

So you want to know about Dorothy?

Alison is taken aback.

ALISON

You knew her?

LANDLORD

She lived here during the war.

ALISON

No - no - that was me - I lived
here during the war.

He looks at her as if she is completely dense.

LANDLORD

First her - then you -

Alison looks back at him, appalled.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)

She and Alec moved in just before
the War - back from India.

ALISON

Both of them? Together?

LANDLORD

Her. Alec. And the little boy.
Brown as berries, they were.

ALISON

A child?

He reaches for his rent books. Flicks back through the years.

LANDLORD

May 1939. Alec and Dorothy Wilson.
Michael, aged 6.

[The rent book shows a clipping with a forwarding address:
64, Crown Street, Wensleydale, Yorks.]

LANDLORD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
- that was her house - there -

Alison stares at the book. She can't take it in: it's too painful. Colour drains from her face.

The landlord looks at her, perhaps a touch of sympathy now. Alison's eyes are now darting anxiously across his rent book.

ALISON
But where am I? I moved in in '40.
I'm not marked - I'm not even here -

LANDLORD
Alec didn't tell me about you. You just came down one day with the rent money, baby on your arm. Gordon, always crying, wasn't he?

Alison looks up - a chink of light revealing itself to her -

ALISON
But he doesn't have Alec's name.

The landlord watches her, sipping from his orange squash.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Maybe he was Dorothy's son - and they just lived here as colleagues?

LANDLORD
Could be - they had terrible rows. She gave as good as she got. Strong lady, really took him on.

Alison stares at the landlord.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)
How is dear, old Alec anyway?

ALISON
He's dead.

He slides his hand over hers. In shock, she doesn't resist.

14a INT. TUBE TRAIN, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY

14a

Alison on the tube home.

15

EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY

15

Alison arrives home, thoughtful, emotions still just about contained under the surface. She puts the key in her door.

Olive steps out from her own house -

OLIVE

How are you, Alison?

Alison nods, tries to smile politely, but the door's open now and she's in focused mode - she turns and walks in -

16 OMITTED

16

17 EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE, GARDEN, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY

17

WHACK. WHACK. Alison has the hall carpet (a runner) pegged up on the washing line. She brutally beats it with a stiff brush. Dust clouds spew out over her and the garden.

It's a boiling hot day and Alison sweats profusely as she works, teeth clenched, determined.

NIGEL

Mum?

ALISON

Hmm.

NIGEL

Didn't you see the letter?

ALISON

What letter?

An incredulous Nigel looks at her - heads back inside. Alison hurries in after him.

18 OMITTED

18

19

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, 15TH JULY 1963 - DAY 19

Alison has Nigel's letter from Oxford in her hand.

ALISON

(Reading letter)

An offer to read history at St
Catherine's College, Oxford.

Alison looks up at Nigel who is packing his rucksack.

ALISON (CONT'D)

I'm over the moon, I really am.

Nigel puts his rucksack on, thinking about this.

ALISON (CONT'D)

When are you back?

NIGEL

I just told you - Monday -

Nigel turns to leave. At the door, he turns, worried.

NIGEL (CONT'D)

You will be OK on your own?

ALISON

Of course I will - have a good
time.

NIGEL

What will you do?

ALISON

Plenty to get on with - have you
seen the state of the windows?

19A

OMITTED

19A

20

INT / EXT. TRAIN, 18TH JULY 1963 - DAY 20

Alison looks out of the window.

The steam train whistles.

TRAIN ANNOUNCEMENT

Our next station will be
Wensleydale. Wensleydale in five
minutes.

Alison applies a crimson lipstick.

As she replaces her lipstick in her handbag, we see that Alec's rosary is in there. She touches it briefly - snaps shut her bag -

21

EXT. WENSLEYDALE, STEEP COBBLED STREET, 18TH JULY 1963 - DAY

The sun lights up the small market town of Wensleydale. It's a huge contrast to suburban Ealing with its 1930s semis. Here, we see tight clusters of grey stone houses and cobbled streets. Beyond, the rolling hills of Yorkshire.

The midday sun beats down on Alison as she walks up the extremely steep road, full of purpose. Her court shoes stumble a bit over the cobbles. No matter.

Alison gets to the top, to the last house. Beyond it, verdant hills. It's stunning. Alison is out of breath and sweating. She wipes her head with a hankie.

Alison looks at the house, struck with fear. Should she go through with this?

She knocks.

The door is opened by Dorothy [aged 50]. She wears a yellow blouse and denim slacks. Barefoot, with painted toes.

Bohemian, a real contrast to Alison in her smart suit and court shoes. Dorothy smiles broadly until she sees Alison.

It mirrors the moment that Gladys knocked on Alison's door except now Alison is the supplicant.

Alison stares at Dorothy. Dorothy says nothing.

ALISON

I'm Mrs -

DOROTHY

I know who you are.

Dorothy looks at her, not hostile but hardly welcoming.

ALISON

I - wanted - want -

DOROTHY

Sorry but I've got absolutely
nothing to say to you.

Dorothy starts to shut the door.

ALISON

Don't, please - I've come up from
London. I need to talk to you.

DOROTHY

Do you now?

Dorothy almost seems to be laughing at Alison. Alison
stiffens, firmer now.

ALISON

You turned up uninvited to my
husband's funeral. The least you
can do is answer my questions.

Dorothy looks at her watch.

DOROTHY

My son is coming over later.

ALISON

We can talk out here if you want.

Dorothy looks back at her, worried by this.

She reluctantly opens the door.

22 **INT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, 18TH JULY 1963 - DAY 22**

Alison's eyes flick anxiously around the room. The house is
neat, neutral. No trace of Alec. Thank God.

There are plenty of photos of a boy / young man [Mike].

Alison is drawn to one: Mike, about eight, is in school
uniform. He looks serious, with a gas mask round his neck.
There are several others of him as a teen and young man.

Dorothy comes in with a glass of water for Alison. Alison
feels caught in the act of snooping.

ALISON

I was expecting to see photos of
your plays -

DOROTHY

Oh no, I gave up acting a long time ago.

It seems to carry some weight, bitterness even.

ALISON

I see.

DOROTHY

Do you?

Dorothy smiles, looks at her watch. She's calm, in control.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

What do you want to know?

ALISON

Did the service pair you up with Alec out in India?

Dorothy looks at Alison trying to work this out.

DOROTHY

I guess you've talked to Karim -

ALISON

No, not really -

DOROTHY

Well, don't - drinking his life away at the Empire Club -

ALISON

Was he your handler too?

Dorothy smiles, shakes her head: you've got this all wrong.

ALISON (CONT'D)

You were in the service, though.

DOROTHY

I don't know what you've been told, but there's no great mystery - I was an actress, in rep, living in Lahore -

ALISON

You're not allowed to confirm it - to reveal your status to me -

DOROTHY

Listen, I wasn't a spy, OK?

Alison digests this.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Alec came to see me in a play. I
was young, naive. We ended up in
bed. A few months later we got
married in Lahore Cathedral.

ALISON
So it definitely wasn't a
professional relationship?

Dorothy can't help laughing.

DOROTHY
No, I wouldn't call it that.

A moment. Alison deals with this.

Dorothy watches her, rises to her feet.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Anything else?

Alison psychs herself up.

ALISON
Is Mike Alec's son?

Dorothy looks at Alison, incredulous.

DOROTHY
Of course he is.

Alison's face falls, she's totally discombobulated.

A moment.

Alison stares at Dorothy, thinking it through, her upset
turning to bitter anger.

ALISON
So Alec visited, did he? Sent cards
too, I expect - never missed a
birthday - a wonderful father for
dear -

DOROTHY
(snapping)
I'm not talking about Mike. If
that's what you're after, you'd
better leave.

Alison just sits there, looking down, totally motionless.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
I said you'd better bloody leave -

A moment. But Alison won't leave. She can't.

She looks up at Dorothy, vulnerable, open-hearted.

ALISON
Did he lie to you?

Alison's need to know is so strong. Dorothy softens - she lights a cigarette.

DOROTHY
No - not back then, when we first met - he seemed honest, kind - even looking out for his sister back home -

ALISON
Which sister?

DOROTHY
Gladys.

ALISON
Gladys? His sister?

Alison stares: Dorothy thinks Gladys was Alec's sister.

DOROTHY
Her husband had just died - so she used to write to Alec, asking for money - we rowed about that - because we weren't exactly rolling in it -

Alison looks at her, full of her own superior knowledge, unsure what to do with it. She pales -

ALISON
Mrs - I don't even know what to call you -

DOROTHY
Dorothy?

ALISON
Dorothy - there's things I should [tell you] -

DOROTHY
What?

ALISON
About your marriage.

Dorothy stubs out her cigarette, decisive.

DOROTHY
We were happy, Alison. In India, before we came home, before he met you, we were just a normal, happy family -

ALISON
That's the point - you weren't -

DOROTHY
Did he say that I was hard work? That he wasn't happy? That he didn't love me?

Alison looks back at Dorothy. A long moment.

ALISON
He didn't talk about you at all.

Dorothy stares at Alison, deeply hurt.

DOROTHY
Well, he told me all about you - Miss McKelvie, the new secretary - out of her depth, struggling with the workload -

Alison stares back at Dorothy, fighting tears.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Coleman soon whipped you into shape - and you learned fast - yes, I knew all about you - your first few weeks at the listening service -

ALISON
(whispered)
You were still together then.

A moment. Dorothy riven with bitterness -

DOROTHY
And then he took you out to lunch - at the Author's Club -

ALISON
We bumped into each other -

Dorothy almost laughs with incredulity.

DOROTHY

Bumped into each other? You think
it was a coincidence?

ALISON

I don't know -

DOROTHY

I was watching him, Alison.

ALISON

Spying on him?

DOROTHY

Yes. Following him to work, waiting
for him at lunchtime, tracking his
every move -

23

EXT. SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, BROADWAY, 30TH APRIL 1940 - DAY 23

A watchful Dorothy stands in an alley opposite the entrance to SIS. Her manner is professional, discreet.

Alec and Alison come out. He is chivalrous, opening the door for her, she is awkward and gauche. They turn left, towards the Author's Club next door -

Heavy-hearted, Dorothy starts to follow them.

24

INT. AUTHOR'S CLUB, LADIES DINING ROOM, 30TH APRIL 1940 - DAY 24

NB THIS IS 1/31 FROM DOROTHY'S POV

Dorothy sits on her own, hidden in a banquette, watching:

A very cheerful Alec, filling up Alison's glass. She is nervous, flushed. They talk. He grins.

Alison spills champagne down her front. She blushes bright red - rises to her feet.

Dorothy discreetly rises, follows Alison.

25

INT. AUTHOR'S CLUB, POWDER ROOM, 30TH APRIL 1940 - DAY 25

NB THIS IS 1/32 FROM DOROTHY'S POV

Dorothy walks in and watches Alison turn on the tap and scrub at her top. She splashes water on her flaming red face.

DOROTHY
Are you all right?

ALISON
Just made a fool of myself - in
front of my boss.

Dorothy throws her a quizzical, slightly leading look.

ALISON (CONT'D)
No, nothing like that - just a
clumsy idiot - spilled my drink.

Dorothy nods and disappears into the cubicle. We go with her -

26 **INT. AUTHOR'S CLUB, POWDER ROOM, CUBICLE, 30TH APRIL 1940 - 26
DAY**

Dorothy is so relieved she practically collapses against the wall. She exhales heavily and lights a cigarette.

27 **INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM, 30TH APRIL 1940 - 27
NIGHT**

A nervous Dorothy stands at the window, looking out. The lights aren't on, and it's getting dark. Alec comes in, in his uniform, doesn't see her at first.

DOROTHY
Hello you.

ALEC
Standing in the dark?

Alec flicks the lights on and walks to her. They embrace.

DOROTHY
How are you? Busy day?

ALEC
Mmm.

DOROTHY
Time for lunch?

ALEC
Author's club.

He detaches from her, looks at her.

ALEC (CONT'D)
I saw you, Dorothy - spying on me -

DOROTHY

Who was she?

ALEC

My new secretary, Miss McKelvie - I told you about her.

Alec sighs. Dorothy deflates, sits down on the sofa.

28

INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM, 1ST SEPT 1940 - DAY 28

Outside, the distant sound of sirens: the end of an air raid.

Alec's hands, cut and scraped, sit in a basin of water. He has his ARP tin hat on and has just come back from a volunteer shift. Mike, aged 7, sits next to him, enthralled as Alec tells him a story.

ALEC

- and the tiger bared his huge jaws and his teeth were white and sharp and shiny - but Mike was a cunning boy and he threw down the meat from his hiding place in the palm tree -

Dorothy comes in with some fresh water which she pours into the basin. She looks haunted now, they both do, jittery from the war, the lack of sleep, the lack of trust between them.

ALEC (CONT'D)

Smoke?

Dorothy puts his pipe in his mouth and he lights it, replaces his hands. She starts to gently wash his hands, he winces a little. Mike watches, hating to see his Dad's pain.

ALEC (CONT'D)

I think you should go up to Wensleydale - stay with your mum.

Dorothy looks at Alec, panicking. Is he trying to get rid of her? Spare her something? Or simply keep them both safe?

DOROTHY

The bombs can't go on forever - We're fine in the shelter, aren't we Mike?

Mike nods. Alec turns away from Mike so he can't see.

ALEC

The things I've seen Dorothy - please - for -

He raises his eyes towards Mike. Dorothy looks away, unsure what to say.

29

EXT. TRAIN STATION, 1ST SEPT 1940 - DAY

29

Mike, with a gas mask round his neck, stands forlorn at the ticket barrier. Alec and Dorothy arrive carrying a couple of cases. Alec swings Mike up into his arms.

ALEC

Write to me, won't you?

Mike nods and buries his head in his father's neck.

ALEC (CONT'D)

And if you get scared -

MIKE

Tell yourself a story.

Alec grins.

He puts Mike down and embraces Dorothy, but there's tension between them. Dorothy lowers her voice so Mike can't hear.

DOROTHY

I'll settle Mike with Mum - and
then I'll come back.

ALEC

You don't trust me, do you?

Dorothy looks at Alec, steadily. Then smiles lightly -

DOROTHY

I love you, you idiot.

Overcome with emotion, Dorothy turns away.

She hands the tickets to the guard and walks through the barrier. Mike looks back at Alec. Alec waves, puts on a silly face, trying to cheer him up. But Mike still lingers -

MIKE

Dad -

ALEC

See you soon - I love you -

Dorothy returns for Mike, yanks at his hand, forcing him through the barrier and on towards the train.

30

EXT. THE STRAND, 1ST OCT 1940 - NIGHT

30

Dorothy hurries along the Strand, following Alec who is at some distance ahead.

DOROTHY (V.O.)

I returned to London as soon as I could. I followed him for months.

Alec stops, crushes his cigarette under his heel and turns into the SAVOY.

31

INT. SAVOY RESTAURANT, FOYER, 1ST OCT 1940 - NIGHT

31

NB SAME SCENE AS 1/37 FROM DOROTHY'S POV

Dorothy stands in a small foyer, looking through glass into the main restaurant:

Alec sits at a table on his own.

But now Alison is walking towards him, in an aquamarine gown.

As Alec's face lights up -

Dorothy's face slowly falls.

Alec produces the velvet box. He places his hand on Alison's wrist. Desire in both their eyes.

Dorothy wants to throw up.

Alison looks at Alec - Alec looks back at Alison -

But then he catches Dorothy's eye through the glass -

They stare at each other - Alec's face, guilty as charged -

Dorothy turns and walks out -

32

INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, BEDROOM, 1ST OCT 1940 - NIGHT

32

Dorothy throws things into a case - photos - clothes -

Alec comes in - and WHACK. Dorothy punches him in the face.

Alec staggers back. He looks at her, devastated. She stares back at him, challenging him to defend his behaviour. But he can't. In fact, he wants punishment.

ALEC

Again - hit me - harder -

WHACK. Dorothy hits out at his body. WHACK. At his face. Scratching him, drawing blood, not stopping. She pummels and pummels at him. He takes it, a defeated man.

An AIR RAID SIREN starts.

Abruptly - Dorothy stops. Looks at him coldly.

DOROTHY

Go. Go and do your duty. When you come back, I'll be gone.

Alec picks up his tin hat, his face covered in gashes. Shattered, Alec walks out.

Dorothy watches him go -

She slams the door and closes her eyes -

33 **INT. WENSLEYDALE, DOROTHY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, 18TH JULY 33
1963 - DAY**

Silence. Alison is deathly white, her brain swimming with thoughts. Dorothy leans back.

DOROTHY

I'm sorry.

ALISON

Sorry?

(Beat)

Now?

DOROTHY

It's so long ago.

ALISON

You didn't try and stop him -

Alison stares at Dorothy in disbelief.

ALISON (CONT'D)

You saw me - you saw us together -
and you let him -

DOROTHY

He was my husband, Alison.

ALISON

I was twenty-one - I knew no-one in
London -

DOROTHY
I had a child.

ALISON
You should have said something -

DOROTHY
We were over.

ALISON
Warned me -

DOROTHY
I had to walk away.

ALISON
But you didn't -

DOROTHY
I needed money -

ALISON
You came to the flat -

DOROTHY
Mike and I had nothing -

ALISON
So he paid you -

DOROTHY
A pittance -

ALISON
How much? How often?

DOROTHY
Once. Five measly fucking pounds.

Dorothy closes her eyes, a lump growing in her throat. Alison watches her, every detail imprinting on her brain.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
God, I hated him. (beat) I was
livid, boiling over with rage -

Dorothy brushes away a brimming tear, determined not to let Alec get to her again. Alison sees this, softens.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
I couldn't let Mike see it - be
infected by my anger - I was
determined about that -

Dorothy closes her eyes, full of the memory.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

'It's perfectly normal - Daddy
lives away - digs down in London' -
all the while singing his praises.
No - I knew I couldn't do that -

ALISON

So you told Mike the truth?

DOROTHY

Don't be stupid - ruin his life?
Turn him against his own father?

Alison genuinely trying to understand how Dorothy coped.

ALISON

So what did you do?

Dorothy fixes her eyes on the photo of Mike in his school uniform.

DOROTHY

Nothing -

Alison is now struggling to follow Dorothy.

ALISON

What did you tell him then?

Dorothy puts her head in her hands, utterly distraught.

DOROTHY

Mike means everything to me. I did
it to protect him.

Dorothy looks up, starts to shake as she confesses -

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I learned some lines, you see - I
thought it would be difficult - but
I was a trained actor - so -

She stops, overwhelmed by the enormity of it. Alison, watching her, riveted, not understanding yet.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Mike came home from school - I was sat here as usual - and I just - 'The telegram man's been', you see?

ALISON

No - go on -

DOROTHY

'Daddy was saving his friend - at Alamein - I'm so sorry, Mike, we've lost him - he won't be coming home again'.

Alison sits there in shocked silence. Finally -

ALISON

All these years - even now - Mike thinks Alec died in 1942?

Dorothy says nothing.

ALISON (CONT'D)

You've been holding on that secret for twenty years?

Dorothy looks at Alison, hoping for absolution. Hot tears start to fall loosely down her cheeks.

But Alison is reeling, silent.

DOROTHY

Was it so wrong? I just wanted to live a normal life without drama, without lies.

Alison is incredulous, sad, not judging Dorothy.

ALISON

But - Dorothy - you told your son the biggest lie of the lot.

Dorothy fills with shame. She tries to be calm, retain her dignity as she wipes the tears from her cheeks.

DOROTHY

Can you leave now please?

Alison just sits there - Dorothy stands up, shaking now.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Please leave.

Alison rises and walks to the door.

34	OMITTED (FLASHBACK)	34
----	----------------------------	----

35	OMITTED (MATERIAL MOVED TO SCENE 33)	35
----	---	----

36	INT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE, HALL, 18TH JULY 1963 - CONTINUOUS	36
----	--	----

Alison walks down the hall - she pauses at the front door - kind, but trying to understand this unholy mess.

ALISON
You regret it, don't you? Lying to
Mike? Depriving him of his father?

Dorothy opens the door and shakes her head.

DOROTHY
Over a life with Alec? - full of
its deceit and uncertainty, poverty
and false promises -

Alison stares at Dorothy, emotional. Is that what her life has been?

Dorothy looks back at her, evenly.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
I've got no regrets - I did what
any good mother would -

Dorothy takes a breath, calming herself.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
I gave my son a safe home, a secure
childhood, did you?

Alison stares back at Dorothy - so hurt, so angry - before turning and walking out.

37	EXT. STEEP COBBLED STREET, 18TH JULY 1963 - DAY	37
----	--	----

Alison walks down the cobbled road, her face set.

But now - coming towards her -

MIKE. Alison recognises him instantly from the photos.

Alison walks on towards him - heart pounding -
Alison quickens her step - looks at Mike, assesses him.
He's about 30, cheerful, normal, as he walks towards her -
Alison takes a deep breath -
They are about to cross paths -

ALISON
Mike, isn't it?

Alison looks distinctly dangerous.

ALISON (CONT'D)
I've just come from your mother's
house.

MIKE
Are you a friend from her work?

ALISON
I knew your father.

MIKE
Major Wilson?

The excitement in his voice, the pride. It stills Alison.

ALISON
You look just like him.

MIKE
Did you know him well?

ALISON
Yes.

A moment.

ALISON (CONT'D)
We met during the war -

MIKE
Oh - so just before he died? I've
never met anyone, apart from Mum,
who knew him. I'd love to hear more
about him. I've read all his
novels...

Alison looks at Mike.

Half of her wants to spill the beans, to hurt Dorothy, as she herself has been hurt - but she can't - she nods.

ALISON
We worked together - sorry I have a
train to catch -

Alison hurries off, without another word. She turns a corner.

She stops, looking almost green now. She leans over a garden wall, and violently retches.

38	 OMITTED (FLASHBACK)	38
39	 OMITTED (MATERIAL MOVED TO SCENE 37)	39
40	 INT. TRAIN, 18TH JULY 1963 - DAY	40

The train rattles along. Alison sits at a table, alone, extremely drunk, and full of emotion, processing everything she's heard.

In front of her, on the table, an uneaten pack of sandwiches and a half-empty half-bottle of gin.

She looks across the carriage. A mother tries to calm a fractious tiny toddler, who is whining.

Alison looks away, irritated by the scene. She stares out of the window, the light fading on the countryside.

DOROTHY (V.O.)
I gave my son a safe home, a secure
childhood, did you?

Alison sits there, thoughts swirling - the toddler's whines echoing in her head and becoming - [scene 40A]

Later, time has passed. Alison reaches into her handbag and touches the rosary. She gets no comfort. She closes her eyes and leans back against the head rest, trying to sleep. But her eyes open again as memories trouble her. [This is to be used, if necessary between 2/48 and 2/49]

40A	 EXT. HENDON FLAT, LONDON, 5TH SEPT 1944 - NIGHT	40A
-----	---	-----

The sound of Gordon crying a little, sitting up in his pram [aged 2]. Alison, very heavily pregnant, lifting the pram over the steps, and inside.

CAPTION: London, 1944

41 **INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, HALL, 5TH SEPT 1944 - NIGHT** 41

Alison struggles to lift Gordon and a bag of shopping out of the pram. She stows the pram under the stairs. Despite this, Alison is cheery, if a little tired round the eyes.

42 **OMITTED.** 42

43 **INT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM, 5TH SEPT 1944 - NIGHT** 43

Alison, carrying Gordon and the shopping, walks in to find Alec stuffing a few last possessions into a large suitcase.

Alison is stunned. Alec comes over, takes Gordon from her and puts his arms round both of them -

ALISON

He's kicking us out? With me like this? Can't we talk to him?

ALEC

I've tried - everything -

ALISON

But Mum paid April's rent - we're only a month behind now -

ALEC

He's found an American who'll pay twice the rent. I'm so sorry -

ALISON

But - the baby - where will we go?

ALEC

Hey, shh, it's going to be all right. I've found somewhere nearby - ground floor, no stairs to drag this one [Gordon] up. OK?

Alison brightens.

ALISON

Sorry, I'm just exhausted -

ALEC

I know you are - don't apologise -

ALISON

This blasted war -

ALEC

As soon as it's over, we can get to Blakefield - have all the space we need - a garden for Gordon to play in - Nanny B to help with the baby - and a study for me so I won't keep you awake with my writing -

Alison smiles.

ALEC (CONT'D)

It's going to be OK.

Alison looks around - the cosy book-lined shelves.

ALEC (CONT'D)

I'll come back for them when we're settled -

He picks up the cases and makes for the door. Alison follows him, buying into his optimism.

44

EXT. HENDON, ALEC'S FLAT, 5TH SEPT 1944 - NIGHT

44

Alison and Alec hurry away from the flat into the dark, bombed-out streets. She pushes the pram with a suitcase and Alec's typewriter in. Alec carries Gordon and another suitcase. Alison starts to laugh.

Alec grips Alison's hand. He looks desperately unhappy, struck with guilt. But he pastes on optimism once again.

45

INT. PADDINGTON, BOARDING HOUSE, ROOM, 29TH SEPT 1944 - DAY

Nine months pregnant, Alison leans over the back of a chair, panting. She's in a nightie, in advanced labour. Gordon, aged two, runs around on a wooden hobby horse.

The room is shockingly decrepit: damp creeping up slimy walls. It's nothing like the cosy attic flat in Hendon. Here, in one room, a double bed and a cot and a tiny, mouldy kitchenette, complete with several large rat traps.

On the wall, a small wooden crucifix.

Alison grimaces - lets out a muffled scream - fearful, she looks over at Gordon -

KNOCK KNOCK.

Alison staggers to the door. It's MRS MCKELVIE, mid 60s, a very smart, upper-middle-class lady.

Alison falls into her mother's open arms in relief.

Mrs McKelvie takes in the slum conditions - her utter shock.

MRS MCKELVIE

Oh Alison -

Alison turns away, ashamed, the next contraction rolling on.

MRS MCKELVIE (CONT'D)

Where's Alec?

ALISON

At work -

46 **INT. PADDINGTON, BOARDING HOUSE, ROOM, 29TH SEPT 1944 - DAY**

Alison is on the bed on all fours, gripping on to the iron rungs of the headboard. A MIDWIFE watches as she pushes, puce, wrung with sweat. Alison screws up her face. SCREAMS -

47 **INT. PADDINGTON, BOARDING HOUSE, NEIGHBOUR'S ROOM, 29TH SEPT 1944 - DAY**

AAAARGH. Alison's screams are audible through the paper thin walls. Mrs McKelvie sits with an Irish neighbour MARY. In her hat and gloves, she holds herself very erect.

She watches Gordon playing on the floor with Mary's three kids. They are all filthy.

Suddenly the sound of a baby CRYING. Mary breaks into a wide grin. Mrs McKelvie forgets her inhibitions and hugs her.

48 **INT. PADDINGTON, BOARDING HOUSE, ROOM, 29TH SEPT 1944 - NIGHT**

Lit by a small, guttering candle, Alec types his next book on the Smith Corona. Alison breast-feeds newborn Nigel under their patchwork quilt. Gordon is fast asleep next to her.

Alison pulls Nigel off her breast and hands him to Alec. Alec stops typing and puts him over his shoulder to burp him. Alec sings a lullaby in Urdu to him. He's very tender, loving.

ALEC

So jaa Munay so jaa, Laal palang
par so jaa, Ammee abboo aa-ayn gay,
Laal topee laa-ayn gay. [Sleep
little one sleep etc]

Alison watches him in a dreamy post-birth euphoria.

ALISON
Nigel. It means from darkness -

Alec's face clouds. She tries to reassure him.

ALISON (CONT'D)
But we're heading for light -

Alec puts Nigel down in a wooden drawer, lined with newspaper and a holey blanket. Alison takes his hand, teasing him.

ALISON (CONT'D)
One day we might even be able to
put money in the electric meter.

He and Alison embrace. A moment of intimate peace.

49

INT. LYONS CORNER HOUSE, 15TH OCT 1944 - DAY

49

Alison finishes a plate of stew and potatoes. She eats quickly in the manner of someone who is extremely hungry. Great, dripping mouthfuls. Pushing bread round the plate.

Alec sits next to her, smoking, troubled.

Mrs McKelvie watches her daughter, deeply concerned.

ALISON
He's a hungry baby - he drains me.

MRS MCKELVIE
All babies are hungry.

Alison looks up from her plate.

ALISON
What do you want Mum? Because it's
not fair to leave the boys with
Mary for long.

MRS MCKELVIE
It's all right, I gave her two bob.

Alison stares at her mum.

MRS MCKELVIE (CONT'D)
She was jolly grateful.

ALEC
And so are we. For all your help.
We really are, Mrs McKelvie.

Alison smiles at Alec, grateful for this public acknowledgement. But Mrs McKelvie's face darkens.

MRS MCKELVIE
How long do you honestly think you
can keep on like this?

ALISON
What do you mean?

MRS MCKELVIE
(to Alec)
What are you doing to provide for
my grandchildren?

ALEC
I'm working, I assure you.

MRS MCKELVIE
Where's your salary going?

ALISON
Mum - I told you -

ALEC
I wish I could say more.

ALISON
And when the war's over we'll move
back to Alec's family home in
Hampshire - it's going to be OK.

Mrs McKelvie looks at Alec, trying to work him out.

ALEC
Mrs McKelvie, I love your daughter
very much. And our two boys.

ALISON
You've seen him with them, Mum -
feeding them, singing them to sleep
-

MRS MCKELVIE

I know - you're good parents, both of you, but it breaks my heart to see Nigel sleeping in a box, and you Alison, not a spare ounce on you.

ALISON

I'm all right - I promise you -

MRS MCKELVIE

What if it's a bad winter? You get TB - Or - God forbid - one of the boys develops asthma or pneumonia -

Alison pushes her plate aside, sombre now, very worried. It's a serious situation.

MRS MCKELVIE (CONT'D)

I've talked it over with my brother and we both agree.

Alison leans forward, suddenly panicking.

MRS MCKELVIE (CONT'D)

It's best if it happens now - before you get too attached.

ALISON

What does?

MRS MCKELVIE

You should keep Gordon of course. But Nigel must be adopted.

Alison looks at her mother in total shock.

MRS MCKELVIE (CONT'D)

He could have a good life, Alison, in another family. One with means.

ALISON

Mum - no - don't -

MRS MCKELVIE

I know, darling - it'd be a wrench at first, but you'd have Gordon, and in time, you'd get over it -

Alison looks at Alec and dissolves into floods of tears. He puts his arm round her and whispers into her hair.

ALEC

Shh, it's OK.

Mrs McKelvie watches them, getting distraught herself.

MRS MCKELVIE
Do it for Nigel - please -

Alec looks up at Mrs McKelvie, calm not aggressive.

ALEC
I know you want the best for
Alison, but we are not giving up
our son. It's out of the question.

ALISON
Never.

MRS MCKELVIE
Just think about it -

Alec shakes his head, tears now welling in his eyes. [He is thinking about Mike].

ALEC
No - I can't lose my son. I won't.
I simply won't let it happen.

MRS MCKELVIE
I just want to give the boys a good
future, do the right thing for
them.

ALISON
And so do we.

Alison stares back at her Mum, defiant.

50

EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE, 18TH JULY 1963 - NIGHT

50

A black cab pulls out Alison's house. And she slowly gets out. She's still slightly drunk.

Her body is heavy with exhaustion as she reaches into her purse for the money. She hands over a note - through the driver's window - without even looking at it.

She walks to her front door -

51

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN, 18TH JULY 1963 - NIGHT

51

Alison can't sleep. She stands, in her nightie, at the cooker warming milk in a pan. She pours it into a mug and turns -

Alec is sitting at the table. He's in his uniform, his face bleeding and bruised. He prays, turning his rosary.

He looks up at Alison, deeply vulnerable - engulfed in sadness, a solitary tear running down his cheek -

Alison walks towards him, compelled to help him, rescue him -

52 **INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY** 52

Alison wakes with a start. It's morning. She's still wearing her dress from yesterday. She's lying on the settee, rosary beads clutched in her hand.

Alison lies there, totally still, reeling from the dream - the sun streaming in on her through the window -

THUD: the sound of post dropping on the mat in the hall.

53 **INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY** 53

Alison sits at the kitchen table. An envelope stamped from the MINISTRY OF WORKS is on the table in front of her. She looks at it, apprehensive.

Hands shaking, she carefully opens the envelope. Reads the letter, heart beating.

OFFICIAL (V.O.)
...further to your letter... I must inform you that Blakefield Hall, Hampshire is not owned, nor ever has been owned, by any member of the Wilson family...

Alison stares at the letter, disappointment and anger marching up inside her.

She's very still, just thinking, processing -

Finally, she puts the letter back in the envelope, in the kitchen drawer.

JUMP CUT TO:

54 **OMITTED** 54

55

EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE, GARDEN, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY

55

Alison, still in the same dress, attempts to prune the hedge with a blunt pair of shears. Anger and danger emanates from her.

She's focused, head down, as she works. Terrifying in her determination. Dry, brittle clippings fall to the ground.

Olive appears over the fence. She watches Alison.

OLIVE

Alison? Alison?

Finally she looks up. Her face is a mottled mess, streaked with sweat, tears, dirt and a few scratches of blood.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Jim would have done that - we hate to see you struggling without Alec.

Alison stares hard at her: she's not struggling.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Such a good man -

ALISON

Why? Why does everyone say that?

Almost shaking with rage, Alison drops the shears and heads inside.

56

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, HALL, 19TH JULY 1963 - CONTINUOUS

56

Alison walks in to find Nigel arriving home, pulling his rucksack off and dumping it in the hall.

He stares at her: she looks mad - dirty, blood-streaked. She has no idea that she doesn't look normal. But she's overwhelmed with relief and delight to see him.

ALISON

Nigel - you're home.

Alison puts her arms out to him and hugs him. Eyes closed, she holds tightly on to him.

NIGEL

Mum?

He pulls away, trying to work out what's going on.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
What happened? You're cut.

Alison tries to pull herself together.

ALISON
Gardening - I just need a bath -

She turns to walk upstairs. Nigel watches her, concerned.

NIGEL
I'll put the kettle on then -

ALISON
I need to go out.

NIGEL
What? Why?

Alison turns back, sees his anxiety. She pauses -

NIGEL (CONT'D)
Do you need help?
(Beat)
A doctor?

Alison can't deal with it. She closes down, walks upstairs.

ALISON
I'm fine. I'll be back soon.

Nigel is left deeply worried.

57

OMITTED

57

57A

EXT. EMPIRE CLUB, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY

57A

Alison has changed out of yesterday's clothes. She is the
smartest we have ever seen her. Hat and coat. She hurries
inside the Empire Club.

58

INT. EMPIRE CLUB, RECEPTION, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY

58

Alison stands at the reception desk inside a vaulted hall.

On the outside she appears immaculate, but as she lays a hand
on the marble counter, we see that her nails are chipped and
dirty with earth.

She slides her hand down.

ALISON
(to receptionist)
I'm looking for one of your
members, Shahbaz Karim.

59 **INT. EMPIRE CLUB, BAR, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY**

59

The receptionist guides Alison towards Karim who sits at the bar, drinking and chatting with friends.

Alison looks Karim in the eye. She's furious.

ALISON
You bloody liar -

Unperturbed, Karim rises and guides her to the garden -

60 **EXT. EMPIRE CLUB, GARDEN, 19TH JULY 1963 - CONTINUOUS**

60

A game of croquet is in progress on an immaculate lawn.

Karim directs Alison away from the game and other spectators towards a quiet spot. All the while, Alison is questioning him, flushed with anger -

ALISON
A good man you said - tell me - in
what way exactly was he a good man?

SHAHBAZ KARIM
He served his country. He made
sacrifices -

ALISON
No - he lied over and over again.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Before the war, out in India -

ALISON
Out in India! - he married Dorothy -
even telling her Gladys was his
recently bereaved sister -

Karim stays calm.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Yes, that was how it all started.

ALISON
What started? His utter depravity?

They reach the sitting area. Karim gestures Alison to sit down. She doesn't sit. Karim looks at her.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

Be careful, Mrs Wilson. You really don't know what you're talking about.

ALISON

Shut up. Go home, Mrs Wilson. Don't ask questions.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

What exactly do you want to know?

Alison exhales and sits down.

ALISON

Who was he? Who was my husband?

Karim narrows his eyes, thinking about this.

ALISON (CONT'D)

He betrayed Gladys. Seduced Dorothy. Married me. Why?

The CLACK-CLACK starts - also CICADAS - the whirr of a FAN -

61 OMITTED

61

62 EXT. LAHORE, ALEC'S BUNGALOW, VERANDAH, 1ST JAN 1933 - 62
EVENING

The India noises get louder over -

A black and white photo of Alec and Gladys's wedding.

It sits on a desk. A fan spins in the ceiling -

Alec, 30s, types by the light of a kerosene lamp. A scotch next to him, his pipe wedged in the corner of his mouth, the ash tray perched on the typewriter as is his way.

CAPTION: Lahore, India. 1933

We reveal Shahbaz Karim [now 40s] arriving, watching Alec -

SHAHBAZ KARIM

How's the novel coming on?

ALEC
(without looking up)
I'm writing to my son Dennis -

Alec looks wistful. He banishes it. Looks up and grins.

ALEC (CONT'D)
The novel however is with my new
agent. He's sent it to every
publishing house in town.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Come on, there's someone I want you
to meet.

Alec rises and takes a jacket from his BEARER. Alec clearly
has a good relationship with him.

ALEC
(in Urdu, subtitled)
Intizaar nah karo, apnay khaandaan
kay paas ghar jaao. [Don't wait up -
go home to your family.]

63 INT. LAHORE, DOROTHY'S DRESSING ROOM, 1ST JAN 1933 - NIGHT 63

Alec follows Karim into a small, dressing room.

Dorothy, (late 20s) sits at a mirror taking off her make-up.
Despite being half-made up, she's very beautiful.

In the background, behind a partition - a half-drawn curtain -
we can see other actors getting changed.

She turns to Karim with friendly mock-exasperation.

DOROTHY
Knock Karim, why don't you?

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Miss Wick, may I present, Mr
Alexander Wilson.

Dorothy laughs and waves off Karim's formal introduction.

DOROTHY
Hello, I'm Dorothy.

ALEC
Alec.

They look at each other, attracted. Karim watches, knowing
exactly what he has set up. Alec offers her a cigarette.

DOROTHY
I have my own -

She pulls out a small cigarette tin of hand-rolled beedis. Alec watches. He strikes a match for her. She steadies his hand, and looks up at him.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Did you enjoy the show?

ALEC
I was in the palm of your hand.

Dorothy rolls her eyes: don't shmooze me.

DOROTHY
But what did you think of the play?

ALEC
Good, funny. I've never seen it played for laughs like that.

DOROTHY
It wasn't too much?

ALEC
Well - not for me -

The two of them look at each other: a real connection.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Dorothy, I need to get Alec into the summer party at the Governor's residence. I was wondering if you needed a partner?

Dorothy looks from Karim to Alec: she's up for it.

64

INT. LAHORE, ALEC'S BUNGALOW, BEDROOM, 3RD JAN 1933 - NIGHT

Alec ties his bow tie in front of a scratched, faded mirror.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (O.S.)
Our intelligence says the mole is within his inner circle. Start with his A.D.C. - partial to whiskey -

In the reflection, Alec watches as Karim systematically removes all photos of Gladys and their family.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)
With Dorothy on your arm, you can go anywhere, meet anyone -

Alec turns, considering this.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)
It's for your country, Alec.

65 **EXT. LAHORE, GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE, 3RD JAN 1933 - NIGHT** 65

Karim, Alec and Dorothy walk in silence through a lush garden. A servant bows as they pass.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Take your time, watch him, wait
until he's had a few drinks.
Dorothy - if you would introduce
them and then disappear - Alec, I
need you to talk to him alone.
Commit every word to memory. Is
that clear?

Alec nods, perhaps a touch nervous. As they turn a corner, they see the house, music rolling lightly across the lawn -

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)
Good luck.

It's tense. He and Dorothy set off, walking a few feet apart from each other, in silence. She's in a dress of liquid gold, with a plunging back-line. He is in white tie.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)
You're in love, remember?

Dorothy looks back over her shoulder at Karim and smiles.

She turns back and Alec puts a hand on Dorothy's naked shoulder. Straightaway, she moves closer into him. Whispering to him.

Satisfied, Karim lights a cigarette, and watches them go inside.

66 **OMITTED** 66

67 **INT. LAHORE, ALEC'S BUNGALOW, BEDROOM, 4TH JAN 1933 - DAYBREAK** 67

The sun has only just risen.

Alec writes manically on paper.

He's dishevelled, in a large white Indian shirt. We've never seen him quite like this before - sweaty, anxious, troubled.

Dorothy - in bed - stirs and walks over.

DOROTHY
Morning -

He doesn't turn round, or even seem to notice her presence.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Alec? Are you all right?

Alec finally looks up, anxiety written all over his face.

ALEC
Bad dreams - when I write they [go away] -

Dorothy watches him, filled with compassion. We can see her feelings for him are developing fast.

DOROTHY
What are you writing?

ALEC
The novel - trying to -

She rests a hand on his shoulder, trying to help him, save him from his unhappiness.

68

EXT. LAHORE, ALEC'S BUNGALOW, VERANDAH, 1ST MARCH 1933 - DAY

Time has passed. Dorothy has now moved in. A few of her clothes are draped across a chair.

SWISH, SWISH. A servant methodically sweeps the verandah as Karim approaches, a few letters in his hand.

The Lahore Times, opened to the society pages, sits on a table. A photo of Alec and Dorothy in evening dress at a government function. Karim picks it up and smiles.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Alec - are you there?

DOROTHY (O.S.)
One minute -

Karim walks over to the typewriter and looks at the sheet poking out and starts to read:

SHAHBAZ / ALEC (V.O.)
"Wallace began to spend every day with the beautiful young actress. One morning, he turned to his Indian handler and asked: "Can you love two women at the same time?" -

Karim reflects on this, a tad concerned.

The doors open and Dorothy emerges.

DOROTHY
Hello stranger.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Good morning - where's Alec?

DOROTHY
At the bazaar - he'll be back soon.

Dorothy smiles, love written all over her face. Karim looks at her, concerned.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
What?

SHAHBAZ KARIM
Don't go in too deep, my dear -

Dorothy is indignant.

DOROTHY
You set us up - I thought this all suited you rather well -

Karim nods, reflecting, torn.

SHAHBAZ KARIM
I just don't want to see you get hurt.

DOROTHY
(defensive)
Well, I'm fine, thanks so much for your concern.

Karim is about to say something else but Dorothy's expression changes - she can see Alec coming.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Darling - Karim's here -

ALEC
(in Urdu, very jolly)
Shahbaz! Assalaamo Alaikum [hello]

SHAHBAZ KARIM
I picked up your post. I know you've been waiting to hear from a certain person in England -

Karim holds out two letters. Alec grabs the first one. We see it is from GLADYS WILSON.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)

No, that's just from your sister -

Alec nods - the lie is clearly well established between them - and reaches out for the second letter.

Karim hands it to him with a flourish.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)

Sender: Longmans Green - hmm,
that's a publisher isn't it?

Alec grabs it and rips it open. He reads, excited. His hands start to shake. We see how much this means to him.

ALEC

They want to publish my first novel
and the one I'm writing now.
They'll wire me an advance.

He rushes at Dorothy, hugs her, lifting her right off the ground. She's equally delighted, sharing in his success.

DOROTHY

Champagne!

She disappears. Karim watches her depart, reflective.

Then he casts a look at the typewriter.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

By the way, you can tell Colonel Wallace I think the answer appears to be yes.

Alec looks up from the letter he is still clutching in delight. He looks at the typewriter and gets what Karim is saying. He offers him a slightly embarrassed, lopsided grin.

ALISON (V.O.)

"Yes, you can love two women at the same time..."

ALISON

"...in this game, you can be two people at the same time."

Alison's words are laced with bitterness.

She doesn't look at Karim. She keeps her eyes on the croquet game. Karim takes a large slug of his gin.

SHAHBAZ

Of course - you've read his books.
He took a lot from real life.

Alison says nothing. A ball shoots through a hoop, knocking another out. A shout of "CROQUET!" Applause from spectators.

ALISON

So they did work together - there was some sort of 'arrangement'?

SHAHBAZ KARIM

Oh yes.

(Beat)

Of course feelings developed - on both sides - but they only married because Dorothy fell pregnant.

Alison stares at Karim, reeling with recognition.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)

Dorothy found a fakir in the bazaar who said he'd deal with it. He'd helped British women before - but of course there were risks. Dorothy was willing to take them -

ALISON

To give up her child?

Alison remembers back to their conversation, their decisions as mothers.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

Yes. But Alec wouldn't let her go through with it. That's the kind of man he was, decent. But he couldn't divorce Gladys because of his Catholicism. He was desperate.

Alison nods, this does sound credible.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)

So I came up with a plan. I faked a wedding for them. Lahore Cathedral.

Alison turns back now, jolted.

ALISON

It was a fake wedding? They were never properly married?

SHAHBAZ KARIM

Alec didn't sign the register.

ALISON

Dorothy told me that they simply
met and fell in love.

Karim slowly shakes his head. Alison exhales, overwhelmed.

ALISON (CONT'D)

So she lied.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

Lied? I'm not sure -

A moment. Karim leans in towards Alison.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)

We spend our whole lives justifying
the decisions we made in the past -
constructing our own intricate
versions of the truth.

Alison's eyes flit around nervously: close to the bone.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)

When you live with deceit for long
enough, it rubs off.

Alison stares at Karim. Is he talking about Alec, Dorothy or
Alison herself? Alison doesn't want to dwell.

SHAHBAZ KARIM (CONT'D)

You learn to mould every situation
to your own advantage.

ALISON

You can't condone Alec's lies.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

I have to, I showed him how to lie,
keep secrets. I shaped him.

ALISON

Then how can you sleep at night?

Karim drains his gin and looks back at Alison evenly.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

Alec was a first class agent. One
of a tiny handful at that time. His
work out in India - then during the
war - saved hundreds of lives.

ALISON

And us women must pay the price? Do
his dirty work? Lie to our
children?

Karim thinks about this, his watery eyes reflecting on this.

SHAHBAZ KARIM

It's the price you have to pay for
the service he gave.

70

INT. EALING CATHOLIC CHURCH, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY

70

The church is empty apart from Alison who is on her knees and appears to be praying.

Father Timothy comes in and sits next to her. He's very surprised to see her here.

FATHER TIMOTHY

Mrs Wilson -

Alison looks up.

ALISON

I didn't know where else to go.

FATHER TIMOTHY

What's happened?

A moment.

FATHER TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

You're not alone, Alison.

Alison looks back at him: she really is.

FATHER TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
(Gently)
Talk to me.

Alison takes a deep breath and starts to voice her shame.

ALISON
Alec let me down Father, he
deceived me -

Alison colours deep red. But Father Timothy nods phlegmatically: Alec's not the first man to do this.

ALISON (CONT'D)
I thought he loved us -

FATHER TIMOTHY
I'm sure he did.
(Beat)
We have all sinned Mrs Wilson.

Alison digests this.

ALISON
But what do I do now? How can I
look my boys in the eye? They know
nothing about this -

FATHER TIMOTHY
Keep it that way. Protect them.

ALISON
And how would I be judged by your
God?

A trace of a smile from Father Timothy.

FATHER TIMOTHY
The God you're not sure about? - he
is forgiving -

Alison nods, her brain calming a little. She looks away.

He sees that she now needs time to process. He rises.

FATHER TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
Our doors are always open.

He quietly walks away, allowing her to rest and think in this new sanctuary for her.

71 **INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, HALL, 19TH JULY 1963 - DAY** 71

Alison comes in, a new calmer aura about her.

ALISON
Nigel? I'm home -

No answer. Alison walks through to the living room.

72 **INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN, 19TH JULY 1963 - CONTINUOUS** 72

Alison walks in to find a note on the kitchen table. It says: "Mum - Gordon is coming home - gone to meet his train."

Alison thinks about this, taking in the implications.

Her eyes move to the kitchen drawer -

She opens it to reveal the envelope about Blakefield.

She takes the letter out of the envelope - scans it once more, committing anything she needs to memory - then screws up the letter into a tight ball.

73 **EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE, 19TH JULY 1963 - NIGHT** 73

Time has passed. Street lights are on.

Gordon and Nigel, heads together talking, hurry down the street to Alison's house.

74 **INT. ALISON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN, 19TH JULY 1963 - NIGHT** 74

Alison has laid on an impromptu spread - a plate of sandwiches, crisps and a few biscuits. A pot of coffee.

Nigel's key in the door. Alison nervously gets to her feet. The boys come in and she greets them enthusiastically.

ALISON
Gordon! What a lovely surprise!

The boys look at the food -

ALISON (CONT'D)
Yes - plenty to eat - cheese and tomato - fish paste - you must be hungry - come on, tuck in - then tell me all your news -

Alison is trying so hard. But they just stare at her.

ALISON (CONT'D)

(to Nigel)

I worried you, didn't I? I'm sorry -
I really am - I'm fine now -

NIGEL

Mum? What's going on?

ALISON

A letter came - about Blakefield -

Alison produces a new letter from the drawer and hands it to Nigel. It is a pristine, un-creased sheet of typed paper. Alison watches Nigel closely; we can tell she wrote this herself.

GORDON

(to Nigel)

You read it -

Nigel reads quickly - Gordon watches him too. It's tense.

NIGEL

(eyes shining)

It is ours but they're using it as
a training base - they can't give
it back yet - look -

Nigel hands the letter to Gordon.

ALISON

I'm sorry, I was disappointed as
well -

NIGEL

(to Gordon)

I told you there'd be a reason.

Gordon looks from the letter to Alison - his mind racing.

Alison pushes on -

ALISON

Right, who wants a cup of coffee?

GORDON

I've found digs for Nigel - a
family he can stay with in Oxford
until term starts -

ALISON

What? No - I'm fine now -

NIGEL
(to Gordon)
I told you -

ALISON
I'm OK -

GORDON
(to Nigel)
Go and pack a bag.

Nigel reluctantly leaves. Gordon looks at Alison.

GORDON (CONT'D)
I phoned the Ministry last night -
they said Blakefield had never been
owned by Dad -

ALISON
What? There must be some mistake -

Panicking, Alison looks at the letter, seemingly confused.
Meanwhile, Gordon runs his hand through his hair.

GORDON
I made other calls too - Repton
School, Cambridge - Dad lied about
going there - and this - that he
gave me on my twenty-first -

He pulls off his gold signet ring.

GORDON (CONT'D)
I took it to a jeweller - there's
no 'family crest' - a stocking
filler, the man called it -

Alison looks appalled. Gordon, getting really upset -

GORDON (CONT'D)
None of it makes sense - who was
he, Mum? I have genuinely no idea
who Dad was.

Gordon looks at Alison in despair -

GORDON (CONT'D)
I even phoned the foreign office -
and there's no record of him
working there.

ALISON
But we worked there together -

GORDON

If you're telling the truth.

ALISON

What?

GORDON

Why should I believe you?

ALISON

Gordon -

GORDON

How I do know you're not lying as well? Covering up for him?

ALISON

(whispered)

Go -

GORDON

Did you write that letter, mum? Did you write that bloody letter?

ALISON

Go upstairs, get Nigel - and both of you leave -

Shocked Gordon walks out of the room without another word -

Alison listens to him go upstairs - their voices as they hurry back downstairs - the front door shutting. CLUNK.

Alison sits there, alone, the food spread in front of her.

Thoughts racing through her head, she elbows the Blakefield letter, then the coffee pot, off the table. SMASH.

END OF EPISODE