

FX: RAINFALL...THEN RUNNING FOOTSTEPS ON COBBLES.

FX: SINISTER MUSIC BUILDS.

BEN

PODCAST: It was three o'clock in the morning, and Charles Piper had known for some time he was being followed.

CHARLES

PIPER: (TERRIFIED, SHOUTING:) Hello?! Who's there?!

FX: A HORSE NEIGHS, CARRIGE BEING DRIVEN. FACTORY HORN BLARES.

BEN

PODCAST: London in 1857 was a city engulfed in fog and shadows. Where police were blinded by the elements. And tales of a nightmarish killer, stalking in the darkness, are whispered before bed...

CHARLES

PIPER: (PANTING, PANIC:) I'm warning you. Stay away?!
Leave me alone?!

BEN ON

PODCAST: Charles Piper was her first victim. He, like the rest of the capital, were at her mercy...and this is *her* story. Told at last. One of Britain's most unreported killers: Penelope Montague – my ancestor – The Shoreditch Slaughterer.

**FX: A STABBING, SLICING INTO FLESH, THEN
WAILING.**

FX: SOUND OF CHOPPING, WHICH SUDDENLY STOPS.

AMY: Ow, ow. I've cut myself on the cucumber.

BEN: Are you alright?

AMY: Yeah, fine. There'll just be blood in the salad, but I'll add more vinegar, you'll never taste it.

FX: CHOPPING, CUTTING, COOKING CONTINUES THROUGHOUT.

BEN: What time is it?...God, it's gone seven, why is my agent always late?!

AMY: Come sit down and eat some bloody salad, put it out of your mind.

BEN: I'm trying, I'm trying, but this is a massive part in EastEnders. You know, I'd get a chip shop scene, a Queen Vic scene and then get beaten up in the square afterwards; it's a dream role.

AMY: Worrying helps nothing, eating helps everything.

BEN: A couple of episodes, plus the money I won on Pointless, it'd pay for our venue deposit, *and* the wedding reception DJ?

AMY: I know but take a breath. What did your therapist tell you to do in moments of high anxiety?

BEN: Call and book a double session, she needs a new kitchen.

AMY: Channel something creative. Why don't you do some writing? Like that Penelope Montague script you wrote.

BEN: Ugh, I'm bored of doing a hundred different projects and scraping a living. I want *actual* money, so we aren't both doing jobs we hate, and I can act and you can write.

AMY: *And* I want that, but that's not where we are, and you have to accept that. You need a way to be happy.

BEN: I am happy, Amy. It's just how my face rests.

AMY: No, I mean in *life*, outside of acting. When it's not all sunshine and rainbows. Look at me at the council.

BEN: I didn't think you liked the council?

AMY: No, I *hate* working at the council, it's like purgatory, but it's a happy distraction from writing while I think of my next book idea. Que sera sera.

BEN: What does that mean?

AMY: It's from a Yazmina Reza play, it means Sutherbridge Council isn't so bad in the end.

FX: PHONE RINGS.

BEN: It's him! My agent!--

AMY: It's mine, it's mum – don't panic. (ON PHONE:) Hi Mum, you alright...What's wrong?...(TO BEN:) Dad's been made redundant. (ON PHONE:) When did this - alright, I'll put you on speaker.

FX: PHONE BEEPS.

AMY: Hey Dad, how are you?

DAD: (EMOTIONALLY:) Oh, I – I don't know, Amy. Thirty-four years I've worked at that factory. Frank called me into his office after lunch, told me there's nothing he can do.

AMY: Did he say why?

DAD: I don't remember. I think the shock has had an effect. By the time your mum collected me, I was telling the vending machine what had happened.

AMY: I'm sorry. Wish I could give you a hug.

DAD: Well, no, it's good. Makes what I need to tell you easier on the phone. We, uhm – me and your mother, we've been talking and we're going to have to start making difficult financial decisions about our future. And, err...we don't know how much we'll be able to contribute to your wedding anymore.

AMY: (SHOCK, BEAT:) Oh, okay. Sure. What, uhm...what –
what are you thinking? How much less?

**FX: DIFFERENT PHONE RINGS TO END OF
SCENE**

BEN: Oh God, it's my agent!

AMY: Don't panic. Whatever he's about to say- I love you.

BEN: I love you too. (ANSWERING PHONE:) Hello?

FX: CALL CENTRE AMBIANCE.

AMY: (ANSWERING PHONE:) Good morning, Sutherbridge council, Amy speaking, how can I help?

PATRICK L: (FLUSTERED:) I want to contest a parking fine, please. I was only gone for two minutes. It's outrageous.

AMY: Okay. Can we start at the beginning? Who's calling?

PATRICK L: Patrick Lewis, registration: B-1-G B-0-Y.

AMY: I see what you've done there, Mr. Lewis. If you could give me a moment.

FX: KEYBOARD TAPPING

PATRICK L: I pay my taxes, take my bins out, recycle when I can be bothered, and *this* is the thanks you get.

AMY: I've found the claim. Yes, your car was left unattended.

PATRICK L: I was barely gone. I went to get a coffee.

AMY: My file says you were gone for more than two minutes.

PATRICK L: No, that isn't possible.

AMY: I'll remind you, we record these calls for training and staff Christmas party purposes.

PATRICK L: I mean, fractionally, *maybe*. Seconds longer at most, I'm not paying £65 for the privilege.

AMY: I've got that you were gone four hours.

PATRICK L: Four hours?! - No, that's not right. It wasn't four hours...(NERVOUSLY:) Why, do you have any proof?

AMY: Eight eyewitnesses and CCTV of the whole period.

PATRICK L: (BEAT:) Alright, that changes things.

AMY: It was also that you'd parked in an ambulance bay, which caused particular upset at the A&E.

PATRICK L: Well, they're roomy and people give it a wide berth.

AMY: How do you want to pay, Sir?

PATRICK: Card's fine, yeah.

AMY: I'll put your through to our payment system.

FX: PHONE CALL ENDING

AMY: Oh, *Janey*, hi, can I borrow you for a moment?

JANEY: Course, petal, walk with me, just doing laps of the office to get my steps in. Three more and I've earnt lunch.

**FX: FOOTSTEPS MARCHING THROUGH AN
OFFICE.**

AMY: Well, I was wondering--

JANEY: Sorry to interrupt, petal – you look exhausted. ‘Specially round your eyes, no offence meant.

AMY: Well, it’s been a difficult weekend. Dad got made redundant and Ben didn’t get a job we were hoping for.

JANEY: Oh, sorry, love. Send ‘em both kisses.

AMY: So, uh, on that, do you think there any more shifts going? Apart from the wedding planner, we’re now paying for everything.

JANEY: You know, I’d love to, petal, but at our SLT meeting we said no extra shifts. New protocol. To do with greater council transparency.

AMY: What does that mean?

JANEY: That’s classified, can’t tell you that. But anything changes I’ll let you know. Scout’s honour. Not that I was a scout, but I’ve always admired their motto: Never Surrender.

AMY: (CERTAIN:) I don’t think that’s the scouts.

JANEY: Really? Well, whatever the case, I’ll tell you about any shift changes.

FX: RESTAURANT AMBIANCE.

AMY: Gardener. Do you think I'd be a good gardener?

BEN: Hmm? What'd you say?

AMY: Pays £9.50 an hour.

BEN: Your hair looks great.

AMY: That's not what I asked. Are you listening to me?

BEN: And your teeth too. They're sparkling.

AMY: You're very well trained. No, I'm looking at second jobs. Turns out our catering quote doesn't include dessert. Or the coolers for the dessert.

BEN: So, it's extra for the ice cream, and then extra-extra if you want it cold? I mean, hearing that, do you not just want to elope?

AMY: I suggested that. Remember? / said that. After your mother told us her only contribution is her attendance...No, it's too late now. Did you manage to talk to your work about extra shifts?

BEN: Oh...sorry, no, I didn't. Slipped my mind. But to be honest, I want to focus solely on acting right now. It's not

a good time to take on non-creative work. I can already feel the 9-5 impacting my self-tape performances.

AMY: ...Right, but, I mean, what are we—

BEN: *Instead*, I had a better idea. Like you said the other day, finding something new for me to focus on...what about true crime podcasts?

AMY: What *about* true crime podcasts?

BEN: So, Mark – who's playing a murdered farmer in Emmerdale this week – introduced me. I've spent the whole day listening to them, and they're *all* the same. I was thinking, we could use the characters from my script and put them into a podcast. Record it on our phones and start releasing them--

AMY: Ben, these are just words, I don't know what you're saying?

BEN: We should make a true crime podcast.

AMY: You – *we* - you want us to make a *true* crime podcast?

BEN: Why not?

AMY: How long do you have?

BEN: Half the work is done because I've written the pilot for it: Penelope Montague: Shoreditch Slaughterer.

AMY: (UNCERTAIN:) Right, sure. Your spec script.

BEN: It's Peaky Blinders meets Fleabag with a hint of Game of Thrones and, like, a dash of The One Show. *You* can write the adaption for the podcast, while I play myself. It's an artistic gig for us both.

AMY: But it's unpaid.

BEN: Yeah, like every gig we do. Who gets paid?

AMY: We need money, Ben.

BEN: Well, *that's* just it. Look at my phone, look at the number of sponsors and subscribers they get.

AMY: (WITH A SIGH:)...That's a lot of people.

BEN: Scroll through, there's loads. This is how I get famous and bring in work. Think of what would happen if it took off?

AMY: Hang on, hang on. This *isn't* 'true crime', you wrote this script on our flight to Bali.

BEN: Already solved that. It's 'based on historical events.' It's our cover-all. Where fiction marries fact, but everyone thinks it's verbatim. Like The Crown or Boris Johnson.

AMY: So, we'll be lying to people?

BEN: No. Yes. Ish. Well, everybody lies. We can't let it get in the way of our careers. Quite the opposite, in fact! So long as we keep it believable. Nothing *too* outrageous, we'll be fine... *what?*

AMY: It would – I'll be honest, it would be nice to do some new writing. It's been a while. (BEAT:) Tell you what, let's do a trial.

BEN: That's all I'm asking.

AMY: One evening next week we can try, but no promises. And in return, you ask your manager for more shifts. I can't do it all. It's *our* wedding, not *my* wedding.

BEN: Hundred percent, agree. Come on, a toast, to us.

FX: GLASS CLINKING

FX: GLASS SMASHING

BEN: Sorry, sorry, wrong button. That was 'smash,' I meant to press 'thunder'. How do we do sound effects on this?

AMY: Let's just focus on narrative. It's only the pilot. We don't need that now.

FX: QUICK BLAST OF SEAGULLS CALLING

BEN: No, you're right. First episode, simple's better. We've got our set-up: London, 1857. Lunatic killer on the loose. Fear and hysteria spreading. All great stuff, then what?

AMY: Looking at the story, my instinct is character. We should set-up who Penelope is and your connection to her from the off.

FX: PAGES TURNING

BEN: Okay. Well, in my original script, she's mid-twenties, totally alone and living on the streets.

AMY: (SARCASTIC:) It's a cheery place to start the show.

BEN: She's based *loosely* on The Artful Dodger, just minus the musical numbers and plus the misogyny.

AMY: Right, okay. I think we do the whole first podcast episode around you discovering her origin. Who she

was, where she's from, what she wanted, and her connection to your family.

BEN: Great. You can pull all that together through made-up newspaper clippings, fake headlines, nonsense quotes.

FX: MORE PAPER TURNING.

BEN: Are you happy with her motive staying revenge on men who've wronged women?

AMY: I think so. She needs to be a wretched, murderous, villainous, sociopath, but always lovable. Audiences have to root for her.

BEN: She's modern mentality; Victorian reality. Flip that round, you've got Jacob Rees-Mogg.

FX: KEYBOARD TAPING

AMY: And I've been looking, some of these podcasts spin out into tv shows, plays, films – we play this right, we could have a present-day Jeffrey Dahmer on our hands.

BEN: Well don't jinx it, but who knows what will happen if it takes off? This time next year, I could be Mr Macbeth in the West End.

AMY: (CORRECTING:) Lord Macbeth.

BEN: I've never read it.

AMY: Well, I re-read your script and have written a rough sketch for you to read. Ideas for what we could do for episode one. Do you wanna just try it?

FX: PAPER HANDED OVER

BEN: Oh, absolutely, let's go. Hit record. See how it sounds.

FX: BEEP OF RECORD BUTTON

BEN

PODCAST: (CLEARS THROAT, FINDING VOICE:) My name's Ben – My name's – I'm – My - (FOUND IT:) My name's Ben Montague, and a few weeks ago, when clearing out some old family heirlooms, I discovered a cardboard box.

FX: SUSPENCEFUL MUSIC STUTTERS AND STARTS

AMY: (CALLING ON:) Does that help?!

BEN: Yeah, yeah, perfect.

BEN

PODCAST: Discovered a cardboard box. Inside, pressed between the pages of a book, was a newspaper cutting. The story read: 'Shoreditch Slaughterer found – Penelope Montague named at last'... What was this doing here? Who was this woman? And why did she share my name? It's these questions which ignited a passion in me, where understanding my past would shape my future...

BEN: (DELIGHTED:) Oh Amy, this is fantastic! It's Who Do You Think You Are? With serial killers. We're gonna be rich!

FX: RECORD ENDING BEEP.

FX: BEEP...FOLLOWED BY THEATRE AMBIANCE

INTERCOM: Tonight's performance of Othello on Ice will begin in five minutes. Please take your seats.

BEN: Why are we watching this, Mark?

MARK: My friend from drama school, Becky, is in it, said I'd come and support. She's recently moved nearby.

BEN: Is she any good?

MARK: God, no. We did The Crucible at drama school together. She made the Salem witch trials sound like they were happening in Scunthorpe. God knows how she got this. Oh, this is her Mum, be nice. (to MUM:) Hiya Sue!

SUE: Mark, how lovely to see you.

FX: KISSES

SUE: How exciting is this? Can you believe it?

MARK: (SARCASM:) Honestly, I *cannot* believe it's happening, no.

SUE: I was telling her this morning, she deserves all of this. All those hours of dedication...Right, we're going to take our ring-side seats.

MARK: See you in there. (BEAT.) She's lying to herself, she knows her daughter can't act. You can see it in her face.

BEN: Ugh, it's not fair, is it? Everyone's getting projects off the ground. Becky's in this, you're in Richard III rehearsals and I'm barely scraping along.

MARK: You have your podcast. It sounds great.

BEN: We've done one episode, which Amy enjoyed, so we're doing another, it's not the same. *Plus*, she wants me doing extra shifts at the café to help pay for the wedding.

MARK: You can't do that, you can't multi-task!

BEN: That's what I said. I'll have to lie and say I can't get the shifts. Because, you know, you take your eye off the ball and you're out in the cold; you've lost Lysander, Tybalt's gone, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.

MARK: Well, *that* over there is Mary Arwin, the casting director. And I heard she was doing something at Regents Park.

BEN: Oh, really? Okay. I'll introduce myself after the show.

INTERCOM: Three-minute warning for Othello on Ice. Time to get your skates on to Venice.

MARK: Right, let's go in, but brace for a horror-show.

FX: HORROR SCREAM, THEN SINISTER

MUSIC BUILDS

BEN

PODCAST: A single stab to the throat. That's what became Penelope's trademark. A stab with enough force to sever the jugular vein. Now it baffled Scotland Yard at what could have done this - but newfound research tells us it was that most feminine of objects...a hair pin. Easily concealed, easily overlooked, Penelope Montague wielded it with such skill as to make each of her victims...

BEN: Sorry, sorry to stop.

FX: MUSIC STOPS

AMY: No, that's alright... what's wrong?

BEN: How many are we saying Penelope's killed?

AMY: Err...good question, how many are in your script?

FX: PAGES TURNING

BEN: Two, I think.

AMY: Two?! No, we'll need more than that. I wouldn't get out of bed for two dead bodies.

BEN: So, what, five? – Five's a lot of dead bodies.

AMY: No, no, I'm thinking... *twenty*.

BEN: Twenty?! She's got a hairpin not a rocket launcher. We only work if we're in the grey areas, in the doubt.

AMY: Yeah, but I've been listening to these other podcasts, they're all butchers, stalkers, *mutilators* – if we're going to rise above every Tom, Dick and Harry Shipman, we need *more*.

BEN: So, what...ten? Meet me at ten.

AMY: *Eleven* and we have a deal.

BEN: Fine, let's kill eleven people. But I don't like it.

AMY: Leave it to me, I'll spice up Penelope for us.

BEN: So, we're doing more episodes, then?

AMY: A couple more, then we'll see, but it's good fun. Come on, quick, let's get this done before we meet Helen. But if she's late again, I swear to God I'll scream.

FX: HORROR SCREAM

**FX: HOTEL AMBIANCE, FOLLOWED BY
PANTING AND FOOTSTEPS TO A SEAT**

HELEN: (BUBBLY:) So sorry I'm late, traffic was a nightmare. But fear not, your wedding planner's here to take away your worries, and most of your life savings. Haha. I'm joking. It'll be a magical day. Are you both well?

BEN: Yeah, we're good.

AMY: Excited to see where we are.

HELEN: Well, let me tell you, I'm on-top of everything, Angie.

AMY: (BLUNTLY:) Amy.

HELEN: Uh-huh. We're one year out but have already got the flowers you wanted. The napkins at a discount. *And* – most excitingly – Bantocks is free to cater all day.

AMY: Oh, that's fantastic!... Ben, isn't it?

BEN: (ABSENT:) Hmm? Yes, absolutely. It's great.

HELEN: So, they'll do the main meal; and then after dancing, they'll wheel out the pizzas to soak up the booze. The only bad news, The Feltham can't do your date.

AMY: Oh, really? We've lost The Feltham?

BEN: (NOT LISTENING:) Oh, no, that's – yeah.

HELEN: Did you have any other preference of hotel? I mean *this* one's lovely.

AMY: This hotel? No, we can't afford the tap water here. Especially as neither of us can get any more work shifts.

BEN: (UNCERTAIN:) No, exactly, that's – what they told me.

AMY: We're only meeting here because Ben met a casting director the other night who said that she eats here, and he's hoping we might bump into her.

BEN: I've had lunch here three times this week, no luck as of yet, and I'm in my overdraft's overdraft.

HELEN: How...*haunting*.

AMY: It won't surprise you to know, Ben's descended from a serial killer.

HELEN: Oh, lovely, I'm descended from an interior decorator.

BEN: Oh, my God, it's her. Amy, she's there. Mary's there! I've got to, *err* – I'll be back – you decide on everything.

AMY: (DISSAPOINTED:) Ben, really?

BEN: Yeah, yeah. Whatever you want's fine. I don't care. Gotta go.

AMY: (DEFLATED, DISSAPOINTED:) Ben, really? Ben!

FX: FOOTSTEPS RUNNING AWAY

HELEN: (BEAT:) You know, I don't think he's coming back.

FX: SINISTER MUSIC

BEN

PODCAST: By this point, historical documents, place my ancestor working for a cobbler in Chance Street. With four unsolved murders, every butcher, baker and blacksmith was accused of being The Slaughterer, while Penelope remained in the shadows. But it was her next victim – Ronald Peck – that was would prove to be the start of Penelope’s downfall – with the finding of a blood-soaked piece of evidence...aaaand *cut*.

FX: MUSIC STOPS

BEN: Alright, quick wee break, I want to see if Mary’s emailed, then shall we go for another episode?

AMY: First, come see our listening figures, for me? I’m a bit worried we’re not improving. Five episodes in, we’re barely getting any downloads. Plus, only one person ever re-listens, and I’m pretty sure that’s your nan.

BEN: Yeah, she told me the podcast helps with her insomnia, but let’s not read anything into that.

AMY: I’m nervous we’re wasting our time.

BEN: No, no, we’re not. We’re definitely not. I mentioned the podcast to Mary Arwin, and she *loved* the idea I was descended from a murderer. We can’t stop now!

AMY: Well...I-I did have some thoughts that might help. Thinking you'd want to carry on.

BEN: Great! What have you got?

AMY: Okay...well, first is a more basic point. We never get paid for our artistic work, right? One reason being, people don't put value in us.

BEN: Can you get to your point; I don't think my ego's ready for this conversation today.

AMY: So, the biggest marker of value in *anything* is that it has money behind it. Donors, backers, *sponsors* supporting it, and listeners know that. All the major podcasts stop every few minutes to advertise. Take Emily Maitlis. She can barely get a word in edge ways without telling you about her broadband. My thinking is, you're just someone with a microphone – we need to create a feeling that it's more than that.

BEN: So, we should try and get sponsors?

AMY: No, easier than that – we just make our own. Fake products, fake companies. Legitimise ourselves to the audience – it's our own blue tick.

BEN: Yeah, I mean, great. Happy with that.

AMY: Now, the second idea is...*dicier*. The best way to get listeners is word of mouth. And if we're not getting the ears naturally, we could make them?

BEN: 'Make them', Dr. Frankenstein?

AMY: We create the movement to carry the podcast. You and I spend a few evenings, couple of weekends, making hundreds of fake Twitter accounts to shout about the podcast. That way creating non-stop conversation...what's that face?

BEN: Well...no, it's just...It's very *plotting*. Rasputin would think of that, let's put it that way.

AMY: And you don't agree?

BEN: Well, it's more that it makes me nervous. I worry that--

AMY: Oh, 'worries', where's your courage? It's only the next step of what we've done – more *creation*. And we need more drama, sound effects, *sensationalism*. Our tongue looks like the innocent flower. But let's be the serpent under it.

BEN: Who said that? Dominic Cummings?

AMY: / did. Now, let's do it. We can make this podcast solve our problems; we just need more nerve, Mr. Macbeth!

FX: PUB AMBIANCE THROUGHOUT

AMY: Alright, our toasts tonight. To Becky, the newest member of our monthly pub quiz team.

BECKY: Thanks guys. Thanks. So long as a round on Gareth Southgate comes up, you'll be pleased to have me.

AMY: And to Mark, on the most exciting thing ever to happen to him, outside of sharing a lift with Emma Thompson, making his West End debut last week!

FX: CHEERS, CLAPPING.

MARK: Thank you, Ames. But I'm really only the spear carrier. Let's not get swept away.

BEN: Yes, but who's spear are you carrying?

MARK: (DELIGHTED:) Well, it's Simon Russell Beale's actually. Since you ask.

BEN: (IN AWE:) Simon...Russell...Beale.

MARK: He's Richard III, yeah. It's only a couple of scenes, but I get killed by him which is very exciting. And I think my deaths are actually getting better.

AMY: Go on then, what's the trick to a good death?

MARK: Errr, commitment, I think. And shock. I really believe Simon's stabbed me in the stomach.

BEN: (MOCKINGLY:) Is someone writing this down?

AMY: I'd love to be killed by Simon Russell Beale.

BECKY: And you love a good blood bag.

MARK: True. *Love* a good blood bag. Chest and stomach, full to the brim. Burst like a tomato all over rows A to E.

BECKY: I don't have any of that. When I die in Othello on Ice, I just skate off looking sad.

AMY: Othello where, sorry?

BECKY: On ice. It's a reinterpretation.

AMY: Yeah, it would be. So, that's your thing is it, Becky, ice-based shows?

BECKY: No, no, I do anything. Lately, quite a lot of international adverts. Not my favourite, but a German mother gives me two bites of the kirsche.

MARK: Say 'buy this now' in German?

BECKY: Bevormunden sie mich nicht.

BEN: Anyone else suddenly want to buy German toilet roll?

AMY: Adverts? How funny. Ben and I have been thinking about doing a bit of that recently for our podcast.

BECKY: God, everyone has a podcast. What's yours about?

AMY: We pretend Ben is descended from a serial killer, and it's him learning about her... (BEAT:) no, honestly, we've done five episodes. I'll send you the link.

BECKY: Right, okay. Didn't think that's where that was going.

BEN: (EMBARASSED:) It's a role. A type of role. I'm sort of playing a heightened version of myself. Like Lorraine Kelly when you put a camera on her.

AMY: (TO BEN:) You sound embarrassed, Ben.

BEN: No, no, I'm not – I don't mean to. I'm just, err, trying to help them understand. It's similar to you both, it's performance. A steppingstone until something bigger comes along.

AMY: Well, we're just starting this technique for the next few episodes. Using social media a lot more, driving the conversation; but we were gonna' do some sponsorship stuff too, would you help us with that?

BECKY: Yeah, of course. I've always got time for fake serial killers and their families.

QUIZZER: Okay, everyone pen to paper. Quiz is about to start. First round: famous liars...

FX: THUNDER STRIKE

BEN

PODCAST: The police had received a tip-off. Their first since these killings began.

FX: RAIN AND THUNDER

BEN

PODCAST: Michael Smith, one night returning home from work, heard a commotion up on the first floor of Charrington brewery. Running to the police station, he spoke to detective Benjamin Willet. Where upon, four officers were dispatched and arrived at the brewery within twelve minutes.

FX: FOOTSTEPS RUNNING

BEN

PODCAST: Inside was Penelope's fifth victim: Ronald Peck.

FX: HORROR SCREAM

BEN

PODCAST: Multiple wounds to the neck, and blood seeping into the floorboards. This was a more frenzied, unexpected attack than my ancestor's usual. And Penelope had, for once, made a mistake...

FX: TENSE MUSIC BUILDS

BEN

PODCAST: A piece of evidence was found that changed the course of the investigation: a woman's earring. And a realisation...they'd been looking in the wrong place all this time.

FX: MUSIC BUILDS TO CRESCENDO.

FX: LIGHT-HEARTED JINGLE

BECKY

PODCAST: (UPBEAT:) There has never been a better time to visit Bavaria. With its exceptional beer, long country walks and picturesque scenery, Bavaria really is the jewel of Europe...Bavaria, why not?

BECKY: (BEAT:) Is that the sort of thing you wanted, Amy?

FX: UPBEAT MONTAGE MUSIC BEGINS

AMY: It's perfect, Becky, thank you. I love it. Are you free next Thursday for another one?

FX: UPBEAT MONTAGE MUSIC CONTINUES

FX: SOUND OF RIPPING PAPER

BEN

PODCAST: Photographs of the discovered earring were published
three days after Ronald Peck's murder.

FX: FLASHBULBS SOUNDS

BEN

PODCAST: They appeared alongside an address to which members
of the public could visit and report having recognised the
earrings in a bid to help the investigation.

FX: DOOR BANGING; VOCAL MURMURS

BEN

PODCAST: An address which soon had to be removed as the police
were inundated with visitors. Over four days, six
hundred and seventy-three women were named as
having owned these earrings. None of whom were
Penelope Montague.

FX: SINISTER MUSIC BUILDS

BEN ON

PODCAST: While this panic shrouded the police's investigation,
Penelope murdered Arthur Reid, Simon Bonfield and
Philip Stone...They were getting further from the truth.

FX: STABBING, VIOLENT NOISES

FX: LIGHT-HEARTED JINGLE

BECKY ON

PODCAST: I wasn't sure about skiing until I used DownSlope.com.
The fastest, easiest way to get into skiing this Winter.
(FASTER:) Half price for kids under five. Two years and
under go free. Terms and conditions on our website.

AMY: (BEAT:) That's perfect, Becky. Great. Can you do same
time next week?

BECKY: Errr, yeah, I mean--

FX: UPBEAT MONTAGE MUSIC SOFTENS

AMY: Okay, we're doing something different this week. No murder narrative, we're going to do a Q&A with the fans.

BEN: *Fans?* We have fans?

AMY: Well, *fan*. We got one question the other day to our inbox, I'll make-up the others. But it shows the Twitter work I'm doing is working. People are hearing about it.

BECKY: Amy, you're the most professional liar I've ever met.

AMY: Writer, liar, tomato, potato. Let me go and print the questions.

FX: FOOTSTEPS WALKING AWAY, DOOR CLOSING

BECKY: Ben, can I ask, are you worried about all this on your career?

BEN: How do you mean?

BECKY: Just, being the face of a big lie?

BEN: Well, it's a performance. And besides, Mary Arwin's let me audition for her and she knows about the podcast.

BECKY: Cool, totally. I get it. Only, if you're getting questions, maybe some people don't realise that? Just something to think about...

**FX: DOOR SLAMS, FOOTSTEPS BACK IN;
PAPERS HANDED OVER**

AMY: Right, okay, got 'em. Ben, they're for you. I wrote down all your answers, so it's just acting as normal.

BEN: 'Can you relate to Penelope?', 'what made you want to start the podcast?'

AMY: Most of it's stolen from a *Guardian* Q&A with the My Dad Wrote a Porno lot.

BEN: 'What do your family think?'

AMY: *That's* the real question. Sent in via Twitter.

BEN: You've used my family's real names in the answer?

AMY: Well, best place to lie is in the truth. You both ready for take one?

FX: UPBEAT MONTAGE MUSIC PICKS UP

FX: UPBEAT MONTAGE MUSIC CONTINUES

BEN

PODCAST: Heading to the British Library, I went to look at archives
not available online.

FX: DOORS CREAKING SHUT

BEN

PODCAST: Dr. Charlotte Swabbings talked me through each of
them in detail.

FX: SOUNDS OF PAGES TURNING

BEN

PODCAST: I wanted to look deeper, what connected Penelope's
victims? Brothel owners, abusive husbands, corrupt
officers – all men whose victims were women.

FX: DEEP, VILLANOUS MALE LAUGH

BEN

PODCAST: Maybe these weren't random choices, but revenge.
Efforts to bring about justice and rebalance an unfair
system. Was she a killer...driven by equality?

FX: LIGHT-HEARTED JINGLE

BECKY ON

PODCAST: Bowes' fully biodegradable kitchen bags are the talk of Gibraltar, with their sensitive arm bands--

FX: PHONE RINGS

AMY: Phones off when we're recording, please!

BEN: Sorry, sorry, it's me – *it's Mary!* It's the casting director!
(ON PHONE:) Hello, Mary? Yes, speaking...

FX: PUB AMBIANCE

AMY: *Toasts!* Toasts before the quiz. Raise your glasses.
Firstly, to my – *incredible* – fiancée on landing the role of
a lifetime at Regents Open Air in King Lear!

FX: CHEERS, CLAPPING.

BEN: Dream summer ahead looking for a hillside hovel with
Roger Allam.

BECKY: There's few better to be looking for a hovel with.

MARK: It's true, I listened to his Desert Island Discs, he's a very
resourceful man.

AMY: *And.* And, and, and...another bit of good news...
Penelope Montague, Shoreditch Slaughterer – after six
months - has had three *thousand* downloads as of this
morning.

FX: LESS CHEERS, CLAPPING.

BECKY: (SHOCK:) three thousand?!

AMY: Three thousand and about forty, yeah.

MARK: (ASTOUNDED:) I'm – well, congratulations. I'm amazed
people believe that Ben's descended from an infamous
serial killer no one's ever heard of.

AMY: Well, lots of people are forgotten from history. It's not unsurprising this has happened.

MARK: Amy, nothing's happened, it's all made up. It's *very* surprising.

BECKY: I'm surprised you're still doing it, what with all your other commitments – *plus* the wedding!

BEN: Well, we've not really talked about it, but what with King Lear, we'll have to find a balance of priorities.

AMY: The whole promotion system's worked a treat. On top of all our fake sponsorships, I learnt how to get Twitter bots to release supportive content every thirty minutes.

MARK: That feels almost illegal.

BEN: 'Almost' being the key word there.

AMY: We've now got genuine fans of the show, a *real* sponsor, and there's even been an invitation to the 'New Shows Stand' at the Cheltenham Podcast Festival. It's like the literary one but with half of the recognition and a tenth of the audience.

BECKY: Well, to Amy and Ben and somehow doing it all.

BEN: To King Lear!

AMY: And Penelope!

FX: GLASSES CLINKING, CHEERS

FX: PHONE RINGING, BEFORE STOPPING

AMY

VOICEMAIL: Hey, it's Amy's voicemail. Why are you not voice-noting me, who leaves voicemails? I'll probably not listen to this.

**FX: VOICEMAIL BEEP, FOLLOWED BY PUB
AMBIANCE**

BEN: Ames, I'm so sorry, I'm not gonna make it back for brunch. We're all going out for King Lear company drinks. But, I'll make it up to you. I promise.

**FX: VOICEMAIL BEEP, FOLLOWED BY
BACKGROUND CHATTER, LAUGHING.**

BEN: Is there any way we can push your parents back for dinner tomorrow? Maybe not six but seven...or seven thirty? Nine at the *absolute* latest.

**FX: VOICEMAIL BEEP, FOLLOWED BY SHOP
AMBIANCE.**

BEN: Just getting myself a meal deal, can you remind me what time the film is? I'm worried you said six, 'cause I've now got a costume fitting then so we might need to skip it.

**FX: VOICEMAIL BEEP, FOLLOWED BY BUS
TRAVELLING**

BEN: (YAWNING:) Before you ask, I've not read, uhm, the Penelope script. I'll do my best to – what are we today...Monday? I'll try to read it for Friday, or start of next week. Then we can – maybe - get back to it.

FX: SOUND OF BUS HORN

FX: FOOTSEPS RUNNING AND SITTING DOWN

HELEN: (TO AMY:) Apologies, Amy. Sorry, I'm late. Couldn't find someone to pawn the baby off to. But I've arrived now, everything's calm and we can talk about your wedding.

AMY: Great, thank you.

HELEN: *Right*, can I just say, we're in a really strong place. Everything starts to get tense six months out, but that's what I'm here for. To bring about calm, peace, and reassurance that everything's in hand. Did you and Brian have any questions before we start?

AMY: (CORRECTING:) Ben.

HELEN: Uh-huh.

AMY: No, we're good. Well, if I don't, he doesn't. It's me that's taking the lead on... on pretty much everything now.

HELEN: Oh, why's that?

AMY: He's, uh, in rehearsals for a play. Has been for the last few weeks and everything and everyone else has fallen by the wayside, sadly...Even this.

HELEN: I'm sorry to hear that. It was the same with my third wife. No, second wife. I'm on my third wife. That's how I got to

my third wife. It's funny, most of the weddings I plan are my own! (LAUGHS).

AMY: (SOMBER:) Well...let's hope it doesn't come to that.

HELEN: No, you're right, you're right. Poor taste. Let's start with the good news... I've got us a 3% discount on the ice cream coolers.

FX: UPBEAT CELEBRATORY FANFARE

AMY: Fanfare's working. Check. Spooky music.

FX: SINISTER MUSIC STARTS AND STOPS

AMY: Check. Thunder.

FX: THUNDER AND STOPS

AMY: Check.

FX: DOOR BURSTING OPEN, FOOTSTEPS

BEN: Sorry. It was mum on the phone.

FX: CACKLE SOUND EFFECT

AMY: Cackle, check. Is she okay?

BEN: She was calling to say that, unfortunately, she can't make *any* of my King Lear performances in the whole six-month run. She's fully booked. Besides, she's not *too* bothered anyway, she knows how it ends.

AMY: Well, at least she rung.

BEN: That was an accident. She meant to call her tennis partner *Benedict*, but since I picked up she thought she'd tell me in person. Anyway, shall we get on with Penelope, it's been a while.

AMY: Yeah, I've put the script in-front of you.

BEN: I've not had a chance to read it, yet. Sorry.

AMY: No, I thought not. While you've been away, I've continued work on all our socials. It's actually what I've based this episode around.

BEN: 'Fan theories'?

AMY: Yeah. Well, we're running out of story, truth be told. And people have some *wild* theories about her. So, I thought, lean into the fans.

BEN: (UNSURE, GOING ALONG:) Right, okay.

FX: MANY PAGES TURNING

AMY: Everything written there is a *real* theory we've received.

BEN: (UNCOMFORTABLE:) It's – *wow*. Look how much people write to you...They're quite, uh...explicit theories.

AMY: You should see the drawings. They're much worse.

BEN: And they all believe it?

AMY: Oh, God yeah. They'd die for their historical truth, when in reality it's a plot-point I invented when I couldn't sleep after three episodes of W1A. You ready for take one?

BEN: Do you think, Amy...have we gone a bit far here?

AMY: (BLUNTLY:) No, I don't think so. Take one, ready?

BEN: No, really. Think about it for a second, have we - come to the end? Best to get out clean before there's any mess?

AMY: *Mess*, what does that mean?

BEN: I- I just have this feeling...now is the time to stop.

AMY: Right ... you're sated, are you? Is that it?

BEN: No, no, that's not what I've said—

AMY: You're done because you, what, have your play now, you're busy. And I'm supposed to go back to twiddling my fingers at the council?

BEN: No, *no*! That's not – it's...

AMY: This was *your* idea. Fake true crime.

BEN: It was, *once*, yes.

AMY: And you do this, you pick up a project and get everyone involved, then drop it when something shinier comes along.

BEN: What I mean, we seemed to have jumped into something and it feels it could blow up in my face. We've

crossed into something else and honestly; I don't like lying to people.

AMY: (SARCASTICALLY:) Says the Earl of Gloucester's son.

BEN: That's different. That's acting.

AMY: *This* is acting.

BEN: Not if the audience don't know it is!

AMY: Don't patronise them, of course they do. Mythical unknown killers, hair pin stabbings, "historical events." We market it as real, but they know there's invention and it's what they want to hear. Isn't that what it's always really been.

BEN: Well, I—

AMY: So, screw your courage to the sticking place, or wherever else you shove it, because we're going to record this episode, and then next week we're going to the Cheltenham Podcast Festival with heads held high. Alright?... Look at me, yes?

BEN: (BEAT:) What has this done to us, Amy? You were never like this. We were happy before we started.

AMY: No, we weren't, Ben. We were sleeping, / was sleeping to just how unequal our relationship is. If anything, it's woken me up...I honestly think I was just here until what you really wanted came along.

BEN: That's not – that's not true.

AMY: ...It's how it feels. And how it's been for weeks. *Months*, actually. No, you know what, since our first date that's how it felt. I just didn't notice...Alright, take one.

FX: PENELOPE MONTAGUE FANFARE**FX: UPBEAT MUSIC**

BEN

PODCAST: (VERY UPBEAT:) Hey everyone, great to be back. Today we're talking fan theories, discussing *your* ideas around *my* ancestor. Also, a quick reminder, I'll be in Cheltenham next Sunday for our first *live* event, should you be free there's some tickets available on the event's website. Okay, alright, theory one is from @ClareWillaims3 and they say Penelope Montague was actually Penelope Montagues and a whole gang of women – well, that's interesting, what do others think?

**FX: DISTANT AUDIENCE AMBIANCE, MURMURS
ETC.**

EVENT

HOST: (THROUGH MIC/LOUDSPEAKER:) Welcome to the Cheltenham Podcast Festival. For those attending James William's interview with the Penelope Montague creator, we will begin momentarily.

BEN: (IN A WHISPER, PANIC:) Amy, I don't think I can do this.

AMY: (IN A WHISPER:) Yes, you can. You know the answers, keep calm.

BEN: (PANIC:) No really, Amy, I feel, uh, very--

AMY: You can, you can. Go out there and act. It's a performance for a few hundred people.

**FX: INTERVIEW MUSIC INTRO, FOLLOWED BY
APPLAUSE**

JAMES: Good Afternoon, everyone, thank you for joining us in the New Show Stand. I ask you in the audience, if you found out your ancestor was a murderer what would you do about it? Hide it? Ignore it? Pretend it was someone else? Well today's guest discovered *exactly* that and made his own history into a hit podcast. Please welcome, Ben Montague...

FX: ROUND OF APPLAUSE

AMY: (WHISPERED:) Go. GO!

**FX: LOUDER APPLAUSE; FOOTSTEPS ONTO
STAGE**

BEN: Hi, Hi there—

FX: BEN'S MICROPHONE FEEDBACK

BEN: Sorry, thanks for, uh, having me.

JAMES: Thanks for being here, Ben. Let's start at the beginning. Take us back. You were looking through old boxes and discovered something, is that right?

BEN: Yes, yeah, I found an old newspaper cutting about an infamous serial killer in a box in the attic - which is, uh, uncommon in most bedsits.

FX: AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

BEN: And we had the same surname, so I started asking questions from there.

FX: DISTANT AUDIENCE COUGH

JAMES: And when you found out there was this woman in your family, what did you think in that moment?

BEN: Well, I – at first, shock, horror and, uh, intrigue.

JAMES: And yet if you Google 'Penelope Montague', there's very little online.

BEN: Right.

JAMES: What do you make of that?

BEN: (BEAT, PANIC:) In, uhm – in what way?

FX: DISTANT AUDIENCE COUGH

JAMES: Well, why has she been kept from the history books?

BEN: Oh, I, uhm, I don't know. One of those things.

JAMES: You must have an assumption.

BEN: Well, I mean--

JAMES: As to why Penelope has been kept--

BEN: You know, I – women are routinely overlooked, aren't they? Historically, I mean. Always have been.

JAMES: You think it's Victorian sexism?

BEN: Yeah, maybe. That's a good answer. I'll take it.

FX: FAINT AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

JAMES: And what does your mother think about all this now?
How big it's become?

BEN: She's, uhm... she's indifferent, actually.

JAMES: What about the rest of your family?

BEN: I – I don't know. They're private people, we don't talk about it.

JAMES: Well, I have the list here from a Q&A you did: your Auntie Sara, your cousins George and Matilda – what do they think? How has this impacted them?

FX: MICROPHONE FEEDSBACK AGAIN

BEN: That's, uhm... they – I'm sorry, Amy. I can't do this.

FX: AUDIENCE MURMURS

BEN: It's a lie. James, I have to go. This is all too much--

JAMES: What's going on?

BEN: (AWAY FROM MIC:) It's all a lie. It's not real.

FX: LOUDER AUDIENCE MURMURS, UPSET

JAMES: *Wrote?* Wrote what? What are you—

BEN: (AWAY FROM MIC:) None of any of this is true.

FX: FOOTSTEPS, BEN LEAVING

**FX: AUDIBLE AUDIENCE FRUSTRATION,
CALLING**

JAMES: (TO AUDIENCE:) Excuse – *excuse* – everyone, please.
I don't know what's going on either, we're going to figure
out what's happened and we'll, uh...

FX: FOOTSTEPS ONTO STAGE, AMY ARRIVING

AMY: (INTO MIC:) Hi, hello, yes.

JAMES: Who are you--

AMY: My name is Amy Tuffin and I am the writer and creator
of Penelope Montague...Did you hear that? / made her.
She's mine.

JAMES: (BEAT) *Writer?* Writer of what?

FX: AUDIENCE UNREST BUILDS

AMY: The podcast. None of it's—

JAMES: It's a true crime podcast.

AMY: No, it's fiction *and* true crime. It's been that since the
beginning.

FX: AUDIENCE UNREST CONTINUES LOUDER

JAMES: (TO AUDIENCE:) No, no, please. Can we have some calm. I think it's important we hear this.

FX: AUDIENCE QUIETENS

JAMES: Repeat what it is you just said?

AMY: I wrote everything. Ben's just a – an actor. Paid to be here, I'm the one who made this.

JAMES: So, who's Penelope Montague?

AMY: Well, that's individual. It's who she is to *you* that matters.

JAMES: No, sorry, you've lost me.

FX: AUDIENCE MURMURS

AMY: Penelope might not real, but everyone in this room believes in her. She means something individual to all of us. How can--

JAMES: She's a lie, then?

AMY: She's real enough. We've all created her together. I've done the invention; wrote up the facts of her life; marketed and packaged her, then you've all run with it. Carried her far beyond what I could've done alone. I've seen your letters and theories. You gave her feeling, emotion, life. She's fictional until she matters to you, then she's good as breathing. That's what counts.

JAMES: ...all I'm hearing is you've manipulated your audience for your gain.

AMY: Well, possibly, but that's a child's argument. What does that matter?

**FX: AUDIENCE FRUSTRATION IS PALPABLE,
AND BUILDING**

AMY: No, I'm not being glib. You all enjoyed the story, so who cares if it's not true? You got what you wanted. I got what I wanted.

JAMES: Our enjoyment was linked to reality. It matters because the truth matters.

AMY: *Mattered*, please. There have been cultural and political landslides started on simpler ideas than Penelope Montague. They've been written on the side of buses, for God's sake. Mine is a tiny, tiny child of a much bigger problem.

FX: AUDIENCE DISQUIET IS BUILDING.

AMY: And, if you don't like that, I get it, / don't like it, but I am not the problem. I'm just one of the one's making something with it. Everybody lies, and I'm being honest now.

FX: AUDIENCE DISQUIET CONTINUES

JAMES: (FRUSTRATED:) Okay, let's stop, shall we? This has been – I don't know, what this has been.

AMY: Well, personally, I've had a lovely time! (TO AUDIENCE:) Have you all had a lovely time?

FX: AUDIENCE ERUPTS, SHOUTS

FX: PARK NOISES, BIRDS TWEETING

BEN: Excuse me, is this seat taken?

AMY: Ben, hello, (AWKWARDLY:) How - are—

BEN: Sorry, I'm late—

AMY: (AWKWARDLY:) No, no, it's fine—It's nice to, uh--

BEN: You look well.

AMY: Do I? *You* look great. How've you been?

BEN: Oh, you know, bobbing along. I have an audition next week for a musical.

AMY: Oh, wow.

BEN: I'm playing an amoeba, which is fun. Then a reading for a short film on Friday.

AMY: That's amazing.

FX: DISTANT DOG BARKING

BEN: Yeah, the short film's actually a thriller. Since the podcast, I keep getting offered whistle-blower roles.

AMY: Right, sure.

BEN: It's a shame I don't look more like Edward Snowden, really.

AMY: That *is* a shame, yeah. But – but personally, I mean, outside of work, you're okay?

BEN: Well, yeah, you know. What would've been our wedding day last week was hard, but I kept going. (BEAT:) How've you been?

AMY: Oh, I'm – I'm not, you know--

BEN: Sure.

AMY: Good days, bad days. The council sacked me...Being labelled 'a compulsive liar' by The Daily Mail will do that to you...and I'm staying with mum and dad, so...

BEN: Yeah, I guessed.

AMY: But I'm actually doing another podcast. Believe it or not.

BEN: (STUNNED:) No! On what?!

AMY: The fiction-factional making of Penelope Montague.

BEN: (AGHAST:) You're joking?!

AMY: No, no. It'll be an in-depth deep dive into the process...plus I got a book deal. So, I'm starting that. And some public speaking opportunities that have come

up, but I'll only get to those after the BBC3 documentary is finished.

BEN: Amy, that's – I don't know what to say.

AMY: Yeah. I'll be with this for a while, I think.

BEN: Well, *congratulations*, I guess. (SHORT BEAT:) Listen, I'm so sorry to have to do this--

AMY: No, no, I get it.

BEN: It's only 'cause it was my grandmother's and she – she would want me to have it back. She loved it, so.

AMY: It's a gorgeous engagement ring. It'll make someone very happy. It did me.

BEN: I know it's horrible. I'm sorry.

AMY: I understand. (SHORT BEAT:) I'll leave you to, uhm-

BEN: Amy...It was all real, wasn't it?

AMY: What?

BEN: You and me. The wedding. Our four years. The laughter. All of it. That was – that was real for you, was it? You weren't lying.

AMY: Don't say that, Ben. Don't question that. That's...that's not fair.

BEN: Because, with everything everyone thinks of you, I want you to know...it's only ever been real for me.

AMY: (HEARTFELT:) I know...Of course, I know.

AMY

PODCAST: Hi everyone. Amy Tuffin here. Even with everything we all know, I thought it seemed right that I tell you the end of the story – how Penelope died; because I know some of you will care, so... She died aged just thirty-three on the bank of the Mile End canal. Sick with fever and carrying all her earthly possessions, which included a letter confessing to every count of murder and not a word of regret. And that was that, never caught... it's nice to think she got away with it, in some ways. (BEAT:) Anyway, thanks for listening.

THE END