



# Lethal White

## Episode 1

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Adapted from the novel by Robert Galbraith

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1 EXT. HILLSIDE (WHITE HORSE OF UFFINGTON) - NIGHT  
(FLASHBACK - LATE 90S)

Undulating tussock. Inky disorienting darkness. A YOUNG BOY (6) lies with his back against the turf, holding his spread hands up against the stars, seeing how their movement can blot out the pin-pricks of blue starlight.

He MUMBLES something. He seems altered, maybe drugged -- and then his raised hands, very briefly, flash bright.

He is confused. He examines his hands -- and then turns and raises himself up -- and sees a torch beam sweeping over the dark hillside. This is what has briefly caught his own hands.

Another beam -- from elsewhere -- and then another. Are they going to converge near him? Are they *hunting* him? They are no more than dark, distant silhouettes. The Boy ducks back down. His heart pounding.

The wind is up -- but he still catches snatches of high-pitched crying, the wailing of a--

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)  
No no no I want to go home I want--

The sound cuts off abruptly. The Boy crosses himself, over and over, MUTTERING a garbled prayer.

The Little Girl CRIES OUT again. The Boy shakes his head, terrified -- but peeks above the grass tussock to look again. It is dark -- he can't see much at all -- but then from a way off, one of the wobbling torch beams fixes on:

A Dark Figure, not far from the Boy's hiding place. The figure drags a long-haired LITTLE GIRL (9), dressed in her pyjamas, towards an eerie 3ft-wide white spot. Under torchlight the spot almost glows, alien in the green grass.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)  
Mum-meeeeee...

2 INT/EXT. BILLY'S BEDROOM/DELL, STEDA COTTAGE, CHISWELL ESTATE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - LATE 90S)

The Young Boy startles awake to HUSHED VOICES -- coming from outside the cottage?

The Boy is sleeping *beneath* his bed, shivering under a thin blanket.

He creeps to the condensation-fogged window. The woods outside are dark. Did he imagine the sound? Then -- a flicker of torchlight, just beneath his window. He rubs a porthole in the fogged glass and cranes to look down, SEEING:

TWO MEN carrying something body-shaped wrapped in a blanket towards the dell at the rear of the cottage. One of them has a torch gripped between his teeth. It illuminates the pinkness of the fleece blanket -- and briefly catches the face of the other man: JACK KNIGHT (40s)

The Boy recognises that man (his father). The Boy's breath quickens. Tears coming.

LITTLE GIRL (PRE-LAP)  
Mum-meeee!

The Boy watches the Men carry the body towards the dell.

Jack Knight glances up at the Boy's window -- the Boy springs away from the glass--

3 EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK - LATE 90S) 3

-- the Boy GASPS as, from his hiding place, he SEES:

The Dark Figure presses the Little Girl down onto the white spot and begins to strangle her there. She wets herself -- the torch beam catching her pyjamas darkening --

But then a different torch beam swings and catches the Boy directly in the face. He is blinded for a moment--

ADULT VOICE (O.S.)  
Hoi!

The Boy rises, turns and runs, electric with fear. But the slope steepens sharply -- and now the Boy loses his footing -- and then he is falling, out of the torch beam, tumbling and rolling away, a sickening descent into the darkness...

## TITLES

4 EXT. GARDEN BY LAKE, WEDDING VENUE - DAY 4

SUPERIMPOSE: **TWENTY YEARS LATER**

ROBIN and MATTHEW, newly-married, stand awkwardly in front of a decorative lake, posing for their WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER.

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER  
A tiny little tad closer? There's a swan about to swim between you.

Robin turns to look at the swan paddling across the surface. Matt reaches to take her hand and pull her towards him--

ROBIN  
Ow. Matt.

That arm is heavily bandaged. Her knife wound is aching.

MATTHEW

Sorry. I keep forgetting.

(beat)

We should... If we want this swan?

The swan opens its wings and flies to the lake edge.

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER

D'you want to wait and see if it--

ROBIN

I really want a drink.

Robin looks over at the terrace, where their GUESTS are mingling with sparkling wine and canapés.

MATTHEW

He won't have left. Not while there's free food on offer.

ROBIN

I wasn't-- I actually want to say hello to Mum's cousin. She's come from Spain.

On Matt: he doesn't believe her. With good reason.

5

INT. MEN'S TOILETS, WEDDING VENUE - DAY

5

STRIKE is seated on a (closed) toilet. He hasn't slept in days. He looks bruised and dishevelled in his suit. On the upside, he has found two pints of bitter to take into the cubicle with him, and is making steady progress with them.

There is a KNOCK on the cubicle door.

STRIKE

This one's taken.

MARTIN ELLACOTT (O.S.)

You're Cormoran Strike.

STRIKE

(beat)

This one's taken.

MARTIN ELLACOTT (O.S.)

You got the guy who knifed my sister. It's in the news. I thought you'd want to see it.

Strike takes a long, slow breath. Knocks back one of the pints and climbs back onto his feet holding the other.

Strike emerges from his cubicle to find MARTIN ELLACOTT waiting for him, a news article on his phone's screen. Strike looks at it politely for a couple of seconds.

STRIKE

Where's Robin now?

MARTIN ELLACOTT

She's out on the terrace.

STRIKE

Thanks.

Strike goes to move towards the exit--

MARTIN ELLACOTT

Aren't you going to flush it?

Strike lays a hand on Martin's shoulder. Feigned seriousness.

STRIKE

I never flush.

Strike passes Martin his empty and starts work on pint no.2.

6 EXT. TERRACE, WEDDING VENUE - DAY

6

Strike works his way through other guests, aware that he is being stared at by nearly everyone he passes.

He is inadvertently heading away from Robin and Matt. They are standing at the far end of the terrace. Matt is joshing with RUGBY FRIENDS. Robin is with her parents, LINDA and MICHAEL, who are anxious that she is happy.

LINDA

They'd put a big arrangement on top table, but I told them, people want to see the bride not the flowers!

MICHAEL

But we can have them put it back, if you'd rather have them there?

ROBIN

Everything's perfect, Dad.

MICHAEL

(relieved)

Well, so long as you're happy...

Robin glances past her parents, quietly scanning. Martin arrives with a fresh bottle of fizz. He tops Robin up.

MARTIN ELLACOTT

Your boss is looking for you.

ROBIN

Is he? Where?

Matt catches the lift in Robin's voice. Hides his irritation as he turns back to fake-focus on the group he's talking to.

MARTIN ELLACOTT

He's quite unhygienic.

Robin sets off through the crowd.

STRIKE

has found a low stone wall to perch on. He sits back, letting sunlight fall on his face. Aching. Unsure why he's here.

He opens his eyes as an AUNT steps one way and PARENTS pursue their TODDLER the other -- and somehow the wedding guests seem to part -- and there is Robin. Their eyes meet.

Strike gets back onto his feet as Robin reaches him.

STRIKE

You look beautiful.

ROBIN

Thanks. You look terrible.

STRIKE

It's this jacket. It needs the sides letting out...

They grin at each other.

ROBIN

I saw the news. You caught him.

STRIKE

We did.

(beat)

Anyway, I'm not staying. I just wanted to say that I'm sorry and I want you back.

Her heart in her mouth--

ROBIN

What?

STRIKE

Come back. Come back to work. Have the job back. Sorry, I'm-- I haven't slept.

Robin realises that she suddenly feels like crying. Strike, looking at his feet, doesn't notice. Robin covers it--

ROBIN

You didn't have to be so dramatic,  
 you know. Bursting into the church.  
 You could have just called me.

STRIKE

I did call.

ROBIN

No, you didn't.

STRIKE

I've left four messages. Assumed  
 you'd blocked me.

ROBIN

Why would I--?

Robin turns. Catches Matt watching her from the far end of the terrace. He turns away. A thought occurs to Robin.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Cormoran? I've got some things I--  
 it's a bit of a strange day to be--

STRIKE

Yeah, sorry. Go and... mingle.

ROBIN

Promise me you'll stay. I want to  
 talk to you properly. I want--  
 (beat)  
 Just... will you promise me?

STRIKE

I'll stay.

Robin turns and walks back to Matt. A change in her.

Matt smiles as she arrives, projecting bonhomie...

MATTHEW

Hi, beautiful. I was just saying--

ROBIN

We need to talk.

Matt trails Robin. She accosts a liveried HOTEL PORTER (17).

ROBIN

Excuse me. Where's the bridal  
 suite?

The Porter glances from Robin to Matt -- and smirks.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Don't be a jerk.

MATTHEW  
Robin.

HOTEL PORTER  
(blushing, flustered)  
Through the doors and go left.

8 INT. BRIDAL SUITE/CORRIDOR, WEDDING VENUE - DAY

8

As Matt closes the door, Robin crosses the room to put distance between them. She takes off her wedding ring and lays it on the table. Matt sees it -- and HALF-LAUGHS.

ROBIN  
You blocked Cormoran, didn't you?

MATTHEW  
Yes. I did. And... what, now you don't want to be married any more?

ROBIN  
What gives you the right--

MATTHEW  
I'm trying to keep you safe! You were attacked. Nearly killed. Look at your arm!

ROBIN  
You don't get to make those decisions for me! No-one does.

MATTHEW  
I was trying to protect you. That's what a husband *should* do. I've just made exactly that promise in church!

Matt crosses the room to join her--

ROBIN  
Don't touch me.

MATTHEW  
Maybe I shouldn't have done it--

ROBIN  
You've said that a lot recently.

MATTHEW

Look how he treats you! He sacks you and then he shows up like a dickhead, making sure it's all about him, and you scurry back to him. I think you're *fantastic*, Rob. But you let yourself down with that job. And that's the truth.

ROBIN

No, Matt. The *truth* is--

A KNOCK-KNOCK on the door halts them. After a beat, Matt marches over and opens it.

It's Linda and Michael. They look incredibly awkward.

MICHAEL

Staff want us sat down for dinner.

LINDA

We could try and push it back but then their timings for the mains...

ROBIN

No, it's alright. We'll come down.

Michael gives them a thumbs-up, and softly re-closes the door. Mortification now mixes in with Robin's anger.

9

INT. RECEPTION ROOM, WEDDING VENUE - DAY

9

Robin has barely touched her food. She stares down at her hand -- her wedding rings back on. All around her, GUESTS chat happily. Her AUNT has stolen over to talk to Linda--

ROBIN'S AUNT

It's a devil to cut a cake like that and have it not fall apart, but then I thought, it's Robin's cake, she's always loved that cake, and maybe what's needed is...

--but to Robin it's like she's under water. An island of quiet unhappiness, as around her WAITERS thread past each other and people LAUGH and pour more wine.

She looks up and catches Strike looking at her from across the room. They both look away.

STRIKE

finishes his pint with a gulp. Looks down. Eyelids drooping. Head lowering. Falling asleep where he sits.

MATCH CUT TO:

10

INT. RECEPTION ROOM, WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT

10

Strike jumps awake in his chair at the FEEDBACK-SQUEAL of a microphone being turned on. Night has fallen. A pudding has been placed in front of him -- everyone else's have been eaten. Without missing a beat, he reaches for his spoon...

Matt's MASTER OF CEREMONIES moves away from the speaker.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Ladies and gentlemen, as stories about love at first sight go, that one takes some beating... But enough about when Matt joined our rugby club. So now, let's...

RUGGER-CHEERS and LAUGHTER. Strike eats, disoriented.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (CONT'D)

...usher in the night as we gather next door for the first dance!

Guests rise to follow him. Strike eats faster.

11

INT. BALLROOM, WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT

11

As Strike follows the crowd to gather around the dance floor, Linda joins him.

STRIKE

Congratulations, Mrs Ellacott.

LINDA

Three times she's been injured, working for you. She's stopped sleeping again. I hear her at night.

Linda's eyes are bright.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You haven't got a daughter. You wouldn't understand what we've been through.

Before he can reply, she walks to rejoin her husband. Strike briefly makes eye-contact with Michael.

SARAH SHADLOCK and her fiancé, TOM TURVEY (beefy, receding hairline, Matt's age, drunk) push past Strike to get closer to the front of the pack.

MUSIC - 'Wherever you will go' by The Calling - begins. As Robin moves into Matt's arms, surrounded by their friends and family, Strike looks away.

His face is cracked granite. He glances towards a set of doors marked EXIT, then back at Robin.

Midway through the song, Strike can tolerate it no longer. Strike makes a decision: he heads for the exit doors.

Robin sees Strike going. She pulls away from Matt.

MATTHEW  
What're you doing?

ROBIN  
Just-- give me a second.

Robin pulls herself free and hurries in pursuit of Strike.

Matt stands for a moment, stranded. Then addresses the crowd:

MATTHEW  
Her arm's hurting. She's just  
checking it. Come and dance!

Tom is first to reach Matt with a few comedy dance-moves thrown in upon his arrival.

TOM TURVEY  
Mate. It's always the fit ones who  
are a handful.

MATTHEW  
Tom, can I borrow Sarah?

TOM TURVEY  
*Mi casa, su casa...*

Matt offers his hand to SARAH SHADLOCK, who takes it with grace and sympathy, moving in close to dance with him.

MATTHEW  
Don't say anything.

SARAH SHADLOCK  
I don't have to.

12 EXT. WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT

12

Robin, alone, hurries in pursuit of Strike.

13 EXT. STONE STEPS, WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT

13

Strike is halfway down the steps, searching for a lighter for his cigarette, when Robin catches up with him.

ROBIN  
Cormoran?

She looks down -- and sees him looking back up at her.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Are you sure?

Strike begins to walk up the stairs to meet her, as she hurries down to him.

STRIKE  
Yes. I am.

They move simultaneously -- into each other's arms, her face pressing into his shoulder, his face buried in her hair.

FADE TO:

BLACK.

14 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE, THE AGENCY - DAY 1

14

Strike sits behind his desk. Deeply unimpressed with what he's hearing from the EX-RED CAP (32) seated in front of him.

SUPERIMPOSE: **ONE YEAR LATER**

EX-RED CAP  
Look. Across the day as a whole I'd say there was more good than bad.

STRIKE  
Your job was to follow the taxi.

EX-RED CAP  
Yeah. And I did do that.

STRIKE  
You don't think crashing a moped into the back of it might have tipped them off?

15 INT. MAIN OFFICE, THE AGENCY - DAY 1

15

Strike escorts the Ex-Red Cap out of the office.

EX-RED CAP  
D'you think you'll need me again this week?

STRIKE  
I think it's unlikely.

Strike shuts the door after him, and turns to the new temp secretary, DENISE (nasal voice), who is sitting at what was once Robin's desk.

STRIKE (CONT'D)  
Take him off the list of  
subcontractors.

DENISE  
(beat)  
Sorry... d'you want *me* to do that?

STRIKE  
Yes...?

DENISE  
If you say my name then I'll know  
you're definitely talking to *me*.

Strike gestures to the otherwise-empty room.

The main door opens and Robin enters.

ROBIN  
Oh, hello.

Robin hangs her jacket on a (new) coat-stand. There is a coolness between her and Strike. A professional distance.

STRIKE  
How's the dodgy doctor?

ROBIN  
He played squash after work.

STRIKE  
Did you see who he was playing?

ROBIN  
A guy with a beard. Don't think  
he's trading sex for a free boob  
job.  
(to Denise)  
What's the name of my six o'clock?

DENISE  
Oh. No, he called this morning to  
rearrange.

ROBIN  
The meeting I've come all the way  
across London for...?

STRIKE  
Well. See you both tomorrow.

DENISE  
Good night, Mr Strike.

Strike leaves the office, heading downstairs.

DENISE (CONT'D)  
Is the work mostly people cheating  
on each other?

ROBIN  
Mostly.

DENISE  
It's not what I thought it'd be.

Robin feels jaded, but doesn't care to share her feelings.  
Denise watches 5.59 turn to 6, and departs immediately.

ROBIN  
See you tomorrow, Denise.

Robin walks into Strike's private office...

16 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE, THE AGENCY - DAY 1 (CONTINUOUS) 16

Robin walks to the window behind Strike's desk. She opens the blinds to peer down into--

THE STREET BELOW

Strike meets a pretty, curvy 1940s-styled woman, LORELEI, on the pavement at the end of the road. They kiss with easy familiarity.

IN STRIKE'S OFFICE

Old news, still hurts. Robin closes the blinds again.

17 EXT. LORELEI'S FLAT - NIGHT 1 17

Strike and Lorelei arrive at her building. Hipster grime.

18 INT. LIVING ROOM, LORELEI'S FLAT - NIGHT 1 18

Lorelei's flat is above the vintage clothes store she runs in Camden. Full of vibrant colour. Flea market film posters.

Strike and Lorelei eat home-made *pad Thai* noodles together.

LORELEI  
Better with the mint?

STRIKE  
It was great before. It's great again. It's a very narrow window you're trying to improve these noodles in.

She LAUGHS.

19 EXT. ROBIN AND MATT'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT 1

19

Robin brings her bike to a halt outside their new house. She scans the road ahead of her and behind her. Looking down dark turnings, studying the shadows. She takes her door keys out.

She takes a breath then picks up her bike and hurries it up to the front door. Door key into the lock near-instantly.

20 INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN, ROBIN AND MATT'S HOUSE - NIGHT 1 20

A mess of cardboard packing boxes. They have just moved in to their new place. Matt is hard at work opening boxes.

MATTHEW

It's like Tetris only the boxes

don't vanish when you make a line.

(kissing her)

How was your day?

ROBIN

The usual.

21 EXT. DENMARK STREET - NIGHT 1

21

DRUNK LADS stagger past BILLY, SHOUTING. Billy (24) is very thin, dishevelled, pale. He flinches away from them.

He pulls a folded sheet of newspaper from his pocket. The article is a profile of Strike with a headline: "*Shacklewell Ripper to be sentenced*". It mentions the Denmark St. office.

Billy checks the street's name-sign. *The right place. Good.*

22 EXT. THE AGENCY BUILDING, DENMARK STREET - NIGHT 1

22

Billy loiters outside the entrance to Strike's building. His ragged appearance doesn't attract many stares. A HOMELESS MAN is curled in a nearby doorway.

SOMEONE exits Strike's building. And before the door can swing closed -- Billy darts in to catch it.

23 INT. STAIRS, THE AGENCY - NIGHT 1

23

Billy fits his chisel to the lock on the agency door and hammers it. The cheap wood splinters around the lock.

Billy pushes the door open and steps into--

24 INT. MAIN OFFICE, THE AGENCY - NIGHT 1 (CONTINUOUS)

24

Billy stands agitated in the neon-lit half-darkness.

BILLY

Only say about the girl...

25 EXT. DENMARK STREET - DAY 2

25

Strike and Robin run into each other on the street as they both approach the office, Robin dismounting her bike.

26 INT. STAIRS, THE AGENCY - DAY 2

26

Robin and Strike walk up in silence...

...only to find the door to their office splintered open. Robin's apprehensive as Strike approaches it cautiously. Pushes the door open...

27 INT. MAIN OFFICE, THE AGENCY - DAY 2 (CONTINUOUS)

27

...and reveals something extraordinary.

Gouged out of the plaster behind Denise's desk is a huge, *strange*, cave-painting-style rendering of a horse mid-gallop. The floor beneath the wall is silted with rubble.

Strike SWEARS SOFTLY, then glances around. The computer has gone untouched. As break-ins go, this is unusual -- and unsettling.

STRIKE

(to Robin)

Don't touch anything. Take pictures.

From Strike's private office space, Billy enters the room from behind them, unnoticed. He is agitated.

BILLY

I seen a kid strangled.

Robin GASPS, then immediately tries to cover her shock. Strike turns and takes a few steps back from Billy. He notes the plaster dust on Billy's clothes.

STRIKE

My name's Cormoran Strike. How can I help you?

Billy points at the horse he has carved.

BILLY

They strangled her up there.

STRIKE

Do you want to sit down? Or would you prefer to--

Billy CRIES OUT and thumps his chest again. Billy has a chisel in one hand.

BILLY

Don't ask me things! I shouldn't even talk. Just-- listen.

Robin is out of Strike's eye-line, so he can't see quite how much she is struggling now -- her breathing shallow. Her eyes on the chisel blade. Sweating. Her hands shake as she discretely turns on her phone to film Billy.

BILLY (CONT'D)

This girl I saw killed, she's in the dell behind my dad's cottage. He helped them bury her there. I can't go...

Billy fidgets with the chisel, its sharp blade-edge nicking his fingertip, drops of blood welling there.

STRIKE

(very, very calm)

I'd like to help you. But please don't hurt yourself. Anything that you want to tell me, it's okay. We'll look after you.

BILLY

They buried her in a pink blanket. They didn't know I seen 'em, but I did and they buried her.

STRIKE

Where's your dad's house?

BILLY

No... I can't...

STRIKE

I start every investigation the same way. My client writes down their name and their address so I can keep them updated. Would you at least do that for me? There's a pen and paper on that desk.

Strike indicates the pen and paper on Denise's desk, keeping an eye on the sharp chisel in Billy's hands.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

You've come to ask for our help.

Billy nods. He glances at Robin.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

Well, we'll help you. You're one of our clients now. So, please...

Billy walks to the pad and begins to write.

BILLY

Yeah, but you'll tell the police,  
and you can't do that. Him and his  
mates control them. He'll find out.

STRIKE

Put your address. What's your name?

BILLY

Billy.

STRIKE

It's nice to meet you, Billy.

Finally Strike looks over at Robin. Trying to reassure her. Robin is pale and looks unwell. She nods as if she's fine.

BILLY

He put her on the eye and choked  
her and she pissed herself as she  
died. She weren't big. She had long  
brown hair. I can't not see it and  
I can't hold it in.

STRIKE

When did this happen?

BILLY

I was six.

At that moment, Denise arrives for work.

DENISE

Oh my days!

Billy jumps. Strike motions for Denise to shut up.

BILLY

Who are you?!

DENISE

(re: the carving)

Did he--?

BILLY

I only done it so you'll know!

Billy buries his head in his arms.

STRIKE

Can I make you some tea, Billy?

Suddenly Billy rips out the page he was writing on and shoves it into his pocket.

BILLY  
Forget all this. You have to.

Billy runs for the door. Denise darts aside, frightened.

Billy springs away down the stairs. They hear his FOOTSTEPS descending. Then the street door BANGING.

STRIKE  
(to Robin)  
You alright?

ROBIN  
I'm fine. Denise, are you..?

Denise looks from Strike to Robin.

DENISE  
I want to get paid for the whole day, but I'm not coming back.

STRIKE  
Okay.

Denise leaves.

ROBIN  
Do you think that was... psychosis or...?

Strike walks to the desk and picks up the pad Billy wrote on.

STRIKE  
He's definitely ill. Doesn't mean he wasn't telling the truth though. The pink blanket, the girl wetting herself. That's all very specific.

Using a soft pencil, Strike gently rubs its lead over the notepad's top page... and the letters of a partial address emerge... 2 - 0 - ?? *Charlemont Road*. Robin joins him.

STRIKE (CONT'D)  
Is that a five or..?

ROBIN  
Maybe an eight? I didn't know people still did this.

STRIKE  
One of the classics.

ROBIN  
I left my phone filming so I should have some decent images of him. Should we call a hospital..?

STRIKE

They'll have an easier time if we  
can give them a definite address.

A beat. Like tentative green shoots between them.

ROBIN

Then... should we maybe go there?

STRIKE

Can't hurt, can it?

28 EXT. CHARLEMONT ROAD, EAST LONDON - DAY 2

28

Strike takes a look at house no.205 -- visible in the front room an ELDERLY MAN is sleeping in front of the television.

ACROSS THE ROAD

Robin checks out the end-of-terrace no.208. The property has grubby curtains across its ground-floor windows. Robin KNOCKS on the door.

Strike joins her. When there are no signs that anybody is in, Strike takes a plastic card from his wallet and quickly slips the slant-latch lock. The door opens.

29 INT. HALLWAY, CHARLEMONT ROAD HOUSE - DAY 2 (CONTINUOUS) 29

Strike and Robin move into the hallway. The rooms are almost empty. A TV sits in front of a grungy couch.

The covered windows make it gloomy. Strike tries a light-switch -- the hallway lamp is missing its bulb. Strike turns on a small pocket torch; Robin turns on her phone's torch.

Robin heads up the stairs. After a moment she realises that Strike isn't following her up -- he is moving into the rear of the house instead.

30 INT. BACK ROOM, CHARLEMONT ROAD HOUSE - DAY 2 30

Strike flicks a light switch on. A mouse, disturbed, shoots across the carpet. A cheap canvas holdall containing some clothes lies next to a stained sleeping bag.

Strike bends to the sleeping bag and looks closely at its opening. Picks a hair off the fabric and examines it.

Strike picks up a stack of cheaply-photocopied flyers for a housing protest group called C.O.Re (Community-Organised Resistance) advertising a regular weekly meeting in a pub. Strike pockets one.

As he does so he sees a half-finished horse figure, carved into the skirting board. Exactly like the one on their office wall. There are fine wood chips in the weave of the grim carpet.

Strike turns as Robin rejoins him from upstairs.

ROBIN

There's one toothbrush in the bathroom and one bed made-up. A lot of books on class warfare. In the wardrobe there's a banner with the word "CORE" written on it. And... there was some porn.

STRIKE

Hair on the sleeping bag's the same length and colour as Billy's. If he's been staying here, I don't think it's his permanent home.

(beat)

The good news is, it's Tuesday.

ROBIN

What happens on Tuesday?

STRIKE

(handing her a flyer)

Tuesday's when whoever lives here changes the world.

31

EXT. CHARLEMONT ROAD, EAST LONDON - DAY 2

31

Strike and Robin emerge blinking back into daylight.

STRIKE

We've got a few hours to kill. We could show the photos of Billy to the local shops?

ROBIN

Actually... I've got a thing I have to get to.

STRIKE

(beat)

Okay.

ROBIN

I could probably stay for a bit--?

STRIKE

No, I'll cover it.

After an awkward beat, they part in opposite directions.

AT A DISTANCE UP THE ROAD

Seated in a parked car, a PLAINCLOTHES DETECTIVE raises a long-lens camera and photographs Strike and Robin. Using an optical zoom he gets several clear shots of Strike.

Then, as Robin turns to watch Strike, before she rounds the corner -- CLICK-CLICK-CLICK. Her pensive expression captured.

32

INT. THERAPIST'S ROOM - DAY 2

32

Robin sits in a large armchair. At a comfortable distance from her, CLAIRE, her THERAPIST, sits in a chair of her own. Their manner implies a long-standing arrangement.

ROBIN

All I could do was try not to pass out. I need to be better than that. My job *depends* on me being better than that and... I don't think this is helping.

(beat)

Behavioural therapy was useful. I'll keep that up. And getting a bike instead of taking the tube, that was good, but... I'm not finding this part... This is going to be my last one.

THERAPIST

I do strongly recommend completing the full course of sessions.

ROBIN

Every time I come out of here I go home feeling wrung out. And then my husband does the same thing. Pushing me. And my mum on the phone. The only person who isn't *at me* all the time is my work partner.

THERAPIST

Mr Strike.

ROBIN

Yes. Him.

THERAPIST

Does he know about everything that you've been through?

ROBIN

I told him about the rape. And he knows about...

(indicating her scar)

...I mean, he was there through all of that.

THERAPIST

But have you told him about the acute anxiety you're experiencing?

A long silence. Robin glances at the clock.

ROBIN

I've moved to a new place, so maybe that'll help. New start. New memories. Anyway. Our time's up.

THERAPIST

I can give you a few more minutes. I really do think I can help you, if you can bear to stick with it.

But Robin rises to end the session. She won't be returning.

ROBIN

But thanks for everything.

33

INT. PUB, EAST LONDON - DAY 2

33

A scuffed place. Towards the rear of the pub, tables are occupied by ACTIVIST GROUPS.

Currently on his feet addressing the room is JIMMY KNIGHT (late thirties, lean, tattooed). A poster behind him reads: C.O.Re

JIMMY

There's ghost towers all over London. Empty flats as an off-shore investment. Call it "the West Bank strategy". You build an illegal settlement then cry racism at the protestors. Now, over there they enforce it with the IDF. Here they use property law, but it's all the same thing. The people's land gets stolen out from under them.

(re: his poster)

Community-Organised Resistance. It means take back what's ours!

(APPLAUSE, then--)

If you don't know me, I'm Jimmy Knight. Come and say hello, get involved.

Strike leans on the bar at the far end of the room. Beside him, a BARMAN puts two pints in front of FLICK (early 20s).

BARMAN

(Polish accented)

There you go, madam.

FLICK

*Dziekuje ci.*

BARMAN

*Mówisz po polsku?*

FLICK

Only a bit. And mate, you have to stop calling people "Madam". It's deferential.

BARMAN

(beat)

*Sorry, I didn't understand all?*

Jimmy joins Flick at the bar as she continues to lecture:

FLICK

Only speaking English is classic imperialism. English people urgently need to learn the languages of poorer countries.

JIMMY

What three languages *shows* is you went to a very posh school.

FLICK

Fuck off! And I'm not taking lectures on posh when you've got me cleaning toilets and scrubbing sinks.

JIMMY

That's hardly a job.

Flick and Jimmy walk back to a table with their pints, joining DIGBY (pallid, early-30s) and SHANICE (pierced, 20s). After a beat, Strike, pint in hand, follows them.

SHANICE

...so feminism is now, what? A minor aspect of Communism?

DIGBY

What's absurd is saying Afghanistan was Dubya's women's lib project! I'm not sure even *feminism* justified an illegal war.

Strike sits down with them uninvited.

STRIKE

I was there. With the army. The whole war was about equal pay and paternity leave.

JIMMY

Who are you?

STRIKE

My name's Cormoran. Do any of you  
know Billy?

Jimmy's reaction is unmistakable. He covers it poorly.

JIMMY

Why?

Strike lays the flyer from Charlemont Road on the table.

STRIKE

He gave me one of these and  
encouraged me to come. I liked him.  
I was hoping to run into him.

JIMMY

Where'd you see him?

STRIKE

Is he a friend of yours?

FLICK

He's his brother.

Jimmy shoots Flick a look of irritation.

STRIKE

Has anyone got a phone number for  
him? Or an email? I'd like to know  
he's okay.

JIMMY

No need. I look after him.

STRIKE

That's not really what I asked.

JIMMY

Yeah, I heard what you asked.

Another beat. Then Strike nods his head.

STRIKE

Maybe another time then, comrades?

Strike leaves the pub.

Jimmy Knight emerges to smoke a cigarette.

After a beat, AAMIR (British-Pakistani, early 20s) joins  
Jimmy. They converse. Jimmy walks around the corner with him.

Peeling out of the shadows, Strike follows the two men at a discreet distance.

He sees them reach a parked, battered old Suzuki Alto. As Jimmy drives it away, Strike discreetly takes a photo of its registration number.

35 INT. BEDROOM, LORELEI'S FLAT - NIGHT 2

35

Strike and Lorelei lie in bed together. Strike is on the phone. Lorelei is finishing a glass of red wine as she flicks through photos of vintage dresses on her iPad.

STRIKE

(on phone)

He put Charlemont Road down as his address, so I thought he might...

(listening, then--)

Alright. Thanks anyway, mate. Say hello to Ilsa from me.

Strike hangs up. Lorelei sets down her glass. Snugs into him.

LORELEI

Any luck?

STRIKE

Nick's a gastroenterologist. He's better at finding stomach ulcers.

LORELEI

Do you do it a lot? Call your friends to help you find people?

Strike glances at her. It's a more personal question than usual, and with it comes an invitation to intimacy.

STRIKE

Whatever gets it done.

A brief beat -- and then she retreats by kissing him.

36 EXT. THE AGENCY BUILDING, DENMARK STREET - DAY 3

36

Strike walks to the office, swigging on a take-out coffee. There is a shiny black BMW with tinted rear windows parked outside his building. As he passes it--

CHISWELL (O.S.)

Mr Strike.

Strike turns and peers into the car's interior through its open window. Seated in the back (a DRIVER in front at the wheel) is JASPER CHISWELL. Aged 68, with coarse grey hair. He displays small signs of deep tension.

CHISWELL (CONT'D)

Why does nobody at your office pick up a telephone? I called twice this morning, well within office hours.

STRIKE

We've been a bit short-staffed.  
Sorry -- who are you?

CHISWELL

Don't play games. I'm Jasper Chiswell, as you very well know.

STRIKE

The Minister...?

CHISWELL

I'm not going to yammer in the street. Get in.

37

INT. CHISWELL'S CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY 3

37

Strike sits in the rear seat beside Chiswell. Eventually--

STRIKE

Can I ask--

CHISWELL

We'll talk at my club.

(to the Driver)

Sturges, call ahead and have them find a jacket for my guest. A large one.

38

INT. PRATT'S CLUB - DAY 3

38

A lost world of stuffed fish, leather, animal horns, hunting pictures. Chiswell has a sherry. Strike -- in a too-tight loaned jacket -- has a beer.

Their waitress, GEORGINA, leads them through to the--

DINING AREA

Chiswell and Strike take their seats.

CHISWELL

So do you work like solicitors? As in, you can't ever be hired by both sides of the dispute?

STRIKE

My clients trust me. My reputation depends on that.

CHISWELL

I have to say... I looked you up yesterday and I thought, Christ, this one actually looks like he could do a number on somebody.

STRIKE

Thank you..?

CHISWELL

And nobody has ever approached you concerning me? In any capacity?

STRIKE

No. Is there maybe a job you'd like to discuss?

Georgina returns with two rather plain plates of ham and potatoes. Strike can't help feel disappointed.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

Could I have some mustard, please?

GEORGINA

(to Chiswell)

Anything for you, sir?

CHISWELL

No. My taste buds are shot. It'd only make things look yellow.

STRIKE

(to Georgina)

Couple more potatoes wouldn't hurt?

As Georgina departs, Chiswell leans forward.

CHISWELL

I am being blackmailed. By two men. I haven't paid them anything. Assumed it'd only encourage them.

STRIKE

That's often how it goes. Have you gone to the police?

CHISWELL

No, and I shan't be doing that. Only takes one bent copper to flog it to a newspaper. And besides, one of the men is intent on destroying me. I doubt he'd be deterred.

STRIKE

What are they blackmailing you over?

CHISWELL

My conscience is clear, and that's all you need know about that.

(beat)

I'd thought it was all fine... But apparently now there are pictures. And once they get hold of those...

Chiswell drains his glass.

CHISWELL (CONT'D)

I need something I can use against them. The threat of "an eye for an eye", d'you see? So that everybody has something to lose. Is that the sort of thing you could do?

STRIKE

That rather depends on whether your blackmailers have done anything wrong. Apart from extorting you. You can't manufacture scandal.

(beat)

Well, you can, but that's not something I do.

CHISWELL

No, I wouldn't have expected that.

STRIKE

So who are the two men?

CHISWELL

Geraint Winn. He runs the office for his wife Della, the MP.

STRIKE

She's blind, isn't she? She's done some work with veterans.

CHISWELL

She never bloody shuts up about it. Listening to her you'd think playing a game with all your limbs intact is a kind of cheating.

(beat)

The other man's a very different fish. He's hard-left. One of those people who're against *everything*. His name is Jimmy Knight.

Strike takes that in. Newly alert. Chiswell is looking at him directly, testing for Strike's reaction to the name.

STRIKE

Minister, can I ask how you knew I've been looking for *Billy Knight*?

CHISWELL

Billy?

(beat)

I shan't go into any of that. The assignment is to *protect* me. You don't need to know my business.

STRIKE

In which case, thank you for the lunch, and best of luck with it.

Strike stands to leave. Chiswell sees that he's serious.

CHISWELL

You can't simply leave me with this thing. It's been...

Chiswell anxiously rakes his fingertips through his hair.

CHISWELL (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Georgina! I'm completely dry.

(to Strike)

Sit! Will you please sit? I'll...

Strike retakes his seat.

CHISWELL (CONT'D)

I've had a policeman watching Jimmy Knight. I said he'd threatened to disrupt Wimbledon. So they've kept an eye on him. He identified you outside Jimmy Knight's home.

(beat)

If you take the job I can let that man go. I'd be glad to do that. Waste of public funds.

A beat, as Strike considers the offer.

STRIKE

I'll send you my fees to look over.

CHISWELL

Don't bother. I'll pay whatever it takes. Just *begin*. I need *haste*.

Georgina arrives. She has barely finished refilling his glass before Chiswell picks it up and gulps most of it back.

CHISWELL (CONT'D)

No emails, no phone calls. I know what we're capable of in *that* regard. We'll discuss things in person. Are you hired?

Strike extends his hand. They shake. Chiswell smiles.

CHISWELL (CONT'D)  
 Your mustard has gone missing.  
 (hollering out)  
Georgina!!

39

EXT. DRUMMOND'S GALLERY - DAY 3

39

Strike and Chiswell walk together. Chiswell has relaxed somewhat, now that Strike is hired.

CHISWELL  
 You were an army man, weren't you?

STRIKE  
 I was SIB.

CHISWELL  
 Yes, you investigated my son's death. I remembered you from the report. You've an unusual name.  
 (beat)  
 Freddie went into my old regiment - well, it was the Queen's Royal Hussars by the time he joined.  
 (beat)  
 He had so much promise. He'd have been running the family estate by now. We made him a coffin from one of our oaks. Cut from the woods he used to play in.

Chiswell struggles to retain his composure.

STRIKE  
 I'm very sorry. He was your eldest child, wasn't he?

CHISWELL  
 Eldest of four. I've got two girls and there's... the other boy, Raphael.

They have arrived close to Henry Drummond's Gallery. A couple of Old Masters are tastefully displayed in the windows.

CHISWELL (CONT'D)  
 He's had problems all his bloody life. Can't stick with anything. My friend here's giving him a chance. He'll squander it. M' wife thinks he's a lost cause.

Inside the Gallery HENRY DRUMMOND sees them, waves, and hurries to join them on the pavement.

DRUMMOND  
 Hello Jasper.

Chiswell gives him a wave of acknowledgement.

CHISWELL

(to Strike)

You really never knew Freddie? It's a shame. He was one hell of a boy.

40

INT. MAIN OFFICE, THE AGENCY - DAY 3

40

Strike enters the office. The door is still in a mangled condition, with a temporary bolt. Robin is straight in there--

ROBIN

Cormoran, that's amazing! A government minister for a client! We might even be able to buy a new door!

(beat)

You know who his son is, don't you?

STRIKE

Yeah, I did the investigation into Freddie's death. He was a shit. Never had so many people ask if an officer got shot by his own men.

ROBIN

I was actually talking about the younger one, Raphael?

STRIKE

Chiswell mentioned he'd had trouble settling down?

ROBIN

That's one way of putting it! He got high and ran over a young mother. Killed her. He got a really light sentence.

STRIKE

I expect his dad was helpful there.

Strike looks down at his notebook. Thinking logistics.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

I'm not sure how we'll cover all this. The Chiswell job needs two people undercover. Dodgy Doc is a full-time job as well.

ROBIN

Can we not put Emerson--

STRIKE

Fired him. He was rubbish.

(beat)

(MORE)

SHOOTING SCRIPT

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STRIKE (CONT'D)

Robin, the other thing is, the Chiswell job will involve the operative doing some things that I'm not sure you'd--

ROBIN

Anything you'd do--

STRIKE

Yeah, well, hear me out before you decide that. You'd be posing as the Minister's god-daughter doing an internship. And under that cover you'd bug the office of one of the blackmailers.

Beat.

ROBIN

What's the legal situation?

STRIKE

It's a grey area. The Minister will get them to his office in his Red Box. That's never searched. But you don't want to get caught placing them.

(beat)

I'd take it on, but my face has been in the papers. Not sure I'd make a convincing god-daughter either, but if you're at all--

ROBIN

No, I'm in. I'll do it.

STRIKE

Okay. And I'll find a new friend for Jimmy Knight.

ROBIN

Will you cover the Dodgy Doc stuff?

STRIKE

Yeah. But mostly I'm going to try to find Billy.

(beat)

I'm pretty sure Chiswell knows who Billy is. We're going to tread carefully on this one.

Strike waits at the front door carrying a small cardboard box. The door is opened by KINVARA CHISWELL (38, curvy). She eyes Strike up and down.

KINVARA

What is it?

STRIKE

Delivery for your husband.

Kinvara puts out her hand to take it.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid he needs to sign for it.

Kinvara pauses, making sustained eye-contact with Strike, before turning and sashaying back down the hall, the front door left wide open behind her.

KINVARA

(calling out)

Jasper! Work.

A moment later Chiswell appears. Strike passes Chiswell the box. Talking quietly--

STRIKE

If my partner's caught she'll deny that you had anything to do with it. You can say she fooled you, claiming to be an old friend's daughter.

CHISWELL

Yes.

STRIKE

Of course, if she does get caught, I hope you'd do everything in your power to make the problem go away.

CHISWELL

Is the girl competent?

STRIKE

Extremely.

CHISWELL

Shouldn't be an issue then, should it? Good night.

Chiswell steps back inside and closes the door. Strike is left irritated. Ruffled. Anxious, if he's honest.

At the mirror Robin struggles to put in tinted contact-lenses; they darken her blue eyes to brown.

Matt enters and grabs her playfully from behind. Robin's reaction is much more than a jump. It triggers her -- she SCREAMS. Matt LAUGHS. Then he notices her face...

MATTHEW

Have you done something..?

ROBIN

Contact lenses. It's for work.

MATTHEW

Thank God for that. They knock you down to a B+.

(off Robin's reaction)

I'm kidding you! Anyway, it's a compliment! Means you're normally way up there. A Plus, Rob. Always have been.

Matt grabs toothbrush and paste and ambles out, leaving Robin alone with her reflection in the mirror.

43

EXT. WESTMINSTER STREET - DAY 4

43

In her contact lenses, smart blouse and skirt, Robin walks towards the iconic Houses of Parliament. She takes in the architecture -- feeling both thrilled and apprehensive.

44

EXT. SECURITY LOBBY, HOUSE OF COMMONS - DAY 4

44

Robin looks at the security arrangements. The ARMED POLICE. The close examination of people's credentials.

Her hands tense. She turns around and leaves.

45

EXT. LOW WALL, WESTMINSTER - DAY 4

45

Robin sits with her eyes closed, doing breathing exercises.

46

INT. SECURITY LOBBY, HOC - DAY 4

46

Robin's bag is X-rayed and her body scanned in a metal detector. A SECURITY GUARD checks her lanyard credentials.

Waiting for her is IZZY CHISWELL (blonde, cheery-posh, 40). As soon as Robin is through security, Izzy swoops.

ROBIN

(cut-crystal RP)

Venetia Hall. Hello.

IZZY

Oh, I like the choice of name. It's very pretty. I'm Izzy.

47 INT. GREAT HALL, HOC - DAY 4

47

Robin looks around her as she follows Izzy.

ROBIN

This is a bit... incredible.

IZZY

I know. It's the heart of the capital. Along with Selfridges!

48 INT. STAIRCASE, HOC - DAY 4

48

Robin and Izzy take the stairs...

IZZY

We do have a lot of mice, so it's not all glamour. Quite a few rats. And far too many Labour MPs. Can't seem to get rid of them! Actually some of them are lovely...

49 INT. CORRIDOR, PARLIAMENTARY OFFICES, HOC - DAY 4

49

Izzy leads Robin to the threshold of Chiswell's office.

IZZY

I know it's a bit tragic, forty and still working for your father, but - - anyway, here we are! Our humble parliamentary abode. Papa left some things on your desk. You're expecting them, no?

(Robin nods)

Della and Geraint's office is just a few doors down.

50 INT. CHISWELL'S OFFICE, HOC - DAY 4 (CONTINUOUS)

50

Izzy and Robin enter a cramped office, stuffed with overspilling files and teetering piles of correspondence threatening to avalanche. Izzy gestures to a small desk.

IZZY

You can sit there.

Robin opens the box on her desk. In it are several bugging devices disguised as power-socket covers.

She takes a box of Tampax from her bag and quickly transfers the devices into it, sliding it into a drawer -- retaining a couple (of different-sized models) for her handbag.

IZZY (CONT'D)  
 You're very calm, I must say. Cool  
 as the proverbial *concombre*.

Robin flashes a smile. The truth is, her hands are shaking.

51 INT. THE TOTTENHAM PUB - DAY 4

51

Everything about SAM BARCLAY (Scottish, 32) says ex-squaddie: from his cropped hair to his too-white trainers. Strike greets him with affection as he joins him at the bar.

STRIKE  
 Afternoon, Barclay. Pint?

BARCLAY  
 Can't hurt, can it?

STRIKE  
 (to the Barman)  
 Pair of the usual, please.  
 (to Barclay)  
 Still smoking?

BARCLAY  
 I'm vakin' it now. Me and the wife  
 had a baby, so... health kick.

STRIKE  
 Where you buying it nowadays?

BARCLAY  
 They send it you over the internet.  
 Pick from a menu, leave a review.  
 If we can put a man on the moon, we  
 can sell you weed over the web.  
 Progress!  
 (beat)  
 If you're looking to score, sorry,  
 but I'm no yer man.

STRIKE  
 I was going to offer you a job.

After he takes that in, Barclay is thrilled at the prospect.

BARCLAY  
 Doing detective stuff?  
 (beat)  
 I'm not vaping every night. I could  
 knock it on the head if I had to.

STRIKE  
 I'd start you on thirty hours a  
 week. You'll bill me as a  
 freelancer.

BARCLAY

What's the gig?

Strike puts a folder on the bar top and opens it. On top of a few internet printouts -- mostly relating to CORE -- is a photo of Jimmy Knight.

STRIKE

This is Jimmy Knight. He leads a housing activist group called CORE. I need you to get in with him. You'll have to admit to being ex-army. You look like a squaddie.

BARCLAY

No problem, I'll be the poor wee laddie who never knew what he was getting in to. They love that shit. Let 'em patronise me.

STRIKE

If in doubt, say our problems began with Jewish bankers. From what I've read, he'll love that. Say you've been drifting since you left the army and now you're looking for a new cause.

BARCLAY

Shouldn't be too hard tae convince him there. It's been a bit rough, to be honest.

Strike pats Barclay on the arm.

STRIKE

What did you name your baby?

BARCLAY

It was a girl, so... Cormorina.

STRIKE

(laughing)

Very pretty.

BARCLAY

(re: the Jimmy photo)

You gunnae tell me what he's done?

STRIKE

Nope. You're going to tell me that.

(beat)

The other thing is, he's got a brother called Billy. If you see Billy, drop everything and call me. Stay with him 'til I can get there.

BARCLAY

Is that what you're being paid to  
do then? Find Billy Knight?

STRIKE

(ignoring that)  
Can you start today?

52

INT. CHISWELL'S OFFICE, HOC - DAY 4

52

Izzy tries to remove a folder from beneath a towering stack of paperwork.

IZZY

It's been ghastly for Papa in the  
last few months. He's under so much  
strain. We all are--

The stack wobbles -- tips -- but then Robin is suddenly there to catch it and help her right it.

IZZY (CONT'D)

Thanks! Raff helps out a bit when  
he's not at the gallery chasing  
Henry's assistants, which is not  
what his Art History degree was  
meant for, but there we are!

(beat)

Anyway, I'm thrilled you're here.  
You'll sort things out, won't you?

ROBIN

We'll do our best.

IZZY

I have to tell you, I had a total  
crush on Cormoran when we were  
younger.

ROBIN

I didn't realise you knew him.

IZZY

Met him at Oxford when he was  
dating Charlie. He was just so  
unapologetic. He obviously never  
gave a toss what people thought.

ROBIN

Thought about what?

IZZY

Him and Charlotte! I mean, she  
could have had anyone but he acted  
like he was definitely good enough  
for her. It was very sexy.

Beat.

ROBIN

Is there anything you can tell me  
about Geraint Winn?

IZZY

Horrible little man. Him and Della  
have always been off with us. I  
think they're bitter. We were a big  
family and their only child died.

ROBIN

She committed suicide, didn't she?  
I read about it.

IZZY

It must have been awful for them,  
but it does a tiny bit make you  
wonder how they were as parents.

ROBIN

(beat)

I should go and introduce myself.

53

INT. CORRIDOR, PARLIAMENTARY OFFICES, HOC - DAY 4

53

Robin walks down the corridor.

Robin finds the office of Della Winn. Its door is ajar. Robin takes a breath, readying her best dizzy posh-girl persona...

54

INT. WINNS' OFFICE, HOC - DAY 4 (CONTINUOUS)

54

Robin KNOCKS and enters. At his neat, orderly desk the assistant Aamir (the man Strike saw meeting Jimmy Knight) looks up sharply. So does GERAINT WINN (60s, Welsh) sitting at a larger, far less orderly desk.

ROBIN

Hello! So sorry to interrupt but I  
have no idea how to use the phone  
system and I really, really wanted  
to introduce myself. Is that okay?

GERAINT

(Welsh-accent)

Of course! What's the, um--

ROBIN

So I've got an internship here? But  
I'm also thinking maybe I want to  
have a career in the third sector  
charity world?

(MORE)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

And so everyone said: you have to talk to Geraint Winn, because he does both really brilliantly, running her office and their charity, and I thought, get over it and just chuck yourself at them, Vee! Is that totally awful?

Geraint visibly fills out at the compliment.

GERAINT

Charity and politics. It's a juggle, I won't lie. Aamir, look after our guest?

Aamir has been observing Robin coolly.

AAMIR

Cup of tea?

ROBIN

Lovely! Would you mind awfully if I had Earl Grey with soy milk?

AAMIR

I'm not sure they'll have--

GERAINT

He'll track some down.

Aamir gets up and leaves as ordered.

GERAINT (CONT'D)

What was your name?

ROBIN

Venetia. A bit like the blinds.

(beat)

Oh God, shit, I'm so sorry.

GERAINT

Why?

ROBIN

Because of Della being blind..?

GERAINT

(laughing)

We've got tougher skins than that! Working class born and bred, and with Etonians for colleagues. You toughen up, believe me.

Robin discreetly scans the room for appropriate power sockets. She spots one not in use, beneath a 'spare' chair that has long been given over to a teetering pile of Geraint's papers. It's perfect.

ROBIN

Could I charge my phone? It's about  
to go and I'll be in trouble if  
they can't reach me.

A thought shadows Geraint's face. A beat, then he shakes it off and remembers to smile again.

GERAINT

Go for your life.

Robin moves to the corner socket, using her back to shield Geraint's view. She tries to clip the recorder over the socket cover -- but the fit isn't quite right. It slips.

GERAINT (CONT'D)

Need a hand?

ROBIN

No. Sorry. It's-- I'm nearly...

Robin blinks. Trying to focus. Struggling. She *feels* Geraint getting up from his chair. Coming over... behind her.

With a final quiet CLICK the device clips onto the plug socket. Robin quickly gets back onto her feet. Relieved.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

It's, ah-- I think I've bent my  
charger. It's fine. Thanks though.

Geraint smiles at her. Gestures to his vacated chair.

GERAINT

Come and have a seat. I'll show you  
something we've just made.

Robin does as she's asked. Keen to show willing.

On his computer, Geraint brings up the Della Winn Foundation website, leaning in very close to her as he does it.

GERAINT (CONT'D)

So. This is who we are, Venetia.

Geraint presses "play" on an embedded video. He stays close behind Robin. She can barely concentrate.

THE VIDEO CLIP:

Shows DR CURTIS-LACEY (captioned with her name and trustee status) as she meets MARCUS PERRINEAU DALEY (WHEELCHAIR BOXER).

ELSPETH CURTIS-LACEY

(on screen)

Most sports test the human body.

(MORE)

ELSPETH CURTIS-LACEY (CONT'D)

But the ways in which Marcus has been tested make *his* achievements all the more remarkable. The Della Winn Foundation has supported his journey towards excellence...

IN THE OFFICE

Robin sees Geraint's reflection on the computer screen -- he seems to loom behind her. Her breathing gets faster, her whole body tense as she tries to contain her panic.

GERAINT

(by her ear)  
What do you think?

Too much. Robin suddenly pushes her chair back and gets to her feet, surprising Geraint.

ROBIN

Sorry-- I have to be somewhere--

Robin walks quickly towards the door.

GERAINT

Don't you want your tea?

She flees...

55 INT. CORRIDOR, PARLIAMENTARY OFFICES, HOC - DAY 4  
(CONTINUOUS)

55

Robin walks back towards the Chiswell office. Struggling to calm down, her fists bunching in anger with herself.

She opens the Chiswell's door and--

56 INT. CHISWELL'S OFFICE, HOC - DAY 4

56

--steps in, feeling nauseous and faint. Izzy isn't at her desk. The main light has been turned off--

--and in the corner of her eye, from the dark corner of the office, A MAN IN A GORILLA MASK lunges towards Robin with a knife. Robin YELPS, backing towards the door, stumbling.

And there is no Gorilla Mask. There is just a handsome olive-skinned boy, now looking stunned at her reaction--

RAFF

Christ! Sorry! Are you--

Robin staggers back out into--

57 INT. CORRIDOR, PARLIAMENTARY OFFICES, HOC - DAY 4  
(CONTINUOUS) 57

Robin's breathing is strained. She can't get enough air.

She rushes past Izzy, Chiswell and Kinvara...

IZZY

Are you...?

Robin stumbles onwards.

58 INT. GREAT HALL, HOC - DAY 4 (MOMENTS LATER) 58

The green carpet seems to go on forever. Blurring. Robin leans back against the wood-panelled wall.

STEWARD (O.S.)

You alright, dear?

Robin turns to find an ELDERLY STEWARD, in formal frock coat, tie and tails, is approaching her.

ROBIN

..asthma..

STEWARD

Got an inhaler?

ROBIN

I'll be fine. Just need a second.

He pulls a chair over for her, and sits her down on it.

STEWARD

You sit and take your time.

Robin feels a wave of misery welling up. She has failed.

59 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE, THE AGENCY - DAY 4 59

Strike has been working his way through a long list of homeless shelters and street outreach services. He is on the phone to another one...

STRIKE

If you see Billy, please have him call me. I just want to help him.

Strike ends the call, ticks-off that agency, and starts dialling the next one...

60 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CHISWELL'S OFFICE, HOC - DAY 4 60

Robin can hear an argument in progress as she approaches. She takes a final steadyng breath and enters--

61 INT. CHISWELL'S OFFICE, HOC - DAY 4 (CONTINUOUS) 61

Robin finds Jasper Chiswell arguing with RAFF (RAPHAEL) CHISWELL (29, olive-skinned, very handsome) as Kinvara and Izzy look on awkwardly. Chiswell turns as Robin enters.

CHISWELL  
What'd he do to you?!

ROBIN  
Sorry..?

CHISWELL  
I saw you belt out of the room. Did he make a pass?

RAFF  
Dad, I'm not--

CHISWELL  
(to Raff)  
Be quiet, boy!

ROBIN  
I didn't know he was in here. I got a surprise and then... I needed the loo. He didn't do anything.

KINVARA  
Well. First time for everything, I suppose.

Raff and Kinvara trade sour looks. No love lost there.

CHISWELL  
(to Raff)  
Why are you here anyway? You're not due for another hour.

RAFF  
I thought you valued punctuality?

CHISWELL  
*Early is not punctual. On time is punctual.*  
(to Izzy)  
Give him something to do.

KINVARA  
(to Robin)  
And who are you?

ROBIN  
Venetia Hall. I'm interning.

KINVARA  
Are you?

Skeptical, Kinvara turns to Chiswell for an explanation.

CHISWELL  
She's my god-daughter. Robert's  
girl. Before your time.  
(to Izzy)  
The wheelchair athlete-chaps.  
Miller wants to know: have we got a  
ramp on every bloody staircase?

IZZY  
Not on the main flight. If you went  
down that in a wheelchair you'd  
take off. It'd be like a ski ramp!  
But there is a lift.

CHISWELL  
So long as we don't have civil  
servants giving them piggy backs.  
Kinvara, come on. Jump to it.

Chiswell stalks out, Kinvara trailing in his wake.

KINVARA  
(cold, to Robin)  
I hope you learn a lot.

Robin closes the door after they leave. Izzy seems anxious to  
know that her brother isn't too upset.

IZZY  
(to Robin)  
So... This is Raffy.

RAFF  
Well, Raphael or Raff. Raffy sounds  
a bit too much like a duck.

IZZY  
Oh, Raffy Duck!

Izzy goes and gives Raff a hug and a kiss.

IZZY (CONT'D)  
(quietly, to Raff)  
He is just so stressed at the  
moment, babes. He's honestly going  
berserk about the smallest thing.

ROBIN  
And I'm really sorry. I completely  
over-reacted.

RAFF

It's all cool. But for the record,  
I'm not a sex-offender.

(beat)

I mean, I have been *an* offender--

IZZY

You don't have to--

RAFF

No, I prefer people knowing.

(to Robin)

I messed up. I knocked someone down  
when I was high. I did that. I just  
have to hope people believe in the  
possibility of redemption.

ROBIN

I think everyone makes mistakes.

RAFF

Thank you. That's nice of you.

(to Robin)

Anyway, what's your story? It's  
Venetia, isn't it?

ROBIN

Some people call me Vee but I've  
never really liked that.

RAFF

In our family, that'd see you  
called Vee for the rest of your  
life! We're merciless.

Raff grins again at Robin. She can feel in her bones that he's flirting with her. Raff stretches like a cat, allowing his shirt to ride up over a sculpted, bronzed stomach.

IZZY

Come to supper this week?

RAFF

That'd be a joy. Maybe we can  
invite Vee to join us?

IZZY

*Maybe.* Okay, off you go now! Drop  
these at the Ministry.

She hands him some papers and Raff saunters out. When the door is closed--

IZZY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. It's like he can't  
speak words without flirting.  
Italian mother. Not to be racist,  
but I honestly think it's a factor.

62

INT. BEDROOM, ROBIN AND MATT'S HOUSE - DAY 4

62

Half-emptied packing boxes. A new home still being moved into, shelves not yet filled. Matt irons a shirt.

Robin pushes through a slender rack of dresses. She pauses on the green dress; it holds memories. Matt sees her pause there.

MATTHEW

Wear the grey one.

ROBIN

It makes me look pale.

MATTHEW

I like you pale.

ROBIN

(beat)

Alright. I'll wear the grey one.

Matt -- pleased to be listened to -- sets down the iron and goes to hug her. Which, tonight, she needs and leans into.

MATTHEW

Good choice. You'll look fantastic.

The sound of a DRINKS PARTY fades up--

63

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN, ROBIN AND MATT'S HOUSE - NIGHT 4 63

Wearing her grey dress, Robin carries a tray of party nibbles. The room is busy with GUESTS -- among them are Sarah Shadlock and Tom Turvey.

As Robin passes Sarah--

ROBIN

You look nice, Sarah.

SARAH SHADLOCK

Do you mean the earrings?  
Engagement present. Bit OTT.

TOM TURVEY

I'm going to be a kept bloke.  
Sarah's about to auction a  
Constable--

SARAH SHADLOCK

Stubbs. Should go for at least  
twenty mil if the market holds.

Robin smiles, nodding politely. The DOORBELL chimes.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Matthew opens up, with VANESSA EKWENSI and her BOYFRIEND behind him, about to leave.

Strike and Lorelei have arrived. A flicker in Matthew's eyes, before he sticks out his hand to Strike.

MATTHEW

Corm, mate, come on in. Welcome to the new gaff.

STRIKE

Thanks. This is Lorelei. Lorelei, Matthew.

LORELEI

Gorgeous road.

Matthew steps back to let them in, and takes the opportunity to head back to his mates.

Strike and Ekwensi smile as they recognise each other.

VANESSA

Nice to see you. Afraid we're just heading off.

STRIKE

I didn't know you and Robin were mates.

VANESSA

We hang out! I wrote her a note after I heard you sacked her.

STRIKE

Oh. Yeah, that didn't last.

VANESSA

(teasing)

It's good to make the odd mistake. Keeps you humble, right?

Vanessa catches Strike looking around the room.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

They're renting it. I'm not sure Matt wants people to know that.

Vanessa grins at Strike. Then she and her Boyfriend exit.

Strike grabs him and Lorelei a pair of beers from a tray. A glance between them -- collusion in a shared thought.

LORELEI

Let's get this party started.

OVER BY MATTHEW

as Robin and her tray of nibbles arrives at Matthew & pals.

MATTHEW  
(re: the nibbles)  
What do we have here?

ROBIN  
These are chorizo and manchego.

MATTHEW  
Classic double-act. Thanks,  
darling. Guys, dig in.

Robin smiles, wide and empty, as hands descend on the food.

ROBIN  
So nice to finally meet you all.

Robin moves on-- until finally she reaches Strike and Lorelei. Lorelei looks stunning in fabric ablaze with colour. Robin glances down at her own grey dress and feels a pang of regret. She pushes it away.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Hi Lorelei. I've heard lots about  
you.

Behind Lorelei, Strike's eyebrows twitch at Robin's fib.

LORELEI  
(warmly)  
I'm confident he doesn't actually  
talk about either of us.

STRIKE  
Got you some wine and a present.  
(disinterested)  
It's a nice house. You pleased?

ROBIN  
Any luck with Billy?

STRIKE  
Wardle got some detail on Jimmy  
Knight off his number-plate. Guess  
where Billy and Jimmy grew up?

LORELEI  
(dry)  
Can we all play?

STRIKE  
Sorry. An address on the Chiswell  
family estate. In Oxfordshire.

ROBIN

(thrown)

What..? So the cottage with the  
dell behind it..?

STRIKE

Exactly. Their dad lived in a  
worker's cottage on the main  
estate. I'm going to go up  
tomorrow. See what I can find.

ROBIN

I'll drive.

Lorelei glances at Robin. Robin realises that she's sounded --  
well, not quite as casual as she'd intended.

STRIKE

What about the House of Commons?

ROBIN

The equipment's all in place.

STRIKE

(beat)

Okay then.

MATTHEW

(shouting over)

Man-CHE-GO! Robin, we have the  
need, the need for cheese.

ROBIN

(to Strike)

Sorry, I should be taking these  
around--

LORELEI

And we should meet your friends.

ROBIN

They're not-- They're mostly Matt's  
colleagues from work.

LORELEI

Do you want us *not* to talk to them?

ROBIN

No. I mean. Have a nice time.

Embarrassed, Robin turns and retreats across the room,  
passing Matt and Sarah as they tease Tom about his receding  
hair, finding the man's evident discomfort hilarious.

Entering the kitchen, Robin looks back and sees Strike and  
Lorelei laughing at a private joke, standing apart from the  
party. *Obviously* they're only at her party out of duty.

64 INT. LIVING ROOM, LORELEI'S FLAT - NIGHT 4 64

Strike and Lorelei arrive back from the party.

STRIKE

Did you have a good night?

LORELEI

You can make it up to me now.

She presses into him.

65 INT. BEDROOM, LORELEI'S FLAT - NIGHT 4 65

Strike lies on his back, awake. Lorelei shifts in her sleep, her chest-thrown arm sliding lower onto Strike's belly.

And Strike remembers--

66 EXT. STONE STEPS, WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 66

FAVOURING STRIKE: he holds Robin, on her wedding day.

His face is buried deep in her hair.

Finally Strike lets her go. Steps back. Robin wipes her eyes.

A beat. They wait for each other to speak.

67 INT. LIVING ROOM, LORELEI'S FLAT - NIGHT 4 67

Strike pours himself a glass of water. Sits in darkness.

68 EXT. STONE STEPS, WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 68

Strike and Robin face each other. A critical moment, when the next words spoken *matter*:

ROBIN

I've got to get through today.

STRIKE

Yes. I know.

ROBIN

(beat)

I'll call you. As soon as I can.

69 INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 69

Strike finishes another beer, sitting at his table.

He considers his phone. He spins his newly-emptied beer bottle. It settles... pointing at the fridge, not phone.

STRIKE

Good choice.

Strike lumbers to the fridge and pulls out another beer.

70 INT. LIVING ROOM, LORELEI'S FLAT - NIGHT 4

70

Strike spins the empty water glass on its side.

71 INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

71

Strike, sufficiently drunk, is finally making the call:

STRIKE

Can I speak to Robin, please?

LINDA (V.O.)

She's on her honeymoon.

STRIKE

(beat)

She went?

LINDA (V.O.)

(on phone; filtered)

Of course she went! You're not expecting her to work, are you?

STRIKE

No. Sorry, I-- got my dates wrong.

(beat)

Don't tell her I called.

Strike hangs up. Sits, quietly devastated.

He turns, grabs his coat, and exits.

72 INT. THE TOTTENHAM PUB - SAME NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

72

A raucous JOSTLE. Tight-packed, LOUD, as a BAND PLAYS. A few PEOPLE dance together.

Strike is drunk. Half-wild with feeling in the aftermath of his call to Masham. Lorelei stumbles into him at the bar, spilling a little of his pint.

LORELEI

Sorry! Can I buy you...

(examining his glass)

An inch of beer?

Strike smiles. A slight shake of his head.

LORELEI (CONT'D)  
Dance with me then?

STRIKE  
I don't dance.

LORELEI  
So what *do* you do?

They kiss. Nothing soft -- for him, it is quickly urgent, a desire to feel nothing by feeling *something*.

73 INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN, ROBIN AND MATT'S HOUSE - NIGHT 4 73

The flat is emptied out. Robin works through a mountain of washing-up. Lorelei's gift catches her eye. She unwraps it -- inside is a tupperware box holding a big home-made cake.

ROBIN  
And she bakes...

She is tired. Heading for bed, she passes Matt who is passed-out, snoring on the sofa. She stares down at him.

74 EXT. BEACH, MALDIVES - DAY (FLASHBACK)

74

Robin stares out at the millpond-flat, startlingly-blue ocean. A few puffy clouds dotting the sky. The sea seems empty.

A wide-brimmed sunhat shades her face, her injured arm still held in its rubberised protective brace.

ON THE WATER

Matthew surfaces from below, shaking the water off his hair, pulling in his breath after a deep dive.

He checks his left hand -- finding that he has scratched it. Blood beading in the water. But nothing serious.

He turns onto his back and floats in the heat, kicking lazily towards the shore.

ON THE BEACH

Robin watches Matthew coming towards her. She lies back, holding up a book as if to read, but instead closing her eyes and remembering--

75 EXT. STONE STEPS, WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

75

FAVOURING ROBIN-- The moment when she and Strike move together. The memory of pressing her face into his chest.

MATTHEW (V.O.)  
Water's amazing.

76 EXT. BEACH, MALDIVES - DAY (FLASHBACK) 76

Robin opens her eyes and sets aside her book. Matthew stands ahead of her, towelling his hair dry.

MATTHEW  
It's like a bath. Can't you go in  
at all?

His eyes are on her protective brace.

ROBIN  
You know I can't.

MATTHEW  
It's a shame.  
(beat)  
It'll scar, won't it?

ROBIN  
Probably.

Matthew sits beside her. No tensions resolved.

MATTHEW  
Suppose it's the price you pay.

ROBIN  
For what?

MATTHEW  
Working for him.

ROBIN  
Not for catching a killer? Not for  
putting a child-abuser in prison?  
Why don't you say what you mean?  
What this is, is the price of me  
being happy.

MATTHEW  
Are you?

ROBIN  
With my work, I am.

A WAY DOWN THE BEACH

An OLDER COUPLE turn on their sun-loungers at the sound of raised voices, looking to where--

Matt is back on his feet. He and Robin SHOUTING at each other. Their unhappiness incongruous in paradise.

77 OMITTED

77

78 EXT. BEACH, MALDIVES - EVENING (FLASHBACK) 78

Robin walks alone, tracking a vanished couple's footprints in the sand with her own solitary ones.

She looks out across the water. Deep in thought, and grave.

She takes out her mobile phone and dials CORMORAN.

A FUMBLE on the other end as her call is picked-up.

ROBIN

I've made a mistake. I want--

LORELEI (V.O.)

Sorry, this isn't Cormoran. I can wake him up, if it's urgent?

(beat)

Hello?

Robin ends the call. Eyes glassy with shock. Trying hard not to cry.

79 OMITTED

79

80 INT. HOTEL ROOM, MALDIVES - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 80

Robin enters the room quietly. The room is dimly-lit from the bathroom. She can see Matt lying on his side on the bed, his back turned to her.

She approaches him.

ROBIN

Matthew, are you awake?

He GRUNTS softly. She speaks quietly:

ROBIN (CONT'D)

This has not got anything to do with anyone else, but I've gone over it all and I can't... I think we need to go back. I want to tell our families that we're separating.

MATTHEW

Mum?

A beat, as Robin tries to make sense of what he has said. Then she moves around the bed and turns on the side-light -- and so sees that Matt is shining with sweat, very pale, shivering with fever and confused. An ugly black tracing of veins up the inside of his left arm. His cut suppurating.

Robin immediately dials Reception on the bedside phone.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)  
I don't feel well.

ROBIN  
(on phone)  
Could you send a doctor, please?  
And have him bring antibiotics.  
It's urgent.

Matthew reaches for Robin's hand. And she takes it.

MATTHEW  
Please don't leave me.

ROBIN  
(beat)  
I won't.

Flying insects THUMP against the window screens, trapped seeking the light. Robin squeezes Matthew's hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

81 INT/EXT. ROBIN'S LAND ROVER - TRAVELLING - DAY 5 81

Robin is quiet as she and Strike drive north towards Swindon.

STRIKE  
What do you make of Geraint Winn?

ROBIN  
I don't know. It's early days.

STRIKE  
Everything go alright there?

ROBIN  
It was fine.  
(changing the subject)  
I thought Lorelei seemed lovely.

Silence overtakes them again. Now both of them evading.

82 INT/EXT. LAND ROVER - LANES NEAR WOOLSTONE - TRAVELLING 82  
DAY 5

Robin and Strike drive through narrow country lanes. Strike looks at a detailed fold-out map of the area.

STRIKE  
We're on the perimeter of the Chiswell estate now.

Suddenly Robin pulls over.

ROBIN

Look. Up there.

Strike follows her indication. And sees--

Carved into the hill at Uffington, in white chalk like paint strokes against vivid green grass -- the same Bronze Age horse figure that Billy carved into their office wall.

83

EXT. WHITE HORSE OF UFFINGTON - DAY 5

83

Puffing, Strike and Robin crest the hill and walk onto the horse, moving towards its head.

STRIKE

Have you got the bit with Billy talking about the eye?

Robin takes out her phone and finger-winds through the video:

BILLY (V.O.)

(on phone speaker)

--He put her on the eye and choked her and she pissed herself as she died. She weren't big. She had long brown hair. I can't not see it.

Strike steps onto the horse's white eye -- a white disc about the size of a large dustbin lid.

STRIKE

A girl is strangled here, and a six year-old boy witnesses it. Was it a ritual? Were they brought here?

ROBIN

(pointing)

The Chiswell estate's over there. Less than five miles.

The light is fading, the wind getting up.

Robin winds back the Billy video.

BILLY (V.O.)

--saw killed, she's in the dell behind my dad's cottage. He helped them bury her there.

ROBIN

When Billy says helped "them". Could he mean the Chiswell family?  
(beat)  
Do we know who we're working for?

Strike turns back to Robin.

STRIKE

Any luck finding the cottage?

ROBIN

There's nothing on the main register. It's probably not an official property. I've found a workshop listed for Jack Knight?

84

EXT. OLD WOODEN BARN, CHISWELL ESTATE - NIGHT 5

84

Robin parks the Land Rover on the cracked, weed-strewn concrete forecourt in front of the wooden barn.

Strike and Robin approach the barn. Strike's flashlight finds an alarm box and a security light. He waves at it -- nothing.

STRIKE

Monitored alarm. Those don't come cheap. Power's off though.

Strike examines the padlock on the main doors. It's solid. Spider webs around the mechanism.

Robin finds a window at the rear of the barn. With a few sharp tugs, the rotten plywood panel covering it splinters away. A dark hole is left in the side of the barn.

ROBIN

(calling back)

Round here.

85

INT. OLD WOODEN BARN, CHISWELL ESTATE - NIGHT 5

85

Strike and Robin's torch beams sweep around the dark and dusty interior finding lengths of rope coiled onto hooks on the wall, wood chips and sawdust in drifts on the floor. A few part-broken tools. It feels abandoned.

STRIKE

What was the business listed as?

ROBIN

General exporting.

Robin's phone-torch beam travels over the beams while Strike's torch beam crawls around the perimeter.

Strike's beam alights on--

One of Billy's horse carvings, cut into a beam of the barn. The wood has been oiled many times since it was carved.

STRIKE

Billy's been carving those for a long time.

Robin sifts a handful of wood chipping.

ROBIN

He probably learnt how to do them here. You get these long curls from a lathe. Maybe they made furniture for export...?

Strike checks along shelves and bench surfaces. Strike finds an old receipt -- but it offers little of value.

Robin gets on her knees to look beneath benches. Near the rear door she finds, fallen and half-submerged in sawdust, an old "Fire Evacuation Plan" -- a Health & Safety requirement. It shows--

ROBIN (CONT'D)

There's a cottage marked here.

Strike walks over to see what she has found.

Along with muster points, "Steda" and "--> main house" have been drawn with a permanent marker.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

It's not far at all.

STRIKE

(beat)

What do you think?

Robin flicks her torch to a half-usable spade (noted earlier among other abandoned tools).

86

EXT. STEDA COTTAGE, CHISWELL ESTATE - NIGHT 5

86

Strike and Robin (carrying the spade) walk the overgrown footpath through dark, close trees. In a clearing they find--

The derelict cottage -- broken windows, partially-collapsed roof. It looks frightening, filling them with dread. It's the same cottage we saw the young boy looking out of in the opening sequence.

STRIKE

The dell's at the back.

87

EXT. DELL, STEDA COTTAGE, CHISWELL ESTATE - NIGHT 5

87

It's a steep, foliage-tangled slope down to the bottom of the dell. They stand on the rim of it, torch beams shining down. Robin glances at Strike. He won't meet her eye.

STRIKE

Come on then.

Strike begins to step down the slope -- and almost immediately loses his balance, his shoe slipping, the fall jarring him.

STRIKE (CONT'D) ROBIN  
Need to find some-- Why don't I--

STRIKE  
Can't fucking feel it when the left one catches on...

Strike struggles back to his feet. Frustrated.

ROBIN  
Let me do it.

Robin -- torch and spade in hand -- begins to step down the slope, using the spade to crush down brambles and nettles. Strike trains his torch beam ahead of her. All he can do.

Robin's foot slips -- she falls and slides to the bottom, her clothes ripping on brambles as she goes--

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
I'm fine... I'm...

Robin goes to pick up the dropped torch -- but sees that its beam has caught something unusual amidst the dark tangle of weeds. She walks to it. Kneels down.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
There's a cross here.

The cross is wooden -- rotten and peeling. It wasn't made by any kind of expert -- it's crude, childish.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
I'm going to start.

Strike watches as Robin clears away the foliage around the cross and then stamps the spade's blade into the earth.

Robin lifts damp, worm-wriggling sod aside. Digs again. Then stops. She steps back.

Strike's torch beam finds what she has seen -- the edges of a soil-clotted pink fleece blanket, emerging from the ground.

ROBIN (CONT'D)  
Cormoran...

STRIKE  
Yeah, I can see it.

ROBIN  
I can see bones.

**END OF EPISODE ONE**