

TITLE: **Althorp Estate, 1774**

We're on the back lawn of a beautiful country house. Off in the distance are fields filled with sheep, long grass and trees. It's a perfect summer's day with birds singing and a gentle breeze rustling in leaves.

Six ARISTOCRATIC YOUNG MEN stand in a group on the field. They are preparing for a running race: taking their jackets off and laying them down, then rolling up their sleeves.

On the lawn, a similar sized group of ARISTOCRATIC YOUNG WOMEN stand across from them. Behind is a tent and a table with the remains of an outdoor picnic.

Slightly to one side of the young women, sunlight hits the face of a young, beautiful and content GEORGIANA. She looks across to the men and calls out to one in particular.

GEORGIANA

(Loudly)

You'd better not let me down,  
Charles Grey. I've got fifty  
guineas riding on you.

A young man, CHARLES GREY looks up. He is quick to reply.

GREY

Only fifty? I'd double that if I  
were you.

GEORGIANA smiles, while the look on Grey's face suggests that he's taking this very seriously. He joins the other men in the starting line up, who also seem pretty intent on winning.

GEORGIANA

Are you ready gentlemen? To the  
farthest tree and back. On your  
marks, get set...GO!

The men immediately sprint out across the park: sheep scatter in every direction; expensive suede court shoes get dirty in the mud; the slower, less gainly young men fall behind as the fitter ones take the lead.

The women start to cheer. GEORGIANA shouts the loudest.

Out in the field a TALL YOUNG MAN is ahead of CHARLES GREY, with the distance between them seemingly increasing. GEORGIANA starts to jump up and down.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)  
Come on Grey, come on!

CUT TO:

2 INT. ALTHORP - DAY

2

In CLOSE UP, a quill pen dips into an ink well and starts to write on a virgin piece of white paper, 'The Fourteenth Day of May, Seventeen Hundred and Seventy...'

BURLEIGH, a solicitor, is at a table writing this document, his ink pen scraping against the paper. Around him, the room has the atmosphere of a serious occasion: still and dark although the sun shines brightly outside and the voices of the women - especially GEORGIANA - bleed through.

The DUKE, BURLEIGH's employer, is standing at the library window, looking into the garden at GEORGIANA cheering on the young men. The scene is distorted through the wavy glass window pane: a beautiful and mildly surreal image.

LADY SPENCER is seated behind the DUKE, perched on the edge of a large sofa, with LORD SPENCER behind her. She tries to ignore the muted screams of her daughter in the background.

LADY SPENCER  
(Cautiously)  
I trust your Grace still finds  
Georgiana an attractive girl?

The DUKE turns and we now see his face properly. He is handsome, older than GEORGIANA, and has a rakish twinkle in his eye. He looks at LADY SPENCER enigmatically.

DUKE  
Of course, Lady Spencer.

Another of GEORGIANA's shouts audibly registers. LADY SPENCER starts to pour tea from a silver Samovar in front of her in an effort to drown out the noise.

LADY SPENCER  
She is well-bred and devoted to her duties. She speaks French, Latin and Italian, and is fully versed in horsemanship and dancing...

DUKE  
Yes, I am aware of all that. She is a credit to you.

LADY SPENCER

...I can't think of anything in  
her that would stand in the way  
of a singularly happy marriage -

The DUKE turns for a brief moment and smiles inscrutably at  
LADY SPENCER. BURLEIGH cuts to the chase.

BURLEIGH

These are not the issues that  
burden the Duke, Lady Spencer. It  
His Grace's duty to produce an  
heir. On the other hand, your  
daughter may expect a handsome  
reward when that occurs -

DUKE

Thank you, Burleigh.

BURLEIGH

(resuming his writing)  
Your Grace ...

The DUKE remains looking out of the window, not so much out  
of interest in GEORGIANA, but rather because he finds these  
pre-nuptial proceedings uncomfortable. LADY SPENCER throws  
a brief glance at LORD SPENCER, who seems disinclined to  
discuss these matters. She resolutely turns to the DUKE.

LADY SPENCER

Your Grace can rest assured. The  
women in our family have never  
forfeited on that account.

LADY SPENCER smiles at her husband who nods back. BURLEIGH  
looks to the DUKE for confirmation, then decides to address  
his comment to no one in particular.

BURLEIGH

Well in that case...

BURLEIGH turns the document around toward the others for  
them to look at. The DUKE smiles at them, then turns and  
fastidiously removes a spot on the window pane.

DUKE

So be it, then.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. ALTHORP HOUSE - DAY

4

The men are running back from the tree. The race is nearing the finish but GREY is still behind the leader.

GEORGIANA

Come on Grey!

GREY puts his head down and accelerates. He shortens the gap. Then passes him. Finally he is in the lead and wins, totally out of breath and sweating. All the others follow, similarly exhausted and bent over double.

GEORGIANA turns to the other women, a book containing all the bets they've laid in her hand.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

(Charming smile)

I do apologise ladies but it appears my horse has won.

The young women smile, open up their purses and give money to GEORGIANA. She collects it in a good natured way. GREY approaches from behind, still slightly out of breath, manly and athletic. GEORGIANA turns to him.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Well done Mr Grey.

He looks intensely at her, bravely standing much closer than may normally be expected. Some of the young people notice this, and there's an edge of tension at this risque behaviour.

GREY

(Flirtatiously)

And my reward?

GEORGIANA returns the look.

GEORGIANA

If one doesn't share the risk,  
surely one can't expect to share  
the winnings.

The young people - eavesdropping on this conversation - smile and look at each other. GREY is just about to come back with a reply when...

SERVANT

Lady Spencer wishes to see you  
Miss Spencer.

GEORGIANA looks up to see LADY SPENCER standing on the top of the stairs outside the house. GEORGIANA curtsies to GREY who bows in return before GEORGIANA half runs toward her.

As GEORGIANA goes, GREY hears a noise. He looks out to the side of the house and sees the DUKE's distinctive carriage racing away across a small bridge over a stream. A strange, uncomfortable sensation comes over him. He quickly looks back for GEORGIANA but she has now reached LADY SPENCER...

We are with GEORGIANA and LADY SPENCER by the house:

GEORGIANA

I must apologize Mama, were we  
making too much noise?

LADY SPENCER

Not at all, darling. We have much  
more important things to talk of.

GEORGIANA waits expectantly for an explanation. LADY SPENCER reveals nothing, holding in her secret, but her excitement can't help but shine through.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

I have heard a rumour...

LADY SPENCER pauses for dramatic effect.

GEORGIANA

Yes...?

LADY SPENCER

...that I shall very soon be  
addressing my daughter as Her  
Grace, the Duchess of Devonshire.

GEORGIANA is taken wholly by surprise.

GEORGIANA

Is it true, Mama?

LADY SPENCER

(Proudly)

It is.

GEORGIANA

But...the Duke of Devonshire ...  
He is the handsomest man.

LADY SPENCER

I had hoped not to part with you  
until 18 at the soonest, but with  
such a fine match it would be  
selfish of me not to let you go.

GEORGIANA

So he loves me?

LADY SPENCER

Yes, of course.

GEORGIANA

I have only met him twice.

LADY SPENCER

When one truly loves someone, one doesn't have to know them well to be certain, Georgiana. One feels it right away. [Pause] I do believe you will be happy with him.

GEORGIANA

I know I shall, Mama...I know I shall.

LADY SPENCER turns and goes back inside. GEORGIANA looks back into the garden. All the young people are chatting and eating at the picnic. GREY, however, is to one side, looking out across the fields.

GEORGIANA takes a moment to herself. In the last light of day, sun rays illuminate pollen in the air around her. The camera moves in to a CLOSE UP of her optimistic face.

CUT TO:

4A OMITTED

4A

5 INT. LONDON CHURCH - MORNING

5

CLOSE UP of GEORGIANA'S face, same framing as before, but now heavily made up and in her BRIDAL DRESS. Wedding music plays as she is walking forward down the aisle, in this relatively small and intimate space.

At the far end stand a select group of powerful and important ARISTOCRATS. As GEORGIANA passes LADY SPENCER, her mother looks incredibly proud. When GEORGIANA reaches THE DUKE, he looks composed. She smiles at him. The DUKE looks impatiently at the MINISTER, evidently annoyed that the ceremony is taking so long.

Credits are superimposed throughout this sequence, until the main title appears as GEORGIANA stands at the front:

**THE DUCHESS**

The music stops. The PRIEST steps up to begin the service.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. DUKE'S GILT COACH. LONDON STREET - DAY

9

It's a wide and busy London street. There are ORDINARY PEOPLE on the side of it, TRAFFIC kicking up dust. It's a messy mass of noise and smells, smoke and dirt.

Through the middle of this comes the DUKE'S GILT COACH followed by two other COACHES, in stark contrast to their surroundings. Heads turn to look at this eighteenth century motorcade.

CUT TO:

9A INT. DUKE'S GILT COACH. LONDON STREET - DAY

9A

Still in her wedding dress, GEORGIANA sits alongside the DUKE in his CARRIAGE. The DUKE has his curtains closed around him to shield him from public view. There's an awkward silence. Finally,

DUKE

Here we are.

A bit further down this street the CARRIAGE nears a set of massive gates where a large group of THE GENERAL PUBLIC can be seen waiting and waving outside. The DUKE waves back, out of duty. GEORGIANA looks bemused.

GEORGIANA

What do they want?

DUKE

To see me. And my new wife, of course.

GEORGIANA

Oh.

DUKE

It's a damn bother, but you'll get used to it. Comes with the job, I'm afraid.

GEORGIANA, however, smiles and gives a little wave: she doesn't mind at all.

CUT TO:

10

I/E. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DAY

10

The CARRIAGE turns off the street and through the massive gateway. The gates are locked behind them.

Inside the huge courtyard Devonshire House is revealed as an oversized, stark and austere building. A wall runs all the way around it, blocking the view and completes the foreboding sense of arriving in a prison. The FOOTMAN opens GEORGINA's carriage door.

GEORGINA steps out into this hugely intimidating space. Flags bearing the Duke's crest blow in the wind, making a tense and aggressive sound. She stops a moment to take it all in.

HEATON, the HEAD BUTLER steps forward.

HEATON  
Welcome, Your Grace.

HEATON then leads her toward rows of HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS who are formally lined up to greet her. They bow and curtsy as GEORGINA walks past.

SERVANT 1  
Your Grace.

SERVANT 2  
Your Grace.

GEORGINA looks up to find the DUKE has disappeared inside.

CUT TO:

10A

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL. DAY

10A

GEORGINA enters a massive marbled ENTRANCE HALL. The DUKE stands at the top of the staircase.

DUKE (O.S.)  
This way.

CUT TO:

11

INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

11

GEORGINA stands in front of the DUKE who is sitting on the bed, about to undress her. He awkwardly unfastens her skirt and lets it fall to the floor. She smiles at him, a bit nervous. She tries to caress him, and leans forward to kiss.

THE DUKE  
Erm, stay where you are, please...

GEORGIANA straightens herself up. The DUKE proceeds to take off her clothes.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)  
I take it this is quite new to you?

GEORGIANA  
Yes...

THE DUKE  
Well, you're in safe hands.

His attempt to reassure her only serves to unnerve GEORGIANA more. She remains standing and looks up at the ceiling, while the DUKE proceeds to remove the rest of her garments - with some difficulty.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)  
For the life of me I don't  
understand why women's attire  
must be so damned complicated. I  
swear I'd pay a small fortune to  
whomever can provide me with an  
answer.

GEORGIANA  
I suppose it's just our way of  
expressing ourselves.

THE DUKE  
Whatever do you mean?

GEORGIANA  
Well, that you have so many ways  
of expressing yourselves, whereas  
we must make do with our hats and  
our dresses, I suppose.

THE DUKE  
Hmmm.

The corset gives the DUKE some trouble, and he pulls it off giving GEORGIANA a fierce jolt. Suddenly, she is completely naked. She sends the DUKE an uneasy look. For a moment he appears to be lost in his thoughts, just staring at her.

GEORGIANA  
Is something the matter?

THE DUKE  
No, not in the least. Lie down on  
your back, please.

The DUKE gets up and starts to undress. Around him the faces of his forefathers bear down from the massive portraits crammed onto the walls of his bedroom.

The DUKE, now naked, walks over to the bed and stands before her. The camera is behind the DUKE and focussed on GEORGIANA: having never seen a penis before let alone an erect one, she is intently and nervously staring at his.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)  
(Bending down)  
Kiss me.

GEORGIANA finally kisses him, inexpertly. He lies down on top of and penetrates her, the look on her face suggesting this is an extremely new and strange experience. The DUKE begins to move rhythmically while GEORGIANA still tries to make sense of the whole thing - all the time watched intensely from the walls by dozens of his male ancestors' eyes.

CUT TO:

12 OMITTED

12

13 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BLUE ROOM - DAY

13

GEORGIANA sits looking isolated and lonely in a huge gilt-edged blue room. She is trying to read a book but her concentration continues to be interrupted by the presence of MALE FOOTMEN stationed at two of the doors, like sentries. She turns a page and tries to focus but fails.

A TALL SERVANT enters. GEORGIANA puts the book down.

HEATON  
Lady Spencer, Your Grace.

GEORGIANA looks up, relieved, to see her mother enter. HEATON bows and walks away across the vast space.

CUT TO:

14 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - DAY - LATER

14

GEORGIANA sits with LADY SPENCER. They are playing cards - with real money laid out in front of them - and talking.

LADY SPENCER  
...One has to accept one's responsibility, my darling. Certain obligations come with marriage, no matter how burdensome they may seem.

GEORGIANA  
Yes, but when we are together, intimately, I mean, he...

LADY SPENCER

I know; it can be a bother.  
However, it is only until you  
have given him a son. The  
occasions will then become fewer,  
and less...determined.

Lady Spencer places down a card.

GEORGIANA

I think it would feel different if  
he might talk to me every once in a  
while. It's not that he's unkind  
but he never talks to me.

LADY SPENCER

Well, perhaps you ought to talk  
less. I fear you may have had a  
little too much education. You  
make boring conversation and ask  
questions which a man is  
disinclined to answer.

GEORGIANA looks at her mother in resignation. How can anyone  
have too much education?

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Learning these things takes time,  
too, my darling. Marriage is not  
like languages or music or  
painting. It requires a longer  
apprenticeship.

GEORGIANA

Yes. But he is... he is not at all  
as when I first met him. I thought  
he would be like Papa. Under his  
cool reserve I would find a wealth  
of depth and sentiment. But he  
doesn't seem interested in  
anything. Apart from his dogs.

LADY SPENCER

Try not to be too hard on him, G.  
He is merely intent on fulfilling  
his duty. As for talking - whatever  
is there to talk about, my dear?

GEORGIANA

No, you're right. How foolish of me  
to think that I should be able to  
converse with my husband.

LADY SPENCER sighs and looks at her spirited daughter.

LADY SPENCER  
 Georgiana, equip yourself with  
 patience, fortitude and  
 resignation. A boy will come soon  
 enough, then you'll see.

GEORGIANA nods. She sends her mother a polite little smile. LADY SPENCER smiles back then lays down a winning card and scoops the pile of money toward her.

CUT TO:

15 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

15

A great, noisy dinner party. WHIGS in full gala, among which is CHARLES FOX, a stout little man making a speech in the grand room. Everybody listens to him. HEATON watches on from the side.

GEORGIANA is by his side, her attire conspicuously more daring than before. She looks apprehensive: she is the only woman in a room dominated by alcohol and testosterone-fuelled MEN, one of whom is relieving himself into a chamber pot at the side of the room. GEORGIANA, though, pays attention to FOX. The DUKE, at the other end of the table, does not.

FOX  
 ...a political party, in my definition, consists of men of honour, entertaining similar principles that may be more successfully pursued by the force of mutual support and, not to forget, the unfailing generosity of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire.

Everybody looks to the DUKE, applauding loudly and somewhat sycophantically. The DUKE nods cordially.

FOX (CONT'D)  
 So between the persistence of my own humble self...

Everybody laughs again, including GEORGIANA, thus betraying that nobody finds Fox humble. FOX, pleased with the success of his joke, joins in the laughter.

FOX (CONT'D)  
 I say, between my persistence and the Duke's purse, we must always remember the honourable and principle aims of the Whig party, aims that some consider radical but which, to us, seem simply just and right and sensible.  
 (MORE)

FOX (CONT'D)

Just to bring independence to America. Right to end the slave trade. And sensible to pursue freedom for the common man, so that the blessings of this blessed plot, this England, may be more equally enjoyed - by *all* of its inhabitants.

All these are greeted by 'hear hears' from the room, and a deep thoughtfulness from GEORGIANA.

FOX (CONT'D)

And so - having kept everyone from the burgundy long enough - let me propose a toast to our host and benefactor his Grace, the Duke, and his beautiful new Duchess.

They all shout "hear, hear", reach for their glasses and toast in the direction of the DUKE. He nods cordially back.

FOX sits down at GEORGIANA's side. The murmur of small talk rises as the guests carry on with their eating and drinking. A MACARONI on the other side of FOX compliments his speech.

MACARONI

Excellent speech, Mr. Fox,  
splendid.

FOX

I thank you. However, it is always easy to address a congregation of friends, and even more so when those friends are drunk.

The MACARONI and GEORGIANA smile.

MACARONI

How did the Duchess find Mr. Fox's speech?

GEORGIANA

I must confess I am not yet at ease with political speeches. Their very form tends to obstruct my view to their actual meaning - if such there be.

FOX, expecting inane flattery, is surprised, although favourably impressed by GEORGIANA's candour. The MACARONI, not observing that GEORGIANA has earned FOX's undivided attention, proceeds to think that he is still part of the conversation:

MACARONI  
(Ingratiatingly)  
I myself found it very rousing...

FOX ignores him. He knows who he wants to talk to.

FOX  
In which particular section of  
the speech did the message elude  
your Grace?

GEORGIANA  
Well, I have great sympathy with  
your sentiments in general, but  
fail fully to comprehend how far we  
- the Whig party, that is - are  
fully committed to the concept of  
freedom.

FOX  
We would like to see the vote  
extended...

GEORGIANA  
To *all* men...?

FOX  
Heavens no. But certainly to *more*  
men. Freedom, in moderation.

GEORGIANA  
"Freedom in moderation"?

FOX  
(Pleased with himself)  
Precisely.

GEORGIANA nods, then smiles faintly, but mischievously.

GEORGIANA  
I am sure you are full of the  
best intentions, Mr. Fox, but I  
dare say I would not spend my  
vote - assuming I had it - on so  
vague a statement. Either one is  
free or one is not. The concept  
of freedom is an absolute. After  
all, one cannot be moderately  
dead, moderately loved, or  
moderately free. It must always  
remain a matter of either or.

Fox smiles at GEORGIANA in surprise.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

(Cheeky)

It is no wonder you are having  
such problems at the ballot box.

GEORGIANA smiles, winningly. Fox scrutinizes her face, not a little shocked but clearly impressed.

Another well-dressed MAN taps his glass and rises to speak. The room falls silent.

MAN

I think it's appropriate to say a  
few words...

The DUKE seems in no mood for another speech, and resolutely gets up and leaves. The entire company, including the MAN about to make a speech, look bewildered at one another.

GEORGIANA, too, is surprised and doesn't really know what she should do, so she jumps up and goes after the DUKE.

CUT TO:

16

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

16

The DUKE is in the middle of a corridor, where he has stopped to talk to a YOUNG MAID. GEORGIANA exits the room behind him, trying to catch up.

GEORGIANA

Your Grace?

The DUKE turns and looks at GEORGIANA. The YOUNG MAID curtsies and exits.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Is anything the matter?

DUKE

No...

GEORGIANA

You just left?

DUKE

Well... I had done eating. And those damn speeches bore me to distraction. We have to ban them in the future.

GEORGIANA

But you are the Whigs main  
supporter...

DUKE

I have no problem with politics,  
it's the rhetoric I can't stand.

The DUKE turns back and continues down the corridor.

GEORGIANA

So...shall I come with you?

DUKE

Not at all, why ever should you?

The DUKE turns and leaves. GEORGIANA looks at him, bemused.

CUT TO:

17 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

17

The conversation has stopped, everyone fearful their benefactor is aggrieved for some reason. The whole table of men watch as GEORGIANA sits back down, looking to her for reassurance. She addresses the room.

GEORGIANA

The Duke is fine. He simply wants  
to rest a while.

People nod and smile, the tension relieved. Conversations resume. FOX looks at her.

FOX

Was it the length of the speech  
that got the better of the Duke?

GEORGIANA

(Wry, flirtatious)

Certainly not. He enjoyed it  
immensely and expressed a hope that  
next time it would be even longer.

Fox sends her a look. She smiles back at him, reaches out for a drink and takes a long swig. The MACARONI leans over.

MACARONI

The dress you are wearing is made  
of a fascinating fabric, Duchess.

GEORGIANA

(Quick off the mark)

Thank you. Canton Crepe, a bit  
heavier than crepe de chine.  
They've developed an entirely new  
dyeing technique, which produces  
the most incredible nuances...

CUT TO:

18

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - LATE NIGHT

18

Late night, and all the guests have left. HEATON oversees as a team of SERVANTS are clearing up the mess: extinguishing the candles on the huge candelabra, on their hands and knees scraping food under the table etc.

CUT TO:

19

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

19

GEORGIANA passes quietly down the long candlelit corridors and of this massive house. She is happy, buoyant, tipsy.

GEORGIANA walks towards their bedroom. Suddenly a door opens and the YOUNG MAID the DUKE was talking to earlier comes running out, half naked, carrying her clothes in her arms. She looks at GEORGIANA in alarm, and runs off.

GEORGIANA looks at her, shocked and speechless, as she disappears off into the darkness of the corridor. Georgiana turns and proceeds toward the bedroom.

CUT TO:

20

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

20

In the bedroom the DUKE is sitting naked on the bed. GEORGIANA stops at a distance.

GEORGIANA

What is going on?

DUKE

About what?

There is an empty bottle by the Duke's side. He is clearly drunk. GEORGIANA approaches, unnerved.

GEORGIANA

What have you been doing?

DUKE

Nothing to concern you.

He smiles at her, kisses her.

GEORGIANA

Wait, William. I don't understand...

DUKE

What is there to understand?

GEORGIANA is lost for words.

DUKE (CONT'D)

You look very beautiful tonight.  
Is this dress your design?

GEORGIANA

Thank you. Yes it is.

DUKE

Then allow me to appreciate it in  
more detail.

The DUKE kisses her breasts and proceeds to remove her clothes. GEORGIANA, with a desire to do the right thing, acquiesces.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - AFTERNOON - EST

21

Time has passed. Months. The season has changed from summer to autumn, with wind in the trees and leaves on the ground, which workmen are busy collecting.

CUT TO:

22 OMITTED

22

23 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

23

GEORGIANA and the DUKE sit together in a gigantic dining room at a very long table. In the corner a musician quietly plays the harpsichord providing a low background ambience.

SERVANTS discreetly serving food and wine. GEORGIANA and the DUKE eat in silence. After a few moments HEATON emerges to whisper something into the ear of the DUKE. He understands the message and nods.

THE DUKE

Send her in...

HEATON exits. GEORGIANA looks at him.

GEORGIANA

Are we having company?

The DUKE chews his food and swallows before he replies.

THE DUKE

Yes, we are. Don't you think this mutton has a funny taste?

GEORGIANA

Not really, no...

THE DUKE

Well, I do...

HEATON enters with a NANNY holding a little three-year-old girl, CHARLOTTE, by the hand. The girl is very nervous. The DUKE looks at them, then at GEORGIANA.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

This is Charlotte. She will be staying with us.

GEORGIANA looks at the little girl who remains absolutely still. Then she looks at the DUKE.

GEORGIANA

Why...?

The DUKE signals to the BUTLER that they can leave the room, upon which the BUTLER leads the NANNY and Charlotte out.

THE DUKE

Because her mother is dead. She has no other place to go.

GEORGIANA looks in disbelief at the DUKE. The penny drops:

GEORGIANA

Have you fathered that child?

THE DUKE

It's only a little girl, Georgiana, hardly the end of the world.

The DUKE sends a suspicious look at the mutton before him. He looks up again, only to find that GEORGIANA is still staring at him. He takes a tiny bite of the mutton, examining its taste as if he suspected poison, during which he continues:

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

We have a house full of vacant rooms, G. She need not bother you. As a matter of fact, she may even be of use; you can practice your motherhood on her...

(gesturing at her stomach)

...until our son arrives.

GEORGIANA hands move protectively toward her stomach to reveal she is midway through pregnancy. She looks at him.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

This certainly doesn't taste like normal mutton. I am sure something is the matter with it.

The DUKE pushes his plate away and smiles at her. A SERVANT immediately steps forward to take the plate away.

CUT TO:

24 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - EARLY EVENING 24

GEORGIANA pauses outside the room in which the nanny is putting CHARLOTTE to bed for the night. She hears sobbing coming from inside.

24A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CHILDREN'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING 24A

GEORGIANA pushes open the door a little to catch a look at the little girl, not knowing if she dares enter. The NANNY catches sight of her and makes a curtsy.

NANNY

Your Grace, I didn't see you.

GEORGIANA

Would you leave us, please.

The NANNY looks nervously at GEORGIANA, not knowing whether she ought to leave.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

...leave us, please...

The NANNY scurries out of the room. GEORGIANA sits down on CHARLOTTE's bed. CHARLOTTE is hiding her face, still sobbing. She reaches for her doll, as if it was threatened by GEORGIANA's presence and she means to rescue it.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

(Softly)

I am Georgiana. What's your name?

CHARLOTTE makes no reply. GEORGIANA smiles at her. She can see that she is trembling and gently puts her hand on her shoulder to calm her.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Shh, there now, you are safe here  
...so what do you call your doll?

No answer.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Surely, it must have a name. Every  
doll must have a name.

CHARLOTTE stares at her in silence.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Let us make a deal, then. Tonight you decide on a name for your doll. You may choose between any in the whole wide world, and then, in the morning, you tell me which one you've picked.

Charlotte nods slowly. GEORGIANA rises and turns to leave.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Alice.

GEORGIANA turns back to Charlotte and smiles.

GEORGIANA

Good night then Alice. And good night Charlotte.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. COURTYARD - WINTER EVENING

25

It's snowing outside and GUESTS arrive in fur coats.

CUT TO:

25A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - WINTER EVENING 25A

MUSICIANS are playing in the foyer.

GEORGIANA - dressed amazingly - receives people with smiles, and poses as a newspaper sketcher draws her from the corner of the hall. Her belly is gigantic - she is in the very last stage of pregnancy. FOX arrives with the flushed and flashy RICHARD SHERIDAN. He looks at her.

SHERIDAN

An inch more, and I do believe your Grace will explode.

FOX

Sheridan certainly knows how to pay a compliment.

GEORGIANA smiles.

GEORGIANA

There are still a few more weeks to wait.

FOX

A huge belly has never been more becoming on anyone.

SHERIDAN

And Fox here offers an expert opinion, seeing, as he does, a giant belly every time he passes a mirror.

GEORGIANA smiles. SHERIDAN leans against FOX in affected confidentiality.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

If your belly were on a woman, we'd all know what to think.

FOX leans against SHERIDAN in imitation of his act.

FOX

My dear Sheridan, less than an hour ago, my belly *was* on a woman - so now what do you think?

GEORGIANA delights in the risky repartee.

GEORGIANA

That will teach you to insult Mr Fox before the gaming has begun.

CUT TO:

26

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - RED ROOM - LATER

26

The ballroom has been converted into a gaming area with a series of round card tables and is full of GAMBLERS. It has a decadent, opulent and smoky atmosphere.

The DUKE is at one table while GEORGIANA sits at another with SHERIDAN to one side and FOX to the other. The conversation runs fast and easy.

DEALER

Her Grace wins again.

GEORGIANA pulls in her chips.

DEALER (CONT'D)

Another wager?

SHERIDAN

I'm out. My funds have run dry and I've no one left to borrow from.

FOX

Maybe it would be different if people thought you had the slightest intention of paying them back?

SHERIDAN

One should never give money to  
one's creditors, dear boy. It  
only encourages them.

GEORGIANA

Is there no one in London not in  
debt?

SHERIDAN

Just the poor.

They all laugh loudly. Suddenly GEORGIANA stiffens as she  
feels a sharp pain. She gasps and looks at them in alarm.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

GEORGIANA

Yes...

She doesn't look convinced. Another dart of pain. GEORGIANA  
is in anguish.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I would like to...

Another shooting pain. By now, FOX, SHERIDAN, and several of  
the other guests have jumped to their feet to help her out.

The DUKE notices the turmoil from his table.

DUKE

Are those labour pains? My wife is  
in labour!

The DUKE now raises his glass and addresses the guests. He  
looks genuinely excited.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I think this calls for a toast. I  
may have an heir before the night  
is out.

He toasts. EVERYBODY joins in the toast and some cheer, save  
those who are helping GEORGIANA out of the room. The last  
image is of the DUKE, happy and proud.

CUT TO:

27

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - A FEW DAYS LATER

27

The house is quiet. LADY SPENCER hurries inside.

CUT TO:

28 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ROOM - DAY

28

LADY SPENCER steps into the room, still dressed in her cape. A SERVANT follows her and receives her cape. The DUKE is with his dogs, reading a newspaper and very depressed.

LADY SPENCER

Your Grace -

THE DUKE

I'm in no mood for conversation,  
I'm afraid.

LADY SPENCER

But, pray tell, is my daughter -

THE DUKE

Is your daughter at all able to  
give me a son?

Beat, as LADY SPENCER takes in the situation and quickly contemplates her response.

LADY SPENCER

Take heart, your Grace. As long as  
the mother is in good health,  
consider this mishap a draft, a  
promise of what is soon to come. In  
our family -

THE DUKE

Yes, yes -

LADY SPENCER stops as the DUKE waves her away, in a gesture which roughly signals that the DUKE appreciates her efforts to comfort him, but is too troubled to talk. LADY SPENCER smiles politely and leaves.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

(muttering)

Hell and damnation ...

The DUKE puts his head in hands. He is deeply troubled. The dogs sense their master's mood and mill around him.

CUT TO:

29 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - ROOM - DAY

29

LADY SPENCER enters the room in which GEORGINA lies exhausted, the curtains mostly closed. She musters a smile as she approaches her.

LADY SPENCER

Darling, how are you?

GEORGIANA

Fine.

LADY SPENCER sends her a warm smile and steps up to look at the baby sleeping in GEORGIANA's arms.

LADY SPENCER

...and is she well and healthy?

GEORGIANA nods and smiles.

GEORGIANA

She is perfect.

LADY SPENCER smiles and looks at the girl.

LADY SPENCER

She looks just like her mother...

GEORGIANA

Did William receive you?

LADY SPENCER

Yes.

GEORGIANA

Was he upset that it wasn't a son? He just glanced at her briefly and left.

LADY SPENCER

It's been a long night for him, too, my dear. Many eyes are upon him. (Looks at the baby) Why, she's the loveliest...

GEORGIANA looks at the baby with LADY SPENCER, seeming to think that this makes it all worth while. The baby starts to wake up, hungry and crying.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Nurse...

Lady Spencer gestures to the WET NURSE to come forward which she does, unbuttoning her shirt to feed.

GEORGIANA

(Firmly)

No, I will do it, thank you.

The wet nurse looks to Lady Spencer.

LADY SPENCER

Darling, are you sure...?

GEORGIANA

Yes, I am her mother after all.

Georgiana is already starting to feed her hungry baby from her breast, a picture of earthy motherhood in stark contrast to the pomp of her surroundings. She has no other concern in the world. LADY SPENCER, however, looks out of the window, worried.

CUT TO:

30 OMITTED 30

31 OMITTED 31

32 OMITTED 32

32A EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY 32A

A very wide shot of the empty English countryside, with the train of GILT COACHES mid-frame, glinting in the sunshine. TWO MORE COACHES follow, laden with STAFF and LUGGAGE.

CUT TO:

33 I/E. GILT COACHES. DAY - EARLY SUMMER 33

Close up on the face of a three year old girl, HARRY, sitting in a GILT COACH. HARRY sits next to CHARLOTTE, now aged 10, and G (4). GEORGIANA - now four years older - sits opposite. They are all playing cards.

In the second COACH the DUKE sits alone and in silence - bar his dogs - staring out of the windows at the passing countryside. He has also aged four years.

CUT TO:

34 OMITTED 34

35 OMITTED 35

36 EXT. THE TOWN OF BATH - DAY 36

The COACHES go past the Royal Crescent.

CUT TO:

36A EXT. THE TOWN OF BATH - DAY

36A

The COACHES travel down a long road with a MASSIVE VILLA at the end of it. All the LOCALS stand on the side of the road and watch. Small children run alongside the carriage. GEORGIANA leans out of her window and waves to them, touching their hands and saying 'hello'.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. DAY - LATER

37

THE FIRST COACH stops in front of the MASSIVE VILLA. SERVANTS open the door of the COACH. The DUKE steps out followed by GEORGIANA and the THREE GIRLS.

CUT TO:

38 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. FOYER - DAY

38

The FOYER alone is fabulous, spacious, sparkling. The DUKE surveys the place. Finally he sighs, as if it's a bad motel.

DUKE

Well. It'll have to do. It's only for a month.

The DUKE goes o.s. GEORGIANA enters, accompanied by the children, and soon after by SERVANTS carrying masses of luggage: suitcases, hatboxes, shoeboxes etc.

LITTLE G watches them go past.

LITTLE G

If we're only here for a month,  
Mama, why do you have so many  
cases?

GEORGIANA

(Smiling, ironic)

A lady needs a change of clothes,  
my darling.

LITTLE G smile back.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Now, who will get the best  
bedroom?

GEORGIANA looks to her CHILDREN. They run into the house full of excitement and energy, with their mother hot on their heels.

CUT TO:

39	OMITTED	39
40	OMITTED	40
41	INT. BATH ASSEMBLY ROOMS - DAY	41

There's a massive ball inside, all guests in formal clothes. Leading Whig SIR JAMES HARE addresses the crowd from the top of the steps.

SIR JAMES HARE

It is always a delight, when one is on holiday, to request a few words of wisdom. So without further ado it is a great honour to hand over to our most distinguished guest...

We see the faces of the DUKE and GEORGINA standing in the darkness of the wings behind HARE. Who is he referring to?

SIR JAMES HARE (CONT'D)

When she appears, every eye is turned towards her; when absent, she is the subject of universal conversation; and what we see her wearing tonight, I look forward to seeing the rest of you wearing tomorrow...

The DUKE's face seems to sink.

SIR JAMES HARE (CONT'D)

...the Empress of Fashion herself  
...The Duchess of Devonshire.

The CROWD applaud loudly. GEORGINA enters, accompanied by the DUKE. There's a hushed 'wow' as everyone takes in her extraordinary appearance: she wears a HUGE, THREE FOOT ADORNED WIG with OSTRICH FEATHERS inserted into it. She beams at the crowd, the total centre of attention. The DUKE looks uncomfortable next to her.

GEORGINA

We come away to Bath to get away from London and all of London has come away to Bath.

EVERYONE laughs. The DUKE forces a smile.

GEORGINA (CONT'D)

I always appreciate Sir James' introductions. He has a jeweller's wit; whenever he turns a phrase, one finds another facet.

There are chuckles from the CROWD. GEORGIANA, looking confident, strokes the feather in her hair.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

And as he suggests, somebody did indeed ask me earlier what kind of feather it is I'm wearing. Well, only two specimens of this rare bird are known to man. One of them has clearly ended up on top of my head. The other, rumour has it, is running for office in the Tory party.

There is great laughter. The DUKE seems disinterested.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

But let me be fair to our friends on the Opposition, for they have always known what they believe in: King's never wrong, Britain never fails, the world is ours for the taking. *Their* problem is that these things belong to the past.

There are 'hear hears' from the room. GEORGIANA looks to the side of the room and sees that the DUKE has caught the eye of a young blushing BEAUTY. She smiles at him. GEORGIANA carries on regardless.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Us Whigs, however, belong to the future. We want more respect for the rights of men and less for the rights of property. *Our* problem is that all the men who vote own property.

EVERYBODY laughs.

CUT TO:

42

INT. BATH ASSEMBLY ROOMS. DAY - LATER

42

HIGH TEMPO MUSIC is being played by some MUSICIANS. Many people are dancing energetically on the floor - especially GEORGIANA who is in the middle of a group of admirers: on a high and basking in the attention.

GEORGIANA is an expert dancer, moving from one male partner to the next. The CAMERA follows the feather on her head standing high over everyone as she twirls around the room, like a sharks fin jutting out above the water line.

All eyes are upon her: COURT REPORTERS in the corner try to sketch it; men look on from the sides with barely disguised sexual interest; women look at her dress, the feather, and then their husbands' reactions.

The DUKE, however, stands at the side, pretending only to be half-watching. GEORGIANA is spurred on by his indifference, and as the dancing progresses, she begins to show off and flirt in inverse proportion to it.

GEORGIANA then loses herself in the dancing until...She glances up to see the DUKE talking to another prey - a beautiful young woman in a dark dress, BESS FOSTER.

GEORGIANA now sees BESS evidently rejecting the ducal overtures and leaving the room. Rejection is a new experience for the DUKE, and he is appropriately taken aback, as is GEORGIANA. The DUKE's eyes stay on BESS as she leaves into the next room. GEORGIANA stops dancing.

GEORGIANA  
(To her partner)  
Excuse me...

GEORGIANA turns and walks away from the DANCERS.

CUT TO:

43	OMITTED	43
44	INT. BATH ASSEMBLY ROOMS. ANNEX. DAY - LATER	44

BESS is helping herself to some food from the sideboard. She is about to take a bite of a tart when she sees GEORGIANA, staring.

GEORGIANA  
I don't believe we have been  
formally introduced?

BESS  
I haven't, at any rate. Lady  
Elizabeth Foster. Bess.

They greet each other.

GEORGIANA  
I saw you in the ballroom,  
talking with my husband.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS in a levelled way. BESS returns the look.

BESS  
Yes, he wished to dance.

GEORGIANA

That is not usually considered  
his forte. And you declined?

BESS

I'm ill at ease with male company  
for the moment.

GEORGIANA smiles. BESS smiles back at her. GEORGIANA looks at BESS, sizing up this beautiful girl.

A LITTLE LATER:

GEORGIANA and BESS sit quite formally on either end of a settee as the party continues in the main room. GEORGIANA watches BESS with great interest.

GEORGIANA

What brings you to Bath?

BESS

(no shame whatsoever)

My husband, Mr. Foster, is enjoying  
his mistress in Bournemouth, and I  
wanted some diversion. And you?

GEORGIANA

(hedges)

The Duke is taking the waters for  
his gout...

Beat. BESS looks as if to say, 'carry on'.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

...and I...for my health.

BESS

Really?

(imitating gossip)

"The Duchess of D., married how-  
many-years and still no son and  
heir."

GEORGIANA is taken aback. People don't speak to her like that and she finds it refreshing and attractive.

BESS (CONT'D)

I beg your pardon. No offence was  
intended.

GEORGIANA

None was taken.

They look at each other. Something passes between them. GEORGIANA smiles and moves closer to BESS on the sofa.

She lowers her voice in a conspiratorial way. It's almost as if they are flirting with each other.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Although I had hoped to avoid being reminded of that. If only tonight.

BESS

I apologize. Trust me to say something silly. I always do, you know.

GEORGIANA

Then perhaps you should have accepted the Duke's invitation. You have much in common.

BESS does not know if she is allowed to laugh. She looks at GEORGIANA and smiles. Then they both laugh. There is a real connection here, two lost people who have found each other.

The DUKE enters the room, nibbling at a chicken drumstick. He seems to dislike the taste, looks at the drumstick and throws it.

DUKE

Well... Home, I think. Georgiana.

He turns to leave, throwing a puzzled look at the drumstick on the floor. GEORGIANA and BESS look at him as he leaves. Then GEORGIANA gets up.

GEORGIANA

Where are you staying?

BESS

I've rented some rooms in town.

GEORGIANA

We must meet again.

BESS

We must.

CUT TO:

45

EXT. THE DUKE'S CARRIAGE - DUSK - LATER

45

The DUKE's carriage trundles down the Bath street.

CUT TO:

45A INT. THE DUKE'S CARRIAGE - DUSK - LATER

45A

The DUKE sits on the seat. GEORGIANA, however, has to sit on the floor to make room for the ostrich feather that's still on top of her head.

They are not looking at each other and the strain of their relationship shows on them both. We remain on GEORGIANA's face as the bright sounds of young children's voices fade up until we...

CUT TO:

46 OMITTED

46

47 EXT. BATH PARK - DAY

47

GEORGIANA, a NANNY flanking her, is playing chase and running races with her children in the sunshine. It's free and easy and everyone is laughing and having a good time.

GEORGIANA steps back to watch the three girls run to a tree and back, and gets her breath back. HARRYO runs and falls.

BESS (O.S.)

Up and fall down, up and fall  
down.

GEORGIANA turns to see BESS standing behind her watching the children play.

BESS (CONT'D)

Why can't we recover like that?

GEORGIANA

Too far to fall now.

They smile.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Hello again.

BESS

Hello. [Beat] Your girls are  
lovely.

GEORGIANA

Thank you. Do you have any  
children?

BESS

I do. Three boys...

GEORGIANA

Three boys ... What the Duke  
wouldn't give for one of them.

BESS smiles.

BESS

She is very dark, your eldest.

GEORGIANA

Yes. (Makes a decision) Her mother  
was dark. I'm sure you know the  
story.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS. BESS does, but she doesn't speak.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

My husband's daughter was born  
before we married. The mother was  
a maid. The maid died; we took the  
child.

BESS

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have spoken.  
There I go again, talking nonsense.

GEORGIANA

Never mind. It's the worst kept  
secret in London. She's nine years  
old now.

BESS

And...do you love her?

GEORGIANA

Of course I do, the same as all my  
children. They are my life.

BESS smiles, but behind it her own pain shows through.

CUT TO:

48 OMITTED

48

49 EXT. BATH. ROMAN BATHS - DAY

49

GEORGIANA and BESS walk through the baths. They pass a  
whole range of unfortunate people: INCURABLES, RHEUMATICS,  
GOUT SUFFERERS etc. PROVINCIAL MUSICIANS play in the  
corner.

GEORGIANA stops to sip a cup of hot liquid. BESS takes a  
sniff and recoils.

GEORGIANA

Thermal water. It's the sulphur  
that makes it smell so bad.

BESS

And you really have to drink it?

GEORGIANA

Twice a day for four weeks. Along  
with all the women who cannot  
give birth...

GEORGIANA gestures toward a group of WOMEN, also sipping  
from teacups.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

...even to a girl.

GEORGIANA takes a sip from her cup, grimaces and puts it  
down. BESS laughs and they walk on.

CUT TO:

49A INT. BATH. PRIVATE BATHS. DAY - LATER

49A

GEORGIANA and BESS are in a private area of the baths. They  
both undress. GEORGIANA is a little self-conscious taking  
her clothes off, but she can't help looking at BESS who is  
much more open.

Suddenly GEORGIANA sees a RED MARK on BESS'S NECK.  
GEORGIANA is shocked, and her hand instinctively reaches  
out to touch her.

GEORGIANA

What's that?

BESS looks evenly at Georgiana, as if trying to decide to  
tell her something.

BESS

It's not illegal for a man to  
beat his wife with a stick unless  
the stick is thicker than your  
thumb.

GEORGIANA is speechless.

GEORGIANA

Mr Foster? But - he can't do  
that...

BESS

Considering what else he's done to  
me, that's not the worst...

GEORGIANA

What could possibly be worse...?

BESS

He's taken my children. He won't let me see them.

GEORGIANA

But ... how can that happen? What do you propose to do?

BESS

Really, I'm at my wits' end. The law supports Mr. Foster, I'm afraid.

GEORGIANA is lost in the horror of BESS's situation. A SERVANT pours more HOT WATER into the bath. Steam rises.

GEORGIANA

And in the meantime, where shall you stay?

BESS

Continue renting I suppose, until my money runs out.

GEORGIANA

Then you must come and stay with us. I will ask the Duke if he will allow it.

CUT TO:

50	OMITTED	50
51	OMITTED	51
52	OMITTED	52
53	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - DAY	53

GEORGIANA leads the way down the corridor. BESS follows, gazing at the house, marvelling at the grandiosity of it all. Unlike GEORGIANA's first arrival it feels informal, free, excited.

BESS

This is incredible ...

GEORGIANA, tickled to have BESS with her, takes her arm.

GEORGIANA

(Ironically)

Yes. There's the castle in  
Ireland, Bolton Abbey, Chiswick,  
Burlington - and Chatsworth, of  
course, which is much bigger -  
but this is more like home.

BESS laughs. GEORGIANA leads her through more rooms.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

(Ironically again)

Unfortunately the State Rooms are  
reserved solely for the King and  
Queen...So this will have to do.

GEORGIANA opens a door to reveal a beautiful bedroom with  
adjacent dressing area. BESS is suitably impressed. They  
laugh and hug each other close.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I am so glad you are here.

(Devilish)

I have arranged a wonderful start  
to the season.

CUT TO:

54 OMITTED

54

55 INT. DRURY LANE THEATER - NIGHT

55

It's OPENING NIGHT. A HUGE CRUSH of SOCIAL TYPES are in the  
theatre. Many of the women have their hair piled high with  
an ostrich feather in it. They hold programmes that read  
'School For Scandal' by Richard Sheridan.

JOURNALISTS and CARTOONISTS sit off to the side, like  
paparazzi, sketching. We see glimpses of their renditions.  
In them, GEORGIANA's large wig looks even larger.

ON STAGE the performance is in full flow: an argument  
between "Sir Peter Teazle" and "Lady Teazle." The actors  
are made-up and costumed to look suspiciously like  
GEORGIANA and The DUKE, and the set is a replica in  
miniature of the Devonshire House living room.

ACTOR PLAYING SIR PETER

"May all the plagues of marriage  
be doubled on me, if ever I try  
to be friends with you any more!"

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

"So much the better"

IN THEIR BOX the DUKE and GEORGINA look on, stiff and very separate. BESS sits behind them. There's a very tense air: the DUKE is looking mortified while GEORGINA seems to know exactly what's going on. She looks down at SHERIDAN sitting in the front row, who looks back equally knowingly, and winks at him.

ACTOR PLAYING SIR PETER

"No, no madam.: 'tis evident you never cared a pin for me, and I was a madman to marry you."

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

"And I am sure I was a fool to marry you - an old dangling bachelor..."

The camera moves into the DUKE. He endures the humiliation with a straight face but his insides are in knots.

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE (CONT'D)

...who was single at fifty, only because he never could meet with anyone who could have him."

The audience LAUGH LOUDLY and look up to where the DUKE and GEORGINA are sitting. The DUKE grips his seat.

ACTOR PLAYING SIR TEAZLE

Very well, madam! Very well! A separate maintenance as soon as you please. Yes, madam, or a divorce!"

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

(Triumphant)  
"Agreed! Agreed!"

The audience laugh and cheer as the curtain comes down.

Amid the noise, GEORGINA smiles at FOX in a box across the theatre. Next to him is a handsome YOUNG MAN in his 20s. She smiles at them both then looks back to the stage. FOX does the same, but the YOUNG MAN remains gazing at her. She looks back, realising who it is - CHARLES GREY.

CUT TO:

After the show. The DUKE is skulking around the edge of the crowd. GEORGINA and BESS meet with FOX.

GEORGIANA

Bess. This is Mr. Fox. The Leader  
of the Opposition. Mr Fox, Lady  
Elizabeth Foster.

BESS is impressed. They nod at each other. CHARLES GREY  
approaches from behind FOX.

FOX

Ah. And here is my protegee,  
Charles Grey.

BESS nods to both the men. GEORGIANA smiles knowingly at  
GREY.

GEORGIANA

Mr Grey.

GREY

Your Grace.

FOX

He's our newest bright young man -  
scarcely out of Cambridge and  
already a member of Parliament.

GEORGIANA can't take her eyes off him. He looks at her too.  
BESS notices how preoccupied they are with each other. Just  
then SHERIDAN approaches with open arms.

SHERIDAN

Your Grace! How we've missed you!  
In your absence London has been  
reduced to the dreariest province!

GEORGIANA smiles. She breaks her eyes from GREY'S.

GEORGIANA

And this, of course, is the  
playwright, Mr. Sheridan. May I  
present the Lady Elizabeth.

SHERIDAN greets BESS. Then, with an apologetic mien at the  
others, he pulls GEORGIANA away.

SHERIDAN

Pardon us. I do not mean to be  
rude, but I have an entire cast  
dying to meet the Duchess. I shall  
return her in a moment, promise.

SHERIDAN and GEORGIANA leave. BESS watches GREY as GREY  
watches them go. They look to the DUKE, who has found some  
consolation in the form of a gauche young GIRL.

CUT TO:

57 INT. DRURY LANE THEATRE - NIGHT - LATER

57

SHERIDAN presents GEORGIANA to a lined-up CAST, who all curtsy and bow to her.

GEORGIANA

Were we fair on the Duke? We  
didn't go too far?

SHERIDAN

It could have been worse.  
(Whispers to her) My original  
title was "The Bad Marriage."

GEORGIANA

Yes, that does make 'The School  
for Scandal' sound like an  
exercise in subtlety.

SHERIDAN smiles.

A SERVANT enters with a tray of drinks. Everybody helps themselves to one. SHERIDAN produces a bottle of opium.

SHERIDAN

Opium?

GEORGIANA

Just a drop...

SHERIDAN pours opium in their drinks. A few of the actors and actresses have a drop too.

CUT TO:

BESS standing near the WINGS.

She watches GEORGIANA surrounded by admirers, laughing, charming them all. Then she looks at the DUKE, who now sits very close to the young GIRL. GREY comes up to her with a drink. BESS takes it.

GREY

Infantile atmosphere, isn't it?

BESS

Well, it's ... certainly not what  
I'm used to.

GREY

It's quite a feat to get through  
all the conversations and still  
remain sober.

GREY raises his glass and smiles at her. BESS raises hers.

GREY (CONT'D)  
What does Her Grace make of it  
all?

BESS  
In truth I think Her Grace may be  
tiring of Society. Her real  
passion lies in politics.

BESS gives GREY a cheeky look to make sure the innuendo is not lost on him.

GREY  
(Very interested)  
Really...

They both observe GEORGIANA talking animatedly on the stage, a crowd around her and loving the attention. Then they spot the DUKE, who has cornered his prey against a wall. GREY cannot believe what he is seeing.

GREY (CONT'D)  
Is it always like this?

BESS  
Well, as they say, the Duke of  
Devonshire must be the only man in  
England not in love with his wife.

GREY takes this in as he watches the DUKE and GEORGIANA.

CUT TO:

58 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 58

BESS and GEORGIANA are in nightclothes, sprawled across each other on the bed. They are intimate and relaxed, like two teenage girls after a night's clubbing.

GEORGIANA  
Were you at all able to forget  
things and enjoy yourself?

BESS  
It was a wonderful distraction,  
thank you.

GEORGIANA  
Good.

BESS  
I talked all night to Mister  
Grey...

GEORGIANA  
Oh yes?

BESS

He is in love with you.

GEORGIANA laughs.

GEORGIANA

My dear Bess. No he's not.

GEORGIANA looks at her, thinks. BESS smiles.

BESS

Can't you tell by the way he looks  
at you? He wants to touch you.  
Honestly, can't you tell?

GEORGIANA

Stop it, please.

BESS

Georgiana. Procreation is not just  
about offspring. In fact, it can be  
quite nice.

GEORGIANA

(laughs uncertainly, lies)  
Yes, I know...

BESS

Try to close your eyes ... and  
envision Grey slowly opening your  
dress ... and kissing your back.

GEORGIANA starts to giggle.

GEORGIANA

Oh, please, they never do such  
things...

BESS

Oh yes they do.

BESS gets up and lies behind GEORGIANA. GEORGIANA looks a  
little nervous about this.

BESS (CONT'D)

Close your eyes...Grey is behind  
you....slowly opening your  
dress...

BESS pulls back part of GEORGIANA's clothing to reveal her  
shoulder. BESS begins to kiss it.

GEORGIANA

Bess, stop.

BESS  
(Firmly)  
...close your eyes....kissing  
your back...

GEORGIANA relents and closes her eyes. BESS continues to kiss her back. Suddenly GEORGIANA goes silent, a look of real surprise on her face: she is experiencing sensations she never knew even existed.

Bess continues, soft but in charge, as they both allow themselves to become lost in the erotically charged moment:

GEORGIANA lets out little gasps of pleasure...

BESS pushes it further...

Her hands explore under GEORGIANA'S nightclothes...

Over her breasts...

The tops of her legs...

GEORGIANA gasps again, a realisation that parts of her body could give such pleasure...

BESS tugs GEORGIANA'S hair back a little...

Her hands reach further...

GEORGIANA closes her eyes...

BESS (CONT'D)  
(Whispers)  
There...see...

BESS stops what she's doing. Beat. They both breathe heavily, the sexual tension and arousal hanging heavy in the air. They are a little embarrassed, scared even of what might happen if they carried on, and for a moment it seems that is what they might well do...

But BESS gets up and walks to the window as GEORGIANA readjusts her clothes. They regain composure and try to carry on as if nothing has really happened.

BESS (CONT'D)  
In the play this evening, there was a scene in which Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface discuss their affair. They acknowledge that once a lady of quality has provided her husband with a son then she may take a lover.

GEORGIANA takes it in.

BESS (CONT'D)  
 Be ready, dear G, when the time  
 comes.

GEORGIANA lies back on the bed, eyes wide open, thinking.  
 This image is held as the sound of a haunting operatic  
 voice - accompanied by harp - starts over it and carries us  
 into the next scene.

CUT TO:

59	OMITTED	59
60	OMITTED	60
61	EXT. CHATSWORTH. FORMAL GARDENS - DAY	61

We are in the grounds of a huge country house and its  
 estate. SWARMS of COUNTRY PEOPLE, MEN on HORSES and TENANTS  
 are present. Massive amounts of food are laid out on  
 trestle tables with white table cloths.

The singing and harp continue, and we find that AN OPERA  
 singer - with GEORGIANA on harp - perform beautifully,  
 perfectly, to a grand outdoor picnic.

CLOSE ON GEORGIANA as she plays: eyes closed, passionate.

We see the DUKE and BESS standing together with FOX and GREY  
 at the rear of the audience. To one side stands LADY SPENCER.

The music ends. GEORGIANA and SINGER bow to APPLAUSE.

MINUTES LATER:

The harp is being carried back inside by FOUR SERVANTS.

GEORGIANA works her way through the ORDINARY PEOPLE and  
 TENANTS, making them feel welcome and urging them to eat.  
 She walks up to LADY SPENCER and embraces her.

GEORGIANA  
 Hello Mama.

LADY SPENCER  
 (Coolly)  
 Hello my dear.

BESS comes over too.

BESS  
 We're so glad you were able to  
 visit, Lady Spencer.

LADY SPENCER looks hurt.

LADY SPENCER  
Are 'we' really?

BESS  
Yes, G speaks of you all the time.

LADY SPENCER  
Well that is nice to hear. My daughter's letters have become so short of late that finally they do not exist at all.

GEORGIANA  
I do apologise Mama. It is merely a reflection of my current state of happiness...

LADY SPENCER  
(Cutting across)  
I only know what she is up to by reading the Morning Post.

GEORGIANA is stung by this. The DUKE wanders up behind, surveying the scene.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)  
And how long do you intend to stay on Lady Elizabeth?

BESS  
Please, 'Bess'. I don't know. I'm sure I've worn out my welcome already.

GEORGIANA  
Nonsense.

DUKE  
Lady Elizabeth is free to stay with us for as long as she likes.

LADY SPENCER is left open-mouthed, a little alarmed at how close they all seem. FOX and some WHIGS come forward. GEORGIANA turns from her mother and smiles broadly.

GEORGIANA  
Who let these radicals through the gates of Chatsworth?

FOX  
No one lets us in anywhere!  
That's why we're radicals!

CUT TO:

62 EXT. FORMAL GARDENS. DAY - LATER

62

The DUKE leads a SHOOTING PARTY of men with rifles at the bottom of the hill. Ahead of them GAMEKEEPERS walk through the trees, banging them with sticks to rouse the birds. The distant gunshots echo in the background of the following...

GEORGIANA helps herself to food from the tables along with ORDINARY PEOPLE. FOX and SHERIDAN help themselves too.

GREY (O.S.)  
What a fine spread.

GEORGIANA turns to see GREY behind her.

GEORGIANA  
Thank you. We do our best.

GEORGIANA starts to stroll, but her smile invites him to follow.

GREY  
We? From what I hear you run  
these open days single-handedly.

GEORGIANA  
Well, the Duke does find inviting  
all and sundry to the house a  
little... testing. But it's only  
once a week.

GREY  
The Duke would prefer his tenants  
to starve?

GEORGIANA  
It is his property.

GREY  
Then he must surely embrace the  
responsibilities that come with it.  
Or perhaps His Grace would prefer  
instead to be *divested* of such  
troublesome possessions.

GEORGIANA  
(Provocatively)  
What an interesting idea.

GREY, encouraged by her double meaning, continues.

GREY

You know, I despise the fact that  
so few men have so much power - and  
that they mismanage it so  
appallingly.

GEORGIANA smiles at him.

GEORGIANA

So you agree with the French?

He returns her smile.

GREY

Yes, in so far as I believe in  
reform...That a man ought not to  
be governed by laws in the  
framing of which he had no voice.

GEORGIANA looks impressed. She realizes how close they're standing, and in full view of the PEOPLE. She moves away a few feet.

GEORGIANA

I must attend to my duties.

GEORGIANA starts to walk off in the direction of more TENANTS. GREY watches her go, disappointed. He starts toward FOX and SHERIDAN.

CUT TO:

63

EXT. CHATSWORTH. FORMAL GARDENS. DAY - LATER

63

It is toward the end of the day. The sun is casting long shadows on the lawn as the picnic is being packed up.

GEORGIANA sits against a tree, sipping a cordial, all the while watching GREY in conversation with some men. BESS approaches GEORGIANA.

BESS

Whatever is the matter with you?  
Your behaviour is so out of the  
ordinary.

GEORGIANA

I just feel like keeping to myself  
today...

BESS sits down beside her, leaning close and intimate. They look at the men, GREY at the centre, then look at each other. BESS smiles broadly. GEORGIANA blushes.

BESS digs GEORGIANA playfully and gently in the ribs. They giggle like schoolgirls.

GEORGIANA looks up to see LADY SPENCER is watching, a disapproving expression on her face.

CUT TO:

64 INT. PAINTED HALL. CHATSWORTH - LONG AFTER DINNER. 64

LADY SPENCER and GEORGIANA are walking through. Other GUESTS mill around.

LADY SPENCER  
(Hushed)  
But you have only known her three months!

GEORGIANA  
Bess is my friend! She is the very best of women.

LADY SPENCER  
She seems many things, but I would be hard pushed to say she were *that*.

GEORGIANA  
It may pain you to recognise it Mama, but a great change has come over my life and its name is Lady Elizabeth Foster...about whom it can be truly said I have at long last found my other self.

LADY SPENCER's pulse races. She wants to interject.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)  
I understand if that may make you feel a little *jealous*.

LADY SPENCER stops.

LADY SPENCER  
(Fierce whisper)  
This is a dangerous path of life to choose my girl. You have begun to cavort so constantly in public you cannot live for your own soul. It is no surprise you are gathering weeds instead of flowers.

GEORGIANA is stunned, like a little girl cut dead by her mother for showing off. LADY SPENCER turns on her heels and walks off leaving GEORGIANA fuming inside.

CUT TO:

64A INT. CHATSWORTH. SITTING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER 64A

GEORGIANA, a rebellious look on her face, takes a drink from a BUTLER. She then heads toward GREY who is among a group of MEN. As he sees GEORGIANA he excuses himself from the conversation and meets her.

GREY

Your Grace...

GEORGIANA

Mr Grey, I have been thinking.  
The national election is in six weeks, yes? How is the campaign going?

GREY

Terribly. Our only hope is to save Westminster for Fox.

GEORGIANA smiles. There's a mischievous sparkle in her eye.

GEORGIANA

Well, I have many faults as you may know, not least among them is my ability to draw attention. Perhaps we could use that to our advantage...

CUT TO:

65 OMITTED 65

66 EXT. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS - DAY 66

GEORGIANA stands on a platform dressed in the most outrageous costume yet, her hair piled three foot high above her head and decorated with Whig-coloured ribbons.

In front is a HUGE CROWD: a massive mix of people from drunks and prostitutes to lords and ladies. Banners proclaim WHIGS, VOTE FOX. JOURNALISTS mill around, scribbling into notebooks and sketching GEORGIANA. In the crowd, women are fanning themselves with fans bearing Georgiana's likeness.

GEORGIANA

(Shouts to the crowd)

Ladies and Gentlemen.

(MORE)

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I give you a man who will inform us of the work we must do and the party we so believe in! Mister Charles Grey!

APPLAUSE as GREY moves to take the stage. GEORGIANA and GREY exchange a look as he positions himself.

GREY

I am here in Westminster to speak on behalf of our candidate Sir Charles James Fox...

APPLAUSE.

GREY (CONT'D)

Well, I wish only to address a single issue. Power.

GEORGIANA looks at GREY, clearly proud of him.

GREY (CONT'D)

The basis of power in our country is land, as it has been for centuries. And the aristocracy owns nearly all of it...

There are a few laughs from the CROWD.

GREY (CONT'D)

...along with all the places in the Government, control of the House of Commons, Ambassadors, Governors, Judges, and a host of other posts too numerous to mention. They levy what taxes they think proper and pass what laws their self interest dictate. They maintain this influence by transferring their land intact, generation after generation. And in so doing continue to dominate English life.

GREY stops to look at the faces of the PUBLIC looking back at him. They are with him.

GREY (CONT'D)

So, if we win this election, if we get the power we seek, what will we do with it?

GREY's listeners are quiet. GREY proceeds.

GREY (CONT'D)

Will we merely follow in the  
footsteps of those that came before  
us? Master the art of compromise?  
Of killing a good bill in a bad  
committee? Of postponing the  
greater good for the greater  
advantage? Will we do that?

(Long pause)

No. We won't. Because we believe  
*in the words we've spoken...*

A few scattered 'hear hears' begin.

GREY (CONT'D)

...and we have *faith* in the hearts  
we've stirred.

More 'HEAR HEARS'. GREY's rhetoric takes flight.

GREY (CONT'D)

The world is on the brink of  
disaster or salvation. From  
France to America, men and women  
are struggling to free themselves  
and find meaning in their  
existence. Change is upon us.

Loud calls of 'YES' and applause.

GREY (CONT'D)

We shall not return to the old  
ways! We shall not shirk our  
promises and our duties! We shall  
take England into this brave new  
world and shake the thunder from  
the skies! This we vow!

APPLAUSE. CHEERS. GEORGIANA gazes at GREY. GREY looks at  
her, flushed and excited. She blushes like mad.

CUT TO:

67

I/E. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS. BACKSTAGE - A LITTLE LATER

67

GREY stands alone. GEORGIANA approaches.

GREY

How did I do?

GEORGIANA

(Trying to hide her  
feelings)

I think it was not an  
embarrassment.

Grey's face crumbles in disappointment. GEORGIANA grins.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

It was a marvel.

GREY smiles. A big open, boyish smile of relief.

GREY

But did you agree with what I said?

GEORGIANA

Every word.

GREY gains self-confidence. He approaches GEORGIANA.

GREY

I was jittery. Your presence  
trebled the numbers at least.

GREY is now very close indeed. GEORGIANA feels the effect of it. She becomes short of breath. GREY speaks softly.

GREY (CONT'D)

I am jittery even now...

GEORGIANA knows that she ought to keep a distance, but remains where she is.

GEORGIANA

So am I.

There is tension in the air. A POLITICIAN walks past them. They both acknowledge him as he goes. Then GEORGIANA stares at GREY, and moves a little closer.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Do you think of me when we are  
not together?

GREY

(surprised)

You ought to know I do... of you  
more than anything else.

GEORGIANA

You hesitated before replying ...

GREY

I am unused to being asked so  
directly, and by you of all  
people.

GREY walks close. He very gently puts his hand on hers. She looks down at his hand, then up at him, blushing a little.

GREY (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
I think of you every day.

They look lovingly at one another. GEORGIANA is just about to reward GREY's candour with a confession of her feelings when the sight of SERVANT approaching brings her to remember herself. She withdraws her hand.

FOOTMAN  
Your carriage awaits Your Grace.

GREY nods. GEORGIANA starts to leave, her eyes remaining on Grey until she turns a corner and is gone.

CUT TO:

68	OMITTED	68
69	OMITTED	69
70	OMITTED	70
71	OMITTED	71
72	OMITTED	72
73	OMITTED	73
74	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT	74

GEORGIANA enters. Silence. She races across the vast space.

CUT TO:

75	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - NIGHT	75
	GEORGIANA, makes her way quickly down the hall.	

GEORGIANA  
(Hushed whisper)  
*Bess.*

As she approaches the door to BESS's room she stops. Two servants are listening outside it. When they see GEORGIANA they jump back and disappear.

GEORGIANA takes their place by the door. She can hear BESS and the DUKE having sex - her husband and her best friend. And it's not the kind she has with him: it's passionate, energetic, enjoyable. For a while, she is paralyzed. Then she moves away and down the hall.

CUT TO:

76

INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - DAWN - HOURS LATER

76

THE DOOR opens and the DUKE enters, stealthily. The sun is just pouring GRAY LIGHT into the room. He closes the door very softly and then turns to see...

GEORGIANA sitting on his bed. She looks ashen.

CUT TO:

77

THE SAME. AN HOUR LATER.

77

GEORGIANA paces. The DUKE sits on the bed, caught. It is difficult to see if he is actually ashamed, but he is listening patiently to GEORGIANA.

GEORGIANA

Of all the women in England, you had to throw yourself upon her. I have not objected once to any of your affairs, I have accepted whatever arrangement you have proposed, I have raised Charlotte as my own daughter, but this... I have one single thing of my own... why couldn't you let me keep Elizabeth for myself?

CUT TO:

78

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

78

We see a distraught BESS listening at the door.

GEORGIANA (O.S./CONT'D)  
What kind of man are you?!

CUT TO:

79

INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

79

GEORGIANA is raging at him.

GEORGIANA

She is all I have to cling to! She is my sole comfort in our marriage.

The DUKE patiently hears her out.

CUT TO:

80

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

80

BESS's eyes are filled with tears.

GEORGIANA (O.S./CONT'D)  
You have robbed me of my only  
friend!

CUT TO:

81 INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

81

GEORGIANA pauses, nearly spent. Then she finally challenges the DUKE, more imploring than angry.

GEORGIANA  
What is wrong with me? Why have you  
never loved me?!

DUKE  
(simple, exhausted  
clarity)  
I do not claim to be a man of  
depth or complexity, G, but I  
have always known what I expect  
from this marriage and what I am  
prepared to give.

GEORGIANA doesn't reply.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
As a husband, I have fulfilled my  
obligations. As a wife, you have  
not.

GEORGIANA  
She has to go! Now! She is never to  
set foot in this house again!

DUKE  
(Hackles rising)  
Do mind your temper, G. You are  
quite forgetting yourself.

GEORGIANA  
I want her out! I never want to lay  
eyes on her again! Go down and tell  
her to leave at once!

DUKE  
I couldn't ask her that. I won't do  
it, G.

CUT TO:

82

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

82

The door swings open - BESS jumps aside - and GEORGIANA comes crashing out of the sitting room, furious. GEORGIANA storms down the hall, followed by BESS.

BESS

Georgiana--!

GEORGIANA

You have taken yourself from me!

BESS

Please --!

GEORGIANA

You don't love me!

BESS

I do love you, Georgiana. Really I do.

GEORGIANA

No! Love is an act! It is more than words and undying oaths! It's what you do! I loved you! You only said you did.

BESS is stung. Her eyes fill with tears.

BESS

...I do love you. But ...

GEORGIANA

Leave. Get out of this house!

BESS remains standing, reaches out for GEORGIANA.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Leave!!! (breaks down, cries out)

Get out!!!

BESS leaves the room. GEORGIANA sinks slowly to the floor, weeping, sobbing.

CUT TO:

83

INT. ALTHORP. LIBRARY - DAY

83

GEORGIANA sits, like a little girl, back at home and surrounded by portraits of her as a child. LADY SPENCER pours tea, slowly, meticulously, from a silver Samovar.

LADY SPENCER

I did not like her from the first.

GEORGIANA

You've made that quite clear, Mama.

LADY SPENCER

She is gone from Devonshire House,  
I hope.

GEORGIANA looks away, ashamed. LADY SPENCER puts the Samovar down.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

They're living there together?  
Georgiana, what have you permitted  
to happen?

GEORGIANA

I don't know! Won't you please just  
help me! Tell me what to do, Mama!

GEORGIANA hangs her head. LADY SPENCER surveys her daughter and the mess she's in. Her demeanor softens.

LADY SPENCER

You must write to your husband and  
insist he send her back to whatever  
horrid little place she came from.

GEORGIANA

He will not. It is out of the  
question, he says.

LADY SPENCER

Then you must return and resume  
your duties. Make him realize  
whom he loves. You will give up  
your politics, your nights on the  
town, your gambling. For once you  
will devote yourself as a loving  
wife and settle down to the task  
at hand: providing him with an  
heir. And then he will soon tire  
of her.

GEORGIANA looks at her mother with sadness.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

You have no other option.

CUT TO:

84 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. COURTYARD - DAY

84

Seen from inside the house, GEORGIANA gets out of her carriage, observed by a couple of servants. She proceeds up to the front door.

CUT TO:

85 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

85

The DUKE awaits her just inside the door. He looks at her with worry.

THE DUKE

Hello, G. ...

GEORGIANA

(Coldly)  
William.

GEORGIANA walks straight past him and proceeds upstairs.

At the top BESS meets her with an apologetic demeanour. GEORGIANA is cold as ice. She passes her without even a look.

CUT TO:

86 OMITTED

86

87 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - DAY

87

BESS quietly enters GEORGIANA's room.

GEORGIANA

I may not have the authority to remove you from this house, but I can at least order you out of my room.

BESS

Won't you please let me explain?

GEORGIANA becomes furious and shouts at BESS.

GEORGIANA

There is nothing to explain. I trusted you, I made you my confidante, and you repaid me by stealing what is mine.

GEORGIANA turns her back and looks out of the window. BESS approaches her carefully.

BESS

This is my only chance of ever seeing my children again. The Duke is the most powerful peer in England. He is my only chance.

GEORGIANA turns to her.

GEORGIANA

There are limits to the sacrifices one makes to see one's children.

BESS

No, there aren't. No limits whatsoever.

GEORGIANA takes in what she just said, before letting animosity get the better of her once again and turning away.

BESS (CONT'D)

Give me a chance to show you that you can trust me... Please... Please.

GEORGIANA

Get out of here. We have no more to say to each other.

BESS leaves, closing the door silently behind her. GEORGIANA punches walls and cupboards, throwing things around the room.

CUT TO:

88 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING 88

GEORGIANA is asleep in her bed. She is awakened by the sound of a carriage outside. She goes to the window.

CUT TO:

88A EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. COURTYARD - MORNING 88A

The DUKE's CARRIAGE pulls up. AUGUSTUS, JOHN, and HARRY emerge from the carriage.

BESS shrieks with joy and leaps out of the house. She runs and hugs them, crying. It's incredibly touching and GEORGIANA is moved, despite herself.

CUT TO:

89 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. RED ROOM - DAY

89

GEORGIANA comes downstairs. Unseen, she looks into the room and watches the DUKE getting AUGUSTUS a hunting rifle from the wall. The DUKE appears surprisingly keen, gentle even. He clearly relates to boys. To one side BESS holds a sleeping HARRY.

GEORGIANA stares on in silence, understanding the DUKE and BESS in a way she has never done before. They look like a quiet, functional family unit.

GEORGIANA quietly comes closer. The DUKE is now showing AUGUSTUS how to use the rifle.

DUKE

...hold it like that, Augustus, it  
won't come back at you.

AUGUSTUS

Yes, I see.

DUKE

Good. Your father doesn't hunt, I  
take it.

AUGUSTUS

No.

DUKE

Oh dear. Well, we can soon make up  
for that.

AUGUSTUS smiles, as does BESS. The DUKE looks up, and seeing her approval does a rare thing: he smiles too. BESS gets up and brings the DUKE a drink.

BESS

(Whispered gently)

Thank you.

The DUKE strokes her hand. GEORGIANA moves away and leaves.

CUT TO:

90 EXT. LONDON PLEASURE GARDENS - DAY

90

It's a grey and drizzly day. The gardens are largely empty. GREY'S carriage is parked by the roadside. COACHMEN wait beside it, informally leaning on the vehicle. A little further down the road, GEORGIANA's carriage pulls up.

In wide shot GEORGIANA, black cape with hood up, makes her way across the gardens.

Well away from the carriages and COACHMEN, GEORGIANA approaches GREY, who is waiting under the trees. GEORGIANA seems preoccupied. GREY, however, is simply excited about them meeting again.

GREY

(Hushed voice)

Did you tell the Duke who you were meeting?

GEORGIANA

No.

GREY

Did he ask?

GEORGIANA

No.

GREY pauses for a moment.

GREY

Good.

GEORGIANA

He has other things on his mind.

GREY stops and scrutinises GEORGIANA. He can tell that she is not truly present.

GREY

As do you.

The direct recognition causes GEORGIANA to stop too, and then look away. She walks off in a different direction. GREY follows.

GREY (CONT'D)

(Softer now)

Would it help to unburden yourself?

GEORGIANA sends him a little smile and a shake of the head.

GEORGIANA

It is nothing I can discuss with you. Besides, it would only bore.

GREY

You don't have to please others all the time.

GEORGIANA

I was brought up to. It's a difficult lesson to unlearn.

GREY

Would you permit me an  
observation?

GEORGIANA

Of course.

GREY

I think you do it so that people  
will love you.

GEORGIANA

(looks deeply at him)  
What would make you think that?

GREY

From what I have seen. With your  
husband, your friends - especially  
Lady Bess. Even the public.

GEORGIANA

(looks away)  
I have never thought of it that  
way. You make me sound pitiable.

GEORGIANA turns and walks away, upset. GREY realizes he has  
gone too far. He chases up with her.

GREY

I've gone beyond my brief. I  
apologize. Please believe it was  
only for your sake I spoke.

GEORGIANA looks at him, and then carries on walking slowly,  
thinking deeply. Grey moves closer to her again.

GREY (CONT'D)

Please tell me what is wrong.

She turns and looks at him intensely. The fountains in the  
pleasure garden dance in the background.

GEORGIANA

I fear I have met some people too  
late in life and some too early.

They stare at each other a moment. The wind blows gently in  
the leaves of the trees above them.

GREY

No, you haven't.

Slowly, GREY moves to GEORGIANA. The air is thick. GREY gets  
closer. They kiss. Not for long, but a gentle, warm kiss.  
Then he withdraws. GEORGIANA is blushing.

GREY (CONT'D)

I have waited all my life for that kiss.

GEORGIANA averts her eyes, and looks confused. He loses his composure a bit.

GREY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry ...

GEORGIANA

No. It's...

She looks up at him again.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I have never been kissed like that before.

They stand and look at each other. Then they move closer, for another kiss. Gentle. And longer, this time.

CUT TO:

91

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM - MORNING

91

GEORGIANA is with BESS and the DUKE. She seems sober, together and strong: fortified. They sit opposite each other at the table as if in negotiation. A long silence. Then:

GEORGIANA

All right.

Beat. The DUKE looks at BESS. What does she mean?

DUKE

"All right..?"

GEORGIANA

Do you love each other?

DUKE

Georgiana -

GEORGIANA

Do you love Bess, Your Grace?

DUKE

... Well ... I ... where is all this leading? I mean...

BESS

I make no demands on him.

GEORGIANA

...And Bess, you love my husband?

BESS  
... As I do you.

GEORGIANA nods, still not giving anything away.

GEORGIANA  
You intend to stay here?

BESS  
... William asked that I do.

GEORGIANA nods.

GEORGIANA  
And you couldn't find it in your  
powers to refuse him.

BESS  
...No.

BESS and the DUKE remain quiet. Beat.

GEORGIANA  
Then let us make a deal.

DUKE  
A deal?

Beat. The DUKE and BESS exchange glances.

GEORGIANA  
Yes. I give you my blessing if you  
will accept my feelings for Charles  
Grey.

BESS blinks, taken aback. GEORGIANA is nervous. She smiles, waiting for The DUKE's reaction.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)  
I wasn't sure at first, I thought  
perhaps it was a dalliance or ...  
But it isn't. He can make me  
happy.

BESS tries to manage a smile. She darts a look at the DUKE, who now stands. Suddenly cutlery and crystal jangle. BESS and GEORGIANA start.

DUKE  
(seething with fury)  
A deal! A deal!! I don't make  
deals! I'm in charge of it all!! I  
would call him out! I would  
challenge him! I would put a bullet  
in his head--!

BESS  
William--!

DUKE  
(to BESS)  
Be quiet!  
(to GEORGIANA)  
Are you determined to make me a  
total laughing stock? A man who  
cannot sire a son and then a  
cuckold?

BESS  
William, Georgiana only asks what  
we ourselves -

DUKE  
Be quiet, you fool! (to GEORGIANA)  
Are you his whore?!

GEORGIANA  
... No... but I can't see why you  
should mind. You have Bess and  
three boys...

DUKE  
Three boys??? Do you think I can  
make those bastards my heirs? Well,  
do you?

GEORGIANA and BESS are frightened. GEORGIANA hurries out of  
the room. A moment passes, then the DUKE strides out as well.

BESS  
William...?

CUT TO:

92 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - MORNING

92

GEORGIANA walks fast through the space. She passes a  
FOOTMAN on the way to her bedroom. The DUKE charges after  
her. GEORGIANA quickens her pace. BESS follows behind.

CUT TO:

93 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

93

GEORGIANA comes into her room, and slams the door behind her.  
A few moments later, the door opens. The DUKE enters. He  
shuts the door. He glares at GEORGIANA. She looks at him. The  
DUKE asks a real question for once.

DUKE

You don't know me in the least, do you?

GEORGIANA

I do. We're a bad match.

DUKE

I asked but two things when we wed: loyalty and a male heir.

GEORGIANA

Yes, same as your dogs.

The DUKE's eyes flash. He snaps. He grabs her. She tries to fight him off. Her dress is torn. They struggle. The DUKE slaps her repeatedly until she no longer resists, then drags her to bed.

CUT TO:

94 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - MORNING - SAME TIME 94  
BESS stands outside the door. We HEAR GEORGIANA SCREAM.

CUT TO:

95 INT. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME 95  
The DUKE pins GEORGIANA onto the bed and tears away at her clothes. We hear the RIP of silk and lace. GEORGIANA screams again. He holds her face tightly between his hands and stares coldly at her.

CUT TO:

96 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. NURSERY - SAME TIME 96  
LITTLE G. and HARRYO stare at the door of their room as the screams continue.

CUT TO:

97 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME 97  
A FOOTMAN stands at attention, trying to remain impassive.

CUT TO:

98 INT. HALL OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - SAME TIME 98  
BESS hovers at the door as she listens to the struggle and screams inside. She turns and sees CHARLOTTE standing a few feet away, staring at her. BESS moves away from the door, unable to stop what's going on inside.

BESS  
(To Charlotte, softly)  
Come with me.

CHARLOTTE stays rooted to the spot.

BESS (CONT'D)  
(Firmer)  
Charlotte, come with me.

BESS takes CHARLOTTE'S arm and hurries her off down the hall.

CUT TO:

99 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER 99

GEORGIANA lies on the bed. It's over. Her clothes are torn. Her face is red and wet with tears. The DUKE sits on the side of the bed, panting, used up.

DUKE  
Give me a son and then do what the hell you want, as long as you do it discreetly. Until then you will stay here and do as I say.

The DUKE gets up and leaves. GEORGIANA's expression is blank, dead. The sounds of crowds cheering and clapping fade up in the background until we...

CUT TO:

100 EXT. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS - DAY

100

SHERIDAN stands before A HUGE CROWD. There is bunting in WHIG colours and banners. The PRESS are out in even greater numbers than before.

SHERIDAN  
I give you the winner! Mr Fox! The Man of the People!

FOX comes forth to a ROAR of approval. He yells out:

FOX  
And I give you the weapon! The Duchess of Devonshire!

GEORGIANA, still shell-shocked, comes forth to WILD CHEERS. She succeeds in smiling to the crowd. BESS and the DUKE stand together off to the side. They clap and smile, but the strain is evident.

GREY, unseen near the doorway, watches GEORGIANA taking in the APPLAUSE. Finally, the applause dies.

FOX (CONT'D)

Thank you, all of you, for this  
reception tonight.

GEORGIANA sees GREY on the sidelines. She glances at the DUKE then turns to slip away. GREY sees this. He follows.

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

We have won the vote, and now we  
must win the future!

APPLAUSE as GREY exits.

CUT TO:

101 EXT. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS - MOMENTS LATER 101

GEORGIANA heads for her coach, well away from the crowd. GREY catches up with her.

GREY

We did it. Or should I say you did  
it.

GEORGIANA tries to smile, but she can't. She turns away from GREY. He knows something's wrong.

GREY (CONT'D)

Georgiana?

GEORGIANA

(the hardest thing to say)  
Mr. Grey... I have enjoyed more  
than I can say the times we've  
spent together, the talks...

GEORGIANA is overcome. She almost breaks down. GREY sees she's upset and leads her to a bench. She sits and collects herself. GREY looks distraught.

GREY

Tell me.

GEORGIANA

I cannot say what -

GREY

Now!

GEORGIANA looks at him. She has to do this as she planned.

GEORGIANA

...I have been unfair to you.

GREY

What are you talking about?

GEORGIANA

(trying to be composed)  
...I have...indulged in your  
affections and made it seem my  
feelings towards you were more than  
they are in fact. I fear the heat  
of the election...

GREY

Say what you mean!

GEORGIANA

(looks dead at him)  
You love me.

GREY

Yes!

GEORGIANA

I do not love you.

GREY takes this punch, but his eyes never blink, never waver.

GREY

You are not speaking what is in  
your heart.

GEORGIANA

It is, it truly-

GREY suddenly stands and strides away, pacing, angry.

GREY

(cuts her off)  
This is a speech, forced upon you-

GEORGIANA

(overlaps below)  
It isn't, it's what I've always  
known to be true!

GREY

(overlaps above)  
-- by those who would destroy our  
happiness!

GEORGIANA

(loud, in the clear)  
THIS IS HOW I AM!

GREY is taken aback by her force and volume.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I was wrong to offer you hope. I  
was wrong to pretend an affection I  
do not feel.

(MORE)

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

You have said it yourself, I need  
to be adored. That is my weakness.

GREY looks sick. He turns from her, angry, hurt, unable to  
find a place to put his feelings.

GEORGIANA fights back the tears. We hear CHEERS o.s. GREY  
turns to her and bows before heading back across the grass to  
the stage. We can hear FOX still speaking.

FOX (O.S.)

We have followed our ideas and  
our ideals, and in the struggle,  
we have found ourselves!

CLOSE ON GEORGIANA as the colour drains from her face. She  
is dying inside but she keeps it all in. She calmly turns  
and walks to her carriage and is driven away into the busy  
London street.

CUT TO:

102	OMITTED	102
103	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - THAT NIGHT	103
	AN ELECTION NIGHT PARTY. Music plays.	

The DUKE waits at the top of the GRAND STAIRCASE, greeting  
GUESTS. He's dressed for the evening. BESS is with him,  
also dressed.

After a few moments, GEORGIANA appears, walking towards us  
down the long corridor that leads into the entrance hall.  
When she reaches the light we see she is dressed to the  
nines and powdered a deathly white, and has been drinking  
heavily.

GEORGIANA walks toward the DUKE who refuses to register  
her, but BESS looks across, shocked. GEORGIANA will not  
meet her eyes, however and walks through into the party.

CUT TO:

104	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - RED ROOM -- THAT NIGHT	104
	The rooms have been converted into gaming areas for the evening. It is boisterous and smoky. There are card tables and players everywhere. GEORGIANA, wanders through, taking another drink from a passing WAITER. BESS enters the background watching her every move.	

As GEORGIANA goes we pick up details of this decadent  
society.

Where before it may have seemed glamorous and exciting it now looks uglier and sordid: a place of corruption and addiction, on the edge of collapse.

GEORGIANA is gambling at a table. A GENTLEMAN GAMBLER shows his hand, GEORGIANA shrugs and pushes her chips across the table with an air of indifference, but is stopped by another GENTLEMAN on her left.

GENTLEMAN

No, Duchess...you can top that.

GEORGIANA

(Hazily)

Can I?

GENTLEMAN

Your Grace seems to have forgotten the king of hearts...

The GENTLEMAN sends a quick, apologetic smile at GEORGIANA's fellow gamblers, then rearranges her hand to form a trump.

GEORGIANA

Why so I have, so I have.

GEORGIANA slowly rises to collect the chips. BESS steps forward to help her but is ignored.

CUT TO:

104A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. BALLROOM. NIGHT - LATER 104A

GEORGIANA comes into the dancing area alone. The DUKE and BESS are with a group nearby. GEORGIANA seems to radiate a force field that keeps people away from her. But not FOX. He comes up and smiles.

FOX

You promised me a dance. Come.  
Give me my small pleasures.

GEORGIANA yields to her old friend. ON THE DANCE FLOOR --

GEORGIANA is dancing very uncontrollably with FOX, amid the rest of the GUESTS. She grabs another drink as they pass a SERVANT. She bumps into SHERIDAN. Drink goes on his jacket.

SHERIDAN

My dear Duchess, much as I know you love dancing and drinking, I really must advise you to settle for one or the other, for the two are incompatible in the long run.

GEORGIANA

(very drunk)

Why, Sheridan, you never were  
such a spoilsport before!

GEORGIANA does a turn and slips. FOX steadies her. She smiles an apology. Then...

Suddenly GEORGIANA stumbles. Her WIG falls against a CANDLE and GOES UP IN FLAMES.

DANCERS back away. BESS looks shocked.

GEORGIANA SCREAMS as she staggers, hair on fire. DOORS OPEN, SHOUTS, SERVANTS rush about.

BESS attempts to knock the WIG off GEORGIANA's head. The DUKE appears in his doorway, none too pleased. He sees the situation. He turns to a FOOTMAN, all efficiency.

DUKE

Please put out Her Grace's hair.

The FOOTMAN splashes water on the wig. HISS and SMOKE.

The DUKE looks down at GEORGIANA: she lies sprawled on the polished parquet floor: wig-less, her make-up smeared, her eyes red and glassy.

CUT TO:

105 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 105

CLOSE ON a SMALL BOWL with a WHITE HANDKERCHIEF draped over the top. There are DROPS OF BLOOD on the handkerchief.

DR. NEVILLE (O.S.)

The bleeding is stopped.

We see GEORGIANA in bed, pale, washed out, and exhausted. BESS, the DUKE, and MAIDS hover as DR. NEVILLE (62) sets the bowl aside.

DR. NEVILLE (CONT'D)

As long as you follow strict  
instructions, there should be no  
impediment to the birth.

The DUKE is mystified. BESS looks at GEORGIANA, who shows no sign of registering what has been said.

DUKE

What are you talking about?

The DUKE and BESS react. GEORGINA has no reaction at all.

CUT TO:

106 EXT. ACROSS DERBYSHIRE - DAY - SPRING

106

A church stands out against the countryside. There are sounds of distant bells far off in the distance. A BOY runs into the bell tower and rings the bell as hard as he can...

In another church in another part of the county, another BOY hears the sound and rings his own the church's bells...

And in another church, bells ring out too...

CUT TO:

107 INT. CHATSWORTH. GEORGINA'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME TIME 107

CLOSE ON - A NAKED NEWBORN BABY being washed by a NURSE. It is a boy. In the background the bells continue to ring. In the room are DR. NEVILLE, and MAIDS.

DR. NEVILLE

Congratulations, Your Grace.

DR NEVILLE bows and makes his way out of the room. As he goes a SERVANT appears.

SERVANT

His Grace wishes to see you.

CUT TO:

108 OMITTED

108

109 INT. CHATSWORTH. LIBRARY - NIGHT

109

The DUKE is seated at his desk, a contract out in front of him. BURLEIGH stands and points out where he should sign.

BURLEIGH

Also there Your Grace...And  
there...

BURLEIGH offers a smile. The DUKE says nothing. He senses GEORGINA, who is at the library door looking in.

DUKE

Come.

GEORGINA enters. The DUKE looks to BURLEIGH.

BURLEIGH

Your Grace. As per the terms of His Grace's inheritance, this is for you. To spend as you wish.

BURLEIGH hands her a cheque. GEORGIANA looks at the DUKE with disdain.

GEORGIANA

(very sad and dry)  
Success at last.

The DUKE looks away, ashamed. GEORGIANA turns to the door.

DUKE (O.S.)

I too abhor this whole thing.

GEORGIANA turns back. The DUKE is now standing.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Yet remove it - separate our estates, sell off the land - and the aristocracy simply ceases to be; and with it the Whig party. England will be ruled by absolute monarchy - or absolute anarchy. Either way it won't just be our heads on the block, but our children's too. I don't wish to see that happen. Do you?

GEORGIANA looks at him, then turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

110 EXT. CHATSWORTH GARDENS - DAY

110

The BABY BOY lies in a moving pram. GEORGIANA walks with the children. She holds CHARLOTTE by the hand, while LITTLE G. and HARRYO look into a pram pushed by a NANNY.

LITTLE G

He's so small.

HARRYO

You've been that small yourself.

LITTLE G

Not that small. Have I, Mama?

GEORGIANA

You have, darling. You've all been that small once.

HARRYO

See, I told you.

They continue towards the old FARM HOUSE.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I can't tell that he's a boy at all.

GEORGIANA

But he is.

HARRY

But if I can't tell, I fail to see why it's so important. He looks just like the rest of us.

GEORGIANA smiles at his innocent view of the world.

GEORGIANA

All babies look alike when they have their clothes on, but each of them is something quite unique.

HARRY

How?

GEORGIANA

You and Little G did not look at all like one another. You cried all the time when you were a baby, whereas Little G was quiet as a mouse. She could walk before you, but you could talk before her.

The children listen. Charlotte looks at GEORGIANA.

CHARLOTTE

What about me, Mama?

GEORGIANA

You never cried, darling. You were always so brave.

They have reached the cascade by the side of the house. The children instinctively run in and start playing in the water.

GEORGIANA turns to look down the hill. She should be happy. She isn't. Then she seems to see someone. HER POV -- A MAN coming across the GREEN. As he gets closer she realises who it is: GREY.

A LITTLE LATER:

GEORGIANA waits for GREY. He takes off his hat and bows. It's awkward, stiff.

GREY

Your Grace.

GEORGIANA

(nods)

Mister Grey. Are you recalled  
from France?

GREY

For a while.

GEORGIANA

No revolution yet?

GREY

No, not yet. But it's only a  
matter of time.

They look at each other. A long beat, then:

GEORGIANA

I bore a son.

GREY realizes she is making a point.

GREY

Yes...

GEORGIANA

William Hartington. We call  
him... Hart.

GREY

You and the Duke must be very  
pleased.

GEORGIANA

We are. In fact he has gone to  
London to celebrate.

Beat. GREY gazes at her. They're both full of longing.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

You have been missed...much  
missed...How is it that you are  
here?

GREY

I received an invitation. I  
assumed it was on behalf of the  
party; I could not say no.

GEORGIANA is confused. She opens her mouth to speak, but  
at this point, FOX and SHERIDAN arrive on horseback too.

SHERIDAN

(sneers)

Well, well, the prodigal son  
returns.

FOX  
(embraces GREY)  
My dear fellow!

CUT TO:

111	OMITTED	111
112	OMITTED	112
113	OMITTED	113
114	INT. CHATSWORTH. SITTING ROOM - THAT NIGHT	114

The GUESTS play cards. GEORGIANA and SHERIDAN are on one table, BESS, GREY and FOX on the other. The atmosphere is tense.

GEORGIANA can't help glancing from her table to GREY at his. GREY can't help glancing back.

SHERIDAN  
Down six hundred. G. Yours?

GEORGIANA  
(distracted)  
Yes, of course. I will match you.

SHERIDAN  
You'll need cards, of course.

GEORGIANA realizes SHERIDAN hasn't dealt yet.

CUT TO:

115	INT. CHATSWORTH. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT - LATER	115
	Silence. GEORGIANA's door opens and she comes out of her room, holding a candle.	

CUT TO:

115A	INT. CHATSWORTH. PAINTED HALL. NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER	115A
	GEORGIANA makes her way carefully down the staircase. When she reaches the bottom she finds BESS standing in the shadows.	

GEORGIANA  
(starts, gasps)  
Oh!

BESS

Shhh! (whispers) Discretion, this time.

GEORGIANA stares at BESS. What...? And then she realizes.

GEORGIANA

You summoned Grey.

BESS

(nods)

William must not know. Honesty is not the virtue you will need.

BESS goes off. GEORGIANA watches her go, shocked. When BESS is gone, GEORGIANA makes her way across the hall.

CUT TO:

116 INT. CHATSWORTH. GREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

116

GEORGIANA walks down the hall to GREY's DOORWAY. She opens the door. He is in his BED. They stare at each other over the flickering candlelight. He comes toward her, takes her hand and leads her into the room, shutting the door behind them.

LATER:

GEORGIANA and GREY are passionately making love in his bed. It's as if it's the first time for both of them. The sex is real, intimate and convincing, an extraordinary release...

LATER:

The window is open and wind blows gently in. Night birds call in the background. GEORGIANA and GREY lie in each other's arms. They kiss, long and tender. GREY pulls away.

GREY

(Gently)

You should return to your room.

GEORGIANA

No I should not.

They begin to make love again...

CUT TO:

117 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM - DAY

117

A few days later. GEORGIANA, BESS, and the DUKE eat. GEORGIANA is nervous. She hesitates, then:

GEORGIANA

I'm going to Bath.

DUKE

(looks up)

But I can't get away for weeks.

GEORGIANA

(trying to seem natural)

I shall go without you.

(To Bess)

Bess, you stay and keep our  
husband company, whilst I take  
the cure.

The DUKE looks decidedly undecided. GEORGIANA looks to BESS for help. She's not sure it's a good idea but acquiesces.

BESS

Yes, William, why not? If G goes  
now we can catch her up when  
you're free.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS, thankful for the help. She tries to remain looking casual. The DUKE relents.

DUKE

Well, if you must.

CUT TO:

118 EXT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. NIGHT - EST.

118

It's a dark night and the trees outside the villa creak moodily in the wind.

CUT TO:

119 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

119

GEORGIANA is in bed, naked and asleep. GREY is awake. He stares at her. Something is troubling him. She wakes, sees his concern.

GEORGIANA

...What's the matter?

GREY

The matter is that after this  
week we will have to leave. You  
will be back home with your  
husband, and I won't be with you.

GREY gets out of bed.

GREY (CONT'D)

Perhaps it would be better if I were married too, then we could be a triangle or a foursome, or... whatever angle could contain you and me and-- I should ask Lady Bess; she seems to have surveyed the geometry and bent it to her favour.

GEORGIANA gets out of bed and tries to comfort him.

GEORGIANA

I know this is hard, but there is nothing else we can do if we want to be together.

GREY nods. GEORGIANA embraces him. GREY holds her tight.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. A BATH ALLEY - MORNING

120

POLITICAL PEOPLE are filing into a building for a meeting.

GREY and GEORGIANA are in an isolated alley, adjacent to the building, standing close, obviously in love. She touches his arm gently and looks into his eyes. For a beat too long. Then GREY goes inside.

ANGLE - THE END OF THE ALLEY: PEOPLE have spotted them.

CUT TO:

121 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

121

GREY is reclining in the bath. GEORGIANA is washing his back and arms with a sponge. The room is candlelit, atmospheric.

GREY

I thought of you the whole afternoon. Why people insist on arguing on a sunny day is beyond me.

Beat, smiles, looks over his shoulder at her.

GEORGIANA

(Smiles)

You'll be gone tomorrow as well?

GREY

Only for a few hours, hopefully.  
I am beginning to fear that  
politics is divided into those  
who want to fix things and those  
that merely want to talk about  
fixing things.

Grey kisses her hand. GEORGIANA smiles blissfully.

GREY (CONT'D)

I wish we had this time just for  
ourselves.

GEORGIANA

Whatever will become of us when  
you're made Prime Minister?

GREY laughs, delighted.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

When you are, you'll be very far  
from me.

GREY

(Takes her hand, very  
intense)

Never. We'll be together. Always.

GREY smiles. GEORGIANA leans across and kissees him.

GREY (CONT'D)

Now pass me a towel.

CUT TO:

122 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. BEDROOM - DAY

122

GEORGIANA is seated at her dressing table. A MAID puts the  
finishing touch to her hair. GEORGIANA, stands and goes  
into...

CUT TO:

123 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

123

...to find the DUKE and LADY SPENCER waiting for her. They  
are in travelling clothes. GEORGIANA gasps.

DUKE

Thought we would surprise you. I  
think you once said there wasn't  
enough spontaneity in our marriage.  
Or words to that affect.

GEORGIANA

Mama, what are you doing here?

LADY SPENCER sends her a severe look.

DUKE

So. Have you seen many of our circle down here?

GEORGIANA

Some. The Cokes. And Haverford. And Lord Wicklow.

DUKE

Bunch of politicos, too, aren't there? Meetings and such.

GEORGIANA

I believe.

DUKE

Isn't... isn't Grey here?

A beat as GEORGIANA's heart stops.

DUKE (CONT'D)

By which I mean Mr Charles Grey. Rumour has it that he is.

GEORGIANA jumps to the heart of the issue.

GEORGIANA

I won't give him up.

LADY SPENCER

Georgiana!

GEORGIANA

Everyone has a lover. Bess is the lover of my husband!

DUKE

That situation was agreed upon.

GEORGIANA

Yes, I held myself in so little esteem that I acquiesced to make you happy!

DUKE

If you had exercised some discretion, it may have been different.

GEORGIANA

Differ--?!

DUKE

The only good fortune is that it  
hasn't yet made it to the papers.

LADY SPENCER

My dear, Grey is unmarried. He  
risks nothing with this affair.  
The hazard is all yours.

GEORGIANA

Grey loves me.

LADY SPENCER

So does William.

GEORGIANA stares at her mother in disbelief, then at the  
DUKE.

DUKE

Yes. I love you!

GEORGIANA

HOW?!

DUKE

In the way I understand love.

LADY SPENCER

Georgiana, this has gone much too  
far. It is beneath our dignity. All  
London is talking...

GEORGIANA

Then let them talk! Grey makes me a  
fallen woman, well and good, now  
William may divorce me and Bess  
becomes Duchess of Devonshire!

LADY SPENCER

That will never happen!

LADY SPENCER stares harshly at GEORGIANA. Then she makes for  
the door.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

I think I will leave you to it.

LADY SPENCER leaves the room. GEORGIANA looks apprehensively  
at the DUKE.

GEORGIANA

What follows now? Are you going to  
tear off my clothes and force  
yourself upon me again?

DUKE

Why on earth would I do that?

GEORGIANA looks at him in surprise.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I know that you've not thought much of neither my intellect nor my manners, but in fact I never do anything that serves no purpose.

GEORGIANA is hurt, and looks at the DUKE in silence. He is composed in a way she has never seen before.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I know precisely what you two have together.

GEORGIANA

We love each other.

DUKE

I do not doubt it. He is a dreamer like yourself. You both dream of another world that does not exist and never will. (Beat) As for reality, however, allow me to enlighten you: If you do not give him up at once, I will see to it that every home and cheque book in this country is closed to him. He will be welcome neither in the halls of government nor its back rooms of power. His dream of becoming prime minister, your mutual fantasy of a changed world, will be dead as ash.

The DUKE pauses before delivering the final blow.

DUKE (CONT'D)

And you will never see your children again.

GEORGIANA is open mouthed, stunned.

DUKE (CONT'D)

You are given to say "love is an act." Well, this was an act.

GEORGIANA turns and runs out of the room.

CUT TO:

124 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. ANTE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

124

GEORGINA is close to the wall, trembling. LADY SPENCER enters and shuts the door behind her.

LADY SPENCER

What do you imagine you will have  
if you stay with Grey?

GEORGINA

Love. Passion.

LADY SPENCER

For a time.

GEORGINA

For ever.

LADY SPENCER

There is no such thing.

GEORGINA

Mama...all my life, it seems to  
me, I've been fighting my way  
upstream. With Charles, I find  
myself going down the stream,  
effortlessly and naturally. I  
never realized that it could be  
that easy. You can't ask me to  
battle nature, and my own heart.  
Not now.

LADY SPENCER

Oh will you never grow up! And how  
will you live, even? Friends will  
shun you, family will abandon you.  
There won't be a house open to you  
in all of England.

GEORGINA

(trying to convince  
herself)

Grey will be Prime Minister.

LADY SPENCER

Not with his whore, the Duchess of  
"D" on his arm and the Duke pulling  
every string to ruin him. He will  
never be Prime Minister. He'll  
pretend it doesn't matter, but it  
will. He'll put on a good face for  
a while, but he'll come to hate you  
for it.

At this GEORGINA's eyes fill with tears.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Most likely you'll end up alone -  
a wife with no husband and a  
mother with no children. At best  
you'll become someone else's  
mistress, living on charity,  
which can be taken away at any  
moment.

GEORGIANA

You can't know all that!

LADY SPENCER

*Look at your friend Bess!*

CUT TO:

125 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. FOYER - DAY 125

The DUKE waits by the front door. GEORGIANA exits the dressing room and walks toward him. Beat.

GEORGIANA

I must ask you to return to London.

DUKE

Without you?

GEORGIANA

Yes.

DUKE

If you will not listen to me,  
then perhaps you will listen to  
your children.

The DUKE takes out a PACKAGE OF LETTERS.

BESS

These are from your girls - I  
promised to deliver them. Hart  
neglected to write, but then he  
is not yet one.

The DUKE puts the PACKAGE down on the table. GEORGIANA refuses to even acknowledge them.

GEORGIANA

I cannot give up Charles. I could  
not survive another day without  
him.

THE DUKE

Then I must warn you. This will be  
the mistake of your life.

GEORGIANA

No, I made that many years ago. I  
trust you can let yourself out.

GEORGIANA leaves. The DUKE sends her an icy stare, then turns to the SERVANT at the door.

DUKE

For God's sake, open the door, man!

The servant quickly opens the door. The DUKE exits.

CUT TO:

125A EXT. BATH. POLITICAL MEETING ROOMS - DAY

125A

GEORGIANA's carriage is parked outside.

CUT TO:

126 INT. BATH. ANTE ROOM. POLITICAL MEETING ROOMS - DAY

126

GEORGIANA and GREY are discussing what has happened. She looks worried and is pacing up and down. In the background are muted sounds of POLITICIANS debating next door.

GEORGIANA

He will come down on us with  
everything in his power, Charles.

GREY

Yes...(beat) Does that frighten  
you?

GEORGIANA

I would be foolish not to be  
frightened.

GREY

We would be foolish to let future  
fears stand in our way.

Georgiana takes heart in Grey's determination.

GREY (CONT'D)

Sorrows will come however we try to  
avoid them. And when they come, we  
must stay our course and not give  
in.

Georgiana is relieved at his words, but holds her course as  
the voice of prudence.

GEORGIANA

He will be without mercy.

GREY  
Then so will we.

GREY kisses her gently.

GREY (CONT'D)  
I shall be back soon.

GEORGIANA looks at him as he leaves. GREY turns in the doorway and smiles. She smiles back at him.

CUT TO:

127 OMITTED

127

128 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. FOYER - THAT AFTERNOON

128

GEORGIANA enters the room, strong and confident. A SERVANT takes her cape and hat then leaves. GEORGIANA is alone. She is aware of the package of CHILDREN'S LETTERS on the side table where the DUKE left it.

GEORGIANA turns away from it but after a moment turns back. She takes a deep breath and rips it open. There are LETTERS in spidery children's handwriting, colourful drawings. It hits her hard. She fingers trace over the drawings, the messages, the kisses at the bottom....

She is suddenly faced with the reality of the choice she is about to make. It's heart breaking but she knows she can't be without her children.

CUT TO:

129 OMITTED

129

130 OMITTED

130

131 OMITTED

131

132 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

132

GEORGIANA runs into the entrance hall.

CUT TO:

133 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. RED ROOM - DAY

133

GEORGIANA enters the room and is met by LITTLE G who looks bewildered at GEORGIANA. She is crying. CHARLOTTE steps in as a big sister, puts her arm around her and draws her close.

LITTLE G

Mama.

GEORGIANA

Come here, my dearest.

GEORGIANA hugs her, and looks at CHARLOTTE. HARRYO comes out too. GEORGIANA hugs them all.

HARRYO

Where have you been Mama? Papa said you were never coming back.

LITTLE G

Don't go away again, please.

GEORGIANA

I shan't. I shan't. We'll all be together. There now...

GEORGIANA hugs the girls. Closer. Tighter.

In the background, the DUKE appears in the doorway and surveys the scene. GEORGIANA gestures to the NANNY to come over.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Now girls, run along. I shall join you in a moment.

The GIRLS leave with the NANNY. The DUKE watches them go, then turns to GEORGIANA.

DUKE

You must know that I am greatly pleased that we have come to an arrangement. It's not good for little ones to be without their mother for too long.

GEORGIANA

My life for theirs...

DUKE

That's one way of putting it.  
Your mother called it "common  
decency before personal  
gratification", or some such  
thing... the exact words escape  
me...

GEORGIANA

How about 'imprisoned in my own  
house'?

DUKE

No, that's not how she put it. I  
would have remembered that.

GEORGIANA sends him a hateful look and walks out.

CUT TO:

134 OMITTED

134

134A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

134A

GEORGIANA walks into the corridor. After a few moments she  
sees BESS appear from the shadows.

BESS

(Whisper)

How did Charles take it?

GEORGIANA stops by her. She is businesslike.

GEORGIANA

I don't know. I just left. If I  
had seen him again, I would have  
stayed.

BESS

No letter, either?

GEORGIANA shakes her head.

BESS (CONT'D)

I know it's cruel, Georgiana, but  
it's for the best. We mother's  
have no choice.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS, then continues to walk off down  
the corridor.

CUT TO:

135 OMITTED

135

135A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT - WEEKS LATER 135A  
 A VIOLINIST and HARPSICHORDIST play a beautiful, slow piece of music from the corner.

CUT TO:

136 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ROOM. NIGHT

136

The music continues in the background as three silver plates covered by silver domes are carried by SERVANTS.

CUT TO:

137 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT

137

GEORGIANA, BESS and the DUKE are seated for dinner at their vast table. It's tense, silent and extremely formal as the THREE SERVANTS bring in the plates. In unison they step forward to take away the domes, revealing elaborately prepared POUSSIN - it's an unexpected comic moment.

They begin to eat. No one says a word. Suddenly we hear DOORS CRASH OPEN from far outside the room. There is the distant sound of a man's voice, raised and angry. GEORGIANA knows immediately that it is GREY. So too does the DUKE who shoots her a vicious look. GEORGIANA rises,

GEORGIANA  
 Your Grace, Bess. Will you excuse  
 me.

CUT TO:

138 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL. NIGHT - MINUTES LATER 8

GEORGIANA enters to see GREY storming up the stairs, followed by FOOTMEN trying to stop him. GREY is wild. He yells at GEORGIANA, quite oblivious to the FOOTMEN.

GREY  
 Why haven't you responded to my  
 letters?!

GEORGIANA tries to maintain calm. She looks at the FOOTMEN, headed by HEATON, the butler.

GEORGIANA  
 Thank you, Heaton.

HEATON bows, and though still remaining present, recedes into the background with the FOOTMEN. GREY comes closer.

GREY

I have written a dozen times a day, and there is nothing from you! What has happened?! Do you love me no longer?!

GEORGIANA steels herself...

GEORGIANA

My personal feelings remain unaltered...

GREY

Then we must be together again. I want to marry you. I want you to bear my children ... and I don't care if they are boys or girls!

...But GEORGIANA is barely holding it together.

GEORGIANA

I wish it could be like that.

GREY

It can. It will.

GEORGIANA

(Firmly)

No, Charles.

GREY steps forward to take her arm but GEORGIANA backs away. HEATON makes as if to intervene, but holds back.

GREY

You must leave and be with me, a free woman! Now, let us leave now!

GEORGIANA

I cannot abandon my children.

GREY stares at her with wide, angry, tortured eyes.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

This is a sacrifice I am forced to make. I have given you up for them only. And in so doing, I have lost my heart and soul.

GREY looks at her, sad and weak, nothing left to argue. GEORGIANA stands firm. She gestures to HEATON.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)  
Heaton, will you please escort  
Mr. Grey to the door?

HEATON comes forward and stands next to GREY.

GEORGIANA still looks at him. Her eyes glisten. GREY, choking with pain, stares one more beat, then turns and walks away. HEATON and FOOTMEN follow, like bouncers.

CUT TO:

139 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT - MINUTES LATER 139

GEORGIANA slowly sits again. She is distant, with no interest in the food in front of her. The DUKE looks up, chewing.

DUKE  
What's the matter, don't like the chicken? I find it really quite decent.

The table is quiet. Not even BESS can muster a reply.  
GEORGIANA looks at him.

GEORGIANA  
I'm with child.

CUT TO:

140 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING 140

Rain spits against the window. Wind blows in the trees outside. GEORGIANA is sitting in her bed, staring blankly before her. The DUKE and BESS enter.

DUKE  
(to Bess)  
Will you be so kind as to inform the Duchess of my decision?

BESS looks deeply uncomfortable.

BESS  
(appealingly)  
Georgiana -

GEORGIANA does not respond, but keeps staring into the air. BESS takes a deep breath.

BESS (CONT'D)

It will be like this: you will be taken to the country where you will give birth to the child, and the child will subsequently be trusted to the care of Charles Grey's family.

GEORGIANA makes no reply.

BESS (CONT'D)

Are you listening to me?

GEORGIANA slides silently into a reclining position.

DUKE

I think she has heard you. Let's leave her.

BESS

Georgiana, please -

DUKE

I said: let's leave. This is not a discussion. She has been informed of my decision.

BESS looks at GEORGIANA.

BESS

Have pity on her, William...

DUKE

Pity be damned. She brought this upon herself, as well you know. Now come...

The DUKE starts to go out. BESS's voice stops him.

BESS

No. I will go with her.

DUKE

You're not going anywhere...

BESS

(Turns, magnificently)  
I will go with G if G will have me, and there is nothing you can say or do to stop either of us.

The DUKE is speechless. GEORGIANA looks up for the first time. The DUKE leaves. The women are left alone in silence with each other. Their eyes meet.

CUT TO:

141 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

141

On a windy, end of summer day, TWO PLAIN COACHES travel across the flat and largely featureless landscape.

CUT TO:

142 OMITTED

142

143 EXT. SMALL HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

143

The house is simple and remote, the only building for miles around. Chickens peck outside. It is far removed from the opulence GEORGIANA and BESS are used to.

The two COACHES are parked outside. From the rear COACH, luggage is being unpacked and brought inside.

CUT TO:

144 INT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

144

GEORGIANA enters this house with BESS and a SERVANT. It's plain and unlivied in.

BESS follows GEORGIANA into what is to be her bedroom.

GEORGIANA

Thank you for coming.

BESS

I couldn't not be with you.

GEORGIANA smiles.

CUT TO:

145 EXT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DUSK - MONTHS LATER

145

GEORGIANA comes out, now heavily pregnant, and watches the sun go down from the vast sky. It is February and the landscape looks completely different - leafless, barren, forbidding.

A few moments later BESS comes out and puts a shawl around her. A moment passes.

GEORGIANA

I count it a triumph we have  
become friends again when fate  
has been so intent on keeping us  
rivals.

BESS

So do I. I may have caused you a  
lot of pain but you must believe  
that I didn't plot or plan any of  
it. [Beat] The Duke is for my  
boys only. You are for me.

GEORGIANA is touched by these comments. Another moment  
passes and her mind returns to the situation to hand. She  
puts her hands around her stomach.

GEORGIANA

Bess, how will I do this?

BESS

For Charlotte, for Harryo, for  
little G, for Hart...

GEORGIANA nods her head.

GEORGIANA

Has Charles confirmed he'll be  
coming...for the little one?

BESS

Not yet. But I'm sure he will.

CUT TO:

146 I/E. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY - SOME TIME LATER 146

BESS and DR NEVILLE attend as GEORGIANA gives birth, seen  
from some distance away down the end of a long corridor.  
It's real and difficult. BESS holds GEORGIANA's hands.

As GEORGIANA screams we cut outside so the muted sounds are  
heard over the shots of the nature around the farmhouse.

CUT TO:

147 OMITTED 147

148 INT. BEDROOM. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. MORNING 148

GEORGIANA's in a chair, breast-feeding her BABY. GEORGIANA  
strokes her head as she does so.

BESS is sitting in the other corner of the room. After a moment, she hears a faint sound and goes to look out of the window. From a long distance away, a small train of COACHES travel toward the house, kicking up dust in its wake.

BESS looks apprehensive. She goes to GEORGIANA's bedside.

BESS  
(Gently)  
He's here.

GEORGIANA flinches - it's the moment she's been dreading. BESS comes closer and gestures toward the BABY.

BESS (CONT'D)  
Would it help if I...

GEORGIANA  
(Looking up)  
No, Bess. I must do it.

CUT TO:

149 EXT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

149

A COACH is at the gate. A BUTLER stands to one side, a WET NURSE to the other. Out steps a serious looking older man, GENERAL GREY. CHARLES GREY is nowhere to be seen.

BESS looks on from the doorway as GEORGIANA slowly takes the BABY up the path toward GENERAL GREY, holding it tight to her all the way. She reaches him.

GENERAL GREY  
(Flatly)  
Your Grace.

GEORGIANA  
General Grey...Where is Charles?

GENERAL GREY  
Your husband thought it best if I took care of this.

GEORGIANA takes a deep breath. She hadn't expected this, and now she is being asked to hand her baby over to a stranger, and a seemingly cold one at that. It's not clear that she will go through with it...

GEORGIANA gently kisses the baby's head, whispering to her, smelling her hair, her skin, running her nose down her face and breathing her in for one last time. BESS finds this impossible to watch and turns away.

With immense difficulty GEORGIANA finally goes to hand her baby over. GENERAL GREY does not take it. He nods sharply to his WET NURSE who steps forward to take the BABY, although for a moment GEORGIANA simply can't let her go.

GENERAL GREY immediately turns to go back to the COACH. GEORGIANA calls after him.

GEORGIANA  
General Grey...

GENERAL GREY stops and turns.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)  
...her name is Eliza. She is  
innocent of all of this. Please  
take care with her.

GENERAL GREY is no longer able to maintain his business-like facade. He nods and gives a small, gentle smile.

GENERAL GREY  
Of course. She is my grand-  
daughter, after all.

GEORGIANA is comforted by his unexpected show of humanity.

GEORGIANA  
What will you tell her, of her  
mother?

GENERAL GREY takes a moment to respond.

GENERAL GREY  
That she is dead...But that she  
loved her very much.

GEORGIANA gives a small smile, one that hides the excruciating pain she is in. GENERAL GREY turns and goes back into his COACH, followed by the BUTLER and the WET NURSE and GEORGIANA'S BABY GIRL.

As the BABY GIRL is passed into the coach, GEORGIANA can hear her daughter begin to cry a little. GEORGIANA instinctively flinches, using all her strength to hold her back from running over to comfort her.

The driver cracks the whip and GEORGIANA watches as the COACHES ride off, leaving her alone at the gate with the barren landscape behind. She slowly sinks down onto the wet and muddy ground.

CUT TO:

151 INT. BEDROOM. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN 151

The cot is empty. Low winter sun cuts through the windows.

GEORGIANA sits alone in her bedroom, lost in thought and rolling a locket of Eliza's hair back and forth between her fingers. It feels as if she has been sat there all night.

BESS enters and comes close. It takes a moment for GEORGIANA to notice she's even there. She looks up.

BESS

We are ready to go.

GEORGIANA nods but doesn't move. BESS produces two linen FLANNELS. GEORGIANA looks quizzically at them.

BESS (CONT'D)

(Gently)

For your milk.

GEORGIANA looks down - there are two wet patches on her breasts. BESS kneels next to GEORGIANA and holds her tight.

CUT TO:

152 OMITTED 152

153 I/E. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GARDEN. AFTERNOON - SPRING 153

A primitive lawn mower is pushed by a GARDENER across the manicured green grass making a loud and distinctive sound. In the background, primitive sprinklers are also at work. Time has elapsed, perhaps a month, and it's spring now.

GEORGIANA is in a slightly gloomy room looking out of a ground floor window at BESS plays with all of their children in another part of this garden. The image is distorted by the wavy glass of the window pane.

DUKE (O.S.)

Hello, G. I hope I'm not disturbing you.

The DUKE approaches tentatively from the dark background. GEORGIANA turns to face him.

GEORGIANA

No, not at all.

The DUKE gestures to the SERVANTS standing to leave. He fidgets and, unusually for him, looks distinctly nervous.

DUKE

I am not particularly adept at expressing myself when it comes to matters of a more personal nature, but I shall endeavour to try. [Beat] Over the years I have acted in ways that you have judged... harsh. Well I do not wish for you to undergo any further suffering. Indeed, I would like our life to return to a calm normality.

GEORGIANA

Thank you William. Your sentiments are very welcome.

The DUKE looks very relieved. He smiles.

DUKE

Lady Melbourne has arranged a function in honour of your recent return from holiday. Given some of the vague reports that have been circulating over this past year, I think it would be wise for us to go. A show of unity, so to speak.

GEORGIANA

As you wish.

DUKE

Very good. Please inform Bess, so that she too has enough time to prepare.

The DUKE looks toward BESS in the garden, but his attention is taken by the children playing. He stares at them, the image distorted by the wavy glass of the window pane. It is a mirrored moment from his opening scene where he watched the young people dancing, his thoughts then a mystery...

DUKE (CONT'D)

How wonderful to be that free.

GEORGIANA looks at him surprised and for the first time sympathetic, as if she finally understands this trapped man. The DUKE, a little exposed by his revealing statement, nods at GEORGIANA and quickly leaves.

GEORGIANA returns to look out of the window at the children playing with BESS - it certainly is carefree, full of life and happiness. CHARLOTTE waves her out to play. She's not sure she's going to. She steps out of the dark of the house and opens the door into the light of the garden.

All the kids are hugely enthusiastic to see her - their mother is back. A game begins and the children, BESS and GEORGINA run around laughing and playing together in the bright spring sunshine.

CUT TO:

154 OMITTED

154

155 I/E. LADY MELBOURNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

155

A society gathering is in full swing. A FOOTMAN addresses the party in his booming voice.

FOOTMAN

The Duke and Duchess of  
Devonshire. And Lady Elizabeth  
Foster.

Behind the front doors BESS whispers to GEORGINA.

BESS

Are you ready for this?

GEORGINA

(Hint of old self)  
Of course.

The room goes quiet with a great sense of expectation...

The doors swing open...

GEORGINA steps back into the limelight...

She's looks stylish and sexy but in a mature, demure way.

GEORGINA walks confidently through the crowd, taking in the scene around her. She nods hello to FOX and SHERIDAN, and there's a warm, ad-hoc mix of bowing and 'welcome home Your Grace'. She has been welcomed back by society with respect and relief.

CUT TO:

155A OMITTED

155A

155B INT. LADY MELBOURNE'S HOUSE. ROOM - NIGHT

155B

GEORGINA enters another large room full of people. Almost immediately she bumps into a young man. It is CHARLES GREY. They are both taken completely off guard, their hearts beating rapidly.

GEORGIANA  
Charles...?

GREY  
Your Grace...

Silence descends on the gathering as the GUESTS around them look over with bated breath, sensing the whiff of scandal. The tension in the room is palpable as the two ex lovers stand face to face, wondering what to do and how to act.

GEORGIANA's hand instinctively moves out to steady herself. It is unclear whether she will give way to her emotions or manage to keep her composure. GREY too, is awkward and nervous but summons up the strength to act for the crowd.

GREY (CONT'D)  
I trust your tour was agreeable?

GEORGIANA understands what he is doing and reciprocates in a similarly controlled and formal way. But under the surface her stomach is in knots...

GEORGIANA  
Yes, thank you. We passed the summer in Switzerland and the winter in Nice.

GREY  
Well, I speak for everybody when I say how glad I am that you have returned home safely.

GEORGIANA smiles back. Her eyes tell a different story.

GEORGIANA  
I hear congratulations are in order. You have made the cabinet.

The polite small talk has worked. Judging that there is nothing between them, the crowd start talking to each other again. Sensing the opportunity, GREY changes tone, finding the next words incredibly difficult.

GREY  
(Hushed, soft)  
I am also engaged to be married.

GEORGIANA is shocked. She gulps. Tears threaten to well up in her eyes. But still she manages to remain steady.

GREY (CONT'D)  
She is over there.

GEORGIANA looks to where a young woman, MARY PONSONBY, is talking to a group of other YOUNG WOMEN.

She is the spitting image of a younger GEORGIANA. Beat. GEORGIANA swallows hard and summons up all her courage...

GEORGIANA  
(Whispers)  
Do you love her?

A long beat. GEORGIANA fears the worst. Then a look of kindness appears on GREY'S face, followed by a gentle, knowing smile.

GREY  
I have met her twice.

GEORGIANA returns the smile: a shared joke from their first scene together that momentarily relieves the underlying tension. They know exactly what is being said - GREY's is a practical marriage and they still love each other and forgive each other everything.

Beat. Their eyes stay fixed on one another.

GEORGIANA  
(Dignified, meaning it)  
I wish you every happiness.

They bow and curtsy with perfect etiquette. GREY walks back into the party. GEORGIANA watches him go, takes a moment to compose herself, then walks off in the other direction.

CUT TO:

156 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT 156

It's still and silent in the house. The DUKE, BESS and GEORGIANA walk through into the entrance hall. They stop at the point of the stairs where it splits into two directions: one toward the DUKE's bedroom, the other toward GEORGIANA and BESS's.

DUKE  
Good night, G.

GEORGIANA  
Good night, William.

The DUKE turns to BESS, expecting her to follow him.

BESS  
Good night, William.

The DUKE is surprised, but doesn't want to upset the newfound harmony.

DUKE  
Oh yes, well...Good night Bess.

The DUKE walks off up the stairs to his bedroom alone.

CUT TO:

157      INT. HALLWAY TO BEDROOMS. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - NIGHT      157

GEORGINA and BESS walk together, two massive dresses side by side down the middle of the wide corridors and rooms, rustling in the silence. They look at each other and smile supportively, then reach out to hold hands.

They carry on walking until they reach a pair of double doors leading into the area of the house where their bedrooms are. GEORGINA pulls them open to let BESS through. GEORGINA then takes the handles and pulls them closed, her strong and beautiful face finally disappearing behind the crack in the middle.

FADE OUT.