

THE WESTMINSTER INSURGENT

Written by

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EXT. TERRACED HOUSE, MIDLANDS, ENGLAND - DAY

A KNOCK and the door opens to reveal a MAN (60s, white). His expression grows suspicious when he sees who is on his doorstep.

This is SAGAL (pronounced *Say-gal*: mid-20s, Muslim of African descent, diminutive, determined) and DESTINY (late 20s; Black Christian, sunny disposition). The pair hold leaflets and clipboards.

SAGAL

Hi there! I'm your independent candidate at the forthcoming general election.

MAN

Yeah, I've 'eard about you.

SAGAL

Then you'll know I've lived in this area my whole life.

MAN

Humph.
(hostile)
Politics ain't never done much for me.

SAGAL

I understand. That's why I'm unaffiliated with those parties that have failed us for so long...

She tails off on seeing the man check his watch. Destiny intervenes.

DESTINY

What would you say is the main issue currently causing you irritation, sir?

MAN

Them damned buses. Waited two hours for one last week, I did.

SAGAL

The funding has been cut to the bone. As your MP, I'd work with the Mayor to do all I could to fix it.

MAN

Oh, you would, would you?

DESTINY

Yes. But we won't take up any more of your time.

(hands him leaflet)

Please consider voting for Sagal Osman on the 6th.

The man accepts the leaflet while closing his door. Sagal and Destiny exchange a smile, exhilarated: That was the best they could have hoped for.

The pair walk away to meet WARREN (early 30s, white) who has been watching. They go up to the next door.

We move out, seeing the whole street, then the neighbourhood and the entire constituency. These thousands of homes contain voters Sagal is trying to win over, one by one.

Away from the city, we move out to the suburbs.

INT. OSMANS' HOUSE, MIDLANDS SUBURBS - NEXT MORNING

Sagal's mother MARYAM (60s, traditional mother and housewife) serves breakfast to Sagal, her brother YOUSSEF (late 20s, ambitious alpha male) and their father, known as FREDDIE (60s, laid-back patriarch of African heritage).

Around the dining table, on the furniture and walls, we see family photos and individual portraits of a young woman. This is ZAHRA, deceased sister of Sagal and Youssef.

MARYAM

(convivial)

It doesn't feel safe to me, you wandering the streets like that.

FREDDIE

It's what they have to do, mother. If they hope to make a difference.

YOUSSEF

(grins)

Do you get much verbal abuse?

SAGAL

You'd be surprised. People are open to hearing us.

YOUSSEF

I guess the ones who aren't wouldn't even open their doors.

FREDDIE

(proud)

I never thought I'd see the day -
my daughter, running for political
office!

(thinks)

You have that boy to watch over
you, don't you? What's his name?

SAGAL

Warren.

MARYAM

(interest piqued)

Who is this?

Growing tired of the focus on his sister, Youssef interrupts.

YOUSSEF

Want to hear my big news, everyone?

They all stare.

YOUSSEF (CONT'D)

Nazreen and I are getting married!

A YELP of joy from his mother. Freddie rises to hug his son.
Sagal eyes her brother, sceptical.

FREDDIE

Congratulations, son!

MARYAM

Oh Youssef, that *is* wonderful news.

(to Sagal)

It's about time someone round here
started a family of their own.

Sagal and Youssef both look uncomfortable.

YOUSSEF

Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

MARYAM

I must go and tell my sister.

Maryam leaves, eyes on her phone. She is followed by Freddie
who excuses himself.

SAGAL

(to Youssef)

Did you even ask her yet?

YOUSSEF

Naz will say yes. Why wouldn't she?

Sagal gives him a look: *you've won this one.*

EXT. OSMANS' HOUSE - DAY

The family emerge, Maryam chattering to Youssef. Seeing a white neighbour nearby, Freddie gives him a friendly wave. The neighbour looks away as the family pile into Freddie's car.

While Freddie drives, the suburbs' party political posters and well-kept streets give way to run-down buildings, boarded up shops and beaten-down pedestrians.

EXT. MOSQUE, CITY CENTRE, MIDLANDS - DAY

The IMAM (60s) welcomes the Osmans. He scans the street as more worshippers arrive. On a wall nearby 'Muslims Not Welcome' is graffitied. Someone has crossed out the word 'Not'.

Later the worshippers emerge. Freddie waits with the Imam as Sagal checks her phone. She sees a local news story about herself: Outsider Gains Ground in Election Marred by Dirty Tricks.

IMAM

I am praying for your daughter to win.

FREDDIE

That is very kind of you, Imam.

IMAM

With God's grace, I know she will do much good here. For our people.

SAGAL

(pointed)

I want to help everyone.

FREDDIE

Yes, but who is more oppressed than the Muslims of this world?

IMAM

She is capable of great things, your daughter. We have long known this.

Sagal gives her father an ironic look. A young white man passes, his eyes on the ground. He turns his head to SPIT at their feet then continues on.

FREDDIE

Things must change in this country.

IMAM

We start with our own community,
then work outwards from there.

SAGAL

Yes, Imam.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, MIDLANDS - DAY

Sagal is in discussion with her female THERAPIST (middle-aged, white, voluble). Sagal's body language reveals her to be tense, closed off.

THERAPIST

...you think your brother's
intervention was an aggressive act?

SAGAL

I'm used to it.
(dismissive)
I have more important things on my
mind, to be honest with you.

THERAPIST

(nods)
I've been following your campaign
with interest. It seems like there
have been some challenges.
(faux concern)
Have you given much thought to how
your life would change, should you
win?

SAGAL

I can't get ahead of myself.
(reflective)
Whatever happens, I'm proud of the
campaign we've run.

THERAPIST

It seems like you've had to
overcome resistance; all the
stories and rumours.

SAGAL

We know how to combat them now.
(studies therapist)
But this isn't a campaign
interview.

THERAPIST

Of course not, I didn't mean to...
(gathering herself)
Coming off your medication hasn't
led to any unforeseen consequences?

SAGAL

No.

THERAPIST

How about the dreams? Have they
come back?

SAGAL

They're not really dreams...
(catches herself)
I haven't experienced anything like
that lately, no.

THERAPIST

That's a good sign.
(checks clock)
Our time's nearly up. Was there
anything else...?

SAGAL

No. Thank you.

THERAPIST

You know Sagal, I'm only trying to
prepare you. The political system
won't know how to deal with a woman
like you.

SAGAL

I'm well aware of that.

THERAPIST

This is going to be an especially
testing time, win or lose.

SAGAL

I'm still very much the underdog.

THERAPIST

(smug)
You've come a long way with me.

(MORE)

THERAPIST (CONT'D)

You aren't so vulnerable now, and I like to think that's...

But Sagal is already rising to leave.

SAGAL

I'll see you next week.

ELECTION DAY MONTAGE:

A reporter describes the situation in voiceover as we see Sagal's team work to get the voters out.

REPORTER (V.O.)

In the hotly contested Midlands seat of Medhill East, analysts are saying the result is too close to call. Here insurgent candidate Sagal Osman bids to become the youngest independent MP ever to enter Parliament.

Destiny mans the phones in the campaign headquarters where the operation is clearly run on a shoestring.

Warren guides a mobility-impaired couple to a taxi. One of the windows of their house bears Sagal's campaign poster.

Outside the polling station Sagal gives voters a cheery welcome. Nearby elderly women write on clipboards for the exit polls.

REPORTER (V.O.)

This contender of Muslim heritage insists she is more than a one-issue candidate. Sagal denies allegations from the incumbent Roy Harrison, who himself has been dogged by corruption claims in recent months.

Footage of the incumbent MP looking beleaguered is followed by scenes from across the UK: politicians posting votes in ballot boxes, vote-share graphics, dogs outside polling stations.

EXT. COMMUNITY ADVICE CENTRE, MIDLANDS - NIGHT

A police officer stands on the door, the building behind her a brightly-lit hive of activity. Sagal arrives with Warren and Destiny.

INT. COMMUNITY ADVICE CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

The trio greet everyone in reception as Warren asks them questions. Sagal gazes at framed photos evoking the history of the building.

Many of these pictures are from previous election nights, depicting celebrations. The winners punch the air or embrace their wives. The MPs depicted are all white, middle-aged men.

We close in on Sagal as her eyes lose their focus. The noise around her recedes to a background HUM. She has entered what we will come to understand is a **state of reverie**.

From images in Sagal's **mind's eye**, we see glimpses of past election nights in this location, dating back a hundred years.

The clothes and demeanour of participants evolve as we move toward the present day; election losers either conceding gracefully, protesting the result, or demanding a recount.

The final image she sees is of the incumbent MP winning five years before; his wolfish smile and graceless grandstanding jar with the surroundings.

WARREN (O.C.)

Did you hear what I said?

Sagal comes out of her trance to find Warren and Destiny before her, expectant.

SAGAL

Not all of it.

DESTINY

It's been an exhausting day.

WARREN

Yes, and it's not over yet. We need to stay focussed
(lowers voice)
I'm told Terrence Wanamaker is here.

SAGAL

Because we won, or because we've lost?

DESTINY

He can't know that yet, can he?

WARREN

No, but his presence is never a good thing. Prepare yourselves.

Observing the rule, they hand their phones to the person on the door then go through.

INT. COUNTING AREA, COMMUNITY CENTRE - NIGHT

Ballot boxes and votes are piled around volunteers working tirelessly on the count. They are watched over by two police officers. We move past them, next door into...

INT. MAIN ROOM, COMMUNITY CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

Here the candidates, teams and supporters from each party are gathered in their cliques. Some chat nervously but fatigue has clearly set in.

Without phones to distract them, the candidates rest their eyes or stare into space. Sagal remains alert, noticing TERRENCE WANAMAKER (40s, slick political type, fitted suit) in conference with the incumbent MP.

He turns a glance her way, one that Sagal immediately reads.

SAGAL

I'm going to freshen up.

She leaves her team, meeting Terrence in a private corner.

TERRENCE

(offering hand)

Miss Osman, I'm...

SAGAL

(shakes his hand)

Everyone knows who you are.

TERRENCE

One of the pitfalls of success.

(studies her)

As you're about to find out.

SAGAL

(taken aback)

I am?

TERRENCE

All early indicators point that way.

(taps nose)

(MORE)

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

Although it wasn't me that told you.

SAGAL

Of course not.

TERRENCE

Westminster sent me here, in case of just this eventuality.

SAGAL

Who in Westminster?

TERRENCE

(ignoring her question)
Enjoy your moment. But realise you'll need all the help you can get over the coming weeks. Is your victory speech ready?

SAGAL

I believe it is.

TERRENCE

Be gracious. Build bridges. We need to ensure you have good people in place to support you.

(looks round the room)

You're about to become famous.

For the first time, Sagal looks overawed. Terrence glances at the incumbent MP.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

(whispered)

Between you and me, I'll be glad to see the back of that awful braggart.

(turns to Sagal)

Very well done anyway. I'll see you down in London.

He leaves to greet the incumbent MP with false bonhomie. Sagal watches, reflecting.

INT. MAIN ROOM, COMMUNITY CENTRE - LATER

Glimmers of daylight are visible through the windows. Sagal's team has been boosted by additional supporters, friends and family. She chats with her mother and father.

Sagal is distracted by a woman who appears from the adjacent room. She goes up to the incumbent MP to speak with him. The MP's face falls.

SAGAL
(to herself)
It's true, then.

DESTINY
What's that?

SAGAL
We've done it Destiny; we've
actually done it.

Destiny stares at her, emotional. The pair embrace.

DESTINY
You're on your way now!
(wipes eyes)
Leaving the rest of us behind.

SAGAL
No Dest, I need you more than ever.
(looks over)
Sorry, I have to tell my parents.

She moves across to Freddie and Maryam.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN ROOM, COMMUNITY CENTRE - LATER

Morning has broken as the candidates stand on the stage. The RETURNING OFFICER announces the results with Sagal having won the most votes. Her supporters CHEER.

The other candidates applaud politely while the outgoing MP looks disgruntled. Representatives from the media film Sagal as she steps up to make her speech.

SAGAL
Thank you, thank you to the
returning officer and everyone who
worked on the count.
(turns to supporters)
And thank you for placing your
trust in me. I promise I won't let
you down.
(cheers)
I shall be your voice in
parliament, your advocate in
Westminster.

(MORE)

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 The needs of Medhill East have gone
 unheard for far too long.

At this point the incumbent MP leaves the stage. A couple of people in the crowd JEER him. Sagal sees Terrence intercept the man and guide him away.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 I think we can all agree there has
 been too much division and
 negativity around here lately.
 (applause)
 I believe politics exists to help
 people like us with our problems,
 not to make them worse.
 (someone WHOOPS)
 I would like to thank everyone who
 got me here; my team, my family,
 those who continue to inspire me,
 even if they're no longer with us.

Sagal looks down to her parents in the crowd, seeing her sister Zahra beside them. Zahra looks up with admiration. Sagal pauses, unable to process this sight.

As everyone waits expectantly, Sagal notices the smiling **apparition** is drawn, horribly thin and ill-looking. Sagal looks away from Zahra, pained. She tries to recover herself.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 (emotional)
 We will hold our first constituency
 surgery this weekend. My inbox will
 be up and running before then.
 (more focussed)
 Bring me your concerns; tell us
 your struggles. We intend to be
 here for you all. Change starts
 with every one of us, and it starts
 from today. Thank you.

Loud APPLAUSE. Sagal steps down to scan the crowd but the vision of her sister has disappeared. She is now surrounded by her new constituents.

MALE CONSTITUENT
 Congratulations! I hope you won't
 forget your roots.

SAGAL
 How could I?

FEMALE CONSTITUENT
 Be careful down in London love,
 they say it changes people.

SAGAL
 I'll do my best.

YOUNG FEMALE CONSTITUENT
 Can I get a photo?

Sagal permits the selfie. Her father eases through the melee, waiting until it has been taken before he intervenes.

FREDDIE
 That's enough. My daughter needs to
 get some sleep.

SAGAL
 Thank you, everyone.

More CHEERS as she is escorted from the building, her team following behind. From his vantage point nearby Terrence watches her go, thoughtful.

INT. CARRIAGE, LONDON-BOUND TRAIN - DAY

Sagal works on her laptop at a table on the busy train.

In her constituency inbox she opens an email containing an Islamophobic death threat. Sagal SIGHS, blocks the sender, then looks to the passing landscape, her mind wandering.

INT. ZAHRA'S BEDROOM, OSMAN FAMILY HOME - FLASHBACK

Zahra (early 20s) is in bed; feverish but awake. Adolescent Sagal (13) tentatively enters, holding a jug of water.

SAGAL
 I thought you might need this.

Zahra sits up, wincing with pain.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 Did you get any sleep?

Zahra gives her sister a sad smile.

ZAHRA
 Sister, my sister. You have always
 been the kindest person.

Sagal turns away, finding it hard to cope with the sight.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)
 I've seen it you know.
 (taps forehead)
 You were made for bigger things.

SAGAL
 (tearful)
 So are you.

ZAHRA
 Making a difference in our world,
 that is your fate.
 (gasps)

SAGAL
 Please Zahra, you must get well.

ZAHRA
 The one thing you should know is
 that we cannot escape our fate.
 This was all written long ago, long
 before we were made.

Sagal grabs her sister's hand and WEEPS. We hear a phone RING.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - AS BEFORE

Her eyes brimming with tears, Sagal pushes the memory aside to pick up her phone: Destiny. She notices a businessman in a nearby seat glare at her as she answers.

SAGAL
 Hey, what's up?

INTERCUT:

DESTINY
 I am *so* sorry about the email. I
 don't know how it slipped through.

SAGAL
 (wipes eyes)
 That's ok, comes with the job.

DESTINY
 We're trying to get them all but...

SAGAL
 I've been through worse.

DESTINY

Warren's just about keeping a lid on things here. I'll probably stay late tonight, to log all the cases.

SAGAL

What would I do without you?

DESTINY

(smiles)

We'll never need to know that, will we?

(all business)

Are you nearly there?

SAGAL

Not long now. You don't have to worry - I've been to London before.

DESTINY

When you were a kid!

SAGAL

They've sent through some *very* detailed guidance.

DESTINY

I'd have been happy to come with you. I said that.

SAGAL

Who would have held the fort then?

Sagal notices the man give her another dirty look.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

Better go, speak to you later.

DESTINY

Good luck!

Sagal hangs up and returns to her laptop.

INT./EXT. EUSTON STATION, LONDON - DAY

Sagal comes out into a swarm of onrushing commuters. She studies the signs, passing buskers, beggars and people who barge past as she heads for the tube.

EXT. WESTMINSTER, LONDON - DAY

Sagal emerges from the station, blending in with a crowd of tourists approaching the Houses of Parliament. She has to sidestep someone who stops suddenly to stare up at Big Ben.

Rounding the corner, Sagal comes upon the Parliamentary Estate. The Palace of Westminster and associated buildings dominate the skyline. People take photos or queue for tours.

Sagal's gaze runs over the statues in Old Palace Yard; the architecture beside Cromwell Green. Large parts of Parliament are cordoned off and surrounded by scaffolding.

Moving toward St Stephen's Entrance, armed policemen oversee the way in. Sagal shows them her poorly-printed Parliamentary pass. One of them gestures.

POLICE OFFICER

Member's entrance is over there.

SAGAL

Thank you.

She moves to the Carriage Gates, overawed. A few tourists watch her, wondering about this out of place young woman.

EXT. MEMBERS' ENTRANCE, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - DAY

Sagal shows her pass to the sombre guard.

GUARD

Here for the swearing in?

SAGAL

That's right.

GUARD

Which party?

SAGAL

None of them.

(off his quizzical look)

I'm an independent.

The guard looks sceptical but admits her. Sagal's belongings pass through the X-ray machine. A scanner is waved over her anatomy by a second guard.

Eventually she is allowed to take her belongings into the Palace of Westminster.

INT. WESTMINSTER HALL, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - DAY

The sheer scale of this place overwhelms Sagal. There is stained glass and high ceilings above; endless candles and great stairs leading upwards.

After taking a moment to get her bearings, Sagal notices others around her: aides, workmen and tour guides. She fumbles for her phone before a VOICE causes her to **jump**.

VOICE (O.S.)
Sagal? Sagal Osman?

Sagal turns to find Parliamentary Aide GEORGIE (blonde, 30s, can do attitude) holding out a hand. They shake.

GEORGIE
I'm Georgie. Come this way;
Terrence is waiting for you.

Sagal follows her upstairs and through the Ceremonial area. Georgie acknowledges the guards as they go.

INT. HOTDESKING ROOM, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - CONTINUOUS

The pair arrive in a more modern space, intended for use by House of Lords representatives and their guests. Terrence is here, at his laptop. He rises to greet them.

TERRENCE
Sagal - welcome. I'm pleased to see
they let you in.
(to Georgie)
You can go now Georgie, you'll hear
from me when I need you.
(motions for Sagal to sit)
How was your journey? I hope the
place isn't too disorienting?

SAGAL
It's hard to believe this is where
I work now.

TERRENCE
It has plenty of downsides, believe
me. You'll be glad to get home for
half the week.
(waves hand)
Georgie you've met. She'll be
taking you to your digs after our
business concludes here. I've asked
her to man your office.

SAGAL

Will I have to pay for her out of my allowance?

TERRENCE

We'll work out the technicalities later.

(leans forward)

Whatever anyone else might say, we're happy to have you around. This place has been stuck in the Jurassic era too long.

SAGAL

I thought you were *part* of that history...

She tails off, spotting an unpleasant red blemish on the underside of Terrence's chin. Sagal cannot stop herself from staring at this **lurid** mark.

TERRENCE

(oblivious)

All the research in the world can't really prepare you for the rituals of this place. Perhaps we had better go through what you need to know, before the ceremony begins.

Sagal snaps out of it, averting her eyes.

SAGAL

Perhaps we should, yes.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS, WESTMINSTER - DAY

News Footage depicts the intake of new MPs; hundreds of them queuing to pass through the house and take an oath of allegiance to the King.

NEWSREADER (V.O.)

...a record number of independent parliamentarians in this intake, including the new Member of Parliament for Medhill East in the Midlands; Sagal Osman...

We see each MP lift their hand to take an oath on the Bible or make an affirmation without a Holy Book. When it is Sagal's turn, she swears on a copy of the Qur'an.

EXT. PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE, WESTMINSTER - EVENING

Now that parliamentary business has ended, MPs are leaving for the day. They rush to taxis as Georgie fights to flag one down, opening the door for Sagal then climbing in after her.

INT. TAXI, WESTMINSTER - DAY

Georgie gives the driver an address and he pulls away, moving at a snail's pace through traffic.

GEORGIE

Your place is close. You'll be able to walk it in the morning, but it's been a long day...

Sagal is distracted by a text alert on her phone: St Stephen's Green Entrance Closed Tomorrow Due to Falling Masonry. Georgie leans over to see.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

That happens a lot. It's quite annoying.

SAGAL

I didn't know these places were falling apart.

GEORGIE

They're old buildings, darling. The powers-that-be really ought to clear the place and fix it up properly. But the members wouldn't go elsewhere.

SAGAL

Oh no?

GEORGIE

They like being in the *seat of power* too much. That and coming down to London to enjoy their 'bit on the side' weekday evenings.

Sagal looks at her, shocked. Georgie bursts out LAUGHING.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

I'm kidding.

(changing the subject)

Your new housemates are all good friends of mine. You'll be in safe hands.

While Georgie continues to CHATTER, Sagal turns her attention to the darkened streets of Westminster outside.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL HOUSE, NEAR WESTMINSTER - NIGHT

The taxi pulls up and the two women head inside.

INT. SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER DIGS - CONTINUOUS

This place is no one's home, feeling more akin to student accommodation for the upper middle classes. Georgie gestures to the communal areas.

GEORGIE

Everyone here works for MPs in some capacity. I went to uni with a couple of them; they're great people. But everyone does long hours. I can't introduce you to any of them right now.

They climb the stairs.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

This is you, next door to Jolyon and Katherine, here we are...

(opens door)

It's not the lap of luxury, but I'm sure this will be sufficient.

Sagal stares at the interior - a single room with a small window and the basics of furniture, made up effectively.

SAGAL

This is perfect.

GEORGIE

If you need anything, get in touch.

(leaving)

I'm never far away.

INT. SINGLE ROOM, SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER DIGS - NIGHT

Sagal unpacks her overnight bag then lies on the bed.

Her eyes glaze over and Sagal enters a **reverie**, seeing all the previous inhabitants of this room, down the decades. Without exception they are all white, privileged, Sloaney.

She snaps out of the trance, glances at her phone but opts not to read any messages. Instead she unrolls her prayer mat and moves to the floor beside the bed.

INT. DINING ROOM, WESTMINSTER DIGS - DAY

Early the next morning Sagal finds her housemates eating breakfast: KATHERINE, JOLYON, STEPH and HARRY are all in their 20s and posh. Everyone looks tired as they greet Sagal.

EXT. WESTMINSTER, LONDON - DAY

The sun bathes everything in a warm glow as Sagal gets coffee and a snack from a café on her way. She walks through Westminster, taking in her surroundings.

Near the tube station Sagal moves toward Portcullis House, a newer building across the road from parliament.

EXT./INT. PORTCULLIS HOUSE, WESTMINSTER - DAY

Members of the public queue to meet their MPs as Sagal passes through the main hall with its glass ceiling, on to her office.

INT. SAGAL'S OFFICE, WESTMINSTER - DAY

Sagal approaches the room assigned to her, noticing the door is open, the latch broken. Inside she finds Georgie hard at work, surrounded by piles of documents and general disorder.

GEORGIE

Hello! I didn't expect you yet.

SAGAL

I wanted to make an early start.

GEORGIE

There's plenty to do but the wi-fi's up and down and, as you can see...

(gestures)

...the previous occupant didn't exactly clear the place before leaving.

SAGAL

I don't need much space.

(gestures to door)

What happened there?

GEORGIE
 Not sure, but I can hazard a guess.
 Pete's coming to fix it later.

Sagal shifts some papers to put her laptop on the desk. She sits opposite Georgie.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)
 Shall we delve into your diary?

Later, the two women are deep into Outlook calendars and lists of resources.

SAGAL
 So, that covers you and...

GEORGIE
 Half an assistant here in London,
 if you need them. And you probably
 will.
 (points)
 You get enough budget for three
 point five case workers up in...

SAGAL
 Medhill.

GEORGIE
 Yes. That sounds like a lot, but no
 MP ever has enough resources in
 place to cope properly.

SAGAL
 (laughs)
 When we were running my campaign we
 had to rely on people giving up
 their time for free.
 (thinks)
 If it hadn't been for crowdfunding,
 I'd never have made it here.

Georgie looks at her, not really comprehending.

GEORGIE
 I've never heard that before.

Their conversation is interrupted by a KNOCK at the door.
 EDWARD (early 70s, cheery, paternal, lifelong MP) wanders in
 without being invited.

SAGAL
 Hello?

EDWARD

Ah yes, I just came to see how you were settling in.

GEORGIE

Sagal, this is the Right Honourable Edward Tremain.

EDWARD

Come, come - there's no need to stand on ceremony. I'm a humble member of parliament, the same as you.

SAGAL

Very pleased to meet you, Edward.

GEORGIE

Edward has represented his constituency for, what is it now? Forty years?

EDWARD

Forty four, and I don't care what they say; this is the best job in the world. How do you like the place so far?

SAGAL

It's a little overwhelming.

GEORGIE

This is her first day, so there's a lot...

EDWARD

(interrupting)

Oh, of course. But if you need any advice in future, I'm just a few doors down.

(studies Sagal)

You've chosen not to wear your, ah.

He motions awkwardly to his own head. Georgie looks pained.

SAGAL

(polite)

A headscarf? No. Islam instructs us believers to dress modestly. Some interpret that as an order to wear the hijab, I choose not to.

EDWARD

Quite right, I should say! Wouldn't want to hide that lovely hair of yours!

GEORGIE

(intervening)

Is Jolyon in your office, Edward? I've something to discuss with him.

EDWARD

Yes, yes. Come along - we'll find him.

GEORGIE

(to Sagal)

Shall I get us some tea?

Sagal nods and Georgie leaves. Sagal returns to her laptop.

Later she rises from the screen, her gaze resting on a pile of Hansard reports among the papers at her feet. She picks one up and idly flicks through it.

Suddenly Sagal hears muffled SHOUTING nearby. Someone is clearly furious and the RANT ends with a loud CRASH. Sagal flinches.

She moves to leave the office then hesitates - hearing only silence. Staring at the damaged door, her eyes lose their focus as she enters a **reverie**.

In this fugue state, she sees the previous inhabitants of her office. Men pace the floor, gesticulating wildly at their cowering aides. In a fury, one MP kicks out at the door.

As Sagal experiences these past events, a scrawny, weatherbeaten man in his early fifties appears at the doorway. He watches her implacably.

In Sagal's vision the MP storms out, leaving the door broken. He morphs into PETE, the facilities manager who stands before her. Sagal **recoils** in shock. Pete nods to his toolbag.

PETE

Here to fix your door.

INT. SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER OFFICE - LATER

Pete repairs the latch while Georgie and Sagal sip tea, the latter wary and unsettled.

GEORGIE

You haven't given *any* thought to raising a private member's bill?

SAGAL

I have, of course I have. There are so many deserving causes, I couldn't decide.

PETE

They're the only way of getting anything done round here.

GEORGIE

It's a lottery whether you get chosen but, hey...

(grins)

You have to be in it to win it!

(quieter)

Plus it looks good, starting your time here in a proactive way.

SAGAL

This week has been such a whirlwind, it's hard to know where to start.

Georgie studies her. Pete swings the door shut.

PETE

All done. You'll have a bit of privacy now.

SAGAL

Thank you.

GEORGIE

Before you go Pete, are you still running those tours of the under-rooms?

PETE

I'm showing some members' friends and family round this very afternoon, as it happens.

GEORGIE

(to Sagal)

How about it? You need a break, and it'll give me a chance to 'file' all this crap.

(points downward)

You could check out the *hidden depths* of this place.

(MORE)

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

(to Pete)

Got room for one more?

Pete nods. Sagal looks intrigued.

INT. UNDERROOMS OF PARLIAMENT - DAY

Pete leads a group of nine, Sagal bringing up the rear. They all wear headsets to hear him, descending the steps beneath parliament. We hear Pete SPEAK as the group study their surroundings.

PETE (O.C.)

The sheer scale of this estate is enough to give anyone pause. There are many miles of passageways down here. It's only safe for us to see a small section of the basement and linked areas.

The group continues into the tunnel, stepping over puddles of water in the dim light.

PETE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

We've done surveys of two thousand distinct areas in recent times; assessing the risks of flooding and fires before putting into place preventative measures. Please watch your heads.

The group duck under some low-hanging pipes. At the back, Sagal sees a shape SCUTTLE down a side tunnel. She hurries on, fearful of what looked to be a large rat.

A WOMAN points to a tunnel extending from the main passageway, blocked by smoke ventilation doors.

WOMAN

What's down there?

PETE

That's only accessible to fire wardens like myself. We regularly inspect the cables and wiring to make sure they're in good working order.

He carries on, still talking. The group follows Pete past plant rooms and red cages containing unit boards. They go up another set of stairs.

PETE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
 There have been fifty fire incidents across the parliamentary estate in the last decade alone. A single leak in the wrong place could mean disaster. That's why we take such a great deal of care.

The group comes out into a large chamber dominated by two giant, cast iron containers. Some put hands to their noses, or cover their mouths with handkerchiefs.

PETE (CONT'D)
 Now we reach the pinnacle of today's brief tour - the parliamentary waste containers. These have been in place for a hundred and forty years and they haven't let us down yet. Although a recent survey concluded they could fail at any time.

(smiles)
 You can imagine how deep in it we would be if they did. But mark my words; these beauties will continue to store politicians' effluent for a good while to come.

He gives one of the containers a BANG that echoes around the chamber. The group instinctively shrinks back. Pete winks at Sagal and she grins.

CUT TO:

INT. CONSTITUENCY SURGERY, MIDLANDS - DAY

Later that week, Sagal is back in her home town, sat with Destiny before the surgery begins. They are surrounded by groceries and supplies. Destiny's nose wrinkles in distaste.

DESTINY
 That sounds disgusting!

SAGAL
 It was actually fascinating, seeing a Victorian sewage system up close. Pete said there's even a *working steam engine* somewhere - built in as part of it.

DESTINY
 What?!

SAGAL

No word of a lie. Parliament's an even stranger place than I thought.

Warren pokes his head in from the next room. He looks harassed.

WARREN

Are we ready? There's a whole lot of people out here.

DESTINY

Send the first ones in!

MONTAGE:

Sagal hands a despairing young mother nappies and baby formula for her child.

Destiny writes down the phone number for Age Concern and gives it to an elderly gentleman.

Sagal tries to explain a situation to a man in his thirties.

SAGAL

...but I *do* have a contact on the council. Let me speak to her then get back to you. This isn't the first complaint we've had about the Housing Association.

Warren comes in with sandwiches for them. We see that the adjoining room is filled with people waiting.

Destiny hands a card to a despairing middle-aged man.

DESTINY

That gives you the opening hours of the Citizen's Advice Bureau. It should be your first port of call.

Sagal addresses a haughty woman in late middle age.

SAGAL

I'd suggest you arrange a meeting with your neighbours; get round the table to sort things out in a civilized manner. I know parking can be an emotive issue, but I don't think this is a matter for your MP.

Destiny comforts a young woman with a black eye and abrasions on her face.

DESTINY

You can't go back there babe, it's too dangerous. Let me ring them, see if they can get you in. Just for tonight, okay?

Sagal puts together a bag of shopping for a SINGLE MOTHER whose three little kids run around, playful.

SINGLE MOTHER

(tearful)

I can't thank you enough!

SAGAL

Don't thank me, it's from the food bank. Do you know where that is?

SINGLE MOTHER

(nods)

It's too far to walk, and I don't have money for the bus.

SAGAL

Maybe we can do something about that.

(calls)

Warren!

Warren appears.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

What's the situation with the petty cash?

Warren shakes his head. Sagal SIGHS and reaches for her purse. She hands the single mother a twenty pound note. Destiny frowns at Sagal's selflessness.

SINGLE MOTHER

Thank you, thank you so much.

SAGAL

(to Destiny, defensive)

I get an MP's salary now.

DESTINY

Which won't go very far if you keep that up, big shot.

SAGAL

(whispered)

You know dinner's on me tonight?

INT. LEBANESE RESTAURANT, MIDLANDS - EVENING

After their long day everyone eats heartily. Warren and his girlfriend enjoy beers while Sagal and Destiny have soft drinks.

DESTINY

What are your lodgings like? Are the people you share with nice?

SAGAL

They're fine.

INT. SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER DIGS, NIGHT - FLASHBACK

In bed, Sagal lies awake, listening to NOISE through the wall. Clearly of carnal origin, this sound is more desperate than tender. A female VOICE begins to make distressed SOUNDS.

Unsettled, Sagal rises to come out into the hallway. The moment she leaves her room, all is quiet. She looks confused before hurrying back into her room.

In the restaurant, Sagal changes the subject.

SAGAL

I don't see much of them.

DESTINY

Sounds like it could get lonely.

SAGAL

(laughs)

Oh, it's anything but that. Georgie's on at me all day and my first debate's happening Tuesday.

(eats)

I'd forgotten how good the Kanafeh is here.

DESTINY

It's delish, alright.

SAGAL

You know, this used to be my sister's favourite place.

DESTINY

You said.

INT. LEBANESE RESTAURANT, NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Twelve years earlier the Osmans sit around the same table. Sagal is a playful twelve year old, Youssef a moody teenager and Zahra in her early 20s with deep bags under her eyes.

Maryam watches her eldest daughter who hasn't touched any of the food. Freddie notices this too and pauses his eating.

MARYAM

Is something wrong my love?

ZAHRA

(unconvincing)

I'm fine, mum.

FREDDIE

Come on Za, this is our special place!

ZAHRA

I'm not really hungry tonight.

YOUSSEF

More for the rest of us then.

He reaches across Sagal who tries to protect her food. They play-fight against the protestations of their parents. Zahra gives them all the saddest of smiles.

Back in the present day, Destiny sees Sagal tearing up. She takes her hand.

DESTINY

She'd have been very proud of you, you know.

Sagal nods and dries her eyes.

INT. PORTCULLIS HOUSE, WESTMINSTER - DAY

In the cold light of day this part of the parliamentary estate looks modern but ugly. A hundred tables are set out in the hall with MPs, aides, constituents and lobby journalists all in attendance.

One corner of the room is cordoned off as workmen replace a glass panel that has fallen from the ceiling. Edward leads Sagal from person to person, introducing her to the MPs.

Everyone seems to be trying to get Sagal's attention. Eventually Georgie intervenes, leading her to other groups of influential men.

Sagal is disoriented by all this attention and seeks out Terrence nearby, making her excuses to the others.

SAGAL

I don't know how much more of this
I can take.

TERRENCE

A necessary evil. This is where it
all happens - here and in the
central lobby.

SAGAL

I'll never remember their names.

TERRENCE

But they'll remember *your* face.

SAGAL

(looking round)
I stand out, don't I?

TERRENCE

If you're memorable, they're more
likely to think of you when they
need an ally.

The pair watch Edward greet a group of middle-aged MPs.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

It's all built on favours here;
allegiances of convenience.

(turns to Sagal)

My wife wanted me to invite you to
dinner at our house. I told her
about you.

SAGAL

I'd be happy to accept.

(shivers)

It's so cold in here.

TERRENCE

Heating's on the blink again.

(points up)

And there's a big hole up above us,
if you hadn't noticed.

SAGAL

I did. Why do they keep patching
everything up? Can't they just
close this place down and refurbish
it properly?

TERRENCE

(laughs)

This isn't your local cinema, Sagal. A renovation of the parliamentary estate wouldn't even be finished in my lifetime. And do you know how much that would cost?

SAGAL

Billions?

TERRENCE

Tens of billions, at least. People think MPs get too much money as it is. How can you defend spending a fortune to some voter who can't afford to send their youngest child to a fee-paying school?

SAGAL

I'd tell them state schools are perfectly adequate.

TERRENCE

What about a poor family who don't know where their next meal is coming from?

They watch workmen descend from high stepladders.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

No, it's patch up and make do for the foreseeable.

SAGAL

That seems short-sighted, and probably more expensive in the long run...

(distracted)

Oh, looks like I'm needed.

Georgie hurries over, jabbing her phone. She is accompanied by fellow parliamentary aide Steph who has clearly been crying. Steph acknowledges Sagal.

GEORGIE

I've got some fires to put out. The minister I was telling you about has just arrived.

(to Terrence)

Hi Terrence.

TERRENCE

Georgie. Stephanie.

SAGAL

I'd be happy to speak to him.

GEORGIE

Make a good impression. I'll be back soon.

(gestures)

Steph and some others are going to the Strangers' when we're done here. Would you like to join us?

TERRENCE

I can't tonight.

(to Sagal)

You should. The more mingling with the great and good you can stomach early on, the better. I'm sure Georgie will protect you from the worst of them.

GEORGIE

Sagal's perfectly able to handle herself.

(to Steph)

Come on, let's sort this out.

Georgie practically drags Steph away. Sagal watches the well-known MINISTER Georgie mentioned glad-hand the room. Terrence follows her gaze.

TERRENCE

Let me come with you, I know Chike from way back.

They rise.

INT. STRANGERS' BAR ENTRANCE, PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE - EVENING

Approaching the MPs' in-house pub, Georgie takes out her phone, holding it up for Sagal to see.

GEORGIE

We always turn them off in here.

SAGAL

Really?

GEORGIE

Yep, no visual evidence allowed.

She LAUGHS. They hold up blank-screened phones and parliamentary passes for the DOORMAN to see. He nods.

DOORMAN
Through you go.

INT. STRANGERS' BAR, PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

Members of Parliament and their guests are clustered at the narrow bar. A sign on the blackboard above reads: Guests Must Be Accompanied and May Not Buy Drinks.

At the tables nearby, male MPs TALK loudly while reclining on the plush furniture. Georgie sees Sagal's four housemates and goes over to them.

Edward is at the bar and moves in on Sagal. She notices a red blemish on his chin and neck, similar to Terrence's but less pronounced. Edward holds a near-empty glass.

EDWARD
Can I get you a drink, my dear?

SAGAL
I don't really...

EDWARD
Of course not, Allah and all that.
How about a lemonade?

SAGAL
That would be fine.

GEORGIE (O.S.)
I'll have a gin and tonic please
Mister Tremain. Make it a double.

Georgie grins as Edward eases his way to the bar. A group of besuited men in their forties GUFFAW. Sagal catches some of their conversation about 'dolly birds' and 'smashing it'.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)
Come on, let's join everyone.

INT. TABLE, STRANGERS' BAR - LATER

Georgie and Sagal sit with Jolyon, Steph, Harry, Katherine and a couple of other aides in their 20s. Steph is withdrawn and looks disconsolate. Harry raises his glass.

HARRY
To our MP and lodger!

Everyone CHINKS glasses. Sagal looks a little shy, noticing that Katherine wears a hearing aid while the aide speaks.

KATHERINE

It's nice to have an MP here we actually *want* to hang out with.

SAGAL

You clearly have to put up with a lot.

(to Georgie)

Is Steph okay?

GEORGIE

She needs to toughen up. Being an aide isn't for the faint of heart.

HARRY

I hear that!

KATHERINE

(points)

Jolyon used to work for one who threw things at him.

JOLYON

Phones, staplers. He even chucked a paperweight at my head once.

SAGAL

(shocked)

That's horrible.

JOLYON

You compartmentalise. I had the last laugh. Or rather, the voters did.

At the bar, the group of men continue to josh. Edward greets an arriving female MP, guiding her to the bar, a hand in the small of her back. The table sees Sagal watching him.

JOLYON (CONT'D)

Oh, Edward's harmless.

HARRY

He's one of the good ones, believe it or not.

GEORGIE

You can say that Harry, he doesn't invade *your* personal space.

JOLYON

I think the woman MPs are worse.

KATHERINE

That's because you're the prettiest
of all parliamentary aides.

HARRY

If that spreadsheet ever comes to
light, we'll find out who's the
worst, once and for all.

Georgie gives Harry a look of warning. Sagal spots it.

SAGAL

What's this?

JOLYON

There's rumoured to be a list doing
the rounds: every MP who has ever
misbehaved; what they got up to.

KATHERINE

Problem is, no one's ever seen it.

STEPH

(under her breath)
Which doesn't mean it isn't real.

HARRY

There's meant to be forty names on
it.

JOLYON

If the file ever came to light,
there'd be an awful lot of snap by-
elections.

GEORGIE

(stern)
There's no way one person could
have compiled something like
that...

Their CONVERSATION carries on in the background as Sagal's
attention is drawn to a woman who has joined the male MPs, up
at the bar.

CARMEN is around thirty, sensual and voluptuous. She is
dressed in more provocative clothes than the other women
here; tight-fitting and overtly sexual.

Carmen flirts and LAUGHS at the remarks made by the men.
Sagal can't take her eyes off this striking woman. Carmen
turns and fixes Sagal with her eyes.

Caught off-guard, Sagal's gaze locks with Carmen's. After a moment Sagal lowers her eyes, embarrassed. Carmen continues to look her way, unflinching.

Returning her attention to the table, Sagal sees the aides are merrier now. Even Steph seems cheery as she leans over to speak to Sagal.

STEPH

I hope you don't mind; I used a bit of your butter today. I ran out of time to get any in.

HARRY

You didn't spread it with the knife you used to cut the bacon, did you?

He LAUGHS. Steph looks confused, then mortified.

STEPH

Oh my God, I am *so* sorry.

SAGAL

I'm sure its okay.

HARRY

It's not like you were force-feeding her pig!

SAGAL

(distracted)

Excuse me, I need to visit the bathroom.

Sagal leaves, the sound of raucous LAUGHTER behind her.

INT. LADIES' TOILET, STRANGERS' BAR - NIGHT

In the empty bathroom, Sagal checks her appearance in the mirror.

Sagal's eyes lose their focus as she enters another **reverie**, this one against her will. She tries to fight it off, eyes briefly becoming clear, but the trance is too strong.

Sagal brings into her mind scenes from the bar's history: all-male singalongs and fist-fights. In more recent years, she has visions of older men pawing at young women.

One woman fends off a groper with a tight smile before escaping to the toilet. The woman tries to compose herself where Sagal stands now.

A BANG as the door flies open. The woman in the vision morphs into Sagal who comes out of her trance. She finds Carmen standing nearby, tending to her appearance.

CARMEN

I know who you are, you know.
 (applies lipstick)
 I'm Carmen.

SAGAL

Hi.

CARMEN

I saw you looking at me.

SAGAL

You're very different to...

CARMEN

Everyone else here?
 (glances at her)
 I could say the same about you babes.

SAGAL

I wasn't going to...

CARMEN

You're part of it now, aren't you?
 That means you'd better get comfortable with these people, if you want to make this work.
 (touches up eyeshadow)
 I'm just a visitor here.

Sagal is now openly watching Carmen, transfixed despite herself.

SAGAL

What is it that you do?

CARMEN

I perform. Sometimes onstage; sometimes off.

SAGAL

Oh yes?

CARMEN

Today I'm the guest of someone who wants me to play a particular character; then *perform* certain acts.

(MORE)

CARMEN (CONT'D)
 (looks Sagal in the eye)
 Does that shock you?

SAGAL
 I-I'm not one to judge.

CARMEN
 Good, because there are very few
 politicians here who want to
 actually change the world and I
 feel like you're one of them.

SAGAL
 Really?

CARMEN
 You just need to loosen up a bit
 first babes, that's all.

Carmen blows Sagal a kiss, then goes into a cubicle.
 Katherine enters the bathroom as Sagal hurries out, her eyes
 on the floor.

INT. STRANGERS' BAR, PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE - NIGHT

Sagal returns to the table to excuse herself.

HARRY
 (drunk)
 Nooo! Don't go!

SAGAL
 I have to prepare for the debate
 tomorrow.

JOLYON
 Your first one, isn't it?

Katherine returns to the table.

SAGAL
 I'm hoping to get an early night -
 I haven't been sleeping too well.

Katherine twigs and looks away. We see a bruise on her neck.

GEORGIE
 I'll remind everyone to keep it
 down! See you later, babe.

INT. SAGAL'S ROOM, WESTMINSTER DIGS - NIGHT

Sagal has fallen asleep on the bed, surrounded by government papers and with her laptop open. The **dreams** she has have an otherworldly feeling, distinguishing them from her reveries.

In her unconscious mind Sagal sees:

A doctor coming out of Zahra's sick room, SPEAKING seriously with their mother in hushed tones.

Darkness in the parliamentary basement, shapes moving at the corner of her eye; a passing rat SQUEAKS followed by a veritable swarm of rodents.

Hostile police with guns turn her away from parliament.

A faceless male MP runs his hands over the bodies of two young women who are also disturbingly featureless.

Carmen appears in red underwear, fixing Sagal with a smouldering gaze as she comes closer. Just as Carmen reaches out a hand...

Sagal wakes with a start to an ORGASMIC SCREAM that echoes through the house. She sits up in terror, breathing heavily.

We see it is the small hours. Sagal scrabbles for her earplugs to muffle the ceaseless CRIES.

Once the sound is blocked out, Sagal attempts to go back to work, shaking her head to try and clear it.

INT. PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE, WESTMINSTER - DAY

More exhausted than ever, Sagal comes through the entrance and into the Central Lobby.

Here MPs and special advisors chat, waiting for the business of the day to begin. Tired and confused, Sagal tries to go down a corridor where workmen congregate. They stop her.

WORKMAN
(broken English)
Not safe. That way.

As he points, Sagal catches a glimpse of the passageway beyond the tarpaulin. Here workmen inspect the walls.

She turns past statues of past Prime Ministers, through the MPs' voting area and on into the House of Commons.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS, WESTMINSTER - DAY

Sagal is at the back of a half-empty commons. A government minister talks at the despatch box, the opposition MPs facing her. The SPEAKER oversees proceedings from the side.

Above them on the second tier we see journalists opposite guests who sit behind glass panes in the public gallery. The Minister for Work and Pensions continues.

MINISTER

...and that is why we feel these changes are essential, to make the system fairer for families and those who *want* to work.

INTERCUT:

INT. OFF CENTRAL LOBBY, PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE - DAY

The workmen Sagal saw earlier inspect pronounced cracks in the walls. They MUTTER darkly to each other.

Back in the House of Commons, the SHADOW MINISTER responds.

SHADOW MINISTER

...these changes will do nothing to reduce a welfare budget that is completely out of control under this government.

Off the Central Lobby a workman looks up, seeing that the cracks in the ceiling above appear to be spreading. He raises the alarm.

Back in the house, the Speaker calls upon Sagal. She is evidently nervous, tentatively projecting her voice.

SAGAL

Thank you, Mister Speaker.
(hesitant)

What is missing from this... this, debate, Mister Speaker, is any comprehension of the effects these cutbacks will have on the lives of ordinary people.

In the Central Lobby word spreads as the workmen signal for the area to be cleared. Security men hurry toward the House.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

My constituency, Mister Speaker, includes some of the poorest areas in the country. Many people are struggling, some of them I know personally.

(hitting her stride)

They need *more* help, not less. And while I am sure my Right Honourable friend over there would not *choose* to push thousands of children into poverty...

She is interrupted by a Security Guard throwing open the entrance door. All eyes fall on him.

GUARD

Possible structural failure - we need to evacuate!

Everyone stands, GRUMBLING as they shuffle out.

In the corridor, workmen around the crack take a step back as the ceiling bulges. After a pregnant pause this section falls in with an almighty CRASH.

INT. WANAMAKER RESIDENCE, NORTH LONDON - NIGHT

Terrence's townhouse is in an affluent neighbourhood with two cars parked in the drive. The lights are on this evening.

The house is spacious inside, tastefully decorated while exuding class. Around the dining table with Sagal sit Terrence, his wife REBECCA (40s, capable, professional, put together) and their children: LUCAS (14) and BEATRICE (12).

The kids politely signal for dishes to be passed and serve themselves. Sagal is the centre of attention, telling the story of the previous day.

SAGAL

...it wasn't exactly how I wanted my first parliamentary debate to go.

TERRENCE

I'd say your contribution turned out to be a rip-roaring success!

REBECCA

How's that, love?

TERRENCE

Think about it Bex - the point Sagal made would probably have got lost otherwise. With that evacuation happening in the middle of her speech, all the footage I've seen gets at least *part* of her message across.

SAGAL

I'd have preferred to do that without the ceiling coming in.

REBECCA

Yes, it sounds awfully dangerous.
(to Terrence)
What on earth were those builders doing?

TERRENCE

(to daughter)
Pass the greens Bea, thank you.
(to wife)
The contractor had it cordoned off already, his men just didn't realise the extent of the problem.
(eats)
Keeping Parliament running is like Whack-a-mole - do one repair and three more issues come to light.

SAGAL

I certainly didn't expect it to be crumbling like that.

REBECCA

(persistent, to Terrence)
They don't seem to be getting ahead of it though, do they? Weren't you involved in negotiating the contract?

TERRENCE

I was brought in to advise the minister in charge, yes. I didn't have any sway over his decision.
(changing the subject)
This really is delicious, Bex.

SAGAL

It is. Thank you so much for having me over. This is the first proper meal I've had since arriving in London.

REBECCA
 After Beatrice went veggie, I
 broadened my culinary horizons.
 (looks to Sagal)
 You *do* look run down.

TERRENCE
 Unfortunate side effect of the job.

SAGAL
 It *is* hectic, but I haven't really
 been sleeping.

REBECCA
 Have you seen your G.P.? If I can't
 shut down I usually take a pill...

LUCAS
 Then you're groggy the next day!

LAUGHTER. His mother gives Lucas an ironic scowl.

SAGAL
 Insomnia runs in my family, but
 that isn't the main thing. The
 other people in my house are quite
 noisy.

TERRENCE
 Ah, the limitless energy of youth.
 (drinks wine)
 Aides need to blow off steam
 sometimes. They're under the cosh.

SAGAL
 But partying every night?

REBECCA
 Can't you do something about it,
 love? Poor Sagal needs her rest.

TERRENCE
 I'll put in a call between courses.

Rebecca makes a KISSING gesture. As everyone eats, Sagal notices the rash on Terrence's face remains red and raw. She puts down her cutlery.

INT. KITCHEN, WANAMAKER RESIDENCE - LATER

Sagal helps with the dinner things as Rebecca loads the dishwasher. From another part of the house we hear the faint sound of Terrence's VOICE on the phone.

SAGAL

Can I ask about the redness on your husband's face? Is it a birthmark?

REBECCA

The rash? Oh no. The doctors don't know what's causing that. Terrence didn't have it before starting work in politics.

SAGAL

No? I saw someone else with a similar blemish and I was wondering...

REBECCA

It could be any number of things, they say. None of the treatments help. I just think he works too hard.

(goes to fridge)

I've been trying to get him to go deeper; maybe talk to someone.

SAGAL

I've been seeing a therapist, ever since my sister passed.

REBECCA

Oh Sagal, I'm so sorry to hear that.

(gestures)

Can you give me a hand with these?

They take the 'Eton Mess' desserts back to the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM, WANAMAKER HOUSE - LATER

Everyone is eating the large puddings when Terrence returns.

TERRENCE

Incredible Bex, you've outdone yourself again.

(to Sagal)

All sorted; we've found you somewhere further out that's guaranteed to be quiet. Get your things together in the morning and I'll send a car.

SAGAL

Thank you so much!

TERRENCE
All in a day's work.
(eats)

SAGAL
What *is* your job title anyway?

REBECCA
(laughs)
Consultant without portfolio.

SAGAL
I'm serious, who do you work for?

TERRENCE
(guarded)
My salary is paid out of central funds.

BEATRICE
Finished! May I be excused.
(stands)

REBECCA
Of course, dear.
(to Sagal)
My husband is employed by whoever is in charge at the time. They always seem to want him.

TERRENCE
I've served both parties over the last decade and a half.

LUCAS
Dad doesn't believe in anything, so it's all good.

REBECCA
Lucas!

TERRENCE
It's fine, Bex.
(to Lucas)
I *believe*, son, that this country needs to be made a success, whoever is in charge. My role involves making that happen. I'm like the King, in a way.

REBECCA
 (tipsy snort)
 Oh yes, you'd like to see yourself
 as the King. Or a *Kingmaker*, at
 least.

She LAUGHS. Sagal looks round the table, observing the three of them, then goes back to her dessert.

EXT. WANAMAKER FAMILY HOME, NORTH LONDON - LATER

Rebecca embraces Sagal warmly, a glass of wine in her hand. Sagal goes to her waiting Uber.

The car drives her through central London. Sagal stares out at the famous landmarks and lights, a smile on her face.

Approaching her Westminster digs, Sagal messages Destiny about her evening. That's when she receives a call: Terrence.

SAGAL
 (answering)
 Hi, did I leave something...?

TERRENCE
 (over phone)
 No, and I don't want you to worry,
 but I've just heard the right-wing
 press are running a story tomorrow.

SAGAL
 About me? Why?

TERRENCE
 I was afraid this would happen.
 Your speech turned a lot of heads.
 You're seen as a threat now,
 someone to be suppressed.

SAGAL
 What should I do?

TERRENCE
 Ignore them. Ride this out. Don't
 let it affect you.
 (pause)
 But there's something else you
 should know.

The Uber moves on, toward Westminster.

SAGAL
 What, tell me?

TERRENCE

Their usual M.O. is to doorstep for comment.

The Uber parks up as Sagal stares at journalists and photographers outside her digs. Unseen by them, Sagal takes in the scene for a moment, trying to psyche herself up.

Eventually Sagal plunges into this gauntlet of clamour. Several reporters TALK over each other at her. One gets close enough to BARK in Sagal's ear.

REPORTER

Sagal, do you think the doctors were at fault for your sister's death?

Head down, she makes it to the door that Jolyon is holding open. As she enters, Harry SHOUTS from behind him.

HARRY

Scum! Bottom-feeding pond scum! Get away from here!

Jolyon SLAMS the door shut.

INT. SAGAL'S ROOM, WESTMINSTER DIGS - NIGHT

Sagal frantically packs her belongings. She looks out of the window, seeing the reporters still there.

INT. MINICAB, SOUTH LONDON - DAY

The next morning, Sagal is in the back seat, bags piled around her. She checks behind the car every so often, nervous they might be followed.

MINICAB DRIVER

Don't you worry, love. You see anyone, let me know - I'll lose 'em.

SAGAL

I think we're okay.

Sagal goes to her phone, doomscrolling the news. She finds the story on a tabloid website: NHS Has 'Questions to Answer' Around Woke Muslim MP's Tragic Sister?

They pull up in a quiet suburb. Sagal struggles to carry her belongings to a semi-detached house then rings the doorbell.

The door is answered by TIFF (30s, upper middle class, immaculate). She greets Sagal with a big smile. Sagal is taken aback by the sheer beauty of this woman.

TIFF
Sagal! How lovely to finally meet
you! I'm Tiff!

She gives Sagal a full body embrace which is tentatively returned. Sagal has gone a little weak at the knees.

INT. SHARED HOUSE, SOUTH LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Dizzy with sleep deprivation, Tiff's VOICE drifts to Sagal as if from underwater. Elements of the house come in and out of focus as she is shown round.

TIFF (V.O.)
My friend Olive's dad owns it;
she's in Dubai right now. Hers is
the biggest room, but you've got a
nice large one too.

Unlike Sagal's previous residence this feels like a real home. The stairs they head up are lined with photos of Olive, her dad and family, all looking happy.

TIFF (V.O.)
He's on a different wife now, I
basically house-sit. There are five
of us but only myself and Imogen
are in and out regularly.
(confiding)
We were *so* keen to have you here.
I'm very aware of our privileged
existence, so if there's anything
we can do for you, *anything* at
all...
(giggles)
...it would really help ease my
guilt.

Transfixed, Sagal follows Tiff into a room that is twice as large as her previous one, with a double bed.

On a table by the door are a pile of leaflets for London tours and attractions.

TIFF
We get a few tourists passing
through. There might be something
of interest for you there.
(leaving)
(MORE)

TIFF (CONT'D)

You settle in, I've got to get back to work.

Turning to watch Tiff go, Sagal stares at her new housemate's flawless body. Finally she snaps out of it, closing the door to discover this one has a working lock.

Sagal takes a handful of leaflets and lies on the bed, enjoying the quiet. She flicks through them, finding a flyer for a cabaret night at a working men's club.

Staring at it, Sagal realises the burlesque performer in the picture is Carmen. The flyer confirms it: Compered by Carmen Alexis.

Taking up her phone, Sagal checks her calendar, discovering she is in London that night. She Googles Carmen, browsing photos of the scantily-clad performer.

Eventually Sagal unpacks her bags, placing her prayer mat in a prominent position on the wide expanse of floor.

INT. SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER OFFICE, PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE - DAY

Georgie brings an endless stream of politicians and their staff in for discussions. Sagal stays upbeat and friendly throughout.

The sequence ends with Sagal speaking to HENRIETTE, an older female MP.

HENRIETTE

See you at the all-party parliamentary group next week?

SAGAL

I'll try to be there. It's a cause I'm keen to support.

HENRIETTE

Once we work out the details, I'll be relying on your vote.
(wags finger)

Sagal nods, distracted by a red rash on Henriette's neck that peeks out from the collar of her blouse.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)

You should start work on your own member's bill.

GEORGIE
 (interjecting)
 That's what I've been telling her.

SAGAL
 I know. I've had a lot going on.

HENRIETTE
 (confiding)
 I saw the story about you in that awful rag yesterday. Don't you worry, they only print speculation and hearsay. I know that from personal experience.
 (sincere)
 I'm sure the health services did everything they could to save your sister.

SAGAL
 They did.

HENRIETTE
 It's a test, they want to see how much you can handle. The buggers pretend to be sympathetic while they pour salt in the wound.
 (leans in)
 But you're resilient dear, anyone can see that...

She is interrupted by the CLANG of a loud bell, resounding through the parliamentary estate. Sagal looks terrified.

HENRIETTE (CONT'D)
 (having to shout)
 Good Christ, I forgot all about that.

SAGAL
 Is it an alarm?

GEORGIE
 It's the division bell.

HENRIETTE
 (rising)
 Time to vote!

INT. VOTING LOBBY, PARLIAMENT - DAY

Minutes later the bell still RINGS as MPs line up to vote. Sagal joins the 'Aye' lobby on the right, feeling hostile glares from those massed in the left lobby to vote 'No'.

The 'Aye' area is sparsely attended and Sagal scans the MPs on her side: younger, female and more diverse. Some of them size her up in silence.

When her turn comes, Sagal taps her pass against the reader. The teller on the 'No' side makes a note of her vote. Sagal swiftly exits.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE, MIDLANDS BOUND - DAY

Sagal is on her laptop, reflecting on the news story about the vote: Bill to Regulate Rogue Landlords Rejected by Parliament. An alert shows on her phone.

She clicks the link and sees a follow up story in the tabloid about Zahra: Tragic Sister of Woke Muslim MP Picked Up Killer Virus on African Trip.

EXT. GARDEN, YOUSSEF'S HOUSE, MIDLANDS - EVENING

Sagal sits with her brother in the twilight. Youssef drinks a beer.

YOUSSEF

I knew it was a bad idea, one of this family becoming a Member of Parliament.

SAGAL

(taken aback)
Bad idea, why?

YOUSSEF

You said they were waiting outside your place. If they come here, or descend on mum and dad's house, I will *not* be happy.

SAGAL

Would you prefer me to give up my political career before it's even started?

YOUSSEF

Not at all, but you're going to have to get a lot smarter, and quick.

SAGAL

What do you mean?

YOUSSEF

You're a minor celebrity now, and you have power...

SAGAL

Very little.

YOUSSEF

...so that makes you a target. They'll be watching you constantly, maybe filming you too. Be on your guard. Act accordingly.

SAGAL

(looks round, smiles)
Got CCTV set up here, have you?

YOUSSEF

I'm serious, sis. Mum doesn't need them digging around in our family history, nor does dad.

(drinks)

They wouldn't talk about it at dinner, but the details they published have stirred up a lot of emotions for them; a lot of guilt.

SAGAL

It's all lies, have you told them that?

YOUSSEF

It's not *all* lies.

The patio door opens and Youssef's fiancée, NAZREEN (late 20s, introverted, obedient) brings him another beer.

NAZREEN

Thought you might want this?

YOUSSEF

Thanks babe.

SAGAL

Would you like to join us?

NAZREEN

(lowers eyes)

Youssef said you have family stuff
to discuss.

(she leaves)

SAGAL

You've got her well-trained.

YOUSSEF

Naz is one in a million.

(drinks)

And she's religious enough to make
up for my failings.

Sagal studies him.

SAGAL

What did you mean, when you said it
wasn't *all* lies?

YOUSSEF

Zahra *did* catch the sleeping
sickness, in Africa, at dad's
folks' place. Out in the middle of
nowhere.

SAGAL

Are you sure?

YOUSSEF

(nods)

You were too young. You didn't
understand back then.

(emotional)

And the doctors, they *could* have
done more.

SAGAL

Mum said she was diagnosed too
late.

(thinks)

But what about dad's aunt? You've
heard the stories.

YOUSSEF

I have.

SAGAL

Can the risk be passed down, do you
think?

YOUSSEF

Do you even know what dad's aunt had?

(off Sagal's head shake)

I do; now I do. Science understands it better these days. This was something incredibly rare.

SAGAL

(persistent)

But *could* it be hereditary?

YOUSSEF

That's not worth worrying about in my opinion. I'll send a link over. You can do your own research.

(drinks)

Right now, we've got *real* problems, and if you aren't careful - *very* careful - they'll get worse. You must know what happens to Muslims the establishment sees as a threat.

(finishes beer)

If you won't protect our family, *I* will.

SAGAL

Kind of a cross between a conspiracy theorist and a Viking, aren't you?

YOUSSEF

(smiles, rises)

I think it's time you got off my property.

Sagal stands too, checking her phone to see a series of messages from Destiny.

EXT. HALAL CAFE, MIDLANDS SUBURB - NIGHT

Later that evening, from a viewpoint outside the café, we see Destiny and Sagal at a table, deep in conversation. Sagal dries her eyes as Destiny takes her hand, reassuring her.

They rise and Sagal pulls Destiny close for a full-body hug. We hear the CLICK of a shutter on a long lens camera.

We move back to reveal the figure with the camera, concealed across the street. He takes a series of photos, portraying Sagal and Destiny locked in their lingering embrace.

EXT. CITY CENTRE TRAIN STATION, MIDLANDS - DAY

Sagal stands on the platform, an overnight bag beside her. Around her people stare at the departures board: all trains to London delayed.

Nearby a shabby STREET PERFORMER hassles travellers, wanting money in return for card tricks. People ignore him or turn their heads away. He grows frustrated.

STREET PERFORMER

(to Sagal)

How about you love? Want to see some genuine magic?

SAGAL

I'm really sorry, I don't have any money on me.

STREET PERFORMER

There's a cash machine over there.

(gestures)

If you like what you see, draw out a tenner. How about that?

SAGAL

I don't think I have time.

STREET PERFORMER

Come on, you're not going anywhere.

(shuffles cards)

Besides, you could do with some cheering up.

Sagal looks pained. Passengers edge away from the pair as the performer fans his cards then pushes them at her.

STREET PERFORMER (CONT'D)

Pick one.

SAGAL

Can you not, please?

STREET PERFORMER

(agitated)

Pick one!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

The lady said she doesn't want to.

They turn to see Carmen with her suitcase and in no mood to take any nonsense.

STREET PERFORMER

No offence meant.
(leaves)

SAGAL

(amazed)
What are you doing here?

CARMEN

Unscheduled diversion babes. I was doing a fundraiser for sex worker rights in Manchester last night.

SAGAL

Oh, wow.

CARMEN

I saw your speech to parliament, you know.

SAGAL

The one that got cut off?

CARMEN

You were really good.
(smiles)
I think us meeting here today might be kismet.

SAGAL

(taken aback)
How do you mean?

CARMEN

Fate. *Destiny*. I need somebody with a public profile to speak up on behalf of my community.

(serious)
The way the laws are at the moment, it puts sex workers at risk; our safety *and* livelihoods.

SAGAL

Really?
(thinks)
My staff have been telling me to raise a private members' bill, but there are so many unjust laws. I got paralysed.

CARMEN

See what I mean? Fate!
(taking her arm)
(MORE)

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Come on babes, I'll tell you all about it.

(sotto voce)

A nice guard told me the next London train leaves from platform nine.

(walking away)

You MPs get to travel first class, right?

They walk away, Sagal blindsided but captivated.

INT. FIRST CLASS CARRIAGE, LONDON-BOUND TRAIN - DAY

Sagal ignores her laptop; enthralled by the woman opposite. As Carmen explains herself, gesticulating extravagantly, we hear audio from Sagal's most recent therapy session.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

Let's go back to your brother announcing his engagement. How did that make you feel?

SAGAL (V.O.)

Happy for him, I suppose.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

Does it take the pressure off you?

SAGAL (V.O.)

Pressure?

THERAPIST (V.O.)

You mentioned your parents were hoping you would marry.

SAGAL (V.O.)

That's just mum. I think she's starting to realise now anyway.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

Realise what?

SAGAL (V.O.)

(hesitant)

That-that being an MP takes up all my energy and most of my time.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

(admonishing)

Work isn't everything, Sagal. Everyone needs a little romance in their daily life.

Carmen is on her phone now, Sagal watching her with puppy dog eyes. The train guard checks their tickets, moving on without questioning the pair.

Sagal looks to her laptop where an email from her brother reads: I'm fairly sure this is what Great-Aunt Trudi had. Below it is a link to an article on **Fatal Familial Insomnia.**

Phrases from the article flash before Sagal's eyes:

- **Rare and lethal genetic disease** caused by a mutation in the PRNP gene.

- Symptoms include months of inability to sleep combined with panic attacks, followed by **rapid weight loss and death.**

- Sufferers report hallucinations, neurodegeneration leading to failed coordination and **vivid dreams escaping the sleep cycle to leak into the waking life.**

- Only around forty cases have ever been reported, but lack of genetic screening means **the true number is much higher.**

Unsettled, Sagal snaps the laptop shut as we hear more from the therapy session.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

It looks to me like the sleep deprivation is getting worse - is that the stress of your new job?

SAGAL (V.O.)

I don't think it's that, no. I'm used to having a lot on my mind. I've just changed accommodation because the noise was too much...

THERAPIST (V.O.)

But you're still not sleeping?

SAGAL (V.O.)

I've been starting to wonder whether my insomnia might have some kind of... medical cause.

THERAPIST (V.O.)

Perhaps. Or your conscious mind doesn't like what bubbles up, while you're asleep.

SAGAL (V.O.)

That sounds very unlikely.

THERAPIST (V.O.)
Really? Well then, why not take
advantage of a perk of your job?

SAGAL (V.O.)
What do you mean?

THERAPIST (V.O.)
MPs are prioritised for healthcare,
aren't they? Like the royals. That
was my understanding?

SAGAL (V.O.)
I-I haven't really looked into it.

THERAPIST (V.O.)
Do. Take the tests. Maybe it'll put
your mind at ease.

Back on the train, Sagal waits to get Carmen's attention.

SAGAL
I've thought about it. Let's draft
a bill.

Carmen smiles.

INT. CENTRAL LOBBY, PARLIAMENT - DAY

The area leading to the corridor with structural damage has
reinforced cordons bearing warning signs now.

Pete is repairing the plinth that the statue of Clement
Attlee stands on. Sagal goes up to him as politicians and
their assistants pass by.

SAGAL
Hey Pete, hard at work as ever?

PETE
My favourite MP! Yeah, those
workmen were supposed to have done
this but they bloody boded it.
Just like they do everything.

SAGAL
(looks round)
Where are they now?

PETE
They'll have knocked off for the
day, lazy buggers.

Georgie appears with two coffees. She greets Pete then pulls Sagal aside.

GEORGIE

You're sure you want to do this?

SAGAL

The laws makes no sense, Georgie. Forcing women to work alone puts them at extraordinary risk.

GEORGIE

It's horrible and, believe me, pushing for change in this legislation fits in with your brand...

SAGAL

My 'brand'?

GEORGIE

...but aligning yourself with sex workers isn't going to get Middle England off your back, is it?

SAGAL

Bit late for me to be keeping a low profile, don't you think?

GEORGIE

Not to mention the chance of you actually managing to effect change is... well, I have to tell you sweetheart, its vanishingly small.

SAGAL

I guess we won't know until we try, will we?

Georgie looks at her. It is apparent nothing she can say will change Sagal's mind.

GEORGIE

Then we're going to have to rustle up some serious support.

(leaving)

Walk with me.

We follow Sagal and Georgie toward Portcullis House. The pair walk and talk while intermittently checking their phones.

SAGAL

I was going to ask, are you able to schedule a genetic screening for me?

GEORGIE

A what?

SAGAL

Like a health check, but for genes.

GEORGIE

That's a new one, but yes. I can book any kind of preventative health care going.

SAGAL

Thank you.

Sagal looks to her text conversation with Carmen. Sagal's last message reads: Looks like the bill is happening!

Carmen has responded with: Knew I could count on U babes. Can get you a comp for the cabaret 2moro if u wld like?

GEORGIE

In my experience, the best cure for working too hard is to indulge yourself with a little play.

(turning to Sagal)

Why don't you schedule some fun too, not just the medical stuff?

SAGAL

Maybe I will.

She texts Carmen back: Yes please!

EXT. FORMER WORKING MEN'S CLUB, EAST LONDON - NIGHT

Middle class couples, girls dressed to kill and flamboyant gay men stand in line, waiting to gain access. A car pulls up and Sagal gets out to join them, clad in modest attire as ever.

She tries to blend into the background, but her deliberately low-key image leaves Sagal out of place amid all the peacocking.

INT. MAIN HALL, WORKING MEN'S CLUB - NIGHT

Sagal stands near the bar, observing the crowd. Performers mingle with the queer female spectators and trans attendees, their outfits standing out against the 1960s décor.

Sagal sips her soda, trying not to stare (even though these revellers clearly want her to). Few of them notice Sagal and, after a while, her eyes lose their focus.

In the **reverie** Sagal sees this club in the late nineteenth century; its early years dominated by Victorian gentlemen, all smoking and drinking while clad in evening wear.

The years pass in a succession of Christenings, celebrations and funerals. In modern times we see that many of the clientele and employees are now women.

As we approach the present, working people disappear with a more diverse influx; the club welcoming the gender fluid and banner-waving socialists; the unconventional and disenfranchised.

CARMEN (O.C.)

Oh, hey - you made it!

Pulled back into the present, Sagal is hugged by Carmen who wears nothing but skimpy underwear. Sagal barely knows where to put her hands. When Carmen lets go, Sagal withdraws.

SAGAL

Thanks again for the freebie.

CARMEN

No problem babes. We sold out tonight so you got lucky!

(winks)

I'm on any second - enjoy the show!

She heads for the stage where a garish backdrop is illuminated. Prominent before the seated part of the audience is a pole.

The show passes for Sagal in a blur of singing drag queens, circus tricks, pole dancing and audience members 'tipping' fake money as the performers strip.

During one explicit section, Sagal spots a couple near the back, the younger woman all over her date. Something about the man feels familiar. Sagal circles them for a better look.

The young woman pauses in her affections to CHEER the performers onstage. On seeing her date is Terrence, Sagal moves back in horror, a hand to her mouth.

She flashes on Terrence's wife Rebecca saying kindly: *Can you do something about it? Poor Sagal needs her rest.* Sagal stares as the young woman fondles Terrence's thigh.

Terrence turns her way. Terrified, Sagal freezes but he fails to register her. She flashes on Rebecca again, saying to her husband: *Weren't you involved in negotiating that contract?*

A VOICE introduces: "**Carmen Alexis**" and the first half climaxes with Carmen's routine. Sagal moves away, unsettled. The crowd WHOOPS as Carmen strips to nipple tassels and a thong.

At the interval the bar is besieged and Sagal has to move. Terrence and his date remain seated, entwined. Sagal soon finds herself on the other side of the hall.

Forced out into the open, Sagal sees a woman in her forties with her phone raised, apparently filming Sagal. As Sagal realises this, a look of terror overtakes her.

Horrified, Sagal flees. Terrence spots her at last, but it takes time to extricate himself from his date.

Once Sagal has left, we see that the woman was actually filming her friend trying to swing around the pole, behind Sagal.

EXT. FORMER WORKING MEN'S CLUB, EAST LONDON - NIGHT

A group of smokers share a joke. They stare at Sagal as she bursts past them. She sees their faces as featureless; all morphing into one, twisted and LAUGHING.

Sagal stumbles, on the verge of collapse. The faces become distinct and look her way, their expressions concerned. She moves down a side street as Terrence comes out.

TERRENCE

SAGAL!

A doorman approaches Terrence and tries to calm him.

EXT. SIDE STREET, EAST LONDON - NIGHT

Oblivious to her surroundings, Sagal pulls out her phone.

SAGAL

(into phone)

Hi, sorry for calling so late.

INTERCUT:

At the other end of the line we see Georgie, watching TV with her upper class boyfriend.

GEORGIE
(into phone)
It isn't late.

SAGAL
I was wondering, do we have access to the contracts for the work that's going on in parliament?

GEORGIE
I think all MPs do, in theory. I wouldn't begin to guess how...

SAGAL
Find them for me, will you?

GEORGIE
I'll make some enquiries in the morning.

SAGAL
Thank you.

Noticing some teenagers inhaling nitrous oxide nearby, Sagal quickens her pace. They watch her go.

In her house, Georgie puts the phone down, looking pensive. Her boyfriend unpauses the TV.

INT. MOSQUE, CITY CENTRE, MIDLANDS - DAY

Worshippers in the washing area cleanse their hands, faces then feet. Freddie and the other men are dressed for prayer. In the main section of the hall, the men all face Mecca.

We see female Muslims heading to the separate 'women's gallery'. This is located in a part of the hall separated from the men by a curtain. They kneel too.

On his prayer mat, the Imam **declaims** in Arabic, leading the **call to prayer**. Everyone bows as the declaration of faith is made. Among the women we move in on Sagal and Maryam.

While they remain supplicant, Sagal sees her sister, manifested beside Maryam. Distracted, Sagal watches Zahra who, like her mother, is absorbed in observing the ritual.

After finishing her prayer, Zahra vanishes. Over in the main area, Muslims approach the Imam, Freddie among them. Volunteers move around the Mosque with buckets for donations.

The curtain is drawn back and Sagal stands with Maryam, watching the men collect their wives and daughters.

SAGAL
Mum, are you okay?

MARYAM
I am fine, my dear. God is great.
(studying her)
Your eyes are so dark.

SAGAL
I didn't sleep last night.

Maryam looks concerned.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
I wanted to tell you mum. I got screened.

INT. CLINICAL ROOM, MEDICAL FACILITY - FLASHBACK

A clinician takes a swab of Sagal's DNA from her cheek.

Back in the mosque, Maryam looks confused.

SAGAL
Genetic screening. I need to know if I have the same disorder as Great Aunt Trudi.

MARYAM
You are not like her my daughter, nothing is the same. I was there for Trudi with your father; I saw.

SAGAL
Maybe not, but there *is* something wrong with me.
(tearful)
I feel Zahra's presence more and more, calling out to me. I don't want to go the same way as her.

MARYAM
You listen to me - I begged your father not to take your sister to Guinea.

SAGAL
She wanted so much to see her family there.

MARYAM

So did you, but you were too young.
And she was weak.

(disconsolate)

Zahra could not be reasoned with;
she wished to know her heritage.
Your father will do anything for
his girls, you know this.

(remembering)

She was bitten by the Tsetse fly,
far from any capable doctors. I
will never forgive him for that,
never.

SAGAL

Youssef said the same thing. But
why? Why was Zahra so weak?

Maryam grips Sagal by the arms, sombre now.

MARYAM

You listen to me daughter. It is
true your sister could not sleep.
She would not eat either. There
were problems, in her mind.

SAGAL

Because of the things she could
see.

MARYAM

(relinquishing her grip)

If there is anything you aren't
telling me, or that therapist you
speak to, then you must. This is
not the time to bottle things up,
do you hear me?

SAGAL

Yes mum.

MARYAM

Your sister had the second sight,
it is true. Many of the women in
your father's family do. It goes
back generations. I have heard the
tales.

(pointed)

No medical test is going to reveal
this.

SAGAL

Is that how she knew...? About me?
About what I would do?

MARYAM

(nods)

Imagine it. Imagine knowing how life will turn out for everyone you meet. The burden of such knowledge.

SAGAL

I-I can't.

MARYAM

(sobbing)

You mustn't leave us Sagal, never.

They embrace. Sagal realises they are now alone in the women's gallery.

MARYAM (CONT'D)

We must find your father.

SAGAL

You have to forgive him.

MARYAM

He is my husband, I am his wife. That is forever.

INT. MAIN HALL, MOSQUE, MIDLANDS - CONTINUOUS

The last worshippers leave as volunteers count the donations. Freddie stands alongside the Imam who greets the approaching Sagal with little enthusiasm.

IMAM

Here is our representative in Parliament.

FREDDIE

We were discussing your future.

IMAM

I *hope* there will be no more developments that reflect badly on our community.

Sagal flashes on Georgie showing her the **Private Member's Bill**, bound with green ribbon and headlined: Review of Sex Work Legislation. She finds her voice.

SAGAL

Newspapers like to print lies about me; about my family and our *community*. Those of faith see through it. God knows my heart.

IMAM

Hmph.

FREDDIE

The Imam has kindly offered to give up his time, should you require further guidance.

MARYAM

Thank you, that is very kind. Come along Freddie, you know Sagal must help the people who voted for her.

FREDDIE

Oh yes, of course. Goodbye Imam.

As they leave Maryam HISSES at her husband.

MARYAM

That man will not solve your daughter's problems. Her world is not his.

SAGAL

Mum...

MARYAM

She has to take better care of herself. With that, we can help.

Freddie looks defeated as Sagal follows her parents out of the mosque.

INT. CONSTITUENCY SURGERY, MIDLANDS - DAY

Destiny and Warren are on the desk, talking with constituents. Sagal stands in a corner, on the phone to Georgie.

SAGAL

(into phone)

Prime Minister's Questions?

GEORGIE

(over phone)

Its time you submitted something, I'll run the text past you. Our question ties in with the bill coming up later in the week.

SAGAL

That seems like a big deal.

GEORGIE

You wanted this. Don't tell me
you're getting cold feet.

(flippant)

Besides, it's unlikely your bill
will get chosen for debate. Even if
it is, they'll never vote the thing
through. This is about getting your
voice out there, showing everyone
what you stand for...

Sagal is disturbed by a MAN who storms into the surgery.

MAN

What are you going to do for me
then, eh?

He jabs a finger at Destiny, gesturing to the constituents
sat before her who are mainly black or of South Asian
heritage. Sagal moves toward him.

SAGAL

(into phone)

Sorry Georgie, got to go. See you
Monday.

(hangs up)

MAN

These immigrants are the problem.
Why do they get priority over us?

DESTINY

They were here before you.

MAN

(outraged)

I'm an indigenous Brit, love. No
one was in this country *before me*.

(disgusted)

These days I can't even get a
doctor's appointment, there are so
many of them.

SAGAL

(intervening)

I'm your MP, perhaps I can help.

MAN

The Muslim! You're another one!

Warren dials 999 as the man gets up in Sagal's face, glaring
at her. Warren speaks into the phone clearly, for everyone's
benefit.

WARREN
Hello, police? Yes, we have a
problem at the local MP's
surgery...

From the adjoining waiting room a burly SECURITY GUARD
appears. He moves between Sagal and the man.

DESTINY
Where were you?

SECURITY GUARD
Comfort break, sorry.
(to the man)
Come on, let's go.

MAN
I'm not leaving until my voice gets
heard! I'm an Englishman!

SECURITY GUARD
Me too mate, that's how I know to
wait my turn.

Warren helps the guard escort the struggling man out. Sagal
sits beside Destiny.

DESTINY
You ok?

SAGAL
I'm fine.
(to constituent)
I'll take over here; how can I
help?

Time passes with a procession of desperate people passing
through the surgery. Sagal, Destiny and a returning Warren
find themselves unable to alleviate much of their suffering.

Destiny hands a furious old woman a leaflet. She looks at it
askance then crumples up the paper.

A man with mobility issues finds it difficult to sit, then
struggles to make himself understood.

A mother gestures emotionally to her tearful, heavily
pregnant daughter. Sagal listens to their story.

A man in his 50s breaks down, sobbing. Destiny passes him a
card for the Samaritans.

There is a pause in proceedings. Warren leaves as Destiny
looks to Sagal.

DESTINY

I know what you're thinking.

SAGAL

All this misery. We can change so little. How do these people keep going?

DESTINY

You've helped many of them.

SAGAL

And sometimes they *don't* keep going. Sometimes they just can't.

DESTINY

Come on Sagal, this isn't like you.

SAGAL

Isn't it?
 (rounds on her)
 How would *you* know?

Seeing the vehemence in Sagal's eyes, Destiny recoils in shock.

They are interrupted by the door opening to reveal dozens of constituents in the next room. Warren enters with the Security Guard.

WARREN

The police are here. They say we have to shut this down.

SECURITY GUARD

Your man's back on the scene and he's brought his mates.

DESTINY

But we aren't finished here.

WARREN

For our own safety, you are. The cops reckon a far-right smoke signal went up.

SAGAL

We tried to make a difference and look what happened.
 (to Destiny, softer)
 Come on.

EXT. CONSTITUENCY SURGERY, MIDLANDS - DAY

Police escort Sagal and the others out of the building. The group are JEEERED by a group of right-wing thugs, including the man from earlier.

Constituents film the scene as the man storms over to them and a policeman hurries to keep everyone apart. Sagal watches, crestfallen.

INT. HOUSE SHARE, SOUTH LONDON SUBURBS - NIGHT

The following Monday Sagal dumps her travel bag in her room. Her phone BUZZES as she sees an incoming call from Terrence and declines it.

She wanders around, the place apparently deserted. But when Sagal tries the bathroom door, it proves to be locked.

TIFF (O.S.)
Just a minute.

Sagal waits, glancing again at the family photos lining the landing and stairs, not really taking them in.

Then something gets her attention and Sagal notices that, unlike before, the photos now show the homeowner and his kids miserable; tearful, **distraught**. In one they are shouting at each other, eyes full of **rage**.

The silence around Sagal is broken only by the soft tread of her feet on the carpet. She moves along the landing to inspect more of these disturbing pictures.

Sagal stops at a portrait of the owner and his first wife. The woman has a black eye and clumps of her hair are missing. Her husband poses as if for a mugshot, a lurid red rash covering much of his face.

The CLICK of a lock causes Sagal to **jump**. Tiff emerges in a cloud of steam, a towel barely covering her gamine figure.

TIFF (CONT'D)
Oh, hey. Didn't know you were home.
(turns)
All yours.

Stunned, Sagal watches Tiff head for her room. Tiff removes the towel before she gets inside, giving Sagal a glimpse of her naked body.

Sagal heads into the steam-filled bathroom. We see that the framed photos on the wall have gone back to being conventionally happy ones.

EXT. PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE, WESTMINSTER - DAY

Workmen stare at the scaffolding covering this part of the House of Commons. Police emerge from vans with guns or sniffer dogs, prepared for Prime Minister's Questions.

Near the Commons people queue to be allowed in. The surrounding areas are a hub of activity with MPs and staff moving around the parliamentary estate.

INT. SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER OFFICE - DAY

Georgie helps Sagal with her last minute preparations. They rehearse the question before Georgie hands her a list of MPs due to speak.

Sagal checks her phone, finding a text message from the clinic: Genetic Screening Revealed No Abnormalities or Cause For Concern - Full Results Will Be Emailed.

Sagal is thrown by this. Georgie tries to get her attention.

GEORGIE

Sagal? You ready? Come on!

INT. CENTRAL LOBBY, PARLIAMENT - DAY

To one side a BBC crew films a reporter talking to the camera.

BBC REPORTER

...PMQs comes at a tricky time for the Prime Minister, who is facing pressure from his own party on arms exports...

Georgie leads Sagal on but the latter comes to an abrupt halt upon seeing Terrence in conversation with male MPs nearby.

GEORGIE

What, what is it?

SAGAL

No, no, sorry...

(focusing)

Nothing, I just. Did you ever get hold of those building contracts?

GEORGIE
 (tight-lipped)
 I've put in a formal request. These
 things take time.

Sagal's phone buzzes with an incoming call: Youssef.

GEORGIE (CONT'D)
 (relieved)
 If that's family you'd better get
 it. You'll be great today, I know
 you will.

She leaves. Sagal answers the phone, her eyes still on
 Terrence.

SAGAL
 (into phone)
 Yes?

INTERCUT:

INT. OSMANS' HOUSE, SUBURBS, MIDLANDS - DAY

Youssef is in his old bedroom in the family home, pacing.

YOUSSEF
 I told you not to let this happen.
 Didn't I tell you?

SAGAL
 Bro, calm down. What is it?

YOUSSEF
 They're here. Dozens of them. We
 can't even get out of the house.

He moves to the window and looks down. A group of media
 people are camped outside, their vehicles nearby. They are
 all equipped with cameras, boom mics and so on.

Up and down the street people watch the circus from their
 front gardens or doorways.

YOUSSEF (CONT'D)
 Mum and dad are terrified. They
 didn't ask for this.

Back in the Central Lobby, Terrence notices Sagal. He comes
 over.

SAGAL
 Wait, they've been doorstepped?

YOUSSEF
I don't know what this is about
Sagal and, quite honestly, I don't
care.

(pacing again)
I need to know what you're going to
do about it?

Terrence is now beside Sagal. She glares at him.

SAGAL
Got to go Youssef, I'll fix this.

YOUSSEF
How? You can't just...
(off dead tone)
Fuck!

Terrence encourages Sagal to come to a private corner.

TERRENCE
(whispered)
I've been trying to contact you.

SAGAL
I'm aware. What is it?

TERRENCE
There's a story about you breaking
this afternoon, a big one.

SAGAL
But I haven't...
(pauses, thinks)
If there's footage of me at the
cabaret, I'll tell them you were
there too. I'll explain everything
I saw.

TERRENCE
(wild-eyed)
Don't be ridiculous, that isn't it.
(in her ear)
It's your member of staff. The
woman, up in Medhill.

SAGAL
Destiny?

Around them MPs move toward the House. Terrence withdraws.

TERRENCE

I'll see what I can do, but...
 (gestures)
 You'd better get in there.

Sagal heads for the House of Commons, as if in a trance.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS, WESTMINSTER - DAY

The chamber is packed with the wall-mounted TV screens all trained on the speaker. Up above, the public gallery is full. Sagal struggles to find space at the back of the house.

The PRIME MINISTER, a white man in his 60s, is at the despatch box. He lists the government's recent accomplishments and pays tribute to deceased public figures.

Sagal thinks about hugging Destiny and holding her hand. She flashes on their clinch by the café window, how they could have been exposed to the world outside.

Sagal WHIMPERS in distress. Nearby a male MP TUTS at her. Sagal notices a livid red rash encircling his ear. She looks away.

The SPEAKER calls on the first questioner. A female MP stands on the government side.

FEMALE MP

Would the Prime Minister agree that his initiative to fix potholes in my Hertfordshire constituency has gone better than any of us could possibly have hoped?

GROANS from the opposition benches.

PRIME MINISTER

I'm very glad my honourable friend asked that, there were many naysayers...

The session continues as Sagal rubs her eyes, looking more exhausted than ever. The Speaker checks his list.

SPEAKER

Sagal Osman?

A susurrant of low VOICES as everyone turns to Sagal. She positions herself below one of the microphones that hangs from the ceiling.

SAGAL
 Th-thank you Mister Speaker.
 (to P.M.)
 I wanted to ask the Prime Minister
 if... if...

She refers to her notes, which results in low JEERS from MPs.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 If he will look at the current laws
 around sex work, laws which...
 which...

The NOISE increases and the Speaker CALLS for quiet. Sagal looks to the MPs, seeing their hostile expressions merge into the faces of those thugs outside her surgery. She gathers herself.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 ...which isolate and endanger women
 who make a living from the
 industry.

Sagal looks increasingly unsteady. The Prime Minister hesitates, then moves to his microphone to answer. At this point Sagal's legs give way and she **collapses**.

INT. SAGAL'S ROOM, SOUTH LONDON HOUSE - DAY / NIGHT

Sagal lapses in and out of consciousness. She is visited by a female DOCTOR who examines her. Tiff and Terrence stand nearby, watching with concern.

DOCTOR
 Looks like nervous exhaustion to me. The paramedics couldn't find anything more specific.
 (to Tiff)
 Let her sleep. When she's awake, make sure she gets plenty of fluid and regular square meals.

Tiff nods. Sagal looks up at the doctor groggily.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 (to Sagal)
 I'm going to leave you some painkillers, for any headaches.
 (glances at Terrence)
 If new symptoms appear, take her to Accident and Emergency.

TERRENCE

Understood.

Sagal shifts and closes her eyes, going back to sleep.

LATER:

Sagal drifts in and out of consciousness. In dreams her sister comes to her.

ZAHRA (IN DREAM)

You are right where you're meant to be. You are doing what you were always destined to do. We cannot give up now.

Zahra disappears, to be replaced by Edward. He approaches Sagal with curiosity before turning into a succession of male MPs, all staring at Sagal as if she's some kind of specimen.

Their faces show livid red rashes overtaking the flesh. The final head in the sequence is a horrifically red, featureless blot.

The blot JEERS Sagal. This noise turns into a SCREAM as the head **disintegrates**. Sagal wakes with a GASP. Around her the house is silent.

LATER:

Freddie and Maryam sit on the bed with Youssef to the side. Sagal's mother caresses her face, reassuring her daughter. The parents eventually leave as Sagal's brother lingers.

YOUSSEF

You didn't have to take such drastic measures!

SAGAL

(wry)

I wasn't *faking* it, Youssef.

YOUSSEF

Maybe not, but those bastards at the house gave up and left when they heard what had happened.

SAGAL

Now I just have to prove the speculation about my health is exaggerated.

YOUSSEF

No, you just have to get well.

(wags finger)

And do me a favour will you? Next time you decide to turn the conversation away from your *friend* Destiny, do it in a way that doesn't give us all a heart attack, alright?

SAGAL

(smiling)

Agreed.

YOUSSEF

You'll be getting a save the date email, by the way.

SAGAL

Congratulations.

Youssef hugs her then leaves.

LATER:

Tiff brings Sagal food on a tray, dressed in tight-fitting gym gear accentuating the shape of her body. Sagal tries to eat, scanning the news on her phone. She finds a photo of her embracing Destiny in the cafe under the headline: Just Friends?

Sagal struggles to the bathroom and gingerly washes her hands, face and feet. Back in the bedroom, she prays then shakily rises before collapsing onto the bed.

Half-asleep, Sagal dreams again. Carmen appears in her burlesque outfit. She comes up to Sagal, kisses her, takes her hand then leads Sagal up onto a stage.

They are back in the club but now it is deserted: **This performance is for Sagal alone.** Carmen gyrates and rubs up against her, culminating in an erotic lap dance.

In bed Sagal writhes, aroused in her sleep.

LATER:

Sagal sits up in bed, her laptop on her knees, looking well-rested for the first time in weeks. She talks to Georgie over a video call.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

I'll be in tomorrow and that isn't pushing myself.

(MORE)

SAGAL (CONT'D)

We need to get my diary sorted before your holiday starts.

GEORGIE

(over video call)

I feel bad about going.

SAGAL

You can't miss a family wedding and besides, I feel much better.

GEORGIE

Steph says she'll have some time to cover for me, if you need her.

SAGAL

Great. Oh, one last thing...

(thinks)

Have you heard anything about those contracts I asked for.

GEORGIE

I haven't, but I've been told the wheels move very slowly...

SAGAL

Give them a nudge, please.

But Sagal is distracted by an email alert from SENDER UNKNOWN. She checks it on her phone and the message is from an anonymous source. It reads: Heard you were looking for these.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

Actually, don't worry about the contracts.

GEORGIE

Fine, are we still going ahead with the bill tomorrow?

SAGAL

I'll get back to you.

Sagal ends the call then downloads a zip of attachments from the email via her laptop. The PDFs inside are contracts for parliamentary building work. She scans them.

Sagal's face shows her shock. She reaches for her phone and messages Georgie: Pull the bill, we can revisit another time. Something's come up.

She continues to read the documents, agog. Georgie messages back: I think that's wise.

INT. CAFE, SOUTH LONDON - DAY

In this typical greasy spoon Carmen sits at a secluded table, dressed down and make-up free today. She sips coffee while curating her social media. Sagal arrives, in a rush.

SAGAL

Hi, sorry I'm late.

CARMEN

No problem babes. How are you feeling?

SAGAL

Much better - I'm ready to step back into the Lion's Den.

CARMEN

That's good. I was worried about you for a while there.

A cook brings Sagal a cup of tea.

SAGAL

I know you don't want to hear this, but I've pressed pause on our sex worker bill.

Carmen takes this in, looking mortified.

CARMEN

I thought you were making progress?

SAGAL

Not enough. It would be futile to try and take the bill forward now. I don't have the authority or connections and there's too much else going on.

CARMEN

Is there?

SAGAL

I'm on the verge of something big and it's taking up my full attention. But once I'm done, I should be in a position to...

CARMEN

Save it. I ought to have known better than to trust a career politician.

(emotional)

(MORE)

CARMEN (CONT'D)

I just thought you were different,
that's all.

SAGAL

I *am*, but I work in the same system
as the rest of them. I have to obey
the rules.

CARMEN

Which means you've given up on
making any real change.

SAGAL

Quite the opposite...

CARMEN

I knew it. When you didn't come
back for the second half of our
show, I knew you'd got spooked.

SAGAL

I'm not sure what you mean...?

CARMEN

Someone like you, coming from where
you do.

(gestures)

It can't be easy, coming to terms
with your sexuality. Or not.

SAGAL

That isn't it.

CARMEN

No? So you're at ease with who
you're attracted to? Willing to
explore your desire, like a woman
who hasn't been repressed by
patriarchy and religion and
everything she *ought* to be doing,
just to keep her job?

Carmen's words have become heated. Sagal stares at her,
thoughtful.

SAGAL

Strange, wasn't it? The way we
bumped into each other at the train
station.

(pointed)

Quite convenient for you.

CARMEN

What are you suggesting?

SAGAL

You showing up and managing to convince me in that way, was it really by accident?

CARMEN

(snaps)

You're not really fascinating enough to stalk.

SAGAL

Aren't I? So it was only ever about what I could do for you?

CARMEN

(rising)

This paranoia isn't good babes, it could be a sign of something much worse.

(gathers belongings)

I hope you manage to figure yourself out Sagal, really I do.

She leaves the café. Sagal watches her go.

INT. PORTCULLIS HOUSE, WESTMINSTER - DAY

Sagal and Georgie attend to business, meeting with other MPs, visiting corporate types and members of the public. Aides and well-wishers come across to welcome Sagal back. She smiles at them.

INT. CORRIDORS, PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE - DAY

On their way to her office, Georgie excuses herself for the bathroom, leaving Sagal by herself. She walks past the closed doors of MP's offices.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

This is not acceptable!

Hearing his anger, Sagal stops at the door it emanates from.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

How many times do I have to tell you?

There is a SMASH and Sagal opens the door. Inside Steph cowers from the male MP Sagal saw in the Strangers' Bar previously. CHIKE (50s, mixed race, intensely careerist) pauses in his fury.

CHIKE
What do you want?

SAGAL
Chike, isn't it? Chike Ude?

CHIKE
Yes?

SAGAL
I saw your name recently, on some contractual documents I obtained.

Chike looks at her, uncomprehending. The bin he has kicked is upturned, the contents scattered everywhere.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
(to Steph)
Come to my office Steph, you'll be safe there.
(glares at Chike)
We can see whether you want to raise a formal complaint.

CHIKE
Now hang on a second. It's none of your business how I discipline my staff.

SAGAL
Funnily enough, she's my staff too.
(to Steph)
Come along, love.

STEPH
It won't do any good, making a fuss.

Sagal hands Steph a tissue and leads her out. Pete passes, acknowledging them.

INT. SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Georgie comforts Steph in Sagal's office.

SAGAL
Look after her.

GEORGIE
I'll bring Steph up to speed.

Sagal hurries off in the direction Pete went.

INT. CENTRAL LOBBY, PARLIAMENT - DAY

Sagal catches up with Pete. Nearby workmen mill around with their tools, doing little.

SAGAL

Pete, hey.

PETE

My favourite MP's back! Sorry
Sagal, I've been busy.

(confiding)

You probably shouldn't be seen with
me.

SAGAL

(under her breath)

It was you, wasn't it? You emailed
me?

PETE

(looking round)

Walls have ears. Come with me.

Pete beckons her to follow him. He leads her along a corridor, past more workmen and into the underrooms of parliament.

INT. UNDERROOMS OF PARLIAMENT - DAY

Pete pulls aside some polythene, guiding Sagal through. She finds herself in a corridor where water drips from the ceiling above. The gloom here is almost total and Sagal
SHIVERS.

SAGAL

I went through the files. I don't
know much about building
agreements, but a bit of research
told me that the numbers...

PETE

Were totally ridiculous. It cost
the taxpayer a fortune, and for
what? A sticking plaster at best.

NOISES ECHO around the passageway. Further down Sagal can see some kind of light. There is the SOUND of machinery in the background.

PETE (CONT'D)

When I first saw them I thought;
ok, if the work we're getting is
perfect, *maybe* that's alright. But
when they turned out to be a load
of cowboys, I couldn't stay silent.

SAGAL

I'm glad you didn't - it's
explosive. Vested interests must be
skimming off at least half.

PETE

Don't go thinking everyone who made
money from it is in there. Plenty
of others have their fingers in the
pie.

(knocks wall with fist)

The whole damn edifice is rotten.

SAGAL

You did the right thing, coming to
me.

PETE

You watch your back love, they'll
do anything to stop this getting
out.

SAGAL

Oh, I won't be silenced.

(to herself)

Politicians taking kickbacks like
organised criminals...

(determined)

It will not stand.

PETE

(looking round)

Do you remember the way back?

(Sagal nods)

Wait a few minutes then come after
me.

Pete leaves and Sagal watches him go. The gloom enshrouding her seems to deepen as she looks down the corridor, towards the artificial light. Curious, she takes a few steps forward.

WHOOSH! A jet of steam shoots from a pipe in the ceiling before Sagal's face. She retreats, retracing her steps out of the underrooms and back into parliament.

INT. CENTRAL LOBBY, PARLIAMENT - DAY

Terrence is waiting for Sagal. He intercepts her.

TERRENCE
You need to come with me.

Intent on returning to her office, Sagal tries to sidestep him.

SAGAL
Look Terrence, I appreciate you coming to visit me when I was sick but...

Terrence grabs her arm. Sagal stares at his hand. At this moment Edward walks by, smiling. When he realises what is happening, the older MP stops.

EDWARD
Is everything alright here?

TERRENCE
Everything's okay, thanks Eddie. We just have some urgent business.

EDWARD
(authoritative)
I was talking to the lady.

SAGAL
No need to worry about me, Edward.
(to Terrence)
Let's have that meeting.

They leave the lobby, Edward stares after Terrence with contempt.

EDWARD
'Eddie' - huh.

INT. HOTDESKING ROOM, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - MOMENTS LATER

Terrence directs Sagal to sit. She sees that the red mark on his face is more prominent than ever.

TERRENCE
I'm not sure what's got into you.

SAGAL
I've no idea what you mean.

TERRENCE

Asking for sensitive information,
stuff that has no relevance to what
you're trying to do here.

SAGAL

Maybe I'm trying to weed out
corruption.

Terrence LAUGHS mirthlessly.

TERRENCE

Good fucking luck with that one.

SAGAL

You know, ever since that night at
your house, I've been thinking
about your wife.

(pointed)

How would Rebecca feel, knowing you
were running around with women half
your age?

TERRENCE

(growing furious)

You can leave my family out of
this, Sagal. For your information,
Bex and I have a mature marriage.
One that allows each of us a
certain amount of *freedom*.

SAGAL

(sneers)

How very *grown up*.

TERRENCE

It certainly is. Not that you'd
know anything about that. How many
relationships have you been in
since you *grew up*, Sagal? How long
before you're married off to some
guy you hardly know, just because
he's *from your community*?

Sagal looks away, wounded. It was a low blow. Terrence
realises this and tries to mollify her.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

Look, I didn't mean to...

SAGAL

Your name's all over those building
contracts;

(MORE)

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 the signatures and points of
 contact. It all comes back to you.

Terrence's face falls.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 Only a couple of MPs are mentioned,
 the directors of certain shell
 companies. Men like Chike Ude.
 (muses)
 It's almost like you're being set
 up to take the fall, should any of
 this get out.

TERRENCE
 Everyone knows who voted it
 through; that's a matter of
 parliamentary record.

SAGAL
 Handy to have a scapegoat, if
 someone calls them out for
 corruption though, isn't it?

TERRENCE
Corruption? You have a lot to learn
 about politics, Sagal. This is
business.

(affected nonchalance)
 It's *all* business. What happens if
 you leak the story? A few negative
 reports in the left-leaning papers,
 a bit of confected outrage on
 social media. Then it all goes away
 again.

SAGAL
 Not for you.
 (clear-eyed)
 I may be inexperienced, but I know
 if you're in the frame for this you
 won't be a safe pair of hands
 anymore. Then you can wave goodbye
 to your contacts, all that power
 and influence. Maybe your time is
 spent fending off the police
 instead.

Pause. The angry red of Terrence's rash is now so pronounced
 it seems to **glow**.

TERRENCE
 What do you want?

SAGAL

Natural justice; for the truth to come out.

TERRENCE

Come off it! I'm not the enemy here - in fact, I'm the one who can get a key group of MPs to vote for that bill you've been drafting...

Sagal looks quizzical: how does he know about that? Then her mind flashes on Georgie.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

...I'll see who around here can do you some favours, get it read in the house as a priority. If not that, how about...

As Terrence tries to think of something else, Sagal waits.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Yes, yes. That would be right in your wheelhouse, wouldn't it?

SAGAL

What?

TERRENCE

You've heard of the spreadsheet? The forty MPs?

SAGAL

The aides were talking about that. Everyone said it's just a rumour.

TERRENCE

It isn't a rumour. I'm still in touch with the special advisor who put it together for a former cabinet minister. He didn't last long.

(laughs, turns serious)

I can get it for you. Who they are, what they did.

SAGAL

I'm not burying the truth about you.

TERRENCE

You wouldn't have to. This is dynamite.

(MORE)

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

(quieter)

Its release would overshadow other parliamentary news that might happen to come out, on the same day.

Terrence scratches the rash which has now calmed to a low crimson. Sagal flashes on Terrence's children: Beatrice and Lucas, LAUGHING and joshing.

SAGAL

I need to see this. Send it to me.
(leaves)

EXT. PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE, WESTMINSTER - EVENING

It is late by the time Sagal finishes for the day. She joins a group of MPs outside in the rain, trying to get a taxi. One barges her out of the way as she nears the front of the queue.

Giving up, Sagal heads for a bus stop near the station. She gets on the first bus heading south. It is packed.

Inside the bus, Sagal becomes aware of eyes on her. When she looks round, people glance away. From outside there comes the occasional SHOUT.

Checking directions on her phone, Sagal gets off at a stop a significant walk from her house. While walking she passes a doorway where a man sits, his head lolling.

Litter blows against her in the wind. Seeing men spilling out of a pub up ahead, arguing drunkenly, Sagal crosses the road without really looking.

A car ROARS past at speed, **almost hitting her**. The horn BLARES. Sagal steps back, shaken. Nearby the drunk men turn to look. She crosses the road, careful this time.

Walking the darkened streets, Sagal's eyes lose their focus as she enters a **reverie**, seeing events that have occurred nearby in the past:

- Gangs of teenagers chase each other while YELLING. Some of them wield machetes.

- A police car descends on a group of black college students, the officers frisking them in a demeaning way.

- A mugger stops a man at knifepoint who tries to resist. The mugger **stabs** him repeatedly.

- A couple have an altercation in broad daylight, ending with the man trying to **strangle** his wife.

The rain pours as Sagal comes back to the present day. She has walked through a pile of disintegrated cardboard. CURSING, Sagal tries to wipe the gunk off.

She walks on, disconsolate and wary of being seen.

INT. HOUSE SHARE, SOUTH LONDON SUBURBS - NIGHT

Sagal discards her filthy shoes on the doorstep then hurries to her room. She sees a message from **Destiny** on her phone: Hey, you coming back tomorrow? We could get away and forget about what anyone else thinks. Let me know.

Another message alert, this time from **Terrence**: Check your email.

Sagal does so, finding a password-protected Excel file. She inputs the password in Terrence's email and a list of MPs comes up: their names, constituencies and contact details.

Beside the names is a column headed 'Potential Infringements / Transgressions'. Some are political or innocuous, including: expenses fiddling, husband took speeding points, illicit business dealings.

Sagal then discovers more alarming allegations. Sitting MPs are supposedly suspected of: violence, bullying, indecent assault; suspected rape, **rape.**

She recognises the name 'Edward Tremain'. Listed against his name are the suspected transgressions: fraud, indecent exposure, **manslaughter.**

Sagal looks away from the screen, shocked. When she turns back to scroll further, it is apparent there are more than forty names on the spreadsheet. The list never seems to end.

Unsteady now, Sagal unrolls her prayer mat and heads for the bathroom. She compulsively scrubs her hands until they are red raw then splashes water on her face.

Looking up, Sagal catches sight of herself in the mirror. On the side of her face is a livid red rash. She puts her fingers to it and lets out a piercing CRY.

CUT TO:

Seconds later there is a KNOCK at the door and Tiff enters, ready for bed in a silk nightgown. She finds Sagal hysterical, slumped on the floor.

TIFF
What is it?

SAGAL
My face!

TIFF
(studying her)
There's nothing wrong with your
face.

Sagal keeps a hand to the cheek where she saw the mark. Tiff helps her up and turns Sagal to face the mirror.

TIFF (CONT'D)
Look. Don't be afraid.

Tiff gently guides Sagal's hand away. Underneath, there is nothing to be seen.

SAGAL
I-I...

TIFF
Your clothes are all wet! Come on -
you need to rest.

Tiff grips Sagal by the waist, guiding the smaller woman to her bedroom. Sagal BABBLES as they move.

SAGAL
I have this sleep disorder. That's
why I'm seeing things...
(remembering, confused)
Except, I don't have it. That's
what the doctors told me.

TIFF
Ssh. Time to get into bed. You've
had a long day.

INT. SAGAL'S ROOM, SOUTH LONDON HOUSE SHARE - CONTINUOUS

Tiff guides Sagal inside, shuts the door and locks it.

SAGAL
My mind, it doesn't always function
like other people's.
(sits)
I see things, you know? Wherever I
am, what happened there, in the
past.

Tiff sits beside Sagal on the bed, beginning to undress her.

TIFF
Let's get you settled.

Sagal cooperates with Tiff while trying to order her thoughts.

SAGAL
I used to be able to control it. Or I thought I could. Now everything's seeping out where I don't want it to. All the tragedy, all the sorrow.

TIFF
Lie down with me, I've got you now.

Tiff holds Sagal who is down to her underwear.

SAGAL
The horror in that place where I work; all the evil. It has to end. Someone has to end it.

TIFF
Ssh, ssh.

Tiff caresses Sagal who trembles at her touch. Sagal shifts, drinking in the body next to her; its pale skin and long limbs. Hesitantly, she returns Tiff's caresses.

Tiff looks at Sagal, eyes sparkling, then kisses her. Confusion gives way to pleasure as Sagal returns the kiss.

In each other's arms, their passion obvious, Sagal grinds against Tiff and MOANS. With a grin, Tiff removes Sagal's underwear, kissing her neck, breasts, stomach, then lower...

While Tiff goes down on her, Sagal's eyes glaze over, but she doesn't enter a reverie. Fully in the moment now, Sagal experiences pleasure like never before. Her breathing becomes rapid and she **orgasms** powerfully.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. SAGAL'S ROOM, SOUTH LONDON HOUSE - MORNING

Dawn breaks as Sagal comes to, unsure what has really happened. She sees her clothes thrown onto the prayer mat. Checking under the bedclothes, Sagal finds herself naked.

Remembering now, Sagal rises to throw on some clothes, finding the door to her room locked. Confused, she unlocks it then leaves. A clock shows the time: 5.47am.

INT. BATHROOM, SOUTH LONDON HOUSE - MORNING

Sagal showers, washing herself thoroughly while thinking about the past.

INT. ZAHRA'S ROOM, OSMANS' HOUSE, MIDLANDS - FLASHBACK

A twelve-year old Sagal sits on the bed, watching Zahra (22) pack her suitcase. Zahra looks frail but upbeat; excited.

Freddie pokes his head round the door.

FREDDIE

(to Zahra)

Don't bring too much - the village is tiny. You don't need to put on a fashion show.

ZAHRA

Come on dad, I've never met my cousins before. I want to make an impression.

Freddie comes in to stand before Zahra, studying her.

FREDDIE

I'm sure you will, my daughter.

SAGAL

I want to go too!

ZAHRA

When you're older.

FREDDIE

There isn't much of interest over there for a twelve year old, little one.

He kisses Sagal's head then turns to go.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Not long now girls. Your mother needs you downstairs for dinner.

ZAHRA

We'll be right there.

He leaves. Zahra sits next to Sagal.

SAGAL

What's Africa like? Have you seen how it will be?

ZAHRA

That isn't the way it works, Sagal. I've told you before, things appear to me in flashes.

SAGAL

But you can see into the future.

ZAHRA

(shakes head)

It's not that simple. This is hard to explain. It comes to me as a feeling. I *feel* destinies.

SAGAL

Will I have the second sight too?

ZAHRA

(smiles)

Perhaps you will. Great Aunt Trudi told me about it. She said it always comes differently, for the women in dad's family.

(takes her hand)

When the blood flows for the first time, when you become a woman - that's when you will know.

SAGAL

(frustrated)

I want it to happen now.

ZAHRA

(laughs)

Don't wish your life away. Enjoy the time you have.

(serious)

What I have seen for you, my sister, is how your life will be a firework display. A celebration of change; change for the better.

SAGAL

You really think so?

ZAHRA

(nods)

Sagal Osman will be a name on everybody's lips. God wants you to write your name in the annals of history.

Sagal looks pleased. She hugs her sister enthusiastically, making Zahra wince.

ZAHRA (CONT'D)

Ouch - not so hard.

(withdrawing)

Be good to mum while I'm gone, won't you?

END OF FLASHBACK.

Returning to the present day, we find Sagal on the toilet, wrapped in a towel. She shudders and convulses with grief.

INT. TAXI, LONDON - DAY

Sagal is on her laptop as the sights of the city flash by. She has the spreadsheet open, reading every line again and again, as if committing it to memory.

As her car approaches Westminster, Sagal emails a copy of the file to Destiny, with the message: If anything happens to me, go public with this.

She closes her laptop, looking to Westminster Abbey and the surrounding buildings. The car approaches Parliament Square.

EXT. MEMBERS' ENTRANCE, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER - DAY

All is quiet this early morning. Sagal is waved through, submitting her laptop and belongings to the x-ray machine.

INT. SAGAL'S WESTMINSTER OFFICE, PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE - DAY

Sagal works her way through the parliamentary records, compiling information about the MPs in the spreadsheet. Steph brings her coffee but doesn't interrupt.

Later there is a KNOCK at the door and Chike Ude MP steps in, all smiles. Sagal eyes him, suspicious.

SAGAL

I'm busy.

CHIKE

I know - so much to do before we start the weekend.

(sits)

This won't take a minute. I just wanted to clear the air.

SAGAL

Oh yes?

CHIKE

You mentioned contractual documentation that had something to do with me...?

SAGAL

(knowing)

Been concerned about it, have you?

Chike LAUGHS mirthlessly.

CHIKE

Not at all. I just thought, since I'm here, I'd resolve any misunderstandings.

SAGAL

Don't worry about the dodgy building contracts. Whatever you did wrong, it's nothing compared to everything I know now.

CHIKE

Excuse me?

The door opens and Steph sees Chike sitting there. She withdraws hastily.

SAGAL

No, no. Come on in, Steph.

(beckoning her)

There's nothing to be frightened of. Chike isn't a threat to anyone, not now.

CHIKE

(rising)

I resent your implication.

SAGAL

It's not an *implication*, Chike. We've seen how you behave with your aides.

(MORE)

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 No doubt you've done even worse
 than anything you inflict on Steph
 here.

Steph goes red. Chike rises.

CHIKE
 I don't have to endure this.

He storms out.

SAGAL
 (to herself)
 Oh, but you will.

Sagal flashes on Carmen in the restaurant; her fury and
 accusations.

SAGAL (CONT'D)
 (to Steph)
 What do you think? That wasn't the
 action of a *coward*, was it?

STEPH
 Ah, no.

SAGAL
 (rising)
 Shall we go and see if anyone else
 needs a few *home truths*?

STEPH
 I-I'm not sure that's a good idea.

But Sagal has already left.

INT. CENTRAL LOBBY, PARLIAMENT - DAY

The lobby is quiet. Aside from the usual workmen and a few
 aides the only person here is Terrence. Sagal ignores his
 overtures as Steph joins her.

SAGAL
 Not many journalists around this
 morning...

STEPH
 Not on a Friday, no.

Terrence strides over.

TERRENCE
 A word?

SAGAL

You can say anything in front of Steph.

(quieter)

I don't think secretiveness is ever good for anyone.

TERRENCE

I've just had Chike Ude bending my ear about you. He thinks you're unstable.

SAGAL

Does he? Does he think I might also be... hysterical?

Edward approaches then, all bonhomie.

EDWARD

Hello, is everyone doing well?

SAGAL

I don't know Edward, you tell me.

(looks him in the eye)

Do you ever feel remorse, for that man you killed?

EDWARD

(reflexive)

That was fifty years ago!

(qualifying)

The British South African Police never even pressed charges! They knew it was an accident.

SAGAL

I wonder why they'd choose to believe that?

TERRENCE

(intervening)

Walk with me.

He takes Sagal's arm.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS, WESTMINSTER - CONTINUOUS

Terrence leads Sagal to one of the front benches of the eerily deserted house, RANTING in her ear. Sagal doesn't really listen. She gazes around the House of Commons instead.

TERRENCE

I gave you that information in good faith, not so you could undermine everything we've been working for. If you're so intent on blowing up your political career, perhaps you might want to consider...

His VOICE recedes to background NOISE as Sagal's eyes lose their focus. In her **reverie** she is assailed by visions of the Commons from across the centuries.

Sagal sees Churchill make a barnstorming speech. Politicians speak in favour of women having the vote. Later, others argue passionately for the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

In the late 1800s, William Wilberforce calls for the abolition of slavery. MPs from around the house BOO and JEER. One shouts: *That's our livelihood!*

During recent times there is anti-immigrant rhetoric and speeches in favour of military intervention. MPs speak scathingly about 'benefits culture' or call for protestors to be jailed. Female MPs are subjected to ridicule or patronised.

Overwhelmed by these images, Sagal manages to force herself out of the trance. She finds Terrence watching her.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

You're not reassuring me.

SAGAL

I need to get out of this place.

She moves past the despatch box and away, followed by Terrence.

INT. CENTRAL LOBBY, PARLIAMENT - CONTINUOUS

Chike, Edward and other male MPs harangue a flustered Steph. When Sagal appears, they spot her and move to approach.

From Sagal's perspective, these MPs close in threateningly; all of them malevolent and disfigured. The only exit not blocked to her is the cordoned off passageway.

Sagal dashes for it, past the surprised workmen, skittling signs and barriers. Once through they recover themselves, reverting to safety protocols by blocking off those MPs who look like they might pursue her.

Terrence comes to the fore, trying to reason with the workmen.

TERRENCE
 She's not in her right mind.
 Anything could happen.

The workmen remain implacable. One points to a warning sign as he blocks Terrence's pursuit.

INT. UNDERROOMS OF PARLIAMENT - CONTINUOUS

Sagal dashes down the stairs and onwards, hearing heavy FOOTSTEPS behind her. She doesn't look back, but we can see that no one is there.

Pete is in the middle of his Fire Warden inspection. She approaches him at speed.

PETE
 You can't be down here!

Sagal changes direction to avoid him, pushing aside the polythene and moving further into the bowels of parliament. Pete leaves his post to pursue her.

Sagal splashes through puddles and ducks pipes, heading for the light. She eventually comes out into another chamber where shafts lead downwards.

The area is dominated by electrical wiring and telephone cables, jumbled together around gas pipes. In the middle sits a surreal sight: connected to the sewage system is a **working steam engine**.

Sagal circles this feat of engineering, avoiding the billows and unable to believe her eyes. She reaches out to touch the metal, burning her hand as she discovers it is real.

PETE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Sagal! You can't be in there! One spark and this whole place goes up!

TERRENCE (O.S.)
 Where is she?

Hearing Terrence, Sagal stumbles, falling against the wiring. In desperation she collects herself then moves on, further into the basement where the water levels are higher.

INT. BASEMENT, UNDERROOMS OF PARLIAMENT - NEARBY

Terrence and Pete are accompanied in their pursuit by two workmen. In the distance we hear faint SPLASHES as Sagal moves deeper in.

PETE

She's gone too far. No one ought to venture down there.

TERRENCE

Someone's got to get her out.

PETE

You don't understand. This whole place is a fire risk. One leak and we're done for.

TERRENCE

Then you need to evacuate parliament.

Pete stares at him.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

Do it!

Pete turns to leave. Terrence points at the workmen.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

Stay back, we don't need anyone else down there.

They obey him. Terrence plunges down the corridor, CALLING out.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

Sagal! No one's after you! Come back!

His words ECHO off the walls as Sagal presses on. A tearful Destiny appears to her, a flashback to Sagal's election victory.

DESTINY (IN VISION)

You're on your way now! Leaving the rest of us behind.

Sagal continues, hearing NOISES all around in this labyrinthine basement. The water at her feet deepens.

INTERCUT:

INT./EXT. PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE, WESTMINSTER - SIMULTANEOUS

Pete emerges into the Central Lobby, convincing security to help him evacuate. The men communicate through earpieces and concealed mics.

INT. CHAMBER, UNDERROOMS OF PARLIAMENT - SIMULTANEOUS

Terrence is confronted by the steam engine. He stares at it for a moment then recovers himself. As he moves, Terrence trips and falls against the pipes.

Regaining his balance, Terrence goes after Sagal. In his wake, we see that one of the gas pipes has been damaged.

Tiring now, the water up to her knees, Sagal struggles on. She is assailed by visions of laughing parliamentary aides; her family regarding her with concern; the face of Zahra on her deathbed.

ZAHRA (IN VISION)

We cannot escape our fate. It was written long ago.

Exhausted, Sagal lists sideways, her foot landing in an unseen shaft. She falls with a CRY and is **submerged**. Hearing this, Terrence rushes toward her.

Outside Parliament the MPs, staff and special advisors gather in Old Palace Yard. Police and security usher aides and MPs out of the Parliamentary estate, including a frantic Steph.

Sagal finds herself in a submerged room. She panics, **splashing** and **gasping** for air at the ceiling.

SAGAL

Help! HELP ME!

Hearing her CRIES, Terrence fumbles to explore the area below her, finding the shaft. After considering it for a moment, he jumps in after her.

Back in the chamber, steam billows. Through the gloom we see that the pipe damaged by Terrence is now fully off the wall and leaking.

Terrence CRACKS his head on the way down but recovers, remaining conscious. He grabs Sagal and lifts her up to the air pocket.

The final evacuees emerge from parliament into Black Rod's Garden. They are ushered across the street by police, joining the aides who watch proceedings, huddled together.

Sagal GASPS for air. There is blood on Terrence's head.

TERRENCE

We need to get out of here.

SAGAL

You're hurt.

Terrence touches fingers to his brow, seeing the blood there. Sagal finds she can move her feet and stay at the surface, unaided. Terrence watches her, deciding.

TERRENCE

I'm going under.

From Terrence's POV we see the murk as he dives down. Terrence feels his way around, finding a movable barrier. He tries to operate it but runs out of breath and swims back up.

TERRENCE (CONT'D)

There's a sluice gate under us. I think I can get it open.

(serious)

Take a deep breath then follow my lead.

The police are now cordoning off the Houses of Parliament. Evacuees, tourists and curious passers-by watch from across the road.

In the basement the workmen listen to the panic above. They look at each other then flee. In the chamber, the wiring damaged by Terrence FIZZES and SPARKS. The gas **ignites**.

Under the water, Terrence pulls at the release mechanism but the sluice gate won't budge.

Fire travels through the basement corridors and upwards, into Parliament.

A **fireball** shoots through the underrooms, incinerating rats and igniting electrical equipment.

Terrence manages to lift the gate and is sucked through. Sagal is pulled after him in a wave of water.

The watching crowd shrinks back as parliament begins to blaze.

Terrence and Sagal are thrown into a whirlpool then find themselves in the River Thames, fighting the current. Sagal makes it to the bank and puts out her hand for Terrence but she cannot reach him.

The current takes Terrence further away. He looks like a rag doll; weakened and concussed, the man's head bloody.

SAGAL

Come on! Fight it!

There is a break in the river's rush. With his remaining strength, Terrence swims to the edge. Just as he is about to be washed away again, Sagal somehow manages to help him out.

They collapse on the bank, neither of them aware of Parliament in flames behind them.

In Parliament Square people watch as the Palace of Westminster is **destroyed by fire**.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, HOSPITAL - DAY

Footage of the Houses of Parliament burning plays on a TV.

NEWSREADER (V.O.)

Investigators are still trying to ascertain the cause of the blaze which engulfed parliament with terrible speed. Six people remain in hospital, although none are thought to be in a critical condition.

The footage cuts to an Archbishop.

NEWSREADER (V.O.)

Earlier today the Archbishop of Canterbury called this absence of fatalities "a miracle from God".

We see Terrence in a hospital bed, his head bandaged, the rash gone. He is visited by his family - Rebecca, Beatrice and Lucas - and smiles as they talk.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Meanwhile pressure is increasing on police to investigate allegations of criminality contained in a spreadsheet of MPs released to the media, earlier today...

Later we see Sagal and Carmen visit Terrence, the women friendly once again. Carmen reaches down to embrace him as they leave.

INT. FOOD BANK, MEDHILL, MIDLANDS - DAY

Days later, Sagal is stocking the shelves at her local food bank. Nearby volunteers bag up supplies for the needy.

Destiny enters and scans the interior, eventually seeing Sagal.

DESTINY

Hey. Warren said you'd be here.

SAGAL

Thought I might fit in a shift before we leave.

DESTINY

(pleased)

No second thoughts then?

SAGAL

I said I'd come, didn't I?

DESTINY

I felt like you were annoyed with me...

SAGAL

Not at all, you did the right thing.

(pauses)

How many is that now?

DESTINY

About thirty MPs say they're stepping down. To tell you the truth, I've kind of stopped counting.

SAGAL

You don't need to keep a tally. You don't work for me anymore.

DESTINY

You're really doing this?

SAGAL

Oh yes.

INT. OSMANS' HOUSE, SUBURBS, MIDLANDS - DAY

In the family's front room, surrounded by photos of Zahra, Sagal talks to a LOCAL REPORTER (20s, female, Middle Eastern Muslim). Nearby a TV news channel plays, the sound off.

LOCAL REPORTER
 Rumour has it you won't be
 returning to parliament.
 (looks up from notes)
 Or whatever is standing in for the
 House of Commons now.

SAGAL
 I'll make a formal announcement
 soon enough.

LOCAL REPORTER
 I don't hear a 'no'.
 (disappointed)
 You realises what that does for
 representation, when it comes to
 the likes of us?

SAGAL
 (frosty)
 It sounds like you're putting
 responsibility for changing
 everything on me. I've noticed how
 people tend to do that.

LOCAL REPORTER
 Not at all, you were already a
 trailblazer.
 (gestures to the TV)
 This feels like a backwards step,
 that's all.

The screen shows footage of the temporary parliament, set up
 in Portcullis House. The MPs filing in are all white; male,
 middle-aged or older.

LOCAL REPORTER (CONT'D)
 Is it any wonder half the young
 people in this country won't even
consider voting? Now we've lost a
 vital Muslim voice who could have
 changed that.

SAGAL
 It's hard to make your way in the
 world, we should remember that.
 (looks to family photos)
 The important aspects of life can't
 be measured at the ballot box.
 Things like being there for your
 loved ones, or the wider community.

Their conversation continues over visuals of...

EXT. BEACH, COASTAL TOWN, ENGLAND - DAY

Sagal and Destiny walk along the shore. Sagal takes Destiny's hand.

SAGAL (V.O.)

Each of us has to make decisions, to safeguard our sanity. If we don't look after our mental health, first and foremost, how can we be there for anyone else?

LOCAL REPORTER (V.O.)

I take it you haven't been following the theories online, about how you escaped the Westminster disaster?

At sunset, we see Destiny and Sagal enjoying the view while holding each other.

SAGAL (V.O.)

You would be correct. As I told the authorities, I have no idea what caused that fire. All I know is that a friend of mine saved my life then I saved his. We will always be grateful to each other for that.

Destiny leans in to stare into Sagal's eyes. As the waves CRASH against the shore, they kiss.

INT. TEMPORARY PARLIAMENT, PORTCULLIS HOUSE - DAY

Furniture in this vast space has been arranged to mirror the destroyed Commons. Through the glass ceiling the sun illuminates Sagal who gives her resignation speech.

In a roped off area, beyond a hastily-made sign that reads 'public gallery', Freddie, Maryam, Youssef and Nazreen watch Sagal. Alongside them sits Destiny.

SAGAL

It has been the honour of my life to represent the proud people of Medhill East. I hope whoever succeeds me can tap into the same wellspring of community, love and respect, I did. One that I am fortunate enough to return to.

She glances across to her family, seeing her sister manifested beside them. In her **vision** Zahra looks well-rested; healthy.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

This is not a decision I take lightly. I am painfully aware of the power that comes with being a black, female MP. I also know that the hopes of many Muslims across the Midlands, and all around the country, rest on my shoulders. It is a heavy weight to bear.

The remaining MPs, both opposition and government, watch from uncomfortable chairs nearby, stony-faced.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

My constituents have asked me why I have chosen to step down. Yes, the media's unwillingness to let my personal life remain private was part of it. But what tipped my hand was this government's decision for a new, state-of-the-art parliament, costing hundreds of billions, all paid for with increased taxes on the poorest in society. That was something I simply couldn't be a part of.

(looks to MPs)

Have you learned *nothing*?

An isolated BOO from a male backbencher. The Speaker glares in his direction.

SPEAKER

Order!

SAGAL

Thank you, Mister Speaker. Before I return to the community that nurtures me, and where I continue to try and make a difference, I would like to address my brothers and sisters in the faith. When we look around the world today, to China, to India, to Gaza, we see how the Muslim faith remains misunderstood and feared. My people are some of the most oppressed in the world.

(pause)

(MORE)

SAGAL (CONT'D)

We will not change that overnight, but society must accept fear no more. We can change the minds of others by changing their beliefs; I've seen it happen. In turn, that will change the lives of those who suffer from prejudice; those brothers and sisters of ours who are *truly* oppressed. My heart is always with them.

She glances at Destiny who gives her a dazzling smile.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

In spite of everything, I remain optimistic. About humanity, about making that change.

(gestures)

But not here, not in this place; not with politics in Britain the way it is. I will waste no more of my time with you all.

Silence before a few in the public gallery APPLAUD. Sagal goes over to her family who congratulate her.

THERAPIST (PRE-LAP)

Was that really the reason?

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE, MIDLANDS - DAY

The therapist studies Sagal who would rather not be there.

SAGAL

What do you want me to say?
Revolution only comes from burning everything down and starting again?

(checks phone)

Because that clearly didn't work. The new intake are only there to make money. That's all they care about.

THERAPIST

I'd have thought being on the *inside* was more likely to make a difference?

SAGAL

That's because you know nothing about this country's political system.

The therapist looks hurt.

THERAPIST

I'm sensing defensiveness. I hope you're not intending to wall yourself off again?

SAGAL

On the contrary, I'm not walling my feelings off from anyone, not anymore. Surely that's progress?

The therapist waits for Sagal to continue. She SIGHS.

SAGAL (CONT'D)

I feel like so many souls have been freed. Maybe they can rest now.

THERAPIST

How do you mean?

SAGAL

My sister, she's at peace. I don't feel grief for her anymore. Not in the same way.

THERAPIST

That's good.

SAGAL

I'm sleeping every night. I have work that fulfills me. I'm surrounded by love.

(makes eye contact)

I suppose, what I'm saying, is that I don't think I need these sessions any longer.

The therapist's face shows shock.

THERAPIST

I don't think this is the right time to be making that kind of decision. It seems like you're in a state of transition...

As the therapist BABBLES on, Sagal tunes out her voice. Sagal's eyes lose their focus then and she chooses to enter a controlled **reverie**.

In her vision, Sagal taps into the history of all that has taken place in this office. She sees:

- Patients storming out in tears.

- A man jabbing his finger at the therapist with hostility.
- The therapist trying to convince a succession of patients to stay on, her pleading body language the same she has shown Sagal.
- Finally the door to her office is slammed repeatedly as unhappy patients take their leave.

THERAPIST (V.O.)
 ...that's why snap decisions are
 unwise in these circumstances. Why
 don't we discuss further at next
 week's session?

Sagal has emerged from her trance.

SAGAL
 You know, I used to wonder if you
 were a little frightened of me. But
 that isn't it, is it?

THERAPIST
 Excuse me?

SAGAL
 You're afraid of every client you
 get in here. What if they find you
 out? What is they say: *our time's*
up?

THERAPIST
 I'm not quite...

Sagal gestures to the clock on the wall. She rises.

SAGAL
 (rising)
 Thank you for everything you tried
 to do for me.

Sagal leaves the therapist with a stunned look on her face, closing the door behind her.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM, THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sagal shuts the door with a satisfied smile. Destiny puts down a magazine and comes over.

DESTINY
 How was it?

SAGAL

Easier than I expected.
(thoughtful)
It felt like the end of something.
(studies Destiny)
But also, a beginning.

DESTINY

Come on.

Destiny leads her outside, into a glorious day.

The End