

DISASTER BASTARDS - PILOT

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EXT. HOSPITAL, CENTRAL LONDON, DAY

Nurses protest as others man the picket line. Many wave placards highlighting their meagre pay and NHS underinvestment.

Nearby we see the Emancipation Hotel which clearly caters for the wealthy. HAZEL (black, 40s, professional) emerges from a side entrance and approaches the demonstration.

As she sizes up the group, Hazel is noticed by a NURSE LEADER. Hazel finds a YOUNG NURSE who appears a little overawed by the situation and sidles up to her.

Nearby the Nurse Leader is interviewed by reporter MIA (early 20s, South Asian heritage).

MIA

The government says there are no further offers on the table, and that your protests are impacting upon patient safety.

NURSE LEADER

You don't believe that, do you?

(to everyone)

What *impacts upon patient safety* are the droves of trained nurses leaving this profession because of fifteen years of real-terms pay cuts...

Nearby Hazel gains the attention of the young nurse.

HAZEL

(gestures)

Do you work here?

YOUNG NURSE

Oh no, I'm based at Royal Saint.

How about you?

HAZEL

I'm not a nurse, I work in hospitality.

The young nurse follows Hazel's gaze toward the hotel and is clearly impressed. Nearby the interview continues.

MIA

What do you say to public sector workers who have been offered lower pay rises than you?

NURSE LEADER

Do you really think anyone can live on that?

She gestures to a placard that details a nurse's starting salary. Nearby, Hazel sees this gesture.

HAZEL

How are you supposed to live on that? In this city?

YOUNG NURSE

I'm staying at my parents' place and commuting in.

HAZEL

You could earn more than that with me, stocking mini-bars.

YOUNG NURSE

Really?

HAZEL

(confiding)

But there *might* be more lucrative possibilities as well.

YOUNG NURSE

Oh yes?

Other nurses look their way. Hazel lowers her voice.

HAZEL

We do physical therapy. Massages. Relaxation. All the training is provided in-house.

YOUNG NURSE

That sounds a lot less stressful than my schedule at the moment.

HAZEL

It is, and the sky's the limit, earnings-wise. I'm recruiting now.

A male nurse looks over, suspicious. He approaches the Nurse Leader who is wrapping up her interview.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

They're never going to pay you what you deserve, not in this economy. You need to do what's best for you.

The Male Nurse and Nurse Leader confer. The latter moves toward Hazel determinedly.

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
Take my card. Give me a call soon.

The Young Nurse takes Hazel's card. The Nurse Leader confronts Hazel.

NURSE LEADER  
What do you think you're doing?

HAZEL  
Just showing my support.  
(leaving)  
Good luck with your protest -  
you'll need it.

Hazel walks back to the hotel, watched by Mia and some disgruntled nurses. Intrigued, the Young Nurse studies the card. It lists Hazel as 'Hotel and Personnel Manager'.

SMASH CUT TO:

Title: 'Disaster Bastards'

Natural and manmade catastrophes (floods, riots, wildfires) morph into footage of business types exploiting the aftermath; signing contracts then building luxury villas.

INT. TOUR BUS, EASTERN EUROPE, DAY

SANTIAGO (50s, Bolivian, coarse) is on the phone. In the main area of the bus, a band lounges. They are comprised of four men with long hair from the North of England.

SANTIAGO  
(into phone)  
I am glad the President was pleased with the goods. I hope he wishes to continue our business relationship.

Meanwhile the band are deep in discussion.

GUITARIST  
I don't understand why we can't play stadiums like that at home.

BASSIST  
Stadia. And we will, Ken.

DRUMMER  
Half that audience were probably ordered to be there.

GUITARIST

They all seemed to be having a bloody good time to me.

DRUMMER

Yeah well, you'd make the most of a few hours off from being oppressed, wouldn't you?

SINGER

(looks at phone)

No point going where we ain't appreciated. Listen to what this bloke's written...

The conversation continues in the background as Santiago steps behind a curtain where their equipment is stored.

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

..."the new Sortie Prigs record, their third, quickly made me hate music".

GUITARIST (O.S.)

(sniffy)

I wouldn't want *everyone* to like our stuff.

SINGER (O.S.)

Not *our music* - music in general. After "enduring" the album, apparently he can't listen to songs anymore.

DRUMMER (O.S.)

And he's supposed to be a *music critic*...?

Santiago rearranges the guitar cases, opening one containing assault rifles. He removes the false front of an amplifier and we see that it is full of grenades.

BASSIST (O.S.)

He can fuck right off.

SINGER (O.S.)

Well, yeah, Keith, he *could*, except this is the only review we've got back home.

GUITARIST (O.S.)

(sulky)

The best acts are massive everywhere: Springsteen; Muse; Rammstein.

DRUMMER (O.S.)

Personally, I like going unrecognised when I'm back home in Goole.

Santiago checks the grenades, tossing one from hand to hand thoughtfully. Then he conceals the cases crammed with weaponry beneath genuine amps.

SINGER (O.S.)

I love our British fans. I just wish they didn't all fit in a café.

BASSIST (O.S.)

How many of them have you had sex with, Brian?

SINGER (O.S.)

Only the women.

Santiago checks the vehicle's location on his phone then moves back into the main area.

SANTIAGO

(interrupts)

Listen to me, gentlemen. We are now approaching the border. If any of you idiots have contraband on you, better hide it now. Do I make myself clear?

The band CALL OUT: 'YES, BOSS!' and scabble among their belongings. The bassist unbuckles his belt.

Santiago's phone RINGS. He stares at the name then answers.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

(into phone)

What is it?

INT. CORRIDOR NEAR HOUSE OF COMMONS, WESTMINSTER, DAY

Politicians emerge from the chamber, jubilant and noisy. CRISPIN (early 60s, grey, sociable) is accosted by the rubicund CHIEF WHIP.

CHIEF WHIP  
You were right, that went very smoothly.

CRISPIN  
I can't recall the last time there was any real opposition here.

CHIEF WHIP  
Swift jar in the Strangers'?

Crispin checks the time as his Parliamentary Aide JESS (20s, focussed, English) watches a clip from the chamber on her phone, headlined: MPs Overwhelmingly Vote to Cut Benefits.

Jess looks up to see the Chief Whip is about to lead a vacillating Crispin away. She intervenes.

JESS  
Mr Clark, your wife is in the visitor area.

CRISPIN  
What does *she* want?

Jess gives Crispin a look: *as if she would tell me that*. The Chief Whip LAUGHS.

CHIEF WHIP  
I'll have one for you, old boy!

CRISPIN  
Yes, enjoy your wet lunch.

Crispin allows himself to be led toward Westminster Hall.

CRISPIN (CONT'D)  
(muttered)  
What's so important it couldn't bloody wait...?

INT. WESTMINSTER HALL, CONTINUOUS

A tour of the Houses of Parliament is in progress nearby. On seeing his wife FLICK (50s, upper class, imperious), Crispin's demeanour immediately changes.

CRISPIN  
Darling! You didn't have to come all this way...

FLICK  
Nonsense, I was only in Kensington.  
(to Jess)  
Hasn't he heard?

Jess gives a shrug.

CRISPIN  
Heard what?

FLICK  
Walk with me, both of you.

They quickly come out into New Palace Yard.

FLICK (CONT'D)  
It's finally happening. What we've  
all been waiting for. Lativainia.  
The coup.

CRISPIN  
There's nothing on the news.

FLICK  
(condescending)  
No, darling. We need to act before  
there is.

CRISPIN  
Understood. Jessica - get hold of  
Lennon Goldacre, would you?

JESS  
On it.

Jess gets no response to her call. She hangs up then checks  
Lennon's socials. Flick kisses her husband on the cheek.

FLICK  
Keep me in the loop. I'm off to  
meet Marian for lunch.

Flick stalks off on her heels, leaving her husband a little  
shell-shocked. Jess holds up her phone. Crispin peers at it.

CRISPIN  
Oh God, he's performing at one of  
those awful conference thingies.  
(to Jess)  
Keep trying, there's a good girl.



INT. CONFERENCE HALL, DAY

Before an auditorium of business people, LENNON (40s, slick, always moving) stands at a lectern. Projected behind him is the legend: 'Adaptable Business For a Prosperous Future'.

LENNON

My message for you today is that change is inevitable. This can lead to trepidation - for us and for our families. But if your company is *ready*, what is often perceived as negative can prove to be the greatest of opportunities.

APPLAUSE. Lennon moves stage-front for his peroration.

LENNON (CONT'D)

Whatever you may have heard, we are not the outliers. Those of you in this room, along with everyone else who *works* for a living, you want to be successful; to contribute to greater GDP and growth; to maximise revenue. That is why we welcome the silver linings which come with inevitable changes to our planet, and the economic benefits that can arise there. We must be bold and see the potential. Get ready to make lemons into lemonade.

Louder APPLAUSE. Lennon pauses and we see that Mia is in the audience, wearing a press badge while scribbling notes.

LENNON (CONT'D)

We have all heard doomsayers with their apocalyptic predictions, intent on remaining downbeat about the future and how it impacts upon our bottom line. But remember: humanity has *always* prevailed. That is what makes us different from the dinosaurs.

(laughter)

However tricky life may become, we *cannot* fail. All through history, certain men and women have proved up to the task of running our economy through difficult times; for the benefit of business.

(louder)

(MORE)

LENNON (CONT'D)

As capital leaves behind the restrictions of nation states, demand increases for our expertise. The coming era will bring unprecedented situations that an innovative community is uniquely placed to master.

(pause, smiles)

A crisis is never a crisis if you can turn it to your advantage. Now go back to your boardrooms and tell them that life will go on, and future profits will factor into their balance sheets! Thank you.

Overwhelming APPLAUSE. Some of the audience give Lennon a standing ovation. The moderator bounds up onstage to take questions as Mia taps at her phone.

We see a textual exchange with her editor: 'Usual neoliberal BS'... 'No acknowledgement of the damage they cause'... 'I'll try and pin him down'.

Onstage Lennon answers the first question with a grin.

LENNON (CONT'D)

I think that's an interesting point, but you're getting onto shaky ground here - we're not oligarchs.

(laughter, points)

You're answerable to your shareholders, but that doesn't mean you can't look into potential synergies. If a president or monarch wants to war game scenarios, we can provide consultation. But to imagine we could *create the conditions* for success, manipulating the media without being found out, well - I think that's crediting us with more power than we have.

The man who asked the question gives Lennon a smug smile.

MODERATOR

Any more questions?

Mia's hand goes up.

MODERATOR (CONT'D)

Yes, the young woman there.

Mia waits for the microphone to arrive.

MIA

Thank you - Mr. Goldacre, I wonder if you could comment on rumours you maintain a fully-stocked 'apocalypse room' near Strathclyde, to use when the results of manmade climate change become too extreme, even for you to profit from?

SILENCE in the auditorium. Lennon retains a neutral expression as he peers out at Mia.

LENNON

Ah, a representative from the press. So important for checks and balances! I didn't catch which outlet you were from?

MIA

I didn't say.

LENNON

One of those online sites that are so fashionable now, no doubt.

(to the room)

But may I say how proud I am to live in a country that *welcomes* a multiplicity of views. This wouldn't happen in China!

(focusses)

In answer to your question, I do not comment on groundless rumours. What I *will* say, is that I'm sure everyone here is pleased most corporations have moved on from the dark days of climate denial to embrace the reality of where we are headed, as a race.

Sombre nods from the audience. Mia films Lennon's response.

LENNON (CONT'D)

How companies cope with changes to our environment is their choice, as it is for individuals. Use the freedom to protest, bring down your carbon footprint, plan to keep your family safe through worst case scenarios - this is a matter of conscience. From everything I've seen, business is doing more good work in this area than ever before.

MODERATOR

Does that answer your question?

Mia's phone BUZZES. She gathers up her belongings and hurries out of the auditorium, answering as she goes.

MIA

(into phone)

Hey, yes...?

MODERATOR

I think that's about all we have time for. Lennon Goldacre, thank you very much.

Lennon acknowledges more APPLAUSE then turns his phone on. Alerts PING including one from 'Seat of Power' with the message: 'Call - urgent'. Lennon leaves the stage.

INT. ROOM ADJOINING AUDITORIUM, CONTINUOUS

LENNON

(into phone)

Yes, I've seen his updates.

(beat)

I'll speak to him.

(listens)

Tonight? Of course, I know the place.

(pause)

Let me call home first then I'll touch base. Bring the ones who can make it, along with your contacts.

(nods)

Get them all onside, agreed.

(beat)

Time is of the essence here Crispin, but that's no reason to lose our cool. We've got this.

(beat)

Yes, yes - I'll see you later.

EXT. EMANCIPATION HOTEL, CENTRAL LONDON, EVENING

Jess enters the gleaming structure, struggling with multiple bags containing a laptop, official papers etc.

INT. DINING ROOM, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, EVENING

Hazel supervises the Silver Service staff who are laying tables. Crispin fusses nearby. Jess arrives, out of breath.

CRISPIN  
Ah, there you are! Did you bring  
everything?

Jess nods. Crispin turns to Hazel.

CRISPIN (CONT'D)  
You said there was a private room  
we could make use of...?

HAZEL  
Over there.  
(to Jess)  
You can set up now.

CRISPIN  
Marvellous, marvellous. Lennon  
should be here any minute.

HAZEL  
Do you want me to entertain the  
early arrivals?

FLICK (O.S.)  
That won't be necessary, dear.

Everyone turns to see Flick, dressed to kill this evening.

CRISPIN  
Darling, you made it!

They embrace.

FLICK  
You'd be in trouble if I hadn't.  
(extends hand)  
I'm Felicity, the long-suffering  
wife.

Hazel is clearly intimidated but takes her hand.

HAZEL  
Hazel.

FLICK  
(looking round)  
Elegant place you have here.

HAZEL  
I'm just the manager.

FLICK  
 Oh, you do so much more than that.  
 (all business)  
 Where do you want me?

HAZEL  
 We'll be serving welcome drinks  
 through here...

She guides Flick into the adjacent atrium. As Hazel moves to follow, Crispin lays a hand on her arm.

CRISPIN  
 (under his breath)  
 You've arranged the *entertainment*  
 later, for any chaps who want it?

HAZEL  
 Of course.  
 (looks to Flick)  
 What about her?

CRISPIN  
 She's none of your concern.

Hazel gives him an uncomprehending look then follows Flick.

CUT TO:

INT. ATRIUM, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, LATER

Hazel works the room, topping up glasses. Some of the attendees are politicians we recognise from the House of Commons earlier. We move through the dining room, into...

INT. ADJOINING ROOM, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, EVENING

Crispin and Lennon sit before a screen, each holding a glass of wine. Jess fiddles with the laptop.

LENNON  
 You're sure this is secure?

CRISPIN  
 It's a parliamentary computer, old boy. Thoroughly vetted by the security services.

The video call begins. Santiago appears in a dank, windowless dressing room. Occasional SHOUTS or the sound of his band SOUNDCHECKING are audible in the background.

CRISPIN (CONT'D)  
Santiago, there you are!

SANTIAGO  
Good evening.

Lennon gives Hazel a glance.

HAZEL  
I'll see how the kitchen's getting  
on - dinner's at eight.

LENNON  
(to Santiago)  
How's the tour going?

SANTIAGO  
For me, excellently. But for these  
shitting fuckers...

There is a KNOCK at the dressing room door.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)  
Do not come in here!

Santiago disappears from shot and we hear him GRUNT.

SANTIAGO (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Your rider is not in here, Ken.  
Fuck the fuck off.

Santiago returns to his seat.

LENNON  
You're near the Balkans right now,  
is that correct?

SANTIAGO  
(peering at Jess)  
Yes but who is that girl, can we  
trust her?

CRISPIN  
With our lives. She's been my aide  
for years. Jessica knows exactly  
where the bodies are buried.

Santiago gives a SNORT. Jess stares at him, unnerved.

JESS  
I can go outside if...?

CRISPIN  
Stuff and nonsense! We need you  
here.

(to Santiago)  
Are you far from Lativainia?

SANTIAGO  
A few thousand miles.

LENNON  
How soon can you get there?

SANTIAGO  
You pay for the transport, I arrive  
the next day.

CRISPIN  
We will, of course. You've heard  
our friends there are about to  
spring into action?

SANTIAGO  
It is about time.

LENNON  
It is. I know we didn't discuss the  
details before, but back then it  
was all very...

CRISPIN  
...hypothetical. Deniable. A flight  
of fancy, if you will.

SANTIAGO  
Now it has become real you need  
someone to speak up for your  
interests.

CRISPIN  
*Our interests, my friend; our  
interests...*

LENNON  
The General has a reputation for  
being a little, shall we say...

CRISPIN  
Quixotic?

LENNON  
...disloyal.

SANTIAGO  
He is intending to stage a coup.



CRISPIN  
Well, quite.

LENNON  
It would be vital insurance to have you convincing him the significant players are all on his side.

CRISPIN  
Players who have a direct line to the UK government.

Jess is surreptitiously looking up the General of Lativainia on her phone. A picture appears of him looking batshit crazy.

At Santiago's end comes an ear splitting wave of FEEDBACK. Everyone puts fingers in their ears.

SANTIAGO  
I must go and see what those fuckwits are doing.

LENNON  
You'll leave as soon as you can?

SANTIAGO  
If the numbers are right, I will abandon these dicks and be in Lativainia by morning.

LENNON  
Haven't we always looked after your interests?

SANTIAGO  
Hmm.

CRISPIN  
Marvellous! Make haste, and let us know when you've made contact with our friend in...

But Santiago has ended the call.

INT. GIG VENUE, BALKANS, NIGHT

The band perform on a tiny stage to an increasingly violent crush of male fans. The singer looks terrified.

Santiago exits the dressing room to barge his way through the crowd. He glances at the stage and gives the band a thumbs up. They look annoyed.

EXT. GIG VENUE, BALKANS, NIGHT

At the back of the tour bus, Santiago shows a group of men the amplifier filled with grenades. One of them hands him a bundle of banknotes.

A TEENAGER sticks around as the rest of the group depart, one carrying the guitar case crammed with guns. Santiago is counting his money when the singer appears.

SINGER

Got a bit hairy there for a minute  
but we won 'em over in the end!

SANTIAGO

Share this out among the boys.

Santiago peels off some banknotes for the singer.

SINGER

Are you coming in? I think the  
promoter wants a chat.

SANTIAGO

(interrupts)

I am sure you can handle it. I must  
leave now - urgent business.

(points to teenager)

Slobodan will drive you to the  
airport.

TEENAGER

I am very experienced.

SINGER

What about the other dates?

SANTIAGO

Cancelled. You have already met  
your targets and shone like big  
fucking stars. Now go and have fun.

SINGER

(looks to venue)

I didn't see any women in there.

SANTIAGO

Do not forget to pack away your  
instruments, nice and tidy. I will  
see you soon.

Santiago gets into a car driven by a man in camouflage gear. The singer watches him leave, dumbstruck. The teenager gives the singer a snaggle-toothed grin.

TEENAGER  
You want girls?

INT. DINING ROOM, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, EVENING

Everyone is enjoying the repast as Crispin joshes with Cabinet Members and MPs. Lennon glad-hands businesspeople, some of whom were in the audience for his speech earlier.

Hazel and Flick stand at the periphery while, out in the atrium, we see Jess with the waiting staff. They include the former nurse Hazel recruited at the protest earlier.

FLICK  
I think I've accomplished all I can here.  
(to Hazel)  
You have a room for my husband?

HAZEL  
(guarded)  
There's always space should Crispin need it.

Flick glances at her husband who is downing wine.

FLICK  
Oh, he's going to need it.  
(all business)  
I'll be here to collect him, first thing in the morning.

Hazel nods. Flick pokes her head next door to address Jess.

FLICK (CONT'D)  
Finish up. I'll give you a lift.

Jess speeds up her eating.

INT. HOUSESHARE, LONDON, DAY

In her cramped room, Mia goes over a story for Strapline Times. Under a picture of Lennon at the podium the headline reads: *Shadowy Businessman Preaches Disaster Capitalism to the International JetSet*

As she tinkers with her copy there is a CRASH. Mia SIGHS and opens the door to find her flatmate JARROD (early 20s, posh, clumsy) carrying his bicycle up the cluttered stairs.

MIA  
 (points)  
 Can't you just leave it down there?

JARROD  
 No room. Landlord says it's a fire hazard.

MIA  
 (incredulous)  
 You have space upstairs?

JARROD  
 Dad's coming round at the weekend to set up a pulley system in the ceiling.

MIA  
 That's something to look forward to.

JARROD  
 I'm heading to the off licence. Want anything?

MIA  
 I have to work.

JARROD  
 It's Friday night, relax.  
 (almost drops bike)  
 I'll see you later anyway.

MIA  
 No doubt.

Mia shuts the door then returns to her desk. We hear the sound of a STRUGGLE, followed by a SMASH.

INT./EXT. FLICK'S CAR, STREETS OF SOUTH LONDON, NIGHT

Jess peers out of the window at the darkened roads.

DRIVER (O.S.)  
 Just up here you said, love?

JESS  
 You can let me out wherever.

FLICK  
 We'll take you to your door.  
 (to herself)  
 (MORE)

FLICK (CONT'D)  
I don't like the look of this  
neighbourhood.

JESS  
(slightly flustered)  
Turn left and, yes, over there.

The car parks and Jess heads for the door. Before going in she pauses and texts: 'Got more than I could have ever hoped'.

Jess sends the message then looks back to see that the car has gone. She turns, hurries onto the pavement and away.

INT. DINING ROOM, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, EVENING

While coffee is served Crispin talks with a CABINET MINISTER.

CRISPIN  
...that seems to be the way it's  
going, Michael. Of course, if a  
vote comes up before parliament, we  
have to give them our full support.

CABINET MINISTER  
(drunkenly)  
Unquestionably. Remind me who's in  
charge over there?

CRISPIN  
A dictator, of all people. Awful  
man. But us Brits now have a chance  
to help the people of Lativainia.

CABINET MINISTER  
Did this dictator buy our weapons?

CRISPIN  
Too cheap. Imported substandard  
Russian gear, from what I hear.

CABINET MINISTER  
To the dogs with him, then.

Crispin beckons Hazel over. She bends to hear.

CRISPIN  
I think it might be time to  
adjourn. Is everything ready?

HAZEL  
I have a suite prepared.

CRISPIN  
And are there...?

HAZEL  
The girls are waiting on my word.

CRISPIN  
Splendid, splendid!  
(to the others)  
Finish up gentlemen, we're  
relocating.  
(calls to Lennon)  
Will you be joining us, Goldacre?

LENNON  
I think I'll leave you to it.  
(to Hazel)  
Could you call me a cab, please?

CRISPIN  
Successful evening though?

Lennon scans the assembled company, all of them intoxicated.

LENNON  
Very much so.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, NIGHT

Hazel guides the group into an enormous room. Waiting are a group of female escorts half their age. The women ease themselves up against the powerful men while Hazel watches.

INT./EXT. TAXI, CENTRAL LONDON, NIGHT

Lennon sees the lights of the city pass him by. As his car enters the suburbs he messages 'Katrina': 'Home Soon'. She immediately pings back a smiley face.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, NIGHT

Two escorts lead a man to the king-size bed. On the sofas, women in various states of undress canoodle with Crispin and others. Hazel ensures that lubricant and Viagra is to hand.

INT. GOLDACRE HOUSE, LONDON SUBURBS, NIGHT

Lennon's wife, KATRINA (late 30s, thoughtful, doting) watches television. Lennon enters and kisses her with genuine passion.

KATRINA

Mmm - missed you baby. Good day?

LENNON

The speech went well and there's something new in the works. How are the kids?

KATRINA

Evie's the same as ever. She's not long asleep. Ben had a meltdown in the shop earlier.

LENNON

Why did you take him to the shop?

KATRINA

I needed some halloumi. In and out - I thought he'd be fine.

LENNON

But he wasn't fine.

KATRINA

No.

LENNON

We've talked about this, babe. Let the au pair run your errands.

KATRINA

Sylvie was busy. Besides, it's not all bad. The school said Ben had his best week so far.

LENNON

That's good.

KATRINA

He's really making progress with them. I hope we can afford...

LENNON

(interrupts)  
We'll manage.

He embraces her then rises.

KATRINA

There are leftovers in the fridge.

LENNON  
 Couldn't - I'm stuffed.  
 (heads for stairs)  
 I might just look in on them.

KATRINA  
 (smiles)  
 Wake them up, it's on you.

INT. BEDROOMS, GOLDACRE HOUSE, CONTINUOUS

Lennon glances in at his daughter EVIE (10) who is fast asleep. In the next room he moves to sit on the bed where his son sleeps. BEN is 5 and non-verbal autistic.

LENNON  
 Sorry you had to go through that,  
 little man.

Lennon strokes the boy's hair, Ben stirs and blearily opens his eyes, seeing his father.

LENNON (CONT'D)  
 I wish you could tell me how you're  
 feeling.

The little boy falls back asleep.

LENNON (CONT'D)  
 Maybe you will, one day.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, DAY

The next morning Hazel, fresh for the day, tidies away contraception detritus before opening the curtains.

On the bed an escort lays next to a sleeping Crispin. Hazel taps the woman on her shoulder and she wakes with a start. The escort gathers her clothes and belongings.

HAZEL  
 (whispered)  
 Did he not get a wake up call?

ESCORT  
 We went back to sleep.

Hazel SIGHS then ushers her out. She stands over Crispin, trying to decide what to do. There comes a KNOCK at the door.



EXT. DECK OF YACHT, BALTIC SEA, DAY

Santiago relaxes on a sun lounger, watching a swimsuit-clad TIMOTHY (20s, buff, callow) shiver in the cool air. Santiago lowers his sunglasses and beckons the young man over.

INT. KITCHEN, GOLDACRE FAMILY HOME, DAY

SYLVIE (20s, Australian au pair), serves breakfast for the family. Evie picks at her food. Katrina fusses around Ben who is arranging his plate rather than eating.

Lennon forks eggs into his mouth, absorbed by a Strapline Times article that describes him as a "corporate lobbyist and fixer with connections to right-wing think tanks".

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, DAY

Outside the suite Flick hammers at the door while a Filipino maid watches her, nonplussed. Eventually Hazel lets her in.

FLICK  
Where is he?

Hazel gestures toward the bed. Flick goes over and shakes her husband. He wakes with a start.

CRISPIN  
What? Who's worming the Labradors?

FLICK  
(as if to a child)  
You need to get compos mentis. We have a very busy day. Jess is waiting in the lobby.

Hazel tries to surreptitiously clear blue pills from the bedside table but Flick sees her. Crispin comes to.

CRISPIN  
Quick shower and I'll be with you!  
(to Hazel)  
Could you get me a decent coffee?

Crispin rises from the bed, wearing only his y-fronts. A sudden pain in his head sees him clutch at his skull.

FLICK  
When you're thinking straight, call the Bolivian.

CRISPIN

Yes, yes.

He stumbles off to the shower. Flick turns her attention to Hazel who is nervous about what's coming.

FLICK

I didn't mention it before, but I'm impressed with how you always come through for him. For us.

HAZEL

You are?

She glances at a pile of Crispin's clothes. A lipstick smudge is visible on his dress shirt. Flick follows Hazel's eyes.

FLICK

Oh, don't worry about all that.

(serious)

We're going to need help in moving this project forward; from someone trustworthy who will continue to prove her worth.

Hazel stares at her, gobsmacked. Flick looks to the door.

FLICK (CONT'D)

You were getting *his nibs* a coffee?

Hazel leaves.

INT. EMANCIPATION HOTEL, CONTINUOUS

Hazel leaves the suite and goes down a staff-only staircase. She is distracted, trying to process what she's heard.

In the stairwell her phone SOUNDS and we see her daughter PIPER (15, street-smart, forthright) on the other end.

HAZEL

(into phone)

Hey sweetheart, what's up?

PIPER

Nothing mum. I was just, er, thinking about coming back to yours early.

HAZEL

How come?

PIPER  
Dad's new girlfriend is being all  
annoying and smother-y.

HAZEL  
(laughs)  
You used to say I never paid you  
*enough* attention.

PIPER  
I could say I've left my homework  
at yours and need to finish it.

HAZEL  
Piper, sweets, I have to work.

PIPER  
There's a surprise.

HAZEL  
This weekend is different.  
Something important has come up.

Hazel comes into the lobby then heads for reception. She  
gestures at the man on the desk to make two coffees.

PIPER  
Are they finally promoting you?

HAZEL  
Ha! No, not that.

PIPER  
You ought to get *something* for  
being a workaholic all your life.  
All *my* life.

Hazel doesn't notice the dig - she is distracted by a  
receptionist who points at an escort from the night before.  
OKSANA (late 20s, Belorussian) stomps over, clearly furious.

HAZEL  
(into phone)  
Look love, we have an agreement.  
Your dad would never let me forget  
if you scarpered now. Wait it out,  
for me.

PIPER  
He doesn't care, he's got her.

HAZEL  
(cutting her off)  
I'll see you tomorrow.

She hangs up. Oksana jabs her finger at Hazel.

OKSANA  
We need to talk.

HAZEL  
Over there.

Hazel guides Oksana to a quiet area, away from guests and staff. They sit beneath a huge television showing footage of protestors being arrested somewhere in the UK.

OKSANA  
I have not been paid.

HAZEL  
We don't do cash in hand - this is a high class operation. You'll get your money through the agency.

OKSANA  
One of the men who had me, he was not respectful.

HAZEL  
I'm sorry to hear that.

OKSANA  
I know him, from the television. He is famous.

HAZEL  
I don't like your tone.

OKSANA  
A big-time politician.

HAZEL  
(steely)  
You signed a non-disclosure agreement, it would be wise to remember that.

OKSANA  
They are easily broken, I know lawyers.

HAZEL  
Immigration lawyers, are they?

OKSANA  
I think it is you who should watch your tone.

HAZEL  
 (patience wearing thin)  
 You might *think* about whether you'd  
 like to go on working here, before  
 you say any more.

OKSANA  
 (sniffy)  
 I can work anywhere.

HAZEL  
 (under her breath)  
 And I'm sure you have.  
 (louder)  
 I'll ensure you're paid in full but  
 it won't happen today. Now, if  
 you'll excuse me, I have a hotel to  
 run.

OKSANA  
 Oh yes, I am busy too.

Oksana departs, teetering on her heels. Hazel puts a fist to her mouth in frustration. The receptionist delivers two coffees as Hazel recovers herself.

HAZEL  
 Thank you.

She downs one, burning her mouth, then leaves. We now see that Jess has been standing around the corner the whole time, close enough to hear everything.

INT. BUNK, YACHT, BALTIC SEA, DAY

Santiago pulls his trousers on as his phone SOUNDS. Before him Timothy lies on the bunk, naked with his feet in the air.

SANTIAGO  
 (into phone)  
 Yes.  
 (listens)  
 A couple of hours, no more.

INTERCUT:

EXT. WOODLAND, ENGLAND, DAY

Lennon sits on a log as Ben squats at his feet, fascinated by an ant. Evie climbs a tree nearby, performing for her father who doesn't notice.

On the video call we also see Crispin in the hotel room. He is watched over by Flick who occasionally interjects.

LENNON

I've got word the General himself will escort you from the harbour.

SANTIAGO

That is good.

CRISPIN

There's no time to waste, Santiago old chap. Stories bad-mouthing the current regime will be appearing here tomorrow.

FLICK

We have assurances from several editors.

LENNON

Crispin will raise the matter in parliament Monday. We want as much support as we can muster.

SANTIAGO

What about weapons?

CRISPIN

This has to be above board and that means a vote. The General will need to be patient.

LENNON

No off-the-record sales in the interim, please.

SANTIAGO

He leads the fucking army. Let's assume he has some guns already.

(snorts)

Unless it is all old shit.

LENNON

Entirely possible, given Lativainia's history.

(certain)

We'll fix this, just give us a bit of time.

CRISPIN

(pompous)

You tell the General the United Kingdom backs him to the hilt.

FLICK

We'll be here for him; all the way through his regime change and the reconstruction that follows.

SANTIAGO

*Reconstruction*, a wonderful time.  
(chuckles)  
Yes, I can be his best friend.

LENNON

Just remember - their culture is very different from ours.  
(to daughter)  
Evie - that's high enough! Get down from there!

FLICK

What do you mean?  
(to Crispin)  
What does he mean?

CRISPIN

People are not free to love who they wish in Lattivainia, I believe.

Santiago studies the naked body before him.

SANTIAGO

It is good you remind me.  
(focussed)  
I must go and make preparations.  
You will be updated.

He hangs up and CLICKS his fingers at Timothy.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)

Get dressed, cabin boy. You are my assistant here. Nothing more.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, DAY

FLICK

That's a very good angle: gay rights. We can play that one up.

CRISPIN

*If* the General plays ball.

FLICK

He'll sing our tune, once we start arming him.

Jess KNOCKS then opens the door. Crispin beckons her inside. Flick picks up her husband's phone.

CRISPIN  
 You're here - good.  
 (to Flick)  
 What time are we due at your  
 parents'?

FLICK  
 We leave very soon.

Flick scrolls through Crispin's contacts, finding Hazel's details. She sends the information to her own phone.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE, ENGLAND, DAY

Lennon returns, holding Ben in his arms who is enthralled by the patterns on a leaf. Evie slumps along behind them.

Inside, Katrina helps get their wellies off. Evie rushes off to sulk. Ben remains transfixed, cross-legged near the door.

KATRINA  
 (calling)  
 Evie! Wash up, please!  
 (to Lennon)  
 Thanks for taking them out.

LENNON  
 Being with all of you, it's the  
 best part of my day.

Katrina kisses him with feeling.

LENNON (CONT'D)  
 You don't have to thank me, you  
 know. I like being present.

KATRINA  
 (rueful smile)  
 What time are you off?

LENNON  
 After lunch.

KATRINA  
 (to Ben)  
 Alright young man, let's get you  
 ready.



EXT./INT. LENNON'S CAR, OUTSKIRTS OF LONDON

Lennon drives west, into Hampshire. He is dressed in a suit and listens to a business-related podcast.

He arrives at a conference centre connected to an airport. Lennon flashes an entry pass and is directed to a busy car park.

INT. EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE CENTRE, HAMPSHIRE, DAY

We pan over stalls for high-tech companies: aerospace contractors for the military, defence suppliers and so on, all pushing their wares.

Lennon weaves between stalls, acknowledging those he knows while evading others. He reaches a stall that isn't obvious about what it sells.

Here we see images of industrial machinery, aircraft carriers and the like, all under a banner for 'British Systems Solutions'. A YOUNG WOMAN (20s, perky) approaches.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hi there! Would you like to know more about BSS?

LENNON

Always. Right now, I was wondering if Terence was around?

YOUNG WOMAN

Terence?

There is CRASHING from behind the display followed by RAUCOUS LAUGHTER as a shambling man appears. This is TERRY (60s, good humoured, dishevelled).

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh, you mean Mr. Worsthorne!

TERRY

Lennon Goldacre! You made it!

LENNON

(looks round)  
Wouldn't have missed this, Terry.

Terry watches the young woman leave to accost others.

TERRY

Walk with me - there are men you need to meet.

We follow the pair between exhibits, hearing their conversation amid the conference hall's HUBBUB.

LENNON

If Crispin gets the commons on board, there will be a big order coming. We'll need to act fast.

TERRY

Splendid, but I won't count my chickens just yet. They tried to put it out to tender before!

LENNON

That won't happen. Last time a few ministers had shares in your rivals.

TERRY

Bloody foreign firms, I'll bet!

LENNON

The rebels will only want to buy British, trust me on that. My man is with the General right now and he's very convincing.

TERRY

You know, I despise the whiners who say this country doesn't manufacture anything anymore! They never mention our artillery!

(laughs)

LENNON

And we'd like to keep it that way.

TERRY

(needy)

Will the General need our clusterbombs, do you think? They haven't been very popular lately.

LENNON

Everyone knows your clusterbombs are the best in the world, Terry. If he wants that kind of firepower, he'll come to you.

TERRY

Like I always say: it isn't the clusterbombs that do the damage, it's the men who launch them.

(laughs raucously)

LENNON

It would be wise to remain low-key.  
Talk only of operational and  
military support.

Terry taps a temple to show he understands.

LENNON (CONT'D)

I've had one of those online news  
outlets on my back. They're getting  
inside information from somewhere.

TERRY

Oh, nobody pays attention to that.  
(gestures)  
Here's the fellow. A new name in  
fighter jets but he's going to be  
big.

More LAUGHTER as Lennon is introduced to a man in a suit.  
They exchange pleasantries as we move back to the BSS stall.

Here the young woman chats with someone her own age now.  
Dressed formally and with her appearance changed from before,  
Mia is gregarious; pointing and asking about the exhibits.

EXT. GARDEN PARTY, COUNTRY MANSION, SUFFOLK, DAY

Standing apart from the crowd and clearly hungover, Crispin  
surveys the affluent attendees. He takes a flute of champagne  
from a passing tray, downs it then winces.

Nearby Flick presses the flesh with her aristocratic guests,  
playing hostess alongside her mother DIANA (late 70s,  
upfront, unapologetic).

Crispin checks his phone, seeing a message from Hazel:  
'Problem with one of the girls from last night. I am sorting  
but your friends need to behave themselves in future'.

Crispin SIGHS, grabs another glass then joins his wife who is  
chatting with Jarrod and his mother. Jarrod wears a full  
tuxedo today and shifts awkwardly.

FLICK

Oh yes, Jess is marvellous. We  
couldn't do any of it without her.

JARROD'S MOTHER

Jarrod was at Cambridge with  
Jessica! Couldn't you find anything  
for him?

JARROD  
 (blushing)  
 Mother!

DIANA inserts herself into the conversation.

DIANA  
 I'm sure he's perfectly happy where  
 he is - where is that, by the way?

JARROD  
 (mumbled)  
 In the city.

JARROD'S MOTHER  
 He works for one of the 'big four'  
 accountants.

NIGEL (O.S.)  
 An excellent place to start one's  
 career.

Flick's father NIGEL (early 80s, patrician, virile) appears  
 to put his arm around Crispin.

NIGEL (CONT'D)  
 Welcome son-in-law, so glad you  
 could make it.  
 (to everyone)  
 We'll be moving into the marquee  
 now where food will be served!

INT. MARQUEE, GROUNDS OF COUNTRY HOUSE, DAY

Flick and Crispin sit opposite her parents. Jarrod and his  
 mother are further down the table, within earshot.

As the food is served Flick messages Hazel: 'Flick here. Are  
 you available to meet soon? Just you and I.'

DIANA  
 Put your bloody phone down, love.

FLICK  
 (sighs, does so)  
 Yes mother.

Crispin and Nigel grin. The latter addresses his son-in-law.

NIGEL  
 That inquiry sailed a bit close to  
 the wind for you, didn't it?

FLICK  
I'll have you know daddy, my  
husband came out of it as clean as  
a whistle.

NIGEL  
That isn't what the Telegraph said.

FLICK  
Others in his party were forced to  
resign, not Crispin.

NIGEL  
You can tell a lot about a man from  
the company he keeps.

CRISPIN  
(slighted)  
Running this country can leave you  
with strange bedfellows.

DIANA  
How *is* your friend Dominic?

CRISPIN  
He started a consultancy.

FLICK  
Raking it in, by all accounts.

NIGEL  
You see, *that* I understand. But  
what on earth is a 'Minister  
Without Portfolio'?

CRISPIN  
(quiet)  
I exercise *soft power*.

NIGEL  
Perhaps you should *stiffen up* a bit  
then.

(chuckles)  
Some of those ministers you were  
friendly with have made millions!

CRISPIN  
Should I end up doing community  
service like them too?

NIGEL  
There's plenty of litter to collect  
around here.  
(laughs)

DIANA  
Nigel thinks there was room for a  
little more nous, that's all.

FLICK  
Oh really, mother?

CRISPIN  
(warning)  
Love.

FLICK  
It just so happens, Crispin's  
working on a project right now that  
makes the income from V.I.P. Lanes  
look like so much budgie feed.

Nearby Jarrod's attention focusses on the conversation.

DIANA  
Oh yes, do tell?

FLICK  
He'll be raising the matter  
publicly, soon enough.

CRISPIN  
Felicity, please!

NIGEL  
Connected to those rumblings in  
Europe, is it?

CRISPIN  
How on earth do you know...?

NIGEL  
(interrupting)  
Good on you. Perhaps you can raise  
some real cash from this political  
lark at last.

FLICK  
Daddy!

A queasy-looking Crispin rises.

CRISPIN  
If you'll excuse me. Bathroom.

He departs. DIANA admonishes her husband who remains amused.  
Jarrod excuses himself from the table.

EXT. PORTALOO AREA, GARDEN PARTY, DAY

Unpleasant NOISES issue from the locked toilet. Jarrod stands outside it, on his phone.

JARROD  
 (into phone)  
 Yes, he did. Early next week, by  
 the sound of it.

Crispin is now clearly being sick.

JARROD (CONT'D)  
 I'm not comfortable with any of  
 this. They're friends of my family.

We hear the VOICE on the other end grow more exercised. Jarrod turns the volume down.

JARROD (CONT'D)  
 (into phone)  
 He's with me now. In a fashion.

A GROAN comes from the toilet, followed by the sound of Crispin giving himself a pep TALK.

CRISPIN (O.S.)  
 That's it. All the bad stuff's out  
 now. No one will know. Get back out  
 there, Crispin boy.

JARROD  
 What do you want me to ask? He's in  
 no fit state...

The door UNLOCKS and Jarrod hangs up. Crispin steps out gingerly. There is a chunk of sick on his tie.

CRISPIN  
 Wouldn't make a habit of hanging  
 around lavatories if I were you.

JARROD  
 (gestures at tie)  
 You've got something...

CRISPIN  
 (wiping it off)  
 Thank you young man. I hope you  
 didn't try the fish.

Crispin ambles off. Unthinkingly, Jarrod goes into the cubicle then immediately comes back out, looking unwell.

EXT. HARBOUR, LATIVAINIA, DAY

While his yacht is secured, Santiago watches from the upper deck. A fleet of official cars and army vehicles descend on the harbour. He disembarks to meet them.

EXT. DOCK, LATIVAINIA, DAY

Santiago and Timothy approach the lead car where the GENERAL waits, smiling. He is dressed in full military regalia and can be no more than five feet tall.

Santiago tries not to loom over him. The general blows cigarillo smoke their way and Timothy COUGHS.

SANTIAGO

(annoyed)

Be quiet.

TIMOTHY

I've got... chk... asthma.

(chokes)

GENERAL

(stentorian)

Your helper should stay on the boat if his health is suspect.

SANTIAGO

(shocked)

You speak English?

GENERAL

I learned it just for your visit.

(pause, cracks up)

Not really. I am - what do they say? - fucking with you.

SANTIAGO

(false)

Ha ha!

Timothy tries to LAUGH too but ends up COUGHING again. The General blows more smoke in his eyes.

GENERAL

I am the master of seven languages.

Santiago recovers himself to shake the General's hand.

SANTIAGO

Very glad to meet you General, we have much to discuss.



GENERAL

Yes, but this is Saturday night.  
 What does my guest do for fun?  
 (studies Santiago)  
 What type of woman do you prefer? I  
 am all for tall blondes.

SANTIAGO

(looks to young man)  
 I'm ah... married.

GENERAL

(looks)  
 Then where is your ring?  
 (smiles)  
 I know a ladies man when I see one.  
 We will get you a variety of girls.

The General extinguishes his cigarillo and gestures to the car. Santiago gets in while addressing Timothy.

SANTIAGO

Perhaps you *should* stay here.  
 (points to yacht)  
 Take good care of her...

A soldier SLAMS the door shut, silencing him.

INT./EXT. GENERAL'S CAR, LATIVAINIA, NIGHT

The city centre is lit up and modern-looking. In the back seat the General is dwarfed by Santiago. The General offers his guest drinks from the minibar.

GENERAL

Cognac? Tequila? Absinthe?

SANTIAGO

(not keen)  
 Could I have a small port?

GENERAL

Excellent choice.

The General pours him a full glass then makes himself a disgusting concoction. Santiago stares out of the window.

SANTIAGO

This is a beautiful country.

GENERAL

Yes, such a shame what must happen  
 to it.

(MORE)

GENERAL (CONT'D)

(drinks, shudders)

But the people know any civil war will be for their own good. A few hours ago they lined these streets, demanding an end to our lying President.

SANTIAGO

They did? Of course they did.

GENERAL

The momentum is with us, my friend. Tomorrow we oust a corrupt regime that has oppressed us for too long.

(drinks)

I am pleased you will be here to see it.

SANTIAGO

It's happening tomorrow?

INT. STRAPLINE TIMES OFFICE, DALSTON, LONDON, DAY

This online news outlet occupies an office shared with fashionable marketing companies. Their hipster staff have all clocked off early to play games while drinking craft beers.

Mia sits at her desk, on a video call. We cannot see her interlocutor.

MIA

...they don't know what's going to hit them. It could happen tonight.

(pause)

Jarrod said they expect it to be very lucrative - he couldn't get much more.

(pause)

It's a shame you weren't there.

(tired)

My editor wants me to post reaction to events all weekend. Engagement levels could be huge.

(listens)

Tell me later - I need to focus on the money now. They want you ready first thing Monday?

(smiles)

It's so great you're embedded. We couldn't do this without you.

(reassuring)

(MORE)

MIA (CONT'D)

I understand the risks are greater for you, we just have to keep our eye on the big picture and - OW!

A stray ping pong ball hits Mia in the face.

HIPSTER (O.S.)

Sorry.

MIA

(to herself)

Fuck's sake.

(to screen)

Gotta go. Later.

Mia hangs up to tinker with a webpage bearing the headline: 'The Cabinet Minister, The Businessman and The Arms Dealer'.

INT. CAFÉ, CONFERENCE HALL, DAY

Lennon rises to shake the hand of the man he has been talking with. As the man leaves Lennon's phone SOUNDS.

LENNON

(into phone)

How are things progressing?

INTERCUT:

INT. BARRACKS, LATIVAINIA, NIGHT

Santiago lies on a bed in a simple military room. He has a coffee in one hand and his phone in the other. Something insane is playing on the small TV before him.

SANTIAGO

(into phone)

The General is tiny. He is like a little toy man.

LENNON

Small man, big plans. You managed to get through to him?

SANTIAGO

I believe so. He gets drunk very easily.

(studies TV)

This is a strange country. I don't think anyone knows what will happen next.

LENNON  
The coup. The coup is going to  
happen next.

SANTIAGO  
Yes, and I will be here for that.  
Did you know this?

LENNON  
(evasive)  
I wasn't sure. Can't you leave in  
the morning?

SANTIAGO  
He says the tanks roll in at dawn.

LENNON  
Oh.

SANTIAGO  
I hope the tiny bastard has sobered  
up by then.  
(drinks, grimaces)  
The coffee here is a fucking joke.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

SANTIAGO (CONT'D)  
That's probably him now.

LENNON  
He trusts you though?

SANTIAGO  
So long as what I tell him turns  
out to be true, perhaps he does.  
(pointed)  
You and the politicians, you must  
come through on this.

LENNON  
I'm doing everything in my power to  
make that happen.

There is a louder KNOCK.

SANTIAGO  
You had better. I must go now.  
(rises)

LENNON  
I'm sure you'll be safe, stick  
close to the General and...

But Santiago has hung up. Lennon hurries out of the conference centre.

INT. BARRACKS ROOM, LATIVAINIA, NIGHT

Santiago opens the door to find two seductively-dressed SEX WORKERS. One is Eastern European and speaks English, the other is Senegalese and doesn't. Santiago's face falls.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER  
Can we come in?

SANTIAGO  
I'm very busy.

The women peer into the room where nothing is happening.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER  
The General wants us to make your night more *exciting*.

SANTIAGO  
That is very thoughtful of him.

They try to caress Santiago but he recoils.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER  
Look, we are here to do a job. If the general finds out we have not done it, he won't be happy.

SANTIAGO  
I am extremely religious.

She points to a flaming demon inked on Santiago's arm.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER  
Is that a religious tattoo?

The African Sex Worker WHISPERS in her colleague's ear.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER (CONT'D)  
Mbenga thinks you are gay.

Santiago looks both appalled and found out. The women read his face.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER (CONT'D)  
(recovering the situation)  
But I say you cannot be gay, because you know what they do to homosexuals here, and you would not visit if...

Santiago interrupts her by ushering them inside.

SANTIAGO

In - in!

He checks the corridor, sees no one, then shuts the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS ROOM, LATIVAINIA, LATER

The trio are squashed onto the single bed like children having a sleepover. They eat snacks and watch something insane on TV featuring people in animal costumes.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER

Jesus God, Lativainian TV is shit.

SANTIAGO

You should be proud of your culture.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER

I am Slovakian, you daft twat.

SANTIAGO

Ah, I...

EASTERN EUROPEAN SEX WORKER

(pats his cheek)

Do not worry. We will tell the general you forced your *pohlavi* into our holes, again and again.

She makes an obscene hand gesture. The Senegalese Sex Worker joins in, LAUGHING. Santiago looks uncomfortable.

INT. HOUSESHARE, LONDON, DAY

Mia and Jarrod watch the news on television. They see footage of tanks on the street and clashes between security forces, the army and civilians on both sides.

NEWSREADER (V.O.)

In the Lativainian capital this morning running battles were fought between those who back the insurgency and guards loyal to the ruling regime.

We see a shot of the Presidential Palace surrounded by military forces. In the background GUNFIRE can be heard. A cloud of smoke rises from a nearby EXPLOSION.

NEWSREADER (V.O.)

Long-time ruler of Lativainia, Alexander Klimovich, is holed up in the Presidential palace with his inner circle. Journalists on the ground believe it is only a matter of time before he is deposed, such is the depth of feeling against the thirty-year of dictatorship.

The footage cuts to the General in a war room, holding a press conference. He appears to be the same height as the soldiers flanking him, so must be standing on something.

GENERAL

We wish to bring democracy to the long-suffering Lativainians. We now look to our friends and allies around the world to help us embark on this journey toward liberation.

(smiles)

In the spirit of unity, I extend the hand of peace to outgoing President Klimovich and assure him that, should he surrender peacefully, he will not be harmed before his trial...

MIA (O.S.)

...where he will be found guilty and put to death.

On the TV the General stumbles and almost falls off the platform. The soldiers steady him. Jarrod watches, agog.

JARROD

Did Crispin and that other guy make this happen?

MIA

Not exactly, but they're looking to exploit it.

INT. CRISPIN'S OFFICE, HOUSE OF COMMONS, DAY

In a cramped, paper-strewn room, Crispin crosses out sections of a draft speech and makes notes while TALKING to himself.

We see a newspaper nearby that features a photo of the Latvian President below the headline: Kilmovich Must Go!

There is a KNOCK at the door and Jess enters.

JESS  
They're heading into the chamber.

CRISPIN  
Two minutes.

Sweating profusely, Crispin makes a final correction then hands the crumpled paper to her.

CRISPIN (CONT'D)  
See if this makes sense to you.

Jess squints at his terrible handwriting.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS, DAY

Crispin stands at the despatch box, finishing his speech. He is watched by a full Commons, including the SPEAKER and a SHADOW MINISTER.

CRISPIN  
...and that is why, Mr. Speaker, the government will today put forward an emergency motion, to supply armaments and logistical support to the incoming government of Lativainia, along with aid for those who have suffered for too long under the regime of Klimovich and his murderous thugs.

Crispin sits to CHEERS from the government benches. The speaker indicates his opposition counterpart should rise.

SHADOW MINISTER  
After thirty long years I agree that it is time Lativainians had a say in their own destiny and live their lives free from oppression. His Majesty's opposition will not stand in their way. We vote with the government on this.

FLICK (O.C.)  
Yes!



## SHADOW MINISTER

Although we *will* require assurances as to how the eight hundred million will be spent.

Crispin and his fellow cabinet ministers JEER. Other MPs raise their hands and are then called upon to speak.

INT. CONSERVATORY, COUNTRY HOUSE, CORNWALL, DAY

In her West Country property, Flick watches developments while surrounded by Labradors. A SCOTTISH MP makes her point.

## SCOTTISH MP

We will *not* be voting for this motion! How do we even know the President is being deposed? Shouldn't we wait until the dust has settled?

## FLICK (O.C.)

Oh, pish and tosh!

## CRISPIN

(rising)

That is precisely why we must act quickly, to ensure the UK possesses influence in this fast-changing political landscape. As I'm sure the honourable lady will appreciate, without British assistance, we run the risk of the dictator Klimovich clinging to power for *another* three decades!

CHEERS. The speaker takes a question from an older Member of Parliament. Captioned onscreen is: 'Independent MP'.

## INDEPENDENT MP

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was wondering how we can possibly be sure the head of the Lativainian army will be any better for ordinary people than their previous ruler? What guarantees do we have that similar human rights abuses won't happen under the new regime, and what is the timescale for implementing free and fair elections?

(pointed)

(MORE)

## INDEPENDENT MP (CONT'D)

I only ask because, historically,  
installing a general as head of  
state has never gone very well.

## FLICK (O.C.)

Piss off you silly old Marxist!  
We're going to win by a landslide!

Flick closes the window then goes to WhatsApp. She messages 'Jessica': 'When his nibs leaves the Commons later, let me know where he goes'. Jess messages back: 'ok'.

Flick goes to the window where a car is waiting. She fend off the dogs jumping around her and readies herself to leave.

## INT. BARRACKS, LATIVAINIA, DAY

In his otherwise empty bed, Santiago wakes with a start to the sound of GUNFIRE. He rushes out of the room in his underwear.

As he runs around the corridors we hear ARTILLERY FIRE and the occasional EXPLOSION. Santiago eventually comes across a low-ranking soldier who doesn't speak English.

## SANTIAGO

What is happening, you shit?  
(shakes soldier)  
Are we under attack?

The soldier stares at him blankly. Santiago shoves him against the wall. He is about to move on but then decides to take the man's rifle with him. Santiago heads for the exit.

## EXT. BARRACKS, LATIVAINIA, CONTINUOUS

Santiago comes out into a firefight. Soldiers under attack run in all directions. While Santiago takes in the scene, a stray bullet hits the wall above his head.

Annoyed, Santiago fires off a few rounds before realising the scale of this attack. Shocked, Santiago flees back inside. A grenade EXPLODES where he was standing.

## INT. STRANGERS' BAR, HOUSE OF COMMONS, DAY

Crispin enjoys a lunchtime glass of wine with the Chief Whip alongside government ministers and MPs.

## CHIEF WHIP

Never in any doubt, was it?

CRISPIN  
 Here's to a new chapter in the  
 story of the Lativainian nation!

They CLINK glasses. Jess fights her way through the crowd holding a tablet. Nearby older men stare at her.

CHIEF WHIP  
 Jessica! Get you a drink?

JESS  
 No, thank you.

She shows Crispin the tablet with his schedule on it.

JESS (CONT'D)  
 You've a full afternoon of  
 meetings.

CRISPIN  
 Yes, yes. The battle may have been  
 won, but now we must get the goods  
 where they need to be.  
 (to Chief Whip)  
 Why does victory always bring more  
 work than defeat?

The Chief Whip LAUGHS. Crispin guides Jess aside.

CRISPIN (CONT'D)  
 Get hold of Ruth - I'd like to see  
 her when I'm done here.  
 (thinks)  
 If she doesn't get back to you, go  
 to her studio and speak in person.  
 You know where that is?

JESS  
 I do.

CRISPIN  
 Then get on the phone with - what's  
 her name? The hotel woman?

JESS  
 Hazel?

CRISPIN  
 I need a dinner reservation for two  
 and a room for tonight. A good one.

Jess leaves. Crispin finishes his wine then follows her.

INT. STANDARD ROOM, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, DAY

Hazel is disabling the room's smoke alarm while her daughter, Piper, uses a rolled up magazine to swat at a moth.

PIPER

This wasn't how I imagined spending half term.

HAZEL

I'm paying you to be here, aren't I?

Hazel checks the moth smoke bombs are set properly. She dons a mask then gestures to her daughter.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Wait outside.

Piper exits as the bombs begin to smoulder. When she is certain they are working, Hazel leaves too. The level of smoke increases.

INT. CORRIDOR, EMANCIPATION HOTEL, CONTINUOUS

Hazel puts up a hazard sign. Piper watches an elegant woman approach: Flick.

FLICK

There you are!  
(gestures at door, smiles)  
Some kind of chemical leak?

PIPER

Moth infestation.

Flick regards Piper, smiling.

FLICK

I didn't realise the recruitment crisis hit you so hard?

HAZEL

I like to keep my daughter where I can see her.

Piper gives her mother a look.

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Felicity Cartier, this is Piper.

They shake hands. Flick regards the teenager, intrigued.

FLICK  
Your mother is an incredible woman.

Piper looks confused.

FLICK (CONT'D)  
Actually, I was hoping Hazel would  
dine with me tonight.  
(to Hazel)  
We can continue our discussions on  
that matter I mentioned.

Hazel looks to Piper, concerned.

PIPER  
You go mum, I'll be fine.  
(pause)  
I won't invite any of my friends  
over!

HAZEL  
Again.  
(to Flick)  
That would be nice. I can't  
remember the last time I went  
somewhere new.

FLICK  
You deserve it. I'll make a  
reservation for Pure at eight,  
shall I?

Piper is amazed. Hazel's phone rings: 'Jessica'.

HAZEL  
I can be ready by then.

FLICK  
Marvellous. I'll let you get back  
to work.  
(to Piper)  
Very nice to meet you, Piper. I  
hope our paths shall cross again.

She leaves. Piper turns to Hazel who is now on the phone.

PIPER  
Mum! You know Pure is where all the  
celebs and crap royals go?

HAZEL  
Give me a moment, love.  
(into phone)  
(MORE)

HAZEL (CONT'D)  
 Say again, Crispin wants a  
 reservation for...?

INT. STRAPLINE TIMES OFFICE, DALSTON, LONDON, DAY

Mia is at her desk, watching reports on plans to supply 'Aid and Support' to Lativainia.

MIA  
 (to herself)  
 They did it. They voted it through.  
 (rueful)  
 All those weapons; all that public  
 money.

She is jolted from her reverie by a WHOOP from a darts-playing hipster nearby. Mia begins to type furiously.

INT. LENNON'S OFFICE, CITY OF LONDON, DAY

Lennon watches the same reports, framed by the TV channel as solemnly virtuous and vital. He reclines and exhales until his phone shows an incoming video call from Santiago.

INTERCUT:

INT. CUPBOARD, BARRACKS, LATIVAINIA, DAY

Santiago has crammed himself into the confined space. He hugs the assault rifle while shakily holding his phone. In the background there is SHOUTING and the occasional GUNSHOT.

SANTIAGO  
 (hushed, anxious)  
 Lennon! Lennon!

From Lennon's perspective Santiago looks to be stuck in a dark hole.

LENNON  
 (laughs)  
 Santiago! What on earth is going  
 on? Have you heard the good news?

SANTIAGO  
 Lennon, listen to me! The  
 President's special forces are  
 trying to take back power.

LENNON

What? I thought the General was about to win?

SANTIAGO

The General is full to the brim with horseshit.

LENNON

But we have to go ahead! The first batch of weapons has been approved for delivery.

There is a loud BANG. Santiago flinches.

SANTIAGO

You need to speed it up. From what I've seen the President is not going quietly, if he goes at all.

The sound of a door being KICKED IN.

LENNON

Santiago! You need to get out of there...!

But special forces have already SMASHED their way inside. Santiago levels his rifle, ready for them.

LENNON (CONT'D)

(over phone)

No, don't!

Santiago is confronted by the barrels of numerous guns. He stares at the men holding them then lowers his rifle.

LENNON (CONT'D)

Santiago! Santiago! I'll make some calls! We can fix this!

A special forces man takes the phone to end the call. Lennon is left gawping. He dials Crispin's number, gets the politician's voicemail and hangs up in frustration.

Unsure of what to do, Lennon paces frantically. Eventually he messages Crispin: 'We need to start the shipments. Call me.'

INT. PURE RESTAURANT, KENSINGTON, LONDON, NIGHT

Hazel is dressed to the nines and marvels at the luxurious surroundings. Flick eats and TALKS with gusto.

FLICK

...he was hoping to leave all that tiresome constituency nonsense behind and follow a well-worn path to the House of Lords but...

(notices Hazel staring)

What is it?

HAZEL

I think that film star is over there. The one with the sex tape.

FLICK

(glances)

Oh, probably.

(dismissive)

They let anyone in nowadays.

Flick finishes eating then looks Hazel in the eye. Unnerved by this intimacy, Hazel looks away.

FLICK (CONT'D)

(low voice)

You know, the reason I invited you here. Well, *one* of the reasons...

HAZEL

(uneasy)

Yes?

FLICK

He won't admit it, but I think my husband has bitten off more than he can chew.

HAZEL

With the thing over in Europe?

FLICK

(nods)

He has me, of course, and Jessica, she's made herself indispensable. But if we're going to control this project and reap the rewards, we need someone else on our team.

(gazes at her)

Crispin speaks glowingly of you. From everything I've seen, that's with good reason.

HAZEL

I, ah -



FLICK  
 (dismissive)  
 Oh, I know you supply girls for him. Don't worry about that. Is he with one now?

HAZEL  
 (formal)  
 Tonight a room has been arranged for your husband and someone called Ruth.

FLICK  
 (to herself)  
 So *she's* back on the scene.  
 (focusses on Hazel)  
 We have an understanding. I simply can't abide his libido anymore.

HAZEL  
 That's very, uh...

FLICK  
 The important thing is that you possess the same values and ambitions as us. All our hard work is about to bear fruit and we now sit at the nexus where big business meets international affairs. That can be a very rewarding place.

Flick reaches across the table, taking Hazel's hand with deliberate tenderness.

FLICK (CONT'D)  
 Would you like to join our team?

HAZEL  
 (staring at hand)  
 What - what would it involve?

Flick withdraws with a LAUGH and a wave.

FLICK  
 Oh, all sorts; you'd never be bored. It would be a great way of providing for that beautiful daughter of yours. Will she be going to university?

Hazel looks at Flick askance.

FLICK (CONT'D)

And you certainly wouldn't have to give up what you've built, don't think that. I see the hotel as a vital cog in our machine.

(lowers voice)

But could I make a small suggestion?

(beat)

Perhaps it's time for you to get out of the escort business.

HAZEL

I was thinking that myself.

FLICK

Come where the real power lies.

Flick raises her glass, waiting for Hazel to toast their partnership. Eventually Hazel does so.

HAZEL

I'm in.

FLICK

You won't regret this.

Flick gives her a look of unabashed desire.

MONTAGE:

In a munitions factory Lennon and Terry oversee missiles and bombs being crated up then loaded onto a military plane. Lennon calls Crispin once more, leaving a voicemail.

Crispin makes love with his mistress RUTH (40s, artistic, East Asian) in a hotel room. As their bodies part, Crispin reaches for his phone and listens to Lennon's voicemail.

Santiago is thrown into a dingy cell, crowded with civilians and soldiers. One of them pushes him away and Santiago violently shoves back.

From the upper deck of Santiago's yacht, Timothy watches fearfully as smoke clouds rise in the distance.

Somewhere in Lativainia the General gets a report from an underling. Seeing the bad news, he throws a hissy fit.

Flick and Hazel leave the restaurant. On the way out Hazel spots Oksana dining with a rich man. Oksana gives her an evil glare.

In the cell Santiago watches a man shit in a bucket while giving him a coquettish grin. Santiago puts his head in his hands.

The military plane fully loaded now, Lennon shakes Terry's hand before getting on board.

Outside the restaurant, Flick draws Hazel close and kisses her. Hazel returns the kiss.

Staring at his phone, Crispin's face falls. Ruth begins to caress him once more and he reaches for a blue pill.

Jess enters that same building we saw Mia and Jarrod in earlier. She ascends the stairs while checking social media and finds that Mia's piece on Strapline Times has gone viral.

INT. LOUNGE, HOUSESHARE, DAY

Jarrood vapes while watching reality TV. Mia is on her phone. Jess comes in and slumps into Jarrod's arms.

JARROD

Hey babe.

(kisses her)

We were just watching STI Brides.

MIA

CSI brides, and no we weren't.

JESS

Congratulations Mia, looks like everyone is reading your story.

MIA

Couldn't have done it without you!

Mia blows Jess a kiss.

JARROD

And me!

JESS

And you, baby!

(kisses him)

MIA

(begrudging)

Yeah, maybe.

(looks up)

They aren't getting away with this, that's the main thing.

JESS  
Not if we can help it.

MIA  
It sounds like that coup might not be going as smoothly as your boss hoped.

JESS  
(grins)  
Oh, Flick's not going to be happy about that.

MIA  
You go above and beyond for those scumbags.

JARROD  
They're not so bad! Hey, didn't we order takeaway?

JESS  
Amazing!  
(to Mia)  
The important thing is I'm helping the cause.

MIA  
You are.  
(zealous)  
One way or another, we're going to take those bastards down.

End of Pilot Episode