

1 INT. COUNTRY HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY (FLASHBACK) 1

A pretty, dressed-down woman in her late twenties, ELLIE, sits at the kitchen table.

She is reading an item in a literary quarterly.

She has been crying, but that was some time ago -- her eyes are still red. Now, more than anything, she is rinsed-out. Pale and hollow.

She walks to a drawer and finds a pair of scissors. She also takes a safety pin from a jar.

Returning to the table, she carefully cuts out the article.

Delicate, precise SNIPS.

With that task completed, she clenches her jaw in anticipation of pain, and pushes the safety pin's needle through her shirt.

She CRIES OUT. Cannot help doing it.

She pins the snipped-out parody text onto the needle and closes the safety pin, securing it to her chest.

Blood reddens the paper.

Ellie turns on the gas oven -- but does not light it. She removes its shelves, stacking them on the tiles beside her.

She stoops towards the dull, insistent HISS of gas, placing her head fully-inside the oven, kneeling, resting her body on the opened-out oven door.

Ellie closes her eyes, resting there.

TITLES

2 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE - DAY 1 2

Strike ambles out of his office to find Robin packing up her things.

STRIKE

You off?

ROBIN

Is that okay?

STRIKE

Course. Any sane Londoner is retiring to their nearest pub.

ROBIN

Do you want to hear your evening plans?

Off his resigned nod, Robin checks the planner.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Cheating husband in Clerkenwell, then suspected cheating girlfriend in Mayfair.

STRIKE

You think we should introduce them?

ROBIN

(laughing)

They'd either be very happy or very unhappy.

Strike opens the door for Robin.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Night, Cormoran.

STRIKE

See you tomorrow.

3

INT. ROPER CHARD OFFICE, CHARD'S OFFICE - DAY 1

3

JERRY WALDEGRAVE, a books editor, blunders in on DANIEL CHARD, CEO, whose office is architecturally styled to befit his status.

A copy of a manuscript, *Bombyx Mori*, is on Chard's desk. Jerry taps it.

JERRY

Reading it again?

(beat)

So Daniel, I'm off. It's-- I've done a letter for the HR people. Don't try to dissuade me.

DANIEL CHARD

What's this about--

JERRY

Come on, let's not. It's effective
immediately, et cetera, et cetera.

Jerry offers his hand. They shake, briskly, full of tension.

4 INT./EXT. FANCOURT'S HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD - DAY 1 4

LIZ TASSEL (50s), a square-framed woman, with a severe grey bob, waits anxiously on the doorstep of a rather grand Hampstead home. She has tied up an ageing Doberman nearby.

The door is opened by ANDREW FANCOURT. He is surprised -- not pleased -- to see her.

LIZ
Have you read it? Did he send it to you?

FANCOURT
(beat)
What do you want?

LIZ
I've fired Owen. As soon as I read *Bombyx* I told him it was despicable -- I wanted you to know that.

FANCOURT
I haven't read it.

LIZ
I thought... maybe with Owen gone for good, that you and I might... rekindle...

FANCOURT
Your dog is shitting on my lawn.

Liz turns to see her dog crouched.

While she is distracted, Fancourt closes his front door.

4A EXT. STREET - DAY 1 4A

Strike, yawning, returns from the day's labours. He stops at a newspaper stand for a copy of the paper.

But instead sees:

Tatler magazine. It has his ex-girlfriend, Charlotte Campbell, on its cover, in a shot where she's laughing at something just out of shot on the ground.

On the cover, Charlotte now turns her head -- impossibly --
to look Strike dead in the eye.

Strike stands there frozen.

5

EXT. CLEMENT ATLEE COURT, KATHRYN'S FLAT - NIGHT 1

5

In the small back yard of her ground-floor council flat, KATHRYN KENT has a fire blazing in a rubbish bin.

She is crying, feeding sheets of her copy of *Bombyx Mori* into the flames.

A NEIGHBOUR pokes her head over the dividing wall.

NEIGHBOUR
You're stinking my flat out!

6 OMITTED 6

7 INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - NIGHT 1 7

Strike is in bed reading *Tatler*.

The magazine is open on a two-page spread covering Strike's ex-girlfriend Charlotte as she poses with her husband-to-be, Jago Ross, in front of the castle they'll someday inherit.

She is getting married.

7A EXT. CHARING CROSS ROAD - DAY 2 7A

Robin walks to work past a bookshop window. A large window display promotes *Bellafront*, the novel from Booker Prize winner Andrew Fancourt.

7B INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE - DAY 2 7B

Robin puts the kettle on and turns lights on etc.

7C INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - DAY 2 7C

Strike wakes groggily to find Robin shaking his leg.

ROBIN
Cormoran. Wake up.
(more shakes)
You've got clients waiting.

STRIKE

What's that?

ROBIN

It's 9.40 and there are clients waiting. I thought you'd want to--

STRIKE

Give me five minutes. Alarm must have... Can you make them some tea?

ROBIN

We're on second cups already.

STRIKE

Offer them a biscuit then. That always makes people feel special.

8

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE/OUTER OFFICE - DAY 2

8

Strike, in a dark mood, lumbers into the office. Drinking coffee from a distinctive "I love Cornwall" mug that has been broken and glued back together.

He finds Robin at her desk and two people waiting for him. One of the waiting clients, sharp-suited WILLIAM BAKER, makes a show of checking his watch.

STRIKE

Morning.

WILLIAM BAKER

Fifteen minutes late. Bet the army wouldn't let you get away with that. If you didn't have such a good-looking secretary I'd have left.

Strike's jaw twitches. He turns to the other person waiting. LEONORA is a mousy-looking woman in unfashionable glasses and clothes that have seen better days.

STRIKE

Good morning. How can I help?

WILLIAM BAKER

Hey-- excuse me. I'm not waiting--

STRIKE

Robin, please make up Mr Baker's final bill.

(to Baker)

(MORE)

STRIKE (CONT'D)

The stuff I got on your partners is good quality. It'll stand up in court.

WILLIAM BAKER

But you're not finished!

STRIKE

We are. Find someone who doesn't mind having a tosser for a client.
(to Leonora)
You can come in now.

Strike indicates the door to his inner sanctum...

9

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE/INNER OFFICE - DAY 2

9

Strike sits at his desk, flips open a notepad. Leonora sits opposite.

LEONORA

I need you to make a phone call.

STRIKE

(beat)
One phone call?

LEONORA

I can pay. Your girl said what your rates are and if the call's not longer than five minutes then I've already got the money on me.

Leonora is already digging out her purse.

LEONORA (CONT'D)

My husband's gone off to a writers' retreat and he'll have told them not to pick up to me. So I just need you to get him on the line and then I can tell him to come home.

Beat.

STRIKE

Could a friend of yours maybe do it?

LEONORA

My neighbour Edna can't do it because she's a woman.

(beat)
(MORE)

LEONORA (CONT'D)

He's gone off before, only this time it's been ten days and our girl's missing her daddy and getting upset and we need him back.

STRIKE

Do you have a number for the retreat?

Leonora hands it over.

LEONORA

Bigley Hall. He's always talking about that one.

STRIKE

What's his name?

LEONORA

Owen Quine. He's a very famous and good novelist.

Strike dials.

STRIKE

Morning. I'm calling for Owen Quine.

(listening)

I'm aware that Mr Quine sometimes asks for his calls to be screened but I'm calling with medical test results. This is one he really does need to take.

(listening again)

Okay. Thanks.

He rests the phone back on the cradle.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

He's not there. I believe them.

Strike tries to hand Leonora's money back to her...

STRIKE (CONT'D)

No charge. Sorry we couldn't help. I'll see you out.

Leonora refuses the money, quietly putting it back down on his desk. Strike shepherds her back into the--

10

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE/OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

10

STRIKE

(to Robin)

How's the day looking?

ROBIN

Surveillance of the Gunfrey place, then I'm pulling town hall records on the Stokes while you're seeing Mrs Ingles in Chelsea. At four you're due to follow Mr Abingdon after work and reckoned that'd be two hours, which takes you to six. Then it's drinks.

STRIKE

Drinks?

ROBIN

With Matthew? It's already been put back twice. Please say you haven't--

STRIKE

Yeah, drinks. Great. Fine.

(beat)

Can you text me Caroline Ingles's contact details?

ROBIN

Will do.

LEONORA (O.S.)

Can you find him?

Strike turns to where Leonora is still standing.

STRIKE

I'm afraid we don't have the capacity to take on another client.

ROBIN

(to Leonora)

If you're worried, could you maybe call the police?

STRIKE

Police can trace phones and track bank card usage. All things we can't do without breaking the law.

LEONORA

Yeah, but I called the police before and then he showed up in a hotel with some girl and everyone got upset how I'd wasted police time.

(beat)

I don't know what to do. It's been ten days.

(beat)

I've got a photo of him.

Leonora hands over a book: *The Balzac Brothers*, presented open at the rear dust-jacket fold where Owen Quine's author photo is located. The photo shows a portly man in a feathered fedora attempting to look brooding.

Leonora looks miserable.

LEONORA (CONT'D)

Liz'll pay. Owen's her best client. She loves him. She can take it out of his next commission. Please.

HARD CUT TO:

11 INT. LIZ TASSEL'S OFFICE - DAY 2

11

LIZ

Absolutely not! Leonora can find her own damned husband.

LIZ, a cigarette permanently affixed to her left hand, talks to Strike from behind a desk in her books-lined mews house office.

Liz breaks out into a prolonged COUGHING FIT.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Excuse me. End of the flu. It's been hellish. And anyway, I have fired Owen.

STRIKE

I don't think Leonora is aware of that. Was there a particular reason for it?

LIZ

The remarkable thing is why I kept him on so long. Bad reviews and worsening sales. But with his latest effort, honestly, my best hope is that it will never be published.

STRIKE

That's an unusual position for a writer's agent...

LIZ

Ex-agent.

(beat)

Owen has written a very thinly-disguised slandering of the people who have tried to help him. He attacks his editor, his publisher, me, other writers. It's a vicious, self-serving little allegory that deserves nothing but burning, and I say that as someone who loves books.

Strike takes a moment as Liz's rage subsides. She stalks to her office door.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Ralph!

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

He's out with Beau.

Liz re-enters, grumpy.

LIZ

Owen would like nothing better than for a search party to be sent out to find him. I shan't pay for his PR. Now if you'll excuse me.

Strike stands. Looks at a picture on the wall.

STRIKE

That's him there, isn't it?

LIZ

Me, Quine, Andrew Fancourt and Joe Noth. My first three clients.

STRIKE

You represent Fancourt? He sells a
lot of books, doesn't he?

LIZ

Of those three writers, Andrew and
I have parted ways and Joe is dead.
He was gay. Had AIDS.

Strike turns back to Liz.

STRIKE

Could he be staying with friends?

LIZ

He doesn't have any left. He teaches 'creative writing' - what a phrase that is! - and that supplies him with a fresh pool of wide-eyed sycophants. That seems to suit him.

The door opens and RALPH, Liz's assistant, brings an ageing Doberman in. It lies down in a corner basket.

RALPH

I'm not sure he's very well.

LIZ

Yes, his poos have been soft. Get him some fibre. And mint tea.

RALPH

In his bowl?

LIZ

For me! For my throat! For God's sake! For the dog?

(to Strike)

Apparently he took a first in English at Warwick. I'm minded to call them to check.

Ralph, embarrassed, softly closes the door.

Strike eyes the dog. It GROWLS.

STRIKE

I won't take up any more of your time. Just a couple more questions. When was the last time you saw him?

LIZ

I had lunch with him -- my assistant can find you the precise date. We ate at Congreve's. By then I'd had some very angry calls from Daniel Chard. I've never not read a manuscript before sending it out, but I was so unwell and Owen's last efforts have been so completely depressing that just for once I skimmed a few pages and told Ralph to send it off. Unforgivable.

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

I went to stay with a writer of
mine, Dorcus Pengelly - her real
name.

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

I had a very pleasant weekend with
Dorcus until the calls started. I'm
paying for my sins very dearly.
(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)

As soon as I was told what the book contained, I read it and fired him.

STRIKE

At the restaurant?

LIZ

Yes.

STRIKE

How did he take the news?

LIZ

Poorly. Look, before you judge me for that, you ought to know that I have been one of very few friends he had in this industry. Over the years I have paid him far more than his royalties warranted. Have you met Orlando?

STRIKE

Is that the daughter? No. Not yet.

LIZ

She's sweet. And she had a hard start in life. The state is niggardly with those needing more help than average. Perhaps you've discovered that for yourself?

Silence falls. Strike lets it sustain.

Liz COUGHS again.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I really must get on.

STRIKE

I hope you feel better soon.

LIZ

If you do find Owen, kindly tell him to please bugger off and die.

12

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE/OUTER OFFICE - DAY 2

12

Robin is at her desk, researching Quine. Five second-hand Quine novels are stacked by her monitor. She is looking at an embedded video clip on an Adult Education website.

ON SCREEN:

OWEN QUINE, in a waistcoat decorated with skull-and-crossbones motifs, gives an interview.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Can you tell us what the subject of your next novel will be?

OWEN QUINE

It will tell my story, as all my books have done. I draw on my disagreement with Andrew Fancourt. The end of a literary era.

BACK IN THE OFFICE

Strike bustles in from the stairwell...

ROBIN

I'm putting together a pack on Quine for you. He's a very important writer, according to himself.

Robin hands over her initial notes and print-outs.

STRIKE

(re: the novels)
Those any good?

ROBIN

He's not a fan of short sentences. I read ten pages then had to take a break before I got a migraine.

(beat)

Should I contact Liz Tassel about our billings?

STRIKE

No, she won't be paying. I'd like to help his wife out though.

(beat)

I know this'll probably mean turning down some paid work...

ROBIN

It's your business.

STRIKE

Yeah, but I'm aware that your salary's a bit shit and--

ROBIN

I'm not asking for a raise.

STRIKE

You deserve one though. And once we're out of debt... I want you to know that I do realise you're worth more than what I can currently pay you. Currently, not forever.

Robin is pleased, and touched by his awkwardness.

ROBIN

It'll be a nice change, trying to bring a couple back together instead of helping people divorce.

STRIKE

I thought that as well.

Strike disappears into his office to grab his camera equipment.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

Heading up to Islington now. Can you make a start on the searches?

ROBIN

Will do. Don't forget the drinks.

STRIKE

I won't. See you at eight.

As he disappears out again...

ROBIN

Six! We're meeting at six!

13 EXT. ISLINGTON STREET - DAY 2 13

Strike follows a MAN.

Swings up a long-lens camera as the Man rings on a townhouse doorbell. The door is opened to him by the smiling Young Woman. They kiss.

Strike zooms in on the kiss.

14 INT. HOLLAND PARK FLAT, BEDROOM - NIGHT (MEMORY) 14

Strike is stroking Charlotte's beautiful, mascara-smearred face. Self-harm marks on her arms.

*
*

CHARLOTTE

I don't understand how you can
still love me...

He kisses her.

STRIKE

Built for stamina, me.

Half-laughing, half-crying, she pulls him closer.

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15 EXT. STRIP CLUB - DAY 2 15

Strike watches a City-boy heading into the interior darkness of the club. He makes a note, then leaves.

16 INT. HOLLAND PARK FLAT - NIGHT (MEMORY) 16

Charlotte is SCREAMING at Strike. And Strike, his back to the wall, is SCREAMING back. White hot with unbridled anger.

CHARLOTTE

How dare you accuse me of lying -
who do you think you are - still a
jumped up fucking monkey in a beret-

*
*
*
*

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
- who gets to interrogate
people -

STRIKE
Don't take me for a fool,
Charlotte!

*

STRIKE (CONT'D)

I can fucking count, unlike most of
the stupid bastards you take for a
ride -

*
*
*
*

Charlotte grabs the nearest object -- Strike's "I love Cornwall" mug -- and hurls it at him. He ducks and it breaks on the wall behind him.

*

17 OMITTED 17

18 EXT. LEONORA'S HOUSE - DAY 2 18

Strike arrives.

18A INT. LEONORA'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY 2 18A

Leonora lets Strike in. As he walks into the hallway, a harassed-looking Jerry comes down the stairs from the upper floor, perhaps exiting from Quine's study.

JERRY

Leonora dear, I really must...

Strike extends a hand.

STRIKE

Cormoran Strike. Private
investigator.

JERRY

God, has it come to that already?

LEONORA

Jerry is Owen's editor. He's one of
the good ones.

JERRY

Of course we all do worry about
him. Ring me as soon as he shows
up, won't you?
(to Strike)
Nice to meet you.

Jerry is out of the front door and is gone...

LEONORA

Did you smell the wine on him? I got woozy just talking to him. Nice he popped round though.

19

INT. LEONORA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY 2

19

Strike drinks tea with Leonora.

STRIKE

It's possible your husband is seeking publicity for his new manuscript. Or he could be genuinely upset over being fired by his agent.

LEONORA

He's her best client though. He's really good. Liz came over to see him last week an 'all. Back in the day she chose him over Andrew Fancourt. Why'd she go and fire him now?

STRIKE

I think he insulted a lot of the people she works with.

(beat)

A hotel for ten days would get expensive. Can you think of anyone he might be staying with?

Leonora looks down, humiliated.

LEONORA

He's had girlfriends as well as flings. He always says "that's that, no more", every time, and I always believe him. And we've been with each other twenty odd years with a kid. That's something.

(beat)

So yeah. He's probably shagging some girlfriend. And I still want him home.

20

EXT. HOPE & ANCHOR PUB - NIGHT 2

20

Strike is on the phone, smoking, as he approaches.

NICK (V.O.)
It's for the best, mate.

STRIKE

It's good that Charlotte's getting
married. Draws a line.

Through the window Strike sees:

Robin and Matthew sitting at a table with a single empty chair waiting for him.

INTERCUTTING:

21 INT. NICK AND ISLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 2 21

NICK's on the sofa with the TV on mute...

NICK

When I saw it in the news, my first thought was that she'd done the whole thing for your benefit.

STRIKE

I'll be fine, Nick. No relapsing.

NICK

Well, you know where we are if you decide you need a support group that has cold beer and peanuts.

22 INT. HOPE & ANCHOR PUB - NIGHT 2 22

Strike enters. Wills himself to cross the room and join them. Burying all thoughts of Charlotte to try to conjure an amenable front.

Robin sees him coming and smiles.

Matthew stands and offers his hand. They shake.

MATTHEW

Matthew, hi.

STRIKE

Cormoran. Anyone need a drink?

ROBIN

It's table service here.

STRIKE

In a pub?

ROBIN

Matt comes here quite a lot.

MATTHEW

The food's alright. It's no Mango Tree, but it passes.

STRIKE

Mango Tree?

MATTHEW

Thai place. A client took me there last week.

STRIKE

Any good?

MATTHEW

If Thai's your thing.

(beat)

Do you like Thai food?

STRIKE

I eat pretty much anything.

ROBIN

There's a good Japanese place around the corner from us. We sometimes get lunch there.

Silence.

STRIKE

(to Matthew)

How long have you been in London now?

MATTHEW

About a year? We've just about found our feet.

Matthew takes Robin's hand. Robin wishes he hadn't.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Did you see the rugby?

STRIKE

No.

(beat)

What happened?

MATTHEW

England Wales. Do you want to know the score?

STRIKE

Okay.

MATTHEW

England 16, Wales 5.

ROBIN

Matt used to play for Yorkshire under-sixteens.

MATTHEW

Do you play anything? Or... did you before...?

STRIKE

I was the European hop-scotch champion. Can't do that anymore.

MATTHEW

That's funny.

But Matthew only half-laughs.

Robin hands over an envelope. Strike opens it... and finds an invitation to Robin and Matt's wedding. *Miss Robin Venetia Ellacott...*

STRIKE

Thanks.

(pocketing it)

It's in eight weeks?

MATTHEW

Yeah, it's exciting.

STRIKE

So... How long have you two been together then?

MATTHEW

Nine years.

ROBIN

We were in sixth-form together.

MATTHEW

She was the only halfway fit girl with a brain. No choice really.

Strike's cool, appraising eyes flit between Robin and Matthew. Robin immediately feels judged.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

How about you? Got a girlfriend?

STRIKE

No. Not for awhile now.

(craning round)

I might just head to the bar.

Robin is near wincing at the lack of connection.

ROBIN

We're doing a missing person case.

MATTHEW

Sounds like most of the work is watching married people cop-off. I said to Robin, you should be called Privates Investigators. I bet there's a porno called that.

ROBIN

There's other stuff we do too...
We're really busy, aren't we?

STRIKE

We are. We're going to have to take on another investigator.

Robin visibly stiffens.

MATTHEW

How'd you find someone like that?

STRIKE

You advertise. Probably go for ex-police. Their relationships tend to be useful.

(beat)

I'm going to go to the bar. What can I get you?

MATTHEW

Same again, please.

STRIKE

Robin?

ROBIN

(distracted)
What?

STRIKE

Drink?

ROBIN

Oh. White wine.

Strike gets up and lumbers towards the bar.

MATTHEW

Let's order some crab balls. I'm
starving.

Matthew busies himself with the menu. Robin sits and stares into empty space.

23 EXT. EALING STREET NR ROBIN'S FLAT - NIGHT 2 23

Matthew and Robin walk home together.

MATTHEW

I felt a bit sorry for him, to be honest. He's not an easy conversationalist, is he?

Robin is preoccupied.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

What's up with you?

ROBIN

No, nothing. I just... him talking about taking someone else on...

MATTHEW

Yeah, but not for your job. He just needs another one of him.

Matthew, understandably, has no sense of why Robin is upset.

ROBIN

I suppose I thought I might move up the ladder there.

23A INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - NIGHT 2 23A

Strike looks at Robin's wedding invitation as he empties his pockets, undressing for bed.

24 EXT. DENMARK STREET - DAY 3 24

Establishing.

25 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE/OUTER OFFICE - DAY 3 25

The CLUMP of Strike's footsteps on the stairs presage his arrival. Robin is already at her desk.

STRIKE

Morning, Venetia.

ROBIN

Morning..? How did you--

STRIKE

It's on the invitation.

ROBIN

Oh.

(beat)

I was conceived in Venice.

STRIKE

(beat)

Good noodles at that pub.

Beat.

ROBIN

I think I've got something.

Strike joins Robin at her monitor.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

You said his only friends were his students so I looked up the class he teaches. They put out a publication each year showcasing the students' work and there are bios for each of the students with contacts and web links. One of them has a blog about her erotic fiction full of cosy mentions of her and TGW.

(off Strike)

The Great Writer. Her name's Kathryn Kent.

STRIKE

No Quine-induced headaches for her... Sounds promising.

ROBIN

What did you think of Matthew?

STRIKE

(off-guard)

Nice bloke.

26

EXT. CLEMENT ATLEE COURT ESTATE - NIGHT 3

26

Strike waits smoking on one of the estate's ground-floor level blocks. He spots a woman with flame-red hair coming towards him. She is carrying a heavy gym bag.

She is wary as Strike approaches.

STRIKE

Are you Kathryn Kent?

KATHRYN

Yes?

STRIKE

I'm looking for Owen Quine. I wondered if he might be here?

KATHRYN

Ha! No.

Kathryn opens her door.

STRIKE

Not a big fan of his?

KATHRYN

He can go to hell.

STRIKE

He's gone missing.

Kathryn turns.

KATHRYN

Who are you?

STRIKE

I'm an investigator. His wife is worried about him. I thought he might be staying with you.

A flicker of guilt...

STRIKE (CONT'D)

You took his writing class, didn't you? Did something happen between you to upset you?

KATHRYN

(beat)

We were friends. He said he'd write me into his new book. And then he put a copy through my letterbox...

Kathryn starts sniffing.

KATHRYN (CONT'D)

I have nothing more to say about him. I hope I never see him again.

Kathryn enters her flat -- and slams the door closed.

27

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE/OUTER OFFICE - NIGHT 3

27

Strike and Robin deliberate.

STRIKE

It's an odd one though. Sending it to his girlfriend, knowing that it'd hurt her? Seems nihilistic.

ROBIN

Like a suicide note? Railing against a world that called your last novel "sphincter-clenchingly awful".

STRIKE

Is that a real review?

ROBIN

That was one of the better ones.

STRIKE

(laughing)

I'm going to head over to Leonora's house to go through some more questions. Do you want to come?

ROBIN

(beat)

I can't tonight.

STRIKE

Yeah, okay.

ROBIN

I just finished the Land Registry search. Might be worth asking about her husband co-owning a house on Talgarth Road.

(off Strike's look)

I know!

28

INT. LEONORA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 3

28

Leonora searches through the clutter of her kitchen drawers. It's a small, cramped house. No space for anything.

LEONORA

Yeah, but he never goes there.

Rummaging....

LEONORA (CONT'D)

I don't even know if we've got...

STRIKE

But if he co-owns the place...! It might have been worth mentioning, given he's been missing for nearly a fortnight now.

LEONORA

He owns it with Andrew Fancourt so he can't ever do anything with it. Their mate Joe left it them when he died. Sometimes they get it rented to artists an' that, but mostly Andrew won't let them make money off it, just to piss Owen off.

(beat)

Here you are!

Leonora hands over a bunch of old keys.

LEONORA (CONT'D)

He won't be there. It's a wreck.

STRIKE

Did he leave you a copy of his new manuscript, by any chance?

29

INT. LEONORA'S HOUSE, QUINE'S STUDY - NIGHT 3

29

Leonora shows Strike in. Quine's study is lined with books. On the walls are various photos documenting his few moments of triumph -- some early awards, a few parties.

There are box files for each novel that he has written -- each labelled with title plus "notes" or "research".

Quine's desk is spartan. There is an old-fashioned electric typewriter. And a manuscript stacked next to it, with Leonora's name on it.

LEONORA

He left it for me by the front door. He knows I'm not gonna read it like that. I only read 'em when there's a cover and it's proper, even if he reckons it's good.

STRIKE

Did he have high hopes for *Bombyx*?

LEONORA

Yeah. But he always does.

Strike picks up the manuscript. It's slender.

STRIKE

So he posted this? Into his own home?

LEONORA

I dunno. It was on the doormat. It was just sat there.

STRIKE

(surveying the shelves)
I can't see any box-files for *Bombyx Mori*.

LEONORA

There will be. He's always getting some idea and it has to go down before he forgets.

Strike glances at a shelf where there is a gap. Faint marks in the dust where two box-files might have sat...

STRIKE

Apart from Jerry and Liz, has anyone visited you since Owen went missing?

LEONORA

His publisher rang but he didn't come over. People don't really.

Upon examination, the top pages of the manuscript have been drawn on by the girl who now comes in to sit in Quine's chair -- ORLANDO, 21, his daughter with Down's syndrome.

STRIKE

Do you like drawing?

ORLANDO

Yes. And I take things.

LEONORA

(disapproving)

We talked about that didn't we,
Dodo?

(to Strike)

She pinches things and sticks 'em
in her Monkey.

Orlando takes a pillowcase stuffed with paper and items from
the floor and hugs it close.

ORLANDO

Who's that man?

LEONORA

He's helping us find Daddy.

ORLANDO

I want Daddy.

LEONORA

I know you do, pet.

(to Strike)

Say what you like about him, but
Owen does a good bed-time story.

STRIKE

(to Orlando)

My name's Cormoran Strike.

ORLANDO

That's not a name.

STRIKE

I was named after a Cornish giant.

Orlando looks to her mother, uncertain.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

(re: manuscript)

Could I borrow this?

LEONORA

Go for your life.

30 INT. ROBIN AND MATTHEW'S FLAT, KITCHEN - NIGHT 3 30

Robin takes a load of laundry from the washing machine.

31 INT. ROBIN AND MATTHEW'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 3 31

Robin irons Matthew's shirts.

32 INT. ROBIN AND MATTHEW'S FLAT, KITCHEN - NIGHT 3 32

Robin finishes making a frittata under the grill as Matthew walks in. He gives her a kiss.

ROBIN

How was work?

MATTHEW

The FSA are bringing in new regs,
so we all have to get on top of
that along with the client
business. And I had mum on the
phone complaining about a headache.

ROBIN

Is she alright?

MATTHEW

She's just short on attention.

Matthew sits down in his chair, ready for his dinner.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

That's a good-looking omelette.

33 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE - NIGHT 3 33

Strike slings the manuscript of *Bombyx* onto his desk. Is about to leave then--

Turns.

Taps a key to wake his computer. It brings up the last webpage he was looking at: news coverage of Charlotte's forthcoming wedding.

An itch he can't seem to stop scratching.

34 INT. ROBIN AND MATTHEW'S FLAT, BEDROOM - NIGHT 3 34

Robin, tired, works with her face bathed by the light of the screen. Images of Owen Quine. His students. Kathryn Kent.

Matthew snores lightly beside her.

Robin leans across to her alarm clock and resets it from 6am to 5am.

35 INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - NIGHT 3 35

Strike settles down to read *Bombyx*. Turns to the first page.

36 EXT. BOMBYX, THE ROAD FORWARD - HALF-LIGHT 36

A masked young man, BOMBYX, walks towards the lights of a distant city.

His passage is arrested by a masked woman in a whore's get-up -- SUCCUBA. Her mask features an owlsh pair of spectacles that are redolent of those worn by Leonora.

BOMBYX

I only wish to continue my journey.

SUCCUBA

And I wish to arrest your passage.

Bombyx backs away hesitantly, but the succubus is upon him.

She parts her wide exaggerated mouth and tongues his face, chipping the paint from his mask.

SUCCUBA (CONT'D)

I will make from your body a new body. My own child.

Succuba presses Bombyx face down into the ground, easily suppressing his attempts to struggle free. With one hand she claws down his trousers, revealing his naked rump.

37 INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - NIGHT 3 37

Strike sets the manuscript aside -- barely dented.

Strike turns on the football on his TV. With one eye on the game, he picks up the next sheaf of pages...

38 EXT. BOMBYX, THE ROAD ONWARDS - HALF-LIGHT 38

Bombyx lies exhausted, defiled and asleep at the side of the road as a CARNIVAL OF GROTESQUES parade past him.

Only now instead of wearing masks Bombyx and Succuba are played by Quine and Leonora respectively.

From a silk thread, a woman-sized TICK now lowers itself onto Bombyx's sleeping body. It is played by Liz. It buries a knife-like straw into Bombyx's shoulder and begins to sup on his blood.

Bombyx wakes and half-turns, groaning in distress.

BOMBYX

No! My blood is my own blood!

TICK

I will leave you enough to live on.

BOMBYX

Tick, I beg you! I owe you nothing.

TICK

Your future is my food and my drink. I will suckle the best of your days, the choicest cuts of you, and only then can I let you sleep.

The Tick digs its straw-like weapon deeper into Bombyx's flesh and he SCREAMS in agony.

39 INT. STRIKE'S BEDSIT - NIGHT 3 39

Strike now fully-commits... to the sports channel. He tosses the manuscript onto the floor by the bed, spilling pages.

Lights a cigarette and opens a bedside beer.

STRIKE

(to the players on TV)

Come on then!

40 EXT. TALGARTH ROAD HOUSE - DAY 4 40

The artist's studio homes on Talgarth Road are striking, even with the dual carriageway rattling their glasswork.

Strike finds number 579.

He slides a key into lock -- opens the door -- and immediately smells something bad.

He pauses.

Takes out a pair of rubber gloves from his pocket and slips them on. Advances into the darkened house.

41 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE - DAY 4 41

Robin has picked up the *Bombyx Mori* manuscript and is leafing through the pages as she fields calls etc.

ROBIN

(on phone)

Yes, I'm so sorry, he was detained on another case. He will see you tomorrow though. Sorry.

42 INT. TALGARTH ROAD HOUSE, HALLWAY - DAY 4 42

Strike tries a light switch -- nothing.

He ventures deeper into the house.

43 INT. TALGARTH ROAD HOUSE, MAIN ROOM - DAY 4 (MOMENTS LATER)⁴³

Strike sees it as soon as he enters the room--

Lit by daylight streaming in through the vast, dirty front window, is the body of a man.

He is naked, roped, and his torso has been slit open from crotch to neck, his guts removed.

Flies buzz over the body. None landing.

Around the body, six plates have been arranged, with silver cutlery, napkins and wine glasses set out for formal dining.

In several places the skin of the corpse has been burned by chemicals. Acid poured liberally over the body has bleached the floorboards around it.

Strike stares.

The victim is Owen Quine.

44

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE - DAY 4

44

Robin sets the manuscript down as Strike enters.

STRIKE

He's dead. I found his body at that address. Police are there now.

ROBIN

Oh my God. Does his wife--

STRIKE

Police are there as well.

(beat)

It was a really odd murder scene. Quite disturbing.

Strike half-hands his phone to Robin.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

Pictures are pretty grim.

Robin's own phone RINGS. It's Matt. She puts it on silent.

ROBIN

Sorry...

Robin reaches and takes Strike's phone. She looks.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

(shocked)

Oh. Is that..?

STRIKE

Who'd kill someone like that? It's demented. Gutting someone and taking their intestines away.

ROBIN

(galvanised)

No, no... you have to-- Look at the last chapter.

She fumbles to pull out the last chapter.

STRIKE

Have you finished it already?

ROBIN

I skipped to the end first. I always do.

(finding the pages)

Read this. Go on!

Strike reads.

45 INT. BOMBYX, THE CASTLE - HALF-LIGHT 45

Bombyx is carried, SCREAMING, into the Castle's great room, by HOODED MINIONS.

His belly is swollen, as if he is heavily pregnant. He is stripped bare on the command of PHALLUS IMPUDICUS, whose bald headed mask is only slightly-less grotesque than the pendulous rotten cock protruding from his crotch.

Five other guests move towards Bombyx.

Leonora the Succuba is one of them and the Tick -- unmasked as Liz Tassel -- is another. HARPY is masked.

THE CUTTER, wearing a mask with horn-rimmed glasses and the male dwarf VAINGLORIOUS are also anonymous.

They overpower Bombyx with ropes, place him on a platter and slit him open. A ball of supernatural light is lifted from Bombyx's belly, leaving his body eviscerated of its guts.

They pour a jug of smoking liquid over Bombyx who -- still alive -- screams.

Then the six begin to eat him, feasting on his flesh and bones until Bombyx is dead.

46 INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE - DAY 4 46

Strike is flabbergasted by what he's just read.

ROBIN

The hero of his book dies in exactly the same way as Quine did.

STRIKE

Tied up, guts torn out.

ROBIN

Must be the grimmest bit of the whole book -- and someone made him re-enact it.

Robin's phone BUZZES. Matt again.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'm just going to...

Robin picks up her phone. Strike courteously moves a few yards away.

Strike notices the expression on Robin's face change. He overhears her say:

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Where are you? I'll come straight away.

She hangs up looking ghostly.

STRIKE
Everything alright?

ROBIN
Matt's mum's died. I-- I'm sorry. I think I'll have to...

STRIKE
(beat)
Tell him I'm sorry, will you?

Robin nods.

ROBIN
I'm going to run and get on the tube. I'll call you later.

46A EXT. TALGARTH ROAD - DAY 4 46A

A murder scene now, taped-off and guarded.

47 INT. TALGARTH ROAD, FRONT ROOM - DAY 4 47

ANSTIS walks in to join Strike.

He pulls off a respirator mask. In doing so he reveals that his face is badly scarred. He greets Strike with enthusiasm, pulling him into a man-hug.

ANSTIS
Mystic Bob! I pulled a few strings to get the case once I heard it was one of yours. How are you? How's the fiancée?

STRIKE
We broke up.

ANSTIS

No! Shit, sorry mate. What--

STRIKE

How's the case looking, Rich? How about forensics?

ANSTIS

Time of death's going to be a bastard. Guts are missing, so there's no last meal to date and then there's acid everywhere. Even the flies stayed off the body so we've got no maggots. We've got a witness though.

Anstis, mindful of the arrival of another POLICEMAN, moves them on to a more discreet location to talk.

ANSTIS (CONT'D)

Neighbour saw a woman in a burqa come out of the property about ten days ago with a sports bag.

STRIKE

Are they credible?

ANSTIS

Think so. Says he noticed because the house is usually empty. He thought Arabs might have bought it.

STRIKE

Burqa's not a bad disguise. Do we assume the bag was full of Quine's intestines?

ANSTIS

Assume so, yeah. We'll have the dogs search the rubbish dumps. We've got a suspect as well. The wife.

(beat)

He was having an affair, probably going to leave her. But if he dies she gets a nice insurance pay-out. She's got a key to this place. All adds up.

STRIKE

I don't think she's got the ingenuity to pull off something like this. And she did hire me to find him.

ANSTIS

You don't have the full picture, mate. We talked to the neighbours. Massive argument in the street the night before he goes. Did she tell you that? And get this: before she married him? Worked in her uncle's butcher shop in Hay-on-Wye. Gutting pigs, the works.

Another POLICEWOMAN walks into the room. Anstis is evidently pleased to be able to make introductions.

ANSTIS (CONT'D)

(to the Policewoman)

This is my mate, Cormoran. Ex-SIB. The bloke who saved my life.

STRIKE

(to the Policewoman)

Hi.

POLICEWOMAN

I've heard lots about you from Richard.

After a beat, somewhat awkwardly, Strike returns to business.

STRIKE

He'd just finished the manuscript for a new book. It makes some very unpleasant allegations about people he knew. Each of them has a motive, if that's what you're looking for.

ANSTIS

But only if they read it.

STRIKE

The killer definitely did. They killed Quine in exactly the same way the hero of his book. Tied up, gutted and laid out to be eaten.

ANSTIS

Bloody hell.

(beat)

Is Leonora Quine in it?

STRIKE

Yes.

ANSTIS

Not hard for her to get a look at
his work in progress.

48 INT. ROBIN AND MATTHEW'S FLAT, KITCHEN - NIGHT 4 48

Robin finds Matthew sitting on the kitchen floor drinking
from a bottle of wine.

She sits next to him and pulls him into her lap, stroking his
hair as he sobs.

49 INT. LEONORA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 4 49

Orlando is drawing at the table, working intensely. Leonora
talks softly to Strike re: Orlando.

LEONORA

She's upset. It's all the coming and going. They asked her questions. I told them what she's like, but they still did.

STRIKE

I'm sorry for your loss.

LEONORA

Yeah, and they said that as well but with them you can see it's like they have to say it.

STRIKE

I can't do much more for you now, Leonora. It's a murder case. There's no charge for the work we've done, so please don't worry about that.

ORLANDO

Shush.

LEONORA

They dug out photos -- these were private photos -- and they were all like, look, there's him tied-up by you, and I'm saying, yeah, but that's what he likes! How's that mean anything to anyone?

ORLANDO

I want it quiet.

STRIKE

I can recommend a good lawyer. She's an old friend of mine. If they question you again--

LEONORA

Why've I got to pay for a lawyer now?! All I ever done was look--

Orlando snaps at the noise, the stresses of the day rushing out of her at the rise in volume.

ORLANDO

Want Daddy!

LEONORA

It's alright, Dodo.

Orlando is gripped by a tantrum, swiping everything -- paper, pens -- off the table, swinging her arms wildly. As Leonora tries to hold and calm her, a stray hand catches her painfully on the nose.

Strike rises to help -- but Leonora waves him away.

LEONORA (CONT'D)
Let's do a cloud.

Even while she holds a thrashing Orlando, Leonora takes a sheet of paper and draws a big, fluffy cloud.

LEONORA (CONT'D)
What goes in a cloud? A bird?

ORLANDO
Want Daddy!

LEONORA
What kind of bird!

ORLANDO
Daddy.

LEONORA
A blue bird? Or a red bird?

ORLANDO
Red bird.

LEONORA
There's a red pen for you then,
Dodo. You put it there.

Orlando is calmer. Draws a cursory red bird. Then gets up and stomps out of the room and upstairs to her bedroom.

A long silence.

A little line of red -- an incipient nose-bleed -- snakes down towards Leonora's lip.

LEONORA (CONT'D)
You must think... Getting cheated
on and then... I'm not getting
anything right, am I?
(beat)
I'm a bit scared they'll take me
away from her. She can't manage it.
It's only ever been me and Owen.

50 EXT. DENMARK STREET - DAY 5 50

Strike opens the door -- flashbulbs and questions hurled at him. The news is out.

REPORTER

Why didn't you report the missing man to the police?

REPORTER 2

Trying to embarrass the police, Mr Strike?

Strike thinks twice about going out. He closes the door.

51 INT. ROBIN AND MATTHEW'S FLAT, KITCHEN - DAY 5 51

Robin makes Matthew breakfast. He's in T-shirt and boxers -- not going to work. She puts bacon and eggs on his toast.

MATTHEW

That's great. Thank you.

ROBIN

What time's your train?

On the muted TV, news footage announcing Quine's death plays unnoticed by either of them.

MATTHEW

Eleven. Do you think you can get the day off? Maybe come with me?

ROBIN

(beat)
I'll ask. I'd like to.

MATTHEW

There's a weirdly huge amount to organise with a funeral.

ROBIN

I've probably got to go in today but if there are things I can do on the phone then you can hand all those over to me. And I'll try and be with you as soon as...

(beat)
Matt, you should try and eat.

52

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE - DAY 5

52

Robin finds Strike hard at work at his desk.

ROBIN

How long have you been up? You sent me an email at 5am.

STRIKE

There's a lot to do. How's Matthew?

ROBIN

Funeral's already arranged. He's going up today.

Beat.

STRIKE

Take whatever time you need.

ROBIN

We're getting a lot of complaints from clients...

(beat)

I just mean all the work with Leonora has really put us back.

STRIKE

I made a list of everyone who we know is ridiculed or slandered in the book. Leonora and Liz Tassel we already know about.

On Strike's laptop screen is a document that he scrolls through -- each person as they correlate to a character name, with question marks where there is uncertainty.

ROBIN

Succuba and the Tick.

STRIKE

Judging from how angry she was, Kathryn Kent is in there too.

ROBIN

I think she's Harpy.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I know it's cruel what he says about the three of them but there's others who come off much worse. The ones in the book who're killing people or torturing them.

STRIKE

Liz mentioned the book attacked his publisher. That's Daniel Chard. He could be The Cutter? Or Phallus Impudicus. Or Vainglorious.

ROBIN

So one of the really nasty ones.

STRIKE

Chard called me this morning He won't risk being seen with us in London and he's paranoid about phone-tapping, which is probably sensible. Going to have to meet him in bloody Devon. I'll need a hire car booked for tomorrow.

ROBIN

I'll drive us.

STRIKE

(beat)

You're sure? I can probably manage with an automatic--

ROBIN

I'm sure. Definitely.

53

INT. STRIKE'S OFFICE, STAIRWELL - DAY 5

53

Robin is on the phone out here so that she can't be overheard.

ROBIN

I can't get away today. We're really over-stretched on this case and I have a meeting at the British Library tomorrow that I tried to move but... but the good news is that's just around the corner from the station and I've got a ticket for the 8pm.

(beat)

(MORE)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Matt. I'll be there as
soon as I can. Love you.

Robin hangs up. And feels guilty as hell.

54

INT./EXT. HIRE CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY 6

54

Robin (at the wheel) and Strike head west down the M4.

STRIKE

Why'd he have to live in Devon?

ROBIN

At least it's not Cornwall.

STRIKE

Can I have these biscuits?

Strike has spotted biscuits in Robin's bag on the back seat.

ROBIN

Okay.

STRIKE

You sound hesitant.

ROBIN

No, have as many as you like. I'm just -- thinking about stuff that isn't biscuits.

Beat.

STRIKE

Did you get on well with Matthew's mum?

ROBIN

Yes, of course.

STRIKE

(beat)
Of course?

ROBIN

I mean, we got on fine.
(beat)
We're moving the wedding back.

STRIKE

Sounds... sensible.

Strike opens the packet and munches a biscuit. Unreadable.

55 INT./EXT. HIRE CAR, DEVON B-ROAD - DAY 6 55

Robin drives them through narrow winding lanes.

They turn through a pair of stone pillars. The country seat of Daniel Chard.

They roll up the driveway towards the house -- a heavily-architectural barn conversion, all steel and open plan modernism aggressively worked into ancient beams and bricks. In its starkness it manages to feel eerie.

56 INT. CHARD'S DEVON HOME - DAY 6 56

Daniel Chard opens the front door to Strike and Robin.

DANIEL CHARD
Thanks for coming. Would you--
we're shoes off, if you don't mind.

ROBIN
No problem.

Robin kicks off her shoes.

Strike leans against a wall and begins to take off one shoe--

DANIEL CHARD
Oh. I'd forgotten. Why don't you
leave yours on?

Chard himself is limping with a bound ankle.

ROBIN
Is your foot alright?

DANIEL CHARD
Relatively speaking.

STRIKE
Relative to mine?

DANIEL CHARD
No, I mean... it's a sprain is all.
Tea? Coffee?

STRIKE
Coffee would be great.

DANIEL CHARD
(calling out)
Manny!

A handsome, surly young Filipino man -- MANNY -- appears.

DANIEL CHARD (CONT'D)
Would you please make coffee for
our guests?

Manny slopes off without responding.

DANIEL CHARD (CONT'D)
He doesn't like it down here. Wants
to be back in London. Horrible news
about Quine.

STRIKE
How are his sales?

DANIEL CHARD
(beat)
Improving.

Chard ushers them towards a table and chairs, positioned to
show off their stark fine design.

DANIEL CHARD (CONT'D)
Look, what I have to say is
confidential.
(to Robin)
Would you mind waiting in the
kitchen?

Robin glances at Strike, but he says nothing.

Annoyed, she follows the path Manny took.

Strike and Chard sit.

DANIEL CHARD (CONT'D)
Look, I am fairly confident -- I
mean almost certain -- that *Bombyx*
Mori is not the work of one person.
Quine must have had an accomplice.

STRIKE

How can you tell that?

DANIEL CHARD

The style seems like his, certainly, but some of the things in it I doubt he could possibly have known. And I've been in books all my life. A writer's voice is particular. This felt to me like early Quine, perhaps, but never wholly. I detect a foreign voice in the text.

STRIKE

Hard to substantiate.

DANIEL CHARD

I know. If you can prove, definitively, who authored the book I will pay you ten thousand pounds. I hate gossip. And believing that maybe somebody I know told Quine private things about me...

(beat)

Have you read *Bombyx*?

STRIKE

I have.

DANIEL CHARD

(frowning)

Did Liz Tassel give you a copy?

STRIKE

I read the one he left for Leonora.

DANIEL CHARD

It's especially savage about me and about the writer Andrew Fancourt. I asked Andrew to join me in suing to prevent publication, but it's moot now Quine's been... you know.

STRIKE

Disembowelled.

DANIEL CHARD

Yes.

STRIKE

What does Quine allege about you both?

57 INT. BOMBYX, VAINGLORIOUS ROOM - HALF-LIGHT 57

Vainglorious, a dwarf with Andrew Fancourt's head, stands with Bombyx/Quine in a dungeon-like chamber.

DANIEL CHARD (V.O.)
In Andrew's case, Quine implies that Andrew himself wrote a nasty parody of his late wife's novel.

They watch a pale young woman, Ellie Fancourt, chained to her desk, typing endless pages.

VAINGLORIOUS
Effigy? Read your words aloud.

58 INT. CHARD'S DEVON HOME - DAY 6 58

As before.

STRIKE
Had Mr Fancourt read *Bombyx*?

DANIEL CHARD
No. But I gave him the gist.

STRIKE
I gather Fancourt and Quine were quite close before they fell out?

DANIEL CHARD
Who've you been speaking to?

STRIKE
Liz Tassel.

DANIEL CHARD

She represented them both. For awhile. Liz told everyone that Quine was a genius and she had a huge crush on Andrew. Not a woman who always gets it right. Not least with sending out *Bombyx Mori*.

59

INT. CHARD'S DEVON HOME, KITCHEN - DAY 6

59

Robin sits watching Manny finish preparing coffee.

ROBIN

I'm just going to use the loo.

MANNY

Are you friends of his?

ROBIN
No. We're private investigators.

Manny looks sharply at Robin.

MANNY
I didn't push him down the stairs.
He fell.

ROBIN
O-kay. Is the loo this way..?

Manny nods and Robin exits into--

60 INT. CHARD'S DEVON HOME, HALLWAY - DAY 6 (CONTINUOUS) 60

Robin's path to the loo is arrested by the sight of a canvas on a easel visible through a semi-open door. She steps into--

61 INT. CHARD'S DEVON HOME, STUDIO SPACE - DAY 6 (CONTINUOUS) 61

A large oil painting is in progress. The subject -- Manny -- has been painted lying naked and prone across a divan.

Robin stands and stares at it.

FLASH ON:

62 INT. BOMBYX, THE CASTLE - HALF-LIGHT 62

Daniel Chard, as Phallus Impudicus, sits with the body of a freshly-murdered naked young man draped over his lap. Light seeping from his wounds -- a knife in Impudicus' hands.

Impudicus fondles the dead boy's flesh lasciviously.

63 INT. CHARD'S DEVON HOME - DAY 6 63

Strike and Chard, as before.

DANIEL CHARD
I have a call with New York... I'm
sorry our coffee hasn't come.
Manny's a little bit... well.
(beat)
Take a look at Jerry Waldegrave.
(MORE)

DANIEL CHARD (CONT'D)

He'll be at our Centennial party.
I'll put you on the list.

Beat.

STRIKE
I'll need to retrieve my assistant.

DANIEL CHARD
Oh-- yes, her. Manny!

Manny opens the kitchen door.

DANIEL CHARD (CONT'D)
Could you fetch Mr Strike's
assistant?

MANNY
She's on the toilet.

Robin appears behind Manny.

Manny steps aside and Robin rejoins Strike.

ROBIN
All done, Mr Strike?

STRIKE
I think so.

Strike shakes Chard's hand. Chard ignores Robin entirely.

Robin forcefully extends her own hand.

Chard takes it and quickly shakes it, hardly making eye contact. He moves back into the back of the room, leaving Strike and Robin to put their shoes back on.

64

INT./EXT. HIRE CAR, DEVON B-ROAD - DAY 6

64

Driving in the opposite direction. Strike glances across at Robin, who is clearly pissed-off.

STRIKE
What did you want me to do? Insist
on you staying in the room and risk
him giving us nothing?

ROBIN
No, I'm sure it was the right thing
to do.

STRIKE

It was. He obviously thinks *Bombyx* has outed him for the first time. He's embarrassed.

Silence.

65

INT. ROADSIDE CAFE - DAY 6

65

Strike and Robin eat sandwiches and drink coffee in silence.

The silence elongates.

STRIKE

Come on then. Speak your mind.

ROBIN

Really, I'm fine.

STRIKE

Chard ended up telling me a lot of useful stuff. The book might have had multiple authors. It's an interesting thought. I get the impression Quine knew some damaging stuff. Maybe he was killed to stop any further revelations?

(off Robin's silence)

I wasn't going to stop him talking by picking him up on his manners.

ROBIN

It's not about that.

(beat)

What do you want from me?

Strike freezes.

STRIKE

As in...?

ROBIN

What were you intending when you hired me? Because I took a pay cut to do this. Did you think I wanted less money to do the typing in a smaller, shittier office?

STRIKE

No, that's no--

ROBIN

I can do more than answer the phone
and I want to do more. I've been
working really hard.

STRIKE

I know. I've noticed.

ROBIN

You said you're going to take on
another investigator.

STRIKE

Okay, okay. Listen. Just-- you
mightn't like what I'm going to say
but just let me get it out.

(beat)

I did take you on thinking I could
train you. 'Course I didn't have
any money for that, but I reckoned
you could learn on the job until...

Strike looks her dead in the eye.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

You've got plenty of aptitude.
You're smart and resourceful. And
you've got guts. But you're getting
married to someone who hates you
doing this.

Robin's face falls. Winded.

ROBIN

I found Kathryn Kent in less than
two hours.

STRIKE

Robin. It's not about whether you,
on your own, could do this.

(beat)

Did you tell Matthew you were doing
this today?

ROBIN

Not... yet. But I--

STRIKE

I need a partner who can share the long hours. Who'll give up their weekend on the drop of a hat. Things need investigating on Sundays. I wouldn't ask my assistant to do that stuff, but I'd demand it of a partner. And it's dangerous, what I do.

Robin's voice is thickening.

ROBIN

I've been useful, haven't I?

STRIKE

I'd struggle without you. But I'm not going to ask you to ruin your marriage over a job.

(beat)

It's what broke me and Charlotte up in the end. Amongst other things. She hated what I did. Hated that when she finally demanded I choose, I chose the job over her.

Beat.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

If it's what you really want, I'll put you on a surveillance course when I get the money. But I'm not spending that on an assistant.

ROBIN

That's what I want. This is what I love.

Robin dabs her eyes with her paper napkin.

STRIKE

Then cheer the fuck up and give me your sandwich if you're going to throw it away.

ROBIN

(sniffing)

It's not a good sandwich. Too much onion.

STRIKE

No such thing. Hand it over.

ROBIN

Can we get going? If I don't make my train I'll miss the funeral.

Strike stares at her.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Don't. Let's just go.

66 INT. OFFICE - DAY 6

66

Anstis looks up as a grinning POLICEWOMAN sticks her head through his door.

ANSTIS

You look cheerful.

POLICEWOMAN

Forensic accountant just called. We've got a proper smoking gun.

67 EXT. DEVON ROAD - DAY 6

67

Robin rounds a corner and finds -- traffic at a standstill. Nothing moving.

ROBIN

Bollocks.

STRIKE

I'll go and see what's happening.

Strike exits and walks up the road. Finds -- a broken down tractor stuck at a particularly narrow point, stopping traffic from getting past in either direction.

68 OMITTEDMOVED TO 69A

68

69

INT./EXT. HIRE CAR - DAY 6

69

Strike checks the time.

STRIKE

I'm sorry about this.

ROBIN

They won't be able to get in to tow it. Idiomatic place to break down.

Robin looks around, flustered.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Right. Can you open that gate?

She indicates a nearby gate to a farmer's field.

STRIKE

Why?

ROBIN

Just-- can you?

Strike hops out and opens the gate. Looking highly dubious -- it leads into a field.

Robin performs a tight, multi-point turn and drives through the gate, stopping to allow Strike to climb back in.

Robin revs the engine and starts driving the hire car through the muddy, steep field.

STRIKE

Hey... This is a bit...

ROBIN

I've got it.

Even as her wheels skid on mud, Robin has great control of the vehicle, anticipating slides and turning into an open gate linking them to the next field.

She drives along the hedge-line... but...

ROBIN (CONT'D)

No gate.

STRIKE

It was a nice idea.

The next available option is an open gate that leads into a patch of woodland.

ROBIN

Right.

Robin guns the engine and heads for it.

STRIKE

I'm not sure this--

ROBIN

It's four-wheel drive. It'll be fine.

Robin drives into the woods. No track, rough ground, the Toyota bouncing around on ruts and roots.

STRIKE

Fucking hell!

Strike grips the door handle. White knuckles.

ROBIN

Shout if you spot a way out.

Strike looks at Robin. What the fucking fuck?!

Robin takes them up a steep semi-track.

Strike breathing hard.

The back wheels seem to lose traction -- Strike really not enjoying this -- Robin focused, working wheel and gear stick - - sliding them around the approaching tree, correcting, sending them bumping up a steep incline and up and out--

Onto flatter, open ground.

Woods turning into field again.

And a gate leading onto the road that Strike is absurdly happy to see. He lets go of the door handle, unflexing his fingers.

STRIKE

Where'd you learn to drive like that?

ROBIN

I've always loved driving. I used to practice in the field with my uncle doing the pedals before I could reach them.

STRIKE

Yeah, but that was more than enjoying driving.

ROBIN

I did an advanced driving course. The year I dropped out of uni... afterwards it was something to do. Got me out of the house a bit. Could you get the gate?

Strike opens the gate to the road -- and soon they're out, into an empty lane, the traffic backed-up in the road behind them.

69A EXT. LEONORA'S HOUSE - DAY 6 69A

Police cars draw up.

The lace curtains on neighbouring houses twitch.

69B EXT. COUNTRY ROADS - DAY 6 69B

Strike and Robin driving. Strike's phone BEEPS.

STRIKE

Reception's back.

He puts the phone on speaker to play the answerphone message:

FANCOURT (V.O.)

(on phone)

Andrew Fancourt here. My agent let me know you were hoping to get hold of me. I'm afraid I have no comment on *Bombyx Mori*. Haven't read it, and don't intend to. And nor do I have valedictory words for Owen Quine. I disliked him both as a man and as a writer. Hope that helps.

70 INT. LEONORA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY 6 70

Leonora is angrily shouting at a POLICEMAN.

LEONORA

I can't just leave her, can I?!

POLICEMAN

Is there anyone you can call?

LEONORA

Oh my God. This isn't happening!

71 INT./EXT. HIRE CAR - LONDON - DAY 6

71

Robin has her foot down. They shoot down the Westway.

STRIKE

You'll make it. It'll be tight but you'll make it.

ROBIN

I can drop you at--

STRIKE

Forget about me. Just get as close to the station as you can.

ROBIN

What are you going to do with the car?

STRIKE

Let me worry about that.

ROBIN

But you can't drive it.

STRIKE

Do you want to get to this bloody funeral or not?

ROBIN

What's the time now?

STRIKE

Ten to eight.

ROBIN

There's no way I'm going to--

STRIKE

Just put your foot down!

72

EXT. LEONORA'S HOUSE - DAY 6

72

Leonora is led out towards the waiting police car in handcuffs. Orlando breaks free of their neighbour Edna and rushes to cling to her mother.

EDNA

Come inside, loveheart. You have to.

Both Leonora and Orlando are hysterical with tears.

LEONORA

Be good for Edna. Be a good girl.

ORLANDO

Want mummy and daddy! Want mummy!

Edna steps forward and tries to take Orlando back inside, but Orlando fights to be with her mother.

LEONORA

(to Edna)

Call him! Tell him what's happened!

The POLICE are sensitive to the situation, evidently unhappy seeing Orlando so distressed.

Orlando sits on the threshold of the front door and howls.

LEONORA (CONT'D)

I'll be home soon, Dodo. I promise.

Leonora chokes as she is placed in the back seat of a car.

73

INT/EXT. HIRE CAR, ROAD NEAR ST PANCRAS - NIGHT 6

73

The towers of St Pancras appear...

STRIKE

Pull over and run.

ROBIN

But what--

STRIKE

Go!

Robin pulls over. Grabs her bag from the back seat...

ROBIN

Thank you.

...and runs.

Strike watches Robin dash into the night.

74 INT. KING'S CROSS STATION, PLATFORM - NIGHT 6 74

Robin races to board the train. Squeaks in through the doors seconds before they close.

75 INT./EXT. HIRE CAR - PARKED NEAR ST PANCRAS - NIGHT 6 75

The mud-splattered car is parked where Robin abandoned it. Strike has the window down and accosts a passerby, TRIONA.

STRIKE

Excuse me. Do you know how to drive a car?

TRIONA

Yes...?

STRIKE

I'll pay you twenty quid to drive me home in this car.

TRIONA

Why can't you do it?

STRIKE

I've only got one leg and my driver had to go home.

She's evidently not convinced.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

Do you want more money or is it the situation as a whole that's making you hesitate?

(Strike's phone RINGS)

Excuse me.

His face falls as he hears the news.

STRIKE (CONT'D)

Arrested or charged?

That does it for Triona -- she quickly hurries away...

END OF PART ONE