

BRIEF LIES

A Play in Three Acts

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Act I**SCENE 1:****TABLOID GIRL**

NARRATOR SHARON, CHIEF REPORTER

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE, LONDON, WINTER NIGHT, 2010

THE SCENE OPENS ON AN OFFICE WITH THREE DESKS, THREE JOURNALISTS LOOKING AT SCREENS AND TAPPING THEIR KEYBOARDS, LISTENING TO THEIR EARPIECES.

SPOTLIGHT ON SHARON, CENTRE STAGE, NARRATOR/REPORTER

SHARON IS A LARGE DARK-HAIRED WOMAN IN HER THIRTIES, PAINTING HER NAILS, DESK PILED UP WITH THE PARAPHERNALIA OF A NEWSPAPER OFFICE AT NIGHT: BOTTLES OF WATER, HANDBAG, PLANT, MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, FILING CARDS, NOTEBOOKS, PENS, PENCILS, RUBBERS, DIARY.

TOUSLE-HAIRED, SMOKING, SHE SITS AT HER DESK TRYING TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE TO HER CHIPPED NAILS

SHARON

I DON'T WANNA BE HERE. I just so DO NOT WANT TO BE HERE.

THERE IS A YELL OFF STAGE, GRUFF MALE

VOICE OFF

Sharon, what are you on about, who you talkin' to? What the fuck are you doin'? Subs are waiting. Copy needed NOW, not tofuckingmoro.

SHARON LOOKS UP AND AWAY IN THE DIRECTION OF THE VOICE FROM THE DESK BEHIND HER

SHARON

Where the fuck I am is sitting at my desk, half cut, smoking when I shouldn't, wishing I was at the pub, trying to meet a deadline on a piece that's got about as much hope getting into the paper as I have getting into the Royal Ballet.

SHE OPENS HER HANDBAG, RUMMAGING.

SHARON

Why do you want my copy now when you know it's never going to see the light of day? I know. We're not even supposed to ask. What? Question God? I don't think so.....

SHE FINDS ANOTHER CIGARETTE,
STICKS IT IN HER MOUTH, STARTS
LOOKING FOR A LIGHTER.

SHARON

It's half past eleven at night. I'm back here by nine tomorrow so the subs can mangle the shit out of my copy before they spike it...

SHARON MOVES AWAY FROM THE DESK

SHARON

WHAT A LIFE..

BEHIND HER ON ANOTHER DESK NIGHT
EDITOR JIM IS MAKING HIMSELF A
ROLL-UP. HE PUSHES HIS CHAIR BACK
ONCE HE'S LICKED THE PAPER AND
THROWS A CAN OF COKE INTO A
BASKET.

SHARON'S EYE FOLLOWS IT

JIM

Go home Sharon. The Editor's had a tip off about the missing girl and sent Frank off to West End Central. If her ladyship is residing at Her Majesty's pleasure, nothing'll happen til the morning, we'll slap this into shape and stick it online tonight - it's about Isabelle Broughton's ever-changing love life innit?

SHARON TAPS HER KEYBOARD, LOOKS AT
HER SCREEN, AND CLOSES DOWN.

SHARON

Now he tells me! I've filed it to News anyway, not online. Catherine says the boss has his knickers in a twist about this story. Thinks it's going to boost the circulation if we get a scoop. Huh.

SHE MOVES CENTRE STAGE, INTO THE
SPOTLIGHT, TO TALK TO THE AUDIENCE

SHARON (CONT)

That's why I'm still here at midnight like the dumb blond I'm not.

SHE SMOOTHS DOWN HER SKIRT, still talking to the audience

SHARON

They've put me on a story about a missing socialite - Lady Isabelle Broughton. Want me to team up with a new girl from the online office - Daisy Greene. Her editor Leo says she can post a blog and tweet like a bird, but another little birdie says she doesn't know jack shit about real newspapers.

By which I mean print. The printed word.

The proprietor of this very successful group of newspapers, Eye Limited, is called Toby Greene, who turns out to be Uncle of Daisy Greene. Toby Greene, our boss and a kinda god around here, is very keen on sassy little online operators, thinks its the future of newspapers, but MY boss, the Eye's Editor, Jack Harwich - he's an old fashioned newspaperman, earned his spurs in Fleet Street. He likes newsprint and paper, none of those shiny green screens and gobbledegook.

I'm with him on that.

SHARON PICKS THE COKE OUT OF THE BASKET JIM DOESN'T STIR FROM HIS SCREEN.

BEHIND HER THE OTHER REPORTERS ARE STILL DUMBLY HAMMERING THEIR KEYBOARDS, NODDING THEIR HEADS.

SHARON (CONT)

An' I don't like working with some-one else. Other people get in the way, if we're trying out this girl I'll end up bumping into her principles, her and her ladyship friend, I can feel it coming.

AROUND THEM THE CLEANERS ARE DUSTING AND HOOVERING ROUND THE DESKS, SPRAYING WITH AEROSOLS, WHIPPING THE SURFACES, SHIFTING THE PILES OF PAPERS

MOVEMENT: to be choreographed like a dance

SOUNDSCAPE: the thunder of the
printing presses under the
floorboards

SHARON (CONT)

If I wanted a split byline I wouldn't mind somebody like that snarly old Lynn Barber, or Jan Moir, at least they can write and we all like a bit of vitriol. Very Private Eye.

SHE DROPS THE COKE BACK INTO THE
BASKET

SHARON (CONT)

Now our Eye might seem a nice middle class newspaper with family values to most people but you need razors for elbows to get on here - and most of us would sell our gran for a good story - probably have....

DRAWS HEAVILY ON CIGARETTE AND
BLOWS OUT

SHARON (CONT)

So the 'it' girl Isabelle, was at school with Daisy Greene (pause). I've seen that Isabelle about town. She's mad as a March hare but she's got guts. Her Dad's another story - weird rumours about his personal habits -

Lady Isabelle does the social round stoned out of her head with a hole in her nose and a fistful of stiffies in her bag, makes sure she leaves every party with a whole lot more and that way she and her boyfriend stay happy in their stoned little bubble, not having to pay for anything.

If Isabelle and Miss Daisy were at school together it gives Daisy an edge on the story, one up on the rest of us ...question is, will she take it? Will she pin the butterfly to the wheel as they say? They tried with Mick Jagger. They certainly tried,

SHARON LAUGHS TO HERSELF,
SHRUGGING ON HER OVERCOAT

SHARON

And look at him now!

JIM IS FLIPPING THROUGH PRINTS
TRYING TO DECIDE IF THERE'S
ANYTHING HE CAN USE, HOLDS THEM UP
FOR SHARON TO SEE, INCLUDING a
HEAD SHOT OF DAISY WITH ISABELLE

JIM

Who's this then?

SHARON (CONT)

That's Daisy Greene, niece of our proprietor don'cha know. An' it makes a difference when genes come into it. Little bit of ice in all their veins/know what I mean?

VOICE OFF

Oi! Sharon! I don't need to know the colour of 'er lipstick, it's not flippin' Grazia. Just file and go.

SHARON

I'm on my way/

SHE STOPS TO FACE THE AUDIENCE
AGAIN BEFORE SHE EXITS

SHARON (*to the audience*)

We're about to find out what's happening with milady Isabelle and her doting entourage/

VOICE OFF

Go to the club Sharon. Go to the Neon. Check it out. See if the young lady has been there or if anyone knows where she is.

SHARON GOES BACK TO HER DESK.
WINDS A SCARF ROUND HER NECK

SHARON

But I'm knackered. I don't want to boogie I wanna go home.

JIM LOOKS OVER HIS GLASSES AT
SHARON

JIM

Are you coming or going Sharon? I need ID on these pix. Is there anyone you recognise? Weren't you at the club last night?

SHARON

I was.

JIM

So, just do it/

SHE MOVES OVER TO LOOK AT THE
PRINTS HE IS RIFFLING THROUGH HIS
HANDS LIKE CARDS

JIM

Are these the girls who d-jay at the Neon Club? The Saddler twins, Vicky and Ricky. Know them?

SHARON

They're friends of hers. String beans in spandex. They might gimme a lead/ know where she is or why.

JIM

That's all we want to know. Now off you go, back to the club. See ya tomorra!

SHARON STRIDES OFF STAGE WITH HER BAGS

BLACK OUT

ACT ONE**SCENE 2****CONFERENCE**

LIGHTS COME UP ON OFFICE

THE EDITOR'S OFFICE, MASSIVE DESK,
PILES OF NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES,
FOUR TELEVISION SCREENS ALL ON
MUTE

A DOOR DIVIDES THIS OFFICE FROM A
SMALL OUTER OFFICE (FOR
SECRETARIES).

EDITOR JACK HARWICH IS ON THE
TELEPHONE IN THE MAIN (HIS)
OFFICE. HE SLAMS IT DOWN AS LIGHTS
COME UP

JACK

Shit shit shit. Shit. We're fucked. I'm fucked.

JACK SWIPES AT SOMETHING ON THE
DESK KNOCKING A PILE OF PAPERS
ONTO THE FLOOR NARROWLY MISSING A
CUP. SWITCHES SKY SPORT TO MUTE

JACK (CONT)

Where in the hell is my son of a bitch deputy? The
circulation is CRASHING -

JACK COMES POUNDING OUT OF HIS
OFFICE

JACK (CONT)

Get that fucker Greg in here. We've got a circulation
crisis. Where is he? Still in the car? Get me Joe -
ok, so the car's arrived -

JACK KICKS THE PILE OF PAPERS
ACROSS THE FLOOR

JACK (CONT)

- big fucking deal. I want him in here before
conference. And get the rest of them into conference
before they choke on their lattes.

ENTER DEPUTY EDITOR GREG, ONE HAND
IN POCKET, NONCHALANT.

JACK STRIDES BACK BEHIND THE DESK
SHAKING HIS FIST AT GREG

JACK (CONT)

You're TOO LATE MATE. Chairman's having his 19th
nervous breakdown - don't you know what the fuck is
going on?

GREG (CONT)

We just lost half a million on our circulation, DOWN
ANOTHER 3 PER CENT IN ONE MONTH. Sorry you didn't see
it earlier boss, but it's been threatening for a
while, we're just looking the horse in the mouth -
with all its rotten teeth.

JACK

Newspapers used to bring cash into this group and now
it's less than half the profits.

GREG

We have to try something new.

JACK

Talk to me about advertising.

GREG

Not without Carl here.

JACK

Do it without Carl here. Stand on your own feet.

GREG

Well it's the internet, that's what we have to look
at. Everything's changing - page to screen - kids
filming on their mobiles, citizen journalism they're
calling it now -

JACK

Why did we just lose the Sony account?

GREG

Because kids download their music free, iPods,
iTunes, YouTube..all that stuff. They get it off the
internet. That means no advertising with us. We've
got to get an online operation that's in the
competition. Put some money into it.

JACK

Doesn't matter what Toby Greene says - a newspaper
like ours can't lift sales with a tinpot little
internet operation.

We can get our journalists moving...use our resources..get the big name writers in...

GREG

Ads on the box, boss, always does the trick. But it costs. And what are we promoting?

JACK (*sarcastic*)

Oh you know, family holidays in Afghanistan, granny in a Taliban b and b, teen skiing in the Bolivian ice puddles....

GREG

We can make deals though, papers always can.

JACK

Cut the crap. That's yesterday's game. Come up with a new line.

GREG

Well no more selling smart newspapers with shit CDs would be a good start.

JACK

CDs, DVDs, It's all waffle. Not what newspapers are about. Give me some real stories before these guys file in here for conference/

GREG

We've got to give our readers something different. Tomorrow digital will deliver news (iPad, iPhone, laptop)- news will be screen only - and to get ahead, hold our lead, we will have to specialise. One thing we're damned good at specialising in is the strong, sexy, in-depth interviews. STICK TO WHAT WE'RE GOOD AT.

JACK JUMPS TO HIS FEET AGAIN AND COMES ROUND HIS DESK TO FACE THEM

GREG

We have to get better, meaner, leaner, stories than anything you'll find on the internet, in the blogosphere. And make 'em cry. Give our readers and exclusive and make 'em cry.

JACK IS STEEPLING HIS FINGERS, LOOKING OVER THEM AT GREG AS HE MOVES AWAY

JACK (CONT)

For God's sake Greg. Think of a subject. Get a story. Do something no-one else can do.

HE GETS UP

JACK

We need more than Royals and the X Factor. We've got to get some grown up sex - get Catherine - who got a line on the Broughton girl's break-up with her boyfriend? I hear her old man's bothered she's gone missing. I'm told the paps got pictures, the row was in a club. Not a great story but she's Lord Broughton's daughter - and he's the bloke who's shit stirring with that new drugs Bill close to the Tory top table. Election coming up/

GREG STOPS BY THE DOOR

GREG (CONT)

Ask Catherine WHY Isabelle Broughton and her toy boy split up. I bet you next year's salary she's sitting on it. THAT's a story to save us. Sex, drugs and politics.

JACK

You're right. I know Catherine was at the party where the row happened so she's got to know something. If Broughton's panicking there's a reason.

GREG

We just have to find it.

JACK

What's he worried about? Get politics on it, and get Catherine in here!

GREG

I'll bring her in Jack. The others are lining up. We'll nail an exclusive we can lead with, splash it, then trump them all - we just need...

JACK

What about trawling the internet for information about the Broughton girl. Where's Jim, have we got reporters on it?

GREG

NEWS have been onto it since last night but I don't know how far they've got or why Jim's not here.

JACK

We need Leo here too. This has to be carefully planned and monitored. His online lot have to be part of it - if only to make sure they don't blow the whole thing - and I need that girl Daisy who's been working for him.

GREG WALKING OUT OF THE ROOM,
STOPS

GREG (CONT)

And a stunning tit girl we can splash on the front page.

CATHERINE COMES BRISKLY INTO THE ROOM LOOKING CHIC AND SEXY. SHORT LEATHER SKIRT, SILK SHIRT, BUCKLED BELT, HIGH BOOTS.

CATHERINE

TIT girl, really, are we back in prep school boys?

CATHERINE SITS DOWN AND CROSSES HER LEGS WHILE GREG AND JACK watch MESMERISED

CATHERINE

You wanted to see me Jack?

JACK

Broughton. Max. What do you know about the family? About Isabelle Broughton's row with her American boyfriend? I haven't seen it on the schedule. Why not?

CATHERINE

I've got some of the girls out doorstepping the family now, Sharon's checking the library and we're doing a comment piece - Izzy Broughton is finding out the hard way that toys, and their boys, come at a price. She says she got bored of the fast lane but that sounds like a line to me - just bored in the sack probably.

JACK

I thought HE had the money. Getty, isn't he?

CATHERINE

Sub section of the main family - and he's not willing to pay out for our Izzy's habit, which I gather is worse than people knew.

JACK

Why didn't you bring this up in conference yesterday?

CATHERINE

Not going to dangle the carrot til I know we've got the donkey. There's a strange twist. Came from Sharon - she was checking out the row and stumbled on it. But I don't think we can stand it up. I was going to let it go til I talked to you.

JACK

Well, here I am. Shoot. What do we have to do to stand it up?

CATHERINE

Nothing. That's the problem. We need to find her. Or find some-one who'll talk. She's gone missing, didn't turn up at home last night and no sign at any of her friends' houses. No-one admits to knowing where she is. She had the row, staggered out with some actor, and hasn't been seen since. Wouldn't be such a big deal if she hadn't just split from one of the richest kids in America.

GREG

Got a lead?

CATHERINE

MAYBE. Sharon overheard two friends of Isabelle's, in the loo at the Neon Club, saying she'd been busted but she was too far away to get it on tape so we can't use it.

JACK

Get the new girl, Daisy Greene, to tell you what she knows. Toby told me they were at school together. Put her on a doorstep.

CATHERINE

She's never done a doorstep in her life! She's just been working for Leo's little online set up, intern, that sort of thing, no real experience.

JACK

Neither had you when I brought you in from your 'modelling jobs'. Get her in here.

CATHERINE FLUSHES AND LOOKS AT HER NOTES

JACK (CONT)

If you don't think she can weather a doorstep, we'll use her to bring in Isabelle. Let's hope they didn't have a girls' falling out.

CATHERINE (CONT)

Now why would that be any worse than a boys' falling out, Jack?

GREG

Sharon thinks Dick Old was following the girls. She tried to get him to take snaps for her but Dick wouldn't commit.

JACK

Get the Picture Desk on it. Charlie can put an arm lock on my friend Mr Old.

HE LOOKS AT GREG, THEN CATHERINE

JACK (CONT)

Greg. Sort it. Catherine, get everything you can from Sharon then find the Broughton girl's ex-boyfriend, whatever his fuckin' name is - I want his head on a plate. Brief the girl too. Sharon can help.

CATHERINE

I'll try.

JACK

It's your job. Do it.

JACK IS LOOKING FOR HIS COAT

GREG COMES IN FOLLOWED BY DAISY

GREG

This is Daisy Greene, Jack, she's been working with Leo. I told him we need to borrow her.

DAISY

Good morning Mr Harwich.

DAISY MOVES TOWARDS THE EDITOR,
HOLDING OUT HER HAND, WHICH
HARWICH IGNORES

DAISY STEPS BACK

JACK (CONT)

I hear you were at school with Isabelle Broughton.

DAISY

About five years ago.

JACK

Friends?

DAISY (CONT)

Um. Best friends. Then.

JACK NODS BRISKLY

You've been working with Leo? I'll tell him I want you to work with Catherine (NODS TOWARDS CATHERINE) on the Diary so you can help us make contact with Isabelle Broughton - no more online shenanigans - go to the Diary office - Catherine, assign her a desk for a few days -

JACK TURNS TO DAISY FOR THE FIRST
TIME

JACK

Catherine will be running the story so you're answerable to her now not Leo. We want everything you know about the Broughton family, then do as Catherine tells you, and I'll be briefing her.

CATHERINE PULLS DAISY AWAY FROM
THE EDITOR'S DESK

CATHERINE

Come into my office Daisy....I'll brief you now.

BOTH WOMEN STAND TO ONE SIDE

CATHERINE

Did she have a boyfriend when you knew her?

DAISY

Izzy was good friends with Jamie Cranford. I don't think they were boyfriend girlfriend, I think he was the first person to turn her on. To drugs I mean.

BOTH MEN TURN TO LOOK AT HER

JACK

Cranford as in Marquis of...? Shortshrift Castle?

DAISY NODS

CATHERINE

Friends now, do you mean? Where does he fit into the Getty relationship?

JACK PICKS UP HIS HEAVY ALPACA
OVERCOAT, SLINGS IT OVER HIS
SHOULDER STILL FIRING ORDERS AT
CATHERINE AND GREG

JACK (CONT)

Get the background Catherine - get one of your girls doorstepping Jamie Cranford - Greg - get hold of Jim and put News onto his circle, current girlfriends, bars, jobs . . . Whatever. Get the telephone numbers, and don't take any shit from Jed, say I said so - number crackers or hackers or whatever they call themselves. GET THE NUMBERS. Whatever way you can. Politics can dig around the lobby in Westminster and see what's going on with Broughton's Drugs Bill. Get Simon on it - get the Crime Desk involved, and put Frank onto finding where Isabelle Broughton's being held now/he can start with his West End Central contact.

GREG

Frank's got contacts everywhere...

JACK

I want all heads of department back here by 5.00 with a list of stories they are ALREADY ON TO, and YOU BETTER BE KICKING ASS NOT LICKING ASS.

GREG STARTS TO LEAVE THE ROOM,
JACK GOES BACK TO HIS SEAT, GREG
RETURNS RESOLUTELY FACING HIM
ACROSS THE DESK

JACK (CONT)

Tell Frank to get dirty if he has to. Brief him yourself. Keep the red-tops off the scent. We need to get a move on I can smell a race.

HARWICH IS GESTICULATING

CATHERINE

A rat more like/

CATHERINE AND DAISY EXIT

GREG

Yes. Near by. I gather you've had a call/

JACK (CONT)

I'm going to make a visit. Keep an eye on Daisy, Greg. I don't want this messed up. Keep Joe on standby with the car I'm on my way.

GREG

Where you off to?

JACK

My Club. Now take over on Sport. Find out how they're getting on with Coleen's Mum. We'll need a picture. Preferably in curlers. With Wayne.

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT ONE**SCENE 3****NEON NIGHTS**

INT. OFFICE

SHARON IS AT HER DESK, HANDBAG CRUMPLED IN FRONT OF THE SCREEN, BOTTLE OF WATER THE OTHER SIDE OF HER DESKTOP

SHE GETS UP FROM THE DESK AND MOVES FORWARD TO TALK TO THE AUDIENCE

SHARON

Instead of going back home last night I did as Jim said, Jim's the night editor, and what he says we do. I went on to the Neon Club which I'm sick of the sight of by now. The Diary ask me to go - they think it's a perk of the job, these posh parties full of AIRHEADS - but I went anyway. This Broughton thing is turning into a bit of a circus.

Last night Isabelle chose the Neon to have a spectacular bust up with her trustafarian toyboy Charles the Chump Getty (yawn) who'd take her anywhere if he didn't have to pay. Can you believe it? They go to these mock-up parties given by PR girls. Their social life revolves around fancy shops with fancy handbags and the whole thing's a publicity stunt. Perfect for Catherine, the Diary Editor, who probably wouldn't have a job without them.

SHARON MOVES CENTRE STAGE, SHUFFLING THROUGH A PACK OF STIFF WHITE INVITATION CARDS AS THOUGH SHE WERE A CONJURER

SHARON

LET'S SEE: PRADA, GUCCI, TODS - Bond Street stores offering what they can to snare the C list. Tods had bricks of Parmesan, Hermès - scarves and a pint of perfume - then the plastic fantastics will go on to the Neon which has a preening model on the decks and last night the Saddler twins were there, all of a silky flutter.

SHE HOLDS UP THE INVITATION CARDS

SHARON

There are enough celebrity freebies around to keep her and Chump happy. Or it did. Until Isabelle called time on the yankee, in public, at the Neon - in front of a shed load of paparazzi.

SHE MOVES TOWARDS THE LIP OF THE STAGE

SHARON (CONT)

As Isabelle slipped out of the back door with that spivvy little actor she picked up, I literally bumped into them out the back as I was following the twins trying to find out what they were saying about her. But without transport I lost 'em.

SOUNDSCAPE: roar of motorcycle engines

BACK OF THE STAGE: FLICKERING VIDEOTAPE PICTURES OF BIKES RACING THROUGH THE streets of LONDON CHASING A CELEBRITY

SHARON (CONT)

It was a bizarre evening, even by my standards.

SHARON SLIPS HER SHOES BACK ON

THE SPOTLIGHT HAS LEFT SHARON

MOVES TO THE NIGHT EDITOR JIM

HE TAKES A CALL

JIM

What's up Dick? Hmmn. Isabelle whats'er face? In the Neon? Got pix of them? Well what the bloody hell use is that to me? Who else was there? You mean that Sharon..our Sharon..in the ladies..tried to get you to take pictures?

Hm. Good on 'er. Why didn't you?

Got 'em already. Might 'ave known. Well you better send them over and I'll get Greg to grill Sharon in the morning. Thanks mate.

HE SLAMS DOWN THE TELEPHONE.

LIGHTS GO DOWN

THE PRINTING PRESSES ARE
THUNDERING IN THE BACKGROUND

SOUNDSCAPE: MIX OF REPETITIVE
DANCE MUSIC UNDERSCORED BY THE
DEEPER LAMENT OF PRINTING PRESSES
RUMBLING INTO LIFE BENEATH HER
FEET (BASEMENT)

SPOTLIGHT ON SHARON, SHE IS
LOOKING AT THE AUDIENCE

SHARON (*to audience*)

It was three in the morning, I was actually trying to follow the girl DJs to see if I could get a lead on Lady Isabelle.

SHE WAVES HER SHOES AT THE
AUDIENCE

SHARON (CONT)

I'd done something a bit crazy see. I'd seen them go into the loo talking about her so I went in the next toilet and tried to tape their conversation, see if they knew where Isabelle had gone. They just stumbled about saying something about her being busted but when I was outside Dick Old, the king of the paps as he's known, was following them too and I bet he's got pix 'cos I talked to him afterwards, asked him to take some for us, but he said no, he was off to bed.

I needed pictures, I knew we wouldn't be able to stand up the story if I couldn't hear the voices.

When I tried to listen the tape was fuzzy, lots of background noise - but the teccies can bump that up and even if it wouldn't back up a quote we can say it did. I always remember what people say.

Things started to hot up in the office. Now they want Miss Daisy to get Isabelle to talk to us, The Eye and nobody else, see? As an exclusive. Daisy's has been working online and they don't want her nipping off and getting the Broughton story for Leo and then have him post it online before we get our hands on it in print.

SHARON EXITS

BLACK OUT. SCENE ENDS

ACT ONE**SCENE 4*****THE DIGITAL GAME***

INT. ONLINE OFFICE, SUNDAY EYE

LIGHTS UP ON ANOTHER OFFICE, SMALLER BUT OTHERWISE IDENTICAL

COMPUTERS LINE THE ROOM, SOME SCREENS BLANK, OTHERS BUZZING

ONLINE EDITOR LEO, SKINNY, COOL,
IS LEANING AGAINST A WALL LOOKING
ANNOYED

DAISY GREENE IS AT ONE OF THE
DESKS

DAISY

Morning Leo. You don't look too happy.

LEO

Yeah, they just told me they want you to move over to Features.

SHE OFFERS HIM A COFFEE BUT HE
SHAKES HIS HEAD

DAISY

It's the Editor's idea.

HE STRAIGHTENS UP AGGRESSIVELY

LEO

What's that all about? I thought you were into this side of things - online, blogosphere, the digital future and all that/

DAISY

I am. I do. It's what I want (BEAT). But I want to write too. I mean - in the paper - be published.

LEO

Ok - be a 'writer' you mean? I get that, but why so sudden?

DAISY

A school friend of mine got busted. The Editor wants the story.

LEO

Right. So you're the bait.

DAISY

What?

LEO

Bait Daisy. What fishermen use. They've promised you a byline and that's your prize. Maybe even a picture byline if you bring in the goods. Then they put you in with your school friend, who must - let me guess - be a celebrity of some sort, and Bob's your Uncle. Girlie girlie talk and it's in the bag. All beans spilled.

DAISY

No. I mean I haven't seen her for years. I'm going to work on it with Sharon. You know Sharon.

LEO

Yes I know cuddly little Sharon, the one with bullets in her belt. She came straight off the Mirror's rock page and that's all she knows. Sex and drugs and rock and roll.

DAISY

The Editor told me she can write most of the reporters off the page.

LEO (*wearily*)

She can teach you a lot, not much of which I'd want to know, but I still don't know why you're going. You've done well here. And if you show promise in this business you need to get your foot on the cyber ladder not the keyboard.

DAISY

I'll come back and go on working online Leo.

LEO

If you go to the Diary you'll be run by that snotty little bitch Catherine and end up writing rubbish about C list 'celebrities'. I just hope you don't fall for that drivel or I wont want you back here.

DAISY

You will want me back. I've seen all that picture-led rubbish that gets put up on the website and I'll learn all about how to get it - Sharon's already told me how the PR people run everything.

LEO

We'll feed off celebrity for as long as people go on buying it - but one day soon they won't. They'll want more. Don't get stuck in the wheel and be a little cog Daisy. You're better than that.

DAISY

I just want to see how it all works - I don't even know what they want me to do but I'd love to be in on the interview - you know that Leo. You would too.

LEO

Only if I put it online first. What's the name of this friend of yours?

DAISY

Isabelle Broughton.

LEO

LADY Isabelle. Old man Broughton's daughter? The would-be Tory Minister trying to make dance drugs illegal and all that crap?

DAISY

I guess so, but I didn't know he was a Minister.

LEO

Not yet not yet. But getting closer. That's why Harwich wants the story. Bet there's more to it than meets the Eye - so's to speak.

LEO LANGUIDLY PATS HER ON THE BACK

LEO (CONT)

Go on then. Rise to the occasion, listen to your genes. Hop over to the other side.

DAISY

Uncle Toby thinks it's the future doesn't he? Digital. Says it's the only way forward for newspapers - but (looking around) this seems to be a pretty small office compared to the others.

LEO

If he's got visions of a digital empire he better move. There's no money. No advertising. They haven't worked out how to make money from it...

DAISY

I hear the FT is charging subscriptions - using a firewall -

LEO

Yeah. The Economist too. The money people. In this paper, there's a civil war. Your Uncle and Harwich.

Jack Harwich is an old fashioned newspaper man through and through. The very idea of print losing out to screen is such an anathema to him he'll go down with the sinking ship!

DAISY

I gotta go Leo.

LEO

That's cool. Just be careful.

DAISY

Because?

LEO

Don't let them ride you for a sucker.

DAISY

I won't let them ride me at all and one thing I'm not is a sucker Leo, you don't know me very well.

SHE SCOOPS UP HER BOOKS AND BAGS

LEO

Jack Harwich, sometimes referred to as Haddock Harwich, is not only formidably smart but..a bit of a cold fish.

He never looks you in the eye. The first and only thing he ever said to me was 'are you a cynic? If you're not a cynic you're no use to me'.

DAISY

Nice.

LEO

Be warned.

DAISY

I am warned.

LEO

Keep in touch. Tell me what's happening Daisy. Remember, executives are manipulators, writers are competitors and interview subjects always fair game.

DAISY

Where do friends fit in?

LEO

They don't.

HE OPENS THE DOOR, DAISY EXITS

SHARON ENTERS

LOOKS AT THE AUDIENCE WHILE LEO
LEANS AGAINST THE WALL LOOKING AT
HER

SHARON(*conspiratorially*)

If my Dad wanted a quiet word with one of his mates would he go to his Working Man's Club for a quick pint? Answer, yes. He knew he'd get the respect he deserved, and the space he wanted, because he wouldn't be going there if he didn't need both, would 'e?

So if men like the Editor of a national newspaper, or one of the blokes who want to run the country - wanna bit of peace and quiet, where do they go? To their clubs. Men like clubs. No kids, no mess, no women to mess with their heads.

Not surprising the Editor of the Sunday Eye and a man who wants to run the country choose The Gent's Club in Mayfair for their chat about Isabelle's little problems.

SHE SLIPS OFF HER VERTIGINOUS
HEELS AND EXITS TO THE THUNDER OF
THE PRINTING PRESS LAMENT

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT ONE**SCENE 5*****THE GENTLEMAN'S CLUB***

3.30 PM INT. DARK DINING ROOM OF GENTLEMAN'S CLUB, MAYFAIR. 30
AFTERNOON

HEAVY REGENCY FURNITURE, MASSIVE
FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS,

PRETTY GIRL AT RECEPTION, HUGE
FLOWERS DISPLAY BEHIND HER

IN A CORNER SITS LORD BROUGHTON,
SUAVE IN PINSTRIPE SUITE AND
SLICKED BACK HAIR, NURSING A GLASS
OF COGNAC

DOORS SWING OPEN

BROUGHTON STANDS UP AS JACK
STRIDES INTO THE ROOM PROFFERING
HIS HAND

BROUGHTON TAKES IT. HOLDS IT FOR
AN INSTANT TOO LONG, THEN SITS

BROUGHTON
Well, Jack Harwich, good to see you after so long.

JACK
Likewise. The Club preferable to jousting in print?

BROUGHTON
Indeed.

JACK
And how do you do?

BROUGHTON
As I am sure you know by now, I could be better.

JACK
Ah, thought that might be what you wanted to talk
about.

BROUGHTON
So you know what I mean?

JACK
I heard about your daughter.

BROUGHTON WAVES TOWARDS A CHAIR,
INDICATING JACK SHOULD SIT DOWN

HE DOES.

BROUGHTON NODS TO THE WAITER

BROUGHTON

What's your poison Jack?

JACK

I'll have spring water, no drinking on duty any more.

BROUGHTON

Not like the old days.

JACK

Can't remember when I last had a drink in the day
time.

BROUGHTON

Tough?

JACK TAKES A BREATH, THE TWO MEN
LOOK AT EACH OTHER WARILY. JACK
EXHALES AND LAUGHS EASILY

JACK

Good heavens no, I got over that years ago. Now I'm
an expert on mineral water...

THE WAITER EXITS

JACK CROSSES HIS LEGS AND WAITS

BROUGHTON

I'll get to the point then. What do you know about
Isabelle?

JACK

I know you have a daughter named Isabelle, a wife
named Arlene, and they are of similar age.

THE MEN ARE SILENT.

BROUGHTON

You know a bit more than that I'm sure.

JACK REMAINS SILENT.

THE WAITER BRINGS THE WATER.

JACK SHRUGS.

BROUGHTON (CONT)

My information is that some-one on your paper does know more.

JACK NODS AND TAKES A SIP OF WATER

HARWICH

Well we won't be the only ones.

BROUGHTON

Very well then (BEAT). You're right. I know where she is, was - roughly, but not the address.

JACK NODS AGAIN.

JACK

You think I can help? Put one of my guys on it?

BROUGHTON SIPS HIS BRANDY

BROUGHTON (CONT)

She was in the police station but they didn't keep her, had no grounds. They offered her a lawyer - they have to - but she said she'd done nothing, didn't want one, and didn't want to see me. Then later she texted me.

HARWICH

To say?

BROUGHTON

It's a long story. My daughter has had a drug problem since her mother died. (BEAT). Unfortunately it seems to be getting worse (BEAT).

HARWICH

It happens, I hear...

BROUGHTON

Crack cocaine, hellish, classless. Slaughters families. And it's destroying mine.

JACK SHIFTS POSITION

JACK

As you say. Classless.

BROUGHTON SIPS THE BRANDY

BROUGHTON

Her young - very young, step-mother..well. There've been problems..are..Marguerite, Isabelle's mother - she passed away while Isabelle was at school and since then/well/

JACK

I understand, I've been married more than once myself.

BROUGHTON

Yes, quite, well....

JACK

I'm sorry.

BROUGHTON

You knew about it?

JACK REMAINS IMPASSIVE, MEETING BROUGHTON'S GAZE, GIVING NOTHING AWAY

JACK

I heard something. We've got feelers out.

BROUGHTON

All I know is Isabelle doesn't want to talk to me. She wants money. Of course. But not to see me -

JACK

Did you try?

BROUGHTON

No. I wait to hear from her. She's wild, and you know - I have to be careful, the PM - election coming and all that. Can't put him in any kind of compromising position with this. Can't have the dirty laundry made too public.

BROUGHTON PICKS UP HIS GLASS AGAIN AND SWIRLS THE BRANDY HOLDING IT UP TO THE LIGHT

JACK

This new drugs Bill - criminalising soft drugs, as if we didn't have enough problems already -

BROUGHTON PUTS DOWN THE BRANDY AND LEANS FORWARD

BROUGHTON

I would ask your position on that, the paper's position, whether the paper would take a position - if I weren't so concerned about my daughter. We've been able to rely on you in the past old man, not sure which way the wind's blowing - whether Toby is likely to take a position at all?

HE SHIFTS IN HIS SEAT

HARWICH

Let's stick with the matter in hand.

BROUGHTON (CONT)

If one of those redtops gets hold of her they'll tear her to pieces. And my career.

HARWICH

SO. Where do I fit in?

BROUGHTON

I'll tell you what I know, get her to talk to you. You and only you get the story. You print it fast and full, so there's nothing left for anyone else. Offer her money if you have to. I want enough of a story in the Eye to make the other papers think there's nothing but bones left for them/

JACK

/you mean it's got to be one of those pieces that no-one wants to follow - we call it a scoop/

BROUGHTON

/so they get off Isabelle's tail, And mine. Can you do it?

JACK STANDS UP

JACK

Why are you talking to the Editor of one of the very papers that could raise its guns against you?

BROUGHTON REMAINS SEATED, LOOKING UP AT JACK NOW TOWERING OVER THE TALLER MAN

BROUGHTON (*cool*)

You know how to make this happen the way I want it. You can keep the low rent tabloids off my case and shape the story so it doesn't stink. Then my wife and I and my daughter can disappear for long enough/

JACK

To let the scent go cold.

BROUGHTON PULLS A CIGAR OUT OF HIS POCKET AND LOOKS AT IT

BROUGHTON (CONT)

You would have to be careful. My reputation unsullied, you understand? And in exchange, perhaps the first one to one with the PM if the Party gets in.

Your paper backs the campaign and gets the heavyweight prize. That's what you want isn't it, up the ante and a gong at the end of it?

JACK LOOKS AWAY FOR A MOMENT

HARWICH

There's a lot on the line. The internet is having a debilitating effect. Circulation needs a kick up the arse.

BROUGHTON (CONT)

You need a change of direction Harwich. Know your friends and keep your enemies close.

JACK HESITATES. TAKES A STEP BACK.

BROUGHTON

You get the exclusive interview with my daughter for your paper - and if you do it the way I want there's more where that came from.

JACK

And you expect me to believe that?

BROUGHTON

I'll tell you where my daughter was.

HE SIPS HIS BRANDY SLOWLY

JACK

I thought you didn't know.

BROUGHTON PAUSES, NODS

BROUGHTON

West End Central. They called. They pulled her up in a Lamborghini belonging to some actor.

JACK BOWS SLIGHTLY

BROUGHTON (CONT)

Now you do your bit. Do it so well we don't get any little fantasies popping up on the internet.

JACK

Don't imagine you hold the only cards. I have some interesting photographs. Under lock and key of course.

BROUGHTON STANDS, THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER

BROUGHTON

What Editor doesn't?

HARWICH

Well I'm sure it isn't the first time a man like you has heard that but I promise you, my threats are not idle.

BROUGHTON

Well now. Let's just hope we don't have to put it to the test.

HARWICH

How do you propose we proceed?

BROUGHTON

It's like trying to hold in a sackful of ferrets, keeping it all together, but it can be done. If we both stick to the deal.

JACK

I can't sit on a story like this. You know that. She's being held overnight in a police station AND YOU THINK NOBODY BUT YOU KNOWS?

HE IS ALMOST LAUGHING AT BROUGHTON

BROUGHTON

NO. That is not what I said. She WAS in a police station and now she's out, shaken, and doing what she always does - looking for money to buy drugs.

JACK (CONT)

She'll get it. If she knows where to turn. Every newspaper in the country will be after the story, and ready to pay. A Minister's daughter in a crack den. That would be enough without **your** new drugs' Bill and link to the next Prime Minister. This proposed legislation, outlawing dance drugs - ketamine, MDMA, speed...whatever - will look like a Vicar's tea party compared to your daughter chasing the dragon in a homeless shelter.

BROUGHTON

Exactly my point.

JACK STARTS TO WALK TOWARDS THE DOOR THEN TURNS SHARPLY

JACK

Let's not forget the boyfriends, the lame duck Cranford whose favourite date is a crack den, and the trustafarian American - whose break-up with your daughter we have two reporters on already, juggling with headlines in the News Room right now.

BROUGHTON SINKS INTO HIS CHAIR

BROUGHTON

Writing the headlines you mean, making the story fit.

JACK TAKES A STEP TOWARDS
BROUGHTON AND STOPS

BROUGHTON (CONT):

So an interview with the ex would raise the stakes in
this cut-throat game?

JACK (*drily*)

Every little helps.

BROUGHTON HALF RISES FROM HIS SEAT

JACK (CONT)

I'LL get one of my best girls onto it. They'd better
be ready to talk.

BROUGHTON

I'll do what I can. We'll speak tomorrow.

BROUGHTON REMAINS MOTIONLESS IN
HIS SEAT

JACK EXITS

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS/ END OF ACT ONE

ACT II**SCENE I****ONE IN THE EYE**

INT: OFFICE, SHARON'S DESK

SPOTLIGHT IS ON SHARON'S DESK,
stage left

SHE IS STANDING IN FRONT OF IT
FACING THE AUDIENCE, the rest of
the office is in darkness

SHARON

So after conference, while the gentlemen pull strings
in secret, we girls are put to work.

The story was found by the Diary so Catherine summons
Daisy - and to the Diary Daisy goes, away from the
little office in the back of the building where she
was learning how to post stories online, talk to
camera and figure out how to jump the broadsheets'
exclusives.

Getting much further ahead of the game than any of us
in fact, learning about cyberspace, the new digital
language, coming to grips with the future because if
we damned well don't we damned well won't.

I hear from Leo that she's a smart little cookie and
he's pissed off she's been nicked from his
department. I gotta warn Daisy not spill her secrets
in a moment of camaraderie - it's been done - when a
story gets posted online before its out in the paper
and then exclusives are lost, heads go flying, and
there's a fountain of blood on the walls.

SHARON RETURNS TO HER DESK

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS UP ON SHARON'S OFFICE
 SHARON IS STANDING IN FRONT OF HER DESK, CENTRE
 STAGE, IN WORKING CLOTHES

SHARON (*to the
 audience*)

The row with Isabelle's boyfriend in the nightclub,
 has been picked up by the Diary already and Daisy is
 about to be initiated into the joys of celebrity
 hunting, thinly disguised as 'writing', intriguing
 enough to inveigle the innocent newcomer.

SHARON STEPS FORWARD

SHARON

This is Daisy Greene everyone - here to help us find
 out a bit more about party girl Isabelle Broughton.

SHE BECKONS DAISY INTO THE OFFICE

SHARON

Daisy come in and meet the team, you've met
 Catherine.

DAISY EDGES INTO THE ROOM CARRYING
 TWO PAPER CUPS

SHARON GOES TO HER DESK AND SITS

CATHERINE IS AT HER DESK WITH PAPERS SPREAD OUT
 AROUND HER.

BEHIND HER ARE SCREENS, WALL PLANNERS, TELEPHONES,
 PLANTS

CATHERINE'S HUGE LEATHER BAG EMITS
 A BLEEP. SHE HAULS OUT HER MOBILE,
 LISTENS

DAISY PUTS THE TWO CUPS ON
 CATHERINE'S DESK.

CATHERINE

Don't mark the desk. Thanks Daisy. Glad Leo could
 spare you.

CATHERINE SHUFFLES THROUGH A PILE
 OF NEWSPAPERS..

LOOKS AT DAISY SUDDENLY

CATHERINE (CONT)

You have to swear to keep quiet about this project - ESPECIALLY to him, no posting it online or any nonsense like that - leaving us vulnerable to the prying eyes of our rivals.

DAISY IS NERVOUSLY TAKING STOCK

SHARON IS SLOUCHED OVER HER DESK
READING THE PAPERS.

CATHERINE

What happens between these walls stays between these walls, understood?

DAISY (*nervously*)

Sure.

SHARON

No gabbing to that dishy Leo.

DAISY

'Course not. No.

CATHERINE BECKONS BOTH WOMEN TO
HER, DAISY MOVES QUICKLY, SHARON
RELUCTANTLY

CATHERINE

Now I want you and Sharon to write up what you know so far and what you've heard, and file it to my basket. The Editor wants Daisy to be ready to talk to Isabelle when we find her, and News want you out door-stepping Sharon.

SHARON

Who's the lucky bloke this time?

CATHERINE

Not a bloke, so you can't use your Essex girl wiles. Find the girls you heard talking in the ladies loo. Talk to the Picture Desk, they'll give you Dick's numbers. Check in with Gavin and get the ex-directory numbers if you can -

DAISY

Who's Dick?

SHARON

Dick Old - paparazzi. Been doin' it for years. Going up in the world now, he's got his own 'gallery' in Knightsbridge where he sells glossy versions of his prints to ladies who lunch. But, he's got the access. He's got more access than (she looks at Catherine)..most people.

DAISY
Oh right, last night, the guy you were talking about -

SHARON
I'll get over to Pics then.

DAISY
What do you mean, talk to Isabelle? I don't know where she is.

CATHERINE
You know Isabelle Broughton disappeared last night.

DAISY NODS.

DAISY
I (BEAT) - saw it on Facebook. Posted by a friend of ours/

CATHERINE (CONT)
Well. We got a tip off. The Editor got a tip off. And somehow he knows you know her. And he certainly doesn't use Facebook.

DAISY
I went to school with her but I haven't/

CATHERINE
I hear you met Sharon at your school/

DAISY
She gave a talk to the Sixth Form, about Tabloid reporting.

CATHERINE
I bet she did. Useful I should think.

SHARON
Will be now!

CATHERINE
Did you know Isabelle dropped from sight Daisy?

DAISY
Well, you can't rely on Facebook - rumours fly/

CATHERINE
Yes yes, but was it from some-one reliable? Some-one we could speak to? We need whatever we can get.

DAISY
Leonie, she was at school with us, something she'd heard. Then Sharon told me what she overheard last night....

CATHERINE

We can't stand that up. What we need to know is what you know that can fill in the gaps, so do me bullet points. The Editor wants to talk to you, so you better come with me.

DAISY

I'll write up what I know.

CATHERINE

But later. And quickly. Sharon - check the library. Go online, ask Sue to get on Google and Wikipedia - every cutting on family and friends you can find, and you'd better hit the telephones, rev up all contacts including James Cranford while I take Daisy upstairs.

You better use one of those desks Daisy - show her.

DAISY SITS DOWN AT A SCREEN.
SHARON TAKES THE CHAIR BESIDE HER.

CATHERINE (CONT)

We've got to work with News on this one. They're sending some-one from the crime desk to the Police stations.

SHARON STANDS UP, NOTEBOOK IN
HAND, TO GO TO THE LIBRARY.

DAISY

You mean we know where she is now?

CATHERINE

Frank Jones, chief crime reporter - he's checking it out.

SHARON'S MOBILE BLEEPS

SHARON

FRANK'S got her?

DAISY

Where?

SHARON CHECKS HER MOBILE

SHARON CHECKS HER MOBILE

He's got a source at West End Central/maybe that's where he is now - I couldn't reach him.

CATHERINE

I'll check with Greg.

SHE PICKS UP HER DESK PHONE, DIALS
A NUMBER, LISTENS

CATHERINE (CONT)

Jack's still out, but he called in to say he thinks she is at West End Central and Frank had already got there - his contact called him.

DAISY

What's that?

SHARON

West End Central Police station. She was busted. Driving a car belonging to that new James Bond guy/

DAISY

Dan somebody?

SHARON

Daniel. That's the one. I've gotta check in with News/

DAISY

Are you going to look up stuff on Isabelle's family?

SHARON

Family, friends, lovers - boyfriend, Chump Getty the Second, or whatever the flying freak he's called.

DAISY

Isabelle's Mum died when we were at school. She took it...very badly.

SHARON

Might explain the drug habit.

DAISY

It does.

SHARON

We can work on this together Daisy. It'll be fun. Usually new girls don't get tipped into the deep end like this and you might need a bit of hand-holding, little bit of guidance.

DAISY

We haven't seen each other since Isabelle left...since...

CATHERINE

We might make our living from gossip girls but WRITE it don't talk it.

THE SWING DOORS SMASH OPEN AND
GREG COMES IN.

GREG

You got the news? Ok good. Jack wanted to see you but he's not back yet. I'll give you the brief.

HE SWINGS OUT AGAIN.

CATHERINE

That means in his office. Give it to me on a canape Daisy, what you know about the Broughtons. You get to the picture desk Sharon, then meet me in the Editor's office.

SHARON FOLLOWS GREG OUT OF THE DOOR. CATHERINE SITS ON THE DESK WHERE DAISY IS STARTING THE COMPUTER. SHE LOOKS UP AT CATHERINE.

DAISY

Izzy's got a brother, Ben. They were tight, and she was close to her Mum, Marguerite but not to her Dad. She went to pieces when her mother died; nobody ever heard if they ascertained the cause of death - misadventure I think it was called, but I'm not sure. She was found dead and they started saying she was depressed, and she drank too much - but it all got very hush hush. Isabelle didn't want to see her father after that.

CATHERINE

When did she get the drug habit?

DAISY

Around that time but it kind of started at school - she'd get migraines, and they gave her downers - Prozac or something. After Marguerite's death her father married this girl Arlene less than a year later and Arlene was only a year or two older than us. Izzy went on a bender - we did some really crazy things - then my Mum persuaded me to slow down. I went back to school and Izzy went to London.

CATHERINE

I read Arlene and she loathed each other.

DAISY

She didn't get on with her father either, he was a bully...

CATHERINE

Power does that. Or you don't get power without being one.

DAISY

Then I heard Izzy was hanging out with Jamie Cranford, you know how many times he's been busted and split with his father and disinherited, all that stuff - I figured she was heading in/ well, we were in different circles by then - I tried to reach her but none of the numbers worked. And I..I gave up. She'd made her own life and I didn't fit/

CATHERINE

So you haven't seen her?

DAISY

For five years.

CATHERINE

Draw up a list of things you'd like to know. Sharon will help you. She's done some tough interviews, she'll give you a blueprint, outline some questions, concentrate the mind.

CATHERINE TUGS HER AWAY FROM THE COMPUTER.

CATHERINE (CONT)

Talk to Greg first, while Jack's out.

DAISY

I don't want to turn her over - or whatever it's called/

CATHERINE

It's called doing the story. Forget about your friends - unless they're useful.

DAISY

What?

CATHERINE

Only kidding. Come on. Get your skates on. We're movin' on up.

CATHERINE TURNS TO SHARON.

CATHERINE (CONT)

Sharon before you go will you ask Joe to get us a car. If Frank's gone already, Daisy will have to get to the police station and we may need to smuggle them back to the office.

EXIT CATHERINE AND DAISY.

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT II**SCENE 2****THE BUY-UP**

INT. OFFICE, NEWS REPORTER'S ROOM

SHARON, IN SHORT SKIRT, LEGGINGS, ANKLE BOOTS AND BAGGY JUMPER, IS PACING UP AND DOWN CENTRE STAGE, AWAY FROM HER DESK, BUT IN FRONT OF THE REST OF THE (NOW EMPTY) OFFICE

SHARON (TO AUDIENCE)

Well that was a crafty little Master Class in upwardly mobile journalism wasn't it? Miss Catherine Eye Life almighty giving the proprietor's girl a piece of her mind.

Lesson One: We make our living from gossip but God forbid we actually do it. No goss in the office.

SHE MARCHES UP AND DOWN

SHARON (CONT)

Catherine, now there's a perfect example of how working for a newspaper brings you up against people who aren't as good as they think they are. A sight too pleased with themselves for their own good, but you gotta get on with them because that's the job...

SHE STANDS WITH HER BACK TO THE AUDIENCE THEN WHIRLS AROUND AS DAISY SIDLES IN

DAISY

Hi.

SHARON (CONT)

Number one tabloid hack lesson: forget who your friends are unless they're useful and if they are, use them. That's the Eye mantra...And do what the Editor tells you. No question. His decision is final, rule *numero uno*.

SHARON SITS DOWN,

SHARON (CONT)

You want the job? There's a price tag Daisy - you kind of know there is one, but the betrayals are not so much hidden as disguised (SHE TURNS). You have to read more than the paper it's written on, there's more to learn than meets the Eye.

SHE MOVES CENTRE STAGE AGAIN

SHARON (TO THE AUDIENCE)

There's a lotta things this girl has to get straight before she heads into her first real interview which means I have to toughen her up and now she's got to listen to the Dep Ed because, as we know, the Ed is getting his just dessert in the Gentleman's Club half a mile away.

SHE BECKONS DAISY

SHARON (CONT)

Come with me.

DAISY AND SHARON EXIT RIGHT TOGETHER AS CATHERINE ENTERS STAGE LEFT, FOLLOWED BY DEPUTY EDITOR GREG

CATHERINE

So where the hell do you think he's gone?

GREG

One of his cronies.

GREG OPENS THE DOOR TO HIS OWN OFFICE AND TAKES A SEAT WHILE CATHERINE PACES

CATHERINE

It's almost four and you know what he's usually like when we're onto something/

GREG

That's probably it, he's onto something. Or some-one.

CATHERINE

It doesn't feel right having such a novice on a big story like this. Bloody nepotism, bloody nerve.

GREG

Yes I know Miss Diary Queen, it would play much better under your byline especially with that new picture (I know, I've seen it, Keith showed me when I was in the photographer's room!)but this time it ain't gonna work Cat's whiskers, you've got to let the young ones get a look in especially if they have some impressive contacts like this one does.

CATHERINE

You mean niece of The Toby? Think she can do it?

GREG

Think she bloody well has to or we're all in the
shit.

CATHERINE

I'll have to coach Sharon to coach her.

GREG

All I need is the wool, I can do the knitting. You
know I'm the best re-write man in the business.

CATHERINE

I'll do the boyfriend. Getty. See what I can get out
of him. Chasing his money so she can chase the dragon
- that kind of thing, then you could give me a decent
byline couldn't you?

SHE SITS DOWN SO THAT HER SKIRT
SLIDES UP HER LEGS AND HE CAN HEAR
THE HISS OF SILK AS THEY CROSS

GREG

Think we've got time for a quickie?

CATHERINE LAUGHS

CATHERINE

In about two seconds flat we are going to have two
lumpen journalists as voyeurs so no Greg. I think
not. Unless you fancy a foursome? Right now you have
to sort out the contract and I have to make sure
Daisy Greene realises how vital it is to get her
friend to sign it BEFORE not after the interrogation.
Now, are you going to do it or am I?

GREG REACHES FOR HIS TELEPHONE

GREG (into the telephone)

Hang on Jed! What happened with Coleen and her Mum?
Did you get the pictures? He's on the warpath. I
bloody well hope so! Good man.

HE PUTS DOWN THE TELEPHONE AS
DAISY ENTERS

GREG (CONT)

Jed's got Wayne in the picture too! Ah, Daisy.

GREG COMES OUT FROM BEHIND HIS
DESK

I'm Greg. Deputy Editor. The Editor is still in a
meeting. He's asked me to go through a couple of
things.

GREG MOVES ROUND THE DESK AND
SHAKES DAISY'S HAND, SITS DOWN
AGAIN

GREG (CONT)

As you know Isabelle, but you haven't done many interviews, Catherine will go through your questions. I'll give you the contract so you know the deal we're making.

GREG OPENS DESK DRAWER TO PULL OUT
A DOCUMENT

GREG

Money will change hands and this is not a girlie chat with an old mate but a deadly serious fishing expedition to enable us to assess how to put the story across and if indeed it is as interesting as everybody seems to think.

HE MOVES A FOLDER TOWARDS DAISY
ACROSS THE DESK

CATHERINE

WE have to get behind the image Daisy. Behind the falling out of nightclubs ditsy 'It' girl to see what's making her tick, take the drugs, date the men and/

DAISY

Hate the father and mourn the mother/

GREG

That's good. I like it Daisy. I can work with that.

DAISY WHIRLS ROUND TO LOOK AT GREG

DAISY

But I'm not going to, I hope I don't have to betray my friend, she is my **friend**..after all....

CATHERINE

/your long lost school friend, we know she is, this isn't about betrayal, this is about building trust - between you two - between us -

CATHERINE MOVES TOWARDS HER

GREG

We aren't trying to manipulate a friendship, it's just that you have a unique opportunity to tell your friend's story the way it should be told. And the thing to remember is it will be told, whatever happens here -

DAISY

Because there are so many explosive elements someone would get to her?

CATHERINE

In other people's hands the tale could so easily be full of unfounded exaggerations, but you can tell her story as it really is, as it should be told.

DAISY

But what do I do if she doesn't want to tell it. I've never known Izzy want to talk about her life to anyone - not even me most of the time - and I haven't even seen her for five years. She's a very very private person under that giddy image. I can see her just not wanting to talk at all and then what?

GREG

Lets cross that bridge when we find her. Look at this contract and remember that there's no deal if she doesn't sign it.

DAISY

Is it - is all this - about money?

GREG GRINS

GREG

IS IT ABOUT MONEY? HAH! When is it ever NOT?

CATHERINE

IT's what we call a 'buy-up', when famous or notorious people get paid to talk to us. She gets money for telling her story, about breaking up with Getty, growing up at Broughton Hall, the death of her mother, why she started taking drugs and what she feels about her father's proposed new drugs Bill, which might put paid to some of her little tricks/

GREG

/as told to us - and us alone - she will get enough money to keep her habit happy and her father quiet. We get the story, with a couple of nice juicy headlines, and all the cows are in clover. The Eye's circulation climbs, Uncle Toby is smiling again, Uncle Jack falls off the wagon, and there we are, Bob's your Uncle again -

CATHERINE

Toby's her Uncle, idiot!

DAISY

Could Sharon come in, do you think? I mean she's been showing me the ropes a bit and I could use another/

NO!
CATHERINE

YES!
GREG

GREG HANDS HER THE CONTRACT FOLDER

GREG
Yes, of course Daisy, we'll get her in here now. She's a little bloodhound when it comes to finding the story behind the story, it's why we poached her from the Manchester Mirror. And she can go through the contract with you.

CATHERINE CALLS SHARON IN

GREG
Sharon's tough, but she's smart, make the best of it. She's on your team.

ENTER SHARON

SHARON
Ah. The 'buy-up'. Do we have a contract?

GREG
Just giving it to Daisy. I think you could help her through it.

SHARON (half reading half to audience)
The key is sell and tell. Sign on the dotted line: The subject has the right to read copy but not actually do anything about it. The payment is only made on publication and that publication only happens if the subject spills their guts and the Eye gets to write it the way they think the readership wants it.

SHARON LOOKS AT THE DOCUMENT

SHARON (CONT)
What's the money?

GREG
The money's ten grand.

SHARON
She gets quote approval (right to check but not change) but not picture approval - the only people I've ever known get picture approval were Jerry Hall and Joan Collins and even they don't get it these days.

DAISY
Can I take this with me?

GREG
That's the big idea.

CATHERINE
I'll find out from News where Frank is now and order a car.

DAISY TAKES THE CONTRACT, GLANCES AT IT BRIEFLY, FOLDS IT OVER AND LOOKS AT SHARON

SHARON
Ok if we grab a cuppa?

CATHERINE
I'll get Joe to drive Daisy to West End Central where Frank's with Isabelle. Got a tape recorder Daisy?

SHARON
I'll give her mine.

GREG
Go with her. If any other reporter on any other newspaper, or even any other reporter on THIS newspaper gets wind of where you're going or what you're doing the deal's down the drain. So hush up and get back here as fast as you can.

SHARON
And rush up. We know.

EXIT SHARON AND DAISY STAGE RIGHT

ENTER JACK HARWICH STAGE LEFT

JACK
Well?

GREG
Just bloodying the cub.

JACK
Good. It's as I told you. Now it's a question of whether one has a story and the other can tell it.

CATHERINE
We just explained the cash for secrets - the buy-up routine -in the nicest possible way of course.

JACK
Think she can do it?

GREG

We'll be fine. I want Catherine to do the interview with the Getty boy, ok?

JACK

It's fine with me if you give it the biggest spread in the paper and a picture byline with her tits out, so long as she goes in hard on him. We've got to get to him before the others do and they'll be all over him if they find him first.

CATHERINE

I'm on it already and I'll make him an offer he can't refuse!

BOTH MEN LAUGH AND CATHERINE EXITS

JACK RAISES AN EYEBROW, STARTS TAPPING HIS PEN ON THE CONTRACT

JACK

At the moment nobody actually knows whether the girl is just a crazy kid who likes to get high at weekends or a full-blown addict. My sources have it she's a junky.

GREG

Not a good look for the daughter of a Tory peer who just might be about to get into Government.

JACK

Isn't that the point?

GREG

It just might save this newspaper/ for a week at least/ or give the competition a kick up the arse/

JACK

If Frank's managed to dodge the other reporters he'll have her confidence even if she is beginning to withdraw. What she needs now is a friendly face.

GREG

Lucky we happened to have one.

JACK

Got some writers on standby if the copy's shit?

GREG

What do you think?

THE LOW RUMBLE OF THE PRINTING PRESSES SOUNDS LIKE A HEARTBEAT

JACK

I've checked the legals. The money will be transferred to her when the words are in and the presses rolling as we say with such profound originality. No posting online. No chance of it 'going viral'. No breath of this beyond these walls until it is done, written and ready to go.

GREG PUTS ON HIS COAT AND HAT

GREG

Aye, aye, sir.

GREG EXITS

THE LAMENT OF THE PRESSES GETS
LOUDER

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT II**SCENE 3****A CELL FOR A CELL**

INT. OFFICE, EYE NEWSPAPER, NEWS DESK, NIGHT, LONDON

SHARON IS STANDING IN FRONT OF THE
EMPTY DESKS TALKING TO THE
AUDIENCE

SHARON

All Daisy knows at this point is her old school chum is in a cell somewhere in London, Frank, our best crime reporter (and my bit on the side as it 'appens, we worked on the same local paper) will meet her there. Daisy and me had a quick cup of tea in the canteen, booked a car to bring them from the West End to the office and then on to an anonymous little hotel round the corner so Daisy can talk to her. After that Daisy'll be called upon to write up her friend's life story so it fits the headlines they're writing as I speak. As Leo pointed out, she's the emotional bait in this fishing expedition.

Or maybe she don't know that, yet, as she's still a bit wet behind the ears, bless her.

SHARON GOES BACK TO HER DESK
(SPOTLIGHT ON DESK) AND STARTS
TYPING

THE RUMBLE BENEATH HER FEET STARTS
AGAIN

AFTER A WHILE SHE PUSHES HER
GLASSES UP ON HER HEAD AND STOPS
TO SPEAK TO THE AUDIENCE AGAIN

SHARON (CONT)

Meanwhile here I am stringing it all together,
waiting til somebody tells me what's happening.

SHE REACHES INTO HER BAG AND PULLS
OUT A CIGARETTE

SHARON (CONT)

First I'm told to doorstep Jamie Cranford. Then I'm told to check out what's on Wikipedia. Look it up on Google, they say - go to You Tube for the nightclub row posted on the internet from friends' mobiles - FRIENDS? - a couple of tips from the politics boys - Diary pictures of the Posh girls - get the idea?

Stich it all together til the interview comes in then paste and cut and add the pictures.

VOICE OFF (MALE)

Sharon come 'ere. Which of these skinny birds is the one Dick snapped the other night and which one's the sister? Or come to think of it didn't ya say they were twins?

SHARON

They're called Ricky and Vicky Saddler. How come Dick Old, King of the Paps, STILL doesn't know their names? And he's the one who said the story would've run away from me by now...

VOICE OFF

Is he bovered?

SHARON

Trouble is nobody's bovered til they're bovered, are they?

THE TELEPHONE RINGS ON HER DESK.
SPOTLIGHT ON HER DIMS AS SHE PICKS IT UP.

SHARON (CONT)

She's where? Who? Ok then. Gimme the address...I'll get on to the News Desk and give 'em the info/

LIGHTS DIM.

LIGHTS RISE ON SAME OFFICE
WITH EMPTY DESKS BUT WITHOUT
SHARON

INT. EYE OFFICE

A SKINNY DARK-HAIRED GIRL IS
PACING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

AT A DESK SITS A YOUNG MAN FRANK
WITH A TAPE RECORDER AND SHORTHAND
NOTEBOOK.

THE GIRL PACES UP AND DOWN
GRIPPING HER OWN ARMS, DIGGING IN
HER NAILS INTO HER SKIN, BENDING
DOUBLE.

A MOBILE RINGS. THE CALL IS TAKEN
BY THE REPORTER, WHO STANDS UP.

FRANK

A friend of yours is coming over.

ISABELLE

What friend? I don't have friends.

SHE RESUMES PACING

FRANK

And your father called. He wants to see you.

ISABELLE (CONT)

I don't want to be got by my father. I asked you to call Lord Cranford. Call Lord Cranford.

FRANK

The Sarj at West End Central called Lord Broughton.

ISABELLE

I don't have to see him. I don't have to speak to him.

FRANK

You should get a lawyer. You're entitled to one. You might need it.

ISABELLE

I KNOW I don't need one. I've done nothing wrong. I've told them I don't want a lawyer.

FRANK (CONT)

They're saying you have.

ISABELLE PULLS AT HER HAIR,
TWISTING IT IN HER FINGERS

ISABELLE

Done what?

FRANK

Something wrong/

ISABELLE

They would wouldn't they?

FRANK

Found some gear on you/

ISABELLE

It's a lie. We were having a drink. He just let me drive for a bit, such an amazing - such a great car...

FRANK

Know the place you were going to did you?

ISABELLE

I'm not talking to you. I don't know you. I don't know what you're doing here. I don't know what I'm doing here.

FRANK

Don't give me that. I told you who I am. I told you I'm from the Eye and my Editor sent me and now we're both here because he wants to get you a lawyer, you're entitled to a lawyer for God's sake. Take one.

HE FISHES IN HIS POCKET AND PULLS OUT A CARD FLASHING IT UNDER HER NOSE

ISABELLE

Is this because of my father?

FRANK

It's because of you.

ISABELLE

How did you crawl in here?

FRANK

Oh we like to help out the boys in blue (*sarcastic*) and they like to help us from time to time.

ISABELLE

So you scratch each others' scaly little backs do you?

FRANK

Mum's the word. Mum's a very nice word as it 'appens.

ISABELLE

I know all about the Eye. I know how you get stories. You make people trust you then you turn them over. Don't think I don't know. Even my father doesn't trust Jack Harwich and that's a spade calling a spade adigger!

FRANK'S MOBILE RINGS

FRANK

What's up? Here? Now? Yes, I've seen the Sergeant and he's got the business. All done and dusted. We've got a driver and we're at the Eye lawyer's office.

FRANK TURNS TO ISABELLE

FRANK (CONT)

She's 'ere. Not feelin' very friendly.

ISABELLE (*shivering*)

For crying out loud, I'm sick. Can't you see I'm clucking. Get me a doctor.

FRANK

Your Dad'll get you a doctor...

ISABELLE

I don't want to see my Dad. I don't want to talk to my Dad I wouldn't trust a doctor who came from my Dad.

ISABELLE STARTS PACING AGAIN,
FASTER, SCRATCHING AT HER ARMS

ISABELLE (CONT)

My Dad sucks. I cluck and he sucks. That's my family. You want the story? You pay for it. Get me some O. Then I'll talk...

THE DOOR IS PUSHED OPEN.

ENTER DAISY WHO STANDS STOCK STILL

ISABELLE'S MOUTH DROPS OPEN

DAISY

What's going ON?

ISABELLE

Daisy Greene as I live and breathe...

DAISY

Doesn't look like you do -

DAISY THROWS HER ARM AROUND THE
SKINNY ISABELLE WHO RELUCTANTLY
HUGS HER BACK BEFORE PULLING AWAY

ISABELLE

GEE thanks hon, nice to see you too/

DAISY FLINGS HER ARMS ROUND
ISABELLE

DAISY

Of COURSE I'm glad to see you!

ISABELLE

You don't have any O do you? Or H?

DAISY

I know that look Izzy I've seen it before....

ISABELLE

So you do..

DAISY

We've got a car outside. We're going to a hotel, so we can...so we can talk.

ISABELLE

What, now? Talk? It's the last thing I want to do.

DAISY

We're getting money - for you - we've got to. The police haven't found anything on you. Frank's talked to some-one high up, they can't hold you because they haven't got anything on you and Jack Harwich got you out, and here's me, ready to look after you. Again!

FRANK IS WINDING UP THE LEADS FROM HIS TAPE RECORDER, PUTTING IT IN HIS POCKET, REACHING FOR HIS COAT.

FRANK

You two know each other then?

DAISY

School. We were at school together.

FRANK LOOKS SIDEWAYS AT ISABELLE WHO LOOKS WRECKED AND SOUR AND MUCH OLDER THAN DAISY WHO STILL HAS A FRESHNESS ABOUT HER

FRANK

A while ago?

ISABELLE

He'd have to be in it somewhere...my Dad, both of them. Jack Harwich. My father/

DAISY

You wouldn't be out of the cells without them.

ISABELLE

I don't trust him. Them. It doesn't smell right.

DAISY (TUGGING AT ISABELLE'S ARM)

Do you trust me?

FRANK IS HOLDING THE DOOR OPEN

ISABELLE

Should I?

DAISY

I work, write, for the Eye. I'll get you the money. It's promised.

ISABELLE LOOKS AT FRANK

ISABELLE (CONT)

Does he work for the Eye? I don't trust him.

SHE NODS TOWARDS FRANK

FRANK (SHRUGS)

Fair enough, talk to your mate then/your call my lady...

DAISY

Now. Come now. Quickly/

FRANK

I'll go with you to the car.

HE MOVES TO TAKE ISABELLE'S ARM

ISABELLE

Don't touch me. Don't come near me.

DAISY

Here. Put this on. Can't let anyone see you.

DAISY MOVES TOWARDS ISABELLE,
TAKES HER BY THE HAND AND THROWS
HER OWN COAT OVER HER HEAD AND
SHOULDERS, COVERING THE LONG DARK
HAIR.

ISABELLE

I need something/gotta have something Daisy/I'm
feeling sick, I'm really sick, shivering, I can't
just go cold turkey in a newspaper office ...you know
what I'm like/can't you get me a doctor?

THE TWO WOMEN EXIT

FRANK STAYS BEHIND

Scene ends

ACT II**SCENE 4****BAD HABITS**

INT: OFFICE, SHARON'S DESK

SHARON (TALKING TO
AUDIENCE)

So out in the urban sprawl, the Broughton cavalcade exchanges one cell for another and Frank gets Isabelle's skinny bum into our lawyer's (empty) office before bringing in Daisy Greene and moving both women on to the hotel round the corner.

SOUNDSCAPE: TAXI HORNS, POLICE
SIRENS, THE SOUND OF THE OLD
PRESSES UNDERNEATH THE CITY HUM

SHARON (CONT)

It's my job to piece it all together back at the office, and I can tell from what's going on behind me when The Eye goes into Operation Celebrity it is, indeed, an operation: hotel room booked, photographer booked, sandwiches ordered, wine ordered (anything to loosen the tongue), if she'd just come off the X Factor or Big Brother they'd have flowers in the room before she got there and a magnum of pink champagne.

As there's the secret involvement of the Editor, it's all very hush hush on the floor and the Back Bench....

SHARON GOES BACK TO HER DESK,
SANDWICH IN HAND

AT HER DESK, SHE SWIGS FROM A
BOTTLE OF WATER AND TRIES TO CROSS
HER LEGS, MADE AWKWARD BY A VERY
TIGHT LEATHER SKIRT

SHARON (CONT)

Daisy takes Isabelle to Hotel Anonymous, leaving Frank to have a little chat in the lawyer's office, sadly not with me. Meanwhile, back at the ranch (that is, the glamorous environs of the News desk) me and the rest of the hacks are busy waiting. Waiting for news of the state of the interview, the state of the interviewee and the state of the interviewer, since her lack of experience is of MAJOR concern to the powers that be.

TABLEAU: IN THE BACKGROUND A LIGHT PICKS UP JACK HARWICH'S DESK, WHERE GREG AND CATHERINE ARE SIFTING THROUGH HUGE PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS WHILE JACK THROWS ONE AFTER ANOTHER INTO THE WASTE BASKET

SHARON (CONT)

The Editor confers with the Deputy Editor and the Diary Editor; the News Editor shouts at his reporters as they reluctantly doorstep victims; the Picture Editor sends out for more and more coffee and his Deputy calls in more and more pictures from agencies and snappers, anyone who might have been at the Neon Club or got a new picture of Isabelle.

ON THE PICTURE DESK THE PICTURE EDITOR IS LOOKING AT SCREENS, MAKING TELEPHONE CALLS, FIELDING QUESTIONS

VOICE OFF

Sharon these pictures haven't been captioned yet. Get over here and tell me who these wankers are when they're at home.

SHARON

Yes boss, of course boss, only here to serve boss.

SHE BOBS A MOCK CURTSY, TURNS TO THE AUDIENCE

SHARON (CONT)

Just one moment while I flit downstairs to the dungeons to see if I can unearth a dozen little brown envelopes to match the names I didn't hear in the ladies loo while trying to tape a conversation which I didn't hear because it was mostly drowned by giggles and a flushing toilet.

SHARON EXITS DOWN STAIRS MARKED 'LIBRARY'

FROM THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH (THE LIBRARY) COMES THE THUNDER OF THE PRINTING PRESSES - GETTING LOUDER AND LOUDER AS SHE DISAPPEARS DOWNWARDS

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS COME UP

INT: ILL-LIT ROOM, ANONYMOUS HOTEL, LONDON, LATE
AFTERNOON:
WHITE WALLS, WINTER THROUGH THE WINDOWS, A DOUBLE
BED; TWO ARMCHAIRS, A SMALL ROUND TABLE

DOOR OPENS AND DAISY ENTERS WITH
ISABELLE

DAISY

Where's Frank gone?

DAISY LOOKS AROUND, PULLS OUT HER
TAPE RECORDER, PUTS IT ON THE
TABLE

DAISY

He's in the office, he'll have to start writing,
probably talking to my friend Sharon by now. Why?

ISABELLE

I didn't like him, I'm glad he's gone - my father
sent him, I know he did.

DAISY TURNS TO ISABELLE, SHAKING
HER HEAD

DAISY (CONT)

Don't be paranoid. For Chrissakes Izzy, straighten
out, Frank is on your side.

DAISY WALKS TO THE WINDOW

DAISY (CONT)

A PHALANX of what used to be called Fleet Street's
finest are on your tail and that half-wit Leonie
Brett just posted something on Facebook saying you've
disappeared - you've got more to worry about than the
Chief Crime Reporter.

The Saddler twins were at the Neon, babbling,
literally. They thought they knew where you were but
they don't. Somebody saw you with Daniel what's 'is
name, or some-one who looks like him. They all seem
to think you've been busted -

ISABELLE

So now you know. I was busted. And I **was** with him, at
the wheel of his car. 'Driving erratically madam' as
the policeman informed me. But Daniel (they don't
want him for James Bond for nothing) slipped away
from the obvious disaster zone and they kept me for
questioning. Thought they'd found something in the
car but then they didn't - then thought they'd found
something on me but they were prescription pills.

Did you say Leonie Brett posted something on Facebook? How the hell would she know anything? And why the hell would she want to write it on Facebook?

DAISY

You were at a party.

ISABELLE

A party?

DAISY

Yes. Remember them? When you broke up with Charles Getty?

IZZY THROWS HERSELF ONTO THE BED

IZZY

It wasn't a real party, with real friends, it was one of those events they pay me to go to with a bit more if I bring my 'celebrity' friends. (PAUSE)

I got sick of it and sick of him!

DAISY

Someone who knew you from another life was there it seems and I can't believe you do that insane social round.

ISABELLE

It's the way I make ends meet - and pay for my shit. That and the occasional word in the ear of a diary writer for a few extra squids/it keeps up my profile according to my agents..

DAISY

Ratting on your friends you mean? What about those 'modelling' jobs I read about? Sequinned shorts over her grandmother's knickerbockers....

BOTH GIRLS BEGIN TO LAUGH

ISABELLE

That's how I met Daniel - ages ago - when Kate was having a fling with him and I was modelling cum escorting cum what ever have you there my dear!

DAISY (*sobering*)

How **could** you?

ISABELLE

Of course **you** wouldn't do it Daisy, neither would I if I thought about it more but I don't, I just get stoned and try not to. I just kind of find myself here, ever closer to the big 30, and I don't know how I got here (BEAT)

DAISY

You behave in such a crazy way/you self-immolate/up
in smoke

ISABELLE

/destruct/I know/can't help it/no-one to show me the
way/

DAISY

/to go home! I remember. Didn't we vow eternal
sisterhood one day, cutting our fingers with my
brother's penknife and pooling our blood?

ISABELLE

True. We did. I'd forgotten...

DAISY

You're forgetting too much/

ISABELLE

Sometimes I think I haven't forgotten any of it -
certainly not the bad bits/

DAISY

I need to start taping Izzy, I've got to write this
and I don't know what bad bits you're talking about
but we have to start doing an interview. Jog your
memory, and mine.

ISABELLE

Where do we start?

DAISY

With the glass-throwing public row which ends with
you announcing your break up with Charles Getty IN A
NIGHTCLUB....

ISABELLE

AND...?

DAISY

You then LEAVE the party with a B movie star/

ISABELLE

Oh Daisy, now you're being ridiculous/he is totally A
list/totes A not B/and and and just delicious!

DAISY ROLLS HER EYES AND POURS
HERSELF WATER

ISABELLE

So, are you looking out for me, or feeling guilty
because you don't?

DAISY SHAKES HER HAND FREE AND
STARTS PACING UP AND DOWN

DAISY

Don't assume we're back to our school days Izzy - I gave up trying to keep up with you when I went back to school and you didn't. I don't know how you fell into this crackpit, or cesspit, or wherever it is you are now that makes you look like a bag of bones and nothing you say makes sense.

ISABELLE

I get so down, Daisy. Some days I don't get up til four because I don't want to face the day. I can just about handle the night.

DAISY MOVES TO HUG ISABELLE

FOR A MOMENT THEY STAND TOGETHER

DAISY

I remember those depressions, just like your mother's - but I can't beat away the black dogs for you now Izzy, not sure I ever could, maybe we just thought I could.

DAISY SITS DOWN ON THE BED AND
PATS IT

DAISY (CONT)

I feel like I'm here for the wrong reasons. It's a job, a job I want to do, but I don't want to hurt you. What 'they' want is for you to tell your secrets, so they can win a game where one man holds sway over another and you and I, Izzy, we're pawns again because we don't even know what it is they want from each other or from us.

IZZY IS LYING DOWN, HER EYES
CLOSED.

IZZY

I've always been a pawn in my father's game. Nothing new there.

IZZY SITS UP SUDDENLY AND LOOKS AT
HER.

ISABELLE

Can we get some water? I'm thirsty.

DAISY

Do you think they've got room service in a dump like this?

I can't believe we're here at the bidding of one of the biggest newspapers in the country and I can't take you to a decent place to go cold turkey.

DAISY PUTS HER HEAD IN HER HANDS,
THEN REACHES FOR ISABELLE'S HAND

DAISY
Of course they've got room service.

ISABELLE
I've got some pills.

ISABELLE RUMMAGES IN HER BAG AND
BRINGS OUT A VICTORIAN SILVER PILL
BOX

DAISY
I thought you were being remarkably calm through my rant. How did they miss them when they went through your bag?

ISABELLE
They found them. They're medicine. Prescription. Legal. Never travel without your sickness pills. Anyway I've sewn a little hiding pocket in the lining of all my handbags.

ISABELLE SHAKES OUT SOME PILLS
ONTO THE TABLE, FISHERS IN HER BAG,
UNZIPS SOMETHING AND BRINGS OUT A
FLAT RAZOR BLADE, CUTS OPEN THE
CAPSULE, STARTS CHOPPING

DAISY
What the f...?

ISABELLE
It's better than nothing. It's pretty obvious we aren't here to have a nice leisurely lunch so I better do something about my general state.

DAISY
Newspapers have been on your doorstep, camped outside your house and Broughton Hall and your friends', and your family since early this morning, I think you better do something about your general state if you're going to string two words together.

ISABELLE
Oh dear, surely not because the police pulled me up in Piccadilly?

DAISY
It's just an excuse.

They smell a story, they want your exclusive version of your elite life, your face to their face, your decadent glamour rubbing off on their monotonous routine. The world is agog to know the reasons why you bust up with one of the richest young dudes in the country, and whatever else we can come up with. What they call an FMD' - 'FUCK ME DORIS WILL YA LOOK AT THAT!'

ISABELLE

What?

DAISY

- stories that sell newspapers. And your feud with your father is sure as hell part of that. So's your fight with Getty, or rather, that's where it kicks off.

ISABELLE

If they think I'm such a hot story they want to pay me drug money, then why didn't they just go to my model agency or something? Set it up properly, not sneak me away with a black bag over my head like a terrorist?

DAISY

Well actually that was my Helmut Lang black biker jacket but lets not worry about the detail. My guess is the police offered you a lawyer and you said no, a call to your father and you said no, they breathalysed, drug tested and searched you but couldn't find anything so they put in a quick call to the news desk (a couple of bob in somebody's pocket or a pint at the pub), Frank's sent off to pick you up and fend off any nosy reporters hanging around and here we are.

SHE PULLS OUT A MICRO TAPE AND
WRESTLES WITH THE WRAPPING

DAISY (CONT)

On the other hand your father could have shopped you to Harwich for all I know.

LOUD KNOCK ON THE DOOR

ENTER SHARON

SHARON

Hi girls. How are we getting on? Sorry to pick up fag ends but it's a Saturday/

DAISY

Izzy this is Sharon, she does news features for the Eye and she's working on this too/

SHARON

And this is a Sunday paper, ergo: time to get a move on. Also, no agents open on Saturdays. On top of that most people know you broke up with your boyfriend in front of the whole world, were busted and stuck in a police station for driving a revved up Lamborghini with an actor who is about to be known throughout the entire world AND YOU ASK DAISY WHY YOU'RE HERE. Get a grip Lady Isabelle. Whatever you do or don't, your pictures will be splattered all over the papers tomorrow for people to interpret how they will unless we get the full story from the horse's mouth. That is, your mouth, via your friend Daisy Greene.

ISABELLE

It'll make the story more valuable. I'll ask for more money.

SHARON

You can forget that. We aren't offering silly money any more.

DAISY

I see why the Editor told me it's harder to interview some-one you know - the lines get impossibly blurred -

ISABELLE

The lines were blurred already. People like my father, Jack Harwich, they eat little girls like us for breakfast.

SHARON

Sign the contract. Once you've signed the contract and done the talking you get the money, we get the exclusive, you can split. Then your Dad smuggles you into a private jet to a private island so no-one from the press pack gets to you or him and Daisy's told the story so brilliantly there's nothing left for anyone else.

ISABELLE

Oh God. I don't know what to say.

SHARON

And if you can't think how to tell the story for sure you better think about it hard, and fast, because if Daisy doesn't interview you for sure somebody else will, and for sure it won't be such an easy lie.

ISABELLE

I want to talk to Daisy - I do and I will. No lies.

DAISY

With half a pharmacy inside you?

SHARON GOES BACK TO THE DOOR,
POINTING TO HER WATCH, BECKONING
DAISY WHO LEAVES ISABELLE'S SIDE
TO LISTEN TO HER

SHARON

Catherine is going crazy because you haven't got the
contract signed, now sign and GET THE FUCK ON WITH
IT!

SHARON HANDS DAISY THE TAPE
RECORDER WHICH IS STILL ON THE
TABLE, POINTS TO CONTRACT AND
EXITS.

DAISY PUSHES THE TAPE RECORDER
ACROSS THE TABLE TO ISABELLE AND
PICKS UP THE CONTRACT

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT II**SCENE 5****ASSIGNATION**

INT. HOTEL ANONYMOUS

LIGHTS ON DAISY AS SHE TESTS THE
TAPE RECORDER. THE TWO GIRLS SIT
ON THE CHAIRS.

THE LIGHTS GO DOWN. DAISY AND
ISABELLE IN SILHOUETTE

FRONT OF STAGE, SHARON RE-ENTERS,
WALKS TO THE MIDDLE OF THE STAGE
LIGHTS FOLLOWING HER TO THE
CENTRE. BEHIND HER THE ROOM
REMAINS DIM.

THE AUDIENCE SEES THE GIRLS IN
OUTLINE AS THEY SIT WITH THE TAPE
RECORDER BETWEEN THEM

SHARON (TO THE AUDIENCE)

I had to leave them to go back to the beginning, when
her mother died and both were sacked from school -
they ripped off that chemist, the old boy. Izzy
wanted a prescription and couldn't get the doc to
give her another one,....Daisy went along with her,
tried to blag the chemist who reported them double
quick.

They have to tie the past to the present and link it
to the future, go back to why Isabelle began to take
drugs and when. Daisy has reconnected with her
longtime friend but these are tough upsetting
questions to ask anyone in distress - and sometimes
they can push a vulnerable soul too near the edge.

SHE TURNS BACK TO LOOK AT THE
GIRLS

SHARON (CONT)

The Editors, they send you in with guns - everything
you can get and more. Use up all the bullets. Forget
the flak jacket. Bare your soul, and make it up if
you have to.

Catherine will want to know how close she is to Jamie
Cranford. The aristo connection. Did he turn her on
to heroin? Was he a lover or just a dealer? Does she
still see him.

Did they take drugs in one of the greatest houses in the land or did they confine their debauching to the crack dens of very different estates?

SHARON

Where did the American chump fit in, why did they break up, and how can she, Isabelle, reconcile her father's new DRUGS Bill with her own lifestyle? What about the rumours he is a violent man?/BEAT/the Editor always likes to throw in a bit of abuse and childhood trauma/and sex of course...

Makes a better headline. Makes it worth the money.

LIGHTS ON ISABELLE AS SHE TALKS TO DAISY

SHARON (CONT)

But to Isabelle, Daisy is a reminder of a more normal world - a world where she went to class every morning, played hockey, went swimming, ate regular meals, read books, watched old French movies. A life less fragmented.

Daisy doesn't realise it but she is already, instinctively using their friendship, making Isabelle trust her again: nostalgia, old ties and loyalties. Unlocking the past in a torrent of memories, unveiling emotions buried under drugs, delusion, distrust, denial and a terrible sense of loss which Daisy recognises like a howl in the dark.

SHARON TURNS TO LOOK BACK AT DAISY WHERE SHE SITS BEHIND HER

AT THE TABLE DAISY REACHES OUT A HAND TO ISABELLE

SHARON (CONT)

Daisy hurts for her. By comforting Isabelle she is allowing friendship to dictate the encounter.

It makes a touching story. Jack Harwich will like it.

SHARON WALKS BACK ACROSS THE STAGE AND EXITS as THE SPOTLIGHT ON HER DIMS

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT ENDS

ACT III**SCENE 1****RISK FACTOR**

INT. SHARON'S DESK IN THE OFFICE.

SHARON ENTERS STAGE LEFT, CARRYING
HER MOBILE

SHARON (INTO MOBILE)

Hi. Put me through to the Deputy Editor. Greg, I've been speaking to Isabelle's brother Ben. He doesn't want to make a comment. Said I should talk to his father, seems to think there's some sort of a deal going on and he/

SHE LISTENS

No. He doesn't want any part of it. Worried about his sister.

Ok. Be there in half an hour. Yes of course I've tried the stepmother - Adele - Catherine's got Zoe on that too but zilch so far.

SHE PUTS AWAY THE MOBILE AND TURNS
TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE

SHARON (TO AUDIENCE)

(CONT)

It's not enough to get Isabelle talking to Daisy while she's going through withdrawal, now I have to get Jamie Cranford talking about taking her to crack dens when she was seventeen, and her brother slagging off his father..It's never enough. Whatever you do, whatever you get, whatever people say when the guards are down, its never enough, there's always another question, another voice from another desk...all they do is desk hop - they don't get out, they don't face the world, they know jack shit as Jack Harwich would say and it's FUCKED. It's absolutely fucked up. And Daisy will be caught in the middle.

THE MOBILE BLEEPs. SHE PICKS IT
UP.

SHARON (CONT)

Hi Jim. What do you mean tonight? All those numbers are ex-directory. Shelley warned us two months ago to stop using the hackers. Even if they are awfully nice and live in Wiltshire. No. Everyone doesn't do it. Everyone used to do it.

Shelley says it's too expensive, too dangerous - I just know I've been told not to use them. Verboten. And without it I don't have Cranford's numbers and I can't get them between now and when Daisy comes back with the tape.

BLACK OUT

INT: DIARY OFFICE

CATHERINE IS PACING UP AND DOWN

JACK HARWICH IS SITTING AT HER DESK

SHARON IS STANDING TO ONE SIDE WATCHING, NOTEBOOK IN HAND

GREG HOVERS

JACK

Why don't I have any copy yet?

CATHERINE

Isabelle will not speak to anyone else and Daisy's talking to her friend who's coming off crack cocaine - I can't get her to say a word to me, or Sharon - who's on standby at the hotel, and she hasn't signed the contract.

JACK

WHAT is Daisy doing?

CATHERINE

She's trying not to freak her out.

JACK

If that little chit has not signed the contract we don't have a deal. I want to get Broughton's story, I've got the online lot dying to put up something, anything, and bloggers will make it up anyway - but to keep to the arrangement I need something now or the deadlines are out of the window.

CATHERINE

The woman's unstable, bordering on absolutely loopy. Not just distressed but mad as a hatter. We could take Daisy out but no-one else is going to get anywhere.

JACK

Why the hell do you think I asked you to put a novice on a story like this?

CATHERINE

If she doesn't come back with the contract she won't be working in my department any more.

JACK

That, Catherine, will be up to me.

CATHERINE LOOKS AT HIM ICILY

GREG

I'm going to make a suggestion.

CATHERINE

Which is?

GREG

Take yourself out of the equation. These are young girls, thrown in to an adult mess. Daisy is running scared, Isabelle is going cold turkey. Jack needs the story reeled in.

CATHERINE (TURNING TO
JACK)

This couldn't have anything to do with your deal with Isabelle's father by any chance?

JACK REMAINS SEATED BUT LEANS
FORWARD AGGRESSIVELY

JACK (CONT)

You're supposed to be a bloody journalist Catherine, just because you have a pretty picture byline with your name all over a gossip column doesn't mean you're irreplaceable.

HE LEANS BACK

JACK (CONT)

Now get out there, find Daisy, get the contract signed and into the lawyers' office.

CATHERINE

But how DO I stop Isabelle having a nervous breakdown?

CATHERINE TURNS TO LOOK AT GREG

GREG

She's right Jack. There's always a danger/

CATHERINE

That you'll go too far/we'll go too/

GREG

/Far. There's a risk with a story like this/

JACK
A story like this?

JACK IS ON HIS FEET, MOVING
TOWARDS THE DOOR, CALLOUS

CATHERINE
She's alone, she's coming off crack, her friend has
appeared, disappeared, reappeared, she's broken up
with her boyfriend and she hates her father.
VULNERABLE? What do you think? What would the Social
Services think?

HARWICH WAVES A DISMISSIVE HAND

JACK
I want the story on my desk in two hours AND THAT'S
IT. NO MORE BULLSHIT.

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT III**SCENE 2****HOTEL ANON**

INT. THE ANONYMOUS WHITE HOTEL ROOM

SHARON SLIPS IN QUIETLY THROUGH
THE DOOR AND STANDS LOOKING AT
BOTH GIRLS

SHE MOVES CENTRE STAGE

SHARON (TO AUDIENCE)

You could see this as a gladiatorial encounter. The two women are locked in combat although they don't see it that way. Daisy wants something from Isabelle and instinctively Isabelle is hiding it.

But now Daisy has to deal not only with getting the story, but getting a contract signed while her friend goes through withdrawal.

Isabelle knows she will get money for spilling the beans and Daisy hasn't got the money thing figured out at all, which is why Catherine comes stomping in from time to time with her lip gloss and big hair to make a mark - if not on the story, at least on the telling of it to Greg in the office later.

Isabelle is having a meltdown. With a druggie's peculiar perception, she feels in her gut she is going too far and wants Daisy to stop her. But in her veins is this bubbling desire for vengeance - on her father for her childhood misery, to avenge her mother's death.

Daisy can't stop her. She has a goal: get whatever new information there is: evidence of Broughton's bad behaviours, nail him. She is thinking like a journalist.

But when Isabelle sees this in print it will be like reading about another person. Daisy by then will be high with excitement, flying on adrenalin. Isabelle will forget what she's said to Daisy in her overwrought state. She's told the stories, the interviewer is just a sponge.

Me? I have to make sure Isabelle doesn't see it yet.

IN THE FOREGROUND SHARON MOVES TO SIT AT THE SMALL ROUND TABLE WITH THE TAPE RECORDER, BLOWING INTO IT AND WETTING HER LIPS

SHARON

Isabelle, desperately seeking anything which won't so much get her high but might stave off the craving for the terrible drug from the beautiful poppy, finds American whisky just about does the job, temporarily at least, so she orders more.

The Editor is anxious about the contract and without it signed there can be no publication, which means trouble.

At the very least. Two angry men and a sick 'It' girl. It's time for Daisy to get a grip.

TABLEAU: THE STONY IMAGES OF JACK HARWICH AND LORD BROUGHTON GLIMMER TO LIFE FROM THE SHADOWS AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE

AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE, LIGHTS COME UP ON THE TWO WOMEN AS THEY SIT ON THE RUMPLED BED, DAISY WITH A COKE ISABELLE WITH HER JACK DANIELS.

ISABELLE

This'll keep me going for a bit.

DAISY

Look, we have to do this contract thing before we go any further and we've got to go further. Now.

SHARON EXITS THE ROOM ON TIPTOE

TABLEAU: BEHIND THE GIRLS AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE A SPOTLIGHT OUTLINES THE SILHOUETTE OF JACK HARWICH, MOTIONLESS, AT HIS DESK

IT MOVES TO ONE SIDE TO FOCUS ON LORD BROUGHTON IN HIS WING CHAIR, NURSING HIS BRANDY, MOTIONLESS

BETWEEN THE TWO MEN STANDS CATHERINE DRESSED IN AN ISSA WRAP MADE OF GOLD LAME, HERMES BAG IN ONE HAND, CONTRACT IN THE OTHER, FROWNING AT THE DOCUMENT

SOUNDSCAPE: THE PRINTING PRESSES
RUMBLE INTO LIFE UNDER THEIR FEET
THUNDERING THROUGH THE ROOM AND
BEHIND IT THE SOUND OF TYPEWRITERS
HAMMERING THE LAMENT

DAISY

Sign it, so we can concentrate.

DAISY PUSHES THE CONTRACT OVER TO
ISABELLE HANDING HER A PEN. BARELY
GLANCING AT IT, GULPING FROM HER
WHISKY, ISABELLE SCRAWLS HER NAME
AND PUSHES IT BACK TO DAISY

DAISY (CONT)

Wasn't so hard/

ISABELLE

Hope I haven't signed my life away.

LIGHTS FLICKER TO LIFE ON THE
SMALL BEDSIDE TABLES

THE HOTEL BEDROOM IS IN A WORSE
MESS THAN BEFORE, SHEETS CRUMPLED,
LAMP SHADE IS TILTED, PAPERS ON
THE FLOOR.

DAISY SIGHS AND PICKS UP THE MIC

SCENE ENDS

BLACK OUT

ACT III**SCENE 3****THE INTERVIEW**

INT: HOTEL ANONYMOUS

LOW LIGHTS AROUND THE SMALL WHITE ROOM, SPOTLIGHT ON THE TWO WOMEN, FACING EACH OTHER ACROSS THE SMALL TABLE HOLDING THE TAPE RECORDER. DAISY HAS A MIC IN HER HAND.

DAISY

Pretend we're strangers/

ISABELLE

/OK. Name: Isabelle Broughton, known as Izzy, age 28.

DAISY

And what do you actually do? How do I describe you? Model? Socialite, 'social butterfly'?

ISABELLE

Some papers call me an 'It' girl which means absolutely fuck all. I lead a pretty useless life really. I wanted to be a writer, or an archeologist, I used to love exploring - when I was a kid I mean - roaming Pompeii and climbing those old lions on Delos - going on digs with my Uncle Rupert.

DAISY

Rupert Broughton, I remember the name....

ISABELLE

He was a famous historian but he died - he was my Dad's older brother. Mum and I spent a whole summer with him, when Dad was off telling some Prime Minister or other what to do - we went on his Greek fishing boat..

DAISY

Sounds like fun.

ISABELLE

Yes, I just suddenly remembered what a wonderful summer that was. No arguments, no stress....

DAISY

And do you remember what you wanted to do with your life.

ISABELLE

Yes/....write poetry, study ancient religions. Didn't quite make it did I?

DAISY

Do you feel bad about that?

ISABELLE

Yes, of course I do.

DAISY

Not going back to school?

ISABELLE

That would have been tough. Were all the girls as bitchy as they used to be?

DAISY

Worse if anything.

ISABELLE LAUGHS AGAIN, BRIEFLY

ISABELLE

I was so miserable at that school - bullied at home bullied at school.

DAISY

And I went back because I didn't want my life to go down the pan. When we were busted for trying to con the pharmacist I could just see it happening/

ISABELLE

Those were the days!

DAISY

They were **your** days - free - to choose your own way. Going back into an institution seemed to be the only way I could function. Straight lines either side, holding me in.

ISABELLE

I wasn't functioning - at all, whatever you thought.

DAISY (CONT)

What was happening at home?

ISABELLE

My father was engrossed in his work, of course, and when he wasn't he was bullying my mother and me. She made sure my brother and I were sent away to school - to get away from him I'm sure, but I hated leaving my mother alone with him. That's why I was always so unhappy at school. And my mother was drinking herself to death and I didn't know it. She kept me away from the truth, and my father didn't care.

My parents fought all the time and he was terribly violent - it was usually shouting at her, but I saw the bruises. She didn't know I did. She sent me to boarding school to keep me away from their nightmare marriage.

DAISY GETS UP, UNCOMFORTABLE

DAISY

He was quite creepy sometimes, your father...the way he looked at us all. I didn't like it. None of us did. Except Arlene I guess, she must have liked him.

ISABELLE

He always liked young girls.

DAISY

Very young. Arlene - she can't be much older than you/but he sort of knew how to....

ISABELLE

I hated that.

Daisy

What happened when your mother died - it was Mother Superior who told you, wasn't it?

ISABELLE

Don't you remember?

DAISY

Your words, Izzy. Just tell me.

ISABELLE

How ironic. Mother tells me Mother is dead. Mother Superior called me in. We were in the Infirmary weren't we? Mucking about. Pretending to be ill. Escaping that bloody awful dormitory -

DAISY

What did she say?

ISABELLE

She called me out of class, and said sit down dear, your mother has died, they think she might have had a stroke -

DAISY

What actually did happen?

ISABELLE

The daily, Mrs D, found her in bed - she never got up early so it wasn't strange the door was still closed.

They think it happened before midnight - in the end it was classed as accidental because there was some question she might have suffocated, there was a pillow - I don't know, they kept the details from me... there were pills and a decanter of brandy beside her bed/

DAISY

Did you realise how much she was drinking?

ISABELLE

Not really. I was learning my catechism and going to 6.00 o'clock Mass every morning like you.

I remember feeling as though I had been hit by a bus when I heard that voice cutting through the room. Just here.

ISABELLE POINTS TO HER HEART

ISABELLE (CONT)

Pain.....

SHE DOUBLES UP

ISABELLE (CONT)

Like her. My mother died of a broken heart.

DAISY

I'm so so sorry Iz/

DAISY HUGS ISABELLE, KNOCKING OVER THE TAPE RECORDER, PICKING IT UP AGAIN BEFORE SITTING BACK DOWN AT THE TABLE

ISABELLE

Towards the end she was always so sick, so sad, so NOT THERE/

DAISY PUTS DOWN THE MICROPHONE AGAIN AND FOR A MOMENT THEY ARE QUITE STILL

ISABELLE TAKES A DRINK

ISABELLE

I used to feel I could put my hand right through her (BEAT).

ISABELLE STARTS TO CRY SILENTLY

We better get on with this or I'll be climbing the walls and that's not what my mother used to call 'a pretty sight'/you see I did go back, I had to, for the funeral - and/ oh dear/ I can't.....

DAISY PICKS UP THE MIC

DAISY

We can come back to it Iz, let's move on to other things for a moment.

TABLEAU: CATHERINE IS BACKLIT AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE FOR AN INSTANT, WAVING CHEQUE BOOK IN ONE HAND CONTRACT IN THE OTHER.

DAISY (CONT)

How do you know Jamie Cranford? They say he was the first person to turn you on to the hard stuff. Is that true? How does it work, what happens when you go to a crack den - ?

ISABELLE

Daisy all I can tell you is that I was at a party once, and they offered me something I thought was a joint - but it wasn't. It was far far stronger, and it took me to a place I had never been before which was seductive, a bit like sinking into a dream - a fairy tale. Then after that, every time after that, you want to repeat it, and you can't, you have to have more and more and the only way you can get more and more is to go to these awful places full of awful sad people. So it starts with the Arabian Nights and ends in, what - death - a kind of death.

TABLEAU: IN ONE CORNER A REDDISH GLOW FROM A LOPSIDED LAMP PROPPED AGAINST A CHAIR ON THE FLOOR, SHOWS UP THE FIGURES OF THREE YOUNG PEOPLE SLUMPED ON CUSHIONS SMOKING FROM A HOOKAH PIPE.

TWO OF THE GIRLS HAVE LONG LANK DARK HAIR LIKE ISABELLE. ALL LOOK WASTED.

ONE OF THE GIRLS UNROLLS SILVER PAPER AND LIGHTS A MATCH UNDER IT

AS WE WATCH A TALL GOOD LOOKING MAN WITH LONG HAIR CURLING OVER HIS COLLAR ROLLS UP HIS SLEEVE AND PREPARES TO SHOOT UP

DAISY SHIFTS, MOVES THE TAPE RECORDER, CLEARS HER THROAT.

DAISY (CONT)

James always looks oddly innocent to me. Child-like. Did you LIKE him? Or was it just that he took you to crack dens you wouldn't get into without his gold card?

THE MAN TAKES OFF HIS OWN TIE AND TIGHTENS IT ROUND HIS UPPER ARM in A TOURNIQUET

ISABELLE

You mean did I fuck him, Daisy, only you are too sweet to say so out loud. Actually, I do like Jamie. His father didn't just slash his inheritance he took away his self-respect, made him feel unloved. But he was loved. I loved him.

THE MAN ON THE FLOOR looks up for a MOMENT AS THOUGH SEARCHING THE ROOM FOR ISABELLE, THEN LETS HIS HEAD NOD DOWN ONTO HIS CHEST, GONE

DAISY

Good heavens, I didn't know you knew that about him. And you.

ISABELLE

Neither did I.

DAISY

Does anyone know? Does he know?

ISABELLE

I think he knows. You always do really, don't you? But no-one else.

IMAGE: THE MAN'S BODY SLIPS SIDEWAYS.

THE RED LAMP SHADE TOPPLES OVER AND THE BACK LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

CENTRE STAGE, THE LIGHTS ARE ON THE GIRLS AS THEY SIT ON THE RUMPLED BED

ISABELLE

Little girlfriend, heroin is not all that chic. That 'sinking into a fairy tale it's just an illusion.

SHE POURS HERSELF ANOTHER DRINK

DAISY

Let's go back now Iz, to when your Mum died, if you can bear to talk about it. When did you go back to the house? I don't remember.

ISABELLE

My father didn't come, he didn't ever come when I needed him. I don't forgive him for what he didn't do.

DAISY

Have you ever talked to anyone about this stuff? Even about what he did do?

ISABELLE

If I went to a therapist some hack would tap my line and I'd be all over the rags with them calling me a nutcase - can't you just see it?

DAISY

I see your father's political career would get pretty rocky pretty quickly, but the truth is you don't forgive him for when you were a kid, do you?

ISABELLE

I didn't say that!

DAISY

No but I know he was/ I just know.....

ISABELLE LOOKS AT HER

ISABELLE

You can't say I said it.

DAISY GETS UP AND WALKS AROUND
SILENTLY

ISABELLE

How do you know Daisy?

DAISY

I know he wasn't very (BEAT) very nice/ to young girls/ we all knew he was.....

THE TWO GIRLS LOOK AT EACH OTHER

ISABELLE MOVES AWAY ABRUPTLY

ISABELLE

The fact is Daisy he was a screwed up bully and he would threaten me and my Mum.

ISABELLE TAKES A DEEP BREATH,
POURS ANOTHER JACK DANIELS, SIPS

ISABELLE

You know I told you Mum and I once had a lovely summer with Uncle Rupert in Greece? Well, nothing was ever the same after that.

DAISY

AND?

ISABELLE

And she was. I think, a bit in love with him. She was so happy that summer, so alive....I never saw her like that again. Ever.

DAISY

So then?

ISABELLE

She started drinking and Dad hated that/she got very low/

DAISY

Depressed?

ISABELLE

Suicidal.

DAISY

How do you know?

ISABELLE

She used to write to me/

DAISY

What kind of thing?

ISABELLE

She wrote poems/lots of poems/ blank verse, sonnets...haiku

DAISY

What were they about, what did she say?

ISABELLE

She became more and more preoccupied with death/

DAISY

Her own?

ISABELLE

Not only.

DAISY

Who else?

ISABELLE

Rupert.

DAISY

His death - your Uncle's death, why, how?

ISABELLE

How did I know for God's sake? How did I know what was killing my beautiful crazy mother? I was a thirteen year old schoolgirl and my mother is going off her head, sending me poems ...and I, we, were walled up in a convent and I couldn't do anything about what was going on at home, couldn't even get out of the convent to see her. The only time the nuns let me out was when she died.

AFTER A MOMENT ISABELLE GETS UP,
WRAPS A DUVET AROUND HER SHOULDERS
AND BEGINS TO PACE THE STAGE

DAISY PICKS UP THE TAPE RECORDER,
TAPS IT, PUTS IT DOWN AGAIN

WAITS

ISABELLE (CONT)

When I went home they had moved her, moved her (BEAT) empty body - her body without its soul (BEAT) but I was able to go up to her room. Everything had been moved by then - the pills, the brandy, the flowers she knocked over - they said she didn't leave a note, they didn't ever say it was suicide but I just had this feeling - that she wouldn't leave me without telling me - without saying goodbye...

DAISY LOOKS AT HER OWN NOTES

DAISY

But if she had a stroke she couldn't - so why - so do you think she did commit suicide?

ISABELLE (CONT)

She told me. She found a way, she wrote to me about everything. She told me she would leave me her diamonds but when the lawyers went to the safe the jewelry was gone. They didn't know about her treasure box. But I did, so I searched for it among her things.

I looked for a sign Daisy, I knew that whatever happened she would leave me one, so I looked where she left her most secret things, her letters, her opium - yes, that's how I first took it, with her, just once - she got it when she was in Hong Kong and she kept it under her pearls. That's where I found it, the sign...it was in her treasure box which I've still got hidden - my father and the lawyers never found it.

ISABELLE SITS DOWN AGAIN, HUDDLED IN THE BED COVER, THEN SHE GETS UP AND GOES TO HER BAG. SLOWLY SHE PULLS OUT A PIECE OF PAPER

ISABELLE

Here.

SHE HANDS IT TO DAISY

DAISY

Do you want me to look at it?

ISABELLE

I want you to see.

DAISY HOLDS UP THE PAPER, READS SLOWLY, ALOUD

DAISY (reading)

My darling girl. I am exhausted by life, by fighting with your father. I want to get away, to keep you safe, but what can I do, it is all too late and too sad. I've thought about this Bella for a long time, but I cannot go on. I am going to another place. My life is beyond endurance. I am no good to you as I am, so, better that I am not. Remember the magical times my darling, you will find me there.

ISABELLE PUTS HER HEAD IN HER HANDS

DAISY PUTS HER ARMS ROUND HER AS SHE LEANS IN

DAISY

She made a choice.

ISABELLE

Yes... 'better that I am not'.....

DAISY

Has anyone else seen this?

DAISY HOLDS UP THE NOTE

ISABELLE

No. I keep it with my drugs, sewn into silk linings. I wouldn't dare let my father see it.

DAISY

She gave you opium Izzy? She let you smoke? How old were you?

ISABELLE

I don't think she took it very often, just if she was in pain from the arthritis she would get in her fingers. To relax them she said. And one day we were talking together and she let me take a hit.

DAISY

How awful.

ISABELLE

Actually it was very moving in a way, a ritual we shared like a sacrament - her way of opening a door of perception for me into adulthood perhaps, or another dreamlike life, somewhere safe and harmonious, where we could talk and talk and never tire of telling and hearing stories; she could hide from the anger and the violence - and I was so glad to see her relax, without fear. She only shared it with me once but I never forgot and maybe that is why I turned to it when my own pain became unbearable. Maybe you're right.

DAISY

Was it that, or curiosity?

ISABELLE

Oh Daisy how can I tell you when I don't know myself? Since she died I've felt untethered - disconnected from the earth. The drugs make it better, make me numb/

DAISY (CONT)

It's unbelievable/

ISABELLE (*shudders*)

But you believe me don't you?

DAISY

I think so, it explains a lot Iz. I just don't know what to make of it.

ISABELLE

I think we have to stop now. I think we've gone far enough.

DAISY GETS UP, STRETCHES, MAKES A
NOTE

ISABELLE

I need the bathroom, to stretch my legs
maybe.....cramps/

DAISY

I'll order up some coffee. I could do with a decent
cappuccino, maybe they can go out for some/

ISABELLE

Don't hold your breath.

ISABELLE SMILES, EXITS

DAISY HOLDS UP THE LETTER ISABELLE
SHOWED HER, GETS OUT HER MOBILE,
PHOTOGRAPHS IT AND SLIPS MOBILE
BACK IN HER POCKET AS SHE SITS
DOWN AT THE TABLE, READS THE NOTE
AGAIN, SCRIBBLES IN HER BOOK

THE BATHROOM DOOR OPENS AND
ISABELLE RETURNS

ISABELLE

Did you get coffee?

DAISY (*flustered*)

Forgot. Sorry. I'll.....

SHE REACHES FOR THE TELEPHONE

ISABELLE LOOKS AT HER QUIZZICALLY

ISABELLE

I've got it.

DAISY

Great. Cappuccinos it is -

ISABELLE

Where is your faithful sidekick anyway?

DAISY POINTS TO THE FLOOR

ISABELLE (CONT)

What, downstairs here?

DAISY NODS, LOOKS AT HER WATCH

DAISY

I'll text to let her know we're done. I'll need the
car.

DAISY TEXTS

ISABELLE

What happens to me now? You piss off and I stay here on my own?

DAISY

I think Sharon's going to stay - and I'm not far away. You'll be fine. I have to write it all now, and keep it true, and thank you Izzy, for being so honest.

DAISY HUGS ISABELLE

ISABELLE

I hope not too honest.

DAISY

No such thing.

THERE IS A TAP ON THE DOOR

THE GIRLS TURN

THE DOOR OPENS

SHARON ENTERS

SHARON

Well girls, how you doin'? Have we got it in the bag? Are you feeling ok my Lady?

ISABELLE

Not the best I've ever been, Sharon, thank you for asking.

SHARON

Can you face a so-so handsome photographer and a bottle of Bolly while Daisy hops off to the office to earn herself a living?

DAISY

Not before my caffeine thanks!

ISABELLE

Are you really going?

DAISY

I'm coming back. Soon. I bet I've forgotten lots of things. But I'll check with you I promise...

SHARON

There'll be more questions from the firing squad. Let Daisy go and I'll hold your hand for a bit.

ISABELLE

I feel as though I haven't said everything I should have said. Or, I don't know, maybe I've said too much.

SHARON

Don't worry doll, everyone feels like that the first time.

ISABELLE

Well one thing's for sure, there won't be a second time.

SHARON LOOKS AT HER KEENLY FOR A MOMENT

THEN LAUGHS

SHARON

Come on darlin' lighten up! First off, we could summon hair and make-up and get Sam's assistant in to set up the lighting.

DAISY GATHERS UP HER THINGS, HUGS ISABELLE, LOOKS AT SHARON

DAISY

Look after her. I'll get back soon.

SHARON (TO ISABELLE)

Actually, she might be stuck in the office for a bit....

SHARON BECKONS DAISY TO ONE SIDE AND WHISPERS LOUDLY

SHARON

Write down the best lines now, the first things which come into your mind, so you remember what's important - it helps prioritise - got your notebook?

DAISY NODS

DAISY (CONT)

I'll write the story.

ISABELLE

You'll let me look at it won't you? Before- before it goes to the Promise?

DAISY BLOWS HER A KISS

THE LIGHTS GO DOWN

DAISY EXITS WITH SATCHEL AND TAPE
RECORDER

ISABELLE SITS AT THE DRESSING
TABLE MIRROR AS SHARON STARTS TO
BRUSH HER HAIR

FADE OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT III**SCENE 4*****THE PROCESS***

INT. SHARON'S OFFICE

SHARON IS BACK AT HER DESK

LIGHTS ON SHARON

SHARON (*to audience*)

Poor Izzy, I quite liked her really... always looking for the next high.... I coulda told her the drugs don't work.

Friendship's all very well but it don't get you off crack addiction unless you got a VERY good doctor.

So that night I stayed with her while the photographer fuffed around and took some shots and I distracted her but she still looked strained and drunk and we won't use them. Still, it kept her mind off things.

In the end what Daisy came to realise was the power you have when choosing how to present some-one's private life to the outside world is ephemeral, the thrill she would feel at seeing her name in print, her picture on a byline, reading her very own words over a strangers' shoulder in the bus, on the tube, in the cafe - it's intoxicating, a guilty pleasure, but it's fleeting.

And that night nothing was simple. Guilt hung in the air. Stifling.

She may have had dreams of becoming the new Kate Adie or Marie Colvin, a valiant heroine of the trenches - they say her father was a Vietnam war photographer - but she had a long way to go, and she discovered the thrill is as brief as the truths and lies we mould for our own purposes.

Before that, she had to write the story, and that story was a demolition job on a man she had known most of her life, a violent creep, but a very powerful one.

She wanted to pay him back for the harm he had done to her friend, and to Marguerite, her friend's beloved tragic mother, but she did not realise how much that desire for vengeance motivated the telling of the story and the revealing of the secret Isabelle had entrusted her with.

She had teased out that story from her friend's psyche like a pro. She has a knack for it, an unerring instinct for not just the story but the chase. It didn't make any difference when it came right down to it that Toby Greene's her Uncle, she'd either get her mate to tell her secrets or not. And she did.

There was this moment towards the end of the interview, this crack between the two worlds - when Isabelle showed her a piece of her soul and she nicked it, right then and there.

Daisy knew what she was looking at. Sensitive to its fragility and all that. But she wanted it.

And she got it. She photographed it.

That was the moment she cracked it, if you'll pardon the pun.

That was when little Daisybud became Miss Daisy Greene, Feature Writer for the Sunday Eye. She knew she was crossing a line and she crossed it.

There's lots who'd say shock horror. Leave it alone girl.

But I know this game and I say good on 'er, I say. Damned good on you Daisy Greene. You did that DESPITE your family, not because of them. Whether she goes back to Lovely Leo and the nerds and teccies online or not, she can call herself a journalist because she had the smarts to recognise the gift, and the balls to take it.

The fact that she did it and her name will be in lights, will give her visiting rights into many worlds, but there's always a price. A heavy price. In this case one she was certainly not prepared for. Nobody was.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE

LIGHTS COME UP ON THE REST OF THE OFFICE

THE STAGE IS DIVIDED INTO 3: NEWS DESK, PICTURE AND ART DESK SPOTLIGHT GOES UP ON EACH OF THE DESKS WHERE GREG, SLEEVES ROLLED UP, SHEAVES OF NEWSPRINT PROOFS BESIDE HIM, IS MAKING MARKS, MOVING BETWEEN ONE DESK AND ANOTHER, AND FINALLY IT RESTS ON ONE DESK WHERE DAISY SITS WRITING, HEADPHONES ON, LISTENING TO A TAPE WHILE HER FINGERS TAP DANCE ACROSS THE KEY BOARD.

ALL DESKS ARE DARK UNTIL LIGHTS GO BACK TO THE NEWS DESK AND THE ART DESK

SPOTLIGHT ON SHARON AS SHE GOES TO HER OWN DESK

GREG CROSSES TO THE ART DESK TO LOOK AT PICTURES

CATHERINE HOLDS UP ONE PRINT AFTER ANOTHER

THEY LEAN OVER THE SCREEN FLICKING THROUGH PICTURES, REACTING TO WHAT THEY SEE

GREG

Good old Dick's got his camera in the right place at the right time again.

CATHERINE

Doesn't matter that we don't have a portrait, formal shoot kind of thing? I thought that's what Sharon was organising?

GREG

She's done it, but Jack's happy with this. More action. Every picture tells...

SHARON JOINS THEM

SHARON

We got them, they'll be in by now. She looks pretty out of it though - here too, leaning on that bloke off the telly.

SHARON (peering over their shoulders)

That's not a bloke off the telly that's the new 007 that is. Well tasty.

GREG

Not true he's gay then?

SHARON

Not bloody likely!

GREG

WE got some good stuff from Frank in the police station and you did the interview with Chump Getty didn't you?

SHARON

That's about the most apt nickname I've ever heard. What a drone. Nothing to give you an angle.

CATHERINE

Well he's said some pretty juicy things about his ex-girlfriend's nocturnal habits. The kind of conversations she had with her father when she wanted money. The fact the Dad likes little girls and married one - you know the stepmother is almost the same age as the daughter?

SHARON

I know, I wrote it remember?

GREG

Don't want you to get any funny ideas mind you, but it's a good job. Now we have to see what your new best friend is coming up with.

CATHERINE

Come and tell us who these DJ girls are then - the ones you spotted at the party?

SHARON

I got locked in the loo with those two, I did, and whatever your fantasy Greg, twins aren't all they're cracked up to be I can tell you. In fact I don't think they are twins.

GREG

Well I wouldn't have minded being locked up with those two.

SHARON

They're not your type. They live on champagne and cocaine and not even *your* expenses will run to that!

GREG PICKS UP ANOTHER SET OF PICTURES, SHOWING THEM TO SHARON AND CATHERINE

GREG

That's a better one. We've got all of 'em in this one. The 'It' girls and Isabelle AND the ex. We're gonna have to get some of this stuff over to the online racket, so they're ready to go when the time's right. If we give it to 'em now Leo will blow it - but we might as well get a package together.

SHARON

Be careful. It's happened before. Online have blown a big story by putting it up first. She might give the game away. They did it with Paul McCartney's new girlfriend. The Editor was spitting nails.

GREG

Where is Leo anyway? He's usually nosing around about now. Hey, Sharon, you should tell Daisy we're not allowed to put anything up online til the paper's gone to bed, sewn up, bought up, done and dusted. There's a big hush hush deal going on with this. It's more than an ordinary buy-up.

SHARON CUPS HER MOUTH IN HER HAND AND WINKS, DROPPING A MOCK CURTSEY

CATHERINE EXITS, SHRUGGING

GREG

Now don't you have a job to do? People work around here Missy, you're not on the Mirror now.

SHARON

Just going to check on copy, see how we're getting on.

SHARON SCOOPS UP A HANDFUL OF PRINTS AND MOVES TOWARDS DAISY'S DESK

GREG

She's done well to get that in the bag - Sharon, and that new girl...

CATHERINE

I need her for a Byline picture.

SHARON

She's still writing...you wanna let her finish or give her a time?

LIGHTS GO UP ON DAISY, WORKING ALONE, LOOKING THROUGH CUTTINGS, TYPING

SHARON BRINGS HER OVER THE SHEAF OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND A CUP OF TEA

DAISY LOOKS UP, TAKES OFF HER HEADPHONES, AND ACCEPTS THE TEA

DAISY

Hey thanks, I need a break.

SHARON

Here Daisy, take a look at these.

SHARON SHOWS HER THE PHOTOGRAPHS

SHARON (CONT)

Did you get that line the Editor wanted, you know, 'My father caused my mother's suicide. That's the reason I took to going to crack dens in my lunch hour!/'

DAISY

Er. Not sure if it's quite like that.

SHARON

Don't you worry, we'll fix it. Did she tell how much she hated Arlene? What's the line? What's going to be important to the story - or their version of her story?

DAISY

We didn't talk much about her stepmother - it was her mother mainly and the way she died. Her father might have hadI don't think she would have ever taken hard drugs if it wasn't for.... There's her Uncle Rupert who was decapitated in a car accident. She talked about taking drugs with Cranford - her father bullying her and how much she hated school - there's a lot! I think....

GREG WALKS OVER

GREG

Gotta learn to spit it out in a sentence Daisy. Sharon's got it down to a tee.

Now what do you want out of this?

Double page spread and your first picture byline?
Eternal fame and a tidy fortune?

DAISY SWIGS HER TEA LOOKING
EMBARRASSED

DAISY
That's - that would be -

SHARON SPOTS SOMETHING ON THE DESK
AND PICKS IT UP TO SCRUTINISE

GREG WANDERS AWAY

SHARON
What's this then?

DAISY TRIES TO TAKE IT AWAY

SHARON (CONT)
What is it? That's not your writing -

DAISY
It's not mine/it's Isabelle's/private/

SHARON HAS ALREADY MOVED AWAY,
READING THE PAPER, KEEPING IT AWAY
FROM DAISY

SHARON
It looks like a suicide note to me. But they didn't
know it was suicide. Did they? They never found a
note, I remember/how did Isabelle get this, is it
real?

DAISY
Her mother left it for her.

SHARON
And nobody else ever saw it?

DAISY
Not til now/

SHARON
Izzy showed it to you?

DAISY
She gave it to me/

SHARON
But this isn't it/

DAISY
I gave it back/

SHARON
And took a picture. First.

DAISY
Yes.

SHARON
And you've written it in, it's in the story?

DAISY
I'm going to check it with Izzy/

SHARON
But is it in the copy?

DAISY
I've underlined the stuff I need to check with her.

SHARON
You're not going to have time/

DAISY
/well I've got to. I promised.

SHARON
Is it true?

DAISY
WHAT? Of course it's true. You're reading it.

SHARON
Then write it, if it's the truth.

DAISY
No I can't unless she knows I'm going to.

SHARON
Why do you think she gave it to you?

DAISY
She wanted me to see it. But you know what state she's in. I can't publish it without telling her.

SHARON
It's not you who's publishing. And she asked you to tell her story. I was there. She knows you are journalist. It's your job. Whether she knows it or not, she wants you to. She's mad at her father, right? He drove your mother into her grave, probably bumped off his own brother too I'd warrant, then married a girl your age. The man's a monster. You want to make up some fairy tale about him being a nice Daddy?

DAISY

No, but that quote -

SHARON

You don't have to tell everything you know but when you do, tell the truth.

DAISY

Well I don't want to tell everything I know!

SHARON

Baby. This one you gotta tell. No question.

DAISY PUSHES HER CHAIR BACK, TAKES
OFF THE HEADPHONES

DAISY

I'm going to find Isabelle. When did you leave her?
How was she?

SHARON

I'd say she was heading for bed, falling over drunk.

DAISY

Is the photographer still with her?

SHARON

He was emailing jpegs from his laptop to the picture
of the man. Even snappers get very sensitive about
their pictures and she didn't look great..

DAISY

But how was she? Functioning? Upright? God I hope so.
I'm going to grab a cab and get over there. Where's
the printer so I can take a hard copy with me, she'll
never be able to read it on screen in the her state.

SHARON

Daisy Greene you are doing no such thing. They won't
let you take proofs out of the building are you mad?
You are going to finish and file, file and finish.
They are standing round the art desk with a bloody
great hole in the page.

CATHERINE COMES OVER TO THE GIRLS

CATHERINE

Picture Byline's what I need you for now Daisy. Get
yourself over to the photographer's room. And this
has to be personal Daisy. Start the intro with : My
friend Isabelle Broughton told me last night....

DAISY(looking at Sharon)

Is she serious?

SHARON

'Course she is darlin'. You just nip into the loo and powder your nose, here, take my comb - I bet you don't take a bad picture Daisy. Enjoy it while you can.

CATHERINE

Is it filed and what's the word count? Sharon get the copy and make sure the intro's how I want it and send the whole thing over to the Editor.

DAISY

Where do I put it once I've run it past Isabelle? You said let it run to 2,500 - but there's lots more. She just didn't stop once she got going. It was quite/

CATHERINE

What?

DAISY

Quite painful actually/

CATHERINE

I'm sure you've done a good job. Sharon will check what you've got so far...

CATHERINE EXITS

DAISY

I guess I can do it over the phone.

SHARON

Well, you'll have to cut if it's that much over. And its better if you check it before subs do.

DAISY GULPS HER TEA AND FOLLOWS
CATHERINE

SHARON

I'm going to find Greg now, he needs to know how far you've got. To see what they want, how many pages they've given us. Then we'll go down to the pub and have a quick one.

SHARON BLOWS DAISY A KISS AND
EXITS

SHE HAS THE PRINT OUT OF
MARGUERITE'S NOTE IN HER HAND

LIGHTS GO DOWN

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT III,

SCENE 5

THE SPLASH

INT. OFFICE, NEWS DESK, ART DESK, SHARON'S DESK IN FRONT

LIGHTS COME UP AS SHARON COMES RUNNING THROUGH THE DOORS FROM BACKSTAGE TO FRONT, SHE HAS A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE IN HER HAND, DAISY IS BACK AT HER DESK SCANNING HER SCREEN, CHECKING WITH PILE OF PAPERS ON HER DESK

SHARON

IT'S THE SPLASH!!

SHARON PULLS OFF DAISY'S HEADPHONES AND DRAGS HER OUT OF HER CHAIR

SHARON (CONT)

You've done enough. The Editor loves it. Catherine loves it. You're a star!

DAISY

You sure? I haven't heard anything.

SHARON

Sure, I'm TELLING YOU. I'm the messenger, and the message is good, so you don't have to shoot me! We've all done good, especially you. They're upstairs mucking about with it now - it's the splash (front page) then a double page spread in the middle and maybe a turn 'cos we've got so much stuff. Mirror muckers eat your hearts out! It's a SCOOP!

DAISY LOOKS UP, SHOCKED

DAISY

But I haven't checked anything, I haven't been back to Izzy, but you said she had copy approval and I haven't even read a word to her - I wouldn't have done it without....

CATHERINE STRIDES THROUGH THE DOOR CARRYING ANOTHER BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE, PUTS IT ON ONE OF THE DESKS, REACHES INTO HER VOLUMINOUS BAG AND PULLS OUT THREE PAPER CUPS

SHARON

QUOTE approval. Bit different. No of course you wouldn't break your word sweetie, there wouldn't have been anyone in the office breathing down your neck/

CATHERINE

Don't you worry about contracts now Daisy, we've got what we want/

DAISY

Oh.

CATHERINE

Your friend's going to be smuggled out without anyone seeing her once we have our scoop nicely put to bed.

THERE IS SILENCE

SHARON BREAKS IT BY POPPING THE CHAMPAGNE CORK

SHARON

Well it's just as well my friend Daisy here has the makings of a sleuth, doesn't it? She seems to have tied up the job.

CATHERINE

So, everyone, let's have a little toast. A toast to newcomers, old hands, and Sharp exclusives.

GREG HOLDS OUT A PAPER CUP

CATHERINE TAKES A DAINY SIP, THEN MOVES QUICKLY OVER TO THE ART DESK WHERE SHE AND GREG PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER, STARTING TO LAY OUT THE PAGES

SHARON

We should get some food.

DAISY

I should call Izzy -

SHARON

Oh, don't worry about that now. We'll go to the bar downstairs.

DAISY

She had some sleeping pills and a bottle of Jack Daniels/

SHARON

So she's asleep? Bound to be.

DAISY

/ I don't think she knew I was going to write it
straight away/

SHARON

It's the name of the game girl. You get the story,
you write the story. Deadlines, they're called,
they're what we live by.

SHARON SLAPS DAISY ON THE BACK

GREG AND CATHERINE LOOK UP

SHARON (CONT)

Anyone want to join us for a drink?

GREG SHAKES HIS HEAD

Give her some food. We'll see you later.

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT III**SCENE 6****THE GIRL DONE GOOD**

INT/ JOURNO'S BAR IN BASEMENT OF SHARP BUILDING, NOISY

SHARON SITS BESIDE DAISY ON A BAR
STOOL SLIPS OFF THE STOOL AND
MOVES FORWARD TO TALK TO THE
AUDIENCE

SHARON (TO AUDIENCE)

This is the time it's fun, when all the hassle is worth it. When late at night the Editor pulls out a secret bottle of champagne from under the desk, the paper cups come out and disguise the medicine from any passers by; the riotous camaraderie's like a football match.

BOTH WOMEN AIRPUNCH

SHARON (CONT)

We're part of the world wide news team, the globalistas - it's as intoxicating as the booze itself! Innit?

DAISY AND SHARON LAUGH, SHARON
HUGS DAISY

JIM THE NIGHT EDITOR PUSHES HIS
WAY THROUGH THE JOURNALISTS AT THE
BAR

SPOTS DAISY AND SHARON

HE HAS PROOFS IN HIS HAND AND
WAVES THEM AT THE GIRLS

JIM

Here you are, take a look at this! You've both done good.

THE WOMEN WRIGGLE, PUSHING EACH
OTHER TO LOOK AT THE PAGES

SHARON

That's good/look at that Daisy!

JIM

Calm down dears, tomorrow is another day and this'll be fish and chip paper.

SHARON

OH hush UP you old Scrooge - let's have our moment!

JIM

ANY more moments in the sun for you lass and you'll turn into a total freckle.

DAISY

Hey look, my picture was taken an hour ago and now I've got my face plastered all over the Sunday Eye! How cool is that? I'm gonna have to tell Leo - and I gotta get back to the office I left my mobile up there.

SHARON PUTS HER HANDS FIRMLY ON
DAISY'S SHOULDERS

SHARON

Just sit down for a moment Daisy and have your sausages. You don't have to tell Leo. You've got about ten minutes to make changes.

DAISY

I just want to tell somebody! What? Ten minutes left? For changes? What's the time - what about Izzy? What am I going to do about Izzy? I must talk to Catherine.

SHARON

Don't hold yer breath love, Catherine's a bit... occupied. Joe was driving them off to the Savoy as we were leaving the building.

DAISY

Driving who? Who's **them**?

SHARON

Yeah. *Them*. Our revered Deputy Editor and his Diary queen.

TABLEAU: GREG AND CATHERINE IN
CLINCH

LIT FROM BEHIND

PRINTERS LAMENT FROM UNDER THE
FLOOR

DAISY

Ketchup. Please.

DAISY STICKS A SAUSAGE IN HER
MOUTH FROM THE PLATE SLAPPED DOWN
IN FRONT OF HER BY SHARON

SHARON

The subs'll still be there. You better sit down and read. Read it girl. I gotta feeling you ain't gonna like what you read so you better remember it looks good with your Byline splashed all over the splash, right?

DAISY

There's something wrong. I didn't put that caption in. That strapline - it's not what she said. It's not what I wrote. She wasn't wearing jewellery let alone a gothic - who WRITES this stuff?

SHARON

Greg, Catherine (sounds like her), The Editor - before we even go out to work darlin'. There's a few things you're gonna have to get used to.

DAISY TURNS AWAY TRYING TO FIND A SPACE TO SIT DOWN, SHE SEES JIM MAKING HIS WAY TO THE BAR

JIM

What's up?

DAISY

THIS IS twisted. This is not what I wrote. This makes Isabelle sound like a junky and her mother too - I didn't write that. We had a deal. I'd let her make changes. If the suicide note Marguerite wrote her is in the piece she has to know, I absolutely have to tell her.

JIM

Bit late for that now darlin'. They won't take it out. Headline's done. Pictures in. If you want to change some factual stuff you better get upstairs and see the subs right away.

DAISY

You want to come back in with me Sharon? I don't even know where to go.

SHARON

No thanks hon, I'll just have another pint with the lads. Well done Daisy. Baptism of fire and you didn't even get your eyebrows singed.

SHARON MOVES CENTRE STAGE, ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE

DAISY
Except my best friend will never forgive me/

SHARON (CONT)

Not sure its that simple darlin'...

DAISY PUSHES HER WAY THROUGH TO
THE EXIT, CLASPING PROOFS

FINDING A TABLE TO PUT THEM ONTO
SHE PULLS OUT HER MOBILE AND SPEED
DIALS IZZY'S NUMBER

DAISY
IZZY. IZZY. I'M trying to get hold of you, it's me,
Daisy. Call me. WHERE ARE YOU IZZY?

DAISY
I'm going to the hotel, leave a message, get her to
call me. Come on answer! Answer!

SHE LEAVES ANOTHER MESSAGE

DAISY (CONT)
Where are you Izzy? Where in the hell are you? I left
a message with the girl at the desk. You MUST talk to
me.

THE MOBILE GOES BACK INTO HER COAT
POCKET, SHE PICKS UP THE PAGE
PROOFS AND EXITS THROUGH THE SWING
DOOR INTO THE STREET

SCENE ENDS

ACT III

SCENE 7

CONFRONTATIONS

INT: NEWSPAPER: JACK HARWICH'S OFFICE - HARWICH STANDS BY THE WINDOW, BACK TO THE AUDIENCE, TELEPHONE AT HIS EAR, PUTS IT DOWN AS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR ANNOUNCES THE ARRIVAL OF LORD BROUGHTON.

HARWICH ADVANCES TOWARDS
BROUGHTON, HAND EXTENDED

HARWICH

My dear fellow, come in. Not quite up to the decor of the Club I'm afraid, but can I offer you a coffee?

BROUGHTON

I've seen the proofs you biked over Harwich and I'm furious. This was not supposed to make me look like a wife beater, let alone a wife-killer. What the fuck do you think you were doing?

HARWICH

My job, Max, my job, as you very well know.

BROUGHTON

Yes, every twist and turn of my daughter's drug-addled neurosis but why the hell did you have to publish that note and how the hell did you get it?

HARWICH

The writer happened to have been at school with your daughter Max. She trusted her. She showed her the note. Of course we had to use it.

BROUGHTON

It puts me in a pretty poor light Harwich so don't start twisting MY words. 'My life is beyond endurance, I can't go on living with your father...'

HARWICH

Look old man, the whole story shows how your neurotic daughter led you and your wife a pretty dance, with her drug-taking, her unsuitable boyfriends - her amoral lifestyle and her amoral mother - what more do you want? It shows she drove you to distraction with worry about her habits and it's a damned good explanation for your passionate quest to get drugs off the street. In fact we can get that into a caption, it's not too late.

BROUGHTON

You better damned well get your back behind our campaign then Harwich, you owe me one.

HARWICH

I'll do better than that. I'll talk to Toby about a donation, and we'll get our provincials behind it too. But more importantly we can offer you and Arlene a great spread in our supplement showing what a happy loving couple you are in your lovely new home - which will contrast with the unpleasant taste left in the mouth by your crazy daughter's junky behaviour.

BROUGHTON

That's just not going to cut the mustard Harwich. I know what you're up to. Another scoop for your little rag.

HARWICH

It will put you in a better light than the photographs I told you about.

BROUGHTON

You don't mean to tell me you'd dare to try to blackmail me on top of this insult?

HARWICH

Of course not old chap, only joking. Just a mild reminder. The fact is that a couple of nice double page spreads in the supplement will be a perfect follow up to today's story and even without spelling out that we are backing your campaign, if we give it a line at the end with a donation number the publicity will be priceless and the legislation as good as in the bag.

ANOTHER KNOCK ON THE DOOR
INTERRUPTS THE TWO MEN.

GREG ENTERS.

GREG

Jack, the papers gone to bed. All done. First editions out in a few hours. Sorry to interrupt, but I've got some bad news.

HARWICH

Well?

GREG TURNS TO LORD BROUGHTON

GREG

It concerns you too Sir.

BOTH MEN LOOK AT HIM

GREG (CONT)

I've just heard from Leo. Isabelle has tried to take an overdose. She's in a coma. Nobody knows yet what happened or whether she'll come round, or even if she intended to take her own life - but he heard it from Daisy, who found her, and he's putting it up online.

HARWICH

Stop him. He can't do that now. Before our piece is out.

GREG

He's done it. He's scooped the scoop. Tough shit.

BLACK OUT

SCENE ENDS

ACT III**SCENE 8 - SECRETS**

INT: OFFICE CAFETERIA, EARLY NEXT MORNING, SUNDAY

LEO IS SITTING DRINKING COFFEE AND
MAKING NOTES, PILE OF NEW SUNDAY
NEWSPAPERS BESIDE HIM.

DAISY SITS OPPOSITE, LISTLESSLY
STIRRING HER TEA

DAISY

She didn't have anything, just those little white
pills -

LEO

/it's possible she had something else.

DAISY

No. I don't think so. I think she saw this, she saw
the note, and it finished her.

LEO

I don't know Daisy I don't know.

DAISY

On the danger list?

LEO

I don't know. Nobody seems to know.

DAISY

Where is she?

LEO

We don't even know that. Usually we can find out.
But/

DAISY

Do you see what's happened? I've dropped a contact
lens and it hurts - I need to find the bathroom.

SHE TURNS TO LEAVE, STOOBS TO
SEARCH FOR LENS ON FLOOR

LEO STOPS HER FORCIBLY

LEO

You couldn't have stopped it.

DAISY (EQUALLY FIERCELY)

I didn't mean to TELL ALL - she showed me something - in confidence - I let Sharon see it - Izzy must have seen it..I made her want to... help me find my lens, help me Leo I can't see...

SHE COVERS HER EYES WITH HER HANDS

LEO

If she knew what you were doing, then she let you do it.

DAISY

What do you mean?

LEO

People say things in interviews, then panic, want to take it back but they can't. She **gave** you the note. Maybe she WANTED people to know about her father -

DAISY

I KNOW Leo, I know he was a creep - but I didn't tell her we were using THE NOTE - if she saw the piece it would have been a shock..

LEO

How could she have seen it? Unless some-one gave her proofs she couldn't have seen it last night - at least not until after midnight - it must have been today.

DAISY

Her father. He drove his first wife to drink and tried to kill his brother - that's what Isabelle thinks/he's a bully and a hypocrite and I wouldn't put anything past him/

LEO

/he couldn't stop the story coming out and neither could you. He tried to control the outcome, but he should have known better. The press is a wild horse, you get bucked off. Law of nature. Greg told me Broughton made a deal with Harwich, the arch hypocrite of Fleet Street. They deserve each other.

DAISY (in tears)

Isabelle didn't deserve either of them. I know, I saw the bruises/

LEO

Did you write that?

DAISY

Bruises? That I'd seen bruises? I thought she'd want me to take it out/I marked everything I wasn't sure about...

LEO

But you didn't?

DAISY

Couldn't/

LEO

Because?

DAISY

No time to think. All happens so quickly.

DAISY PICKS UP A PAPER AGAIN

DAISY

I wrote it, pressed the button and it was gone - went into this monstrous mouth.

LEO

Don't show them anything if you don't want it to run. Editors are like magpies. They see the gems and take them for their nest.

DAISY IS WALKING UP AND DOWN, HALF-READING FROM THE NEWSPAPER

DAISY

Maybe it's not me. Maybe this whole thing was just too much for Izzy, maybe she found Jamie Cranford and he brought her something/

DAISY THROWS DOWN THE PAPER. LEO PULLS HER UPRIGHT

LEO

You mean maybe it wasn't your fault. Good. Maybe it wasn't. Now - let Harwich and Broughton tear themselves to pieces, you have to keep yourself together and we'll find Isabelle. Even if they stopped you going in the ambulance we can find her.

DAISY

Now? Find Izzy now? /...HOW? Her father will stop us.

LEO

I doubt it. Jed's got people at all the airports. Broughton's flying Isabelle to Panama, to get her out of the drugs scene and protect himself from a loose cannon when the Election's coming up - private jet, he could be anywhere, especially with all this shit hitting the fan.

Daisy

How do you know? Who told you? You haven't put anything on line yet have you? Not about Isabelle, not about/

LEO

I don't know why I haven't, but no I haven't. Pity. Perfect opportunity.

DAISY LOOKS AT HIM AND LOOKS AWAY

DAISY

I've got to look for her. Find her.

LEO

You could call the News Desk - get them to help you - speak to Frank, he'll know where to start.

DAISY STARTS DIALLING, THEN DROPS THE MOBILE AND LOOKS AT LEO

DAISY

I've had an idea.

LEO

Oh-oh, dangerous.

DAISY

You know how you think Harwich and Broughton were in cahoots over this whole thing, the story, turning the tables on Isabelle - turning my words around so she sounded like a slut not a desperate unhappy girl -

LEO

Ok. What comes next?

DAISY GETS UP QUICKLY, HEADING FOR THE EXIT, TALKING OVER HER SHOULDER TO LEO

DAISY

We put it online, now, before they can stop us. Their collusion, their twisting of the story, Isabelle's words written up by me, was because they had a deal to get the newspaper group behind Broughton's political ambitions - it could be why Isabelle tried to take her own life. It's political dynamite. We have a reason. Can you do it?

Can you make it happen that quickly? It would put a bomb under their political machinations.

LEO LEAPS TOWARDS HER FOLLOWING HER TO THE EXIT

LEO

It wouldn't be the first time we've scooped the paper. Not the most popular move, but it can be done. Whatever happens next is sweet revenge.

AS DAISY AND LEO LEAVE THE CAFETERIA AT A TROT, SHARON ENTERS

SHARON (*to the audience*)

What she really has to know is whether it was her fault. If Isabelle took an overdose, did she mean to, and was it because Daisy made the note public?

VIDEOSCAPE/MONTAGE ACROSS THE BACK OF STAGE

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES/PIX OF ISABELLE DRINKING, FALLING OVER DRUNK/HANGING ONTO DANIEL/TILTING A PANAMA HAT OVER ONE EYE/WATER SKI-ING BEHIND A SPEEDBOAT (DANIEL CRAIG AT THE WHEEL)

Isabelle was one crazy chick. But she didn't overdose because she was about to read her life story in the Sunday Eye. She was much too cool. More likely somebody gave her a treat and she took too much of it. She was drinking like a snake anyway.

PHOTOGRAPH OF A GLASS, A BOTTLE OF WHITE SPIRIT(MEXICAN TEQUILA) BUG IN THE GLASS/ROLLED UP £50 NOTE WITH WHIT PAPER ON A SILVER ENGRAVED MIRROR

SHARON MOVES BACK TO HER DESK

PICKS UP A PENCIL. PICKS UP A GLASS, POURS FROM THE BOTTLE OF TEQUILA (ON HER DESK), PICKS UP THE ROLLED NOTE AND SNIFFS

None of us writers gets what's happening now in newspapers - or likes it, writing about airheads, celebrities, famous for nothing. X-Factor mini stars, Big Brother big beasts, Dragons and Apprentices... That's fine for red-tops but it isn't why I came to the Eye. Nor did they.

SHARON NODS IN THE DIRECTION OF LEO AND
DAISY, OUTLINED AT BACK OF THE STAGE,
CLOSE BUT NOT TOUCHING

Both idealists, with their colours nailed to the
mast. And now we are having to publish bad stuff
about good people. So we've got to use the tools we
have to hand. Revolutionaries

SHE SEIZES THE TITLE PAGE OF THE
RIPPED PAPER AND WAVES IT OVER HER
HEAD LIKE A FLAG

We could change it. No more corruption and double
dealing. No more pay-offs. Change the world.

Daisy says she won't write for the Eye again. Leo
says she should write her own blog.

DAISY WALKS ACROSS THE STAGE BEHIND LEO
TAPPING INTO HER IPAD

Ink in the veins. Ink and ice. You can't stop the
driving force, the ambition to be read and heard. No
point in making a point if nobody gets the point.

Besides. She's got a meeting with the Editor tomorrow
about a spread for the supplement.

SEARCHLIGHT ON THE DOOR TO THE EDITORS
OFFICE. JOE OPENS THE DOOR
SLOWLY, LEAVING IT AJAR, NOT CLEAR
WHETHER THE EDITOR IS SITTING AT HIS
DESK OR NOT

If he's still the Editor, that is.

CURTAIN

PLAY ENDS

25/05/17