

ARC OF BRIEF LIES

Television series (2012)

STORY

Intended as a series of six one-hour episodes, Brief Lies is set in a UK national newspaper office in 2008 as the paper faces the threat of the internet.

The story follows a group of journalists caught up in cut throat circulation wars, and the increasing pressures of digitalisation.

Four years before the Leveson Inquiry brings to the surface allegations of corruption, collusion and blackmail in the industry, the series starts with a young writer, Daisy Green, as she begins an internship at the Sunday Eye. Recently graduated, hungry for work, ambitious, she gets 'work experience' at the online office of Sharp Newspapers in London. Commercially successful and described as 'a colossus straddling the middle market', for years the newspaper group's dominance of the market has lined the pockets of senior editors, top journalists, executives and the proprietors. Suddenly they and their competitors find the readership sliding downhill as the public move from print to screen and circulation is threatened by a growing army of bloggers, tweeters and citizen journalists. This is a story of what happened next.

OVERVIEW

It is early Spring, London, 2008. Daisy Green is an untried young writer with vaulting ambitions, who starts work in the newly set-up online office of an ancient and popular newspaper as it tries to get to grips with cyberspace. She gets daily expenses but no salary. If she wants to succeed she has to produce.

The first episode is about how she gets involved in finding a missing 'it' girl, Isabelle Broughton, who was at boarding school with her. The girl is a crack addict daughter of a Tory peer (Shadow Chancellor), and Daisy is put on the story because she knows the girl. It is a 'buy-up', meaning Daisy must offer her money, and another journalist will write it.

Daisy's first interview is dependent on her former friend Isabelle, who realises she and Daisy are pawns in a bigger game of politics, power and the future of print media. Two key figures in the story are Isabelle's father Lord Broughton, MP and Shadow Health Secretary trying to push through a new Drugs Bill, and Daisy's Editor Jack Harwich. These four characters make up the main twists and turns of the narrative thread of the series.

STRUCTURE

Each episode aims to focus on stories run by the different 'desks' (News, Sport, Arts and Culture, Politics, Pictures) within a newspaper.

The structure of the series follows the shape of the working week on a Sunday newspaper, kicking off on Tuesday and ending on Sunday, publication day, last episode in the series of six.

1. episode one: **TUESDAY**

DESK: Diary Episode: **Shock Tactics**

Daisy gets the job in the online office, is put on the track of her old school friend Isabelle, and they meet again, in a police station. The Editor and Isabelle's politician father meet and plot. Diary Editor Katherine puts Daisy together with ex-tabloid hack Sharon, who begins to teach Daisy some of the tricks of the newspaper trade. They find the missing Isabelle and set up the story – Daisy and Isabelle are holed up in a hotel room as Daisy tries to talk her friend into telling her everything. But when she returns to the office she tells the online Editor what's happening, he runs it overnight which causes a rival paper to pick it up and triggers a massive confrontation between the online operation and the Editor.

2. Episode Two: **WEDNESDAY**

DESK: TV and Entertainment Episode: **The Girl with the Golden Nose**

The online Editor, Leo, is given a written warning and Daisy is moved into the Diary offices. As Daisy researches Isabelle's disappearance, Diary Editor Katherine hears of another connection to Isabelle. Kiki Meredith is a Diary contact, a would-be television presenter, part of Isabelle's social 'set' prepared to sell the secrets of her friends and fellow party girls, for the price of a 'tip' fee to help feed her habit.

Sharon is sent to get what she can out of the tv presenter.

News flash: street riots cause havoc in Brixton. The News Editor hears that another of Isabelle's friends, has been driving through the riots with a black drug dealer, in her father's car, while the man loots burning shops. Both girl and drug dealer get nicked and put into jail. Girl has information about Isabelle.

Sharon is summoned to the jail with crime reporter. Money changes hands. Another buy-up for the paper. Harwich is happy, and throwing money at the stories.

3. Episode Three: **THURSDAY**

DESK: Arts and Culture Episode: **Colour Co-ordinated**

Rothko painting defiled in art gallery in the name of 'yellowism', a radical arts protest movement 'art free for all'. Arts correspondent investigating the event discovers the gallery owner is running an insurance scam. Arts editor demands reporters from News Desk. News already overstretched on Broughton story. Row explodes between the two factions. Art desk hears news of millionaire (Tetra Pak heir) art benefactor Hans Kristian Rausing hiding his wife's body under black bags for ten days before informing authorities of her death. As art and news put reporters on doorsteps Daisy writes up the transcript of Isabelle's tape and in the excitement forgets to be ashamed that she has left her tape recorder running as her friend has a nervous breakdown.

4. Episode Four: **FRIDAY**

DESK: Sports: **Balls**

Football clubs start asking parents to pay for their children to be mascots at big games. Fury from parents and fans. Sports Editor, on his high horse over the story is suddenly accused of giving backhanders (to friends and family) and discounting the price of season tickets for reporters.

Features Desk sends Sharon to doorstep girlfriend of Chelsea player who has just broken up with the multi-millionaire 23 year old.

Racing 'Scout' accused of making a million on a tip off.

Sharon comes back with the Chelsea story, the girlfriend has fallen for the flowers and white wine trick, asked Sharon in, and spilled the tearful beans.

Daisy is writing up the Isabelle story as Sharon returns to the office. She is supposed to be writing up the story herself so keeps Daisy away from the Editor's office until it is too late to get the copy to Isabelle to check as she has promised to do.

Sharon, Daisy and Katherine have a blazing row which ends in Daisy racing to the hotel to find Isabelle has disappeared.

She returns to the office at midnight to find the paper has been 'put to bed' and the subs have ignored all her directions to 'hold until checked'.

Sharon takes her out to the pub where they both get legless and the News Editor and Picture Editor have to carry Daisy to a taxi.

5. Episode Five: **SATURDAY**

DESK: Features and News: **An Eye for an Eye**

The main story for Sunday will be Isabelle's – interview by Daisy, written up by Sharon, they share the byline. Daisy sits in the office biting her nails and waiting for subs to make her requested changes to the text. The call never comes. Art desk and back benches (subs and layout) have been instructed to prioritise the story, at the same time the Features Editor had some months ago bought up a first person series by Brian Rix about celebrities with handicapped children. His own Down's Syndrome daughter has just died and features have planned a campaign for Mencap.

The Editor pulls series at the last moment to replace it with Isabelle's story, the art desk lays it out with pictures over several pages.

Politics team starts an investigation into Broughton's anti-drugs Bill.

The Editor returns to the Club to meet Broughton.

Broughton leaves the Club hurriedly.

Daisy still can't reach Isabelle.

6. Episode Six: **SUNDAY: Splash**

Daisy running out of the house to get the paper, excited, sees shocking headline saying Isabelle has attempted suicide.

Horrified she gets Sharon to help her track down all hospital emergency departments and police to find her friend.

Leo the online editor, still keen to run the story as an exclusive for his department, tries to get addresses from Daisy with no luck, so races to the airport where he thinks Broughton has taken Isabelle to make a getaway as the world's press descend.

Final scene at the airport where Leo is trying to get an exclusive quote from Broughton for the online operation as the Broughton family board a plane for Panama.

But Isabelle is not with them, she is being rushed to a London hospital in an ambulance, as her father departs. Leo gets his quote from Broughton as he and his wife walk up the gangway to the private jet, and taps it into the online website. Daisy is already on her way to the hospital, not knowing if Isabelle has survived.