

THE PLOUGHMAN'S LUNCH

An original screenplay by

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Post Production Draft, 1985

FADE IN:

INT. BBC RADIO NEWSROOM - LATE MORNING

We are IN CLOSE as a story arrives on a press service teleprinter. A Hand tears away the sheet. The CAMERA TRACKS as we follow the story. It passes through the copytaster's hands and it passes on down to the summaries desk.

This is a time of steady activity. Journalists move about the room to consult. Others are writing in longhand, and several are dictating copy to typists, who are all women.

One or two people - NEWSREADERS - sit about doing nothing.  
Much movement of paper.

Over the sound of typewriters and the murmur of dictating voices we HEAR a WOMAN'S VOICE over the P.A. Announce, "The Leader of the Opposition on five". A few journalists pick up their headsets, but they do not stop writing. We establish the atmosphere - laconic but efficient, and a little down-at-heel.

At the summaries desk we find JAMES PENFIELD. He stands to the side of a little behind a seated secretary, dictating in a laconic deadpan voice from a sheet of scrawled longhand.

JAMES

Between fifty and sixty scrap metal workers are..

The phone rings. James snatches it and answers without breaking stride.

JAMES

Hello. Newsroom.

The secretary waits, her face totally inexpressive.

JAMES

Who? Paul Dean? He doesn't work here anymore.

ANOTHER JOURNALIST

(calling over his shoulder as he passes)

Went to IRN.

JAMES

No. No. Sorry. Try IRN.

He drops the receiver and continues. The secretary reactivates.

JAMES

..reported to have landed illegally on the island of South Georgia in the South Atlantic.

The Foreign Office reacted sceptically to reports that Argentine Government was planning..

INT. NEWSROOM - LATE MORNING

James and a newsreader (one of those we saw earlier doing nothing) stand together by the photocopier. Walking with controlled haste and carrying the news sheets, they head towards the studio. A clock behind them shows two minutes to twelve.

INT. STUDIO - LATE MORNING

James and the newsreader sit at a table in the studio, fairly close together. The newsreader settles himself behind the microphone. James sits back, professionally bored, rolling a stub of a pencil between his fingers.

Through a large loudspeaker we hear a Radio 4 programme winding up. Theme music.

The newsreader has a plummy authoritative voice and is a year or two younger than James. He stares down at the news sheet.

From the Control Room a woman announces "One Minute".

JAMES

How's Mary?

NEWSREADER

(stung then  
recovering)

Oh, she's well. Jolly well.  
Thanks. Very well indeed.

From the Studio Controller's POV we SEE the Newsroom behind James and the newsreader, who chat soundlessly.

MOMEN'S VOICE

Before the news at twelve o'clock,  
there's just time to tell you about  
Woman's Hour this afternoon.  
Commander Freddy Bracknell will be  
talking about his four years as a  
German POW in Stalag Three, and  
mountaineer John Clayton will be  
reliving the thrills and perils of  
Everest. Also, Polly Morrell will  
be finding out from the historian  
Professor John Gerty how the  
governments of Eastern Europe  
distort their recent past in history  
books to suit their present policies  
and allegiances. That's Freddy  
Bracknell, John Clayton and John  
Gerty, all on Woman's Hour just  
after two o'clock this afternoon  
The six pips. The sweep hand of  
the clock. The red light.

NEWSREADER

BBC News at twelve o'clock. There  
is cautious optimism in Brussels  
that formula may be reached to  
break--

EXT. BRIXTON - LATE AFTERNOON

James hurries home through the din of rush hour Brixton.

INT. JAMES' FLAT - LATE AFTERNOON

James' flat is one floor of a large Victorian house. The decent-sized rooms knocked together make a very large bedsitting room. Bare boards, junk furniture, but elegant. Heavy stereo stack, a lot of records, a lot of paperbacks.

In high spirits, James prepares to go out. He chooses a shirt, begins to undress. The TV is on.

INT. JAMES' FLAT - NIGHT

An hour later. James is dressed to go out. The big room is now in darkness except for the light by James' armchair. He is talking on the phone to his friend Jeremy Hancock.

JAMES

C'mon, you promised...tell her you've got to finish a piece...I know...I know, but it's my big night...yes she's going to be there...C'mon! All I want you to do is introduce me to her. And remember, build me up...good man.

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE - NIGHT

A high-ceilinged room in a publishing house, Bloomsbury. A launch party. About forty guests. Waiters take round trays with glasses of wine. By some large double doors is a display of school textbooks. Most prominently featured is the book being launched today - Goldbooks Schools Series No. 5 The Cold War, edited by Professor J. Gerty.

James is led by a PERSONAL ASSISTANT through the crowd to meet GOLD, who is surrounded by ATTENTIVE YOUNG MEN.

GOLD

.....took him by the elbow, steered him into a quiet corner and said "Where do you think you are, young man? Fabers?"

From the circle of polite laughter, Gold extends his hand towards James.

GOLD

Glad you could come.

PERSONAL ASSIATANT

James Penfield.

GOLD

Good, good. Now is someone getting you a drink.

PERSONAL ASSIATANT

Wrote the Berlin Airlift chapter.

Job done, P.A. fades.

GOLD

I know, I know! Gentlemen, let me introduce you to one of our most talented contributors to The Cold War. James Penfield. He wrote the opening chapter, on 'The Berlin Airlift'. One of the best chapters in the book.

JAMES

Hello.

GOLD

I won't introduce you all by name. Basically James, this is our UK sales team. What was I saying? Yes, these graduate trainees...

Twenty minutes later. JEREMY has just come in and is surveying the room from the doorway. He takes a drink from a tray, notices James across the room and smiles ruefully.

Jeremy Hancock is a journalist, same age as James, good-looking and well-dressed. A fairly corrupt look about him, despite this. He is intelligent and intensely self-regarding.

James makes his way through the crowd towards Jeremy. They stand on the doorway - a position which affords them a good view of the guests in the room and those guests who are still arriving by way of a grand and ornate stairway.

JEREMY

My dear James.

With mock solemnity, he kisses James on the cheek.

JAMES

Not here.

JEREMY

To the airlift.

JAMES

To the airlift.

JEREMY

Any sign of the goddess Barrington?

JAMES

Not yet you know any of these people?

JEREMY

One or two. A grey lot. Some

social democrats. Some diligent  
anti-communists. A political  
section man from the US Embassy.  
And this exquisite Californian  
wine, courtesy of the CIA.

JAMES

Nonsense.

They look across the room at Gold being listened to.

JERMEY

By the way, I hear that your Mr.  
Gold is about to become very rich.  
I hope you told him that most of  
the ideas in your Berlin airlift  
chapter came from me.

JAMES

Fuck off.

SUSAN (O.S.)

So it's all worked out perfectly...

JAMES

That's her.

The two men go to the head of the stairs to watch SUSAN  
come up.

SUSAN

She get's the house, he get's the  
cars. And the baby is still in  
Switzerland with the Au pair.

SUSAN BARRINGTON is in her late twenties. Flamboyant,  
effortlessly confident, she inhabits that special world -  
with its different rules - of the truly ambitious. James  
fascination owes as much to the certainties of her class  
as to her looks.

An attractive young man accompanies her up the stairs.

Jeremy makes a sound. Susan Glances up.

SUSAN

Jeremy!

She waves and her elbow catches a tray of champagne being  
carried downstairs. Glasses fall about her feet. While  
apologising, Susan does not take her eyes off Jeremy.

SUSAN

How Stupid! I am sorry.

The butler and the young man drop to the ground and set  
about picking up the glasses. Susan regards them for a  
moment, then steps round them and hurries up the stairs.

Jeremy and Susan go into a clinch, with kisses. James stands a few feet off.

SUSAN

Jeremy! How Fantastic.

JEREMY

Darling Susan.

SUSAN

You're so famous now.

JEREMY

And you're so beautiful. What are you doing here?

SUSAN

We're thinking of doing this current affairs thing for schools. World history since 1945. Twelve programmes, lots of stock film.

JEREMY

In that case, you should meet my very dear friend, James Penfield. Brilliant analyst of recent history and a world authority on the Berlin Airlift.

James and Susan say "Hi" and shake hands.

SUSAN

Was that your chapter, then? It was very good.

JAMES

Thank you. We met last week, at the Wajda film. You won't remember. We didn't actually speak.

SUSAN

(not remembering)

Yes, that's right. I'm being terribly rude. Bob? Oh, Bob. This is Bob Tuckett. Bon was at Oxford too.

Bob, Jeremy, James all say "Hi". Momentarily enthusiasm flags, no one speaks. Then the drinks tray is suddenly in their midst and they all reach out thankfully, with mock groans of relief and surprise.

An hour later, Guests are leaving. James has got Susan alone. They descend the stairs. CLOSE ON Susan, a disparate kind of seriousness.

SUSAN

I mean, in many ways I'm right behind the women's movement. But

sometimes I wish they'd get on with it instead of moaning on. The office was split right down the middle. I mean, as a woman I understood what they were saying, that current affairs was all about what men did, but as a human being and a television researcher, as a professional, I could just sense they'd got it all wrong. I could see there were two paths I could go down, power or not-power. Down the not-power path was lot of sisterly feeling, masochism and frustration. Down the other path, I could keep on working. So of course I voted with the men and the other women all resigned. I think they're mad, don't you?

They arrive by the front door. There is the briefest pause. James makes his bid.

JAMES

Can I give you a lift?

SUSAN

No, it's all right. I can get a cab. Night night.

James stands in the doorway and watches her go.

EXT. OXFORD CIRCUS - DAY

An abrupt transition. Morning rush hour, Brixton Underground station to Oxford Circus. James fights his way through the crowd up the underground steps leading to the street. He is late.

EXT. LANGHAM PLACE - DAY

James runs away from CAMERA towards Broadcasting House.

INT. NEWS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Same time, Moulded plastic chairs are ranged along the walls of the room. Some journalists stand, some are half asleep. The feel of a morning assembly.

Seated at the only desk, by the door, sits the EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, While waiting he pretends to look at papers.

The tone of these meetings is restrained, weary.

The Editor speaks with short pauses between each point. Quietly, as though talking to himself.

EDITOR

Use of this word "finally". We've

had this one before. Difficult  
when it gets...

James come in. The Editor ignores him pointedly. There  
are no more seats. James stands somewhere inconspicuous.

EDITOR

...when it gets too close to  
'finally' the main points of the  
news... Now today. Not very sexy  
list. We can't live off all these  
court cases...Royals...What's  
Charles giving Diana for her  
birthday?

1ST. JOURNALIST

He's not telling.

EDITOR

Better follow him around, I  
suppose.

2ND. JOURNALIST

Newcastle is following Charles to  
see if anyone throws a bottle at  
his car like last time.

EDITOR

Good... Now, I'm going to drop  
this panda business unless something  
happens soon.

2ND. JOURNALIST

We've got two people down the zoo  
looking into the cage.

EDITOR

Give it one more day. These scrap  
iron merchants on, where is it,  
Gritviken Anything in that?

JAMES

Could be.

EDITOR

Let's keep an eye on it then.  
Okay, I'm just thinking aloud.  
Let's take the list in order.  
Cabinet reshuffle. Chris?

1ST JOURNALIST

Bob is ringing round the ministries  
finding out where everyone is going  
to be. That'll come to fruition  
later this morning. John'll be at  
Caxton Hall. We'll try and lay on  
a radio car.

Through this last speech we CLOSE IN on James. Behind his

news prospects sheet he is reading a letter. We glimpse the letter heading: 'GOLDBOOKS'

EDITOR

Prime Minister is on the Jimmy Young Show at ten-thirty. We should get something out of that. Now, matter Irish...

INT. JAMES' FLAT - EVENING

James is clearing a desk he has against a wall, in preparation for work on his Suez book. It is a desk that has not seen much use before, piled high with clutter. He brings over a lamp for it, arranges the typewriter in its centre. Various London library books are arranged along one edge.

On the wall above the desk, James pins a large map of Europe and the Mediterranean. He sits at the desk, lines up a couple of pencils...and picks up a book.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Langan's, Piccadilly. Gold and James are met at the door by the HEAD WAITER, Gold is obviously known here. Businessmen, media people, agents, conspiracy, urgency, babble. Cornucopia too - dessert trolley, cheese trolley, something being flambee'yd at a table.

ANOTHER SHOT through the diners we find Gold and James already seated. The main course has been cleared away. A clock shows the time to be ten to three.

JAMES

I was only ten years old at the time, but it was the first international crises I can remember. It's obviously a key point, and I've always thought that sooner or later we would have to re-examine Suez in the light of subsequent events. And now, suddenly, with this Falklands business on us, it's quite clear we do need to take another look at 1956. The way I see the book is that it would get away completely--

The waiter has wheeled up the dessert trolley. Gold has been examining it for the last few seconds before breaking in.

GOLD

Would you like a dessert...I'm having one.

JAMES

No thanks. I'd like to break away--

GOLD

I'll have some of that.

JAMES

...break away completely from--

GOLD

And some of that. Sorry.

JAMES

...from all the moralising and talk of national humiliation that is now the standard line on Suez...

Gold has a great forkful of gateau near his face.

GOLD

Yes...You're not a socialist then?

JAMES

No. I'd want to--

GOLD

Good.

JAMES

I'd want to set out events as they happened. The way I see it is this: the British Empire was an ideal. It may have become totally obsolete by the middle of this century, but it wasn't totally dishonourable to try and defend its remains and try and salvage some self-respect, which is what I think the Conservatives were trying to do. Then there's the essential--

GOLD

Are you going to have coffee?

JAMES

Yes, please.

GOLD

And you'll join me in a sambucca?

JAMES

Thank you.

Gold speaks to the waiter as James continues.

JAMES

...there's the business of the British collusion with Israel. Of course it's proved beyond all doubt now, but I want to set it in the context of diplomacy and warfare.

I mean, if you're about to attack one country, it makes sense to encourage neighbouring countries to attack it to. The French understood this. They could never--

The waiter brings the coffee. Gold is lighting a cigar, having offered one to James.

JAMES

The French could never make out all the embarrassment and breast-beating of the British. My enemy's enemy is my friend. It's as simple as that. If we had not been so scrupulous we would not have been so ashamed.

The waiter brings the sambuccas. We CLOSE IN on the drinks as James goes on talking. Gold puts a match to James's drink on this next line.

JAMES

Now it's as if we discovered ourselves again. We're acting independently when the standard line has always been that after Suez we couldn't lift a finger without the Americans.

INT. ARCADE - DAY

Gold and James stroll through the arcade, bloated from their lunch. Both are slightly drunk. Gold is expansive.

GOLD

Personally James, I'm very excited by this new arrangement we have. It gives us direct access to literally hundreds of American collages. Twentieth century history is a growth area over there, don't ask me why. Your readership will be first and second year American collage students...

JAMES

Freshman and sophomores...

GOLD

You know the lingo. Jolly good. So your language will have to be simple, not stupid, mind, but simple, very, very simple, and always remember it's an American readership.

JAMES

Like I was saying, the American

angle in Suez is very important.  
I wouldn't want to say they let us  
down. I think that's wrong. A  
good ally is one who doesn't back  
you up in your mistakes, who tells  
you when to pull back. And the  
Americans were good allies. Simple  
as that.

James is immensely pleased with his own performance during this speech. Gold, however, is more interested in something he has seen in a shop window. As soon as James finishes, Gold mumbles an apology and plunges into the shop. James follows him in.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

A lull in the action. Most of the journalists are eating out. A few eat sandwiches, smoke, chat, read. A background television shows crowd scenes from Argentina.

James sits with a plastic cup of coffee reading intently.

He stands at the window looking out over the roofs. Then he turns abruptly, picks up a telephone and dials.

JAMES

Is that London Midweek? Susan  
Barrington.

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET - NORTHWEST LONDON - DAY

James turns off the street up the front path of a nondescript per-war semi.

INT. JAMES'S PARENTS HOUSE - DAY

MR. PENFIELD comes into the hall to answer the door. He is tired-looking man in his sixties. James enters. The two men fumble awkwardly between a handshake and an embrace. It is James who favours the former.

MR. PENFIELD

Hello, Jimmy.

JAMES

Dad.

MR. PENFIELD

Come into the kitchen. I'm just  
making your mother's tea.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mr. Penfield fusses inexpertly at the stove. James leans in the doorway.

JAMES

So how is she?

MR. PENFIELD

Well, she doesn't complain much.  
You know what she's like. She  
keeps asking when you're coming...

JAMES

I'm sorry about Saturday, Dad. It  
was just impossible to get away.

MR. PENFIELD

Oh she knows you're very busy,  
especially now, with everything  
going on...the doctor said to try  
her on solids, but she's been right  
off her food...You take this up to  
her. Tell her you made it. She'll  
like that.

James picks up the tray - tinned tomato soup, buttered  
bread, and a cup of tea.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

MRS. PENFIELD lies on her back, dozing. She is plainly  
very ill. James sits at the bedside. The tray of food  
cools on a bedside table. We have a sense of time passing.

Mrs. Penfield opens her eyes. James kisses her on her  
cheeks.

MRS. PENFIELD

Jimmy. I knew you'd come today.  
I said to Dad this morning, that  
boy'll be here this morning, just  
you see. He said don't get your  
hopes up, but I knew...

This speech appears to exhaust her. Her eyes close. She  
keeps hold of James's hand. She murmurs.

MRS. PENFIELD

Have you got to do straight off?

JAMES

No, not yet.

MRS. PENFIELD

Good...stay here a bit.

James sits. His mother falls into a deep sleep.

INT. LIVING-ROOM - EVENING

Mr. Penfield sits drinking tea and watching TV. He stands  
when James enters and turns the set off.

JAMES

She's asleep.

Mr. Penfield indicates a seat to James.

MR. PENFIELD

Everyone's been marvellous really, Jimmy. The neighbours come and sit with her while I'm at work.

JAMES

That's good.

MR. PENFIELD

And Joe Ramage - do you remember him? He comes and helps out in the shop.

JAMES

Yes, you said.

MR. PENFIELD

Now, are you going to have some more tea?

JAMES

No, thanks Dad.

MR. PENFIELD

Or a beer. I've got some in.

James shakes his head. There is a long awkward silence, a hopeless silence that is particular to both father and son. Finally James gets to his feet.

JAMES

I've got to be going. I've got a meeting tonight.

MR. PENFIELD

The bed's all made up if you want to stay.

JAMES

I'll ring you in the next couple of days.

Mr. Penfield stands and nods. This is a familiar exchange. Finish on him.

INT. BARBICAN ARTS COMPLEX - AFTERNOON

James and Susan arrive at the Barbican together. Their conversation is a little detached from its subject matter. They are feeling each other out. They are not disagreeing here. As they talk they make a complicated route through the Arts Centre, always on the verge of getting lost.

JAMES

What did you think of that Wadja film?

SUSAN

I quite liked it. I wasn't as enthusiastic as everyone else.

JAMES

I thought it was tremendous.

SUSAN

I think it went on rather too long.

JAMES

I couldn't bear for it to end.

SUSAN

And I didn't like that man.

JAMES

Oh, but he was terrific.

SUSAN

And the shape of it all. It was sort of...shapeless.

JAMES

Really? I thought those long flashbacks were extremely good.

INT. LIFT - AFTERNOON

JAMES

You don't like flashbacks because your mother's a historian.

SUSAN

Good theory. But I like my mother. I have no aversions to what she does.

JAMES

Too bad. What did your father do?

SUSAN

My real father? Well, he was a flashback.

They laugh as they step out of the lift.

INT. BARBICAN ART GALLERY - LATE AFTERNOON

A little later. A Private View. A discreetly murmuring, wine, canaps.

The paintings - painfully pretentious - represent various forms of aesthetic self-consciousness.

James and Susan look at the pictures, but make no reference to them. They spend a little time in front of each one before moving to the next. James speech is broken by

moments of contemplation. As they move on again, he picks up his thread.

JAMES

Everyone describes the same process. At first it is exciting. You're at the centre of the world. As soon as anything happens, you're the first to know about it. And there are deadlines a dozen times a day, even more, and that's intimidating and exciting. Then you get the hang of it and the excitement wears off. You're a clerk in a rather dowdy Office. There's none of the glamour of television, or the penetration of serious journalism. You're a processor of semi-official news. Some people leave at this stage. Then, if you hang on, and especially if you're promoted, you discover a new kind of pleasure. You're pleased by the ease with which you can write summaries and bulletins from news agency printouts, by the way you can judge length. Ending a broadcast on the dot, having everything run smoothly, selecting a running order that makes sense, knowing instinctively what you can and cannot do. Professionalism.

SUSAN

And you're at this third stage

JAMES

No, there's a fourth. Numbness. You do everything right, but you feel nothing either way.

SUSAN

I think you're exaggerating. And if you aren't, you should jolly well change your job.

JAMES

Oh yes?

SUSAN

Yes. You're much too old to making a drama out of alienation, or whatever you call it. You've got to take responsibility for your own happiness. That's what I think anyway.

Susan has moved on a couple of steps and is bending forwards to look at a picture. James smiles at her wonderingly, a

little deflated, but impressed.

INT. JAMES' FLAT - EVENING

Jeremy is sprawled in a chair with a drink. James is standing. Muted piano music from the stereo. EDWARD has just entered. The other two have been waiting for him.

JAMES

It's the Poet Laureate himself.

Edward approaches. He is a contemporary of the other two, but looks much younger and less worldly in manner. He is slightly nervous. He works on a literary magazine and he is a poet whose work is just beginning to be recognised.

The three are old friends. Jeremy and James keep up their friendship with Edward because they recognise his talent, and this makes them feel more authentic. Edward keeps up with them because he is lonely and his own life is rather dull. However, he does distrust them a little. And they keep his talent in place by teasing him.

As Edward enters the other two applaud.

JEREMY

How sweet.

Edward makes a nervous mock bow.

EDWARD

Thank you. Have you two been smoking that illegal stuff again?

James pours wine into Edward's glass.

JAMES

We were admiring your poem in the TLS, Edward.

EDWARD

Ah, yes.

JEREMY

It's terribly good.

EDWARD

Don't tell me you've actually read it, Jeremy.

James picks up the TLS and waves it at Edward.

JEREMY

Committed to memory. Forever.

EDWARD

I see.

JAMES

Blas, and epicene.

JEREMY

We were just chortling over that. Blas, and epicene. It perfectly describes the new Foreign Secretary. So--I hope you don't mind, Edward, I pinched it for my piece today.

EDWARD

Attributed?

JEREMY

Of course.

EDWARD

Why, is there a new Foreign Secretary? Who was the old one anyway?

JEREMY

It needn't concern you, Edward. James has got some news. He needs a poet's advice.

Jeremy pats a seat. Edward sits down.

JAMES

C'mon. I don't want any Jones about this.

JEREMY

No jokes. James is in love.

EDWARD

Congratulations. Who with?

JEREMY

A glamorous young lady way above his station...

JAMES

Bastard.

JEREMY

Name so Susie Barrington. Daughter of the eminent historian, Anne Barrington, step-daughter of the scandalous Matthew Byrd the acclaimed sack-artist...

Lay over Jeremy's account on next scene and FADE DOWN SLOWLY.

INT. SUSAN'S FLAT - LATE EVENING

A sumptuously cluttered place. A chesterfield. Deep armchairs, silk cushions, many prints, coffee table, books. Clearly an inherited place.

Susan is pouring coffee. James sits across from her, jacket off, sunk in cushions.

JEREMY'S VOICE OVER RECEDES.

SUSAN

Mummy and I, we were more like lovers, really, or sisters. Then a couple of years after Daddy died, and not long after I left Oxford, she started seeing various men and I was furious. I really was upset. I stopped going home. I never phoned. I went round telling everyone how awful her books were. And she hardly seemed to notice, and that made me angrier. Then I got a job I was interested in, and I started to see lots of men, and I suppose I grew up a little and began to understand. So I wrote her a long letter, almost seven pages, saying how sorry I was, and how I was worried that we were drifting apart. And do you know, she wrote me a poem, a really beautiful poem about mothers and daughters.

JAMES

How nice.

SUSAN

It makes me weepy just to remember it. So we were fine again, and then she got married to Matthew who's a womaniser and a bit of a yob, but quite nice really, makes TV commercials. What about yours.

JAMES

Both dead.

SUSAN

That must be rather nice, in a way. I mean, you don't have any--

The door bell RINGS loudly.

SUSAN

Damn. They're early.

JAMES

Who?

SUSAN

I called you a taxi.

JAMES  
Very thoughtful.

SUSAN  
(a gesture of  
helplessness)  
Well, you know...

EXT. FRONT DOOR - SUSAN'S FLAT - NIGHT

A minute later, James and Susan stand at the front door. Portico and steps down to the street. Taxi waits. They kiss, Susan draws back.

JAMES  
Again?

SUSAN  
Yes, if you like. Call me at work.

James descends the stairs. Susan closes the door.

INT. COCKTAIL BAR - EARLY EVENING

A cocktail bar, a self-conscious imitation of the American model. James and Jeremy sit on high stools at the bar. Tall colourful drinks are being set down in front of them. On a TV there are scenes of the departing Royal Navy fleet.

JEREMY  
To the Fleet.

JAMES  
To the Fleet.

JEREMY  
And the Argies.

JAMES  
The Argies.

Jeremy reaches into his inside pocket and pulls out an envelope.

JEREMY  
Now, top secret file.

JAMES  
(reaching for it)  
Come on. Hand over.

Jeremy outs the envelope out of James's reach.

JEREMY  
Uh-huh. Tell me what you think of  
this first.

JAMES  
It's shit.

JEREMY

You approve!

JAMES

Let me see.

JEREMY

Get way. You'll see when I'm ready. First I want you to reflect on my noble behaviour, on how your interests are closest to my heart, how I lay awake at night worrying--

JAMES

Jeremy, just let me see what you've got.

JEREMY

You're so hard. All right then. I was chatting to some people from the diary page, and the name of Barrington came up. I expressed an interest...

JAMES

Oh yes.

JEREMY

...an innocent interest, and found out that last year Vogue ran a series called 'Mothers and Daughters' Number seven, Anne and Susan Barrington. Being a decent loving friend I went to the files and made a copy for you.

JAMES

Let me see.

JEREMY

Ah, ah. There's more. The piece celebrates the undying affection between eminent left-wing historian and he dazzling daughter. Then the news editor, who happened to be in the room, said that years ago, when he worked on The Guardian, Anne Barrington had written a very good piece on...guess...Suez. It was 1966, the tenth anniversary.

Jeremy hands over the envelope which James now opens.

JEREMY

She's never written a book in it, but she clearly knew a lot.

JAMES

Mmm...

JEREMY

It's obvious what you have to do.  
Your way into the daughter's pants  
is through the mother, up the Suez  
canal...

JAMES

You're so gross.

JEREMY

She's very nice, apparently. Lives  
in Norfolk. And very left-wing.  
You'll have to watch yourself there.

JAMES

Ha ha...

JEREMY

According to this, the daughter  
goes up to stay quiet often. You'll  
need to get yourself invited for  
the right weekend.

JAMES

You've really got it all worked  
out, haven't you?

JEREMY

No need to thank me, if you don't  
want to. Just pay for these drinks.

BARMAN

That'll be eleven pounds, sir

INT. POLYTECHNIC - DAY

James walks along a busy corridor in a polytechnic. In a recess to one side is a games room. Along the walls are Space Invader machines by the dozen. Students stand at the machines intently, their faces illuminated by the glow. We SEE some expertly handled Space Invader action. James approaches one of the players and asks directions. Without looking up the student points down the corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

James stands outside the doors of a lecture hall. Inside a lecture is in progress. We catch a few words.

James pushes the door open.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

The LECTURER glances back and acknowledges his presence.

James stands at the back of the hall for the end of the lecture.

LECTURER

A vacuum had been created. If the United States did not fill it, it was assumed the Russians would.

(A beat)

Next week I shall be considering the extent to which the behaviour of nation states or governments may be judged by the moral criteria we normally apply to individuals. Thank you.

The students stand and begin to move out. James and the Lecturer move towards each other and shake hands.

INT. LECTURER'S ROOM - DAY

James and the Lecturer sit separated by a low table. A tape-recorder is on the Lecturer's side of the table.

LECTURER

Well, what you need to understand--

JAMES

No, sorry, could you lean forward a bit when you speak.

LECTURER

Oh. Is this all right? Um...you see, through the early autumn of 1956 the Egyptians were running the canal, their canal, that is, quite efficiently. Traffic was passing through unimpeded, for Nasser didn't want to provide the West with any reason for invading his country. Is that loud enough, by the way?

JAMES

It's okay.

LECTURER

Right. So by the time the British and French launched their invasion at the beginning of November the main economic reasons for doing so had largely evaporated. What remained, especially for the British, were the more marginal and emotional arguments.

INT. JAMES'S FLAT - EVENING

The Lecturer's voice continues on the tape. James pours a drink and he listens and walks towards his desk.

LECTURER (V.O.)

(from tape)

Using the language of private behaviour you could say that this was an affair of the heart - the idea was to teach Nasser a lesson, to appear capable of acting independently, and to maintain face in the world, particularly the Arab world.

James switches the tape recorder off. He picks up the Vogue 'Mothers and Daughters' article and pins it to the map of Egypt.

INT. A COMMUNITY HALL - EVENING

A poetry reading, given by Edward Long, has just come to and end. There are about fifty present, and empty chairs behind. Jeremy and James are in the audience.

Edward is reading the last stanza of a poem.

EDWARD

(reading)

"And so the ferry moves across the bay, Top heavy as a wedge of wedding cake, Leaving us to return to our hotels, Gulls in nautical trim cry their farewells, Then drop with avaricious eyes to tale, Souvenirs from the debris of the day."

He pauses.

EDWARD

Thank you very much.

There is earnest applause which peters out. Now, a tense silence.

Edward stares impassively at the audience until he catches the movement of a half-raised arm.

EDWARD

Yes.

The questioner is a middle-class middle-aged woman, rather twittery.

WOMAN

Me?

EDWARD

Yes.

WOMAN

Oh, yes, well I thought I'd start the thing off by asking, you know, and you'll probably think it's a

stupid question that you get all the time, but could you tell us a little of how you actually get ideas, I mean, your poems are quiet extraordinary and beautiful and I wondered how they, well, you know, came about.

During this, Jeremy has caught James's eye and they have started to giggle silently. This continues through the scene. They hunch up and turn away from each other, shaking quietly, half recover, become aware of each other, or of the absurdity of the questions, or of Edward's attempts to deal with them, and they fold up once more. From Edward's POV we SEE their heads duck down.

EDWARD

It isn't a stupid question, but it is a difficult one to answer. I get ideas in much the same way as anyone does. Perhaps the difference is that I take them more seriously. I write them down - odd scraps of things. Then I seem to know when I'm ready to start work on a poem. It takes shape to start work on a poem. It takes shape as I write it, very slowly.

While Edward answers, the woman nods vigorously.

James and Jeremy recover in the brief pause between questions. They lift tear-stained faces, then crack up at the next question.

A young man, anorak, flat auto-didact's 'does the team think' voice. A piece of paper in hand, he stands, trembling.

MAN

You are one of the most praised poets of your generation of younger poets, and the Sunday Times has called you a cross between Dante and Philip Larkin. What is your reaction to this?

EDWARD

Well, it's silly really.  
(catching sight of  
Jeremy and James)  
It's journalism, yes?

A serious-looking student has his hand raised.

STUDENT

Yes. What is the poet's role in society today?

CLOSE ON James, drawing breath. A sudden sharp yelp from Jeremy fighting for air. All heads turn. The two are almost off their seats onto the floor. We move CLOSE ON them and hear their moans or 'No', 'No' and 'Stop', 'stop' and 'Sorry!'

INT. NEWSROOM - LATE MORNING

The newsroom. The teleprinters. The sheets arriving on the copytaster's desk. On the TV monitor there are pictures of the Fleet. On the P.A. a voice announces 'Edward Du Cann on Four'.

We find PHILIP standing by the bulletin desk, He is a graduate trainee, 23 years old. Earnest in manner, slightly ingratiating.

Immensely pleased with what he has just read, he moves towards the summaries desk with a piece of paper in each hand.

PHILIP

James, look at this. At last.

James is standing by a secretary dictating.

JAMES

Wait...and with talks at the United Nations still making little progress, tension and anxiety settled on MPs of all parties in Westminster. Speaking on the Jimmy Young Show earlier today, Mrs Thatcher said the prospects of a peaceful solution did not look encouraging. What is it?

PHILIP

Take a look at these.

James glances over the sheets.

JAMES

Not bad.

PHILIP

Fifteen news items. I got exactly the same running order as the bulletin desk. They're all old pros.

JAMES

Terrific.

Philip moves on to show someone else nearby. We hear him explain his triumph again.

James makes a gesture and expression of contempt for the benefit of the secretaries.

A group of journalists passes through. James catches one of them by the arm.

JAMES

Can I use the phone in your office?

JOURNALISTS

Sure.

INT. OFFICE - LATE MORNING

A small bare office. A few minutes later, James is speaking on the phone to Susan.

JAMES

(into phone)

You're being very elusive...tell them you're ill...or leave early then...do it properly, tell them a lie...Okay, come when you can. You've got the address...yes, it will be nice. 'Bye..

INT. JAMES'S FLAT - NIGHT

Susan sits cross-legged in the centre of James's bed. James lies along one edge, head propped on elbows. They've been drinking coffee. We have the sense of a long evening of talk, but not much else so far. A pause before Susan speaks.

JAMES

Why not stay?

SUSAN

I have to be up early.  
(She stands)

JAMES

Me too.

SUSAN

(straightening herself at the mirror. James standing close)

Two or three years ago I would have stayed. And fucked you.

JAMES

Too late. Just my luck.

He stands behind her and kisses her neck. She turns and they kiss. Susan pulls away. She taps James's nose with her forefinger.

SUSAN

Now I'm more wary. I must be

getting old.

She reaches for her coat. James helps her.

JAMES

You don't trust me.

SUSAN

I don't trust anyone. That's what comes of working in television.

JAMES

In radio we're different.

SUSAN

I bet. Thanks for the drink.

He opens the door.

JAMES

I might see you in Norfolk over the weekend.

SUSAN

(smiling)

You just might.

She closes the door on her smile.

INT. SQUASH COURT - DAY

A day later. A glass-fronted Squash Court. James and Jeremy are into a game. Both are inept and very unfit. We COME IN on a rally. Jeremy misses an easy ball and let's his racket drop. James sits down with his back to the wall. Jeremy gets his cigarettes from the corner of the court. They inhale smoke as if it were fresh air.

JEREMY

That's enough of that.

JAMES

We've been playing ten minutes for Christ sake.

JEREMY

Far too long.

A pause. Some keen SQUASH PLAYERS appear at the door, peer in and go away.

JAMES

What have you been up to?

JEREMY

Well, everyone's desperate for a new Falkland's angle. Purdy's come up with a real dog. Worker's rights in Argentina. So I've been

running round getting people to do things. But no one's keen. Workers rights. When did anyone on that paper give a damn about workers rights? I said to Purdy, "Look, tits, bingo, jingo, horoscope, sport, celebs, gossip and the occasional firm stand on--"

JAMES

The torture of small children--

JEREMY

On the torture of very small children, but don't start telling them about their rights--

JAMES

Hold those rights.

JEREMY

Tame those rights...you know, we're even freighting in a couple of exiled Argie trade unionists from Paris for a TV tie in. One of them had his balls tap-danced on by the secret police. The other one had to be hosed off the wall of his cell after the police-- yes my good man?

A muscular COACH in a tracksuit, is rapping on the glass door. And opening it. He wears a towel around his neck.

JEREMY

I'm sorry. This is a private conversation. You'll have to wait outside.

COACH

You can't smoke in here. This is a squash court.

JEREMY

Well we booked it for a smoke, didn't we James?

JAMES

And we're not quiet finished.

COACH

Come on. Out!

A few players have gathered to watch outside.

JEREMY

The court is ours for another half hour. Please run along.

The coach advances into the court, picks up their rackets and stands over them. He pushes a racket under JermeY's chin.

COACH

I said, out.

JAMES

On the other hand, we might be more comfortable at the bar. I've got some news on Suez.

JEREMY

(racket still under his chin)

A serious drunk might be of use, I suppose.

INT. JAMES' FLAT - MORNING

James adjusts his tie in the mirror. The PHONE RINGS, Lay over James's voice into SCENES 38 and 39.

JAMES

Ohm hello, Dad, I've been meaning to phone you. How is she?...Oh...in the night?...Oh God. What does the doctor say?...Look, I will, I will. I promise. But it's impossible at the moment, now with the crisis on. I'm working night and day...Look, tell her I'll come as soon as I can. I promise...Look, Dad, I've got to dash. Give her my love. Yes...bye.

EXT. BRIXTON - DAY

James walks down a Brixton street, down a narrow road to a set of lock-up garages. A group of black kids are playing football here. James steps round puddles, careful not to muddy his shoes. He scowls at the kids and unlocks his garage.

James backs his car out of the garage. An early sixties Jaguar saloon. He gets to close to the garage door. The game of football rages around his car, as if it was not there.

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

Ten minutes later. A car wash. From the driver's POV we SEE the revolving brushes advance and engulf the car.

The phone conversation ends. James reaches down and pushes a tape into the car tape deck. We will HEAR the recording all through James's journey to SCENE 41.

LECTURER (V.O.)

(from tape)

You see, if we talk of a nation, like an individual, we can also speak of it acting deceitfully. Britain and France had entered into a secret agreement with the Arabs' deadly enemy, the Israelis. The agreement was signed or initialled by the Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd on about October 23, at Sevres. The Israelis were to attack Egypt on an agreed date. British planes based in Cyprus were to precision bomb Egyptian airfields to protect Israeli cities from retaliation. After putting out an ultimatum to both side to withdraw to ten miles from the Canal, which of course the Egyptians would have to ignore since the Canal is 100 miles inside their territory, the British and the French would invade on the pretext of 'separating the combatants'. That became something of a catch phrase - 'Separating the combatants'.

EXT. CITY - DAY

James's car makes its way through the city.

EXT. M11 MOTORWAY - DAY

An hour later. The M11. James's car speeds away from us.

EXT. NORTH NORFOLK - DAY

An hour and a half later. James drives along a country road.

EXT. THE BARRINGTON HOUSE - DAY

A small BOY, TOM, peers over a wall at James's car as it sweeps into the drive.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Five minutes later. The Barrington house. The library. James waits alone. The house stands in its own grounds - an old rectory, spacious, but not over-grand. Much charm. 19th and 20th Century oil paintings, a serious reader's library. Pleasant disorder, but no squalor. There is one housekeeper.

Somewhere in the house a PHONE RINGS. There are footsteps. James crosses to a window which faces out over the garden which is large and well-kept. At some distance away a gardener is raking leaves. Another man comes and talks to

him and then disappears from sight. This is MATHEW, Anne Barrington's husband.

The door opens slowly. TOM, the ten year old son of Matthew, stares at James.

After a pause.

JAMES

Hello.

TOM

Hello.

JAMES

I'm waiting for your mother.

TOM

She said awfully sorry, make yourself comfortable, she won't be long. .

JAMES

Thanks.

TOM

Why not sit down and wait?

JAMES

Okay, I will.

TOM

She's not my mother, anyway. My mother's in Italy.

JAMES

Oh, I see.

TOM

Have you come to talk about me?

JAMES

Not at all. History.

At this Tom leaves the door and advances into the room.

TOM

What period?

JAMES

Suez. 1956.

TOM

Do you want to hear my list of English Kings and Queens?

JAMES

All right.

TOM

It goes from Henry VIII.

(In rapid monotone)

Henry VIII, Edward IV, Mary,  
Elizabeth I, James I, Charles I,  
Charles II, James II, William and  
Mary, Ann, George I, II, III and  
IV, Victoria, Edward VII, George  
V, Edward VIII, George IV, Elizabeth  
II.

JAMES

What about the Cromwells?

TOM

They don't count.

Anne Barrington comes in. Aged about fifty-five, very attractive still, and fit.

ANN

Mr. Penfield. I am sorry to have kept you.

JAMES

It's kind of you to see me.

ANN

Tom, Daddy would like to see you in the garden. And will you ask Betty to bring us some coffee. And remember to say 'please'.

Tom leaves. They watch as he closes the door with exaggerated care.

ANN

He's a little unhappy. I hope he wasn't a nuisance?

JAMES

He was delightful.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Ten minutes later. Anne sits behind her desk, James sits across from her. The HOUSEKEEPER sets down a tray and leaves.

Anne appraises James and deals with the coffee, and for the first time in the film we take a long, hard look at him too. The light flatters. The notebook at his side, his patience and deference, the well-cut suit...he is at least credible.

ANN

My first husband worked for the BBC. I doubt if anyone there remembers him now, just another

long dead diligent administrator. He would have been useful in the fight to preserve the BBC's independence during the Suez crisis - one of the few things he was passionate about. I became involved too. I started work on a book that would have been published on the tenth anniversary of Suez. Then he died, and I loots the will to write it. By the time I was over his death, other books had been published, and it wasn't worth going on.

JAMES

What a shame.

ANN

It wasn't much more than a pot boiler. Suez was very important for our generation. I didn't want it to be forgotten. And that's why I'd like to be able to help you. But really Mr. Penfield, I looked through my notes before you came, they're all very much out of date, there's been so much published since. I don't think I'm your man.

JAMES

(smiling, uncertain)

Well, I am a great admirer of your work. I read your books on Chartism when I was still at school. I'm a journalist, not a historian. There are questions of method, and approach. I wondered--

ANN

I see. Are you a socialist, Mr. Penfield?

JAMES

Yes.

ANN

Good. Suez was a minefield for both parties.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

The Garden, same time. Tom wanders aimlessly near the house. He comes to one of the library windows and peers in.

Unobserved, he watches Ann and James. Ann is speaking. James interrupts, Anne nods. James writes something down

in his notebook.

Tom hears his father in the distance calling his name. He leaves the window and runs.

INT. CONSERVATORY - DAY

Lunchtime. A table spread with white tablecloth, salads and wine. Set for two.

ANN

My husband apologises for not joining us. It's not too cold for you, Mr. Penfield?

JAMES

It's fine, thank you.

ANN

Since you are a friend of my daughter's, I think I'm entitled to call you James, don't you think?

JAMES

Please do. I was beginning to wonder who this Mr. Penfield was.

ANN

And I'd like you to call me Ann.

James raises his glass.

JAMES

To Ann.

ANN

To James. I remember what it was I was going to say. We were talking about forgetfulness. The Czech writer Kundera has one of his characters say that the struggle of man against tyranny is the struggle of memory against forgetting.

JAMES

History books are first onto the bonfires.

ANN

If we leave the remembering to historians then the struggle is already lost. Everyone must have a memory, everyone needs to be a historian. In this country, for example, we're in danger of losing hard-won freedoms by dozing off in a perpetual present.

James is uneasy, a little out of his depth.

ANN

Here I am lecturing you. Have some p,t.

JAMES

Thanks.

A Pause. Ann has already emptied her glass. James has hardly touched his. Ann refills her own. Then James, lightly, wanting to be back on familiar ground.

JAMES

So I can go ahead and be a historian without feeling like a poseur. I shall be fulfilling a citizen's duty.

ANN

If you like. But don't be too modest, James. The citizen's duty is to remember, not necessarily to write books. You are highly qualified. You're a responsible journalist doing what sounds to me like a very demanding job. Every day you take decisions that depend on your sense of history. A genuine tyranny would have to get rid of people like you.

JAMES

You're kind to be so encouraging.

ANN

I think you'll do very well.

She smiles and briefly touches James's hand. James looks up impassive.

EXT. BACK GATE TO GARDEN - DAY

Anne and James are returning from an after-lunch walk. We have a glimpse of the landscape we will see more of on James's return.

As they walk they arrive through a back gate into the Barrington garden. A jet fighter races through the sky.

ANN

I've met some of her colleagues, I'm afraid they struck me as rather empty people. Very ambitious, and charming too. But not serious. No politics.

They walk on.

ANN

I do worry about Susan. Have you known her long? She hasn't mentioned you.

JAMES

Actually, we've only just met. But we're quiet good friends.

ANN

It's a pity she couldn't make it up here today.

JAMES

Yes.

ANN

She'll be here next weekend. Why don't you come too, James? I'll show you the marshes properly. If you're lucky you might even see the first of the geese arriving from Siberia.

\*

JAMES

Well, I'd hate to be a nuisance.

ANN

Don't be silly. I'll look out some more Suez material for you. You'll be very welcome.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

They come round the front of the house to James's car. He opens the door and shakes Ann's hand.

JAMES

Thank you.

ANN

We'll see you next week, and if--

Matthew's car comes sweeping up the drive. Tom is in the front seat. Matthew stops his car so that his front door is by James.

MATTHEW is fifty. A director of commercials for cinema and television. Breezy, chunky-faced, keen to be taken seriously. Essentially good-humoured.

ANN

I wish you wouldn't drive so fast, Mat, dearest.

MATHEW

I'll get a bike. I promise. Hi! Just off?

Matthew and James shake hands over the car doors.

ANN

Matthew my husband. James. James is coming to stay next weekend.

MATHEW

Very good. Well, I'll see you then.

He strides away with Tom.

MATHEW

Come on, Tom. Let's see if we can get this thing working.

James pulls away. Ann stands watching him till he is out of sight, and a little longer after that.

EXT. A149 ROAD - DAY

Ten minutes later. James drives along the A149 near Clay. He has the window wide open, the radio on. The great expanse of salt marsh is to his right. The huge sky. The mood is triumphant.

EXT. CENTRAL NORFOLK - DAY

Half an hour later. A lonely road in central Norfolk. James brings the car to a sudden halt. He switches off the engine. In the silence we are able to hear the car cassette player. As it plays, James walks round the car till he finds his flat tyre. He rummages with growing ill-temper in the boot. Two cases of empty wine bottles, a mildewed towel and swimming trunks, but no jack.

LECTURER (V.O.)

(from tape)

There was a real desire on the British part to appear virtuous while behaving aggressively, and the pursuit of virtue led to many lies being told, most notable the Prime Minister's in the House of Commons on December 20 when he said that there was 'no foreknowledge that Israel would attack Egypt'. Perhaps we should reverse the question and ask ourselves to what extent individuals behave like governments, who are bound to act in the national interest which in turn is rarely separable from the government's interest, or that of the class it represents...

Furious, he goes to the front of the car and snaps off the tape machine, and stands jiggling his keys in the vast

silence.

A minute later. James sets off. The immensity of the landscape, the incongruousness of his clothes...

EXT. LONELY ROAD - DAY

James, walking.

EXT. ROAD THROUGH WOOD - DAY

The road passes through a wood. When BETTY speaks, it surprises both James and us.

She stands at the head of a little grass track that leads into a wood. She carries a plastic carrier bag. She is almost childlike in her friendliness.

BETTY

Are you the man from the BBC?

JAMES

What?

BETTY

Sorry. I didn't mean to frighten you. I thought you must be from the BBC.

(she advances)

We've been waiting, see. And you don't exactly look like a farmer. I'm Betty.

They shake hands.

JAMES

James Penfield.

BETTY

Come and meet the others. They've been waiting for you.

EXT. WOODS. AIRFIELD PERIMETER - DAY

James follows Betty through the woods. A rumbling and whining noise increases in violence and becomes deafening once they leave the wood and cross open ground towards a Military Air Base. The Peace Camp is near the perimeter fence. A ramshackle collection of tents, caravans, a tepee and a rough wooden shelter which is the communal area. A fire burns here. Various peace signs, Women's Movement sign and slogan. ('Fight War, Not Wars', etc.)

Three women are sitting around the fire. A little further off a MAN is chopping wood. One of the women, CARMEN, is over sixty. The other two are in their thirties. The man, PETE, is a vintage hippy. A good mix of regional accents among the campers. Betty leads James to the fire.

BETTY

I found a man from the BBC, but  
he's not the man.

CARMEN

Never mind. We'll just have to  
make do. Would you like a cup of  
tea? Jill, give the young man  
your cup.

JAMES

(Dodging smoke from  
the fire)

Thank you.

CARMEN

Sit on that log, dear.

JILL

Be careful though, it wobbles.

The others laugh.

JAMES

Er, listen, I... I've got a  
puncture. I wondered if I might  
borrow a jack.

JILL AND CAROL

Pete!

JAMES

Sorry to be a nuisance.

Pete ambles over. Inscrutable behind much hair. He  
registers no awareness of James. He smokes a roll-up.

CARMEN

Pete, do we have a jack?

Pete inhales, considers and nods almost imperceptibly.

CARMEN

Could you look it out for our  
friend?

Pete nods again and returns to chopping wood.

JILL

Is the tea all right? I didn't  
ask you if you wanted sugar.

JAMES

It's fine, thanks.

CARMEN

Now first of all, tell us your  
name.

JAMES

Penfield. James Penfield.

CARMEN

This is Jill, Carol, Betty, Mandy,  
Louise, Pete over there, and I'm  
Carmen.

The women smile and murmur hello as they are introduced.  
Their friendliness progressively disorientates James.

CARMEN

There's another fifteen of us out  
at a meeting.

CAROL

Would you like us to show you round  
the camp.

CARMEN

Let him drink his tea, poor man.  
I don't know what's happened to  
this other fellow. He said he'd  
be here at three.

JILL

Lost!

BETTY

What do you do at the BBC, James?

JAMES

I work in radio news, in London.

A chorus of 'Oh well then ... 'and 'Great!'

JAMES

But I'm not an interviewer or a  
correspondent.

CARMEN

That doesn't matter. As long as  
we can get our message through to  
someone there. Jill, where are  
those handouts?

JILL

They're back here somewhere.  
They're a bit crumpled.

Pete hands a jack to James.

JAMES

Oh, great. Thanks.

Now James has his jack he begins to back away.

CARMEN

Give them here. This tells you

how the Women's Peace Camp came to be set up. All local women at first, then we had support from women and men all over the country.

JAMES

Very good.

JILL

The response has been just amazing.

JAMES

Yes.

CARMEN

And this sheet tells you all about the base, the number of missiles they're going to have, what they think they're for and so on.

CAROL

We've had the local radio down here.

JAMES

Terrific.

CARMEN

But what we need is national coverage. It's difficult with this Falklands madness going on. Do you think you might be able to do something when you get back?

JAMES

I'll suggest it. Remember though, we're news, not features. It might help if you could get yourselves attacked by the police. Anyway, I'll be back with this soon. Thanks.

BETTY

(close up, eyes wide)

Ordinary people everywhere are saying 'No, we don't want these terrible weapons!' That's news!

JAMES

I won't be a moment.

EXT. PEACE CAMP - EVENING

James drives down the road towards the airbase. He stops his car well short of the camp. He takes the jack from the car and walks towards the camp. There are more people now moving in and out of the light of the fire. The sounds of voices, laughter, mostly female. A meal is being cooked.

James sets down the jack where it can be found. He has been observed throughout by Pete, from the shadows. He speaks as James is turning back towards his car.

PETE

Off then?

JAMES

Er, yes, I put the jack by the ...  
hut there. Thanks for your help  
... I... I have to be getting back  
... so ... see you. And thanks  
... and ... all the best.

Pete watches James walk away.

INT. TELEVISION COMPANY ENTRANCE/STAIRS - AFTERNOON

London. A day later. The television company where Susan works. James is late. The lift is out of order. He runs up several flights of stairs with diminishing energy.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Breathless, James bursts into the screening room. Susan is seated. Jeremy stands near her, leaning against a desk, smoking. By contrast, they are calm.

JEREMY

Fortunate that I was here to keep  
Susan entertained.

JAMES

Sorry. Got held up. What are you  
doing here?

JEREMY

Delivering gossip and goodwill.  
It seems we'll both be doing  
Brighton.

(He starts to put  
on his coat)  
Perhaps you should come too.

JAMES

(to Susan)  
Will it be fun?

SUSAN

It was last year.

JEREMY

We might be able to dig out a couple  
of Suez survivors for you.

JAMES

Perhaps I will, then.

JEREMY

(Kissing on the  
cheek first Susan,  
then James)  
I'm off. Let's meet. You promised  
to tell me about Norfolk.

JAMES  
I'll ring you.

A brief pause and a slight awkwardness after Jeremy leaves.

SUSAN  
(into microphone)  
I think we're ready now, thank  
you. And how was Norfolk? Did  
you get on with my mother?

JAMES  
I think she liked me.

SUSAN  
Did she talk about me?

JAMES  
No. We talked about history, and  
Siberian Geese.

The lights go down.

We SEE a series of FILM CLIPS about Suez: crowd scenes in  
Cairo; footage of the Fleet on its way from Malta; the  
actual invasion; parachutes; Eden at Downing Street; Lloyd  
at the airport; the protest meeting at Trafalgar Square;  
fighting in Suez streets.

James sneaks occasional looks at Susan throughout. We SEE  
her in profile, lit by the screen.

SUSAN  
(As the first  
pictures come up)  
It's not in chronological order.  
There's an hour of stuff, of which  
the director has to choose four  
minutes. What'll happen is that  
I'll choose it for him ... Does he  
look like a man on speed?

Our two minute sequence is presented to represent an hour  
of film. When at last it is over and the lights come up,  
there is a moment of stupefaction. Susan yawns and prepares  
to leave.

SUSAN  
Do you think she's invited you up  
for her sake or for mine?

JAMES  
(kissing Susan's

fingers)  
I haven't really thought about it.

SUSAN  
(smiling, mischievous)  
Well, you should.

James kisses Susan. She complies rather than responds.

Susan disengages herself gently and gathers her things.  
She stands.

SUSAN  
Well, must get on.

INT. NEWSROOM - EARLY MORNING

A day or two later. People are drifting out to go down the corridor to the morning news conference. James is one of the last to leave. On his way out he meets Charles, the newsreader from Scene two.

JAMES  
Charles! I didn't know you were back. Have a good holiday?

CHARLES  
Not too bad, thanks. How have you been?

JAMES  
Working hard on that book I was telling you about. Coming to the meeting?

CHARLES  
I'm not sure I can face it.

JAMES  
Keep me company.

INT. CORRIDOR - EARLY MORNING

James steers Charles out of the newsroom and along the corridor. Only slowly does it become apparent that Charles is in a state of distress.

JAMES  
How's Mary?

CHARLES  
She's fine. Well, actually we've broken up. It's all over.

JAMES  
No. That's terrible, Charles. What happened?

CHARLES

(on the edge of  
tears)

Look, I'd rather you didn't ask me  
questions. I can't talk about it.

They have reached the News Conference Room, but Charles  
walks on down the corridor to nurse his grief out of sight.

INT. NEWS CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

The News Conference Room. Ten minutes later. The same  
Editor. The same matter-of-factness and slight boredom.

EDITOR

....as it happens they got all  
their facts wrong anyway. I checked  
up. We reported the big peace  
march on Hyde Park last October,  
and a march on NATO headquarters  
in the spring, and the death of  
whatsisname last month, the old  
CND man...

He looks round. It is not clear that anyone is listening.

EDITOR

What really gets to them, though  
they'll never admit it, these types,  
is that we give both sides, theirs  
and the government's.  
Multilateralists and unilateralists.  
Hawks and doves. As far as they're  
concerned, there's only one side  
to the question. Nuclear weapons  
are bad. Full stop. End of  
discussion. Anyone who says there's  
more to it than that is... what  
was it...

(He picks up a  
newspaper cutting)

'Under cover of an authoritative  
news service, propagating a military  
definition of reality.'

He pauses, relaxes into professional indifference.

EDITOR

Still. With the party conferences  
coming up in the autumn there's  
bound to be some action on that  
front and we'd be doing something  
anyway. It won't all be Falklands  
business. James, is there something  
in there for us, if we could tie  
it in with something else?

JAMES

Well, it's all a bit cranky and  
small scale. Vegetarians, hippies,

disturbed housewives. Local radio story, I'd say, if that. They're mad.

EDITOR

Oh well. Just an idea. Now. Can we talk about this radio-car cock-up yesterday. Chris?

INT. NEWSROOM STUDIO - LATE MORNING.

Two hours later. The studio. James and Charles sit at the table, as in Scene Three. Charles reads. He is obviously distressed but his voice remains under control. James watches anxiously.

CHARLES

It was an emotional occasion. Hundreds of small craft led by six fire tugs making fountains of water formed an escort flotilla, and four Wasp helicopters flew past in salute. In the City the Financial Times Ordinary Shares Index was down ten points an hour ago at 529.8. BBC Radio News.

In the Control Room, the minute hand of the clock reaches five past the hour; the sweep hand reaches the twelve on Charles's last word. The Controller pushes a button. Charles slumps forward.

JAMES

My God that was close! Well done, Charles. I knew you wouldn't let me down. But God! We almost didn't make it.

James is standing, gathering papers. He bustles out, indifferent. We CLOSE IN on Charles. Unseen by anyone, he is just beginning to cry.

INT. JAMES'S FLAT - EVENING

James is typing rapidly. There is a growing pile of typewritten sheets to one side. We go over his shoulder and look closely at the map, Egypt, the desert . . .

EXT. THE BARRINGTON HOUSE, NORFOLK - LATE MORNING

A few days later. James has just arrived and switched his engine off. But for the wind and birdsong, silence. There is no reply when he tries the front door. A note pinned to the door reads: 'Gone for a walk. Follow footpath. Susan.'

EXT. DYKE - DAY

James walks along the dyke, across the marshes. Below

him, on the sand, in the distance, are two figures. James stops to watch them. Matthew and Susan are deep in conversation, evidently a serious matter. They seem to be making an agreement. Matthew puts his head on Susan's shoulder, and they walk on, unaware of James.

INT. DINING-ROOM - NIGHT

A burst of laughter. It is dinner. Seated are Ann, Matthew, Tom, Susan, James and JACEK, a professor from Central Europe, mid-sixties, an old friend of Ann's. Betty, the housemaid, serves.

JACEK

(heavy accent)

The second is less pleasant. A Pole is confronted by a German and a Russian soldier. Which should he shoot first? The German first, the Russian second. Duty before pleasure.

A more subdued response.

TOM

I've heard that one at school.

JACEK

Then you are a well-educated young man.

(to Ann)

Tom has been reciting his English kings and queens to me.

JAMES

And to me.

JACEK

Haven't you socialist historians in the West made kings and queens out of date in schools?

ANN

We keep trying.

MATTHEW

I can tell you that the history of the monarchy is alive and well in the national memory. I shot a commercial - a series of vignettes of kings and queens, Henry VIII, Mary.

TOM

Elizabeth I.

MATTHEW

Elizabeth I, and so on - and we had a fantastic response.

SUSAN

What were you advertising?

MATTHEW

Oh, some new lager.

JACEK

I'm pleased to hear that there is at least some national memory. I agree with Ann that the British forget too quickly. Here you have enviable freedoms, and yet no monuments to those who struggled to win them for you. Now that is why I think there is hope for the Poles, whoever occupies their country. They remember their dates, and they keep adding to them. December 1981, Gdansk 1980, 1976, 1970. Katyn 1940, 1922 and so on. It's a subversive list. Say it out loud on the streets of Warsaw and you might get arrested.

During this last speech of Jacek's we SEE James trying to catch Susan's eye. She glances up and looks away.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

An hour later.

Wine glass in hand James goes upstairs. He comes to Tom's room.

INT. TOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Susan has been seeing Tom into bed. James watches from the doorway. She kisses her brother and turns out the light.

TOM

Don't close the door. Don't turn out the hall light.

SUSAN

I won't. Goodnight.

TOM

'Night.

James and Susan linger in the semi-darkness outside Tom's room. From downstairs comes the sound of boisterous conversation.

JAMES

I haven't seen much of you.

SUSAN

No. It's a bit of a madhouse.  
For some reason a lot of my mother's  
friends specialise in monologues.

JAMES

He's all right, the professor.

Tom comes out of his room.

TOM

Ah, Susy, it...

SUSAN

Tom . . . bed! Go on.

Tom retreats into his bedroom. James and Susan move to  
the head of the stairs.

JAMES

Look, will you come on a walk with  
me tomorrow?

SUSAN

I might.

JAMES

Might?

ANN (O.S.)

(calling from below)

Susan, James, are you up there?

SUSAN

Hello, Mummy.

Ann comes half-way up the stairs.

ANN

Betty's made some coffee. Do you  
want some?

SUSAN

Yes, we do.

ANN

Well, we're in the library.

Ann lingers a moment. She wants James downstairs. As  
soon as she has gone, he kisses Susan.

JAMES

Might?

SUSAN

(Strokes his face)

Yes. Might. Remember, you're  
here to talk to my mother.

She leads the way downstairs.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

The library. A fire burns. Ann pours the coffee and is highly aware of James when he comes in. Jacek is a little drunk.

JACEK

Ah, Susan, James. Come and judge. I am interrogating Matthew. I am asking him how a director of advertisements and a socialist get along so well together. How does the lion lie down with the lamb.

ANN

By staying in town all week. And lying down with several lambs.

MATTHEW

Not so. We meet half way. Ann has grown very fond of her material comforts. She even owns land with keep out signs posted on the boundaries. And I...

ANN

(wearily, to James)

I bought a wood because a local farmer was going to cut it down. The signs were already there.

JACEK

And you...

MATTHEW

I earn so much money at what I do that I can't even begin to defend it. I used to shoot a whole line about the value and necessity of advertising...

ANN

You were more interesting then.

MATTHEW

...but now I'm an agnostic. So is Ann, if she'd only admit it.

ANN

Come on, James. Defend me from this tripe.

Expectant pause. Susan smirks. James is out of his depth.

JAMES

Well, there's no reason why a socialist shouldn't like comfort, or own a wood, or be very rich.

The problem is making all that  
available to everybody ...

All except Ann groan dismissively.

MATTHEW

Rubbish!

JACEK

Ah, if everybody is to have  
everything, then you need to plan  
very carefully, you need to control  
the future. This is the tragedy  
of Marxism. The future is not  
ours to control, nothing turns out  
as we plan it.

(to Ann)

You remember that charming note of  
Enzensberger's, Spanish anarchists  
in 1898 looked forward to a glorious  
future after the revolution, a  
world of incredibly tall shining  
buildings, with elevators that  
would save climbing stairs, electric  
light for all, garbage disposal  
chutes and wonderful household  
gadgets. This vision is now a  
reality in our cities, the victory  
has been won and it looks just  
like defeat. ..

Susan yawns conspicuously. Everybody turns.

SUSAN

(unrepentant)

Sorry. Tired.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

The following morning. If possible, a beautiful day.  
Betty is washing up a large pile of breakfast things.  
From outside, the sound of much hilarity.

EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

On the back lawn Tom, Susan and Matthew are playing  
football. To one side, Jacek leans on his stick and  
watches.

INT. LIBRARY - MORNING

The library. Ann and James sit facing each other by the  
fireplace. The game of football can be heard. From where  
James sits he can see past and into the gardens, the  
occasional glimpse of Susan, the enticing sunlight.

ANN

The references are to Hansard or  
to newspapers. I haven't got the

actual speeches now. You'll have to chase them up.

JAMES

I will, thanks.

ANN

These are transcripts of various radio broadcasts, including Gaitskill's, the one they tried to stop. You ought to have that ...

Betty knocks and enters.

BETTY

Excuse me. Phone call for Mr Penfield.

ANN

Take it here.

JAMES

Thanks. Hello... how did you get this number? I see. Look, I'm really sorry about last week, I... no, I'm up here researching something I... is she?... well, don't they have painkillers for that?... Oh, yeah... Look, tell her I'll be there... I can't just drop everything. It'll probably be the day after tomorrow... Right... Ok... yes, goodbye.

(to Ann)

It's a relative of mine. She's not very well.

(He sits down again)

I'm sorry. What were you saying?

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

A couple of hours later. Susan sits on a bench re-tying the lace of her walking boot. James stands, waiting.

SUSAN

Jeremy phoned this morning

JAMES

What did he want?

SUSAN

He's making plans for Brighton. He thought we could travel down together.

JAMES

That'll be fun

SUSAN

In your car

JAMES

Why not.

Ann appears from the house. Tom follows.

ANN

Hello. Anyone for a walk? Tom isn't, I can tell you.

JAMES

Well, we were just...

SUSAN

Don't you want to walk, Tom?

TOM

No.

SUSAN

Actually, I've been once today already. I'll stay here with him.

ANN

James and I have been indoors all morning.

SUSAN

Well, he's very keen to go.

She walks with Tom towards the house.

JAMES

Susan...

Holding Tom's hand, she turns and smiles.

SUSAN

See you when you get back.

James has been quickly outmanoeuvred by Susan. He stands awkwardly for a moment, collecting himself.

ANN

Shall we go?

JAMES

Yes.

EXT. DYKE - DAY

The dyke across the marshes, the sand dunes, the sea. During Ann's monologue (broken up where appropriate) we SEE the two sometimes IN CLOSE, sometimes as MINUTE FIGURES in this immense landscape.

James follows Ann along the dyke. They stop and she points out a wooded hill, well inland. Later...

ANN

Then I began to listen to what the well-off were saying about the poor now, the war had just ended, and the language was much the same as it had been before the first Reform Act. A small minority thought that England was really theirs, they had made it, they owned it. The rest, the wage earners, were foreigners, outsiders intent on wrecking it all.

JAMES

Didn't Evelyn Waugh say that the country under Atlee seemed to be under enemy occupation?

ANN

Did he? I left school and worked for the Labour Party. My older brother, George, had just been killed in Greece, and he'd been an active member. I hero-worshipped him. He was 25 years old ...

(she trails off)

It was an exciting time for us, those first couple of years after the war. We thought the country was about to become a true democracy. I can understand why people of your generation want to write about that time. They feel betrayed. They want to know what went wrong.

JAMES

What went wrong?

ANN

Oh, many things. Inertia ... Stalin and the Cold War... a failure of nerve. We took the seediest, most inefficient fifth of the economy into State care, paid out millions for it, put the same old duffers in charge. A new broom with very old bristles. When the Tories were returned, I went and sat in the BM and wrote my little book on Chartism.

Later. Walking home

ANN.

I don't like admitting it, but the truth is, I am happy. Matthew's right. I like comfort. I like

doing my own work and not having to teach. I love my house and the garden, and my wood.

(she stops)

And I'm very happy walking here with you. (She takes his hand.) You have such a quiet, strong sense of purpose. Energy. I think I'll rely on you to take the uncomfortable stands in life. I've done my bit.

They smile at each other.

Ann moves in to kiss James passionately. He complies.

A jet fighter flies in low over the marshes.

INT. DRAWING-ROOM - EVENING

Susan and Tom, who wears pyjamas and dressing-gown, are playing Chess. James watches Susan. Tom is noisily, bossily instructing her in the rules. Matthew is approaching James, about to speak.

MATTHEW

I just might give you a ring when we get back to London. There's one or two things I'd like to... Will you let me have your number before you leave? Have you ever watched a commercial being made?

JAMES

No.

MATTHEW

Well, it's worth seeing.

Ann appears in the doorway.

ANN

James...

There is a moment of awkwardness. James squeezes past Matthew and goes towards Ann.

JAMES

Excuse me.

INT. LIBRARY - EVENING

The library. A moment later. James has just come in. Ann hands him a silver framed photograph.

ANN

I wanted to show you. It was taken six months before he died.

The resemblance between James and the dead brother should be clear. James studies the photograph. He looks up. Ann is gazing at him steadily.

INT. DINING-ROOM - NIGHT

Half an hour later. Ann, Matthew, Susan and James. A certain strain. The sound of knives and forks only. In the hall the PHONE RINGS. They hear Betty pick it up. Still holding the receiver she pushes open the dining-room door.

BETTY  
(to Matthew)  
It's for you, Mr Fox.

The others go on eating, acutely aware of Matthew's conversation.

MATTHEW  
(from the hall)  
Hello... Oh, hi... well, you know...

He pushes the door shut with his foot. James looks at Susan. Susan glances at her mother. Ann knows it is one of Matthew's girlfriends. She goes on eating, a brave but failing attempt to appear untouched.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Very late, the same night. From the point of view of an intruder we move into the room. James is asleep.

ANNE'S VOICE  
(whispers)  
James... James.

He snaps awake. We SEE what he sees. Ann sits on the edge of his bed, in tears. She touches his face. She leans over and embraces him.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A little later. The bedside lamp is on. James lies still, his expression numb. The bedclothes are in disarray. His bedroom door is just closing.

INT. NEWSROOM - LATE MORNING

The Newsroom at its busiest, as in Scene One. Linger on the activity before finding James. He sits writing a report in longhand, referring to News Agency material. Much dictating going on around him, so that Philip who sits across from him has almost to shout to be heard. He has picked up a phone and is covering the mouthpiece.

PHILIP  
It's that lady from Norfolk again.

JAMES

I'm not here.

PHILIP

I'm terribly sorry. He doesn't seem to be here ... No ... Yes, if I see him, I will. .. Goodbye. She's going to phone back.

JAMES

Next time tell her I've gone away.

CHARLES

Aha. James giving some woman the old heave-ho.

JAMES

(rim smile)

Exactly that.

INT. JAMES'S FLAT - EVENING

TIGHT SHOT of Edward on the phone.

EDWARD

Hello, you don't know me. My name's Edward Long. I'm a friend of James Penfield. He asked me to phone you. I don't know what any of this means, but he said you would understand ... Yes, that's right. He said he's got to go away for a while, and that he'll be writing to you and please don't try and contact him ... Hello?

Pulling away, we see where we are. James sits in a chair reading a magazine. God, that was terrible. Don't ever ask me another favour like that.

JAMES

You were wonderful. I'm very grateful.

EDWARD

She hung up. Why couldn't you just write to her?

JAMES

I will, sooner or later.  
(standing)  
Trouble is I hate writing letters.  
Now, where are we going to eat?

INT. FILM STUDIO - MORNING

What we SEE first is the actual set and only subsequently the surrounding technical apparatus of film-making. We are suddenly in a deeply contented pre-war middle-class

sitting-room. Guide track: sweet, period music. Dad sits in an armchair reading a newspaper. A pipe is near at hand. To one side, a wireless. At his feet, a girl plays with a doll; a boy plays with a model steam engine.

Mum enters with a tray of steaming hot drinks. As she sets down the tray on the arm of Dad's chair, the music peaks and the children half rise and arrange themselves on either side of Dad's legs. Everyone smiles up at Mum. Once this has unfolded, we pull back to see the camera crew, continuity, make-up etc. James is standing to one side watching.

MATTHEW

And ... cut. Steve?

STEVE

((camera-man))

Not the best, guv'nor.

MATTHEW

Right... we'll go again, please.

Matthew to ad lib instructions to actors and crew. He notices James.

MATTHEW

James, good, you made it. We're just going to do one more take, then we'll break for lunch.

The commercial is set up and shot again, with Matthew continuing to give ad libbed directions. As soon as the take is over, Matthew snatches his jacket, gives a quick kiss to a young woman who could well be his current lover, and steers James out of the studio.

MATTHEW

Right, James. Come on. Let's go before the clients get hold of me.

INT. PUB - DAY

Lunch time. Matthew stands at the bar where he is buying drinks and lunch. Then the two men sit at a small table face to face.

MATTHEW

I'll tell you another thing. We might have led the world once into the Industrial Revolution, now we lead with television commercials. We're the best, it's as simple as that. Even the Americans will admit it now ... the camera work, the acting, the scripts, special effects. We've got the lot. Nearly all the good directors here have ambitions to make serious films.

(a sudden laugh)  
That food you're eating.

JAMES

Yes.

MATTHEW

What would you call it?

JAMES

I dunno. Ploughman's Lunch.

MATTHEW

Ploughman's Lunch. Traditional  
English fare.

JAMES

U-huh.

MATTHEW

In fact it's the invention of an  
advertising campaign they ran in  
the early sixties to encourage  
people to eat in pubs. A completely  
successful fabrication of the past,  
the Ploughman's Lunch was.

We look at James's plate, the unappetising food. Matthew  
takes a long drink.

MATTHEW

Listen, James. There's something  
else I want to talk to you about.

Matthew pauses.

MATTHEW

I'm pretty broadminded, and I'd  
rather be frank than have everybody  
misunderstanding one another. If  
you see what I mean.

James does not.

MATTHEW

Susan told me that your visits to  
Norfolk had ... well, an ulterior  
motive.

JAMES

She said that?

MATTHEW

You weren't really interested in  
Suez at all. Incredibly enough,  
you were interested in my wife.

JAMES

Now listen...

MATTHEW

No, no, let me go on before you get the wrong idea. Ann and I have kept to our separate bedrooms for the last three years. And I can't imagine that Susan hasn't hinted at the kind of life I lead in London. I'm not telling you how to run your affairs. I'm just saying ... I don't mind. I'm giving you permission.

We are CLOSE IN on James's reaction.

INT. JAMES'S CAR - EARLY MORNING

James drives towards Susan's flat. Jeremy sprawls in the back seat, slowly peeling the foil from a champagne bottle. Both are well-dressed. As they draw up outside Susan's flat, Jeremy leans forward and murmurs in James's ear.

JEREMY

Still in love?

JAMES

I'm not sure.

He presses the horn and gets out. Jeremy gets out too. Susan comes down the steps. She is also smartly dressed. She kisses James. He takes her small suitcase and puts it in the boot. She kisses Jeremy.

JEREMY

Darling Susan. You look like an angel. But where's your hat?

SUSAN

Oh no!

JEREMY

They won't let you in without one.

James hands Susan into the front seat.

JEREMY

Brighton, James!

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

The car slips through the London traffic.

INT. JAMES'S CAR - DAY

In the car, a few minutes later. Much hilarity. Susan is holding a glass ready as Jeremy eases out the cork.

SUSAN

Don't point it at James!

JEREMY

Voila!

The cork flies. The champagne is poured. Susan hands a glass to James.

JEREMY

To the ninety-ninth conference of  
the National Union of Conservative  
and Unionist Associations!

All repeat the toast with various stumbling inaccuracies.

INT. CAR PARK, BRIGHTON - DAY

James drives into a multi-storey car park. Jeremy gets out of the car and goes to look at the view which is of modern office developments.

JEREMY

Hah - the seaside! Isn't it  
heavenly!

Susan joins Jeremy.

SUSAN

Gorgeous.

Jeremy is taking out his Press Pass and pinning it to his lapel.

SUSAN

What have you got there?

JEREMY

You'd look naked without one.

SUSAN

Oh, yes! Where's mine? I want to  
look like you.

James joins them. There follows a little charade of mock sympathy.

SUSAN

What about James?

Jeremy and Susan chorus a sympathetic moan.

JEREMY

We'll see what we can do.

SUSAN

Promise?

JEREMY

Promise.

EXT. BRIGHTON PROMENADE - DAY

James, Jeremy and Susan walk along the promenade and cross the road towards the Grand Hotel. The Conference Centre is visible and so too are the POLICE and DEMONSTRATORS. Jeremy has linked arms with Susan. James lags behind a little. Jeremy tells a joke, barely audible above the SOUND of TRAFFIC and the CHANTS of the PROTESTORS. Susan giggles as she and Jeremy skip forward to dodge the traffic.

INT. LOBBY, GRAND HOTEL - DAY

The lobby is crowded with DELEGATES, MPs, PRESS and TV PEOPLE.

JEREMY

There goes my deep throat. Excuse me.

Jeremy darts away. Susan is looking about her.

JAMES

Shall we have a drink or something?

SUSAN

Oh ... excuse me. There's Nicholas.

James is left.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - AFTERNOON

DELEGATES and MPs, and MEDIA PEOPLE, are taking tea on the long balcony of the Grand Hotel. Jeremy is interviewing an MP. James and Susan sit at the same table listening.

JEREMY

Then, the theory goes, you'll be back in favour. In line for a real job. Is that right?

MP

Well, it's a theory ... interesting. Oh, excuse me, there's Willy.

The MP makes off.

JEREMY

I want to see him too.

Jeremy leaves. James comes and sits closer to Susan.

JAMES

We don't seem to get much time to talk.

SUSAN

I know. I'm sorry.

An announcement comes through on the hotel's P.A.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE (O.S.)

Miss Susan Barrington, Miss Susan  
Barrington. A phone call for you.

Susan makes a half-hearted apologetic gesture and leaves. As she goes she passes Jeremy who holds a Press Pass for James. He kneels by James's chair and pins the card to his lapel.

JEREMY

General Sir James Penfield ...  
services during the Norfolk  
campaign.

EXT. CONFERENCE CENTRE - LATE AFTERNOON

The three walk towards the Conference Centre, along the gauntlet of PROTESTORS and ONLOOKERS. Among them are Carmen and Betty, holding a placard which says 'Women's Peace Camp'. They catch sight of James. Some puzzled recognition. James hurries away from the women and through the doors into the Centre.

INT. PRESS BALCONY, CONFERENCE CENTRE - DAY

James, Susan and Jeremy come onto the Press balcony and find their seats while FRANCIS PYM delivers a speech.

PYM

It was they who rebuffed aggression,  
they who struck such a powerful  
blow for democracy . . .

JAMES

(to Susan)  
I managed to book us a table at  
Wheelers.

PYM

I believe this will prove of wider  
significance even than the event  
itself. We were seen to be fighting  
to defend principles which are  
fundamental to free nations  
everywhere, and our reputation has  
been enhanced as a result.

JEREMY

(to Susan)  
Francis is in cracking form, don't  
you think?

INT. BAR - EARLY EVENING

James, Jeremy and Susan. Journalists, delegates etc.

SUSAN

(triumphant, excited)  
It was incredible. He came back, made a pompous little bow and said, 'My dear girl you may film me all afternoon if you wish.' And he's promised not to talk to the Press.

JEREMY

It's because he desires you. The women get all the breaks at these conferences.

SUSAN

It's true! I was here last year doing a piece, remember? I was in the bar with all these Northern trade unionists and their sponsored MPs. They were all incredibly fat and beery, huge trousers and braces. And so sweet. They all stood round me like children saying 'You! Working for television? You're just a young thing.' They wouldn't let me buy drinks even when I told them the programme was paying. They kept looking at my pass which was pinned here and saying  
(Mock Yorkshire.)  
'Oo, can I?'

JEREMY

Then one of them was sick all over your new dress.

SUSAN

No, he wasn't. He just lowered himself into a bar stool and said...  
(Yorkshire)  
'Oo I do feel bad. I 'ad three pints of lager and six onion bajejes!'

They all laugh.

SUSAN

I've got to go. See you at dinner.

She kisses them both. They watch her go. Their different expressions.

JEREMY

Six onion bajejes! Great girl.  
(then, confidential)  
Did you shake the mother off?

JAMES

Yes, finally.

JEREMY

Big mistake, I think. You might have learned a lot.

JAMES

(sudden)

Are you up to something?

Jeremy shrugs innocently and shows his empty hands.

INT. CONFERENCE CENTRE - DAY

James wanders through the Centre in search of Susan. He enters the debating chamber. MICHAEL HESELTINE is addressing the Conference. James wanders out to the space below the platform where journalists and photographers are gathered. He goes up the aisles between the seated delegates. No sign of Susan. He leaves the chamber.

HESELTINE

....left-wing councils employ labour candidates in the paid voluntary sector. We now face a professional left financed at the ratepayer's and tax payer's expense! Just more money is not a solution in itself. As we have given more money to the professional left...

INT. LOBBY, CONFERENCE CENTRE. DAY

Much later. James crosses the crowded lobby, still in search of Susan.

INT. STAIRS, CONFERENCE CENTRE - DAY

James climbs the stairs to the Press balcony. He hears Mrs Thatcher's voice, and from the street below, the chanting of protestors.

THATCHER (O.S.)

This is not going to be a speech about the Falklands campaign, although I would be proud to make one. But I want to say just this because it is true for all our people.

INT. PRESS BALCONY - DAY

James passes through the doors and finds a seat.

THATCHER

The spirit of the South Atlantic was the spirit of Britain at her best. It has been said that we surprised the world, that British patriotism was rediscovered in those spring days. Mr President, it was never really lost!

James suddenly notices Susan down on the lower floor. She passes through the doors and is gone. James gets to his feet.

THATCHER

But it would be no bad thing if the feeling that swept over the country then were to continue to inspire us. But if there was any doubt about the determination of the British people...

Jeremy and Susan come through the doors onto the Press balcony. James stops. They have not seen him. He watches as they stand together. Clearly a new intimacy has been established.

THATCHER

... it was removed by men and women who a few months ago brought a renewed sense of pride and self-respect to our country.

Jeremy kisses the nape of Susan's neck. They are not interested in staying for the speech. James watches stonily as they leave.

THATCHER

They were for the most part young. Let all of us here, and in the wider audience outside, pause and reflect...

Numbed, James returns to his seat.

THATCHER

...on what we who stayed at home owe to those who sailed and fought and lived and died and won. If this is tomorrow's generation, then Britain has little to fear in the years to come!

Mix to the last sentence of the Prime Minister's speech.

THATCHER

We will tell the people the truth, and the people will be our judge!

James sits through the standing ovation. The delegates cheer, 'Land of Hope and Glory' is sung. James chews his nails.

INT. CONFERENCE CENTRE - DAY

Hours later. WORKMEN are dismantling the platforms, taking away props, taking down the Conference backdrop and slogans. In LONG-SHOT we SEE Jeremy making his way between the rows

of chairs. James pursues him enraged, shouting. The ad libbed obscenity can barely be heard.

EXT. BRIGHTON SEA FRONT - DUSK

James and Jeremy.

James's rage is spent. It has collapsed into bitterness. The two men stop under a street lamp.

JEREMY

Susan and I are very old friends,  
James.

JAMES

Fuck off.

JEREMY

And you were obviously getting  
nowhere with her. I was waiting  
for the right moment to tell you  
that.

JAMES

My God. You even cooked up that  
Norfolk trip.

JEREMY

It might have worked. Really. I  
would have been delighted for you  
if it had. But she wasn't  
interested. Not my fault.

JAMES

You're a piece of shit

JEREMY

I've known Susan for more than  
fifteen years. James, we're old  
allies.

At this last word, James looks up. Jeremy walks away.

INT. JAMES'S FLAT - DAY

A few weeks later. We don't see James. We SEE and HEAR  
words pounding onto the PAGE. A fury in the typing. The  
page is pulled clear. SILENCE. We STAY ON the TYPEWRITER.

INT. BBC NEWSROOM - DAY

James is leaving in a hurry. He pulls on a thick overcoat,  
gathers up some papers, ignores someone who calls after  
him as he leaves.

EXT. LANGHAM PLACE - DAY

James leaves Broadcasting House and walks towards Oxford  
Circus.

INT. GOLD'S OFFICE - DAY

Gold stands by his desk as James comes in, pouring two glasses of wine.

GOLD

James... I can't begin to tell you how pleased we all are.

(he hands James a glass)

Congratulations, and I really mean it.

JAMES

Thank you.

GOLD

It's everything we wanted. A very good read. A terrific piece of work. So, here's to you and Suez.

JAMES

And to history.

CLOSE IN, the glasses touch.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

A group of mourners round a grave. A grey day. A priest reads from the Book of Common Prayer, but his voice is virtually lost to us. We find James's father, hunched in his overcoat, face immobile with grief. Next to him, James, expressionless.

James glances at his watch.

FREEZE FRAME. OPTICAL ZOOM.

THE END