

1: PHOEBE (SPEECH)

Alas, this shame! Doesn't he see others pay the cost for his so-called freedom? His cancerous smoke that none can escape. He may find these fascinating ideas to be freely discussed, but many, like myself, find them part of a dangerous discourse. Note it is often the men who crave this kind of freedom! Note it is often the drunk and unhappy! This talk of releasing the darkness within us comes from older generations who with no access to therapy, and a deeply conservative society, used drugs and drink as self-medication. In vino non veritas. In vino is just escape! And all this from him! It makes no sense. How can he be full of such bile when I am not?! How can he not see the hurt he causes?! Our so-called 'rules' he rails against enforce only kindness, but now I see it is precisely that kindness he cannot stand. For he is not kind. There is so much to fight in the world and he chooses to fight us. Well then. He is the very devil and he is lost!

I've been on orange for the night, but with my life in turmoil perhaps a dose of poison is the cure. This one time, maybe I will escape myself.

She downs her drink.

Disgusting!

But oh. My head.

Waiter!

2: HANNAH (SPEECH)

Indeed, but now I must admit you to my greatest secret. It is a scheme I have in place that I will get such pleasure from myself, but now you're here I suspect I'll draw a double pleasure from it shared.

For reasons you need not be aware, I harbour a resentful wound from Lady Climber, and in forging closure I must get some cold revenge.

I have become her social media consultant and made her believe she can succeed through causing outrage. As such, she senses all that she desires is within her grasp. But today, just as she reaches up to lay her hands upon her prize, I'll make her stretch too far, and bring her crashing down.

Inflated with success and most trusting in my advice, she attends these awards today, and will be seen by all the most influential people in London. However, I have also advised her what to wear and ensured it is so massively offensive that the moment she appears, she will be forever disgraced by every side, and eradicated from society. With this story forever in the memory and online, she will be unable to work, unable to thrive, unable to live any meaningful life from this day forward.

3: HANNAH (SPEECH 2)

Alright! It's true. I wanted you to fall and never rise again. And I'll tell you why! When I first moved to London, I was optimistic, hopeful, and intent on a career in television, desperate to engage with creative people. But I had no way in, until through a chance encounter I secured a position on a reality show as a runner. I performed my duties to the best of my abilities, but one contestant began to place more and more demands on me, to fetch her food, make her coffee, to tidy up after her miniscule dog. She asked the impossible then insulted me for failing. I could put up no resistance, as this was my only opportunity, but as it progressed she destroyed my self-esteem, my passion, my belief in joy itself. She moved on, creating a career for herself, full of money and acclaim. I retreated, depressed, hid away for two years, and then slowly, through social media, built a reputation as a consultant, but all that time I had one aim: to bring that woman down, as she had brought me down. For that show was The Apprentice 2015, and that contestant was you Lady Climber. You showed no mercy.

4: LADY CLIMBER (SPEECH)

Stop! It's my choice!

Look at you all!

I don't want a family. I never have. To be bonded without option to strangers from birth. Responsibility with no power? Love with no escape? 'Tis not for me. Indeed, I desire success. I adore my ambition. Of this I remain most proud. 'Tis true Sir Dennis. I am alone. But there are worse things.

To rely on a mother who manifests only cruelty, then abandonment. Or a father who insulted us nightly, then spent his money on drink, rather than his children. Who as I grew, came back every few years, with his insults and attitude, yet begged me to support him. Which I do to this very day. When I was still a child, cowering, hungry, looking after my sister on a cold night, I made a pledge I would never rely on anyone.

Perhaps money and power and status wouldn't bring me happiness. But I made my decision, and since then they've been more constant than family. A firmer friend, than friends.

Julie found her solace in community. I found mine in cash. But surely, if I have any freedom, then I'm allowed to make that choice.

Yes?

5: JACK (speech)

We should all be able to do it. To drink what we want, smoke what we like. It used to be one was free to decide how to spend your lime upon this earth, for better or ill, who you were, smoker or no-smoker, believer or non-believer. angel or dirty fucking *devil*, but now you're all... all of you... the same, really, or not *really*, because in fact the more you *contain* yourselves, the more you have thoughts you never say, doubts, beliefs you bold in your hearts you'd never let pass your lips, the more the tyranny of *virtue* takes over, the more you'll be shamed and guilty and you'll crumble or the more you'll feel resentment and hurt and want to *fight*!

Well not me! I *refuse*. I am not for virtue but for freedom, for truth! We're sick of being guilty. I *ought* to do this, I *should* do that. When inside us all are desires, sexual, financial, all kinds of cravings and opinions we're told to hide. Let's talk about forbidden subjects. Expose our devils and be proud of what they say. Half of us gaze upon pornography, how many admit it? What's in the dark nature of our desire?

6: HANNAH AND LADY CLIMBER

- HANNAH Greetings Lady Climber, on this fine morning
- LADY C. MsTweetwell, how effortless you appear with your fashion. It makes quite a change to see someone who –
- HANNAH An immediate comment on my appearance.
- LADY C. A compliment my dear.
- HANNAH Would you have made it had I been a man?
- LADY C. In my experience men are rarely well dressed, and so hardly ever deserving of such remarks.
- HANNAH You believe men are less well dressed?
- LADY C. Well...
- HANNAH You have just offended all women, and one sentence later, all men. As a candidate for your social media consultant may I offer some advice? Avoid generalisations until you know how to use them.
- LADY C. Oh and what a shame! 'Tis my fault. I should have known, given your youth, two words of conversation and you're offended! You could do with... what's the word your generation's always droning on about? Resilience. Which I have in fucking buckets, by the way.
- HANNAH No Lady Climber-
- LADY C Born in the poorest circumstances, I was given no favours, I came to town and simply *worked*. Third place on The Apprentice 2015. Now a lifestyle business a celebrity. All going swimmingly until... well... a tiniest accident on social media and I'm laid low, my custom gone, management turned tail, and hanging to the London scene by a thread. But I will rise again Ms Tweetwell, which is why you're here. I had hoped you might assist me to no longer be simply Lady Susan Climber but Dame Susan Climber, respected by the wealthy, invited to Number 10 receptions, Netflix deals, government procurement, Strictly.
- HANNAH If I may, Lady Climber –
- LADY C Oh ho! Yes! The snowflake flurries! You'd have me apologise I expect. 'I understand the harm caused by the microaggression of using the disgusting word "Lady" and fully' –
- HANNAH Madam you misunderstand, you can be divisive by all means –
- LADY C But not offensive.
- HANNAH Offence is essential, but Lady Climber, it must be targeted.

LADY C ...Targeted?

HANNAH My my. We are a beginner. This explains a lot of your recent disasters.

LADY C. Don't you bloody well patronise me –

HANNAH How to explain? Online, one should have a singular focus. You must climb the ladder of influence.

LADY C. I know fully well how to - I beg your pardon? Influence? (Aside.) I thought her a typical flimsy, but what's this? Grit?

HANNAH To achieve the maximum cultural influence possible, you have two options. Either will work, but they must be committed to completely. No half measures.

LADY C. Indeed?

HANNAH Either you head fully to the right, becry the culture wars, defend tradition, trash progress, and advocate preserving any and all institutions regardless of history or utility.

LADY C. Or?

HANNAH Or head fully to the left, becry the culture wars, trash tradition, defend progress, and advocate eradicating any and all institutions regardless of history or utility. Either will attract thousands of idiots, or as we like to call them, followers, who like things made simple and have no inclination to think for themselves. Over this herd you have influence. And your goal is achieved.

LADY C. But what I genuinely believe... ?

HANNAH Is irrelevant. Your choice as to left or right is dictated by what you wish to do with your influence in the real world.

LADY C. Well I desire reputation and wealth.

HANNAH And that ambition is achievable, but I believe currently you are too timid.

LADY C. Timid?! I know what you want, you quivering millennial quim. That I should use every platform to declare constant virtue? Urgh! Never!

7: HANNAH AND LADY CLIMBER (2)

HANNAH Lady Climber, how are you this morning?

LADY C. Quite well, thank you.

HANNAH You enjoyed last night?

LADY C. On and off.

HANNAH Well, it certainly enjoyed you! I have compiled a portfolio of attention in the press.

She hands LADY CLIMBER the iPad. LADY CLIMBER looks through it.

LADY C. My! All so flattering. So many photographs.

HANNAH And I'm close to finishing your children's book deal for Christmas, appearances on some celebrity programmes... oh and already I have received the paperwork for your television show with Rosalind Double-Budget. I assume you will accept?

LADY C. With pleasure!

HANNAH I've tried to call her this morning but she's having some family issue. Apparently her son disappeared last night and she's not happy.

LADY C. Ah.

HANNAH Never mind, I'm sure she'll be in touch. How did your evening progress with Mr Eton?

LADY C. Oh enjoyably enough, but sadly he did not accompany me home.

HANNAH He - oh, that is sad. For I had selected him with care and anticipated you and he would become most entwined. *(Aside.)* Fie on her! I had intended an illicit liaison with this future prime minister, to be revealed at the crucial moment, to add to her disgrace. *(To LADY CLIMBER.)* No matter! I shall invite him instead to your next event. Today Sir Dennis Hedge is hosting a young entrepreneur's reception at his Kensington house. You have been requested to present one of the awards.

LADY C. Sir Dennis? Are you sure? For we know each other of old and our relationship is most warlike. Is he aware of my invitation?

HANNAH He is and wishes now that you may settle things.

LADY C. But only last night he said he found my recent tweets 'disgusting'?

HANNAH And this invitation is useful for our purposes. A high-profile event, but this time exclusive. Only the richest, and most influential individuals will be in attendance. Royal family, presidents, Gary Lineker.

LADY C. Yes of course... Well... Sir Dennis...

A moment of thought. Of... longing, perhaps...

His motives are irrelevant. I shall attend.

HANNAH Good. As before, I've detailed a suggested outfit for the occasion here...

She pings LADY CLIMBER a picture on her iPad.

And I would ask just one more thing. That going forward you avoid uncontrolled personal scandal. It would undermine your judgement of others if you were caught in some unfortunate incident of your own.

LADY C. Ms Tweetwell, at my age life is very calm. My scandal days are long forgot.

HANNAH notices something sticking out from the back of the portrait. She takes it and pulls and it's the boxer shorts. She looks at LADY CLIMBER.

Ah! My awful servant Carson uses them to dust and has a filthy habit of depositing them in all sorts of absurd places. I'll thrash him later.

HANNAH You seem most dissatisfied with your help. And he is rather ancient. Why do you not source a more efficient and economic serf?

LADY C. Oh how I wish that were possible! But... sadly, 'tis not. I am most stuck with him.

HANNAH A shame. Well, please follow my instructions to the letter, and very soon, all will be yours.

LADY C. Indeed I shall. Farewell.

HANNAH goes. LADY CLIMBER breathes a sigh of relief and sits on the chaise longue.

I must keep control, for if I can then, as she says, I'll have what I so dearly desire. My revolting father, those bullies in the playground, all of them said I'd amount to nothing, but now I'm close to having it all. There's nothing wrong with wanting more, and doing what it takes! Now let me lay eyes on my instructions...

She looks on the iPad.

Hmm. A strange choice indeed. If Tweetwell had not already proved herself astute, I'd find this costume... questionable. But well... I am committed and she has earned my trust. Sir Dennis indeed! 'Tis absurd. Any relationship we had is long past. *All* my relationships are past thank heavens. 'Tis the very thing which allows me to thrive.

8: PHOEBE AND JULIE

JULIE Ooo my head feels like it's been caved in with a pickaxe. She's been staying up late recently so it's been ages since I've had any fun. Last night I couldn't take it, so I went up to my bedroom, got under the covers with a bottle of Smirnoff and those jazz cookies you gave me, had a little party all on my own. It wasn't the best look, probably, but I had a fucking good time, and she was none the wiser, which is what matters isn't it, in the end?

Feeling rough this morning though. Just waiting for Kev. Only chance we get for a bit of it, first thing, back of his van before little madam gets up and –

PHOEBE (From offstage.) Aunty?

JULIE Oh shit - Call you back.

She hangs up, stubs out the cigarette. Sprays herself with air-freshener,takes a mint out of her pocket. Puts it in her mouth, and turns,just as PHOEBE VIRTUE comes out of the house.

PHOEBE Aunty! There you are! Here I am thinking I'm an early bird, ready to savour the rosy fingers of dawn, all prepared to pick herbs and surprise you in bed with a stimulating infusion, but when I get downstairs, I hear your voice, and you're out already! Let me embrace you!

JULIE Er. Alright.

She does.

PHOEBE Ah! So fresh! Most people don't smell too good in the morning, but your benevolence means you sleep peacefully and wake as new, naturally fragrant with mint and juniper. But why are you out here? Doing the chores I suppose? The bins? Waving the community off to work, with a smile on your face and a click in your heel?

JULIE Well er- yeah, you've got me. Thought I'd just... check

PHOEBE You are the wisest, kindest aunt one could hope for. From the moment you took myself and my twin brother Jack in as babies on the death of our mother, you have raised us as your own, with never complaint or fatigue. You've done precisely as you pledged to our late mother - your sister - and brought us up the most virtuous, progressive and moral young people in the whole country.

JULIE Don't I know it?!

PHOEBE What's that Aunty?

JULIE Oh er yes well - did my best!

PHOEBE And in this hard, too-evil world, your best has been heaven. But alas, if only my night was so blissful. As you can tell from my zombie face, I struggled for sleep.

JULIE You look alright.

PHOEBE Bless you Aunty but I look old. Lines, bags - I look like you.

JULIE Beg your pardon?

PHOEBE You have no choice but to wear the disfiguring scars of time, but I'm only twenty-two.

JULIE Didn't you put on your meditation whatsit?

PHOEBE I did. But then at three in the morn, I awoke, eyes wide, in a complete state of panic.

JULIE Was it that climate change again?

PHOEBE Not this time. For since we've binned your plastic, given your car away, and stopped all your holidays I feel much better. No. It was my brother Jack. I'm concerned.

JULIE Oh Jack's alright. He's like you. Since he left for London to volunteer for the RSPCA or whatever it was-

PHOEBE Unicef Aunty.

JULIE - all his messages have been telling us how he's doing really well, helping all those poor dogs

PHOEBE – Children. Indeed, he was most regular in his messages -for we've always been inseparable - but the last two weeks, nothing. It isn't like him. The world is a terrible place, as you know, full of evil people like Andrew Neil. And those friends you used to have - I'm so glad we agreed to get rid of them all by the way.

JULIE Hmm.

PHOEBE You might be lonely now but it was a teachable moment.

9: REBECCA AND PHOEBE

PHOEBE Ah! Hi! I'm Phoebe. Come in! Very prompt I have to say.

REBECCA Rebecca. You were expecting me?

PHOEBE Oh yes, but I hadn't dreamed you'd come so soon! Now, please don't turn around and walk straight out again, I know we're facing a mountain, but no one's expecting it all to be done today, and I intend to do most of it myself, once I feel slightly less vomitous and drunk than I do at this moment. If you could just see to the key areas, we're talking kitchen, bathroom, you would be saving these guys' lives, is the truth, you *really* would –

REBECCA This is a flat share?

PHOEBE Indeed, myself and three others, and there's a visitor this morning, Freddie's catch from last night, he's using the bathroom at the moment, but he'll be out shortly and you can get in there and do your thing –

REBECCA My –

PHOEBE - you haven't brought cleaning equipment oh that was an oversight on my part why on earth would I assume *that*? Well stay here 'tis not your responsibility but mine I'll run to the shop now – perhaps just start with a tidy while I'm out? I used to be very much against the idea of domestic help but I was persuaded by a wonderful article explaining how it created an economy of employment and how that employment had vastly better conditions than the gig economy for instance I certainly don't look down on it you want some chocolate I really want some chocolate see you in a minute!

She goes

REBECCA To think this girl could mistake my boho chic for genuine decay, and that despite my much enhanced complexion I was here to... clean?! Pah! I'd presumed if my husband played away he'd be in some high-end city John Lewis nightmare hotel, cavorting with a paid-up tart. But inconceivably, he's crash-landed in this pit of shit. This morning I dumped the children on the help, and using the tracking app I had secreted on his phone, resolved to catch him in the act. For truly I don't care who he fumbles, but I must ensure he's careful – I'll be damned before I appear the naive wife, who wakes one morning to discover pictures of her husband's errant tongue all splashed across the morning news. I have investments and aspirations of my own that needs be served – I'll not rely on him. 'Freddie' eh? So he's in the bathroom. Well then I could be in for quite a wait. For despite his lack of hair, he takes a fucking age.

10: LADY CLIMBER AND JULIE

- LADY C. Oh why am I discussing this with you - something too sophisticated for your provincial mind to comprehend. Just tell me why you've left your region.
- JULIE I'm here to warn you! For though you treat me with contempt and never show much love, you remain my sister. You should know young Phoebe's come to London, as well as Jack. I'd thought it was okay as London is so huge it should prevent your meeting. But then Phoebe texted me that she was attending a party for Netclix –
- LADY C. Netflix.
- JULIE Netbix, and suddenly I thought perhaps you might be there. Unable to make contact with anyone, I came myself, put on a costume and sneaked in. I watched and made sure you never met.
- LADY C. You mean the two of them were there all last night? Oh. My stomach turns.
- JULIE Indeed and they're moving even closer I believe. For instance Jack was with Ms Tweetwell, and she's now in your employ, am I right?
- LADY C. Jack? There was a young man called Jack here just now.
- JULIE Yes that may be him! Didn't you recognise him?
- LADY C. Why should I? Last I saw him he was but six months.
- JULIE But all the pictures that I sent... ?
- LADY C. Made excellent kindling in my wood-burning stove - so that was Jack!
- JULIE My sister we must tell them! For they are grown, will make no demands, and even though you wish it not the case you are their mother and –
- LADY C. No! The deal we made in those prenatal days remains in blood. I would, despite my instinct, give them birth, on condition you would take them swift away, that they would never know, and I would never hear of them again. To this we will adhere like glue.

11: JACK AND PHOEBE

JACK The best of mornings to you stranger, applicant unto our Utopia! Thou, deemest Steven, what makes you believe you have the sheer bloody vim to enter us so boldly? - Oh.

He finally looks at 'Steven'. PHOEBE is uncomfortable.

PHOEBE What? Is there a problem mate?

JACK No I... it's peculiar but you're... Have we met before?

PHOEBE Don't think so.

JACK They said you were from the north. I too, many eons ago, hail from those blust'ry monochrome lands. But no matter, some refreshment! I performed a single day of service at Pizza Express (never again, let me tell you) and was quickly dismissed for over-serving. However, as I was instructed to the door, I liberated my own severance pay, the alcoholic libation you see before you.

PHOEBE (Aside) Can this appalling kleptomaniac truly be my angel brother?

Wine? But... it's so early?

JACK Indeed! Lubricate the diem. Now I'm going to ask you some very personal questions if that's alright, Steven? Because if we're going to live together, there'll be no hiding. Betwixt these thinnest of walls, defecation, fornication, and masturbation are all public activities. We will hear you and you, my boy, will hear us, doing all of those things, possibly simultaneously. You'll have no need of privacy - whatever your guilty secret - pornography, Starbucks, Sunday Times Culture section, come out! Proud! No judgement! We don't want to lie to each other, or ourselves. No dissembling Steven!

PHOEBE (Aside.) No dissembling?! Better my virtuous lie than his vile truth

JACK So tell us. What are you? Single, married, divorced? Celibate, total slut?

PHOEBE Oh. Wot? Me mate? Well I'm a straight man, as you can see, so I like football, and cars, growing chillis, barbecues, and stag dos, beer and locker rooms not reading books stubble mate yeah Jordan Peterson podcasts boxing horror four-hour body can't say it these days mate but legs and pussy can't say anything these days mate yeah gambling other men mostly ego shouting in groups of lots of men sport just men you know normal. Normal. Normal men things. Sport. Yeah mate.

Another moment where all that lands. JACK unsure...

JACK Hmm...

12: MATT ETON AND LADY CLIMBER

- LADY C Matthew Eton! As I live and breathe.
- MATT Yes, and the fact you still do is entirely down to me Lady Climber, for it was my tremendous leadership that saw us through the plague.
- LADY C I know that well. You were a literal inspiration.
- MATT I'm afraid I can't stay long. I'm on my way to the tailor's for a new suit. The seat is near worn through. I'm a keen rider you know.
- LADY C I'm sure.
- MATT But when I received your invitation I knew I had to make a detour. I have it that your conversation can be very stimulating.
- LADY C Well indeed, for stimulation is often required.
- MATT Really? Mmm.
- LADY C How's your wife Mr Eton?
- MATT My wife? Oh, a journalist for the Daily Mail. Lifestyle, culture. She pokes the woke. Nothing of consequence.
- LADY C But how does she fare?
- MATT Well she'-s yes. You know. Home. The children. That sort of thing.
- LADY C And how are the children?
- MATT Ah- young. And there's a lot of them. Four. But as a devoted family man I have a rule! I'm there, every night, at bath time. You know I'm very busy and I have an extremely important job, but despite that, every evening I make sure I'm home. I roll my sleeves up and I *run* those taps, and I'm *there*, so as the nanny bathes the children they can see their father's face just... behind her.
- LADY C May I make a confession?
- MATT Please do.
- LADY C I can't stand children.
- MATT What a shame. Never wanted them?
- LADY C They suck the pleasure from your life.
- MATT Oh well, that's a-
He looks around to check no-one's listening, then-
I feel the same! It's true, they're awful, but you can't say that, can you?
- LADY C You can say anything to me.

MATT I've known my wife since Oxford, but she's become a tyrant, insisting I do this, don't do that. I work just to get away from her, but then in the evenings she forces me home because there's 'things to discuss' or because she's out and apparently it can't be the nanny 'all the time'. So I must confess, in frustration, I crave to venture down other avenues.

LADY C Which avenues?

MATT New frontiers. Mountains. Beautiful valleys and towering... towers. Could be men, women, I wouldn't mind as long as they were *new*. And what would be the harm, eh? As long as she doesn't find out.

LADY C Mr Eton, I have a dilemma.

MATT Well I am known as a fixer in the party, excellent at resolving dilemmas – pray continue.

LADY C Tonight I am due to attend the Netflix Masked Ball in Central London. It's a very exclusive event. Celebrities, media types, the great and the good.

MATT It sounds a most wonderful affair.

LADY C I am sure it will be, for Netflix has a lot of money.

MATT Everyone likes Netflix don't they? I adore *Selling Sunset*. I watch it and imagine I was living that life, not my own.

LADY C Hmm. Well tonight, at the party, I would very much like to be accompanied. For as a woman you know I am naturally shy and dainty, in need of masculine protection.

MATT I am a man.

LADY C Yes and I had some idea – it seems ridiculous now – but I had thought I may ask you –

MATT I see...

LADY C But you've said of course you must be home with your family in the evening, so I wondered –

MATT Well hold on –

LADY C - is there anyone else you can think of that might be appropriate?

MATT - When I said –

LADY C Your counterpart in the opposition, perhaps? He always seems like an agreeable sort –

MATT Lady Climber! I would be most happy to accompany you!

13: JACK AND HANNAH

JACK By George, I feel unusually magnificent this morning. Glory has a name and that name is Hannah! Yes she well and truly took advantage of me. I can't remember everything we got up to, but I guess it was profound as my muscles have an Olympic ache and my tongue a noted stretch. Yes that was the kind of sex we'll be grateful to look back on when we're old and irrelevant. We'll say whatever I failed to do with my life, at least I got that night right.

Enter HANNAH TWEETWELL, putting the last of her clothes on.

HANNAH I enjoyed our intercourse. 'Twas most athletic. But now I must leave –

JACK Pray why?

HANNAH I attend an interview to work for Lady Susan Climber as her social media consultant.

JACK By Jove you're brave! By reputation she is most fierce.

HANNAH But she accounts for that ferocity with cash. And after her recent errors, she is most in need. So farewell... *HANNAH holds out her hand.* I beg your pardon but your name? In all our sweaty grapp'ling I never found what you were called?

JACK Jack.

HANNAH Good then Jack. Be nimble! And you certainly were.

JACK Wait - Stay for breakfast! I need some exercise to work off my... hangover.

HANNAH Jack really! I can't be seen in such a place as this.

JACK Why not? It's bohemian.

HANNAH Oh sir, you jest! It's a fucking disgrace. These omnipresent lice!

JACK 'Tis true but even so, we must meet once more! You would agree that when our bodies intertwined we produced an unusual amount of pleasure? For us to be separate would defy nature.

She looks at him. She takes out a pen and paper. Writes something.

HANNAH Hmm. Your character holds no interest for me, but sensually I can't deny 'twas a fullsome ride. I doubt they'll let you in, but if you can find entry tonight, I shall be here.

She folds up the paper and gives to him. He kisses it.

JACK Until tonight!

HANNAH Ta-ta!

14: JENNY AND SIR DENNIS HEDGE

JENNY Canapé sir?

SIR D. Oh thank you.

JENNY Wait! You're Sir Dennis Hodge.

SIR D. Hedge.

JENNY One of those dinosaurs.

SIR D. Dragons.

JENNY You invest in things. But haven't you long since left that most capitalist display, rejecting celebrity? So what are you doing here?

SIRD. I am asking the same question, young lady, but well... from the poorest start in South London, my inventions have made me somehow unbelievably rich. However now, with advancing years, I ponder my purpose on this earth. I'm keen to invest not simply for profit, but in people. Schemes that might make the world better. I was told there might be individuals like that here. Creatives. Young visionaries. But so far... nothing.

JENNY You could give the cash to me.

SIRD. But why? Do you have some way to improve the world?

JENNY Actually I'd probably burn it. I think money is the cause of most of our problems.

SIRD. Ah! There you are! Half of you are deluded utopian dreamers like yourself and those that aren't seem wholly absorbed with their appearance, status and 'career'. Where's the vision? The gleaming future? Never mind. Thank you for this, at least young lady...

JENNY May I shake you by the hand sir. Despite your rampant capitalism, I'm a big fan.

SIR D. Oh very well.

They shake hands. Then SIR DENNIS moves off. JENNY holds up his watch, which she's stolen, then pockets it.

15: PHOEBE and TOM

TOM takes off his mask. He breathes deeply.

PHOEBE Sir you're in distress! Perhaps you should have chosen a different mask?

TOM My mother said given my appearance it should cover every last inch.

PHOEBE Your mother?

TOM I thought coming here would be good for my career. Not that I have one yet, but I so desire to make documentaries! About important subjects and attempt through the power of the screen to change the world.

PHOEBE That sounds like a noble aim.

TOM Mum thinks it ridiculous.

PHOEBE I don't believe it's ridiculous at all.

TOM You don't?

PHOEBE Indeed no. For though one may laugh at our dreams, about how we want to change the world, it's through aiming at stars that we may at least achieve the moon.

TOM Well... yes, I think that's right. But tell me about yourself. What brings you here?

PHOEBE Oh... just to see what it's like, I suppose. To discover if I... get on with anyone. But I'm... disappointed.

TOM I get on with so few people.

PHOEBE The same.

TOM I hardly ever meet anyone, is the truth. But I often imagine there might come a day I do, and we just... click.

PHOEBE Click, indeed.

TOM I don't mean sex of course, don't for a moment think I mean that.

PHOEBE There's nothing wrong with sex though, is there?

TOM Oh nothing at all, I mean sex is lovely, probably, I don't know, but more important for me is a meeting of *minds*.

PHOEBE Precisely. I mean I have sexual thoughts, I mean I have done it, I'm very sex positive, but when I'e actually had intercourse with boys it's... not quite lived up to expectations...

TOM Maybe it's not the right person...

PHOEBE Yes! You know I think it might be because the feeling wasn't there, you know
 – the true, higher, pure...

TOM and PHOEBE *(together)* ...Connection.

They gasp, then stare at each other, amazed.

TOM Would you care to dance?

PHOEBE Why yes...

16: LADY CLIMBER AND TOM

LADY C. Who the fuck are you?

TOM I'm Tom.

LADY C. Tom? Who's Tom?

TOM We met yesterday, at the –

LADY C. But you're... How old are you?

TOM Twenty-two.

LADY C. You're the Harlequin.

TOM Cheapest one in the shop. They had a deal.

LADY C. They had a... *They had a deal?! You're not supposed to be - I mean –*

TOM I had a great night.

LADY C. You - I'm sure. Sure you did. Did you?

TOM Yes.

LADY C. Yes. Well. That explains a lot I suppose but –

TOM Are you quite alright?

LADY C. Yes. No. *No!* I'm not. Not alright at all –

TOM I thought you said the sex was –

LADY C. The *sex*? Yes the sex was sex I don't give a fuck about the *sex* I need my *money*, my position.

TOM I thought we did rather well on position.

LADY C. Don't you dare make light of this you spotty...intern.

TOM I'm confused.

LADY C. *You're* confused?! Look, you're just... you're not –

TOM Wait, did you think I was someone else

LADY C. Oh you're so incredibly hard of understanding. *Yes, yes* I thought you were definitely someone else.

TOM Oh. Wow.

As she carries on talking, he goes and gets out his phone. He then presses a button and starts filming. She turns out, panicking, not seeing any of this.

LADY C. And you're - oh my god you're that Tom! The producer's son! Rebecca Double-Bucket or whoever she was - who's going to give me my show, and she said if anyone touched her son –

She turns to find him filming her.

What are you doing?

TOM Well I really want to make documentaries and I did this masterclass online about it, and it said if anything happens to you in your life that's in any way remarkable, start filming straight away, get it online, put your work out there, and this –

She takes the phone out of his hands.

LADY C. No, no.

TOM I got a few videos last night too. I can't wait to show Mum! Not her little boy any more!

LADY C. How do you delete this?

TOM I can tell you're upset, but I promise I'm just... a guy, you met, and yes it was my first time but I understand that doesn't mean I –

LADY C. First... time? I just took your virginity?! When your mother said 'innocent' I didn't realise she meant –

TOM Yeah.

LADY C. Brilliant.

TOM - but we don't really talk about it like 'taking your virginity' any more as it's sort of offensive and possessive? Anyway it was good so, I'm, well I'm having an 'oh what a beautiful morning' moment you know what I mean? The sun is shining the birds are –

LADY C. Christ - listen - you're not to tell a soul about this, ever. It's all, all of this, deeply problematic, to use one of your generation's ridiculous words.

17: SIR DENNIS AND HANNAH

SIR D. My gratitude for taking on the arrangements today with such zeal.

HANNAH A pleasure sir, I will be in my element.

SIR D. I'm certain of that, and yet, as I look at all these honorific guests and entrepreneurial celebrants, I feel a gap. They excel at business, but which of them does truly feel responsibility unto the world?

HANNAH I wonder sir, if you have expectations too high? Our age is one of the individual self, is it not? Self-fulfilment, self-image.

SIR D. But what of the current activism amongst the young! That's genuine, isn't it?

HANNAH *(Laughs)* Oh sir! Nay! 'Tis but the fashion! They'll do it if it's easy – they claim their motivation is the betterment of society but this is clearly false. The vast majority are possessed by the same motivations as every young person in history - money, pleasure, respect and sex. There's few who'll actually sacrifice anything in their life for a larger goal.

SIR D. If true then what you say would crush my soul. So you may hold your bleak opinion, but I'll remain in hope.

HANNAH Well bless you for that Sir Dennis. We need deluded optimists.

SIR D. And what of jaded cynics Ms Tweetwell? Do we need them too?

A moment

Will you stay here to welcome guests, I must withdraw to attend the hall.

SIR DENNIS goes.

HANNAH *(Aside.)* I wish I could share that hope, like I used to, but he is correct that I now live as a ruthless cynic; alone, without love, passion, or joy. And all because of Lady Climber!

18: JENNY, FREDDIE AND JACK

JACK Well? What make you of my latest doxy?!

FREDDIE I thought I recognised her.

JENNY Too posh.

JACK Jenny Hood, you are dull. Only interested in a girl if she passes your rigorous political tests.

JENNY I'll certainly never do it with a Tory.

JACK Ah! Principles! Principles are a sham. If I've learnt one thing since I came to London it's that everyone's out for themselves. All this pretence about making things better? It's just cover for putting yourself first. Everyone's on the make, so until my dying day, I intend to capitalise.

JENNY What an alteration from the well-meaning boy we took in

FREDDIE But if that's the case, why are you our friend? We're poor as.

JACK Because young Frederick, unlike those out there, at least we are brutally honest about who we are. Jenny Hood is a thieving anti-capitalist intellectual. You, a sex-obsessed workaholic. And as for myself, my sole concern is freedom and pleasure in all its many forms. A libertine, if you will! Our abode is a unique island, of countercultural laissez-faire. 'Tis why we attract so many visitors. I'faith, sometimes the mornings by our bathroom are like Piccadilly Circus. A criss-cross of tantalising strangers. They love it, and so do I! Oo.

He winces slightly. A twinge.

FREDDIE You okay?

JACK Just an athletic night! Speaking of which, Fred, I'm in need.

FREDDIE Now?! We've got things to do.

JACK Yes I need to do something as well, quite urgently -

He tries to lead FREDDIE off to the bedroom

Jen - Fred and I might be a moment?

FREDDIE We've got people coming.

JACK I'll have *people coming* in about ten minutes if you -

FREDDIE It's important.

JACK (Pointing to himself.) Freddie, it's first thing in the morning! We are talking stick of fucking rock.

FREDDIE Look I'll suck you off later if you concentrate.

JACK On what?

FREDDIE It's in the house diary.

JACK What house diary?

FREDDIE On the side.

JACK What side?

FREDDIE Do you never listen?

JACK Just staring into those eyes...

FREDDIE You prefer that girl.

JACK Oh well yes I can't deny it.

FREDDIE I thought I - Hannah Tweetwell! That's her! She's well known in London PR circles as the ultimate social media consultant. Never tweets a thing herself, but knows all the scandal, all the strings. Advises everyone of import. And she was here!

JACK Indeed, in our very house. And what's wrong with scandal? Isn't that the very apex of life, to test its limits? To, with impulse and pleasure, create the very heavens here on earth

FREDDIE She might get someone to tweet about you.

JENNY I doubt it.

JACK Why not! I'm pretty scandalous aren't I?

JENNY You're debauched Jack but not scandalous because you have absolutely no shame. You stride through life believing you can somehow avoid consequence.

JACK Indeed. Life is short. I leave consequence to others!

JENNY Speaking of short, our list of three this morning has shrunk to one. His name is 'Steven'. An IT consultant from the north.

JACK The north?! Oh!

JENNY - I know and look, we don't have to go with him, but every week we have an empty room none of us can afford, we've rejected twenty-two people already.

FREDDIE That's mostly Jack's doing -

JENNY I augment our fairly earned cash best as I can but if we keep going, we'll run out, at which point we lose the flat. And as we are all without parents or back-up, that means at best a charitable sofa and at worst, the hardened street itself.

19: FREDDIE, JENNY, PHOEBE, MATT

PHOEBE (Aside.) I feel reborn! Of course I had often thought of women, but never realised it could result in such unalloyed and sticky joy as this! I'd wanted everything in such straight lines, but now Jenny has relaxed me, in so many ways, and through our intercourse both verbal and sexual, I see many curves and subtle shades. We're human! In the end. All of us. A unique mix, every one.

JENNY enters

JENNY You seem happy.

PHOEBE Indeed, 'twas one of the best nights of my life! I haven't slept at all, but I don't care! I'm full of possibility! I wish Jack was here. That I could speak to him...

JENNY I'm sure he'll turn up. But I still don't understand why you went to all this effort. Why didn't you just call him?

PHOEBE I've tried to call him now, but he doesn't answer. I want to tell him I get that our ethics are conditioned by the situation, and despite disagreeing perhaps we should spend some time together.

Enter FREDDIE

FREDDIE Morning!

He's followed by MATT. FREDDIE sits down. MATT goes to join him, then sees the women.

MATT Wait!

He tries to cover his face.

FREDDIE So this is my flatmate Jenny Hood. And this is – er – oh

JENNY Phoebe.

FREDDIE You've changed?!

PHOEBE So much.

FREDDIE Excellent!

MATT Frederick, I believe I had most clearly explained I could not reveal our most pleasurable endeavours to the world.

FREDDIE Them? They have no care! Ladies if anyone should ask about my consort here your lips must be most superglued.

JENNY Okay.

PHOEBE You have my word.

FREDDIE (To MATT.) See? Your secret's safe.

MATT cautiously reveals his face, then puts his hand out.

MATT In that case - Matt Eton, Secretary of State for Procurement.

PHOEBE Oh yes! I remember you from the briefings. I watched every day.

MATT Indeed - it was I that steered our national ship safely through the stormy viral seas.

PHOEBE Safely? Er - we had the highest death rate?

MATT Well I'm not sure international comparisons are –

PHOEBE And the greatest hit to our economy –

MATT Indeed these may be the facts, but our country moveth quickly on! And I think if we just talk about other things enough, we might all forget?

JENNY Freddie, I find this choice of partner... unusual for you.

PHOEBE Sir why are you so keen to hide?

MATT Ah well, in truth I'm happily married, with four young children, and most keen not to upset them, as it would take up so much time, but beyond that trifling concern I have a political career that will not be served by public knowledge of my infidelity.

JENNY But what if your wife found out?

MATT Oh then she'd wield her pen like a sword and disembowel me across the Mail on Sunday. But I'm hoping it's unlikely. Her brain's most dull these days, fogged I believe by hot yoga.

JENNY But you had a good time last night?

MATT Oh indeed. It was liberating, in so many ways!

JENNY Good.

MATT And revealing.

PHOEBE I bet.

FREDDIE And now Matt?

MATT Ah... Yes. And now I must resign.

JENNY You... what?

He starts emailing on his phone.

MATT Sweet youth, you are right to presume there was an initial frenzy of sexual endeavour, but Freddie made me promise to stay the night, which, as a man my word, I did, and then ,during that night, we talked, well *he* talked, and explained, and educated me in ways and worlds I had never imagined. I took it all in, and this morning, I am reborn.

PHOEBE Oh really? Excellent.

MATT As a Socialist! Red as the robin, Left as luggage.

PHOEBE Wow. Presumably your wife won't approve of that.

MATT Well, no that's true. Right, email composed. Gosh that's true about my wife...

His finger hovers over the button.

I'll... er... send it later, if that's alright?

FREDDIE But Matt, you promised.

MATT I did, and I will, you have my word. Very soon. But now, forgive me, for I must shower thoroughly, and attempt with hard Labour to cleanse this most Tory Trunk.

MATT goes off to the bathroom.

PHOEBE He's man divided. I fear not just for his wife and children, but himself. You know one cannot live for long with such a chasm in your soul.

JENNY Many have, and lived quite long. It's up to him.

The doorbell goes.

PHOEBE Aha! I know who this is.

JENNY Pray who? It's too early for a visitor.

PHOEBE In the middle of the night while you were asleep I decided I'd enough of the filth, and used an app to order forth a cleaner who would come and start the purge! Worry not, I have some savings and will pay for it myself.

She presses the buzzer.

Come up!

JENNY Haven't I persuaded you there's value in some d!rt? Not everything needs be clean - as well you did affirm last night!

PHOEBE goes to the door and opens it, in expectation of the cleaner.

PHOEBE Some dirt yes, and my sexuality may now be open, wine is cool, and ethics complicated, but none of that can help the fact this place is a stinking hole. And it will make a nice surprise for Jack when he returns. (Aside.) If he returns...

20: ROSALIND, SIR DENNIS, PETER MEDIA

ROSALIND Sir Dennis! We were conversing 'pon the steps we must make to diversify our industry. A subject that I am sure will be close to your heart.

SIR D Of course but I don't think we need to-

PETER We consider it an absolute priority. I think we both –

ROSALIND Yes both!

PETER We saw the Black Lives Matter movement

SIR D. No.

PETER And absolutely.

ROSALIND Absolutely!

PETER Absolutely felt the moment had come to do something. Our industry is so hideously white, and when I saw what was happening on the street.

SIR D. You saw it on the street? You mean you went out yourself and -

PETER No – God no, on the TV, obviously –

ROSALIND I took the knee right where I was watching it, right by my pool house. The cleaner, she was very impressed, I told her: quickly! Take a picture – for my knees aren't what they were - and eventually she managed it, stupid woman, and I put it on my Instagram in total solidarity.

SIR D. Forgive me, how long have you both been working in television?

PETER Ooooh twenty-five –

ROSALIND Thirty –

PETER Yes thirty years. We met when we were young. Cambridge!

ROSALIND Cambridge I'm afraid! Footlights!

PETER Footlights!

SIR D. Thirty years?

PETER Indeed yes, on and off.

SIR D. Yet you only thought it was time to do something last year?

PETER Well, yes. I mean that's when it all started wasn't it?

SIR D. Excuse me, I must be elsewhere.

ROSALIND But sir we've so much to ask you about your wealth of experience.

PETER And more importantly your experience of wealth.

SIR D. *Moving on.*) No. No, I'll never work with people like you. You're arrogant, lazy, entitled and unbelievably racist.

PETER Oh I know! We are! So massively racist!

21: ROSALIND, PETER, TOM

(Note that LADY CLIMBER and HANNAH are present in this scene but don't speak)

ROSALIND (To LADY CLIMBER) I cannot wait! And you've quite a platform yourself, I note your followers grow exponentially. I wondered if you'd thought about television? Hosting a talk show perhaps? Or something at breakfast on ITV?

TOM DOUBLE-BUDGET enters, dressed in casual clothes, and with a canvas man bag.

Oh excuse me - My son! Can't you see the style? Where's your costume?

TOM In the bag.

ROSALIND But why not on your person? I pulled every string to get you access to this event, and this is how you repay me, dressed as a layabout.

TOM Oh Mum...

ROSALIND You say you want to work in the media –

TOM Not the media, film –

ROSALIND - but how do you intend to do that when your actual mother gives you an opportunity anyone would die for and you throw it in her face?!

TOM I just don't think networking is how I'm going to make an impact.

PETER laughs.

Who is he?

PETER What kind of film, young man?

TOM I want to create documentaries about the world collaborate with interesting people, make a ' difference.

ROSALIND I'm sure you do, but who's going to pay for them?

TOM None of my heroes dress up or do things like that...

PETER And who, may I ask, are your heroes?

ROSALIND He adores Ken Loach.

PETER (Sniggers.) Oh my god! Really? If that's your plan, I'd get your costume on and get out there pronto young man!

ROSALIND Or go home.

He looks at her.

TOM Fine.

He goes off. ROSALIND turns back to PETER, HANNAH and LADY CLIMBER.

ROSALIND Twenty-two and still untouched...

PETER Unsurprising.

ROSALIND But you know, as his mother, I don't mind that at all. For despite everything I love him dearly, and I honestly dread him growing up and leaving home. Therefore if someone were to so much as graze his precious innocence... well... I don't know what I'd do. But it would probably involve legal action. Anyway. Exciting! I will be in touch tomorrow. I can see it now! 'Lady Climber Meets... ' Let's make this show!

PETER and ROSALIND move away.