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THE DUCHESS

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TITLE: **Althorp Estate, 1774**

CLOSE UP brush strokes on canvas, as an ARTIST paints a miniature portrait. It's a perfect English summer's day, birds singing, gentle breeze rustling in leaves.

Sunlight hits the face of a young, beautiful and content GEORGIANA, who is trying with difficulty to stay very still. She is his subject, and is being painted on the BACK LAWN of her home estate. The ARTIST is aware that she is itchy to move.

ARTIST

Nearly done...(politely) if her ladyship can hold on just a little longer.

GEORGIANA straightens her back and tries her best.

GEORGIANA

(Warmly)

My mother tells me you have recently painted the King...

ARTIST

That's correct.

GEORGIANA

Does he have difficulty keeping still, too?

The ARTIST smiles at her cheekiness. He carries on.

ARTIST

(Diplomatically)

I haven't yet come across anyone who finds it easy.

GEORGIANA

Oh? Who else have you been painting?

GEORGIANA smiles charmingly. The ARTIST is won over.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I promise I won't tell.

CUT TO:

In CLOSE UP, a quill pen dips into an ink well and starts to write up a LEGAL DOCUMENT on a virgin piece of white paper, 'The Fourteenth Day of May, Seventeen Hundred and Seventy Four...'

BURLEIGH, a solicitor, is at a table writing this document, his ink pen scraping against the paper. Around him, the room has the atmosphere of a serious occasion: still and dark although the sun shines brightly outside.

The DUKE, BURLEIGH's employer, is standing at the library window, looking into the garden at GEORGINA having her portrait painted, the image distorted through the wavy glass window pane.

LADY SPENCER is seated behind the DUKE, perched on the edge of a large leather sofa, with LORD SPENCER behind her.

LADY SPENCER
(Cautiously)
I trust your Grace still finds
her an attractive girl?

The DUKE turns and we now see his face properly. He is handsome, older than GEORGINA, and has a rakish twinkle in his eye. He looks at LADY SPENCER enigmatically.

DUKE
Of course, Lady Spencer.

LADY SPENCER
She is well-bred and devoted to
her duties. She speaks French,
Latin and Italian, and is fully
versed in horsemanship and
dancing...

DUKE
Yes, I am aware of all that. She
is a credit to you.

LADY SPENCER
...I can't think of anything in
Georgiana that would stand in the
way of a singularly happy
marriage -

The DUKE turns for a brief moment and smiles inscrutably at LADY SPENCER. BURLEIGH cuts to the chase.

BURLEIGH
These are not the issues that
burden the Duke, Lady Spencer.
His Grace won't come into his
inheritance until he produces a
male heir. On the other hand,
your daughter may expect a
handsome reward when that occurs -

DUKE
Thank you, Burleigh.

BURLEIGH
 (resuming his writing)
 Your Grace ...

The DUKE remains looking out of the window, not so much out of interest in GEORGIANA, but rather because he finds these pre-nuptial proceedings uncomfortable. LADY SPENCER throws a brief glance at LORD SPENCER, who seems disinclined to discuss these matters. She resolutely turns to the DUKE.

LADY SPENCER
 Your Grace can rest assured that a boy will be produced. The women in our family have never forfeited on that account.

LADY SPENCER smiles at her husband who nods back. BURLEIGH looks to the DUKE for confirmation, then decides to address his comment to no one in particular.

BURLEIGH
 Well in that case...

BURLEIGH turns the document around toward the others for them to look at. The DUKE smiles at them, then turns and fastidiously removes a spot on the window pane.

DUKE
 So be it, then.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. ALTHORPE - DAY

3

The ARTIST stands back. He has finished the portrait.

ARTIST
 There.

GEORGIANA jumps up and comes round to look at it, peering close at the two-inch picture.

GEORGIANA
 It's perfect.

ARTIST
 (Flattered)
 Splendid. I'll bring it to you when it's dry.

GEORGIANA
 (Young and impatient)
 Can I not take it now?

GEORGIANA smiles another winning smile.

GEORGINA (CONT'D)
I want to show Mama. Please.

ARTIST
Oh...well be very careful with
it...

CUT TO:

4 EXT. ALTHORP - DAY

4

GEORGINA walks back across the estate with the portrait, carefree and excited. When she sees LADY SPENCER exiting the main house and coming towards her she starts to run across the lawn.

GEORGINA
Mama! Mama!

LADY SPENCER comes out of the house.

GEORGINA (CONT'D)
Look at this! I'm going to wear
it as a pendant around my neck -
Mr Gresse says that's what Lady
Davenport does with hers...

LADY SPENCER smiles, holding in her secret.

LADY SPENCER
Very good, Georgiana. Although I
must say I have something rather
more important for you to
concentrate on than fashion.

GEORGINA looks at the portrait, a little dejected but intrigued nonetheless. LADY SPENCER pauses for dramatic effect. GEORGINA looks up.

GEORGINA
Yes?

LADY SPENCER
Rumour has it I shall very soon
be addressing my daughter as Her
Grace, the Duchess of Devonshire.

GEORGINA is taken wholly by surprise.

GEORGINA
Is it true, Mama?

LADY SPENCER
(Proudly)
It is.

GEORGIANA

The Duke of Devonshire ... He is
the handsomest man.

LADY SPENCER

And the most eligible. The
Devonshires rank among the very
first families of England.

GEORGIANA is thinking.

GEORGIANA

So he loves me?

LADY SPENCER

Yes, of course.

GEORGIANA

But he hardly knows me.

LADY SPENCER

You have met him twice. And when
one truly loves someone, one
doesn't have to know them well to
be certain, Georgiana. One feels
it right away.

GEORGIANA desperately wants this fairy tale to be true.

GEORGIANA

Yes...well if he didn't, he
wouldn't wish to spend the rest
of his life with me would he?

LADY SPENCER

Then there you are.

LADY SPENCER smiles and pauses, momentarily caught by a
different thought.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Dearest G, I have held onto you
for as long as I could. I am sure
I shall be lost without you.

GEORGIANA

But we will still see each other.

LADY SPENCER

Yes. And I do believe you will be
happy with the Duke.

GEORGIANA

I know I shall, Mama ... I know I
shall.

The camera moves in to a CLOSE UP of her optimistic face.

CUT TO:

5 INT. GREAT LONDON CHURCH - MORNING

5

CLOSE UP of GEORGINA'S face, same framing as before, but now heavily made up and in her BRIDAL DRESS, and looking ever so slightly petrified. Wedding music plays as she is walking forward down the aisle, accompanied by her father.

A high PLAN SHOT reveals that this church is packed with people. GEORGINA continues to walk, her eyes flicking from side to side to take them in: all the important members of society, even the King and Queen. Journalists and sketchers are busy scribbling away from the back. All eyes are fixed on the couple at the front.

GEORGINA looks nervous - as well she may - within this massively daunting environment, as if she wasn't prepared to be thrust into the limelight in such a dramatic way.

Near the front she passes LADY SPENCER who looks incredibly proud. When GEORGINA finally reaches THE DUKE, he looks composed. She smiles at him.

Credits are superimposed throughout this sequence, until the main title appears as GEORGINA stands at the front:

THE DUCHESS

CUT TO:

6 INT. GREAT LONDON CHURCH - LATER THAT MORNING

6

The marriage ceremony itself is underway. A MINISTER quotes Genesis, his voice booming loudly across the space:

MINISTER

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee..."

The DUKE looks impatiently at the MINISTER, evidently annoyed that the ceremony is taking so long.

CUT TO:

7

INT. ANNEX. GREAT LONDON CHURCH - MORNING

7

GEORGIANA, the DUKE, the minister, and the few guests exit the main building and come into an annex to sign the register.

THE DUKE

I had no idea that it would take so long.

MINISTER

The ritual must be observed, your Grace, sir.

THE DUKE

By all means, although I fail to see why... well, now it's over. At long last.

The DUKE smiles calmly at GEORGIANA and takes her hand. She smiles blissfully back at him. The FAMILY MEMBERS step forward to congratulate the couple, although the DUKE now seems slightly distant.

CUT TO:

8

EXT. LONDON STREET - AFTERNOON

8

It's a wide and busy London street. There are ORDINARY PEOPLE on the side of it, TRAFFIC kicking up dust. It's a messy mass of noise and smells.

Through the middle of this comes the DUKE'S GILT COACH followed by two other COACHES, in stark contrast to their surroundings. Heads turn to look at this eighteenth century motorcade, and the famous people inside.

CUT TO:

9

I/E. DUKE'S GILT COACH. LONDON STREET - AFTERNOON

9

Still in her wedding dress, GEORGIANA sits alongside the DUKE in his CARRIAGE. There's an awkward silence. Finally,

DUKE

Here we are.

As the CARRIAGE nears a set of massive gates a large group of THE GENERAL PUBLIC can be seen waiting outside. When they see the carriage these people start waving. The DUKE waves back, out of duty. GEORGIANA looks bemused.

GEORGIANA

What do they want?

DUKE

To see me. And my new wife, of course.

GEORGIANA

Oh.

DUKE

It's a damn bother, but you'll get used to it. Comes with the job, I'm afraid.

GEORGIANA, however, smiles and gives a little wave: she doesn't mind at all.

CUT TO:

10 I/E. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

10

The CARRIAGE turns off the street and through the massive gateway. The gates are locked behind them.

Inside the huge courtyard Devonshire House is revealed as an oversized, stark and austere building. A wall runs all the way around it, blocking the view and completes the foreboding sense of arriving in a prison.

SERVANTS are formally lined up to greet them. They bow and curtsey as GEORGIANA walks past, averting eye contact.

SERVANT 1

Your Grace.

SERVANT 2

Your Grace.

The DUKE strides off ahead. GEORGIANA follows him into a massive ENTRANCE HALL the size of small aircraft hanger.

DUKE (O.S.)

This way.

CUT TO:

11 INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

11

GEORGIANA stands in front of the DUKE who is sitting on the bed, about to undress her. He awkwardly unfastens her skirt and lets it fall to the floor. She smiles at him in excitement, a bit nervous. She tries to caress him, and leans forward to kiss him.

THE DUKE

Erm, stay where you are, please...

GEORGIANA straightens herself up. The DUKE proceeds to take off her clothes.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)
I take it this is all quite new to
you?

GEORGIANA
Yes...very.

THE DUKE
Well, don't worry. You're in safe
hands.

GEORGIANA remains standing and looks up at the ceiling, while the DUKE proceeds to remove the rest of her garments - with some difficulty.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)
For the life of me I don't
understand why women's attire
must be so damned complicated. I
swear I'd pay a million pounds to
whomever can provide me with an
answer.

GEORGIANA
I suppose it's just our way of
expressing ourselves.

THE DUKE
Whatever do you mean?

GEORGIANA
Well, that you have so many ways
of expressing yourselves, whereas
we must make do with our hats and
our dresses, I suppose.

THE DUKE
Hmmm.

The corset gives the DUKE some trouble, and he pulls it off giving GEORGIANA a fierce jolt. Suddenly, she is completely naked. She sends the DUKE an uneasy look. For a moment he appears to be lost in his thoughts, just staring at her.

GEORGIANA
Is something the matter?

THE DUKE
No. No, not in the least. Lie down
on your back, please.

The DUKE gets up and starts to undress. Around him the faces of his forefathers bear down from the massive portraits crammed onto the walls of his bedroom.

The DUKE, now naked, walks over to the bed and stands before her. The camera is behind the DUKE and focussed on GEORGIANA: having never seen a penis before let alone an erect one, she is intently and nervously staring at his.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)
(Bending down)
Kiss me.

GEORGIANA kisses him. He lies down on top of her and penetrates her, the look on her face suggesting this is not a very pleasurable experience. The DUKE pumps away while GEORGIANA wonders what all the fuss is about, all the time watched intensely by dozens of his male ancestors' eyes.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DAY - EST

12

Sunshine beats down against this stark, massive building. Workers are busy sweeping, cleaning, tending horses etc.

CUT TO:

13 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - AFTERNOON

13

GEORGIANA sits reading a newspaper. The headline is 'Society Welcomes The New Duchess', and underneath is a caricatured sketch of Georgiana in her wedding dress. The room she's in is huge - two storeys high, flanked by drawing rooms of equal size, and leading to an anteroom and dining rooms - and she looks isolated and lonely.

A SERVANT enters and walks across the vastness toward her. Georgiana puts the paper down.

SERVANT
Lady Spencer is arrived, Your Grace.

GEORGIANA
Oh, thank you.

CUT TO:

14 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - DAY

14

GEORGIANA sits with LADY SPENCER, in another massive room. They are playing cards, as they've always done, and talking.

LADY SPENCER
...One has to accept one's responsibility, my darling.
(MORE)

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Certain obligations come with
marriage, no matter how burdensome
they may seem.

GEORGIANA

Yes, but when we are together,
intimately, I mean, he...

LADY SPENCER

I know; it can be a bother.
However, it is only until you
have given him a son. With luck
the occasions will then become
fewer, and less... determined.

Lady Spencer places down a card.

GEORGIANA

I think it would feel different if
he might talk to me every once in a
while. It's not that he's unkind
but he never talks to me.

LADY SPENCER

Well, perhaps you ought to talk
less - just be there for him. I
fear you may have had a little too
much education.

GEORGIANA

How can one ever have *too much*?

LADY SPENCER

(Cutting in)

You make boring conversation and
ask questions which a man is
disinclined to answer.

GEORGIANA looks at her mother in resignation.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Learning these things takes time,
too, my darling. Marriage is not
like languages or music or
painting. It requires a longer
apprenticeship.

GEORGIANA

Yes. But he is... he is not at all
as when I first met him. I thought
he would be like Papa. Under his
cool reserve I would find a wealth
of depth and sentiment. But he
doesn't seem interested in
anything. Apart from his dogs.

LADY SPENCER

Try not to be too hard on him, G.
He is merely intent on producing a
boy. As for talking - whatever is
there to talk about, my dear?

GEORGIANA

No, you're right. How foolish of me
to think that I should be able to
converse with my husband.

LADY SPENCER sighs and looks at her spirited daughter.

LADY SPENCER

Trust me, G. Brace yourself with
patience and try to look outside
your marriage for your
entertainment. A male heir will
come soon enough, then you'll
see.

GEORGIANA nods. She sends her mother a polite little smile.

CUT TO:

15

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

15

A great, noisy dinner party. WHIGS in full gala, among
which is CHARLES FOX, a stout little man making a speech in
the grand room. Everybody listens to him.

GEORGIANA is by his side, her attire conspicuously more
daring than before. She looks apprehensive: the room is
dominated by alcohol and testosterone-fuelled MEN.
GEORGIANA, though, pays attention to FOX. The DUKE, at the
other end of the table, does not.

FOX

...a political party, in my
definition, consists of men of
honour, entertaining similar
principles that may be more
successfully pursued by the force
of mutual support and, not to
forget, the unfailing generosity of
his Grace the Duke of Devonshire.

Everybody looks to the DUKE, applauding loudly and somewhat
sycophantically. The DUKE nods cordially.

FOX (CONT'D)

So between the persistence of my
own humble self...

Everybody laughs again, including GEORGIANA, thus betraying
that nobody finds Fox humble. FOX, pleased with the success
of his joke, joins in the laughter.

FOX (CONT'D)

I say, between my persistence and the Duke's purse, we must always remember the honourable and principle aims of the Whig party, aims that some consider quite radical but which, to us, seem simply just and right and sensible. Just to bring independence to America. Right to end the slave trade. And sensible to pursue freedom for all, so that the blessings of this blessed plot, this England, may be more equally enjoyed.

All these are greeted by 'hear hears' from the room, and a deep thoughtfulness from GEORGINA.

FOX (CONT'D)

And so - having kept everyone from the burgundy long enough - let me propose a toast to our host and benefactor his Grace, the Duke and his charming and beautiful new Duchess.

They all shout "hear, hear" and reach for their glasses. In the midst of all the commotion, the DUKE seems more eager to resume his chat with an obliging lady at his side.

FOX sits down at GEORGINA's side. The murmur of small talk rises as the guests carry on with their eating and drinking. The LADY on the other side of FOX compliments his speech.

LADY

Excellent speech, Mr. Fox,
splendid.

FOX

I thank you. However, it is always easy to address a congregation of friends, and even more so when those friends are drunk.

The LADY and GEORGINA smile.

LADY

How did the Duchess find Mr. Fox's speech?

GEORGINA

I must confess I am not yet at ease with political speeches. Their very form tends to obstruct my view to their actual meaning - if such there be.

Fox, expecting inane flattery, is surprised, although favourably impressed by GEORGINA's candour. The LADY, not observing that GEORGINA has earned FOX's undivided attention, proceeds to think that she is still part of the conversation:

LADY

I myself have no head for politics...

FOX ignores her. He knows who he wants to talk to.

FOX

In which particular section of the speech did the message elude your Grace?

GEORGINA

Well, I have great sympathy with your sentiments in general, but fail fully to comprehend how far we - the Whig party, that is - are fully committed to the concept of freedom.

FOX

We would like to see the vote extended...

GEORGINA

To all men...?

FOX

Heavens no. But certainly to *more* men. Freedom, in moderation.

GEORGINA

"Freedom in moderation"?

FOX

(Pleased with himself)

Precisely.

GEORGINA nods, then smiles faintly, but mischievously.

GEORGINA

I am sure you are full of the best intentions, Mr. Fox, but I dare say I would not spend my vote - assuming I had it - on so vague a statement. Either one is free or one is not. The concept of freedom is an absolute. After all, one cannot be moderately dead, moderately loved, or moderately free. It must always remain a matter of either or.

Fox smiles at GEORGINA in surprise.

GEORGINA (CONT'D)

(Cheeky)

It is no wonder you are having
such problems at the ballot box.

GEORGINA smiles, winningly. Fox scrutinizes her face, not a little shocked but clearly impressed.

Another well-dressed MAN taps his glass and rises to speak. The room falls silent.

MAN

I think it's appropriate to say a
few words...

The DUKE seems in no mood for another speech, and resolutely gets up and leaves. The entire company, including the MAN about to make a speech, look bewildered at one another.

GEORGINA, too, is surprised and doesn't really know what she should do, so she jumps up and goes after the DUKE.

CUT TO:

16 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - AT THE STAIRCASE - NIGHT 16

The DUKE is on his way up the staircase. GEORGINA exits the room behind him, trying to catch up.

GEORGINA

William?

He turns and looks at her.

GEORGINA (CONT'D)

Is anything the matter?

DUKE

No...

GEORGINA

You just left?

DUKE

Well... I had done eating. And those damn speeches bore me to distraction. We have to ban them in the future.

GEORGINA

But you are the Whigs main
supporter...

DUKE

I have no problem with politics,
it's the rhetoric I can't stand.

The DUKE turns back and continues up the stairs.

GEORGIANA

So...shall I come with you?

DUKE

Not at all, why ever should you?
Just go back in and have some fun.

The DUKE turns and leaves. GEORGIANA looks at him, bemused.

CUT TO:

17

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

17

GEORGIANA re-enters the dining room. The conversation has stopped, everyone fearful their benefactor is aggrieved for some reason. GEORGIANA walks back to her place. All the men look to her for reassurance. She turns to FOX.

GEORGIANA

The Duke is fine. He simply wants
to rest a while.

People nearby nod. The news quickly makes its way down the table and the conversations resume. FOX looks at her.

FOX

Was it the length of the speech
that got the better of the Duke?

GEORGIANA

(Wry, flirtatious)

Certainly not. He enjoyed it
immensely and expressed a hope that
next time it would be even longer.

Fox sends her a look. She smiles back at him, reaches out for a drink and takes a long swig. The LADY leans over.

LADY

The dress you are wearing is made
of a fascinating fabric, Duchess.

GEORGIANA

(Quick off the mark)

Thank you. Canton Crepe, a bit
heavier than crepe de chine.
They've developed an entirely new
dyeing technique, which produces
the most incredible nuances...

CUT TO:

18

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - HALL - LATE NIGHT

18

Late night, and all the guests have left. GEORGIANA walks through the massive hall where a SERVANT is about to extinguish the candles on the huge candelabra.

GEORGIANA

Good night, Miss Horsham.

Surprised to be acknowledged in such a way by her superior, the SERVANT curtsies. GEORGIANA proceeds upstairs.

CUT TO:

19

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOM - NIGHT 19

GEORGIANA passes quietly down more vast candlelit hallways and staircases in this massive house.

GEORGIANA walks towards their bedroom. She hears a noise. Then a door opens and a SERVANT GIRL comes running out. She is half naked, carrying her clothes in her arms. She looks at GEORGIANA in alarm, and runs down the corridor in the opposite direction.

GEORGIANA looks at her, shocked and speechless, as she disappears off into the darkness. Georgiana turns and proceeds toward the bedroom.

CUT TO:

20

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

20

In the bedroom the DUKE is sitting naked on the bed. GEORGIANA stops at a distance.

GEORGIANA

What is going on?

DUKE

Come over to me.

There is an empty bottle by the Duke's side. He is clearly drunk. GEORGIANA approaches, unnerved.

GEORGIANA

What have you been doing?

DUKE

Nothing to concern you.

He smiles at her, kisses her.

GEORGIANA

Wait, William. I don't understand...

DUKE

What is there to understand?

GEORGIANA is lost for words.

DUKE (CONT'D)

You look very beautiful tonight.
Is this dress your design?

GEORGIANA

Thank you. Yes it is.

DUKE

Then allow me to appreciate it in
more detail.

The DUKE kisses her breasts and proceeds to remove her clothes. GEORGIANA, with a desire to do the right thing, acquiesces.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - AFTERNOON - EST

21

Time has passed. Months. The season has changed from summer to autumn, with wind in the trees and leaves on the ground, which workmen are busy collecting.

CUT TO:

22 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DRESSING ROOM - AFTERNOON

22

GEORGIANA is designing clothes on a piece of paper, flamboyant dresses with massive trains and headdresses.

Two MAIDS come in. One holds a newspaper.

GEORGIANA

Yes?

MAID#1

We thought you might like to see
this, your Grace.

GEORGIANA

Oh? What does it say?

MAID#1 nods to MAID#2: the one who can read.

MAID#2

The conduct of the young,
beauteous and virtuous Duchess of
Devonshire is a pattern worthy of
imitation; and in her dress a
Standard may be expected to be
given to the Fashion.

GEORGIANA is flattered. She hands her drawings to her MAID.

GEORGIANA

Thank you, ladies. Would you give
these drawings to the seamstress.
Let's see what effect they have.

The MAIDS smile. GEORGIANA then stands up to reveal she is
obviously pregnant. She gently strokes her stomach.

CUT TO:

23

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

23

GEORGIANA and the DUKE sit together in a gigantic dining room
at a very long table. SERVANTS are discreetly serving food
and wine. They eat in silence.

A BUTLER emerges to whisper something into the ear of the
DUKE. He understands the message and nods.

THE DUKE

Send her in...

The BUTLER exits. GEORGIANA looks at him.

GEORGIANA

Are we having company?

The DUKE chews his food and swallows before he replies.

THE DUKE

Yes, we are. Don't you think this
mutton has a funny taste?

GEORGIANA

Not really, no...

THE DUKE

Well, I do...

The BUTLER enters with a NANNY holding a little three-year-old girl, CHARLOTTE, by the hand. The girl is very nervous. The DUKE looks at them, then at GEORGIANA.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

This is Charlotte. She will be
staying with us.

GEORGIANA looks at the little girl who remains absolutely still. Then she looks at the DUKE.

GEORGIANA

Why...?

The DUKE signals to the BUTLER that they can leave the room, upon which the BUTLER leads the NANNY and Charlotte out.

THE DUKE

Because her mother is dead. She has
no other place to go.

GEORGIANA looks in disbelief at the DUKE. The penny drops:

GEORGIANA

Have you fathered that child?

THE DUKE

It's only a little girl, Georgiana,
hardly the end of the world.

The DUKE sends a suspicious look at the mutton before him. He looks up again, only to find that GEORGIANA is still staring at him. He takes a tiny bite of the mutton, examining its taste as if he suspected poison, during which he continues:

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

We have a house full of vacant
rooms, G. She need not bother you.
As a matter of fact, she may even
be of use; you can practice your
motherhood on her...

(gesturing at her
stomach)

...until our son arrives.

GEORGIANA looks at him with vacant eyes as he continues tasting his mutton.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

This certainly doesn't taste like
normal mutton. I am sure something
is the matter with it.

The DUKE pushes his plate away and smiles at her.

CUT TO:

24

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CHILDREN'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING 24

GEORGIANA pauses outside the room in which the nanny is putting CHARLOTTE to bed for the night. She hears sobbing coming from inside.

GEORGIANA pushes open the door a little to catch a look at the little girl, not knowing if she dares enter. The NANNY catches sight of her and makes a curtsy.

NANNY

Your Grace, I didn't see you.

GEORGIANA

Would you leave us, please.

The NANNY looks nervously at GEORGIANA, not knowing whether she ought to leave.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
...leave us, please...

The NANNY scurries out of the room. GEORGIANA sits down on CHARLOTTE's bed. CHARLOTTE is hiding her face, still sobbing. She reaches for her doll, as if it was threatened by GEORGIANA's presence and she means to rescue it.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
(Softly)
I am Georgiana. What's your name?

CHARLOTTE makes no reply. GEORGIANA smiles at her. She can see that she is trembling and gently puts her hand on her shoulder to calm her.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Shh, there now, you are safe here
...so what do you call your doll?

CHARLOTTE
... nothing ...

GEORGIANA
Surely, it must have a name. Every doll must have a name.

CHARLOTTE stares at her in silence.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Let us make a deal, then. Tonight you decide on a name for your doll. You may choose between any in the whole wide world, and then, in the morning, you tell me which one you've picked.

Charlotte nods slowly. GEORGIANA rises and turns to leave.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)
Alice.

GEORGIANA turns back to Charlotte and smiles.

GEORGIANA
Good night then Alice. And good night Charlotte.

CUT TO:

MUSICIANS are playing in the foyer. It's winter outside and GUESTS arrive in fur coats which they shed at the door.

GEORGIANA - dressed amazingly - receives people with smiles, and poses as a newspaper sketcher draws her from the corner of the room. Her belly is gigantic - she is in the very last stage of pregnancy. FOX arrives with the flushed and flashy RICHARD SHERIDAN. He looks at her.

SHERIDAN

An inch more, and I do believe your Grace will explode.

FOX

Sheridan certainly knows how to pay a compliment.

GEORGIANA smiles.

GEORGIANA

There are still a few more weeks to wait.

SHERIDAN

I'm starved. Shall we carry you to the table?

CUT TO:

26

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

26

They walk slowly to the table. FOX detects that GEORGIANA is sweating a bit.

FOX

Are you all right? You are not too cold, or too hot?

GEORGIANA

No no, everything's perfectly all right...

FOX smiles at her and once again contemplates the vastness of her belly.

FOX

A huge belly has never been more becoming on anyone.

GEORGIANA smiles.

SHERIDAN

And Fox here offers an expert opinion, seeing, as he does, a giant belly every time he passes a mirror.

SHERIDAN leans against FOX in affected confidentiality.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
If your belly were on a woman, we'd
all know what to think.

FOX leans against SHERIDAN in imitation of his act.

FOX
My dear Sheridan, less than an hour
ago, my belly *was* on a woman - so
now what do you think?

SHERIDAN
Touché.

GEORGIANA delights in the risky repartee.

GEORGIANA
That'll teach you to insult Mr. Fox
before we have even sat down.

FOX
As a Whig, I cannot blame a man for
speaking the truth. However, your
belly, Duchess, will be gone before
we know it. Mine may remain a
little longer.

All three laugh. They have reached the table. GEORGIANA
sits down. FOX and SHERIDAN sit next to her. Suddenly
GEORGIANA stiffens as she feels a sharp pain. She gasps and
looks at them in alarm.

SHERIDAN
Are you certain that you are all
right?

GEORGIANA
Yes...

Another dart of pain. GEORGIANA is in anguish.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
I would like to...

Another shooting pain. By now, FOX, SHERIDAN, and several of
the other guests have jumped to their feet to help her out.

The DUKE notices the turmoil.

DUKE
Are those labour pains? My wife is
in labour!

The DUKE now raises his glass and addresses the guests. He
looks genuinely excited.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I think this calls for a toast. I
may have an heir before this dinner
is over.

He toasts. EVERYBODY joins in the toast and some cheer, save
those who are helping GEORGIANA out of the room.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

27

The house is quiet. All the guests have left. A cab arrives
and Lady Spencer gets out. She hurries inside.

CUT TO:

28 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

28

LADY SPENCER steps into the room, still dressed in her cape.
A SERVANT follows her and receives her cape.

The DUKE is sitting in the library, very depressed. LADY
SPENCER is shown in.

LADY SPENCER

Your Grace -

THE DUKE

I'm in no mood for conversation,
I'm afraid.

LADY SPENCER

But, pray tell, is my daughter -

THE DUKE

Is your daughter at all able to
give me a son?

Beat, as LADY SPENCER takes in the situation and quickly
contemplates her response.

LADY SPENCER

Take heart, your Grace. As long as
the mother is in good health,
consider this mishap a draft, a
promise of what is soon to come. In
our family -

THE DUKE

Yes, yes -

LADY SPENCER stops as the DUKE waves her away, in a gesture
which roughly signals that the DUKE appreciates her efforts
to comfort him, but is too troubled to talk. LADY SPENCER
smiles politely and leaves.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)
 (muttering)
 Hell and damnation ...

The DUKE puts his head in hands. He is deeply troubled.

CUT TO:

29 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT 29

LADY SPENCER enters a big room in which GEORGIANA lies exhausted. She musters a smile as she approaches her daughter.

LADY SPENCER
 Darling, how are you?

GEORGIANA
 Fine.

LADY SPENCER sends her a warm smile and steps up to look at the baby sleeping in GEORGIANA's arms.

LADY SPENCER
 ...and is she well and healthy?

GEORGIANA nods and smiles.

GEORGIANA
 She is perfect.

LADY SPENCER smiles and looks at the girl.

LADY SPENCER
 She looks just like you...

GEORGIANA
 Did William receive you?

LADY SPENCER
 Yes.

GEORGIANA
 Was he upset that it wasn't a son? He just glanced at her briefly and left.

LADY SPENCER
 It's been a long night for him, too. Men don't know how to handle these things, my dear. (Looks at the baby) Why, she's the loveliest...

GEORGIANA looks at the baby with LADY SPENCER, seeming to think that this makes it all worth while. The baby starts to wake up, hungry and crying.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Nurse...

Lady Spencer gestures to the WET NURSE to come forward which she does, unbuttoning her shirt to feed.

GEORGIANA

(Firmly)

No, I will do it, thank you.

The wet nurse looks to Lady Spencer.

LADY SPENCER

Darling, are you sure...?

GEORGIANA

Yes, I am her mother after all.

Georgiana is already starting to feed her hungry baby from her breast, a picture of earthy motherhood in stark contrast to the pomp of her surroundings.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

30

It's a busy and affluent London street. There are carriages going either way, and people walking to and fro.

A carriage pulls up and the GEORGIANA and the DUKE get out. People stop to look at her and point. GEORGIANA sends a wave back as the DUKE walks straight on.

CUT TO:

31 INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY - DAY

31

DR. GRAHAM, a society quack, is meeting with The DUKE and GEORGIANA. He consults a file.

DR. GRAHAM

Do either of you have any reason to believe you cannot birth a male?

GEORGIANA

We've no reason to suspect otherwise.

DUKE

Except that we've been going at it forever with nothing to show for it. ... Four miscarriages, two still births - both of which were sons - and one girl ...

GEORGIANA looks down, upset.

DR. GRAHAM

Your Grace, your time usually falls
within the fortnight, is that so?

GEORGIANA

(embarrassed)

Yes.

DR. GRAHAM

Well. Nature can be a bit
laggardly. Let us see what science
can accomplish.

Georgiana looks apprehensive.

CUT TO:

32

INT. DR. GRAHAM'S ELECTRIC BED CHAMBER - DAY

32

FOUR ASSISTANTS stand behind WIRED-UP COPPER TURBINES,
ready to turn the cranks. A STRING QUARTET sits nearby. DR
GRAHAM tinkers with the machinery.

Adjacent to this is a high-chambered room with a COPPER BED
in the middle connected to the WIRES with the words BE
FRUITFUL, MULTIPLY AND REPLENISH THE EARTH above it.

GEORGIANA and the DUKE are on the bed, under a sheet, ready
to make love. They look nervous and awkward. Outside the
room, Dr Graham cues the quartet and assistants. The
turbines whirl and the quartet plays a beautiful and
haunting Scarlatti tune. Pistons pump and the bed begins to
move up and down in rhythm with the music. The music
carries over into the following sequences...

CUT TO:

33

I/E. GILT COACHES. DAY - EARLY SUMMER

33

Close up on the face of a three year old girl, HARRYO,
sitting in a GILT COACH: 'science' has clearly not been
successful. HARRYO sits opposite GEORGIANA - now four years
older - and between CHARLOTTE, now aged 10, and G (4).

In the second COACH the DUKE sits alone and in silence,
staring out of the windows at the passing countryside. He
has also aged four years.

The music continues...

CUT TO:

34 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

34

A very wide shot of the empty English countryside, with the train of GILT COACHES mid-frame, glinting in the sunshine. TWO MORE COACHES follow, laden with STAFF and LUGGAGE.

The music continues...

CUT TO:

35 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

35

The COACHES clatter past a small country village. All the LOCALS stand on the side of the road and watch. Small children run with the train, like Third World kids following an aid truck. GEORGINA leans out of her window and waves to them, touching their hands and saying 'hello'.

The music continues...

CUT TO:

36 EXT. THE TOWN OF BATH - DAY

36

The COACHES pass camera to reveal a view of BATH and the road leading into it. In Bath itself the COACHES pass by the Royal Crescent, then proceed down a long road with a MASSIVE VILLA at the end of it. Passersby stop and stare.

The music continues...

CUT TO:

37 EXT. GEORGINA'S RENTED HOUSE - BATH - DAY - LATER

37

THE FIRST COACH stops in front of the MASSIVE VILLA. SERVANTS open the door of the COACH. The DUKE steps out followed by GEORGINA and the THREE GIRLS.

The music stops.

CUT TO:

38 INT. GEORGINA'S RENTED HOUSE FOYER - DAY

38

The FOYER alone is fabulous, spacious, sparkling. The DUKE surveys the place. Finally he sighs, as if it's a bad motel.

DUKE

Well. It'll have to do. It's only
for a month.

The DUKE goes o.s. GEORGINA nods to her CHILDREN and they run in full of excitement and energy.

CUT TO:

39

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE NURSERY - NIGHT

39

GEORGINA finishes reading a story to the THREE GIRLS.

LITTLE G

Can we have another one, Mama?

GEORGINA

Not tonight. I have to get ready.
And I fear it may take some time.

CHARLOTTE

(Excited)

What will you be wearing?

GEORGINA

I have a little something in mind. I'll show you all in the morning.

GEORGINA kisses them all good night.

CUT TO:

40

I/E. A LARGE BATH VILLA - THAT NIGHT

40

There's a massive party inside. A FOOTMAN stands in front of the entrance and addresses the crowd.

FOOTMAN (O.S.)

The Duke and Duchess of Devonshire!

GEORGINA and the DUKE enter. All heads turn - toward her. There's a hushed 'wow' as everyone takes in GEORGINA'S extraordinary appearance: she wears a HUGE, THREE FOOT ADORNED WIG with an OSTRICH FEATHER inserted into it. She beams at the crowd, the total centre of attention. The Duke looks uncomfortable next to her.

GEORGINA

We come away to Bath to get away from London and all of London has come away to Bath.

THE GROUP laugh. GEORGINA has come alive. The DUKE forces a smile as his wife disappears into the crowd.

CUT TO:

41

INT. BATH VILLA BALLROOM - NIGHT - LATER

41

Leading Whig SIR JAMES HARE addresses the crowd.

SIR JAMES HARE

It is always a delight, when one is on holiday, to request a few words of wisdom. So without further ado it is my great honour to hand over to our distinguished guest...

We see the DUKE. Does HARE mean him?

SIR JAMES HARE (CONT'D)

...the Empress of Fashion herself
...The Duchess of Devonshire.

There is laughter from the CROWD. GEORGIANA relishes it.

SIR JAMES HARE (CONT'D)

When she appears, every eye is turned towards her; when absent, she is the subject of universal conversation; and what we see her wearing tonight, I look forward to seeing the rest of you wearing tomorrow.

The CROWD laugh and applaud. The DUKE claps softly. When it's over GEORGIANA stands up:

GEORGIANA

I always appreciate Sir James' introductions. He has a jeweller's wit; whenever he turns a phrase, one finds another facet.

There are chuckles from the CROWD. GEORGIANA, looking confident, strokes the feather in her hair.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

And as he generously suggests, somebody did indeed ask me earlier what kind of feather it is I'm wearing. Well, only two specimens of this rare species of bird are known to man. One of them has clearly ended up on top of my head. The other, rumour has it, is running for office in the Tory party.

There is great laughter. The DUKE, jealous perhaps, seems disinterested.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

But let me be fair to our friends on the Opposition, for they have always known what they believe in: King's never wrong, Britain never fails, the world is ours for the taking. *Their* problem is that these things belong to the past.

There are 'hear hears' from the room. GEORGIANA looks to the side of the room and sees that the DUKE is now courting a young blushing BEAUTY. He whispers into her ear, and she laughs immoderately. GEORGIANA carries on regardless.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Us Whigs, however, belong to the future. We want more respect for the rights of men and less for the rights of property. *Our* problem is that all the men who vote own property.

EVERYBODY laughs.

CUT TO:

42

INT. BATH VILLA - BALLROOM - NIGHT

42

HIGH TEMPO MUSIC is being played by some MUSICIANS. Many people are dancing energetically on the floor - especially GEORGIANA who is in the middle of a group of admirers: on a high and basking in the attention.

GEORGIANA is an expert dancer, moving from one male partner to the next. The CAMERA follows the feather on her head standing high over everyone as she twirls around the room, like a sharks fin jutting out above the water line.

All eyes are upon her: COURT REPORTERS in the corner try to sketch it; men look on from the sides with barely disguised sexual interest; women look at her dress, the feather, and then their husbands' reactions.

The DUKE, however, stands at the side, pretending only to be half-watching. GEORGIANA is spurred on by his indifference, and as the dancing progresses, she begins to show off and flirt in inverse proportion to it.

GEORGIANA then loses herself in the dancing until...She glances up to see the DUKE talking to another prey - a beautiful young woman in a dark dress, BESS FOSTER.

GEORGIANA now sees BESS evidently rejecting the ducal overtures and leaving the room.

Rejection is a new experience for the DUKE, and he is appropriately taken aback, as is GEORGIANA. The DUKE's eyes stay on BESS as she leaves into the next room. GEORGIANA stops dancing.

GEORGIANA
(To her partner)
Excuse me...

GEORGIANA turns and walks away from the DANCERS.

CUT TO:

43 INT. SALON - NIGHT

43

BESS is helping herself to some food from the sideboard. She is about to take a bite of a tart when she sees GEORGIANA, staring. BESS returns the stare, bites the tart, and chews.

GEORGIANA
I don't believe we have been
formally introduced?

BESS
I haven't, at any rate. Bess
Foster.

They greet each other.

GEORGIANA
I saw you in the ballroom.

BESS nods.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Why did you decline the Duke's
invitation?

BESS
I'm ill at ease with male company
for the moment. Not that I've come
across any real males tonight...

GEORGIANA laughs. BESS smiles back at her. GEORGIANA looks at BESS, sizing up this beautiful girl.

CUT TO:

44 INT. SMALL ROOM OFF THE BALLROOM. NIGHT - LATER

44

GEORGIANA and BESS sit quite formally on either end of a settee as the party continues in the other room. GEORGIANA watches BESS with great interest.

GEORGIANA
What are you doing here?

BESS

(no shame whatsoever)

My husband, Mr. Foster, is enjoying his mistress in Bournemouth, and I wanted some diversion. Why are you in Bath?

GEORGIANA

(hedges)

The Duke is taking the waters for his gout.

BESS

Well it certainly isn't water that has put him in such a passionate mood.

GEORGIANA

Was he? I can't imagine the Duke being passionate.

BESS

Well, that explains.

GEORGIANA

Explains what?

GEORGIANA guesses what's to come. BESS barrels on.

BESS

(imitating gossip)

"The Duchess of D., married how-many-years and still no son and heir."

GEORGIANA is taken aback. People don't speak to her like that and she finds it refreshing and attractive.

BESS (CONT'D)

I beg your pardon - no offence.

GEORGIANA

None taken.

GEORGIANA smiles and moves closer to BESS on the sofa. She lowers her voice in a conspiratorial way. It's almost as if they are flirting with each other.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Although I had hoped to avoid being reminded of that. If only tonight.

BESS

I apologize. Trust me to say something silly. I always do, you know.

GEORGIANA

Then perhaps you should have accepted the Duke's invitation. You would have gotten on like a house on fire...

BESS does not know if she is allowed to laugh. She looks at GEORGIANA and smiles. Then they both laugh. There is a real connection here, two lost people who have found each other.

The DUKE enters the room, nibbling at a chicken drumstick. He seems to dislike the taste, looks at the drumstick and throws it.

DUKE

Too bad... well... Home, I think.
Georgiana.

He turns to leave, throwing a puzzled look at the drumstick on the floor. GEORGIANA and BESS look at him as he leaves. Then GEORGIANA gets up.

GEORGIANA

Where are you staying?

BESS

I've rented some rooms in town.

GEORGIANA

We must meet again.

BESS

We must.

CUT TO:

45

EXT./INT. THE DUKE'S CARRIAGE-NIGHT-LATER

45

The DUKE sits on the seat of the carriage. GEORGIANA, however, has to sit on the floor to make room for the ostrich feather that's still on top of her head.

CUT TO:

46

INT. GEORGIANA'S BATH VILLA - UPPER HALL -NIGHT - LATER 46

GEORGIANA and the DUKE reach the top of the steps. The strain of their relationship shows on them both.

DUKE

Goodnight, G.

GEORGIANA

Goodnight, William.

They go their separate ways to their separate bedrooms, not looking back at each other. The DUKE enters his.

GEORGIANA lingers, then enters hers. Immediately her public face falls and we can see the pain her marriage is causing underneath. MAIDS appear and begin to take off her clothes and make up, beginning with the feather.

We remain on GEORGIANA's face as the bright sounds of young children's voices fade up until we...

CUT TO:

47 EXT. BATH PARK - DAY

47

GEORGIANA, a NANNY flanking her, is playing chase and running races with her children in the sunshine. It's free and easy and everyone is laughing and having a good time.

GEORGIANA steps back to watch the three girls run to a tree and back, and gets her breath back. HARRYO runs and falls.

BESS (O.S.)
Up and fall down, up and fall
down.

GEORGIANA turns to see BESS standing behind her watching the children play.

BESS (CONT'D)
Why can't we recover like that?

GEORGIANA
Too far to fall now.

They smile.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Hello again.

BESS
Hello. [Beat] Your girls are
lovely.

GEORGIANA
Thank you. Do you have any
children?

BESS
I do. Three boys...

GEORGIANA
Three boys ... What the Duke
wouldn't give for one of them.

BESS smiles.

BESS
She is very dark, your eldest.

GEORGIANA

Yes. (Makes a decision) Her mother was dark. I'm sure you know the story.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS. BESS does, but she doesn't speak.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

My husband's daughter was born before we married. The mother was a maid. The maid died; we took the child.

BESS

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have spoken. There I go again, talking nonsense.

GEORGIANA

Never mind. It's the worst kept secret in London. She's nine years old now.

BESS

And...do you love her?

GEORGIANA

Of course I do, the same as all my children. They are the only thing of value in my life.

BESS smiles, but behind it her own pain shows through.

CUT TO:

48

EXT. BATH - ROMAN BATHS - DAY

48

GEORGIANA and BESS walk through the streets and enter a BATH HOUSE.

CUT TO:

49

INT. BATH - ROMAN BATHS - DAY

49

The baths are made up of a whole range of unfortunate people: INCURABLES, RHEUMATICS, GOUT SUFFERERS, those afflicted with RAMPANT ECZEMA and other unsightly SKIN DISEASES. Awful PROVINCIAL MUSICIANS play in the corner.

GEORGIANA and BESS sit with a cup and saucer in their hands. BESS takes a sniff and recoils.

BESS

What's this?

GEORGIANA

Thermal water. It's the sulphur
that makes it smell so bad.

BESS

And you really have to drink it?

GEORGIANA

Twice a day for four weeks. Along
with all the women who cannot
give birth...

GEORGIANA gestures toward a group of WOMEN, also sipping
from teacups.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

...even to a girl.

GEORGIANA takes a sip from her cup, grimaces and puts it
down. BESS laughs.

LATER:

GEORGIANA and BESS undress to get in the water. GEORGIANA
is suddenly a little self-conscious taking her clothes off,
but BESS is much more open.

GEORGIANA ducks under the water. BESS joins her.

BESS

There is some financial interest in
a male heir, I take it?

GEORGIANA

Certainly. Instead of having too
much money as it is, we will have
far too much once the Duke comes
into his full inheritance.

BESS

Money played no part in my marriage
arrangement, but little good it
does me. I married for love. What
Mr. Foster married for I cannot
say.

GEORGIANA

I grant your husband's affair is
hurtful, but isn't this what men
do?

BESS looks evenly at Georgiana, as if trying to decide to
tell her something.

BESS

And what about this?

BESS lifts her hair to reveal a RED MARK on her NECK. GEORGIANA is shocked, and her hand instinctively reaches out to touch Bess.

GEORGIANA
But - he can't do that...

BESS
Well he did...It's not illegal
for a man to beat his wife with a
stick unless the stick is thicker
than your thumb.

GEORGIANA is speechless.

BESS (CONT'D)
Considering what else he's done to
me, that's not the worst...

GEORGIANA
What could possibly be worse...?

BESS
He's taken my children. He won't
let me see them.

GEORGIANA
But ... how can that happen? What
do you propose to do?

BESS
Really, I'm at my wits' end. I
have made some sort of alliance
with a man who will assist me in
abducting them. What I'll do when
he does, I don't know. Live under
an assumed name, I suppose. The
law supports Mr. Foster.

GEORGIANA is lost in the horror of BESS's situation. A SERVANT pours more HOT WATER into the bath. Steam rises.

GEORGIANA
And in the meantime, where shall
you stay?

BESS
Continue renting I suppose, until
my money runs out.

GEORGIANA
Well, there at least, I think we
can help.

CUT TO:

50

EXT. DINING ROOM. BATH VILLA - NIGHT

50

Georgiana, Bess and the Duke eat. Georgiana and Bess exchange secret glances.

GEORGIANA

William? We leave tomorrow. And Lady Elizabeth is not due to meet her parents on the continent for some time. And she hardly visits London at all.

DUKE

Ah. Pity that.

GEORGIANA

You see she doesn't have a place to stay.

DUKE

Oh dear, problem there.

BESS and GEORGIANA hold their breath. The DUKE glances up.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Well why doesn't she stay with us? For a while at least.

Georgiana and Bess grin like schoolgirls.

CUT TO:

51

EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DAY

51

SERVANTS are lined up outside Devonshire House. A row of carriages stop in front. BESS and GEORGIANA are in one of them. They get out.

BESS is gazing at the house. GEORGIANA, tickled to have her friend with her, takes her arm and hurries her inside. Unlike GEORGIANA's first arrival it feels informal, free, excited.

CUT TO:

52

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

52

BESS marvels at the grandiosity of it all. GEORGIANA sweeps through and BESS follows.

BESS

This is incredible ...

GEORGIANA

(Ironically)

Yes.

(MORE)

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

There's the castle in Ireland,
Bolton Abbey, Chiswick, Burlington -
and Chatsworth, of course, which is
much bigger - but this is more like
home.

BESS laughs. GEORGIANA is climbing up a grand staircase.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Let me show you your quarters.

CUT TO:

53 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. BESS'S QUARTERS - DAY 53

GEORGIANA leads the way down the corridor.

GEORGIANA

(Ironically again)

Unfortunately the State Rooms are
reserved solely for the King and
Queen...So this will have to do.

GEORGIANA opens a door to reveal a bedroom the size of a tennis court with equally massive dressing area. Open double doors reveal BESS's own drawing room. BESS is suitably impressed.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

My husband and I have separate
rooms. You are near to mine.

They laugh and hug each other close.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. DRURY LANE THEATER - NIGHT 54

A HUGE CRUSH of SOCIAL TYPES -- a wave of the fashionable -- fight their way into the theatre. It's a RED CARPET NIGHT. Many of the women have their hair piled high with an ostrich feather in it.

GEORGIANA, BESS, and the DUKE cut through the throng. As people see them - in fact, see GEORGIANA - the CROWD gets in more of a frenzy, with people shouting out and calling her name. FOOTMEN make a path for her through the baying people.

JOURNALISTS and CARTOONISTS stand off to the side, like paparazzi, sketching. We see glimpses of their renditions. In them, GEORGIANA's large wig looks even larger.

Up on a billboard is the title of the play, "'The School for Scandal', by Richard Sheridan"

CUT TO:

55

INT. DRURY LANE THEATER -NIGHT

55

ON STAGE the performance is in full flow: an argument between "Sir Peter Teazle" and "Lady Teazle." The actors are made-up and costumed to look suspiciously like GEORGINA and The DUKE, and the set is a replica in miniature of the Devonshire House living room.

ACTOR PLAYING SIR PETER

"May all the plagues of marriage
be doubled on me, if ever I try
to be friends with you any more!"

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

"So much the better"

IN THEIR BOX the DUKE and GEORGINA look on, stiff and very separate. There's a very tense air: the DUKE is looking mortified while GEORGINA seems to know exactly what's going on. She looks down at SHERIDAN sitting in the front row, who looks back equally knowingly, and winks at him.

ACTOR PLAYING SIR PETER

"No, no madam.: 'tis evident you
never cared a pin for me, and I
was a madman to marry you."

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

"And I am sure I was a fool to
marry you - an old dangling
bachelor..."

The camera moves into the DUKE. He endures the humiliation with a straight face but his insides are in knots.

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE (CONT'D)

...who was single at fifty, only
because he never could meet with
anyone who could have him."

The audience LAUGH LOUDLY and look up to where the DUKE and GEORGINA are sitting. The DUKE grips his seat.

ACTOR PLAYING SIR TEAZLE

Very well, madam! Very well! A
separate maintenance as soon as
you please. Yes, madam, or a
divorce!"

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

(Triumphant)

"Agreed! Agreed!"

The audience laugh and cheer as the curtain comes down.

Amid the noise, GEORGINA smiles at FOX in a box across the theatre. Next to him is a handsome YOUNG MAN in his 20s.

She smiles at them both then looks back to the stage. FOX does the same, but the YOUNG MAN remains gazing at her. GEORGIANA, aware of this, can't help glancing back.

CUT TO:

56

INT. DRURY LANE BACKSTAGE AREA - NIGHT

56

After the show. The DUKE is skulking around the edge of the crowd. GEORGIANA and BESS meet with FOX.

GEORGIANA

Bess. This is Mr. Fox. The Leader of the Opposition. Mr Fox, Lady Elizabeth Foster.

BESS is impressed. They nod at each other. The YOUNG MAN approaches from behind FOX. It is CHARLES GREY, and GEORGIANA can't take her eyes off him.

FOX

Ah. And here is my protegee, Charles Grey.

BESS nods to both the men. GEORGIANA smiles at GREY.

GEORGIANA

A pleasure to meet you, Mr Grey.

GREY

Likewise, Your Grace.

FOX

He's our newest bright young man - scarcely out of Cambridge and already a member of Parliament.

GEORGIANA smiles, quite taken with him. He looks at her too. BESS notices how preoccupied they are with each other. Just then SHERIDAN approaches with open arms.

SHERIDAN

Your Grace! How we've missed you! In your absence London has been reduced to the dreariest province! Now the season can commence.

GEORGIANA smiles. She breaks her eyes from GREY'S.

GEORGIANA

And this, of course, is the playwright, Mr. Sheridan. May I present the Lady Elizabeth.

SHERIDAN greets BESS. Then, with an apologetic mien at the others, he pulls GEORGIANA away.

SHERIDAN

Pardon us. I do not mean to be rude, but I have an entire cast dying to meet the Duchess. I shall return her in a moment, promise.

SHERIDAN and GEORGIANA leave. BESS watches GREY as GREY watches them go. They pass the DUKE, who has found some consolation in the form of a gauche young GIRL.

CUT TO:

57 INT. DRURY LANE BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

57

SHERIDAN presents GEORGIANA to a lined-up CAST, who all curtsey and bow to her.

SHERIDAN

Could you relate in any way to the play, Your Grace?

GEORGIANA

(Feigning innocence)
However do you glean such domestic gossip?

SHERIDAN smiles.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Were we fair on the Duke? We didn't go too far?

SHERIDAN

Well it could have been worse.
(Whispers to her) My original title was "The Bad Marriage."

A SERVANT enters with a tray of drinks. Everybody helps themselves to one. SHERIDAN produces a bottle of opium.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Opium?

GEORGIANA

Just a drop...

SHERIDAN pours opium in their drinks. A few of the actors and actresses have a drop too.

CUT TO:

BESS standing near the WINGS.

She watches GEORGIANA surrounded by admirers, laughing, charming them all. Then she looks at the DUKE, who now sits very close to the young GIRL. GREY comes up to her with a drink. BESS takes it.

GREY
Infantile atmosphere, isn't it?

BESS
Well, it's ... certainly not what
I'm used to.

GREY
It's quite a feat to get through
all the conversations and still
remain sober.

GREY raises his glass and smiles at her. BESS raises hers.

GREY (CONT'D)
What does Her Grace make of it
all?

BESS
In truth I think Her Grace may be
tiring of Society. Her real
passion lies in politics.

BESS gives GREY a cheeky look to make sure the innuendo is not lost on him.

GREY
(Very interested)
Really...

They both observe GEORGIANA talking animatedly on the stage, a crowd around her and loving the attention. Then they spot the DUKE, who has cornered his prey against a wall. GREY cannot believe what he is seeing.

GREY (CONT'D)
Is it always like this?

BESS
Well, as they say, the Duke of
Devonshire must be the only man in
England not in love with his wife.

GREY takes this in as he watches the DUKE and GEORGIANA.

CUT TO:

58 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BESS' BEDROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT 58

BESS and GEORGIANA are in nightclothes, sprawled across each other on the bed. They are intimate and relaxed, like two teenage girls after a night's clubbing.

GEORGIANA
Were you at all able to forget
things and enjoy yourself?

BESS

It was a wonderful distraction,
thank you.

GEORGIANA

Good.

BESS

I talked all night to Mister
Grey...

GEORGIANA

Oh yes?

BESS

He is in love with you.

GEORGIANA laughs.

GEORGIANA

My dear Bess. He's just a boy.

BESS

No, he's not.

GEORGIANA looks at her, thinks. BESS smiles.

BESS (CONT'D)

Can't you tell by the way he looks
at you? He wants to touch you.
Honestly, can't you tell?

GEORGIANA

Stop it, please.

BESS

Georgiana. Procreation is not just
about offspring. In fact, it can be
quite nice.

GEORGIANA

(laughs uncertainly, lies)

Yes, I know...

BESS

Try to close your eyes ... and
envision Grey slowly opening your
dress ... and kissing your back.

GEORGIANA starts to giggle.

GEORGIANA

Oh, please, they never do such
things...

BESS

Oh yes they do.

BESS gets up and lies behind GEORGIANA. GEORGIANA looks a little nervous about this.

BESS (CONT'D)
Close your eyes...Grey is behind
you....slowly opening your
dress...

BESS pulls back part of GEORGIANA's clothing to reveal her shoulder. BESS begins to kiss it.

GEORGIANA
Bess, stop.

BESS
(Firmly)
...close your eyes....kissing
your back...

GEORGIANA relents and closes her eyes. BESS continues to kiss her back. Suddenly GEORGIANA goes silent, a look of real surprise on her face: she is experiencing sensations she never knew even existed.

Bess continues, soft but in charge, as they both allow themselves to become lost in the erotically charged moment:

GEORGIANA lets out little gasps of pleasure...

BESS pushes it further...

Her hands explore under GEORGIANA'S nightclothes...

Over her breasts...

The tops of her legs...

GEORGIANA gasps again, a realisation that parts of her body could give such pleasure...

BESS tugs GEORGIANA'S hair back a little...

Her hands reach further...

GEORGIANA closes her eyes...

BESS (CONT'D)
(Whispers)
There...see...

BESS stops what she's doing. Beat. They both breathe heavily, the sexual tension and arousal hanging heavy in the air. They are a little embarrassed, scared even of what might happen if they carried on, and for a moment it seems that is what they might well do...

But BESS gets up and walks to the window as GEORGINA readjusts her clothes. They regain composure and try to carry on as if nothing has really happened.

BESS (CONT'D)

In the play this evening, there was a scene in which Lady Teazle and Mr. Surface discuss their affair. They acknowledge that once a lady of good standing has provided her husband with a son then she may take a lover.

GEORGINA takes it in.

BESS (CONT'D)

Be ready, dear G, when the time comes.

After what's just happened - and from the look on GEORGINA's face - she clearly can't wait.

CUT TO:

59 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - GEORGINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 59

GEORGINA undresses and goes to bed. She lies in the dark, eyes wide open, thinking. This image is held as the sound of a haunting operatic voice - accompanied by harp - starts over it and carries us into the next scene.

DISSOLVE TO:

60 EXT. DERBYSHIRE - DAY 60

The music continues as we dissolve to an aerial shot of dramatic Derbyshire countryside rushing fast beneath us. A title reads: **Chatsworth Estate**.

The shot develops as it passes over the 35000 acres of land that belong to the DUKE - from HILLS to FIELDS to LAWNS to GARDENS and finally a huge country house. SWARMS of COUNTRY PEOPLE, MEN on HORSES and TENANTS surround it.

CUT TO:

61 EXT. CHATSWORTH - DAY 61

Massive amounts of food are laid out on trestle tables with white table cloths. The singing and harp continue, and we find that AN OPERA singer - with GEORGINA on harp - perform beautifully, perfectly, to a grand outdoor picnic.

CLOSE ON GEORGINA as she plays: eyes closed, passionate.

We see the DUKE and BESS standing together with FOX and GREY at the rear of the audience. To one side stands LADY SPENCER.

The music ends. GEORGIANA and SINGER bow to APPLAUSE.

MINUTES LATER:

The harp is being carried back inside by FOUR SERVANTS.

GEORGIANA works her way through the ORDINARY PEOPLE and TENANTS, making them feel welcome and urging them to eat. She walks up to LADY SPENCER and embraces her.

GEORGIANA

Hello Mama.

LADY SPENCER

(Coolly)

Hello my dear.

BESS comes over too.

BESS

We're so glad you were able to visit, Lady Spencer.

LADY SPENCER looks hurt.

LADY SPENCER

Are 'we' really?

BESS

Yes, G speaks of you all the time.

LADY SPENCER

Well that is nice to hear. My daughter's letters have become so short of late that finally they do not exist at all.

GEORGIANA

I do apologise Mama. It is merely a reflection of my current state of happiness...

LADY SPENCER

(Cutting across)

I only know what she is up to by reading the gossip columns of the Morning Post.

GEORGIANA is stung by this. The DUKE wanders up behind.

DUKE

Me too.

LADY SPENCER
 And how long do you intend to
 stay on Lady Elizabeth?

BESS
 Please, 'Bess'. I don't know. I'm
 sure I've worn out my welcome
 already.

GEORGIANA
 Nonsense.

DUKE
 Lady Elizabeth is free to stay
 with us for as long as she likes.

LADY SPENCER is left open-mouthed, a little alarmed at how
 close they all seem. FOX and some WHIGS come forward.
 GEORGIANA turns from her mother and smiles broadly.

GEORGIANA
 Who let these radicals through
 the gates of Chatsworth?

FOX
 No one *lets* us in anywhere!
 That's why we're radicals!

CUT TO:

62

EXT. A HILLSIDE ABOVE THE PICNIC AREA - LATER

62

At the bottom of the hill, the DUKE leads a SHOOTING PARTY of
 men with rifles. Ahead of them GAMEKEEPERS walk through the
 trees, banging them with sticks to rouse the birds. The first
 Grouse flies above the trees and a shot rings out.

Down by a river GEORGIANA leads a group on a walk with
 SHERIDAN, BESS, GREY. They have come upon the ruins of an
 OLD FARMHOUSE. The distant gunshots echo in the background.

SHERIDAN
 What's this?

GEORGIANA
 One of the old farm houses.

SHERIDAN
 Hideous. Reminds me of Ireland.

The crowd moves on. GEORGIANA is left with GREY.

GEORGIANA
 I wanted to make it over into a
 school for the tenants' children,
 but the Duke was unresponsive.

GREY
The Duke prefers ruin?

GEORGIANA turns to see GREY is the only one left near her. She starts to stroll, but her smile invites him to follow.

GEORGIANA
It is his property.

GREY
Perhaps then His Grace should be
divested of such troublesome
possessions.

GEORGIANA
(Provocatively)
What an interesting idea.

GREY, encouraged by her double meaning, continues.

GREY
I despise the fact that so few men
have so much power - and that they
mismanage it so appallingly.

GEORGIANA smiles at him.

GEORGIANA
So you agree with the French?

He returns her smile.

GREY
Yes, except I believe in reform,
not revolution...That a man ought
not to be governed by laws in the
framing of which he had no voice.

GEORGIANA looks impressed. She realizes how close they're standing. She moves away a few feet.

GEORGIANA
We're lagging behind...

GEORGIANA starts to walk. GREY looks at her, disappointed and a bit taken aback. He starts toward the rest of the group.

CUT TO:

GEORGIANA sits against a tree, sipping a cordial, all the while watching GREY in conversation with some men. BESS approaches GEORGIANA.

BESS

Whatever is the matter with you?
Your behaviour is so out of the
ordinary.

GEORGIANA

I just feel like keeping to myself
today...

BESS sits down beside her, leaning close and intimate. They look at the men, GREY at the centre, then look at each other. BESS smiles broadly. GEORGIANA blushes. BESS digs GEORGIANA playfully and gently in the ribs. They giggle like schoolgirls.

GEORGIANA looks up to see LADY SPENCER is watching, a disapproving expression on her face.

CUT TO:

64

INT. SITTING ROOM. CHATSWORTH - LONG AFTER DINNER.

64

A VIOLINIST is playing beautifully in the corner.

The GUESTS are engaged in a range of activities: some listen to the music, some gamble at gaming tables, some gather around the fireside, drinking and talking. The DUKE and FRIENDS are playing billiards and smoking.

LADY SPENCER and GEORGIANA are walking through. Across from them BESS is talking to a circle of people.

LADY SPENCER

(Hushed)

But you have only known her three
months!

GEORGIANA

Bess is my friend! She brings the
best out in me...

LADY SPENCER

She certainly brings *something*
out in you, but I would be hard
pushed to say it were the *best*.

GEORGIANA

It may pain you to recognise it
Mama, but a great change has come
over my life and its name is Lady
Elizabeth Foster...about whom it
can be truly said I have at long
last found my other self.

LADY SPENCER's pulse races. She wants to interject.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I understand if that may make you
feel a little *jealous*.

LADY SPENCER stops.

LADY SPENCER

(Fierce whisper)

This is a dangerous path of life
to choose my girl. You have begun
to cavort so constantly in public
you cannot live for your own
soul. It is no surprise you are
gathering weeds instead of
flowers.

GEORGIANA is stunned, like a little girl cut dead by her
mother for showing off. LADY SPENCER turns on her heels and
walks off leaving GEORGIANA fuming inside.

A LITTLE WHILE LATER:

GEORGIANA, a rebellious look on her face, takes a drink
from a BUTLER. She then looks at LADY SPENCER - who is
talking to a group of stuffy aristocrats - and heads toward
GREY who is among a group of MEN. As he sees GEORGIANA he
excuses himself from the conversation and meets her.

GREY

Your Grace...

GEORGIANA

Mr Grey, I have been thinking.
The national election is in six
weeks, yes? How is the campaign
going?

GREY

Terribly. Our only hope is to
save Westminster for Fox.

GEORGIANA smiles. There's a mischievous sparkle in her eye.

GEORGIANA

Well, I have many faults as you
may know, not least among them is
my ability to draw attention.
Perhaps we could use that to our
advantage...

CUT TO:

CUT TO:

66

EXT. GROSVENOR SQUARE - DAY

66

GEORGIANA stands on a platform dressed in the most outrageous costume yet, her hair piled three foot high above her head and decorated with Whig-coloured ribbons. In front is a HUGE SEATED CROWD. Banners proclaim WHIGS, VOTE FOX. JOURNALISTS mill around, scribbling into notebooks and sketching GEORGIANA. In the crowd, women are fanning themselves with fans bearing Georgiana's likeness. The DUKE is sat to one side.

GEORGIANA

(Shouts to the crowd)

Ladies and Gentlemen. I give you a man who will inform us of the work we must do and the party we so believe in! Sir Charles Grey!

APPLAUSE as GREY moves to take the stage. GEORGIANA and GREY exchange a look as he positions himself.

GREY

I am here in Westminster to speak on behalf of our candidate Sir Charles Fox...

APPLAUSE.

GREY (CONT'D)

Well, I wish only to address a single issue. Power.

GEORGIANA looks at GREY, clearly proud of him.

GREY (CONT'D)

The basis of power in our country is land, as it has been for centuries. And the aristocracy owns nearly all of it...

There are a few laughs from the CROWD. GREY can't help but look over at the DUKE - is this speech directed at him?

GREY (CONT'D)

...along with all the places in the Government, control of the House of Commons, Ambassadors, Governors, Judges, and a host of other posts too numerous to mention. They levy what taxes they think proper and pass what laws their self interest dictate. They maintain this influence and affluence by transferring their land intact, generation after generation.

(MORE)

GREY (CONT'D)

And in so doing continue to
dominate English life.

GREY stops to look at the faces of the PUBLIC looking back at him. They are with him. The DUKE, unsurprisingly, isn't.

GREY (CONT'D)

So, if we win this election, if we
get the power we seek, what will we
do with it? Assign the old
patronage positions? Bilk the
treasury like the ones who came
before us?

GREY's listeners are quiet. GREY proceeds.

GREY (CONT'D)

Will we master the art of
compromise? Of killing a good bill
in a bad committee? Of postponing
the greater good for the greater
advantage? Will we do that?

(Long pause)

No. We won't. Because we believe
in the words we've spoken...

A few scattered 'hear hears' begin.

GREY (CONT'D)

...and we have *faith* in the hearts
we've stirred.

More 'HEAR HEARS'. GREY's rhetoric takes flight.

GREY (CONT'D)

The world is on the brink of
disaster or salvation. From
France to America, men and women
are struggling to free themselves
and find meaning in their
existence. Change is upon us.

Loud calls of 'YES' and applause.

GREY (CONT'D)

We shall not return to the old
ways! We shall not shirk our
promises and our duties! We shall
take England into this brave new
world and shake the thunder from
the skies! This we vow!

APPLAUSE. CHEERS. GEORGIANA gazes at GREY. GREY looks at her, flushed and excited. She blushes like mad. BESS sees this. So does the DUKE, who has got up and is on his way to his carriage.

CUT TO:

67

INT. COVENT GARDEN HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

67

GREY stands alone. GEORGIANA enters and shuts the door.

GREY
How did I do?

GEORGIANA
(Trying to hide her
feelings)
I think it was not an
embarrassment.

Grey's face crumbles in disappointment. GEORGIANA grins.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
It was a marvel.

GREY smiles. A big open, boyish smile of relief.

GREY
But did you agree with what I said?

GEORGIANA
Every word.

GREY gains self-confidence. He approaches GEORGIANA.

GREY
I was jittery. Your presence
trebled the numbers at least.

GREY is now very close indeed. GEORGIANA feels the effect of it. She becomes short of breath. GREY speaks softly.

GREY (CONT'D)
I am jittery even now...

GEORGIANA knows that she ought to keep a distance, but remains where she is.

GEORGIANA
So am I.

She stares at him, then withdraws a little.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
We ought to join the company. We
must all go and celebrate.

GEORGIANA makes for the door. GREY remains standing.

GREY
..and the Duke?

She turns and looks at him, flushed and exuding desire.

GEORGIANA
He has taken refuge in his club.

CUT TO:

68 INT. GAMING HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

68

The rooms are full of GAMBLERS, drinking and letting off steam. It has a decadent, opulent and smoky atmosphere.

GEORGIANA sits at a packed FARO TABLE. GREY stands behind her, SHERIDAN sits to one side and FOX to the other. The conversation runs fast and easy.

DEALER
Another wager?

SHERIDAN
I'm out. My funds have run dry
and I've no one left to borrow
from.

GREY
Maybe it would be different if
people thought you had the
slightest intention of paying
them back?

SHERIDAN
One should never give money to
one's creditors, dear boy. It
only encourages them.

GEORGIANA
Is there no one in London not in
debt?

SHERIDAN
Just the poor.

They all laugh. FOX pushes three chips into the centre of the table.

GEORGIANA
Got to risk more than that. Not
worth winning if you don't.

GEORGIANA and FOX stare at each other for a beat. Then GEORGIANA pushes all her chips to the centre. A YOUNG LORD matches GEORGIANA'S bet with his chips. The DEALER deals. GEORGIANA turns an ace. YOUNG LORD, a club.

DEALER
Her Grace wins again.

GEORGIANA shrieks with pleasure. The CHIPS are raked to her. YOUNG LORD is stricken but immediately places a new bet. GEORGIANA downs her cordial and smiles at GREY.

SHERIDAN

I'll never know how you drink so much and remain standing.

CUT TO:

69 EXT. LONDON STREET - GAMING HOUSE - NIGHT

69

GEORGIANA, GREY, FOX, SHERIDAN, and others emerge from the gambling house. High spirits abound, and they're all a little worse for wear. There's LAUGHTER, AD-LIBS.

A VALET opens the door to GEORGIANA's waiting carriage. She addresses all her admirers.

GEORGIANA

Time to go home.

FOX

(Ironically)

So soon?

GEORGIANA

(Equally ironically)

My husband will be waiting.

GEORGIANA and GREY make eye contact - a tad too long.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

(Back to Fox)

And you usually drink the port all by yourself, anyway.

PEOPLE laugh.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I'll be seeing you, gentlemen.

GEORGIANA addresses to all of them but shares a last look with GREY before getting into her carriage.

CUT TO:

70 INT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

70

GEORGIANA sits in the carriage, submerged in alcohol-fuelled thought. She smiles to herself and gazes out the window. They drive by the Thames, and she looks across the river. GEORGIANA taps on the side of the carriage.

GEORGIANA
Make a stop here, please...

CUT TO:

71 EXT. LONDON BY THE THAMES - NIGHT

71

GEORGIANA gets out. The coachman and the servant look at her.

SERVANT
Is anything the matter, your Grace?

GEORGIANA
Nothing at all. It's just such a
beautiful night. I want to enjoy it
for a little while.

They nod. GEORGIANA moves slightly unsteadily away from the carriage and goes to the railing at the embankment. Here she stops and contemplates the sight of the city.

Other carriages pass. Among them is CHARLES GREY's. He spots GEORGIANA's parked carriage and notices her standing outside with her back turned to him. His carriage stops. GEORGIANA is lost in thought as he very quietly draws near.

GREY
Your Grace?

GEORGIANA turns and looks at him. She smiles.

GEORGIANA
Are you following me?

GREY
No, I saw you standing here. Is all
well?

GEORGIANA
Yes ... I didn't feel like going
home after all.

GREY
You shouldn't be here in the middle
of the night. It isn't safe.

GEORGIANA
Even thieves must sleep.

GREY
Yes, but not at this hour, I'm
afraid.

GEORGIANA sends him a little smile. Then she turns to look at the city again. The alcohol has emboldened her.

GEORGIANA

Do you ever think of me when we are
not together?

GREY

(surprised)

You ought to know I do... of you
more than anything else.

GEORGIANA

You hesitated before replying ...

GREY

I am unused to being asked so
directly, and by you of all people.

GREY walks close. He very gently puts his hand on hers. She looks down at his hand, then up at him, blushing a little.

GREY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

I think of you every day.

They look lovingly at one another. GEORGIANA is just about to reward GREY's candour with a confession of her feelings when the sight of the coachman and the servant - joined now with GREY's coachman - brings her to remember herself. She withdraws her hand.

GREY nods. GEORGIANA returns to her carriage, never taking her eyes off GREY, who remains on the bridge.

CUT TO:

72 INT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

72

GEORGIANA turns away only when GREY disappears from her view, excited by the rush of early love.

CUT TO:

73 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - NIGHT - LATE

73

GEORGIANA rushes out of her carriage and into the house.

CUT TO:

74 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

74

GEORGIANA enters. Silence. She races across the vast space.

CUT TO:

75

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. BESS'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

75

GEORGIANA, makes her way quickly down the hall. She approaches the door to BESS's room.

GEORGIANA

(Hushed whisper)

Bess.

She stops. She can hear BESS and the DUKE having sex - her husband and her best friend. And it's not the kind she has with him: it's passionate, energetic, enjoyable. For a while, she is paralyzed. Then she moves away and down the hall.

CUT TO:

76

INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - DAWN - HOURS LATER

76

THE DOOR opens and the DUKE enters, stealthily. The sun is just pouring GRAY LIGHT into the room. He closes the door very softly and then turns to see...

GEORGIANA sitting on his bed. She looks ashen.

CUT TO:

77

THE SAME. AN HOUR LATER.

77

GEORGIANA paces. The DUKE sits on the bed, caught. It is difficult to see if he is actually ashamed, but he is listening patiently to GEORGIANA.

GEORGIANA

Of all the women in England, you had to throw yourself upon her. I have not objected once to any of your affairs, I have accepted whatever arrangement you have proposed, I have raised Charlotte as my own daughter, but this... I have one single thing of my own... why couldn't you let me keep Elizabeth for myself?

CUT TO:

78

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

78

We see a distraught BESS listening at the door.

GEORGIANA (O.S./CONT'D))

What kind of man are you?!

CUT TO:

79

INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

79

GEORGIANA is raging at him.

GEORGIANA

She is all I have to cling to! She
 is my sole comfort in this house,
 in our marriage.

The DUKE patiently hears her out.

CUT TO:

80

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

80

BESS's eyes are filled with tears.

GEORGIANA (O.S./CONT'D)

You have robbed me of my only
 friend!

CUT TO:

81

INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

81

GEORGIANA pauses, nearly spent. Then she finally challenges the DUKE, more imploring than angry.

GEORGIANA

What is wrong with me? Why have you
 never loved me?!

DUKE

(simple, exhausted
 clarity)

I do not claim to be a man of
 depth or complexity, G, but I
 have always known what I expect
 from this marriage and what I am
 prepared to give.

GEORGIANA doesn't reply.

DUKE (CONT'D)

You, it seems, have hoped for
 something else, something more.

GEORGIANA

She has to go! Now! She is never to
 set foot in this house again!

DUKE

(Hackles rising)

Do mind your temper, G. You are
 quite forgetting yourself.

GEORGIANA

I want her out! I never want to lay eyes on her again! Go down and tell her to leave at once!

DUKE

I couldn't ask her that. I won't do it, G.

CUT TO:

82

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

82

The door swings open - BESS jumps aside - and GEORGIANA comes crashing out of the sitting room, furious. GEORGIANA storms down the hall, followed by BESS.

BESS

Georgiana--!

GEORGIANA

You have taken yourself from me!

BESS

Please --!

GEORGIANA

You don't love me!

BESS

I do love you, Georgiana. Really I do.

GEORGIANA

No! Love is an act! It is more than words and undying oaths! It's what you do! I loved you! You only said you did.

BESS is stung. Her eyes fill with tears.

BESS

...I do love you. But ...

GEORGIANA

Leave. Get out of this house!

BESS remains standing, reaches out for GEORGIANA.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Leave!!! (breaks down, cries out)
Get out!!!

BESS leaves the room. GEORGIANA sinks slowly to the floor, weeping, sobbing.

CUT TO:

83

INT. ALTHORP - SITTING ROOM - DAY

83

GEORGIANA sits, like a little girl, back at home and surrounded by portraits of her as a child. A MANSERVANT pours tea, slowly, meticulously, from a silver Samovar. It seems to take for ages. LADY SPENCER can't wait to get talking. Finally the MANSERVANT finishes and leaves.

LADY SPENCER

I did not like her from the first.

GEORGIANA

You've made that quite clear, Mama.

LADY SPENCER

She is gone from Devonshire House,
I hope.

GEORGIANA looks away, ashamed.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

They're living there together?
Georgiana, what have you permitted
to happen?

GEORGIANA

I don't know! Won't you please just
help me! Tell me what to do, Mama!

GEORGIANA hangs her head. LADY SPENCER surveys her daughter and the mess she's in. Her demeanor softens.

LADY SPENCER

You must write William and insist
he send her back to whatever horrid
little place she came from.

GEORGIANA

He will not. It is out of the
question, he says.

LADY SPENCER

Then you must return and resume
your duties. Make him realize
whom he loves. You will give up
your politics, your nights on the
town. For once you will devote
yourself as a loving wife and
settle down to the task at hand:
providing him with an heir. And
then he will soon tire of her.

GEORGIANA looks at her mother with sadness.

CUT TO:

84 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE -DAY

84

GEORGIANA's carriage drives up to the house. She gets out, observed by a couple of servants. She grants them a stiff stare and proceeds up to the house.

CUT TO:

85 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. HALL -DAY

85

The DUKE awaits her just inside the door. He looks at her with worry.

THE DUKE

Hello, G. ...

GEORGIANA

(Coldly)

William.

GEORGIANA walks straight past him and proceeds upstairs.

CUT TO:

86 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

86

GEORGIANA walks down the corridor. BESS meets her with an apologetic demeanour. GEORGIANA is cold as ice. She passes her without even a look.

CUT TO:

87 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - ROOM - DAY

87

BESS quietly enters GEORGIANA's room.

GEORGIANA

I may not have the authority to remove you from this house, but I can at least order you out of my room.

BESS

Won't you please let me explain?

GEORGIANA becomes furious and shouts at BESS.

GEORGIANA

There is nothing to explain. I trusted you, I made you my confidante, and you repaid me by stealing what is mine.

BESS

We do what we have to do.

GEORGIANA

How true. And now you have to leave.

BESS

I know you may find it hard to believe, but you can still trust me.

GEORGIANA walks to the door and opens it.

BESS (CONT'D)

This is my only chance of ever seeing my children again. William is the most powerful peer in England. He is my only chance.

GEORGIANA

There are limits to the sacrifices one makes to see one's children.

BESS looks her in the eye.

BESS

No, there aren't. No limits whatsoever.

GEORGIANA takes in what she just said, before letting animosity get the better of her once again and turning away.

BESS (CONT'D)

Give me a chance to show you that you can trust me... Please... Please.

GEORGIANA

Get out of here. We have no more to say to each other.

BESS leaves, closing the door silently behind her. GEORGIANA punches walls and cupboards, throwing things around the room.

CUT TO:

88

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING 88

GEORGIANA is still asleep in her bed. She is awakened by the sound of a carriage outside. She goes to the window.

OUTSIDE:

The DUKE's CARRIAGE pulls up the front door. AUGUSTUS, JOHN, and HARRY emerge from the carriage.

BESS shrieks with joy and leaps out of the house. She runs and hugs them, crying. It's incredibly touching and GEORGIANA is moved, despite herself.

CUT TO:

89

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - LIBRARY - DAY

89

GEORGIANA comes downstairs. Unseen, she looks into the library and watches the DUKE getting AUGUSTUS a hunting rifle from the wall. The DUKE appears surprisingly keen, gentle even. He clearly relates to boys. To one side BESS holds a sleeping HARRY.

GEORGIANA stares on in silence, understanding the DUKE and BESS in a way she has never done before. They look like a quiet, functional family unit.

GEORGIANA quietly comes closer. The DUKE is now showing AUGUSTUS how to use the rifle.

DUKE

...hold it like that, it won't come back at you.

AUGUSTUS

Yes, I see.

DUKE

Good. Your father doesn't hunt, I take it.

AUGUSTUS

No.

DUKE

Oh dear. Well, we can soon make up for that.

AUGUSTUS smiles, as does BESS. The DUKE looks up, and seeing her approval does a rare thing: he smiles too. BESS gets up and brings the DUKE a drink. He strokes her hand. GEORGIANA moves away and leaves.

CUT TO:

90

EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS - DAY

90

The fashionable and wealthy stroll up and down the park. GEORGIANA walks with GREY under the trees in a secluded part. GEORGIANA seems preoccupied. GREY, however, is simply excited about them meeting again.

GREY
 (Hushed voice)
 Did you tell the Duke who you
 were meeting?

GEORGIANA
 No.

GREY
 Did he ask?

GEORGIANA
 No.

GREY pauses for a moment.

GREY
 Good.

GEORGIANA
 He has other things on his mind.

GREY stops and scrutinises GEORGIANA. He can tell that she is not truly present.

GREY
 As do you.

The direct recognition causes GEORGIANA to stop too, and then look away.

GREY (CONT'D)
 (Softer now)
 Would it help to unburden
 yourself?

GEORGIANA sends him a little smile and a shake of the head.

GEORGIANA
 It is nothing I can discuss with
 you. Besides, it would only bore.

GREY
 You don't have to please others all
 the time.

GEORGIANA
 I was brought up to. It's a
 difficult lesson to unlearn.

GREY
 Would you permit me an
 observation?

GEORGIANA
 Of course.

GREY

I think you do it so that people
will love you.

GEORGIANA

(looks deeply at him)
What would make you think that?

GREY

From what I have seen. With your
husband, your friends - especially
Lady Bess. Even the press and the
public, you want them to too.

GEORGIANA

(looks away)
I have never thought of it that
way. You make me sound pitiable.

GEORGIANA turns and walks away, upset. GREY realizes he has
gone too far. He chases up with her.

GREY

I've gone beyond my brief. I
apologize. Please believe it was
only for your sake I spoke.

GEORGIANA looks at him, and then carries on walking slowly,
thinking deeply. Grey moves closer to her again.

GREY (CONT'D)

Please tell me what is wrong.

She turns and looks at him intensely.

GEORGIANA

I fear I have met some people too
late in life and some too early.

They stare at each other a moment. The wind blows gently in
the leaves of the trees above them.

GREY

No, you haven't.

Slowly, GREY moves to GEORGIANA. The air is thick. GREY gets
closer. They kiss. Not for long, but a gentle, warm kiss.
Then he withdraws. GEORGIANA is blushing.

GREY (CONT'D)

I have waited all my life for that
kiss.

GEORGIANA averts her eyes, and looks confused. He loses his
composure a bit.

GREY (CONT'D)
I'm sorry ...

GEORGIANA
No. It's...

She looks up at him again.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
I have never been kissed like that before.

They stand and look at each other. Then they move closer, for another kiss. Gentle. And longer, this time.

CUT TO:

91

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE SITTING ROOM - MORNING

91

GEORGIANA is with BESS and the DUKE. She seems sober, together and strong: fortified. They sit opposite each other at the table as if in negotiation. A long silence. Then:

GEORGIANA
All right.

Beat. The DUKE looks at BESS. What does she mean?

DUKE
"All right..?"

GEORGIANA
Do you love each other?

DUKE
Georgiana -

GEORGIANA
Do you love Bess, William?

DUKE
... Well ... I ... where is all this leading? I mean...

BESS
I make no demands on him.

GEORGIANA
...And Bess, you love William?

BESS
... As I do you.

GEORGIANA nods, still not giving anything away.

GEORGIANA
You intend to stay?

BESS

... William asked that I do.

GEORGIANA nods.

GEORGIANA

And you couldn't find it in your powers to refuse him.

BESS

...No.

BESS and the DUKE remain quiet. Beat.

GEORGIANA

Then let us make a deal.

DUKE

A deal?

Beat. The DUKE and BESS exchange glances.

GEORGIANA

Yes. I give you my blessing if you will accept my feelings for Charles Grey.

BESS blinks, taken aback. GEORGIANA is nervous. She smiles, waiting for The DUKE's reaction.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I wasn't sure at first, I thought perhaps it was a dalliance or ... But it isn't. He can make me happy.

BESS tries to manage a smile. She darts a look at the DUKE, who now stands. Suddenly cutlery and crystal jangle. BESS and GEORGIANA start.

DUKE

(seething with fury)

A deal! A deal!! I don't make deals! I'm in charge of it all!! I would call him out! I would challenge him! I would put a bullet in his head--!

BESS

William--!

DUKE

(to BESS)

Be quiet!

(to GEORGIANA)

Are you determined to make me a total laughing stock?

(MORE)

DUKE (CONT'D)

A man who cannot sire a son and
then a cuckold?

BESS

William, Georgiana only asks what
we ourselves -

DUKE

Be quiet, you fool! (to GEORGIANA)
Are you his whore?!

GEORGIANA

... No... but I can't see why you
should mind. You have Bess and
three boys...

DUKE

Three boys??? Do you think I can
make those bastards my heirs? Well,
do you?

GEORGIANA and BESS are frightened. GEORGIANA hurries out of
the room. A moment passes, then the DUKE strides out as well.

BESS

William...?

CUT TO:

92

INT. HALLS AND CORRIDORS- MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

92

GEORGIANA walks fast through the space. The DUKE charges
after her. GEORGIANA quickens her pace.

CUT TO:

93

INT. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

93

GEORGIANA comes into her room, and slams the door behind her.
A few moments later, the door opens. The DUKE enters. He
shuts the door. He glares at GEORGIANA. She looks at him. The
DUKE asks a real question for once.

DUKE

You don't know me in the least, do
you?

GEORGIANA

I do. We're a bad match.

DUKE

I asked but two things when we
wed: loyalty and a male heir.

GEORGIANA

Yes, same as your dogs.

The DUKE's eyes flash. He snaps. He grabs her. She tries to fight him off. Her dress is torn. They struggle. The DUKE slaps her repeatedly until she no longer resists, then drags her to bed.

CUT TO:

94 INT. HALL OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM -MORNING -SAME TIME 94

BESS stands outside the door. We HEAR GEORGIANA SCREAM.

CUT TO:

95 INT. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME 95

The DUKE pins GEORGIANA onto the bed and tears away at her undergarments. We hear the RIP of silk and lace. GEORGIANA screams again. He holds her face tightly between his hands and stares coldly at her.

CUT TO:

96 INT. NURSERY -SAME TIME 96

LITTLE G. and HARRYO stare at the door of their room as the screams continue.

CUT TO:

97 INT. UPPER HALLWAY -SAME TIME 97

A BUTLER stands at attention, impassive.

CUT TO:

98 INT. HALL OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM-SAME TIME 98

BESS hovers at the door as she listens to the struggle and screams inside. She turns and sees CHARLOTTE standing a few feet away, staring at her. BESS moves away from the door, unable to stop what's going on inside.

BESS
(To Charlotte, softly)
Come with me.

CHARLOTTE stays rooted to the spot.

BESS (CONT'D)
(Firmer)
Charlotte, come with me.

BESS takes CHARLOTTE'S arm and hurries her off down the hall.

CUT TO:

99

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER⁹⁹

GEORGIANA lies on the bed. It's over. Her clothes are torn. Her face is red and wet with tears. The DUKE sits on the side of the bed, panting, used up.

DUKE

Give me a son and then do what the hell you want, as long as you do it discreetly. Until then you will stay here and do as I say.

The DUKE gets up and leaves. GEORGIANA's expression is blank, dead. The sounds of crowds cheering and clapping fade up in the background until we...

CUT TO:

100

EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS - DAY

100

SHERIDAN stands before A HUGE CROWD. Across the river are the HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. There is bunting in WHIG colours and banners. The PRESS are out in even greater numbers than before.

SHERIDAN

I give you the winner! Mr Fox! The Man of the People!

FOX comes forth to a ROAR of approval. He yells out:

FOX

And I give you the weapon! The Duchess of Devonshire!

GEORGIANA, still shell-shocked, comes forth to WILD CHEERS. She succeeds in smiling to the crowd. BESS and the DUKE stand together off to the side. They clap and smile, but the strain is evident.

GREY, unseen near the doorway, watches GEORGIANA taking in the APPLAUSE. Finally, the applause dies.

FOX (CONT'D)

Thank you, all of you, for this reception tonight.

GEORGIANA sees GREY on the sidelines. She glances at the DUKE then turns to slip away. GREY sees this. He follows.

FOX (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We have won the vote, and now we must win the future!

APPLAUSE as GREY exits.

CUT TO:

101

EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS - MOMENTS LATER

101

GEORGIANA heads for her coach, well away from the crowd. GREY catches up with her.

GREY

We did it. Or should I say you did it.

GEORGIANA tries to smile, but she can't. She turns away from GREY. He knows something's wrong.

GREY (CONT'D)

Georgiana?

GEORGIANA

(the hardest thing to say)
Mr. Grey... I have enjoyed more than I can say the times we've spent together, the talks...

GEORGIANA is overcome. She almost breaks down. GREY sees she's upset and leads her to a bench. She sits and collects herself. GREY looks distraught.

GREY

Tell me.

GEORGIANA

I cannot say what -

GREY

Now!

GEORGIANA looks at him. She has to do this as she planned.

GEORGIANA

...I have been unfair to you.

GREY

What are you talking about?

GEORGIANA

(trying to be composed)
...I have...indulged in your affections and made it seem my feelings towards you were more than they are in fact. I fear the heat of the election...

GREY

Say what you mean!

GEORGIANA
 (looks dead at him)
 You love me.

GREY
 Yes!

GEORGIANA
 I do not love you.

GREY takes this punch, but his eyes never blink, never waver.

GREY
 You are not speaking what is in
 your heart.

GEORGIANA
 It is, it truly-

GREY suddenly stands and strides away, pacing, angry.

GREY
 (cuts her off)
 This is a speech, forced upon you-

GEORGIANA
 (overlaps below)
 It isn't, it's what I've always
 known to be true!

GREY
 (overlaps above)
 -- by those who would destroy our
 happiness!

GEORGIANA
 (loud, in the clear)
 THIS IS HOW I AM!

GREY is taken aback by her force and volume.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
 I was wrong to offer you hope. I
 was wrong to pretend an affection I
 do not feel. You have said it
 yourself, I need to be adored. That
 is my weakness.

GREY looks sick. Then GEORGIANA delivers her coup-de-grace.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
 This is not the first time I have
 been so careless. Ask Mr. Fox.

That does it. GREY turns from her, angry, hurt, unable to
 find a place to put his rage.

GEORGINA fights back the tears. We hear CHEERS o.s. GREY turns to her and bows before heading back across the grass to the stage. We can hear FOX still speaking.

FOX (O.S.)
We have followed our ideas and
our ideals, and in the struggle,
we have found ourselves!

CLOSE ON GEORGINA as the colour drains from her face. She is dying inside but she keeps it all in. She calmly turns and walks to her carriage. Loud bangs fade in as we...

CUT TO:

102 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

102

It's dusk over the HOUSE. Fireworks explode above it as hoards of PEOPLE make their way up to the front entrance. Whig-coloured ribbons decorate the outside.

CUT TO:

103 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - FOYER - THAT NIGHT

103

The DUKE waits at the top of the GRAND STAIRCASE. He's dressed for the evening. BESS is with him, also dressed. They don't speak. They're waiting for GEORGINA. After a few moments, GEORGINA appears, dressed to the nines and powdered a deathly white.

The DUKE refuses to register GEORGINA, but BESS looks across, shocked. GEORGINA will not meet her eyes, however. They walk down the staircase together all looking forward.

CUT TO:

104 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOMS -- THAT NIGHT

104

AN ELECTION NIGHT PARTY. Music plays.

Part of the UPSTAIRS has been converted into a gaming room for the evening. It is boisterous and smoky. There are card tables and players everywhere.

GEORGINA, who has been drinking heavily, wanders through, taking another drink from a passing WAITER. BESS is in the background watching her every move. As GEORGINA goes we pick up details of this decadent society. Where before it may have seemed glamorous and exciting it now looks uglier and more sordid: a place of corruption and addiction, dangerously on the edge of collapse.

GEORGIANA is gambling at a table. A GENTLEMAN GAMBLER shows his hand, GEORGIANA shrugs and pushes her chips across the table with an air of indifference, but is stopped by another GENTLEMAN on her left.

GENTLEMAN

No, Duchess...you can top that.

GEORGIANA

(Hazily)

Can I?

GENTLEMAN

Your Grace seems to have
forgotten the king of hearts...

The GENTLEMAN sends a quick, apologetic smile at GEORGIANA's fellow gamblers, then rearranges her hand to form a trump.

GEORGIANA

Why so I have, so I have.

GEORGIANA slowly rises to collect the chips. BESS steps forward to help her but is ignored.

LATER:

GEORGIANA comes into the dancing area alone. The DUKE and BESS are with a group nearby. GEORGIANA seems to radiate a force field that keeps people away from her. But not FOX. He comes up and smiles.

FOX

You promised me a dance. Come.
Give me my small pleasures.

GEORGIANA yields to her old friend. ON THE DANCE FLOOR --

GEORGIANA is dancing very uncontrollably with FOX, amid the rest of the GUESTS. She grabs another drink as they pass a SERVANT. She bumps into SHERIDAN. Drink goes on his jacket.

SHERIDAN

My dear Duchess, much as I know
you love dancing and drinking, I
really must advise you to settle
for one or the other, for the two
are incompatible in the long run.

GEORGIANA

(very drunk)

Why, Sheridan, you never were
such a spoilsport before!

GEORGIANA does a turn and slips. FOX steadies her. She smiles an apology. Then...

Suddenly GEORGINA stumbles. Her WIG falls against a CANDLE and GOES UP IN FLAMES.

DANCERS back away. BESS looks shocked.

GEORGINA SCREAMS as she staggers, hair on fire. DOORS OPEN, SHOUTS, SERVANTS rush about.

BESS attempts to knock the WIG off GEORGINA's head. The DUKE appears in his doorway, none too pleased. He sees the situation. He turns to a FOOTMAN, all efficiency.

DUKE

Please put out Her Grace's hair.

The FOOTMAN splashes water on the wig. HISS and SMOKE.

The DUKE looks down at GEORGINA: she lies sprawled on the polished parquet floor: wig-less, her make-up smeared, her eyes red and glassy.

CUT TO:

105 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - GEORGINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 105

CLOSE ON a SMALL BOWL with a WHITE HANDKERCHIEF draped over the top. There are DROPS OF BLOOD on the handkerchief.

DR. NEVILLE (O.S.)

The bleeding is stopped.

We see GEORGINA in bed, pale, washed out, and exhausted. BESS, the DUKE, and SERVANTS hover as DR. NEVILLE (62) sets the bowl aside.

DR. NEVILLE (CONT'D)

As long as you follow strict instructions, there should be no impediment to the birth.

The DUKE is mystified. BESS looks at GEORGINA, who shows no sign of registering what has been said.

DUKE

What are you talking about?

DR. NEVILLE

Her Grace is pregnant.

The DUKE and BESS react. GEORGINA has no reaction at all.

CUT TO:

106

EXT. ACROSS DERBYSHIRE - DAY - SPRING

106

A church stands out against the countryside. There are sounds of distant bells far off in the distance. A BOY runs into the bell tower and rings the bell as hard as he can...

In another church in another part of the county, another BOY hears the sound and rings his own the church's bells...

And in another church, bells ring out too...

CUT TO:

107

INT. CHATSWORTH. GEORGINA'S BEDROOM - DAY - SAME TIME 107

CLOSE ON - A NAKED BABY being washed by a NURSE. It is a boy. In the background the bells continue to ring. In the room are BESS, the DUKE, DR. NEVILLE, and SERVANTS.

DR. NEVILLE

Congratulations, Your Grace.

DR NEVILLE bows and makes his way out of the room. The DUKE looks down at GEORGINA, who looks up at him.

GEORGINA

(very sad and dry)

Success at last.

The DUKE looks away, ashamed.

CUT TO:

108

INT. NURSERY. CHATSWORTH - NIGHT

108

GEORGINA gently puts the sleeping BOY to bed in his cot. There's a knock on the door. A SERVANT appears.

SERVANT

His Grace wishes to see you in
the library.

CUT TO:

109

INT. LIBRARY. CHATSWORTH - NIGHT

109

The DUKE is seated at his desk, a contract out in front of him. BURLEIGH stands and points out where he should sign.

BURLEIGH

Also there Your Grace...And
there...

BURLEIGH offers a smile. The DUKE says nothing. He senses GEORGINA, who is at the library door looking in.

DUKE

Come.

GEORGIANA enters. The DUKE looks to BURLEIGH.

BURLEIGH

Your Grace. As per the terms of His Grace's inheritance, this is for you. To spend as you wish.

BURLEIGH hands her a cheque. GEORGIANA looks at the DUKE with disdain then turns to the door.

DUKE (O.S.)

It may surprise you but I too abhor this whole thing.

GEORGIANA turns back. The DUKE is now standing.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Yet remove it - separate our estates, sell off the land - and the aristocracy simply ceases to be; and with it the Whig party. England will once again be ruled by a tyrannical monarchy, or, as will occur in France, anarchy. And it won't just be you and I with our heads on the block, but all of our children too. I don't wish to see that happen. Do you?

GEORGIANA looks at him, then turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

110 EXT. CHATSWORTH FIELD - THE RUINED FARMHOUSE - DAY 110

The BABY BOY lies in a moving pram. GEORGIANA walks with the children. She holds CHARLOTTE by the hand, while LITTLE G. and HARRYO look into a pram pushed by a NANNY.

LITTLE G

He's so small.

HARRYO

You've been that small yourself.

LITTLE G

Not that small. Have I, Mama?

GEORGIANA

You have, darling. You've all been that small once.

HARRYO

See, I told you.

They continue towards the old FARM HOUSE.

HARRY O (CONT'D)

One can't tell that he's a boy at all.

GEORGIANA

But he is.

HARRY O

But when one can't tell, I fail to see why it's so important. He looks just like the rest of us.

GEORGIANA smiles.

GEORGIANA

I don't understand it myself, darling.

HARRY O

All babies look alike when they have their clothes on.

GEORGIANA

Yes, but each of them is something quite unique.

HARRY O

How so?

GEORGIANA

You and Little G did not look at all like one another. You cried all the time when you were a baby, whereas Little G was quiet as a mouse. She could walk before you, but you could talk before her.

The children listen. Charlotte looks at GEORGIANA.

CHARLOTTE

What about me, Mama?

GEORGIANA

You never cried, darling. You were always so brave.

They have reached the ruins which GEORGIANA strolled through together with GREY. She surveys the crumbling walls, the moss and ivy, and the GREEN FIELDS beyond.

The children instinctively run in and start playing around and climbing. GEORGIANA watches them and makes a decision.

CUT TO:

111 EXT. CHATSWORTH SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY

111

It's a festive OPENING DAY. Lots of CHILDREN and PARENTS, OFFICIALS, RIBBONS. The Whigs are represented by FOX and SHERIDAN.

CUT TO:

112 INT. CHATSWORTH SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY

112

PEOPLE "ooh" and "ahh" at the interior. There are MANY WINDOWS looking out onto GREEN FIELDS.

GUEST

Your Grace, if it is to be a school for study and learning, what need will the children have of windows?

GEORGIANA

For gazing and dreaming.

GEORGIANA stares out the window. She should be happy. She isn't. She looks out onto the fields for a long time and then seems to see someone.

HER POV -- A MAN coming across the GREEN. As he gets closer she realises who it is: GREY, riding towards the SCHOOL.

GEORGIANA almost has a heart attack. She looks around to see if anyone has glimpsed her reaction. No one has. She moves to the door.

CUT TO:

113 EXT. CHATSWORTH SCHOOL - DAY - CONT

113

GEORGIANA comes out where there are more GUESTS, WHIGS, CHILDREN, etc. She waits for GREY. And then he reaches the steps. He takes off his hat and bows. It's awkward, stiff.

GREY

Your Grace.

GEORGIANA

(nods)

Sir Charles.

GREY

(looks up at the school)

You built it. I knew you would.

GEORGIANA

Yes, I came into some money of my own. Are you recalled from France?

GREY
For a while.

GEORGIANA
No revolution yet?

GREY
No, not yet. But it's only a matter
of time.

They look at each other.

GEORGIANA
You have been missed...much missed.

GREY
(a long beat; then:) I understand
you bore a son.

GEORGIANA realizes he is making a point. She nods, nervous.

GEORGIANA
...Yes. William Hartington. We call
him... Hart.

GREY
You and the Duke must be very
pleased.

GEORGIANA
He is. We are.

Beat. GREY gazes at her. They're both full of longing.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
I must talk to you... about Fox.

GREY
There is no need. We have already
spoken...

GREY smiles at her. There is kindness in his eyes.

GEORGIANA
How is it that you are here?

GREY
I was in London and received an
invitation. I assumed it was on
behalf of the party; I could not
say no.

GEORGIANA is confused. She opens her mouth to speak, but at
this point, FOX and SHERIDAN come out of the SCHOOL.

SHERIDAN
 (sneers)
 Well, well, the prodigal son
 returns.

FOX
 (embraces GREY)
 My dear fellow!

GEORGIANA blushes. BESS joins them.

CUT TO:

114 INT. CHATSWORTH CARD ROOM - THAT NIGHT

114

The GUESTS play cards. GEORGIANA and SHERIDAN are on one table, BESS and the DUKE are on another and on the other side GREY is with FOX. The atmosphere is tense.

GEORGIANA can't help glancing from her table to GREY at his. GREY can't help glancing back.

SHERIDAN
 Down six hundred. G. Yours?

GEORGIANA
 (distracted)
 Yes, of course. I will match you.

SHERIDAN
 You'll need cards, of course.

GEORGIANA realizes SHERIDAN hasn't dealt yet. SHERIDAN smirks.

CUT TO:

115 INT. CHATSWORTH - UPPER HALL - NIGHT

115

STAFF are extinguishing the candles downstairs and clearing up. The GUESTS are going into their bedrooms. DOORS open and close. Then the hall is empty. Silence. Then GEORGIANA's door opens. GEORGIANA comes out of her room. She holds a candle. She turns and finds...

BESS standing in the shadows.

GEORGIANA
 (starts, gasps)
 Oh!

BESS
 Shhh! (whispers) Discretion, this time.

GEORGIANA stares at BESS. What...? And then she realizes.

GEORGIANA

You summoned Grey.

BESS

(nods)

William must not know. Honesty is
not the virtue you will need.

BESS goes off to her own room. GEORGIANA watches her go, shocked. When BESS is gone, GEORGIANA hears a DOOR OPEN. She turns. GREY stands in his doorway.

GEORGIANA stares at him, down the long corridor.

GEORGIANA walks down the hall to GREY and his DOORWAY. Behind him we can see his BED. They stare at each other over the flickering candlelight.

GREY

I don't just want an affair.

GEORGIANA

Nor do I.

Beat. They keep staring. GEORGIANA takes his hand and pulls him towards his own room. He does not move. She turns and kisses his lips. Finally, he responds. Still embracing, they go into the room.

CUT TO:

116

INT. CHATSWORTH - GREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

116

GEORGIANA and GREY are passionately making love in his bed. It's as if it's the first time for both of them. The sex is real and intimate and convincing, an extraordinary release and revelation for them both...

LATER:

The night is still. Night birds call in the background. The window is open and wind blows gently in. GEORGIANA and GREY lie in each other's arms. They kiss, long and tender. GREY pulls away.

GREY

(Gently)

You should return to your room.

GEORGIANA

No I should not.

They begin to make love again...

CUT TO:

117

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE BREAKFAST ROOM - DAY

117

A few days later. GEORGIANA, BESS, and the DUKE eat. GEORGIANA is nervous. She hesitates, then:

GEORGIANA
I'm going to Bath.

DUKE
(looks up)
But I can't get away for weeks.

GEORGIANA
(trying to seem natural)
I shall go without you.
(To Bess)
Bess, you stay and keep our
husband company, whilst I take
the cure.

The DUKE looks decidedly undecided. GEORGIANA looks to BESS for help. She's not sure it's a good idea but acquiesces.

BESS
Yes, William, why not? If G goes
now we can catch her up when
you're free.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS, thankful for the help. She tries to remain looking casual. The DUKE relents.

DUKE
Well, if you must.

CUT TO:

118

EXT. A VILLA IN BATH - NIGHT - EST.

118

CUT TO:

119

INT. GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

119

GEORGIANA and GREY in bed, naked. GEORGIANA is asleep. GREY is awake. He stares at her. Something is troubling him. She wakes. She sees his concern.

GEORGIANA
...What's the matter?

GREY
The matter is that after this
week we will have to leave. You
will be back home with your
husband, and I won't be with you.

GREY gets out of bed.

GREY (CONT'D)

Perhaps it would be better if I
were married too, then we could be
a triangle or a foursome, or...
whatever angle could contain you
and me and-- I should ask Lady
Bess; she seems to have surveyed
the geometry and bent it to her
favour.

GEORGIANA gets out of bed and tries to comfort him.

GEORGIANA

I know this is hard. It's hard
for me, too. But it won't be like
this forever.

GREY smiles. GEORGIANA embraces him. GREY holds her tight.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. A BATH ALLEY - MORNING

120

POLITICAL PEOPLE are filing into a building for a meeting.

GREY and GEORGIANA are in an isolated alley, adjacent to
the building, holding close, obviously in love. They kiss
and then GREY goes inside.

ANGLE - THE END OF THE ALLEY: PEOPLE have spotted them.

CUT TO:

121 INT. GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

121

GREY is reclining in the bath. GEORGIANA is washing his back
and arms with a sponge. The room is candlelit, atmospheric.

GREY

I thought of you the whole
afternoon. Why people insist on
arguing on a sunny day is beyond
me.

Beat, smiles, looks over his shoulder at her.

GEORGIANA

(Smiles)
You'll be gone tomorrow as well?

GREY

Only for a few hours, hopefully.
I am beginning to fear that
politics is divided into those
who want to fix things and those
that merely want to talk about
fixing things.

Grey kisses her hand. GEORGIANA smiles blissfully.

GREY (CONT'D)
I wish we had this time just for
ourselves.

GEORGIANA
Whatever will become of us when
you're made Prime Minister?

GREY laughs, delighted.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
When you are, you'll be very far
from me.

GREY
(Takes her hand, very
intense)
Never. We'll be together. Always.

GREY smiles. GEORGIANA leans across and kissees him.

GREY (CONT'D)
Now pass me a towel.

CUT TO:

122 INT. GEORGIANA'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

122

GEORGIANA, very happy, is dressing. She's even humming. She exits the room and goes into...

CUT TO:

123 INT. GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE. BEDROOM - CONT

123

...to find the DUKE and LADY SPENCER waiting for her. They are in travelling clothes. GEORGIANA gasps.

DUKE
Thought we would surprise you. I think you once said there wasn't enough spontaneity in our marriage. Or words to that affect.

GEORGIANA
Mama, what are you doing here?

LADY SPENCER sends her a severe look.

DUKE
So. Have you seen many of our circle down here?

GEORGIANA

Some. The Cokes. And Haverford. And
Lord Wicklow.

DUKE

Bunch of politicos, too, aren't
there? Meetings and such.

GEORGIANA

I believe.

DUKE

Isn't... isn't Grey here?

A beat as GEORGIANA's heart stops.

DUKE (CONT'D)

By which I mean Sir Charles Grey.
Rumour has it that he is.

GEORGIANA jumps to the heart of the issue.

GEORGIANA

I won't give him up.

LADY SPENCER

Georgiana!

GEORGIANA

Everyone has a lover. Bess is the
lover of my husband!

DUKE

That situation was agreed upon.

GEORGIANA

Yes, I held myself in so little
esteem that I acquiesced to make
you happy!

DUKE

If you had taken a lover with
discretion, it may have been
different.

GEORGIANA

Differ--?!

DUKE

The only saving grace is that it
hasn't yet made it to the papers.

LADY SPENCER

My dear, Grey is unmarried. He
risks nothing with this affair.
The hazard is all yours.

GEORGIANA
Grey loves me.

LADY SPENCER
So does William.

GEORGIANA stares at her mother in frustration, then at the DUKE.

DUKE
Yes. I love you!

GEORGIANA
HOW?!

DUKE
In the way I understand love.

LADY SPENCER
Georgiana, this has gone much too far. It is beneath our dignity. All London is talking...

GEORGIANA
Then let them talk! Grey makes me a fallen woman, well and good, now William may divorce me and Bess becomes Duchess of Devonshire!

LADY SPENCER
That will never happen!

LADY SPENCER stares harshly at GEORGIANA. Then she makes for the door.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)
I think I will leave you to it.

LADY SPENCER leaves the room. GEORGIANA looks apprehensively at the DUKE.

GEORGIANA
What follows now? Are you going to tear off my clothes and rape me again?

DUKE
Why on earth would I do that?

GEORGIANA looks at him in surprise.

DUKE (CONT'D)
I know that you've thought much of neither my intellect nor my manners, but in fact I never do anything that serves no purpose.

GEORGIANA is hurt, and looks at the DUKE in silence. He is composed in a way she has never seen before.

DUKE (CONT'D)
I know precisely what you two have together.

GEORGIANA
We love each other.

DUKE
I do not doubt it. He is a dreamer like yourself. You both dream of another world that does not exist and never will. (Beat) As for reality, however, allow me to enlighten you: If you do not give him up at once, I will see to it that every home and cheque book in this country is closed to him. He will be welcome neither in the halls of government nor its back rooms of power. His dream of becoming prime minister, your mutual fantasy of a changed world, will be dead as ash.

The DUKE pauses before delivering the final blow.

DUKE (CONT'D)
And you will never see your children again.

GEORGIANA is open mouthed, stunned.

DUKE (CONT'D)
You are given to say "love is an act." Well, this was an act.

GEORGIANA turns and runs out of the room.

CUT TO:

124 INT. GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 124

GEORGIANA is close to the wall, trembling. LADY SPENCER enters and shuts the door behind her.

LADY SPENCER
What do you imagine you will have if you stay with Grey?

GEORGIANA
Love. Passion.

LADY SPENCER
For a time.

GEORGIANA
For life.

LADY SPENCER
There is no such thing. Will you never grow up! And how will you live, even? Friends will shun you, family will abandon you. There won't be a house open to you in all of England.

GEORGIANA
(trying to convince herself)
Grey will be Prime Minister.

LADY SPENCER
Not with his whore, the Duchess of "D" on his arm and the Duke pulling every string to ruin him. He will never be Prime Minister. He'll pretend it doesn't matter, but it will. He'll put on a good face for a while, but he'll come to hate you for it.

At this GEORGIANA's eyes fill with tears.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)
Most likely you'll end up alone - a wife with no husband and a mother with no children. At best you'll become someone else's mistress, living on charity, which can be taken away at any moment.

GEORGIANA
You can't know all that!

LADY SPENCER
Look at your friend Bess!

CUT TO:

125

INT. BATH. GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE - HALL - DAY

125

GEORGIANA descends the stairs and walks to the door. She now sees the DUKE waiting for her.

GEORGIANA
I must ask you to return to London.

DUKE
Without you?

GEORGIANA

Yes.

THE DUKE

Then I must warn you. This will be
the mistake of your life.

GEORGIANA

No, I made that many years ago. I
trust you can let yourselves out.

GEORGIANA leaves. The DUKE sends her an icy stare. LADY SPENCER joins him. They exchange one look, then the DUKE turns to the SERVANT at the door.

DUKE

For God's sake, open the door, man!

The servant quickly opens the door. The DUKE exits. LADY SPENCER follows him.

CUT TO:

126 INT. BATH. ANTE ROOM. POLITICAL MEETING ROOMS - DAY 126

GEORGIANA and GREY are discussing what has happened. She looks worried and is pacing up and down. In the background are muted sounds of POLITICIANS debating next door.

GEORGIANA

He will come down on us with
everything in his power, Charles.

GREY

Yes... (beat) Does that frighten
you?

GEORGIANA

I would be foolish not to be
frightened.

GREY

We would be foolish to let future
fears stand in our way.

Georgiana takes heart in Grey's determination.

GREY (CONT'D)

Sorrows will come however we try to
avoid them. And when they come, we
must stay our course and not give
in.

Georgiana is relieved and elated at his words, but holds her course as the voice of prudence.

GEORGIANA
He will be without mercy.

GREY
Then so will we.

GREY kisses her and strides back into the MEETING ROOM next door where a noisy, heated argument is underway.

CUT TO:

127 EXT. BATH - GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE - THAT AFTERNOON 127

GEORGIANA arrives back at her house in her carriage to find BESS waiting outside. She eyes her with suspicion.

GEORGIANA walks inside. BESS follows.

CUT TO:

128 INT. BATH - GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE - THAT AFTERNOON 128

BESS and GEORGIANA are mid conversation.

BESS
Dearest Georgiana, you cannot -

GEORGIANA
I cannot give up Charles. I could not survive another day without him. You think I've chosen to be with him, of my own free will, and so did I, for a while. But Bess, I've come to realize that it was no choice at all. Not really.

BESS
(Getting angry)
But these are your *children* you are talking of. You must pack up immediately and...

GEORGIANA
(Getting angry too)
No! All my life I have been dominated by my family, my husband and now my husband's lover....

BESS is stopped in her tracks.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
...All my life, it seems to me,
I've fought my way upstream.
(MORE)

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

With Charles, I find myself going down the stream, effortlessly and naturally. I never realized that life and love could be that easy. You can't ask me to battle nature, and my own heart. Not now, when I've come so far.

BESS sends GEORGIANA a kind, but worried smile. She goes to her bag and takes out a PACKAGE OF LETTERS.

BESS

These are from your girls - I promised to deliver them. Hart neglected to write, but then he is not yet one.

BESS puts the PACKAGE down on the table. GEORGIANA refuses to even acknowledge them.

BESS (CONT'D)

I know you will do the right thing eventually.

GEORGIANA

(Trying to believe it)
I am doing the right thing now.

CUT TO:

129 INT. BATH - GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK 129

GEORGIANA lies awake in bed, GREY sleeping beside her. She is staring into the ceiling. Quietly she gets up and goes to her case. From the bottom of it she takes out the PACKAGE from her children.

GEORGIANA carries a candle into the adjacent room. She takes a deep breath, rips it open. There are LETTERS in spidery children's handwriting, colourful drawings. She looks at it all, unable to not let it touch her...

CUT TO:

130 INT. GEORGIANA'S RENTED HOUSE - DINING ROOM - MORNING 130

GREY and GEORGIANA are having breakfast. GEORGIANA looks pensively at him. He is aware that she is moody and smiles at her. He gets up and kisses her.

GREY

I'll be back soon.

GEORGIANA looks at him as he leaves. GREY turns in the doorway and smiles. She smiles back at him, but her smile fades as soon as he is gone.

CUT TO:

131 INT. A COACH - LATER THAT DAY

131

GEORGIANA alone in the speeding carriage, staring out the window. The DRIVER is cracking the whip to make the horse ride faster, faster...

CUT TO:

132 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DAY

132

GEORGIANA runs through the corridors.

CUT TO:

133 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. PLAYROOM - DAY

133

When she enters she is met by LITTLE G who looks bewildered at GEORGIANA. She is crying. CHARLOTTE steps in as a big sister, puts her arm around her and draws her close.

LITTLE G

Mama.

GEORGIANA

Come here, my dearest.

GEORGIANA hugs her, and looks as CHARLOTTE. HARRYO comes out too. GEORGIANA hugs them all.

HARRYO

Why aren't you here anymore,
Mama? Where have you been? Papa
said you were not ever coming
back...

LITTLE G

I'm scared, Mama. I should like
very much for you to stay here,
please.

GEORGIANA

I shall. I shall. We'll all stay
here together. There now...

GEORGIANA hugs the girls. Closer. Tighter.

CUT TO:

134

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. LIBRARY - DAY

134

The DUKE is reading his newspaper. GEORGINA steps in. He looks up at her and nods approvingly.

DUKE

You must know that I am greatly pleased that we have come to an arrangement. It's not good for little ones to be without their mother for too long.

GEORGINA

My life for theirs...

DUKE

That's one way of putting it. Your mother called it "common decency before personal gratification", or some such thing... the exact words escape me...

GEORGINA

How about 'imprisoned in my own house'?

DUKE

No, that's not how she put it. I would have remembered that.

The DUKE resumes reading. GEORGINA sends him a hateful look.

CUT TO:

135

EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GARDEN - DAY

135

GEORGINA watches LITTLE G., HARRYO and CHARLOTTE playing on the grass with AUGUSTUS, JOHN, and HARRY, BESS' boys. NANNIES hover.

BESS (O.S.)

How did he take it?

GEORGINA turns to see BESS appearing from behind her.

GEORGINA

He didn't. I just left. If I had seen him again, I would have stayed.

BESS

No letter, either?

GEORGIANA shakes her head.

BESS (CONT'D)
I know it's hell, but it's for
the best, Georgiana...

GEORGIANA keeps looking at BESS while her aspect changes and her face goes blank. Then she returns to look at the children laugh, shout, and play.

CUT TO:

136 INT. KITCHEN AREA- NIGHT - WEEKS LATER

136

Three silver plates covered by silver domes are carried by SERVANTS out of the kitchen and through the downstairs corridors into the main part of the house.

CUT TO:

137 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT - WEEKS LATER 137

GEORGIANA, BESS and the DUKE are seated for dinner at their vast table. It's tense, silent and extremely formal as SERVANTS bring in the plates. In unison THREE SERVANTS step forward to take away the domes, revealing elaborately prepared POUSSIN - it's an unexpected comic moment.

They begin to eat. No one says a word. Suddenly we hear DOORS CRASH OPEN from far outside the room. There is the distant sound of a man's voice, raised and angry. GEORGIANA knows immediately that it is GREY. So too does the DUKE who shoots her a vicious look. GEORGIANA rises,

GEORGIANA
Your Grace, Bess. Will you excuse
me.

CUT TO:

138 INT. CORRIDOR. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER 138

GEORGIANA enters to see GREY storming up the corridor, followed by FOOTMEN trying to stop him. GREY is wild. He yells at GEORGIANA, quite oblivious to the FOOTMEN.

GREY
Why haven't you responded to my
letters?!

GEORGIANA tries to maintain calm. She looks at the FOOTMEN, headed by HEATON, the butler.

GEORGIANA

Thank you, Heaton.

HEATON bows, and though still remaining present, recedes into the background with the FOOTMEN. GREY comes closer.

GREY

I have written a dozen times a day, and there is nothing from you! What has happened?! Do you love me no longer?!

GEORGIANA steels herself...

GEORGIANA

My personal feelings remain unaltered...

GREY

Then we must be together again. I want to marry you. I want you to bear my children ... and I don't care if they are boys or girls!

...But GEORGIANA is barely holding it together.

GEORGIANA

I wish it could be like that.

GREY

It can. It will. You must leave and be with me, a free woman! Now, let us leave now!

GREY steps forward to take her arm but GEORGIANA backs away. HEATON makes as if to intervene, but holds back.

GEORGIANA

(Firmly)

No, Charles. I am a mother already. I cannot abandon my children. This is a sacrifice I am forced to make. I have given you up for them only.

GREY stares at her with wide, angry, tortured eyes.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

And in so doing, I have lost my heart and soul.

GREY looks at her, sad and weak, nothing left to argue. GEORGIANA stands firm. She gestures to HEATON.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Heaton, will you please escort Mr. Grey to the door?

HEATON comes forward and stands next to GREY.

GEORGIANA still looks at him. Her eyes glisten. GREY, choking with pain, stares one more beat, then turns and walks away. HEATON and FOOTMEN follow, like bouncers.

CUT TO:

139 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE DINING ROOM - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER 139

GEORGIANA slowly sits again. She is distant, with no interest in the food in front of her. The DUKE looks up, chewing.

DUKE

What's the matter, don't like the chicken? I find it really quite decent.

The table is quiet. Not even BESS can muster a reply. GEORGIANA looks at him, as if she's got something to say.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Yes?

CUT TO:

140 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - ROOM - THE FOLLOWING MORNING 140

Rain spits against the window. Wind blows in the trees outside. GEORGIANA is sitting in her bed, staring blankly before her. The DUKE and BESS enter.

DUKE

(to Bess)

Will you be so kind as to inform the Duchess of my decision?

BESS looks deeply uncomfortable.

BESS

(appealingly)

Georgiana -

GEORGIANA does not respond, but keeps staring into the air. BESS takes a deep breath.

BESS (CONT'D)

It will be like this: you will be taken to the country where you will give birth to the child, and the child will subsequently be trusted to the care of Charles Grey's family.

GEORGIANA makes no reply.

BESS (CONT'D)
Are you listening to me?

GEORGIANA slides silently into a reclining position.

DUKE
I think she has heard you. Let's leave her.

BESS
Georgiana, please -

DUKE
I said: let's leave. This is not a discussion. She has been informed of my decision.

BESS looks at GEORGIANA.

BESS
Have pity on her, William...

DUKE
Pity be damned. She brought this upon herself, as well you know. Now come...

The DUKE starts to go out. BESS's voice stops him.

BESS
No. I will go with her.

DUKE
You're not going anywhere...

BESS
(Turns, magnificently)
I will go with G if G will have me, and there is nothing you can say or do to stop either of us.

The DUKE is speechless. GEORGIANA looks up for the first time. The DUKE leaves. The women are left alone in silence with each other.

CUT TO:

141 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

141

On a cold, windy, grey March day, TWO PLAIN COACHES travel across the flat and largely featureless landscape.

CUT TO:

142 INT. CARRIAGES. DAY

142

In one carriage are TWO MAIDS and DR NEVILLE. In the other is GEORGINA and BESS.

CUT TO:

143 EXT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

143

The house is on a farm. It is rustic and remote, the only building for miles around. Chickens peck outside. It is far removed from the opulence GEORGINA and BESS are used to.

The two COACHES are parked outside. From the rear COACH, luggage is being unpacked and brought inside.

CUT TO:

144 INT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

144

GEORGINA enters this house with BESS and a SERVANT. It's simple, unlivied in and dusty.

BESS enters what is to be Georgiana's bedroom and tries to open a window, but it's locked shut.

CUT TO:

145 EXT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DUSK

145

GEORGINA comes out and watches the sun go down from the vast sky, to disappear at the very lowest point of the horizon. A few moments later BESS comes out and puts a shawl around her. A moment passes.

GEORGINA
Thank you for coming.

BESS
I couldn't not be with you.

GEORGINA smiles.

GEORGINA
I count it a triumph we have
become friends again when fate
has been so intent on keeping us
rivals.

BESS

So do I. I may have caused you a lot of pain but you must believe that I didn't plot or plan any of it. [Beat] The Duke is for my boys only. You are for me.

GEORGIANA is touched by these comments. Another moment passes and her mind returns to the situation to hand. She puts her hands around her stomach.

GEORGIANA

Bess, how will I do this?

BESS

For Charlotte, for Harryo, for little G, for Hart...

GEORGIANA nods her head.

GEORGIANA

Has Charles confirmed he'll be coming...for the little one?

BESS

Not yet. But I'm sure he will.

CUT TO:

146 I/E. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

146

SOME TIME LATER:

BESS and DR NEVILLE attend as GEORGIANA gives birth, seen from some distance away down the end of a long corridor. It's real and difficult. BESS holds GEORGIANA's hands.

As GEORGIANA screams we cut outside so the muted sounds are heard over the shots of the nature around the farmhouse.

CUT TO:

147 I/E. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

147

It's a bright Spring morning. Birds are singing. Inside it is peaceful. Brutal-looking eighteenth century birthing instruments lie covered in blood. It is unclear whether something really terrible has happened.

Outside, hens peck in the courtyard. DR NEVILLE, in a sombre mood, washes the blood off his hands and arms with water from a well. BESS joins him.

BESS

How are they?

COUNTRY DOCTOR

(Bluntly)

The girl is well. Her Grace lost
a lot of blood.

BESS looks worried.

CUT TO:

148

INT. BEDROOM. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. MORNING

148

GEORGIANA's in bed, summoning up all her strength to breast-feed her BABY. GEORGIANA strokes her head as she does so.

BESS is sitting in the other corner of the room. After a moment, she hears a faint sound and goes to look out of the window. From a long distance away, a small train of COACHES travel toward the house, kicking up dust in its wake.

BESS looks apprehensive. She goes to GEORGIANA's bedside.

BESS

(Gently)

He's here.

GEORGIANA flinches - it's the moment she's been dreading. BESS comes closer and gestures toward the BABY.

BESS (CONT'D)

Would it help if I...

GEORGIANA

(Looking up)

No, Bess. I must do it.

CUT TO:

149

EXT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

149

A COACH is at the gate. A BUTLER stands to one side, a WET NURSE to the other. Out steps a serious looking older man, GENERAL GREY. CHARLES GREY is nowhere to be seen.

BESS looks on from the doorway as GEORGIANA slowly takes the BABY up the path toward GENERAL GREY, holding it tight to her all the way. She reaches him.

GENERAL GREY

(Flatly)

Your Grace.

GEORGIANA

Where is Charles?

GENERAL GREY

I am Charles' father, General Grey. Your husband thought it best if I took care of this.

GEORGIANA takes a deep breath. She hadn't expected this, and now she is being asked to hand her baby over to a stranger, and a cold one at that. It's not clear that she will go through with it...

GEORGIANA gently kisses the baby's head, whispering to her, smelling her hair, her skin, running her nose down her face and breathing her in for one last time. BESS finds this impossible to watch and turns away.

With immense difficulty GEORGIANA finally goes to hand her baby over. GENERAL GREY does not take it. He nods sharply to his WET NURSE who steps forward to take the BABY, although for a moment GEORGIANA simply can't let her go.

GENERAL GREY immediately turns to go back to the COACH. GEORGIANA calls after him.

GEORGIANA

General Grey...

GENERAL GREY stops and turns.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

...her name is Eliza. She is innocent of all of this. Please take care with her.

GENERAL GREY is no longer able to maintain his business-like facade. He nods and gives a small, gentle smile.

GENERAL GREY

Of course. She is my granddaughter, after all.

GEORGIANA is comforted by his unexpected show of humanity.

GEORGIANA

What will you tell her, of her mother?

GENERAL GREY takes a moment to respond.

GENERAL GREY

That she is dead...But that she loved her very much.

GEORGIANA gives a small smile, one that hides the excruciating pain she is in. GENERAL GREY turns and goes back into his COACH, followed by the BUTLER and the WET NURSE and GEORGIANA'S BABY GIRL.

As the BABY GIRL is passed into the coach, GEORGIANA can hear her daughter begin to cry a little. GEORGIANA instinctively flinches, using all her strength to hold her back from running over to comfort her.

The driver cracks the whip and GEORGIANA watches as the COACHES ride off, leaving her alone at the gate with the barren landscape behind.

CUT TO:

150 I/E. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN

150

The MAIDS, SERVANTS and DR NEVILLE are packing up in the early morning light of dawn.

CUT TO:

151 INT. BEDROOM. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN

151

The cot is empty. Low sun cuts through the windows.

GEORGIANA sits staring into space in her bedroom, her fingers rolling backwards and forwards over a locket of Eliza's hair, as if she has been sat there all night.

BESS enters and comes close. It takes a moment for GEORGIANA to notice she's even there. She looks up.

BESS

We're ready.

GEORGIANA nods but doesn't move.

GEORGIANA

I can't go back...to how it was.
It will finish me off.

BESS

I know. We will find a way, I
promise. But now we must go.

BESS produces two linen FLANNELS. GEORGIANA looks quizzically at them.

BESS (CONT'D)

(Gently)

For your milk.

GEORGIANA looks down - there are two wet patches on her breasts. BESS kneels next to GEORGIANA and holds her tight.

CUT TO:

152

EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DAY

152

It's a sunny May day. We see still lives of the house and grounds.

In the courtyard SERVANTS are lined up in military precision. The DUKE is at the head of them standing alone. A small band are at the ready. A SERVANT at the gates gives the signal and they play bright, happy, celebratory music.

GEORGIANA's carriage enters the gates and stops in front of them. GEORGIANA steps out, clearly very subdued, followed by BESS who holds back near the CARRIAGE. The music playing is in total contrast with the mood of the occasion.

The DUKE steps up to greet GEORGIANA.

DUKE
Welcome home, G.

GEORGIANA
Thank you, William.

One by one the servants greet her, looking into her eyes, real affection showing through the formal setting.

SERVANT 1
Welcome home, your Grace.

SERVANT 2
Welcome home, your Grace.

Finally there are the CHILDREN, who are last in line but can wait no longer and break ranks, rushing forward to greet her, all cuddles and tears.

CUT TO:

153

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

153

GEORGIANA's MAIDS unpack all of her things.

GEORGIANA and BESS are talking quietly to one another by the window. Outside their children play together, the images distorted by the wavy glass of the window pane.

The DUKE approaches tentatively from the background.

DUKE
Hello, G. I hope I'm not disturbing you.

GEORGIANA
No, not at all.

GEORGIANA gestures to her staff who all leave, as does BESS. The DUKE fidgets and, unusually for him, looks distinctly nervous.

DUKE

I am aware that I am not particularly adept at expressing myself when it comes to matters of a more personal nature, but I shall endeavour to try. [Beat] Over the years I have acted in ways that you have judged... harsh. Well I do not wish for you to undergo any further suffering. Indeed, I would like our life to return to a calm normality.

GEORGIANA

Thank you William. Your sentiments are very welcome.

The DUKE looks very relieved. He smiles.

DUKE

Lady Melbourne has arranged a ball in honour of your return from holiday. Given some of the vague reports that have been circulating over this past year, I think it would be wise for us to go. A show of unity, so to speak.

GEORGIANA

As you wish.

DUKE

Very good. Please inform BESS... so that she too has enough time to prepare.

The DUKE, pleased with himself, leaves. After a moment BESS re enters. The women face each other, seemingly trapped once again in the DUKE's triangle. But their faces are not despondent. In fact they display tiny, mysterious smiles.

CUT TO:

154

INT. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - EVENING 154

GEORGIANA is carefully made up by her MAIDS. At the same time, her SEAMSTRESS holds up a series of fashionable and eye-catching clothes for her to wear. GEORGIANA shakes her head to all of them.

Finally the SEAMSTRESS holds a dress up - although we don't see it - and GEORGIANA nods.

CUT TO:

155 EXT. BALL. LADY MELBOURNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

155

A big, lively ball is in full swing. A FOOTMAN stands at the door and addresses the party in a booming voice.

FOOTMAN

The Duke and Duchess of
Devonshire. And Lady Elizabeth
Foster.

The room goes quiet with a great sense of expectation...

The doors swing open...

GEORGIANA steps back into the limelight...

But she is now dressed in a far more sober way and cuts a demure, conservative figure. GEORGIANA'S appearance is clearly a disappointment to the guests, and the press react with far less interest than ever before. In contrast, ahead of her the room is packed with fashionable new debutantes.

GEORGIANA walks steadily through the crowd. She is to the left of the DUKE, BESS to the right. He has his head held high, finally seeming to be in total control of it all.

GEORGIANA nods hello to FOX and SHERIDAN, and there's a warm, ad-hoc mix of bowing and 'welcome home Your Grace'. There is however, a hint that they don't quite recognise her, or that she has undergone some kind of minor lobotomy.

LADY SPENCER steps forward and kisses her.

LADY SPENCER

(Genuinely)

G, my darling, how wonderful to
see you.

GEORGIANA

And you, Mama.

LADY SPENCER guides her off to one side, and whispers;

LADY SPENCER

How are you?

GEORGIANA gives a look as if to say 'alright'.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

I wish I could have done more to
help.

(MORE)

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

But the choices you have made are
for the best. Things will become
easier in time.

GEORGIANA

Thank you. I know.

GEORGIANA walks on. Suddenly she sees GREY, talking to a group of YOUNG PEOPLE. She cannot help but approach him, speeding up as she gets nearer.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Charles...

He turns, looking awkward and nervous when he sees that it is her. Next to him a YOUNG WOMAN turns too, a younger spitting image of GEORGIANA.

GREY

Your Grace...allow me to
introduce my fiance, Mary
Ponsonby.

GEORGIANA is shocked but manages to hold out her hand.

MARY PONSONBY

Your Grace.

GEORGIANA

Miss Ponsonby.

GEORGIANA looks to GREY. GREY takes his fiance's arm.

GREY

Please excuse us.

GREY and MARY PONSONBY walk off. After a moment, GEORGIANA appears behind them.

GEORGIANA

Charles...

GREY turns to face her. He looks at MARY, who is not happy about it, but slopes off. GREY faces GEORGIANA.

GREY

Yes?

GEORGIANA

I'm sorry that the Duke didn't
let you come.

GREY

What do you mean?

GEORGIANA

(Whisper)

To pick up our Eliza.

GREY looks at her. Beat. There is a coldness in his expression we haven't seen before.

GREY

It was me who didn't want to come.

GEORGIANA tries hard to remain composed, but finally looks to have been crushed, cracked and defeated.

GEORGIANA

I wish you every happiness.

CUT TO:

156 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - NIGHT

156

The DUKE, BESS and GEORGIANA walk through the halls in silence. They stop at the turn off for the DUKE's bedroom.

DUKE

Good night, G.

GEORGIANA

Good night, William.

The DUKE turns to BESS, expecting her to follow him, but she doesn't.

BESS

I am tired, William. It has been a difficult trip. I'm sure you understand.

The DUKE is taken aback, but doesn't want to upset the newfound harmony.

DUKE

Oh...yes, well...another time.
Good night Bess.

BESS

Good night William.

The DUKE walks off to his quarters alone.

CUT TO:

157 INT. HALLWAY TO BEDROOMS. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - NIGHT

157

GEORGIANA and BESS now walk together, two massive dresses side by side down the wide corridor. They don't speak, but the knowing, mysterious smile we saw earlier returns to GEORGIANA'S face. It is matched by BESS's.

They reach GEORGIANA'S room and she pushes open her double doors to reveal her four poster bed. GEORGIANA turns, a devilish, coquettish, rebellious twinkle in her eye.

GEORGIANA
After you.

BESS returns a cheeky, mischievous look and sexily brushes past, heading for the bed. GEORGIANA puts her head back into the hallway and looks left and right to check no one's watching.

GEORGIANA takes the handles and pulls closed the heavy doors, her triumphant face finally disappearing behind the crack in the middle as she shuts us out with a bang.

CUT TO BLACK:

158 FADE UP - A PORTRAIT OF GEORGIANA

158

Over the portrait, a title card fades up:

Georgiana, the Duke and Bess lived together until Georgiana died

FADE TO BLACK:

159 FADE UP - A PORTRAIT OF THE DUKE

159

Over the portrait, a title card fades up:

Soon after, the Duke proposed to Bess

FADE TO BLACK:

160 FADE UP - PORTRAIT OF BESS

160

Over the portrait, a title card fades up:

And Bess became the new Duchess of Devonshire

The shot begins to move in on Bess's face, but then starts to close in on the pendant necklace she is wearing.

The camera gets closer and closer until we realise that Bess is wearing a miniature portrait of GEORGIANA - the one we saw in the opening scene. She stares back and smiles.

The camera moves even closer still, until we disappear to BLACK between a tiny crack in the paint of this two hundred year old picture.

161 END TITLES

161