



RUTHLESS

Katherine Moran

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Character List

Ruth

Muriel Jakubait

Clare Andrea McCallum

Morrie Conley

Vicki Martin

Club Member

Male Date

Edgar

George Ellis

Desmond Cussen

David Blakely

Ant Findlater

Carole Findlater

Recorded voices are denoted with 'VOICE'

Ruth is played by one actor,
with 4 actors multi rolling the other characters

The staging, design & music all have a touch of flamboyance.

Heightened at times, slathered in melodrama
with bright colours and dark deep pits.

Audio & music suggestions are a guidance.

Holloway Prison. Morning of 13 July 1955.

A prison cell.

La Vie En Rose tinkles from Prisoner No. 9656's compact as she checks herself. A dab of lipstick. Sounds of a crowd in the distance.

Prisoner No. 9656, Ruth Ellis, spots the glass of brandy on the table.

She approaches, sniffs it and downs it.

RUTH. *(exhales loudly)*

PRIEST VOICE. Good morning, Mrs Ellis.

RUTH. Oh, Jesus!

Sorry, *Father*. Good morning.

A little curtsy.

Beat.

Would you like a biscuit? I won't, I'm watching my figure.

Not very *(talkative)* for a priest, are you? Thought you'd be a bit more...

Right, well, I better warn you before we start that I'm a little rusty on the... on the words

And before you say it, it's not nerves, I don't get nervous, believe me, it's really just –

PRIEST VOICE. Are you ready?

RUTH. Yes. Father.

PRIEST VOICE. May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy.

This is your bit.

RUTH. Oh, right, yes – bless me, Father, for I'm – for I have sinned. It has been... well, it, this – is actually my first... confession.

A romantic orchestra fades in. Ruth begins to glow like Rita Hayworth on the big screen, a dreamlike recounting.

You know, it's funny, last night, I dreamt I was at church. Back in Basingstoke. That would have been our second or third home – I can't remember, we lived in many shitty towns growing up. And in the dream, I was suddenly possessed of a supernatural power and I flew like a spirit, over the pews and the church graveyard, and landed in our old house.

Julian and Muriel are playing – mum, Julian and Muriel are fighting! The kitchen's all warm and steamy from boiling potatoes – ow!– *mum*, Muriel pinched me!

No point trying, she's sick of the lot of us. She's not really... here.

She's waiting...

And then suddenly, there he is... his silhouette watching me... standing in the –

The music cuts, the space suddenly plunged into a black abyss.

A bedroom door creaks and closes. Sounds of shuffling.

YOUNG RUTH VOICE.

(sleepily mumbled) Mm?

ARTHUR HORNBLY VOICE.

Only me, Roo Roo.

YOUNG RUTH VOICE.

(sleepily mumbled) Daddy?

ARTHUR HORNBLY VOICE.

Shh, shh...

The sound of an adult getting into a bed.

The film star lighting suddenly ignites again. Ruth plasters on a smile.

RUTH. Sorry I –

Please play the music.

The orchestra abruptly starts up & crescendos, slowly fading into [Pistol Packin' Mama](#).

I was fourteen when I told my mother I was leaving.

“Bertha,” I said,

“I am going to *be someone*”.

—

1942. A London dive bar.

Wailing air raid siren, music. Teenage Ruth is spectacted, tipsy, dancing awkwardly.

RUTH. Muriel, is he looking at me?

MURIEL. Not likely! You're far too young.

RUTH. I'm not! Ugh, you're so annoying. You're just jealous. Cos I'm your little sister and I've got better bosoms.

MURIEL. Shut up, Ruth. And it's bosom, not bosoms. *(gasps)* He's a *GI*.

RUTH. *(gasps)* Is he?

...What's that?

MURIEL. He's *American*, you dodo. Over here fighting for our lot.

RUTH. Oh bloody hell, you *dodo*. Come on then, dance with me!

Ruth awkwardly twists and bops.

He's still looking.

Heard things about these American ones. Apparently, they've got more money than you can stuff up your –

CLARE. Hey, chick.

She melts.

Nice dancing.

RUTH. *(giddy)* I f-thank, ah just –

MURIEL. Sorry about my sister – I'm Hillary.

RUTH. What?

CLARE. Nice to meet ya, Hillary. And you, little miss?

RUTH. I'm... R – Rita. Like Rita Hayworth. The actress.

CLARE. Well hello, Rita.

RUTH. Hello. You.

MURIEL. What's your name?

CLARE. Clare.

RUTH. Clare?! Like... Claire Trevor, the actress?

MURIEL. Ruth!

CLARE. (*amused*) I guess so.

RUTH. That's an odd name for a bloke.

MURIEL. I'm really sorry about my sister.

CLARE. Shame. I've always fancied myself in Hollywood.

RUTH. Are you from Hollywood?

CLARE. Eh, not too far.

MURIEL. Where?

CLARE. Montreal.

RUTH. Canada.

MURIEL. *Obviously*, Ruth.

RUTH. It's *Rita*.

CLARE. You're quite the duo.

RUTH. Oh, is that funny – he's got really white teeth. You've got really white teeth.

CLARE. Thank you. You've got really blue eyes.

RUTH. Mmm I do. Do I? Yes.

Well I know I've had a gin but I'm pretty sure I'm talking to Gene Kelly.

CLARE. Say, lil sugar, you wanna dance?

RUTH. Definitely Gene Kelly.

They dance and float. A Hollywood underscore.

And suddenly, we're doing this amazing routine where Clare whisks me away into oblivion, every night. We travel by *taxi only*, Brixton to Soho. He showers me with bouquets of dark red carnations, and perfume that makes Muriel go

MURIEL. *Heavens!*

RUTH. We drink and jive, and if we get too close, the man comes up and tells me "You can't move like that in here" so I tell him "Ohhh why don't you kiss my –"

She is spun away.

And after the bars close, Clare takes me to a hotel, and we spread out on the biggest bed you've ever seen. He doesn't believe me when I say I'm seventeen. Then he starts to... things that I only...

A snap blackout, sounds of a struggle, heavy breathing –

ARTHUR HORNBY VOICE.

Just relax.

YOUNG RUTH VOICE.

Daddy, I...

ARTHUR HORNBY VOICE.

Now, now, Roo Roo...

RUTH. No, no! Not this time.

Snaps back to the romantic hotel, romantic music.

No – this time, this is – I'm floating. He's smooth. And gentle.

And sweaty but I sort of don't mind.

I tell him my real name's Ruth.

He kisses me on the cheek and says

CLARE. Nice to meet you, Ruth.

RUTH. Bit weird him saying that while – but whatever

Breakfast.

And for breakfast, he always has bacon. Clare loves bacon. He calls me his little Piggy.

CLARE. Morning Piggy!

RUTH. Hello you.

CLARE. Piggy, you're not gonna believe this – we've hit the breakfast jackpot.

RUTH. No! Better than bacon?

CLARE. Just wait. Piggy, I am proud to present...

Eggs in a tin!

RUTH. That / sounds *foul*.

CLARE. / *Eggs in a tin!* This is gonna be the best breakfast ever!

Beat, before she commits.

RUTH. (*Canadian accent*) We've hit the jackpot!

Joyful, then suddenly she loses her breath as something is changing inside her.

Woah.

Clare.

CLARE. Baby?

RUTH. ...is it?

CLARE. What?

She indicates her stomach. Pregnant.

RUTH. Clare... I think...

CLARE. You hungry? Baby, don't worry, we've got eggs in a tin.

RUTH. No, Clare, I think I'm...

Clare realises.

CLARE. You serious?

RUTH. Deadly.

CLARE. Oh my god.

She winces with a contraction.

RUTH. Don't leave me.

CLARE. Ruth, I – will you –

RUTH. What? Oh Clare, of *course*, of course I'll marry –

—

She is spun into

Silence, breastfeeding.

RUTH. Piggy had a little piglet.

Sorry, I'm meant to say – *this is my little boy.*

The baby bites as he feeds.

Ouch! You little –

This is Andy.

To be honest, they might as well have handed me a piglet. Covered in... mashed potato. Make a good dinner.

It's just so... quiet.

Baby starts crying.

Yeah, alright, alright...

She hum-sings a little bit of Dream A Little Dream of Me.

(To Baby Andy) Where's Daddy, piglet? Aaaah where's Dada?

Well, little piglet, let me tell you a story. Daddy had to go back to Canada just after you were born, but he *promised* he'd come back and marry mummy.

So mummy waited.

And waited. For six months, and mummy doesn't like waiting, so eventually mummy wrote to daddy's Commanding Office.

BABY ANDY VOICE. What's that?

RUTH. Oh, like, his bosses at the army.

Anyway, weeks later, I ended up getting a very grumpy letter. From daddy's *wife*.

BABY ANDY VOICE. He was already married!?

RUTH. I know! Can you believe it. Idiot.

Muriel told me that when you have a baby, your *instincts* kick in. You're no longer just a *girl*. You're a *mother*. And your body suddenly just *knows*, knows how to do things. How to... *care* about him.

But I just... This is just... I mean, this is in the *way* –

BABY ANDY VOICE. Mummy!

RUTH. Ugh, what now?

BABY ANDY VOICE. The newspaper!

RUTH. So demanding.

‘Nazi Germany surrenders and V-E Day commemorates the end of the Second World War’. Oh my goodness!

BABY ANDY VOICE. No, not that tosh! Page 19.

RUTH. Oh, sorry. ‘Camera Club seeking models, for nude but artistic poses. Evening work only. One guinea an *hour*.’

Modelling? For a guinea an hour?

Andy, you’re a bloody genius!

Camera flash.

—

The Camera Club.

Ruth slowly takes off a layer of clothing and holds an angular pose. Ballsy but awkward, like a child pretending to be grown up.

RUTH. It’s weird how the photographers don’t talk.

Thought they’d at least pretend to discuss the best angle or something.

A pathetic, clapping sound.

Oh, really, there’s no need for applause —

Oh. That’s definitely not applause.

Did feel a bit strange at first. Didn’t know what to do with my arms.

Then I realised they don’t care what I’m doing with my arms.

She slowly starts to opens up.

Camera flash.

No one’s ever seen my whole body at once. Let alone lit up like Picadilly Circus.

It’s this weird mix... dead boring... and utterly exhilarating.

Camera flash.

I am giving them every little bit of me

Camera flash.

but I'm juuust out of reach.

Camera flash. Becoming physically freer and bolder in her poses.

They're gawping. I feel like a sweet shop or something.

Camera flash.

I am art.

Camera flash.

I'm their pin up.

Camera flash.

And best of all... I'm so good at this.

Mm, I can smell them. I – am – *beautiful!*

Finale camera flash.

Are we done?

She puts a layer back on.

Thank you, gentlemen.

—

The haze of Wilton's Restaurant.

MORRIE. Femme de Rochas?

RUTH. Beg pardon?

MORRIE. Your perfume. Femme de Rochas?

RUTH. Yes! Yes, it is Femme de Rochas, yes.

MORRIE. Got my grandad's nose, me.

RUTH. Oh, really? Was he a perfumer?

MORRIE. Fishmonger.

RUTH. Right. Perceptive.

After the shoot, one of the gents usually takes me to dinner. This one is essentially a walrus with legs.

MORRIE. So how did you get into the business?

RUTH. Well I've been modelling a while now, but I'm a singer actually.

MORRIE. Is that right?

RUTH. Yeah, used to perform with the band at the Locarno. You looking for a singer at your clubs, Mr Conley?

MORRIE. Please, please, call me Morrie.

RUTH. Pardon me – Morrie.

He runs clubs and bars. Bit confusing cos for someone who's not a photographer, he spends an awful lot of time at my Camera Club sessions.

MORRIE. Not looking for singers particularly at the moment.

RUTH. Well, I'm an all-round performer, Morrie. Entertainment's in my blood. Actually, my father played the cello for the biggest –

MORRIE. We don't need cellos. You heard of tricking?

RUTH. Tricking? What, like – rabbit out of a magical top hat, tricking?

Beat.

MORRIE. No.

RUTH. Oh. Oh. I... never done it.

MORRIE. Mm.

RUTH. Dammit.

And now I don't want to look more stupid, but I'm not even sure if tricking is when you're standing up, or if you have to be in a bed.

MORRIE. *(smirking to himself)* Magical top hat. Funny.

Where's your dress from, girl?

RUTH. It's a CC41.

Why? Do you like it?

Morrie is staring at her chest.

You're dribbling.

MORRIE. The haddock is salty.

RUTH. Is that what they call a euphemism?

MORRIE. Don't get clever with me.

RUTH. That means I'm winning.

MORRIE. I don't like the dress.

RUTH. Rude. But he tells me / that doesn't matter.

MORRIE. But / that doesn't matter. You're a talker, that's for sure. But you've got potential. That's the first step. / Second step is entertainment.

RUTH. Second step is entertainment.

MORRIE. Customer *comes* first. You know?

Beat.

RUTH. What's the pay?

MORRIE. Five pound a week plus / com –

RUTH. / FIVE POUND A WEEK?

MORRIE. Plus commission on drinks. And free evening-wear. None of those hideous CC41's.

He eats.

Got any children?

RUTH. Got a little boy.

MORRIE. Hm.

RUTH. What does that mean? He's dismissing me again – no, you are not going to dismiss me. I can, I can still – my mother, or my sister, someone can look after him, that's no problem –

MORRIE. My girls are lucky to work for me, Ruth. We're the best in the business. So I need commitment.

A baby's cry from offstage.

RUTH. Well, Mr – Morrie.

BABY ANDY VOICE. Mummy!

RUTH. *(to Andy)* No!

Like I said – entertainment's in my blood.

—

Arriving to the hum drum of the Court Club.

RUTH. Hello, I was told to come here – Ruth Hornby.

VICKI. *Horny!?* Oh you were born for this.

- RUTH. No, not – oh, right, har har, born for... great.
- VICKI. You're in the right place, dear. Welcome to the Court Club, Ruth *Hornby*.
- RUTH. The girls are perched like dolls on the bar stools, eyeing me up over their ciggies.
- VICKI. This is Betty... Lisa... Joan...
- RUTH. Allo, Betty. Lisa. Joan.
- VICKI. I'm Vicki.
- RUTH. More commonly known as Quickie Vicki.
- VICKI. Any questions, any trouble, you come to me.
- RUTH. Right.
- VICKI. First things first, you'll need conversation starters, so grab a newspaper, ducky.
- RUTH. What d'you call me – a *newspaper*? Oh leave it out, I've enough chat without the bleedin' Telegraph.
- VICKI. (*laughs*) Oh, is that right? Well. I think we're going to be friends.
- RUTH. Vicki's all rollers and pink satin. She's got curves like Ava Gardner and teeth like Doris Day. She's so pretty, when she looks me at me, I don't know if she's gonna punch me or kiss me.
- VICKI. Oh but my word, we can't have you wearing – *that*. Here, try this... Oh, looks like it'll be a bit tight on you. Hopefully in the right places. And then, come here – Chanel shower. Lippy – perfect.
- Ready? Good lucky, ducky.
- RUTH. Why does she keep calling me bloody duc –

We burst into the Court Club. Bodies weave, dance, drink. Piano, perhaps a beat.

It's early at the Club, but there's already a buzz. The air is a tipsy mix of schoolboy jokes and stale manly sweat. Girls waft through the smoke and shouts, pouring out drinks and one-liners, all tits and teeth.

Vicki's gliding across the room like a fairy, chatting, laugh –

She hears and mimics Vicki's laugh.

(*laughing*) Oh yes, laugh – laughing.

Are we meant to – dance? No?

She awkwardly sways alone for a while.

CLUB MEMBER. What's your story then, blue eyes?

RUTH. *(startled)* Sorry? Oh – I'm – I'm new. I'm a singer.

CLUB MEMBER. Yeah? What kind?

RUTH. Oh, no, nothing you would've...

CLUB MEMBER. Mmm.

RUTH. Yeah...

What you drinking?

CLUB MEMBER. Gordon's.

RUTH. Lovely.

I have no idea what I'm doing.

CLUB MEMBER. What?

RUTH. What?

CLUB MEMBER. You just said you have no idea what you're doing.

RUTH. Nooo. Did I? Must be the Blitz that's sent your ears funny.

CLUB MEMBER. You're funny.

RUTH. Right.

He's funny – funny-looking. Could be sort of handsome if... y'know... it was dark.

She notices Morrie watching in the shadows.

CLUB MEMBER. Well. Have a good night, then.

RUTH. Actually, actually, you know I'm a singer? Well I was a regular at the Queen's Hall, actually. Yeah. Before it was, you know, bombed out.

CLUB MEMBER. Really?

RUTH. Yeah. Really.

CLUB MEMBER. How does a young thing like you end up at Queen's Hall?

RUTH. Well

Well, my father played the cello for –

Snap blackout. Loud sounds of discordant cello scratching, into fumbling, ears ringing, whimpers, heavy breathing & whispers –

ARTHUR HORNBY VOICE. Ahh... that's lovely, Roo. Isn't it?

Snaps back to the club.

RUTH. – I, I mean – he was a *conductor* for... the Royal Ballet.

And how he met my mother was, she was the principal ballerina, see.

In Swan Lake.

CLUB MEMBER. No!

RUTH. I know. *I know.*

Play it, play it, I've got him now.

He – *father* always, oh *golly gosh*, he *always* used to say that when mother danced, she floated on air. And then once he met her – he was floating too.

CLUB MEMBER. (*tickled*) Awwww /

RUTH. / Awwww – well I don't know what the fuck I'm saying, but it's bloody working.

Should've stuck a pair of wings on him and called him Twinkletoes, shouldn't we!

Morrie smirks at me from the corner. This is easy.

Shot him off to the high heavens and all!

She laughs forcedly.

Ok. I'm hilarious. And popular.

(*To the Club Member*) Na night!

So I come back the next night. And the next.

The gentlemen start to take me and Vicki on double dates. Classy stuff, mind, no funny business.

Breakfasts in Mayfair, then hotels for high tea and drinks into the night.

So we start to pretend we're sisters who – oh yes, we lived in – was it India first?

VICKI. Yes, yes, ducky, then Kenya.

MALE DATE. That's where my father was based!

RUTH. Nooo!

MALE DATE. Yes, yes, couldn't hack it though, all that wildlife.

RUTH. Oh my goodness, Victoria, do you remember?

VICKI. Remember? Regina, how could I forget!

MALE DATE. What, what happened?

RUTH. I almost watched my darling sister get totally devoured by a man-eating crocodile.

MALE DATE. You didn't.

VICKI. Oh quite! The "mamba hatari of Nairobi", if I remember rightly.

RUTH. That's right, dear, that's right.

MALE DATE. Goodness.

VICKI. But our Regina is quick on her feet.

RUTH. I am, I am. Turns out crocodiles love marmite sandwiches, thank heavens.

VICKI. Just think if we'd gone for jam that day! Oh!

MALE DATE. Golly! You two have lived quite a life.

VICKI. Haven't we just. Fancy a tea-and-soda, ducky?

RUTH. I have no idea what that is, you bloody duck, so *yes* I will.

VICKI &

RUTH. Cheers!

Upstairs.

MORRIE. Here, Ruth. C'mere. This is Edgar. Friend of mine.

RUTH. Nice to meet you, Edgar.

EDGAR. Pleasure's mine.

MORRIE. Was wondering if you'd like to take a look upstairs together?

RUTH. I

EDGAR. I didn't mean to interrupt your little party.

RUTH. No, I

Look upstairs.

MORRIE. Yes, Ruth.

RUTH. I can –

Oh god, he's another one of the walrus family. He must be the baby. Got chubby walrus fatty cheeks –

MORRIE. Ruth?

RUTH. Sorry, I can – no, no, yes, I – I can –

Oh my god, why are you *stuttering*, Ruth!?

I can

do

that.

If he likes.

MORRIE. Perfect.

EDGAR. Absolutely.

She downs a drink.

RUTH. Baby Walrus stumbles into one of the rooms above the Club. He reeks of English Leather cologne and cigarette smoke.

Silence.

EDGAR. You're beautiful.

RUTH. Thank you.

No need to be... sad about it.

EDGAR. What?

RUTH. You seem sad.

EDGAR. Morrie said you were a talker.

RUTH. What?

EDGAR. I'm not sad.

RUTH. All right.

Aren't you going to turn off the lights?

EDGAR. Why?

RUTH. Normally, I thought... it happens in the dark.

EDGAR. I prefer to be able to see.

It's romantic.

RUTH. There's nothing romantic about this.

While Edgar continues the physical motions of the scene, Ruth steps out, sometimes physically in sync from afar, sometimes witnessing.

It's

feeble.

Pathetic strokes of my jaw, and elbows.

Strokes turn into hugging, holding. Gripping around my waist, he's kissing my –

Then somehow we crash into the bedside table

And he starts grabbing handfuls of me.

And then it's – oh

It's business. I grit my teeth. It's business, it's business.

He's pulling – oi mind yerself, this dress cost three shillings!

Oh my god, I feel sick.

He spins me round, pushes down on my shoulders. What's – ?

Oh.

Harry Brenton got me to do this once behind a pub in Camberwell.

Baby Walrus is enjoying it. Towering above me, eyes closed, mouth open, brow furrowed.

He's powerless. Totally powerless.

I could bite it off.

Tell me I'm beautiful.

EDGAR. You're...

You're...

RUTH. And it ends.

It's fine.

It's
hollow.

Nothing worse than I've

So maybe I'm a natural.

—

Moving out.

Muriel and Ruth fold laundry together.

MURIEL. Did I just hear your correctly?

RUTH. Muriel –

MURIEL. (*presenting a pile of sheets/laundry*) Here, take these.

RUTH. Jesus, you're like a sergeant.

MURIEL. Ruth, you can't be serious.

RUTH. Yes I can be.

MURIEL. You want to move *into* the Court Club!?

RUTH. That's what I said, isn't it.

MURIEL. You – you can't – ok, firstly you're folding that all wrong.

RUTH. Ugh!

MURIEL. Secondly, is the Court Club really where you want to be? Working at a bar? Here, you've met some lovely single chaps recently, and you never know what might happen there.

RUTH. Oh *boring*, I don't want to settle down.

MURIEL. Well, maybe not yet.

RUTH. Maybe never, it's 1950, we're not *medieval*. Although this underwear is, *hello*!

MURIEL. Stop it. The working hours are awfully late there too, you know rheumatic fever comes back when you're exhausted. Mummy and daddy are already besides themselves with your late nights as it is.

RUTH. Oh, Muriel, really! Pull the other one, Bertha and Arthur have never given two hoots about where I am.

MURIEL. I hate it when you call them that.

RUTH. Those are their names!

MURIEL. That's inside out.

RUTH. Have you just got a problem with everything I do?

MURIEL. Not at all, I just want you to think this through.

RUTH. I have thought it through.

MURIEL. What about Andy then? How will that work?

RUTH. He'll stay with Bertha, she loves having him. And this means I won't be disturbing them at all hours of the night.

MURIEL. Look, darling, you're a good person. You deserve to be in – good places.

RUTH. What does that mean?

MURIEL. You don't have to do this.

RUTH. I don't have to do anything.

MURIEL. Can we just –

RUTH. I don't know if you've noticed, but I'm making a *living* at the club. A future. I know what I'm doing.

MURIEL. You have a future here too.

Beat.

RUTH. Morrie? When do I get to sing? Come on, the boys want it.

A gentle spotlight appears.

Ruth performs an imperfect, playful, coming-of-age rendition, à la Hollywood solo of Rita Hayworth or Marilyn Monroe.

VICKI. Happy birthday, ducky!

RUTH. Thank you, Vicki!

VICKI. What is it now, twenty...?

RUTH. Four. Bleedin' ancient.

VICKI. Oh, stop it.

RUTH. No, look, my tits are getting all saggy, look!

VICKI. Phwoar! Proper swingers!

They giggle.

MORRIE. Ruth. Would you like to... pop in to my office? Say goodnight?

Beat.

RUTH. Actually, Morrie, I'm going for a drink with Vicki.

MORRIE. That's alright. There's plenty of time.

RUTH. It's my birthday, Morrie.

MORRIE. Mm. Happy birthday.

He exits.

VICKI. Ugh. "Pop in to say goodnight."

RUTH. Yeah, like he's some kind of giant baby.

VICKI. Is it awful?

RUTH. Nothing we don't know.

VICKI. Right.

I'll go polish the glasses.

RUTH. Honestly, fucking Morrie Conley is like trying to bounce across the Channel on a half-inflated rubber dinghy.

Sometimes, you get an extra bottle of perfume or bracelet at the end of the week.

Oh, and something else you definitely didn't ask for.

Looks at stomach.

The girls tell me about a lady in the area who'll sort it out.

You go round for a bath. Drink a lot of gin beforehand...

And it gets... done.

She starts to contort in pain, a guttural yell, then abruptly snaps to —

—

A proposal.

Evening, George.

GEORGE. (*slurring*) Don't you mean, happy birthday, George!?

RUTH. No, it isn't! Is it!? A toast!

GEORGE. Forty-one years old!

RUTH. You're *never*! – God, I thought he was nearly sixty –

GEORGE. / Cheers!

RUTH. / Cheers! George Ellis. Always had a soft spot for him. I mean, he's an absolute mess, but –

GEORGE. (*slurring*) Ruth –

RUTH. He likes to take me shopping.

GEORGE. You've changed my life, you know.

RUTH. Now stop that.

GEORGE. No, on your birthday, you have to speak the truth, and Ruth /

RUTH. / George...

GEORGE. I never thought a woman could make me feel like this again.

RUTH. Now, come on.

GEORGE. And after that bitch ruined my life –

RUTH. Uh uh uh, now Georgie, if you're about to talk about that horrid ex-wife of yours again, then I'll have to tell you to shut up.

GEORGE. You'll have to shut up. I love you, Ruth *Horny*.

RUTH. Join the queue, darling.

GEORGE. You know I could change your life, too.

RUTH. Oh, leave it out.

GEORGE. We could live down by the seaside –

RUTH. Oh yeah..!

GEORGE. I'd be the local dentist.

RUTH. Would you, now. How exactly would you do that?

GEORGE. Got friends, haven't I, down in Southampton. Can get us a place too. Right by the water.

RUTH. You know I love the seaside.

GEORGE. You wouldn't have to work. Bedroom for Andy. Bedroom for us.

RUTH. You'd bring Andy?

Now I can't tell if you're pulling my leg, this is dangerous. Would you take me on holiday, too?

GEORGE. If you like.

RUTH. Where?

GEORGE. Ooh... How about Nice?

RUTH. *Oooh la la*, how proper! You wouldn't dare.

GEORGE. Try me.

Beat.

RUTH. Stay right there.

So hear me out, I've been at the club four years now. It's same dicks, same tricks. Pardon my French.

And granted, this proposal... well, yes, he's absolutely sloshed, clearly, I don't know if he'll even remember it in the morning. And I don't want to settle down.

But it's – *fun*, isn't it. Seaside, a whole house, no boss. Good set up for Andy.

And I could

love George.

Maybe.

Do I need to love him?

And this isn't settling down.

It's not settling down.

Go on then, Georgie. I dare you.

Wedding bells ring.

Wait, hold on, you never said we'd have to – !

Ugh, fine.

Mrs Ruth Ellis. Pleasure to make your acquaintance.

—

Recipe for Marriage.

Upbeat 50s music plays. Apron on, Ruth busies herself as the iconic 50s housewife, making dinner from a recipe book.

George?

That's odd. He said he'd be home by now.

Right... recipe for the perfect proper marriage...

One onion. Yes. Three potatoes. Yes.

One anxious message left with the local pub. Right.

It's only – he told me six o'clock, and it's nearly eight now. Sorry, what was your name? With all due respect, *Barbara*, I can tell when you're covering for him. You're an awful liar, really. Look, you've got to tell him to come home. Please. Alright, can I speak to the pub landlord? *What?* Well, this country's in some state if a shit liar like you can be in charge of a pub.

2 ounces of potato peels for extra crunch. Unusual.

Two sedatives, thank God for that.

She adds some to the mix. Reads the bottle.

Prescribed to calm the nerves.

Adds one more, then takes a handful for herself. Relief.

A screaming match? Gosh, really, after the sedatives? All right.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

GEORGE. *(drunk)* Give over, Ruth.

RUTH. The dental practice called me again today. I know you didn't turn up to work, George. So what were you doing?

GEORGE. I was working –

RUTH. Don't walk away from me, you were off poking that tart again, weren't you. And here's me, cooking your – you really don't care one toss about me! And honestly, now, I don't know what I ever saw in you! The more I know you, the more you're utterly revolting to me, you're mad, you're obsessed with your ex-wife –

She is struck for the first time.

She touches her forehead. We see blood on her fingers.

Shaken.

Brandy, for an extra kick.

Adds it to the mix, then takes a swig.

Yes please.

Bake in the oven for 40 minutes, and then repeat the process for... ever.

That's it.

That can't be it.

This can't be it.

(checking the recipe) Oh, and for that extra icing on the cake – a pregnancy.

Course.

Barbara? No, no, don't hang up, no, I promise I won't shout. Please listen, Bab, woman to woman now. Hear me – I need... I need George to come home.

I can't keep doing this. I am utterly, utterly miserable.

He's cheating on me, clear as day, you probably know all about it –

Good man? He can't even hold onto a job, Barbara. Let alone an erection!!

You know what – *thank you*, Barbara. Thank you. You've made me realise – Andy! – you've made me realise –

I don't belong here.

And I mean it this time – put on your coat, dear – I have people in London that love me, I have a *career*, which doesn't involve *onions* and *potatoes*. There are people who actually talk to me and respect me –

– *and* will help me look after this *second one* on the way. Yeah, you can tell George *I'm pregnant!*

Andy, come on! We're leaving.

On set for Lady Godiva Rides Again.

The sound of film rolling. Ruth hurriedly changes into a swimsuit and heels. We are mid-take on the set of [Lady Godiva Rides Again](#).

1st A/C VOICE. Lady Godiva Rides Again, scene 7, take 2.

CREW VOICE. Mark it!

Clapperboard snaps.

CAMERA VOICE. Rolling.

DIRECTOR VOICE. Aaaaand – action!

Applause.

COMPERE VOICE. Next we have a little girl from Scotland, Doris Campbell, the Pride of the Highlands. She tells me she gets her chestnut hair from her mother and her blue eyes from her father.

More applause. Ruth totters into shot and holds her beauty pageant pose.

COMPERE VOICE. And now we have Dorothy Morrell, the Bangkok's beauty queen. And believe me, those boys know their figures.

DIRECTOR VOICE. No, no – cut!

The lights come up bright, and Ruth is left squinting into the auditorium.

DIRECTOR VOICE. Eddie, did you approve this?

EDDIE VOICE. What's that, Frank?

DIRECTOR VOICE. This 'Dorothy Morrell' here.

EDDIE VOICE. Y – yes, sir?

DIRECTOR VOICE. I asked for petite. I'm not seeing petite, Eddie.

RUTH. What?

DIRECTOR VOICE. We're going to have to do a swap.

RUTH. You cheeky bastard. I'm five foot two!

EDDIE VOICE. Sorry about that, sir.

RUTH. I've modelled in Mayfair for years!

EDDIE VOICE. Out you come, love.

RUTH. No, s'cuse me, but that other lady you've got – Jane Collins, Joan Collins, whatever the – *she's got very womanly curves and all!*

DIRECTOR VOICE. Chop chop – my word, does she have a baby bump, Eddie?

EDDIE VOICE. Cor, not sure, sir – sorry, love, if you just toddle over there –

RUTH. No, NO! This is *my* story!

The scene is transformed to –

–

1953. *Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation rings out.*

Ruth is Queen, accepting her “crown”. She heroically drapes herself in a silk dressing gown, pearls – and transforms into a platinum blonde.

RUTH. Thank you, thank you.

Well Hollywood has been *gagging* to have me again, but I'm afraid Morrie took me back quicker than you can say “God save the fucking Queen”.

Three of us now, me, Andy and baby *Georgina*, after...

But not only that. Morrie realised I'm so fucking brilliant that he put me in charge of the whole place. I'm the youngest manageress in the whole of London, darlings!

Ladies and gents – welcome to the Little Club!

MORRIE. Looking good, Ruth.

RUTH. I absolutely transform the place. New décor, new girls, new music.

Vicki appears in a flurry of satin.

VICKI. Ducky, I'm in the *papers*!

RUTH. Oh bloody hell.

VICKI. All because of / Stephen Ward

RUTH. / Stephen Ward, I know.

VICKI. He likes my flavour.

RUTH. For god knows what reason.

VICKI. They called me “*the Darling of London*” last week – isn’t that amazing!

RUTH. My dear, you realise you’ve got painfully arrogant since I left.

VICKI. Well you won’t believe it, ducky, tomorrow, I’m going on a bloody road trip with the bloody Maharaja of Cooch Behar!

RUTH. Vicki, what the hell does that even mean, you pompous –
Oh, salami laykum, gentlemen, salami laykum, sir, salami.

VICKI. I don’t think it’s salami.

RUTH. That’s his *Majesty* Farouk of *Egypt*, Vicki. It’s salami.
Even as manager, the customer comes first.

Ruth is suddenly being ‘seduced’ from behind.

Oh, my!

Phone rings. She answers, still bouncing.

Hello, the Little Club? Yes, Ruth Ellis here.

Oh hello Mr Mishcon, how’s it going? You know, he’s really been making this divorce malarkey bloody nasty.

Ooft, gently, love.

What? He’s done what?

—

Somehow George gets custody of our baby girl, Georgina. She’s not even two years old.

They come and collect her from my flat one Tuesday afternoon.

I’m sorry, who are you?

They’re taking her “up north”, to be with him.

Why aren’t you answering me?

And suddenly we’re watching them leave, she’s crying, and Andy turns to me and says

BABY ANDY VOICE. Mummy. Mummy, can I go with them?

RUTH. I

Don’t be *silly*. It’s far more fun living with mummy.

Ruth shaking, takes her anti-anxiety medication.

You know, if there's one thing I've learnt. About men. They can't bear it when a woman's in charge. Being *important*, making important decisions, without them, without needing them, they hate it.

So do you know what the trick is? Make them think they're in control. "Whatever you prefer, dear". "Oh that's a good idea, darling." Because if they realise she's capable. That's she doing what *she* wants to do, no matter what the hell he's saying. They can't stand it.

—

Vicki is draped in the corner, adorned by her newest group of fans. All drunk.

Who's this lot then?

I said, who's this lot then?

VICKI. Racing drivers, ducky.

RUTH. Taken a wrong turn, have they.

VICKI. Har har. From the Steering Wheel Club, just off Park Lane.

RUTH. Men who constantly look on the edge of being slick and being greasy. Marvellous.

Desmond is staring.

Hallo, starrer. I'm Ruth.

DESMOND. *(mumbles)* Desmond.

RUTH. Desmond? Pleasure.

Way too much Brylcreem in his hair. Like he dunked his head in a chip fat fryer –

DESMOND. Sorry?

RUTH. Sorry, I said, what do you drive then?

DESMOND. A taxi.

RUTH. A taxi? That's the worst racing car I've ever heard of.

Her attention is pulled to...

Who's the stuck-up ass? Look at the way he's grabbing the girls. What's his name?

One of the group whispers it to her.

Eurgh, well I hope I never to see that little shit again.

Yes, I'm talking about you!

I said – I hope I never see that little shit ag–

—

A race car whizzes past, spinning Ruth into her next chapter.

At the garage.

Go on David, give it to 'em!!

David Blakely.

Racing driver. Slick little shit.

I'm obsessed with him.

DAVID. *(stubs his toe on his toolkit)* Ouch!

RUTH. Oh for god's sake, David, *slick*, I said you were *slick*!

DAVID. Sorry, darling! Come here.

He gives her a long, theatrical, Hollywood kiss.

DAVID. Better?

RUTH. Much better.

He's building this amazing new race car with his friend.

ANT. David, I said we need Penrith 20-60, 20-60, what on earth is – Silkolene?!

RUTH. They're calling it *The Emperor*. It's going to win all the races.

DAVID. Ant, how am I meant to remember this stuff when you tell me after five pints in!?

ANT. Some engineer, you are.

DAVID. I'm the driver, Ant, my job is to look good and drive fast.

ANT. And when are you starting on either of those?

RUTH. Last week, David decided to drive a Bentley around the Albert Hall, just randomly decided, and he did – at sixty miles an hour. So fast, he didn't get caught, *and* it got reported in the paper.

You think you're God's gift, don't you, David Blakely.

DAVID. Oh, but that was a ruddy brilliant one, though. *Sixty miles an hour*, Ruth, round and round like a carousel, *come on!*

RUTH. Darling, you're so arrogant, I can't possibly let on that you're bloody gorgeous, or you'll tear up the town.

DAVID. Too late.

He goes back to fixing the car's engine.

RUTH. There's something different about him. Unpredictable. Fun. Unusual for a posh boy.
Here, David –

DAVID. Mm?

RUTH. You promised me a bottle of Miss Dior last week.

DAVID. Did I?

RUTH. You did. What happened? I'm absolutely stinking.

DAVID. Well then, you're a filthy, beautiful woman.

RUTH. And you love it.

DAVID. You know me, darling, the filthier, the better.

David finishes tinkering with engine.

DAVID. There she is! *The Emperor!*

RUTH. She's... she's...

DAVID. Beautiful? Splendid?

ANT. The best bloody car you've ever seen?

RUTH. Yes, yes, that's – yes.

DAVID. It's all right, Ant, we'll make a racer out of her yet.

RUTH. I'll just follow his lead. I've heard you're going to win Goodwood next year.

ANT. And pigs are gonna fly.

DAVID. Oh, give over.

RUTH. Race day. You've got to look right on race day. It's a classy place. I pack us a picnic like what civilised people do – smoked salmon sandwiches, chocolates for David, he likes chocolates while he's driving.

And when he does well in the race, it's fabulous! We all celebrate back at the club and he gets all loud and hilarious, and treats me like the queen!

DAVID. Ruth!

RUTH. David! You did it!

DAVID. I bloody did it!

RUTH. I knew you could.

DAVID. All thanks to you – (*Irish*) my lucky charm!

RUTH. Oh bleeding Nora.

He presents Ruth with a bouquet of red carnations.

RUTH. Oh David!

DAVID. Red carnations.

RUTH. Oh they're beautiful. Splendid! The best bloody flowers I've ever seen!

DAVID. Not as beautiful as you. Isn't that right, boys? C'mere!

They are swept into a dreamlike Hollywood dance, perhaps to Dream A Little Dream of Me.

It is safe, idyllic. Almost too perfect.

During the dance, Ruth pulls David's handkerchief, smells it, and keeps it.

RUTH. Are you mine?

DAVID. Might be.

RUTH. This feels like we're in a movie.

DAVID. Hollywood.

RUTH. Exactly.

The track slow changes, speeding up with a beat, and their movements morph into a joyful physical sequence.

It's colourful, chaotic, euphoric, sexy.

Ruth whoops and squeals.

RUTH. David, you look utterly wild!

DAVID. What!?

RUTH. I said you look –

We dance

and scream

and drink

and laugh

and dance,

and yell

DAVID. / You're gorgeous!

RUTH. / You're gorgeous!

and David spins me and flings me until I cry,

with laughter, I'm –

crying with laughter! Oh my god!

I'm – *sherbet!*

This is what it is! Being *alive!* This is bloody it!

—

Breathless, a race car screeches past.

ANT. Ruth, this is –

CAROLE. Carole Findlater, nice to meet you.

RUTH. Nice to –

CAROLE. Hello, David.

DAVID. Hello, Carole.

Beat.

ANT. And Carole, this is Ruth.

RUTH. Hello. Cor, you've some figure, Carole. Don't look, David.

CAROLE. Oh, that hardly matters. Already seen most of it, haven't you.

DAVID. Carole –

RUTH. What does that mean?

CAROLE. Oh, sorry, didn't you know?

RUTH. Know what?

CAROLE. Oh, no, I feel like a total fool.

RUTH. Oh, that's alright, you only sound like half of one.

CAROLE. It's only... well, somehow, David proposed to me once.

RUTH. Did he.
You never told me that, darling.

DAVID. Ruth, it wasn't –

CAROLE. Really, it was nothing. I'd call him a trier.

RUTH. Would you? Well, I'd call *you* a bit of a cun – cunning.
Person.

She smiles and takes a big bite of sandwich.

Sandwich, anyone?

DAVID. Ruth –

RUTH. Cor there's something "*je ne sais what*" about claggy smoked salmon, isn't there?

ANT. How about we see you after the race?

DAVID. Perfect.

CAROLE. See you later, David.

RUTH. (*mocking*) See you later, Carole.
This is what it's like to be in one of those dysfunctional rich families, isn't it.

DAVID. A little bit.

RUTH. She can go on staring. She's just jealous.

DAVID. Don't pay any attention to her, Ruth. Let's have a drink.

RUTH. Eurgh, you stink of smoked salmon.
But he's my smoked salmon.
So back off.

Charades.

RUTH. Red carnations!

DESMOND. Heard they were your favourite.

RUTH. Oh Dessy, you shouldn't have.

David's away for a race, so I'm with the perpetual starrer. You remember Desmond, with the chip fat fryer hair.

DESMOND. What?

RUTH. I said you've done something - different with your hair. S' nice.

DESMOND. Oh.

RUTH. He hasn't really stopped staring since when we first met.

Would you like a drink?

DESMOND. Oh, no thanks, I rarely touch it.

RUTH. Oh. Me neither.

Ok, my turn!

She mimes the charade for 'film'.

DESMOND. Film.

RUTH. Yep.

She mimes 'two words', then 'first word'. She points to her bum.

DESMOND. Err... big?

RUTH. How dare you!

DESMOND. Right, um... Behind? Bottom?

RUTH. Oh my god, Dessy, you're awful! Fine, fine, let's try...

'Second word'. She mimes 'window'.

DESMOND. Box? Gearbox?

RUTH. Gearbox!?! Bloody hell, it's *window*, Dessy. Window! *Rear – Window!* The Hitchcock
–

DESMOND. Oh, the *Hitchcock*, oh -

RUTH. Honestly, I did it *really* well for you, and everything.

DESMOND. Sorry, dear. Well done.

RUTH. Right, go on.

He mimes.

Book! Oh god.

Six words. Jesus.

First word. “The”. Ok.

Second – second and third word.

Uhhh... “injured”, “bad back”? The... “walking stick”? Can’t walk, *sad*, um... “old”? Old! The “old – soldier”? “Old *man*”? Old man, the old man!

You could’ve just pointed at yourself, darling – joking! I’m joking!

Fourth word. “And”. Boring.

“The Old Man And”, what on earth is –

Fifth word. “The”. Jesus, Dessy.

Sixth word. Uhhh... “dancing”? Oh – “*bumpy*”. “Wobbly”. “Road”? Uh, what’s that, wobbly arms?

Oh, gimme a clue!

DESMOND. Ernest Hemingway.

RUTH. Well that’s not going to bloody help me, is it!

Oh, I give up.

DESMOND. The Old Man And – The Sea!

RUTH. *Sea!* That was *sea!*? *That* – was *sea!*?

She replicates his mime. He laughs. They enjoy a peaceful moment of silence.

I think you secretly love being teased by me.

DESMOND. Don’t know if it’s much of a secret.

RUTH. Well.

Gosh, this feels awfully

innocent.

DESMOND. Does it?

RUTH. You remind me of a teddy bear. All upright. Quiet. Safe.

Desmond approves.

DESMOND. What do you see in him?

RUTH. What?

DESMOND. Nothing. Sorry. Another round?

—

The Court Club.

VICKI. The usual, Desmond?

DESMOND. Yes, thank you.

RUTH. Same for me then, Vic.

VICKI. You sure about that, ducky?

RUTH. Why?

VICKI. You sure you also fancy a *beef fizz*?

RUTH. Excuse you?

VICKI. Beef. Fizz.

DESMOND. It's delicious.

RUTH. What's in it?

VICKI. It's ginger ale, beef broth —

RUTH. Yeah, no, Pernod for me please, Vicki, thanks.

Beef fizz?

DESMOND It's like soup with a kick.

Beat.

RUTH. That sounds horrendous.

VICKI. How've you been, Dessy?

DESMOND. Oh. You know me.

Beat.

VICKI. One beef fizz.

RUTH. Have you seen David around?

VICKI. No, not for a few weeks, dear. He's away racing, isn't he?

RUTH. Mm. He's at Le Mans.

VICKI. Isn't that the one that only lasts for twenty four hours?

Beat.

DESMOND. Cheers.

He downs his beef fizz. Ruth is distracted.

How about a song, Ruth?

RUTH. Me? Oh, no, not tonight.

DESMOND. I've heard there's a caricature artist in Piccadilly on a Friday night.

RUTH. Oh yes?

DESMOND. He does a wicked portrait, apparently. Perhaps after this, we could —

RUTH. Desmond, I'd like to stay here for a while.

DESMOND. Right-o.

The music changes.

Desmond gently offer his hand to Ruth. Eventually, reluctantly, she takes it.

He guides her in a teenage sway.

At first Ruth feels awkward, then she softens. It's like he is cradling her.

Suddenly, the sound of shouts outside, an almighty smashing of glass.

David staggers in, drunk, slurring, blood on his face.

VICKI. Oi!

RUTH. Oh my god!

DAVID. Bloody —

RUTH. Oh my god, David!

DAVID. Dancing with her?

VICKI. What on earth are you doing?!

RUTH. Get away from him!

Ruth rushes to David.

DESMOND. Careful, Ruth.

RUTH. Oh my god.

VICKI. He just head butted that glass.

RUTH. David, David, sit down.

DAVID. I'm not an idiot!

VICKI. You're paying for that, I hope you realise.

RUTH. Calm down.

DESMOND. Vicki, he's smashed the bar door.

VICKI. Yes, I can see that, Desmond!

RUTH. Oh, sweetheart, are you alright?

DAVID. I dunno.

RUTH. Right, it's all right, sweetheart, it's alright. Vicki, get some medical cloth, there's some in the office.

VICKI. You must be joking?

DAVID. Ouuucccch.

RUTH. I know, darling, I know – Vicki, I am your manager, go get some bloody cloth.

You know how to make an entrance, don't you, you great buffoon.

David starts crying, drunken, moany, childlike.

Oh I'm sorry, sweetheart. I'm only joking.

DAVID. *(slurred, through sobs)* Eighth.

RUTH. What?

DAVID. I came. Fucking *eighth*.

RUTH. Eighth?

DAVID. At Le Mans.

RUTH. Oh.

DAVID. The Emperor. Is shit.

RUTH. It's not, darling, you've done brilliant work –

DAVID. What the hell do you know?

RUTH. Well, I know what you've told me and / I know –

DAVID. / No, you don't know anything, you don't know anything.

He bats her away.

I need a drink.

DESMOND. Careful of the glass, Ruth.

DAVID. Is he still here?

RUTH. Stop being an arse, David.

DAVID. Thought you at least had some taste, darling.

RUTH. What?

DESMOND. Don't speak to her like that.

Beat.

DAVID. What d'you say?

RUTH. Stay out of it, Desmond.

DAVID. I'll speak to her how I like.

David and Desmond hold a glare.

DESMOND. Yes, I was dancing with her.

Where have *you* been?

Desmond exits.

Ruth starts to clean David's face.

RUTH. You're a fool, David Blakely.

She gently kisses his cheeks.

RUTH. An utter fool.

DAVID. Get off me.

He flinches.

He staggers out.

RUTH. Don't think about coming back.

—

We hear, or see the projection of, [Kim Hunter and Vivien Leigh in A Streetcar Named Desire](#).

KIM. Stanley's always smashed things. On our wedding night, soon as we came in here... he's snatched off one of my slippers, and rushed about the place smashing the light bulbs with it.

VIVIEN. He did what?

KIM. He smashed all the light bulbs with the heel of my slipper.

VIVIEN. And you let him, didn't run, didn't scream?

Beat.

KIM. I was sort of thrilled by it.

—

Red flags.

A car horn beeps.

Coming, coming!

She hops into David's car, taking a swig from a hip flask.

DAVID. What have you done with your hair?

RUTH. What do you mean, what have I done with my hair?

He takes her hip flask for a swig.

It's styled. Actually, it's called a *scarf bouffant*, David, if you must know. You like?

DAVID. Very nice.

RUTH. Don't you mean "I love it, Ruth, you magnificent woman" —

He suddenly puts his foot down on the accelerator.

Woah!

We're hurtling down blossomed lanes. Fast, free, scarf billowing in the wind. The colours out here are so vibrant, I could eat the blue icing sky. And I could kiss you all over!

I COULD KISS YOU ALL OVER!

DAVID. Put your arms in, Ruth.

RUTH. Goodness, what will your mother say when she hears you have a girlfriend?

He flinches away.

Aw, are you nervous?

Beat.

DAVID. You're not going to meet my parents.

RUTH. You thought I wouldn't catch on! I know they live in Penn, silly, I'm not stupid.

DAVID. You're getting carried away.

RUTH. Excuse me?

DAVID. Ruth, I told you, we're going to the cinema, in Beaconsfield. With Ant and Carole. That's it. Really.

Look, Ruth, I don't want to have to spell this out.

RUTH. Well I'm no good at spelling anyway.

DAVID. This... us... is just fun.

RUTH. Just fun?

DAVID. It's fun. That's it.

RUTH. You can't pretend, David.

DAVID. I'm not / pretending

RUTH. / You said you're mine / you can't pretend

DAVID. / No, be serious for a moment, Ruth. A man in my... position... to *seriously* consider...

RUTH. Is it because I'm a manager? Are you intimidated by my power, sweetheart?

DAVID. Don't exaggerate.

RUTH. I'm not exaggerating, I'm the manager. You're going with a –

DAVID. You're a club girl, Ruth.

RUTH. Well I'm a club girl paying *your* rent!

He slams his foot on the accelerator.

You struggle to even win a trophy at a little car race – *slow the hell down.*

DAVID. I honestly believe you are the most delusional person I've ever met.

RUTH. Slow down!

DAVID. I'll do what I like!

RUTH. If you shout, I'll shout back! You bloody idiot, *slow down* –

The screech of a car crash into

—

Brassy, distorted music at a club.

Ruth is swept into a nightmare-ish jive.

His eyes are black. Or maybe it's the room.

David, you look utterly mad!

I said you look –

We dance

and scream

and drink

and – ow!

and dance,

and yell,

You're gorgeous!

and he spins me and flings me until I cry,

with laughter, I'm –

crying with laughter!

David, who's – did she touch you?

Oi!

Sorry, darling, he's with me.

'Scuse me. 'Scuse me, you're in my –

Ow! *(laughing)* David, mind pushing *me*! It's this one you need to –

Slowly Ruth's dance morphs. We can't tell if her twists and flicks are the result of punches, pushes.

David!

DAVID. Will you just quit it, Ruth.

RUTH. I wasn't – I didn't –

DAVID. You always insist on embarrassing me.

RUTH. How did I embarrass you!?

DAVID. Just – stop making a scene.

RUTH. Oh, shut up.

(laughing) Hey, don't push me, David.

Hey, that hurts.

Stop it!

She is being beaten.

Stop.

The music distorts into sharp blasts

Beating Ruth brutally until

She is left on the floor.

Eventually, she stands. Collects herself.

She downs some pills with a bottle of alcohol.

Need them for...

For...

Turns out that woman at the club

Is David's fiancé

So

I don't know whether I love him or whether I'm going mad.

—

We hear this [original audio of Desmond and Ruth](#).

DESMOND. No wonder you're looking haggard, dear.

RUTH. Oh shut up, you'll have a black eye.

David gave me a black eye. Sitting in a car park on New Year's night. Sitting in a car park on New Year's night, in Penn, Buckinghamshire, at the Crown Hotel.

—

Still dazed, Ruth realises she is not alone.

David...?

Oh.

Desmond hands her a big stuffed envelope.

What's this?

DESMOND. I just heard, thought that – rent must be a little tough. Now that David's lodging with you.

RUTH. David and I are very happy. Living together.

DESMOND. Right.

RUTH. Do you think I'm some kind of charity case?

DESMOND. No. No, not at all.

Sorry.

How's your son doing?

RUTH. Andy is

He's absolutely

Oh, just leave off.

Really, Desmond, I mean it, sod off.

What do you care?

Desmond kisses her.

That was

So boring.

Utterly

Fleeeeuuhh.

Knock at the door. She tries to pull herself together, still dazed or drunk or both.

Yes?

MORRIE. Ruth? You decent?

RUTH. Morrie! Oh – oh, I forgot to say, sorry, sorry I was – late on Thursday –

MORRIE. Ruth, cut the chat. Look, this isn't pleasant but I'm afraid I have to fire you.

Silence until she bursts into laughter.

RUTH. Oh stop it, Morrie, my poor nerves can't take jokes like –

He's not joking.

You can't do that.

MORRIE. Afraid I can. You're too distracted playing house with the schoolboy.

RUTH. What, David? He's not even / here –

MORRIE. / Don't make this harder, Ruth –

RUTH. But he's not – I'm not –

MORRIE. This is a business, Ruth, not a hotel. I need women who *work*.

RUTH. Are you being serious?

I make this place what it is. I've made you what you are. You'd have nothing without me.

MORRIE. (*chuckles*) Alright. You tell yourself that.

I need you out by tomorrow morning.

RUTH. You're actually laughing.

No – you're just a sad little man. You *walrus*!

Slams door closed. She grabs a bottle, takes a big swig. Another knock.

Did you hear me, I said you're a bloody –

The door opens on an exasperated Muriel.

Muriel.

Oh my god, was it today? Was that lunch with you and Bertha today?

Shit shit, what are you – who's –

MURIEL. Ruth, I need to / talk

RUTH. / Andy! Hello, love – what are you doing? Muriel, why are you here?

She's looking at me like I smell bad or something.

MURIEL. I'm here. Because. I can't – it's too much for me, love. It's all – it's just too much for me.

RUTH. What is?

MURIEL. I can't – Joseph's putting in extra hours to cover the food, but with Andy there's six of us now, Ruth. They're getting too big to share beds, and the house is turning into a bomb site, and it just...

RUTH. She looks really wrinkly, like a sad balloon.

No, Muriel I absolutely can't take Andy in, I've just –

MURIEL. When are you going to get some sense of responsibility, Ruth?

RUTH. Responsibility.

MURIEL. Do you realise how often people come up to me? Everywhere, the newsagents, at church, with stories, saying “gosh, your sister's been gone a long time.” And I say, “Oh you know, she works a lot” and then they say “We heard she's a *call girl*, is that true, Muriel? That can't be true?” And I say “Oh gosh, no, *no*”. But after a while, I'm left thinking – why am I – I can't defend... you know, what example of a mother *is* that, who sleeps around / and calls it work

RUTH. / How *dare* you. I am *working*, working full time, for my children –

MURIEL. So when was the last time you telephoned for your daughter?

Can you even remember?

RUTH. You know what Muriel, I think you're jealous. Because I actually have a *life*. A *fun* life, with gorgeous, important people.

In fact, I know you've always been jealous of me. And you know why?

Because Daddy didn't manage to knock me up.

You've had a miserable life since you were fourteen.

You're jealous.

She looks like I've punched her in the stomach.

I don't care.

See, I've actually done something with my life. And now look at what I've become!

—

Come back.

[Here in my Heart by Al Martino](#) erupts. Ruth is alone in her Hollywood make-believe, a cross between evil villain and glamorous film star. She smells David's handkerchief, licks it. He is her drug.

She drinks from a bottle, scoffs anti-anxiety medication.

Suddenly cuts to –

—

Ruth slurring.

David, I'm pregnant.

I'm standing in front of his parents' big country house. Everywhere stinks of cow shit.

I said I'm pregnant.

DAVID. How the hell did you find this house?

I told you to leave me alone.

RUTH. *(indicating stomach)* Well, you clearly haven't stayed very far away.

I don't tell him Dessy drove me here, and this is actually the fifth door I've knocked on.

DAVID. That has nothing to do with me.

RUTH. It bloody does. No, don't close the door.

DAVID. You need to leave, Ruth.

RUTH. Play the music.

A Hollywood orchestra gently starts up.

Look, I know that I've been

It's been

hard work

in the past.

But I don't want that any more.

We're wonderful together, David. There's nothing like us. Our passion.

She gently leads him to a dinner table, or a sofa, or a bed – somewhere in Ruth's romantic film scene.

Sod it, let's get engaged, darling. I don't work at the club anymore. So no more rows.

It's our time to be lucky.

DAVID. Oh Ruth.

RUTH. Oh David.

Do you remember what you said once? You said once, you said you'd never have any winner's luck.

DAVID. Did I really?

RUTH. Do you remember the reason why?

You said – because you love me so much.

Yes / Yes, you did.

DAVID. / I bloody didn't.

RUTH. You said – David, yes you bloody did – you said you'd never have any winner's luck because you love me so much.

DAVID. Oh, yes, yes I did.

RUTH. I remember it, I thought it was ridiculous at the time, but you know, I think you were probably right. It makes sense. The more you love me, the rougher you love me, the worse you drive.

The orchestra suddenly cuts, the filmlike scene disappears as

David strikes her.

You can't walk on me forever.

I'm only human. I can't stand it.

DAVID. You will stand it. Because you love me.

Music erupts, a beat pumping, distorted.

RUTH. I want to start again.

DAVID. I should never have let you into my life.

RUTH. David, we're better when we're together.

DAVID. I don't know what make-believe world you live in.

RUTH. But you love me! We love each other!

DAVID. Ruth, this is done.

RUTH. We're going to have a baby!

DAVID. No, *we* are not! I'm nothing / to do with that –

RUTH. / God, you're so fucking *arrogant*, you're an embarrassment.

DAVID. I swear, one of these days, I'll kill you!

RUTH. You've done that already!

Ruth stands in front of David's car.

Go on! Go on, run me over. I dare you!

Ruth is beaten. She spins into oblivion.

David punches her so hard that she has a miscarriage.

She yells and crumples in pain.

—

Broken Model.

Ruth stares in a daze, motionless.

ANNOUNCER VOICE.

Training for the day when heads will turn to look at them at an academy in Fulham, London, are some of Britain's models of the future. For this is one of the country's most up-to-date training schools for models and mannequins.

WOMAN 1 VOICE. Is she all right? Why isn't she dressed?

ANNOUNCER VOICE.

Their limbs are effortlessly supple as they move across the fashion stage and pose for the cameras.

Ruth can't pose.

WOMAN 2 VOICE. She's in an awful state I'm afraid. Can't possibly wear a swimsuit. If she's any chance at all, it's in the sports clothes.

WOMAN 3 VOICE. God knows what kind of fellow she's tied up with... absolutely covered in bruises from head to foot.

Ruth? Ruth?

DESMOND VOICE. Ruth?

RUTH. Dessy?... Teddy bear.

DESMOND. I got a call from Andy's school. No one came to collect him.

My god, look at you. Let me drive you home.

RUTH. I'm...

modelling.

I'm modelling.

Where's David?

—

Easter Weekend, 1955.

Ruth is sleep-deprived, rattled, raging, desperate. She drinks shots and downs pills throughout the sequence. Hurling between slow motion daze and panic. Her words may become monster-like noises, or physicalisation.

Where's David? Spending Easter together.

Eight.

He said he'll be back for me at eight o'clock.

Goodnight Andy, sweetheart.

This is it, we said. No more rows.

9 o'clock.

Half past.

I don't like waiting.

I don't like waiting.

She makes a phone call.

Hello Ant, it's Ruth – is that –

is that David in the –

Ant hangs up.

I know he's here, Ant – David, come down and talk to me.

(rings doorbell) Ant! Ant! I just want to ask for my keys back. I don't give my keys to liars.

I won't go to bed, Dessy, I won't – I won't –

They're hiding from me.

Andy? He's fine, he's –

Here, sweetheart, here's two shillings. For – adventure – London Zoo! Aaah!

We see Desmond leading Ruth in target shooting practice in Penn Woods. A short physical, dreamlike sequence – perhaps unclear to the audience.

God, it's heavy...

A few muffled gunshots.

Desmond, drive me back –

Yes, I'm, oh yes I'm, buying this flat.

(spots him) David!

Who's she?! Who are you!?

You desperate cow, do you realise he's engaged?! Hussy.

Watching the night.

Dials the Findlaters.

Ant! I hope you are having an enjoyable holiday, because you've ruined mine!

Evil man, evil. Pathetic woman.

Andy, go to bed.

Evil.

I love, I love him

– no, no, please

I dreamt he was going to kill me

I shall *die*

Red carnation petals sprinkle down.

I can't

I don't know...

But this... No.

I

—
As Ruth makes her way to the Magdala Pub, we hear the voice, or see the projection of, of Vivien Leigh in [Gone With The Wind](#).

VIVEN LEIGH. I can't let him go, I can't. There must be some way to bring him back.

Home. I'll go home. And I'll think of some way to get him back. After all, tomorrow is another day!

—
The Magdala Pub.

Ruth waits on the pavement, alone, delirious & slurring.

The door to the Magdala opens.

Hello David.

Beat.

David!

6 shots are heard.

Ear-ringing silence.

Will you call the police?

I am guilty.

I am a little confused.

Ruth is released into a sea of calm. She floats like an angel.

Ruth's statement.

RUTH V/O. About two years ago, I met David Blakely when I was manageress of the Little Club, in Knightsbridge. On Friday, he left me about ten o'clock in the morning, and promised to be back by 8 o'clock, to take me out. I waited until half past nine...I waited for David all day...

This gun... was given to me about three years ago in a club by a man whose name I do not remember. I took a taxi... I took a taxi to Tanza Road... then walked to the Magdala Pub.

David turned and he saw me and then turned away from me, and I took the gun from my bag and I –

We hear [Joan Fontaine & Laurence Olivier in Rebecca.](#)

Ruth may speak Joan Fontaine's lines, as she undergoes an electroencephalograph test.

RUTH/JF VOICE. *I'm awfully sorry, darling. It was very careless of me.*

DAVID/LO VOICE. *You behave more like an upstairs maid or something, not like the mistress of the house at all.*

RUTH/JF VOICE. *Yes I know I do. But I feel so uncomfortable. I try my best every day, but it's very difficult with people looking me up and down as if I were a prize car.*

DAVID/LO VOICE. *Well what does it matter if they do? You must remember the plight of man, it's the only thing that interests anybody down here.*

—

The Old Bailey.

Ruth stands exhausted.

LAWYER VOICE.

It might be better if you look less striking.

RUTH. I don't know how to do that.

Why have they turned all the lights off

Or – my eyes –

JUDGE VOICE.

Mrs Ellis.

When you fired that revolver at close range into the body of David Blakely, what did you intend to do?

Ruth is confused but masks it with a brief silence.

RUTH. It's obvious that when I shot him,
I intended to kill him.

Why do you look shocked?

That's the truth.

They told me to tell the truth.

Is that it?

Where are you going?

That

can't be it.

As we hear this clipped, tinny-sounding report, Ruth changes into a grey prison smock.

REPORTER VOICE.

After only fifteen minutes of deliberation, on June 21st 1955, the jury at the Old Bailey found Ruth Ellis guilty of murder and sentenced her to death by hanging in accordance with the law.

She currently resides at Holloway Prison, where she reportedly does not wish to appeal her ruling. However, a public outcry at her sentence has culminated in her solicitor, John Bickford, writing a 7-page letter to the Home Secretary. In it, he sets

out the grounds for reprieve, along with a petition that has been signed by some fifty thousand people.

—

13 July 1955. 8.50am.

Holloway Prison. Prisoner No. 9656's cell. Ruth, calm, bespectacled, writing.

RUTH. Dear Mr Simmons,

Just to let you know I am still feeling all right.

The time is 7 o'clock am – everyone (staff) is simply wonderful in Holloway. This is just for you to console my family with the thought I did not change my way of thinking at the last moment.

Or break my promise to David's mother.

Well, Mr Simmons, I have told you the truth and that's all I can do.

Thanks once again,

Goodbye.

She turns to the priest.

Takes off her glasses.

Won't be needing these.

I better warn you before we start that – I'm a little rusty on the... on the words

And before you say it, it's not nerves, I don't get nervous, believe me, it's really just –

PRIEST VOICE. Are you ready?

RUTH. Yes, Father.

PRIEST VOICE. May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy.

This is your bit.

RUTH. Oh, right, yes – bless me, Father, for I’m – for I have sinned. I...

I’m sorry, I don’t know why we’re doing this.

PRIEST VOICE. What do you mean?

RUTH. What difference will this make?

PRIEST VOICE. Well, Mrs Ellis. The book of John says “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

God forgives all.

RUTH. Is that right. Father.

PRIEST VOICE. Completely.

You’ve told your lawyers your truth. Why don’t you try telling God?

RUTH. I’m not sure any of that lot are looking out for me, to be honest.

PRIEST VOICE. You’d be surprised.

Why not try.

RUTH. Well.

All right.

I killed a man.

David Blakely. And I shall now die loving him.

He deserved what he got.

And now I will too.

I’m sorry for his mother. I’m really sorry.

I want her to know I was not the person who shot him. In that moment, I was another person entirely.

But I did not defend myself, because a life for a life is just. I know that I’m going to die and I’m ready to do so.

And. There it is.

Are the angels meant to come down now, or something?

A knock on the iron cell door. It creaks open.

PIERREPOINT VOICE. Mrs Ellis.

RUTH. Mr Pierrepont. Hello again.

PIERREPOINT VOICE. Father.

RUTH. Well, you'll have to toss a coin, gents. It's been a busy night, and I don't have time for both of you.

Just a little joke.

I'm ready.

She puts her arms behind her back to be tied.

The bass vibrates, crescendoes

Wait – wait, stop –

as she is taken back to –

–

The night of the murder.

Ruth observes the flickering scene, like a projection from a melodramatic film. Watching herself and Desmond, drunk and riled, she is bereft.

RUTH. I love, I love him –

DESMOND. Ruth, he beat you, so badly that you / lost your –

RUTH. / no, no, please –

DESMOND. That's the truth!

RUTH. I dreamt he was going to kill me, Dessy.

DESMOND. Oh, Ruth.

RUTH. I shall *die*!

DESMOND. *He* deserves to die.

Desmond hands Ruth a .38 calibre Smith & Wesson Victory model revolver.

RUTH. I can't

DESMOND. Take it. It's loaded.

Red carnation petals sprinkle from above.

RUTH. I don't know –

DESMOND. You do, it's what I showed you.

RUTH. But this... No.

DESMOND. Ruth. You have to. Show him. How he has ruined you.

RUTH. I

Desmond.

Drive me to Hampstead.

—

A gunshot that erupts the room with dazzling light, an explosion of euphoric and devastating sounds from Ruth's story – music, laughter, a baby crying, Muriel crying out for Ruth, crowds cheering, a young woman in labour, Morrie, the original audio of a conversation between Ruth & Desmond, the Priest's whispered forgiveness, an orchestra.

PRIEST VOICE. Now in peace, I commend you, my dear sister, to Almighty God.

And may He open to you the gates of paradise and welcome you now to everlasting joy.

Amen.

RUTH. Amen.

PIERREPOINT VOICE.

Come with me, love. I'm not going to hurt you.

RUTH. Thank you.

Ruth smiles. She is free.

We hear the cheers & jeers of the crowd outside Holloway Prison. Camera flashes.

Red carnation petals fall from the sky.

A symphony orchestra plays a grand version of Dream A Little Dream of Me.

Ruth turns to see the audience.

A filmic, Hollywood crescendo.

The thud of a sandbag. Blackout.