

AGATHA & IAN

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FADE IN

SUPER: April 1926 - Sunningdale, United Kingdom

INT. OFFICE - SUNNINGDALE - SUBURBAN LONDON - DAY

It's a man's office. There are models of a Sopwith Camel and a Fokker DR 1. There are medals in a case. Some framed World War I photographs of the man of the house. On a wall is a map of Europe. In the corner of the room is a set of golf clubs. On the desk, there is a typewriter, notepad and a newspaper. Above the fold: SKULL CRUSHED AND THROAT SLASHED - Body Found By Husband.

AGATHA (34) is typing. We see a finished stack of paper an inch high. The doorbell rings but Agatha continues to type. CHARLOTTE, secretary and nanny, lightly approaches the open door. She lightly knocks on the frame. It's bad news. Charlotte puts the telegram on the desk and quietly backs out of the room. LILLY the housemaid pretends to dust in the hall, so she can judge the reaction.

AGATHA reads the telegram and weeps. She sighs and looks at the map of Europe, ZOOM in on Spain.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEGIN TITLES

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

Agatha looks despondent as she rides the train with ROSALIND (7). Rosalind shows a bit of a spark looking out the window, but she's also sad. Pull back and the entire car is dressed in black.

INT. EALING BROADWAY TRAIN STATION - LONDON- DAY

Agatha, Rosalind, friends and family deboard the train and they watch the casket being loaded onto a hearse.

INT. STREETS OF EALING - LONDON- DAY

The funeral procession slowly proceeds from the train station to the cemetery. Traffic stops and the men tip their hats and everyone bows.

INT. GRAVESIDE - SOUTH EALING CEMETERY - LONDON - DAY

Rosalind cries and Agatha silently consoles her.

GRAVESTONE: Wife of Frederick Alvah Miller. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life.

INT. SMALL BEDROOM - SUNNINGDALE - DAY

Agatha lays despondent on the bed. She looks at the typewriter, she looks at ARCHIE (35). Archie looks through the window outside. Charlotte is tutoring Rosalind with flash cards. A; Rosalind runs and brings back an apple. C; Rosalind brings back a cat. Rosalind accepts the death of her grandmother.

Something snaps and Agatha gets up and types.

END TITLES

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LONDON - DAY

Archie enters. A doctor has been interviewing Agatha. Neither show any emotions.

DOCTOR

Your wife was very close to her mother.
Naturally, things are difficult for her.

ARCHIE

I don't know if I can be much help.
(beat)
I've seen it before.

DOCTOR

She has a history of this? I wasn't told this.

ARCHIE

No, I saw it in and after the War. Chaps,
widows.

DOCTOR

And you feel awkward around it?

ARCHIE

I have a certain dislike for illness,
death, actually trouble of any kind.

Archie tries to make a joke of nearly everything.

AGATHA

He was in the war and has had his fair
share of trouble. And now he has me.

ARCHIE

I suggested travelling, a vacation in
Spain. It might be fun. A distraction.

AGATHA

I think I need to be with my sorrow and
get used to it.

DOCTOR

Good.

(beat)

She must have rest, and things will, in
time, right themselves.

INT. ASHFIELD HOUSE - TORQUAY - DEVON - DAY

Agatha is clearing out the memories at her childhood home. Still in black, she's packing clothes and personal items. She starts to lose her senses. She keeps looking at her mother's copy of Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* by her bedside; it's the only item that Agatha takes as hers.

Beethoven's 5th piano is the most powerful (or angry) music and Agatha plays it on her mother's old piano.

END TITLES

EXT. ASHFIELD HOUSE - TORQUAY - DEVON - APRIL

Archie is shocked at Agatha's appearance when she rushes to meet his car. She looks tense and in extremely poor health.

ARCHIE

Hello dear.

She hugs him but he's emotionally withdrawn. Rather than kiss Agatha, he turns his back and takes two suitcases.

ARCHIE

Charlotte has packed you some things.

AGATHA

Darling. I missed you so. Mother is dead.

ARCHIE

Yes. I'm sorry. Well, the roses look nice.

AGATHA

Spring is so nice here.

ARCHIE

It's the sheltered position.

AGATHA

Particularly beautiful.

ARCHIE

There's nowhere better to be than Devon in spring!

AGATHA

I'm glad you are here, finally.

ARCHIE

Fancy a river cruise?

AGATHA

You seem strange.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ASHFIELD HOUSE - TORQUAY - DEVON - SUMMER

Waiting for the tea to arrive Archie notices a fat manuscript on the kitchen table by a typewriter. Archie and Agatha are

drinking tea. Facing each other over a living room coffee/tea table.

AGATHA

Thank you for coming.

ARCHIE

It's getting rather tedious my coming on weekends. Do you expect to be much longer?

AGATHA

No.

ARCHIE

You wrote that you weren't sleeping.

AGATHA

My nerves. I can't sleep.

ARCHIE

Rosalind sends her love. She wanted to come but I wouldn't let her. And now I'm glad. I'm not sure she should see you like this.

Odd pause.

AGATHA

This is difficult. I'm sorry.

ARCHIE

We're very lucky to have Charlotte.

AGATHA

Yes. She's a very good secretary and a great nanny.

Odd pause. Mannerly words, then Archie makes a spontaneous revelation.

ARCHIE

Her name is Nancy Neele.

AGATHA

The young friend of Major Belcher?

ARCHIE

She's been in our house. You remember her?

AGATHA

What are you trying to say to me?

ARCHIE

I've been seeing a lot of Nancy.

AGATHA

And she is...?

ARCHIE

My golf partner for one.

AGATHA

And she's the reason for your new
obsession with golf?

ARCHIE

I want a divorce.

Long beat.

AGATHA

This is not happening, can't be happening.

ARCHIE

I'm fully/perfectly aware that our
relationship has had problems, but...

AGATHA

I've always put you first, even above
Rosalind.

ARCHIE

I realize that this coming so soon after
your mother's death, this isn't quite
cricket.

AGATHA

No. It's not.

ARCHIE

What are you going to do?

AGATHA

I'm going to finish here and come home.

ARCHIE

(unemotional)

That will be nice.

EXT. GARDEN - SUNNINGDALE - MORNING

Agatha always goes over her ideas out loud before typing them, She has some notes but she's talking to herself. Rehearsing her next novel.

AGATHA

(to herself)

Mrs Ferrars expired (scratch that) she DIED on the night of the 16th-17th September—a Thursday. I was sent for at eight o'clock on the morning of Friday the 17th. There was nothing to be done. She had been cold (scratch that) DEAD some hours.

(beat)

It was just a few minutes after nine when I reached home once more. I opened the front door with my latchkey, and purposely delayed a few moments in the hall, hanging up my hat and the light overcoat that I had deemed a wise precaution against the chill of an early autumn morning. Honestly, (scratch that) TO TELL THE TRUTH, I was considerably upset and worried. I am not going to pretend that at that moment I foresaw the events of the next few weeks. I emphatically did not do so. But my instinct told me that there were stirring times ahead.

(beat)

From the dining room on my left there came the rattle of tea-cups and the short, dry cough of my sister Caroline.

(beat)

"Is that you, James?" she called.

Archie is spying on her from the house. Listening. He has this disgusting and jealous look on his face. He despises her success.

EXT. FESTIVE LONDON STREET - NOVEMBER NIGHT

MONTAGE: London is a blur of bad Christmas jumpers. Agatha walks and takes it all in; without emotion. She looks in the café windows at the prosecco cocktails and already people out shopping are beginning their turkey dinners. In one kitchen a chef is pouring gallons of rum into a giant figgy pudding mix.

In Christmas park on a bench, there is a MOTHER sharing a letter from her son, a soldier in the Boer War.

MOTHER

(to her friend)

My son is in South Africa.

FRIEND

At war in Africa? During Christmas?

MOTHER

No, it's okay. He says it's glorious.

Two SMALL BOYS in flat caps dragging home a fir tree. All the familiar scenes of wreaths, twinkly lights and letters to Father Christmas. Christmas trees with tinsel and ornaments.

She walks and notices several SANTA CLAUS FIGURES at stores. They are all listening to children's Christmas wishes. One Santa has got himself into a spot by giving out only one present; he's being chased through the streets by a group of excited youngsters.

Agatha finally reaches a toy store and a final Santa figure. He's entertaining everyone, especially a girl who is obviously blind.

YOUNG GIRL

(to Santa)

Please give me a big dolly.

Everyone chuckles but Agatha is untouched. She buys a big dolly, but she isn't feeling merry. She's perhaps moving deeper into depression.

INT. KITCHEN - SUNNINGDALE - MORNING

Enthusiastically, Agatha receives a box of books, her books sent from the publisher. She looks at the cover, the book summary and the endorsement and then the title page. She's pleased and flips through the pages.

DISSOLVE TO:

Charlotte enters and Agatha isn't as enthused as she was before.

CHARLOTTE

What's wrong?

AGATHA

Nothing really. It's silly. The typesetters left out a comma... and that wouldn't be so bad but it's directly after, "of course" and that phrase always is separated by a comma.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, I think people understand those sorts of things.

Charlotte holds up a letter that's come in the mail.

CHARLOTTE

What about this do?

AGATHA

There's a do?

CHARLOTTE

For amputees.

AGATHA

Last year, Arche grumbled, "that is still going on."

CHARLOTTE

I remember it differently. That he called them a bunch of loafers.

AGATHA

Well, maybe he did. I don't recall.

CHARLOTTE

I hope you told him; the condition is permanent. They're still missing their limbs.

AGATHA

I did. But, you know Archie.

CHARLOTTE

Well, I'd like to know how many bombs he did actually drop.

AGATHA

They want me?

CHARLOTTE

To speak, yes.

AGATHA

Oh, Archie won't want me to do that.

CHARLOTTE

Why not?

AGATHA

He'd want me to tell them no. Will you please politely decline?

Archie arrives in the drive and she hears it and she rushes to get the books off the table and hidden before he gets into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - SUNNINGDALE - FRIDAY MORNING

Eggs, beans, sausage, and tomatoes. Agatha and Archie. Charlotte is holding Rosalind in a different room, in fear of a domestic explosion of sorts.

AGATHA

(cheerful)

I intend to spend the weekend resting at a bed and breakfast in Yorkshire. Would you like to join me?

ARCHIE

I'm afraid I'm rather unavailable. I've already made plans to meet my friends.

AGATHA

Golf again? In December?

ARCHIE

Yes.

After five months, Agatha's breaking point has arrived.

AGATHA

(poisoned mood)

If you go, I won't be at home when you return.

Archie's reaction is cold and prepared.

ARCHIE

I'm tired of the charade.

AGATHA

Let's be reasonable.

ARCHIE

I'll be seeking a divorce regardless of your cooperation.

Archie leaves his breakfast and fetches his golf clubs.

AGATHA

Where are you going?

ARCHIE

Godalming, where I have friends.

AGATHA

You're going to see that woman again.

Archie exits the house with his golf clubs in tow. The golf clubs are simply the last straw. Agatha squints her eyes in pain. She moves her hands to her face. She hears the sound of his car spinning the cinder in the drive.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SUNNINGDALE - FRIDAY DINNER

Agatha sits at the dinner table with Charlotte and Rosalind. Archie's spot is empty. Agatha's clearly focused on the plate.

CHARLOTTE

Don't you dare apologize.

Is Agatha near breaking back the other way?

INT. BEDROOM - SUNNINGDALE - FRIDAY NIGHT

Agatha packs a valise with several dresses, a fancy nightgown, two silk scarves, and two pairs of shoes. She carries the case to the front door and then returns upstairs to wait.

Agatha writes letters to Charlotte and Archie.

Agatha is sitting on the bed staring at a mantle clock. She is resolute and unmovable.

CHARLOTTE

You're still going to Yorkshire?

AGATHA

I'm not going to Godalming if that's what you're worried about.

CHARLOTTE

You are in the right here.

AGATHA

Thank you for reminding me.

CHARLOTTE

So you're going to the bed and breakfast?

AGATHA

I'm waiting.

CHARLOTTE

I see; well, there is always the chance.

AGATHA

Off chance, I'm afraid.

CHARLOTTE

It may work out, dear; patience.

AGATHA

I'm just a foolish woman.

CHARLOTTE

No, not foolish; it's very brave of you to refuse to give up.

AGATHA

(sarcastically)

I'm a regular bulldog it seems. But even a bulldog eventually will get a sore jaw.

The clock chimes ten p.m. Agatha pops up.

Agatha puts on a fur coat, velvet hat, and leather gloves. She only glances in the hall mirror. She hugs her terrier.

AGATHA

Good luck, Peter. I wish you many rats.

She places the letters on a table in the foyer before leaving. She picks up her bag and doesn't look back.

It's a cold/dark night. We can see the cold air on her face. She struggles with the weight of the bag. Her steamy breath and flushed face. She walks slowly to her car, the famous Morris Cowley.

She is relieved when the car starts immediately.

AGATHA

Oh, thank god!

We see her excitement and determination as she presses her foot on the accelerator. The cinder flies and she's gone down the lane.

She drives dangerously fast. Tears.

EXT. NEWLANDS CORNER - NIGHT

Tears in her eyes and she's disoriented, Agatha leaves the main trek to London (or Yorkshire). Unpaved roads, she struggles to find her way through rough brambles and thick underbrush that scratches the side of her car, but she motors through. Fast and then slow, fast and then slow. The road stretches for several miles, far from any city. It makes no sense, but her heavy fur coat is on the front seat, beside her.

Tears well up in Agatha's eyes. And she believes she's nearly hit a deer. She slams on the breaks on a hillside. She exits the car in a miserable state and she doesn't set the parking brake. She looks around the area for the deer; she's trying to determine if it was real.

This has been building and she knows that she's nearing a different state of mind. The wind picks up and the empty car begins to roll down the hill. It narrowly misses a deep pit and comes to rest in some bushes.

She's in a confused state. She turns and in the far distance, there are the lights of a town (Guildford). She starts down the hill and then retreats up.

AGATHA

No, it's too dark.

(beat)

No, I need my suitcase.

She walks/stumbles/falls down to the bottom of the hill. The Guildford lights disappear. She navigates to the car lights and the sound of the engine, still running. She is tangled in brambles and escapes. She nearly falls into the pit.

When she reaches the car, she's focused only on the suitcase.

It's too heavy; so she lightens it. She takes out an evening dress and a sweater and two pairs of shoes, abandoning them. She also leaves the fur coat and an expired driver's license in the car. She doesn't turn off the engine.

She climbs the hill in winter, without a coat.

At the top of the hill, she can again see the city lights. She walks through the harsh country toward the city lights. She's determined but clearly suffering.

EXT. GUILDFORD TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

She sleeps in the cold outside the train station.

EXT. GUILDFORD TRAIN STATION - MORNING

She might be dead on a bench, but she wakes up. Early, before the station is open, the morning newspaper is delivered.

The headlines say, "SANDRINGHAM READY FOR ROYALS - Baby Elizabeth's first Christmas."

DISSOLVE TO:

She approaches the STATION CLERK for a ticket.

AGATHA

Norfolk.

STATION CLERK

One way or two?

She contemplates things.

AGATHA

One.

She takes the ticket, turns and we aren't certain if she is listening to the instructions.

STATION CLERK

Second train this morning. London and then on to King's Lynn.

But she's cold and boards the first train.

The conductor clearly calls out..

CONDUCTOR

Workingham, Reading, Maidenhead and Winsor.

Either she's already in a psychogenic fugue, too frozen or uncomfortably numb to care which train she boards. It's not clear and that's part of the mystery. Is it a mental breakdown or just exposure to the weather? A combination of both.

EXT. NEULANDS CORNER - SATURDAY MORNING

JACK (15) is walking the narrow road. He spots Agatha's automobile far down the hill. It's almost hidden in boxwood. He can however see a number of hedges broken, run over by the car. He can see the roof of the car sticking up out of the bushes. He walks down.

He looks down into the pit. He looks about for anyone. The car is covered in frost and the front two wheels are off the ground fast in a hedge. He looks inside the car and notices the shoes, fur coat and clothes. He runs back to the road.

INT. FORYER - SUNNINGDALE - SATURDAY MORNING

A pair of policemen arrived.

POLICE

May we speak with the Christies.

CHARLOTTE

Neither Mr or Mrs Christie are home.

POLICE

May we inquire...

CHARLOTTE

Mr Christie is presumably in Godalming.

(beat)

It's difficult to say, actually.

POLICE

I see.

CHARLOTTE

Mrs Christie is on a motorcar excursion.
She is driving to Yorkshire.

POLICE

A Morris Cowley has been found run off the road in Newlands Corner, 14 miles south of here. That's his car?

Charlotte's heart sinks.

CHARLOTTE

Mr Christie drives a Delage.

POLICE

So, we're looking for her?

(beat)

What are these?

The policeman gestures to the envelopes on the table.

Charlotte's hands are shaking as she opens the note addressed to her. She reads it to herself first. Then she reads it to the police.

CHARLOTTE

I shall not be home tonight. I will let you know tomorrow where I am. Please cancel the reservations in Yorkshire.

(beat)

She was contemplating a weekend rest.

POLICE

Apparently she's not.

INT. HURTMORE COTTAGE - GODALMING - SATURDAY NOON

SAM JAMES, WIFE, Archie and NANCY are sitting at lunch.

SAM

(inadvertently says)

Golf is played by a million mature British men whose wives think they are out having fun.

Ironically, only Nancy chuckles.

Knocking at the front door.

The butler whispers in Sam's ear. Sam turns to Archie.

SAM

The police are waiting in the sitting room.

WIFE

We don't normally receive visits from the police.

SAM

Very disturbing... very disturbing.

(beat)

Archie? Agatha has gone missing.

They move to the sitting room and we see they are all dressed in casual (but winter) golfing attire – a sport coat over a sweater and wool breeches.

Nancy releases Archie's hand as the policemen rise.

ARCHIE

What's this about my wife?

POLICE

I'm afraid your wife's car has been discovered, abandoned down a slope at Newlands Corner.

Archie looks more annoyed than concerned.

POLICE

Do you know her whereabouts or her exact plans for the weekend?

ARCHIE

I have no idea; she's a writer and she has a highly dramatic nature.

POLICE

Everything at home okay, sir?

The policemen are speaking to Archie but they are looking at Nancy.

ARCHIE

She's been depressed and probably has had a nervous breakdown of sorts.

POLICE

Maybe you'd like to accompany us to North Downs. People are organizing a search.

ARCHIE

Yes, just give me a moment.

INT. DELAGE - NORTH DOWNS WAY - DAY

In the front of the car are Sam and Archie (driving). In the back is Nancy.

A search party is assembling. The police approach the car.

ARCHIE

I'm going home, to inquire with her secretary. I'll be back.

The police watch suspiciously as he drives away.

INT. CHRISTIE HOME - SUNNINGDALE - SATURDAY MORNING

Archie leaves the car. Lilly nervously anticipates his arrival and opens the door before he reaches it, taking his hat and coat.

Archie finds Charlotte in the office, visibly upset.

ARCHIE

I know you never had much sympathy for me, but...

CHARLOTTE

You're self-absorbed and emotionally absent from your family.

(beat)

Whatever she's done, you drove her to it.

ARCHIE

If this is some sort of trick, the joke is over. Just fess up.

CHARLOTTE

I don't know anything to fess up. I think she's in trouble. She left you this.

Charlotte is eager to know the letter's contents. Snatching up the envelope, Archie rips at it. He shields it from Charlotte's view. Broad shoulders and turned back.

Archie shows his anger and impulsively tosses the note in the fireplace. The evidence burns.

CHARLOTTE

The police will want to know what was in that.

ARCHIE

Nothing.

CHARLOTTE

Nothing?

EXT. CHRISTIE HOME - SUNNINGDALE

Archie returns to the car with Charlotte.

ARCHIE

There isn't any danger, it's a performance. She's a desperate woman.

EXT. WINSOR TRAIN STATION - NOON

Agatha steps off the train, suitcase in tow. It's 40° F.

EXT. DELAGE - NEWLANDS CORNER - DAY

There are over a dozen policemen assembled at the point where Agatha's car had rolled off the road. WILLIAM KENWARD is waiting, back turned, and he is perturbed. Kenward turns.

ARCHIE

Should have known I'd see you.

KENWARD

Oh?

ARCHIE

Eager to be back in the spotlight?

KENWARD

I have no idea what you mean.

ARCHIE

The most dangerous place in Surrey is standing between you and a newspaperman.

KENWARD

Meaning?

ARCHIE

You know what I mean.

KENWARD

I'm not here about that. Nothing is or will be given to the press... so long as you cooperate.

ARCHIE

You are a real piece of work, deputy constable.

KENWARD

What are you hiding?

ARCHIE

You try hiding the egg on your face when she turns up and everyone discovers this has been a wild goose chase.

KENWARD

No goose, huh?

(beat)

Where did you hide her?

Before Archie gets into more trouble, Sam leads him back toward the motorcar.

KENWARD

(loudly)

It's only been a few hours and already you're rattled.

Agatha's car is being towed up the rutted hill.

Kenward directs his search party toward a pond called Silent Pool.

INT. DELAGE - NEULANDS CORNER

Archie is unnerved; he sits in the car and waits. Kenward continuously glances over at the Delage. Charlotte is in the back seat with Nancy; she's very uncomfortable.

NANCY

That pool. They say it holds the ghost of a virgin, raped and drowned by King John in medieval times.

ARCHIE

Don't tell Kenward, that he'll be dredging it looking for that body as well.

Charlotte exits the car and speaks with Kenwood, who dutifully nods his head. She returns to the car.

ARCHIE

What did you tell them?

CHARLOTTE

Maybe she found someone to take her to Ashfield.

ARCHIE

Maybe. Good idea. Her childhood home.

(beat)

It isn't about me, you know.

CHARLOTTE

Who's it about?

ARCHIE

Her mother. She's not been the same since her mother died.

Nancy nods, willing to justify everything he says. Charlotte frowns. Sam is leaning toward Archie's explanation.

ARCHIE

I'm sorry I yelled at you, Charlotte.
You're a loyal family friend.

CHARLOTTE

Just to be clear. I'm your employee, but
I'm Agatha's friend.

ARCHIE

Understood.

Archie takes it as a veiled warning.

INT. THE FURROW - ETON COLLEGE - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Ian (20) is playing an odd game. Agatha stops and watches all the young men. The blood, sweat and the brut force of it all, she's entirely curious but still in a daze. It's a game only played at Eton.

It's a game played against a wall that was built in 1717. It's something between rugby and soccer. The aim of the game is to move the ball towards the opponents' end of the wall. In those last few yards of the field is an area called the "calx". In this area a player can earn a "shy" (worth one point) by lifting the ball against the wall with his foot. A teammate then touches the ball with his hand and shouts "Got it!" These two plays must happen within the calx. The calx is where American football got its, "end zone." There are other rules but...

Ian's team is being pushed back and time is nearly expired. Ian seems to be the last resort, the last opportunity to stop the opposition.

TEAMMATES

Hold, for Ian. Hold fast! It's do or die,
men!

Ian's team puts their shoulders into the scrum. However, Ian is distracted by Agatha, who is without a coat standing in the cold. Rather than give the effort 100 per cent, Ian falters and glances up. He's easily distracted by any woman; Agatha is still very attractive. She's about to cost Ian the game. The ball is raised against the wall. No one notices that it has been Ian's fault.

REFEREE

Given!

The opposing team throws the ball at a garden door, hits it (for nine points), and wins the game. Celebration by the opposing team.

Ian is consoled by ten teammates patting him on the back.

TEAMMATES

Sorry, Ian. Maybe next year.

It's cold and the athletes run for their coats/dorms. Ian takes his coat and holds it as he runs after Agatha.

LONG SHOT: She refuses the coat and he puts it over her despite her not wanting it. The camera follows them down High Street. We can't say they are conversing; it's entirely Ian talking. At the most, Agatha's only nodding slightly. He points to downtown and the cafes, then to the college and Dorney Lake.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TABLE BY THE FIRE - HIGH STREET CAFÉ - DAY

Ian, bloody and filthy from the game, has Agatha at the warmest table. But Agatha's not cooperating; she's still zoned out. A WAITRESS arrives.

IAN

She can't speak.

WAITRESS

Of course not, love. She's frozen.

(beat)

Let's get her some nice hot tea, or maybe some coffee. She's probably hungry too, I imagine.

Ian nods and the waitress disappears.

DISSOLVE TO:

A sandwich arrives and she takes two ravenous bites and then remembers herself. She's embarrassed. She's slowly recovering from the exposure. Her words will be coherent but she looks confused.

IAN

So you are in a situation?

AGATHA

(first words since leaving Sunningdale)
It's delicate.

IAN

I gathered it must be.

AGATHA

So you're more than just muscles and
athleticism?

IAN

I'm glad you noticed.

AGATHA

Why did you bring me here?

IAN

Well, it's cold outside.

AGATHA

You're being sensitive or just practical?

IAN

I should hope both.

AGATHA

After the game, they all seemed to console
you alone.

IAN

There is a really meaningless trophy for
the athlete with the most points at the
end of the year.

AGATHA

And you were expected to win it?

IAN

I suppose that's true.

AGATHA

And that was the last contest before exams?

IAN

Yes.

AGATHA

You lost.

(beat)

Well, I'm sorry.

IAN

It's all rather nice you're interested but I don't think I'm the issue here.

AGATHA

Very well, I shouldn't tell you anything.

IAN

There is a time for frankness and a time for discretion. And there is a time for both.

AGATHA

I'll be frank and you'll be discrete?

IAN

A gentleman does not blurt out all he knows about a lady. Not ever.

Ian is devilishly handsome; while not a fighter pilot, he is just exactly Agatha's type.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TABLE BY THE FIRE - HIGH STREET CAFÉ - ONE HOUR LATER

Presumably, Agatha's shared her "situation" with Ian. There is a long beat as he processes the information.

IAN

Is it repairable?

AGATHA

What?

IAN

Your marriage? You told me the story, but...
would I be interrupting anything?

AGATHA

Would I return? I mean seven years is a
long time.

IAN

(a question)

To thine own self be true?

Agatha contemplates everything. She's careful.

AGATHA

Probably not.

IAN

No? You must say "yes" or "no."

AGATHA

Why?

IAN

I might have a stake in this.

AGATHA

Are we going to have an affair?

IAN

I won't say "no"... if you thought I was
worthy.

AGATHA

I hear you Eaton boys never say no.

IAN

We aspire to a lot.

AGATHA

Earlier, you said you wanted a career in
the government.

IAN

The government can go to blazes.

AGATHA

Then the answer is, "no."

IAN

No? To what?

AGATHA

I have no say in it.

IAN

Of course, you do.

AGATHA

Are we on the same page?

IAN

Maybe not.

AGATHA

I mean, "no." I'm not going back to Sunnydale.

IAN

You mean, "no," the marriage isn't repairable?

AGATHA

Yes. It's burnt as toast.

IAN

In that case, I have a rather sleazy idea.

Long beat, as she considers maybe a secret/revenge affair.

AGATHA

I'm not sleeping with you.

IAN

Never?

AGATHA

Probably.

Long beat.

AGATHA
(jokingly)
You're not going to cry?

IAN
No. I was going to say, if you're gone
long enough... he'll be charged with...

AGATHA
I might look a fright but that has
occurred to me.

IAN
Of course, it did. I love dark novels.

AGATHA
I'm dark?

Ian chuckles. They are clearly attracted to one another.

IAN
(mocking the upright crowd)
Murder she wrote, most foul.

AGATHA
Thank you for the suggestion, but the
longer I'm gone the more people will talk.

IAN
That would rather be the entire purpose of
the endeavour, actually.

AGATHA
I'm sure I'm already violating a few laws.

IAN
Laws are meant to be manipulated. God
never created sheeple.

AGATHA
Sheeple?

IAN
People and sheep.

AGATHA

That would be a sin.

IAN

And against the law... as well. But the point is sheep bow to power and follow the law. People do what they want.

AGATHA

But about the law, as it pertains to today and my situation? I've abandoned my car and come here.

IAN

See you are already a criminal. What's another week or two away?

AGATHA

That long?

IAN

Well, if you want it done properly.

AGATHA

I see.

IAN

You will certainly have his attention.

AGATHA

And the attention of the police.

IAN

I expect a good number of mystery readers will be paying attention.

AGATHA

A short-term investment.

IAN

Nice metaphor.

AGATHA

And if I'm discovered?

IAN

Then you simply feign amnesia. A fugue.

AGATHA

I mean that is possible.

IAN

I believe you were in one when we met.

AGATHA

And why didn't you call the police?

IAN

I can't testify to that ever; they'll say I was planning on taking advantage.

AGATHA

You should remain out of sight.

IAN

Perhaps, you've had something like that happen before?

AGATHA

No.

IAN

Too bad. It would create a certain plausibility.

AGATHA

I'm a woman and I'm here, aren't I? That's some evidence, you know.

IAN

I feel a bit lucky you're here.

AGATHA

Thank you.

IAN

Let's do it.

AGATHA

(light-hearted)

Does Eton know they have an anarchist enrolled?

IAN

Why no, quite the opposite; they tell me I should enter politics, like my father.

AGATHA

And what does your mother say?

IAN

She thinks I would undoubtedly botch politics... that voters aren't as dumb as they appear.

AGATHA

So she's the anarchistin the family?

IAN

Far from it, except in her own affairs.

(beat)

She says I should enter the military.

AGATHA

What do you want to do?

IAN

Between us; I think I might enjoy the foreign service.

AGATHA

Sounds about right.

IAN

Why do you say that?

AGATHA

My friends call it the ministry of dirty tricks.

IAN

Precisely.

AGATHA

And the foul play makes it less regimented for you than say... a regiment?

IAN

The military would bore me.

AGATHA

In the military, the foul play is kept in reserve.

IAN

Yet, on the surface, the foreign service appears regimented.

AGATHA

Regimented enough for your mother?

IAN

She knows me better than I know myself.

AGATHA

And you're frightened by that?

IAN

Terrified.

AGATHA

So about the law...

IAN

Well, sad to say, but with a bit of subterfuge and if you have enough money the law can be ignored completely.

AGATHA

What would your mother say? Before you said I was the only issue, but you also said that you depend on her.

IAN

After my father's death, in action by the way, my mother inherited his estate in trust, and she's very wealthy. However, the conditions of the money in trust transferred it to others should she ever

remarry. She's the mistress of a certain painter, you might have heard of him. Well, anyway, little Amaryllis was born last year. Cute as a button.

AGATHA

And people don't talk?

IAN

Not to me they don't.

AGATHA

And if they did?

IAN

I'm more than prepared to box someone's nose.

(beat)

Or worse.

AGATHA

Maybe a little anxious?

IAN

It's crossed my mind, yes.

AGATHA

I wouldn't want to be the stranger who mentioned your mother.

IAN

I'm not a violent man.

AGATHA

But, you are a man and you do have a certain swagger.

IAN

Thank you.

AGATHA

And your mother is she happy?

IAN

Happy as a lark.

AGATHA

Really?

IAN

She has money and frequently says, "people can go to blazes."

AGATHA

But I don't want you to say that.

IAN

Are you telling me you're going to just disappear and I can't play?

AGATHA

You just said to me, "people can go to blazes." I don't want to ruin anyone. And you are such a promising diplomat.

IAN

How kind of you to want to leave me out of it, when it's my idea.

AGATHA

If I proceed, I absolve you of all responsibility.

IAN

How kind, but I don't mind.

AGATHA

You're young and reckless.

IAN

And you aren't?

AGATHA

Thank you but you want to do government work and that can be so judgmental.

IAN

I assure you a bit of cajoling will open a few doors in the government. And my mother's money won't hurt either.

AGATHA

It's true. I have some money. A career, perhaps.

IAN

Thank goodness.

AGATHA

He always treated my writing as a hobby or a woman's distraction. He refers to it as my, "needlepoint."

IAN

How callous.

AGATHA

But when leaving, he did have a nice, relevant, point. I don't need him. The writing makes me independent of him.

IAN

(chuckling)

Your "needlepoint" will now be his undoing.

AGATHA

Perhaps all our undoing?

IAN

I'm not so sure. What would your literary agent say if you disappeared for a month or two?

AGATHA

He's as greedy/opportunistic as any.

IAN

Naturally, in that line of work.

AGATHA

But, I couldn't possibly.

IAN

Do you need some help?

AGATHA
It's all so Machiavellian.

IAN
Fortunately for you...

AGATHA
You are? No offence.

IAN
That's a compliment if you ask me.

Long beat.

IAN
Are we going to be lovers?

AGATHA
Ask me again after your exams.

IAN
I intend to.

AGATHA
I expect you will.

Odd moment.

AGATHA
What do you call that game you were
playing?
(beat)
With all the bloody elbows.

IAN
The long sleeves help. But hips and knees
also.

AGATHA
Surely it has a name. What am I to call
it?

IAN
It doesn't really have a name. We call it
the wall game.

EXT. COLLEGE HOUSE DORMITORY - EATON - LATE AFTERNOON

Ian is carrying her suitcase. He drops it outside the door.

IAN

Leave the suitcase outside.

AGATHA

But.

IAN

No one will take it and I won't be a minute.

INT. COLLEGE HOUSE DORMITORY - EATON

Ian enters with Agatha. He's very polite, opening the door and escorting her to the common room.

IAN

Women are not allowed upstairs, but I won't be a moment.

Ian puts Agatha in the parlour on a sofa. Ian then literally runs upstairs and it's all under the eye of the housemaster.

HOUSEMASTER

(to Ian)

I don't like you, Mr Flemming. I don't like your hair oil, your car; no one else has a car. And I don't like your cavalier way with women.

(to Agatha)

You! Sit on that couch young lady and do not move.

Ian has changed into a tuxedo and brings down two books and a bag of clothes.

IAN

Have a wonderful weekend, sir.

HOUSEMASTER

I have a mind to see you expelled.

IAN

(smiling)

Family emergency. But I'll be back for exams Monday.

HOUSEMASTER

I have a mind, students shouldn't have cars.

Nearly out the door with Agatha, Ian waves to his housemaster.

HOUSEMASTER

(shouting)

Your brother was a gentleman and a scholar; you are neither!

EXT. COLLEGE HOUSE DORMITORY - EATON

They proceed to the parking lot.

AGATHA

He doesn't like you.

IAN

I'm a gentleman. My brother should go into the military.

(beat)

But you shouldn't worry. Don't worry.

AGATHA

Please.

IAN

You'll see. He's just an old fart.

AGATHA

Promise me; you'll be a gentleman.

IAN

You doubt me?

AGATHA

Pretend you're in His Majesty's Secret Service.

IAN

With a license to kill, but still polite
enough to open the door for Her Majesty.

He opens the car door.

AGATHA

Thank you.

IAN

Is the front okay, or do you want to ride
in the back like the queen?

AGATHA

I'll ride in the front but you must
promise not to kill anyone.

Ian bows and she enters the vehicle.

AGATHA

At least until exams are over.

INT. TORQUAY POLICE STATION - DEVON - LATE SATURDAY

TORQUAY POLICEMAN

(into telephone receiver)

Ashfield house is boarded up. Deserted.
The autumn leaves are lying thick in the
doorway, the windows are fastened, and
there aren't any footmarks in the carriage
drive or on the footpaths.

INT. KIT-CAT CLUB - HAYMARKET - LONDON - SATURDAY NIGHT

In the basement of a theatre. It's a totally legal 1920s Jazz
club. Ian is young and the MAN AT THE DOOR doesn't want to let
them in. But Ian whispers something in his ear. The man then
looks at Agatha and he opens the door.

AGATHA

What did you say to that man?

IAN

The password.

AGATHA

What is it?

IAN

I'm a man in a brown suit.

AGATHA

Really?

IAN

No.

AGATHA

How do you know about this place?

IAN

One of the chap's father is a backer.

AGATHA

Who?

IAN

I can't really say.

(beat)

Dear.

Ian clearly has a secret life AND she's impressed with his
air of confidentiality.

AGATHA

Nice to know a man who can keep secrets.

IAN

But then we don't REALLY have any secrets,
yet do we?

AGATHA

But, if we did.

IAN

Yes, wouldn't it be nice if we had a
secret or two?

They watch an athletic gipsy dancer on the dance floor.
GOOGLE, "London's Famous Clubs And Cabarets No. 1 - The Kit
Cat Club (1926)." And when she's done the band starts up

another fast jazz number and people rush out on the floor. It's 1920s drunken mayhem. Ian seems always on guard and aware of his surroundings. At the age of 20, Ian is already nearly the "James Bond" we all understand, distrustful and dangerous.

They both noticed more than a few ROUGH TYPES in the club.

AGATHA

Gangsters?

IAN

More than a few.

AGATHA

You wanna dance?

IAN

I don't dance.

AGATHA

Why?

IAN

It's very hard to keep track of everyone when you're moving about. Like that.

AGATHA

What about a slow dance?

IAN

You want me to dance cheek-to-cheek with you like that? In this mess?

(beat)

Especially, "no," to that distraction, dear.

Ian has Agatha's hand and they weave in and out of people toward the back of the club. There is another mysterious door.

Again Bond/Ian... I've already typed "Bond" or "James" several times and had to back out of it and type "Ian"... whispers again to THE MAN GUARDING THE CASINO. The man opens the door.

AGATHA

Another password? Again you can't say?

IAN

No, this time I can say.

AGATHA

What?

IAN

I told him you were Agatha Christie and you wanted to gamble.

AGATHA

Really?

IAN

No.

They go down a long corridor and up some stairs and down another corridor and then down some stairs. It takes an entire minute to arrive at the casino.

AGATHA

My god, what a long haul.

IAN

It has to be this way because of the police. They want to make it difficult for the police.

AGATHA

I see.

INT. BALINESE ROOM - BEHIND THE KIT-CAT CLUB - LONDON

They reach a final door and a full-fledged Asian themed casino opens to them. It's a huge smoke-filled room. There is a kitchen and a chef. More gangster and silent-era movie stars. Slot machines, but also a telegraph machine and a blackboard with the "GULFSTREAM TRACK WINTER MEET" horses listed and the odds for ten races. Blackjack. There are various other card games and roulette. In the back, there is even a boxing ring and fighters going at it. Gamblers.

An ASIAN MAN greets them.

ASIAN MAN

Welcome to the Balinese Room.

IAN

Can you direct me to the serious players?

The Asian man points to a poker table in the back.

IAN

The new Texas game?

ASIAN MAN

(cryptically)

Yes, sir. But you look very young, sir.

You might want to shop somewhere else.

It's code. It's a veiled warning to stay away; they might be cheating. Ian takes note and gives the man a pound note.

IAN

Thank you.

AGATHA

Oh, Ian this is a casino.

IAN

Of course, what did you expect?

AGATHA

Well... I don't know about this.

IAN

You have ten and I have five, let's turn it into fifty and we'll be off.

AGATHA

Oh, Ian. I don't know; this is a casino.

IAN

Yes, you said that, dear.

AGATHA

I'm frightened. If we lose, I'll have to go back home and I desperately don't want to do that.

He hugs her for the first time. He whispers in her ear.

IAN

Listen. Don't approach casinos with timidity or reverence, they're just fruit machines tended by bank clerks and mechanics. Be relaxed and confident.

AGATHA

Oh, Ian please keep me away from my husband, for just a while longer. Please.

IAN

You are a crafty/smart writer and you bring trouble to casinos and you are going to win and stop when you have won. You are a person of free will and iron self-discipline who will beat the machine.

AGATHA

I'll try to relax.

IAN

That's a good girl. I'll take care of everything.

AGATHA

What will I do? I don't drink or smoke. And I'm afraid to gamble.

IAN

Do what you do best, dear.

(beat)

Watch.

Ian buys chips from the cage. Surveys the room for the big players. There is an empty chair at the big wig's card table but Ian stops at the roulette wheel.

Ian plays his strategy, what they actually today call, "the James Bond Method." And he builds up some chips. It takes time, so Agatha wonders away.

Multi-tasking at the highest level, Ian is watching the poker table, all the while he is winning at roulette. He does this from across the room, with interruptions and people walking between Ian and the card table. He is scouting the card game.

A small GRANNY FIGURE interrupts him. He leans over and speaks with her but he continues to watch the high-stakes poker AND play roulette. Ian is winning.

GRANNY

How are you doing that?

IAN

Simple.

(beat)

Seventy per cent on 19 thru 36. Twenty per cent is placed on the numbers 13 to 18.

GRANNY

What's the remaining 10 per cent for?

IAN

Cab fare.

EXT. BALCONY - BALINESE ROOM - NIGHT

There is a balcony out onto a roof with a great view of London. Ian finds Agatha there. Smiling and looking out at the city.

AGATHA

It's very peaceful.

IAN

You wouldn't know it but there will be three, or more, murders down there tonight.

AGATHA

I read the papers.

IAN

Yes, of course; what was I thinking.

(beat)

You know you're very disarming.

AGATHA

That's not good for a military man.

IAN

You know, I think I'd like to conquer you.
This is my marching in.

He kisses her neck.

IAN

And this is my flanking your position.

He runs his hand up and down her arm.

AGATHA

Is that your service revolver I feel on my
backside?

IAN

That's the artillery, dear.

AGATHA

This is me repelling your advances.

She does nothing to resist.

AGATHA

Should I retreat?

An arguing couple walks out on the balcony. The mood and
extended analogy are ruined.

IAN

Unfortunately, your "retreat" is a night's
drive away.

AGATHA

Harrogate?

IAN

It's my roommate's last resort. He says we
can trust it.

AGATHA

Is that really necessary?

IAN

Yes. And I'm sorry.

AGATHA

It's quite alright. I do believe you know best.

IAN

Hey, take this. He hands her money - forty or fifty pounds. Keep it.

AGATHA

Iron rations?

IAN

Hopefully not.

(beat)

See those men?

They turn and look back into the casino.

AGATHA

They look German.

IAN

How do you...

AGATHA

Their hair cuts. The clothes. That cocky look on their faces. Recently defeated but still arrogant.

IAN

Well, the fat one is cheating.

Ian makes a beeline for the Germans. Agatha follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

Agatha and a number of others are watching. The pots are growing and it's drawing a crowd.

Ian plays poker and wins a big hand. He's playing to win.

FAT GERMAN

The war is over, son.

IAN

Is it?

FAT GERMAN

(sinister)

Maybe it's just the intermission.

Ian plays poker and wins on final/huge hand. The German's chips are depleted. Gone.

IAN

(to Agatha)

We're done here.

Agatha is thrilled, but there is a fight/commotion on the front side of the casino.

MAN

It's a raid!

There is a panic. Hidden panels in walls can hide equipment quickly and craps tables convert to billiards tables. The entire casino can disappear in less than a minute. However, it's an undercover operation. The plain-clothes police stick knives and forks and pencils in the mechanical works. So there is fighting, staff vs police.

The fat German reaches for the chips on the table but Ian punches him in the face. He pushes the other Germans back in their chairs. The foreigners bolt for the exits. Ian dumps the water and ice out of the silver champagne chiller and fills it with the chips. He takes the chips; he rightfully won them.

Ian takes Agatha's hand leads her through the chaos/ruckus.

Ian (James) finds the cage door closed and locked. He kicks in the door. A CASINO CLERK is putting the money down a chute, an escape tube of sorts. There is one last bundle of money. And Ian grabs his wrist preventing the money from leaving.

Ian gives the casino clerk a solid, "I'm going to beat the hell out of you if you resist," look. And there is an understanding.

Ian pours the chips out on the table. The casino clerk rapidly/roughly counts the chips and then the clerk counts out a rough amount of pounds. And he looks at Ian for agreement.

IAN

Agreed.

(beat)

Nice joint you have here. Too bad about the police.

CLERK

Ea, sure. Come back.

IAN

I will. Thank you.

(beat)

Oh, one more thing.

(beat)

You might want to turn out the lights.

The casino clerk gestures to the lightbox, lever and fuses. The clerk counts the remaining house money.

Ian hands the winnings, at least 500 pounds, to Agatha.

AGATHA

What do you want me to do with it?

IAN

Spend it, naturally.

Agatha appears lost. Frozen.

IAN

(very calmly)

You're hesitating in an emergency, dear.

AGATHA

I know; and you can't have that.

IAN

Put it in your underwear and let's go.

She put's the money down her blouse.

The clerk sends the house money down the chute.

Ian pulls the lever and turns out the lights.

Ian again takes Agatha's hand and navigate the chaos. They escape out a back door, up a fire escape and across a roof and down a fire escape.

EXT. KIT-CAT CLUB - HAYMARKET - LONDON - NIGHT

Out of breath they arrive on the street.

AGATHA

That was fun.

Ian gives one of those "James Bond" expressions as he would rather have been on a beach.

IAN

I could have done without that at the end.

AGATHA

Well, you were marvellous.

(beat)

Never seen anything like that.

(beat)

Croupiers fighting cops and you navigating it all. Fearlessly.

IAN

Dealers fighting detectives.

AGATHA

I thought everyone would run. But they fought.

IAN

Admirable.

AGATHA

Can we come again? Tomorrow?

Another "James Bond" expression. They walk a block or two to the MG.

AGATHA

How did you know the man was cheating?

IAN

One of my professors asked me to catch someone cheating at his club. So..

AGATHA

But I don't understand how that helped you. I simply wouldn't have played if I knew someone was cheating.

IAN

Dear. A person can't cheat on every hand. So, if you know how he cheats then you know when he cheats.

AGATHA

And that's when you don't play that round?

IAN

You simply fold.

AGATHA

I see. Clever.

IAN

You still have the money? It didn't fall out the bottom of your dress, did it?

AGATHA

No, it didn't. The dress is tight enough.

IAN

I noticed.

AGATHA

Thank you.

IAN

Can I have five of it for petrol?

(beat)

We need to get you as far from here as possible.

EXT. PETROL STATION - WEST LONDON - SATURDAY DUSK

Agatha is counting the money on the seat. It's rather a lot.

IAN

You did pretty well for yourself back there?

AGATHA

You did pretty well for yourself, as well.

She means he's won her heart.

IAN

Can you make it on that?

AGATHA

I can do more than just make it. I can live a year on this.

IAN

I shouldn't think it will take that long.

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 SUPER SPORTS - LUTON - SATURDAY NIGHT

Motoring north. There aren't car heaters (at the time) and Agatha and Ian use blankets. Agatha is totally wrapped up in one. Ian has one over his legs.

AGATHA

Do you have a second blanket?

IAN

In the back.

She reaches into the back and brings up a second blanket.

IAN

I don't know why they don't get around to inventing heaters for cars. The engine seems hot enough. Can you feel it through the floorboards?

AGATHA

Only a bit.

She's not likely going to want to discuss engines.

IAN

Okay, back to the subject of your backstabbing and inconsiderate husband. Finish the story.

AGATHA

In those days, the social rules were still strict. More than three dances with the same man could blemish a girl's reputation.

IAN

You enjoyed being popular?

AGATHA

No, there was really only one fellow for me. Archibald.

IAN

Archibald?

AGATHA

Well, Archie. He asked me for the authorized three dances. He then dared to ask me for three more.

IAN

And did you?

AGATHA

By then it didn't matter what people thought.

IAN

He was your fellow.

AGATHA

Of course, and we danced six times. Archie was a second lieutenant and a pilot. I was smitten.

IAN

Sure of himself, was he?

AGATHA

He motorbiked to Ashfield and sweet-talked my mom into inviting him in for tea.

(beat)

I wasn't even there, but she didn't tell him that until he was inside. She used it as an opportunity to cross-examine him. Thoroughly, I imagine.

IAN

So she approved?

AGATHA

She begged me to marry anyone but Archie. But the war was beginning and he was off for it... so we got married. We had one night and he was off.

IAN

Well...

Ian begins to say something but stops. Agatha expects him to answer. He can not.

AGATHA

Well...

IAN

I have nothing. What can I possibly say?

(very long beat)

Like a virgin never died on a battlefield?

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 SPORT - NORTHAMPTON - SATURDAY NIGHT

Something occurs to Agatha and she turns in the car seat and opens her suitcase in the back. She returns with a notepad. She's as energized as a teenage girl out with her beau.

IAN

You're writing a story? Now?

AGATHA

Yes.

IAN

It's past 11:00 at night.

AGATHA

Yes.

IAN

It's outside Northampton.

AGATHA

Okay.

IAN

Is this the way it's done?

AGATHA

I like to talk it out beforehand. Not every idea is a good one you know.

IAN

And you'll know a good idea when you hear it?

AGATHA

Let me try it out on you.

IAN

This story... it's about me?

AGATHA

So, impish James, his name is James, NOT Ian; he finds himself at the fashionable resort Kimpton-on-Sea, all due to the lure of his girlfriend, Grace, who during the last few months of their courtship has become more difficult to deal with.

IAN

She's frigid?

AGATHA

Yes, that's what I mean.

(beat)

You have no idea what expectations are forced on a young girl.

IAN

Oh, I might have some idea.

(beat)
It's not easy you know.

AGATHA
And it shouldn't be easy either.

IAN
So what does this chap do?

AGATHA
Grace has money and chooses to stay with friends at the best hotel while James stays at a cheap boarding house.

IAN
I like him already.

AGATHA
Just wait. The upper echelons of society are there, including the Rajah of Maraputna. But James isn't intimidated. And he's Eager to both irritate and win over Grace; if that makes any sense.

IAN
It does. Women really won't notice you unless they're at least a little irritated.

AGATHA
You're not much of a milksop are you?

IAN
I don't know what that is.

AGATHA
What establishes the character is... he bypasses the queue to the changing rooms and ducks into one of the private huts on the beach so that he can be the first into the water.

IAN
Brilliant. He's ballsy.

AGATHA

It's only later that he realizes he has accidentally come into possession of a very valuable and sought-after object, the Rajah's stolen emerald. He puts on the thief's trousers and then has the priceless emerald.

IAN

And you just dreamed that?

AGATHA

You heard it first.

IAN

And who's is this fellow?

AGATHA

Bond, James Bond.

(beat)

Naval Lieutenant, James Bond. In deference to your mother, he's in the navy.

IAN

Yes, but who is he?

AGATHA

I think he's rather like you; he's a bit mischievous, After an incident with the housemaster, he's been sent down from Eton. But he finishes school and joins the Navy. Trust me; he can take care of himself.

IAN

He's from a nice family?

AGATHA

The definition of a nice family is starting at Eaton, not finishing.

IAN

I like that. And this Grace?

AGATHA

Well, she doesn't matter but she's a girl naturally.

IAN

Not a grown woman running away from her husband?

AGATHA

Yes, well; the point is I believe you'd cut the queue to win her attention and then leave her after the second poke.

IAN

I might. But say the name again.

AGATHA

His name is Bond. James Bond.

IAN

I like that name. Grand Cayman, you say? Why not Jamaica?

AGATHA

I like the Caymans.

IAN

I like Jamaica.

AGATHA

Who's story is this anyway?

IAN

Well, it's not yours until you write it down.

AGATHA

Do you have a torch?

IAN

Under your seat.

AGATHA

I can't reach...

IAN

Here.

Ian reaches down under her car seat and narrowly misses crashing the car.

IAN

That was close. I'm embarrassed.

Ian turns white as a ghost. Agatha, however, is invigorated. Adrenaline. She laughs hysterically, mostly at Ian's expression.

AGATHA

(chuckling)

Careful; you only live twice.

Agatha begins to write.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 - LEICESTER - NIGHT

Still travelling north.

AGATHA

The triumph of good over evil.

IAN

A biblical concept of morality?

AGATHA

Thou shalt not kill might be more important than the others.

IAN

Well, keep up the good work.

AGATHA

All mystery novels are metaphors for original sin, don't you think? Everyone's guilty of something.

IAN

What are you guilty of?

AGATHA
Being here, for one.

IAN
Is it that bad?

AGATHA
No. You've been marvellously civil.

IAN
Well, just think of the stories I'll be
able to...
(beat)
Oh, that's right. I forgot.

AGATHA
They won't believe you at Eaton and
besides, you promised.

IAN
I won't say a word.
(beat)
Go on about your family?

AGATHA
Many many confused ideas.

IAN
Your father?

AGATHA
No. He was an American. He's dead.
(beat)
For a time I feared that he would burn in
hell.

IAN
Why?

AGATHA
Because he played croquet Sunday
afternoons and he told jokes about the
clergy.

IAN
That's not odd.

AGATHA

It was mostly my mother; she didn't let me read until I was seven.

IAN

So when did you learn to read?

AGATHA

When I was four.

(beat)

I remember my nanny breaking the bad news to mum that I'd taught myself to read.

IAN

And your mother?

AGATHA

My mother was an angel and we bullied her.

IAN

I doubt that.

AGATHA

Once she mentioned needing to sell Ashfield.

(beat)

We protested until she gave up.

IAN

Who is we?

AGATHA

My brother and my sister. Mostly me. I threw a fit; I'm afraid I put a lot of undue pressure on her.

IAN

What happened?

AGATHA

It was an expensive house to keep up, but we kept it.

IAN

Financial anxieties?

AGATHA

We gave up the lobster but kept the roof
and the piano.

IAN

I hate to hear that. Lobster's so love the
piano.

AGATHA

Cute.

IAN

Your siblings? They're older?

AGATHA

Much older. They moved out when I was ten.

IAN

That explains a lot.

AGATHA

It does?

IAN

You had your mother all to yourself.

AGATHA

You think I'm spoiled?

IAN

What's it like to be a woman?

AGATHA

Odd question. Don't you know?

IAN

Obviously not; that's why I'm asking.

AGATHA

You'll take what I tell you and use it to
seduce other women, less intelligent
women.

IAN

Less deserving women?

AGATHA

Yes.

IAN

You're jealous?

AGATHA

I'm not. I've only just met you.

IAN

Then tell me. What's it like to be a female?

AGATHA

Well, I don't know. I like mathematics, music, and logic puzzles. I buy the newest typewriter each year. Most women don't do that. And I have/had an automobile.

IAN

You have a practical bent.

AGATHA

I'm afraid I grew up not fitting into anyone's ideal of femininity.

IAN

How do you feel about women voting?

AGATHA

It's nice but women shouldn't work. For a million years, women have been crawling up into a revered position and now they want to dive back into drudgery?

IAN

It's all silly, if you ask me.

AGATHA

But on the other hand; I'll never wear a corset, like my mother.

IAN

Edward VII was the worst of kings.

AGATHA

Not a practical man at all.

IAN

You regret being practical?

AGATHA

No wonder my husband left me. I forgot I was a woman...

(beat)

... until I saw your wall game.

IAN

Really? It restored your femininity?

(beat)

Well, it was well worth the loss then.

AGATHA

Your elbow, does it hurt?

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 - LOUGHBOROUGH - NIGHT

IAN

It's good to be a bit scared... shaky.

AGATHA

We'll see what happens, I guess.

IAN

If the newspapers don't kill you, you'll be stronger.

AGATHA

That's not what I signed up for.

IAN

It's an interesting life.

AGATHA

Oscar Wilde had an interesting life, dirty bugger.

IAN

I imagine being a writer might be fun.

AGATHA

It's all I ever want to do.

IAN

Driving you around in the greatest, most crafty, act of revenge ever in history. I quite like this part of agent/provocateur.

AGATHA

I might add that you can be very provocative.

IAN

You liked the way I touched you out on the balcony?

AGATHA

What balcony?

IAN

At the casino? Don't you remember?

AGATHA

(chuckling)

I'm poking fun at your male ego. Some men come unglued.

IAN

I think I know who you mean.

AGATHA

But that's done. I hope this isn't the end for me as a writer.

IAN

You'll always work.

AGATHA

I'm never going to stop. Even if the books no longer sell.

IAN

Of course not; you have a public and they'll stick with you. Unless we muck up the machinery?

AGATHA

Machinery?

IAN

Moving parts. Journalists. Police.

AGATHA

And the people.

IAN

No, the British? They're immovable.

AGATHA

It's still Victorian England, right?

IAN

The British people will never forgive anyone who likes a lot of sex.

AGATHA

That sounds odd coming from such a robust eager man.

IAN

Do I seem eager?

AGATHA

About normal, I should guess.

IAN

From here on out your work should be so entertaining that they will never want to forgive your husband.

AGATHA

I'll remember that.

(beat)

Thank you.

(beat)

You might make a nice writer yourself. It takes a certain deviousness, I think.

IAN

I don't think I can sit still for that long. This car ride is just murder on my back...

(beat)
Murder... haha get it?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 - CASTLE DONINGTON - NIGHT

AGATHA

Archie?
(beat)
It's entirely my fault.

IAN

Please. Why must every woman be so eager
to fall on the sword?

AGATHA

That's very progressive of you.

IAN

No, I think just practical.

AGATHA

That's very sweet of you but I'm being
practical too. And I was there.

IAN

But I can guess.

AGATHA

He tried to warn me. "Everybody can't be
happy," he said. And he said, "I can't
stand not having what I want, and I can't
stand not being happy."

IAN

He can't see the contradiction in that? It
was okay for you to be unhappy, but not
for him?

AGATHA

He doesn't matter now.

IAN

You should be happy, now.

AGATHA

I didn't think I would be happy, I'm confident the writing will allow me to be independent of him. And happy.

IAN

You're no longer frozen.

AGATHA

Thank you.

IAN

What was his reaction when he actually saw you writing?

AGATHA

I never allowed him.

IAN

That's curious.

AGATHA

About the needlepoint. He doesn't always use that... sometimes he compares it to gardening.

IAN

You're a wonderful gardener.

AGATHA

Thank you.

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 - NOTTINGHAM - NIGHT

AGATHA

Like my sister, I read mystery novels. When she mentioned that she might try writing one...

IAN

You told her that you too might write one.

AGATHA

How did you know?

IAN

A rivalry between the sisters, it's normal.

AGATHA

It took a while, several many years.

IAN

That's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*?

AGATHA

It felt good to do something that my sister had not.

IAN

How did you come up with the idea?

AGATHA

During the war, I was working at the hospital. The pharmacist, an arrogant ass, I disliked him immensely. He misplaced a decimal point when calculating a dosage. He refused to listen when I pointed out his mistake.

IAN

So what did you do?

AGATHA

I dropped the medicine tray and kicked most of the medication away with my shoe.

IAN

You saved someone's life.

AGATHA

It enlightened me about strychnine and bromide.

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 - SHEFFIELD - NIGHT

Ian is still driving. She's resting her head on his shoulder. She's trying not to fall asleep. Her head drops off his shoulder but she catches herself. She's embarrassed.

INT. 1924 MG 14/28 - LEEDS - NIGHT

The sun is rising in the East. Agatha is sleeping with her head using Ian's lap as a pillow. It's very innocent, but would be scandalous at the time. The entire movie is scandalous.

IAN

We're going to be at the resort soon.

She doesn't stir from her sleep.

IAN

Did you think of a name?

The car hits a bump in the road and she wakes up.

AGATHA

What?

IAN

Did you think of a name to use at the hotel?

AGATHA

Neele.

IAN

But, you said that's the name of the...

She tilts her head only a bit. She doesn't need coffee in the morning. She immediately commands a slew of words.

AGATHA

(almost talking in her sleep)

Trollope? Jade? Tart? Cyprian? Demimondaine?

IAN

That's not...

AGATHA

If it ever makes the papers...

IAN

... healthy.

AGATHA

Me using the name of the OTHER woman?

IAN

He'll look guilty as hell.

AGATHA

He IS guilty as hell.

IAN

I should write a novel about this.

AGATHA

You promised.

IAN

But I might like to write a different story.

AGATHA

I expect you'll be too busy with dirty tricks and your political intrigues.

IAN

Well, someday perhaps.

Her head has never left his lap but she returns to sleep.

INT. SWAN HYDROPATHIC HOTEL - HARROGATE - YORKSHIRE - SUNDAY

Sun is above the horizon. Ian carries sleeping Agatha into the hotel and stands in front of the HOTEL MANAGER/OWNER (female).

HOTEL MANAGER

This isn't very...

IAN

Yes, we've been driving all night, up from London.

HOTEL MANAGER

Why didn't you stay there and drive up in the morning?

IAN

Where's the adventure in that?

Long beat. The manager might be stuffy. But she's not.

HOTEL MANAGER

That's the spirit. Happy to have you.

IAN

This is Mrs Neele. Can I put her down
somewhere?

Agatha begins to wake up.

IAN

Should I set you down? Do you want to
walk?

AGATHA

Yes. No. Take me directly to bed.

He doesn't put her down.

IAN

She's exhausted.

HOTEL MANAGER

And you are Mr Neele?

IAN

No, ma'am, I'm just the driver.

HOTEL MANAGER

Your name?

AGATHA

Teressa Neele. She... I mean I spell it N-E-
E-L-E

HOTEL MANAGER

Sign here.

IAN moves over to the book and from his arms she signs it.

HOTEL MANAGER

(to Ian)

And your name?

IAN
I'm not staying.

HOTEL MANAGER
I'd still like to know your name.

AGATHA
His name is Arthur Pritchard.
(beat)
He's named after King Arthur.

HOTEL MANAGER
Oh, my son is studying for his classics exam. Rumoured to be on King Arthur.

IAN
Oh, same here. My exam is Tuesday. Maybe we should compare notes.

AGATHA
Can I pay for a week?

HOTEL MANAGER
Sign the book, please.

AGATHA
Okay, you can put me down now.

She puts several pounds on the desk.

DISSOLVE TO:

Ian and Agatha are waiting on the elevator, or standing at the base of the stairs. The suitcase is there now.

AGATHA
(whispering)
I don't know it might be a mistake.

IAN
You said we would have to see. Let's see.

AGATHA
I was such a coward giving into you like this.

IAN

I can understand that. But we're knee-deep in it now.

AGATHA

Friends and family. His work. My work. We were Agatha and Archie. We fit rather well, people always said.

IAN

We have to stick to the plan. Has he given any reason to think it will work out?

AGATHA

No.

Long beat...

IAN

You poor thing. Do you want to go back?

AGATHA

I've made it all a hash. I haven't stopped loving him.

IAN

(hesitates)

Well, that's good. If you can wash him out of your hair... how easily you can me as well.

AGATHA

Oh, my god. You're serious.

(beat)

I don't wash men out of my hair. It's the other way around.

IAN

Maybe I should have a word with the bolter. You said he can fly a plane but can he fight?

AGATHA

No, don't do that. This is our plan and it's going to work.

IAN

Maybe if we try jolly hard.

AGATHA

I want it to work...

IAN

So do I. Everything is going to be alright.

Ian looks down at Agatha's suitcase.

HOTEL MANAGER

You can take it up if you like.

Ian remembers the trouble he's been in at Eaton.

IAN

Oh, no I better not... at my school... Well never mind.

The hotel manager signals for her son to take the suitcase upstairs. I'll be off.

EXT. LESSER HOTEL - HARROGATE - NOON

Ian sleeps from 7 am to 12 noon in a much cheaper hotel.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE - AFTERNOON

The HOTEL MANAGER'S SON has his books out and has been studying for the test. Ian enters.

HOTEL MANAGER'S SON

My Mom said you know about King Arthur.

IAN

Well, I didn't know him personally, but I can tell you what will be on your exam.

HOTEL MANAGER'S SON

Really?

IAN

They're gonna ask you about Arthur; I guarantee it.

HOTEL MANAGER'S SON

How do you know?

IAN

Because no one ever graduates from any British school without knowing about Arthur, and knowing the story is true.

HOTEL MANAGER'S SON

So what do I have to say?

IAN

You have to know two poems. One is called the *Gododdin'* and in it some other guy killed 300 men but it's nothing compared to what Arthur did. But there is a problem. We only have a copy of it from the 13th-century, that's the 1200s AD. Long way back. But King Arthur was older than that date. The guy who they say wrote the poem, a guy named Aneirin; he lived in the 500s AD. So people say Arthur isn't real, but he was. They just lost his paperwork, you see?

There are two young people sitting on the floor listening to Ian's talk.

IAN

And the second poem they will want you to know about is also Welsh. It's a poem found in the Black Book of Carmarthen, *Pargur yv y porthaur?* "What man is the gatekeeper?". Arthur wants to get into a fort, but the gatekeeper won't let in just anyone. So Arthur has to tell them all these stories proving he's worthy. Arthur tells him about the things he and his men have done.

HOTEL MANAGER'S SON

True stories or made up?

There are eight young people on the floor listening.

IAN

Nothing about Arthur was made up. Not ever. And if someone tells you it's not true... tell them the story has been handed down for dozens of generations AND there are old documents that prove it, just not all the documents are readily available. Understand?

There are fifteen young people on the floor listening. Many are younger than the hotel clerk's son. Ian is charismatic and has a great story.

YOUTH

Tell us a story.

IAN

Okay, one story but I have to go back to school. I have school tomorrow just like you.

YOUTH

Haha.

IAN

Yes, bloody old school. I'm just like you.

YOUTH

(chanting)

Story! Story!

The chanting brings the entire hotel to the sitting room.

Ian is going to do a one-man play. He begins but Agatha comes downstairs to join him.

IAN

There was once a time when Arthur wasn't a king. He didn't even have a cake to eat. No lords. No swords, No ladies to spoil. No lakes. Amazingly it was a time when there was just a terrified boy in a rank section in the dark city of London. But he had a lady to serve as his mum.

Agatha comes and stands near Ian.

AGATHA

Here, let me help you.

Suddenly there are 50 people in the living space. He hands her the script and takes a blanket and lays on a couch. In the play, Ian plays young Arthur being put to bed by his mom.

IAN

This is a true conversation Arthur had with the woman who adopted him. He was all alone in the world except for his new mum, and the mystery who he really was.

AGATHA

(playing Arthur's mom)

Good night, Arthur.

IAN

(playing Arthur)

Night, mum.

AGATHA

Can I ask you a question? Who was the stranger who brought you to London?

IAN

Just a man.

AGATHA

The man that brought you here, what did he say to you?

IAN

I was young and don't remember.

AGATHA

Are you sure?

IAN

He asked me what I remembered, just like you're doing now.

AGATHA

Remembered about what? What do you remember about life before you came to London?

IAN

I don't know. I've always been here.

AGATHA

No. Someone brought you to us. So what is your first memory?

IAN

I was the apprentice to the stable master; now he was a real treat he would beat you as soon as look at you. And he could whistle through his teeth.

AGATHA

Before that?

IAN

Nothing. You ask a lot of questions.

AGATHA

I'm curious.

IAN

About what?

AGATHA

I'm curious you don't remember anything before you came here. You don't remember what he asked you?

(beat)

No. But I remember what I asked him.

(beat)

I asked him who he was and he said a better question for me to ask myself was who I was?

(beat)

And he said I might be surprised by the answer.

AGATHA

Well, who are you?

IAN

I'm the boy who keeps the horses clean.

AGATHA

And has dreams of a dead king.

IAN

Mom, I don't want to talk about this anymore.

AGATHA

Why would a stable boy dream about a dead king? Unless...

IAN

Unless, what?

AGATHA

You tell me.

(beat)

Why would God cause you to dream such things?

IAN

Maybe all the boys dream of Uther.

AGATHA

Oh, so he has a name now?

IAN

The butcher of Cornwall.

AGATHA

You have dreams about that particular king?

IAN

You remember him?

AGATHA

He sure did know how to collect his taxes. Bled the country dry.

IAN

What else?

AGATHA

That he's dead.

IAN

Good riddance.

AGATHA

Do you ever think about Uther, during that day?

IAN

Why would I do something like that?

AGATHA

I'm just asking.

IAN

Mom, there isn't any such thing with you.

AGATHA

Does talking about Uther disturb you?

IAN

He has nothing to do with me.

AGATHA

That's not what I asked you, son.

(beat)

In these dreams how does he appear to you?

(beat)

As a king or as a dragon.

(beat)

Which?

(beat)

Young or old?

(beat)

Perhaps he's both, king and a dragon?

IAN

Mom, I'm about to go to sleep and all this talk. You're just gonna cause me to...

AGATHA

Tell me and I'll leave you to sleep.

IAN

He appears as a king riding a gray dragon.

AGATHA

Thank you. That's all I wanted to know.

IAN

Where are you going?

AGATHA

It's time for you to sleep.

IAN

I won't want to go to sleep now.

Applause.

IAN

And of course, everyone knows that later Arthur will deal with supernatural Saxons, giant cat-monsters, enchanted wild-boars, dragons, dogheads, giants, witches and impossible queens with far too many shoes.

IAN

Ladies and gentlemen. This is..

AGATHA

(whispering)

Teressa Neele.

IAN

That's right; this is Teressa Neele, from..

AGATHA

(whispering)

South Africa.

IAN

South Africa.

Applause.

IAN

Make sure she's welcomed. A great talent and a wonderful lady.

AGATHA

And is there any applause, or small coins,
for my royal friend?

IAN

Me?

(whispering)

Who am I?

AGATHA

This is Arthur Pritchard! Scholar and
athlete. Eaton College.

Applause.

IAN

And so I must ask you, what do you believe
about Arthur?

YOUTH

Everything is absolutely true.

IAN

Yes. You are right.

IAN

Down with the knights of negativism.
Arthur lives!!!

Applause.

INT. OFFICE - SUNNINGDALE - SUNDAY

Sunningdale church bells toll. Archie sits with Charlotte in
the office. Rosalind enters in her Sunday best.

ARCHIE

What's this?

ROSALIND

It's Sunday; didn't you hear the bells?

CHARLOTTE

You dressed all by yourself? What a big
girl.

ARCHIE
No church today, pumpkin.

ROSALIND
Why?

CHARLOTTE
We're worried about your mother.

ARCHIE
She knows her mother isn't missing.

CHARLOTTE
How could she know anything?

ROSALIND
What happened to mommy?

ARCHIE
Nothing, she's playing a game.

ROSALIND
Hide and seek?

CHARLOTTE
No, Rosalind. Not hide and seek.

EXT. SILENT POOL - NEULANDS CORNER - SUNDAY

Church bells in the far distance. Kenward is speaking to special constables.

KENWARD
I understand you are all volunteers. And it's brutally cold.

VOLUNTEER
Minus two degrees Fahrenheit.

KENWARD
And you've rallied.

KENWARD
Comb the underbrush and hedges.
(gesturing to the pond)

Get some sticks and break the ice. THE killer he'll not benefit from a bit of cold.

VOLUNTEER

You don't suspect the Colonel, do you?

KEN

I don't care what that louse did during the war. He's the husband who brought his floozy to the scene of the crime.

(beat)

I want that pool dredged. Here are our experts.

(gesturing to two men)

They'll lead you. I want it done now. Today!

INT. SWAN HYDROPATHIC HOTEL - HARROGATE - SUNDAY

Church bells. Agatha is laying in the steam room. She rises and goes to a table where she receives a massage.

EXT. NEULANDS CORNER - NOON SUNDAY

Sun is now shining. Children and their families have taken to the fields in the hopes of finding clues missed by the police. They giggle and make a game out of it until dusk.

INT. GUILDFORD POLICE STATION - SUNDAY NIGHT

Kenward enters the station and hands a paper (missing person's bulletin) to a POLICE CLERK.

KENWARD

I want this phoned to the surrounding 48 police departments.

CLERK

London?

KENWARD

I'll take care of that personally.

Kenward picks up the phone in an office.

KENWARD

Operator. London, the Daily Herald.

There is a long wait.

DISSOLVE TO:

Later, Kenward is still on the phone.

KENWARD

Of course, there are sinister implications!

(beat)

She's not lost. If she were just lost don't you think she'd have been spotted by the planes or tracked by the dogs? Or dredged up from a stream or pond?

(beat)

Over 15,000.

(beat)

Yes, you heard me correctly. Volunteers.

(beat)

Well, they just showed up to help in the search.

(beat)

No, it's not a made-up number. It's front page stuff.

INT. OFFICE - SUNNINGDALE - MONDAY

Archie and Charlotte, even Rosalind, are listening to the wireless.

BBC RADIO

BBC missing person's report. MISSING From her home "Styles" Sunningdale Mrs Agatha Mary Clarissa CHRISTIE (WIFE OF COLONEL A. CHRISTIE) Age: 34 years, Height: 5 ft. 7 inches. Hair: Red, Natural Teeth, Eyes: Grey, Complexion: Fair, Well Built. DRESSED—Grey Stockingette Skirt, Green Jumper, Grey and dark Grey Cardigan, small Green Velour Hat, may have handbag containing £5 to £10. Left home on 3rd December leaving note saying she was going for a drive. The next morning the car was

found abandoned at Newlands Corner,
Albury, Surrey.

ARCHIE

You certainly gave them plenty of
information. You're sure you aren't
involved in this?

CHARLOTTE

You don't seem a bit worried?

ARCHIE

Who remembers that much, specifically what
she was wearing or how much money she had?

ROSALIND

You will never catch mother; she's very
clever at hide-and-seek. And she won't let
you win just because she loves you.

INT. DRESS SHOP - HARROGATE- DAY

Agatha buys clothes.

INT. AC CAR GROUP - GUILDFORD - DAY

JOURNALIST and FREDERICK speak.

FREDERICK

Frederick, nice to meet ya.

JOURNALIST

What do ya do here?

FREDERICK

I'm a mechanic.

JOURNALIST

Are you the one who found the car?

FREDERICK

No. that was some kid. He told me about
it. So, I went out there to look at it.
That's it over there.

Agatha's car is parked in the garage.

JOURNALIST

Something you can tell me about the car?

FREDERICK

It was down a hill, where the kids use their sledges when it snows.

JOURNALIST

At the bottom of the hill and it's a Morris Cowley?

FREDERICK

Yep. It was up in some bushes.

(beat)

All the lights were out. I found the switch "on" but the current was given out.

JOURNALIST

Someone left the lights on. Abandoned in the darkness. What happened, ya figure?

FREDERICK

It certainly looked to me that it had been pushed down the hill. There weren't no skid marks.

JOURNALIST

Suicide you think?

(beat)

You think she was murdered?

(beat)

Maybe she tried to make it look like foul play and she's on a steamer to America?

FREDERICK

I have no idea. Really. You're asking me about something I don't know about.

JOURNALIST

But the car was definitely pushed down the hill empty? Ya think she was trying to run it into the pit?

(beat)

Was her husband involved you think? Most people think he did her in.

FREDERICK

Could have been. I don't know.

JOURNALIST

I'll take that as a yes. Thank you.

EXT. VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL LOCATIONS - DAY

MONTAGE - Various POLICEMEN are taking reports.

RAIL ROAD PORTER

And the woman, obviously Mrs Christie, asked me the time of the next train to Portsmouth.

LITTLE LONDON FEMALE

She bought sausage in that little shop the very next day.

MANCHESTER WAITRESS

She ordered tea.

ROUGH LOOKING FELLOW

I offered her a lift to Battersea, because that's where she said she wanted to go. And then she looked at me like the kind of woman that didn't care if she got there at all. Did she get in? No, she declined.

FRENCHMAN

(in French)

Une femme, la célèbre écrivaine anglaise, elle a escaladé la tour Eiffel et whosh, elle a sauté. C'était triste.

(A woman, the famous English writer, she climbed the Eiffel tower and whosh, she jumped down. It was sad.)

An EGYPTIAN TAXI DRIVER points the police toward the Great Pyramid.

A STRANGE WOMAN is out of her car, in light clothing (no coat) on a very cold day. The FIRST MAN is looking closely at her. She's pointing to her car. The lights of her car are on but it's not running.

MAN

Can I be of any assistance?

But the woman is not speaking. She's frozen as well.

Soon FIVE MEN are standing around or helping. Two work under the hood. They seem to gesture each other, whisper, that they know it's Agatha. The first one takes off his jacket and hands it to the shivering woman. The SECOND MAN donates his gloves. A THIRD MAN walks to a phone to call the police.

They give the crank two swift turns and the engine sparks to life. Helping the strange woman into her car and retrieving his coat and her thanks, he turns to leave and she starts speaking Spanish.

IMMIGRANT LADY

(in Spanish)

Eres un hombre valiente. Gracias, muchas gracias a todos. Que tengas un buen día.

(You are a brave man. Thank you, thank you all a great deal. Have a nice day.)

On a transatlantic ship, HONEYMOONERS order room service. The BRIDE looks so much like Agatha that the WAITER drops the tray of food when she opens the door.

INT. INDOOR POOL - SWAN HYDROPATHIC HOTEL - WEEKDAY

Agatha is swimming (treading water). And a YOUNG GIRL (12) swims up to her. They tread water.

YOUNG GIRL

Who is older?

AGATHA

What do you mean?

YOUNG GIRL

Out of you and your boyfriend?

AGATHA

What boyfriend?

YOUNG GIRL

I saw your production of King Arthur as a boy.

AGATHA

Oh, he's not my boyfriend. We just ran into each other.

YOUNG GIRL

How did you run into each other?

AGATHA

I noticed him playing sports.

YOUNG GIRL

And I guess he noticed you back?

AGATHA

Uh, yes.

YOUNG GIRL

You like sports?

AGATHA

Yes. But he's just a friend.

YOUNG GIRL

He looks like he might be rather good at it.

AGATHA

We don't really know each other. I just thought it would be fun.

YOUNG GIRL

Are you having fun?

AGATHA

I'm getting over someone. You know what that means?

YOUNG GIRL

No.

AGATHA

It means there is someone out there that I love, but I can't be with them anymore.

YOUNG GIRL

Why?

AGATHA

I don't really know.

YOUNG GIRL

What's your job?

AGATHA

What about you? Shouldn't you be in school?

YOUNG GIRL

My grandmama educates me. She's driving me around the country.

AGATHA

What do you think of it?

YOUNG GIRL

It's all the same. Hotels, motorcars, cows, birds, cow shit, bird shit.

AGATHA

Exhaust fumes from the motors.

The young girl chuckles.

AGATHA

I work for a detective. I answer the phones and type the reports.

YOUNG GIRL

In South Africa? Is he a bruit?

AGATHA

Really? He's a Belgian. I guess he tries.

The young girl repeats something she's heard her grandmother say.

YOUNG GIRL

It's not about trying with me.

AGATHA

Okay. I see.

INT. LOBBY - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE - WEEKDAY

Returning from school, the hotel manager's son shows his mother his essay book. His exam has been on King Authur and it's marked with a very large A+. The hotel manager is very pleased.

INT. DINING ROOM - SWAN HYDROPATHIC HOTEL - WEEKDAY

GRANDMOTHER, the young girl and Agatha are dining together.

GRANDMOTHER

I grew up in Windsor. Back then the royal family spent the Christmas holiday there. Now it's changed and not just Christmas.

AGATHA

How?

GRANDMOTHER

It was just more glamorous then. The king could carry on a decent conversation and the city wasn't dead at Christmas. Now when the students leave, it's a ghost town.

AGATHA

Why Sandringham now?

GRANDMOTHER

(dismal)

The king, I suppose. I guess it's part of the new regime.

AGATHA

I considered going to Sandringham for my holiday and they brought me here instead.

YOUNG GIRL

Lucky for us.

AGATHA

That was sweet, thank you.

GRANDMOTHER

My husband was a schoolmate of Edward.

AGATHA

What a quandary?

GRANDMOTHER

Lunacy.

AGATHA

I see.

GRANDMOTHER

I was forced to listen to all their discussions and smoking and everything.

YOUNG GIRL

Granmama, can Teressa have a look at grandfather's butterflies?

GRANDMOTHER

I don't think.

YOUNG GIRL

Yea. She might be interested.

GRANDMOTHER

But she's not going to want to do that.

YOUNG GIRL

I can ask her.

AGATHA

What's this?

GRANDMOTHER

My husband collected butterflies.

YOUNG GIRL

They're upstairs.

AGATHA

And you travel with them?

YOUNG GIRL

Grandmama likes to keep hold of things.

INT. DINING ROOM - SWAN HYDROPATHIC HOTEL - WEEKEND NIGHT

Agatha and Ian are dining. A few glances at their table, but there isn't too much interest among the adults. The young girl is watching everything between them.

AGATHA

How were your exams?

IAN

I muddled through.

AGATHA

Only muddled?

IAN

I'm not sure I like school all that much.

AGATHA

It's a necessary evil...

IAN

Teachers are boll weevils.

AGATHA

So what will we ever do?

IAN

(devilishly)

I have an idea.

AGATHA

Maybe we should discuss things instead?

IAN

The particular thing we've done?

AGATHA

Running away.

IAN

Or the thing any reasonable person would expect us to do?

AGATHA

Really. You are presumptuous.

IAN

You're really doing well.

He slides the folded newspaper across the table. She opens it to the headlines: WRITER STILL MISSING - Foul-play Suspected.

IAN

Newspapers are so informative; don't you think?

She rapidly reads the article.

AGATHA

There are some detractors, I see.

IAN

But that's at the bottom. That you're suspected and Archie is the victim. Almost an afterthought.

AGATHA

I'm trying to extract some sort of *marital justice*? I didn't know there was such a thing.

IAN

Yes, it's a new thing. Since last year, I think.

AGATHA

Am I on a ship to American, hoping he'll be arrested?

IAN

You might be at sea. I wouldn't know.

AGATHA

They can't make up their mind. Was I murdered or is it all about selling books?

IAN

I'm not really crazy about either of those.

AGATHA

Then what's it all about?

IAN

It's about winning.

He reaches across the table and takes her hand.

IAN

You're so warm.

AGATHA

I think it's just your hand.

IAN

No, It's your forehead too.

AGATHA

No. I think it's your hand. It feels so warm and sweaty. I can feel it.

IAN

So you want to go for a drive or something?

AGATHA

No. I want to sit here.

IAN

You're safe here?

AGATHA

No, it's not that. It's just warmer.

IAN

You don't like my blankets?

AGATHA

I'm sorry it's just going a bit fast.

IAN

Uhm...

AGATHA

I'm sorry.

IAN

What is it that we're taking slow?

AGATHA

All this...

IAN

Hardly; we raced into this.

AGATHA

I'm just a bit confused, about what I'm doing here.

(beat)

It seems to be a game for you. Spy versus the world or something like that.

IAN

Well, I'll be frank. I try to compartmentalize everything. There is "you" and there is "the game."

AGATHA

The game?

IAN

The game we're playing... yes with the newspapers.

AGATHA

And the police.

IAN

Dolts.

AGATHA

Why do you say that?

IAN

It's just that I believe everything is relative.

AGATHA

And?

IAN

You make a living from the need for private detectives. Real or perceived.

AGATHA

Well, as doltish as they are, please don't underestimate them at my expense.

IAN

Our expense, dear.

(beat)

That little girl is staring at us.

Ian is a bit taken back. They stop holding hands.

AGATHA

She must think... the hand holding... and you touched my forehead.

IAN

Maybe she thinks we're married.

AGATHA

She doesn't.

IAN

She doesn't?

AGATHA

I told her you were my friend.

IAN

Not boyfriend?

Ian thinks.

IAN

A bit too fast? What do you mean?

AGATHA

I thought maybe because you want a career...

IAN

That I shouldn't implicate myself?

AGATHA

Not any more than you already have.

IAN

Well after this... any jeopardy I face would be rather non-unique... something of a double jeopardy because I'll be blamed for it all. After all it was my car that brought you here.

AGATHA

So what's a little romp? Is that your argument?

IAN

I'm already in jeopardy, just sitting here with you. If you're discovered they'll look into it. My life might be over tomorrow.

AGATHA

It's the same argument Archie made before going to war. And you see where that's got me.

IAN

No one suspects.

AGATHA

No, just the people in this room.

IAN

It's a small number.

AGATHA

That headmaster would raise the alarm and you'd be expelled.

IAN

Plenty have been expelled for less.

AGATHA

(sarcastically)

Poor thing.

IAN
If he knew, he would.

AGATHA
I gathered that.

IAN
It's not too cold...

AGATHA
And you want to take a drive with me...

IAN
We certainly can.

AGATHA
Alternatively, we might hold off on...

IAN
... the lovemaking? Not a chance.

AGATHA
Really?

IAN
You told me you were practical.

AGATHA
I'm not that practical.

IAN
Okay. I see.
(beat)
You know they expect another play.

AGATHA
Now that I will agree to do.

IAN
Wonderful.

INT. LOBBY - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE - DAY

Grandmother delivers a letter to the desk.

GRANDMOTHER

Please post this, immediately.

The hotel manager takes the letter; she puts it in the box.

INT. CAFE - HARROGATE - WEEKEND DAY

It's chilly out but there are people out. There is a SOLDIER, a MILKMAN and a FARMER. Ian and Agatha are conversing and looking out the window.

IAN

You told me about your sister, but what's your brother like?

AGATHA

He's just a guy.

IAN

Like any guy?

AGATHA

(gesturing)

He's a guy like that.

IAN

Like the lieutenant or the milkman?

AGATHA

Like the lieutenant. We used to be close but we've... I don't know.

IAN

Do you think my mother has a point about the military?

AGATHA

Uniforms are attractive.

IAN

Really?

AGATHA

Some more than others.

IAN

I guess it boils down to expectations?

AGATHA

The military isn't entirely trustworthy.

IAN

And writers are?

She gives him an impish grin.

AGATHA

Writing is politics for people who know how to spell.

INT. BOOK STORE - HARROGATE- DAY

Agatha and Ian are walking down the sidewalk. Agatha notices a books store.

AGATHA

Come on.

IAN

You can't go in there. Someone will...

She pulls him inside.

AGATHA

It's cold and I was in here Thursday anyway.

They wander about and come to Agatha's *Roger Ackroyde* book. She takes it and holds it up to a LADY SHOPPER.

AGATHA

Now this is good. I can recommend it, if you're interested.

LADY SHOPPER

Thank you. I've read it as well. And you're right; it was particularly thrilling.

Agatha is feeling her oats and feels invincible. Ian's charmed; she's gone from a confused state to a euphoric state in a matter of a few days.

INT. FRONT ROOM - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE - SATURDAY EVENING

MONTAGE: Agatha and Ian perform another part of the play... it's another skit from King Arthur's story because Ian pulls an imaginary sword (a poker) from a stone (the fireplace). Big crowd and everyone's thrilled, especially the children. Another curtain call. Grandmother scoffs at the show and its popularity. The young girl is thrilled.

INT. LOBBY - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE - SUNDAY MORNING

Grandmother and the young girl check out and depart the hotel.

INT. PARKING LOT - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE - SUNDAY MORNING

The church bells ring. Agatha walks Ian to his MG. Ian seems a bit grumpy.

IAN

I have one more test... bloody hell. I'd like to stay here with you.

AGATHA

Finish the term and... I'll let you bring me a poinsettia, but only after your exams are finished.

He looks odd for a moment.

AGATHA

What's the matter? Is your car okay?

IAN

No, no. The car is fine. It's the finest motorcar alive.

AGATHA

Hhha. Alive? It's not a horse.

IAN

But it is... 14 of them.

AGATHA

Did you really expect me to take a drive with you last night?

IAN

I did. And you will. Eventually.

AGATHA

I'm flattered, but... it's time for you to get back... that one remaining exam.

IAN

Very well.

AGATHA

Do that and then we can have all the fun you like.

IAN

Really?

Ian was unhappy, but he leaves smiling or he's even giddy.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOBBY - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE - DECEMBER 14

There are two policemen and AGATHA'S SISTER but it's Archie at the front desk interrogating the hotel manager.

ARCHIE

She told you her name was Teressa Neele?

(beat)

Let me see your book.

(beat)

From South Africa?

(beat)

Ridiculous!

At that particular moment, Ian comes in looking very enthusiastic. He has a nice healthy poinsettia plant. He freezes when he realizes what is happening - two policemen and an irate husband.

ARCHIE

I've brought my sister-in-law and these
are two policemen.

HOTEL MANAGER

Everyone can see that and hear it as well.

ARCHIE

Who brought her here?

HOTEL MANAGER

I don't know, sir.

HOTEL MANAGER

(to Ian)

Is that a delivery?

IAN

(hesitantly)

Yes.

HOTEL MANAGER

(to Ian)

I'll see that she gets it. Thank you.

(explaining to Archie)

I'm sorry; the flower shop down the lane.

ARCHIE

What car did she arrive in?

HOTEL MANAGER

I don't believe she has a car, sir.

ARCHIE

She had visitors?

HOTEL MANAGER

Not that I'm aware of.

ARCHIE

Where is she now?

The manager reluctantly nods to the dining room.

ARCHIE

And you're sure? No male visitors?

HOTEL MANAGER
We don't allow male visitors.

ARCHIE
I was told...

HOTEL MANAGER
You were told wrong.

ARCHIE
That had better be the case!

HOTEL MANAGER
I assure you, nothing happens here but
rest and hydration.

The hotel manager glances after Ian, who is already beating it out of the lobby out to his vehicle.

EXT. SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE

Already a CROWD has gathered and especially present in front of the hotel are the newspapermen and photographers. Ian walks through the crowd.

BELGIAN
What's all this about?

SPINSTER
The missing writer.

BELGIAN
Agatha Christie? She's inside?

SPINSTER
They say she's been here all week. Using
the name of her husband's mistress.

JOURNALIST
And that's her husband making all the
fuss?

Both the BELGIAN immigrant and the local SPINSTER show their disgust for the journalist. They refuse to help the journalist.

JOURNALIST

Sounds like you know all about it. I have a few questions.

The Belgian punches the reporter in the nose. In the process, the reporter drops his glasses. The spinster steps on and shatters the reporter's glasses. They leave.

INT. LOBBY - SWAN HOTEL - HARROGATE

The hotel manager writes a note on the hotel stationery, folds it and puts it in between two poinsettia stems. The hotel manager's son is playing a board game in the front room with some other youth. She motions her son over to the desk and she hands him the plant.

HOTEL MANAGER

Dear, please take this up and put it in Mrs Neele's room.

Ian drives away.

INT. DINING ROOM - SWAN HYDROPATHIC HOTEL - HARROGATE

Archie finds Agatha, at a table by herself. She opens the newspaper and is reading an article on the inside. She seems to care less about the account of her disappearance, which is on the front page. When Archie approaches, she has no expression on her face. She convincingly looks lost.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: Many in the press blamed Agatha for wasting police resources. But it was soon forgotten.

SUPER: Nancy Neele's parents sent her on a long trip to escape the reporters.

SUPER: Archie and Nancy were married and presumably enjoyed a long happy marriage.

SUPER: Agatha Christie, the "Queen of Crime," remains the best-selling novelist in history. She created the murder mystery detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. Her books have sold about two billion copies. Only the Bible and

Shakespeare's works have sold more copies and her legacy shows no signs of fading.

SUPER: Ian Fleming is credited for creating the iconic character of James Bond. Specialists at the London School of Marketing have compiled data on the 007 movie franchise and they estimate that the Bond story has brought in as much as £13 billion. Of the £13 billion generated by the brand, £9 billion was from box office sales with the remaining £2 billion in DVD and equivalent sales and £2 billion in merchandising and co-marketing.

FADE IN

EXT. ALLY BEHIND THE SWAN HOTEL - DAY

To avoid the press, Agatha, Archie and Agatha's sister leave through the back door. However, one PHOTOGRAPHER is wise to it and Agatha is photographed leaving holding the poinsettia.

FRONTPAGE PHOTOGRAPH: *The Daily Express*.

ROLL CREDITS

FADE OUT