

THE DUCHESS

SCREENPLAY BY
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BASED ON THE BOOK "GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE"
BY AMANDA FOREMAN

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TITLE: Althorp Estate, 1774

Two servants knock in four flag posts, with fifty paces in between. They are marking out a race track of some kind.

We're on the back lawn of a beautiful country house. Off in the distance are fields filled with sheep, long grass and trees. It's a perfect summer's day with birds singing and a gentle breeze rustling in leaves.

Six ARISTOCRATIC YOUNG MEN stand in a group on the field. They are preparing for a running race: taking their jackets off and laying them down, then rolling up their sleeves.

On the lawn, a similar sized group of ARISTOCRATIC YOUNG WOMEN stand across from them. Behind is a tent and a table with the remains of an outdoor picnic.

To one side of the women a young, beautiful and content GEORGIANA approaches with a hat. Inside are folded up pieces of paper which she mixes around. She offers the hat to the women and they each pick a piece of paper. One after another they read out the names of the men opposite who look over and smile. GEORGIANA is left with the last name, and looks up.

GEORGIANA

(Loudly)

You'd better not let me down,
Charles Grey. I've got twenty
guineas riding on you.

A young man, CHARLES GREY looks back. He is quick to reply.

GREY

Only twenty? I'd double that if I
were you.

GEORGIANA smiles, while the look on Grey's face suggests that he's taking this very seriously. He joins the other men in the starting line up, who also seem pretty intent on winning.

GEORGIANA

Are you ready gentlemen? Twice
around the track. On my count,
three...two...one...go!

GEORGIANA drops a handkerchief. The men immediately sprint out across the park. The women start to cheer. GEORGIANA shouts the loudest, then starts to jump up and down.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Come on Grey, come on!

CUT TO:

2 INT. ALTHORP - DAY

2

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

HEATON, a solicitor, is at a table writing this document, his ink pen scraping against the paper. Around him, the room has the atmosphere of a serious occasion: still and dark although the sun shines brightly outside and the voices of the women - especially GEORGIANA - bleed through.

The DUKE, HEATON's employer, is standing at the library window, looking into the garden at GEORGIANA cheering on the young men. The scene is distorted through the wavy glass window pane: a beautiful and mildly surreal image.

LADY SPENCER is seated behind the DUKE, perched on the edge of a large sofa, with LORD SPENCER behind her. She tries to ignore the muted screams of her daughter in the background.

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

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

DUKE
Of course, Lady Spencer.

Another of GEORGIANA's shouts audibly registers. LADY SPENCER starts to pour tea from a silver Samovar in front of her in an effort to drown out the noise.

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

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

LADY SPENCER

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

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

HEATON

These are not the issues that burden the Duke, Lady Spencer. It is His Grace's duty to produce an heir. On the other hand, your daughter may expect a handsome reward when that occurs -

DUKE

Thank you, Heaton.

BURLEIGH

(resuming his writing)

Your Grace ...

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

LADY SPENCER

Your Grace can rest assured. The women in our family have never forfeited on that account.

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

HEATON

Well with that assurance...

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

DUKE

So be it, then.

CUT TO:

The men are running back. GREY is in the lead.

GEORGIANA

Come on Grey!

GREY puts his head down and accelerates. He wins, totally out of breath and sweating. All the others follow, similarly exhausted and bent over double.

GEORGIANA turns to the other women, a book containing all the bets they've laid in her hand.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

(Charming smile)

I do apologise ladies but it appears my horse has won.

The young women smile, and gather around GEORGIANA. GREY approaches from behind, still slightly out of breath, manly and athletic. GEORGIANA turns to him.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Well done Mr Grey.

He looks intensely at her, bravely standing much closer than may normally be expected. Some of the young people notice this, and there's an edge of tension at this risqué behaviour.

GREY

(Flirtatiously)

And my reward?

GEORGIANA returns the look.

GEORGIANA

What would you suggest?

The young people - eavesdropping on this conversation - smile and look at each other. GREY is just about to come back with a reply when...

SERVANT

Your mother wishes to see you
Lady Georgiana.

GEORGIANA curtsies to GREY who bows in return before
GEORGIANA runs off. GREY watches her go.

CUT TO:

4aA INT. ALTHORP. DAY

4aA

LADY SPENCER waits inside. GEORGIANA enters.

GEORGIANA

I must apologize Mama, were we
making too much noise?

LADY SPENCER

Not at all, darling. We have much
more important things to talk of.
Come here.

GEORGIANA waits expectantly for an explanation. LADY
SPENCER reveals nothing, holding in her secret, but her
excitement can't help but shine through.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

I have heard a rumour...

LADY SPENCER pauses for dramatic effect.

GEORGIANA

Yes...?

LADY SPENCER

...that I shall very soon be
addressing my daughter as Her
Grace, the Duchess of Devonshire.

GEORGIANA is taken wholly by surprise.

GEORGIANA

Is it true, Mama?

LADY SPENCER

(Proudly)

It is.

GEORGIANA

...the Duke of Devonshire ...

LADY SPENCER

I had hoped not to part with you
until 18 at the soonest, but with
such a fine match it would be
selfish of me not to let you go.

GEORGIANA
He loves me?

LADY SPENCER
Yes, of course.

GEORGIANA
(Excited)
I have met him only twice.

LADY SPENCER
When one truly loves someone, one
doesn't have to know them well to
be certain, Georgiana. One feels
it right away. [Pause] I do
believe you will be happy with
him.

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

CUT TO:

4aB EXT. ALTHORP. DAY

4aB

GEORGIANA walks out onto the balcony and looks into the garden. The young people are chatting and eating. GREY, however, is to one side, looking out across the fields.

GEORGIANA takes a moment to herself. In the last light of day, sun rays illuminate pollen in the air around her. The camera moves in to a CLOSE UP of her optimistic face.

CUT TO:

4A OMITTED

4A

5 INT. LONDON CHURCH - MORNING

5

CLOSE UP of GEORGIANA'S face, same framing as before, but now heavily made up and in her BRIDAL DRESS. Wedding music plays as she is walking forward down the aisle, in this relatively small and intimate space.

At the far end stand a select group of powerful and important ARISTOCRATS. As GEORGIANA passes LADY SPENCER, her mother looks incredibly proud. When GEORGIANA reaches THE DUKE, he looks composed. She smiles at him.

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

THE DUCHESS

The music stops. The PRIEST steps up to begin the service.

CUT TO:

9

EXT. DUKE'S GILT COACH. LONDON STREET - DAY

9

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

Through the middle of this comes the DUKE'S GILT COACH followed by two other COACHES, in stark contrast to their surroundings. Heads turn to look at this eighteenth century motorcade, people wave, children start to run after it.

CUT TO:

9A

INT. DUKE'S GILT COACH. LONDON STREET - DAY

9A

Still in her wedding dress, GEORGIANA sits alongside the DUKE in his CARRIAGE. The DUKE has his curtains closed around him to shield him from public view, although GEORGIANA is staring intently at the PEOPLE outside. There's an awkward silence. Finally,

GEORGIANA

What do they want?

DUKE

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

GEORGIANA

Oh.

DUKE

It's a damn nuisance, but you'll get used to it.

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

A bit further down this street the CARRIAGE nears a set of massive gates where a large group of THE GENERAL PUBLIC can be seen waiting and waving outside.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Here we are.

The carriage begins to turn.

CUT TO:

10 I/E. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DAY

10

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

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

GEORGIANA steps out into this hugely intimidating space. Flags bearing the Duke's crest blow in the wind, making a tense and aggressive sound. She stops a moment to take it all in.

BURLEIGH, the HEAD BUTLER steps forward.

BURLEIGH
Welcome, Your Grace.

BURLEIGH then leads her toward rows of HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS who are formally lined up to greet her. They bow and curtsy as GEORGIANA walks past.

SERVANT 1
Your Grace.

SERVANT 2
Your Grace.

GEORGIANA looks up to find the DUKE has disappeared inside.

CUT TO:

10A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL. DAY

10A

GEORGIANA enters a massive marbled ENTRANCE HALL. The DUKE stands at the top of the staircase, with his two dogs either side of him.

DUKE (O.S.)
This way.

CUT TO:

11 INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

11

GEORGIANA stands in front of the DUKE. He takes a pair of scissors and cuts through the stitching of her wedding dress, letting it fall to the floor. She smiles at him, a bit nervous. He proceeds to remove the rest of her underclothes, a pile growing around her ankles.

THE DUKE

You're in safe hands.

His attempt to reassure her only serves to unnerve GEORGIANA more. She remains standing and looks up at the ceiling, while the DUKE expertly unlaces her corset.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

For the life of me I don't understand why women's attire must be so damned complicated.

GEORGIANA

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

THE DUKE

Whatever do you mean?

GEORGIANA

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

THE DUKE

Hmmm.

The corset falls to the floor. The DUKE then removes GEORGIANA'S chemise. Suddenly, she is completely naked. She sends the DUKE an uneasy look. For a moment he appears to be lost in his thoughts, just staring at her.

GEORGIANA

Is something the matter?

THE DUKE

No, not in the least. Go to the bed, please.

GEORGIANA goes to the bed. The DUKE starts to undress. Around him the faces of his forefathers bear down from the massive portraits on the walls of his bedroom.

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

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

GEORGIANA finally kisses him, inexpertly. He lies down on top of and penetrates her, the look on her face suggesting this is an extremely new and strange experience. The DUKE begins to move rhythmically while GEORGIANA still tries to make sense of the whole thing - all the time watched intensely from the walls by dozens of his male ancestors' eyes.

CUT TO:

12 OMITTED 12

13 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BLUE ROOM - DAY 13

GEORGIANA sits looking isolated and lonely in a huge gilt-edged blue room. She is trying to read a book but her concentration continues to be interrupted by the presence of MALE FOOTMEN stationed at two of the doors, like sentries. She turns a page and tries to focus but fails.

A TALL SERVANT enters. GEORGIANA puts the book down.

HEATON
Lady Spencer, Your Grace.

GEORGIANA looks up, relieved, to see her mother enter. HEATON bows and walks away across the vast space.

CUT TO:

14 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - DAY - LATER 14

GEORGIANA sits with LADY SPENCER. They are playing cards - with real money laid out in front of them - and talking.

LADY SPENCER
...One has to accept one's responsibility, my darling. Certain obligations come with marriage, no matter how burdensome they may seem.

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

LADY SPENCER

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

Lady Spencer places down a card.

GEORGIANA

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

LADY SPENCER

Well, perhaps you ought to talk
less. I fear I may have given you
a little too much education. You
make tiring conversation and ask
questions which a man is
disinclined to answer.

GEORGIANA looks at her mother in resignation. How can anyone
have too *much* education?

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

Learning these things takes time,
too. Marriage is just like
languages or music or painting. It
requires a long apprenticeship.

GEORGIANA

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

LADY SPENCER

Try not to be too hard on His
Grace, G. He is merely intent on
fulfilling his duty. As for talking
to him - whatever is there to talk
about, my dear?

GEORGIANA

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

LADY SPENCER sighs and looks at her spirited daughter.

LADY SPENCER

Georgiana, equip yourself with
patience, fortitude and
resignation. A boy will come soon
enough, then you'll see.

GEORGIANA nods. She sends her mother a polite little smile,
then lays down a winning card and scoops the pile of money
toward her.

CUT TO:

15

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

15

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

GEORGIANA is by his side, her attire conspicuously more
daring than before. She looks apprehensive: she is the only
woman in a room dominated by alcohol and testosterone-
fuelled MEN, one of whom is relieving himself into a
chamber pot at the side of the room. GEORGIANA, though,
pays attention to FOX. The DUKE, at the other end of the
table, does not.

FOX

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

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

FOX (CONT'D)

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

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

FOX (CONT'D)

I say, between my persistence and
the Duke's purse, we must always
remember the honourable and
principle aims of the Whig party,
aims that some consider radical
but which, to us, seem simply
just and right and sensible.

(MORE)

FOX (CONT'D)

Just to bring independence to America. Right to end the slave trade. And sensible to pursue freedom for the common man, so that the blessings of this blessed plot, this England, may be more equally enjoyed - by all of its inhabitants.

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

FOX (CONT'D)

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

They all shout "hear, hear", reach for their glasses and toast in the direction of the DUKE. He nods cordially back.

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

MACARONI

Excellent speech, Mr. Fox, splendid.

FOX

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

The MACARONI and GEORGIANA smile.

MACARONI

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

GEORGIANA

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

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

MACARONI
(Ingratiatingly)
I myself found it very rousing...

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

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

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

FOX
We would like to see the vote
extended...

GEORGIANA
To *all* men...?

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

GEORGIANA
"Freedom in moderation"?

FOX
(Pleased with himself)
Precisely.

GEORGIANA nods, then smiles faintly, but mischievously.

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

Fox smiles at GEORGIANA in surprise.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

(Cheeky)

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

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

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

MAN

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

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

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

CUT TO:

16

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

16

The DUKE is in the middle of a corridor, where he has stopped to talk to a YOUNG MAID. GEORGIANA exits the room behind him, trying to catch up.

GEORGIANA

Your Grace?

The DUKE turns and looks at GEORGIANA. The YOUNG MAID curtsies and exits.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Is anything the matter?

DUKE

No...

GEORGIANA

You just left?

DUKE

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

GEORGIANA

But you are the Whigs main supporter...

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

The DUKE turns back and continues down the corridor.

GEORGIANA
Shall I come with you?

DUKE
Not at all, why ever should you?

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

CUT TO:

17

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - NIGHT

17

The conversation has stopped, everyone fearful their benefactor is aggrieved for some reason. The whole table of men watch as GEORGIANA sits back down, looking to her for reassurance. She addresses the room.

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

People don't look convinced.

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

GEORGIANA
(To the room)
Certainly not. He enjoyed it
immensely and expressed a hope that
next time it would be even longer.

All the men laugh. Fox sends her a look and raises his glass to her. She smiles back at them all, reaches out for a drink, raises it back to FOX and takes a long swig.

CUT TO:

18 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BALLROOM - LATE NIGHT 18

Late night, and all the guests have left. BURLEIGH oversees as a team of SERVANTS are clearing up the mess: extinguishing the candles on the huge candelabra, on their hands and knees scraping food under the table etc.

CUT TO:

19 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CORRIDORS - NIGHT 19

GEORGIANA passes quietly down the long candlelit corridors and of this massive house. She is happy, buoyant, tipsy.

GEORGIANA walks towards their bedroom. Suddenly a door opens and the YOUNG MAID the DUKE was talking to earlier comes running out, half naked, carrying her clothes in her arms. She looks at GEORGIANA in alarm, and runs off.

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

CUT TO:

20 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT 20

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

GEORGIANA
What is going on?

DUKE
About what?

GEORGIANA approaches, unnerved.

GEORGIANA
What have you been doing?

DUKE
Nothing to concern you.

He smiles at her, kisses her.

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

DUKE
What is there to understand?

GEORGIANA is lost for words.

DUKE (CONT'D)
You look very beautiful tonight.
Fascinating fabric. Is this dress
your design?

GEORGIANA
Yes it is. Thank you.

DUKE
Then allow me to appreciate it in
more detail.

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

CUT TO:

21 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - AFTERNOON - EST 21

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

CUT TO:

22 OMITTED 22

23 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY 23

GEORGIANA and the DUKE sit together in a gigantic dining
room at a very long table. In the corner a musician quietly
plays the harpsichord providing a low background ambience.

SERVANTS discreetly serving food and wine. GEORGIANA and
the DUKE eat in silence. After a few moments BURLEIGH
emerges to whisper something into the ear of the DUKE. He
understands the message and nods.

THE DUKE
Send them in...

BURLEIGH exits. GEORGIANA looks at him.

GEORGIANA
(Lighting up)
Are we having company? Is it
Fox?

The DUKE chews his food and swallows before he replies.

THE DUKE
Don't you think this mutton has a
funny taste?

GEORGIANA

Not really, no...

THE DUKE

Well, I do...

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

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

This is Charlotte. She will be staying with us.

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

GEORGIANA

Why...?

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

THE DUKE

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

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

GEORGIANA

Have you fathered that child?

THE DUKE

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

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

GEORGIANA

I am pregnant with your child. Surely you are not expecting me to look after her?

THE DUKE

We have a house full of vacant rooms, G. She need not trouble you. As a matter of fact, she may even be of use; you can practice your motherhood on her...
(gesturing at her stomach)
...until our son arrives.

GEORGIANA hands move protectively toward her stomach to reveal she is midway through pregnancy. She looks at him, silently furious and hurt.

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

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

The DUKE pushes his plate away and smiles at her. A SERVANT immediately steps forward to take the plate away.

CUT TO:

24 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - CORRIDOR - EARLY EVENING 24

GEORGIANA walking past, pauses outside the room in which the nanny is putting CHARLOTTE to bed for the night. She hears sobbing coming from inside. GEORGIANA is moved by this but steals herself against the painful sound and walks off. After a few paces she stops.

CUT TO:

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

The little girl is lying on the bed, the NANNY trying to comfort her.

GEORGIANA (O.S.)
Would you leave us, please.

NANNY
Your Grace, I didn't see you.

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

GEORGIANA
...leave us, please...

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

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

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

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

No answer.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Surely, it must have a name. Every
doll must have a name.

CHARLOTTE stares at her in silence.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

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

Charlotte nods slowly. GEORGIANA rises and turns to leave.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Alice.

GEORGIANA turns back to Charlotte and smiles.

GEORGIANA

Good night then Alice. And good night Charlotte.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. COURTYARD - WINTER EVENING 25

It's snowing outside and GUESTS arrive in fur coats.

CUT TO:

25A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - WINTER EVENING 25A

MUSICIANS are playing in the foyer.

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

SHERIDAN

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

FOX

Sheridan certainly knows how to pay a compliment.

GEORGIANA smiles.

GEORGIANA

There are still a few more weeks to wait.

FOX

A huge belly has never been more becoming on anyone.

SHERIDAN

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

GEORGIANA smiles. SHERIDAN leans against FOX in affected confidentiality.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

If your belly were on a woman, we'd all know what to think.

FOX leans against SHERIDAN in imitation of his act.

FOX

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

GEORGIANA delights in the risky repartee.

GEORGIANA

That will teach you to insult Mr Fox before the gaming has begun.

CUT TO:

26

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - RED ROOM - LATER

26

The ballroom has been converted into a gaming area with a series of round card tables and is full of GAMBLERS. It has a decadent, opulent and smoky atmosphere.

The DUKE is at one table while GEORGIANA sits at another with SHERIDAN to one side and FOX to the other. The conversation runs fast and easy.

DEALER

Her Grace wins again.

GEORGIANA pulls in her chips.

DEALER (CONT'D)

Another wager?

SHERIDAN

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

FOX

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

SHERIDAN

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

GEORGIANA

Is there no one in London not in debt?

SHERIDAN

Just the poor.

They all laugh loudly. Suddenly GEORGIANA stiffens as she feels a sharp pain. She gasps and looks at them in alarm.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

GEORGIANA

Yes...

She doesn't look convinced. Another dart of pain. GEORGIANA is in anguish.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I would like to...

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

The DUKE notices the turmoil from his table.

DUKE

Are those labour pains? My wife is in labour!

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

DUKE (CONT'D)

I think this calls for a toast. I may have an heir before the night is out.

He toasts. EVERYBODY joins in the toast and some cheer, save those who are helping GEORGIANA out of the room. The last image is of the DUKE, happy and proud.

CUT TO:

27

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - A FEW DAYS LATER

27

The house is quiet. LADY SPENCER hurries inside.

CUT TO:

LADY SPENCER steps into the room, still dressed in her cape. A SERVANT follows her and receives her cape. She is surprised by the sight in front of her: the DUKE is throwing a ball to exercise his dogs who scamper around the ballroom.

LADY SPENCER

Your Grace -

THE DUKE

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

LADY SPENCER

But, pray tell, is my daughter -

THE DUKE

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

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

LADY SPENCER

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

THE DUKE

Yes, yes -

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

THE DUKE (CONT'D)

(muttering)

Hell and damnation ...

The DUKE throws the ball deep into the room, his dogs racing to retrieve it.

CUT TO:

GEORGIANA is sitting by the cot, totally engrossed with her new baby, stroking its arm, staring at its face. A wind up MUSIC BOX is playing nearby.

LADY SPENCER enters the room. Georgiana looks up and smiles.

LADY SPENCER
Darling, how are you?

GEORGIANA
Quite well.

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

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

GEORGIANA nods and smiles.

GEORGIANA
She is perfect.

LADY SPENCER smiles and looks at the girl.

LADY SPENCER
She is her mother's likeness...

GEORGIANA smiles as she looks down at the baby with her mother. Then her mind shifts, and her expression becomes darker. There is an edge to her tone.

GEORGIANA
Did William receive you?

LADY SPENCER
Yes.

GEORGIANA
Was he upset that it wasn't a son? He just glanced at her briefly and left. I've hardly seen him since.

LADY SPENCER
It's been a difficult time for His Grace, my dear. Many eyes are upon him, not all of them kind.

LADY SPENCER senses the tension and looks back at the baby, keen to change the subject.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)
Why, she's the loveliest...

The baby starts to wake up, hungry and crying.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)
Nurse...

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

GEORGIANA

(Firmly)

No, I will do it, thank you.

The wet nurse looks to Lady Spencer.

LADY SPENCER

Darling, are you sure...?

GEORGIANA

Yes, I am her mother after all.
Even if she is only a girl.

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

LADY SPENCER looks over at this headstrong young woman, not a little bit worried.

CUT TO:

30	OMITTED	30
31	OMITTED	31
32	OMITTED	32
32A	EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY	32A

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

CUT TO:

33	I/E. GILT COACHES. DAY - EARLY SUMMER	33
----	---------------------------------------	----

Close up on the face of a three year old girl, HARRYO, sitting in a GILT COACH. HARRYO sits next to CHARLOTTE, now aged 10, and G (4). GEORGIANA - now four years older - sits opposite. She is sketching dress designs while the children play with cards.

In the second COACH the DUKE sits alone and in silence - bar his dogs - staring out of the windows at the passing countryside. A newspaper sits beside him with a story about Georgiana on the front page. He has also aged four years.

CUT TO:

34	OMITTED	34
35	OMITTED	35

The COACHES go past the Royal Crescent. On the grass in the foreground lots of people are strolling, having picnics, children play.

CUT TO:

36A OMITTED 36A

37 EXT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. DAY - LATER 37

THE FIRST COACH stops in front of a MASSIVE VILLA. SERVANTS jump down to open the door of the COACH.

CUT TO:

38 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. FOYER - DAY 38

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

DUKE

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

The DUKE goes o.s. GEORGIANA enters, accompanied by the children, and soon after by SERVANTS carrying masses of luggage: suitcases, hatboxes, shoeboxes etc.

LITTLE G watches them go past.

LITTLE G

If we're only here for a month, Mama, why do you have so many cases?

GEORGIANA

(Smiling, ironic)

A lady needs a change of clothes, my darling.

LITTLE G smile back.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Now, who will get the best bedroom?

GEORGIANA looks to her CHILDREN. They run into the house full of excitement and energy, with their mother hot on their heels.

CUT TO:

39 OMITTED 39
40 OMITTED 40
41 INT. BATH ASSEMBLY ROOMS. NIGHT 41

There's a massive ball inside, all guests in formal clothes. Leading Whig JAMES HARE addresses the crowd from the balcony.

JAMES HARE

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

We see the faces of the DUKE and GEORGIANA standing in the darkness of the wings behind HARE. Who is he referring to?

JAMES HARE (CONT'D)

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

The DUKE's face seems to sink.

JAMES HARE (CONT'D)

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

The CROWD applaud loudly. GEORGIANA enters, accompanied by the DUKE. There's a hushed 'wow' as everyone takes in her extraordinary appearance: she wears a HUGE, THREE FOOT ADORNED WIG with OSTRICH FEATHERS inserted into it. She beams at the crowd, the total centre of attention. The DUKE looks uncomfortable next to her.

GEORGIANA

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

EVERYONE laughs. The DUKE forces a smile.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I always appreciate the Honourable Mr Hares' introductions. He has a jeweller's wit;
(MORE)

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

whenever he turns a phrase, one
finds another facet.

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

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

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

There is great laughter. GEORGIANA looks to the side of the room and sees that the DUKE has caught the eye of a young blushing BEAUTY. She smiles at him.

CUT TO:

42

INT. BATH ASSEMBLY ROOMS. NIGHT - LATER

42

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

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

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

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

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

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

GEORGIANA
(To her partner)
Excuse me...

GEORGIANA turns and walks away from the DANCERS.

CUT TO:

43	OMITTED	43
44	INT. BATH ASSEMBLY ROOMS. OCTAGON ROOM. NIGHT - LATER	44

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

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

BESS
I haven't, at any rate. Lady
Elizabeth Foster.

They greet each other.

GEORGIANA
I saw you talking with my
husband.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS in a levelled way. BESS returns the look.

BESS
Yes, he wished to dance.

GEORGIANA

That is not usually considered
his forte. And you declined?

BESS

I'm ill at ease with male company
for the moment.

GEORGIANA smiles. BESS smiles back at her. GEORGIANA looks
at BESS, sizing up this beautiful girl with great interest.

Beat.

GEORGIANA

What brings you to Bath?

BESS takes a moment to consider how she will answer this.

BESS

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

GEORGIANA

(hedges)

The Duke is taking the waters for
his gout...

Beat. BESS looks as if to say, 'carry on'.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

...and I...for my health.

BESS is upset that GEORGIANA has not rewarded her honesty
with similar directness.

BESS

Really?

(imitating gossip)

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

GEORGIANA is taken aback, hurt. BESS immediately realises and
regrets what she's said.

BESS (CONT'D)

I beg your pardon. That was an
awful thing to say.

GEORGIANA

But it is the truth, at least.

They look at each other. Something passes between them.

GEORGIANA lowers her voice in a conspiratorial way. It's almost as if they are flirting with each other.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Although I had hoped to avoid being reminded of that. If only for this evening.

BESS

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

GEORGIANA

Then perhaps you should have accepted the Duke's invitation. You have much in common.

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

The DUKE enters the room.

DUKE

Well... Home, I think. Georgiana.

GEORGIANA and BESS look at him as he leaves. Then GEORGIANA gets up.

GEORGIANA

Where are you staying?

BESS

I've rented some rooms in town.

GEORGIANA

We must meet again.

BESS

We must.

CUT TO:

45

EXT. THE DUKE'S CARRIAGE. ROYAL CRESCENT - DAWN - LATER

45

The DUKE's carriage trundles down the Royal Crescent.

CUT TO:

45A INT. THE DUKE'S CARRIAGE - DUSK - LATER

45A

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

They are not looking at each other and the strain of their relationship shows on them both. We remain on GEORGIANA's face as the bright sounds of young children's voices fade up until we...

CUT TO:

46 OMITTED

46

47 EXT. BATH PARK - DAY

47

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

GEORGIANA steps back to watch the three girls run off and gets her breath back. HARRYO runs and falls. GEORGIANA runs up to comfort her. HARRYO runs off again and GEORGIANA watches her go.

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

GEORGIANA turns to see BESS standing behind her.

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

GEORGIANA
Too far to fall now.

They smile.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Hello again.

BESS
Hello. [Beat] Your girls are
lovely.

GEORGIANA
Thank you. Do you have any
children?

BESS
I do. Three boys...

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

BESS smiles.

BESS
She looks least like you, your
eldest.

GEORGIANA
Yes. (Makes a decision) I'm sure
you know the story.

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

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

BESS
I'm sorry, I shouldn't have spoken.

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

BESS
And...do you love her?

GEORGIANA
Of course I do. The same as all my
children. They are the world to me.

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

CUT TO:

48 OMITTED

48

49 OMITTED

49

GEORGIANA and BESS come out onto a balcony with tables, benches and chairs. Below and beyond it is a manicured garden with people strolling, pushing wheelchairs etc. It has the feel of an upmarket sanatorium.

GEORGIANA walks to a small drinking fountain and stops to sip a cup of hot liquid. BESS takes a sniff and recoils.

GEORGIANA

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

BESS

And you really have to drink it?

GEORGIANA

Twice a day for four weeks.

BESS

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

GEORGIANA

No. Except four miscarriages, two still births - both of which were sons - and two girls ...

BESS feels for her, and smiles supportively. They make their way to a table and sit down. BESS looks around them - people are stealing sneaky glances over at GEORGIANA.

BESS

Everybody's staring at you...

GEORGIANA smiles at her cheekiness. BESS turns right around to look in the direction of a couple staring at GEORGIANA. As she does so GEORGIANA is able to see a DARK BRUISE on BESS'S NECK. GEORGIANA is shocked, and her hand instinctively reaches out to touch her.

GEORGIANA

What's that on your neck?

BESS is taken off guard. She looks a little vulnerable.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Bess...?

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

BESS

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

GEORGIANA is speechless.

GEORGIANA

Mr Foster? But - he can't do
that...

BESS

Considering what else he's done to
me, that's not the worst...

GEORGIANA
What could possibly be worse...?

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

GEORGIANA
What do you propose to do?

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

GEORGIANA is lost in the horror of BESS's situation.

GEORGIANA
And in the meantime, where shall
you stay?

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

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

GEORGIANA reaches out to take another drink of water.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. DINING ROOM. BATH VILLA - NIGHT

50

The DUKE - continuing the previous scene's action - picks
up a glass and drinks. Georgiana, Bess and the Duke eat.
Georgiana and Bess exchange secret glances.

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

DUKE
Ah. Pity that.

GEORGIANA

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

DUKE

Oh dear, problem there.

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

DUKE (CONT'D)

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

Georgiana and Bess grin like schoolgirls.

CUT TO:

51	OMITTED	51
52	OMITTED	52
53	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - DAY	53

GEORGIANA leads the way down the corridor. BESS follows, gazing at the house, marvelling at the grandiosity of it all. Unlike GEORGIANA's first arrival it feels informal, free, excited.

BESS

This is incredible ...

GEORGIANA, tickled to have BESS with her, takes her arm.

GEORGIANA

(Ironically)

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

BESS laughs. GEORGIANA leads her through more rooms.

GEORGIANA opens a door to reveal a beautiful bedroom with
adjacent dressing area. BESS is suitably impressed. They
laugh and hug each other close.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I am so glad you are here.

(Devilish)

I have arranged a wonderful start
to the season.

CUT TO:

54	OMITTED	54
55	INT. DRURY LANE THEATER - NIGHT	55

It's OPENING NIGHT. A HUGE CRUSH of SOCIAL TYPES are in the
theatre. Many of the women have their hair piled high with
an ostrich feather in it. They hold programmes that read
'School For Scandal' by Richard Sheridan.

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

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

ACTOR PLAYING SIR TEAZLE

"Lady Teazle, Lady Teazle, I'll
not bear it!"

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

"Sir Peter, Sir Peter, you may
bear it or not as you please; but
I ought to have my own way in
everything."

ACTOR PLAYING SIR TEAZLE

"Lady Teazle, though my life may
be made unhappy by your temper,
I'll not be ruined by your
extravagance."

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

"My extravagance! I'm sure I am
not more extravagant than a woman
of fashion ought to be."

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

ACTOR PLAYING SIR PETER

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

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

"So much the better"

ACTOR PLAYING SIR PETER

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

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

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

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

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE (CONT'D)

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

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

ACTOR PLAYING SIR TEAZLE

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

ACTRESS PLAYING LADY TEAZLE

(Triumphant)

"Agreed! Agreed!"

The audience laugh and cheer.

Amid the noise, GEORGIANA looks across the theatre to see the reaction. She sees a handsome YOUNG MAN in his 20s. She looks back to the stage, but the YOUNG MAN remains gazing at her. She looks back, realising who it is - CHARLES GREY. Unlike the crowd, he is not laughing at all.

CUT TO:

After the show: close up on champagne cork popping and champagne poured into glasses. The DUKE is skulking around the edge of the crowd. GEORGIANA and BESS meet with FOX.

GEORGIANA

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

BESS is impressed. They nod at each other. CHARLES GREY
approaches from behind FOX.

FOX

Ah. And here is my protegee,
Charles Grey.

BESS nods to both the men

GEORGIANA

Mr Grey.

GREY

Your Grace.

FOX

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

GEORGIANA can't take her eyes off him. He looks at her too.
BESS notices this and quickly starts a conversation with
FOX, leaving GEORGIANA to talk to GREY alone.

GEORGIANA

I always felt you would do well,
Mr Grey.

GREY

Thank you.

GEORGIANA

Did you enjoy the play?

GREY is uneasy, but still looks GEORGIANA straight in the
eye as he replies.

GREY

I must confess I did not
entirely.

GEORGIANA is surprised.

GEORGIANA

I hope you haven't lost your
sense of humour since entering
politics...

GREY

Not that I am aware.

GEORGIANA

Then you do realise 'School For Scandal' is written as a comedy?

GREY

Yes...although from where I sat it read as a tragedy.

GEORGIANA is troubled. GREY's unexpected comments affect her deeply. Just then SHERIDAN approaches with open arms.

SHERIDAN

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

GEORGIANA smiles. She breaks her eyes from GREY'S and shakily resumes her usually effortless social persona.

GEORGIANA

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

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

SHERIDAN

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

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

CUT TO:

GEORGIANA throws a look back to GREY, then SHERIDAN presents her to a lined-up CAST, who all curtsy and bow.

GEORGIANA
Were we fair on the Duke?

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

SHERIDAN smiles. GEORGIANA does not.

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

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)
Opium?

GEORGIANA
Just a drop...

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

GREY takes this in as he watches the DUKE and then GEORGIANA. GEORGIANA turns and looks at him. For an extra beat.

CUT TO:

CUT TO:

58

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

58

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

GEORGIANA

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

BESS

It was a wonderful distraction, thank you.

GEORGIANA

Good.

BESS

I talked all night to Mister Grey...

GEORGIANA

Oh yes?

BESS
He is in love with you.

GEORGIANA laughs.

GEORGIANA
My dear Bess. No he's not. In fact
I fear the very opposite.

GEORGIANA looks at her, thinks. BESS smiles.

BESS
Can't you tell by the way he looks
at you? Honestly, can't you tell?

GEORGIANA
Stop it, please.

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

GEORGIANA
(laughs uncertainly, lies)
Yes, I know...

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

GEORGIANA starts to giggle.

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

BESS
Oh yes they do.

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

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

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

GEORGIANA
Bess, stop.

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

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

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

GEORGIANA lets out little gasps of pleasure...

BESS pushes it further...

Her hands explore under GEORGIANA'S nightclothes...

Over her breasts...

The tops of her legs...

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

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

Her hands reach further...

GEORGIANA closes her eyes...

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

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

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

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

GEORGIANA takes it in.

BESS (CONT'D)
Be ready, dear G, when the time
comes.

GEORGIANA lies back on the bed, eyes wide open, thinking.
This image is held as the sound of a haunting operatic
voice - accompanied by harpsichord - starts over it and
carries us into the next scene.

CUT TO:

59	OMITTED	59
60	OMITTED	60
61	EXT. CHATSWORTH. FORMAL GARDENS - DAY	61

We are in the grounds of a huge country house and its
estate. SWARMS of COUNTRY PEOPLE, MEN on HORSES and TENANTS
are present, with others arriving all the time. Massive
amounts of food are laid out on trestle tables with a tent
for the gentry on the other side.

The singing and harpsichord continue, and we find that AN
OPERA singer and HARPSICHORD perform to a grand outdoor
picnic.

We see the DUKE and BESS standing together. FOX and GREY are
at the rear of the audience, looking on.

GEORGIANA is with her children, working her way through the
ORDINARY PEOPLE and TENANTS, making them feel welcome. They
respond with reverence. She walks up to LADY SPENCER and
embraces her.

GEORGIANA
Hello Mama.

LADY SPENCER
(Coolly)
Hello my dear.

BESS comes over too.

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

LADY SPENCER looks hurt.

LADY SPENCER
Are 'we' really?

BESS
Yes, G speaks of you all the
time.

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

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

LADY SPENCER
(Cutting across)
I only know what she is up to by
reading the Morning Post.

GEORGIANA is stung by this. The DUKE wanders up behind,
surveying the scene.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)
And how long do you intend to
stay on Lady Elizabeth?

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

GEORGIANA
Nonsense.

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

LADY SPENCER is left open-mouthed, a little alarmed at how
close they all seem. The music has stopped and everyone
turn and politely applaud the musicians. FOX and some WHIGS
come forward. GEORGIANA turns and smiles broadly at them.

GEORGIANA
Who let these radicals through
the gates of Chatsworth?

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

CUT TO:

62 EXT. FORMAL GARDENS. DAY - LATER

62

The DUKE performs his duty talking with the important people in the tent: other aristocrats, politicians and wealthy businessmen. FOX, SHERIDAN and GREY are here too.

GEORGIANA is opposite, amongst the ORDINARY PEOPLE, where she is carrying food to their tables and making sure they are being well looked after.

GREY (O.S.)
What a fine spread.

GEORGIANA turns to see GREY behind her, coming over from the tent.

GEORGIANA
Thank you. We do our best.

GEORGIANA starts to walk through the tables with a plate of food. He follows.

GREY
We? From what I hear you run these open days single-handedly.

GEORGIANA
Well, the Duke does find inviting all and sundry to the house a little... testing. But it's only once a week.

GREY
The Duke would prefer his tenants to starve?

GEORGIANA
It is his property.

GREY
Then he must surely embrace the responsibilities that come with it. Or perhaps His Grace would prefer instead to be *divested* of such troublesome possessions.

GEORGIANA
(Provocatively)
What an interesting idea.

GREY, encouraged by her double meaning, continues.

GREY

You know, I despise the fact that so few men can have such precious things - and that they mismanage them so appallingly.

GEORGIANA smiles at him. She knows he is talking about her.

GEORGIANA

And what would you suggest?

He returns her smile, remembering the exchange from years ago.

GREY

That people should be set free.

GEORGIANA

And will freedom alone make them happy?

GREY

The point is not to make people happy. The point is to make them free, so they can pursue their own idea of happiness...whatever that may be.

GEORGIANA looks impressed. She realizes how close they're standing, and in full view of the PEOPLE. She moves away a few feet.

GEORGIANA

I must get another plate..

GEORGIANA walks off. GREY watches her go, happy in the knowledge he has made an impact. He starts back toward FOX and SHERIDAN.

CUT TO:

63

EXT. CHATSWORTH. FORMAL GARDENS. DAY - LATER

63

It is toward the end of the day. The sun is casting long shadows on the lawn as the picnic is being packed up.

GEORGIANA leans against a low wall, sipping a cordial, all the while watching GREY in conversation with some men. BESS approaches GEORGIANA.

BESS

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

GEORGIANA

I just feel like keeping to myself
today...

BESS sits down beside her, leaning close and intimate. They look at the men, GREY at the centre, then look at each other. BESS smiles broadly. GEORGIANA blushes.

BESS digs GEORGIANA playfully and gently in the ribs. They giggle like schoolgirls.

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

CUT TO:

64

INT. PAINTED HALL. CHATSWORTH - LONG AFTER DINNER.

64

LADY SPENCER and GEORGIANA are walking through. Other GUESTS mill around.

LADY SPENCER

(Hushed)

But you have only known her three months!

GEORGIANA

Bess is my friend! She is the very best of women.

LADY SPENCER

She seems to be many things, but I would be hard pushed to say she were *that*.

GEORGIANA

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

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

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

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

LADY SPENCER stops.

LADY SPENCER

(Fierce whisper)

This is a dangerous path to choose my girl.

GEORGIANA

I am not a girl, mother, I am the Duchess of Devonshire. It would serve you well to remember that.

LADY SPENCER

Yes, and you have begun to cavort
so constantly in public you
cannot live for your own soul. It
is no surprise you are gathering
weeds instead of flowers.

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

CUT TO:

64A INT. CHATSWORTH. SITTING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER 64A

GEORGIANA, a rebellious look on her face, takes a drink from a BUTLER. She then heads toward GREY who is among a group of MEN. As he sees GEORGIANA he excuses himself from the conversation and meets her.

GREY
Your Grace...

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

65 OMITTED 65

66 EXT. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS - DAY 66

GEORGIANA stands on a platform dressed in the most outrageous costume yet, her hair piled three foot high above her head and decorated with Whig-coloured ribbons.

In front is a HUGE CROWD noisy: a massive mix of people from drunks and prostitutes to lords and ladies. Banners proclaim WHIGS, VOTE FOX. JOURNALISTS mill around, scribbling into notebooks and sketching GEORGIANA. In the crowd, women are fanning themselves with fans bearing Georgiana's likeness. It's like a pop concert.

GEORGIANA
(Shouts to the crowd)
Ladies and Gentlemen.
(MORE)

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

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

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

GREY

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

APPLAUSE.

GREY (CONT'D)

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

GEORGIANA looks at GREY, clearly proud of him.

GREY (CONT'D)

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

There are a few laughs from the CROWD.

GREY (CONT'D)

...along with all the places in
the Government, control of the
House of Commons, Ambassadors,
Governors, Judges, and a host of
other posts too numerous to
mention. They maintain this
influence by transferring their
land intact, generation after
generation. And in so doing
continue to dominate English
life.

GREY stops to look at the faces of the PUBLIC looking back
at him. They are with him.

GREY (CONT'D)

So, if we win this election, if we
get the power we seek, what will we
do with it?

GREY's listeners are quiet. GREY proceeds.

GREY (CONT'D)
Will we merely follow in the
footsteps of those that came before
us? Master the art of compromise?
Of postponing the greater good for
the greater advantage? Will we do
that?

(Long pause)
No. We won't. Because *we believe*
in the words we've spoken...

A few scattered 'hear hears' begin.

GREY (CONT'D)
...and we have *faith* in the hearts
we've stirred.

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

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

Loud calls of 'YES' and applause.

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

APPLAUSE. CHEERS. GEORGIANA gazes at GREY. GREY looks at
her, flushed and excited. She blushes like mad.

CUT TO:

67 I/E. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS. BACKSTAGE - A LITTLE LATER 67

GREY stands alone. GEORGIANA approaches.

GREY
How did I do?

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

Grey's face crumbles in disappointment. GEORGIANA grins.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
It was a marvel.

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

GREY
But did you agree with what I said?

GEORGIANA
Every word.

GREY gains self-confidence. He approaches GEORGIANA.

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

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

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

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

GEORGIANA
So am I.

There is tension in the air. A POLITICIAN walks past them. They both acknowledge him as he goes. Then GEORGIANA stares at GREY, and moves a little closer.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Do you think of me when we are
not together?

GREY
(surprised)
You ought to know I do... of you
more than anything else.

GEORGIANA
You hesitated before replying ...

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

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

GREY (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I think of you every day.

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

FOOTMAN
Your carriage awaits Your Grace.

GREY nods. GEORGIANA starts to leave, her eyes remaining on Grey until she turns a corner and is gone.

CUT TO:

68	OMITTED	68
69	OMITTED	69
70	OMITTED	70
71	OMITTED	71
72	OMITTED	72
73	OMITTED	73
74	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT	74

GEORGIANA enters. Silence. She races across, the soles of her shoes echoing as she click-clacks across the vast space.

CUT TO:

75	INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - NIGHT	75
----	--	----

GEORGIANA makes her way quickly down the hall, her shoes still making that distinctive sound.

GEORGIANA
(Hushed whisper)
Bess.

As she approaches the door to BESS's room her pace slows - two servants are listening outside it. GEORGIANA is perplexed. When they see her they stand back looking awkward. GEORGIANA continues walking toward them.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
What are you doing outside Lady Elizabeth's bedroom?

The servants don't reply.

GEORGIANA comes closer, then finally stops. Suddenly the noise of her shoes clicking on the floor is replaced by the muffled noise of BESS and the DUKE having sex: passionate, energetic, enjoyable.

For several painful, humiliating and shocked moments GEORGIANA is paralyzed in front of the servants. Then GEORGIANA backs away down the hall and is off.

CUT TO:

76

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

76

GEORGIANA'S hat sits on a table, the 'VOTE FOX' sign clearly visible on its side. GEORGIANA'S hand hangs down over a chair.

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

GEORGIANA sitting on his bed. She looks ashen. They stare at each other.

CUT TO:

77

THE SAME. 5 MINUTES LATER.

77

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

GEORGIANA

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

CUT TO:

78

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

78

We see a worried BESS coming up the corridor outside GEORGIANA'S bedroom to find out what all the noise is about.

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

What kind of man are you?!

CUT TO:

79

INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

79

GEORGIANA is raging at him.

GEORGIANA

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

The DUKE patiently hears her out.

CUT TO:

80

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

80

BESS's eyes are filled with tears.

GEORGIANA (O.S./CONT'D)
You have robbed me of my only
friend!

CUT TO:

81 INT. THE DUKE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

81

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

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

DUKE
(simple, exhausted
clarity)
I do not claim to be a man of
fine sensibility, G, but I have
always known what I expect from
this marriage and what I am
prepared to give.

GEORGIANA doesn't reply.

DUKE (CONT'D)
As a husband, I have fulfilled my
obligations. As a wife, you have
not.

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

DUKE
(Hackles rising)
Do mind your temper, G. You are
quite forgetting yourself.

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

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

CUT TO:

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

BESS
Georgiana--!

GEORGIANA
You have taken yourself from me!
You don't love me!

BESS
I do love you. Really I do.

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

BESS is stung. Her eyes fill with tears.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Leave. Get out of this house!

BESS remains standing, reaches out for GEORGIANA.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
(breaks down, cries out)
Get out!!!

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

CUT TO:

CUT TO:

GEORGIANA sits, like a little girl, back at home. LADY SPENCER pours tea from a silver Samovar.

LADY SPENCER
I did not like her from the first.

GEORGIANA

You've made that quite clear, Mama.

LADY SPENCER

She is gone from Devonshire House,
I hope.

GEORGIANA looks away, ashamed. LADY SPENCER puts the
Samovar down.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

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

GEORGIANA

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

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

LADY SPENCER

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

GEORGIANA

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

LADY SPENCER

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

GEORGIANA looks at her mother with sadness.

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

You have no other option.

CUT TO:

84 EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. COURTYARD - MORNING 84

Seen from inside the house, GEORGIANA gets out of her carriage, observed by a couple of servants. She proceeds up to the front door.

CUT TO:

85 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - MORNING 85

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

THE DUKE

Hello, G. ...

GEORGIANA

(Coldly)

William.

GEORGIANA walks straight past him and proceeds upstairs.

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

CUT TO:

86 OMITTED 86

87 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - LATER 87

BESS quietly enters GEORGIANA's room.

GEORGIANA

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

BESS

Won't you please let me explain?

GEORGIANA becomes furious and shouts at BESS.

GEORGIANA

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

GEORGIANA turns her back and looks out of the window. BESS approaches her carefully.

BESS

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

GEORGIANA turns to her.

GEORGIANA

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

BESS

No, there aren't. No limits
whatsoever.

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

GEORGIANA

Get out of here. We have nothing
more to say to one another.

BESS leaves, closing the door silently behind her.
GEORGIANA's finger slowly pushes a perfume bottle off her
dressing table until it falls and smashes on the floor.

GEORGIANA hears the sound of carriages approaching. She
gets up and goes to the window

CUT TO:

88 OMITTED

88

CUT TO:

88A EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. COURTYARD - SAME TIME

88A

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

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

CUT TO:

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

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

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

DUKE

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

AUGUSTUS

Yes, I see.

DUKE

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

AUGUSTUS

No.

DUKE

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

AUGUSTUS smiles, as does BESS. The DUKE looks up, and seeing her approval does a rare thing: he smiles too. BESS gets up and brings the DUKE a drink.

BESS

(Whispered gently)

Thank you.

The DUKE strokes her hand. GEORGIANA moves away and leaves.

CUT TO:

It's a grey and drizzly day. The gardens are largely empty. GREY'S carriage is parked by the roadside. COACHMEN wait beside it, informally leaning on the vehicle. A little further down the road, GEORGIANA'S carriage pulls up.

In wide shot GEORGIANA, black cape with hood up, makes her way across the gardens.

Well away from the carriages and COACHMEN, GEORGIANA approaches GREY, who is waiting under the trees. GEORGIANA seems preoccupied. GREY, however, is simply excited about them meeting again.

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

GEORGIANA
No.

GREY
Did he ask?

GEORGIANA
No.

GREY pauses for a moment.

GREY
Good.

GEORGIANA
He has other things on his mind.

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

GREY
As do you.

The direct recognition causes GEORGIANA to stop too, and then look away. She walks off in a different direction. GREY follows.

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

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

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

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

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

GREY

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

GEORGIANA

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

GREY

From what I have seen. With your
husband, your friends - especially
Lady Bess. Even the public.

GEORGIANA

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

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

GREY

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

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

GREY (CONT'D)

Please tell me what is wrong.

She turns and looks at him intensely. The fountains in the
pleasure garden dance in the background.

GEORGIANA

I fear I have done some things
too late in life and some too
early.

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

GREY

No, you haven't.

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

GREY (CONT'D)
I have waited all my life for that
kiss.

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

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

GEORGIANA
No. It's...

She looks up at him again.

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

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

CUT TO:

91

INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM - MORNING

91

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

GEORGIANA
All right.

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

DUKE
"All right..?"

GEORGIANA
Do you love each other?

DUKE
Georgiana -

GEORGIANA
Do you love Bess, Your Grace?

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

BESS
I make no demands on him.

GEORGIANA
...And Bess, you love my husband?

BESS
... As I do you.

GEORGIANA nods, still not giving anything away.

GEORGIANA
You intend to stay here?

BESS
... William asked that I do.

GEORGIANA nods.

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

BESS
...No.

BESS and the DUKE remain quiet. Beat.

GEORGIANA
Then let us make a deal.

DUKE
A deal?

Beat. The DUKE and BESS exchange glances.

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

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

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

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

DUKE
(seething with fury)
A deal! A deal!! I don't make
deals! I'm in charge of it all!! I
would call him out! I would
challenge him! I would put a bullet
in the upstart's head--!

BESS
William--!

DUKE
(to BESS)
Be quiet!
(to GEORGIANA)
Are you determined to make me a
total laughing stock? A man who
cannot sire a son and then a
cuckold?

BESS
William, Georgiana only asks what
we ourselves -

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

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

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

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

BESS
William...?

CUT TO:

92 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - MORNING 92

GEORGIANA walks fast through the space. She passes a
FOOTMAN on the way to her bedroom. The DUKE charges after
her. GEORGIANA quickens her pace. BESS follows behind.

CUT TO:

93 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING 93

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

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

GEORGIANA
I do. We're a bad match.

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

GEORGIANA
Yes, same as your dogs.

The DUKE's eyes flash. He snaps. He grabs her. She tries to
fight him off. Her dress is torn. They struggle. The DUKE
overpowers her.

CUT TO:

94 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - MORNING - SAME TIME 94
BESS stands outside the door. We HEAR GEORGIANA SCREAM.

CUT TO:

95 INT. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME 95
The DUKE pins GEORGIANA onto the bed and tears away at her
clothes. We hear the RIP of silk and lace. GEORGIANA
screams again. He holds her face tightly between his hands
and stares coldly at her.

CUT TO:

96 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. NURSERY - SAME TIME 96
LITTLE G. and HARRYO stare at the door of their room as the
screams continue.

CUT TO:

97 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME 97
A FOOTMAN stands at attention, trying to remain impassive.

CUT TO:

98 INT. HALL OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - SAME TIME 98
BESS hovers at the door as she listens to the struggle and
screams inside. She turns and sees CHARLOTTE standing a few
feet away, staring at her. BESS moves away from the door,
unable to stop what's going on inside.

BESS
(To Charlotte, softly)
Come with me.

CHARLOTTE stays rooted to the spot.

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

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

CUT TO:

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

100 EXT. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS - DAY 100

SHERIDAN stands before A HUGE CROWD. There is bunting in WHIG colours and banners. The PRESS are out in even greater numbers than before.

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

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

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

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

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

FOX (CONT'D)
Thank you, all of you, for this
reception today.

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

FOX (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We have won the vote, and now we
must win the future!

APPLAUSE as GREY exits.

CUT TO:

101 EXT. COVENT GARDEN HUSTINGS - MOMENTS LATER 101

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

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

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

GREY (CONT'D)
Georgiana?

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

GEORGIANA is overcome. She almost breaks down. GREY looks her
in the eye.

GREY
Tell me.

GEORGIANA
I cannot say what -

GREY
Now!

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

GEORGIANA
...I have been unfair to you.

GREY
What are you talking about?

GEORGIANA

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

GREY

Say what you mean!

GEORGIANA

(looks dead at him)
You love me.

GREY

Yes!

GEORGIANA

I do not love you.

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

GREY

You are not speaking what is in
your heart.

GEORGIANA

It is -

GREY suddenly stands and strides away, pacing, angry.

GREY

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

GEORGIANA

(overlaps below)
No. It's what I've always known to
be true!

GREY

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

GEORGIANA

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

GREY is taken aback by her force and volume.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

I was wrong to offer you hope. I
was wrong to pretend an affection I
do not feel.

(MORE)

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

You have said it yourself, I need
to be adored. That is my weakness.

GREY looks sick. He turns from her, angry, hurt, unable to
find a place to put his feelings.

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

FOX (O.S.)

We have followed our ideas and
our ideals, and in the struggle,
we have found ourselves!

CLOSE ON GEORGIANA as the colour drains from her face. She
is dying inside but she keeps it all in. She calmly turns
and walks to her carriage and is driven away into the busy
London street.

CUT TO:

102 OMITTED 102

103 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL - THAT NIGHT 103

AN ELECTION NIGHT PARTY. Music plays in the background.

The DUKE waits at the top of the GRAND STAIRCASE, greeting
GUESTS. He's dressed for the evening. BESS is with him,
also dressed.

After a few moments, GEORGIANA appears, walking towards us
down the long corridor that leads into the entrance hall.
When she reaches the light we see she is dressed to the
nines and powdered a deathly white, and has been drinking
heavily.

The DUKE refuses to register her, but BESS looks across,
shocked. GEORGIANA will not meet her eyes, however and
walks through into the party.

CUT TO:

104 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - RED ROOM -- THAT NIGHT 104

The rooms have been converted into gaming areas for the
evening. It is boisterous and smoky. There are card tables
and players everywhere. GEORGIANA, wanders through, taking
another drink from a passing WAITER.

As GEORGIANA goes we pick up details of this decadent
society.

Where before it may have seemed glamorous and exciting it now looks uglier and sordid: a place of corruption and addiction, on the edge of collapse.

GEORGIANA downs her drink. She passes: gambling at a table; two fat old men taking snuff; a man in a lewd embrace with a drunk woman; another man toadying to an important politician.

The DUKE appears and looks on, concerned. GEORGIANA takes another drink and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

104A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. BALLROOM. NIGHT - LATER 104A

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

FOX

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

GEORGIANA yields to her old friend. Amid the rest of the GUESTS, GEORGIANA dances around and around with FOX. Her face is hardened, distant - a vision of suppressed anger, frustration and pain. She closes her eyes, her mind drifting to thoughts of GREY.

GEORGIANA grabs another drink as they pass a SERVANT. She bumps into SHERIDAN. Drink goes on his jacket.

SHERIDAN

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

GEORGIANA
(very drunk)
Why, Sheridan, you never were
such a spoilsport before!

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

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

DANCERS back away. BESS looks shocked.

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

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

DUKE
Please put out Her Grace's hair.

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

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

CUT TO:

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

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

DR. NEVILLE (O.S.)
Her Grace needs to rest.

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

DR. NEVILLE (CONT'D)
As long as you follow strict
instructions, there should be no
impediment to the birth.

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

DUKE
What are you talking about?

DR. NEVILLE
The Duchess is pregnant.

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

CUT TO:

106 EXT. ACROSS DERBYSHIRE - DAY - SPRING 106

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

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

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

CUT TO:

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

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

DR. NEVILLE
Congratulations, Your Grace.

DR NEVILLE bows and makes his way out of the room. As he goes a SERVANT appears.

SERVANT
His Grace wishes to see you.

CUT TO:

108 OMITTED 108

109 INT. CHATSWORTH. LIBRARY - DAY 109

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

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

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

DUKE
Come.

GEORGIANA enters. The DUKE looks to HEATON.

HEATON

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

HEATON hands her a cheque. GEORGIANA looks at the DUKE with
disdain.

GEORGIANA

(very sad and dry)
Success at last.

The DUKE looks away, ashamed. GEORGIANA turns to the door.

DUKE (O.S.)

I too abhor this whole thing.

GEORGIANA turns back. The DUKE is now standing.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Yet remove our traditions -
separate our estates, sell off
the land and the nobility simply
ceases to be. Without us England
would once again suffer absolute
monarchy or descend into absolute
anarchy. I don't wish to see that
happen. Do you?

GEORGIANA looks at him, then turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

110

EXT. CHATSWORTH GARDENS - DAY

110

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

LITTLE G

He's so small.

HARRYO

You've been that small yourself.

LITTLE G

Not that small. Have I, Mama?

GEORGIANA

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

HARRYO

See, I told you.

They continue towards the old FARM HOUSE.

HARRYO (CONT'D)

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

GEORGIANA

But he is.

HARRYO

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

GEORGIANA smiles at his innocent view of the world.

GEORGIANA

All babies look alike when they have their clothes on, but each of them is something quite unique.

HARRYO

How?

GEORGIANA

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

The children listen. Charlotte looks at GEORGIANA.

CHARLOTTE

What about me, Mama?

GEORGIANA

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

They have reached the cascade by the side of the house. The children instinctively run in and start playing in the water.

GEORGIANA turns to look down the hill. She should be happy. She isn't. Then she seems to see someone. HER POV -- A MAN coming across the GREEN. As he gets closer she realises who it is: GREY.

A LITTLE LATER:

GEORGIANA waits for GREY. He takes off his hat and bows. It's awkward, stiff.

GREY

Your Grace.

GEORGIANA

(nods)

Mister Grey. Are you recalled from France?

GREY

For a while.

GEORGIANA

No revolution yet?

GREY

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

They look at each other. A long beat, then:

GEORGIANA

I bore a son.

GREY realizes she is making a point.

GREY

Yes...

GEORGIANA

His name is William George Spencer Cavendish, Marquis of Hartington. We shall call him Hart.

GREY

You and the Duke must be very pleased.

GEORGIANA

We are. He has gone to London to celebrate.

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

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

You have been missed...much missed...How is it that you are here?

GREY

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

GEORGIANA is confused, but covers it up.

GEORGIANA

Yes, of course. Come inside.

CUT TO:

111 OMITTED 111
112 OMITTED 112
113 OMITTED 113
114 INT. CHATSWORTH. SITTING ROOM - THAT NIGHT 114

CLOSE UP of fingers playing strings on a harp. The camera tracks back to reveal a HARPIST next to a STRING QUARTET. The music carries through this scene and the next...

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

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

SHERIDAN
Down six hundred. G. Yours?

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

SHERIDAN
You'll need cards, of course.

GEORGIANA realizes SHERIDAN hasn't dealt yet.

GEORGIANA
I am too tired to play.
(Nodding to the players)
Gentlemen.

GEORGIANA gets up and leaves the room. Just outside BESS comes up to her. There is silence and suspicion from GEORGIANA. She tries to continue walking.

BESS
No one must know.

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

GEORGIANA
You summoned Grey.

BESS
Good night, G.

GEORGIANA makes her way across the hall.

CUT TO:

115 OMITTED

115

115A OMITTED

115A

GREY is sitting by the fire. The door opens. GEORGIANA enters. GREY stands up, yet keeps his distance.

GREY
Your Grace...

Beat. They look at each other. GEORGIANA walks forward and kisses him. GREY kisses her back, but after a moment pulls away. Beat.

GREY (CONT'D)
(Firmly)
I was ready to give you
everything...how can I believe it
won't happen again?

GEORGIANA approaches again.

GEORGIANA
I give you my promise...

GREY looks into her eyes, caught between his head and his heart. GEORGIANA starts to undress him, confidently, seductively until he is naked.

GEORGIANA pushes GREY gently back onto the bed. Then she hitches up her skirts and straddles him, her dress enveloping the lower half of his body. Underneath, his hands reach inside to touch her.

They begin making love. It's as if it's the first time for both of them: real, intimate and convincing, an extraordinary release...

LATER:

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

GREY
(Gently)
You should return to your room.

GEORGIANA
No I should not.

CUT TO:

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

GEORGIANA
I'm going to Bath.

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

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

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

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

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

DUKE
Well, if you must.

CUT TO:

118 EXT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. EARLY MORNING - EST. 118
Birdsong

CUT TO:

119 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. BEDROOM - MORNING 119

It's morning. GREY and GEORGIANA are in bed surrounded by newspapers and cartoons. They are looking at cartoons and laughing at them.

GEORGIANA
Which one is your favourite? This
one?

GREY
(seriously at first)
Well, in this one you are proud
and strong, which is very
good.... In this one you are
fair and gentle... and in this
one you seem to have only one
eyebrow!

GEORGIANA laughs, trying to snatch the image out of his hands.

GEORGIANA
(giving him a playful nudge)
Oh, you politicians know nothing
of fashion.

They laugh and continue:

GREY
But wait, wait... if you were to
ask me which is my favourite...
(leaning in and taking her face
in his hands) it's this one - my
Duchess. The G no one else ever
gets to see.

They lock eyes, clearly in love, and kiss passionately.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. A BATH ALLEY - MORNING

120

POLITICAL PEOPLE are filing into a building for a meeting.

GREY and GEORGIANA are in an isolated alley, adjacent to the building, standing close, obviously in love.

GEORGIANA

Will you be long?

GREY

Until late I fear. It seems politics is divided into those who want to fix things and those that merely want to *talk* about fixing things.

GEORGIANA smiles. GREY smiles.

GEORGIANA

I'll be waiting for you...

She touches his arm gently and looks into his eyes. For a beat too long. Then GREY goes inside.

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

CUT TO:

121 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. BEDROOM - NIGHT

121

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

GEORGIANA

...What's the matter?

There is no reply.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

Charles?

GREY

The matter is that in a few days I will have to leave. You will be back with your husband, and I won't be with you.

GREY gets out of bed and walks to the window.

GREY (CONT'D)

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

GEORGIANA gets out of bed and tries to comfort him.

GEORGIANA

Charles, we've had this time all for ourselves. Let's not taint it with thoughts of anything else... Anyway, whatever will become of us when you're made Prime Minister?

GREY laughs.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

When you are, you'll be very far from me then.

GREY

(Very intense)
Never.

GEORGIANA embraces him. GREY holds her tight.

CUT TO:

121A EXT. POLITICAL MEETING ROOMS

121A

Contented and happy Grey walks into the political meeting rooms.

CUT TO:

122 OMITTED 122

123 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. ROOMS - CONTINUOUS 123

GEORGIANA is standing in her bedroom, a made bed behind her. A MAID puts the finishing touch to her hair and clothes. GEORGIANA walks out into the ante room, heading for the foyer. The double doors open in front of her...

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

DUKE

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

GEORGIANA
Mama, what are you doing here?

LADY SPENCER sends her a severe look.

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

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

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

GEORGIANA
I believe.

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

A beat as GEORGIANA's heart stops.

DUKE (CONT'D)
By which I mean Mr Charles Grey.
Rumour has it that he is.

GEORGIANA jumps to the heart of the issue.

GEORGIANA
I won't give him up.

LADY SPENCER
Georgiana!

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

DUKE
That situation was agreed upon.

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

DUKE
If you had exercised some
discretion, it may have been
different.

GEORGIANA
Differ--?!

DUKE

The only good fortune is that it hasn't yet made it to the newspapers.

LADY SPENCER

My dear, Grey is unmarried. He has no rank and no wealth. He risks nothing with this affair. The hazard is all yours.

GEORGIANA

Grey loves me.

LADY SPENCER

So does your husband.

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

DUKE

Yes. I love you!

GEORGIANA

HOW?!

DUKE

In the way I understand love.

LADY SPENCER

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

GEORGIANA

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

LADY SPENCER

That will never happen!

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

LADY SPENCER (CONT'D)

I think I will leave you to it.

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

GEORGIANA

What follows now? Are you going to tear off my clothes and force yourself upon me again?

DUKE

Why on earth would I do that?

GEORGIANA looks at him in surprise.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I know that you've not thought much of either my intellect or my manners, but in fact I never do anything that serves no purpose.

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

DUKE (CONT'D)

I know precisely what you two have together.

GEORGIANA

We love each other.

DUKE

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

The DUKE pauses before delivering the final blow.

DUKE (CONT'D)

And you will never see your children again.

GEORGIANA is open mouthed, stunned.

DUKE (CONT'D)

You are given to say "love is an act." Well, this is an act.

GEORGIANA turns and runs out of the room.

CUT TO:

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

LADY SPENCER

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

GEORGIANA

Love. Passion.

LADY SPENCER

For a time.

GEORGIANA

For ever.

LADY SPENCER

There is no such thing.

GEORGIANA

Mama...all my life, it seems to
me, I've been fighting my way
upstream. With Charles, I find
myself going down the stream,
effortlessly and naturally. I
never realized that it could be
that easy. You can't ask me to
battle nature, and my own heart.
Not now.

LADY SPENCER

Oh will you never grow up! And
how will you live, even? Friends
will shun you, family will
abandon you. There won't be a
house open to you in all of
England.

GEORGIANA

(trying to convince
herself)

Grey will be Prime Minister.

LADY SPENCER

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

At this GEORGIANA's eyes fill with tears.

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

GEORGIANA
You can't know all that!

LADY SPENCER
Look at your friend Bess!

CUT TO:

125 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. FOYER - DAY

125

The DUKE waits by the front door. GEORGIANA exits the
dressing room and walks toward him. Beat.

GEORGIANA
I must ask you to return to London.

DUKE
Without you?

GEORGIANA
Yes.

The DUKE takes out a PACKAGE OF LETTERS.

DUKE
These are from the girls - I
promised to deliver them. Hart
neglected to write, but then he
is not yet one.

The DUKE puts the PACKAGE in her hand. GEORGIANA takes them
but holds them down by her side, refusing to even
acknowledge them.

GEORGIANA
I cannot give up Charles. I could
not survive another day without
him.

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

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

GEORGIANA leaves. The DUKE sends her an icy stare, then turns
to the SERVANT at the door.

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

The servant quickly opens the door. The DUKE exits. LADY
SPENCER follows from the ANTE ROOM. At the door she shares
one last sad look with GEORGIANA, then walks past.

CUT TO:

125A	OMITTED	125A
126	INT. POLITICAL MEETING ROOMS. DAY	126 ***
	GREY is pacing up and down. GEORGIANA remains standing.	***
	GEORGIANA	***
	He will come down on us with everything in his power.	*** ***
	GREY	***
	We must not be frightened into submission.	*** ***
	GEORGIANA	***
	We would be foolish not to be frightened.	*** ***
	GREY	***
	No. We would be foolish to let future fears stand in our way.	*** ***
	GEORGIANA	***
	He will be without mercy.	***
	GREY	***
	Then so will we.	***
	GEORGIANA looks straight at him.	***
	GEORGIANA	***
	How Charles?	***
	GREY	***
	We'll fight...	***
	GEORGIANA	***
	What do we have to fight with?	***

GREY ***
Our ideals, our principles. And ***
if we must we will make ***
sacrifices. ***

GEORGIANA ***
And are you ready to do that? ***
Everything you've worked for? ***

Beat. ***

GREY ***
Yes, I am...whatever is ***
necessary. If it means we will be ***
together. ***

GEORGIANA looks at him, trying to gauge in her own mind of ***
she believes this. Before she is able to probe further... ***

GREY (CONT'D) ***
Are you? ***

Beat, as GEORGIANA considers the full consequences of this. ***

GEORGIANA ***
Yes. ***

Beat. GREY smiles and kisses her. ***

GREY ***
Let us talk later. I shall be ***
back soon. ***

GEORGIANA looks at him as he leaves. GREY turns in the ***
doorway and smiles. She smiles back at him but there is ***
doubt creeping in behind it. ***

CUT TO: ***

127 OMITTED 127

128 INT. RENTED BATH HOUSE. FOYER - THAT AFTERNOON 128

GEORGIANA enters the room, strong and confident. A SERVANT takes her cape and hat then leaves. GEORGIANA is alone. She is aware of the package of CHILDREN'S LETTERS on the side table where the DUKE left it.

GEORGIANA turns away from it but after a moment turns back. She takes a deep breath and rips it open. There are LETTERS in spidery children's handwriting, colourful drawings. It hits her hard. She fingers trace over the drawings, the messages, the kisses at the bottom....

She is suddenly faced with the reality of the choice she is about to make. It's heart breaking but she knows she can't be without her children.

CUT TO:

129 OMITTED 129

130 OMITTED 130

131 OMITTED 131

132 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - ENTRANCE HALL. DAY 132

GEORGIANA rushes into the hallway.

CUT TO:

GEORGIANA runs into the room and hugs her children.

Minutes later: we are behind the DUKE as he walks slowly down a corridor. We can hear children's voices in the background. He reaches the end of the corridor and the scene is revealed: GEORGIANA sits in the middle of the room, surrounded by her children, playing a game together.

GEORGIANA hugs the girls. Closer. Tighter.

In the background, GEORGIANA notices the DUKE surveying the scene. GEORGIANA gestures to the NANNY to come over.

GEORGIANA

Run along, girls. I shall join
you in a moment.

The GIRLS leave with the NANNY. The DUKE watches them go, then turns to GEORGIANA.

DUKE

You must know that I am greatly
pleased that we have come to an
arrangement. It's not good for
little ones to be without their
mother for too long.

GEORGIANA

My life for theirs...

DUKE

That's one way of putting it.
Your mother called it "common
decency before personal
gratification", or some such
thing... the exact words escape
me...

GEORGIANA

How about 'imprisoned in my own
house'?

DUKE

No, that's not how she put it. I
would have remembered that.

GEORGIANA sends him a hateful look and walks out.

CUT TO:

134 OMITTED 134

134A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS 134A

GEORGIANA walks into the corridor. After a few moments she
sees BESS appear from the shadows.

BESS

(Whisper)

How did Charles take it?

GEORGIANA stops by her. She is businesslike.

GEORGIANA

I don't know. I just left. If I
had seen him again, I would have
stayed.

BESS

No letter, either?

GEORGIANA shakes her head.

BESS (CONT'D)

I know it's cruel, Georgiana, but
it's for the best.

GEORGIANA looks at BESS, then continues to walk off down
the corridor.

CUT TO:

135 OMITTED 135

135A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT - WEEKS LATER 135A

A VIOLINIST and HARPSICHORDIST play a beautiful, slow piece of music from the corner.

CUT TO:

136 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ROOM. NIGHT 136

The music continues in the background as three silver plates covered by silver domes are carried by SERVANTS.

CUT TO:

137 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT 137

GEORGIANA, BESS and the DUKE are seated for dinner at their vast table. It's tense, silent and extremely formal as the THREE SERVANTS bring in the plates. In unison they step forward to take away the domes, revealing elaborately prepared POUSSIN - it's an unexpected comic moment.

They begin to eat. No one says a word. Suddenly we hear DOORS CRASH OPEN from far outside the room. There is the distant sound of a man's voice, raised and angry. GEORGIANA knows immediately that it is GREY. So too does the DUKE who shoots her a vicious look. GEORGIANA rises,

GEORGIANA

Your Grace, Bess. Will you excuse me.

CUT TO:

138 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL. NIGHT - MINUTES LATER 138

GEORGIANA enters to see GREY at the foot of the stairs, surrounded by FOOTMEN trying to stop him get further. GREY is wild. He yells at GEORGIANA, quite oblivious to the FOOTMEN.

GREY

Why haven't you responded to my letters?!

GEORGIANA tries to maintain calm and walks toward him.

GREY (CONT'D)
I have written a dozen times a day, and there is nothing from you! What has happened?! Do you love me no longer?!

She looks at the FOOTMEN, headed by BURLEIGH, the butler.

GEORGIANA
Thank you, Burleigh.

BURLEIGH bows, and though still remaining present, recedes into the background with the FOOTMEN. GREY comes closer. GEORGIANA steels herself...

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
My personal feelings remain unaltered...

GREY
Then we must be together again. I want to marry you. I want you to bear my children ... and I don't care if they are boys or girls!

...But GEORGIANA is barely holding it together.

GEORGIANA
I wish it could be like that.

GREY
It can. It will. Sorrows come however we try to avoid them. We must stay our course and *not give in*.

GEORGIANA
(Firmly)
No, Charles.

GREY steps forward to take her arm but GEORGIANA backs away. BURLEIGH makes as if to intervene, but holds back.

GREY
You must leave and be with me, a free woman! Now, let us leave now! It is still possible. Let us at least take a chance.

GEORGIANA
I cannot risk my children.

GREY stares at her with wide, angry, tortured eyes.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)

This is a sacrifice I am forced
to make...but I have given you up
for them only. And in so doing I
have lost my heart and soul.

GREY looks at her, sad and weak, nothing left to argue.
GEORGIANA stands firm. She gestures to BURLEIGH.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
Burleigh, will you please escort
Mr. Grey to the door?

BURLEIGH comes forward and stands next to GREY.

GEORGIANA still looks at him. Her eyes glisten.

GREY
You promised me.

GEORGIANA
I know...

GREY, choking with pain, stares one more beat, then turns
and walks away. BURLEIGH and FOOTMEN follow, like bouncers.

CUT TO:

139 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NIGHT - MINUTES LATER 139

GEORGIANA slowly sits again. She is distant, with no
interest in the food in front of her. The DUKE looks up,
chewing.

DUKE
What's the matter, don't like the
chicken? I find it really quite
decent.

The table is quiet. Not even BESS can muster a reply.
GEORGIANA looks at him.

GEORGIANA
I'm with child.

CUT TO:

140 INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM - MORNING 140

Rain spits against the window. Wind blows in the trees
outside. GEORGIANA is sitting in her bed, staring blankly
before her. The DUKE and BESS enter.

DUKE
(to Bess)
Will you be so kind as to inform
the Duchess of my decision?

BESS looks deeply uncomfortable.

BESS
(appealingly)
Georgiana -

GEORGIANA does not respond, but keeps staring into the air.
BESS takes a deep breath.

BESS (CONT'D)

It will be like this: you will be taken to the country where you will give birth to the child, and the child will subsequently be trusted to the care of Charles Grey's family.

GEORGIANA makes no reply.

BESS (CONT'D)

Are you listening to me?

GEORGIANA slides silently into a reclining position.

DUKE

I think she has heard you. Let's leave her.

BESS

Georgiana, please -

DUKE

I said: let's leave. This is not a discussion. She has been informed of my decision.

BESS looks at GEORGIANA.

BESS

Have pity on her, William...

DUKE

Pity be damned. She brought this upon herself, as well you know. Now come...

The DUKE starts to go out. BESS's voice stops him.

BESS

No. I will go with her.

DUKE

You're not going anywhere...

BESS

(Turns, magnificently)

I will go with G if G will have me, and there is nothing you can say or do to stop either of us.

The DUKE is speechless. GEORGIANA looks up for the first time. The DUKE leaves. The women are left alone in silence with each other. Their eyes meet.

CUT TO:

141 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE. DAY 141

On a windy, end of summer day, TWO PLAIN COACHES travel across the flat and largely featureless landscape.

CUT TO:

142 OMITTED 142

143 EXT. SMALL HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY 143

The house is simple and remote, the only building for miles around. Chickens peck outside. It is far removed from the opulence GEORGIANA and BESS are used to.

The two COACHES are parked outside. From the rear COACH, luggage is being unpacked and brought inside.

CUT TO:

144 INT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY 144

GEORGIANA enters this house with BESS and a SERVANT. It's plain and unlivid in.

BESS follows GEORGIANA into what is to be her bedroom.

GEORGIANA
Thank you for coming.

BESS
I couldn't not be with you.

GEORGIANA smiles.

GEORGIANA
I count it a triumph we have become friends again when fate has been so intent on keeping us rivals.

BESS
So do I. The Duke is for my boys only. You are for me.

GEORGIANA puts her hands around her stomach.

GEORGIANA
Bess, how will I do this?

BESS
For Charlotte, for Harryo, for
little G, for Hart...

GEORGIANA nods her head.

CUT TO:

145 OMITTED

145

146 EXT. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY - SOME TIME LATER 146

We hear the muted sounds of GEORGIANA screaming over shots of the house and the wildlife around it.

CUT TO:

147 OMITTED 147

148 INT. BEDROOM. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. MORNING 148

A baby is sleeping in its cot.

BESS is sitting in the other corner of the room. A FOOTMAN appears at the door and nods to her. BESS looks apprehensive. She goes to GEORGIANA's bedside.

BESS
(Gently)
It's time.

GEORGIANA flinches - it's the moment she's been dreading. BESS comes closer and gestures toward the BABY.

BESS (CONT'D)
Would it help if I...

GEORGIANA
(Looking up)
No, Bess. I must do it.

GEORGIANA snips a piece of hair from her sleeping baby and puts it in a distinctive silver locket.

CUT TO:

149

EXT. CROSSROADS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

149

It is a barren and featureless landscape with one straight dirt track running through it. TWO DARK COACHES are already parked ahead. GEORGIANA's COACH, containing GEORGIANA and BESS, pulls up fifty yards behind it.

At the first of the DARK COACHES, a BUTLER stands to one side, a WET NURSE to the other. From the second steps a serious looking older man, GENERAL GREY. CHARLES GREY is nowhere to be seen.

BESS looks on from the side of their COACH as GEORGIANA slowly takes the BABY up the track, holding it tight to her all the way.

GENERAL GREY
(Flatly)
Your Grace. I am General Grey.

GEORGIANA
Where is Charles?

GENERAL GREY
Your husband thought it best if I
took care of this.

GEORGIANA takes a deep breath. She hadn't expected this, and now she is being asked to hand her baby over to a stranger, and a seemingly cold one at that. It's not clear that she will go through with it...

GEORGIANA gently kisses the baby's head, whispering to her, smelling her hair, her skin, running her nose down her face and breathing her in for one last time. BESS finds this impossible to watch and turns away.

With immense difficulty GEORGIANA finally goes to hand her baby over. GENERAL GREY does not take it. He nods sharply to his WET NURSE who steps forward to take the BABY, although for a moment GEORGIANA simply can't let her go.

GENERAL GREY immediately turns to go back to the COACH. GEORGIANA calls after him.

GEORGIANA
General Grey...

GENERAL GREY stops and turns.

GEORGIANA (CONT'D)
...her name is Eliza.

GENERAL GREY looks at GEORGIANA giving nothing away. He turns and goes back into his COACH, followed by the BUTLER and the WET NURSE and GEORGIANA'S BABY GIRL into theirs.

As the BABY GIRL is passed into the coach, GEORGIANA can hear her daughter begin to cry a little. GEORGIANA instinctively flinches, using all her strength to hold her back from running over to comfort her.

The driver cracks the whip and GEORGIANA watches as the DARK COACHES ride off, leaving her alone with the barren landscape behind. She slowly sinks down onto the wet and muddy ground. BESS comes forward and holds her.

CUT TO:

151 INT. BEDROOM. HOUSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN 151

The cot is empty. Low winter sun cuts through the windows.

GEORGIANA sits alone in her bedroom, lost in thought and rolling a locket of Eliza's hair back and forth between her fingers. It feels as if she has been sat there all night.

BESS enters and comes close. It takes a moment for GEORGIANA to notice she's even there. BESS produces two linen FLANNELS. GEORGIANA looks quizzically at them.

BESS
(Gently)
For your milk.

GEORGIANA looks down - there are two wet patches on her breasts. BESS kneels next to GEORGIANA and holds tight onto GEORGIANA's almost lifeless body.

BESS (CONT'D)
The Duke has asked that we return
as soon as possible.

GEORGIANA nods but doesn't move.

CUT TO:

152 OMITTED 152

153 I/E. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GARDEN. AFTERNOON - SPRING 153

A primitive sprinkler is operated by a GARDENER spreading water across the manicured green grass making a loud and distinctive sound. Other GARDENERS are on their hands and knees cutting the grass with scissors. Time has elapsed, perhaps a month, and it's spring now.

Inside, there are a series of shots of the empty, still house.

CUT TO:

153A INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ROOM. AFTERNOON - SPRING 153A

GEORGIANA sits in a chair, distracted. She clutches the silver locket of Eliza's hair, the chain wrapped tight around her hand.

A MAID appears at the door. GEORGIANA's clutches the locket in her hand so it can't be seen.

MAID

Your Grace, I have Charlotte to see you.

GEORGIANA turns her head to the door. CHARLOTTE is standing with the MAID. She steps into the room.

CHARLOTTE

We are all in the garden, Mama. Will you come and join us?

GEORGIANA is unable to connect for a split second. CHARLOTTE remains looking at her. GEORGIANA comes to and is about to say yes but sees the DUKE approaching from behind.

GEORGIANA

In a moment.

CHARLOTTE gives a small smile and leaves.

DUKE

Hello, G.

GEORGIANA

Your Grace.

The DUKE fidgets and, unusually for him, looks warmly at G.

DUKE

I am not particularly adept at expressing myself when it comes to matters of a more personal nature, but I shall endeavour to try. [Beat] Over the years I have acted in ways that you have judged... harsh. Well I do not wish for you to undergo any further suffering. Indeed, I would like our life to return to a calm normality.

GEORGIANA

Thank you William.

The DUKE looks relieved. He smiles.

DUKE

Lady Melbourne has arranged a small gathering in honour of your recent return from holiday. Given some of the vague reports that have been circulating over this past year, I think it would be wise for us to go. A show of unity, so to speak.

Beat.

GEORGIANA

Who will be there?

DUKE

Everybody.

GEORGIANA recognises what this must mean.

GEORGIANA

As you wish.

The DUKE turns back to the window. We see what he sees: BESS is playing with all their children in the garden, the image distorted by the wavy glass of the window pane. It is a mirrored moment from his opening scene where he watched the young people dancing, his thoughts then a mystery...

The DUKE resumes his faraway look and says as if from nowhere,

DUKE

How wonderful to be that free.

GEORGIANA looks at him sympathetically, as if for the first time she finally understands this trapped and complex man.

The DUKE, a little exposed by his revealing statement, nods and leaves, disappearing off into the long corridor.

After a beat, GEORGIANA takes the DUKE's position at the window and looks out at the children playing with BESS and smiles.

CUT TO:

153b EXT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. GARDEN. DAY

153b

BESS stands in the garden, watching the children. GEORGIANA approaches from behind her.

The two women look at each other, understanding the sentiment completely. They smile, then GEORGIANA leads them forward to the children. They turn to see her.

GEORGIANA

Who will catch me first?

The children's faces light up. GEORGIANA runs around the garden, chased by them and BESS until she finally allows herself to be caught.

CUT TO:

CUT TO:

154 OMITTED 154

155 I/E. LADY MELBOURNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT 155

A society gathering is in full swing. A FOOTMAN addresses the party in his booming voice.

FOOTMAN
The Duke and Duchess of
Devonshire. And Lady Elizabeth
Foster.

Behind the front doors BESS whispers to GEORGIANA.

BESS
Are you ready for this?

GEORGIANA
Yes.

The room goes quiet with a great sense of expectation...

The doors swing open...

GEORGIANA steps back into the limelight...

She's looks stylish but in a mature, demure way.

GEORGIANA walks through the crowd, taking in the scene around her. She nods hello to FOX and SHERIDAN, and there's a warm, ad-hoc mix of bowing and 'welcome home Your Grace'. She has been accepted back with respect and relief.

CUT TO:

155A OMITTED 155A

155B INT. LADY MELBOURNE'S HOUSE. ROOM - NIGHT 155B

GEORGIANA enters another room full of people. Across it she sees CHARLES GREY. The DUKE and BESS are aware of him too, but stand back to allow GEORGIANA to handle the situation.

It feels risky in this company but GEORGIANA walks through the crowd toward him.

GEORGIANA

Mr Grey.

GREY

Your Grace...

A subtle hush descends on the gathering as the GUESTS around them look over with bated breath, sensing the whiff of scandal. The tension in the room is palpable.

GEORGIANA's is nervous and it is unclear whether she will give way to her emotions or manage to keep her composure. GREY too, is awkward but summons up the strength to act for the crowd.

GREY (CONT'D)

I trust your tour was agreeable?

GEORGIANA understands what he is doing and reciprocates.

GEORGIANA

Yes, thank you. We passed the summer in Switzerland and the winter in Nice.

GREY

Well, I speak for everybody when I say how glad I am that you have returned home safely.

GEORGIANA smiles back. Her eyes tell a different story. The polite and seemingly innocent small talk continues...

GEORGIANA

And what news is there with you?

GREY looks uncomfortable. Beat.

GREY

I am to be engaged to Lady Ponsonby. The announcement will follow shortly.

GEORGIANA swallows hard. Beat.

GEORGIANA

Congratulations.

Beat. GREY looks at her again.

GREY

And I have a niece...

GEORGIANA looks up quickly.

GREY (CONT'D)
....who is much loved.

Beat as she takes a moment to digest this..

GREY (CONT'D)
One day you should come and see
her. In a little while. If you
would like...

Beat. They look at each other.

GEORGIANA
I would like that very much.

GEORGIANA curtsies with perfect etiquette and walks back into the party. GREY watches her go as she walks confidently off into the crowd to join the DUKE and BESS who are waiting for her.

CUT TO:

156 OMITTED 156

157 OMITTED 157

158 OMITTED 158

159A (FORMERLY SC. 156) INT. DEVONSHIRE HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL 159A
NIGHT

It's still and silent in the house.

159B (FORMERLY PART OF SC. 157) INT. HALLWAY TO BEDROOMS. 159B
DEVONSHIRE HOUSE - NIGHT

The DUKE, BESS and GEORGIANA walk through a long corridor.

They stop at the point in the corridor where it splits into two directions: one toward the DUKE's bedroom, the other toward GEORGIANA and BESS's.

DUKE

Good night, G.

GEORGIANA

Good night, William.

The DUKE turns to BESS, expecting her to follow him. BESS looks to GEORGIANA, who looks back intensely. BESS gets the message and turns back to the DUKE.

BESS

Good night, William.

The DUKE is surprised, but doesn't want to upset the newfound harmony.

DUKE

Oh yes, well...Good night Bess.

The DUKE walks off to his bedroom alone. GEORGIANA and BESS walk together, two massive dresses side by side down the middle of the wide corridors and rooms, rustling in the silence. They look at each other and smile supportively, then reach out to hold hands.

CUT TO:

160 (FORMERLY PART OF SC. 157) INT. GEORGIANA'S BEDROOM. 160
DEVONSHIRE HOUSE

GEORGIANA and BESS settle outside GEORGIANA's bedroom. GEORGIANA looks at BESS. BESS smiles back. They embrace and BESS walks off.

In a mirror of scene 4AB GEORGIANA walks from camera into the room, then turns around for us to see her strong, determined face. GEORGIANA nods to two servants who step forward, take the handles and pull the double doors closed, GEORGIANA's face finally disappearing behind the crack in the middle with a bang.

Cut to black.

After a moment the following words appear:

Georgiana, the Duke and Bess lived openly together for the next ten years until Georgiana died

Fade out / fade in:

Georgiana ensured in her will that Bess could marry the Duke and become the next Duchess of Devonshire

Fade out / fade in

Grey became Britain's 32nd Prime Minister

Fade to black, then fade up to:

A PORTRAIT OF ELIZA - her face a mix between GEORGIANA and GREY. On this is superimposed:

In late childhood Eliza found out the true identity of her mother. The source of the informant remains unknown.

The picture pans down to a miniature around ELIZA's neck - it is of GEORGIANA as she started in the film: an open, optimistic seventeen year old girl smiling out to camera.

End titles.