

ROUGE STREET

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ABSTRACT:

'Rouge Street' is an original queer television drama that aims to shine a light on a previously unexplored chapter of British queer history, The Cleveland Street Scandal. Set in Victorian London in the aftermath of Jack The Ripper, the series follows the various classes of people surrounding a fictional homosexual brothel as it threatens to become the subject of police investigation and public scandal.

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

ROUGE STREET

'PILOT'

Written by

Leo Thomas

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EXT. LONDON STREET - NIGHT

A dark, deserted back alley. The only spot of colour, a YOUNG MAN (late teens) in a bright blue postal uniform, is TRUDGING along, a large satchel slung over his shoulder.

A LOUD MALE CACKLE echoes from the main street up ahead. The young man stops, quickly dropping his satchel to one side, eyes fixed on the glimmer of light up ahead. He hears the drunken voices of several men. One of them begins SINGING loudly. A crude, sexually explicit ballad --

DRUNK MAN #1

Women on the moors, Women on the
moors! I want more women... to open
their drawers --

DRUNK MAN #2 (O.S.)

(heard faintly)
Shut up, you big tit.

The young man smirks, at ease, watching a few distant figures staggering along the main road ahead. The drunkest of the men, the SINGER, turns, spotting him down the alley. He gives a YELL of camaraderie, raising a pint glass in salute, almost falling over.

The young man gives an amused half-wave back as his friends try to put the singer's arms back around them. The singer breaks free and staggers off, resuming his warbling.

The young man stoops down, grabbing the strap of his satchel, before feeling a TUG --

He turns to find a LARGER MAN stood facing him, holding the satchel.

They eye each other for a moment. The postal boy glances back towards the main street, where we can still make out the drunken singing.

He hesitates, before dropping the satchel strap and RUNNING up the alley towards the main street.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

We cut to the entrance to the alleyway, waiting for the postal boy to emerge. No sign of him.

We move closer on the singer, blissfully lumbering further down the street, alone. He hears something from the alleyway and turns back, a grin spreading across his face.

DRUNK MAN #1

Oh 'ello!

Just beyond the entrance to the alley one of his friends is hurling his guts out onto the pavement. Loud, disgusting vomiting.

The singer sidles over to him, placing a comforting hand on his friend's back before, in a gesture of support, resuming his singing at an even louder volume in his friend's ear. The third watches on, cackling.

As this symphony of singing, vomiting and laughter grows to a crescendo, we see the shadow of one man pummelling another against the alley wall behind them. The men continue on, unaware, as a small stream of blood trickles out onto the main street.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. VICTORIAN SUBURB - DAY

CAPTION: LONDON, 1889.

We're still in Victorian London, but not the city we're used to from the likes of *Oliver Twist* or *Sherlock Holmes*. GRAND TOWN HOUSES line a quiet street of well-kept lawns and pristine flower beds - there's not a pickpocket in sight.

At the front door of one of the houses we find a WEALTHY WOMAN (50s) speaking to a young man (EZEKIEL, we'll meet him in a moment) on her doorstep, his back to us, out of focus. He's wearing the same blue postal uniform as the boy from the alley, an identical satchel strung over his shoulder.

WEALTHY OLDER WOMAN (O.S.)
And signature here?

EZEKIEL (O.S.)
Yes, ma'am.

WEALTHY OLDER WOMAN (O.S.)
And here?

EZEKIEL (O.S.)
That's right, yes, ma'am.

WEALTHY OLDER WOMAN (O.S.)
Perfect, thank you so much.

EZEKIEL (O.S.)
That's my pleasure, ma'am.

She surveys him with a motherly smile.

WEALTHY OLDER WOMAN
And may I say what a well-mannered
young man you are.

We find EZEKIEL (male, 20, mixed race, bags under his eyes) stood opposite her. He's the sort of friend your mum loves having round for dinner, but you wouldn't call him charming, more awkward and obedient, which is just what the doctor ordered.

Ezekiel holds her gaze with a well-trained smile that doesn't quite reach his eyes.

EZEKIEL

Thank you, ma'am.

WEALTHY OLDER WOMAN

Your parents did something right.

EZEKIEL

Thank you.

WEALTHY OLDER WOMAN

You have a nice day now.

EZEKIEL

You too, ma'am.

He holds his smile until the moment the door SHUTS --

EXT. VICTORIAN SUBURB - MOMENTS LATER

Ezekiel's face has dropped. Back to the expression of monotony you only get from serving others all day. He's walking down the same street flicking through a pile of TELEGRAMS (envelopes).

We now see his uniform isn't quite like the boy from the alley. It's crinkled - the permanent kind - stained - ditto - and more of a faded, pastel blue. A POLISHED CRUCIFIX NECKLACE gleams against his otherwise scruffy ensemble. He belongs here only in service.

He looks up from his telegrams just in time to read a sign: 'DO NOT WALK ON THE GRASS'. He stops, his foot hovering above an IMMACULATE LAWN. He glances back. He's already ten steps in. *Shit*. He looks up to the heavens --

EXT. VICTORIAN SUBURB - LATER

Ezekiel is treading carefully back over his muddy footprints, bending down after each step to fix the flattened grass he left behind.

He steps back off the lawn, looking up at the house it belongs to. It's gorgeous, worth a small fortune. Ezekiel barely bats an eye. He glances down at the telegram in his hand --

EXT. SOMERSET'S FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Outside the same house. A gleaming front door.

Ezekiel raps a handsome silver knocker three times. Pulling his hand away he notices a few marks of mud left on the knocker. He carefully wipes them off with his sleeve.

The door opens, Ezekiel donning his well-trained smile as a finely-dressed OLDER MAN answers. Ezekiel's smile falters then drops in recognition. He stares, mouth open, horrified, like he's seen a ghost --

CHAINE (V.O.)
So this would be the strange
behaviour.

INT. CHAINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Ezekiel, still in postal gear, is sat in a cramped office. Opposite is a man in a finely-pressed postal uniform, POST OFFICE CONSTABLE CHAINE (male, 40, Ezekiel's moustachioed boss).

Chaine is flicking through a report in front of him.

EZEKIEL
Pardon?

CHAINE
The strange behaviour in Mister
Somerset's report. He said you kept
staring at him. Fidgeting.

Ezekiel is toying with his crucifix necklace. He stops.

EZEKIEL
I thought I recognised him.

CHAINE
Right. Go on.

EXT. SOMERSET'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Ezekiel is still staring, mouth slightly open at whoever has answers the door.

HUGH SOMERSET (male, 36, upper class, refined, polished, perfect in appearance) clearly doesn't recognise him back. A portrait of Victorian wealth with his smooth cheeks and well-styled hair, he'd almost be handsome if he ever smiled. He stands surveying Ezekiel with disinterest.

SOMERSET
Yes?

EZEKIEL
 (recovering)
 Parcel for Mister Somerset?

He holds out an envelope.

SOMERSET
 That's me.

He waits. Ezekiel hasn't held the envelope out far enough for Mister Somerset.

EZEKIEL
 Here you are, sir.

He places the envelope into the man's hand, avoiding eye contact.

SOMERSET
 Thanking you.

CHAINED (V.O.)
 Where did you think you recognised
 Mister Somerset from?

INT. CHAINED'S OFFICE - DAY

EZEKIEL
 Pardon?

CHAINED
 He's quite a well-known man in some
 circles. I just wouldn't have
 guessed yours that's all.

EZEKIEL
 I must have seen him in the paper.

He fingers his crucifix again. Chained isn't buying this for a second.

CHAINED
 I see. Please continue.

EXT. SOMERSET'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Somerset waits expectantly, before prompting Ezekiel, already tired of the exchange --

SOMERSET
 Do you need me to sign anything?

CHAINE (V.O.)
The paper?

INT. CHAINE'S OFFICE - DAY

CHAINE
I'm not sure I've ever seen Mister
Somerset's picture in the paper.
Which paper was it?

EZEKIEL
I'm not sure. Must have been
something about horses.

CHAINE
Because he's a horse breeder. Makes
sense. Continue.

He gives an encouraging smile. Chaine's enjoying playing the
role of arsehole in this interrogation.

EXT. SOMERSET'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Ezekiel pulls a BOUND NOTEBOOK and a POT OF INK out from his
satchel.

EZEKIEL
Just need a pen.

Somerset watches, bored, as Ezekiel continues rummaging
around in his satchel. The bag falls over, knocking twenty or
so silver coins (SHILLINGS) out onto the doorstep.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
Sorry, those are mine.

INT. CHAINE'S OFFICE - DAY

CHAINE
And were they?

EZEKIEL
Were what?

The constant interruptions are starting to get to him.

CHAINE
The money. Was it yours?

EZEKIEL
Yes.

Chaine watches Ezekiel's fingers. They're unmoving this time.

CHAINED
Eighteen shillings according to
Mister Somerset.

EXT. SOMERSET'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Ezekiel is still hurriedly scooping up coins. Somerset hasn't moved an inch. He surveys Ezekiel, for the first time his curiosity peaked. His gaze fixes on the scattering of coins.

INT. CHAINE'S OFFICE - DAY

EZEKIEL
Something like that.

CHAINED
Just lying in your bag. More than
your monthly wage

EZEKIEL
I'm good at saving.

Chaine smiles, almost appreciating the cheek.

CHAINED
I've never known you to be a liar,
Ezekiel, don't start now.

EZEKIEL
I'm not --

CHAINED
Chain off, we've spoken about this.

Ezekiel has been fiddling with his crucifix again. He puts it down on the desk. Chaine picks it up. He lets it pass through his fingers as he speaks --

CHAINED (CONT'D)
Do you want to know what I think?

Ezekiel doesn't particularly.

CHAINED (CONT'D)

I think you got the money by stealing from Mister Somerset while on duty, and the reason why he says you were acting so strange is because you and I both know you don't handle guilt particularly well.

Ezekiel is gazing into the crucifix again.

EZEKIEL

I didn't steal it.

CHAINED

Then where did you get it from?

EZEKIEL

I earned it.

CHAINED

Well clearly you didn't earn it here.

EZEKIEL

Says who.

CHAINED

Says the fifteen shillings I paid you last month. Where did you get the money from?

Ezekiel continues to stare into the crucifix.

EXT. SOMERSET'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

EZEKIEL

You have a good day, Mister Somerset.

He finally makes eye contact and forces a smile, which Somerset does not return. The door slams shut, as we cut to --

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A dark, dank room. Short, sharp cuts of Ezekiel, facing us, being FUCKED from behind. By who? We don't know...

Ezekiel's dead eyes find the man behind him in the bedroom mirror. We close in on the CLENCHED, GRUNTING FACE OF HUGH SOMERSET, about to orgasm, when --

INT. CHAINE'S OFFICE - DAY

CHAINE

Well?

The office door FLIES OPEN. A POSTAL GIRL appears --

POSTAL GIRL

Sir, there's been another one.

Behind her in the hallway is another postal boy (we recognise him from the cold open), battered and bruised, his clothes torn and his face bloody. He's propped up on the shoulder of another.

CHAINE

Jesus Christ.

(then, standing)

Bring him in.

Ezekiel turns to the door.

CHAINE (CONT'D)

Ezekiel.

Ezekiel turns reluctantly to find Chaine holding out his crucifix necklace.

CHAINE (CONT'D)

We'll continue this first thing tomorrow morning.

EZEKIEL

Thank you, sir.

Chaine lets go of the necklace and Ezekiel slips out past the bloodied postal boy.

INT. POSTAL STATION - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Ezekiel emerges, panicked, to find another postal girl, OPHELIA (female, 21, modern head girl stuck in the 1800s), right by the door. She's clearly been eavesdropping.

OPHELIA

What did the constable want?

Ezekiel ignores her, hurrying off down the corridor.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

(calling)

Where are you going?

INT. ROUGE STREET HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

A dark, dank room, possibly the same one Ezekiel and Somerset were once in. A single candle FLICKERS in the corner. JAMES STRUTT (male, 21, northern, devilishly handsome and knows it) is sat back in a leather chair, hands behind his back, visible only from his naked torso up. He's searching around the room for something of interest, bored out of his mind.

After a moment he JOLTS, gritting his teeth in pain.

A HEAD emerges from his lap. An older, POSH MALE VOICE speaks --

POSH MALE VOICE
How's that for you?

STRUTT
Oh great, yeah, mate, great.

He's barely bothering to sound genuine. He doesn't have to.

POSH MALE VOICE
Splendid.

The head begins to submerge, before lifting up again.

POSH MALE VOICE (CONT'D)
Do you think you're going to, you know...

He's trying to sound casual. Bless him.

STRUTT
Trouble is we're not really 'sposed to. Charlotte would kill me if she found out I was being paid to nut all day, ya know.
(then)
So I probably shouldn't.

POSH MALE VOICE
Ah right. I see.

STRUTT
But I am really enjoying it, don't get me wrong.

POSH MALE VOICE
Me too.
(he really is)

STRUTT

So if you wanna chuck on another
half an hour?

EXT. VICTORIAN LONDON - DAY

Ezekiel bursts out of a large, dishevelled POSTAL STATION. Crowds of people, smog-filled streets, begging children. *This* is the Victorian London we know. But Ezekiel still doesn't quite fit in. He stands out a mile in his eyesore of a blue uniform for one.

But he doesn't have time to worry about that. He SPRINTS off down the road.

We cut back and forth between Ezekiel running through London and Strutt receiving a mediocre blowjob.

EXT. ROUGE STREET - LATER

Ezekiel finally reaches his destination, a grim, dingy side street. There's not another person in sight. We can see why. He stares at a sign that reads 'ROUGE STREET'.

Ezekiel takes a deep breath and walks towards a tall, dark building a few doors down (Rouge Street House). What may have once been a semi-habitable house now rests crumbling with its windows heavily boarded up.

GRUNTING and PANTING are heard, all in his head, as Ezekiel approaches the house. He begins to shake slightly as he reaches the door.

Flashes of Ezekiel having sex with various older men FLASH before us, culminating in a searing shot of Somerset.

We cut back to Ezekiel. He notices his hand raised, about to knock on the door. He lowers it, not sure if he can.

The door SWINGS open and Ezekiel thrusts himself to one side as an UPPER-CLASS MAN walks out. He gives Ezekiel a curt nod, pulling up a rich fur coat to shield his face as he walks up the street.

The door begins to shut. Ezekiel spots someone inside --

EZEKIEL

(calling)

Strutt!

STRUTT (O.S.)

Easy?

Strutt emerges, now clothed (ish). Ezekiel's the last person he expected to see here.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
Well hello sexy. To what do I owe this pleasure?

EZEKIEL
Can we talk?

STRUTT
Of course. Step into my office.

Ezekiel stares past Strutt into the dank interior of the house.

EXT. ROUGE STREET - RUBBISH HEAP - LATER

Ezekiel and Strutt are stood down a side alley next to a large heap of rubbish. Strutt is shivering slightly in a tatty dressing gown.

STRUTT
So what, just tell Chaine you stole the money and move on. Do you know how many times he's caught me dipping my hand into the royal pot and let me off with a slap on the wrist?

EZEKIEL
But I didn't steal it.

STRUTT
Right you earned it porking MPs --

EZEKIEL
Which is way worse.

STRUTT
Hey I'm proud of the work we do.

EZEKIEL
And if you hadn't taken three months to pay me --

STRUTT
That was all my accountant. His hands were tied.

He senses Ezekiel's not in the mood.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
 You said you didn't want the money
 anyway. Said it felt 'tainted'.

EZEKIEL
 Things have changed a bit.

STRUTT
 All the more reason not to lose
 your job. Which is to say, Chaine
 and this lad you stole from are
 never gonna know about anything you
 did in or around Rouge Street if
 you don't fess up.

EZEKIEL
 They might do.

STRUTT
 How? Not your saintly honesty
 bullshit.

EZEKIEL
 No 'cause --

He glances around in case anyone is in earshot. Strutt rolls
 his eyes.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
 'Cause the guy, this --

He doesn't want to say his first name.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
 Somerset, is 'Mister Brown'.

He's been holding off dropping this bombshell as long as
 possible. It doesn't quite land.

STRUTT
 Easy, I'm not good with riddles.

EZEKIEL
 The guy who reported me is Mister
 Brown.

He looks pointedly back at Rouge Street House.

STRUTT
 (realising)
 Ohh, 'Mister Brown'.
 (slight laugh)
 Oh shit.

EZEKIEL
It's not funny.

STRUTT
So he recognised you?

EZEKIEL
No, definitely not.

STRUTT
Really? But he knows you. Might
even say intimately.

He's still enjoying this revelation more than he should.

EZEKIEL
I've serviced him yeah.

Strutt mouths the word 'serviced', cringing.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
Several times.

STRUTT
And he doesn't remember you? Sorry,
Easy, that's tough.

EZEKIEL
I don't care about that --

STRUTT
(supportive)
Yeah, you're a very memorable fuck.

Ezekiel doesn't appreciate the cheek. Or at least he doesn't
have time for it right now.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
Sorry, I know you don't care about
that. Go on.

EZEKIEL
It did bother me a bit.

STRUTT
Only natural.
(then)
But this is good news, if he
doesn't remember fucking you, and
even if he does he's got way more
to lose by being found out than
you, no offence.

EZEKIEL

This isn't about whether he remembers or not.

STRUTT

Then what is it about?

A man walking down the main street spots them down the alley and WOLF WHISTLES. Strutt pulls his dressing gown tighter.

STRUTT (CONT'D)

And why can't we have this lovely catch-up inside?

EZEKIEL

I'm not going back in there.

STRUTT

Mate it's been three months.
(then)
Yeah, fine.

He knows not to push this.

STRUTT (CONT'D)

It's not gonna get out. Because you're just gonna tell Chaine you stole the money. Right?

He's not being forceful, he just can't understand why Ezekiel would do anything else.

Ezekiel avoids his gaze.

STRUTT (CONT'D)

What's with you the last few months, lad? The Easy I knew would be arse deep in some gallery owner by now laughing it up.

EZEKIEL

I think I need to tell him.

STRUTT

Why?

EZEKIEL

I have to tell someone what I did. In there.

STRUTT

All you did was help put food on the table.

EZEKIEL

It was wrong, what I did. What I was doing. I need to confess.

STRUTT

So what do you need from me?

EZEKIEL

I'm giving you a chance to get out of there before I do.

Strutt pretends to consider this.

STRUTT

Nah.

(then)

I appreciate the warning. But you're smarter than this, Easy, you'll lose your job if you tell him. You're gonna keep your mouth shut and this Somerset guy's not gonna remember eighteen shillings in a week's time. And even if he does and everything goes to shit --

He puts a comforting hand on Ezekiel's shoulder, looking him in the eye.

STRUTT (CONT'D)

We'll lie through our teeth. Because that's what people do.

INT. ROUGE STREET HOUSE - LATER

Strutt enters the house. An extravagantly dressed older woman is waiting for him. CHARLOTTE (female, 48, madam of the house) hands him a couple of coins.

CHARLOTTE

Here, buy yourself something pretty.

STRUTT

Who needs pretty when I've got you.

He's not being crass. It's oddly endearing.

CHARLOTTE

I heard Calvin got hit last night. Two streets down.

STRUTT

Shit. Is he alright?

CHARLOTTE
Looks like he's not coming back.

STRUTT
How many's that now?

CHARLOTTE
Three. Not counting Ezekiel.

STRUTT
Yeah, he's not coming back. But
I'll find others.

CHARLOTTE
You always do.

Strutt smiles.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
You'll be covering 'til then.

EXT. ROUGE STREET - DAY

Ezekiel walks back up Rouge Street. We can't tell whether he feels better or worse. He leaves, joining the main street. On the other side of the road Ophelia, on duty, watches him.

EXT. VICKY'S HOUSE - DAY

A stunning victorian mansion. Acres of luscious grounds surround the house. We couldn't be further from Rouge Street.

A CLINK of glass on glass. We cut inside to find --

INT. VICKY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A HIGH SOCIETY PARTY in full swing. Waiters walk around parading bottles of champagne, society women hide behind fans and military men thrust their medal-laden chests.

As we pass through the party we hear two WEALTHY MEN (Victorian finance bros) chatting. They're several drinks in and show no sign of stopping.

MAN #1 (V.O.)
Five murders, all unsolved. And I'm
over there talking to the fucking
detective assigned to the case.
Fuck ugly, miserable sod. Hasn't a
clue who the rotter is.

(MORE)

MAN #1 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

At a loss until, get this, a package arrives in the post. It's a kidney. Weird. Police open up the note attached and whoever wrote it says he's eaten the other one!

MAN #2 (V.O.)

All prostitutes as well, weren't they.

MAN #1 (V.O.)

(hiccupping)

That's right. All prozies.

MAN #2 (V.O.)

That's why you always pay *after* the girl shows up, right?

The first man laughs.

MAN #1 (V.O.)

I tell you who the real victim is, that poor bastard sitting with his todger out all night watching his balls turn blue waiting for the girl to turn up.

We reach the two men, who look exactly like we'd expect them to. They're sat around a table playing cards, a pile of banknotes in the middle. The second man is collapsed in laughter.

MAN #1

Am I right, Somers.

He nudges the third person at the table, our man Hugh Somerset, who shows no sign of amusement. He holds up his cards.

SOMERSET

Ready to show?

MAN #1

Right, right. Forget who I'm dealing with.

He finishes off his glass and puts his cards down, face up. Somerset does the same.

MAN #1 (CONT'D)

Looks like Somerset's got us beat.

MAN #2

Or does he?

He puts his cards down triumphantly. The first man is blown away by this incredible turn of events.

MAN #2 (CONT'D)
Thank you, gentlemen.

He reaches forwards to collect his winnings.

SOMERSET
You folded.

MAN #2
What?

SOMERSET
You folded.

MAN #2
(a laugh)
No I didn't?

The first man laughs as well.

SOMERSET
Yes you did. Two rounds ago.

The first man snorts again. Somerset looks at him.

MAN #1
(serious)
You know I think Somers might be right. I think you did fold.

The first man looks between them, deciding whether to object -
-

MAN #2
Must have done, then. Well played.

Somerset reaches forwards to collect his winnings.

INT. VICKY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Somerset is walking through the house. A voice calls him from across the room --

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Hugh! Hugh!

Somerset walks over to find the source of the voice, VICKY (female, 44, queen socialite), in a large flowing dress.

SOMERSET

Vicky, hi, thank you again for the invitation. You have a lovely home as always.

He's never this polite with anyone. Vicky's a big deal.

VICKY

('stop it, but do go on')
Oh, Hughie.

SOMERSET

I did actually want to talk --

VICKY

And you've met the Colonel, of course.

She gestures to the man next to her, AMBROSE BARKING (male, 32, known as 'mad dog' to his private school chums), stood head-to-toe in his military uniform.

SOMERSET

Hello, Barking.

BARKING

(nod back)
Somerset.

He knows Somerset well enough not to shake his hand. Somerset is about to speak but Vicky gets there first --

VICKY

Barking was just introducing me to his charming friend Gwasila, have you met him?

SOMERSET

Haven't had the pleasure, no.

BARKING

He's a bloody war hero. Saved my arse back in Gaballat.

VICKY

Gallabat.

BARKING

Wherever.

SOMERSET

Vicky, if I could have a word. In private.

VICKY
Intriguing. Mad dog, shoo.

She waves Barking away. He obeys.

VICKY (CONT'D)
Terribly fascinating man.

SOMERSET
Yes he's a riot.

VICKY
So go on, what's the dish?

SOMERSET
Is there an update on that postal
boy? The one I asked that your
husband report.

They both look over at VICKY'S HUSBAND, a man in his mid-80s slumped by the fire. It's clear Vicky runs the show around here.

VICKY
(disappointed)
Oh. You just won't drop this, will
you. No, there's been no action.
The boy still claims he didn't
steal anything from you.

SOMERSET
That figures.

VICKY
I mean it was twenty shillings,
Hughie, I could probably find you
that down the back of one of these
chairs.

SOMERSET
It was eighteen and that's not the
point. I want you to keep pressing
him. And in the meantime I don't
want him coming anywhere near my
house again.

VICKY
Fine, I'll see what I can do.

SOMERSET
Thank you.

VICKY

I did hear one thing about the boy,
nothing to do with you of course --

Somerset tries to feign interest in this latest bit of incoming gossip.

VICKY (CONT'D)

Apparently he's been spotted
skipping work, hanging around one
of those windowless houses
downtown. One on Rouge Street. So
you know what that means --

All colour drains from Somerset's face.

SOMERSET

What.

VICKY

Or Rouge Street, wherever.

SOMERSET

Never heard of it.

VICKY

Well it can only mean one thing.
Drugs or sex or both, God knows...

Somerset isn't listening. His eyes drift elsewhere --

MONTAGE:

Ezekiel is delivering Somerset his telegram. He looks up at Somerset.

Somerset is in Rouge Street House, shoving a couple of banknotes into Charlotte's hand.

A blur of various sexual acts.

Somerset fucking someone. Grunting. No trace of the high society man we've met before. All animal. His eyes are drifting, close to orgasm, as they find a mirror on the wall opposite, where he can just make out the face of Ezekiel through the darkness --

EXT. VICTORIAN STREET - DAY

A rundown part of town. The street is lined with cheap apartment buildings. We cut inside --

INT. EZEKIEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

A tiny, two-room apartment. Walls peeling, barely furnished. There's no bathroom, nowhere to cook. Even for a postal boy this is rough living.

The door opens and Ezekiel enters and puts his satchel down. He glances around.

EZEKIEL

Hello?

A woman calls from the other room.

WOMAN (O.S.)

In here.

Ezekiel moves through into an even smaller room where we find the woman, REBECCA (female, late-30s, worn) knelt down next to a small boy, JEREMIAH (male, 5, mixed race, shy). Jeremiah is tucked in bed, looking unwell.

Ezekiel smile falters upon seeing his brother.

INT. EZEKIEL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Back in the other room, Ezekiel closes the door behind Rebecca, leaving just the two of them.

EZEKIEL

What's wrong with him?

REBECCA

He's sick. Looks like a fever.

EZEKIEL

I thought he was getting better yesterday?

REBECCA

It comes and goes. You should really get him looked at, by someone who isn't your landlady.

EZEKIEL

Thanks for watching him again.

REBECCA

Don't mention it.

EZEKIEL

Did he talk about Friday?

REBECCA
It didn't really come up.

EZEKIEL
Do you think he should go? I keep thinking maybe it's too soon, especially if he's ill. He's only five, he doesn't really know what death is. But he was his dad --

REBECCA
Ezekiel --

Ezekiel stops rambling.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
I know it's been tough without your dad but you know I can't let you stay here forever.

EZEKIEL
I'll have the rent. I promise.

REBECCA
By the end of the week.

Ezekiel hesitates.

EZEKIEL
Yeah. End of the week.

REBECCA
Or you'll have to find somewhere else to stay.

She leaves. Ezekiel stands alone.

He gets himself together and re-enters the other room, putting on a smile.

EZEKIEL
Hey, look who's awake!

INT. VICKY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

A white marble bathroom, probably twice the size of Ezekiel's apartment. Somerset is bent over the sink, BREATHING HEAVILY, arms supporting him as he stares downwards in horror.

The door SWINGS open. Somerset lurches as Barking swaggers in.

BARKING

So is this what I think this is?

Somerset looks up. It's definitely not.

SOMERSET

We're fucked.

BARKING

What?

SOMERSET

We're fucked. Well I'm fucked. I don't really care what happens to you.

BARKING

Thanks.

(then)

Sorry what's going on?

SOMERSET

They know about Rouge Street.

BARKING

(well-rehearsed)

What's Rouge Street --

SOMERSET

Oh shut up we're the only ones here.

BARKING

You never know.

(then)

So they know? Who knows?

SOMERSET

(broken speech)

Vicky, the postal service, I reported one of the delivery boys, thought he was stealing, he's a prostitute there that knows my face. That's why he kept staring at me. They're investigating him for money I probably paid him.

Barking ponders this for a few moments.

BARKING

Is it James?

SOMERSET

Who's James?

BARKING

No one.

SOMERSET

And if it gets out that we're clients of Rouge Street we're fucked.

BARKING

I suppose.

SOMERSET

Fucked. Ruined. Your career? Done. Your bullshit medals? Gone --

He needs Barking to feel as scared shitless as he does. It's working.

SOMERSET (CONT'D)

That God-awful shit you put in your hair --

BARKING

(worked up)

Alright, if you're just going to insult me.

(then)

Does this boy even know your name?

Somerset turns away, thinking.

SOMERSET

I don't know. But he knows my face.

BARKING

He probably wouldn't tell anyone even if he did.

SOMERSET

That's a pretty big gamble.

Somerset turns around, finding Barking SNORTING something from a small box in his hand. Barking looks up, caught in the act. Somerset stares at him.

The bathroom door OPENS. A MAN (30s, thinning hair) starts to enter.

SOMERSET (CONT'D)

Not now!

He pushes the man back and SLAMS the door shut.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

SOMERSET (CONT'D)

Fuck off!

BARKING

Why don't you ask Vicky to call off the investigation?

SOMERSET

I've asked her five times to look into the boy I can't back out now.

There's another knock.

SOMERSET (CONT'D)

Fucking piss yourself!

BARKING

Maybe I should talk to my lawyer.

SOMERSET

No. We can't talk to anyone about this. The postal boy is the only one who knows about it, and we keep it that way.

BARKING

A last resort then.

Somerset stares at him. That isn't what he meant at all.

BARKING (CONT'D)

So what do we do about the boy?

SOMERSET

I don't know. It depends what he knows. I think Vicky's moving him off my route, that's something.

BARKING

I've got a contact at the post office who might be able to get some intel?

SOMERSET

That could be traced back to us.

BARKING

Not a chance, he's a top chap. He'd never rat.

SOMERSET

Okay, fine. Do that. And this should go without saying but no going back to Rouge Street. Ever.

BARKING

Ever? Come on.

SOMERSET

I haven't been near the place in three months and I don't intend to go again.

(then)

Do whatever the hell you want but if it's traced back to me --

BARKING

Understood.

Somerset takes a deep breath. Finally relaxed.

BARKING (CONT'D)

And it wasn't James you were with?

SOMERSET

Who the fuck is James?!

INT. POSTAL STATION - ENTRANCE - DAY

Strutt is stood in the doorway of the postal station, dressed in his blue uniform - somehow he makes it look good. His arms are spread wide as SECURITY searches his bag. He looks like he's slept rough the last couple of nights.

STRUTT

James Strutt.

SECURITY

Thank you.

They hand Strutt back his bag. He walks off.

STRUTT

As if you didn't fucking know.

INT. POSTAL STATION - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Strutt walks down a corridor. Through Chaine's office window he sees Ezekiel sat talking with Constable Chaine. Strutt's brow furrows, concerned.

INT. CHAINE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

CHAINE

So, confession time. What's it going to be?

Ezekiel fingers his crucifix for a moment before speaking --

EZEKIEL
I stole the money, sir.

CHAINED
There, now was that so hard?

Ezekiel doesn't respond. He feels sick.

CHAINED (CONT'D)
As this is your first offence, and a minor one at that, you won't be faced with a suspension, but I will be docking your pay one shilling a week until the amount you stole from Mister Somerset is repaid in full.

EZEKIEL
Understood, sir.

CHAINED
As a result of your confession I'm also forced to move you from your postal route in Hampton, so from now on you'll be delivering telegrams in Fitzrovia.

EZEKIEL
Calvin's route? Where he got mugged?

CHAINED
I'm sorry, Ezekiel, this isn't coming from me. Mister Somerset requested the transfer himself. And let's be honest you haven't really given me a choice.

EZEKIEL
Didn't you see Calvin, he was almost killed?

CHAINED
I've also heard rumours of you and James skiving off duty to hang around down Rouge Street way, so I don't think you're in a position to be making any pleas.

EZEKIEL
What. Who said that?

CHAINED
 Just make sure it doesn't happen
 again.

EZEKIEL
 Yes, sir.

He stands up, pausing --

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)
 There isn't any chance I could get
 an advance on my pay this week is
 there? Just my brother's sick and I
 think he needs to see a doctor.

Chaine stares back at him. He can't quite believe the nerve.

INT. POSTAL STATION - LOCKER ROOM - LATER

A grim locker room, walls peeling, water leaking etc. Several
 POSTAL WORKERS, boys and girls late teens to early twenties,
 are stood around.

Strutt and Ezekiel are stood side by side, collecting their
 telegrams for the day.

STRUTT
 What were you and Chaine nattering
 about?

EZEKIEL
 I was asking him for an advance on
 my pay.

Strutt snorts at the nerve.

STRUTT
 Respect. Any luck?

EZEKIEL
 Nope.

STRUTT
 Shame I was gonna ask if he'd suck
 me off after lunch but I guess he's
 not in the giving mood.

Ezekiel doesn't react. He's looking straight ahead at his
 locker. He doesn't want to be seen talking with Strutt.

EZEKIEL
 I told Chaine I stole the money.

STRUTT

Ay, good lad. Feel better?

Ezekiel turns to give him a look that says 'what do you think?'

STRUTT (CONT'D)

Well you did the right thing. Now you don't go to prison and Chaine doesn't go snooping around where he doesn't belong.

EZEKIEL

He's transferred me to Fitzrovia, Calvin's route.

STRUTT

What a cunt.

EZEKIEL

I think I'm being punished.

STRUTT

Yeah, no shit.

EZEKIEL

For everything.

He fiddles with his crucifix. Strutt rolls his eyes.

STRUTT

This isn't God's wrath, Easy, this is Chaine being a massive twat.

Strutt can see this hasn't helped.

STRUTT (CONT'D)

And you haven't been down Rouge Street in months. You've been squeaky clean ever since, you know, your dad died, which wasn't your fault by the way --

EZEKIEL

Then why did they find his --
(stops, voice about to crack)

Why did they find *him*, outside Rouge Street?

STRUTT

I don't know. But this has got nothing to do with that. You've got nothing to feel guilty for.

EZEKIEL
I've still been lying about it.

STRUTT
People lie every day.

EZEKIEL
And what if something happens to me
on my new route. What happens to
Jeremiah?

STRUTT
I'll look after him.

EZEKIEL
Is that supposed to be comforting?

STRUTT
Nothing's gonna happen anyway.
Calvin was an idiot.

EZEKIEL
For getting mugged?

Strutt looks around then reaches into his locker. He hands a
bundle of cloth to Ezekiel.

STRUTT
Just take this alright and you'll
be fine.

Ezekiel peers inside the cloth, finding the blade of a knife.

EZEKIEL
A knife? What the fuck?

STRUTT
It'll keep you safe.

Ezekiel doesn't want to take it. This all feels too real.
Strutt gives him a stern look. Ezekiel shoves it into his
pocket.

INT. POSTAL STATION - CORRIDOR - DAY

Ophelia is walking down the corridor leading a new postal
boy, LEWIS FRY (male, 19, too pure for this world). She's
talking very quickly at him.

OPHELIA
That's where we put any undelivered
telegrams. That's lost property.
That's the constable's office.

Fry's gazing around like he's touring a chocolate factory.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)
You'll be taking the Hampton
region. A lot of us wanted that
one. So don't slip up.

She stops walking, turning to him.

OPHELIA (CONT'D)
Any questions? Queries?

FRY
I like the uniforms. Pretty snazzy.

He plays at his own baby blue shirt.

OPHELIA
('that's not a question')
Yes they're nice.

FRY
My mum says it'll bring out my
eyes.

Ophelia looks at Fry's brown eyes, not sure whether to tell him.

OPHELIA
But these are blue?

FRY
I know! She's the best.

OPHELIA
The locker room's just through
there if you'd like to make
yourself acquainted. Let me know if
you need anything.

FRY
Sure! I'll try not to break
anything.

INT. POSTAL STATION - LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Fry is perched on a bench looking around curiously. He catches sight of Strutt across the room and gives him a friendly smile. Strutt smiles back, a polite, non-inviting smile.

Strutt looks back at Fry. He studies him. After a moment he walks over.

STRUTT

James Strutt, how're you doing,
lad?

FRY

Oh hi, James, I'm Lewis Fry.

STRUTT

Pleasure to meet you, Fry. Hey
what's that?

He points at a sheet of paper lying on Fry's bag.

FRY

It's a sketch. Do you draw?

STRUTT

(laughs)

No I'm shite. Not you, though, this
is brilliant.

FRY

Thanks.

STRUTT

Is this your mum?

FRY

Yeah, everyone says we look the
same.

STRUTT

Yeah she's proper fit.

(then)

Joking.

Fry laughs.

FRY

You saying she's not fit?

Strutt laughs, taken by surprise.

STRUTT

Is this your first day, Fry?

FRY

No that's Friday. Ophelia was just
giving me the tour.

STRUTT

Oof sorry.

Fry laughs.

FRY

I learned a lot actually.

STRUTT

Well to make up for that how about
I take you for your first shift?
Show you the ropes. You'll learn
absolutely nothing, I promise.

FRY

Yeah sounds great.

STRUTT

Meet you here midday then.

FRY

Sure!

STRUTT

I better be off then. Shit to do.

INT. ROUGE STREET HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Strutt is once again leaning back, shirtless, in his leather chair. His eyes stare blankly at the wall opposite. He flinches slightly, a jolt of pain. It's not the best blowjob in the world.

A HEAD emerges from his lap.

STRUTT

Everything alright?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Yeah, um --

This time we recognise the voice. Ambrose Barking lifts his head into view.

BARKING

Do you think we could just sort of
chat today?

STRUTT

Chat?

BARKING

Yeah, bit of a chinwag.

STRUTT

Long as you're paying, it's fine by
me.

BARKING
Brilliant.

He gets up and sits on the bed opposite Strutt.

STRUTT
So what did you want to talk about?

BARKING
Just thought we could get to know
each other a bit more.

STRUTT
What do you want to know.

This isn't the charming, smarmy Strutt we know, but Barking
doesn't seem to care.

BARKING
Well, um, this prostitution racket
has always fascinated me. You get
paid to have sex with other men --

STRUTT
That's the general idea, yeah.

BARKING
But, uh, do you enjoy it?

STRUTT
It's good money.

BARKING
But what about the sex?

STRUTT
Depends who it's with.

BARKING
What about with me?

God knows how long he's wanted to ask this. Tension builds.

STRUTT
Yeah of course, mate. You're my
favourite.

BARKING
Thank you, James.

He reaches forward and squeezes Strutt's knee. An
uncomfortable silence follows.

BARKING (CONT'D)

If there's ever anything on your mind you know you always have me to talk to.

STRUTT

Thanks.

BARKING

About anything. Anything at all.

Another silence passes.

STRUTT

Anything else you wanted to talk about?

BARKING

Uh, yes one other thing, while we're shooting the shit.

He's trying to sound casual. It's a very poor performance.

BARKING (CONT'D)

I heard one of your colleagues here may have gotten caught by the post office? Something like that.

Strutt stiffens.

STRUTT

Yeah.

BARKING

Just wondered if that's something to worry about. As a frequent visitor.

STRUTT

Easy doesn't work here anymore.

BARKING

Easy?

STRUTT

Short for Ezekiel.

Barking mulls this. Strutt realises his mistake. He tries to correct --

STRUTT (CONT'D)

He's not gonna tell anyone about S--

He stops. The damage is done.

BARKING
About... Hugh Somerset?

STRUTT
We're not allowed to know client
names.

BARKING
Right.

He considers pressing further, but that would spoil the mood.

BARKING (CONT'D)
I wouldn't mind if you knew my name
by the way.
(no response)
It's Ambrose.

STRUTT
Cool.

Barking gets off the chair and back onto his knees. Strutt
turns his head away, face numb.

EXT. ROUGE STREET - LATER

Charlotte is stood outside the house, smoking. The door opens
and Barking, hidden under a large coat, walks out. He gives
Charlotte a curt nod and walks off.

Moments later Strutt emerges.

CHARLOTTE
He stayed a while.

STRUTT
(mock modesty)
What can I say?
(then)
Money's upstairs.

Charlotte smiles and keeps smoking. She can tell he wants
something.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
I was wondering if someone else
could take him --
(gestures off at Barking)
When he next comes.

CHARLOTTE
But he likes you.

STRUTT
(a grin)
Who doesn't?

CHARLOTTE
He only comes here because of you.

Strutt scoffs. But he knows it's true.

STRUTT
Just one night off. There's only so many times I can listen to the time him and his school 'chums' set fire to the boarding house crest.

It's passably light-hearted. He eyes Charlotte anxiously.

CHARLOTTE
We're missing four boys as it is. You can't go skipping clients until you find me some new ones. It's not fair.

STRUTT
Of course, yeah. No problem.

EXT. RACETRACK - DAY

A day at the races. Huge crowds, petty gamblers, posing nobility. Sounds of cheering and jeering fill the air.

We find one STILL FIGURE amid the chaos. Somerset is stood, his eyes rooted to the track.

BANG!!

We stay on Somerset's face as the race begins and the crowd swells. His expressions remains unchanged, pure focus, no emotion.

We cut to --

INT. STABLES - LATER

A long line of stables away from the track. The roar of the crowd can be heard faintly in the distance.

Various people mill around, jockeys, breeders, handlers. But there's also eager another class of people there, the rich and powerful eager to get close to the star athletes of the day.

Somerset is alone, watching a small crowd of people gathered around a horse nearby.

QUINN (O.S.)
Sorry about the race.

Somerset turns to find QUINN (male, 30s, wiry frame, thinning hair) standing next to him. Half-Irish, his voice still has a slight twang to it.

SOMERSET
It happens.

QUINN
Broken leg, though. That's tough.

He's smiling, almost revelling in this misfortune.

QUINN (CONT'D)
I'm Marcus Quinn.

He holds out his hand. Somerset just looks at it.

SOMERSET
Marcus Quinn of the Whitechapel
Murders.

Quinn lowers his hand.

QUINN
Good memory.

SOMERSET
I've heard a lot about you.

QUINN
All good things I hope.

He grins, knowing this isn't true.

QUINN (CONT'D)
And you're Hugh Somerset.

SOMERSET
That's right.

QUINN
Yeah I'm a pal of Vicky's. She told
me I might get to meet you if I
came down.

SOMERSET
You like horses?

QUINN

Yeah. Sure.

He's wearing the same wide smile. Too wide to be genuine.

Somerset stares at Quinn, trying to read him.

QUINN (CONT'D)

I think we've met. In the bathroom.

He smiles again, as though recalling a fond memory between them.

INT. VICKY'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - FLASHBACK

Somerset slams the door as a man tries to enter. It's Quinn.

INT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Somerset clocks.

SOMERSET

Yes, I'm so sorry about that --

QUINN

(genuine)

No, don't worry.

SOMERSET

I was having one of those days --

QUINN

Of course, don't be sorry. You should see me at work.

Somerset forces a laugh.

QUINN (CONT'D)

Something about a postal worker, wasn't it?

SOMERSET

Pardon?

QUINN

You were talking about a postal worker with, who was it, Colonel Barking?

SOMERSET

I don't recall.

QUINN
Something about Rogue Street?

SOMERSET
(quickly)
Yes I thought a postal boy was
stealing from me.

QUINN
And was he?
(then)
You'd really be helping me out
here, Hugh, God knows I could do
with a win right now. You've seen
the papers.

SOMERSET
I thought you were more of a
murder, big picture detective.
Thieving postal worker would be a
bit beneath you.

QUINN
You never know where these things
lead.

SOMERSET
I'm sorry, there's nothing more to
it.

Quinn fixes him with a stare before breaking into a smile.

QUINN
Fair enough! I'll do a little
digging myself.

Somerset looks around, avoiding Quinn's gaze. He notices a
figure approaching them. His jaw clenches as Barking joins --

BARKING
Afternoon, chaps.

Somerset gives him a nod. Quinn's smile couldn't be wider.

QUINN
Colonel Barking! What are you doing
here?

BARKING
Thought I'd take a look at the old
races. I don't believe we've met.

He holds out his hand. Quinn shakes it.

QUINN

Don't worry, I was just leaving.
I'll leave you gentlemen to it.

He gives them both a smile and walks off.

BARKING

Nice chap.

SOMERSET

What are you doing here?

Barking glances around slightly --

BARKING

I've got news.

SOMERSET

Go on.

BARKING

So I went back to Rouge Street --

SOMERSET

You fucking idiot.

BARKING

Hear me out. And I spoke to my contact and I know who the postal boy is. His name's Ezekiel, Ezekiel Mason by the looks of the station records I pulled up. And, uh, they know your name. Your real name.

SOMERSET

They? Who's they?

BARKING

This Ezekiel and my friend, but he won't tell anyone, he wouldn't do that to me.

Somerset doesn't buy this for a second.

SOMERSET

Do you know who that was.

He gestures at where Quinn was standing. Barking shrugs.

SOMERSET (CONT'D)

That was Marcus Quinn, the fucking detective who fucked the Whitechapel Murders --

BARKING

Jack The Ripper? That one?

SOMERSET

Yes. He overheard us talking at Vicky's and he wants to know more. He needs a new case to distract everyone from the whole Whitechapel mess.

BARKING

But he does murders and stuff, doesn't he?

SOMERSET

Who knows what he does. But we need to do something now, about the boy.

BANG. A gunshot rings out right next to them. Barking starts, Somerset doesn't move. A large thump is heard from inside the stable next to them.

INT. EZEKIEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ezekiel is stood dressed in what can only generously be described as his Sunday best. An off-white shirt marginally cleaner than his postal uniform tucked into a pair of worn dark trousers.

He enters the smaller room to find Jeremiah asleep in bed, still looking unwell. Ezekiel moves over quietly and places a kiss on his brother's forehead. Jeremiah gives a few violent coughs. He doesn't sound good.

INT. EZEKIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CORRIDOR - LATER

Ezekiel emerges from his flat. Rebecca is stood down the corridor. She looks up. Ezekiel gives her an awkward smile. She nods back.

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

A small, rustic Protestant church. People are filing in.

Ezekiel is stood outside staring up at it.

We see another FLASH of Hugh Somerset in the dark depths of Rouge Street, grunting. Ezekiel shakes it off.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

A steady line of CHURCHGOERS are filing in, taking their seats. Ezekiel walks in, his eyes drawn to a portrait of a black man in his 40s on the wall.

PASTOR WEBB (male, 38, not a selfish bone in his body) is greeting people as they pass by, a big smile on his face.

Webb's smile falters for a moment, caught off guard, as he spots Ezekiel enter.

Ezekiel stops in front of Webb. The two look at each other and then EMBRACE.

After a few seconds they break apart. Webb turns to greet another church goer to allow Ezekiel to compose himself.

WEBB

And where's my favourite little man? How is Jeremiah?

EZEKIEL

He's at home. Bit under the weather.

Webb nods with a sympathetic smile. He isn't sure what to say. Ezekiel throws him a bone --

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)

How're you feeling about the service?

WEBB

Good, yeah. First couple went alright.

(then)

Luckily I got to learn from the best.

It's a tacky line. They both know it. Ezekiel looks over at the same portrait on the wall. He tries to break the silence again --

EZEKIEL

(laughing)

He'd have hated that so much.

Webb laughs.

WEBB

I know. Your dad never liked to make a fuss.

The laughter dies. Webb stares at Ezekiel, a question on his mind. One he's been dying to ask for the last three months.

WEBB (CONT'D)

Do they know what happened yet?

EZEKIEL

No.

This hurts.

WEBB

He'd be really proud of you,
Ezekiel.

Ezekiel forces a smile. He doesn't feel he's done much to be proud of lately.

EZEKIEL

Thanks.

WEBB

We've, uh, done a few collections
for you, over the last couple of
months for when you came back. I
know life can't be easy right now.

He holds out a box.

EZEKIEL

I can't take that.

WEBB

It's for you.

EZEKIEL

Put it towards repairing the roof.
That's what he would have wanted.

WEBB

He'd have wanted you both looked
after.

EZEKIEL

Thanks.

He takes the box. He doesn't feel good about it.

WEBB

Let me know if there's anything
else I can do.

EXT. VICTORIAN LONDON - DAY

Strutt and Fry are strolling along a bustling street, both in bright blue postal uniform and high spirits.

Strutt is holding an envelope up to the sun, reading its contents --

STRUTT

'Dearest Albert Victor --'

FRY

He's in the royal family, isn't he?

STRUTT

Right, sorry.

(over the top posh female
accent)

'Dearest Albert Victor!'

Fry doubles over.

STRUTT (CONT'D)

Alright, let's see you do better
then.

He hands the envelope to Fry with a grin. Fry glances around to check no one's listening.

STRUTT (CONT'D)

It's fine, no one cares.

Fry clears his throat.

FRY

(thick German accent)

'Dearest Albert Victor --'

Strutt bursts out laughing.

STRUTT

What was that??

FRY

His dad. Come on, they're all
German.

STRUTT

Alright, keep reading, Bismarck.

FRY

(thick German accent)

'Dearest Albert Victor...'

Strutt's smile falters as he spots a WELL-DRESSED MAN accompanied by an equally WELL-DRESSED WOMAN walking the other way towards them.

FRY (CONT'D)
 (faintly in the
 background)
 'So long has it been since our
 tender lips did touch.' Hm, maybe
 it's not his dad --

The MAN catches Strutt's eye and gives a slight nod, a SMIRK on his face.

Fry looks up, finding Strutt rooted to the spot several paces behind him.

FRY (CONT'D)
 You alright?

STRUTT
 (recovering)
 Yeah, yeah, fine. That accent of
 yours just got me all weak at the
 knees is all.

Fry laughs. His eyes catch Strutt's. There's a spark.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
 Say, Fry, there's a little place I
 know that I think you might like?

FRY
 (keen)
 Yeah?

STRUTT
 If you fancy swinging by after
 we've dropped these off in the
 nearest sewer.

He waves the envelopes.

FRY
 Yeah that sounds great!

STRUTT
 Cracking.

FRY
 We're not actually dumping these
 are we?

STRUTT

Nah, not on your first day. Let's see who we have next. Ah, a Mister Horatio Kent, what do you reckon he sounds like?

INT. HORATIO KENT'S OFFICE - DAY

A grand office in central London. Thick leather-bound books, memorabilia on the walls, roaring fire etc. A plaque lying on a handsome wooden desk reads 'Horatio Kent, Barrister'.

HORATIO KENT (male, late 40s, more down to Earth than his tailored suit would have you think) is sat at a handsome wooden desk in the centre of the room.

HORATIO

(reading)

'Maximum two years imprisonment for any man found guilty of gross indecency with another male, whether in public or in private.'

He looks up from the book he's been reading from, removing his glasses. Somerset is sat opposite him.

SOMERSET

Two years?

HORATIO

Yes, for any sexual act.

SOMERSET

What about prostitution?

HORATIO

Same difference. Just more witnesses.

He smiles. Horatio has little sympathy for Somerset. Theirs is a long, strictly professional relationship.

SOMERSET

What are my chances?

HORATIO

Good. You said you haven't been there in three months. Only one person can place you at the scene --

SOMERSET

And he's being taken care of --

HORATIO
 (sharply)
 I don't want to know.

Somerset nods.

SOMERSET
 There is one other thing. Last time
 I was at Rouge Street there was a
 slight incident.

HORATIO
 With this Ezekiel?

SOMERSET
 No, nothing to do with him. With a
 man outside.

HORATIO
 A fight?

SOMERSET
 Barely. It was more an argument.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Hazy flashes of angry YELLING down a dark street. We
 recognise one of the voices as Somerset.

INT. HORATIO KENT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

SOMERSET
 I may have pushed him, it was a bit
 of a blur.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A FLASH of Somerset shoving someone hard. They FALL down with
 a sickening crunch.

INT. HORATIO KENT'S OFFICE

SOMERSET
 Nothing more than that.

We drift through the wall of Horatio's office to a slightly
 smaller room. A young woman PRESLEY (female, 30, Horatio's
 assistant) is sat at her desk, listening through the wall.

Horatio and Somerset's voices are heard, clear as day --

HORATIO (O.S.)
Was he hurt?

SOMERSET (O.S.)
I'm not sure, I left pretty
quickly.

HORATIO (O.S.)
Is he alive?

Silence from the other room. Presley listens closer.

We cut back inside Horatio's office.

SOMERSET
Come on, who do you think I am?

HORATIO
So it's a midnight brawl outside a
brothel? Happens every day, who
cares.

SOMERSET
Right.

HORATIO
Kill someone, you let me know.
Actually don't, I've got enough
shit on as it is.

Somerset forces a laugh.

HORATIO (CONT'D)
You don't have to laugh, Somerset,
I'm not gonna tell anyone about the
postal boys.

INT. OUTSIDE HORATIO KENT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Somerset leaves Horatio's office. He glances at Presley, part
of the wallpaper as far as he's concerned. Presley's eyes
follow him as he leaves.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DUSK

Ezekiel is walking the dark London streets alone, Webb's
donation box under one arm. Gaggles of people pass him,
chatting happily. A few drunks stagger past, one SINGING
loudly.

Ezekiel takes a turn down a quiet alley. He needs to be
alone. He fingers his crucifix.

INT. CHURCH - FLASHBACK

Mid-service. Pastor Webb is delivering his sermon.

WEBB

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

There's movement at the entrance to the alley. Ezekiel looks up. Three men have entered the alley. He looks down at his box and walks further down the alley. The men follow him.

Ezekiel breaks into a run before finding himself PINNED up against the alley wall. WHAM. A fist meets his face, bloodying his mouth. WHAM. Another fist. Ezekiel desperately clings onto the box. It's ripped out of his hands. He looks down, seeing the three men are wearing military boots.

Ezekiel tries to reach into his pocket as he absorbs another punch. He fingers the handle of the knife Strutt gave him but this time the men smash his head into the wall behind him. He fumbles, losing his grip on the knife and it clatters to the ground.

The men step back, Ezekiel crumpling to the ground. One of them picks up the knife. He bears down on Ezekiel, wielding the knife. He stops, an inch away from Ezekiel's bloody face.

MAN #1

Ezekiel Mason?

EZEKIEL

(coughing blood)

Yeah?

The man turns and nods to the other two. He starts to turn back, raising the knife, but before he can do anything else Ezekiel STABS him in the eye with his crucifix necklace.

The man SCREAMS, staggering backwards. He clutches his face, blood seeping out.

The other two men start to move towards Ezekiel, who scrambles backwards, but they stop as the sound of DRUNKEN SINGING sounds, louder and louder, from the alley entrance.

A man is in the alley up ahead. He stops, not too far from them, to urinate against the alley wall.

One of the men grabs the other two and they hurry off.

Ezekiel crawls over to the box Pastor Webb gave him and opens it. The money is still inside.

Two boots appear in front of Ezekiel. Another of the soldiers speaks.

MAN #2
What's in the box?

EZEKIEL
(weak)
Nothing.

The first man yells after him from down the alley --

MAN #1 (O.S.)
Lancroft, hurry up!

MAN #2
Coming!
(then, to Ezekiel)
Consider this a warning. Don't ever mention the names Hugh Somerset and Ambrose Barking ever again. Or we'll come back and finish the job.

The man picks up the box and riffles through it. He chucks the box back down on the ground and hurries off. Ezekiel reaches out and grabs the box, tipping it over. It's empty. He stares up to the heavens, out of answers.

He looks back down, his eyes falling on the blood-splattered crucifix lying in his hand.

EXT. VICTORIAN LONDON - EVENING

Strutt is leading Fry through a dark Victorian street. Fry eyes various SHADY FIGURES passing by.

FRY
Where is this place?

STRUTT
Almost there, don't worry.

Fry grins, excited. Strutt tugs him down a side alley. It looks eerily familiar.

Strutt reaches a black door down the alley and fumbles in his pocket for a set of keys. He opens the door and gestures inside.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
After you, good sir.

Fry's apprehensive. We don't blame him. But his excitement masks his nerves. He enters.

INT. DARK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fry walks inside, finding a dark room. He raises his hands, trying to feel around.

FRY
What is this place?
(then)
Strutt?
(now slightly panicked)
James --

A FLASH. A match has been lit.

STRUTT
Voilà.

He LIGHTS a couple of candles, illuminating the room. Fry looks around, eyes wide. We're in a large, open room, paintings lining the walls. An ART GALLERY.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
Thought you might like to see some art that wasn't of your mum.

Fry gazes around, stunned.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
Except that one, obviously.

He gestures at a provocative painting of a topless woman. Fry hits him, grinning.

FRY
What is this place?

STRUTT
It's a gallery.

FRY
('I got that part')
Who owns it?

STRUTT
An associate of mine. He left me the keys.
(he definitely didn't)

FRY
Where did you meet this
'associate'?

STRUTT
I've got a side hustle.

FRY
Cool.

STRUTT
Go ahead. No one's coming 'til the
morning.

INT. CHAINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Late at night. Chaine is working under candlelight. The door opens. Ezekiel enters, face bloodied, clothes sodden.

CHAINE
Ezekiel?

EZEKIEL
I need to tell you something, sir.

CHAINE
What's happened to you? Was this on
duty, it's almost midnight?

EZEKIEL
I didn't steal the money. I earned
it at a house downtown where I got
paid to have sex with other men. I
haven't worked there in three
months, but I'm sorry I didn't tell
you or anyone else sooner.

Chaine examines him, almost pitying.

CHAINE
Thanks for letting me know.
(then)
You know I still can't give you an
advance on your pay. Or move you
from your route.

EZEKIEL
That's not why I'm telling you.

CHAINE
I also have an obligation to inform
the police, which obviously I'm not
going to do.

EZEKIEL

Thank you, sir.

CHAINED

But I can't continue to have someone like you working here. I'll arrange for your uniform to be collected tomorrow.

EZEKIEL

I'm fired?

CHAINED

I'm sorry, Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL

But it's my first offence?

CHAINED

This isn't a minor offence.

EZEKIEL

How am I gonna pay my rent? How am I gonna look after my brother?

CHAINED

That's no longer my problem.
(then)
Good night.

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Strutt and Fry are staring up at a painting.

FRY

I always wanted to get my mum a painting. A proper one.

STRUTT

I'll watch the door if you want?

FRY

She's been so good to me, you know. And I just want to give back.

STRUTT

(smiling)
My mum's the same.

FRY

What's her name?

STRUTT
Charlotte.

FRY
She sounds great.

STRUTT
She is.

It's a good act. Fry turns to face him.

FRY
I don't know what Ophelia meant
when she said you were a piece of
shit.

STRUTT
(mock outrage)
She said what!

FRY
Pretty sure she was joking.

STRUTT
I've been called far worse.

FRY
Oh yeah, like what?

Strutt leans in. Fry kisses him back.

They break away.

FRY (CONT'D)
Not bad.

STRUTT
Fuck off.

They look into each other's eyes. A moment of bliss.

STRUTT (CONT'D)
You know I've got another friend of
mine I reckon you'd quite like. He
might even be able to help you get
that painting for your mum.

FRY
Yeah?

STRUTT
Yeah, easy as.

FRY

Cool, thanks! You piece of shit.

He grins. They kiss again. Strutt forces his eyes shut.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE POSTAL STATION - NIGHT

Ezekiel is stood outside the postal station, gazing upwards.

He starts walking.

INT. SOMERSET'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Somerset is reclining back in a rich leather armchair surrounded by leather-bound books and priceless art.

EXT. ROUGE STREET - FLASHBACK

The dead of night. Grunting. Yelling. Somerset is tussling with a MAN (40s, black) in the street outside Rouge Street House. He grabs the front of the man's shirt and throws him to the ground. Somerset walks away. The man's head hits the wall of the house with a crunch.

Somerset turns back. The man is slumped, unmoving against the wall. We recognise him as Ezekiel's father from the church portrait.

INT. SOMERSET'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Somerset tries to shake this memory off. But he can't.

EXT. ROUGE STREET - NIGHT

Ezekiel, alone, walks towards Rouge Street House.

He reaches the door and stares up at the house looming over him. He raises a hand and knocks. After a moment the door opens and he enters.

In the shadows, on the main street, Quinn watches on.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE