

**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

An original 6-part TV drama series

Written & Created

by Leo Thomas

*"And be it enacted, That every Person convicted of the  
abominable Crime of Buggery ... shall suffer Death as a Felon."*

Offences Against the Person Act 1828

**TV SERIES: CREATOR'S BIBLE**

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***LOGLINE***

When a postal boy in Victorian London is discovered carrying money he earned while working at a notorious homosexual brothel catering to the city's elite, an entire empire and the secret lives of those involved threaten to come crumbling down.

## **THE SHOW**

ROUGE STREET at its core is a show about a public scandal that just happens to take place in the past – a past that defines love between two men as criminal. Love for other men, however, is just about the only thing our characters have in common. It's a show that highlights how a group of people confined to wear the same label couldn't be more different.

It's a show about a wealthy SOCIALITE embroiled in homosexual scandal who betrays everyone he knows in order to protect his reputation, including the former prostitute he used to engage with.

It's a show about a young POSTAL WORKER, whose life is ruined by the socialite, who must return to prostitution and risk everything in order to provide for his recently-orphaned family.

It's a show about a LAWYER'S ASSISTANT who strikes an underhand deal with the socialite in order to advance her career in a profession that forbids her gender from doing so.

It's a show about an Egyptian WAR HERO in town with a secret, who places all his trust in the socialite to help him protect it.

It's a show about a handsome CHARLATAN who lures a wide-eyed teen into prostitution, only to realise he's betrayed the one person who didn't fall for him because of his looks.

It's a show about a naive TEEN who's determined not to let his descent into prostitution change who his mother raised him to be.

It's a show about a CITY shaken by the unsolved murders of five women at the hands of a man known as 'Jack the Ripper', and the universally blamed detective in need of an easy win.

It's a show about a HOUSE on Rouge Street filled with shadowy figures and hushed exchanges, where one encounter between a socialite and a postal worker changes the sexual landscape of the city forever.

It's a show not about who we're told we are on the outside, but who we really are on the inside. What we choose to do with the opportunities presented to us, and how our actions ultimately define who we are.

## **CREATOR'S STATEMENT**

In 1889, Charlie Swinscow, a young Post Office delivery boy in the city of London, was caught with eighteen schillings in his possession, one and a half times his weekly wage. He admitted to earning the money performing sexual favours for other men at a house on Cleveland Street which catered to a range of London's elite. Swinscow was suspended from duty as the scandal became the subject of police investigation, and Cleveland Street's most notorious client, one Lord Arthur Somerset, set about scheming his own escape from scandal.

The Cleveland Street scandal, the inspiration for this series, has been shamefully overlooked in retelling the story of Victorian London on screen in large part due to the popularity of Jack The Ripper, who committed his murders just the summer prior. In the gory remains of the Whitechapel Murders, however, lies a story sizzling with sex, scandal and sabotage, which publicly disgraced a member of the royal family and set a precedent for the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde. It was only through research into an entirely different topic that I stumbled upon this scintillating chapter of London's history, and I've been hooked ever since.

Aside from the intrigue and drama, the Cleveland Street scandal stood out to me as a particularly fascinating and unique tale in queer history because gay and bisexual men served as both the subjugated and the domineering. Charlie Swinscow was tricked into prostitution and serviced the rich and powerful sexually in order to scrape a living, while Arthur Somerset used his wealth and status to attempt to frame an innocent man for a crime he had committed. Both were attracted to the same sex, but that's about all they shared. It's a story that traverses labels and raised questions for me about our outer and inner identities and the relationship between the two. It's an issue that has been very personal to me, but I hadn't quite found the right series through which to explore it until I stumbled across the misbehaviours of Swinscow and Somerset.

So, is Rouge Street a historical drama based on a true story?

Inspired by? Yes. Based on? Not quite. Rouge Street is not a historical drama in the same way *The Crown* (2016, 6 seasons) or *Anne Boleyn* (2021, 1 season) are. It's an original story loosely inspired by the events that took place around Cleveland Street in 1889 and the murders of Jack The Ripper. Think of Cleveland Street as the jumping off point for the series. It's set in the same Victorian London, but concerns fictional characters and events that nonetheless represent real lives and struggles.

But why not tell the story of the Cleveland Street scandal?

That's partly what Rouge Street aims to do, but this show also wants to tell the stories of countless other figures and experiences, queer or otherwise, not represented by Cleveland Street. The house on Cleveland Street was not the only brothel catering to gay and bisexual men in late-Victorian London, nor was it the only one to be publicly brought down. By not restricting the show to the specific figures and events surrounding Cleveland Street, this

series will have far more freedom to tell a truly captivating story about the queer experience in Victorian London.

More importantly, Rouge Street aims to tell a more diversified and modern story than the real-life saga it was inspired by, one that informs our understanding of both Victorian and present-day queer life. Victorian London presents such a rich tapestry of human experience, and yet most of us can only conjure up images of Oliver Twist or Sherlock Holmes when thinking back to the era. The Cleveland Street scandal is a tale entirely dominated by white British men, which isn't an accurate representation of the period this series aims to explore. By having a licence to venture away from the strictly factual events of Cleveland Street, Rouge Street can delve into experiences from every corner of Victorian London and beyond.

So what's the tone of the show?

It's an energetic series that combines elements of public scandal and detective shows with themes of love and sexuality. The vibrant characters, fast-paced plot and contemporary dialogue offset the dark backdrop of Victorian London, marking a distinction from how the period is typically depicted on screen while still remaining true to the smog-filled industrial metropolis.

Through six episodes we follow an ensemble of characters whose lives become entangled around one windowless house downtown, rumoured to cater to the needs of the city's homosexual elite. Rather than telling separate contained storylines, the episodes together form one comprehensive six-part story exploring our characters' overarching journeys across the series as their secret misdeeds teeter on the edge of public scandal.

Television audiences have demonstrated their increased appetite for queer scripted content over the last decade. Gone are the days of gay characters serving as one-dimensional side-kicks for an easy laugh. There now exists a large market for complex queer characters such as *Sex Education's* (2019, 4 seasons) Eric Effiong, Adam Groff and Ola Nyman, or *Heartstopper's* (2022, 2 seasons) Nick Nelson and Charlie Spring. These programs thrive because they embrace their characters' queer identities without being engulfed by them. They fall in love, go through heartbreak, strive for better lives and face daunting obstacles to overcome – journeys we can all relate to, no matter what sexuality we identify with, because they appeal to our most primal emotions.

*It's A Sin* (2021, 1 season) proved queer history has established itself as a sub-genre with mass appeal, telling the story of a crucial period in time for the gay community that attracted an audience far wider than its subject matter. Rouge Street takes us a hundred years prior to those events, to a period more popular than ever thanks to the success of shows such as *Bridgerton* (2020, 2 seasons). This is a story that has inexplicably never been told on screen, and now more than ever is the time to tell it.

Whether or not you have a particular interest in queer history, Rouge Street is still a series layered in scandal and sabotage, set in the aftermath of Jack The Ripper. There's plenty to entice the general viewer. But more than that it's a series that demonstrates how a group of



people all under one label couldn't be more different, a concept more relevant now than ever before.

## **THE POSTAL BOYS**

EZEKIEL Mason (20) is a self-contradiction. He's a squeaky-clean Christian boy who fucks other men for money in a windowless house downtown. Somewhere along the way he drifted from his pastor father, and now that his father's dead there's no way back to shore. Ezekiel's stuck paying the price for his teenage rebellion while still trying to figure out who he is and how he can reconnect with a man he'll never speak to in this life again. But providing for his family has to come first.

And that's why he makes the decision to return to the windowless house on Rouge Street, even amid police investigation regarding rumours of buggery and prostitution. Because Ezekiel's greatest weakness is his need to put everyone else before himself – whether through kindness or guilt, he's not sure. But as this decision plunges himself and his family into disarray, and he feels more distanced than ever from his father, a different, darker solution starts to form as he learns more about the man whose betrayal started all this in the first place.

James STRUTT (21) is the man. And he knows it. Blessed with charm and good looks at an early age he was quickly put to work servicing those even more fortunate than him: the rich and horny. But he's far more than a pretty face. He's witty, surprisingly loyal and smarter than most give him credit for – smart enough to know that his cheekbones earn him far more pleasuring dukes than any other profession available to him. He's happy being the 'King' of Rouge Street; he enjoys using his sexuality to lure other young lads into the same world he's been stuck in for years. Or so he tells us. But when he preys on the wandering eye of the newest postal employee, Lewis Fry, he instead finds himself betraying the one person who didn't fall for him because of his jawline. It turns out he's worth a lot more than his looks, but he doesn't know it yet.

Lewis FRY (19) is too pure for this world. In a Victorian city of poverty and despair he still sees the best in everyone. He paints for fun. His best friend is his mother. And that's out of choice, not loneliness, because Fry is liked by just about every person he meets. He knows who he is, but hasn't had the chance to explore it yet, until he starts an innocent flirtation with James Strutt. It's a startling realisation to learn the world, and the people you trusted, aren't what you thought they were, and it'll be a miracle if he makes it out the same source of pure joy as he went in.

## ***THE SOCIALITES***

Hugh SOMERSET (36) is not used to adversity. He's a rich, semi-successful racehorse breeder who's never been asked to work a day in his life. He's lucky. But he's not like every other privileged ponce he swills priceless wine with, because he knows he's lucky. Even in his ivory tower he sleeps with one eye open, knowing how fast a person's luck can change. Most would say he should be happy with what he's got, but those who truly know him – if there is anyone out there who does – know that Hugh Somerset doesn't care about happiness.

So what does he care about? Everything else. His prize-winning horses, his three-story townhouse, his immaculate hedgerows, his reputation as a sought-after party guest, and keeping his night-time visits to a windowless house downtown a secret. Which is why he doesn't think twice about reporting an innocent postal boy he assumes has stolen from him to the authorities. And why he has the same employee fired for an offence he himself committed. And why he embarks on a path of destruction betraying every source of so-called joy he's ever experienced just to protect his name. Because happiness isn't an emotion he understands or values, until he meets Gwasila.

Ambrose BARKING (32) is an idiot. He's an idiot with a private education, a senior military rank and a license to do whatever the hell he likes. But he's also insecure. Deep down he knows if you strip away everything that was granted to him at birth there's not much left, but he thinks the love of a young dashing postal worker will change all that. Unfortunately, when push comes to shove and he does lose everything, what's left is a far uglier sight than anyone could have anticipated.

GWASILA (35) is a breath of fresh air. Amid the snobbery and self-entitlement of London's elite is a man who likes to roll down hills just for the fun of it. His sole purpose in life is to live, and after a freak encounter with Colonel Ambrose Barking in North Africa he's given just that chance. A chance to escape persecution as a homosexual in Egypt and travel to London as a celebrated war hero. Only Gwasila is no war hero, not according to Hugh Somerset's suspicions at any rate. But in Somerset Gwasila finds the one socialite in London who doesn't treat him like a novelty party piece, and decides, for better or for worse, to place all his trust in the man who has nothing to gain and everything to lose.

VICKY Ewart (44) is a wild card. She's a force of social chaos. If she hosts a party that doesn't feature at least one extra-marital affair she considers it a failure. She married a man who was far too old far too young and never looked back. Now she's in sole charge of the British postal service thanks to her senile husband, just in time to oversee what could well become her greatest scandal to date.

## **THE OTHERS**

Detective Marcus QUINN (39) is rattled. Less than a year ago five women were murdered at the hands of a man known colloquially as 'Jack The Ripper', and the vast number of mocking letters he's received from fake rippers since aren't helping. He's worse than rattled, he's humiliated. He needs a win, and a public one at that. So when he overhears a wealthy socialite discussing hints of a homosexual prostitution ring in hushed whispers through a bathroom door, he jumps at the chance to bring down the brothel and publicly arrest some of the most powerful men in London.

PRESLEY Fort (30) is always one step ahead. Her mind works differently to every other barrister in the city, but she's living in an age that forbids her gender from becoming anything more than an assistant. But thinking outside the box can get you places. It can turn a sealed letter penned by Hugh Somerset into a blackmailed job as his personal legal advisor. But the higher you climb, and the more risks you take to get there, the further you stand to fall.

CHARLOTTE (48) is tired. She was a prostitute for most of her life before she realised she could make more money hiring others to do the dirty for her. A lifetime with the sorts of men she spent her nights with has given her no qualms with ruining the lives of the teenage boys she brings into her line of work, even her own son. But she wants out. And as police circle the windowless house she's built from the ground up, an escape – whether out of choice or necessity – starts to form.

## **THE STORY**

### WORLDS COLLIDE

Our story begins with two worlds colliding: Somerset and Ezekiel, rich and poor, celebrated horse breeder and anonymous postal worker. On the outset it looks as if these two men will never cross paths again, but when Somerset reports Ezekiel for being in possession of a sum of money large enough that he assumes the postal boy must have stolen it from him, it sends the pair down a road of mutually assured destruction.

Ezekiel recognises Somerset in an instant as one of the many men he's been paid to service sexually in the upstairs room of a windowless house downtown: Rouge Street. This is how he came to be in possession of such a substantial amount of money, but he can't tell the post office this, even when the constable calls him in for an interrogation. Ezekiel's already on edge, already the sole provider for his family, and still trying to move on from the mysterious death of his father. The last thing he needs is to lose his reputable delivery job and end up in prison for buggery. He hasn't been to Rouge Street in three months, but as a once-devout Christian who blames his sinful past for his father's death, the guilt eats him alive.

Somerset, meanwhile, doesn't recognise Ezekiel, nor does he realise where he must have earned the money, not until it's already too late. By the time Somerset connects the dots the post office is already following up on reports of Ezekiel being spotted outside a dark, sketchy house downtown frequented by some of London's most notable gentlemen, and the city's most desperate detective has begun asking some difficult questions. Somerset has a small fortune, a glowing reputation among the city's elite and a real shot at owning the horse that wins this year's Epsom Derby, but all that will disappear if he's publicly outed for buggery. His solution? To have the boy tracked down in the middle of the night and killed before he can breathe a word of Somerset's misdeeds again. But when Ezekiel evades his attackers and interprets the midnight beating he received on Somerset's orders as a final sign from God to repent for his sins, he decides to confess, losing his stable job at the post office. With nowhere else to turn, he returns to the brothel, a decision that will ultimately result in Somerset himself being dragged back there...

### CHAOS REIGNS

This chance encounter between Somerset and Ezekiel acts as the butterfly flapping its wings, causing the chaos that follows.

Thanks to Ezekiel's three-month hiatus from servicing the rich, fellow postal worker and 'King' of Rouge Street James Strutt is forced to find a fresh face to fill in at the brothel. He's gained a reputation for his ability to lure young men into the prostitution game and thinks he's hit the jackpot when he spots the wandering eyes of fresh-faced Lewis Fry in the postal

staff changing room. But Strutt finds himself just as taken in by Fry's infectious exuberance as Fry is by Strutt's polished charm. Strutt's a young man who's forged very few genuine relationships in his life and by the time he realises what he had with Fry it's already too late. Fry's trapped in the sinking ship that is Rouge Street, his innocence stripped away in the process, and Strutt has no idea how to make things right and salvage whatever they once might have had.

Strutt now finds himself at a crossroads in his life, where one path may find him for the first time embrace a version of himself not defined by his looks or the services he's known for on Rouge Street, but instead defined by the qualities Fry saw in him. Other paths, however, could see him inherit ownership of Rouge Street and resign himself to a lifetime in the prostitution game, or even flee to Europe as the personal companion to one of his most deplorable clients. As police and public interest grows in the windowless house he's always called home, Strutt is forced to decide, now or never, which version of himself he wants to be.

If Ambrose Barking had any say, Strutt would be on the next boat out of England with him. As a decorated officer, Barking has almost as much to lose as Somerset by his visits to Rouge Street becoming the subject of police investigation. As begrudging acquaintances brought together through crisis, Somerset and Barking initially plot their escape from scandal together, but Barking's insistence on frequent return visits to the scene of the crime put their whole plan in jeopardy. Barking's an addict, and the forced affection he receives from young, good-looking Strutt is his drug. It hasn't crossed his mind for a moment that Strutt despises every second he's paid to spend with him.

When Somerset finds himself under threat of police investigation and sells Barking to the press, the disgraced officer decides to flee the country. He wants Strutt to start a new life with him in Europe, where their 'relationship' can finally blossom. For Strutt, this could be a way out of Rouge Street, out of poverty, out of the guilt he feels towards Fry. But when Strutt eventually rejects the offer, the once-jovial, bumbling Barking finally shows who he really is when he has nothing left to lose.

But Barking's reputation is just one of the many, many casualties left in the wake of Somerset's warpath. As the most distinguished client of Rouge Street, Somerset's understandably more desperate than anyone to keep his name away from the impending scandal, but his own bullish approach to self-preservation and life itself makes him some powerful enemies, none more so than Marcus Quinn.

As the detective responsible for failing to solve the famed Whitechapel Murders, Quinn hasn't fared well in the court of public opinion. He's desperate to salvage his name and an unsavoury encounter with Somerset gives him just what he's after: a high-profile criminal case ripe with celebrity intrigue. With Quinn determined to publicly bring down Rouge Street, outing fellow socialites and threatening postal boys will only delay Somerset's own

inevitable downfall. Unless he can find a bigger name to sell to the press, or failing that, fabricate one...

When Somerset first meets Gwasila he doesn't think much of him. While everyone else clamours around the war hero Vicky and Barking have brought over from Egypt, all Somerset sees is a mostly-mute party piece. That is until he stumbles across Gwasila jumping up and down on the two legs he supposedly broke while saving Barking's life during the war. Gwasila isn't all that he seems, and the fake injury is just the start. He's loud, eccentric, full of laughter, without a care in the world. He made a deal with Barking to keep the officer's homosexuality a secret in exchange for a one-way trip out of the death sentence he faced as a result of his own sexuality. Being a gay man in London's no picnic either, but Gwasila doesn't plan on letting anyone know his true identity. He's not the type to pay young men for their services, but Somerset doesn't care. One hint that the celebrated war hero would make a believable client of Rouge Street is enough for Somerset to set about framing him for his own crimes.

At first, queen socialite Vicky's search for someone other than herself to host Gwasila in London plays right into Somerset's plans. He'll have full access to the man of mystery and ample time in which to lure him to Rouge Street and put a bullseye on his head. But before he knows it, Somerset finds himself starting to enjoy the time he's forced to spend with Gwasila. They bond over their shared love of horse racing, their isolation from those around them, their lack of interest in what anyone else thinks of them. Somerset has never enjoyed time spent with another human being that didn't ultimately profit himself. He's feeling strange emotions that he doesn't understand, and yet as the police and press circle ever closer and none of his temporary measures are keeping them at bay, he's forced to make a choice. Does he prioritise his own reputation, or protect the first source of happiness he's ever experienced in a life of self-serving Darwinism.

When Somerset visits his lawyer requesting legal advice for his role in the impending Rouge Street scandal, his incriminating confession reaches the ears of his barrister's assistant, Presley. As a woman trying to advance in a society where female barristers are outlawed, Presley is willing to do whatever it takes to get ahead, including blackmailing a notoriously bullish socialite on the brink of ruin. But Presley doesn't want Somerset's money or power, she wants his business. In exchange for her silence, she'll become Somerset's sole legal advisor and hopefully establish a legal career of her own through her unorthodox methodology.

It's Presley who understands Somerset's greatest threat is the press, not the police, and it's Presley who suggests he sacrifice Barking and Gwasila to the court of public opinion. She's almost as ruthless as Somerset, but when her client's commitment to the relentlessness of the cause wavers and her boss begins to suspect her illegal involvement in Somerset's unusual behaviour, Presley realises the hole she's potentially dug herself. But it's not in her nature to quit, so all that's left is to keep on digging. There's only one person left who can

save Somerset, and Presley's career by proxy, and it's the postal boy whose run-in with the socialite caused this entire, city-wide debacle in the first place.

Ezekiel is just about the last person on Earth who would help Hugh Somerset. Thanks to Somerset, Ezekiel has been fired from his legal means of income and left to fend for himself back in the world of prostitution in a bid to provide for his orphaned family, but he's got far more than that to worry about. Ezekiel is a worrier by nature, and he can't help but try to protect Fry from Rouge Street and keep Strutt from reverting back to who he used to be even while his own life collapses around him. Amid the turmoil of servicing clients while avoiding police investigation lies Ezekiel's main goal: reconnecting with his dead father. He thinks this is where all the answers lie, and by doing so he'll finally find the light at the end of the tunnel.

But finding common ground with a man of the church when you yourself spend each night committing cardinal sin is a tough ask. Ezekiel's forced to confront his faith and somehow marry his attraction to men with his father's love, and realise that the two were never mutually exclusive. But it's a difficult journey, and one that relies on a faith in humanity that Ezekiel is losing with each passing day. He's always been taught to turn the other cheek, but as his own situation worsens and he slowly realises there's someone to blame, the prospect of vengeance starts to consume him, especially when the real cause of his father's death comes to light.

By the time Somerset's path crosses with Ezekiel's again he's faced with an entirely different man from the postal boy he once cast aside without a second thought.

## YIN AND YAN

Somerset and Ezekiel are two figures who, at first glance, are polar opposites to each other. Somerset's solution to every problem he faces is to find somebody else to suffer in his place, while when Ezekiel is faced with adversity, he seeks only to do right by those around him. Both characters' journeys, however, find them battling against temptation to act more like the other. Somerset experiences friendship and love for the first time in his life with the man he's been plotting to stab in the back, Gwasila. After betraying countless others, with Gwasila we start to see Somerset contemplate choosing to protect someone he cares about rather than carry out the plan he knows will benefit himself most. Meanwhile Ezekiel's own faith is increasingly challenged by his inability to protect his family from the choices he's made, no matter how hard he tries to do right by them. The more he learns about Somerset's role in his downfall, and the circumstances surrounding his father's death, the more he begins to question the idea of turning the other cheek.

All our characters find themselves faced with change because of the choices they've made, but Ezekiel and Somerset become almost unrecognisable. By the end of the series they both get one last choice, mirroring the opportunity the other is presented at the start of episode one. This time it's Ezekiel who can throw Somerset under the bus for personal gain, while



Somerset is granted the chance to sacrifice himself for the sake of a loved one. The choice they both make will tell us who they really are.

## **SEASON ONE**

## **EPISODE OUTLINES**

### **EPISODE ONE (PILOT)**

EZEKIEL is caught by the post office with money he earned as a prostitute. As the sole carer to his younger brother, JEREMIAH, he knows he can't risk losing his job if the truth gets out, but the guilt eats him alive. His pastor father died three months ago, and Ezekiel has been blaming his own sinful misdeeds for it ever since. SOMERSET and BARKING set about plotting how best to keep Ezekiel quiet, which culminates in Barking's men cornering Ezekiel in the dead of night and attempting to kill him. Ezekiel evades his attackers but sees this as further punishment for his sins and finally confesses to the post office, leaving himself penniless, jobless and with no choice but to return to work at Rouge Street. Meanwhile STRUTT is under pressure from CHARLOTTE to bring new prostitutes into the brothel and sets his sights on naïve new postal boy FRY. Police detective QUINN, fresh off the humiliation of the unsolved Whitechapel Murders, overhears murmurings of Rouge Street and takes an interest in the case. We close on the discovery that Somerset unknowingly killed Ezekiel's father in a scuffle outside Rouge Street several months ago.

### **EPISODE TWO**

Ezekiel tries to adjust to life as a prostitute again but continues to struggle with the guilt associated with the Christian household he was raised in by his dead father. Ezekiel is visited by Quinn, who offers him payment and a way out of Rouge Street in exchange for answers about the house, which he's seen Barking frequently visit. Strutt, meanwhile, introduces Fry to Barking. Barking's been harbouring an obsessive infatuation with Strutt for several years and Strutt's hoping to distract him with another fresh-faced prostitute. By the time Ezekiel is ready to accept Quinn's offer, Fry is already in too deep with Barking and Ezekiel's testimony would incriminate Fry, so he turns down the deal. Somerset is visited by his lawyer's assistant, PRESLEY, who offers Somerset her own unique brand of legal advice in exchange for becoming his sole advisor. Somerset refuses, deciding instead to publicly soil Quinn's credibility by preying on his recent failings. When Somerset's actions only draw more attention to Quinn's investigation, he's forced to turn to Presley for help.

### **EPISODE THREE**

Somerset convinces VICKY to squash any internal investigation in the post office by agreeing to let GWASILA, a visiting Egyptian war hero she's grown tired of, stay in his home. Presley convinces Somerset that he needs to find an even bigger client name to sell to the public when the scandal breaks out, and when Somerset discovers Gwasila isn't all that he seems – not a war hero, but a gay man who escaped persecution in Egypt after making a deal with Barking – they decide to frame him. Strutt regrets bringing Fry into Rouge Street, realising he has genuine feelings for him, but Fry won't forgive him, especially when Charlotte blackmails Fry to prevent him from quitting. Barking, though enjoying his time with Fry, tries

to track down Strutt at the postal station after not seeing him for several days. Ezekiel begins working extra hours at Rouge Street in order to finally pay for Jeremiah's medical treatment. He returns one night to find Jeremiah missing.

#### EPISODE FOUR

Ezekiel discovers his church's pastor, WEBB, has taken Jeremiah into his own care after being told of Ezekiel's involvement in Rouge Street. Webb tells Ezekiel he's not in a fit state to be taking care of Jeremiah and banishes him from the church community. Ezekiel tries to find out who tipped Webb off. Presley quits her assistant job after her boss grows suspicious, leaving her future entirely dependent on Somerset's arrival. Somerset attempts to lure Gwasila to Rouge Street, but he'll only go if accompanied by Somerset. Inside, Gwasila is sent into a bedroom with Fry, but the pair end up just chatting. When Somerset is discovered at Rouge Street, now the subject of increased media speculation, he's forced to sell Barking to the press in order to buy himself more time. Charlotte, sensing the impending scandal, presents Strutt with ownership of Rouge Street House. Strutt frees Fry of his prostitution obligations, but Fry still wants nothing to do with him.

#### EPISODE FIVE

Barking is publicly outed as a client of Rouge Street. Quinn allows Barking to escape his impending arrest and trial if he gives the police information that might lead them to more clients. Barking, wanting to spare Strutt, gives up Fry. Per the deal, Barking has one night to flee the country and uses it to attempt to convince Strutt to escape with him. Strutt, who is struggling under his new ownership duties and his guilt towards Fry, contemplates the offer. When Ezekiel convinces Strutt to stay, Barking has several of his men take Fry captive to join him in exile. Strutt agrees to join Barking in exchange for Fry's freedom. When Fry returns, he is arrested by Quinn. Somerset and Gwasila continue to bond, and Somerset begins to question whether he can actually frame Gwasila as rumours of even more prominent clients than Barking begin to swirl around London. Presley struggles to incriminate Gwasila after he shows a lack of interest in returning to Rouge Street.

#### EPISODE SIX

Strutt and Barking begin a tumultuous journey as fugitives overseas. In London, Somerset plans one last evening with Gwasila before selling him to the press, but still isn't sure if he can through with it. Ezekiel finally agrees to give Quinn his testimony in exchange for Fry's freedom. When Quinn reveals it was Somerset who tipped off Webb about Jeremiah, Ezekiel decides to exact vengeance on Somerset for all the hardship he's suffered. He tracks Somerset down, finding him with Gwasila, Ezekiel recognising Gwasila from his visit to Rouge Street. Presley intercepts Ezekiel and tells him of her plan to frame Gwasila. Rather than exact his revenge on Somerset, Ezekiel agrees to corroborate the framing of Gwasila in order to clear Barking's name and allow Strutt to return to England. Somerset is in the clear as Quinn is forced to arrest Gwasila on Ezekiel's false testimony to save face after publicly

announcing his triumph over the case. Ezekiel confesses his crimes to his father's grave, while Strutt and Fry reunite. Quinn, still set on bringing down Somerset, finds a clue that could lead him to Somerset's involvement in Ezekiel's father's death.

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