

'Dagenham Girls'

(Working Title)

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BLUE REVISIONS 24/06/09

By

William Ivory

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Number 9 Films (Slate) Ltd  
Linton House  
24 Wells Street  
London, W1T 3PH  
Tel: 0207 323 4060

William Ivory  
C/o The Agency  
24 Pottery Lane  
London W11 4LZ  
Tel: 020 7727 1346

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**Keep On Running** By The Spencer Davis Group, thunders over titles and-

1 EXT. ESTATE IN DAGENHAM - DAY 1

RITA O'GRADY and her husband EDDIE, both late twenties, step onto the balcony of a flat on a massive housing estate in East London. With them are their two children, GRAHAM and SHARON.

They kiss the kids goodbye as another man, also in blue overalls, emerges from the flats, clambers onto a bike and sets off down the car-less streets. Rita and Eddie grab their own bikes, and ride off into an ever broadening stream of people.

2 EXT. ESTATE - DAY 2

On another part of the estate, a much younger woman, SANDRA, emerges from a flat, waves to her mum on a balcony above and hops onto her bike. She wobbles off, the white patent leather boots she is wearing make balance something of a challenge.

3 INT. ESTATE - DAY 3

Sandra filters in with the great tide of cyclists pouring from the Estate beneath the baking sun. We see them from high above. Sandra spots Eddie and Rita, calls out and speeds up to join them.

4 INT. FORD MAIN PLANT - DAY 4

The tide has become a flood as more and more cyclists freewheel through town and down a hill towards a massive industrial complex with a blue neon sign above it: **FORD MOTORS.**

As they approach the factory, the cyclists diverge, men one way, women the other. Several people stop and kiss at the point of divergence, including Eddie and Rita. Then he pushes off towards the Main Plant, brand new and state of the art while she turns her bike towards a crumbling nineteen twenties monolith the River Plant. We follow Rita, as she cycles between the blackened, paint peeled buildings to a series of bike racks, There, along with Sandra, Eileen, Brenda and Monica, she dismounts and glancing at the hot sun, passes into the factory. MUSIC FADES. CREDITS END. ACROSS THIS-

**DAGENHAM. ENGLAND. MAY 1968**

5

INT. RIVER PLANT - DAY

5

On the shop floor, a cramped, filthy, windowless place, chatter and laughter rings out. The girls, nearly 200 of them, roll down their overalls and tie the arms off in front of them, revealing bras or camisoles. And as Rita enters and moves to her bench, we drop to floor level and see that nearly all of the women have now removed their shoes. As Rita, threading up her sewing machine, wipes a bead of sweat away from her face, we understand why: the place is an oven! Rita grabs a box of vinyl pieces as Eileen walks past, revealing a ferocious wired bra.

RITA

Bloody hell, Eileen, you got more support  
there than the Arsenal-

Eileen makes to retort but is interrupted by a the sound of a hooter. Almost at once there is the noise of a generator engaging and then a staggering cacophony as 200 sewing machines start to clatter away. Talk impossible, the women get down to work.

Rita pulls several pieces from the box beside her and picks up a car headrest frame. She arranges the vinyl around the frame and starts to machine it into place. It is hugely intricate but nevertheless she sews at breathtaking speed and quickly completes the first item. She places it on a trolley behind her and grabs the next frame.

6 EXT. DAGENHAM HIGH STREET - DAY 6

Silence. The street is utterly deserted. And we see how bare, how basic, how unlike the Swinging Sixties, is Dagenham. And then, we see a lone figure, CONNIE, late forties, cycling towards the plant as fast as she can.

7 INT. RIVER PLANT - DAY 7

Rita curses. One of her nails is chipped. She wipes sweat away again and resumes her work at a ferocious speed, finishing another headrest. As she reaches for the next frame, Connie enters, flustered-

CONNIE

Sorry I'm late-

RITA

(smiles; shouts)  
Everything alright?

Connie looks across from threading her machine.

CONNIE

Yeah. Just overslept.

Connie takes off her shoes, places a washing up bowl of water on the floor and stands in it. Then she turns to her machine, hassled. But, suddenly, something drops from above with a thud. Connie jumps, startled. It is a dead bird, entangled in cotton threads. Already there's laughter from those who saw the near miss. Connie tenses; staring at the animal on her work bench with a steely expression. She's not in the mood. Instantly, more laughter.

BRENDA

Least it didn't shit on you. They do that sometimes. 'Fore they die.

Connie picks up the bird and marches to the bin with it. Rita looks to the rafters where hundreds of other birds hang dead. She then turns back to Connie, trying not to laugh, as she arrives at her place. But immediately, the hooter sounds again and the power to the machines is switched off. The girls start to make themselves decent-

ALBERT

Ladies...If I could just interrupt you a second-

Rita looks to the far doorway. There, a man in his late fifties, in blue overalls, waits, staring at the floor, in a well practised manoeuvre. This is ALBERT FINCHAM.

RITA

Stand by your beds, men!

\*\*  
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The girls laugh but all around there is also a hubbub of excited chatter as they complete getting dressed. Connie, however, hurries down the aisles and shunts the girls forward.

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\*\*  
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CONNIE

Come on! Hurry up-

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\*\*

The noise levels have risen considerably.

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CONNIE (CONT'D)

Get down the front-

\*\*  
\*\*

She claps her hands and shouts to the back rows-

\*\*

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Girls-

(turns; shouts)

In you come, Albert-

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\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

He enters and walks to the front. Connie moves across and stands by Albert's side, facing the girls. He leans into her.

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

ALBERT

Thank you, Connie-

\*\*  
\*\*

Albert climbs onto a bench and the noise rises accordingly. Voices are calling out: "What's happening, then? What they decided?" Albert struggles to speak over the top.

\*\*  
\*\*

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Yeah. Alright...Hang on. I'll...If you'd just shut up a minute!

(They quieten)

(MORE)

\*\*

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Right, well...to quote Winston Churchill himself: it ain't the end. It ain't even the beginnin' of the end. But it may well be the end of the beg-

BRENDA

Albert, for fuck's sake, get on with it-

The women laugh. Several call out.

ALBERT

Please! Ladies! I'm doin' me best here-

A shout that he's lovely when he's cross. Albert sags but gradually, the girls are quiet. He nods, relieved.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Thank you...

(clears throat)

So...The deadline we set the management, to respond to our complaint about how they've re-graded you..."unskilled"...*has* now passed.

(voices shout; serious this time)

And they still ain't got back to us-  
(louder cries)

Which means!...you gotta vote! On the threat we made in that original communiqué: an immediate ban on all overtime and a one day stoppage - to happen on the 29th of May.

(silence. Eileen glances at Rita, nervously)

All them *for* industrial action: hands up.

Rita's determined face. Her arm goes straight up. She looks round. All of the other hands are up, too.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Against?

(no one)

Thank you. 187 to nil. I'm seein' the management first thing tomorrow mornin'. I'll inform 'em of your decision.

A stunned moment, then as Albert steps down, a huge cheer and applause as and the women break into groups, talking excitedly. Eileen grabs Rita.

EILEEN

We done it!

Rita looks nervous, too.

RITA

First time for everything...

BRENDA

Fuck 'em. That's what I say. Every other bugger round here goes on strike. Why shouldn't we?

RITA

Yeah. Just...maybe don't put it like that if you get interviewed by David Frost, eh?

Everyone laughs and the girls return to their benches, still chattering furiously. In the doorway, Albert watches the women going back to their positions. A young lad, BRIAN, passes by, sweeping the corridor. Albert looks to him, indicating the girls.

ALBERT

I fought Rommel, you know. I was never once scared like I am when I go in there.

The hooter sounds and the machines start up again. Immediately the door slides shut, just as the girls begin to disrobe.

8

INT. DAGENHAM DOCK CLUB - EVENING

8

The sports and social club has been decorated with streamers and balloons. **Young Girl** by Gary Puckett plays on a large portable record player, perched on the stage at one end of the room. However, the dark suits and knee length skirts of the packed dance floor bring to mind the nineteen fifties, not the sixties.

The joint *is* jumping, nevertheless. And standing at a corner table, Rita throws down a large gin before rushing back to Eddie, caught in the thick of the dancing. Close to him is Connie, with GEORGE, her husband, a couple of years younger, angular and handsome, moving stiffly. Also nearby are Eileen and Dave. Eddie spins Rita rather too vigorously and she nearly goes over, laughing, as he grabs her again. Then, suddenly, the music stops and everyone is plunged into near darkness. Moans and complaints from the floor as a Dave runs towards the record player.

DAVE

Alright! Hold your horses-

EILEEN

(to Dave)

This happens every time-

More shouts of derision.

CONNIE

He puts the wrong fuse in. I keep tellin' him-

Then suddenly a piano sounds out. Heads spin towards the back of the room where the older folk are gathered.

RITA

Oh, God! Give him half a chance and he's in there-



Albert is playing "MY OLD MAN." The oldsters immediately start singing along, to groans from the youngsters.

RITA (CONT'D)

-Bleedin' Liberace-

But then, the power is back on and Rita puts the record player on again, drowning out Albert. It's Sandie Shaw's, **Always Something There To Remind Me**. A big cheer. Rita and the others start dancing. She looks across to a peeved Albert and winks at him. He's not amused. Eddie leans in-

EDDIE

Here, where's Brenda gone?

Rita looks uneasy. She shrugs. Eddie nods and whisks her off again.

9 INT. CAR - EVENING

9

A man grunts and thrusts. He's having sex, eyes shut, across the back seat of his motor. Beneath him, Brenda stares at a tear along the seam of the front passenger seat. The man opens his eyes and finally stops thrusting. At last Brenda looks at him.

BRENDA

Your trim. That'll be hangin' right off in a day or two, that will...

(points to tear on seam)

And I bet I know the girl what sowed it, n'all.

(nods, smugly. He is stunned)

Go on, then. Chop chop. Or we'll miss the buffet.

He hesitates, then goes for it anyway. Brenda, head rocking, looks back to the edge of the seat: typical.

10 INT. DAGENHAM DOCK CLUB - EVENING

10

Empty glasses are placed on a tray.

RITA

Right! Who wants another? George? You're finished-

GEORGE

Naah. Be up all night-

CONNIE

Go on! Let your hair down.

He relents. Connie pushes her own across.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
Same again for me, ta!

Rita smiles, just as a figure lurches into her.

SANDRA  
Who's next, then?

Sandra, in a much shorter skirt than the others, also with a bee hive hair-do, wears a sash which says 21 TODAY and sways alarmingly.

EDDIE  
You sure you don't wanna sit down five minutes, Sandra?

SANDRA  
You're jokin'...

CONNIE  
What about some food...?  
(to Eileen)  
She won't eat nothin'...  
(to Sandra)  
There's Scotch eggs-

SANDRA  
(to Rita)  
I'll have a snowball...Come on, George.  
You ain't tripped the whatsit with me yet, have you?

She weaves back onto the floor and is soon involved in something very sixties and very unstable. Rita watches her, then looks back to George uneasily. He starts to move, but it's an effort-

ALBERT (V.O.)  
Do you mind, George...If I have this one...?

They turn; Albert is staring across at Sandra; he bends to one side, limbering up. Rita smiles at Albert's gesture. He turns to Connie.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
Like to keep me hand in...Jitterbug,  
Twist. All them...

He takes a deep breath and prepares to stride out-

RITA  
Yeah, well, don't overdo it...  
(Albert turns to her)  
Give yourself an heart attack...We need you tomorrow-

Albert tuts, piqued. Then he strides out onto the floor.  
Rita smiles.

11 EXT. DOCK CLUB - NIGHT

11

Sandra sways. Then Dave and Eileen take her by either arm and set off, to escort her home. Finally, Rita and Eddie are left alone in the still night air. Rita takes a deep, contented breath. Then she kisses Eddie on the mouth.

EDDIE  
What was that for?

RITA  
Nothin'. Like you. That's all...

He is staring at her in wonder. And lust. He tries to grab her.

EDDIE  
Come here-

RITA  
Oy-

She skips away, laughing.

EDDIE  
Ri-ta!

She turns and looks back at him.

RITA  
Not out in the street-

She grins and runs off. He chases after her. She easily keeps her distance.

EDDIE  
Oh, you're better than that, are you!

RITA  
Yes, I am, actually.

Then she goes over on one of her high heels. They laugh together.

12 INT. RITA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

12

A big screaming guitar solo from Cream's **Crossroads**- And Rita re-tunes the radio, exhaling heavily. She feels dreadful.

She settles on **Born Free** by Matt Monroe, then takes a drag on a fag, finishes ironing a shirt and moves across to a cooker where she removes a pan of beans from the heat. She spoons them onto three plates, eggs and bacon already in place, then pauses again, feeling sick. Rita places the plates on the table. In front of Sharon, her daughter (8) who is reading a comic. Graham, their eleven year old son enters, still in his pyjamas.

RITA

Graham...You're gonna be late-

GRAHAM

I don't feel very well...

Rita frowns, crosses and feels Graham's forehead.

RITA

You're not hot.

GRAHAM

It's me stomach.

It's said very quickly. Then he tucks into his breakfast. Rita watches and frowns. Graham eats with the fork in his left hand, his right, clenched. She takes it. He resists but Rita fixes him with her gaze and he unclenches his fist as she turns it over. His palm has angry red wields across it. Rita is shocked.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

I never done nothin'-

(she looks him right in the  
eye)

Honest.

She stares. Nods. It's enough.

RITA

Mr Clarke again?

He looks uncertain.

GRAHAM

Yeah.

Rita holds her temper. Just.

RITA

Have your breakfast and go and get  
dressed-

(he makes to speak)

I'll deal with it...It'll be fine.

She says it with utter conviction. He nods, relieved.

13 INT. RITA'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY 13

Rita pulls back the sheets on their bed.

RITA  
Oy! Lover boy!

Eddie lies face down on the bed. He wears nylon pyjama bottoms. He moans.

EDDIE  
Clear off. I'm dyin'.

RITA  
We're all dyin'. And we all gotta go to work...Clean shirt-

She drapes it over him. And walks to the door. She looks back. He hasn't moved. She crosses, removes the shirt and tips a bedside glass of water over his back. He yelps, leaps up and she walks out.

14 EXT. FACTORY - DAY 14

As clouds gather, the men (and only men) go about their business outside. GORDON, late twenties, drives a motorised trolley cart, full of completed seats. They load brand new, shining Ford cars onto transporters. But then, a crack of thunder and it starts to rain-

15 INT. FACTORY FLOOR - DAY 15

The thunder of the factory. The women work in silence. Sweat drips from Rita's face and she wipes her brow with her sleeve. She's moving with her usual speed, but with something else, too; aggression, as she yanks hard at the cotton threads she must cut off from around the headrests. Then there is a moan. She turns. Connie has stopped work and glugs from a bottle of Lucozade.

CONNIE  
Never again, I swear.

Beside Connie, Eileen re-applies a cold flannel to the back of her neck and Brenda downs a pint of milk. But suddenly, spots of water are dripping through the roof.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
Oh-

She looks up and grabs an umbrella which she wedges above her station.

BRENDA  
Alley-bloody-lujah-

Brenda and several other girls step right under the rain, to cool down. Eileen turns to Connie.

EILEEN

You'll go mad, takin' that up and down...It's showers all day!

CONNIE

I don't care...It's dangerous. Water and electrics...Innit?

BRENDA

What you talkin' about? You're standin' in a bowl of the bloody stuff!

Rita smiles, then sees Sandra who is ashen white, hurriedly place a headrest on the "DONE" trolley, just as it's pushed away. Rita frowns and grabs the item as the trolley is wheeled behind her. She inspects it.

RITA

Con!....Connie!  
 (Connie turns)  
 Sandra's at it again-  
 (indicates a tear)  
 You're gonna have to say somethin'-

Sandra, who blows bubble gum, sees Rita looking and waves. Rita shouts.

RITA (CONT'D)

Don't wave you silly cow, I'm moanin' about you...

Rita removes her own item, in order to repair Sandra's work. Then she looks back to Connie.

RITA (CONT'D)

We can't keep coverin' for her.  
 (Connie looks worried)  
 They're gonna find out, Con. And then they'll give her the boot.

CONNIE

I'll have a word.

ALBERT (O.S.)

Connie...Con!-

She turns. Albert, wearing a suit and union badge, stands directly in front of them, beaming.

CONNIE

Albert.

Then, her eyes indicate the slip she is wearing. And all of the other half dressed girls, too.

ALBERT

Oh, Christ!

He looks down, averting his gaze. Rita, grinning, calls out.

RITA

Maaaaaaaaa-n!

The hooter sounds and power is turned off to the benches as the girls dress. But noise remains; excited chatter filling the air. When Albert looks up the whole shop floor has shoved around Connie's bench.

CONNIE

You were sayin'?

ALBERT

(instant smile again)

Meeting tomorrow. Ford headquarters. Down at Warley!

The girls all glance at one another, stunned.

CONNIE

You're jokin'-

ALBERT

(posh voice)

"The machinists? The machinists are threatening strike action..." They couldn't believe it!

(Chatter breaks out on the floor. Albert leans in)

Right. They'll have Hopkins there. Jones. And Grant...He's a right miserable sod. Which means we need one more.

(Eileen frowns)

Little principle I learnt in the war, Eileen: success in battle is very simple. Turn up with more on your side than they've got on theirs and turn up when they're least expectin' it.

(back to Connie)

In this case we're booked in for two thirty, so we'll get there at half one...Monty Taylor'll come from Union head office, I make two, you're three, so-

(smiles; looks round)

-who's gonna be the extra man? Any takers?

And instantly all noise has stopped. The girls stare back at Albert uncertainly. He tuts, disappointed. He looks to Brenda.

BRENDA

Fuck off!

ALBERT

Oh, come on...It's a day off-

All hands go up in the air. Several people call out, too. Albert looks over the rows of faces, just as stymied as before. But then he notices Rita. Their gazes lock again. And he smiles.

16

EXT. RIVER PLANT - DAY

16

Rita wipes down her bench and tosses the off cuttings and threads in a bin. The women are done for the day. She hurries towards the exit. But her way is suddenly blocked, as a forklift truck tows in a massive trailer load of dismantled, un-upholstered seats.

CONNIE

What you doin' with them?

GORDON

This new Escort. Looks like they finally designed something people like.

The driver jumps down, unhooking the load.

BRENDA

Well they can get **fucked**! We've had our vote! We ain't doin' no overtime!

\*\*

GORDON

Yeah, you took the plunge at last...

He doesn't re-connect the trailer but climbs on board the forklift, anyway, scoffing:

GORDON (CONT'D)

Me and the boys was sayin': we'd've gone on strike years ago; just havin' to turn up in a pig hole like this! You know it's rainin' in here, don't you?

And he drives off. The women stare at the seats, suddenly aware of what they are doing. Rita, frustrated by the delay, leans in to Connie.

RITA

I'll see you tomorrow-

CONNIE

Rita-



RITA (O.S.)

I gotta go!

And she has. Connie hesitates. Then she looks to the girls and walks out. They follow her. Soon all that remains are the seats, un-touched.

17 INT. WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM- DAY 17

Rita is down to her underwear, already in high heels. She slides a pencil skirt on, toppling against the cubicle wall-

RITA

Christ-

Then she grabs a top-

Then she pulls on a top, runs in front of a mirror, checks her teeth and is off-

18 EXT. STREET - DAY 18

It's stopped raining as Rita slides through a puddle on her bike and stops. She jumps off and leans it against a brick wall. She straightens her blouse and immediately curses: one stocking is smeared with splashed up dirt. She considers her options, then, glancing round, removes it. Then the other one. Then she hurries round a corner and approaches the Thomas A Becket Grammar School. It is much leafier here and cars can be seen for the very first time, most parked near the waiting mothers, gathered at the gate. As Rita strides towards them, short skirted, shapely legged, several women turn to look at her. Rita stiffens slightly. A bell rings and the school starts to let out.

19 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 19

A teacher, fifties, cleans a blackboard as Rita enters the classroom.

RITA

Mr Clarke?

(he turns)

I wondered if I could have a word?

He considers her.

TEACHER

Of course-

He motions to a chair. Rita hesitates; it's a pupil's and rather small. She sits anyway. He smiles.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

How may I help you?

His tone is clipped, Empire. Rita stares at the man. There is no easy way. Finally-

RITA

You hit my son.

He frowns, confused. But Rita, hearing it said, feels stronger. And more angry.

RITA (CONT'D)

On his hand. You caned him. And it ain't the first time.

TEACHER

Ah. Yes. O'Grady...I remember.

He smiles; not the slightest hint of remorse. Rita is wrong footed. He crosses the room-

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Forgot his protractor. And it isn't the first time...

He nonchalantly collects some books. Rita flares-

RITA

I don't care whether it's the tenth time!  
I don't want you doin' it!

She stops; knows she's lost her temper but she holds his gaze, nonetheless. He simply smiles, calmly.

TEACHER

Have you spoken to your husband about this, Mrs O'Grady?

RITA

(surprised)

What?...No...I-

TEACHER

I do find where matters of discipline are concerned, that's usually the best route-

RITA

He's *my* son!

Again she flinches inwardly. But again he seems calm.

TEACHER

You live on the estate don't you?

Rita is confused but also on guard now-

RITA

I don't see what-

TEACHER

We find that those boys who come to us *from* the estate often have difficulty in adjusting to the standards of behaviour required in a school like this...It's not really their fault. Their parents have invariably never undergone the full rigours of academic life-

He looks at her quizzically. And now Rita struggles to hold his gaze. The teacher continues, pleased.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

So the boys can hardly look to them for guidance...

Rita tries to keep her expression neutral.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

But they *do* adapt...In time...And I'm sure your son will, too. If he's just given the chance.

He smiles, comes across and holds out his hand to shake. Rita stares at it, utterly shocked.

20

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

20

Rita walks blindly away from the classroom, turns down a corridor and stops. Ahead is a dead end. She quickly retraces her steps, passing back round the corner. Another woman, LISA, waits outside the classroom now. She turns to face Rita. She is of a similar age, thin, and impeccably dressed in expensive high street fashion. She frowns, sensing Rita's distress.

LISA

Are you alright?

She speaks with a posh voice. Rita trembles.

RITA

Fuck off!

Then Rita barges past her.

21

EXT. HIGH STREET/NEW KIOSK- DAY

21 \*\*

Rita is shaking, upset and angry. She fumbles in her bag but her packet of fags is empty. \*\*

She walks towards a News Kiosk and steps to the front of  
a small queue.

\*\*  
\*\*

RITA  
Ten John Player, please.  
(hands across money)  
Ta.

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

She looks down. A few magazines are laid out on top of a  
tressel table. One of them is Vogue. It's cover shows  
Jean Shrimpton with short, slicked down hair and panda  
eyes: the sixties of popular memory. The byline reads:  
ALL CHANGE. Rita picks it up.

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RITA (CONT'D)  
And this, thank you.

\*\*  
\*\*

She stands tall as she passes it over.

\*\*

22 OMITTED 22

23 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 23

TV pictures of The Prague Spring. A Czech student drops a flower down the barrel of a soldier's gun.

ANNOUNCER

Russia said it was monitoring the situation closely-

Audio fades.

RITA (O.S.)

Tea's ready...

Sharon looks round from the telly. Rita stands by the door, a tea towel in her hands. Eddie is dozing on the sofa and starts to rouse himself. Graham is at a table by the wall where he is doing his homework. He turns and Rita smiles at him.

RITA (CONT'D)

Alright? Need any help?

GRAHAM

Naah. It's easy.

He packs his stuff up. Rita looks at him guiltily. But then he turns suddenly and sees her staring.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)

What's up?

RITA

Nothin'...You're a good lad. That's all.

She ducks away from his gaze and moves to the TV. We see that it is now showing an episode of The Magic Roundabout; Sharon has turned over. But Rita switches off.

SHARON

Aw, mum-

Rita steps back into the kitchen. Eddie picks Sharon up as he passes her. She giggles.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Here, Dad, Martine Clarke's got colour. I seen it-

24

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

24

They start to sit round the table.

EDDIE

Yeah, well, we'll have colour soon. Once you can rent 'em-

Rita looks to Eddie who takes up his knife and fork.

RITA

Eddie...We can't go talkin' about colour. We ain't paid for the fridge yet. And the three piece is still on tick.

(he frowns; so?)

And now we got all this unrest at work.

EDDIE

(realising; laughing)

That! You had a vote, Rita. Unrest's when you actually come out and strike!

Rita's face falls and Eddie looks immediately guilty.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Hey, come on! Don't look like that. I'm only jokin'...I'm proud of you. We all are...Stickin' to your guns...We had a book goin' on the shop floor: no one thought you'd even take the vote. So-

(nods positively)

Well done!

Sharon smiles at her mother, too. Rita looks from her, back to Eddie. She isn't sure quite how to take the comment and finally she shrugs.

RITA

Well...It ain't just a vote now. We got a meetin' tomorrow. With all the bosses...And I'm goin'.

Her family stare back, stunned. She avoids eye contact.

RITA (CONT'D)

So...I'll plate your tea up, in the mornin'. Then if I'm a bit late back, you'll just need to heat it through.

Eddie nods relieved. And Rita feels suddenly piqued.

RITA (CONT'D)

Apparently we go to a Berni Inn. On our way there.

She takes a mouthful of her own food, still looking at Eddie, a twinkle in her eyes.

24A EXT. BERNI INN - DAY

24A \*\*

We see Connie, Rita, Albert and Monty enter the Berni Inn.

\*\*  
\*\*

25 INT. BERNI INN - DAY

25

Red velour and a deep blue carpet. And in a far corner of the restaurant, Rita and Connie, facing Albert and Monty around a table. The two men wear dark suits, Rita and Connie smart dresses; both have their hair set. Monty reaches across and pours more Blue Nun into a wine glass beside his empty pint pot. Then he carries on talking to Albert in hushed tones. Rita finishes a slice of Black Forest gateaux and moans with delight.

CONNIE

It's alright, innit?

RITA

And that steak...

CONNIE

(whispering)

It's Monty, insists we come here, you know...Long as the union's payin'...

Rita smiles. Just as Monty leans across.

MONTY

Here, Rita...Word of advice-

He stops; uses the corner of the menu to poke between his teeth. Rita stares.

MONTY (CONT'D)

-when we get there. Don't be lured in. If they seem to be askin' you a question, just look at your notebook and I'll have it. Above all, if I nod, you nod.



Albert stares at Rita. She nods. But he keeps his eye on her. However, Monty waves to a waiter-

ALBERT

Monty?

MONTY

What? Thought we'd have one o' them liqueur coffees. Panatella maybe-

ALBERT

Yeah. We could...It's just...If we don't go now, we'll end up bein' on time.

Monty considers Albert. The waiter arrives.

MONTY

Yeah. Just the bill please.

Albert glances at Rita.

26

INT. FORD HEADQUARTERS, WARLEY - DAY

26

A young secretary rushes about her office.

SECRETARY

I...I'm sorry...We weren't expecting you until-

She checks her appointments book. Albert and the others are crowded around her desk, just inside the office.

ALBERT

That's quite alright.

SECRETARY

I'm not sure Mr Hopkins-

ALBERT

Honestly. It's not a problem. Just let him know, we're here, anyway...At half past. As arranged.

(She looks confused, then hurries to an inner door)

And there's four of us. If you need an extra chair.

Rita smiles slightly, looking to Albert; sly old dog.

27

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

27

Now Rita exhales, frustrated. She sits in a dark, hot room with no windows. It is silent.

PETER HOPKINS Ford's Head of Industrial Relations, late thirties, sits beside two other men, GRANT and JONES both middle aged, facing Monty, Albert, Rita and Connie. Rita glances at the clock. Four fifteen. A black suited PENTHOUSE STEWARDESS serves tea and coffee, no one says thank you except Rita. Finally-

GRANT

On a previous occasion, in a free vote, the girls agreed to the new grading structure-

ALBERT

They did not agree, however, as to where they would end up on it. Which is why we're sittin' round this table!

Silence again. Rita fidgets.

HOPKINS

Look. I understand what the girls are saying. I just don't think that *they* appreciate-

MONTY

I'd rather you didn't speak for the girls, Mr Hopkins...None of us here knows what's in their heads.

That comment makes Rita look across. She turns to Connie. *Her* eyes are firmly on her note pad still.

HOPKINS

The fact remains, there is a formal grievance procedure already in place. And the machinists' case *will* be heard. What we can't do, is let them jump the queue-  
(Rita frowns)  
-or every *other* Ford employee who is waiting on a decision, will want our blood!

MONTY

Peter. Look...You know me. I ain't got no axe to grind with Ford. Am I right or am I right?

HOPKINS

You've always been very fair.

MONTY

Exactly...And we're all men of the world so-

Rita looks to Albert. This is getting too much.

MONTY (CONT'D)

-let's cut to the chase, shall we? We'll agree to re-convene in two weeks time-

Albert stiffens. Rita looks appalled.

ALBERT

Monty?-

MONTY

Wait. Listen...We'll re-convene...and we'll come back down here again for the day...And at that point, you'll *guarantee* to look into the girls' complaint.

ALBERT

The thing is, Monty-

MONTY

That way...you can go back to your bosses and say the strike's off, 'cause of how you handled today's negotiations...and we can go back to the girls and say they're now your number one priority...In a few weeks time.

Hopkins glances at the other Ford men; counts to three.

HOPKINS

That seems very fair.

ALBERT

Yeah, well, I'm not sure the girls-

MONTY

The girls'll be fine! So long as they know they're not just gettin' fobbed off by the management: the unions's settin' the terms. That's what matters-

RITA (O.S.)

Bollocks!

All heads turn. And Rita blinks. But it's said. And she means it, she realises. She turns-

RITA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Albert but...It is. Bollocks...Three hours, we've been sittin' here now and-

(to Monty)

"That's what matters to the girls?"  
How're you qualified to talk about what matters? To us?...

(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

(looks to Connie who stares  
back amazed)

What matters is this-

She reaches into her bag and throws a pile of vinyl cuttings, of the kind we saw her machine at the start, in front of Hopkins.

RITA (CONT'D)

There. You put them together-  
(spreads them out)

13 different bits. That makes up an head rest cover...

GRANT

Ford property, I believe-

RITA

Oh, get stuffed-

(to Hopkins; on track)

What *matters* is that we have to take them 13 different bits of material and imagine how they fit together... 'cause there ain't no template... and then we have to sew 'em, all free hand, into the finished article! Same with seat covers and door trim. And that is *not* unskilled work. Which is how you've re-graded us! Christ, you have to take an exam to get on our line-

HOPKINS

Please, Miss-

RITA

Mrs!...O'Grady.

HOPKINS

Mrs O'Grady, I understand your grievance. But-

RITA

Oh, no! No, no, no, no... Don't start with all that again; all that I appreciate, I sympathise... It ain't difficult: we're entitled to semi-skilled. And the wages what go with it-

(Hopkins makes to speak)

And!... as regards queue jumpin', we put this complaint in months ago-

(Albert is impressed)

-and you done nothin' about it. And we both know *why* you done nothin' n'all, don't we? 'Cause we're women and the women have *never* gone on strike. This is the first time we've even suggested it.

(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

Which meant you thought you could keep  
ignorin' us...Well, hard bleedin' cheese,  
mate, 'cause it's too late now!

\*\*

Albert's face. And Connie's.

RITA (CONT'D)

We're gonna do what we said we would. No  
more overtime and **an immediate twenty  
four hour stoppage**. And where it goes  
from here, that's up to you. Cause we  
only open our gobs when we mean it!

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

Rita stands. A moment. The others stand too, dazed. The  
meeting is clearly over.

28

EXT. FORD HEADQUARTERS, WARLEY - AFTERNOON

28

Rita drags on a cigarette by Albert's car, an old Ford  
Corsair. She looks worried. Connie is with her. She looks  
nervous too. The reason is about twenty yards away, by a  
phone box: Albert being railed at by Monty. After a  
moment Monty storms into the box and dials. Albert walks  
back.

ALBERT

He's calling Branch. Tellin' 'em what you  
said.

RITA

(nods)

He seems a bit...

She shrugs, awkwardly. They all look back to the phone  
box. Monty rants. Then Albert fixes Rita with a stare and  
points a spindly finger. And he grins.

ALBERT

I knew....I knew. Up there-  
(taps head. She frowns)  
I wanted clever, Rita. That's why I  
picked you.

(she is stunned)

Bringin' them cuttin's in, though...that  
was magnificent...I didn't expect that:  
you'd come prepared-

RITA

Oh, no. No. Grant was right. I was  
nickin' them...Eddie uses 'em to patch up  
his tent. For when we go campin'...

She nods at Albert apologetically. He stares.

ALBERT

Yeah. Well...All the same...

And he walks off with as much dignity as he can muster.  
At the car, he turns. He looks Rita in the eye.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
Leave Monty to me.

Rita is wrong footed by Albert's rapid re-focusing.  
Connie steps forward-

CONNIE  
And what about the factory? The girls.  
What you gonna say to them?

ALBERT  
I'm not gonna say anythin', Con. You're  
in charge on the shop floor. They're your  
business. \*\*

He smiles and ducks down into his car. Connie turns to  
Rita.

CONNIE  
You can speak to 'em. It's your bloody  
fault.

She crosses to the car, too. And we see she is hiding a  
smile, too. She clambers into the car. On Rita. Worried.

29 INT. RIVER PLANT - AFTERNOON 29

The girls are all hard at work when the hooter sounds.  
Brenda and Eileen start to make themselves decent but  
then stop when they see who it is: Rita, standing on a  
bench, looking out over them. Connie is beside her, at  
ground level. A beat. Rita hesitates, glances to Connie,  
then looks back again. She shouts:

RITA  
Everybody out!

A huge roar and the women push to the exit.

30 EXT. WESTMINSTER - DAY 30

Big Ben booms out and a new day dawns.

31 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 31

Another pair of bare feet, the stockinged soles of which  
scratch an itch beneath a large desk. Then, we see a sign  
on the desk: SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT AND  
PRODUCTIVITY and behind it, the petite figure of a woman  
with flame red hair, pouring over a huge pile of manilla  
files.

BARBARA CASTLE

Now, I realise this *is* my first day in the job...And it may be that I'm missing something here-

She speaks in a thick Lancashire accent which has poshed up over the years.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

But the facts themselves seem very clear. And they are, that in the last year alone, in the United Kingdom, there were 26,000 strikes. With 5 million working days lost as a result. The affect of this on the country's productivity and balance of payments has been nothing short of catastrophic and yet...the management and the unions seem completely unable to alter this picture...Now why is that exactly?

She looks up. And is confronted by two people: her private secretaries. They are men. And they stare back at her blankly.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

Don't all shout at once...gentlemen.

32 INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - DAY

32

The front room of a small terrace; simpler and less plush than Rita's home. George sits in an armchair by the fire. He looks pale. The newspaper is folded on his lap. He blinks, a pronounced tic. And then Connie hurries in from the kitchen.

CONNIE

Here you go-

She carries a fizzy glass of something. She holds it out to him.

\*\*  
\*\*

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Down in one-

He takes it. But then he doesn't drink it. He places it on a small table beside him and sits back, picking up the paper as if she isn't there.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

You gotta drink it, George...

He looks at her. Surprised. Zones in again.

GEORGE

Yeah. Sorry...



He downs it; winces.

CONNIE

It's the latest stuff, that.  
It's...He...reckons you'll really notice  
a difference.

They stare at each other. He manages a smile. Then-

GEORGE

You gotta go, have you?

\*\*

\*\*

She holds his gaze and forces a beaming smile.

\*\*

CONNIE

It's important.  
(grabs her jacket)  
You know where I'll be...  
(turns)  
Just don't you be late.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

She smiles, determined. He nods, unconvincingly. Then  
she's off. George watches the closed door.

\*\*

\*\*

33 EXT. RIVER PLANT - DAY

33

A great mob of the striking women are gathered by the locked River Plant gates. Several of them wave placards and banners, excited, calling out to the many men who are cycling into the main plant-

BLOKE

Up the strikers...Specially you Brenda-

BRENDA

(flicking vees)

You wish!

BLOKE TWO

Gaaaaarn...give 'em what for-

Rita smiles at Eddie who grins and winks as he sails by on his bike.

DAVE

Get stuck in, girls!

Eileen spots Dave as he cycles in. She waves proudly. Sandra, jiggling a banner, shouts out-

SANDRA

We want respect!

Rita and Brenda turn to Sandra. She wears tight slacks, a tight blouse and is heavily made up.

BRENDA

What you done to your eyes?

SANDRA

They're amazin', aren't they? Me best friend showed me how.

EILEEN

This *is* a demonstration, you know, Sandra-

SANDRA

And I'm demonstratin'...  
(conspiratorially)  
There's scouts everywhere! That's how Twiggie got discovered. Just walkin' down the street-

BRENDA

Up West, you dozy sod. Not Dagenham-

Another whistle of support. Connie leans in to Rita.

CONNIE

I can't believe we done this...

RITA

Least they know we're serious now. And we ain't quite as helpless as everyone seems to think we are.

Rita looks proudly across at the girls-

34 INT. RIVER PLANT - AFTERNOON 34

Hopkins is uneasy. He walks through the empty River Plant and looks at all the idle machines.

35 EXT. FORD HEADQUARTERS, MICHIGAN - MORNING 35

The sun beats down on one of the Great Lakes. Then we see a gleaming building, sitting in a wide, open, vista. In front of the building, glinting in the brightness is a sign: FORD MOTOR COMPANY, USA.

36 INT. FORD HEADQUARTERS, MICHIGAN - MORNING 36

Air conditioning hums. In a light and airy space, a man in his mid forties drops food into a huge aquarium whilst speaking on the 'phone.

TOOLEY

Peter, Bobby here...What can I do for you...?

37

INT. FORD HEADQUARTERS, WARLEY - AFTERNOON

37

Hopkins sits in his cramped and dingy office, an old electric fan dinging on a filing cabinet behind him.

HOPKINS

We've got another dispute, I'm afraid-

38 INT. FORD HEADQUARTERS, MICHIGAN - MORNING 38

TOOLEY

Another one? Who is it this week?

He turns from the tank. That *is* new.

39 EXT. RIVER PLANT - AFTERNOON 39

Baby Come Back by The Equals blasts from a transistor radio around which several of the girls dance. A crate of beer lies on the floor. Deck chairs have now been found, also, and many of the women sit in them, eating ice cream wafers which Eileen dispenses from a large box. A bin wagon passes and the driver slows, leans out-

DRIVER

It's a lot more fun on your picket than ours usually are. I might join you later.

MONICA

It's women only, love.

The girls laugh, the bin waggon pips and accelerates away, swerving past a van which pulls up beside the women. Written on the van's side is: **A.A. Horovitz Greengrocer**. The door opens and Brenda gets out. She has several brown paper bags in her arms.

BRENDA

Tea's up! Bananas, apples, pears!

The girls rush over to help themselves. Then from the van steps Mr Horovitz, about twenty five and VERY good looking. He also looks, however, exhausted. He removes Brenda's bike from the back of the van and places it on the side. Brenda waves to him.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Thanks for the ride, Arthur!

He nods, embarrassed, clambers in and zooms off. The girls are open mouthed.

EILEEN

Brenda!...You never-

BRENDA

Why? He's gorgeous...And just as I was leavin' with the fruit, he goes: "I believe *all* the workers of the world should unite." And I thought to meself, I can help you with that one straight away, mate.

She bites an apple and sits. Suddenly Connie smiles.

CONNIE

Yeah, well, much as I'd like to hang around, discussin' solidarity for another eight hours...Me date's here-

George crosses the road. He looks immaculate, wearing a suit, his hair neatly Brycleemed. A couple of whistles as he stops. He smiles. But he still looks slightly hollow eyed.

RITA

Don't you scrub up nice...What's goin' on?

CONNIE

(thrilled)  
You made it.

GEORGE

It's our anniversary...

RITA

What?

A chorus of the girls calling out Connie's name, cooing and clapping.

RITA (CONT'D)

Why didn't you say something-

CONNIE

I didn't wanna make a fuss...

(brightening)  
So, say "up yours" to the management from me, will you?! We're off.

She leaves to shouts of 'bye' and 'enjoy yourselves'.

BRENDA

Right. Who's for a game of pontoon?-

She produces cards. Just as there is an immense rumble of thunder. Moans from the girls.

EILEEN

I knew it was too good to last-

SANDRA

It'll be fine-

And the rain comes. Squeals from the girls as they rush about and gather up stuff.

MONICA

What we gonna do? Pubs aren't open-

Rita, gathering placards, looks at her watch.

RITA

I dunno...We have done a full day-

SANDRA

And I promised me mum I'd cook tea.

RITA

(grinning)

Sod it! We registered the protest...Hooter's blowin'

The girls cheer. The whole group runs around, packing, shouting hurried good byes and dispersing.

BRENDA

Hey and Rita!-

(Rita looks round)

Well done!

(Rita frowns)

Was your gob got us here, wannit?

Brenda leaves. Beat. Rita smiles.

40

INT. CAFE - DAY

40

Albert's POV as he watches Rita struggling with the placards, he bangs on the window to get her attention, she comes over to the doorway of the café.

RITA

Albert-

ALBERT

Just been round your house.

He wipes his face with his hanky. Rita watches him.

RITA

Why?

ALBERT

Cause I thought you'd'a gone home ages  
ago...I'm lucky if I can get the lads to  
hold out the full hour-



Albert notices the placards and smiles. He then looks to Rita who stares at him expectantly:

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
 Oh...I wanted a quick chat, was all...  
 (indicates cafe)  
 Fancy a cuppa?

RITA  
 I can't. Sorry...I told Graham I'd meet him from school.

ALBERT  
 (checks time)  
 You got twenty minutes 'fore they tip out, ain't you?

She frowns; that's rather insistent. He looks up from his watch, meeting her gaze. He smiles.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
 I'm buyin'.

41 INT. CAFE - DAY

41

Rita stares as Albert spoons three sugars into his tea. He stirs and looks at her. She waits, a little edgy. Then he adds one more. *She* makes to speak-

He stirs again-

RITA  
 Albert, come on! Cough it up!

He looks her in the eye.

ALBERT  
 Alright...You won't win.

RITA  
 What?

ALBERT  
 This battle...You're gonna lose-

RITA  
 But...we got a case. You said so. We-

ALBERT  
 Oh, don't get us wrong. You might get Ford to back down over the gradin' thing but...I'm talkin' big picture. And in that case, you ain't even in the frame-

RITA  
 (irritated)  
 What do you mean we're not-

ALBERT  
 -'Cause this dispute's got nothin' to do  
 with what skill level you are! Ford's  
 decided to give you less money 'cause  
 they *can*...They're allowed to pay women a  
 lower wage than men.

She stares at him.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
 And not just Ford neither. The whole  
 country, Rita. Women gettin'  
 less...because they're women...

She stares at him. She's already there but daren't say  
 it. He shrugs.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
 You'll always come second, you'll always  
 be dependent, you'll always be fightin'  
 for the scraps from the top table as long  
 as-

RITA  
 -we ain't got equal pay...

ALBERT  
 Oh, Rita, if you knew how thick most of  
 the blokes I deal with are...

She stares. It makes sense. But she's scared. She looks  
 away. A second. She looks back, a new thought in her head-

RITA  
 Why? Why you bothered about us gettin'  
 the same as the men?

He stares; knows Rita will accept only the whole truth.  
 He smiles fondly.

ALBERT  
 I got brought up by me mum...Me and me  
 brothers. Me dad cleared off when we were  
 nippers, so...  
 (nods)  
 She worked all her life at Ranley and  
 Coopers. Ball bearin's...She paid aunt  
 Lilly for lookin' after us durin' the day  
 and...

He stares, forcing back the emotion. Then to Rita:

ALBERT (CONT'D)

...it was hard. Especially cause she got paid less than half what the blokes in the factory was gettin'. For doin' the same work...But there was never any question it could be different...Not for her.

(smiles, fondly at Rita)

You remind me of her, actually, Rita...You got heart and...brains and-

(frowns)

-and someone has to stop those exploitin' bastards from gettin' away with what they been doin' for years!

He looks back, his eyes filmed with water.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

And you can. You can. If you make your battle focus on the right target.

Rita stares, suddenly energised. But she's scared, too.

RITA

What about Connie? *She's Shop Steward. We voted for her-*

\*\*  
\*\*

ALBERT

*And she's magnificent, Rita! At organizin'. And implementin'. But this needs...a leader. To inspire the girls. To make the issues clear. And that ain't her. Not at the moment-*

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

(Rita makes to speak)

*And she knows it. 'Cause I've already spoke to her.*

\*\*  
\*\*

(Rita is shocked)

*And she's more than happy to let you have a go...More than.*

\*\*

(touches her arm reassuringly)

*Look...Don't say nothin' now. It's a big thing, I know that. Just...sleep on it, will you? And let me know tomorrow...*

(smiles, nods)

\*\*

*Here. I'll take them. Least I can do.*

\*\*

He picks up the placards and goes. Rita watches him.

42

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

42

Rita glances at her watch as she hurries towards the school. A group of the mothers wait. All under umbrellas. Rita hesitates.

LISA (O.S.)

Do you want to wait in here?

She turns. A brand new Ford escort is parked by the kerb, and LISA is poking her head out of the driver's side window. Rita recognises her immediately.

LISA (CONT'D)

We have met. In the corridor outside Mr Clarke's class.

(Rita stares. Lisa shoves  
open the passenger door)

Please-

Rita glances at the other mothers and suddenly feels a surge of opportunity. With her nose in the air, she hurries over and climbs in.

43

INT. CAR - DAY

43

Rita arranges herself.

RITA

I'm drippin'...

LISA

It's fine. Really...I've been hoping to bump into you for a day or two actually.

(Rita stiffens)

I wondered if you'd care to sign a letter...? To the headmaster. I'm making a formal complaint; about Mr Clarke's use of the cane-

RITA

What?

LISA

He seems to think my son's-

RITA

You mean...You were there for the same reason as me?

LISA

Yes...He was...indiscreet enough to mention why you'd been in...I think he was suggesting something hormonal was happening about the school-

(bitter)

We should all calm down a bit.

RITA

-He just fobbed me off. He...I mean...I'd got it all worked out in me head; what I was gonna say only-

LISA

Oh, you don't talk to Mr Clarke. You listen...

(scoffs)

He's a bully...That's why he beats them all-

Lisa stops. Rita stares at her impassioned face. And relief floods her body.

RITA  
You got a pen, then?

Lisa passes across the letter and pen. Rita signs. Hands everything back.

RITA (CONT'D)  
-That first time, when I saw you...  
(Lisa frowns, confused)  
You're bein' polite, not mentionin' it, I know you are, only...I was upset. As I say and...I never use that sort of language normally.

LISA  
Don't you? I called Mr Clarke a complete cock...

Rita is stunned; Lisa smiles. Children are now pouring out of the school.

LISA (CONT'D)  
Here they are...

Lisa gets out. Rita, too.

44 EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

44

Lisa has an umbrella which she erects and then she moves over to Rita who stands beside her, beneath it. Rita glances across and suddenly, emboldened-

RITA  
That dress-  
(Lisa turns, frowns)  
I seen it. In Vogue...It really suits you.

LISA  
Thank you...It's Biba.

A second. Lisa looks back to the children. Rita does too. And her chest swells ever so slightly.

45 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - DAY

45

Rita places a mug of tea on a bedside table. Eddie is dozing but now he opens one eye. Rita slips back into bed, her red, nylon nightie crackling, and props herself up against the headboard.

EDDIE

Ta, love...  
 (frowns)  
 What time is it?

RITA

Six-

EDDIE

We got another half an hour-

\*\*

RITA

(distracted)  
 Yeah. Sorry. I was awake anyway, so...

She trails off. A beat. He turns on his side.

EDDIE

Well, now you are...Shame to waste an opportunity-

He nibbles her hip. She giggles.

RITA

Eddie!

He pulls himself up her body and kisses her neck. She's not really in the mood, though.

\*\*

EDDIE

What?...What's up?

RITA

Nothin'...I'm...I got stuff on me mind...  
 (she turns; dare she?)  
 Which...I didn't say nothin' about last night 'cause I wanted to get straight in me own head first-

\*\*

EDDIE

Get what straight?

She looks at him for a long moment.

RITA

I've decided to get a bit more involved. In the dispute.

\*\*

EDDIE

What dispute? It's happened...it was yesterday.

RITA

Yeah, but...it ain't settled yet, is it?

EDDIE

No, I know but...you've made your gesture. That's all I mean-

RITA

It wasn't a gesture. It was a...strike...to get somethin'!

EDDIE

Fine...It's not worth rowin' over, is it?

He smiles. Then kisses her shoulder several times. \*\*

EDDIE (CONT'D) \*\*

You got my support, Rita. You know that. Whatever you wanna do. \*\*

RITA

Good. Thank you...  
(he kisses her again) \*\*  
You're not just sayin' that, are you? \*\*

EDDIE

(still kissing) \*\*  
Hmmm?- \*\*

RITA

'Cause you got an ulterior motive! \*\*

He finally straightens and looks at her. \*\*

EDDIE \*\*

What's that mean? \*\*

She stares at his honest, open face. She grins. \*\*

RITA \*\*

I'll show you. \*\*

She kisses him and they slide down the bed. \*\*

46

EXT. RIVER PLANT - DAY

46 \*\*

Rita places her bike in the rack. She smiles as Brenda dismounts, too. But then, both stare open mouthed as Sandra arrives - in a pair of tiny shorts and a blouse tied just below the bust. Sandra struggles to get her leg over the bike seat. \*\*



BRENDA

Bloody hell Sandra, I think you've had a bit've shrinkage in the wash-

SANDRA

They're hot pants. They're Mary Quant's-

BRENDA

Well you should give 'em back to her. They look fuckin' painful-

RITA

I think they look nice. Long as you can breathe-

SANDRA

Course, I can...And it's what Brenda said, innit: it *ain't* Knightsbridge...Dagenham. So if you're gonna get spotted, you have to stand out that bit more. Well, I am doin'...

She walks off. Brenda watches her, then looks to Rita.

BRENDA

Come on...

She sets off after Sandra but just as suddenly stops and turns back. \*\*

BRENDA (CONT'D) \*\*

Wannit great, though? Yesterday. \*\*

RITA

(surprised) \*\*

Bein' on strike? \*\*

BRENDA \*\*

Yeah. Chance to be different...Was lovely. \*\*

(smiles) \*\*

Felt like it all night. \*\*

RITA

What did you do? \*\*

BRENDA

Met the veg man, got blind drunk, then went back to his place. \*\*

RITA \*\*

(confused) \*\*

But- \*\*

BRENDA \*\*

Oh, it was different, Rita... \*\*

(winks) \*\*

Just ask him. \*\*

She happily wanders in. Rita **scoffs** and follows. \*\*

47 INT. RIVER PLANT, CORRIDOR - DAY 47

Rita, **a hint of a smile still on her face**, walks towards the factory floor, pulling her overalls around her waist as she goes. \*\*

BUT then she stops. The notice board is directly ahead.  
On it, MACHINIST rates of pay:

MEN: £19 7s 6d

WOMEN: £13 4s 2d

Rita stares. She looks determined. Then uneasy.

48

INT. FACTORY FLOOR - MORNING

48

Rita walks onto the floor. She stares at Connie's space:  
still unoccupied. She begins to thread up her machine.  
Then she grabs some cuttings. And finally Connie rushes  
in-

CONNIE

I'm here! Just...Christ-

She grabs her bowl and places it on the floor. Then she  
pulls her overalls down and she stops - as she sees Rita  
staring at her.

RITA

Connie, listen. I-

CONNIE

(shaking head)

Rita-

RITA

No! I have to say it! For me!

(stares at Connie)

If I was to get involved with Albert,  
Con, it's only cause...I got a gob on  
me...You're the heart beat of this place.  
You always will be.

Connie smiles, fondly. Then:

CONNIE

Rita...Look at me. All at six's and  
seven's...Again-

(quietly)

I got enough on me plate at the moment,  
without takin' on the whole of British  
Industry...

(nods)

You *can* do it. And you should.

Rita stares at Connie; makes to speak. But the hooter  
sounds and the machines start up. The women smile and get  
down to work.

49

INT. RIVER PLANT - DAY

49

Rita finishes an item, then notices Sandra, tongue out, carefully completing a piece. She is pleased. Then the hooter goes and the girls look across, on the point of getting dressed. But it is Brian, so they simply continue. He looks frustrated. Then scared; as he realises he must enter anyway. This he does and at every bench the women jiggle their bits, wolf whistle and generally make life hell for him.

BRENDA

Hello Brian...That a cotton bob you got in your pocket?...Or is it an hard on?

He reaches into a sack he is carrying and shoves a letter straight at Brenda. She frowns but soon all the girls have them. Rita opens her envelope and reads. She looks furious and then catches Connie's eye. A second and Rita marches off.

\*\*

As she arrives at the door, Albert appears, in his Ford overalls, coming for her decision. She marches past him, thunder on her face, glancing once at him as she strides on. He grins.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

ALBERT

(to himself)

That a yes, then?

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

And then, he sets off after her.

\*\*

50

INT. CANTEEN - AFTERNOON

50

Monty Taylor, in his suit and Union badge, stares at the letter. Albert is by his side. They are surrounded by the girls.

MONTY

Ignore it.

RITA

Ignore it?

MONTY

Standard issue. Day after a walk out.

RITA

Have you seen the language?

(Eileen and Brenda nod)

"Your flagrant and aggressive disregard for the existing complaints procedure"...Tone of that-

MONTY

They don't mean it.

RITA

So why they sayin' it...?

MONTY

'Cause...that's how we've always done it.  
All the other strikes. It's like the  
rules-

RITA

Oh, no!

(snatches letter back)

(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

We're not playin' that game...We ain't your men, remember. We're us. And we won't be addressed in this manner.

(Cheer of agreement. Rita stares at the girls)

All those in favour of not only maintainin' but increasin' our current industrial action by goin' to an immediate all out stoppage until an equal pay settlement is reached-

MONTY

What?

Monty has spoken for them all. Mutterings of "equal pay?" are heard everywhere. Rita turns to the girls:

RITA

Well, why not?

(stares at the trusting faces of the girls)

That's what this dispute is really about, innit?!

Rita suddenly points to the lad seen earlier. He sweeps out the canteen now.

RITA (CONT'D)

They've put us on the same rate as Brushin' Brian! The lowest rate in the whole factory...despite the fact that we have got considerable skill.

(A few mumbled "trues")

And there's only one possible reason for that... 'Cause we're women, and in the work place women get paid less than men- no matter what skill they got!

(More support. Agreement. Shouts now.)

Which is why we gotta demand that from now on, there's a level playin' field and rates of pay which reflect the job you do, not whether you've got a dick or not-

(cheers of support)

This strike is about one thing and one thing only: Fairness!

(To Monty; points)

Equal pay or nothin'!

(huge cheer; Rita turns back to the women)

All those in favour?

(every hand goes up)

Everybody out!!!!

Another cheer and Rita walks to the exit, stopping by the door as a wave of the girls passes her and empties the building. Monty looks panicked and glares at Albert. Albert shrugs with a wry smile.

ALBERT

Nothin' to do with me.

The women sweep out.

51 OMITTED 51

52 INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - AFTERNOON 52

Hopkins looks stunned. He stands beside a window held open by a block of wood.

HOPKINS

An all out stoppage?!

Monty fidgets before Hopkins' desk.

MONTY

Also...The specifics of the strike...It's widened out a bit-

53 INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - AFTERNOON 53

Hopkins appears in his doorway. He is ashen. He looks at his secretary, then he mutters to himself:

HOPKINS

Christ...

54 INT. FORD HEADQUARTER'S, MICHIGAN - MORNING 54

Tooley listens on the phone. He is deadpan.

TOOLEY

Shit.

55 INT. UNION OFFICES - EVENING 55

BARTHOLOMEW

Fuckin' Ada!

CLIVE BARTHOLOMEW, sixty, bearded, stares at Monty. Another middle aged man, ROGERS, also glares at him.



BARTHOLOMEW (CONT'D)

Equal pay! What were you thinkin', Monty?

MONTY

It wasn't me...It was Albert. He...He went behind me back-

ROGERS

Really-

MONTY

He's a loose canon. He-  
(grasping at straws)  
I got him with me...You wanna haul someone over the coals, he's your man; the bloody trouble maker.

A beat. Bartholomew and Rogers exchange a glance. Then Bartholomew nods to Monty.

56 INT. UNION OFFICES, ANTE CHAMBER - EVENING

56

Albert, still in Ford overalls, sits on a chair waiting. Monty enters. He looks at Albert and sighs theatrically.

MONTY

I tried to protect you Albert. But you are gonna get such a fuckin' bollockin'...

Albert considers Monty and nods. He stands.

57 INT. UNION OFFICES - EVENING

57

Albert sits on another chair in the middle of the room. Bartholomew paces up and down for a moment. Then-

BARTHOLOMEW

This is awkward, Albert, you know that, don't you? It jeopardises a whole...raft of other negotiations the unions already at loggerheads with the management over-

ROGERS

Not to mention protocol. There's ways of goin' on strike. Right ways and wrong ways-

BARTHOLOMEW

Look...Comrade...Basically, you encouragin' these women...to get all militant-

ROGERS

-shifts the resources away from the  
blokes...who let's be straight, are the  
ones at the coal face-

BARTHOLOMEW

We ain't unsympathetic! But...as a  
union...we have to remember who comes  
first...The Communist Party. And Marx  
himself said: "Men make their own  
history." That's men, Albert!

Monty sighs. He did warn Albert. Albert smiles.

ALBERT

Didn't he also say: "progress can be  
measured by the social position of the  
female sex"...Or was that a different  
Marx? Was that Groucho?

Bartholomew makes to respond but Albert stands: *his* turn  
now.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Equal pay! Across the board! You tellin'  
me that ain't worth fightin' for? Course  
it is! And you know it! Only cause've all  
the in-fightin' and the prejudice and the  
sixteen other unions down at Ford all  
lookin' after their own little patch, you  
ain't even tried, have you? Well, you  
listen to me. This...Rita...she's got a  
bigger set of balls than the three of you  
put together and she ain't scared of  
layin' 'em on the line neither, so I, for  
one, am gonna help her and if you *are*,  
what you say you are, an organisation  
*pledged* to support its members - which  
everyone of them girls most definitely *is*  
- then you'll get off your fat, lazy  
arses and you'll help her, too! Good  
fuckin' evenin!

He storms out of the room. Rogers looks to Bartholomew.  
They're fucked. A beat. They turn on Monty, furious. He  
cowers. MUSIC STARTS: BORN TO BE WILD - STEPPENWOLF: "Get  
your motor runnin'..."

58

EXT. DAGENHAM TOWN HALL - DAY

58

A rally in front of the Town Hall before about fifty  
people. Albert is on the platform with various other  
officials. A banner reads A FAIR DAYS PAY FOR A FAIR DAYS  
WORK. Rita is there, too. Albert finishes speaking and  
Rita nervously steps forward. A long pause. And then Rita  
sees Connie, Brenda and the girls. She begins-

RITA

(faltering)

I...work at Ford...As a machinist  
and...I'm here to put our point of view.  
About what's goin' on and how, it ain't  
fair. And also, how it's part of  
somethin' bigger...much bigger...which is  
equal pay...

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

She continues. A man in a threadbare coat, a camera  
around his neck, takes out a notebook and starts writing.

\*\*

HEADLINE: **DAGENHAM GIRL STRIKERS**

\*\*

-IS DROPPED ONTO THE TRESSEL TABLE IN THE NEWSAGENT.

AND THEN FURTHER IMAGES FROM THE BURGEONING DISPUTE ARE  
INTER-CUT WITH MORE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES. THEY START SMALL  
BUT GET BIGGER, MOVING UP THE PAGE AS THE STRIKE GROWS.

59 EXT. DAGENHAM HIGH STREET - DAY

59

Rita addresses a crowd of onlookers. Thirty or so girls  
are gathered around her, including Connie and Sandra who  
hold up a banner proclaiming: *SUPPORT THE FORD  
MACHINISTS*. Passing are a group of West Ham fans on the  
way to a match with scarves and rattles. Several stop and  
listen. Rita sounds much smoother.

\*\*

RITA

'Cause basically, Ford's done what they  
have, awarded us a pay cut, 'cause they  
think no-one'll really notice, because  
we're women. And women's pay has always  
been less than men's...

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

MORE HEADLINES: **PETTICOAT REBELLION GROWS etc.**

\*\*

60 INT. RIVER PLANT - DAY

60

Gordon and Frank arrive at the River Plant's deserted  
warehouse area on the forklift. They swing open two  
massive doors. Inside, the store is packed with thousands  
of finished headrests, seat covers and door trim. Both  
men look at each other ruefully.

61 INT. CANTEEN - DAY

61

Rita addresses a mass of workers. She is noticeably more  
confident and slicker.

\*\*

RITA

And that's a tactic, not just the Ford  
management, but *all* managements have  
exploited, year after year: basin' huge  
profits on a wage system which is as  
corrupt as it is unchallenged-

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

A couple of men glance at each other and nod; fair point.  
 HEADLINE: **FORD STRIKERS LEAD WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVE**

RITA (CONT'D) \*\*  
 Which begs the question, why? Why is it \*\*  
 like that? And the answer is, *us!* Because \*\*  
 we've never said no. \*\*

62 INT. FORD MAIN PLANT - DAY 62 \*\*

In the more modern main plant, we see Albert, then Dave who is holding up a copy of the Dagenham and Redbridge Echo. BANNER HEADLINE: **MANAGEMENT DENY CRISIS**. Then we hear Rita's voice, gliding, over the picture. \*\*  
\*\*

RITA \*\*  
 We've meekly stepped forwards, despite \*\*  
 what we've seen with our mothers and our \*\*  
 grandmothers and we've taken our pay \*\*  
 packets and we've tugged our forelocks \*\*  
 and we've said "thank you very much." \*\*  
 Well, no more! The time has come for all \*\*  
 women to say: Enough! We do *not* accept \*\*  
 this! \*\*

We hear applause. And see Eddie, smiling bashfully, as a picture of Rita, campaigning, is pointed out to him, beneath the banner. \*\*

63 EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY 63

The applause fades as Rita steps down from the platform. She is immediately approached by several reporters and other union officials.

ALBERT  
 Rita...

She turns. Albert indicates a young man who stands away from the crush.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
 There's a bloke here from The Times.

Rita tries not to react. MUSIC ENDS

64 EXT. BARBECUE - DAY 64

A copy of The Times sits on a recliner beside the crystal clear water of an outdoor swimming pool into which children are leaping. It is red hot and the vast garden of JEB HARDEY, sixty, boss of Ford America, looks Panavision wide and technicolour bright.

His senior management team are with him, gathered around a barbecue at which he cooks, while their wives deal with the children.

KRONNFELD

I thought your boy said he could handle this?

A man with a leathery face and buzz cut hair stares at Tooley who sighs.

KRONNFELD (CONT'D)

And do we even know what we're dealing with here? Socialist Workers Party;  
(MORE)

KRONNFELD (CONT'D)

Workers Revolutionary Party;  
 Revolutionary Communist Party?...Who's  
 she with?

He holds up a photo: RITA.

TOOLEY

I don't think she's *with* anyone. I don't  
 even think she's a communist. She-

HARDEY

Looks a lot like Rita Heyworth. Very  
 sexual woman.

Hardey flips a burger. All of the other men stare at him,  
 then carry on.

TOOLEY

She hasn't got a background in politics,  
 in or outside the union, her husband's a  
 moderate...She's just got a beef-

KRONNFELD

A beef! That's what she's got? Bobby, if  
 this woman gets what she wants and Ford  
 Motors is forced to introduce equal pay  
 for men and women in the UK...we'll end  
 up havin' to do it right across the  
 world!

A noise. The old bugger heard that alright - and has  
 dropped his barbecue prong on the floor, a hot dog  
 impaled on its end. His demeanour has changed. He no  
 longer looks an affable old fool. He looks hard and  
 stares at Tooley with cold eyes.

HARDEY

Deal with it! Now!

65

EXT. GARDEN AT NUMBER TEN - DAY

65

Mrs Castle sighs, frustrated.

BARBARA CASTLE

Prime Minister...I'm not sure you quite  
 appreciate what I'm saying...

Harold Wilson turns. He has a dog on a lead. Mrs Castle  
 looks at it distastefully. Wilson considers Mrs Castle  
 and then walks on. She follows, struggling, as her heels  
 sink into the grass. Two of her undersecretaries follow  
 her.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)  
 As of 5pm last night, there were 403  
 strikes in progress nationally. With a  
 further fifty set to commence today-

She stops suddenly. Because Wilson has stopped. Because  
 the dog is clearly about to take a crap. He looks at it  
 fondly. Mrs Castle winces-

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)  
 It's anarchy, Harold!

He hears her aggrieved tone; turns, awkwardly.

HAROLD WILSON  
 And I'm not saying I *won't* legislate-

He stops; looks back down. The dog has finished already.  
 He frowns.

HAROLD WILSON (CONT'D)  
 It's always white when he goes to the  
 toilet. But he never eats anything white.  
 (Mrs Castle is stunned)  
 Mary gives him the odd fruit gum-

BARBARA CASTLE  
 Prime Minister-

He blinks; he hears his title; as he was supposed  
 to...But the dog now trots on. Wilson gladly follows. And  
 Mrs Castle, too! She will not be deflected-

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)  
 -You asked me to do this job; you  
 appointed me-

HAROLD WILSON  
 You're very capable, Barbara-

BARBARA CASTLE  
 I know I am! Provided I get some support!  
 (sinks again, yanks her foot  
 free and catches up)  
 You *must* introduce new bills; which give  
 me the power to regulate the Unions! I  
 can't get the county back to work  
 otherwise-

HAROLD WILSON  
 I understand that...  
 (she looks hopeful)  
 But all *I'm* saying...  
 (her heart sinks)  
 (MORE)



HAROLD WILSON (CONT'D)

-is that we have to acknowledge that without the unions there would be no Labour Party...

One of her undersecretaries leans in.

UNDERSECRETARY

They currently provide 80% of Party funding, Minister. It's a very close relationship-

She stops; so does he.

BARBARA CASTLE

Young man! I was a member of the Trades Union Movement while you were still at your mother's breast...So unless you have something to add which goes beyond the blindingly obvious, I'd prefer it if you kept quiet!

The man remains rooted to the spot, terrified, while Mrs Castle totters on, catching up with Wilson.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

Harold, no body supports the Unions more than me. But the situation is out of control-

(shouts)

The tail is wagging the dog!

This stops him. He looks back, cornered. But then he smiles.

HAROLD WILSON

Jack Scamp!

(her face falls)

He's your man. Any...impasse...get Jack in. Sits them all round a table; beer and pork pie. Straight taking negotiation...

(nods)

He's the way forward.

Mrs Castle takes a deep breath and nods.

BARBARA CASTLE

Beer and pork pie...Might not do for the latest one. Down at Ford.

(Wilson frowns)

187 Machinists. All women...Perhaps get a finger buffet in, eh?

She turns, starts to walk, sinks, takes off her shoes then strides back across the lawn, thunderous.

66 OMITTED 66 \*\*

67 INT. TUBE - DAY 67 \*\*

A city gent, in suit and bowler, stands silently with many other commuters on their regular run into the City. He looks uneasy. And as we pass along his carriage, we see the girls crushed at its far end, chatting excitedly, their protest paraphernalia causing considerable disruption. The city gent looks distastefully away. But then he leaps and his hand goes to his backside. Someone has pinched his arse. Then we see Brenda, close by. She smiles sweetly.

67A EXT. LONDON TUBE - DAY 67A \*\*

The girls emerge from the tube, blinking into the bright sunlight. They are gossiping madly, excited and some, a little overawed. \*\*

RITA \*\*

Come on, then, girls! Get yourselves organised! \*\*

EILEEN \*\*

Anyone fancy a Wimpy?...I'm starvin'- \*\*

Rita turns, distracted- \*\*

MONICA \*\*

We ain't got time to see the sites, have we? \*\*

RITA \*\*

No, we have not! \*\*

Now Sandra appears in tiny shorts and a skimpy top. She looks round, urgently. \*\*

SANDRA \*\*

Where's all the press, then? \*\*

CONNIE \*\*

We ain't there yet! \*\*

BRENDA \*\*

We gotta get to parliament first, you silly sod- \*\*

RITA \*\*

(frustrated) \*\*

Exactly! \*\*

BRENDA \*\*

So?...Which way is it? \*\*

Rita looks round. Then she sighs, having to come clean- \*\*

RITA \*\*  
(to girls) \*\*  
I think it's this way, isn't it? \*\*

The girls all look in different directions. Clearly no one knows. \*\*

68 EXT. PARLIAMENT - DAY 68 \*\*

The girls stand on a small lawned area outside the Houses of Parliament. They unroll banners, hold up placards and huddle into a group. \*\*

MONICA \*\*  
(worried) \*\*  
Rita! \*\*

Rita looks up from where she's unrolling a banner. Monica is nodding across the lawn. Rita follows her gaze and sees a dozen press men now approaching. Rita stands. \*\*

CONNIE \*\*  
Go on, Rita...Tell 'em what's what- \*\*

And Rita nods, stepping forwards to meet them. Eileen then leans into Connie. \*\*

EILEEN \*\*  
I can't help thinkin' some of us are here \*\*  
for different reasons than others- \*\*

She nods to the other side of the lawn where Sandra is posing for two photographers who have approached from a different direction. Brenda grins. \*\*

BRENDA \*\*  
Naah. Fair play to her...she never gives \*\*  
up. \*\*

The press shove closer, asking questions. A second and Sandra is back, shoving in next to Connie- \*\*

SANDRA \*\*  
It's actually quite interesting, \*\*  
politics. When you get down to it... \*\*

\*\*

69 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 69

Mrs Castle sighs. She is leafing through more reports of industrial unrest. Then she becomes aware of the pips outside-

70 EXT. PARLIAMENT - DAY 70

Interviews over, the girls are gathered beneath Rita's banner. Another car toots...and another. The girls wave. Men shout encouragement.

CONNIE

It's unbelievable...I never thought we'd get this backing-

More pips and shouts. A driver leans from the cab of a passing van and calls across.

DRIVER

Here, I finish work at four. Give us a call!

His mate laughs. The girls wave back, blithely. More pips and Rita frowns. She looks up, at the banner she holds. A moment.

RITA

Girls...I think we're not entirely unfurled.

All of them look up to the banner. It says: WE WANT SEX

71 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WHITEHALL OFFICES - DAY 71

Mrs Castle looks out of her window. Sees the banner.

BARBARA CASTLE

I know the feeling.

She walks back to her stressful work. While outside we see Connie help Rita frantically untwist the banner which is now lain on the grass. WE WANT SEX EQUALITY is revealed. Rita, flustered, gestures for the girls to re-group. Most are giggling.

72

INT. DOCK CLUB - DAY

72

A TV IMAGE. OF THE PROTEST JUST SEEN, OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT.

REPORTER

What makes this strike different-  
-is that it's not about a specific pay  
settlement-

THE TV PICTURE CUTS TO THE REPORTER AT WESTMINSTER. HE  
TALKS TO CAMERA NOW-

REPORTER (CONT'D)

-but the whole issue of sex  
discrimination-

THE TV PICTURE CUTS TO RITA. SHE IS BEING JOSTLED OUTSIDE  
WESTMINSTER. FLASH BULBS POP AROUND HER AND MICROPHONES  
ARE SHOVED INTO HER FACE.

A cheer in the background. And ON SCREEN we see-

REPORTER THREE

How long are the girls prepared to stay  
out?

REPORTER TWO

It must be starting to bite now-

RITA

As long as it takes-

REPORTER TWO

Does your husband support you in all  
this?

Another cheer in the background.

EILEEN

He has to!

RITA

He...supports me...We always support the  
men when they come out.

REPORTER THREE

What about the other Ford women; in  
Liverpool? Are they behind you?

RITA

They will be.

Several reporters call out. One persists.

REPORTER TWO

Does it bother you you've been described  
as a Revlon Revolutionary?

REPORTER

Have they been in touch? About doing some modelling work for them.

Laughter from the reporters. Rita smiles.

RITA

I prefer to concentrate on the issues of the strike-

A PHOTO FLASHES. RITA TURNS HER HEAD TOWARDS IT. THEN THE TV PICTURE CUTS TO OUTSIDE THE AMERICAN EMBASSY.

TV NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

-After the March protests in Grosvenor Square, this months student riots in Paris-

TV PICTURE IS REPLACED BY A TEST MATCH.

DAVE (V.O.)

Ha! Ain't that somethin'?

73

INT. DOCK CLUB - DAY

73

Dave and Eddie turn from the TV, pints in hand.

EDDIE

Yeah. She's doin' alright.

DAVE

And she mentioned you...On the television...

(jabs finger at Eddie)

You gotta smart woman there, Eddie.

Eddie nods, uneasily. Then smiles. He glances at his watch.

EDDIE

I gotta get goin'-

DAVE

Already?

EDDIE

I know...I gotta fetch the kids...

(Dave frowns)

Rita reckons they won't be back 'til gone six, so...I need to get 'em sorted.

He smiles ruefully at Dave and downs his pint.

GEORGE

You tell her to get her finger out. When you see her.

And for the first time we notice George, sitting on a stool by the bar. He stares at his half of mild, not looking at Dave or Eddie.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Gone on long enough now.

EDDIE  
(laughing)  
I don't think they're deliberately draggin' it out, George-

GEORGE  
It's alright for you and him. Two wages in the house. I've got me war pension and I've got what she earns. That's it...I can't afford a bastard strike.

EDDIE  
I know that...And they'll settle it; soon as they can.

George says nothing more. Eddie nods and goes.

74 EXT. LIVERPOOL FACTORY - DAY 74

A coach pulls up outside a factory gate. On it is written: FORD, HALEWOOD. Rita gets off. Several of the girls follow.

75 EXT. LIVERPOOL FACTORY - DAY 75

Rita stands on a soap box outside the main factory. She is sweating, passionate, addressing a crowd of women.

RITA  
-You're doin' the same work for Ford, here in Liverpool, that we're doin' for 'em down in Dagenham. So you *know* that our job is skilled...But I'm askin' you to think beyond that...I'm askin' you to strike now for *all* women, not just machinists, until every one of us gets fairness and is entitled to the same pay as men!...Will all those in favour, put their hands in the air now, please-

They do. Rita beams, delighted.

76 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING 76

The kids sit at the dining room table. Smoke spills from the kitchen. They glance at each other. Look slightly worried.

77 INT. RITA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING 77

The kitchen is a mess as Eddie, sweat dripping from his nose, tries to fry a piece of liver. A huge flame leaps up from under the pan as spitting oil hits the gas. Eddie leaps back, cursing, then goes back to the food, his jaw tight.

78 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING 78

Eddie drops newspaper wrapped fish and chips onto Sharon's plate. Sharon glances at Graham. She is struggling not to snigger as she undoes the package and takes a chip. Graham laughs out loud as he receives his bundle of food. Eddie looks thoroughly pissed off.

79 OMITTED 79

80 INT. BUS - EVENING 80

The girls drive back from Halewood. Rita, sitting at the front, with Connie beside her, glances out over burnished countryside, a low red sun throbbing in the sky. Across the aisle, also at the front, Sandra has a transistor radio on her lap, a single ear piece in. She starts to sing, quietly as she looks out of the window-



SANDRA

Once upon a time, there was a tavern,  
 where we used to raise a glass or two-  
 (Brenda, next to her, looks  
 across)

Remember how we laughed away the hours-

Brenda starts to sing. And then Connie joins in.

BRENDA, CONNIE

Think of all the great things we would do-

Rita sings. And others, too. Sandra realises, then,  
 smiling, continues in full voice with the rest:

ALL

Those were the days, my friend, We  
 thought they'd never end, We'd sing and  
 dance forever and a day-

(Rita laughs)

We'd live the life we'd choose, We'd  
 fight and never lose, For we were young  
 and sure to have our way-

81 EXT. BUS - EVENING

81

The bus slips through the warm, summer night-

ALL (V.O.)

La La La La La La-

81A EXT. HOPKINS HOUSE - DAY

81A

Hopkins opens his front door and approaches Tooley, who  
 is getting out of a taxi.

HOPKINS

Welcome. How was your flight?

TOOLEY

Long.

HOPKINS

I'm so sorry to drag you over.

TOOLEY

They're taking this very seriously. At  
 board level.

HOPKINS

Come in. My wife's cooking dinner...

They walk into the house.

82

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE - NIGHT

82

Hopkins passes into a modern, late sixties, detached house. Tooley follows.

TOOLEY

Really, I don't want to be any trouble.

\*\*

HOPKINS

Honestly...Least I can do...Let me take your coat.

Hopkins wife appears in a pinny. Lisa.

HOPKINS (CONT'D)

Lisa...This is Robert Tooley-

TOOLEY

Delighted to meet you at last.

LISA

Likewise.

They shake. Then Hopkins hands Tooley's coat to Lisa.

TOOLEY

I was saying to Peter; I'm quite happy to  
eat later; at the hotel-

\*\*  
\*\*

HOPKINS

Nonsense! She loves to cook.

(glances at Lisa)

Don't you?..Just relax. Have a drink.

I'll run you back when we're finished.

Hopkins passes his coat to Lisa too and ushers Tooley through into the sitting room. Lisa looks at the coats and then hangs them up.

83

INT. RITA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

83

Rita walks into the house, excited. The place is chaotic but it seems hardly to register as she smiles, seeing Eddie arriving at the foot of the stairs. He bends stiffly to pick up some clothes, then straightens and spots her. She beams.

EDDIE

Go alright, then?

RITA

I slaughtered 'em! Every single one come out!

EDDIE

Well done.

He moves into the kitchen and starts to collect the plates. She follows.

RITA

It was incredible though, Eddie! To start with. A load of 'em said, while they was happy to support their fellow machinists...union solidarity and all that...they didn't actually agree with equal pay as a principal. Men deserved more...Can you believe that?

He looks at her; her ebullience. And suddenly feels troubled. But he manages a smile.

RITA (CONT'D)

I'll go and check on the kids. Give 'em a quick kiss.

She pecks him on the cheek and goes. He stares at the cluttered table. His effort. Anger swells.

EDDIE

Yeah. I managed alright. Thanks.

84

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE - NIGHT

84

Lisa clears away. Bottles of beer sit on the table.

TOOLEY

Thank you.

HOPKINS

Can you bring some brandy glasses back in with you?

She nods and smiles. Then turns to go.

TOOLEY

Lisa...You must have a quite head on your shoulders...Peter tells me you read history. At Cambridge-

LISA

Yeah-

She nods, proudly but then suddenly becomes aware of the plates in her hand. She puts them on the sideboard.

TOOLEY

So whadda you make of our little problem; over at the factory?

(nods to Peter)

Think maybe he's a bit too much velvet glove and not enough iron fist?

She seems uncertain, then shrugs, relaxing.

LISA

I don't actually. Just the opposite. Look at Vauxhall. They don't appear to have any problem with the unions and that seems to me because General Motors have a much more collaborative approach to management. Whereas at Ford, you seem only to deal with the unions because you have to...You tolerate them. And as a result they're much more entrenched and aggressive in the way that they deal with you.

Tooley looks at her. Then he smiles.

TOOLEY

That's a very...progressive point of view, Lisa.

(turns to alarmed Hopkins)

Isn't it?

He stares at Hopkins, his expression at once benign but threatening. Hopkins hesitates, then turns to Lisa. He smiles, but it's a fragile thing. Then-

HOPKINS

Cheese.

LISA

What?

HOPKINS

We've...got some  
Stilton...Why don't you...get that  
out?...Some grapes.

Lisa is wrong footed. She looks to Tooley for support. He doesn't meet her eye.

TOOLEY

That'd be terrific.

Hopkins smiles, relieved. Lisa colours; she is dismissed. She picks up the plates, glances at her husband and leaves the room.

85 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

85

Lisa drops the plates into the sink and leans back against the draining board, trembling. On the table is a copy of the Daily Mail, it's headline: FORD WOMEN FIGHT ON. Beneath it is a picture of a rally and a woman speaking out. There is something familiar about the woman. Lisa crosses and picks up the paper. Her face - as she sees it is Rita.

86 EXT/INT. RITA'S HOUSE - DAY

86

Rita checks the temperature on the oven. Then she crosses to her bag which is on a chair beside the set kitchen table and removes her purse. It is empty.

\*\*

Her jaw tightens and she crosses to a cupboard near the door. Inside is a metal box, full of shoe polish, cloths and brushes. Also in there is a puncture repair kit. She opens this and reveals some crumpled notes and a few coins. She takes some of the cash, not all, and shoves it into her wallet. She grabs her bag and hurries into the hall.

87 EXT/INT. RITA'S HOUSE - BALCONY - DAY

87

Graham is coming downstairs.

RITA

It's in the oven. Don't burn yourself-

He wordlessly moves into the kitchen. And Rita pulls on a jacket. She turns and stops. Sharon is there. Her hair is in pig tails. One bunch is massively bigger than the other, while one is a tangled mess.

RITA (CONT'D)

What happened?

SHARON

Dad.

Rita stares and goes towards her. Then she stops.

RITA

I gotta go see Albert. Just tell him to  
have another go.

\*\*

Sharon slips into the kitchen and Rita ties on a head scarf as Eddie comes down the stairs. She nods to the kitchen.

RITA (CONT'D)

's all ready...  
(crosses to placards against  
wall)  
You're alright gettin' 'em off to school,  
aren't you?

He watches her pick up the placards.

EDDIE

Course.

She turns. Immediately he moves towards the kitchen.

RITA

Eddie-  
(he stops)  
Everything's okay, innit?

He stares at her, then shrugs.

EDDIE

Yeah. Why wouldn't it be?

She smiles, relieved and moves to the door. He watches her, then fingers the collar of his shirt.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

This is me last one.

RITA

What?

EDDIE

Shirt. I just noticed.

RITA

(wrong footed)  
Yeah...Sorry. I missed washin' Monday.  
I'll do it tonight.

He nods. And walks into the kitchen. A second. Rita stares at the empty doorway then leaves.

88

INT. DAGENHAM DOCK CLUB - DAY

88

The girls are queuing up for strike pay which Albert hands out from a table near the stage. There is much banter between the girls.

Rita passes Albert a sheet with names on it and removes one covered with signatures.

ALBERT  
Thanks Rita-

A young woman steps forward-

\*\*

MONICA  
Monica Dawson-

ALBERT  
There you go-

He passes her the list. She signs and then Rita hands her three notes. Monica stares at the money.

RITA  
It's still three quid, love. Don't matter how you count it!

MONICA  
I know...just...'bout covers me rent and that's it-

EILEEN  
Hey, Mon; you're short of anything, you just gotta ask-

Eileen is next in line. Monica smiles, grateful. But then she shakes her head.

\*\*

\*\*

MONICA  
No. I'm alright. Thanks. I'll manage.

\*\*

\*\*

ALBERT  
It's all the Union can afford, Monica...

She nods. She knows that. And she goes, slipping the money in her purse. Eileen steps forward-

EILEEN  
Eileen Scott.

She bends over to sign. Brenda waits two or three girls behind her and lights a cigarette. She sucks greedily on the fag, then notices a woman waiting behind her, about thirty, looking longingly at the fag-

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

BRENDA  
It's me last one. Sorry, love.

\*\*

\*\*

She shows her the empty packet. The girl smiles, disappointed. She nods, looks ahead, towards Albert.

\*\*

\*\*

Brenda sighs. She takes her cigarette from her mouth, and tears it in two.

\*\*

\*\*



She lights one end against the other and then gives half  
to the girl who beams, delighted.

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

\*\*

89 INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - DAY

89

Monty stands with Grant and Hopkins. He tries to look confident. In fact, he's uneasy. The whole room is. Then, suddenly, the door bursts open and Tooley strides in, a file under one arm. He slings it onto a far desk as Hopkins tries to assert control.

\*\*

HOPKINS

Monty. This is Mr Tooley. He-

TOOLEY

I need you to break the strike for me, Mr Taylor...As soon as you can.

\*\*

\*\*

Monty glances at Hopkins who also looks a little surprised. Monty scoffs.

MONTY

I'm not sure you appreciate whose side I'm on-

TOOLEY

Oh, yes, I do. I've been going through your file-

MONTY

File?

TOOLEY

You're on your side, Mr Taylor.

\*\*

MONTY

I beg your pardon!? I-  
(to Hopkins)

I don't have to listen to this-

He moves towards the door

TOOLEY

Keep going! And six months from now, your union won't exist.

Monty stops. Despite himself. He turns back.

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

Industry can't afford to pay women the same rates as men. Fact. If it's forced to, it will collapse under the extra wage bill, its workers will be laid off, their union subscriptions will disappear and so, finally, will the unions which collect them. That's you...Monty.

(MORE)

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

Which means you will no longer have a  
reason to visit these gentlemen here via-  
(flips open file)

The Berni Inn, is it?...The Queen's Head,  
The Chequers-

(looks up)

Jeez, that's a lot've restaurants...Not  
to mention the all expenses paid trips to  
the party conferences. Union conferences-  
(spots something)

To Paris! The Gallic rank and file. Good  
on you, Monty!

Monty blinks; afraid. Tooley walks across and leans right  
into him.

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

These women get what they want, you're  
fucked. So why don't you start thinking  
less about what your union can do for you  
and more what you can do for your  
union...Go break the strike!

Monty trembles, humiliated, then walks numbly from the  
office. A long silence. Tooley looks to the others.

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

Personnel files...Everyone's got a weak  
spot. You just gotta find it.

90

EXT. RIVER PLANT - DAY

90

The women are now on picket before their entrance gates  
and a lorry delivering supplies, turns away in support of  
them. The women all cheer. The lorry pips as it drives  
back up the road.

BRENDA

Definite.

Rita frowns; looks over to Brenda and Eileen

EILEEN

Maybe if I was desperate.

BRENDA

He was lovely! And supportive-

EILEEN

He had cross eyes-

Rita sees a figure approaching-

RITA

Hello, love! Thought you weren't comin'-  
 (hands across money)  
 Got your strike pay. Albert let me have  
 it-

Connie looks at it, takes it and nods. But she is hassled. She places her bag on the kerb beside several others, then steps across to join the chatting girls. Rita lowers her voice.

RITA (CONT'D)

You alright?

CONNIE

Yeah...Fine.

Connie looks up the road. But she is aware of Rita staring at her; not convinced. Connie sighs, then steps back to rummage in her bag: a diversion. Rita moves over. Connie lowers her voice.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

-Was a load've press outside the Labour Exchange. They cornered George...

(Rita is confused)

"Had he fought for a country where the women'd turn out to be more militant than the men?"-

RITA

Silly sods.

Connie frowns; that's not what she meant.

CONNIE

Yeah.

But then, a bell sounds briefly. Rita looks across. A dark blue police van pulls up.

SANDRA

What they doin' here?

Three or four policemen get out of the van.

BRENDA

Hello boys. Nothin' too physical. Til we're on first name terms. I'm Brenda-

The girls all laugh. A young PC, about twenty, speaks:

COPPER

You gotta move.

The hilarity stops in an instant.

RITA

What?

COPPER

You're trespassin'.

RITA

No, we ain't. We're picketin'-

COPPER

You can't. Not here.

CONNIE

(annoyed)

Yes, we can. It's our right!

COPPER

Not here!

He is firm. The girls are stunned.

COPPER (CONT'D)

You can do it at the bottom of the High Street-

(points way back to town)

But this road, all the way back to town, Ford built. So it's private property and since you're on strike you're actually out of contract which means you are trespassin'. You gotta move to the public highway-

CONNIE

We can't turn the lorries round from there-

COPPER

I'm sorry!...Look, who's in charge?

Everyone looks at Rita but Connie steps forward.

CONNIE

I'm shop steward-

Rita turns, wrong footed-

COPPER

Right. I need you to get these women out of here.

He nods and then opens his arms wide as if to corral the women up the road-

CONNIE

Get your hands off me-

COPPER

I ain't touched you-

RITA  
It's alright, Connie-

CONNIE  
No. It ain't alright!

COPPER  
(to Connie)  
Will you just move-

CONNIE  
No!

Rita is worried, the situation starting to boil-

BRENDA  
Yeah, sod off! We ain't doin' nothin'  
wrong-

The women link arms. Connie is on the end of the line.

COPPER  
You are! And you gotta shift!

He shoves Connie forwards. She pulls away.

CONNIE  
Get off me! You ignorant bugger-

COPPER  
Right! Lads-

He beckons the other coppers. And grabs Connie.

RITA  
Leave her!

CONNIE  
Get off!

COPPER  
Come here-

Connie kicks her heel hard into his shin. He cries out, letting go. But the other coppers grab her as the girls shove back against them. A huge melee ensues. The press take photos and Sandra tries to smile, even as she's shoved one way and the other. In a moment, though, Connie, screaming, is extracted, shoved in the van and the coppers are away. Silence immediately falls and Rita looks to Brenda, shocked.

91 INT. RIVER PLANT, CORRIDOR - DAY

91

Monty stands looking out of a window at the aftermath of the skirmish. A pay phone is close by, on the wall. Monty feels sick.

92 INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

92

A clock ticks. And ticks. Then we see George. He sits at home. He is in an armchair but is perched right on the edge of the seat. He looks at the time. Then back to a spot on the far wall. He suddenly screws his eyes tight shut and grimaces. A second and he opens his eyes again. Wherever he is, he's utterly terrified.

93 INT. POLICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

93

Brenda, Rita and Eileen are all piled into the station and Rita speaks to the uniformed desk clerk. She is incredulous.

RITA

You can't just keep her in.

CLERK

We can do what we like while she's hysterical-

RITA

Course she's hysterical! She's been in a bleedin' police cell all afternoon-  
(gathers her own emotions)  
Please. Just let me speak to her.

CLERK

She ain't allowed visitors-

RITA

I'm not visitin'! I'm tryin' to sort things out-

TOOLEY (O.S.)

Excuse me!...Can I help here?

Tooley pushes through the women.

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

I only just found out...A question of trespass, I gather? On Ford property?

CLERK

Who are you?

TOOLEY

(pushing ID over)

I represent Ford Motors, Sir, and we have no desire to press charges here.

(Rita stares at Tooley,  
immediately uneasy)

Protest is a basic right in all free and democratic countries.

CLERK

There's also a matter of assault-



TOOLEY

Is that so? Well, I'm quite sure it was a minor thing. And with all these ladies here as witnesses, plus the view of another of my employees who clearly saw the incident with the middle aged woman...I'm sure you'd be just as happy as me if it went right away.

The clerk hesitates, then bolts from his desk into a back room. Tooley turns, smiles.

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

Robert Tooley, Mrs O'Grady. A pleasure to meet you.

She's shocked he knows her name. Then Tooley produces a card from an inner pocket. He holds it out-

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

Anytime you wanna come in, have a chat with me...

(she takes the card)

Talk about settling this thing-

(she looks him in the eye)

Just give me a call.

(starts to go; looks back)

It's my job to make things happen, Mrs O'Grady. I *can* make all sorts of things happen.

And he's gone.

BRENDA

Christ...I thought Boris Karloff was scary.

Rita nods, gathering herself and her tumbling emotions.

RITA

It's fine. We can handle him...Shows how much they're frightened of us...Sendin' in the heavy brigade-

A cheer of support. Rita makes to say more-

But a voice cuts through.

CONNIE

Can we go now...I wanna go home.

Connie is there; standing by an inner door which closes behind her. She is visibly upset. The girls flock to her. A half beat and Rita, a little awkward, goes, too.

93A

EXT. CONNIE'S HOUSE

93A

Connie enters her house.

94 INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

94

Connie closes her door. She looks pale. A second as she gathers herself. Then she walks towards the sitting room, calling out, brightly-

CONNIE  
I'm back, George-

But there is no-one there, his chair empty.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
George?

She passes into the kitchen. Nothing. And now she's looking slightly anxious. She calls generally, to the house...

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
I'm home, love-

And she hurries from the kitchen to the stairs. We see her run up them.

CONNIE (CONT'D)  
George!

Then we hear her upstairs. Front bedroom, back bedroom and running back down the stairs. She looks scared.

95 EXT. WASTELAND - LATE AFTERNOON

95

George wanders across a bleak, barren expanse of open ground. His steps are jerky, ragged. He looks wretched.

96 EXT. DAGENHAM ESTATE - LATE AFTERNOON

96

We hear shouts from the girls. They are calling George's name as they search the estate. Rita and Connie appear at the foot of a twitchell.

CONNIE  
Christ-

RITA  
He'll turn up-

CONNIE  
I said. I said I'd be back at two-

RITA  
Connie-

CONNIE  
(shouts)  
George!

Rita looks stressed but knows she must remain calm.

RITA  
Maybe he's down the Dock Club-

CONNIE  
(bitter)  
What with?

They hear Brenda calling George. Then see her, emerging from a side road, unsuccessful. Connie looks dreadful. Rita, too.

97

EXT. WASTELAND - LATE AFTERNOON

97

Graham, still in school uniform, carrying a football, heads home. He frowns; recognising the figure sitting on a fly tipped bench. It is George. Graham moves over.

GRAHAM  
Hello Mr Andrews...You alright?

George says nothing. There is a hint of spittle in the corner of his mouth. Graham is unsure. He glances round, then sits beside George.

GRAHAM (CONT'D)  
Just been playin' football. I was Bobby Moore...  
(nothing from George)  
I should get home for me tea-

He starts to move. But George reaches out and takes his hand. Graham is shocked at first; but then he looks into George's eyes and sees the fear. And shock gives way to worry and he finally sits back, holding the older man's hand.

98

EXT. EDGE OF WASTELAND - ESTATE - LATE AFTERNOON

98

Connie, Rita, Eileen, Monica all crying out for George. And in them all we hear the gathering concern, the insistence.

CONNIE  
Oh, God! Where is he-

She seems about to set off in another direction when she stops. Her breath catches. There he is. Walking with Graham. Graham still holding his hand. Graham bringing him home. Connie's eyes fill and she runs towards her husband. Rita exhales, feeling the gathering pressure.

99

INT. RIVER PLANT - AFTERNOON

99

Gordon sits in the empty warehouse reading the paper. A man with a clipped 'tash and severely parted hair stands to one side shouting into the phone.

FRANK

Don't you take that tone with me! I-

(stops; listens; then-)

There aren't any! That's what I'm sayin':

You've had 'em all! There are no more

finished seats...full stop!

He slams the phone down. Then he takes a deep breath and gathers himself. He walks past Gordon who looks up from his paper.

GORDON

Frank!

Frank glances across

GORDON (CONT'D)

What do you want me to do, then?

FRANK

(matter of fact)

Go home.

GORDON

What?

Frank stops by the door. He turns; looks serious-

\*\*

FRANK

No more seats...no more job.

\*\*

Frank leaves. Gordon's face as he realises he's being laid off. He is stunned. And angry.

100

INT. FORD MAIN PLANT - AFTERNOON

100

The assembly line stops.

101

INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - AFTERNOON

101

Hopkins scrambles for his phone, terrified and dials-

102

EXT. DAGENHAM HIGH STREET - AFTERNOON

102

A pale Rita walks through Dagenham's deserted streets. She is exhausted. But then, a man cycles up the hill. Then another. She checks her watch and frowns. Too early.

But more sweep by until finally, a huge tide of cyclists pass by her. One or two men glance at her as they go. Finally, she stops an older man, moving slowly.

RITA  
What's goin' on?

MAN  
You done it...  
(she is uncertain)  
They've laid everyone off-  
(she blinks)  
You've shut the factory down.

He rides on. Rita wobbles.

RITA  
I...I gotta see Albert.

Rita runs off, through the tide of men flooding onto the streets.

103

INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - AFTERNOON

103

Tooley watches Hopkins who paces his office.

HOPKINS  
That's it. We're bugged! We can't make cars with no bloody seats in 'em!

He inadvertently snaps a pencil he's holding. He throws it in the bin.

TOOLEY  
Relax-

HOPKINS  
Relax! The entire workforce of my main plant is going home!

TOOLEY  
Good.  
(Hopkins blinks)  
This is what we want-

Tooley is smiling, reasonable. Hopkins, incredulous, makes to speak-

TOOLEY (CONT'D)  
We're trying to make the girls go back to work.  
(MORE)

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

And now, we've got five thousand men out of a job, as well...Their husbands and boyfriends...Which means, in a very short time, when those men can't afford their booze and their soccer and their gambling...they'll do our job for us...

104 INT. CAFE - NIGHT

104

Albert and Rita stare at the facade from inside a CAFE. Albert still wears his Ford overalls. A note pad sits beside them on the table and several empty packets of crisps are screwed up in the ashtray.

ALBERT

Now's the critical time, Rita. You gotta drive them girls forward-

RITA

I know that!

She does. And he smiles, nodding, acknowledging it.

ALBERT

You need to keep an eye on the Union, too. Now the lads've all been made redundant. They'll be nervous. And Monty! Ford's rattled him. I can tell. So careful what news you share with him!

\*\*

\*\*

She nods. Meets Albert's eye. He suddenly smiles and clenches his fists.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Hold on tight, girl.

105 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

105

Rita hurries into the house. She's flushed.

RITA

I'm back-

She nips into the kitchen which is in a mess. She opens the fridge. It is bare. There is a tiny piece of cheese and after checking it, she devours it. Then she walks towards the front room.

RITA (CONT'D)

Eddie?

She peers round the door. It's empty.

106

INT. RITA'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

106

Rita slips into the bedroom. Eddie is laying in bed. He is reading a Haynes motorcycle Manual. He looks across and goes back to the book.

RITA

You alright?

EDDIE

Yeah...Been busy, have you? \*\*

She is instantly energized, moving to the bed and sitting close, her gaze intense. \*\*

RITA

Final push, Eddie; we gotta plan. The entire Main Plant closed down. Ford can't afford that-

He's looking at her now and she stops; realises- \*\*

RITA (CONT'D)

I mean...I'm sorry, love...It's had to come to this. For you and the lads... \*\*

He stares. Then looks back to the book. \*\*

EDDIE

Oh, don't you worry about us, Rita...We was sayin' on the way out, it's nice warm weather at the moment; if they cut the gas off, we'll hardly notice.

He glances back and smiles. Then, it's face in the book again. Rita frowns. Is he joking? She stands and moves across the room and starts to undress. She turns to him, however; can't let it go.

RITA

Thing is, I know how you feel, love: gettin' laid off. 'Cause've all them times us girls've supported you men; and it's meant no work for us.

He looks across the room. His eyes fiery. Half a second and he puts a lid on his emotions.

EDDIE

Yeah.

Then he's back to the book. She stiffens even more.

RITA

If you've got somethin' on your mind, Eddie-



EDDIE  
I'm fine...I'd say.

Beat. She crosses to take off her make up.

RITA  
Good. Cause I ain't had the easiest of  
days meself-

Click! His half of the room plunges into darkness. Rita stares across at Eddie, sees his hand move from the lamp to the bed while his back remains resolutely turned towards her.

107 INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

107

Connie is in bed, asleep. George is beside her. Suddenly he starts to pant. The panting gets louder and faster, as if he is hyperventilating. Connie moans, starts to wake.

GEORGE  
Fuckin' skip, fuckin' skip-

CONNIE  
George-

GEORGE  
Closin' in! He's...closin'-

He shouts out. Connie turns on the light.

CONNIE  
George, George, stop it-

GEORGE  
Ahh! Ah!

He cries out the last time, wide awake. Then he sees it's her. He blinks, starts to slow his breathing.

CONNIE  
It's alright. I'm here....It's okay.

She stares. He says nothing, whimpers. He looks at the bed. Then he curses, feeling something-

GEORGE  
Oh...

He shifts over. The bed is wet through.

CONNIE  
It don't matter. I'll change it...Here-

She drags him onto her side, towards the foot of the bed. He watches her. Then his face twists.

GEORGE

What the fuck do you care?

(she is confused)

You'd sooner they threw us in the sanatorium...Or the fuckin' poor house-

CONNIE

(wrong footed)

What?

GEORGE

(nodding; manic)

I know what you're up to...This strike. Back your mates...Then when we haven't got a pot to piss in, with a bit've luck, the Social'll have me, eh?

CONNIE

(upset)

No! You-

GEORGE

And then you can move another one in...Real fuckin' man...Look after you proper-

CONNIE

(angry)

Don't say that!-

GEORGE

Give you a bitta cock-

CONNIE

George!

A second and he launches himself at her-

GEORGE

You fuckin' cow, you-

He knocks her backwards and drags himself up her body. She immediately tries to pin his arms to his side but he is flailing, crying out, howling like an animal-

CONNIE

Stop it! George! Stop it! You're gonna hurt me!

And then we see him bite her, on the shoulder, like he is stuffing a rag in his own mouth. She cries out, in pain. But she grits her teeth, baring it. And finally, his wailing reaches a pitch and he slumps against her, spent and sobbing. Connie looks bereft, her own eyes filling immediately. She pulls him to her, holding his head against her chest. His convulsing body shakes the whole bed.

GEORGE

I'm sorry...I'm sorry-

She holds him. And we pull back and see them both, huddled together, in their small dark bedroom.

108 OMITTED 108 \*\*

109 OMITTED 109 \*\*

110 OMITTED 110 \*\*

111 EXT. DAGENHAM TOWN CENTRE - AFTERNOON 111

Rita walks through town. She approaches a large brick building: Department of Labour and Social Services, Employment Exchange. One or two men pass inside and several more are gathered in groups by the gate. Rita sees them, crosses the road, and accelerates. She slows at a bus stop. She lights a cigarette with unsteady hands. Then she stops. Someone is there; it is Gordon. She smiles, relieved.

RITA

Hello, Gordon-

GORDON

Don't you fuckin' hello me!

(she blinks, shocked)

You don't have to work. You got an husband. My missus don't have to. You do, 'cause it's nice. It's a bit extra. But you don't *have* to...I *have* to fuckin' work. To pay the electric and the food and the coal. The fuckin' basics. Only now I can't. I can't shift what ain't there...You fuckin' idiot.

He strides off. Rita doesn't move, feeling sick.

112 OMITTED 112 \*\*

113 EXT. REAR OF CONNIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON 113 \*\*

Rita passes down the side of Connie's house. She looks upset still. \*\*

RITA \*\*  
 Connie...You in? \*\*

She peeps over the wall. Connie is sitting on a chair by the door, bucket at her feet, peeling potatoes- \*\*

RITA (CONT'D) \*\*  
 Could do with seein' a friendly face- \*\*

She flashes an injured smile but immediately Connie's own expression shifts; becomes guilty, evasive. And Rita looks concerned. \*\*

114 EXT. REAR OF CONNIE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON 114

Rita stares at Connie, upset and panicky.

RITA  
 You can't just stop-

CONNIE  
 I'm not stoppin'. I'm still on strike. I still support you- \*\*  
 (Rita makes to speak) \*\*  
 I can't...be on the front line so much, that's all- \*\*

RITA  
 But we need you...at the meetin's and...The younger girls look up to you- \*\*

CONNIE  
 You're in charge, Rita! You wanted to be in charge! Of this dispute. \*\*

Rita looks upset by that one and it forces Connie to turn away. She tries another tack. \*\*

CONNIE (CONT'D) \*\*  
 I got arrested. They put us in a cell. It's too much for me! \*\*

Again they make eye contact. And this time Rita knows Connie's making excuses. Connie sees this and exhales; unable to keep up the pretence any longer. She scoffs, sadly. \*\*

CONNIE (CONT'D)

What do you want me to say, Rita? George  
is ill. You know that! He's touched. And  
the strike's whippin' everything up...I  
gotta put him first-

\*\*  
\*\*

(Rita makes to speak)

You don't understand!

\*\*

(frowns)

I'm not his wife no more. I'm more like  
his...sister or-

(stares at Rita)

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

But I'm his. And that's all he's got left.

\*\*

Rita stares at her friend, her heart breaking.

\*\*

RITA

And I ain't sayin' you gotta give up on him, Connie. Just...

\*\*

(imploringly)

You count, too. Your life...And you gotta allow it to blossom, just a bit...Or the war's gonna destroy two people, Con! And that would be so wrong.

Connie stares hard at Rita.

115 INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - DAY

115

Tooley walks into the office where Grant *is* working. He is tense and opens a drawer aggressively. Grant closes a filing cabinet. Nothing. He sighs. But then he notices an old copy of the Dagenham and Redbridge Echo, folded on top of the cabinet. On it is a picture of Sandra, in hot pants.

\*\*

GRANT

Mr Tooley...

Tooley turns, eyes greedy; he heard a thought there-

116 INT. BRENDA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

116

Rita addresses a number of the girls, driving herself, as well as them, on.

RITA

We gotta stand firm. Everyone of us! It *ain't* easy...And it's gonna get harder now. Cause we ain't caved in how they thought we would. Which means they're desperate...But we've got this far, so we can get a bit further...as long as we stick together.

Rita nods, exhausted. Then she sees Connie at the back of the room. She smiles at her gratefully.

117 EXT. BRENDA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

117

The girls are starting to emerge from the house. They pass between Eileen and Brenda who hold sacks of garden produce.

EILEEN

Don't forget your veg, girls-

She hands a cauliflower to the first girl leaving-

BRENDA

I will pass on a personal thank you to Mr Horovitz from every single one of you-

She hands out veg, too. Connie, still deep in thought, grabs a cabbage and heads off, hardly acknowledging the girls.

EILEEN

She alright?

Rita is outside, too, also watching Connie leave. She turns to Eileen.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

She looks tired.

RITA

Naah. She's...she's fine...

The last cauliflower is handed over. Brenda beams as she tips the sack upside down.

BRENDA

Yes!

Monica emerges and takes Eileen's last item. Brenda immediately grabs her sack.

\*\*  
\*\*

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Thank you-

\*\*  
\*\*

She smiles at the girls.

\*\*

BRENDA (CONT'D)

I may be some time...

\*\*

She hurries off.

\*\*

EILEEN

More beets'd be nice!

\*\*

(back to Rita)

I reckon it's serious. He give her a pineapple the other day.

\*\*

Rita smiles but she's still worried. And another thought occurs:

\*\*

RITA

Here, what happened to Sandra? She don't usually miss.

MONICA

Oh, she's had some trouble at home-

\*\*

Rita frowns, worried.



MONICA (CONT'D)

\*\*

They cut off the electricity, apparently-

RITA

Oh, no, I...I ain't got nothin' I can give her-

MONICA

Hey! Rita! It ain't your responsibility...It's what you just said, innit? It's gonna get tougher...And we all know that.

\*\*

Rita stares at **Monica** and nods.

\*\*

118 INT. PHONE BOX - ESTATE - AFTERNOON

118

Sandra stands very upright in the phone box. She looks agitated. The 'phone rings and she grabs it.

SANDRA

Hello-

(posher)

Hello...Yes...Yes, it is...That's right.

He said you'd call...

(excited)

Really...?

(worry)

Oh, I see...No, I didn't realise

that...Well, I dunno, I-

(listens; brightens)

Yeah? That would be nice...I mean, it makes sense, dunnit...Okay. **Thank you.**

\*\*

She hangs up. She looks guilty. But set on a course.

119 EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

119

Rita walks down the road, turns a corner and stops: from her house, two men are wheeling her fridge onto the back of a lorry. Eddie walks onto the doorstep, watching the scene. Rita hurries over and turns to him.

EDDIE

Last of mine went on the electric bill.

How you set?

Her jaw tightens.

120 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

120

Rita runs angrily into the kitchen. She goes straight for the shoe polish box, pulls out the puncture repair kit and opens it. It is bare. She looks furious-

121 EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

121

Rita strides over to Eddie-

RITA  
You spent the money-

EDDIE  
Eh?

RITA  
You spent the last of the emergency. Out  
the repair kit.

EDDIE  
I had to pay the milk man.

RITA  
Why?-

EDDIE  
What d'you mean-

RITA  
We could'a kept him off til next week-

EDDIE  
He wanted payin'!-

RITA  
And you shoulda told him we didn't have  
it!  
(he makes to speak)  
Christ, Eddie, I'm in charge of the money-  
!

EDDIE  
Well, you ain't much good at it are you!  
Or we might have some left!  
(she blinks, shocked; he  
scoffs)  
Welcome to the real world, Rita. This is  
bein' on strike: you run out of cash and  
you end up screamin' at each other.

She stares at him, ashen.

RITA  
What happened to you?

Rita Stares then hurries off.

122 EXT. ESTATE / SANDRA'S MUM'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

122

Rita and Sharon, in school uniform, walk down a street.  
Rita strides ahead pulling Sharon along. Sharon winces.

SHARON

Ow. Mum!

Rita stops. Realises what she is doing.

RITA

I'm sorry. Sorry, sweetheart.

She bends down and kisses her hard on the cheek.

SHARON

Why we comin' this way-

RITA

Cause we're gonna see Aunty Sandra...She needs cheerin' up.

Rita stops and knocks on a door. It opens. Sandra's mum. Rita smiles at her sympathetically-

RITA (CONT'D)

Hello, Marge. Is she in?

MUM

No. She's gone to the factory.

(proud)

That Mr Tooley rang her. Asked for her personal.

Rita's face. Fear.

123 EXT. RIVER PLANT - AFTERNOON 123

Sandra waits outside the factory. She looks nervous. She walks in.

124 OMITTED 124

125 INT. MAIN PLANT - AFTERNOON 125

Music plays quietly in the background as a photographer in his late forties, bearded, leans in towards Sandra. She wears an evening dress and long gloves. She is positioned between the harsh machinery of the shop floor and a brand new Ford Executive Saloon.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Terrific Sandra. Head a little higher.

SANDRA  
Like that?

She twists. Looks over one shoulder. She's a natural.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Yeeees! Beautiful!

And even as he says it, at the side, a door opens and Rita and the other girls rush in-

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)  
Bit nearer...Flat hand on the roof.

And they stop, amazed. They stare at Sandra. She looks extraordinary. Beautiful, transformed. And momentarily, they are neutered, unsure what to do. But then Sandra, as she turns, sees them.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)  
Okay. Openin' the door now. Lookin' back to the machine's-

But Sandra slows, can't do it with the girls watching. And finally she stops. Then the photographer becomes aware of the other women, too, Rita to the fore now.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)  
Right...Not to worry...Why don't we have a break...You can go back to the caravan, Sandra. Get changed for the next set up!...You've done brilliantly.

Sandra stares at the girls and then rushes out in the opposite direction, slipping on a silk dressing gown as she goes.

126

INT. WARDROBE TRUCK - AFTERNOON

126

Sandra sits before a mirror, staring at herself. Then, in the mirror, she sees Rita enter at the back of the waggon. She turns. A moment.

SANDRA  
It's all I've ever wanted.

RITA  
I know.

Sandra's eyes fill. She shakes her head.

SANDRA

I don't really care about equal  
pay...Still a shitty factory, with dead  
birds and rain comin' in and like a sauna  
in the summer and dirty and-  
(cries; screws up face)  
I want more, Rita-

And now she's crying. Rita runs across.

RITA

Hey-

Rita comes across and hugs her. When Sandra speaks it's  
between sobs-

SANDRA

Tooley said he'd shown me photo...Out the  
paper...And this photographer'd said I'd  
got what it took-

RITA

(fondly)  
You have-

SANDRA

It's for a brochure. Only trade but it  
could lead on...Foot in the door, you  
know-

(breath catches)

I don't wanna let you down. I just-

RITA

You ain't let us down. You ain't gone  
back yet, have you...?

(Sandra looks to Rita  
hopefully)

I mean, that is the deal, innit? They let  
you do this shoot and you agree you'll  
return to work...Only that second bit  
ain't happened so...

She smiles. And then Sandra looks horribly compromised

SANDRA

But...They won't use the photos, unless,  
I-

She stops; the choice is clear.

RITA

Sandra...You look amazin'...I mean, you  
are a model. You were doin' it, in there.  
They couldn't get better...You could  
though...Now I seen it. You really  
could...But it's up to you in the end.

Rita walks out. Sandra looks pale.

127 INT. RIVER PLANT - AFTERNOON

127

The photographer, now back, glances across to Brenda and Eileen, nervously. And then Tooley suddenly appears. He looks worried. He sees the two women also, and fears the worst. But then, the far door opens and Sandra walks in. She looks scared but determined as she crosses the shop floor-

PHOTOGRAPHER

Brilliant, Sandra. That's great-

He moves into position. Tooley looks triumphantly to Brenda and Eileen who stand with Sharon.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

Same as before. Loads've oomph, loads've energy...

Sandra slips off the dressing gown

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

Loads've, Christ-

He stops. Sandra is down to her bikini. And written on her body in red lipstick is: EQUAL PAY

SANDRA

How's that look?

Tooley trembles with suppressed rage.

128 EXT. FACTORY - NIGHT

128

The factory is deserted; shut down still and creaking with inactivity.

129 INT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - DAY

129

George sits in the kitchen. He has the paper before him but doesn't read it. Then Connie enters. She is dressed up and grabs a hand bag.

GEORGE

You're goin' are you?

She turns. Frowns.

CONNIE

You know I am. I said. It's an emergency meetin'...Rita asked me to go, 'special-  
(He stares. Nods)

You gotta fight for what you believe in, George. You know that. More than anyone.



He stares.

GEORGE

You think I'd do the same again. If another war come round?

CONNIE

I know you would...Cause you're an hero.

He stares. There is utter conviction on her face.

GEORGE

I love you.

She frowns. Wrong footed. Then there is a knock on the door. It opens.

RITA

Con. You all set?...George-

Rita smiles at George. Connie looks from Rita, back to her husband. He smiles.

GEORGE

Go.

She does and the door closes. George smiles again.

130

INT. UNION OFFICES - DAY

130

Rita looks nervous. She glances at Connie. They sit in the little ante-room where Albert had been before his bollocking. And suddenly it is Albert who appears, walking in from the main office. He turns to the room behind him in which we see Bartholomew, Rogers, Monty and a couple of other Union Reps. Albert smiles at them, confidently, then virtually closes the door behind him.

ALBERT

This way, please, ladies-

The women move across. Albert lowers his voice to a whisper-

ALBERT (CONT'D)

They've hung you out to dry. Lads in the other unions've had enough. Whatever they say now, don't believe it and we'll sort it out after-

(normal voice)

If you'd follow me-

He throws open the door again and leads the women into the main chamber.

131 INT. UNION OFFICES - DAY

131

Rita's jaw is fixed. She glances at Connie.

BARTHOLOMEW

We are absolutely behind you still, Rita.  
You and the girls...We ain't sayin'  
otherwise-

ROGERS

And as you can see, we have got other  
representatives from the other Unions  
here to pledge-

RITA

You ain't got 'em all though, have you-

Albert flashes her a glance. She bites it-

BARTHOLOMEW

No...But we're very confident  
we'll...prevail. The thing is, though, as  
we've got the National Conference comin'  
up...down Weymouth...The most sensible  
thing, probably, would be just to go to a  
vote-

MONTY

Which would be the actual, final, and  
bindin' position, I believe, Comrade?  
After which it'd be out our hands.

BARTHOLOMEW

That's right, Monty. But like I say,  
we're expectin' full support.

He looks Rita in the eye.

132 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - AFTERNOON

132

The line up of Barbara Castle's posh, public school,  
undersecretaries. They beam. Then we see Mrs Castle. She  
looks uncertain.

UNDERSECRETARY

The Unions are turning!

UNDERSECRETARY TWO

The other unions, Minister! Normally,  
they all band together-

She turns on that one-

BARBARA CASTLE

Yes. I gather it's called Solidarity-

UNDERSECRETARY

Only, they're not...Being solid. The men want to return to work. So they're telling *their* unions to withdraw support from the machinist's union and to actively put pressure on the women to end the dispute...

(beams)

They'll be back within the week.

Barbara Castle stares. Is that a tiny hint of disappointment?

BARBARA CASTLE

We'll see...

The men glance at each other, confused.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

You're assuming the girls will do as they're told.

She smiles and walks out of the room.

133

EXT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - DAY

133

Rita and Connie pass down the lane. They are fired up.

RITA

They must think we was born yesterday-

CONNIE

That Monty's a sly one, though, inni?

(mocking)

"Will the Weymouth vote be bindin' Comrade?"

RITA

(laughs)

See how he looks when we turn up down there! Put our side of things-

They pass through the gate.

CONNIE

Sod him...You're right. We can deal with him!

RITA

We can deal with anyone, Con!

They both laugh and Connie opens the door. She screams. In the centre of the room, hanging from the ceiling, a belt around his neck, is George. He is wearing his RAF Best Blue. Rita makes a guttural, animal-like noise and then runs into the house. Connie follows, realising what Rita intends.

And Rita is there already, grabbing George round the thighs and trying to take the weight off his neck.

134 EXT. CONNIE'S HOUSE - DAY 134

A police car and an ambulance are parked on the road. A small crowd has gathered to watch. Rita is standing a little away from the scene, staring at the house. She can see Connie, through the front windows, on the settee, a blanket around her shoulders, being passed a cup of tea by a policewoman.

135 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY 135

The machinists are all gathered for George's funeral. A couple of RAF greatcoats can be seen. Possibly ex crew...they're George's age. Connie stands with Brenda. Rita is with Eddie and the kids. Albert is there, too. The service nears its end and finally, the vicar closes his prayer book and moves away. The crowd presses up to Connie and people start to pass on their condolences.

RITA  
I'm sorry, Connie.

Connie nods, smiles, but doesn't look Rita in the eye.

CONNIE  
No, you're not.

RITA  
What?

CONNIE  
You thought he was a millstone. You thought he was keepin' me back-

One or two heads turn.

BRENDA  
Hey, Connie that's enough!

Connie finally looks at Rita.

CONNIE  
I should have been there.

Brenda leads Connie away. She has started to cry. Rita watches, her expression frozen. Eddie takes her hand supportively.

136 EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - EVENING 136

Rita is alone now. We sense she's not been home all afternoon. She walks slowly onto her street, exhausted.

And then she stops. A car is parked close to her house. Lisa's. She climbs from the vehicle and smiles. Rita does her best to return the gesture as she reaches the car.

RITA

This is a surprise.

LISA

Yeah. I'm...sorry it's so late...I nearly didn't come at all.

She's nervous. Rita is too numb to see it.

RITA

You wanna pop in? I...be honest, I ain't feelin' the most chatty but-

LISA

No...I really don't want to keep you, I just-

She looks at Rita; and loses her nerve. She smiles instead.

LISA (CONT'D)

Mr Clarke has been asked to leave the school.

(Rita frowns; the name cuts through)

We won. They're getting rid of him.

Rita manages to smile.

RITA

That's great. That's...brilliant.

Lisa nods. A beat. Rita looks to her front door-

LISA

I'm married to Peter Hopkins. At the factory...

(Rita is stunned)

Had a feeling you didn't know...And **I** didn't know...who you were...the strike.

She nods emphatically and smiles. Rita frowns.

RITA

I...don't understand. I-

(suddenly upset)

If you've come here to tell me to back off...I wasn't jokin'; what's gone on today and I'm warning you-

LISA

Keep going! Please. Please keep going.

Rita looks down. Lisa has gripped her wrist. Then Rita looks back into Lisa's eyes.

LISA (CONT'D)

Do you know who I am, Rita?

(Rita is confused)

Who I actually am? I'm Lisa Burnett. I'm thirty one years old, with a first class honours degree from one of the finest universities in the world and my husband treats me like I'm a fool.

Rita blinks and Lisa smiles, fondly-

LISA (CONT'D)

When I studied...for my degree...I was...very happy.

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)

All sorts of reasons...Especially the work...I loved to read about all these extraordinary people. *Making* history. I always wondered what it felt like...

(nods)

Let me know will you...When you've finished doing it.

(kisses her on the cheek)

Don't let me down.

She gets into the car and drives off.

137 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - EVENING

137

Rita passes into her bedroom. She stares out of the window. And suddenly, she starts to cry. Great sobs which she bites back as she tries to keep quiet. And gradually, as she clenches her fists, she manages to calm herself. She takes a deep, steadying breath. Then she crosses the room and looks at herself in the dressing table mirror. She is a mess. A second and she grabs a hanky, licks it and removes her smudged make up. Another beat. She stares at herself, determined.

138 EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - DAY

138

Eddie's motorcycle is loaded with camping kit. He pushes himself back from under the side car and stares at Rita incredulously.

EDDIE

You're goin'? To Weymouth?

Then he looks back to his wife. She says nothing.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

It's...the holiday, it's...campin'. We go campin'-

RITA

I can't-

EDDIE

Why can't you-

RITA

Because-

(gritted teeth)

If I don't see it through...Then it has all been for nothin'...

She stares at him. Then she picks up her case and walks off down the street. He watches. His chest heaves. But then, he looks compromised. And he calls out-

EDDIE

Rita!

He runs after her.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Rita!-

He catches her up. She turns.



RITA

What?

EDDIE

We gotta sort this out. Now!

(she makes to speak)

No...We have and...I know it ain't been good...between us lately-

(again she tries to speak)

Which...I ain't about to make worse, I promise, only...We gotta stop the rot or-

RITA

(weary)

Eddie-

EDDIE

Listen to me!

His impassioned expression slows her. He focuses.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Look. If I ain't...appreciated what you done, properly...how you've come on and...what you've achieved, all that...then I'm sorry-

She doesn't want this; looks down the road.

RITA

I gotta catch a bus-

EDDIE

Rita! I *am* sorry...But you ain't been perfect in all this either, you know...I mean, just cause you believe in a particular thing with all your heart, that don't mean it actually *is* the most crucial thing in the whole world...

RITA

This really ain't the time, Eddie-

EDDIE

Yes! It is! Cause it needs sayin'! I know you reckon I'm not bothered about the important things and I just...drift along and I'm more interested in fiddlin' with motorbikes and makin' tents out of head rest covers but...I do me best. You know?

(scoffs)

Christ, I'm not out on the beer every night or...screwin' other women, or-

(a thought)

I've never once raised me hand to you!

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Ever. Or the kids. And-

(He stops. She is smiling)

What? Why you lookin' like that?-

RITA

You're a saint. That's what you're tellin' me, Eddie? You're a bleedin' saint! Cause you give us an even break...

(thunderous)

That's as it should be...Jesus! What **do** you think this strike's been all about? It ain't about us gettin' special treatment, you know...Kid gloves...It's been about fairness. What's proper....And you stand there now and lecture me about countin' me blessin's...

(nods)

Well, you're right actually...You don't knock us about, you don't drink, you don't gamble, you do join in with the family...

(through gritted teeth)

That's-as-it-should-be!...Try and understand that. Please. What you're talkin' about now...what I've been fightin' for, the last few weeks...Same thing...Rights. Not privileges.

She marches off and Eddie watches her go. He sways, as if he has taken a punch.

139 EXT. DAGENHAM TOWN HALL - AFTERNOON 139

The last of the girls climbs onto a coach. Rita looks back at the streets of Dagenham and climbs on also-

140 INT. COACH - AFTERNOON 140

The coach is full. Rita's seat is at the front as usual. The seat next to her, Connie's, is empty. Rita catches Brenda's eye and then she sits, alone.

141 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON 141

Eddie sits at the kitchen table, thinking. He looks shocked. He blinks, noticing the unpacked camping gear leant against a couple of protest placards. He exhales slowly. But then, Graham enters the room. He sits next to his father. Eddie looks at him. Graham smiles. It's fine. A long moment and Eddie straightens.

142 EXT. NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON 142

The kids stand with a woman on her doorstep and wave as Eddie zooms off on his motorbike. He doesn't wave back.

143 EXT. ROAD IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING 143

A hotel with a plush facade, displaying a sign: **The Tadmarton Park Hotel, Weymouth, Dorset Welcomes The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.**

\*\*

144 INT. HOTEL IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING 144

The ballroom is crowded with Union delegates as the Chair, up on stage, a northerner, consults his notes.

CHAIRMAN

Very good, gentlemen. And that brings us to our main item...The ongoing dispute at Ford Motors...Can I call on Monty Taylor, Senior Convenor, Ford Dagenham.

The chairman squints. And out of the darkness comes Monty. He mounts the stage and moves across to the Chair. He whispers and then crosses to the lectern.

MONTY

Thank you Mr Chairman...I shall try and be brief-

He looks to the darkened hall, a glint in his eye.

145 EXT. HOTEL IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING 145

Eddie jumps off his bike and looks wildly round: Shit! The seafront is a mass of hotels.

146 INT. HOTEL IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING 146

Monty is pushing on, scared, but desperate.

MONTY

-Of course we must represent all our members...But we must also remember we live in a democracy. And in a democracy, the wishes of the majority must always hold sway. Therefore-

BRENDA (O.S.)

Monty Taylor! You two faced, hypocritical, toe rag!

A kerfuffle by the door. Monty squints into the darkness. The lights come on. The Dagenham contingent are there, Eileen by the switch, banners at the ready.

MONTY

Now hang on-

BRENDA

No, you hang on-

More rowdiness and shouts of Judas. The whole hall hums. Several delegates stand to see what's happening. Monty has moved to the front of the stage and calls out for the girls to sit down and that he'll explain, while they call back at him. Finally Monty returns and shouts into the microphone.

MONTY

Be quiet!

The noise shocks everyone into silence. Monty is embarrassed and moderates his voice.

MONTY (CONT'D)

Sorry...Gentlemen...We'll sort this out amongst ourselves later-

SCOTSMAN

(shouts; stands)

Hey, Monty! I've seen more of their mugs on the front pages these last few weeks than you've managed in twenty years!

(laughter from crowd)

I wouldnae mind hearin' from 'em.

Shouts of support. Monty looks terrified.

MONTY

No-

More shouts of support. Monty shakes his head.

147 EXT. SEAFRONT - EVENING

147

Eddie walks down the seafront and stops. Parked up ahead is a coach...From Dagenham. He runs past it and into the Hotel outside which it is parked.

148 INT. HOTEL IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING

148

More shouts. Monty looks trapped. Then the sound of slow stamping and clapping. Louder and louder. Then Brenda, Eileen and the others step aside. Rita is there. She walks towards the platform. And Monty looks sunk.

149 INT. HOTEL IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING 149

Eddie looks for a sign and runs towards the doors which lead into the hall.

150 INT. HOTEL IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING 150

Eddie bursts into the hall and stops right at the back. Rita is at the lectern, a light on her. All around is still. She makes to speak then stops, gathering herself; all of the emotion of the last few days sweeping over her. She stares at the people in the hall, their faces turned to her. Waiting...

RITA

My best friend lost her husband recently. Durin' the war he was a gunner in Fifty Squadron in the RAF. He got shot down one time...on a raid to Essen and even though he managed to bail out, he **was badly injured**. I asked him once, why he'd joined the raf and he said...they got the best women...

\*\*  
\*\*

(Laughter in the hall. She nods, upset)

Which they did...

Eddie stares at Rita

RITA (CONT'D)

But then he said, you had to do somethin'. And he'd always wanted to go up in a plane...

Her jaw tightens; she feels the cause start to flood through her veins.

RITA (CONT'D)

You had to do somethin'...That was a given. Cause it was a matter of principle. You had to stand up; do what was right, 'cause otherwise you wouldn't be able to look yourself in the mirror.

(stares at hall)

When did that change? When did we, in this country, start bein' happy, to do nothin'? On what day did we decide we had no duty to fairness no more?

(The hall is silent. She nods slightly)

It has NOT changed.

(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

That is NOT us...It is not you...And we are only in this situation now, where women get paid less money than men for doing the same work...

\*\*

(lets it sink in. Nods)

-because we was tricked. Those in power kept tellin' us: it's fine. You don't need to do the right thing cause there's nothin' needs fixin'. And they said it for so long, we ended up believin' it was right....Well it ain't right!

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

Calls of support. Heads nod in agreement.

RITA (CONT'D)

It was wrong at the start, it's wrong now, and it'll be wrong forever!-

(shouts of agreement)

-unless you back us, you stand up, you remember who you are and you accept, that *this* is a matter of principle. Women are entitled to the same rates of pay as men. And that is it. No matter the cost, no matter the difficulty, no matter them that are gonna lose out, no human being should be punished in the workplace cause've how they was born!

(Cheers. Rita calls above them-)

We are the working classes. The men and the women. We are the furnace which fires the world and without us no-body earns tuppence h'appenny!

(big cheer)

We are *not* separated by sex, only by the will of those who are not prepared to go into battle for what is right - and those who are!

The hall erupts. And leaps to its feet. Eddie sways.

151

INT. HOTEL IN WEYMOUTH - EVENING

151

Delegates pour out, talking excitedly about what they have just witnessed. We briefly see Eddie again, swallowed up by the crowd, being pushed backwards. And then we see our girls, emerging thrilled and elated. We hear odd snatches of conversation above a huge wall of chatter-

BRENDA

(to another woman)

I'm tellin' you! You can see 'em! Scorch marks right up the curtains where Monty's arse caught fire-

The woman laughs. Rita smiles. Her chest still heaves. Eileen grabs her wrist.

EILEEN

Come on, let's have a drink-

RITA

We got no money-

SANDRA

We're all signin' it to Monty's room-

The girls laugh. The scots delegate pats Rita on the back. Some speech. Rita nods, but she is exhausted. Brenda smiles at her.

BRENDA

Hey! Come on...You're allowed to unwind a bit, you know...

RITA

(nods)

Yeah. 'Cept we ain't there yet, Brenda-

She stops. She is looking over Brenda's shoulder, to the other side of revolving doors, where she can see, on the spot where he has been spat out, Eddie. He stares in at Rita. Then, suddenly, he turns and hurries off-

152 EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

152

Rita runs after the retreating Eddie. She calls out to him.

RITA

Eddie...Eddie!

(he finally stops; turns)

What you doin' here?

\*\*

He looks at her; slightly confused. Then...

EDDIE

I...*come* to say sorry. I mean...I \*\*  
 thought...about what you said and-  
 (shrugs)  
 You're right, I suppose...You *are* right.  
 (nods)  
 And it is amazin' what you done...*Rita* \*\*  
*O'Grady*. And I wanna back you...I was \*\*  
 gonna tell you that. Only *then* I come in \*\*  
 when you was speakin' and I heard you  
 and...you was...*huge...you was...like a* \*\*  
*force-* \*\*

He can't express it. Then he looks at her fondly and smiles.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

And *then* I thought...  
 (shrugs)  
 Not sure me backin' you makes that much  
 difference to be quiet honest. *Where you* \*\*  
*are now...* \*\*  
 (serious; positive)  
 Anyway. You get back to your meeting or  
 whatever you gotta do. I should...

He nods, vaguely over his shoulder and sets off, walking-

RITA

Eddie!

He turns again. She shakes her head.

RITA (CONT'D)

You've said some stupid things in your  
 time but...

She runs to him, embraces him and kisses him hard on the  
 mouth. She steps back. He looks stunned.

RITA (CONT'D)

Of course you backin' me makes a  
 difference. It makes all the difference  
 in the world.

She kisses him again.

153

INT. *BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES* - DAY

153 \*\*

Mrs Castle is holding back the slightest of smiles. She  
 is looking at a sheet of paper on her desk while the  
 undersecretaries wait in a line.

BARBARA CASTLE

"The bloody unions are back in line"-



UNDERSECRETARY

It's verbatim.

UNDERSECRETARY TWO

Our man was there.

BARBARA CASTLE

Well, well, well-

(looks to them)

So the strike remains solid. And  
meanwhile, five thousand men have now  
been laid off and the country has lost  
export orders worth 8 million pounds...

(checks notes)

8 million.

She looks back to the undersecretaries.

UNDERSECRETARY TWO

It really *does* seem time to call in Sir Jack.

BARBARA CASTLE

Good...I'll do that then. I'll appoint a Court of Inquiry, which he can oversee. And let's hope that does the job.

She smiles. The men glance at each other and stand.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

Oh, yes. And one other thing...Set up a meeting will you.

UNDERSECRETARY

Minister?

BARBARA CASTLE

With the machinists. Their leaders.

The men glance at each other.

UNDERSECRETARY

Pardon me?

BARBARA CASTLE

I want to meet them. At my St James's Square Offices...At the earliest opportunity.

UNDERSECRETARY

But-

Mrs Castle looks at them quizzically. Yes?

UNDERSECRETARY (CONT'D)

The Minister doesn't. Do that. Never has done.

UNDERSECRETARY TWO

It'll just encourage them.

UNDERSECRETARY

Give credence to their cause.

She looks at them. Long beat. She inhales. Then:

BARBARA CASTLE

I'm what's known as a fiery red head...I hate to make this a matter of appearance...go all womanly on you but...there you have it. And me standing up like this-

(gets to her feet)  
(MORE)

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

Is in fact, just that red headed fieriness, leaping to the fore...

(voice rises furiously)

Credence! I will give credence to their cause? My God. Their cause already has credence. It's equal pay. Equal pay is common justice. And if you weren't such a bunch of egotistical, chauvinistic, bigoted dunderheads, you'd realise it-

UNDERSECRETARY

I-

BARBARA CASTLE

This is an office run by incompetents. And I am sick and tired of being patronised, spoken down to and generally indulged as if I was the May Queen!

(one of the men holds up a tremulous finger, as if to make a point-)

Set up the meeting!

The men scatter.

154 INT. HOPKINS OFFICE - DAY

154

Tooley glares-

TOOLEY

Whaddya mean, The Secretary of State is gonna see the women? On whose say so?

Hopkins faces Tooley; scared.

HOPKINS

On her own, I gather...Apparently, Mrs Castle's quite a forceful woman-

TOOLEY

Is she!

He marches across the office and picks up his phone.

HOPKINS

What're you doing-?

TOOLEY

I represent Ford Motors. We are the biggest car manufacturer in the world. We pump millions of pounds into the UK economy...

(he dials)

(MORE)

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

I think it's time my bosses started reminding one or two people of that fact.

154A EXT. RITA'S HOUSE - DAY 154A \*\*

Eddie's motorcycle pulls up outside Rita's house. Albert waits by the door. Rita looks concerned and quickly jumps out of the side car, hurrying over to him. For once he doesn't look entirely in control of his emotions- \*\*

ALBERT \*\*

There's no need to panic, Rita. Only I've had a call...From Mrs Castle's office- \*\*

Eddie is clambering off the bike but turns suddenly as he hears a sharp scream of excitement. He looks down the drive to Rita who is turned to him, an expression of sheer delight on her face- \*\*

RITA \*\*

Bloody 'ell! \*\*

She grins, thrilled! \*\*

155 INT. RITA'S HOUSE - DAY 155

Now Rita looks concerned as she roots through her wardrobe. She pulls out a dress and turns, holding it up. Albert sits on a chair beside Eddie, Eddie still in his bike gear, sitting on the bed, both gazing across at the impromptu fashion show like rabbits caught in a full headlight glare. \*\*

RITA \*\*

Too short. \*\*

She nods in agreement. Then she looks back and selects another outfit. This she holds up. \*\*

RITA (CONT'D) \*\*

Too formal. \*\*

She nods and she grabs another. She holds this up. But this time she doesn't say anything. She looks to the lads. Albert jumps at the opportunity- \*\*

ALBERT \*\*

Lovely...that is... \*\*

(to Eddie) \*\*

Innit? That's- \*\*

EDDIE \*\*

Yeah. \*\*

They both nod. Her face falls \*\*

RITA

You hate it...

\*\*

\*\*

She looks back to the wardrobe. The lads glance at each other appalled.

\*\*

\*\*

RITA (CONT'D)

I ain't got anythin' that's right-

\*\*

\*\*

And then Rita stops; has an idea...

\*\*

156

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE - DAY

156

Hopkins is back at home. He stares sickly at the front page of the Telegraph which records the ongoing horror of Ford's plummeting sales figures. Then the door bell rings. Hopkins waits for Lisa to answer. But it rings again. He sighs and stands, crossing to the door. He opens it. Rita. He is stunned.

RITA

S'alright. I ain't come to see you. It's your missus I wanna talk to.

Lisa steps forward from behind Hopkins.

LISA

Rita...What are you doing here?

HOPKINS

Rita?!

RITA

I need a favour.

Hopkins is agog. Lisa nods.

LISA

Come inside-

HOPKINS

(annoyed)

Lisa-

LISA

What!?

Her look is hard; combative. He has not seen it before. She holds his gaze, furiously and he steps meekly to one side. Rita enters the house.

157

INT. THE PRIME MINISTER'S CAR - DAY

157

Harold Wilson puffs on his pipe as his official motor sets off around St James's Square. Mrs Castle settles next to him, having just got in. Wilson looks tense and when Mrs Castle raises an enquiring eyebrow, he gets straight to it-

HAROLD WILSON

Have you or have you not invited the Ford women to your offices?

Mrs Castle *hesitates*, momentarily. Then: \*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

Prime minister- \*\*

HAROLD WILSON

I have just spent the last half an hour on the phone to Henry Ford the Second, reassuring him that my government is *not* on the side of the strikers-

BARBARA CASTLE

It's not a question of sides. We *have* to grasp the nettle

HAROLD WILSON

By aligning ourselves with the machinists?

(she makes to deny this)

I wanted you to fix this! Not to make it worse-!

BARBARA CASTLE

And I will fix it! If you'd just...

(can't help it)

Bloody well support me!

This shocks them both. But Wilson can see her passion. He nods. Go on.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

I can resolve this dispute. I *can* get the women *to resume work again*...But you must back me, *Harold*. You must give me power and then stand shoulder to shoulder with me on this. \*\*

Wilson stares. A long beat. \*\*

HAROLD WILSON

Meet the women if that's what you want to do. But don't upset Ford. I've got enough trouble with the Americans as it is.

(MORE)

HAROLD WILSON (CONT'D)

158 EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY 158

Rita strides through Dagenham. Pull back. She wears Lisa's Biba dress. Ahead, the other girls wait for her.

159 EXT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 159

The rather splendid exterior of Mrs Castle's offices.

160 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 160

The undersecretaries are struggling with a sofa. They put it down, then straighten. They are sweating.

BARBARA CASTLE

There. Perfect...Actually...Maybe it was better where we had it before-

(The men exchange glances)

Oh...dizzy me.

The men stagger back with the sofa and she turns away. Up close we see she is nervous. She looks back-

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

Just the armchairs, then...

(she disappears from view)

And I want plenty of sherry.



161 OMITTED

161

162 OMITTED

162

163

EXT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY

163

The girls walk towards St James's Square, followed by the press. A second crowd of photographers and a camera crew, already in-situ, rush forwards to envelop them. Behind, the press who have dogged them all day, also shove forwards and a scrum ensues. Before long, one or two of the girls look overwhelmed and panicky.

RITA

If you could just...can we get through please-

(she, too, is struggling)

You're blockin' the way. You-

CONNIE (O.S.)

Make some room, for God's sake-

Rita stops. Looks across. Connie is coming towards her, shoving reporters aside.

RITA

Connie-

The door opens and an undersecretary steps out.

UNDERSECRETARY

Ladies. Good morning...Could you keep back please, gentlemen-

He and a couple more of the staff shove the press back.

RITA

I...?

CONNIE

I'm sorry I'm late.

The two women stare, Rita's eyes fill. They embrace.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Rita! Rita! Can we have a final comment-

REPORTER TWO (O.S.)

Rita-

RITA

I-

All of the girls are through the cordon and the reporters are pushed back. But still they look formidable-

REPORTER TWO

Rita! Is equal pay really a possibility?

REPORTER THREE

What if Mrs Castle says no deal?

REPORTER

How will you cope?

RITA

Cope? How will we cope?

She is aware of Connie beside her. Eileen, Sandra and Brenda, too. Rita looks back to the reporter.

RITA (CONT'D)

We're women. Now don't ask such stupid questions.

Rita turns to Connie and leads the girls back inside.

164 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 164

Mrs Castle checks the room; with sofas and armchairs arranged in a circle it now looks like a living room rather than a meeting place. She takes a deep breath and crosses to a large armoire at the back of the room. She opens it and selects a jacket from her closet. She plumps for something rather old. She looks at herself in the door mirror. Very sober. Then she checks shoes. The pair we've seen on several occasions are discarded and a plainer pair popped on. There is knock on the door. An under secretary comes in

UNDERSECRETARY

Minister, there's a slight problem.

Mrs Castle turns to the secretary.

164A INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 164A

Mrs Castle walks into a smaller room. A man stands with his back to us. He turns, it's Tooley.

TOOLEY

Mrs Castle.

BARBARA CASTLE

Mr Tooley - I wasn't expecting you.

They shake hands.

TOOLEY

But you are meeting the women?

BARBARA CASTLE

I think it's time I listened to their argument. If you'd care to wait I'll inform you of any decisions we make.

She turns. Tooley watches her; his jaw suddenly tightens-

TOOLEY

You know, we basically want the same thing, Mrs Castle...you and I-

She stops and turns

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

We want to see Ford Motors employing  
British workers.

BARBARA CASTLE

Ford is a vital part of our economy, I'm  
well aware of that-

TOOLEY

Then don't make us go elsewhere to build  
our cars...

It wobbles her. He smiles.

TOOLEY (CONT'D)

If you don't help us hold the line here  
and support us in our efforts to combat  
the constant strikes which undermine our  
ability to make cars at a profit...we  
*will* take our factories elsewhere.

MRS CASTLE

Are you threatening me, Mr Tooley?

TOOLEY

I'm just trying to stop 40,000 people  
from losing their jobs, Mrs Castle.  
That's how many people we employ in this  
country...Neither of us wanna take *that*  
risk...surely?

She holds his gaze. Then she turns away.

164B INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 164B

Mrs Castle closes the door behind her and takes a deep  
breath.

164C INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 164C

Brenda and Sandra look out of a window, pointing out the  
sights. But they're nervous. As is Connie who glances to  
the door. But Rita, who is beside her, sitting on a sofa,  
can concentrate only on her friend. Finally-

RITA

Connie-

Connie turns. Rita speaks with a hushed voice. She  
smiles. Then fudges it-

RITA (CONT'D)

Thanks for comin'.

Connie smiles. And Rita immediately leans closer in- \*\*

RITA (CONT'D) \*\*

I'm so sorry- \*\*

CONNIE \*\*

No! Don't. It's me that needs to apologise- \*\*

(Rita frowns) \*\*

I loved George. More than anything. But when it happened I felt guilty and I took it out on you- \*\*

(nods head) \*\*

But I am glad now, 'cause he ain't sufferin' no more. And that's how he would want me to feel. Which is why he did it. \*\*

(smiles, simply) \*\*

He was such a brave man, Rita. \*\*

Rita is amazed but before she can react, the door is opened and an undersecretary is there. \*\*

UNDERSECRETARY \*\*

The Minister will see you now- \*\*

The women all look at each other. \*\*

165 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 165

They walk into the main office where Mrs Castle is waiting in front of the grand fireplace.

RITA

Mrs Castle?

She turns and smiles

BARBARA CASTLE

I am...And you're Mrs O'Grady. I recognise you from the news.

She crosses and they shake.

RITA

I'm pleased to meet you.

BARBARA CASTLE

And me, you.

Mrs Castle looks to the others.

RITA

Sorry. This is Connie, Brenda and Sandra.

BARBARA CASTLE

I'm delighted you could all come

They all nod. Mrs Castle's brain is racing.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

Please take a seat. Would you care for a sherry?

Mrs Castle, nods to a strategically placed undersecretary.

BRENDA

You ain't got whiskey, have you?

The girls look to Brenda thunderously.

165A

INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY

165A

Tooley is waiting still. He is brought a second cup of tea. He looks irritated.

UNDERSECRETARY

Sugar?

TOOLEY

No.

The undersecretary takes the empty and leaves the full cup. Tooley looks to the door. All alpha male

166 OMITTED 166 \*\*

167 INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - AFTERNOON 167 \*\*

Mrs Castle places her jacket on her chair. She's delaying. Then she turns to Rita who sits directly opposite, a small table between them.

BARBARA CASTLE

I've been following your dispute very closely. And I want to say how proud I am of the battle you've fought. I fully support the struggle for equal pay.

The girls look to each other, flushed with hope.

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

And you *will* have it...But in time.

RITA

What?

\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

Industry *is going to* object. The Lords'll kick up a fuss. *The press'll have a field day...It isn't going to be easy-*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

RITA

What is, that's worth havin'?

Mrs Castle makes to retort then stops and considers the girls. This is difficult. But she drives on-

BARBARA CASTLE

Return to work, get back to your machines and then you have my word that I will push forward with your fight-

RITA

No!

The girls were all thinking it but Rita's vehemence still surprises.

BARBARA CASTLE

Mrs O'Grady-

RITA

That ain't good enough-

(Barbara makes to speak)

We want somethin' now! Somethin' solid-



MRS CASTLE

But-

RITA

You got the authority, you-  
(upset)

\*\*

We thought...seein' you, we'd-

MRS CASTLE

In politics you sometimes have to play  
the long game-

RITA

We ain't politicians! We're workin'  
women. And so are you!

Mrs Castle blinks. Rita too. A beat. Then Mrs Castle  
straightens.

\*\*

\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

Very well. What would it take...? To get  
you back.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

RITA

Excuse me?

\*\*

\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

The something solid...And mark well, I  
say some thing, not everything.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

RITA

We'd need...guarantee of an Equal Pay Act  
and...an immediate and...considerable  
movement towards the male rate at Ford.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

Mrs Castle considers them. Her eyes narrow.

\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

Seventy five per cent?

\*\*

\*\*

RITA

Ninety.

\*\*

\*\*

Mrs Castle's eyes widen.

\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

You're putting me in a very difficult  
position...

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

167A

INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES ANTE ROOM - DA67A

\*\*

Mrs Castle closes the door behind her. Her brain races.  
She turns to an undersecretary in the room.

\*\*

\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

Get me the Prime Minister.

\*\*

\*\*

He picks up the phone. Mrs Castle's jaw tightens. \*\*

167B INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 167B \*\*

Tooley waits, fidgeting. An undersecretary sticks his head round the door with a teapot and an enquiring expression. \*\*  
\*\*

TOOLEY \*\*  
Whadd'ya think? \*\*

The undersecretary ducks away. \*\*

167C INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 167C \*\*

The women sit on the edges of their seats and wait. Rita feels self conscious. \*\*  
\*\*

RITA \*\*  
I wasn't too...aggressive? \*\*

BRENDA \*\*  
Naah. \*\*  
(looks to Sandra) \*\*  
They have got rid of hangin' ain't they? \*\*

Connie simply squeezes Rita's hand. \*\*

167D INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES, ANTE ROOM - DAY 167D \*\*  
DAY \*\*

The undersecretary puts down the phone. \*\*

UNDERSECRETARY \*\*  
He's on a plane. Won't land until this evening. \*\*

Mrs Castle says nothing. Just exhales, slowly. Then she looks to the opposite ends of the room. Two doors. Two choices. She takes a deep breath. \*\*  
\*\*

167E INT. MRS CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 167E \*\*

Mrs Castle strides into Tooley's room. Tooley immediately makes to speak- but Mrs Castle gets there first. \*\*  
\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE \*\*  
That risk; you were talking about, Mr Tooley. I'm going to have to take it. \*\*  
(he frowns) \*\*  
All women are entitled to equal pay and I intend to begin the process of enshrining that fact in law. Whatever the cost. \*\*  
(Tooley is ashen) \*\*  
(MORE) \*\*

BARBARA CASTLE (CONT'D)

So, the question is...do you want to wait \*\*  
until it *is* Law before you get your \*\*  
machinists back to work, or do you want \*\*  
to make a gesture now and see production \*\*  
resume immediately? \*\*

Tooley stares at Mrs Castle. Endgame. Who will back down? \*\*

168 OMITTED

168

169 OMITTED

169 \*\*

169A OMITTED

169A \*\*

169B OMITTED 169B \*\*

169C OMITTED 169C \*\*

169D EXT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 169D \*\*

Eileen, Monica and the other women wait patiently with their banners. Albert appears and dispenses beers. \*\*

169E INT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - DAY 169E \*\*

The women stare at empty glasses. Brenda takes a pull on her whiskey. \*\*

BRENDA \*\*

I'm gonna miss all this. \*\*

The girls smile but they're so nervous. And then the door opens. All heads turn and Mrs Castle walks slowly into the room. \*\*

BARBARA CASTLE \*\*

We have a deal. \*\*

CONNIE \*\*

90%? \*\*

Suddenly, Barbara looks uneasy. She shakes her head. The girls look worried. \*\*

BARBARA CASTLE \*\*

92... \*\*

Rita is stunned. She sees Mrs Castle's twinkling smile. And she, along with the girls, smiles. \*\*

RITA \*\*

Thank you! \*\*

Mrs Castle grabs a glass and toasts with Rita. Brenda smiles and looks to Connie who is grinning, too. \*\*

169E

169E \*\*

170 EXT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - AFTERNOON 170 \*\*

The women look tired as well as happy as they walk into the sunlight. Mrs Castle stops as they are greeted by camera flashes, and turns to Rita. \*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

BARBARA CASTLE

That's Biba... I saw it in a magazine-

Rita nods to Mrs Castle's outfit.

RITA

And that's C and A. I've got one at home... Seems we all dressed up... And you dressed down... Who did that put at an advantage do you think?

Mrs Castle laughs. \*\*

RITA (CONT'D)

After you.

BARBARA CASTLE

Oh, no, young lady. After you. \*\*

Mrs Castle indicates that Rita should step forward first. \*\*  
And Rita moves towards the crowd. \*\*

171 EXT. BARBARA CASTLE'S WESTMINSTER OFFICES - AFTERNOON 171 \*\*

Black and white TV footage. Mrs Castle stands with the girls. She clears her throat.

BARBARA CASTLE

Thank you...Thank you very much...I'm delighted to say that following our talks this afternoon, getting down to the nitty gritty, the 187 Ford machinists will be going back to work on the 1st of July. They will get an immediate pay rise of 7d an hour which will put them at 92% of the male rate. However, this is not an end to it. As a result of our discussion, I can announce that the government is fully committed to the creation of an Equal Pay Act and by the Autumn of this year, I guarantee appropriate legislation will be put into place to ensure that that act becomes law.

She steps back. Cameras flash and reporters call out. Rita breathes deeply, absorbing the scene.

She places her arms around Connie and with Sandra and Eileen and Brenda, they form up as a group. They all beam. SNAP. And the picture freezes.

THE STRIKE BY THE DAGENHAM SEWING MACHINISTS AND THE SUBSEQUENT SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATED THAT AFTERNOON WITH MRS BARBARA CASTLE DID INDEED LEAD TO THE INTRODUCTION OF AN EQUAL PAY ACT. IT BECAME LAW IN 1970.

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DISSOLVE TO:

172

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

172

The deserted factory. But then a bike comes over the hill. A single bike. A woman is on it. Then comes another and another. The women are leading the workforce back and soon the whole road is awash with bikes and people, all buffeted together, a vast sea of humanity, sweeping down the road, back to their jobs.

THE END