

ASTREA
The Femme-Adventures of Aphra Behn

Written by

Mariah Anzaldo Hale

Based on, the life of Aphra Behn

TEASER

INT. LONDON - ATTIC GARRET - 1670 - NIGHT

OVER BLACK. A tedious scratching sound to which music is added.

Dark and cramped. Small window. small table. One candle. A distinguished young woman, her face not revealed, writes with a quill. Inkstained fingers. Ink blotted paper. She tucks a curl behind her ear. This is APHRA (30s, confident, graceful).

EXT. WHITEHALL GALLOWS - DAY

Snow blankets the Palace yard. KING CHARLES I (48) shivers on the scaffold. Gaunt but dignified. His long hair under a cap.

APHRA V.O.

In 1649, after England's bloody
Civil Wars, 59 Parliament men
signed a warrant to execute the
King.

CITIZENS crowd the palace yard to witness the execution. The axe rises and falls. Thud. Groan. The EXECUTIONER holds the dripping head.

Freeze frame on the head

APHRA V.O. (CONT'D)

This was Charles the first. Clearly
not skilled in diplomacy.

BACK TO SCENE

Rushing blood from the scaffold makes a river of red in the snow.

INT. LONDON - ATTIC GARRET - CONTINUOUS

Aphra stops writing. Dips her quill; it tinkles in the claypot. She bites her lip and writes again.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - MANOR HOUSE - NIGHT

The old house is ablaze. Flames escape every window. Rescued goods and furniture scatter the lawn. The FAMILY watches their home burn. A TROOP OF CAVALRY with torches circle their

mounts.

APHRA V.O.

A decade of bloodshed. Royalists
against Parliamentarians against
the Military. Brother against
brother, nephew against uncle,
father against son.

From his mount, an OFFICER carefully aims a wheel lock pistol

Freeze frame on the Officer with the pistol

APHRA V.O. (CONT'D)

England's men are a monumental cock
up.

BACK TO SCENE

He shoots the FAMILY PATRIARCH dead. The Cavalry thunder away
kicking up divots.

INT. LONDON - ATTIC GARRET - CONTINUOUS

Aphra cuts a new quill nib and brushes the scraps to the
floor. Massages the nape of her neck, dips her quill and
writes again.

INT. PARIS - PALACE BEDCHAMBER - DAY

The room is in shambles from the previous night's party. A
tangle of passed out bodies. Guttered candles. Scattered
empty bottles.

APHRA V.O.

Our headless King's heir, Charles
Prince of Wales, is exiled to the
Continent. A King without a
country.

CHARLES II (aged 27), the original frat boy, uber masculine
with long dark hair, is naked in the enormous bed. THREE
NAKED WOMEN in bed with him stir as he reaches over them for
last night's wine.

Freeze frame on Charles

APHRA V.O. (CONT'D)

The penniless bachelor prince fucks
his way through Europe.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. LONDON - ATTIC GARRET - CONTINUOUS

Aphra examines her work. We see she writes in cipher.

EXT. OXFORD - CHAPEL COURTYARD - DAY

ROYALIST SOLDIERS, prisoners of war with tattered red silk sashes surrender muskets to PARLIAMENTARY SOLDIERS marked by yellow sashes. Piles of weapons are stacked on the cobbles. Prince JAMES (17), Duke of York (blonde, pretty boy, snob) hands tied in front of him, is marched into the yard.

Freeze frame on James

APHRA V.O.

The second son, James, Duke of York, now heir to his brother's useless throne is imprisoned by Oliver Cromwell in England.

BACK TO SCENE

James is stripped of rank and sword, his conceited fury palpable.

INT. LONDON - ATTIC GARRET - RESUMING

Aphra puts down the quill. Consults her cipher disk. Dips her quill to write again.

INT. LONDON - APOTHECARY - DAY

Parliamentary soldiers ransack the shop.

Freeze frame on soldiers

APHRA V.O.

Rebellion meant to create equality instead becomes Cromwell's military dictatorship, and then his personal rule. Land and wealth are confiscated. Royalists flee the country.

BACK TO SCENE

Ransacking continues. The APOTHECARY and his FAMILY watch in fear.

INT. LONDON - ATTIC GARRET - CONTINUOUS

Aphra pulls a woolen shawl on her shoulders. Dips the quill and continues to write.

INT. LONDON - TAVERN - NIGHT

A rowdy candlelit pub full of PEOPLE eating and drinking.

APHRA V.O.
Chaos rules. Conspiracy is rife.
Every man takes a side. Royalist or
Cromwell. Some take both sides.
Often they change sides.

SPY MAN 1 inconspicuously leaves a sealed letter on a table.

Freeze frame on the letter

APHRA V.O.
No man can be trusted in this
lawless England...

BACK TO SCENE

SPY MAN 2 walks by and stealthily picks it up.

INT. LONDON - ATTIC GARRET - CONTINUOUS

Aphra dips her quill and holds the pen over a blank sheet of paper. A drop of ink hanging from the nib splashes loudly on the page. Like canon shot. Poised to write, APHRA looks up; her eyes bore through the lens.

APHRA
...But a woman can.

END OF TEASER

ACT I

EXT. WESTMINSTER - STREET - DAY

A brick enclosure wall runs parallel to the street.

SUPER (written in cipher, it transitions to English):
"Salisbury House, The Strand, London. 14 years earlier"

It's pouring. A younger Aphra (17) walks along the wall clutching a book. Filthy hem, muddy shoes. Swollen lip, dry bloodied nose.

EXT. WESTMINSTER - SALISBURY HOUSE ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

A grand Tudor red brick manor. Aphra pulls the bell at an immense door. A footman opens. (20s, quirky, in full livery uniform) This is NIGEL and he is not happy to see her.

NIGEL

What happened to you?

Freeze frame on Nigel: His boyish face screwed up in distaste.

APHRA V.O.

Nigel. 23. Lady Carlisle's loyal footman. Jack-of-all-trades. Smarter than he looks. Adorable but penniless.

BACK TO SCENE

NIGEL

Why are *you* at the front hall?

APHRA

Nigel. I can explain--

NIGEL

--The Countess isn't here.

APHRA

I know. She's in The Tower and the guard won't let me in....Just for one night Nigel? I've no place to go.

NIGEL

Mmm. I heard. And no you may not.

APHRA

Then allow me to leave a note--

--He shuts the door on her. Aphra looks at the camera.

APHRA (CONT'D)

He doesn't like me.

EXT. TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

View from the Thames of the massive Tower walls and infamous water gate.

SUPER: (cipher transitions to English) "Tower of London. The same week"

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - OUBLIETTE - DAY

Pitch black; A trap opens from above and daylight streams in. A woman shields her eyes and looks up haughtily.

EXT. ST. GILES - ALLEY - NIGHT

A dark, fetid cobblestone gutter.

SUPER: (cipher to English) "St. Giles Parish, London"

Aphra hunkers down on the wet stones. She holds her book to her chest trying to stay awake. A militia TROOP loudly pass the alley. There are sounds of a street brawl. A horse and cart clop through nearby puddles. She nods off.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - OUBLIETTE - RESUMING

More sunlight fills the oubliette. The woman wears an expensive gown worse for wear, and an elaborate baroque pearl necklace. A rope ladder tumbles down.

EXT. ST. GILES - ALLEY - NIGHT

Aphra jerks awake. A DRUNK MAN is vomiting on her shoes. Aphra tears off the vomitty shoe and throws it at him as he stumbles away.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - OUBLIETTE - RESUMING

The woman pats her brow and futilely smooths her mussed hair. Then climbs the rope ladder as if it were a grand staircase.

EXT. ST. GILES ALLEY - DARK MORNING

A girl bops tipsily through the alley mumbling to herself. She stumbles over Aphra. This is PHOEBE (early 20s, West African, delightful).

PHOEBE
Where'd you come from love?

She tosses coins which land in a puddle. Aphra eyes the money but doesn't reach for it.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Wot Luv? Been a bit since you've
seen a few pence?

Freeze frame on Phoebe

APHRA V.O.
Phoebe. West African Princess by
way of Barbados. As of this moment,
my only friend in the world.

BACK TO SCENE

Aphra picks up the wet coins. Phoebe fingers Aphra's lace collar. Aphra pulls away.

PHOEBE
That's pretty lace....
I'm not gone to hurt you now, am I?
... when d'ya last eat?

Aphra looks wary.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Been a bit. Idn't it?

Phoebe moves for a clear look at her face.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Aren't you a pretty one. Under the
muck. Aven't seen you 'ere
before.... No one's offered miss
some bread for a screw?

Aphra slightly ticks up her chin.

APHRA
I'm not a harlot.

PHOEBE
Well aren't we posh. I can see ye
don't belong here.

APHRA
There's no place else to go.

Phoebe walks away.

PHOEBE
Right then. I've got someplace.
Come. Let's get some food and some
warm.

Phoebe turns back when Aphra doesn't follow.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Well I'm not gone to beg
now, am I.

Phoebe walks on. Aphra weighs her decision and looks at the camera.

APHRA
Anywhere is better than here.

Then grabs her muddied book to follow.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - DUNGEON - RESUMING

The prisoner woman wearing the elaborate pearl necklace is LADY LUCY Percy Hay. Countess of Carlisle. She faces the Puritan sour Spymaster JOHN THURLOE. 40s. In all black. Sinisterly attractive.

THURLOE
Had enough, Lady Carlisle?

Freeze **frame on Thurloe** looking pinched.

APHRA V.O.
John Thurloe, 40. Secretary of
State. Cromwell's Spymaster.
Ruthless. Puritan. Sadist.

BACK TO SCENE:

LADY LUCY
I've had worse.

Freeze frame on Lucy: Conceited and glamorous.

APHRA V.O.
Lucy Percy Hay. Countess of
Carlisle. Spy, Virago, cunning
political animal.
(MORE)

APHRA V.O. (CONT'D)

My guardian and mentor. More droll
aunt than loving mum.

BACK TO SCENE:

THURLOE

I see Constable let you keep your
pearls.

LADY LUCY

Yes. Well, Essex knows better than
to insult a Percy. Which is more
than can be said for you.

EXT. ST. GILES - STREET - RESUMING

Aphra trails Phoebe. Then stops dead; a MURDERED SOLDIER at
her feet. His face gruesomely unidentifiable. Phoebe picks
his pockets while Aphra wretches.

PHOEBE

First dead body love?

Phoebe rips fringe from his red sash, finds two coins, a
handkerchief and an envelope of powdered ink, which she
proffers to Aphra.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Have a use for ink powder? Here.
Miss must read and write the way
you clutchin' that book.

Aphra takes it. Examines it. Pockets it. Phoebe dabs the
found handkerchief on her tongue and proceeds to clean
Aphra's face. Aphra pulls away.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Lemme! Can't take you back all
filthy.

Phoebe dips the handkerchief in a puddle and resumes washing
Aphra's face carefully. Aphra submits. They smile at
each other awkwardly.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Now, you get 'is boots. That blood
ul clean off.

Aphra is still, dumbstruck. Phoebe pulls the boots off and
throws them at Aphra.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

How you gonna walk in one shoe?

APHRA
He's a Royalist, a Cavalier
murdered.... In the street?

PHOEBE
Was.... Fool enough wearin' 'is red
sash... Tellin' the world he's
Royalist in Cromwell's London....
Help me flip 'im.

APHRA
What! Why?

PHOEBE
You gonna want 'is coat.

They wrench the chamois buff coat off him. Phoebe holds it up for Aphra. Aphra hesitates.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Too proud milady?

Phoebe pushes the coat at her.

APHRA
No.

She puts on the buff coat and turns up the cuffs while Phoebe stuffs her loot in her stays and walks on.

PHOEBE
There. Pretty as a picture. Grab
them boots.

Aphra grabs the boots and the red silk sash which she arranges like a scarf.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Name's Phoebe. What's yours?

APHRA
Aphra... Mine's Aphra.

Aphra hobbles in one shoe behind Phoebe.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - DUNGEON - RESUMING

Thurloe shows Lucy the torture rack. A crude machine of wood, steel and leather. She laughs.

LADY LUCY
But, I've only just arrived.

The game begins. She volleys by placing herself on the rack.

LADY LUCY (CONT'D)

Alone. With me. Mr. Thurloe, you'll
sully your godly reputation.

THURLOE

I'm not bluffing, Lady Carlisle.

He binds one of Lucy's wrists on the rack. She offers her
other wrist.

LADY LUCY

Neither am I.

Thurloe binds her wrists and ankles. She "accidentally"
reveals her stockings and garters. He forces himself to cover
her legs with her skirts.

EXT ST. GILES - STREET - RESUMING

Phoebe and Aphra trudge through shuttered post-war London;
half abandoned. There are 3 boiled heads on pikes at
Cripplegate.

PHOEBE

See them there. Ones Sir Henry
Hyde. Spy. One bloke's Peter
somethin-or-other. For a plot to
kill Cromwell. Don't know th'other.

Aphra stares at the gruesome heads. Phoebe sees that Aphra's
taken the soldier's red silk sash.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Criminy. Don't be seen with that.
Cromwell's huntin' Royalists.

Aphra side-eyes the camera as she drops the sash in the
street; it rolls in the breeze like a tumbril through the
desert as the girls walk on.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - DUNGEON - RESUMING

THURLOE

Milady, we had an agreement.

LADY LUCY

First, only servants call me
"milady". And second, I am your
double agent. That was the
agreement.

Thurloe begins to screw the apparatus which pulls on her limbs. She is unperturbed.

THURLOE

Then bring me something useful. Not
another ill- fated Cromwell
assassination plot.

LADY LUCY

That is all these Royalist men do.
Plot uprisings and play war.

He turns the screw with enjoyment. She laughs nervously.

LADY LUCY (CONT'D)

Careful John, your Puritan zealot
is showing.

He grabs her chin and smears his thumb across her lips.

THURLOE

I want more.

LADY LUCY

You don't know how to use the
intelligence I bring you as it is.

THURLOE

We shall reaffirm your loyalties.

He forces his thumb in her mouth. She takes it, sensually....
and bites it.

THURLOE (CONT'D)

Arrrgggggghhh.

LADY LUCY

You know perfectly well I don't
really care who has power as long
as I get what I want.

He backhands her across the face.

THURLOE

Fucking cunt!

LADY LUCY

If Cromwell catches me, I'm just a
silly woman. But you will hang when
he discovers you're playing both
sides.

EXT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE - DAY

A row of working class houses.

SUPER: "Moor Lane, Cripplegate Without, Citie of London"

A bear-sized man fills the doorway; shaved head, tattooed.
This is BILLY.

Freezeframe on Billy; Big and mean.

APHRA V.O.
Billy. Bully. Brothel bouncer.
Madame Cresswell's muscle.

BACK TO SCENE:

Billy steps inside and slams the door.

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE ENTRY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Very purple, but spare and clean. Billy, blocks the doorway
to keep Aphra from leaving.

APHRA
You should have said you were
taking me to a brothel--

PHOEBE
--anywhere is better than that
filthy gutter.

APHRA
Some friend you've turned out to
be... Excuse me Sir..

Aphra attempts to get past him. Billy bodily prevents it.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - DUNGEON - RESUMING

Lucy's nose is bloodied, lip split. Thurloe turns the screws
a bit more. Lucy's breath catches.

THURLOE
Be careful Lady Carlisle. When the
music stops, you may not have a
chair.

LADY LUCY
Percy's always end up on the
winning side.

THURLOE

(sighing)

Your sequestered estates. Your land. Your income... You do want it all returned. Do you not?

LADY LUCY

...Get to the point.

THURLOE

Both the Duke of York and the Princess are threats to Cromwell. His personal rule isn't safe as long as they live.

LADY LUCY

This sounds unnecessary.

THURLOE

They are useless royal heirs. Keeping them only causes trouble.

LADY LUCY

You could do the decent thing and send them to their mother in Paris.

THURLOE

I've had them moved to St. James. That should make it easier.

LADY LUCY

Make what easier? I'm not an assassin.

THURLOE

No. No. I want James brought to me. You know, whoever controls the heir holds all the power.

LADY LUCY

Surely you have more experienced kidnappers--

THURLOE

--Of course. But this is my insurance.

LADY LUCY

Ah! You will hold this over my head so I don't compromise you if and when a King returns.... So. What about the Princess?

THURLOE

I don't really care. Leave her for
the assassin.

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE ENTRY HALL - RESUMING

Phoebe puts her hand out to the brothel owner Madame
CRESSWELL, a riot of rouge.

PHOEBE

I'll be taking ma fee now.

Cresswell regards Aphra like livestock.

Freezeframe on Cresswell: Sneering.

APHRA V.O.

Mistress Cresswell. Brothel owner.
Bawd. Pimp. Hustler. Moll. Madame.
Enterprising entrepreneur.

BACK TO SCENE

CRESSWELL

I don't need another two-bit skank.

APHRA

I beg your pardon!

PHOEBE

Nay. This one's a real lady.

CRESSWELL

Oh sure. A real lady with a busted
face.

APHRA

What is this fee you speak of?

PHOEBE

Ma finders fee.

CRESSWELL

Don't s'pose you have a clean
dress.

APHRA

I was offered food and warm. What's
my dress to do with it?

CRESSWELL

Food ain't free 'n you need a dress
for workin'.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - DUNGEON - RESUMING

LADY LUCY

Assassin?... when? Who?

THURLOE

Cromwell is paranoid. He's hired someone...

LADY LUCY

You don't know who it is...
Cromwell is suspicious of you--

THURLOE

--He's suspicious of everyone--

LADY LUCY

--and you also need a seat when the music stops. No matter which side wins.

THURLOE

Ergo, my pawn, the Duke of York.

LADY LUCY

James is a rather difficult young man. I'm sure you've heard. What makes you think you can control him?

THURLOE

That's not your concern.

LADY LUCY

What about the Princess. Cromwell surely can't be threatened by a little girl.

THURLOE

She's not a little girl anymore.
She's a meddling bitch.

LADY LUCY

And very popular with the people.
She would make as good a political pawn as James, perhaps better.

THURLOE

She's as good as dead. It wouldn't be the first time a princess was murdered.

LADY LUCY

The Queen will never believe I had anything to do with Minette's death. If that's what you're hoping.

THURLOE

Perhaps not. But your precious man-child King Charles will.

He turns the screws more. She's in pain. He twists her pearl necklace, choking her.

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE ENTRY HALL - RESUMING

Phoebe closes in on Cresswell.

PHOEBE

Ma fee, Cresswell.

CRESSWELL

As if you'd know a lady when you saw one.

PHOEBE

She's a virgin. I lay money on it.

APHRA

I won't make a very good harlot, I'm afraid.

CRESSWELL

They's usually the best kind. You a virgin?

Aphra shifts her eyes to the camera.

APHRA

Aren't we all?

CRESSWELL

She looks it. That's alls that matters. Billy, give Phoebe ONE farthing.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON - DUNGEON - RESUMING

LADY LUCY

Fine. Consider it done. Now let me out of here.

THURLOE

Perhaps you should bring the pretty little princess quim to me.

LADY LUCY

You're a pig.

THURLOE

...I'll arrange your little Tower "escape" tonight. Have James in your possession by the end of the week.

LADY LUCY

It can't be done by the end of the week. I need time. There's no one I can trust to help.

THURLOE

You will figure it out.

LADY LUCY

My lands and income will be returned?

He twists his fist into her pearls further. Choking her.

THURLOE

Yes. Betray me and you'll wish you were on this rack.

He rips the necklace from her neck. Pearls scatter on the stone floor.

THURLOE (CONT'D)

I've broken other women.

LADY LUCY

(spitting anger)

I'm not other women.

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE ENTRY HALL - RESUMING

Cresswell pushes Aphra up the stairs.

APHRA

I should get a farthing.

CRESSWELL

Ya aint done nothin yet.
Inspection first.

APHRA
Inspect what?!

Cresswell continues pushing.

CRESSWELL
Billy, this one don't leave the
house. She a real innocent.

APHRA
You paid that skank her farthing!

PHOEBE
Who you callin' names? I could a
left ya in the street.

CRESSWELL
You suddenly an expert?

APHRA
I could work in your kitchen.

CRESSWELL
A virgin don't go to the kitchens.
Virgin goes to the highest bidder.

Aphra looks at the camera. Wtf?

EXT. TOWER OF LONDON - CURTAIN WALL - NIGHT

A lantern lit coach waits. The horses tack jingles. Lucy's coat of arms shows prominently on the coach door. Nigel leans against the coach, snoozing. Lucy's Pageboy, COLIN (11, cute as a button) is on lookout, sitting postillion. He is a mini-Nigel in the same livery uniform.

Lady Lucy limps into the light wearing a vizard mask to hide her face. She trips on the coach step, coming face to face with her painted coat of arms. Nigel lifts her and places her in the coach. He takes off her mask, inspects her face. Lucy waves him off. He closes the door and jumps up top. The coach moves forward.

INT. LUCY'S COACH - CONTINUOUS

Lady Lucy screams, hard and angry. Beats her fists on the seat. Then wipes her tears and composes herself.

She unfolds a handkerchief from her pocket in which her pearls are collected. She counts them and folds them back up. Puts them away.

There is a hatbox on the seat across. She rips into it, pulls out the plumed hat, tears a sealed letter out of the lining and throws the hat out the moving coach.

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Modest bed and table. Laundry hangs about to dry. Dirty clothes on the floor.

Aphra holds her breath completely underwater in a linen lined tub. If she's trying to drown herself, it's not working. She bursts out of the water gasping for breath. Grabs her book from the floor and opens it as if she will find the answer there.

Phoebe charges through the door. Aphra drops the book, stands and puts the soldier's buff coat on to cover herself.

PHOEBE

You'll give up modesty right quick
'round 'ere.

Phoebe throws her a linen and collects the dirty clothes.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Known I'd be your minder, might uv
left ya in the gutter.

APHRA

Wait. Phoebe. I was already in big
trouble even before you found me. I
can't stay here.

PHOEBE

Forget about it. Billy won't let
you leave. If you pipe down, maybe
you'll see this could work out
peachy for both of us.

APHRA

"Pipe down"! She's selling my
virginity!!

PHOEBE

Oh please. I've sold mine three
times.

APHRA

So what are you saying then? That
you will help me get out?

PHOEBE

I might be formin' a plan.

APHRA

...OK. Then might you fetch me some paper? Cause I have a plan.

PHOEBE

As if I can just rustle up some paper.

APHRA

If you do, I'll pipe down. I promise.

PHOEBE

...Bath's for scrubbin' not for readin'.

Phoebe slams the door as she leaves.

Aphra notices the buff coat makes a crispy papery sound. From a secret slit in the seam she pulls out several pages written in cipher. Turns them. The other sides are blank. Aphra has found her paper.

She looks right at the camera. The cat who ate the canary.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

EXT. ST. JAMES PALACE - ENTRY COURT - DAY

Prince James, Duke of York (17) and lovely Princess MINETTE (15) can be seen through the window of their approaching coach. a troop of GUARDSMEN are assembled on the gravel.

SUPER: "St. James Palace, Westminster"

Coach pulls to a stop. An Officer drops the step. This is Colonel Joseph BAMPFIELD. Charming.

Freezeframe on Bampfield; Movie star smile.

APHRA (V.O.)

Col. Joseph Bampfield. Not really a Colonel. Not really dashing. It's rumored he's stellar betwixt the sheets. A Royalist agent; But has been known to switch sides.

BACK TO SCENE

A jolly, ginger-wigged middle-aged man with a pipe in his teeth and a puppy under his arm awaits them. This is Algernon, Lord PERCY.

Minette sees the puppy and flies from the coach. Glamorous for 15; more woman than girl.

MINETTE

Oh Lord Percy! I love a puppy! You are so kind!

Freezeframe on Lord Percy: looking harmless.

APHRA V.O.

Algernon. Lord Percy, 10th Earl of Northumberland and never lets you forget it. Custodian of the Royal children. works for Parliament. Secretly Royalist. Plays both sides against the middle.

BACK TO SCENE

Minette takes the puppy. Percy bows.

PERCY

Your Highness. Her name is Bette.

MINETTE
Bette! Adorable.

James exits the coach. Tall, haughty. Percy bows.

PERCY
Welcome back to St. James.

Freezeframe on James: cynical and superior.

APHRA V.O.
James, Duke of York. Younger son of
the dead King Charles. Brother to
the exiled King Charles.
Pretentious, proud and self
absorbed. Stiff in bed they say;
and not in the good way.

BACK TO SCENE

James shakes Percy's hand.

MINETTE
You've no need to call me
"highness". We are no longer
Royalty, after all. James prefers
it though. Do you not?

JAMES
You must indulge my sister. Minette
has been raised without our Mother
the Queen. and. lacks. manners.

He eyes her with reprimand.

MINETTE
Perhaps. But my brother's arrogance
does not match his current station.

Percy chooses silence; always the perfect diplomat.

INT. ST. JAMES PALACE - GREAT HALL - CONTINUOUS

They enter a once sumptuous Great Hall, sizing up their digs;
unimpressed. The hall is devoid of any art or tapestries.

MINETTE
Where is everything? Where are all
of Father's paintings? The
tapestries?

JAMES

They are selling everything,
Minette. They are selling his
priceless paintings for pennies.

PERCY

I promise there is some still here
to enjoy. This Palace is
traditionally the home of the heir
to the throne.

JAMES

There is no longer a throne, Percy.
St. James is a prison, not a
Palace.

INT. WHITEHALL PALACE - BLACK CHAMBER INTERCUT WITH ALLEYS
AND HALLWAYS - DAY

BLACK CHAMBER:

Cramped, dark, windowless. Lit only by a handful of candles.
One desk houses an elaborate writing contraption.

SUPER: (cipher to English) "Black Chamber at Whitehall"

One man is softening a seal on a letter over a candle. This
is Samuel MORELAND. 30s, a gym bro.

Another is studying an open letter at his desk. Isaac
DORISLAUS: also 30s, professorial.

ALLEY:

Thurloe walks aggressively through a warren of narrow inner
alleys. At an inconspicuous door, he looks both ways before
unlocking and enters.

HALLWAYS:

We see Thurloe's hands turn a key in several locks before he
gets to the last one.

BLACK CHAMBER:

Thurloe relocks on the other side of the door. Addresses the
piles of letters and papers on his desk.

THURLOE

Anything?

Both Moreland and Dorislaus look up from their tasks.

Freeze-frame on Dorislaus and Moreland: The professor and the playboy.

APHRA V.O.
Dorislaus and Moreland.
Interchangeable and uninteresting.
More on these two later.

BACK TO SCENE:

DORISLAUS
One from Amsterdam. Ciphared. So far, says nothing of importance.

THURLOE
Our dead cavalier?

MORELAND
Unidentifiable. Likely the letters were in his coat, which is gone.

DORISLAUS
Nothing for Lady Carlisle.

MORELAND
No. But this.

Hands Thurloe a letter.

DORISLAUS
It appears to be from the Queen Mother to the little princess.

Thurloe raises an eyebrow.

THURLOE
Yes? Well, she's not little anymore.

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE KITCHEN INTERCUT WITH CELLAR,
AND BEDCHAMBERS - DAY

SERIES OF SMASH CUT SHOTS WITH SOUNDS (a la Edgar Wright)

KITCHEN:

- There's yelling, pots and pans bang.
- Aphra's hand pulls a knife from the butcher block.
- It gets slipped up her sleeve.

CELLAR:

- Aphra's hand pulls a bottle from the wine rack.
- Aphra pulls up her skirts (to hide the wine)

BEDCHAMBER:

- Aphra pops her head around an open chamber door.
- HARLOT and A JOHN snore.
- There his hat sits; wide brimmed, with feathers.
- Aphra's hands rip the feathers from the hat.

APHRA'S CHAMBER:

- Aphra's hands shave the quill.
- Aphra's hands cut the quill nib.
- Aphra looks at the camera; shows us the quill.
- Aphra's hands pour the wine in a cup.
- tears the ink packet.
- Pours the ink powder into the cup.
- Aphra looks at the camera; shows us the ink.
- Hold the ciphered papers.
- Looks at the camera and dips her quill.

APHRA

I will write my way out of this.
Lady Carlisle will have no choice
but to come fetch me.

She turns the paper over to the blank side and begins.

EXT. LONDON - INN - NIGHT

Oldey-Timey half-timbered Tudor pub.

SUPER: (cipher to English) "Blackfriars, later"

The sign above the door reads, "The Cat and Canary". It's hinges squeak in the breeze. Nigel closes up the coach, throws the reins to the stable GROOM and steps inside. Colin is painting black over the coat of arms on the coach door.

COLIN
Like this, Sir?

Freezeframe on Colin; Smiling, eager to please.

APHRA V.O.
Colin, Lady Carlisle's street
urchin turned pageboy. A mini
Nigel. Sees and hears everything.
Always with a smile.

BACK TO SCENE:

NIGEL
Just like that. No trace of
Milady's coat of arms left. We are
travelling incognito from here on.

COLIN
Will I be incognito too.

NIGEL
Of course, love.

INT. LONDON - INN - CONTINUOUS

Nigel walks through the pub full of rowdy PATRONS.

INT. LONDON - INN KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nigel enters the busy kitchen with SERVANTS and a stifling
fireplace. He grabs some cake.

INT. LONDON - INN PRIVATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A spare room with a dining table. Nigel opens the door on
Lucy stuffing her face. She downs a goblet of wine all at
once. Her vizard on the table.

NIGEL
Milady.

Puts the cake down.

LADY LUCY
Have Colin paint out the arms--

NIGEL
Already done Milady.

LADY LUCY

And get me a spoon... Or a fork. I
can't eat cake with my hands.

Nigel returns to the kitchen.

A storm of a man bursts through the entry door. The type who
pulls off sex symbol in frills and lace. One hair shy of a
pirate. This is Francis, Lord WILLOUGHBY.

WILLOUGHBY

We should not be seen together.

Behind him, a posse of piratey manservants.

Freezeframe on Lord Willoughby; Errol Flynn grin.

APHRA (V.O.)

Francis, Lord Willoughby. Baron of
Parham. Swarthy Governor of
Barbados. Merchant, ship owner,
self titled ladies man. First
Royalist. Then Parliament. Now
Royalist again.

BACK TO SCENE

LADY LUCY

This is a secret meeting,
Willoughby. Shut the door.

Willoughby shuts the door on his posse. Nigel returns.

NIGEL

No forks. No spoons. Thurlow's men
are out front.

She takes up the cake and eats it with her fingers.

LADY LUCY

Consider them friendly, for now.

WILLOUGHBY

This had better be worth the risk.

LADY LUCY

I'm always being watched.

WILLOUGHBY

Well, I'm not!

LADY LUCY

Yes, you are you idiot....As of right now, Thurlow is the least of our problems.

WILLOUGHBY

What are you on about?

LADY LUCY

Perhaps you wouldn't be so conspicuous if you didn't bring your pirate posse everywhere.

WILLOUGHBY

It would be conspicuous if I *didn't*-
(sees her broken face)
--Ugh. what happened to you?

LADY LUCY

Never mind that.

WILLOUGHBY

Perhaps you should keep the mask on.

She begins to undress and change into clothing less posh.

LADY LUCY

Perhaps you should wear a mask.
...I need ships, plural, before the end of the week. One tonight.

WILLOUGHBY

That's impossible.

LADY LUCY

This is not a request. Send one of your boys right now. Get me out of Faversham Cove. Midnight.

WILLOUGHBY

You can't just show up at my Faro game with no warning, wanting ships.

LADY LUCY

I most certainly can.... And postpone your return to the Caribbean, we've things to do and I don't have time to explain right now. I'm going to the Abbess and you better be here when I return.... Go. Go lose at cards.

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Aphra at her table, drips hot wax on a letter written on the back of a ciphered page. Phoebe bursts in.

APHRA
Don't you knock?

PHOEBE
Been sent to check.

APHRA
She's worried I'll pop my cherry in here all by myself?

PHOEBE
For a posh miss, you sure got a mouth.

Phoebe grabs Aphra's ink-stained hands.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
What the hell?

Aphra pulls them away.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Holy fuck! She'll have your hide!

Aphra stamps the hot seal with a button. Hands Phoebe a short stack of letters.

APHRA
Could you deliver these for me?

Phoebe snatches one letter. Looks at it. turns it over and over.

PHOEBE
What they for?

APHRA
Just letters to friends Phoebe. I'd deliver them myself if I could get out.

Phoebe examines Aphra's coded papers and more sealed letters on the table.

PHOEBE
Why so many?

APHRA

I need at least one to get to her
so they must be taken to all the
places she could possibly be.

PHOEBE

You writing in cipher?...yes, I
know what cipher is.

APHRA

Um. No. I found the paper with the
cipher on it.... I'm using the
other side. I mean, I can write
cipher, I just don't need to. I
don't think.

Phoebe hands the letter back to Aphra.

PHOEBE

I can't deliver them.

APHRA

Just as many as you can in one day.

PHOEBE

If you leave, Cresswell ul take it
out on me.

APHRA

So leave with me.

Phoebe throws herself on the bed and picks up Aphra's book.
Flips through.

PHOEBE

Go where? Here's just fine...This
book is French.

APHRA

Leave with me and I'll teach you to
read.

PHOEBE

Who said I can't read?

APHRA

To read French then. ...When you
brought me here, did you know I'd
be trapped?

PHOEBE

That depends on what you mean by
"trapped."

Aphra lays down beside Phoebe in the bed.

APHRA

Do you ever think about your future?

PHOEBE

Oh, I know my future.

They lay face to face with each other.

APHRA

You plan on being a harlot until you die?

PHOEBE

Well you don't got to put it like that.

APHRA

... Cyprian? Tart? Strumpet?...
Drab? Coquette? Streetwalker?
Stroller? Trollop--

PHOEBE

--For someone who knows nothing about doin' it, you sure know the verbage. ...I prefer "courtesan".
...You got somethin' better to do?

APHRA

Yes. I'm going to be a poetess.

PHOEBE

(pause, laugh)

Oh I see --you're bein' cheeky.

APHRA

I'm serious.

PHOEBE

Girls aren't poets. You'll starve.

APHRA

Just you watch.

Aphra curiously fingers a curl on Phoebe's cheek.

APHRA (CONT'D)

...Surely You must have some sort of future.

PHOEBE

Oh, I have one, it just don't belong to me.

APHRA

I don't understand.

PHOEBE

For all that book learnin', you sure are thick.

They look into each other's eyes for a long moment.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

I can deliver your letters if you want.

Phoebe touches Aphra's cheek.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow. Cresswell has plans for you tonight.

The romantic spell is broken by pure panic.

APHRA

Tonight! You must go now!

Aphra fumbles about to find and hand off some letters.

PHOEBE

That's what I came to tell you. She is displaying your wares tonight.

APHRA

What do I do?

PHOEBE

Nothing really. A string of men prance through the salon, give you a gander and make Cresswell an offer if they like what they see.

APHRA

Will you be with me?

PHOEBE

No. I got letters to deliver! You can hold them off for one night at least? Can't ya?

APHRA

I don't know what to do!

PHOEBE

Keep your mouth shut. And use your charm to prolong the activities as long as possible.

APHRA

How am I supposed to do that?

PHOEBE

On second thought, no charm. Talk. Alot. They hate talkin'.

APHRA

Oh! I can do that.

PHOEBE

Just use your wits girl! You can't be as dumb as you seem.

EXT. FAVERSHAM COVE - SMUGGLER SHIP - NIGHT

By moonlight Lucy is rowed by a BOATMAN to the side of the merchant ship. The oars cut into the water.

SUPER: "Faversham Cove, The Channel"

A rope ladder is thrown for her to climb aboard. We hear the slap of water against the hull.

EXT. ST. JAMES - PALACE KITCHEN YARD - DAY

Stone courtyard overrun with chickens and aggressive geese. Minette sidles through rows of hanging laundry towards the kitchen entry, the puppy Bette behind her.

Col. Bampfield follows her clandestinely.

INT. ST. JAMES - PALACE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A medieval complex of stone rooms and high timbered ceilings. COOK and SERVANTS work. An enormous fire roars. A boy turns a roast on the spit. We recognize him as Colin, Lady Lucy's pageboy.

Col. Bampfield continues to watch and follow her. Only Colin notices.

MINETTE

(to the Cook)

May I have two slices of bread with butter?

COOK
Yes Highness er-- Miss.

She slices bread and slathers it with butter.

Bampffield flirts with a kitchen maid.

MINETTE
Lots of butter too please...if you
would.

Minette smiles at Colin. She takes her bread and butter to
the spit and gives Colin one slice.

Colin intentionally drops his slice and Minette kneels to
fetch it. Colin lifts his shoe to reveal a tiny letter.
Minette retrieves it and slaps it in the butter between the
two slices of bread.

SPITBOY/COLIN
(dips a cursory bow)
Milady. What's the pups name?

COOK
You. Boy. Work... Apologies your
Highness.

MINETTE
(whispers to him)
Bette. ...Many thanks. Can you come
tomorrow? I will have something
then.

Colin nods "yes." Minette continues on her way. Col.
Bampffield has taken no notice of their exchange and
inconspicuously follows Minette.

INT. ST. JAMES - PALACE BACKSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Minette slips through a door and up a narrow circular
staircase. She walks through a labyrinth of dark backstairs
hallways with doors. Stops to listen to muffled voices. She
cracks one door open on the back side of a tapestry. Pushes
it aside.

INT. ST. JAMES - PALACE DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

From behind the tapestry, Minette enters a drawing room. She
stops to stare at the naked, discolored spots on the walls
where paintings have been removed. Col. Bampffield waits for
her to leave before entering the same way.

INT. ST. JAMES - PALACE GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Minette traverses from one door at the end of the gallery to another door at the far end. Bette still at her heels. She runs her hand along the panelling all the way through the room. Touching each spot where a painting has been removed. Col. Bampffield watches her.

INT. ST. JAMES - PALACE BACKSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Through another door at the top of another hidden stairway. Circular, narrow, stone, dim. Minette begins down the stairs. Col. Bampffield descends behind her. Two flights down on the landing he rushes her. Bette barks viciously and nips at his legs. Minette turns to see him descending. Bampffield kicks the puppy down the stairs with a yelp. Then pushes Minette by her neck as James coincidentally bursts onto the landing. In a flash, Bampffield grabs Minette by her hair to keep her from falling. Safe, she wrenches away and runs down the stairs to her now dead puppy. James may have seen the whole thing and stands motionless in shock. Not sure what he saw.

MINETTE

He's killed my Bette.

James descends the stairs to Minette, passing Bampffield warily.

BAMPFIELD

I was right behind her highness
when she slipped. That was a close
thing.

James holds Minette in tears.

JAMES

(suspiciously)

Yes. ... Indeed it was.

EXT. AND INT. TOWER OF LONDON - INTERCUT WITH LONDON STREETS,
EXT. AND INT. APOTHECARY SHOP, EXT. AND INT. CAT AND CANARY
TAVERN, INT. MILLINER'S SHOP AND EXT. AND INT. SALISBURY
HOUSE - DAY

SERIES OF SMASH CUT SHOTS

TOWER

- Phoebe approaches the guard house with one letter.

- Delivers it to a BEEFEATER

LONDON STREETS

- Walks with the letters in her pocket. Carefully examines one for the next delivery.

APOTHECARY SHOP

- Phoebe enters the shop door. The bell rings.
- Hands a letter over the counter to the APOTHECARY.

LONDON STREETS

- Phoebe stops at a stall for an orange. Eats it while walking.

CAT AND CANARY TAVERN

- Phoebe approaches the tavern.
- Leaves the letter with the KEEPER'S WIFE

MILLINERY SHOP

- Phoebe hands off the letter to the DRESSMAKER.

SALISBURY HOUSE SERVANT'S ENTRY

- Nigel answers the door.
- Phoebe hands him the letter.

SALISBURY HOUSE ENTRY HALL

- Nigel looks at the letter warily and reluctantly puts it on a silver tray with the others.

TOWER OF LONDON

- Beefeater hands over the letter delivered at the gate to Thurlow in his offices.

EXT. GHENT - ENGLISH CONVENT - DAY

A cloaked and veiled Lady Lucy crosses a footbridge over a canal to the wrought iron gate. Bells are pealing. NUNS are seen inside the enclosure.

SUPER: (cipher to English) "Exiled English Convent in Ghent"

INT. GHENT - ENGLISH CONVENT - CONTINUOUS

Lucy is let in the gate. Mother ABBESS MARGRET Knatchbull(40s, no-nonsense, pristine habit) greets her. Lucy lifts her veil and kneels. Abbess blesses and embraces Lucy.

INT. GHENT - ENGLISH CONVENT ABBESS CHAMBERS - DAY

Suprisingly elegant chambers, for a nun. Abbess Margret tends to Lucy's face wounds.

ABBESS MARGRET
The King will be back on his
throne... and you will have your
reward.

LADY LUCY
Reward. I'll be lucky if he returns
what's already mine.

EXT. GHENT - CONVENT CLOISTER AND GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

Abbess Margret and Lady Lucy stroll through the colonnaded cloister.

ABBESS MARGRET
I hope you don't let the Queen
Mother hear you say these things.

LADY LUCY
I've a better chance of getting my
land back from Cromwell than I do
from Charles... or his mother.

ABBESS MARGRET
Stop talking. Now child.... Where's
your faith?

They stop at a gothic chapel door.

LADY LUCY
I left it on the wrack.

INT. GHENT - CONVENT SCRIPTORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Abbess Margret and Lady Lucy pass through the door. Several NUNS are at work writing, copying, sanding manuscripts, cutting quills. Fingers black with ink. They keep their heads down, but steal glances.

ABBESS MARGRET

Good day!

NUNS

Good day Mother Abbess.

ABBESS MARGRET

Sister Constance! I need forged papers for Milady to travel through Paris and back into England. If you would be so kind.

SISTER CONSTANCE

Yes Mother. Right away.

Margret and Lucy pass through another door across the room.

INT. GHENT - CONVENT CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

A small windowless room filled with paintings. Canvases stacked and rolled. Priceless valuables on shelves.

ABBESS MARGRET

Queen Henrietta couldn't do this all the way from Paris if not for you.

LADY LUCY

Because I'm the only one left. Susan is dead. Diana is turned. Mary can't leave London.

ABBESS MARGRET

Didn't you have a girl educated specifical to this purpose?

LADY LUCY

No. Yes. She's not going to work out.

ABBESS MARGRET

What a shame. Genius with a cipher, you said.

LADY LUCY

There's more to this than ciphers....I've arranged a marriage. She will be a respectable matron if she doesn't ruin it first.

Abbess Margret swings a shelf away from the wall. There's another door. She takes a key from the lintel and unlocks it.

ABBESS MARGRET
She might be all you have.

INT. GHENT - CONVENT PRINTING PRESS - CONTINUOUS

Through this door, NUNS work a printing press. Papers hang to dry. They set type and press pages. Neat piles of printed leaflets cover the tables. Lucy and Abbess Margaret each take one and read.

ABBESS MARGRET
As if words could make men brave.

LADY LUCY
Or foment uprising and rebellion.

ABBESS MARGRET
We've packed the pistols and pikes
in soap barrels. Your papers will
pass you through as a Breton
launderess. Customs won't bother
you.

LADY LUCY
This is pointless. These stupid men
and their factions warring amongst
themselves. Every time they fail, I
end up in the Tower.

ABBESS MARGRET
You are right. But our hands are
tied.

LADY LUCY
Not this time. I have a plan. But I
need you send someone to the Queen
in Paris for me.

ABBESS MARGRET
I do have a young lady I need to
get out of Ghent.

Lucy pulls out a wrapped parcel from her stockings.

LADY LUCY
Send her to the Queen with these.

She unwraps the loose baroque pearls that were once her necklace.

ABBESS MARGRET
But these are yours.

LADY LUCY
They do no good around my neck.
Here. Take one for yourself. You
and the sisters must eat at least.

She puts one in Abbess Mary's hand and closes it. Then takes
one fat pearl for herself.

LADY LUCY (CONT'D)
Give her Majesty these for more
weapons and tell her I plan to use
this doomed military uprising to
our advantage.

ABBESS MARGRET
How?

LADY LUCY
To distract Cromwell and Thurloe.

ABBESS MARGRET
Say more.

LADY LUCY
From the real operation.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Aphra, rouged and patched, smokes a cheroot and coughs.
Cresswell barges in.

APHRA

Don't you people knock?

CRESSWELL

Privacy is a privilege... I had
better see you in the salon,
showin' your charms by the time I
count to ten. There's men here to
see you. Now.

APHRA

I don't want to do this.

CRESSWELL

How else you gonna pay me back? All
I done for you. Just shut your
mouth and look virginal.

Cresswell exits. Aphra looks at herself in the mirror with
conviction. Then sips from her teacup of ink, swishes it in
her mouth and spits it back in the cup. Looks at the camera
in the mirror.

APHRA

God that's vile. But I'm worth it.

EXT. GRAVESEND - WHARF CUSTOMS HOUSE - DAY

Nigel supervises a cart getting loaded with the "soap"
barrels from the ship.

SUPER: (cipher to English) "Customs House, Gravesend, on the
Thames"

INT. GRAVESEND - CUSTOMS HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lucy's papers are stamped by a bored CUSTOMS AGENT who merely
glances out the window at the barrels. She dips a curtsy.

LADY LUCY

Merci, monsieur.

INTERCUT - INT. CRIPPLEGATE TOWNHOUSE SALON/ ENTRY HALL -
RESUMING

Aphra is inspected by a series of prospective buyers.

SMASH CUT MONTAGE WITH MUSIC: "You Don't Own Me" by Lesley
Gore

SALON

An OLD MAN pins Aphra on the divan and tries to kiss her.

ENTRY HALL

He scurries from the brothel.

SALON

A DANDY moves his chair closer to hers. She moves hers
further away; He grabs her by the chin.

ENTRY HALL

He exits in a hurry as Cresswell chases after him.

SALON

A HANDSOME MAN pats the seat next to him on the divan. Aphra
hides her face behind her fan. He kisses her hand and up her
arm. She wrenches it from him and wipes his slobber off on
the upholstery.

SALON

A FAT MAN has trapped Aphra on the chaise. She beats him with
her fan and snarls.

ENTRY HALL

Cresswell attempts to bar his exit.

SALON

A dashing ARMY OFFICER removes her shoe, smells it with
relish and runs his hand up her leg. She knees him in the
face.

ENTRY HALL

He exits the brothel with a bloody nose.

SALON

A MIDDLE AGED MAN and Aphra face each other on the chaise. He wraps her curls around his finger. She smiles, showing her inky black teeth. Then vomits in his lap.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. WESTMINSTER - SALISBURY HOUSE - BEDCHAMBER - DAY

A once stunning baroque bedchamber. Paintings have been removed from the walls, leaving discolored squares on the silk. The furniture is threadbare and sparse.

Lady Lucy lays on her bed fully dressed; reads a letter. A nude Colonel Joseph Bampffield lies next to her. He snatches the letter from her. She snatches it back.

LADY LUCY
Mind your manners.

INT. WESTMINSTER - SALISBURY HOUSE - SITTING ROOM -
CONTINUOUS

Nigel stands in front of the fireplace with the silver tray of letters. Silently debating whether to burn them or deliver them to Lady Lucy.

INT. WESTMINSTER - SALISBURY HOUSE - BEDCHAMBER - RESUMING

BAMPFIELD
It's your brother's plan.

LADY LUCY
It's my plan! Percy has nothing to do with it.

BAMPFIELD
May I make a suggestion--

LADY LUCY
No you may not. Just make sure the horses are reliable this time.

Lucy slaps Bampffield's bum. He turns over, throws some letters on the floor and starts to unlace her bodice.

BAMPFIELD
I can't help you if you won't share the intel.

Lucy continues to read ignoring Bampffield as he works to get inside her bodice.

LADY LUCY
Stop asking. Hire the horses for a week from yesterday. That's all I need from you right now.

Nigel scratches at the door.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Letter for Milady.

She slushes silk off the bed. Answers the door; takes (Aphra's) letters from Nigel. Whose eyes search the room.

NIGEL (CONT'D)
I didn't want to give you these, but...

LADY LUCY
(whispers)
Thank you my darling.

She shuts the door in his face. Examines Aphra's letters. Unseals and reads one, then another. She turns the letters over and sees the ciphered code. Concerned. Puzzled. Opens another.

LADY LUCY (CONT'D)
Playtime will have to wait.

Off Bampffield who throws up his hands. Coitus interruptus.

INTERCUT - INT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE SALON/ BACKSTAIRS/ DINING ROOM/ ENTRY HALL - THAT EVENING

SALON

Pink decor borders on tasteless. Aphra on the chaise, wears a fresh dress, eats a caramel; which Cresswell snatches from her.

CRESSWELL
No candy! You're wearing my last clean frock.

The door knocker sounds from the entry hall.

CRESSWELL (CONT'D)
Get up. Lemee see them teeth.

Aphra flashes a smile. No inky teeth. Cresswell snatches Aphra's book and throws it under a chair. Billy introduces their guest.

BILLY

Lord Willoughby, Baron of Parh--

Willoughby sweeps through the doorway.

CRESSWELL

--You!--

WILLOUGHBY

(no nonsense)

--This is the one?

Aphra stands as far away from him as possible. The door knocker sounds again.

CRESSWELL

This one is not for you. Please go.

WILLOUGHBY

Come now, My money's as good as any other's.

CRESSWELL

Sure. Right then how bout, Ten?

WILLOUGHBY

You're in bedlam. Ten is a fortune. Five.

APHRA

Five?!

CRESSWELL

Ten.

WILLOUGHBY

Six.

CRESSWELL

Ten.

WILLOUGHBY

--Six it is. I'll take her now.

Billy appears.

CRESSWELL

You most certainly will not--

BILLY
 --Pardon Madame. In the dining
 room.

CRESSWELL
 (as she exits the room)
 I suggest you take these moments to
 consider the deal. It's ten.

Cresswell exits. Billy stands in the doorway.

BACKSTAIRS

Peeling paint; piles of plates. Phoebe eavesdrops, her ear
 against the service door.

DINING ROOM

Tables and mismatched chairs. Ugly drapes. Lady Lucy waits
 wearing a vizard mask. Cresswell enters.

LADY LUCY
 Madame--

CRESSWELL
 --Should I pretend to not know who
 you are?

With a sigh, Lucy takes off the mask.

LADY LUCY
 Hands off Cresswell. The girl is
 mine.

CRESSWELL
 Well, if she's workin' for you, she
 don't know it.

LADY LUCY
 She's my ward, has been all her
 life.

CRESSWELL
 What's she doin on the streets
 then?

LADY LUCY
 None of your concern. You know
 where I've been. Give her here.

CRESSWELL
 Let you out, did they?

They stare each other down.

CRESSWELL (CONT'D)
Fine. It's gonna cost you.

Cresswell exits to Salon.

SALON

Willoughby and Aphra haven't moved. Cresswell enters.

CRESSWELL (CONT'D)
You've been outbid. Another
customer givin' me ten quid. That's
too bad--

DINING ROOM

Lady Lucy eavesdrops recognizing Willoughby's voice.

WILLOUGHBY O.S.
--You'll take eleven and be done
with it.

SALON

Willoughby shakes his finger at Cresswell.

WILLOUGHBY
I don't have all day.

Aphra looks at the camera.

APHRA
I doubt it will take more than
three minutes.

DINING ROOM

Lady Lucy, ear to the door.

CRESSWELL O.S.
No no. It's only fair I offer the
other bidder to counter.

SALON

Cresswell exits. Willoughby sucks teeth, sighs, throws
himself in a chair.

DINING ROOM

Cresswell enters and slams the door.

CRESSWELL
He's at Twelve. What say you?

LADY LUCY
I heard him! He said eleven!

SALON

Aphra recovers her thrown book and reads on the chaise. Willoughby impatiently drums his fingers on a side table and watches her. Silent and uncomfortable; the clock ticks. His fingers drum.

APHRA
Must you? Milord?

Willoughby jumps out of his seat and paces the room.

WILLOUGHBY
Yes, I'm afraid I must... What are you reading?

He moves closer to Aphra and she turns away.

APHRA
A book. Milord.

WILLOUGHBY
A book. I can see that it is a book.

BACKSTAIRS

Phoebe looks through the keyhole.

WILLOUGHBY O.S.
I must admit. I've met very few harlots who can read.

SALON

Aphra smiles wryly.

APHRA
Strumpet connoisseur, Milord?

DINING ROOM

Cresswell and Lucy in eachother's faces.

CRESSWELL
Your little hussy cost me a pretty penny while she been here.

LADY LUCY
That's your business.

CRESSWELL
If you want my girls to keep
informing, you better damn well
show me some coin right now!

LADY LUCY
Fine. What does Willoughby want
with her?

CRESSWELL
He's collecting virgins... How
should I know?

LADY LUCY
Well find out!

SALON

Willoughby circles Aphra on the chaise.

APHRA
I'll be a disappointment, Milord. I
haven't any of the required skills.

WILLOUGHBY
Clearly not. If you think innocence
is a disappointment.

APHRA
In my experience it's a hindrance.

Willoughby gets a good look at her book.

WILLOUGHBY
You are reading French.

APHRA
Oui. Est-ce que vous?

WILLOUGHBY
Mais une romance idiote d'Honoré
D'Urfé.

APHRA
(coyly smiling)
Tu as l'air assez bête pour le
connaître.

Billy is annoyed; not understanding French.

WILLOUGHBY
 (charming smile)
 Oui. Mais je suis le Baron Parham.
 Tu n'es qu'une fille.

APHRA
 Même une fille peut chercher la
 vérité dans la vie et dans l'art.

WILLOUGHBY
 (chuckling)
 "Life and art"... That's
 ridiculous. What are you really
 doing here?

APHRA
 I beg your pardon. ...I don't--

WILLOUGHBY
 --I'm here for your ciphered
 letters. Not your virginity.

APHRA
 What ciphered letters? I don't know
 what you mean.

He hollers toward the backstairs door.

WILLOUGHBY
 Phoebe! Now!

Phoebe enters from the backstairs.

WILLOUGHBY (CONT'D)
 You didn't tell her the plan?
 (to Aphra)
 I buy you out of here. In return
 you tell me everything you know--

APHRA
 Plan? What plan? Phoebe, what are
 we doing?

PHOEBE
 This is the man who owns me.

WILLOUGHBY
 Not on English soil. Must we put it
 that way?

PHOEBE
 But everywhere else. Milord will
 buy you out of here.
 (MORE)

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

(trying to get Aphra to
play along)

As long as you tell him.
everything. you. know. You
remember, I told you I'd help you
get out of here.

APHRA

Oh. Ah. Yes. Of course. Absolutely.
Although I don't know any--

Phoebe eyes Aphra and interrupts.

PHOEBE

--She will tell you everything you
want to know Milord. ...Right?

Cresswell barges in.

CRESSWELL

What a shame. You've been outbid ya
have.

Cresswell drags Aphra unwillingly out of the room.

APHRA

Wait! No! Lord Willoughby will
counter. He was here first! I want
to go with him!

WILLOUGHBY

I'll double it!

APHRA

Phoebe! Do something!

PHOEBE

What am I supposed to do?

CRESSWELL

It's done deal.

APHRA

But Madame, he said he'll double
it!

WILLOUGHBY

What is the meaning of this?!

CRESSWELL

Billy will see ya out.

Billy manhandles Willoughby. Phoebe starts laughing out loud.
Willoughby doesn't appreciate it.

WILLOUGHBY
I've offered you a fortune!

CRESSWELL
(to Phoebe)
I should have known this would be
one of your conspiracies.

APHRA
But all he wants from me is
information!

Lady Lucy appears in the room and slams the door shut.
Everyone stops.

LADY LUCY
And what information would that be?

APHRA
Oh! Thank God it's you. I--

LADY LUCY
--Wipe that smile off your face.
you'll get your turn.

WILLOUGHBY
Lady Carlisle! I'm shocked to find
a lady of your stature in a
brothel.

LADY LUCY
Shut up Willoughby.
(indicating Phoebe)
This one is yours?

WILLOUGHBY
Indeed she is.

LADY LUCY
(to Cresswell)
But she's living here with you?

PHOEBE
Yes, but I'm not really a harlot
either.

LADY LUCY
Willoughby, you were just leaving.
I will deal with you later.

Willoughby chastened, defeated, makes for the door.

WILLOUGHBY
As I was saying, on my way out--

Phoebe follows him. Billy stands filling the doorway.

CRESSWELL
 (to Phoebe)
 --Not you. I'm not finished with
 you.

Phoebe stops. Billy helps Willoughby out of the house.

WILLOUGHBY O.S.
 Unhand me good sir!

Both girls are deer in headlights. Lady Lucy moves to grab Aphra by the arm and drag her to the door.

APHRA
 If we're leaving, I need to fetch
 my poetry.

Cresswell pulls Aphra's other arm. Aphra drops her book.

CRESSWELL
 Not so fast there Countess.

APHRA
 I'll just run up for my papers....

LADY LUCY
 Let's be dignified about this.

CRESSWELL
 We can be dignified after you pay.

Lucy tosses several coins. Cresswell lets go of Aphra to catch. Aphra grabs her book from the floor and Lucy jerks Aphra out to the hall.

ENTRY HALL

They get as far as the front door. Billy blocks their exit. Cresswell runs after. Phoebe follows.

CRESSWELL (CONT'D)
 This doesn't even cover what's on
 her back.

LADY LUCY
 How much then?

CRESSWELL
 A guinea.

LADY LUCY
That's ridiculous.

CRESSWELL
That's my offer.

APHRA
I really need to fetch my writing--

LADY LUCY
--I doubt she's worth even 2
shillings! I bet she's been nothing
but trouble.

APHRA
I behave!

LADY LUCY
Oh really? How is it you end up in
a brothel?
(to Cresswell)
three more shillings.

CRESSWELL
Fine. I'll take it.
(she holds out her hand)
And the ribbons.

Lucy pulls the ribbons out of Aphra's hair.

CRESSWELL (CONT'D)
And the lace.

Lucy rips the lace off Aphra's neckline.

CRESSWELL (CONT'D)
And the dress.

LADY LUCY
Oh for fuck's sake. I can't leave
with her naked.

CRESSWELL
Fine then. Another two shillings.

Lucy throws coins. Cresswell scrambles for and counts her
money. Billy steps aside. Lucy and Aphra get away.

APHRA
But my poetry!

LADY LUCY
Let it go.

CRESSWELL
 (to Phoebe)
 You owe me a shilling.

EXT. CRIPPLEGATE - TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lucy walks ahead of Aphra towards her coach. Nigel mans the coach door.

APHRA
 I--

LADY LUCY
 Not one word.

APHRA
 But-- I have questions.

Lucy climbs in. Nigel gives Aphra the eye.

LADY LUCY
 As do I. Just once, do as you're told.

Aphra sticks her tongue out at Nigel. Then looks at the camera. This may be worse than selling her virginity.

INT. LUCY'S COACH - CONTINUOUS

They are seated facing each other. Lucy grabs Aphra's precious book from her hands. Aphra isn't quick enough to stop her.

LADY LUCY
 I should have known there'd be fuckery afoot.

APHRA
 (trying to pry it from
 Lucy's hands)
 Give it back! A Poetess must have her words.

LADY LUCY
 What!? What the hell is a "poetess"?

APHRA
 I'm going to be a writer.

LADY LUCY
(getting firm hold of the
book)

Don't be ridiculous. No one cares
what you think. Every thought in
your head belongs to your father
and after this wedding, will belong
to your husband.

APHRA
No one can own my thoughts.

LADY LUCY
You think not!? No man wants his
property exposed for all to see and
hear. And that's what you'll be,
his property. So give it up.

APHRA
I don't have to give anything up.
My father disowned me and there
will be no wedding.

LADY LUCY
What are you talking about?! I left
you with my sister. Why aren't you
at Penshurst Place?

APHRA
She kicked me out.

LADY LUCY
What have you done?

Aphra looks directly at the camera. What happened was...

INT. PENSHURST PLACE, KENT - LIBRARY INTERCUT WITH PENSHURST
STABLES - A WEEK AGO

LIBRARY

Exquisite Tudor manor house library.

SUPER: (cipher to English) "Penshurst Place, Kent, a week
ago"

Aphra stands. Black eye and swollen lips; dried bloodied
nose; hay in her hair. A formidable matron rages at her. This
is LADY DOROTHY.

LADY DOROTHY
 --bad influence on my daughters!
 Good for nothing strumpet-- Trying
 to entrap my nephew--

Freezeframe on Lady Dorothy; Her mouth ajar in mid yell.

APHRA (V.O.)
 Dorothy Percy Sidney, Countess of
 Leicester. Milady's sister. Minus
 the Percy charm.

BACK TO SCENE

LADY DOROTHY
 You're not my sister's ward, you
 are her parasite!

STABLES

A well dressed YOUNG MAN doubles over screaming in pain,
 holding his face.

LADY DOROTHY V.O.
 ...You've brought scandal to this
 house... maimed my nephew ...
 You're ruined and you won't be
 happy 'til you've ruined all of us!

LIBRARY

Lady Dorothy gasps for breath.

APHRA
 Perhaps the eyepatch will give Lord
 Strangford some caché.

Aphra looks at the camera.

APHRA (CONT'D)
 I didn't say that... exactly--

LADY DOROTHY
 --Out. Out. Never--

INT. LUCY'S COACH - CONTINUOUS

Close on Lucy's blank shocked expression.

LADY LUCY
 --What do you mean "out"?

Aphra looks at Lucy. Then directly at the camera. It's a long story.

INT. PENSHURST PLACE, KENT - STABLES - A WEEK AGO

SUPER: (cipher to English) "Penshurst stables, that morning"

Horses in the stalls. No one else about, returning from her ride, Aphra leads Caliope in and unbuckles her girth. A well-dressed teenaged boy watches Aphra. This is Philip, Lord STRANGFORD. Aphra is startled.

APHRA

Lord Strangford! Don't sneak up on me like that.

Freezeframe on Strangford; In mid-lecherous grin.

APHRA (V.O.)

Philip Smythe, Lord Strangford. 18.
The neer-do-well nephew. Rich and
dissolute.

BACK TO SCENE:

STRANGFORD

I didn't expect to see you here
this morning either.

He presses himself to Aphra's back. Uncomfortable, she continues to un-saddle Caliope.

STRANGFORD (CONT'D)

I'm very glad to see you.

She laughs nervously.

APHRA

You needn't entertain me, Lord
Strangford.

STRANGFORD

On the contrary. I'm here to be
entertained.

He wraps a curl around his finger. She blushes and tries to smile. Continues to untack Caliope.

APHRA

Milord, I'm not some saucy kitchen
maid.

STRANGFORD
No, that you are not.

He kisses her neck.

APHRA
I am to be married soon.

STRANGFORD
Exactly, this is our last chance.

He is feeling her up. Disgust shows on her face.

APHRA
We can't even be alone together.
It's not proper.

She stealthily grabs a riding crop within reach.

STRANGFORD
Come love, you know you want it.

Aphra pushes him away and shakes the crop at him.

APHRA
I will tell your Aunt.

STRANGFORD
(laughing)
She won't care, I assure you.

APHRA
Milord, I'm begging you. I can't.

STRANGFORD
You appear quite able, waving that
crop. Perhaps you like it rough.

Philip lunges and wrestles her into an empty stall. She flails at him with the crop. He grabs it from her and drops it; holds her down and quiets her.

STRANGFORD (CONT'D)
Shh. Shh. Shush. You're going to
hurt yourself. If the stable lads
hear, everyone will know what
you're up to.

She submits. He lets go and wipes a tear from her cheek. Then violently and with debauched fervor, he's on her. One hand over her mouth and nose. She struggles to breathe.

His other arm roots under her petticoats. Aphra sees the crop within reach.

She struggles and thinks. Then she feigns submission. Strangford relaxes and loosens his grip.

STRANGFORD (CONT'D)

There. You see? I said you would like it.

She quickly reaches for the crop and sticks it into his eye.

INT. LUCY'S COACH - CONTINUOUS

Lucy and Aphra bounce in the coach. Lady Lucy with her hand to her brow.

APHRA

Yes. "Out" out...I put his eye out.

LADY LUCY

Your instructions were simple. You were stay there. Read your books. Behave. Until this wedding when you become someone else's problem.

APHRA

Your sister kicked me out...

LADY LUCY

As would I!

APHRA

I went to my Da. Apparently, the problem isn't that Lord Strangford assaulted me.

LADY LUCY

No, the problem is you assaulted Lord Strangford.

APHRA

Well, now everyone knows I've been defiled. And the reason they all know, is because I put his eye out.

LADY LUCY

And if you hadn't, no one would know he had deflowered you and we could act as if it never happened so there could be a wedding.

APHRA

So, it is all my fault.

EXT. ST. MARTINS, LONDON - HOUSE AND YARD - A WEEK AGO

Muddy fenced-in pig pen. Chickens and goats running about.

SUPER: (cipher to English) "Bartholomew Johnson's house, St. Martin's Parish, Citie of London"

APHRA V.O.

He put me out with nothing but my
book.

BARTHOLOMEW Johnson, a burly working class man raises said
book above his head.

Freezeframe on Bartholomew; Contorted angry face.

APHRA V.O. (CONT'D)

Bartholomew Johnson. Barber-
surgeon. My so-called father. Large
and unpredictable. Secret Royalist.

BACK TO SCENE:

Bart throws the book into the pig pen.

BARTHOLOMEW

Take yur damned French frog book
with. And don't come back!

He slams the door. Aphra picks her book from the mud. Tries
to wipe it clean. The title clearly reads: "Astrea".

INT. LUCY'S COACH - CONTINUOUS

Aphra is silent. Lucy is beyond exasperation.

LADY LUCY

You're going back--

APHRA

--I am not!

LADY LUCY

You must! What am I supposed to do
with you now? ...You will beg his
forgiveness.

APHRA

You know what he said? My father?
He said I should lay there and take
it like a good girl.

LADY LUCY
You had choices.

APHRA
Well I chose.
(smugly)

LADY LUCY
Now you won't be marrying any
gentleman. Ever. ...You did this on
purpose.

APHRA
So what if I did.

LADY LUCY
Why must you always be the center
of attention!?

APHRA
Why shouldn't I be!?

LADY LUCY
I'll bet you're still a virgin. I'm
sure he lost his erection when you
put. Out. His. Eye!

APHRA
Are you laughing at me? ...What
would you know about rape? You're a
stinking countess--

Aphra has gone too far. Lucy's anger notches up.

LADY LUCY
We all survive. Be grateful.

APHRA
Survival is the best I can hope
for.

LADY LUCY
You were a very lucky girl. I
raised you, educated you and
arranged this marriage. All to make
a respectable, polite gentlewoman.

APHRA
Marriage is just another form of
prostitution.

LADY LUCY

Perhaps. But marriage is the first
step on the path to widowhood.
That's the best you can hope for.

APHRA

Easily said by the widow of a rich
Earl with the decency to die young.

LADY LUCY

My husband was an ugly old
Scotsman....and left me with
nothing.

Lucy takes a breath and reaches to peel patches off Aphra's
face.

LADY LUCY (CONT'D)

We all sell ourselves, Aphra. One
way or another we all work for our
bread. I work now to get back what
Cromwell has taken from me.

APHRA

Marrying for the sake of becoming a
widow is a gamble. I could wait an
eternity for Mister Hales to die.
Am I to poison him?

LADY LUCY

Perhaps I should have left you in
the brothel.

APHRA

Fine. Take me back. I refuse to be
a polite, common, boring lady wife.
Ever.

Lucy grabs Aphra's book from her and pitches it out the
window of the coach.

APHRA (CONT'D)

Don't! That's the only book I'll
ever own!

Aphra bangs her fist on the ceiling of the coach for a stop.

LADY LUCY

Well that's good because you're not
going to be any lady-wife. You're
ruined and your choices of wife or
servant are now limited to harlot.

(MORE)

LADY LUCY (CONT'D)

Servants must at least appear to be respectable people and widow is not in the cards.

APHRA

(to the driver, Nigel)

Stop! Stop please!...

EXT. COPSE OF TREES - CONTINUOUS

The coach comes to a stop. Aphra jumps and runs into the glen, looking for her book. Lucy hovers at the door. Nigel climbs down and rolls his eyes.

APHRA

Strangford is the kind of man who thinks I exist for the sole purpose of his enjoyment. I couldn't control my anger.

Lucy follows.

LADY LUCY

A woman can be kept by one man at a time; a father, brother, husband or a succession of men as their mistress. From every angle, men are unavoidable.

APHRA

No. They're not. ...There are three kinds of women. Like you, wealthy and above the rules... Respectable ladies trapped by the rules... And the ruined ones, to whom the rules do not apply. ...As a ruined woman I am the mistress of my own fate.

LADY LUCY

Being a successful reprobate requires great wit, self-control and the protection of a man. None of which you have.

APHRA

I'm sure you didn't educate me to make me an insipid gentlewoman.

LADY LUCY

I had you educated because you were a little genius. ...You taught yourself to read. An education couldn't be stopped.

APHRA

You had me educated so I could decipher codes for you and your Royalist conspirators. And that is how I will earn my bread. I'll be one of your she-spies.

LADY LUCY

I have spent your lifetime keeping you out of this scandal because I want more for your future.

APHRA

Surely that ship has sailed.

LADY LUCY

You won't last a week as a spy. You are neither dependable, nor suited for the work. You lack circumspection and are completely devoid of charm--

APHRA

But handy enough to cipher and decipher all your correspondence since I were six. You should know I've already deciphered the code on the back of my letters to you.

LADY LUCY

I don't want you to be a spy! ...But my choices are limited too. We need you.

APHRA

Who is we?

Lucy produces the letters from Aphra.

LADY LUCY

First, tell me where you got these.

Aphra looks at the camera with a smirk.

APHRA

And just like that, I'm a spy.

THE END

