

ABSOBLOODYLUTELY FABTASTIC

Written by

Laz Rojas

Registered with WGAw

Lazaro Rojas
(818) 319-6430
filmman@earthlink.net

TITLE OVER BLACK:

August, 1963

FADE IN:

WIDE ANGLE - LONDON, ENGLAND - NIGHT

Thousands of lights twinkle as the city lays spread out before us beneath a completely overcast sky.

TITLE:

London, England

EXT. PUB - SAME

It's raining heavily as a black 1960 JAGUAR MK 2 SALOON pulls up and stops at the curb. Silhouetted in the light from a lamp post, a MAN wearing a raincoat and bowler and carrying a briefcase and umbrella gets out of the car and walks quickly toward the pub's entrance.

TITLE:

The St. George Pub
Mayfair, London
10:23 PM

INT. PUB

The man enters, and it's a 54-year-old LORD EDMUND TAYLOR. He wipes the fog from his glasses, then looks toward a booth in the back where the only patron at this hour is sitting.

Sitting in the booth is a 53-year-old SIR PERCIVAL HAWTHORNE, calmly reading a newspaper and sipping ale from a mug, and he doesn't look up as Taylor comes to the booth.

HAWTHORNE

You're late.

TAYLOR

Last-minute preparations before my flight tomorrow.

Taylor sits down and sets his briefcase on the table. Hawthorne continues to read his paper.

TAYLOR

We really should find a new place to meet. Now that you're using my diplomatic bag, we must be careful about being seen.

HAWTHORNE

Would you prefer Boodle's? If anyone spies us there, we can always say we're reminiscing about our days on the *Rodney*, pounding the bejeezus out of the *Bismarck*.

TAYLOR
(smiles)
Ol' Rodders.

HAWTHORNE
A lifetime ago.

TAYLOR
Indeed.

Hawthorne takes a sip from his mug, then brings out his own briefcase. He opens it, brings out a MANILA ENVELOPE stamped "TOP SECRET" and places it on the table, then shuts the briefcase and puts it back on the floor.

HAWTHORNE
This goes directly to Angleton. For
his eyes only.

Taylor takes the envelope and puts it in his briefcase, then sits there, thinking. Hawthorne continues to read his paper, aware there is something on his mind.

HAWTHORNE
Care for a pint before you go?

TAYLOR
(shakes his head)
No.

HAWTHORNE
Then there must be another reason why
you haven't left.

Taylor hesitates, then decides to go ahead and reveal what's on his mind.

TAYLOR
Do you recall what you mentioned last
time about recruiting a female field
operative?

HAWTHORNE
Yes, of course.

TAYLOR
Are you still looking?

HAWTHORNE
There are two potential candidates I'm
watching at the moment, both presently
in MI5, very highly qualified.

TAYLOR
How far along are you with that?

HAWTHORNE
It's still early yet. Nothing's been
decided.

TAYLOR

Then I've a recommendation for you to consider before you go any further.

HAWTHORNE

Anyone I know?

TAYLOR

Actually, you've known her since she was eight. My adopted daughter Darla.

Hawthorne lowers the paper and looks at Taylor for the first time, and he watches him for a moment before he replies.

HAWTHORNE

I'm sitting here trying to decide whether or not you're pulling my plonker. It's not April Fools', is it? I've a calendar here somewhere.

TAYLOR

It's well past April Fools'.

HAWTHORNE

That's what I thought. Then I must've had more ale whilst waiting for you than I'd realized. Wonder if I'll be in any condition at all to drive home.

TAYLOR

I'm quite serious, Percy.

HAWTHORNE

You are, aren't you? You're honestly suggesting I consider Darla for the job.

TAYLOR

Absolutely.

HAWTHORNE

To my complete and utter astonishment.

TAYLOR

And why is that?

HAWTHORNE

Why is that? Edmund, she's a very nice young lady, and you and Penelope -- God rest her soul -- did a bang-up job raising her, but what on earth makes you think she's at all the type of material I'm looking for?

TAYLOR

You said the position requires someone fearless, resourceful, quick on her feet and able to adapt to any situation.

HAWTHORNE

That I did.

TAYLOR

Darla is all that, and more.

HAWTHORNE

She's a pop singer with no experience whatsoever in anything of this sort. A girl who's faced nothing more threatening than a hostile critic or smart-arse reporter.

TAYLOR

And who survived in the streets for an entire year with nothing but her wits and her fierce determination -- or have you forgotten that? She may appear soft to you now, but beneath that veneer she's still the same scrappy little fighter she was then.

HAWTHORNE

(smiles)

I do recall how difficult a time she gave you those first few months. "Little terror" indeed. I honestly was convinced you'd bitten off more than you could chew.

TAYLOR

If I could mold her into a proper lady, you can mold her into a proficient agent.

The conviction on Taylor's face is plain, but a new concern suddenly occurs to Hawthorne.

HAWTHORNE

You haven't told her yet about the organization, have you?

TAYLOR

I thought it best to refrain until I'd brought this to you.

HAWTHORNE

Very wise.

TAYLOR

And until you'd given me an answer.

Taylor watches him steadily, waiting for a decision, and Hawthorne appears to relent a little.

HAWTHORNE

Let's for a moment pretend I'd set aside my reservations -- which are many -- and go along with all this.

(MORE)

HAWTHORNE (CONT'D)

Why would she be interested, considering she's already got a career? And a rather comfortable one at that.

TAYLOR

(a beat)

I suspect that, deep down, she wishes to do something more.

HAWTHORNE

You suspect.

Taylor pauses again, coming to terms with something he really hasn't admitted to himself until now.

TAYLOR

You know Edith is the apple of my eye, and she'll always be first with me... but there are times I feel a bond to Darla that I cannot explain, as though in some manner she were more my own and of like mind. Edith goes... her own way.

He elaborates no further, and Hawthorne remains silent, well aware of Edith's rebellious streak. Then Taylor looks back at him and makes one last, unapologetic appeal.

TAYLOR

Think on it, would you?

HAWTHORNE

I'll take it under advisement.

Taylor nods, then picks up his briefcase and stands.

TAYLOR

Until next time, then.

HAWTHORNE

Godspeed, old friend. Give my regards to President and Mrs. Kennedy.

Taylor nods again, then turns and heads for the entrance. Hawthorne picks up his paper and resumes reading as Taylor opens his umbrella and exits the pub.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE OVER BLACK:

August, 1967

FADE UP:

WIDE ANGLE - LONDON, ENGLAND - EVENING

Thousands of lights twinkle as dusk settles over the city.

EXT. TELEVISION STUDIO - SAME

A building located somewhere in Central London.

TITLE:

Kingsway Television Studios
Central London
Friday, 7:00 PM

INT. STUDIO - CONTROL ROOM - ON TELEVISION MONITOR

The INTRO SEQUENCE of *Pop! Goes London* -- the musical television show which we saw in the pre-credits teaser of "Absolutely Smashing" -- begins on the monitor. It's a different intro than the one in the earlier film, and the INTRO MUSIC is now the SONG "Come On Now" by The Kinks.

INT. STUDIO - SAME

A STUDIO AUDIENCE of young people dances as the INTRO MUSIC plays, then the MUSIC fades and they applaud as the show's presenter, CHLOE, steps onto the stage. We remember Chloe from the earlier film; she is mid-20's and mod, quite effervescent, and speaks with a pronounced Scouse accent.

CHLOE

Hello, everyone! Chloe Sellers here.
Thank you for joining me this evening
for another edition of "Pop! Goes
London" -- where the weekend starts
early! We've got a really fab show
for you tonight, and here to start
things off, singing her latest chart-
topper, is the fabmost Darla Chandler!

The audience applauds as the lights come up on an adjacent stage and DARLA CHANDLER is revealed. She is by herself; the two back-up singers that we saw with her in "Absolutely Smashing" are gone and she is now completely a solo act. The instrumental INTRO of the SONG "There's a Kind of Hush" plays, then Darla begins to sing.

DARLA

There's a kind of hush all over the
world tonight.
All over the world you can hear the
sounds of lovers in love.
You know what I mean.

CHLOE AND A MAN

are standing in front of the audience and watching as Darla sings. The man is in his 30's, very well-dressed and quite good-looking.

DARLA (O.S.)

Just the two of us and nobody else
in sight.
There's nobody else and I'm feeling
good just holding you tight.

DARLA

continues to sing.

DARLA
So listen very carefully
Closer now and you will see what I mean.

CHLOE AND THE MAN

exchange comments as they watch Darla sing.

DARLA (O.S.)
It isn't a dream.

CLOSE-UP - DARLA

DARLA
The only sound that you will hear
Is when I whisper in your ear I love you

CHLOE AND THE MAN

watch her, and it's obvious the man is quite taken with her.

DARLA (O.S.)
Forever and ever.

DARLA

finishes the verse.

DARLA
There's a kind of hush all over the
world tonight.
All over the world you can hear the
sounds of lovers in love.

EXT. STUDIO - PARKING LOT

As the first half of the song's INSTRUMENTAL MIDDLE plays,
we see a CLOSE-UP of a man's legs, dressed in black
trousers, as their owner starts climbing up a chain link
fence.

REVERSE ANGLE

During the second half, we see a CLOSE-UP of the man's legs
as he lands on the ground on the other side of the fence,
then moves off OUT OF FRAME.

INT. STUDIO

Darla continues to sing.

DARLA
So listen very carefully
Closer now and you will see what I mean.
It isn't a dream.

CLOSE-UP - DARLA

DARLA
The only sound that you will hear
Is when I whisper in your ear I love you
Forever and ever.

WIDER ANGLE

as Darla finishes the song.

DARLA
There's a kind of hush all over the
world tonight.
All over the world people just like us
are fallin' in love.
Yeah, they're fallin' in love.
They're fallin' in love.

The MUSIC ends and the audience applauds. The man with Chloe
applauds enthusiastically, and he watches as Chloe steps
onto the stage holding several INDEX CARDS and joins Darla.

CHLOE
(to audience)
Wasn't that absolutely gear, everyone?
(to Darla)
Hello, Darla, how are you?

DARLA
Just tickety-boo, thank you. And you?

CHLOE
Very well, thank you. Before the show,
we asked people in the audience to come
up with questions they'd like to ask
you. Are you up for it?

DARLA
Fire away.

Chloe goes through the cards asking the questions written on
each one and Darla answers them:

CHLOE
What kind of films do you like?

DARLA
Musicals, obviously. Comedies are a
lot of fun as well. And I'm an absolute
sop for a good romance.

CHLOE
Who are your favorite American film
stars?

DARLA
Not who'd you think, probably. Ginger
Rogers and Fred Astaire. Clark Gable
and Jean Harlow. Have a soft spot for
the oldies.

CHLOE

What was your favorite book as a child?

DARLA

That's an easy one. "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", naturally.

CHLOE

Have you any hobbies?

DARLA

You mean in my spare time? Haven't got much of that. But I paint when I can... write a little poetry.

CHLOE

What's your favorite food?

DARLA

Chip butties, of course. I could live on them exclusively. Chip butties and jam butties.

CHLOE

No mistaking where you're from.

DARLA

That's right. True Scouser here. No woollyback.

CHLOE

Is it true you were once nearly nicked for stealing a loaf of bread?

DARLA

Yes, I confess. I was a rascally little girl, I'm afraid.

The audience laughs.

CHLOE

If you could have anything you wanted, what would it be?

DARLA

Oh, to live a less complicated life, I suppose.

CHLOE

Yes, the life of a pop star can be rather hectic, can't it?

DARLA

You don't know the half of it.

CHLOE

Now here's a question you're probably asked all the time. What do you look for in a bloke?

DARLA
 (taken by surprise)
 Oh, goodness. Um, how much time have we got?

Chloe and the audience laugh, but Darla looks a bit thrown by the question. Up to now, she's answered the series of questions easily and directly, but she has to stop for this one and think how she's going to reply.

CHLOE
 I'm sure it's not enough. But give us a few hints, if you would.

As Darla tries to answer the question, the man who was standing beside Chloe during the song listens with anticipation, and it's obvious he's the one who asked it.

DARLA
 What do I look for in a bloke? Well, let's see... A sense of humor, to start. That's first and foremost in my book.

CHLOE
 And what else?

DARLA
 A kind heart... a pleasant disposition... a modicum of intelligence...
 (audience laughs)
 And of course, it doesn't hurt if he's a looker.

Chloe and the audience laugh again, and the man looks hopeful.

CHLOE
 Yes, of course.
 (looks at card again)
 Oh, it's a two-part question. Second part is: Are you presently seeing anyone?

Darla opens her mouth to say something, then evades the question with an uneasy little laugh.

DARLA
 Very curious, this person is. They're not a reporter, by any chance?

CHLOE
 No, just one of your many fans.

DARLA
 Well, always like to please the fans, but, that's a bit private, isn't it?

CHLOE
 Par for the course in the life of a pop star. We want to know all the details.

DARLA
Yes, but some things are better kept
undisclosed, I think.

CHLOE
Oh, do tell. I'm sure everyone's just
dying to know.

DARLA
I'm sure they are. Next question.

CHLOE
So you won't tell us?

Darla is getting more uncomfortable with this subject, as
well as annoyed at Chloe, but she covers it with her usual
wit.

DARLA
Well, a girl's got to keep some things
to herself. Little air of mystery and
all that.

CHLOE
Yes, I'm sure.
(changes subject)
So what's on your new LP? Your first
solo release, I might add.

DARLA
Oh, this and that. Little bit of
everything.

CHLOE
Could you be more specific?

DARLA
Let's just say it's a veritable
potpourri of songs I've loved over
the past twenty years and decided to
cover on one album. A trip down memory
lane, as it were.

CHLOE
Seems we'll have to wait till it's
in the shops next week to find out.

DARLA
That you will. But the single's out
tomorrow, on Vista, and it's six and
nine.

CHLOE
Wonderful. We're all looking forward
to it.
(to audience)
Darla Chandler, everyone.

The audience breaks into applause.

INT. STUDIO - DRESSING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The show is over and Darla is getting out of her costume. The door opens a bit and Chloe pokes her head in.

CHLOE

'Ey, Darla, you've anywhere to go tonight?

DARLA

Matter of fact, yes. I'm skedaddling as soon as I'm done here.

CHLOE

(comes in)

You've always someplace to go, la. You never stick around anymore. Didn't used to be like that.

DARLA

And you're always trying to match me up with some posh git you've decided in your wisdom is precisely just what I need. That is what you've in mind for tonight, isn't it?

CHLOE

Why on earth would you think that?
(at Darla's look)
Well, yes, I suppose.

DARLA

So who is it this time? Not that geezer who was standing right up front with you. I suppose those were his questions.

CHLOE

Oh, you'll absolutely adore him, Darla. He's loaded and funny and he's just dishy, isn't he? And he's a really big fan. Works at Templeton, Asher and Klein. Came to the show tonight just to see you.

DARLA

Well, I'm very sorry, but you'll need to tell him I'm not in the market for a solicitor right now -- or anyone else, come to that. But if he wants a signed copy of my new LP, that could be arranged. I've no objection to that.

Darla starts getting dressed in her regular clothes, and Chloe watches her, getting annoyed with Darla's constant refusal to let her match-make for her.

CHLOE

Are you going for a new title, Darla?

DARLA

Such as?

CHLOE

Oh, I don't know. "Spinster of Pop"? Really, has someone broken your heart and you've sworn off all contact with blokes, or is it some Eastern path to enlightenment you've decided to dabble in?

DARLA

(sarcastic)

Didn't you notice the whole thing started after my meeting with the maharishi?

CHLOE

Or are you hiding someone you don't want anyone to know about, hmm? Someone who'd shatter that squeaky-clean image of yours if people were to find out. Like Marianne Faithfull and Mick Jagger. Is that it? I bet that's it, isn't it?

DARLA

You've more imagination than Lewis Carroll, girl.

CHLOE

If that's it, you can tell me, la. You know I can keep a secret.

DARLA

Says the girl with the gob like the Mersey Tunnel.

CHLOE

Or maybe he's married. Could that be it? Darla Chandler sneaking about like a bandit in the shadows with a married man.

DARLA

Give your chin a rest, would you?

CHLOE

(continuing)

Stealing away for a dirty weekend to some undisclosed location far from prying eyes.

DARLA

Yes, that's it. You've sussed it out, girl, despite all my efforts. What can I say? You've got me bang to rights.

CHLOE

Come 'ed, Darla, give us a hint, would you? Can't you be straight up with me? I worry about you.

Finished dressing, Darla steps up to Chloe and pats her on the cheek.

DARLA

Well, don't trouble yourself, Little Miss Nosey Parker, because there's absolutely, positively nothing at all to worry about whatsoever. I couldn't be happier in my present state. So let it go and don't give it any more mind.

Darla goes back to the mirror to fix her hair, and Chloe sighs and gives up.

CHLOE

Alright, have it your way. But if you're hiding some deep, dark secret from me, I'll get to the bottom of it eventually. I'm like a dog with a bone, I am.

DARLA

Oh, deffo. That you are.

CHLOE

(smiles)

Dead cert.

Darla smirks at her in the mirror, then Chloe leaves the room. After she's gone, Darla stops smirking... and as she watches her own reflection, we can see the increasing toll it's taking on her to keep secret not only that she's a spy, but that she's married as well -- to another spy.

EXT. STUDIO - PARKING LOT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Darla approaches her car, a Sierra Blue 1966 RADFORD MINI DE VILLE GT with Silver Birch roof. Just as she is about to unlock the door, a man dressed all in black comes up behind her and grabs her arm, the same man we saw earlier climbing the fence. Alarmed, Darla instantly swirls around to strike him -- but it turns out to be NIGEL WILKINS and she stops.

DARLA

Nigel!

NIGEL

Fine way to say hello.

DARLA

Nearly frightened me to death.

NIGEL

You should be more alert, luv. I could have been a bad hat with some rather dishonorable intentions.

DARLA

And I could have taken your head off. What are you doing here, anyroad? We were supposed to meet down the street.

NIGEL
Thought I'd avoid the crowd out front
and ask the pretty bird for an autograph
in private.

DARLA
If someone were to see you...

NIGEL
But they haven't, have they? I am a
specter in the night, moving unseen
from one location to the next, making
myself known only when I wish.

DARLA
Be serious. If Chloe gets a dekko at
us together, God forbid, it'll be
plastered all over the rags by
tomorrow.

NIGEL
So let's clear out of here and that
won't be a problem, eh? I'll drive.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Darla's Mini drives by.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel drives; Darla rides beside him, fiddling with a small
CAMERA.

NIGEL
I wish these television appearances
didn't always coincide with the nights
we need to conduct surveillance.

DARLA
Why? I'm right on time, considering
how short notice this was. Who is this
tosser we're tailing anyroad?

NIGEL
I've no idea. Hawthorne gave me a
description and location but nothing
more. Wants us to take photographs of
him.

DARLA
That's all? Nothing else?

NIGEL
For now, anyway.

DARLA
Sounds simple enough. But I'm sure
it'll get more complicated later.

EXT. HOTEL - AN HOUR OR TWO LATER

A shabby hotel somewhere in Whitechapel. Darla's Mini is parked across the street.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - SAME

Nigel and Darla are sitting in the dark, watching the hotel and waiting.

DARLA
Never liked this area very much. Gives me the heebie-jeebies.

NIGEL
(chuckles)
Yes, hopefully we won't run into any of the usual denizens such as the Kray Twins or even the ghost of Jack the Ripper, eh? But there is life east of Aldgate, you know.

DARLA
Reminds me of parts of Liverpool when I was a little girl. A few places I'd like to forget.

NIGEL
Well, you've certainly come a long way from all that. Curious how life works, eh? Who'd have told you back then you'd be performing on the telly for thousands of people one moment, then sitting in a car in the dead of night skulking about with the likes of me the next?

DARLA
Nothing could ever have prepared me for that -- especially the last part.

Nigel chuckles again, but Darla looks pensive.

DARLA
Sometimes I miss it, though. The past.
(beat)
You can take the girl out of the Pool, I suppose... but you can't take the Pool out of the girl.

Nigel notices some activity across the street and leans forward to watch. Darla notices him do so and watches too.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

A man steps out of the hotel, smoking a cigarette, and stands on the pavement. He is SERGEI KRASINSKI, Russian, mid-30's, and he wears a suit and tie and a fedora.

BACK TO SCENE

They watch as Krasinski stands there and smokes.

DARLA
Is that him?

NIGEL
Looks like it.

Darla brings the camera up to her face and aims it at Krasinski.

DARLA
Smile... You're on candid camera.

INSERT - VIEW THROUGH CAMERA

Standing outside the hotel, Krasinski casually smokes his cigarette as Darla snaps his photo.

BACK TO SCENE

Darla continues taking more pictures.

DARLA
Hawthorne really didn't tell you what this is all about?

NIGEL
Seems he wants to play it close to the chest till he has his suspicions confirmed.

DARLA
What about?

NIGEL
Didn't say. But it's something his Dean Street Irregulars have been monitoring for a while. I imagine he'll enlighten us if he takes it to the next step.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

Krasinski tosses his cigarette away and walks over to a maroon 1965 MORRIS OXFORD SALOON parked beside the hotel.

BACK TO SCENE

Darla lowers the camera, and she and Nigel watch as Krasinski gets into the car.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

Krasinski starts the engine and begins to drive away.

BACK TO SCENE

Darla and Nigel watch.

DARLA
Shall we follow him?

NIGEL
Hawthorne said nothing about that...
but I suppose it won't hurt to see
where he's going and take a few more
photographs.

Nigel starts the engine.

EXT. STREET

The SONG "White Rabbit" by Jefferson Airplane begins on the soundtrack as Darla's Mini makes a u-turn and starts heading down the street in the direction Krasinski left, and it continues throughout the entire following sequence:

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel drives as they follow Krasinski's sedan.

EXT. STREET

Krasinski's sedan drives by. A few moments later, Darla's Mini drives by too, keeping a discreet distance.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel and Darla watch Krasinski's sedan as they follow it.

EXT. INTERSECTION

Krasinski's sedan arrives at the intersection, turns at the corner and continues down the intersecting street.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel arrives at the intersection and starts to make the turn.

EXT. INTERSECTION

Darla's Mini turns at the corner and continues to follow Krasinski's sedan at a discreet distance.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel and Darla keep their eyes on Krasinski's sedan.

INSERT - THE VIEW AHEAD

Krasinski's tail lights can be seen about a block ahead.

BACK TO SCENE

They continue to watch the sedan as they follow it.

EXT. ANOTHER INTERSECTION

Krasinski's sedan arrives at the intersection and turns. A few moments later, Darla's Mini arrives and makes the same turn.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

They keep their eyes on the tail lights ahead.

EXT. WAREHOUSE

Somewhere still in the East End. Krasinski's sedan approaches along the opposite side of the street, makes a u-turn, and parks in front of the warehouse. A few moments later, Darla's Mini passes by across the street and makes a right turn at the next corner.

EXT. SIDE STREET

Darla's Mini enters the side street, but it makes a quick u-turn and comes back to the corner and stops there.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Nigel and Darla watch the sedan parked around the corner from them and halfway down the block.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

Krasinski gets out of his car.

BACK TO SCENE

Nigel and Darla watch.

EXT. WAREHOUSE

Krasinski walks into an alley beside the warehouse and disappears from view.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Darla gets out of the car with her camera.

EXT. WAREHOUSE

Darla quickly walks up to the alley and peeks around the corner.

INSERT - DARLA'S P.O.V.

Krasinski and another MAN are talking a few yards down the alley. It's dark and we can't make out their faces.

DARLA

watches from her vantage point and realizes it's too dark to take photos.

INSERT - DARLA'S P.O.V.

The men finish talking and Krasinski turns to come back out of the alley, carrying a FOLDER full of papers.

DARLA

ducks back around the corner.

EXT. WAREHOUSE

Krasinski emerges from the alley to return to his car. Behind him, Darla is hiding in a doorway near the alley's entrance.

DARLA'S P.O.V.

Krasinski heads for his car... and as he does so, a BUSINESS CARD slips out of the folder and lands on the sidewalk.

DARLA

notices he dropped it.

DARLA'S P.O.V.

Krasinski gets into his car, starts the engine, and pulls out.

DARLA

watches him drive away, then emerges from the doorway.

THE MAN

whom Krasinski was talking to starts to walk toward the street, and we cannot make out his face in the darkness.

THE MAN'S P.O.V.

Up ahead at the entrance to the alley, Darla comes INTO VIEW as she steps up to the card Krasinski dropped and bends over to pick it up.

THE MAN

stops short as he sees her pick it up, alarmed, and ducks behind a trash bin.

DARLA

looks at the card she picked up, then looks down the alley for any sign of the other man.

THE MAN

continues to watch, peeking from behind the trash bin. His face is in shadow and we cannot see who he is... but he sees Darla's face clearly now as she faces toward him.

THE MAN'S P.O.V.

We quickly ZOOM-IN on Darla to an EXTREME CLOSE-UP of her face.

THE MAN

reacts with surprise as he recognizes her, quickly putting a hand over his mouth.

DARLA

sees no one in the alley, then looks back toward where the Mini is parked and signals Nigel to come pick her up.

THE MAN

watches from behind the trash bin.

THE MAN'S P.O.V.

The Mini drives up and stops, and Darla gets in. Then the Mini drives off and goes OUT OF VIEW as the SONG reaches its climax and comes to its crashing end.

THE MAN

slowly emerges from behind the trash bin as the last note of the SONG fades, but his face is still in shadow and not once have we been able to see who he is. Then he speaks, his voice hushed and aggrieved.

MAN
So... singing isn't all that you do.
(sighs heavily)
Oh, Darla... what a spot you've put
me in. And yourself.

EXT. STREET

The Mini drives away from us and down the street, its tail lights receding into the night...

CROSSFADE

MAIN CREDITS SEQUENCE

accompanied by the SONG "Time of the Season" by The Zombies. The titles are SUPERIMPOSED over a dark background against which the brightly colored rotoscoped silhouettes of GO-GO DANCERS dance sensually, similar to Maurice Binder's credits sequence for "Dr. No".

TITLES and SONG end, and as the music FADES, we slowly

DISSOLVE TO:

WIDE ANGLE - LONDON - MORNING

The city lays spread out before us in the morning sun.

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT - SAME

A terraced house in Chelsea's Markham Square.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - BEDROOM - SAME

Darla is standing in front of her vanity's mirror, fully dressed and brushing her hair. She finishes and puts on an earring, then starts to put on the other one when the doorbell RINGS from the lounge.

DARLA
(annoyed)
A bit early today, aren't we?
(drops the earring)
Oh, dear...

She picks up the earring and puts it on.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - SAME

Darla exits the bedroom and crosses toward the front door.

DARLA
I really must start taking my own car
in again. Then I wouldn't need to put
up with you hurrying me all the time.

She reaches the door and opens it, expecting Nigel to be outside. But Nigel isn't there, and no one else is either.

DARLA
Nigel...?

She looks down and sees a BASKET OF FLOWERS wrapped in cellophane on the mat outside the door. She picks it up and looks it over, then looks in both directions down the street, but there's no sign of whoever left it there.

Darla closes the door and carries the basket over to the coffee table and sets it down, then tears off the wrapping and searches for a card.

DARLA
Wonder if they're from Chloe's solicitor
friend... Won't take no for an answer...

Her musing is interrupted by a car that HONKS outside. She continues to search for a card but the horn HONKS again, and she sighs, then heads back to the front door.

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT/STREET - SAME

A black 1958 ASTON MARTIN DB4 2-SEAT COUPE is parked in front, and Nigel sits at the wheel. Darla exits her flat and crosses to the car.

NIGEL
Took you long enough. Don't want to
keep the old man waiting.

DARLA
(getting in)
Where's the Jag?

NIGEL
Gearbox service. Brought Tilly out of mothballs. Old girl's been champing at the bit for some action.

Nigel starts the engine and pulls out.

INT. NIGEL'S DB4 - MOVING

The car's RADIO is playing the SONG "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair)" by Scott McKenzie, the volume low.

NIGEL
You know, we really must do something about our living arrangements.

DARLA
Not again...

NIGEL
It's been a year since we married and we're still carrying on as if we're having some sort of illicit affair. It's really become quite tiresome.

DARLA
Oh? In some ways it keeps things rather exciting, I think.

NIGEL
I've had enough excitement to last a lifetime, thank you. Now I'd be content with a bit of peaceful domesticity -- which we can't have whilst we're still living in separate flats.

DARLA
You didn't seem to mind this arrangement before we married. You rather liked it, if I recall correctly.

NIGEL
Because we weren't married. But now we are. And unless I'm mistaken, that typically entails both parties residing under the same roof.

DARLA
I'd no idea you were such a traditionalist.

NIGEL
I thought I could get used to it in time but I was wrong. It's an entirely preposterous situation.

DARLA
Which is just as trying for me as it is for you, so if I'm willing to lump it, I see no reason why you can't do so as well.

NIGEL

The whole thing's rather unnatural when you think about it. Goes against the very grain of everything I've ever held dear.

DARLA

I really don't know why you insist on flogging this dead horse. We both knew right from the start this marriage had to be kept secret from the general public.

NIGEL

Yes, of course. Darla Chandler, beloved pop star. England's most eligible bachelorette.

DARLA

That's not the real reason and you know it. If I'd married anyone else, it wouldn't make any difference to my career and it wouldn't need to be kept secret at all. But I didn't marry anyone else, did I? I married a spy. And I'm a spy as well. And we also happen to work together. And all of that needs to be kept under wraps for all the reasons we've already discussed and that I've no desire to debate any further either this morning or ever again.

EXT. SEX SHOP - MORNING

The street-level facade for S.M.A.S.H.'s underground headquarters in Soho. Nigel's DB4 drives by the front, then turns and goes into the alley beside the building. We hear a DISC JOCKEY on the radio:

DISC JOCKEY (V.O.)

This is the continuing sound of free radio for Great Britain and the Continent. Caroline International on 259, your all-day music station.

EXT. ALLEY - SAME

The SONG "Winchester Cathedral" by The New Vaudeville Band begins to play on the radio as the DB4 goes down the alley and stops in front of a garage door. The door opens, then the car proceeds into the garage.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nigel drives the car onto an elevator and stops, but keeps the engine running and the radio playing. The elevator begins to slowly descend to the parking level.

INT. NIGEL'S DB4 - CONTINUOUS

Darla and Nigel sit there silently as they descend, both looking straight ahead, and there is still some palpable tension between them. Darla wishes to put an end to it and searches for something to say.

DARLA
I've got a secret admirer.

NIGEL
Beg pardon?

DARLA
Someone sent a basket of flowers to my flat this morning.

NIGEL
(a beat)
How do you know it wasn't me?

DARLA
(glances at him
and smirks)
You don't send flowers unless we had a fight.

NIGEL
Maybe I thought I'd send them in advance this time.

Darla rolls her eyes.

NIGEL
Any idea who it might be, then? A fan?

DARLA
No, there was no card.

NIGEL
(another beat)
Well, whoever it is, I think it's safe to say it's one of the millions of people out there in the general public who've somehow got the impression that you're not married.

Darla looks heavenward and sighs heavily.

INT. S.M.A.S.H. HQ - CORRIDOR

The doors from the parking level open and Darla and Nigel step out and approach FIONA'S desk. On the wall is still the same large INSIGNIA, and the large letters beside it read:

S.M.A.S.H.
Strategic Measures Against Soviet Hegemony

Darla and Nigel arrive at the desk, and they check their PISTOLS and add their names to a sign-in sheet.

NIGEL
Good morning, Fiona.

FIONA
Good morning, Agent Wilkins.
(under her breath)
Agent Chandler.

Ever since Nigel's and Darla's marriage, Fiona has gone back to addressing Nigel formally. She is also rather circumspect towards Darla. Nigel isn't in his usual talkative mood, and Fiona senses the tension between him and Darla.

FIONA
(all innocence)
Problem...?

NIGEL
(looks at her)
Hmm? No... Why would you say that?

Fiona says nothing, watching him, and Nigel looks at Darla.

NIGEL
Is there a problem by any chance?

Darla says nothing, just gives him a little shrug.

NIGEL
That's what I thought.
(back to Fiona)
No problems here.

Again, Fiona says nothing. She watches as Nigel and Darla proceed down the corridor towards Hawthorne's office, then goes back to her work.

FIONA
(to herself)
Oh, well. One can keep hoping.

INT. S.M.A.S.H. HQ - HAWTHORNE'S OFFICE

PERCIVAL HAWTHORNE is standing at his desk, looking through the PHOTOS that Darla took the night before. Darla and Nigel are standing beside him.

DARLA
So is it whom you suspected?

HAWTHORNE
Indeed it is. Sergei Krasinski, a low-level KGB operative. He was spotted in Belgium two months ago by C.E.R.T., where they observed him for several days. They lost sight of him after that, so they alerted all their strategic partners in the event he turned up in someone else's neck of the woods.

NIGEL

And now he's turned up in ours.

HAWTHORNE

I put our entire network of street informants on it back then and told them to keep their eyes and ears open, just in case. It was a long shot, but two days ago our man in Spitalfields reported he might have a hit. These photographs confirm it.

Hawthorne puts the photos down and goes around his desk to sit down, and Darla and Nigel sit in the chairs in front of the desk.

HAWTHORNE

Ordinarily, the presence of such an operative here in England would raise only the usual red flags. But in this case, the situation is a touch more alarming.

DARLA

How so?

HAWTHORNE

Because of Krasinski's connection to this man.

Hawthorne brings out a different PHOTO and hands it her, and both Darla and Nigel look at it. The man in the photo is considerably older than Krasinski, and he has a scar on one cheek and a dangerous scowl on his face.

NIGEL

(surprised)

Yevgeny Volkov?

HAWTHORNE

We determined not long ago that Krasinski works directly for Volkov. In what capacity, we've yet to ascertain... but his presence here indicates something is afoot.

NIGEL

Volkov's rather high up on the KGB totem pole. One of the old guard. Earnt quite a reputation in the NKVD and in SMERSH after that. If one of his minions is here, what is he up to?

HAWTHORNE

Whatever it is, we can rest assured it must be of some import. A low-level operative like Krasinski wouldn't be moving about this far from home without good reason... and Volkov doesn't involve himself in trifling matters.

NIGEL
No, he certainly doesn't.

HAWTHORNE
You two need to get the gen on what Krasinski's doing here. Have you got anything to go on based on last night?

DARLA
Just this. He dropped it as he came out of the alley after meeting whoever was there.

Darla brings out the card Krasinski dropped and hands it to Hawthorne, and Hawthorne studies it. The design on the card is very simple: a pop-art grinning cat face, under which appears an address and a phone number.

DARLA
You do recognize it, don't you?

HAWTHORNE
Of course. The logo of Cheshire Cat Productions -- British television and music corporation run by Sir Peter Rice-Davies, enterprising fellow who started out managing several fledgling music groups in the Manchester area fifteen years ago. Today he heads a consortium second only to ATV and EMI in programming and production.

DARLA
And all of that by the age of forty. Rather impressive man.

NIGEL
Isn't he the bloke who always says "fabtastic" all the time?

DARLA
That's him.

NIGEL
Each time I see him on the telly he's saying that about something, or someone. Strikes me as a bit of a fop.

HAWTHORNE
(to Darla)
Do you know him?

DARLA
No. Strangely enough, I've not had the occasion to cross paths with him.

NIGEL
Really? I'd have thought you rubbed shoulders with just about everyone in the music business.

DARLA

Believe it or not, we don't all run in the same circles, you know. Plus my duties here at S.M.A.S.H. don't permit me the time to indulge in that world as much as I used to -- or would like.

NIGEL

(teasing her)

Yes, I suppose you've only got time these days to remain chummy with fellow Liverpudlians like John Lennon, perhaps.

DARLA

Oh, don't start with that again.

HAWTHORNE

What are you two talking about?

NIGEL

Long story.

DARLA

And not important. Not anymore, anyroad.

HAWTHORNE

Whatever. Back to our muttons?

DARLA

Yes, of course.

Hawthorne nods simply, then leans back in his chair and contemplates the situation.

HAWTHORNE

So let's go over what we know, shall we? Two months ago, Krasinski's spotted in Brussels, then drops out of sight. No one knows where he's been since, but now he turns up here --

(holds up card)

-- with this in his possession. Now, why would a low-level KGB operative with high-level connections be meeting with someone in London and carrying a business card from Cheshire Cat?

NIGEL

Very good question indeed.

HAWTHORNE

(looks at them;
a beat)

Find the answer.

INT. NIGEL'S DB4 - MOVING

Nigel drives; Darla rides beside him. The INSTRUMENTAL TRACK "Music to Watch Girls By" by The Bob Crewe Generation plays on the car's RADIO as they talk, the volume low.

NIGEL

You know, I really think Fiona has the makings of an excellent investigator. She's utterly wasted at that desk.

DARLA

What are you talking about?

NIGEL

Her intuitive skills are rather well honed. She sensed quite quickly the tension between us.

DARLA

I wasn't aware of any tension.

NIGEL

Oh, so everything's just hunky-dory in Darla-land, is it? No problems at all?

DARLA

The only problem I see is your dogged insistence on whinging about something we all agreed upon over a year ago.

NIGEL

I don't recall my ever agreeing upon anything. I do remember being offered an ultimatum by our beneficent leader:
(imitates Hawthorne)
"The only way I'm permitting you lot to be married is if the whole thing is kept strictly confidential and Chandler carries on in public as if still unattached. Otherwise I shall have to most regrettably but with all due necessity split you up as a team."

DARLA

And I found his decision appropriate in view of the risks.

NIGEL

Can you honestly tell me you're content with this state of affairs? That all of this sits well with you?

DARLA

Whether or not it does is beside the point. I'm an adult, and being an adult means accepting difficult circumstances and doing whatever is necessary in order to deal with them. It's as simple as that.

She says nothing more... but it's obvious she's struggling to maintain a facade and that she's finding it harder and harder to keep things bottled up and deal with the mounting pressure.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

The same hotel in the East End where Nigel and Darla found Krasinski last night. Nigel's DB4 is parked out front, and only Darla sits in it, watching as Nigel exits the hotel.

INT. NIGEL'S DB4 - SAME

Nigel arrives and gets into the car.

NIGEL
He's gone.

DARLA
What?

NIGEL
(getting in)
Clerk says the man in that room checked out first thing this morning.

DARLA
Has he any idea where he went?

NIGEL
None at all.

DARLA
Do you think he's still in the city?

NIGEL
He may not even be in England anymore, for all we know. Could be he's finished his business here by meeting whomever he did last night.

They sit there for a moment, contemplating the situation.

DARLA
Hawthorne's going to throw a right wobbler when he learns Krasinski's vanished again.

NIGEL
(nods slowly;
a beat)
Well, I'll just tell him it was all your fault.

Darla looks at him and smirks as Nigel starts the car and pulls out.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - SAME

The front door opens and Darla and Nigel enter, talking.

NIGEL
Actually, he took the news rather well. He's convinced Krasinski's still in London somewhere.

DARLA
The vaunted Hawthorne intuition.

NIGEL
(closing door)
I wouldn't mock it. I've learnt to trust
it as much as my own. He's usually right.

As Darla goes OFF-SCREEN into the kitchen, Nigel sees the
basket of flowers on the coffee table and goes to it.

NIGEL
So these are what was sent, eh? You're
right. I'd never send these.

DARLA (O.S.)
You wouldn't?

NIGEL
'Course not. I do things with a bit
more subtlety and finesse.

DARLA
(returns from kitchen)
Yes, I know.

The telephone RINGS just at that moment, and Darla goes to
it and answers.

DARLA
Hello?
(listens)
Yes, this is she.
(listens; surprised)
Oh, hello!
(listens)
Yes, it's quite a surprise.
(listens)
Yes, I did receive them, in fact. Thank
you.
(listens; even
more surprised)
Really? Well, I don't know what to say.
(listens)
Yes, of course I'm interested. Naturally.
(listens)
Monday? Yes, I'll be there.
(listens)
Yes, I look forward to it as well. Cheers.

She hangs up slowly, a very thoughtful look on her face.
Nigel watches her.

NIGEL
Your secret admirer, I assume.

DARLA
I don't believe it. That was Peter
Rice-Davies.

NIGEL
Peter Rice-Davies? Of Cheshire Cat
Productions? That Peter Rice-Davies?

DARLA
Is there another?

NIGEL
Mr. Fabtastic? What did he want?

DARLA
He wants to meet with me. Wants to
discuss the possibility of my own
musical program.

NIGEL
On the telly?

DARLA
A weekly variety show on which I'd
sing and present other acts.

NIGEL
Well... I suppose congratulations are
in order. "The Darla Chandler Show",
eh? Quite a leap forward, career-wise.

Darla still looks very thoughtful, and Nigel sees the
distant expression on her face.

NIGEL
Darla...? Helloooo?

Darla snaps out of it and looks at him.

NIGEL
Where were you just now?

DARLA
I was just thinking how uncannily things
fall into place sometimes. This couldn't
come at a more fortuitous moment.

NIGEL
Yes... Quite a coincidence, if you ask
me.

DARLA
One should never argue when random
chance works out to one's benefit.

NIGEL
I thought you knew by now I don't
believe in random chance.

DARLA
Well, whatever it is, this certainly
lines up rather well with our mission.
Gives us a place to start now that
Krasinski's gone missing.

NIGEL

So I take it you're going to accept Mr. Fabtastic's offer.

DARLA

Well, meet with him to discuss it, at least. Might give me the chance to sniff about his company a bit, look for a connection to Krasinski, if there is one.

NIGEL

The question is, would you meet with him to discuss it if it didn't fit in with our investigation.

DARLA

What do you mean?

NIGEL

Would you respond to the man's offer if it wasn't advantageous to do so in the line of duty?

DARLA

Why wouldn't I? What singer wouldn't? As you said, it's an excellent career move.

NIGEL

I suppose so... if one isn't exactly satisfied with one's current situation in life. And someone comes along with just the remedy.

DARLA

Nigel Aloysius Wilkins! I do believe you're jealous!

NIGEL

Jealous? Don't be ridiculous. Why should I be jealous? I mean, he's only rich, and powerful, and involved in the same industry as you. And if we want to go a bit further and be equitable, moderately good-looking, if you go for that type. But be that as it may, I see no reason whatsoever to be jealous of a superficial dandy who struts about in Victorian fashion acting like a man half his age.

Darla watches him and smiles, sensing that he is a bit jealous.

DARLA

I can always turn him down. We can find another way to pursue this... try to locate Krasinski again.

NIGEL

No. As you said, this gives you a perfect chance to go undercover. And if your pop career can benefit from it as well, why refrain? Seems advantageous all around.

DARLA

Are you certain?

NIGEL

Are you asking me for permission? Because if so, this is an historic occasion, since you've never requested my permission for anything in the past.

DARLA

I simply want to be sure there'll be no problems if I go ahead with this. Nothing to complicate things later on at the most inopportune moment.

NIGEL

If any problems arise it won't be because of me.

DARLA

Good. Then I shall call on Mr. Rice-Davies first thing Monday.

EXT. CHESHIRE CAT BUILDING - DAY

Somewhere in the West End, and a giant version of the cat logo on the business card hangs over the main entrance. The SONG "Dedicated Follower of Fashion" by The Kinks begins on the soundtrack.

EXT. CHESHIRE CAT BUILDING - INNER COURTYARD - SAME

A mini-skirted SECRETARY leads Darla out into the courtyard and indicates toward a group of people across from them, then goes back into the building. Darla stands just outside the door and watches the activity.

DARLA'S P.O.V.

There are five people gathered at a fountain in the center of the courtyard. Three of them are members of a folk singing group, two MEN and one WOMAN. Another is a PHOTOGRAPHER with a CAMERA. And the fifth is PETER RICE-DAVIES.

Peter is 40, and just as Nigel described him earlier, dressed foppishly in Victorian style clothes. He wears a double-breasted suit of crushed velvet, a brocade waistcoat, and a shirt with a frilled collar. His hair is longish but not too long, and he wears John Lennon-style sunglasses with colored lenses.

At the moment, Peter is overseeing a photo session and he is a stickler for every little detail. He fusses over the members of the group like a mother hen and indicates exactly how he wants them to pose around the fountain, but from this distance we cannot hear what he's saying.

DARLA

watches the activity with interest.

PETER AND THE OTHERS

Peter finishes positioning one of the men to the left of the woman, then changes his mind immediately.

PETER

No, no, that's wrong. Keith, you over here, and Gordon over here.

He switches the positions of the men around, then steps back to observe.

PETER

Right, I think that works better. Yes, I like that.

Satisfied, he turns his attention to the woman.

PETER

Alright, Cyn, now --

He breaks off as he looks at her, then he goes up to her and tugs the sleeve of her dress.

PETER

Cynthia, what is this?

The woman looks over her dress, has no idea what he finds unsatisfactory and shrugs.

PETER

Is this what's presently off the peg at Granny Takes A Trip?

CYNTHIA

Well...

PETER

These look like ruddy odds and sods from a bargain bin.

CYNTHIA

You saw them earlier. You said nothing then.

PETER

I hadn't got a good look until now.

(a beat; sighs)

Oh, alright, I suppose it'll do. Could be worse.

Peter notices Darla standing at the door and breaks off. He glances at his watch and realizes he's late for their meeting, then looks back toward her.

PETER
 Darla!
 (to photographer)
 Hold it, Neil.

WIDER ANGLE

as Peter takes a few steps toward Darla.

PETER
 So glad you made it, luv. Fabtastic.
 (stops and holds
 up his hand)
 Could you wait for a tick? Just a tick,
 luv. I'll be right with you.

Darla nods and watches as Peter returns to the group and continues to fuss over Cynthia.

PETER
 Alright, let me look at you. Turn
 around.

He looks Cynthia up and down as she turns a full circle, reaches in to adjust something, then steps back and eyes her critically.

PETER
 Alright, Neil, how's that look to you?
 Can you work with that?

NEIL
 No problem, Peter.

PETER
 Right, take it from here. I've a meeting.

Peter leaves the group and comes over to Darla, taking off his sunglasses, and he extends his hand and smiles.

PETER
 Peter Rice-Davies.

DARLA
 (shakes his hand)
 Darla Chandler.

PETER
 I apologize. Photos for an album cover.
 Thought it'd be more natural out here
 than in the studio.

DARLA
 Looks very nice.

PETER
Cynthia's a wonderful singer, but the
bird has no fashion sense.

DARLA
Do you usually involve yourself in
photo sessions?

PETER
It's the manager in me. I still want
to handle every detail for the people
I sign. So, Darla -- I can call you
Darla? Don't wish to take any liberties
without getting the nod.

DARLA
Of course. Shall I call you Sir Peter?

PETER
If it pleases you, but quite frankly
it annoys me.

DARLA
Why?

PETER
A bit stuffy, don't you think?

DARLA
It's an honor.

PETER
Oh, I'm honored. But it's still stuffy.
Don't know why the Queen bothered.
Makes me feel old. Let's go up to my
office, eh?

INT. CHESHIRE CAT - PETER'S OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Peter shows Darla into the office and indicates a chair in
front of his desk.

PETER
Have a seat, luv. Can I get you anything?

DARLA
(sits)
No, I'm fine.

PETER
You sure? A cuppa? Fizzy drink?

DARLA
No, really, I'm fine. Thank you.

Peter goes behind his desk, which is cluttered with various
things, including an AM RADIO that is playing very softly
and a HARDCOVER COPY of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland".

PETER

Shame about Big L, eh? At least
Caroline's carrying on.

(sits down)

Let's get down to brass tacks, then.
What I said on the blower is true.
I've been watching your career since
'61 and listened to all your releases,
and I think a show around you would
go down like a bomb. You're certainly
ready for it, you've got the right
look, your voice is sterling, and
you've got a large enough fan base.
It was wise to leave the group last
year and go solo, keeping all the
focus on you. So I think the time
is ripe for you to break ground and
advance to the next level of your
career -- and your own television
program would help that enormously.
What do you think?

DARLA

Well, it's a bit overwhelming coming
out of the blue like this, but --

Peter suddenly interrupts, hearing something on the radio.

PETER

Wait just a tick, would you, luv?

He raises the radio's volume and listens as it plays the
SONG "Don't Sleep in the Subway" by Petula Clark.

PETER

Listen to that, would you? She's
fabtastic, isn't she? Voice clear as
a bell. Actress, singer... a consummate
performer. Pye is very lucky to have
her.

(listens for a moment)

I suppose you could say I've been
looking for my own Petula. Never did
find her -- until now.

He looks right at her, and Darla tries to hide her surprise
at what he just said.

PETER

Yes, Darla, you. That's what I see you
doing. And with this show, and perhaps
films later on, you can be bigger than
her.

(snaps his fingers)

When does your current contract with
Vista expire?

His mention of films, and then the sudden change of subject,
takes Darla by surprise, rattling her a bit.

DARLA

Um, not for a few months. February next year.

PETER

(lowers volume)

Not a problem. I'll buy it out. Whatever they paid you, I'll double it. I'll have my solicitors ring theirs and see what they'd ask. Unless you object?

Once again, Darla feels a bit rattled at how fast Peter moves from one idea to the next, trying to keep up with him.

DARLA

Well...

PETER

Oh, what am I saying? You've just come in for the very first time and you haven't even agreed about doing the show, and here I am talking about buying up contracts and what-not. I'm sorry. You'll have to forgive me, but I just get so excited when I see great talent I get way ahead of myself. So first things first, eh? Let's talk about the show. Now, what I'm seeing is a half-hour format. You open and close, and in between you --

(phone rings)

Sorry. I'll get rid of this as fast as I can.

Peter answers the phone, and while Darla waits as he talks, she looks at a POSTER on one of the walls. It's a colorful pop-art advertisement for an upcoming event, and it says:

FABTASTIC FESTIVAL
AN ALL-DAY EVENT IN CARNABY STREET
BEGINNING AT 12 PM
SATURDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 1967
ORGANISED BY CHESHIRE CAT PRODUCTIONS

PETER

(into phone)

Yes?

(listens)

Oh, no...

(listens)

Well, Alec is there, can't he handle it?

(listens, sighs)

Alright, I'll be right there.

Peter hangs up and sits there, preoccupied with something. Darla watches him.

DARLA
Problem...?

PETER
(looks at her)
Oh. New singer I just signed. Sweet little thing. She's cutting her debut single. Nervous, understandably. I'm going to have to go down to the studio and hold her hand.
(realizes something)
Oh, but we're not finished here, are we? We've barely got started. Look, I hate to leave things hanging, but is there any possibility we could carry on with this tomorrow?

DARLA
Um, yes, I suppose.

PETER
You don't have to drive in, I'll send my driver over to fetch you. Ten o'clock alright?

DARLA
Of course.

PETER
Fabtastic.

He stands, and so does she, and he accompanies her to the door, putting a hand on her shoulder.

PETER
I'll be honest with you, Darla. I've got big plans for you. I look at you and I see someone who hasn't even begun to reach her full potential. You can be so much more. With the weight I'm willing to put behind you and this program, I'm not exaggerating when I say you can be bigger than Petula.
(opens door)
But we'll talk about all that tomorrow, eh?

EXT. CHIP SHOP - AFTERNOON

Somewhere in Soho.

INT. CHIP SHOP - SAME

Nigel and Hawthorne are sitting in a booth in the back, and Hawthorne is eating FISH AND CHIPS. Nigel watches as Darla enters and comes over to join them.

NIGEL
So how'd the meeting with the big man go?

DARLA
Well, we haven't come to any agreement yet, but --
(sits)
-- he did say I can be bigger than Petula Clark.

NIGEL
(surprised)
Did he, now?

DARLA
Mr. Rice-Davies believes I've got great potential which I haven't even begun to tap.

NIGEL
And I suppose he's going to provide the means of tapping it, eh?

DARLA
In a nutshell, yes. He even offered to buy out my record contract and said I could do films.

NIGEL
Films? Well, stone the crows.
(to Hawthorne)
You see? How can I possibly compete with that?

DARLA
This isn't a competition. The man knows his business and he knows how to make things happen.

NIGEL
And he also knows a good dish when he sees one.
(at her look)
Sorry. That was rather childish of me, wasn't it?

DARLA
Yes, it was. But it was also most adorable.

NIGEL
Now there's a word I'd never have thought of to describe myself. Sounds like what you'd call a nipper caught in some sort of cheeky mischief.

DARLA
(pinches Nigel's cheek playfully)
Yes, that's you, you cheeky monkey, you.

HAWTHORNE
Ahem.

Darla stops pinching Nigel's cheek and they both look at Hawthorne, who eyes them like a disapproving parent.

HAWTHORNE

This little game between you two?
Very heartwarming. But do me a favor,
would you? Leave it at home.

DARLA

Of course, sir.

NIGEL

(under his breath)
Which one? We've got two, you know.
(at Hawthorne's look)
Sorry.

HAWTHORNE

If you two can dispense with the marital
frivolity for a moment, perhaps we can
focus our attention on the matter at
hand.

NIGEL

Yes, sir.

HAWTHORNE

Now, have you any clue as to Krasinski's
present whereabouts?

NIGEL

No, none, I'm afraid. After the other
night, he's simply vanished. Just like
a certain cat.

DARLA

Do you believe he knows we're watching
him?

HAWTHORNE

I suppose he always assumes he's being
watched just as a matter of course.
That's why he shifts location. But by
us, specifically? No.

NIGEL

Has C.E.R.T. come up with anything else?

HAWTHORNE

C.E.R.T. has the most annoying habit
of not bringing much to the table in
circumstances like this. All they know
is that he was in Brussels for several
days. Beyond that, they haven't a clue.

NIGEL

I don't know how those bumlbers stay
in operation. A more gormless lot I've
never seen.

HAWTHORNE

Be that as it may, it behooves us to maintain a good relationship with them. They may have something to offer down the road.

NIGEL

Yes -- effusive apologies for their utter ineptitude.

HAWTHORNE

For now, I believe this situation with Chandler could be helpful and may yield some fruit. Stay on it.

DARLA

Yes, sir.

HAWTHORNE

Until Krasinski reappears long enough for us to detect him again, that's all we've got.

DARLA

I'll meet with Mr. Rice-Davies again tomorrow and agree to the program.

NIGEL

(under his breath)

As if you needed any further prodding.

Darla glances at Nigel, but Hawthorne continues.

HAWTHORNE

Splendid. Keep me apprised.

DARLA

Righto.

(gets up; to Nigel,
needling him)

Toodle-oo.

NIGEL

Pip pip.

Nigel watches as Darla crosses to the entrance and exits the shop, then turns back to Hawthorne.

NIGEL

And what about me?

HAWTHORNE

You're on stand-by for now.

NIGEL

Stand-by?

HAWTHORNE

Enjoy the free time whilst you have it.
 (wipes mouth with
 napkin)
 Be a good man and pay the bill, won't
 you?

Hawthorne gets up and also leaves. Nigel watches him go,
 then sits there by himself and mutters.

NIGEL

Stand-by... It's like back in the old
 days.
 (beat, sighs)
 Free time, eh?
 (another beat;
 sarcastic)
 Fabtastic...

EXT. CHESHIRE CAT BUILDING - MORNING

The next day.

INT. CHESHIRE CAT - PETER'S OFFICE - SAME

Peter is sitting with his feet up on his desk, reading
 "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland". The door is open and
 Darla pokes her head in. She watches him for a moment,
 noticing what he's reading, then knocks. He looks up and
 sees her, then quickly closes the book and puts it down and
 gets his feet off the desk.

PETER

Darla, luv.

DARLA

(comes in)
 Your driver is most punctual.

PETER

Yes, efficient man, isn't he? Took me
 ages to find such a helper. Diamond
 geezer.

DARLA

(indicates the book)
 That was my favorite book as a child.
 Haven't read it in years, though.

PETER

Oh, I read it all the time. Especially
 when things get too mad round here.
 Then I jump right in. Sometimes the
 world in there makes more sense than
 the world out here.
 (claps his hands)
 So, come to a decision yet? You've had
 all night to think it over.

DARLA

Yes, I have.

PETER

And what's the word?

DARLA

Well, with all due respect to Petula,
I certainly wouldn't mind being bigger.

PETER

(smiles, points at her)
That's the ticket. I knew you had the
stuff the minute I laid eyes on you.
I said to myself, "Peter, that bird
is the one you've always been on the
lookout for. The special one." And
I'm never wrong. You won't regret
this decision, I promise you.

He gets up and goes right up to her, brimming with
enthusiasm.

PETER

Are you free this week? I mean, the
entire week? I've loads of ideas I
want to discuss with you, bash them
about and see what you think -- and
get your input as well, of course.

His desire to jump right into it takes Darla by surprise.
She didn't expect things to go so fast.

DARLA

Well, I --

PETER

We can meet over lunch or dinner or
both, whatever you like. I'm absolutely
hyped up about this project and I want
to get right to it as soon as possible,
start laying some of the groundwork.

DARLA

(indicates poster
on wall)
I thought you'd be engaged this week
with the final preparations for the
Fabtastic Festival. It is the weekend
after next, isn't it?

PETER

Yes, of course, but I've done all I
can for it. Leave it to the underlings
to handle the rest. They have to earn
their pay, don't they?

DARLA

I thought you were very much a hands-on
type. Certainly seemed that way yesterday.

PETER

Oh, but I am. When I work on a project it's all I can think about. I don't eat, I don't sleep, I'm all over everything, making sure every detail is precisely as I see or hear it in my head. But this festival? Strictly a one-off. "Summer of Love" and all that. So there's nothing more to do with it. You, however, will be a continuing operation, and if we play our cards right, one that will go on for years, demanding my utmost attention.

Darla hesitates, his rapid-fire conversation starting to make her head spin a little. He notices it and keeps going.

PETER

So what do you say? Want to join me on a magical journey all this week and help me put together what will undoubtedly be a blinding success and the program to beat on the telly next year? A show that will put all those other sad imitators to shame and completely revolutionize the medium -- and perhaps make us both a bob or two whilst we're at it?

Darla laughs. She can't help but be touched by his infectious enthusiasm and boyish charm, and she smiles and shrugs.

DARLA

Why not?

PETER

(grins like the
Cheshire Cat)

Fabtastic!

A SERIES OF SHOTS

elapsing over the course of the next week, and the entire sequence is accompanied by the SONG "Somethin' Stupid" by Frank Sinatra and Nancy Sinatra, which begins on the soundtrack:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Somewhere in the West End. We watch the traffic go by along the street, then slowly PAN over to a restaurant and establish the shot.

INT. RESTAURANT - SAME

Darla and Peter are sitting at a table in a corner, discussing the show over lunch. Peter does most of the talking, very animated, while Darla listens.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANOTHER RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Darla and Peter are sitting at a table in the back, discussing the show over dinner, and Darla is more involved in the conversation, offering ideas and suggestions.

INT. NIGEL'S FLAT - LOUNGE - SAME

Nigel picks up a PHONE and dials. He waits as the line rings, but there's no answer. He waits a while longer, growing increasingly annoyed, then hangs up and sighs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHESHIRE CAT - PETER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Peter is sitting at his desk, Darla in a chair, as they discuss the show while eating take-out food.

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT - SAME

Dressed in a suit and tie, Nigel steps up to the front door and rings the bell, then adjusts his tie while he waits.

INT. CHESHIRE CAT - PETER'S OFFICE

Peter and Darla continue to discuss the show while eating take-out, and it's obvious they're becoming more comfortable in each other's company as the week progresses. Darla makes a funny comment while Peter crumples a sheet of paper, and he stops and sees her smiling at him, then throws the crumpled ball at her. She laughs, then picks up the ball and throws it back at him, grinning.

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT

Nigel continues to wait at the front door. He rings again, but nobody's home, and he sighs and turns and walks OUT OF FRAME.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT - DAY

Peter's car, a white 1963 ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM V, arrives and stops in front. Nigel's red 1963 JAGUAR E-TYPE OTS is parked across the street.

INT. NIGEL'S JAG - SAME

Sitting at the wheel, Nigel watches the Rolls.

NIGEL'S P.O.V.

Darla comes out of her flat and approaches the Rolls, smiling and waving at Peter in the car.

NIGEL

watches them.

NIGEL'S P.O.V.

The Rolls pulls out and starts to drive off.

NIGEL

watches the Rolls leave, then sighs and shakes his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAFÉ - AFTERNOON

Darla and Peter are sitting at a table outside, having lunch *al fresco*, and Peter is telling her a funny story.

INT. NIGEL'S JAG - SAME

Parked across the street from the café, Nigel watches them.

DARLA AND PETER

As Peter tells her the story, Darla starts chuckling, then tries to stop and listen. But whatever Peter is saying, it must be very funny, because Darla starts laughing in earnest despite herself.

INT. NIGEL'S JAG

Nigel watches them, then he frowns and starts the car and pulls out.

DARLA AND PETER

Darla tries to control herself, but Peter reaches the punch line and she bursts into a fit of laughter, and Peter laughs with her. The SONG ends, and as it fades, we slowly

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

We PAN slowly across the interior until we reach where Darla and Peter are sitting at a table eating dinner.

CLOSER ANGLE

Peter raises his GLASS OF WINE and takes a sip, and he notices Darla watching him thoughtfully. He stops, his glass still to his lips.

PETER

What are you looking at...?

DARLA

You. I'm trying to suss you out. But I can't.

PETER

(puts down glass)
After a whole week? Is that good or bad?

DARLA

I don't know. Perhaps it's none of my business, but it strikes me a bit odd -- a man like you, still unattached. I'd imagine you have dozens of eligible women to pick and choose from.

PETER

Well, if you read the rags you'd believe I see a different bird every week.

DARLA

Do you?

PETER

You know what gets into print. Half of it's true, half of it's rubbish.

DARLA

No, I'm serious. Hasn't the right one come along?

PETER

Well, if you're going to be serious, then I shall have to be so as well. Not my usual style, luv, so you'll forgive me if I'm a bit out of practice.

(mysterious, hushed)

But I can tell you that the Peter Rice-Davies you read about is not the real Peter Rice-Davies.

DARLA

(equally hushed)

He's not, is he?

PETER

(shakes his head)

Not by a long chalk.

DARLA

Well, I can relate to that. Much of what the public believes about me couldn't be further from the truth. But I suppose we all have parts of our lives that we guard very closely, inviting rumors and misconceptions.

Peter watches her as she takes a sip of her wine, as if he knows the true meaning behind what she just said, but he remains silent.

DARLA

So, what's your dark little secret?

PETER

Hmm?

DARLA

Who is the real Peter Rice-Davies?

PETER

Well, let's see, now. In order to identify the real Peter Rice-Davies, we'd have to go back, oh, some thirty years or so. Back to a ten year old boy growing up dirt poor in Manchester with stars in his eyes and big dreams in his heart; a ten year old boy who grew up to see all of those dreams come true beyond his wildest expectations. But despite all that smashing success, at the end of the day the king sits alone in his castle, a prisoner of his own image, doomed to squiring an endless parade of eligible women well suited to the façade but not the man.

(breaks off)

But I suppose we're all trapped within our own self-made purgatories in one manner or another.

Darla watches him, and her original impression of him starts to crumble as she sees the sensitive, thoughtful, and lonely man behind the flamboyant media mogul.

DARLA

You look like a swinger... but you sound like a romantic.

PETER

But of course. Didn't you know that? Beneath this gaudy costume beats the heart of a man from a different era, a bygone era where men were heroes who slew dragons and women were princesses whose hands were won by such daring exploits. I'm a man out of sync with the times, trying to fit into a world that changes faster than the number ones on the hit parade. And I've been searching for a young lady who is equally out of sync.

DARLA

A search that's been fruitless up to now.

PETER

Sadly, yes. But I'll give you a little tidbit that the rags aren't privy to. There is someone I've had my eye on for some time now, and I've been trying to come up with a way to let her know how I feel. It was only recently that I hit on just how I might go about doing that, and started the proceedings a bit prematurely because circumstances forced my hand.

DARLA
Who is she? Anyone I know?

PETER
She is in the public eye... but that's
all I'm going to let slip for now.

She watches him as he sips his wine, and she starts to wonder if she's the someone he's referring to.

PETER
So what about you? How is it a bird as charming and talented and attractive as you is still flying solo, eh? I'd imagine you've got dozens of blokes queuing outside your door just waiting to offer their affections.

DARLA
Well, it's never reached those proportions.

PETER
But there have been a few.

DARLA
Yes, there have.

PETER
And...?

DARLA
And none of them were precisely what I'm looking for. I mean, I don't wish to sound difficult to please, but --

PETER
No, no, that's alright. I understand completely. You've got certain criteria that need to be met, just as I do. And we won't settle for anything less than what we're looking for, no matter how long it takes to find it.

(beat)
Perhaps we're both looking for the same thing.

Darla's now fairly certain he's indeed referring to her, but she says nothing.

INSERT - VIEW THROUGH CAMERA

Suddenly, we are watching Darla and Peter from outside the restaurant and through the window.

INT. CAR

The car is parked across the street from the restaurant, and a MAN is taking photos with the CAMERA. He lowers the camera and reveals his face... and it's not Nigel. In fact, it's no one we've seen before.

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Peter's Rolls drives up and stops in front of the terraced house. Nigel's Jaguar is parked across the street.

INT. NIGEL'S JAG

Nigel watches the Rolls.

EXT. PETER'S ROLLS/STREET

Peter helps Darla get out, and Darla is carrying several FOLDERS full of papers.

DARLA
Thank you for a lovely dinner.

PETER
I'll see you Monday afternoon?

INT. NIGEL'S JAG

Nigel watches as Darla and Peter talk.

INSERT - NIGEL'S P.O.V.

Peter watches as Darla walks toward her flat's front door.

NIGEL

watches them.

INSERT - NIGEL'S P.O.V.

Darla opens her front door and goes into her flat, and Peter gets back into the Rolls.

NIGEL

watches the Rolls drive off, then gets out of his car.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE

Darla goes to her sofa to put the folders on it. The doorbell RINGS and she drops one of them, scattering the papers on the floor. She goes to the door, annoyed, looks through the peephole, then opens it. Nigel stands outside.

NIGEL
Where have you been?

DARLA
Doing my job.
(heads back toward
sofa)
What do you think I've been doing?

NIGEL
(comes in)
We used to do that job together.

DARLA
 (starts gathering
 scattered papers)
 Yes, I know. But I don't think Peter
 would appreciate your tagging along.

Nigel closes the door behind him and watches as Darla
 gathers the papers from the floor.

NIGEL
 Oh, so it's "Peter" now. Not "Mr. Rice-
 Davies". Sounds like you two get on
 rather well. And here I was thinking
 Scousers and Mancunians mix like oil
 and water. But what do I know about
 Northerners, eh? I'm just a provincial
 Londoner who's never been north of
 Birmingham.

DARLA
 Don't be an arse.

Finished picking up the papers, Darla heads for the bedroom,
 and Nigel follows.

NIGEL
 My speciality. So there's no room in
 this for little old me, is there?

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Darla comes in and stands at her vanity mirror and starts
 taking off her earrings.

DARLA
 You heard Hawthorne. Because of Peter's
 interest in me, I'm ideally positioned
 to conduct this mission on my own. At
 least at this stage.

NIGEL
 (stops at doorway)
 And is that interest purely professional,
 or of a more personal nature?

DARLA
 What are you talking about?

NIGEL
 You can't tell me you're not aware the
 man is smitten with you. It's written
 all over his bloody face.

She pauses and looks at him, realizing that he's been
 watching them, then finishes taking off her earrings.

DARLA
 Of course I'm aware of it. I'm not
 thick, you know. It just gives me one
 more thing to utilize.

She goes to the bed and sits on it and starts taking off one of her boots, and Nigel steps into the room.

NIGEL

And what have you managed to uncover, in between lunches and dinners? Absolutely nothing, because you've not had the chance to sniff about at all. You've been meeting with him alone for an entire week, and you're no further ahead than at the start.

DARLA

It's still early yet.
(starts taking off
second boot)

Nigel, just what is the problem? This isn't the first time I've got close to someone to pursue an investigation. Or taken advantage of a situation that presented itself if it aided the mission.

NIGEL

Yes, I know. I used to engage in that sort of thing myself. And sometimes I'd dally a bit more than was necessary for the mission. But I swore off all that, and I've been strictly professional and by-the-book ever since.

Darla drops the second boot on the floor and looks squarely at him.

DARLA

And you think I'm not being professional?

NIGEL

I think your judgment is being clouded.

DARLA

By what?

NIGEL

By the opportunity he's offering you. The man is handing you everything you've ever wanted musically on a silver platter. That's a big thing. And whilst you've always managed to keep your two lives separate and not let one intrude upon the other, the way you're handling this mission is opening the door to some overlap. So as you cozy up to "Peter", you need to ask yourself: Whose agenda am I really pursuing -- Darla Chandler the spy's... or Darla Chandler the singer's?

Darla hesitates for the briefest of moments, then opens her closet to put the boots away.

DARLA
I know precisely what I'm doing and
how to go about it.

NIGEL
I certainly hope so, because if this
man turns out to be in any way
connected to what we're investigating,
your priorities had better be clear.

DARLA
(closes closet,
turns to him)
My priorities are perfectly clear.
And why would you think he's involved?
His company employs hundreds of people,
any one of whom could be the link to
Krasinski we're looking for. If there
is a link at all.

NIGEL
It's always a possibility. And one you
wouldn't discount so readily if you
were thinking as Darla Chandler the
spy.

They stare at each other, but before Darla can say anything
else, the phone RINGS from the lounge. She walks past him
and out the door.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Darla comes back into the room and answers the phone as
Nigel follows her and stops nearby.

DARLA
Hello?

PETER (V.O.)
Darla! I just got in and had a fabtastic
idea.

DARLA
(a beat)
Hello, Peter.

At the mention of the name, Nigel rolls his eyes and exhales
sharply.

PETER (V.O.)
Look, are you doing anything for the
weekend?

DARLA
(another beat)
I don't know yet. I'm not sure.

INT. PETER'S HOME - LOUNGE - SAME

Peter sits on his sofa as he talks on the phone.

PETER
Well, before you make any plans, I've got a proposition for you. I've got a little place down in Brighton and I'm going there tomorrow. It's where I do my best thinking.

INTERCUT BETWEEN DARLA AND PETER

PETER
(continuing)
I hope it's not too forward of me, but I wanted to ask if you'd like to come along. I thought we'd do a bit of brainstorming and not wait till Monday. A little sea air does wonders. How's that sound to you?

Darla says nothing, uncertain about the invitation, and Nigel looks on.

PETER
Darla? Are you there?

DARLA
Yes, I'm here.

PETER
What do you think? You'll come?

DARLA
(a beat)
Yes, alright.

PETER
Fabtastic! I'll swing by round nine. That alright?

DARLA
Yes, that'll be fine.

PETER
Splendid. See you then, luv.

Peter hangs up. Darla hangs up too, then thinks for a moment. Nigel watches her.

DARLA
He's going down to Brighton for the weekend... and asked me to accompany him.

NIGEL
(a beat)
Really.

DARLA
 (turns to him)
 He wants to do some brainstorming at a
 flat he's got there. Says it helps him
 think.

NIGEL
 (another beat)
 I'm sure it does.

Nigel's not happy about it, but it isn't jealousy; it's his
 suspicions about Peter. Darla goes up to him slowly, then
 coyly traces up and down his arm with her finger.

DARLA
 You can tag along this time, if you wish.
 As back-up.

Nigel doesn't react to her touch, and she waits for him to
 say something. Finally, he does.

NIGEL
 You're a big girl. You can take care
 of yourself. You don't need a chaperone.

Nigel turns and goes to the front door and exits. Darla
 stares at the closed door after he's gone, pained by the
 continuing tension between them.

WIDE ANGLE - BRIGHTON, ENGLAND - DAY

We PAN across the English Channel to the beach as the SONG
 "Baby, You're A Rich Man" by The Beatles begins on the
 soundtrack and continues through the following:

VARIOUS SHOTS

along the beach as DAY-TRIPPERS enjoy the surf and sand.

A LINE OF AUSTIN AND MORRIS MINIS

being displayed along the beachfront.

THE PALACE PIER

with its restaurants and arcade.

THE BEACHFRONT

with its bars, restaurants, and nightclubs.

THE ROYAL PAVILION

looking for all the world like an Indian palace.

THE BRIGHTON DOME

also looking like an Indian palace.

THE LANES

LOCALS and TOURISTS wander about the small shops and narrow alleyways.

AERIAL SHOT

following a cream 1960 MG MGA 1600 MK I ROADSTER driving along A23/London Road as the SONG's refrain begins, and we can see Peter at the wheel and Darla riding beside him.

THE STREET

The roadster arrives at an intersection and starts to turn.

REVERSE ANGLE

as the roadster completes the turn and continues down the street.

EXT. PETER'S BRIGHTON HOME - DAY

A detached two-story, three-bedroom house near the coast with a spectacular view of the English Channel. We fade the SONG slowly after the refrain as the roadster comes up the brick-paved driveway and stops at the front door. Peter and Darla get out, and Darla watches the house, carrying a small OVERNIGHT BAG.

PETER

Not what you expected, eh?

DARLA

When you said you had a little place,
I envisaged, well, a little place.
A flat on the beach. Something a bit
more bohemian.

PETER

(chuckles)

Come on in.

He takes her bag and leads her toward the front door.

INT. PETER'S BRIGHTON HOME - LOUNGE - SAME

We hear the front door close OFF-SCREEN, then Peter and Darla come in from the entrance hall.

PETER

Actually, I purchased it in anticipation
of the day I'd have a family, but as you
can see, it was a bit premature.

Darla immediately notices the spectacular view from the doors that lead to a terrace and rear garden, and she goes to them and gazes out at the channel.

DARLA

Quite a view.

PETER
(joins her)
Yes. Wish I had time to enjoy it more often.

DARLA
Why don't you?

PETER
Because I must juggle too many things to indulge myself as much as I'd like. Part of being a grown-up, I suppose.

Darla says nothing, looking at the view, thinking about the things she must juggle in her own life.

PETER
Let's take your things upstairs and get you settled in.

INT. PETER'S BRIGHTON HOME - GUEST BEDROOM - SAME

Peter and Darla come in and Peter places her bag on the bed.

PETER
I'm sure you'll be comfortable, but if there's anything you need just let me know.

The view from the windows up here is just as spectacular, and Darla goes up to them.

DARLA
Honestly, I don't know how you manage to get any work done here.

PETER
Discipline, luv. Plus I find the water quite an inspiration.

Darla continues to gaze at the view, and Peter suddenly has an idea and claps his hands together.

PETER
You know what? I just realized I'd nothing to eat this morning. How about you?

DARLA
I had a bite before we left.

PETER
I'm starved -- and I know this fabtastic little place on the beach. Let's go for lunch before we get to work, eh?

EXT. FOOD PUB - DAY

A small and intimate place near the beach.

INT. FOOD PUB - SAME

Peter and Darla enter, and Peter is carrying a folded NEWSPAPER under his arm. The pub's proprietress, a woman in her 60's named EMMA, turns and sees them come in.

EMMA

Well, love a duck. Look who's here.

Peter leads Darla to her and kisses Emma's cheek as he would an aunt.

EMMA

(sarcastic)

Peter, so nice to see you. Didn't know you were coming down.

PETER

Hello, Emma. How are you?

EMMA

Still on me feet, but you wouldn't know that, would you? Haven't seen you in donkeys. Where've you been keepin' yourself?

PETER

You know how it is. Business keeps me in London most of the time.

EMMA

Oh, what a load of codswallop. Doesn't occur to you to give us a bell sometime? I could be pushin' up daisies or in hospital with the dreaded lurgy and you wouldn't have a clue.

PETER

(chuckles)

Yes, you're quite right. I apologize.

(indicates Darla)

This is Darla. Darla, Emma Sutcliffe.

DARLA

Hello.

Emma nods at her briefly, then indicates the table beside them.

EMMA

Well, pull up a bollard.

(as Peter and Darla sit)

What've they been feedin' you up there, anyroad? You could use a bit more meat on your bones.

PETER

Why do you think I came here?

EMMA
So what'll you be havin'? The usual?

PETER
Yes, but could you possibly fix us up
some chip butties first, by any chance?

EMMA
'Course I can.

PETER
Fabtastic.

EMMA
Comin' right up, ducks.

Emma leans close to Peter and speaks secretively in his ear,
eyeing Darla.

EMMA
Bit of a dish, this one.

Then she leaves. Darla watches Emma move off toward the
kitchen, then turns back to Peter with a quizzical smile.

DARLA
Rather informal.

PETER
Oh, Emma and I go way back. She was
my baby-watcher when I was a boy, and
after her husband passed I moved her
down here and got her this place.
She always wanted to live by the sea.
Everywhere I go back in London it's
"Sir Peter this" or "Mr. Rice-Davies
that", but here, I can sit and be
treated like a regular bloke without
being made a fuss over. Even get a
dressing down if I've earnt it.

He picks up the newspaper and starts to look at it, and
Darla watches him silently. The more she sees behind his
facade, the more he is completely different from what she
expected, and she finds herself genuinely liking him.

PETER
Well, that certainly didn't take very
long, did it?

DARLA
What?

PETER
(reads article)
"Over the past week, Cheshire Cat
Productions head-honcho Sir Peter Rice-
Davies and pop singer Darla Chandler
have been spied having intimate
tête-à-têtes at various spots all
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)
 about London. Rumor has it they've been discussing some new venture for Chandler, perhaps her migration over to Rice-Davies' White Rabbit record label, but word from an anonymous insider is that their meetings might involve something of a more personal nature. During a recent appearance on 'Pop! Goes London', the Liverpool lovely gave the impression she was seeing someone romantically but unwilling to reveal any details; and Rice-Davies, who is thirteen years her senior, is known for -- "

Peter breaks off and stops reading, and he sighs and tosses the newspaper on the table.

PETER
 There's even a photo.

Darla picks up the newspaper and looks at the article. There is indeed a photo, taken of them at the restaurant the night we saw the photographer spying on them.

DARLA
 Oh, Chloe...

PETER
 Who?

DARLA
 Chloe Sellers.

PETER
 "Pop! Goes London"'s presenter?

DARLA
 Yes -- and my soon-to-be ex-friend. She and I go way back to our childhoods in Liverpool, and she's determined to make my life miserable. Not intentionally, but that's usually the end result.

PETER
 Do you want me to issue a statement? I can nip this in the bud straight away; clarify what it is we're doing. I didn't want to let the proverbial cat out of the bag just yet, but --

DARLA
 No. Let her play her little games, for now. There's nothing for her to sniff out beyond what we're doing, is there? And it will keep her from stumbling upon other things.

She doesn't elaborate what those things might be, but he doesn't ask, as if he knows what she's referring to.

PETER

Well, I was going to invite you down to the beach tomorrow morning, maybe visit some of the arcades after dinner tonight... but perhaps we should stay in. No sense giving them any more fodder.

Darla nods, but her mind is elsewhere, and he can see that.

PETER

So, we'll go back to the house and get right to work, then.

INT. S.M.A.S.H. HQ - RECORDS DEPARTMENT

Nigel steps up to the counter and speaks to the female STAFFER currently behind it.

NIGEL

Hello.

STAFFER

Agent Wilkins.

NIGEL

Could I have a look at our file on Cheshire Cat Productions by any chance?

STAFFER

Certainly.

Nigel waits as the staffer goes to fetch the file. She returns with a FOLDER and hands it to him.

STAFFER

Here you are.

NIGEL

(looks at folder)

Rather thin.

(to staffer)

Cheers.

Nigel takes the folder over to a table and sits down. He opens the folder and examines the contents, but there isn't much, just a few SHEETS OF PAPER with standard information. He looks over them, doesn't find anything helpful, then closes the folder. He sits back and thinks for a moment, then gets up to leave.

EXT. PETER'S BRIGHTON HOME - EVENING

Later that night.

INT. PETER'S BRIGHTON HOME - GUEST BEDROOM - SAME

Darla emerges from the bathroom after taking a shower, wearing a robe, her hair still wet. She crosses the bedroom to the vanity and stands in front of the mirror. She brushes her hair, then puts the brush down and stares at her reflection... and we can see the conflicts and pressures within her are steadily mounting.

INT. PETER'S BRIGHTON HOME - LOUNGE - SAME

The lights are low. Peter is sitting on the sofa, listening to a record on the STEREO, and the SONG playing is "The Look of Love" by Dusty Springfield. Darla comes down the stairs from the upper floor and stands in the doorway.

PETER
Find everything alright?

DARLA
Yes.

PETER
I think we accomplished a fair amount today. Let's relax the rest of the evening.

Darla remains where she is, and Peter pats the sofa beside him.

PETER
Come. Sit.

Darla hesitates for the briefest of moments, then comes over and sits next to him. Peter continues to listen to the song closely, making plans.

PETER
This song would be perfect for you. I think you should sing it on the debut program. If it's good enough for Dusty it's good enough for you.

Darla says nothing. Peter's full attention seems to be on the song, and he describes what he sees in his head as he visualizes Darla singing it on the show.

PETER
Yes... I can see it. Dark stage... a single spotlight on you. Very simple set-up... just you looking right into the camera. Constant eye contact, making each person watching at home feel as if it's just you and them... as if you're right there in their lounge singing directly to them. We can open the show with that.
(beat)
Yes... Absolutely fabtastic.

They continue listening to the song, then Peter puts his arm around her shoulder as if not even aware that he's doing it. Darla tries not to react and just sits there. After a while, Peter looks at her, then runs a finger through her wet hair.

DARLA

Peter...

Peter ignores her and starts kissing her neck, and Darla pulls away a little.

DARLA

Peter, please...

Peter stops and watches her.

DARLA

I need to tell you something.

PETER

(a beat)

What?

DARLA

I need to tell you there's someone...
someone I care for very deeply.

The revelation is like a knife in Peter's heart, and it takes him a moment to find his voice.

PETER

Anyone I know...?

DARLA

He's not in the public eye. In fact, no one but a very few know we're involved at all.

PETER

(another beat)

Is that to keep up appearances career-wise?

DARLA

In a manner of speaking. But I love him very much. Many of the songs on my new LP are for him. We have our ups and downs, but... we're made for each other.

PETER

I see.

(pause; tries
to joke)

So the rags got it right this time...
just wrong about the identity of the
other party.

DARLA

I appreciate your interest in me, and I'm very flattered. But if we're to work together, I must be completely honest with you. You deserve that much. Our relationship must remain strictly professional. It can be no more. Not now, not ever.

PETER

That certainly has a ring of finality to it.

DARLA

I'm sorry.

Peter nods slowly, heartbroken, and Darla feels terribly guilty about hurting him this way.

PETER

Well... can't blame a bloke for trying.

DARLA

I suppose this means our deal is off...

He looks at her, surprised that she would think so.

PETER

No. No, not at all. That's not the way I operate, Darla. Maybe with cigar-chomping impresarios in smoke-filled rooms... but not with you. What I offered you is not contingent upon anything. If you still wish your own program, the invitation remains open. Nothing has changed.

DARLA

I appreciate that.

(beat)

But for now, I think I'd like to return to London.

PETER

Are you sure? We've still got half the weekend. Seems a shame to waste it.

DARLA

There are some things I need to attend to.

PETER

(a beat)

Alright. I'll take you home.

Darla gets up to go upstairs, leaving Peter sitting there and feeling as empty as he ever has in his life.

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT - LONDON - NIGHT

Peter's roadster arrives and stops in front. Darla gets out without saying a word, and Peter watches forlornly as she walks up to her front door and starts to unlock it.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

The door opens and Darla comes in. She closes it and locks it, then leans back against it and closes her eyes. She stays there for a while, trying to deal with all the things that are going on inside her, things that have been steadily mounting for months and that have been exacerbated by the current situation, then opens her eyes again. She doesn't have a clue how to deal with any of it, and she moves off OUT OF FRAME toward the bedroom.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - AN HOUR LATER

The STEREO in the lounge is playing the SONG "A Whiter Shade of Pale" by Procul Harum, the volume low. The doorbell RINGS and Darla steps up to the door, now dressed in a robe. She hesitates for a moment, then unlocks and opens it. Nigel stands outside.

Darla isn't surprised; she asked him to come over. Neither says anything, and Darla turns and goes back into the room. Nigel enters and closes the door behind him, then watches as Darla fiddles with something absently. Darla stands with her back to him, and as they converse, there is much awkwardness between them and a lot of pauses between their responses.

NIGEL

So you're back.

DARLA

Yes.

NIGEL

A bit early. How did it go?

DARLA

Didn't find out very much.

NIGEL

Pity.

DARLA

He was under a bit of a misconception, but... I put him right.

NIGEL

I see.

(beat)

There's a newspaper that needs to be put right as well.

DARLA

I know.

NIGEL
And the program...?

DARLA
It's still on.

NIGEL
Good.

The awkwardness continues, and Nigel takes a couple of steps into the room.

NIGEL
So... what's next?

DARLA
Any sign of Krasinski?

NIGEL
No.

DARLA
We'll just have to try another way,
is all.

NIGEL
I suppose.

DARLA
Look about the office block overnight...
see what we can find.

NIGEL
You know I'm available.

DARLA
We'll discuss it tomorrow.

NIGEL
I'll ring you.

Darla says nothing more. Nigel seeks for a way to cut through the awkwardness, and he slowly approaches her and stops behind her.

NIGEL
You know... if we're going to go about
it this way, I think a good starting
point would be --

DARLA
(turns to him
suddenly)
Oh, belt up.

She throws her arms around his neck and locks him in a long, deep kiss. Momentarily surprised, he returns it. Then he picks her up and carries her toward the bedroom, and they kiss the entire way until they go into the room and he kicks the door shut behind him. We fade the SONG and slowly

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - BEDROOM - AN HOUR OR TWO LATER

Nigel and Darla are lying in bed after making love. Her head is on his chest, and he twirls a lock of her hair with his fingers. The mood is quiet, and Darla is feeling very melancholy and introspective.

DARLA

This past week has reminded me of what my life was like before... before I accepted Lord Taylor's suggestion and began working for S.M.A.S.H. What my life used to be, when all I was was a singer... when all I needed to worry about was choosing the right clothes to wear or which clubs to be seen in or being witty in front of the cameras. I thought it was hectic at the time, too much for a twenty year old... but my life was so much simpler then.

Nigel says nothing, and she goes on, more quietly.

DARLA

I've been remembering a lot more, though. The way things were when I was little girl... things I haven't thought of for a long time. My parents... my friends... a little moggy I found in the jigger behind our flat one day and took in. I thought my father would object, but he bathed her and fed her and asked me to name her. So I named her Dinah, after Alice's cat. My father always read me that story at bedtime.

(beat)

He died when I was three. He enlisted in the RAF after the Christmas blitz and was shot down over Berlin. My mum worked fifteen hours a day after that to feed us, and that's what killed her when I was seven. She'd been sick for a long time but kept working... till she ended up in hospital and died from tuberculosis.

(another beat)

I didn't even know what that meant.

She says nothing more, haunted by the memories, and Nigel realizes how vulnerable she is, something she has hidden for so long beneath her independence and which he hadn't really seen until now.

NIGEL

I've been remembering a lot as well. I remember the day Hawthorne called me in and introduced me to a new trainee he'd recruited. He told me, "She comes highly recommended, but she has a lot to learn. As my best agent I want you

(MORE)

NIGEL (CONT'D)
 to take her in hand." So he brought me into the room, and standing there was this blonde little thing, bright blue eyes and looking like a teenager, and I immediately recognized her. "I've seen her before", I thought to myself. "On the telly. She's a singer." I looked at Hawthorne and I said, "Is this a joke?" And he looked at me and said, "No joke, Wilkins. Get to it."

Darla remains silent, listening to him and lying completely still.

NIGEL
 After a week, I told him, "This won't work. She's opinionated, undisciplined, temperamental -- an absolute pain in the arse. I don't care what latent skills she may have, she's not cut out for this. Give her the boot and let her go back to being a moody pop star." And he said, "Wilkins, she's a diamond in the rough, and I believe between you and I we can polish her and make her shine."

(beat)
 And he was right. I stuck with it, and so did she... and a year later, I was amazed at how brightly she shone. It took another year before I was willing to admit that in some ways, she was better than me. And by that time, I'd finally accepted the reality that I'd fallen in love with her... this feisty little thing that had so annoyed me the first time I met her.

Darla says nothing, but we see the tears emerge from her eyes and trickle down the sides of her face. Nigel looks at her and speaks to her gently, knowing the stress she's been under for months now and all that this mission has stirred up. But even he doesn't know the half of it.

NIGEL
 You have a choice to make. You can beg off the investigation and pursue this career opportunity... or you can decline the opportunity and focus on the mission. You can't do both anymore.

A moment passes, then Darla finally moves and wipes away the tears.

DARLA
 I think it goes even further than that...
 (beat)
 But that's a good place to start.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT - MORNING

The next day.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - BEDROOM - SAME

Darla is asleep in bed, alone. After a moment, she slowly rouses and realizes Nigel isn't there.

DARLA
Nigel...?
(sits up and
calls out)
Nigel?

There's no response. She looks at the CLOCK on her night stand and sees it's almost noon, then notices a NOTE beside it. She takes the note and reads it, and it says in Nigel's handwriting:

You've a lot to think about, and I
don't wish to intrude. Love, Nigel

She lowers the note and thinks for a moment, then she gets an idea and quickly rolls out of bed.

EXT. KENWOOD - SURREY, ENGLAND - AFTERNOON

John Lennon's mock-Tudor house in Weybridge. Darla's Mini is parked in the driveway next to Lennon's psychedelic ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM V.

INT. KENWOOD - LOUNGE - SAME

A 26 year old Sgt. Pepper era JOHN LENNON is reclining on a chaise-longue, his face hidden behind a newspaper as he reads it. Darla is sitting on a sofa opposite him, waiting for him to respond to something she said. The television in the room is on and showing some Sunday program, and there's a small stuffed walrus doll on the coffee table.

DARLA
John...

Lennon doesn't respond, reading the paper.

DARLA
John.

Lennon lowers the paper a bit and peeks over it at her through his round-rimmed glasses.

DARLA
Have you heard a word I've said?

LENNON
You came all the way here for my advice,
did you?

DARLA

Yes.

LENNON

But you won't tell me the whole story.

DARLA

(a beat)

I can't.

LENNON

(lowers paper)

Why not? I thought we trusted each other.

DARLA

It's... complicated.

LENNON

Complicated, is it?

(puts paper down)

Let me tell you something, luv.
Everything's simple. We're the ones
who complicate them.

DARLA

That's your advice?

LENNON

Bit of wisdom from George.

(picks up walrus)

But anyroad, let's ask the walrus here,
shall we? Wise little feller, he is. He
might have the answer to your problem.

Darla opens her mouth to retort, but she holds back as
Lennon puts the walrus up to his ear. Lennon nods
intermittently as if listening closely to the walrus's
instructions, and Darla watches impatiently for a moment.

DARLA

And what does he say?

LENNON

(holds up a hand)

Sssh.

Lennon continues to listen and nod his head, and Darla can't
help but smile and roll her eyes, bemused. Finally:

LENNON

He says you already know what to do.

You don't need me or him.

(tosses walrus aside,

looks straight at her)

So just get out of yer own bloomin' way
and do it.

He fixes her with a penetrating gaze, as if staring directly
into her soul, and Darla knows he's right.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - AFTERNOON

Darla is looking through some of the RECORDS she has recorded, flipping through the sleeves. She stops at a 7" 45 RPM EP and brings it out and looks at it. On the sleeve is a photo of the Liverpool skyline, and one of the four songs is "Liverpool Lullaby".

She hesitates, then removes the record from its sleeve and puts it on her TURNTABLE. Then she sits down on the sofa as the SONG begins, her voice singing it in a very melancholy tone.

As the SONG plays, Darla opens and flips through a SCRAPBOOK of publicity material documenting her singing career -- PHOTOS, MAGAZINE COVERS, ARTICLES, ADVERTISEMENTS, POSTERS. She looks at them one at a time, then closes the scrapbook and sets it aside and opens an envelope.

Within the envelope is an old, frayed BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTO of her mother and father and herself when she was a baby. Darla brings it out and looks at it... and as the SONG continues with its bleak, plaintive lyrics, she becomes increasingly maudlin until the tears start flowing and she has to wipe them from her face. Then she stands up suddenly and rushes back to the turntable and turns it off.

She stands there, covering her mouth with her hand and trying to keep from breaking down completely and being wracked with sobs, then makes a great effort to control herself. She takes a deep breath and regains her composure, then makes a decision and moves to implement it before she can change her mind. She picks up the PHONE and dials and waits as the line rings, then we hear Peter answer.

PETER (V.O.)

Hello?

DARLA

Peter.

PETER (V.O.)

Darla! I was just thinking about you.
What's on your mind?

DARLA

Peter, I --

INT. PETER'S HOME - LOUNGE - SAME

PETER

(interrupts)

Listen, I'm glad you called, luv. I had a fabtastic idea and I want to run it by you. Listen to this. What if we have you perform a number at the festival and use the moment to announce your program?

INTERCUT BETWEEN DARLA AND PETER

DARLA
(a beat)

I...

PETER
It's perfect. Best advert we could possibly come up with. But we need to sort it out as soon as possible -- pick a song, what you'll wear, fit it into the schedule. We've only got a week. Why don't we meet tomorrow to discuss it?

DARLA
Peter... I don't know quite how to say this, so I'm just going to tell you.

PETER
Tell me what, luv?

DARLA
I've changed my mind about the show.

PETER
(a beat)
You've changed your mind...?

DARLA
I don't wish to do it anymore.

For a moment, Peter doesn't know what to say. After all they've discussed over the past week, this was the very last thing he ever expected.

PETER
I don't understand. I thought you were excited about it.

DARLA
I was, but...

PETER
I don't know what to say. I mean... I never saw this coming. After all we've talked about. I'm absolutely gutted.

DARLA
I'm sorry.

PETER
It's not because of what happened last night, is it?

DARLA
No, that's not why.

PETER
Then why?

DARLA

I just don't think I could devote the amount of time and effort it requires. My life is such right now, that...

(a beat)

It would be a huge commitment... and one which I'm simply not able to make right now.

PETER

I see.

DARLA

I do appreciate all you've done for me... and I want you to know that I think you're a lovely man, and perhaps we can work together in the future... but for now, I believe this is best.

PETER

(a beat)

Well, if that's the way you feel... then that's the way you feel. I won't push you.

DARLA

Thank you.

PETER

I'll put away all the work we've done... save it for another day.

DARLA

Yes.

PETER

And Darla... I want you to know that whatever happens... whatever that future may bring... there'll always be a place for you in my plans.

DARLA

Goodbye.

Darla hangs up. Peter does so as well, then he sits there thinking, wondering what he's going to do now.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Darla is lying in her tub having a bubble bath, her eyes closed. On the floor near the tub is an 8-TRACK TAPE PLAYER playing the SONG "There's Too Much On My Mind" by The Kinks, the volume low.

After a moment, the phone RINGS from the lounge. She opens her eyes, but she doesn't want to move. The phone stops ringing, and she closes her eyes again. Another moment passes, then the phone starts ringing again. This time, it doesn't stop, and she opens her eyes again and sighs.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - SAME

Wearing a towel, Darla goes to the phone, which is still RINGING, and answers it.

DARLA

Hello?

A male VOICE speaks over the phone in a very mysterious and cryptic manner, hushed and obviously disguised.

VOICE (V.O.)

You're looking in the wrong place.

DARLA

What?

The caller hangs up. Darla stands there for a moment, puzzled, then hangs up too. She turns to go back to the bathroom when the phone RINGS again, and she turns back and picks it up.

DARLA

Yes?

VOICE (V.O.)

What you're searching for is not there.

Once again, the caller hangs up. Darla frowns, then she sighs sharply and hangs up as well. She turns and heads back to the bathroom.

INT. DARLA'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Darla enters and is about to take off her towel when the phone RINGS yet again. Angry now, she turns and exits.

INT. DARLA'S LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Darla marches back to the phone and answers it.

DARLA

Hello!

VOICE (V.O.)

The key to this case opens a very small door.

DARLA

What?

VOICE (V.O.)

You must change size and direction.

DARLA

Direction?

VOICE (V.O.)

Don't you wish to know which way to go?

DARLA
Which way to go where?

VOICE (V.O.)
Where you wish to go.

DARLA
Where do I wish to go?

VOICE (V.O.)
Wherever you like. But you're going the wrong way.

DARLA
Who is this? Look, I haven't the least idea what you're talking about!

VOICE (V.O.)
Keep your temper.
(beat)
I've some important information for you.

DARLA
About what?

VOICE (V.O.)
About what you're doing.

DARLA
And what am I doing?

VOICE (V.O.)
Can you do it at all? That's the real question. And you can't the way you're doing it.

DARLA
Would you stop talking in circles??
Who are you??

VOICE (V.O.)
To get where you want to go you must go in the opposite direction. You have a riddle to solve. I can help you solve it.

DARLA
What are you --
(caller hangs up)
Hello? Hello!

This time, Darla slams the phone down, then puts both hands to her forehead and closes her eyes.

DARLA
(mutters to herself)
For God's sake... What is all this nonsense?

She stands there like that for a moment, gripping her head as if it were going to split open, then the doorbell suddenly RINGS. She jumps, startled, then runs to the door, ready to blow her top.

DARLA
Stop badgering me!

She opens the door, ready to confront whoever is outside, but there's no one there. She looks this way and that, but there's no sign of anyone. Then she notices an ENVELOPE taped to the door. She pulls it off and looks at it. On the outside, it says:

READ ME

She opens the envelope and brings out a folded piece of PAPER. She unfolds and reads it, and the handwriting on it says:

MEET ME AT SPEAKER'S CORNER
IN HYDE PARK. ONE HOUR.

Darla stands there, wondering what the hell is going on.

EXT. SPEAKER'S CORNER - HYDE PARK - NIGHT

Not very many PEOPLE here at this hour. Darla arrives and moves about slowly, looking around. She has absolutely no idea who she's looking for or what he looks like, and she looks at the faces of the people around her, any one of whom could be the mysterious caller, trying to determine which one it could be.

After a while, she stops and sighs, and she considers giving up and going back to her car. But then she spots a MAN across from her, standing by himself. He is wearing a mask that hides his face, and he holds up a SIGN that says:

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND,
DARLA. BUT NOT THERE.

The man notices Darla looking at him and their eyes lock, then he immediately drops the sign and flees in the direction of Oxford Street. Darla takes off after him, and the SONG "Incense and Peppermints" by Strawberry Alarm Clock begins on the soundtrack and accompanies the ensuing chase:

EXT. MARBLE ARCH

The man runs past the huge white structure as he races toward Oxford Street. Darla follows, trailing some distance behind.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF PARK LANE AND OXFORD STREET

The man runs across Park Lane, past the entrance to the Marble Arch Underground Station, and continues east along the south side of Oxford Street. A few moments later, Darla does the same.

THE MAN

runs quickly east along Oxford Street, past all the shops and around the PEDESTRIANS.

DARLA

pursues him determinedly, running past the shops and making her way around the same pedestrians.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF OXFORD STREET AND PARK STREET

The man arrives at the intersection and crosses it, never slowing down, and Darla does so as well, starting to close the distance between them.

THE MAN

continues to run east past pedestrians which include a group of HARE KRISHNAS.

DARLA

continues to chase him, determined to catch up and grab him.

FURTHER DOWN THE STREET

The man runs past and OUT OF VIEW, but as Darla pursues him, she runs into a COUPLE coming out of a shop and they all tumble to the pavement. Darla scrambles to get up and continues to run after the man, leaving the couple on the ground, but the delay has cost her a few precious seconds.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF OXFORD STREET AND NORTH AUDLEY STREET

Darla comes to a stop at the corner and looks around hastily, having lost sight of the man and not knowing which way he went. She glances towards Selfridges across the street, then back toward Marks & Spencer, but there's no sign of him. Then she glances down North Audley Street and spots him halfway down the block, waiting for her. He turns and starts running again as soon as she sees him, and she resumes chasing him.

FURTHER DOWN THE BLOCK

The man and Darla run south along North Audley Street, and there is more distance between them now than at the start of the chase.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF NORTH AUDLEY STREET AND NORTH ROW

The man turns right and starts heading west along North Row, and a few moments later Darla does as well.

THE MAN

runs as fast as he can along North Row.

DARLA

increases her speed and starts to close the distance between them again.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF NORTH ROW AND PARK STREET

The man races across the intersection and continues west, but a car goes through just as Darla arrives and she is forced to stop and wait for it to pass, delaying her again.

THE MAN

continues running west along North Row.

DARLA

continues to chase him, once again trailing some distance behind.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF NORTH ROW AND PARK LANE

The man turns right again and heads north on Park Lane, and a few moments later Darla does so as well.

FURTHER UP THE BLOCK

The man continues running north, back toward Oxford Street, and Darla continues to pursue, starting to close the gap again.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF PARK LANE AND OXFORD STREET

The man runs down the stairs into the Underground entrance they passed at the start of the chase, and he has taken Darla in a full circle.

INT. MARBLE ARCH TUBE STATION - UNDERGROUND PUBLIC PASSAGE

The man runs down the passage beneath Oxford Street and toward the ticket hall.

EXT. UNDERGROUND ENTRANCE

Darla arrives and starts running down the stairs.

INT. UNDERGROUND PUBLIC PASSAGE

Darla comes off the stairs and runs down the passage in pursuit.

INT. MARBLE ARCH TUBE STATION - ESCALATOR

The man runs down the long escalator, passing the few PEOPLE who are on it at this hour.

INT. MARBLE ARCH TUBE STATION - LOWER LEVEL

The man comes off the escalator and goes OUT OF VIEW down the corridor to the right.

INT. ESCALATOR

Darla runs down the escalator, passing by the very same people, and they watch and wonder what the hell is going on.

INT. LOWER LEVEL

Darla comes off the escalator and goes OUT OF VIEW down the same corridor.

INT. MARBLE ARCH TUBE STATION - PLATFORM LEVEL

Darla comes down the stairs and skids to a stop, glancing toward the eastbound platform on the right and then at the westbound platform on the left -- just in time to see the man inside a westbound TRAIN as the doors close. She steps out onto the platform as the train starts to pull out of the station and watches it leave, exhausted and catching her breath.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Darla returns to her car parked near Speaker's Corner, tired and disoriented from the chase. She is about to open the door when she notices a folded NOTE under one of the windshield wipers, and she grabs the note and unfolds it.

INSERT - THE NOTE

It says:

FORGET THE GRINNING CAT.
THE ANSWER LIES ELSEWHERE.
I SHALL TELL YOU WHICH WAY TOMORROW.
OR PERHAPS THE NEXT DAY.

DARLA

finishes reading the note and crumples it in utter frustration. She stands there, not knowing what to make of it, not knowing what to make of anything anymore, and the SONG ends and fades as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DARLA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Nigel's Jaguar drives up and screeches to a halt right in front of the terraced house.

INT. DARLA'S FLAT - LOUNGE - SAME

Darla is sitting on her sofa, looking contrite as Nigel stands in front of her and stares at her incredulously.

NIGEL

You did what??

Darla remains silent, feeling very small and confused, and Nigel can't believe the story she's just told him.

NIGEL

You know, for the first time you've left me absolutely gobsmacked. And that's not easy to do, because I've got well used to all sorts of surprises from you. But this time beggars all description.

DARLA

Nigel --

NIGEL

(cuts her off)

You ring me in the middle of the night and what do I think? "Maybe she's still feeling soppy, maybe she wants me to go cheer her up." Then I get here and find you've not only gone to meet with some dodgy informant who sounds like a right lunatic and chased him all over Mayfair, but that you didn't even think to inform me and bring me along with you!

DARLA

Nigel, I --

NIGEL

(cuts her off again)

But that's the least I'm ballistic about. What were you thinking? Even if this person is legit, did you not realize the implications? For God's sake, woman, he rang you and left you a note here at your flat! He knows you're a spy! He knows Darla Chandler the singer is a spy!

He stares at her, but Darla doesn't respond, knowing that he's absolutely right. And for the first time, she is completely unsure of herself. This is not the dynamic, decisive, and self-assured Darla we've always seen until now, and Nigel is just as surprised at how lost she appears as we are.

NIGEL

I've never seen you off your game before. This mission has played with your head -- and now someone out there is doing the same.

He goes to the PHONE and picks it up and starts to dial.

DARLA

What are you doing?

NIGEL
I'm ringing Hawthorne right now and
clueing him in on this.

Darla quickly gets up and goes to him.

DARLA
No, don't.

NIGEL
And why not?

DARLA
You know what he'll do. He'll take me
off this case and sideline me for God
knows how long. I won't have that.
Whatever's going on here, I want to
see it through to the end.

NIGEL
Darla, your secret is known!

DARLA
Then we'll find out who knows it.
Together.

Her tone is desperate, and Nigel hesitates, watching her.
He's never seen her like this before.

DARLA
Nigel, please.

She stares at him anxiously, her eyes pleading with him, and
he slowly relents.

NIGEL
Alright.
(hangs up)
But from this moment forwards, I swear,
we're doing things my way. Understand?

DARLA
Fair enough.

NIGEL
And my way says we go to Cheshire Cat
right now and have a look about --
which is what we should have done in
the bloody first place!

EXT. CHESHIRE CAT BUILDING - NIGHT

All the lights are out at this late hour. Darla's Mini
arrives and parks across the street.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - SAME

Nigel sits at the wheel, Darla beside him, both dressed in
black. They watch the building.

DARLA
Let's start with a gander at employee records. They may yield some insight into someone's possible motivation.

NIGEL
Instead of doing this from the bottom up, let's do it from the top down.

DARLA
What do you mean?

NIGEL
Rice-Davies. I'm going directly to his office. And I'm giving it more than just a once-over.

DARLA
You can't be serious.

NIGEL
Have you ever known me not to be?

DARLA
Do you know what you're saying?

NIGEL
Yes. I'm saying that the head of a British media conglomerate, a man who's got the ear of the prime minister, a man who's been bloody knighted, for God's sake, is fraternizing with the Soviets in some manner.

DARLA
Why? Why would he have anything to do with them? For what possible reason?

NIGEL
Only he can answer that question. But is it so far-fetched? Remember your own adoptive sister.

Darla stares at him, the reference to Edith touching a nerve, but Nigel is dead serious and mincing no words.

DARLA
You know, up to now, I've found your little displays of jealousy rather endearing. But to accuse a man without any evidence whatsoever of something like this --

NIGEL
(cuts her off)
You think I'm suggesting his involvement because I'm jealous of the man? Darla, he's a boy who happens to look like an adult!

DARLA

Then why are you?

NIGEL

Because my instincts tell me so. They have since the very beginning. And as for there being no evidence, perhaps you're forgetting the business card that started this all.

DARLA

That doesn't link him to anything. We've been over this before. Could be anyone in his company. A janitor even, for all we know.

NIGEL

I say it's him.

DARLA

I don't believe that.

NIGEL

Why not? Why do you keep bloody sticking up for the man?

DARLA

Because you don't know him. He's not at all the way he's portrayed in the magazines and newspapers.

NIGEL

Because he wined and dined you and offered you a television program? And fed you a few lines to elicit a little sympathy? I'd no idea you were that easy.

Darla suddenly slaps him, and Nigel says nothing more, surprised. She stares at him, instantly regretting it.

DARLA

I'm sorry.

NIGEL

No... I earned that one. I was out of line.

(beat)

But it doesn't change the fact that you refuse to consider what you don't wish to believe.

Darla doesn't know what to say. She never, ever expected to strike Nigel for any reason whatsoever. She sits back and sighs deeply, then covers her face with her hand.

DARLA

Oh, Nigel, I don't want to fight with you. Not tonight.

NIGEL
 (smiles a little)
 I thought that was your favorite
 pastime... as long as we always made
 up afterwards.

DARLA
 I don't enjoy it anymore.

NIGEL
 (a beat)
 You mean us...?

DARLA
 No... I don't enjoy this anymore.
 Juggling two irreconcilable lives,
 and the toll they take on each other.
 Before we married it was something I
 could handle, maintaining two such
 disparate careers... but I can't keep
 it up any longer. Too much has been
 thrown into the mix... too many secrets
 to keep. I feel like Alice down the
 rabbit hole. I don't know where my
 head is at.
 (pause)
 One of those lives must end.

She says nothing more, and Nigel is deathly afraid that
 she'll quit S.M.A.S.H. and that their days of spying
 together will be over.

NIGEL
 Well... please let me know when you
 decide which one.

A moment passes, then Darla takes a deep breath and steels
 herself to go on with the mission.

DARLA
 Let's get on with this.

They are about to open their doors when Nigel sees something
 across the street.

NIGEL
 Look.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

Across the street, a black 1965 JAGUAR E-TYPE FIXED HEAD
 COUPE emerges from the building, and Peter is at the wheel.

BACK TO SCENE

Nigel and Darla watch.

NIGEL
 What's he doing here at this hour?

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

The Jaguar turns and starts going down the street.

BACK TO SCENE

They watch the Jaguar drive away.

NIGEL

Do we go in, or follow him?

Darla says nothing for a moment, afraid of what they might find out if they follow Peter. The pain her decision costs her is clear on her face.

DARLA

Follow him...

Nigel starts the engine.

EXT. STREET

The Mini's headlights come on and the SONG "The Beat Goes On" by Sonny and Cher begins on the soundtrack. The Mini pulls out and makes a u-turn and starts heading in the direction the Jaguar went.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel and Darla watch Peter's Jaguar about a block ahead as they follow it.

EXT. CHARING CROSS ROAD

Peter's Jaguar drives by, heading south. A moment later, Darla's Mini drives by as well.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel and Darla watch Peter's Jaguar as they continue south on St. Martin's Place.

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Peter's Jaguar enters the area and turns left onto Northumberland Avenue. A moment later, Darla's Mini does the same thing.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel and Darla watch the Jaguar up ahead as they follow it.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE AND VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

Peter's Jaguar arrives and makes a right turn and proceeds south on Victoria Embankment.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel arrives at the intersection and starts to make the same turn.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE AND VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

Darla's Mini turns right and also heads south.

PETER'S JAGUAR

drives south on Victoria Embankment along the River Thames.

DARLA'S MINI

drives south along the Thames as well, following at a discreet distance.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel and Darla continue to watch the Jaguar up ahead.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF VICTORIA EMBANKMENT AND BRIDGE STREET

Peter's Jaguar arrives, turns left, and continues east on Westminster Bridge.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel arrives at the intersection and starts to make the turn.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF VICTORIA EMBANKMENT AND BRIDGE STREET

Darla's Mini turns left as well and gets on the bridge.

EXT. WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

Peter's Jaguar drives by as it crosses the bridge, and Darla's Mini continues to follow at a discreet distance.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel and Darla keep their eyes on the Jaguar up ahead, wondering where he's going on the other side of the river.

EXT. WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD

Peter's Jaguar comes off the bridge on the other side and passes by, and Darla's Mini does as well.

EXT. WAREHOUSE

Somewhere in Waterloo. Peter's Jaguar arrives and stops in front, parking behind a black 1966 AUSTIN A110 WESTMINSTER SALOON already there.

EXT. SIDE STREET

Darla's Mini turns right onto a side street just before the warehouse, then doubles back and stops at the corner and turns off its headlights.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Nigel and Darla watch the Jaguar diagonally across the street from them.

PETER'S JAGUAR

Peter gets out and looks around, then starts heading toward an alley beside the warehouse.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Nigel and Darla watch him.

THE ALLEY

Peter goes in and disappears into the darkness.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Darla and Nigel watch and wait... Darla with a growing sense of dread, Nigel with the certainty that his suspicions are about to be confirmed.

THE ALLEY

Someone emerges from the darkness and walks out, but it isn't Peter. It's Krasinski. He stops and looks around, and as he does so, we ZOOM-IN quickly on his face.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Darla and Nigel immediately recognize him. Darla moves as if to get out of the car, but Nigel quickly blocks her with his arm.

KRASINSKI

looks around, then walks toward his car.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Darla and Nigel watch intently, and Nigel decides to let Krasinski go instead of nabbing him. Whatever is going on, he knows Krasinski won't talk even if threatened -- but Peter will.

THE STREET

Krasinski gets into his car, pulls out and starts driving away.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Darla and Nigel watch him drive off, then look back toward the alley.

THE ALLEY

Peter reemerges from the darkness. He stops and looks around just as Krasinski did, then starts to go back to his car.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Nigel and Darla watch, and Darla can't believe what she is seeing.

PETER'S JAGUAR

Peter opens the door and gets in.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Nigel and Darla watch silently.

PETER'S JAGUAR

pulls out and drives off.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

A CLOSE-UP of Nigel as he watches the Jaguar drive away, then he turns his head to look at Darla... and as he does so, we PAN over to a CLOSE-UP of Darla sitting there beside him and staring blankly through the windshield, her eyes empty, completely and utterly disillusioned by what she has just witnessed. And the SONG ends.

INT. CHESHIRE CAT - PETER'S OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The lights are out. We hear the key turning in the lock, then the door opens and Peter comes in. He closes the door and turns on the light... then stops short as he turns and sees Darla sitting at his desk and Nigel standing nearby.

DARLA

How long did you think you could
hoodwink me?

Peter says nothing. He just stands there and stares at her, absolutely frozen, overcome by a mixture of shock, shame, and embarrassment. Darla stares back at him with eyes that could burn holes right through him.

DARLA

Did you think I wouldn't find out?

Peter remains silent, simply unable to speak, and he jumps slightly when Darla suddenly leans forward and shouts angrily.

DARLA

Did you??

(a beat; calmer)

Then you thought wrong. It's my job
to find out.

She continues to stare at him, and Peter takes a deep breath and finally finds his voice.

PETER

I know that.

DARLA

(a beat)

What?

PETER

I know who you are... what you are.

(beat)

I've known since before we first met.

Darla and Nigel exchange glances, then Darla looks back at Peter and responds with a mixture of sarcasm and skepticism.

DARLA

And just what am I?

PETER

I don't know the specifics. MI5? Or perhaps some agency only a select few know about. It doesn't matter. I knew you were investigating this, in whatever capacity. I was in the alley that night... and I saw you.

Darla and Nigel stare at him, and for the moment, Darla's anger is blunted by the shock of Peter's awareness. Now it all makes sense to her, and she realizes it was him who made the mysterious phone calls and led her on that wild chase through the streets.

Once it all sinks in, though, her surprise is replaced by disgust. She stands up slowly and goes to him and stops in front of him, and Peter averts his eyes, unable to look at her.

DARLA

Since we're all taking off our masks tonight, perhaps you'll oblige me a bit further. What's going on here? Why did you meet with a KGB agent? What exactly are you involved in?

Peter says nothing, sick to his stomach. Nigel looks on.

NIGEL

I suggest you answer her question. She can be very determined. Sometimes not even I can control her.

Peter hesitates, but there's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. He takes a deep breath and decides to confess.

PETER
They wanted my help.

DARLA
Your help.

PETER
Yes.

DARLA
Your help with what?

PETER
(a beat)
They needed someone to help them smuggle
in something.

DARLA
Smuggle in what? Weapons? Other operatives?

PETER
No.

DARLA
Then what?

Peter takes another deep breath, and Darla waits for him to answer, wanting to rip the words out of him.

PETER
A nuclear warhead.

Darla opens her mouth in shock, and Nigel reacts with alarm as well. They exchange glances again, then look back at Peter. Peter hesitates again, then he decides to spill it all... and every word costs him great pain to say.

PETER
It's central to Volkov's plan. He's the lead man on the operation. They intend to bring in a warhead and blackmail the British government with it. In secret, behind closed doors. Whitehall must capitulate or the warhead goes off in central London. And the world won't know anything's amiss until it's all complete, until they wake up one morning to hear Britain announce its withdrawal from NATO and the expulsion of all American forces. With both France and the UK out, the alliance will collapse.

Darla can't believe what she's hearing. She can't believe the enormity and horror of the plot Peter has described. It's simply implausible to her.

DARLA

They're mad.

PETER

As mad as a March hare. But they're also deadly serious.

DARLA

And how do you figure in all this? Why did they recruit you?

PETER

The Fabtastic Festival. They reasoned it was a perfect opportunity to smuggle the thing in right under everyone's noses, hidden in one of my lorries.

Darla remains silent, contemplating what Peter has revealed, sickened to the core that he could be involved in such a plot. Peter goes to a chair and slumps into it like a man who is utterly exhausted and has resigned himself to an inevitable fate.

PETER

Krasinski contacted me a month ago. I came home one evening and found him sitting in my lounge, just as I found you here tonight. He'd helped himself to my cognac. He tells me, "This is what we're going to do. It's already in motion and nothing will stop it. All our people are already in place. But we need your help for the final stage. You can either help us and we'll allow you to keep your companies, or you can refuse and we'll kill you and find someone else. We have a list of prospects, and we'll go down them one by one. With or without you, it's going to happen."

(beat)

So I weigh all that, and I figure, if it's going to happen anyway... if there's nothing I can do to stop it... I might as well go along and be in a good position once it's done. And be alive.

He says nothing more and just sits there, completely drained. Darla goes right up to his face and speaks in a low and dangerous tone.

DARLA

Did you woo me on their orders? Did they tell you to drag me off to Brighton and keep me occupied? Misdirect me with mysterious calls and riddles to throw me off the trail?

PETER

Oh, Darla. These people wouldn't go to all that trouble. If they knew you were on to them, you'd already be gone. A silenced bullet in the dark of night, and Darla Chandler would never sing on another stage again. I never told them anything about you. I did all those things on my own. You're standing here right now because they don't know you know.

Just then, the door opens and three men walk in -- Krasinski, a GUARD armed with an AK-47, and YEVGENY VOLKOV.

VOLKOV

But now we do know.

Darla and Nigel are surprised, but Peter is absolutely shocked, and he watches with horror as Krasinski and the guard go right up to Darla and Nigel and confiscate their PISTOLS. Then the guard keeps them covered with his AK-47 as Volkov turns to Peter.

VOLKOV

Do you think we are fools? We knew you were soft.

(points)

Stand over there.

Peter is horrified, but like an obedient puppy, he steps back and stands where Volkov pointed. Then Volkov dismisses him and turns his attention to Darla and Nigel.

VOLKOV

Good evening. I am Yevgeny Andreevich Volkov.

DARLA

Charmed, I'm sure.

NIGEL

No need to introduce yourself. I've seen your photograph. And you know something? It doesn't do you justice. You look far worse in person.

VOLKOV

(smiles thinly)

Hmm. British wit. Something I have always considered to be overrated.

NIGEL

Perhaps because our highly refined sense of irony eludes your comprehension.

Nigel stares at Volkov with the barest hint of a smirk. Standing where Volkov ordered him to stand, Peter watches, riddled with fear of what Volkov intends to do with Darla.

NIGEL

So what happens now? You dispose of us and carry out your devious little plot?

VOLKOV

No. I put you where you won't cause problems until we carry out devious little plot. I keep you guessing when you will die, then I dispose of you.

NIGEL

Such a nice fellow.

Volkov glares at Nigel, then signals Krasinski to follow him out into the hallway. Volkov and Krasinski step outside, and the guard stands by the door, his AK-47 held ready.

Peter watches the two men leave, then he appears to come to a decision and makes a visible effort to calm himself. He slowly goes over to Darla and faces her, his expression pained and apologetic.

PETER

I didn't want it to go this way.

DARLA

Coward. A coward and a traitor.

Her words cut him like a knife, and though he tries to hide it, he wears his heart on his sleeve. He smiles sadly.

PETER

Perhaps I am. I always wanted to be that hero slaying the dragon... but maybe this is all I'm cut out for. I truly wish it hadn't come to this, but we each do what we must, what we each consider important. It's all a game in the end, and a game has winners and losers. We can't all win. I want to be on the winning side.

DARLA

Is that what that ten year old boy dreamt about? So, you win... and the rest of England loses. Is that equitable in your eyes?

PETER

England is going to lose regardless of what I do.

DARLA

Not if you had come clean right from the start and revealed this plot to me when you first learnt I was a spy. We could have stopped all this then. Instead, you tried to distract and manipulate me at every turn to protect yourself.

PETER

I tried to protect you. I never feared you'd uncover this plot and link it to me. I feared they'd kill you long before you got that far. I did it to keep you safe, to keep them from finding out you were investigating.

He stares at her, hoping she understands, waiting for any sign at all that she believes him. But Darla stares back with naked contempt.

DARLA

Here's a news flash for you. I don't need you to protect me.

She spits in his face. Peter stands there for a moment, then wipes it off. Then he meets her eyes, and he doesn't hold it against her. On the contrary, his feelings for her have never been clearer on his face.

PETER

Whether you believe it or not... I did everything I did because I love you.

Darla stares at him, but before she can reply, Volkov comes back in and signals the guard to take Darla and Nigel out. The guard pushes them out the door, then Volkov steps up to Peter and speaks to him as one would to a slave.

VOLKOV

Go home. Wait there. Do nothing. We will contact you tomorrow.

Peter nods wordlessly, then watches as Volkov goes out into the hallway to join the others. He stands there, alone... and now that Volkov is gone, we see in his face that he has definitely made a very important decision.

EXT. CHESHIRE CAT BUILDING - ALLEY - NIGHT

Volkov and Krasinski stand beside the black Westminster sedan we saw earlier and watch as the guard gets Darla and Nigel into the back seat and gets in after them. Krasinski shuts the door, then turns to Volkov as the car pulls out and jerks his thumb upward at the window in Peter's office.

KRASINSKI

What do we do about him?

VOLKOV

We need him until Friday. Then shoot him with the other two.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The same place where Krasinski and Peter met earlier tonight.

INT. WAREHOUSE - BASEMENT - SAME

Darla and Nigel are locked in a barred cell at the end of a long corridor. At the other end sits a GUARD, his GUN in a shoulder holster, reading a NEWSPAPER. Behind the guard is a stairwell leading up to the first floor.

Darla stands in one corner of the cell, leaning against the bars, looking at nothing. Nigel is sitting on a bare wooden bench and watching her, and he knows how deeply she is hurting over Peter's betrayal of both the nation and her faith in him.

NIGEL

Darla?

Darla doesn't appear to hear him, and she continues to stand there staring at nothing.

NIGEL

Darla.

Darla finally responds, but she doesn't look at him.

DARLA

I'm not very good company right now.

NIGEL

I don't wish to say I told you so...

DARLA

Then don't.

NIGEL

For what it's worth, you're not the first person to be deceived by another. And God knows you won't be the last.

Darla remains where she is for a moment, then she slowly goes over to the bench, sits down beside him and sighs.

DARLA

What's happened to me? What's happened to my instincts? When I was seven years old I lived in the streets and survived by my wits. Now I get played for a fool... and I never even saw it coming.

NIGEL

Happens to all of us at one time or another.

DARLA

For the first time in as long as I can remember, I've made a string of mistakes worse than the rankest amateur. I feel so uncertain; not myself. What does it all mean?

NIGEL
(pats her knee)
It means you're human just like the
rest of us.

DARLA
Speak for yourself. I'm the goddess
of the underworld, remember?

NIGEL
(smiles)
At least you haven't lost your sense
of humor.

DARLA
Lost just about everything else. And
look where it's got us. On the back
foot and locked in a cell.

NIGEL
Well, not to put too fine a point on
it, but that's usually how things go
for us, isn't it? Sooner or later,
whatever the mission, we always wind
up like this -- up the creek. Why is
that, do you think?

DARLA
Random chance?

NIGEL
Or a universe that's stacked against us.

DARLA
If it is, it must have a soft spot for
us, because we've always managed to
prevail in the end.

NIGEL
You know, you're right. I've never
been a superstitious man, but we've
managed to emerge unscathed from
situations that should have cost us
our lives. I've always ascribed it
to our abilities and skill, but those
can only go so far. Perhaps there's
some force that looks out for us, that
lends a helping hand when necessary
and makes sure we live to see another
day and complete another mission.

DARLA
Do you really believe that?

NIGEL
(a beat)
No, not really. But it would be nice
if there were, and it got us out of
this predicament. A whole nation's
future depends on it.

They remain silent for a moment, mulling over their situation, then Nigel looks over at the guard and elbows Darla.

NIGEL
So what are you waiting for?

DARLA
What?

NIGEL
Aren't you right this very moment cooking up one of those daring little schemes to get us out of this fix? One of those crafty and typically audacious plans to confuse, manipulate, and otherwise hoodwink our jailer into playing right into your hands and unwittingly handing over the means for our escape? Is that not what you're doing right now?

DARLA
No, it's not.

NIGEL
It isn't?

DARLA
I'm afraid this time I'm completely at a loss. I've no plan up my sleeve to implement.

NIGEL
Well, I never thought I'd see the day when Darla Chandler was stumped. I must say it's rather disheartening.

Nigel sighs, then he looks over at the guard again... and he is astonished by what he sees. As the guard continues to read his newspaper, Peter slowly and quietly comes down the stairs, holding a SWITCHBLADE. Nigel elbows Darla again, and she looks up and sees Peter too. She is even more astonished than Nigel, and they watch in stunned silence as Peter continues to sneak up behind the guard.

Peter looks toward them and puts a finger to his lips to make them stay quiet, then slowly inches right up to the guard. But he makes a tiny sound that alerts the guard, and the guard immediately stands up and turns to him, raising his gun and knocking the switchblade out of Peter's hand.

As the switchblade clatters on the floor, Peter quickly grabs the guard's wrist and pushes his gun-holding hand up into the air. The two men struggle for a while, slamming back and forth against the walls of the narrow corridor. Eventually, one of them trips and both men go down to the floor, and they continue wrestling as Darla and Nigel helplessly watch this life-and-death struggle from the cell.

A shot rings out, and for a moment neither we nor Darla and Nigel know who's been hit. But then we see Peter react and the blood starting to stain his shirt. More angry than shocked, he suddenly backhands the guard and pulls the pistol from his hand as the guard falls back. The guard rolls on the floor and immediately gets up to tackle him, but Peter shoots and the guard falls dead.

For a moment, Peter doesn't move, the blood continuing to stain his shirt and his strength starting to ebb... and from the amount of blood covering his chest, we know the wound is mortal and that he doesn't have much longer. He crawls slowly toward the guard's body.

As Darla and Nigel watch intently, Peter reaches the guard, then fumbles to pull the KEYS out of the guard's pocket. It takes a moment, but he succeeds. Then he collapses onto his stomach and starts to pull himself ever so slowly along the floor toward the cell.

For a tense and seemingly interminable full minute, and with incredible determination, Peter inches slowly closer and closer to the cell as Darla and Nigel watch with baited breath, leaving a trail of smeared blood on the floor behind him the entire way. His strength fades and he finally reaches the point where he can't go any farther.

With his last bit of strength, Peter slides the keys across the floor toward the cell. Nigel and Darla watch as the keys slide toward them, their hearts pounding... and the keys stop just inside the cell at Nigel's feet. Nigel immediately snatches them up and unlocks and opens the door.

Darla rushes out to Peter and kneels beside him and cradles his head in her lap, and he is still barely alive. He looks up at her as Nigel joins her.

PETER

I'm sorry... I hope you can forgive me...
and that England can as well.

Peter dies, his eyes open. Darla and Nigel watch him, and there are tears in Darla's eyes. Nigel closes Peter's, respecting the man's heroic and honorable sacrifice in the end, then picks up the guard's gun. He places a hand on Darla's shoulder.

NIGEL

C'mon. He's given us a sporting chance.
Let's make it count.

Darla watches Peter for a moment, then she brushes his hair back from his face and whispers two words to him:

DARLA

My hero...

She places his head down on the floor, gently, then kisses his cheek. She wipes the tears from her face, then she and Nigel run down the corridor and start going up the stairs.

INT. WAREHOUSE - STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Nigel and Darla come up the stairs, then stop at the top behind a closed door. Nigel looks at her to make sure she's ready, and after she nods, he swings the door wide open, ready to shoot.

INT. WAREHOUSE - FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nigel and Darla expected to come across a guard, and they do. But the GUARD lies sprawled on the floor in a pool of blood, his throat cut. They stare at the body, realizing that Peter came this way and killed him.

They step over the body and move toward the door at the end of the corridor, which leads outside. As they near it, it opens and another GUARD starts to come in. He sees Nigel and Darla and starts to bring up his AK-47 to shoot them, but Nigel fires two rounds into him in quick succession and the guard drops to the floor. Darla picks up the AK-47 and they race out the door.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As Nigel and Darla emerge from the warehouse, a third GUARD comes running up from the alley beside the building, AK-47 in hand and ready to shoot. Without even slowing down, Darla and Nigel gun him down together, then run around the corner and into the alley.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Nigel and Darla jump into Peter's Jaguar, which is parked there, start the engine, and drive off down the street...

WIDE ANGLE - LONDON, ENGLAND - DAY

The SONG "Puppet on a String" by Sandie Shaw begins on the soundtrack.

VARIOUS SHOTS ALONG CARNABY STREET

as the Fabtastic Festival gets underway. We see PEOPLE walking about or standing around and talking; PEOPLE buying food and drinks from STREET VENDORS; and PEOPLE going in and out of clothing stores and boutiques. We see the DECORATIONS put up for the festival; GO-GO DANCERS dancing on platforms; and STAGEHANDS preparing a stage that has been set up at an intersection for the first act that is going to perform.

We focus on all these things and more, taking in the colorful, carnival-like atmosphere as the SONG continues, then we finally zero in on:

DARLA

standing outside of a shop and watching the crowds, and the SONG continues now through loudspeakers along the street. She is dressed like a go-go dancer and wears a WIG and SUNGLASSES, and she brings out her COMPACT and speaks into it quietly.

DARLA
 "Squirrel" calling "Moose". Can you
 hear me?

NIGEL

is standing near another shop, dressed in Victorian garb
 very much like Peter's wardrobe and wearing a false
 moustache. He taps a little RECEIVER in his ear, then speaks
 surreptitiously into a large RING on his finger.

NIGEL
 Loud and clear. How am I coming through?

DARLA (V.O.)
 Clear as a bell.

INT. HAWTHORNE'S CAR - SAME

A black 1964 VANDEN PLAS PRINCESS 4-LITRE R SALOON, and
 Hawthorne is sitting in the passenger seat speaking into a
 small RADIO while his DRIVER sits beside him.

HAWTHORNE
 And I can hear you both quite nicely.
 Now stay off the air until you have
 something to report.

NIGEL (V.O.)
 Affirmative...
 (needles him)
 ..."Bear".

Hawthorne switches off as his driver grins a little.

HAWTHORNE
 I'm still not used to being called that.

NIGEL

walks about slowly, looking around, blending into the crowd.

DARLA

does the same.

NIGEL

continues to look around, then stops as he sees something
 OFF-SCREEN.

A TRUCK

arrives at the end of the block on Great Marlborough Street
 and stops, and it bears the Cheshire Cat logo on its side.

NIGEL

raises his hand to his mouth and speaks into his ring.

NIGEL
"Squirrel", "Bear"... I'd like to call
your attention to the lorry that just
arrived at the end of the street.

DARLA

sees the truck and speaks into her compact.

DARLA
I see it.

INT. HAWTHORNE'S PRINCESS

Both Hawthorne and his driver watch the truck as well.

HAWTHORNE
(into radio)
So do I. Do you believe that's the one?

NIGEL (V.O.)
We'll soon find out. Stand by.

NIGEL

watches the truck and speaks into his ring.

NIGEL
Alright, Darla, move in. I'll meet
you there.

DARLA (V.O.)
On my way.

Nigel starts to move toward the truck.

DARLA

does as well.

THE TRUCK

Darla and Nigel approach it separately, and while Nigel keeps to the rear and out of sight of the DRIVER in the cab, Darla goes right up to the driver's door and knocks on the glass to get his attention. The driver looks at her, then ignores her. Darla knocks again, insistently, and the driver rolls down his window and looks at her again, annoyed.

DRIVER
(Russian accent)
What is it?

Just then, Nigel rises up quickly beside Darla, pointing his PISTOL right in the driver's face.

NIGEL
This.

The driver stares into the barrel, surprised, but he doesn't move. Nigel opens the door.

NIGEL
Step outside, please.

The driver hesitates, then slowly steps out of the truck.

NIGEL
There's a good fellow.

Nigel reaches into the truck and takes the KEYS out of the ignition, then closes the door. Then he signals Darla, and she quickly presses a tiny HYPO against the driver's neck. The driver sags, unconscious, and Nigel grabs him and drags him behind the truck as Darla follows.

NIGEL
Sorry you'll miss the festival, but
this music's not for you anyway.

Nigel deposits the driver out of sight, then unlocks and lifts up the truck's cargo door. Inside is the WARHEAD, and he and Darla stand there for a moment staring at it.

DARLA
Dear God...

NIGEL
(a beat)
Right. Let's get to work.

They climb into the back of the truck.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Nigel pulls down the cargo door and closes it, then takes off his moustache and steps up to the warhead. Darla takes off her sunglasses and watches as he kneels beside it and starts looking it over.

NIGEL
Can't wait to see the look on Volkov's
face when he finds out his bargaining
chip has been taken off the table.

As Nigel brings out some GADGETS from his pockets, Darla brings out her compact and opens it.

DARLA
(into compact)
"Squirrel" calling "Bear". We're in.

HAWTHORNE (V.O.)
What's happening?

DARLA
(into compact)
The warhead's here. Nigel is examining
it.

INT. HAWTHORNE'S PRINCESS

Hawthorne speaks into his radio.

HAWTHORNE

Tell him to be very careful. We know they don't intend to detonate it, but we don't need you setting it off by accident.

INT. TRUCK

Nigel starts scanning the warhead with one of the gadgets as Darla responds.

DARLA

Right.

(to Nigel)

He says to be very careful.

NIGEL

Never would have crossed my mind.

Darla watches as Nigel scans with the gadget. Nigel checks the readings on it, seems surprised by what he sees, then scans the warhead again. He checks the readings a second time, then stares at the warhead, puzzled, and the expression on his face worries Darla.

DARLA

What is it? What's wrong? You can turn it off, can't you?

NIGEL

No need. This is a dummy.

DARLA

What?

NIGEL

There's no nuclear material here. Completely inert. Not even a detonator.

DARLA

Are you sure?

NIGEL

(stands up)

Believe me, Darla, this thing wouldn't hurt a fly.

They both stare at the warhead, thrown by this new development they never expected.

DARLA

Then where's the real one?

NIGEL

Is there a real one? Or is something else going on?

DARLA
They've changed the plan.

NIGEL
Unless this was a misdirection the
whole time.

EXT. TRUCK/STREET

Nigel lifts up the cargo door again and he and Darla jump out of the truck. Nigel closes the door, then they look around, trying not to panic, uncertain of what's going on. Then Nigel notices a smaller Cheshire Cat TRUCK driving along the street, coming from the opposite direction. He watches it, and Darla notices his attention focused on it.

DARLA
What is it?

Nigel watches the truck drive by them... and he can't deny what his sixth sense is telling him.

NIGEL
C'mon!

He starts quickly heading toward Darla's Mini, which is parked across the street, and Darla follows him.

INT. HAWTHORNE'S PRINCESS

Hawthorne and his driver watch as Nigel and Darla disappear from view at the end of Carnaby Street.

HAWTHORNE
Where are they going?
(into radio)
Chandler, Wilkins. What are you doing?

DARLA (V.O.)
Following a hunch. Stand by.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Nigel and Darla get in and close the doors, and Nigel quickly starts the engine.

EXT. GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET

The Mini pulls out, makes a quick u-turn, and drives away in the direction of the departing truck.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel drives, trying to catch up to the truck.

INSERT - THE VIEW AHEAD

The truck is about half a block ahead, moving at a normal pace.

BACK TO SCENE

Darla peers at the truck up ahead.

DARLA
Do you think they've got another warhead
onboard?

Nigel remains silent, keeping his eyes on the truck.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF GREAT MARLBOROUGH ST. AND REGENT STREET

The truck reaches the intersection and turns south on Regent Street.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Hawthorne's voice comes in over Darla's compact.

HAWTHORNE (V.O.)
Chandler! Wilkins! Where are you?

DARLA
(into compact)
We're following another lorry. Stand by.

Nigel reaches the intersection and starts to turn.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF GREAT MARLBOROUGH ST. AND REGENT STREET

The Mini turns south and accelerates down Regent Street after the truck.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Darla watches the truck as Nigel closes the distance.

DARLA
How do we know they're even involved?

NIGEL
Let's find out, shall we?

EXT. REGENT STREET

The Mini pulls out and starts passing the truck on the right.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

As they pass alongside the truck and reach the cab, Darla looks to see who's driving -- and it's Krasinski at the wheel.

DARLA
Krasinski!

Nigel looks too, then stays alongside the truck and honks his horn.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

Krasinski glances over at them, then returns his attention to the street ahead. He doesn't accelerate and continues to drive at the same pace.

BACK TO SCENE

Nigel and Darla watch him, then Nigel honks several times, insistently.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

Krasinski looks over at them.

BACK TO SCENE

Nigel points and signals Krasinski to pull over.

INSERT - THEIR P.O.V.

Krasinski simply smiles, then returns his attention to the road.

BACK TO SCENE

Nigel marvels at the man's cool and nonchalance.

NIGEL
Bloody bastard...

Nigel slows down and allows the truck to pass, then gets right in behind it again. The truck continues to travel at the same pace as before.

DARLA
Why doesn't he try to get away?

NIGEL
He doesn't want to draw attention, least of all from the police. Fortunately, that serves my purposes as well.

Nigel is about to implement a plan of action, but he sees what's coming up ahead.

NIGEL
Blast...

EXT. PICCADILLY CIRCUS

The truck enters the junction from Regent Street, and the Mini follows.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel follows the truck, waiting until they're out of the area to implement his plan.

EXT. PICCADILLY CIRCUS

Both vehicles go east through the area and turn south onto Haymarket.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel gets ready to make his move.

NIGEL
How much do you like this little car
of yours?

DARLA
Very much so.

NIGEL
Well, you can always get another.

Before Darla can ask him what he means, Nigel accelerates.

EXT. HAYMARKET

The Mini pulls out from behind the truck and starts to overtake it on the right.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel continues accelerating.

NIGEL
Brace yourself...

Darla braces herself, anticipating what he's going to do.

EXT. HAYMARKET

The Mini continues to pass alongside the truck.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Just as they pass the truck, Nigel suddenly steers hard to the left.

EXT. HAYMARKET

The Mini cuts off the truck, very close, practically scraping its bumper.

INT. DARLA'S MINI - MOVING

Nigel slams on the brakes.

EXT. HAYMARKET

The truck rear-ends the Mini.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

The impact knocks Nigel and Darla forward and back.

INT. TRUCK

Krasinski gets knocked forward and back as well.

INT. DARLA'S MINI

Nigel and Darla quickly recover from the impact.

NIGEL
Alright?

DARLA
Yes.

They start to get out of the car.

EXT. HAYMARKET - CONTINUOUS

Nigel and Darla get out of the car, pulling out their pistols.

INT. TRUCK

Krasinski quickly throws the gears into reverse.

EXT. HAYMARKET

The truck starts to back up just as Nigel and Darla are about to reach the cab.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Krasinski backs up just enough to clear the Mini, then throws the gears into forward again.

EXT. HAYMARKET

The truck pulls out and starts to pass the Mini on the right. Nigel jumps onto the outside of the cab on the passenger side and holds on as Darla crouches and shoots the truck's left rear tire.

As he drives, Krasinski pulls out his GUN and shoots at Nigel, shattering the passenger side window. Nigel ducks and barely avoids getting hit, then sticks his hand in the window and returns fire and kills him. Krasinski slumps in the driver's seat and the truck slows to a stop. Nigel opens the door and climbs in as Darla comes up running.

Nigel reaches over the dead Krasinski to get the KEY from the ignition, but as he does so, he notices a MAP on the passenger seat. He grabs both the key and the map and gets back out, and both he and Darla look at the map.

NIGEL
Look. He's got Parliament circled. The
Palace of Westminster.

DARLA
And the route there marked.

Just then, the truck's rear doors swing open and Volkov leaps out and shoots at them.

DARLA

Blimey!

Nigel and Darla dive for cover behind the front of the truck while Volkov ducks back behind the rear. While Nigel and Darla remain crouched behind the cab, Volkov pokes out and fires again.

NIGEL

I've had just about enough of this grotbag. What say we end his long career today?

DARLA

No argument from me.

Nigel pauses, then pokes out and returns fire. Another shot from Volkov forces him to duck.

NIGEL

Blast! We've got to see what's inside this lorry.

Nigel pokes out again and shoots back, then ducks again as Volkov returns fire. Darla goes around the driver's side of the truck, crouched low, and slowly makes her way toward the rear. Nigel watches her go, then distracts Volkov.

NIGEL

(calls out)

Volkov! End of the line, old man! What say you give it up, eh?

VOLKOV

More British wit. Amusing. But it is end of line for all of us.

Suddenly, Darla appears behind Volkov, her pistol aimed.

DARLA

No -- just you.

Surprised, Volkov spins around, but before he can do anything more, Darla shoots him right in the heart. He staggers for a moment, then falls dead at her feet. She stares at the corpse, Peter's death avenged.

DARLA

Wanker.

Nigel comes around the rear of the truck and joins her. He looks at Volkov's body, then at Darla.

NIGEL

Looks like you're getting your mojo back.

Then he turns to look inside the truck -- and he stops short at what he sees.

NIGEL

What -- ?

Inside the truck is a very large METAL TANK that takes up almost all of the interior space. Nigel climbs into the truck and steps up to it, and he sees the small TIMER attached to its side.

DARLA

What is it? Doesn't look nuclear.

Nigel brings out another one of his GADGETS and takes a reading as Darla climbs into the truck as well and watches.

NIGEL

Bloody Nora! There's enough cyclonite here to blow up half of Parliament!

DARLA

Far less grandiose than their bogus plan. The one they told Peter to scare him into cooperating.

NIGEL

But enough to throw the whole nation into disarray. Which they would exploit somehow.

DARLA

Who knows where this plot goes? What turns it takes. What's waiting in the wings.

NIGEL

I don't care. It goes no further. It ends here, now.

Nigel looks at the timer just as the digits move under 3:00. Three minutes. That's all they have.

DARLA

Can you defuse it?

NIGEL

There's not enough time.

DARLA

Then we need to take this where it will do no harm.

NIGEL

The river.

Moving quickly, they jump out of the truck and close the rear doors, then race to the front and get into the cab.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Nigel starts the engine and pulls out as Darla brings out her compact and opens it. The tire Darla shot is going flat and Nigel instantly feels it.

NIGEL

What the --

DARLA

I shot one of the tires! How was I to know?

(into compact)

"Squirrel" to "Bear"! "Squirrel" to "Bear"!

INT. HAWTHORNE'S PRINCESS

Hawthorne speaks into his radio.

HAWTHORNE

Chandler, what's going on? What are you two doing?

DARLA (V.O.)

The lorry is full of explosives!

HAWTHORNE

What?

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Darla shouts into the compact as Nigel drives.

DARLA

The lorry is full of explosives! They were going to bomb Parliament!

INT. HAWTHORNE'S PRINCESS

DARLA (V.O.)

(continuing)

We're taking it to the river!

HAWTHORNE

Good God --

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

NIGEL

Tell them to clear the streets!

HAWTHORNE (V.O.)

Where are you?

DARLA

(into compact)

Haymarket, moving south towards Whitehall!

NIGEL
Tell them to clear Victoria Embankment
between the bridges!

DARLA
(into compact)
Clear Victoria Embankment between
Westminster and Hungerford Bridges!

NIGEL
Horse Guards Avenue!

DARLA
(into compact)
Horse Guards Avenue!

INT. HAWTHORNE'S PRINCESS

HAWTHORNE
(to driver)
Go!

Hawthorne fiddles with his radio to switch frequencies as
the driver starts the engine and pulls out with a jerk.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF HAYMARKET AND PALL MALL EAST

The truck reaches the end of Haymarket and turns onto Pall
Mall East.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Darla glances at her watch.

DARLA
We've got two minutes! Give it some
welly!

NIGEL
We're too weighted down! And the
puncture's not helping!

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE

The truck enters the area and approaches Nelson's Column.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Nigel sees an obstacle up ahead.

NIGEL
Bugger and blast!!

INSERT - THE VIEW AHEAD

There's a DOUBLE-DECKER BUS up ahead in the next lane,
moving slower.

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE

The truck passes the bus and cuts it off to go around the traffic circle.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Nigel glances in his side mirror as he leaves the bus behind.

NIGEL
Sorry, mate! No disrespect intended!

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE

The truck proceeds out of the roundabout and onto Whitehall.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

The truck starts to rumble as the flat tire fully deflates and starts to rip apart.

NIGEL
There goes the tire!

EXT. WHITEHALL

The truck proceeds south along Whitehall past the government buildings.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

The rumbling gives way to a SCREECHING SOUND as the rubber is all gone and metal scrapes the asphalt.

DARLA
(glances at watch)
One minute! We're not going to make it!

NIGEL
Hold on!

EXT. INTERSECTION OF WHITEHALL AND HORSE GUARDS AVENUE

The truck turns left onto Horse Guards Avenue and heads east toward the river, the left rear wheel now riding on the rim.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Darla glances at her watch again.

DARLA
Thirty seconds!

EXT. HORSE GUARDS AVENUE

The truck accelerates down the street past the Ministry of Defence, creating a shower of sparks behind it.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Nigel shouts above the noise.

NIGEL
Get out! I'll take it the rest of the
way!

DARLA
We go together!

NIGEL
It only needs one foot on the accelerator!
Get out!

DARLA
We go together!

EXT. HORSE GUARDS AVENUE

The truck barrels on toward the embankment, trailing sparks
all the way.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Nigel and Darla open their doors and prepare to jump as they
near the end of the street.

NIGEL
On my word!

EXT. INTERSECTION OF HORSE GUARDS AVE. AND VICTORIA
EMBANKMENT

The truck enters the t-bone.

INT. TRUCK - MOVING

Nigel shouts at the last possible moment.

NIGEL
NOW!!

They start to leap from the truck.

EXT. VICTORIA EMBANKMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nigel and Darla leap from the truck and hit the street hard,
their bodies rolling several times as the truck careens onto
the pavement and then smashes through the concrete barrier
and flies out over the Thames. The truck disappears under
the water's surface and explodes, and the screen goes
completely WHITE. The sound of the explosion echoes, then
slowly FADES away until there is nothing but silence.

THE WHITENESS

After a while, Nigel slowly rises INTO FRAME as he gets up,
disoriented.

NIGEL
Ohhh... Now that was something I'd
very much prefer not to repeat.

He shakes his head to clear it, then looks around to get his bearings. But there is nothing to see but complete and total whiteness stretching out in all directions.

NIGEL
What...?

He looks down to see where he's standing, but he seems to be atop an opaque layer of white fog.

NIGEL
What's all this...?

He looks around again, at the seemingly infinite whiteness, utterly perplexed.

NIGEL
What's going on here? Where in bloody
hell am I?

Just then, Darla's voice calls out from somewhere.

DARLA
Nigel?

NIGEL
Darla?
(looks around)
Darla, where are you?

He turns and suddenly sees Darla standing nearby.

DARLA
Right here, it seems. But just where
is "here"?

Nigel goes to her and stands beside her, and they both continue to gaze around them in wonderment.

DARLA
Where are we? How did we get here? The
very last thing I remember was jumping
from the lorry.

NIGEL
Yes... so do I.

DARLA
Then what's happened?

NIGEL
I'm not sure.
(beat)
But if I were to hazard a guess...
I'd say that we're dead.

DARLA
Dead?

NIGEL
 That's right.

DARLA
 Are you serious?

NIGEL
 Have you a better theory?

Darla looks around at the infinite whiteness, and she doesn't.

NIGEL
 We must have been killed in the explosion. Yes, that's it. I thought we jumped in time, but... perhaps I was wrong.

They continue to look around at the eerie whiteness and come to terms with the situation.

NIGEL
 Well... it could have been worse. One of us could have been killed and the other not. At least this way, we're together.

DARLA
 (a beat)
 So what do we do now?

NIGEL
 Do? Are we supposed to do something?

DARLA
 I would think. Doesn't seem quite right, just standing here for the rest of eternity.

NIGEL
 Well, don't look at me. I haven't the foggiest. I've never been dead before.

DARLA
 Hawthorne certainly forgot to include this contingency in the manual.
 (beat)
 I wonder what he's doing right now.

NIGEL
 Recruiting a pair of new agents, I imagine.
 (sees something up ahead)
 Look!

DARLA
 What?

Darla turns to look at what Nigel is watching. Up ahead is a large GOLDEN GATE encrusted with pearls, bright and shiny, and in front of it stands a MAN in a white robe, his back currently to them.

NIGEL

Are you seeing the same thing I'm seeing?

DARLA

I don't know. What are you seeing?

NIGEL

What's that look like to you?

DARLA

(shrugs)

Looks like the pearly gates.

NIGEL

Yes... It does, doesn't it?

DARLA

Looks just as I imagined it when I was six years old.

NIGEL

(points at man)

And what about him?

DARLA

(shrugs again)

Saint Peter?

NIGEL

Can't imagine who else it could be.

(beat; motions to her)

C'mon.

They walk toward the gate and approach the man.

NIGEL

Pardon me, my good man, but are you --

At the sound of Nigel's voice, SAINT PETER turns around to face him, surprised. And when he speaks, he speaks with a perfect English accent.

SAINT PETER

(cuts him off)

Good Heavens! What are you two doing here? You can't come in here.

NIGEL

Beg pardon?

SAINT PETER

I said you can't come in here.

DARLA

Are you Saint Peter?

SAINT PETER
Why, yes, of course.

DARLA
(totally perplexed)
Why are you speaking with an English accent?

SAINT PETER
You're just hearing me the way you speak. Everyone does. But I said, you can't come in here.

NIGEL
(slaps his forehead)
Blimey o'reilly! You mean we're supposed to go down to the other place?

SAINT PETER
No, no, no, no, no. Of course not. You don't understand. You can't come in because it's not your time yet.

DARLA
Not our time...?

SAINT PETER
No, not at all. Do you know how many villains are down there right this very moment concocting all sorts of nasty things? You think those miscreants you just defeated were bad? Good God, you've no idea. There are others who make them look like angels -- no pun intended. And you're the only two who can possibly stop them.

DARLA
Really? There's no one else?

SAINT PETER
No one else, believe me. You're the Smashing Duo. That's what we call you up here. And your mission's only just begun. You have years and years ahead. Why, in fifteen years time, you're going to face someone who is positively and without doubt the nastiest, most treacherous --
(breaks off)
Never mind. I can't tell you anything more. You'll find out when the time comes. Right now, you just need to get back down there.

NIGEL
Er... how do we do that?

SAINT PETER
Don't worry about it. I'll take care
of that.

DARLA
Even if we do go back, we'll be going
back to a situation I can't bear
anymore. I don't know how to resolve it.
I can't make it work. I think that's
why I was willing to accept dying.

SAINT PETER
Don't worry about that either. It'll
work, trust me -- and you won't need
to give up a thing.

DARLA
How?

SAINT PETER
(smiles knowingly)
Leave that to my boss. He can make
anything work.

Before she can reply, Darla spots something which makes her
eyes open wide in surprise. Looking past Saint Peter, she
sees Peter standing just inside the gates. He smiles at her
and waves.

DARLA
Peter -- !

SAINT PETER
(alarmed)
Yes?

DARLA
Not you!
(points)
Him!

Saint Peter glances back over his shoulder, then turns back
to Darla and sees the huge smile on her face.

SAINT PETER
Oh, yes. He got here just a little
before you did. And let me tell you --
for a while there, it was a bit touch
and go whether he'd make it in at all.
But at the last moment he made it in
gangbusters. Absobloodylutely fabtastic,
what he did.
(breaks off again)
Now, go!

There is a flash and the screen once again goes completely
WHITE. Then the white FADES away until it reveals:

EXT. VICTORIA EMBANKMENT - DAY

Nigel is lying on his stomach on the pavement, unconscious and badly bruised. Darla lies nearby in the same condition. After a moment, Nigel begins to stir and opens his eyes.

NIGEL

Darla...?

(no response)

Darla, you alright...?

Darla's eyes flutter open and she rouses.

DARLA

I don't know...

NIGEL

Can you move?

DARLA

(tries to move)

I think my leg is broken.

NIGEL

Are you sure?

DARLA

(grimaces in pain)

Very.

NIGEL

(tries to move too)

Well... you seem to have fared better than I, then, because it appears both of mine are.

(grimaces too)

As well as an arm.

DARLA

I've got you beat there, because both of my arms are broken.

NIGEL

Splendid.

A moment passes, and they stay perfectly still. Then:

DARLA

So what do we do now?

NIGEL

I suppose we'll just lay here till someone comes for us.

DARLA

(a beat)

Might take a while.

They lie there and wait.

THE STREET

Two black 1964 WOLSELEY 16/60 Special Branch saloons and two AMBULANCES arrive and come screeching to a halt. As soon as they stop, POLICEMEN and PARAMEDICS emerge from all vehicles and rush to where Nigel and Darla lay injured.

Hawthorne's Princess arrives and Hawthorne leaps out along with his driver. They stop and watch as the paramedics check out Nigel and Darla, deeply concerned. After a moment, one of the paramedics looks over at them and gives a thumbs-up sign, and Hawthorne is tremendously relieved.

HAWTHORNE

Thank goodness...

Then he glances up at the sky and nods his head in appreciation.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A few days later.

INT. HOSPITAL - DARLA'S ROOM - SAME

Darla is in bed, one leg in a cast and both arms as well, her face still bruised, the top of her head wrapped in a bandage, staring up at the ceiling. After a moment, Hawthorne enters and greets her cheerfully.

HAWTHORNE

Good morning, Darla! How do we feel today? You're looking absolutely smashing.

DARLA

That's what you say every day.

Hawthorne pulls up a chair and sits beside the bed.

HAWTHORNE

What would you have me say, then?

DARLA

That I look absolutely horrid and pathetic.

HAWTHORNE

Alright, you look absolutely horrid and pathetic. Pleased?

DARLA

Yes.

Hawthorne shakes his head in bemusement, then Darla asks the same question she asks him every day.

DARLA

How's Nigel?

HAWTHORNE

Nigel is fine. He's been progressing rather nicely the past few days, just as you've been.

DARLA

When can I see him? I haven't seen him since the explosion.

HAWTHORNE

Well, I've got very good news for you today, because I've just spoken with the doctor and he informs me you're strong enough now to leave this room. So they'll be taking you out to the garden this afternoon and you'll be able to see Nigel. How does that sound?

DARLA

Best news I've had since I've been here.

HAWTHORNE

Splendid. Now, you're going to need all your strength for that, so I'll be going now before I tire you out. I'll call on Nigel and tell him the news, then I'll be back in the morning to see you both. Alright?

DARLA

Fine.

HAWTHORNE

Well done.

Hawthorne gets up and goes to the door, but he stops there and turns back to her.

HAWTHORNE

Oh, and just so you know, Nigel looks as absolutely horrid and pathetic as you.

And with that, he exits. Darla lies there, staring at the ceiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Nigel is sitting in a WHEELCHAIR, one arm in a cast and both legs as well, his face still bruised, the top of his head wrapped in a bandage, waiting. After a moment, a NURSE emerges from the hospital and wheels Darla out in her WHEELCHAIR. Nigel watches them approach, and the nurse positions Darla's wheelchair right next to his.

NURSE
Right, I'll be back in half an hour.
Enjoy.

The nurse goes back into the hospital, and Nigel and Darla sit there staring into the distance, both trying to appear nonchalant despite how helpless they look.

NIGEL
Fancy meeting you here.

DARLA
Likewise.

NIGEL
How've you been?

DARLA
I've been better. And you?

NIGEL
Likewise.

A moment passes, and they continue to stare into the distance.

NIGEL
Hawthorne tells me you've been progressing quite nicely.

DARLA
Do I look like I have?

NIGEL
(glances at her)
I would say so.

DARLA
He tells me you've been progressing quite nicely as well.

NIGEL
Do I look like I have?

DARLA
(glances at him)
I suppose so.

Another moment passes.

NIGEL
Do you remember much about what happened?

DARLA
You mean after the explosion?

NIGEL
Yes.

DARLA
Not very much. I remember hitting the ground and not being able to stop rolling, and then everything went black.

NIGEL
I had a similar experience. I've no idea how much time passed after that, but I eventually woke and we started to talk.

DARLA
Yes, I remember that.

Another moment passes as Nigel struggles with something on his mind that he doesn't quite know how to express.

NIGEL
It's funny, though. Really rather odd, when I think about it.

DARLA
What is?

NIGEL
Well... I don't wish to sound daft, but... I had the strangest dream whilst I was unconscious.

DARLA
You did?

NIGEL
Yes. Really quite bizarre.

DARLA
(a beat)
How so?

Nigel pauses for a moment, trying to figure out just how to explain it.

NIGEL
Well... I dreamt that you and I were just outside the pearly gates.

DARLA
Pearly gates...

NIGEL
Yes. We'd both been killed jumping from the lorry, and then we found ourselves standing outside the pearly gates. But Saint Peter was there, and he said --

DARLA
(cuts him off)
That we couldn't go in... because it wasn't our time yet.

NIGEL
 (looks at her;
 a beat)
 Yes... And he told us we had to go back.

DARLA
 (looks at him)
 Because there were a lot of villains
 that only we could stop.

NIGEL
 (another beat)
 Again, yes.

They stare at each other for a moment, but neither says a word. Then they go back to staring into space, each thinking about the experience, which both of them now know beyond any shadow of a doubt really did happen.

DARLA
 Fifteen years from now... we're going
 to run into someone who, apparently,
 is going to turn out to be rather nasty.
 (beat)
 Perhaps the very worst villain we'll
 ever encounter, from the sound of it.

Nigel nods slowly, but says nothing. A moment passes as they contemplate this. Then:

NIGEL
 Well... we should both be out of these
 wheeled chairs by then.

Darla looks at him, and then he looks at her. They stare at each other for a moment, then they start to chuckle. Quietly, at first, then they laugh more and more loudly, until they are laughing uproariously.

WIDE ANGLE

of the entire garden, as Darla and Nigel continue laughing their heads off down below and the intro of the SONG "All You Need Is Love" by The Beatles begins to play...

FADE OUT

TITLE:

YOU DIDN'T THINK THIS WAS REALLY THE END, DID YOU?
 IT'S ONLY THE END OF THE BEGINNING.
 DARLA AND NIGEL WILL BE BACK IN
 "AS COLD AS ANY STONE"

END CREDITS ROLL

accompanied by the rest of the song, which SEGUES into the SONG "A Groovy Kind of Love" by Petula Clark.

FINAL FADE OUT

THE END