

# On Chesil Beach

by

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July 1962. Chesil Beach in summer calm and late afternoon glory. We are looking along a seventeen-mile-long, narrow finger of shingle, running between the English Channel and a salt lagoon know as the Fleet.

Shimmering in the far distance, at the limits of optical resolution, two figures, EDWARD MAYHEW and FLORENCE PONTING, approach us.

CREDITS

Now we see that they are holding hands.... that they are man and woman. Their voices and laughter are close, as is the tramping of their feet on the shingle.

EDWARD (V.O.)  
So, we're in E

FLORENCE (V.O.)  
The tonic.

EDWARD (V.O.)  
No, E.

FLORENCE (V.O.)  
All right.

EDWARD (V.O.)  
So, er, four bars of that, you know the sort of thing, Woke up this morning, head felt so bad, then, um, a nice seventh, then into A...

FLORENCE (V.O.)  
The sub-dominant...

EDWARD (V.O.)  
Never mind that.

FLORENCE (V.O.)  
And what does he say now?

EDWARD (V.O.)  
He says, Woke up this morning, head felt so bad. Same thing, different chord, see.

FLORENCE  
Hmm. Tricky.

EDWARD  
Then back to E again...

FLORENCE  
Woke up this morning, head felt so  
bad...

A reverse. The couple walking away from us along the beach,  
towards their hotel, half-hidden among the trees in the wooded  
hills above the shore.

CREDITS cont'd.

EDWARD  
Then, this is the uh emotional punch,  
reaches right up to B.

FLORENCE  
The dominant.

EDWARD  
No, B, and he says something like um,  
Gonna tell that two-timin' woman, back  
through A, you know, something like  
er, She's driving me mad, then into  
your E again perhaps for your title  
line, and then this lovely little  
thing, the turnaround on B seventh,  
and that brings you back to E.

FLORENCE  
And am I?

EDWARD  
What?

FLORENCE  
Driving you mad.

EDWARD  
Well, actually, yes, on every chord...

2 INT. HOTEL LOUNGE. DAY 2

An air of rectitude and relaxation. Seven or eight couples, middle-aged or elderly. Gin and tonics, pipes, sherries, knitting, backgammon. The men mostly ex-military.

We see EDWARD and FLORENCE pass in front of the doors that give onto the corridor. They are by far the youngest guests in the hotel.

3 INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. DAY 3

Two WAITERS, nervous, put-upon local lads, manipulate the trolley with its dish-warming candles along an ancient creaking corridor, lifting their burden painstakingly down a step.

WAITER ONE

Easy... Steady... Get it!

Close-up. The wine bottle, already opened, totters, falls, hits the floral carpet, starts to disgorge.

Bastard!

WAITER TWO

Give him here.

WAITER TWO, lips pursed in concentration, tips water from a glass jug into the wine bottle.

4 INT. HOTEL SUITE, SITTING ROOM. DAY. 4

Sitting room and bedroom are connected by double doors. The sitting room has open french windows onto a small first floor balcony that overlooks the beach. A small bare dining table stands in front of the french windows.

A big pre-War bakelite wireless.

WIRELESS

'...shows affinity with the melodic complexity of his later...'

EDWARD

Not tonight...

EDWARD, a strong, good-looking young man of twenty two, leans over the set, irritably fine-tuning.

FLORENCE is unpacking in the adjoining room. The connecting doors are wide open.

Fade in the opening licks of Chuck Berry's 'Roll over Beethoven'.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
Perfect. Now listen!

Almost instantly, the song is overwhelmed by Morse code, German voices, then Moroccan orchestral music.

He gives the set a thump.

FLORENCE (V.O.)  
Nice microtones...

EDWARD  
A load of sick bloody cats... I'd rather have your lot...

He turns the dial back to the cultural programme, to the sound of applause. He looks over his shoulder at her with a wry smile, his irritation dissolving at the sight of her.

LAST OPENING CREDIT as the applause fades.

EDWARD'S lovestruck pov (through the open doors into the bedroom) of FLORENCE. We hear the rising cello in the opening of the Mozart quintet. She stands amid the business of unpacking, a beautiful young woman, a dress on a hangar in her hands, looking a little prim in her 'going away' clothes, and smiling nervously, anxious for his approval.

FLORENCE  
I really don't mind, if you want that Hank person... Or is it Elvis?

EDWARD  
Chuck Berry. No, he's gone, he's had it...

FLORENCE  
Honestly, you can, I think it's, he's quite...

5 INT. HOTEL SUITE. BEDROOM. DAY

5

He has come through the connecting doors into the bedroom. Between him and FLORENCE is a four-poster bed with a starchy white counterpane stretched smooth. They are intensely aware of the bed.

EDWARD

Quite what?

FLORENCE

Well, you know, merry...

EDWARD

Chuck Berry? What else?

FLORENCE

Well, you know... sort of... bouncy.

EDWARD

D'you know, I think you must be the squarest person in all of western civilisation.

He comes round the bed, takes her hand, draws her close, waiting to kiss her.

FLORENCE

But you love me.

EDWARD

*Therefore* I love you... you know, Florence, it was beautiful.

FLORENCE

Nothing went wrong!

EDWARD

Even my mother behaved herself.

FLORENCE

Do you think she knew what was happening?

EDWARD

Perhaps she did...

FLORENCE  
 Poor Edward...

They kiss tenderly.  
 Listen, I've decided. If we ever have  
 a girl, she'll be called Chloe.

EDWARD  
 Chloe. Yes, beautiful.

They kiss again. EDWARD becomes more pressing, and FLORENCE  
 wants to please him. But there is a knock on the door.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
 Damn. Ignore it.

Another knock. She pulls away.

FLORENCE  
 You ought to look.

6 INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. DAY

6

Outside EDWARD and FLORENCE'S room. The two young waiters  
 exchange a meaningful look. They know what such silence means in  
 the honeymoon suite. WAITER ONE is about to knock again when the  
 door is wrenched open.

WAITER ONE  
 Evening sir. Dinner what you ordered.

EDWARD  
 Not this early...

7 INT. HOTEL SUITE, SITTING ROOM. DAY.

7

Ignoring him, the WAITERS, both nervous despite their satirical  
 air, push the trolley in. Edward makes a helpless gesture in  
 Florence's direction.

WAITER TWO unfolds a tablecloth and flaps it over the dining  
 table. An inshore breeze through the french windows disrupts his  
 efforts. He tries again. And again. Unseen, EDWARD rolls his  
 eyes at FLORENCE.

Something about the waiters, their nervousness and doggedness, gives FLORENCE the giggles. She turns away and we follow her into the bedroom.

8 INT. HOTEL SUITE. BEDROOM. DAY

8

She stands by the bed, trying to recover. From next door, EDWARD doing his best to sound authoritative.

EDWARD (V.O.)

You could push the window shut. Not all the way, no, more, that's it. Thank you. Now try... Yes, yes... we both want the melon... and the thingy, the glazed cherry...

9 INT. HOTEL SUITE, SITTING ROOM. DAY.

9

Minutes later. EDWARD and FLORENCE are at table, the two WAITERS serve from the trolley. The floorboards squeak loudly against the silence.

EDWARD watches the WAITERS closely for any sign of mockery.

Plates of melon are set down. The wine is poured for EDWARD to taste. He takes his time, samples it and frowns importantly, holds his glass to the light, takes a second sip.

EDWARD

Very good actually.

WAITER TWO

Thank you sir.

He pours.

CUT TO A minute later. The WAITERS stand back, napkins over their forearms, staring straight ahead, expressions impenetrable. The COUPLE are acutely conscious of them and avoid each other's eye.

EDWARD

Are you er, are you going to stand there the whole time?

WAITER ONE

We do the silver service on the beef,  
sir, and then we all retire.

EDWARD decides to be bold. He takes the glazed cherry off his melon and offers it to FLORENCE with an ironic flourish. She sucks it from his fingers, holds his gaze. There is something a little forced in her performance. The WAITERS pretend not to see.

EDWARD

Any more of those?

WAITER ONE

Ain't none sir. Sorry sir.

CUT TO:

A minute later. The WAITERS are busy at the trolley. EDWARD leans forward, whispers.

EDWARD

I love you.

FLORENCE

And I...

But WAITER ONE is at her elbow with the beef and serves the sodden vegetables while WAITER TWO piles a sideboard with trifle, cheese, chocolates.

The WAITERS are ready to leave.

WAITER TWO

You ever get the need for something  
sir, pull on the string. Hard.

WAITER ONE

And have a very nice one sir.

EDWARD

Good night.

But the WAITERS linger.

WAITER TWO

That is, a very nice evening, sir.

EDWARD

Oh yes. Here. Thank you.

EDWARD hands over a ten shilling note. He holds FLORENCE'S gaze as they listen to the trolley retreat down the corridor. They hear what sounds like a hoot of laughter. We are close on EDWARD

-

10 INT. MAYHEW'S COTTAGE. SITTING ROOM. DAY.

10

July 1961. The hooting sound persists, faintly, growing louder. EDWARD is sprawled on a tattered sofa in the chaotic sitting room reading. He registers the sound. His concentration is breaking. With a resigned sigh he goes to the window.

His POV through the leaded window down the untidy garden in full bloom. His mother, MARJORIE, is standing under a tree, completely naked, staring up into the branches, making her hooting sound.

EDWARD

Oh God...

11 EXT. MAYHEWS' GARDEN. DAY.

11

EDWARD has put a blanket around MARJORIE'S shoulders and is escorting her back towards the cottage.

MARJORIE

She was up there, she could hear me.  
You know son, she could understand me.  
She was listening to me.

EDWARD

I know, I know. But she'd also listen  
to you with your clothes on.

MARJORIE

She needs the connection. Now the  
nights are shorter she doesn't sleep  
so much.

EDWARD

But she won't come down.

MARJORIE

She'll never come down. We're quite safe...

As they approach the cottage, EDWARD'S father, LIONEL comes out through the kitchen door, both concerned and resigned.

LIONEL

Marjorie Mayhew. You'll get me thrown in prison.

Behind LIONEL come the twins Harriet and Anne, aged fifteen. They've seen it all before. The family gathers round Marjorie, shepherds her indoors.

HARRIET

Come on, Mum.

12

INT. HOTEL SUITE, SITTING ROOM. DAY.

12

The COUPLE are alone at last. Awkwardness descends. Without appetite, they push the food around their plates. The waves breaking on the beach sound loudly through the French windows, which stand ajar. They meet each other's eye, smile nervously, look away.

CLOSE on FLORENCE. She is in unhappy anticipation of what she must go through after dinner. Her POV: EDWARD, his big, eager face, his uncertain expression.

Then EDWARD'S POV: Behind FLORENCE, through the connecting doors, he can see into the bedroom.

EDWARD

To... uh, Chloe.

FLORENCE

To Chloe.

EDWARD

D'you know, as you walk that way along the beach, the stones get bigger.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Yes?

EDWARD

Over thousands of years storms have sort of graded the pebbles. When local fishermen come ashore at night they can tell exactly where they are.

A pause.

That's the story, anyway.

FLORENCE

We could go back out there.

EDWARD

You don't mean now.

FLORENCE

Why not? Take the wine, some fruit. It won't get dark for a long time.

But EDWARD is looking over her shoulder at the bed.

EDWARD

I'm not sure we could just leave all this er...

FLORENCE

I'm not awfully hungry after that lunch.

EDWARD

Yes, but Flo, they've gone to a lot of trouble. We can't just...

FLORENCE

I know, but it looks so beautiful out there...

EDWARD

But... we're here... in here... and you're so beautiful. I keep thinking how beautiful you are and...

FLORENCE

I suppose you're right, I mean, about going out.

EDWARD

Oh God. Look, sorry. Am I being a bully?

FLORENCE

Of course you're not.

EDWARD

You know what, I could get them to bring back that plate warmer thingy. And we could go out for as long as we like.

He starts to get up.

FLORENCE

No, I'm just being silly...

He is going towards the bell.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Honestly, Edward, I don't think I could bear to have them back in here.

EDWARD

It won't take a minute. No trouble at all...

His hand is on the bell. Uncharacteristically, FLORENCE raises her voice.

FLORENCE

Edward, please, no!

He turns, just a little startled.  
Oh God, we're having our first row.

EDWARD

Florence, we're not...

FLORENCE

We are. Because I'm being selfish.

EDWARD

Honestly, we're not... you're not...

FLORENCE

We are, we are. And it's all my stupid fault.

13

INT. PONTINGS HOUSE. DINING ROOM. DAY.

13

September 1961. A large Victorian villa in north Oxford. FLORENCE and her mother, VIOLET, and her 14 year old sister, RUTH are at table. GEOFFREY PONTING'S place is empty. The issue is FLORENCE'S CND badge. The emotional tone is tense.

VIOLET

... I would have thought it was the pretentious sort of thing you would have put behind you after college.

FLORENCE

Well, I like it and I believe in it and I intend to go on wearing it.

RUTH

Mummy, we talked about this yesterday...

VIOLET

And what are they saying, your Aldermaston lot, about this wonderful wall in Berlin last month. Bit awkward for the lefties, is it?

FLORENCE

We hate it. Everyone hates it.

VIOLET

An entire country turned into a prison camp, with the Soviet's blessing. A proud day for socialism!

FLORENCE is trying not to rise to this.

FLORENCE

How was school?

RUTH

All right.

VIOLET

A million Russian troops spread along the borders. What do you think prevents them sending their tanks across the north German plain?

FLORENCE

Commonsense, I should think.

VIOLET

Commonsense, nonsense! It's the Bomb, the one you want to ban. Nato hasn't got the men and tanks to hold them back, and communism, as it proudly proclaims, is an expansionist creed. It's our nuclear bombs that deter them. It's as simple as that my dear. We have to have a deterrent.

FLORENCE

Well we don't, actually. Do you remember a couple of months ago I said I met this chap at a CND meeting. I bumped into him again in town this morning. I've asked him round tomorrow. For tea.

VIOLET1

Chap?

RUTH

Is he a beatnik?

FLORENCE

No.

GEOFFREY has appeared behind FLORENCE'S chair with a bottle of wine he is about to open. He rests a hand lightly on her shoulders. Almost imperceptibly, she tightens, flinches.

GEOFFREY

Beard and sandals?

FLORENCE

No, actually.

VIOLET

What does he do?

RUTH  
He's a beatnik.

FLORENCE  
Shut up. He's like me, just finished  
his degree.

VIOLET  
What college?

FLORENCE  
UCL.

VIOLET  
But that's London. For sons of  
tradesmen. Florence!

GEOFFREY  
They produce some pretty decent  
engineers.

VIOLET  
Exactly.

GEOFFREY  
What does his father do?

FLORENCE  
You mean, is he working class or one  
of us.

GEOFFREY  
Yes. I think that's more or less what  
I mean.

FLORENCE  
His dad is headmaster of a primary  
school in Henley.

GEOFFREY  
Hmm...

VIOLET  
And what does he intend doing with  
himself?

RUTH  
He wants to be a beatnik.

FLORENCE

I haven't researched his prospects. I haven't worked out his precise socio-economic status. I haven't arranged to marry him. I've asked him for tea. For tea!

A pause after this outburst.

GEOFFREY

Jolly good. Pass me those new er, what are we calling them?

VIOLET

Mange tout.

14 INT. HOTEL SUITE, SITTING ROOM. DAY.

14

EDWARD and FLORENCE have abandoned their dinner, but are still at the table. The tone now is intimate.

FLORENCE

How old?

EDWARD

I was fifteen. He took me to the bottom of the garden so the girls wouldn't hear. And so he told me what happened in 1944. I'd grown up with it and took it for granted. We all did. You've seen how it is. We didn't even let ourselves think she had a condition. And when I heard it, this horrible phrase, everything fell into place, and everything was different. Brain-damaged. Suddenly I saw her the way other people did... Anyway, let's...

FLORENCE

Terrible moment...

EDWARD

No, it was like... a release. I felt this space opening out. She was brain-damaged, and I wasn't.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I was not my mother, I wasn't my family, I was me... a secret me. I knew one day I'd leave, and come back as a visitor... sort of a lonely feeling, but I felt for the first time that I really existed - in myself, not as part of something and I felt... impatient, excited. Does that make me sound a brute?

FLORENCE

You're always so kind to her. My parents just *pretend* to be brain damaged, and I'm just awful to them.

EDWARD

I don't know why my dad didn't tell us all long ago. I mean, Flo...

FLORENCE

He didn't want you and the twins to think she was strange or different. He wants everything to seem normal and...

EDWARD

I know... Florence, look...

He stands, comes round to her side of the table.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I love you, you're so... I mean, I need to kiss you.

She stands, they are close, they begin to kiss.

FLORENCE

I love you too... And I... I...

EDWARD

What is it darling?

FLORENCE

Nothing. I love you. That's all it is.

15 EXT. GARDEN OF MAYHEWS' COTTAGE. DAY. 15

July 1961. A hot day. Sound of insects. EDWARD is slumped under the tree at the bottom of the garden, reading in the shade. He hears his name being called from the front of the cottage.

POSTMAN (V.O.)

Ed! Second post. Looks like the one!

EDWARD runs the length of the garden.

16 EXT. FRONT GARDEN OF MAYHEWS' COTTAGE. DAY. 16

The POSTMAN hands over a brown envelope.

POSTMAN

Big moment, eh?

EDWARD is about to open the letter, hesitates.

EDWARD

Jack, I think I'll er...

The POSTMAN understands, wheels his bike away, calls over his shoulder.

POSTMAN

Tell me tomorrow, Ed. And good luck.

17 EXT. GARDEN OF MAYHEWS' COTTAGE. DAY. 17

EDWARD pauses with the envelope in his hands. Wishes. Then opens it. A look of shock.

EDWARD

I don't believe it...

Dazed, shaking his head, he walks towards the house.

18 INT. SITTING ROOM, MAYHEWS' COTTAGE. DAY. 18

The squalor is overwhelming. Pots of old glue, food scraps, discarded paper, a broken chair, a curtain hanging askew from a damaged rail.

MARGORIE is cutting pictures from a magazine to paste into a scrap book. She looks up sharply as EDWARD comes in.

EDWARD

Mum, listen. Are you listening?

MARJORIE

This isn't how she looks now. It's the future. It's a new thing. A special camera tells you how she'll look one day.

EDWARD

This is important. Put that down a minute. Listen to me. I got a first. Mum, a first...

MARJORIE

That's right, son. I saw you. I was watching. Now you tell me. Yellow, like this. It's got two things, a number and a meaning. Now I know the number...

EDWARD

Seven.

MARJORIE

Seven. But I can't remember what it means.

19 INT. MAYHEWS' COTTAGE. STAIRS. DAY

19

EDWARD goes up the stairs.

EDWARD

Ruth? Harriet?

20 INT. MAYHEW'S COTTAGE. GIRLS' BEDROOM. DAY.

20

More squalor - unmade beds, discarded dirty clothes on the floor, food-encrusted plates etc. Teenage boredom. The girls are on their beds. HARRIET paints her fingernails, RUTH is writing in a diary. A tiny transistor plays squawky pop music.

EDWARD  
I got a first!

RUTH  
Is that good?

EDWARD  
It's the best.

HARRIET  
Dad'll be happy then.

EDWARD  
When's he back?

HARRIET  
Eight.

RUTH  
Nine.

HARRIET  
Nine.

EDWARD  
You know, you should be outside. It's beautiful.

RUTH  
Too hot.

HARRIET  
Too boring.

21 EXT. AVENUE OF LIMES. RURAL PHONE BOX. DAY

21

In LONGSHOT, the phone box looks dwarfed by the avenue of great limes on Turville Heath.

EDWARD (V.O.)  
Is Toby there?... oh, when are you expecting him?..

CUT TO:

Mrs Davenport? Edward Mayhew,  
university friend of Henry. Is he  
there?... Finland?

- 22 EXT. EDWARD'S BEDROOM, MAYHEWS' COTTAGE. DAY. 22  
 EDWARD rummages through a drawer, finds some loose change. Yanks open another, finds a book, opens it, pulls out two ten shilling notes.
- 23 INT. MAYHEWS' GARDEN SHED. DAY. 23  
 With fierce impatience, EDWARD pulls out his old bike from under a pile of junk.
- 24 EXT. MAYHEWS' BACK GARDEN. DAY. 24  
 EDWARD pumps up a tire.  
 CUT TO:  
 Wipes the dust off the bike with a rag.  
 CUT TO:  
 He wheels the bike, tests the brakes - useless. Glances down, sees broken brake shoes dangling above the spokes.
- 25 EXT. STEEP HILL IN THE CHILTERNs. DAY. 25  
 At reckless speed EDWARD flies down a hill.  
 He uses his feet against the front wheel as a brake.
- 26 EXT. COUNTY ROAD. DAY. 26  
 Hurriedly, EDWARD hides his bike behind a hedge. A rural bus marked 'Oxford' is approaching
- 27 EXT. STREETS, OXFORD. DAY. 27  
 Edward enters a pub.  
 CUT TO:

And comes out.

CUT TO:

And enters another.

28

EXT. NARROW COBBLED STREET, OXFORD. DAY.

28

EDWARD stops in front of a hand-written sign: 'Today. Oxford  
CND. Cannon Collins. 2.45 pm.'

Only a little unsteadily, he goes down a narrow passage way,  
enters a church hall with high pitched roof and beams, and dusty  
light filtered through high windows.

Echoing voices, various people standing about, waiting for the  
meeting to begin.

Then he sees her. FLORENCE is standing in a pool of light,  
listening to a tall thin young man who is holding in two hands a  
pile of pamphlets.

EDWARD stops, struck by her beauty.

FLORENCE looks his way, while TIMOTHY, holding the pamphlets,  
talks on. She notices his toes breaking through his raggedy  
plimsoles.

EDWARD'S and FLORENCE'S eyes meet.

Her POV past TIMOTHY'S shoulder: the well-built young stranger  
intrigues her.

FLORENCE watches with interest as Edward approaches.

TIMOTHY

...just consider it for a moment,  
Florence. If it fell on St Giles the  
crater would be half a mile across, a  
hundred feet deep, and the city would  
be uninhabitable for a thousand years  
because you see the radioactivity...

FLORENCE

(takes a pamphlet from  
TIMOTHY'S pile)  
Hello. Would you like one?  
(MORE)

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
It's all about a hydrogen bomb landing  
on Oxford.

EDWARD  
I can't think of anything I'd rather  
read.

CLOSE IN. As he takes the pamphlet from her, their hands touch.

FLORENCE and EDWARD hold each other's gaze. TIMOTHY scowls.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
Do you mind if I tell you something?

FLORENCE  
No.

TIMOTHY  
I say, do we know you?

EDWARD  
I just got a first. In history.

FLORENCE  
(softly)  
Fantastic...

29 EXT. PORT MEADOW. OXFORD. DAY.

29

Half an hour later. EDWARD pushes his bike, FLORENCE walks  
beside him.

EDWARD  
This is my idea. A series of history  
books not about the great men, but  
about the minor figures at their side,  
the bit part players who fade away.  
Like the man who rode non-stop from  
London to Edinburgh to tell the king  
of Scotland that Elizabeth was dead  
and that he was now the king of  
England..

FLORENCE  
I think that's brilliant.

A little later, across the meadow.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

I thought everything would be clear as soon as my result came through. But it isn't. I'm still just hanging around.

EDWARD

Like me.

FLORENCE

I could play in this awful dance orchestra in a hotel near Slough. But what I really want is to work with my quartet.

EDWARD

What's that?

She looks at him, intrigued and amused by his ignorance.

FLORENCE

Two violins, viola, cello. We're called the Ennismore Quartet. Then Daddy would have to support me and he and I don't exactly...

EDWARD

What did you get?

FLORENCE

What?

EDWARD

In your music degree.

FLORENCE

Well, actually, same as you.

EDWARD lets his bike fall to the grass as he snatches up a dandelion and solemnly and sincerely presents it to her.

EDWARD

Miss Florence ah...

FLORENCE

Ponting.

EDWARD

To Miss Florence Ponting. This is for you. A great achievement. Well done.

She receives the dandelion, stares at him, suddenly touched. No one in her family has made much of her degree.

FLORENCE

(quietly)

Thank you.

30 INT. HOTEL SUITE, SITTING ROOM. DAY.

30

The kisses continue. EDWARD'S eyes are closed, he is in a kind of swoon.

FLORENCE'S eyes are open, she's determined to please him, to be plausible somehow, but it is not easy for her. His tongue is in her mouth. She accepts this, but she doesn't like it. She feels acutely self-conscious. She pulls away a little, whispers -

FLORENCE

Edward...

EDWARD

What..?

FLORENCE

Sorry...

EDWARD

What is it darling?

FLORENCE

I just thought, well, you know, that it isn't awfully comfortable here when we could...

She looks hopefully towards the french windows, and beyond, a glimpse of beach and sea.

EDWARD begins to understand, or thinks he does.

EDWARD

You mean... yes, of course, let's... come on then...

He takes her hand and tows her towards the bedroom, towards the smooth wide bed.

FLORENCE lets herself be led, as though to a slaughter. She sees the bed over his shoulder.

31 INT. HOTEL SUITE, BEDROOM. DAY.

31

CLOSE on EDWARD as they arrive in the bedroom. He knows what he wants, but he not quite sure what he should be doing next.

They are right by the bed. Uncertainly, he turns to face her, goes close, puts a hand on her shoulder, on the front of her dress, looking for some button or fastener which might give him a clue to undressing her. There's nothing.

EDWARD

If I just took this... I mean... we could go on the bed and, well...

FLORENCE

Then, I think I'll... my shoes...

EDWARD

Right. Of course.

He goes to bend towards them

FLORENCE

No, I can do it. It's better.

She turns away from him and goes towards the bedroom window. Still facing away from EDWARD, she sits on a chair. Her shaking hands fumble with one shoe then the other.

She stands in her silk stockings, and as she turns to face him she hears a voice:

CHARLES (V.O.)

People think you're shy, but the fact is you're rather tough aren't you.

32

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM. LONDON. DAY.

32

May 1960. FLORENCE is rehearsing with her quartet - JENNY (2ND VIOLIN), SONIA (viola) and CHARLES, (cello) - all second-year students at the Royal College of Music.

Sitting listening are a couple of friends, a tutor and a girl, another student, ELSBETH.

We come in on the last passionate and tumultuous four bars of the 3rd Razumovsky quartet. Then, an expectant silence. Have they just done something amazing? They are waiting for FLORENCE. She is matter-of-fact.

FLORENCE

It'll do for now.

She leans forward to make a pencil note on her score. Then draws from under it another score, from which she takes the various parts and hands them out. There is a murmur of disapproval from the other players.

CHARLES

What's this?

There is one part left over. Unseen by the others, ELSBETH stands with her viola already out of its case, and takes the part, goes to fetch a music stand.

JENNY

Quintet?

FLORENCE

You said I should decide on the next piece...

SONIA

But it means getting in another viola.

CHARLES

Another person. It's going to change everything.

JENNY

It's too soon.

FLORENCE  
Say hello to Elsbeth, in her third  
year, awfully good.

ELSBETH  
Hello.

The players are embarrassed. They mutter their greetings,  
reluctantly make space for her.

FLORENCE  
Right then, we'll begin. Charles, your  
big moment.

CHARLES examining his part is beginning to come round.

CHARLES  
So I see.

FLORENCE  
We'll take it a little slower than  
marked.

CHARLES plays the opening of Mozart's D major Quintet.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
Again. It's... tender. Like a  
question.

CHARLES plays it again - the cello's rising question, the gentle  
response of the violins and violas. It's clear within seconds  
that the piece has the players in its spell. We are CLOSE on  
FLORENCE'S quiet satisfaction.

CUT TO:

The rehearsal is breaking up. FLORENCE is in a tearing hurry.  
She struggles into her raincoat, snatches up her violin case and  
a small bag, hurries down a run of concrete stairs that lead to  
the street. Her hand is on the door when she turns at the sound  
of a voice behind her. CHARLES is at the top the stairs.

CHARLES  
People think you're shy, but the fact  
is you're rather tough aren't you.

FLORENCE smiles apologetically, half turns.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
Can I buy you that drink?

FLORENCE  
I'm late for work.

She pushes on the door and steps into -

33 EXT. LONDON STREET. NIGHT. 33

A rainstorm. FLORENCE runs down the street.

34 EXT. SECOND LONDON STREET. NIGHT. 34

And hurries down another street, violin case stuffed under her coat for protection.

35 EXT. STREET BY WIGMORE HALL. NIGHT. 35

Walking hurriedly now, she comes down the street and turns into the stage door of Wigmore Hall.

36 INT. WIGMORE HALL. LADIES LAVATORY. NIGHT. 36

By a row of hand basins, FLORENCE vigorously dries her hair with a borrowed towel.

37 INT. WIGMORE HALL. STAGE. AUDITORIUM. NIGHT. 37

A concert is in progress. Two grand pianos fill the stage. Two PIANISTS are playing Rachmaninov's 'Symphonic Dances'. FLORENCE is at one piano, primly seated at the pianist's side. She's a page turner.

The haunting second theme of the first movement is floating in.

We see a row of the audience - very elderly, rapt, gnarled faces.

We CLOSE IN on FLORENCE. The music is affecting her. Some powerful emotion is being held in check.

As she leans forward to turn a page, CUT TO.

38 EXT. BOAT ON ENGLISH CHANNEL. DAY. 38

Summer 1952. Music continues. An idyll. A small yacht cutting through a calm blue sea. GEOFFREY PONTING is at the rudder. Twelve year old FLORENCE holds a jib sheet.

The boat enters a small harbour.

39 INT. BOAT. NIGHT. 39

In her nightdress, FLORENCE is in her bunk in the small cabin below the deck. At the far end of the cabin are steep steps up to the deck.

A wireless on a shelf above her bed plays through static the same haunting melody.

At a sound, she looks up sharply. A shadow falls across the steps, and moves forwards as GEOFFREY descends.

40 INT. WIGMORE HALL. STAGE. NIGHT. 40

The music. FLORENCE is struggling to control herself. She bites her lip, she's trembling. But she is not going to let go. She leans to turn another page.

41 INT. WIGMORE HALL. GREEN ROOM. NIGHT. 41

The post concert reception. The two PIANISTS, FRIENDS, ADMIRERS, Wigmore ADMINISTRATORS. FLORENCE is taking round a tray of drinks.

CUT TO:

An hour later. The room has emptied. FLORENCE and another GIRL are clearing up.

42 INT. WIGMORE HALL. AUDITORIUM. NIGHT. 42

Fifteen minutes later. FLORENCE goes through the door that connects the green room with the auditorium. It is still lit, but completely empty.

She sits at a piano, sounds a note, listens to it fade. And begins to weep quietly.

43 INT. HOTEL SUITE, BEDROOM. DAY.

43

FLORENCE without her shoes watching EDWARD as he approaches from the bed.

He draws her to him again. Their faces are close.

FLORENCE  
Do you want to know a secret?

EDWARD  
Yes.

FLORENCE  
Actually, I'm a little bit scared.

A pause. They hold each other's gaze.

EDWARD  
I think I am too.

He puts his hand over her shoulder to reach for the zip of her dress. The other hand is in the small of her back, pressing her body against his.

He whispers close into her ear.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
I love you... I love you...

We are on his hand as it fumbles with the zip. His fingers are large and clumsy. Then the zip is free but hard to draw down with one hand. The light cotton material is trapped.

EDWARD tries to peer over FLORENCE'S shoulder. He gives a sharp tug. Now the zip is firmly snagged in the cloth.

FLORENCE'S hand flutters ineffectually over her shoulder. Anxious to protect his pride, she does not know whether to help him or not.

FLORENCE  
I could...

EDWARD

Oh for God's sake, Flo, just keep  
still will you. Turn round.

Shocked, obedient, she turns.

Now even two hands are not enough. The zip will not go down or  
up. EDWARD'S arms tremble with the effort.

FLORENCE

Please don't tear it...

EDWARD reels away in frustration.

EDWARD

Oh bloody hell! I'm a clumsy idiot. I  
can't do the simplest thing. A zip!  
There's something wrong with me...

He catches her startled, guilty expression.

I'm sorry, I'm really sorry. It's such  
a bloody mess!

FLORENCE

It happens to me sometimes. I have to  
get my sister to...

EDWARD

But I'm so damn stupid!

FLORENCE

Look, let's sit on the bed...

Grateful to be taking an initiative, she guides him towards the  
bed. They sit.

Pause.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

You get so cross sometimes.

EDWARD

I know, I know.

FLORENCE

You look like you want to hit someone.

EDWARD

Do I?

FLORENCE

Your face goes... quite frightening.  
You used to get in fights, didn't you.  
You told me...

EDWARD

Not anymore. Not for ages...

They are half sitting, half reclining on the bed. They face the open bedroom windows and a view of the beach. The sound of waves on the shore. FLORENCE is grateful for the temporary reprieve from seduction

FLORENCE

Tell me something.

EDWARD

You've got beautiful legs and...

FLORENCE

No, not that. Not about me.

EDWARD

'With my body I thee worship'

FLORENCE

Tell me about the last time you got in a fight.

EDWARD

Oh, it was terrible. You don't want to hear about that...

FLORENCE

I do. I need to know your worst side.

EDWARD

Well, it was in my final year.  
Saturday night. I went to the Hundred Club...

FLORENCE

Where?

EDWARD

Just a club... to hear John Mayall and  
the Blues...

FLORENCE

Is he famous?

EDWARD

Very. But I only heard the support  
band. I went with his chap, cleverest  
person in our year, fantastically  
intellectual, you know, thick glasses,  
rather short, knew everything, knew  
everyone. Harold Mather. I don't know  
what he was doing there. He hated loud  
music...

FLORENCE

Like me.

EDWARD

Even more than you. I think he was  
just curious. Anyway, I really admired  
Harold. I wanted him to take me  
seriously. I wanted him to publish my  
stuff in his magazine...

44 INT. BLUES CLUB. NIGHT.

44

April 1960. The support band on stage coming to the climax of  
their set with the final bars of a blues standard (Sweet Home  
Chicago etc).

In the crowd we find EDWARD engrossed in the music. At his side  
is HAROLD, not enjoying himself one bit, wincing at the guitar's  
high notes, glancing around.

CUT TO:

Ten minutes later. Between sets. EDWARD, HAROLD and some other  
university friends, TED, BOB, JACK, are at the bar.

TED

She wasn't having it. And everyone  
told me she was putting out...

There are knowing guffaws. HAROLD is only faintly amused.

JACK  
Not to you, mate...

BOB  
And you're wrong. Lucy's tits are bigger, Susie's tits are bigger...

TED  
Lucy's tits aren't big...

A chorus groan of dissent.

EDWARD  
You're in dreamland, the lot of you. If you want to go all the way with a girl in the History department...

TED  
Or the English department...

EDWARD  
First you've got to meet her parents...

BOB  
And then you've got to marry her...

More laughter. HAROLD taps EDWARD'S arm.

HAROLD  
I think I'll head off. Late night meeting of the Philosophy Society.

EDWARD  
(unconvincingly)  
Philosophy! That's great. I'll come with you.

45 EXT. SOHO STREET. NIGHT.

45

Fairly deserted, cobbled.

HAROLD  
He actually invented the term existentialism. And the point about Gabriel Marcel is this - have you read Existence and Objectivity by the way?

EDWARD

Er, no, not yet.

HAROLD

I'll lend you a copy. The point is harmony. As individuals we're all seeking harmony in our transient lives and we find it through what he called secondary reflection...

As HAROLD is speaking, a COUPLE is approaching. EDWARD, only half listening is aware of them. They look like a wealthy young pair. The MAN is big, wears a camel coat and swaggers with his cane. The WOMAN clings to his arm. They are both a little drunk.

HAROLD (O.C.) (CONT'D)

...the key idea being that philosophical enquiry was based on 'wonder and astonishment', and being open to the presence of others...

As the MAN passes, he delivers with the advantage of height a hard, flat-handed smack to the back of HAROLD'S head.

MAN

Jewboy!

HAROLD is sent reeling, his glasses go skittering across the cobbles.

The MAN strolls on, the WOMAN is giggling.

EDWARD hesitates, then strides after the MAN.

HAROLD

Edward, don't. It's all right, I'm fine...

But EDWARD is in a dream. Nothing will stop him. He grabs the MAN'S shoulder, spins him round and slams him against wall. The MAN'S head clunks against a drainpipe.

The WOMAN is screaming and scrabbling uselessly at EDWARD'S arm. Holding the MAN by the throat with his left hand, EDWARD hits him in the face, once, very hard.

The MAN sinks to the ground. The GIRL is distraught.

WOMAN

Police! Someone call the police!

EDWARD retrieves from the gutter HAROLD'S cracked glasses and hands them to him.

They walk on in silence.

They leave behind the MAN sitting on the kerb, head in hands, while the WOMAN fusses over him.

46 EXT. SECOND SOHO STREET. NIGHT.

46

The silence lasts. EDWARD glances anxiously at his friend. Harold's face is grim.

EDWARD

These are terrible people...

Silence.

We have to stand up to them...

Silence.

They arrive at a door.

HAROLD

Look, Edward. You go on in. I've remembered something I ought to be doing. An essay I should look over. And so I, well, that's it. I'm going.

EDWARD

But Harold. This is your meeting. Harold.

We watch HAROLD'S retreating back.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Harold!

47 INT. HOTEL SUITE. BEDROOM. DAY.

47

EDWARD and FLORENCE on the bed.

EDWARD

He avoided me after that, never spoke to me again.

FLORENCE is now lying back on the bed, gazing thoughtfully towards the ceiling. She speaks as though from far away.

FLORENCE

My dad's says things about Jews. When Mummy's not around, that is. Drives me nuts.

She pauses.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Why do you think he never spoke to you again?

EDWARD

I think he was ashamed of me. I'd always been in fights. In play grounds. Then outside pubs at chucking-out time.

FLORENCE

Edward! So dangerous and stupid. Why?

EDWARD

People said I was good at it. I used to be proud of myself.

FLORENCE

And then?

EDWARD

I saw myself through Harold's eyes. A yokel in a punch-up. Not an intellectual. Not cool. He made me ashamed of myself. I wanted to be cool.

She kisses him.

FLORENCE

You are. And now you've got to promise your wife. No more fights. Ever.

EDWARD

Promise.

FLORENCE

Not even if... if someone says something bad to me.

EDWARD evades. He is gazing at her legs stretched out on the white counterpane.

EDWARD

Uhuh. Can I ask you something?

FLORENCE

Of course.

EDWARD

I want to take your stockings off.

FLORENCE

I think I'd better do it.

Self-consciously, she unclips the top of her stockings. EDWARD watches transfixed. His pov - the lifted hem of the light summer dress, the glimpse of her suspender belt, the silk stocking peeling away to reveal her sun-tanned legs.

Utterly entranced, EDWARD has to clear his throat to speak.

EDWARD

So brown...

FLORENCE

All that tennis in Summertown.

He moves closer to her side. The bedsprings squeak mournfully. This sound will become a feature. He places a hand well above her knee, and lets it move up. FLORENCE stiffens involuntarily.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Sorry... Sort of tickles.

EDWARD

It's all right.

He moves his hand further under her dress, along her inner thigh. FLORENCE'S face tightens.

But she's determined not to let him down. This is the expression she had at the Rachmaninov concert. She will get through this.

The couple speak in just above a whisper -

FLORENCE

I want to ask *you* something.

EDWARD

Yes.

FLORENCE

I asked you before but you didn't quite... you said 'a lot', but I mean, how many girls have you, you know...

Under the dress. The long thumb gently palpates. Their voices are dreamy, breathy.

EDWARD

The truth is, Well, not many really.

FLORENCE

How many then?

EDWARD

Just... some.

EDWARD'S gentle movements are beginning to have an effect on FLORENCE. A sensation of unfamiliar intensity is spreading through her.

FLORENCE

Six?

This is an awkward subject for EDWARD, but he does not want to break the moment.

EDWARD

Yes, about that, or... I don't know...

FLORENCE

Four..? Do you think it was four?

EDWARD

I... uh... Flo... perhaps it's...sort of... uh... a matter of definition.

EDWARD'S hand has moved closer, his fingers have pushed past the trim of her knickers.

FLORENCE

And Edward... I feel... I'm feeling...  
But... who were they?

EDWARD

Who?

Without pulling his hand away, he has positioned his face over hers. He lowers his head to graze her lips.

Uh... students.

FLORENCE

And... what were their names..?

EDWARD

Oh, Flo, why are we talking about...  
there are no names... you're the  
first. You are the first.

FLORENCE

You're not to make fun of me...

48

INT. PONTINGS HOUSE. FLORENCE'S BEDROOM. DAY.

48

May 1962. FLORENCE alone in a private moment of intense self-communion. In front of a full length mirror she is trying on the underwear that she will wear on her wedding night. Empty boxes, wrapping tissue as well as sheet music on the floor at her feet.

She stands full on to the mirror, turns, turns the other way, regards herself over her shoulder. Trying to see herself in new terms, as he will see her. Is she beautiful? Will EDWARD think she is. She is, of course, but she doesn't know she is, she doesn't feel it.

FLORENCE turns again. Her hand plays across the pastel silk, cups her breast. She is unconvinced.

She frowns.

49

INT. PONTINGS' HOUSE, BEDROOM. NORTH OXFORD. DAY.

49

FLORENCE is at a window seat with a book, 'Love, Sex and Marriage - a Young Bride's Guide.' Behind her, a violin in its open case, music stand, sheet music. At various points she looks up, faintly nauseated, then forces herself to go on reading.

FLORENCE (V.O.)

'...this pleasurable excitement causes the penis to fill with blood and become engorged...' oh God...  
 'secretes a clear substance to lubricate the mucous membrane...' ugh... 'and now the foreplay is concluded, he lies on top of her, and it is perfectly acceptable for her to use a hand gently to guide her husband in, and at last he enters her...' enters me... 'he enters her and this is known as penetration...

RUTH, is in the hall, looking for her.

RUTH (V.O.)

Flo?

FLORENCE

Enter. You may enter me.

RUTH

What?

FLORENCE

Nothing.

RUTH

Are you all right?

FLORENCE

I'm feeling rather sick.

RUTH

What are you reading?

FLORENCE

A sex manual.

In thrilled horror, RUTH'S hand covers her mouth.

RUTH

Flo! Because of Edward! What does it say?

FLORENCE

It says women are like doorways. Men have to enter through them.

RUTH

That's so ridiculous! That simply isn't true.

FLORENCE

I'm afraid it is...

RUTH

What else does it say?

FLORENCE

You won't like this. It says the penis...

RUTH shrieks at the word.

... the penis fills with...

Suddenly their mother, VIOLET, is in the doorway. She's an academic, a brittle, angular woman, rather cold. She speaks sharply.

VIOLET

No sign of Daddy?

RUTH

No.

VIOLET

Well that's typical. I'm giving my Spinoza supervision now so Ruth, no running across the hall, and Florence, no screeching until I'm done. Is that clear?

She vanishes as quickly as she appeared. The girls exchange a look.

RUTH

Do you think Mummy was ever a doorway?

50 INT. VICAR'S SITTING ROOM. DAY.

50

The VICAR, the REV. WOOLLETT, is portly, benign, an old friend of the family. A cat snoozes on his lap. REV. WOOLLETT will marry FLORENCE and EDWARD in New College Chapel, Oxford. We are in a small book-lined parlour where two armchairs face a fireplace. FLORENCE cradles a mug of tea.

We come in on a silence. REV WOOLLETT has asked a question.

REV. WOOLLETT

All right. Let me put this another way. You don't seem quite as happy as you should - in love, as you say, getting married in the summer.

FLORENCE laughs nervously.

FLORENCE

No, I am honestly, I'm very happy...

REV. WOOLLETT

Something's bothering you, Flo.

FLORENCE

It could be the quartet, the cellist, Charles. I think he's a bit taken with me, keeps asking me out.

REV. WOOLLETT

That's easy. Now you've got a fiance.

FLORENCE

Oh well, you see, I don't want the quartet to know. They'll think I'm leaving, they'll panic. I have to wait for the right moment. You know, reassure them...

She laughs nervously again and subsides. Another pause.

REV. WOOLLETT

That's not it though, is it?

She waits, then minimally shakes her head.

REV. WOOLLETT (CONT'D)

Something about yourself...

FLORENCE'S gaze is fixed on the carpet.

REV. WOOLLETT (CONT'D)  
...a little delicate... Not something  
you could discuss with an old man like  
me.

FLORENCE  
I'm just being silly.

REV. WOOLLETT  
Could you not talk to your mother?

FLORENCE cannot restrain another nervous laugh. The idea is  
preposterous. She stands.

FLORENCE  
I should go.

REV. WOOLLETT  
Stay just a little longer. There's  
something I want to say...

She waits, but she does not sit.

REV. WOOLLETT (CONT'D)  
You can change your mind, you can  
delay. There's no rush, everybody will  
understand. So your father's ordered a  
marquee, your mother is getting  
measured for a dress, invitations are  
at the printers - Flo, these are minor  
details, trifles compared to what's at  
stake. It's not too late to hold back.

FLORENCE is smiling. She senses it is too late.

FLORENCE  
I really have to go. I'm giving a  
lesson.

As she turns a little too hurriedly to leave, she knocks over a  
low table bearing a teapot and cake, sends them flying to the  
floor. Her exclamation has an edge of hysterical energy.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Oh CHRIST! No, Oh God! No, I mean,  
hell, sorry, I didn't mean to say  
that... or any of them, I'm so sorry,  
I'm sorry, oh look at this... this  
mess.

REV. WOOLLETT

Flo, it's nothing. Nothing at all...

As FLORENCE drops to the floor to sort out the spill, we close  
in on REV WOOLLET to catch his worried look - which he shares  
with his WIFE, who has appeared in the doorway.

51 EXT. PORT MEADOW. DAY. 51

Long shot, moody, in falling light. FLORENCE walks alone across  
the empty meadow.

52 INT. PONTINGS HOUSE. FLORENCE'S BEDROOM. DAY. 52

FLORENCE is practising her scales, RUTH is lying on the bed,  
bored. In a pause, while FLORENCE turns to look for a sheet of  
music -

RUTH

It was a simple question.

FLORENCE

You're not old enough.

RUTH

Stupid! Perhaps you're just getting  
married because Daddy wants you to.

FLORENCE finds her music and plays aggressively. (Gigue from the  
E major partita?)

But RUTH'S remarks have needled her.

She puts her violin down and comes to sit by her sister.

RUTH (CONT'D)

I can do your hair.

She takes a brush.

RUTH (CONT'D)

So. Come on. Why do you love him?

FLORENCE

One. Aren't you going to take notes?  
One. He's not like anyone else.

RUTH

No one is.

FLORENCE

You'd be surprised. Two. He always has a history book in his pocket, and a pencil stub. Three. He knows the names of trees and flowers and constellations. And... he wears plimsoles, never shoes...

RUTH

With his toes poking out. Mummy goes on about that.

FLORENCE

He's the only man I know who doesn't smoke. And he's so strong - have you seen his hands? He says unpredictable things. And... um he's going to write a series of history books about minor characters caught up in famous events. How many's that? He's not too proud to work as a cricket groundsman. He only has one tie and he wears it all the time. And do you know what?

She drops the whimsical tone. She turns to her sister.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Sometimes when we're talking, I see these soft brown eyes looking at me, and I feel like I'm... wrapped in a cloud of love. A friendly cloud of love.

RUTH

And his socks never match.

FLORENCE

Exactly.

RUTH

And he doesn't know the difference  
between a croissant and a baguette.

FLORENCE

*That's* why I love him!

RUTH

And d'you know what Mummy called him?

FLORENCE

Oh God. What?

RUTH

I heard her on the phone to Iris  
Murdoch. She said he's a bit of a  
country bumpkin!

The doorbell rings.

FLORENCE

*That's* him!

She jumps up.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Did she really say that?

RUTH

And did you hear? He's got to play  
tennis with Daddy.

FLORENCE speaks from the door.

FLORENCE

No! What if Edward wins?

RUTH

Daddy'll throw him out.

FLORENCE leaves. RUTH mutters to herself -

RUTH (CONT'D)

Or hang himself.

53 INT. PONTING HOUSE. HALLWAY. DAY.

53

FLORENCE yanks open the front door to reveal EDWARD, disheveled, awkward, holding a duffel bag. He has just hitch-hiked in from the Chilterns. They embrace.

RUTH, always nosey, observes from halfway up the stairs.

FLORENCE  
Edward. I love you.

EDWARD  
And I love you. And I'm sorry I'm late. No one would stop for mes.

FLORENCE  
They're idiots.

EDWARD  
Perhaps I should get a haircut. Or a new jacket or something.

FLORENCE  
Come and see your room.

She leads him up the stairs

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
Mummy's put you in the small room, right at the top. As far away from me as possible.

EDWARD  
Very sensible.

54 INT. PONTING HOUSE. TOP FLOOR. DAY.

54

EDWARD  
It's enormous.

FLORENCE  
Betty washed the clothes you left.

EDWARD  
This shirt's never been ironed before. Looks new.

They speak between kisses.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
You're beautiful.

FLORENCE  
Put your arms right round me... I like that... Daddy wants to show you the factory.

EDWARD  
Ah, the job... Let me kiss your vibrato.

He kisses the tips of her fingers.

FLORENCE  
Stupid! Do you think you can be a salesman and write history books?

EDWARD  
Someone's got to try it.

FLORENCE  
And the insurance came through. You're allowed to drive the Humber...

EDWARD  
Bliss...

FLORENCE  
Which means you have to take Mummy to her lecture in Winchester.

EDWARD  
Ecstasy...

FLORENCE  
Which means I love you... and Ruth says you're playing tennis with Daddy.

We are in close - the rapid kisses, the breathy asides.

EDWARD  
No. Florence. I'm hopeless. It's ridiculous. I can't even -

FLORENCE  
That's not what you said at dinner.

EDWARD  
I know but -

FLORENCE  
It's all right. He'll simply want to thrash you. Just let him.

EDWARD  
But... you're mine now. I want... to thrash *him*.

FLORENCE  
Don't... you... dare.

55 INT. PONTING HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

55

RUTH brandishes various vegetables under EDWARD'S nose. She's unconsciously flirting with him, dancing around him, a little out of control. FLORENCE is amused, tolerant. EDWARD hides his ignorance behind his jokiness.

EDWARD  
Um, let's see now. A coelacanth.

RUTH  
Courgette! And this?

EDWARD  
This one I know. We had it the other night boiled in horse's blood. It's a grabchick.

RUTH  
Aubergine, stupid! And this one?

FLORENCE  
Calm down, Ruthie.

EDWARD  
Everyone knows that's a croissant

RUTH  
Endive! Don't you know anything?

GEOFFREY PONTING has entered the kitchen unobserved. He is a tough, compact man, awkward and intense, who always wanted sons, not daughters. The girls are never relaxed in his presence.

GEOFFREY

Ruth, that's not how I ever want to hear you talk to an adult.

RUTH

Sorry.

EDWARD

Oh, she's all right. She was just, you know -

GEOFFREY

I thought we'd go straight from the works to the court.

EDWARD

I'll get my stuff.

EDWARD meets FLORENCE'S eye. She is behind her father and, unseen by him, makes a 'go easy' gesture with a downward movement of her palm.

GEOFFREY turns to her.

GEOFFREY

Mummy's got tutorials until six. Why don't you cook tonight.

FLORENCE

All right.

GEOFFREY

Well, don't sound too bloody enthusiastic about it! If you can't be bothered someone can go out and get fish and chips.

EDWARD has paused in the doorway for this exchange. He sees how cowed FLORENCE is by her father.

FLORENCE

No, Daddy, I want to, honestly. I'll make something special.

GEOFFREY

Right then. I'll get you a racket.

56 INT. HOTEL SUITE, BEDROOM. DAY.

56

EDWARD and FLORENCE on the bed as before, but now she lies on her back and he is at her side, propped on an elbow, her head cradled against his arm. He is still gently touching her.

For the first time in their relationship, she is beginning to succumb to his caress, to a swelling physical sensation of pleasure that is transfixing her, melting her.

He looks down at her. Her breathing is deep and steady, like a sleeper's. Her gaze roll upwards.

Close on EDWARD - his indecision. All is going smoothly, but what next? He whispers?

EDWARD

Florence..?

Her lips part as if to speak his name, but no sound comes. He moves his hand and begins to remove her knickers. But he needs her cooperation.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Flo...

As she raises her buttocks, the bed squeaks mournfully as before.

EDWARD'S hand is now at full stretch and he cannot get her knickers past her knees without disturbing this promising arrangement of their bodies.

She bends her knees, and he unhooks the knickers free of her ankle and lets them drop.

Now she is in his arms, waiting, but he is fully dressed. Trying not to disturb her, he attempts to undo one of his black leather lace-up shoes.

It is not possible.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Florence, don't move. Ok? Florence?

FLORENCE

Mmm

The moment is precious, easily disrupted. EDWARD gently disengages his arm. As he leaves the bed, it bleats and squeaks again.

Desperate not to lose the moment, he stumbles against a chair as he hurries across the room and starts to take off his clothes as fast and as quietly as he can.

Naked, but for his unbuttoned shirt. he stands at the foot of the bed, gazing at FLORENCE. She has not moved. Her gaze is still upwards. She looks beautiful in her attitude of abandon, her dress rucked up around her thighs, ropes of tangled hair spread across the counterpane. EDWARD has been thinking of this moment for over a year. He takes a deep silent breath, taps the breast pocket of his shirt where his contraceptives are, and moves towards her.

57

EXT. CRICKET GROUND IN CHILTERN. DAY.

57

June 1962. Late morning. The explosive crack of leather on willow. And a shout. We are in the practice nets by a rural cricket pitch.

Pulling away from the CRICKETERS there, we find EDWARD at a distance, marking out the boundary.

Close in. A CAPTAIN of the local village team is approaching him.

CAPTAIN

That wicket will want rolling again  
before tomorrow.

EDWARD

It'll be done, Mr Ramage.

We follow EDWARD as he pushes his machine, marking out chalky white against the brilliant green.

He stops to mop his brow, glances towards the pavilion, and double-takes.

Across the field, sitting in the deep shadow of a huge old oak by the pavilion is FLORENCE.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Florence!

With a delighted laugh, EDWARD begins to walk, then run towards her.

FLORENCE gets to her feet, picks up her canvas satchel and runs towards him. She wears a dandelion in her buttonhole and has tied her hair with a scrap of coloured velvet.

Among the cricketers at the nets, knowing nods and winks.

EDWARD AND FLORENCE embrace. In their excitement, between kisses, they talk over each other, oblivious to the onlookers by the nets.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

How did you get here? How long have you...

FLORENCE

I took the train to Henley and walked through the woods. I had a map. Didn't get lost once... Seven miles!

EDWARD

And you've been watching me...

FLORENCE

For half an hour. Loving you at a distance. Waiting for you to see me.

EDWARD

I was thinking about you just then, and I looked up, and there you were. I thought you were a hallucination!

FLORENCE

Sitting quietly, loving you so hard. Oh Edward, I came by that little church you told me about...

EDWARD

You liked it.

FLORENCE

I wish we could be married there.

EDWARD

Now that wouldn't please your father.

FLORENCE

I leaned by the wall, looking down across the valley and I ate an orange and checked the map and I thought, He's only two miles away now! I was so happy, I'm so happy!

58 EXT. CRICKET GROUND IN THE CHILTERNs. DAY. 58

The pitch now deserted but for EDWARD and FLORENCE. Between them they haul a massive roller over the wicket.

59 EXT. WOODS, FIELDS. DAY. 59

Half an hour later. EDWARD and FLORENCE walk together through the beech woods. And along an avenue of limes. She tugs on his arm for a kiss. They walk on.

Further on, by the edge of the wood. He puts a hand on her shoulder and points.

EDWARD

There it goes. Did you see it?

FLORENCE

Yellowhammer?

EDWARD

No! It was going fast and low over the hedge.

FLORENCE

Greenfinch?

EDWARD

Sparrowhawk. Florence! The only ones you've ever get right are robins.

FLORENCE

And blackbirds.

EDWARD

What am I to do with you?

FLORENCE

Love me.

EDWARD

Oh, all right. If you insist. This way. Almost home.

60 EXT. BY COTTAGE. DAY.

60

Minutes later. The COUPLE emerge from a footpath through the woods onto the green in front of the cottage.

EDWARD

She won't remember you.

FLORENCE

You say that every time. But she might one day.

61 INT. COTTAGE. SITTING ROOM. DAY.

61

As EDWARD and FLORENCE enter, MARJORIE rises, confused, alarmed, amid her habitual disorder and squalor. Her hair is awry, flecked with gold and green where she has been trying to paint it. She is naked above the waist.

We catch EDWARD'S pained look.

But FLORENCE, as she goes towards MARJORIE, smoothly picks up the discarded blouse and slips it over the older woman's shoulders. FLORENCE buttons it for her as she speaks.

FLORENCE

Marjorie, hello, it's Florence. I've come to see you.

MARJORIE

Me? Why me? I've done nothing wrong.

FLORENCE

I've brought you something interesting. From the Ashmolean.

(MORE)

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

We talked about it before. You told me things I never knew...

FLORENCE reaches into her satchel and brings out a large post card reproduction. It fills our view, in all its vividness.

MARJORIE

Ah yes! Uccello. The Hunt in the Forest. His last... look at that perspective.

FLORENCE

You told me that when he was young he painted his fields blue in protest at the boring food.

MARJORIE

Yes, Vasari says the Abbot gave him cheese soup followed by cheese pie. Every day!

The two women laugh.

On EDWARD. Some emotion welling up, (gratitude, love) which he contains as he turns away.

FLORENCE

I thought we could paint it, make a copy together.

EDWARD

I'll make some tea.

MARJORIE

A forgery!

We follow Edward out to -

62

INT. COTTAGE. KITCHEN. DAY.

62

The customary stinking mess, clouds of flies, etc. EDWARD leans by the sink, recovers himself, pinches a tear from the bridge of his nose. Fills the kettle.

63 EXT. STEEP COUNTRY ROAD. DAY. 63

Early evening, same day. At the end of a day's work in Henley, LIONEL pushes his bike up the hill towards the cottage. Piled in the bike's wicker basket are school exercise books for marking.

Top of the hill gained, LIONEL mounts his bike.

64 INT. COTTAGE. KITCHEN. DAY. 64

FLORENCE is sorting out the kitchen. EDWARD is her helper. He is at the sink scrubbing pots, she is on her hands and knees, wooden spoon in hand, peering under the stove, retrieving something. There is a stew cooking.

FLORENCE

There are two more under here.  
Sprouting, but they'll do. Peel'em and  
chuck'em in.

She hands the potatoes to EDWARD and surveys the room.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Then we're going to do something about  
this floor. Is there a bucket or...

She is interrupted by a squeal from the sitting room.

HARRIET AND ANNE

Florence! Florence!

65 INT. COTTAGE. SITTING ROOM. DAY. 65

We follow FLORENCE in. HARRIET and ANNE sit at the table, flanking their mother, their arms round her shoulders. They've all been painting. The twins display for us the work - MARJORIE'S, of course.

We are looking at a striking, impressionistic, sized-up poster-paint version of the Uccello, or rather, a detail from it. Horsemen, wild-eyed horses, spears, woods. The colours are thick and swirling, as in a Van Gogh.

Unnoticed, LIONEL has appeared in the facing doorway.

FLORENCE is genuinely amazed, touched by the painting. EDWARD is now behind her.

FLORENCE  
It's beautiful. It really is.

HARRIET  
We helped. I did some green.

ANNE  
So did I. And brown.

HARRIET  
But it was Mum.

ANNE  
It was truly Mum.

MARJORIE  
In Uccello the horses know everything.  
They were wild once, you see, but  
they've swapped sides. They're with  
the hunters now. They feel guilty. You  
see it in their eyes.

On LIONEL, taking it in, the sudden cohesion in the household, the brief reincarnation of the MARJORIE he used to know. His gaze travels from the painting to FLORENCE. He quietly nods in acknowledgement.

LIONEL  
Beautiful... Thank you.

ANNE  
Good old Mum.

HARRIET  
We love you.

FLORENCE half smiles, lowers her gaze.

FLORENCE  
Come on, Edward. Lots to do.

66 INT. COTTAGE. BATHROOM. DAY. 66

In the chaotic bathroom, MARJORIE'S head is lowered over the hand basin while FLORENCE washes her hair.

67 INT. COTTAGE. KITCHEN. DAY. 67

The kitchen is in order. The FIVE are seated around a small pine table as FLORENCE brings the stew (rather thin, mostly carrots and potatoes) from the stove. FLORENCE is about to pick up a ladle but EDWARD'S restraining hand closes over hers.

MARJORIE (in fresh clothes, brushed hair) takes up the ladle and sets about doling out the stew. She addresses her remarks to FLORENCE.

MARJORIE

I'm so glad you're here, my dear. I've been wanting to try this out. An old gypsy recipe. Rabbit stewed in plums. All day on a low heat.

Before FLORENCE can reply, EDWARD cuts in.

EDWARD

Our mum's a very good cook.

FLORENCE

It smells delicious.

MARJORIE

D'you have children of your own, dear?

FLORENCE

Not yet.

MARJORIE

People romanticise, but it's awfully hard work. I make all our own jam, marmalade, chutney. Shopping, laundry, cleaning - it never stops.

LIONEL

And you do a wonderful job, Marjorie.

EDWARD and the TWINS murmur their agreement. MARJORIE pauses. Her smile is of dreamy contentment.

MARJORIE

I do my best.

FLORENCE finds EDWARD'S hand and squeezes.

68 INT. BOAT. NIGHT.

68

Summer 1952. We are close on the young FLORENCE. She lies on her bunk, as before, the radio tinnily playing the piano duet.

At the sound of a creaking board, she turns her gaze towards the steps that lead on deck.

The shadow of a descending figure grows larger.

69 INT. HOTEL SUITE. BEDROOM. DAY.

69

July 1962. We are close on FLORENCE, anxiously, passively waiting.

The bed tilts and makes its lonesome moan as EDWARD climbs beside her.

FLORENCE'S POV upwards - His face moves to fill her view entirely. His expression is of wonder, expectancy.

Awkwardly, she lifts her head so that he can slot his arm under it, to cushion it as before.

He lowers his head and they kiss tenderly. And again. Only the sound of the sea, breaking gently and withdrawing. Their faces are close.

They look long at each other. What next?

EDWARD

Are you all right?

FLORENCE

Yes, yes, Of course.

EDWARD

(whispers)

I love you.

FLORENCE  
 (too hastily)  
 I love you.

The bed creaks again as EDWARD'S hand travels the length of her body, pulling back the hem of her skirt up to her waist.

FLORENCE tenses, catches her breath.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
 Edward, tell me something, say  
 something kind... no, something  
 stupid... like you used to.

A pause as he gazes down at her. He understands.

EDWARD  
 (solemnly, in her ear)  
 Miss Ponting, you have a clavicle and  
 a philtrum all men wish to play on and  
 a vibrato all men adore, but you  
 belong entirely to me and I'm very  
 glad and proud.

She laughs nervously.

FLORENCE  
 In that case, you may kiss my vibrato.

He takes her left hand and kisses the tips of her fingers.

EDWARD  
 Such hard calluses in so soft a woman.

FLORENCE  
 And my philtrum...

Then they kiss again and -

Close on FLORENCE to catch her wide-eyed expression as EDWARD tenses his arms and suddenly rolls on top of her. His elbows and forearms are planted on either side of her head.

And her POV of EDWARD - his own amazement, and uncertainty.

EDWARD  
 There... Is that... am I squashing  
 you?

FLORENCE  
No... not really...

70 EXT. LONDON SHOPPING STREET. DAY. 70

May. 1962. FLORENCE and EDWARD have paused in front of a shop window display of bridal gowns.

EDWARD  
Flo, it's easy. Just point and choose.

FLORENCE  
But you're not meant to see it.

He opens the door for her.

71 INT. BRIDAL WEAR SHOP. DAY. 71

The COUPLE are among ranks of foamy gowns.

FLORENCE  
No. Awful. Too creamy, too frilly. I want something simple. And white.

EDWARD  
White...

An ASSISTANT is hurrying towards them. But FLORENCE is already edging towards the door.

FLORENCE  
Can't face it. Let's get out. We're late for rehearsal.

ASSISTANT  
Can I help you young people?

FLORENCE has walked on.

EDWARD  
She's... er. Too creamy and frilly. Sorry mate.

72 INT. REHEARSAL ROOM. LONDON. DAY.

72

As before. A handful of students looking in on the rehearsal. EDWARD is slumped in the back row.

The ENNISMORE QUARTET plus ELSBETH, the extra viola, is about to begin work on the Mozart Quintet.

FLORENCE is putting on her Alice band.

CHARLES

Who's that fellow at the back?

FLORENCE

Just someone.

CHARLES

Looks a bit rough.

FLORENCE snaps open her music.

FLORENCE

Let's start, shall we. Charles.

CHARLES rolls his eyes. A competitor! With a frown of concentration, he plays the opening, the others respond, the Quintet begins.

On EDWARD. The music bores him instantly. His eyes are beginning to close.

Then they open. His POV over the shoulder of the STUDENT sitting in front of him.

He is looking with adoration at his wife to be. The straight back, the poise and command, her beauty...

73 INT. PRIMARY SCHOOL. HALL. NIGHT.

73

EDWARD and FLORENCE are among parents at a school concert.

On stage, in a pool of light, a pretty eight year old GIRL, their daughter, straight-backed, solemn, wearing an Alice band and lifting her violin to her chin.

FLORENCE is tense. EDWARD reassuringly puts a hand on her knee.

The GIRL plays a simple melody to a TEACHER'S piano accompaniment.

CUT TO:

After the concert. EDWARD kneels to receive the embrace of his daughter. Still holding her violin in one hand, bow in the other, she loops her arms around his neck and presses her cheek against his.

74 INT. REHEARSAL ROOM. LONDON. DAY. 74

The music continues, EDWARD dozes.

75 EXT. LONDON STREET. DAY. 75

EDWARD and FLORENCE walk along. He is protesting.

EDWARD

No honestly. I loved it. I often  
listen with my eyes closed. Listen, I  
can even sing it.

He sings the opening four notes of the Quintet, with a bluesey emphasis.

FLORENCE

(kissing him)

I take it back. Come on. I want to  
show you where I used to work.

76 INT. WIGMORE HALL. STAIRS. DAY. 76

FLORENCE leads EDWARD up the rear stairs of the Hall, and shows him through a door.

77 INT. WIGMORE HALL. GREEN ROOM. DAY. 77

FLORENCE

This is where the performers wait to  
go on stage. And afterwards I'd serve  
them drinks here. I once made a cup of  
tea for Benjamin Britten...

EDWARD is unimpressed, and trying not to be.

EDWARD  
Ah yes, the uh famous...

FLORENCE crosses to another door. She's in a state of excitement, desperate to share it.

FLORENCE  
And this peephole. I'd hear the applause and watch like this, and when the players started to leave the stage, I'd have to open it smoothly, without being seen...

She has opened the door onto the stage. EDWARD is bemused as he follows her out.

78 INT. WIGMORE HALL. STAGE. DAY.

78

FLORENCE  
... Can you imagine the terror and the thrill of stepping out here to play your first concert... these are discerning audiences.

EDWARD  
Yes, I suppose it would be something...

FLORENCE  
I just know the Ennismore will play here one day.

She takes his arm, kisses him.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)  
And when we do, I'll choose the Mozart Quintet, the one you can sing...

Getting into the spirit of her excitement at last, he sings the four notes again, comically mimicking a seated, frowning CHARLES.

FLORENCE laughs.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Yes! We'll play it beautifully. The critic from the Times will be there. We'll triumph. And it will be yours, it'll be specially for you. It's my promise.

EDWARD has jumped down into the auditorium and is going along a row.

EDWARD

And I'll be here, dead centre, three rows back, ready to shout at the end - what is it they shout?

FLORENCE

Bravo.

EDWARD

Bravo! Bravo the Ennismore Quartet!

A CLEANING LADY at the rear of the hall looks up, startled.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

This is where I'll be, Florence, in this very seat. Number 9, row C. That's my promise!

FLORENCE

Oh God. I love you.

79 INT. HOTEL SUITE, BEDROOM. DAY.

79

EDWARD lying on top of FLORENCE.

But not much is happening. EDWARD jabs and bumps against FLORENCE, but cannot find a way in.

She tries to lie still, jolted a little this way and that by his efforts. She is as determined as ever to get through this, to make it work.

They talk over each other.

EDWARD

It's all right. It's all right. I just can't quite... lie still... sorry...

FLORENCE finds it difficult to breath.

FLORENCE  
Sorry... if you could...

EDWARD  
What is it?

FLORENCE  
If you could lift... sorry, just a  
little.

EDWARD  
I'm trying.... sorry... But I can't...  
I'm sorry I don't...

On FLORENCE. She remembers.

FLORENCE (V.O.)  
And now the foreplay is concluded, he  
lies on top of her...

EDWARD  
I'm sorry... I'm really sorry...

FLORENCE (V.O.)  
And it is perfectly acceptable for her  
to use a hand gently to guide her  
husband in...

As we hear this, we follow FLORENCE'S hand as it travels towards  
her groin. EDWARD lifts to let her hand through.

Close on EDWARD'S face as he feels her hand on him. He is  
suddenly stilled.

EDWARD  
Oh... Florence.

His expression becomes dreamy as FLORENCE continues to move her  
hand.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
No...

FLORENCE  
(whispers)  
It's going to be all right...

EDWARD

It's too...

FLORENCE

...in here...

But EDWARD knows he is beginning the irrecoverable slide to orgasm.

EDWARD

No... it's too... Flo...

EDWARD gives out a wail, a complicated series of agonised, rising vowels.

FLORENCE

Darling, what is it? Did I hurt you?  
Edward?

Shocked, she pulls her hand away as EDWARD rises up with a bewildered look. He is lost. His back arches in spasms, he lets out a hoarse shout as his orgasm overwhelms him.

On FLORENCE. Frozen in horror.

EDWARD

Oh my God...

Sudden silence. EDWARD pulls away.

Florence continues to lie still on her back. What is changing is her breathing. By degrees it is becoming shallower, more rapid.

We see a single trickle running down her side and into the sheet.

She is fighting to stay calm. And losing. Something powerful is about to erupt, it is slowly beginning to overwhelm her sense of self-control - primal disgust, visceral horror at a buried memory disinterred.

She cannot help herself. Her breathing is fast. She lets out a cry of revulsion.

EDWARD watches amazed.

She scrambles to her knees, snatches a pillow and frenetically, hysterically, tries to wipe herself with it, letting out cries of utter disgust.

She is sobbing. And in contrast to this frenzied, uncontrolled behaviour, there FADES UP the sad beauty of the Rachmaninov piano duet, the music she heard a long time ago on her father's boat. She shouts -

FLORENCE

Don't look at me! Please don't look at me! Stop looking at me!

Her efforts with the pillow are hopeless. With a cry of frustration she hurls it down.

She leaps from the bed, snatches up her shoes, runs through the sitting room, past their abandoned meal, and out the door, slamming it behind her.

80 INT. HOTEL LOUNGE. HALL. DAY. 80

As before, but now there is a soporific after-dinner air. Whisky, bridge, one or two GUESTS dozing.

FLORENCE runs barefoot past the doorway, unobserved. She passes WAITERS ONE and TWO as they carry in trays of drinks. They give her a quizzical look.

81 EXT. HOTEL GARDEN. 81

FLORENCE runs out onto the lawn, stoops to put on her shoes, runs towards the beach.

82 INT. HOTEL SUITE, BEDROOM. DAY. 82

EDWARD lies on his back on the bed staring numbly at the ceiling.

83 INT. GEOFFREY'S CAR. DAY 83

May 1962. GEOFFREY at the wheel of his Humber.

GEOFFREY  
You any good, by the way?

EDWARD  
Pretty useless, actually.

GEOFFREY  
Everyone says that. You probably think because you're young you're going to slaughter me. Well, my friend, think again. Anyway, here it is...

He pulls into a parking area in front of a small industrial building.

They get out of the car.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)  
Old Ministry of Defence place. Bought it for next to nothing.

EDWARD looks at the building with foreboding. He follows GEOFFREY in.

84 INT. FACTORY. DAY.

84

About twenty people working on assembly benches.

GEOFFREY  
Mostly special stuff made to order for labs. This oscilloscope is being adapted for Oxford's engineering department. A lot of work is for universities. But we could do more...

A little bewildered, EDWARD, a highly non-technical person, follows GEOFFREY along the benches.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)  
You'd need to spend a couple of months here learning what we do, get your mind round some basic electronics...

They pass along a dingy corridor.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)

Then you'll go round the universities,  
explain our services, drum up business  
for us.

GEOFFREY opens a door and turns on a light.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)

You'll even have your own office.

EDWARD is looking into a tiny, windowless room, barely more than  
a cupboard, piled with junk.

EDWARD

Will I get a desk?

85

EXT. TENNIS COURT. DAY.

85

A sweaty, energetic, highly determined GEOFFREY serves with a  
mighty thwack. The ball flashes by EDWARD.

GEOFFREY

(immensely satisfied)

Six love. Two sets to me. One more?

EDWARD

I don't know. I think I'd rather...

GEOFFREY

Your serve. Come on man. See if you  
can get a point. Just one point!

At last, almost by accident, EDWARD delivers a decent serve,  
down the line. It is difficult to reach and GEOFFREY is too  
slow. We see the ball is in.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)

(screams)

Out!

EDWARD

(to himself)

In.

He serves again. The ball flops into the net.

GEOFFREY  
 (triumphant)  
 Love fifteen!

EDWARD  
 (to himself)  
 I know.

CUT TO:

Minutes later. GEOFFREY to serve.

GEOFFREY  
 Forty love.

He serves. The ball is fast. EDWARD just gets his racket to it - and mis-hits.

EDWARD  
 Oops...

But he has hit an accidental drop-shot.

GEOFFREY runs frantically from the baseline.

He makes a desperate lunge, almost dives, but he does not make it.

He stands still, lifts his gaze to the sky, takes a deep breath in a show of a man mastering his feelings. He is furious with himself.

As he walks back to serve, he slaps his buttock with his racket.

GEOFFREY  
 For Godssakes man. Come **on!**

CUT TO:

Minutes later. GEOFFREY serves an ace.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)  
 That's it. Six love, six love, six love.

But he is not pleased. He had set himself the task of ensuring EDWARD did not get a point, and he has failed.

The two men pick up their stuff at the side of the court.

GEOFFREY (CONT'D)

I have to say it. Your single point,  
that drop shot was a complete fluke.

EDWARD

Well, no, actually, I've been working  
on that one.

GEOFFREY rams his racket into its frame, snatches EDWARD'S  
racket from him.

As GEOFFREY turns, he notices FLORENCE sitting on a bench to one  
side of the court. All his anger turns on her. EDWARD watches on  
amazed. The exchange takes place through the mesh of the court  
fencing.

GEOFFREY

For God's sake! Florence! How long  
have you been sitting there?

FLORENCE

Not long at all. I thought I'd just...

GEOFFREY

I asked you a question, damnit. How  
long?

On FLORENCE. Clearly terrified.

FLORENCE

About twenty minutes.

GEOFFREY

About? About? What the hell do you  
think you're up to? Did I invite you  
to come and spy on me? Well? Did I?  
Answer me!

FLORENCE is silent. GEOFFREY strides away.

EDWARD and FLORENCE exchange a helpless look through the mesh.  
She is in shock.

86 INT. HOTEL BEDROOM. DAY. 86

As before, EDWARD lies on his back, gazing at the ceiling.

87 EXT. BEACH. DAY. 87

FLORENCE is walking, half running along the beach, desperate to put distance between herself and the hotel bedroom and all that has happened in it. But it is hard to make quick progress through the heavy shingle. She gasps in frustration as she almost loses her footing on a steep slope of stones.

88 INT. HOTEL SUITE, BEDROOM. DAY. 88

EDWARD, lying on the bed, stirred into anger, comes to a sudden decision. He gets up, crosses the room and begins to dress impatiently.

He stands in front of a mirror, runs a comb through his hair, begins to knot his tie.

He snatches up his jacket, puts it on as he strides through the sitting room, past the remains of the dinner.

89 INT. HOTEL LOUNGE. HALL. DAY. 89

EDWARD passes the lounge and its guests. In the corridor are the WAITERS, lounging, bored, smoking. They watch him hurry by with keen interest. A wedding narrative is building.

90 EXT. BEACH. DAY. 90

Much further along the beach. FLORENCE is calmer now as she reaches a fallen tree. She leans with her back against it, staring at the breaking waves.

91 EXT. BEACH. DAY. 91

EDWARD angrily pounds his way across the shingle. He is talking to himself, sometimes close to shouting. Mostly we do not catch the words, but the fury is obvious.

EDWARD

Dammit.... Every time I tried... never let me near her... she never once, not once... I was an idiot! Idiot!

92

EXT. BEACH. DAY.

92

FLORENCE leans by the fallen tree.

EDWARD

Florence!

She looks up, startled. EDWARD is some way off, coming towards her along the beach. The confrontation she dreads is about to begin. She wanted to be on her own. Now she steels herself and waits.

He stops some yards away. He is carrying his jacket under his arm. He is breathing heavily. There is exasperation in his voice.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

There you are.

FLORENCE turns away. EDWARD waits.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Did you really need to come this far.

FLORENCE

Yes.

EDWARD

It must be two miles back to the hotel.

FLORENCE

I needed to get out.

Pause. EDWARD comes a little closer. The stones tinkle under his feet. He draws breath, prepares to tell her what he has come to say.

EDWARD

Look, this is ridiculous. It was unfair of you to run out like that.

FLORENCE

Was it?

EDWARD

In fact, it was unpleasant. Bloody unpleasant.

FLORENCE

Yes.

EDWARD

What do you mean, yes?

FLORENCE closes her eyes, forces herself to say this.

FLORENCE

It was all absolutely revolting.

EDWARD has found his anger again. He takes another step nearer.

EDWARD

You don't have the faintest idea how to be with a man, do you? If you did it would never have happened. In all this time, you've never let me near you. I'm never... I'm not allowed to touch you, or see you properly. I can't do this, can't do this. You don't know a thing about any of it, do you? You carry on as if it's *eighteen sixty two*. You don't even know how to kiss.

FLORENCE is frightened, horrified.

FLORENCE

You said you loved kissing me.

EDWARD

And I'm not going to be humiliated by you.

FLORENCE

I didn't... Please don't bully me.

EDWARD

I'm not bullying you.

FLORENCE

Yes you are. Edward, you are!

EDWARD

You're talking bloody nonsense.

FLORENCE

I'm trying to...

EDWARD

You're the one who stops us getting close. When we hold hands you think you're doing me a favour. You're so stuck up!

FLORENCE

Is that what you think..?

EDWARD

It bloody well is what I think...

FLORENCE

Then why are you here? Why are you chasing me down the beach? Why can't you let me sit here by myself

He does not answer. After raised voices, silence. They pull back from a full-on row. The mood level subsides. Florence is thoughtful.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Edward, I want to make you happy. But I think I'm always a disappointment. You're always advancing, I'm always backing away. And we can't talk about it. We can never just be happy. Or just be. You're always demanding something more, and I'm useless at, you know... And you go silent and unhappy and it's all my fault. And when I do, I mean when I say yes to something even if I don't really want to, I know there'll be another thing that I'm expected to do... I'm no good at these demands...

This word gets to him.

EDWARD

Demands?

FLORENCE

Well, what I mean is...

EDWARD

Demands? You think I'm some sort of  
debt collector.

He is suddenly suspicious. Or can't help himself deliberately  
misunderstanding her.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I hope you're not talking about money.

CLOSE on FLORENCE. It was the last thing she meant. She wants to  
put him right..

FLORENCE

Of course I'm not...

EDWARD

That's it, isn't it? Money?

FLORENCE

Honestly, I wasn't talking about...

EDWARD

I don't care about money...

FLORENCE

I didn't mention money, Edward.

EDWARD

... yours or anyone's.

FLORENCE

I know you don't...

EDWARD

So keep your money, your father's  
money. Get a new violin. Don't waste  
it on anything I might use.

She stares at him, amazed.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

You think I 'demanded' that job from your father. It was your idea. And d'you know what? I don't want to work for him. Tell him I've changed my mind.

FLORENCE

I know you don't mean that. It's just because you're feeling...

EDWARD

I bloody well do.

In his exasperation he wheels away from her. He walks down to the shoreline. He kicks violently at the stones and comes back towards her.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

But why did you run off? You shouldn't have done that.

FLORENCE

I've already told you.

EDWARD

You wanted to humiliate me.

FLORENCE

No, honestly. It's something... I can't explain it... I don't know what it is... why I ran away... I got in such a state... I was ashamed...

EDWARD

So you humiliated me.

Suddenly, she snaps.

FLORENCE

All right then. If that's what you really want me to say. If that's the kind of person you want me to be. I was trying to humiliate you. Perhaps you should learn to control yourself.

He is close to her. The words are out before he can stop them.

EDWARD

You're a bitch talking like that.

FLORENCE flinches. The powerful word explodes around them. She is almost shouting.

FLORENCE

If that's what you think then get away from me! Just clear off will you, Edward. Don't you understand? I came out here to be alone. Please go away!

In distress, weary of arguing, she has turned her back on him. He hovers uncertainly, regretting his word.

Into the silence, from the woods on the inland side of the Fleet lagoon, comes the clear sound of birdsong.

FLORENCE half turns to listen. They both listen. The sound is like an accusation, a reminder of their past happiness.

EDWARD

(quietly)

I loved you. But you make it so hard.

On FLORENCE as she takes this in, the implications of the tense.

FLORENCE

You *loved* me?

EDWARD

We could be so free with each other.  
We could make each other so happy.  
Instead we're in this mess.

Again, FLORENCE considers this.

FLORENCE

Yes.

EDWARD

Meaning what exactly?

FLORENCE

It's a mess.

EDWARD

It's hopeless.

FLORENCE

Is it?

They have reached the tidal turning point in their row. Tentatively, EDWARD stretches out a hand and rests it on her shoulder. She does not turn, but nor does she resist him.

They hear the birdsong again.

At last she turns.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Is it a nightingale?

EDWARD

It's a blackbird.

FLORENCE

At night?

EDWARD

It must be a prime site he's on. He's doing overtime, having to work hard... Like me.

She can't help herself - her laughter is spontaneous and delighted. EDWARD'S remark brings back to her the man she fell in love with.

Encouraged, he tries to take her hand. But she slips away. As the laughter dies on her lips, she is coming to a momentous decision.

FLORENCE

Edward... no, please. There's something I want to say to you. It's not...

She is on the edge of changing her mind.

EDWARD

What?

FLORENCE

You know I love you.

EDWARD

Still.

FLORENCE

Very very much. And I know you love me. I want to spend my life with you. And you feel the same. It ought to be quite simple, but it isn't. We're in a mess like you said. Even with all this love. And I also know that it's my fault. We both know why. Edward, it must be obvious to you by now that I'm...

EDWARD

Florence, what is it?

As she falters he tries to touch her again, but she raises a hand. She is determined to say the difficult thing.

FLORENCE

... that I'm pretty hopeless, no, absolutely hopeless at sex. I'm no good at it. I don't seem to need it like other people, like you do. It isn't a part of me, I don't like it, I keep trying to pretend, but I... I don't know why. I might change, but I can't imagine it. If I don't say this now we'll always be struggling with it. It's going to cause you a lot of unhappiness, and me too...

EDWARD is silent now, unreadable. She is scared, but she makes herself go on.

FLORENCE (CONT'D)

Look, I've thought about this carefully. It's not as stupid as it sounds. I mean, on first hearing. We love each other, we know how happy we make each other. We're free to make our own choices, shape our lives as we please. These days people live in all kinds of ways now, they can live by their own rules without asking anyone's permission.

EDWARD

I don't understand what you're...

FLORENCE

Mummy knows two homosexuals - they live in a flat together, like man and wife. Two men. In Oxford, in Beaumont Street. They both teach at the University. And we can make our own rules too, Edward. I can say this because I know you love me. We don't have to be like everyone else. We could live together and... and so, and no one would know what we did or didn't do. We'd be together, and if you wanted, really wanted, that's to say, whenever it happened, and of course it would happen, I would understand, more than that, I'd want it because I want you to be happy and free. I'd never be jealous, as long as I knew that you loved me...

EDWARD gasps, then moans as he grasps what she is trying to say. But she presses on.

EDWARD

Oh God...

FLORENCE

Honestly, my darling, I just want to be with you all my life, look after you, be happy with you, and work with the quartet and one day at Wigmore Hall play something glorious and beautiful for you...

EDWARD at last comes to the boil. His fury makes him hoarse. He can barely get the words out.

EDWARD

Have I... have I got this right? You want me to go with other women. Is that it?

She is shocked by his fury. Her voice is small.

FLORENCE

Not if you didn't want to.

EDWARD

You're telling me I could do it with anyone I liked but you.

FLORENCE cannot speak. Her proposal turns out to be as unacceptable as she half suspected.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Have you actually forgotten that we were married today? We're not two old queers living in secret on Beaumont Street. We're man and wife!

Angrily EDWARD seizes a large smooth stone and smacks it into his left palm and back into his right.

He is close to shouting. The hand that holds the stone is raised as he takes a step towards her.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

With my body I thee worship! That's what you promised today. In front of everybody. Are you so innocent and stupid you don't realise how disgusting and ridiculous your idea is? And what an insult it is? An insult to me!

With a cry of frustration he turns and hurls the stone towards the sea. We follow it. It lands just short of the water's edge.

He wheels round to face her again. She shrinks before him.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

You tricked me. You're a fraud. And I know what else you are? Do you know what you are? You're frigid, that's what. Completely frigid. But you thought you needed a husband and I was the first bloody fool to come along.

On FLORENCE as this sinks in. She knows she never set out to deceive him, but she believes everything else is true. Her proposal was obscene, she broke her promise made in a church, she is frigid. She has let everyone down. In her own eyes as well as his, she is worthless.

She comes away from the washed-up tree and stands close in front of him. Her voice is only just above a whisper.

FLORENCE

I am sorry, Edward. I am most terribly sorry...

She lingers, waiting, willing him to respond, to touch her and forgive her. But he remains silent.

She begins the long walk back to the hotel.

93 EXT. BEACH. SUNSET 93

Twenty minutes later. A LONG SHOT. EDWARD alone and furious, and shouting, pacing up and down the beach along the water's edge, his words lost to us.

94 EXT. BEACH. NIGHT 94

A half hour later. The moon is up. EDWARD comes along the beach towards the hotel.

95 INT. HOTEL. HALL 95

A half hour later. As EDWARD comes in he confronts the two WAITERS. Their expressions of sympathy could be mockery - as always, it is impossible to tell.

EDWARD

Oh... has my uh wife gone upstairs...

WAITER ONE

Very sorry sir to hear about your father-in-law taken ill.

WAITER TWO

Manager's kindly given the young lady a lift to the station. Big hurry it was.

WAITER ONE

On your special night and all.

EDWARD

Yes, it's a... um a shame...

He brushes past them and runs up the stairs.

96 INT. HOTEL SUITE SITTING ROOM. NIGHT 96

EDWARD yanks open a wardrobe door. Empty.

Twenty minutes later. He is slumped in an armchair, drinking wine from the bottle. Numbly, he stares into space.

An hour later. EDWARD is asleep in the armchair. The wine bottle is on its side on the floor.

97 INT. HOTEL SUITE. SITTING ROOM. DAWN. 97

EDWARD is woken by the sound of birdsong.

Five minutes later. He stands by the remains of the wedding supper, eating cold roast potatoes, congealed meat, cheese, mints. He picks up FLORENCE'S unfinished glass of wine and downs it in one.

His suitcase is at his feet.

98 EXT. OUTSIDE HOTEL. DAY. 98

EDWARD slings his suitcase onto the back seat of the Humber, the Ponting's family car.

He drives away.

99 EXT, COUNTRYSIDE. DAY 99

Drive-by. The Humber recedes into the rural beauty of Dorset.

100 EXT. OUTSIDE PONTING'S HOUSE. NORTH OXFORD. DAY 100

A couple of hours later, still early morning. EDWARD has parked the car in the driveway. He approaches the front door, pushes the keys through the letter box.

As he walks away, the front door opens.

RUTH  
Edward... Edward!

But he ignores her and hurries away.

101 INT. TRAIN. DAY. 101

EDWARD asleep on the Oxford to Henley train.

102 EXT. WOODS NEAR COTTAGE. DAY. 102

Carrying his suitcase, EDWARD comes through the woods, in sight of the cottage. He pauses, collects himself. Breaking this news is not going to be easy.

103 INT. COTTAGE. KITCHEN, SITTING ROOM. DAY. 103

The family are in the kitchen, eating lunch. EDWARD comes through the sitting room. It is his mother who sees him first through the open door.

MARJORIE  
Hello Edward love. Have you been at work?

He cannot speak. He looks rough. The rest of the family turn in their seats.

HARRIET  
But where's Florence?

LIONEL takes this in, its import. He stands.

LIONEL  
Oh my God. Son...

104 EXT. COTTAGE GARDEN. DAY 104

Late afternoon on the same day. EDWARD is in fresh clothes. He has brought the twins, ANN and HARRIET to the bottom of the garden.

ANN

And what about all those presents?

EDWARD

They'll all be sent back. Dad's writing to Mrs Ponting.

HARRIET

Why can't we see Florence?

ANN

We love her. Why won't you tell us what's happened?

EDWARD

Look, uh, one day when you're grown up you'll understand. But listen. I want you to make me a promise, a really solemn promise. That you'll never ever mention her name to me again, or ask me any more questions about her. Do you understand?

On the twins. Their blank astonishment.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

I mean it... Hands on hearts.

Reluctant but obedient, they solemnly place a hand over their hearts.

HARRIET

Edward! This is so stupid!

105

INT. COTTAGE. LIONEL'S STUDY. NIGHT

105

A few days later. Father and son sit across from each other at a table where LIONEL does his marking. School exercise books and text books are piled around. A clock ticks heavily on a bookcase. The atmosphere is laden. So much is unsaid.

LIONEL

And the job. You'll have to write to Mr Ponting.

EDWARD

I've already done it.

LIONEL

I've had a letter back from Florence's mother. Here, you'd better read it.

EDWARD

I'd rather not.

LIONEL

Well. Anyway. It's agreed. Non consummation...

A silence.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

(gently)

Come on, son. Is there really nothing you want to tell me?

EDWARD'S shake of the head is almost imperceptible.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Are you sure?

EDWARD looks away.

SLOW FADE TO

106 EXT. OUTSIDE SHOP. CAMDEN. DAY.

106

1969. EDWARD is locking the steel shutters of his shop - 'Ed's Records' - with heavy padlocks. The pavement at his feet is litter-strewn. EDWARD - long hair, tight jeans, leather jacket - looks cool. Standing to one side, waiting for him, is a girlfriend, MOLLY

He comes away from the shop, links arms with MOLLY. They walk on.

Relaxed in each other's company, the couple walk along the Regents Canal.

107 INT. STAGE WINGS. NIGHT

107

A rock concert in progress on stage. EDWARD, the promoter of the event, is talking to a STAGE MANAGER in the wings. We cannot make out what is being said.

With an arm looped around EDWARD'S shoulder is another girlfriend, DANA. He breaks off his conversation to kiss her.

Closer.

EDWARD

... we brought our own PA and you're charging us for yours. But that's fine. We'll balance the account at the end...

108 INT. OZ-TYPE EDITORIAL OFFICE. DAY. 108

In the background of the chaotic offices, MOLLY, DANA and other STAFF.

EDWARD studies some sample pages of an Oz-type counter culture magazine - orange print on purple paper, exploding images.

EDWARD

I think it's way too legible... we need something like a sun-burst over the titles here...

109 EXT. WIGMORE STREET. DAY. 109

EDWARD is with a group of friends - MOLLY, DANA, two other girl, JANE and TINA, plus, two young men, PHIL and JACK.

They come noisily along the street, laughing. As they pass under the concert hall canopy EDWARD catches sight of a poster: 'The Ennismore Quartet', Mozart quintet D major. He slows to look. The others walk on.

MOLLY

Ed! Come on!

After a brief glance (he won't be going) he catches up with his friends.

110 INT. APARTMENT. NIGHT. 110

The friends, EDWARD with MOLLY and DANA curled up on either side, and JANE with PHIL and JACK with TINA.

They sit and sprawl on cushions around a low table. On the table, many wine bottles, a lump of hash etc. It is the end of a long evening. The atmosphere is soporific - anecdotes interspersed with silences.

JANE

... so she borrowed this bike

PHIL

...nah, she stole it...

JANE

Went shooting down the hill, to his mother's house and said, look, here's your money back.

There are groans, some laughter, then silence. EDWARD'S story is sleepily understated.

EDWARD

It's not always like that. I knew this couple once. Very straight. Sort of innocent and young. She was truly beautiful. And so they get married, the whole conventional thing, you know, church and cake and in-laws, honeymoon in a hotel by the sea. And on the big night it doesn't quite work out, you know, in bed, and she gets upset and rushes out the room, goes miles along the beach. He follows her out and he's truly pissed off, So he finds her and she tells him that she isn't really into sex and that when they live together he can have it with anyone he likes, anyone but her...

A stir of approval, chuckles.

PHIL

Man, what an offer!

EDWARD

No, but that's not it... you see, he's furious when he hears this, I mean, who wouldn't be? They were only married that afternoon. I don't blame him or anything.

(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)

But he doesn't get what it is she's trying to tell him. He's too angry, he doesn't see that... the thing is she really loves him and she doesn't want to let him down... but she wants to be with him, wants him to be happy... and he can't get it... and it all comes apart that night on the beach, they never see each other again... and that's how it goes, I guess...

EDWARD trails away. He has talked himself in the direction of a conclusion he has never before spelled out to himself, and still has not quite reached - that he made a terrible mistake.

The group talk over EDWARD'S final words and don't notice his disquiet or guess that he's talking about himself.

They begin to discuss the bride's offer ('not practical man... you kidding... paradise... look, if it was me... all right for him' etc) their voices fading as we CLOSE IN on EDWARD - reevaluating.

111 INT. WIGMORE HALL. NIGHT

111

The auditorium - crowded, with a few empty seats. A couple of seconds of silence. FACES in the audience - tense, expectant, good-willed.

We find a MUSIC CRITIC, grand, full-bearded, notebook on his lap. A new, young, much-talked-about string quartet is about to make its important debut.

On stage. The Ennismore Quartet - FLORENCE, JENNY, SONIA, ELSEBETH, CHARLES - ready to perform Mozart's D major quintet.

On FLORENCE. She glances at the others. All set.

FLORENCE inclines her head towards CHARLES. He plays the familiar rising four-note opening. The others play the lingering response. Then the four notes again, on a different chord.

FADE TO:

Fifteen minutes later. The haunting Adagio. CLOSE on FLORENCE as she plays the tender melody.

FACES in the audience. Then the MUSIC CRITIC - inscrutable.

FADE TO:

The last few bars and concluding chord of the stormy last movement. The music has barely finished when there is an exclamation of delight from someone in the audience. Followed by others, and loud 'bravos'

The dazed players stand to acknowledge the rapturous applause. Their nervous smiles.

MUSIC CRITIC (V.O.)

...and commanded with magisterial ease all the riches of Mozart's late style stop. There followed a searingly expressive Adagio of consummate beauty and lyrical power. Stop.

On FLORENCE. She smiles across at the others. They've made it! She faces out towards the audience. We follow her gaze...

Toward the middle seat in the third row. 9c. Empty.

On FLORENCE again as she struggles with a flood of mixed emotions.

112 INT. GREEN ROOM BEHIND STAGE. NIGHT. 112

The MUSICIANS are just packing up their stuff and leaving. The mood is exultant, but FLORENCE is subdued.

JENNY

Are you coming Florence?

FLORENCE

I'll catch you up.

113 INT. LOBBY OF WIGMORE HALL. NIGHT. 113

Half an hour later.

The lobby is almost deserted. The MUSIC CRITIC is using a payphone in a corner to phone in his copy.

## MUSIC CRITIC

The leader comma Miss Florence Ponting  
 comma in the youthful passion of her  
 phrasing...no that's P, H, R,  
 yes...played comma if I may put it so  
 boldly comma like a woman in love  
 stop.

He does not notice FLORENCE walking by alone, carrying her violin case.

As he dictates, she goes along the red carpet, through the double swing doors and disappears into the darkness of the street.

SLOW FADE TO:

114 EXT. CAMDEN TOWN. DAY 114

1982. The canal. A scruffy street.

115 INT. ED'S RECORDS. DAY 115

1982. Edward, short-haired, greying at the temples, is at the counter of his record store, checking an inventory. His store specialises in jazz and blues LPs.

A CUSTOMER leaves. Another comes in. She is CHLOE, eleven years old. EDWARD has not yet looked up.

She is solemn, poised, straight-backed. A strong-boned face, an Alice Band, school uniform. She's carrying a violin in its case. She gazes about the store with calm self-possession.

As CHLOE goes to a rack of LPs, EDWARD glances up, then down at his figures, and up again in a slow double-take.

We watch her from his POV . She rests the violin case carefully on the floor between her feet and begins to thumb through the LPs.

EDWARD'S curiosity is growing. Finally, kindly -

EDWARD

Camden School for Girls?

CHLOE

Yes.

EDWARD

Good school?

She turns to look at him. Her gaze is level. A coincidence surely, but this is a face that reminds him of the FLORENCE he once knew, twenty years ago.

CHLOE

I think it's very good.

EDWARD steps down from the counter.

EDWARD

Perhaps I can help you. What is it you're looking for?

CHLOE

The thing is, it's my mum's birthday soon...

EDWARD

Yes...

CHLOE

She's pretty old. She's going to be forty two.

On EDWARD as he takes this in.

EDWARD

Same as me.

CHLOE

You see, she mostly listens to classical music and I thought I'd get her something different.

EDWARD

Does she play the violin too?

CHLOE

She's really good. Actually, she's quite famous. She taught me. We can play the Bach Double, the slow movement anyway.

EDWARD

So... what can you get her? How about... let me think now... what about this one, Chuck Berry?

CHLOE

Oh yes! She actually likes him! She always says he's...

EDWARD

Bouncy?

CHLOE

Yes! And...

CHLOE AND EDWARD

Merry...

CHLOE

How did you know that?

EDWARD covers fast.

EDWARD

It's what I always say. It's what everyone says.

CHLOE

Well bouncy and merry is what my mum is.

EDWARD

Is she really? Does she...

CHLOE

And this is perfect. She'll be so surprised! But how much is it? I've only got seventy five p.

EDWARD

You can have it. I've got half a dozen copies.

CHLOE

Are you really sure?

EDWARD

Positive.

CHLOE

Amazing. And thank you! I'll put my money in your charity thing...

EDWARD

No need, honestly...

But before he can stop her she has posted her coins into the 'Help Brain Damage Research' collection box.

CHLOE

I can't believe it. Are you sure you mean it? It looks brand new. Like it's never been played before.

EDWARD

Just tell her, you know, happy birthday...

Chloe is at the door, ready to leave.

CHLOE

But happy birthday from who?

EDWARD

Oh, from... tell her, just, you know, from the shop.

CHLOE

'Bye then. And thanks again. You're really nice!

EDWARD

Wait. You haven't told me your name.

CHLOE

Chloe.

A little wry smile, a wave by way of a clasped and unclasped hand, and she's gone.

EDWARD stands alone in the centre of his empty shop, stricken.

SLOW FADE TO

116 EXT. CHILTERNS. DAY.

116

High summer. 2007. A LONG SHOT over the beech woods. We find the distant green patch of the cricket pitch, and a game in progress, and the distant white figures of the PLAYERS.

Closer. PLAYERS and their FAMILIES, FRIENDS, watch the village game from around the pavilion. Two TEENAGED BOYS arguing inside the scoring box. CHILDREN playing on the grass. Some KIDS watch a movie on a hand-held device. Modern cars parked in the shade. Much is unchanged, but we are clearly in another era.

We see the game from the boundary. The BOWLER makes his run, delivers. The BATSMAN swings and misses, the stumps go flying. A chorus of 'howzat!'

To scattered, feeble applause, the BATSMEN trudges towards us.

As he comes closer, we see that it is EDWARD.

In the scoring box, the 'last man' score turns to zero.

EDWARD stops by the pavilion, stoops to remove his pads. It's an effort - he's getting rather stout. WELL-WISHERS call out, 'Bad luck, Eddie', 'Good try, old man.'

EDWARD straightens.

EDWARD

Didn't even see it. Too damn slow...

117 EXT. AVENUE OF LIMES. DAY

117

A couple of hours later. EDWARD, still in whites, a jacket slung over his shoulder, walks towards the cottage, along the avenue of limes where he walked with FLORENCE (Sc 59).

118 EXT. OUTSIDE COTTAGE. DAY.

118

Parked outside is a small modern car. EDWARD goes up the garden path, enters. The door closes behind him.

119 INT. COTTAGE. DAY

119

An hour later. The place is far less cluttered than before. Not much modernised. The untidiness is of a man living alone. But the interior of the cottage is instantly recognizable. The furniture is unchanged. Along one wall, a large cd collection. There are some records scattered along a shelf above the hi-fi.

Edward's cricket shoes are on the floor along with a half finished cup of tea. He is stretched out on the sofa, snoozing. A cat is asleep on his stomach.

A newspaper has slid to the floor. We see part of a headline over an article EDWARD has been reading. 'Ennismore Quartet forty fifth anniversary triumph'

120 INT. COTTAGE. KITCHEN. DAY.

120

The following morning. EDWARD kneels to feed the cat, talks to it. We have the impression this is an important relationship.

121 EXT. COTTAGE GARDEN. DAY.

121

EDWARD cuts some flowers to make a small posey.

122 EXT. PATH THROUGH BEECH WOODS. DAY

122

Carrying the flowers, EDWARD makes his way along a footpath deep in the woods. He pauses briefly at a fork in the path.

VOICE OVER

Sometimes, when he thought of her, he wondered if this was the path she took when she walked to the cricket ground all those years ago...

EDWARD walks on.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

It rather amazed him, that he had let that girl with her violin go. Finally he could admit it, he had never met anyone he loved as much, never found anyone who matched her seriousness.

(MORE)

## VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

If he'd stayed with her, perhaps he  
would have written those history  
books...

123 EXT. COUNTRY CHURCHYARD. DAY.

123

Minutes later. EDWARD puts the flowers by the graves of his  
parents, Marjorie Mayhew (1918 - 1976) and Lionel Mayhew (1916 -  
1983).

## VOICE OVER

Her strange proposal was irrelevant.  
All she needed was the certainty of  
his love, his reassurance that there  
was no hurry, not when a lifetime lay  
ahead of them...

EDWARD comes up the churchyard path, steps through the gate  
under the yew.

On the verge beneath the wall, by the place where FLORENCE  
stopped to look at her map and eat her orange, he sees some peel  
scattered on the grass.

## VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

Love and patience would surely have  
seen them through.

EDWARD looks round and sees two HIKERS walking away, sharing an  
orange as they go.

He heads for home across an open grassy field towards the woods.

## VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

And then what unborn children might  
have had their chances, what young  
girl with an Alice band might have  
become *his* daughter, his loved  
familiar?

SLOW FADE TO:

124 EXT. BEACH. DAY

124

July 1962. Chesil Beach in summer calm and evening glory.

We find the couple.

FLORENCE comes away from the washed-up tree and approaches EDWARD.

FLORENCE  
I am sorry, Edward. I am most terribly  
sorry...

She waits for him to respond, to forgive her.

His face is a mask of cold anger.

He remains silent.

She turns and begins to walk away from him.

VOICE OVER  
On Chesil Beach he could have called  
out to Florence...

Very slowly we begin to pull away and above the couple, watching the gap between them grow.

FADE in the Rachmaninov

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)  
She thought she had lost him, and she  
had never loved him more. The sound of  
his voice would have been a  
deliverance. He could have gone after  
her...

Now we are only on FLORENCE as she moves away from us, receding, receding...

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)  
This is how the entire course of a  
life can be changed - by doing  
nothing.

The long road of shingle stretching to the horizon, the distant figure of FLORENCE dissolving into the dusk.

ENDS

CREDITS