

HACKS

Episode One

'Death Knock'

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. DIXON'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING DAY 1 1

It's a cold winter morning, the thin early light only just beginning to penetrate the mist. CHARLES DIXON, a smart, middle-class man in his mid-60s, emerges from his well-kept Kents Hill house wearing an anorak and scarf but with a tie visible beneath.

Clearly nervous, but also determined, he brushes one gloved hand over a dusting of frost on the windscreen of his small hatchback on the neat drive.

2 EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY 1 2

DIXON drives his car anxiously - he would say 'safely' - through the quiet early morning streets of Nether Brickhill, a dormitory village near Milton Keynes.

3 EXT. NETHER BRICKHILL TRAIN STATION CAR PARK - DAY 1 3

DIXON pulls up in his car and gets out, glancing at the station. Then he heads in the opposite direction towards the tracks, away from the platform.

4 EXT. ISOLATED RAILWAY TRACKS - DAY 1 4

DIXON, hiding in a bush, watches as an express train rounds a corner through the mist. He steps out, lies down facing the oncoming train with his neck across one rail, and closes his eyes. The train's horn sounds desperately but it is too late.

DIXON's scarf is sent flying by a rush of air from the passing train that has decapitated its owner.

5 TITLE SEQUENCE - INT. NEWSPAPER PRESSES - DAY 1 5

A montage showing newspaper presses in action, from the plating up at the front end to the finished product - The Milton Keynes Mail - being loaded onto delivery vans.

The voices of the senior editorial staff are going through the motions of the morning news conference. The editor, JERRY NORTHOVER, early 50s, runs the show in his blunt northern accent while his well-educated news editor FRANK THORNTON offers up stories for dissection.

JERRY (V.O.)

The arson case is boring me  
shitless, nobody gives a toss  
about traffic wardens and the  
single mums story is a load of  
bollocks.

FRANK (V.O.)

Oh come on, Jerry, traffic  
wardens adopting a stray puppy?  
It's good human interest stuff.

JERRY (V.O.)

The only humans likely to be  
interested in that are the limp-  
wristed, fluffy-bunny brigade.

FRANK (V.O.)

People like those stories, Jerry.  
Think of Rolf Harris.

JERRY (V.O.)

No, Frank, you think of Rolf  
bloody Harris, then maybe I won't  
have to. Where's tomorrow's  
splash, for God's sake?

FRANK (V.O.)

'Fraid that's all there is at the  
moment.

JERRY (V.O.)

Well you'd better go out and  
bloody well find something before  
tonight, hadn't you? Right -  
Sport.

6 INT. ALEX PARKER'S BEDROOM - DAY 1

6

ALEX PARKER, early 30s and dishevelled, is sitting hunched  
over on the edge of his bed, naked to the waist and with  
his hands raking through his hair.

Fussing angrily around the room is a pretty, slim BLONDE  
several years younger than ALEX. She is picking up items of  
clothing and cosmetics and dumping them in a large canvas  
bag on the bed beside him.

She puts the final handful into the bag and zips it up  
forcefully. Throwing it over her shoulder, she marches to  
the door. With a last, disgusted look back, she throws a  
bunch of keys onto the bed and slams the bedroom door  
behind her. Seconds later another slam - the front door.

For a moment ALEX sits bewildered. Then he looks at his  
wristwatch and jumps to his feet.

ALEX

Bugger!

7 INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1

7

The morning news conference is coming to an end. JERRY, his tie already adrift and his top button undone, is in command at the head of a long table, peopled by the senior editorial staff. He addresses KEN ADAMS, the picture editor, sitting a few seats away down the table.

JERRY

So no more bloody firing squads  
from your boys, right, or they'll  
just get spiked. (Beat) Right,  
let's make a paper.

The assembled staff all get up to go but before anyone can reach the door there is a hurried knock and deputy editor JANEY ARNOLD, a capable woman of about 40 but hassled and stressed, pokes her head in.

JANEY

What have I missed?

JERRY

Everything.

There is a moment where everyone stops in their tracks, waiting for the next move. All eyes are on JERRY.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Well get on with it, then.

As one man, they spring into action again, heading for the door.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Not you, Janey.

JANEY stops in the doorway, then steps into the room to let the others file out.

JERRY (CONT'D)

A word.

They wait for the last staffer to leave and JANEY closes the door after them. She turns to look at JERRY and takes a couple of steps forward but says nothing.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Parker.

JANEY

(testing the water)  
Yep. That's a word.

JERRY

Don't push it, Janey. The line was there.

(He points behind her)

You're over it.

JANEY

(contritely)

Point taken. What about him?

JERRY

You tell me. When was the last time he had a splash?

8

INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

8

The news editor FRANK, mid-50s and slightly shabby, leads the group emerging from JERRY's office after the conference. Carrying the office diary, he makes straight for the newsdesk as the others straggle out behind him.

He dumps the diary down heavily, then looks around for someone to offload on. He spots DEBBIE ALLARDYCE, one of his team of young reporters.

FRANK

Debbie, you're going to have to spike the puppy, sweetheart.

DEBBIE

What?

FRANK

Ditch it, dump it, drown it - whatever you do with unwanted puppies.

DEBBIE, a pretty and normally sweet-natured 26-year-old, is poised to complain when chief reporter SIMON CHAPMAN, 30, immaculately dressed with obvious taste and style, arrives in a damp raincoat, which he takes off and hangs on a coatstand near the newsdesk.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(with ill-disguised dislike)

Morning, Simon. Glad you could make it.

SIMON

Oh, no problem. Any time you need me, just give me a call.

SIMON goes to his desk, the nearest to the newsdesk, and is about to sit down.

FRANK  
Er, just a minute, Mr Casual. If  
you don't mind.

He signals SIMON to come over, which he does. They consult  
the diary together.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Since you're in such a happy  
frame of mind, a little job for  
you tonight.

FRANK taps the diary with his pen. SIMON reacts.

SIMON  
For God's sake, Frank. You can be  
a real bastard sometimes.

FRANK  
(smiling)  
Oh, no problem. Any time you need  
me...

9 INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1

9

JERRY is reading the nationals and swigging coffee when he  
comes across a story that sparks an idea. He picks up the  
phone and pushes a single button.

JERRY  
Frank? In here. Now.

He slams the phone down and swigs again. After a moment,  
there's a knock at the door.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
In!

FRANK appears at the door.

FRANK  
Give us a chance, boss. It's only  
been five minutes.

JERRY  
(ignoring him)  
Seen this?

FRANK  
Seen what?

JERRY throws the paper across the table at FRANK.

JERRY  
Estate agents. Page Five lead.

FRANK looks bemused at JERRY, then picks up the paper and reads.

FRANK  
'Estate agents have been voted  
Britain's most hated  
professionals, a new survey  
reveals today.' (He looks up.)  
So?

JERRY  
'Most hated.'

FRANK gives him a blank look.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Even more than journalists.

FRANK looks again at the paper and chuckles.

FRANK  
We're third behind lawyers.

JERRY  
And we're not about to let them  
forget it. I want a local angle  
on this. Today. There's your  
splash.

FRANK  
(uncertain)  
Really?

JERRY  
Really.

FRANK  
Is that... [wise?]

JERRY  
Don't argue with me about it,  
Frank. Get out there and get  
somebody on it.

FRANK turns for the door but hesitates.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
And I don't want one of the  
juniors cocking it up either.  
Understood?

FRANK shrugs to himself.

FRANK  
Understood.

10 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1 10

FRANK emerges from JERRY'S office with the newspaper in his hand and a bemused look on his face. He casts around the office to see who's about.

FRANK

Right. Who's for tomorrow's splash?

11 EXT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE CAR PARK - DAY 1 11

A steady rain is falling as ALEX turns his battered old Ford Fiesta into a parking bay outside the back of The Mail building.

12 INT. ALEX'S CAR - DAY 1 12

ALEX is just about to shut off the engine - and the radio with it - when a news bulletin begins. He stops the windscreen wipers to listen.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

You're listening to MK FM, good morning. In the latest news, police have revealed that this morning's delays to commuter trains were the result of a body being discovered on tracks near Nether Brickhill early today. A spokesman said the victim was a man in his sixties from the Milton Keynes area but could not reveal any more details at this stage.

ALEX snaps the radio off and reaches inside his jacket for a notebook and his mobile. He dials a number he knows by heart.

ALEX

(into phone)

Police press office? (Beat) Hi - it's Alex Parker from The Mail here. What can you tell me about this train suicide?

13 INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1 13

JERRY is reading through proofs of the next edition's pages when CARRIE HIGHAM, his efficient young secretary, pops her head in through the open door.

CARRIE

Jerry, sorry to bother you.

JERRY  
 (without looking up)  
 Mmm?

CARRIE  
 I've just had Eric on the phone.  
 He asked to see you.

JERRY  
 Later.

CARRIE stays put. She's the messenger and doesn't want to be shot.

CARRIE  
 Actually, it wasn't so much  
 'asked' as... [ordered]

JERRY sighs dramatically and throws the proofs down.

JERRY  
 Now?

CARRIE nods.

CARRIE  
 He didn't say what it was about.  
 Sorry.

JERRY gets up and heads for the door.

JERRY  
 (grimly)  
 It's all right. I've got a pretty  
 good idea.

14 EXT. BARRISTERS' CHAMBERS - DAY 1 14

Establishing shot of a shiny new office building in the shadows of a much larger, imposing block, adorned with a gold crest and the large lettering 'Milton Keynes Crown Court'. It is still raining.

JEREMY HOOPER, a 35-year-old successful lawyer, carrying an expensive briefcase and smart black brolly, strolls up the steps to the front door of his chambers. He is extremely relaxed and utterly in control.

15 INT. BARRISTERS' CHAMBERS - DAY 1 15

HOOPER sweeps authoritatively into his outer office, shaking out his dripping umbrella. He smiles sweetly at ELIZABETH MOORE, his middle-aged PA, puts down his briefcase and brolly, and hangs up his tailored coat.

HOOPER  
Morning, young Lizzie.

She smiles at this routine flirting.

ELIZABETH  
Morning, Sir.

HOOPER reaches for the pile of papers and letters that are waiting for him on her desk.

HOOPER  
What fun have we got today then?

ELIZABETH gets up from her desk and follows him round the room to the door that connects to his own chambers, chattering as she goes.

ELIZABETH  
I don't know about fun, but  
you're due for your summing up at  
two.

HOOPER  
(pompously)  
Ah yes, the moment when my  
blistering logic is brought to  
bear on an awestruck jury,  
leaving them in no doubt about  
the defendant's sickening guilt.

ELIZABETH  
(tolerantly)  
If you say so.

She watches from the doorway as he goes into his own office, sits in the plush leather chair and casually puts his feet up on the huge desk.

16 INT. NEWSPAPER ERIC'S OFFICE - DAY 1

16

JERRY is standing on the opposite side of a large mahogany desk from ERIC SANDERS, the newspaper's managing director. ERIC is a ruthless, profit-driven businessman in his early 50s, with a smart line in sharp suits and an eagle-eye for economies.

JERRY looks extremely uncomfortable.

JERRY  
This is a joke, right?

ERIC skewers him with a look.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Because I can't see how you're going to shave six people off my numbers without seriously damaging editorial quality.

ERIC shifts easily in his huge black leather seat.

ERIC

Point is, Jerry, me old mate, it's not me who's going to be doing it.

JERRY takes his painful point.

JERRY

So where's this come from?

ERIC

(shrugging)

Powers that be. You know how it works.

JERRY

(steely)

Cash.

ERIC

Bottom line. Always is. The figures for this year aren't as good as last, the whole industry's plummeting into God knows what kind of abyss while the bloggers and online marketplaces blag all our business from under us.

There's a pause while JERRY considers.

JERRY

How many going in advertising?

ERIC

Ah, different kettle of fish there. You can put a figure for revenue against their costs.

JERRY

So because editorial doesn't bring in hard cash, we get the knife.

ERIC

No arguing with the economics. Show me how much money your average reporter brings in and we can talk about keeping him.

JERRY  
 Editorial doesn't work that way  
 and you know it.

ERIC  
 That's not how the shareholders  
 see it.

JERRY stomps angrily to the door.

JERRY  
 Bugger the shareholders.

As he goes, ERIC calls after him.

ERIC  
 Six, Jerry. Find 'em.

17 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

17

SIMON is typing sullenly at his desk when ALEX arrives in the office at a half-run. He goes straight to the newsdesk, where FRANK is working on the diary.

ALEX  
 I've already been onto the cops  
 about the suicide and I think  
 I've got -

FRANK  
 (calmly)  
 And good morning to you too, dear  
 boy. Lovely weather for the time  
 of year. I'm very well, thank  
 you, and you? Now, did you say  
 something about a suicide?

ALEX  
 You haven't heard? It's just been  
 all over the radio.

FRANK  
 (unfazed)  
 Then you'd best start playing  
 catch-up, hadn't you, dear boy? I  
 want a full briefing ready for  
 the editor in ten minutes.

ALEX nods and hurries to his own desk opposite SIMON's, firing up his computer. As it warms up, he looks over at SIMON and immediately picks up an atmosphere.

ALEX  
 Problem?

SIMON  
(pointedly towards  
Frank)  
Bloody amateurs.

FRANK has heard but chooses to ignore him.

ALEX  
Sorry?

SIMON  
(disparagingly)  
The amateur operaticals.

ALEX  
(grimacing)  
Ouch. What is it this year?

SIMON  
What difference does it make?  
They're still the bloody  
amateurs.

FRANK  
(singing to himself)  
'When you walk through a storm  
Hold your chin up high  
And don't be afraid of the dark.  
At the end of the mmmm mmmm...'  
(He resorts to humming  
as he forgets the  
words)

SIMON  
What about you?

ALEX holds up his notebook towards SIMON.

ALEX  
Looks like a death knock.

SIMON  
You bastard. Who are you sleeping  
with?

They both look across at FRANK, who gives them a withering  
look without letting it interrupt his singing.

ALEX  
To be honest, I could do without  
it today.

SIMON  
Don't give me that balls. You get  
the peachiest job on the diary  
and I'm lumbered with the bloody  
amateurs. Whatever happened to  
the perks of seniority?

FRANK  
 (still singing)  
 'And you'll never walk alone,  
 You'll never walk - '

JANEY appears behind FRANK and claps her hands on his shoulders.

JANEY  
 Thank you, Pavarotti. Now can you  
 give it a rest - some of us are  
 trying to work?

FRANK  
 What? Who? Where?

JANEY  
 (to ALEX)  
 Alex - can I borrow you for a  
 moment?

Before ALEX can respond, JERRY appears in the newsroom, returning from his chat with ERIC. He adopts his usual self-important stance and addresses the room.

JERRY  
 Right, listen up everyone.

He waits until he has everybody's attention.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 Right. Sorry about this. We're  
 going to be making some news of  
 our own today.

18 EXT. DIXON'S HOUSE - DAY 1

18

ALEX's Fiesta pulls up in the street outside DIXON's house on the Kents Hill estate.

ALEX looks in the rear-view mirror to straighten his tie, then gets out of the car. He reaches back inside to pull out a large bunch of flowers, then looks up at the house, checking he's got the right number.

He takes a deep breath and heads up the drive through the rain.

19 EXT./INT. DIXON'S HOUSE - DAY 1

19

From the POV of new widow MRS DIXON, a trim, no-nonsense woman in her mid-60s wearing an apron and wiping her hands on a tea towel. ALEX is on the doorstep, in the middle of his charm offensive.

ALEX

...so we like to think of it as giving the family of the deceased a chance to pay tribute to him. You know, what kind of husband he was, how he loved his family...

MRS DIXON is too fresh in her grief to cope with this and starts to cry.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm sorry, Mrs Dixon. Here - let me find you a tissue or something.

ALEX steps inside, uninvited but assuming the role of white knight. She lets him.

MRS DIXON

(still weeping)

You - you'd better come in.

She closes the door as ALEX hovers in the hall, which is full of stacked cardboard boxes. It is clear the removal men have barely left. MRS DIXON leads him to the kitchen at the back of the house.

MRS DIXON (CONT'D)

I was just about to put the kettle on.

20

INT. DIXON'S KITCHEN - DAY 1

20

ALEX sizes up the kitchen with a glance. Although there are more boxes being unpacked, it's clean and well-kept, and there are already family photos of the DIXONS with their two grown-up children and a flock of grandchildren stuck to the fridge door with homely magnets.

ALEX spots a box of tissues on a work surface and offers them to MRS DIXON. As she dries her eyes, he goes over to the fridge and studies the pictures.

ALEX

Your family -

MRS DIXON

They're on their way. They don't live...

ALEX

Do they know... [the whole story?]

MRS DIXON shakes her head and starts to crumple again, but manages to compose herself. She reaches for the kettle.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Here - let me do that.

ALEX takes the kettle and goes to the sink to fill it.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
(over his shoulder)  
You know, it would be a really nice touch if we could borrow one of those photos of your husband to go with the tribute.

MRS DIXON  
I don't know -

ALEX  
(turning to face her)  
It doesn't have to be a special one. Anything would do.  
(He mimes a cut-off at shoulder level)  
Even a head and shoulders.

There's a beat as the significance of his words sinks in - with both of them. Then MRS DIXON lets out a wail of horror and rushes from the room.

ALEX drops his head in self-disgust.

21

INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

21

SIMON punches the return key on his computer decisively, then gets up and wanders across to the newsdesk, where FRANK is working on the diary.

SIMON  
(casually)  
Church roof story's in.

FRANK  
(without looking up)  
Good.

SIMON  
(after a beat)  
Could just do with something tasty now.

FRANK  
You could always try the canteen's all-day breakfast.

SIMON  
I was thinking more of... say, a suicide?

FRANK sighs and looks up at him.

FRANK  
Give it a rest, Simon.

SIMON  
(urgently)  
But why does he get it? I'm  
supposed to be the chief  
reporter, aren't I?

FRANK  
(patiently)  
Alex brought the story in, dear  
boy.

SIMON  
Only because he was late and  
heard it on the radio.

FRANK  
(shrugging)  
Doesn't matter where they come  
from. You should know that.

SIMON  
Meaning?

FRANK  
Let's just say, you appear to  
have some interesting sources.

SIMON  
(defensively)  
So I've got a healthy contacts  
book. It doesn't seem to be  
getting me the big stories, does  
it?

FRANK  
Oh, save your energy. You've got  
a late night coming up, haven't  
you?

SIMON considers a riposte, but none comes. He resorts to  
turning away and skulking back to his desk.

22

INT. DIXON'S KITCHEN - DAY 1

22

MRS DIXON has regained her composure and is sitting at the  
table in the centre of the room. ALEX takes a nice china  
cup in newspaper wrapping from a nearby box, removes the  
paper and gives the cup a cursory wipe with a tea towel.  
Then he pours tea into it from a pot and takes it over to  
her.

ALEX  
There you go, Mrs Dixon. I find a  
nice cup of tea always helps.

She dabs at her eye with a tissue before taking a sip of the tea.

MRS DIXON  
(gratefully)  
Thank you. I'm sorry about  
before.

ALEX  
Not at all - my big mouth.

MRS DIXON  
It's just all come as such a -  
you know, so sudden and  
everything.

ALEX  
I know, I know.

MRS DIXON  
I mean, I never suspected a  
thing.

She starts to weep again. Now used to the routine, ALEX automatically takes another tissue from the box and hands it to her.

He fishes his notebook out of his jacket pocket.

ALEX  
Would it help to talk about...

MRS DIXON  
What?

ALEX  
You know - what drove him to it?

MRS DIXON  
What drove him to it? How should  
I know? He had no enemies. He'd  
got the rest of his life to look  
forward to.

ALEX  
He'd just retired?

MRS DIXON  
We only moved back here last  
week. Coming home, he said. Of  
course, it's changed a lot. We'd  
been away twenty years but people  
still remember him. Just  
yesterday we had one of his old  
pupils call round. They loved  
him.

She begins to dissolve again.

ALEX

Mrs Dixon, if I could just understand why he might...

MRS DIXON

(suddenly suspicious)

What are you after? Gossip. Scandal. That's it, isn't it?

ALEX

No, Mrs Dixon. That's not it at all.

MRS DIXON

Vermin on the lookout for some sordid little secret.

ALEX

We're not the nationals -

MRS DIXON

Well you won't find anybody with a bad word to say about my Charles. Not my sweet Charles.

She breaks down again. ALEX has to move fast.

ALEX

You're absolutely right, Mrs Dixon. If people remember your husband like you say, then he should be given a proper tribute. And it's my job to make sure that happens. Now, how about we freshen up that cup of tea?

23

INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

23

FRANK, at the newsdesk, notices CARRIE emerging from JERRY's office with an empty coffee cup.

FRANK

Carrie, have you got a minute?

CARRIE considers the cup in her hand, then heads over to FRANK, still carrying it. SIMON watches the unfolding scene from his desk nearby.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Fancy a little researching job?

CARRIE

Really?

FRANK

Absolutely. (Sarcastically) Not too busy, are you?

He nods at the coffee cup, which she deposits quickly on his desk.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I need a list of all the estate agents in the city, together with their phone numbers and a contact name. Five minutes tops.

CARRIE

Five minutes. Right.

She hops off back to her desk near JERRY'S door, where she picks up a notepad and pen, then looks around, clearly a little lost.

FRANK has been studying her.

FRANK

(calling over)

You might want to start with Yellow Pages?

SIMON gives him a look.

SIMON

Give her a break. She's not your personal slave.

FRANK flashes a brief smile at SIMON, then picks up the diary and goes off in the direction of JANEY'S desk, some way away across the newsroom.

24

INT. DIXON'S DINING ROOM - DAY 1

24

ALEX is sitting at the dining table with a shoebox of old photos in front of him. He is sifting through them for a likely snap to use in the paper.

ALEX

(calling)

Any of these, Mrs Dixon?

MRS DIXON (O.S.)

(from the kitchen)

Just help yourself.

ALEX carries on flicking through them, vetoing one after another. Finally, he pulls from the pile a straightforward snapshot of DIXON, evidently taken fairly recently, and a second, old photograph in black and white, showing him in his younger schoolmaster days, smiling and with his arms round the shoulders of identical twin teenage boys.

ALEX  
 (to himself)  
 Better than nothing, I suppose.  
 'Goodbye Mr Chips'.

25 EXT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY 1 25

Establishing shot of The Mail building, with its giant press hall sticking out behind. An angry TRAFFIC WARDEN clutching a puppy hurries out through the front door.

26 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1 26

A phone starts ringing on the unmanned newsdesk. SIMON looks across at it, irritated, but does nothing.

From JERRY's office...

JERRY (O.S.)  
 Phone!

Annoyed, SIMON goes over to take the call.

SIMON  
 (into phone)  
 Newsdesk, hello?

BOOKIE (V.O.)  
 Frank, me old mate. You asked me to give you a call about the 2.15 at Towcester. How much did you want on Booze Cruise, then?

SIMON  
 I'm sorry, Frank's not available right now. Can I get him to call you back? (Beat) Not at all. Goodbye.

He hangs up, then looks around the office to see if anyone's watching. The coast clear, he starts searching surreptitiously through FRANK's desk.

When he draws a blank, he pulls up a chair to FRANK's computer terminal and opens up his "Email Sent" folder. With countless messages to "Lucky Jim Turf Accountant", it is immediately apparent that one of FRANK's main correspondents is the bookie.

27 INT./EXT. DIXON'S HOUSE - DAY 1 27

ALEX is doing his jacket up in the hall as he leaves the widow to her grieving in the kitchen.

ALEX

...and thanks for the tea, Mrs Dixon. I'm sure you'll be pleased with the tribute piece. Should be in tomorrow, with luck. Don't mind me, I'll get the door.

He pulls the door closed behind him and turns to breathe in fresh air. As a frown spreads across his brow, he takes the two photographs from inside his jacket before glancing back over his shoulder and scurrying down the wet path.

Once inside the car, he drops the photographs onto the passenger seat, then takes out his mobile from a jacket pocket and dials a short number.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Yes, I'd like a number for Winterbourne College, please.

28 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

28

FRANK returns to the newsdesk from JANEY's desk. SIMON is suddenly there beside him, looking very pleased with himself. He leans down to whisper in FRANK's ear.

SIMON

Quiet word in your shell-like?

FRANK scowls, then sees the look on SIMON's face. Intrigued, he follows as SIMON nods in the direction of the coffee machine.

29 EXT. NEWSPAPER SMOKING SHELTER - DAY 1

29

Non-smoker SIMON, plastic cup of coffee in hand, stands inside the shelter to keep out of the rain and watches FRANK light up.

They wait in silence until the one other occupant of the shelter stubs out her cigarette and leaves. They are evidently partway through a conversation begun at the coffee machine, and when the woman is out of earshot, they resume where they left off.

SIMON

Come on, Frank. You know how tight the company is over its internet abuse policy. It's instant dismissal.

FRANK

(sarcastically)

While blackmail is perfectly acceptable.

SIMON  
 (disingenuously)  
 Blackmail? Who said anything  
 about blackmail?

FRANK  
 You're transparent, you little  
 shit. How's it going to look to  
 Jerry if you snitch on your own  
 boss?

SIMON  
 I don't need to snitch on you,  
 Frank. You're quite capable of  
 destroying yourself with the  
 booze, the fags, the gambling.

FRANK lurches towards SIMON and stabs his cigarette  
 menacingly at him.

FRANK  
 You evil bastard. You keep your  
 slimy nose out of my private  
 life, all right? If you think you  
 can frighten me with your scummy  
 little threats, you'll find I can  
 throw a great deal worse at you  
 than a bloody amateur theatre  
 review. Get me?

SIMON is taken aback by the intensity of the fury. He is  
 also aware that another pair of smokers is approaching.

SIMON  
 Woah, there. Down boy.

FRANK  
 (sotto voce)  
 You ever try anything like that  
 again and I'll have you taking  
 all the kiddies' names at every  
 sodding nativity in the county.

SIMON  
 (in a placatory tone)  
 All right, all right. No need to  
 get vicious. I only want in on  
 the suicide. A different angle.  
 Alex hasn't got time to cover it  
 all. What do you say? A little  
 background digging?

FRANK is a little calmer and recognises the logic.

FRANK  
 (after a moment)  
 Sod it. All right.

He prods a warning finger at SIMON.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
But don't get in each other's  
way, you hear me?

SIMON nods eagerly.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Now piss off and let me finish my  
fag in peace.

30 INT. HOOPER'S OFFICE - DAY 1 30

HOOPER, in his shirt sleeves, finishes making some notes on the file in front of him and slaps it shut with satisfaction. He checks his watch, then gets up and goes to a wardrobe in the corner, where he takes out his wig and gown. He starts to pack them into luxurious carrying cases.

31 EXT. WINTERBOURNE COLLEGE GATES - DAY 1 31

ALEX drives through the stone gates of an imposing country house, converted into a boarding school. A large noticeboard at the entrance announces 'Winterbourne College for Boys'. Underneath its shield emblem, the school's motto is picked out in italic script: 'Honour in all things'.

32 EXT. WINTERBOURNE COLLEGE FRONT DOORS - DAY 1 32

ALEX parks his Fiesta among a group of much newer, cleaner cars. Locking up, he heads for the front door of the building, where a sign indicates 'All visitors must report to Reception'.

33 INT. WINTERBOURNE COLLEGE RECEPTION - DAY 1 33

ALEX enters and smiles at the school secretary behind a large counter. ROZ TURNER, in her 50s, is immaculately turned out and wears an ultra-modern telephone headset.

ROZ  
(smiling back)  
Can I help you?

ALEX  
I'm Alex Parker, from The Mail.

ROZ appears confused.

ROZ  
Yes?

ALEX

I'd like to see the headmaster,  
please.

ROZ

Mr Collins? I'm sorry, I don't  
understand.

ALEX

I'm looking for a comment to go  
with a tribute piece we're  
running on Charles Dixon. He used  
to teach here.

ROZ

Oh yes, I know who Charles Dixon  
is. I just don't understand why  
you want to speak to Mr Collins  
again.

ALEX double-takes.

ALEX

Again?

ROZ

I've only just put through a  
phone call from your colleague.

ALEX

My colleague?

ROZ checks the phone log in front of her.

ROZ

A Mr Chapman?

ALEX's face turns to thunder.

ALEX

(to himself)  
Bollocks.

ROZ looks shocked.

ROZ

Well, excuse me!

JANEY is at her desk, working on tomorrow's dummy, an A4  
plan of the layout of the paper, writing in pencil what  
each page will contain. CARRIE shuffles nervously up.

CARRIE

Janey?

JANEY looks up and smiles maternally at her.

JANEY

Carrie.

CARRIE

Anything you need doing?

JANEY

(a little surprised)  
Don't think so.

CARRIE

No little jobs need sorting?

JANEY

(hesitantly)  
Not just now, thanks.

CARRIE

So, nothing I can do for you?

JANEY

(after a beat)  
Carrie, what's this about?

CARRIE pauses and grimaces uncomfortably.

CARRIE

I think I've stuffed it up.

JANEY

How exactly?

CARRIE

Frank.

She falters again.

JANEY

I need a bit more than that.

CARRIE

Sorry. The thing is, he asked me  
to do some research for him and  
I...

JANEY

You what?

CARRIE

I wasn't very good at it.

JANEY

(laughing it off)  
Oh, I wouldn't worry about that.  
Frank's never satisfied.

She begins to return to her work, but CARRIE persists.

CARRIE  
It's just that, with these  
redundancies -

JANEY  
(concerned)  
Are you worried about that?

CARRIE nods sheepishly.

JANEY (CONT'D)  
Look, sweetheart, there's no  
point getting yourself all worked  
up about that. Life's too short.  
There's more to our existence on  
this little planet than what goes  
on between these four walls, let  
me tell you. If you're in line  
for the chop - or if I am, come  
to that - then there's pretty  
much bugger all we can do about  
it now, except smile sweetly and  
get on with our lives.

CARRIE  
You don't think Frank'll hold it  
against me?

JANEY  
It's not up to Frank. It's not up  
to me either, more's the pity.  
But let's just say there are some  
people more essential to the  
running of this place than  
others. Such as anyone with  
access to the editor on a regular  
basis. If you take my meaning.

CARRIE starts to understand and the hint of a smile creeps  
onto her face.

CARRIE  
Thanks, Janey.

JANEY  
Happier?

CARRIE nods again, more confidently this time.

JANEY (CONT'D)  
Well, off you go and make  
yourself indispensable then.

As CARRIE goes, the cheery look on JANEY's face falls into  
a grim stare: she doesn't believe a word of what she's just  
said.

She jumps as the phone on her desk rings. She picks it up.

JANEY (CONT'D)  
 (into phone)  
 Janey Arnold. (Beat) I'll be  
 right in.

35

INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1

35

JERRY is still looking through page proofs when JANEY  
 knocks at the open door and lets herself in. JERRY looks up  
 and beckons her to close the door. As she turns back to  
 him...

JERRY  
 These cuts.

JANEY  
 (cautiously)  
 Yes...

JERRY realises she's concerned for herself and acts quickly  
 to put her straight.

JERRY  
 Oh, not you, Janey.

She sighs with relief.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 Don't be a daft sod. I couldn't  
 manage without you, could I?

JANEY  
 Well, I -

JERRY  
 No, no. But I am about to dump a  
 load of shit on you, I'm afraid.

JANEY looks unsurprised.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
 I need a hit list.

JANEY  
 Oh, what?

JERRY  
 Six redundancies - give me a list  
 of twelve names.

JANEY  
 Jerry -

JERRY

I know, I know. Call it part of the job. Comes with the territory of senior management. It'll be a learning curve for you.

JANEY

(sarcastically)  
And a cop-out for you.

JERRY

Yes, thank you, Ms Arnold. This is your editor speaking.

JANEY turns to the door.

JANEY

Don't I know it.

She flings the door open and stomps out, but it's all for show, and JERRY knows it. He allows himself a wry smile.

36

INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

36

As JANEY emerges from JERRY's office, ALEX comes marching into the department. He's clearly furious.

ALEX

(to nobody in particular)  
Where the bloody hell's Chapman?

FRANK, at the newsdesk, studiously avoids responding. JANEY is already well on her way back to her own desk. DEBBIE happens to catch ALEX's eye.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Any idea?

DEBBIE

Not here. Sorry.

ALEX

Has he gone out?

DEBBIE

(shrugging)  
I think so.

ALEX

Great.

ALEX turns around and goes back towards the lift. There, he pulls out his mobile, punches a number and listens.

37 INT. CROWN COURT CORRIDOR - DAY 1

37

SIMON is on a bench outside the court rooms, waiting. When his phone rings, he fishes it out of his coat pocket and looks at it. 'ALEX PARKER'. Decisively, he rejects the call.

38 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

38

ALEX, infuriated, thrusts the mobile back into his pocket and heads back to his desk. But he is interrupted by JANEY, approaching across the newsroom.

JANEY

Alex!

ALEX has not even had the chance to take his coat off, but he follows when JANEY beckons to him. They cross to an area at the edge of the newsroom where three sofas are laid out in a U shape around a low coffee table. They sit.

JANEY (CONT'D)

I'll be straight with you, Alex.  
Jerry's on the warpath.

Alex leaps in to defend himself.

ALEX

What have I done now?

Janey holds up two hands to deflect the anger.

JANEY

Hold your horses there, Tonto.  
It's not so much what you've done  
as what you haven't done. Is  
there anything bothering you?

ALEX

(peevishly)  
Not any more.

JANEY

Meaning?

ALEX

(reluctantly)  
There's been a bit of... domestic  
trouble.

JANEY

Ha! Don't try and sell me your  
domestic troubles. I could trump  
you any day of the week. You need  
to sort yourself out, Alex. He  
wants to see something meaty from  
you.

ALEX  
(sniggering)  
Dirty sod.

JANEY  
Be serious, Alex. God knows,  
these redundancies are no joke.  
(Beat) What are you working on at  
the moment?

ALEX  
Something meaty, as it happens.  
Assisted suicide.

JANEY  
Really? The wife?

ALEX  
The 6.35 from Bedford, actually.

Alex drags a finger across his throat, miming decapitation.

JANEY  
Great!  
(She catches herself)  
Well, you know what I mean.

ALEX  
So you can tell our glorious  
leader that I've just come back  
from doorstepping Mrs Suicide.  
D'you think I should have  
mentioned that he asked after  
her?

JANEY  
It's that smart mouth that's  
going to land you in trouble if  
you're not careful.

She gets up to go, then looks back.

JANEY (CONT'D)  
Make it a good one, and make it  
fast. There's too much at stake  
to go pissing about.

She leaves ALEX mulling it over.

ALEX  
(to himself)  
Shit.

39 INT. TRENDY CITY RESTAURANT - DAY 1

39

HOOPER is enjoying lunch with a couple of legal colleagues, sharing a joke. Across the dining room a television scrolls rolling news across its screen.

HOOPER

...and the judge said, 'Mr Hooper, I shall be forced to adjourn proceedings if your client insists on wearing that hat'!

All three fall about laughing. As they recover their composure, HOOPER spots a headline on the scrolling news. It reads: 'Suicide victim named as former teacher CHARLES DIXON'.

HOOPER stops laughing immediately and gets up to go for a closer look at the television.

40 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

40

ALEX is back at his desk, trawling through the paper's computer archives. He types in the name 'CHARLES DIXON' and studies the results. Clicking on one that refers to Winterbourne College, it brings up on screen the same photograph of DIXON with his arm round twin boys.

Alex studies the caption, which reads: 'JEREMY HOOPER (left) with his twin brother JAMES and housemaster Mr CHARLES DIXON.' Next he calls up Friends Reunited on his computer. Into the search window he types 'JEREMY HOOPER, Winterbourne College'.

When the profile appears, a formal photograph of HOOPER in barrister's wig and gown stands alongside a short paragraph of text: 'Currently executing criminals at Crown Court.'

Returning to the paper's own archives, ALEX requests 'JEREMY HOOPER barrister'. The screen immediately reveals the address of Hooper's chambers.

Alex scribbles the details in his notebook and is about to get up and go when he notices something else. Checking the trail of most recent searches on HOOPER's name, he discovers that the latest was carried out this morning. By SIMON.

ALEX leaps to his feet and dashes out of the newsroom.

41 INT. NEWSPAPER STAFF CANTEEN - DAY 1

41

CARRIE is in the lunch queue with a friend of hers from the advertising department, SAM.

CARRIE takes a salad sandwich from the chiller cabinet and puts it on her tray. Her rather larger friend moves up to the hot food display.

SAM  
(to the dinner lady)  
Full fry-up please, Sandra love.

CARRIE  
(sighing)  
I'm extremely tempted to join you.

SAM  
Why don't you?

CARRIE  
Can't. Not until after my birthday.

SAM  
You're having a blow-out then, though, aren't you? I'm relying on you.

CARRIE  
Oh yes.

SAM receives her piled-high plate and they move on to the cashier at the end of the line. They pay as they chat.

SAM  
So why the temptation now?

CARRIE  
I've just had my head bitten off.

SAM  
Who by? Let me at 'em.

CARRIE  
(laughing)  
No, it's Frank, the news editor.

SAM  
That greasy little slimeball?  
Tell him to bugger off. I would.

CARRIE  
You would, too, wouldn't you?

They move to a free table and settle down, starting to eat their lunch.

SAM  
What's he done to upset you?

CARRIE

He's just had a real go at me. I wouldn't mind but I was trying to do him a favour.

SAM

Come on, I need more.

CARRIE

OK. First off, he asks me to put this list together of all the estate agents in the city.

SAM

Why?

CARRIE

Some story the editor wants doing.

SAM

About estate agents?

CARRIE

Yes, but that's not important. The point is, when I gave him the list, he had a right go because I hadn't put contact names down with the phone numbers. But how am I supposed to get that sort of information from Yellow Pages?

SAM

Hang on a minute - back up there, sister. Frank had a go at you over a story the editor's doing about estate agents in Milton Keynes?

CARRIE

Yes.

SAM

What sort of story?

CARRIE

Something about them being the most hated profession, I think. But like I said, that's not the point.

SAM

It is if your editor's planning to knock some of our biggest customers. In print. Can't see Arabella being too impressed by that.

42 INT. BARRISTERS' CHAMBERS - DAY 1

42

ALEX is leaning over ELIZABETH's desk with an air of desperation.

ALEX  
Look, I only want a few minutes  
with him.

ELIZABETH  
(firmly)  
And I've already told you he's  
not available today.

But ALEX isn't going to take no for an answer, and rushes past her to HOOPER's office door.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Hey, you can't -

But it's too late. ALEX is already inside. HOOPER looks up in alarm.

HOOPER  
What the - ?

ALEX  
Mr Hooper?

ELIZABETH  
(following him in)  
I'm so sorry, Mr Hooper. I  
couldn't -

ALEX  
What can you tell me about  
Charles Dixon, Mr Hooper?

HOOPER stands imperiously and walks over to ALEX, towering over him.

HOOPER  
Just who the hell do you think  
you are, barging in here like  
this?

ALEX  
I'm sorry. I should have made an  
appointment.

ELIZABETH  
You certainly should.

ALEX  
I'm just really up against it.  
Please, Mr Hooper. Give me five  
minutes.

HOOPER

For what?

ALEX

For a few comments about him. He taught you, didn't he?

HOOPER

And what the hell's it got to do with you?

ALEX realises he hasn't even introduced himself.

ALEX

Oh God. I'm really sorry.

He holds out a hand towards HOOPER.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Alex Parker. The Mail.

HOOPER looks confused.

HOOPER

Another bloody hack?

ALEX looks from HOOPER to ELIZABETH, nonplussed.

ALEX

Another?

ELIZABETH

I've just had exactly the same conversation with one of you people. At least he had some manners.

ALEX has been trumped again.

ALEX

(to himself)

Bastard!

HOOPER

Do you mind?

ALEX

I'm sorry. It's just - this is my story.

HOOPER

I don't care whose story it is. I have nothing to say to the press.

ALEX

Just a comment, a tribute - please.

HOOPER  
 (flaring)  
 A tribute?

He stops himself before he blurts anything else out.

HOOPER (CONT'D)  
 Look, I vaguely remember Mr  
 Dixon. Not a particularly  
 memorable chap, if truth be  
 known. But I haven't seen him  
 since I left that place and I  
 certainly wouldn't feel qualified  
 to pass any comment. Now if you  
 don't mind, I've got work to do.

ELIZABETH ushers ALEX out of the office, ignoring his protests, and shepherds him to the door.

ELIZABETH  
 Good day.

She shuts it firmly behind him. Through the glass, she watches him give up and trudge away, swearing to himself.

43

INT. NEWSPAPER ERIC'S OFFICE - DAY 1

43

JERRY is standing opposite the desk, where ERIC is on the phone, looking relaxed.

ERIC  
 (into phone)  
 Yah, so... (Beat) I don't think  
 it's as serious as all that, do  
 you?

He looks up at JERRY, acknowledging him with a gesture, then ignores him again.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Anyway, look - let me do some  
 number-crunching and I'll get  
 back to you this afternoon. OK?  
 (Beat) Great. Speak to you then.

He hangs up, then leans forward, picking up his glasses and putting them on to study a sheet of paper on the desk in front of him. He talks without looking at JERRY.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Right. Slight cock-up on the  
 figures, I'm afraid. Turns out  
 we're looking for a bit more than  
 we thought.

JERRY starts to react but ERIC ploughs on.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Still, it shouldn't make any  
 difference to the overall  
 numbers. All you need to do is  
 substitute a senior staff member  
 for one of the juniors - Bob's  
 your uncle.

He finally deigns to look at JERRY with a big false grin.  
 JERRY waits to make sure he's finished talking - and maybe  
 to make him feel a little uncomfortable.

JERRY  
 (at last)  
 Is that it? (Beat) Have you  
 finished destroying my  
 department?

ERIC  
 Tough times, old chap. Got to  
 make the sums add up.

JERRY  
 By decimating my staff.

ERIC  
 I presume you'll be intending to  
 stop on yourself? Bit tricky to  
 run a newspaper without an  
 editor, I guess. So that  
 leaves... Janey or Frank?

JERRY is about to respond again, but -

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Got to be one of them, Jerry. The  
 decision, as that annoying man  
 used to say, is yours. No  
 pressure. End of the week'll do.

Out on JERRY, steaming but speechless.

44 EXT. DIXON'S HOUSE - DAY 1 44

ALEX's Fiesta pulls up outside again. Notebook in hand, he  
 gets out and hurries up the path.

45 INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1 45

JERRY enjoys his post-prandial strong black coffee and  
 another look at the day's papers. His phone rings with an  
 internal tone. He scowls at it, looks at the display  
 telling him who it is, then ignores it.

ALEX is standing in the kitchen, where MRS DIXON sits at the table, tissue still in hand.

MRS DIXON

I don't know what else I can say.

ALEX

I'm sorry, Mrs Dixon. I know it must be very difficult for you. I was just hoping for something a bit...

MRS DIXON

(accusingly)

Meatier?

ALEX breaks the stare, ashamed.

MRS DIXON (CONT'D)

Well, at least you've got the good grace to look embarrassed.

ALEX

I'm only -

MRS DIXON

Don't say 'doing my job'. Please.

There is an awkward silence. ALEX is still hovering, but it's MRS DIXON who breaks first.

MRS DIXON (CONT'D)

Why don't you try talking to somebody else? There's plenty of people still living round here who knew him.

ALEX

Any suggestions?

MRS DIXON

I really am doing your job for you today, aren't I? (Beat) What about the boy who was round here yesterday? First visitor we'd had since moving in. There - that shows you how much they loved him.

ALEX

Any chance of a name?

MRS DIXON

One of those Hooper twins.

(remembering)

He always got on well with them.

ALEX  
 (suddenly interested)  
 Hooper? Jeremy Hooper?

MRS DIXON  
 That's right.

ALEX  
 He was here? Yesterday?

MRS DIXON  
 I told you - they all loved my  
 Charles.

ALEX  
 But he said he'd - never mind.

ALEX rushes away down the hall to the front door, calling  
 behind him.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
 Thanks, Mrs Dixon. You're a star.

MRS DIXON  
 Any time, love.

47 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1 47

In the b.g. four TRAFFIC WARDENS with a puppy are in the  
 middle of an unheard but lively discussion with JANEY at  
 her desk.

Across the newsroom, the power-dressed, brassy figure of  
 advertising manager ARABELLA LLOYD, late 30s, strides  
 purposefully towards JERRY'S office door.

48 INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1 48

JERRY starts as his door is thrown unceremoniously open by  
 the dominating presence of ARABELLA. His coffee slops into  
 the saucer.

She barges in, leaving the door wide open.

ARABELLA  
 What the bloody hell are you  
 playing at?

JERRY  
 Afternoon to you too, Bella.

ARABELLA  
 Don't play games with me. What  
 are you up to?

JERRY

I have no idea what you're talking about. And if you wouldn't mind lowering your voice when the whole office can hear.

ARABELLA

I don't care if the whole of Buckinghamshire can hear. I want to know what you're playing at.

JERRY gets up calmly, crosses to the door and holds it for ARABELLA, inviting her to leave.

JERRY

If there's something you'd like to discuss relating to company strategy, feel free to arrange a meeting. Carrie's got my diary.

ARABELLA grabs the door from him and slams it shut - with her still on the inside.

49 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1 49

Reaction across the newsroom to this latest bust-up. The TRAFFIC WARDENS interrupt their discussion with JANEY to look over at JERRY's office door, surprised.

50 INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1 50

ARABELLA

You can stick company strategy up your arse.

JERRY

That's a kind invitation but I think I'll decline. It's quite a hefty document, as I recall.

ARABELLA

Stop that right now and tell me what the hell you're up to with our advertisers.

JERRY

I've got no idea what you mean.

ARABELLA

The estate agents?

JERRY

Oh, that.

ARABELLA

Yes, that. What do you think you're playing at?

JERRY

I'm not playing at anything, Bella.

ARABELLA

That's Arabella, if you don't mind. So what I'm hearing about a knocking story isn't true?

JERRY weighs it up with his hands.

JERRY

Knocking story, front-page lead. (He shrugs) You say potato...

ARABELLA

Don't give me your bullshit, Jerry. I'm not one of your readers.

JERRY

Evidently.

ARABELLA

You've got to drop it.

JERRY

I'm sorry?

ARABELLA

You heard.

JERRY

Let me get this straight. You, the advertising manager of The Mail, are telling me, the editor of aforementioned organ, to spike tomorrow's splash?

ARABELLA

Not me, Jerry. Common sense.

JERRY

You -  
(pointedly)  
- Bella, are trying to influence editorial policy for commercial reasons?

ARABELLA

Damn right I am, if it stops us losing hundreds of thousands of pounds of business.

(MORE)

ARABELLA (CONT'D)

And if you can't see the sense in that, then you're even more stupid than I thought.

JERRY

(getting angry)

It's not about business, Bella. That's what you people can never understand. Editorial decisions are made by me, on the basis of thirty years in this industry and a journalist's nose for a story. They are nothing to do with you, and they're certainly nothing to do with our advertisers. Now if you don't mind, I've got a paper to get out.

ARABELLA stands, furious, and marches to the door, which she flings open.

ARABELLA

Don't think this is going to go away. I'm not having you ruin my bottom line for the sake of your 'journalist's nose'.

JERRY

Oh, troll off back to your lair, Bella, and let the rest of us get on with the real business.

ARABELLA

Business? You wouldn't understand business if it jumped up and bit you on the arse.

She storms out.

51 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

51

JERRY follows ARABELLA out into the newsroom, determined to have the last word in front of his own troops.

JERRY

That's right - business. The business of news. I wouldn't expect you to understand.

She disappears from the department, ignoring him now.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(to the whole room)

Bloody bean-counters.

ALEX enters through the impressive doors and makes his way to the reception desk. ROZ TURNER doesn't even look up.

ROZ

Good afternoon. How can I -

Now she sees who it is.

ROZ (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I thought I made it clear.

ALEX

Look, I just want to talk to the headmaster.

ROZ

I'm sorry. Mr Collins is unavailable at the moment.

ALEX ignores her, leaps the counter in a bound, and heads for the door behind her marked 'Headmaster'. ROZ is completely unable to stop him.

ROZ (CONT'D)

Now look here -

ALEX is about to storm through the door when Mr COLLINS emerges, having heard the commotion.

COLLINS

What on earth is going on out here?

ROZ

This - this -

She can't find the words.

ALEX

Mr Collins, my name is Alex Parker. I'm a reporter with The Mail. I just want to talk to someone about Charles Dixon.

COLLINS

Call the police, Roz.

ROZ immediately pushes some buttons on her phone console.

ALEX

There's no need for that.

ROZ

(into her headset)  
Hello? Police please.

ALEX  
 (to COLLINS)  
 What about the Hooper twins? What  
 can you tell me about them?

COLLINS is ushering him towards the exit. ALEX knows he has  
 no choice but to leave.

ROZ  
 (into headset)  
 My name's Roz Turner. I'm the  
 school secretary at Winterbourne  
 College.

ALEX  
 All right, all right. I'm going.

He heads out of the door.

ROZ  
 (into headset)  
 Not to worry. Panic over.

53 INT. ALEX'S CAR - DAY 1

53

ALEX is still parked in the school grounds. Sitting in the  
 driver's seat, he's racking his brains for options. He  
 takes out the photograph of DIXON with the HOOPER twins and  
 stares hard at it. Suddenly, a light bulb moment.

ALEX  
 (to the photo)  
 Bugger! It wasn't you at all, was  
 it, Jeremy?

His mobile rings and he takes it from his pocket - it's  
 JANEY. Accepting the call, he starts to talk excitedly.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
 (into phone)  
 Hi Janey. I think I've got a new  
 lead on the suicide.

JANEY (O.S.)  
 Where the hell are you?

ALEX  
 (into phone)  
 Winterbourne College. It's where  
 Dixon taught.

JANEY (O.S.)  
 Great. Now get your arse back  
 here.

ALEX  
 (into phone)  
 But I told you, I've just got  
 another lead. I was talking to  
 the wrong twin.

JANEY (O.S.)  
 Alex, have you learned nothing  
 from this morning? Jerry's  
 looking for scapegoats, and  
 anyone physically out of his  
 range of vision is right up there  
 on his list.

ALEX  
 (into phone)  
 But this could make a splash.

JANEY (O.S.)  
 I don't care if it makes a bloody  
 tidal wave. Get yourself back in  
 this office in the next half hour  
 and file me an obit on the poor  
 bastard who stuck his head under  
 an express train.

The phone clicks as the line goes dead. ALEX stares  
 uncomprehendingly at it.

ALEX  
 Shit.

54 EXT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY 1 54

Establishing shot.

55 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1 55

SIMON is typing at his computer in a busy newsroom as ALEX  
 enters. Spotting the chief reporter, ALEX rushes over in a  
 rage, grabs his shirt from behind and hauls him to his  
 feet.

ALEX  
 What the fuck do you think you're  
 playing at?

SIMON  
 Whoa there -

ALEX  
 Planting your size nines all over  
 my bloody story. Completely  
 ballsed it up for me.

SIMON

Hang on a minute, smartarse. I was only acting under orders.

ALEX

What? Whose orders?

SIMON smiles in the direction of the newsdesk, where FRANK is enjoying watching two prime contenders for redundancy slugging it out.

ALEX lets go of SIMON and stares disbelievingly at FRANK.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Well, no bugger told me.

SIMON feigns surprise.

SIMON

Really?

ALEX turns his anger back on SIMON.

ALEX

Oh, don't give me that. You knew perfectly well what you were doing. I bet you found a way to weasel yourself onto the story, you smug bastard.

JANEY arrives on the scene, flustered and wanting to keep a lid on things.

JANEY

Right, that's enough. You -  
(she points to SIMON)  
Get on with your story. And you -  
(she jabs at ALEX)  
Go and wait for me at my desk.

SIMON sits back down, ALEX retreats to JANEY's desk, and JANEY turns to FRANK, still smiling.

JANEY (CONT'D)

I don't know what you think you're playing at, Frank, but it's bloody risky at this stage in the game.

FRANK

I'm sorry, I don't quite -

JANEY

Save it. I'm not interested in your petty office politics.  
(MORE)

JANEY (CONT'D)

But if you think you can play one reporter off against another and not get caught in the crossfire, then you're in for a shock.

She marches back to her desk, leaving FRANK chastened.

When she gets there, she's still steaming at ALEX.

JANEY (CONT'D)

You've got ten minutes to file a holding story. After that, it's two hours to deadline. (Beat) You'd better nail this damn story.

56 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

56

ALEX finishes pounding the keyboard at his desk, then crosses to the newsdesk, where he drops the photograph of DIXON, alone, in front of FRANK.

ALEX

Death knock's on the system.

FRANK

(his mind elsewhere)  
Already?

ALEX

Pretty straightforward stuff.

He nods towards JANEY's desk.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Boss's orders.

FRANK pulls his computer keyboard towards him and looks at the screen.

FRANK

What's the catchline?

ALEX

'Suicide'. Imaginative, huh?

FRANK

You're not paid to use your imagination.

FRANK finds the story on his screen and starts reading.  
ALEX waits for a beat.

ALEX

(to nobody in particular)  
Apparently not.

He heads back to his desk, where he sits for a moment, looking again at FRANK. After a moment, FRANK looks up.

FRANK

Not three bad.

ALEX offers a grim smile in return and goes back to his computer screen. Calling up the newspaper archives again, he types 'JAMES HOOPER' into the search.

The first story to come up is headlined 'Boy, 15, in school library tragedy'. ALEX sits bolt upright and skim-reads it before hitting the 'Print' button, checking with a glance that the documents are appearing on the printer by the newsdesk.

Then he clicks on the next story. The headline of this reads 'Suicide boy named', while the third says 'College mourns brilliant JAMES'. ALEX hits 'Print' on these, too, then picks up the documents from the printer and heads for the door, stuffing them into his pocket.

57

INT. NEWSPAPER ERIC'S OFFICE - DAY 1

57

ERIC and ARABELLA are on one side of ERIC's large conference table. JERRY sits opposite them, outnumbered and outmanoeuvred.

ERIC

You know you can't win this one, Jerry.

JERRY

(wearily)

The minute you let commercial influences drive editorial decisions, you've lost your independence.

ARABELLA

Oh, get real, will you? This is the twenty-first century. Face it, Jerry: you're a dinosaur.

ERIC intervenes, holding ARABELLA back.

ERIC

All right, all right, let's not get aerated, shall we?

JERRY

Dinosaur. Well thanks, Bella. At least we know where you stand.

ARABELLA

That's Arabella to you.

JERRY  
 (to Arabella)  
 Now you listen to me -

ERIC interrupts calmly but chillingly.

ERIC  
 No, Jerry. You listen to me.  
 We've got to live with the  
 realities of the commercial world  
 we're operating in, whether you  
 like it or not. Editorial  
 independence doesn't come into it  
 - unless the people who pay our  
 bills say it does. Do you see  
 where I'm going with this? This  
 city's estate agents are our key  
 advertisers. They drive this  
 market, they pay your wages. So  
 whatever our own personal views,  
 we keep them to ourselves, smile  
 pleasantly and take the money,  
 thank you very much. They decide -  
 not you, Jerry, not me - they  
 decide what goes in our  
 newspaper. And they don't have to  
 go near a news conference to do  
 it. Do you see, Jerry? Do you get  
 it? Because everybody else in  
 this building does. And anyone  
 who struggles to grasp that  
 simple fact is either very short-  
 sighted or very stupid. (Beat)  
 Which are you, Jerry?

JERRY takes a long moment, then very deliberately closes  
 his folder and stands up, ready to walk out.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Where do you think you're going?

JERRY  
 There's more?

ERIC  
 Damn right, there's more.

JERRY stares, dumbfounded. He switches his gaze to  
 ARABELLA, who smiles sweetly at him.

58 EXT. BARRISTERS' CHAMBERS - DAY 1

58

Establishing shot of HOOPER's home turf.

59 INT. BARRISTERS' CHAMBERS - DAY 1

59

ALEX is trying his persuasive charms on ELIZABETH again. And getting nowhere. Again.

ELIZABETH

You can't expect the world to revolve around your deadlines, you know.

ALEX

I know, but -

She cuts him short.

ELIZABETH

I think a Crown Court judge might just take priority over a newspaper hack.

ALEX jumps on the implication of her words and rushes excitedly towards the door.

ALEX

Thank you. Thank you so much.

He dashes out, leaving ELIZABETH perplexed.

ELIZABETH

(to herself)

What did I say?

60 EXT. BARRISTERS' CHAMBERS - DAY 1

60

ALEX leaps down the steps in one bound and runs across a courtyard to the entrance of the impressive Crown Court building next door.

61 INT. CROWN COURT FOYER - DAY 1

61

ALEX crashes in, almost knocking down a SECURITY GUARD, who grabs him and pulls him back.

GUARD

Hold it right there, sonny.

ALEX fusses apologetically over the GUARD.

ALEX

I'm really sorry. It's just that I've got to find someone before they go home.

GUARD

Not before you get the once-over, you don't.

The GUARD points at a large metal-detecting frame, similar to an airport's.

GUARD (CONT'D)  
(holding out a tray)  
Keys, wallet, belt.

62 INT. CROWN COURT CORRIDOR - DAY 1 62

Feeding his belt back into his trousers, ALEX stumbles down a corridor. Seeing a noticeboard headed 'Court Lists', he studies it closely, running his hand down the lists until he finds what he's looking for. Then he's off again.

63 INT. CROWN COURT COURTROOM - DAY 1 63

A hearing is in full session. Facing the judge, rows of barristers and solicitors sit in front of the dock, where the three accused stare sullenly at the jury to one side.

JEREMY HOOPER is in full flow.

HOOPER

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you have heard the testimony of several witnesses. You have even heard the words of the accused themselves. Now it is time for you to play your part in the administration of justice. This is not a role to be taken lightly. In your hands rests the future of these three men. But whatever you believe happened on that night - whether you believe their version of events or that of the other witnesses - you must remember that this trial is about justice. Not revenge or retribution. Those are emotions for another time and place -

There is a sudden commotion at the back of the court as ALEX recklessly barges in through the doors, breathless. Everyone turns to stare at him and, having established that the court is still in session, he backs out, mortified, lifting his hands in apology. But HOOPER has clocked him.

64 INT. CROWN COURT CORRIDOR - DAY 1 64

ALEX recoils from the court door, followed by an angry USHER, and retreats down the corridor to collapse on a wooden bench and wait. He buries his head in his hands.

65 INT. NEWSPAPER ERIC'S OFFICE - DAY 1

65

A stunned JERRY is sitting back at the table, head in hands in a mirror of ALEX's last pose. ERIC and ARABELLA continue to watch him.

ERIC

Twice, Jerry. In one day. I've spent half my afternoon dealing with people who are mightily pissed off with your reporter. I've got to tell you, it doesn't reflect well on the management of the department. It's the kind of thing that could seriously undermine a managing director's confidence in the ability of his senior executives. Especially at such a... delicate time.

JERRY keeps his head bowed: he can't look ERIC in the eye.

66 INT. CROWN COURT CORRIDOR - DAY 1

66

ALEX jumps to his feet as the USHER opens the door, followed by a flood of people from the courtroom. After the main rush has gone, the LAWYERS begin to emerge, talking and joking with each other. But HOOPER is not among them.

ALEX rushes to the court room door and looks in - empty. HOOPER has clearly left by another exit.

67 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - DAY 1

67

CARRIE is preparing to leave the office for the day. As she fetches her coat from the hatstand near the newsdesk, she spots SIMON sulking at his computer.

CARRIE

Still here, Simon?

SIMON

Night job.

CARRIE

Oh, right. Anything good?

SIMON

I shouldn't think so for a moment.

There's a pause as CARRIE hovers.

CARRIE

Simon?

He doesn't want to be distracted.

SIMON

Mmm?

She's building herself up to this.

CARRIE

Can I ask you a question?

SIMON

If you must.

CARRIE

Do you think there's a chance I could make it as journalist? I mean, I know I'd have to do loads of work and pass exams and learn shorthand and stuff, but if it's something I really want to do...

SIMON stops what he is doing to give his full attention to CARRIE.

In the b.g. JERRY emerges from his office with ERIC's folder in his hand. He catches the rest of the conversation.

SIMON

Carrie, if an extra-terrestrial virus came and wiped out the entire human race, leaving only baboons and lower primates to run the planet, you'd still have as much chance of making it as a journalist as my great aunt Gladys. And she's been dead eleven years.

CARRIE doesn't deserve this. She dissolves into tears and runs from the office.

SIMON turns back to his computer, calling after her.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Oh, and you need a spine in this job as well.

JERRY waits for CARRIE to get out of earshot, then marches up to SIMON.

JERRY

(steaming)  
My office. Now.

SIMON is horrified to have been caught. He follows JERRY meekly.

68

INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - DAY 1

68

JERRY crashes down into his swivel chair, furious.

JERRY

What the fuck was that about?

SIMON decides it's best not to sit.

SIMON

Jerry, I -

JERRY

You really can be a little shit, can't you? I thought you were better than that, Simon - picking on a defenceless kid who was only asking for your help.

SIMON

I'm sorry, Jerry -

JERRY

I don't want your whingeing apologies. I want you to behave like a normal human being. You can't go round treating people that way. It's bullying, simple as that. And I won't stand for it. Do you understand?

SIMON

Yeah.

JERRY

I mean it, Simon. I won't tolerate that kind of behaviour in my newsroom. Any repeat of that sort of performance and you'll find out what bullying can feel like from the other side. Now get out. (Beat) Get out!

SIMON turns to leave. At the door, he pauses to look back, considering another appeal. One look at JERRY changes his mind and he goes.

69

EXT. HOOPER'S HOUSE - NIGHT 1

69

ALEX pulls up outside a large, detached house in extensive grounds. HOOPER's Jaguar is on the gravel and security lights line the drive.

ALEX emerges from the car, looks up at the huge home and takes out his notebook. He goes to the front door and knocks confidently.

After a few seconds, HOOPER opens the door. When he sees who it is, he almost slams it shut again, but ALEX manages to wedge a foot inside.

HOOPER  
(controlled fury)  
Take your foot out of my door  
before I call the police.

ALEX  
(sympathetically)  
Mr Hooper, I think it's time to  
talk about Charles Dixon.

HOOPER  
Oh, you do, do you? And what the  
hell would you know about it?

ALEX  
(measured)  
I know you went to see him  
yesterday.

HOOPER stares hard at him for a long moment.

HOOPER  
And?

ALEX  
Mr Hooper, what do you think  
James would want to say about  
Charles Dixon?

HOOPER turns this over for a long moment, then opens the door wider to let ALEX in.

70

INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 1

70

JERRY is perched on the edge of JANEY's desk as she leans forward over the flatplan. But JERRY doesn't want to talk about the next day's paper. He's holding JANEY's hit list in his hand

JERRY  
So Frank's judgement is seriously  
suspect, Alex is miles off form,  
and Simon's just a bully. But  
you've got none of them on your  
list.

He looks at JANEY, who shrugs.

JANEY  
They've all got... qualities.

JERRY sighs and drops the sheet on the desk.

JERRY

As has everyone else in this newsroom. Which Leaves the awkward question: how the bloody hell are we supposed to find six candidates for redundancy?

71 EXT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - NIGHT 1 71

Turning up his tailored collar against the steady rain, SIMON leaves the newspaper building on his way to his evening assignment, reviewing the amateurs.

72 EXT. CIVIC THEATRE - NIGHT 1 72

SIMON hurries through the rain to arrive at the Civic Theatre.

73 INT. HOOPER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 1 73

HOOPER is sitting at a large kitchen table in the middle of the sumptuously furnished room, echoing MRS DIXON's pose when ALEX visited her. This time, ALEX sits directly opposite, his notebook open in front of him.

HOOPER

You can't use any of this.

ALEX

I think I'll let my editor decide that.

HOOPER

(trying to convince  
ALEX)

I've done nothing wrong.

ALEX

Really?

HOOPER

What crime's been committed?

ALEX

At a guess, blackmail,  
threatening behaviour,  
intimidation.

HOOPER

(surprised)

You think I forced him to do it?

ALEX

Didn't you? Threaten him with exposure of whatever it was he'd done?

HOOPER

Whatever it was? You don't have a clue what you're dealing with here, do you? You can't begin to understand the emotional turmoil he went through.

ALEX

I take it this is James we're talking about?

HOOPER

He trusted that evil bastard. We all did.

74

INT. WINTERBOURNE COLLEGE LIBRARY - DAY - FLASHBACK

74

Slow-motion black-and-white footage reveals a 45-year-old CHARLES DIXON holding a very informal tutorial session with a small group of teenage pupils, among them the HOOPER twins. There is boyish laughter and a gleam in DIXON's eye.

HOOPER (V.O.)

'Extra tuition in the library'. We weren't the first, but I imagine the idea of twins excited him. It took him three years to groom us. Twice a week, after prep. (Beat) But once it started...

Now there are just the HOOPER twins with DIXON in the library. As the older HOOPER speaks, DIXON goes to the library door, turns the key in its lock and faces the boys again. Slowly, he moves towards them.

HOOPER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's so bloody clever the way they do it, you know. Somehow they make you believe it's your responsibility, your fault. And James - he was always the fragile one. Yin and yang.

END OF FLASHBACK

The black-and-white footage blurs as the modern-day scene comes into focus on:

- 75 INT. HOOPER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 1 75
- Extreme C/U on HOOPER.
- HOOPER  
(grimly)  
They say twins are telepathic. I  
never saw it coming.
- 76 INT. WINTERBOURNE COLLEGE LIBRARY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK 76
- Sudden black-and-white. There is a loud crash as a chair falls to the floor from a library desk. Where it had stood a second ago, the feet of the 15-year-old JAMES HOOPER dangle, twitching sickeningly in mid-air.
- The opening strains of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' begin over:
- END OF FLASHBACK
- 77 INT. CIVIC THEATRE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT 1 77
- The amateur production of Carousel is under way. In the semi-darkness, SIMON struggles to find ways of enduring it. As the song builds, he resorts to chewing the end of his pen to stop himself grinding his teeth.
- The song continues throughout the following scenes, building to its emotional climax.
- HOOPER (V.O.)  
I didn't have to threaten him.  
Seeing me was enough of a shock  
to the old man's system. I don't  
know why he came back.
- 78 INT. CIVIC THEATRE FOYER - NIGHT 1 78
- SIMON fights his way through the enthusiastic crowds of family and friends to get out of the building and back to the office.
- HOOPER (V.O.)  
I told the police, of course, but  
I knew they were never going to  
make anything stick after all  
this time.
- 79 EXT. CIVIC THEATRE - NIGHT 1 79
- Cursing the rain, SIMON heads off towards the newspaper office.

HOOPER (V.O.)  
 (with a bitter tone)  
 I merely reminded him of the  
 college motto, 'Honour in all  
 things', and he fell apart in  
 front of me.

80 EXT. NEWSPAPER SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT 1

80

SIMON arrives by the security office at the back gate. The window is dark so he leans up against it and peers in, shielding his eyes with one hand to see better. He hammers with his fist on the window.

HOOPER (V.O.)  
 I just wanted him to know. I  
 wanted him to know I was there; I  
 remembered.

The ageing nightwatchman appears out of the security office and laboriously unlocks the gate for SIMON.

SINGER (V.O.)  
 'Walk on through the wind,  
 Walk on through the rain...'

81 INT. NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT - NIGHT 1

81

Putting the finishing touches to his review, SIMON hits 'Send' on his computer, shuts everything down and heads for the door. He calls across to the handful of night staff putting the paper to bed.

SIMON  
 All yours, guys. Night!

They wave in acknowledgement as he leaves.

SINGER (V.O.)  
 'Though your dreams be tossed and  
 blown...'

82 EXT. NEWSPAPER SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT 1

82

As the weather worsens further, SIMON leaves the building, letting himself out of the still unlocked gate. He waves in at the security guard's window as he hurries off into the night.

83 INT. HOOPER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 1

83

HOOPER is staring intently at ALEX.

HOOPER  
I don't want you to run it.

ALEX cocks his head quizzically.

HOOPER (CONT'D)  
You'll destroy his reputation.

ALEX  
(shrugging)  
You can't libel the dead.

HOOPER  
(insistent)  
It'd kill the old woman.

There's a pause. ALEX doesn't reply.

SINGER (V.O.)  
'Walk on, walk on...'

84 INT. NEWSPAPER JERRY'S OFFICE - NIGHT 1

84

ALEX is sitting alone with a whisky. He empties the glass in one long draught.

SINGER (V.O.)  
'...with hope in your heart...'

ALEX slams the glass down on JERRY's desk. At the same moment, JERRY strides in, his tie even further adrift, a bound pile of newspapers in his hand - tomorrow's first edition.

JERRY  
(cheerfully)  
Hot off the press.

He dumps the papers on the desk, takes out a scalpel from his top drawer and deftly slices open the bundle. One quick glance at the front page, and he slings one across to ALEX.

SINGER (V.O.)  
'And you'll never walk alone...'

85 MONTAGE

85

Over a rapid sequence of reactions:

1. At his kitchen table, HOOPER reads the paper, deadly serious.

2. At her kitchen table, MRS DIXON breaks down in sobs over the paper.

3. In JERRY's office, ALEX studies the front page with mixed emotions as JERRY smiles half-heartedly at the Pyrrhic victory.

86

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY 2

86

SINGER (V.O.)

'You'll never walk - '

As it reaches its musical climax, the song is cut short by a bundle of newspapers slapping heavily onto a pavement outside a newsagent's.

The headline screams: 'SUICIDE VICTIM BRANDED SCHOOL PERVERT'. ALEX's byline appears under a large red 'EXCLUSIVE'.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE.