

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BELLE

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

*Written by
Misan Sagay*

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An intricate piano piece - GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL...

INTERCUT WHITE ON BLACK CREDITS WITH BELOW...

1 INT. RUSTIC STUDIO OF AN ARTISAN. DAY 1 1 *

A series of shots.

Blue sky through shabby windows.

Run down walls. A paint splashed pine floor. Tens of paint brushes soaking in stained jars.

An artisan's hands - weather-worn, swirling a paint brush in dirty water that sways at the bottom of one of the jars.

A canvas - the sketched face of a woman - blonde, blue eyed as the artisan strokes paint into her features - a poster girl for 18th century portraiture. (We will later recognise her as ELIZABETH MURRAY)

CAPTION: ENGLAND 1766

2 EXT/INT. DOCKS/SLUM ROOM. ENGLAND - DAY. 2 2 *

A swallow cuts across a red tinged sky. SOUND of footsteps trudging through mud.

EXTREME CLOSE UP: a small figure being dressed by someone - a shoulder, an arm, little hands. We do not see a face.

CLOSE: heavy naval boots move at sombre pace through slums.

Against a stone floor, a child's feet are laced into boots.

A starving dog barks , darts between tradesmen, sailors.

Hold this image as Handel comes to an END.

3 INT. SLUM ROOM - DAY. 2 3 *

A CHILD'S POV as the door opens. We see a gentleman in ceremonial naval dress - CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY, aristocratic, handsome...alarmed at the sight before him.

His eyes close with some sad, internal pain and as they re-open...We see what he sees...

A fragile girl...around six years old stands in shabby surroundings. Her terrified eyes stare back, leaving LINDSAY at a loss. He takes in her features - delicate with a full mouth that underlines her ethnicity.

She is DIDO ELIZABETH BELLE...part black, part white.

He speaks quietly- words almost as fragile as she is.

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY
Hello little girl...Little Dido.
(pause)
I am your father.

Silence. Then a tear rises to the surface and as her confused tears spill, so too do LINDSAY'S.

His POV: a POOR BLACK WOMAN oversees DIDO from afar.

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY (CONT'D)
(re. Dido)
How lovely she is. So much of her
mother.
(his eyes sting)
I tried...but how...how could I
separate a mother from her child?
(he restrains tears)
And now nature has deprived me of
such a dilemma.

He composes himself - feeling futile...

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY (CONT'D)
Thank you..for taking her.

He reaches into his pocket, holds out money to the woman.

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY (CONT'D)
You may leave us.

The WOMAN hesitates, scurries to DIDO, placing her lips to the child's head in a prolonged kiss. Then she is gone. DIDO is left frightened and stunned!

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY (CONT'D)
Do not be afraid sweet thing. I
am to take you to a good life.
The life you were born to.

He takes out a cube of chocolate, shows it to her. She is reluctant. He takes a bite - delicious! DIDO moves forward. He puts the chocolate in her hand. She tastes it. Sweet cocoa and sugar..and now her tiny mouth is filled. It makes LINDSAY laugh out loud.

4 EXT. DOCKS - DAY. 2

4 *

A driver, HARRY - seated at a fine carriage.

As HARRY becomes alarmed - from his POV LINDSAY moves towards us - the mulatto child in arms.

5 EXT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LAWNS. DAY. 2

5 *

Silence, except bird song - the splendor of the English countryside - A neoclassical estate stretches before us.

The figure of a LITTLE GIRL running across the lawns - her giggle fills the air, her outline faded by the sun.

At French doors to the nursery, a furious greying woman - LADY MARY MURRAY (40s), waves a wooden spoon and yells...

LADY MARY
Elizabeth Murray, bring yourself
back here this very moment!

The child crashes to the grass in fits of laughter. She is no more than 6 years old - Hair the colour of bleached hay and delicate pale skin.

She rolls on to her back, squinting at the sunlight as... The SOUND of horse and carriage at the front of the house.

ELIZABETH bolts upright. Her POV: As CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY guides DIDO from the carriage.

WIMBRIDGE, the butler, steps out to receive them.

6 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. DAY. 2

6 *

LADY MANSFIELD (40s), the years have been kind. She is beautiful, regal - stares ahead in shock...

LORD MANSFIELD (50's) - a majestic man, white wigged and low brows, is incandescent, his sister, LADY MARY, frozen.

LORD MANSFIELD
What in God's name have you done!!

Their POV - LINDSAY and little DIDO stand.

LADY MANSFIELD
She...she is black.

LINDSAY is pained.

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY
She is my blood.

LADY MARY
But she IS black!

LORD MANSFIELD
A detail you chose NOT to share.

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY
Uncle? You assured me!

LORD MANSFIELD

(fury)

Captain Sir John Lindsay, do you find me a fool? She is a MULATTO!

LORD MANSFIELD'S blood boils, he rages towards LINDSAY. LADY MANSFIELD restrains him. LINDSAY is red with humiliation.

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY

I have no wife to take her...In a few hours I am to captain a voyage to the Indies on a longitude experiment.

(strained)

From there, who knows!!! It is not in my gift to question the King and his Royal Navy.

LORD MANSFIELD

You keep in mind my position..?
My reputation...?

CAPTAIN SIR JOHN LINDSAY

Sir...

LORD MANSFIELD

Then have some sense of propriety boy...and understand what you are asking.

LINDSAY lowers his voice, shielding DIDO.

SIR JOHN LINDSAY

Her mother is dead! My wishes may not be orthodox but they ARE necessary!

LORD MANSFIELD

How do we raise her...?

SIR JOHN LINDSAY

I beg you, uncle...love her - as I would, were I here.

(sadly)

And ensure that she is in receipt of all that is due to her as a child of mine.

LADY MARY gasps, under...

LADY MANSFIELD

That is simply impossible.

SIR JOHN LINDSAY

What is right can never be impossible.

His firm gaze holds his aunt and uncle to account. A long beat. LADY MANSFIELD stands conflicted.

LADY MANSFIELD
What has she been named?

SIR JOHN LINDSAY
She is Belle...after her mother.
Dido Elizabeth Belle...Lindsay.

LORD MANSFIELD
She takes your name?

SIR JOHN LINDSAY
I am not ashamed.

LINDSAY stands his ground.

LADY MARY
We cannot have another
Elizabeth in the household.

LADY MANSFIELD regards the child, then looks to her husband, gravely. He turns his back - aggrieved.

LADY MANSFIELD
We...we will call her Dido.
(off Lindsay's nod)
Good Lord, she is thin. Mary,
find her something to eat.

LORD MANSFIELD storms from the room. LADY MANSFIELD follows. LINDSAY kneels, choked with emotion.

SIR JOHN LINDSAY
Little Belle - sweet child...
(weak smile)
My wish is to keep you...keep you
with me...but a ship...it is no
place for one so precious as you.
(pause)
In these walls, yours will be a
life equal to my blood.

A beat. Through eyes that brim...he catches his breath.
LADY MARY is both stunned and moved - she has to turn away.

SIR JOHN LINDSAY (CONT'D)
You will not understand in this
moment, but hold this in your
heart...you are loved...Just as
I loved your mother.

A tear spills and DIDO's little fingers come up to wipe it from his cheek. He presses his lips to her hand, sobbing a moment, and then he is gone - to stay any longer would be too much to bare.

7 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. STAIRS/ENTRANCE HALL/GALLERY - DAY. 2 7 *

ON ELIZABETH seated at the grand staircase as LADY MARY and DIDO emerge. Like ELIZABETH, DIDO is now freshly dressed in rich silks, an adorable sight as they move through corridors

ELIZABETH

Are you...a nee-gro?

ELIZABETH makes her way across...taking her aunt's hand as all three walk. DIDO is silent.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Are you what they call 'a negro?'
I heard them talking.

LADY MARY

Questions, questions, Elizabeth!
Tis a most irritating trait you
and your father share.

ELIZABETH

Papaa M?

LADY MARY

No your blood papaa. Sir David
Murray. You should not insist on
always speaking your mind, you
know. You will end up an old maid
with only your own company for
entertainment!

ELIZABETH

Like you, Aunt Mary? That is what
the maids say?

LADY MARY

You little....

ELIZABETH takes off. LADY MARY rushes after her.

DIDO is left alone - through the doorway of the gallery, a
portrait of LINDSAY stares at her. She gazes at it.

LORD MANSFIELD approaches, arrested at the sight of DIDO,
newly tidied. He follows her gaze to LINDSAY'S image. The
sight affects him, unexpectedly.

LORD MANSFIELD

Captain Sir John Lindsay.
(off her reaction)
Do you recognise him?

She nods. A beat as conflict fills him.

8 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. GALLERY. CONTINUOUS. DAY 2

8 *

LORD MANSFIELD
D'you see here...? This..this is
your grandfather, Sir Alexander
Lindsay of Evelick.

DIDO examines the painting. LORD MANSFIELD watches her.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
I am here too....do you see?

Her eyes search the long line of her aristocratic heritage,
until her gaze settles. He chuckles, reluctantly charmed as
she points to his likeness.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
Yes...I am William Murray, First
Earl of Mansfield.

A beat as he looks to her, affected by this little person.
Gently, he leads her to a final portrait.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
(carefully)
Now...do you see this man? He is
my nephew...do you understand...?
(off Dido's nod)
...your uncle - Sir David Murray.

DIDO
Elizabeth's papa.

He pauses

LORD MANSFIELD
You are a sharp little one. He is
The Seventh Viscount Stormont...
(beat. Almost to himself)
...to inherit everything that we
are standing on when I am gone.

She nods, bites her lip - that much has gone over her
head...he can see. He closes his eyes. The enormity of this
new responsibility weighing heavy.

9 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES PARLOUR/LAWNS - DAY. 2

9 *

LORD MANSFIELD'S POV: through window - The lawns. ELIZABETH
gently takes DIDO'S hand in hers, leads her off to run
between the trees. As their delighted screams filter...

LADY MANSFIELD enters - observes LORD Mansfield, a moment.

LADY MANSFIELD
Born on English soil?

LORD MANSFIELD
Indeed. He discovered her mother
aboard a captured Spanish slave
ship. He was charged with
conveying it back to these
shores, he tells me.

LADY MANSFIELD
Evidently he had some... 'feeling'
for the woman.

LORD MANSFIELD
(dry)
And there I was believing it was
sheer lack of 'self control'.
(scathing)
He has been at sea, six years.
All of this child's life!

LADY MANSFIELD
Well, he clearly saw to their
wellbeing. The child is not
altogether uncivilized.
(she breathes deeply)
So...now we have two nieces in
our guardianship.

LORD MANSFIELD
(reticent)
Elizabeth was much in need of a
companion.

LADY MANSFIELD
And that is what we shall say
when questions are asked of us?

LORD MANSFIELD
We shall say that in accordance
with her birthright, she is
entitled to live beneath this roof.
(with irony)
Such...is the nature of 'order'.

LADY MANSFIELD
And where in this 'order' should
her colour be placed? Below or
above her Murray bloodline?
(off his silence)
May she dine with us?

LORD MANSFIELD
She may...(pause)...NOT...in
company. We cannot escape
society's confines on etiquette

LADY MANSFIELD
Marriage?

He shakes his head at the complexity of it all.

LORD MANSFIELD

Impossible. Any match her.. 'other origins' may attract would surely disgrace her and the family rank.

LADY MANSFIELD

And when we are no longer here? No husband - who will take care of her?

He rubs his eyebrows, perturbed, turns back to the lawns.

10 EXT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LAWNS - CONTINUOUS. DAY.2/3 10 *

A view across the idyllic estate. SOUNDS of children's shrieks have become adult.

CAPTION: 1781

A twenty year old DIDO darts between trees.

DIDO

Bette! No...no surprises Bette!

ELIZABETH, also twenty now, suddenly jumps from behind the willows, causing DIDO to wail hysterically.

LADY MARY stands at the doorway of the old nursery.

LADY MARY

(shrieking)

Girls! Will you refrain from shrieking like the...bless-ed French!

The girls race towards the house.

ELIZABETH'S blonde colouring remains, whilst DIDO'S looks have become dramatic - her dark hair, thick and long, wrapped in a bun, and black lashes that frame her dark eyes.

11 EXT. HAMPSTEAD. CHURCH - DAY.3 11 *

Church bells - parishioners make their way into the beautiful sixteenth century chapel, in lush green fields.

12 INT. CHURCH - DAY.3 12 *

REVEREND DAVINIER, white wigged, stands at the pulpit.

REVEREND DAVINIER
 ...for it is the power of God
 unto salvation to every one that
 believeth. So saith Christ the
 Lord. Amen.

CONGREGATION
 Amen.

A FLAME as a YOUNG MAN lights a candle by the altar. He sings,
 choir-like, the word 'amen' rather than simply saying it.

REVEREND DAVINIER
 Hymn no. 76.

ON the MANSFIELDS as the congregation begins to sing.

13 INT. CHURCH - DAY. 3 13 *

The YOUNG MAN stands collecting bibles as the congregation
 file out. DIDO hands him hers.

He is chaotically handsome with deeply set, expressive eyes
 that lock with hers for a moment, stirring her. Then his
 gaze moves suddenly to LORD MANSFIELD - intense, as he
 watches him drift from the church, the family in tow.

14 EXT. KENWOOD ESTATE. HEATH - DAY.3 14 *

Pure, lush, green. The Mansfield carriage on the horizon.

15 INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE - DAY.3 15 *

LORD and LADY MANSFIELD sit together, ELIZABETH beside
 them. DIDO and LADY MARY ride backwards.

LORD MANSFIELD
 I have reason to speak with you
 alone, Dido.

DIDO is quietly alarmed.

DIDO
 Have I wronged you, Papaa?

LORD MANSFIELD
 You have done no such thing.

16 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LORD MANSFIELD'S STUDY - DAY.3 16 *

LORD MANSFIELD is grave. DIDO stands before him.

LORD MANSFIELD
I have not past experience in the
ways of breaking grave news to you.

He hands her a letter and she reads. A beat, as the news
resonates through her, silently. Her pained gaze slowly
rises to meet LORD MANSFIELD'S.

DIDO
(quiet, shock)
I thought I should one day have
the opportunity to make his
better acquaintance.

LORD MANSFIELD
Yes. I know.

17 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - DAY.3 17 *

ELIZABETH
Two thousand pounds a year?

ELIZABETH sits at the edge of the bed in day clothes. DIDO
nods, her back to us as she stares out through the window.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Then you are an heiress! He has
left you your fortune!

18 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 3 18 *

Darkness. DIDO and ELIZABETH lie in separate beds. Only a
shaft of moonlight illuminates their faces.

ELIZABETH
He must have loved you, Dido.

DIDO
He did not know me.

ELIZABETH
My father's new wife wishes him
to leave me not a thing, and he
obliges her.

DIDO
Then it is her cruelty you should
lament, Bette, not his stupidity.

ELIZABETH
I think he might have loved me
more if Mamaa had not died.

DIDO
 (pained)
 I...I think love must be a very
 complicated thing.

ELIZABETH lifts her head to look across at DIDO.

ELIZABETH
 Dido - with such a dowry you may
 marry into any good family you wish.

OFF DIDO as she stares at the ceiling, daunted.

19

INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES PARLOUR - DAY.4

19 *

Soft sunlight filters. LADY MARY sits engrossed in her
 needle-work. The two girls persevere with theirs.

LADY MARY
 We shall receive visitors for dinner.

The two girls exchange a glance and whisper.

ELIZABETH
 Visitors? Who ever bothers to
 visit us here?

DIDO
 Or leave... except the dead!

ELIZABETH'S titters escape. LADY MARY looks up, abruptly.

LADY MARY
 Once again, Dido?

DIDO
 Beds...Aunt Mary. We should
 prepare some extra beds... in
 case our visitors are to stay...

She trails off - LADY MARY raises an eyebrow.

ELIZABETH
 May we wear the new silks?

DIDO
 I will do your hair, Bette. Oh
 say we may wear them, Aunt Mary.

LADY MARY
 You will not be dining with us, Dido.

The room falls silent and the girls' energy is killed.

DIDO
 (hurt)
 Yes of course. But I may join
 after dinner, may I not?

LADY MARY
 Yes. Such are the rules, and you
 know them well.

20 EXT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LAKE - DAY.4

20 *

A blaze of rhododendron, azaleas. DIDO strolls with LORD
 MANSFIELD, along Kenwood's lake, orange sunlight glistens.

DIDO
 She is a most disagreeable...
 hideous, old maid - I hate her!

LORD MANSFIELD
 You do not! She is only managing
 the dictates of the household

DIDO
 Papaa...how...how may I be too high
 in rank to dine with the servants
 and too low to dine with my family?

LORD MANSFIELD
 Dinner with guests is a formal
 proceeding, Dido - we simply
 cannot impose the disregard of
 those formalities upon visitors.

DIDO
 But...Papaa, am I not..'wealthy',
 now...an heiress? Surely that
 changes matters...

LORD MANSFIELD
 (softly)
 My dear...I wish it were so
 simple. Finances may go some way -
 but Society has a habit of
 disregarding even one of their
 own, when opportunity provides.

DIDO
 (stung)
 Of course...(trailing off)

LORD MANSFIELD
 BUT after dinner...when formality
 is of less consequence...well
 your presence can raise no
 defensible objections.
 (off her sadness)
 (MORE)

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 Dido, you know the rules of
 propriety. Far better than
 Elizabeth, if I am frank.

His loving gaze elicits a smile from her, weary. Propriety
 is everything, after all.

DIDO
 As you wish, sir.

21 EXT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LAWNS. CONTINUOUS. DAY 4

21 *

LADY MANSFIELD sits in the shade - a maid prepares a seat
 for LADY MARY, as DIDO heads for the house, pensive.

LADY MANSFIELD
 Dido!...

ELIZABETH emerges from the house, breathless.

ELIZABETH
 There you are. I have been
 searching for you!

LADY MANSFIELD
 (to Dido)
 What a wretched countenance!

LADY MARY
 She deplores my authority. What
 am I in this household, if not
 the 'observer of rules'?!

ELIZABETH
 I would rather dine with Dido!

She links arms with DIDO in solidarity.

LADY MANSFIELD
 What a great pity

LADY MANSFIELD and LADY MARY feign nonchalance.

LADY MARY
 Indeed.

LADY MANSFIELD
 Our young gentlemen guests shall
 miss you, Elizabeth.

Both girls' eyes widen - DIDO's with disappointment.

ELIZABETH/DIDO
 Young gentlemen?

LADY MARY
 Very good connections.

LADY MANSFIELD
And most agreeable by all accounts!

ELIZABETH'S mouth falls open. LADY MARY leans toward her.

LADY MARY
Close your mouth and understand:
There shall be no discussions
tonight in any languages other
than English! No whisperings in
gentlemen's ears - not in Latin,
Italian...and certainly not French!

OFF ELIZABETH'S mischief and Dido sunk.

22 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DINING ROOM - NIGHT. 4

22 *

Candles sprinkle a delicate light. An imposing dining table stretches before us, laden with exquisite foods. LADY ASHFORD 40's - a pale porcelain skinned woman, sits with her sons - JAMES (25) and OLIVER (22). She is beautiful and both have inherited her striking looks.

ELIZABETH whispers in JAMES' ear. LADY MARY glares!

JAMES ASHFORD
What excellent French! Though I
have not an idea of what you said.

ELIZABETH
I said...'Your hands have the
suggestion of a sensitive man'.

She wrinkles her nose, minxish. Across the table...

LADY ASHFORD
I must say, the entire country
barely breathes awaiting your
judgement on this appeal.
Terrified you shall destroy
England, no doubt. I know Lord A
is. He does wonder though, what
can be taking you...so long?

LORD MANSFIELD
(mild condescension)
The law, Lady Ashford. It is to be
interpreted - not merely administered.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
Your husband of all people knows this.

LADY MARY
My brother is not a man of rash instinct.

LADY MANSFIELD
For that we are all grateful.

LADY ASHFORD
What a lot of fuss over dead cargo.

LORD MANSFIELD
It is a fuss over the bread and
butter of a great many in these
isles. A great many, Lady Ashford.

OFF LORD MANSFIELD'S distaste....

23 EXT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LAWNS - NIGHT. 4 23 *

The windows glint with candlelight, DIDO sits at a bench
alone. Laughter from the house carries in the breeze.

A rustle in the branches behind her. She stands, startled.
A beat, then she turns on her heels and sprints - fast.

24 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. ENTRANCE HALL. NIGHT. 4 24 *

Breathless, DIDO races inside as WIMBRIDGE appears.

DIDO
Wimbridge!

WIMBRIDGE
Miss Lindsay?

DIDO
There are poachers wandering...!

The sound of the echoing doorbell, jolting DIDO. Her eyes
dart to the door. WIMBRIDGE hesitates, then answers.

A YOUNG MAN stands, damp brow, and as breathless as DIDO.
We recognise him as the YOUNG MAN seen earlier in the
church. He is JOHN DAVINIER, son of REVEREND DAVINIER.

JOHN
Good evening to you. I am John
Daviner, I..I believe I may have
disturbed a lady of this house...

He sets eyes on DIDO, peering from the great staircase.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Ah...she is there.
(calling out to her)
Please forgive me...though you
barely gave me a chance...

DIDO turns her back, horrified. *How dare he address her
without formal introduction?!*

DIDO
 Sir, I do not believe we have
 been introduced!

JOHN takes hold of himself, half mortified, half irritated.

JOHN
 Indeed. I...I...
 (to Wimbridge, feeling
 foolish)
 Please inform the lady of my
 apologies for startling her. I
 took advantage of the back
 fields, by way of a short-cut to
 deliver this to Lord Mansfield...
 from my father.

WIMBRIDGE
 Sir?

He hands WIMBRIDGE an envelope.

JOHN
 Reverend Davinier.

WIMBRIDGE
 Of course, sir. I will see that
 he gets it immediately...

DIDO can't help but interfere. She calls over her shoulder.

DIDO
 You shall not interrupt him at
 dinner, Wimbridge!

WIMBRIDGE
 Immediately - after dinner, sir.

JOHN resists rolling his eyes - *ghastly female!*

JOHN
 Yes, of course...thank you.

He backs away. DIDO still shows him nothing but her back.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (to Wimbridge, awkward)
 Good night.

WIMBRIDGE
 Good night, sir.

He moves off, and is gone as DIDO finally turns, stares at
 the closed door, flushed.

25 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. CONTINUOUS - NIGHT. 4. 25 *

A single figure - at the farthest end of the crimson drawing room...DIDO'S heart skips a beat at the SOUND of the approaching dinner party...Suddenly the doors open ...DIDO stands quickly - nervous.

LORD MANSFIELD
Dido...my dear.

LADY ASHFORD
(whispers to her sons)
Good Lord - the negro! She really is...

JAMES ASHFORD
(quietly disturbed)
...a lady.

OLIVER
Capital!

LADY ASHFORD
I hadn't expected her to look
so...black.

OLIVER
Mamaa, did you not listen to the
rumours when you were spreading
them?

DIDO curtseys respectfully to LORD MANSFIELD.

LORD MANSFIELD
May I present to you the second
of my nieces - Miss Dido Lindsay.

DIDO curtseys. LADY ASHFORD nods graciously. OLIVER bows - has to nudge his troubled brother do the same.

OLIVER
A pleasure, Miss Lindsay.

She curtseys once again, then moves to sit with ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH
(sotto - re. James)
He is the eldest - to inherit the
entire Ashford fortune. He is
also to inherit from his uncle -
a healthy man, who shows little
sign of departure.

DIDO
How do you know?

ELIZABETH
 Lady Ashford herself. She seems
 rather despondent at her
 brother's robust constitution.

JAMES catches DIDO'S soft brown eyes resting on him.

DIDO
 He has much to recommend him. And
 a second fortune in life should
 please any wife.

ELIZABETH clocks the gaze between DIDO and JAMES.

ELIZABETH
 Dido! You are not to be a
 coquette with him! You already
 have your fortune!

DIDO
 Are you suggesting I now
 condescend to a gentleman without
 means, Bette?! What should good
 society think of us!

OLIVER moves to his brother, follows his gaze to DIDO.

OLIVER
 She is intriguing, is she not?

JAMES
 I find her repulsive.

OLIVER
 I suppose she is...if you find a
 most rare and exotic flower so.
 She is quite something to behold.

ON DIDO as she falters under the brothers' stares.

ELIZABETH
 (flustered, to DIDO)
 Good Lord! They are appraising me!

ELIZABETH composes herself. JAMES' eyes remain on DIDO,
 swallowing hard at her undeniable beauty.

JAMES
 One does not make a wife of the
 rare and exotic, Oliver. One
 samples it on the cotton fields
 of the Indies...

OLIVER
 So far, when it is right at my door?

JAMES
 ...Then finds a pure ENGLISH rose
 to decorate one's home.

OLIVER smiles. OFF both men - trained on DIDO.

26 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT 4.

26 *

ELIZABETH is at the pianoforte. She sings, plays hard, for JAMES' attention, gazing up at him as he stands beside her.

LADY ASHFORD
 Is she 'OUT'??

LADY MANSFIELD
 (embarrassed)
 Not quite.

LADY MARY
 (awkward)
 Any day now.

LADY ASHFORD raises an amused eyebrow - *precocious creature!*

OLIVER offers DIDO a discreet smile, as she sits beside LORD MANSFIELD. His mother quietly moves across to him.

LADY ASHFORD
 You will refrain from any
 intercourse with the negress.
 (beat)
 Lord and Lady Mansfield may find
 it fascinating to have a Lady
 Mulatto running around their
 household, but I will not have
 one running around mine!

OLIVER
 She is an heiress.

A seamless change of heart for LADY ASHFORD.

LADY ASHFORD
 Although exceptions can be made.

OLIVER
 It is said that her father left
 her a rather vast fortune.

LADY ASHFORD
 I mean to say, if that is your
 inclination.

OLIVER
 She is rather soft on the eye - I
 have thought no further Mamaa.

LADY ASHFORD stares across at DIDO.

LADY ASHFORD
From where did you receive your
information?

OLIVER
Her sister-cousin has a rather
fast tongue.

ON LADY ASHFORD as she studies DIDO. ELIZABETH finishes,
amid a smattering of polite applause led by JAMES.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
And what of you Miss Lindsay?
Are we to hear you play tonight?

DIDO looks up to find OLIVER smiling across at her.

DIDO
Well...
(deferring to her father)
Papaa...?

LORD MANSFIELD hesitates. DIDO is embarrassed.

OLIVER
Oh do not be selfish with your
good fortune, m'lord!

A beat...then put on the spot, LORD MANSFIELD caves,
throwing up his hands, helplessly.

DIDO is tentative, ELIZABETH less pleased.

LADY ASHFORD
This will be most interesting!

DIDO moves to the pianoforte settles her fingers on the
keys. A beat, then Handel's *Suite No.9* fills the room.

LORD MANSFIELD closes his eyes, irritated with himself.
LADY MARY whispers to LADY MANSFIELD.

LADY MARY
She has never played in company!

LADY MANSFIELD is silent - stiff with anxiety.

DIDO is raising a beautiful and fluent sound - as skillful
as the most gifted of Georgian young ladies.

LORD MANSFIELD'S eyes spring open - sees all held hostage.
OLIVER moves forward, utterly fascinated.

Relief floods LADY MANSFIELD - she sighs with pride as LADY
MARY lends LADY ASHFORD a smug look.

LADY ASHFORD
(conceding)
She is...most accomplished.

LADY MANSFIELD
(with deep satisfaction)
Hers was a most diligent governess.

27 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. UPSTAIRS CORRIDORS - NIGHT. 4 27 *

Echoing footsteps. LORD and LADY MANSFIELD move toward their rooms, each with a lamp to light their way.

LADY MANSFIELD
The liberty of asking her to play! And when he can have no better intentions towards her.

She stops in her tracks briefly, suddenly unsure...

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
Can he??

They round a corner.

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
...His family name will, no doubt, entice her to take him seriously.

LORD MANSFIELD
She must not delude herself. Such decisions are not hers to make.

LADY MANSFIELD
Then spell it out to her! Before she renders herself...sport to some 'gent' of cruel promises!!!

LORD MANSFIELD
She has no reason. Hers is an inheritance that renders her free of the usual inducements to marry.

LADY MANSFIELD
Well, that, at least, is true, (burdened, grave)
Indeed, it is Elizabeth who needs to secure her bread and butter.

28 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. GROUND FLOOR CORRIDORS/STUDIO. DAY. 5 28 *

Feminine feet move along the corridor. REVEAL DIDO making her way to LORD MANSFIELD'S study.

Her POV: through the doorway to the studio.

An UNFAMILIAR FACE mixing paints, engrossed. His weather-worn hands are recognisable from the opening credits. His stare meets DIDO's, calmly moved by her beauty as she stands, frozen - her full lips parted in astonishment.

29 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - DAY. 5 29 *

ELIZABETH stands at the mirror - a maid dressing her.

ELIZABETH
A portrait? Are you sure?

DIDO
Yes...Aunt Mary has confirmed it.

DIDO sits, light headed, anxiety running through her.

ELIZABETH
Good Lord. How...truly wonderful.

DIDO
But...but...

ELIZABETH
(becoming exasperated)
But what, Dido?

30 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LORD MANSFIELD'S STUDY. DAY. 5 30 *

DIDO hurls herself into the room, utterly panicked.

DIDO
Papaa...should he not have wished
to SEE me before deciding?

She throws her hands up woefully, and finds another face staring back at her - It is JOHN DAVINIER. He regards her from a huge law book. She stands mortified.

DIDO (CONT'D)
(to Lord M)
I am sorry...I did not know you...

LORD MANSFIELD
(dry)
Mr Davinier, I believe you have
already had the pleasure.

JOHN
(ironic)
In...some way - yes.
(to DIDO)
Miss Lindsay.

She curtseys, brief and stiff - a smile to match.

LORD MANSFIELD
Decide what?

She is hesitant now, awkward in JOHN'S presence.

DIDO
If he should...should WANT to
paint me!

LORD MANSFIELD
The man is to be paid a fortune.
What is there to decide?

DIDO
But...

LORD MANSFIELD
Dido, you are to simply sit
still. Not a challenging task!

DIDO
(anxious)
Next...next to Elizabeth...?

LORD MANSFIELD
As you always are - right beside
one another.

DIDO's chest heaves with distress.

JOHN
Should...should not any lady be
flattered to be such a subject?

His tone is impatient, irritating her.

DIDO
How should any male know the ways
of a lady when he has not even
mastered the ways of a gentleman?

JOHN
Quite! Though one should be
forgiven for thinking he was in
the presence of a lady - when she
is, in fact, still a juvenile!

DIDO
Papaa, may we do this in private!

LORD MANSFIELD
Not now, no! You may return the
books to the library.

DIDO
Papaa...!

LORD MANSFIELD casts her a stare and she is silenced.
DIDO begins collecting giant hardbacks, exasperated.

LORD MANSFIELD
Upon her husband's death a widow
may receive....

JOHN
...her marriage portion and
inheritance at once. She has forty
days to leave her husband's home...

LORD MANSFIELD
Hummm...
(contemplation)
Yours are grand ambitions.

JOHN says nothing - swallows hard. DIDO steals a glance.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
What is the purpose of the law in
your eyes, Mr Davinier?

JOHN
To... to provide certainty where
there might otherwise be none.

LORD MANSFIELD
Example.

JOHN
The Zong ship and those drowned.

LORD MANSFIELD stiffens. He looks uncomfortably at DIDO
piling books. JOHN'S eyes follow.

LORD MANSFIELD
It is one of the few trades
acceptable to a gentleman.

JOHN
I am no member of the nobility -
I have little, but...where my
father relies on the bible, I...I
wish to rely on the law courts.

LORD MANSFIELD
You aspire to the judiciary?

LORD MANSFIELD laughs at him. DIDO stares at the ground -
cringing on JOHN'S behalf. John asserts himself.

JOHN
One day...yes...m'lord. I wish to
make the laws not only administer
them - for that...that is how I may
truly change this world. I mean to
say, make it... a better place.

A beat. His words force DIDO to look up, affected.

LORD MANSFIELD
Noble if not pompous! A country
lawyer, you may make - perhaps! If
you pay every regard to what you
are taught - but you have neither
the rank nor finances for any more!

JOHN
(tentative)
If I may, m'lord - neither did you!

LORD MANSFIELD
I beg your pardon?

JOHN
Well...as a fourth son, you had
rank but not the income to pay for
your qualification to the Inns.

DIDO's wide eyes take in JOHN, astonished by his chuzpah.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Without the sponsorship of Lord
Foley and William Hamilton...the
English courts may not have
benefited from your brilliance -
and the title, Lord Chief Justice
could not be yours today...M'lord.

LORD MANSFIELD
You believe you are worthy of
such considerations? Such are
your capabilities?

JOHN
That I do not know, M'lord. I
have not yet been afforded those
considerations...but I know a
country life does not suit me.

LORD MANSFIELD's gaze is trained on JOHN. DIDO has finished
gathering the books and is quietly slipping from the room.

LORD MANSFIELD
The Reverend has requested I take
his son into my tutorage, Dido.
(Beat)
What do you think?

DIDO freezes, in the doorway - all eyes locked on her.

31 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. GALLERY - NIGHT. 5

31 *

DIDO moves along the hallway, lined with enormous artists'
interpretations, communicating a certain lifestyle.

*

She slows, caught by one of the paintings - an English rose stares out, as a black domestic submissively fastens a priceless bracelet around her lady-master's wrist.

DIDO's POV: CLOSE on the domestic. Suddenly...

JOHN

Thank you for your gracious support.

DIDO jumps - finds JOHN standing beside her.

DIDO

I neither spoke for or against you - since neither is my place.

JOHN

Silence speaks volumes.

Elizabeth approaches, calls out, as she curtseys.

ELIZABETH

Papaa's new student.

JOHN

Indeed!

DIDO

Mr Davinier, my cousin, Elizabeth.

JOHN

A pleasure.

DIDO

(to John)
Papaa has never taken a pupil, you realise?

ELIZABETH

Someone to keep you company while you take Papaa's dictation, Dido.
(to John)
Truth is, there have been more of your sex at Kenwood this week, than I've previously seen in all my entire life!

DIDO flushes.

JOHN

Hopefully we have not disappointed!

ELIZABETH

On the contrary!

She raises a minxish eyebrow and moves off. Awkward silence.

DIDO
Mr Davinier, what...what is the
importance of the Zong... why is
the case before Papaa's court,
the supreme court...?

He searches her, taken aback. *Why is she asking him?*

JOHN
Well...
(he struggles, tentative)
It is a cargo ship.

DIDO
I...I am aware of that.

JOHN
A human-cargo ship.

DIDO hesitates, tentative.

DIDO
Oh. You said those who were
drowned.

JOHN
It lost most of its slaves before
arriving at its destination.
(hesitant)
Drowned - by the crew on the
captain's order.

JOHN watches as DIDO falters.

DIDO
But...why?

The SOUND of the MANSFIELDS gathering with the ASHFORDS. A
maid approaches hurrying about her duties.

MAID
Miss, your supper is served
now in the ladies' parlour.

DIDO
Thank you.

JOHN hesitates, struck with confusion at the maid's words.
DIDO becomes awkward. LADY MANSFIELD emerges, disappearing
into the dining room.

LADY MANSFIELD
Mr Davinier, will you be joining
us for dinner?

JOHN's eyes dart to DIDO - sees her unease. It pierces him.

JOHN
 I..er...I thank you, Madam, but I
 am promised to the company of my
 aunt this evening. She has recently
 moved to the cottage at Belsize.

LADY MANSFIELD
 Of course - as you wish.

She moves off, and DIDO and JOHN are left in tense silence.

JOHN
 Permit me to ask, why you do not
 dine with your family - ever?

DIDO
 That is not correct.

JOHN
 Forgive me...but twice now I have
 seen...I have seen you separated
 from the gathering.

DIDO's cheeks begin to burn.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 I am confounded.

DIDO snaps, her shame over-spilling...

DIDO
 And well you might be - when the
 son of clergy is permitted to the
 table before a lady of the house.

JOHN
 Is that a reminder of my place,
 Miss Lindsay?

She holds back frustrated tears, pained.

DIDO
 No. It's a statement of mine!

Both of them are smarting. JOHN moves off, stung.

32 EXT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.5 32 *

DIDO steps into the room, expressionless. She sits on the
 chaise longue, allows her gaze to settle on her reflection.

Something terrible resonates through her - some awful
 thought or feeling, that leaves her breathless with
 emotion. And then her fingers come up to the skin on her
 chest...and she begins to pinch and pull with self-hatred,
 rubbing the heel of her palm across her cheek, her
 forehead, as her face crumples and she begins to cry.

33 EXT. HAMPSTEAD. HEATH. DAY. 6

33 *

New day. LORD MANSFIELD and JOHN ride through Kenwood's lands on horseback, slowing under the shade of trees.

JOHN
(he pats his animal)
There is much speculation on your decision. Anticipation seems to be turning to panic, m'lord.

LORD MANSFIELD
I cannot disagree.

JOHN
One hundred and thirty two drowned on route from Africa to the West Indies. Your ruling could bring the slave trade to its knees - entirely destroy an economic foundation of these lands.
(off Mansfield)
Is that pressure not maddening, m'lord?

LORD MANSFIELD reigns in his horse. He quotes in Latin.

LORD MANSFIELD
Justitia fiat, ruat coelum, Mr Davinier - Let justice be done, though the heavens may fall.

JOHN
The insurance claim states, the slaves were thrown overboard for the safety of the ship - that there wasn't sufficient water for the cargo and crew to survive the rest of the voyage.

LORD MANSFIELD
It does.

JOHN
Then, if I am correct, the case hangs on...

LORD MANSFIELD
...IT HANGS on 'Absolute necessity'. If the cargo was spoiled...

JOHN
Cargo?

LORD MANSFIELD adjusts his language.

LORD MANSFIELD
 If the killing of the..'negros' was
 truly 'necessary' in order to save
 the ship - as the captain contends.

A difficult silence. JOHN is careful, but sceptical.

JOHN
 But...is that where it hinges?

LORD MANSFIELD does not welcome the challenge.

LORD MANSFIELD
 The ship's journey was thwarted
 by impossible weather conditions -
 what should have been weeks
 became months! What once appeared
 enough water, may not have been!

JOHN
 I am sensible of this, m'lord..

LORD MANSFIELD
 Then do you know what a hundred
 thirsty slaves are capable of? I
 can tell you no man happily
 disposes of his cargo, even in
 the face of rebellion!

(Off John's silence)
 So now tell me - were you to
 dock at port with barely a piece
 of merchandise left to trade -
 what would you do? Swallow
 financial ruin - or claim your
 due from the insurers.

John is conflicted - *to speak up, or not?*

JOHN
 With due respect... I should
 question, whether 'human' life
 should have been insurable as
 cargo - at all.

The air turns cold.

34 EXT. KENWOOD GARDENS. DAY. 6

34 *

LADY MARY clips flowers from a bush of sunset pink Dahlias.
 DIDO holds a basket, collecting them. LADY MANSFIELD and
 ELIZABETH stroll beneath parasols.

LORD MANSFIELD and JOHN can be seen approaching the stables
 on horseback - JOHN trailing.

LADY MARY
A gentleman rather like him once
paid me much interest.

ELIZABETH
Mr Davinier?

LADY MANSFIELD
(matter of fact.)
Really, Mary?

DIDO lays each Dahlia carefully.

LADY MARY
Do not look at me like that! It was
my Mamaa who intervned. I thought
he had a very great sense of duty.
Overly kind at times but...

LADY MANSFIELD watches as though she knows the rest.

DIDO
(gently)
But...what, Aunt Mary?

LADY MARY hesitates and LADY MANSFIELD cuts in, saving her.

LADY MANSFIELD
HE is engaged, you know?

DIDO follows her gaze to JOHN, as he climbs from the horse,
hands it to a STABLEMAN.

LADY MARY
Engaged!

ELIZABETH
Is he?

LADY MANSFIELD
Mr Beresford's daughter.

ELIZABETH
The carriage-maker! He might have
set his sights a little higher!

AS JOHN marches toward the back entrance of the house. He
nods to the ladies. A self-conscious beat between he and
DIDO, her back to him - as he disappears inside.

OFF her reaction.

35 INT. KENWOOD STUDIO. DAY. 7

35 *

CLOSE ON: the soft curls around DIDO'S hairline, a single
eye, her nose, cheek. HOLD on her lips.

ON the painter's canvas...a sketch emerging - he brings DIDO'S mouth to life. We see an outline of ELIZABETH with some detail, already been created.

REVEAL ELIZABETH beside DIDO. As her hand slides over to DIDO'S and she squeezes it tight.

ON their clasped hands.

ZOFFANY

To the window, Miss Lindsay

DIDO favours the window a little more...Soft sunlight pours onto her skin.

36 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. CORRIDORS/STUDIO. DAY. 7

36 *

JOHN moves through corridors - hat under his arm. ELIZABETH emerges from the studio, drawing his attention to...

Through a half open doorway, his POV: DIDO sits on stool before ZOFFANY. The sight draws JOHN to a halt.

He attempts to move off - but cant! He observes DIDO quietly. She is somehow tranquil under Zoffany's gaze.

A beat before her eyes fall on JOHN'S outline in the doorway - his stare, penetrating and compelling.

ON ZOFFANY - he follows DIDO'S gaze to JOHN. Then he sketches madly, filling in DIDO'S eyes in great detail.

ON JOHN, embarrassed - he moves away quickly. DIDO is affected. She jumps up! Goes after him!

As ELIZABETH'S eyes follow, uncertain.

DIDO

Wait...

She is upon him in the CORRIDOR! They stand silent, awkward.

JOHN

I...I was curious...

DIDO

Quite a task - to sit for so many
hours...(beat)...
Congratulations! I learned of
your..your match..yesterday.

*

*

JOHN

Thank you.

He falters slightly, swallows hard - *not all is well.*

Her eyes hone in on a pamphlet under his arm. JOHN shifts uneasy at what it shows - the last few letters of THE ZONG can be seen, and LORD MANSFIELD depicted with large butt.

DIDO

I appear the only one to have just learned of this affair?

JOHN

Perhaps yours is a life less concerned with such matters.

DIDO

Why do you judge me so?

He studies her. She is tentative.

DIDO (CONT'D)

It is a fact that I have contemplated on the matter for many hours, and I...I do not think the slaves could have been drowned in the way you say.

ON his disbelief - irritation slowly turns to dawning.

JOHN

Are you at utter disconnect from everything?!

He searches her, making her feel very small and ashamed. As he moves off, she stares after him, distressed.

DIDO

Mr Davinier...please. Tell me. Tell me what you know!

He stops, stares back at her. *What to do?*

DIDO (CONT'D)

(earnest)
Do not render me your amusement.

He traces her vulnerability. It roots him.

JOHN

I can only tell you what I believe.

DIDO

(trying to understand)
And what...what is that?

JOHN

The slaves were intentionally drowned, that is not in question. Chained! Thrown into the waters - chained together as one.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

They were diseased - worth more as
dead insured merchandise, than as
alive spoiled goods.

(stark)

The captain hoped it would 'pay'
to kill them.

ON DIDO as colour drains from her face. Nausea rises...

His eyes try to read hers, becoming sensitive. As he moves
back towards her. She struggles to take it in.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Miss Lindsay....?

DIDO

But the insurers are appealing.

JOHN

Yes. They are challenging the
decision of the lower court -
refusing to pay for murdered
slaves.

Her eyes sting. JOHN can see she is having difficulty - he
touches her hand absentmindedly, startling her, but their
eyes remain locked. She attempts, weakly, to return self-
possession. Then almost a whisper...

DIDO

Thank you.

That is, thank you for telling me what nobody else has!

She turns, walks away. ON DIDO, as her pace quickens.

37

INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LORD MANSFIELD'S STUDY. DAY. 7

37

*

ON DIDO, urgently rifling through files, shelves - chaotic.

She moves to a desk, pulls open drawers - REVEAL volumes
and volumes of news pamphlets. A set of them bound, LORD
MANSFIELD'S wax seal hanging from the cord. She unties the
cord, wax seal all over her hands. She fingers her way
through the pile - legal headlines...all referring to Lord
Mansfield. She stops dead...

POV - pamphlet cover...image of LORD MANSFIELD, drooping
bottom lip touching the ground - foolish and dithering,
whilst beside him a 'Negro' slave wields a judge's' gavel.

A headline - **'Slave Cargo Deliberately Drowned to save ship
- Mansfield Dithers on Zong Insurance'**. DIDO stares hard...

DIDO

(whispers)

Papaa.

She runs her fingers across the caricature, pained - then moves urgently to the next pamphlet, and the next...

More MANSFIELD caricatures - a big nose, fat lips, all with Zong headlines: 'Mansfield to Rule on "Disposable Slaves" '

The library door suddenly opens, jolting DIDO.

ELIZABETH
There you are!

DIDO is frozen, says nothing. ELIZABETH stares from the doorway - why does DIDO look so strange?

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
We are requested. You - drawing room.
I, relegated to the ladies' Palour!

She disappears leaving DIDO bewildered.

38 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES' PARLOUR. DAY. 7 38 *

ELIZABETH stands before LADY MANSFIELD.

LADY MANSFIELD
We are to attend London for the
Season.

ELIZABETH'S eyes are wide.

39 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM - DAY. 7 39 *

DIDO mirrors ELIZABETH.

DIDO
We are to finally 'come out'??

LORD MANSFIELD stares back at her.

LORD MANSFIELD
(clarifying)
Elizabeth is to come out.

40 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES' PARLOUR - DAY. 7 40 *

LADY MANSFIELD
Dido is not.

ELIZABETH'S face falls.

41 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS. DAY. 7 41 *

LORD MANSFIELD stares solemnly at DIDO.

DIDO
But why?

LORD MANSFIELD
You understand the ways of this
world for a female, Dido.
Elizabeth has no income. When all
this is gone to her father, I
have nothing to leave her.

42 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES PARLOUR - DAY. 7 42 *

LADY MANSFIELD
You are to meet as many gentlemen as
possible, before we make the match.

ELIZABETH
Oh!

43 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. DAY. 7 43 *

DIDO is speechless.

DIDO
And me?

LORD MANSFIELD
Dido, you are well taken care of -
Of this, you are well aware.

44 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES' PARLOUR - DAY.7 44 *

LADY MANSFIELD
A gentleman of good breeding is
unlikely to form any serious
attachment to Dido, and a man
without, will lower her position
in society.

ELIZABETH
But she is not merely my cousin,
Mamaa, she is my sister. I
cannot attend London without her!

45 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM - DAY.7 45 *

DIDO'S gaze is pained.

LORD MANSFIELD
You may attend London together to
keep Elizabeth company and save the
pain of a few weeks separation.

46 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES' PARLOUR. DAY.7

46 *

LADY MANSFIELD shakes her head.

LADY MANSFIELD
Lord knows I will need you both
to keep each other out of trouble.

47 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM - DAY.7

47 *

DIDO
Papaa...

LORD MANSFIELD
You are not to be denied, Dido.

He looks down. DIDO'S eyes follow to a large bunch of keys.

DIDO
Papaa, please!

LORD MANSFIELD
These are the keys to the house.
They have hung at the waist of your
aunt for the last thirty years.

DIDO
(horrified)
No! I am not Lady Mary. I am not
an unwanted maid!

LORD MANSFIELD feels no choice but to go on.

LORD MANSFIELD
Lady Mary is too old to continue
in charge of the house.

He places the keys in her hand and closes her fingers.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
You may assume her duties on your
return. A most respectable position
for an unmarried Mansfield Lady.

She stares at him, disbelieving, bereft...

DIDO
Are...are you punishing me?

LORD MANSFIELD
Punishing you!! Dido, you are
most cherished. Most loved. Why
...why would you say such a thing?

DIDO
Because...

She tries to find courage to speak. LORD MANSFIELD waits.

DIDO (CONT'D)
Because ...

She swallows hard...loses courage...

LORD MANSFIELD
Because what?

A moment. He looks down, sees the bright red wax from his seal on her fingers. ON his slow dawning. Ominous beat.

48 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. GROUND FLOOR CORRIDORS - DAY.7 48 *

ELIZABETH steps from the ladies' parlour - DIDO from the drawing room, winded with emotion. As they fall into each other's arms, weeping...

ELIZABETH
I am sorry, Dido. So very sorry.

49 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. DAY. 7 49 *

LORD MANSFIELD stands alone restraining his tears.

50 INT. KENWOOD. LORD MANSFIELD'S STUDY. DAY. 8 50 *

LORD MANSFIELD's eyes are wild. JOHN stands before him.

LORD MANSFIELD
You told her they were wantonly drowned.

JOHN
Because they were! Those slaves were diseased - some were already dying - yes. But it was essential they die ON the journey or they would not come under insurance consideration! Neither too, if they had expired of their diseases - That is why they were killed - this we all know!

LORD MANSFIELD
You have entered my home and utterly taken advantage of the confidential matters afforded you.

JOHN
These 'matters' have been for public consumption for months. Miss Lindsay is no child...no.. fool!

LORD MANSFIELD
 (incandescent)
 Her precious care is in my hands
 and I will decide when she is
 ready for such realities. Not the
 son of a vicar! A vicar who,
 incidently purchased his living
 from me!

JOHN
 I shall gather my belongings.

LORD MANSFIELD
 Do so!

LORD MANSFIELD turns his back on JOHN to glare at the lawns
 JOHN calmly collects his books, jacket, hat. He hesitates.

JOHN
 Your Lordship, a question?

LORD MANSFIELD swings round ready to bite..

LORD MANSFIELD
 WHAT, Mr Davinier!

JOHN
 As the mere son of a vicar - I
 wonder whether the value you
 extend to your very precious
 mulatto niece - well I wonder if
 it amounts to MORE...or LESS than
 the thirty pounds insurance the
 traders are asking for each life
 they murdered?

ON LORD MANSFIELD'S cold stare. He swallows hard.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Good day, M'lord.

LORD MANSFIELD
 Mr Davinier.

JOHN stops, turns to LORD MANSFIELD.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 A word to the wise. Find yourself
 in her vicinity again, and you will
 rue the day you cast eyes on me.

JOHN hesitates a beat. Then he is gone.

51 INT. KENWOOD HOUSE. LADIES PARLOUR. DAY. 8

51 *

ELIZABETH catches sight of JOHN riding across the heath.

ELIZABETH
John Davinier is leaving very
early today!

DIDO moves to the window. Her POV: JOHN on horseback as he disappears over the brow.

ELIZABETH, LADIES MANSFIELD and MARY watch as LORD MANSFIELD storms past the doorway.- *all is not well, they can tell.*

LORD MANSFIELD's gaze locks with DIDO through the doorway - he falters, moves on.

OFF DIDO's realisation - *JOHN is not coming back .*

52 EXT. HAMPSTEAD - DAY 9 52 *

CLOSE ON hooves - the Mansfield carriage is on the move to London. The familiar lush horizon provides the backdrop.

ON the luggage-laden carriage - the girls whisper.

ELIZABETH (OOV)
Do you think I may see Mr James
in town?

DIDO (O.C.)
Perhaps.

53 INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. CONTINUOUS DAY. 9 53 *

ELIZABETH whispers to DIDO, completely matter of fact.

ELIZABETH
I could fall in love with such a
man, Dido.

LADY MARY
Love?

The two girls are startled. LADY MARY smiles to herself.

DIDO
(whispers)
Bette, you could feel no such
sentiment for you should either
end poor or... broken hearted.

54 EXT. LONDON STREETS. DAY. 9 54 *

The carriage rounds a corner, weaves through the bustle of markets, peasants, guided by HARRY, the MANSFIELD driver.

ON DIDO's face, staring from the moving carriage.

55 EXT. LONDON STREETS. DAY. 9

55 *

Bloomsbury Square opens before us. As the carriage halts...

ELIZABETH (O.C)
Aren't you quietly relieved?

DIDO
Relieved?

ELIZABETH
That you shan't be at the caprice
of some silly Sir and his fortune!
(off Dido's silence)
The rest of us haven't the choice!
Not a chance of inheritance if
we have brothers and forbidden
from any activity that allows us to
support ourselves.

ELIZABETH sighs.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
(c'est la vie)
We are but their property.

OFF DIDO, affected.

56 INT./EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE ENTRANCE HALL - DAY. 9

56 *

LIBBY, the housekeeper and THOMAS, the butler stand on ceremony. Maids help the Mansfield ladies as they disrobe.

ON DIDO as her gaze falls on MABEL (20), a black maid helping ELIZABETH with her hat. A beat as DIDO stiffens.

LADY MANSFIELD
Light the fires for dinner, will
you, Thomas.

ON MABEL as she catches DIDO'S stare, forcing DIDO to avert her gaze quickly, turning her back to distance herself.

57 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.9 57 *

The soft light of oil lamps.

DIDO, in night-clothes, drags a brush through tight ringlets. She stops, observes, a moment as ELIZABETH runs a comb through her own silken hair.

DIDO
You are so beautiful, Bette.
I hope your match is the most
wonderful of all gentlemen.

ON ELIZABETH wide eyed, then moved as her eyes brim.

A tentative knock and MABEL enters - DIDO becomes tense.
MABEL speaks gently - strong Welsh accent.

MABEL
Some bed socks for you, Miss
Murray, Miss Lindsay. It's not as
warm as we hoped tonight

She hands a pair each to the girls.

ELIZABETH,
Thank you Mabel...How kind.

MABEL pauses as DIDO struggles with her hair.

MABEL
Can I help you with that, Miss
Lindsay?

ON DIDO, self-conscious under MABEL'S stare.

DIDO
Mabel, I am fine - thank you!

She struggles once again, wrenching the brush.

MABEL
You must start from the ends, miss.

DIDO stares at her - a long beat.

CUT TO:

Candle lit faces... DIDO'S reflection in the mirror - her
hair separated into four sections.

In the reflection BG, ELIZABETH sits serenely watching
MABEL brushing through each section from ends to roots.

MABEL (CONT'D)
My Mam taught me, see?

DIDO stares at her a moment, some kind of pain resonates in
her eyes as her face softens and she begins to relax.

58 EXT. MAYFAIR. ASHFORD HOME. DAY.10

58 *

The four MANSFIELD ladies step from the carriage. Before
them, a huge Georgian home. All four take it in.

LADY MANSFIELD
Promise me you will change that
vulgar teal paint, if you ever
become lady of this home. It is
positively wanting, Elizabeth.

59 EXT. MAYFAIR. ASHFORD HOME. GARDENS. DAY.10

59 *

A sophisticated landscape, very much in keeping with LADY ASHFORD'S sense of style.

A maid steps out - LADY MANSFIELD follows with the four Mansfield women. ELIZABETH beams.

MAID
Lady Mansfield, LADY MARY and
their nieces, Madam.

LADY ASHFORD moves towards them, face bright with ambition.

LADY ASHFORD
Ladies.

LADY MANSFIELD
Lady Ashford.

The girls curtsy.

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
And the gentlemen? Mr James?

LADY ASHFORD
(reassuring)
Here, of course. Very little could
have prevented him, knowing that
Miss Murray would visit today.

ELIZABETH could burst. She looks up to see JAMES and OLIVER approach from the North side of the gardens.

CUT TO:

The ladies sip drinks as LORD ASHFORD appears from the house, a man with presence (50s) cultivated and astute.

He moves to OLIVER, observing DIDO, under a nearby tree.

LORD ASHFORD
Lord Mansfield's infamous Mulatto.
No wonder our 'Lord Chief Justice
knows not whether he is coming or
going! Not your usual game, Oliver.

OLIVER examines his father.

LORD ASHFORD (CONT'D)
She can not know your thoughts
unless you offer them to her.

He moves off, leaving OLIVER pensive.

LORD ASHFORD (CONT'D)
 The ladies Mansfield! As sweet on
 the eye as the freshest flowers
 in bloom....
 (off Lady M's laughter)
 What is in those glasses?

ON OLIVER as he moves to the pond. In the BG...

LADY ASHFORD
 Grenadine syrup...

LADY MARY
 And port!!

LADY MANSFIELD
 Which has gone to my head already!

ELIZABETH is knelt at the pond's edge with JAMES - a paper
 boat floats on the water, toppling over to a unanimous cry.

OLIVER watches as DIDO approaches. His eyes light up.

ELIZABETH
 Oh Dido look - Mr James has made
 me a boat and it has capsized.

JAMES stretches a branch into the lake to rescue the boat.

DIDO
 What a dreadful shame.

OLIVER collects paper from the grass. CLOSE on his hands as
 he folds it into a boat under DIDO'S nose.

OLIVER
 (to DIDO, earnest)
 For you.

She smiles, can't help being charmed.

DIDO
 Thank you.

He places it in the water, stands and examines DIDO. From
 afar, LADY MANSFIELD watches.

OLIVER
 Miss Lindsay, would you do me the
 honour of taking some air with
 me, some time?

DIDO is dumbstruck - *what to say?* JAMES is halted.

JAMES
 Don't you care what people will say

DIDO is jolted by the antagonism in JAMES' tone - ELIZABETH too - it pierces her and she speaks up.

ELIZABETH
What is that to mean Mr James?
What should anyone say?!

JAMES hesitates, then...

JAMES
That he should compromise a lady's reputation by stepping out with her - scarcely having made her acquaintance!

OLIVER
I think you are a great deal too anxious, brother. We should merely take a turn around Vauxhall.

DIDO observes JAMES - His protestation is bitter. She traces OLIVER'S features, warmly.

DIDO
I should be delighted, Mr Oliver!
Most delighted.

60 INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. LONDON STREETS. DAY.10 60 *

On the move through London streets. LADIES MANSFIELD and MARY sit quietly. ELIZABETH whispers to DIDO.

ELIZABETH
Are you really to defy Papaa?

DIDO says nothing, turns to stare out of the window.

61 EXT. VAUXHALL PLEASURE GARDENS. DUSK/NIGHT.11 61 *

Teaming with parasols, fountains, and hidden pathways.

61.1: JAMES and ELIZABETH stroll, followed by DIDO and OLIVER, then, LADIES MANSFIELD, MARY, and ASHFORD.

LADY MANSFIELD
(re. Dido with Oliver)
I am not at ease with this.
Lord Mansfield would be most aggrieved.

LADY ASHFORD
Oh it can do no harm. This is simply two families, enjoying a day together.

LADY MANSFIELD takes an unhappy breath, burdened.

LADY ASHFORD (CONT'D)
 Though surely...IF a desirable
 match were a ... certain...
 possibility your dear husband could
 have no objections, could he?

LADY MANSFIELD, turns slowly to regard LADY ASHFORD,
 aroused by the insinuation and alarmed at the same time.

She looks back to DIDO and OLIVER, wide eyed.

OLIVER
 Well I did not think I would ever
 find a lady who was not to be
 conquered or ignored...Until you.

DIDO
 Ah now how do I know this is not
 just another tactic in your
 battle to conquer?

He stops, takes her hand and places it on in his chest.

OLIVER
 See how my heart beats.

She lets her hand rest a moment.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
 I am utterly taken with you, Miss
 Lindsay.

DIDO
 Despite...such pronounced
 protestations from your brother?

OLIVER
 He cannot overlook your mother's
 origins, as I do. Foolish. Why
 should anyone even pay her regard
 when your better half has equipped
 you so well with loveliness and
 privilege.

Dido is stung. OLIVER shrugs, oblivious. The sound of Handel
 filters from a nearby concert. DIDO tries hard to recover.

DIDO
 What a lovely sound.

He smiles at her, studies her...mischievous...

OLIVER
 You are unrelentingly cultured.
 Come, let's find it!

He takes her waist spinning her round with him into another
 pathway, disappearing from the others, giggling as they go.

LADY MANSFIELD
People will think she has no family!

LADY ASHFORD.
People will think they are courting!

LADY MANSFIELD and LADY MARY exchange a look. LADY MARY is somehow softened - her eyes appeal to LADY MANSFIELD...

LADY MARY
Let her enjoy his society.

LADY MANSFIELD is effected - reads MARY'S emotion.

61.2: An open pavilion with classical concert. ON OLIVER and DIDO watching.

OLIVER
I might only have dreamed of
these moments, at one time.

DIDO smiles - allows herself to be flattered.

DIDO
Really? You are much of the
conqueror Mr Oliver.

He chuckles, brings his hand up to brush her cheek, gently. She smiles just as her eyes fall on the back of a gentleman's head, shoulders - his movement somehow familiar.

The sight roots her, uncertain of what she sees. And then he turns to address another, and his profile becomes clear.

It is JOHN DAVINIER.

In that moment, he flicks his head round and his gaze falls on her - a beat between them then his eyes fall on OLIVER. JOHN excuses himself from others and makes his way across.

JOHN
Miss Lindsay.

DIDO
(flushed)
Mr Davinier. How...how nice to
see you.

JOHN
And you, Miss Lindsay.

He looks to OLIVER.

DIDO
Forgive me - Mr Ashford, may I
present to you...Mr Davinier.
(She smiles awkward)
(MORE)

DIDO (CONT'D)
 He is the son of our Vicar at
 Hampstead, and was..well,
 almost father's pupil...

OLIVER
 A clergyman!
 (an 'off' smile)
 Good day, to you...sir.

OLIVER bows, manfully, asserting his greater status.

JOHN
 Sir. (beat) My regards to
 your family, Miss Lindsay.

Unexpected hope fills her.

DIDO
 Elizabeth and Mamaa are here...
 in fact.

DIDO watches as JOHN nods politely and moves off, returning
 to his company - male and all of a similar type to him.

ON OLIVER, as he takes in JOHN'S effect on DIDO.

CUT TO:

61.3. The spit and bang of spectacular fireworks. OLIVER
 stands engrossed as the sky lights up. DIDO looks up at
 him. She wavers. Then...slowly she backs away from the crowd

CUT TO:

61.4 DIDO walks quickly - follows the sound of the concert
 to find her way back to JOHN.

Her POV: JOHN listening diligently to the music. He double
 takes at the sight of her hovering at the edge of the
 concert. He stands alarmed, negotiates his way to her.

JOHN
 (dismayed)
 Miss Lindsay, you are alone!!

DIDO
 I did not have the chance to see
 you before you left...Mr Davinier
 ...to convey my apologies.

JOHN
 Apologies...?

DIDO
 Your pupilage. Father would
 never have ended it...you...you
 never would have had to leave
 Kenwood were it not...

His eyes soften as he looks at her...

JOHN

He would make mine a living hell,
were he to know of us speaking.

DIDO tugs him into a quiet lane, away from the concert and promenading.

Hardly a breath and BAM!! She is slammed against a walled maze, suddenly!! JOHN pressed against her tightly!

Confused, her gaze darts around her, finds LADY MANSFIELD and LADY ASHFORD ambling past along a cross path, oblivious.

DIDO freezes - held tightly against JOHN. She stares panicked into his eyes and he into hers.

61.5:CUTAWAY So they do not see ELIZABETH as she strolls by with JAMES - Her gaze falling on JOHN and DIDO, instantly.

ELIZABETH is stunned!!!! But doesn't falter.

61.4 CONT'D: As DIDO and JOHN look back - nothing but anonymous strangers, leaving them none the wiser to being discovered. JOHN pulls away, embarrassed...

JOHN (CONT'D)

Forgive me.

She nods, equally bashful. They regard each other.

DIDO

What are you doing here in London
Mr Davinier?

JOHN

I am under a third cousin - a
solicitor, here. Nothing more
than petty disputes between
unsavoury landlords and debauched
tenants, but I cannot discount it.

DIDO

Not what you wished for.

JOHN

I haven't given up on The Inns.
Nothing worth having in life
comes easily.

DIDO

(flushed)
Where are my manners? I trust
the future Mrs Davinier is well.

JOHN

Very well...thank you.

DIDO is unexpectedly struck - recovers herself.

DIDO
I have tried to keep up - with
the Zong. These past weeks.

JOHN
(agitated)
Tis pitiful! Such inability to
simply know what value to put on
another's life.

DIDO
(bitterly)
What price, a worthless Negro.

JOHN
(frustrated)
You utterly misunderstand me.
I am saying that no man may have
the value of that of cargo!!!
Human beings cannot be priced,
since we are priceless!! Freeman
and slaves alike!

Her eyes begin to sting at the 'integrity' in his words.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(enthused)
I am with others here. We are
all students in law - applying
pressure on the insurance companies
to refuse from here on to insure
slaves on any ship. A simple clause.

DIDO
But that would require a change
of law. I know nothing but...

JOHN
A change in law - something the
insurance companies can lobby for
IF they can be persuaded to band
together.

(softly,)
We may only be students,
but...change is most always
precipitated by the young.
(shrugs - poignant)
Someone has to have the courage.
How can we expect to be civilised
if we live in a barbaric world.

His words wind her as JOHN shakes his head, frustrated. She
takes him in - *he is so very handsome!*

JOHN (CONT'D)
It is the utter injustice...the
industrial slaughter of so many.

DIDO stares at him earnestly.

DIDO
No. It is more than that. It's
the shame of a law that would
uphold a financial transaction
upon that atrocity.

She is scathing and accepting all at once, affecting him.

JOHN
That is indeed the truth.

Their eyes are locked. An intimate beat that perturbs her.

DIDO
I have never heard anyone speak
like you.

JOHN
Nor I, you, Miss Lindsay.

He is emotional, it perturbs him too, now.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You must return. They will be
anxious. Should I follow to see
you safely.

DIDO
No we cannot risk it.

He nods - studies her....

JOHN
Good bye, Miss Lindsay.
(he pauses)
I suspect, we will never see each
other again.

The thought strikes DIDO, uneasily.

DIDO
Good bye, Mr Davinier.

She turns, preparing herself.

JOHN
Miss Lindsay?!
(tentative)
We...commune at the Coaching
Inn - Kentish Town...most
evenings..

He trails off awkwardly. She falters.

DIDO

Quite.

A beat as they regard each other - then she moves off.

CUT TO:

61.6: The whirl of the pleasure gardens...DIDO alone - searching hard for OLIVER or the others. Her pace quickens as a hand comes down on her shoulder, taking her breath away.

OLIVER

I did not dare return to Lady Mansfield without you.

DIDO

(relieved)

I..I am terribly sorry. I thought I saw the others, I went after them...and found myself lost.

OLIVER studies her - she is so nervous...*what is she hiding?* A moment - then his eyes become forgiving.

CUT TO:

61.7 ON LADIES MANSFIELD, MARY, ASHFORD, seated on a bench.

LADY MANSFIELD

It's almost dark!

LADY ASHFORD

Look, here are James and Miss Murray.

ELIZABETH and JAMES approach, sit on the bench opposite.

ELIZABETH

I do hope you know how well I think of you.

JAMES

As I do you.

ELIZABETH

Then I hope, Sir, you plan to honour your attentions...as not to would leave me looking... quite foolish.

JAMES

And I should not call myself a gentleman!

Satisfaction washes over her. As DIDO and OLIVER appear, LADY MANSFIELD lets out a cry of relief, goes to say something - LADY ASHFORD lays a finger across LADY MANSFIELD's lips. *

LADY ASHFORD
 Say nothing! This has all been
 for the good of the future, I
 assure you!

CUT TO:

61.8: The two couples and ladies stroll back to the carriages.

LADY ASHFORD (CONT'D)
 Elizabeth is a determined spirit.

LADY MANSFIELD
 She is.

They stare at the couple ahead.

LADY ASHFORD
 She will need a gentleman who
 can temper her. Quite a task.

She fixes on LADY MANSFIELD, lets her eyes do the talking...

LADY MANSFIELD exchanges a look with LADY MARY.

LADY MANSFIELD
 (to Lady Ashford)
 Do I sense that an address is
 finally to be made?

LADY ASHFORD goes carefully...

LADY ASHFORD
 She is an exquisite girl...
 (with relish)
 And...since there is no male heir
 and...it will therefore fall upon
 Elizabeth and her husband to
 eventually inherit all of Kenwood
 and its lands...

Colour drains from LADY MANSFIELD. LADY MARY closes her
 eyes, dismayed.

LADY MANSFIELD
 Lady Ashford, may I...

LADY ASHFORD
 ...I realise there will be no end
 of worthy addresses to consider.

ON LADY MANSFIELD as she too closes her eyes at the strain.

LADY ASHFORD (CONT'D)
 My dear? Lady Mansfield, what is it?

62 INT. ASHFORD CARRIAGE - NIGHT.11

62 *

JAMES
Penniless?

LADY ASHFORD
(disgusted)
Without an inch of property, or
shilling to her name!

OLIVER chuckles. LADY ASHFORD rests her hand on JAMES' knee.

LADY ASHFORD (CONT'D)
Your situation can attract so
much better, James. She brings
nothing but name. A real lady is
blessed with SO much more.

OLIVER
(sardonic)
Do you hear that, James? A lady's
good breeding alone will not do!

LADY ASHFORD
(to Oliver)
Your brother needs a wife who
will bring him further land!
LOTS!... if he is ever to exert
more political influence than your
father has.

JAMES
But what of her own father?

LADY ASHFORD
The Seventh Viscount Stormont is a
scoundrel. Enscconced in Vienna
with the girl's vicious step-mamaa
and his new offspring - who I am
told is to inherit EVERYTHING.

She shakes her head, stares through the carriage window.

LADY ASHFORD (CONT'D)
I must say, pen-ni-less!
Thankfully her cousin is not.
It is true that on each occasion
I lay eyes upon that girl, she
becomes more beautiful.

OLIVER shifts, perturbed - *DIDO*, indeed, on his mind.

JAMES
She has the colouring of a farmer.

LADY ASHFORD
James, we do not talk about that,
any longer.

JAMES

Is this really the very best you aspire to, Oliver? To introduce some woman of obscure birth into the family lineage?

LADY ASHFORD

James - you are my first boy - blessed by law to inherit your father's wealth. Be sympathetic to your brother. Like the unfortunate Miss Murray - a good family name and empty pockets will only get him so far!!

OLIVER closes his eyes, privately humiliated.

63 INT/EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DRAWING ROOM - DAY.12 63 *

LADY MANSFIELD looks up from her embroidery - SOUNDS of a carriage rounding into the square. At the window.

LADY MANSFIELD

Good heavens, Lord Mansfield has arrived a day early!

LADY MARY moves quickly to look down on the street. Her POV: below, LORD MANSFIELD'S carriage outside.

LADY MARY

(calls out)

Mabel! Freshen the flowers!

64 INT./EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. ENTRANCE HALL - DAY.12 64 *

A trunk hits the flagstone. A FOOTMAN enters with another.

65 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. BREAKFAST ROOM. DAY.13 65 *

A beautifully laid out breakfast - A spray of purple lavender, silver and porcelain.

MABEL smiles privately at DIDO as she lays some bread on the table. DIDO watches her leave.

DIDO looks to the newly arrived LORD MANSFIELD, as he sits.

DIDO

(facetious)

Is Mabel a slave?

LADY MANSFIELD almost chokes on her porridge.

LORD MANSFIELD

I beg your pardon?

DIDO
Is-Mabel-a-slave!

LORD MANSFIELD swallows hard, his jaw tightens.

LORD MANSFIELD
She is free and under our protection.

DIDO
(twice as facetious)
O! Like me!

ELIZABETH
Hardly, Dido!

LORD MANSFIELD
And paid a very respectable wage.

DIDO takes a mouthful of breakfast, goads her father further.

DIDO
How is the fraud appeal Papaa?

LORD MANSFIELD
Fraud?

DIDO
The marine insurance. It is a
Fraud case, is it not?

LORD MANSFIELD
That would depend on to whom you
may speak.

DIDO
To cull your 'cargo'? To do it
solely to claim insurance because
it was too diseased to achieve a
good price at market? If not
fraud, then what?

LORD MANSFIELD
Do you speak on my behalf, Dido?

LADY MANSFIELD
Oh will you please stop!

She slams down her napkin.

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
This is a vulgar subject to be
discussing at breakfast

DIDO and LORD MANSFIELD are locked in a stand-off.

A bitter silence. LADY MARY ventures to change the subject.

LADY MARY
I learned yesterday that Mr
Davinier is in town.

DIDO stiffens. ELIZABETH stares across at her, privately.

LORD MANSFIELD
Makes sense. Dido is beginning
to sound very much like him.

DIDO has lost her appetite.

DIDO
Excuse me.

She gets up and is gone.

66 INT. LORD MANSFIELD'S LONDON CHAMBERS. HALLWAYS DAY.13 66 *

LORD MANSFIELD moves through hallways, robed, wigged, his
full authority apparent. LORD ASHFORD walks beside him.

LORD ASHFORD
I had the pleasure of laying eyes
on your adopted girl.

LORD MANSFIELD
(facetious)
Which one?

LORD ASHFORD
You have raised a lovely young
lady...And, though I understand she
is kept under interesting rules,
She raises questions.

LORD MANSFIELD
Spit it out.

LORD ASHFORD
Her introduction to society comes
at a key time in the insurance
appeal. Parliament is nervous that
your 'family situation' will
colour your judgement.

LORD MANSFIELD
I will neither be pressured from
the inside - or the outside.

LORD ASHFORD comes to a stop.

LORD ASHFORD
(calm)
You are the highest judge in the
land.

(MORE)

LORD ASHFORD (CONT'D)

In you, they see a man who is of the persuasion and position to bring down the major trade of our time and the commercial health of this country. Some will say, next to our king, you are the most powerful man in England. And the same will ask how you, our Chief Justice can be fair?

LORD MANSFIELD

How? RULES are in place to dictate how we live - were that not the case, I would not have had the mandate to give shelter to my nephew's child.

He struggles with his emotion.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)

She is his blood - MINE! And rightfully had entitlement to grow up on the family estate.

(aggrieved)

The parliamentarians may challenge me - let them! I can tell you all, if the law supports the Zong's slave owners as strongly as Murray blood runs through Dido Belle's veins - make no mistake - the insurers will be forced to pay up!

LORD ASHFORD is affected. He regards LORD MANSFIELD.

LORD ASHFORD

(softly)

I believe you.

He raises an eyebrow. Then...

LORD ASHFORD (CONT'D)

I have reason to speak with you on another matter.

LORD MANSFIELD

Oh?

LORD ASHFORD

(tentative)

I have a wish to seal the bond between the Ashford and Mansfield names. It would, however, require some relaxing of your most stringent rules, I must add!

LORD MANSFIELD comes to a halt again.

LORD MANSFIELD
Is that so?

67 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.13

67 *

LORD MANSFIELD steps into the room. LADY MANSFIELD turns from the window. They look gaze in a grave moment.

LORD MANSFIELD
I have had reason to speak with
Lord Ashford.

LADY MANSFIELD
And I to Lady Ashford.
(beat)
Are we in agreement?

LORD MANSFIELD
We are.
(long beat)
You once asked me, who would
look after her when we are gone.
Money is no substitute for a
man's protection. I cannot deny
her a match so suitable.

LADY MANSFIELD nods, satisfied.

68 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. MARBLE ROOM. DAY. 14

68 *

The girls are embroidering with LADY MARY. MABEL enters.

ELIZABETH
Whatever did happen in the end,
Aunt Mary? With your gentleman
friend.

LADY MARY looks up surprised DIDO studies her curious.

LADY MARY
He never married. Cousin Marjorie
wrote me last year, that he had
died after a long illness.

She looks down and continues to sew. DIDO fights tears,
unexpectedly affected. ELIZABETH takes her Aunt's hand.

ELIZABETH
Oh Aunt Mary...

MABEL
Pardon me. Mr Ashford is here for
you, miss.

DIDO and ELIZABETH look back at her, then at each other.

DIDO/ELIZABETH
Which Mr Ashford?

MABEL
O excuse me! Mr Oliver,
for you, Miss Lindsay.

LADY MARY takes it all in, with a special interest.

69 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. GROUND FL. CORRIDOR/DRAWING ROOM. DAY. 14 69 *

As DIDO enters, OLIVER stands with LADY MANSFIELD, both fixed on her. LADY MANSFIELD takes DIDO'S hand, gently.

LADY MANSFIELD
You need worry about nothing.
Your Papaa has been dealt with.

She disappears, leaving DIDO lost. A nervous silence.

OLIVER
Hello, Miss Lindsay.

DIDO
Mr Oliver.

OLIVER
I do hope my reason for being
here will bring you as much
happiness as it brings me.

DIDO swallows hard.

In the CORRIDORS - LADIES MANSFIELD and MARY listen through a crack in the doorway.

In the DRAWING ROOM - OLIVER moves closer to DIDO.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
I think...well, I know...that we
make a rather good match.
(he pauses)
Father has purchased me a
commission in the navy - as
colonel - Is that not the rank
your blood father first purchased?

DIDO
(anxious)
Yes. Indeed it is.

OLIVER
So I feel my career is now set.
All that remains...

A long beat. OLIVER gathers his courage...

OLIVER (CONT'D)

I can not offer you a title, Miss Lindsay..for the next 'Lady Ashford'...well that title must fall to my brother's wife...

(huge,nervous breath)

What I am trying to say is, I can without doubt, offer you ALL that is due to 'Mrs Oliver Ashford' and...and I trust that this would be acceptable to you.

(he hesitates)

Since...it would very much be my privilege...my honour, if you would agree to become my wife.

He takes something from his top pocket. DIDO looks down, finds a large black sapphire glistening in his fingers...

In the CORRIDORS.

LADY MARY

I cannot see...!

LADY MANSFIELD

Shooosh!

On the stairs, ELIZABETH slows, as she approaches.

ELIZABETH

What are you doing?

LADY MANSFIELD

Quiet, Elizabeth!

In the DRAWING ROOM - DIDO is still staring at the ring.

DIDO

Good Lord, Mr Oliver! Your ...your wife? Mrs Ashford?!

She repeats the title and conflict washes over her.

DIDO (CONT'D)

I...

(swallows hard.)

...I cannot...

(she pauses)

I cannot...think of anything ...more wonderful!

He stares at her. She looks back at him, stunned.

In the CORRIDORS....

LADY MANSFIELD

(overjoyed)

She has agreed! O...

ELIZABETH

Agreed?

LADY MANSFIELD throws open the doors, elated.

LADY MANSFIELD

O...!

OLIVER stands, his chest bursting with pride. DIDO shell-shocked, holds up her ring finger - the sapphire flashes.

DIDO

Mamaa, we are engaged!

LADY MANSFIELD eyes fill. She touches DIDO'S face softly. *

DIDO (CONT'D)

It is a good thing, is it not, Mamaa?

LADY MANSFIELD

(whispers, poignant) *

You are my heart - from the
moment I saw you. I only want you
to be happy. *

LADY MARY wipes a tear, discreet as ELIZABETH stands, rooted.

70 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DIDO & ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.14 70 *

Darkness. ELIZABETH whispers softly.

ELIZABETH

Dido...was there any message
for me?

DIDO hesitates a moment - then whispers back just as softly

DIDO

No, Bette (beat) But..I am sure it
won't be long. *

ELIZABETH thinks a moment - Then musters a smile for DIDO.

ELIZABETH

What does it feel like
Dido? To be engaged?

DIDO is struck. She falters, privately, as she thinks.

DIDO

(unsure)
Perfect, Bette - perfect.

CUT TO:

Later. DIDO awake as ELIZABETH sleeps. DIDO slips from bed.

She sits alone at the window, silhouetted by moonlight.

71 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. BREAKFAST ROOM. DAY.15 71 *

Informal breakfast. LORD MANSFIELD approaches in a bustle of importance and sits.

LADY MANSFIELD and LADY MARY exchange tense glances. DIDO considers whether to speak, then...

DIDO

Papaa.

He looks up. DIDO is sincere.

DIDO (CONT'D)

Thank you.

LORD MANSFIELD nods. Tension is relieved.

LADY MANSFIELD

We are to make many calls today, Elizabeth. Acquainting oneself with the most eligible gentleman is not light business.

ELIZABETH

Should we not wait a day or two - for Mr James?

LADY MARY

Elizabeth - some advice. Wait for no man, dear!

She picks up her pamphlet. On the back, a headline reads: *Student Politics Puts Rise to Pain of Insurers*. ON DIDO as she double takes. ELIZABETH follows DIDO'S gaze.

LADY MANSFIELD

Will you join us, Dido?
(no response)
Dido?

She is absorbed in the headline. Absolutely rooted.

DIDO

I..I am terribly light headed this morning, Mamaa. I should like to take rest if it would not displease you.

LADY MANSFIELD

Oh dear! Unwell? And just as we are to announce your news!

- 72 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. STAIRS/GROUND FLOOR CORRIDOR. DAY. 15 72 *
- Dido stands at the top of the sweeping stairs, watches as ELIZABETH and LADY MANSFIELD fuss, before disappearing to their carriage... On DIDO as she thinks a moment.
- 73 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. STAIRS/GROUND FLOOR. DAY. 15 73 *
- DIDO quickly makes her way down - a hooded figure, carrying two scrolls.
- 74 EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. MANSFIELD HOME. DAY.15 74 *
- Harry is asleep at his seat. DIDO reaches up on tiptoe.
- DIDO
Harry! Harry!
- He wakes with a start.
- DIDO (CONT'D)
Harry, I need your help. I need you to take me somewhere.
- HARRY
Alone, Miss?
- DIDO
I shall not be alone, I shall be with you.
(off Harry, reticent)
Please - Harry. If you don't take me, I shall be forced to go alone.
- 75 EXT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. KENTISH TOWN STREETS. DAY.15 75 *
- Sunset. ON HARRY negotiating the carriage through bedlam - his anonymous passenger inside, curtains closed.
- 76 INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. DAY.15 76 *
- DIDO steadies herself with a deep breath as the carriage comes to a halt. She draws the curtain back slightly. Her POV: The exterior of the Coaching Inn.
- 77 INT. COACHING INN. DAY.15 77 *
- POV, negotiating the dark crowded inn - An intellectual brood, mostly men in their own little cliques, discussing the woes of the world and nursing malt beer.
- We find JOHN - in amongst his group, an intense discussion in full swing, a table laid with pamphlets, papers.

A huge figure approaches. JOHN stops mid speech, stares up.

HARRY
Mr Davinier?

JOHN takes a moment - he's alarmed, but somehow, this man is familiar - then...uncertain...

JOHN
Harry?

78 EXT. COACHING INN/INT.MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. DAY.15

78 *

DIDO waits nervously. Suddenly, her breath is taken away as the carriage door opens.

JOHN
Miss Lindsay!

As he climbs inside. He is stunned, flustered.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I...

DIDO
Mr Davinier.

It makes him breathless just to see her there. A beat passes.

JOHN
I didn't expect...! Are you to come inside?...Are...?

DIDO
No...It would be dangerous.

JOHN
(feeling foolish)
Yes. Indeed.

DIDO
Oh Mr Davinier...I am so proud of you. I am so proud of what you are doing and...achieving.

JOHN
No. We've achieved little....

She lifts his face to hers, earnestly.

DIDO
At least thirty per cent of insurers are with you! It is a start. It is a real start.

They are staring straight into each other's eyes. She pulls her hands away, self consciously.

DIDO (CONT'D)
I have something to show you.

She collects the two scrolls beside her, each ribbon tied.
She hands one to JOHN, smoothing the other on her lap.

DIDO (CONT'D)
It is said all of the ship's
papers have been 'lost'...
but...here...I found these in
Papaa's library.

JOHN
What are they?

DIDO
Papaa's notes on the ship's log.
It seems the First Mate has come
forward with it - one Mr Stubbs. I
could not find the log itself, but
look at Papaa's markings - See the
map positions - From December
29th, Captain Collingwood and
his men directed the ship past no
less than eight ports where, you
see....
(she points to map)
...there was every opportunity to
stop and replenish the ship's
water supplies.

JOHN studies the log and map together.

JOHN
Good Lord!

DIDO
And they did not! They either
ignored the possibilities, or
they were never in need.

JOHN'S gaze darts from notes to the map, absorbed.

JOHN
This...This is remarkable.

He looks up from the papers. DIDO is still tentative.

DIDO
Is it? Perhaps if you made these
facts known, Mr Davinier

JOHN
But this places you in an
impossible position with Lord
Mansfield.

DIDO
What is the alternative?

His face searches hers...

JOHN
Walk with me, Miss Lindsay.
The back of the Inn has the
canals,
(he laughs)
Nobody but blind drunks.

79 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DRAWING ROOM. LOW SUN. DAY.15 79 *

A beautiful light fills the room. MABEL distributes candles
as LORD MANSFIELD enters - informal and without wig.

LORD MANSFIELD
Where is everybody, Mabel? The
carriages are gone.

MABEL
Lady Mansfield and Miss Murray
are out calling, your lordship.

LORD MANSFIELD
And Dido also?

MABEL
Erm...I believe so.

LORD MANSFIELD stares at her irritated - *peculiar girl!*

LORD MANSFIELD
Well is she, or isn't she?

MABEL wavers, attempts to sound convincing.

MABEL
Yes. She is, M'lord.

LORD MANSFIELD watches as she stiffly moves from the room.
He goes to ask something more...then thinks better of it.

80 EXT. KENTISH TOWN. CANAL SIDE. LOW SUN:LAST EMBERS.EVE.15 80 *

The sun is almost down. A hooded DIDO walks beside JOHN.

DIDO
Papaa would rather I see no ill,
as though by ignoring it, it some
how escapes me - perhaps by
position but not...not by blood

JOHN
 (conciliatory)
 The fault was never with you.

He stops a beat as he catches her gaze on a painted metal sign swinging from the back of an inn. It shows a gent, hat in hand, his black servant bowing behind him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 (unsure)
 Miss Lindsay?

DIDO
 Just as in life, we are no better
 in paintings...

He follows her gaze back to the image and realisation hits.

JOHN
 You were afraid.

DIDO
 Afraid?

JOHN
 To be painted - to be painted
 beside Miss Murray
 (off her discomfort)
 And I ridiculed you.
 (swallows hard)
 I feel ashamed.

She looks back at him earnestly...

DIDO
 Do not feel ashamed.
 (she observes him)
 Elizabeth said something when we
 arrived in London. She said:
 (recounting)
 we are but their property.

JOHN
 Whose?

DIDO
 Gentlemen's. We women are but
 the property of gentlemen. That
 is the way it is, in law and in
 life, is it not?

JOHN nods, uneasily. DIDO thinks aloud.

DIDO (CONT'D)
 And it came into my head that I
 have been blessed with freedom
 twice over? As a negro and as a
 woman?

JOHN
I suppose you have, yes!

DIDO
Or have I?
(her mind ticks over)
Must not a lady marry, even if
she is financially secure? For
who is she, without a husband of
consequence?
(she ponders)
It seems silly - like a free
negro who begs for a master!

JOHN
Unless she marries her equal. Her
true equal - A man who respects her.

DIDO is silent. She steals a glance at him.

DIDO
I remember my Papaa's eyes. They
were kind, gentle... a little
like yours...

JOHN
Mine?

DIDO
(embarrassed)
I mean...in colour. Grey.
(long beat)
He showed me much love, though
I knew him only a few hours.

JOHN
That is terribly moving.
(off her reaction)
What of your mother?

DIDO
She is a ghost in my life -
present in my reflection,
in each scowl I receive, yet I
know very little of her than the
colour she has given me.

JOHN
(moved)
Then at the least, you know she
was beautiful.

They come to a halt. DIDO's eyes begin to sting.

DIDO
I had never felt it.

JOHN

Had?

They observe each other a moment. *Will they kiss?* Dido pulls back, nervous of the intimacy.

DIDO

I am to marry, shortly - Mr Ashford.

JOHN falters but tries to recover.

JOHN

Oh!

She begins to walk again - composing herself.

DIDO

He is amiable and of good family.

JOHN

Is it...what you want?

She stops. The question strikes her.

DIDO

The alternative is to replace Lady Mary in her responsibilities at Kenwood.

JOHN

But she is a spinster.

DIDO

Papaa did not trust I could achieve a match that might raise my rank - or even equal it.

JOHN searches her, then gently...

JOHN

You...are above reducing yourself for the sake of rank.

She stares at him, frozen - his words bury somewhere deep. She studies him, harder. He moves towards her, letting his breath settle on her face. They are both deadly nervous.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I pray he would marry you without a penny to your name - for that is a man who will truly treasure you!

DIDO searches him. He takes her hand, brings it to his lips, kissing it gently sending a shiver through her.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I will take you back to your coach.

OFF DIDO reeling, from the moment.

81 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. ENTRANCE HALL. DUSK: LAST EMBERS. EVE. 15 81 *

DIDO enters the house, terrified, as she takes off her hood. MABEL passes in the corridor.

DIDO
Is anyone home, Mabel?

MABEL
Lord Mansfield.
(Dido's heart plummets)
I said you were out with Lady
Mansfield and Miss Murray

OFF DIDO'S relief/gratitude. She makes her way up the stairs quickly.

82 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DIDO/ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - EVE. 15 82 *

ELIZABETH falls back onto her bed, frustrated.

ELIZABETH
Urghhh! What if I shall never
find someone so...so incomparably
suitable...and wealthy?!

DIDO
What if he is suitable but you do
not feel... 'yourself' with him?

ELIZABETH
Oh Dido! He understood me.
(beat)
And whenever... whenever...
he looked at me... I somehow
felt better in this world...

ELIZABETH'S voice trails. Her words force DIDO to turn away.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I am convinced his affections
were growing... and I feel
certain of my own love.

DIDO
Oh Bette, stop it! It is NOT love!!

ELIZABETH
Dido! You stop it, won't you?
You know no more of love than I
myself, do you?!
(deliberately pointed)
Do you Dido?

She holds her to account - willing DIDO to open up to her.
DIDO stares daunted, then...

DIDO

No.

Beat. ELIZABETH swallows hard, disappointed.

ELIZABETH

Then what better right do you have
to name what I am feeling than me?

OFF DIDO affected.

83 EXT. LONDON. THAMES RIVER BANKSIDE. DAY.16

83 *

Decandence personified...a beautiful picnic, shaded by trees.
Punts float up and down lackadaisically. ELIZABETH listens as
LADY MANSFIELD interrogates a gentleman.

LADY MANSFIELD

How charming. Is that not
charming, Elizabeth? And tell me,
are you an only son?

GENTLEMAN 1

I have six brothers, madam.

LADY MANSFIELD'S smile stiffens.

LADY MANSFIELD

SIX! Goodness!...all..?

He knows where this is going...defeated...

GENTLEMAN 1

...all older, madam, yes.

Her smile falls away.

LADY MANSFIELD

Is that not a most fascinating display?

He turns to look at the bush of flowers behind him. When
he turns back, LADY MANSFIELD and ELIZABETH are gone.

ON BARONESS VERNON (50s) who passes on a punt, utterly
captivated as she waves. Her eyes are on DIDO, stunningly
beautiful in fuchsia, beside OLIVER.

BARONESS VERNON

Oh how dreadfully wonderful Lady M.
Your girl is a picture...an utter
picture! With her...'intended'?

LADY MANSFIELD

Indeed, Baroness Vernon.

BARONESS VERNON
 (re. ELIZABETH)
 AND I see the other does not give
 up...so terribly endearing!

She stares across at ELIZABETH - ON BETTE'S contempt.

BARONESS VERNON (CONT'D)
 Now has she met Mr Willoughby...

She points to a gent and leans into the bankside...

BARONESS VERNON (CONT'D)
 A very eligible widower - Three
 thousand yearly and no heir...yet!

Her punt moves off as she waves gauche to two gentlemen
 passing in another.

BARONESS VERNON (CONT'D)
 Mr Francis, Mr Smith...!!! You
 must meet the Mansfield girl!
 (She mouths)
 Still available!!

ELIZABETH
 (anxious)
 Mamma, Mr Vaughan approaches.

A slender, dapper gent moves towards us on the river bank.

LADY MANSFIELD
 Now I have checked and he has no
 London home, but I have good
 information he achieves an income
 no less than four thousand a year!

ELIZABETH's mouth falls open....

MR VAUGHAN
 Miss Murray. Lady Mansfield.

ELIZABETH curtsseys.

MR VAUGHAN (CONT'D)
 I trust your stay in London is
 proving pleasant, Miss Murray.

ELIZABETH
 (earnest)
 Oh most certainly.

MR VAUGHAN
 Miss Murray, I wonder, if you
 might permit me to call upon you
 at home, sometime?

ELIZABETH

Oh!

She looks to her mother, stunned, his gaze follows...

MR VAUGHAN

With her Ladyship's permission?

LADY MANSFIELD

I shall make arrangements.

ON DIDO, as OLIVER chats to others. She moves past as...

LADY ASHFORD

A pity Lady Mansfield and I could not do business on James and Miss Murray.

LADY MARY

A greater pity you rejected her.

LADY ASHFORD

Let us not dwell on the unfortunate. Oliver and Miss Lindsay are a blissful match. Tell me, when exactly does she receive her inheritance?

As DIDO observes her reflection in waters - easy laughter floats by - a group of gentleman josh.

A figure beside her turns - icy blue stare takes her in as she meets his gaze and finds herself staring into the eyes of JAMES ASHFORD.

JAMES ASHFORD.

Miss Lindsay. Not Husband hunting, are we?

(off Dido's disdain)

Good Lord, I forgot - you have ensnared my brother. Now is he to share his dining room with you, as well as his bed??

His words bury deep and painful.

DIDO

Oh, Mr James, your manners are as poor as your brother's finances.

JAMES

And you are foolish enough to marry him. I on the other have no better use for your impoverished cousin!...(beat)...Though she does make for rather amusing sport!

She follows his gaze through trees to ELIZABETH breathing in the scent of the azaleas beside MR VAUGHAN. The joshing gentlemen trickle away leaving only DIDO and JAMES.

She goes to move off. JAMES grabs her arm, spitefully.

DIDO
That is painful, sir.

JAMES
 Have you never been manhandled?

DIDO
 It is not in my repertoire to keep company with beasts.

He regards her - her disdain reflected in his eyes. His free hand comes up, fingers rest on her lips, then spread, as he crushes her beauty in his hand.

Her eyes fill as he brings her close. So close. She is afraid, angry. She struggles desperately, spirited, both arousing and alarming him. As she tears herself from him

DIDO (CONT'D)
 How dare you? HOW DARE YOU!

He stares at her - takes her in, calmly. Then...

JAMES
 With ease.

DIDO wavers nauseous with contempt. JAMES moves off. She watches, incensed, humiliated.

ELIZABETH strolls with MR VAUGHAN, as JAMES passes OLIVER, he whispers to his brother.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 You will destroy us. You will destroy the entire order of our family.

Nearby, DIDO emerges from the trees...

LADY ASHFORD
 Oliver has been searching for you!

LADY MANSFIELD notes DIDO'S odd demeanour, LADY MARY too. Her eyes dart suspiciously to JAMES as he approaches.

LADY MANSFIELD
 Are you unwell, my dear?

DIDO's affected eyes come up to meet her mother's. She goes to answer...interrupted as...ELIZABETH gasps overwhelmed...

ELIZABETH
 Oh!..Mr James!

A distressed DIDO follows her gaze back to JAMES.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Lady Ashford, you had not mentioned
Mr James was to attend!

LADY ASHFORD
Surprisingly.

LADY ASHFORD closes her eyes, livid. VAUGHAN stands usurped.

JAMES
Ladies.
(off Dido's reaction)
Miss Murray.

He kisses ELIZABETH'S hand oh so gently, for DIDO'S
benefit. LADY MANSFIELD'S heart sinks.

OFF DIDO, turbulent.

84 EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM. DAY.17 84 *
DIDO sitting at the window, a sad figure. A MONTAGE OF
SHOTS OVER DIFFERENT DAYS FOLLOWS...

85 EXT. KENTISH TOWN. WATER MILL. DAY.17 85 *
A busy area - As workers traipse up and down.

JOHN
I had never imagined myself to be
married. But my aunt is determined.
It is true that if one were to count,
I had not even been acquainted with
Miss Beresford on three occasions.

DIDO
Is she not terribly disappointed that
you will not return to Hampstead?

JOHN
(ironic)
my Aunt?

They begin to laugh...it's good to see DIDO laughing.

JOHN (CONT'D)JOHN
I doubt Miss Beresford has
anymore wish to marry me
than I her. I should rather
make a nuisance of myself
alone in London, than in an
unwanted marriage in Hampstead...

Their laughter carries...

86 EXT. KENTISH TOWN. BACK ALLEYS. DAY.18

86 *

A NEW DAY...bustling, behind the canal. DIDO and JOHN stroll.

JOHN

Were you a curious child?

DIDO

Completely. Elizabeth, always asked the questions for me... then took blame for the impropriety when in fact she was protecting me! Dear, dear Bette.

Laughter...

POV: a pamphlet lies on the ground. It reads: *LORD MANSFIELD, THE ZONG AND THE DEATH OF ENGLAND'S TRADE.*

JOHN watches as DIDO takes in the headline...

87 EXT. KENTISH TOWN. CANAL DAY.19

87 *

ANOTHER DAY...ON JOHN and DIDO as they meander.

DIDO

...I find myself unable to sleep. Papaa is to finally speak in a few days and...well...

JOHN

It is quite extraordinary ...but I fear...I fear despite persuasive argument...your Papaa has not been moved.

(despondent)

I am not certain he is ready to go against the traders - they are some of the most powerful in these Isles - theirs are the finances that hold up England, after all. The enemies of any man who stood against the trade would be vicious.

DIDO stops, turns JOHN to face her. She is intense...

DIDO

And yet if he does...stand up...IF he speaks the words and condemns the trade...The Lord Chief Justice of England...it may be impossible for the slave laws of England and its colonies to remain absolute. Is that correct?

JOHN
That...that is a fact.

A tear spills. As JOHN'S hand come up to wipe it away...

CUT TO

88 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. ENTRANCE HALL. DAY.19 88 *

DIDO steps into the house, hooded, tip-toeing to the stairs.

LORD MANSFIELD steps from the shadows, watches quietly, as she creeps up the stairs, silently.

He thinks a moment - then hears the horses neighing out front. He moves to the front door.

89 EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. MANSFIELD HOUSE. CONTINUOUS DAY.19 89 *

POV - HARRY disembarks, alarmed as he sees LORD MANSFIELD'S gaze on him. An ominous beat.

90 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DRAWING ROOM - DAY.20 90 *

ELIZABETH at the pianoforte, raising a sweet sound.

DIDO appears in the doorway, listens a moment, then moves to join ELIZABETH, using only the one hand to play. A harmony emerges, continuing to its natural end.

ELIZABETH
I have heard nothing from him,
since Vauxhall, Dido. I was
certain an announcement was
to be made any day...that he
meant it this time!

DIDO
Then he is not a man of his word.

ELIZABETH stares at the piano keys. DIDO is pained for her.

DIDO (CONT'D)
I will help you find the kindest
most wonderful of husbands.
(off Bette's sadness)
And I shall ask Papaa to use a
portion of my inheritance for your
dowry.

ELIZABETH
You would do that? For me?

DIDO
Bette, anything for you!

ELIZABETH'S eyes brim.

ELIZABETH

Dido...

She hugs DIDO tight.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I have been of the mind these last few days..that it is my little means that has delayed James in making his approach.

DIDO regards her, sadly - tentative as she ventures...

DIDO

I think you may be right.

ELIZABETH

Then I cannot thank you enough.

DIDO

Bette...?

ELIZABETH stands, brighter, smoothing her clothes.

ELIZABETH

I will ask Papaa to write immediately to Lady Ashford.

DIDO

No!

ELIZABETH

No?

DIDO gets up too, now.

DIDO

James Ashford is not kind. He is not a man to give your life or dowry to.

ELIZABETH

Then your gift comes with conditions.

DIDO

No!

ELIZABETH

What then?

DIDO

I am trying...trying to make you see. He is not... appropriate!

ELIZABETH
 Appropriate? The brother of the
 man you are to marry is not
 'appropriate' for me?

DIDO
 He does not desire you, Bette!
 At least, even if he does, you
 would regret such a mistake.
 (off Bette's silence)
 He...he laid his hands on me,
 Bette - in the most
 un-gentlemanly fashion.

ELIZABETH
 Why should you say such a thing?

DIDO
 He hurt me.

ELIZABETH
 You are a liar!

DIDO
 Why...why would I lie to you?

ELIZABETH
 I don't know - but do you not
 see? Have you never been able to
 see? He would never touch you...!

DIDO
 Bette...

ELIZABETH
 You are beneath him!

A long beat.

DIDO
 I am beneath him??

ELIZABETH
 Yes. You...you are...

DIDO
 What! Tell me! What am I, Bette?

She dares ELIZABETH to cross their line of sisterhood.

ELIZABETH
 ...You...you are....(courage leaves
 her)...You are illegitimate!!

DIDO is winded, but relieved.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
 Have you never wondered why you
 are not permitted to eat with our
 guests?

Dido draws breath to calm herself, then...

DIDO
 My mother and father never married
 - you are correct. But my father
 acknowledged me as his child.

(beat)
 It is yours who refuses to
 legitimise your position, Bette -
 that is why you are poor! And that
 is why it is not me who is beneath
 Mr James, Bette. It is not me!

ELIZABETH stings - she fights tears, before she disappears.

A dreadful silence. DIDO looks down at the black sapphire
 on her finger. A moment, then she slips it off.

91 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM. DAY.20 91 *

DIDO, alone. She studies her reflection at the dressing
 table. A moment. A soft breath - something in her relaxes
 the look on her face, just as soft as she regards herself.

92 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. STAIRS/GROUND FLOOR HALL. DAY.21 92 *

DIDO hooded and cloaked, races quickly. Suddenly...

MABEL
 (worried whisper)
 Miss Lindsay. Are you out again?

DIDO turns to MABEL, presses her fingers to her lips,
 appealing to her, before slipping from the house

MABEL stands frozen, a porcelain jug in each hand,

93 EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. MANSFIELD HOME. DAY.21 93 *

As DIDO climbs into the carriage.

94 EXT. LONDON STREETS. DAY.21 94 *

Horse hooves trotting rhythmically.

95 INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. LONDON STREETS. DAY.21 95 *

DIDO sits patiently, her heart pounding.

- 96 EXT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. LONDON STREETS. DAY.21 96 *
ON HARRY'S sweating cheeks as he guides the carriage.
- 97 INT./EXT MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. KENTISH TOWN. DAY.21 97 *
The carriage as it pulls up in front of the Coaching Inn.
DIDO takes a breath.
- 98 INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. LONDON STREETS. DAY.21 98 *
As HARRY climbs from the driver's seat.
- 99 EXT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. KENTISH TOWN. DAY.21 99 *
CLOSE: HARRY'S outline, as we follow him to the Inn.
- 100 INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. LONDON STREETS. DAY.21 100 *
DIDO smoothing her dress.
The door of the carriage opens before she can finish.
She looks up - the happiest smile...
It falls from her lips, as quickly as it came and she starts to tremble, at what comes towards her.
The sight of LORD MANSFIELD as he climbs into the carriage ...and sits opposite her, silent - a cold stare.
- 101 INT. COACHING INN. DAY.21 101 *
JOHN follows HARRY to exit the Inn.
- 102 EXT. COACHING INN/INT. MANSFIELD CARRIAGE. DAY.21 102 *
The carriage door opens - JOHN climbs in, barely taking a moment to look where he is going, and as he looks up, he too sets eyes on LORD MANSFIELD.
JOHN looks back to HARRY, stunned. HARRY's gaze locks with DIDO'S. She is hurt. He falters, closes the carriage door.
DIDO
(terrified)
Papaa...?
LORD MANSFIELD is incandescent. He shakes with rage.

LORD MANSFIELD

This man's ambitions include you.
You will endure shame and risk
your position for a man without
name, who will sully yours and
drag your reputation to the gutter!

JOHN

(bitter and humiliated)
I take great offence in your
summation of my character without
ever even taking a moment to know
me. Where is your right?

LORD MANSFIELD

...I have EVERY right...!

JOHN

...No! That you will never have!
Not until you cease from judging
the entire world as those above and
those below and begin to see people
as PEOPLE! Human beings, who think
and feel no more or less than you do!

LORD MANSFIELD stands arrested. JOHN'S words strike deep.

LORD MANSFIELD

I know there is a lady in Belsize
who is waiting to be your wife.

JOHN

No! I have an ambitious aunt in
Belsize, who like you, assumes
reputation and fortune are all
that life depends on, and
despises love as though it were
the devil's own creation!

LORD MANSFIELD's eyes narrow dangerously - rage explodes.

LORD MANSFIELD

Love? You claim love....??

He reaches for JOHN'S neck. DIDO throws herself at them.

DIDO

NO! STOP! Papaa, you must stop!

As she struggles to keep them apart. JOHN falls against
the door. He shouts at the top of his voice to be heard.

JOHN

Yes...yes I love her! I love her
with every breath I breathe.

Silence! DIDO and LORD MANSFIELD are stunned. A painful beat.

DIDO
Go John. You do not deserve this.

JOHN'S breath is heavy, his heart pounding. He catches his breath, almost chokes on it as he rises, moving with uncertainty from the carriage, and is gone. DIDO stares at LORD MANSFIELD.

DIDO (CONT'D)
Captain Sir John Lindsay would never have behaved like this.

LORD MANSFIELD
Captain Sir John Lindsay would never behave like this because he was never HERE!...You are destroying your possibilities with the only gentleman who will consider you.
(searching her, hard)
Is that what you want?

No, perhaps it isn't! DIDO stands wavering - daunted.

103 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.21

103 *

A fist comes down hard on the rosewood table

LORD MANSFIELD
Arrogant...parasite! HE is filling her with worthless ideals. He wants to 'make the world a better place'!...

LORD MANSFIELD is puffed with fury as he paces the room. He knocks the table again, jolting LADY MANSFIELD.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
He is laughing at us! His childish campaign simply adds to my already rampant ridicule in the gossip pamphlets and now...! As though he were some kind of...saint, immune from reproach!

LADY MANSFIELD
You said something identical, once.

LORD MANSFIELD stops in his tracks.

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
That you wanted to change the world! Quite some time before you entered your chambers, of course. Defiant, principled...driven.
(off Lord M)
(MORE)

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
Desperate to seal your position
among the establishment but always
a little too radical for them.

LORD MANSFIELD
I never broke the rules.

LADY MANSFIELD
Did you not? You simply became
powerful enough to make new ones.
(off his silence)
I always felt you already loved
me when I gave you my hand. Not
that you said it but... something
in the way you looked at me.

LORD MANSFIELD'S face softens slightly, struck by his
wife's words - *of course he loved her! He adored her!*

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
That we were a good match - that
was of no doubt...But I am not
sure I could have married a
gentleman without that...'thing'
in his eye...without knowing -
privately - that my heart stopped
a moment each time he looked at me

Their eyes are locked. She speaks carefully.

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
It is possible that even you
cannot fight change, my darling...
And sometimes you cannot fight it
because you are a part of it.

Her words resonate, shifting him into thought.

LADY MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
Do you love her?

His eyes fill. What he says next is deeply heartfelt...

LORD MANSFIELD
As though she were created of you
and I...(poignant)...And that is
why I simply do not want to see
her diminished.

104 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.22

104 *

Like subjects of a pastel Joshua Reynolds painting, the
MANSFIELD ladies are draped around the room .

LADY MARY uses a dainty magnifying glass to read a pamphlet
as LADY MANSFIELD sips tea, ELIZABETH reads and DIDO gazes
out of the window...LADY MARY reads aloud.

LADY MARY
The niece of the Marquess of
Winchester. Mr James Ashford is
to marry the niece of the
Marquess of Winchester.

ELIZABETH looks up, bewildered.

LADY MARY (CONT'D)
I am reading it here.

She indicates the pamphlet and her heart sinks as she sees
ELIZABETH'S heartache.

LADY MANSFIELD
(sardonic)
That shall render your future
mother-in-law ecstatic, Dido.

ELIZABETH slams her book down, gets up and storms off. DIDO
thinks about it a beat, uncertain then goes after her.

105 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. STAIRCASE LANDING. DAY.22 105 *

ON ELIZABETH sobbing into DIDO'S arms. She lifts her head.

ELIZABETH
Don't you dare say a word.

DIDO
I won't.

ELIZABETH
Why! Why do they ALWAYS do that!!

DIDO
Who, Bette?

ELIZABETH
Men! They leave and never come back!

A painful beat, then DIDO kisses and hugs her tightly, as
ELIZABETH desperately sobs some more.

106 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. DIDO AND ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM. EVE.22 106 *

DIDO lies still in bed, ELIZABETH beside her.

ELIZABETH
I saw you with him, that day. At
the pleasure garden.

DIDO
You said nothing.

ELIZABETH
I wanted you to tell me. To trust me.

DIDO
I should have.

ELIZABETH
You know, if I had your choice, I
would choose...the man I loved
(off Dido, sad)
I simply hope he is worth it.

107 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.23

107 *

OLIVER stands, numb. LADY ASHFORD turns to us, eyes flashing.

LADY ASHFORD
I am not in the habit of
requiring explanation more than
TWICE! But on this occasion, you
will have to forgive me.

LORD MANSFIELD
(burdened)
Lady Ashford there is little
point in repetition...

LADY ASHFORD
Then let me be clear that I have
understood. Your charge - your
mulatto charge...

LADY MANSFIELD
(fiercely protective)
That is enough!

DIDO sits staring at the floor. OLIVER cuts in, aggrieved...

OLIVER
(to Lady Mansfield)
Is it not true enough, your
ladyship?!!

LADY ASHFORD
...whose unfortunate circumstances
of birth, we chose to forgive -
has decided she no longer wishes
the match with my son - a
gentleman and an officer.

OLIVER stares across at DIDO. He speaks quietly...

OLIVER
Why, Miss Lindsay?

DIDO is silent.

LADY ASHFORD
 (poignant and pained)
 Do you feel I have any lesser need to
 ensure my child's wellbeing and
 future than you?...*(beat)*...Does she
 still have a tongue?

DIDO
 I have a tongue, Madam. Though
 yours explains well enough why I
 may not marry your son...*(beat)*...
 You view my circumstances as
 unfortunate, though I cannot
 claim even a portion of the
 misfortune of those to whom I most
 closely resemble.

ON LADY MANSFIELD stung by the thought.

DIDO (CONT'D)
 My greatest misfortune would be
 to marry into a family who will
 carry me as their shame - as I
 have been required to carry my
 own mother.

LORD MANSFIELD swallows hard. LADY MANSFIELD's gaze falls.

DIDO (CONT'D)
 Her apparent crime, to be born
 negro, and mine - to be the
 evidence.
(beat)
 Since I wish to deny her no more
 than I wish to deny myself, you
 will pardon me for wanting a
 husband who feels 'forgiveness'
 of my bloodline is both
 unnecessary and without grace.

ON the astonished ASHFORD faces.

108 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. STAIRS/GROUND FL HALLWAY. DAY.23 108 *

DIDO steps from the room, shaken..*what has she just done?!*
 LADY MARY approaches, intuitively hands DIDO a handkerchief.

109 EXT: KENTISH TOWN CANAL. DAY.23 109 *

Wide on the canal, bustling with life - the poor and
 working classes. - FIND JOHN sitting alone, forlorn.

- 110 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. MARBLE ROOM. DAY.24 110 *
A canvas stands hidden under hemp fabric. ZOFFANY stands beside it. LORD MANSFIELD before him...
- 111 EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. GARDENS. CONTINUOUS. DAY.24 111 *
DIDO surrounded by Summer blooms. She reads a poetry book.
- 112 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. MARBLE ROOM. CONTINUOUS. DAY.24 112 *
As ZOFFANY carefully removes the hemp - a series of actions slowly uncovering his painting. We do not see it revealed.
- 113 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. GARDENS. CONTINUOUS. DAY.24 113 *
As DIDO repeats a sentence from the book to herself.
- DIDO
Why did I, slave, beyond my lot
aspire..
- The line repeats itself in her head.
- 114 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. MARBLE ROOM. CONTINUOUS. DAY.24 114 *
LORD MANSFIELD before the painting, shielding it from us.
ON ZOFFANY as his eyes fall on the window. LORD MANSFIELD follows his gaze, to DIDO alone in the gardens, reading.
POV: THROUGH THE WINDOW, as DIDO feels their gaze. She falters. Her eyes dart through the glass, beyond LORD MANSFIELD, to the canvas...The sight causes her to stand - drawn to the window to see more clearly.
The camera, too, draws in on the portrait, now. And as it is revealed to DIDO, so too, is it finally revealed to us.
It is a serenely sensitive representation of two delicate English ladies - one part black, as they stand as equals, against Kenwood's iconic gardens.
CLOSE on DIDO, shaken, taking in the extraordinary image.
Off both men, each as moved as she is.
- 115 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. MARBLE ROOM. DAY.24 115 *
The camera hovers on the painting - The image of ELIZABETH'S delicate hand laying gently on DIDO'S arm.

LORD MANSFIELD (OOV)
It will hang at Kenwood.

DIDO
Will it?

LORD MANSFIELD
Why should that surprise you?

DIDO
Why should it not?

LORD MANSFIELD says nothing, observes her, curious.

LORD MANSFIELD
What are you reading?

DIDO
Poetry. A gentleman named Thomas
Day. He speaks of a slave who
agreed to marry a free woman.
A voice to people...people like
my mother - who do not have one.

People like the drowned slaves. He takes her point.

LORD MANSFIELD
You find yourself in such writing?

The camera tracks, capturing them taking in the canvas.

DIDO
I don't know that I find myself
anywhere. I have no place that I
may claim.

LORD MANSFIELD
What is it that you want, Dido?
What precisely are you searching
for? I enabled every rule of
heritage so that you could know
exactly where you belong. Yet
little appears enough for you!

DIDO
Papaa, you enabled every rule,
but you had to overlook just as
many to raise me within good
society. And what if there were
not a rule Papaa? What if that
rule that allowed you to take me
did not exist? Would you have
returned me to the slums?

The air is poignant with the question.

DIDO (CONT'D)

You are courageous. When it comes to the matters you believe in, society is inconsequential. You break EVERY rule when it matters enough. Papaa, I am the evidence.

(OFF the painting)

This painting...is the evidence.

Her words are stark. LORD MANSFIELD follows her gaze to the painting, swallowing hard. Something in him is shifting.

116 INT. LLOYD'S OF LONDON. COFFEE HO. ROYAL EXCHANGE. DAY.25 116 *

The hub of the mercantile profession. This is LORD MANSFIELD'S world. It is pillared, and elegant, teaming with Lloyd's members - Insurance men, brokers, lawyers - all engaged in commerce and politics.

ON LORD MANSFIELD with the LORD MAYOR. They weave past to sit with others, equally wigged - power houses of England, watched by all in the room. In every corner, heated debate rages - the imminent Zong decision on everyone's lips.

LORD MAYOR

Look at them - For and against at each other's throats! How on earth did the damn quakers find their way into here!..(beat)..You are a brave man, negotiating these quarters on the eve of your judgement.

LORD MANSFIELD

You did not become Lord Mayor through being a coward.

LORD MAYOR

Finally you are to speak, then. If England is destroyed we shall blame you!

He slaps LORD MANSFIELD'S back, playfully, but is deadly serious. LORD MANSFIELD is distracted...through the bustle in the room, the SOUND of YOUNG MEN debating at a table, insurance underwriters before them.

JOHN (OOV)

...But religion cannot be the only guardian of our morality.

YOUNG MAN 1

Of course not - there is self-responsibility?

LORD MANSFIELD'S POV: we make out JOHN debating intensely.

JOHN
 And failing that does the law not
 have a duty?

ON LORD MANSFIELD - his own group continue in conversation,
 but all his attention is on JOHN.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Do the bench and parliament not
 have a duty to uphold and create
 the laws, to set the precedents
 that progress our morality, not
 retard it! If not to protect us
 from others, then to protect us
 from ourselves! Laws that allow
 us to diminish the humanity of
anybody, are not laws - they are
 frameworks for crime.

ON LORD MANSFIELD - something going on behind the eyes. The
 rest of the room fades - making JOHN clear and crisp.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 A constitution can never be finite
 - surely as humanity evolves so
 too must its laws. And frankly I
 really do not care if you as an
 individual are without character
 or conscience - But a land whose
 laws contain neither - whose laws
 sanction not control the barbarous
 among its citizens - that is a
 country whose hope is lost.

LORD MANSFIELD's gaze falls away, as he swallows hard.

117 INT. ROYAL EXCHANGE. ENTRANCE HALL. DAY.25 117 *

JOHN exits Lloyd's, into the open halls of the Exchange.
 LORD MANSFIELD fits his tricorn (hat), preparing to leave.
 The two men lay eyes on each other - both rooted. LORD
 MANSFIELD'S examines JOHN.

LORD MANSFIELD
 Why does it matter to you so?

JOHN stares at him bewildered, at a loss for words.

118 EXT. ROYAL EXCHANGE. COURTYARD/STREETS DAY.25 118 *

LORD MANSFIELD walks to his carriage. JOHN races after him.

JOHN
 M'lord..! It..it is a misuse of the
 clause. It is not for human lives.
 It is for goods.. Chattel...

LORD MANSFIELD keeps walking.

LORD MANSFIELD
(factual)
It is for property!

JOHN
I HAVE SEEN YOUR NOTES!! If they
wanted water they could have had it!

ON LORD MANSFIELD'S realisation - *DIDO* has given the
information to JOHN.

LORD MANSFIELD
Dido.

JOHN
If you find for the traders, you
will be formalizing in law the
concept of insuring 'human' cargo.

LORD MANSFIELD climbs into his carriage.

LORD MANSFIELD
That is correct!...(to his
driver)...Drive!

The carriage begins to move off. JOHN walks alongside it.

JOHN
Then know that when you are gone,
your legacy will be to have left
Miss Lindsay in a world that says
she may be worth more dead, than
alive.

LORD MANSFIELD
She is not a slave.

JOHN
By the very grace of God!

The words provoke LORD MANSFIELD. He stands, slamming his
hand to the driver's wall. The carriage halts abruptly.

JOHN stands at the carriage window, breathless. LORD
MANSFIELD looks down at him furious, suddenly disarmed by
the emotion in JOHN'S eyes.

LORD MANSFIELD
This is not about Miss Lindsay.

JOHN is confused, flustered.

JOHN
Of course it is! It's about all
of us. It's about everything...
everything that is important!

LORD MANSFIELD searches JOHN, palpably affected now. He doesn't want to show JOHN his empathy, fights it - but for a split second it escapes in the profound silence.

He recovers himself - considers his words before he speaks quietly - as though from personal experience...

LORD MANSFIELD
Mr Davinier, the world is a
devastating place. You must learn
to protect your emotions if you
are to prevent matters of both
law..and love from devastating you.

JOHN is frozen, averts his gaze. LORD MANSFIELD regards him, affected, bangs on the carriage again and is gone.

OFF JOHN, shaken.

119 INT. BLOOMSBURY SQ. ENTRANCE HALL AND STAIRS. DAY.26 119 *

POV: looking down at the sweeping stairs and entrance hall.

LADY MANSFIELD
Smooth your dress, young lady!

LADY MANSFIELD pinches ELIZABETH'S cheeks. LADY MARY fusses anxiously The bell chimes. ELIZABETH'S excitement rises. She steals a glance up the stairs to REVEAL DIDO surreptitiously watching. The BUTLER sweeps by

MR VAUGHAN (OOV)
Lady Mansfield...Miss Murray...

As MR VAUGHAN enters Elizabeth descends into a curtsy.

LADY MANSFIELD
Mr Vaughan, how kind of you to come.

ELIZABETH
I have thought of nothing else
but showing you Aunt Mary's
chrysanthemums, Mr Vaughan.

MR VAUGHAN
What a pleasure, Miss Murray.

ELIZABETH
You too Mamaa.

She drags them away, sending DIDO a final surreptitious glance that says, *the coast is clear for her*. As she does, LADY MARY'S gaze follows - sees DIDO hiding. A beat. LADY MARY hangs back - smiles satisfied to herself, before moving off.

120 EXT. BLOOMSBURY SQUARE. MANSFIELD HOME. DAY.26 120 *

A hooded DIDO steps from the house. HARRY's heart sinks.

HARRY
NO! Never again!

DIDO
Fine! Then step down and allow me
to take the reigns.

Harry rubs his eyes, burdened. Then...far from jovial..

HARRY
Had I known you were to be such
trouble, I'd 'ave driven off
before Captain Sir John Lindsay
bought you to my carriage!

121 EXT. WESTMINSTER HALL. LONDON. DAY.26 121 *

A myriad of people flood into the court - politicians,
clergy, shipping merchants, abolitionists...and insurers.
DIDO steps from the carriage.

122 INT. WESTMINSTER HALL. LONDON. CONTINUOUS. DAY.26 122 *

As they pour through the doors, we settle first on LORD
ASHFORD, then, JOHN DAVINIER, pushing into the room.

CUT TO:

Moments later...DIDO pushes into the court. She lays eyes on
JOHN, seated - forces her way past seated men, seen at
earlier meetings. JOHN stands, overwhelmed as she approaches.

123 INT. WESTMINSTER HALL. LONDON. DAY.26 123 *

LORD MANSFIELD enters - sits, flanked by two LAW LORDS. He
appears profoundly focused - reserved, despite the chaos of
the filled room. His eyes dance across the sea of faces.

CLERK
Silence in the court!

DIDO's hand slides to JOHN'S.

LORD MANSFIELD
Whether the 'jettison clause' of
Marine Insurance Law may be brought
to bear in this appeal. This is
the question. That is, first:
whether the slaves were drowned
as an anticipatory act. An act to
avoid the disease caused by their
(MORE)

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 journey, killing them once on shore,
 and at their destination...depriving
 the slave owners of any compensation.

He takes in the gaze of a free black man in the gallery.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 Or secondly: whether they were
 'jettisoned' as cargo! To save
 captain and crew from certain death,
 when the extended journey threatened
 shortage of drinking-water.

(steely eyed)
 Let me be clear, loss of water on a
 ship constitutes a singularly
 dangerous affair - insurrection of
 thirsty and hostile slaves at its
 extreme - and an impossible task to
 share diminished water reserve, among
 all those living, at best. Each
 implies severe threat to the lives of
 the seamen. In such circumstances our
 law is transparent and equivocal -
 the jettisoning of enslaved cargo
 ...IS legal!

(he spells it out)
 And in these circumstances, combined
 with unavoidable loss of water, our
 laws leave the ship-owners securely
 within their rights to make a claim
 ...and behoves the insurers to pay
 losses.

DIDO

No!

Gasps from around the room...gasps that turn into cries,
 including DIDO'S own. JOHN is rigid, anger rising.

LORD MANSFIELD
 The ship's owners chose a tight
 'packing fashion' to transport
 the slaves...A popular fashion of
 transportation that is known for
 causing death and disease.

His voice is raised over the sounds of a chaotic court.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 This choice of laying the slaves
 tightly together is undertaken at
 the Captain's own risk. In the
 event that over packing renders
 an avoidable lack of drinking water
 on board a protracted journey,
 such a decision may be viewed as
 simple 'bad management' on a
 (MORE)

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 Captain's part, and further, weigh
 as his own risk. An extended journey
 - one in which the destination is
overshot may also be viewed as
 the captain's own mismanagement.

The noise lowers to silence. LORD MANSFIELD settles on JOHN.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 It is not legal...to discharge lives
 from a ship into the waters, to
 prevent those lives dying on land,
 and to facilitate insurance
 compensation. Whether they be the
 lives of horses... or human beings
 ...slaves or otherwise - It is
not legal, neither is it right.

DIDO lets out a gasp - breathless relief.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 Further, the claim of shortage of
 water is illegitimate shown by the
 evidence put forward. To my
 mind, it is clear a fraud has been
 committed in claiming insurance on
 slaves who were...drowned solely
 for financial gain.

He looks around the room - sees LORD ASHFORD's acceptance.
 His eyes fall on DIDO now and here they remain.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 It is my opinion, that the state of
 slavery is so odious a position that
 nothing may support it. This case
 has displayed with searing clarity
 the depravity of any such nation
 whose choice is to practice it. You
 may be certain that I have laboured
 over my judgement and statements
 today and am in full understanding
 of all of the ramifications. Justice
 be done, though the heavens may fall.

JOHN'S eyes brim at the realisation of those words.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)
 I find in favour of the insurers
 and overturn the decision of the
 lower court. I order a retrial.

Stunned confusion in the courtroom. Then, all kinds of
 commotion - anger, cheers amid shock. LORD MANSFIELD stands.

CLERK
 All rise!

JOHN jumps up, desperate for eye contact through the commotion...but LORD MANSFIELD fixes ahead, moves off. DIDO stands, caught by her own breath. JOHN turns to her. She begins to sob. For the first time he pulls her close,

WIDE on the court room - JOHN holding DIDO as she sobs.

Through the judges' exit - a figure, in the shadows. REVEAL LORD MANSFIELD, taking in DIDO and JOHN, affected.

124

EXT. WESTMINSTER HALL. STREETS - DAY.26

124

*

JOHN watches as DIDO races back to the carriage. ON their reaction - LORD MANSFIELD stands waiting.

As DIDO and LORD MANSFIELD come before each other. Everything in their eyes - restrained emotion over a long beat.

DIDO

You may not blame Mr Davinier
...My attendance today is
absolutely at my own volition
...for matters which concern me.

LORD MANSFIELD

I am fully aware, Dido.

He fixes on JOHN. JOHN is apprehensive.

JOHN

M'Lord...I am inspired by your
decision today. We will not go
backwards from here.

LORD MANSFIELD

(burdened)
History will judge if your
optimism is warranted...(beat)...
You are a man of conviction.

JOHN swallows hard, emotion rising, stinging his eyes.

JOHN

I am trying to be.

LORD MANSFIELD

Then your efforts are not in vain.

DIDO moves to JOHN'S side, taking his hand. LORD MANSFIELD'S eyes drop to their clasped fingers.

LORD MANSFIELD (CONT'D)

I have not changed my mind. She
is to marry a gentleman.

He turns and begins to move to the carriage. JOHN stares at the ground, humiliated. DIDO is incensed.

DIDO
And Mr Davinier is not a gentleman?

Her voice rings out, furious. LORD MANSFIELD stops...

LORD MANSFIELD
He is...indeed...Dido.
(he speaks carefully)
And that is why he ought to have
a job befitting one.

DIDO
(a whisper - defiant)
My affections are with him, Papaa.
I wish for nothing...
nothing, if not to be his wife.

She stares into LORD MANSFIELD's eyes - he takes in JOHN.

LORD MANSFIELD
If you would Mr Davinier, I would
like you to attend my chambers in
the morning. There are matters I
would like you to assist me with.

JOHN
Your Lordship?

LORD MANSFIELD
And if you think it a good
idea...I wish to facilitate
your entry to the Inns of Court.

JOHN
(tentative)
That is to serve my qualification
to The Bar?

The question LORD MANSFIELD once put to JOHN, is now answered.

LORD MANSFIELD
Indeed...(humbled)...Capabilities
such as yours are clearly
deserving of such considerations.

JOHN breathes heavily, also humbled, as his tears surface.

JOHN
I..I think it a very good idea, sir.

LORD MANSFIELD nods, then finally moves off. JOHN can't
take it in. DIDO is breathless, eyes brim...

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can it be true?

DIDO

Of course. He sees what I see.
His words were as clear as...

JOHN

No! That your feelings for me are
so? That you would be my wife..?
(off her reaction,)
Because, I cannot conceive of a
life without you..and if...if
such were all that were before
me, Miss Lindsay, then my heart
would never beat the same again.

DIDO

It is not. It is not all that is
before you Mr Davinier...
(begins sobbing) I love you...for
all that you are, and with
all..all that I am.

He breaks down now too, wiping her tears before kissing her
through his own sobs. Then tears turn to laughter.

We draw back on the couple - two fragile figures, amid the
bustle of London town.

ON the MANSFIELD crest as LORD MANSFIELD'S carriage moves
off, a solitary figure inside, staring straight ahead.

THE END

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