

The Young Victoria

by
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28th June 1838.

Female fingers are fastening hooks, tightening laces...

We are behind a young woman who is raising her arms in slow motion, to allow her maids to dress her.

A superb necklace is fastened with an elaborate clasp.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

I do not now remember when I first knew I was different.

A little girl's feet walk on a gravel path beside a woman's heavy skirts. From behind, the child holds the hand of a governess. A couple passes. They see her and stop. The man bows, removing his top hat. The woman curtsseys. We see the young face, accepting this deference from strangers.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Or rather, that my life belonged to others, besides myself.

A carriage wheel is stopping on cobble stones. A man's stockinged leg and buckled shoe appear. The door of the carriage has been opened and gloved hands are unrolling the steps down towards the ground. A small, silk-encased foot is placed on the top of the carriage steps.

A young man's face is in motionless profile. We pull focus to reveal a whole line of soldiers, all completely still, all looking straight ahead.

A hand fastens an elaborate buckle. The folds of a heavy, fur trimmed, golden robe are being arranged around the central figure in a gold dress, by indistinct attendants.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

I must have been about eleven, or thereabouts, when they left a book open on the nursery table.

A child's finger traces a genealogical chart, showing King George III and Queen Charlotte. It finds their son, George IV, "died 1830," whose daughter, Charlotte, is also dead. The finger moves across to the childless Duke of York, "died 1803." Next, King William IV, and his two dead daughters. On to the dead Duke of Kent, to his widow and, finally, to his daughter, Victoria, "born 1819," the first and only living child. The finger hesitates, poised over the name.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

And so I learned I was nearer to the
Crown than I had thought...

A young girl, with ringlets and a simple dress, is looking at the book. Shadowy figures hover behind. A governess in black, a woman in brilliant colours with an elaborate hair style, and a sharply dressed man. They study the child's reaction.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

And I knew then why I must trace a path
ordained by others.

Male hands take a measurement of a young woman's head, and we see the drawn outline of her head on a piece of paper. An ancient crown is placed over it. It is far too large.

A new, delicate, golden circlet, empty of gems and held with tongs, is being carefully fashioned over a brazier.

Large, impressive jewels, cut but unset, are brushed and polished and a single, huge sapphire (the Stuart Sapphire) is being positioned at the front of the new crown.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

They would all bear witness on that
sacred morning.

Blurred faces watch as a young woman processes down the aisle of a cathedral to the Coronation chair. They lean forward or move their heads to catch a glance. In the high stands, some faces (never the Queen's) come into focus. They are strangers now, but soon we will know them well.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

From my past...

The governess, Lehzen, in a modest box of the Queen's friends, glows with pride.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

My present...

Wellington looks on approvingly from among the dukes. Peel is with the politicians. The Duchess of Sutherland hovers behind the Throne among the ladies. Lady Cowper looks down from the countesses' tier. Palmerston is in the viscounts' stand, and, near him, is the smiling face of Melbourne.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

And my future...

Among the visiting princes, all resplendent with orders, stands a youthful and wonderfully handsome Albert.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

In truth, I was glad to have them near me
at that all-changing moment.

A man's hand lays the golden Sceptre with its Cross in the right
hand of a young woman that we only see from behind.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

For even with the knowledge...

The same hand brings the Rod of Equity and lays it in the same
young woman's left hand.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

That I was heiress to the Throne,

The older, male hands now take hold of the ermine rim of the new
crown we have seen being created.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Before that day of days, I can't
pretend...

Our view is loosening. We are behind the great Gothic chair. The
bare-headed Archbishop approaches. He lifts the Crown and with a
clearly enunciated prayer, he sets it down on the head of the
chair's occupant. It fits perfectly.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

I understood the phrase's full
significance.

We cut to a spectacular wide shot. The whole of Westminster Abbey
is laid out before us in dazzling magnificence, with gallery
after gallery, tier upon tier, packed with Government, Court and
Aristocracy, all standing, all exultant. As the choir sings *Zadoc
the Priest*, their voices soaring to the very heavens, the banks
of peers, gorgeous in red velvet and ermine, put on their own
coronets while the peeresses, in separate stands, reach up to
place their coronets among their head-dresses of feathers and
diamonds. Their long, white gloves raised in unison, backed by
the brilliant colours of their costumes, make their arms seem
like a thousand swans in flight.

The whole effect is more thrilling, more exciting, more
glamorous, than can almost be imagined.

At last, and for the first time, we see the face of the new Queen
of England. She is eighteen, soft, innocent and almost childlike,
a poignant contrast to the glittering diadem on her head,
proclaiming centuries of tradition.

As the choir ends and the final notes echo through this
extraordinary, timeless place, the title appears:

1 CONTINUED: (3)

1

The Young Victoria

It disappears as the camera starts to move round to present Victoria's profile. As serious as she tries to be, she can't refrain from the faintest trace of a smile. Later, we will learn that this smile is for Melbourne. Now, we pull focus. In the background, in a gallery defined as Royal by the coats of arms upon it, we see a handsome, middle aged woman, moved by the events she witnesses. This is the Duchess of Kent. As we close in on her and see the very real emotion in her eyes, a new voice is heard.

DUCHESS OF KENT (V.O.)

You are sure? That we're doing the right thing?

CONROY (V.O.)

No one sane could think otherwise.

We're very tight on the Duchess' face now. The light suddenly changes on her skin...

2 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. NIGHT.

2

We pull back from the same face and find that the Duchess, herself, is speaking.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Perhaps we should leave it? Maybe tomorrow she'll be less tired.

No longer in her Coronation robes, she looks like a pretty, painted doll, her hair dressed in the brilliant, extravagant fashion of the 1830s. A title appears...

One year earlier

CONROY

No! We'll do it now!

Sir John Conroy is the Duchess's Controller, handsome, vain and arrogant. Striding across the room, past a canopied four poster, he comes to a smaller bed where the same girl we saw crowned is lying, flushed with fever, and barely awake. In front of her, a paper rests on a board and, with it, a pen. He snatches this up, holding it out to her.

CONROY

Sign it!

VICTORIA

I will not sign it.

CONROY

I say you will!

He pushes the pen into her hand and seizing it, holds it over the paper.

VICTORIA

And I say *I will not!*

With a supreme effort, she pulls her hand free and flings the pen to the floor, pushing paper and board after it as she collapses onto the pillows. His anger bursts as he pounces on it with a roar, lifting his hand to strike her -

LEHZEN

Sir John.

Baroness Lehzen, Victoria's governess, stands, immobile, in the doorway. She is a dour figure next to the weak bird of paradise that is Victoria's mother.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Ah, Baroness, Sir John was just...

She tails away. How can she justify the scene?

LEHZEN

It's time for the Princess's medicine.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Of course. Shall I...?

LEHZEN

I'll do it.

She remains stock still, in possession of the room. For a moment the others stare at her. Then the Duchess weakens.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Well, if you're sure... good night, *mein leibling*.

VICTORIA

Good night, Mama.

As she speaks, Victoria eyes her mother coldly. Pointing up the irony of this relationship is a nearby portrait of the Duchess with her baby daughter. Clearly, things have changed. The Duchess glances nervously at Conroy and, after a moment of indecision, he picks up the discarded pen and the paper.

CONROY

We'll talk about this later.

2 CONTINUED: (2)

2

The Duchess leaves. She passes Lehzen, who sinks low into a court curtsey. Standing, she turns her face away as Conroy strides past her and out of the room.

3 EXT. THE GARDENS OF LAEKEN PALACE. BELGIUM. DAY.

3

The Royal Palace, Brussels.

In a sumptuous setting, two men walk together, one proud and splendid, King Leopold of the Belgians, and one rather wizened and dressed in sober black, Baron Stockmar.

LEOPOLD

My sister says she won't sign it.

STOCKMAR

Does the Duchess give a reason?

LEOPOLD

Not really. Victoria won't accept it.
That's all.

Leopold shrugs. Stockmar is silent.

LEOPOLD

It's absurd. An ignorant baby on the
Throne of England? Of course she must
accept it.

But when he looks at Stockmar, it is clear that the Baron doesn't think the plan likely to succeed. The King insists.

LEOPOLD

She needs guidance to prepare her for the
task! And until she's ready, my sister
will be Regent.

STOCKMAR

Sir John Conroy would be Regent.

This is annoying to the King but he does not deny it. Instead, he tries to justify his own position.

LEOPOLD

England is the key to peace in Europe. If
Belgium is to survive, if France and
Germany are to be kept from each other's
throats, *England must be controlled*. That
has been my goal for a quarter of a
century! I will not be cheated of it now
by a stubborn child!

STOCKMAR

What a mercy that the stubborn child is
Your Majesty's niece.

LEOPOLD

Why else would I have pushed my sister at
that idiot?

STOCKMAR

Precisely. And having achieved such a
useful connection, let us not throw away
the advantage.

4 INT. GALLERY. LAEKEN PALACE. BELGIUM. EVE.

4

Now in uniform, blazing with medals and orders, the King strides
down a gallery, trailed by equerries but alongside Stockmar. They
talk in low voices as they go.

STOCKMAR

Conroy has over-played his hand. The
Princess detests him.

LEOPOLD

But my sister -

STOCKMAR

The Duchess has also forfeited her
daughter's good will.

LEOPOLD

According to your spy.

STOCKMAR

The Baroness *is* Conroy's enemy. But then
he has no friends.

LEOPOLD

Baroness Lehzen is a jealous, old cat who
thinks of nothing but her own importance.
Why you trust her is a mystery to me.

STOCKMAR

I must use the implements God gives me.

LEOPOLD

Does Victoria know her governess is
writing to you?

Stockmar doesn't answer.

LEOPOLD

So? What are you suggesting?

STOCKMAR

When the Princess is Queen, she will turn away from anyone who has helped her enemies.

LEOPOLD

We don't know what she'll do. She's an unknown quantity.

STOCKMAR

Thanks to Conroy, she's as secret as the Man in the Iron Mask.

Leopold thinks for a second, then makes up his mind.

LEOPOLD

Very well.

STOCKMAR

We abandon Conroy and your sister and support the young Princess?

Leopold gives a slight nod.

STOCKMAR

The Duchess won't like it.

LEOPOLD

Baron, I was born the younger son of a penniless duke. Now, I am King of the Belgians. Such journeys are not managed without hard decisions. Besides -

They have nearly reached the far end of the gallery. Two footmen step forward to open a pair of vast, double doors.

LEOPOLD

Who controls a young girl most?

A light dawns in Stockmar's eyes.

5 EXT. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. GERMANY. DAY.

5

Two young men are practising archery. The elder turns and waves. Baron Stockmar is on his way to join them. He bows.

STOCKMAR

Prince Ernest. Good day to you.

ERNEST

Baron. When did you arrive? My uncle is well, I hope?

5 CONTINUED:

5

STOCKMAR

The King is very well. But busy.

ERNEST

Uncle Leopold is always busy. What brings you here? Business of his?

STOCKMAR

His and... Prince Albert's.

Ernest looks at his brother who releases an arrow which thuds into the target. This is His Serene Highness, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and he is as handsome as the dawn.

6 INT. KENSINGTON PALACE. LONDON. STAIRCASE HALL. DAY.

6

Victoria and Lehzen are on the landing. The governess holds out her hand.

VICTORIA

This is so ridiculous. My uncle Cumberland is no more likely to kill me than fly to the moon.

LEHZEN

What have I told you? Only fight the things that matter.

With a shake of her head, the girl takes the proffered hand. At the bottom, a footman is standing.

VICTORIA

Where is the Duchess?

FOOTMAN

In the drawing room, Your Royal Highness.

Victoria goes towards a door, followed by her spaniel, Dash. The footman glances after her.

LEHZEN

Keep your eyes to yourself.

She is, of course, quite different with the servants.

7 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

7

The Duchess, Conroy and a young woman, Lady Flora Hastings, are poring over a map on the central table.

CONROY

We'll spend two nights at Norris Castle,
one for the local gentry, one for the
town officials, then we sail along the
coast -

He looks up. Victoria has entered the room with her dog.

DUCHESS OF KENT

How did you come downstairs?

VICTORIA

I walked.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Not alone?

VICTORIA

No. Not alone. Lehzen was with me.

DUCHESS OF KENT

And she held your hand?

VICTORIA

She did. Though why she has to -

DUCHESS OF KENT

She has to because not everyone in
England wishes you well.

VICTORIA

Oh, Mama...

This is an old argument. Victoria changes the subject.

VICTORIA

I hope we're not planning another
journey?

DUCHESS OF KENT

Sir John says -

CONROY

As much as possible, we want the people
to know their new Queen -

VICTORIA

But why can't we wait 'til I *am* Queen?
His Majesty clearly said -

At this, Lady Flora rolls her eyes at Conroy.

7 CONTINUED: (2)

7

CONROY

The King is jealous of your popularity and that's why he does not approve of your travels. It's no reason to give them up.

VICTORIA

On the contrary, it's a very good reason. I do not wish to annoy my uncle.

CONROY

The King is old.

VICTORIA

He may be old, Sir John, but he's not dead yet.

Sir John eyes Victoria coldly.

8 INT. KING'S DRAWING ROOM. WINDSOR CASTLE. DAY.

8

The white, eccentric head of King William IV is shaking with anger as he shouts at his Prime Minister. This is the great Lord Melbourne, a handsome, witty, beguiling man in middle age. Queen Adelaide is with them.

KING WILLIAM

Is there no limit to this woman's disobedience?

MELBOURNE

The Duchess wants the Princess to know more of the country.

KING WILLIAM

The Duchess wants the country to know more of the Princess!

MELBOURNE

Is it such a bad thing, Sir?

KING WILLIAM

To make her familiar, you mean? A popular girl who supports your ministry? You would defend it!

QUEEN ADELAIDE

I don't think Lord Melbourne -

KING WILLIAM

You see how Conroy presents her? The young liberal in contrast to the old conservative?

(MORE)

KING WILLIAM (cont'd)

She is change and the thrill of the new,
but I am stuck in the mud of history. She
is hope and the future, while I am
despair and the past. She is life, Lord
Melbourne, and I am death!

He storms away for a moment. The Queen catches Melbourne's eye
and shakes her head gently. She stands and walks over.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

There's nothing to be gained by shouting
at the Prime Minister.

KING WILLIAM

Nonsense. I feel much better.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

And none of it is Victoria's fault.

KING WILLIAM

Maybe not. But she and her mother are
tools in the hands of a man who knows how
to use them. Mark my words. The reign of
King Conroy is coming.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

My poor sister in law. What is the hold
that wicked man has over her?

The question is rhetorical but the two men catch each other's eye
and say nothing.

MELBOURNE

What about her uncle in Brussels? Could
he help?

KING WILLIAM

King Leopold is as slippery as a barrel
full of eels. If he did dislodge Conroy,
it'd only be to tighten his own grip on
the girl. And who can blame him? He sits
on a gimcrack throne, not ten years old
and born of Civil War!

He sighs, shaking his head.

KING WILLIAM

The King of Belgium is a parvenu! The
King of France is the son of a regicide
and rules by Right of Revolution! The
Queen of Spain is a baby of six years
old! If there's a monarch who feels safe,
I've yet to meet them.

(MORE)

8 CONTINUED: (2)

8

KING WILLIAM (cont'd)

And I must leave England in the hands of
a frail girl, the prey of every rogue and
politician in Europe!

He catches sight of Melbourne watching him.

KING WILLIAM

You, too. You mean to use her and don't
tell me you won't.

Melbourne says nothing either way.

KING WILLIAM

Oh Lord in your mercy, get me past
January! That way she'll be of age and
we'll have cut Conroy and the Duchess out
at least.

MELBOURNE

And what of the proposed journey?

KING WILLIAM

The Royal Progress you mean?

He is about to erupt when he looks at his wife and sighs. The
truth is his time is ending and they all know it.

KING WILLIAM

Oh, very well. Let England get a sight of
her future Queen. But I'll have no
broadsides! No cannons and guns in
salute. I'm still the monarch here!

His face is as red as his hair is white.

9 EXT. THE ENGLISH COAST. DAY.

9

A fusillade of cannon blasts into the air, smoke pouring from
their mouths. On a raised and decorated platform, with the
sparkling sea behind, Victoria is receiving the Freedom of a
seaside town from a local Mayor. A modest crowd watches them. The
Mayor bows and retreats, and Victoria steps back to where her
mother, Conroy, Flora and Lehzen are waiting.

CONROY

Curtsey to them.

VICTORIA

I have already curtsied.

CONROY

Then curtsey again.

With a smile, she gives a slight curtsey and is cheered.

VICTORIA

That's enough.

CONROY

I will decide when it's enough.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Yes, let Sir John decide.

VICTORIA

Mama, I'm not running for election. I will be Queen not Prime Minister.

With a last nod, she turns and starts to descend the steps on the way to a waiting carriage. The others follow but, at the base of the steps, Conroy catches at Lehzen's arm.

CONROY

I warn you. If you're her friend, don't set her against me.

The Baroness does not answer but just looks at him.

CONROY

You want to keep her for yourself but she needs me. If she tries to walk alone, she'll stumble in a month and fall within a year. For her own sake, don't encourage her rebellion.

LEHZEN

I hope I encourage the Princess in all things, Sir John.

She nods towards the crowd behind them.

LEHZEN

Like it or not, they're cheering her, you know. Not you.

She descends the last step to where Victoria waits.

10 INT. ALBERT'S ROOMS. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. GERMANY. DAY.

10

An engraving of Princess Victoria looks down serenely as Stockmar is putting Albert through his paces. Relentlessly.

STOCKMAR

Novels?

ALBERT

She hasn't read many novels. They were forbidden until this year.

STOCKMAR

But she *did* like?

ALBERT

The Bride of Lammermoor.

STOCKMAR

By?

ALBERT

Sir Walter Scott.

STOCKMAR

Other recreations?

ALBERT

Piano. Music, generally. History. The famous dolls, of course.

STOCKMAR

Is she permitted the theatre?

ALBERT

Only the opera and ballet.

STOCKMAR

Where her favourites are?

ALBERT

The soprano, Giulia Grisi and the dancer, Maria Taglioni.

STOCKMAR

And among the men?

ALBERT

Her teacher, the Bass Baritone, Luigi Lablache. She calls him "*Le Papa de Tous.*"

STOCKMAR

And do you know why?

ALBERT

Lablache says that Mozart is the father of all music. The phrase has become her nickname for him.

Stockmar is almost impressed. He nods.

STOCKMAR

Which opera does she like best?

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

ALBERT

Norma?

Stockmar strikes the table sharply, with impatience.

STOCKMAR

I Puritani. Her favourite opera is
Bellini's *Puritani*. How many times?

Albert sighs with resignation and resumes his studies as a song from *Puritani* explodes, full volume.

11 INT. COVENT GARDEN OPERA HOUSE. EVE.

11

We are watching the opera from Victoria's point of view. Seated in the Royal Box on the main tier, she is completely absorbed. As we dolly in on her face, we pull focus behind her to reveal her three gaolers, the Duchess, Conroy and Lady Flora. A half secret glance passes between Conroy and Flora, but Victoria's mother is more interested in the audience. In crowded boxes on the same tier, we see Peel, Melbourne, Wellington, Palmerston and Lady Cowper, though we do not know them yet. They in turn watch the Princess, not the stage.

12 INT. KENSINGTON PALACE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

12

Bellini's music continues. The room is bustling. Girls, the same age as Victoria, wash up in a scullery. Lehzen appears.

LEHZEN

I've come for the Princess's milk.

Lehzen glances at the maids coldly. The girls don't react. A chef arrives with a small, pretty tray.

CHEF

I've made her some chocolate.

LEHZEN

I didn't order chocolate.

CHEF

Well, that's what you've got.

He is not frightened. They stare at each other.

CHEF

I made it myself.

Lehzen still waits. Annoyed, the chef picks up a kitchen cup from a nearby table, pours some and drinks it. After a moment, Lehzen takes the tray.

12 CONTINUED:

12

LEHZEN

Next time, do as I say.

She goes. The girls stick tongues out at her back. For once, the chef shares their sentiments and pulls a face. For a moment, he looks like he's performing in Bellini's opera...

LADY FLORA (V.O.)

Hurry, scurry, to the little Princess.

13 INT. KENSINGTON PALACE. GALLERY. NIGHT.

13

Bellini's music continues. Lehzen walks along with the tray. She is dressed demurely. She passes Lady Flora who is still in the full evening dress she wore to the opera.

LEHZEN

Yes. That's just what I'll do.

Lady Flora walks on. Then she stops.

LADY FLORA

Don't be too smug. He could save her from a lot of grief if she'd let him.

LEHZEN

This is getting cold.

LADY FLORA

You're no better. In fact you're worse. You covet the same thing but at least he admits it.

LEHZEN

Please don't judge me by your own standards, Lady Flora. Or by those of Sir John Conroy.

The words disgust her. Lady Flora shakes her head.

LADY FLORA

You've tasted power, Baroness, and when she's queen it'll taste much sweeter. You'll see.

But Lehzen has already walked on.

14 INT. DUCHESS OF KENT'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

14

On the last note of Bellini's opera, a simple Dutch doll in a young girl's hand, fills the screen... Victoria is having fun with her doll, pretending to sing. The music ends. Victoria is on her cot.

Nearby, the huge bed of her mother has been turned down for the night. The doll is replaced among a group of similar dolls, all gorgeously arrayed, on the table by her bed. Victoria looks up. Lehzen is standing in the doorway. The candle on her tray and an oil lamp on a table throw odd shadows round the cluttered room.

VICTORIA

Miss Agatha won't stand up straight. So she must go to the back as a punishment.

This isn't worrying. She is speaking in fun.

LEHZEN

I met Lady Flora in the gallery.

VICTORIA

Lying in wait, no doubt.

Lehzen pours the chocolate and hands it to the Princess.

VICTORIA

Chocolate. What a treat.

LEHZEN

I thought you deserved it.

The girl smiles her thanks and sips it for a moment.

VICTORIA

Sir John's getting worse.

LEHZEN

Of course he is. In a few months you'll be eighteen.

VICTORIA

In a few months I may go mad!

Lehzen tidies the bed clothes with a brisk smile.

VICTORIA

All I ever do is change my clothes, avoid his bestial daughter and pray for freedom!

LEHZEN

It's only until your birthday.

VICTORIA

Only! I can't even sleep without Mama checking every hour that I'm still breathing!

She nods towards the double portrait on the wall.

VICTORIA

See how she holds me there? If anything,
her grip is tighter now.

LEHZEN

Not for long. Less than a year. And don't
forget who championed you from the start.

They are interrupted by the arrival of the Duchess and her maid.
She stops at the sight of Lehzen.

LEHZEN

I'll say good night, Ma'am.

She curtsies and leaves. The Duchess eyes her daughter.

DUCHESS OF KENT

You two are so close. Anyone would think
you were plotting treason. Don't fuss me!

She snaps at her maid who unfastens the glittering outer layer.
Here is the deconstruction of a Royal icon. The truth behind the
image. She entered as Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, in
silks and lace and diamonds, her hair dressed with feathers and
pearls. We will leave her as a middle-aged woman, ready for bed.
As she talks, the skirt comes away, then the embroidered bodice,
leaving corsets and layer upon layer of petticoats. She puts on a
loose gown to sit at the dressing table, while the maid
dismantles the high-piled hair, removing the false switches,
brushing it out.

DUCHESS OF KENT

You still don't look well. Maybe we
should go away for August.

VICTORIA

No, Mama.

DUCHESS OF KENT

What do you mean no?

VICTORIA

We missed the Queen's birthday. We will
not miss the King's. We have accepted.
We're going.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Really, Victoria, don't issue orders to
me! I'm not a servant.

VICTORIA

You've already disobeyed about the extra
rooms. That's enough.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Don't be absurd! Are we to live like rabbits, crammed in a hutch? Of course I "disobeyed"!

VICTORIA

Since we live in a palace, I'd say we're a lot better off than most people in the country, never mind the world.

DUCHESS OF KENT

We live in an *apartment* in a palace which is far too small for our needs. The rooms I took were empty. Keeping us out of them was... almost immoral.

VICTORIA

That's not how he'll see it.

DUCHESS OF KENT

I can't help that. As Sir John says -

But at the mention of Conroy's name, Victoria lies back.

DUCHESS OF KENT

My dearest child, Sir John only wants the best for you. I wish you'd believe that.

VICTORIA

I'm sure you do.

The Duchess gives a sharp look but, glancing at the maid, she does not reply, studying her face in the mirror.

DUCHESS OF KENT

I've invited the Coburg brothers to come and stay... You ought to know them better than you do.

VICTORIA

Why?

DUCHESS OF KENT

Well... because you should. Your Uncle Leopold thinks -

VICTORIA

I knew he'd have a part in it.

14 CONTINUED: (4)

14

DUCHESS OF KENT

Really Victoria, there's no pleasing you. You complain you've no friends but when I find you some companions of a suitable rank, you look as if I'd forced you to take medicine.

Victoria just stares at her for a moment.

VICTORIA

Mama, why do you treat me like a simpleton? Is it my fault? Was I unusually stupid as a child?

There is a quality in her that almost frightens the mother. She stares back, then takes it out on the luckless maid.

DUCHESS OF KENT

If you stick one more pin in me, I swear I shall call the guard.

15 INT. KENSINGTON PALACE. UPSTAIRS PASSAGE. DAY.

15

Through the window, we see a carriage arriving. A postilion jumps down, and the two Coburg princes climb out.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Well, if it's a wasted journey they can't blame me.

LEHZEN (V.O.)

Your mother wants you downstairs.

Victoria is watching. Lehzen heads for the staircase. The girl follows but stops by a mirror, checking her ringlets and pinching her cheeks, to give them a bit of colour.

16 INT. DINING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

16

Victoria feeds Dash under the table and watches Albert who sits opposite. Ernest, Conroy, Lady Flora and the Duchess complete the party. The click of knives and the footsteps of the footmen are clearly audible. Sir John is the only member of the party who drinks the wine.

DUCHESS OF KENT

What do you plan this afternoon?

ERNEST

There isn't a plan, Aunt. What would Victoria like to do?

CONROY

My daughter is sketching in the park.
Perhaps you might join her?

VICTORIA

I don't think so.

Her tone is so firm and flattening that Albert looks over.

DUCHESS OF KENT

It's a nice day for a walk.

VICTORIA

If you wish, Mama.

17 EXT. KENSINGTON GARDENS. DAY.

17

Conroy and Lady Flora hover at the rear of the party. Ernest walks with the Duchess. She ignores him, looking ahead at Victoria who is with Albert. The Duchess, glimpsed behind the young couple throughout the scene, conveys a powerful sense of Victoria's incarceration.

ALBERT

Of the modern composers, I suppose
Vincenzo Bellini is my favourite.

VICTORIA

What a coincidence. So is mine. Which of
his operas do you enjoy most? No, wait,
let me guess. *I Puritani*?

ALBERT

As a matter of fact, yes.

VICTORIA

I used to like it, too. But now I prefer
Norma.

She's aware of what he is up to and has deliberately caught him out. She takes a ball from her pocket and throws it.

VICTORIA

Dash! Fetch! Oh, fetch it, you silly dog!

Albert picks up the ball, dancing along beside the dog, teasing it with the ball just out of reach. But when he looks at Victoria, she is not laughing, just watching. He gives the ball back to Victoria. Their gloved hands touch. She pulls away.

ALBERT

Have I offended you in some way?

VICTORIA

No.

She continues for a few paces.

VICTORIA

Tell, me, what are your favourite sports?

ALBERT

Shooting, of course. And fishing.

VICTORIA

And do you find fishing easy?

ALBERT

Easy? No. Not if you're trying to catch something worth having.

VICTORIA

Exactly.

She walks on.

18 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. EVE.

18

Albert and Victoria play chess, again watched by the others who sit round the room. It is Albert's turn. He studies the board. She studies him. Conroy notices, but she gives him a cold look when their eyes meet, then lowers her voice.

VICTORIA

Do you ever feel like a chess piece, yourself? In a game being played against your will?

ALBERT

Do you?

VICTORIA

Constantly. I see them leaning in and moving me round the board.

ALBERT

The Duchess and Sir John?

VICTORIA

Not just them. Uncle Leopold. The King. I'm sure half the politicians are ready to seize hold of my skirts and drag me this way and that, from square to square.

ALBERT

Then you had better master the rules of the game. Until you play it better than they can.

Perhaps to her surprise, she likes this and smiles at him.

VICTORIA

You don't recommend I find a husband to play it for me?

ALBERT

I should find one to play it with you, not for you.

She nods. But the urge to tease is never far away.

VICTORIA

Why don't we ring for some music and then we could dance?

We can read panic in Albert's eyes. Victoria enjoys it.

VICTORIA

I've lately discovered the Waltz and I am quite in love with it.

Albert looks to the Duchess. They have been caught out.

ALBERT

Waltzing is not really my forte.

VICTORIA

Oh dear. What a shame.

Victoria gives Albert a provocative glance. In spite of herself, she does like him. She lowers her voice.

VICTORIA

You know the King wants me to marry my Cousin George?

Albert, studying the board, does not rise to the bait.

ALBERT

What's he like at chess?

19 INT. KENSINGTON PALACE. HALL. NIGHT.

19

Lehzen waits by the stairs as Victoria leaves the drawing room. After a moment, Albert appears, closing the door.

ALBERT

Victoria.

She stops, feeling Lehzen's irritation.

VICTORIA

It's all right, Lehzen. Albert can take me up. You'll have to hold my hand. Mama insists. I hope you don't mind.

ALBERT

Not in the least.

The Baroness hesitates then, defeated, goes on up.

VICTORIA

What did you want to say?

ALBERT

Only that I understand more than you think. Of what your life is.

VICTORIA

Do you?

ALBERT

My childhood wasn't easy, either.

VICTORIA

Oh?

ALBERT

I lost my mother when I was a boy.

VICTORIA

I know. She died.

ALBERT

No. That is, she did die. Eventually. But she was sent away long before that.

This does interest her. Much more than she expected.

ALBERT

There was some... difficulty... It was all hushed up and no one talks of it now. But I know what it is to live alone in your head. To smile when people are guessing your thoughts and never to give a clue of your real feelings.

She appreciates his honesty. This is also her experience.

VICTORIA

Then you're right. We do understand each other. Did Uncle Leopold ask you to tell me that?

ALBERT

He told me never to mention it.

VICTORIA

How little he knows me.

She turns towards the stairs, holding out her hand and he takes it as he summons his courage to speak.

ALBERT

May I write to you?

She looks at him and without a word starts upstairs. He climbs with her, waiting for her to speak. But the answer, when it comes, is only a smile. It is more than enough. On the landing, they stop. She looks at her hand, waiting for him to release it. He does, but first he kisses it in homage. Then she walks away, down the passage, stopping once to look back. The fact is, he's perfect.

20 INT. DUCHESS OF KENT'S BEDROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. NIGHT.

20

Lehzen is waiting as Victoria walks in... a little out of breath with a smile on her face. She signs to her maid, Watson, to undress her as quick as possible.

WATSON

I expect you'll miss the Princes when they're gone, Ma'am.

LEHZEN

Don't be impertinent.

Victoria winks at Watson as she is released from her stays.

VICTORIA

The untold luxury of being able to breathe again.

Watson gathers up the discarded clothes and leaves.

LEHZEN

Those boys pester you.

VICTORIA

Give me some credit. You don't think I've come this far to walk straight into *another* gaol?

LEHZEN

You must marry one day.

20 CONTINUED:

VICTORIA

I don't see why. And if I do, I'll please myself, not Uncle Leopold or the King or Mama or anyone else. Trust me.

LEHZEN

I do. Just as you must trust me.

Victoria takes a deep breath, then, dressed in a shift and holding an imaginary partner, she starts to waltz. What does she dream of as she whirls round? Whatever it is, she's more aware of what goes on than Lehzen credits.

21 INT. BEDROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. NIGHT.

21

Ernest is reading in bed. Albert sits on the end of it.

ERNEST

Listen to this. Right now, it takes a day or more to cross England in a coach. By train, the same journey will be achieved in three hours. Isn't that amazing? Trains will change everything.

But there is no answer from Albert, who is daydreaming.

ERNEST

Are you listening?

Naturally, Albert is not. A waltz starts to play.

22 INT. ALBERT'S ROOMS. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. GERMANY. DAY.

22

The smiling profile of a Dancing Master in Close Up. He is waltzing. As the camera slowly pulls back, we discover he's dancing with Albert, who feels ridiculous.

DANCING MASTER

And one two three, one two three and face the window, face the wall, face the window, face the -

But Albert is lagging behind. The Master stops exasperated.

DANCING MASTER

Your Serene Highness must learn to turn as you go.

ALBERT

Must I?

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

Yes. You *must*.

22 CONTINUED:

22

Stockmar is watching. He is pitiless. Silently, Albert takes the Master's hand and waist. The music resumes.

DANCING MASTER

And one two three, one two three -

23 EXT. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

23

The waltz still plays. By the carriage, Watson and the Duchess's maid wait with the postilions, as Victoria, her mother, Lady Flora and Conroy emerge. Lehzen follows them.

CONROY

Be on your guard.

VICTORIA

We are going to Windsor for my uncle's birthday party.

CONROY

In the castle of the enemy.

VICTORIA

Your enemy, Sir John. Not mine.

The girl climbs in. He turns to the mother.

CONROY

Agree to nothing.

DUCHESS OF KENT

What should I say about the rooms?

CONROY

You needed more space. Appeal to the Queen. It's ridiculous.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Should I cultivate Melbourne?

CONROY

Smile on any politician that you find there.

DUCHESS OF KENT

I wish you were coming with us.

He does not answer but squeezes her hand as he helps her in. The liveried postilions and the maids climb up behind. The coachman cracks his whip and the carriage moves off. Sir John Conroy turns to find Lehzen watching him.

23 CONTINUED:

23

CONROY

You're very intent, Baroness. Are you making a study of me?

LEHZEN

Someone should.

She goes inside. The music of the waltz lends the moment a certain irony...

24 INT. ALBERT'S ROOMS. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. GERMANY. EVE.

24

It plays on as we see Albert, still practising his steps. Stockmar is with him. He has a pile of engravings on a table which he holds up to illustrate every question.

STOCKMAR

The present Prime Minister?

Albert glances over at the engraving as he twirls past.

ALBERT

Lord Melbourne.

STOCKMAR

Lord Melbourne. The leader of the Whig Party. Who'll probably be in power when the Princess succeeds.

As he speaks, we cut to:

25 INT. MELBOURNE'S CARRIAGE. WINDSOR CASTLE. EVE.

25

Melbourne's coach is in a torchlit queue. He's with Lady Cowper, and Palmerston, all dressed for a ball. The continuing waltz tells us these people are linked in the same dance. They are part of the same game.

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

The only other Whig minister you need concern yourself with is Lord Palmerston. He may be troublesome.

ALBERT (V.O.)

Why?

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

Because he puts the interests of England above those of Europe.

ALBERT (V.O.)

Which is bad?

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

It's not useful to *us*. He wouldn't spill a drop of British blood to save a foreign throne.

ALBERT (V.O.)

But he's sure of a place in the Cabinet?

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

I should think so. He's sleeping with Melbourne's sister.

Sliding along the carriage seat, Palmerston's fingers surreptitiously touch those of Lady Cowper. She smiles.

26 EXT. WINDSOR CASTLE. EVE.

26

The waltz plays on as flares light the castle. Coachmen deposit their brilliant cargo and then drive off. A crowd has gathered at the gates to watch. Edward Oxford, a young Londoner, is among them. The excitement grows as Victoria and her mother climb down, accompanied by Flora Hastings.

27 INT. WATERLOO CHAMBER. WINDSOR CASTLE. EVE.

27

A magnificent room, a magnificent company, Monarchy at its best. Candlelight flickers on tiaras and gems. Our waltz becomes practical as an orchestra plays. The King and Queen receive their guests. Melbourne, Palmerston and Lady Cowper hover nearby. The Chamberlain's voice rings out.

CHAMBERLAIN

The Duke of Wellington.

The familiar figure with his Roman nose strides in. We hear the continuing instruction of Stockmar.

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

In the public mind, the leader of the Opposition is their pet hero, the grand old Duke of Wellington.

ALBERT (V.O.)

But not in fact.

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

No. The next Tory Prime Minister will be Sir Robert Peel.

His voice is exactly in sync with the Chamberlain's.

CHAMBERLAIN

Sir Robert Peel.

A stiff and formal man enters the room. He advances towards Their Majesties and bows, then joins Wellington. We hear:

ALBERT (V.O.)

Which side does Victoria favour?

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

The Whigs. She's a liberal. Or so she thinks. Above all, she favours Lord Melbourne. And Melbourne will take full advantage of it.

WELLINGTON

You heard Conroy tried to force her agreement to a regency?

Peel raises his eyebrows to signify that he has.

PEEL

Still, she wouldn't sign it. That speaks for the girl's spirit.

WELLINGTON

It does indeed.

The tone makes Peel look at him in surprise.

WELLINGTON

A frail child, sick with fever, and she wouldn't yield to a bullying man? When she's healthy and crowned, what chance would you give her Prime Minister?

CHAMBERLAIN

Her Royal Highness the Princess Victoria.
Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent.
The Lady Flora Hastings.

The company breaks apart to make a channel for the women.

LADY COWPER

Look at that demure little head. And all of us wondering what's inside it.

MELBOURNE

We'll find out soon enough.

Albert is still at his lessons.

STOCKMAR

Melbourne will make her fall in love with him. It's his method.

ALBERT

But he's old.

STOCKMAR

Not too old. And still attractive.

ALBERT

Don't underestimate Victoria.

STOCKMAR

Don't underestimate Melbourne.

The comment is enough to make Albert stop dancing...

29 INT. WATERLOO CHAMBER. EVE.

29

The waltz will come to an end during this scene as the King raises the curtsying Victoria and kisses her.

KING WILLIAM

My dearest niece.

He indicates a spotty and awkward youth nearby.

KING WILLIAM

You remember your cousin.

VICTORIA

Good evening, George.

It's clear from her brisk nod that she isn't interested.

KING WILLIAM

How can my little niece and nephew have grown up when I wasn't looking?

Victoria slips her arm through her uncle's.

VICTORIA

Whereas you are quite unchanged and as handsome as ever.

He laughs and draws her aside from the crowd.

KING WILLIAM

If I put my head close to yours and speak softly, they'll suspect us of hatching a plot.

29 CONTINUED:

As he talks, he does exactly this. The company is subdued by their curiosity. Victoria plays along.

VICTORIA

And if I look a little surprised as I listen, they'll know it.

This she does, with her hand at her mouth. The company is almost falling forward in their efforts to hear. He laughs.

KING WILLIAM

Ah, my dear, I wish we saw more of you. But then, nor you nor I are to blame for *that*.

He gives a cold stare at the Duchess but she looks away.

Further down the room, Wellington and Peel whisper softly.

WELLINGTON

What do you make of the Conroy business? The Princess hates him. No doubt about that.

They look at the Duchess, who is talking to the King.

PEEL

I suppose they're lovers.

WELLINGTON

I suppose the girl thinks they are which is more to the point.

Across the room, the King's voice is suddenly raised.

KING WILLIAM

Madam, the plain fact is you have stolen seventeen rooms!

The Duchess is uncomfortable with the sensation created.

DUCHESS OF KENT

One cannot "steal" a room, Sir. The rooms are where you left them. But now they are used where before they were empty.

KING WILLIAM

I see. So I have no say in my own palaces? Why not move in here and bring your Irish tinker with you? The Queen and I will be happy enough in the lodge!

This is very rude indeed. The Duchess is icy in her reply.

DUCHESS OF KENT

So would I, Sir. If I thought the people there would be *polite* to me!

The Queen steps forward to head off further trouble.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

We're going in. The Prince of Saxe-Meiningen will take you to your chair.

She nods at a man who extends his arm. After a moment of hesitation and biting her lip, the Duchess takes it. The Queen holds her husband's arm and the procession forms.

KING WILLIAM

How dare -

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Enough, my dear. You have exhausted the topic.

She looks at him firmly. With a glare at his sister-in-law, he steps off. Victoria follows, the cynosure of all eyes.

30 INT. SAINT GEORGE'S GALLERY. EVE.

30

A table a mile long sparkles with glass, silver and gold. Men and women sit alternately down its length with footmen behind their chairs. The ladies' jewels and silks lend an Eastern glamour to the gathering. The King has clearly had more than enough to drink. Victoria is seated by Melbourne.

MELBOURNE

Your next birthday will be quite a milestone, Ma'am. I hope it means we'll see more of you at Court.

They glance across at the stony face of her mother.

VICTORIA

I hope so too, Lord Melbourne.

MELBOURNE

You know that if you should ever need an ally, you have one in me.

VICTORIA

A Prime Minister has more important calls upon his time.

MELBOURNE

Not at all. I knew the late Duke of Kent well. Naturally I take an interest in his daughter.

VICTORIA

You knew my father?

This is a direct route to her heart. As he planned.

MELBOURNE

Is it difficult to speak of him?

VICTORIA

No! I love to hear from someone who knew him! For I never did, you see.

MELBOURNE

He was a great gentleman. Of that you may be sure.

VICTORIA

Indeed I am.

MELBOURNE

He was excellent company like his brother, the Regent. But not so extravagant. And he was as kind as his brother, the King...

They both look over to where the red-faced, white-haired King is gabbling dementedly to his neighbour.

MELBOURNE

But not perhaps so... talkative.

VICTORIA

You make him sound as if he were the best of them.

MELBOURNE

Oh, I think so, Ma'am.

She glows with pleasure. From nearby, they are watched by an eaves-dropping Wellington and Lady Cowper.

WELLINGTON

Your brother's hard at work, Lady Cowper. See him hover with his net to catch the pretty butterfly.

LADY COWPER

And when you're back in power, Duke, will you not do the same?

WELLINGTON

Not nearly as well as Melbourne.
Unfortunately, I have no small talk and
Peel has no manners.

Which makes her laugh.

WELLINGTON

And I'd have a hard time praising her
father. The most brutal officer I ever
encountered.

He stops. The King, drunk and scarlet in the face, has risen to
his feet. He signs for them to remain seated.

KING WILLIAM

First, I thank you for your good wishes
on my birthday.

This is conventional enough. But his mood is darkening.

KING WILLIAM

It has been a long life and an
interesting one and I shall be content
with only a short while more. Just enough
to dispense with any thought of a
Regency, so I may pass the Royal
authority directly to that young lady -

His voice is growing angrier as he points at Victoria.

KING WILLIAM

And not to the hands of a person now near
me who is surrounded by evil advisers and
who cannot act with propriety in the
station in which she's been placed.

Suddenly the company sees that he is punishing his sister-in-law.
The Duchess tenses. He is very angry now.

KING WILLIAM

I have been insulted - grossly and
continually insulted! She has kept her
daughter, my brother's child, from my
Court! But from now I'd have her know
that *I am King!* And I will *not* be flouted
or disobeyed by her or by that *jackanapes*
she keeps about her!

He is shouting straight at the Duchess who blushes with rage.
This is too much. She stands, flings her napkin down, knocking
the glasses over with a crash, and storms out, sending her chair
flying. There is total, pin-dropping silence in that vast
chamber. Servants and guests alike are frozen.

30 CONTINUED: (3)

30

Victoria blushes, trembling and on the brink of tears. Wellington whispers to his neighbour.

WELLINGTON

Families. Who'd be without them?

Lady Cowper smiles discreetly behind her fan.

31 INT. A BEDROOM AT WINDSOR CASTLE. NIGHT.

31

Victoria is dressed for bed as Lehzen enters.

VICTORIA

How is she?

LEHZEN

She wants to leave tonight but they've persuaded her to stay until the morning. She's asked for your bed to be set up in her room. I'll see to it.

VICTORIA

Must I? Can't I be alone for one solitary night?

She sighs. Lehzen says nothing.

VICTORIA

Why does everyone fight over me?

LEHZEN

Because you will be Queen.

VICTORIA

They act as if I'd no mind of my own. But I know what lies ahead. And I mean to do it well.

LEHZEN

All the more reason to listen to those who love you.

She curtseys and leaves. Victoria, alone, goes to the window. And we cut to:

A quick flashback shot of Victoria at the age of eleven.

YOUNG VICTORIA (AGED 11)

I will be good.

We are back at the window in 1836. Victoria looks out at the night sky and murmurs gently.

VICTORIA

I will.

32 INT. A WALL IN A ROOM IN LONDON. DAY. 32

A cartoon of the row, with Duchess and King raging, and Victoria cowering in the background, is pinned to a wall.

33 INT. ROSENAU CASTLE. GERMANY. NIGHT. 33

Discarded, unfinished letters have been thrown on the floor. In the background, the door opens to reveal a man's feet.

ERNEST (V.O.)
Shouldn't you get over there?

The feet belong to Ernest. He looks at Albert, seated behind a desk, writing. We see his back, not his face.

ALBERT
What? Like a jackal? To hover at the edge until the King is dead?

ERNEST
When he *is* dead, there'll be more than one jackal to contend with. What is it? Don't you like her?

Albert stops writing, angry at his own lack of skill. He crumples the letter and throws it down with the others.

ALBERT
Yes, I like her. I like her very much. More than I dared hope.

ERNEST
Well then.

ALBERT
It's not up to me, is it?

Albert finally turns to look at his brother.

ALBERT
What do you call a man who waits for a rich woman to decide whether or not she wants him?

Ernest says nothing. Albert nods.

ALBERT
That's the name I'd use, too.

Ernest looks at the discarded letters on the floor.

ERNEST

Why not say that? Why not tell her how
you feel?

He leaves. At last Albert takes another sheet of paper...

34 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

34

A fist slams down onto a letter on a table.

CONROY (V.O.)

Don't you see what he wants!

Victoria is with her mother and Conroy. Dash hovers nearby,
worrying a toy. The girl is attempting to keep her temper.

VICTORIA

He increases my income now I'm eighteen
and he asks to see me at Court. What's
wrong with that?

CONROY

The King wants to separate you from your
mother! He is trying to take you away
from those whose sole aim is to protect
you!

The door opens and Lehzen appears. Victoria stands.

VICTORIA

There's no need to shout, Sir John. I'm
sure the people of London will find out
our business soon enough without hearing
it from your lips.

CONROY

Tell her! Make her understand!

Nervously, the Duchess tries to explain as Conroy crosses the
room to a chair, struggling to calm down.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Victoria, Sir John only means that you
are unprepared for the task that awaits
you.

VICTORIA

And if I am, whose fault is *that!*

Conroy sits, then jumps up at once. He snatches one of Victoria's
dolls and throws it to one side, losing what patience he had. He
walks back, shouting in her face.

CONROY

You're too young! You've no experience!
You're a china doll walking over a
precipice!

VICTORIA

Then I must smash! For it's too late to
mend my ways now! So if you'll excuse me -

CONROY

But I will not excuse you!

Seizing her arm, he flings her back roughly into the chair. For Victoria, this is a savage shock. The other women are stunned. The dog snarls. The Duchess attempts to intervene.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Surely we want no unpleasantness.

But he silences her, bending over the shrinking girl.

CONROY

Now, here's what you will do! First
you'll refuse the money and demand
instead that it be given to your mother!
Next you will appoint me your private
secretary, from today, and finally, you
will agree to be co-regent with the
Duchess until your twenty fifth birthday.
Neither she, nor I, will accept less!

He pauses, panting for breath, leaning into her face. Victoria is trembling with anger when she answers.

VICTORIA

You may do what you like with the money.
Now, *get out of my way!*

He makes a move to prevent her but she brings up her hand to dismiss him so firmly that he drops back. She stands and turns to the Duchess. Her voice is like ice.

VICTORIA

If you think I will ever forget that you
sat by silent and watched him treat me
thus, you're *dreaming!*

She goes, followed by Lehzen and Dash. The Duchess looks at Conroy who slams the door shut.

35 INT. PASSAGE. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY. 35

Victoria walks into her room in a fury, slamming the door behind her as violently as Conroy.

36 INT. KITCHEN. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY. 36

Everybody has stopped working, footmen, kitchenmaids, chef. They listen to the reverberation of the banging doors, then look at each other, half nervous, half enjoying the stir.

37 INT. CONROY'S PRIVATE SITTING ROOM. NIGHT. 37

The door bursts open. Conroy looks up, startled. He stands as Albert walks across the room. Until he stops and punches Conroy full in the face.

38 INT. VICTORIA'S ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. NIGHT. 38

Victoria embraces Albert. He comforts her, enjoying the fragrance of her skin...

39 INT. ROSENAU CASTLE. ALBERT'S ROOM. GERMANY. NIGHT. 39

An extreme close up of Albert's nose and eyes pulls back to reveal him in exactly the same position at his desk. He is still enjoying Victoria's scent... on a letter. Voice-Over tells us the previous two scenes were in his imagination.

ALBERT (V.O.)

My dear Victoria, if it is ever within my power to assist you, you know you have only to ask...

The camera dollies in on the envelope on Albert's desk. It is franked with the mark of the Belgian Royal Household.

40 MONTAGE. 40

Through flashbacks, we follow Victoria's letter:

Victoria hands her letter to a Chamberlain. It is addressed to Albert in Germany.

The Chamberlain gives it to the Duchess of Kent.

The Duchess of Kent inserts it in another envelope.

King Leopold passes the letter to Stockmar.

40 CONTINUED:

40

Stockmar puts it into a third envelope and seals it.

LEOPOLD (V.O.)

How should we play it?

41 INT. KING LEOPOLD'S LIBRARY. BRUSSELS. DAY.

41

King Leopold is by the window in this splendid apartment, looking out at the gardens. He is restless and angry.

STOCKMAR

We've thrown over Conroy. Now go after Melbourne. Flatter him. Make him an ally.

LEOPOLD

But what about his influence on her later?

STOCKMAR

He'll be less on his guard if he thinks you're a friend.

LEOPOLD

Very good.

He nods to dismiss the adviser but as Stockmar bows...

LEOPOLD

And Albert? Is he ready?

42 INT. ROSENAU CASTLE. ALBERT'S ROOM. GERMANY. NIGHT.

42

Albert is still behind his desk, daydreaming as he's writes.

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

He may be. But she isn't. Let her enjoy succession and the freedom it will bring.

43 INT. VICTORIA'S ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

43

Victoria's impressive collection of dolls fill the frame.

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

We must wait for disillusion, and the loneliness that follows.

Victoria is being dressed by Watson. Again.

VICTORIA

One day they'll invent a garment to be worn the whole day long.

(MORE)

43 CONTINUED:

VICTORIA (cont'd)

From breakfast to bedtime without a change. Think of that.

WATSON

I dursen't, Ma'am. For what would I do then?

Which, naturally, Victoria had not considered.

44 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY. 44

Melbourne is with Victoria. He stands. She sits.

MELBOURNE

Is there really no compromise? Not private secretary, of course, but something harmless? The Privy Purse? We must keep up the look of the thing -

She cuts him off. She is full of emotion.

VICTORIA

I tell you, Lord Melbourne, his behaviour to me -

Cheeks flushed, she struggles to control her rage.

VICTORIA

To me... makes it impossible for him to remain in any post near my person. Any post *whatever*.

MELBOURNE

You don't think it more dangerous to cut him loose?

VICTORIA

I can't help that! I know things -

When she has recovered, she speaks again.

VICTORIA

Things that mean I could never have confidence in him.

MELBOURNE

Very well.

He bows. The interview is at an end.

MELBOURNE

And Ma'am... you needn't worry. I will be your private secretary. To begin with, anyway.

44 CONTINUED:

For the first time, she smiles.

VICTORIA

Thank you, Lord Melbourne. That is a great comfort to me.

He goes towards the door, adding, as an afterthought:

MELBOURNE

We should start with the new appointments. Your ladies-in-waiting, and so on.

VICTORIA

Yes. How do we settle those?

MELBOURNE

Don't give it a thought, Ma'am. I'll draw up a list.

She smiles. He bows, and leaves. Victoria, left alone, puts her hands on her sides, breathing against her tight stays.

45 INT. PASSAGE. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

45

Outside the door, Melbourne stands, his fist clenched in triumph. He has achieved his first goal of the next reign.

46 INT. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. DAY.

46

Stockmar is looking for Albert. When he catches up with him, he hands over an opened letter.

STOCKMAR

Another missive for you, from your Queenly correspondent.

ALBERT

As a matter of interest, will a time come when I read them first?

Stockmar is immune to this kind of thing. He smiles.

STOCKMAR

You'll enjoy this one. She has a real flair for description.

ALBERT

Any progress against Conroy?

STOCKMAR

Very much so.

46 CONTINUED:

46

CONROY (V.O.)

This is madness!

47 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

47

Conroy paces the room. The Duchess is wringing her hands. Melbourne sits patiently in front of them and says nothing.

DUCHESS OF KENT

She's only a child!

48 INT. VICTORIA'S ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. NIGHT.

48

The child is smiling, alone in the middle of the night. She is writing to Albert, as we hear Melbourne's voice.

MELBOURNE (V.O.)

If she is a child, it could be said
Ma'am, that you have kept her so.

49 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

49

DUCHESS OF KENT

A mother's duty is to protect her
daughter's innocence.

MELBOURNE

A mother's duty is to prepare her
children for the lives awaiting them.

CONROY

But what will people say? Surely to
exclude us entirely will launch the new
reign in a cloud of scandal!

MELBOURNE

They'll say the Queen and her mother do
not always agree. These things happen in
the best families.

DUCHESS OF KENT

But where am I to live? Am I to be
abandoned here? Or must I beg along the
highways for a crust?

MELBOURNE

You'll move into the Palace with the
Queen, but she has arranged a separate
apartment for you. It will allow you both
more privacy.

49 CONTINUED:

49

DUCHESS OF KENT

I don't want privacy from my own child!

MELBOURNE

Nevertheless you shall have it.

The Duchess produces a handkerchief.

DUCHESS OF KENT

You are cruel, Sir. You prefer to break my heart than plead my cause.

CONROY

And when King Leopold learns of this?

50 INT. LEOPOLD'S PALACE, BELGIUM. NIGHT.

50

King Leopold is finishing a letter that he gives to Stockmar as we hear Melbourne's and the Duchess's voices.

MELBOURNE (V.O.)

I am here this morning at his express command.

DUCHESS OF KENT (V.O.)

My brother *knows* that I'm to be cast into the wilderness?

51 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

51

This is a blow. They are both completely stunned.

CONROY

You're lying!

MELBOURNE

You are out of your depth, Sir John. It has made you forget yourself.

He is very cool. The reprimand pulls Conroy back.

CONROY

But there's a middle way! Surely? If I'm not to be her secretary, then there must be something else -

Melbourne cuts him off with a raised palm.

MELBOURNE

I see I am not speaking clearly. How can I put this? You have played the game...

52 INT. VICTORIA'S ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. NIGHT. 52

As we cut back to Victoria writing her letter, we see her pronouncing in sync with Melbourne:

MELBOURNE (V.O.)
... and lost.

53 INT. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. DAY. 53

Albert looks up from his letter at Stockmar, who smiles.

54 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY. 54

The Duchess looks at Conroy and then at Melbourne. Melbourne looks at the Duchess and then at Conroy.

55 INT. VICTORIA'S ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. NIGHT. 55

Victoria smiles a victorious smile as she ends her letter with the firm full stop. Her pen on the paper makes a sound that punctuates the moment. She feels good. So do we.

56 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY. 56

The tone is abrupt. Melbourne bows to the Duchess.

MELBOURNE
Good day to you, Ma'am.

He has gone, leaving her weeping. She reaches out for Conroy's hand but he is furious.

DUCHESS OF KENT
You'll still run my household. They cannot prevent it.

CONROY
Don't think it's the end! It's not at all the end!

DUCHESS OF KENT
When you talk like that, you frighten me.

CONROY
Good.

He is as angry with her as with everyone else.

57 INT. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. DAY. 57

Stockmar is with Albert, who has read Victoria's letter.

ALBERT

But she does not summon me?

STOCKMAR

Not yet. But she will.

He bows and goes, leaving Albert alone, disappointed.

58 EXT. AN OPEN ROAD. NIGHT. 58

A coach hurtles through the night.

59 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAWN. 59

The sleeping Victoria is being shaken by the Duchess who stands there in her nightclothes.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Victoria. *Leibling...*

The girl opens her eyes and the two women, watched by the sightless dolls on the bedside table, stare at each other.

It is the hour.

60 INT. HALL. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAWN. 60

Mother and child, hair loose, are at the top of the stairs. The Duchess, in a heavy, damask dressing gown, is in contrast to Victoria, who wears a white, lace-trimmed *peignoir*. Behind them is Lehzen in a woollen robe. As they start down, the Duchess holds out her hand and Victoria takes it, without complaint. At the bottom, in the hall, stands a footman with tousled hair who has struggled into some part of his livery.

VICTORIA

Where are they?

FOOTMAN

In your sitting room, Ma'am.

He steps forward and opens a large double door. Across the room, stand two men, a noble and a prelate.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Victoria, wait. I will go with you.

VICTORIA

I think *not*, Mama.

She goes in as Lady Flora hurries into the hall. She has seen the girl enter the room and the door shut behind her.

61 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAWN.

61

In the flickering light of a single candelabra, Victoria advances through the shadows across the floor. She stops. The archbishop kneels. Then the tall statesman drops to one knee. Reaching out, he takes her hand and kisses it.

STATESMAN

Long live the Queen.

It is both moving and awe-inspiring as the Courtier and the Prince of the Church bow in deference to this tiny figure in a simple nightdress, with her shimmering hair.

62 INT. HALL. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAWN.

62

Victoria comes out. The Duchess and the others hover. Already it is clear that Victoria's manner has changed.

VICTORIA

I'm going back to bed. I imagine Lord Melbourne will be here quite early. Lehzen, you can see that he has everything he needs if I'm not ready to receive him.

LEHZEN

Of course, Your Roy -

She stops.

LEHZEN

Of course, Your Majesty.

Having enunciated the words, she goes down into a deep curtsey as Victoria walks by. After a moment, so does her mother and finally Lady Flora sinks to the floor. Victoria walks to the stairs. The Duchess stands.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Wait. I'll hold your hand.

VICTORIA

No, thank you, Mama.

Her voice does not brook any argument. She pauses.

VICTORIA

And Lehzen, in the morning could you arrange for my bed to be moved into a room of my own?

DUCHESS OF KENT

Well, there's no great -

VICTORIA

As soon as possible, Lehzen.

LEHZEN

Certainly, Ma'am.

VICTORIA

I thought you'd understand, Mama. I'm Queen. Your work is done.

Watched by the women, she climbs the stairs. Alone.

63 INT. VICTORIA'S DRESSING ROOM. DAY.

63

Victoria, in black, is mouthing words, before a mirror. The young Duchess of Sutherland hands her some lace mittens.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

The Council is assembled, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Thank you, Duchess.

Lehzen, also in black, is arranging her skirt. Victoria takes a deep breath, and nods. The Duchess makes a sign. The doors are opened. In a continuous tracking shot, we follow her down passages, across lobbies, and up a great staircase, until we reach a door. A Chamberlain opens it.

CHAMBERLAIN

Her Majesty the Queen.

64 INT. COUNCIL CHAMBER. KENSINGTON PALACE. DAY.

64

In a crimson room, lined with huge paintings in gilded frames, are many men, old and middle aged, ranged round a table covered in green baize. They are in mourning and they stand as the small figure enters, goes to the throne, bows, and sits. On their feet throughout, the men tower over her. She's nervous but also dignified as she reaches for her speech, placed nearby, coughing gently to clear her throat.

VICTORIA

It is with a sense of reverence and honour that I address you, my Privy Councillors, as your Sovereign and Queen. I mourn sincerely the death of my dear uncle, the King, but I know I may count on you to serve me as loyally as you served him.

She clears her throat again. The men's eyes are brimming.

VICTORIA

I am young but I am willing to learn and I mean to devote my life to the service of my country and my people. I look for your help in this. I know I shall not be disappointed. Thank you.

She finishes and holds out her hand to the nearest man who, understanding what is required, sinks to one knee.

COUNCILLOR

I swear allegiance to my Sovereign Lady, Queen Victoria...

Watching at the far end of the room, Wellington stands with Melbourne, Palmerston and Peel.

PALMERSTON

A welcome change after all those fat, old men.

WELLINGTON

The country's half in love with her already. I know I am.

PEEL

She starts on your watch, Lord Melbourne. Guard her well and keep her safe from trouble.

Hearing this, Melbourne almost winks at Palmerston as the Chamberlain nods. It is his turn. He kneels.

MELBOURNE

I swear allegiance to my dear Sovereign Lady, Queen Victoria...

The young Queen smiles on him, her surrogate father. Wellington observes this with a look to Peel.

65 INT. PASSAGE IN BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY. 65

The door opens. The Queen emerges soberly, with her ladies, and the door is shut with a click. At the noise, Victoria hugs herself with satisfaction and skips off down the passage like a merry child, leaving the others to follow behind her.

66 INT. KING LEOPOLD'S LIBRARY. BRUSSELS. NIGHT. 66

King Leopold is angry. Outside, it is lashing with rain.

ALBERT

Uncle, I am not defying you -

LEOPOLD

When I was born, who'd ever heard of the Coburgs? A little, ducal house in the forest somewhere. Now look! The King of the Belgians is a Coburg! The King of Portugal is a Coburg! The Queen of England's mother is a Coburg! And you are the next piece in the game!

Prince Albert is smiling.

LEOPOLD

What is it?

ALBERT

Nothing, Sir. You reminded me of something Victoria once said.

LEOPOLD

I'm glad she makes you smile. Now go to England and make *her* smile!

ALBERT

I repeat: She hasn't invited me.

STOCKMAR

Your Majesty, if I may...

Leopold glares at the baron but he nods.

STOCKMAR

We have only to be patient. She is testing her wings. She won't wish to clip them quite yet.

LEOPOLD

If she flies free she may get away.

66 CONTINUED:

66

STOCKMAR

Wait 'til she flies through a storm.

This kind of talk is most unsettling to Sir Galahad.

ALBERT

I won't stand by, if Victoria's in danger.

This is most encouraging. Which King Leopold shares with Stockmar, who is discreetly amused.

67 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE COURTYARD. DAY.

67

Buckingham Palace

Wagons and workmen fill up the palace courtyard.

68 EXT. THE GARDENS. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

68

Victoria is walking with Queen Adelaide, both in mourning. Dash capers along in front.

VICTORIA

Will you be comfortable there?

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Of course. And I'll be warm for the first time since I married. Come and inspect when you're next at Windsor.

They sit together. Victoria plays with Dash as Queen Adelaide thinks for a moment, staring at the Palace.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

We'd hardly met when I accepted your uncle. Did you know that? William needed a wife and my father was very glad to catch an English prince for his daughter.

She looks back at her niece.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

It's hard. That moment when you first realise that everyone may bow and curtsy, but you have no say in your own destiny.

VICTORIA

Were you in love with someone else?

QUEEN ADELAIDE

I can't remember.

Really? She recovers and smiles at the warm-hearted girl.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Well, well. I was a good wife. As good as I knew how. And not every marriage has to be a love match.

Victoria gives her a look which shows she cannot agree. They move off again. But her aunt is not finished.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

I'm sad you don't care for poor George.

VICTORIA

I like George.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

But not in *that* way.

Victoria's silence confirms this.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

What about Leopold's candidate?

VICTORIA

That's just it. There's nothing wrong with Albert. Nothing at all...

Her mind wanders slightly, then returns to make the point.

VICTORIA

But he *is* Uncle Leopold's choice. I can't marry the man they *want* me to marry!

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Every suitor will have strings attached.

VICTORIA

Can't I be my own mistress for a while? Haven't I've earned it? And dear Lord M.'s so very kind. I couldn't have a better tutor.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

You may dream of independence but you won't get it. From now on, everyone will push and pull you for their own advantage, Melbourne more than the rest. Just remember you're a queen, not a politician, crossing the public stage for half an hour. And politicians, whatever their creed, resent a monarchy. They go. You stay. Just keep "dear Lord M." in his proper sphere.

Something in this troubles Victoria, which Queen Adelaide notices. In answer to her look, Victoria speaks:

VICTORIA

He's already chosen the new Household.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

What? You mean your ladies? Did you ask him to?

Victoria clearly feels she's on weakening ground.

VICTORIA

I couldn't do it. I don't know anyone. I've been living in an *oubliette*.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Tell me the names of the women. Because if they're all the wives of his own supporters, there'll be trouble when he loses office.

VICTORIA

Then let's hope he never does!

Queen Adelaide's expression is not reassuring.

69 INT. PASSAGE. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

69

Victoria comes in. The Duchess of Sutherland is waiting.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

The Prime Minister is here, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Thank you, Duchess.

She starts to walk down a passage, then stops by a large mirror. As if struck by the gloominess of her black garb, She breaks off a rosebud from a nearby flower arrangement and tucks it into her bosom. Satisfied, she moves on.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

The Duchess of Sutherland says the young leave prison worse than they went in.

70 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

70

This is Victoria's new sitting room. On a table, the doll collection reminds us of the earlier life. Victoria, Dash at her feet, is talking to Melbourne, who (always) stands.

MELBOURNE

Indeed, Ma'am. But there are many places one leaves worse than one went in. I always leave a ball-room worse than I came in. Are there to be no balls in future?

Victoria laughs. But something is troubling her.

VICTORIA

About my ladies-in-waiting...

MELBOURNE

I'll bring the list later today, Ma'am. They've all accepted.

Oh. The Queen is slightly wrong-footed.

VICTORIA

Only my aunt advised me not to be too partisan in my choices...

She laughs gently as if this is a joke. He is very smooth.

MELBOURNE

With respect, Ma'am, I think I understand these things as well as the Queen Dowager.

VICTORIA

I know that, of course.

MELBOURNE

And we want friends around us as we begin our labours, surely? We mustn't find Sir John Conroy sneaking back to the table.

VICTORIA

No...

Melbourne moves matters along. In truth he's good at this.

MELBOURNE

It's very cold. Why haven't they lit the fire?

VICTORIA

It seems fires are laid by the Lord Steward's department but lit by the Lord Chamberlain's. No one knows which footmen should do it. It's not very sensible.

70 CONTINUED: (2)

MELBOURNE

Well, if it's the way things are done, I should leave it alone.

Victoria is troubled by this.

VICTORIA

But we must improve where we can! If I've discovered anything from touring England, it's the poverty and suffering that needs my help.

MELBOURNE

Never do good, Your Majesty. It always leads to scrapes.

VICTORIA

Really Lord Melbourne. That's *not* what is preached from the pulpit.

MELBOURNE

Exactly why I never go to Church, Ma'am. One hears such *extraordinary* things.

As she laughs again, there is a noise outside the door.

DUCHESS OF KENT (V.O.)

I want to go in!

71 INT. PASSAGE. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

71

The Duchess of Kent and Lady Flora are outside the door with a Chamberlain and two footmen.

CHAMBERLAIN

I beg your pardon, Ma'am, but Her Majesty is with the Prime Minister and cannot be disturbed.

DUCHESS OF KENT

That won't apply to her mother!

She steps forward to reach for the door but he intervenes.

CHAMBERLAIN

I'm very sorry, Ma'am.

LADY FLORA

What a splendid example to set before the Nation!

Fuming, they retreat, watched by the servants.

72 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

72

The Queen and Minister are almost guilty.

VICTORIA

You must think me very harsh.

MELBOURNE

Not in the least. The Duchess is a difficult woman.

VICTORIA

Stubborn, self-centred and *always* right!

MELBOURNE

My mother was the same. But at least *she* was intelligent.

Which elicits a guilty smile. She glances despairingly at the letters covering her writing table.

VICTORIA

You'd think she was at the North Pole from the number of letters she writes! Before I can answer one, she writes four more!

Melbourne notices a letter under the desk. He retrieves it, studying the writing which is different from the rest.

VICTORIA

I've made no promise to him.

Victoria is actually embarrassed. Her tone is defensive.

VICTORIA

And there are times when I feel quite alone in the world.

MELBOURNE

Never while I'm here, Your Majesty.

73 INT. ALBERT'S ROOMS. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. DAY.

73

Albert is reading a letter. Stockmar is with him. Significantly, the Baron holds the envelope.

ALBERT

Plenty of praise for Lord Melbourne and not much of anything else.

Albert stands, throwing the letter down.

STOCKMAR

Everything comes to him who waits.

ALBERT

And if nothing comes, what then? You've played with me, Baron, you and my uncle, you've made me your wax doll. You've fashioned and combed and tailored me, all to please one woman. And if she doesn't want me? What's to become of me, then?

STOCKMAR

You are needlessly pessimistic.

ALBERT

Do you wonder at it? I'm nothing but a Geisha and what is worse, a Geisha who's failed to please.

STOCKMAR

You do please her.

ALBERT

Why do you say that?

STOCKMAR

Because, Sir, if you didn't, she would not write you letters. But perhaps you have a point. Perhaps it is time to remind her *why* you please her... You will attend her Coronation as the representative of His Serene Highness, the Duke of Coburg.

ALBERT

But my father is planning to go, himself.

STOCKMAR

Then he can un-plan it, can't he?

74 INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY. DAY.

74

The marble face of Queen Elizabeth I fills the screen. Victoria and Melbourne are being escorted around the Abbey. She is dressed in the lilacs and mauves of half-mourning. They have arrived at the tomb of the great Queen.

MELBOURNE

Queen Elizabeth never married and it didn't spoil things for her.

She looks at him but says nothing. They rejoin the Dean and move on. He brings them to the Coronation Chair.

DEAN

Your Majesty will be familiar with the Coronation Chair and the ancient Stone of Scone.

VICTORIA

Familiar yes but quite in awe.

She steps forward to touch the carvings, to be alone with this seat of her ancestors, then turns back to Melbourne.

VICTORIA

I'm so afraid of disappointing. On the day. After all, I'm not an actress -

MELBOURNE

Nonsense, Ma'am. All monarchs are actors. It is part of the job.

But she cannot laugh. He sees this is important to her.

MELBOURNE

Just be yourself. Your instincts always do you credit.

Comforted, she looks round and catches sight of some rough-looking workmen who have gathered to see her.

DEAN

They are engaged in preparing the Abbey for the Coronation. They asked if they might wait here for a glimpse of Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Of course.

She smiles and waves, thanks the men and bids them good day. They are shabby and poor but they smile back, calling God's blessings on her head. She turns to Melbourne.

VICTORIA

They're wonderfully good natured.

Melbourne says nothing. They walk along through the Abbey.

VICTORIA

I do want to help them, whatever you say. And not just the labouring poor, but the lost, the hungry, the homeless... Whose business is it to see to their welfare? When I try to ask, it seems so chaotic.

MELBOURNE

These things are best left to develop naturally. Interfere and you overturn the cart.

VICTORIA

Prince Albert doesn't agree. He's made a study of the working man's conditions and he's full to the brim with ideas for their improvement.

MELBOURNE

Indeed, Ma'am? How inspiring. He sounds ready to take control at the first opportunity.

He makes no further comment but his words sink in.

75 DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

75

As the Duchess arrives, Conroy hides a flask of whisky. Quickly, he blows into his hand to test his breath.

CONROY

Well?

DUCHESS OF KENT

You may not accompany me to the Proclamation Ceremony. You may not attend the Coronation.

He punches his fist in rage. He is drunk.

CONROY

Damn her!

DUCHESS OF KENT

It isn't her, it's Melbourne. He has her round his finger. If you must curse someone, curse him.

CONROY

Then damn him to hell!

He attempts to recover his composure.

CONROY

Never mind. He too will pass.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Will he? Even if he's voted out, he'll be back.

CONROY

Then we must discredit him.

DUCHESS OF KENT

How?

CONROY

He's a politician. There'll be something, if only his vanity... She's in love with him, you know.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Hardly. She's almost a child.

CONROY

She's a cauldron of emotion with nowhere to put it. She loves him. And if we're careful, it will make her do something foolish.

DUCHESS OF KENT

You mean if we're *not* careful.

CONROY

I mean what I say.

She glances nervously at the portrait over the chimneypiece, of her younger self, her innocent baby daughter in her arms.

76 INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY. DAY.

76

The ceremony we witnessed at the start is over. Victoria is crowned Queen. But this time, we see it from the point of view of Prince Albert. He looks around at the faces we did not know at the start, Peel, Palmerston, Lady Cowper, the Duchess of Sutherland, Wellington and above all, Melbourne. Albert watches as the premier catches the Queen's eye and mouths "Perfect." Albert takes in Victoria's delighted smile in response and ponders what he is up against.

77 EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY. DAY.

77

The heralds sound the trumpets. Albert follows in procession, as the Queen and her ladies arrive at the great doors of the Abbey, to be greeted by cheers from the vast crowd. She climbs into the glass State Coach. Edward Oxford is there, to witness it. Then Albert catches sight of the cold, hard face of Sir John Conroy, jostled by mob. It is plain that Conroy does *not* agree with Melbourne that everything is "perfect."

78 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

78

Victoria, still in her gold dress, has rolled up her sleeves and is giving Dash a bath. She looks up. The Prime Minister is standing in the doorway. He is astonished.

VICTORIA

Don't look so surprised. A Queen has many different duties.

MELBOURNE

It is heartening to know she will not neglect the least of them. Even on Coronation Day.

VICTORIA

I don't think Dash would allow it.

She holds up the soapy dog and kisses it on the nose.

MELBOURNE

Try to rest before the ball.

VICTORIA

I will. Since I firmly intend to dance until dawn.

MELBOURNE

You've plenty of Royal partners to choose from, for once.

But if he is fishing, she does not rise. Instead she towels the dog and lifts it as her partner in a waltz.

79 INT. BALLROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

79

The Coronation Ball is as glamorous as the ceremony. Jewels, uniforms, orders, feathers, an orchestra playing. The dance floor is empty. For the first time since the King's death, Victoria wears colours and the effect is enchanting. She is surrounded by visiting princes. Melbourne hovers, watched by Albert from the edge of the crowd. A Chamberlain bows.

CHAMBERLAIN

If Your Majesty would care to open the ball.

Victoria looks at the men around her. Who will receive the honour? A couple of them look hopeful. So does Melbourne. Then Albert's face appears among the princes. He catches her eye and she nods to him, uncertainly. He bows, gives her his arm and they walk onto the floor. She whispers.

VICTORIA

Are you sure this is wise?

As an answer, he takes her hand and waist. The music starts and he steps off, firmly taking the lead. They spin smoothly round. He is really very good. In fact, they're so good together that nobody wants to join them and spoil it.

VICTORIA

You've paid attention to your teachers, I must grant you.

ALBERT

I might say the same for you.

Other guests now begin to dance and they are more relaxed.

ALBERT

Are you finding it hard?

VICTORIA

It's hard work. But you'll agree there's nothing wrong in that.

ALBERT

As long as it's not too much for you.

VICTORIA

I'm stronger than I look.

ALBERT

Not stronger than you look to *me*.

She quite likes this answer. He never diminishes her.

VICTORIA

Will you go straight home from London?

ALBERT

Via Brussels. Uncle Leopold must first have his report.

VICTORIA

I'll give you a letter for him. Before you leave.

They share a smile at this. Then the music stops.

VICTORIA

Oh dear. A quadrille with the Prince of Prussia next. My poor little toes. I feel sorry for them already.

A tall man, his chest covered in medals and orders, arrives to claim his partner with a click of his heels and a bow. Reluctantly, Albert lets her go. As he walks back across the floor, he feels Melbourne's eyes on him. These two are fully aware they are rivals when it comes to the Queen.

80 EXT. GARDENS OF BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

80

A letter addressed to King Leopold is passed from her hand to his. Albert and Victoria are walking. Lehzen and the Duchess of Sutherland hover on the terrace, watching.

VICTORIA

I hope, for once, I've given him enough detail. You can fill in anything I've missed.

ALBERT

He takes a great interest in you.

VICTORIA

Don't I know it! If you heard the questions he asks by every post! Like a never-ending examination! Lord Melbourne -

She breaks off, embarrassed at her indiscretion.

ALBERT

What about Lord Melbourne?

VICTORIA

Never mind. It doesn't matter... Will I see you again before you go?

ALBERT

I'm afraid not. I have to be in Dover tonight.

VICTORIA

Well... good bye...

She hesitates. He takes her hand. But he holds on to it.

ALBERT

Victoria, I would so much like...

She waits. On the terrace, her ladies have risen. It is time for her next appointment. Albert ends as best he can.

ALBERT

I would like to be useful to you. If there is ever an opportunity.

VICTORIA

I know you would. And one day I may take advantage of your offer.

She looks into his eyes, not wanting her words to hurt him.

VICTORIA

But not yet.

81 INT. KING LEOPOLD'S LIBRARY. BRUSSELS. DAY.

81

Leopold is livid. He is clutching the letter. Albert and Stockmar are with him.

LEOPOLD

Did you read this? Before she gave it to you?

ALBERT

No, Sir.

LEOPOLD

It seems she does not think it appropriate to discuss politics "in our otherwise delightful correspondence!"

STOCKMAR

Which was dictated by Melbourne.

LEOPOLD

Insolent devil!

STOCKMAR

He doesn't see why he should help you.

LEOPOLD

Damn it! I am King of a country that's eight years old! With most of Europe teetering on the brink of revolution! Of course I need help, and it's my niece's duty to give it!

ALBERT

But he guards her like Cerberus. No one else comes near her. Every official, every attendant, has been chosen by him.

STOCKMAR

You won't get past Melbourne.

LEOPOLD

Well then, we must get *him* past Melbourne! We must get him into her bed!

81 CONTINUED:

81

He points at Albert who is extremely uncomfortable.

LEOPOLD

Then we'll see if she still takes
Melbourne's dictation!

Enraged, he tears the letter to shreds. Albert leaves.

82 INT. MELBOURNE'S LIBRARY. NIGHT.

82

The door bursts open. Albert strides in, going directly to Melbourne who looks up, startled. Albert stops in front of him, takes his glove off. And slaps him across the face.

83 INT. ALBERT'S ROOM. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. NIGHT.

83

Albert slaps the shutter of his bedroom window as he stands, looking out into the night. He slaps it again and again.

ERNEST (V.O.)

What are you playing at?

Ernest is in the doorway, looking very tired and not very pleased. Albert cannot put his angry thoughts into words.

ERNEST

If it's all the same to you, can we get
some sleep?

He leaves. Slowly, Albert returns to bed.

84 INT. VICTORIA'S ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

84

ECU on Victoria's neck, as Watson touches it with the stopper of a scent bottle. The Queen is being dressed yet again.

85 INT. DINING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

85

Victoria sits at dinner with a party of about twenty. These include her mother, the Duchess of Kent, seated far away.

VICTORIA

So, Duke, was Paris much changed?

WELLINGTON

Not really, Ma'am. It was as charming and
as dangerous as ever.

VICTORIA

Lord Melbourne says French doctors kill their patients. English ones just let them die.

This is greeted with a respectful laugh.

WELLINGTON

I thought he might be here tonight.

VICTORIA

He's thrown me over for Lady Holland.

She says it smiling but it clearly rankles.

WELLINGTON

I expect Your Majesty will miss him.

VICTORIA

Not too severely. He'll be back tomorrow.

WELLINGTON

No, I meant when he's out of power.

VICTORIA

What?

Her tone begets a tremor of unease. Her mother looks down the table at her. Even the servants seem to freeze. Clearly Wellington had no intention of starting this.

WELLINGTON

Well, only... I don't mean to crow. I just thought it was common knowledge that he's about to lose the vote...

He tails away. Every eye is on the Queen. The great room is in silence. But she is perfectly composed when she speaks.

VICTORIA

Parliamentary democracy is Britain's greatest gift to the world, Duke. Even if sometimes it can be rather trying.

They laugh more than her quip deserves. The danger is over. Victoria turns pleasantly to her other neighbour, without noticing the look of compassion in her mother's eyes.

86 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. NIGHT.

86

Victoria is standing by the window, her face turned away.

LEHZEN (V.O.)

Schatzi?

86 CONTINUED:

86

Victoria glances towards the voice. In the shadows, Lehzen is standing, motionless. She holds a tray with some milk, just as she held the tray with the chocolate, before.

LEHZEN

What is it?

Victoria turns away again, to hide her face. Like a silent, stalking beast, Lehzen glides across the room, waits for a moment, and then slides her arm round the girl. After a moment, Victoria's shoulders start to heave.

LEHZEN

There, there... Never mind...

87 INT. PASSAGE. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. NIGHT.

87

The Duchess silently approaches her daughter's door. She would knock but the sound of crying makes her hesitate.

88 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. NIGHT.

88

Lehzen is holding the glass to Victoria's lips.

LEHZEN

Just a sip... now another...

She glances at the table of dolls and laughs.

LEHZEN

Oh, look. Miss Agatha is playing up again. She's just as naughty as ever!

A snuffling Victoria reaches out to stand the fallen doll.

VICTORIA

Dearest, darling Lehzen, you won't desert me, will you?

LEHZEN

Never, *mein leibe schatzi*. Never.

The Queen is a child once more. As Lehzen intended. Through a mirror, we see Victoria's door gently being shut.

89 INT. PASSAGE. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. NIGHT.

89

The Duchess of Kent is visibly hurt by what she just witnessed. Her role has been usurped.

90 INT. GALLERY. LAEKEN PALACE. BRUSSELS. EVE.

90

King Leopold is with Stockmar. They are amazed.

STOCKMAR

It's true. Every lady-in-waiting was chosen by Melbourne from among his own friends.

LEOPOLD

What does the new Prime Minister say? He won't allow the Queen to spend her days and nights surrounded by his enemies!

STOCKMAR

Naturally, he's asked her to change some of the women. But she's refused.

LEOPOLD

She wants a Royal Household opposed to the Government? It's mad! Can't she see that?

STOCKMAR

Not while Melbourne is pulling her strings.

The King shakes his head at the folly of it.

LEOPOLD

What about Albert?

91 INT. UNIDENTIFIED LOCATION.

91

We are close on Albert's face. He is concentrating.

LEOPOLD (V.O.)

Should he go now? Is it time?

STOCKMAR (V.O.)

Let her first taste unpopularity. Then we'll see what she will take to ease the pain.

Albert and Victoria are playing chess. She picks up a white Knight and starts to remove a black Castle -

MELBOURNE (V.O.)

Are you quite sure, Ma'am?

She looks up, hesitating. Melbourne, Leopold and Stockmar stand by the chimneypiece, watching the game. She pauses, with the Knight in her hand, looking back to Albert.

91 CONTINUED:

91

ALBERT

Make your move. You play better than he does. Trust me.

MELBOURNE

Don't listen, Ma'am. He just doesn't want to lose his Castle.

VICTORIA

But won't he take the Queen?

MELBOURNE

Not if I don't want him to.

She places the Knight on the board and starts to pick up the Castle, when her wrist is seized. She looks up, startled, to find that Albert has become Sir John Conroy, who holds her in a vice-like grip. Her face is filled with terror when...

92 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. NIGHT.

92

Victoria starts awake. Watson is setting a tray of tea things by her bed. And a newspaper. Victoria reads the headline.

NEWSBOY (V.O.)

Constitutional Crisis! Queen flouts Prime Minister!

93 EXT. A LONDON STREET. FLASHBACK.

93

A boy is selling papers, with headlines as loud as he is.

NEWSBOY

"Threat to bring down Tory Government!"

Edward Oxford is buying a newspaper.

94 INT. A WALL IN A ROOM IN LONDON. DAY.

94

Another cartoon is pinned to the wall. An arrogant Victoria crushes an anguished Peel, while leaning on Melbourne's arm.

QUEEN ADELAIDE (V.O.)

You reign by right of Parliament! And you must work with the voters' choice!

VICTORIA (V.O.)

But Lord Melbourne says -

95 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

95

Victoria is with Queen Adelaide, arguing.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Melbourne says what suits his interest!
He's used you to punish his enemies
without thought of the damage to the
Crown! My dear -

She takes Victoria's hand, her tone becoming tender.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

I wish you had an ally to help you in
this.

VICTORIA

I have Lehzen. I have Melbourne. Until
this morning, I thought I had *you!*

But the older woman wants to make her point.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Melbourne is a minister, Lehzen is a
servant. You need an *equal*, to tell you
the truth and help carry the burden. If
it's Albert, well and good, if not, then
find another.

VICTORIA

Which, translated, means you think that
I'm mistaken?

The fact is, she will not bend. Adelaide sighs.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Oh, very well. Have it your own way. Peel
is *right!* Melbourne is *wrong!* Give in!

VICTORIA

I will not!

QUEEN ADELAIDE

You're confusing stubbornness with
strength, my dear. And I warn you: The
people will not like you for it!

Her words are almost drowned in the roar of a mob.

96 INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. DAY.

96

The noise is coming from a rowdy House of Commons. Wellington, Melbourne and Palmerston look down from the Visitors' Gallery. Peel is at the Despatch Box.

PEEL

With sorrow, I will tomorrow inform Her Majesty that I am not qualified to form a Government if I do not enjoy her confidence.

An MP rises on the other side of the house.

WHIG MEMBER

Are we to understand that the mighty Tory Party has been defeated by the frilly petticoats in the Queen's chamber? We must be powerful if even our ladies can frighten Sir Robert Peel!

This provokes guffaws of laughter from his own side.

PEEL

What frightens me is to see the Crown used as a shuttlecock in the game of politics.

WHIG MEMBER

Which apparently Lord Melbourne plays better than you do, Sir.

More roars of laughter.

97 INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. LOBBY. DAY.

97

Wellington and Peel walk past Melbourne and Palmerston who are in a group of their supporters. Melbourne bows slightly.

PEEL

You should be ashamed of yourself. If the Queen has been foolish, she can plead her youth. You're old enough to know better.

PALMERSTON

I hate a bad loser.

PEEL

We are all losers in this. Good day, my lords.

He and Wellington walk on.

97 CONTINUED:

97

PALMERSTON

What a po-faced prig he is.

MELBOURNE

Maybe. But what if he's right?

For the first time, he sees the damage he's done.

98 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

98

Victoria sits at her desk. She strokes Dash, thoughtfully.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND (V.O.)

But might it not help if I tendered my resignation?

The Duchess is standing in front of the Queen.

VICTORIA

No. Thank you, but no.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

Of course Sir Robert asked for more than one new face but -

VICTORIA

Duchess, he asked and I refused. I cannot back down now.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

But with a Tory Mistress of the Robes...?

Wearily, Victoria releases the dog, with a sigh.

VICTORIA

You're kind, but you're too late.
Tonight, the Government resigned. Lord Melbourne is Prime Minister again.

The women stare at each other. This was a *big mistake*.

99 INT. ROSENAU CASTLE. MONTAGE. DAY.

99

Albert is writing when he looks at the clock. With a start, he jumps up, running out of the room, through the castle. Down passages, halls, staircases. At last he reaches the back hall, where a Chamberlain is sorting through letters.

ALBERT

Anything for me, Gubbenholtz?

CHAMBERLAIN

There is, Your Serene Highness, but the Baron always likes -

ALBERT

I'll take it, myself. Thank you.

He removes the envelope from the hesitant servant.

100 EXT. GARDENS. ROSENAU CASTLE. DAY.

100

Albert is reading his letter, watched by Ernest.

ERNEST

She's brought down a government over a handful of ladies?

ALBERT

Apparently.

ERNEST

Then she's a fool.

ALBERT

No. She is not a fool. But she has listened to a fool.

ERNEST

Then she had better change her advisor. Or things will get worse before they get better.

As the brothers look at each other, we hear the rising noise of a murmuring, raging mob.

101 EXT. WATERLOO BARRACKS PARADE GROUND. DAY.

101

An angry crowd, Edward Oxford among them, is outside the barracks. Victoria, Lehzen and the Duchess of Sutherland sit in a *barouche* among the court carriages, watching a regiment of guards. There is another nasty growl from the mob.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

Heavens. It sounds more like France than good old England.

VICTORIA

Be calm, Duchess. It will pass.

LEHZEN

Perhaps we should imitate Sir John Conroy. He seems more amused than alarmed.

Her intent is, of course, to make trouble. They look across to the Duchess of Kent's carriage, where she sits with Conroy and Flora. The latter pair glance at Victoria and snigger together, as if they were enjoying the Queen's discomfort.

VICTORIA

God in Heaven, is there no way to be rid of them?

The question was rhetorical but Lehzen is looking at her.

VICTORIA

What is it?

LEHZEN

I shouldn't say.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

No, you shouldn't.

Victoria is taken aback, but the Duchess tries to explain.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

There's a story doing the rounds, Ma'am. I'm sure we should give it no credence.

VICTORIA

Thank you. Now will you go on, Lehzen.

102 INT. POST CHAISE. SCOTLAND. FLASHBACK.

102

Lady Flora and Conroy are seated next to each other in a rattling, uncomfortable post chaise.

LEHZEN (V.O.)

In August, Lady Flora Hastings came home from Scotland with Sir John Conroy. They were three days on the road, alone in his post chaise.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

I do not envy her.

103 EXT. WATERLOO BARRACKS PARADE GROUND. DAY.

103

LEHZEN

The point is -

She bends to whisper in Victoria's ear.

VICTORIA

What!

Lehzen whispers again. Victoria stares as if she were mad.

VICTORIA
It can't be true!

LEHZEN
Just look at her waist.

The soldiers march past to the regimental band, but the Queen stares through them at the hated faces beyond.

104 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

104

Queen and Minister are with a smug-looking man in black.

SIR JAMES CLARK
But I haven't examined her.

VICTORIA
You must have an opinion.

He hesitates and wriggles coyly.

VICTORIA
Oh, for Heaven's sake!

SIR JAMES CLARK
Very well. Let me just say that I hope she is secretly married.

Victoria pretends shock but of course she is delighted.

VICTORIA
Thank you, Sir James. I appreciate your honesty.

SIR JAMES CLARK
I do not know it for certain, Your Majesty. It is only my opinion.

VICTORIA
Of course.

The interview is over. Clark leaves. After a moment...

VICTORIA
They must be barred from my presence.

MELBOURNE
They?

VICTORIA
Sir John is the father.

104 CONTINUED:

104

MELBOURNE

Of course... But, Ma'am, please make sure there's proof before you act.

VICTORIA

You heard the doctor! Lady Flora will show the proof. For everyone to see!

She is already triumphant. He, by contrast, is worried.

105 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

105

The Duchess is anxious when Lady Flora appears.

DUCHESS OF KENT

There you are.

LADY FLORA

Am I late? I beg your pardon. I shall be dressed in a moment. If you'll excuse me, Ma'am.

DUCHESS OF KENT

There's no hurry... You will not be dining with the Queen this evening.

LADY FLORA

Oh? Have the plans changed?

DUCHESS OF KENT

Yes... That is, not exactly... but I have some news. Some rather disagreeable news.

Lady Flora looks at the Duchess. And waits.

106 INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. PASSAGE. DAY.

106

Footmen and maids are listening outside the Duchess's door. They scramble as first Conroy rounds the corner, then the door bursts open and Lady Flora hurries past without a word. She is in hell. Conroy looks after her and smiles.

107 MONTAGE.

107

Victoria and Albert are writing and reading letters to each other. We cut back and forth so rapidly that it is as if they were conversing, but the changes of scene, inside and out, and the different costumes show that time is passing.

Albert, concerned, is writing in his room at Rosenau.

ALBERT (V.O.)

I worry that your feelings towards your mother may be clouding your judgement.

Victoria is at her desk, Albert's letter in front of her.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Surely even my mother might object to the palace being a house of ill repute!

Albert is out walking, reading as he goes.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Of course views differ on these things. Madame du Barry was a prostitute and yet the King of France found her company congenial. I however should *not*!

Which makes Albert throw back his head and laugh.

Victoria is being dressed by Watson as she reads.

ALBERT (V.O.)

I only worry that, from what you tell me, nothing has been proved against Lady Flora and that is always what people dislike.

Victoria looks up and speaks aloud, startling Watson.

VICTORIA

It *will* be proved!

She reads on.

ALBERT (V.O.)

Could you not wait until it is?

Now Albert is being dressed by his valet. He is also reading.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Now they tell me that Lady Flora means to fight it out in public. Which is too typical and vulgar to be believed.

Victoria is reading the answer from Albert.

ALBERT (V.O.)

It may be vulgar, or typical, my dearest Victoria, but it does not make her guilty.

She half crumples the letter, throwing it down. Then she looks up. Lehzen, as still as ever, stands in the doorway.

VICTORIA

Well?

LEHZEN

There is a swelling, no doubt about it, but no bigger than it was a month ago.

Lehzen sees Albert's letter. It does not please her.

LEHZEN

Do you think it was all a trick to catch us out?

VICTORIA

If it was, then it worked.... Good night.

As Lehzen is about to open the door, she sees an envelope that someone has slid under it. She picks it up.

LEHZEN

From your mother.

Victoria takes it without a word. Lehzen goes. Victoria, watched by Dash, drifts over to the windows with the letter in her hands. We do not see her face as she reads.

DUCHESS OF KENT (V.O.)

My dearest child, You will not let me come to you, and that I may deserve. But however you resent me, however I have failed, I am still, and always, your mother. What troubles you, troubles me. What pleases you, pleases me. I love you, and my only prayer is that, one day, you will understand how much. Good night, *mein leibling*, your own Mama.

The candles give a ghostly quality to the room. Below, angry crowds hover. Victoria sits. Her head falls into her hands. She starts to weep, gently at first, but then with racking sobs, as music swells and continues through the Montage.

Leopold, Stockmar and Albert study a newspaper.

A letter has been printed in it, headed "Grave Injustice." It is signed by Lady Flora Hastings.

The letter, cut out, is being pinned on the clippings wall.

109 CONTINUED:

109

King Leopold is looking at a vicious cartoon of Victoria trampling Lady Flora in the dust. He covers his face as he hands the newspaper to Albert.

The cartoon is being pinned to the wall. Then another. Until we pull back to reveal that it is not on the wall, but in...

Melbourne's hands. He holds a newspaper and stares at yet another vile caricature of Victoria.

110 INT. THE ROYAL BOX. COVENT GARDEN. EVE.

110

The music becomes the score of *I Puritani* and the singing is superb. The Duchess of Sutherland and Lehzen sit behind Victoria and Melbourne, who is watching her. She whispers.

VICTORIA

I've had a letter from King Leopold.

He waits to hear what is coming.

VICTORIA

He proposes another visit by Prince Albert.

MELBOURNE

What have you answered?

VICTORIA

Nothing yet.

And now, at last, the Minister questions his own judgement.

MELBOURNE

Perhaps you should let him come.

She is visibly relieved by this but also defensive.

VICTORIA

If he does come, they should read nothing into it. Neither Prince nor King.

WOMAN

Mrs. Melbourne!

The words are shouted. The auditorium is stunned. Even the singers falter. The woman responsible is in a box opposite.

MELBOURNE

Good God! What are we coming to!

VICTORIA

Who was it? I didn't see.

110 CONTINUED:

110

MELBOURNE
The Duchess of Montrose.

This is amazing. The Queen is being booed by a duchess.

MELBOURNE
That's an end to her career at Court, I
hope.

VICTORIA
If I ban everyone who thinks me wrong,
you and I will be alone in the ballroom.

She glances at his face for a moment.

VICTORIA
And I'm not that sure about you.

She turns her attention back to the stage.

111 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE. 111

Carriages are arriving for an event at the palace but the mob
outside is hostile. Some news is running through the crowd,
making them angry. As usual, Edward Oxford is among them.

112 INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. PASSAGE. EVE. 112

Conroy is grimly excited. He hurries along a passage.

113 INT. BALLROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE. 113

The Queen is holding a "drawing room." Mothers in evening dress
and diamonds, with white Prince of Wales feathers in their hair,
are presenting their debutante daughters. The girls, all in white
dresses and more regulation feathers, wait in a gorgeous gaggle
at one end of the chamber.

VICTORIA
Isn't my mother expected?

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND
She's sent her regrets. Something has
delayed her.

VICTORIA
She doesn't usually miss a chance to grab
at me.

But she nods to the Chamberlain who summons the girls with a
card, brought from each mother in turn by a liveried page.

As he reads the names, the Chamberlain drops the card into a gilded basket on the floor as first mother and then daughter step forward and curtsy to their Monarch.

CHAMBERLAIN

Viscountess Chartley, presenting Miss Mary Doone.

The Queen extends her hand which is taken and kissed. The women rise and pass on. As the litany continues, behind the Queen, the Duchess of Sutherland is amazed to see Conroy hovering in the doorway. She breaks away to go over to him.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

Sir John, what on earth are you doing here?

CONROY

I must speak to the Queen.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

You know that's quite impossible.

He lowers his voice. There is a roar from outside. Unease ripples through the room. During this, the ritual continues.

CHAMBERLAIN

The Countess of Orford presenting Lady Rachel Walpole.

As the two women walk forward, the shouting is growing so loud that they hesitate. Victoria holds her nerve.

VICTORIA

Lady Orford.

This strengthens their resolve. They curtsy, kiss hands and move on. During which, the Duchess has re-joined the Queen.

VICTORIA

How does that man dare to show his face?

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

He brought a message from Your Majesty's mother.

VICTORIA

I don't want to hear it.

CHAMBERLAIN

The Marchioness of Downshire presenting Lady Charlotte Hill.

The women walk forward but the Duchess persists.

113 CONTINUED: (2)

113

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

You must hear it. Lady Flora Hastings is dying.

Victoria turns to her, aghast.

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

It's true. Cancer of the stomach.

Stunned, Victoria turns back and extends her hand like an automaton. The women step forward and curtsy when there is a crash. A brick has been thrown through the ballroom window, showering the debutantes and their bejewelled mothers with shards of broken glass. Amid the screams and panic, as blood spatters onto the white tulle and satin, Victoria looks back at the Duchess with horrible clarity.

VICTORIA

What have I done?

114 INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY. NIGHT.

114

The Queen is alone, kneeling in the middle of the vast abbey. A small gaggle stands in a side aisle watching her. The Duchess of Sutherland, an equerry, and a man who looks like a night watchman. A church official, hastily fastening his cassock, comes hurrying up.

PRELATE

What's happening? Why did no one warn me she was coming?

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

Calm yourself, Reverend. She wants no attention of any kind.

Victoria, raising her eyes heavenward, begs forgiveness.

115 INT. LADY FLORA'S BEDROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

115

The light is dim and the curtains closed. Victoria is in the doorway. The shrunken figure of Lady Flora is on the bed. An older woman standing by her stiffens as Victoria approaches.

LADY FLORA

You remember my mother, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA

Indeed. Lady Hastings.

MARCHIONESS OF HASTINGS

Your Majesty.

115 CONTINUED:

She curtsies slightly, her manner as stiff as a board.

LADY FLORA

Would you leave us, Mama? Just for a moment.

The Marchioness is reluctant but she goes.

VICTORIA

She hates me. And who can blame her?

Since this is clearly true, Flora does not answer.

VICTORIA

I have come to apologise. To say that I was wrong. That I wish what I have done could be undone.

LADY FLORA

But it cannot be undone.

VICTORIA

No.

They stare at each other, Queen and invalid. Then Flora takes a painful breath. She has had her pound of flesh.

LADY FLORA

Well, well... I am not on my deathbed because of your cruelty.

VICTORIA

I wish you wouldn't talk so.

LADY FLORA

Forgive me, Ma'am, but I prefer not to waste my final hours on false hopes.

She studies the Queen, who is truly at a loss.

LADY FLORA

We never liked each other much, you and I.

VICTORIA

We shouldn't -

LADY FLORA

Again, I beg your pardon, Ma'am, but you will allow that honesty is the privilege of the dying.

VICTORIA

Of course.

LADY FLORA

You thought me cold and snobbish and lodged in Sir John Conroy's pocket.

She waits but Victoria says nothing, because this is true. Her silent acceptance seems to please Lady Flora, who nods.

LADY FLORA

I thought you naïve and headstrong and too young for the position you occupy. We were both right in part. But not entirely.

VICTORIA

Recent events would seem to bear out *your* verdict, anyway.

But the dying woman shakes her head.

LADY FLORA

No. You've been foolish, of course. Your devotion to Lord Melbourne and your anger at your mother have corrupted your judgement. But you have also shown the world your strength.

This is difficult for Victoria but she accepts the criticism.

VICTORIA

I think the world would use a different term.

LADY FLORA

Ma'am, you have brought down a Government! You've caused chaos in Parliament and riot in the streets! How many girls of twenty could manage that?

VICTORIA

You shame me with the proof of my folly.

LADY FLORA

Folly, yes, but also *power*. You have real power in you. In you and not just in the Crown. More power than I ever imagined. Leave off these silly games of favouritism or revenge, and *harness it!*

VICTORIA

Will they still let me?

LADY FLORA

Oh, yes. Your subjects may be angry but they have not done with you yet.

(MORE)

115 CONTINUED: (3)

115

LADY FLORA (cont'd)

Believe me, you are at the start of a marvellous adventure. If you're really sorry for the things that you have done -

VICTORIA

I am. Truly.

LADY FLORA

Then let your childish anger die with me. Only turn your thoughts to the work ahead, and I *promise* you will do great things.

She holds out her shrivelled hand and Victoria takes it.

116 INT. A WALL IN A ROOM IN LONDON. DAY.

116

The headline, "LADY FLORA HASTINGS DEAD!" is pinned up.

117 INT. CARRIAGE. DAY.

117

Victoria in sober mood is with Melbourne. There are men and women on the pavement but only the very occasional cheer.

VICTORIA

I am not forgiven yet.

MELBOURNE

Not yet but soon. Just wait for unseasonal weather or the news of an elopement, and all will be forgotten.

She looks at him. Is she waking up at last?

VICTORIA

You don't have a very high opinion of ordinary people, do you, Lord Melbourne?

MELBOURNE

With respect, I have lived much longer than your Majesty.

She does not answer this. Instead, she thinks for a moment.

VICTORIA

I said once I did not understand whose task it was to see to the public welfare.

MELBOURNE

I remember.

VICTORIA

Well, I should like to understand. I want a report on living conditions, on parish benefit, on housing... all of it. And by the end of the month.

Melbourne looks at this young woman, knowing what this means. His child pupil is growing up and he will lose her.

MELBOURNE

Very good, Your Majesty.

118 INT. ALBERT'S ROOMS. ROSENAU CASTLE. COBURG. DAY.

118

Albert is supervising his packing, watched by Ernest.

ERNEST

I shall miss you.

ALBERT

I'll be back.

ERNEST

Only to collect your bags and say goodbye.

ALBERT

You're very confident.

He busies himself with some books.

ERNEST

After what Melbourne and Conroy have done to ruin her? Believe me, she will welcome your proposal like the sun in May.

ALBERT

She won't. For I cannot propose.

ERNEST

Meaning?

ALBERT

She must ask me. I cannot ask her. How absurd is that?

He looks over at his brother who has something to say.

ERNEST

When you get there, don't be a spy or Uncle Leopold's puppet. And never mind the Coburgs. We're a hardy race.

(MORE)

118 CONTINUED:

118

ERNEST (cont'd)

We'll manage. It's your life. Live it.
For yourself and for Victoria.

ALBERT

Our uncle wouldn't thank you for that.

ERNEST

I don't care. I don't love him.

Albert is more touched by this than he can say. Awkwardly, He throws a playful punch at his brother. Ernest returns it. Before they abandon the pretence and hug each other.

119 INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. GALLERY AND STAIRCASE. DAY.

119

Victoria walks with Lehzen down a gallery. Footmen stand at attention. She glances in a looking glass as she goes.

VICTORIA

Should I have worn the blue?

Lehzen is silent. She is not enjoying this.

VICTORIA

Of course, there's no great significance
to his arrival.

Still Lehzen says nothing. They walk on.

LEHZEN

Then you're right not to make any special
show to welcome him.

VICTORIA

Why? Is there something wrong?

She stops at another mirror to stare in critically, then walks on. They arrive at the top of the great staircase where her mother waits among the courtiers and officials.

CHAMBERLAIN

His Serene Highness Prince Albert of Saxe-
Coburg and Gotha.

The Prince is at the foot of the staircase. He wears a travelling costume of dark green coat, with tight, pale, buckskin trousers and high boots. As he climbs the stair, around his legs weave two superb greyhounds. It is almost impossible for a male human to be this handsome...

120 INT. BLUE CLOSET. WINDSOR. DAY.

120

Victoria walks restlessly back and forth in the pretty little room.

She hears a noise in the passage and hastily sits on a sofa, hardly daring to breath. The door opens and Albert, clearly as nervous as she is, enters.

ALBERT

I only just got your note. I was riding.

VICTORIA

I envy you. I've had a morning of papers and boxes... Sit. Please... Here.

He does. They are side by side now. But she is still not sure how to steer the conversation around.

ALBERT

The park is marvellous.

Nor is he.

VICTORIA

I'm so pleased you like it. I do want you to be quite at home...

Is this it? Maybe. He looks at her, waiting. Here goes.

VICTORIA

I think you must be aware why I wished you to come here... Because it would make me happier than anything - too happy, really - if you'd agree to what I wish...

Now, surely, it's acceptable for him to weigh in.

ALBERT

And stay with you?

VICTORIA

And stay with me.

ALBERT

And marry you?

VICTORIA

And marry me.

These last speeches have come out in a kind of shared, gasping, tumbled rush, but they have reached their destination and there is passionate relief as he takes her in his arms and, at last, kisses her properly.

A choir sings as Victoria and Albert stand before the altar, the bride and her ladies in white lace and orange blossom.

121 CONTINUED:

121

They're watched by most of our principal characters. Victoria smiles at Queen Adelaide and ignores her mother which Albert notices. He gives a reassuring smile to the Duchess - which Victoria notices. The Archbishop presides.

ARCHBISHOP

I now pronounce you man and wife.

Victoria blushes with pleasure.

122 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. WINDSOR. NIGHT.

122

Victoria is in bed alone. There is a knock on the door.

VICTORIA

Come in.

The door opens and there is Albert in a dressing gown. He shuts the door behind him. It is a moment of exquisite, sweet awkwardness. He walks to the window, peering out.

ALBERT

I feel more at ease in Windsor. It reminds me of Rosenau.

She looks at him. He is fumbling.

ALBERT

It's much larger, of course.

VICTORIA

I haven't always been so fond of it... I will be now...

He comes and sits on the bed. Gently, he takes her hands.

ALBERT

Alone at last.

They laugh, nervously. Then he becomes serious.

ALBERT

I must tell you that I'll do everything in my power not to disappoint you.

VICTORIA

I know that already.

ALBERT

You can draw on me for help with any task that lies ahead. I want you to.

VICTORIA

Only love me.

ALBERT

I will love you, Victoria. But I will serve you, too. Your work will be my life.

There is something awkward here. Their expectations do not mesh. But she can't deal with it right at this moment.

VICTORIA

Just love me. Now.

She takes his face in her two hands and kisses him. This side of things at least will clearly not be a problem.

123 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

123

Outside the window is the sound of cheering. The Duchess sits at her desk. Conroy stands nearby holding a letter.

CONROY

It's not complicated. It says you have no money.

DUCHESS OF KENT

But that's impossible... Isn't it?

CONROY

Why did you open it? I always deal with the letters from your banker -

There is a shout from the cheering crowd outside.

CONROY

Can't they keep them quiet? Someone should tell them the Queen is at Windsor.

He walks to the window and looks down, suddenly pensive.

CONROY

How changeable they are... They hate you. They love you. They hate you.

DUCHESS OF KENT

They didn't hate her. They punished her. But they never hated her.

She looks at the picture of herself and her lost child.

CONROY

And now she is a bride and back on top. Until the next mistake.

He sighs. When he speaks, his tone is genuinely wondering.

123 CONTINUED:

123

CONROY

What on earth have I done with my life?

He glances at her, almost as if she were a stranger.

CONROY

I had many gifts, you know. As a boy, I was tipped for success.

DUCHESS OF KENT

You have served me faithfully.

He looks at her, this foolish woman. The thought that this is all he has achieved is suddenly preposterous.

CONROY

And what is that?

None of which is exactly reassuring to the Duchess.

124 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. WINDSOR. DAY.

124

Albert is asleep, watched with wonder by Victoria. She reaches over to arrange his hair. He opens his eyes.

VICTORIA

Now I know I am quite married.

ALBERT

And when we're old, and surrounded by our children, we will remember this as the day our lives began.

He strokes her cheek tenderly. But she protests.

VICTORIA

Not too surrounded, please. And not too soon.

ALBERT

Oh? I should warn you now that I am expecting a very large family!

And he seizes her in a tangle of sheets and giggles.

125 INT. PASSAGE. WINDSOR. DAY.

125

Watson is walking down the passage with some linen, when she is surprised by Lehzen, standing motionless in the shadows.

LEHZEN

Have you woken Her Majesty?

WATSON

No, M'm.

LEHZEN

Don't you think you should?

WATSON

No, M'm. Not this morning, I don't.

She walks on, leaving Lehzen seething with jealousy.

126 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. WINDSOR. DAY.

126

Victoria sits on the edge of the bed in her nightdress, as Albert kneels before her, rolling her stockings up her legs.

ALBERT

Let's take a little tour together and visit Scotland. I hear if any part of Britain is like Germany, it's the highlands of Scotland.

VICTORIA

Yes, we must. One day.

ALBERT

No. I mean now.

VICTORIA

Now?

ALBERT

Only for a few weeks. You're a bride. They can't expect you back before that.

VICTORIA

Dearest, I may be a bride but I'm also a queen. I cannot be away more than three days at the most.

This is disappointing. But he doesn't wish to spoil things. Instead, he starts to take her stocking off again.

VICTORIA

What are you doing?

ALBERT

Well, if we've only got three days...

127 EXT. WINDSOR GREAT PARK. DAY.

127

They gallop through the Great Park, and they're an impressive pair, she riding side-saddle in her velvet habit and plumed hat, and Albert in his romantic costume. They rein in.

ALBERT

I've been looking at the suggestions for my household. It worries me that so many are supporters of Lord Melbourne. We mustn't repeat your recent difficulties, and so I thought -

VICTORIA

Forgive me, dearest, but it's decided. They have already accepted the posts.

He is momentarily stunned. After a moment, he recovers.

ALBERT

What about my private secretary? I'll have a say in that, I suppose?

VICTORIA

Lord M. suggests his own secretary, George Anson.

ALBERT

Out of the question.

VICTORIA

And I have agreed. He will of course resign from his present position.

ALBERT

That's a comfort.

Even she can see this interview is not going to plan.

VICTORIA

I know it's hard, my love. But there's bound to be a period of adjustment.

She kicks her heels and rides on. He reins himself in.

128 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

128

The Queen is in bed waiting for Albert to join her. He is talking through the open door to his dressing room.

ALBERT

Victoria, there's something I've been worrying about, that I think we should address right away.

She doesn't answer. He comes in, removing his dressing gown.

ALBERT

We must end the quarrel with your mother. The sooner the better.

He climbs into bed. Her answer, when it comes, is very calm.

VICTORIA

I cannot while Sir John Conroy remains in her household.

ALBERT

Then we'll get rid of him.

She seems to study his face, which he takes for agreement.

ALBERT

We're not autocrats. We can't issue Ukases and lop off heads. Our power lies in our example, and we can hardly present ourselves to the British as an ideal family if we're torn apart by Civil War.

For a moment, she is silent and when she does speak, her tone is completely altered. She gets out of bed.

VICTORIA

They warned me of this.

ALBERT

Of what?

VICTORIA

Let me make one thing clear. I will not be governed. I will not be managed. *I will not be controlled!*

He is shocked at her furious outburst. Who is this woman?

ALBERT

My love -

VICTORIA

No! For eighteen years I could not breath, I could not dress or bathe or walk down stairs without permission! I'm not a child and I will *never* live that way again!

ALBERT

I don't want a child! Quite the reverse!

VICTORIA

Then do not lecture me on politics or my mother or anything else! I may be Queen of England. But you are *not* the King!

Her rage is spent. There is a deep pool of silence.

ALBERT

I see.

VICTORIA

I don't mean to sound unkind. But it is better that we understand each other from the start.

ALBERT

Much better, I agree. But there's one thing I don't quite grasp about the whole arrangement.

She looks over enquiringly.

ALBERT

Exactly what am I supposed to do?

It is a good question.

129 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

129

Victoria works at her Red Boxes. Lehzen and the Duchess of Sutherland embroider. Albert strokes Dash and plays himself at chess. Victoria stops, biting the end of her pen.

LEHZEN

What is it?

The Queen shakes her head, laying the document aside.

VICTORIA

Just a question for Lord M.

ALBERT

Could I help?

VICTORIA

It'll keep.

She does not see how dismissive this is, in front of the others. In exasperation, he stands and goes to the window.

ALBERT

Why are these windows so dirty? I can hardly see out.

VICTORIA

Same as the fires, I'm afraid. The departments can't agree to wash inside and out at the same time.

LEHZEN

The inside panes are cleaned by the Lord Chamberlain's office and the outside by the Clerk of the Works.

ALBERT

Then why not do something about it?

DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND

I quite agree.

LEHZEN

Because it's the way things are done here, and it's worked very well for many years.

ALBERT

Meanwhile, we live in a filthy, freezing house.

LEHZEN

We live as guests of the Queen.

It is a reprimand which he does not take kindly.

ALBERT

Thank you, Baroness, for reminding me I am a guest here.

With a curt bow, he leaves. Victoria stands to follow.

LEHZEN

Let him go. It always takes time to get used to a new uniform.

At this, the Duchess looks at Lehzen with real dislike, which Victoria sees. And it makes her think.

130 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE GARDENS. DAY.

130

Victoria is walking with Queen Adelaide.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

How's Albert settling in?

VICTORIA

Why? What have you heard?

Naturally, this is an answer in itself. Out it comes.

VICTORIA

I simply cannot please him. Nothing's ever right. All I hear is a litany of my mistakes from dawn to dusk. He says Lord Melbourne controls me. He says Lehzen controls me. It seems everyone controls me except him! And he never stops complaining he has nothing to do, but Lehzen says -

She breaks off.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

What does Lehzen say?

VICTORIA

Only that most men would love a life of leisure and he should be grateful... She doesn't mean to be unkind.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Oh no. Anyone could see that.

Her tone makes Victoria look at her.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

A man who does no work becomes ridiculous. And a poor man with a rich wife must work twice as hard as the rest. Besides, you've chosen well. I congratulate you.

VICTORIA

My uncle chose well. But you didn't take on half his duties.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

You don't know that. You don't know what I did.

VICTORIA

So you think I should give in?

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Only because this is your last hurdle, my dear. Clear it, and you will have finished your apprenticeship.

Victoria does not look convinced. Adelaide sighs.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

But while we're waiting, there must be something he can do without offending you.

VICTORIA

He wants to reorganise the way the palaces are run.

QUEEN ADELAIDE

Then let him. And do please tell dear Lehzen I said so.

At this, the Queen looks genuinely relieved.

131 INT. AN ANTE-ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

131

A rowdy dinner party is in progress when the Prince walks in. The drunken officers lumber to their feet.

ALBERT

What is this exactly?

OFFICER

The Red Room Dinner, Sir. For the officers guarding the King.

ALBERT

The King? Which King?

The men look slightly sheepish.

OFFICER

King George III, Sir.

ALBERT

And how often do we provide this most historic dinner? For a king who has been dead for twenty years?

OFFICER

Er... every night, Sir.

The Prince absorbs this information.

132 INT. DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

132

It is early morning. Albert enters, disturbing the footmen and maids at work there. One man is removing the unused candles from a large chandelier which has been lowered.

132 CONTINUED:

132

ALBERT

What are you doing? Those candles are brand new.

FOOTMAN

We change the candles every day, Sir.

The man is silent. The other servants look nervous as the Prince digests another massive waste. He makes a note.

133 INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. PASSAGE. DAY.

133

Albert is walking along when he sees Lehzen laughing with a man who holds a newspaper. They fold it when they see him.

ALBERT

Something amusing?

LEHZEN

Nothing, Your Royal Highness.

ALBERT

I should like to see it.

The man hands it over. There is a cartoon of Albert counting scrubbing brushes: "One brush per housemaid. Any more and Parliament will be told!" He hands it back.

LEHZEN

People always hate change.

ALBERT

Do they, Baroness? Well, you should know.

He goes, followed by the cold and jealous eyes of Lehzen.

134 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

134

Albert's face is as still as stone. So is Victoria's. The tension is vibrant. Is this another battle's aftermath?

ALBERT

You're sure?

She nods and, in a wider shot, Albert walks forward and kneels. Pulling her to him, he kisses her stomach.

135 INT. THE WHITE DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

135

The fires are burning brightly. Albert and Victoria are with the Duchess of Kent, Lehzen and Melbourne.

ALBERT

I'm happy to say that it seems, God willing, there will be an addition to our family next year.

Naturally, this occasions much clapping and good cheer.

MELBOURNE

Congratulations, Ma'am.

The Duchess rushes forward, overwhelmed with delight.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Mein lieblich! You'll say at once if there's anything you need!

She embraces Victoria who pulls back slightly.

VICTORIA

Don't crush me, Mama. There's no hurry. We have plenty of time.

DUCHESS OF KENT

Of course.

She is flattened and draws back from the group, looking round for her reticule. Albert comes over to her.

ALBERT

You're not going already?

DUCHESS OF KENT

I can never leave too early for my daughter... Anyway, I've a lot on my mind.

ALBERT

Something I could help with?

DUCHESS OF KENT

Just boring things.

ALBERT

Boring things are what sons-in-law are for.

But she kisses him and goes. Melbourne has been listening.

MELBOURNE

And there you have your opening. For your next task. If you'll take my advice -

Albert cuts him off with a pleasant, easy smile.

ALBERT

Lord Melbourne, forgive me but you seem to have confused me with a member of your club. I am not your drinking companion or your whist partner, I am the husband of your Sovereign. As such, I will make my own decisions and I neither seek nor invite your advice. Good evening.

Albert walks off, leaving Melbourne speechless.

136 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

136

Open ledgers, dense with figures, fill the screen.

CONROY (V.O.)

I cannot believe I'm being subjected to this interrogation!

Albert sits at a table piled high with account books, watched by a furious Conroy and the Duchess.

ALBERT

You're not being subjected to anything, Sir John. You have been in charge of the Duchess's finances for many years. Indeed, you have made public statements testifying to their health.

CONROY

I have!

DUCHESS OF KENT

And I am so grateful...

She glances at her implacable son-in-law. She regrets this now and she would beg for mercy but Conroy spurns her glances. Perhaps because he has nothing more to lose.

ALBERT

All I am asking is that you will be so good as to tell us exactly where the money has gone?

Conroy's flushed, furious face tells us precisely where the money has gone.

137 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

137

A coach is loaded up. Sir John Conroy storms out and climbs in. The coachman cracks his whip. The vehicle rumbles off.

137 CONTINUED:

137

From a window, the Duchess looks down as her former favourite is swept out of her life.

138 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

138

Albert, Victoria and Lehzen watch the same departure.

ALBERT

I almost pity him.

Victoria shakes her head.

VICTORIA

Don't ask too much of me.

ALBERT

His failure was of his own making and no one is more bitter than the man who has ruined himself.

VICTORIA

I thought he'd put up more of a fight.

ALBERT

I made it clear the terms would not improve with age.

VICTORIA

Has Mama accepted it?

ALBERT

I'm glad to hear you ask. Pay her a visit. See for yourself. Now if you excuse me, I have something to do before dinner.

He's gone. Throughout this, Lehzen has been sewing in loud silence. She sighs. At last, Victoria looks at her.

LEHZEN

You see how he takes credit? "I made it clear." He is the master here and you're to thank for it.

She shrugs gently, leaving Victoria with her thoughts.

139 INT. THE WHITE DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

139

At a reception, Albert is with Wellington and Sir Robert Peel. Victoria and Melbourne are watching them.

VICTORIA

I could never feel easy with a man who shuffles so. He's like a trader from a travelling fair.

MELBOURNE

Peel's manner may not be much but he has substance. And I won't stay in forever.

VICTORIA

We turned things round the last time.

MELBOURNE

The cost was too high to bear repeating.

Albert comes over with Peel and Wellington.

ALBERT

I've been boring Sir Robert and the Duke with my ideas for encouraging the Arts.

VICTORIA

Does Sir Robert care for such frivolity?

Victoria's tone is soft. But hostile.

PEEL

Oh yes, Ma'am. I hope my Government would support the Prince's plans wholeheartedly.

VICTORIA

Your Government? What Government is this?

PEEL

I only meant... if I should be fortunate enough to form a government, Ma'am...

ALBERT

And when he does, there'll be no repeat of the old problem.

VICTORIA

I hope you're right.

ALBERT

I know I am. Some of your ladies have already agreed to resign. And Sir Robert will ask for no more change than that.

Victoria looks at him and all of them. In silence.

ALBERT

Which is good of him.

The Queen knows better than to make a scene here and now.

VICTORIA

Very good. Thank you, Sir Robert.

The men are relieved. Victoria smiles pleasantly.

140 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. NIGHT.

140

The Queen is incandescent with anger.

VICTORIA

*How dare you speak in that way to me
before them! How dare you talk across me
as if I were a child!*

ALBERT

I did no such thing!

VICTORIA

Oh no? You've sorted this! You've sorted
that! You and Sir Robert! You and the
Duke! *And all without reference to me!*

ALBERT

I thought you'd be pleased.

VICTORIA

I'll tell you what you thought! You
thought I was a woman, to be petted and
passed over and ignored!

ALBERT

Would it were so simple! Then we might
avoid more scandals of your making!

VICTORIA

What? Have you lost your mind?

But now he is getting angry. And his anger matches hers.

ALBERT

Do you wonder at it? Less than three
years on the Throne and you and your
precious Melbourne have pushed the
Monarchy to the brink of an abyss!

VICTORIA

I've told you before and I tell you
again: You are my husband here and that
is all!

ALBERT

It's quite enough, believe me!

VICTORIA

I will not have my role usurped! I wear the Crown and if there are mistakes, they will be *my* mistakes! And no one else will make them! *No one! Not even you!*

He starts to answer. Then he stops.

ALBERT

I'm leaving. Before you excite yourself and harm the child.

VICTORIA

If I do, it will be *your fault!* Just like the baby! Which, by the way, I did not want! Or at any rate, *not yet!*

She pauses, panting with the success of her onslaught.

VICTORIA

And you will go when I dismiss you!

He is shocked by her cruelty. He walks towards the door.

ALBERT

We'll talk tomorrow when you are calmer... and feeling more *grown up!*

VICTORIA

You may not go! I order you to stay here in this room!

He continues and puts his hand on the doorknob.

VICTORIA

I am your Queen and I am telling you to stay!

She is screaming at him. He turns in the doorway.

ALBERT

Goodnight, Victoria.

He is gone and she is left enraged, humiliated, bewildered.

141 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

141

There is an open carriage waiting, complete with equerries and a couple of mounted guards.

142 INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. HALL. DAY. 142

The Queen and Prince Albert are ready for a drive. But not speaking. At last she addresses him.

VICTORIA

There's no necessity for you to accompany me.

ALBERT

I've said I'll come with you. So I will come with you.

They say nothing more and walk on, together but apart.

143 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY. 143

In silence they climb into the carriage and sit. The guards swap a quick look. The coachman starts and they move off.

144 EXT. CONSTITUTION HILL. DAY. 144

The carriage bowls up the leafy road. Riders in the park gallop over to salute them. Pedestrians wave. It is a happy scene save only for the iciness between the Royal couple. Then Albert notices a figure pushing through the people. Edward Oxford. In his hurry to reach the kerb, he knocks a child over and the cries of both baby and mother sound a discordant note. Victoria notices the fallen boy but not the man who reaches into his bag. He brings the gun out. Albert seizes his wife's arm. She is outraged at being pulled backwards against the seat and struggles to free herself.

VICTORIA

What!

145 INT. DUCHESS'S DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY. 145

The Duchess of Kent suddenly looks up from her sewing. An extreme close-up shows the hairs on her arm standing up.

146 EXT. CONSTITUTION HILL. DAY. 146

The gun is out. Two women see it and scream as Albert jerks Victoria down into the carriage and flings himself across her, hiding her beneath his own back. The shot cracks out. And another. There is a groan from Albert, to mix with the shouts of anguish and rage from the crowd as men throw themselves upon Oxford, pinning him to the ground.

146 CONTINUED:

146

The riders, men and women, angry and excited, form a tangled guard around the vehicle as the coachman whips up the horses and the whole pack gallops headlong for home.

147 INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. HALL. DAY.

147

Albert is half dragged, half carried through the hall at a racing speed, followed by Victoria. Lehzen hurries in.

LEHZEN

What's happened? What has he done this time?

VICTORIA

Not now, Lehzen!

She runs on, leaving the governess alone among the running servants and officers as panic streams through the Palace.

148 EXT. A BACK STREET IN THE EAST END. NIGHT.

148

Police officers run down the pavement in this, the other side of Victoria's London. Drunks and prostitutes and ragged, dirty children jostle for pavement space.

149 INT. EDWARD OXFORD'S ROOM. NIGHT.

149

The door is forced open and the two officers enter, followed by a harassed landlady.

LANDLADY

What're you doing with Mr Oxford's things? What's happened? What's he done?

The officers stop in shock. The walls are lined with print. Every cartoon, every headline we have seen pinned up, is on this wall. But they are harshly desecrated with savage marks in red ink, slashing across Victoria's face.

150 INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

150

Albert is in bed. He looks dazed and tired and his arm is bandaged. Sir James Clark stands back.

SIR JAMES CLARK

There's nothing more I can do here. The Prince needs rest.

The others file out with him, leaving only Victoria. She sits on the bed, with her husband's hand in hers. He looks at her.

VICTORIA

My courageous darling.

ALBERT

I did what any man would do.

VICTORIA

What only a brave man would do. You saved my life.

ALBERT

I wonder. I don't think he was a very good shot. Thank heaven.

They laugh a little with relief. Then she grows serious.

VICTORIA

You saved my life and risked your own when I've been the beastliest, most horrid wife imaginable.

ALBERT

That's true. But then I had two very good reasons.

VICTORIA

What were they, pray?

ALBERT

First, because I am replaceable and you are not.

VICTORIA

You're not replaceable to me.

ALBERT

I seem to remember some woman telling me that you are Queen but I am not the King.

VICTORIA

She didn't know what she was talking about. Go on. What was your second reason?

ALBERT

Because you're the only wife I've got or ever will have. You're my whole existence. And I will love you until my last breath.

Looking at her, his eyes fill with tears of pure love, as do hers. She leans down to kiss him with all her heart.

151 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. GARDENS. DAY.

151

Victoria is with Melbourne in the gardens.

MELBOURNE

We'll lose the vote tonight. I felt you should hear it from me... How is the Prince?

VICTORIA

Much better. We're told the man was mad. Is that reassuring? I can't decide.

MELBOURNE

May I be honest?

She stops, querying him with a look.

MELBOURNE

Even a politician can be honest sometimes. And I will not lead another government.

She nods, taking his arm as they begin to walk.

MELBOURNE

The years spent in Your Majesty's company will not be repeated. They have meant a good deal to me. More perhaps than anything else in my long career.

He is nearly crying.

MELBOURNE

My guidance may not always have been faultless. But I speak now not as a minister but as a true friend to Your Majesty.

She answers him quite gently.

VICTORIA

I know.

MELBOURNE

The Prince is a good man. A better man than any of us knew.

VICTORIA

I wish he saw your qualities as clearly.

MELBOURNE

Well. I am old, and my vanity is not the issue here. He is able. Let him share your work. Take him into your confidence.

VICTORIA

You know King Leopold plans to use him to influence our policy?

Her tone is quite matter-of-fact. He is amazed.

MELBOURNE

I know that. So does the Foreign Office. But nobody thinks you do.

Victoria shrugs slightly.

VICTORIA

Every suitor would have come with strings attached.

MELBOURNE

Trust him. He is more than that.

She knows he is right. Because she is wiser than she was.

MELBOURNE

One other thing, Ma'am. Which you will not want to hear...

VICTORIA

Try me. I am older now and more equipped for truth.

They walk along by the lake, the old Statesman at the end of his career, the young Queen at the start of hers.

152 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

152

Another carriage has been loaded up with luggage for a long journey. This one holds the dour figure of Baroness Lehzen. She looks grimly ahead as the vehicle pulls away.

153 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. DAY.

153

Victoria is watching this second departure with Albert whose arm is in a sling. She quickly wipes a tear away.

VICTORIA

I needed her so much as a child.

ALBERT

And soon you'll have a child who needs you.

He holds her to him. Then a doubt strikes.

ALBERT

When you said you never wanted -

She stops his mouth with her finger.

VICTORIA

You've been listening to that mad woman, again.

She kisses him tenderly. Then he looks around, puzzled.

VICTORIA

What is it?

ALBERT

Something's different.

He looks round. The shelf with the Dutch dolls is empty.

ALBERT

The dolls have gone...

So they both know the old life is over.

ALBERT

But there's something else. And I can't for the moment see what.

VICTORIA

Well, your desk has been brought in. Is that it?

It's true. Their desks sit side by side. She smiles in confirmation of what he thinks it means.

VICTORIA

You don't mind, do you? It'll be so much easier to do the boxes or see the ministers, if your papers are here as well as mine.

Albert thinks his heart will explode.

Leopold is with Stockmar. He is holding a letter.

LEOPOLD

I can't understand it! He writes that he would prefer not to talk politics in his letters but only to discuss news of the family! He's copying her!

Stockmar shakes his head.

STOCKMAR

I don't think so. No, they sound alike because they think alike.

LEOPOLD

What are you saying, Baron?

STOCKMAR

Just that the birds have flown.

LEOPOLD

You mean we've failed? After all that work and planning!

STOCKMAR

On the contrary, Your Majesty...

The wizened, enigmatic, old Baron is smiling for once.

STOCKMAR

I would say that the whole affair has been a very great success.

The opening scene music theme starts to play as we hear:

VICTORIA (V.O.)

I'll be the judge of that!

155 INT. VICTORIA'S SITTING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

155

A nurse is at the doorway, carrying a baby. Albert goes to her and takes his daughter in his arms. He walks to Victoria, across the room, and gives her the child to hold.

ALBERT

I repeat, if you trust me in this matter, you will thank me.

Albert kisses his wife and heads for the door.

VICTORIA

I doubt it.

He smiles as the Duchess of Kent walks in. With his back to Victoria, Albert gives the Duchess a wink and leaves.

155 CONTINUED:

155

The Duchess stands enjoying the tableau of her daughter holding the child. The Queen looks up. After a moment, she speaks.

VICTORIA

Don't stand by the door, Mama. Come in.

And we leave this mother and daughter, neither quite so apart, nor really together, as we read:

It took Prince Albert ten more years before Victoria and her mother were finally, and happily, at peace.

156 INT. PASSAGE. BUCKINGHAM PALACE. EVE.

156

Victoria and Albert are walking together, arm in arm, down a passage. They are in evening dress but they are talking and laughing. Then they come to a pair of doors, stop, straighten up and nod to the footmen to open them.

157 INT. DRAWING ROOM. BUCKINGHAM, PALACE. EVE.

157

In that fraction of a second, they have turned themselves into the Sovereign and her Consort. The company bows and curtsies as they hold their positions in the doorway, calm, dignified, the perfect Royal couple. They could be posing for a Winterhalter portrait. We freeze frame.

Victoria and Albert reigned together for twenty years, and together they would champion reform in every part of their expanding empire. In 1851, the Prince's concept of a Great Exhibition of international achievement, established Britain as the leading industrial nation in the world. After Albert's death in 1861, on Victoria's orders, his rooms were kept unchanged and his clothes laid out each day, for the rest of her life. Their nine children all married and among their descendants are the Royal Families of Britain, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Russia, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia.

The camera reframes the two shot as it pulls in on Victoria's face... that is slowly and magically ageing...

The Queen survived her husband to be the longest reigning Sovereign in British history. To date.

Our Victoria's face has now morphed into a portrait of the real Queen, towards the end of her long life.

THE END