

BRIDGERTON

"Capital R Rake"

Episode #201

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Based on
The Bridgerton Series by Julia Quinn

WHITE SHOOTING SCRIPT - 3/25/21
BLUE REVISIONS - 3/28/21
PINK REVISIONS - 4/7/21
YELLOW REVISIONS - 4/9/21
GREEN REVISIONS - 4/23/21
DOUBLE WHITE REVISIONS - 4/29/21
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0A EXT. BRIDGERTON HOUSE - MORNING 0A

It's A BEAUTIFUL MORNING here in 1814 Mayfair! And our family's home is as grand and handsome as ever -- as a CARRIAGE stops in front of the rose-covered gate. Inside, sits a thoughtful DAPHNE BRIDGERTON, looking up at the house, seemingly steeling herself before climbing out--

1 INT. BRIDGERTON HOUSE/OUTSIDE ELOISE'S ROOM - MORNING 1

ON a purposeful Daphne, striding down the corridor when she sees her HUDDLED FAMILY (VIOLET, ANTHONY, BENEDICT, FRANCESCA, GREGORY and HYACINTH) whispering fiercely in front of a CLOSED DOOR.

DAPHNE
Is *this* the plan?

VIOLET
Daphne, thank goodness you are here.

ANTHONY
She requested *time*.

DAPHNE
We do not have time. Stand back, all of you.

BENEDICT
I mean no offense, sister, but I believe *you* are the last person she would like to see.

DAPHNE
What is that supposed to mean?

HYACINTH
Are we sure she is even in there?

FRANCESCA
Of course she is in there.

GREGORY
Where else would she be?

BENEDICT
Climbed from her window, escaped through the chimney--

VIOLET
--*Quiet*, she may hear you.

DAPHNE
You do realize I left my child and husband at home for this.

(CONTINUED)

HYACINTH

How *is* little Augie? Can I return
to Hastings House with you--

ANTHONY

--I told everyone this would
happen. And now we are to be
late for *the Queen*.

And THE BRIDGERTONS begin to ARGUE, when--

FRANCESCA

--I hear something!

Everyone stills. Sure enough, there's a RUSTLING SOUND
at Eloise's door. A beat, and then it stops. An impatient
Anthony sighs, goes for the door handle--

VIOLET

Anthony--

(CONTINUED)

Only THE DOOR OPENS -- and MAID after MAID begin to file out. Each one looking more plaintive than the next. And just as Daphne and Violet exchange a worried look -- no sooner does ELOISE finally appear. Feathered, bejeweled, and all done up. Also, miserable. As she takes in their smiling faces.

ELOISE

If one of you utters a *single* word...

(then)

Let us get this over with.

Off our Bridgertons, we SMASH TO:

2 INT. ST. JAMES'S PALACE/PARLOR - MORNING

2

CLOSE ON a sullen-looking young lady's MINIATURE.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Too somber.

ANOTHER young lady, smiling very hard.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Too eager.

ANOTHER young lady, more mature at 22.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Too late.

Reveal QUEEN CHARLOTTE, sitting in this magnificent room with LADY DANBURY, along with her LADIES and BRIMSLEY.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Is this truly the best we can do this year?

BRIMSLEY

Lady Goring delayed her daughter's debut so she could perfect her skills on the harp. At just two and twenty, the miss is considered a prodigy.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

I have heard children just out of leading strings play concertos by Handel on the harp. It is not difficult. *It is a harp.*

(then)

What happened, Lady Danbury?

LADY DANBURY

What happened is that you seem to have set very high standards last season, Your Majesty.

(CONTINUED)

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Why, yes. Yes, I did.

3 INT. BRIDGERTON CARRIAGE/EXT. LONDON - MORNING

3

An anxious Eloise SWEATS profusely as Violet dabs at her brow with a cloth and Hyacinth flutters a FAN, all while Francesca adjusts the carriage's curtains for shade. But none of it seems to be working. As Daphne takes in her sweltering sister:

DAPHNE

Just remember to remain composed.
And control your emotions.

ELOISE

Is death an emotion?

DAPHNE

Her Majesty does not take kindly to any hint of hysterics. I found a small smile worked best to appear open and approachable, but not too eager. Now let us see it.

ELOISE

No.

HYACINTH

(re: Eloise's sweating)
She is practically melting.

FRANCESCA

Allow me.

Francesca takes hold of H's fan and starts to fan Eloise. As Daphne shoots a look to Violet, who nods back:

VIOLET

And your *curtsy*, dearest. Tell your sister how you managed such balance...

DAPHNE

(to Eloise)
Simply locate a stationary object and keep your eyes set. I used a painting nearby. We practiced it. Several times.
(trying for upbeat)
You have natural gifts, Eloise--

ELOISE

--Do not patronize me. AND GIVE ME THAT!

And she RIPS the fan from Francesca's hand, starting to furiously fan herself. Off a beleaguered Eloise Bridgerton...

4 INT. ANTHONY'S CARRIAGE/EXT. LONDON - MORNING 4

On a silent Anthony, looking out at the passing scenery. Across from him sit Benedict and Gregory. Anthony suddenly seems to remember something:

ANTHONY

Gregory. I have decided to replace your Latin tutor.

GREGORY

But I like Mister Allen. He can be quite funny.

Benedict leans in, playful.

BENEDICT

This is called *distraction*, little brother. The Viscount's task of finding a bride this season will undoubtedly require it.

ANTHONY

I am more focused now than I have ever been, I assure you. And my task cannot be exceptionally difficult. Hastings did it, after all. How hard can it be?

BENEDICT

Spoken with such *feeling*, too.

ANTHONY

I do not need *feeling*. What I need is what I have and that is a *list*. Tolerable. Dutiful. Suitable enough hips for childbearing *and* at least half a brain. That last part is not so much a requirement but a *preference*, in fact.

(then, to Gregory)

Mister Allen is not there to entertain you. He will be replaced by Sunday.

And as Benedict trades a look with Gregory, we're off a stoic Anthony, returning to the passing scenery outside...

5 INT. ST. JAMES'S PALACE/HALLWAY - MORNING 5

Back with Queen Charlotte and Lady Danbury, now sashaying down the corridor.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

I yearn for someone *fresh*. Someone *unexpected*, to turn this season on its head.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

That is what we need. There is no room for indifference. Apathy is a blight the monarchy simply cannot endure.

LADY DANBURY

Of course, Your Majesty. But remember, a young lady cannot be a diamond until you *anoint* her as such. So... *If* for any reason you do not find one amongst the candidates today--

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

--Do you think she will return?

She pauses.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

We have heard nary a peep from Lady Whistledown since last season ended. Perhaps the writer came to her senses. Perhaps she realized taking on *her Queen* was a bad idea and she will never publish again.

LADY DANBURY

It is a convincing theory, ma'am.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Or, she simply left for the country as the rest of us did in the off-season. *Bored* by the lack of any real gossip. You do know what that would make her then? *One of us*.

6 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - MORNING

6

PENELOPE, sitting in her usual window seat, BOOK in hand, peers down at the square below. *Looking* for someone? Nearby, PRUDENCE and PHILIPPA bicker as LADY FEATHERINGTON tries to calm her nerves with tea being poured by MRS VARLEY. Everyone wears sad mourning colors.

PRUDENCE

Could we not have appealed to The Queen, mama? After having mourned dear papa for so very long, perhaps Her Majesty might extend a kindness and allow us to be presented *again*.

PHILIPPA

I see no need to go through all of that again when I myself am already betrothed to Mister Finch--

(CONTINUED)

PRUDENCE

--*Mister Finch* may very well still change his mind.

VARLEY

(quietly, to Lady F)

Particularly when he discovers there is still *no dowry*--

LADY FEATHERINGTON

--*Hush*. The new Lord Featherington shall see to that. When he finally decides to show his miserly face.

She sips her tea, disgusted.

LADY FEATHERINGTON (CONT'D)

This tea tastes of nothing.

VARLEY

We have started to reuse the leaves, ma'am. Not as if we have a choice...

Lady F lets out an exasperated sigh, before:

LADY FEATHERINGTON

I believe Prudence is right. We have sufficiently paid our respects to your dear papa -- it is time we re-entered society, and without a mourning color in sight.

(then)

Even for you, Penelope... How many times must I warn you to be wary of that window? Do you *wish* to appear like a befreckled beggar spending all day in the sun?

PENELOPE

Of course not, mama. My apologies.

And Pen shifts, ever so slightly, before happily returning her focus to outside that window--

7 INT. ST. JAMES'S PALACE/PRESENTATION ROOM - MORNING 7

With our Queen on her throne, and SOCIETY MEMBERS on both sides of that aisle.

LORD-IN-WAITING (O.S.)

Miss Cordelia Patridge...

And the doors open, revealing a wide-eyed MISS PATRIDGE and her eager MAMA. As we begin to QUICKLY SMASH from LADY TO LADY, all standing behind those parting doors:

(CONTINUED)

LORD-IN-WAITING (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The Lady Abigail Evans...
(doors)
...Mary Ann Hallewell...
(doors)
...Miss Margaret Goring...

Harp virtuoso MISS GORING and LADY GORING smile big. As the Queen lets out an exasperated sigh and Lady Danbury watches from the sidelines, seemingly entertained by all of this...

8 INT. ST. JAMES'S PALACE/OUTSIDE PRESENTATION CHAMBER - MORNING 8

Violet adjusts Eloise's feathers, taking a moment to look her anxious daughter in the eye. She takes her face in her hands. Reassuring and warm.

ELOISE
It is not too late. You can say I collapsed. I got something unmentionable on my gown. All of the feathers affected my senses -- *anything* mama, to get me out of doing this.

VIOLET
My darling girl. No matter what, you will always be a diamond to me.

ELOISE
...If Penelope were here...

9 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - MORNING 9

As Penelope keeps staring out of that window. *Waiting... Waiting...*

10 INT. ST. JAMES'S PALACE/PRESENTATION ROOM - MORNING 10

The doors open, revealing Eloise and Violet. We clock THE BRIDGERTONS in the crowd: Daphne offering her sister an encouraging nod. Anthony shifting, a bit nervous for what's about to go down. At the end of the aisle, our Queen tilts her head to the side, appraising Eloise from afar. BACK TO:

11 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - MORNING 11

Penelope leans forward, peering through that window, and that's when.... SHE SEES IT. And so do we -- down in the square, it's our DELIVERY BOY!

PENELOPE
It is here.

(CONTINUED)

She turns toward her family -- but they pay her no mind, continuing to talk amongst themselves--

12 INT. ST. JAMES'S PALACE/PRESENTATION ROOM - MORNING 12

Eloise closes her eyes. Takes a breath. And just as she's about to step forward and head down that aisle-- DOORS behind The Queen are suddenly thrown open! A ROYAL FOOTMAN enters and goes over to whisper in Brimsley's ear--

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

What is the meaning of--

And that's when she sees what Brimsley is now being handed: *Lady Whistledown*. And so, too, does our crowd -- as WHISPERS abound! The Queen looks around, and can't help but smile. 'Cause this was... *unexpected*, to say the least. She rises--

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I have seen enough.

BRIMSLEY

But, Your Majesty, there are still--

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

--*I have seen enough*.

And with that, she snatches the paper from his hand and heads away with it. Eloise watches from the end of the aisle, a smile starting to form too, because... SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO DO THIS AFTER ALL!

ELOISE

Does this mean I can go?

VIOLET

I do not know what this means.

But Eloise ain't waiting around -- she's OFF. Just as we ANGLE ON the Bridgertons, now in the increasingly animated crowd -- as MORE COPIES OF WHISTLEDOWN are being distributed. Daphne has to laugh, watching as everyone digs in. She leans into Anthony, beside her.

DAPHNE

Truly, I cannot say I will long for any of this. Best of luck, brother. You will certainly need it this season.

And as we move off of Daphne to push in on a darkening Anthony, taking in the spectacle, we hear it:

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Dearest gentle reader...

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13 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - MORNING 13

As Penelope watches Delivery Boy in the square...

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
...Did you miss me?

We're off Pen, smiling big, when we have our...

BRIDGERTON TITLES.

14 EXT. MAYFAIR - DAY 14

It's all SEE AND BE SEEN out here -- as OUR FASHIONABLE
TON collects its most familiar publication from DELIVERY
BOYS.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
As the members of our esteemed
ton lazily sojourned in their
rustic retreats, this author was
doing but one thing...

A trendy LADY EATON marvels--

LADY EATON
I KNEW she would return.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
Honing my skills.

A swaggy LORD FIFE sighs--

LORD FIFE
Increased her price too, I see.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
Or should I say, *hatching my plans?*

CRESSIDA COWPER boasts--

CRESSIDA
Is she truly *that* good a writer?

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
No, even better...

15 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/PENELOPE'S ROOM - NIGHT 15
(FLASHBACK)

CLOSE on PAPER and QUILL. A HAND scribbling out those
former words.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
I was *sharpening my knives.*

Reveal Penelope, as we realize we're seeing her ply her
trade out-of-time with the rest of our sequence.

(CONTINUED)

She smiles.

(CONTINUED)

PENELOPE/LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
For all of you.

And as Pen, happy with this word choice, goes to dip her knife/quill back into that ink...

16 INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**) 16

Penelope inconspicuously mills against the wall as about A DOZEN OR SO LORDS and LADIES (Lady Featherington, Prudence and Philippa included) mingle and sip their punch at this smallish soiree. We catch SNIPPETS OF CONVERSATIONS:

JUDGY MAMA
How do you think she does it?

LADY COWPER
Certainly not by herself. How could she?

We hang with Penelope -- nearing a window where, outside, A CARRIAGE DRIVER holds up his lantern and flashes it. A *signal*. As Pen stealthily slips out of the room, unnoticed--

17 INT. PENELOPE'S CARRIAGE - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**) 17

As Penelope removes a FOLDED MANUSCRIPT PAGE from the bust of her dress, and then lifts the seat to reveal a QUILL and SPECIFICALLY-COLORED CLOAK. We MATCH CUT TO:

18 INT. PRINTING PRESS - NIGHT (**FLASHBACK**) 18

SOMEONE wearing said cloak, standing in front of MISTER HARRIS (a gruff, no-nonsense printer).

HARRIS
Eighteen? We agreed on twenty.

SOMEONE
(in a *shockingly*
authentic Irish
accent)
My mistress changed her mind.

Reverse to reveal that this someone is Penelope -- now dressed as A MAID. As she continues, perfect Irish accent and all:

PENELOPE
You're new to this arrangement, so I'll say this only once. What my mistress wants, she gets. And for whatever reason, that would be you at the moment. That doesn't make you special, Mister Harris. Printers in this town are ten-a-penny.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

But there's only one Lady Whistledown, and she can just as easily move her business elsewhere. So it's eighteen, not a penny more. And the delivery boys need a wage increase. They're the ones running around town, while you get to sit here on your lazy arse.

And Harris just nods, slack-jawed.

HARRIS

Yes, ma'am.

PENELOPE

Then my mistress thanks you for your services.

Off a badass Pen, handing over her manuscript with a smile...

19 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/PENELOPE'S ROOM - NIGHT 19
(FLASHBACK)

QUICK POPS as Penelope closes her bedroom door behind her. Drags a chair under the handle. And proceeds to move a table out of the way in order to LIFT A FLOORBOARD on the ground.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Questions abound as to this author's identity and means. Seeking those answers shall prove fruitless, indeed.

And now we see what's hidden beneath that floorboard: A treasure trove of BOOKS. She takes one out and opens it: IT'S HOLLOW, with COINS inside. ALL OF THESE BOOKS have coins inside. The Whistledown riches! Off Pen, a prideful look on her face--

20 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - MORNING 20

Back in the present, with Penelope rising from her window seat as A FOOTMAN delivers the latest Whistledown to her all-too-eager mother and sisters.

PENELOPE

I am off to the market with my maid, mama. I have just a tiny bit of pin money left and...

And Lady F just kind of waves her invisible child away...

(CONTINUED)

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

There is, of course, another
unknown identity at present.
Though this one you *will* be able
to unearth...

21 INT. ST. JAMES'S PALACE/PARLOR - MORNING 21

Queen Charlotte and Lady Danbury sip tea after the aborted
presentation.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

I speak of the season's diamond,
where ever she may be. *Your move,*
Your Majesty.

The Queen lowers her copy of Whistledown with a faint
smile.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Well the writer did manage to
make the morning somewhat
memorable, I will give her that.
But she must know I would be hard-
pressed to find even a paste jewel
amongst that horrid parade of
milksoop debutantes, let alone a
diamond.

LADY DANBURY

It is a shame, Your Majesty.

Lady D sips her tea and then casually adds:

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

Oh. I almost forgot, Lady Mary
Sharma wrote to me. She is
returning to London for the season.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

To beg forgiveness for her previous
poor judgement, I should hope?

LADY DANBURY

I have no doubt, Your Majesty.
But she brings with her *two*
daughters, both unwed. Rather
intriguing, do you not think?

The Queen nods, nonchalant. *Sure.*

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

I have offered them my home for
the season. I will of course be
making their introductions.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

(then)

How odd I forgot to make mention
of it. Completely slipped my
mind.

(CONTINUED)

And we're off Lady D, planting ideas, inception-style...

22 INT. BRIDGERTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - DAY

22

Benedict sketches as Violet and Hyacinth eat casually. Across the room, Francesca plays pianoforte while Eloise "practices" her steps with Gregory, and an exasperated-looking DANCE MASTER (50s, sour little man) looks on.

DANCE MASTER

One and two, one and two...

HYACINTH

I do not think she is very good.

BENEDICT

I believe she can hear you.

ELOISE

(from across the
room)

I CAN HEAR YOU.

GREGORY

Ow! Watch my feet!

ELOISE

Might we be done?

As Benedict and Hyacinth snicker.

VIOLET

If you are to catch The Queen's eye after this morning's *interruption*, then you must be perfection...

ELOISE

I believe it was the *interruption* that was *perfection*.

BENEDICT

Shocking that Eloise Bridgerton was not named the season's diamond after all, was it not?

And he shoots Eloise a mocking look as a perturbed Anthony enters.

ANTHONY

Was anyone else aware that dear Colin has apparently decided to add *Albania* or some such place to his itinerary as he gads about the world?

(CONTINUED)

ELOISE
(begrudgingly
dancing)
No. But how happy for him that
he can simply *decide* to do that.

VIOLET
Joining us for tea, Anthony?

ANTHONY
I am afraid I must pass. Too
many calls on my funds today.
Now that the season has started,
I shall need to fill your coffers
at the modiste, and oversee the
hiring of a few extra staff, and
your ring, when you have the
chance, I shall need it. The
fields by Ferryhallow -- I was
thinking we might hold off on
leasing them this year due to the
hard frost--

VIOLET
--I beg your pardon?

ANTHONY
The frost hardens the soil, saps
it of nutrients.

VIOLET
That is very well -- but you
requested my ring?

ANTHONY
Father's betrothal ring.

BENEDICT
Did someone catch your eye at the
presentation, brother?

HYACINTH
I thought all of the young ladies
looked beautiful.

ANTHONY
Not particularly. And all of the
young ladies looked the same.
Like young ladies.
(to Violet)
I should simply like to be prepared
when the opportunity presents
itself.

VIOLET
The *opportunity*...

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

I have already compiled an index of the season's eligible misses and have arranged interviews.

And now everyone STOPS what they're doing. *He did what?*
Violet forces a smile.

VIOLET

Interviews? Dearest, I shall be more than happy to give you my ring when you find someone with whom you are very much in love. Besides, it is in safe keeping at Aubrey Hall.

ANTHONY

Very well.

As Anthony crams food in his mouth and begins to go, a worried Violet turns to Benedict.

VIOLET

See that he is quite well.

BENEDICT

Me?

ANTHONY

I am not in need of coddling.
(then)
I assure you all. Everything is in order.

And as Anthony goes to check his pocket-watch, that TICK-TICK-TICKING launches us into a SEQUENCE:

23 EXT. MAYFAIR/INT. ANTHONY'S CARRIAGE - DAY 23

HOOVES GALLOP along the road, as we find Anthony, pulling out A LIST. *Miss Cordelia Patridge*, apparently, at the top...

24 EXT. ROTTEN ROW - DAY 24

Anthony and Miss Patridge promenade. Lady Patridge behind.

ANTHONY

Do you look forward to being a mother?

MISS PATRIDGE

Oh very much. I am quite close with my brothers and sisters. I love children.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

And what number do you have in
mind?

(CONTINUED)

MISS PATRIDGE
Of children? Four. Or, five?
No, perhaps six?

ANTHONY
Rather indecisive, yes?

25 EXT. MAYFAIR/INT. ANTHONY'S CARRIAGE - DAY 25

As Anthony crosses Miss Patridge's name off of his list--

26 INT. GUNTER'S - DAY 26

Anthony sits over ice cream with Lady Abigail. Her EDGY MAMA in earshot.

LADY ABIGAIL
Three children is what I have
always wanted, my lord.

ANTHONY
And how will you raise them?

LADY ABIGAIL
With love and affection, certainly.

ANTHONY
And what if, say, one of your
daughters had a penchant for
overspending? How would you deal
with that?

And a thrown Lady Abigail looks over to her mama for help.
But she doesn't quite know how to answer either.

EDGY MAMA
I, I suppose, um...

27 EXT. MAYFAIR/INT. ANTHONY'S CARRIAGE - DAY 27

As Anthony crosses Lady Abigail's name off of his list--

28 INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY 28

Anthony, starting to grow weary, eyes Miss Goring as she
comes to a grand finish on her HARP. Lady Goring claps.

MISS GORING
The harp is a wonderful instrument,
my lord. Teaching one patience,
strength, and an appreciation for
beauty, of course.

ANTHONY
But do you read?

MISS GORING
...Books?

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29 EXT. MAYFAIR/INT. ANTHONY'S CARRIAGE - DAY 29

As Anthony crosses Miss Goring's name off of his list--

30 INT. ANTHONY'S APARTMENT/STUDY - NIGHT 30

Anthony enters purposefully, trailed by his valet NELSON (50s).

ANTHONY

How difficult is it to find a decent Latin tutor these days? I will not have Gregory falling behind anymore than he already is. And we must secure a new lady's maid for Eloise, now that she is out. Ensure she is even more strong-willed than the last. What are those?

Nelson hands over the DOCUMENTS he's been carrying.

NELSON

Accounts requiring your signature, my lord.

31 INT. BROTHEL - DAWN 31

Anthony EXHALES as he rolls off a COURTESAN. He stands, naked, fishing in his pocket for some coins. The dead in his eyes deepening as things start speeding up:

32 EXT. ROTTEN ROW - DAY 32

Promenading with Miss Hallewell, mama in tow.

MISS HALLEWELL

I am fluent in French. Italian. Latin.

ANTHONY

And your Greek?

33 INT. GUNTER'S - DAY 33

Ice cream with MISS EATON, and the encouraging Lady Eaton.

MISS EATON

I ride. I paint. I sing. I dance. I can divide *and* multiply. I even construct my own hats--

34 INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT 34

Dancing with MISS CLIFTON -- who's presently stepping ALL OVER his toes.

(CONTINUED)

MISS CLIFTON
 Apologies, my lord. I much prefer
 a quadrille.

35 EXT. MAYFAIR/INT. ANTHONY'S CARRIAGE - DAY 35

Buh-bye, Misses Hallelwell, Eaton, Clifton--

36 INT. ANTHONY'S APARTMENT/STUDY - NIGHT 36

The scratchy sound of Anthony's pen SIGNING paperwork. As we INTERCUT QUICK POPS -- Anthony's routine jumbling into a cacophony of sound: POCKET-WATCH TICKS, A PEN SCRATCHES OUT A NAME, A LEDGER SIGNED, A WOMAN'S QUICK MOAN, THE JANGLE OF COINS, ad infinitum, then FINALLY -- Anthony finishes signing the stack of documents before him. He sighs, relieved, until:

NELSON
 Five and twenty more, my lord.

Nelson places more documents in front of him. Off Anthony, the weight of the world on his shoulders, we END SEQUENCE.

37 INT. BROTHEL - DAWN 37

A JANGLING OF COINS, as Anthony fishes out some money. Leaving it next to another COURTESAN, who's fast asleep in bed, before he heads out...

38 EXT. HYDE PARK - DAWN 38

A numb-looking Anthony's on his horse. He's vacant. Just going through these motions. And he's deep in his ennui until -- A HORSE suddenly BOLTS past him -- *startling him out of his daze*. He partially glimpses the rider -- hair tumbling loose from her hooded cloak. Wait, is that A WOMAN? Riding ASTRIDE?

ANTHONY
 Woah there!

But the mystery rider isn't looking back. And so a concerned Anthony spurs his horse into action and TAKES OFF AFTER HER. DUCKING tree branches, VEERING around the bend, CHASING hard--

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
 Fear not. I shall stop him!

But that only seems to make our mystery rider lean forward, spurring her horse to gallop that much faster -- RACING ahead. Anthony's confused -- until he wonders: *is this a challenge?* And so he bears down, speeding after her. Hooves THUNDER as the two horses bolt across a picturesque field, the sun just rising over the mists now. And he's almost caught up to her, until-- A hedgerow looms up ahead!

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Careful now!

Anthony watches -- is she going to stop?? And they're just about there, when the female rider JUMPS the hedge, soaring over the obstacle and landing easily -- as Anthony YANKS on his reins, pulling up his horse at the last minute. He pauses, breathless and... a bit invigorated. *Who the hell was that?* And we get our answer when we catch up to our mystery rider -- now pulling her horse up and turning around to reveal this is KATHANI "KATE" SHARMA (26, a certain confidence that belies her age). She peers back toward the hedgerow, only Anthony's fallen out-of-sight. And off a satisfied yet equally invigorated Kate, spurring her horse on, and trotting away...

39 EXT. HYDE PARK/WOODS - DAWN

39

As Kate hurries her horse underneath this canopy of trees, looking behind her to make sure she's now by herself. And just as she seemingly gets back to enjoying the quiet--

ANTHONY (O.S.)

Enjoying your victory lap?

Kate looks up. *Him.* Emerging from around a tree just ahead. Startled, she quickly looks for an escape.

KATE

(to herself, in
Hindi)

Baap re.

ANTHONY

You will not be afforded such an ample head start this time, I assure you...

And now he's close enough to really see her. She forces a smile.

KATE

Apologies, sir, I... Did not mean to cause anyone concern.

ANTHONY

I shall escort you back to town.

KATE

I do not need an escort.

ANTHONY

You already have one, then? Does your maid know you are riding astride?

KATE

I... Have no maid.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

Ah, then you are married.

That assumption seems to wipe the fake smile from Kate's face. Anthony clocks it.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Forgive me, then you are lost--

KATE

--*I am not lost either.*

And she's irritated now. Because, these *questions...* Still, she breathes.

KATE (CONT'D)

I am on my way back to Mayfair. It is just ahead.

ANTHONY

Mayfair? Well, then--

KATE

--I appreciate your attention, sir. But I assure you I am perfectly safe. So perhaps we can pretend that this encounter never took place. You allow me to go my way. And you go yours.

He holds her gaze.

ANTHONY

You worry about being seen.

KATE

(a mutter)
I worry about meeting strange men in parks at dawn who fail to leave me alone with all of their *questions.*

ANTHONY

Your secret is safe with me. I shall not tell a soul.

KATE

How grateful I am.

ANTHONY

Losing races to strange women in such parks at dawn... I can only imagine the questions *I* would have to answer.

And we see that elicit the *tiniest* of smiles from Kate. Anthony *is* rather charming.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

...Is that what that was? A race?

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

Was it not?

KATE

Does one not need actual
competition for a race?

ANTHONY

You could say that if we had
decided on the finish line
together, but alas -- we made no
such agreement.

A beat.

KATE

I see you are not one for losing.

ANTHONY

I shall have you know... That in
the *rare* instances it occurs, I
have no difficulty in admitting
when I have either lost, or am in
the wrong. Though I am afraid
the same cannot be said for you.

KATE

I beg your--

ANTHONY

--Mayfair is not just ahead. It
is the other way entirely.

(then)

Not lost, you said?

And Kate slows. A begrudging nod, until she suddenly
spots a pair of RIDERS on the path ahead.

KATE

Good day, sir.

She wheels her horse around. Anthony's startled--

ANTHONY

We have not yet been introduced.

KATE

I am afraid that is not possible.
Not when I have a victory lap to
enjoy.

And with a small smile, she goes. Off Anthony, also
cracking a smile, for what's probably the first time in a
long time, as he watches her gallop away...

39A EXT. DANBURY HOUSE - MORNING

39A

As the morning sun makes this crown jewel of Park Lane shine...

40 INT. DANBURY HOUSE/MORNING ROOM - MORNING

40

A lovely pianoforte melody floats through the air -- before we FIND Lady Danbury at the keys.

(CONTINUED)

Lost in her beautiful playing. She finishes, pleased, and a FOOTMAN enters.

DANBURY FOOTMAN
Your guests are in the drawing room, my lady.

LADY DANBURY
And they already keep such good time.

And as she smiles excitedly, we CUT TO:

41 INT. DANBURY HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - MORNING 41

As MARY SHARMA (40s, nervous and fidgety) whispers with her daughter, EDWINA (18, buzzing with gleeful energy and wonder):

MARY
Well what do you mean she was not in her room?

EDWINA
I went to find her after awakening, but she was not there--

LADY DANBURY (O.S.)
--Lady Mary!

They turn to find a beaming Lady Danbury, entering.

MARY
Lady Danbury! Oh, how delightful it is to see you!

LADY DANBURY
And you! After all of these years. You look well.

And Mary just nods, quickly offering up:

MARY
Allow me to introduce to you my youngest, Miss Edwina Sharma.

Edwina curtsies prettily.

EDWINA
A true pleasure, Lady Danbury. I am so grateful for your hospitality. Your home... It is magnificent.

LADY DANBURY
Consider it yours for the season. Though I was expecting... Another?

(CONTINUED)

MARY
Yes. My eldest. Kate.

LADY DANBURY
Kate. Yes.

And there's an awkward beat of silence.

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)
Well she did get off the ship
with you last night, did she not--

KATE (O.S.)
Apologies!

They turn to see Kate hurrying in -- a bit ruffled, a bit
smudged from her ride, too. But she's trying her best to
cover.

EDWINA
Kate!

MARY
There you are, dearest.

KATE
(all smiles)
I do hope I did not keep you
waiting long. The gardens here
are so lovely. After such a
lengthy journey, I found that I
wanted some freshness and morning
air -- but I am here now.

And Kate exchanges a furtive glance with Edwina, who
motions at the bit of mud on Kate's hem. Kate shifts,
trying to obscure it, as Lady Danbury just eyes her.

MARY
My eldest, Lady Danbury. Miss
Kate Sharma.

LADY DANBURY
(nodding back)
Well. Now that we have all
arrived...

KATE
Almost.

LADY DANBURY
I beg your pardon?

KATE
We have *almost* all arrived...
There is also Newton. Is he still
upstairs?

(CONTINUED)

And off Lady D's curious expression -- *who the fuck is
Newton* -- we SMASH TO:

42 INT. DANBURY HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - MORNING

42

CLOSE on NEWTON (who happens to be a fat corgi) now sitting in Kate's lap. A distracted Lady D eyes the dog, as Mary and Edwina sip their tea.

EDWINA

Mama tells us that you host the first ball of every season, Lady Danbury.

LADY DANBURY

Yes. I have appropriated a conservatory for this year's festivities.

KATE

Did you hear that, Edwina?

EDWINA

Well, that sounds delightful.

MARY

It will make for a most spectacular entrance to society indeed. I cannot tell you how eager the young ladies are for the upcoming season.

LADY DANBURY

As am I. I would have ensured their presentation to Her Majesty The Queen, but I thought it wise for me to examine their deportment *prior* to their first engagement. Her Majesty is most discerning, you understand.

Mary blanches, suddenly uncomfortable.

MARY

So Her Majesty will be in attendance then. At the ball.

And Kate's eyes also flash to Lady D, who offers Mary a nod.

LADY DANBURY

There is no reason for concern, Lady Mary. You will be with *me*, after all.

MARY

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY

(to the girls)

Now. I have made all of the
arrangements. The pianoforte is
tuned. Instructors, hired. Dance
lessons begin at noon.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

Followed by a short but
comprehensive visit from a lovely
French tutor I have secured.
Well, stand up. Both of you.

Kate and Edwina stand. Newton squirms in Kate's arms.

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

(re: the dog)
Could you...

KATE

Oh, of course.

And she hands Newton to Mary. Lady D appraises.

LADY DANBURY

Exceptional posture. Beautiful
smiles.

MARY

Yes, they are quite--

LADY DANBURY

--Of course the age of the elder
miss may raise concern. Any
suitable man will require some
persuading, whether we like it or
not -- as she will already be
considered an old maid at the
mature age of...

KATE

Six and twenty, ma'am. But it
should truly be of *no concern* as I
assure you that I am not here to
find a husband for *myself*. I am
only here for my sister -- who,
indeed, stands quite tall and
smiles rather *exquisitely*. Even
more so when she speaks French, I
always think.

Kate nods to Edwina.

EDWINA

(in perfect French)
*I have been studying French since
I was ten years old, Lady Danbury.
And I am most excited to share my
language skills with you and anyone
else who wishes to hear them.*

Lady Danbury's impressed, if not a little surprised.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

She is also accomplished in both
Latin and Greek -- in addition to
Marathi and Hindustani, of course.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATE (CONT'D)

She not only plays the sitar and maruli but pianoforte, too. And as for her dancing, well, it is quite remarkable if I do say so myself and, I do say so, considering it was *I* who taught my sister the cotillion, the quadrille, *and* the waltz. Self-taught, naturally. But, as I said, quite remarkable nonetheless.

Kate beams proudly. Lady D wants to be thrilled. She really does. But with this little know-it-all right here? Mary shifts, clocking Lady D's reaction.

MARY

Kate feels quite passionately about her sister's prospects this season.

KATE

(to Lady D)

I do hope you did not go to too much trouble. Finding all of those instructors.

LADY DANBURY

...Not at all.

KATE

But we were hoping for your assistance with our wardrobe? I would like to be certain my sister is only seen in the latest of fashions.

LADY DANBURY

I have seen to that. You will find new dresses in your rooms.

KATE

What foresight, Lady Danbury! My mama did not err in her description of you. A woman of such grace and kindness. I am sure we have much to learn from you. Such as the preparation of this most *excellent* tea.

And she flashes a smile. Lady D returns one, if not a bit tepid. Because Kate's just patronizing now. Mary jumps in again:

MARY

Kate, dear.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARY (CONT'D)

Might Newton require a walk?
Before he makes his mess all over
these fine carpets?

KATE

Indeed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATE (CONT'D)

Delighted to make your
acquaintance, Lady Danbury. My
sister and I do look forward to
your sponsorship this season!

(CONTINUED)

She takes hold of Newton, as well as her sister's hand, and heads out.

EDWINA
(hushed, to Kate)
Where ever did you go this morning--

KATE
--Shh, shh, it does not matter!

Off a nonplussed Lady Danbury, watching them head out...

43 EXT. MARKET - DAY 43

As Penelope and Eloise peruse the various stalls, their MAIDS nearby.

ELOISE
Daphne provided me a list of *recommendations*. For a successful season. *Private advice* regarding the top ten ways in which to entrap a man. I am telling you, Pen, the season has barely begun and already I feel touched in the head.

And Pen has to laugh, paying for a new QUILL at a stand--

ELOISE (CONT'D)
Another quill? You do get through them at an extraordinary rate.

PENELOPE
I have been busy with my correspondence.

ELOISE
To the new heir? Is he here yet?

PENELOPE
No. I only mean, *Colin* has been keeping me informed of his adventures in Greece.

ELOISE
In fairness I have stopped reading his letters. He rambles, does he not?

PENELOPE
He certainly is no Lady Whistledown...

She smiles, feeling herself.

(CONTINUED)

ELOISE

No. But then again Colin has in fact *been* somewhere, unlike her.

(CONTINUED)

Pen tries to hold her face together but she did NOT expect to hear Whistledown shade like that from Eloise.

PENELOPE

I thought you revered Whistledown. Did her arrival not save you from your presentation to The Queen?

ELOISE

I was delighted by the diversion, to be sure. But I sat with her paper all morning -- in truth, all she does is repeat what she hears.

PENELOPE

Someone must report the gossip. And does she not have a way with words?

ELOISE

Yes but what is she *saying* with those words? Truly, I did not mind Whistledown's silence the last ten months, as it finally gave me time to read a few articles of substance.

(clearing her throat)

"My own sex, I hope, will excuse me if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces."
Wollstonecraft.

PENELOPE

Rather... haughty.

ELOISE

Imagine if Whistledown wrote like this, instead of simply turning our eye toward every newly-minted debutante. Perhaps then we might find our respite from the tedious sequence of tea parties and balls. I rather think that the only reason Lady Whistledown writes about such things is because *she* is not an active participant in them.

PENELOPE

Everyone has their theory, I suppose.

And we're off Eloise's frustration, and Penelope's secret smile...

43A EXT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE - DAY TO NIGHT TRANSITION

43A

Still gaudy as ever, even at night...

44 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/GIRLS' DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 44

Prudence and Philippa stand in the mirror, not exactly happy with their outfits, as Varley attempts to sew another butterfly onto Pru's dress. Penelope sits nearby, reading.

PHILIPPA

But it is the same dress I wore to the Montagu Ball last year.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Nonsense. Varley was able to alter the stitching just *here*, you see?

PRUDENCE

Ow!

Varley seems to have pricked her with her sewing needle.

VARLEY

Well it does not help if you continue to shift about!

PRUDENCE

Mama. People are going to remember.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Well then that would make you *memorable*, would it not?

(then)

Everyone is well aware of our sad condition. Ever since your father's death, we have been but a grieving family of pitiable mourners. No one will be cruel enough to ask any questions.

Varley, now finished with Pru's mending, turns to Lady F.

VARLEY

Would you like me to prepare some potatoes for the ladies downstairs, ma'am?

PRUDENCE

Potatoes? Again?

PHILIPPA

Why are we always eating potatoes?

VARLEY

(a little too loud)
Because these days I am the housekeeper, lady's maid, scullery maid *AND* cook.

(CONTINUED)

And a concerned Penelope looks up from her book.

PENELOPE

Have all of the staff truly
departed, mama?

VARLEY

Though I *am* quite good at boiling
the veg.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Thank you, Mrs Varley. Potatoes
would be lovely.

(CONTINUED)

PRUDENCE

A season with no new dresses *nor* servants. Are we to empty our own chamberpots, too?

PHILIPPA

Mama, I cannot do that--

LADY FEATHERINGTON

--Calm yourselves. As I have told you, once the new Lord Featherington arrives, we will be provided for.

PRUDENCE

Well where is he?? Why is he taking so long??

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Because he wishes to make us suffer.

A beat, as Lady Featherington sighs.

LADY FEATHERINGTON (CONT'D)

I did not wish to burden you young ladies, but -- well our estate has been left in some *disrepair* ever since your father... The new Lord Featherington is off somewhere *delighting* in our misfortune because the man is as cruel as can be. I hear he cast his only son out to the Americas for daring to question his word. I tremble to think where he will send the rest of us if he has a mind. Cornwall, perhaps.

PRUDENCE

Cornwall!

PHILIPPA

I suppose you may always visit Mister Finch and me.

PENELOPE

If there is nary a penny for new dresses or staff there is certainly none for your dowry, sister.

And Penelope eyes her mom like, *tell me I'm wrong.*

PHILIPPA

He shall prevent me from marrying?

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Of course not.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LADY FEATHERINGTON (CONT'D)

The man may be an old, bitter curmudgeon, but he is a gentleman, and he will *keep* a gentleman's agreement. Which is why we must waste no time finding matches for the lot of you. Unless you are all betrothed by the time our cousin arrives to claim the Featherington estate, we shall be at *his mercy*, and then heaven help us all!

VARLEY

We could always sell the silverware. The dinner service should fetch a handsome price--

And a stressed AF Lady F scoffs and goes. Off Penelope, processing the apparent dire straights her family is in...

45 INT. DANBURY HOUSE/KATE AND EDWINA'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 45

As Kate assesses TWO BEAUTIFUL DRESSES. She takes one in her hands, holding it up against her body in front of the mirror, and grows pensive. A beat, before Edwina enters.

EDWINA

Are you thinking of wearing that one? It is quite beautiful.

Kate immediately puts the dress down.

KATE

No. These are for you, bon. We have come to London to find your husband, not mine.

And Edwina has to smile, teasing:

EDWINA

Yes, yes -- you are but a dear old maid.

KATE

Who shall be perfectly happy doting on my *many* nieces and nephews one day soon. I shall spoil them exceedingly. You do know that, yes?

Edwina has to laugh, taking hold of the dress. She breathes deep, her excitement briefly waning. Kate eyes her, and we sense the deep love these sisters share for each other.

KATE (CONT'D)

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

EDWINA

I... Only hope they like me
tonight.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

How could they not?

EDWINA

Mama is doing what she always does when she is worried. The gossip she endured after marrying appa had to have been unbearable, do you not think?

KATE

Is this what troubles you? That was many years ago.

EDWINA

Everyone will still have questions. About our family. About how you and I are related--

KATE

--We are *sisters*. This place may feel different, but... It will never change the way you and I see each other. Besides, you heard Lady Danbury. She will smooth everything over. She is on our side.

EDWINA

The dowager does seem more formidable than I imagined. She will have your head when she learns of your secret morning ride. Are you certain no one saw you?

And a tiny smile seems to form on Kate's face, before:

KATE

Yes. Now never mind her. The dowager is not half as frightening as she thinks she is.

(then)

You must be *excited!* This is the first chapter of a happy story! All you must do this evening is remember what it is you are looking for.

EDWINA

Someone charming. And handsome, of course. A prince or a duke, perhaps...

KATE

It is not a man's appearance or title that will win you. It is his mind and spirit that will engage yours.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATE (CONT'D)

He will speak in a manner that only your heart can hear. *That* is what you are looking for. *That* is the true love you will find.

We can see, Kate believes it. And so does Edwina, whose heart clearly swells at this magical fairytale Kate describes. And as MAIDS enter, ready to help -- Kate holds a dress up against Edwina:

KATE (CONT'D)

This one. They will not be ready.

And Edwina all but squeals. Off the sisters, equal parts excitement and nerves...

46 INT. CONSERVATORY/BALLROOM - NIGHT

46

Lamps glitter inside of a gorgeous glass building -- all exotic flowers and genteel chatter filling out this SPECTACULAR affair. We find Lady Danbury entering with Edwina, Kate and Mary. Edwina's wide-eyed with excitement. Kate smiles, trying to appear the calm presence her sister needs -- but it's clear, she too is awestruck. HEADS SWIVEL.

EDWINA

It is like a dream, from which I hope never to wake.

KATE

That should not be a problem as you can charm people even in your sleep. Just remember to breathe, bon.

Edwina takes a breath, but remains giddy. The lush, floral canopy beckoning them further into this stunning room. Lady Danbury leans into Mary, pointing out various gentlemen:

LADY DANBURY

The Marquis of Ashdown.

FIND a blush-cheeked BOY (16) barely out of leading strings...

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

A little young, to be sure, but he has ten thousand a year. The Earl of Gloucester...

The EARL (40) stands mournfully beside the lemonade table...

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

His wife recently died of influenza. He might make a particularly estimable addition to *your* dance card this evening, Miss Sharma.

*
*

KATE

I will not be taking to the floor tonight, Lady Danbury.

LADY DANBURY

Is there someone back home you are yet to tell me about?

KATE

Come now, I am long past all of that. The only match I am interested in is for my sister. She trusts me implicitly.

(then)

Now what about the Duke of Suffolk? According to Debrett's, he should be quite the catch this year--

*

LADY DANBURY

--Ah, there she is.

*

And that SHE is apparently THE QUEEN, just over there.

MARY

So soon, Lady Danbury...?

Lady D takes Mary's hand, encouraging, leading the group over. Even Kate seems to shrink for a brief moment.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

(to BRIMSLEY and her ladies)

So many flowers, when what I really seek is a gem.

(seeing Lady D)

Lady Danbury! A delightful soiree, as expected. But you do know it will be no match for my own, later this week.

LADY DANBURY

Your Majesty, I would not *think* to compare.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

And rightly so.

(CONTINUED)

They smile. Good friends, these two.

LADY DANBURY

Your Majesty, may I present Lady Mary Sharma, whom you must remember. And may I present her daughters. Miss Sharma. Miss Edwina Sharma.

And they all make their deep curtseys as Lady Danbury beams.

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

My personal, *special* guests for the season.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

A high honor, indeed. I hear you have made quite a journey to join us again after all these years, Lady Mary. If only you had extended the courtesy of offering your Queen a final farewell before you left...

And The Queen moves off as Mary lowers her eyes. Kate shifts. But Lady Danbury just smiles.

LADY DANBURY

Oh, I do relish a challenge.

Lady D puts on her game face as a worried Kate looks to Mary, who's just staring at all those faces currently giving her the side-eye. Like Lady Featherington, who chats with Lady Eaton and Lady Cowper, Cressida in tow, as Penelope lingers.

*
*

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Is that Lady Mary Sheffield? Sharma. Or, whatever the name is. I am surprised she would show her face here again.

CRESSIDA

A scandal, mama?

(CONTINUED)

LADY COWPER

Lady Mary was the incomparable of our season, until she fell in love with and married some kind of *clerk*, I hear. The two of them absconded to India thereafter.

(CONTINUED)

LADY EATON

A Maharaja, I would have understood --
but the man was no more than a
common *worker*. Who already had a
child!

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Oh, that must be her. The older
one.

Lady Cowper nods.

LADY COWPER

Lady Mary's parents, the
Sheffields, never lived down the
shame, did they?

LADY EATON

Too shamed to show their faces in
London. They have not left their
country seat in *years* because of
it.

LADY COWPER

If only every family could be as
respectable as ours -- yes, Lady
Featherington?

And Lady F has to smile tightly, as she sees MR AND MRS
FINCH arriving with ALBION. Philippa rushes over to greet
him.

ALBION

My love. You are a.. A... vision!

And he sneezes violently. Philippa adoringly produces a
handkerchief, as Lady F steps away from the Cowpers.

MRS FINCH

Lady Featherington! It is a
delightful surprise to see you in
attendance.

MR FINCH

After such a *long* mourning period.
Almost as long as our son has
been courting Philippa, if you
can imagine.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Yes, it has been a difficult time
indeed. Darkness has been our
candle in recent months.

MR FINCH

Have you come unaccompanied?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MR FINCH (CONT'D)
(looking around,
eagerly)
Or has the new heir finally come
to manage this unsettled business
of your daughter's dowry?

And Lady F pauses. Also looking around, but only to make
sure no one's paying them much attention. And then:

(CONTINUED)

LADY FEATHERINGTON
Unsettled. That is the precise word, Mr Finch -- as I, too have been quite unsettled indeed. Shaken to the bone, in fact. By grief. Missing my dear, dear, very dead husband.

TEARS in her eyes. And they seem to work.

MRS FINCH
 (hisses, to Mr Finch)
 I told you it was too soon!

MR FINCH
 (hisses back)
 You told me you wished for the boy to be out of our house!

MRS FINCH
 Our apologies, Lady Featherington. Do let us know when you are more *settled*, yes?

*
 *

Lady F just dabs at her eyes, mustering a nod. The Finches go, and the waterworks stop on a dime. Off an exasperated Lady F, we ANGLE ON the Bridgertons: Violet with Eloise, Anthony, and Benedict -- just arriving.

ANTHONY
 (to Eloise)
 Stop fussing with your dress.

VIOLET
 You look lovely, dear.

ELOISE
 I look like a prize calf, trussed up for auction.

BENEDICT
 (teasing)
Moo...

Violet swats him.

VIOLET
 Even Daphne felt most apprehensive at her first official ball, and look how well her season turned out.

The baby-faced MARQUIS approaches. Eloise clocks him, tensing up. Benedict leans in--

(CONTINUED)

BENEDICT

Come, sister. The cakes at these occasions are surprisingly good.

Thankful for the save, Eloise links arms with Ben before Violet can stop them. Anthony looks around, frowning.

ANTHONY

It truly is a sparse crop.

VIOLET

I am sure there is someone here who will charm you. After all, this is the season *THE VISCOUNT INTENDS TO FIND A WIFE*.

She announces that part loudly, and sure enough -- it's bait in the water: MAMAS and DEBS snap to attention. Eyes widen. Jaws drop. Violet beams, nodding to all. Anthony glares.

ANTHONY

You *honestly* just did that.

VIOLET

I believe I did.

A SHARP MAMA pushes her NERVOUS DAUGHTER forward, as OTHER MAMAS start to swarm around a beleaguered Anthony. Off the hive, we MOVE to find the Sharmas and Lady Danbury, across the room. Suddenly, Kate spots Anthony -- her eyes widening in recognition--

*
*
*
*

KATE

I know that gentleman.

EDWINA

Who?

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY

The Viscount? I do not believe I
have yet made an introduction...

Kate catches herself. She can't reveal she was out riding.

KATE

Of course, it must be my mistake.

LADY DANBURY

Though you do have quite the eye.
Viscount Bridgerton is wealthy,
well-connected and from one of
the ton's most illustrious
families. Apparently hoping to
marry this season, he may very
well be our most eligible bachelor
indeed...

EDWINA

He is very handsome.

KATE

Yes. I suppose he is.

And she's playing it cool, just as Lady Danbury spots--

LADY DANBURY

Lord Corning! I was hoping to
see you this evening. Allow me
to introduce to you Miss Sharma
and Miss Edwina Sharma.

LORD CORNING

It is a pleasure. Miss Edwina,
would you honor me with a dance?

But Edwina only looks to Kate for approval. Corning's a
little confused.

KATE

Corning, you said?

LADY DANBURY

The Baron Corning...

And Kate reluctantly gives Edwina a nod.

EDWINA

I would be delighted, my lord.

As Edwina and Corning head to the floor, Lady D glares at
Kate like, *wtf?*

KATE

I do not recall reading of Lord
Corning's family in my research--

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY

--It does not matter what you have and have not read. It is unacceptable here for a young lady to decline a dance with a gentleman unless she is already reserved by another. I see we have much to learn.

And she motions for a chastened Kate to follow -- just as we clock Kate's eyes falling back to where she saw Anthony. Only now, he's gone. Off Kate, following Lady D...

47 INT. CONSERVATORY/HALLWAY - NIGHT

47

As Penelope, blending in with the bright florals lining this corridor, eavesdrops on TWO FOOTMEN--

CHATTY FOOTMAN

...And they say Millerson has a whelp in the country. Spitting image of his father--

ELOISE (O.S.)

There you are!

Pen startles as Eloise joins her.

ELOISE (CONT'D)

Oh, Pen. I am so glad to see you. Mama is already being insufferable.

PENELOPE

At least she did not see fit to dress you as a sunflower. I declare a bee keeps mistaking me for the real thing.

And now they're intercepted by LORDS STANLEY and CHO.

LORD STANLEY

Miss Bridgerton. May I request your next dance?

LORD CHO

Or I might accompany you to fetch some lemonade? You seem parched.

PENELOPE

How can you tell, is she wilting?

LORD CHO

Or punch if you prefer.

PENELOPE

It was a plant pun if you were wondering...

(CONTINUED)

He was not. Penelope is utterly invisible to the men.

ELOISE

Apologies, gentlemen, I regret to inform you that my dance card is already full.

She waves it at them and whisks Penelope away. A confused Pen grabs El's dance card and holds it up.

PENELOPE

Lord Byron? Wellington? Eloise, these names are false!

ELOISE

I am merely following my sister's valuable advice. She told me that it is of the utmost importance for a lady's dance card to be filled with all of the right names.

VIOLET (O.S.)

Eloise?

Eloise quickly hides the dance card as Violet approaches.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

There you are, dear. Come, there is someone I would like you to meet.

And she grabs Eloise by the hand. As El throws a look back to Pen -- *kill me now*. Off Pen, offering an encouraging nod before spotting those chatty footmen again...

48 INT. CONSERVATORY/BALLROOM - NIGHT

48

As Edwina twirls the night away, we find Kate watching her sister from the sidelines like a worried chaperone. Only then -- Anthony comes into her view, with his partner, on the dance floor, too. Kate suddenly shrinks back, starting to move along the perimeter -- watching him closely. He doesn't exactly look *happy* out there. Probably because his partner -- the NERVOUS DEB -- is stepping all over his toes. She looks at him pleadingly, as Anthony decides to relieve this poor girl and bow from the dance early. Kate steps behind a group of people, trying not to be seen, as Anthony heads out to the terrace. Kate looks to Edwina once more, seemingly settled into her dance and in no need of assistance. Off Kate, deciding to leave her watchful post, and head for that terrace...

49 EXT. CONSERVATORY/TERRACE - NIGHT

49

Anthony, tense, takes a deep breath. A group of gentlemen is nearby: Lords Stanley, Cho and Fife.

(CONTINUED)

LORD FIFE

Bridgerton! I owe you a drink.

ANTHONY

Whatever for?

LORD FIFE

With you as the prized catch of the season, the rest of us will receive a respite from the marriage-minded mamas this season indeed.

Unseen by them, Kate steps out onto the terrace. The men are hidden from view by a floral screen, but she hears their voices as they banter, locker-room style.

ANTHONY

Enjoy your freedom while it lasts. You too will soon submit to this ridiculous rigmarole of courtship -- squiring every eligible miss around town until you are barely able to see straight.

LORD CHO

Is one lady unlike any other?
Simply pick the least objectionable, and get her wed, bed, and bred. Then you can return to more pleasurable pursuits.

*

LORD STANLEY

And more pleasurable *partners*.

They laugh, as behind the flowers, Kate moves closer...

ANTHONY

You may be cavalier, but if I must leg-shackle myself in marriage, the lady in question should have more to recommend her.

LORD FIFE

Do not tell us you are hoping for a love match?

ANTHONY

Love is the last thing I desire. But if my children are to be of good stock, then their mother must be of impeccable quality.

And now Kate's scowl begins to grow.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

A pleasing face, an acceptable wit, genteel manners enough to credit a Viscountess... It should not be so hard to find, and yet the debutantes of London fall short at every turn.

LORD CHO

You want the best, perhaps The Queen will finally name a diamond. Save you some trouble. At least, of *choosing* her. Wooing the piece will be a different story, indeed.

ANTHONY

I shall have no problem there.

They laugh again. Lord Fife takes out his pipe, then pats his pockets. No tobacco.

LORD FIFE

The smoking room, gentlemen?

ANTHONY

I shall be there anon.

And the lords take their leave. Anthony turns to the dark gardens, still tense. Kate tries to make a discreet exit, but inadvertently makes a NOISE.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Is someone there?
(off the silence)
I can see--

Kate reluctantly steps out of the shadows. Anthony's expression lifts, happy to see her, but Kate is wary.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You.

KATE

Pardon me, my lord.

ANTHONY

Lost a second time, are we?

And he's trying for charm, but Kate's in no mood as she keeps walking back to the party. Anthony catches up.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I was wondering if we would meet again--

(CONTINUED)

KATE

--So that you might discern if my
wit is *acceptable*, my manners
genteel?

(CONTINUED)

Anthony realizes she's heard everything. He stops.

ANTHONY

You were eavesdropping.

She scoffs. Also stops.

KATE

It was hardly an effort, seeing as you were proclaiming your many *requirements* for a wife loud enough for the entire party to hear.

ANTHONY

You take issue with my requirements?

KATE

I take issue with any man who views women merely as chattels and breeding stock.

ANTHONY

None of that was meant--

KATE

--Tell me, *Viscount Bridgerton*. When you manage to find this paragon of virtue, what ever makes you think that she will accept *your* suit? Are the young ladies of London truly so easily won by a pleasing smile and absolutely *nothing* more?

ANTHONY

So you find my smile pleasing.

KATE

I find your opinion of yourself entirely too high.

ANTHONY

I could say the same of you.

Kate takes a breath, steadying herself.

KATE

Your character is as deficient as your horsemanship. I shall bid you good night.

And with that, Kate stalks away. Off Anthony, pretending like that didn't hurt...

50 INT. CONSERVATORY/HALLWAY - NIGHT

50

Penelope paces, anxiously looking out of a window to where the carriages are parked outside, where she sees a HIRED CARRIAGE drawing up.

(CONTINUED)

The DRIVER holds up his lantern and flashes it. Penelope smiles. And she's heading for the exit when Eloise suddenly emerges from the ballroom again--

ELOISE

You are still out here? Are you going somewhere, Pen?

Pen freezes, caught.

PENELOPE

I... Was just getting some air. It is so very stifling in the ballroom.

ELOISE

The air, or the dreary conversation?

(then)

I do suppose this is the one benefit of being out. I have you to run off with. We shall never have to be alone!

PENELOPE

...My thoughts exactly!

And Eloise links her arm through her friend's. Off Pen, stuck, her usual Whistledown routine totally blown...

51 INT. CONSERVATORY/BALLROOM - NIGHT

51

As Benedict gets into the ratafia, Violet approaches -- grabbing her own glass.

VIOLET

Have you seen your brother? Or your sister?

BENEDICT

They managed to escape you? Good for them.

Violet spots a solo Lady Danbury approaching.

VIOLET

Lady Danbury. A splendid evening.

LADY DANBURY

For the most part. There are a few guests whose absence I might not have regretted.

VIOLET

I do hope I am not one of them.

And Lady D shoots her a look.

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY

You and I have common interests
this season, it seems.

VIOLET

I heard. Your wards -- I look
forward to meeting them.

LADY DANBURY

And I look forward to showing
these other mamas how the game
ought to be played.

(then)

Though it appears you have already
stoked the fire by informing them
of the Viscount's intentions this
season...

And Violet smiles. Holding up her drink.

VIOLET

My son said he was ready. Who am
I to question it?

LADY DANBURY

(nodding)

They all must come around
eventually, I suppose--

KATE (O.S.)

--Lady Danbury, we wish to leave.

A heated Kate storms up, Edwina in tow.

LADY DANBURY

Miss Sharma. Allow me to introduce
you to--

KATE

--Charmed. My mother is already
in our carriage. We will see you
at home.

LADY DANBURY

(quietly)

People are watching, my dear.
You are clearly upset but this is
no way--

KATE

--What is clear is that we are
woefully unprepared to navigate
this lion's den. I am sure
Edwina's absence will only make
her that much more desirable.

(CONTINUED)

EDWINA

It truly was a magnificent soiree,
Lady Danbury. We are most gracious--

But now Kate's just ushering Edwina towards the exit. As
Lady Danbury turns back to Violet--

VIOLET

Well. It would seem both of us
may have our hands full this year.

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY

Not if I have something to say
about it. And as you very well
know, I *always* have something to
say.

Off Lady Danbury, determined not to lose control of this
season...

52 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/PENELOPE'S ROOM - NIGHT 52

Pen enters, just home from the ball--

PENELOPE

Delightful evening, mama. Night,
sisters.

She shuts the door behind her, turning anxious. And then
she removes her FOLDED MANUSCRIPT from her dress. Starts
to pace. Thinking, *thinking*... Until she quietly opens
her door, making sure no one's there. Off her deep breath:

53 EXT. LONDON/INT. CARRIAGE - DAWN 53

Penelope, now in her servant disguise, can't sit still.

PENELOPE

Can you go any faster?

54 INT. PRINTING PRESS - DAWN 54

Mister Harris is just packing up, when a breathless Pen
hurries in with her pages.

HARRIS

Lawks, I thought you weren't
coming.

PENELOPE

My mistress apologizes for the
delay. This is for today. It
must print before noon.

Harris shifts. *Unlikely*. But Pen doesn't have time to
waste. She swipes the CLOTH BAG OF COINS on the table.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Last edition's takings, yes?
Eight hundred copies at five pence
a piece, sold for eight pence
each, minus the delivery boys'
wages there should be eleven pounds
two shillings here altogether.
(digging into the
bag)

My mistress is prepared to make
it an even ten. You get to keep
the surplus for the rapid service.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

These kinds of delays are sure to be more frequent now due to an *unforeseen* circumstance anyway, so... It's really a bargain.

She tosses a few coins back on the table. And off a seemingly unwavering Pen, staring Mister Harris down...

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

There is nothing quite like the sweet-scented smell of *success*. But after taking in the scene from last night's festivities, it is clear the season won't be quite so *fragrant* for everyone...

55 INT. ANTHONY'S APARTMENT/STUDY - MORNING

55

Anthony's eyes are bleary as he pores over a stack of documents.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

The Viscount Bridgerton's own mama may have loudly declared her eldest son's lofty intentions to marry. Yet I cannot be the only one wondering if this former capital-R-Rake is *indeed* ready to flourish.

Anthony sighs, worn out. He catches sight of his watch on the desk, and covers it with a piece of paper, as we go...

56 EXT. BUCKINGHAM HOUSE/GARDENS - MORNING

56

To find The Queen (and her Poms) reading LWD over an elaborate breakfast, Brimsley standing by.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Perhaps the Viscount, like the rest of us, is simply waiting for The Queen to finally name her diamond. Or perhaps this author should take matters into her own hands...

Our Queen lowers the newsletter with a scoff.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

I shall not be hustled into making my selection. Not by anyone.

BRIMSLEY

Of course, Your Majesty.

And she pushes her plate to the side, annoyed.

(CONTINUED)

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Take this away. And bring me a
list of the peerage.

57 INT. BRIDGERTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - DAY

57

It's calling hour and Eloise is in hell -- sat with the
baby-faced MARQUIS. Violet beams, as G and H play on the
floor.

VIOLET

(to the Marquis)
Some tea, my lord?

ELOISE

(murmured)
Perhaps some warm milk may be
better.

MARQUIS OF ASHDOWN

(re: H & G)
Oh, are those marbles? What fun.

And he gets down on his knees to play with the children,
Eloise turns to her mother:

ELOISE

Might I go and read now?

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Though of the many *purportedly*
well-trained and bred hot-house
flowers on display this year --
this author must wonder if a more
surprising choice might still be
in store...

Off Eloise, hurrying from the room, Violet watching her
go...

58 INT. DANBURY HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - DAY

58

GENTLEMEN call on the Sharma sisters -- Kate having
positioned herself firmly between her sister and any
potential suitor. And she just seems to have denied Lords
Cho and Fife -- now heading for the door, passing Lady
Danbury and Mary, who stand watch.

LORD CHO

The younger one would do, if the
eldest just got out of the way.

LORD FIFE

A spinster is one thing, but a
hell-cat, too? Dreadful.

Lady D studies Kate, who now holds up her tea to cheers
her from across the room.

(CONTINUED)

Lady D nods back, turning to Mary.

LADY DANBURY

Do you remember all of this
business of marriage, Lady Mary?

MARY

Indeed. Though I quite wish I
did not.

Lady Danbury turns to her -- sensing something troubling
beneath Mary's eyes. And Lady D would say more, only
NEWTON suddenly races in and jumps up on something lovely--

LADY DANBURY

Not on the settee!

And she nods for a footman to DO something before we're
off a vexed Lady D...

59 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - DAY

59

Philippa's sat at the table with Albion, who reads LWD, while a bitter Prudence lingers nearby. Pen's at her window, along with Lady F, on the sofa.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Which ever darling miss receives
such high esteem, let us hope
there is a suitor available of
only the sharpest wit, lest his
dry musings leave a young lady
wilting like a parched rose...

ALBION

It is rather clever, the way she
uses plant puns to belittle.

And Pen has to smile.

PENELOPE

Clever indeed.

As Lady F sags, leaning into Varley:

LADY FEATHERINGTON

The candlesticks. See what they
are worth.

Varley nods and we're off Penelope, having heard the
exchange -- her smile fading, as we END SEQUENCE.

60 INT. BRIDGERTON HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - DAY

60

A fun-filled Bridgerton hang! Anthony reads the paper,
Francesca's at the pianoforte, G and H jostle for scones,
and Eloise reads -- as Violet peruses some FABRIC CHOICES
courtesy of GENEVIEVE DELACROIX.

VIOLET

Lady Goring was quite taken with
Eloise's dress last night, Madame
Delacroix. She would keep saying
how well it complemented her
complexion. She said you reminded
her of *Daphne*, dearest.

ELOISE

(not looking up
from her book)
I am *not* Daphne.

(CONTINUED)

VIOLET
(re: the fabric)
This is the one.

GENEVIEVE
With pleasure, Lady Bridgerton.

And as Genevieve begins to gather her things, Violet heads for Eloise--

VIOLET
You do know, Eloise, that you might enjoy the next ball if you in fact *danced* with someone. Meeting new people -- it can be thrilling.

ELOISE
Yes it certainly seemed as if Anthony had a thrilling time. Swept away by many a nimble-footed young lady, were you brother?

ANTHONY
I can still barely feel my toes. I thought you ladies were taught to dance.

ELOISE
And I thought you gentlemen were capable of worthwhile conversation. How sad that both our hopes were dashed.

HYACINTH
I think Eloise would make a *brilliant* diamond.

And now even Francesca has to suddenly stop playing.

VIOLET
I could not agree more, Hyacinth. Perhaps Her Majesty will take note at her ball tomorrow night.

ELOISE
(to Hyacinth)
I despise you.

Meanwhile, at the door, Gen's heading out -- only she runs into a surprised Benedict, just on his way in.

BENEDICT
Madame Delacroix. I did not know you were back in town.

GENEVIEVE
Bien sûr!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GENEVIEVE (CONT'D)

Who else could dress these delicate debutantes for the season?

BENEDICT

Does that mean I shall see you later tonight? I hear there is a party.

Genevieve eyes him, considering. Until--

GENEVIEVE

I have much work to do, Mister Bridgerton, and my art must come before... all else. Enjoy your time.

And she goes. Benedict heads for the sofas, under the watchful eye of his older brother--

ANTHONY

Are you and the modiste still... making a stitch?

BENEDICT

Apparently not. Have you found a wife yet, or are you planning to offend every young lady until there are none left? Is mother aware?

VIOLET

Aware of what?

And Benedict flashes a smile, taking out his sketch book, as Anthony smirks, rising--

ANTHONY

I am off to deal with our solicitor. Have fun with your pretty pictures, brother.

Only now Violet's following Anthony out and into:

61 INT. BRIDGERTON HOUSE/OUTSIDE DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

61

VIOLET

There were some lovely young ladies in attendance last night -- were there not? Lady Delilah has beautiful manners. And I hear Miss Goodrum is quite accomplished with her needlework. Perhaps you shall get to know them better soon?

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

Lady Delilah can barely string a sentence together for nerves. And Miss Goodrum thought that Napoleon fights for the *Spanish*. And as for every other eager chit you pushed in my direction, I would happily never lay eyes on them again.

VIOLET

Oh, Anthony.

ANTHONY

I am looking for perfection, mother. And you should be, too. The woman I marry shall be *the Viscountess Bridgerton*. The lady of this household, responsible for launching my sisters and bearing my children. Do you truly desire them to be raised by a woman who does not know how to so much as hold a map right side up?

Violet looks at him sadly.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

This is the duty I must fulfill.

He turns to go.

VIOLET

You will end up *alone*. With such expectations.

ANTHONY

Good day, mother.

And as he goes, we see it -- the dark expression that tells us he just might think Violet is right...

61A EXT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE - NIGHT

61A

Establishing.

62 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/PENELOPE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

62

Penelope has one of her hollow money-books in her hand as she guiltily surveys her secret stash. *Should she solve her family's money problems?* FOOTSTEPS come in the hallway, and she quickly KICKS the floorboard back into place before Prudence saunters in.

PRUDENCE

Why is it so quiet in here?

(CONTINUED)

PENELOPE

Because I am alone? *Reading.* As
I always do.

And she clutches the money-book as evidence.

PRUDENCE

You are so boring. I will be
perfectly putrified if Philippa
does manage to marry Finch.

(CONTINUED)

PENELOPE
Petrified. The word is petrified.

But Pru is ignoring her: she's seen pages on Pen's desk.

PRUDENCE
What is that...?

PENELOPE
What is what?

PRUDENCE
What you are writing.

PENELOPE
I am not writing.

PRUDENCE
But you *were*.

And Prudence snatches the page. Pen leaps up -- trying to get a hold of it--

PENELOPE
Prudence! Do not... Hand it back!

But it's too late because now Prudence's eyes are widening.

PRUDENCE
Oh my... You little devil-doll.
This is what occupies your "quiet" time?

Shit. Penelope squirms, blood rising in her neck. And just as we think this whole Whistledown ruse has come to an end...

LADY FEATHERINGTON (O.S.)
What are you ladies doing, still up?

Busted, the sisters spin to the door where their nettled mama glowers at them from the doorway.

PRUDENCE
Penelope was *writing*. To Colin Bridgerton!

And Pen just looks away, horribly embarrassed.

LADY FEATHERINGTON
Well that would explain the ink all over her fingers. I declare, Penelope.

PENELOPE
Colin is my friend.

(CONTINUED)

Lady F rolls her eyes. Prudence snorts.

(CONTINUED)

PRUDENCE

As if *he* would ever waste his ink
on someone like *you*.

As a downcast Pen sighs, Lady F clocks her books--

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Are they worth anything?

PENELOPE

What?

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Your *books*. Books can be worth
something, can they not?

She browses the shelves, taking a book and flipping through
the pages. Penelope hides her MONEY BOOK behind her back.

PENELOPE

I... do not think so, mama.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Pity.

(then)

You must stop wasting your precious
time on such pointless pursuits
as *writing* silly letters. Colin
Bridgerton is no more your friend
than I am the next Catherine the
Great. Now wipe your hands lest
someone think you a commoner.

And she goes with Prudence. Off Penelope, gingerly placing
down her money book, clearly not ready to help...

62A EXT. DANBURY HOUSE - NIGHT 62A

Establishing.

63 INT. DANBURY HOUSE/DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT 63

Lady Danbury smokes a cheroot by the window, strategizing
no doubt -- when her footman enters.

DANBURY FOOTMAN

A letter for you, ma'am.

She nods, opens the letter -- captivated by its contents...

64 INT. DANBURY HOUSE/KATE'S ROOM - NIGHT 64

Kate, ignoring her cup of tea, peers out a window
overlooking those stabled horses. Danbury approaches.

LADY DANBURY

Your tea grows cold. My horses
do not.

(CONTINUED)

Kate catches herself, sips her tea. Lady D eyes her a beat.

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

Did you plan to ride again tomorrow morning?

And Kate just stands there. *Caught.*

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

I know all that goes on in my home. And since you insist on sneaking around I may as well save us both the trouble.

Danbury holds up a letter.

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

Correspondence from your grandparents, the Sheffields. I wrote to them before you arrived.

KATE

Those people are not my grandparents, Lady Danbury. I have no relation to them whatsoever, in fact. Yet I am quite surprised to learn you still associate with them.

LADY DANBURY

I would much prefer not to. But I certainly could not agree to play host to their daughter this season without first informing them of my intentions. That would be tactless. And such things as manners and rules are important, I think.

A beat, as she holds Kate's gaze.

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

It seems you have not been straightforward with me.

KATE

I realize, I should not have gone out for a morning ride without a chaperone.

LADY DANBURY

And what about failing to tell me why you have truly come to London with your sister? I am rather more concerned about *that*.

KATE

We are here to find Edwina a husband.

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY
And is that all?

As Kate opens her mouth to speak--

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)
You would be wise to reconsider resorting to more forgeries and half-truths, Miss Sharma. Very few attempt to outwit me. And even fewer succeed.

Nope. Lady D ain't nothin' to fuck with right now. As Kate falls silent and Lady Danbury assesses her:

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)
You are living under my roof. Under my care. You are relying on my good name. My connections. My money. I vouched for you and your sister in front of *Her Majesty The Queen*. All because I thought I was paying a kindness to an old friend--

KATE
--And we are truly grateful for it--

LADY DANBURY
--An old friend who is clearly no longer as well as she should be.
(then)
Your mama misses your father, naturally. But she never wanted to come back here, did she? *You did.*

Kate doesn't even have to say anything. Lady D knows.

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)
I have no interest in being used as a pawn in someone else's game.

KATE
That is not what we are doing--

LADY DANBURY
--Then tell me what stipulations the Sheffields have apparently set down with regard to Edwina's match. Stipulations which, if met, will, I am guessing, guarantee great fortune for you and your family?

A long, tense beat. Kate better start talking.

(CONTINUED)

KATE

Edwina must marry an Englishman
of nobility.

As we watch that land on Lady D...

LADY DANBURY

They could not control your mama's
marriage so they mean to interfere
with your sister's.

KATE

Yes. They never recovered from
my father's lack of rank and,
title.

(then)

Though let me assure you, Lady
Danbury. I am not here for selfish
reasons. After my father died,
mama and I did the best we could
to raise Edwina. All so that she
would never know of our struggles.
But our money ran low. So we
used the last we had for this
very journey. The Sheffields
have agreed to bestow a sizable
dowry on my sister, *and* look after
my mama -- but only if Edwina
marries... *properly*.

LADY DANBURY

And what about you?

KATE

I do not matter. This is...
This is what I must do.

LADY DANBURY

Become a spinster?

KATE

If *I* could marry for the sake of
my family, I would. But I am not
mama's daughter by birth. Edwina
is.

(then)

Do you think this has been easy,
Lady Danbury? I have spent the
last eight years raising my sister
to *walk* in the right way, to *talk*
and to play the pianoforte just
so -- teaching her twice as much
and watching her work twice as
hard as anyone else. I even showed
her how to make this pitiful excuse
for tea the English so adore.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATE (CONT'D)

I despise English tea. But if it
means that my sister will not be
left destitute, then I will smile
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KATE (CONT'D)
and I will nod politely after
each and every sip, *to be sure.*

(CONTINUED)

And now it's clear -- Lady D can't help but be a bit impressed by this very honest side of this girl. Another beat.

LADY DANBURY

Your sister has a right to know.
As you said, it is her future.

KATE

That is precisely why I shield her. Because I *know* her. If she was made aware of the circumstances she would quickly marry only to please us. She would say yes to any man kind enough to ask. Edwina deserves a chance to find love *without* such a burden.

(then)

I would never ask you to help us, Lady Danbury. But, please, you must not tell a soul. *That* is all I shall ever ask of you.

And a vulnerable Kate heads away. Off Lady Danbury, realizing the stakes for the season couldn't be higher...

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Formed under pressure, desired by many, yet possessed only by a fortunate few -- there is *nothing* on earth quite so envied as a diamond...

65 INT. BUCKINGHAM HOUSE/BALLROOM - NIGHT

65

The glimmering Diamond Ball! It's a decadent celebration that's certainly fit for a Queen, who surveys the turnout by the entrance, pleased with this crowd dripping in jewels...

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Might our Queen finally extinguish the fevered speculation and bestow the highest of honors to a most fortunate young lady tonight?

FIND Lady F entering with Pru, Phil and Pen.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Show your figures, girls.
Remember, diamonds are *pointy*.

And she pushes them toward The Queen.

LADY FEATHERINGTON (CONT'D)

Your Majesty.

(CONTINUED)

They curtsy, but the queen simply nods and looks away.
As they continue forward...

(CONTINUED)

PRUDENCE

(to Lady F)
Did I sparkle?

LADY FEATHERINGTON

You did something.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

With so many futures at risk, I
do suspect this author is not the
only one waiting with bated breath.

Off our Featheringtons, and Penelope heading for that wall, we move to FIND the Sharmas entering with Lady Danbury. An overwhelmed Edwina takes in the beauty, The Queen just ahead.

KATE

Just remember, bon. There is no
one here who can hold a candle to
your grace.

And Edwina squeezes her sister's hand. Kate catches Lady Danbury's eye and we clock the lingering tension as they approach QC.

LADY DANBURY

Your Majesty. Lady Mary Sharma,
Miss Sharma, Miss Edwina Sharma.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Ah, yes. I do hope you are finding
everything in town to your
satisfaction, Lady Mary.

MARY

Indeed I am, Your Majesty--

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

--This time around, that is.

Lady Mary goes still. And just as Kate's about to say something for her mother, Lady D jumps in:

LADY DANBURY

Perhaps your mother might enjoy
some refreshment, Miss Sharma.

And Lady D nods at Kate, like -- *I got this*. Kate nods back, surprised yet grateful, ushering away Mary and Edwina. Lady Danbury leans in.

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

I might think Lady Mary deserves
some recognition, ma'am.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LADY DANBURY (CONT'D)

It is certainly a sign of true devotion on her part -- having sought to introduce her daughters under the discerning eye of Your Majesty, after all. The youngest one, in particular, I think, is certain to make the kind of match that will be the envy of the ton.

(CONTINUED)

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Why do I sense my strings being pulled, Lady Danbury?

LADY DANBURY

I only mean to say -- an outsider would be the shrewd choice this year. It would assuredly surprise a certain scribbler who will have never seen it coming. You wanted to shake up the season. Now is your chance.

And as Kate watches Lady D, wondering what she just said, we ANGLE ON Violet, Anthony, Benedict and Eloise entering. As Anthony and Ben scan the crowd of pretty young things--

BENEDICT

Anyone here you have not yet rejected?

ANTHONY

You are the artist. Do you see anyone remotely inspiring?
(off Ben's shrug)
We shall have our diamond tonight.
And I shall have a wife.

They bow to The Queen, who suddenly seems to light up:

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Lady Bridgerton. *Miss* Bridgerton. Such a shame your presentation at court was so rudely interrupted.

ELOISE

A shame, indeed.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

I nearly forgot you were making your debut this season. After your elder sister's triumph -- perhaps good fortune might run in the family.

Oh, shit. Is Eloise going to ACTUALLY be named our diamond? Violet's eyes go wide as Eloise's face FALLS. And Cressida, nearby, audibly SCOFFS. Violet elbows El to SAY SOMETHING.

ELOISE

It is a delightful ball, Your Majesty. *Very* diamond-y. Though I must admit, I am more of an *emerald* person myself.

And now there's a bit of silence -- Violet *mortified* -- until... The Queen just CACKLES.

(CONTINUED)

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

Oh. Oh dear. My favorite necklace is one of emeralds. How thoughtful of you to know that! It seems you have indeed come a long way since last year, Miss Bridgerton...

With a delicious smile, The Queen moves on. As the Bridgertons head deeper into the ballroom...

BENEDICT

If The Queen in fact names Eloise the diamond, whom will you marry then, brother?

ANTHONY

Hush you.

And as Eloise takes in all those eyes on her now, she spots Pen, up against the wall, and races toward her--

ELOISE

We must leave. The Queen. I somehow managed to... *charm* her. She seems to in fact LIKE me.

PENELOPE

Eloise, you must calm--

Only now Cressida's swanning over.

CRESSIDA

Eloise Bridgerton *the diamond*. Perhaps now you might stop spending time with insipid wallflowers all evening and *refine* your circle of friends. I may have an opening--

ELOISE

--I would rather die.

And she takes Pen by the hand, heading toward the exit--

66 EXT. BUCKINGHAM HOUSE/BACK LAWN - NIGHT

66

As Eloise leads Pen away from the festivities--

PENELOPE

Eloise. Eloise, where are we--

ELOISE

--ANYWHERE but in there.

And they finally reach an area FULL OF DAFFODILS. Eloise calms. Taking in the air. Pen just looks at her. A beat.

(CONTINUED)

ELOISE (CONT'D)

How you managed an entire season of these absurd events alongside people like Cressida Cowper is beyond me. And it is not just her. It is all of them. Staring at me as if I were some china teapot.

(then)

How did you do it on your own, Pen?

PENELOPE

I do not share your difficulties, El. *Insipid wallflower*. Remember?

Eloise realizes what she is saying. Looks to her.

ELOISE

That is not... Cressida is only incensed that even her new dress cannot hide her character.

Pen smiles at her protective friend, watching as Eloise finds a place on the ground near the daffodils and gets comfortable. Pen goes to sit beside her. Another beat.

PENELOPE

It is not so bad you know. The wallflower thing. I always get the first taste of lemonade. I know who all the best dancers are just from watching. I can always tell when a suitor is serious about courtship just by how he looks when a young lady dances with another. The wall even affords me a chance to hear what the footmen discuss in secret.

Eloise looks at her.

ELOISE

You have been keeping it from me.

Penelope's heart nearly stops. Did she just accidentally reveal she's Lady Whistledown?

ELOISE (CONT'D)

You do not have to pretend any longer, Pen. You *like* all of this.

And now Penelope breathes a subtle sigh of relief.

PENELOPE

Well, it *can* be amusing.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

I know you have started to think little of her now, but Lady Whistledown is still a source of amusement, is she not?

ELOISE

It is not that I think little of her. When she was gone, I thought I would miss her. I thought I needed her to make sense of this world. But now she is back, reporting on the same old things. Just another reminder of how trapped I am.

Pen looks at her friend conflicted. *Should she tell her?* Eloise lies back and looks up at the stars. Instead of her usual screed. She admits:

ELOISE (CONT'D)

I can *feel* people's eyes on me. Every time I walk into a ballroom, I know they are comparing me to *Daphne*. She was so good at being the diamond and it made my mother so happy. *I* can never live up to that. I do not *want* to live up to that. But it does not make it any easier to know you are constantly disappointing people just by walking into the room.

Pen joins Eloise looking up at the stars.

PENELOPE

I never thought of it that way. No one truly notices me. I suppose that is what I like. When you are invisible you can have all the amusement you want without any of the expectations that popularity brings. It... frees you.

ELOISE

Do you think that is why Whistledown remains anonymous?

PENELOPE

Perhaps.

ELOISE

Do you think that is why Cressida is so cruel?

(CONTINUED)

PENELOPE

No. I think she just wears her
hair too tight.

(CONTINUED)

Off Eloise, cracking a smile. And Pen, eyeing those stars...

67 INT. BUCKINGHAM HOUSE/BALLROOM - NIGHT 67

Back at the ball, as Brimsley taps a champagne glass, indicating a toast. We catch our people out in the crowd -- Lady D and the Sharmas. The Featheringtons. The Bridgertons. All quieting down, as Queen Charlotte takes center stage:

QUEEN CHARLOTTE
Your presence is noted, and Your Queen most appreciative. Allow it to now be my honor to present to you, the season's diamond...

The crowd leans forward. QC scans the room, as does Violet, looking for Eloise -- where the EFF is she?? But now The Queen's eyes land on Lady Danbury. And there's a beat as she thinks, before she makes her decision:

QUEEN CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Miss Edwina Sharma.

Lady D smiles. Kate swells with pride, steadying Edwina -- who's ready TO BURST. Brimsley steps forward to take Edwina's hand -- leading her over to The Queen. On the other side of the room, Anthony cranes his neck to see through the crowd -- until Edwina finally comes into view -- arriving in front of QC and curtsying with Misty Copeland level grace. The crowd oohs and ahhs -- as Pen and a thoroughly-relieved Eloise finally return to the ballroom -- and our music starts back up again. We ANGLE ON Anthony, watching Edwina:

BENEDICT
You look at her the way I look at a finished painting, brother.

ANTHONY
Every man needs a muse, does he not?

And a laser-focused Anthony heads for his prize. We stay with him, heading through the crowd, until he reaches Edwina. She eyes him, clearly liking what she sees, as The Queen just BEAMS, happy to have this front row seat.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE
Viscount Bridgerton. Have you yet met my new incomparable?

ANTHONY
I am most grateful for the introduction, Your Majesty. I only hope I shall be afforded the pleasure of a dance.

(CONTINUED)

As Queen Charlotte nods for Edwina to accept, we ANGLE ON Lady D and Kate, who can't quite see what's happening on the dance floor yet because of the crowd.

KATE

I suppose I should thank you.

LADY DANBURY

Oh, child. It is much too soon for that. You must know the real work begins now.

KATE

Indeed. There will be a mire to wade through on behalf of my sister, to be sure. Speaking of, where *is* my sister...

And now we ANGLE ON Anthony and Edwina, on the dance floor. Anthony's back to his interview schtick:

ANTHONY

Forgive my directness, but have you any thoughts about children?

EDWINA

Other than the fact that I desire them so? However many I have, my lord, I shall feel most fortunate. Together with my husband, we will chart the best course.

ANTHONY

How very sensible. Do you... play any musical instruments by chance?

Edwina titters, undeterred by this line of questioning.

EDWINA

Many in fact, but my education was for the most part taken up by more serious pursuits -- the modern languages, classical literature. I do love to read.

ANTHONY

You do not seem discomposed by my line of questioning.

EDWINA

Why ever would I be? A man who knows what he wants is most admirable.

And she is ACING this interview, leaving Anthony a bit stumped, rather taken by Edwina's glow.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

Is your father in attendance? I should like to speak with him.

EDWINA

Sadly, my father died years ago.

ANTHONY

Ah. I am so sorry. As did mine.

Anthony's eyes fill with knowing sympathy, as the dance ENDS.

EDWINA

Though perhaps you could speak with my sister? It is her blessing you will need if we are to...

(as she sees Kate)

Oh, there she is now! Kate!

And now Kate and Lady Danbury come into view. Kate's expression immediately darkening as Anthony comes right towards her. Looking EQUALLY horrified as well.

LADY DANBURY

Lord Bridgerton. I see you have met Miss Edwina. And this is--

ANTHONY

--Her sister.

KATE

Miss Sharma. My lord.

And it's a stare off. All tight smiles and polite looks. A LONG, AWKWARD beat, before:

EDWINA

The Viscount Bridgerton is a most excellent dancer. Perhaps I may learn a thing or two from you, my lord--

KATE

--Would you join me in the retiring room, sister?

And she doesn't wait for an answer. Instead, she's sweeping Edwina away. And Anthony's watching them go -- just as Violet sidles up next to him:

VIOLET

She is a lovely diamond, dearest.

ANTHONY

Indeed. She is who I shall marry.

As we catch up to Kate and Edwina:

(CONTINUED)

EDWINA

Is something wrong, didi?

KATE

Everything is wrong. You are not to go near that man, do you understand, bon? There are a few things I must make you aware of...

And we're off Kate, glancing over her shoulder to scowl at a rather confident-looking Anthony Bridgerton...

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Color. Clarity. Carat. *Cut*.
At long last the queen has named her most precious stone...

68 INT. FEATHERINGTON HOUSE/ENTRY - NIGHT

68

A downtrodden Lady F, Pru, Phil, and Pen return home.

PRUDENCE

Perhaps I did not show my figure *enough*.

Only now they all stop, because TRUNKS AND TRUNKS OF LUGGAGE fill the foyer.

PHILIPPA

What is all this?

VARLEY

Ma'am. He is here. The new Lord Featherington.

And sure enough, coming down the stairs, is JACK FEATHERINGTON. Only, he's closer to 40 than 60. And, also? He's EXTREMELY GOOD LOOKING.

JACK

Lady Featherington! That still work if we're not married? Rather *strange*.

And he smiles the cheekiest of smiles, all unassuming swagger and style.

PHILIPPA

I thought the heir was old.

PRUDENCE

I thought the heir was ugly.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

Ladies.

JACK

It is quite alright.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACK (CONT'D)

You must mean my father. And no offense taken -- he was ugly. And very old. So old that, well, he died.

(off Lady F)

I'm terribly sorry for my late arrival. I made the trip from America. But don't worry, I've already started taking care of things. Philippa -- that must be you -- your dowry to that fine Finch fellow is paid. The late Lord's books are on their way to me now and I even took the liberty of having your possessions moved from your bedchamber, *Lady Featherington*. Yes, still strange.

LADY FEATHERINGTON

You had my possessions. Moved.

JACK

I shall be taking over those rooms. Now that the home is mine. You understand, yes?

Lady F can barely muster a response, watching Jack float over to his VALET. Pen leans in to her mother.

PENELOPE

It is like you said, mama. The new Lord Featherington is here to provide.

Off Lady F, forcing a smile, and a relieved-looking Pen...

69 EXT. MAYFAIR - DAY

69

As DELIVERY BOYS hand out fresh Whistledowns -- and THE TON eagerly PAYS for them.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

While this author finds Miss Edwina Sharma to be an exceptional young lady, it is about time I used these pages of record for something else: a *shift*.

70 INT. BRIDGERTON HOUSE/ELOISE'S ROOM - MORNING

70

Eloise reads LWD, ignoring Violet and A MAID tucking her into a brand new dress--

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)

Is the entire practice of naming a diamond not, well, *rather ridiculous*?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Should a woman not be valued for
so much more than her dancing or
comportment? Should we not value
a woman instead for her candor,
her character, her true
accomplishments?

VIOLET
(re: the dress)
What do you think, Eloise?

ELOISE
I love it.

Said without looking up from Whistledown at all, as a
small smile crosses her face.

71 EXT. BUCKINGHAM HOUSE/GARDENS - MORNING

71

Queen Charlotte reads LWD at breakfast.

LADY WHISTLEDOWN (V.O.)
Perhaps, if The Queen abandoned
this absurdity that is The Diamond,
we would all see that a woman can
be so much more. That she can,
truly, sparkle from within.

And as Brimsley clocks Her Majesty's fallen face...

BRIMSLEY
What is it, Your Majesty?

She begins to fold up her paper.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE
Edwina Sharma. My diamond. It
seems she will need to do more
for me this season than simply
sparkle.

Off a scheming Queen, and this renewed vendetta, we have
our--

END OF EPISODE