

# **A GLORIOUS DEATH**

screenplay by

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EXT. EUROPEAN FOREST. DAY/CREDIT SEQUENCE

RUSTLING, and distant BIRDSONG.

A POV shot. We're RUNNING, carving through thick foliage. A HAND parts the trees on the left, but branches on the right catch us. It doesn't matter. We're following the birdsong, left and right and always onwards, as it increases in VOLUME.

In the distance, SUNLIGHT is visible through the trees. The birdsong escalates still. We run faster, headed for the light. Faster and faster until the light is nearly upon us...

It hits. WHITENESS envelops us. There is nothing else.

Over white:

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

Beloved Katherine,  
I loved you, and I shall continue  
to love you. I know that my  
actions are unforgivable but I  
know also that you will forgive  
them. Everything is clearer now.

FADE INTO:

EXT. SUBURBAN GARDEN. DAY

A SMOKE RING grows to a perfect circle, distorts and breaks.

A small group of CATERERS; white hats and near pristine aprons. They sit on stone steps leading into a large living room, share a cigarette and look hatefully out onto:

The expansive GARDEN. It's summer, and there's a party. Tables are spread across the lawn, and a marquee is pitched at the rear. There must be 150 guests.

As the voiceover continues, we see scenes from around the garden. Adults talk and laugh. Children play innocently on the lawn. Waiters circle with trays of champagne.

It's all extremely CIVILISED.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

I'm writing this to give you an account of the events that led me here. My journey.

In the MARQUEE a long table houses 8 smartly dressed guests.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

This letter, most regrettably, will be my legacy. The sole surviving work of an underachiever.

The CHINK of a fork on a champagne flute. Conversation lulls immediately to respect best man MATT. He CLEARS his throat.

MATT

Ladies and gentlemen, we are here today to celebrate the engagement of two wonderful people...Charles and Katherine.

Earnest APPLAUSE as we see the bride and groom. KATHERINE, 41, flame-haired and pretty in a summer dress, beams at the crowd. CHARLES, 39, slim and handsome in a tuxedo, stares into nothingness. He hasn't registered his introduction.

MATT (CONT'D)

Now, Charles and I have known one another for over twenty years. We were roommates at Trinity and...

Matt's speech FADES OUT as we explore the scene from Charles' POV. Middle-aged men in suits. Middle-aged women in cautious summer dresses. Middle-class children as miniature adults.

Katherine notices Charles is distracted, so places her hand comfortingly upon his. Charles looks up at his new fiancée.

KATHERINE

(whispered)

Okay?

He nods, but she knows something bothers him.

MATT (CONT'D)

(back to fore)

...kept telling him that Claudia Winkleman wasn't going to turn up on the doorstep, and I guess he finally listened.

Polite LAUGHTER. Charles is watching a young SCAMP sneak up to a table. His comrades silently cheer him on as he poaches a glass of champagne from the place of an attentive woman.

MATT (CONT'D)

So it gives me great pleasure to say, finally...

(turns to Charles)

My friend, you've got one hell of a woman. Congrats to you both.

(raises glass to guests)

To Charles and Katherine!

GUESTS

Charles and Katherine!

The congregation swig in unison. The woman searches around in confusion as the scamp quaffs her champagne nearby. His peers snatch at the glass, wanting their own taste of adult life.

Focus on Charles, enviously WATCHING.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

Have you ever wondered where your life has gone?

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN. DAY

TIGHT on Charles' face, fluorescent light skimming it. He looks lifeless. Resigned to the journey.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

I had been in limbo for longer than I care to mention. Each day was indistinguishable from the last.

Charles looks around. Everybody is reading or writing or listening to music. Avoiding contact with fellow passengers.

As the voiceover continues, we focus on some of them. A boy, early twenties, new suit, silently rehearses for a job interview. A businesswoman, mid-twenties, attractive, reads work documents. A couple, elderly, side-by-side, silent.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

My future was predictable, more than that...it was certain. Identical train, identical job, identical woman. I dreamed of something new, but what right did I have? My life was perfect. So get married Charles, have children and stop complaining.

Charles habitually stands to let a pregnant woman sit down. There isn't a word or gesture between them. It's expected.

AUTOMATED ANNOUNCEMENT

The next station is Charing Cross.

The carriage begins to slow. Charles heads for the door.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

But at the engagement festivities, I sensed the firm grip of fate upon my shoulder. It was all arranged. I had announced to the world; "I accept my lot. I commit to married life, I commit to suburbia. I commit to commute".

We hear the gentle SQUEAL of the train brakes. Charles stands by the exit, his hand loitering over the OPEN DOOR button.

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE. DAY

We see NELSON, standing proudly atop his memorial. Pigeon shit drops on his hat, and slides onto his face.

In the square below, Charles weaves through the crowd. He walks straight through a tourist's photograph.

EXT. PETRUS. DAY

Pedestrians walk by one of London's elite restaurants.

INT. PETRUS. DAY - LATER

Charles at his table. An elaborately decorated quail sits in front of him. He cuts off a small portion and tastes it.

Along the back wall, we see the concierge, waiters, chefs and managers on tenterhooks, waiting for a hint of reaction.

Charles CLICKS his fingers. Three waiters arrive.

CHARLES

That's fine.

One of them removes his meal. Charles, wearing an expression of impassivity, makes a note on his pad. "Sumptuous".

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT

The same NOTEPAD, with the heading 'ideas' and nothing below.

Charles sits in his armchair, pad on his lap, deep in thought. He takes a sip of TEA. Katherine knits on the sofa, and the CLICK of the needles penetrates the room.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

Do you remember suggesting I write a novel? You said I had a talent with words. Well, what of my subject? I knew nothing of adventure or drama or romance. I had traversed no sweeping terrains, fought no great battles and rescued no damsels in distress. I was burdened by routine.

Katherine has retired her needles.

KATHERINE

(yawning)

I think I'll head to bed. How much longer are you going to be?

(no reply)

Charles?

CHARLES

(barely listening)

Yes, darling?

KATHERINE

I'm going to bed.

CHARLES

Goodnight then.

KATHERINE

(quiet)

Goodnight.

And she leaves. Charles doesn't look up from his pad.

INT. OPEN-PLAN NEWSPAPER OFFICE. DAY

Reporters run back and forth. We move along the frantic space, heading for the end of the office. We gradually leave the people, and the natural light, behind.

It's here that Charles types at his computer. Even this is mechanical. A hand places a note next to his CUP OF TEA.

BOSS

Maze at three, okay? So don't fanny around at the Ivy.

Charles nods. His boss spots a folded-paper plaque on his desk: it reads *Charles Abbott - Gastronomic Adventurer*.

He grabs it, scrunches it up and throws it in the BIN.

EXT. STREET. DAY

Charles is walking along a side-road. As the voiceover plays, we see a couple ahead, walking towards him.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

And so, I was on the lookout for something fresh. I craved newness,

though I had no idea where to find  
it.

Charles and the couple are now close.

AMERICAN MAN

'Scuse me...

Charles doesn't want to stop, but the man blocks his path.

AMERICAN MAN

'Scuse me!

CHARLES

(put out and showing it)  
Yes?

AMERICAN MAN

Do you know where Harrods is?

CHARLES

Just continue along this road.

He goes to walk on but this time the woman blocks him.

AMERICAN WOMAN

(presenting a map)  
Can you show us?

CHARLES

(doesn't look at it)  
It's straight down here, okay?  
That's Brompton Road. Then turn  
left at the end. Left.

AMERICAN MAN

Thanks.

They step out of his way and walk on, chatting. Charles,  
annoyed, is about to continue but something catches his  
eye.

A TRAVEL AGENTS window, with several large posters for  
*Visit Australia*. The one that's grabbed Charles' attention  
is of *Hopetoun Falls* - a beautiful WATERFALL surrounded by  
trees.

We close in on the image.

[SOUND CUE: Crashing water]

EXT. WATERFALL. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

We are there. It's stunning, secluded...a tall waterfall cascading into a plunge pool. Water crashing against rocks.

EXT. ROAD. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

A road cut into a rocky coastline. The edge plunges into the clear ocean. It's all as if seen from a fast-moving car.

EXT. CONTINENTAL VILLAGE. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

A hot day, a cold beer. A quaint, picturesque village.

EXT. WATERFALL. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

The sun beams down on the scene. An anonymous but indecently beautiful WOMAN washes her naked body in the fall's stream. A WIDE SHOT shows the leafy surroundings.

We HOLD on this final image. Water, rock, trees.

[TINKLE of a bell]

EXT. TRAVEL AGENTS. DAY

Back to reality. A MAN has exited the shop. Charles turns from the window to look at the door, SLOWLY CLOSING.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT

Katherine and Charles sleep at two extremes of the bed. Charles is content; smiling, dreaming. We PAN DOWN his side of the bed. Travel brochures are visible underneath.

MATT (V.O.)

So, what are you saying?

INT. CAFFE RITAZZA, PADDINGTON STATION. DAY

Charles and Matt sit at a table, a drink and a croissant each. They are both in suits and ready for work.

Charles adds sugar to his CUP OF TEA.

CHARLES

I'm saying...I need to get away. I need some time to myself.

MATT

To do what?

CHARLES

Explore, expand my horizons - I don't know. Don't look at me like that.

MATT

I didn't say anything.

CHARLES

I've not gone potty, I promise. I know I'm engaged -

MATT

Oh good, you do.

CHARLES

(ignoring him)

But what if I'm compromising? What if there's something better for me?

MATT

Another woman?

CHARLES

Another everything...new experiences, yes maybe another woman. There are three billion of them after all.

MATT

So how long is this search going to last - a month, six months, a year? You could spend forever looking for something that doesn't exist.

CHARLES

Or I could find it. I can't settle  
down without knowing.

Beat.

MATT

I don't condone this, what you're  
doing to Katherine...

CHARLES

I'm not trying -

MATT

*But...if this is what it takes for  
you to get some perspective and  
realise how perfect your life is,  
then...maybe it's for the best.*

CHARLES

(grinning)

Yes, I think it is.

(stands up)

Cheers Matt.

MATT

Don't take too long Charles, or it  
mightn't be here when you get  
back.

Charles pats him on the back and strides toward his new  
life.

MATT

(calling after him)

Charles!

He holds Charles' forgotten BRIEFCASE aloft.

INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT

Charles and Katherine are eating dinner in silence. Just  
the intermittent sound of a knife and fork SCRAPING the  
plate.

Charles keeps looking up at Katherine, then back down, as  
if he's building up to something. Finally...

CHARLES

I have to go to Scotland for a couple of weeks.

Katherine stops eating and looks at him.

CHARLES

(rehearsed)

They're opening a new city office and they want someone with journalistic experience to help set up the business structure.

KATHERINE

So they're sending a food critic?

A beat.

CHARLES

Yes.

KATHERINE

(breaks into a smile)

Well, congratulations! It's about time people appreciated how hard you work.

She holds up her wine glass. Charles reluctantly meets it.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

And perhaps I could come to visit - I loved Edinburgh as a child!

CHARLES

It's in Glasgow.

KATHERINE

(excitement gone)

Oh.

She returns to her food. Charles watches her, a sly smile.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

I am sorry that I lied to you. If only I had been honest, I could have spared you the hope.

EXT. LAMBETH. DAY

It's busy. The London Eye runs, with a long queue leading up to it. Tourists cross Westminster bridge to visit the abbey.

EXT. HIGH STREET. DAY

Charles sits on a bench. He has a couple of carrier bags at his feet, one clearly jammed full of travel guides.

INSERT (NOTEPAD) -

Travel guides  
Digital camera  
CD player  
Sat nav  
Casual clothes - inc. trainers  
Euros  
Soft-top

HOMELESS MAN (O.S.)

(distant)

Spare change?

A HOMELESS MAN and his dog are camped next to a cash machine. He asks everyone in the queue for cash, and gets quite a lot.

Charles sees this and smiles. It's a good tactic; they have nowhere to go. He flips a page on his pad and MAKES A NOTE.

INT. GARAGE. DAY

Charles circles a red convertible *Alfa Romeo Spider Veloce 2000* (henceforth, *Spider*). The SALESMAN stalks him around.

CHARLES

And what's the brake horse power?

SALESMAN

132, sir.

CHARLES

Top speed?

SALESMAN

Officially around 115 sir, but  
I've heard it can be pushed to  
125.

Charles inspects the car closer, childish glee in his eyes.

CHARLES

125!

EXT. CUL DE SAC. EVENING

Matt is waiting at the end. The *Spider* approaches and he  
WHISTLES, impressed. Charles kills the engine and exits.

CHARLES

What do you think?

MATT

It's beautiful.

Matt circles and inspects the Spider.

CHARLES

It's all loaded and ready to go. I  
should be around about seven...

MATT

(not listening)

What's the brake horse power?

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE. DAY

Early morning. Birds CHIRP.

The kitchen door opens and Charles emerges in a SUIT.

CHARLES

Well, I'll see you in a couple of  
weeks.

Katherine, in her dressing gown, hands him a container.

KATHERINE

Your lunch.

CHARLES

(takes it)

Thankyou, but I could have got  
lunch on the train.

KATHERINE  
I just thought...

CHARLES  
No, that's lovely. Thanks.

A beat.

CHARLES  
Well...

Katherine embraces him. Charles pats her on the back.

KATHERINE  
(emotional)  
Have a great couple of weeks.

CHARLES  
Okay. You too.

He kisses her on the cheek. Brief. Then he slowly walks up  
the drive, and heads off to the LEFT.

Katherine returns inside and fills the kettle. As she turns  
from the window, we see Charles dart across to the RIGHT.

EXT. DOVER FERRY PORT. DAY

WHITE CLIFFS loom over the bustling port. Cars  
intermittently emerge through customs to join the passport  
control queue.

We travel forward in the line. The Spider is next.

INT. FERRY CONSOLE. DAY

A passport photo of an white, gaunt teen. The CHECKER looks  
from the photo to the driver: a handsome, tanned 23-year-  
old. If he looked like his photograph, he'd be too ill to  
travel.

Satisfied, the checker hands the man's passport back, along  
with a ticket to hang on the mirror.

CHECKER

Thankyou, have a good trip.

The driver pulls away. The Spider appears at the window.

CHECKER

Passport please.

CHARLES

(unprepared)

Ah, yes.

He opens his glove box and rummages for a second. The checker waits patiently. He retrieves his passport and hands it over.

CLICKING as she types information into her computer.

CHECKER

Is the purpose of this trip  
business or pleasure?

CHARLES

I suppose that depends how it -  
(re: her expression)  
Pleasure.

The checker TAPS something else on her computer.

INT. FERRY - EXECUTIVE LOUNGE. DAY

The TAPPING continues; a pencil on a notepad. There is still nothing below 'ideas'. Charles gives up.

He leans forward in his comfortable seat and surveys the room. There are businesspeople all around; a herd of black and white. And he's no different.

He starts to pack everything into his rucksack.

EXT. DECK TOILETS. DAY - MUSIC BEGINS

(This is the FIRST TIME that Charles has music in his life.)

Charles emerges from the gents, now in long shorts and a more casual shirt. A group of teenagers are in his way, so

he takes a wide evasive curve around them. He reaches the edge and looks out across the ocean.

The French coast can be seen in the distance.

EXT. CALAIS FERRY PORT. DAY - MUSIC CONTINUES

The ferry door CLUNKS to the floor and stewards beckon cars off. The Spider, top down, emerges among the traffic.

INT. CAR. DAY - MUSIC CONTINUES

From Charles' POV, through the windscreen.

CHARLES

(sotto)

Drive on the right, drive on the right.

He sees two options: right to Saint-Omer, left to Dunkerque.

SAT NAV

Take the next left, signposted Dunkerque.

The Sat-Nav speaks in a formal but provocative tone.

CHARLES

Anything you say, you filthy minx!

He GROWLS sexually and turns LEFT.

INT. CAR. DAY - MUSIC ENDS

The sun shines through the windshield. Charles pulls down the sun visor, and looks out of the passenger window.

The land slopes gently down to a small, somewhat dirty beach.

INT. CAR. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

The landscape becomes his fantasy ROCKY coastline, cutting down to a magnetic blue ocean.

Charles turns to look ahead. The road WEAVES temptingly, challengingly around the natural rock.

INT. CAR. DAY

Back to reality. The road is straight and unadventurous. Charles sighs softly, but picks up when he sees the sign ahead. 10 BELGIQUE.

EXT. FRANCO/BELGIAN BORDER CROSSING. DAY

The Spider pulls up and is flagged to one side.

INT. CAR. DAY - LATER

Charles winds down his window. His lunch container is on the passenger seat, with sandwich crusts and an uneaten banana.

BORDER OFFICIAL  
Any fruits or vegetables?

Charles stiffens. He knows what's behind him, but can't look. He turns his body awkwardly to conceal the fruit from view.

CHARLES  
(unconvincing)  
No.

INT. SERVICE STATION SHOP. DAY

Charles on his way out. He spots *The Times* amongst the French language papers, picks it up and heads back to the counter.

EXT./INT. HOTEL. DAY

The hotel sign: HOTEL BRUGGE. We pan down to show the facade of an expensive hotel. The Spider pulls up outside.

Charles gets out, pushes some euros into the valet's hand and they have a short exchange. The valet jumps in the Spider.

A doorman opens the door and Charles enters the lobby. He looks out of place in shorts, surrounded by businesspeople.

At his desk, the receptionist surveys Charles up and down. Charles produces his *American Express* platinum credit card, and places it deliberately on the desk.

The receptionist springs into action.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE. DAY TO NIGHT

1. Tourist Information. An employee marks a suggested route on a city map. Charles watches, camera around neck.

2. Charles takes a photograph of Saint Salvator Cathedral.

3. Charles in a café. He takes a teabag out of a now RED tea. He takes a cautious sip, grimaces and pushes the cup away.

4. Charles, wearing a headset, follows the mass around Groeninge museum. He stops at Provoost's *Last Judgement*, and leans in to study the naked women at the bottom.

5. A horse and carriage CLOMPS through the Markt. Charles looks up at the Belfry. Tourists around him take photos, and thinking he should follow suit, he lifts his camera. FLASH...

...AND INTO:

EXT. BUSY RESTAURANT. NIGHT

A busker plays VIOLIN nearby. Charles sits at a table, looking through the day's photographs on his camera.

ENGLISH MUM (O.S.)

Oh, that's a nice photo.

Charles looks across to the next table. A family of four are gathered around the camera, looking at the day's photographs.

ENGLISH GIRL

Look at dad's legs, they're like chicken drumsticks.

They all LAUGH. Charles turns back to his camera, and flicks through shots. All landmarks and no context. No loved ones.

His dinner is placed before him. The steak appears to be in good condition but Charles starts to poke it suspiciously. He puts down his knife and fork and CLICKS his fingers.

CHARLES

Garçon?

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT

The MINIBAR door is open, and some bottles are missing.

Charles lies asleep on the bed, his laptop on his belly. On screen, we see the heading 'Chapter One', and nothing below.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

Bruges was pleasant, but nothing more. I decided to travel onwards.

FADE IN:

EXT. WATERLOO BATTLEFIELD. DAY

Charles sits at the base of a large lion statue, drinking from a thermos. He reads a leaflet on Waterloo.

We swoop out over the surrounding fields. The faint sounds of BATTLE haunt the landscape as the voiceover continues...

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

At Waterloo, I thought about the valiant men who died to keep Britain British. Was it somewhat ironic that I was in Belgium searching for validation?

INT. CAR. DAY

Charles drives, eating a sugared waffle. On his passenger seat, a book on THE NAPOLEONIC WARS.

EXT. MANNEKIN PIS. EVENING

Charles, engulfed with tourists. He can't even see the statue ahead, and he's too English to push through. He holds his camera aloft to take a hopeful shot. He's captured a crowd of heads. He tries again: the distant mannekin is just visible.

With a victorious smile, Charles makes his way out of the crowd. As he escapes down an alley, we see a shop with three racks of postcards: the *Mannekin Pis* in different costumes.

CHARLES (V.O.)

Hello, it's me.

EXT. PETROL STATION. DAY

Charles is WASHING his car in a very rural petrol station.

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

Yes, I'm fine. Very busy of course  
but...we're getting there.

Suddenly, a cow starts to make his way across the platform; a shortcut between field and field. Charles reacts.

EXT. ANTWERP MARKET SQUARE. EVENING

A row of medieval guild houses form the backdrop. The *Brabo Fountain* at the fore. Charles, emotionless, takes a photo.

CHARLES

I've hardly left the office to be

-

(beat, as interrupted)

Well, we did pop to a bar for a  
quick drink last night.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT

Charles sits in a dimly lit corner of an Italian. He could be anywhere in the world. He writes on his 'ideas' pad but, a moment later, scrubs it back out again.

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

Mm-hm. Er, I can't remember what it was called...*King Tut's* something something.

INT. CAR. DAY

*King Tut's Wah Wah Hut*. It's under DRINKING in the Glasgow section of a travel guide. Charles has his finger on it.

He's talking into his mobile.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

It was nice, yes.

(reading)

It's a popular live music pub with low cost food including vegetarian options.

(beat)

Well, it's nice to know isn't it?

EXT. ERASMUS BRIDGE. DAY

The Spider drives over the bridge, entering Rotterdam. The camera looks over the city, including the distant *Euromast*.

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

I need to get back to work, so...

(beat)

I'll call you in a couple of days.

Yes, I promise.

INT. MUSEUM. DAY

Panorama Mesdag. Charles stands in the middle with a few other tourists. A child next to him pirouettes to see the painting, and bumps into Charles.

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

(can't get off the phone)

Okay, okay. Yes. Yes, you too.

Bye-bye. Bye.

The child spins and hits Charles again.

We focus on Charles' face. Irritated. Fed-up.

[SOUND CUE: Light RAIN falls]

EXT. CONTINENTAL VILLAGE. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

It's drizzling. The beer splashes, hit by droplets of rain.

A THUNDER CLAP.

EXT. WATERFALL. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

The waterfall is being PUMMELLED by rain. The bay fills at an extraordinary rate. Breaching ground level, water spreads all around. The naked woman SCREAMS as she's swept off, but falls silent the moment she SLAMS against a large rock. DEAD.

The rain continues. We see water flowing into the forest, destroying plants, turning BROWN as it picks up dirt.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAY

Charles, asleep on the extreme left of the bed, book on his chest. He slowly stirs and puts his arm out for Katherine.

She isn't there.

INT. TRAM 13. DAY

Charles, camera around neck, looks through some leaflets he's picked up. GALLERIES, MUSEUMS, WATER SPORTS at the beach.

The tram stops and the old couple in front of Charles exit. As the tram pulls off again, we see them out of the window: they pass *The Green House* café and enter the *Sexmuseum*.

EXT. LEIDSEPLEIN. NIGHT

Amsterdam's main square, laden with restaurants, bars and nightlife. Charles is accosted as he walks along.

LEAFLETEER #1

(in Dutch)

2 for 1 on drinks all evening.

CHARLES

No thankyou.

LEAFLETEER #2

(in Dutch)

Free white wine with a fish meal.

Charles holds up a dismissive hand.

LEAFLETEER #3

(in Dutch)

Free aperitif with a main course.

(in English)

Free aperitif with a main course.

Charles stops at his native tongue, if not his native accent. This is LAUREN; beautiful, pink-haired, 24 and Australian.

Charles is DUMBSTRUCK, like a teenage boy.

LEAFLETEER #3/LAUREN

Free aperitif?

CHARLES

Yes. Erm, could I please see a menu? Please.

LAUREN

Sure.

(she hands him one)

Are you English?

CHARLES

From England, yes.

LAUREN

I love English men.

Charles blushes, and absorbs himself in the menu.

LAUREN

Are you a food buff?

CHARLES

Actually I'm a, er, food critic.

LAUREN

(fast-talking)

Oh in that case you've got to try  
the hutspot met vleesjus - it's  
kind of like meatloaf but liver  
and mashed veg, seriously it's  
nice, looks like spew but...shall  
I show you to a table?

CHARLES

Erm, yes. Why not?

LAUREN

Cool follow me.

She's off, weaving between tables. Charles follows her.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

It was in Amsterdam that I met  
Lauren.

Charles is mesmerised by her ARSE in jeans as she walks.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER (CONT'D)

She was the handsomest creature I  
had ever seen. Perhaps that is why  
I did not suspect her earlier.  
Beauty breeds idiocy.

They reach a table. Lauren pulls out a chair and he sits.

LAUREN

You like red wine right?

CHARLES

Yes.

She takes a napkin and gently lays it on his lap. She  
brushes his thigh with her hand and looks intensely into  
his eyes.

LAUREN

We've got a Château Cheval Blanc  
1981 tucked round the  
back...that's if you can afford  
it.

Charles averts his eyes. Lauren smiles.

LAUREN

Well have a good meal...

CHARLES

Charles.

LAUREN

Have a good meal Charlie.

Charles reacts but she's off. He watches her walk away.

EXT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT - LATER

The blank NOTEPAD. Charles absently taps his pencil on it.

A WIDE-SHOT reveals he is alone. His bill has been placed before him, but is as yet unpaid. He's deep in thought.

LAUREN

(distant)

Okee, doei.

Lauren arrives in shot and sees Charles.

LAUREN

Hello again.

He looks up, and takes a moment to register her.

CHARLES

Oh, hi. Hello.

LAUREN

You alright?

CHARLES

Yes, fine. You're...finishing?

(he looks at his watch)

Oh my...

He looks over his shoulder. The waiters are gathered at the entrance to the restaurant, watching him with contempt.

Charles holds his hand up in apology and opens his wallet. Lauren clocks his *American Express* card with interest.

LAUREN

Did you have the hutspot?

CHARLES

Yes, I did.

He puts some euro notes on a plate and a waiter pounces.

LAUREN

And?

CHARLES

('so-so' gesture)

Uninspired.

He takes a dignified sip of coffee.

LAUREN

Is that not cold?

CHARLES

(swallows, pulls face)

Mm-hm.

LAUREN

Listen what are you doing tonight?

CHARLES

I've got work to do.

(impressively)

I'm a writer.

LAUREN

I thought you were a food critic.

His facade falters.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Anyway I'm meeting some friends  
for a drink, you wanna come?

CHARLES

I wouldn't want to intrude.

She LAUGHS. Charles doesn't know what to do.

INT. COCKTAIL BAR. DAY

LAUREN

...een glas rode wijn, graag.

The waiter leaves.

LAUREN

So what do you write?

CHARLES

Well, I...haven't...actually started yet. I mean, I've got plenty of ideas but I'm struggling to commit them to paper. This trip was supposed to help, I don't know, clarify some of them, but -

LAUREN

How long have you been here?

CHARLES

Amsterdam?

LAUREN

On this trip.

CHARLES

Oh. Four days.

LAUREN

Four days...and you've done Bruges, Brussels, Rotterdam...?

CHARLES

I've been quite disappointed.

LAUREN

Well you can't tick off a country in half a week.

CHARLES

It was only Belgium.

LAUREN

Why did you come away?

(no time for reply)

Okay then let me tell you - the same reasons everyone does - you're looking for something different, you want to experience new ways of life right, new people?

CHARLES

Yes. I suppose.

The waiter puts their drinks in front of them. Lauren has a red wine. Charles has an extravagant pink cocktail.

LAUREN

Well you're not giving yourself a chance, you're not really experiencing it are you? Do all the tourist stuff, sure, but you need to scratch the surface. Soak up the atmosphere. Do you think London can be summed up by the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace -?

Loud SLURP as Charles sucks some cocktail through his straw.

INT. CLUB O2. NIGHT

THUMPING BASS. Charles, woefully overdressed, pays for two beers at the bar. He turns to face the dancefloor.

CUT TO:

Lauren dances in tight jeans and a short-cut top to expose her toned stomach. A ring of enamoured men dance around her.

She spots Charles moving through the crowd, drinks held high.

LAUREN

(shouting)

Charlie!

He acknowledges her. She POINTS somewhere off screen.

LAUREN

This way!

She disappears into the crowd, much to the disappointment of the group of men. Charles follows, spilling a little drink.

INT. CHILLOUT ROOM. NIGHT

Plastic flaps hang from the doorway, like outside a freezer. Charles pushes through, spilling more drink en route.

LAUREN (O.S.)

Over here!

Lauren and two other people are seated on cushions, passing around a joint. This makes Charles uncomfortable, but he heads over anyway. He hands Lauren her drink, which is now about HALF EMPTY, and takes the spare cushion for himself.

LAUREN

Charlie, this is Arjan and Emile.

CHARLES

Nice to meet you.

ARJAN is 22 and Dutch. EMILE is 27 and French, with good English. She throws Lauren an inquisitive look.

Arjan offers next-in-line Charles the joint.

CHARLES

No thankyou.

ARJAN

(thumbs up)

Very good.

EMILE

Do you not smoke?

She pinches the joint off Arjan and takes a drag.

CHARLES

No, I don't.

EMILE

(exhaling)

You don't know what you're missing.

She passes the joint to Lauren, who holds it out for Charles.

LAUREN

It's perfectly fine, come on.

CHARLES

I'm a little old for peer  
pressure.

LAUREN

Hey I'm not trying to pressure  
you...I just thought you were  
looking for something new.

Charles considers this. He watches Lauren inhale deeply.

ARJAN (V.O.)

Oranje boven!

EXT. CANAL. NIGHT

A SPLASH as Arjan's body hits the water.

The bridge above. Emile, stripped to her underwear, LEAPS.

EMILE

Vive La France!

A SPLASH from below. Lauren slips off her top.

LAUREN

Come on Charlie, strip.

Charles looks down at the dark water. Emile surfaces.

CHARLES

I don't want to.

LAUREN

Come on Charlie.

EMILE

(distant, from below)  
COME IN!

CHARLES

No, no. I don't want to. It's  
just, my trousers. They're  
expensive. I don't want to leave  
them here.

LAUREN

Alright then...

...and she PUSHES Charles over the edge.

LAUREN  
(shouting after him)  
Rule Britannia!

He BREAKS the surface, but re-emerges very quickly, breathing heavily. He looks up at the bridge. No Lauren.

Suddenly he's DRAGGED underwater. We follow him down. The water settles and we see Lauren, her hands on Charles' TORSO. She grins, then uses him as leverage to push to the surface.

Charles remains underwater, placid. He takes in Lauren's submerged form: feet, ankles, knees, thighs, CROTCH.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER  
That first night, Lauren and I  
slept together.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT

It's dark, but we hear the sound of frantic SEX. It becomes faster, heavier, more desperate...escalating to CLIMAX...

INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAY

SILENCE. Gradually, the muted sound of TRAFFIC fades in.

Charles turns in bed, and feels the empty space next to him. He sits up, rubs his face and stands. Noticing a pair of knickers on a high, wall mounted lamp, he peels them off.

LAUREN  
Charlie?

He spins around, pants still in hand. Confused. Lauren, towel wrapped around her and newly BLONDE hair, perches on the edge of the bed. She dries her hair with a second towel.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
Are you ready for your guided  
tour?

MONTAGE SEQUENCE. DAY

1. INT. MACBIKE RENTAL. Charles, on his bike, hands over money. Lauren's off, so he flicks his stand up and pedals.

2. EXT. RIJKSMUSEUM. They park their bikes alongside rows upon rows of others, chatting animatedly and LAUGHING. Charles clocks the entrance fee: €10.

3. INT. ANNE FRANK'S HOUSE. Lauren affectionately squeezes herself against Charles as he hands over cash.

4. INT. CAFE. An untouched, somewhat YELLOW cup of tea. Charles puts money on the bill. He notices that he has a text from Katherine, but Lauren returns so he pockets his phone.

5. INT. THE HOLLAND EXPERIENCE 3D. Everyone in the theatre wears dark glasses. On screen, a tulip opens and everyone is sprayed with perfume. Lauren's enjoying it, Charles isn't.

A DYKE bursts, FLOODING the screen...

INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAY

Charles emerges WHISTLING from the bathroom. He wears boxer shorts and buttons up his shirt. He looks around and spots his WALLET on the side, resting against his BOOK. He checks his remaining cash and SIGHS; it's worse than he thought.

He takes out a photo of him and Katherine picnicking. They both look at least half a decade younger, and happy.

Charles SMILES fondly.

[Somebody DIALLING a phone]

CUT TO:

Charles paces the room, no more dressed, with the telephone.

CHARLES

Hello, it's me. I'm fine, I'm  
sorry I haven't been in contact.  
(beat)

That's the reason I'm calling.  
I'll be home by the weekend.

Charles spots a TIN on the desk. He walks over to it.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
Yes, I'll probably get on a train  
tomorrow or the day after.

The tin has the image of a MARIJUANA LEAF on it. Charles picks it up and considers it. He turns it over in his hand.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
So how have you been?  
(beat)  
Really? And what did you say?

Charles takes the tin with both hands and PULLS IT OPEN.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY. NIGHT

Lauren, in a figure-hugging black dress, walks along the hall. She arrives at Room 12 and KNOCKS on the door. Nothing.

LAUREN  
Charlie?

She KNOCKS louder, and the door swings open. She walks in, tentatively. The wardrobe is open: NEATLY HUNG shirts, trousers, ties. Lauren rounds the corner and sees Charles.

He's asleep over his laptop. Lauren goes over and SHAKES HIM.

LAUREN  
Wakey wakey.

CHARLES  
Mmm?  
(focussing)  
Lauren?

LAUREN  
You ready for dinner?

CHARLES  
Oh yes, let me just...

He goes to shut the laptop but FREEZES. There's a full page of writing, and the page count reads *4 of 4*.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT

A board of text. The DISPLAY MENU. We head over to Lauren and Charles, who are sitting at a table with outside heaters.

LAUREN

...and I ran out of money, it's that simple...I've been working here since.

CHARLES

So you have a visa, then?

LAUREN

(tuts)

Come on, it's cash in hand.

Charles is disapproving. Lauren notices.

LAUREN

Charlie, why did you come travelling?

CHARLES

I don't know.

LAUREN

Well what's disappointed you? What did you expect to find, inner peace, perspective?

CHARLES

I just...everything was different from how I imagined it would be.

LAUREN

So what did you imagine?

CHARLES

Well, all sorts. Peaceful villages, dramatic coasts. A waterfall.

LAUREN  
Waterfall?

CHARLES  
Yes, something beautiful. *Ideal*.  
Inner peace, yes, it's all there,  
it's...it's paradise on earth.

LAUREN  
(excited)  
Charles, I've been there.

CHARLES  
What?

LAUREN  
I've been to your waterfall, I  
mean your waterfall...it's high  
and secluded and beautiful, like  
you said...

[SOUND CUE: The water CRASHING down]

EXT. WATERFALL. DAY - **FANTASY SEQUENCE**

It *is* high, secluded and beautiful. As Lauren talks, we see what she describes. The water, the forest, the sun overhead.

LAUREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...with crystal clear water...it's  
in a clearing in the middle of a  
thick forest, really remote...it  
could be seen from the air but  
nothing flies overhead...

EXT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
Nobody knows about it.

Charles stares at her, his eyes lit up.

CHARLES  
(barely a whisper)  
Where is it?

LAUREN

In Norway.

CHARLES

(his face falls)

Norway?

LAUREN

A friend and me found it when we were trekking through the forest...I don't think anyone else has ever seen it. It's the most beautiful place I've ever seen.

CHARLES

(solemn)

I can't go to Norway.

LAUREN

Why not? I'll go with you.

CHARLES

I'm leaving tomorrow.

Beat.

LAUREN

(suddenly nonchalant)

Shall we order pudding then?

INT. BAR. NIGHT

We find Charles and Lauren, at a table with Arjan and Emile.

EMILE

So Charles, you are leaving tomorrow?

CHARLES

I need to go home.

EMILE

What do you need to go home for?

CHARLES

Well, I...I've got a job to get back to.

EMILE

Oh. Okay.

ARJAN

(to Emile, in Dutch)

What did he say?

EMILE

(in Dutch)

He needs to get back to work.

ARJAN

(in Dutch)

Straight away?

CHARLES

What did he say?

EMILE

He asked if you need to go back to work *now*.

CHARLES

Well, I should, I mean...

He tails off. A beat.

EMILE

Sure.

TIME CUT TO:

LATER. Charles and Arjan share a joint.

CHARLES

I need to know where you got this.

(Arjan doesn't  
understand)

Where can I buy this?

CUT TO:

Lauren and Emile at the bar.

EMILE

...then what is this with Charles?

LAUREN

It's just a bit of fun.

EMILE

So you're straight now?

LAUREN

It's not that simple...look, I didn't come halfway across the world to work in a restaurant - Charles is my ticket out of here.

EMILE

So you've slept with him?

She looks at Charles, still trying to communicate with Arjan.

LAUREN

Yeah I've slept with him.

EXT. AMSTERDAM CENTRAL STATION. DAY

It's mid-morning. Locals and tourists mill around.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAY

TRAFFIC fades in. Charles wakes, feels the empty space next to him, sits up and rubs his face.

Lauren emerges from the shower, a towel wrapped around her.

LAUREN

Morning sleepy head...I called Fabian this morning and quit, so we can leave as soon as you've showered.

She perches on the bed and dries her hair.

Charles is rooted to the spot.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

RING, RING, RING. CLICK. The answerphone.

CHARLES' VOICE (RECORDED)

You've reached Charles...

KATHERINE'S VOICE (RECORDED)  
...and Katherine. We're otherwise  
engaged (*giggles*)...

CHARLES' VOICE (RECORDED)  
...so please leave a message.  
(beat, off phone)  
How do I -?

TONE.

CHARLES' VOICE  
(strained)  
Katherine, it's me.

INT. LOBBY. DAY

Charles is on his mobile in a corner of the busy lobby.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
I know you're at work at the  
moment - I thought I'd call the  
house so as not to disturb you.  
(a breath)  
Something unexpected has come up.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

CHARLES' VOICE (CONT'D)  
I'm needed in Glasgow for a while  
longer, perhaps another fortnight,  
perhaps...  
(beat)  
I'll call again as soon as I can.  
(suddenly hurried)  
I have to go goodbye.

LAUREN'S VOICE  
You ready Charlie?

...and the call ends. We HOLD on the machine.

CUT TO BLACK.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

I am sorry for the message,  
Katherine. I'm sorry that the last  
words I gave you were a lie.

FADE IN:

EXT. ROAD. DAY

The Spider travels along a flat, country road. Wind turbines border the route like street lamps.

INT. CAR. DAY

Charles' phone rattles in a cup holder. It's been turned OFF.

The sun is shining so the Spider's top is down. Lauren wears a light summer dress, and her seat is angled back so that she looks above the windscreen. Her hair dances in the wind.

Charles looks across at her. God, she's beautiful.

CHARLES' VOICEOVER

The waterfall was always in my  
mind, but for then I was content  
to take in the sights with Lauren.  
Happiness isn't in the  
destination, but the route you  
take.

He tears his eyes away and looks back at the road ahead.

EXT. PETROL STATION - PLATFORM. DAY

Charles fills up. The display price is €59 and rising...

INT. PETROL STATION - SHOP. DAY

Lauren tries a pair of sunglasses in the mirror. They're no good. She does it twice more before finding a pair she likes. She walks over to the CDs and picks up *The Best of the 50s*.

[SOUND CUE: 'Sh-boom' by The Crew Cuts]

INT. CAR. DAY - MUSIC CONTINUES IN BACKGROUND

It's overcast, so the top is now up.

Charles watches the road intently. Lauren reads a travel guide, and taps the back of the CD with her long fingernails.

LAUREN

Did you know that Texel's known as Europe's Last Battlefield?

Charles looks across at her.

CHARLES

No, I didn't know that.

LAUREN

Well the revolt against the Germans didn't come 'til April 1945...and it carried on for nearly a fortnight after V-E day because none of the allies turned up.

(beat, aside)

God, don't you think that history just, kind of, validates you? I mean, knowing that the human race has survived all this stuff in the past makes everything more important, like the debt you hold to your predecessors is what the future will owe you. I find it so inspiring, don't you?

Charles looks across at her. This is new.

CHARLES

Mmm...

The Spider turns off an exit signposted FERRY PORT.

EXT. MARKET. DAY

Stallholders peddle their wares: cheese and meats, knitwear, homemade olive oil in plastic bottles. Lauren and Charles move slowly along with the masses. Charles is quite content amongst the tourists but Lauren is bored.

Lauren suddenly dives out of a rare gap, free of the crush.

LAUREN

Come on, let's get away from this!

Charles tries to move towards her, but is being jostled in the direction of the crowd. He holds out a hopeless hand as he is swallowed by the slow-motion stampede.

EXT. HEATHLAND. DAY

Lauren walks up a hill and out of frame. A BEAT, then Charles appears, red, breathless, supporting his camera as he climbs.

LAUREN

Come on Charles.

Charles struggles to the top, where Lauren is sitting on the grass, taking in a PANORAMIC VIEW of the island.

LAUREN

Beautiful, isn't it?

Charles looks all around. Heathland, sand dunes, villages. He reaches for his camera.

EXT. SHOP. DAY

Charles and Lauren look through racks of postcards of Texel and other areas of the Netherlands. Lauren chooses a couple.

Charles is looking at a postcard of a SMALL WATERFALL.