

BENNY FIX

Pilot for TV drama series

EXT. STOWBAY - DAY

Summer, present day. A sense of calm across the water.

I/E. BENNY'S BOAT

A modest, weathered cabin-cruiser is anchored mid-bay. The 'Be Happy'.

BENNY PORTER (35) quick-checks the generator and faltering bilge pump. He's agile, easy on the eye.

A short line of socks and boxer shorts dries in the breeze.

Inside, art prints are on display in opened bubble-wrap.

A laptop screen shows a video-link with sassy PASCALLE (25) in an art gallery. Casual activity behind her. She gestures to hush and move aside. Young artists casually step away.

PASCALLE
(video-link)
Benny?

Benny returns to his laptop.

BENNY
Sorry, sorry, the bilge pump's
playing up.

PASCALLE
Just a few more days. I'm doing
well.

Benny toys with a rugby ball.

BENNY
As long as you're selling.

He glances out at a luxury motor-yacht cruising by.

EXT. TOP DECK, 'FORTUNA' MOTOR-YACHT

Guests relax. Sharply handsome ANTON STYRIOS (30) is the social butterfly focus of attention.

Sleek GISELLE STYRIOS (30) shows interior design samples to an indulgent guest.

Anton strokes her arm.

ANTON
(posh)
Where's Mikey?

GISELLE

Thought he was with you.

A ball bounces down steps.

Little MIKEY (5) chases in a blue-white stripes football shirt, with 'KOKI 9' on the back.

The ball bounces down to the stowed power-dinghy. Mikey scrambles after it.

Seagulls swoop low, SQUAWKING. Mikey is briefly alarmed.

He spins round and around, laughing at the seagulls.

He loses his balance on the shallow aft deck.

He falls SCREAMING into the water.

Guests react.

A deckhand throws a life-ring out, but Mikey is too far back, struggling in the yacht's wake.

Skipper STEFFA (40) cuts the engines and rushes aft. She's tanned, super-fit, in white uniform jacket and shorts. With cropped 'blond' hair, wearing sports shades.

I/E. BENNY'S BOAT

Bobbing in the yacht's wake.

Benny reacts to Mikey's SCREAMS.

EXT. 'FORTUNA' & DINGHY

Steffa launches the power dinghy. Anton scrambles in.

ANTON

Mikey, we're coming!

Giselle is too late as the dinghy speeds away.

GISELLE

Mikey! Mikey! Oh my God! Please no!

EXT. BENNY'S BOAT & 'FORTUNA' DINGHY

Benny steers toward Mikey.

He hurls a life-ring but it's out of Mikey's reach.

He throws the rugby ball. Closer.

He tears off his shirt and dives in.

He reaches and supports flailing Mikey in the water.

Dinghy approaches. Steffa takes control of hauling Mikey out.

STEFFA

No, no! Head and feet must be
level!

She performs expert resuscitation on Mikey's little form.

Anton presses hands to his face, trembling in utter relief.

Benny's boat. The rugby ball is tossed up onto the deck.
Benny clambers onboard, heaving the life-ring.

He calls across.

BENNY

He's OK?!

ANTON

He's OK! Thank you my friend, from
my heart.

Benny signals acknowledgement.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Please, you must be my guest
tonight. Anton, The Fortuna. Pier
five.

Distracted, Benny checks the sodden pockets of his shorts. He
checks his discarded shirt. He glances out at the water.

He hurries into the cabin, searching.

He searches the deck.

His phone is behind a toolbox. He moves the toolbox.

The phone SPLASHES into the bilge-water.

Benny grabs the phone. It lights up with a home-screen photo
of a brightly smiling woman and girl.

He quick dries it with his shirt. He flops down, relieved,
exhausted.

He cradles the phone, gazing at the screen.

I/E. BENNY'S MERC, CAR PARK, QUAYSIDE - NIGHT

A classic Mercedes coupe. Benny opens the boot. He unzips a
'Tonioni bespoke' suit cover. He selects a jacket/slacks
combination. He selects a shirt in 'Tonioni' dry-cleaner
packaging.

A few 'Alice Gallery' promo cards lie scattered, showing a Georgian terrace gallery.

EXT. 'FORTUNA', MARINA

Anton's 'Fortuna' motor-yacht is moored among other luxury yachts. Security guards chatter on the pier.

I/E. LOUNGE DECK, 'FORTUNA'

The guests have gone. Anton is on a phone call, with a glass of champagne. Tense.

ANTON
(on phone)
Now let's not... we both should
have... Darling please, just be
thankful he's OK...

Benny sips champagne, intrigued by Anton's discomfort.

Asian steward EDMOND (25) deftly refills glasses.

Skipper Steffa declines a top-up. She fiddles with a folder.

Benny discretely admires her. She guardedly knows it.

ANTON (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Give him a hug from me...
(a glance at Benny)
Yes, of course I will... back
soon... soon... Bye.

He downs the champagne and gestures for more. He turns, smiling.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Mikey's running around again.

STEF
(NZ accent)
Oh, that's wonderful.

BENNY
Marvelous.

ANTON
Like he's a seagull.

He lifts his glass in a toast.

ANTON (CONT'D)
To life.

His smile fades.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Benny, I can't say enough just how grateful I am. Without you and Steffa...

An involuntary shudder.

BENNY

Best not dwell on it.

Steffa offers her folder to Anton to check. A token gesture.

STEFFA

Boss, I have to organize for tomorrow.

Anton urges more champagne.

ANTON

There's no rush, relax.

STEFFA

You'd better not drive.

She starts away, glancing at Edmond. He nods understanding.

She glances back at Benny.

Benny and Anton share tacit admiration of her departing form. Disappointed at her leaving.

BENNY

Impressive.

ANTON

She's a proper amazon. Olympics medal for sailing.

BENNY

Wow.

ANTON

Lives on board. Runs our charters. I'll show you around.

BENNY

But you're expected home.

ANTON

And you must dine with us. Giselle insists.

BENNY

Another time maybe. You'll just want to be together tonight.

ANTON

I suppose.

His PHONE RINGS. He reacts jittery. Then, checking, with relief.

ANTON (CONT'D)
 (calls out)
 Edmond, brandies if you please, on the bridge.
 (on phone)
 Not tonight, Seb. Duty calls at home... Well I'm sure you guys can party without me.

INT. BRIDGE, 'FORTUNA'

An array of navigation screens lights up. Benny is politely impressed.

Anton refills their brandy glasses and eases up into the skipper's swivel leather chair.

ANTON
 I'll have it installed for you.

BENNY
 Thanks, but not sure it would fit in my little tub.

ANTON
 Well the very least I can do is offer you club membership, VIP.

I/E. LOUNGE, 'FORTUNA'

Benny dutifully views footballers on a giant TV screen - celebrating a goal, clutching a silver trophy with blue and white ribbons, doing selfies for fans, signing shirts, driving away in luxury cars.

TV V.O.
 An exciting new season is upon us.
 We're in the big league now...

TV FOOTBALLERS
 And we're here to stay... here to stay... here to stay...

A sign-off shows the Stowbay FC stadium gates.

Anton turns to Benny for comment.

BENNY
 Anton, I have to say, that was just lazy, vacuous nonsense. A bunch of super-egos, playing to camera.

ANTON

(stung)

But its promotion to the Premier League. What do you expect?

BENNY

Some proper content. More humility in victory, more compassion. More about the fans.

Anton sighs frustration, downs his brandy and refills.

BENNY (CONT'D)

And you'll need weekly updates for specific targets besides the fans. Sponsors, investors, your local council. I'll put someone on it if you like.

Anton shrugs vague consent.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Believe me, you'll appreciate the difference.

ANTON

You're some kind of expert I suppose.

BENNY

I was in PR.

Anton reacts with a flicker of suspicion.

A cleaner holds back a work-mate from disturbing. Unseen by Benny and Anton.

I/E. LOWER DECK, 'FORTUNA'

Anton shows off his mini-gym and sauna to Benny.

He sees Mikey's little football shirt, drying on a chair. He's briefly overwhelmed.

ANTON

Damn football.

Benny picks up the shirt, silently coaxing.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Oh I shouldn't complain, of course. But if you knew just what I have to deal with.

He glances about, nervy, distracted, but seeing nothing.

INT. MAIN DECK

The cleaners briskly go about their business.

I/E. LOWER DECK

Benny and Anton move on out toward the stern.

Anton sways, alcohol affected.

ANTON

All the pressures and agents'
demands, and the season hasn't even
begun.

On impulse he clutches Benny's arm.

ANTON (CONT'D)

And there's the 'old lion'.

BENNY

Your father? Dmitri?

Anton is again suspicious.

ANTON

You know him?

BENNY

I know of him, of course.

Suspicion allayed.

ANTON

Pitched me in. Supposed to prove
myself.

BENNY

You did well to get promotion.

ANTON

Hardly my doing. And now we must
stay up.

They reach the stern. Anton sees the dinghy. He shudders,
averting his gaze out across the bay. But no comfort in that
view either.

ANTON (CONT'D)

He dotes on Mikey.

BENNY

Only natural.

Anton faces him, and Mikey's shirt.

ANTON

Sees him as a chip off the old block. So if he should hear of what...

He covers his ears.

BENNY

The little splash?

ANTON

Oh God, he'll be unbearable, unless I can stop any gossip.

Sudden sound of a Hoover. Anton reacts, paranoid. Glancing around, and across at the quay.

He snatches the shirt from Benny.

ANTON (CONT'D)

I must stop the gossip.

He distractedly folds the shirt, tighter and tighter.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Our guests, I did ask for their discretion...

BENNY

Who were they?

ANTON

Not another scandal. I can't cope with another...

BENNY

(firm)

The guests. On board, today.

ANTON

The guests? Hotel execs.

(hopeful)

Maybe flying back to Lisbon tomorrow.

(stark)

And some of Giselle's showbiz friends.

BENNY

Hmmm. A big ask.

ANTON

Promise me, Benny. You'll be discrete.

BENNY

I can do more than that. I can help.

Anton stares at him. An accusing stare. Becoming paranoid.

ANTON
So, PR. All your questions, I
should have guessed.

He confronts, jabbing a finger.

ANTON (CONT'D)
A publicist. A scandal-monger.
Another hot story to promote.

Benny remains calm.

BENNY
Anton, you have me wrong.

ANTON
Well, you got lucky. And a
photographer somewhere, no doubt.

BENNY
(flat)
Of course.

Anton pushes at him. Benny evades.

Anton collapses into a chair.

ANTON
Watch out for parasites. The Old
Lion is right about that.

Benny picks up Mikey's unravelling shirt.

ANTON (CONT'D)
So, hit me. What do you want for
your silence?

Benny tosses the shirt onto him.

BENNY
Thanks for the hospitality.

He walks away.

He passes alerted Steffa, then Edmond.

Anton stares after him.

ANTON
Benny, please, forgive me.
Completely out of order. Heat of
the moment.

Benny pauses. Turning, he's caught in a man-hug embrace.

ANTON (CONT'D)
My son is alive thanks to you.

He slumps.

Benny has to hold him up.

A LITTLE LATER

Anton munches left-over sandwiches. Steffa pours more black coffee. Benny eyeballs him.

BENNY
So. Dmitri. Make the call.

ANTON
Now?

BENNY
Now.

ANTON
What do I say?

BENNY
Set up a social visit, then
casually admit what happened.

ANTON
(sour)
That's PR?

BENNY
You want him to hear secondhand?
Mention about little Mikey, so
mischievous.
(mimics posh Anton)
'Takes after you Dmitri'.

A wry smile from Anton.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Take the hit and move forward. No
shirking. He should at least
respect you for that.

ANTON
Debatable.

BENNY
Tell him Mikey must have torn off
the life-jacket to show off his
football shirt. So proud.

ANTON
And?

BENNY
Chased a ball into the dinghy, the
seagulls made him dizzy. A little
scare in the water, but he's fine.

Anton pulls a face.

BENNY (CONT'D)
I'll prompt you.

He gestures back at the yacht.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Be pro-active. Tell him safety
barriers will be fitted. But you
must visit, soon as.

Anton considers.

ANTON
You'll come with me? Moral support?

BENNY
(shrugs)
I'm due back in London, but...

ANTON
Excellent.

BENNY
If you call Dmitri.

ANTON
Yes, yes.

BENNY
Now. Then I can go check my bilge.

Anton hesitates.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Make the call.

Anton reluctantly takes out his phone.

ANTON
I could do with your help at the
club. Come for lunch tomorrow.

BENNY
But right now, Dmitri.

Anton's phone RINGS. Checking, he answers, almost in relief.

ANTON
Yes, darling. I'm leaving now, I
promise.

A glance at intent Benny.

EXT. MARINA - DAY

Seagulls hover and SQUAWK.

INT. LOCKER ROOM, MARINA CENTRE

Benny SPLASHES in a shower cubicle.

He opens his locker, but is drawn to a discarded newspaper, with photo of an orange-hair footballer - "Koki Key To New Season Hopes".

EXT. BENNY'S BOAT, PIER

Benny returns in bathrobe and flip-flops, carrying a bag of groceries.

EXT. BENNY'S MERC, ENTRANCE GATES, STOWBAY FC

Fitters erect a mega photo of footballers in blue-white shirts. Dominated by Koki.

Benny drives up in his Merc, taking a random lanyard pass from a tangle of them. He briefly flashes it to security, as though a mere formality.

The guard casually waves him through.

EXT. STADIUM FORECOURT

Fans admire a bronze statue of an imposing footballer, with bronze boots hung around his neck.

Brash, brawny WAYNE (35) is the fans' guide. He wears a 'supporters club' gilet.

WAYNE
(squeaky)
The legend. Three hundred and sixty
two goals.

Benny walks by, breezily commenting.

BENNY
Big new season. High hopes?

WAYNE
Yeah, for survival.

BENNY
All about the money I suppose.

WAYNE

We need a bigger squad.

SUPPORTER

We should give more chances to our local lads.

2ND SUPPORTER

The Academy.

3RD SUPPORTER

Shame about Ollie Hollis.

SUPPORTERS

(chants)

Ollie Ollie Ollie 'Ollie!

3RD SUPPORTER

Shame.

BENNY

Ollie?

WAYNE

Got injured. Then lost to gambling.
Tragic.

EXT. PITCH & GROUNDSMAN'S SHED

Benny emerges from between stands, passing a shed.

Hippy groundsman SHAWN (60) maneuvers a pitch sprinkler. A terrier dog dashes in and out of the spray.

SHAWN

What's up, mate?

BENNY

Oh, I'm early for a meeting.

Shawn gestures above, to the main stand.

SHAWN

All about Koki I bet.

Benny shrugs.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

And more dosh to keep him. But no budget for us.

(in vague hope)

Don't suppose you can chase up my trainee application?

The terrier springs toward Benny.

SHAWN (CONT'D)
Dizzy, down, down!...
(to Benny)
Fancy a proper coffee?

They approach the shed. Sturdy EMMA (30) prepares a coffee percolator.

SHAWN (CONT'D)
Need more staff. Tell him, Em.

Seeing Benny, Emma instinctively flirts a little.

Descending ROAR OF A HELICOPTER. It lands on the pitch.

EXT. BOARDROOM WINDOW, MAIN STAND

Indistinct faces peer down at the helicopter.

EXT. HELICOPTER ON PITCH

Chubby 'GOBBO' (35) clambers out as the rotors slow. He prevents a 'G' logo cap from flying off his head.

He ignores Shawn's 'double teapot' glare.

He bustles on, adjusting his suit and tie, fending off Dizzy.

He scrambles to avoid the spray from a sprinkler.

Shawn laughs.

Gobbo responds with a finger 'salute'.

He makes a phone call.

Intrigued, Benny follows him.

INT. STADIUM LOBBY

Gobbo passes display cases of football memorabilia.

Nuggety factotum SIDDH (70) polishes the silver trophy with ribbons attached.

GOBBO
(on phone, Scouse)
Yeah, do it now... Now!...

Receptionist CANDACE (20) pauses in her phone chatter.

CANDACE
Can I help...?

Gobbo blows a kiss and bustles on.

Recognizing, Candace rolls her eyes. She makes a fast call.
Benny follows Gobbo, with a disarming smile to Candace.
He follows Gobbo into a lift.

GOBBO
(on phone)
You're breakin' up...

INT. LIFT

Benny nods a greeting. Gobbo ignores him.

GOBBO
(on phone)
Shut up and text...

INT. EXECUTIVE FLOOR

They emerge at a grandstand view of the stadium through sponsor boxes.

INT. EXECUTIVE SUITE

Gobbo bustles in, followed by Benny. He offers a cursory glance around.

GOBBO
Ladies...

Secretaries are on alert. They eye Gobbo with wary familiarity. But they fancy Benny.

Gobbo approaches the boardroom.

Compact, sharp-suited JUSTIN (30) emerges, with a box lid of mini-me footballer caricatures in blue-white kit.

He holds up a warning hand to Gobbo.

JUSTIN
They're busy.

GOBBO
Me too.

Pushing by he knocks the box lid. The caricatures spill.

He strides on into the boardroom.

GOBBO (CONT'D)
Gents...

He SLAMS the door shut.

Justin glares after him.

JUSTIN

Bastard.

Secretaries giggle.

MUFFLED SHOUTING in the boardroom.

A secretary starts to pick up the caricatures. Benny helps her replace them on the box lid while Justin stands rigid in wounded pride.

He eyes Benny.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Who do you want to see?

BENNY

Anton, a lunch appointment.

Justin promptly offers his hand.

JUSTIN

(a little vain)

Justin, general manager.

Benny gestures to the boardroom.

BENNY

So who?

JUSTIN

That idiot? Gobbo. Players' agent.

He displays the orange-hair caricature of Koki.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Has Koki on his books. Two idiots.

ZEGGER ZOF (40) storms out of the boardroom and away. He's a crew-cut hulk in blue tracksuit, initialed ZZ.

Gobbo follows him out, almost bouncing with ferocity, leaving a parting shot inside.

GOBBO

That's where we stand on Koki.
You've got my number.

He chases after Zeger.

GOBBO (CONT'D)

Zeger, Zeger...

Fascinated, Benny hot-foots after them.

Anton emerges from the boardroom, furious, trying to compose himself.

INT. CORRIDORS

Gobbo chases.

GOBBO
Zeger, listen. Don't mess with the
politics.

Zeger pauses to confront. Benny discretely pauses too.

ZEGER
(Dutch accent)
Politics? Bollocks. Greed.

GOBBO
It's all about negotiation. You
know the game.

Zeger continues on, swatting Gobbo away.

ZEGER
Get lost. You put crazy words in
Koki. Gonna ruin him.

Gobbo chases him down stairs to another corridor.

GOBBO
Koki's a star on the rise, big
time. You've been blessed.

Zeger ignores.

GOBBO (CONT'D)
If you can't deal with me, you
can't deal with Koki. Tell you that
for nothing.

Zeger turns on Gobbo, threatening a fist.

Benny steels himself. He calls out.

BENNY
Gentlemen, gentlemen, please...

The antagonists turn in surprise.

Benny approaches with a princely, benevolent air.

GOBBO
You again.

BENNY
I couldn't help overhearing.

GOBBO
Snooping. Clear off.

BENNY
Please. Let's be constructive.
There's new interest in the club.

Gobbo is instantly intrigued.

GOBBO
What kind of interest?

BENNY
Let's find a quiet spot.

He moves on. Zeger and Gobbo follow, disarmed by Benny's calm authority.

Benny peers into an open 'Supporters Club' office. He politely gestures to enter.

Gobbo and Zeger resist.

BENNY (CONT'D)
(to Gobbo)
You must be the agent.

GOBBO
Clever lad.

ZEGER
The great Gobbo.

GOBBO
(preens)
A dozen players on my books. Eight
in the Premier League.

BENNY
Excellent.

He turns to Zeger, but Gobbo speaks.

GOBBO
Him? Zeger Zof, Dutch
international. Class.

Zeger is unmoved by Gobbo's flattery.

GOBBO (CONT'D)
Now he's a decent coach, but he's
nobbled on budget.

ZEGER
The season not start yet, but this
jerk, he try to mess with Koki.

GOBBO
Just business, and you know it.

Benny gestures inside again.

BENNY
I can guess the situation but,
indulge me...

INT. LIFT, CORRIDOR

Wayne emerges from the lift, with a carton of milk. Starting down the corridor he hears VOICES.

INT. SUPPORTERS' CLUB OFFICE

The cramped room has a table and chairs, filing cabinet and a makeshift kitchen. The walls are covered with football posters and pin-ups. A red postie bag is on the table.

Gobbo and Zeger are warily seated. Benny is by the open door, strategically blocking the exit.

GOBBO
(to Zeger)
You should be spending, big time,
if you want to stay up.

ZEGER
That for sure, but you hold us to
ransom. You want all the money for
Koki...
(to Benny)
And get-out clause in the contract.

GOBBO
To kick in half way through the
season, the winter window. That's
only if you're stuck near the
relegation zone. Bottom eight.
Can't say fairer.

INT. CORRIDOR

Wayne pauses by the Supporters Club door. He's astonished by what he overhears.

WAYNE
'Kin'ell.

INT. SUPPORTERS' CLUB OFFICE

Zeger shakes his head.

ZEGER
the great Gobbo. Nothing but a
greedy rat.

Benny intervenes.

BENNY
And threatening to make Koki the
deserting rat, it seems.

Gobbo jumps to his feet.

GOBBO
Koki's worth double the deal. He's
had massive offers. Massive. Needs
a quality team to bring out the
best in him.

BENNY
Or bad results and his price drops.

GOBBO
Bright lad. You got it.

He reaches for a packet of biscuits in the postie bag. Zeger
moves the bag away. Gobbo glares.

GOBBO (CONT'D)
I'm fighting for you, big fella. To
keep Koki and more money for the
squad.

ZEGER
You just bullshitter. You gonna
threaten the dirty tricks.

Benny reacts, pantomiming enlightenment.

GOBBO
It's just money. The friggin'
league's loaded. Dmitri's loaded.

Wayne bursts in, with a challenging glare all round.

WAYNE
Dirty tricks?

He recognizes Zeger.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Jeez, Zeger the Wizard. Good luck
mate. We're looking good? No injury
scares?

ZEGER
(beams)
We good. You good fans. You make
the big noises.

Wayne gives a double thumbs up. He thumps a poster of Koki. He glares at Benny and Gobbo.

WAYNE

Koki's our boy. Helped get us up.

GOBBO

Hop it, pal. With respect.

Wayne wavers, fearing he's out of his depth.

WAYNE

Well er, carry on like. I'll get a coffee at the shop.

He backs out. Benny intrigues.

BENNY

Wait. You run the supporters' club?

WAYNE

(pumped up again)
Chairman.

BENNY

Excellent. Then you might have a minute.

He gestures to sit with them.

GOBBO

(to Wayne)

No way. Clear off. This is private business.

WAYNE

Koki's our business.

ZEGER

That's right.

He pulls out a chair for Wayne.

Benny eyes Gobbo, enjoying his discomfort.

BENNY

You were saying?

GOBBO

Up yours, pal. Hasta la vista.

He kicks his chair over. He makes a scowling exit.

INT. CORRIDOR

Justin snoops.

Gobbo pushes him aside.

GOBBO
Get lost.

INT. SUPPORTERS' CLUB OFFICE

Benny and Zeger share satisfied glances.

Wayne is confused.

WAYNE
Was that a result?

ZEGER
You bet.

BENNY
Unless...

He starts out, concerned, brushing past Justin.

INT. EXECUTIVE FLOOR

He's light on his feet, up steps and emerging.

INT. EXECUTIVE SUITE

He glances around.

BENNY
Gobbo?

Secretaries shake their heads in relief. But show further interest in Benny.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Anton?

A secretary indicates the boardroom, with a pained look of warning.

Benny reacts to sound of the helicopter. He smiles and retreats.

EXT. PITCH

The helicopter powers up into the sky.

Seen off by Dizzy, fiercely yapping.

EXT. BENNY'S MERC, CAR PARK, MARINA

Benny takes a fuel can from the boot.

EXT. BENNY'S BOAT, PIER

Approaching his boat he stares in dismay.

Powerful unit CHESTER (40) sunbathes in boxer shorts. With paperback novel and beer bottle beside him.

A suit lies folded on a business backpack. A manila envelope is perched in readiness on top.

Benny backs away.

EXT. ENTRANCE GATES TO PURKISS HALL - DAY

'Purkiss Hall' is carved in a stone gate-post. The imposing iron gates are rusty, chain-locked.

Benny gets out of his Merc. He peers through the gates at the abandoned grounds.

He makes a call on his phone, with home screen photo of the smiley woman and girl. He sounds upbeat, but looks concerned.

BENNY

(on phone)

Alice, have you settled in?...
How's Daisy?... Tomorrow's still
on?... The gallery's OK, don't
worry...

A pheasant wanders out through the gate.

Benny scares it back to safety.

BENNY (CONT'D)

(pained)

Yes, I'll be on time...

EXT. OPEN-AIR MARKET

Benny buys a modest bunch of flowers. He pauses to observe a 'Fresh Garden Produce' stall.

The sturdy, country-gent stall-holder serves a customer with an affable air.

He smiles in response to a joke from a fellow trader. He settles down with a newspaper crossword.

Benny turns away and sees a natty car enthusiast admiring his Merc coupe.

BENNY
Electric engine.

He points to a window decal - 'Classic Cars e-Born'.

NATTY CHAP
Bit of a compromise?

Benny smiles and gestures to get inside for a ride.

BENNY
Be my guest.

His PHONE RINGS. He steps away.

BENNY (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Hey Elliot, you're a football nut.
I might have a nice gig for you,
regular too...

I/E. 'GORSE COTTAGE'

Another 'Fresh Garden Produce' sign. The garden is dominated by a large greenhouse and cloches.

Home-office. Neat and compact. Impeccable HARRIET PORTER (60) has a queen-bee aloofness about her, even alone.

She prepares Women's Institute mailers with brisk efficiency.

She talks to herself.

HARRIET
That's the reminders done.

She arches her back and runs her hands down her body. A moment of sensuous indulgence.

BENNY (O.S.)
Mother?

Kitchen. Harriet finds Benny waiting with the flowers.

HARRIET
Benny, how nice.

She allows a brief kiss on her cheek.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
You could have warned me.

BENNY
Sorry, sorry.

HARRIET
No matter.

A LITTLE LATER

Patio. Tea and cakes.

BENNY
I saw him at the market.

HARRIET
He's desperate to make a proper go
of it.

BENNY
Tell him to put his crossword away.
Look busy but leave spaces to show
he's in demand. Busy-ness brings
business. Basic.

HARRIET
He won't listen.

Benny sighs.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Anyway, that money from your
'gallery friend' for the boat
has certainly helped.

BENNY
I'll get it fixed and sell on.

HARRIET
He suspects it's you, of course,
but he wouldn't have dealt direct.

Benny shrugs in put-upon frustration.

A trusty old Land-Rover pulls up, with trailer of unsold
produce in tow.

Benny tenses.

The driver is the sturdy stall-holder, RUSSELL PORTER (60).
He stares at Benny's Merc as an unwelcome inconvenience.

He gets out, a little stiffly.

Benny lifts a hand in token welcome.

Russell ignores him. He jerks a thumb at the Merc.

RUSSELL
(to Harriet)
Expect he'll be leaving soon.

HARRIET

Tea, dear?

Russell waves the invite away.

RUSSELL

Later. Things to do.

A LITTLE LATER

Kitchen. Benny shapes to leave. Harriet draws his attention to a framed 'Stowbay Players' theatre poster on the wall, 'Dead On Nine'.

HARRIET

I have to rehearse for The Captivating Stranger. Such a commitment.

BENNY

I'm sure you'll find time.

HARRIET

I always liked Alice's designs. Maybe she can do our new one, now she's...

Trying to prompt.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

I thought the gallery was intended for...

No response.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

And after giving up your career.

BENNY

(flat)

We couldn't rely on the gallery. I have other projects too.

HARRIET

So, as ever, just too busy. Poor Alice, poor Daisy.

BENNY

Yes Mother.

HARRIET

You never could relax. Always up to something. Always 'whatever next?'

BENNY

Yes Mother.

He starts out.

HARRIET

I do care.

I/E. BENNY'S BOAT, PIER, MARINA

No sign of Chester.

Benny cautiously approaches. On-board, he checks the cabin door. It's locked.

A VOICE BOOMS.

CHESTER

Benjamin Porter, I presume.

He strides down the pier, now dressed, with backpack in hand, cooling his face with a bottle of beer.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Chester Sullivan. Grieves
Adjustments.

He finishes the beer and tosses the bottle to Benny.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Old Barn bitter. Not bad.

He gestures to come aboard.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

May I?

No response. He boards.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Just a little matter of mortgage
arrears, Benjamin. Flat and
gallery.

BENNY

But I have an understanding with
the agents.

CHESTER

Well you'd better understand a
court order.

He methodically opens his backpack and presents the manila envelope.

Benny resists.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Now let's be sensible.

Benny reluctantly accepts the envelope.

CHESTER (CONT'D)
We can dispense with it for now, if
you're willing to make a
contribution...

BENNY
This is rather intrusive.

CHESTER
Three months owing, plus penalty
costs, and the next three months in
advance as a gesture of commitment.

BENNY
Trust me, I have serious deals in
play.

CHESTER
We only trust the money.

He jerks a thumb back at the quay.

CHESTER (CONT'D)
Nice motor by the way.

Benny can't hide his exasperation.

CHESTER (CONT'D)
You shouldn't have done a runner.

BENNY
Hardly that. I have a summer show
at the gallery. A young artists'
group, so I'd rather be out of the
way. I can work from here.

CHESTER
Whatever. You'll pay something now?

He whips out a card reader. Benny frowns at the hustle.

BENNY
Let me check.

He starts toward the cabin.

Inside, he makes a phone call, glancing back.

BENNY (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Captain's Choice?

A LITTLE LATER

Deck. Benny opens a folio of art prints.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Maybe you'd like to invest in art.

Chester enjoys Benny's chutzpah, briefly.

CHESTER
It's your tangibles if you're
struggling. Your boat, your motor.

A Captain's Choice waitress wiggles along the pier, carrying
fish and chips take-aways and Old Barn beers on a tray.

Benny signals. He pays cash.

BENNY
Marvelous, thanks.

A lingering smile from the waitress as she starts away.

Chester eyes her, and the feast.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Enjoy.

Chester eyes Benny, silently acknowledging an operator.

He seizes a bottle-opener. Beer froths.

Benny hastily moves the folio of prints away.

I/E. 'SCALLYWAGS' BAR - NIGHT

Loud CHATTER and background MUSIC. Decor features photos and
cartoons of famous rogues and rascals.

A soul band prepares to perform.

Benny is at the bar, glancing around.

BENNY
(shouts to barman)
Just a student hangout back in the
day.

Anton and Zeger arrive. Zeger winces at the vibrant
atmosphere. Party animal Anton hails Benny.

ANTON
Brilliant, you sly devil.

Benny feigns puzzlement.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Gobbo. I hear you shafted him.

BENNY
Needed shafting.

ZEGER
That son of a bitch.

ANTON
(to barman)
Champers.

ZEGER
Got him good, for sure.

ANTON
But Gobbo. How?

BENNY
The bigger the front the more to
hide. And we had a little help.

A glance to Zeger.

BENNY (CONT'D)
From the Supporters Club.

ZEGER
For sure.

Barman pours champagne. Rangy RUPERT (30) and chubby SEB (30)
converge. Smug playboys.

RUPERT
Hey, Anton....

SEB
She's let you out?

ANTON
You wasters...

They're distracted by LIVE MUSIC.

Zeger frowns.

Anton and friends whistle and whoop, moving closer to the
soul band.

Anton tries to flirt with a waitress. She walks away, but a
busty waitress draws his interest.

Benny and Zeger strain to be heard.

ZEGER
You gonna work for the club?

BENNY
Oh, I'm just happy to help.

ZEGER
You deal with the politics, I deal
with the football.

BENNY

You deal good with the football.
Thirty eight internationals as a
player, many trophies.

ZEGER

I been lucky, and still lucky.

He proudly shows photos on his phone.

BENNY

Very nice.

ZEGER

Now we expect a third. Gonna be a
girl. And you? Family man?

BENNY

A have a daughter, Daisy.

He shows his phone.

ZEGER

Very nice.

Exuberant APPLAUSE for the band. Rowdy customers push by.

Zeger looks trapped, ready to explode.

BENNY

Zeger, go home. I'll say you had a
call.

Zeger's frustration evaporates.

ZEGER

OK. You good man.

He lifts his glass to Benny, but doesn't drink.

ZEGER (CONT'D)

I don't drink. He should know that.

He starts out.

Benny is obliged to wait on. He gazes at his phone.

EXT. 'SOPHIE FASHIONS' SHOP - DAY

A 'Summer Sale' sign in a window display of country fashions.

Benny approaches with a cardboard box and large bunch of
flowers.

INT. 'SOPHIE FASHIONS' SHOP

Shop bell RINGS as Benny enters.

Voluptuous SOPHIE JEEVERS (40) glances away from attending to elderly customers.

SOPHIE
Can I help?

BENNY
You must be Sophie.

Mutual attraction.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Benny... Alice's er...

Sophie checks her gaze.

SOPHIE
Oh, Benny, yes... they're not back yet from shopping.

She beckons.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Please, come into my parlour.

Back office. Benny follows her in. Stairs are glimpsed, and a courtyard through french windows.

Sophie lifts a glass of wine, inviting Benny to join her.

BENNY
Tempting, but I'm Daisy's chauffeur for the day.

He takes a lava lamp out from the box.

BENNY (CONT'D)
For her. It got left behind.

SOPHIE
I'm sure she misses you.

BENNY
I miss them both.

SOPHIE
Oh, Alice is a Godsend. Working part-time for use of the flat. She's organising my websites too.

BENNY
She ran our gallery in London. Inspired it.

EXT. 'SOPHIE FASHIONS' SHOP

Lissome ALICE (35) and DAISY (10) take shopping from a compact SUV. They're recognisable from Benny's phone.

Alice tenses, Daisy brightens, on seeing Benny's Merc.

INT. 'SOPHIE FASHIONS' SHOP

Shop bell RINGS.

Daisy hurries in.

DAISY

Dad?

Alice hushes her, indicating the customers.

Back office. Reacting, Sophie smiles blithely at Benny.

SOPHIE

I'll leave you to it. Bye.

Shop. Sophie emerges. Daisy bounces into her.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Oops. Hi Daisy.

DAISY

Hi.

Daisy hurries by.

SOPHIE

(to Alice)

He's here. He's nice.

Back office. Daisy hesitates, then rushes into Benny's arms.

DAISY

Dad.

BENNY

Sweetie.

He kisses and swings her round.

She lands as Alice enters.

ALICE

Benny.

Benny glances at his watch, and at Alice.

BENNY

So who's late?

A tolerant smile from Alice. Daisy smirks.

BENNY (CONT'D)
Sorry, sorry.

Alice bustles Daisy away.

ALICE
Pop up and get your things.

DAISY
Dad, come and see the flat.

Benny is diplomatic.

BENNY
Another time maybe.

Disappointed, Daisy starts upstairs alone.

ALICE
(murmurs)
Thanks.

She allows Benny a kiss on her cheek.

ALICE (CONT'D)
How's London?

BENNY
Just about coping without me, I
suppose.

Their eyes lock in mutual concern.

A customer calls.

CUSTOMER (O.S.)
Miss? Hello?

Alice reluctantly responds.

Shop. She attends to the customers. One holds up a blouse.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)
It's not really my colour.

SECOND CUSTOMER
Oh it is.

CUSTOMER
(to Alice)
What do you think?

I/E. BENNY'S MERC ALONG STREETS

Daisy stares ahead, pouting a little. Benny drives, looking a little defensive.

BENNY
Takes time to resolve.

DAISY
But you're still friends?

BENNY
Of course.

DAISY
Not just cos of me?

BENNY
Sweetheart, we've been friends
since teens.

Daisy eyes him.

EXT. PARK

Girls' softball cricket. High spirits. Daisy is a nimble fielder.

Parents help set up a BBQ.

Alice's SUV draws up, at a distance, unnoticed.

Alice discretely gets out and sits on a bench.

She sees Benny pacing, absorbed in a phone call.

BENNY
(on phone, patient)
Norris, Norris... yes, I get your
drift... well I'll try for
tomorrow, with a possibility to
stabilize things...

West Indian girl JUANITA (12) bowls. The batter hits the ball high and far.

PLAYERS (O.S.)
Catch!

Daisy runs and catches. She celebrates and spins round, seeking to enjoy the moment with Benny.

The sudden excitement draws him, in time to engage with Daisy's elation. He punches the air.

Juanita rushes to embrace Daisy. They laugh and tumble.

They bump heads.

Alice starts toward them concerned, but the girls giggle.

Juanita's father ROY (35) strides over. He's tall, lean, calmly regal, taking off a BBQ comic apron.

Benny follows him.

JUANITA
We're OK, Dad.

ROY
Best we do a check. What's your name?

JUANITA
Daisy.

More giggles, met by Roy's stern gaze.

He turns to Daisy.

ROY
How many fingers...
(supposing)
Daisy?

He displays three fingers.

DAISY
Three.

Roy waves a finger in random circles, checking the girls' eye co-ordination.

He gestures OK and to get back to the game.

ROY
Good catch, well bowled.

Alice smiles with relief, still unnoticed.

Benny retreats with Roy.

BENNY
You're a doctor?

ROY
(grins)
Hardly. RAF. Just basic checks.

Alice retreats too, to her SUV. A little tearful. Still unseen.

INT. ALICE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Dusk. Compact living-room with kitchenette.

A TV is on mute. The lava lamp glows in the window.

Alice adjusts an iPad illustration. She transfers it to a Sophie Fashions layout on a computer screen.

Daisy's tiny bedroom. She practices scales on an acoustic guitar. Some of the frets buzz. Frustration.

Alice turns and stretches as Daisy approaches. They hug.

I/E. BENNY'S MERC, COAST ROAD - DAY

He drives, speeding, glancing at his sat nav.

Momentary alarm.

He slows to cruising speed.

EXT. DMITRI'S VILLA

Security guard at gates checks and lets Benny through.

Anton's SUV is parked, with view of the villa beyond.

Anton gets out to liaise with Benny.

Mikey, in his football shirt, wriggles free from Giselle. He runs away, kicking a ball.

Giselle eyes Benny and is attracted.

GISELLE
Benny, at last.

She gestures after Mikey.

GISELLE (CONT'D)
I can't thank you enough.

BENNY
It's what anyone would have done.

Giselle embraces him with socialite poise.

GISELLE
Thank you, thank you.

Her embrace tightens, discomfiting Benny, ending with her defiant glance at Anton.

Chubby PHIL (40) with briefcase, casually dressed, approaches his car from the villa. He eyes Anton, gesturing back.

PHIL
Never ending.

Anton shakes his head, unsurprised.

He starts after Mikey, trying to take Giselle's hand. She deftly resists.

BENNY
Now let's focus. You're here to celebrate family. Any mention of Mikey's mishap, just remember what you said on the phone.

ANTON
(arch)
Takes after you, Dmitri. Full of adventure.

GISELLE
Huh, Dmitri. Full of himself.

EXT. VILLA TERRACE & POOL

Mikey kicks his ball around the main building.

Grounds slope away to a jetty at the edge of a bay.

A classic sailing yacht is moored.

The ball bounces past a mini-goal, toward a swimming pool.

Mikey races to stop the ball, but it falls into the pool.

MIKEY
My ball, my ball!

He teeters on the edge and backs away, fearful.

HECTOR
Hey Mikey.

Body-built, smiley Greek aide HECTOR (50), retrieves the ball with a pool skimmer.

On the terrace, DES MANDERS (70) discards a newspaper. He's in powerful good nick, in shirt and swim-shorts, with a rugged 'game face'.

DES
C'mon Mikey.

Hector and Des pass the ball, teasing, tempting Mikey to tackle.

But Mikey is still distracted by the pool.

DES (CONT'D)
What's up, lad?

MAUDE STYRIOS (55), in straw hat, breaks away from conversation with a gardener. She's spry, composed. She carries fresh-picked flowers in a trug.

She offers a smiling welcome to Benny, Anton and Giselle.

She chills slightly on embracing Giselle.

MAUDE
Giselle, my dear.

GISELLE
Maude, how nice to see you again.

Anton gives Maude a warm hug.

He lifts Mikey for a kiss from her.

MAUDE
Ah, darling little Mikey.

Anton and Giselle share anxious glances, and relief.

Maude gives the trug of flowers to Mikey.

MAUDE (CONT'D)
Be a dear and give to Hilda.

She gestures toward emerging, comely Asian maid FRIDA (30).

A seagull hovers close by.

Mikey drops the trug. He races around, imitating a seagull.

Roar of LAUGHTER from a villa balcony. Imperious, robust DMITRI STYRIOS (70) observes in silk robe.

DMITRI
(Greek accent)
Hey Mikey. I come down.

An apprehensive glance from Anton to Benny.

MAUDE
Dmitri, we have a guest. Look respectable.
(aside to Frida)
We'll have tea now.

She gestures for all to relax on the terrace.

Anton makes introductions.

ANTON
My good friend Benjamin... my dear
mother Maude.

BENNY
Benny. Delighted.

Maude is lightly charmed.

Des approaches.

ANTON
And Des is, what can I say, the
club legend.

BENNY
Three hundred and sixty two goals.
Remarkable. Honoured to meet you.

Des has a shrugging modesty, well used to compliments.

DES
I had the knack I suppose. And no
bad injuries.

Maude lightly scrutinizes Benny.

MAUDE
Now then Anton, what about this
young man?

ANTON
A fellow mariner.

BENNY
Oh, just a weekender.

ANTON
And helping me at the club.

MAUDE
Well please be careful with Dmitri.
No shop talk.

Anton 'zips' his mouth.

MAUDE (CONT'D)
(to Benny)
He's delegated the club to Anton
for a while. But can't help
interfering.

Benny admires the bay view.

BENNY
Marvelous.

MAUDE
Dmitri's family were fishermen.
He's always lived by the sea.

ANTON
(to Benny)
Don't get him started on his life
story.

MAUDE
It is rather special.

BENNY
And you must have been a vital
influence.

Maude is dismissive, but further charmed.

MAUDE
Oh, I just happened along.

Dmitri joins them, swaggering in open robe, revealing
swimming shorts.

DMITRI
Greetings.

He only has eyes for Mikey.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
Mikey, Mikey, my little hero.

Anton and Giselle share wary glances.

Mikey rushes forward and into Dmitri's lifting arms.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
My young lion.

He hugs and kisses Mikey, and lets him down.

Anton and Giselle share relief.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
What shirt you have?

He gestures for Mikey to turn around.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
Number nine, Koki.

MIKEY
Koki Koki.

ANTON
(on impulse)
Number one problem.

Dmitri frowns. Maude tut-tuts.

Anton regretfully glances at Benny.

Dmitri appraises him.

DMITRI
So, who?

ANTON
My good friend Benjamin.

Dmitri is distracted by Mikey's antics.

ANTON (CONT'D)
A sailing friend.

DMITRI
Sailing. Huh. You like Anton's ugly
monster, or you prefer?

He gestures out to his classic yacht.

BENNY
You're putting me on the spot,
but...

He gestures admiration of the yacht.

Dmitri laughs.

DMITRI
Relax, have swim, enjoy.

He drops his robe.

MAUDE
No Dmitri, we're about to have tea.

Dmitri dives into the pool. Hector jumps in after him.

Mikey instinctively steps away.

Dmitri floats on his back.

DMITRI
Come on Mikey. Take off your shoes.

Mikey reluctantly obeys.

Dmitri stands in the pool.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
And your shirt, come on.

He beckons, arms wide.

Anton and Giselle dare not intervene.

Mikey edges closer, closer. Tremulous.

Dmitri glares at Anton.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
What is this? You say he fall off
the boat, but no big deal.

ANTON
Chasing seagulls, full of
adventure.

GISELLE
Like you, Dmitri.

DMITRI
Huh.

Anton turns to Benny for support.

BENNY
No real danger.

DMITRI
I heard about it. You fished him
out?

Benny awkwardly shrugs.

BENNY
With Anton and the skipper.

DMITRI
We're in your debt my friend, big
time, and I don't forget.

He eyes Anton and Giselle.

He checks his watch. He unfastens and gestures for Mikey to
take it.

He grabs Mikey and tries to pull him in.

ANTON
No, no!

GISELLE
Leave him alone!

Mikey breaks away.

DES
Go easy on the little fellow.

DMITRI
Come on Mikey. You chicken?

MIKEY
(yells)
No chicken.

Dmitri flails in the water. Sudden panic. Mikey is shocked.

Dmitri is play-acting. He laughs.

Mikey laughs too. He rushes to the little diving board.

MIKEY (CONT'D)
No chicken.

He jumps up and down on the board. He springs off, over Dmitri, and into the water.

Dmitri beams. Mikey clumsily swims close.

DMITRI
My little hero.

He grabs Mikey and ducks him under, holding him down.

Anton and Giselle look on in horror.

Des starts up.

DES
Hey, stop that!

Dmitri lifts and embraces spluttering Mikey.

DMITRI
Nothing to scare. Just water. We
all come from the water.

A LITTLE LATER

EXT. VILLA WATERFRONT

Benny and Anton stroll toward the jetty, kicking Mikey's ball.

ANTON
It's hard to have any kind of
conversation.

BENNY
That breeds suspicion.

ANTON
But he expects unquestioning
loyalty. Impossible.

He kicks the ball hard. It bounces off the jetty onto Dmitri's yacht.

They start back.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Nikolas found a way to escape.

BENNY
Your brother?

ANTON
Building new hotels in the Far
East. Loyal to the business but out
of reach. A stranger to me. A
stranger to us all.

Benny silently presses.

BENNY
Now you're stuck with running the
club.

ANTON
And the 'old lion' interfering.

BENNY
Walk away?

ANTON
I wish. But he's testing me. He'd
brand me a quitter.

BENNY
He's king of the hill. You have to
accommodate.

ANTON
With your help.

Benny is silent.

EXT. VILLA POOL & TERRACE

Dmitri tries to teach Mikey a folk song, towelling him dry.

Frida clears away the tea.

She bustles past Dmitri. He admires, shaping to flick her
bottom with the towel.

He shares naughty boy grins with Hector.

MAUDE
(calls out)
Now, Dmitri, you must rest.

Dmitri waves in heeding irritation.

Hector prepares to massage him on a table.

Maude is with Giselle, separated by an empty chair.

Giselle reaches for Mikey as he scampers by.

GISELLE

Dmitri was way too rough.

MAUDE

There was no real danger.

GISELLE

(huffs)

Just because...

She lapses into silence.

Maude eases out of her chair.

MAUDE

You are staying for supper?

GISELLE

Of course.

Maude eyes her.

MAUDE

Anton needs a settled home life,
more than ever.

GISELLE

Then he should make an effort. He
can't expect me to give up
everything.

MAUDE

He's having to adjust at the club,
under the spotlight...

GISELLE

Where is Nikolas? He should be
helping. Odd that I've never met
him. Too busy even to fly in for
our wedding.

MAUDE

That extravaganza?

She starts away.

Giselle seethes.

INT. LOUNGE

Fading light. Spacious. A grand piano with family portraits
and digital photo frames with changing images. Paintings of
Greek island views.

Giselle rests on a sofa, with Mikey asleep on her lap.

Dmitri proudly shows off a curious coffee-table to Benny.
The glass top rests on a battered leather suitcase.

DMITRI

I got off the ship with nothing,
just a suitcase of my mother's
lace to sell.

Benny nods appreciation. Anton, Des and Hector have heard
it all before.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

I worked all hours and bought an
ice-cream van. More money in fish
and chips. Then I bought a boarding
house. Too many actors in it, but
it was bricks and mortar. Always I
plan ahead.

He shows a row of tattered notebooks in a display case of
curios.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

My books. Everything inside. All
I needed. No wise guys to rip me
off.

Maude passes by, putting on a cardigan.

MAUDE

Then I interfered.

DMITRI

Maude worked in a bank. Taught me
how best to leverage my money.
Tried to teach me how to relax.

He blows a kiss to Maude. He gestures to Mikey.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

I started late but... what is
life without family?

He eyes Anton.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

(hisses)

Mikey needs a brother, a sister.
You forget what to do huh? You
playin' away? You both playin'
away?

Giselle overhears.

Benny sees the hurt on Anton's face.

Des chuckles and slaps Dmitri's back.

DES
Go easy.

A LITTLE LATER

In a room beyond are framed football mementos - photos, signed shirts. a giant TV screen shows Johan Cruyff playing for Ajax.

Dmitri and Des view, in football heaven.

Benny and Anton keep silent company. Benny glances at his watch.

A sequence of passes on TV.

DES (CONT'D)
Brilliant.

DMITRI
Stroking the ball. Pure teamwork.

DES
Pure football.

DMITRI
Too much knockabout now.

DES
Too much money. Too much ego.

DMITRI
The managers, the players, they come they go, no time to experiment.

DES
No time to bond a proper team.

DMITRI
(aside to Des)
That boy, Ollie?

Des sadly shakes his head. He turns to Benny.

DES
Academy. A natural playmaker.
Brilliant, but lost to gambling.

DMITRI
What a waste.

He fixes his gaze on Anton.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
So what is this with Koki?

Anton is on his guard.

ANTON
Oh, just star player tensions.
Nothing to worry about.

DMITRI
Like what?

Anton eyes Benny. No response.

ANTON
(shrugs)
Gobbo wants a get-out clause.

DMITRI
But you have the deal.

ANTON
He threatens the unpredictables.

DMITRI
Unpredictables?

Des is animated.

DES
The usual bollocks. Fake
injuries, dressing-room flare-
ups.

DMITRI
Outrageous.

He confronts Anton, jabbing a finger.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
You must put a stop. Nip in the
bud. Bad for team morale, and for
the fans if rumour gets out.
Poison.

ANTON
That's Zeger's headache.

DMITRI
Passing the buck huh?

ANTON
Well I'm just filling in. You
expect me to work miracles?

DMITRI
You can't stand the heat?

Anton is exasperated. He eyes Benny again.

Dmitri eyes him too.

BENNY

Player power. The modern game.

ANTON

Zeger and Gobbo had a shouting match. All about Koki. Benny stepped in, and sent Gobbo on his way.

He's desperate for Benny to engage.

BENNY

A storm that I just happened on. Only natural to try and calm the situation. Clarify best interests.

Dmitri savours the phrase.

DMITRI

Clarify best interests. Sounds like bullshit, but go on.

BENNY

Gobbo will hit back of course, that's his job.

DES

Football agent? Call it a job?

DMITRI

Parasites.

He eyes Benny more closely.

DMITRI (CONT'D)

So, what is your interest?

Anton chips in.

ANTON

I met him at the marina. We...

Dmitri sharply signals for Benny to answer.

BENNY

Anton suggested helping at the club. I'm rather too busy but I had a look around.

DMITRI

You're some kind of expert?

BENNY
I was at Jordan and Keen,
consulting.

DMITRI
Huh. What kind of consulting?

BENNY
Mostly corporate, advising on
problems and opportunities.

DMITRI
A spin man. An operator. One step
up from Gobbo.

ANTON
That's not fair.

Dmitri glowers.

BENNY
Dmitri is right to be cautious.

DMITRI
Consulting. Why you leave? What
you do now?

BENNY
Oh, I have other interests, and I
needed more family time.

Dmitri's eyes light up.

DMITRI
Family. That's the biggest deal.
Through the good times, the not
so good times. All these years
with Maude.

DES
And counting, pal. You got lucky
with her.

Dmitri presses a hand to his heart.

DMITRI
I only wish we could have raised
a bigger family.

He turns back to Benny, with a provocative smile.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
Maybe you OK for a bullshit PR
guy. Maybe you help Anton. Some
wise counsel.

BENNY
If available.

He defers to Anton.

ANTON
To be sure.

Dmitri steps closer to Benny.

DMITRI
You think I should check you out?

BENNY
If my CV...

Dmitri waves away the suggestion. He stares intently, appraising.

He offers his hand. Benny warily accepts.

Dmitri twists Benny's hand, forcing him to the ground. Though Benny is part-diplomatic in his surrender.

Dmitri laughs. Des laughs. Anton is dutifully amused.

Dmitri slaps Benny's back.

DMITRI
You make us your priority. You do good and we pay good. Top dollar. And I say this...

He eyes Anton too.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
Football is entertainment. I want the crowds to enjoy the beautiful game. Give it our best shot, hey Des? But if all the talk is the money game, how much we pay for, how much we sell for... if all the talk is idiot stars and bastard agents...

His gaze returns to Benny.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
You put a stop.

BENNY
Well I'm certainly flattered, and honoured to be in the presence of not one legend, but...

His gaze moves to Des, and back to Dmitri.

DMITRI
I said no bullshit.

Laughter.

Dmitri turns on Anton. A piercing stare.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
So, you've been reckless with
Mikey. Letting him fall off that
ugly thing you call a yacht.

ANTON
But I explained...

BENNY
We've dodged the media.

Dmitri turns to him.

DMITRI
And I'm grateful. But my boy has
been mixing with the wrong crowd.
Neglecting his responsibilities.
Dickin' around, caught up in those
scandals. Shaming the family name,
shaming my reputation.

ANTON
Well you're no saint.

Dmitri turns and slaps his face, hard.

DMITRI
At least my private life stays
private.

Des steps forward.

DES
Hey, let's all calm down.

Dmitri continues to eye Anton.

DMITRI
Those media bastards have got you.
Minor league celebrity now. For
better or worse. You have to play
smart.

A glance at Benny for support.

BENNY
(shrugs at Anton)
Discretion or disgrace.

DMITRI
(beams)
Discretion or disgrace... I like
this guy.

He motions to Benny to step away with him.

DMITRI (CONT'D)
We must talk.

But Benny pulls out his car key-fob.

BENNY
I've intruded enough on your
hospitality...

ANTON
But you must stay for supper.

BENNY
I'm due back in London tomorrow.
Much to do.

Dmitri beckons again.

DMITRI
But first we talk.

BENNY
Another time, perhaps.

Dmitri looks affronted as Benny turns away.

Des is impressed by Benny's polite resistance.

EXT. VILLA

Anton sees Benny to his Merc.

ANTON
Now you know why I need you.
He's impossible.

BENNY
But he's the boss. I can't work for
a house divided.

Anton is panicky.

ANTON
You promised.

BENNY
I expressed an interest.

ANTON
I'll put you on a retainer. All the
perks. You name it.

Benny starts to drive off.

BENNY
I wish you luck, and I'm happy to
advise by phone.

Anton despairs.

I/E. BENNY'S MERC THROUGH STREETS

Benny drives past Stowbay FC stadium. The Koki photo display shines bright.

He drives on. Pensive. He pauses at Sophie Fashions shop. He peers up at a warm window glow in the flat above.

I/E. ALICE'S FLAT, SOPHIE FASHIONS

Changing colours of the lava lamp.

Alice lies sleepless...

FLASHBACK

EXT. ALICE GALLERY, LONDON - DAY

Alice hurries reluctant Daisy out. They load bags into her double parked SUV.

She pushes keys into the letterbox.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. BENNY'S BOAT, MARINA

Aft deck. Rain SPATTERS on the toolbox.

Benny checks the bilge with phone torchlight.

Rain SPATTERS on the cabin windows.

Benny is glimpsed inside, flopping down exhausted.

FADE OUT.