

COUNTERFEIT
PILOT - "THE WORLD CRASHES"

Written by

Ashley Tropea

EXT. STREETS OF ENGLAND - NIGHT

LAMPLIGHTERS illuminate gas street lamps.

Victorian CARRIAGES calmly roll down cobblestone streets.

The scene is peaceful, magical. There is no rush, no hurry.

But further through the streets... past the lamps and carriages... past market places and shops... sits...

EXT. ROSEVILLE MANOR - NIGHT

A mansion. Complete with ANGEL STATUES at each corner of the roof and swirling metal fixtures covering the DOUBLE DOORS.

All the windows are dark...except ONE.

INT. ROSEVILLE MANOR - FOYER - NIGHT

The MOONLIGHT is the only light in the beautiful entry way, reflecting off the MARBLE FLOORS and CHANDELIER.

All is silent.

INT. ROSEVILLE MANOR - STUDY - NIGHT

The study is as ornate as the outside of the house, with beautiful PAINTINGS and a large FIREPLACE lighting the room.

Above the fireplace is a FAMILY PORTRAIT, of a husband, wife, and 2 daughters. The man's chin is in the air and his chest is puffed out.

The man himself, **CHARLES JEFFORDS (50s)**, sways drunkenly in front of it. Nothing like the painted assured nobleman.

SWEAT glistens on his FLUSHED face and his scotch glass trembles in his hand as he takes a sip.

CHARLES

(slurring)

Time. That's all I'm asking for.

ABRAHAM RIVERSHAM (30s), the looks of Prince Charming with the mind of a parasite, reclines behind a large wooden DESK.

ABRAHAM

Would you not agree that I've been more than accommodating throughout this unfortunate business?

CHARLES

I have a plan, Mr. Riversham. The money will come, I just -

ABRAHAM

Always, "The money will come."

Abraham rolls his eyes and stands. Meanders calmly.

Charles watches him with heavy-lidded, rapidly blinking eyes.

Abraham stops in front of Charles' GUN case, which holds a PISTOL. He picks it up thoughtfully.

When he doesn't say anything, Charles starts to FIDGET.

CHARLES

I-I've arranged a betrothal. It's an excellent match, I assure you. The chap has already agreed to it, and it would more than adequately cover the bill. Of course, I've not yet told my daughter, but -

ABRAHAM

I don't care if you rob a bank, take out a loan, or try your luck at the godforsaken Melbourne Ball. As long as I get what's owed to me by the end of the month.

Charles CHUCKLES awkwardly.

CHARLES

One week is a bit quick to organize a wedding. It would invite scandal.

Abraham rests the GUN back in its case. Takes a moment to position it just so.

Then he walks toward Charles who backs away nervously.

Abraham stops an inch from the cowering Charles. Glances up at the FAMILY PORTRAIT. Smiles pleasantly.

ABRAHAM

Lovely portrait. I have often found myself staring up at your beautiful family. Especially your youngest. A pretty little thing, isn't she?

He meets Charles' glassy eyes and his smile DROPS, exposing the dark spirit that lurks beneath his friendly expressions.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)
 I was promised payment, Lord
 Jeffords, and I will have it.

Charles' whole body seems to **QUAKE** as they **LOCK** eyes.

But then Abraham reaches for his **HAT** resting on a chair and calmly places it on his head. **TIPS** it at Charles.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)
 I'll be back tomorrow. For a
 friendly check-up.

Abraham goes out the door.

Still trembling, Charles glances up at his family. His poor children. He touches their feet as **TEARS** form in his eyes.

SNIFFLING, he clumsily drops into his seat behind the **DESK**.

Downs the rest of his scotch. Digs a **HAND** into his **HAIR** and nearly yanks it out.

STARES at the portrait on the wall. Shakes his head.

TEARS fall. Charles reaches out to put his glass on the desk - and **KNOCKS OVER** the ink bottle.

CHARLES
 Blasted - I - A mess. My mess.
 Again. Always, my mess...

As he speaks, he hastily tries to mop up the ink -

Charles' gaze **STALLS** on the **GUN** in its display case.

The pistol seems to **GLEAM** in the firelight. Taunting him.

TEARS roll down Charles' cheek. With his shaking hands, he **GRABS** the gun.

Rests it on his desk and **STARES**.

Charles glances back up at the portrait.

At his **WIFE**. She stands proudly.

A flood of **TEARS** falls down Charles' sweating face.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
 Stop looking at me like that.

The portrait stays the same.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
I said, stop it.

He THROWS his scotch glass at it. It SHATTERS on impact.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Stop it, you pathetic, ungrateful,
ugly bitch!

Charles LURCHES to his feet and beelines for the painting.
RIPS it from the wall and SMASHES it on the ground.

The frame BREAKS apart with a loud CRACK.

Charles points the GUN at his wife's face.

She just gazes serenely ahead.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
You were right. Is that what you
want to hear, Katherine? You were
right. You would do it better,
wouldn't you? Of course, you wo -

Charles freezes. Drunken eyes latch on her image.

Charles watches her as if she's actually talking, as if he's
actually LISTENING.

And then...

CHARLES (CONT'D)
You would, wouldn't you. My wife
would do better than me.

She seems to STARE him down. GLARING at him.

Charles NODS. Swallows hard and wipes the tears from his
eyes. HUFFS out a humorless laugh.

Returns to his desk and pulls out a piece of paper.

He takes a moment to center himself. Draws a deep BREATH.
Sets his shoulders and...

Dips his pen into the INK PUDDLE. WRITES. Clumsy hand now
steady. He SIGNS his name.

Charles sits back in his chair and looks at the family
portrait again. At his DAUGHTERS.

At his WIFE.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Go on, then.

Raises the GUN to his temple -

BANG!

Blood EXPLODES out of the side of his head.

INT. ROSEVILLE MANOR - KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

KATHERINE JEFFORDS (late-30s), a Victorian beauty with a reinforced delicate manner, BOLTS upright in bed.

She glances to the spot beside her, but it's EMPTY.

Katherine throws the covers off and grabs her robe.

Opens the door and steps into the...

HALLWAY

Katherine softly closes the door behind her.

LYDIA JEFFORDS (19), the beauty of her mother but as much delicacy as a raging bull, peeks out of a door a few feet away in confusion.

Just beyond her, **WINNIFRED "WINNIE" JEFFORDS (18)**, not conventionally pretty but endearing in her awkwardness, steps into the hall with similar curiosity.

LYDIA

Mother? What was that?

KATHERINE

Go back to bed.

Lydia steps into the hallway and CLOSES her door behind her defiantly. Winnie eyes her sister and copies her.

Katherine shakes her head but relents.

INT. ROSEVILLE MANOR - STUDY - NIGHT

Blood DRIPS from Charles' head, PATTERNING against the floor.

The door opens slowly, and the three ladies PEER inside.

As one, their eyes fly WIDE and they GASP.

TEARS burst from Winnie's eyes and she RUSHES to her father.
Lydia balks, falling back against the wall.

WINNIE
Oh, my God! Papa!

Winnie's hands hover over him without knowing what to do.

Lydia covers her mouth and shakes her head in horror.

Katherine...is surprisingly BLANK. Her lids flutter as she stares, but there are no tears or looks of horror.

She takes in the whole scene with absolutely no expression.

Charles' dead body. The PORTRAIT. The GLASS SHARDS beside it.

The **NOTE** with Charles' signature.

Katherine's brows furrow and she drifts towards the desk.
Grabs the note and **READS** it.

WINNIE (CONT'D)
Papa! Papa, please!

LYDIA
I'll fetch help.

KATHERINE
Wait.

Lydia freezes and both girls turn to Katherine.

Katherine gazes at Charles with complete and utter shock.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Lydia, shut the door.

LYDIA
Why?

KATHERINE
Just do it!

Lydia quickly complies, eyes wide.

Katherine's hands begin to tremble, making the paper in her hand CRINKLE loudly in the now silent room.

Winnie's eyes lock on the PAPER in her mother's hand.

WINNIE
What is that?

Katherine doesn't say anything. Her breathing picks up SPEED.

Winnie meets Lydia's eyes with fear and concern.

Lydia quickly crosses the room and takes the paper from Katherine. READS it.

Katherine sinks into a chair.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

Lydia?

Lydia's gaze darts to Katherine before she shakily reads:

LYDIA

"S-Sweet and Perfect Katherine."

Winnie WHIMPERS and turns back to her father. Holds his hand.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

"Do you recall, all those years ago, the unfortunate circumstances that befell good Sir George?"

WINNIE

Who is Sir George?

They wait for Katherine to respond but all she can do is stare absently into the fireplace.

LYDIA

"Do you recall how I criticized his feeling of shame? Shame was not meant for men like us. He ought to have been stronger."

Lydia looks up again.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

What is he talking about, Mother?

Katherine's gaze slowly drifts to the PORTRAIT. To her husband's noble face.

LYDIA (CONT'D)

I am speaking to you!

WINNIE

Lydia. Keep reading.

LYDIA

Fine. "I implore you to remember your sentiments about the incident and allow yourself to feel similarly toward me. For it is my turn to feel shame, to feel weak, to...feel trapped."

WINNIE

I don't understand.

LYDIA

"But you are not weak, Katherine. You would do a better job of it than I. So it is with much regret that I must say goodb--"

KATHERINE

(softly)

That's enough, Lydia.

Lydia's eyes have welled with TEARS and Winnie stares uncomprehendingly at Charles.

LYDIA

What did he mean? Escape from what? Was Papa in danger?

Katherine turns from the painting to the real man.

KATHERINE

He's ruined us.

WINNIE

Wh-What do you mean?

Winnie stands and takes the note from Lydia. Reads herself.

KATHERINE

There's nothing left.

Winnie's shoulders lower as she finishes reading.

Her and Lydia gaze at their father with a mixture of deep sadness and betrayal. The deafening SILENCE weighs on them -

KNOCK, KNOCK.

All their eyes SWING toward the door.

MORGAN (O.S.)

(through the door)

Is everything all right, Your Lordship?

Katherine's back straightens and life returns to her eyes. She looks between Charles' body and her daughters.

The KNOB begins to TURN.

Katherine LEAPS from her chair and BOLTS for the door.

She catches it just as **GERALD MORGAN (50s)**, noble in character but not station, dressed in a nightshirt, tries to enter. She BLOCKS him from seeing into the room.

He tries to peek through the crack in the door.

KATHERINE

Morgan, I am terribly sorry to have woken you.

MORGAN

It's no problem at all, Your Ladyship. I thought I heard a gun -

KATHERINE

Gun?! Oh, heavens, no.

Behind her, Lydia and Winnie exchange a look. FROWN in confusion at their mother.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

No, no, Morgan, just a bit of an accident. Charles...has knocked the portrait down is all.

Morgan stalls. Studies Katherine.

MORGAN

(meaningfully)

Has the portrait injured you, my lady?

KATHERINE

No, I am quite all right, Morgan, thank you.

Morgan stares harder, as if hoping she understands his code.

MORGAN

Perhaps you'd like to return to your rooms for some tea?

KATHERINE

That won't be necessary. I promise, I'm all right. You can see to the frame in the morning. Good night now, Morgan.

She CLOSES the door on him and leans against it, holding her breath. Lydia and Winnie watch on with fear.

After a moment, Morgan's feet THUMP as he walks away.

Katherine SIGHS in relief.

LYDIA
Why did you lie?

Winnie's eyes are fastened to Charles. Struggling to process.

Katherine glances between Winnie and Lydia. What is she meant to tell them? How does she explain this?

Katherine speaks SLOWLY as her thoughts piece together.

KATHERINE
Ten years ago, Sir George
Raventhall took his own life.

Lydia and Winnie stare WIDE-EYED.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Your father and I watched as his
wife and daughter were thrown out
of their own home. Mrs. Raventhall
did not - could not - remarry and
not a suitor in all of Europe would
even look at their daughter. Their
ruin went far beyond finances.

WINNIE
What...what happened to them?

Katherine meets her gaze. The deep horror, the deep terror.

She shakes her head and takes a step closer to her daughters.

KATHERINE
Listen to me very carefully. We
will send for no one.

WINNIE
But we must!

LYDIA
Of course we must.

KATHERINE
Listen -

LYDIA

No, I will not listen to this.
We've done nothing wrong and
neither has Papa. Just because -

KATHERINE

Nothing wrong? He's gambled away
everything we have and then some!

LYDIA

So we'll marry to cover the
expenses. You'll remarry. The
solution is not -

KATHERINE

QUIET, Lydia! For once in your
bloody life, you're going to do as
I say!

Lydia FLINCHES at Katherine's outburst.

Katherine takes a BREATH and steels herself. Moves across the
room, as if retracing her steps.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I was in the study with your father
when we heard a bird in the
chimney.

She grabs the WATER PITCHER and DOUSES the fire. The room is
plunged into DARKNESS.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Your father and I tried to get it
out but all our mucking about in
the chute knocked down the
portrait.

She gestures to the broken PORTRAIT.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

That was the noise Morgan heard.

WINNIE

Mother, we can't -

KATHERINE

Your father saw what would happen!
He saw it with his own eyes! And
now he's done it to us!

It's Winnie's turn to JERK BACK at the venom in her voice.

Katherine's nose curls in disgust as she looks at Charles.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
But we are not the Raventhalls.

She straightens her shoulders and juts her chin out.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Neither of you have seen your
father since supper. You went to
bed and when you awoke, you
discovered he'd taken ill. You did
not investigate a strange noise nor
leave your beds. Yes?

Winnie nods. Lydia just gazes at her mother darkly.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I will tell the staff that he
is...catching, and no one - apart
from me - is to enter his room
until he has recovered.

LYDIA
We're going to tell them he's alive
when he's lying here, dead?

KATHERINE
He won't be lying here.

Katherine shirks off her robe.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Lydia, fetch the keys from your
father's room. Winnifred, give me
your robe.

Katherine gets on her knees and MOPS the BLOOD with her robe.

Lydia and Winnie stare. There are no words for their shock.

WINNIE
What are you doing?

KATHERINE
Your robe, Winnifred!

LYDIA
Why? Why lie about -

KATHERINE
Because if anyone finds out, our
lives are over! Satisfied? Is that
a good enough answer for you, girl?

Lydia grinds her teeth as she stares down her mom.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Keys, Lydia. Now. Winnifred?

Winnie obeys with trembling limbs, slipping off her robe while Lydia leaves the room.

Katherine presses Winnie's robe to the **HOLE** in Charles' head.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 Hold it here.

Winnie's mouth parts in horror. But she holds it there.

INT. ROSEVILLE MANOR - SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Only the moonlight through the many windows illuminates the long, plain corridor, lined with DOORS.

JULIET MANNERS (20s), nervous by nature and a mere slip of a girl, in her nightgown, gazes anxiously down the hall.

Dressed identically is **ANNA SHEPHERD (18)**, a free spirit and the good looks to get away with anything. She stands beside Juliet, staring with excitement instead of concern.

ANNA
 He had it comin'.

JULIET
 Anna!

ANNA
 What? It may not be the most
 Christian thing to say, but you
 know I'm right.

JULIET
 We've no idea what's happened yet.

ANNA
 Don't we?

Juliet turns to her with wide eyes.

JULIET
 What do you mean?

ANNA
 I hear things is all.

ROSE (O.S.)
 Just because you hear things
 doesn't mean you ought to repeat
 them.

ROSE DEVSHIRE (30s), a maid as proper as the lady she serves,
 also in her nightgown, steps up beside them.

Anna rolls her eyes.

ROSE (CONT'D)
 If His Lordship catches you
 gossiping, he'll sack you.

ANNA
 I ain't gonna be caught -

JULIET
 Wait, there's Mr. Morgan.

Indeed, Morgan uses a candle to guide himself toward them.

MORGAN
 What are you lot doing out of bed?

JULIET
 Is everything all right?

He SIGHS tiredly.

MORGAN
 Just a fallen picture frame.
 Please, get back to -

ANNA
 I'd know that sound even if I was
 struck deaf; that were a gun, Mr.
 Morgan.

ROSE
 If His Lordship says it was a
 fallen picture frame, then it was a
 fallen frame, Anna.

ANNA
 That's only if it were His Lordship
 that said so.

MORGAN
 Enough, Miss Shepherd. Everyone,
 back to bed.

Morgan turns and heads toward a door on the opposite end of
 the corridor.

Juliet bites her nails and glances at Anna.

JULIET

You really think it was a gun?

ANNA

Mark my words, Her Ladyship's done
him in.

ROSE

Don't listen to her. Come on.

Rose urges Juliet back to her room, shaking her head.

But Anna hangs back. Stares curiously down the hall.

INT. ROSEVILLE MANOR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Katherine's hands are hooked under Charles' ARMPITS while
Lydia and Winnie struggle to carry his LEGS.

All of them try to stifle their HUFFS of exertion as they
move through the dark corridor.

They disappear around a CORNER.

For a beat, all is SILENT. Then -

ANNA comes down the hall with a candle in her hand. She
clearly hasn't seen anything but suspicion propels her.