

THE DORCHESTER PLAN

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. LONDON (1935) - NIGHT

Low lying clouds give an air of claustrophobia to the huddled buildings and narrow winding streets. Big Ben CHIMES 7 times.

INT. BALL ROOM - NIGHT

Bright chandeliers and crystal ware. Starched WAITERS weave through SOCIETY'S CREAM and HIGH RANKING MILITARY MEN dressed in formal 1935 fashion.

Vivacious, frosty ELISE KITTING (30) flirts over champagne flutes with an inebriated RN ADMIRAL (55) whose focus is more on her daring cleavage.

Aristocratic, doughy HERMANN KITTING (42), works a clutch of bejeweled WOMEN at a buffet table with charm and gossip.

Ill-at-ease in formal garb, PETER HAMILTON (22) fakes the same panache with a whiskey-fueled bravado, oblivious to the fact that everyone knows he doesn't belong here.

MUSIC and CONVERSATIONS ebb and flow. Elise and Hermann casually center themselves amid three different groups.

ADMIRAL (O.S.)  
Submersible patrols in the North  
Sea.

GENERAL (O.S.)  
Work is progressing on the A9  
Cruiser. Lovely little tank.

Hermann keeps an eye on Peter as he fawns over a posturing young COUNTESS (20s).

COUNTESS  
I don't think I could survive  
another depression. The servants  
positively ate me out of house and  
home the last three years. I'm  
sorry, I've forgotten your name.

PETER  
It's Hamilton, Peter Hamilton. You  
mustn't worry.

He leans in to share a secret.

PETER (CONT'D)

I have a direct line to the  
Exchequer. The pound is as stable  
as the Rock of Gibraltar.

She sighs her relief, toasts Peter.

Hermann and Elise exchange a glance. Ad-libbing their good-  
byes, they make their way out of the room.

HERMANN

(German accent)

I told you it would be a good night  
for gossip.

ELISE

(German accent)

Such children, these English. Where  
is the boy?

Hermann winces, heads back in, tugs Peter away from the  
Countess. She shrugs, finds a new face to talk to.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A premier establishment, the building reeks of high society.  
Elise and Hermann exit with royal formality.

A limo glides up. Elise enters. Hermann pushes Peter in, gets  
in himself. The limo moves into light traffic.

EXT. LONDON - HYDE PARK - NIGHT

Fronting the swath of greenery, The Dorchester Hotel commands  
an entire block: venerable, imposing. A haven for the well-to-  
do, common folk shunted across the street park-side.

Drab four and five story brownstones cower beside the  
opulence. Blocks away, a ten story skeleton of steel beams  
and plywood floors rises.

Every street is festooned with streamers of flowers and  
banners celebrating King George V's 25th year on the throne.

In the park, a collection of painted wagons and canvas tents  
bristles with MUSIC and MOVEMENT.

EXT. HYDE PARK - NIGHT

ALFRED THACKER (58), imperious in a conservative suit, ignores the carnival at his back. His busy eyes sweep the Dorchester block end to end.

Glancing up from their background activities, a half dozen MEN acknowledge Thacker with quick meeting of eyes, go back to their business.

Thacker grunts a satisfaction, scans the traffic approaching.

Behind him, fresh-faced, lanky MANLY DAWES (25) strains like a puppy on a leash. Dawes takes in the carnival tents with unrestrained infatuation. He bumps into Thacker's back.

Thacker startles, frowns at Dawes with impatience.

DAWES

(Londoner)

Dawes, sir. I was pulled to replace Warren. I wasn't given a post.

THACKER

(Oxford overtones)

Oh. Dawes. Yes. Well. I suggest you take up a post, hereabouts.

Dawes turns a circle. He's practically inside the carnival, well away from the hotel and the focus of Thacker's agents.

Thacker rifles a packet of candid photos, hands full face photos of Hermann and Elise over.

DAWES

Here, sir?

THACKER

Rear cover is a coveted task. You should be honored. And Dawes, don't attract attention to yourself.

Crossing through traffic, Thacker's already forgotten him. Dawes sighs, finds a spot where he's out of the way.

EXT. DORCHESTER HOTEL - NIGHT

BRIDEY EVERETT (24) willowy, personable, saucily dressed, drifts past the hotel. She pauses to adjust a perfect stocking, pulling the eyes of the starched DOORMAN.

Straightening, she opens a compact to check her make-up. Except the mirror faces the sky over her shoulder.

BRIDEY'S POV - picks up four shadowy figures seemingly walking the banner wires toward the Dorchester.

Bridey snaps the compact away, smiles at the Doorman.

ENRICO (O.S.)  
 (Brooklyn accent)  
 Hurra, hurra, hurra. Step right up.  
 Madame Sylvia's family circus  
 welcomes one and all.

On the verge of returning the smile, the Doorman scowls past her to the bustle about the gypsy tents.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

A YOUNG COUPLE exits a fortune teller's tent.

ENRICO (O.S.)  
 Come and dance to the music of the  
 balalaikas. Marvel at mysteries not  
 seen in ten thousand years.

ASSUNTA VARGAS (63) the epitome of movie gypsy in her flamboyant silks and time-weathered wrinkles, steps out.

She spits between splayed fingers at the couple's heels, slips a copper coin into a waist purse.

ENRICO (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Savor mouth-watering souvlaki and  
 baklava fresh from the oven.

She lets her eyes slip up to the wire walkers. Anxious? Hard to tell. She returns her focus to the people walking past.

EXT. DORCHESTER HOTEL - NIGHT

Thacker greets an acquaintance alongside the main door. They pretend an interest in the evening paper.

Bridey swishes past. Neither gives her notice. She crosses the street.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Bridey winks at Dawes, smiles at his startle. She crosses to the main tent and three foot high wood platform.

ENRICO VARGAS (25), sensual, sparkling with guile, commands the platform. His dark suit in stark contrast to the flamboyant colors worn by GYPSY WOMEN offering trinkets and food.

ENRICO

Hurra, hurra, hurra. Come see the  
freaks and oddities that P T Barnum  
himself didn't dare promote.

His gloved hands weave, drawing attention away from cruising GYPSY CHILDREN and their pocket picking. His smile beams innocent welcome.

Bridey comes to the platform edge, taps his toe. Enrico doesn't lose focus on the crowd, but a quick glance down catches Bridey's small point back at Dawes.

Enrico locates Dawes, nods. Bridey slips around the tent.

ENRICO (CONT'D)

Come one, come all. Witness the  
spectacle of Ruggerio as he  
swallows three feet of steel.

Enrico slaps a poster of a man with a sword hilt in his mouth. His gaze remains on Dawes.

ENRICO'S POV -

Dawes does his best to be idly curious in the carnival, but his attention keeps returning to the hotel.

BACK TO SHOT -

Enrico invests fresh energy into his spiel.

ENRICO (CONT'D)

Behold Sonja as she twists and  
turns into shapes no sensible  
person should ever attempt.

A second poster of a tiny Eurasian twisted like a pretzel.

ENRICO (CONT'D)

If that's not enough to sway you.  
Allow me to introduce ... Delilah!

Bridey sashays out, dressed in exotic Asian silks and baubles, a dark wig giving her an Eastern look. She snaps finger cymbals, gyrates seductively.

ENRICO (CONT'D)

The enchantress of the Far East.  
Nowhere else can you witness the  
forbidden dance of the Seven Veils.  
And all we ask is a single  
shilling. So step right up. Who  
will be the first to dare propriety  
for a smile from Delilah?

Bridey swishes into the tent. Men crowd the stage. Assunta sets up to take the money. She nods Enrico off.

Dawes stands out like a sore thumb as he avoids being sucked into the crowd, scanning the passing cars.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Elise casts a jaundiced eye out the window. Champagne sloshes. Peter's giddy. Hermann not as drunk as he pretends.

PETER

And then the little tart puts my  
hand down her bosom. Oh dear.  
Excuse my manners, Baroness.

HERMANN

Don't be silly. Elise enjoys such  
naughty talk.

Hermann lays a suggestive hand on her thigh. Peter's eyes follow, rapt. Hermann nods for Peter to follow suit.

Peter squeezes her leg, doesn't dare to slide her skirt higher. Elise takes his hand, about to draw it up when her attention rivets ahead.

ELISE

(German)  
Stop the car.

Peter never flinches at the sudden halt. Hermann and Elise peer out the front window.

ELISE'S POV - Nothing out of the ordinary. If you discount the people ignoring the carnival.

BACK TO SHOT -

Hermann considers their sloppy young friend.

HERMANN

(German)  
Take him. I'll clear the way.

ELISE  
Come, liebchen.

She opens the door, pulls Peter out by the hand.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Barely upright, Peter's distracted by the carnival music.

PETER  
A circus? Are you quite sure ...

ELISE  
The walk will clear your head for  
other sport.

She nuzzles his ear. He follows her lead. The limo takes off.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Dawes is forced away from his post as PEOPLE flow in and out of the main tent. THUMP! A rowdy CHEER goes up behind him.

ENRICO (O.S.)  
Step right up. Try your luck. One  
throw wins a prize.

Now in shirt sleeves, Enrico pitches baseballs at the rows of kewpie dolls. THUMP. THUMP. Nailing each target dead center.

The booth attendant, BELA (30s), a dark brooding monster, scowls encouragement.

Dawes sights Elise and Peter beyond the games. He slips a photo from his pocket - it's her.

He looks for back-up. Thacker and his people are focused on the approaching limo. Time for action. Dawes heads for Elise.

ENRICO (CONT'D)  
See how easy it is to win a dolly.  
All it takes is five pence. Who'll  
be first to take a prize?

Enrico scours faces, reading potentials.

Focused on his targets, Dawes moves right into his sight. Enrico gets him by the sleeve.

ENRICO (CONT'D)  
You, sir. You look like a pitcher  
to me. Try your hand.

DAWES

Oh no. Really. I couldn't.

ENRICO

Don't be shy. The ladies can't resist a man willing to step up to the plate.

He holds Dawes' eyes, sly and challenging. Behind Enrico's shoulder, Elise is turning their way.

Dawes sweats. Don't be a spectacle. He eyes the kewpies.

DAWES

Well. Perhaps one.

ENRICO

That's the spirit. Bela, give the man some room.

Dawes weighs a ball in his left hand. His first throw hits a cross beam. THUNK. LAUGHTER starts behind him.

ENRICO (CONT'D)

My mistake. Guess you're one of those desk jockeys that don't get out much. Okay, folks, who's next? It's not as hard as it looks.

Indignant, Dawes plants his feet, lets loose with a sidearm that takes down two kewpies. THUMP. A CHEER goes up.

Enrico shoves a prize doll into Dawes' arms.

ENRICO (CONT'D)

There you have it, folks. One pitch wins a dolly. Step right up.

Men step up, crowding Dawes backwards. Photo in hand, he searches for Elise.

Enrico is suddenly there like old pals, grabbing the photo for a look. Dawes snatches it back.

DAWES

I beg your pardon.

ENRICO

Take it from someone who knows faces. This broad is not for you.

DAWES

Indeed. Perhaps you intend to proposition her yourself.

Enrico's grin widens into genuine amusement.

ENRICO

Bud, my wife knows how to use a knife and I don't mean to carve a chicken. Come back any time. I can always use a good shill.

Enrico melts into the crowd. Dawes looks for Elise. Gone. He heaves a sigh, works his way back to his sentry post.

EXT. DORCHESTER HOTEL - NIGHT

The limo pulls up. Hermann gets out, looks at the carnival, crosses directly to Thacker, invoking a tepid formal smile.

HERMANN

You expect trouble from these gypsies, Herr Inspector? Dirty scum. Your concern is unnecessary. German security is second to none.

INT. HOTEL - HALL - NIGHT

Swank decorations. A CONCIERGE lounges in a cushioned chair outside the elevators, engrossed in a newspaper.

Up the hall, an Emergency Stair door cracks open. Merry light eyes peek out, assess the passage.

GABE (26) slithers into the hall. Dressed in head to toe black, he stands watch as three black clad companions spread out to apartment doors down the corridor. Gabe follows.

The Concierge turns another page.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gabe scours the room in silent efficiency. A soft sound gets his attention. He applies an eye to an inner door crack.

BATHROOM -

A YOUNG COUPLE share a bubble bath and champagne.

BACK TO SHOT -

Gabe smirks, backs away like a ghost.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - ELISE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dainty MARIA (23) runs fingers through a wardrobe of lush gowns, a hungry yearning in her eyes.

DIEGO VARGAS (67), dark and serious, goes through desk drawers. He opens Hermann's passport, puts it back. He clucks at the girl to attend business.

Maria opens a jewel case to a bonanza of sparkling treasure, brings it to Diego.

He squints. His fingers, ringed with real gold and gems, dance over the pieces. Nothing here worth taking.

Maria puts the box back, slides a gaudy bracelet into a waist bag. Both miss a dark briefcase lodged behind a credenza.

INT. HOTEL - PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT

PAULO (30), muscular and macho, flings an empty drawer shut. Annoyed eyes land on a briefcase peeking under the bed skirt.

He drags the case out and up, picks the locks, brings out a wad of pristine British pound notes. Jackpot!

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Thacker trails Hermann to the front door. The Doorman scowls at the impertinence.

THACKER

There were reports of disturbances.  
We were immediately concerned with  
the safety of yourself and your  
wife. Where is the Baroness?

HERMANN

Lounging in a bath.

Hermann waves off the Doorman, bows Thacker inside.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Behind the tents, Enrico watches the taut cables above the fluttering banner lines.

PETER (O.S.)

It really isn't much of a circus.