

EXT. BENCH IN PARK BY DILAPIDATED SKATEBOARDING AREA - DAY

A banner says 'July Skate-Fest'. Sisters SCARLET COOPER 23, and PEARL COOPER, 15- looks 13, sit on a park bench watching kids thundering around a skate park, being filmed by RUBY COOPER 17. Scarlet and Pearl are both obviously heavily pregnant. A woman passes & takes a second look at Pearl, in a skintight dress. Pearl doesn't appreciate this.

PEARL COOPER

Hello? You looking at something?

The woman walks on, ignoring Pearl. Scarlet rolls her eyes and shakes her head at her sister. Pearl grins back.

SCARLET COOPER

Leave it out Pearl. Watch Tino!

The sisters watch a boy, Tino, give an awesome display on the skate ramps. When he finishes he blows a kiss to Pearl and she returns the gesture. Ruby films his tricks from multiple angles.

Pearl regards her huge belly, stroking it gently.

PEARL COOPER

Do you think he'll be a skater? Or a boxer? Will they let me know?

Scarlet looks at her little sister and gives a sad smile.

SCARLET COOPER

Maybe. Who knows? You could ask?

Scarlet strokes her own bump, and gives Pearl a hug.

Ruby joins her sisters on the bench. She looks at some of the footage she's shot on her camera. Pearl is interested.

PEARL COOPER

Tino's so fuckin amazing.

RUBY COOPER

Yeah. But so are you. Go on, get up there.

Pearl looks taken aback for a sec and pushes herself to stand. Then she laughs and sits. Ruby looks at her phone.

RUBY COOPER (CONT'D)

I've got to go and edit this now.
Stay safe.

Pearl and Scarlet watch as Ruby rides off on her skateboard.

INT. CHIEF INSPECTOR STUART'S OFFICE - DAY

A desk calendar shows September. DS Lizzie Layzell stands stiffly in front of her boss's desk. He is seated and seems displeased. A document in front of him has Scarlet, Ruby and Pearl Coopers' names, printed in bold & ringed in red.

DCI STUART

You've ridden roughshod over the procedures, effectively giving the Cooper girls a house - with a garden? Their victims will be overjoyed.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

With respect sir, these girls have been victims too, for most of their lives. Their mum's dead now, and they stand a chance, with the right support.

DCI STUART

Karl Butler too? You're not telling me he's deserving of this softly, softly approach too?

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

He's Scarlet's partner and the baby's dad. Karl's grown up, a bit, a lot. Pearl is fifteen and has just had her baby adopted. I really think the girls need each other.

The DCI taps his fingers for a few moments while reading.

DCI STUART

So, Ruby Cooper is at film school now, locally. Very well, but one keyed car or complaint from anyone and they are out, on the streets.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

(pause) Yes sir. Thanks. You won't regret it sir.

INT. SCARLET COOPER'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ruby sits at a table, headphones on, glued to her laptop, Pearl lies on the sofa clutching a skateboard like a baby.

The suburban living room is cluttered with baby equipment and clothing. Cards welcoming a new baby and photos show the sisters, boyfriend Karl and baby Gemmi.

The front door slams and Pearl sits up as Scarlet sparking with rage, thunders into the room. Ruby glances up.

SCARLET COOPER

That's it. I'm done with him.

Pearl stares, waiting for more. Ruby shakes her head and returns her gaze to the laptop. Pearl looks around.

PEARL COOPER

Where's Gemmi?

Scarlet just shakes her head. She suddenly looks exhausted, messy hair, red eyes, odd socks. Pearl runs to the door and looks into the hallway. When she turns back she looks afraid.

PEARL COOPER (CONT'D)

Where's Gemmi?

Scarlet looks up, tears and fury in her face.

SCARLET COOPER

Karl's taken her. He's gone off with that French woman on her boat.

Scarlet pushes past Pearl towards the kitchen. Pearl grabs her skateboard and runs out to the hall. Scarlet slurps juice from the fridge. Then the front door slams.

RUBY COOPER

What are you on about Scarlet?

SCARLET COOPER

Karl says it's work, a plumbing job. The woman that was in hospital with Pearl phoned and he said he'd go round and fix her bloody leak. He's meant to be here, with me on paternity leave, not fucking around on a boat. I hope it sinks.

Angrily, Scarlet types a message on her phone.

RUBY COOPER

Jeez. You know what Pearl's like at the moment. She'll think Karl's gone and kidnapped Gemmi.

EXT. HOUSING ESTATE - DAY

Pearl skateboards fast down the street, past the bus shelter where a poster for exotic holidays taunts the locals.

KARL BUTLER, 26, attractive, turns into the road behind Pearl, watching her speed away. In the white buggy he's pushing is a tiny swaddled baby, swamped by a white beanie hat, embroidered with HB on it, covering half her face. Karl stops and adjusts the hat.

KARL BUTLER

Hey babe. Let's see those beautiful brown eyes of yours.

Karl frowns as he reads his phone. He looks across the street to no 20: the house he shares with his partner Scarlet, her two sisters plus baby. He makes a face at the baby.

KARL BUTLER (CONT'D)

Are you ready for this?

He takes a deep breath, walks up and opens the front door.

SCARLET COOPER

Indistinct screaming

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAY

Pearl skates recklessly down the middle of a main road heading into greener suburbia.

A sports car turns into the road, too fast, with Pearl heading straight for it. The car and Pearl both swerve to avoid each other, with Pearl turning down the side road the car had emerged from. The car screeches to a halt at the side of the main road. Pearl skates on, not looking back. Beside the car, a signpost points to a canal.

INT. ADAM BURNETT'S CAR - DAY

A plush car, lots of old leather. The driver clutching the steering wheel is the normally self-assured Dr ADAM BURNETT, IVF specialist. Anger flashes across his face before he recovers from the shock of the near miss.

ADAM BURNETT

Shit! Idiot child.

A cyclist slows as he passes and Adam composes himself, winding down the window as he watches Pearl skateboard away. He takes a deep breath. The cyclist is abrupt in her manner.

CYCLIST

Are you ok? She could have been killed. Silly girl.

Adam nods, producing a warm smile.

ADAM BURNETT
Thanks so much. I'm fine. She seems
ok too.

The cyclist charmed by his demeanor, softens her tone.

CYCLIST
Wouldn't have been your fault
though.

Adam nods, then waits until the cyclist moves off before
accelerating off rather fast.

His phone lights up and he, takes another deep breath before
answering hands free as he drives.

ADAM BURNETT
Morning Sandy.

SANDY (UNSEEN ON PHONE)
Adam, you're on the box, right now.

Adam doesn't respond ecstatically.

ADAM BURNETT
Oh

SANDY
It's about the community centre and
skate park. I'll record it.

Adam's laugh is hollow.

ADAM BURNETT
No, don't bother. I'm running late
Sandy. I'll call you later.

SANDY
The careers fair is all afternoon?

ADAM BURNETT
Yep. I'm in tomorrow. Oh and Sandy?
Miss Dubois's been persuaded to
sponsor a placement with Maiden
Voyages.

Adam drives on through the East Kent countryside.

INT. OFFICE BLOCK IN PEGWELL BAY - DAY

SANDY, office manager and chief eavesdropper, composed and elegant, sits at her tidy desk, overseeing a clinical laboratory. She watches a wall-mounted tv monitor, whilst on the phone. Two lab-coated scientists are also viewing the local midday news with subtitles.

A third lab-coated scientist, DR HAZEL PIPER, emerges from Dr Adam Burnett's office, at the far end of the lab, locking it behind her. She looks troubled and watches Sandy and the other scientists rather than the tv as she walks towards them.

SANDY

Good going Adam. I'll send her an investors pack See you tomorrow.

Sandy replaces the phone. She catches Dr Piper's eye as she approaches the door on her way out of the lab.

DR PIPER

Back in a bit.

Sandy nods at Dr Piper, who walks out of the lab carrying a bunch of keys. Sandy turns up the tv volume then focuses on her computer. On TV a presenter talks to camera in a busy skateboarding park.

TV PRESENTER

Doctor and Philanthropist Adam Burnett, who runs the Hova IVF centres as well as the popular Maiden Voyage Cruise line, has definitely endeared himself to these young people by his latest generous donation of land and finance to create this skate park.

Sandy presses a key on her computer so the screen displays CCTV images of the building. She can see Dr Piper on her phone in the lift. When the lift doors open she can be seen hurrying out of the building.

She closes down the CCTV images and mutes the TV, now showing a weather forecast. The scientists return to their test tubes.

EXT. CANAL TOW PATH IN RURAL SETTING - DAY

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL races along the canal tow path on her bike. Ducks scatter, quacking.

She dings her bell repeatedly as she approaches a couple ambling along. The man turns to face her, blocking the path.

MAN ON TOW PATH

This isn't a race track.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

No! But, I'm on police business.

The man looks dubious, but stands aside as Lizzie speeds off. The couple gaze at each other flabbergasted.

She approaches a row of houseboats, moored near the George pub. A footbridge straddles the canal and, on the opposite side is woodland, a track running along the water's edge.

Curious onlookers gawk at Pearl from a safe distance. She is standing on the roof of a houseboat, Destiny. Wide eyed and stressed out, Pearl clutches a baby car seat. A small baby with a white beanie hat, like Gemmi's is wrapped in a white shawl, just her nose and mouth showing.

Lizzie's bike squeals to a halt next to the boat and Lizzie looks up at Pearl, standing perilously near the roof edge.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL (CONT'D)

Pearl? What are you doing?

PEARL COOPER

Keep away!

At the far end of the boat, on the deck, lies PHILLIPA DUBOIS, the baby's mother. Blood oozes from a gash on her forehead. She is moaning in pain.

A barman sidles up to Lizzie, taking hold of her bike that she's been gripping. He whispers to her seeking verification.

BARMAN

She says that woman's stole the baby?

Lizzie doesn't reply and the barman moves away. Pearl looks distraught and starts pulling her hair as sirens herald the arrival of an ambulance and police car to the pub car park.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

Pearl, what are you talking about?
I've just spoken to Scarlet. This
isn't yours or your sister's baby.

Pearl steps closer to the edge. An armed PC dashes into the pub, while another stealthily makes his way on to the bridge. Two paramedics approach the boat, where Ms Dubois lies.

PEARL COOPER

Stay away. Don't come closer.

Pearl puts the car seat down by her feet on the sloping roof.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

Pearl, the baby's mum is hurt. She needs treatment.

Pearl gazes around frantically.

PEARL COOPER

She's not her mum & I didn't do that

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

They need to make sure she's ok.

Pearl doesn't say anything as the paramedics cross over to the houseboat. She rocks the car seat with her foot.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL (CONT'D)

Look at the baby. It's not Gemmi.

PEARL COOPER

You're lying. (pause) It's her hat.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

When have I ever lied to you?

Lizzie gestures at Pearl, who is nervously looking around. Lizzie takes out her phone when it pings. Pearl hears it.

PEARL COOPER

You all fucking lie. All the time.

Lizzie holds up her phone to Pearl.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

Pearl look! It's not Gemmi. She's at home with Scarlet.

Pearl stops rocking the car seat which has been sliding closer to the edge of the boat roof. A narrow band of murky water lies below the car seat, between the houseboats.

The armed PC, on the bridge, has Pearl in his sights.

POLICE CONTROL VOICE

Do you have a clear shot?

ARMED PC

Negative. Not with the baby.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL

I've always been straight with you.
You know that. I'm on your side.

Pearl grimaces. The baby whimpers. Pearl pulls the seat closer, crouches down and lifts the beanie hat. She looks up, shock and surprise in her face, and sees her sisters rush towards the boat from the car park. Ruby first, then Scarlet with baby Gemmi.

DS LIZZIE LAYZELL (CONT'D)

It's not Gemmi.

PEARL COOPER

No, but she's got the same thing as Marina's baby had. She was my mate.

RUBY COOPER

Pearl, get the fuck down.

A motorbike screams into view on the far side of the canal, the rider dressed in black. It stops opposite the houseboat. The rider takes a gun from his jacket and fires twice. Pearl twists, staggers sideways and falls into the canal behind the boat. The car seat also slides in to the canal.

Lizzie clutches her ear. It doesn't hide the blood now seeping out. She leaps into the water, grabbing the car seat handle, pulling it up. The baby, still in it, is spluttering.

DI GREY, rushes to the water's edge to grab the car seat as Ruby too leaps into the canal, making her way to the murky water Pearl has disappeared into. Scarlet rushes forward.

DI GREY

No! Get back!

The biker roars off, heading into the woods. Lizzie is pulled, half conscious, from the water by PC Grey and paramedics, blood pouring from her head. Ruby searches for Pearl in the canal together with swarms of police.