

GULF

Oliver Staniland

2020

1. INT. SITTING ROOM - AFTERNOON

FADE IN:

A man... BRIAN, grey-hair, mid 50s, is slouching on a SOFA, his face is covered by a NEWSPAPER that he struggles to hold up to his eyes. His DARK JACKET is creased and there's an obvious stain on his WHITE SHIRT. Brian puts down the NEWSPAPER as CAMERA TRACKS FORWARD, revealing Brian's fatigued face.

BRIAN
(grumbling)
I can't believe it... For five years I've been after that job and for what? So I can drive a slightly newer car and drink my coffee from an espresso machine instead of that freeze-dried crap?

WOMAN (O.S.)
(softly)
There's always next year dear, I'm sure tha...

BRIAN
(Interrupting)
This was my last chance, DEBBIE. Next year I'll be sixty, so in their eyes I'll have served my purpose, done my duty and off I go to live out the final 10 years of my life, 15 if I'm lucky. Hoping that the home they put me in has the cricket on the tele.

DEBBIE (O.S.)
(Meekly)
I'll be there too.

Brian nods and widens his eyes, acknowledging Debbie's comment, before returning to his newspaper.

DANGER ZONE RISES IN THE MIX.

MATCH CUT TO:

2. INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

CAMERA TRACKS BACK from a NEWSPAPER CUT-OUT of a recent murder story, revealing a WOMAN, 40s, smartly dressed in neat BLACK FORMAL-WEAR.

The woman applies the finishing touches to her MAKE-UP and takes a PHONE from the windowsill, placing it in her BAG.

MF

The woman receives a CALL from a DIFFERENT MOBILE PHONE in her pocket. Answering the PHONE, she nods a few times and ends the CALL, putting the PHONE back in her pocket and purposefully exits the room.

DANGER ZONE FALLS IN THE MIX.

3. INT. SITTING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Brian enters the frame, clutching a small bunch of LETTERS. He's changed his SHIRT from the day before but his JACKET remains creased. He sits down on the sofa and begins shuffling through the post, alternating between discarding LETTERS and briefly reading through some of them.

He grows increasingly more despondent, realising that they are nothing more than bills.

The penultimate LETTER intrigues Brian, who opens it with great care.

Brian's expression abruptly changes from intrigue to bemusement. He retrieves a PHONE from his pocket and makes a CALL.

There's a short wait.

Brian stands up.

BRIAN
Yes, hi. Hello. It's Brian. I'm
calling because...

Brian is clearly surprised that he's been interrupted.

BRIAN
(continuing)
Okay. Yes, I understand. 45
minutes.

The phone call ends just as quickly as it started.

BRIAN
(shouting to Debbie)
I'm going out.

4. INT. OFFICE LANDING - AROUND 40 MINUTES LATER

Brian stands alone in a dark landing, glancing at his watch.

The woman enters through a door, not immediately visible in the dim light. She's wearing the same outfit as the previous night.

WOMAN

Hello Brian. I'm pleased that you've found us. I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, can I get you a drink?

BRIAN

I'm okay for now. I'm just eager to know how I can be of any sort of help to the Government.

WOMAN

Of course you are! But, before we get started, I do need to tell you that we employ a strict policy of non-disclosure and that this...

The woman widens her eyes and shrugs her shoulders slightly. Brian responds by gesturing for her to continue.

WOMAN

(continuing in a deep and menacing tone)
enforced. To the fullest extent of the word. You need to understand the consequences of a slight slip of the tongue.

Brian nods and his eyebrows raise.

WOMAN

(continuing in a brighter tone)
Nevertheless, the incentives involved are... Well, you see Brian, the incentives will change you. Who you think you are. They'll encourage you to visit the depths of what you believe is right **and** wrong. But, let's get started. Please, do follow me.

The woman beckons Brian over to a LOCKED WOODEN DOOR. She inputs a code which opens the DOOR with a satisfying CLICK. The DOOR SLAMS shut with a LOUD THUD as the two characters leave the frame.

5. INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

We are introduced to a medium-sized office. There are two adjacent DESKS, separated by a BLACK PRINTER. Each DESK has a BLANK COMPUTER and a BLACK CHAIR.

Brian is sat in an office CHAIR, facing the BLANK COMPUTER SCREEN.

The woman is heard rustling around in a CABINET, searching for something.

There are FILES strewn across the entire breadth of the DESK, one in particular catches the eye of Brian.

He goes to pick it up.

WOMAN
 (with her back turned to
 Brian)
 Did no one ever tell you not to
 touch what isn't yours?

Brian's face turns a pink-ish hue and he slumps back down into his seat.

The woman starts to smile with glee. She's found it!

The woman walks over to Brian, carrying a LARGE FILE. It's visibly different to the others in the room, there's a LATCH fastening the two halves of it. The woman places the folder down in front of Brian and encourages him to open it.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

5A. INT. OFFICE LANDING/GOVERNMENT OFFICE - 5 MINUTES LATER

Brian's pacing around the landing. Alone. He's removed his jacket. He walks towards the door, hesitating slightly, before entering the room, shutting the door behind him.

BRIAN
 (to the woman)
 Was that real?

WOMAN
 Yes Brian, of course it's 'real'.

Brian steps back, looking visibly overwhelmed.

The woman sits down on the other office CHAIR and moves towards the other side of the DESK, glancing up at Brian.

WOMAN
 (continuing)
 Brian, for goodness sake, sit down.

Brian tentatively sits down.

BRIAN
I think that I'll have that drink
now. Water, please.

The woman exits the room.

5B. INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

We see a GLASS OF WATER, half empty, CAMERA TRACKS BACK,
revealing Brian, sitting alone in the office.

A SUDDEN THUD!

The woman enters and sits down, she's carrying a RED, PAPER
FOLDER. She places it on the DESK.

WOMAN
Ignore that for now, Brian. Now, as
I understand it, you've been
working at Pharmacophore for how
long now?

BRIAN
(taken off-guard)
35 years.

WOMAN
And they have overlooked you for
that promotion. Unbelievable! That
kind of loyalty should be rewarded.

BRIAN
What are you talking about?

WOMAN
Your promotion. Oh, I'm sorry,
rather lack there of.

Brian breathes out in dismay, rolling his head back at the
woman's abject impoliteness.

WOMAN
(continuing)
I apologise if that came across as
brash, Brian. But I'm only
reviewing the facts here. Besides,
you won't need that promotion now.

BRIAN
Why? You still haven't told me why
I'm here. So whatever... that was,
is meaningless right now.

The woman reaches for the FOLDER, opening it and emptying the contents of it onto the DESK, revealing a USB STICK.

The woman reaches over Brian, inserting the USB STICK into a PORT at the back of the COMPUTER.

With a FLASH, the COMPUTER turns on and CAMERA TRACKS FORWARD until the COMPUTER SCREEN completely engulfs the frame.

SEASONS IN THE SUN RISES IN THE MIX.

A MONTAGE of 5 images of a seaside town begins to play. Notable images include a long-shot of a child giggling and a long-shot of an older couple, walking along the sea front.

SEASONS IN THE SUN FALLS IN THE MIX.

5C. INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

BRIAN

What have I just seen?

WOMAN

That Brian, that was Thorpewood, around 40 miles away.

BRIAN

(laughing)

Alright, what do you want me to say? It looks nice.

There is a distinct tonal change. The LIGHTING BECOMES DARKER and the woman looks at Brian with a severity not yet seen before.

WOMAN

Brian. 4 days ago, the country ran out of potable water. We have been using a backup ever since, that backup runs out today. 10 days ago, our electricity demand was over three times the maximum supply. 21 days ago, we ran out of sites to bury the deceased. I won't elaborate but I hope that you get the point.

BRIAN

(in disbelief)

What's Thorpewood got to do with this?

WOMAN

Although it looks ordinary,
Thorpewood is one of only 6
locations in the country with over
450,000 residents. It's also of the
most unsustainable locations. As
such, I have been instructed to get
rid of it. That's where you come
in.

BRIAN

Get rid of it?

WOMAN

(sighing)

Brian, I know that 18 years ago you
synthesised a chemical called B18-
s5. What do you remember about
this?

Brian breathes out heavily and closes his eyes momentarily.

BRIAN

That was a mistake. It was never
meant to happen. Two of my
colleagues, two of my friends...
Jim and Dave, died.

WOMAN

(reluctantly)

I cannot be any more frank than
this Brian. If you don't synthesise
that chemical and release it into
Thorpewood, the entire country will
collapse. The anarchy will last for
two, maybe three days, but no more
than four. At this point, well, I
hope that I don't need to spell it
out for you.

BRIAN

No. Of course not. I need to think
about this. Can I see the file
again, please?

WOMAN

No, absolutely not. If you are
still in any doubt about the
validity of that file, your time
here is done.

The woman stands up and walks towards the door.

BRIAN
No, wait. Okay, just, give me an
hour.

WOMAN
45 minutes.

Brian nods. The woman walks over to the COMPUTER and opens a web-page.

WOMAN
(continuing)
If you decide to do this, click
this link, it will alert my boss
and get the lab ready for
your arrival. Regardless of what
you decide, I'll be back within the
hour to escort you out of the
building. Please, Brian, do the
right thing!

The woman exits the room; however, something falls from her pocket, landing near the door. Brian doesn't see this, remaining entranced by the COMPUTER SCREEN.

5D. INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - 40 MINUTES LATER

Brian looks the most composed he's ever been. He appears content as he clicks the link on-screen.

As Brian heads towards the door, he notices an OBJECT on the floor. It glistens in the reflection of the COMPUTER SCREEN.

Remembering what the woman told him earlier, Brian leaves the room, without touching the OBJECT. The door shuts slowly as the CAMERA ZOOMS IN on the OBJECT.

The OBJECT is a PHOTOGRAPH...of the woman. She's stood with an older couple, her parents! There's something familiar about the background...the sea front, the promenade, the cobbled path.

WOMAN (O.S.)
(to Brian)
Thank you, Brian. Follow me.

FADE OUT.