

'Dating', Deception, Drugs and Death: An exploration into the rise of serious crimes committed against men in England, as a result of using LGBTQI+ mobile dating apps.

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Abstract

Online crimes against men who use LGBTQI+ dating apps are steadily on the rise in England, spilling from the online realms of cyberspace into the physical, afflicting more men than ever before.

The first part of the thesis will explore exactly what crimes are on the rise, and where, linking the more common crimes committed against men who use Queer dating apps, to areas of England facing heightened levels of these newfound disorders. The thesis will then explore official hate crime statistics from sources such as UK LGBTQI+ charity 'Galop', The Home Office, and The Office for National Statistics (ONS), whilst gaining a unique set of crime statistics, from this study's own organic freedom of information (FOI) research enquiry across multiple UK Police forces.

The thesis will then argue exactly what makes a criminal, and what makes a victim – exploring various scholarly arguments, from scholars such as Castro et. al, Timmermans and De Caluwé, and others. Then, through the use of a carefully constructed research questionnaire aimed at men who use LGBTQI+ dating apps in England, construct a model from the data gathered, embodying the more common characteristics and behavioural traits of potential 'victims' of LGBTQI+ dating app crime - and the potential '*criminals*' who commit them.

The study of English 'Grindr Killer' Stephen Port's crimes, and the homophobia that ensued withing Barking and Dagenham's Police division during his investigation, drew light on the true scale of homophobia within the UK Police as a whole, prompting the latter section of the critical discussion within this thesis. This section will explore, not only the documented cases of prejudice within the UK Police from various reports and other news sources, but will also use the independent survey carried out in the latter section to explore participants' experiences, issues and overall satisfaction with how the Police handled their complaints/the reporting of any crime they may have experienced.

The second part of the thesis will explore the influence and effect of the research on the creative accompaniment, demonstrating how key findings and data sourced throughout the critical analysis section shaped, and formed, elements of the creative piece - from underlying themes to storylines and characterisations. This section will also include any additional research and findings gathered, to not only factor into the creative discussion, but also to strengthen the arguments raised throughout.

The last section of this thesis will include the show bible document for the creative accompaniment "No Strings Attached" – exploring in-depth aspects of themes, plot structure, storylines, and characterisation.

The thesis will then conclude with all three 'No Strings Attached' screenplays - Episodes One, Two and Three.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Andrew Pankhurst (candidate)

Date: 17th January 2024

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed: Andrew Pankhurst (candidate)
Date: 17th January 2024

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed: Andrew Pankhurst (candidate)

Date: 17th January 2024

STATEMENT 3

This thesis has followed Swansea University's ethical procedures, and full ethical approval was granted for the research carried out throughout this study.

Signed: Andrew Pankhurst (candidate)

Date: 17th January 2024

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Acknowledgements

I really don't know where to begin when it comes to handing out thanks. Especially when there are so many people who have endured countless conversations about my initial PhD ideas, my frustrations in emailing potential supervisors (and mostly not getting a reply), and then my excitement in finally finding one. And then, ultimately, a step-by-step breakdown of every single avenue of research, the challenges I faced, and the brief moments of progression that I experienced over these past three years.

It must be made very clear that there are *two* people who deserve the utmost of special thanks – the first, and quite suitably so – goes to my partner James Roberts, who, I can honestly say, deserves an award for quite frankly having the patience of a saint. But not only that, somebody who has selflessly supported and encouraged me to carry on, and, on the many occasions that I did not think I would be able to, talk me back from the edge and back into that writing driving seat.

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And lastly, a special shout out to my Mum, Dad, and Sister Kate – for always believing in me, and who can all now rest assured that I have, in fact, finally finished University after *fifteen years*. Honestly, I have.

Promise.

TITLE

‘Dating’, Deception, Drugs and Death: An exploration into the rise of serious crimes committed against men in England, as a result of using LGBTQI+ mobile dating apps.

I. INTRODUCTION

LGBTQI+ dating apps have surged in popularity since their broader introduction to the consumer market, with dating apps that “originated in the gay community” such as “Grindr and Scruff, which helped single men link up by searching for other active users within a specific geographic radius” launching in “2009 and 2010, respectively.” (Fetters, A., 2018)

“Historically, Grindr was the first iPhone app to combine dating - and sex” (Fitzsimons, T., 2019). And, like Grindr, in 2012, when the emerging dating app Tinder expanded from iPhone to Android platforms also - this “gigantic shift in dating culture really started to take hold”. Tinder then became the most popular dating app in the world; available on “more than 70 per cent of smartphones worldwide” (Fetters, A., 2018) targeting a more extensive consumer base of every sexual orientation, and not just those of LGBTQI+ status.

These geo-based, location ‘dating’ apps, rapidly took romance (and casual sex) from the home computer into the pockets of millions worldwide: on the move, anywhere and everywhere, day and night. This newfound, shared, and global “diversity of desires expressed by those with (somewhat) shared sexual interests” represented “a unique networking culture, best described as ‘socio-sexual’” networking (Shield, DJ, A., 2018).

With such significant advances in ‘socio-sexual networking’, and the ability for dating app consumers to find a sexual partner to the nearest metre of their location, Geo-based location dating apps, in turn, also brought about a *significant* increase in the harmful inequalities associated with, and specifically targeted against, the individuals who used them. This “sharing and storage of such intimate and private information on the app(s),

whether purposely given by the user or not” raised serious “concerns about...user’s privacy and safety.” (Murphy, A., 2017)

Sexual behaviour was not the only sociological factor to be influenced by these advances in communicative technology as criminal behaviour, in turn, also began to expand significantly.

“In some parts of the UK, the number of crimes involving dating apps doubled from 2015 to 2018” (Phan, A., Seigfried-Spellar, K., Choo, K,K,R., 2021), with criminals adapting to exploit the opportunity to target the many individuals left vulnerable by the unexposed flaws within these new mobile applications. Flaws that exposed some users as potential victims to crime, through a broad range of both minor and serious offences - in either a physical capacity, or behind the physical anonymity of the complex regions of cyberspace.

In late 2018, I began to develop the idea for an independent PhD research project that would address these new developments in criminal behaviour, and the predominantly male victims (of any sexual orientation) that were being targeted while using these online LGBTQI+ dating apps. More specifically, popular dating apps such as ‘Grindr’.

In my preliminary research, I quickly noticed a substantial gap and occurrent theme in the countless news articles, online journals, and any other related research that I was reading relating to this newfound emergence in criminal behaviour.

There was always a principal focus on the brutality, deviance and severity of these crimes and the questionable sexual nature that concerned them. Shocking headlines such as: “Horrific 'Grindr murderer' who drugged, raped and killed men” (Darbyshire, 2019), and “999 call of 'Grindr cheat' moments after he 'killed wife with Tesco bag” (Lightfoot & O’Leary, 2018) lined the front pages of UK newspapers; alongside mug shots of the men who committed these awful acts - *but* not the platforms that they used to lure their victims, nor the story behind their actions - or the sociological and psychological factors that *made* them a criminal.

Victims were photographed, and their last, very private acts – which resulted in their untimely deaths - were now on show for the whole world to see. The exploration into victims' lives stopped short at their death, and perhaps their occupation - but not the road of psychological and sociological behaviour that ultimately led them to their fates. This was, to me, an indication that the accurate and unexposed details behind crimes such as those surrounding gay dating apps were still taboo to most, and even to the public bodies that were now investigating them.

News reports and other media coverage concerning significant Police failings in criminal cases, crimes such as those made notorious by Stephen Port - famously coined 'The Grindr Killer' by the world media - switched my chain of thought post-research proposal. I had already planned to research the prospect of internalised homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia within the Police force; but I had never engaged with the expanded possibility of researching gross Police misconduct on a *national* scale.

The failings of Barking and Dagenham Police force, throughout Stephen Port's criminal prosecution, and the series of events that led up to it – even before an official enquiry had been carried out and concluded - re-inspired me to adjust my research proposal, and further explore precisely *how* English Police forces gather, collect, and maintain data concerning crimes against men in England resulting from online dating apps; specifically, those crimes affiliated with the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.

In contrast to this quantitative research, I originally proposed to explore the perceptions of the LGBTQI+ community and how they felt the Police, and other public services, had handled their complaints concerning any negative experiences that they may have had using online LGBTQI+ dating apps.

The impromptu exploration into the study of quantitative and qualitative data – highlighting inequalities in the UK Police's own data, and public perceptions from the LGBTQI+ community of the UK Police's conduct, whilst also considering the 2021 Stephen Port enquiry - gave my project an extended and far more significant contribution to research in its field, than had previously first been intended.

Under the umbrella of my project's focus: An exploration into the rise of serious crimes committed against men in England as a result of using LGBTQI+ mobile dating apps; my research question allows for further sociological questions to be asked.

The resulting arguments which these questions raise, and their key findings, are to be the topic of discussion throughout this thesis. Consequently, resulting in a conclusion that highlights the key findings throughout the project – and that determines the elements that make this project a unique and individual contribution to the research in its field.

The sub-questions that this project will ask, are as follows:

- **What levels of serious crime are on the rise, and where?**

This fundamental question will allow my project to explore the various criminal activities that have resulted directly from the use of LGBTQI+ dating apps over recent years.

Using data gathered from various sources, such as LGBTQI+ charities and the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) - along with a series of specifically targeted FOIs (freedom of information requests) to every acting Police force in the UK - my findings will construct a model of results that provide a detailed explanation and categorisation of the multiple levels of crimes that are reported, the crimes that are on the rise, and their specific locations.

- **What makes a Criminal, and what makes a Victim?**

By addressing this question, I will break down the sociological construct of those who fall victim to such crimes, and those who commit them – and whether they have any substantial similarities (or differences) between them.

When asking what 'makes' a criminal, or victim, I am referring to the sociological and psychological qualities that have shaped the person into who they are, why they act in the way that they do, and whether there are specific patterns regarding such actions;

and the men (or victims) that find themselves in such situations of vulnerability in the first place.

Also, in consideration of the research project's main focus and varying models of sub-focus, a key, focal point of my research will be to carry out an independent questionnaire concerning men of any age, who actively use, or who have previously used LGBTQI+ dating apps - specifically, Grindr.

The study will identify an average 'model' of dating app user qualities - such as age, race, and levels of usage; it will then explore the varying levels of crimes, or negative experiences that participants have encountered whilst using these applications – and then compare and contrast the data collated against other scholarly arguments from research in its field.

- **How many crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps go unreported by male victims? And, with recent reports of multiple Police failings concerning investigations into the deaths of several LGBTQI+ males, would the men who use these dating apps, should they ever have to report such crimes, trust the Police to handle their case without bias?**

One interesting factor that I have uncovered throughout my research is that specific Police forces have come under constant scrutiny for how they have handled serious criminal cases relating to crimes committed through LGBTQI+ dating apps. Scrutiny that has been widely reported, and documented, in the UK national (and worldwide) media.

These failings by Police include the stereotyping and prejudicial treatment of LGBTQI+ people; and some include their detrimental failures to link serious cases together, resulting in the potentially preventable deaths of several gay men.

The results from the project's independent questionnaire in the latter section will also be discussed. Results that engage with the matter of how survey participants, if they had ever reported experiences of crime and disorder relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps, felt their complaints were handled. And, whilst also addressing that if they did not report such incidents - the reasons *why*.

Again, I will then discuss the findings of this specific section of my research questionnaire, and subsequently compare and contrast the data collated against other scholarly arguments in this field of research. Ultimately, raising the primary sub-argument for discussion - that these documented failings by Police could affect the future decisions of LGBTQI+ people, namely men, if ever faced with the decision to report such crimes to their forces in the future. This will be supported by the results of my independent research questionnaire to argue this point with strength and clarity.

...

The research will be supported by a creative accompaniment that will run alongside the critical essay and reflect elements from its research, and the key arguments raised within it, into the creative narrative.

Each sub-question in the critical essay, as well as critical research, will also contain elements of creative reflection. Reflections recounting the different stages and processes that formed the adjoining creative accompaniment to the research project, such as characterisation, overall plot structure and dialogue.

This self-reflection of the creative process will not only explore how particular points in the academic research helped to shape the creative project's outcome; but also, how visual research examples and scholarly techniques concerning the creative writing process helped to shape the overall completed creative product.

The creative piece will be presented in the written format of a screenplay for a five-part television series, with an accompanying show bible.

The screenplay genre will be crime/drama to reflect the context and nature of the research, with each episode lasting sixty minutes in length. The project will be set in the modern-day, with any reference to times and dates being no later than 2022.

Elements of the crimes fictionalised within the script will draw from this study's research into the serious crimes committed against men in England who have used LGBTQI+ dating apps. Along with the careful attribution of the results obtained from its quantitative and qualitative research into the UK Police, and men who frequently use these dating apps.

However, for legal reasons (and as this project covers a vastly sensitive topic), names, locations and personal details that could be related directly back to victims, or those who participate in the study, will be changed/remain anonymous.

A combination of elements derived from different offender characteristics within the research will then be used to construct each of the criminal characters within the screenplay. Primarily, reflected within the characterisation of the story's main antagonist.

The goal of this research project is to explore and learn from these crimes, and the people who commit them – ultimately manifesting in a critically, well-thought-out, creative accompaniment that will magnify and present a clear creative contribution to the research in this field.

II. What levels of serious crime are on the rise, and where?

In 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, my initial research question dramatically leapt from the very distant topic of “transgender representation in film and television over the last ten years”.

After ruminating for several weeks but still finding myself unable to piece together a creative accompaniment for this robust debate, I knew that I had to source new inspiration for another PhD research question from another topic, but where?

It was shortly after this point that I sat down to watch Stephen Grandison’s 2016 BBC Three documentary, “How Police Missed the Grindr Killer”: A documentary recounting the investigation into the murders of four gay men in Barking, London, between 2014 and 2015, by ‘Grindr Killer’ Stephen Port.

Then, after reading several news articles from the height of Port’s heinous crimes, and understanding the hidden dangers lurking within online dating apps from my own experiences - the research question and creative accompaniment fell straight into place within my chain of thought almost immediately.

“Anthony Walgate, Gabriel Kovari, Daniel Whitworth, and Jack Taylor were all plied with fatal doses of the “date rape” drug GHB by Port” during his sixteen-month trail of murder, “between June 2014 and September 2015” (Mercer, 2021).

At the time of watching Grandison’s documentary, I recalled hearing about the first few murders in the media prior to them being flagged as suspicious and before Port was officially linked to them. But it was the fundamental and apparent failings of the Metropolitan Police at the time of the investigation that also caught my attention; the media reported during the investigation’s official inquest that the “jury found that Police failings in the investigation into the death of Mr Walgate, Port’s first victim, ‘probably’ contributed to the” following “fatalities of Mr Kovari and Mr Whitworth.” (Mercer, 2021).

During Port’s initial links to the crimes, and before the official inquest, the victims’ families’ pursuit for justice shone a light on the notable (and more than apparent) clear

links between the murders and the failings of Barking and Dagenham Police to connect them:

“The families of serial killer Stephen Port’s four gay male victims have described the investigation into their deaths as ‘one of the most widespread institutional failures in modern history’ and that ‘four white, heterosexual girls’ would have been treated differently.” – Frank-Keyes, 2021

It was this heavily documented ‘institutional failure’ by The London Metropolitan Police, as described by the families of Port’s victims and the media, that prompted me to creatively explore not only the study of crimes against men originating from LGBTQI+ ‘dating’ apps, but also, the argument that homophobia and discrimination within the Police, could hinder and obstruct investigations into such crimes. And, more importantly, the attitudes and concerns of the men who *actually* report these crimes to the Police themselves – or, in some cases, men who won’t report such crimes based on notable prejudice within Police forces. The influence of these specific factors upon the creative piece will be mentioned later in this thesis.

Another BBC Three Documentary, which I viewed shortly after Grandison’s - ‘The Man Who Used HIV as a Weapon’ (2019), directed by Charlotte Charlton, explored the crimes of Daryl Rowe, a young man in his late twenties, who “launched a deliberate campaign to infect men he met on (the) dating app Grindr after being diagnosed with HIV in April 2015 in his home city of Edinburgh” (BBC News, 2018).

Rowe, who was 28 at the time of his sentencing, was served a life sentence with a minimum term of twelve years for his crimes. He was found guilty of “intentionally infecting five men with HIV and attempting to give five other men the virus between October 2015 and December 2016” (Braidwood, 2019). Rowe took his case to the Court of Appeal, “but judges ruled the grounds presented on his behalf to challenge against his conviction were ‘unarguable’” (BBC News, 2018).

Charlton’s documentary states that a total of “twenty-four men attended court to give evidence against him (Rowe)” (Docs4All, 2019). However, the exact number of victims that Rowe targeted is still unknown.

The study of Port and Rowe's crimes, along with numerous examples of statistical data gathered from various sources that will be mentioned at the latter end of this section of the thesis, inspired me to divert from my initial plan to compose a screenplay for a feature-length film - to a five-part streaming platform series.

This inspiration came not only from Port and Rowe's cases being reported within the media at the time of planning this research project (2020), but also from the stark differences in each of their physical appearances (Appendix 1).

Appendix 1 shows pictures released to (or obtained by) the mass media that, although subjective in opinion, make Port appear to look more of a monster – more sinister and akin visually to reflect the awful crimes that he committed. As opposed to the handsome, well-kept, almost baby-faced Rowe – whose images within the media seem so 'normal' that they made me question how a man who looked like that could be so evil.

This is where the concept of Liam Bower's character first originated, the antagonist of my screenplay – along with the series title: "No Strings Attached". As a result, Liam's character naturally personifies the dangers of, and crimes surrounding, LGBTQI+ dating apps.

The audience is first introduced to Liam near the end of episode one, as he appears momentarily on screen as one of protagonist Ethan Paige's hastily arranged Grindr meets. The audience is also unaware, at this point, of Liam's many links between Ethan and the other central characters within the story - such as closeted property developer Alexander Banks and thieving, drug dealing, tearaway youth Malik Sutcliffe.

Soon, it is not long before Liam's character descends into something evil, remorseless, and sadistic before our very eyes - and these unexpected links between himself and the other characters within the storyline start to bleed into the narrative.

The many influences on characterisation within the creative piece are mentioned in more detail at several points throughout this section of the thesis. Each sub-question and example of researched texts, television and film lend their own contribution towards the

unique and individual characterisations and their purpose within the “No Strings Attached” storyline.

The 2013 Bloomsbury Revelations revised versions of Constantin Stanislavski’s “An Actor Prepares” and “How to Build a Character” each played a small role in the initial development of the “No Strings Attached” show bible and its overall character development.

Despite Stanislavski’s work being translated for the stage, and stage actors specifically in preparation for a theatre role, analysing the books still allowed me to visualise my characters, their physical appearance, mannerisms, and even their in-depth backstories. All of which were included in the show bible document to accompany the creative research project as a result.

One particular quote that resonated early in the study of “An Actor Prepares”, and that perfectly reflected one of the underlying causes for the PhD research project’s inspiration, was:

“Never allow yourself externally to portray anything that you have not inwardly experienced and which is not even interesting to you.” - Stanislavsky & Reynolds Hapgood, pg. 37, 2013.

This was because, aside from being inspired by the initial research into crimes against men who use LGBTQI+ dating apps, there was also a strong personal connection to the motive behind the entire creative research project’s idea.

When I was in my early thirties, I had a very ‘near miss’ experience concerning the popular LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr that jeopardised my personal safety. Thankfully, I was left mostly unaffected by the incident. However, for a period of around nine months before I entered a long-term relationship, I became almost obsessed with using LGBTQI+ dating apps on a daily basis. Grindr most notably. To the point where it seriously infringed on my personal and work life. This obsessive behaviour (one of many) was, in my late thirties, later attributed to me having undiagnosed ADHD – a condition that I was coincidentally diagnosed with in the second year of this research project.

So, when reading Stanislavski's theories and researching crimes like Stephen Port's, I soon realised I was depicting my own past experiences with LGBTQI+ dating apps. Transforming my personal 'near miss' incident and the lingering 'what if' I faced afterwards into a fictional narrative, exploring these potential events through Ethan Paige and Liam Bower's characters as they fatefully encounter Barry Murphy in a Liverpool hotel room.

"Moreover, you study character, such as custom, manner, movements, voice, speech, intonations, all this work on your material will help you permeate it with your own feelings. Without all this you will have no art." - Stanislavsky & Reynolds Hapgood, pg. 31, 2013.

When exploring Stanislavski's "How to Build a Character" text, his argument that: "the character has to have some kind of arch. The character has to go through an event, and be changed by the human event" (Stanislavsky & Reynolds Hapgood, 2013) resonated profoundly within the "No Strings Attached" screenplays, and each of its central characters' journeys – who are all affected by each other's actions, and who all reach their own individual story arcs at different points within the story.

Interactions between central characters and the pivotal 'human events' that change their narrative trajectories will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

The "No Strings Attached" storyline was also heavily influenced by television series such as "The Fall" (2013), written and directed by Alan Cubitt, and notably, Jed Mercurio's 2012 Police corruption drama "Line of Duty" – which will be discussed in more depth in the latter part of this section.

With "The Fall" focusing on a rogue, unassuming (and attractive) serial killer – who stalks a series of Belfast women, eventually murdering them - and "Line of Duty" focusing heavily on Police corruption throughout the London Metropolitan Police's ranks, these dramas further prompted me, like Port and Rowe's documentaries, to explore the categorical failures behind the investigations into these crimes by authorities. And, from the visual research of dramas such as these, and before my actual studies during the drafting of my PhD proposal, I immediately noticed a substantial gap in the creative market for an LGBTQI+ crime drama of this nature.

“A woman, I forget who, once asked a male friend why men felt threatened by women. He replied that they were afraid that women might laugh at them. When she asked a group of women why women felt threatened by men, they said, ‘we’re afraid they might kill us’” – Stella Gibson, The Fall, 2013.

Alan Cubitt’s “The Fall” lent the majority of inspiration to the creative project more than any of the other visual examples researched. This was because, whilst re-watching all three series after initially being blown away by Cubitt’s writing back in 2013, I was suddenly struck with the idea of alternating the concept of this drama, where vulnerable women are preyed on by a lone man, a psychopath, and turning it on its head.

The concept of a drama where *men* are vulnerable and preyed on by a lone man – alike to so many of the news reports I was researching at the time, particularly Port’s - seemed like a completely unique visual concept and one that I could not think of any recent (or relevant) visual examples of on mainstream British television or streaming services to that date.

The concept of a strong female, such as “The Fall’s” protagonist DI Stella Gibson, played by Gillian Anderson – and a volatile, unpredictable, psychopathic murderer – such as Jamie Dornan’s ‘Paul Spector’ left me with the inspiration to create Olivia Hartford and Liam Bower’s storylines retrospectively. Cubitt’s ‘cat and mouse’ style of writing throughout the first two seasons, until Spector is caught, heavily inspired me to replicate the same style of writing within the “No Strings Attached” screenplays. With Liam Bower’s character remaining anonymous until the end of the second episode, and with his character evading justice, like Cubitt’s Paul Spector – when he is shot dead at the end of episode five, during a final conflict with Olivia as he attempts to suffocate her.

Another visual example I drew inspiration from came from watching Alain Guiraudie’s “Stranger by the Lake” (2013), a stunning example of modern French Queer cinema that explores the impact a string of unexplained, and unexpected, murders has on a group of gay men frequenting a lakeside gay cruising area.

The film follows its central protagonist, Franck, played by Pierre Deladonchamps, who is a frequent visitor to the lakeside cruising spot. Upon hearing about the recent string of murders, Franck is suddenly acquainted with the mysterious and charming Michel (Christophe Paou) who suddenly appears in the area at the exact point of the string of sudden deaths within the small community of promiscuous gay men. As Franck and Michel's sexual relationship expands, and as their personal feelings grow more intense, Franck begins to suspect that Michel may be the perpetrator behind the recent murders. Guiraudie's writing builds tension from start to finish and ends in a shocking conclusion that leaves Franck's life in immediate danger.

Guiraudie's "Stranger by the Lake" and its central protagonist, Franck, partly inspired me to create Ethan Paige's character. Like Franck, I was inspired to create a protagonist at the heart of "No Strings Attached" who would serve to play the victim of not only a killer, but their *own* actions. Somebody akin to Franck's character, who, despite the string of vicious murders in the small cruising area he frequently inhabits throughout the summer months, still continues to visit the cruising spot looking for sex, knowing the potential risks that his actions may incur. And, not just any risks - such as STIs or even prosecution by French authorities - an actual risk to his own *life*.

And, like Franck, Ethan Paige continues to engage in sexual meets despite his acknowledgement of the risks to his personal safety – such as a near-miss sexual assault and even the discovery of Alexander Banks's character, brutally murdered in his own apartment.

It was this inclusion of my personal experiences with LGBTQI+ dating apps to Ethan's characterisation, as a result of adopting Stanislavski's methods, that meant Guiraudie's protagonist, Franck, further inspired Ethan's obsession with dating apps. Fabricating his ignorance of the dangers that they pose to him within the "No Strings Attached" narrative.

Both "The Fall" and "Stranger by the Lake" developed a sense of mystery surrounding their antagonists - an element that kept the viewer engaged and immersed within the story throughout. Building a gripping narrative arc and finally reaching an intense climatic

point – a quality of writing that I sought to replicate within the narrative of the “No Strings Attached” screenplays.

One national news story that sealed the final crux of the creative piece’s storyline, as I began researching further into crimes against men who used/had used LGBTQI+ dating apps, was the arrest of Gerald Matovu in London, 2018.

Together with his boyfriend, Brandon Dunbar, he and Matovu “targeted 12 victims”, all male, over a “nineteen-month period” to fund their “drug habit”; taking “advantage of Grindr hook-ups to steal property and bank details” (Murphy-bates, 2019).

Matovu was finally brought to justice and jailed for the murder of Eric Michels, also in 2018, after meeting him at his “home in south-west London for sex”, “plying” him with the date rape drug GHB - and leaving him to die; whilst Matovu stole Michels personal possessions, and “took photographs of his bank cards and driver's licence” (Murphy-bates, 2019).

The surprising link, that I never expected to see within Matovu’s crimes at the initial point of reading about them, is that, prior to Michels death in 2016, Matovu was arrested and charged with supplying Stephen Port with the drugs he used to carry out his string of murders. “Matovu pleaded guilty to supplying Port with mephedrone and GHB but denied knowing what he planned to do with it” (Walker, 2019).

Matovu was later sentenced to “12 months community service, 150 hours of unpaid work and 40 days of drug rehabilitation”; despite this intervention, Matovu still went on to carry out more crimes against several men, and after Michels death, “he was convicted of six counts of administering a noxious substance, seven thefts, six counts of having articles for fraud, murder, assault by penetration, assault occasioning actual bodily harm and possessing GBL drugs” (Pennink & Morton, 2019).

This unexpected link between Port and Matovu’s crimes led me to create Malik Sutcliffe’s character, with CCTV Images of Matovu and Dunbar in the media (See Appendix 2 and 3) helping to shape Malik’s overall characterisation, from his clothes to his ethnicity and his mannerisms – even his dialogue.

Malik is, in fact, a direct representation of Gerald Matovu - with his role within the story starting at the opening of the first episode, seemingly innocent, nervous, and unassuming. He later unexpectedly assaults and robs lonely, naïve, older man - David Finch, who has invited Malik into his home on the agreement that Malik will be paid for sex. Malik then strikes David with a hammer over the head, leaving him unconscious in a pool of blood on his kitchen floor.

Another crime that was drawn from the research of this project that influenced the actions of not only Malik Sutcliffe's character, but also antagonist Liam Bower, was the murder of Adrian Murphy in London, 2019.

Murphy was drugged and killed by Joel Osei, 26, who "used a fake dating app profile" on Grindr "to entrap" the "43-year-old Irishman... killing him... with an overdose of scopolamine" (Hockaday, 2021). Osei was also accompanied by ex-girlfriend Diana Christea during Murphy's murder - who helped to target, drug, and rob the unsuspecting man alongside her former partner.

It was when reading James Hockaday's article for Metro News, during the preliminary stages of devising my television series' show bible, that one particular element of Osei's crime resonated within my thoughts.

He had drugged and killed Mr Murphy with an overdose of scopolamine, otherwise known by the street name 'Devils Breath'. A drug that, despite having some legitimate medicinal research uses, is derived from "the deadly nightshade family" of botanical toxins. A drug that is more "commonly used in rapes and kidnappings in South America" than in crimes located within the UK.

Inspecting several news articles surrounding the drug further, I discovered Devils' Breath to be "widely available on the Chinese website Alibaba.com, which ships it anywhere in the world from mainland China and Ukraine" (Keay, 2017). Other reports suggested that "scopolamine, as with many other predatory drugs, may only be detectable in bodily fluids – especially urine – for short times", typically varying "between one to five days" (Burks, 2018) depending on the level of dosage administered. With some news articles

even claiming that the drug is “almost impossible to detect” and that it “disappears from the bloodstream in two to six hours” (Keay, 2017).

It was at this point in the research project that a noticeable pattern began to emerge from the study of crimes by Stephen Port, Gerald Matovu and Joel Osei. A design that saw the criminal lure their unsuspecting victims via LGBTQI+ dating apps, drugging them, and eventually killing them. Although mainly through the use of Gamma-Hydroxybutyric Acid (GHB) – Osei’s rare use of Devil’s Breath, in the UK at least, led me to include it within the script as the drug that Liam Bower administers to his victims, purchased from Malik Sutcliffe; and the drug that is incidentally used during Liam’s rape scene in episode three, before his killings, by Barry Murphy and his two accomplices. Which was poetically, unknown to Liam’s character at that time within the story, also supplied by Malik Sutcliffe.

The use of Scopolamine in specific criminal activity is also directly referenced during episode three in a scene purposely created to reflect the information gathered surrounding the taboo substance within the plot’s narrative. DI Olivia Hartford and DI Rhys Denham both visit the city Coroner in the wake of Barry Murphy’s (at that time unrecognised) murder. There, the Coroner explains to each of the officers her concern in seeing a similar previous case involving the death of an older gay man involving the rare street drug Devil’s Breath. This man, the plot later reveals, is one of Barry Murphy’s accomplices – Gavin Maclean.

It was this abundant use of drugs such as scopolamine, GHB, and other benzodiazepines in a substantial number of serious crimes researched stemming from LGBTQI+ dating apps, and with the majority of offences studied sharing date rape drugs as a common tool that criminals favoured - that influenced this project’s title: ‘Dating’, Deception, Drugs and Death: An exploration into the rise of serious crimes committed against men in England, as a result of using LGBTQI+ mobile dating apps.

‘Galop’, the UK’s leading LGBTQI+ anti-abuse charity, has continually supported members of the Queer community, working “to combat violence and discrimination against LGBT+ people for nearly 35 years” (Noone, 2017, pg.1) since 1982.

Each year, Galop has led studies into varying levels (and classifications) of violence, anti-social, and threatening behaviour against Queer people within the UK. With their studies in recent years expanding to include the crux of this research project – online crimes:

“Online anti-LGBT+ hate crime is an issue facing our clients in ever-growing numbers, but it often proves difficult to tackle, and is poorly understood and under-researched.” – Noone, 2017, pg.1

Reading Galop’s 2017 Chief Executive Nik Noone’s comments in Melanie Stray’s “Online Hate Crime Report 2017: challenging online homophobia, biphobia and transphobia” prompted this study to research further into the newfound increase in levels of online crime and disorder afflicting LGBTQI+ people across the UK.

Several hate crime reports published by Galop were analysed – notably the studies from 2016 (in part), 2017 and 2020, each addressing rising figures in UK online hate crime. The key findings from each individual report studied are listed in Appendix 4.

Thus far, the statistics shown from Galop’s hate crime reports (Appendix 4) give a clear indication of a steep and rapid increase in online crime, recognising that “online abuse is not experienced as distinct from everyday life, but as part of a wider experience of LGBT+ prejudice that cuts across both online and offline worlds” (Stray, 2017).

In order to research this matter further and justifiably argue that there is an increase in crimes concerning men in the UK who use dating apps, firstly, the crimes’ inception must form within the online realms, as Galop’s studies show. And it is the bridging of this gap between the online, and into the offline, and the physical, as Stray suggests, that this research project will investigate further.

Before that, however, and aside from Galop’s independent online hate crime studies, the project also researched other official UK hate crime data: annual hate crime reports from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which analysed official figures concerning online hate crime within England and Wales were examined, along with hate crime reports from the Scottish Government. And, to further solidify the argument that crimes

concerning LGBTQI+ dating apps were on the rise, the project also conducted an independent research study of its own.

The independent study involved multiple freedom of information (FOI) requests that were sent to every individual acting UK Police force. The data gathered from these FOI requests mapped out crucial findings concerning online hate crime that originated through the use of queer dating apps, specifically Grindr, and gave access to data that was informative not only on a quantifiable scale, but also from a geographical perspective.

Thus, it was this gathering of data concerning crimes against men who used/had used queer dating apps, along with the location and categorisation of these crimes around the UK that gave this project the unique insight into this field of research that no other research study found at the time of writing this project offered.

The ONS hate crime reports studied ranged from 2016 through to 2021, matching the same time period as the Galop hate crime reports. The project set this particular study time frame as its sole focal point to ensure the figures collated were consistent, whilst narrowing the field of research within the overall study, and also ensuring the study was more likely to obtain crucial data regarding FOI requests from UK Police forces for the project's independent study (which will be mentioned later in this section of the thesis). The statistical data gathered from each of the ONS reports is presented in Appendix 4 through 10.

The steady annual rise in hate crime figures that both the Galop and ONS reports show is a vital topic of debate throughout this thesis and its central argument. Arguments from the ONS in their 2018/19 report to suggest that the rise in hate figures “have been driven by improvements in crime recording and a better identification of what constitutes a hate crime” (Home Office, 2019). Yet, when the same report discusses rises in religiously motivated hate crimes, they argue that:

“This increase was thought to be driven by general crime recording improvements but may also reflect a greater proportion of victims coming forward to report hate crimes to the Police and a genuine increase in these offences.” – Home Office, 2019, pg. 30

Some important factors that the ONS fails to consider when accounting for this continued rise in hate crime whilst justifying their statistics (Appendix 4-10) are the emergence of new communications technologies, mobile applications, and the increasing numbers of new consumers being introduced to them. Individuals who, when using specific applications - such as LGBTQI+ dating apps, for example - are further exposed to the increased risk of falling victim to online hate crime themselves. Encouraging more and more people ‘online’, who would have previously been ‘offline’, every year.

“The popularity of (online) dating is partly due to the digitalization of our society and the pervasiveness of consumer technologies such as smart mobile and wearable devices... It has, for example, been estimated that the number of users will increase steadily in the 30 million range, with 2019 having 34.9 million dating app users.” - Phan, Seigfried-Spellar and Choo, 2021

The fundamental reasoning behind what exactly encourages new users online, and, subsequently, what encourages criminals to follow in their digital footsteps - who they are, and the personality traits of what ‘makes a criminal’ and ‘what makes a victim’, elements that are crucial to this research study - will each be explored later in this thesis. As mentioned, the data gathered thus far confirms an undeniable rise in hate crimes across the UK – notably within England and Wales. And it becomes evident from the sources studied so far that there are a multitude of reasons behind this rise in online hate crime; however, the fundamental increase in online users, as scholars Phan, Seigfried-Spellar and Choo suggest, is the most notable cause studied so far. After all, no online crime can be committed without the online criminal, and their victim.

Despite the ONS and their categorisation of hate crime and online hate crime into multiple differentiating strands, the initial research into the rise in crimes against men who use/have used LGBTQI+ dating apps, still failed to establish where these crimes were happening *and* the exact classification of individual offences.

For instance, the ONS categorised online hate crimes based on a victim's sexual orientation, race, or gender identity (or a combination of these). The study swiftly pinpointed a significant research gap in this field, as none of the investigations into online hate crimes against queer individuals provided specific details on the locations of these incidents. But also, no study at that time showed increases in specific crime categories - such as robbery, rape, blackmail, and others.

As a result of this discovery, in May 2021, this thesis conducted an independent research study to further explore the levels of serious crime on the rise within England and Wales, affecting men who use/have used LGBTQI+ dating apps. While also defining these crimes, and, as mentioned, unlike any other study researched, identifying the exact parts of the country where these crimes were committed. Thus, giving a clear indication as to what parts of the country are the most affected whilst also identifying the most common classifications of crimes/hate crimes committed, and where.

Specific freedom of information requests (FOI) were sent electronically to every acting Police force within the UK - excluding the British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, and Ministry of Defence Police. The FOI requests were sent out twice, as the first attempt was deemed too broad - and most forces declined because it would have cost their FOI departments too much financially to collect the required data within their set labour budgets.

The final FOI request asked for each Police force to produce the total number of crimes/hate crimes committed concerning men of any age, race, and sexual orientation that involved the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr between 2017-2021, and the classification of the crimes committed.

It was also suggested to each force that if this exact data was not possible to obtain, then a total number of crimes recorded concerning men using the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr within each force, between the years 2017-2021, would also suffice. That way, although not clearly indicating the exact offences committed, it would still be possible to determine where exactly online crimes were rising within the UK.

Receiving data from the forces contacted took some time, with some of the data not being received until nearly a year after the initial FOI requests were sent out. Some of the forces did not reply after several attempts to contact them, and notably, Scottish and Irish Police forces declined to send any data, in any capacity, due to funding/labour costs that retrieving the said data would incur.

And, despite twelve applicable Police forces being unable/unwilling to provide the specific data requested, or only part of the total data requested, the thirty-three forces that *did* provide information accounted for 73% of the forty-five relevant forces able to provide such data.

Thus, in comparison to Galop's smaller catchment of research participants and the ONS' failure to establish precisely *what* crimes were happening and *where* in England and Wales, this project's independent survey and its widespread data captured from individual Police forces across the nation strengthened current research in its field, and the viability of the data gathered concerning male victims of crimes relating to the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.

It was at this point in the thesis that, as a result of the research gathered, and the conclusion of the independent FOI survey and its findings, required changes to the original research question were identified.

Due to the Home Office's ONS survey being restricted to England and Wales and Galop's findings being more centralised around England (and London more so), this, combined with Police Scotland and Police Service of Northern Ireland's refusal to provide data for the independent FOI survey, meant this thesis then directed its research to be specific to crimes against men within England *only*.

Once the data from the FOI survey was finally collated and crimes were broken down into specific offence categories, they uncovered some exciting and unexpected findings – unseen in any other hate crime reports researched for this thesis (Appendix 12).

Unlike the ONS and Galop surveys, crimes in this study were not broken into strands of defining cause – such as hate crime, racially motivated, etc. Rather, they were categorised by the class of offence instead of the class of motivation. The reason being, alike to the ONS' earlier claims that one crime may fall under several hate crime strands of defining cause, this thesis' point of research lies with crimes committed against men who use LGBTQI+ dating apps in England. Crimes that may, or may not, necessarily even include the factor of 'hate' within their motive. Some, for example, may be for nothing other than monetary gain – exploiting the most vulnerable users of online dating apps.

The crimes recorded by each force were split into several categories – with the most common categorisations remaining uniform by each authority throughout the majority of data gathered. Some forces, however, used slightly different wording than others when defining the committed offences. The key findings from this study's Independent FOI study are discussed in more detail throughout Appendix 11, with the statistical data gathered from each of the UK forces shown separately in Appendix 12.

Overall, the independent FOI study carried out by this research project showed that Devon and Cornwall Police, Avon and Somerset Police, Greater Manchester Police, West-Midlands Police and West Yorkshire Police had the highest recorded number of offences, in contrast to the remaining forces between 2017 and May 2021. West Yorkshire Police had the highest number of reported crimes, although with no individual classifications of the exact offences committed.

Avon and Somerset Police had the highest number of offences broken down into categories, with the most commonly reported crimes being 'theft' and 'vehicle offences'. Any data, however, confirming whether or not some (or all) of the vehicle offences involved any form of relation to theft is not available.

The FOI study ultimately concluded that the data gathered from the thirty-three Police Forces that responded to the FOI requests showed that crime concerning men in England who used/had used the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr increased from 318

reported crimes in 2017 to 541 reported crimes by the end of 2020 - a total increase of 70% within the entire three years applicable to the study.

The Galop and ONS reports that were researched throughout the project's preliminary stages, helped to shape its creative element, alongside the data captured from the recently discussed independent FOI enquiry. Data that accurately reflected and embodied the rising crimes originating within LGBTQI+ dating apps, such as Grindr, into one creative narrative. Each research subtopic, under the umbrella of the leading thesis research question, helped to shape different aspects of the creative piece, such as: storyline, dialogue, characterisation and more. And, for this particular subtopic: "what levels of serious crime are on the rise, and where?" the primary source of influence that this had on the creative piece was not only the focus and drive of the plot, but also its antagonist, the troubled Liam Bower, and his storyline.

Thus far, the independent research carried out within this thesis, has discovered that the most common crimes between 2017 and 2021 fell into five separate offences: Theft, Malicious Communications, Blackmail, Stalking and Harassment. Yet, it was the least common crimes reported throughout the data gathered - violent crimes, such as murder - that resonated as a far more gripping storyline for the creative piece to follow. And, as previously mentioned, the crimes of Stephen Port in Barking and Dagenham between 2014 and 2015 heavily influenced the preliminary foundations for this research and creative project.

III. What makes a Criminal, and what makes a Victim?

The research within this particular critical section, “What makes a Criminal, and what makes a Victim?”, significantly helped to shape the characterisations of both protagonist, Ethan Paige, and his antagonist, Liam Bower, within this project’s creative element – along with the aid of other visual examples and texts that were also analysed.

During the initial stages of the creative project, I sourced several points of literature concerning screenwriting formatting, characterisation, and other creative writing methods. The first example of the three notable sources that I examined was Blake Snyder’s “Save the Cat!: The Last Book on Screenwriting You’ll Ever Need” as well as Constantin Stanislavski’s “Building a Character” and “An Actor Prepares”, the latter two of which are mentioned later in this study. Each of these three texts aided the creative writing process in three very different ways.

Snyder’s “Save the Cat!” franchise of screenwriting guides informs their readers on the many effective methods for formatting screenplays (for both film and television) – and even expands on their guidance towards novels in the posthumous continuation of the series after his sudden death in 2009.

I first read Snyder’s “Save the Cat!” screenwriting guide whilst undertaking my master’s dissertation; therefore, when constructing my creative projects storyline, I was already familiar with the “Blake Snyder Beat Sheet” that comprised of fifteen beats to the ‘perfect’ screenplay format and his ten categorisations of feature film genre.

I adopted three examples of Snyder’s style of screenplay genre in the “No Strings Attached” screenplays – ‘Monster in the House’, ‘Dude with a Problem’, and ‘Whydunit’ - with my initial ideas for the creative element’s plotline and its three central characters sharing characteristics from each of these three genres. Snyder explains each have “two very simple working parts” (Snyder, 2005), with the ‘Monster in the House’ genre applying to the location of the screenplays. All are confined to the city of Liverpool, and situated around its close-knit gay community. That being the proverbial ‘house’ to which the genre must be confined. Snyder also argues that:

“There must be a sin committed – usually greed (monetary or carnal) – prompting the creation of a supernatural monster that comes like an avenging angel to kill those who have committed that sin...” – Snyder, 2005, pg. 27

The ‘sin’, as Snyder suggests, that is committed in the “No Strings Attached” storyline falls into two defining events. The first, which the reader does not see until episode three, is the rape of Liam Bower at the hands of Barry Murphy, Gavin Maclean, and their other unnamed accomplice. The exact same fate that Ethan’s character so narrowly (and obliviously) avoids at the end of episode one. This was also a nod to my very own ‘near miss’ experience that I faced whilst using LGBTQI+ dating apps in my early thirties, which was discussed earlier in this project alongside Stanislavski’s theories.

The second comes as a result of Liam Bower's horrific and abusive upbringing at the hands of his alcoholic mother, Sarah Bower, and his paedophile stepfather, Phil Bower. A part of the “No Strings Attached” screenplay that included language, and particular character actions, that were significantly difficult to write.

Consequently, as a result of these ‘sins’, Liam Bower’s ‘monster’ was born – yet, Liam’s character was not the only portrayal of a monster within the screenplays.

Ethan Paige’s storyline adopted two of Snyder’s genre characteristics – the first, as a result of cheating partner Grant Hart’s ‘sins’ of infidelity, created the ‘monster’ of sex addiction within Ethan’s character narrative. A monster that, even without Liam Bower’s presence, would be sure to lead Ethan into harm’s way eventually.

The second genre that the creative piece manifested from Snyder’s theories was ‘Dude with a Problem’. Here, we see Ethan as the “ordinary guy” who “finds himself in extraordinary circumstances” (Snyder, 2005), and the circumstance being, the discovery of Alexander Bank’s dead body and the stalking by Liam Bower that ensues - leading up to Ethan’s eventual death at the end of episode four. Which, coincidentally, breaks the “don’t get eaten” rule of Snyder’s ‘Monster in the House’ genre. However, learning from visual examples of great television writing, such as Cubitt’s “The Fall” and Mike Bartlett’s “Doctor Foster”, it became apparent that sometimes the rules of the genre aren’t always strictly adhered to.

For example, in “The Fall”, antagonist Paul Spector is eventually caught, leading to the conclusion of the second season. Consequently, the third season sees his character kept firmly behind bars. However, the damage that Spector has caused to so many of the surrounding characters’ lives, is still enough to cause continued chaos outside of his prison walls - without him having to move from his Police interview room chair.

Throughout the course of the creative project, taking into consideration the serious nature of the research collated throughout the critical section, my aim was to create characters whose actions all have strong consequences. And, even if the genre rules are broken, ensure that the script and its narrative do not fall apart as a result.

The third of Snyder’s genres applicable to the creative accompaniment, ‘Whydunit’, lends itself to each of the three central characters: Ethan, Liam, and DI Olivia Hartford:

“Whydunit isn’t about the hero changing, it’s about the audience discovering something about human nature they did not think was possible before the ‘crime’ was committed and the ‘case’ began.” – Snyder, 2005, pg. 36

When dissecting the rules of each genre, it becomes apparent that Snyder’s ‘Whydunit’ shares the same principles as his ‘Monster in the House’ theory – two genres that lean heavily on the *consequences* of significant *actions* that characters make within the overall narrative. Ethan and Liam’s ‘sins’ and ‘crimes’ have already been discussed earlier in this section, yet Olivia’s proverbial ‘crime’, which was technically not a crime at all, was the discovery of her partner Craig’s serial infidelity at the start of episode one.

The three central characters share a common similarity in the ‘whydunit’ genre. As Snyder suggests, their stories take a ‘walk on the dark side’ and ‘take us to the shadowy side of the street’ through character narratives that involve ‘discovering something unexpected, something dark and often unattractive, and the answer to the question: Why?’ (Snyder, 2005).

The influence on characterisation, however, did not end with just Snyder’s ideologies. As the shaping of the other characters within the screenplays - their actions, personalities, and behaviours – all derived from the research gathered and the subsequent data collated as a result.

When I started researching for this project, I explored countless news articles surrounding many crimes attributed to dating apps within the UK, initially, investigating crimes not explicitly attached to LGBTQI+ apps. Yet ultimately, the number of crimes reported within the media eventually outweighed those that concerned heterosexual users.

An American study for the Pew Research Centre by Monica Anderson, Emily Vogels, and Erica Turner argues that there “are striking differences by sexual orientation” concerning dating app users within their research study, and that “LGB adults are about twice as likely as straight adults to say they have used a dating site or app (55% vs 28%)” (Anderson et al., 2020). A similar contrast, although US-based, to the results found in the data gathered by this project’s independent survey, concerning the predominant use of dating apps by male users in general. The independent survey mentioned will be discussed later in this project, and throughout Appendix 14 to 31.

In light of Anderson et al.’s findings, it must also be noted that no official (or independent) UK study could be found at the time of this thesis’ publication to compare any differences in data between LGBTQI+ dating app users and heterosexual dating app users. Although, this study’s independent survey (Appendix 14) did conclude that only 2.5% of its participants were, in fact, heterosexual, with the rest of the participants all falling under the LGBTQI+ umbrella.

The hardest characterisation to construct from the research within this study was that of the creative piece’s protagonist, Ethan Paige. This was primarily due to any news articles surrounding the various crimes throughout the UK relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps, taking noticeable priority in reporting more about the *criminals* than their *victims*.

It was this specific lack of victim analysis within the media that drove me to perform my own research questionnaire (Appendix 14), in order to determine the characteristics of the average dating app user and to better understand the social science behind their actions - as set out in this research project’s initial proposal document. A questionnaire that subsequently, after exploring Castro et al.’s five-factor personality model, and the

negative personality traits of LGBTQI+ dating app users (mentioned later in this section), unexpectedly shaped some of the characteristics of the average criminal, also.

The main protagonist, Ethan Paige's character, was eventually shaped into a thirty-four-year-old, gay, white male – who has worked in the same hospitality bar job for almost all his adult life. Ethan's age, ethnicity, and marital status all reflect the results presented from this thesis' survey surrounding the average LGBTQI+ dating app user model.

Ethan's character backstory is influenced heavily by two critical factors: the first drawing from the effects of other characters' personalities and negative behaviours around him. The second came from lending my personal experiences, and my personal struggles with LGBTQI+ dating app addiction to Ethan's character biography.

Episode one: "Never Trust a Stranger", introduces Ethan's character in a scene outside a Liverpool coffee shop, as he shares a morning coffee with close friend Josiah Worth; and there, the screenplay immediately presents within the dialogue that Ethan's lifestyle does not adhere to the average nine to five working pattern.

I set him aside characters, such as friend and lawyer Josiah, to highlight his character's non-conformity to the standard ways of adult life. Almost making him rebellious to this conformity – which, in some respects, makes his descent into addiction concerning both his sexual encounters and dependence on alcohol more relatable.

Within a few lines of dialogue, there is a small montage showing the audience that Ethan engages in a lot of NSA sexual meets, drinks heavily, and is still troubled by his separation from unfaithful ex-partner Grant Hart. And it is the source of Grant's shady actions and negative character traits, his infidelity and exploitation of Ethan's kind nature in their shared past, that lay the initial foundations on Ethan's road to self-destruction. Ethan's late-night encounter with Barry Murphy and the stark realisation of the seriousness of his attempted rape and physical assault momentarily pause his NSA addictions, and, as Ethan makes the decision to reluctantly date love interest Aaron Teller, this also gives him temporary respite from his urges. It isn't until Ethan discovers the dating app Grindr on Aaron's phone, that his impulses resurface in abundance – and

he ultimately finds himself in front of his previous hook-up, businessman Alexander Banks's dead body, and in the direct sights of killer Liam Bower.

Within the creative accompaniment to this PhD, there is a recurring underlying theme within each of the three episodes' storylines – deception. Whether it be in the manifestation of DI Olivia Hartford's husband cheating on her, the assault and robbery of David Finch by Malik Sutcliffe, Alexander Banks' double life as a promiscuous gay man - or Barry Murphy's catfishing of both Ethan Paige and Liam Bower at different timelines within the storyline. In every main character, whether they are on the receiving end of such actions or carrying them out themselves, acts of deception influence all of their storylines at different points within the overall plot.

When planning these points in the creative piece's plot, aside from using various elements from crime statistics and my own quantitative research, I also used elements from different crimes surrounding LGBTQI+ dating apps within the media. Crimes that reflected significant elements of deception were, of course, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, those by Stephen Port, Daryl Rowe, Gerald Matovu and Joel Osei.

Another prominent example of visual research that sparked the adoption of the theme of deception within the “No Strings Attached” narrative was Mike Bartlett's BBC drama, “Doctor Foster” (2015).

When devising the “No Strings Attached” concept, one of the first things I wanted to emote within my screenwriting was the replication of sheer tension and relatable empathy to Bartlett's protagonist, Dr Gemma Foster, played by Suranne Jones, and her pain at discovering her husband's infidelity with a woman half her age.

Dr Gemma Foster's character was initially where I derived the majority of inspiration for DI Olivia Hartford's narrative, her struggle with her husband's infidelity, and the ‘monster’ that arose as a result. A monster that manifested in her homophobic, judgemental, and prejudicial dialogue – that solely condemned the lifestyles of gay men, such as David Finch's character prior to his assault by Malik Sutcliffe.

Much like “The Fall”, “Doctor Foster” and Dr Gemma Foster’s character spiralled into a web of deception and revenge - with a protagonist seeking retribution from the other characters who had faulted her. And, this is essentially what I encompassed within Olivia Hartford’s journey throughout the “No Strings Attached” screenplays. Mirroring the character of Dr Gemma Foster, she eventually learns the error of her ways towards the latter end of the story.

Another series of news articles that inspired my creative imagination, retained the theme of deception, and that documented the rare instance of a lone woman’s involvement in disorderly conduct relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps were the crimes committed by Yannick Glaudin.

Glaudin was jailed in 2020 “for posing as a man on a gay dating app and sharing sexual photos and videos of a man she met online during a ‘disturbing campaign of harassment’” (Media, 2020).

Glaudin used popular dating app Grindr, posing under the pseudonym of Steven St Pier, where she made initial contact with her victim, who is not named in any of the corresponding news articles. Once contact had been made, and mobile numbers had been exchanged, Glaudin’s victim became suspicious of her pseudonym’s authenticity and decided to break off all contact with her. Or rather, Pier.

It was at this point that Glaudin, furious at her victim’s rejection, started her ‘disturbing campaign of harassment’ involving the victim’s boyfriend, his friends, and his family. People to whom she venomously sent the intimate pictures shared by her unsuspecting victim during their initial communication, when Glaudin’s alias, Pier, was yet to be questioned. “Police and Crimestoppers were contacted on multiple occasions over false claims, including... assault and paedophilia, against one man, while his friends were warned he had a “bounty on his head” (Media, 2020).

Reading of Glaudin’s crimes in the planning stages of my creative project and observing the extent to which she pursued harassing her victim in a truly shocking and depraving way - merely because he ceased communication with her online - gave me the idea to fortify elements of her crimes within each screenplay’s narrative.

Notably, the concept of Barry Murphy's character within the storyline came from not only Joel Osei's crimes surrounding Devils' Breath – but also Glaudin's catfishing of her victim and serious crimes of harassment. Also, there was a direct reflection at this point within the creative project, lending influence from the FOI requests mentioned earlier in this thesis – and the four most commonly reported crimes: malicious communications, blackmail, stalking and harassment.

In the wake of researching Glaudin's crimes, I was surprised to learn that 'under the current UK law, catfishing is not inherently illegal'. However, that instigators of these deceptive actions are "likely to engage in a series of illegal activities when catfishing" (Ma, 2020), such as fraud, or in Glaudin's case, harassment, stalking and malicious communication. Ultimately arguing that most individuals who catfish people online *do* eventually end up breaking the law, by committing other closely related offences in the process.

Catfishing appears at several points throughout the creative piece's storyline, as I felt it was an extremely relevant subject matter, given the crimes researched so far within this thesis. In episode three (although unknown to the audience until episode four), Liam Bower masquerades as 'Jack', Rhys Denham's potential love interest. Liam also takes on the Grindr alias of "Hung4rent", posing as a male escort and attracting the attention of Grant Hart, ultimately making him Bower's fifth victim at the end of episode four.

I also turned the concept of Joel Osei's crimes on their head – and decided to link Barry Murphy's catfishing, also influenced by Glaudin, with the crimes involving the rare use of Devil's Breath by Barry Murphy, Gavin Maclean, and their other accomplice - in the rape of Liam Bower, and the attempted rape of Ethan Paige. An attempted rape, which unbeknown to Ethan at that time, involved more than just *one* person. The audience later discovers this in episode three, leading to a further reflection of deception within the main storyline, mirroring the unseen dangers lurking within LGBTQI+ dating apps that users may not always be aware of.

To further explore the crux of exactly what makes a criminal and what makes a victim, I tackled this particularly rousing question from various angles, alongside the strong

semblance of catfishing in particular. One of the other interesting ways in which I did this, and that was on reflection, probably the most enjoyable part of the creative writing process - was a scene in episode three, where friends Ethan, Mark, and Josiah are discussing their experiences with dating apps, whilst enjoying food and some cocktails in a city restaurant.

An online article for The Mirror newspaper in 2018 by Lucy Clarke-Billings that I came across during the preliminary research process forged the idea to write this particular scene in question.

The article, titled: “Terrifying Tinder date sounds like something from horror film as woman left feeling physically sick shares 'scariest story ever” - depicts the story of how Scottish Twitter user Cara Paton posted a video on her feed in April 2018, that has since amassed 8.7 million views and has been “shared by tens of thousands of” other “social media users” (Clarke-Billings, 2018).

Paton’s post (Appendix 13) shows a video including what appears to be the audio recording of a phone conversation (or voice note) of a woman with an English accent, relaying a story concerning her friend's horrifying experience whilst on a Tinder date. The location of which, and exact details surrounding the woman involved remain unidentified throughout the duration of the recording – as does the identity of the woman heard in the audio.

The heading of Paton’s Twitter post reads: “This has to be the scariest thing ever; I feel physically sick listening to it”, and she continues to write, “Everyone should be so careful with whom they meet (online)” (Paton, 2018).

Clarke-Billings’ article then summarises the fundamentals of the story relating to Paton’s chilling audio post: A woman meets a man on the popular dating app Tinder, they talk for a while, and then eventually arrange to go on a date. On the date, in a restaurant, the woman falls ill and then decides to cut the night short and return home.

Her date drives her home - at which point she then invites him in for a coffee as her illness begins to subside. However, after a short while, she begins to feel unwell again and asks him to leave. He agrees and, as requested, leaves her home.

Clarke-Billings then explains at this point in Paton's audio post that "the woman says her friend then went to bed but woke in the night to noises downstairs and called the Police." Clarke-Billings continues to explain that "Police officers then attended the property to discover the doors locked but were asked to knock it down by the terrified woman inside who was convinced of a disturbance in her living room."

The article then concludes the short story by recounting how Police officers allegedly broke into the house and restrained an intruder in the petrified woman's living room. It also recounts how officers, upon their initial entry to the property, immediately noticed that the intruder had covered the woman's living room furnishings with plastic sheeting.

This commodity only makes sense later to the audience of Paton's post, when the woman in the recording then confirms that the attending officers found a hammer, and a saw, on a nearby table in the living room area. And that the man they had restrained upon entry to the property, was the same man with whom the frightened woman upstairs had been on a date with earlier that evening.

"According to the story, the mysterious man had drugged his date and then taken her house keys with his when he left after she fell unwell. Thousands of people have shared the story as a warning to people inviting strangers back to their home." – Clarke-Billings, 2018

What struck me initially when discovering this article, and when listening to Paton's post, was that the story being told had no defining features, solidifying any form of credibility or authenticity in what the audience and readers were being told. Aside from the story itself, and to imagine oneself being faced within such a situation, being utterly horrifying to conceive of. With Clarke-Billings herself explaining at the latter end of her article that "not everyone believes the story, and many consider it an urban myth." She argues that "similar accounts of the tale, with small details changed, have surfaced in the past" (Clarke-Billings, 2018).

One example of the same story reiterated in another form was discovered in Sara Salman's Rear Front online article, also from 2018.

Salman's article depicts how Twitter user 'skyegoulding' recounts how an unidentified woman, a "friend of a friend" (Salman, 2018), faced a similar and equally horrifying ordeal on a Tinder date – alike that faced by the unidentified woman mentioned in Paton's post, within Clarke-Billings article. This version of the story is almost identical to that told in Paton's post, with minimal difference between them – and as a result, casts further doubt on the legitimacy of the entire story in general.

Salman concludes the article by suggesting that:

"The moral of the story is that you must not trust a complete stranger and avoid using dating applications because you never know what's going to happen with you. Why should you put your life at risk by trusting a complete stranger and letting him/her enter your life and house?" - Salman, 2018

After reading these articles, I set myself thinking about how the research element of this PhD project would be built on nothing but solid data from various credible sources, with crucial elements that would feed into the adjoining creative piece. Clarke-Billings' article surrounding this Tinder urban myth, gave me the idea to juxtapose against these credible sources in one scene – to air again, an element of deception within the creative piece's screenplays, with urban tales of Tinder horrors bled into factually inspired content.

During the scene, Mark's character tells his version of Paton's Tinder date horror story to his aghast friends, as they all sit around a restaurant table. His dialogue then continues off-screen as the script cuts to Ethan's bedroom – where, at the climax of Mark's tale, it becomes apparent to the audience that an intruder is inside Ethan's empty apartment.

Mirroring the notion that although urban myths may not always be entirely factually correct, lending pieces of information from various sources – such as internet forums, non-credible news sources, and social media outlets to name a few; there is always some semblance of truth, somewhere, within them. No smoke without fire, so to speak.

As a result of this, it is this one particular scene that I feel has the most gravitas to inspire thought regarding the dangers lurking within LGBTQI+ dating apps than any other scene within the creative piece.

To explore the concept of what ‘makes’ a criminal and what ‘makes’ a victim further - and by ‘makes’ the research simply refers to the sociological and psychosexual qualities that shape a criminal, or victim’s mindset, personality, and actions - the research project will aim to decipher these characteristics and behaviours and understand the reasoning behind both the criminals and victims’ actions. With this section of the research leaning heavily toward the circumstances surrounding how crimes, such as those mentioned up to this point in this thesis, are committed - addressing any patterns of behaviour from both the victim and/or the perpetrator. Ultimately, determining whether those who fall victim to (or commit) such crimes have any correlation in sociological and psychological qualities between them.

One scholarly article studied - “Profiling Dating Apps Users: Sociodemographic and Personality Characteristics” by Castro, Á., Barrada, J. R., Ramos-Villagrasa, P. J., & Fernández-del-Río, E. (2020) addresses this avenue of research almost perfectly.

The Castro et al. article does this by identifying how the “recent phenomenon” of online dating apps has led to “some gaps in the literature on individual differences (sociodemographic variables and personality traits) between users (previous and current) and non-users” of these apps. With Castro et al. analysing “the relationship between using dating apps, sociodemographics (gender, age, sexual orientation, and relationship status), and bright and dark personality traits” (Castro et al., 2020).

It is Castro et al. and their notion of identifying what effectively translates as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ personality traits within dating app users (and non-users) in particular, that allowed this study to cross-reference their claims - and to then compare and contrast their logic alongside other widely reported crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps - leading to this particular part of the study, and its focus on dating app users specific behavioural traits, helping to factually shape the majority of characterisation within the creative piece.

At the start of the Castro et al. study they identify within the first few pages of their report “that men use dating apps more”; not excluding, however, that women can also be users, but, identifying that women use these applications more “selectively and effectively” and less “intensely” than their male counterparts. Castro et al. also recognise that people who fall within a sexual orientation minority, such as gay and bisexual men, are more likely to use these apps, as they offer ultimate discretion and anonymity to those “who have trouble expressing their sexuality” to others (Castro et al., 2020). The study also notes that “between 18% and 25%” of the dating app users studied “had a stable partner”.

Castro et al. then move on to discuss Robert McCrae and Paul Costa’s (1987) updated version of the ‘Five Factor Model of Personality’, or ‘The Big Five’ – which is “a taxonomy of five personality traits whose labels can differ according to the authors’ denomination (Neuroticism or Negative Emotionality, Extraversion, Openness to Experience or Open-Mindedness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness).

Castro et al. also identify early in their article an argument that this thesis makes from the offset; they claim that “there is hardly any research to analyse the phenomenon of dating apps in relation to the ‘Big Five’” personality traits (Castro et al., 2020). And it was this limited research and insight into the psychosocial area of dating app users in particular, that prompted the research to explore the sub-question of “what makes a criminal, and what makes a victim?” in the first instance.

Scholars Elizabeth Timmermans and Elien De Caluwé are noted by Castro et al. as the only other source, besides themselves, that explore this psychosocial research into mobile dating applications, more specifically, in Timmermans et al.’s. Study, ‘Tinder’ - and the varying degrees in the personalities and motives of those who use them.

One immediate and noticeable difference in the findings from Timmermans et al., when compared to the study from Castro et al., is their argument that the majority of participants within their study claimed to use “mobile dating applications more for entertainment purposes than they did for finding a romantic or sexual partner” (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017).

Castro et al. also claim in their study that their “results indicate that dating apps can be used to find long-term relationships or that looking for casual sex is not incompatible with seeking a romantic relationship” at the same time. With each study contradicting the general stereotype that dating “apps are used only for casual sex” (Castro et al., 2020).

This argument, although entirely comprehensible, lends another example as to what makes this research project individual when compared to any other piece of research in its field – such as the studies by Timmermans et al. and Castro et al. Precisely because this thesis argues the opposite when concerning LGBTQI+ dating apps, specifically those such as Grindr.

To expand on this argument further, in comparison against Timmermans et al. and Castro et al.’s theories - and also as a fundamental part of its research development, the research undertook an independent and anonymous online survey in the UK. Both the statistical findings and breakdown of the survey’s methodology are shown in Appendix 14 through 24.

Appendix 14 confirms that the independent survey’s results determined the more common characteristics and behaviours attributed to those who use/used Queer dating apps; or, rather, shaping a model of the average characteristics associated with a potential victim of crime and disorder, as a result of their use/previous use of these dating apps.

Therefore, when averaging the survey’s statistical data shown in Appendix 14, the study concluded that the model of a potential ‘victim’ was more likely to be a person who was:

- Aged between 18-39.
- Of any white ethnic background.
- Single, with no relationship commitments.
- Identify their sexuality as being Gay.
- Somebody who uses LGBTQI+ dating apps for both dating and sexual purposes, but with sex being the more predominant usage factor.

- Somebody who uses LGBTQI+ dating apps at least a few times every day.
- Somebody who uses, or has used, the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.

There are some noticeable similarities and differences in the dating app user model created by this survey, when compared alongside the results from Castro et al. and Timmermans et al.

Despite Castro et al.'s capture audience being substantially larger at 1705 participants, a small fraction of this number, only 12.7% (217), were actually current dating app users – with 15.8% being previous users and a substantial 71.5% of those surveyed not being dating app users at all.

Timmermans et al. found similar results within their participants, with a similar capture audience of 1573. Yet, after participants were filtered down into the appropriate criteria and defined as users, previous users, or non-users of dating apps - the final number of participants that *were* users of dating apps levelled at 378. Of these, 44 participants from that last number identified as non-heterosexual.

Castro et al., as with this project, also found that “individuals who are members of sexual minorities, men, and older youths are more likely to use dating apps”, with their study finding that people of a sexual minority were “three times greater” to be users of dating apps when compared to those who identified as heterosexual.

Castro et al. also argue that “being single greatly increased the likelihood of being a current user of dating apps”, whilst finding that 4% of their participants were in a relationship; their explanation for this was that “participants could be single while using the apps, but not when responding to the questionnaires” as well as “people cheating on their partners or in a consensually non-monogamous relationship” (Castro et al., 2020). Like Castro et al., this study found that users of designated LGBTQI+ dating apps were also more likely to be single and identify as gay. When questioning participants' marital status, unlike Castro et al., the questions were structured (as well as the anonymity of the survey) to differentiate between participants who were/had been faithful and potentially unfaithful whilst using LGBTQI+ dating apps (Appendix 19). A substantially

larger number of participants, 32.5%, claimed to be in a relationship at the time of the survey – discounting the question of whether or not they were, or weren't, single at the time of using LGBTQI+ dating apps. The surveys option for participants to disclose whether they were in a consensual non-monogamous (open) relationship, also took away the confusion of participants who may have been non-monogamous with the consent from their partners - as opposed to those who cheated on their partners without their knowledge.

Castro et al. did not define dating app users by their race, as this study did – however, this was more attributed to not only defining the average model of an LGBTQI+ dating app user, but also to act as a visual guide for the supporting creative element of this research project. Whilst also helping to aid the characterisation of the screenplay's protagonist and antagonist, specifically.

Castro et al.'s analysis of their studies' data then shifts toward the 'big five' personality traits and the psychological shaping of their participants, as with Timmermans et al.'s research. This study did not pursue the same course of psychological investigation, yet by using the data from each of these scholars' studies, some of their definitions of dating app users' personalities as a result of their behaviour (i.e. cheating on their partner) can be sourced back to some of the results from the previous questions that the survey asked its participants.

Questions such as those surrounding marital status, as mentioned earlier, where 32.5% of participants were in a relationship, yet still using dating apps. Castro et al. confirm that "people with higher scores in dark personality traits had a less restrictive sociosexuality, more sexual partners, and a greater orientation to short-term mating and casual sexual relationships". Thus suggesting that active dating app users who use their apps more frequently, are not single, and solely use the apps for sexual purposes, are more likely to have negative personality traits and motives, potentially, leading to criminal behaviour (Castro et al. 2020).

Therefore, this thesis argues from the example model of an LGBTQI+ dating app user that its independent survey generated - with some slight variations - that the same model could *also* be used to predict what constitutes as the average 'criminal' dating app user.

Relatively speaking, exploring LGBTQI+ dating app users and creating a model of the average user (or potential 'victim') through the survey undertaken within the research – was a straightforward measure. Participants likely had no cause to lie about their behaviour and use of these apps, as none of the behaviours the research openly sought to investigate were of a Machiavellian nature – as well as the survey being completely anonymous.

Deciphering the model of an average 'criminal', however, was not so straightforward. With no exact method to measure whether survey participants had either harmless or insidious motives concerning their use of dating apps – just as Castro et al. note: “The dark personality showed no predictive ability”.

They also state that “in recent years, in parallel with the traditional Big Five paradigm, other proposals have emerged focused on the malevolent side of personality, which may be of special interest for the understanding of sexual phenomena” concerning the negative side of dating app user's personalities and motives. (Castro et al., 2020).

These other proposals – such as Minna Lyons, Ashleigh Messenger, Rebecca Brewer, and Gayle Perry's article 'The Dark Tetrad in Tinder: hook-up app for high psychopathy individuals, and a diverse utilitarian tool for Machiavellians?' - explore negative personality traits and their relation to the big five paradigm in further context.

In particular interest to part of this study's sub-question 'what makes a criminal', Lyons et al. explore the 'dark tetrad' of behavioural traits more commonly associated with dating app users' negative personalities. Such as their lack of 'agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability' when compared to other users with more positive personality traits.

Lyons et al. also claim that:

“Those who score high on Dark Tetrad instruments favour short-term relationships with low levels of commitment... This is consistent with research suggesting that for those

high in some Dark Tetrad traits (Machiavellianism and psychopathy) casual sex is the primary motivation for using Tinder whilst already in a relationship.” - (Lyons et al., 2020)

Lyons et al. also directly reference Timmermans et al.'s. research – and how they found that in “non-single Tinder users, social approval was the primary motive for those high in narcissism and Machiavellianism, whereas casual sex was an important driver for those high in psychopathy and Machiavellianism.” They also determined that those with negative personality traits were more likely to be “associated with a host of anti-social behaviours in the online environment, including cyberstalking, computer-mediated sexual violence, and sending explicit unsolicited sexual images” (Lyons et al., 2020).

Interestingly, the data from this project's independent survey (Appendix 25) showed that the more common offences that were reported to the Police by the select number of participants that did so, were: bullying/harassment/hate speech, stalking (online or offline), and catfishing. With the majority of these offences being relatively applicable to an online environment, as Lyons et al. suggest. It should also be noted that participants were not required to define the offence they were victim to in the survey, nor were they required to answer that particular question due to the sensitive topic of the research. As participant welfare, and any potential emotional triggering due to probing questions of a personal nature - was a substantial concern throughout the ethics of the questionnaire. Therefore, the actual levels of crime/disorder experienced by participants who completed the survey, are likely to have been far higher than the numbers that were actually recorded.

Thus far, it can be argued from the data gathered from scholars Castro et al., Timmermans et al., and Lyons et al. that male dating app users specifically share the majority of association with negative personality traits, as opposed to female users. Lyons et al. confirm in their data that “men scored higher than women in all of the Dark Tetrad traits” and with Timmermans et al. and Castro et al. both confirming that “male Tinder users are significantly more likely to use Tinder to have casual sex” (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017).

This, combined with casual sex and infidelity also being solid indicators of negative personality traits and motives in Tinder users, as mentioned previously, mean the

likelihood of participants having negative personality traits within *this* project's survey, are as follows:

- 32.5% (13) of participants who stated they were in a relationship at the time of using LGBTQI+ dating apps.
- 21.9% (7) of participants who stated they used LGBTQI+ dating apps for sexual purposes only.
- 18.8% (6) of participants who use dating apps very often.

This leaves a mean percentage total of 24.4% of participants identifying as having negative personality/behavioural traits. With each of the scholars sourced in this section noting, in similar terms, that “in the growing field of online dating research, the Dark Tetrad” of dating app users’ personality and behaviours “has received surprisingly little attention to date” (Lyons et al., 2020). The same of which can be said for the personality and behaviours of Grindr users in the UK. Something that, from the results of this thesis’ independent survey, has been addressed more specifically as a new contribution to the research in this field.

IV. How many crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps go unreported by male victims? And, with recent reports of multiple Police failings concerning investigations into the deaths of several LGBTQI+ males, would the men who use these dating apps, should they ever have to report such crimes, trust the Police to handle their case without bias?

The argument surrounding male LGBTQI+ dating app users and their trust in the Police, should they ever have to report a crime, and the effect that this had upon the creative element of this research project was profound.

It shaped the creative piece's plot in various ways, but ultimately, gave me the chance to embody each of the reports and studies researched throughout this particular argument into two central characters: DI Olivia Hartford and DI Rhys Denham.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the entire creative element and its screenplays are centralised around three main characters, with each reflecting the crucial arguments highlighted within this research project: the crimes themselves, the definition of a victim and a criminal, and a representation of the categoric failings within the UK Police. Thus, exposing the internalised homophobia and severe malpractice uncovered throughout the multiple articles studied by this project and, consequently, lending these discoveries a clear narrative within the creative piece.

In total, five characters were created to reflect this particular part of the narrative, alongside (and including) Olivia and Rhys – colleagues within the serious investigation unit of Merseyside Police: Gill, and Neil; and their fictional Chief Superintendent Spencer Cooke.

To better aid the characterisation of these characters, and to ensure that their dialogue and interactions between each other were not only believable, but accurately referenced, I studied Police dramas such as Ged Mercurio's "Line of Duty" (2012) which, unlike any other Police drama that I had seen, portrayed the British Police and its Officers from an *internalised* angle.

Having already watched “Line of Duty”, like “The Fall”, upon its initial release in 2012, when I revisited it again during the planning stages of the creative element, I was immediately drawn to the complexities of the characters and their behaviours whilst on the job as working Police professionals.

The characters Steve Arnott and Kate Flemings, played by Martin Compston and Vicky McClure, helped me to further envision the relationship between Rhys, Olivia, and their other colleagues. I considered how each of their characters interacted with each other throughout the duration of the six series – and the terminology used throughout for certain operational procedures, and reference to certain Police staff divisions.

Anna Maxwell Martin’s excellent portrayal of the passive-aggressive on-screen ‘villain’, DCI Patricia Carmichael, during her internal investigation of Superintendent Ted Hastings and the “AC-12” anti-corruption unit in Season Five - lent inspiration to the scenes and dialogue concerning Olivia Hartford’s unrest with the gay community, and her verbal assault towards partner Rhys in her disregard of the attack on David Finch at the start of episode one. Olivia’s attitude, and tone of dialogue, were strongly influenced by the awe I felt when watching Anna Maxwell Martin’s sharp character portrayal.

The most prominent piece of visual research that I undertook throughout the planning of the creative piece, however, was the study of the BBC dramatization of Stephen Port’s murders, “Four Lives”, created by Neil McKay.

Originally titled “The Barking Murders”, I knew about this drama back in 2019, when I had devised my initial research proposal for this study. And, in actual fact, there was an initial worry on my part that my idea for “No Strings Attached” would be too similar to McKay’s drama. However, I soon learnt from researching the programme further that one of the reasons it was renamed, was “in order to change the focus on the drama, so it” became “more about the lives lost” than focusing on Stephen Port himself (Fletcher, 2021).

Several delays in the filming of “Four Lives”, such as COVID-19 and the inquest into Stephen Port’s investigation, meant the show was delayed for more than two years. Relatives of Port’s victims were said to be “upset... when they learned the broadcast

date was being pushed back” on more than one occasion, and hoped that the drama would “show the world how the cases were handled, and how Police may have been able to stop the killer sooner” (Fletcher, 2021).

When analysing “Four Lives” it became apparent from the offset that the programme had been researched intrinsically. Accounts from those involved in the investigation - friends and family of Port’s four victims - lent the scriptwriters the voice of their experiences with Barking and Dagenham Police.

As well as adopting the principles of Snyder’s ‘Monster in the House’ and ‘Whydunit’ genres, and elements of Mike Bartlett’s protagonist Dr Gemma Foster, Olivia Hartford’s characterisation also reflected the data gathered from the multiple studies researched within this thesis, concerning hate crime figures and public attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people - notably, those concerning the Police.

Olivia’s character enters the screenplay at the beginning of episode one, when she returns home from work in the evening to find her restaurateur husband, Craig Hartford, in the shower. As she proceeds up the stairs and into the bedroom, she notices that her husband’s laptop is open on the desk. A sudden notification, and a chance inspection of the laptop, seals Olivia’s fate throughout the rest of the creative piece.

Upon discovering that her husband has been cheating on her for months, on the factual swinging website “Fabswingers”, Olivia’s character then proceeds to not only represent the embodiment of Police failings within my research, but also, the crippling, emotional, and physical effects that infidelity concerning LGBTQI+ dating apps and websites can inflict.

The portrayal of some of Barking and Dagenham’s investigating Police officers’ unjust comments in “Four Lives”, and the news articles mentioned earlier in the critical section of this argument, led me to consider, despite their inexcusable nature, the understanding that there is a reasoning behind everything – including views and opinions expressed by investigating officers in the Stephen Port investigation.

This reasoning was imprinted within the script as a result of Olivia Hartford's characterisation – and delivered at multiple points within the narrative.

In episode one, during the first scene that Olivia Hartford and Rhys Denham share together on screen, Olivia, recently humiliated by her husband's infidelity with members of the same and opposite sexes, makes a homophobic outburst to colleague Rhys concerning the attack on elderly gay man David Finch (shown at the very beginning of that episode).

Olivia's comments concern the age gap between Malik Sutcliffe, a young offender already known to them, and David, who is more than four times his senior. In this particular part of the screenplay, I made a point of reflecting the damage that these dangerous and uninformed views can have – on both the victim and the investigation, alike to that experienced from researching Port's crimes. The screenplay then continues with Olivia and Rhys attending the crime scene at David's flat, as his head injuries are being tended to by Paramedics – with Olivia's reaction to him being nothing short of unacceptable.

During their brief scene together, as Olivia starts to question David's actions and intentions on the night of his attack, Olivia suggests in front of an aghast Rhys, that David had knowingly met Malik Sutcliffe for sex, and, that he was aware of Malik being an adolescent. An accusation that David then categorically denies, promptly explaining that the reason he had arranged to meet Malik was simply because he was sometimes lonely after his former partner's death. Back in the patrol car, Olivia and Rhys then come to blows as Rhys explains to Olivia that she could be reported to the IOPC for her outburst, to which Olivia shows no regret or remorse.

This particular part of the creative piece's narrative was chosen to reflect the reasoning and concerns from members of the LGBTQI+ community (not just men) in not reporting crimes associated with LGBTQI+ dating apps to the Police.

This links closely back to an article by Lily Wakefield, which will be discussed later in this section, and the report from the IOPC during Stephen Port's investigation surrounding

investigating officers' damaging "assumptions about the lifestyles of gay men" (Wakefield, 2022). The scene ends with Rhys asking Olivia whether they are going to get an investigation started into Malik's whereabouts. Olivia point-blank refuses, citing that they have more important issues to deal with than David Finch's assault.

I chose Olivia's character, alongside the other influences mentioned earlier in this project, to represent the examples of prejudice shown within the research gathered by this thesis. Examples of prejudice from not only the Police, but also society in general. The twist within this reflection upon the screenplay, however, is that Olivia's anger at men within the LGBTQI+ community stems solely from her husband's infidelity. Incapable of blaming her husband directly, or the dating apps themselves, she shifts her blame towards gay men.

Only when Olivia discovers that she is HIV positive, in episode two, as a result of her husband sleeping with multiple sexual partners without using protection does her reasoning finally shift the blame to her husband, in a dramatic scene where she confronts him at his restaurant business.

Another unique point in how Olivia's character reflects the research gathered throughout this thesis upon the creative piece - is that she is a *woman*.

Most, if not all of the research collated concerning homophobia and misogyny within the UK Police, gave accounts of examples shown to concern male officers. So, the portrayal of such prejudices by a female officer lent a unique take on this concept to the creative element of the project.

As the three episodes progress, Olivia, however, soon realises that the unintentional direction of her anger towards gay men and their lifestyles is not acceptable. This realisation is notably aided by the education she receives concerning LGBTQI+ people from Ethan Paige's character, and, more notably, from that of her friendship with colleague DI Rhys Denham who identifies as gay, a fact Olivia does not realise until her harsh homophobic comments force him to inform her.

Rhys Denham's character was devised when researching this particular sub-argument within the thesis. Several articles that acquired my interest were discovered, most notably one for The Guardian in 2016 by Kevin Maxwell: "As a gay officer I saw how homophobic the Police were". This inspired me to create Rhys's character as a manifestation of an insider's account, lending the voice of a Queer Police officer's experiences of prejudice and discrimination within the London Metropolitan Police to my narrative.

Maxwell's article, which also references the Police failings documented in Stephen Port's investigation, claims that examples such as these, of Police failing the Queer community "has shone a light on how LGBT victims are often brushed away, with prejudice in the force still remaining" (Maxwell, 2016).

Maxwell's personal account of joining Manchester Police in 2001 goes on to describe homophobia as "rife" at the time that he joined – and that "the system, riddled with institutional homophobia as it is, needs to be dealt with" (Maxwell, 2016).

Maxwell writes that he often heard the word "Queer" in relation to prisoners from other officers, namely sergeants – and that when he came out to a senior officer, he was told that they did not "condone" what he "did as a homosexual", with one chief superintendent writing a report to senior officers that he "considered moving" Maxwell from the force, "because of concerns over victimisation resulting from" his "sexual orientation". (Maxwell, 2016).

His article also recounts how he, and other officers, would purposely target gay men along the Manchester city canal, to make an example out of them, and "punish them for sexual acts" under "outdated laws" at the "direction" of senior officers (Maxwell, 2016).

What struck me regarding Maxwell's article in particular, was his shift towards Port's crimes – and the further discussion of the institutionalised homophobia within the Police that this research argues. Alike to this argument, Maxwell asks: just "how much were officers' judgements blinded by the so-called "lifestyle choice" of the (Port's) victims?" (Maxwell, 2016).

Interestingly, Maxwell notes that the Labour government of that time repealed some of the “outdated homophobic laws” recently mentioned, and that homophobia within the Police went “underground” and as a result Queer people became “complacent” (Maxwell, 2016):

“Believing we were equal in the eyes of the law made us forget the dismissiveness, disinterest and victim blaming many of our LGBT brothers and sisters experienced at the hands of the Police.” – Maxwell, 2016

Maxwell further conveys the message that as a result of cases such as Port’s – with Police failings and examples of prejudice such as these - that “many LGBT people don’t report incidents or hate crimes to the force for this very reason” (Maxwell, 2016).

Rhys Denham’s character then proceeds throughout the creative element of the research project to mirror Maxwell’s personal accounts, and the experiences of the families and friends of the victims of crimes such as those committed by Port, when dealing with the UK Police.

In every scene where I chose to portray an element of homophobia within the narrative - whether it be Olivia’s patrol car outbursts, Gill and Ian’s mocking of the circumstances surrounding the death of Barry Murphy, or chief superintendent Spencer Cooke’s homophobic dismissal in halting further investigation into it - Rhys Denham’s character is always present, and always there to witness these acts of homophobic dialogue.

Outdated homophobic British law, as Maxwell notes, may have changed - but the mindset of Police Officers who were behind the timeline of these changes in the law, may not have. This is where I drew the inspiration for Chief Superintendent Spencer Cooke’s character.

Upon further reading, I came across an article from 2006 by Dean Blackburn, written for the “Centre for Crime and Justice Studies” 63rd journal. The article, titled: “Gay Rights in the Police Service: Is the Enemy Still Within?”, explores the changing attitudes within the UK Police concerning external and internal homophobia amongst serving officers.

Blackbourn argues that “in the 1990’s most rank and file Police officers viewed being gay as akin to paedophilia or other criminal conduct”; and that being an openly gay Police officer opened up a “conflict of interest” as an employee of the Police force (Blackbourn, 2006).

Despite Blackbourn reporting a shift in acceptance within the Police from 1999 onwards, he suggests, in a quote cited from an unnamed senior Police officer, that “it used to be mandatory to be homophobic in the Police service... at least now it is only optional”. This resonated perfectly with my creative idea for Spencer’s character as soon as I read it (Blackbourn, 2006).

I drew Spencer Cooke’s character from this “mandatory” time, where homophobia was rife within the Police, to represent my argument that changes to dated legislation did not necessarily bring immediate changes to people’s personal beliefs, which is why, when writing the fifty-four-year-old fictional Chief Superintendent’s character’s dialogue his homophobic comments, like each of the five Police related characters within the screenplays, are always portrayed as underhand and out of earshot of an unintended audience.

I also lent some inspiration, although not entirely concerning Spencer’s personality, from “Line of Duty’s” Superintendent Ted Hastings (Adrian Dunbar). The reflection that Ted’s character had upon the characterisation of Spencer was more applicable to his presence within the scenes that he featured – and his no-nonsense attitude towards his Officers concerning the crimes (or issues) that he feels are not their point of concern.

Spencer’s character is also portrayed within the five intended episodes, as always paying close attention to all of the forces ‘diversity’ targets that he must implement as best as he can – on the record of course.

Off the record, however, he couldn’t be any more different. With the idea for Spencer’s characterisation lent from Blackbourn’s argument, that despite Police forces challenging internal/external homophobia and the interests of LGBTQI+ people more effectively from 1999, “insight into Police organisational culture demonstrates that there is in fact still a

mountain to climb before the interests of diverse groups are fully protected within the service” (Blackbourn, 2006).

Consequently, with the research gathered and arguments presented throughout this entire section of the thesis, and their influence upon both the critical and the creative, it became clear to me when planning and writing my show bible, and the following three consecutive scripts, that Liam Bower’s character was not the only antagonist within the “No Strings Attached” storyline.

The researched examples of Homophobia, Biphobia, Misogyny, and the stereotyping of Queer people within the Police that this research presented was the real enemy within. Something that I portrayed with a subtlety throughout the overall narrative, so much in fact, that in some scenes the audience would miss it in the blink of an eye.

This writing truly reflects the “underground” internalised problems within the Police that most people, especially Queer people, as Maxwell suggests, have become complacent with as a result of the presentation of visible changes to outdated, homophobic UK legislation. Changes that shroud the undisputable fact from the evidence gathered thus far, that homophobia is still a very real problem within the UK Police.

The initial concept for this particular argument within the research project, as previously mentioned, was aroused by the categoric failings of the London Metropolitan Police – namely Barking and Dagenham - during the criminal investigation into the murders committed by Stephen Port between 2014 and 2015.

When returning to a quote mentioned earlier in this thesis by Jessica Frank-Keyes, who argues:

“The families of serial killer Stephen Port’s four gay male victims have described the investigation into their deaths as ‘one of the most widespread institutional failures in modern history’ and that ‘four white, heterosexual girls’ would have been treated differently.” – Frank-Keyes, 2021

It became abundantly clear during further research into Port's criminal investigation, that these 'institutional failures' were not only the by-product of human error within the Met Police, but also, institutional homophobia.

A report for Pink News in March 2022 by Lily Wakefield, concerning an IOPC (Independent Office of Police Conduct) report leaked to Channel Four News, states that investigating officers made "assumptions about the lifestyles of gay men", including Port's victims; and that during the investigation into the four deaths, these assumptions "could have been based, consciously or unconsciously, on discriminatory views" (Wakefield, 2022).

Port's crimes, and the inequitable assumptions of his victims that were made by investigating officers - as a result of the sexual nature (and somewhat promiscuous surroundings) concerning the circumstances of how Port and his victims met through LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr - mirrored poignantly, with another well-documented case of major Police misconduct, that this research unexpectedly drew light on.

Peter Sutcliffe, the man who eventually became referred to as 'The Yorkshire Ripper', terrorised women throughout Yorkshire, between 1975 and 1980. "Sutcliffe used hammers and screwdrivers to murder his victims" and "he targeted women from all walks of life... sparking a reign of terror that meant no woman in the region felt safe" for almost half a decade. (Topping, 2020).

The unexpected links between Port and Sutcliffe's crimes to this research project came not from the murderers themselves, nor their crimes, but from the way that the Police in each of the vastly separated decades between them handled the investigations into each of the victims' murders: and the alarming prejudice, misogyny, and internalised homophobia that then ensued.

Helen Pidd and Alexandra Topping write for their 2020 Guardian article titled: "It was toxic: How sexism threw Police off the trail of the Yorkshire Ripper", where they interview feminist campaigner Julie Bindel, who was eighteen at the time of Sutcliffe's murders, to gain her recollection of how the media and West Yorkshire Police handled the investigation into each of the thirteen women's murders. Bindel argues that "women felt

under attack from all sides – not just by the Ripper, but by the blatant sexism from the press and West Yorkshire Police” (Pidd & Topping, 2020).

Pidd and Topping also argue that West Yorkshire Police only started to take serious investigative action into Sutcliffe’s crimes after being delayed by eighteen months due to a hoax confessor to the crimes, and when women who *weren’t* identified as sex workers started to be murdered, claiming that “the Police... only started to take the case seriously once “innocent young girls” (their words) and not just sex workers had been killed” (Pidd & Topping, 2020).

One famous quote during a press conference by a senior West Yorkshire Police Detective active at the time of Sutcliffe’s murders, Jim Hobson, stated that the killer (unknown to them at that time): “has made it clear that he hates prostitutes. Many people do. We, as a Police force, will continue to arrest prostitutes. But the Ripper is now killing innocent girls”. Leading investigating officer, George Oldfield, was also quoted in 1979 as referring to Sutcliffe’s targets, Yorkshire women, as “pawns” in a game of “war”. Bindel later claims in Pidd and Topping’s article: “that’s what women were to these detectives... disposable pawns” (Pidd & Topping, 2020).

Anthony Walgate (18), Stephen Port’s first victim, “very occasionally supplemented his student finances through carefully selected escort work” (Davies, 2021), and, as a result of this revelation after his death, was then defined as a “male prostitute” by one investigating officer. The official inquest into the handling of Port’s investigation heard that another officer also claimed that two of Port’s remaining three victims, Gabriel Kovari (22) and Jack Taylor (25), “could be drug users” on the basis that “they were skinny” (Davies, 2021).

A Channel Four News article, surrounding the same IOPC report mentioned in Wakefield’s article earlier in this section, argues that:

“The public cannot be satisfied that Police are making decisions based on evidence and fact”, because of how assumptions made about “the lifestyles of gay men” informed investigations.” - (Stephenson, 2022)

This research project uncovered countless news articles concerning the criticisms mentioned in this section, and the institutional failings of individual Police forces across the UK in cases similar to those such as Stephen Port's and Peter Sutcliffe's.

These reports made claims of internalised homophobia, misogyny, and other prejudices within the Police and their criminal investigations, prompting the research to question just how many crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps go unreported by male victims? And, with recent reports of multiple Police failings concerning investigations into the deaths of several LGBTQI+ males, would the men who use these dating apps, should they ever have to report such crimes, trust the Police to handle their case without bias?

At the time of proposing this research project (and given the articles studied so far), faith in the Police as an LGBTQI+ person appeared anything but positive, particularly in the midst of these categoric failings of Queer people from their UK forces, such as those in Stephen Port's investigation.

Thus, prompting this project to gain further insight into not only the crimes men faced whilst using LGBTQI+ dating apps, but also, whether or not they *reported* these crimes to the Police, and why. Whilst subsequently gathering information concerning the overall satisfaction in how these complaints were handled - with participants (voluntarily) stating whether their overall experience with the Police was either positive, or negative.

The results of the latter part of the independent online survey are discussed in Appendix 26 through 31 - and they therefore conclude the survey's contribution to the argument presented within this sub-argument of the research project.

The latter part of the survey identified that the majority of those questioned *would not* have reported any crimes/negative experiences through the use of LGBTQI+ dating apps to the Police. And, to further extend this argument, for those *who did* report any crimes/negative experiences to the Police, the majority were left unsatisfied.

Referring back to the Galop reports mentioned earlier in this thesis, notably Nick Antjoulé's: "The Hate Crime Report 2016: Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in

the UK”, there are some findings that marry to this research project’s independent study considerably.

Antjoule’s research found that only “a quarter of LGBT people reported the last hate crime they experienced” when participating in Galop’s study. And that “common barriers to reporting included feeling it would not produce a result, being unsure if it was a crime, and feeling it would not be treated seriously.” Another 40% of participants in this particular survey claimed that the process of reporting crimes itself was not “easy” – with concern also raised regarding the training on “LGBT issues” concerning justice professionals. 25% of participants also claimed that “they would not report (crimes) in future, mostly due to the fear it would not be taken seriously” (Antjoule, 2016).

Galops 2020 Hate Crime Report, by Luke Hubbard, of the same title, also includes a section that explores participants' experiences of reporting hate crimes to the Police (Appendix 31).

Akin to this project's research, “72% of respondents who reported their victimisation to the Police” in Galop’s 2020 study were left “dissatisfied with the response they received” from the Police (Hubbard, 2020). With the majority of reasons for their dissatisfaction falling into three top categories:

- 68% were dissatisfied because no action taken.
- 63% felt the incident was not treated seriously.
- 42% encountered a professional who had little knowledge of LGBT+ issues.

The remaining responses from Hubbard’s study concerning participant dissatisfaction with the Police fell mostly into issues concerning administration, and “repeating” the complex details of traumatic events “several times” – as well as some participants having to “disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity” to multiple people (Hubbard, 2020). Hubbard’s study then concluded that only 16% of those studied were left satisfied with how the Police handled their complaints.

The data therefore shows, as a result of this project's independent research study – and the lending of data from similar studies in its field of research - that the concluding answer to the latter part of this section's sub-argument: “How many crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps go unreported by male victims? And, with recent reports of multiple Police failings concerning investigations into the deaths of several LGBTQI+ males, would the men who use these dating apps, should they ever have to report such crimes, trust the Police to handle their case without bias?” – is, for the most part, no.

The first part of this sub argument's question concerning the number of crimes involving men and LGBTQI+ dating apps that go unreported, of course, is impossible to measure with precise accuracy.

However, the literature and quantitative data studied thus far, combined with the multiple examples of damning news reports of biased Police investigations involving homophobia and misogyny against gay men and female sex workers, for example, certainly does not lend much faith to support a strong opposition to this argument.

Therefore, on reflection of the data presented within this section of the thesis: “how can men who experience crimes associated with LGBTQI+ dating apps, should they ever have to report a crime, trust the Police to handle their case without bias?” the answer is - with caution.

V. Conclusion

This PhD research project initially sought to identify a rise in crimes against men in the UK who use/have used LGBTQI+ dating apps; and, as anticipated from the preliminary research proposal, quickly identified from the offset that LGBTQI+ dating apps, as ‘Galop’s’ Melanie Stray stated, “are sometimes used to target gay and bi men with sexual and physical violence... a forum also used to target gay and bi men with hate speech and hate crime” (Stray, 2017).

The research then expanded on this argument by reviewing several Galop and ONS Hate Crime Reports between 2016 and 2021. The analysis of these reports concluded that online crime was, as predicted, rising year on year, and not only were these crimes substantially increasing in numbers, they were also spilling from the online realms of cyberspace and into the physical, with more ‘offline’ offences being recorded as a result of this rise in online hate crime.

Both the Galop and ONS reports unanimously showed that Queer people, predominantly gay men, were the reciprocal targets of this relatively newfound surge in criminal behaviour; the crimes documented in the reports studied ranged from verbal abuse to threats, harassment, doxing and even robbery – with LGBTQI+ dating apps, particularly Grindr, later being identified as one of the more common platforms used for targeting gay and bisexual men with such offences.

The research then identified that despite the Galop and ONS reports addressing crucial data concerning the *rise* in hate crime across the UK, there was no supporting evidence to geographically determine precisely *where* these crimes were taking place and in what capacity, including the crux of this research project’s argument: the crimes solely attributed to men who use LGBTQI+ dating apps, such as Grindr.

The study then collected a distinctive set of data by gathering information that was not previously available, focusing on the limited research into online hate crimes against men who use dating apps in the UK. This was achieved through a series of targeted Freedom of Information requests sent to all active Police forces across the three nations,

with the exception of the British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, and Ministry of Defence Police.

The FOI requests were constructed to gather essential data concerning the levels of crime across the UK relating to the LGBTQI+ dating app 'Grindr', with each force asked to produce the total number of crimes/hate crimes committed concerning men of any age, race, and sexual orientation. As with the Galop and ONS reports, the FOI timeline of research was kept between 2017-2021, with the classification of crimes committed also requested to be disclosed – unlike the ONS and Galop reports repeated presentation of non-geographical percentages.

It was at this point in the project that the initial research question was altered after all of the FOI requests were received, excluding information requested from both Scotland and Northern Ireland that was subsequently denied; this, along with limited data received from Wales, meant that the original research question and intended field of research were later narrowed from the initial proposal to study 'crimes against men in the UK' to 'crimes against men in England' relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps.

The data that this section of unique research uncovered gave a clear indication of the overall highest and lowest crime rates concerning the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr across the majority of England, with a total of thirty-three forces out of forty-five (73%) responding with adequate and useable data.

Theft was recorded as one of the five most common offences highlighted throughout the recorded FOI data, alongside Malicious Communications, Blackmail, Stalking and Harassment with the least common of the crimes reported being violent crimes. However, the research did conclude that there was no way of determining from these results whether any of the crimes, such as theft, could have been violent in their execution by the criminal(s) who committed them.

The study showed that West Yorkshire Police retained the highest number of reported crimes, yet with no individual classifications of the offences committed. Avon and Somerset Police had the highest number of offences that were broken down into

separate categories, with the more commonly reported crimes being ‘theft’ and ‘vehicle offences’. And more notably, by the end of the FOI study, the research concluded that the data gathered from the thirty-three Police Forces that responded to the FOI requests; showed that crime concerning men in England who used/had used the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr - increased from 318 reported crimes in 2017 to 541 reported crimes by the end of 2020 - a total increase of 70% within the entire three years applicable to the study.

The FOI study and its unique findings were the first of three major points within this research that identified a unique contribution to its field by addressing the more commonly reported crimes across England, broken down into categorisation and location, relating to men who use/have used the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr. Thus, proving that crimes of this nature rose between 2017 and 2021 – and even contradicting official ONS results and a University of Cambridge and the University of Utrecht-led study that stated a decline in overall crime during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results from various forces showed that reports of theft continued to rise by 44% in 2020 compared to the previous year – and that the overall level of crimes affiliated with the FOI requests slightly decreased by 2%. A marginal decrease in figures that showed not all crimes decreased as predicted throughout the UK COVID-19 lockdowns.

As the critical research drew upon various sources and scholars - including reports from Galop, the ONS, Phan, Seigfried-Spellar and Choo; the Cambridge and Utrecht University-led study, and the project's very own independent FOI enquiry – the research consequently shed light on new data concerning the most common types of crimes reported. These crimes were evidently rising in numbers, encompassing theft, malicious communications, blackmail, stalking, and harassment into a drive for the creative accompaniment’s focal narrative.

Visual and literary research gathered from sources such as Alan Cubitt’s “The Fall” (2013), Alain Guiraudie’s “Stranger by the Lake” (2013), and from reading Constantin Stanislavski’s texts: “An Actor Prepares” and “Building a Character”; led the creative accompaniment to reflect several ideologies, and even my own personal struggles with LGBTQI+ dating app addiction, to its overall narrative and characterisations.

The concept of a strong female protagonist, such as DI Stella Gibson, played by Gillian Anderson, and a volatile, unpredictable, psychopathic murderer such as Jamie Dornan's 'Paul Spector' ("The Fall") left me with the initial inspiration to create Olivia Hartford and Liam Bower's storylines. Guiraudie's "Stranger by the Lake", and his central protagonist Franck, inspired me to ensure that Ethan Paige would not only fall victim to a stalking serial killer, but also his *own* actions and their consequences.

Each of Stanislavski's texts: "An Actor Prepares" and "Building a Character" urged prospective stage actors to never "externally portray anything" that they had not "inwardly experienced" (Stanislavsky & Reynolds Hapgood). As well as the refrainment from embodying actions and emotions that did not interest them when portraying a character on stage. This consequently prompted me to disclose my personal struggles with LGBTQI+ dating app addiction in my thirties – including a 'near miss' experience that jeopardised my own personal safety - and the influence that all of these factors, even including my recent ADHD diagnosis, had upon the characterisation of the "No Strings Attached" characters. Even inspiring key points within the storyline that served as a personal reflection of my past struggles and dangerous experiences with LGBTQI+ dating apps that bared the initial concept of this entire PhD research project.

Research into two of the most notable criminals and their crimes surrounding the popular LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr in the UK at the time - Stephen Port and Daryll Rowe – drove the creative accompaniment to defer from the five more commonly reported offences found in the earlier FOI study, and focus on the most serious: VATP (violence against the person) and Murder, as the primary crimes within the "No Strings Attached" screenplay.

The screenplay takes the five more commonly reported crimes, as mentioned, and distributes them between different characters and underlying sub-plots, retaining the main premise of murder throughout, combined with a heavily integrated recurring theme of deception and drug misuse. Thus, encapsulating the research project's final title: "Dating, Drugs, Deception and Death: A Study into the Crimes Committed against Men in England who use LGBTQI+ Dating Apps".

Deception was at the crux of the creative accompaniments' overall theme – encompassing the research gathered into not only the crimes committed by 'Grindr Killer' Stephen Port, and those by Daryll Rowe; but also, Gerald Matovu, Joel Osei, Yannick Glaudin and even the notorious 1970's British serial killer 'The Yorkshire Ripper' (Peter Sutcliffe). The theme of deception was applicable to nearly every main character's journey throughout the "No Strings Attached" screenplays, from Olivia's cheating husband to Alexander Bank's double life as a closeted gay man, from Ethan's masking of his NSA sex addictions from friends to Liam Bower's stalking of Ethan, and the countless murders of gay men that he commits as a result of his sexual assault at the hands of Barry Murphy that pushed him over the edge, crossing the line, leading Liam to take another person's life. Again, and again.

The concept of deception throughout most of the crimes studied to that point in the thesis then inspired the research to move further into exploring *what* exactly makes a criminal and *what* makes a victim. This section of the research focused on the circumstances surrounding how crimes are committed, addressing any noticeable patterns of behaviour from both the victim and/or the perpetrator, ultimately determining whether those who fall victim to (or commit) such crimes have any correlation in sociological and psychological qualities.

This section focused heavily on insight from scholars Castro, Barrada, Ramos-Villagrasa, Fernández-del-Río - and Timmermans and De Caluwé - exploring the 'five-factor model of personality', along with their arguments concerning the 'bright and dark personality traits' of dating app users. With Castro et al. subsequently admitting how the "recent phenomenon" of online dating apps has led to "some gaps in the literature on individual differences (sociodemographic variables and personality traits) between users (previous and current) and non-users" of these apps (Castro et al. 2020). Throughout their argument, Castro et al. reference Robert McCrae and Paul Costa's (1987) theory of the 'Five Factor Model of Personality' quite frequently, which is "a taxonomy of five personality traits whose labels can differ according to the authors' denomination (Neuroticism or Negative Emotionality, Extraversion, Openness to Experience or Open-Mindedness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) (Castro et al. 2020).

The only other supporting piece of literature to fortify Castro et al. and Timmermans et al.'s arguments, whilst remaining relevant to the research that this thesis uncovered was the report: 'The Dark Tetrad in Tinder: hook-up app for high psychopathy individuals, and a diverse utilitarian tool for Machiavellians?' by scholars Minna Lyons, Ashleigh Messenger, Rebecca Brewer, and Gayle Perry. The report explored the varying personality traits and 'dark tetrad' of behaviours in dating app users (and their relation to the big five paradigm) in further context, alongside Castro et al. and Timmermans et al.'s initial arguments.

The findings from the above scholars were sourced to allow the research project to map out the average dating app users' personalities, characteristics, and motives; giving a better understanding of what exactly constitutes as a 'criminal' and a 'victim' – who both, as the findings from each of these scholars confirmed, are fundamentally dating app users at their point of contact, irrespective of their perfectly innocent or Machiavellian intentions. From the findings of each of these scholars, the research was then able to construct a preliminary example of some of the average motives of dating app users to that point:

- The research from Castro et al. identified that the majority of dating app users were *male*.
- Women were also identified as regular users; however, they were identified as being more selective and less "intense" in the way that they used the apps and the ways in which they were acquainted with people (i.e. more emotionally than sexually driven).
- Castro et al.'s study also noted that between 18% and 25% of the dating app users studied "had a stable partner", suggesting that nearly a quarter of users were potentially cheating on their partners.
- Castro et al.'s study recognised that people who fall within a sexual orientation minority, such as gay and bisexual men, are more likely to use dating apps – as they offer ultimate discretion and anonymity to those "who have trouble expressing their sexuality" to others.

- Timmermans and De Caluwé, and Castro et al. contradict each other's arguments concerning sex being the sole motive for dating app use. With Timmermans and De Caluwé arguing that dating app use was identified as being more for 'entertainment purposes' within their study; whereas Castro et al. argue that dating app users who have casual sex at the forefront of their motives for use were, in their findings, more than compatible with the prospect of searching for a partner/relationship at the same time as sex.

The research then moved towards exploring dating app users' behaviours, as applicable to the five-factor model of personality mentioned above, and Lyons et al.'s dark tetrad of behaviour. Each of the scholars discovered that:

- The five-factor model of personality consists of five personality traits: Neuroticism or Negative Emotionality, Extraversion, Openness to Experience or Open-Mindedness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.
- Castro et al. argued that users with "dark personality" traits "showed no predictive ability" (Castro et al. 2020) – therefore making users with insidious intentions near impossible to predict.
- Lyons et al. argued that users who scored high on the "dark tetrad" of behaviour preferred short-term relationships and encounters, whilst preferring casual sex over more emotional encounters.
- Contradictory to the previous claim, Lyons et al. also confirmed that those with more Machiavellian intentions were more likely to be in a relationship at the time of using dating apps.
- Lyons et al. argued that those with dark personality traits were more likely to be "associated with a host of anti-social behaviours in the online environment, including cyberstalking, computer-mediated sexual violence, and sending explicit unsolicited sexual images" (Lyons et al., 2020).

The research then discovered that Lyons et al.'s last argument, concerning users with negative personality traits and antisocial behaviour, directly correlated with the results

from the research project's independent FOI study. It was noted that the five most commonly reported crimes involving men who use the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr across England were: Malicious Communications, Blackmail, Stalking, and Harassment – all of which align with the online environment as suggested by Lyons et al.

It was here that the project made its second original contribution to research in its field, by constructing its own questionnaire aimed specifically at retrieving data from men who use/have used LGBTQI+ dating apps in England, who may have encountered negative experiences at the hands of other users, whether illegal or not; and also to obtain participants' overall levels of satisfaction with how the Police handled their complaints (if they reported their negative experiences to them).

The goal of the independent survey, in this particular section of the thesis, was to first generate a 'model' of the average male LGBTQI+ dating app user, or potential *victim*, unlike any other study found at the time of researching this project. However, what also inadvertently occurred left the results of the survey also generating the model of what constituted as the average *criminal*.

The independent survey was shared via online social media platforms Facebook and Instagram - and posted across various LGBTQI+ community groups, with the option to participate in the survey between 21st October 2022 and 3rd November 2022.

In that time, the survey accounted for exactly forty responses from individuals over eighteen years of age, who identified as male, and who were permanent UK residents via its two-week online reach.

The survey's key findings were as follows:

- The most common age group among the surveyed participants was 30-34, at 27.5% of participants. The 18-24 and 35-39 age groups tied at 22.5% each. Meaning that 72.5% of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 39.

- All participants identified their gender as assigned at birth, indicating that none of them were transgender males.
- 80% of the participants identified as Gay, 15% as Bisexual, 2.5% as Heterosexual, and 2.5% as Demisexual.
- 97.5% of the participants identified their ethnicity as "any white background," while 2.5% described their ethnicity as "any mixed/multiple ethnic group."
- 62.5% of participants disclosed that they were single, 32.5% stated they were in a relationship, and 5% claimed to be in an open relationship.
- 80% of participants claimed to use LGBTQI+ dating apps, with 100% of the remaining respondents confirming their use of the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.
- When asked about their main reasons for using dating apps, 50% of respondents used them for both dating and sex, 21.9% used them solely for sex, 18.8% used them for dating only, and 9.4% used them for non-sexual or dating purposes.
- The majority of participants (28.1%) reported using dating apps once or twice a day, while 21.5% used them a few times a day, 21.9% checked their profiles a couple of times a week, and 6.3% hardly ever used dating apps. 18.8% of participants reported excessive use of dating apps, checking their profiles multiple times throughout the day.

Therefore, on average, the study concluded from its data that the model of a potential 'victim' was more likely to be a person who was:

- Aged between 18-39.
- Of any white ethnic background.
- Single, with no relationship commitments.
- Identify their sexuality as being Gay.

- Somebody who uses LGBTQI+ dating apps for both dating and sexual purposes, but with sex being the more predominant usage factor.
- Somebody who uses LGBTQI+ dating apps at least a few times every day.
- Somebody who uses, or has used, the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.

These results support the arguments previously analysed by scholars: Castro et al., Timmermans and De Caluwé and Lyons et al. As mentioned, the study inadvertently managed to construct the average model of what constituted as a ‘criminal’ through observing the above scholars’ findings concerning dark personality traits; and by also utilising the independent studies data to argue that participants who fell into an average likelihood of criminal intent whilst using LGBTQI+ dating apps were commonly associated with the following criteria:

- 32.5% (13) of participants who stated they were in a relationship at the time of using LGBTQI+ dating apps.
- 21.9% (7) of participants who stated they used LGBTQI+ dating apps for sexual purposes only.
- 18.8% (6) of participants who use dating apps very often.

Leaving a total of 24.4% of those studied by the independent survey identified as having dark personality traits - and more likely to have criminal intentions whilst using LGBTQI+ dating apps. It should also be noted that the mean ethnicity and age group of this 24.4% also fell into the same parameters as the model of a potential victim.

The independent study and exploration into the five-factor model of personality and “dark tetrad” of behaviour from Castro and other scholars gave the perfect foundations for character development within the adjoining creative accompaniment to this research project.

The characterisation within “No Strings Attached” is largely influenced by the survey's construct of what constitutes the average ‘victim’ and ‘criminal’, forging the characterisation of both protagonist Ethan Paige, and antagonist Liam Bower, as a result.

Blake Snyder's renowned book "Save the Cat!: The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need" served as one of the key inspirations for the blending of different genres to the "No Strings Attached" characters and their crossing narrative arcs, with Ethan, Olivia, and Liam's characters paying particular reference to his "Monster in the House", "Dude with a Problem" and "Whydunit" theories of screenplay genre.

Again, the adoption of Snyder's theories to the characterisations throughout the creative element, along with visual research obtained from "The Fall" and "Stranger by the Lake", enabled me as a screenwriter to be mindful throughout the creative project's planning stages to ensure that my characters and their actions must have direct consequences to the narrative arcs of those around them.

The creative exploration into 'what makes a victim, and what makes a criminal' also helped to fabricate the remaining characterisations of the other characters in the screenplay, by exploring more than just the scholarly arguments and the survey presented in the critical argument, and lending influence from real-life crimes, and real-life criminals to the creative process.

Research into criminals such as Stephen Port, Gerald Matovu, Daryl Rowe, Joel Osei and Yannick Glaudin led to the underlying cruxes of their crimes - drugs, deception, and death - being added to the storyline, dominating the actions of characters Liam Bower, Barry Murphy, and Malik Sutcliffe especially, whilst also suitably fitting the latter part of this research project's title.

All of the fictional crimes and their dramatization share the influence of real-life crimes studied throughout the course of this project: from Barry Murphy's catfishing and rape of Liam Bower to Malik Sutcliffe's assault of David Finch, to Liam Bower's drugging and murder of Alexander Banks, Barry Murphy, Gavin Maclean, and finally his assault on Aaron Teller, and murder of Ethan Paige.

As a result of researching the many notable crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps that saw their initial foundations built on the criminal deceiving the victim, deception was noted as one of the most prominent underlying themes within the creative

accompaniment. This was, as a result, chosen to be subtly written into each and every main character's underlying narrative throughout the course of the "No Strings Attached" screenplays. Visual research gathered from sources such as Mike Bartlett's "Doctor Foster" (2015), and the integration of his vengeful female lead, Dr. Gemma Foster, into the characterisation of Olivia Hartford, further explored the concept of drugs, deception and death within the creative project's narrative.

The research also juxtaposed against sourcing inspiration solely from the documented serious crimes studied within the media, instead, sourcing urban legends of dating app horrors from the social media platform Twitter.

This was used in a particular scene where Ethan Paige and friends Mark and Josiah share their worst dating app experiences with each other around a restaurant dinner table. This scene in particular – through the use of carefully orchestrated flashbacks, recounts Mark's tale of a woman who meets a man on the dating app Tinder, arranges to go on a date, and is then faced with an unimaginable and horrifying encounter as a result.

The tale, inspired by an online article for The Mirror newspaper in 2018, by Lucy Clarke-Billings, drove me to inspire more fear in the audience surrounding the unknown dangers lurking within dating apps, using the influence of modern technology and social media to give Mark's important tale more gravitas than that of a newspaper report. And, again, linking directly back to the recurrent theme of deception - that online, not everyone is who they say they are:

"The moral of the story is that you must not trust a complete stranger and avoid using dating applications because you never know what's going to happen with you. Why should you put your life at risk by trusting a complete stranger and letting him/her enter your life and house?" - Salman, 2018

In the third and final sub-argument of this project: "How many crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps go unreported by male victims? And, with recent reports of multiple Police failings concerning investigations into the deaths of several LGBTQI+ males, would the men who use these dating apps, should they ever have to report such

crimes, trust the Police to handle their case without bias?”, another contribution to research in this field was made.

The heinous crimes of ‘Grindr Killer’ Stephen Port that first inspired this project during its proposal stages have played an integral role in the overall research, discussion and arguments presented thus far. With the focus of research then deriving from Port’s crimes themselves, to that of the Metropolitan Police – and more notably, Barking and Dagenham Police and their failings in the instance of Port’s four victims: Anthony Walgate, Gabriel Kovari, Daniel Whitworth, and Jack Taylor.

“The families of serial killer Stephen Port’s four gay male victims have described the investigation into their deaths as ‘one of the most widespread institutional failures in modern history’ and that ‘four white, heterosexual girls’ would have been treated differently.” – Frank-Keyes, 2021

This particular section of the research drew light on multiple examples of reports both claiming and officially confirming homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and misogyny within the UK Police; and producing strong examples, such as those witnessed within the enquiry into the Stephen Port criminal investigation, that these prejudices pose a *very real internal problem* for the UK Police forces, and have done for countless years.

A notable link was unexpectedly unearthed between the research of Stephen Port’s crimes and the crimes of ‘Yorkshire Ripper’ Peter Sutcliffe during the 1970s and 1980s. Similar to the serious misconduct and prejudice from the Police presented within the research into Port’s enquiry, during the time of Sutcliffe’s murders both Police and the media were seen to show serious contempt, and even dehumanisation, of females and especially female sex workers in the same manner of homophobic discrimination from investigating officers during the Stephen Port investigation – which this project confirmed through the evidence obtained. Showing that the serious failings by Barking and Dagenham Police after the death of Anthony Walgate allowed Port to go unnoticed, unprimanded and able to kill another three young gay men during his string of murders between 2014 and 2015.

This theory was concurred by the report researched for Pink News in March 2022 by Lily Wakefield, concerning a leaked IOPC (Independent Office of Police Conduct) report to Channel Four News. The report confirmed that officers investigating Port's crimes made "assumptions about the lifestyles of gay men", including Port's victims; and that during the investigation into the four deaths, these assumptions "could have been based, consciously or unconsciously, on discriminatory views" (Wakefield, 2022).

Understandably, the serious concerns raised during the research into both Port's and Sutcliffe's murders, irrespective of the decades between them, showed that despite growing acceptance concerning Queer people and women's rights (as opposed to the 1980s, for example), internalised prejudices within the UK Police still existed. Even after significant changes to UK law protecting the rights of Queer people were introduced by the Labour government of 2001, this still wasn't enough to silence homophobia within the UK Police. Instead, the research discovered in articles such as Kevin Maxwell's Guardian article, "As a gay officer I saw how homophobic the Police were", and Dean Blackburn's article, "Gay rights in the Police service: is the enemy still within?", that, as Maxwell argues, these changes to legislation merely took homophobia within the Police from general conversation to behind closed doors.

"Believing we were equal in the eyes of the law made us forget the dismissiveness, disinterest and victim blaming many of our LGBT brothers and sisters experienced at the hands of the Police." – Maxwell, 2016

These examples of well-documented and shocking acts of misconduct by the UK Police, prompted the independent research study (also used to identify the average characteristics of dating app users) to question: just how many crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps go unreported by male victims? And, in light of the reports researched by this project that highlight significant homophobia and other prejudice within the UK Police; would the men who use these dating apps, should they ever have to report such crimes, trust the Police to handle their case without bias? The subsequent findings of which produced this research project's final individual contribution to research in its field.

The research study found that out of the forty men surveyed, twenty-one participants reached the point within the survey that asked them: “Did you report your negative experience(s) to the Police?” (Appendix 19). 81% of participants (17) answered this question confirming that they did *not* report their negative experiences to the Police, along with the remaining 19% (4) confirming that they *did*.

The study then took into consideration that not all of the negative experiences faced by participants may have necessarily been illegal, or even needed Police involvement at all. However, the survey pre-empted this possible conclusion – and asked from that point onwards: “If your negative experience had have been a criminal act - would you have reported it to the Police?”.

41.2% of participants then claimed they *would have* reported any criminal acts to the Police – leaving a majority of 58.8% of participants stating they *would not have*.

Participants were then given the option to include a personal response as to why they would not have reported any potential crime/disorder to the Police and their responses were as follows:

- “Not going to be bothered, are they?”
- “No, I think I’d be judged by the Police and not taken seriously.”
- “It depends what it was. I would only have reported it if I felt my life was threatened.”
- “Lack of evidence, I didn’t want hassle. I don’t trust the Police to understand or do anything.”
- “I’d feel embarrassed.”

(Pankhurst, 2020)

Yet, despite the narrow margin between participants' preferences to *not* report any crime/disorder to the Police, the findings still presented a clear overall majority. With the responses given for doing so showing present and valid fears concerning public trust in

how the Police would handle reports of crimes against Queer people, and in this instance, from the direct viewpoint of gay, bisexual, and demisexual men.

The findings from this section of the independent survey became even more interesting when participants who *did* report their experiences of crime/disorder to the Police were asked the question: “Do you feel that the Police handled your complaint/report well?”.

25% of participants claimed to have been left satisfied with how the Police handled their complaints, but a resounding 75% of participants claimed they were *not* satisfied. Further solidifying the argument that despite reporting their complaints to the Police, the majority of those who did were left unsatisfied with the overall outcome of doing so.

The survey then asked the 75% of participants who claimed not to be satisfied with how their complaints were handled by the Police one final question: “Would you feel comfortable reporting a similar crime or experience to the Police again?”

100% of participants answered “no”, and their reasoning for this was split into the following categories:

- Lack of empathy/interest in handling your complaint: 2 Participants.
- Impaired judgement by investigating officers concerning the nature of your complaint – 1 Participant.
- Prejudice against gender – 1 Participant.
- Prejudice against race – 1 Participant.
- Prejudice against sexuality – 2 Participants.
- Breakdown in communication between you and Police force/Investigating officers – 1 Participant.
- Reluctance to prosecute offenders, despite complaint – 2 Participants.
- Poor Investigating officers handling your case – 2 Participants.

(Pankhurst, 2020)

The remainder of the independent questionnaire then concluded: from those studied within the survey, the majority of those questioned *would not* have reported any crimes/negative experiences through the use of LGBTQI+ dating apps to the Police. And, to further extend this argument, those *who did* report any crimes/negative experiences to the Police, the majority (75% of participants) were left unsatisfied. These figures stand alongside clear testimonials from participants who claimed to have experienced prejudice against their race, sex, gender, and sexuality as the reasons for their dissatisfaction, along with claims of poor investigative procedures.

These key overall findings from the independent study were supported by referring back to the Galop reports studied at the beginning of the research project – notably Nick Antjoulé’s: “The Hate Crime Report 2016: Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in the UK” and Galop’s 2020 Hate Crime Report by Luke Hubbard, of the same title.

Each of these reports married with the findings of the independent study, by presenting the following key findings:

- Only a quarter of LGBT people surveyed in the 2016 study reported the last hate crime they experienced.
- 40% of participants in the 2016 study claimed that the process of reporting crimes was not straightforward.
- Concern was raised by participants in the 2016 study, regarding the training on LGBT issues concerning justice professionals.
- 25% of participants in the 2016 study claimed that they would not report crimes in the future, mostly due to the fear they would not be taken seriously.
- 72% of respondents in the 2020 study who reported their victimisation to the Police were left dissatisfied with the response they received from the Police.

And, strongly akin to this research, in the 2020 study - participants' explanations for dissatisfaction with the way their complaints were handled by Police fell into the following multiple response categories:

- 68% were dissatisfied because no action was taken.
- 63% felt the incident was not treated seriously.
- 42% encountered a professional who had little knowledge of LGBT+ issues.

The research then concluded that the answer to the sub-argument: “How many crimes relating to LGBTQI+ dating apps go unreported by male victims? And, with recent reports of multiple Police failings concerning investigations into the deaths of several LGBTQI+ males; would the men who use these dating apps, should they ever have to report such crimes, trust the Police to handle their case without bias?”, from the research and key findings presented to that point, was *no*.

This particular branch of research into the questionable actions of investigating officers and the hesitation of Queer people to report online hate crimes to the Police influenced the creative elements storyline and characterisation *substantially*.

The visual study of Jed Mercurio’s “Line of Duty” (2012) and its portrayal of the British Police Force and its Officers from an *internalised* angle, unlike any police drama I had seen before enabled me to accurately reference the dialogue and on-script interactions between Olivia Hartford, Rhys Denham, Gill, and Neil - and the rest of the characters within the fictional ‘Serious Crime Unit’ of Merseyside Police. With two of Mercurio’s lead characters significantly lending their inspiration to Olivia Hartford and Spencer Cooke’s characterisations.

Anna Maxwell Martin’s portrayal of Patricia Carmichael lent inspiration to the scenes and dialogue concerning Olivia Hartford’s unrest with the gay community, and her disregard for the attack on David Finch at the start of episode one. And with Adrian Dunbar’s character, Superintendent Ted Hastings, lending his character presence and no-nonsense attitude to the characterisation of Chief Superintendent Spencer Cooke.

Another piece of visual research - the BBC drama concerning Stephen Port's murders "Four Lives", created by Neil McKay – gave this project clear insight to stand adjacent to McKay's work. Both McKay's drama, a dramatization of real events, and "No Strings Attached", a fictional crime/thriller, combine multiple elements from different crimes, criminals, and victims researched in this project into their narratives.

The inception of Olivia Hartford's character presented not only the research gathered from news articles, damning reports of Police misconduct, and adjacent visual research, but also the data captured within the project's independent survey. The damaging "assumptions about the lifestyles of gay men" (Wakefield, 2022) made by officers during the Stephen Port investigation, and even in Peter Sutcliffe's investigation decades earlier, were fed into Olivia's actions, character, and narrative as a result of her emotional struggle and blame of gay men for her husband's serial infidelity and recent HIV diagnosis.

As her character develops, Olivia soon realises that the only person who should be held accountable for her devastation is her husband, and *not* the gay community.

It was also entirely intentional to present the most prominent scenes of Police homophobia within the "No Strings Attached" screenplays emanating from a female officer's character, as the majority of prejudice presented within the research from Police officers throughout the decades was almost always concerning *male* officers. Therefore, to show a female officer demonstrating homophobic behaviour gave the scenes in which this featured more emotional gravitas, shock factor and authenticity.

Rhys Denham's character also embodied the experiences presented in the articles studied by Dean Blackburn and Kevin Maxwell that featured authentic, first-person accounts from gay men in the UK Police force. Accounts that exposed the rife homophobia, past and present, that still clearly exists despite significant changes to UK legislation from 2001 onwards.

Lastly, Chief Superintendent Spencer Cooke's character - aside from the character traits lent from "Line of Duty's" Superintendent Ted Hastings - was fundamentally created to

represent this now ‘underground’ problem of homophobia in the UK Police forces, as depicted in both Maxwell and Blackburn’s articles, along with the several articles and visual research studied concerning Stephen Port’s enquiry, and the project’s own independent research.

...

In conclusion, this research project: ‘Dating’, Deception, Drugs and Death: An exploration into the rise of serious crimes committed against men in England, as a result of using LGBTQI+ mobile dating apps.’, has made three significant and individual contributions to research in its field – along with the formation of a creative accompaniment that embodies the research gathered, and reflects elements of which throughout the duration of its narrative.

The project has concluded that online dating app crimes against men in the UK, and England retrospectively, have risen substantially between the years 2017-2021; and, as proven in the data from the nationwide FOI requests this project carried out, even during COVID-19 lockdowns online crimes concerning the dating app Grindr marginally plateaued, and then continued to increase the following year.

The research then continued, from the findings of its own independent survey – and the comparing and contrasting against various scholars’ research in the field, to construct the average model of what constituted as the average ‘victim’ from the data gathered from participants – identifying the key age, ethnicity and sexuality of men most likely to fall victim to online crime; and then, inadvertently, through the study of bright and dark personality traits – construct a model of the average ‘criminal’, also.

The data from the independent study, and research of multiple articles and reports concerning the Queer community’s trust in the UK Police, and answering the notion of whether men, especially those of LGBTQI+ orientation, could be able to trust the Police to handle any potential reporting of online crime (or any hate crime) without bias against their sexuality, gender or identity, found that, on the whole, participants who took part in the research study claimed to *not* be satisfied with how the Police handled their

complaints. And participants who were asked whether they would have reported any crimes/disorder to the Police if they ever fell victim to such, for the majority, said they would *not*. The reasoning for such responses to each of the above statements fell into the majority of issues concerning trust with investigating officers, and fears of prejudice against sexuality, gender, and even race.

The final part of data analysed from the research survey then identified that the majority of those who *did* report any crimes/disorder to the Police, were left unsatisfied. With their reasoning falling into claims of unprofessionalism, lack of empathy, and acts of prejudice from investigating officers – inequalities that this research repeatedly highlighted throughout its course, whilst significantly highlighting that homophobia and prejudice are still rife within UK Police forces.

Despite positive changes to UK law and social attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people in general, considerably more work needs to be done to diminish homophobia within the UK Police ranks and to re-educate their officers on changing social diversity. Hopefully, in turn, the UK Police will forge a trust from the UK Queer community that this project has now confidently concluded, they have never really had.

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VII. Filmography

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VIII. APPENDICES

- 1) Images of Daryl Rowe (left) & Stephen Port (right)



- 2) Gerald Matovu – CCTV Images (Met Police)

Pennink, E., & Morton, S. (2019, July 15). *Guilty: Dealer who murdered actor with same drug he supplied to serial killer*. Barking and Dagenham Post. <https://www.barkinganddagenhampost.co.uk/news/crime/drug-dealer-guilty-of-murdering-actor-3374916>



- 3) Gerald Matovu & Brandon Dunbar leaving the homes of one of their victims (Met Police)

Pennink, E., & Morton, S. (2019, July 15). *Guilty: Dealer who murdered actor with same drug he supplied to serial killer*. Barking and Dagenham Post. <https://www.barkinganddagenhampost.co.uk/news/crime/drug-dealer-guilty-of-murdering-actor-3374916>



4) Key findings from the 2016, 2017 and 2020 GALOP hate crime reports.

Galop's 2017 online hate crime report by Melanie Stray, "presents evidence about the scale and nature of online hate crime and hate speech against LGBT+ people in the UK" (Stray, 2017), publishing its findings from ten semi-structured interviews with Queer people whilst also obtaining data from an online survey across the UK, "distributed through online community networks of LGBT+ activists, individuals, and professionals" with the intention for the study to reach a diverse range of LGBT+ people, from different "identity, social and geographical groups" (Stray, 2017).

Stray's 2017 report is also the first in the Galop series of hate crime studies to reference crimes concerning the use of mobile dating apps directly:

"Dating apps are sometimes used to target gay and bi men with sexual and physical violence, for example in the case of Stephen Port. It has been identified by Galop's advocacy service that dating apps are a forum also used to target gay and bi men with hate speech and hate crime." – Stray, 2017, pg. 9

Galop's 2016 report of the same name, by Nick Antjoule briefly explored online hate crime statistics in the same manner, but with data only collated via an online survey of "467 LGBT people" (Antjoule, 2016).

Antjoule's key findings from the study found that, at the time of research, out of the LGBT+ people surveyed, "4 in 5... people had experienced hate crime". Antjoule subsequently discovered that a quarter of those studied "had experienced violent hate crime", with a tenth also having "experienced sexual violence as part of a hate crime". And with a third of those surveyed having "experienced online hate crime" specifically (Antjoule, 2016).

The 2016 survey also found that "1 in 3 LGBT people had experienced online abuse targeting their sexual orientation or gender identity", that "31%" of these victims were "gay men", and that "24%" were recorded as "bisexual people" - although this percentage was defined as non-gender specific (Antjoule, 2016).

Galop's 2016 survey interestingly declined to mention the use of Grindr (and other popular LGBTQI+ dating apps of that period) as impacting the increase in online crimes documented. Instead, implicating social media as the focal point for increasing online deviance:

"Over the last year, we have seen a big increase in online hate crime committed using social media." - Antjoule, 2016, pg.7

Then, after only a year, Melanie Stray's 2017 Galop report showed a vast increase in study participants' experiences of online hate crime.

The study found that "84% of respondents" had "experienced more than one occurrence of online abuse", and "59% of respondents" had experienced "six or more occurrences" (Stray, 2017). Showing an increase from 2016's report, with approximately 33% of study participants experiencing more than one form of online hate crime - 51% more than in 2017's study. However, what makes this particular study more concerning, is that the data from its respondents shows that over half of those who contributed to the study had been victims of six or more occurrences of online hate crime that year.

Stray's report suggested that the types of online crime/abuse committed ranged from "verbal abuse" to "insults, threats, intimidation, harassment, outing and doxing"; Stray also argued that being a trans and non-binary person – along with other "characteristics such as race, ethnicity, faith, disability and gender" - could also play a distinct role in the level of "impact and consequences" concerning online hate crimes. And with, notable to this piece's central argument, gay and bisexual men "often the target" – victims, at the reciprocal end of these increasing online crimes (Stray, 2017).

"The growth of online spaces has brought many benefits to LGBT+ people, providing... opportunities for self-exploration, and ways to connect with other LGBT+ people and communities. Unfortunately, the downside of the anonymity and lack of usual social boundaries in these spaces is that the online environment can be permissive of abuse and hate." – Noone, 2017, pg. 1

The 2020 Galop online hate crime report, by Nik Hubbard, surveyed 700 LGBT+ participants – 233 more than its 2017 predecessor, with a two-year gap between each piece due to no report being issued in 2018 – and the 2019 report focusing more on public perceptions and attitudes towards LGBT+ people in the UK.

Hubbard's 2020 report showed a steep increase in the levels of participants afflicted by online abuse/crimes and the number of crimes that people experienced within a specific time frame, noting that "8 in 10 respondents had experienced anti-LGBT+ hate crime and hate speech... in the last 5 years" and that a staggering 50% of those respondents "had experienced online abuse 10 or more times".

Alarmingly, Hubbard's hate crime report was also the first in the Galop series to publish figures showing that 10% of respondents had experienced 100 or more counts of online abuse/crime within the last five years; and argued that "online anti-LGBT+ hate crime often involves more than one perpetrator, and commonly involves groups of people" (Hubbard, 2020).

5) Key findings from the 2015-2018 ONS hate crime reports.

The 2016/17 ONS hate crime report, compiled by Aoife O'Neill, examined Police-recorded hate crimes within England and Wales during that period. The report explores different categorisations of hate crime as 'monitored strands', combined as an overall total, whilst arguing that links to increases in particular forms of hate crime (specifically those that are racially aggravated) are the direct results of significant events within England and Wales. Such as Brexit, the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack in 2017, and even relating a rise in hate crime figures to the murder of British Soldier Lee Rigby in May 2013. (Appendix 6)

"In 2016/17, there were 80,393 offences recorded by the Police in which one or more hate crime strands were deemed to be a motivating factor" (O'Neill, 2017), which was a substantial increase of 29%, compared to the total amount of hate crimes recorded in 2015/16. The five strands of hate crime recorded were defined by: sexual orientation, religion, disability, and transgender identity; and the total number of offences recorded concerning sexual orientation was 9157 – making up 11% of the total number of hate crimes registered in England and Wales alone. With racially motivated hate crimes topping the scale at 78% of all hate crimes recorded. (Appendix 7)

One complexity found within this avenue of research, is that it must consider the possibility that not all crimes concerning men in the UK who use/have used Queer dating apps are necessarily attributed to any of these 'strands' of motive. It is, in fact, "possible for a crime to have more than one motivating factor (for example, an offence may be motivated by hostility towards the victim's race and religion)" (O'Neill, 2017) or, perhaps, something entirely different - such as spontaneous crimes with little to no prior motive behind them, like robbery, or theft from the person, for example.

O'Neill's report then progressed to include the numbers of *online* hate crimes, as monitored by strand. Again, racially motivated crimes and those of a religious disposition were the most common forms of online offences, with 199 online hate crimes reported attributed to the strand of sexual orientation. (Appendix 8)

One key finding presented within this particular set of statistics is that they relate to the project's previous argument of bridging the gap between crime, and the online/offline. With the online hate crime strand of sexual orientation, in this particular instance, only accounting for 3% of all hate crimes recorded. (Appendix 8)

The 2017/18 ONS hate crime report, as with Galops reports also showed a steady increase in hate crime over the year between that and the previous ONS publication.

Overall, “there were 94,098 hate crime offences recorded by the Police in England and Wales” that year, “an increase of 17%” compared with 2016/17 (Home Office, 2018). Hate crimes associated with the strand of sexual orientation were also higher than the year previous at “11,638 (12%)” of all hate crimes – with racially motivated hate crimes still the most common motive at “71,251 (76%)” (Home Office, 2018). An overall increase in ONS-reported hate crimes attributed to sexual orientation by 21%.

The table in Appendix 9 shows a breakdown of online hate crimes, as with the last report, associated by strands of motive. Again, the findings show another annual increase in online hate crime which aligns with the overall rise in hate crime statistics shown earlier in Galops reports.

This particular increase in online crimes within the 2017/18 report shows a 57% increase from the previous year, with 352 online hate crimes associated with sexual orientation making up 4% of all hate crimes recorded. The report also concurred that online hate crime in every identifying strand had increased in comparison with that of the previous year, including racially motivated crimes surging by 72%, and, directly relating to the LGBTQI+ community, online hate crimes associated with transgender identity also increasing by 42%. Transgender hate crime was, however, still the least reported form of hate crime strand according to this study.

As with its predecessor, the 2017/18 ONS report also broke down the most common classification of crime, aside from the motivating factor, associated with reported online hate crimes:

“Analysis of the online hate crime data by offence type shows that out of the four selected offence groups, violence against the person (VATP) had the highest proportion (6%) of online hate crimes in 2017/18... malicious communications offences (a subgroup of stalking and harassment offences) accounted for the majority (86%) of the VATP online.”

– Home Office, 2018, pg. 30

Here, the ONS present solid evidence that online crimes *were* on the rise, yet 86% of these crimes were confined to the ‘online’ only, leaving 6% of the remaining 14% of ‘offline’ in-person offences classified as violent. Out of the two ONS reports researched to this point within the thesis, neither reflected strong data that considered the full extent to which crime levels *actually* are – concerning offences that have been instigated within the online realms and spilt into the physical, with crimes committed in person. Crimes such as the murders of four young gay men, committed by Stephen Port in Dagenham, East London, from 2014 to 2015, that led to his eventual life-term imprisonment in 2016.

Port met his victims online through the popular LGBTQI+ ‘dating’ app Grindr, as well as through the use of several other gay websites. Port then went on to meet his victims in person, drugging them, leading them to purposely overdose and meet their untimely deaths, consequently being dubbed “The Grindr killer” for his horrifying crimes (O’Sullivan, 2022). It was Port’s horrifying crimes, that substantially influenced the project’s creative element, which will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

“From April 2015, it became mandatory for forces to apply” an “online flag” to any crimes concerning “the internet and digital communications technology”. And, in light of this change in legislation, the 2017/18 ONS report addresses these ‘online flags’ and criticises their disparities by explaining that despite their legal enforcement, and their function being to determine “whether an offence was in part or totally committed online”, that some of these crimes may require more investigative measures. Meaning, that online flags are considered to be more “prone to a higher degree of undercounting” in many investigations – consequently undermining the accuracy of overall hate crime statistics, such as the ONS reports themselves. (Home Office, 2017).

The 2018/19 ONS hate crime report’s key findings, one year later, showed even more concerning data regarding the ongoing rise in hate crime levels in England and Wales.

The report showed a total of “103,379 hate crimes recorded” - an increase of 10% from the previous year.

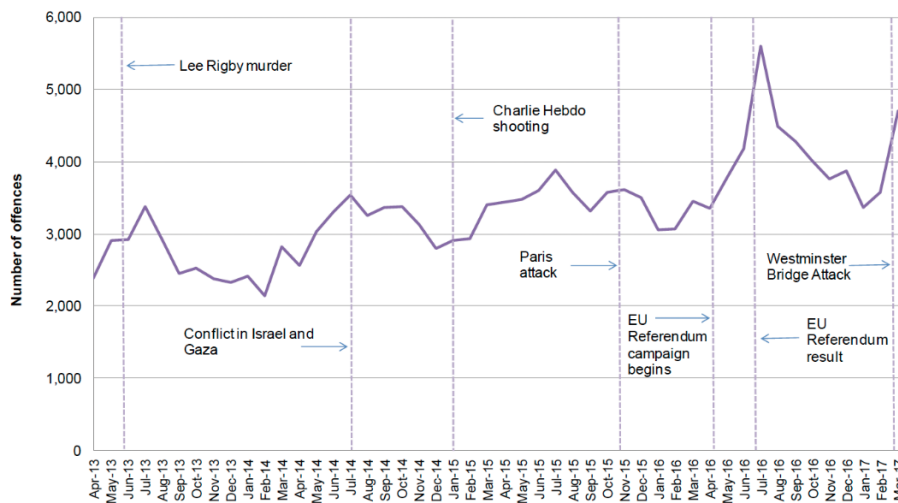
Interestingly, as with the 2017/18 report – the 2018/19 version also relays similar criticisms concerning the flagging of online hate crimes, as mentioned previously. However, one differentiating factor with this particular report is that it does not digress on the individual rise of online hate crime by strands – instead, focusing on the broader overall categorisation of hate crime statistics in general. What this report *does* present, unlike other ONS reports, is a complete breakdown of reported hate crime figures in England and Wales from 2011/12 until 2018/19 (Appendix 10).

All of the data shown within this table is broken down into the same categorised strands of hate crime, as with all other ONS reports, with each strand showing an increase in hate crime numbers (excluding data from 2013) year on year.

Hate crime figures concerning sexual orientation from 2011/12 to 2018/19 more than tripled in numbers, from 4345 reported crimes to 14491. At the same time, hate crimes associated with transgender identity increased by nearly seven-fold – from 313 reported crimes to 2333 (Home Office, 2019).

The data presented in this particular table (Appendix 10) gives the most solid and confirming evidence thus far within this project, and alongside the data from all of the hate crime reports studied so far, to verify that hate crime is, and has been, steadily on the rise for some time within the UK.

6) (Source: Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17)



7) (Source: Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17)

- The number of hate crime offences in 2016/17 for the five centrally monitored strands were as follows:
 - 62,685 (78%) were race hate crimes;
 - 9,157 (11%) were sexual orientation hate crimes;
 - 5,949 (7%) were religious hate crimes;
 - 5,558 (7%) were disability hate crimes; and
 - 1,248 (2%) were transgender hate crimes.

It is possible for a hate crime offence to have more than one motivating factor which is why the above numbers sum to more than 80,393 and 100 per cent.

8) (Source: Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17)

<i>Numbers and percentages</i>	England and Wales, recorded crime	
	Number of online hate crimes	% of all hate crimes
Hate crime strand		
Race	671	2
Religion	132	3
Sexual orientation	199	3
Disability	140	4
Transgender	29	4
Total number of motivating factors ²	1,171	2
Total number of offences	1,067	2

9) (Source: Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017/18)

Table A1: Online hate crimes recorded by the police, by monitored strand, 2017/18

<i>Numbers and percentages</i>	England and Wales, recorded crime	
	Number of online hate crimes	% of all hate crimes
Hate crime strand		
Race	928	2
Religion	210	3
Sexual orientation	352	4
Disability	225	4
Transgender	69	6
Total number of motivating factors	1,784	2
Total number of offences	1,605	2

10) (Source: Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/19)

Table 2: Hate crimes recorded by the police by monitored strand, 2011/12 to 2018/19

<i>Numbers and percentages</i>	England and Wales, recorded crime								
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	% change 2017/18 to 2018/19
Hate crime strand									
Race	35,944	35,845	37,575	42,862	49,419	62,685	71,264	78,991	11
Religion	1,618	1,572	2,264	3,293	4,400	5,949	8,339	8,566	3
Sexual orientation	4,345	4,241	4,588	5,591	7,194	9,157	11,592	14,491	25
Disability	1,748	1,911	2,020	2,515	3,629	5,558	7,221	8,256	14
Transgender	313	364	559	607	858	1,248	1,703	2,333	37
Total number of motivating factors	43,968	43,933	47,006	54,868	65,500	84,597	100,119	112,637	13
Total number of offences	N/A	42,255	44,577	52,465	62,518	80,393	94,121	103,379	10

Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
See Bulletin Table 2 for detailed footnotes

11) Key findings from Independent FOI Survey concerning crimes against men who use Grindr in England and Wales, 2022.

In Appendix 12, Dorset Police’s definition of Stalking, in contrast to Devon and Cornwall Police, is classed into two separate categories – violent and non-violent. Whereas Devon and Cornwall Police, and most other forces, class stalking under the one umbrella definition.

More cross definitions appear in Dorset Police’s data, as they class ‘Robbery (Personal)’ and ‘theft (other)’ within the same set of figures, along with several definitions of rape, such as ‘rape (man over 16)’. In contrast, other forces consistently use ‘theft (other)’ and ‘rape’ to define these offences. Thus, to make the presentation of overall figures more concise and less complicated, the research will group the multiple sub-offence categories of the same crime into one combined total when discussing the data gathered.

Out of all the forces that provided data to this project’s independent study – each displayed a steady rise (with some substantial) in crimes between 2017 and May 2021 (Appendix 12). Notably, crime levels jumped, some dramatically, between 2019 and 2020. With only 10% of the thirty-three forces that provided data seeing a slight drop in reported cases within this period.

Interestingly, the research has discovered that during 2020-2021, despite England, Wales, the rest of the UK, and most of the global community all being subject to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, certain online crimes concerning Grindr, continued to rise across England and Wales - despite most Lockdowns around the world seeing an actual *decrease* in reported crime. London, for example, “saw less pronounced but still significant falls in some crime, with daily robberies dropping by 60%, theft by 44% and burglaries by 29%”. The University of Cambridge and the University of Utrecht led study, found that “stay-at-home policies during the pandemic” resulted in “an overall drop in Police-recorded crime of 37% across all the sites” researched. These included metropolitan areas such as: “Barcelona, Chicago, Sao Paulo, Tel Aviv, Brisbane and London” (University of Cambridge, 2021).

The ONS also issued a report: “Coronavirus and crime in England and Wales: August 2020” that found during the first COVID-19 Lockdown, “Police recorded crime fell by 5% in March 2020 compared with the previous month, followed by a larger 20% decrease between March and April”. The report also states that there were “significant falls in theft offences, particularly domestic burglary and other theft of personal property” (ONS, 2020).

In contrast to the ONS and the University of Cambridge and Utrecht’s findings, this thesis’ independent FOI study (Appendix 12) found Theft to be one of the most commonly reported offences concerning Grindr - with 76 categorised offences reported in 2020 alone.

And, to further contradict these studies and protest the exact opposite of their above claims, this study's independent research showed a contrasting 44% annual increase in 2020, when compared with the previous number of 42 reported theft offences from 2019. The FOI study also showed that crime, in total, dropped minutely from a total of 554 reported crimes in 2019 to a total of 541 in 2020 – a mere 2% decline overall.

Theft was one of the five most common offences highlighted throughout all of the recorded FOI data, alongside Malicious Communications, Blackmail, Stalking and Harassment. The least common of the crimes reported were, in fact, violent crimes.

However, with Theft, Stalking and Harassment being classed as one of the more common offences there is no proof throughout the study to suggest that any of those crimes may not have been violent in nature, relating back to the previous ONS issue highlighted concerning the disparities of online flags. Still, if any of these crimes were violent in nature, for the most part, the study showed that this was not something recorded by the majority of forces involved.

The force with the most recorded violent and sexual offences, however, was Avon and Somerset – with consistent crime figures displayed between 2017-2020, and a total of 37 offences.

12) Andrew Pankhurst – Independent FOI Survey concerning crimes against men who use Grindr in England and Wales, 2022.

POLICE FORCE / REPORTED CRIME CAT	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE								
HARRASSMENT		4	3	2	2			
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS					1			
SEXUAL OFFENCES - OTHER		2		2	1			
SEXUAL OFFENCES - RAPE			2		1			
THEFT					2			
TOTAL		6	5	4	7			22
ESSEX POLICE								
NO CAT - TOTAL		17	6	14	7	3		47
SUSSEX POLICE								
	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	
RAPE				1				
SEXUAL ACTIVITY INVOLVING MINOR			1					
BLACKMAIL			1					
THREATS TO KILL		1						
SEXUAL GROOMING			1					
HARRASSMENT					1			
ASSAULT WITH INJURY				1				
STALKING		1						
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS				1				
PUBLIC FEAR, ALARM, DISTRESS					1			
TOTAL		2	3	3	2			10
GWENT POLICE								
NO CAT - TOTAL								14
STH YORKSHIRE POLICE								
	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	
ASSAULT WITH INJURY				1	1			
BLACKMAIL							1	
HARRASSMENT			1		1			1
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS			1	2	3		2	
OTHER NOTIFIABLE OFFENCES			1					
PUBLIC FEAR ALARM OF DISTRESS				1				
RAPE			1	1				
STALKING					1			
THEFT IN A DWELLING				1	2			
TOTAL		4	6	8	8	4		22

STH WALES POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON			2	1				
THEFT AND HANDLING			1					
TOTAL			3	1				4
HERTFORDSHIRE CONSTABULARY	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
STALKING								
OTHER THEFT								
HARASSMENT				1	3			
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS			1	1	1			
BLACKMAIL				1				
RAPE				1	2			
CHILD ABUSE				1				
TOTAL			1	5	6			12
NORFOLK CONSTABULARY	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS				8	1			
HARASSMENT		2						
RAPE		4						
BLACKMAIL				1	2			
DISCLOSE PRIVATE SEXUAL PHOTOS				2				
TOTAL		6		11	3			20
HUMBERSIDE POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
SEXUAL OFFENCES								5
THEFT								6
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON								19
TOTAL								30
DYFED-POWYS POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
NO CAT - TOTAL		1	0	1	2	0		4
CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
STALKING					1			
OTHER THEFT								
HARASSMENT				1	2			
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS			1	2	2			
BLACKMAIL				1			1	
RAPE			3	2	4			
CHILD ABUSE			2					
ASSAULT			1	1	2			
TOTAL			7	7	11	1		26
DERBYSHIRE CONSTABULARY	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
NO CAT - TOTAL		2	24	28	16			70
STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
STALKING								
OTHER THEFT				2	1			
HARASSMENT			3	1				
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS		1	1		3			
BLACKMAIL			1					
RAPE					2			
CHILD ABUSE			1					
OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS				1				
ASSAULT					1			
FRAUD					1			
DRUG OFFENCE					1			
TOTAL		1	6	4	9			20

BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
DOMESTIC DISPUTE		8	1					
STALKING								
OTHER THEFT			2	2	9	3		
HARASSMENT		1	2					
OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS								
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS		3						
BLACKMAIL								
RAPE								
CHILD ABUSE		8						
ASSAULT								
FRAUD		1	1					
DRUG OFFENCE								
SEXUAL OFFENCES			4	14	1	1		
VANDALISM				1	1			
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON				3	8	4		
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES					1			
TOTAL		21	9	20	20	8		78
LANCASHIRE POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
DOMESTIC DISPUTE								
STALKING							2	
OTHER THEFT							2	
HARASSMENT							8	
OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS							3	
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS							14	
BLACKMAIL							7	
RAPE							7	
CHILD ABUSE							6	
ASSAULT							6	
FRAUD								
DRUG OFFENCE								
SEXUAL OFFENCES							2	
VANDALISM							1	
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON								
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES								
TOTAL							60	60
LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE								OVERALL TOTAL
NO CAT - TOTAL		14	24	20	31	4		93
CUMBRIA POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
DOMESTIC DISPUTE								
STALKING		1	2	2	5			
OTHER THEFT		2	2					
HARASSMENT								
OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS								
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS								
BLACKMAIL								
RAPE					1			
CHILD ABUSE								
ASSAULT								
FRAUD								
DRUG OFFENCE								
SEXUAL OFFENCES				2				
VANDALISM								
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON								
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES								
TOTAL		3	4	4	6			17
DEVON & CORNWALL POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
DOMESTIC DISPUTE								
STALKING				1	1			
OTHER THEFT		2	2	2	1			
HARASSMENT		2	8	6	8	2		
OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS		1	2	2				
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS		6	7	8	7	3		
BLACKMAIL		16	9	16	19	3		
RAPE				4	5			
CHILD ABUSE		1	2	3	1			
ASSAULT		1	2		5			
FRAUD		1	2	7	6			
DRUG OFFENCE								
SEXUAL OFFENCES			2	1				
VANDALISM			1	1				
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON			2					
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES		1			1			
TOTAL		31	39	51	54	8		183

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
Violence & Sexual Offences		6	7	16	8			
Theft Offences		19	19	26	30	7		
Criminal Damage		1	6	3	6	1		
Drugs Offences			1		1			
Weapon Offences				1				
Public Order Offences			1	4	2			
Vehicle Offences		22	28	19	24	4		
Stalking and Harassment		9	2	4	6			
Miscellaneous Crimes Against Society			1		1	2		
Non-notifiable			1					
TOTAL		57	66	73	78	14		288
DURHAM CONSTABULARY								OVERALL TOTAL
TOTAL - NO CAT		10	20	19	21			70
WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE								OVERALL TOTAL
TOTAL - NO CAT		75	67	99	105			346
NORTH WALES POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS		2	1	1				
BLACKMAIL		2	1	1	4			
HARRASSMENT				1	4			
STALKING				1				
RAPE (MALE OVER 16)				1	1			
CHILD ABUSE					2			
PUBLIC FEAR, ALARM, DISTRESS					2			
FRAUD				9	6			
TOTAL		4	2	14	15			35
CITY OF LONDON POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
DOMESTIC DISPUTE								
STALKING		1			2			
OTHER THEFT		8	8	4	24	2		
HARRASSMENT								
OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS								
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS								
BLACKMAIL			2					
RAPE								
CHILD ABUSE								
ASSAULT								
FRAUD								
DRUG OFFENCE		12	8	14	22	3		
SEXUAL OFFENCES								
VANDALISM			1					
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON			5					
POSSESSION OF WEAPON		2			1			
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES					1			
TOTAL		23	24	18	50	5		120
DORSET POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
BLACKMAIL		2	2	4	3			
DISCLOSE PRIVATE PHOTOGRAPHS		1						
HARRASSMENT		1	1	2				
HARRASSMENT (NON VIOLENT)		1						
RAPE OF MAN (OVER 16)				2				
ROBBERY (PERSONAL)					1			
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS			1		1			
STALKING VIOLENT					1			
STALKING NON VIOLENT/THREATENING			1					
THEFT (OTHER)				1				
TOTAL		5	5	9	6			25

NORTHUMBRIA POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
NON-CAT TOTAL		2	3	6	2			13
GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONSTABULARY								OVERALL TOTAL
NON-CAT TOTAL		0	1	1	3			5
WARWICKSHIRE POLICE								OVERALL TOTAL
NON-CAT TOTAL		7	9	12	28			56
LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS							9	
OTHER OFFENCES							9	
BLACKMAIL							6	
HARRASMENT							4	
SEXUAL ASSAULT							4	
VIOLENCE							3	
ASSAULT WITH INJURY							2	
SEX ACTIVITY CHILD UNDER 16							2	
ASSAULT WITH SERIOUS HAR,							1	
ASSAULT WITHOUT INJURY							1	
DOMESTIC INCIDENT							1	
SEX ASSAULT MALE OVER 13							1	
SEXUAL GROOMING							1	
STALKING							1	
NON-CAT TOTAL							45	45
SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
ASSAULT WITHOUT INJURY			1					
BLACKMAIL					1			
RAPE OF A MALE 16 AND OVER			1					
ROBBERY OF A PROPERTY				1				
THEFT IN A DWELLING OTHER AUTO MAC				1				
TOTAL			2	2	1			5
KENT POLICE								
REFUSAL								
POLICE SERVICE NORTHERN IRELAND								
REFUSAL								
WEST MIDLANDS POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
ASSAULT OTHER							2	
ATTEMPTED ROBBERY							2	
BLACKMAIL							20	
BREACH OF NON-MOLESTATION ORDER							1	
SEXUAL ACTIVITY MALE UNDER 16							1	
CHILD ABUSE							2	
COMMON ASSUALT							3	
CRIMINAL DAMAMGE TO DWELLING							1	
DISCLOSE SEXUAL PHOTOGRAPHS							5	
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - NON CRIME							2	
CONTROLLING CO-ERCIVE BEHAVIOUR							1	
FEAR/PROVOCATION OF VIOLENCE							1	
FRAUD							1	
HARASSMENT							15	
INTIMIDATE WITNESS - JUROR							1	
MEETING MALE UNDER 16/GROOMING							1	
OTHER CRIMINAL DAMAGE							1	
CAUSE FEAR/VIOLENCE							1	
STALKING							5	
RAPE OF MALE OVER 16							5	
RAPE OF MALE CHILD 13-15							3	
ROBBERY PERSONAL PROPERTY							6	
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATION							45	
SEXUAL ACTIVITY MALE UNDER 16							1	
SEXUAL ASSAULT MALE 13+							2	
THEFT DWELLING NOT MACHINE							9	
THEFT OTHER							1	
THREATS TO KILL							1	
VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE							1	
TOTAL							140	140
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
NON-CAT TOTAL		9	7	5	14			35
WILTSHIRE POLICE								
DENIED REQUEST - DUE TO COSTS								
DUNDEE POLICE								
DENIED REQUEST - DUE TO COSTS								
CHESHIRE POLICE	NO. CRIME IN YEAR.	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
NON-CAT TOTAL		N/A	2	12	8	3		25

METROPOLITAN POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
REFUSED REQUESTS - DUE TO COSTS BUT OFFERED ME AN OVERALL COUNT OF MEN INVOLVED IN ALL ONLINE CRIME. HOWEVER THIS WOULD MAKE MY FINDINGS INACCURATE.								
THAMES VALLEY POLICE								
DENIED REQUEST - DUE TO COSTS								
HAMPSHIRE POLICE								
DENIED REQUEST - DUE TO COSTS								
GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
COMMON ASSAULT		1	1		1			
VIOLENCE WITHOUT INJURY		3	2	1				
RAPE		2	3	4	4			
STALKING		10	13	12	11			
ROBBERY BUSINESS			1					
ROBBERY PERSONAL PROPERTY			2	6				
THEFT OTHER		2	11	3	9			
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCE		1	1		1			
CRIMINAL DAMAGE AND ARSON OFFENCES				1				
SEXUAL ASSAULT (OTHER)		3	5	5	2			
TOTAL		22	39	32	28			121

DEVON & CORNWALL POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
DOMESTIC DISPUTE								
STALKING				1	1			
OTHER THEFT		2	2	2	1			
HARRASSMENT		2	8	6	8	2		
OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS		1	2	2				
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS		6	7	8	7	3		
BLACKMAIL		16	9	16	19	3		
RAPE				4	5			
CHILD ABUSE		1	2	3	1			
ASSAULT		1	2		5			
FRAUD		1	2	7	6			
DRUG OFFENCE								
SEXUAL OFFENCES			2	1				
VANDALISM			1	1				
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON			2					
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES		1			1			
TOTAL		31	39	51	54	8		183

DORSET POLICE	NO. CRIME	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (UP TO MAY)	NO SPECIFIC YEAR	OVERALL TOTAL
	IN YEAR.							
BLACKMAIL		2	2	4	3			
DISCLOSE PRIVATE PHOTOGRAPHS		1						
HARRASSMENT		1	1	2				
HARRASSMENT (NON VIOLENT)		1						
RAPE OF MAN (OVER 16)				2				
ROBBERY (PERSONAL)					1			
MALICIOUS COMMUNICATIONS			1		1			
STALKING VIOLENT					1			
STALKING NON VIOLENT/THREATENING			1					
THEFT (OTHER)				1				
TOTAL		5	5	9	6			25

13) Cara Paton – Twitter Tinder Date ‘Urban Myth’ Video

<https://twitter.com/carapatonx/status/989250709039263744?lang=en>

14) **Key findings from Andrew Pankhurst’s independent online survey questionnaire.**

The independent survey was aimed at the following target audience:

- Those who identify as Male (including trans men) of any ethnic group.
- Those who are over the age of 18 years.
- Those who are permanent UK residents.
- Those who have currently/previously used LGBTQI+ dating apps.

With the objectives of the study being:

- To determine an age group more commonly associated with the use of LGBTQI+ dating apps.
- To determine an ethnic group more commonly associated with the use of LGBTQI+ dating apps.
- To identify common levels of daily LGBTQI+ dating app usage.
- To identify participant relationship status’ – to study levels of non-monogamous behaviour within those surveyed.
- To identify the participant’s reason(s) for using LGBTQI+ dating apps.
- To identify how many participants have used ‘Grindr’ specifically.
- To identify an overall percentage of those studied who had encountered negative experiences using LGBTQI+ dating apps; and to further determine whether any of these experiences were, in fact, criminal acts.
- If participants defined any negative experiences as criminal acts, these crimes would then be placed into offence categories (as with the FOI requests); the study would then determine the most common form of crime(s) reported by participants.

During the questionnaire, if participants confirmed that they had experienced negative behaviour from other users whilst using dating apps online, then the following points were also raised:

- Did those concerned report the issues experienced to the Police? If so, what was their response?
- Did those concerned report the issues experienced to the app developer? If so, what was their response?
- Regarding the reporting of any issues to the Police and/or the app developer - the questionnaire also asked participants (in two separate questions) to rate their level of satisfaction with how they felt their complaint was handled.
- Lastly, the questionnaire asked all participants (irrespective of whether they had encountered negative behaviour or not) whether they would report being a victim (or potential victim) of abuse/crimes whilst using LGBTQI+ dating apps to the Police, should they ever need to in the future.

The independent survey was shared via online social media platforms Facebook and Instagram - and posted across various LGBTQI+ community groups, with the option to participate in the survey between 21st October 2022, and 3rd November 2022.

In that time, the survey accounted for exactly forty responses from individuals over eighteen years of age, who identified as male, and who were permanent UK residents via its two-week online reach.

Appendix 15 shows the pie chart associated with the overall breakdown of age brackets of the forty participants surveyed. It confirms that the most common age group of those surveyed fell into the 30-34 age bracket, at an overall total of 27.5%.

The following typical age brackets of participants tied at 22.5% for both the 18-24 and 35-39 age groups. Consequently meaning that over 72.5% of those surveyed were male, LGBTQI+ dating app users between the ages of 18-39, with only 10% of participants being between the ages of 40-44, and with a further 2.5% of participants falling within the 45-49 and 50+ age brackets.

All of the participants (Appendix 16) stated that their gender was still as was assigned at birth, signifying that out of all of those who participated, none were transgender males.

Appendix 17 shows that 80% of the participants identified as Gay, with a further 15% identifying as Bisexual, 2.5% as Heterosexual, and lastly, with 2.5% identifying as Demisexual.

A staggering 97.5% of those surveyed (Appendix 18) identified their ethnicity as falling into the 'any white background' category, with the remaining 2.5% describing their ethnicity as meeting the 'any mixed/multiple ethnic group' requirements.

More interestingly, and allowing this research to obtain a clearer picture of the sociosexual behaviours of its participants, when asked about their marital/relationship status (Appendix 19) 62.5% of participants disclosed that they were single, yet 32.5% stated they were in a relationship. The survey gave the option to include the response 'open relationship' – in the aid to differentiate between LGBTQI+ dating app users who were monogamous and non-monogamous. Only 5% of respondents claimed to be in an open relationship, with none claiming to identify as being 'married' in a 'civil partnership' or 'widowed'. Meaning, it can be argued from the survey results, that a fair proportion of respondents who claimed to be in a relationship (32.5%), could be using LGBTQI+ dating apps to cheat on their partners.

Appendix 20 shows that 80% of participants claimed to use LGBTQI+ dating apps, and 20% did not. This does not, however, discount the potential use of non-exclusive LGBTQI+ dating apps such as Tinder, Hinge or Bumble etc. Once this question had been confirmed, the survey ended for those who selected the 'no' response – leaving 32 respondents remaining. 100% of these respondents (Appendix 21) confirmed that they used, or had used, the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.

The survey then began to further explore the sociological and sociosexual reasoning behind participants' use of LGBTQI+ dating apps, by asking: "For what reason would you say that you mostly use dating apps for?" with the response options:

- Dating (to find a partner).
- Sex (to find a sexual partner only).

- Both dating, and sex (to find a partner, but also have sexual partners along the way).
- Just to talk to people / meet new friends (for non-sexual or dating purposes).

Appendix 22 shows that 50% of respondents claimed to use dating apps for both dating, and sex. And a further 21.9% claimed to use the apps solely for sex purposes alone. 18.8% of users identified as using dating apps for their intended use, dating only. Whereas 9.4% claimed to use dating apps to talk to people and make new friends (for non-sexual or dating purposes).

With this, and in contrast to Timmermans et al. and Castro et al.'s previously mentioned arguments surrounding the complex issue of the primary sociosexual motives for dating app usage, this study found that with LGBTQI+ dating apps specifically, although not always for the sole reason, use with intended sexual activity amongst participants came in at a majority of 71.9%. Undeniable results to suggest that sexual activity is one of the fundamental and underlying reasons for LGBTQI+ dating app use, which this particular study argues strongly from its own survey results; and, consequently opposing scholarly arguments such as those sourced from Timmermans et al. and Castro et al. in the process.

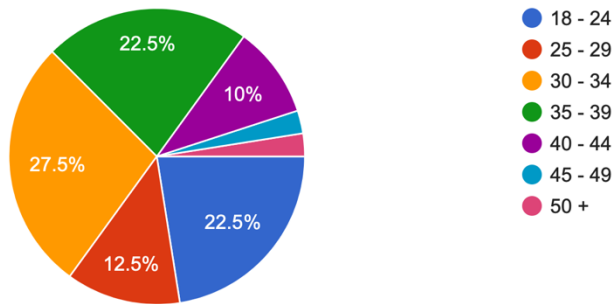
Participants' estimations of overall daily dating app usage were also recorded by the survey (Appendix 23), with the majority of those questioned claiming their use of dating apps to be 'average' (using dating apps once or twice a day) at 28.1%. A further 21.5% claimed their use was 'often' (checking their profile a few times a day), whilst 21.9% claimed their use was 'not so often' (checking their profile a couple of times a week), concluding with 6.3% of participants claiming to 'hardly ever' use dating apps - having a profile, but rarely logging on.

Excessive use of dating apps (checking their profile many times throughout the day) was recorded by 18.8% of participants – making an overall 40.3% of the total number of those surveyed, considering themselves to be more than 'average' LGBTQI+ dating app users throughout the day. The survey also recorded, at this point, that 100% of the *remaining* participants had used the dating app Grindr (Appendix 24).

15)Independent online survey results – participant age groups.

How old are you?

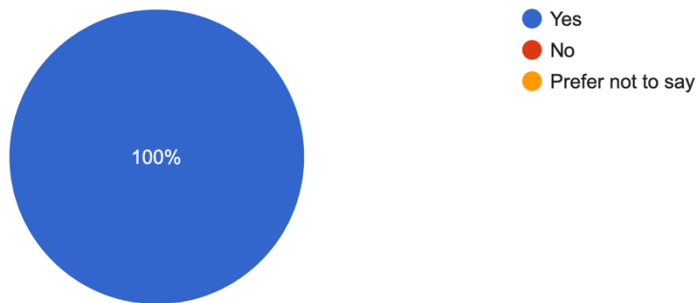
40 responses



16)Independent online survey results – Gender assigned at birth.

Is your gender still that as was assigned at birth?

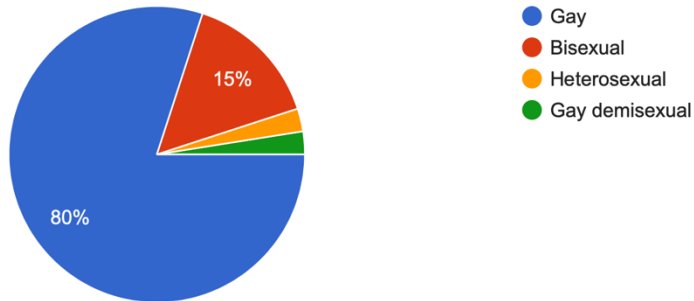
40 responses



17) Independent online survey results – Participant sexuality.

What is your sexuality?

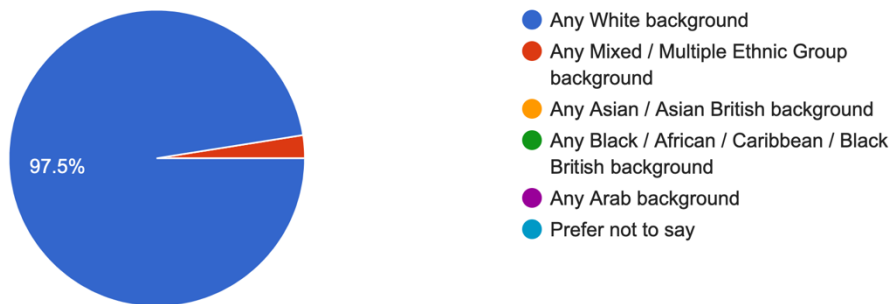
40 responses



18) Independent online survey results – Participant ethnicity.

What best describes your ethnic group? (Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background)

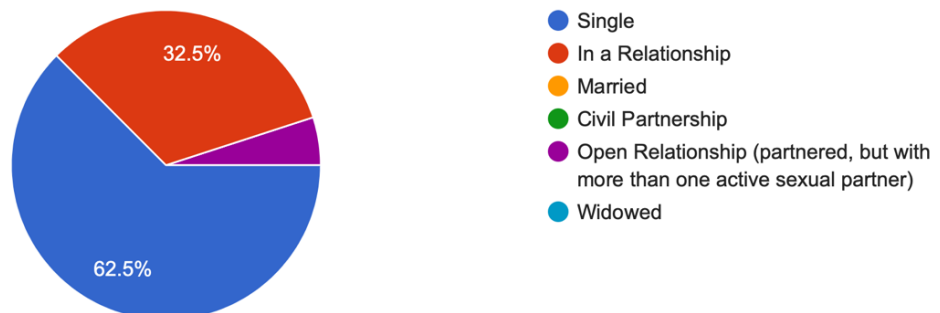
40 responses



19) Independent online survey results – Participant relationship status.

What is your marital status?

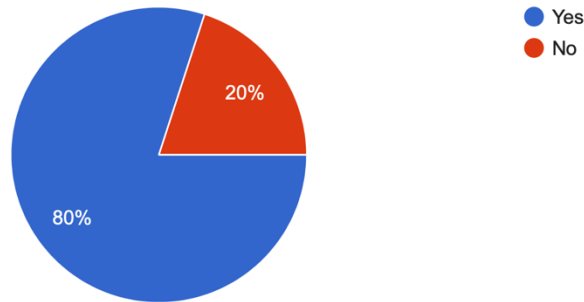
40 responses



20) Independent online survey results – Participants who use LGBTQI+ dating apps.

Do you use LGBTQI+ dating apps? (e.g. Grindr, Scruff, Hornet)

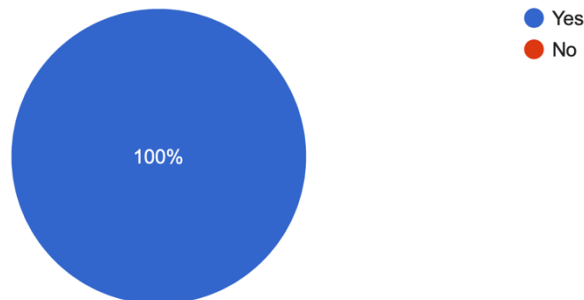
40 responses



21) Independent online survey results – Participants who use LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.

Do you use, or have you ever used, the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr?

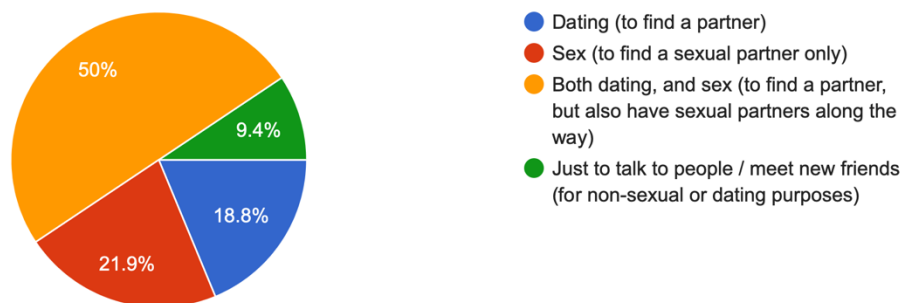
32 responses



22) Independent online survey results – Participants reasons for using dating apps.

For what reason would you say that you mostly use dating apps for?

32 responses



23) Independent online survey results – Participants level of dating app usage.

How often do you use dating apps?

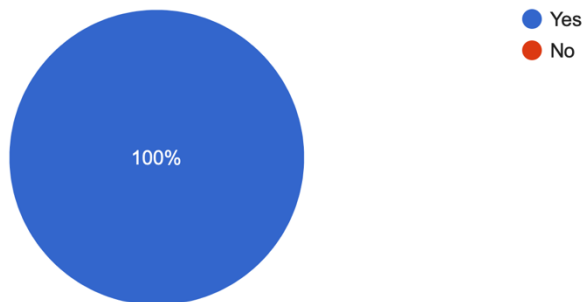
32 responses



24) Independent online survey results – Participants that use/have used LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr.

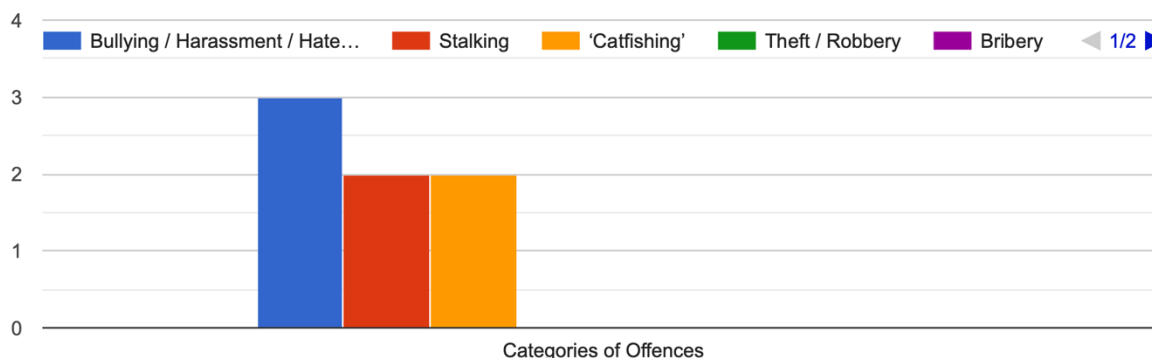
Do you use, or have you ever used, the LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr?

32 responses



25) Independent online survey results – category of crime/disorder committed against participants.

What category would you place the negative experience/crime committed towards you in? (You may select multiple options if needed)



26) **Key findings from Andrew Pankhurst’s independent online survey questionnaire, concerning dating app user’s experiences reporting crimes/disorder to the UK Police.**

Out of the forty male participants surveyed, twenty-one reached the point in the survey that asked participants “Did you report your negative experience(s) to the Police?” (Appendix 27). 81% of participants (17) at this stage confirmed that they did *not* report their negative experiences to the Police, with the remaining 19% (4) confirming that they did.

It was the majority of those who *did not* report their experiences to the Police, along with their individual responses that further supported this study’s argument: that the majority of men who experience crimes/disorder as a result of using LGBTQI+ dating apps would not report said crimes to the Police. And, what makes this particular part of the independent study so insightful, is that it gives this thesis the ability to explore the individual responses from participants as to exactly *why*.

The 81% of participants who answered “no” in this particular part of the study, were then given the option to expand on why they *did not* report their experiences to the Police.

It must also be noted that not all of the experiences faced by participants may have necessarily been criminal acts, consequently resulting in no need for Police involvement. However, the survey pre-empted this possible conclusion – and asked from that point onwards: “If your negative experience had have been a criminal act, would you have reported it to the Police?”.

Appendix 28 shows that, at this point in the questionnaire, aside from the 41.2% of participants that *would have* reported any criminal acts to the Police – a majority of 58.8% of participants asked, *would not have*. With some of the participant's reasons for doing so being:

- “Not going to be bothered, are they?”
- “No, I think I’d be judged by the Police and not taken seriously.”
- “It depends what it was. I would only have reported it if I felt my life was threatened.”
- “Lack of evidence, I didn’t want hassle. I don’t trust the Police to understand or do anything.”
- “I’d feel embarrassed.”

(Pankhurst, 2020)

The survey then directed respondents who answered, ‘yes’ to the question: “Did you report your negative experience(s) to the Police?”, to the question: “Do you feel that the Police handled your complaint/report well?”.

Appendix 29 shows a staggering 75% of those surveyed responded with “no” as their response – with the remaining 25% claiming to be satisfied with the way that the Police handled their complaints. Further solidifying the argument that despite reporting their complaints to the Police, the majority of those who did, were left unsatisfied with the overall outcome of doing so. Hence, causing further reason for the male users of LGBTQI+ dating apps who experience crime/disorder not to report their complaints through the lack of trust and confidence in Police services as shown here in this thesis’ independent study.

Participants who answered “no” to the previous question (Appendix 29), were then asked: “Would you feel comfortable reporting a similar crime or experience to the Police again? – with a resounding 100% responding, “no” (Appendix 30).

Their reasoning for this was split into the following categories (Appendix 31):

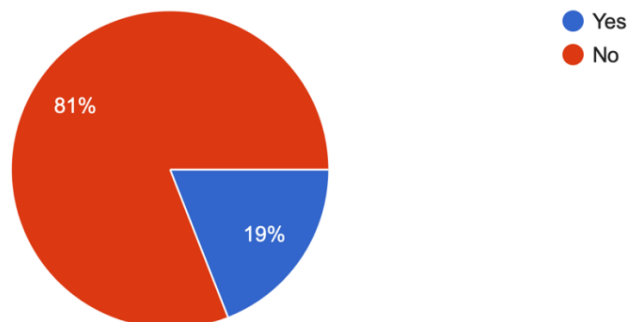
- Lack of empathy/interest in handling your complaint: 2 Participants.
- Impaired judgement by investigating officers concerning the nature of your complaint – 1 Participant.
- Prejudice against gender – 1 Participant.
- Prejudice against race – 1 Participant.
- Prejudice against sexuality – 2 Participants.
- Breakdown in communication between you and Police force/Investigating officers – 1 Participant.
- Reluctance to prosecute offenders, despite complaint – 2 Participants.
- Poor Investigating officers handling your case – 2 Participants.

(Pankhurst, 2020)

27) Independent online survey results – Did you report your negative experience(s) to the Police?

Did you report your negative experience(s) to the Police?

21 responses



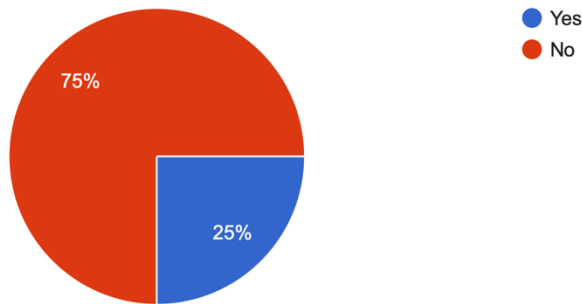
28) Independent online survey results – If your negative experience had have been a criminal act - would you have reported it to the Police?

If your negative experience had have been a criminal act - would you have reported it to the Police? If you would not have reported any crimin...w. (The survey will end once you have done this).
17 responses



29) Independent online survey results – Do you feel that the Police handled your complaint/report well?

Do you feel that the Police handled your complaint/report well?
4 responses



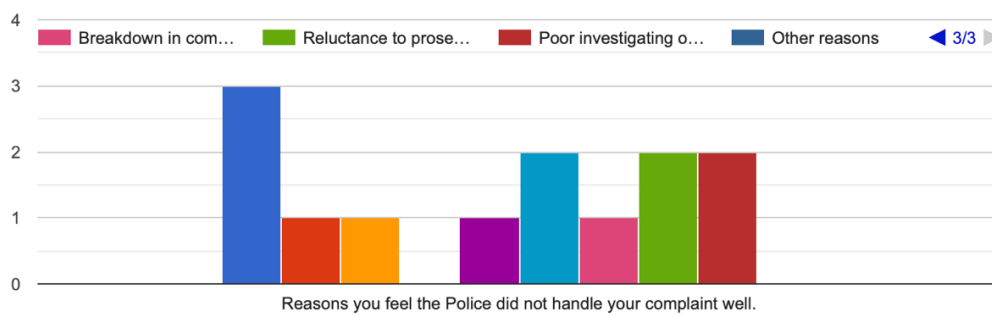
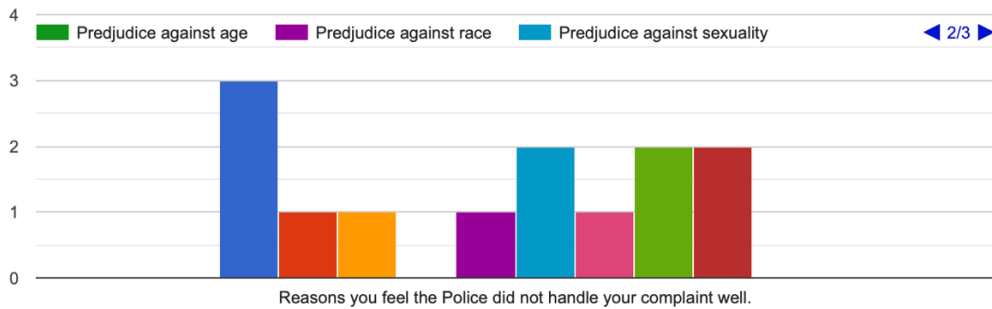
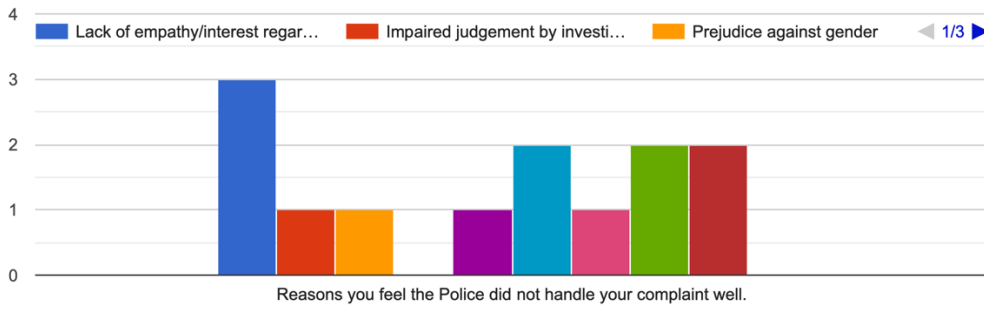
30) Independent online survey results – Would you feel comfortable reporting a similar crime or experience to the Police again?

Would you feel comfortable reporting a similar crime or experience to the Police again?
3 responses



31) Independent online survey results – Please select any of the multiple options that best describe the reasons you feel the Police did not handle your complaint/report well.

Please select any of the multiple options that best describe the reasons you feel the Police did not handle your complaint/report well:



32) Galop Hate Crime Report 2020: Challenging Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia – Luke Hubbard. Excerpt on research participant's experiences reporting hate crimes to the Police.

Experiences of reporting to the police

72% of respondents who reported their victimisation to the police were dissatisfied with the response they received.

WHY?

- 68% were dissatisfied because no action taken
- 63% felt the incident was not treated seriously
- 42% encountered a professional who had little knowledge of LGBT+ issues
- 39% felt there were too many steps to go through
- 37% had to repeat what happened several times
- 37% had to disclose their sexual orientation/gender identity to several people
- 26% had received an automated response
- 24% felt they were belittled or blamed
- 13% did not receive a response

On the other hand, 16% of respondents who reported their victimisation to the police were satisfied with the response they received.

WHY?

- 37% felt they were treated with respect
- 37% felt they were listened to
- 24% felt they were responded to quickly
- 24% felt the incident was taken seriously
- 13% were satisfied because the offender faced consequences

IX. “No Strings Attached” Show Bible

“NO STRINGS ATTACHED” INTRODUCTION

“No Strings Attached” is a five-part LGBT+ television thriller set in present-day Liverpool, England, that tells the story of Ethan Paige and his toxic, internal struggles with infidelity, self-loathing, and sexual addiction.

And, as Ethan’s world continually spirals out of control, it fatefully lands him in a life-changing situation and in the direct path of a sick and twisted individual.

Someone is stalking gay men through online dating apps and murdering them – and now Ethan Paige has caught their undivided attention.

Paying homage to iconic serial killer series such as ‘The Fall’, and gripping dramas such as ‘Happy Valley’ and ‘Doctor Foster’, “No Strings Attached” is a unique take on these classics, incorporating modern LGBT+ psychological and sociological struggles into the thriller genre’s fold for the first time on modern mainstream television.

...

THE STORY

Ethan Paige believes that he’s finally found the perfect relationship. A loving, kind and very attractive partner; a lovely home, an amazing sex life – the works.

That is until one day, a strange text message from one of Ethan’s friends marks the start of a drastic turn in events – sending all of Ethan’s beliefs of what he thought his relationship once was, into doubt.

Months later, Ethan is now single, living alone *and broke*.

Ex-boyfriend Grant, on the other hand, has now moved one of the many men he cheated on Ethan with, into their old home. The home that they *both* built together, the home that Ethan thought they were *happy* in, and the home that Grant legally owned.

Consumed by his own anger, self-loathing, insecurities, and personal humiliation, Ethan turns to using mobile dating apps, in an attempt to alleviate his loneliness and boost his decimated self-esteem.

What starts as a ‘quick fix’ solution to his woes, slowly descends into a dark and dangerous obsession.

Ethan’s tainted morals, and personal struggles, manifest themselves in the form of an addiction to meeting strangers for sex on a daily basis.

An addiction that lands Ethan in the path of a killer. A killer who slowly starts to obsess over Ethan, his life, and those he holds *closest*.

...

Olivia Hartford's heart pounds through her chest as her doctor explains her recent blood test diagnosis.

"HIV positive."

Her doctor's voice sounds almost muffled as the sound of her pounding heart rings in her ears making her head thump.

Olivia had only discovered that her husband Craig was having multiple affairs, with different people, two weeks ago. After she found his online swingers website profile - with an array of sordid, explicit photographs and incriminating messages from both *men* and women.

She didn't know how to handle that.

Olivia knew how to handle many things, but not this. It was only upon the advice of her overly cautious sister that she took this sexual health test in the first place. After discovering that one of her husband's 'likes' was unprotected sex with random strangers.

Olivia didn't claim to have the perfect marriage, nor did she think her sex life was particularly fantastic; the struggle of trying to conceive naturally with Craig had taken a toll on their relationship, yes, but what she did not think, however, was that her husband had been *that* unhappy.

In a desperate attempt to block her pain, silence her anxieties and forget about the consequences of her recent HIV diagnosis, Olivia immerses herself in an already gruelling work schedule as a Detective Inspector for Merseyside Police.

Her latest case, however, concerns the death of a gay man in a city centre hotel room. It appears that he has died from a suspected drugs overdose, at what looks like a sex party gone horribly wrong.

Olivia doesn't quite know it yet, but this will be the first of many cases that she will uncover, that test her recently clouded discernment, and grieving contempt for gay men.

This also leads Olivia to accidentally uncover of a *shocking* trail of serious Police misconduct.

A trail of serious misconduct that her peers within the Police force will do anything to keep quiet.

...

Liam Bower looks out of the cracked bedroom window pane, and down on the street below him, as his stepfather is dragged from his house and into the back of a nearby Police car by several struggling Police officers.

His alcoholic mother screams noxious words, lashing out, as social workers also remove his younger sister from the household - on the recently obtained knowledge of several counts of sexual abuse at the hands of her paedophile father.

Liam's mother *knew* what was happening.

And Liam *knows* that his mother knew what was happening.

For years he took countless beatings and verbal lashings; and all because he shares the same face as the man who left his mother to rot in her own troubled, addiction riddled existence.

But he won't take this.

Now Liam has lost the only fathomable thing that he truly ever loved, in his very troubled and broken life.

And now his mother is finally going to pay for *everything* she's ever done to him.

And so is *everybody* else.

...

When Ethan Paige stumbles upon the dead body of murdered businessman Alexander Banks in his city centre apartment, he immediately becomes Olivia Hartford's prime-suspect.

And Liam Bower's next *victim*.

...

STRUCTURE

The story will be structured into five, hour long episodes – with the series reaching its conclusion by the fifth and final episode.

Each episode will be structured as if watching a film – with a distinct start and emotionally peaking midpoint, followed by a dramatic conclusion.

The intense storyline between Ethan, Olivia and Liam that is presented in the first season is a standalone concept; and, although the series may not rely on a sequel to continue its story, there *are* some characters within “No Strings Attached” that open the prospect of further storytelling in potential future series.

Characters such as DI Olivia Hartford and DI Rhys Denham could easily have their own spin off series together, for instance; but for this particular storyline, it has only *one* opportunity to speak its voice.

THE EPISODES

EPISODE ONE

The episode opens as drug dealer and anti-social youth Malik Sutcliffe travels across Liverpool City centre to meet older professional David Finch - for what appears to be sex. A seemingly shy, nervous, and reserved looking Malik then proceeds to attack and rob David once he has entered his home.

DI Olivia Hartford discovers that her husband of seventeen years has been having multiple affairs with multiple people behind her back, both men and women, during their painfully long IVF battle together. This painful revelation prompts her to move in with her younger sister Hannah, who suggests that she should perhaps get herself 'checked out', just to be on the safe side.

We are introduced to Ethan Paige, who has split from his cheating ex-partner Grant and subsequently developed an addiction to LGBTQI+ dating apps, and frequent NSA sexual meets.

As a gesture of support – to help Ethan with his breakup struggles, close friend Josiah offers to pay for Ethan to receive professional help through a therapist that has recently been recommended to him. Ethan declines, arguing that he is 'fine' – however, a montage of scenes depicting the lengths of his promiscuous activity says otherwise.

Olivia, on her sister's pushy advice, and with the concern of her recent bout of morning sickness, gets her bloods taken at Doctor Stenner's surgery.

Shortly after, Olivia disregards the reported robbery and assault of David Finch without even thinking through the finer details. She makes a bold remark regarding his *lifestyle*, and his age - pointing toward his sexuality and alleged predatory behaviour being the main reason for his assault. Shocked at her outburst, partner DI Rhys Denham, quickly and abruptly corrects her.

Events become more heated as Olivia and Rhys arrive at David Finch's apartment, where Olivia begins to interrogate and belittle an already fragile, and injured, David.

Rhys and Olivia come to blows once more as they leave the scene, with Rhys questioning what has suddenly got into his partner to make her act in such a hostile, flippant manner. At the end of their argument, Rhys lets slip to Olivia that he is in fact a gay man himself, and that her views are generalising, stereotyping and offensive to LGBTQI+ people.

Ethan arranges an NSA meet with businessman Alexander Banks – unaware of just exactly how attractive Alexander is. When they meet, Ethan is bowled over by his appearance and charming demeanour – until Alexander offers Ethan a line of cocaine.

Shortly after Ethan accepts Alex's proposition, and once they have (quickly) become sexually acquainted, Ethan suffers with a heavy nosebleed.

Alexander's reaction is nothing short of dismissive and rude, and he promptly shows his true colours through his charming facade; in his disgust, he demands that Ethan leave his apartment immediately, and that on his way out not to 'take' anything.

Mortified, ashamed, and now 'high' from his line of cocaine, Ethan hurries back to his apartment, arranging another meet enroute. Once outside his apartment building, Ethan is met by his furious ex-boyfriend, Grant, demanding to know why he has been interfering in his new relationship.

Ethan's rage spills out into a blazing argument with Grant on the street – in which Grant annihilates Ethan's already fragile state of mind. During the argument, Ethan's preconceived NSA meet arrives, a young man named Liam, who, once Grant has walked away victorious in his argument, Ethan stands up – slamming the door in his face.

Olivia receives a call at the station, regarding her recent blood test results, asking her to head to Doctor Stenner's surgery immediately. Once in Doctor Stenner's office, Olivia, who is convinced that she is pregnant, is told that her blood tests have shown that she is HIV positive.

Olivia storms out of the doctor's surgery, and immediately heads to husband Craig's restaurant business. Once there, she lashes out at him publicly, in front of all his shocked guests and staff.

As Craig eventually drags Olivia outside into the car park, she tells him that he has infected her with HIV.

Ethan, who is upset from his earlier confrontation with Grant, then turns to alcohol whilst on a staff night out.

Ethan, now drunk in the bar he works in, and after a minor altercation with a fellow nightclubber unexpectedly bumps into mystery man Aaron Teller, who, despite Ethan's drunk, semi-hostile attitude, still expresses his flirtatious interest.

Shortly after, manager Iris refuses to serve Ethan and he storms out leaving the nightclub.

Walking the streets, Ethan arranges an NSA meet and ends up walking into a dangerous situation, risking his personal safety in a near sexual assault by a man called 'Barry' in a city centre hotel room.

The man catfishes Ethan, looking nothing like the photos he has sent him, and then becomes violent when Ethan refuses to have sex with him. Ethan manages to escape unharmed, but the experience causes him significant distress.

Ethan, now safely home after his near sexual assault, is crying hard, fully clothed, and slumped at the foot of his shower.

While Olivia, sits in her parked car at the side of the road, her head leant forward, as she cries hysterically, her hands gripping the steering wheel.

A man, wearing a bright yellow raincoat, slowly descends through the hotel corridor, stopping at Room 242. The door slowly creeps open, and 'Barry' half emerges from the other side. Barry smirks, and says, "come back for more, have ya?" as he steps aside, allowing the man in the yellow jacket to walk inside the room, closing the door firmly shut behind him.

The episode concludes the following morning when a piece of post arrives that will change Ethan's life forever.

We are shown Barry's hotel room, the bright morning sunlight creeping through the curtains, as his naked, lifeless body lies sprawled across the unkept bed.

His face twisted.

EPISODE TWO

After his near sexual assault with Barry, Ethan decides to renounce dating apps and sexual meets for good.

He starts himself on the road to achieving this goal by agreeing to see counsellor Kate Constavolos, who Josiah previously recommended. Here, Ethan lays bare the extent of his NSA addiction, and impartial ear Kate listens with no prejudice.

It is at this point that Ethan notices a picture frame, containing a family photo, behind where Kate sits in her office. The man in the family photo is Alexander Banks – the rude, arrogant man that Ethan had previously nearly slept with days before. Kate picks up on Ethan's curiosity and points out that it is her sister Alannah and husband Alex, with their daughter Hope.

Josiah urges Ethan to report Barry after his session with Kate. Ethan refuses, stating his knowledge of the Police being renowned for not taking experiences like his, and other LGBT+ people seriously. Josiah angrily tells Ethan that he can't help him out again, and that if he isn't going to report Barry that he best not be naïve enough to get into another near miss situation like the last. As this time, Josiah points out to Ethan that he might not be as lucky.

A hotel chambermaid discovers the dead body of Barry Murphy, in Room 242, of the Adelphi Hotel.

Olivia, who has just started taking her HIV meds, looks pale, withdrawn, and troubled at the scene of Barry Murphy's death. Barry is found on his bed, surrounded by drugs, alcohol, and various paraphernalia. It appears as if Murphy has been drinking, taking drugs, and has choked on his own vomit.

Olivia and a group of officers make assumptions concerning the scene of Murphy's death – and generalisations surrounding his lifestyle as a closeted gay man. And, unbeknown to them at this point - his murder.

Grant kisses new boyfriend Shaun goodbye outside 'their' house, as he leaves for Wales to return home for the impending holidays until after the new year. As soon as Grant is back inside his house, and sure that Sean has left, he immediately re-downloads Grindr.

Determined to stop NSA meets and calm his need for sexual gratification through dating apps, Ethan decides to meet Aaron for a date, after manager Iris took his number to forward on to Ethan at the bar several nights ago.

After receiving a free game of bowling voucher, Ethan and Aaron arrive at a run-down outer city bowling alley for their date. To Ethan's embarrassment, the young man he stood up outside his apartment after his argument with Grant is working behind the reception desk.

Ethan distracts Aaron with a drinks order, and heads to confront the man at the desk – whom he later discovers is called Liam.

Liam admits that he sent Ethan the free bowling vouchers, despite his rude behaviour, as he felt that Ethan could do with something to cheer him up. In receipt of this, Ethan eventually accepts Liam's reasoning, despite seeming slightly odd – and apologises for the way he acted when they had arranged to meet.

Liam accepts Ethan's apology, calling a truce – he then takes Ethan and Aaron's coats and shoes for the exchange of their bowling attire.

Ethan and Aaron's date goes well, and they are enjoying each other's company – all the while, Liam Bower sits quietly inspecting them. His attention is then drawn to a noise near the arcade of games machines, and the group of anti-social youths collecting around them. One of them is Malik Sutcliffe.

Liam and Malik lock eyes, and an exchange of knowing glances are made between the two young men.

Grant sits alone in his house texting Shaun, telling him that he 'misses him already' – his intercom suddenly sounds. He answers the door and greets a young man inside - shortly afterwards they begin to kiss.

The next day Olivia, Rhys and serious investigation unit colleagues Neil and Gill discuss the parameters of the Barry Murphy case; again, the discussion leads to homophobic comments and stereotyping in the presence of Rhys who, aside from Olivia, nobody else knows is gay.

Chief Superintendent Spencer Cooke soon appears in the office, reeling from the news of the city's 'purple flag' status being reviewed as a result of several violent crimes across the city; he immediately sets the record straight on what the officers need to be dealing with, and how the *accidental* death of some 'fairy' isn't on their list of priorities.

Olivia is later approached by another work colleague, Peter, and unexpectedly asked out on a date. To Peter's shock, her reaction is defensive, and almost dismissive of his romantic interest.

Friends Ethan, Mark, and Josiah all sit around a table in a busy restaurant – they are enjoying cocktails after finishing their meal. Josiah discusses a recent, odd, encounter on LGBTQI+ dating app Grindr – after which Mark reveals he has a story of his own. Although, a far more *sinister* tale to say the least. Revealing the hidden horrors, and dangers lurking within dating apps that their users aren't always aware of.

During Mark's chilling tale the scene cuts mid scene to a voyeuristic perspective of somebody letting themselves into Ethan Paige's apartment with the same key that Ethan later explains he lost on his date with Aaron.

At Christmas Olivia's sister, who is unaware of her recent HIV diagnosis, suggests she perhaps try and work on her failing marriage – this doesn't go down well.

Aaron and Ethan have both hit it off over the festive period, and their romance is now blossoming. Ethan's addictions have subsided, and he is learning to trust again. Until that is, Ethan's habitual prying causes an argument – as he discovers that Aaron still has Grindr on his phone, with people still messaging him. Despite Aaron's pleas that he is only talking to people, not meeting them, and that he'd simply not got round to deleting it, him and Ethan still both fall out.

In a heat of the moment decision, Ethan re downloads Grindr. The first message he notices is from Alexander Banks. It's an old one, from several months ago. Still, and despite knowing it is wrong, especially considering that Ethan now knows who his wife is, he quickly replies.

Within a mere matter of minutes, Ethan is on his way to Alex's apartment.

When there is no answer at Alex's intercom, a man wearing a hooded yellow jacket opens the door enough as he leaves for Ethan to quickly sneak inside the apartment building.

Ethan makes his way up to Alexander's flat, noticing instantly that the door has been left open, slightly ajar.

Something doesn't feel right.

And it is not until Ethan is standing over Alexander's naked, dead body – with his expressionless eyes visible through the clear plastic bag still over his head - that Ethan realises something is very, seriously wrong.

Olivia, now staying in a hotel after her and her sister's argument is reviewing CCTV footage from Barry Murphy's death. As she runs through the footage, a man wearing a yellow, hooded jacket with a black cap exits a lift. His head, face down.

In the final scene, the man wearing a yellow jacket - the same man from the CCTV Olivia is reviewing, and the same man that let Ethan slip into Alexander's apartment building - slips from the street into a nearby alleyway.

He removes his jacket and cap, his breathing heavy. Liam Bower.

EPISODE THREE

(FLASHBACK) We see Liam Bower, wearing a hospitality service uniform, sodden with rain. He is wearing the same yellow coat from the CCTV footage over his work clothes as he runs into the Adelphi Hotel.

Liam stops at Room 242 – and as soon as Barry answers the door, he realises he has made a mistake. Barry plies alcohol on Liam, eventually spiking his drink – just minutes before Liam tries to leave.

It is at this point that the true horror of what Ethan narrowly escaped starts to unfold. As Liam lies, paralysed, unable to move on Barry's bed – two older men enter the room.

Liam is then raped by all three men, who later dump him in a stairwell several floors down from Barry's room, leaving him to come around from his intoxication, out of sight, alone.

(PRESENT) Olivia and Rhys are both called out to Alexander Bank's flat where Ethan Paige has 'discovered' his dead body.

On the drive to the scene Rhys passes comment on how Olivia is looking tired and run down. She immediately snaps at him, but then quickly reverts on her response and apologises.

Olivia also, rather unexpectedly, apologises to Rhys for her previous comments surrounding the Finch case. She explains the reasons behind her remarks, whilst also expressing that, despite her reasoning, there was still no legitimate excuse to make such offensive remarks in the first place.

When Rhys accepts her apology, Olivia then asks if he has anyone in the picture himself. He tells her how he has been speaking with somebody called 'Jack' online - and that they're hopefully going to meet up soon for a date. Olivia stresses his personal safety and Rhys agrees to take caution, proudly showing her a photograph of him, as they both admire and comment on his handsome looks. (The audience do not see this photograph)

Upon arrival at the scene of Alexander's murder, Olivia immediately sends a frantic Ethan Paige back to the station to await questioning.

(FLASHBACK) Liam Bower races to pick his younger sister, Emily, up from school – he is late. When Liam arrives, Emily's teacher pulls him aside to discuss her, and the other teachers' concerns regarding Emily's welfare. Liam freezes when Mrs. Perrin explains that she has found multiple unexplained bruises on Emily's body.

(PRESENT) It is now late into the night – Ethan is interviewed by Olivia, while continually stating his innocence and the events leading up to him finding Alexander's body. Ethan is shocked to find that not only has he stumbled upon the dead body of a man murdered in cold blood – but that he is now a suspect.

Early the next morning, Alannah Banks is awoken from her sleep to discover that her husband Alexander is not back from his business trip yet. She hears the doorbell ring, and heads downstairs – as she opens the door two Police officers, including Rhys, tell her that her husband has been murdered. She has no idea that he has lied to her of his whereabouts, and his concealed sexuality.

(FLASHBACK) Liam Bower's horrifying home life is finally uncovered, and his relationship with his abusive mother and stepfather is then revealed. In an argument over a smashed bottle of vodka, his stepfather attacks and injures his younger sister Emily.

(PRESENT) Josiah comes to blows with Ethan again when he picks him up from the station early the next morning, furious that Ethan, yet again, has landed himself in a dangerous situation as a result of his LGBTQI+ dating app addiction.

(FLASHBACK) Liam's stepfather is arrested by Police for abusing his younger sister, after her teachers unanimously form a complaint for her safety and welfare. His younger sister is then taken into protective care, leaving Liam alone with his mother. Liam's neighbours see and hear everything the Police tell his stepfather in the street.

(PRESENT) Liam Bower is working at the bowling alley, it's empty – he is scrolling through his phone and using a blank profile on Grindr "Yng4Rnt". The text clearly indicates that he is soliciting online for paid sexual purposes, as he sends explicit photos to other men.

Liam Bower returns home from his job to his abusive and alcoholic mother. As he walks up to his house, he sees there is red graffiti across his front door, reading: 'PEADO'.

Sarah, his mother, begins taunting him as he walks inside the house - and the true extent to the horror of which Liam has been living in starts to unravel. Sarah blames Liam for his stepfather's despicable actions and starts continually hitting him, telling him now that everyone in the street knows what he's done, they're going to have to sleep with one eye open at night from now on. *And it's all his fault.*

Liam runs upstairs to his bedroom, slamming his door behind him.

Olivia and Rhys inspect the CCTV from Alexander Banks' apartment, where they find that Ethan's side of the story checks out. Olivia notices the man in a yellow jacket, the same man from the hotel CCTV involving Barry Murphy's death, walking into Alexanders apartment – hours before Ethan Paige arrives. They burn off the footage and head for the coroner's office.

Later that morning, Ethan awakes to Josiah standing over him. He explains that Aaron has messaged him on social media as Ethan slept, wanting to know if everything was alright, as he was unable to get through to him on his mobile.

When Ethan explains his situation, Josiah makes it quite clear that he must come clean about his NSA addictions, ongoing struggles with trust and finding Alexander's body to Aaron - before somebody else does. It soon becomes evident that Ethan won't be

able to keep that a secret for much longer, as Josiah proceeds to show him a headline from a local online newspaper article.

Olivia and Rhys arrive at the coroner's office and are stunned when they discover that Alexander had been dead for at least two to three days before his body was found. She also concludes that whoever killed Alexander did so out of personal motives. His murder was not random, it was planned.

The coroner then makes a passing comment about another man's untimely death within the LGBT+ community as a result of intoxication from a drug called scopolamine, or "Devil's Breath". Olivia realises she is going to have to go back and re-examine some older cases - namely, Barry Murphy's.

The coroner later confirms that the other man who died as a result of being drugged with scopolamine in a hotel bathroom, the same hotel as Barry's, was Gavin Maclean: one of the other two men, who accompanied Barry in the drugging and sexual assaults of young men. Including Liam Bower.

Olivia is furious that the force missed the link between two men, both found dead in their hotel rooms unexplainedly, in the same hotel, in the space of two weeks apart.

Liam's mother's continuing screams eventually lead him to angrily storm from his bedroom and into hers, as she lies there, drunk, grinning at his obviously now agitated expression. He starts to argue back with his mother who then, to stir him even more, makes an abhorrent comment about his sister Emily's abuse, and his.

Liam storms out of his mother's room and quickly walks downstairs to the kitchen and starts to wash the pile of dishes that have been left in the sink, banging cutlery together as he does so.

A plate slips from his hand and smashes on the floor beneath his feet. He stops.

Liam then removes a large plastic zip lock bag from the kitchen drawer beside him and returns upstairs towards his mother's room. Liam walks past his yellow jacket, as it hangs on the banister beside his mother's bedroom, and enters her room to find that she has now passed out, flat on her back, drunk.

Liam starts to climb over her, pinning her arms down to the bed as he does so. He then places the plastic bag over her head - and starts to suffocate her.

(FLASHBACK) Liam is sitting in Barry Murphy's hotel room, wearing a yellow jacket, and holding a black cap on his knees as Barry stumbles, confused and drugged, backwards on to the bed behind him. Barry then meets the same grim fate as Liam's mother. He is suffocated to death, unable to fight back.

(FLASHBACK) We see Gavin Maclean enter Barry's hotel room. Suddenly from nowhere, Liam plunges a syringe into Gavin's thigh. The scene then cuts to Gavin, naked in a bath, unable to speak or move as Liam slowly starts to pour boiling water from a kettle onto his body.

(FLASHBACK) Liam watches from a distance, as Ethan Paige runs from Alexander's apartment building, his hand clutching his bloody nose. Next, we see Liam messaging Ethan on Grindr – with Ethan quickly replying to arrange a meet.

(FLASHBACK) Ethan's bedroom is dark. Photos of Ethan and his friends line the walls. A dressing table mirror shows the reflection of Ethan's unmade bed.

At first - Liam is hard to distinguish, against the room's pitch black darkness. He sits on the bed. Silent. Turning a small house key in his hand. Round, and around.

(FLASHBACK) Liam removes Ethan's housekey from his coat in the Bowling Alley cloakroom.

The episode concludes with grieving widow Alannah Banks, as she lies asleep in her dimly lit living room, her daughter in a travel cot beside her. She is watching her and Alexander's wedding video from the previous year. It streams, lighting up the darkened room on the large expensive television in front of her.

The scene is joyous, and guests clap and cheer on, as both Alannah and Alexander begin to cut their wedding cake, smiling lovingly at one another.

In the background, behind the happy couple, and near to the bar of the busy function suite stands Liam Bower. He stares coldly at the couple, with his gaze firmly affixed on Alexander Banks.

EPISODE FOUR

(FLASHBACK) It is over a year earlier; a nervous looking Liam Bower rings the intercom of Alexander Banks apartment for the first time. Alex opens the door, and within minutes they are both having sex. Afterwards, it's quite clear that Alex's charm has won Liam over straight away, as Liam asks if they can both see each other again. Alex clearly explains that he has a partner, but he'd like to see Liam again, only for sex of course.

Liam explains how he had always liked Alexander from the first time he came into the function suite where he worked for one of Alexander's charity events. Unknown to Liam at the time, Alexander in fact owned that function suite making him, effectively, his boss.

(PRESENT) The attending doctor at Liam Bower's home confirms that his mother has died as a result of her alcoholism, prescription drug abuse and failing health matters. He sees no reasonable meaning to carry out an inquest into her death. *Liam breathes a quiet sneer of relief.*

Olivia discovers that the killer of Alexander Banks was at the scene of his death three days prior to Ethan's arrival. And that the same man was also at the hotel on the nights when both Barry Murphy and Gavin Maclean died.

Ethan receives a call from Olivia to let him know that his side of the story checks out, but the call takes a more insidious tone when she reveals to Ethan that the person he was speaking to when he arranged to meet Alexander Banks was not Alexander at all - but his killer.

(FLASHBACK) Liam Bower is frantically pushing the buzzer to Alexander's apartment building, with no response. Eventually he sneaks in as somebody leaves and heads up to Alex's front door. He knocks continually until the door opens, and another man leaves the apartment.

Liam, who is clearly upset, confronts Alexander and they both begin to argue. Liam clearly has another concept of his and Alexander's sexual relationship. Alex makes it quite clear to Liam, again, that he won't be leaving his girlfriend - and that he never was. Alexander then insists, sternly, that Liam should know they are not going out with each other, and that they're merely fucking each other. But then insists that it should stop, immediately.

Liam then makes a sniping comment about Alannah finding out who her husband to be *really* is; and Alex immediately turns nasty, a side that the viewer has seen once before, threatening Liam's job.

Ethan heads to work that night hoping to cheer himself up around his other co-workers. He ultimately makes the mistake of turning to alcohol during his shift – and hours later he re-downloads Grindr.

The door to Ethan's dark, empty apartment opens - and Liam Bower walks inside.

He steps around in the pitch dark, with the only light coming from the streetlights outside. He starts to pick objects up, opening drawers slowly, and rummaging through them. He then lies down on Ethan's unmade bed. He is messaging Ethan on Grindr from a blank profile, as the scene cuts to and from Ethan's work, and to Liam replying in his apartment.

It becomes apparent that Liam has sent several fake pictures, as Ethan eagerly replies.

Grant succumbs to his temptations once again, as he also talks to Liam on Grindr, who is now hiding under the guise of his escort profile. Grant responds to several 'tap' notifications completely unaware that the person he is talking to has broken into his ex-boyfriend's flat.

Liam faces Ethan's dressing table mirror in the darkened room, turning his phone flashlight on and off, casting an eerie shadow on his face in the reflection.

(FLASHBACK) It's the day of Alexander's wedding, and the reception is in full swing – guests are crowding around the happy couple as they both cut their cake. Liam can be seen in the background, as in the wedding video. He waits for a moment to approach Alexander, and when he eventually heads to the toilet, Liam follows.

At first Liam insists that they should both carry on their affair as they were before. Liam is desperate to have Alex back in his life, in any capacity. Alex refuses, and the discussion becomes heated to the point of Alex making a homophobic slur at Liam and becoming physical. It isn't long before Liam's work superior notices that he is arguing with the owner of the venue, and he is immediately sacked and dragged out by security staff. Alannah notices the commotion - but is none the wiser as to what exactly is going on.

Liam can be seen walking through the city centre; he is crying. His phone lights up with a Grindr notification.

It's from Barry.

(PRESENT) Grant's intercom sounds, and he opens his front door to reveal Liam smiling back at him. Grant acknowledges that he recognised him from his pictures, as he invites Liam into his home, shutting the door behind them.

Olivia, Rhys, and their colleagues agree that it appears they are now looking for a multiple murderer. Shortly after, Rhys tells Olivia that he is finally going out with Jack that night - and a sceptical Olivia tells him to be careful. She then heads straight to Chief Superintendent Spencer Cooke's office.

Spencer reminds Olivia, after reviewing the case, that officers (including herself) appear to have passed off the death of a man in suspicious circumstances, based purely on his 'lifestyle choices'. He makes a homophobic remark about upsetting 'those people' and tells her that the media would have a field day with it. Spencer tells Olivia she is to keep quiet about their 'fuck up' - and that he will find a way to keep it hidden.

Liam, now sat alone in his bedroom, starts to send the explicit photos that Ethan sent him to his friends and work via an anonymous social media profile. He then messages somebody on Grindr thanking them for lending him the money to buy his replacement passport. And that he is looking forward to coming to stay with them for a couple of days.

Ethan, hungover, suddenly receives several messages from family members, Josiah, and Iris, informing him that intimate and revealing pictures that he sent over Grindr drunk the night before, have been posted online and sent to his friends and family.

Sean, Grant's new boyfriend, returns home from his festive break. When Sean enters the house, everything seems normal, and music is playing quietly in the front room. Sean immediately notices two wine glasses on the kitchen counter, one is full and the other one nearly empty.

Sean walks into the lounge as he calls to his boyfriend above the sound of the music, and stumbles upon Grant's dead body. He has been suffocated, the bag still over his head, and he is sprawled across the large corner couch.

Aaron finally meets Ethan at his flat to try and reconcile their differences – and he explains that he wants to give it another go. Ethan wholeheartedly agrees. Ethan

breaks down and emotionally explains to Aaron everything that has happened since they split – including Alexander and the recent photographs.

Surprisingly, Aaron stops Ethan short of his explanation saying it's not something that is going to affect them going forward, and that they'll work through it.

Aaron explains to Ethan that they will discuss it in more detail tomorrow, as Aaron must go out for a friend's birthday, but that he will see Ethan at his work later. Ethan agrees, and leaves for work.

Olivia is stopped outside the station by colleague Peter, who asks her again if she would like to go for a drink. She agrees, but her acceptance is interrupted with a phone call informing her that there has been another murder.

We see Rhys on his date with Jack - the man he has previously explained to Olivia that he's has been trying to meet for a while. Rhys is talking across a dinner table, obviously flirting and with the sound of faint laughter from the person sat in front of him. It is then revealed that 'Jack' is in fact Liam Bower.

Ethan discovers during his shift that Grant has been murdered and news of his death spreads amongst mutual friends and colleagues. Ethan immediately leaves the bar, without saying anything to anyone. His manager, Iris, looks on, knowing exactly what has happened.

As Ethan leaves, forcing back his emotions as best he can, he rushes past Rhys and Liam as they are both buying drinks at the busy bar. Liam turns to watch him leave. And, as Ethan exits the bar, Aaron is seen in the background enjoying his night out with friends – oblivious to Ethan's upset. Liam looks at Aaron coldly.

Olivia is one of the first at the scene of Grant's death. Sean is hysterical, and she tries her best to calm him down beside another officer. After briefly inspecting the body, she notices a group photo of Grant and several others. Ethan's face has been partially covered by the magnet that is holding it on to the kitchen fridge door. Olivia, with her detective eye, moves the misplaced magnet from the photograph.

Ethan returns to his apartment, crying and immediately pouring himself a large glass of wine to calm his nerves.

Olivia asks Sean the relationship between Ethan and Grant, and then realises the connection between Ethan and the murders is larger than she first thought. She knows he is in danger.

Olivia notices that Grant's phone is still on the coffee table beside his body – and after a short moment of pause, she then directs the other officer in the house to move Sean out of the house and into the patrol car. Whilst this happens, and in an unprecedented move, realising it may cost more people's lives to wait for e-forensics, Olivia decides to unlock Grants phone herself *with his fingerprint*.

Olivia starts to look at Grant's dating app account, and personal photos. She then stumbles upon a photo in Grant's recent messages, a face she has seen before, Jack, the man that Rhys has been talking about. Except this isn't Jack, this is 'Hng4Rent'.

Olivia, now frantically searching for her own phone, forgets Ethan momentarily and scrambles to contact Rhys.

Ethan calls Aaron, but he fails to hear his phone ringing in the loud bar area. Ethan then explains that he's had some terrible news and would really like to see Aaron after he has finished his drinks, regardless of the time.

Then, Ethan ends the answer phone message by telling Aaron that he loves him, explaining in more detail how sorry he is for the way he has acted; but this is not revealed until the answer message is played at the end of episode five.

Aaron notices his missed call from Ethan, realising that he hasn't even seen him yet, having put that down to him being busy working; Aaron then asks a member of staff where Ethan is.

Liam watches on as Aaron speaks with staff at the busy bar – he is sitting at a table beside a captivated Rhys, who seems to be enjoying every minute of their now one-sided conversation.

As soon as Aaron discovers the terrible news about Grant, he quickly heads to the nearby toilet and away from the loud music, to try and return Ethan's call.

Rhys doesn't hear his phone ringing over the loud music, as 'Jack', seeing his opportunity, tells him that he's heading to the toilet and won't be long.

We see a hand reach to pick up a waiter's corkscrew from a tray on the busy nearby bar as it moves past.

Ethan starts running a bath, he has lit several candles around his flat to calm down. He is playing relaxing, mellow music, in the now dimly lit apartment. Ethan sits on his bed, as the bath water rises, looking through a scrapbook of old photos and memories from the times when he and Grant were both happy; either by themselves, on holidays, or with other mutual friends.

Ethan's phone rings as it lies on the bathroom shelf, with the sounds of the running water and background music drowning it out.

When Aaron gets into the toilet, he tries calling Ethan, who doesn't answer. As he stands in an open cubicle, his back turned, Liam suddenly appears behind him, and pushes him into the cubicle. He stabs him multiple times, kicking the door shut behind him. He then knocks Aaron out cold during the struggle, by smacking his head against the tiled cubicle wall.

Liam then exits the cubicle, and shuts the door behind him calmly, locking it with a coin from the outside.

Olivia finally gets through to Rhys, who is waiting for Liam to return from the toilet and sees her multiple missed calls. He realises something must be wrong and heads outside to hear her better.

Liam returns from the toilet and notices Rhys clutching his phone to his ear, quickly leaving the venue. The group of people sitting next to where they were both sat, shout Liam over to explain that his friend is just taking a quick call outside. Completely ignoring them, knowing something isn't right, Liam follows Rhys outside.

As people now begin to fill the busy toilet area, they impatiently shout for whoever is in the engaged toilet to "hurry up". That is, until a customer notices a pool of blood emerging from underneath the locked cubicle door.

Liam heads outside to discover Rhys on the phone to Olivia, who then manages to reveal 'Jack's' identity.

Liam approaches Rhys - and within seconds realises that the game is up, as his friendly expression chillingly turns into a cold vacant stare. The stare between them both, as revellers cavort in the background around them, lasts for several seconds.

The silence is broken by a woman screaming for staff because "somebody has been stabbed".

As Rhys's attention is suddenly drawn to the screaming woman, Liam unexpectedly head butts him, and he falls to the floor in front of several shocked bystanders.

Liam then immediately flees the scene, stealing a delivery drivers' bike as he does so.

Ethan, still oblivious to his missed phone calls, and who's phone has now run out of battery, steps into his bath, as Olivia still desperately tries to reach him. She then calls Rhys – and tells him she is going to drive over to Ethan's address, and that he should head there as well. But that it may take her a while due to being stuck in busy traffic after a football match.

Olivia then calls for officers to attend ahead of her getting there. However, the football match, and several other acts of disorder in the city are delaying the speed of the Police's response vehicles.

As Ethan tries to relax, submerging himself in the hot water, he is unaware of Liam Bower quietly letting himself into his apartment.

(FLASHBACK) Ethan recounts his feelings to counsellor Kate about his NSA addiction as he sits in her office. His voice then narrates over several cut scenes between both Olivia and Rhys as they both desperately scramble to get to him in time, and Liam, as he walks into Ethan's apartment, quietly closing the door behind him.

A slight noise breaks the silence, and wakes Ethan from his calm, relaxed state. He opens his eyes to discover Liam standing over him.

Before he has a chance to react, Liam pushes Ethan under the water. As he struggles, water is flying everywhere, until eventually, Ethan is still.

Olivia arrives at Ethan's apartment building, and races from her car to the main door; she frantically rings his intercom, and then every intercom, until she eventually manages to get inside the building.

As Liam discreetly steps on to a bus that has stopped outside of the main road adjacent to Ethan's address, several Police cars rush past, swerving around the corner as their sirens sound and their blue lights illuminate the dark street.

Ethan's apartment is unlocked, and Olivia steps inside - where she then discovers his body, still submerged beneath the water. Rhys, who has appeared from nowhere, pulls him out of the bath alongside a helping officer and tries to revive him, but Ethan is unresponsive.

EPISODE FIVE

Olivia sits on the concrete steps outside of Ethan's apartment building, her head in her hands as several forensic officers walk past and up towards Ethan's apartment.

Olivia feels a deep sense of regret that she didn't get there in time to save Ethan's life. More so, she feels that if she had have acted faster, then she could have potentially saved *other* people's lives. Or, at the very least, have picked up on the connection between Ethan, Liam, and the murders sooner than she did.

Rhys sits down next to her, explaining that she can't be held accountable for any aspect of these crimes - and that nobody can, other than Liam Bower himself. Rhys explains that there is a bigger picture to all of this and admits that homophobia within the force needs to be addressed. That, he implies, was the real culprit in not identifying Liam quicker - not Olivia's remarks during an investigation, which, he also reminds her, she both apologised and took accountability for.

Rhys then explains his experiences with internalised homophobia, as a gay man working within the force. Such as how he frequently catches wind of those 'unassuming' comments that some people make during conversations, oblivious that they're sitting next to a gay man themselves. And, that it makes him feel sick to his stomach, knowing that he is working alongside some people that think such things about his sexuality, and the person he can't help being.

Rhys tells Olivia that he can't stop thinking about what might have happened to him if she hadn't have managed to get through to him earlier at the bar. Would he have been Liam's next victim? Would Ethan still be alive?

He explains that never knowing that will probably haunt him for the rest of his life. And what has caused him to feel so uncomfortable regarding all of this, is that he trusted Liam. Or, Jack, as he knew him. Somebody he spoke to online for weeks, somebody he felt he knew, and somebody that seemed so *normal*.

Rhys suddenly recounts that shortly before he was knocked to the floor by Liam, that he heard a woman claiming that somebody had been attacked inside the bar.

The next morning Olivia wakes up in her hotel room, and as she makes her morning coffee she pulls her divorce papers out from the large bag work beside her, briefly pauses for a moment, and signs them.

Liam Bower stands across from a busy gated primary school playground; he is somewhat hidden between several large hedges that line the small, winding street the school is situated in. He scours across the playground from where he stands - searching as children play amongst each other, and then he spots her. His younger sister, Emily, happily chasing after one of her school friends across the school grounds as the school bell sounds for the children to head inside for registration.

Armed Police break into the Bower household to find that Liam appears to have left the property. Police also enter the bowling alley where Liam works, with its confused manager oblivious to what exactly is going on. Rhys calls for search records from Liam's workplace internet, as he did not have it at home – and he also calls for CCTV footage from Liam's most recent shifts.

When Olivia heads into the station that morning, she explains to her team that she needs to know *everything* there is to know about Liam Bower. And fast. Olivia wants to know where he has gone, and who he is staying with.

It is then revealed in a cut scene that Liam is staying with David Finch, who has happily agreed to help him out for a couple of days after his 'landlord evicted him'.

Neil, one of Olivia's colleagues, pulls up what they already have on Liam – explaining that his house has been turned, and that a team have already searched his workplace. Gill, who is also on the investigation, explains how Liam's mother had recently died as a result of her alcoholism - shortly after the arrest of her husband over child abuse charges concerning Liam's younger sister. She also mentions Liam's work history and that, according to the DWP, one of his former employers was a business owned by Alexander Banks.

Gill confirms that Liam's mother also had a string of ASBO and shoplifting offences to her name. Olivia presses for more information regarding Liam's mother's death, as Rhys returns to the station and confirms that there was no forced entry to Ethan's apartment. So, either Ethan let Liam inside the apartment himself, or he somehow obtained a key.

Rhys also breaks some bad news to Olivia, reminding her of the attack at the bar that he briefly mentioned last night; he informs her that there has now been another victim, Aaron Teller – Ethan's new boyfriend. Rhys explains that Aaron is still alive, despite being stabbed several times and left for dead by Liam, which has been confirmed via the bar's CCTV.

Olivia explains to the team that they are now dealing with a very dangerous and unpredictable individual – somebody who has clearly developed a thirst for causing

other people the same pain that he has endured throughout his life. She directs the team with certain tasks moving forward, as they try to catch Liam for good.

Rhys attends Josiah's home, who still has no idea of Ethan's murder, as he explains of his worry of not being able to reach him since the night before.

Olivia also visits Alannah Banks to ask her more questions concerning her husband's death - unaware of whether she knows that his killer was an ex-employee. It is here that Alannah recounts her memory being jogged regarding her wedding day reception, as a member of staff was thrown out of the venue by security staff.

Olivia reveals to Alannah that her husband's mobile phone records have disclosed that Liam and Alexander were in frequent contact shortly before her wedding day – and that she suspects Alexander was not just having an affair with other men, but also Liam Bower.

Olivia and Alannah share a moment of mutual understanding when they recount their experiences surrounding their recent marriage betrayals and the pain of their partners' infidelity.

Josiah, devastated by the death of his closest friend, tells Rhys after learning there was no forced entry, that Ethan had suddenly misplaced his apartment keys several days ago after a bowling date. As soon as Rhys informs Olivia of this, they conclude that Liam must have somehow taken Ethan's keys and made a copy of them.

Rhys explains to Olivia that he is waiting on search history and other IP information from the bowling alley ISP.

The media are in a frenzy – and now reports are surfacing that an extremely volatile, gay serial killer is on the run in Liverpool. They know that five men are now dead - and that one is also critically ill in hospital, following an unprovoked bar attack.

To make matters even more complicated, the media are also making allegations that a Police officer who is working on the Liam Bower case was also colluding intimately with him, unaware that Liam was in fact the Grindr killer they were looking for.

Spencer Cooke calls Olivia and Rhys into his office as he begins to delve into the media mess that has become associated with the Bower case. His office door may be shut over, but everyone else in the office can hear his ranting.

As Spencer explains that he will “hang the officer out to dry” that was “stupid enough” to become involved with this “murdering Queer”, Rhys interrupts him immediately.

Rhys tells him of how he was duped into meeting Liam, or rather Jack, and that they most certainly weren't sexually acquainted – and that he doesn't like the tone in which Spencer is taking towards his sexuality.

Spencer, backing down, plays off his homophobic comments as Olivia stops his pitiful excuses dead in their tracks.

She then proceeds to tell her boss that if anyone should be hung out to dry, *it should be him*.

Olivia expresses that Spencer can threaten her position all he wants, but she will be making a complaint to the IOPC (independent office for Police conduct) herself when the case is over. She also states that the way in which the force collates information regarding crimes such as Bower's, or crimes concerning gay men's lifestyles in general, needs to change, as well as existing attitudes of prejudice, especially his, within the force.

Olivia then explains how her attitude was quickly corrected by Rhys himself, and that she is thankful for him educating her in not tarring all gay men with the same brush – and that Spencer should really adopt the same principles.

Spencer, who is now lost for words as he sits at his desk, watches on as Olivia excuses both herself and Officer Denham, as they now have an important press conference to hold.

The coroner, who Olivia met briefly during Alexander's inquest, rings her to explain that as Liam's mother had not yet been buried, examining her body was straightforward. She confirms that Sarah Bower's corpse shows signs that are commonly associated with asphyxiation.

Later that morning, at the busy press conference, Rhys and Olivia confirm the further deaths of Grant and Ethan, as well as Aaron's violent attack. Rhys acknowledges reports regarding himself and Liam Bower's involvement, setting the record straight.

Olivia then explains to the media, and the people watching at home, who they are looking for. She produces a photograph of Liam, adding that he may not be going by his real name and that he has used alias names of either Jack, or Michael, posing as a gay escort in the past.

She then reveals, as several people in the conference room gasp, that Liam is now a suspect for his own mother's murder.

Liam half listens to David Finch as he shouts over to him from his back kitchen; Liam's attention is fixed to his photograph as it appears on the TV screen in front of him. Liam immediately moves over to the television and fumbles to quickly find the buttons to change the channel, as David walks back inside with some food that he's prepared for them both.

Once David has placed the food on the table Liam cheekily asks if he has any condiments. David sighs laughably and returns to the kitchen as Liam turns his stare to the food and drink placed on the table directly next to him.

As Rhys and Olivia leave the conference room, Neil approaches them with something that may be of interest to them both. He explains that the team have recovered the internet history from Liam's workplace computer and ISP, which includes access to several escort websites, online sex personals and something rather unexpected. Liam

has bought two fake passports on the dark web. One for him, one for his younger sister.

Liam returns to the guest bedroom that he is staying in, and quickly pulls out a yellow bag pack from under the bed, throwing more clothes into it and pulling out a wallet from his back pocket - it is David Finch's. He then removes a passport from the bag and opens it; the photograph is clearly Liam's, but the name is not. He then pulls out another passport, and this time his sister's face is where another person's photograph should be.

Throwing his bag over his shoulder, Liam shouts to an unexpected David that he is heading out for a while. David asks when he will be back, but Liam does not reply, shutting the front door behind him.

Olivia and Rhys rush towards the patrol car as Rhys radios Gill in the office. They ask to confirm the school that Liam's sister attends; Gill advises them to give her ten minutes while she searches for them. Olivia then screams back over the radio, *that they don't have ten minutes*, telling Gill that she needs to ring Emily Bower's school immediately and tell them not to let any of the children leave. Olivia looks over at her watch – it's 3.15pm.

Liam approaches the primary school, carefully walking down the winding street that approaches it, trying his best to blend in amongst the sea of waiting parents at the school gates. He watches on as children start to run from the school building and out into the grounds. Watching tentatively, his eyes flicking from child to child, he spots Emily.

Liam observes the crowds of parents and guardians to see who is picking Emily up as he turns the small knife in his palm around by its handle, half hidden inside his hoodie pocket.

Olivia and Rhys get the radio call through from Gill – Holy Trinity primary school, Lonsdale Road. Rhys turns the sirens on, and immediately speeds off.

Liam watches, as Emily darts around the playground, stopping to playfully wave at her guardian through the diamond shaped fencing. Liam then slowly starts to walk towards the guardian, pulling the knife from out of his pocket and under his sleeve.

Suddenly, a teacher runs out into the busy playground, whilst another quickly runs to shut the gates, pulling both a parent and child back into the school grounds as she does so. She warns the confused parents standing on the other side that there is a reported security issue, and that the Police will soon be attending.

Within ear shot, Liam stops, pulling the knife back into his pocket as a Police car screeches to a halt on the other side of the road. Olivia and Rhys both get out of the car, and Liam quickly turns on his heel. His face seething with anger, he heads towards a secluded path at the foot of the school grounds.

Olivia, out of the corner of her eye, notices the bright yellow coat disappearing into the overgrowth surrounding the pathway several yards ahead of her. She suddenly bolts

forwards in the direction that Liam has just left in, shouting behind at Rhys to call for more backup.

Olivia runs into the small path, which is full of overgrown weeds and unkempt bushes, carefully searching from side to side, as she frantically searches for Liam, who may potentially be hiding somewhere within them. As she emerges from the pathway, amongst a sea of busy afternoon high street shoppers, Olivia knows that if that was Liam, then she he has just lost him.

Back at the school, out of breath, Olivia informs Rhys and the shaken teachers that it looks as if they may have just stopped the abduction of Emily Bower in the nick of time. Rhys follows Olivia back to the car, and they both immediately set off back to the station.

Liam walks quickly through the streets and emerges into Sefton Park as he heads back to David's apartment. He is furious. Furious knowing, that now, he will never get another chance to take Emily with him again. And all because of that *bitch* Police officer.

In the station car park Peter approaches Olivia, after being previously interrupted by the news of Grant's death. He then explains to Olivia that he really likes her, and that if she doesn't like him, she should be more honest and just say so.

Olivia then asks for Peter to come inside the patrol car as she doesn't want to discuss her response around other people.

Liam walks into David's flat and then heads straight into the kitchen to get himself a drink. As he does so, David quietly follows him into the kitchen, stopping a short distance behind where Liam is stood.

David asks Liam calmly if he has seen his wallet. His tone of voice, though, suggests that he knows he has his wallet, and would very much appreciate it if he gave it him back. Liam says nothing.

Olivia, for the first time since finding out about her HIV status, explains to Peter what happened to her, giving cause for her lack of enthusiasm when asked out by him.

Peter seems silent, and Olivia can't decide on whether he's shocked or confused by what she has just told him. He then looks up to Olivia and explains that he can't understand why on earth she would think he would see that as a reason to not go anywhere near her.

Peter then reveals that his feelings for Olivia are non-negotiable, and that he has liked her for years; and that some disease that means absolutely nothing to him will most certainly never change his feelings for her. Then, unexpectedly, Olivia and Peter both kiss.

David explains to Liam that he doesn't know what sort of trouble he is in, but that he wants no part in it. He just wants his key, his wallet – and for Liam to collect his stuff and leave. David tells Liam that he doesn't want the money back for his passport.

Liam, still saying nothing, looks down at his hands that are placed on the kitchen counter as various cooking utensils are still scattered amongst the worktop from David's cooking earlier.

Liam quietly reaches for a tenderiser, as David, now raising his voice tells Liam to get out of his house. And, as he does so, Liam quickly turns and hits him across the head. And again, and again. Until David is lying on the kitchen floor in a pool of blood. Liam then kicks him. And again. Until he is frantically beating an unconscious David as he lies helpless on the floor. Liam reaches for his nearby backpack and pulls out a large, clear, plastic bag.

Gill knocks on Olivia's car window, and then awkwardly apologises for interrupting her and Peter's brief embrace. Gill tells Olivia to come back into the office as there have been some leads on the case. Back in the office, Gill and Neil confirm that they know who purchased passports for Liam – the card used was in the name of David Finch.

Neil also adds that they have also just had an anonymous tip off from a concerned neighbour, who thinks that they may have seen Liam going into a nearby address.

Olivia directs Rhys to go to the tip off address with another officer, knowing it will probably lead to nothing, as they almost always never do. She will go to David Finch's address herself, as she already knows exactly what's happened here. A case of the vulnerable and naive 'sugar daddy' being taken advantage of, yet again.

She also admits, after her last encounter with him, that she also owes him an apology.

Looking out from David Finch's bedroom window, Olivia's car comes into sight below as she parks outside of the large gates that separate David's building from the park directly opposite.

The apartment intercom sounds as Olivia calls from the gate - there is no answer. Realising that the gate is open anyway, Olivia walks through the grounds towards David's apartment door, which she notices has been left slightly ajar.

Rhys pulls up with another officer outside of the address that they have had a tip off over. After knocking at the door several times, an elderly woman answers the door. Rhys looks across at his colleague, puzzled.

As Olivia steps inside the apartment, she already knows that something is very wrong. She calls out to David, but there is no answer. Slowly, she starts to investigate the ground floor of the property until she reaches the kitchen, and almost loses her footing in the small pool of blood at her feet.

She immediately radios through to Rhys, as his radio lies unattended on the passenger seat of the empty patrol car.

Moving up the stairs cautiously, Olivia shouts out again to David – no answer. It is not until she reaches the landing that she notices David's legs sprawled across his bed.

Olivia moves further forward, checking the empty guest bedroom to her left, and moving further along the landing until the body on the bed comes into full sight.

David's body is sprawled, fully clothed, across the bed – there is blood all over the sheets and the bedroom carpet. His head is covered, like Liam's other victims, with a clear plastic bag. His face appears to have been badly beaten, and the inside of the bag is mostly covered in blood from his injuries.

Olivia is nearly sick as she bolts from the room across the landing to the nearby toilet. She radios again, still no response.

Rhys returns to the patrol car, radioing the station as he does so. He confirms that the sighting was a hoax, and that the old woman who lived there had no idea what they were talking about.

Gill then informs Rhys that they have had another breakthrough regarding information from the app that hosts Liam's escort profile. They have received several messages exchanged between Liam and David Finch several days ago; and it seems that David invited Liam to stay with him, free of charge, after he explained his financial struggles concerning his mother's sudden death and his landlord 'evicting' him.

Rhys suddenly realises that Olivia has gone to Finch's address on her own and may possibly be in danger.

Olivia, almost grey with nausea, leans against the small toilet door frame beside her, her back turned away from David's lifeless body lying on the bloodstained bed across the hall.

She then grabs for her radio and calls in to the station to tell them that there has been another murder.

As Olivia confirms the details of David's death to another officer, behind her, the body on the bed slowly starts to sit upright.

There is a faint banging sound, coming from the utility cupboard beside where Olivia is standing – a kind of soft tapping. She looks closer. The door taps again, slightly moving as it does so.

The silence is suddenly broken, as Rhys's voice loudly comes through her radio, making Olivia jump out of her skin. He informs her that Liam has been staying at that address with David, to which she informs Rhys that she knows, and that they are too late - again.

The door softly taps, moving slightly forward. Olivia slowly braces her hand on the handle, her heart beating out of her chest, and quickly flings it open.

There she finds David Finch, half naked, covered in blood and lying in a heap on the floor in the utility cupboard with one leg extended out, his foot near to the door. He is badly injured, but still alive.

Liam, his face covered in David's blood, stands behind Olivia. He quickly pulls the plastic bag over her head.

There is a struggle as Olivia stumbles backwards, side to side, in a desperate attempt to free herself from Liam's strong grip. She can't breathe. In a moment of desperation, Olivia throws her legs up against the wall of the narrow landing and pushes herself backwards with all her strength; she sends both her and Liam flying over the wooden banister, that breaks to pieces under both of their weight, as they both tumble down the stairs and into the hallway below.

There is a moment of pause as both Olivia and Liam recover from the weight of their fall. Free from Liam's grasp, Olivia quickly removes the bag from her head, gasping for breath, only to be knocked back to the floor when Liam punches her in the head just before she can stand.

Liam then puts his full weight on Olivia, pinning her down, as he starts to strangle her barehanded. And it seems that all is lost, as Olivia, now turning blue, with the life drifting out of her eyes, slowly starts to fade away. He is too strong for her to fight off on her own.

A loud bang sounds. Suddenly Olivia can breathe as Liam's grip around her neck slowly starts to relax. He raises an arm to his now blood-soaked shoulder. Disturbingly unphased, Liam quickly returns his bloody hand towards Olivia's neck.

Another shot is fired, and Liam then falls to the floor - his blank, expressionless face landing beside Olivia's.

Rhys quickly runs across to Olivia and carefully pulls her up from the floor; she hugs him as he directs her slowly away from Liam's still body on the floor below them.

- *Several days pass...*

Olivia and Peter both sit in his car as it is parked outside of her sister's house. Peter asks if she is ready to make amends and tell her sister about her HIV status, and Olivia explains that she should have done it a long time ago as it would somewhat explain her erratic behaviour over the past year.

Olivia kisses Peter, smiles, and walks inside her sister's house. As she does so, she finds her sister sat down at her kitchen table – and Olivia sits down next to her and starts to talk.

Rhys stands across from the hospital bed where Aaron Teller is recovering from his injuries - he is still in pain and unable to move very much, but he is conscious and coherent.

After Rhys wraps up the remaining questions he has regarding the night of Aaron's attack, he confirms to him that Liam Bower, although critically injured by armed officers, is still alive. Aaron vents his anger at the news of Liam's survival, whilst Ethan, and all of Liam's other victims, aren't.

Aaron explains to Rhys that he will never forgive himself for not hearing Ethan's phone calls the night he died. Because if he had, then Ethan could have potentially still been alive.

Rhys recounts a similar conversation with Olivia – and tells Aaron that the only person to blame in all of this is Liam Bower. And that it's a blessing in disguise he *isn't* dead – because now he will have to pay for his sick crimes for the rest of his life.

Rhys thanks Aaron for his co-operation in the investigation, and once more gives him his deepest sympathies as he leaves.

Aaron now sits alone in his hospital bed and sighs deeply as he is left alone once again, with nothing other than his thoughts for company.

His phone pings.

Aaron reaches over slowly, picking his mobile phone up from the table next to his bed – he opens his messages and receives an unopened voicemail message notification.

He holds the phone to his ear as it rings through to his voicemail – and Aaron's heart seems to stop. He hears Ethan's troubled voice.

Aaron's eyes fill with tears as he hears Ethan asking for him to come and stay with him after he has finished his night out with his friends.

And he wants him to know that he loves him...

VISUAL TONE & CINEMATOGRAPHY

"No Strings Attached" will be set in present-day Liverpool, with all locations situated closely within the city's perimeter.

The City of Liverpool is widely used by film and television studios around the world to provide alternative locations for cities ranging from those such as New York or London.

Quite recently, Liverpool was used to shoot Gotham City scenes in '*The Batman*' from Director Matt Reeves; and Liverpool also posed as a shooting location for scenes depicting both central London and downtown New York City in Russell T. Davies' hit Queer series '*It's a Sin*'.

One significant reason for choosing Liverpool, aside from its beautiful architecture and scenery, stems from the noticeable lack of any substantial Queer programming to date (to the level of streaming television series and film) associated with the city.

The visual tone from the city's haunting Georgian architecture, combined with the rest of its vibrant city surroundings and large leafy areas of respite will undoubtedly prove effective in casting the correct and precise visual tone to the story, that will easily shape the story nearly as much as the carefully crafted narrative.

All the characters' locations have been pre-conceived prior to writing and are each based on real locations and architecture, ensuring that the atmosphere created within the screenplay and throughout the narrative is as accurate as possible: Ethan's new apartment, Olivia's office at Police Headquarters, Liam's run-down terraced house and even the deserted bowling alley he works in.

The tone of the cinematography, although intended for broadcast on streaming platforms as a standalone series, should resemble the cinematic tone of a film. With letter box presentation and slightly desaturated colour correction, the tone of the story will become noticeable before a word has been spoken.

AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHIC & MARKET

"No Strings Attached" is a series that will cater to the themes and ideals enjoyed by, and related to most, by those specifically within the age range of 25-40.

The storytelling factors in the dangers posed through the careless daily use of modern technology, therefore, only those who are familiar with such technology, and the dating apps that feature in the series, would likely relate in full to most of the storyline.

So, although the series can still be relatable to most of those over the age of 18, those in the 25-40 bracket will identify with it the most.

The series has a primary and distinct LGBT+ focus, and its storyline and narrative closely follow some of the life experiences and relationship issues faced by those who specifically identify within the LGBT+ community. This provides another relatable demographic and market audience that the series will also fall closely within.

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THE MAIN CHARACTERS

ETHAN PAIGE is thirty-four-years-old, gay, and recently single. Despite his initial concerns that he is 'over the hill', his intriguing and unconventionally attractive looks, and enviable physique, beg to differ. When he is plunged into the unknown foray of online dating in his search to find another partner, it turns out he is more sought after than he first thought.

He is friendly, and outgoing – but that outgoingness is reserved only for those that he is acquainted with. Otherwise, Ethan is quite shy around those he is unfamiliar with. His shyness, in fact, stems from a fear that he has held close to him since his childhood – a fear of not fitting in, not being liked, being rejected.

Ethan grew up in the particularly well-to-do suburb of Formby, within the outer regions of the City of Liverpool, with both of his parents, and his older brother.

Growing up in this particular area of Liverpool resulted in Ethan's voice escaping some of the more 'harsh' and 'raspier' tones usually associated with a lot of Liverpool accents.

Formby was a small town, not tiny, but small enough. It was the sort of town where everyone knew everybody's business; and where everybody had no problems discussing everybody's business either. And, if ever the opportunity to reflect on Ethan's childhood arose, he would actively voice his dislike of how he was forced by adolescence to grow up there throughout the 1990s.

Yes, he was aware that he was an extremely privileged young man to be able to grow up in such a safe, leafy, and idyllic suburb. Yet, the constant feeling of being an outsider, or even an imposter within his community, married with being dubbed 'the only gay in the village' by taunting school children during the end of his school years, really didn't help Ethan's mental health much as a teenager.

Such effects, and the insecurities they created within Ethan's mind, also followed him into adulthood, leaving him with the consistent fear of rejection, a stinging sense of unworthiness - and the longing need to be loved.

His hair is dark blonde (somewhat ash in colour), and it's cut as short as possible – otherwise it just gets in the way. He doesn't have the time to fiddle around with his hair anymore, like he used to when he was in his twenties. In the days when he used to make more of a substantial effort with his appearance, even if it were just to go to Tesco.

Ethan has worked as an Assistant Manager at a busy gay bar in Liverpool City Centre for a number of years now. More recently, studying for his English undergrad at the same time, with the future goal in mind of a new career away from the hospitality industry.

He had frantically started a desperate attempt to better himself, after realising on the eve of his pivotal milestone thirtieth birthday, that he was ageing fast; and still working in an industry that he had no intention of being in by the time he was forty.

It was shortly after his 'hangover epiphany' a day later that he decided to enrol in university again, hopeful that he'd make a better job of it this time round, more than he had done during his first attempt that lasted all of four months straight after he'd finished his A Levels.

Then Grant came along.

Ethan was narrowly in his thirties, and only recently just out of his last relationship, although, admittedly, they had met almost a year before this. Grant often frequented the bar Ethan worked in and didn't hesitate in making his affections clearly known.

Ethan was swept off his feet, and that was all that mattered at the time.

They had four great years together, but it was the last two that really became an emotional struggle; and it was a struggle that had a further detrimental and negative impact on both Ethan's personality and his actions.

Shortly before their relationship ended, a shocking revelation from Ethan's close friend Josiah came to light - that Grant had been cheating on him, and meeting people on gay dating app Grindr.

Josiah only knew this, because by some strange act of fate, Grant sent explicit photographs to his blank Grindr profile; along with several prompts to visit him that evening, whilst Ethan was in work.

Grant didn't deny it and when confronted by Ethan, finally admitted that he had been sleeping with other people for the last two years of their relationship; and it was this monumental break in trust that signified the loveless, bitter end to their romance.

Now, Ethan's painful and costly separation from his cheating partner has left him unhappy, alone, and broke. And his internalised struggles with self-doubt, repressed anger, and the repeated violation of the trust he has placed in others each manifest themselves within Ethan's recent struggles - as he finds himself slipping into a dark and troubling addiction to NSA sex with strangers.

Ethan's troubles are further exacerbated when he discovers that not only was Grant cheating on him with numerous people, but he was also having an affair. An affair with a man, who Grant has now moved into the home they once both shared, two months later.

And so, an unhealthy, dangerous and life changing obsession with online dating apps begins; and the true extent of Ethan's personal demons are shown when he eventually meets Aaron.

Soon, Ethan realises that the resentment he bares for those who have wronged him, has unearthed a darker side to his personality, shaping him into the sort of person he despises the most, without him even realising it.

...

OLIVIA HARTFORD, forty-two, is headstrong, proud – and undoubtedly committed to her work as a DI for Merseyside Police, serious crime division.

Growing up in Greater Manchester, she has a Mancunian accent, although soft in its pronunciation - almost sounding as if she were from Yorkshire.

Olivia had a happy childhood, and a solid, disciplined upbringing; she was lucky to have had two very supportive and encouraging parents – especially concerning her chosen career path. Coincidentally, both of her parents were in the Police force themselves - so they obviously took great pride in their daughter's achievements, as she essentially followed in their footsteps.

Olivia's younger sister, Hannah, then flipped the table of sibling adoration on its head, when she gave their parents their first grandchild – and two years later, a second.

This brought up several conversations between Olivia and her parents, regarding when she and husband **CRAIG** would *finally* settle down with a family of their own.

And, all the while, to avoid quashing her parents hope, or worse even, disappointing them, Olivia kept the painful secret to herself, that both she and her husband were unable to naturally conceive together.

Olivia stands at 5'7 tall; she is slim, about a size ten. She's lucky, as she naturally maintains her figure through being on the job every day. To the point where nutrition becomes subsidised with coffee over enduring, unsociable shift patterns.

Her hair is just past her lower ear in length – dark brown, straight, and with a few stray greys. She doesn't have the time to dye her hair. In fact, she barely has much time to do anything at all.

Her personality is very cut and dry. On the one hand she's friendly, nice to talk to - and on the flip side she can be short, stern, and authoritative. With the colder side to her personality usually appearing when she is in 'detective inspector' mode. Although lately, the colder side to her personality is surfacing far too often, and usually directed towards the wrong people.

When Olivia looks at somebody for the first time, her eyes narrow as she quietly assesses every inch, and every visible detail of that person. It's just a natural habit she has developed from her work, along with never being able to trust anyone - anyone completely, anyway. That being said, she is a talented actress. An actress in the sense of being able to hold a strong poker face concerning the questioning of suspects, being sure to never give anything away – whether somebody is under caution or not.

Even if you were the victim of a crime, Olivia would hang fire on letting anything slip concerning the important details of any investigation. Knowledge is power, and she wouldn't give up that power to anyone.

She is particularly impatient, and as a result of this, frequently becomes annoyed by her peers - especially if they do not follow her way of thinking.

Olivia also adheres to a very strict schedule – and if that schedule is interrupted? Then she becomes frustrated, again, especially when concerning other colleagues. And a lot of her colleagues, if not the majority - unsurprisingly - dread working with her on any important cases for these exact reasons.

One evening, after an email notification catches Olivia's attention on husband Craig's open laptop screen, she discovers that her husband has been having multiple affairs online, with both men and women, during the height of their long and painful struggle with IVF.

She opens an email that leads her to discover several online dating site profiles, escort websites and gay dating sites.

Olivia immediately leaves him.

Her sister Hannah naively assures her that maybe they can 'work things out' – and if they don't? Olivia's years of a strict 'yoga four times a week' routine, will pay off if she finds herself officially divorced, and 'back on the market'.

Olivia and Craig's separation, however, soon turns out to not be as straightforward as she would have first liked; and now she must learn to live with the grief of a shocking and unexpected HIV diagnosis, and an overwhelming sense of resentment for the man to blame.

Her resentment towards the predicament she has found herself in haemorrhages uncontrollably into her work-life, clouding her professional judgement with her personal, biased opinions.

And in the midst of these revelations, Olivia finds herself faced with a killer who is preying on gay men in Liverpool; and unearths a substantial trail of Police misconduct that follows him.

...

LIAM BOWER may only be twenty-three-years old. Yet on first impressions, he always appears far older than he actually is.

This is mostly down to his masculine features; and how he boasts the dense, rugged facial hair of a man who is easily in his thirties. His broad, strong frame supports his strikingly handsome features.

Liam doesn't see his naturally lean, muscular physique as something remotely sexual himself, as he's mostly detached from those kind of thoughts, for the most part anyway.

But he knows that other men find it attractive. Most of the men who use apps like Grindr, for instance, are like moth to a flame when it comes to physiques like his – especially the older ones.

During Liam's school years and early childhood, his personality managed to retain some element of hope and kindness within it; irrespective of the horrors that he faced, and still faced as a young adult, at the hands of his two abusive parents.

He exuberated this caring side to his personality, especially concerning his younger sister **EMILY** – although, mostly only to her. Liam wasn't allowed to have any friends to share his love with, you see - he didn't deserve them. At least that's what his mother, Sarah, had always told him.

The last of Liam's caring traits were kept alive mostly through his imagination and the hope he held out for a better life. A better life for him and Emily. And Liam's hope was something that manifested itself through his reading of countless stories from the books that he stole from his local library and his school.

As a child he would find himself imagining a world alike to the stories he read, no matter how exaggerated, where he would be able to leave his mother and stepfather – and take himself and Emily away from their life of poverty and abuse forever.

However, there is only so much hope that one person can have, before it becomes starkly obvious that there is nothing to hold out hope for anymore.

And, in the end, Liam's hope ran out.

As he eventually reached his teens, this hope then soured – and what was once bright became dark. Feelings of jealousy, anger – so much anger, replaced the last remaining light inside of him.

Liam's reading, and his imagination, diverted towards a keen interest in darker stories, such as horror - and in particular, accounts of real crimes. The knowledge of these crimes, and the people who committed them, were soon something that he obsessed over.

Now, Liam's personality is cold and expressionless, and he never smiles anymore – unless he needs to of course. Liam's face, with the right amount of effort, produces the most charming smile.

A smile that can win people over in seconds.

He knows that he doesn't feel much in terms of emotion, namely, happiness. He has become null to it, or maybe he was just always devoid of it, he really can't remember.

And, when Liam watches the actions and behaviour of those around him, he instinctively knows that he is very different from other people.

So, to fit in with those people (take his work colleagues for example), should he ever be required to, and not arouse any suspicion, he just pretends to laugh along, smile with, and engage in any conversation that may be thrown in his direction.

Yet, if truth be told, he really can't fucking stand doing it.

That's one emotion he knows he possesses – anger, hate. The rest are just vacuous to him.

That feeling he gets when he kills though - that's his personal happiness. The only time he has ever felt truly content.

And he wants to feel more contentment.

Liam is articulate, and sounds very intelligent – and he is, despite his lack of academic achievements on paper. And, despite officially lacking these achievements, he acts as if he has them anyway.

He is an outright narcissist by fault of his abusive nurture, except when it comes to his mother and stepfather – as their boundaries can *never* be pushed.

Liam's narcissistic traits are slow burning, he enjoys that more. It's no fun going straight in for the kill, after all, it hurts far more when you trust the person that hurts you.

He enjoys the challenge of getting inside somebody's head and making them crack, just like his mother did to him.

Liam's mother saw to it that every day, throughout all of his childhood and adult life, he was reminded of just how worthless and useless he was.

And all of this because, as Liam finally figured out when he was old enough to do so, he looked exactly like the man who left her and ruined her life. The man that left her pregnant and alone, the man who took away her dreams, her opportunities, her life.

Yes, his mother reminded him of this every day – and her waste of space husband, Phil, followed suit whenever it pleased him too.

Liam can't really remember if he has ever felt love. If he has ever felt wanted, or even needed. The only sentiment of affection he's ever bared for another person is for his sister Emily.

But now that she's been taken away from him as well, all of the pain that Liam has felt throughout his tragic life, his violent and abhorrent upbringing, his mother and stepfather's vile abuse, has left him with an uncontrollable want. An urge. A strong and malevolent desire to inflict pain. To murder.

To kill those who have wronged him, and to make other people just like them, *suffer* the same fate.

To *suffer* like *he* has.

...

THE OTHER CHARACTERS

RHYS DENHAM has only recently been promoted to Detective Inspector.

He had only joined the Police force to become a detective, as that was what he had always sought after; and he has bitten his lip on more than several occasions around other colleagues' remarks about 'people like him'. He's broken up countless pub fights, had his jaw fractured, been spat at by smackheads. And all so he could finally get that heinous two-year Police Constable probation finally out of the way.

Still, twenty-six is good going for a detective – despite Rhys having to assure people of his credibility, day in, day out. As his slightly lanky, slender frame reads more submissive than authoritative. His naturally calm and quiet temperament, followed by his youthful and seemingly naive appearance, seems to give people the idea that they can walk all over him, although they are soon quickly, unexpectedly, and sharply reminded that they can't.

His recent pairing with DI Olivia Hartford, although having only been for a matter of weeks so far, he senses, will undoubtedly unearth the need for him to remind her of the same thing.

Rhys doesn't have many friends, and his job has always had to come first. Long hours, working weekends – each of these factors have eventually distanced him from most

of the acquaintances he did have. Leaving him with a slight sense of loneliness, and a yearning to eventually find that *special* someone.

And, for the first time in a long time, it seems to appear that he actually *has*.

ALEXANDER BANKS is a forty-one-year-old charming, polite, and very humble man – considering his wealth. It is his wealth, however, that has led him to develop a very smooth, relaxed, and effortlessly confident demeanour. Whilst his less than advantageous background has strongly implemented his courteousness and good manners.

Yes, Alexander is a very charming man, there's no question of that – and he knows exactly what he wants sexually, and exactly how to get it. And with both his handsome looks, and his kind and persuasive manner, he usually gets it.

There is an underlying selfishness to Alexander's personality, however, that cannot be ignored – no matter how charming he appears. His ability to continually cheat on his wife, Alannah, with countless men without giving it a second thought gives an indication that he does not feel guilt very easily.

Yes, he loves his wife – but not as much, or wholly as he should do. He knows he is gay – and has done for years, but he can't be an openly gay man and work in the industry he does and be anywhere near enough as successful. So, his sex life away from his wife is very private – yet very eventful. He has to be careful who and where he does this, however, to evade being caught, or even worse - blackmailed.

Alexander likes to have sex as and when he wants it, and when taking other people's emotions into account this can sometimes lead to it not being as quick and snappy as Alex would like.

And, on one fateful occasion, it is this impatient disregard for the feelings of others that seals Alexander's impending fate.

AARON TELLER has only just become part of the 'thirty club', and he still looks like he could pass for being in his mid-twenties. With strikingly green eyes, and a classically handsome face, his dark mass of fine hair, is ruffly styled into a messed up 'bead head' look.

Aaron wears his heart on his sleeve, that's for sure – and he has only ever had one serious relationship, that lasted eight years, and that had unfortunately ended quite bitterly several months ago.

Looking for love again was something that Aaron did not really intend on doing in a hurry. Exposing his heart more than others, generally meant that he was destined to have it broken more than others – which meant for Aaron, the healing process was a slow and steady one. So, relationships weren't really on his radar – until he met Ethan.

There was just something about him, something that made his heart skip a beat every time he looked at him.

Aaron chose to overlook seeing Ethan on Grindr frequently, after all, whatever he did on that was his business. He hadn't even had the guts to approach him yet.

Aaron was too polite for things such as dating apps, simply because, if anyone ever messaged him to 'try it on', or even just to speak, he would always have to finish a conversation out of politeness. Even if he didn't really find them very attractive in the slightest.

When Aaron finally did find the nerve to approach Ethan, he was left feeling disappointed by his response – he didn't appear to be very interested. Until he received a nice, and rather unexpected follow up to his "nice to see you last night" message.

And from that point on, Aaron already knew he wanted to be with Ethan for a very long time.

SARAH BOWER used to be happy – before he left.

Her young and once carefree personality, and her innocent, trusting nature were soured early on in her troubled life, through a close series of quite unfortunate encounters.

When her first boyfriend, Graham, had knocked her up aged fifteen, and then left when he couldn't handle the idea of being a father at sixteen, it devastated her. When her father, her idol, died through his destructive relationship with alcohol and its serious implications upon his mental and physical health, she was ruined. And, when her mother took her own life as she struggled to imagine a life without her beloved husband, Sarah then forged the same unhealthy relationship with alcohol that undoubtedly killed her father. And then came the fourth, final and very unfortunate encounter in Sarah's life: Phil Bower.

Years later, and now in her late forties, her debilitating relationship with alcohol, and her abusive relationship with now husband Phil has turned Sarah into a hateful, jealous, and disillusioned woman. A woman who is deluded by her alcoholism, and the jealousy and hatred she bares towards her children. A woman who cannot accept her life has ended up this way, through anything other than her own actions and lack of responsibility. Instead, she sees her children as nothing other than a hold back – the reason she became tied to her life of borderline poverty and an abusive, child molesting husband.

She reminds Liam of this every day – his eyes are Graham's, and so are almost all of his masculine features. 'Almost' in the sense that some of Sarah's features have bled into Liam's – otherwise he'd almost be a carbon copy replica of his estranged father.

Every day, since the day he was born, when Sarah looks into Liam's eyes, she sees the man that deserted her, the man that left her on her own.

And she hates him for it.

GRANT HART, at thirty-one, has a personality that is somewhat sleazy – yet conveyed in a manner that doesn't make him appear creepy, or unapproachable.

In fact, his personality struck now ex-partner Ethan Paige as being quite inciting, regrettably drawing him in, and, before he knew it - he was hooked.

Grant is good looking, but he knows it. And, to some degree, he thinks he is far better looking than he actually is. He has a naturally proud personality, in both his physical appearance, home life and career. Despite his proud attitude, Grant is always polite, and never rude or obnoxious to strangers. No matter how much better he thinks he is than them.

To put it bluntly – he’s a *cheater*, and *always has been*. He doesn’t look at monogamy with the concept of solely being with one partner for life, and he feels that sleeping with other people is a natural instinct that most men follow - regardless of their sexuality. And he doesn’t experience guilt in the same way that most people do – it doesn’t exactly make him feel amazed with himself; but nevertheless, he doesn’t exactly cry himself to sleep about it every night, either.

Grant’s substantial experience in cheating tendencies has meant that he has also developed quite a talent in covering his own tracks, should he ever need to do so. And only on the rarest of occasions has he been caught out red handed by his actions.

Occasions such as the time he accidentally messaged nude photos on Grindr to Ethan’s best friend, Josiah.

ALANNAH BANKS, now thirty-nine, although she would never actually disclose this free willingly, realises that her life would be considered enviable by most. An attractive, multi-millionaire property mogul husband, a beautiful baby daughter, and a lavish lifestyle, with weekly hair and spa appointments, undoubtedly make Alannah one of the most enviable housewives in Liverpool.

Born from Greek descent, with her father also a successful property developer, Alannah was pretty much born into money from day one. Yet despite that, her father’s intrinsic efforts to ensure both Alannah and her sister Kate knew the value of money growing up, was extremely high on his priority list.

Aside from the very expensive house, luxury car and weekly shopping order from Waitrose, Alannah really only invests her money on her appearance.

The nice designer clothes, and her immaculate make up – all of this she does to keep her husband interested. She knows what men are like, after all, and more or less all of them think of straying in the end. Not her **ALEXANDER** though – or at least, so she thinks.

SPENCER COOKE is a fifty-two-year-old, Chief Superintendent within Merseyside Police – one of the highest in his ranks.

He is borderline overweight, smokes – and doesn’t really give much of a second thought to his appearance. He has unruly, fine dark hair that combs into place under the partial build-up of grease. His uniform is always immaculate, however, and he always takes his appearance in work very seriously – even if his hair and skin upkeep isn’t always as well kept.

Spencer's personality is not the most likeable. For the press and any media he will always come across as a nice, friendly person who is both caring and attentive to his community's needs irrespective of whoever they are, and wherever they're from. He always pays close attention to all of the force's 'diversity' targets that he must follow and implement as best as he can – on the record, of course. Off the record, however, he couldn't be any more different.

Knowledge is unearthed by one of his 'busy-body' officers which appears to confirm his investigation teams have overlooked several suspicious deaths, dismissing them all on the grounds of the stereotyping of gay men's sexual behaviour.

Something that could spell serious trouble for his force's reputation if it got out.

Spencer won't let that happen, though. And he'll do whatever it takes and pull whatever strings he needs to pull. He'll even intimidate or manipulate any officers that he may need to – all in order to ensure that the truth about his force's mishaps are safely kept under wraps, and stay that way.

JOSIAH WORTH is a thirty-six-year-old legal assistant from Liverpool, and best friend of almost twenty years to **ETHAN PAIGE**.

They met aged fifteen, when they used to hit the gay bars of Liverpool every weekend - and seemed to ensure that a mere £20 got them a packet of cigarettes, a lot of alcohol, and a taxi home at the end of the night.

Gone are those days, however, and now Josiah frequently boasts being ten years sober, after developing quite a troublesome relationship with alcohol in his teens and early twenties.

Despite his professional occupation, Josiah is a free spirit – calm, relaxed and level-headed. A very spiritual person. Which is more than can be said for Ethan. Strangely though, their two personalities gel well together, although you may not at first expect them too.

Josiah's hair is blonde, slightly curly and he has a fairly toned body – mostly through his ten-year obsession with yoga, meditation and a strict plant based vegan diet.

Josiah almost mothers Ethan – and sometimes their relationship could be compared to a parent/naughty child scenario. Despite this, Josiah is never patronising, he just cares a great deal for Ethan's welfare. Which is why when Ethan's partner Grant had unknowingly sent him explicit photographs on Grindr, he knew he had to tell him immediately.

MALIK SUTCLIFFE was born into a life of crime. He lost both of his parents to drugs, with his mother dead from a heroin overdose when he was just five years old, and his father incarcerated for two life sentences; Malik spent his youth within the failed care system of Scotland, before escaping to London aged fifteen.

For the next five years he survived by selling his body, and drugs. This may have just kept him off the streets, but in the process of doing this, he learnt how to easily target the vulnerable and exploit them for his own gain.

DAVID FINCH is a retired civil servant, who lives alone after his partner of 26 years died two years previous, after a long struggle with terminal brain cancer.

David is lonely, has no friends now and struggles to meet people at his age. He never envisioned being alone at sixty with the same mind of his once thirty something self.

He speaks to people online for comfort, more than anything else. But, in an online world obsessed with youth culture, he finds it hard to fulfil his sexual desires against a sea of youth, taught bodies and good looks.

Which is why he sometimes has to offer payment for what he wants – and, if at first that doesn't completely offend the person, then it usually tends to do the trick.

KATE CONSTOVALOS is a fantastic grief counsellor, and she always had been, long before she officially graduated. Always such a good listener, as her sister **ALANNAH** would always say. Keeping neutral to any situation was her key – that way, she could rise above the finer details to see the bigger picture.

Family is everything to Kate. And being raised within a closely knit Greek family helped to shape these morals.

So, when the news of her brother-in-law's unexpected, violent death concerns one of her new clients Ethan Paige, Kate will break every confidentiality clause in the book to get her grieving sister the answers she needs.

PETER BEDFORD, forty, works as a member of Police staff within the serious crime unit of Merseyside Police. He has been single for years, with no children and only a handful of friends. Surprisingly, despite his handsome looks, he has not had much interest in the woman department since he split from his ex-wife eight years ago.

He doesn't quite know what it is about Olivia Hartford that draws him to her because she doesn't appear to be the calmest, or even most polite of people at times.

She has always been nice to him, though, and he has secretly admired her from afar for years. And when he caught wind of the news being passed around the office several weeks ago of her splitting from her husband, he has been building up the courage to approach her ever since.

PHIL BOWER, forty-three, is Liam's abusive, paedophile, stepfather; and it was his equally abusive home life growing up, that led him on to the same path of abusing his own children.

He works all day, six days a week – and has an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, like his wife Sarah. Years of coercive behaviour, gaslighting and physical abuse towards his wife, have left her in exactly the place he wants her to be – under his complete control.

His daughter, Emily, is too young to know otherwise. Liam however, well, he's too old now. Although a good slap every now and again keeps him well in check.

Phil knows that Sarah is fully aware of what he does. But he also knows, that without him, she'd be on the streets. So, Phil can do as he pleases – knowing that she will *never* challenge him.

HANNAH WRIGHT is Olivia's younger, blonder, and much prettier sibling. She has a good marriage, stable home and two beautiful young children. She is a stay-at-home mum – and takes immense pride in this being her one and only, truly joyous occupation.

Because of Hannah's world revolving around this almost domestic perfection, her views on Olivia's marriage troubles are somewhat out of touch with reality, and any advice she does think to give is often met with the opposite expected reaction.

Despite Hannah's somewhat clouded judgement, and not really knowing the whole story concerning her sister's break up, especially her recent HIV diagnosis, it is clear that Hannah means well, and that she undoubtedly cares for her sister's wellbeing.

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'NO STRINGS CULTURE'

The definition of the once simplified meaning for "No Strings Attached" has evolved within modern day culture as a result of both progressive technological advances and influences.

Geo-based location apps were notably first developed for mainstream use in 2008, erupting an entire business empire of *millions* of apps from various software developers, and tirelessly competing technology companies.

The creation of these mobile applications completely re-defined the world of online dating as we knew it.

And, in doing so, mobile apps broadened the horizons of online sexual promiscuity, notably amongst the LGBT+ community, by taking the static locations of our home computers, out of our homes, and right into our pockets.

'Grindr', an LGBT+ dating app that was developed in 2008 alongside the inception of millions of other competing applications, has grown to become one of the most widely used LGBT+ apps on the planet. 'Grindr's' popularity with its consumers over the past decade, and integration into their daily lives has led to it now being defined as a substantial part of gay culture *itself*.

'Grindr', and other geo-based location apps very much akin to it, have completely redefined the way in which we as a society date, communicate and interact; both mentally, physically, and of course, *sexually*.

With these redefining and evolutionary changes to our social interactions, also come the problematic changes to unwanted and *anti-social* interactions – such as criminal behaviour.

Popular dating apps, such as ‘Grindr’, ‘Tinder’ and ‘Bumble’ have all seen crimes associated with the compromising of their consumers’ personal safety ‘skyrocket’ over the past four years.

‘Grindr’, in particular, has seen an array of high-profile, serious crimes associated with its domain in recent years. With heinous crimes like those committed by the serial killer and rapist Stephen Port; and the disturbingly evil crimes committed by Daryll Rowe, who deliberately infected men he met online with HIV, later taunting them of their unknown and irreversible exposure to the virus.

“No Strings Attached” dares to tread where other television content will not. It explores the contentment in which some of us take our own personal safety for granted when using dating apps such as these. And shows the unsettling reality of exactly what can happen to us, when we think ‘it won’t happen to us’.

X. **“No Strings Attached” Screenplays – Episode 1-3**

EPISODE ONE

Written by

Andrew Pankhurst



EPISODE ONE

"NEVER TRUST A STRANGER"

FADE IN:

EXT. SMITHDOWN ROAD - NIGHT

MALIK SUTCLIFFE (21), young, scruffy looking - runs quickly along the narrow, littered pavement. Dodging, skirting the busy traffic. Cars beeping as he quickly reaches the other side.

He boards a departing bus, runs up the stairs, and falls across two seats as the vehicle jolts sharply forwards.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

DAVID FINCH (67), an older man, smartly dressed, with an enviable full head of grey hair - sits at his kitchen island.

He peers over his glasses and narrows his old blue eyes. He struggles to read the text displayed on the phone screen, now held almost directly in front of his face.

A MESSAGE ON THE GRINDR CHAT POP-UP READS:

"BE THERE IN FIVE."

David places the phone down on the kitchen table. He strokes his cat - who immediately jumps up onto the countertop beside him.

EXT. SEFTON PARK GATES - NIGHT

Malik pulls his coat hood up over his head, steps off the bus, and into the rain.

He runs towards the large, stone, park gates - and disappears into the darkened park grounds.

EXT. SEFTON PARK DRIVE - NIGHT

Malik slowly approaches the locked gate to the grounds of David's apartment.

He stops in his tracks.

A brief moment passes, and he then starts to walk back in the opposite direction of which he came.

Malik's phone suddenly 'pings' loudly in his pocket.

He stops and immediately pulls his phone out of his wet coat, and unlocks it.

He turns immediately on his heel and back towards the locked gates.

Malik then inputs a sequence of numbers into the keypad next to the gate - the buzzers sound, and he pushes his way inside the building grounds.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

OLIVIA HARTFORD (42) struggles her way through the large wooden door of the dimly lit vestibule. Some items of shopping fall to the floor, from the over-filled plastic carrier bag she is struggling to hold upright.

OLIVIA

Fuck.

Olivia sidesteps and rests the bag, balancing it on a nearby side table.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

Craig.

Her husband does not reply.

Olivia kicks off her work shoes, and takes off her navy blazer - hanging it over the end of the wooden bannister in front of her.

Olivia reaches a hand behind her head and unties her mid-length brown hair. It flops out over her shoulders, as she starts to climb the stairs.

The faint noise of raining shower water, creeps in from above.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

David stands in front of a small, slightly stained, oval mirror - and wets his fingers under the tap below.

He slides the long, stray grey hairs from his sideburns back behind his ears.

David adjusts his slightly tight shirt collar around his neck. He sharply tugs the v-neck grey jumper placed over it, slightly downward at the waist.

DAVID
Shush! Stop it now.

David picks up his cat, ARCHIE, as he winds in and out between his ankles MEOWING.

David places Archie in the spare room beside where he stands. He carefully shuts the door behind him.

There is a sudden loud knock at the front door.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Sorry, Arch.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Muffled meows sound faintly in the hallway, as David slowly walks towards the front door.

A muted figure ahead, is visible through the frosted glass in the door's upper partition.

He opens the door to reveal a hooded, rain-sodden Malik.

Malik seems hesitant, apprehensive to come through the doorway. Almost shaking.

David smiles softly. He slowly looks Malik up and down. Trying to assess what his body must look like under his clothing.

DAVID
It's ok I -

MALIK
- Ave yer got that money mate?

DAVID
Yes, of course. Sixty?
It's straight through here. Do come
in though, you're soaking lad.

Malik cautiously looks around from side to side. He enters through the apartment doorway and carefully closes the front door behind him.

David trails off, slowly, back towards the kitchen in search of his wallet.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Do be sure to wipe your feet
though, the grounds are far muddier
than they look.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

Olivia heads straight past the closed over bathroom door,
towards the bedroom. She unbuttons her white blouse as she
walks.

The muffled sound of raining shower water from behind the
bathroom door, fills the landing.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

David walks into his kitchen, arriving at the large,
prominent kitchen island.

He reaches for his wallet that lies beside several recipe
booklets, a bottle of wine, and two wine glasses.

David turns the sink tap on, and quickly rinses the glasses
underneath one by one.

DAVID

(RAISING VOICE)

Just go through to the sitting
room. On your left. I'll bring a
drink through if you want?
Sauvignon OK for you?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Malik still stands in the doorway. He cautiously inspects his
surroundings. Peering into the dimly lit sitting room beside
him. Still nervous.

David raises his voice over to Malik, as he starts to pour
two glasses of wine; politely disregarding his failure to
respond.

DAVID (O.S)

I mean - you don't look like much
of a wine drinker per say. But it's
either this or Ribena to be quite -

(PAUSE)

- Damn it.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

David's wallet falls to the kitchen floor, as he places the now half-empty wine bottle back onto the countertop. The tap, still running, slowly fills the sink basin behind him.

David bends down, lowering himself onto his knees slowly, with one hand clasped firmly to the side of the island's countertop.

He picks up the wallet, and slowly starts to pull himself back to his feet.

David grabs a small tray from the other side of where he is standing. He places the two wine glasses onto the tray, along with three crisp twenty-pound notes.

DAVID
(RAISING VOICE)
Sorry lad. Two ticks - just dropped something. Hope you're making yourself at home.

David finally stands back upright. He turns around, to turn off the running tap.

Suddenly, Malik hits David across the head, hard, with a hammer.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The stubborn, wooden drawer creaks loudly - as Olivia pulls out an old, oversized t-shirt from the chest of drawers beside her.

She pulls it over her head, removing her bra from underneath.

She slowly shuffles her work skirt down her thighs under the t-shirt, eventually kicking it off in the direction of her clothes basket with one foot.

A notification 'BEEP' sounds from the open laptop on the desk across the room. The laptop screen wakes, bright, with a new message notification.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

David falls to the floor.

He reaches out for the countertop to break his fall, his hand secures the tray of drinks instead.

The tray crashes down onto the side of the countertop. The glasses smash to pieces. Wine saturates the counter and the floor below.

David lies at Malik's feet, semi-unconscious. A small pool of blood starts to gather at the side of his head.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

'FAB SWINGERS'.

The message notification pop-up reads on the laptop screen.

Olivia pulls out the desk chair, and sits down. She swipes her finger across the trackpad and logs straight into the home screen.

With one click, the browser in the dock bar opens, and a webpage fills the screen - revealing a swingers website inbox.

Olivia starts to read the explicit messages, one by one, as the sound of running water from the bathroom finally stops.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Malik steps over David. He dodges the large shards of broken glass at his feet.

The kitchen sink is now overflowing. Water is pouring down the sides of the cupboards and onto the floor below.

Malik picks up the wet notes from the tray on the floor, along with David's wine-soaked wallet from the countertop beside him.

He quickly opens the wallet. He inspects its contents - staring coldly, skimming quickly through the notes, before clasp it firmly shut.

- OPENING CREDITS -

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Olivia pulls her car key from the ignition, plunging the quiet suburban driveway back into darkness and silence.

Almost momentarily, she flings open the car door and steps out on to the driveway; hugging an old, heavy box full of her belongings close to her chest.

Olivia kicks the driver's door of her Black Vauxhall Astra shut. The back seat of the car is laden with boxes, and several strewn items of clothing.

She is still wearing the oversized T-shirt, with the addition of some old, grey, jogging pants.

HANNAH WRIGHT (39), a pretty woman, with her perfectly coloured blonde tresses tied up neatly with a hair clamp - opens her front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The sound of the wailing kettle, as it reaches boiling point in the nearby kitchen - breaks the now awkward silence between both sisters.

Hannah sits across from Olivia, on the matching floral suite, her legs folded neatly beside her.

HANNAH

How long?

OLIVIA

I don't know. A year? At least.
Must have been.

HANNAH

Bastard.

OLIVIA

All the way through Dad's cancer.
All the way through -

Olivia halts. Hannah pursues.

HANNAH

- What? All the way through what?

Before Olivia can respond, Hannah quickly tilts her head in the direction of the open living room door.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

Michael. Cup of tea love.

Hannah turns back to face Olivia.

OLIVIA

Jesus Han.

HANNAH

What? I'm talking to you aren't I?
And, more to the point - all the
way through?

Olivia's eyes move to the floor.

OLIVIA

We tried I.V.F a couple of times.
Well. It didn't really materialise,
so.

Small tears begin to form in the corners of Hannah's eyes.
She unfolds her legs, and lowers them down onto the thick,
grey carpet.

HANNAH

I.V.F? Oh. Liv, I had no idea.

OLIVIA

Nobody did. It was, well, a hard
time. Really hard. Hard for both of
us.

HANNAH

That's still no excuse for what
he's done, Liv.

Olivia looks back up. She sighs in agreement.

MICHAEL

Tea's here.

MICHAEL WRIGHT (40), handsome, toned - walks into the living
room. He is wearing a casual T-shirt and jeans. Each garment
inadvertently flatters his athletic frame.

Michael carefully passes each sister their mug of freshly
made tea.

OLIVIA

Thank you, Mike.

Michael wanders back out of the room - he abstains from a
reply. The two sisters are alone in silence once more.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I feel like I've been married to a
complete stranger. The things he
was messaging those women. Men.
Those queers.

Hannah winces at Olivia.

HANNAH

Well, you need to get checked out.

OLIVIA

Oh -

HANNAH

- No, I'm sorry you do. Just to be on the safe side. I read about this new strain of gonorrhoea. It's being passed from pillar to post with some of those, you know.

Olivia raises her hand over her face. She exhales deeply.

OLIVIA

This isn't something I was really wanting to think about right now Han.

HANNAH

It doesn't matter. I'm booking you in with Doctor Stenner.

I mean, you don't really want to be hanging around GUM clinics, do you?

Hannah raises her eyebrows.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

At your age, anyway.

Olivia slowly winces her eyes half shut.

OLIVIA

(SIGHS)

Listen. If it's OK with you, I'm just going to go to bed. It's been a long day, and -

HANNAH

- Of course. Say no more. There's some fresh PJ's for you at the end of the bed.

(SHOUTS)

Michael. Olivia's coming to bed now, make sure the kids don't disturb her.

Olivia sits upright and straightens her crumpled t-shirt. She picks up her untouched, still hot, mug of tea. She replies to her sister, as she heads for the stairs.

OLIVIA

Thank you.

EXT. OUTSIDE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Friends ETHAN PAIGE (34), and JOSIAH WORTH (36), sit across from each other - amongst the sparse collection of plastic outdoor furniture. They each hold a takeaway coffee cup.

Ethan is handsome, fair. His light skin contrasts boldly against his dark, unkept hair. Josiah is well-groomed, smart, professional.

Ethan is fresh from a night shift. Josiah about to start his weekday nine-to-five.

JOSIAH

You need to get out of that job.

ETHAN

Oh god. Don't. Not now.

Josiah ups the volume.

JOSIAH

Seriously Ethan. You're thirty-four now. Not twenty-four.

Ethan leans back, sipping from his coffee.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

Besides, if you weren't working in that bar you wouldn't have to live in fear of bumping into that dickhead every other weekend.

Ethan's eyes slowly crawl across to meet Josiah. His coffee cup still upturned, pressed against his lips.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

And you'd be able to see your friends more at the weekend. You know. Like normal people.

Ethan returns his coffee cup to the table.

ETHAN

Do you know he's moved him in?

JOSIAH

Who?

ETHAN

Grant. Somebody told me last night.

Josiah rolls his eyes. He inhales deeply, exhales deeply - then calmly replies.

JOSIAH

Why do you care?

ETHAN

Well, how would you feel? Building your life with somebody for years, a home -

JOSIAH

- It's been over a year.

ETHAN

And then they fuck you off for somebody else. Throw you out of the home that you helped to build.

JOSIAH

And it wasn't the first time he'd done that either. Somebody else. Remember that. We all told you.

Ethan raises his eyebrows. He takes another sip of his coffee.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) INT. STRANGERS APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan walks through the doorway and into the unfamiliar apartment. All of the hallway doors are closed. Until, one door, slowly begins to creep open.

JOSIAH (O.S) (CONT'D)

And what about the sex?

B) INT. STRANGERS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ethan, a young man, and another slightly older man - are engaged in a threesome.

C) EXT. OUTSIDE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

ETHAN

What?

Josiah sternly replies.

JOSIAH
You know what.

Ethan is silent.

D) INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan lies across his bed and pours himself another glass of wine. The digital clock beside him reads 5AM.

He quickly swipes through the Grindr profile grid on his iPhone. He taps his finger on the phone screen, stopping at one of the profiles.

JOSIAH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Listen, if you want to see Kate,
I've said I don't mind paying.
She's good. She can help you.

E) INT. OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

An older man (71), slightly port, pale. Sits at the edge of a bed topless. The room is dated, with aged floral fabrics.

The man starts to remove his pants, staring downwards. Ethan is kneeling directly in front of him, staring blankly back.

ETHAN (O.S.)
I don't need to speak to somebody.

F) EXT. OUTSIDE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Josiah looks down at the table. Ethan slowly shakes his head. He takes another sip of his coffee.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
I'm fine.

G) EXT. OUTSIDE OLD MANS HOUSE - NIGHT

Ethan is running down a small, dark, garden path. He reaches the garden gate, steps out into the street, and vomits all over the pavement.

- END OF MONTAGE -

INT. DOCTORS SURGERY TOILET - DAY

Olivia vomits repeatedly.

She stands crouched over a toilet basin, in a narrow toilet cubicle.

Her breathing is heavy. She stands upright and leans against the cubicle's side. She moves her hands to her stomach.

INT. DOCTORS SURGERY ROOM - DAY

Olivia sits down in a chair, her sleeve pulled up over her forearm. A CLINICIAN (55) prepares Olivia's arm to take her bloods.

Olivia passes the Clinician a small urine sample jar.

OLIVIA

There's my. You know.

CLINICIAN

Oh, course. Thank you lovely. Just rest your arm at your side now for me please.

The Clinician places the sample pot on the desk beside her. She then removes a syringe packet from a nearby drawer. She quickly pulls the syringe out of the packet.

CLINICIAN (CONT'D)

Sharp scratch.

Olivia winces.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

DI Olivia Hartford and newly qualified Detective RHYS DENHAM (26) drive through the outskirts of Liverpool City Centre.

They are on their way to attend the scene of a reported robbery and assault. Rhys is at the wheel, his crisp new suit looks slightly too big for his skinny frame.

Olivia is sat in the passenger seat beside him. Arms folded. Her skin Pale, beaded with sweat.

OLIVIA

So this man, what's his name?

RHYS

Er, David. David Finch.

Rhys has a soft Liverpudlian accent, that sounds out shadowed against Olivia's - which is unmistakably Mancunian.

OLIVIA

OK. So. David's saying that he invited this guy round to talk? Where did they meet again, sorry?

RHYS
The app. Grindr.

OLIVIA
Right. So they arrange to meet on Grindr, victim says he just wanted to talk to him. Then the next thing this guys cracked him over the head with a hammer?

RHYS
Well, yeah. That's what he's told us.

Olivia laughs to herself.

OLIVIA
(IN A SARCASTIC TONE)
OK, like there's not going to be more than meets the eye to this one.

RHYS
The man's obviously embarrassed. He's given a full description to other officers. Think the lad was about 21.

Olivia sighs under her breath, turning her head to look out of the car window. The patrol car stops at a red light.

RHYS (CONT'D)
Paramedics at the scene as well. Guy was out cold for over an hour. He's one of those, happened last night - but only reported it this morning because all of his cards have been used.

OLIVIA
How old is he?

RHYS
One second.

Rhys pulls his police notebook from his trouser pocket. He quickly flips through the tattered pages.

RHYS (CONT'D)
67.

OLIVIA
Jesus.

RHYS

What?

OLIVIA

Well, he's gonna be one of those,
isn't he.

RHYS

One of what?

OLIVIA

You know, bit of a creep, an old
perve. Trying to get his rocks off.
Not afraid to sacrifice a bit of
his pension in the process.

The light turns green, and the car moves off.

Rhys glances across at Olivia. Her sudden lack of filter, and
offensive gestures seem out of her usual character.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Then he gets stung. By the young,
pretty boy criminal. Who, of
course, can see the sad fucking
bastard coming from a mile away.

RHYS

I wouldn't have really put it like
that to be honest.

OLIVIA

Yeah, well. It's the same with
older men and younger women. I've
seen it all before. They're just
easy bait for these criminals.

RHYS

Well, we're here now anyway.

Olivia ignores Rhys's response.

OLIVIA

Especially the queer ones. They're
relentless. They'll do anything for
a fuck. Makes you feel a bit sick
to be honest.

Rhys brakes hard to a stop. The patrol car is now stationary
outside the gates to David Finch's apartment.

RHYS

Are you OK?

OLIVIA
Yeah. It doesn't matter. Right then.

RHYS
Right then.

Rhys exits the car first, slamming the door behind him.

Olivia slowly reaches to unbuckle her seatbelt, and scoffs quietly to herself.

OLIVIA
Right then.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

David Finch sits at the kitchen island. A PARAMEDIC tends to the large wound at the side of his head.

Olivia and Rhys walk into the open apartment, through the hallway, and approach David in the kitchen.

OLIVIA
David Finch then, I'm assuming?

David looks up at Olivia solemnly. He is deathly pale. His gashed temple, and clothes, bloody.

DAVID
Yes.

The tending paramedic quickly interjects.

PARAMEDIC
Right David. You're going to need to come to hospital for some glue on this wound I'm afraid mate.

DAVID
If I have to, I suppose I must then.

PARAMEDIC
And we're going to have to give you a little scan and x-ray to make sure this concussions nothing to be worrying about, OK David?

DAVID
I'm not deaf you know.

The paramedic doesn't respond. He closes his open medical bag, and turns to Olivia.

PARAMEDIC

He's got some nasty head trauma -
and he's left reporting this for a
while, so.

OLIVIA

(UNDER HER BREATH)

Well, I think we know why that
might be.

PARAMEDIC

I need to rule out a bleed on the
brain, possible fracture, you know.
He's been hit very hard.

OLIVIA

I can see.

The paramedic steps in front of David, blocking Olivia.

PARAMEDIC

So, I'm not sure he'll really be up
for any questions just now.

David raises his hand, in a subtle gesture of surrender.

DAVID

I'm OK lad. I can answer their
questions.

Olivia politely smiles at the paramedic.

OLIVIA

I'll just be two minutes.

RHYS

We can just come back another day
next week.

Rhys has not long closed his mouth, before Olivia moves her
face up to his.

OLIVIA

(STERNLY WHISPERS)

No. We've got too much going on as
it is to be messing around with all
of this crap.

The paramedic slowly steps aside.

PARAMEDIC

Two minutes.

David looks up at Olivia. The combination of both the bright kitchen lights and his broken glasses - makes him narrow his eyes.

Olivia pulls out her notebook, and starts to write.

OLIVIA

Hi David. I'm DI Hartford, and this is DI Denham.

Olivia slowly raises one arm, still looking at her notepad - her upturned palm points towards Rhys.

RHYS

Hello David.

OLIVIA

Just a couple of quick questions about last night really. Won't take up too much of your time.

DAVID

I wouldn't have reported it. Cause a fuss, you know. But you see, he's used my cards.

OLIVIA

I see. Where did you meet him David?

DAVID

On the internet app. Grindr. It's a dating site.

OLIVIA

I know what it is. I wouldn't really call it a dating site though.

David looks away from Olivia, eyes to the floor.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Do you meet men through Grindr very often David?

DAVID

Sometimes. I just.

OLIVIA

Quite dangerous at the best of times, really. But that late in the night?

DAVID

I just get a bit lonely since my partner died.

RHYS

It's OK David, we'll come back.

Olivia turns to Rhys. She raises her eyebrows. She turns her head back.

OLIVIA

Do you normally meet younger men, David?

The sudden change of tone in Olivia's questioning, prompts David to shoot her an instant look of discontent.

DAVID

He said he was 21.

OLIVIA

Still. Also, you gave us an e-fit before and it looks like we suspect it may be somebody who is already known to us.

DAVID

I see.

OLIVIA

He hustles, gay for pay, you know? Thing is, he's fifteen years old.

DAVID

What?

OLIVIA

Mal? Was it?

DAVID

Yes.

OLIVIA

Or Malik, as we know him.

David says nothing.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

How much did you pay him David?
Because he didn't just come round
for a chat did he?

DAVID

I didn't know he was fifteen.

OLIVIA

Did you do anything sexual with
him?

Rhys immediately cuts into Olivia's now slowly descending
interrogation.

RHYS

That's enough.

A second paramedic appears in the hallway with a wheelchair.

PARAMEDIC #2

Right. Time to go.

David pleads for Olivia's understanding.

DAVID

I didn't know he was that young. I
just get so lonely after John. I
didn't think.

Olivia finishes writing, and snaps her notebook shut.

OLIVIA

I think it's clear we've got
everything we need now anyway.

Both paramedics help David from his seat, and into the
wheelchair. Rhys walks out of the kitchen, his head down.
Olivia closely follows.

EXT. OUTSIDE GRAND APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ethan waits outside the grand, almost stately, apartment
entrance. He glances to and from his mobile phone. The
intercom buzzes and the large doors open. Ethan walks inside.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

The sound of the last car door slamming fills the small
passenger cabin. Olivia and Rhys are back in the patrol car.
Olivia, reaches to fasten her seatbelt.

RHYS
What was that?

OLIVIA
What?

RHYS
That. What were you doing?

OLIVIA
He invited a fifteen-year-old boy
to his apartment for sex Rhys.

RHYS
No he didn't. At least not
knowingly. You know that.

OLIVIA
I only know what I have in front of
me. Facts.

RHYS
Bullshit.

OLIVIA
Excuse me?

RHYS
That was out of order Olivia. He
could easily make a complaint to
the IPCC about the way you've just
handled that.

OLIVIA
Let him. I feel bad for the guy
losing his life partner and
everything. But he's obviously -

Rhys interrupts Olivia before she can finish.

RHYS
- Lonely.

OLIVIA
If you say so.

Rhys starts the ignition. The car pulls away from the
apartment grounds, and starts to manoeuvre back onto the main
road.

INT. GRAND APARTMENT - DAY

ALEXANDER BANKS (41) is charming and well-spoken. He is
strikingly attractive - and he knows it.

He answers the apartment door, shirtless. Ethan stands there. Unable to form words.

ALEXANDER

Alex. Pleased to meet you?

Alexander's smile matches his equally perfect physique. It makes the rude mistake of him not being able to remember Ethan's name forgivable.

ETHAN

Ethan.

Alexander smiles again.

ALEXANDER

Well, Ethan. Are you going to come inside, or should we do it in the hallway?

Ethan walks inside the apartment, and into a large plush living area. Alexander, ahead of him, sits down on a large sofa.

ETHAN

Sorry. It's just, well, you don't usually find people like you on Grindr that's all.

Alexander leans forward, and snorts a line of cocaine from the nearby glass coffee table with a metal straw.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Unless you're paying for it.

Alexander laughs loudly. He snorts sharply. He pushes his finger into his left nostril. His smile doesn't break.

ALEXANDER

Line? I made you one up. Wasn't sure if you just tolerated chems, or if you'd actually want some yourself.

Ethan smiles silently. He walks up to Alexander, takes the straw from his hand, and quickly snorts the line of white powder from the coffee table.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Olivia still hasn't finished giving her five pence worth.

OLIVIA

Some of these gay men. They grow old. Think they're still 21. So promiscuous.

RHYS

What are you trying to say?

OLIVIA

Well, he needed a warning didn't he. Imagine if he hadn't been attacked? He would have essentially groomed a young boy for fucks sake.

RHYS

A warning? He told us that he didn't know.

Olivia scoffs. She turns to Rhys.

OLIVIA

Well he's going to isn't he. Backtracking. Now he's got a hole in his head.

RHYS

And it's hardly grooming if the other person is essentially grooming you.

Olivia rolls her eyes.

RHYS (CONT'D)

So are we going to get a team back on Malik? Or?

OLIVIA

We haven't got the time. Or the team. He could be anywhere by now. You know that. I'm not pulling out the cavalry for some old pervert who's just had his wallet stolen.

RHYS

What? It was the robbery and assault of a gay man. What's up with you? This isn't like you at all.

OLIVIA

He'll probably be back on Grindr tomorrow. Men like him can't help themselves Rhys.

RHYS

Not all gay men are promiscuous you know. Not all gay men are like that.

OLIVIA

(RAISES VOICE)

Christ. When did you suddenly become a freedom fighter for the gay alliance?

Rhys say's nothing. His silence speaks volumes.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

(SIGHS)

Oh.

Olivia holds her hand to her mouth and rests her face in her palm. She stares out of the window. They are both silent.

INT. GRAND APARTMENT - DAY

Alexander and Ethan are both sitting next to each other on the large, expensive sofa.

Alexander rides Ethan's t-shirt up and over his head - and they both begin to kiss passionately. Alexander pushes himself on top of Ethan, removing the rest of his clothing.

Suddenly, Alexander stops and pulls back from Ethan. They both sit back upright.

ALEXANDER

Ethan, your nose.

Alexander points towards Ethan's face. Ethan touches his nostril and pulls his hand away. His fingers are covered in blood.

ETHAN

Shit.

Alexander bolts upright.

ALEXANDER

Jesus. You're getting it all over the fucking couch.

ETHAN

(EMBARRASSED)

I'm sorry.

Ethan jumps up quickly. He runs towards the open-plan kitchen and pulls some paper from a roll on a vertical holder.

Ethan presses the paper down onto his nose to try and stem the flow of blood.

Alexander starts to get dressed.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
(MUFFLED UNDER KITCHEN
PAPER)

I'll be okay in a minute. Sorry. I
haven't had a nosebleed for years.
I don't -

ALEXANDER
- Just leave please.

Alexander walks out of the living room, and towards the bathroom. The sound of running tap water can now be faintly heard.

ALEXANDER (O.S) (CONT'D)
And don't take anything.

Ethan's face drops. He screws the bloodied paper into a ball, and throws it toward a nearby bin. He misses.

He then begins to gather his scattered clothes and belongings.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Ethan quickly walks along the pavement.

He pulls his jacket closed over his T-Shirt breast, to hide the small dots of blood-stained fabric from passers-by.

Ethan swipes through the Grindr grid on his phone screen. He is exchanging messages with a blank profile:

"COME ROUND NOW. 68 FALKNER STREET. RING THE BUZZER."

It promptly replies:

"NEAR. NOT LONG."

INT. POLICE SERIOUS CRIME UNIT OFFICE - DAY

Olivia is sat at her desk. The office is busy, with people stood in groups, conversing, surrounding different desks around the room.

She is filing off David Finch's assault. A mug shot of Malik Sutcliffe can be seen in the records scattered across her workspace.

Olivia's phone suddenly rings loudly - it's a withheld number.

She answers.

OLIVIA
Olivia Hartford.

A voice at the other end of the phone, eases Olivia's formality.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
That quick?

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan is standing in front of a large, apartment building door. He fumbles blindly through his jacket pockets to find his apartment keys.

Eventually, he pulls them out - only to accidentally drop them in the process.

GRANT
(SHOUTING)
Ethan. I want to talk to you.

The sound of GRANT HART (31), and his deep, Scottish timbre - echoes as he crosses the cobbled street.

Ethan ascends back up from the pavement to face Grant, keys in hand.

Grant is dressed smartly. His grooming immaculate.

ETHAN
Fuck off Grant. I've got nothing to say to you.

Ethan turns back around to face the building door, ignoring Grant; He tries to push a key into the old Yale lock. He misses.

GRANT
(LOUDLY)
You had plenty of things to say to Shaun though didn't you? A pack of fucking lies.

ETHAN

Lies? They weren't lies.

Ethan squints at the lock. He scrapes the tip of the key across the Yale's metal front, missing the chamber.

GRANT

I can move in with somebody else if I want to Ethan. We're not together anymore.

Ethan spins back around, quickly.

ETHAN

I'm well aware.

GRANT

Then what's the problem?

ETHAN

You. Fucking somebody behind my back for six months, kicking me out and leaving me broke.

Ethan steps forward. He brings his face closer to Grants.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Moving somebody into a house that you own, and that I paid half the mortgage for.

GRANT

I told you at the time it was rent. And his name's Shaun.

ETHAN

I don't care what he's called.

GRANT

For fuck's sake.

Ethan throws his arm to point in the direction of an empty street parking bay.

ETHAN

Remember the day I left? When you ran up to my car window? The car I've sold now by the way, because I'm that fucking skint.

GRANT

Irrelevant.

ETHAN

You handed me this blue Ikea bag,
remember?

GRANT

Are you off your head?

ETHAN

And as you handed me it to me, you
said how guilty you felt for
leaving me with hardly anything.

GRANT

You are aren't you. Is that blood?

Ethan quickly pulls his jacket over his chest.

ETHAN

And do you know what was in it? A
couple of old plates, three pans
and a plastic strainer.

Grant stares back at Ethan. He is silent. His breathing
heavy.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

That's when I knew you'd really
fucked me over Grant. Six years of
being with you and I'm left with a
mass of debt, some plates and a
couple of fucking pans.

While you shack up, living your
best life with your latest bit on
the side.

GRANT

Shaun isn't a bit on the side.

ETHAN

Then what is he then?

GRANT

I love him.

Ethan laughs.

ETHAN

Yeah, for now.

GRANT

More than I ever loved you.

Ethan immediately stops laughing.

GRANT (CONT'D)
He thinks you're pathetic, you know.

ETHAN
(SHOUTING)
Just fuck off.

Ethan frantically turns back toward the door. He finally pushes the key into the Yale lock, and turns it.

GRANT
We both read that message and thought - how sad. How desperate must somebody be to write something like that? How can somebody still be that messed up? That fucked up. Almost a year later.

Ethan faces the unopened door. He is still, silent. Grant continues, unphased.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Always skint. Hopeless. Thirty-four years of age, and still working in that shitty little bar.

A tear runs down Ethan's cheek - as LIAM BOWER (21) slowly walks towards both men. His hair is dark ash blonde. His pale frame strong, muscular and broad.

Ethan turns back around.

Liam say's nothing as he stops a short distance from the arguing pair. He places his hands inside his pockets, and softly smiles at Ethan.

Grant looks jovially from Liam to Ethan.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Bit young for you, isn't he?

Ethan remains silent. He wipes a rolling tear from his cheek.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Christ, you're pathetic.

Grant turns around, ignoring Ethan's sudden attempt to muster a responding insult.

ETHAN
(SHOUTING)
Bastard.

GRANT
(SHOUTING)
Go and have another drink. You
fucking failure.

Grant walks across the street towards his parked car. A proud grin covers his face.

Ethan stands speechless, shaking.

Liam, still standing feet away, finally speaks.

LIAM
Do you still want to meet?

Ethan scoffs at Liam, screwing his face up.

ETHAN
What do you fucking think?

Ethan turns back towards the door and pushes it open.

He steps inside, and slams it shut behind him. Leaving Liam alone outside, officially stood up.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan slams his apartment door shut. He walks to the kitchen, opens the fridge and pulls out a half drunk bottle of wine.

Ethan quickly reaches for an empty glass that is standing on a metal dish rack beside him.

Now sobbing - he pours himself a large glass of wine, and starts to drink. He catches his breath, half crying, after each large mouthful of wine.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - DAY

Olivia walks into the Doctors' office. The room is clean, bare, organised. Olivia immediately sits down, opposite DOCTOR STENNER (70).

Stenner is a classy, mature woman. Her hair is cut into a shiny, grey bob. She peers across at Olivia; over her thick framed designer glasses, that are balancing at the end of her nose.

She holds a pen in her left hand, her thumb extended over the push button.

OLIVIA
(SLIGHTLY OUT OF BREATH)
Sorry I'm a bit late. I've got a
ton of work - well, you know how it
is.

Olivia smiles, adjusting her leather jacket over the smart
pin striped shirt underneath.

DOCTOR STENNER
Yes Mrs. Hartford, I do.

Dr. Stenner softly smiles.

DOCTOR STENNER (CONT'D)
May I call you Olivia?

OLIVIA
Yeah.

Olivia's curiosity halts their formalities.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Sorry, I just wasn't expecting to
be back here so quickly. Why
couldn't you tell me this over the
phone?

DOCTOR STENNER
We have regulations concerning how
we approach the delivery of certain
test results to our patients, and -

OLIVIA
- Certain results?

Olivia sits back in the chair. Her hands place down on her
thighs, her legs close together. She is still, yet the sound
of her breathing rises. Her eyes race across the room.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I'm pregnant, aren't I?

Dr. Stenner places the pen in her hand, down on the desk in
front of her. She leans forward, removes her glasses, and
also places them on the desk.

DOCTOR STENNER
When we did your test, we screened
for several things. And, yes,
pregnancy was also one of those
things.

OLIVIA
I thought. I mean.

DOCTOR STENNER
But, as you know, we also carried
out some blood tests.

Olivia throws one hand up to touch her forehead.

OLIVIA
I've been really sick in the
mornings recently. Some days, I've
just gone off my food. I've felt
awful really, to be honest.

Olivia's other hand moves to her stomach.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
I never thought -

DOCTOR STENNER
(STERNLY)
- You're not pregnant Olivia.

Olivia immediately moves her hand away. She sits more upright
in her chair. Her brief moment of tenderness instantly
diminishing.

OLIVIA
Then why have you asked me to come?
(PAUSE)
I, don't understand.

Dr. Stenner's eyes fleet down at her feet. She seems
unequipped for what she is about to say.

DOCTOR STENNER
When we did your bloods, we
screened for several things. STI's
as requested.

OLIVIA
Why have you asked me to come?

DOCTOR STENNER
Before I tell you this, please
remember that medicine has advanced
significantly since -

Olivia shouts.

OLIVIA
- What is it.

DOCTOR STENNER

I'm sorry but the blood tests we carried out conclude that you're HIV positive.

Olivia's mouth opens slightly. A small, audible, painful gasp escapes.

DOCTOR STENNER (CONT'D)

The results confirm that you have HIV antibodies present in your bloodstream. Do you understand?

OLIVIA

(SWALLOWS)

I understand.

(PAUSE)

And there's got to be some sort of mistake.

DOCTOR STENNER

The lab repeat positive test results multiple times from the one sample they receive. But if you'd prefer, we can - for your peace of mind and ours, arrange to have them repeated?

Olivia stares blankly.

DOCTOR STENNER (CONT'D)

But, I'm simply afraid that we just don't make those sort of mistakes Olivia.

Dr. Stenner reaches for some tissues on her desk, at the sight of Olivia's welling eyes.

DOCTOR STENNER (CONT'D)

The sickness that you're describing to me, could perhaps be symptoms of HIV seroconversion. Which is when the virus first begins to compromise the immune system.

Olivia keels over in her chair. As if she is about to throw up.

OLIVIA

Oh my fucking god.

Olivia bolts back upright in her seat. She stands up, pulling her jacket downwards to straighten it. Doctor Stenner also stands.

DOCTOR STENNER
I know this is a shock.

A short burst of sarcastic laughter shoots out from Olivia's mouth.

OLIVIA
A shock?

Dr. Stenner sighs, and continues.

DOCTOR STENNER
I know this is moving fast. But I'm going to book you in for a phone consultation with me in three days time, OK?

Olivia holds both hands to her face.

DOCTOR STENNER (CONT'D)
We need to look at how we're going to approach the best course of antiretroviral treatment that suits you. Do you understand?

Olivia immediately turns around, and heads for the office door.

DOCTOR STENNER (CONT'D)
Olivia, please don-

Dr. Stenner sighs, bringing her hand to her forehead, as she watches Olivia slam the door behind her.

INT. BUSY BAR - NIGHT

Ethan is now in the bar that he works in. He is drunk.

He emerges from the toilet area - and walks across the busy dance floor, towards the bar.

Ethan, not paying attention to his surroundings, as he swipes through his Grindr home screen; accidentally walks into a DANCING MAN (20) in the middle of the busy dance floor.

Most of the man's drink spills over his glass, and onto the floor - along with Ethan's phone, as it flies from his grasp.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The large restaurant is filled with scattered tables of different people, enjoying their evening meal.

Through the large glass window, Olivia's black Vauxhall Astra screeches to a halt in the small, dimly lit exterior car park.

Several customers turn their heads, as Olivia bolts from the car slamming the door shut. She walks towards the restaurant doors and flings them wide open. She shouts loudly.

OLIVIA

Craig.

The restaurant goes immediately stop eating. They all look up from their tables.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Craig. Get out here now.

A young WAITRESS (19) quickly runs over to where Olivia is standing.

WAITRESS

Mrs. Hartford. What's wrong?

OLIVIA

Never mind what's wrong. Where's Craig.

WAITRESS

He's, in the back office. I.

Before she can finish, Olivia barges straight past her.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Mrs. Hartford. Please.

The waitress apologises to a nearby, concerned looking table of diners as she runs shortly behind Olivia.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

So sorry.

CRAIG HARTFORD (40) a tall man, with a slim frame and dark hair emerges from the nearby back kitchen. He is dressed smartly, matching the formal ambience of the restaurant and its diners.

Craig stops, meeting his wife in the middle of the busy restaurant floor.

CRAIG

I told you not to do this here Liv.

OLIVIA

Don't Liv me.

CRAIG
 (UNDER HIS BREATH)
 I'm sorry. I'm a bastard. I know I
 am - and I don't deserve your
 forgiveness. I know that. But you
 know we weren't happy Liv.

OLIVIA
 (SHOUTING)
 Stop calling me Liv.

Craig eyes the restaurant guests surrounding them - they have
 all stopped eating. Staring.

CRAIG
 Not here.

OLIVIA
 Do you know where I was this
 afternoon?

CRAIG
 Come on, let's go and talk about
 this outside.

Craig attempts to usher his wife in the direction of the
 exit.

OLIVIA
 Get the fuck off me.

Olivia slaps Craig across the face. Hard. A woman eating at a
 nearby table gasps.

Craig momentarily pauses. He then grabs Olivia, and drags her
 towards the restaurant doors.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
 (SCREAMING)
 Get off me now. You lying piece of
 shit.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

DANCING MAN
 (SHOUTS OVER LOUD MUSIC)
 Watch it mate.

Ethan, startled from the unexpected collision - looks down at
 his phone, now lying in a small puddle of clear liquid on the
 floor below.

The dancing man looks at his now half-empty drink, and shakes his head to a nearby friend in disapproval.

DANCING MAN (CONT'D)
(SHOUTS OVER LOUD MUSIC)
Go back to bed lad.

Ethan mutters an offensive slur under his breath. However, his verbal retaliation goes unnoticed - drowned out by the blaring club music.

ETHAN
Fuck off.

Ethan bends down, falling onto one hand to balance himself as he retrieves his phone from the wet floor.

He stands back up, wipes his phone on his t-shirt, and starts to walk back towards the bar. As he walks, he squints at his phone screen - trying to focus on reading a Grindr profile bio with one eye shut.

Ethan's face suddenly presses into a man's back.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Ah. Watch out.

As Ethan pulls himself backwards and wipes one side of his face, AARON TELLER (30) turns around from the bar and smiles at him.

Aaron laughs, as he politely ignores the pool of Jack Daniels forming on the now saturated bar top behind him - where his hand rests.

Aaron's thick, dark mass of pushed back hair is ruffly styled into a messed up look. His eyes are strikingly green.

AARON
Don't worry about it. Accidents
happen.

EXT. OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - DAY

Craig and Olivia emerge into the car park. Olivia pushes herself free of her husband's grip. Olivia breaks. She is now sobbing.

OLIVIA
You've ruined my life.

CRAIG

I know it was awful. Finding all of that out. What I was doing. I know how hard that must be for you to process.

OLIVIA

Process? You think I'm still talking about you fucking cheating?

Craig stops.

CRAIG

Well, what are you talking about then?

Olivia stares at her husband. Several eaters are now peering directly out of the restaurant windows. Olivia exhales a laugh of breath.

OLIVIA

You're HIV positive.

There is a momentary lapse of silence.

CRAIG

What?

OLIVIA

You've given me HIV, Craig.

Craig shakes his head.

CRAIG

No, you're lying. I'm fine. I'd know if -

OLIVIA

- I thought I was pregnant.

(PAUSE)

I thought that's why I was so ill. I went to the doctors, thinking - well, at least one good thing's come out of this.

CRAIG

No.

Craig shakes his head. Olivia ignores Craig's interjection.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

You're lying.

OLIVIA

One of those dirty queers you've fucked without a condom has given you HIV. And now you've given it to me. That's what's come out of this.

Craig stares blankly at his wife, unable to speak. Olivia composes herself. She wipes both of her eyes with one hand, and sneers venomously at her husband.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Olivia turns a half smile.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I know this must be - hard for you to process.

Olivia turns away, unlocks her car, opens the door and climbs inside.

She speeds off - leaving her husband standing still, in a small fog of upturned gravel.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Ethan's guard quickly drops, as he notices the spilt drink beside Aaron on the bar.

ETHAN

Sorry. I'll get you another one.

AARON

No, honestly it's fine. It's not every day someone this cute walks into me anyway, so I'll let you off.

Ethan laughs.

AARON (CONT'D)

You work here, don't you? I've seen you here before is all.

ETHAN

Yeah, it's my night off. Well, one of many at the moment.

(LAUGHS)

Spying on me then?

AARON

Well, more admiring than spying.
But yeah. Actually. Well, weirdly.
I've been admiring you for a while.

Ethan smiles looking down at the bar.

AARON (CONT'D)

Can I ask your name?

ETHAN

It's Ethan.

AARON

Oh good. Well. Ok, I already knew
that - but I just wanted to be
polite and actually ask.

Aaron points to his chest.

AARON (CONT'D)

Aaron.

Ethan starts to laugh. Before the momentary lapse in his
drunken state resurfaces, and his legs suddenly buckle
beneath him.

AARON (CONT'D)

Whoa. Easy. You're a tad drunk,
aren't you?

Ethan regains his stature, pulling himself upwards from the
bar top. He then half smiles at Aaron.

ETHAN

Maybe a little bit.

Bar Manager IRIS (46) a trans woman, with bobbed, blonde hair
and a vintage grey leather jacket over her smart black dress;
walks behind the bar to where both Ethan and Aaron are
standing.

IRIS

Ethan love, go home.

Ethan looks up. His half smile drops.

ETHAN

I'm fine. Stop worrying.

IRIS

Home, now. You've had too much.

Iris shoots a bulldog-like stare in Aaron's direction.

IRIS (CONT'D)

And as for you Romeo - lay off.

AARON

I was just.

IRIS

Just what?

Aaron holds both of his hands up in the air in front of him.

Ethan mutters to himself as he turns and walks away, towards the exit.

ETHAN

(SHOUTING OVER MUSIC)

Sorry for trying to have a little bit of fun.

IRIS

(SHOUTING OVER MUSIC)

Ethan wait. I'm booking you a cab.

ETHAN

(SHOUTING OVER MUSIC)

Don't bother. I'm walking.

Ethan stumbles away from the busy bar area and out of the exit.

Iris watches on, shaking her head. She then returns her attention back to Aaron - his hands still held up in surrender.

IRIS

Drink?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ethan is stumbling from side to side as he walks through the city centre. The street is deserted, lined with high-end retailers.

Ethan sits at a bench, and pulls out his mobile phone.

He glances at the Grindr profile grid, and starts to message a profile named 'Barry'.

The photo on Barry's profile shows a man in his thirties, normal build, who is ruggedly handsome; with thick, short dark hair and a well-kept beard to match.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOTEL BUILDING - NIGHT

Ethan walks into the hotel entrance lobby - his eyes are affixed to his phone screen.

Two hotel receptionists, too busy at their computer screens, completely ignore Ethan's casual stride into the open lift.

The doors close in front of him.

INT. INSIDE HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ethan paces along the hotel corridor, his stare fleeting from his phone to the array of room numbers on the several doors he is passing by.

He stops at room 242.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The hotel room is dimly lit. BARRY (49) walks from his bed across the room towards the door. Cigarette smoke clouds the small room.

He is wearing a white bath robe, the chord pulled far too tightly. His frame is a broad, rugby type - not athletic.

He has dark, thinning hair, that is unkept. His facial hair short, thick and greying.

He opens the door, moving aside, his face concealed around the other side of the door. Ethan enters the room.

ETHAN

Alright.

Barry shuts the door, turning to face Ethan.

BARRY

Yeah lad.

Ethan looks at Barry, tilting his head slightly, almost as if he is squinting to ingest a better picture of what's in front of him.

Barry looks nothing like his profile picture.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Fit you, aren't you. Very nice.

Barry moves forward, as Ethan backs towards the bed. Barry starts untying his robe.

ETHAN
No, wait. Sorry.

Barry doesn't stop moving, or untying.

BARRY
What?

ETHAN
It's just you, well your photos.

Barry stops. His voice raises.

BARRY
What about them?

ETHAN
They're not you. Sorry. I couldn't see because of the light.

BARRY
Nah. It is me, you must be pissed mate.

ETHAN
Sorry no.

Ethan tries to move past, towards the door - but Barry grabs his arm, hard.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
(SPEAKING SLOWLY)
Let go now.

Ethan's adrenaline immediately catapults him back into sobriety.

BARRY
Don't be a dick tease lad. I just turned somebody down so you could come here.

ETHAN
(SHOUTING)
No. I want to go.

Barry grabs Ethan's other arm.

BARRY
You were well up for it just then. Telling me everything you wanted me to do to you.

ETHAN

You're not the person in that photo.

BARRY

You cheeky little rat. You calling me a liar?

Before Ethan can reply, Barry pushes him onto the bed. He is stronger than Ethan. Barry pulls open his robe, and puts his full weight on Ethan - pressing his face into the bed.

ETHAN

(MUFFLED SHOUTING)

No. Stop.

Barry breathes heavily, still pinning Ethan to the bed, as he takes one hand and pulls Ethan's pants half way down.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

(MUFFLED SCREAMING)

Stop.

Barry struggles to reach for his crotch, as Ethan writhes underneath him - anxiously trying to escape.

BARRY

Can't stand little slags like you. Thinking you're all that. Leading me on.

One of Ethan's arms frees itself from Barry's grip. Ethan desperately reaches for anything lying on the bed near to him.

He grasps a small glass ashtray, turns his head to locate his target, and throws it at Barry's face.

BARRY (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

Ah. You little fucker.

Glowing embers of cigarette ash, fall slowly through the air and onto the bed covers.

Ethan, now free, bolts towards the door. He frantically pulls it open and leaves; as Barry cradles his face in pain with both of his hands, as he sprawls across the edge of the hotel bed.

BARRY (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

Fuck.

EXT. SIDE OF BUSY ROAD - NIGHT

Olivia is sitting in her car driver's seat.

She is parked at the side of a busy road. The passing traffic illuminates the cars dimly lit cabin.

Olivia is sobbing. Her head is pressed into the steering wheel, her hands gripping each side. Traffic noise blares, as oncoming vehicles speed past.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan frantically shuts his apartment door behind him. The apartment is dark. Silent. His heavy breathing is the only sound that fills the silence.

Ethan slides downward, with his back to the door, falling to a heap on the floor.

He starts to sob uncontrollably in the darkness.

INT. INSIDE HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A man wearing a bright yellow jacket, slightly stained, his face obscured - walks slowly across the hotel corridor.

He stops at Room 242.

The door slowly creeps open, as Barry half emerges from the other side - his wide torso blocking the pathway into the room. His dressing gown is stained with streaks of black ash.

A small red mark, from Ethan's prior retaliation, can be seen on Barry's forehead.

BARRY

Ah.

Barry smirks.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Come back for more, have ya?

Barry steps aside, allowing the man in the yellow jacket to walk inside the room - closing the door shut behind him.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan is in his bathroom.

It is dark - with some light partially spilling in from the nearby hallway.

Ethan is slumped, sat down in his shower, fully clothed. The shower is running.

Ethan sits still, staring into nothing, as water slowly runs down his face.

INT. ETHANS APARTMENT FOYER - DAY

It is the next morning.

The rusted letterbox of the old, wooden entrance door creaks open.

Several letters are forcefully pushed through the small opening, and the letterbox quickly snaps shut.

Mail drops onto the well-worn entrance matt below. Letters sprawl out amongst each other as they fall to the ground.

One letter is visible. It is addressed to: "Ethan - Flat 11"

The envelope has a company logo printed in the bottom left-hand corner. The brand name, "Vegas Bowling", is in bright pink neon text - alongside three animated bowling pins.

Bold text also reads: "FREE GAME INSIDE!"

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Light creeps in from the semi-drawn hotel room curtains. The window is slightly ajar. The light morning breeze, gently lifts the cheap curtains material.

Kim Wilde's "*Never Trust A Stranger*" plays at mid-volume, on the bedside clock radio.

Barry's grey, naked, lifeless body is sprawled across the bed.

His eyes wide open, his face twisted.

- END CREDITS -

Title Song: Kim Wilde "Never Trust A Stranger"

EPISODE TWO

Written by

Andrew Pankhurst



EPISODE TWO

"WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?"

FADE IN:

INT. COUNSELLORS OFFICE - DAY

Ethan sits on a three-seated, oxblood leather Chesterfield sofa.

His hands rest on his thighs. His fingers softly drum atop his jeans.

The counsellor's office is neutral, minimal - a stone's throw from sterile, but not quite.

KATE CONSTOVOLOS (42) sits back, relaxed, on a matching single-seated Chesterfield.

Her long dark hair is tied back. She is wearing a red, designer cashmere sweater.

ETHAN

I can't explain how it started.
It's almost as if, I suddenly woke
from a dream. Subconscious. Not
realising what I was doing.

Kate immediately starts to note. Her eyes still fixed on Ethan. She scrawls into a small, black, leather-bound notebook resting on her lap.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

And, by the time I did, it was too
late.

Ethan sits more upright in the Chesterfield. His feet fidget below him. He stares blankly at the wall beside him, unable to look Kate directly in the eye.

Ethan pauses, he clears his throat.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

It's like something takes over me.
Something that doesn't stop. Give
in. Until - you know.

Kate's well-presented dialect, clear in tone, interjects.

KATE

Until you've had sex?

Ethan turns back to Kate and nods. He knits his eyebrows, and submits his response in complete agreement.

FLASHBACK

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan is sat at his kitchen table, he is wearing a dressing gown - his hair is messy. A cup of coffee sits on the table top beside him, steam rises from the freshly poured mug.

He swipes endlessly through the Grindr chat grid on his smartphone screen.

ETHAN (V.O)

Yeah. It starts off as a few casual glances at my phone, at those apps.

INT. BAR STAFF ROOM - NIGHT

Ethan silently waves a hello to two colleagues leaving the staff room. Ethan is left alone in the room. He sits down. His eyes still glued to his phone screen. Swiping. Messaging.

ETHAN (V.O.)

And it mostly ends in me desperately looking. Constantly swiping. Refreshing.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. COUNSELLORS OFFICE - DAY

Kate gives Ethan a silent, expressionless nod. She continues to write.

ETHAN

All for the next meet. Sitting there, hours on end, waiting for somebody to just say "yeah, come over".

It consumes me. These urges. No matter how hard I try to stop. Not think about it. In the end, I just.

KATE

Give in to them?

ETHAN

It started off as a once or twice thing, at first. I was so angry. Angry with him - sorry, Grant.

(PAUSE)

Angry at myself I suppose, mostly for being stupid enough not to have noticed.

Ethan promptly closes both hands together. He holds them out in front of his face - softly biting two of his fingers.

His eyes, immediately shoot to the floor.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

And, I suppose the only thing that made me forget the anger.

Ethan sighs. He stops short of finishing his sentence.

KATE

OK. It's OK. Carry on.

ETHAN

I was so happy. I mean I thought I was happy. I thought that we were - you know.

Kate stops writing, as Ethan's following words seem to burst from his mouth.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

(AGITATED)

He tore my heart out. He literally pissed all over everything, I thought, was true.

(PAUSE)

Then, next thing I know, I'm living alone, broke, in a dead-end job; while Grant shacks up with his new fuck. Moving him into the home that I made, and that he owns.

Ethan composes himself, just short of his outburst. He looks down at the floor.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Sorry. I just feel so angry whenever -

KATE

- Don't be sorry, Ethan. There's nothing to be sorry for. Not with me, not here, anyway.

Kate softly clasps her notebook shut, and leans forward. She pushes her glasses downward, and peers over their rim.

KATE (CONT'D)

You need to try and not fixate on Grant's actions post separation Ethan. No matter how unreasonable, or wrong you feel his actions are.

You'll only make it harder for yourself by focusing on, or becoming angry about, whatever he does next.

Kate smiles appeasingly at Ethan.

KATE (CONT'D)

Truth be told Ethan, his actions are no longer your concern now.

Ethan looks away, he is silent.

KATE (CONT'D)

The simple answer is - that there is no simple answer. No quick fixes. This is going to take time.

Kate smiles back at Ethan - whose gaze suddenly shifts to the shelving behind where she is sat.

KATE (CONT'D)

We'll tackle your addiction through some separate CBT sessions. I can arrange for this to be done through the NHS though if that's better?

Ethan stares, ignoring Kate's question. He is transfixed on one of the framed photographs on the large shelf. The people in which, he has only just noticed.

KATE (CONT'D)

Your emotional struggles, we'll work on together through our weekly discussions.

A family portrait.

A photo of a gorgeous woman, with olive skin and shiny, black hair. Her baby daughter, cherub-like, sits laughing between both smiling parents.

Her Father, stunningly handsome.

Her Father, is Alexander Banks.

The same man, who made his unexpectedly rude acquaintance with Ethan the previous week; as Ethan's nose helplessly bled all over his expensive white carpet.

Kate immediately picks up on Ethan's distraction.

KATE (CONT'D)

(ASSERTIVELY)

Ethan, I know this is overwhelming you. These needs. Your desires. But you've acknowledged their toxicity. And you've come to me for help.

(PAUSE)

And, you might not realise it yet, but you've already made the hardest move.

Ethan continues to stare blankly at the photograph.

Kate's kind words of encouragement, are lost amongst the absence of his stare.

ETHAN

(MUTTERS UNDER BREATH)

Fuck.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

A Hotel CHAMBERMAID, late fifties, port; pushes a stainless steel service trolley down the narrow hotel corridor.

She stops, out of breath, at Room 242.

Breathing heavily - she moves towards the door, and knocks sharply. Three times.

A 'do not disturb' sign sways slightly against the door handle.

CHAMBERMAID

(RAISED VOICE)

Room service.

The Chambermaid waits momentarily for a delayed guest response. Silence.

She opens the door with her keycard - and pulls the trolley backwards, squeezing herself through the narrow doorway and into the hotel room.

Moments pass - and then suddenly, a piercing scream fills the empty hotel corridor.

- OPENING CREDITS -

INT. COUNSELLORS OFFICE - DAY

Kate places her leather-bound notebook to the side of where she is sat on the Chesterfield.

She smiles softly, slowly turning her head to glance behind her.

Finally, Kate locates the direction of Ethan's prolonged interest.

KATE
Isn't she adorable?

Ethan immediately breaks from his astounded pause.

ETHAN
Sorry?

KATE
My Niece.

Kate points behind her.

KATE (CONT'D)
In the photo.

ETHAN
Oh, yes. Yes she is. Sorry, what were you saying?

Kate smiles.

KATE
And my sister, Alannah of course.

ETHAN
She's so pretty. Your sister, sorry.

KATE
Oh I know, don't apologise - she always was. Always the pretty one.
(LAUGHS)
Still is. And then there's her husband Alex. To be honest I found him quite arrogant at first, but, when you get to know him.

ETHAN
Yeah. He's -

KATE
(SARCASTICALLY)
- I know.

Kate laughs and reaches one hand behind her neck. She quickly scratches.

Kate smiles. She glances toward the floor at the sudden break in her professionalism.

KATE (CONT'D)
But don't ever tell him that. My
god, does he know it.

Ethan gives a half smile.

ETHAN
Don't worry, I won't.

INT. JOSIAH'S CAR - DAY

The passenger door to Josiah's gun-metal Audi slams shut, as Ethan quickly climbs inside.

Josiah waits patiently, as Ethan slowly pulls his seatbelt across him and buckles it shut.

JOSIAH
Well?

Ethan slowly turns his head around to meet Josiah's suspenseful expression.

ETHAN
She was good.

JOSIAH
Is that it? Good?

ETHAN
Yes. She was nice.

JOSIAH
And?

ETHAN
What?

Josiah promptly pulls out of the parking space, and drives away. He quickly returns his attention to Ethan.

JOSIAH
What did she say about last week?

Ethan stops, and exhales.

ETHAN

I'm not going to report him.

Josiah quickly throws his gaze from the road to Ethan, and responds.

JOSIAH

(RAISED VOICE)

You were nearly raped. Why would you not discuss this with her? You've been distraught about it for the past week.

ETHAN

No. I know people who've done that. Reported things like this in the past, got nowhere. Embarrassing themselves entirely in the process.

Josiah turns to Ethan, his eyes detract from the road again as he pulls to a stop at a red light. He knits his eyebrows and narrows his eyes.

JOSIAH

And why exactly would you be embarrassing yourself?

The lights turn green. Josiah releases his handbrake and pulls off. He quickly gathers speed.

ETHAN

The police don't care.

(PAUSE)

They frown on us you know. Our lifestyles.

JOSIAH

Who cares what they think? Besides, nobody is going to judge you for nearly being raped.

ETHAN

They can't handle it.

JOSIAH

Who?

ETHAN

The heteronormative agenda. Birth, Marriage, kids, death. They haven't got a clue.

JOSIAH

Oh fuck off Ethan. Really? Who are we talking about here anyway? Straight people, or Police officers?

ETHAN

Both. And don't tell me to fuck off. I don't mean all of them, obviously. But our sexual freedom scares the shit out of them.

Josiah sighs deeply. He does not reply. Ethan continues.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I won't sit in front of some officer, probably a man, and make a statement. When I know, really, deep down they're going to be judging me for going into a complete stranger's hotel room at 2am, for a quick fuck.

JOSIAH

Circumstances are irrelevant. Attempted rape, is attempted rape.

ETHAN

It doesn't matter.

Ethan turns to look directly at Josiah.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

People in work, customers, have told me they've reported stuff. Hate crimes, assaults - stuff like that.

Josiah sighs frustratedly.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Gay, Trans, Non-binary people.

Josiah scoffs at the latter two of Ethan's associations.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

What? Oh stop it. Really? You see this is exactly what I'm talking about.

JOSIAH

Your point?

ETHAN

My, point, is that the police always act like they're doing something. But in the end? It never actually goes anywhere.

JOSIAH

Listen. The Police have far more regulations now, especially concerning the welfare of LGB - you know. Gay people. Put it that way.

ETHAN

You really need to work on your pronouns mate. And yeah, on paper they do.

Josiah scoffs.

JOSIAH

Sorry, who's the lawyer here?

ETHAN

But there's still officers in their ranks, who were there in the eighties - beating gay people up. People like me and you, for being who we are.

JOSIAH

He'll do it again.

ETHAN

That ideology doesn't just disappear overnight you know. No, sorry, I'll pass.

(PAUSE)

Besides, I've stopped. I know I've said this before, but I have. I haven't touched Grindr for over a week now.

JOSIAH

Well. That's good and everything but -

ETHAN

- I'm seeing somebody later this afternoon. For a date. He's nice. I want to put Grant, last week, Grindr - all of it behind me now.

JOSIAH

Who? Ethan, listen.

ETHAN

(STERNLY)

No. You said it yourself, and as much as it pains me to admit it, you were right. I'm moving on. Enough now.

JOSIAH

(SNAPS)

Well this has got to be it. The end. No more putting yourself in danger. Period. And you're going to keep seeing Kate? In fact, no. You are. That's not a question.

ETHAN

Yes. And yes. I really want to. I meant to tell you by the way - I noticed something before on her shelf that -

JOSIAH

(STERNLY)

- I don't care. No more putting yourself in these situations. Because if you carry on the way you are, one day, eventually, you're not going to be so lucky.

Ethan turns to look out of the passenger window. Both friends are now silent.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Olivia is standing half-covered with a bath towel. Her hair clumped together in long strands, wet.

She wipes the condensation from the fixed wall mirror with her hand. Her reflection is tired, pale, grey.

Olivia empties two pills from one prescription bottle, and then another pill from another. She swallows the pills whole, without water.

She drops both of the prescription bottles into her open handbag, on the floor, at her bare feet. One visible label reads, in bold text: **"Truvada 200mg - once daily"**

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Detective Rhys Denham walks slowly around the dimly lit hotel room.

He is wearing protective white clothing, zipped up over his suit. Several police forensic officers, and a photographer are stood beside the room's double bed.

A man's grey, cold and lifeless leg is hanging over the edge of the bed. The rest of the body is concealed by people working closely around it.

Rhys alerts the photographer's attention to several discarded bags of what appears to contain cocaine.

RHYS

Imaging could you look at this please? We'll need prints off this bag as well, looks like coke.

Rhys winces closely at the small, empty bag.

RHYS (CONT'D)

Perhaps Ketamine.

Olivia walks into the room.

Her smart, yet baggy clothes, drown her small frame.

Her complexion is tired and pale, in contrast against her black trouser suit.

OLIVIA

Doesn't look like much of a ket user to me. Also, he looks like he's in his late forties, early fifties at the most. I'd say cocaine. The weight of him as well. Possible heart attack perhaps?

One of the nearby forensic officers shrugs at Olivia's assumption.

RHYS

Room service only came in after he hadn't checked out. He works in insurance, travels a lot. Stays here quite regularly for weeks at a time.

OLIVIA

Well it certainly looks like he's had one hell of a party.

The photographer inspects several overturned empty cans of beer, alongside two empty bottles of wine on the hotel room desk. The telephone receiver is off the hook, lying next to them.

RHYS

Seems it.

OLIVIA

Okay, so what else do we know about - what's his name again? Do we know anything else?

RHYS

No. Just like I said, he was here on business. Nothing out of the ordinary. Wife and children back home in the west midlands. Just your average, working family man.

OLIVIA

Family? Shame.

RHYS

Yeah.

OLIVIA

Well, he wasn't really your average family man was he.

RHYS

Why?

OLIVIA

Because family men don't go away on business with a big bag of cocaine in tow, do they?

RHYS

No, I suppose they don't.

Olivia notices one of the forensic team bagging a discarded bottle of poppers.

OLIVIA

And not all family men go away with a big bag of coke and a bottle of poppers. Jesus, no wonder he had a heart attack.

RHYS

Allegedly.

OLIVIA

Well, so far there doesn't seem to be any indication that this was foul play.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

He's obviously had a few of his friends around, had too much alcohol, drugs, somebody's bailed in panic perhaps - and everything else.

Rhys looks at the body on the bed, and then looks back at Olivia.

RHYS

Everything else?

OLIVIA

Poppers Rhys. Straight men wouldn't dream to use poppers. Let's be honest. They're used by gay men - and mostly for sex.

RHYS

Some gay men.

OLIVIA

Well, anyway.

A FORENSIC OFFICER carefully bags a mobile phone, it's screen lights up inside the bag - it's still charged.

FORENSIC OFFICER

DI, we're going to send this off for examination.

OLIVIA

Great, thank you.

FORENSIC OFFICER

Although there are several notifications on the phone that may suggest you're right.

RHYS

Right about what?

FORENSIC OFFICER

Grindr. There are several Grindr notifications. We can't unlock the phone as of yet, obviously, but it appears that he's been using the app anyway.

Olivia grins at Rhys.

OLIVIA

Read the room, Rhys.

FORENSIC OFFICER

My guess is, judging by the vomit beside him - that he's got high, drunk and passed out on his back. Choked on his own vomit. Can't tell for sure until the autopsy, though.

Olivia walks over to the small parting between the forensic workers around the bed.

OLIVIA

What did you say his name was, sorry? Rhys?

The forensic officer interrupts, as Rhys leaves the room.

FORENSIC OFFICER

Barry Murphy. Forty-nine.

Olivia peers down at Barry's body, as he lies still on his back beside a small pool of vomit.

He is still wearing the stained white bathrobe, his grey leg is partly exposed at the parting. His thin, dark hair is messy. Traces of vomit coat his dark, greying beard.

OLIVIA

Well, Barry. Now we're getting somewhere.

EXT. OUTSIDE BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Ethan walks towards the entrance of an old, ageing bowling alley - situated in an out-of-town retail park.

He adjusts his top under his jacket, as he walks across the car park, brushing away loose lint from the fabric.

The outside of the bowling alley is dated - its pink, neon signage, broken in several places.

Aaron stands outside the entrance, checking his phone, awaiting Ethan's (now late) arrival.

ETHAN

(RAISED VOICE)

Hey.

Ethan smiles as he approaches Aaron. They are both dressed in their casual best.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Sorry I'm late. The bus just went straight past me. Swear he did it on purpose.

AARON

Late? No, it's fine. I only just got here myself.

ETHAN

Ah, good. I ran most of the way here in the end.

They both laugh, as Ethan dabs away slight beads of sweat from his forehead with one finger.

AARON

You look lovely by the way. It's also nice to see you in daylight for a change.

ETHAN

It's nice to finally hear you properly.

They both smile. Ethan looks up towards the bowling alley signage.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Well, it definitely looked better on Insta.

Ethan jovially waves the free game coupons in front of Aaron.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

(HUMOROUSLY)

Free game and a drink though?

Aaron smiles.

There is a short pause, until Ethan remembers his formalities.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

(STUMBLING WORDS)

And you look lovely, too.
Obviously. Sorry.

Ethan spurts his words out quickly. Almost forgetting to repay Aaron's initial compliment; but also managing to ruin the attempt of salvaging it in the process.

Aaron looks toward the entrance doors in front of them.

AARON

Shall we?

Aaron jokingly holds out his arm smiling, as Ethan takes his lead. They both laugh amongst each other as they walk, arm in arm, into the bowling alley.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE - DAY

Grant Hart carries SHAUN NEWMAN'S (21) suitcase over the threshold of his house, and out into the street.

Shaun waits for Grant, sat inside an old, rusting, teal Nissan Micra.

Shaun is youthful, athletically built. Grant walks around the car, opens the boot door, and loads the suitcase into the messy cabin.

Grant retraces his steps and crouches down beside the half-open driver's side window.

GRANT

I'm going to miss you. A lot.

Grant kisses Shaun, through the window arch.

SHAUN

I know.

Grant stands up. He slowly backs away.

GRANT

(RAISES VOICE)

Let me know when you get there please. Don't forget.

Shaun smiles and nods. He closes the window, and starts the car's ignition.

Grant smiles and waves slowly, as the car coughs to a start and slowly drives away.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY

Ethan and Aaron both walk into the bowling alley reception area.

The carpet is aged, fraying - and several pieces of grey, trodden in chewing gum are sporadically dotted along the pathway to the customer reception desk.

Several youths stand, conversing around the corridor of fruit and games machines.

Ethan stops.

Aaron, not paying attention, gently bumps into the back of him.

AARON
(LAUGHING)
Whoa.

Ethan turns to apologise. Some of the nearby youths snigger amongst each other.

ETHAN
(FRANTICALLY)
Sorry.
(SLOWLY)
Sorry.

AARON
What's up?

Ethan quickly interjects.

ETHAN
Nothing, it's nothing.

Ethan's eyes dart around the venue.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Why don't you go take a seat over there, and I'll sort these tickets out.

Ethan hands Aaron a voucher.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
You get the drinks in, yeah?

Aaron smiles mischievously.

AARON
You don't have to tell me twice.

Ethan smiles. He expels his attempt at forced laughter through his nose.

Aaron smiles, and walks off towards the bar area.

Ethan immediately looks towards the customer reception desk.

Liam Bower - the man he had arranged to meet shortly after Alexander Banks, and who he had also rudely left standing in the street; sits behind the desk.

He is staring back at him.

INT. GRANTS HOUSE - DAY

Grant shuts the front door. He turns around and leans against the wooden frame behind him. He pulls his phone out of his pocket, and starts to write a text message to Shaun on the screen. It reads:

"Miss you already."

Grant half smiles, then exits his messages, and opens the Grindr app.

His profile photo displays his upper torso only, his face is concealed.

Grant starts to reply to a message, one of several, in his Grindr inbox.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Liam Bower sits at the reception desk of the run-down bowling alley.

Several aged, faded cardboard advertisements line the countertop. A large rack of scruffy, stained, off-white bowling shoes fill the cloakroom wall behind him.

Ethan approaches Liam.

Liam looks up, as if he hasn't already noticed Ethan's arrival.

He smiles.

LIAM
Ah, it's you.

There is a brief silence. It prompts Liam to continue.

LIAM (CONT'D)
You OK?

Ethan knits his eyebrows.

ETHAN
(CAUTIOUSLY)
Did you send me this?

Ethan holds up the promotional letter in front of Liam.

LIAM
Oh.

Liam holds both hands up, above the desktop in front of him.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Yeah. You got me.

Ethan's face doesn't reiterate Liam's humour.

ETHAN
I don't understand.
(PAUSE)
Why would you send me these? After
the way.
(DISCREETLY)
Well, the way I was with you?

Ethan looks around, checking Aaron's whereabouts.

Liam smiles, and replies.

LIAM
Well, you looked like you were
having a bad day.

Ethan laughs suggestively.

ETHAN
Yeah. I suppose you could say that.

LIAM
So I still had your flat number in
the Grindr message, and I just
thought.

Liam bites the corner of his bottom lip.

LIAM (CONT'D)
I was in work later that night you
see. And I was posting these
letters out to members, and.

There is a brief pause.

LIAM (CONT'D)
I just sent them. Sorry. I didn't
even think you'd want them.
(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

Or even turn up.

(PAUSE)

I didn't really think about it.
Sorry if that seems weird.

Liam nods, exhaling deeply.

LIAM (CONT'D)

It is a bit weird, isn't it?

Liam gently hits his forehead with his palm. Ethan smiles appeasingly.

ETHAN

Thank you.

Liam immediately looks back up at Ethan.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I suppose? And, I think I actually owe you an apology. No, in fact, I do. I'd had a really, really bad -

LIAM

- No need. Shit happens. I just wanted to make your day a bit better than it was. Well, what I thought it was.

They both laugh.

There is a momentary pause - as Ethan and Liam both smile at each other, awaiting the other person's next response.

Liam holds his hand out.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Voucher?

Ethan breaks his smile and quickly presents the voucher once again. He then hands it to Liam.

ETHAN

Thanks.

Liam stands still. There is a short, awkward pause.

LIAM

Coat?

Ethan suddenly scrambles to quickly remove his jacket. He hands it over the counter, passing it to Liam.

Liam smiles. He folds Ethan's jacket over his forearm, and then points to the assortment of worn bowling shoes on the rack behind him in the cloakroom.

Ethan grimaces.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Near a small bowling lane - Aaron and Ethan both play a game of tenpin bowling. Their pints in hand.

They both laugh amongst the punchlines of each other's conversations, and their amateur attempts at bowling.

The chemistry between them both is alight.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY RECEPTION DESK - DAY

The sudden sound of shouting voices, immediately prompts Liam to look towards the fruit and game machines that are north of where he sits.

Malik Sutcliffe stands amongst the group of several untoward looking youths crowding in the corridor.

Liam peers in closer, as Malik passes one of the youths a small bag of white powder.

Liam watches silently.

Malik soon catches Liam's stare, and grins back.

Liam remains still, staring blankly at Malik. His arms now folded.

INT. GRANTS HOUSE - DAY

The doorbell sounds loudly in the hallway.

Grant quickly walks towards the door. He straightens his underwear, adjusting it from under his trousers.

He shoots a quick glance at his reflection in a small mirror beside the door - before carefully opening it.

A YOUNG MAN (19) walks inside the hallway - he is handsome, athletic.

Grant smiles at the man, he says nothing.

They both say nothing.

They start to kiss.

INT. SERIOUS CRIME UNIT OFFICE - DAY

Olivia, Rhys and colleagues NEIL (32) and GILL (39) surround a box file-laden desk in the police station office.

Echoes of staff voices and telephones ringing loudly in the background, fill the bustling room.

Olivia talks to her colleagues as she quickly types, her focus is on PC the monitor in front of her.

OLIVIA

Right, so. We've contacted Barry's family?

Gill leans in.

GILL

Yeah, did that an hour ago. Fetched someone down from Digbeth Station to go to his address. He's - was, local to there. They'll let the wife know.

OLIVIA

(TUTTING)

Poor woman.

GILL

I know, and his kids. Jesus. Imagine not knowing your husband was up to all that. You know, double life.

Olivia quickly interrupts.

OLIVIA

Forensics come back with anything?

Neil looks up from the file that he is reading.

NEIL

Well they're not sure if it's being treated as suspicious yet.

(PAUSE)

And with the scene being the way it was, you know.

RHYS

The way it was?

NEIL

Well it was a right party wasn't it? Poppers, ale, drugs? Choking on his own vomit? Looks like he had a right, you know, gay old time.

Gill sniggers, she tries to stop her face from creasing.

GILL

Fuck off Neil, that's awful mate.

Rhys stands up.

RHYS

(RAISED VOICE)

Well I don't think that we -

Rhys is interrupted, as Chief Superintendent SPENCER COOKE (52) walks into the room.

He is borderline overweight. His hair is unruly, fine and dark. The grease in which, casts a slight shine on top of his head.

Despite these flaws in his appearance, his uniform is immaculate.

He bellows towards Olivia and her other colleagues.

SPENCER

Hartford. What have we got?

Olivia straightens her posture and turns away from her computer to respond.

OLIVIA

Couple of minor assaults Sarge, nothing to worry about as such.

Rhys walks away from the desk. Olivia side glances.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

One shooting, Park Road. Couple of city centre stabbings, Saturday just gone. They're with licensing at the moment.

SPENCER

Fucks sake. Go on.

OLIVIA

Missing child. Gill will tell you more on that. And we've got a man found dead in a hotel room.

SPENCER

What's the intel on that?

OLIVIA

So far? We're not treating it as suspicious. Trying to locate the rest of the, party.

Spencer quickly raises his eyebrows, urging Olivia to speed up.

SPENCER

Uh huh.

OLIVIA

But there were drugs, alcohol - appears he choked on his own vomit. Potential heart attack. He was using one of those gay apps, and we found poppers near the body - so.

SPENCER

Yeah party hard, die young them lot.

(SIGHS)

Shame.

GILL

I've informed the family sarge.

SPENCER

(SCOFFS)

A family? Disgraceful.

Olivia, Gill and Neil all look at each other in unison.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Get on top of these assaults. Stabbings. Fucking news are all over that shite. We've got our purple flag status review - and that's our priority.

Spencer lowers his voice, and leans in towards the other officers.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

And not some fucking closet fairy, overdosing on coke in some hotel room I'm afraid. You get me?

Spencer shoots his glance to each of the colleagues.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

We lose this status, and the force ends up looking like it's ran by a bunch of idiots who can't handle their own fucking arses - let alone the city.

GILL, NEIL, OLIVIA

Sarge.

Spencer swiftly leans away.

SPENCER

Hartford, check back with forensics.

(UNDER BREATH)

And, in the meantime, shelve the poof. You've got a lot to crack on with.

OLIVIA

Sarge.

All of the colleagues stare back at each other in unison, as Spencer immediately departs the office, slamming the door behind him.

TWO WEEKS LATER...

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Friends Ethan, Josiah and MARK (44) sit around a small cluttered restaurant table. They have finished eating their food.

A WAITER (19) brings them another round of drinks, simultaneously clearing their plates from the table as he does so.

ETHAN

I've had about three sessions now.

(RELIEVED SIGH)

She's good, Kate. Really good.

Ethan nods, as he takes a sip from his fresh drink.

Mark replies, with slight over-enthusiasm.

MARK

Good.

JOSIAH

See, I told you. She came highly recommended - put it that way.

Josiah puts one hand over the side of his face, directing his mouth within Mark and Ethan's earshot.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

(DISCREETLY)

Our legal clerk, Sylvia, had some pretty messy ex-spouse issues.

Mark smirks. Ethan continues.

ETHAN

And, of course, things are going really well with Aaron.

Mark claps.

MARK

Yay. When can we meet him?

Ethan tries not to laugh. Josiah shoots Mark a confused stare.

ETHAN

Soon. It's early days, yeah. But ultimately, I suppose, it's kept me sober. And, most of all, off those apps.

MARK

Yes. And another plus - he's not that cheating jock, idiot, 'bimboy' Grant.

They all laugh.

MARK (CONT'D)

More to the point though - you're better off without those "dating" apps anyway.

Mark signifies the inverted commas, with each of his hand's first two fingers.

MARK (CONT'D)

Full. Of. Weirdos.

ETHAN

Yeah, I've met a fair few like.

Ethan and Josiah both lock eyes, and smirk.

JOSIAH

I was messaging this man once.
Really fit. We were talking for a
while.

MARK

Two hours?

JOSIAH

(LAUGHS)

Fuck off.

(COMPOSES SERIOUSNESS)

Anyway, all seemed normal - we were
going to meet up. And then
suddenly, out of the blue, he asks
me if I'm okay with him wearing a
nappy.

Ethan laughs out loud, hard - slamming his hands down on the
table as he does so.

INT. SERIOUS CRIME UNIT OFFICE - DAY

Olivia works alone at her desk.

Fellow officer, PETER BEDFORD (40), slowly walks up to
Olivia's desk. Olivia does not break her concentration from
typing.

Peter smiles as he approaches her.

PETER

How's it going?

Olivia looks up. And then immediately back to her computer
screen.

PETER (CONT'D)

I've heard you're being pressed by
the media about that Barry guy? The
one they found in the hotel room?

OLIVIA

Sorry? Oh, yeah. Yeah, I am.

Olivia points to her PC screen.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Currently trawling through footage
as we speak. It took them long
enough to give us it. Not exactly
sure this is going to prove to be
anything substantial anyway.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

We got everything we needed from the scene, in my opinion.

PETER

(LAUGHING)

You ever get a chance to relax?

Olivia snaps.

OLIVIA

What's that supposed to mean?

Peter holds his hands up in metaphoric defence.

PETER

Oh no, I only meant. I just meant, do you ever like going for a drink? Unwind after this hell hole.

Olivia quickly drops her guard.

OLIVIA

Ignore me, sorry. Long day.

PETER

(LAUGHS)

I get it. Do you fancy grabbing a drink now? You look like you could do with one. I know I could.

OLIVIA

I would, but. Looks like I'm taking this home tonight.

Olivia briefly smiles, and points back to the PC screen.

PETER

If you ever fancy it though? Some time soon then?

Olivia casually nods.

PETER (CONT'D)

Maybe even get a bite to eat? Anyway.

(SIGHS)

See you tomorrow, no doubt.

Peter smiles at Olivia. He walks away, and throws his satchel bag over one shoulder as he leaves the room.

Olivia stops typing, and looks back in Peter's direction.

She then retains her focus, and looks back at the CCTV on her computer monitor.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Ethan, Mark, and Josiah - continue to laugh amongst themselves around the restaurant table.

JOSIAH

He said it was A, B - something?

Mark stares confusedly at Josiah, as he lifts his cocktail glass from the table.

ETHAN

Oh my god. ABDL. "Adult baby diaper lover".

MARK

Jesus Christ.

JOSIAH

A fucking nappy though?

Ethan continues to laugh, as Mark takes a sip from his cocktail glass. He places it back down on the table in front of him.

MARK

Well, all jokes aside. I've actually got a pretty fucked up dating app story myself.

Josiah rolls his eyes.

JOSIAH

Oh god, here we go.

Ethan finally stops laughing to himself, and pushes Josiah's shoulder playfully. He leans in closer to Mark.

ETHAN

Go on?

Mark clears his throat, re-composes his focus, and continues.

MARK

OK. So, I was reading this article a while back.

JOSIAH

Okay.

MARK

And there was this girl.

JOSIAH

Specific.

Ethan hits Josiah's shoulder. Less playfully this time.

ETHAN

Shut up. Go on, Mark.

Mark long rolls his eyes, and continues.

MARK

So this, girl - meets a man on
Tinder.

Josiah smirks. He slowly raises his glass from the table and takes a sip of his Gin cocktail.

MARK (CONT'D)

She's speaking to him for weeks.
Months maybe. I can't remember.
Anyway - they eventually set up a
date, and they both meet up.

Ethan nods, raising one eyebrow. With both his, and Josiah's gaze now firmly fixed on Mark.

MARK (CONT'D)

The date goes well, they both get
along, everything seems fine. But
during the meal, the woman suddenly
feels very sick - so she decides to
call it a night.

ETHAN

Right?

MARK

On route home, the woman feels a
bit guilty for cutting things
short. You know? So, she invites
the man back to her house - for a
quick coffee.

Ethan's stare now darts between Mark and Josiah.

ETHAN

Okay?

MARK

So they have a coffee, a nice chat -
and then eventually, he leaves.

Josiah looks at Mark - waiting for more. Unimpressed.

JOSIAH
Is that it?

MARK
(ANNOYED)
No.

Ethan impatiently waves his hands at both friends - ending their spat, and restoring the momentum of the story.

ETHAN
Go on.

MARK
The woman still feels awful - worse now, in fact. So she finally decides to go to bed and sleep it off.

Ethan holds his hand to his face.

ETHAN
(SLIGHTLY MUFFLED)
Why do I get the feeling I'm not going to like how this ends.

Mark continues, without responding.

INT. ETHANS APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan's bedroom is half-lit by the dusk sunset, that breaks through the half-drawn fabric curtains.

Scattered photos of Ethan and his friends line the painted, off-white walls.

A large, grey, body-length mirror - stands tall in the corner of the room. Ethan's dark, oak, wardrobe door is visible in its reflection.

MARK (V.O)
In the middle of the night, she hears this noise. Like her furniture being moved around. Something like that. So, convinced that she's being burgled, naturally, she calls the police.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Mark looks at each friend one by one. He sighs.

MARK

The Police arrive, and the woman gives them permission to break the door down. Just because she's too frightened to go back downstairs. Obviously.

- FLASHBACK -

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

There is a loud bang, metal against wood - echoing from the nearby hallway.

Moments later - three Police Officers cautiously walk through the open doorway and into the empty, still-lit, living area.

Furniture is clearly askew, half covered in plastic sheeting. With one, large plastic sheet on the floor in the centre of the room.

Each officer appears bemused, as they separately walk to inspect different corners of the scene.

MARK (V.O.)

When the Police finally get into the property - nobody's there. They've left, so it seems, through the back door.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Josiah frowns, tilting his head.

MARK

But, what they do find - very oddly. Is that all of the living room furniture has been covered in plastic sheeting.

JOSIAH

Huh?

Mark peers in closer to both Ethan and Josiah. His eyes narrow.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

One POLICE OFFICER (54) stops at the nearby dining table. He immediately shouts across the room, to attract the attention of his other colleagues.

On the dining table lies some rope, a hammer, and a slightly rusted saw.

MARK (V.O.)

(SINISTER TONE)

It only makes sense - when officers later find some rope, a hammer, and a large saw on a nearby dining table.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Both Josiah and Ethan stare blankly, aghast.

They remain sat down, frozen in their seats - as Mark slowly retracts back into his former position.

JOSIAH

Fuck. Off.

MARK

He'd unsuccessfully spiked her drink during the meal. With the sole intention of her, going to him.

Ethan holds one hand to his mouth.

MARK (CONT'D)

And, when he arrived at her house - he realised he was too unprepared; so he stole her house key as she made him a cup of coffee.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Somebody, who we can not see, is slowly climbing the staircase ascending to Ethan's apartment.

Their footsteps slow, soft.

MARK (V.O.)

He returned later that night while she slept upstairs, with the key that he'd stolen.

(MORE)

MARK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He came back, to carry out what he'd always planned to do from the start.

The footsteps stop at Ethan's apartment door.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Mark leans closer into his friends, his eyes narrow.

MARK

Right from that very moment. The moment he chose his unsuspecting victim.

Ethan shudders. He is silent.

Josiah suddenly roars, laughing out loud.

JOSIAH

Oh god, don't tell Ethan that. He lost his house key after his date with Aaron last week.

MARK

Really?

JOSIAH

(LAUGHING)
Seriously.

ETHAN

Stop it. It's not funny.

Ethan's head turns to Marks.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I came home from my date the other week and it was missing. It must have fallen out of my jacket, or pocket when I was bowling.

JOSIAH

(LAUGHING)
I had to drive down and give him the spare.

Josiah quickly composes himself.

ETHAN

I can't even remember having it when I got there to be honest?
(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I was running to get there because I'd missed my bus. Must have dropped it then.

JOSIAH

Still. Fucked up story that.

ETHAN

Horrifying. Imagine? I think that story alone would stop me from ever going on Tinder again.

MARK

Well, that's just it isn't it? You never really know who you're talking to, do you?

Ethan shoots a worried look.

ETHAN

God, I'm meeting Aaron now as well.

Mark laughs, as Josiah suddenly glances at his phone screen - lit up by a recent notification.

Ethan and Mark now talk amongst themselves.

Josiah's expression suddenly resembles complete concentration, as several moments pass.

He then reads out the headline from the local news article he is reading, to the rest of the table.

JOSIAH

(READING ALOUD)

Gay sex app mystery, and unexplained death of unidentified man found dead in city hotel room.

Ethan and Mark both look up from their drinks.

INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ethan's bedroom is still. The hue of the dusk light, now illuminates his walls in a golden amber.

In the tall mirror's reflection, the oak wardrobe door - starts to slowly move.

EXT. LIVERPOOL CITY CENTRE - NIGHT

Aaron and Ethan are walking amongst masses of late-night Christmas shoppers. Every shop window they walk past is festively decorated.

AARON

Well this is nice, isn't it?

ETHAN

What?

AARON

The John Lewis window display.

ETHAN

Oh. Yeah?

Aaron laughs.

AARON

This you tit. Us. Dating, at Christmas?

(SMOOTHLY)

Romantic AF.

Ethan shoots Aaron a look of jovial disapproval.

ETHAN

Yes, it is, actually.

AARON

I just never thought a couple of weeks back that I'd be doing this with you, you know. Even if it is early days. Didn't think you'd bat an eyelid at me.

ETHAN

(SARCASTICALLY)

Speak for yourself. I was shocked you'd even want to see me!

(SERIOUSLY)

You know, in my train wreck phase.

Aaron stops Ethan from walking momentarily.

AARON

So you got a little drunk from time to time. Hardly off the rails is it? You were coping with being fucked around by an idiot. You were hurting. I get that.

Ethan beams a closed smile to himself, and momentarily leans his head into Aarons's shoulder.

AARON (CONT'D)

I'm, well.

Aaron struggles to form a sentence.

ETHAN

You're what?

AARON

I don't want to scare you.

Ethan stands to face Aaron directly.

ETHAN

Oh god, what? I've had enough of that today.

AARON

What?

ETHAN

It doesn't matter. Honestly.

AARON

OK?

(PAUSE)

Well. What I'm trying to say is, that I think I'm really starting to like you. You know?

(SPEAKS SLOWLY)

Like you.

Ethan breathes a sigh of relief. Laughing to himself.

ETHAN

I really, like you, too. And, my friends can't wait to meet you either.

Aaron smiles. They both continue to walk, skirting around a busy shop doorway. A MAN (24) exits the shop, he is carrying several bags.

Ethan meets his eye. But he isn't looking at Ethan - he's looking at Aaron. Aaron stares back at him.

Once the pair are shortly past, Ethan continues.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Know him?

AARON

No. Do you?

Ethan pauses slightly as they both continue to walk. He knows Aaron is lying.

ETHAN

No.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Wright family, and Olivia, are sat at a large, wooden, kitchen table. They are eating their evening meal. The kitchen is modern, expensive.

Hannah's two children OTTO (6) and LUNA (3) are squabbling amongst each other. As Hannah, Michael, and Olivia sit slightly aside from both children.

HANNAH

So Liv, how are you feeling this week? We haven't seen you much recently, have we Michael? You're just in and out, aren't you?

Michael raises his head upwards. Unsure of what was just said, and afraid to ask his wife to repeat the question.

OLIVIA

Works so busy. We've got a backload of cases. Several serious assaults. Days of CCTV to trawl through.

HANNAH

Oh gosh. Sounds awful. Doesn't it Michael?

MICHAEL

Yes, love.

OLIVIA

Well, there's some people that bring it on themselves to be quite honest.

Hannah looks across at her husband, then back to Olivia.

HANNAH

Thing is Liv, I've been meaning to talk to you about this.

OLIVIA

Talk about what?

HANNAH
Well, Craig.

OLIVIA
What about him?

HANNAH
It's been weeks now. And, and well,
he came here the other day when you
were in work.

MICHAEL
He just said he'd like to talk to
you Liv. You know, before you sign
anything.

OLIVIA
I've got nothing to say to him.

HANNAH
What he did was awful Liv. I know.
Men are idiots sometimes. We both
know that. They just think with.

Hannah immediately turns to her husband.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Sorry Michael.

Michael does not respond. He holds his hands up in front of
him as if he is in surrender.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
What I'm trying to say Liv, is -

OLIVIA
No.

HANNAH
If you just hear him out. Before
you start divorce proceedings. You
should let him explain himself.

OLIVIA
Absolutely not.

HANNAH
(MORE ASSERTIVELY)
Well you just don't know, do you? I
mean, if you don't, you might
regret it Liv.

Olivia throws her cutlery down on her plate. Otto and Luna stop their now silent squabbling at the crashing sound of the metal hitting ceramic. They both stare at Olivia.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

For god's sake Liv you -

OLIVIA

- Never mind for god's sake. Don't tell me that I should reconcile with that cheating piece of shit, just in case I might regret it.

HANNAH

(UNDER HER BREATH)

Keep your voice down in front of my children.

OLIVIA

I won't. You keep your fucking nose out of my divorce.

HANNAH

Michael.

MICHAEL

Liv, come on.

OLIVIA

Do you know what he did to me? Do you know what he's done to my life?

HANNAH

I know he's hurt you. I know -

OLIVIA

- You don't know shit.

HANNAH

Pardon?

OLIVIA

You think that with your perfect home, perfect life; that everyone else should follow suit, and lead by your fucking perfect example.

HANNAH

No I don't.

OLIVIA

Yes you do. You think you're some sort of expert on married life. Better than everyone else.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

The messiah of fucking marriage counselling.

HANNAH

Right, that's enough.

OLIVIA

When in actual fact, Han - your marriage isn't that far off ending up like mine really, is it?

HANNAH

Michael are you going to let her -

OLIVIA

Let me what? Tell you that you're a bully, and that your husband's constantly living in fear of putting one foot wrong in front of you?

HANNAH

Get out.

OLIVIA

Don't worry, I am.

Olivia stands up. She pushes her chair back into the kitchen wall with the force of her standing legs.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I appreciate you helping me stay here, I really do.

Hannah scoffs loudly. She leans back in her chair and folds her arms.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

But don't you dare try to convince me to question the decision I've made to divorce Craig.

Olivia walks towards the kitchen doorway. Hannah bolts quickly upright, slamming her hands down hard on the dinner table in front of her.

HANNAH

(SCREAMING)

Well if you weren't so hard to love in the first place, Liv - then perhaps none of this would have even happened.

Olivia stops. She turns towards her sister. Her face lost in expression. Unable to move.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan is preparing food in the open-plan kitchen / living area. Aaron sits across from where Ethan stands, at a small dinner table, on his mobile phone.

Aaron is typing a message on his phone screen, as Ethan stops cooking momentarily to talk.

ETHAN

What you up to?

AARON

Oh, just work. Nothing.

Aaron stands up from his chair and walks towards Ethan. He hugs him from behind, as Ethan starts placing vegetables into the frying pan on the stove in front of him.

ETHAN

About before, when you said you liked me.

AARON

What about it?

ETHAN

Well. I wasn't really telling you the whole truth.

AARON

So you don't like me?

Ethan laughs. He gently pushes Aaron off him, as he turns around to face him.

ETHAN

Don't be fucking stupid Aaron.

Aaron laughs.

AARON

Then what?

ETHAN

I really like you. Really like you. And I suppose I'm just afraid to admit that to myself incase, you know.

AARON
I'm not Grant.

ETHAN
Exactly. Which, well, is why I
think I'm starting to fall in love
with you.

A wave of happiness fills Aarons face.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
I know it's quick. But we just have
this connection.

AARON
Well, Ethan Paige. I most certainly
think I'm falling in love with you
too.

They both kiss.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Olivia throws the last remaining bag of her belongings into the back of the cluttered Vauxhall Astra. She slams the back passenger door shut.

She climbs inside the driver's seat and starts the ignition, pulling the driver's door shut - with equal force.

She reverses fast, screeching to a braking halt in the road outside the driveway. She revs the engine hard, and speeds off into the night.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan has set the small table with cutlery and other condiments.

Aaron is sat back down at the table, he is using his phone again.

Ethan walks to the table with the pan of sizzling hot food, trying to serve it on to both of their plates. He misses, and spills some food onto the table.

In a panic, Ethan's unsteady arm jolts and the hot pan he is holding burns his hand.

ETHAN
Fuck.

Aaron jumps up from his chair, placing his phone down on the table.

AARON

It's okay. I'll help.

Aaron darts for the kitchen in search of something to mop up the spillage. Ethan runs back to the kitchen. He drops the hot pan by the kitchen sink.

ETHAN

Shit. I've burnt my hand.

Aaron quickly turns to Ethan to inspect his injuries.

AARON

Looks like a scald. You'll live.

Ethan ignores Aaron's diagnosis, and searches for a nearby tea towel.

ETHAN

I've left the tea towels in the washing downstairs. I'll just -

AARON

- No. I'll go. You get that hand under a cold tap. Watch that pan.

Ethan silently nods, and places his hand under the cold tap in the kitchen - avoiding the nearby, still sizzling, pan.

Aaron then heads out of the apartment, to retrieve the washing from the downstairs communal facilities.

As Ethan stands patiently, his hand under the soothing cold water - Aaron's phone 'pings' on the table. It is still unlocked.

Ethan hesitates.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Aaron unloads Ethan's washing from the communal washing machine into a large grey plastic basket. The communal area is filled with two large washing machines and one tumble dryer.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan is sat at the small kitchen table. He is holding Aaron's phone in his hands. It 'pings' again. No notification appears.

Ethan searches through the app folder - and finds the Grindr app, with the optional discreet logo.

Ethan opens the app.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Aaron struggles to hold the heavy washing basket as he makes his way up the stairs. An item of clothing falls onto the staircase, forcing Aaron to stop and pick it up.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan, still sat at the table, opens the Grindr inbox. There are several messages - but one stands out.

It's from the man that Ethan and Aaron saw earlier that day.

The man that Aaron denied knowing.

There is a long conversation. The latest message reads:

"Didn't know that was your boyfriend. I've met him before. Wasn't the best though. He was that drunk, I doubt he'd even remember."

Ethan exhales deeply. His face sinks. He continues to read:

"Come round after you've seen him if you like? I'm sure I'll show you a better time :)"

The front door opens.

AARON

Well this was heavier than I anticipated it to be.

Aaron stops. He places the washing basket down on a nearby piece of furniture. Ethan stares across at him from the table - Aaron's phone still in his hand.

ETHAN

So you did know him then.

AARON

Yeah, and so did you.

ETHAN
(SHOUTING)
Well I'm not the one who's still
messaging him on Grindr though, am
I?

Ethan briefly pauses. He then returns stability to his voice.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Get out.

AARON
Listen, Ethan I can -

ETHAN
- No, please, don't bother. I think
it's obvious what's going on here.

AARON
I was only on Grindr, because -
well, I wanted to check if you
were.

ETHAN
Fuck off.

AARON
Don't tell me to fuck off.

ETHAN
I think you need to leave. Maybe
head to James's house on the way
back.

Ethan points the phone screen at Aaron. The profile named
'James - 23' is highlighted on the bright screen.

AARON
Have you read it all?

ETHAN
I've read enough.

Aaron's tone suddenly becomes desperate.

AARON
Listen. I do know him. I met him a
couple of times but -

ETHAN
- Get out. I don't want to know.
God I'm so fucking stupid.

AARON
I haven't met him while me and you
have been dating. I haven't met
anyone. I swear.

Ethan glances back at Aaron's phone, placing it back down on
the table beside him.

ETHAN
(REITERATING COLDLY)
Come round after you've seen him if
you like?

Aaron's face drops.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Apparently I'm not, that good,
either.

AARON
I didn't know he was going to say
those things. Ethan, I swear I
wasn't going to meet him.

Ethan looks up at Aaron, coldly.

ETHAN
Well if you hadn't already, it
certainly seems like you were about
to.

AARON
I was going to delete it.

ETHAN
Get out.

AARON
I swear.

ETHAN
(SHOUTS)
- Get out now.

Aaron doesn't argue with Ethan's final demand.

He picks up his keys from the nearby worktop, his coat from
the hanger on the wall, and leaves.

INT. SHABBY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Olivia opens the door to the dimly lit, and mostly beige hotel room. The wallpaper is stained. The furnishings are well-worn.

Olivia sighs deeply, as she throws her heavy shoulder bag onto the bed in front of her.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan pours a glass of wine from the bottle next to him at the already laid table. He takes several drinks from the glass, one after another.

He downloads the Grindr app, and logs back into his account. Within seconds Ethan is scrolling through countless profiles.

Suddenly, he stops at several instant messages - some old, some recent; from a very familiar chiselled torso.

Alexander.

The charming, yet rude, businessman he'd met previously - and unbeknown to him, his therapist Kate's brother-in-law.

Ethan hesitates momentarily - and then sends a reply.

INT. GRAND APARTMENT - NIGHT

A man sits on the large, expensive sofa. His arm only visible, as he holds out a smartphone in one hand.

The phone screen displays a Grindr chat window, and Ethan's reply is suddenly displayed. The profile photo shows Ethan, sat in a café, smiling.

The man starts to reply.

In the background, on a large white rug beside the sofa, a mans figure can be seen. Naked. Still.

The lit nearby fireplace, and its flickering light - casts amber reflections on the clear plastic bag that is placed over his head.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Seconds later, Ethan's response receives a reply:

"Come now."

Ethan quickly downs another drink of wine. He throws on his coat, and leaves the apartment.

EXT. CITY CENTRE STREET - NIGHT

Ethan quickly paces across Liverpool City Centre. It's cold. Shoppers have dispersed, leaving only drunk revellers in their place.

There is still no reply to Ethan's confirmation message to Alexander. Ethan sends another message - carefully dodging a group of rowdy drinkers.

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

There is still no reply from Alexander as Ethan rings the intercom.

No answer. Ethan tries again.

Ethan re-checks his phone, and sends another Grindr message.

Suddenly, Ethan spots a young man wearing a yellow jacket and black baseball cap walking through the entrance hallway.

Ethan quickly darts to the side of the door out of view, as the young man leaves the building. The wide-open apartment building door slowly closing behind him. Ethan sneaks inside.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ethan exits the lift and makes his way along the corridor towards Alexander's apartment. Once he arrives at the large, white oak apartment front door - he notices that it is slightly ajar.

ETHAN
(UNDER HIS BREATH)
Okay.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan steps inside Alexander's hallway.

ETHAN
Hello?

Faint music can be heard playing from the dimly lit living area, ahead of where Ethan stands:

"Pet Shop Boys feat. Dusty Springfield: What have I done to deserve this?"

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Hey?

There is no reply.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Alex? I'm here.

Ethan walks further into the hallway towards the living area.

He notices Alexander's thighs first.

The initial sight of his toned legs, immediately relaxes Ethan into accepting the false alarm.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Ah. Really? Role play?

(LAUGHS)

I nearly didn't bother coming in you know.

Ethan stops dead in his tracks.

He has now moved past the hallway doorframe, and up past the initial pleasing sight of Alexander's thighs; as he lies on his side, on the living area carpet.

Now that Ethan is closer - the dim light from the glowing fire ahead, brings everything into focus.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Alex?

Alexander lies on the thick grey rug, his torso turned slightly on its side. His toned, naked body lies as still as stone. His body is grey, chalk-like.

A large, clear plastic bag covers Alexander's head. It is taped at the edges securely around his neck with thick, grey duct tape.

Alexander's still, twisted expression of fear - his eyes wide open; can be made out through the gaps in the bag's condensation - from his last dying breaths.

EXT. BUSY CITY CENTRE STREET - NIGHT

A man wearing a yellow jacket races through the crowds of busy Christmas shoppers.

INT. SHABBY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Olivia sits on the hotel room's double bed. Her legs crossed. Her work laptop placed in front of her.

She is trawling through CCTV footage of the hotel, from the time of Barry's death.

She stops, suddenly, at an image frame on the screen.

A man wearing a yellow, hooded jacket with a black cap - exits a lift. His head, face down.

Olivia's eyes suddenly tighten at the screen.

EXT. BUSY CITY CENTRE STREET - NIGHT

The running man stops - at a secluded, dimly lit side street.

Extractor vents from nearby restaurants, pour steam into the alley - clouding in the crisp, cold air.

The man slowly removes his hood and cap. He is out of breath.

It is Liam Bower.

- END CREDITS -

Title Song: "Pet Shop Boys feat. Dusty Springfield: What have I done to deserve this?"

EPISODE THREE

Written by

Andrew Pankhurst



EPISODE THREE

"THE END OF THE WORLD"

FADE IN:

TWO MONTHS AGO

- FLASHBACK -

EXT. CITY CENTRE STREET - NIGHT

Liam Bower paces across the busy, city high street.

He quickly wipes away tears with the sleeve of his yellow jacket that form in wells beneath his eyes.

He glances down at the cracked screen of his smartphone. The Grindr profile, 'Barry', is displayed on the screen.

The familiar photo of a man in his thirties, with dark and ruggedly handsome features, fills the display.

Liam continues to message the profile, and power walk simultaneously through nearby crowds of people.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A loud 'ping' sounds - and the old, metal, lift doors struggle to prise themselves apart.

Liam exits the lift carriage, and walks out into the corridor.

He brushes away droplets of rain from his jacket, that he has now disrobed and folded over one arm.

He wears a white shirt and black tie - with matching black pants. A stained grey service apron, tied around his waist.

The rattling sound of a Chambermaid, her heavy breathing, as she wheels a service trolley in Liam's direction - fills the corridor.

As Liam passes the Maid, their eyes immediately lock.

Her face remains straight, stone like. Her cold eyes inspect Liam, up, and down - until he finally clears her wide torso.

The Chambermaid backs the service trolley into one of the nearby rooms, without knocking. Her eyes fixed on Liam, until the door shuts firmly behind her.

Liam turns towards one of the doors. He is finally standing outside room 242.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A fine, smoky haze clouds the hotel room.

Barry Murphy walks to a small desk, that also houses a small TV and conference call telephone.

Two glass tumblers, sit next to the telephone.

His cigarette in hand, Barry picks up a half empty bottle of Jack Daniels whisky. He raises it in front of Liam.

BARRY

Drink?

Liam forces words out. His frame rigid.

LIAM

Just, a small one. Please.

Barry nods upwards, and tightens the chord on his ill fitting, white bath robe.

BARRY

Suit yourself.

He starts to pour whisky into each of the two glasses. The final of which, starts to softly fizz on contact with the liquid.

Barry places one hand over the top of the glass, muffling the faint sound. He grabs a nearby bottle of opened Pepsi and pours it into each of the glasses, filling them both to the brim.

BARRY (CONT'D)

There you go mate.

Barry hands a tumbler to Liam. He nods in the direction of a small armchair beside the bed.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

Liam takes the glass from Barry, smiles politely, and walks towards the chair.

He immediately takes a small sip of his drink, and winces.

Barry sits beside Liam, on the edge of the bed.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Fit you lad, aren't you, hey? How
old are you?

Liam looks at Barry. His hands placed firmly on his knees.
His form, still stiff.

LIAM

Twenty.

Barry looks at Liam, and smiles. His upper lip moves to
reveal his stained, off-white teeth.

Black decay forms in the corner of one of his canines.

BARRY

Nice. Very nice.

Barry takes a long drag from his lit cigarette. He looks to
his glass, and then back to Liam.

He exhales a thick cloud of grey smoke - and immediately
downs the contents of the tumbler in one large gulp.

His eyes do not break contact with Liam's as he does so.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Come on lad. Plenty more of that to
get through.

Liam glances at his drink, and then back towards Barry.

He slowly starts to sip from the glass. Faster. Until it is
gone.

Barry starts to laugh.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Thats a lad.

Half an hour passes.

Liam stands upright from his chair.

Immediately he falls sideways. Propping himself up, with one
arm on the side of the chair.

Barry stands, and grasps Liam's shoulder.

BARRY (CONT'D)
Steady lad. Come here.

LIAM
(CONFUSED)
I. I don't feel -

BARRY
- No, you're alright. Just lie down
here for a second.

LIAM
No. I, I feel sick.

Liam stumbles forwards from the chair.

Barry intervenes, and pushes him face down onto the bed.

BARRY
(CALMLY)
That's a lad. There you go.

Liam breathes heavily.

He slowly moves his head to the side. His eyes stare blankly
out in front of him.

He moves his arms. He pushes against the bed. Nothing.

There is a sudden, soft knock at the hotel room door.

LIAM
(SLOWLY AND MUFFLED)
No. Wait.

Barry walks to the door. He discreetly pulls it open,
standing to one side.

Two MEN #1(58) and #2(52), slowly walk into the room.

Barry greets them inside, as if they had never left.

BARRY
This ones had a bit, too much, to
drink.

Barry laughs. Both men look to him, smirking.

Liam lies on the bed. Paralysed. His breathing races.

One of the men walks towards Liam and starts to remove his
service apron.

MAN #1
How much did you give him?

BARRY
Enough. Just to get him, you know,
in the mood.

MAN #1
How much? You've got to be careful
with this stuff it -

MAN #2
- How old? Eighteen?

BARRY
Twenty. Young looking though, isn't
he?

Man #2 strokes one finger against Liam's back, where his skin is now exposed between his trousers and his half untucked shirt.

MAN #2
Smooth.

Man #2 starts to unbuckle his trouser belt, as Barry reaches under Liam's trousers and starts to remove them - pulling them down.

His underwear next.

Several moments pass.

Liam lies on the bed. His face half pressed into the sheets by a man's large hand.

He is being raped.

INT. HOTEL STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Man #1 and Man #2 carry Liam - still rigid, unresponsive; discreetly into the empty, dimly lit, hotel stairwell.

They lay him, two floors down, on the exposed grey concrete landing beneath their feet.

MAN #2
(SLOWLY)
Bit too much to drink haven't you
mate. You can sleep it off here.

He pats Liam on the back. Dropping his jacket down on the floor beside him.

Liam mumbles incoherently.

MAN #1
Shouldn't we put him outside?

Man #1 shoots the other a look of instant disdain.

MAN #2
You fucking thick?

Man #1 does not reply.

The two men then speedily depart down the dark stairwell.

Liam lies, sprawled across the floor, his eyes wide. He breathes heavily for several moments.

He vomits.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

PRESENT DAY

INT. ALEXANDER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan vomits into the toilet.

He is slumped, his arms spread across the edge of the basin, in Alexander's bathroom.

His breathing frantic. His body shaking.

Alexander's dead body is still visible from the bathroom doorway.

The lounge fire dances amber reflections off the plastic bag, that is still placed over his head.

Ethan moves one arm away from the toilet - his free hand clambers around inside his jean and jacket pockets for his mobile phone.

He slowly unlocks his phone, dials '999' and presses the green call button.

Ethans trembling hand raises the phone up to his ear.

An OPERATORS voice is barely audible on the other line.

OPERATOR

Emergency. What service do you require?

Ethan freezes.

OPERATOR (CONT'D)

Hello? Emergency. Which service do you require?

Ethan speaks. His voice distorted. Confused.

ETHAN

He's, dead. He's. Somebody's killed him.

The sound of the operator's concerned voice, fades into nothing. As Ethan's hand, his phone in its grasp, falls down to his side.

- OPENING CREDITS -

INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Olivia and Rhys climb into the force patrol car, and when seated, close the car doors in unintentional unison.

Rhys holds a large, brown paper bag, from the Chinese takeaway restaurant that they have just left.

He passes Olivia a large noodle box, and some disposable chopsticks.

OLIVIA

Did you not get a fork?

RHYS

Oh. Er.

Rhys delves his hand back into the brown paper bag. His face then lights up with a cheeky grin.

RHYS (CONT'D)

Ta-dah.

Olivia smiles.

RHYS (CONT'D)

About time you got a good meal down you anyway.

Rhys immediately starts to pile noodles from his takeaway box, into his mouth.

RHYS (CONT'D)
(STILL CHEWING)
You're working too much, and not eating enough.

Olivia's smile immediately retracts.

OLIVIA
I am eating, thanks.
(PAUSE)
I just don't have much of an appetite at the moment.

RHYS
Well, I'm just saying you need to take more care of yourself.

Olivia barks back.

OLIVIA
Jesus christ Rhys. I was feeling quite good about ten seconds ago.

RHYS
I just -

OLIVIA
- Why don't you try going through a divorce, and then having to live in a fucking travel lodge? See how well you stick to your five a day then.

The pair are momentarily silent. Rhys continues to chew.

Olivia places her fork back in her open noodle box. She takes a deep breath, biting her bottom lip before she speaks.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Look, I'm sorry.

Rhys exhales through his nose, his lips pursed.

RHYS
It's ok.

OLIVIA
No, actually it's not. I'm.
(SIGHS)
I'm just not myself at the moment.

Olivia holds her hand to her forehead.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
There's a lot going on, and.

RHYS
I know. I shouldn't have -

OLIVIA
(RAISED VOICE)
- But you don't know. That's the
thing. You don't know half of it.

Rhys turns to look out of the passenger window.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
(LOWERS VOICE)
But I shouldn't have snapped.
(PAUSE)
I shouldn't have said those things,
during that robbery. The Murphy
case.

Rhys turns back to look at Olivia, his eyebrows knitted.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
It was wrong of me. And I was
insensitive. And I'm sorry. Listen,
I know it's still no excuse - but
when I'm ready, I'll tell you why.
I just.

Rhys smiles, and interrupts.

RHYS
Apology accepted.

Olivia softly smiles back. She starts to quietly laugh to herself.

OLIVIA
I'll tell you one thing though, if
you're thinking about getting into
a relationship, now I know it'll be
with a man - don't bother. Not.
Fucking. Worth it.

Rhys laughs. He shoots Olivia a look of amusement.

RHYS
I can't see that happening any time
soon, to be quite honest.

Olivia replies with astonishment.

OLIVIA

What? Come on Rhys, you're an attractive lad. You must have them queuing.

Rhys laughs louder. He nearly spills noodles from his mouth.

RHYS

Not exactly. But then again, I've only been on Tinder for a week - so, give me a chance.

OLIVIA

God. Be careful. If there's one thing you won't catch me on it's dating apps. We of all people should know why.

RHYS

Well. Yeah. But, there not all that bad.

Rhys momentarily pauses, and then continues.

RHYS (CONT'D)

Actually, I have been speaking to somebody.

Olivia quickly darts her gaze away from her noodle box. She quickly races to finish chewing her food, before replying.

OLIVIA

Spill.

Rhys pulls out his phone. He gently taps the screen several times, and then presents it to Olivia - the screen concealed only to her.

RHYS

There you go. That's Jack. We're going for a drink next week.

OLIVIA

Nice. Handsome.

Rhys smirks to himself. He places his phone back in his pocket.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

How old is -

A voice over the Police car RADIO suddenly sounds, interrupting Olivia's question.

RADIO
Gatford 1194. Over.

Olivia grabs the radio mic.

OLIVIA
Yeah, this is Gatford. Over.

RADIO
We've got a body found in The
Albany Building, Old hall Street.
Attending PO's say it's a murder
enquiry. Need you there. Over.

Olivia looks at Reece, and passes him her half eaten noodle
box.

OLIVIA
On it. Over and out.

She immediately starts the car's ignition. She turns her head
to Rhys.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
No rest for the wicked.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ethan sits on the hallway floor. His head between his legs.
He is sobbing.

Several Police officers crowd around him.

Olivia and Rhys enter the hallway at pace. Olivia spots a
forensic officer leaving the apartment entrance.

OLIVIA
Fucking forensics here before us,
again.

RHYS
Sounds about right.

Olivia and Rhys stop at the foot of Ethan, as he crouches on
the floor beneath them. Rhys speaks to a nearby POLICE
OFFICER.

RHYS (CONT'D)
Who's this?

Rhys points his finger, just above Ethan's head.

POLICE OFFICER
Ethan Paige, Detective. He found
the body.

The Police officer leans in closer to Rhys and Olivia.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Say's he'd arranged to meet him on
Grindr.
(PAUSE)
You know.

Olivia and Rhys both glance at each other.

Ethan's crying suddenly slows, and looks up at both
Inspectors. His eyes tear stained, red, and puffy. He
suddenly speaks.

ETHAN
(FRANTICALLY)
I just found him like that.

Ethan's stare dances frantically between Olivia and Rhys as
he speaks.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
He told me to come over. I was half
an hour. I don't understand. I
don't understand how that's even
happened. I was only -

OLIVIA
- Calm down.

She hesitates about his name.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Ethan?

The Police officer nods.

ETHAN
I've just found a man, dead, naked,
with a bag over his head. How calm
do you want me to be exactly?

Olivia ignores Ethan's outburst. She promptly addresses the
waiting Police officer with an order.

OLIVIA
Take him back the station for us,
please. It's no good keeping him
here.

The Police officer nods.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Smithdown Lane if you don't mind.
Thanks.

POLICE OFFICER
Yes, Inspector.

Olivia addresses Ethan directly.

OLIVIA
We're going to take you back to the
station for some questioning Ethan.
Me, or DI Denham will be over
shortly. Ok?

Ethan does not reply. He is promptly helped to his feet, and escorted away by the Police officer down the hallway.

RHYS
Reckon he's got something to do
with it?

OLIVIA
Well, I'll be honest, nothing
surprises me anymore.

She looks at the apartment door, and then back to Rhys.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
Ready?

RHYS
Are we ever ready for this?

OLIVIA
(SIGHS)
True.

Both Detectives walk into Alexander Banks's apartment.

INT. ALEXANDER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A camera flash light fills the dimly lit lounge area of the apartment.

A team of forensics examine Alexander's naked body. His still face. Eyes open.

They carefully peer through the plastic bag, placed over his head.

Another camera flash fills the room, as Olivia and Rhys walk into the lounge area.

They both stop, just short of the white rug where Alexander's body is lying.

OLIVIA
Jesus Christ.

RHYS
Isn't that Alex Banks? Property
guy?

OLIVIA
Yeah. He's developed half the city
over the past five years.

RHYS
I thought so. He's always in the
Echo him.

Olivia turns to Rhys and frowns.

OLIVIA
Well, it looks like he's certainly
going to be in the Echo again - by
the looks of things.

RHYS
I think we both know by now that
this is a murder enquiry.

OLIVIA
Yeah. A pretty violent one as well
by the looks of things.
(PAUSE)
Still looking forward to that
Tinder date then?

Rhys immediately scowls at Olivia.

- FLASHBACK -

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Liam Bower is being shown around the bowling alley reception desk by a MANAGER (50).

The manager is pointing to various parts of the run-down reception desk, and adjoining cloakroom - explaining their particular uses as he does so.

Liam nods silently in agreement, at the end of every explanation.

EXT. PRIMARY SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

It is raining heavily as Liam races through the tall, meshed, black iron gates and into the primary school grounds.

He skirts puddles across the faded, red, rubber tarmac; and bolts up the wheelchair accessible ramp - into the small, bungalow style, school building.

INT. PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Liam, his clothes saturated from the outside downpour - quickly darts into the empty, silent classroom. All but for one table.

EMILY BOWER (6), Liam's younger sister - sits silently, unfazed by her brother's stumbling entrance, scrawling across a piece of white paper with a coloured crayon.

MRS. PERRIN (28), Emily's teacher, sits at a desk in the corner of the room behind where Emily is colouring.

She takes off her reading glasses, and places the paper she is marking down amongst the other piles of lined textbooks on the desk in front of her.

She stands.

MRS. PERRIN

Mr. Bower.

Liam does not make eye contact.

LIAM

Sorry I'm late. I missed my bus.
Something happened in work, and -

MRS. PERRIN

- It's no bother, honestly. Not
this time, anyway.

Mrs. Perrin points towards her cluttered desk.

Liam briefly turns Mrs. Perrin a smile. He then darts towards his sister and pulls her coat up from over the back of her chair.

She continues to frantically colour, regardless.

MRS. PERRIN (CONT'D)
Just a second, please, Mr. Bower.
Liam, if I may.

Liam stops dressing his sister immediately, to look back up.

LIAM
Yeah.

Liam bites his bottom lip.

MRS. PERRIN
Can I have a quiet word, please?
Just over here.

The teacher points her outstretched hand towards the opposite corner of the room - scattered with small tables, soft toys and children's books.

Liam nods back.

LIAM
Ok.

They both walk in silence to the opposite corner of the room.

Liam places his hands in his pockets, and leans against the classroom wall.

Mrs. Perrin carefully perches at the end of a nearby table.

MRS. PERRIN
I'm afraid I've got to ask you something. I know you're Emily's brother - not her guardian or parent as such. But I know you look after her a lot.

LIAM
Yeah.

MRS. PERRIN
And I'm aware that your mother has some significant health issues.

LIAM
She's really sick at the moment. My stepdad's always working.

MRS. PERRIN
I understand. But I suppose the point I'm getting at is - is everything, OK?

(MORE)

MRS. PERRIN (CONT'D)

(PAUSE)

OK at home?

Liam nods. He takes his hands out from his pockets and places them at his side.

Mrs. Perrin looks down at the floor. And then across to where Emily is sitting.

MRS. PERRIN (CONT'D)

Today, we had a PE lesson - and I know sometimes things at home can be busy, hectic. But it seems Emily's kit hasn't been washed for a while.

LIAM

I must have forgot.

MRS. PERRIN

Yes. Well. That's not the only thing I've noticed. Me and some of the other staff.

Liam's hands tightly grip the back of the small classroom chair he is standing in front of.

LIAM

I'm always forgetting to check that school bag. I'll make -

Mrs. Perrin stops Liam short of his explanation.

MRS. PERRIN

When we were helping Emily get changed, we - I, found several bruises on her body. Across her arms and her chest.

(PAUSE)

On the inside of her thighs.

Liam stares back. His hands grip the chair tighter. He does not respond.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

INT. POLICE STATION INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Ethan sits at a desk. He is silent.

The interview room is bare, grey, windowless.

Olivia sits directly across from Ethan. She leans slightly aside, and turns on a recording device at the end of the desk.

OLIVIA
Interview commencing -

Olivia quickly glances at a large digital clock on the wall beside her.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
- Twenty-first of December, 2018.
The time is twenty-past-one in the morning.

Olivia quickly returns her focus to Ethan.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
DI Olivia Gatford, interview with
Mr. Ethan James Paige - at
Smithdown Lane interview suite.

Ethan winces at the word 'interview'.

ETHAN
Interview? I thought you just.

Olivia quickly interrupts.

OLIVIA
Formalities.

Olivia exhales, as she examines several documents held out in front of her.

She wets one fingertip with her tongue - and quickly turns through several of the pages.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
So, Ethan. I need to go through
absolutely everything that happened
last night. Minute by minute.

Ethan quickly nods.

ETHAN
Okay.

OLIVIA
Tell me again, how exactly did you
come to find Mr. Banks's body?

Ethan stares down at the table almost immediately. He takes a deep breath.

ETHAN

I had an argument with my
boyfriend. It was so spare of the
moment. I just.

(SIGHS)

So stupid.

Ethan pauses. Olivia raises one eyebrow.

OLIVIA

Go on.

ETHAN

I'd met Alexander before. Through
Grindr. So, I thought nothing of it
when he messaged back. Albeit,
slightly surprised.

Ethan squirms slightly in his chair.

OLIVIA

When did he message you back?

ETHAN

About eight-thirty? He'd sent me
some prior messages a day or two
before, but I'd been off it. I'd
stopped using it.

(PAUSE)

I had my reservations though
because he wasn't exactly, nice.

(SIGHS)

He just, well. He looked nice.

OLIVIA

So you're saying that you didn't
really get on with Mr. Banks, then?

ETHAN

No, not really.

Ethan suddenly shakes his head, and reiterates.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

No. I just mean, when we last met
it didn't exactly end very well.

OLIVIA

Oh. How so?

ETHAN

He offered me some -

Ethan stops short of his sentence.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Well, let's just say I had a nosebleed. And he was a bit rude about it. Really. In fact, no - not a bit, a lot.

OLIVIA

So you were annoyed at Mr. Banks?

ETHAN

(FRANTICALLY)

No.

(PAUSE)

Well, at the time.

(STERNLY)

What exactly are you trying to say?

OLIVIA

You were found in the apartment of a man who was brutally murdered. A man who you'd previously met for sex before.

Ethan sits upright. He edges his upper body forward, into the desk.

ETHAN

You don't actually think I had something to do with this, do you?

(FRANTICALLY)

I rang you, for fucks sake.

Olivia doesn't react to Ethan's outburst. She continues.

OLIVIA

We're still waiting for forensics to give us an update from the scene. DNA, CCTV from the building, you know.

Ethan breathes heavily. He holds his hands to his head.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I'm afraid until then, I need to consider every single avenue of possibility.

Ethan removes his hands from over his face.

ETHAN

Possibilities like what?

OLIVIA

No forced entry. No struggle.
Alexander clearly knew, or felt
comfortable with his killer. At
least, to start with, that is.

ETHAN

What?

OLIVIA

Possibilities, like - perhaps you
were angry.

ETHAN

Please tell me this is a fucking
joke.

OLIVIA

Oh, he wasn't liked. Mostly for his
business acumen - that's common
knowledge. But, now I'm starting to
realise his private doings may have
had the same response.

ETHAN

Doings? That has nothing to do with
me. I'd only met him once.

OLIVIA

Did you take it too far, Ethan?
Panic? Breath control fetish gone
wrong, maybe?

Ethan screams out loud.

ETHAN

What? I was there for two minutes.
I arranged to meet him. I walked in
and I found him. Lying on the
carpet. Dead. With that -

Ethan stops short of his sentence again. Olivia exhales, and
leans back in her chair.

Ethan places his head down, in his folded arms on the
desktop.

EXT. LARGE DETACHED HOUSE - NIGHT

The large, stately looking home - lies in complete darkness.

The surrounding gravel laden grounds, and driveway, are dimly lit by one light; near to the side of a large wooden front door.

The blue flashing lights of a Police patrol car, as it heads up the driveway, saturate the front of the house in blue.

The car shortly comes to a halt on the gravel drive - and DI Rhys Denham steps out of the car.

INT. LARGE BEDROOM - NIGHT

ALANNAH BANKS (40) lies asleep, on one side of a large, king-size bed.

The duvet is white, plain, pristine.

Her husband's side of the bed lies empty, untouched.

The loud sound of a doorbell chime, immediately wakes Alannah. She bolts upright.

She catches her breath for a moment - and glances at the empty space, where her husband should be lying next to her.

EXT. LARGE DETACHED HOUSE - NIGHT

Rhys waits patiently outside the front door to the house.

He reaches for the doorbell again, but stops - as a light suddenly fills the frosted glass of a nearby side window.

A voice fills the speaker, on the doorbell intercom.

ALANNAH (O.S.)
What is it?

RHYS
(RAISED VOICE)
Sorry for calling so late. Could I please ask to speak with Mrs. Alannah Banks?

ALANNAH (O.S.)
Speaking. What's going on?

RHYS
I'm Detective Inspector Denham, Mrs. Banks.

There is a brief pause.

The faint sound of Alannah's increased breathing - can be heard over the receiver.

Rhys continues.

RHYS (CONT'D)

I'm with Merseyside Police. I need to speak to you concerning your husband, Alexander.

The front door slowly creaks open, and the front step fills with amber light from the hallway.

Alannah Banks stands in a floral, silk dressing gown - draped across her enviable figure.

Her appearance is almost flawless - a pair of small, diamond earrings glint in the light from the hallway behind her.

Her only discerning quality - the look of worry painted across her face.

ALANNAH

What's happened?

Rhys looks down at the floor. He takes a deep breath.

He looks back up.

- FLASHBACK -

EXT. WALTON ROAD - NIGHT

Liam Bower walks along the busy main road. The pavement is littered with rubbish. Takeaway after takeaway - line the busy street with tacky, bold neon signage.

Liam turns into a small side street. He stops at one of the small terraces, opens the front door, and steps inside.

INT. SMALL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Liam quietly shuts the front door behind him. The house is small, run down. Aged, stained, fraying wallpaper lines the walls.

Liam's mother SARAH BOWER (48) appears from the nearby dimly lit kitchen doorway. She is smoking a cigarette. Sarah is thin, almost gaunt. With messy tied back hair - its colour matches Liam's.

She is wearing a scruffy, threadbare, dark dressing gown.

SARAH

Cigs?

Liam pulls a packet of cigarettes from his pocket. He passes them to his mother. She snatches them from his hand.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(SNIFFING LOUDLY)

Money?

Liam hands his mother a crumpled twenty-pound note. She snatches it from him, giving no thanks as she slips it inside her dressing gown pocket.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Bottles smashed in the living room.
Clean it up.

Liam says nothing, his eyes glance in the direction of the living room doorway.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Your little sister knocked over my
best fucking vodka.

His head suddenly jaunts back to his mother. His eyes are wide. His breathing is heavy.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You can clean that little shit up
as well while you're at it.

Liam quickly darts into the nearby living room.

Emily sits at a small dinner table. Her head hovers barely above the height of the tabletop. She is wearing a pink dressing gown. Blood has coagulated at the side of her head, staining her hairline.

Liam softly strokes his sister's forehead, turning it slowly to get a better view of the cut.

SARAH (O.S) (CONT'D)

I said clean her up. Take her
upstairs.

Liam ignores his Mother.

He softly strokes his sister's face, tilting her head back into its former position. She remains silent. Her small cheeks are tear stained, flushed and puffy.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I said, take her up fucking stairs.

PHIL

Are you deaf lad? Little prick.

PHIL BOWER (46) sits back in a brown, old leather armchair on the other side of the room.

He is holding a can of beer in one hand, and a lit cigarette in the other. The smoke forms a haze around his face, making it undistinguishable inside the dimly lit room.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I said, are you fucking deaf?

LIAM

No. What happened?

Liam looks down at his sister, sitting in the chair.

PHIL

She got a slap for being out of line didn't she. Worth three hours work that drink was.

LIAM

She's six years old.

PHIL

You telling me how to look after my own fucking kid? In my own house?

Phil stands up, placing the beer on the window ledge behind him. He is drunk. Liam backs away from the table, pulling his sister with him. She begins to cry.

LIAM

(QUIETLY)

No.

The silence is interrupted as Sarah grabs Liam's hair from behind with one hand. Pulling him out of the doorway, his grip still firmly on his little sister's hand.

SARAH

I said, get your fucking sister upstairs now. And clean her up.

Sarah releases Liam's hair from her grip, swinging his head in the direction of the staircase. She takes a drink from the glass in her other hand.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Get up the fucking stairs now you little cunt.

Liam picks up his sister and quickly bolts up the stairs. His stepfather appears in the doorway beside his mother, laughing.

PHIL

Faggot.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

EXT. SMITHDOWN LANE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The automatic doors to the station open. Ethan quickly exits the foyer, into the cold night air.

Josiah walks slowly behind him, his stare solemn.

They both walk down a concrete ramp, and into a small side car park.

Ethan circles on the spot to face Josiah. He holds both hands to his head.

ETHAN

(FRANTICALLY)

What the fuck.

JOSIAH

Stop shouting.

Ethan ignores him.

ETHAN

How has this fucking happened? Why does she think I've got something to do with it?

JOSIAH

They don't have any clear indication that you have. You're lucky they let you go home. They could have kept you there longer.

ETHAN

Lucky? Sorry? What exactly's lucky about this?

JOSIAH

That you didn't get there half an hour earlier.

Ethan stops in silence. His breath steams the air around his face.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

I told you.

(PAUSE)

I told you to stop using those apps. But you didn't listen.

ETHAN

Really, all you're going to say is - I told you so? I've just found a man, dead. Suffocated. Murdered.

JOSIAH

I know you have. And you best hope whoever did this wasn't as good at hiding their tracks as it appears.

ETHAN

This wasn't like Barry. I knew him. He was safe.

Ethan starts to plea. Josiah does not bend.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I was angry. Aaron had been talking to people on -

JOSIAH

- Stop making excuses.

ETHAN

What?

JOSIAH

Aaron didn't force you to go back on Grindr.

ETHAN

He was messaging some -

JOSIAH

You're an addict Ethan. It doesn't matter what the circumstances were. You can't stop.

ETHAN

I didn't know he'd -

JOSIAH

- And now, because you can't listen to anything anyone ever tells you - or accept any help that anyone ever tries to give you.

Josiah briefly pauses.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)
You're finally going to have to
learn your lesson the hard way.

Ethan's eyes begin to well, as he and Josiah stand in silence for several seconds.

Ethan then begins to sob, on the spot where he stands.

- FLASHBACK -

INT. SMALL HALLWAY - NIGHT

A loud banging at the front door fills the Bower's hallway.

The flashing blue lights from the parked Police car outside, spill through the front doors glass partition and illuminate the hallway.

A POLICE OFFICER shouts from behind the door.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S)
Mr. Bower - open the door. Police.

Sarah, now drunk, stumbles from the living room to the hallway. Leaning into the doorframe.

SARAH
(SHOUTING)
What do you fucking want? It's past
ten. He hasn't done fuck all mate.
Fuck off.

The banging continues.

SARAH (CONT'D)
(SHOUTING)
Phil.

PHIL
I'm fucking sleeping. What?

POLICE OFFICER (O.S)
Open the door. Now.

Sarah walks to the front door, and slowly releases the catch with the chain firmly on. She opens it slightly ajar.

The police officer pushes the front door open, the safety chain immediately snaps taught.

Sarah stumbles backwards into the stairs.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Liam sits on his bed in the darkened room.

Flashing blue lights from the police car outside, bounce off the walls and onto his face.

The sound from the hallway below him erupts.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S)
We have a warrant obtained to search this address, and for the arrest of Mr. Phillip Bower.

SARAH (O.S)
Get fucked. Arrested for what?

PHIL (O.S)
I've done fuck all lad.

INT. SMALL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The front door is suddenly burst open by two police officers with a battering ram. As the POLICE OFFICER (48) who was shouting, steps inside towards Phil, his handcuffs already prepared.

The other two officers stand in front of Sarah as she looks on in horror at her husband.

SARAH
(SCREAMING)
Phil. Bastards.

Phil stands emotionless as the officer cuffs him, almost too easily.

POLICE OFFICER
Phillip Bower, I am arresting you under the sexual offences act 2003, and the Children and young persons act 1933. Relating to the sexual abuse of your daughter, Emily Bower.

PHIL
I haven't fucking touched her.

SARAH
Lying pig bastard.

POLICE OFFICER

You do not need to say anything,
but any -

Sarah spits at the police officer. She misses, hitting his
trouser leg.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

- Get him out of here.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The two police officers walk Phil from the house towards the
nearby parked police car.

One officer opens the car door, as the other directs Phil's
head inside the vehicle with the palm of his hand.

Several neighbours have gathered outside, standing on their
run down doorsteps.

SARAH

(FRANTIC)

Phil. He's done fuck all you twats.
He's never touched her. She's
lying.

Sarah bangs on the Police car window. She tries to open the
door but it is locked. The arresting police officer pushes
her away from the vehicle. His tone shifts from professional
to threatening.

POLICE OFFICER

Get away from the car Mrs. Bower.
Now. Unless you want to end up in a
cell too.

The Police officer moves forwards - closer to Sarah's
franticly gaunt face.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

(LOWERS VOICE)

You know. Like your sick, nonce,
husband.

Several neighbours gasp. One NEIGHBOUR, a woman, (67) -
speaks amongst the crowd.

NEIGHBOUR

Did you hear that? Hey.

The small gathering each turn their heads toward the
Neighbour.

NEIGHBOUR (CONT'D)

Did you just hear what that busy
said to her?

Sarah backs away, fragile looking, unable to reply to the
officers cutting remark.

The Police Officer then joins the others in the patrol car,
and it drives away.

SARAH

(SCREAMING)

What the fuck are you all looking
at?

Sarah's neighbours don't move, their arms crossed, staring.

She walks back inside the house, slamming the broken door
behind her.

Liam looks out of his bedroom window from the top of the
house, down at the street below him.

More neighbours flock towards each other outside of their
houses. The faint sounds of whispers grow.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Liam Bower sits at the alley reception desk.

He types slowly - while glancing back and forth at a dated PC
monitor, and several sheets of data capture on the desk in
front of him.

His phone 'pings'.

Liam picks up his battered smartphone, and opens the Grindr
app.

His profile photo is displayed - showing Liam's bare,
athletic, upper torso.

His profile title reads: "YNG 4 RENT".

EXT. STREET - DAY

Liam walks up to his small, run down, terraced house.

He is carrying several plastic shopping bags.

He reaches for his keys in his jacket pocket - and suddenly stops at the sight of his front door.

Red spray paint, still fresh; drips slowly down the off-white, PVC door.

The words: "PEADO. SICK. NONCE." cover the front of the door.

Liam quickly looks around himself - and hurriedly fumbles to put his key in the lock.

He quickly pushes himself inside the house, slamming the door hard behind him.

INT. SMALL KITCHEN - DAY

Liam places the shopping bags over an old, rusted gas stove.

The kitchen is dimly lit, the ceiling tobacco stained.

He removes his jacket, placing it over the back of a small chair, beside a worn wooden table.

The table is littered with bills, some final demands.

Sarah Bower walks into the kitchen, her pace intense. She barges Liam aside, and pulls a bottle of vodka and a packet of cigarettes from one of the shopping bags.

SARAH

(OUT OF BREATH)

They've been banging on the door
all fucking morning. On the
windows.

She lights a cigarette, inhaling quickly.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You've done this.

Liam does not reply.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You told them all those lies about
Phil, didn't you?

LIAM

(QUIETLY)

No.

SARAH

Telling that bitch teacher on him.

LIAM
I didn't say any -

SARAH
(SCREAMS)
- Didn't you.

Sarah burns Liam's neck with her lit cigarette. Liam screams in pain.

LIAM
What are you doing?

Sarah lunges forward. She pushes Liam into a nearby cluttered dish rack.

SARAH
You're a dirty, lying, queer
fucking cunt.

Liam leans back, as far as he can, over a nearby kitchen counter. He raises his hands in surrender.

LIAM
(SHOUTING)
Stop.

SARAH
I know what you are.

Liam's face hardens.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Well you better know, when he gets
out - you're fucking dead. And so
is that lying little slag.

LIAM
Don't call her that.

Sarah starts to uncap the bottle of vodka.

SARAH
(CALMLY)
This is all your fault, you know.

Sarah quickly downs a mouthful of vodka, straight from the now open bottle. She starts laughing.

Liam replies sternly.

LIAM
What's so funny?

Sarah laughs harder.

SARAH

You best be sleeping with one eye
open from now on lad.

She smiles and relights another cigarette. She exhales. Part coughing, part laughing.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Because if all of them outside
don't get to you first - he fucking
will.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING OFFICE - DAY

Olivia, Rhys, and a CONCIERGE (52) stand in a small maintenance office.

CCTV screens line one wall. The Concierge leans over some of the equipment - he then clicks several menus on the computer screen to access the archive footage.

RHYS

She was distraught. She wouldn't
believe me at first.

OLIVIA

Yeah, well. That part of the job
never gets any easier
unfortunately.

The concierge stops clicking, and turns to Olivia.

CONCIERGE

Got it. This is the last couple of
hours before Mr. Banks was found.

OLIVIA

Amazing. Thank you. Any chance we
can have a quick look now?

CONCIERGE

Sure. Just use this joystick to
move the time frame forward.

Olivia squints at the screen, and nods.

OLIVIA

Got it. I think.

Olivia sits in a chair in front of the CCTV system. She begins to scan through the footage.

CONCIERGE

Am I OK to leave you both here? I just need to man the front desk you see.

Rhys smiles, and holds his warrant card up.

RHYS

Don't worry, we won't rob anything.

The concierge nods back.

CONCIERGE

(LAUGHING)

Course, right you are.

The concierge exits the room, closing the door behind him.

Rhys doesn't wait to resume his chain of thought.

RHYS

She had no idea. She thought he was at some business conference.

OLIVIA

(DISTRACTED)

They tend not to know, Rhys.

(PAUSE)

Ah, right. Here's Ethan Paige arriving.

Both Olivia and Rhys stare at the still image of Ethan, in the corridor approaching Alexander's apartment.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

I'm going to look further back from here. The times he's given us seem to fit, though.

RHYS

Okay.

(PAUSE)

I mean, from the looks of things - his phone suggests that he was pulling a blinder on her, nearly every day.

Olivia suddenly turns to Rhys, she furrows her eyebrows.

OLIVIA

Who? Oh.

Olivia shakes her head, and turns back around. She continues to glance back through the footage timeline.

RHYS

I mean, how could you not know something like that?

Olivia clicks a button on the screen to stop the recording. She turns to Rhys, her expression hurt.

OLIVIA

I had no idea. When Craig was shagging all sorts behind my back.

RHYS

Oh, shit. I -

OLIVIA

Men, and women.
(SARCASTICALLY)
Sometimes both at the same time.

Rhys bites on his lip.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

You never know what's going on in somebody's head. Not truly. You might think you do, but.

Olivia exhales deeply, and shoots Rhys a calm look.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Your best friend. The person you want to spend the rest of your life with. Sometimes, isn't always the person you think they are.

Rhys say's nothing.

Olivia turns back to the screen, and restarts the footage. There is an air of prolonged silence, until.

SAY

(RAISED VOICE)

There.

RHYS

(STARTLED)

Where. What?

Olivia pauses the footage, momentarily rewinds, and freeze frames. She points to the screen.

OLIVIA

Him. I've seen him before. The yellow coat. Barry Murphy's death.

RHYS
You're sure?

Olivia turns. She raises her eyebrows.

OLIVIA
This is three hours before Ethan
Paige arrives.

Olivia plays the footage.

On the screen - a man in a yellow jacket, hood up, cap on;
walks down the corridor, into Alexander's apartment.

RHYS
He just walks in. The door isn't
even locked.

Olivia stands up.

OLIVIA
Right, let's get this burnt off.
(DEEP BREATH)
Then it's the Coroner, remember?

RHYS
Shit. Yes. I'll get the Concierge.

Rhys is halfway out the door as Olivia replies.

OLIVIA
Looks like Ethan Paige might be
telling the truth after all.

The screen is still - freeze framed on the man in the yellow
jacket; one gloved hand, resting on the front door handle to
Alexander's apartment.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ethan lies asleep, huddled across a small two-seater couch.

The living room is small, beige, with several pieces of
colourful artwork dotted across the walls.

A large, widescreen television, dominates the small room.

Josiah quickly opens the glass partitioned living room door,
and shakes Ethan's feet - that hang over the side of the
couches armrest.

Ethan stirs. Josiah shouts.

JOSIAH

Wake up.

Ethan mumbles.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

Ethan, get up. It's all over the news.

Ethan opens his eyes, half smiling. Then, almost immediately, his face drops.

ETHAN

(DISORIENTATED)

For a second there I.

Ethan expels the air from his lungs with discontent.

JOSIAH

What? Forgot?

ETHAN

Yeah.

JOSIAH

Well, I'm afraid Mr. Banks has already reached the front page.

Ethan holds his hands to his head.

ETHAN

For fucks sake.

JOSIAH

And that's not all of it.

Ethan quickly throws his hands away from his face.

ETHAN

What's not all of it?

Josiah hands Ethan his phone. The screen shows Josiah's Instagram inbox. Aaron has sent several concerned messages.

JOSIAH

He just wants to know if you're okay.

ETHAN

Are you joking me? Why is he messaging you?

JOSIAH

Maybe, because your phones
currently sitting in a Police
station?

Ethan looks away. He doesn't respond.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

Do you not think you should call
him?

Ethan scoffs.

ETHAN

And say what? "Sorry, Aaron. To get
back at you last night, I decided
to meet an old shag on Grindr.
Except, he'd been suffocated, and,
now I'm being questioned about his
murder?"

Josiah snaps.

JOSIAH

Well you're going to have to tell
him sometime.

ETHAN

No, I'm not. Because there isn't
going to be a sometime. We're
finished. Besides, how on earth
would he ever forgive me for this?

JOSIAH

He likes you.

ETHAN

And I like him.

(PAUSE)

I liked him.

JOSIAH

Well it's more than can be said for
the others. Grant. Adam. Need I go
on?

Ethan bolts upright. He makes a loud moaning sound, airing
his disagreement with Josiah's patronising tone. He shakes
his head.

ETHAN

This isn't the time. This really
isn't.

JOSIAH

(BUILDING AGGRAVATION)

When is it going to be the time?
You harp on, constantly, about
wanting to find somebody who loves
you the way you want to be loved.
You finally find him? And you just
give up.

ETHAN

He was messaging pe -

JOSIAH

- Bullshit Ethan. The truth is, you
don't want to find out whether he
was or wasn't.

Ethan stares back in discontent.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

(SHOUTING)

The minute somebody actually cares
for you the way you want. You bolt.
The truth is, Ethan, that you enjoy
being treated like shit by men. By
all the Grants. The Adams.

ETHAN

That's not fair.

Mark's voice can be heard faintly from up the stairs.

MARK (O.S.)

Everything okay?

Neither Ethan or Josiah reply.

JOSIAH

I just don't think I can watch you
make the same mistakes. Over and
over again.

Ethan sits silently. He stares into nothing.

JOSIAH (CONT'D)

I don't think I can help you
anymore Ethan.

INT. MORTUARY - DAY

Olivia and Rhys walk into the mortuary.

The clinical room is cold, grey - with stainless steel body lockers lining the walls.

Several steel examination tables are scattered throughout the large, fluorescent tube lit room.

A CORONER (42), stands next to a body locker. She is wearing a white lab coat; her glasses black, with a thick frame.

She examines notes on a clipboard, unaware of Olivia and Rhys's arrival.

OLIVIA
(OUT OF BREATH)
Hi. Sorry we're late. Traffic's an
arse at this time.

Rhys follows with a more simplified greeting.

RHYS
Hi.

The coroner looks up from her clipboard. She immediately unlocks the locker door, and slides out a steel tray.

Rhys takes a sharp breath in.

RHYS (CONT'D)
(NERVOUS)
Nice to meet, you.

Alexander Bank's cold, grey body - lies still on the slab in front of them.

OLIVIA
(UNDER HER BREATH)
Straight to it then.

CORONER
Sorry. You get so used to working
in this environment, sometimes you
just forget. Would you both like a
moment?

OLIVIA
No. No it's fine. Rhys?

Rhys stumbles to form a response. Olivia quickly interjects.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
He's fine.

The coroner nods in agreement.

CORONER

Then I'll make a start.

Olivia and Rhys both join the Coroner around the steel slab, and Alexander's body.

She first points to Alexander's neck.

CORONER (CONT'D)

See here?

Rhys and Olivia both peer slightly forward.

CORONER (CONT'D)

There are no ligature marks to coincide with any type of strangulation. Nor, any visible signs of ample pressure on the neck.

The Coroner picks up Alexander's arm, displaying his lifeless wrist.

CORONER (CONT'D)

Nor, any struggle.

Olivia nods. Rhys slowly steps back.

CORONER (CONT'D)

For the way that he was killed. The bag over the head. From the photos I've seen.

(DEEP BREATH)

It would suggest that he was heavily drugged when this was done to him.

Olivia and Rhys glance at each other.

OLIVIA

Forensics thought as much. Do you have any idea what with?

CORONER

Not at this moment. Toxicology takes a little longer, as you know. And, well, we're pretty backed up in the lab at the moment.

OLIVIA

Right. Well, at least we're both on the same page that this didn't start off violent.

CORONER

No. He more than likely knew his killer. If not enough to feel comfortable for a short time, anyway.

The Coroner presents a photo from her clipboard to Olivia and Rhys.

It shows the bag placed over Alex's body in his apartment.

CORONER (CONT'D)

The way the tape was placed around the bag, if he'd struggled - it would have likely caused air to leak in.

OLIVIA

I see.

CORONER

So it's likely he was drugged to the point of paralysis. Or, let's hope, unconsciousness.

The Coroner suddenly looks down at Alex's torso.

CORONER (CONT'D)

There's also this.

The Coroner slowly moves the white sheet covering Alexander's body downward to his hips.

- FLASHBACK -

INT. ALEXANDER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alexander lies on the rug beneath Liam's feet.

He is still alive.

The bag around his head condensates, and clears, with every gasping breath that Alexander takes.

Liam screams.

He raises his knee to his chest. And stamps down, hard, on Alexander's ribcage.

Crack.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

INT. MORTUARY - DAY

The Coroner points to Alexander's chest.

Bone protrudes under the skin.

Rhys winces.

RHYS

Missed that one.

OLIVIA

What's that? I've got an idea. But,
you're the expert.

The Coroner expels a short laugh through her nostrils.

CORONER

He's been stamped on, or kicked.
From the angle of the break, I'd
suggest he was still on the floor
when this happened. So my guess is,
stamped on.

The Coroner places her finger over one of Alex's ribs.

CORONER (CONT'D)

This rib in particular, well, it's
snapped in half.

OLIVIA

Christ.

CORONER

Which suggests to me, whoever did
this? It was more than personal.

Olivia scans Alexander's body.

OLIVIA

Why break his rib though? When he's
already being suffocated to death
right in front of you.

CORONER

Exactly.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Liam sits alone on his bed.

He is messaging a Grindr profile - the photograph of which,
shows a man's toned, slightly hairy, torso.

A loud smash, suddenly fills the landing outside the closed bedroom door.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING - DAY

Liam opens his bedroom door. Liquid runs down the outer side, and broken glass covers the floor by his bare feet.

His mother's shrill voice, fills the landing - permeating from her bedroom, a mere few feet in front of Liams.

SARAH
(SLURRED)
Get me a fucking drink.
(LAUGHING)
Useless piece of shit.

Liam avoids glass on the floor, as he walks into his mother's bedroom. His stare is cold.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Sarah Bower's bedroom is dark.

Untidy.

The walls are stained with nicotine, and off-white, almost yellow, net curtains hang unruly from the tops of the cracked windows.

One faded, black curtain is pulled across the window beside Sarah's bed.

Cigarette haze fills the room.

Sarah lies flat on her back, her dressing gown half open. A dark shadow is cast over where she lies.

She is drunk.

SARAH
(TAUNTING)
Didn't you hear me? Faggot.

Sarah laughs to herself.

SARAH (CONT'D)
I asked you to get me a fucking drink.

Liam stands still. Silent.

SARAH (CONT'D)
She let him do it, you know.

Sarah starts laughing harder.

Her lungs crackle. The sound of phlegm curdles in her chest.

Liam tightens his fists.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Your little sister.

Liam starts to shake on the spot.

Sarah laughs insidiously.

SARAH (CONT'D)
She liked it.

LIAM
(QUIETLY)
Stop.

Sarah smiles at Liam. Her eyes cold. Her teeth black.

SARAH
Just like you did. Remember?

Sarah coughs out with laughter.

Liam bolts from the spot he is standing on, and quickly runs down the stairs.

Sarah lies back, squirming with amusement.

INT. CORONERS OFFICE - DAY

Olivia, Rhys and the Coroner - still stand, crowded around Alexander's body.

CORONER
If he was as drugged as I think he was? Then I think he wouldn't have felt much pain. Perhaps fear, though.

RHYS
(UNDER HIS BREATH)
Count your blessings.

CORONER

It depends what toxicology come back with. Some drugs, such as benzodiazepines -

OLIVIA

- Come again?

CORONER

Rohypnol. Or even ketamine. Those drugs tend to knock you out.

OLIVIA

Okay.

CORONER

Some though, which I've seen pop up more of late. Leave you paralysed. Aware of everything going on around you. You just can't do anything about it.

RHYS

Drugs like?

CORONER

Scopolamine. Or, as you may know it, 'devil's breath'.

Rhys fails to form a confirming response.

CORONER (CONT'D)

There was a man, actually. Three weeks back? I think they found him in his hotel room? Yeah. Yes, he'd drowned.

Olivia and Rhys quickly glance at one another. Olivia immediately looks back to the Coroner, her face confused.

OLIVIA

Drowned?

CORONER

Yes. In the bath.

OLIVIA

How?

CORONER

We found traces of scopolamine in his sys - I mean, devils -

OLIVIA
- Breath. Yes?

CORONER
It's just unusual. Not exactly the
kind of drug you can just readily
buy off your average street dealer,
really, is it?

Olivia raises one eyebrow. She purses her lips, and turns to Rhys.

OLIVIA
(ANNOYED)
How do we not know about this?

Rhys struggles to recall.

RHYS
I think Gill mentioned something.
But. I can't.
(DEFENSIVELY)
We've been busy ourselves.

The Coroner suddenly interjects.

CORONER
He had alcohol in his system, and
other drugs, aside from the
scopolamine.
(DEEP BREATH)
There were alcohol and drugs
everywhere, actually.

Olivia's eyes widen.

CORONER (CONT'D)
Judging by the burns on his body -
I eventually determined that he'd
ran a bath, under the influence, he
most probably had a heart attack,
and he drowned.

Olivia responds, her voice rings of dread.

OLIVIA
Which hotel was this?

Rhys quickly turns in Olivia's direction.

He's on to it.

CORONER
(WITH HESITATION)
I think it was The Adelphi?
(NORMAL)
It was in the report. I mean, I can
send it over soon as I get back to
the office. In about an hour?

OLIVIA
(DISTRACTED)
Please. Yes. Thank you.

RHYS
Thank you for your help.

Olivia clambers to find her bearings.

Rhys guides her by the shoulder and they both turn towards
the mortuary exit - until the Coroner stops them again.

Both detectives turn back around.

CORONER
(SLIGHTLY RAISED VOICE)
That was it. He was gay. Partial to
the younger man as well, according
to his criminal record. If you know
what I mean.

OLIVIA
(UNDER HER BREATH)
Was he now.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Liam Bower stands in the dimly lit, dilapidated kitchen.

He is standing in front of the kitchen sink, scrubbing
dishes, hard.

Soapy water swills over the edge of the work top. Splashing
on to the floor at his feet.

Liam doesn't stop.

He places each clean plate, one by one, onto the rusted dish
rack beside him.

Sarah Bower can be faintly heard upstairs. Still laughing.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Sarah lies flat, still on her back.

Paralytic.

She slowly, slurs her words. Barely audible.

SARAH

Get me a drink you piece of shit.

She laughs - which again, soon descends into uncontrollable coughing.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Queer fucking cunt.

Sarah's eyes start to roll into the back of her head.

Within seconds, she is unconscious.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Liam continues to scrub.

His breathing heavy.

Tears form in his eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alannah Banks lies asleep - across a large, expensive, corner sofa. Her face is tear stained, puffy. Mascara burns streak down her face.

Large black-out curtains cover the windows, darkening the room - no light escapes.

Alannah's daughter, HOPE BANKS (2), lies in a travel cot asleep, beside where Alannah is sprawled on her side.

She is still wearing the same silk dressing gown.

The wall-mounted television, in front of where Alannah is lying - is playing a wedding video.

It is Alannah and Alexander's wedding video.

The song: "The End of the World" by Skeeter Davis, starts to play.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Liam continues to frantically scrub.

He lifts a dish from the water, and places it on the dish rack. He misses.

The plate falls to the floor, and smashes.

The music stops.

Liam stands still. Stone like. His breathing, still heavy.

The music continues.

Liam immediately walks towards a nearby drawer. He frantically pulls it out.

Cutlery spills out of the drawer and onto the floor below.

He grabs a large, clear, plastic zip lock bag from the drawer - as he heads towards the stairs.

He passes his folded yellow jacket, which is hanging over the edge of the bannister.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alannah lies still, asleep.

The images from the television reflect white light onto her, and dance across her face.

On the television screen - Alexander and Alannah start to gather around a large, expensive, white wedding cake.

They embrace. Smiling, kissing - happy.

Crowds of guests gather around them. They start to clap and cheer.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Rhys silently drives the patrol car, as Olivia rants, loudly, in the passenger seat next to him.

OLIVIA

(SHOUTING)

Two men, dead in the same hotel. In the space of two fucking weeks? And nobody even noticed?

Rhys remains silent.

Olivia's phone 'pings'.

She inspects the email notification, and opens the message.

The email from the coroner is displayed, with an attached report.

Olivia opens it.

The report opens, displaying a photograph of the deceased.

It is Man #2 - the same man who raped Liam in Barry Murphy's hotel room.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
(SPEAKING TO HERSELF)
Gavin Maclean.

Rhys glances across at Olivia. He breaks his silence.

RHYS
Who?

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Liam walks into his mother's bedroom.

Sarah is unconscious.

She lies, still flat on her back, sprawled across the centre of the messy bed.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alannah stirs slightly in her sleep.

The wedding video now shows both her and Alexander cutting their wedding cake together.

The wedding party cheers.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Liam climbs on top of his mother's bed.

He positions himself on top of her, his thighs firmly placed around her frail, bone-like arms.

Sarah tries to move. The weight of Liam's body, half wakes her from her intoxicated slumber.

Liam places the bag over his mother's head.

He tightens the base around Sarah's neck, and her eyes suddenly fly open.

Her muffled, panicked scream, fills the bedroom.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

- FLASHBACK -

A) EXT. OUTSIDE HOTEL - NIGHT

Liam waits discreetly outside of the Adelphi Hotel grounds - across the busy city centre street.

Ethan, frantic, runs out from the hotel lobby and into the street.

It is the night that Barry had tried to rape him.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

B) INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Sarah screams, as she desperately gasps for breath. Liam still forcefully holds the bag over his mother's head. He starts to scream. Cry.

His grip tightening more around Sarah's neck.

- FLASHBACK -

C) INT. INSIDE HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Liam stops at Room 242.

The door half opens. Barry stands at the open door, his wide torso blocking the pathway into the room.

BARRY

Come back for more, have ya?

He stands back allowing Liam to enter room.

The door closes shut behind them.

D) EXT. OUTSIDE GRAND APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ethan hurriedly leaves Alexander's apartment building, clutching his nose with one fist. Blood has stained his T-Shirt.

It is the day that Ethan and Alexander first met.

Mark's voice, echoes over the scene. Reiterating his tale of the Tinder murderer.

MARK (V.O)

He came back, to carry out what
he'd always planned to do from the
start.

Liam observes from across the street. His expression cold. He swipes onto Ethan's nearby Grindr profile, and starts to message him.

MARK (V.O) (CONT'D)

Right from that very moment. The
moment he chose his unsuspecting
victim.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

E) INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Liam screams with rage.

He pushes the plastic bag tighter around his mother's lifeless head - her body pressing further into the bed.

- FLASHBACK -

F) INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Gavin Maclean enters Barry's hotel room.

He says nothing, as he slowly approaches the bed where Barry is lying.

It is only when Gavin reaches Barry's lifeless body, and realises he is dead - that Liam, out of nowhere, plunges a syringe deep into his thigh.

Gavin screams out in panic.

G) INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Liam struggles to drag Gavin across the hotel corridor, back to his room.

Liam looks around. Scoping out his surroundings.

They eventually stop at a doorway. Liam swipes the card key in the lock. It reads: Room 251.

H) INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gavin lies naked in the bath.

The tap runs hot water only. Hot steam rises.

Gavin is slumped on his side, his feet escape the edges of the bath.

He cannot move. He cannot speak. His eyes are wide, his breathing heavy.

Liam walks into the bathroom holding a steaming kettle.

His stare is vacant. Expressionless. As he slowly starts to pour boiling water onto Gavin's naked body.

Slowly, moving down to his crotch.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

I) INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

As Alannah continues to sleep - her and Alexander's wedding video continues to play.

They embrace around their wedding cake.

Guests clap and cheer.

- FLASHBACK -

J) INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ethan's bedroom is dark.

Photos of Ethan and his friends line the walls.

A dressing table mirror, shows the reflection of Ethan's unmade bed.

At first - Liam is hard to distinguish, against the room's pitch-black darkness.

He sits on the bed. Silent. Turning a small house key in his hand. Round, and around.

- END OF FLASHBACK -

K) INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alexander and Alannah embrace once more.

In the background, his face soon becomes noticeable.

Liam stands at the bar. He is wearing a white shirt, black tie, and service apron.

As the wedding party cheer and clap for the happy couple - Liam does not.

He stands still, his face twisted with rage.

His gaze firmly affixed on Alexander Banks.

The music stops.

- END OF MONTAGE -

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Liam calmly walks back to the sink.

He closes the drawer that he left open earlier, and discards the plastic bag he has just used to kill his mother, into a nearby bin.

He picks up a dish from the worktop, and plunges it into the soapy water.

He starts to scrub the dish.

This time, less frantic.

- END CREDITS -

NO MUSIC.