

ALMEIDA THEATRE

INK

JAMES GRAHAM



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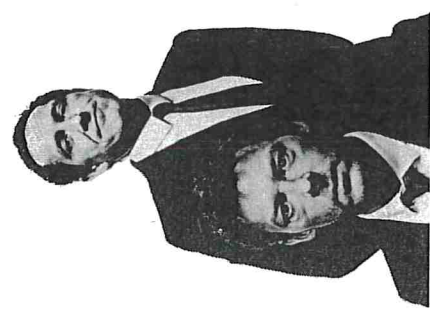
I want to tell you a story. And it's true. That's what makes it a good fucking story, right, 'cause all the best stories are true.

Fleet Street. 1969. The Sun rises. James Graham's riveting, ruthless and revealing play leads with the birth of this country's most influential newspaper – when a young and rebellious Rupert Murdoch asked the impossible and launched its first editor's quest, against all odds, to give the people what they want.

Ink was first published to coincide with the world premiere at the Almeida Theatre, London, in June 2017. The production transferred to the Duke of York's Theatre in London's West End in September 2017.

'A play for today. The blazingly talented James Graham has penned a super, soaraway smash.'
Daily Telegraph

'Hold the front page: a huge hit'
Evening Standard



DRAMA & PERFORMANCE STUDIES

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Characters

Larry Lamb, *forties*, Yorkshire, new editor of the Sun
Rupert Murdoch, *thirties*, Australian: owner of the Sun
Hugh Cudlipp, *fifties*, Welsh: editor of the Mirror
Stephanie Rahn, *teventies*, London: model

An ensemble can play the following team of reporters and other occupants of the Street. Possibly the minimum number required for the ensemble is eight, but equally possibly not.

Brian McConnell
Joyce Hopkirk
Sir Allick McKay
Bernard Shrimmsley
Beverley Goodway
Lee Howard
Frank Nicklin
Percy Roberts
Muriel McKay
Ray Mills
Diana
Anna Murdoch
Vic Mayhew
John Desborough

Christopher Timothy
Chrissie
Peter Wilson
Rees-Mogg
Hetherington
Brittenden
Chapel Father
Apprentice Printer
Bench Hand
Hosein Brothers
Typesetters, Stone Hands,
Printers, Messengers
TV Host
CID Commander

Setting

Fleet Street, 1969-70.

Prologue

Darkness at first.

Murdoch OK, listen - you listening?

Lamb Yes.

Murdoch Good, 'cause I want to tell you a story. And it's true. That's what makes it a good fucking story, right, 'cause all the best stories are true - you don't mind me swearing by the way do you? The odd curse, I should have asked.

Lamb No -

Murdoch So a good fucking story only has value if it's 'heard'. Right? And for it to be heard it has to be Told Well. So, you tell me, before I tell you *my* story, you tell me what in your mind . . . what in your mind do I need to tell a good story?

Lamb Well, I . . . alright, I would venture to / say that -

Murdoch And don't try to be smart, this isn't a goddamn interview, we're just talking, OK, I'm just interested, what makes a good story? Go.

Lamb Well it's the five 'W's, isn't it.

Murdoch Five 'W's.

Lamb Yeah, the first 'W' is Who.

We see who this is, speaking

Rupert Murdoch, *late thirties*, Australian. **Larry Lamb**, *early forties*, Yorkshireman.

Lamb Who is important. 'Who' did this. Take us two, right now, you're - what, uh, um, an Australian businessman.

Murdoch Right.

Lamb You own a Sunday newspaper.

Murdoch Yeah.

Lamb Me? I edit a newspaper.

Murdoch Uh-uh.

Lamb So far, not very interesting.

Murdoch It's a little interesting, but OK —

Lamb But it becomes more interesting —

Murdoch Uh-uh.

Lamb — when we establish that I'm not the editor of *your* newspaper.

Murdoch Right.

Lamb So why would we be meeting? You see? That's — 'curious'.

Murdoch Yeah.

Lamb And that's the Second 'W' — What. 'What' are they doing?

Murdoch Having dinner.

They're at a table.

Lamb We-ell, that's a little boring, but —

Murdoch It's not boring, I'm hungry.

Lamb We're having a, a 'negotiation', that's a little more interesting —

Murdoch Right, right, OK, a, a, a 'surprise' —

Lamb A 'secret' —

Murdoch A *secret*. (*Claps.*) Exactly, I love this. A secret negotiation — *over* dinner, please, I'm starving here.

Lamb Alright then, third 'W' — Where.

Murdoch Can I pick?

Lamb Go for it.

Murdoch Okay dokey, Savoy Grill.

The Savoy Grill.

Lamb OK, but, just know then that means — (*Gesturing at some Guests over his shoulder.*) You're going to see Maurice Green, *Telegraph* editor, having dinner with Bob Edwards, editor of the *People*, at their usual table, right over there —

Murdoch Oh, Jesus, I'd forgotten how bloody predictable this Street is, fine.

The surrounding world disappears again.

Lamb That's the fourth 'W'. When, usually the least important, but in this instance, Saturday night, the Savoy Grill, it's a minefield.

Murdoch I get it, fine, the Waldorf, then.

The Waldorf. (Different tablecloths etc.)

Lamb (*pointing at other Guests*) OK, but, *Daily Mail* and *Sunday Times*.

Murdoch Fuck's sake.

It disappears.

Rules restaurant.

Lamb Do you like Rules?

Murdoch So long as I'm the one making them.

Lamb The restaurant, it's the oldest —

Murdoch I know what bloody Rules is, oldest restaurant in London blah blah, fine, just do it, go.

Waiter approaches with menus.

Waiter Good evening and welcome to Rules. The specials today are —

Murdoch Yeah yeah, we can see the board, bottle of Chianti, '61. (*To Larry*) You like red? There we go. (*Handing back the menu*.) I'll have the rib eye, rare. Now when I say rare what does that mean, here?

Waiter For a three-centimetre cut, we normally cook each side for two minutes –

Murdoch No, too long, half that. Just a quick flash in the pan, in-out, fssh.

Waiter Our chef will normally recommend –

Murdoch In fact you know what, just like 'show' the steak to the flame, literally, like that, just hold the little guy in your hands, and point out the flame from across the kitchen, and then – (*His the table*.) Straight here. Larry?

Lamb The lobster, please.

Waiter Thank you. (*Makes to go*.)

Murdoch Wait, come back.

Waiter Sir?

Murdoch I'll have the lobster too.

Waiter You want to change your –

Murdoch Yeah, lobster, lobster sounds good. Wait, shit, the Chianti.

Lamb That's fine, honestly, I don't –

Murdoch Right, fuck this, this is a disaster, we're starting again.

Lamb It's fine –

Murdoch No FUCK it, I mean it, we're going again. (*At the Waiter*.) Not him this time, 'Who', you can change the first 'W', right, 'who'?

Lamb It's your story.

Murdoch (*at the Waiter*) Right, piss off Long Tall Sally, someone else, someone pretty, if we're doing this, let's fucking –

Waitress (*replacing Waiter*) Hi.

Murdoch Better, good, go.

Waitress Good evening and welcome to –

Murdoch Exactly, the 'welcome', and all that. Now, can –

Waitress The specials are on the board –

Murdoch Yeah and the shit with the board, OK, good; we're having the lobster, two of them, and a bottle of the Pouilly-Fumé, thank you.

She goes.

So what's the fifth? The fifth 'W'?

Lamb Fifth 'W' I used to think was the most important, now I think it's the least. Fifth 'W' is Why.

Murdoch You think the least important question is 'Why', I would have said that was the most important question.

Lamb Once you know 'why' something happened, the story's over, it's dead. Don't answer why, a story can run and run, can run forever. And the other reason, actually, honestly, I think, is that there is no 'Why'? Most times. 'Why' suggests there's a plan, that there is a point to things, when they happen and there's not, there's just not. Sometimes shit – just – happens. Only thing worth asking isn't 'Why', it's . . . (*Struggs*.) 'What next?'

Beat. Murdoch smiles, enjoying this.

Murdoch You're in Manchester and you don't want to be.

Lamb I want to be an editor and there was no openings on the Street so I left to –

Murdoch Northern Editor of the *Daily Mail* is not an editor –

Lamb Actually it's quite a —

Murdoch No, let's not fuck around, it's not, you're better than that. You were the best sub on the Street, did your time at the *Mirror* and after a decade it began to dawn on you they would never let you sit in the pilot's seat. Not you. Not the Yorkshire-born son of a blacksmith, not the guy who didn't get a degree from Oxford or Cambridge, who didn't get a degree from anywhere. Not you.

I've bought a newspaper.

Lamb I know, a Sunday, the *News of the World*.

Murdoch I bought a *daily* newspaper. I just bought a daily newspaper from your old paper.

Lamb You bought a paper from the *Mirror*? What are they selling? Oh Jesus. Is it the *People*, tell me it's the *People*.

Murdoch I have offices —

Lamb Tell me it's not the —

Murdoch — and a machine room, rotary presses that don't press anything for six days of the week. I need a daily. I —

Lamb Tell me it's not the *Sun*.

Murdoch . . . I've bought the *Sun*.

And.

Lamb Oh shhh—

Murdoch I need an editor.

Lamb Ah bollocks. Is that why you asked me down, to . . . (Sigh.) Ah fuck. I thought . . . God, I'm a — I *really* thought this might be my —

Murdoch Your way back. It still can be.

Lamb The *Sun* — sorry, Rupert — it's a laughing stock on the Street, a stuck-up broadsheet that has never once made a profit, it's selling less than, what, 850,000 —

Murdoch 800 and falling.

Lamb Jesus. (*Head in hands.*)

Murdoch And it doesn't have to be a stuck-up broadsheet — Who — who bloody says it has to stay a stuck-up broadsheet? We could . . . we could 'change' it.

Lamb Change it. To what?

Murdoch I dunno, something 'new', a new newspaper.

Lamb You can't just, just invent a new newspaper and assume —

Murdoch Why not?

Lamb — in the same way you, you wouldn't change your football team, the British are . . . we're creatures of habit, and —

Murdoch I hate that, I hate it. It's ludicrous, everything's so old. In Australia we don't mind new because everything *had* to be new. *We* just have to find a *new* market.

Lamb There are no new markets.

Murdoch Bullshit, you're just too afraid to say it, in case the world thinks you're a bloody fool. Well guess what. You're sat opposite the Other Bloody Fool.

It's the same market the paper we're buying it from *used* to serve, but is now failing.

Lamb The *Mirror*? Fail! — it's the biggest selling newspaper in Britain.

Murdoch It used to be fearless, provocative, *fun* — where's the fun gone from the Street, it's boring, fuck it. It used to speak to the working classes, in the industrial heartlands, the run-down suburbs. And you, I think you know how to make a paper to reach those forgotten people, don't you? Because you *are* one of them — were. Your family, your friends, your neighbours, in your ordinary Yorkshire mining town.

What's your father's paper, what does he read?

Lamb He re— He *used* to read the *Mirror*.

Murdoch See, *used* to — exactly. What does he read now?

Lamb Nothing, he's dead.

Murdoch (*beat*) We try harder to please them when they're gone, don't we? Funny.

So give him a paper, Larry. Make a paper for him. The family he left behind —

Lamb Alright, you don't . . . I don't need you to romanticise my 'eeh bah gum' Yorkshire past, yes of course I see the, the shit that's dumped off the presses now, telling people what they *should* be interested in, rather than reflecting *who* they really are, yes, fine. But how do you expect to reach them with a brand-new paper they've never heard of? It isn't possible.

Murdoch You just said it. Stop giving them what you think they need, start offering them what they want. A popular paper, for the masses. One that can 'unleash' a part of us, a part of the British character that I think, humbly speaking, has never been tapped into, but is there, yearning for stuff. Maybe it takes an outsider to see it.

Lamb The *Mirror* . . . These are my people, you're asking me / to go against

Murdoch Oh bugger off, 'your' people. Larry . . .

Lamb The Street has given me / a lot of opportunities, and I don't want to —

Murdoch No, all it's done is take from you, Larry, *listen* to me. I said I had a story for you. An exclusive. Never been told. And the story is true. The headline is —

The headline is visually typed and set somewhere for us . . .

SHOCKING BRITISH CONSPIRACY

What's the main picture? The picture is —

A flash bulb picks out — a new scene, separate from them.

Men, meeting, shaking hands with each other.

At this point, perhaps Murdoch leaves the table, joining the scene. Perhaps Lamb joins him, watching, as they tread around the action that is being described, invisible observers.

Murdoch A little under a year ago, there was a clandestine meeting between the most powerful *unelected* men in the country. (*Referencing*) Here? Cecil King — chairman of the *Mirror*. Best-selling paper. Who's he shaking hands with? Go on, for ten points?

Another flash bulb pops, capturing the changing scene, each time revealing a new handshake.

Lamb That's Lord Mountbatten.

Murdoch Bingo. Highest ranking officer in the military. This, this is Solly Zuckerman — he's only the bloody fella with the British nuclear codes.

Lamb I know who Solly Zuckerman is.

Murdoch It's his finger on the button. And this fella here, I assume you know . . .

Lamb *walks close to the guy in question. A moment . . .*

Lamb Yeah. I know this fella.

Murdoch Hugh Cudlipp. The editor of the *Mirror*. Your dear friend —

Lamb *Old* friend. What do they want?

Murdoch To overthrow the government.

Lamb . . . What?

Murdoch Yup. Bring down Wilson, his high spending, the national debt, all that.

Lamb The *Mirror's* a Labour-supporting paper —

Murdoch Exactly. See? Oh I know, I know you bought into the whole philosophy, the 'values' the *Mirror* claims to stand for, democracy, freedoms, the emancipation of working people, well, behold, the hypocrisy of your treasured, *liberal*, establishment. The belief that they know best, that it's their, what, 'responsibility' to reverse the poor democratic choices of the people they pretend to defend. And replace the government with their own committee, led by Mountbatten. A military coup.

Lamb I . . . I was — come on, I was there, at this time, at the *Mirror*, you think I wouldn't have known the executives were plotting a — I was part of this circle.

Murdoch And yet funnily enough — you aren't in the picture.

Lamb . . .

Murdoch Your people, Larry. There to hold power to account; always happens, as sure as the sun replaces the moon, the revolutionaries become the very elites they overthrew.

Lamb So publish. If it's true, you'll destroy them —

Murdoch Number one, the coup didn't happen, was never realistically going to happen, it was insane, born of a sickness that has grown deep inside the whole system. And number two . . . there are other ways to destroy people.

(*At Hugh Cudlipp.*) The man standing quietly in the corner knew that. Saw that his mentor, King, the man who had raised him up, championed him, saw that he'd finally tipped over the edge of reason. And now it was his chance to grab power for himself.

Lamb I knew the board rolled over on to King, I had no idea it was Hugh who did the pushing. I'm almost impressed; didn't know he had it in him.

Murdoch King is now just the latest in a long line of fallen barons, names you can hear to this day on the wind as it whistles down the Street. 'Beaverbrook'. 'Northcliffe'. 'Rothermere'.

Lamb And one day . . . 'Murdoch'?

Murdoch The moral of this story is . . . that power replaces itself with itself. And you can either stand on the other side of the window, tap tap tap, asking to come in. Or, you establish . . . a *new* line of ascension.

(*Looks at Lamb, checks his watch.*) Walk with me. The Street. It's Saturday night —

Lamb I've seen the Street on a Saturday night —

Murdoch My presses will be starting up in the *News of the World* basement. Given that currently only happens once a week, I like to be there when they do. Come on . . .

Fleet Street. At night.

The lit-up signs from different press houses.

The Daily Telegraph. The Express. The Daily Mail. The Mirror. The Guardian.

The lights from the machine rooms in basements kick into life, running their presses.

The silhouettes of the Bench Hands tossing the bundle stacks of papers from one to the other.

Lamb and Murdoch *passing through, to . . .*

The News of the World — and soon, the Sun.

An office. Murdoch pours them a drink.

Lamb (*looking around*) Jesus . . .

Murdoch Yeah. But I like to think little imperfections give things a certain 'character'. Like that little birthmark on your forehead -

Lamb It's not a birthmark. It's a scar.

Murdoch Really? How'd you get it? In a fight?

Lamb Rupert . . . I get that you've come here, ready to, to take everything on, but I know what I'm talking about. The Street really is the Wild West. It'll stand on you and crush you and keep crushing, just because you tried.

Murdoch Oh, you think I've not had to roll my sleeves up before? Punch my way out of corners? You think I'm afraid of these old bastards? I throw everything I have into this Sunday rag, to 'buy my way in', finally. My first time in the old Press Club? All the other chairmen in their leather chairs, clutching their papers, what happens? Up they go - (*Demonstrates lifting a paper over his face.*) Not one handshake. No cigar. Nothing. 'The Aussie sheep farmer'. Well not for much longer, eh?

Lamb So that's what this is. Revenge.

Murdoch No. It's business. And it's revenge.

I'm giving you the chance they never did, and it's your *last* chance. I don't mean to be the cunt that points that out, but there you go.

(*Gesturing*) Captain of your own ship. It's not much, but it could be yours. I sign the papers tomorrow, tick-tock. What do you say? Me and you together, Larry. Rupert the Sheep, and Larry the Lamb.

Lamb . . .

A slow rumble begins to rise from beneath them.

Murdoch Listen. They're starting . . .

Feel that . . .?

What do you say?

Lamb looks around the place. Beat . . .

Lamb There'll be a lot of blood.

Murdoch God. I hope so.

The presses beneath are winding up violently, louder and louder, the furniture in the office beginning to shake, as the sound becomes deafening.

A new headline, typed into view over the pounding noise.

PAGE ONE

Act One

The Chairman's office at the Mirror.

Lamb and **Murdoch**, along with **Sir Alick McKay**, are greeted by **Mirror** chairman **Hugh Cudlipp** and his editor **Lee Howard**.

On the wall – a chart, with different coloured strings, showing sales. The Mirror leading in red, Sun bottom in yellow.

Cudlipp Larry. Been a long time. How's the north?

Lamb Uh, the weather's colder but the people are warmer, so, evens out.

Cudlipp You know Lee Howard from your time here, our new senior editor.

Lamb Yeah, I knew you made Lee editor . . . Alright, Lee.

Murdoch Sir Alick McKay, my deputy chairman.

Sir Alick Yes, we all met, during the talks, hello again, how do.

Murdoch Right, is that enough foreplay, can we get down to the fucking?

Cudlipp (*beat, then*) You know, I once had dealings with your father. When we opened the *Melbourne Argos* as a joint venture. I liked him.

Murdoch Good. I liked him.

Cudlipp He – (*Chuckling a little, at Lee.*) I remember over dinner actually, him saying to me once how, at the time, he was worried about 'his boy Rupert'. Worried he hadn't found his, his – path, yet. I never imagined I'd be standing opposite the boy himself one day, selling him a newspaper.

Murdoch (*beats, open hands*) The webs we weave, Hugh.

Cudlipp (*a piece of paper*) The agreement, all signed off by the board.

Sir Alick May I? (*Taking it, glasses on.*) Ta so much.

Lamb What's happening to the current staff?

Cudlipp We'll be absorbing most of them back into the *Mirror*, we have –

Lamb And the rest?

Cudlipp They're yours to interview and/or make redundant as you / see –

Lamb So, you'll be taking all the good ones.

Cudlipp They're all a high calibre, you know that. We're looking at Saturday 15th November, our final edition. Then, Monday morning, the *Sun*'s 'name' and whatever staff we don't keep – all yours. (*With the contract.*) All for . . . £1.75 million.

Lamb Well, we obviously won't be going to print on that Monday after your Saturday edition, we'll need months to being prepping our new ideas –

Cudlipp Ah. Yes. No, sorry. That's . . . (*Pushing forward the contract.*) One of the stipulations. When my predeces – (*A brief, guilty glance at the King portrait.*) When we bought the title in '64 we had to make the old owners two assurances. That the *Sun* would be always be a Labour supporting paper – now, OK, we've said, to facilitate a quick sale, that that's one of the assurances, under your objection, they are happy to drop.

Sir Alick Which is appreciated, naturally, but –

Murdoch And the other?

Cudlipp The second assurance *isn't* negotiable. That there must be five years of *continual* publication. It was important to the family that the title last. So –

Lamb You bought it in 1964? So, it's '69, that's five years, done.

Cudlipp *December '64.* So just shy, by a matter of weeks. Sorry. So, no, there can be no break. You'll have a little over one day to turn around your new paper.

A moment.

Lamb That's not / possible –

Murdoch *(taking the contract)* We'll do it.

Lamb Mr Murdoch, / just a – we –

Murdoch Yeah, how hard can it be, we can't make it worse than it already is, can we? – I mean, that with all due respect, Hugh. You print *your* final *Sun* on Saturday, we'll print our entirely new paper for Monday. Do you have a pen?

Cudlipp . . . An 'entirely *new*' paper? I'd have thought – 'continuity', for a time, was the only realistic possibility. As I think Larry was about to say, it / isn't possible –

Lamb No, don't worry, we'll turn something around. Go ahead, Mr Murdoch.

Lee Actually, we've arranged a little, sort of, signing 'ceremony', in the boardroom, if you don't –

Murdoch No, you're alright.

Lee There's brandy and some 'snacks'.

Murdoch Alright, chuck the snacks, but we'll choke down the booze. Alick?

Cudlipp I'll be right with you.

Murdoch, Sir Alick and Lee *exit into the other room, leaving Lamb and Cudlipp alone.*

Cudlipp How's the family? The girls?

Lamb . . . Well, ta, thank you. Joan sends her love.

Cudlipp As does Jodi. She was a little surprised, when I told her.

Larry, what is this? If you wanted a job that badly –

Lamb I had a job, and now I have a new job, this –

Cudlipp Why do you think I'm selling it? Why do you think I'm selling it so *cheap*, instead of just closing the blasted thing.

Lamb You couldn't close it, that many job losses, the unions would halt production of your entire publishing stock; don't talk to me like I'm the copy boy, Hugh, like I wasn't on the team, I slaved every night on that subs' desk, over every line, word, comma, fucking colon. I helped build the *Mirror* into what it is, don't think I can't take what I know and go do it somewhere else, somewhere better.

Cudlipp Ah yes, right, with your – what did you call them, your 'new' ideas. Incredible, for such an old trade, for you to have discovered something brand-new that none of us have before.

Come back, Larry. Why don't you come back on to the team. Come *home*.

Lamb . . . I can't. I'm the editor of my own newspaper now –

Cudlipp Edit one of mine, pick one.

Lamb You're lying, just trying to –

Cudlipp I'm serious.

Lamb *wavers momentarily, looking next door where Murdoch is . . .*

Cudlipp I'm serious, pick one.

Lamb . . . The *Mirror*.

Cudlipp We print more than just the *Mirror*, Larry.

Lamb I know. Sounds like you might be over-extending yourself, Hugh. I mean, look at the *Sun*. That's a right pile of crap, that is.

Murdoch and Sir Alick return, a brandy in hand.

Murdoch Right, that's all official then. Shall we?

Cudlipp Wait, we should have the traditional photo, shouldn't we? All together, shaking hands, a nice symbol for the Street —

Lee (*leaning in*) Hugh? Percy asked for a quick hello.

Cudlipp . . . Forgive me, one moment.

He exits with Lee, leaving the three intruders in his office alone.

Murdoch 'Signing ceremonies', photos, fuck's sake. These pompous arses.

Sir Alick (*at his glass*) Brandy's not much cock, either, worse luck.

Lamb No dummy runs? Less than — (*Checks his watch*.) A matter of weeks until the handover and then a one-day turnaround, are you *fucki*—

Sir Alick Oy, Larry, language, good heavens!

Lamb With a skeleton staff of their effing rejects, and then hahaha, which ever loser hacks you think I'd be able to poach from other papers to work under *these* conditions . . .

Murdoch I poached you, didn't I? Find people like you. The spurned, the spited, the overlooked; gather 'em up, throw 'em in. A ship of undesirables.

Sir Alick You have a payroll big enough for a hundred people. No more.

Lamb The *Mirror* have four hundred.

Murdoch They're over-staffed.

Lamb Rupert —

Murdoch Larry. What did he say to you? Try to tempt you back? Oy, I'd be disappointed if he didn't.

He sneaks over to Cudlipp's chair; checks the coast is clear, and sits in it, spinning — him and Sir Alick laughing, as Murdoch looks around his desk and drawers.

Murdoch Look at him, master and commander, of all he surveys.

He stands and imitates wanking over the papers on the desk.

Masturbating all over the faces of the grateful British public, 'Oh Mr Cudlipp, Mr Cudlipp, thank you!'

Sir Alick Oh Rupert, honestly, do you mind?!

Murdoch Well. Radical thought. But I'm going to run my paper — like it's a *business*. (*Mock-gasps*.) Not a public service. Not an educational programme. Not a church. Margins, bottom lines, the figures are what counts. In fact . . .

He sees the circulation chart with coloured strings, and approaches it. The Sun figures in yellow.

Wouldn't it be so bloody satisfying . . . if this line (*yellow string*), overtook this line (*red string*) . . . within one year. Twelve months from the day of our launch.

Lamb One of the lowest-selling papers in the country overtaking the biggest-selling paper in the world.

Murdoch Yeahhhhh. Wouldn't that be a good 'story'.

Lamb Is it an ultimatum? A / condition of my —

Murdoch No, it's a target, and a bit of fun.

Lamb Need I remind you I haven't signed any contract yet. I could just walk.

Murdoch I do believe you're right. Alick?

Sir Alick (*taking a contract out from his jacket*) Very healthy expense account, as you'll see, car complete with driver, and this as your salary.

Lamb . . . I won't be 'managed', needing your say-so on every hire.

Murdoch *takes a fancy pen on a stand from Cudlipp's desk. And holds it out for Lamb.*

Murdoch Make the paper you want, I trust you.

Lamb *signs his contract. He's about to replace the pen . . . but puts it inside his own pocket instead.*

Murdoch I just want something . . . 'loud'.

A Fleet Street cabaret club.

Stephanie Rahn *steps into the lights . . .*

She is twenty-one, of mixed British and Indian origin. Joined by other female Singers as a Band kicks in.

They sing or play under the following sequence, as —

Lamb *bounces around the different iconic bars, pubs and clubs, rounding up his new team.*

There could be a dance element to this movement too as we turn from one into the other . . .

El Vïno's restaurant and bar.

A Landlady *spotting Lamb pass through —*

Landlady Bloody hell, Larry! The prodigal son returns. I thought you'd died.

Lamb No — well, inside a bit, maybe. Not seen McConnell around, have yer?

Landlady What, Brian, that bastard? Got barred from El Vïno's. You could try the Stab?

The Stab in the Back — a spit and sawdust pub.

John Desborough *singing along in the pub to the song, as other Journalists join in. Lamb leans over the piano . . .*

John *stops singing momentarily, but keeps playing under.*

John Stone me, Larry Lamb's looking over me piano!

Some other Journalists cheer him — possibly mockingly.

Lamb John. You've not seen McConnell about?

John That old gobshite? Got barred from the Stab. You tried the Tip?

Lamb *nods his thanks. Makes to go. Doesn't . . .*

Lamb You're still political at the Mirror?

John Senior Political Editor, if you please. *(Downs his pint.)*

Lamb Fancy a change?

John *(laughs)* What? To Rupert's 'Shit Sheet'? I'm alright, thank you!

He laughs, hard. As do others . . .

As the band swells again, Lamb exits, into the Street. He lights a fag.

Checks his watch. An idea . . .

He begins to strip his clothes off, stepping into —

The Fleet Street Turkish Baths.

Lamb Hello, Brian.

Brian McConnell *is laid down in the water, a fag in his mouth still.*

Brian Who's that, can't see through the steam.

Lamb The Ghost of Christmas Past. (*Gets into the water.*)

Brian As I live and breathe. (*Coughs, smokes.*)

Lamb Sounds like breathing doesn't come all that easy any more, Bri.

Brian 'S alright, this steam, it helps open up the lungs. (*Tugs again on his fag*) How'd you find me?

Lamb Heard you'd been in the Tip till five a.m., no time to go home, knew you'd shit, shower and shave here. Not much changes on the Street.

Brian I dunno. Apparently some things do.

Lamb I have some news.

Brian Yeah well, that's the business we're in.

(*Smokes.*) Shouldn't be here. I'm seen talking to you, they'll have me out on my arse —

Lamb I've accepted it. The position.

Brian And what position's that, down on all fours, mouth open? You're an idiot, Larry, which is strange, because you're the smartest bugger I know. What does Joan think?

Lamb Joan thinks . . . Joan'll come round. Look, Brian —

Brian Please don't ask me, Larry. It ain't fair. I can't say no to you, and you know that, so I'm asking you not to ask, alright?

They both stand as the music swells again, towels whipped on, as —

The locker room, afterwards.

Lamb and Brian

Brian News editor?!

Lamb Shh, keep your fucking —

Brian I'm not senior management, Larry, I'm a hack —

Lamb You mean no one's given you a chance.

Brian Why would I leave the best newspaper on the Street?

Lamb Because it isn't the best any more.

Brian (*looking around him, aware of listening ears*) I happen to believe, Mr Lamb, that the *Mirror* is the crown jewel of Fleet Street, and a bastion of journalistic —

Lamb Cut the shit, no one's listening, and you know full well how stuck up its own arse it's become, Jesus.

Brian Hugh Cudlipp's not stuck up. He's Welsh.

Lamb You can be posh and Welsh, Bri.

Brian No you can't, name one.

Lamb . . . Prince of Wales.

Beat. Brian smiles, a bit . . .

Brian I'm a crime writer, bloody *crime*. What do I know about editing the news?

Lamb News the *Mirror* way? Probably nothing, but what if we treated the news as *if* it were a crime thriller, a mystery! Plot twists, whodunnits! An entertaining page-turner that slaps you in the face rather than sends you to sleep.

Brian That's what he wants, is it?

Lamb That's what I want. Have done for years, what *we* always talked about, propping up the bar of the Tip for all those years — our *own* paper.

Brian I'm settled, now.

Lamb You're bored, now.

Brian Course I'm bored, everyone's bored. Is this just about proving a point?

Lamb . . . Really? That just got said, did it, me?

Brian Well then, why?

Lamb Least important question, Bri, did I not teach you that?

Brian Why 'me'?

Lamb Because I *know* you. And you know me. You can be a sort of . . . 'grounding', influence, on me. My 'perspective'.

Brian What, tell you when you're getting too big for your boots?

Lamb If you like —

Brian Larry, you're getting too big for your boots —

Lamb Brian. (*Hand out.*) Come on.

Brian (*sighs*) You'll not bring anyone else with you, you know that.

They both stand, Brian part of the 'dance' now, as he spins into —

Brian in *The Mucky Duck*.

Vic **Mayhew** is greeted by **Brian**.

Brian Vic Mayhew! The best sub-editor on the street. Drink!

Vic Answer's no, Bri.

Brian Oh.

Vic Yeah sorry.

Brian Right.

Vic So.

Brian Whisky, anyway?

Vic Won't make a difference.

Brian Fair enough, how d'you like it?

Vic Massive.

As they move between pubs —

Brian (*tapping*) Let's go for Ray Mills next, he's a brute, and we're gonna need brute force for this —

The Printer's Devil

With Ray Mills — a thuggish, frightening sub. He's playing darts.

They all down copious amounts of beer as they talk.

Ray O₂, you pair — respectfully, Mr Lamb, Printer's Devil is for subs. Editors go to the Hifalutin Press Club, and crime writ— Well, I've no idea where you go, Brian, honest to God, but traditions need respecting —

Lamb Ray, when Hugh sells us the *Sun*, he's not moving you to the *Mirror*.

But. We'd like you to sub-edit our *Sun*.

Go on, just swallow it.

Ray downs *his drink*.

Lamb I meant your pride.

Ray I know what you meant. Why me?

Lamb Our writers, stone hands, block makers . . . we're going to be putting them all under some pretty tough conditions. The sub is the centre of a paper's gravity. You're an ex-docker, union man. People would follow you. You would — charm 'em.

Ray I've never been called charming before. What other posts need filling?

Lamb Nearly all of 'em. Actually, all of 'em.

Ray When for?

Lamb Five weeks.

Ray Not long enough.

Lamb We know.

Ray How much money you got?

Brian Hardly any.

Ray What's your criteria?

Lamb Anyone who says 'yes'.

Ray Does it matter if they've been sacked, arrested, or both?

Lamb Not in the slightest.

Ray Alright, get your pad out.

The White Swan.

Frank Nicklin, *fifties*, with **Lamb**.

Brian So, Frank, you were assistant sports editor at the old *Sun*?

Frank Yeah, and I heard Cudlipp's not moving me back to the *Mirror*. And you no doubt want someone younger, fresher-faced for yer new *Sun*, eh? So. Looks like paid redundancy for me then, eh? Retirement. Oh well. It's fine. I understand.

Lamb (*handing him a contract*) We'd like you to be our sports editor –

Frank Awh FUCK!

Lamb I know, mate, bad luck, sorry.

Frank I had plans. I was going to play golf.

Lamb So, Frank, here's the deal –

Frank Shit the bed.

Lamb We don't have any presses outside London, so, in order to get our first editions on the trains up north . . . our print deadline is a bit earlier than other papers.

Frank How much earlier?

Lamb 8.10 p.m.

Frank So that means –

Lamb – we'll never be able to carry footie scores, no.

Frank No footie scores?! Are you mad?

Lamb No, we're going to have to use our . . . 'imagination's', to come up with . . . 'something else'. Stories.

Frank Stories, what do you mean 'stories'?

Lamb Look, respectfully, you don't have a choice. And also, I don't know, it could be . . . (*Thinks*) 'Fun'.

Frank (*considers this, takes a sip*) Hmm. 'Fun', eh . . .

El Vino's.

Lamb *approaches Joyce Hopkirk, smoking at her table.*

Lamb Mrs Hopkirk, my name's –

Joyce Who else?

Lamb I'm sorry?

Joyce Who else did you try before me; the answer's 'no', by the way.

Lamb You're the first.

Joyce Carefully, you nearly had my eye out then, Pinocchio.

Lamb (*sitting, sincere*) Joyce. You're the first.

I've heard the rumours, the talk, writers on the *Mirror's* women's pages not being happy with the direction of —

Joyce Not happy? (*Aware of the nearby drinkers.*) The *Mirror*, Mr Lamb, happens to be the finest example / of journalism —

Lamb Of journalistic integrity, 'crown jewel of the Street', yes I know. What do you really think?

Joyce What do I really think? . . . That since I joined it's become stuffy and dowdy and *old*, you already knew that, but it's also got five million readers and you've got —

Lamb What I'm offering is the opposite. We want to represent real women, not as seen through the squeamish eyes of Hugh Cudlipp, but —

Joyce Really? You and Mr Murdoch are secret feminists, are you, *that's* why you're buying this newspaper?

Lamb I'm saying I think we could give women a voice. That through writers like you, Joyce, we could champion the cause of modern women —

Joyce I don't want to champion the cause of modern women —

Lamb Well, I mean to do —

Joyce I mean I do, of course, but I want to do that by championing the cause of me. Make me woman's editor. Not just a features writer.

Lamb (*smiles*) That's exactly the role I had in mind.

Joyce Really?

Lamb Yep.

Joyce What happens if I fuck it up?

Lamb I'd fire you, Joyce.

He winks and exits one way . . .

Fleet Street sandwich shop.

Lamb and Brian with Bernard Shrimley — *lean and smart, straight posture and tight tie — standing at a high counter eating sandwiches and drinking coffee.*

Brian (*at his coffee*) Jesus, what's that?

Lamb It's coffee, Brian, like a black Russian without the vodka.

Brian Can't we just go over to the Tip?

Bernard Sorry, rule of thumb, I don't drink with hacks, compromises the job.

Lamb Thanks for coming down on the train, Bernard, we really —

Bernard Cut to it, let me guess, you're having to scrape the figurative bottom of the proverbial barrel — the 'provincial' barrel, no less. Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds?

Lamb Are you enjoying life at the *Liverpool Post*, Bernard?

Bernard No, I hate it.

Lamb We're looking for someone with experience.

Bernard Is that a euphemism for old fart?

Lamb Do you want to be our deputy editor?

Bernard Alright.

Lamb . . . Really?

Bernard Yeah, fine then. I should warn you that nobody likes me.

Lamb That's alright, nobody's ever liked me particularly much either —

Bernard I am incredibly particular when it comes to layout and I have exacting standards that I will not be lowering for — well, for whatever low standards I hear are in the offing from your new proprietor.

Lamb Of course. Wouldn't dream of it . . . (*Winning privately at Brian.*)

Brian Last up, some photographer. Never heard of her; 'Beverley' . . . twenty-five.

They both look 'intrigued' by the prospect of meeting this young woman, stepping into —

The Golden Egg café.

Beverley Goodway, twenties, holding a camera.

Brian You're a fella.

Beverley Yes.

Brian You're called Beverley, we — we thought you were a bird.

Beverley No. Sorry.

Brian (*sighs*) Do you have a portfolio, or — ?

Beverley Oh, I — I'm only just getting started, really. Background's more in medicine. Used to take photos in the mortuary, you know. Dead bodies.

Lamb And now you're on the sports desk at *The Times*.

Beverley Yeah, I think they're going to fire me, soon. Everything goes so fast, keep missing goals and things. Dead bodies, you can, you know / take your time.

Brian Take your time. Right.

Beverley What are you looking to shoot?

Brian Anything. Stock pictures. Women, quite a lot. Girls.

Beverley Girls? What will they be doing?

Brian Standing, wearing things, sometimes not a lot of things. Pointing at things and, you know, like laughing and stuff.

Beverley 'Not a lot of things', you mean like — naked?

Lamb What, no, of course not fucking naked, Jesus. Just like — bras and pants and stuff, the usual. 'Tasteful'. We might be planning to slaughter a great many sacred cows but no one's going to go that far. This is fucking England after all.

Brian Where there hardly is any fucking. Least in my experience.

Beverley Sounds like a no-brainer; all this, doesn't it.

Brian Yeah.

Beverley So why are me hands shaking?

Lamb (*pen and contract*) Are they steady enough to sign this?

Beverley (*taking the pen*) Give it a whirl, yeah.

He signs and steps away as Lamb and Brian look at their completed list — with some doubt — but nevertheless shake hands. It's a start . . .

Bang, bang, bang — heavy overhanging lights turn on one by one in the Sun offices, illuminating —

The newsroom . . .

Lamb *steps forward as staff assemble.*

Lamb Uh, hello. Erm —

Ray All o' yer, quiet, now!

Lamb . . . Thank you. To some of you, this is hello, welcome. To many of you from the old *Sun* . . . this is goodbye.

And as you'll know it's a tradition on this Street, to send you out a certain way, and that is something we'll honour now. So to those leaving – everyone?

A thumping of fists on desks begins, growing Bang, bang, bang . . . as a pack of reporters gathered together, looking around, mixed emotions, begin to drift away as one to the building thunder.

The horseshoe subs' desk, other metal tables scattered around, with typewriters, phones with cables that hang down from the ceilings, and on each a spike – a sharp metal stick – where cut stories are spiked.

Lamb, Brian with Bernard, Ray, Frank and Joyce, though more activity on the floor around them. Bernard has his layout pad on display. Another flip chart. 2.1 Days to Launch.

From now on, it should go without saying, that an insane amount of alcohol is drunk, by everyone, at any time of day. Whisky, beer, gin. And smoking constantly.

Lamb Alright, amongst everything else – (Phone rings, he answers.) Not now. (Puts it down.) If we're turning this into a tabloid layout, the print room boys need to reconfigure the presses almost immediately, so –

Brian Aah! Sorry, think I just saw a rat.

Joyce Oh give over, what's it gonna do to you?

Brian God, this fucking place . . .

Lamb Time to shine, Bernard, go.

Bernard *sketching, turning pages continually.*

Bernard So – convention nowadays is justified alignments and equal spacing, everything clean and clear. These are some recent, very successful, *Mirror* front pages.

Holding some front pages from 1969. The Kray Twins are sentenced . . . Man walks on the Moon.

Lamb Right, lacking in attitude or character whatsoever but hey-ho.

Bernard (drawing) So, at Mr Lamb's request . . . ours, at least, could use a bigger logo. And, we could use – (Sighs.) 'Fun' items, such as starbursts for offers, say, and bubbles for listings, and such.

Lamb Bernard. You're a good man, the best at what you do. But more. Fucking more, mate. More bastards and bangers and screamers.

Bernard (sighs) Right, well, it's not a children's comic, unless it is / but –

Joyce I know I'm setting you all up for an easy one here but what's a bastard?

Ray Different column inches and widths, no, like, conformity.

Bernard It's when they're not justified – literally, and figuratively.

Lamb I want it to, to 'jump' out at me, be surprising.

Bernard Well, ugly is surprising, I'll grant you that.

Lamb Well, maybe, maybe we need a bit of ugly, this country, maybe it's time. We only get one shot to launch, and we are deeply under-resourced, let's turn that into our virtue. Headlines – underlined, and in some cases overlined. Huge fonts, and half of it italicised.

Bernard Oh for goodness' – you're basically asking our paper to slouch!

Lamb No, lean forward. With momentum. It's – like, it's – 'optimistic'!

Bernard By what degree, italicised?

Lamb Thirty?

Bernard / Frank Thirty?!

Bernard Did we lose the bloody war?! Eighty, best offer.

Lamb Sixty, it's not a slouch, it's an elegant lean. Gene Kelly in *Singing in the Rain*, like . . .

He demonstrates a rough sixty-degree lean, against the wall.

Bernard . . . Seventy degrees.

Beat. Lamb readjusts his lean up a bit and looks at Brian, who nods.

Lamb Alright, done.

Ray These are from Hobson Bates. Options for the masthead logo.

Which? Any of them?

Lamb I dunno, they're all a bit . . . I dunno.

Joyce . . . 'Fussy'.

Lamb Yeah, they're —

Bernard This is the best ad agency in London.

Lamb Yeah, and it shows. We want something . . . I dunno.

Taking a piece of paper, opening his bag, searching. He's found a child's pencil case.

Brian The hell is that?

Lamb Daughter's pencil case, must have took it by mistake (*Takes a random felt tip pen — it's red.*) I don't know, something . . .

Larry *places his design for the logo on the projector. Near to the Sun logo we recognise.*

Lamb Frank, what does that look like?

Frank Like you just drew it.

Lamb Perfect.

Bernard You're kid— These things last, Mr Lamb.

Lamb It's decided.

Frank And, sorry to bring, you know, logistics and practicalities into this otherwise very entertaining theoretical discussion, but how are we meant to get stories when we don't have any staff, a team this size?

Lamb Find a way, work from the wires, pad things out.

Brian Pad things out? He's only used to writing Leyton Orient, 3 — Derby County, 2, eh Frank? Hardly Wordsworth.

Frank Fuck off, you. And County would never lose to Orient 3–2, you know nothing.

Joyce He's right, Mr Lamb, the fashion buyers, agents, they're not giving us —

Lamb I know, I know, look just — try and see the limitations as opportunities. To do things differently, in a, a make-do-and-mend sort of way, spirit of the Blitz. I'm saying I'm not going to be over your shoulder, you have your responsibilities, go for it.

Move into the open newsroom/compositors' room now . . .

Beverley (*arriving, with Diana in tow*) Mr Lamb, this lady here to see you, something about horoscopes?

Lamb Ah yes, hello you're —

Diana Diana.

Ray Horoscopes, that fucking voodoo nonsense, Jesus.

Diana It isn't nonsense. It's astrology, which is a science.

Lamb I asked you to write me a Pisces one, for yesterday?

Diana (*offering a sheet*) Do I have the job?

Lamb I'll tell you when you give it to me. (*He takes it and folds it into his pocket.*)

Diana You're not gonna read it?

Lamb No, someone else is. You'll get a call either way. (*Trying to leave.*)

Ray with Frank

Frank Brave new world, eh.

Ray Yeah, don't you believe it, Larry giving free rein to anyone? Know how he got that scar on his forehead? Head-butted a stone hand so hard for not allowing a late correction it cracked both their skulls.

Frank Fuck off.

Ray 'S what I heard.

Lamb (*pulling Joyce aside*) And Joyce . . . I was chatting to my daughter last night. And, well, the types of models. Supermodels, most papers . . . she says a lot of girls can't relate to them, that's all. So I was wondering —

Joyce What? That an ugly newspaper should have ugly models?

Lamb No, I'm saying *normal* girls. Girls next door. Why don't we turn *them* into stars, eh? Like I say, though — your department, your call.

Joyce *goes.*

Lamb (*to a Messenger Boy*) Here, take this logo drawing to the art department, get them to work something up —

Chapel Father (*passing*) OY, OY, OY! . . . Sorry, Mr Lamb, but he's not a member of the NGA, they carry drawings, that's someone's job.

Lamb (*aware this is public*) Alright. Are you NGA?

Chapel Father No, I'm SOGAT. Printers. Graphical and Allied Trades.

Lamb I thought Printers were NATSOPA?

Chapel Father Where *you* been? NATSOPA merged with NUPBPW — printing, bookbinding and paper works.

Lamb Well can you find someone to take this from here, up to there, please?

(*As everyone goes back to work — more privately.*) OY . . . I'm not like other editors, I came up through the unions and I want to work *with* you. But don't raise your voice to me in my own newsroom again or I swear to God — (*Beats.*) Look, we're not just making a paper *with* you, here, we want to make a paper *for* you. You and your members, all of us, right?

Chapel Father (*sarcastic*) Aww. Thank you . . .

He goes. Lamb feels the sting of that.

Fleet Street tailors.

Murdoch *is being fitted up for a new suit. Mirrors, a tailor, Lamb.*

Lamb They're not budging on the presses; unions saying it's a week's-long job to reconfigure the machines for a tabloid.

Murdoch Bollocks, it's a three-minute job, did it myself in Adelaide. You just need to use the crushers.

Lamb The what — ?

Murdoch The bloody crushers. Call yourself a newsman? The crushers can fold the blasted paper over at the feed; no need to reconfigure anything. Done, easy peasy. I'll climb on to the presses when they've all gone home and do it myself, blame it on the bloody ghost if you have to — Oh, we have a ghost, by the way? Apparently.

Lamb We do not have a ghost.

Murdoch You don't believe in anything you can't get ink on your fingers from, do you Larry?

Lamb Speaking of which. (*Handing him.*) From 'Diana', our potential horoscopes writer, the homework I set her.

Murdoch Diana who?

Lamb Dunno, she just calls herself Diana, it . . . it's in vogue. You know. 'Twiggy'. 'Jesus'. Your stars from yesterday. Accurate?

Murdoch (*reads, then pops it into his pocket*) Yeah, good enough. (*Looking at himself in the mirror*) Nowhere else in the world are the employees more powerful than the buggers paying 'em. They talk about solidarity, what about 'equality'? They run just as much of a closed shop as the private schools and members' clubs. Only get a job if you're the 'son to', or 'nephew of'. No wonder it's still hot metal here, bloody industrial revolution still. We have computers in Oz, computers!

Lamb Got to keep them on side, work *with* folk, not *against*. Unions can refuse to print a story if they don't like it.

Murdoch (*looking at him through the reflection*) If they do . . . I will end them.

Lamb And when you talk about 'them' you're talking about me. If it weren't for my first union, the weekly newsletter, I wouldn't be here now. My 'people', remember?

Murdoch Have you forgotten you're the boss now? You don't have to 'convince' anyone of anything, just bloody tell 'em, if they put up a fight, fire them.

Lamb I just gave a speech about empowering my team, giving 'em autonomy.

Murdoch Good, let 'em think that, but still lead them. You gotta be a pneumatic drill, Larry, never letting up, powering on through. Try it. What?

Lamb The limited number of hacks we have don't have the manpower to go out investigating, half of them are from the regions and haven't got any bloody sources here. We still need scoops, and for that you need specialist reporters. The other papers, *their* specialists have ring-fenced the access, closed off the relationships —

Murdoch Well then, just steal it from them.

Lamb Steal it from them? Brilliant, OK. (*Beginning to pace around nervously, angrier*) Yes, of course, as well as convincing my staff to work in disgusting conditions, with no time, or money, and become the *laughing* stock of their peers, I'll get them to become *thieves* as well, shall I?! Excellent idea!

Murdoch (*to the tailor*) That's enough, Serge, thank you. *Tailor exits.*

Murdoch What's the matter, Larry?

Lamb The matt—I am *trying* to fulfil the task you have entrusted to me, despite not having the necessary resources to get it bloody done! And there are still . . . 'ways of doing things', that *don't* extend to breaking journalistic codes and traditions, and becoming ever more the black sheep of the entire —

Murdoch You're still trying to beat them by fighting on their terms. Let it go! Do you know what I hear when I hear 'codes', and 'traditions', I hear the rules as written by those who benefit from them, to stop others from treading on their turf.

He begins to remove the threads of his new suit and get changed.

I meant it when I said I wanted a bit of business acumen pumped into this Street. The markets. Competition.

It's happening everywhere else after all, can't you — feel it? The whatever-you-want-to-call-it, that 'collectivism', from your treasured unions, born out of the war, everyone together, to rebuild. Well, it's been rebuilt now. And young people today, they want to be themselves, as individuals.

This Street won't ever move forward while we think of it as a Street. Rather than individual houses, competing with one another, pushing each other forward in a fight for change, progress, the next big thing:

Lamb *listens, and takes a breath. He sits, on an upturned waste bin.*

Murdoch *(doing his tie in the mirror)* You know, my grandfather, James, he was a minister, in Scotland. Split the entire Scottish church, in the 'Great Disruption' of the 1840s – isn't that wonderful, 'the great disruption'? It was too closely tied to the English Establishment, so he introduced a bit of 'competition', formed the Free Church. Heresy, yes, but there you go. I want us to *disrupt* this Street, Larry. A disruption. It's *time*.

Lamb . . . Just steal their stuff?

Murdoch Steal anything. Fuck it, get the readers to become the storytellers. Call in with the news, their own lives, let them bring it to us rather than us chasing them.

Lamb You mean like . . . members of the public?

Murdoch Why not? Normal people. Mutton – dressed as Lamb.

Isn't that the real endpoint of the revolution? When they're producing their own content themselves? That's when we know they're really getting what they want.

Lamb *(beat, sighs)* Mutton . . . dressed as Lamb?

Murdoch *(finally back in his full – impressive – suit, arms out)* You got it.

Inside the editor's office, Lamb's core team. Brian writes on two whiteboards; on one side, the Mirror's features, on the other side, a blank page for the Sun . . .

Lamb So the *Mirror* has 'Live Letters', right, very popular, let's introduce a letters page too, and not bury it, bring it forward. What do we call it?

Joyce Theirs is 'Live Letters'? Why don't we just call ours 'Liveliest Letters'?

Lamb . . . Yeah, why don't we? OK, good, next.

Brian Comic strips, obviously, the *Mirror* has Garth. A time-travelling hero.

Lamb Alright, we'll make a time-travelling . . .

Joyce Heroine?

Lamb . . . Heroine, exactly. What's the *Mirror* one called, Garth? Alright Barth, Larth, Carth, Scarth – Scarth? Scarth?

Frank Is this definitely legal?

Lamb Dunno, next.

Brian Their other comic, Andy Capp.

Bernard Andy Wack, then?

Lamb Fine.

Bernard I was joking.

Lamb Alright, one more step removed, *Tommy Wack*. He . . . he's a southern – fuck the cloth cap – a southern, Essex –

Brian – beer-drinking –

Ray – womanising –

Bernard – van driver.

Lamb Van driver!

Bernard They're going to go absolutely spare over there, Larry, this is outrageous –

Lamb It's not outrageous, these are all features, items that we built, remember, when we were there, when it used to be exciting, and they're wasting 'em, burying them amongst the preachy claptrap. We have a *duty* to take them back, right?

Brian How much of that do you believe?

Lamb All of it. What political lead is Cudlipp running week of our launch?

Beverley Interview with Ted Heath, apparently.

Frank I always think of the band leader, Ted Heath. That musician.

Lamb (*quick beat*) Right, get *him* instead, exclusive.

Brian With the band leader?

Lamb Do it – it'll be funny, *Mirror* runs a boring old puff piece with a boring old Tory, we have a musical legend with the same name, what does *he* think about the state of the country, get to it. And finally . . . (*Writing on the board*.) I want this to be our slogan.

Frank Forward with the People?

Lamb Yeah, we're all about the people, we're the people's paper, go.

Ray That's the old *Mirror*'s slogan. Word for word. Larry, we –

Lamb Old slogan, exactly, not using it any more are they?

Bernard (*hands on his face*) They're going to run us out of town.

Lamb Good, we could use the exercise. Next!

A photo shoot/audition, at the Sun offices.

Stephanie *preparing to model some lingerie with another model, Chrissie.*

Beverley *prepares his camera. Joyce sits on her stool watching, smoking, reading CVs.*

Joyce Which one is Christine?

Chrissie Christine, that's me.

Beverley Uh, could you – the robe? The dressing – could you just, erm –

Joyce Take off your gown, honey.

Chrissie He could have just said that. (*Takes off gown*.) What are you looking for?

Joyce We won't be printing these, dear, this is just to get you on file.

Chrissie You mean we don't get paid.

Joyce Expenses, for your trouble.

Beverley Smile?

Chrissie Hard to smile when you're working for free.

Beverley (*shooting*) Great, and, and more to the side, with a – maybe try a little –

Joyce Stephanie? Is that Kahn?

Stephanie (*coming forward*) Yes.

Chrissie *swaps out with Stephanie.*

Joyce Haven't I seen you before? I'm very good with faces, don't you sing down the club?

Stephanie I've got a lot of jobs, I'm paying for my studies.

Joyce What are you studying?

Stephanie It's a drama school.

Joyce Oh, an actress, really?

Beverley (*stopping shooting Chrissie*) Thank you.

Joyce And 'Kahn', is that your stage name?

Stephanie My father was Indian.

Joyce Was? Did he change?

Stephanie No, he passed away. Last year.

Joyce Oh.

Beverley Like Shere Khan, *Jungle Book*.

Joyce I can see you've got a 'bit' of colour, not a huge amount. How's the course going, dear?

Stephanie Fine, thank you. Doing *Tamburlaine* at the moment, s' alright I s'pose. I prefer comedy.

Joyce Comedy, really. A comedy model, Beverley, what do we make of that?

Chrissie Her name's Stephanie, not Beverley.

Beverley No, she was – talking to me. Nice big smile then, come on.

Stephanie What's the story I'm playing?

Joyce There is no story, we just need your photo on file, love. This Kahn name, are you very attached to it?

Stephanie Well it's very attached to me, yes.

Joyce I'm just looking out for you, dear, because you are much lighter than the name suggests and I'm thinking there might be more work available to you than that. What about something more European, but still a little exotic, something like . . .

I'm just thinking.

Beverley Rahn? There's a German footballer I know called Rahn.

Joyce Rahn I like. Have you ever thought of maybe some blonde streaks as well, in your hair, maybe?

Stephanie German? Blonde hair? What is this, Hitler Youth?

Beverley That's you done.

Joyce It's just a bit of advice, dear, you can take it or leave it, but regardless it's never a wise tactic to get lippy with the lady who decides who gets the work.

Stephanie . . . Sorry, Mrs Hopkirk.

Joyce That's alright, Ms . . . ?

Stephanie . . . Rahn. Stephanie Rahn.

The old Press Club.

Hugh Cudlipp *having dinner with Sir Percy, a Mirror board member.*

Cudlipp *has his trademark glass of champagne on the go.*

Lamb *watches them for a while before sitting at the booth / table behind / next to them.*

Lamb *(to a waiter)* Scotch on the rocks, please.

Cudlipp *(hearing, turning)* Well, well. Percy, you remember Mr Lamb, used to be on the bench as a sub? He's about to try his hand at our old *Sun*.

Percy Oh! Goodness me, you're Mr Lamb? Well . . .

Cudlipp Percy Roberts is our new managing director of the Mirror Group. He's been overseeing our West African and Caribbean papers.

Percy Hugh is making me sound more exotic, I've mainly been overseeing the northern distribution of the *Mirror*. Don't forget the North, that's my tip.

A Delivery Boy arrives with some proofs for Cudlipp.

Delivery Boy Mr Cudlipp?

Percy Well, I'll leave you to look at tomorrow's edition. *(At Lamb.)* Pleasure.

Percy goes. A different Delivery Guy arrives at Lamb's table with likewise some oversized sheets of paper.

Delivery Guy Mr Lamb.