

Ep 3 - A VINTICELLI?

DAY. Alice Gallery. London. Handlers pack three bold 'Laughing Kings' paintings into an Art Logistics van. Benny observes, reassured by bohemian ROSKO (50) in linen suit. The van roller door clatters down shut...

It's a flashback. Benny wakes, alarmed by the memory.

Benny's boat. Stowbay marina. He emerges on deck in bathrobe. Ahead, something catches his eye...

Beach. Yacht skipper Steffa exercises in the distance, running, sprinting, side-stepping...

Benny admires her. He's surprised to find a fat, Styrios Hotels envelope by his feet, with a phone number.

He heads towards the marina centre with washbag and towel. He pauses to admire Steffa more closely as she dashes along the quay-side.

Nature reserve. Distant horse riders along a bridle-path. A flurry of disturbed birds rising up to the sky...

Benny's Merc is parked by Dmitri's Bentley. Dmitri has the fat envelope. "You didn't even open it." Benny shrugs, "I daren't." "So, playing hard to get." Hector hisses, "Big mistake." Dmitri gestures silence...

Benny matches Dmitri's vigorous stride along a nature trail overlooking the sea. Dmitri gestures at the reserve, "Maude is out there somewhere painting another view. Or having it off with a ranger." He laughs at Benny's reaction.

He points down to a bay. He has ambition to set up a boatbuilding yard. "Classic yachts." He needs road access, but says Maude resists him disturbing the wildlife. It's her passion. He wants Benny to persuade her, and deal with the council. "Y'know, creating jobs, boosting local business." Benny politely resists, he's far too busy right now...

Dmitri is exasperated as they turn back. "And there's Ollie. Maybe I scared you off, huh? The way I deal with Anton." He suddenly gasps in pain, rubbing his chest. He dismisses Benny's concern, "Just indigestion." He marches on, but pauses to sit on a rustic bench. He needs to confide...

About the dynasty he's trying to create. About his sons. He's proud of Nikolas. He learned the hotel business hands-on, and now expanding the network in the Far East. But he's a stranger, with no sign of a family. "Maybe he's gay. What kind of legacy is that?" As for Anton, he's just a hothead loose cannon. Little Mikey is Dmitri's bright hope for the future. But he can't trust Anton and that scheming flirt Gizelle to bring him up properly or even add to their family. Has he built an empire for nothing?...

He eyes Benny with intent, "Anton listens to you. So, to come on-board, what do you need?" Benny sighs, "I'm duly flattered but..." Dmitri presses, "Quit the bullshit." They move on...

Benny eases into his Merc. Dmitri tosses the fat envelope inside. "For fixing Koki. On top of whatever you agreed with Anton. And don't try to argue." Hector steps forward to add silent persuasion. Dmitri takes a Stowbay Gazette from his Range Rover. He flourishes the headline. 'Lost Cause Ollie.' With photo of a young footballer. "Gambling is a curse. Bastards making fortunes on addiction misery. Speak to Des. He's hurting. That boy is family." Benny insists, "I can't work miracles." Dmitri implores, "Give it your best shot, that's all I'm asking. Whatever it takes."

Stowbay FC pitch. The groundsman's terrier dog chases random, animated sponsor images along the perimeter hoardings. Justin is pitch-side with Anton, flustered, trying to control the software on his laptop...

Groundsman's shed. Des holds court, enjoying 'proper coffee'. He briefs Benny about Ollie. A natural playmaker. A sad waste of a brilliant young talent. Rehab is a slow process, hit or miss. "There must be some way to break the shackles and get him motivated again." Des has found Ollie a job with ex player Mervin. He urges Benny to come up with a solution. Benny repeats he's no expert on addictions, but he can't deny both Dmitri and club legend Des. He's persuaded to at least investigate...

Des is distracted by YuBet advertising flashing around the ground. "That's all we need, a damn betting sponsor." He starts toward Anton, glowering. Benny follows, intrigued. But he pauses, wary of getting further involved.

'The Vines' townhouse. Frantic OLLIE HOLLIS (18), in overalls, fends off burly, shirt-sleeved Trent. They bounce against a life-size painting of a music conductor in poised splendour, baton raised. They burst outside. 'You're out of control, Ollie.' "Can't push me around, you're not my dad." They bump into a Merv's Missions builders truck. Ollie scrambles away...

Benny and rangey builder MERV (40) rush out from the house. Trent is irate, "His mum. If he ever lays a hand on her again I'll kill him." He slumps, shocked by the degree of his anger, apologetic for disrupting. Merv assures, "He'll be back..."

An old-timer caretaker straightens the conductor portrait. Returning, Benny pauses to glance at a small, Renaissance style portrait of a girl.

Conservatory, being renovated. Benny helps Merv shift a window unit. Merv reflects on Ollie's predicament. "He was a star at the Academy. Played a first team game. So much promise, but got injured. Massive let-down. Couldn't cope." Ollie's job with Merv is part of the rehab, to give him a focus. Wages carefully controlled. But Ollie is desperate to keep gambling. Desperate enough to threaten his mother for money...

Benny takes a phone call from accountant Norris, wandering out to the hall, fending off cashflow concerns. He takes a closer interest in the Renaissance portrait. A keen interest. He glances about. He peers into a kitchen. The caretaker is settled with a beer and newspaper. Back in the hall Benny nudges the Renaissance portrait, checking for an alarm. No sound. He takes it off the wall and inspects it near the front door, in better light. He

photographs it front and back, using a gallery promo card for scale. He replaces the painting just as the caretaker emerges...

Benny makes show of admiring the conductor painting. The caretaker reveals the subject is Sir Penning Dewald - owner of the house and away on an opera season in the south of France.

Gorse Cottage. A dove is perched on the garage roof, on a weather vane. A buzzard hovers. A tabby cat gazes up. Daisy gazes up too...

Alice has just arrived with Daisy. She checks her phone - a message with photo of the Renaissance portrait...

Daisy follows the cat into the cottage. She sees Harriet organising paperwork, talking to someone. "Well that's done. Now you can help me rehearse my part." But Harriet seems alone, talking to herself again. Daisy, perplexed, quietly retreats.

Patio. Tea and cakes. Harriet fusses about Alice's separation, assuming Benny to be at fault. Always too busy with his schemes. Alice won't be drawn. Harriet assures she only means well. She shows old theatre programmes, complementing Alice on her designs, urging her to get involved with the Stowbay Players again...

Daisy wanders into the garage. She sees an old cupboard half-open, stuffed with sailing regalia. Storm coats and boots...

She surprises Harriet and Alice, skipping toward them in a yellow sou'wester hat. Harriet intends to get rid of all the sailing gear. She expresses relief that Benny was able to sell their boat. "The Players enjoyed it on sunny days, for read-through rehearsals." She says Russell used the boat later to 'get away from things'. But it's been neglected since renewing his love for gardening. Harriet is sceptical about Russell's market gardening. A lot of effort for little reward. "If only he hadn't..." She sighs...

Daisy glances up at the weather-vane again. It moves in the breeze, revealing the silhouette of a cabin cruiser boat.

Stowbay marina. Benny parks his Merc. He stretches, gazing across at luxury yachts...

Anton's 'Fortuna' motor yacht. Two sturdy crew members carry provisions up the gangway. Benny follows, picking up a box of drinks. He calls out, "Permission to board?..."

He waits up on the lounge deck, leafing through a navigation book. Steffa calls out a navigation question. The steward Edmond answers. Steffa approaches buttoning her uniform shirt. "I'm testing him. Deck officer training." Benny admires her, "Well I hope I'm not intruding." Steffa smiles, "Hardly, you're the life-saver." Benny shrugs, "Little Mikey? You pumped him out, that was real skill." He admits to being lured into the world of Anton and Dmitri. "Should I get involved?" Steffa frowns, "Oh I can't advise. I'm strictly low profile, just doing my job..."

Benny compliments her on her fitness. She tenses. Benny backs off, admitting, "I'm a little out of shape since my rugby days." Steffa quips, "Nose and ears look OK." Benny laughs, "I was a nippy winger, kept out of trouble." Steffa offers to put him on a fitness regime, using the yacht's gym. Benny considers, "Maybe you'll be a little too hard on me." They're flirting, but it's carefully low-key...

A crew guy approaches, "What's the deal, skip?" Steffa frowns, "Another stupid playboy jaunt. Lunch at The Haven and back late. Just keep them away from the bridge." She confides to Benny, "Two of Anton's pals. Think they own the world. It'll get rowdy." Benny muses, "Maybe I've met them." Steffa abruptly turns away, murmuring, "Sometimes I hate this job."

Benny drives his Merc, taking a call. "Sorry Anton, I'm due in London... well it's certainly a bad look... a gambling sponsor, and Des trying to save Ollie's career."

London. Alice Gallery. Flat. A photo of Benny, Alice and Daisy is glimpsed. Benny stuffs clothes into a washing machine. Sassy assistant Pascale calls up, "What's the gallery story? What's your narrative?" Benny pauses to think...

Storeroom-office. Clutter of stacked paintings, sculptures, architect model and plans of a Chateaux development. Pascale flips through paintings, "So you're more a collector than a dealer." Benny admits to buying young artist's work on instinct, speculating. Pascale provides a reality check. "If you'd bought just two or three artists you could properly market them. But you're spread too thin. Stuck with a waiting game, waiting on market luck." Benny resents, but has to admire Pascale's sheer panache...

She reminds she worked at Litherby's fine art auctioneers, and has experience of the key New York market. She's intrigued by a promo card for Tess Embers' 'Laughing Kings' paintings. Benny reluctantly answers her gaze. "They're out on a private viewing." Pascale is concerned, "With who?" Benny is evasive, "With a top dealer, a mega dealer." Pascale guesses, "Christian?" Benny silently acknowledges. Pascale chastises him for being so gullible. "But you're certainly not the only one. He spun a very convincing web. I could put the word out but..." Benny shrugs, "I know, it's a long shot, and bad PR..."

They emerge down in the main gallery. Benny glances around, taking stock. "So, what's the gallery narrative? One word. Survival. And maybe I can win my family back..."

Pascale takes a moment to process Benny's raw emotion. She hustles, "Let's do a deal. Two artists each that can make a good fit. And share the space." Benny gestures to 'back off'...

Immaculate FREDDIE FULGER (50) glides in, "You two are becoming an item." Pascale smirks, Benny frowns. Freddie turns serious, "Have you heard? Kirby Delrose. There's a rumour he's dead. Car crash. New Mexico."

Benny is shocked. Freddy muses, "Don't you have some of his work? Bound to shoot up in value." He starts out, suggesting 'drinks' nearby...

But Benny reflects, confiding to Pascale. "Alice liked Kirby's work at a graduate show. I bought a couple of seascapes."

NIGHT. Smart office block. A cleaner at work in the lobby. Two handlers in 'Art Exchange' overalls show paperwork to a security guard. They each carry a shrouded painting...

They emerge from a lift. They press code access to Jordan and Keen, Public Relations. They enter a boardroom with the paintings. They carefully unscrew two seascape paintings from the walls.

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'A' story - Business. Benny is conned by art thieves but believes he's discovered a 'lost masterpiece' Renaissance portrait. Needs Alice's opinion.

'B' story - Dynasty. Benny resists pressure from Dmitri to commit to the dynasty, but agrees to try and save Ollie from gambling addiction.

'C' story - Family. Alice and Daisy visit Harriet. They learn of the family boat and of Benny buying it to sell on. Daisy puzzles about Harriet talking to herself. Harriet is doubtful about Russell's market gardening prospects.

'D' story - Affairs. Benny is attracted to skipper Steffa. The feeling is cautiously mutual.