

Episode One - THE CHARMER *(pilot script available)*

DAY. Stowbay estuary. BENNY PORTER (35) is on a leaky cabin-cruiser. He's easy on the eye, doing art business by video-link with sassy PASCALLE (25). She needs a few more days use of Benny's gallery for her 'New Visions' show. Says she's doing good business...

A luxury motor yacht cruises by. Guests relax, hosted by sharply handsome ANTON STYRIOS (30). His swish wife GISELLE (30) glances around, "Where's Mikey?" Child MIKEY (5) chases a ball, tearing off his life-jacket. The ball bounces to the yacht's stern, and down to the power dinghy. Mikey scrambles after it. Seagulls hover close. Mikey spins around, loses his balance and falls into the churning wake...

Alerted by screams, Benny dives in and saves Mikey from drowning. Helped in the dinghy by athletic yacht skipper STEFFA (40) and panicky Anton...

Back on his boat Benny panics too. His phone, lost to the sea? Searching, he knocks it into the bilge water. He quick-dries and cradles it. He gazes, relieved, exhausted, at the home screen photo of a smiley woman and girl.

NIGHT. Marina. Benny opens the boot of his classic Mercedes coupe. He selects clothes from Tonioni bespoke dry-cleaning, and shoes...

Grateful Anton hosts Benny with champagne on his yacht. There's a lordly yet defensive arrogance about him. He's tense on a phone call from Giselle, but relieved to hear that Mikey is running around again, imitating seagulls. Anton is in no hurry to return home. More champagne to calm his emotions...

Steffa has details of next day's yacht charter for Anton to check. A formality. He's distracted by her super-fit form. She declines more champagne. There's a briskness about her as she leaves. Anton notes her glance back at Benny. "She's based on board. A sailing Olympian... (jealous challenge) Formidable..."

Anton pours brandies. He shows off the yacht's navigation system. Benny declines an invite to have it installed. "On my little tub?" Anton offers VIP membership of Stowbay Football Club, just promoted to the Premier League. "The least I can do." Owned by his father, hotels tycoon DMITRI STYRIOS (70). Anton is reluctantly in charge, being tested by Dmitri. "Acts like he's head of a dynasty, and I'm supposed to do his bidding." He plays the club's celebratory video. Benny is not impressed. "Too many player egos. Where are the backroom staff, the fans? You need regular, targeted updates to keep everyone on-side. I was involved with media. I can brief someone." Anton shrugs, "Whatever..."

He shows off the gym and sauna. His fragile ego shatters on seeing Mikey's drying 'Koki 9' football shirt. The departed yacht guests will gossip. He'll be fiercely accused of negligence by Dmitri. The 'old lion' dotes on 'little lion' Mikey as a kindred spirit. Benny urges to call Dmitri, to pre-empt any gossip. But Anton is consumed by paranoia, "There'll be stories in the media too. That's all I need, another embarrassment." He flings away his empty brandy bottle. Suddenly spooked, he turns on Benny, jabbing at him, "So, you're a

media guy. Another scandal-monger. Well you've lucked in. How much? What price for your silence?" Benny walks away as Steffa is alerted...

Anton comes to his senses, offering an earnest man-hug. "Benny, please. My apologies. You saved my boy. But the gossip. What do I do?..."

Steffa helps Anton sober up with coffee and left-over sandwiches. Benny repeats to call Dmitri now, on some pretext about the club, and just happen to mention about Mikey's little scare. "Full of beans. Takes after you." And a family visit to Dmitri must quickly follow. Show photos of safety guards fitted on the yacht. Anton wants Benny to accompany him. He needs his support at the club too. All the crazy pressures. Benny says he's too busy with his London art gallery and other business. But he'll delay going back, if Anton makes the call to Dmitri. Now.

(Benny is fascinated by Anton's predicament. A PR challenge? Opportunism with a dynasty? Taking advantage of Anton's emotional debt?)

DAY. Benny has a shower at the marina centre. He sees a newspaper photo of Stowbay footballer Koki with big orange hairstyle. Headline: 'Koki Key To New Season Hopes.'

Stowbay FC stadium. Benny explores incognito. Supporters admire a bronze statue of club legend player Des Manders. Benny overhears about brilliant young player Ollie, lost to gambling addiction...

A helicopter lands on the pitch. Chubby players' agent 'GOBBO' (35) bustles out. Benny witnesses a fierce row between Gobbo and coach ZEGER (40) about Koki's future. On impulse he steps in to counter Gobbo's mercenary hustle. He uses brash postie WAYNE (40), the supporters' club chairman, as extra leverage. Sheer improvising audacity, guided by his PR skills, to frustrate Gobbo. Sending him fuming back to his helicopter. (Is Benny hooked on the football craziness?)

Benny returns to the marina. He's shocked to see a burly stranger on his boat, sun-bathing in boxer shorts. A paperback novel and beer bottle beside him. A manila envelope rests on a neatly folded suit. Benny retreats undetected.

Benny's Merc is parked by the rusty, chain-locked gates of Pincham Hall. He gazes through at the abandoned grounds. He phones ex partner Alice, arranging to take out their daughter Daisy next day. Their brief exchange becomes tense. Benny assures, "The gallery's OK, I'm on top of things."

Town market. Benny buys a modest bunch of flowers. He observes a 'Fresh Garden Produce' stall. The gentleman trader serves a customer. He tidies his display, shares a joke with fellow traders, and settles down to a crossword...

A car geek admires Benny's Merc. It's electric powered. Benny presents a 'Classic Cars e-Born' promo card and offers a drive. He answers a phone call. "Hey Elliot, the football nut. I might have a nice gig for you..."

'Gorse Cottage', with greenhouse tunnels. Courtly HARRIET PORTER (60) is busy with Women's Institute correspondence. Oddly chatting to someone about

rehearsing her role for a play, though she's alone. Benny disturbs with the flowers for his mother. An unexpected visit. Harriet is a queen-bee, urging Benny to get back with Alice and Daisy. Whatever did go wrong? No time for family, she supposes. Benny is silent. Harriet chides, "You were always up to something or other. It was always 'whatever next' with you..."

She's grateful to Benny for buying the neglected family boat, though indirectly. The money has helped with his father Russell's market gardening ambition. It's a sore point that Russell would never have accepted Benny's money direct. Benny intends to get the boat renovated and sell on...

The gentleman trader RUSSELL PORTER (60) arrives, parking his trusty Land Rover. He glares at Benny's Merc. He shuns Benny. Seems an on-going estrangement.

Marina. Benny returns to his boat. The sunbathing stranger has gone - but not far. LESTER GREAVES (40) returns, dressed. He's after mortgage arrears on Benny's gallery/flat. Benny engages him over fish and chips and beer. Says he's temporarily overstretched, but with deals in play. He's invested in 'coming' young artists at base prices. Maybe Lester would like to invest in art. Lester enjoys Benny's deft charm offensive, for what it is. It buys time.

NIGHT. Scallywags bar. Benny is with Anton and coach Zeger. Anton is further impressed by Benny. "That bastard Gobbo. Zeger has updated me. Marvellous. You really must join the club." Benny remains non-committal. Anton is joined by arrogant playboy friends. They flirt with a waitress. Benny complements Zeger on his career success in football. Zeger says he's been lucky, and lucky too with family. His wife is expecting again. He looks restless, trapped, amid the rowdy socialising. Benny gestures to leave. He'll tell Anton it's a family emergency. He's tempted to leave too.

DAY. Benny visits Sophie Fashions shop. He shares a frisson of attraction with voluptuous owner SOPHIE (40). She says Alice and Daisy are due back from a shopping trip. Benny has a large bunch of flowers for Alice, and Daisy's lava lamp from London. Sophie praises Alice's efficiency as part-time manager of the shop, and for organising her websites - she runs a horse-riding stables too. Benny says Alice inspired and ran their art gallery in London. He regrets, "I shouldn't have got so involved..."

Their mutual intrigue is broken by the arrival of lissome ALICE (35) and young DAISY (10) (Benny's phone photo). Benny gets a hug from Daisy. Alice is more reserved, with a coping spirit and dignity. Benny seems the accepted cause of their break-up. Daisy hopes for signs of reunion. There's lingering affection but Alice is resolved. Daisy is eager to show their flat above to Benny, but he's diplomatic. "Another time maybe." Alice offers silent thanks...

Benny's Merc. Taking Daisy to play in a summer-school fun cricket match. She asks cautiously probing questions about the separation. Was she partly the cause? Benny assures absolutely not. He's conflicted by love and guilt...

Park. Game on. High spirits. Alice discretely arrives in a compact SUV. She sits on a bench, at a distance, torn by emotions. She sees Benny pacing, absorbed

in a phone call. Too busy to watch the game. West Indian girl JUANITA (10) bowls and Daisy takes a skyer catch. Benny is alerted in time to share their delight. The girls tumble and bump heads celebrating. Alice is concerned but the girls laugh. Juanita's father ROY (35) strides over from a BBQ, calmly regal in comic apron. He does mental awareness tests to make sure the girls are OK. Benny treats them to ice-cream. He's distracted by another call. Alice drives away, still unnoticed.

NIGHT. Alice's little flat. The lava lamp glows. Alice deftly updates the shop website. Daisy practices guitar, but she's frustrated by buzzing strings. She shares a tired hug with Alice.

DAY. Dmitri's villa, bayside. A classic schooner is moored. Benny visits, with Anton, Giselle and little Mikey. Benny is wary of Giselle's interest in him, beyond being the hero who saved Mikey. She seeks to provoke Anton. They're all wary of proud, robust DMITRI (70) - of any pent-up anger about Mikey's fall from the yacht...

At the swimming pool Mikey's new fear of water causes Dmitri to take harsh action. He taunts Mikey into the pool and ducks him under. Mikey responds well. Their bond is strengthened. "My young lion." Though Giselle is horrified. Dmitri's sprightly wife MAUDE (55) scolds Dmitri for such reckless behaviour. Dmitri waves away the rebuke...

Maude puts Giselle in her place as they touch on Anton's rebellious relationship with his father Dmitri. It doesn't help that Giselle has a lingering ambition to re-form her girl band, or be an interior designer. She should be putting family first, as a stabilising influence on Anton. Giselle retorts that it would help if Anton's older brother Nikolas was more involved. She's still sore that mysterious Nikolas never even showed up for their wedding. Maude remembers it as a bad taste extravaganza...

Anton confides to Benny that Nikolas is based in the Far East, expanding Dmitri's hotels empire. "Loyal to the dynasty but lucky to be out of reach." Maude notes Benny's calming influence on Anton.

NIGHT. Dmitri shows Benny a curious coffee-table - a glass top on a battered old suitcase. He says he emigrated from Corfu. He's proud of having built up his business empire from the suitcase of his mother's lace. Ice-cream vans to fish and chip shops to guest-houses to hotels. An old story, heartily told...

Benny witnesses Dmitri's close friendship with club legend DES MANDERS (70), the subject of the bronze statue. They watch classic 'total football' on TV. They dream of Stowbay playing that way. Dmitri asks about young Ollie Hollis and his gambling addiction. Des fears he's a lost cause. Dmitri says football has lost its soul. Too much a business now - dominated by money and agents...

Anton praises Benny's handling of agent Gobbo. He's urging Benny to work for the club. Benny is cautious - happy to oblige, if and when he has the time. Dmitri scrutinises Benny. Can he be trusted? He relies on his instinct. Benny senses approval...

Dmitri spins round and confronts Anton about Mikey's fall from the yacht. Anton is flustered, caught off guard. Benny tries to intervene, but Dmitri rants about Anton's scandalous affairs too, damaging the family name. Anton retorts, "Well you're no saint." Dmitri smacks his face, "At least my private life stays private..."

Anton invokes Benny's support. Benny is dismayed by the sheer bitterness on display. He shrugs and recommends, "Discretion or disgrace." Dmitri likes that. He wants to confer, but Benny has to leave. He's due back in London, with much to do. Dmitri is not used to being denied...

Anton sees Benny out, willing his support. Benny says he can't work for a divided dynasty. Anton presses Benny to name his terms - anything. Benny offers to keep in touch by phone, Anton despairs.

Benny drives past the football club...

He pauses by Sophie Fashions. He gazes up at the lava lamp glow from a window above. Inside, Alice lies in fitful sleep...

A brief flashback shows Alice hurrying reluctant Daisy out from 'Alice Gallery', loading bags into her double parked SUV. She pushes keys into the letterbox.

Benny drives on.

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'A' story - Family. Establishing Benny as separated from Alice and daughter Daisy, though with hope for reunion. Shunned by his father, with little hope of reunion. And chided by his mother.

'B' story - Dynasty. Benny impresses by saving Mikey from drowning, by his audacious PR skills neutralising Gobbo, and by his calming influence on Anton. He's wary that the ensuing job offer is a poisoned chalice, with deep friction between Dmitri and Anton.

'C' story - Business. Benny needs to make a success of an art gallery that was inspired by Alice, but that he's put at risk. He has other business pressures too. He charms away a debt chaser.

'D' story - Affairs. Benny admires yacht skipper Steffa. He shares a frisson of desire with Alice's boss Sophie. He's wary of Giselle's interest in him.