

Stratford Quilter - Drama/Dark Comedic/Quirky – TV Proposal – Stephen Cottage

'An enigmatic artist who is a secret agent to, among others, Her Majesty The Queen.'

Series 1 – Three self-contained, two-hour episodes woven through with a serial storyline.

Concept

The central concept for this series plays on the thrilling and mysterious life of the eponymous secret agent Stratford Quilter – Quilter has the demeanour and ability to move effortlessly from a suave James Bond-type figure, to getting his hands dirty in the unemotional business of kill or be killed.

Stratford Quilter is seemingly an agent working entirely alone, answerable to no one – not even to MI5 who can only 'ask' him if he'll accept their requests to sort problems with high-profile individuals like Royalty, Politicians, Presidents – such is his calibre. There is always a liberal helping of 'tongue-in-cheek' irreverent humour throughout the adventures.

It is essentially about a loner, but a loner that comes across as anything but – often the life and soul of the party - with no shortage of the great and the good wanting to associate with him. It is a look into the mind of a character who exists on a level outside that of everyday society but is nevertheless part of it and indeed, one of the vital unseen forces helping to maintain its status quo.

The Story

The mini-series has self-contained story lines within each episode. The first episode revolves around a plot to assassinate The Queen and Prince Philip at The Trooping of the Colour. Throughout each episode, a little more of the origins and inner workings of Stratford Quilter is revealed, as well as a look into his day to day life and the people surrounding him. There are glimpses of where Stratford Quilter comes from and some inklings as to why he is the way he is, revealed by occasional flashbacks to his rather privileged and unusual childhood – one that was heavily influenced by the death of his mother who took her own life, in the ice-house, on a side of the hill by the lake on the ancestral family estate.

The first episode explores how Stratford Quilter sets up home along with his muse and lover, Jenna, a well-known, powerful clairvoyant, in a rented remote Georgian farmstead in a remote Suffolk wood owned by Sir Julian Floxley. To Floxley, along with everyone else, Stratford is an artist, setting up a studio in his newly-rented abode. Part of the charm of Stratford is that he actually *is* a genuinely talented, professional artist – so much so, that all the great and the good that he knows (including The Queen, the offices of MI5, the President of the United States, and the President of Russia to name but a few) are pleased to have his work hanging on their walls with the distinctive SQ signature across the bottom right hand corner.

This 'being an artist' helps to throw people off the scent of what he really gets up to. Of course, the high-profile individuals that he works for directly as an agent are in the know about his art-life and purchase his work without a second thought – it's as though he has an innate ability to connect on a close-bonded, one to one relationship with all types and levels of people. There are some dark comedic moments when for example, Stratford is fucking Princess Verity in the disabled toilet situated in a quiet corridor of the Royal Opera House, while a royal protection officer impatiently paces up and down outside the door, along with Princess Verity's Lady-In-waiting who stands

waiting, nervously fiddling with her fingers, eyes cast down demurely, so that she can 'tidy the Princess up' before she goes into the royal box to join her waiting husband (upper-class twit), a waiting audience, and a waiting orchestra anxious to belt out 'God Save The Queen.'

Throughout the episodes, more of Stratford Quilter's character is revealed by way of the internal struggle he has within his own self as a result of his past – he struggles to make sense of life and its purpose if, indeed, he thinks it has any, to which point of view, he conducts his private life as if tomorrow is the end of the world – everything is immediate, matter-of-fact, and usually without much emotion.

He does finally apprehend in person, among the crowds watching the Trooping of the Colour, the plotters intent on the assassination of The Queen and Prince Philip – albeit dressed as a bumblebee in 'Operation Bumblebee' as it is seriously referred to by MI5.

The World

The world of the series takes place in the present time excepting the odd flashback to Stratford Quilter's childhood. However, the mindset of some of the characters, for example, Sir Julian Floxley, is definitely caught up in the past, which creates a dramatic (sometimes humorous) tension between himself and Stratford Quilter, and his muse Jenna. The drama focusses on the minutiae of village life at times and highlights for example, the juxtaposition of Stratford Quilter's remote Suffolk abode which is rudely penetrated by the arrival from the capital of The Ferret, a short ferret-like, exquisitely-dressed man straight from the world of Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace – full of his own piss-and-importance – the Queen's own little rottweiler.

The official Buckingham Palace milieu is featured alongside the more informal life that the Queen lives with her husband with a certain amount of tongue-in-cheek humour. Similarly, the world of MI5 with its clandestine meetings and discussions is also highlighted with a certain amount of humour along with some brief forays into the White House Oval Office and the Kremlin.

When not in secret agent mode, Stratford Quilter inhabits the world of his art exhibitions and opening nights, rubbing shoulders with media people and the like – often sleeping with them – his muse and lover, Jenna, obviously (being a clairvoyant) knows all about them – she's a very open-minded and free individual, happily telling him on his return home late one night to grab himself a drink and join her in the hot tub to 'wash away that woman' – Stratford Quilter never feels like a bad boy and is never *made* to feel like a bad boy, not by anyone, anywhere.

Characters

Stratford Quilter (40)

Charismatic, handsome, a mass of curly hair, physically fit, slightly rugged, intelligent, enigmatic, and well-spoken with a very distinctive voice. Ostensibly he's an artist (and a truly exceptional one) but his real calling is as a secret agent to very high-profile individuals. He is happiest with his own company, painting in his studio, but has the sort of charm and presence that draws people to him – especially women. Stratford Quilter is not his real name – no one knows that, not even his muse and lover, Jenna. His real name is revealed in the flashbacks to childhood at the age of 10 'Quentin Somerset-Montagu-Scott' son of the largely forgotten explorer Sir Charles Montagu-Somerset-Scott, a rugged but aristocratic figure.

Jenna (30)

Jenna is Stratford Quilter's live-in muse and lover. Tall and strikingly attractive with thick, luscious curly black hair, buxom and full of life – she has something of the 'Romany' about her and is indeed

a well-known, powerful, natural clairvoyant, having mysteriously obtained her incredible abilities after a serious road accident at the age of six from which she wasn't expected to live. She's a totally free and open, strong individual who always speaks her mind, not suffering fools gladly. She is the ideal companion for a man like Stratford Quilter.

HM The Queen and Prince Philip

The Queen of England and her husband. They are seen in their official capacities with an insight into the 'goings-on' around that milieu. They are also portrayed at home (Buckingham Palace) in a more personal light, both together and individually. There is a certain amount of tongue-in-cheek humour with the couple, especially concerning Prince Philip.

Sir Julian Floxley (80)

An excitable and impatient man, tall – upright, well-dressed with a typical country-Suffolk-style pink shirt and tie, suited, aristocratic and well-spoken. Sir Julian is rather stuck in the past – and he likes it that way “I don't like change” he says “Change is boring.” He lives (and has always lived) alone in his mansion with a housekeeper, a gardener, a cook, and a driver for London outings for lunch at his club. He is happy surrounded by his large country estate with its dependant houses and acres of meadows. He is happiest when surrounded by his flunkies hard at work, regardless of the futility of the tasks. His most precious flunky is his 'Batman', Clunky – Clunky is always by his side to act upon Sir Julian's every whim and fancy with a “Sir, yes sir, sir!” but but with eyes rolled and an upturned lip.

Clunky (50) – Sir Julian Floxley's 'Batman'

A dishevelled, stocky man with a large unruly mop of slightly too much jet black hair. He doesn't really have a life of his own as he is almost entirely given over to the service of Sir Julian Floxley to the point that he's near-on a slave. However, although he carries out every nonsensical task that Sir Julian spits out, he objects to it – always mumbling and grumbling - about nothing in particular but constantly garnering the typical aristocratic uninterested faux questioning of “What what?” from Sir Julian. Clunky lives alone in one of the dependant houses near to Sir Julian's mansion. Clunky is sexually frustrated. He takes a fancy to Jenna who knowingly and comfortably plays along with him as she walks around the house naked, knowing that he sits in the bushes at night, watching her.

Secondary Characters

The Ferret (50)

A short man with a pinched, ferret-like face and a ferret-like personality and demeanour. Walks as if he's 'full of his own piss-and-importance' which of course, he is, having the full and absolute backing of Her Majesty The Queen – he knows that he's the dog's bollocks – it pays to keep your business out of sight of The Ferret as, like in the wild, ferrets find ground-nesting birds easy prey! When Her Majesty has a sticky problem, she calls for The Ferret – he is known only as The Ferret and only ever referred to as such both by The Queen and Prince Philip, and indeed by the whole royal household at Buckingham Palace who are careful to keep their business out of his sight if at all possible.

Felicity Flippance

A well-known TV presenter known for the combination of her high intellect and stunning looks. She is one of Stratford Quilter's many long-standing acquaintances-with-benefits.

Princess Verity (28)

Granddaughter to the Queen. Married to a stuffed shirt with a stupid grin – an airhead. She's bored, and rampant.

The Queen's Lady-in-waiting (55) – Discreet and tactful.

Princess Verity's Lady-in-waiting (45) – A Nervous wreck.

Assistant Commissioner MI5 (52) - She's unflinchingly serious amidst Stratford's antics.

The Witch Mardella (70?) - a mysterious figure appearing out of the woods – seems to intuitively 'know' Stratford Quilter as others don't. One of the few to connect properly with him.

John Gently (50) – a millionaire private art collector and associate of Felicity Flippance.

Jasper Joyce (45) – a well-known businessman, racehorse owner, and philanthopist – boyfriend of Jasper Joyce.

Lady Perkins (75) – a minor member of the Royal Family related to Princess Verity and cousin to Sir Julian Floxley.

Episodes

1 – Operation Bumblebee

Covent Garden, at the Royal Opera House, Stratford Quilter is having sex with Princess Verity in the disabled toilet in a deserted corridor near to the Royal Box while her entourage, an audience, and not least, her husband, awaits her royal presence – showing exactly what kind of man Stratford Quilter is, along with the fact that he is able to penetrate, in every way, the very heart of the establishment, at a time and a place that suits *him*. Princess Verity composes herself with the help of her Lady-In-Waiting and enters the Royal Box as the orchestra plays God Save The Queen. As the strains of God Save The Queen fill the London night, Stratford Quilter fills his lungs with the night air, strutting along Bow Street like the cat that got the cream.

Stratford Quilter arrives in central London in his sports car. He approaches a back street set of doors and points a device so that the doors open. He drives in and he and his car descend to his secret room. Inside he stands before a mirror and undresses. He dresses completely in black with long black boots and scrunches up his hair with a special device so that he can put on a long black pony-tailed wig. A tall chimney-pot hat finishes it off. He slips a pistol inside his coat and smirks to himself in the mirror.

Towards the gates of Downing Street he lollops like a different character in his high boots and get-up towards the security as Big Ben strikes four o'clock. At the gate he approaches a guard very casually and laid back with a different, slow-drawl of an accent. He whispers something to the guard who immediately orders the gate to be opened. Stratford Quilter then lollops his way up Downing Street towards number 10 – seemingly a lone figure completely out of context. At the door of number 10 a lone policeman standing guard moves aside. Stratford knocks on the door. It opens. The Prime Minister holds out a welcoming hand to be shaken with an enthusiastic "Stratford!" Stratford enters with a "How do" as the door shuts behind him.

At his grand country estate of 'Blackthorne Park' Sir Julian Floxley and his Batman Clunky prepare for the arrival of a new tenant 'an artist' a 'Mr Quilter', 'Stratford Quilter' as Sir Julian excitedly puts it. They head across the lanes to a remote outlying, now disused farmstead 'Lantern House Farm.' Meanwhile at Buckingham Palace, HM The Queen sends for her Equerry in order to summon The Ferret – she has a problem. At Lantern House Farm Sir Julian and Stratford Quilter meet for the first time – each finds the other intriguing especially Stratford's amusement at the feudal-type arrangement he sees with all Sir Julian's live-in flunkies busying themselves around the yard with Sir Julian constantly ordering them around down to the minutest inconsequential detail. Stratford is left to his own devices as Sir Julian and his flunkies head off back to Blackthorne Park where Sir Julian has the important business of choosing a horse for the day's racing – he settles on 'Ratty Boy' in the 3.30 at Newbury.

Whilst alone in the drawing room, Stratford takes out a brown envelope marked 'Confidential' from 'Specialist Operation, Protection Command, London Met Police.' He reads with interest and is somewhat distracted as Jenna his partner tries to have a conversation with him from London

between giving clairvoyant readings to some high-profile people. Later, an official royal car arrives in the yard at Lantern House – it is The Ferret who has come to remote Suffolk just to summon Stratford to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen in person. Stratford agrees to meet her.

The Ferret returns to Buckingham Palace and informs The Queen. Over lunch at the Palace The Queen and Prince Philip mull over the situation sitting at opposite ends of a long table with prince Philip saying it's an 'arse-ache' having to get Stratford Quilter involved in The Trooping of the Colour. The Queen smooths things over and reassures Philip – he relents somewhat, screws up his nose and noisily slurps his tea.

Sir Julian's housekeeper has to wake him from his afternoon nap to watch the 3.30 at Newbury. Sir Julian is at his most animated as Ratty Boy wins it by a head over Roger Dodger.

Sir Julian along with Clunky visit Lantern House Farm to collect the first rent from Stratford. He's on his way back so Jenna entertains Sir Julian and playfully and provocatively flaunts her scantily clad chest in front of Clunky who she knows has taken a fancy to her.

Stratford arrives back and they all get worse the wear on the brandy after Stratford gives Sir Julian two year's worth rent in cash in advance.

At MI5 a meeting takes place to discuss the ongoing problem with the perceived threats to The Queen over the Trooping of the Colour. Stratford is mentioned and MI5 are aware that he will be involved.

Back at Lantern House Farm Stratford is having vigorous sex with Jenna late morning. They lie on the bed afterwards as Stratford makes a direct phone call to the Oval Office to talk directly with the welcoming President of the United States.

The next morning Stratford and Jenna are setting up his art exhibition for the private view the next evening at the Heston Gallery in Bond Street. Meanwhile, Sir Julian and Clunky back at Blackthorne Park are working out the timings to attend Stratford's private View the next evening. However, Sir Julian has an unexpected 'serious toilet' need and Clunky must go into full 'gloves and wet-wipes' operational mode.

Stratford's Private View at the Heston Gallery in Bond Street is in full swing. Sir Julian arrives accompanied by Clunky who he has 'deposited' for the evening in a side room, should he be required.

The evening is attended by the TV celebrity Flippance who discusses with an associate of hers, the millionaire art collector John Gently, the largest of the artworks entitled 'Fuck Tree' – a sculpture of the trunk of an oak tree with dildo-like phalluses growing out of the bark – it is accompanied by life-size figures of two old ladies depicted with their skirts hitched up and each riding the dildo's from behind – they have wild, slightly frightening, ecstatic faces. introduces John Gently to Stratford.

Outside, an official black limousine arrives. It is a Mr Petrov from the Russian Embassy. He is welcomed in. He meets Stratford and it transpires that he wants to purchase everything in the exhibition which Stratford agrees to on condition that the works stay in place for the rest of the evening's Private View. Mr Petrov is buying on behalf of the Kremlin for 'a very important person.'

Sir Julian, drink in hand, takes out his large magnifying glass and reads out loud 'Fuck Tree' with some astonishment.

The next morning at Blackthorne Park Sir Julian is impressed with Stratford Quilter as he reads in the newspaper that the exhibition was a sell-out.

On the river Thames in a moored Barge, three hooded figures sit around a small table in the galley – their faces not visible. They have a plan spread out on the table and discuss how they are going to assassinate The Queen at The trooping of the Colour the next day. They are not particularly professional.

Stratford is painting in his studio when he sits down, lights up a slim cigar and goes into a kind of reverie. He sees back in time [Flashback] when he was 10 years old sitting on the bank of a river on the ancestral family estate, chatting to his father, the explorer Sir Charles Montagu-Somerset-Scott, a rugged but aristocratic figure. He talks about wanting to know what happened to his mother who committed suicide in the ice-house [End of Flashback]. Stratford comes to and snaps out of his reverie but visibly deep in thought and serious.

Stratford drives his convertible once again to his secret underground garage in London. This time his disguise is different. He puts on some feminine pink trousers, a frilly white blouse, and a ladies jacket. He once again uses his special device to gather up all his curly hair and place it in a bun atop his head. This he covers with a large flamboyant ladies floppy hat. He applies some make-up to change his features somewhat and pops on some coloured spectacles. Finally he pulls on some thigh-length ladies swede boots and admires himself in the mirror, He slips a knife into one of the boots as he leaves.

In this disguise he walks along Monmouth Street in Covent Garden and past Jenna's Therapy rooms. She passes him as she returns with a take-out coffee and fails to recognise him. He walks off with a wry grin to himself.

He then walks through London attracting a certain amount of attention, over to Buckingham Palace where he converses with a police officer at the vehicle entrance to the Palace. He is waved through. He walks through the corridor towards the Queen's study. As he nears the door a security man apprehends him making to physically stop him. Stratford takes the security man out using some deft moves – there is quite a kerfuffle and the Queen's door is hit. The security guard is left unconscious flat on his back at Stratford's feet. Two waiting flunkies silently bring a stretcher – they load him onto it as Stratford knocks on the Queen's door. The Queen makes noises for him to enter and he half opens the door. She has her back to him and sarcastically makes out to worry that she hopes that he hasn't hurt her man too much. Stratford tells her that 'he'll live' and she retorts 'well that's what he's paid for I suppose.' She tells him to come in as The Ferret tells her that he's got lots to tell her. Stratford shuts the door.

In the office of the Assistant Commissioner at the Met the Deputy Assistant Commissioner informs her that more information regarding the possible suspects has come to the surface and that they are in the vicinity. The information is coming from Stratford Quilter and is taken seriously.

At the palace, Stratford Quilter talks to a policeman on the gate as he leaves. He fiddles, ladylike with his hair and then minces up the road in camp fashion. He returns to his underground garage and puts himself back to normal.

At BBC Broadcasting house, Stratford Quilter knocks on door marked Felicity Flippance – first four knocks, then five knocks getting progressively louder. Felicity already knows who is knocking and is excited to see him. He is soon fucking her over a stool in her dressing room but they have to 'pause' when a runner comes to get her for a programme she's presenting 'The Late Night Arts Show' pre-recorded in the morning. There is a live audience and Stratford watches from the wings with a

wry smile on his face as Felicity does her stuff.

Back at the Heston Gallery, Mr Petrov is overseeing the collection of the artworks – the large Fuck Tree is in the process of being wrapped. Mr Petrov is keen to get them shipped as he says that they must be hung in Moscow by the evening.

At Lantern House Farm Jenna is enjoying the warmth and bubbles of her new hot tub on the terrace in the late evening sun under the parasol the underside is covered with romantic lights. She leans back, naked, with a glass of champagne. When Stratford arrives she playfully orders him to get his clothes off, grab a drink and to get in and 'wash that woman away.' He puts his arm around her and they have a moment gazing across to the setting sun.

At MI5 the officials sit around the oval table just before midnight with plans discussing the next day's trooping of the Colour. They point out at which intersection Stratford Quilter has given them the heads up on. The Assistant Commissioner wants to know how they will be able to distinguish Stratford Quilter in the proceedings the next day. Commander Johnson informs her very seriously that it will be as a bumble bee. The Assistant Commissioner also wants to know whether Stratford Quilter will be armed to which she is reminded that he will be but the last time, dressed as Little Bo Peep, he managed to render three men unconscious without drawing a weapon.

At the palace, The Queen sleeps in her bed – soundly. On the wall above her bed is another Stratford Quilter painting.

Early the next morning, at the Kremlin, the Russian President sits at his desk, smoking a cigar. He looks at the entire collection of Quilter's paintings from the private view that now hang on the walls of his office.

Meanwhile at Lantern House Farm. Jenna stretches her hand out for Stratford but he's already gone.

Over at the Palace, The Queen has to be woken by her Lady-In-Waiting so that she's ready for the Trooping of the Colour.

Early morning on the Mall officials are putting finishing touches to road blocks and barriers as the public start to arrive for the event.

Stratford Quilter sits in a Soho coffee house eating croissants and sipping coffee.

The Assistant Commissioner of the Met sends out a message that the operation is now officially 'Operation Bumble Bee.'

In his secret garage, Stratford Quilter puts on his close-fitting bumble Bee suit. Complete with 'bee' shoes and a balaclava-style 'bee' headpiece. He slips a pistol in his suit and a special 'anaesthetic spike' up his sleeve.

Stratford walks through the excited crowd up the Mall to take his position near Horse Guards Parade. As he walks many children are encouraged by their parents to interact with the bee as though he is some kind of official mascot – Stratford reciprocates. Commander Johnson who is on the ground radios to the Assistant Commissioner that he has located the bee. The Assistant Commissioner reminds Johnson to not intervene in anything that the bee does.

In her therapy room Jenna is in the middle of giving a clairvoyant reading and breaks off to say how she has this strange feeling of a bumble bee but can't explain it.

In the Quadrangle at Buckingham Palace the Queen and Prince Philip mount the horse-drawn Glass Coach. The procession begins – leaving Buckingham Palace with other members of the Royal Family ahead in small horse-drawn 'barouches' while an entourage of officials follow behind.

There is mounting excitement from the crowd as the Procession arrives at Horse Guards Parade, coming to a halt just as Big Ben strikes eleven. The first hooded man attempts to fire a flare over the proceedings – Stratford is lurking, waiting and plunges a spike into the hooded man's neck causing him to be unconscious before he hits the ground. The crowd are confused, there is a certain amount of panic – not knowing if the Bumbee Bee is just messing around.

Over his walkie talkie Commander Johnson informs base that the bee has stung.

Back at Blackthorne Park Sir Julian is watching the trooping of the Colour hunched over a small TV. He is annoyed as the TV commentator is complaining about there being some kind of kerfuffle over a bumble bee. Sir Julian shouts at the TV for the bumble bee to be gone. Tangmo gets the wrong end of the stick and runs to fetch Clunky to get rid of the bee for Sir Julian.

Stratford sets his sights on a second hooded man who is about to fire some kind of hand-held rocket launcher at the Glass Coach. Stratford pulls out another spike and plunges it into the man's neck – he falls unconscious. Stratford disappears among the kerfuffle in the crowd.

Commander Johnson radios the news that the Bee has stung again and flown.

Moments later the Assistant Commissioner is at the door of the Glass Coach. The Queen has a window slid open. There is an eerie stillness due to the commotion. She talks in hushed tones to the royal couple. They have an idea what's been happening and are told that 'The Bee' has sorted it. Prince Philip enquires to The Queen whether any 'honey' has been sent over to Bumble Bee's hive. She tells him that it's all in hand and that the Ferret will be dealing with it. He responds with his usual "Well done, cabbage."

Commander Johnson oversees the hooded men being stretchered into the ambulances.

Stratford walks away from the area through Marylebone High Street still dressed as The Bee. He comes across a road block caused by a builder's dumper truck that has run out of diesel. He rolls up his 'bee' sleeves and after they fill it with diesel from a can he shows them how to bleed the engine – it fires up! They thank the bee. He continues his journey. He changes back into his clothes and leaves for Suffolk. He arrives back at Lantern House Farm. As he sits painting at his easel Jenna arrives back late afternoon – she's happy to see him back. She kisses him on the forehead as he paints and leans over to look at something in the corner of the painting – he affirms that it is a bumble bee. There is a knock at the door. It is The Ferret – he hands over a brown envelope to Stratford full of money.

Jenna shouts to Stratford that his tea awaits him in the drawing room. He enters the drawing room to find her completely naked, reclining on a chaise longue, looking radiant and pre-Raphaelite with her mass of hair now down her back. She sips her tea.

Stratford playfully observes that she's got her clothes off early. She tells him that she's giving someone a little treat – he's confused – she replies with a 'does it matter?' She asks him who that strange little creature was at the door. Stratford empties the contents of the brown envelope all over the rug – there are thousands of pounds in used notes – Stratford replies to her with a 'Does it matter?'

They both laugh together. Jenna puts on a CD - the opening of Poulenc's ballet 'Les Biches.' She returns to the chaise longue and Stratford joins her. They nestle closely together. The music intensifies.

Outside, the drawing room window can be seen from the bushes from behind the distinctive mop of hair that is Clunky's head. He's getting his treat. As the music intensifies still further, away and upward with a bird's eye view of Lantern House Farm and onto the surrounding Suffolk landscape.

Episode 2 and 3

Currently in progress.



A possible likeness to Stratford Quilter (then Quentin Somerset-Montagu-Scott) in his younger days.