

FLESH AND BLOOD

ITV PRODUCTION NOTES





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Silverprint Pictures, produces four-part drama, *Flesh and Blood*, written by Sarah Williams, starring Imelda Staunton, Francesca Annis, Russell Tovey and Stephen Rea

Imelda Staunton (*A Confession, Maleficent, Paddington, Harry Potter, Vera Drake*), Francesca Annis (*Home Fires, The Little House, Cranford*), Russell Tovey (*Years and Years, Quantico*) and Stephen Rea (*Dickensian, War & Peace, The Honourable Woman*) star in *Flesh and Blood* - a darkly witty and gripping four-part drama created and written by Sarah Williams (*The Long Song, Case Sensitive, Poppy Shakespeare*), which explores family dynamics and modern relationships as they spiral towards a tragedy and possible crime.

Joining the ensemble cast are Claudie Blakley (*Manhunt, Grantchester, Lark Rise To Candleford*), Lydia Leonard (*Gentleman Jack, Absentia, Apple Tree Yard*), Sharon Small (*London Kills, Trust Me, Born to Kill*), Lara Rossi (*Cheat, Crossing Lines*), Keir Charles (*Man Up, Love Actually, Green Wing*), Vincent Regan (*Victoria, The Royals, Atlantis*), Grace Hogg-Robinson (*The Coroner, Mum*) and David Bamber (*Valkyrie, Doctors, The Bourne Identity*).

Directed by BAFTA nominee and Grierson award winner Louise Hooper (*Cheat, Vera, Cold Feet*), *Flesh and Blood* is a modern story of three adult siblings - Helen (Claudie Blakley), Jake (Russell Tovey) and Natalie (Lydia Leonard) - who are thrown into disarray when their recently widowed mother Vivien (Francesca Annis) declares she's in love with a new man, Mark (Stephen Rea).

As she nears her 70th birthday, the siblings' suspicions are heightened when retired GP Mark sweeps their mother off her feet, shifting her priorities away from her children. The happiness of her 45-year marriage to their father, Terry, is called into question, which sends a seismic shock through the lives of the siblings. Years of secrets, lies, rivalries and betrayals come to the surface and threaten to blow apart everything they've held dear.

With their large family home overlooking the South coast, their inheritance and the happy memories of their childhood all suddenly threatened by the arrival of Mark, the siblings attempt to find out more about him. But will their long-buried grudges and complicated personal lives allow them to pull together?

Then there's Mary (Imelda Staunton), who has lived next door to Vivien for 40 years. Despite not being family, Mary appears overly attentive to Vivien and her family's unfolding drama.

Filmed on location along the South coast, *Flesh and Blood* is produced by Letitia Knight (*Dark Heart, Vera*). Silverprint Pictures' Creative Director Kate Bartlett (*Dark Heart, Shetland, Vera*) executive produces the series with Sarah Williams.

Silverprint Pictures is part of ITV Studios. ITV Studios Global Entertainment distributes *Flesh and Blood* internationally.

FOREWORD BY SARAH WILLIAMS, WRITER AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

One of six children myself, I've always been fascinated by family dynamics, because it seems to me that families bring out the best and the worst in us. Our brothers and sisters can be our closest allies or our sworn enemies, often in the space of a heartbeat. Our shared history means we know each other's biggest dreams, deepest fears and darkest secrets, and consequently our siblings can push our buttons faster and harder than anyone else. As the Buddhists say: when you think you are enlightened, go and spend a week with your family.

But although our family can wound us deeply, they are often the people who make us laugh the hardest too - and that blend of humour and heartbreak seemed to me to be rich territory for a drama. In fact I thought I could really have some fun with the tone of the piece: there could be twists and turns, jeopardy and a deep emotional undertow to the drama, yes - but it could be playful and darkly delicious too.

Quite quickly I found my *Flesh and Blood* family. Vivien (played by Francesca Annis) was my starting point. She's a recently-widowed mother who's decided, after a lifetime of looking after her family, to put herself first for a change. This ruffles the feathers of her three chicks, Helen (Claudie Blakley), Jake (Russell Tovey) and Natalie (Lydia Leonard) all of whom have trouble adjusting to this new version of their mother. And when Vivien's new love Mark (Stephen Rea) appears on the scene threatening to whisk Vivien away, the worried siblings join forces to check out his background.

So that was the meat and potatoes of my show, but it wasn't until the family's neighbour, Mary, elbowed her way into my script that I realised I had the gravy too and the story really took off.

Mary (Imelda Staunton) has lived next door since the year dot. Vivien's trusty second-in-command, she's always been there to help out with the children. Deprived of a family herself, over the years she's made herself indispensable to her neighbours. And she's distraught at the thought of Vivien disappearing off over the horizon with a new man.

So, where does this family live? Right on the edge of the sea. I grew up on the Kent coast and have returned to live there, so it's my own personal backdrop. The sea is soothing and good for the soul, but also ravaging and relentless - a bit like families. Plus a house on the beach would give me the isolation I wanted for this family, and be a place where you really depend on the support of your neighbours. Then there are the visuals of course. We were so lucky with the weather when we shot this, we had bright sunshine and big blue skies which contrast nicely with the rising family tensions.

The siblings are increasingly suspicious of Mark's motives and hugely protective of their mother. Mark is not only a newcomer to the district with no-one to vouch for him, but he and Vivien met on a website and she's only known him for six months. Can he really be trusted? Is he Vivien's gateway to a new life of freedom, romance and adventure? Or a dangerous - perhaps deadly - predator? That's the burning question of the series.

And when I started writing I honestly didn't know the answer to that question! What I did know was that someone's life would be hanging in the balance from the very opening scene and that we would flash back to find out how this perfectly nice family got to this terrible point. So I started writing and trusted that my characters would show me the way - and indeed they took me firmly by the hand and lead me to the conclusion I least expected. I had a lot of fun on that journey and I hope you do too.

NOTES FROM DIRECTOR, LOUISE HOOPER

It was a total joy to direct FLESH & BLOOD. Sarah Williams's writing first drew me in. It's a complex and enthralling world, full of secrets and lies. I was also delighted to discover this was not a conventional thriller; it is mischievous and witty and doesn't play the police procedure too heavily. To that end I worked with the HODS to create a sun drenched, playful world, full of idiosyncratic detail and fun, rather than going down the more usual monochrome, gritty thriller trope. We revelled in the wild cliff tops, sea and wide stretches of beach right in front of Mary and Vivien's homes.

The amazing designer, Tim Dickell and his team, had great fun creating this seaside world; particularly Mary's house and garden which is filled with nostalgic details and delightfully questionable wallpaper that sets her character up so beautifully. To maintain this lightness of touch and to deliver a fresh and unique thriller we asked the wonderful Dan Jones to compose the score for us. We wanted the music to be on the front foot, an impish, playful, stunning score that acts as a narrator to the piece.

I wanted to make FLESH & BLOOD as visually stylish and arresting as possible. Cinematic in terms of beautiful lighting, composition and sweeping camera moves, courtesy of DOP Oli Russel, but also to have a bullet proof reality at its core. For me that is how tension can really ratchet up. To give the audience an unnerving mix of the very familiar, every day natural world, existing within a heightened reality.

A spectacular cast! It was a privilege to work with such incredible actors at the top of their game, who also happen to be utterly delightful and great fun to work with. There was much collaboration, laughter and a true meeting of minds in terms of what we wanted to create. A family thriller that feels real, laced with suspense and running through it a refreshing tone of delight and mischief! This continued into the edit where an all female team worked beautifully together - the very fantastic producer Letitia Knight, editor Edel McDonnell, Execs Kate Bartlett, Sarah Williams and commissioner ITV, Polly Hill. All fabulous, funny, feisty and talented ladies!

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES



Mary played by Imelda Staunton

Mary has lived next door to Vivien and her family since before the children were born. Living on her own has meant she's had plenty of time to help Vivien out with childcare and other household duties. In fact over the years the family have come to rely on Mary - she's been a shoulder to cry on and a devoted supporter of them all. Quiet and unassuming, Mary has never looked for any notice or reward - other than Vivien's friendship - but she definitely did not bargain on the arrival of a new man in Vivien's life. Of course she wants Vivien to be happy, but can this new man really be trusted?



Vivien played by Francesca Annis

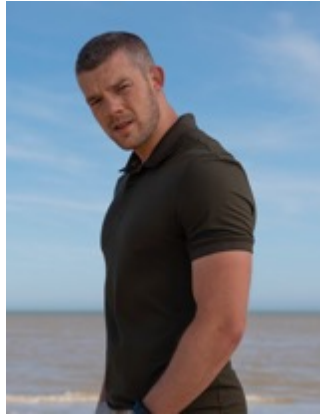
On the cusp of turning 70, Vivien remains fit, attractive and determined to grab what life still has to offer. She nursed her husband through a long-term illness before his death 18 months ago, and now she's keen to enjoy a rediscovered freedom. In the past she'd spent years looking after her children while running a successful hair salon. And her marriage had long contained cracks and heartaches that she'd kept concealed. Then six months ago Vivien met Mark, who quickly set about sweeping her off her feet. She feels she deserves some romance in her autumn years. But is she throwing caution to the wind?



Mark played by Stephen Rea

Mark is charming, impulsive, and seems to wear his heart on his sleeve. A retired surgeon, 6 months ago he met Vivien and now seems committed and is putting his heart and soul into this new relationship – showering Vivien with gifts and treats. But Vivien's children are worried about Mark's motives and how quickly his relationship with their mother has progressed. No one seems to know that much about his past. Is Mark too good to be true?

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES CONT'D



Jake played by Russell Tovey

Passionate, impulsive, and with something of a hot temper, Jake is fit and athletic – working as a personal trainer. He hid his spiralling gambling debts from his wife and family for as long as he could, but when they came to light he found his marriage on the rocks. Jake loves his wife, Leila, and his two kids (Maddie, 10 and Aaron, 7) madly. But they now live separately from him, and he's scrambling to pay off his debts and win back Leila's trust in order to rebuild his family. But will he set about doing all of that in the most sensible way...?



Helen played by Claudie Blakley

Helen doesn't mean to be bossy, it's just she has a knack for seeing the best way to get things done. This has undoubtedly helped her career in hospital administration. And she's recently taken on her biggest challenge yet – turning around a failing NHS Trust. But perhaps Helen relies a little too much on a drink at the end of the day to relax from all the stress. And while work consumes her, she's apparently unaware that her marriage to husband George is fracturing, and her teenage daughter, Lily, might be drifting away.



Natalie played by Lydia Leonard

Right from when she was young, Natalie always had big dreams – first of being a dancer, then an actress, then an artist. They all came to nothing. She's ended up working as the personal assistant to a property developer. Not that she isn't talented and highly competent in this busy role. But things have become complicated by the fact that her boss, Tony, is also now her lover – which Natalie is determined to keep hidden from her family.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES CONT'D



Stella played by Sharon Small

Confident and independent with a no-nonsense, straight-talking attitude, Stella is partner in a local law firm with a small side-line in property rentals. Unattached, with no children and heartache in her past, she's made a conscious choice to eschew relationships – except on her own terms. Keep-fit classes brought her into contact with Jake, who became her personal trainer. And then provider of other services too. But will what started as a purely professional understanding between them spiral into something more intimate?



George played by Keir Charles

Once a bit of a dreamer with an artistic bent, George has nevertheless always been loyal and committed – a faithful husband to Helen and loving stay-at-home dad for daughter Lily. Nowadays his artistry is mainly poured into renovating properties the family buys to live in then sell on. But Helen's overarching commitment to work, and domineering manner at home, has led to an increasing distance in their relationship. George often retreats into getting stoned as a coping mechanism. While Helen doesn't even seem to notice this dangerous drift...



Leila played by Lara Rossi

Determined, self-sufficient and sexy, Jake really met his match with Leila - her tough-love approach brought his wild youth into line. But over the years Jake has gradually slipped back into his old ways, and when Leila discovered he'd run up a huge gambling debt which imperilled the family home, she threw him out at once. A lioness of a mother, Leila wants to protect her kids from their father's excesses. But, but - there is still a deep love between this couple, and if Jake can pay off his debts and mend his ways, might she be tempted to give him a second chance?



Tony played by Vincent Regan

Charismatic and full of bonhomie, bluster and verve, Tony is a man who gets things done. Over the years he's built up a thriving property development company and he enjoys the cash, lifestyle and freedom this successful business brings. His home life also appears charmed – with a beautiful house, a gorgeous wife, and two teenage daughters. Yet Tony's also been having a long-standing affair with his PA, Natalie. And can he really continue to have it all, while avoiding personal conflicts? And at what cost to him?



IMELDA STAUNTON IS MARY

How would you describe *Flesh and Blood*?

“Flesh and Blood is an unusual, refreshing drama that is hugely intriguing. All of the different parts of the family story are very interesting with a mystery right from the start. It also highlights the intricacies of three grown up children’s relationships with their partners, ex-partners and with their mother.

“The writer Sarah Williams has drawn rich characters across the drama. Every character has a good story to tell and they all have different lives. She has done a great job in keeping all of the characters bubbling away while one strand goes all the way through: ‘What on earth has gone on?’

“We know from the beginning that something bad has happened to one of these characters before the story goes back in time. But you are never quite sure exactly what that is and who it involves until the end of the drama.

“What is clever about *Flesh and Blood* is you want to know what has happened but you also become invested in everyone’s story. Trying to guess what these characters are really like. You think it’s possible that any one of these characters could be responsible. We all love, for whatever reason, questions like, ‘Who did it? Why did they do it? Was it an accident? What’s going on?’ We want to be intrigued and kept interested along the way.”

Can you explain to us who Mary is?

“Mary is an old friend of Vivien (Francesca Annis) and Vivien’s three now grown up children. Mary and Vivien live next door to each other in two houses on the beach and have been neighbours for many years. Mary and Vivien have been there for each other over that time but without being too intrusive. Mary would babysit Vivien’s kids when they were young.

“Mary has got used to her neighbour being there. Vivien’s husband Terry died some 18 months before but aside from that nothing has changed. I don’t think Mary likes change. You are never quite sure about Mary. You want the writing to be ambiguous and you don’t want it all mapped out. You want to keep the audience thinking and interested. The actor can only do so much. It’s all in the writing.

“Francesca and I look very different. Mary is more ordinary and Vivien is more exotic. More glamorous.”

Can good neighbours become good friends?

“In London you can have neighbours who are best mates and others who you think, ‘I’ve only seen them twice.’ That’s a result of living in a city. I like that you don’t have to make friends with every single person in your road. And you don’t have to ignore every person in your road.

“In this story these two women are basically just there on their own. It was an amazing location. We filmed in Eastbourne in the most glorious weather. Literally every single day was bright, hot sunshine. Which is unusual. You can walk from the sea to the houses which are just perched there on the beach.”

How would you describe Mary’s relationship with Vivien’s three children?

“Mary is that combination of a person who is useful, friendly, maybe slightly annoying but liveable with. Mary didn’t have children of her own so she really invested in Vivien’s three children emotionally as they grew up. And yet is British enough to know her place. To feel she ought to not really intrude too much.

“We all have selective memories. We remember what we want to remember. And maybe we attach too much of an emotional connection to certain memories. Things that seem very emotional to Mary were just very ordinary to these siblings. She has over invested in their lives.

“Mary has watched Vivien’s children from when they were very young to the adults they are today.”

How does Mary view Mark (Stephen Rea), the new man in Vivien’s life?

“It’s someone getting in the way of Mary’s relationship and friendship with Vivien. Mary doesn’t want Vivien’s attention to be drawn somewhere else. It’s petty, childish and ridiculous. But at the same time understandable. It could have been anyone coming in. It just happens to be Mark who has done it.

“Mary wants to say, ‘Can you just leave Vivien alone now, please? And let her get on with her life?’ I think part of Mary wants Vivien to move on with her life and be happy. But it is like a child saying, ‘She’s my friend not yours.’ Mary’s reaction is childlike.”

How do Vivien’s children react to Mark?

“Her three children have no real concept that their mum might want to have own life. A living, breathing woman. The children are caught up in their own lives and are fairly self-obsessed. It’s questionable how emotionally developed they really are. They seem fairly selfish.

“They try to accept this new man in their mother’s life. But in their mind, this has all happened far too quickly after their father’s death. They might think that even if this happened 10 years later. Whatever you do isn’t right.”

The family house is important to the three siblings. Do you have strong memories of your own childhood home?

“I was raised above a hair salon in north London. I regarded that as home. We moved when I was 10 or 11. And for most of my adult life, probably until I had my own house and family, I dreamt about that house all of the time. Because I wanted to be there. We moved to a horrible flat in Finchley and I hated it.

“It’s weird, isn’t it? If you’re a child of a family in the Forces you are moving all of the time. That’s your life. But if you are lucky enough to have had a home that you stayed in during your formative years you become very attached to that home.”

Mary finds gardening therapeutic. Was much acting required for those scenes?

“I am a gardener myself so that was quite relatable for me. It was a very nice added ingredient that was easy for me to do. I wasn’t stood there going, ‘Oh, what do you do with this?’ It felt very comfortable filming those scenes of Mary gardening.”

Had you worked with Francesca Annis and Stephen Rea before?

“Francesca and I were both in Cranford in 2009 but we didn’t meet. Stephen and I did something 25 years ago in Budapest called Citizen X, where he was a Russian detective and I was his wife. He is a remarkable actor.”



“Flesh and Blood is an unusual, refreshing drama that is hugely intriguing.”



FRANCESCA ANNIS IS VIVIEN

What attracted you to Flesh and Blood?

“Reading the scripts - Flesh and Blood has the absolute classic opening to a thriller. Something bad has happened to one of the characters but you don’t know who it is. Then it cuts to this breezy, chatty family. Sarah Williams’ writing is wonderful because everything seems so ordinary but you wonder, ‘What is the story arc that leads to this end? And who is it within this group of people?’ It is a real page turner. And it also made me laugh. Unexpected things kept coming up in the most ordinary situations. I haven’t done something like that for a long time.

“Then I met up with the team - director Louise Hooper, producer Letitia Knight, Sarah Williams and everyone. A group of women who were fronting this show and we had a great time. Louise is completely empowering. She always wanted anyone’s suggestions and input. She wasn’t intimidated or nervous about that and would often take it on board. It was very collaborative. That made it an interesting project. It is terrific.

“There are so many dark projects around. Dark in every sense of the word. This is family life as it is. A complete rollercoaster and things taking you by surprise. I liked the idea of that. And I liked the idea that I was playing the head of this family that was so recognisable. There are lots of twists and turns in Flesh and Blood that made me laugh. And a couple of things made me gasp.”

Who is Vivien?

“Vivien is a very interesting, contemporary woman. She has been a career woman and is now heading for her 70th birthday. Having lost her husband Terry some 18 months before, Vivien is interested in looking for new ways to enjoy life. She is happy to enter into a completely new phase in her life, taking on board whatever life may

throw at her, which includes a new relationship with a man called Mark (Stephen Rea).

“What I liked about Vivien is that she is not without criticism but you don’t feel she is judgmental. That’s one reason her children talk to her and confide in her. That’s a very good quality of hers.”

How does she get on with Mary next door?

“Vivien’s relationship with her next door neighbour Mary (Imelda Staunton) is very real. They were close. Particularly from Mary’s side. Vivien had the family Mary didn’t have. We don’t know very much about Mary but things are gradually revealed. Mary is quite dependent emotionally on this family who have grown up next door. While Vivien relied on her when she was working to take care of the children. Not all of the time but she was always on hand to help out if needed. Mary is a very good neighbour.

“But Vivien’s new relationship with Mark makes it quite difficult. Because Vivien is looking out and away from the family and into a whole new part of her life. Vivien is not someone who lives in the past. She is forward looking. She lives in the moment and in the future and is moving on. While Mary still lives a bit in the past. With Vivien no longer dependent on her any more.

“I like Mary very much and really feel for her. It’s an interesting dynamic. About people who are a bit needy. While Vivien is self-sufficient and off about her business in the world.”

What are your thoughts about neighbours?

“I’m a city person. I like the anonymity of London. I did move to the country about 30 years ago. Maybe I didn’t stay long enough but I didn’t like the fact that everybody knew your business.

“But I was born and brought up and went to school in London and have many friends from then so I have friends who are still here. I like that anonymity of where I live. The only thing I really envy away from London is fresh air. You don’t have any fresh air in London.”

How did Vivien and Mark meet?

“They met through a dating website for widows. Vivien thinks it’s terrific while her children are horrified. She doesn’t let the grass grow under her feet. I’ve never done online dating or anything like that. I don’t know very much about it. But it certainly seems to be something that many people do now and many do it successfully. Maybe it’s no different to meeting somebody in the pub? But in this case, it is fantastic. How lucky are Vivien and Mark to have found each other?”

What was it like working with Stephen Rea?

“He is someone who I’ve hugely admired and our paths have crossed many times. But we’ve never actually worked together until now. So that was fantastic. I’m an enormous fan of his. The casting is wonderful in this series. Lydia Leonard, who plays one of Vivien’s daughters Natalie, has played my daughter before, on stage at the National Theatre.”

How do Vivien’s grown-up children react to Mark?

“Families are very tribal and deeply suspicious of any outsider who is coming into the family. Somebody who is going to become part of the family. It’s deeply complicated all round.”

Do they struggle to see Vivien as anything else but their mother?

“If you give up your mum and then see her as someone else, a woman with another man, then where does that leave you? You feel orphaned. It means they have to grow up themselves. People are often reluctant to give up that role of being the child in the family. Even if they are middle aged. I understand that.

“It’s complicated for Mark too. I think being a step parent must be very difficult. Or even just coming in as a new partner for their mother. He has to contend with her three children. It’s challenging for Mark.

“Vivien is also thinking about moving on from the family house, which is now too big for her. Her children have moved out but still return from time to time. The thing about going home is it’s the one place you can be completely yourself. You are with a group of people in a family that are just there for you. With all of that security that a family home represents. An emotional identity.”

Vivien is trying to declutter, asking her grown up children - who have their own homes - to remove all of their stuff from the family house. Did that resonate with you?

“I’ve just been to Brazil. I went up into the Amazon and I was with the Asháninka tribe. The children don’t have any toys and the adults don’t have any objects. There’s no plastic, no litter, nothing. The children play and the people chat and talk all of the time. I came back changed. I’m now decluttering on a major scale.

“It’s very hard getting rid of my children’s things because it’s their stuff. But that’s fine. When I pass on, anything that’s left here they can either just dump or sell or whatever. And they can sort out their own stuff. Because I will have decluttered all of mine.

“It was a real learning curve for me in Brazil. It was amazing. I feel differently since I’ve been back. As the song says, ‘Let it go.’ Because if you let it go before it’s all chipped and broken and nobody wants it, somebody else will want it. Whether it’s clothes, objects or whatever. With a bit of luck a little bit of money will be made for a charity or something.”

Mark encourages Vivien to visit India. Other than your trip to Brazil, are you a great traveller?

“I’ve travelled quite a lot and I’ve never been afraid of travelling on my own.”

“There are lots of twists and turns in Flesh and Blood that made me laugh. And a couple of things made me gasp.”



“I do appreciate that some people really want to be with a partner when they are travelling and doing things. They don’t want to do it on their own. But I learned at a very early age that if you wait around for somebody to do it with you, you’ll never get it done. Or only get 50 per cent of the things done.

“The Amazon trip was absolutely amazing, staying with the Asháninka tribe. I went to Rio and São Paulo. I have relatives in both places. It was a six-week solo trip. It’s a completely different experience going on your own. It’s wonderful. Sometimes you get really high on being on your own.

“At the same time I decided while I’m there I’m going to go down the Amazon. I’ve always wanted to do that. It’s hard getting down there. There are various tourist trips you can do but I wanted to go on a more independent route. I have a friend who is an Amazonian conservationist and he took me to stay with this tribe that he’s been working with for 20 years. That’s how I got there. It took us three days to travel there from Rio.”

Where did you film *Flesh and Blood*?

“We filmed in Eastbourne. Vivien and Mary’s houses are right on the beach front. It was amazing. You opened the door and the sand came up to the porch. It was a blistering sunny summer when we filmed. Absolute heaven.

“I stayed at the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne while filming during the summer of 2019. And I have pictures of my mother at the same hotel in 1919 - exactly 100 years before me. On holiday. I was incredibly moved by that. To think I was staying at the same place that my mother had stayed in a century before. I found that very moving.”

Vivien lies on the beach and reflects on how her children have grown and all that has gone before. Does time appear to speed up as you get older?

“I don’t know about time speeding up. But I think your life gets richer as you get older. And the whole fabric gets so much more complicated. I know when you’re younger you think your life is complicated. Because it most probably is emotionally. But as you get older it’s not just the emotional things. It’s all of the other things. The practical things. The many people you know who need care and attention. And all sorts of different generations in your life.

“The thing I really lament now is that people don’t write letters. I try and tell my children how important letter writing still is. Because you are expressing something in the moment. And letters can take you right back to that moment.

“People did write once just like texting and emails today. They wrote much more when there were two post deliveries a day. About appointments and all sorts of things. I say to my children that letter writing will be their heritage. The letters I leave are actually part of the fabric of their heritage of life within the family. Because they won’t remember what was happening when they were six, seven or eight. Or 14.

“There are also all of these myths in families. Of how things get passed down. But when you read the letters back of, let’s say, 50 or 60 years ago, for instance, it’s incredible how it was not quite like that at all. When I read my parents’ letters written during the war involving one or two instances that have been passed down about things that have happened in the family, the letters make clear the myth passed down wasn’t quite like that at all.

“What strikes me now is how varied one’s life and time can be. Which is wonderful. You are not the same at 70 as you were at 50. It keeps changing. I always think that every decade there is a change in you. You change, your attitudes change, you change physically, you change mentally. That’s why it’s so important to live in the moment. There’s no good thinking ahead, it’s too abstract. And there’s no good thinking about the past because it’s gone.”

What has your choice of career as an actor given you in life?

"I have been extremely lucky in how my career has turned out for me. And I have always felt hugely privileged that my career, my work, always has a beginning, middle and an end. That's very exciting. First of all, it's a whole new experience. A new character. A new something to look into. Which can take you to very dark places in yourself.

"Also, it means you go on this amazing adventure that you know will end. Good or bad, you will have a whole new open canvas again at the end of it.

"What my career has given me is time. I've had freedom and time. That's what a lot of people who have to do a nine to five job for 48 weeks of the year don't have. If I want to travel for two or three months, I could do it. I had the choice. I didn't have to think, 'Do I give my job up or not?' I know that my job will come to an end on a particular date. That play or that television or that film.

"I've never been someone who's only expressed themselves through their work. I've never felt anxious about not having work at the end of a job. Some people like to have something already lined up. The next one to go to. They don't feel happy without that security. I'm the exact opposite. I like to think there is a big clear space. A big broad canvas. A lot of jobs don't give you that freedom.

"Every new job is a wonderful voyage of discovery. It can be incredibly interesting. Finding out about other people's lives that are outside of your own experience. It is challenging. Sometimes scary. But never boring."





STEPHEN REA IS MARK

What attracted you to *Flesh and Blood*?

“Francesca Annis and Imelda Staunton were already attached to this. Actors who I am very impressed by, fond of and know. The character of Mark was interesting and it had an intriguing surface of a functional family that turns out to be completely non-functional. I have a personal belief that most families aren’t functional. So, I’m quite happy to contribute to that propaganda.

Vivien (Francesca Annis) is, essentially, a very nice woman. But what most of her three grown up children - Helen (Claudie Blakley), Natalie (Lydia Leonard) and Jake (Russell Tovey) - mainly think about is what they can get out of her. Mark has come into her life and her children think he may be after her money.

“Vivien’s husband has died some 18 months before Mark’s arrival. Her children think that’s too soon for her to be considering another relationship. But at that stage of life, 18 months might be all you’ve got left. She has been a brilliant mother to them so why shouldn’t she have a life of her own?

“Vivien is quite strong herself. She tells them, ‘This is about me. It’s not about you.’ Her son, in particular, has just decided he’s against Mark. They are rather horrible to Mark. Her three children all have lives that they are making a mess of. So why shouldn’t their mother?”

Who is Mark?

“As far as we know, Mark appears to be a good guy. I sometimes play suspicious characters. So, I found this interesting because I got to wear nice clothes. It is a bit different for me. Actually, it’s playing very close to myself. It’s not a wildly different character. I didn’t have to pretend too much with Mark.

“He has an Irish surname - Kineally - so was going to be Irish. And he’s about my age. I was actually a little worried because I didn’t have to pretend too much. I’m a character actor and this character is very close to me - but it seemed to work because of the writing.

“It’s interesting that these two not so young people - Vivien and Mark - have met via an online dating service. I wouldn’t dream of doing it myself.

“But people who have been married and lost partners do try and find love again. Or find some accommodation. When you are that age you are old enough to know it isn’t about a soul mate. It’s simply someone to be friendly with for the rest of your life, I guess.

“Our director Louise Hooper has done a fantastic job. Sarah Williams’ writing is very intelligent. It makes this a different kind of drama. The actors in this cast are intelligent and witty. They are subtle actors. While the audience are bound to feel suspicion about Mark. Whether that is justified or not.”

The family home where the children have grown up is at the centre of this story. Do you have memories of your own childhood home?

“I don’t have strong memories of my own childhood home. We lived in several different homes. We were not a very stable family. But I can understand about Vivien’s family home in *Flesh and Blood*. It provides the kind of stability you need.

“I do feel very strongly about certain places that are close to me. We’ve got a house in Donegal now, which is on the north west coast of Ireland. Me and my two sons feel very close to that location. We’ve been going there since they were tiny. It feels like my spiritual home. I like London. I lived there for a long time. But I prefer living in my own environment.”

Vivien's next door neighbour Mary is played by Imelda Staunton. Had you worked with her before?

"Imelda Staunton and I played husband and wife a long time ago in a film called Citizen X. Based on a true story of a serial killer in Russia. I love Imelda. She's absolutely fantastic, hilarious and just good fun the whole time.

"That's the thing about actors. We're the biggest bores to the outside world. You might not see somebody for five years but you pick up with them again very easily. Imelda is one of those. She's just great.

"I've also known Francesca for quite a long time. She is a brilliant actor and incredibly professional. Good fun."

How would you describe Mary?

"Mary is emotionally bereft in some way. She has placed all of her emotional need in this family next door. In Vivien and her three children. Mary thinks of Mark as a terrible intrusion. She is an emotional control freak. It's weird for Mark. When you enter a complex network of emotional relationships you don't know what you're getting into."

Where did you film?

"We filmed in Eastbourne. The two houses that feature in the story front on to the beach. You can walk straight out of the sea to the front door. Absolutely unbelievable. A tremendous location. A lovely place to live."

Mark encourages Vivien to take risks. Is that also part of an actor's life?

"You take a risk every time you embark on a new role.

If you're any good, you're not working always from previous experience. You always try and do something a little fresh for yourself.

"I've been doing an incredible play over the last few years called Cyprus Avenue. We made a film of the stage performance which was shown on BBC4. There is a huge risk in that because I never leave the stage and it's an immensely difficult but brilliant play. That's what keeps me going. When people ask you to do something fresh, different and risky. That's what we're geared up to do as actors."

What has your choice of career as an actor given you in life?

"I told my sons a few years ago, 'I realise I've spent my life doing what I wanted to do. To be honest boys, that's what you have to do. You don't want to be doing something that other people wanted you to do...and you don't want to do.'

"As I look about I see a lot of people heading off in the morning to do things they have to do. Rather than want to do. I just feel I am so lucky that it worked out for me. I went to London and then I was able to decide, 'Well, I'm going to go and live at home now.' I've been all over the world in this job. And doing it with good people.

"I shot War and Peace. We filmed a lot of it in St Petersburg and I'm there with fantastic actors and old friends. It doesn't get any better than that. It's amazing. I just hope it continues. Not for me. But for other people as a viable profession.

"For a while drama was under threat on TV. But now it competes with movies. It's amazing how you can now watch drama from all over the world. I've been very fortunate."

A man with dark, curly hair and a blue button-down shirt sits on a yellow sofa, looking off-camera with a concerned expression. Next to him, a woman with short, wavy brown hair and a light-colored cardigan looks in the same direction with a somber expression. The background features a white brick wall, a wooden door, and a side table with a vase and a plant.

“It’s interesting that these two not so young people - Vivien and Mark - have met via an online dating service.”



RUSSELL TOVEY IS JAKE

What attracted you to the role of Jake?

"It was the opportunity to play the role of a father as I have not yet done so. I've always been drawn to domestic dramas and that emotional connection you have with your parents and siblings. That is something that has always fascinated me on an emotional level. To play with this dynamic of being part of a family is something I find interesting and was too exciting to pass up.

"And to play a character who has so much animosity towards this older man who has come into his mother's life. It was a really great role and something I had to explore."

What is *Flesh and Blood* about?

"*Flesh and Blood* is partly the story of three grown up children - my character Jake, Helen (Claudie Blakley) and Natalie (Lydia Leonard) - accepting that their parents are adults and have their own lives. All three children are adults themselves now with their own grown up lives and yet are weirdly infantilised.

"Their father has died some 18 months before the start of the story, leaving their mother Vivien (Francesca Annis) all alone in the family home. In going back to that childhood home, they quickly adapt to being the children again and their mum is their mum. That's the role she plays as far as they see it. She then introduces them to a new man in her life - Mark, played by Stephen Rea. Will they accept that relationship?

"They are quite a selfish trio. Their own lives are not organised and they all have their own problems. For their mum to be settled and having a pleasant time, holds a mirror up to their own situations.

"Their mum is at an age where she feels like she has done her duty. She has been their mother. The children should now be old enough to make their own mistakes and learn from them. Not to come running home to mum and expect her to sort it all out. It is her time now. She can't always be there for them like she used to do.

"All of the children have issues in their lives which they hide from each other. None of them communicate on that level. They are like swans. On the surface it looks like they have got it all together but underneath they are kicking the weeds around and panicking.

"It's a very interesting dynamic to act with this trio of siblings who are constantly niggling and bickering with each other. They might be there for the others, but they don't really know each other at all."

Are secrets revealed about their parents' marriage?

"Children don't really want to know the details about their parents' relationship. You project on to your parents that they are perfect. They are the ones who have given you the blueprint for what it is to be an adult from your own formative years. You want them to stay on a pedestal.

"It's coming to the realisation that the authoritative figures in your life like your teachers and parents are just human beings. That's quite the realisation. Because you want them to be superheroes. Then you find out they're not. As in this drama, the mother continually drops hints insinuating their late father was not a saint. For Jake, his dad was everything to him. To hear that really does rock him."

How does Jake react to Mark?

“Coming just 18 months after the funeral of Jake’s father it all seems a bit disrespectful. Jake has no respect for Mark on any level. He doesn’t believe a word he says and doesn’t like the idea of this man being with his mum.

“Suddenly Jake now sees his mum as a sexual being and that image is rather repulsive for him. Why does he have to think like that about his mum? Where does this man come from and what is his agenda? He can’t trust Mark to just be a man who has fallen for his mum.”

What has happened to Jake and his wife Leila (Lara Rossi)?

“Jake is a gambling addict and subsequently has gotten himself into serious debt resulting in jeopardising the well-being of his wife and two young children. His wife was oblivious to what was going on and they have separated. He threw that all away. Jake is a personal trainer earning decent money, but he wanted more. He thought he could achieve that through gambling, but he wasn’t smart enough. And as we see today, a lot of gamblers, not least young men, can become addicted and get themselves into serious trouble and debt.

“Jake and his wife are separated and are still in love. She feels betrayed by Jake and is desperately afraid he might turn to gambling again. She is deeply angry and saddened about the situation as well as shocked that this was all going on without her knowledge.

“And I think Jake has also shocked himself. He has hollowed out. Jake has a very strong exterior but inside he is incredibly sensitive - and disappointed in himself. That’s probably worse than someone else being disappointed in you because you feel like you’ve let yourself down.

“The question of money also rears its head among the three siblings. This can cause huge disputes within families. Jake is especially concerned as money is the reason he is in the mess he is in.

He is desperate to get cash to pay off his debts and get back with Leila and their children.”

How would you describe Jake’s relationship with fitness client Stella (Sharon Small)?

“Stella and Jake have come to a personal/professional understanding between each other. It helps Jake out in a couple of different ways and takes his mind off what else is going on in his life. Jake has developed feelings for Stella but in more of a respectful way rather than on the emotional level he holds his wife. It’s another layer to Jake where he is behaving without really taking any responsibility for any of his actions.

“Jake is not the greatest when it comes to relationships. He will happily give those around him advice but is no good when it comes to taking it himself in his own life. Outwardly to the world it looks like he has everything figured out. But that’s not the case. He’s getting a little older and has possibly lost the passion for his job as a personal trainer. Jake has really messed up his life and is lashing out all over the place.”

Where did you film?

“We filmed a lot of the drama in Eastbourne. The family home is on the beach, so you can walk up from the sea into the house. It was an amazing location. Eastbourne is lovely. I had no idea. Really beautiful.

“We filmed in the summer for a drama that is set in the summer. On many occasions you film dramas that are meant to be set in the summer and it’s actually winter when you are shooting. You are on a beach with shorts on and it is freezing. That’s when you really have to give it some serious acting. This was lovely so should look great on screen.

“In contrast to that lovely childhood home, Jake lives alone in a very grim flat. “



“Jake is not the greatest when it comes to relationships. He will happily give those around him advice but is no good when it comes to taking it himself in his own life.”

What happens when their mother decides to sell the family home?

“The mother deciding to sell their childhood home rocks the foundations of what the children hold on to so dearly. It’s a symbol they go back to which offers the security in their lives which they lack elsewhere. It’s the one real solid thing that has kept them together. If they don’t have that then what will they have?

“We moved out of my childhood home when I was 14. But my parents still live in the home I lived in from then on. I love that house but I don’t feel like I’d be upset if my parents decided to sell it. I’d feel sad. But my brother and I have gone off and are happy with our lives.

“We’re not rooted there now. Our lives don’t revolve around that house. Our family is the thing we revolve around. Not the building. Even though it’s lovely and holds nice memories, you can make new memories elsewhere.

“Whereas for the Flesh and Blood children, that house is what is keeping them all together. The place where they were their happiest. It has never crossed their minds that this wonderful house by the sea they called home would one day be sold.”

Did you enjoy filming the scenes as a personal trainer?

“It felt good to be playing a personal trainer and was fun to film the gym scenes. If I didn’t go to the gym it would have been harder to act as somebody who knows all about fitness and the body. But luckily I do go to the gym.”

What was it like working with the rest of the cast?

“I loved working with Francesca Annis and Imelda Staunton, who plays Vivien’s next door neighbour Mary. And my screen sisters Claudie and Lydia are friends for life. I called us ‘The Three Sisters’. I absolutely adore them. They are fantastic. Along with Lara Rossi who plays my long-suffering wife Leila and Sharon Small as Stella.

“The best thing about this job is we are all very instinctive actors and in tune with each other. We were given the freedom to talk over each other. When filming most television shows, the sound crew want you to really separate what you are saying. But in Flesh and Blood that was not the case.

“Louise Hooper, who is an awesome director, wanted it to be real. So we were able to squabble, improvise a little and speak over each other. As people do in a family. It felt great to do those scenes. Although a lot of times we would just break down giggling because someone would say something funny. It was a really fun job.

“I’m excited about the prospect of it coming on screen, I hope viewers will be hooked. I think they are going to love it.”

What’s next for you?

“I’m back on Broadway in March to star in Scott Rudin’s revival of Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, which is exciting. Can’t wait to see what the response will be like. I also have my podcast - Talk Art – which is a passion project I share with gallerist and friend Robert Diament.”



CLAUDIE BLAKLEY IS HELEN

What appealed to you about *Flesh and Blood*?

"Flesh and Blood has a bit of everything in it and the writing is brilliant. I think viewers will relate to this story because it's about a family all harbouring secrets and they are suspicious of their mother's new boyfriend which gives it a thriller aspect. There is also a neighbour who you're never quite sure about. It's a bit eerie and quirky."

Can you tell us who Helen is?

"Helen is one of three siblings who are all very different. Sharing their suspicions about the new boyfriend brings them together. They are not the most likeable people, all of them are messed up in one way or another."

"Helen is the eldest daughter. She is a very accomplished, high powered business woman. Helen has risen up the ranks, knows what she is doing and earns great money. She is married to George (Keir Charles) and has a teenage daughter called Lily (Grace Hogg-Robinson)."

"The fact that she is so focused on her job has given her tunnel vision. Helen doesn't realise that her stay at home, amazingly supportive husband is desperately unhappy and her marriage is falling apart. She is a good person but he has become invisible to her because of this focus on her work."

"She puts all of her energy into her latest job as a chief executive with the task of turning around a hospital trust. Helen is in charge of three hospitals with a huge responsibility but has taken her eye off the ball in terms of her family. She is driven and passionate about her job but her family life is suffering."

"We also find out that her decisions at work have consequences. She's been brought in to make lots of people's jobs redundant. People she probably has never met. You've got to be a particular kind of person to be able to do that job. You have to cut off from your emotions in a way and become ruthless."

The impact of social media is part of this story. What are your thoughts about that?

"There have been so many reports about social media, trolling and all that sort of thing. I have a two-year-old daughter and it does terrify me the way some young people believe they have to look and behave in a certain way."

"It's frightening for any parent. What do you do? You can't keep an eye on your children 24/7. I obviously haven't had to deal with that yet but I know I will have to one day. Helen is so focused on her work and is not keeping an eye on her daughter Lily. It's very difficult."

How does Helen view the new arrival in her mother's life?

"All of the siblings are taken aback when their mother Vivien (Francesca Annis) announces she is going out with a man called Mark (Stephen Rea). Just 18 months or so after the death of her husband and their father Terry. I think their dad's death pulled the rug from under their feet leaving them all a bit jangled. From their point of view, it feels quite soon for their mum to find someone else."

"Although the relationship between the siblings is pretty fractured their mum is a real anchor. They all have a good relationship with her, she has always been an amazing mum and always been there for them."

“They have always leaned on her and expected her to be there for them. All of them are fairly emotionally backward and have never really grown up.

“When Mark comes along as her new man they really are thrown into disarray. It’s something they simply don’t expect. They are all quite selfishly thinking how this is going to affect their own lives. They don’t think anyone would be good enough for their mum and it’s also about having to see their mother as this sexual being, which is very weird.

“They simply don’t know what to do but it seems to unite them in a way. As the story unfolds it also makes them question their own relationships and marriages. They all have problems and it’s unsteady for all of them.

“Another big thing is the fact they just don’t trust Mark. While their mother’s next-door neighbour Mary, played by Imelda Staunton, cleverly plants little seeds in their brains which they run with. It’s for the audience to decide if they are on the right track or not.

“When my Dad passed away I put myself in the same position. I would have found it really hard if my mum met someone else, worrying about if the new person would treat her right and how my Dad could he ever be replaced?”

How do the siblings react to the prospect of their childhood home being sold?

“It’s a big shock for them. They always thought the house would be in the family. As Vivien says, she is walking around on her own in this massive house. There are lots of memories there but she wants to move on.

“They are quite selfish and wrapped up in their own lives so it comes as another bombshell which they can’t deal with. Even though they don’t go there all of the time and have homes of their own, they want to know they can return if they want.

They are like children that have never grown up. That is the place they feel is their sanctuary.

“We have all done that to a certain extent. When I first moved to London I remember going home a lot because I just felt safe and secure. It always smelled the same. I think everyone can relate to that.

“But Vivien is always asking them, ‘Can you come and collect your stuff from that cupboard?’ And my mum is always saying that to me. ‘Please come and get your stuff from the garage, Claudie.’ And I still haven’t. It’s terrible.”

Are the siblings also concerned about their inheritance?

“Money can cause big rows in some families. They automatically assume Mark is going to take financial advantage of their mum, who is well off. They see him sweeping in and are suspicious of his motives. Is he after her money? That’s terrifying for them.

“They also argue among themselves about money and how some were helped out by their Dad but others weren’t. Helen was the first born so she was encouraged to work for her money so she never got a free ride with anything. That just adds more friction between the siblings.”

What was it like working with your screen siblings Jake (Russell Tovey) and Natalie (Lydia Leonard)?

“There was quite a bit of laughter during filming. A number of our scenes together involved bickering which just made us laugh. We also had a method during filming of jumping on each other’s lines or finishing each other’s sentences. Not letting each other speak. That’s quite difficult to do if you’re not in tune with the other actors. You really have to know all of the lines well and when to cut in. But we got it instantly.

“The three of us just clicked. That’s quite rare. It was a really good working relationship and we had such fun working together. It’s extraordinary considering the characters appear to hate each other.”



“I think viewers will relate to this story because it’s about a family all harbouring secrets.”



LYDIA LEONARD IS NATALIE

What drew you to *Flesh and Blood*?

“Flesh and Blood shows how families can be so dysfunctional and loving at the same time. There’s a thriller element to this story but also a lightness. It was fun to film and, hopefully, will be fun to watch. I think a lot of people will relate to these characters. It’s darkly witty and gripping.”

Can you tell us who Natalie is?

“Natalie has had various aspirations in life that haven’t quite transpired. Through no real fault of her own. She is hard working and bright but she has ended up in a job which is certainly not her dream job. Being an assistant to construction firm boss Tony, played by Vincent Regan.

“Tony is married but is having an affair with Natalie. Life has really happened to her and she is now struggling to make sense of this not altogether perfect life she is living. Including being in a relationship with an unavailable man and in a job she doesn’t love. Natalie isn’t a bad person. And yet she is not living up to her personal ideals.

“She is a loving daughter and gets on fairly well with both of her siblings. But not well enough to share her secrets with them. All three have issues in their lives. All families have secrets but these guys take it to another level. They almost have parallel lives alongside their seemingly straightforward family life.

“Natalie has been living at odds with how she really wants to be so when she does finally take responsibility for her actions you are rooting for her. You can see just how lost she has been.”

One of the characters says, “Everybody lies.” Is that true?

“Natalie is lying to her family about not being in a relationship. And other lies emerge in the family as the story unfolds. Natalie finds herself in a very difficult position and behaves as she wouldn’t normally behave.

“I think ultimately lies, as we all know, eat you up and make things worse. That’s part of the journey for Natalie.”

What is Natalie’s view of the new man in her mother’s life?

“Their mother Vivien (Francesca Annis) reveals she is going out with Mark (Stephen Rea). It’s just 18 months since their father Terry died so this comes as quite a shock to the siblings.

“They all feel very protective and possessive of their mother. With the memory of their late father who has been put on a pedestal. Then again, their mother has to move on.

“Perhaps of all three siblings, Natalie goes along with the idea of this new relationship a little bit more than the other two because she can see it makes her mother happy. But Mark faces quite a bit of resistance.”

The issue of money is also raised amongst the siblings. That can cause huge rows in some families?

“Money can be very divisive in families. Especially when certain facts emerge. It’s that balance of making sure all of the siblings are treated the same financially. While they all have different perspectives about how they have been treated over the years.

“Everyone has a different story about their childhood and what happened. Which is weird. They all grew up in the same house but they all have a different version of events.

“Children have a certain view of their parents and don’t want to know everything about their relationship. Everyone wants to believe their parents are perfect.”

How do they feel about the proposed sale of their childhood home?

“They all regress and start behaving increasingly badly - or childishly - as those sentimental ties are threatened. Which doesn’t help the situation. The house is the link to their father and their own childhood memories.

“Everything feels threatened. Especially with their own personal lives in turmoil so the house appears even more important to them. That rock from their childhood. They all had a really nice start in life but adult life is proving a lot harder for them.

“The location for the family house was in Eastbourne. It was a wonderful summer filming right on the beach.”

What was it like working with your screen siblings?

“It was a very fun job working with Russell Tovey, who plays Jake, and Claudie Blakley, who plays Helen. Luckily the three of us hit it off pretty much immediately. We certainly got on better than the three characters do on screen.

“The scenes where the three of them are talking over each other are very realistic. Three siblings bickering. Hopefully that comes across.

“It was also wonderful to work again with Francesca Annis as their mother Vivien. She played my stage mother in Time and the Conways at the National Theatre in 2009. I’m very lucky she has played my mother twice now. I’m extremely fond of her, she is a brilliant woman and a wonderful actress.”



**“Flesh and Blood shows
how families can be so
dysfunctional and loving
at the same time.”**



EPISODE SYNOPSES

EPISODE ONE

In the aftermath of a family celebration, a body lies on the beach, terribly injured – perhaps dead. But who is it?

Just a few weeks earlier, a family of adult siblings is shaken when their recently-widowed mother, Vivien, announces her love for a new man, retired surgeon Mark. Tensions rise as the siblings' question why Vivien hasn't mentioned Mark before and are forced to reassess her entire marriage to their father. Mark seems devoted to her, but isn't it all a bit sudden?

Even Vivien's neighbour, Mary, is surprised by this turn of events and closely scrutinises the new arrival. She feels protective of Vivien and this family she has known so well and for so long.

At the same time, events in the siblings' own love-lives start to spiral out of control. Vivien's eldest daughter Helen is overloaded at work, unaware that her family is fracturing as husband George and daughter Lily feel ignored.

Middle son Jake is a personal fitness instructor. His marriage with Leila hit the rocks months ago thanks to Jake's gambling. In order to regain Leila's trust and put his family back together, he'll need to pay back his debts. With this in mind, a wealthy client offers him a highly unorthodox solution.

Vivien's youngest daughter, Natalie, has been involved with Tony for nearly five years now. However, she expertly conceals this as Tony happens to be her boss – and also married. Natalie's growing worry that, despite his promises, Tony will never leave his wife, leads her down a dangerous path.

When Vivien suffers a health scare and Mark moves in to look after her, the siblings become alarmed about their mother's growing dependence on him and suspect that he's only after her money. But can they overcome years of sibling rivalry to truly put their mother's health and happiness first?

Meanwhile Mary is quietly watching events unfold from her garden next door and dispensing tea, sympathy and advice to them all.

EPISODE SYNOPSES

EPISODE TWO

Vivien's three children are alarmed to discover that she plans to sell their childhood home and go travelling with her new man Mark in India. Although Mark seems loving and attentive to Vivien - spoiling her with indulgent gifts and whisking her off to the continent - the siblings and neighbour Mary are increasingly suspicious of his motives.

Meanwhile each of the siblings' personal lives are in turmoil. Helen faces trouble from a former employee with a grudge, who attempts to drive a wedge into the heart of her family.

Jake accepts an offer from Stella that sees his living standards shoot up at a stroke. But ironically he's now even more tied to Stella – while at the same time trying desperately to rescue his marriage to Leila.

Natalie's assured by Tony that he'll finally leave his wife, Carla, for her. But can she believe him? And Carla makes it terrifyingly clear that she won't give Tony up without a fight.

But all of this is put to one side when Vivien and Mark phone home with some momentous news, rocking the siblings and deeply wounding Mary. With everyone back together, a fractious family barbecue builds towards an explosive climax.



CHARACTER CREDITS

Mary	IMELDA STAUNTON
Vivien	FRANCESCA ANNIS
Mark	STEPHEN REA
Jake	RUSSELL TOVEY
Helen	CLAUDIE BLAKLEY
Natalie	LYDIA LEONARD
George	KEIR CHARLES
Tony	VINCENT REGAN
Stella	SHARON SMALL
Leila	LARA ROSSI
Carla	STEPHANIE LANGTON
Meera	CLARA INDRANI
Lily	GRACE HOGG-ROBINSON
Maddie	MIA LLOYD
Aaron	AYDEN BEALE
DI Douglas Lineham	DAVID BAMBER
Therapist	BRIAN BOVELL
Julianne	PAMELA NOMVETE
Doctor	LACHELE CARL

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producers	KATE BARTLETT AND SARAH WILLIAMS
Writer	SARAH WILLIAMS
Director	LOUISE HOOPER
Producer	LETITIA KNIGHT
Line Producer	MARTIN CAMPBELL
Production Executive	JULIE BURNELL
Director of Photography	OLI RUSSELL
Production Designer	TIM DICKEL
Editor	EDEL MCDONNELL
Casting Director	ANDY MORGAN
Costume Designer	IAIN MACAULAY
Hair & Make Up Designer	JUTTA RUSSELL
Composer	DAN JONES
Sound Recordist	GARY DODKIN
Development Executive	BEN MORRIS
First Assistant Director	MARK CHALLENGOR
Location Manager	STAN FUS

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