

# Once Upon A Time In West London

6x 30 minutes

by James Fritz

The Swiss Estate. West London. A once utopian housing development, full of promise. The urban living space of the future.

Today, it stands almost derelict, left to rot by an overstretched council. The Swiss has been almost entirely 'decanted', flats compulsorily purchased, residents rehoused all around the country. Because the estate has been sold to an Australian developer, marked for demolition to facilitate the creation of Market Park, a new clean concrete and glass development full of affordable homes starting at £475,000. Full of promise. The urban living space of the future.

An estate that once housed thousands is a ghost town. Windswept. Echoing. At its heart, three sorry looking tower blocks: Geneva, Bern and in the middle, Lucerne House. Peeling paint. A broken lift and filthy, flickering walkways. And on the third floor, inside number 34, the very last two residents in the whole of The Swiss are sitting in the flat they have called home for the past forty-five years, waiting for their fate to arrive.

In the bedroom watching *Pointless* lies **John Kane**, bedridden, dying from advanced stage throat cancer. He was supposed to be dead by now. But he isn't. He's still here.

In the kitchen sits his wife, **Maggie**, waiting for a knock on the door. Despite her best efforts, despite months of fighting, the council have won. She knows that the bailiffs are due any moment, ready to batter down the door and evict them. So she sits, and she waits.

A cigarette in one hand. A cup of tea in the other.

And a shotgun resting across her lap.

Because what the bailiffs don't know is that while John's still alive, the Kanes are not fucking going anywhere....

John's last wish is to die in the home that he loves, and Maggie will do anything to see that that happens. She owes John everything: not just for a lifetime of marriage, but for the sacrifice he made for her when she was nineteen. Hence the shotgun, which she bought through a contact: a boy she used to babysit.

But when Maggie finds herself accidentally taking two hostages - **Dan**, a well-

meaning if slightly naive bailiff, and **Meera**, John's Macmillan homecare nurse who shows up unexpectedly - it isn't long before the full force of the police and the media and have gathered in the streets of the estate below.

To complicate matters, John is unaware that theirs is the only flat left occupied on the estate, and Maggie wants to keep it that way. She must conduct the siege and deal with the council, the police and the hostages, all while making sure her husband is comfortable and totally unaware of the chaos happening outside his bedroom.

As Maggie's situation makes national news, the Kanes' estranged son **Michael** rushes to the childhood home that he hasn't seen in years, hoping to diffuse the situation.

Can Maggie repay her husband and grant him his wish to die in the home he loves? Or will time run out for the Kanes, like it did for all those they used to call their neighbours?

*Once Upon A Time In West London* is a blackly-comic siege drama, a Dog Day Afternoon for the era of austerity and gentrification, set in a city obsessed with renewal and moving on.

But it is also a portrait of a complicated marriage that is not all it seems, and a lovesong to the third floor flat that housed that marriage - how our memories, our loves and our losses, our successes and failures imprint themselves on the spaces we call home.

Told in short, sharp, shocking episodes and always using Flat 34 as its anchor, the series will flicker between past and present.

While the bulk of the drama focuses on the siege unfolding, throughout each episode non-chronological flashes of Maggie and John's history in the flat - prompted by objects, stains, holes in the wall - will gradually build a picture of how they got to this situation, and what they have to lose. We will discover the details of their life together in the estate, their secrets and sacrifices and finally their struggle to keep things together when the twin spectres of illness and eviction start circling.

And at its heart, always at its heart, is Maggie. A fearless woman who has fought her whole life and is not afraid to fight a little longer. A woman who is not only defending her home, she is defending the ghosts of her past.

A woman determined not to be moved on. Whatever the cost.