

# Glass Ceiling

6 x 60 minute returning drama

*Turning 50, Tammy finally sees her ambition being fulfilled by becoming one of the very few female Executives of a FTSE 100 company, but what deceit and dark secrets will be revealed as she fights against the misogyny and tokensim that confronts her when she breaks through the glass ceiling, and what devastating revelations will come to light about her lifelong 'loyal' friend Angel?*



**Glass Ceiling** is a dark compelling drama set in the financial quarter of London that follows 50-year-old Tammy, a career focused woman, as she overcomes the disadvantages of her childhood growing up in the Yorkshire town of Rotherham and, against the odds, proves her detractors wrong as she fulfils her lifelong ambition to take a seat on the board of a FTSE 100 company. But as she bats aside the hurdles of entrenched misogyny and tokensim in the corporate world, she is not prepared for the sinister revelations of corruption linked to the devastating betrayal by her lifelong friend as their deadly actions from their teenage years lead to a standoff where, unsuspectingly, a life is taken.

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### **Why now?**

You'd hope that after almost 200 years of women's suffrage, society would be in a place where equality was the norm. But it isn't. The discriminatory barrier that prevents women from rising to positions of power or responsibility is just as prevalent and impenetrable today – particularly in the corporate sector. Living in a household with two strong independent women, I am very aware of the barriers that they are confronted with on a daily basis... because they are women.

**Glass Ceiling** highlights the discriminations women face in the boardroom, through a compelling and sinister story of betrayal, and confrontation of dark secrets from the past.

My work involves delivering many varied Theatre-in-Education Roadshows in schools across the length and breadth of the UK on social issues that affect Young People in the world today both as a performer and a writer.

Highlighting societal issues is at the heart of the work I write... holding a mirror up, raising awareness, and prompting discussion. Having seen the barriers that family members have had to overcome as they've progressed up the corporate ladder, seeing the compromises they've had to make, instils in me the need to continually highlight discrimination – just as much today as the suffragettes have over the centuries.

## Character Biographies

### **Tammy Beighton**



All her adult life, Tammy Beighton (50) has pursued her single-minded ambition to leave her past behind her. An only child of a family desperately impacted by the pit closures in Rotherham in the '80's, her father Ron manifested his feelings of inadequacy in violence toward Tammy and her mum.

Tammy's best and only friend Doreen (known as Angel), has been by her side since primary school. They forged a bond that made them inseparable in every aspect of their lives, cemented by the sinister actions of Tammy when, at 15, arriving home from school with Angel, they come across Ron having a heart attack. He begs for help through his contorted face. Angel rests a hand on Tammy's and with an unspoken understanding they close the door and leave the house.

After her dad's death, life with her mum was more settled, but the financial hardships were ever more difficult. This experience motivated her to succeed (to the point of exhaustion – she develops a need for regular fixes of caffeine, but only the *good* coffee will do).

She fights for her place at University and once graduated, works in the City, climbing the career ladder very quickly. An unexpected approach presents her with an offer too good to turn down – Finance Director of the thriving company that everybody's talking about, led by a charismatic and charming man.

Disarmed, Tammy lets the protective barriers down – the actions of her father stopped her from ever being vulnerable with a man. But all that glitters is not gold, and in moving to this company, allowing herself to become emotionally involved, it could be the ruin of her.

### **Doreen (Angel) Parsons**

When introverted 'Angel' (50) met Tammy, her new soul mate helped her to overcome her insecurities and soon her confidence overflowed. As a child she was well provided for, but jealousy of her younger brother consumed her. With her newfound confidence, like Tammy, she was driven to achieve great success for herself – even if it meant trampling on others, and doing deals that blur the lines of what is lawful.

Her career mirrored Tammy's, but always one step behind. This festered into an irrational jealousy. Then she met Piers. He opened her eyes, luring her in with the thrill of business on a knife's edge.



Soon they became lovers and Angel was all in. But now they need a recruit to be the front person and fall guy for a business deal at a whole new level. Someone who would trust them. Someone who could be manipulated. Someone who has a secret that could be used to control them... Tammy.

## Piers Rochelle



Oxford graduate Piers (55) worked for a number of financial institutions before setting up Pendragon Holdings with help from 'daddy' and his inherited wealth.

His childhood is a cliché of privilege and entitlement, but his father forced him to create his own wealth. His career has been on the back of connections – he did okay at Oxford but spent a little too much time being a socialite to fulfill his real academic potential. Now he wants to break out on his own and make the big bucks.

In recent times he's learnt that the family wealth is fast dwindling and will be little enough to sustain the life he wants to lead when he finally inherits it. Taking matters into his own hands he plays fast and loose in his business dealings, and readily engages in dealings that sit outside the law using his Holdings Company to launder money for a very generous return.

He has always seen women as playthings – especially those that are keen to get to the top in the City, but in Angel he has met his match. This is someone he genuinely sees as a partner for life, even if the occasional 'other' encounter is needed to secure some business.

## Episode Breakdowns

### **Episode 1 – Breaking Through**

Friday night. Tammy and Angel hit the West End of London to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> birthdays, casual acquaintances joining in, champagne corks popping all around. Amidst the heady haze of alcohol, Angel asks Tammy when she'll hear about the position she's applied for. Tammy tries dismissing the conversation – it's not the time or the place. However, in a lull of the celebrations, Angel pushes again, prompting a conversation about how close they are, or at least Tammy is, to fulfilling their childhood goal of breaking through the glass ceiling, becoming CEOs of FTSE 100 companies. Angel pushes further about Tammy's interview which prompts throw away comments about the Board being filled with overprivileged middle-aged white men with attitudes about women that were established in the Victorian age – everything that Tammy and Angel have railed against! Tammy ends the conversation – she's not got the job yet, and she's not giving it another moments thought tonight! Tonight is about partying... hard. Tammy's eye is caught by a young 'fit bit' finance bod whose gaze is transfixed on her. She chooses to pursue the line of interest, leading him onto a dance floor.

08.00 the next morning. Tammy's phone rings on the bedside table. She groggily sits up and takes the call, suddenly alert once she realises she's talking to the Finance Director of Pendragon Holdings, requesting her to come in and see the Board. She vigorously agrees – she'll be there in an hour, hangs up, then looks across at the body of the 'fit bit' lying asleep next to her. She forcefully digs her finger into his ribs to rouse him, officiously telling him to get up and get out – breakfast is not on the menu today!

As she makes her way through the imposing skyscrapers of Canary Wharf, Tammy speaks animatedly to Angel on the phone – informing her that she's on her way to see the Board. Angel tells her to stand strong against the 'overprivileged middle-aged white men' prompting Tammy to recall the conversation she'd had with Angel last night. Suddenly struck with irrational fear, she wonders if somehow someone overheard their conversation – after all, they were drunk and they have no idea of who was in earshot. Angel reassures her that she is being over the top and moves the conversation on to how the night 'concluded' and whether it was 'worth it'...

At the prominent high-end Head Office of Pendragon Holdings, Tammy is shown into the board room to be greeted by the all-male panel of Board Members. Apologies are made that the owner of the business isn't able to be there, but the consensus of opinion was that Tammy is the perfect candidate to replace the outgoing Finance Director. This was it. Her lifelong ambition to break through the glass ceiling. To be a woman that would be equal to, or better than any man. One step away from CEO. One step away of being part of an elite group of a handful of women to achieve that status.

To welcome her into the fold, glasses of whiskey are passed round, and a toast is made. As the meeting ends, she chats informally with the men – her personal space invaded, she deals flawlessly with the over-familiarity and the inappropriate touching by some. The outgoing Finance Director walks Tammy to the door. She asks how she was identified for the position. She learns that they've been tracking her for a while, but it was the owner of Pendragon Holdings that first drew their attention to her causing Tammy to be curious about how she came to be on his radar.

Tammy and Angel meet for lunch. Angel shares Tammy's excitement for her news. They reflect on where they have come from to where they are now – how they had to fight to be entered for their exams and their place for Sixth Form at their struggling comprehensive school... how the Careers Advisors tried to dissuade them from applying to University... it wasn't the career pathway for people at their school, unless you were exceptionally bright. But they fought, and they succeeded, and now look at what they've achieved. Angel hides well the hint of resentment she has towards Tammy – her lifelong best mate. Tammy has always had the edge over her as they have pursued their careers – albeit a very small edge.

The topic of conversation takes a turn to relationships. Tammy is still content with her 'use 'em and abuse 'em' approach to men, but Angel has always needed something more. Perhaps this is why Tammy has had the edge over her – no compromise, eyes fixed on the goal. But when Tammy asks her about who she is seeing, Angel is uncharacteristically dismissive. It strikes Tammy as odd but she doesn't pursue it.

Tammy steers the conversation to talk about her mum. She's going back to Rotherham to visit. To tell her about her promotion. Angel asks in all sincerity if there's any point in that, but Tammy feels she has to go. Even if the significance of the achievement doesn't register, she feels she still needs to celebrate with her mum. Tammy tries to convince Angel that she should come along with her back to Rotherham – perhaps the time has come for her revisit her childhood home for closure, Angel recoils. She ain't ever going back.

Tammy sets off on her journey taking in the rolling countryside as she sits in her first-class carriage. This contrasts sharply with the run-down industrial buildings she sees as her dilapidated sprinter train pulls into Rotherham station, and the unloved houses as the taxi drives her to her mother's care home.

Once in the room with her mum, Dot, in moments of lucidness, Tammy shares her news and her withered body swells with pride as they toast with a celebratory bottle of champagne, but the moment soon passes as she 'disappears' once again and starts asking after Ron – her husband, Tammy's dad. Tammy bristles at the mention of his name. Dot talks about how much he loved her and she him. Tammy recoils and flashbacks to the memories of her father beating her mother as she stood in between Tammy and him to protect her from harm.

Tammy reluctantly pulls herself away and talks with the care staff to get an update on Dot's condition. The news isn't great – she is deteriorating quite rapidly. Tammy vows to return more frequently, for her sake as much as her mothers.

Tammy takes a Taxi back to the station but asks the driver to take a detour. She arrives at her old home – as she gets out of the taxi, she is taken aback at how smart it looks now. The current occupant tidies the garden, acknowledges Tammy with a look of curiosity. Tammy strikes up a conversation explaining that she used to live there. Flashbacks haunt her once again of memories of her father beating her mother. Back in the taxi she sets off for the station with a final backward glance.

Back in London, while on gardening leave, Tammy soaks up the sunshine in a park near her apartment at Canary Wharf. As she takes in the rays a former client passing through stops and strikes up a conversation. Tammy is very much missed – her efficiency and competency are not so evident in those that have filled her position. They ask about the new opportunity that has presented itself to Tammy and their guarded reaction takes Tammy by surprise. The former client wishes Tammy well, but, perhaps, to be on her guard, then goes on their way before Tammy has chance to question them further. She calls Angel and asks to meet up.

Tammy meets Angel in a bar and shares the exchange she had with the former client. She questions whether she has done the right thing, was it a risk, should she just have served her dues at the former company and waited for the opening to climb the ladder – after all, the approach to interview came completely out of the blue. Angel flippantly dismisses Tammy's concerns saying that the opening would never present itself in her former company. Tammy asks Angel if she has seen any openings for her to progress up the chain of command. Angel gives nothing away and turns the conversation to men! Tammy says there is no room for a man in her life – other than to service her needs and then never to see them again. She's owning playing the cougar with the young playthings. Angel is guarded arousing suspicion in Tammy. Lately she feels Angel is not open with her anymore.

Back at her apartment, Tammy scours the internet for more information about Pendragon Holdings – headlines on business and corporate news websites herald the success and meteoric rise of the company, with pictures of its founder Piers Rochelle – a sharp dressed, well groomed, ruggedly handsome man. She finds very little reporting on his background other than his privileged ancestry, and all the reporting is about how successful the company is. She feels it is irrational but there is a niggling worry in her mind. She pushes it aside.

On a night out, sat at a bar, she takes in the delights of the young city workers, out to party hard after another stressful week. One of the young men approaches her and strikes up a conversation. He comes across as very familiar putting Tammy on guard. He reminds her of the night they spent together. Tammy vaguely recalls the occasion. To protect him from bruising his ego she humours him, but her eye is caught by a familiar looking man as he heads to the door. Piers Rochelle. She abruptly ends her conversation with the young man to go and introduce herself to Piers, but her path is blocked by a group of revellers pouring into the bar. By the time she has made it through the crowd, Piers has gone.

Tammy travels back to Rotherham to see her mum. The journey up is plagued with memories of her dad. When she's with her mum she shares her anxieties about starting the new job – none of which registers with Dot, but, once again, in her moments of lucidness, Dot reminisces about Ron. Tammy flashbacks to her father's violence, this time with snatches of his grimaced, pained face. As Tammy starts leaving, she tells her mum she'll try and visit soon but it may be a while because of her new job. On her way out, a Health Professional shares with her that her mum has lashed out at Care Staff on a couple of occasions, physically and with abusive language, calling them Ron. Tammy struggles to keep control of her emotions, as she attempts to give some understanding of her mum's behaviour. Tammy shares some insights into her background and the abuse she suffered at the hands of Ron. As she finishes talking, she pulls herself up, holds her head up high and strides out. She has a job to go back to.

Tammy's first day. The Board formally welcome her. She's introduced to managers of departments who will show her the ropes, and as the Board leave, one comments on her dress code as being inappropriate - a bit too 'sexual', to which another responds saying to carry on just as she is – a lairy look in his eye. Tammy's self-assuredness lets her ride over these asides, and she deftly deals with each one as they come her way. While the introductions are taking place her mobile rings. It's her mum's care home. Disparaging looks from the those around her and she rejects the call and switches her mobile to silent.

The HR Manager leads Tammy on a tour of the modern offices. As they make their way round a figure in the distance catches her eye – her interest is roused as everyone appears to 'stand to attention' for them. She holds back a moment then realises that it's Piers. There is something enigmatic about him. The HR Manager comes back to check she is okay, and they resume the tour.

Having 5 minutes to herself in her new office, Tammy takes out her phone and notices 5 missed calls from the care home. She is about to return the call when it rings. It's Angel. Tammy answers. Angel wants an update on how things are going. Tammy tells her about Piers – how attractive he is... even better in real life! She spots him again at the opposite end of the open plan office. She discreetly takes a photo and sends it through to Angel who comments that he does look rather dishy. Tammy reminds Angel (and herself!) of the golden rule of never getting embroiled in a romance on the doorstep. The call is interrupted by an incoming call – it's the care home again. Tammy ends the call with Angel and talks to a Health Professional from the home. Her mum has hurt herself. She fell over resisting the help from a Care Worker, once again calling out Ron's name, and knocked her head. The news shocks Tammy. She wants to drop everything and catch the next train to Rotherham, but that won't be possible... not in the first week of her new job as Finance Director. She tells the Health Professional she will be up on Saturday. The call ends leaving Tammy feeling conflicted.

The outgoing Finance Director pops their head in snapping Tammy out of her thoughts. He checks she is okay. She buries her distress and asks how she can help him. He needs to go through a few things. He pulls up a chair and starts explaining processes and procedures within Pendragon Holdings and highlights some very important clients. He also flags up a piece of business that is in the pipeline which will prove to be very lucrative – a company called Stallion. Tammy's eye is once again caught by Piers. She asks the Finance Director about him. The Finance Director apologises that they haven't been introduced. He calls Piers into the office and introduces him to Tammy. Tammy and Piers' eyes lock. There is an instant connection – something electrifying. A hint that something extraordinary could happen at any moment. Tammy is left catching her breath.



## **Episode 2 – First Impressions**

- Piers and Tammy work closely together as she is inducted into the company
  - Piers takes a Board Member to task over improper behaviour toward her
- Piers takes Tammy on a business trip to meet a very important client – the founders of Stallion. She impresses them
- Tammy visits her mum using her as a confidante, and in flashback we learn that her dad died of a heart attack
- Angel's mask slips and a hint of her jealousy/resentment of Tammy starts to show through
- Unbeknownst to Tammy Piers and Angel are seen to be in a relationship with each other

## **Episode 3 – Losing Control**

- In an unprecedented move for a Director, Piers puts Tammy in explicit control of new business bought in from Stallion. Tammy resists but Piers states that the client insisted on it
- Tammy continues to face misogynistic attitudes by being the only woman on the Board – unusually for her she feels almost threatened, but stands her own
- Tammy visits her mum and we learn that Tammy was at the house and witnessed her father having the heart attack
- Tammy spends time with Piers, late into the evening, finalising business details... the sexual tension boils over and, against her own self-imposed rules, she instigates sex in her office
- Angel observes the sexual encounter from a distance, a salacious smile crosses her face

## **Episode 4 - Betrayal**

- Tammy and Piers keep their relationship under wraps within the company
- In bed with Piers, Angel discusses the 'plan' for Tammy – her bitterness and resentment toward her laid bare
- Tammy starts to suspect something is not quite right with the new business with Stallion she is heading
- Another visit to her mum and we learn that Tammy walked away from her dad while he was having his heart attack, leaving him to die
- Tammy confides in Angel about her suspicions of the business, about her affair, and about her part in the death of her father – Angel reminding her that he's the reason she is the success that she is, it was him and his abusive behaviour that spurred her to leave Rotherham and to never to suffer at the hands of a man

## **Episode 5 – Follow the Money**

- Tammy gathers evidence of money laundering within Pendragon Holdings
- Tammy feels compromised as a consequence of her relationship with Piers – she keeps the findings of her investigations secret from Piers
- Tammy confides in Angel. Angel brings the conversation round to the part Tammy played in her father's death

- Angel shares Tammy's findings with Piers – they start making plans to keep Tammy quiet
- Tammy visits her mum and confesses her part in the death of her father, but Dot falls in and out of lucidness and doesn't grasp the full confession

### **Episode 6 - Snared**

- On a visit to her mum, Tammy reveals the full account of her father's heart attack – Tammy, uncertain what to do was guided by Angel, also present, as she lay her hand on Tammy's and helps her to pull the door closed before both leaving the house
- With all the evidence, Tammy is about to reveal the money laundering to the Board of Pendragon Holdings, but the misogyny of the men overwhelms her and she storms out in rage
- Embarrassed by her behaviour, Tammy heads to the roof of the office building to clear her head where she is followed by Angel
- Surprised to see her, but also relieved to have her friend present, Tammy explains all her findings only to be joined by Piers as she finishes explaining
- To her horror, Angel reveals her involvement with Piers, her bitterness and resentment toward Tammy, and her plans to take her down
- Piers reveals he was in on the plan from the start
- Tammy struggles to make sense of it all and starts to leave to go to the police
- Angel threatens her with revealing the part she played in her father's death but Tammy would rather risk the unlikely consequences of that being believed than cover up the company fraud
- Angel lunges at Tammy and they end up in a struggle, Piers intervenes, separating them, but in a fit of frustrated rage, Angel shoves Piers, inadvertently pushing him over the side of the building – all caught on CCTV
- Tammy and Angel both have dirt on each other