

**You're playing a British consul in new drama *The Diplomat*. Have you ever needed the services of one when you've been abroad?**

I have not. I am a very sensible traveller. I have compartments for things. I am that person. Touch wood I have never needed one but now I would know where to go.

**What is your character like?**

My character, Laura Simmonds, is someone I recognised. I went to school with bright young women like her [at Bournemouth School for Girls]. She is a very accurate portrayal of the kind of woman who would be doing that job. She's the British consul and the job above her is the consul-general. When the show starts, there is talk of the previous consul-general who was a bit of a relic, a bit of a dinosaur.



**Brilliant co-star:**  
Serena Manteghi

# SIXTY SECONDS

With **Sophie Rundle**

**He's been cancelled for wading in on social media with the culture wars...**

Yeah, he'd swan off to soirees at the

ambassador's house with the Ferrero Rocher tower and say something un-PC. Laura and her friend and work colleague Alba, brilliantly played by Serena Manteghi, are very much the younger people doing the job.

THE ACTRESS, 34, ON HELPING BRIT'S ABROAD, AVOIDING HEN DOS AND HER DEATH THANKS TO TOMMY LEE ROYCE IN HAPPY VALLEY

INTERVIEW BY PAUL SIMPER

**Was there anyone you could talk to or shadow for research?**

I didn't do a lot of homework. I'm not going to lie to you. I was just getting my swimmers ready for Barcelona. I did meet the actual British consul-general. He came to set one day. He was very tall, very polite and very nice. He was just a bit baffled that we were making this TV show about his job. I said, 'So what's it like then?' He said, 'It's the best job in the world.' I said, 'That's a line in the show, I say that!' It was very nice to know it was accurate.

**What were holidays like for you growing up in Bournemouth? Was another beach holiday the last thing you wanted?**

I actually prefer beaches in the winter. I like Bournemouth beach in the cold, getting all wrapped up and having fish and chips. We had a little beach hut so summer for me as a kid was me and my two brothers. Our parents shipping us off to the beach, getting us to run around as much as possible and then being freezing cold in the beach hut and maybe having a hot dog and a tea.

**My career highlight will be when I'm appropriately dressed for the weather for once**

**In *The Diplomat*, one storyline has ladies from Merthyr Tydfil on a hen do. You're engaged to Jamestown co-star Matt Stokoe, so will you be having one?**

God, no. It is so intense to go abroad on a hen do. I avoid them like the plague. But good on anyone if they want to.

**Did you leap at the chance to film in Barcelona after your long lockdown disrupted filming for *Gentleman Jack*?**

Yes, it took forever to film that. It was lockdown and I was having a baby [she has a son]. I had a bit of time off and then this came last April. What a gig. 'Do you want to just move out to Barcelona for a couple of months with your one-year-old baby?' Right ho.

**And was Matt filming back in the UK as fugitive Raoul Moat at the same time?**

Yes, that was side by side with this, so he was back and forth. He had an interesting haircut for that...

**Are you pleased that your *Happy Valley* character PC Kirsten McAskill was spoken about by Sarah Lancashire's Sgt Cawood in the final series?**

It's funny that has come back round considering how long I was in the show for [Kirsten is murdered by James Norton's Tommy Lee Royce]. It's a minimal part but it has persisted. I think people are still collectively quite traumatised by her horrible demise.



WIREIMAGE

**What are your memories of filming it?**

It was f\*\*\*\*\* cold. It was December on the Yorkshire Moors. I was freezing.

**James Norton was sitting in the yellow mini. He was all right...**

Yeah, he had the heating on. He had a lovely time. I was the mug with the sugar syrup all down my face on the road. I do remember our police adviser who had seen people in accidents like that. She had to place my body. It was brutal. Then they had to do the shot of James driving over the sandbag [doubling as Kirsten]. I was sat on the hill watching it all happening, thinking this is a strange, dreamlike, out-of-body experience watching someone run over you.

**What's the dream for the next role?**

I'd like to go to set and not be the d\*\*\*head in the costume. I'd like to be appropriately dressed for once. Every time I'm on set, I'm either too cold or hot.

**You went from corsets to chilly Halifax to 40C heat in Barcelona...**

Yes, I was roasting in a blazer and polyester trousers. Basically, my career highlight will be when I am appropriately dressed on screen for the actual weather that day.

**What are you doing with the rest of your day?**

I'm going to eat chips and then go home and see the baby.



**Shocking:**  
James Norton

*The Diplomat* is on Tuesdays, 9pm, Alibi