

LOST PARADISE

Written by

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Based on 'Lost Paradise' by Martin Sutton

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE SOMME, FRANCE - DAY

WILLIAM PASCOE, 20, trudges across the battlefield alone as smoke wafts among shattered trees and yawning shell-holes: Hell on Earth.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

The constant assault upon the senses makes it difficult to remember that other world. Green and sweet it was.

INTERCUT: EXT. HELIGAN GARDENS, CORNWALL - DAY

William walks in gardens awash with colour and exotic plants: Heaven on Earth.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

There were battles even then of course. Our lives were a series of minor raids and major offensives.

EXT. THE SOMME, FRANCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Blood drips from a wound on William's forehead and stains his tunic. His piercing blue eyes stare vacantly at an unseen horizon as his boots stick in ankle-deep mud.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

People like me and Diane were never content until we'd locked horns with a world we found wanting.

INTERCUT: EXT. HELIGAN GARDENS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Faint sun pierces the clouds and the foliage blurs among rolling hills. A Jacobean mansion dominates the horizon.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Then, when that world had weakened and divided us, we turned on each other.

EXT. THE SOMME, FRANCE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Silence overwhelms William but the smoke eventually clears.

He finds himself on a low ridge overlooking the Somme Valley.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Bullets on the battlefield would
have been more merciful.

An intact church stands on a hill in the distance, a beacon of hope amid the destruction.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
But the real war is the one that
rages inside us, its battles those
you can never win.

William closes his eyes and sinks to his knees.

TITLE: LOST PARADISE

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE, CORNWALL - DAY

SUPER: "Cornwall, England, 1914"

The coast glistens in the morning sun. Tiny villages nestle among hills leading to glorious beaches.

Glorious gardens surround the Jacobean mansion overlooking the sea. Several GARDENERS work the borders.

William, 18, blonde hair, kneels next to a flowerbed near the main gate, his shirt soaked in perspiration.

He drops a pile of weeds in a barrow and wipes a dirty handkerchief across his brow.

A Prince Henry Vauxhall sputters to life in front of the main house. William stands as DIANE LUXTON, 18, emerald eyes and wavy brown hair, drives slowly past the flowerbed.

She can't help staring at this young gardener who moves with a languid grace. He flashes a smile and touches his cap.

Momentarily distracted, Diane drifts off the drive and heads for a sycamore tree.

William desperately points at the tree.

Diane slams on the brake and the car stalls inches from disaster. William rushes over and leans on the car door.

WILLIAM
Are you okay, Miss?

DIANE

You need to keep that smile under control.

WILLIAM

Sometimes it has a mind of its own.
(caressing the bonnet)
A real beauty.

DIANE

I'm flattered.

WILLIAM

The car.

DIANE

Cheeky so and so. She gives me my freedom. The open road, the wind in my hair.

William walks to the front of the car.

WILLIAM

The crashing into trees. Take the brake off and I'll push you back.

She releases the brake and William gives the car an almighty shove. It rolls back onto the driveway so quickly that he falls flat on his face in a pile of grass cuttings.

DIANE

(squealing with laughter)
What a mess. Come here.

He picks himself up and leans into the car. She removes the grass from his head and tidies his hair.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Much better.

William checks himself in the side mirror.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Any more handsome and I'd be obliged to propose.

A gust of wind spins a mini tornado of grass cuttings into the air. Then a sudden stillness envelops the estate.

WILLIAM

Do you feel that?

Diane seems almost overcome but eventually smiles.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 Universal harmony.

William spots an easel and paintbrushes on the back seat.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 What are you painting?

DIANE
 My uncle's commissioned a
 watercolour of the coast.

WILLIAM
 Then you're a professional artist.

DIANE
 That makes two of us.
 (gesturing at the borders)
 I hear the staff are learning a
 thing or two.

WILLIAM
 I thought they couldn't wait to see
 the back of me.

DIANE
 Pay them no attention. My father is
 itching to show Heligan off at the
 Summer Ball.

WILLIAM
 Do you have the starting handle?

She leans into the passenger footwell and hands it to him.

DIANE
 He's also insisting I bring someone
 to the ball.

William cranks the engine to life.

WILLIAM
 There'll be a queue at the gate.

DIANE
 His choice of suitor.

WILLIAM
 Surely that's up to you.

William returns the handle.

DIANE
 You're a gentleman, William.

WILLIAM
And you're welcome, Miss?

DIANE
Luxton. Diane.

He holds out his hand to shake.

DIANE (CONT'D)
You'll ruin my gloves.

William wipes his hand on his tatty trousers.

DIANE (CONT'D)
(taking his hand)
I don't think that helped.

She releases his hand and heads off down the driveway.

As she approaches the main gate, she fiddles with her necklace and glances in the side mirror. William still stares after her. She holds up a hand and gives him a wave.

HERBERT PASCOE, 45, squat and balding, watches unnoticed from inside the head gardener's office in the grounds.

EXT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE, HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

William removes his cap and knocks on the door.

HERBERT (O.S.)
Enter!

INT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE - DAY

William enters and stands opposite Herbert. The head gardener is buried in a diary on his desk.

WILLIAM
You wanted to see me, sir.

Herbert scribbles another line in his diary, lights a cheroot and fixes William with a steely gaze.

HERBERT
I heard you made a disparaging comment about Daniel's flower display in the sunken garden.

WILLIAM
I don't --

HERBERT
Know what disparaging means?

WILLIAM
Mr Millar's given me a good
education.

Herbert flicks ash into a tray on the desk.

HERBERT
When's he teaching you manners?

WILLIAM
Not 'til next week.

Herbert grinds out his cheroot in the ashtray.

HERBERT
Any more slips and I'll be speaking
with Mr Luxton.

Herbert sips his tea and waves William towards the door.

HERBERT (CONT'D)
William?

WILLIAM
(turning)
Sir?

HERBERT
What did you say about Daniel's
arrangement?

WILLIAM
Too many reds. It needed blues and
whites for balance.

HERBERT
And what did you tell him about
planting strong-smelling crops
together?

WILLIAM
Their scent discourages pests, sir.

Herbert buries himself in his diary.

HERBERT
Oh for that scent now.

A suitably chastened William leaves the office.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

GERALD MILLAR, 55, a tall and lean vicar with a thick shock of wavy grey hair and turquoise eyes, walks across the lawn to where William tends a flowerbed in the sweltering heat.

WILLIAM
(standing)
Morning, Mr Millar. I'll get your weekly supplies.

GERALD
I'll pick them up in a minute, William. Walk with me.

WILLIAM
I've lots to do, Mr Millar.

GERALD
Don't worry about Herbert.

William joins Gerald and they walk among glorious gardens.

GERALD (CONT'D)
He's only angry because you showed up more experienced gardeners. They don't like taking advice from someone so young.

Several gardeners work the grounds. An older man, DANIEL, plants strawberries in the main garden. Another, JACK, 20, short and powerful, pushes a wheelbarrow full of soil.

Gerald stops at a flowerbed awash with red.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Is this the display?

WILLIAM
It needs scabiosa, sweet sultan, campanula and cornflowers for variety. They'd balance the reds with whites and blues.

GERALD
Very patriotic.

WILLIAM
King and country.

GERALD
Find more delicate ways to make your point, William.

WILLIAM
Without getting sacked.

Gerald squeezes his shoulder.

As they approach the Sundial Garden, Diane breezes across the lawn in a loose-fitting dress.

William whips off his cap.

DIANE
(to Gerald)
My father asks that you join him
for morning tea.

GERALD
I have a sermon to write.

DIANE
He wanted to talk about your
tuition schedule.

GERALD
I should collect my supplies.

DIANE
He mentioned a salary.

GERALD
(checking his watch)
Very well.

Diane turns and heads back to the main house. She then glances over one shoulder and catches William's eye. She flashes that incredible smile and disappears inside.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Happy birthday, William.

WILLIAM
Thank you, Mr. Millar.

Gerald heads across to the main house, then turns.

GERALD
We need to talk about your essay.

WILLIAM
That bad?

GERALD
Quite the opposite.

He then leaves William to tend the flowers.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, DRAWING ROOM - DAY

THOMAS LUXTON, a regal 50, his glamorous wife ELIZABETH, 48, and Diane's equally beautiful sisters, EVELYN, 22, and JACINTHA, 25, take tea with Gerald and Diane.

The head butler, ARTHUR RENFREW, 40, serves them biscuits.

THOMAS

(to Gerald)

I hear you've been offered a teaching position at Cambridge.

GERALD

I start in September. Providing the trouble in the Balkans doesn't escalate.

THOMAS

A localised conflict. No more.

GERALD

When countries meddle in one another's affairs, they can light the fuse to a powder keg.

THOMAS

Britain will never let things get out of hand.

GERALD

We're not the power we once were. And what right do we have to police the world?

THOMAS

We have the influence, inspiration, intellect.

(looking at his daughters)

I'm hoping you'll school the next generation of Luxtons.

EVELYN

You're getting ahead of yourself, Father.

THOMAS

You'll all be married soon.

JACINTHA

I'm not sure Diane is ready to settle down.

EVELYN
She loves that motorcar too much.

DIANE
I can speak for myself.

GERALD
It is a magnificent machine.

Diane takes Gerald by the arm and leads him to a window away from the family. The Vauxhall glints in the sunshine.

GERALD (CONT'D)
A work of art.

Diane spots William tending a flowerbed.

DIANE
Speaking of which.

GERALD
I thought you were engaged to
Rodney Moncrieff.

DIANE
He's occasional fun but no more.

GERALD
But he has status.

DIANE
You sound like my parents. He
hasn't even popped the question.

Gerald finishes his tea and places the cup on a table.

GERALD
William's been hurt before, Diane.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

Jack, his clothes stained with dirt, approaches William in an old motorcycle and sidecar. He pulls up in front of the gardeners' hut.

JACK
Time for a beer?

WILLIAM
I'd rather have a bath.

JACK
Today of all days.

William climbs into the sidecar and Jack accelerates out of the gates onto the main road.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Arthur Renfrew and his team of WAITERS serve supper to the Luxton family at a magnificent dining table.

DIANE

I thought Richard was joining us.

Thomas finishes a mouthful of food and sips a glass of wine.

THOMAS

He and Lucinda will be here tomorrow.

EVELYN

I wish he didn't have to bring her.

THOMAS

Don't speak ill of your sister-in-law.

ELIZABETH

Please let's have the weekend pass peacefully. Last year's Summer Ball was the finest yet.

DIANE

(to Evelyn)

When are Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum arriving?

JACINTHA

At least we have fiances.

ELIZABETH

And Diane has Rodney.

EVELYN

(to Diane)

Tomorrow evening.

ELIZABETH

(to Diane)

The Barringtons are fine young men.

DIANE

Boring-tons more like. A fine pair indeed.

EVELYN

What you wouldn't give to share our
happiness.

EXT. THE PASCOE HOUSE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

Jack parks the motorcycle outside. He and William then enter
a small cottage in the middle of the village.

INT. THE PASCOE HOUSE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - CONTINUOUS

Jack and William enter a tiny communal room where their
mother, NELLIE, 40, prepares a stew. A cake sits on the
sideboard.

Herbert nods a greeting as he repairs a set of work boots.

JACK

We're going to the Barley Sheaf.

NELLIE

You'll have some dinner first.

JACK

Save some for me.

WILLIAM

You'll be lucky.

NELLIE

(to Jack)

Don't go spending every last penny.

HERBERT

It's beer or that bloody bike.

NELLIE

Language, Herbert!

JACK

(to William)

Birthday pint then?

HERBERT

So that's what the cake's for.

NELLIE

You forget every year.

WILLIAM

(to Jack)

I really need a wash.

JACK
Then join me afterwards.

WILLIAM
I promised to read to Phillip and Oliver.

JACK
Do you have a list of excuses?

NELLIE
Button it, Jack. You know the reason.

JACK
She hasn't been there in weeks.

WILLIAM
I can't take the risk.

JACK
Get over it, Will.
(to Nellie)
Can I borrow some money, Ma? I had to fix the tyres on the bike.

HERBERT
No you bloody well can't. We're not slaving away all day so you can drink it in the pub.

William surreptitiously removes a few coins from his trousers and drops them into Jack's pocket.

JACK
(winking at William)
See you in a bit.

INT. THE PASCOE HOUSE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

William enters the communal room and dries his hair.

Nellie pours three mugs of milk and places them on a tray.

NELLIE
Give the boys a drink while you read to them.

HERBERT
(to William)
I don't know why you bother, son.

WILLIAM
It'll help them at school.

HERBERT
We're a family of gardeners,
William. Always have been.

WILLIAM
They could go to university, Pa.
Don't deny them the choice.

Herbert pours himself a tot of rum.

HERBERT
Like we did you?

NELLIE
(to William)
Read them a quick chapter, then
join your brother in the Sheaf.
You've earned it today.

INT. WILLIAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

William puts a Bible back in a bookcase and tucks his younger brothers, PHILLIP, 5, and OLIVER, 9, into bed.

Then he places the mugs on a tray and heads downstairs.

INT. THE BARLEY SHEAF - NIGHT

William enters and looks around uneasily. He then joins Jack, several FRIENDS and a few gardeners at the bar.

JACK
(passing him a pint)
Happy birthday, little brother.

FRIENDS
Cheers!

The group raise their glasses and drink. Jack finishes his beer in one enormous gulp and attracts the barman's attention by pointing into his empty glass.

WILLIAM
I thought it was my birthday. Is she here?

JACK
Fear not.

William sips his beer.

JACK (CONT'D)
I can't work for Pa much longer.

WILLIAM
We don't have a choice. Anyway,
we're supposed to be celebrating.

He touches Jack's refilled glass and gulps his drink.

EXT. THE BARLEY SHEAF - NIGHT

William helps a drunk Jack to the motorcycle. Jack jumps into the saddle.

WILLIAM
You'd better let me ride.

JACK
I can't fit in the sidecar.

WILLIAM
Try.

JACK
You're no fun sometimes.

William eventually crams him into the sidecar.

EXT. CORNWALL - NIGHT

William rides through the dusky evening. Jack can't help smiling as his head lolls drunkenly in the sidecar.

They crest a low ridge and a church appears in the distance.

Jack reaches across and pulls the brake.

WILLIAM
What are you doing?

JACK
I need a moment.

WILLIAM
Can't it wait?

The motorcycle stops and Jack climbs out of the sidecar. As he relieves himself at the side of the road, he stares at the church.

JACK
Will?

WILLIAM
Still here.

JACK
When I die...

WILLIAM
The beer's talking again.

JACK
Hear me out. When I die, I want it
to be somewhere like this. So
peaceful. So beautiful. So...

WILLIAM
Drunk.

JACK
I'm serious, Will. It's paradise.

Jack climbs back into the sidecar.

WILLIAM
There are two things you should
never discuss when drinking.

JACK
What's the other one?

WILLIAM
Women.

JACK
Don't get me started.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

Diane enters as her father reads a newspaper.

INSERT, THE HEADLINE, which reads: "Archduke assassinated"

BACK TO SCENE

DIANE
You wanted to see me.

Thomas drops the paper on his desk and removes a decanter
from a globe drinks cabinet. He pours Diane one finger of
brandy and himself three, and they both sit.

THOMAS

Your siblings all have partners for the ball.

DIANE

Father, please.

THOMAS

Rodney's from good stock, Diane. The melding of the Luxtons and Moncrieffs would practically make us royalty.

DIANE

Yes, Father.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

William plants rows of vegetables when he spots Diane sketching on her easel twenty yards away.

DIANE

(smiling mischievously)

There are a few weeds in the lawn.

William props his fork in the border and saunters over.

DIANE (CONT'D)

That's close enough.

WILLIAM

For what?

DIANE

Comfort. I can't have you seeing this before it's finished.

WILLIAM

Only if I'm the subject.

DIANE

I'll leave that to your imagination. You've a far-away look in those blue eyes. Something lost?

WILLIAM

More like something never found.

Diane suddenly spots Herbert approaching.

DIANE

(whispering)

On your knees!

WILLIAM

What?

Diane subtly cocks her head towards Herbert.

William drops to the lawn to pluck an imaginary weed.

HERBERT

Good morning, Miss Luxton.

(to William)

What are you doing, William?

DIANE

I spotted a few weeds in the lawn.

HERBERT

I can take care of that.

(to William)

Back to work.

WILLIAM

Yes, sir.

William saunters back to the vegetable garden.

HERBERT

Miss Luxton, my staff don't need any distractions while they're preparing for the ball.

Herbert then marches back to his office.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE, SUNKEN GARDEN - LATER

The secluded garden is surrounded by hedges and expansive flower arrangements. William works the borders alone.

Diane slips into the garden and joins him.

WILLIAM

You shouldn't be here.

DIANE

It's my house. Come to the ball with me.

WILLIAM

Your family wouldn't approve.

DIANE

It's not up to them.

WILLIAM
What about mine?

DIANE
Herbert's not your keeper.

WILLIAM
I haven't got a suit.

DIANE
Do you have an answer for
everything?

WILLIAM
No.

DIANE
Well you've a few days to find one.

WILLIAM
An answer or a suit?

DIANE
The latter. Meet me in the Great
Hall at eight.

William opens his mouth to reply, but Diane places a finger
across his lips. Then she removes her hand and kisses him.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Don't be late, William.

Diane leaves a breathless William in the garden.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

Diane packs her easel away and heads back to the main house.
As she reaches the front door, a motorcar pulls up.

RICHARD LUXTON, 28, slick and businesslike, climbs out of the
rear seat and holds his arms out.

RICHARD
Sis!

Diane leans the unseen sketch against the wall and hugs him.

DIANE
Shouldn't you be helping Lucinda?

Richard turns back to the car but LUCINDA, 25, is already
unloading suitcases from the boot.

Their DRIVER, 50, climbs out and rushes round to help her. Arthur Renfrew also trots past to collect the luggage.

RICHARD
That's what staff are for.
(spotting the sketch)
Who's this fine specimen?

DIANE
Just one of the gardeners.

RICHARD
Does Rodney know?

DIANE
It's none of his business.

Richard puts an arm around her waist as if to walk her inside, but she removes it.

DIANE (CONT'D)
I should help Lucinda.

RICHARD
Suit yourself.

Diane joins Lucinda and grabs one of the cases.

LUCINDA
Thanks, Di. It's lovely to see you.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

Thomas and Richard spread a seating plan across Thomas's desk and pin the corners down with paperweights.

THOMAS
The dining room will be chock-a-block. A hundred and eighty guests.

RICHARD
(studying the plan)
I'm not sitting next to that god-awful Barrington woman. The sons are bad enough. Where's Rodney?

THOMAS
Your sister's being difficult.

RICHARD
Leave it with me, Father. Put Uncle Peter on my left, Rodney at my right hand and Diane next to him.
(MORE)

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Sit the ghastly Mrs Barrington on
 Diane's right and my rebellious
 sister will have no choice but to
 converse with Rodney all evening.

They touch glasses and drink.

THOMAS
 (glancing at the plan)
 And Lucinda?

RICHARD
 Oh stick her on Peter's left.

Richard picks up his father's paper from the end of the desk.

INSERT, THE HEADLINE, which reads: "Archduke assassinated"

BACK TO SCENE

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Peace relies on uneasy alliances.

THOMAS
 Doesn't it just.

RICHARD
 Do you think there'll be trouble.

THOMAS
 It's nothing. Let's throw the ball
 to end all balls.

INT. THE PASCOE HOUSE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

William enters the kitchen and joins Nellie as the sun rises
 above the headland.

Nellie stirs a bowl of porridge on the stove.

WILLIAM
 What time is it?

NELLIE
 Nearly seven.

WILLIAM
 Why didn't you wake me? I'm late.

William grabs a jacket and pulls on his boots.

NELLIE
Have some porridge. You'll still be
there by half past if you cycle.

WILLIAM
Ma.

NELLIE
You may argue with your father but
you won't with me.

Nellie serves him a bowl of porridge, then slides an envelope
across to him.

INSERT - THE ENVELOPE, which reads (in beautiful flowing
handwriting): "William Pascoe."

BACK TO SCENE

William opens the letter and removes an INVITATION to the
Summer Ball.

NELLIE (CONT'D)
Well?

WILLIAM
It's an invitation to Heligan.

NELLIE
Who from?

WILLIAM
Diane.

NELLIE
What have you been up to?

WILLIAM
Nothing, Ma.

NELLIE
I know where these things can lead.

WILLIAM
What do you mean?

Nellie takes his plate and turns away to do the washing up.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Mother?

NELLIE
Just be careful, William.

EXT. GERALD MILLAR'S COTTAGE - DAY

William cycles up to a well-kept cottage in a small but beautiful garden next to the village church.

He knocks on the door and enters before it can be answered.

INT. GERALD MILLAR'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

William enters a cosy living room with stylish furniture and shelves creaking under the weight of a thousand books.

WILLIAM
Mr Millar?

GERALD (O.S.)
I'll be right down.

Gerald appears from the staircase in the far corner.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Do we have a tutorial today?

WILLIAM
Not exactly.

GERALD
Shame. I wanted to discuss your essay on the works of Jules Verne.

Gerald picks up a stack of paper from a table.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Your writing is coming along beautifully, William.

William seems genuinely surprised.

GERALD (CONT'D)
That's the first time I've seen you lost for words. Now, what was it you wanted?

WILLIAM
I've been invited to the ball.

GERALD
Have you indeed.

WILLIAM
But I don't have a dinner jacket.

GERALD

Are you sure about this?

WILLIAM

That's what my mother said.

GERALD

She's worried you're not ready.

WILLIAM

I'd like to go, Mr Millar.

GERALD

Does your father not have a suit?

WILLIAM

We're not exactly the same shape.

GERALD

You'd better come upstairs.

EXT. GERALD MILLAR'S GARDEN - DAY

Gerald sits on a bench behind the cottage and marks William's essay. The sun casts long shadows across the lawn.

William appears in the doorway. He wears a dinner jacket, waistcoat, bow tie and shoes with the class of a diplomat.

Gerald joins him and straightens his bow tie.

GERALD

Only one thing missing.

Gerald tucks a white handkerchief into William's top pocket.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Remember, a gentleman never uses his handkerchief.

WILLIAM

Then what's it for?

GERALD

Let's hope you don't find out.

Gerald grips William's shoulders and glows with pride.

WILLIAM

Thank you.

He turns to leave but Gerald hands him the essay.

GERALD

Take a look at my notes, William.
You have talent. Real talent.

EXT. VILLAGE SHOP - DAY

Gerald leans his bicycle against the wall as Nellie leaves with a few supplies.

GERALD

Can I give you a hand?

NELLIE

I can manage, thank you.

She walks past but turns before he enters the shop.

NELLIE (CONT'D)

Could you speak to William? A little guidance might help.

GERALD

Some lessons he must learn for himself, Nellie.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

William emerges from the workers' hut in his dinner jacket to the delight of two GARDENERS finishing for the day.

FIRST GARDENER

Careful, William. She'll drag you down to perdition.

SECOND GARDENER

She's wonderful. Enjoy yourself.

Their laughter fades as William joins a stream of GUESTS heading to the main house. The sun sinks to the horizon but distant clouds brew.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, GREAT HALL - DAY

William enters a magnificent hall lit by candles and lanterns. A clock at the far end strikes eight.

A string quartet plays soft background music.

WAITERS breeze through the guests with trays of Champagne. William takes a glass and drinks. He pulls a disapproving face but forces himself to take another sip.

William spots Diane across the hall and the crowd parts.

She wears a sensational figure-hugging dress and does her best to appear interested in her sisters and their FIANCES, TOBY, 25, and OSBERT, 21.

Toby holds court, his shock of red hair threatening to leap off his head.

TOBY

We're playing an exhibition match against the South Africans next Saturday. You should come along, Diane. It's a rather splendid game.

DIANE

With funny-shaped balls. I'm afraid I'm painting all next weekend.

OSBERT

Do you have any work on display?

JACINTHA

No one would pay to see her amateurish doodlings.

DIANE

Don't cut yourself with those claws.

Diane senses William's presence and turns towards him.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Please excuse me.

Her sisters can't help staring at William as Diane glides across the Great Hall to take his hand.

She's just about to reach him when an OLDER WOMAN in all her finery grabs William by the arm.

OLDER WOMAN

You must be a Tremayne, dear boy. Tres distingue!

WILLIAM

Enchante, Madame.

OLDER WOMAN

Such class. I shall expect a dance presently.

The older woman releases him and accosts another MAN.

Diane finally joins William and he kisses her hand.

DIANE

I wasn't sure you'd come.

The quartet ease into a gentle waltz so she takes him onto the dance-floor and they pirouette in perfect unison, bodies and mouths pressed close.

Other dancers stop and watch, and her family look on in astonishment.

Richard studies them from across the hall. He glances at his watch, his eyes narrow, disapproving. A cat about to pounce.

As Thomas chats with several GUESTS, he glances across at Richard. His son cracks a malevolent smile.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE, SUNKEN GARDEN - NIGHT

William and Diane drink Champagne as they walk in the garden.

Music and laughter waft on the breeze but the wind begins to pick up and lightning pierces the sky in the distance.

DIANE

William Pascoe, where on earth did
you learn to dance like that?

WILLIAM

Does it matter?

Diane takes his glass and places it next to hers on a garden bench. Then she takes him by the hand and leads him to the workers' hut.

Diane opens the door but William initially resists. She gives his hand a slight tug and he eventually follows her inside.

INT. WORKERS' HUT - NIGHT

Moonlight streams in through a skylight.

William and Diane gaze into each other's eyes. He draws her close and kisses her. She offers no resistance and they embrace passionately. Then she slowly begins to undress him.

A distant rumble of thunder rattles the window as they make love among the tools and benches in the hut.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE, PATIO - NIGHT

William and Diane find a spare table among the guests. The weather holds but the clouds move ever closer.

She leans across and straightens his bow tie, then holds up her empty glass.

DIANE

Would you get me another?

William notices a well-dressed young man, RODNEY MONCRIEFF, leave the Great Hall and wander over.

Rodney places a hand on Diane's shoulder and her face falls.

RODNEY

Di, old girl, we haven't mingled
limbs in weeks.

Diane struggles for words.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Cat got your tongue?

DIANE

Who invited you?

Richard steps out of the shadows.

RODNEY

(to Diane)

As you couldn't extend your future
husband the courtesy.

DIANE

I'm with someone.

Rodney looks William up and down.

RODNEY

A serf in squire's clothing.

(to Diane)

What's it like lying with the noble
savage?

William places the glass back on the table.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

That's it. Off you pootle.

Rodney grips Diane by the waist.

DIANE
Rodney! No!

Rodney ignores her.

WILLIAM
She said no.

RODNEY
It speaks.

Rodney releases Diane and squares up to William. Several guests begin to take an interest in the confrontation.

RICHARD
I hate to break up this gathering
but I suspect the gardener doesn't
have an invitation.

RODNEY
(to William)
Well, serf?

William removes his invitation and shows it to Richard. Richard snatches it and drops it in his pocket.

RICHARD
You've been uninvited. Good
evening, Pascoe.

WILLIAM
Diane, please!

Diane breaks free from Rodney and embraces William, a tear rolling down her cheek.

William reaches for his handkerchief and gives it to her.

She wipes her eyes, her face a mask of grief, then slowly backs away.

William starts to follow but Richard blocks him.

RICHARD
That's enough drama for one night.

Thomas Luxton appears in the doorway.

THOMAS
My lords, ladies and gentlemen,
forgive the interruption but I've
just received a telegram stating
that his majesty's forces have
declared war on the German Empire.

Thunder rumbles across the estate and rain begins to fall.
An OLDER GENTLEMAN on the patio eventually raises his glass.

OLDER GENTLEMAN

The king.

EVERYONE

(raising their glasses)

The king.

THOMAS

(murmurs to himself)

The king.

Everyone files inside, leaving William alone in the rain.

EXT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE - DAY

William moves to the front of a small queue of gardeners and LOCAL MEN by the door.

STERN VOICE (O.S.)

Next!

William enters the office.

INT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE - DAY

A sour-faced ENLISTING OFFICER in military uniform sits at the desk. He ticks William's name off a list and spins the page round. Then he hands William a pen.

William scribbles his name on the form and rolls the pen across the desk.

ENLISTING OFFICER

Next!

EXT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE - DAY

William leaves the office and walks across to where Jack waits on the motorcycle.

William notices Diane watching him from the main house. Their eyes meet but then Rodney appears at Diane's shoulder.

JACK (O.S.)

Don't let your war start now,
little brother.

William eventually turns away from Rodney and Diane. Then he climbs into the sidecar, his face like thunder.

EXT. NO-MAN'S LAND, THE WAILLY-ARRAS FRONT, FRANCE - NIGHT

SUPER: "The Wailly-Arras Front, France, 1916"

A flare bursts into life above no-man's land and the rumble of heavy gunfire fades.

William trudges amid scores of bodies. He kneels next to a PRIVATE but the soldier lets out a final gasp.

He suddenly spots DAVID DREW, 20, lying at the bottom of a shell-hole under a GERMAN SOLDIER. The German has a rifle pressed against David's throat.

William barrels into the crater, but the German spins and strikes him in the shoulder with an entrenching spade.

William staggers backwards and falls to the ground, blood seeping through his jacket.

The German towers over him, illuminated by a flare against the angry clouds. He raises the spade again, its edge bloodied, menacing.

David frantically searches for a weapon but only finds a sliver of shrapnel. He tries to help but collapses in pain.

William grabs his rifle, jams the butt into the ground and manages to snap off a quick shot at the enemy soldier.

The bullet strikes the German in the chest and he crumples into the mud next to David.

The German is somehow still alive. He pulls out a knife and raises it to stab David.

David drives the shrapnel into the German's eye, and the enemy soldier finally pitches face-first into the water at the bottom of the hole.

Darkness envelops them as the shell-hole falls silent.

William crawls across to David. His friend lies coughing and spluttering, blood dribbling from his chin and staining his tunic. He has another deep wound in his neck.

William removes his water bottle and helps David drink.

WILLIAM
How are you feeling?

DAVID
Not sure I could manage a game of
ping-pong.

William removes a morphia tablet but David pushes it away.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I may not wake up. And I want to
see my girl again.

WILLIAM
You're lucky to have one.

DAVID
How is Diane?

WILLIAM
I wish I knew.

DAVID
(moaning)
Write to her. There's beauty in
your words.

William stares into the crater.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Then write to my Charlotte.

William takes David's hand.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(his eyes closing)
She needs to know that I...

By the light of another flare, William drags David to the crater rim. He somehow lifts him onto his shoulder and staggers back towards British lines.

Gunfire erupts around them once more. William can barely focus as he stumbles through the chaos.

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

William stirs and opens his eyes. One is covered with a bloodstained bandage.

He lies on a cot in a tent. NURSES scurry between beds to check on the injured.

Some of the CASUALTIES are choking, their faces burned by gas. Others have limbs missing. Still more have gunshot and shrapnel wounds. Their discomfort fills the air.

William tries to sit up but his vision blurs and he slumps back into the cot.

A NURSE, 30s, rushes over.

NURSE
Easy, Private. You need rest.

As the nurse pulls up his sheet, LIEUTENANT MARK ASKEW, 26, and SECOND LIEUTENANT STAN PARKER, 23, enter the tent.

A SOLDIER opposite suddenly starts moaning. The nurse leaves William and tends to the wounded man.

Parker waits by the tent entrance while Askew joins William.

WILLIAM
(throwing a half salute)
Lieutenant Askew.

ASKEW
How are you feeling, Pascoe?

WILLIAM
Nothing a tot of rum won't cure.

ASKEW
I'll see what I can do.

WILLIAM
How's David?

Askew sits on the edge of the cot and shakes his head.

An ARMY CHAPLAIN enters the tent and joins the nurse tending the man opposite. He sits on the man's bed and opens a cabinet next to the cot.

CHAPLAIN
(to the nurse)
This man's Bible is missing.

NURSE
The men take them all the time.

William opens his cabinet and pulls out a tatty Bible.

WILLIAM
Have mine.

The chaplain joins them and takes the book.

CHAPLAIN
Thank you.

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

A German Aviatik bomber meanders through sporadic British small-arms fire above the front line.

The PILOT spots the field hospital and banks towards it.

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

Askew hands William a glass of water.

ASKEW

You'll be transferred to Albert in the morning.

WILLIAM

Thank you, Lieutenant.

ASKEW

Unless, of course, you feel up to a small side project.

WILLIAM

Do the Germans want to use me as a pincushion?

ASKEW

All in good time. You know we censor all correspondence home.

WILLIAM

Am I in trouble?

ASKEW

No, no. It's the quality of your writing.

WILLIAM

I don't understand.

ASKEW

This bloody offensive is sapping our energy, our wits. We need to give our boys something to smile about. I'd like you to write a pamphlet we can send to the front.

WILLIAM

I'm a soldier, Lieutenant.

ASKEW

I have a team to help you. This is very important, William.

Askew breaks off and cocks his head as the sound of small-arms gunfire mingles with an aircraft engine.

An OFFICER on crutches suddenly hobbles into the tent.

OFFICER
German bomber!

Askew helps William out of bed and they roll underneath.

Parker removes a sidearm from his holster, then peels back the tent flap and starts firing.

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

The enemy aircraft passes over the tent and the PASSENGER drops two small bombs.

British troops return fire and a swarm of bullets strikes the aircraft. Its engine sputters, then belches black smoke.

INT. / EXT. FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

The gunfire drowns out the coughing engine.

The bombs strike thirty yards from the tent and detonate with an ungodly roar, throwing mud and debris into the air.

British troops pepper the aircraft with more fire and it crashes half a mile away.

The field hospital survives the attack and the nurses are soon tending to the injured.

Askew helps William back into bed.

PARKER
They know what it does to morale.

ASKEW
You'd relocate to Bouzincourt on the outskirts of Albert. One of the locals was a printer. His cellar doubled as a workshop.

WILLIAM
If I'm not going home, please let me rejoin my company.

ASKEW
You aren't fit enough to fight.

Two more injured SOLDIERS are brought into the tent.

Askew nods to Parker and the second lieutenant removes a half bottle of rum from his trenchcoat. He then slides it under William's pillow.

The chaplain makes the sign of the cross above the dead soldier, then tries to return the Bible to William.

WILLIAM

I won't be needing it.

The nurse pulls a sheet over the soldier lying opposite.

EXT. BOUZINCOURT, FRANCE - DAY

William, Parker and Askew walk past houses in the village. Some have been destroyed, others only have shrapnel damage.

Askew checks an address on a slip of paper and turns into a side road. He then knocks on the door of a converted barn.

SYLVIE JOURDAN, 23, opens the door. She's pretty and petite with eyes that have seen all the hardship in the world.

ASKEW

Madame Jourdan? We're here to see your husband's printing press.

SYLVIE

Please, come in.

INT. SYLVIE'S ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

As the men file through into the kitchen, William walks past a child's bedroom off the hall.

INT. SYLVIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Sylvie lights a paraffin lamp and leads them into the cellar.

INT. SYLVIE'S CELLAR - DAY

Sylvie shows them into a large space lit by more lamps. The printing press and shelves with all the paper, ink and tools are covered in a layer of dust.

William tries a door in the far corner but it's locked.

SYLVIE

(handing Askew a key)
All the cellars in the village are
linked by tunnels to make it easier
to distribute our wine.

PARKER

(mutters)
How very French.

SYLVIE

(heading back upstairs)
I'll make some coffee.

ASKEW

Thank you, Madame Jourdan.
(to Parker)
You worked for a local rag. How
does it look?

PARKER

My engineering qualifications don't
stretch to printing presses. Give
me tanks and cannon every day.

ASKEW

But can you get it working?

PARKER

(checking the press)
With a toolkit and permission to
swear a lot.

ASKEW

Done.

WILLIAM

We'll still need a typesetter,
designer and proofreader.

ASKEW

We have enough wounded to run The
Times, just no one to write it.

WILLIAM

When do we start?

ASKEW

Brigadier Brown wants the first
edition of two hundred copies by
the bank holiday weekend.

WILLIAM

Did I miss an airborne pig earlier?

ASKEW

Sylvie's offered you a room for the princely sum of one franc, so you can work on the paper full time.

WILLIAM

A private's wage won't cover it.

ASKEW

The army will pick up the tab.
(claps William on the back)
You're much more capable than you believe.

WILLIAM

Am I?

ASKEW

You move in tomorrow.

EXT. RODNEY'S BOAT OFF MEVAGISSEY, CORNWALL - DAY

Diane stares across the water at the coast of Cornwall.

Her eyes betray a mixture of sadness and yearning.

Rodney throws an anchor over the side and drops the little boat's mainsail.

He seems perfectly fit but he then collects a walking stick and steps gingerly into the cockpit to join Diane.

DIANE

Serves you right for playing rugby with the Barrington brothers.

RODNEY

I hear they've started a team in the trenches.

DIANE

You're bound to be called up.

RODNEY

Not until the knee's better.
Doctor's orders.
(passing her a newspaper)
Page twelve, halfway down.

INSERT - THE FRONT PAGE OF THE NEWSPAPER, which reads: "Heavy Fighting at Verdun."

BACK TO SCENE

Diane flicks through the paper.

DIANE

You announced our engagement.

RODNEY

Actually, it was your parents.

Diane stares longingly at the coast. A tear forms in her eye but she immediately wipes it away.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, STUDY - DAY

Diane enters and joins Thomas and Richard. There's no joy in her life, no spring in her step.

THOMAS

You've a letter from France.

RICHARD

Have you told him you're marrying Rodney?

DIANE

I'll tell him face to face.

RICHARD

If he makes it home.

DIANE

I don't see you taking up arms.

THOMAS

We can't send everyone to France, Diane. The City of London needs to function while we make decisions on the war effort.

DIANE

The City would be quite all right in Richard's absence.

RICHARD

If you're so keen to go, they need nurses.

THOMAS

Richard, enough.

DIANE

(holding out her hand)
The letter, please.

Thomas glances at Richard and nods.

INT. DIANE'S COTTAGE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

A haunted Diane sits at the kitchen table clasping the letter.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Dearest Diane. There is a strange new shape to my life, and I justify it in whatever way I choose. It weighs me down with guilt, but the ever-present element of fear has finally been removed. The constant clenching of the muscles, the sweat under the arms and across the back. Only a soldier learns to live with this. I just want to be with the men of my section now. They are my new family and it's the only place I feel I belong. With much love, William.

Nellie suddenly peers in through the window. She lets herself in through the back door but Diane seems oblivious.

NELLIE

Diane?

Diane eventually snaps out of her trance.

DIANE

Mrs Pascoe, what are you doing?

NELLIE

No one's seen you in days.

Nellie glances at the table and spots the letter under Diane's hand.

NELLIE (CONT'D)

William?

Diane nods.

NELLIE (CONT'D)

At least we know he's alive, Dear.

DIANE

I haven't the strength to write back.

NELLIE

My son has enough to deal with
without you cutting yourself off.
Again. He'd already had his heart
broken.

DIANE

What happened?

NELLIE

She ran off with someone else.

DIANE

I'm sorry.

NELLIE

They were engaged.

Diane slides the letter across to Nellie.

Nellie reads and just manages to control her emotions. Then
she slides it back and takes Diane's hand.

NELLIE (CONT'D)

Please show it to Mr Millar.

EXT. GERALD MILLAR'S COTTAGE - DAY

Diane parks outside and knocks on the front door.

GERALD (O.S.)

It's open.

INT. GERALD MILLAR'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Diane enters the living room as Gerald comes through from the
study. She hands him the letter.

Diane glances at a few PHOTOS of Gerald and his family while
he reads. One picture in particular catches her eye.

GERALD

Thank the lord he's okay.

Diane picks up the photo.

DIANE

Who's this with William?

GERALD

Actually that's me. With my father.

INSERT - THE PHOTO, which shows Gerald as a young man. The similarities between Gerald and William are striking.

BACK TO SCENE

DIANE

Why did you turn down that position
at Cambridge?

GERALD

They withdrew their offer.

DIANE

Did they give an explanation?

Gerald shows her to a seat and then sits opposite.

GERALD

I objected to the war.

DIANE

And it cost you a job?

GERALD

It would cost me a lot more if I
spoke out now.

Diane glances back at the photo.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Herbert and Nellie had a row. She
took refuge here.

DIANE

William needs to know.

GERALD

(taking her hand)
No he doesn't.

DIANE

I'll tell him myself if I have to.

INT. TUNNEL BENEATH THE WESTERN FRONT - DAY

Jack and two of his MEN enter and crawl towards a dimly lit chamber. They drag large canvas sacks and tool kits.

A single artillery shell rocks the earth and dirt falls from the tunnel roof. The men exchange uneasy glances.

When the rumble from above fades, they hear MUFFLED VOICES.

One of the men lights a candle and Jack removes a listening device from his tool kit. He presses it to the tunnel walls and roof, and eventually holds up two fingers.

The candle starts to flicker and the flame shrinks.

JACK
(whispers)
The air's bad.

INT. SYLVIE'S CELLAR - DAY

William and Askew join Parker, WARRANT OFFICER FRANK HOUSMAN, 19, SECOND LIEUTENANT IAN PARTRIDGE, 20, and CORPORAL BERTIE LESTER, 25, in the now-clean cellar.

The new men all carry minor injuries.

ASKEW
(to Housman)
Your father's a printer, right?

HOUSMAN
(nodding)
I'm a compositor.

WILLIAM
A what?

HOUSMAN
I arrange the type for printing.

ASKEW
Ian's our proofreader, Bertie our designer.

WILLIAM
(pats the enormous press)
We just need Stan to fire her up.

Parker checks the press and tries to start it. The machine digests several sheets of paper and grinds to a halt.

Parker removes the paper, adjusts the feed and tries again. This time the printing press runs through a cycle and deposits a sheet of paper on the desk.

Askew picks it up and laughs: the text is backwards.

ASKEW
(to Frank)
Compositor eh? It's back to front.

WILLIAM
Not a bad name for a pamphlet.

PARKER
Explain.

WILLIAM
Back to Front News.

INT. SYLVIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

An exhausted ink-stained William enters while Sylvie cooks.

WILLIAM
Smells good.

SYLVIE
Unlike some.

WILLIAM
(nodding at the pot)
Have I got time for a wash?

SYLVIE
A stew is only ready when it needs
to be eaten.

INT. SYLVIE'S HALL - NIGHT

William leaves the bathroom and dries his hair. He hangs the towel over a rail in the hall and spots JEAN-LOUIS, 5, peering round his bedroom door.

WILLIAM
(kneeling)
My name's William. A little bird
tells me you're Jean-Louis. May I
call you JL?

JEAN-LOUIS
(nodding)
Can you really talk to birds?

WILLIAM
Can't you?

A confused Jean-Louis turns and runs into the kitchen.

INT. SYLVIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jean-Louis buries his head in Sylvie's dress.

William enters and rubs the boy's head affectionately but Jean-Louis shakes him off.

SYLVIE
(to Jean-Louis)
Be a good boy and sit at the table.

WILLIAM
Yes, Ma'am.

Sylvie can't help smiling. She helps Jean-Louis into a chair and pours him a glass of water. Then she pours herself and William small glasses of wine.

INT. SYLVIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

William stands at a gramophone and selects 'Mon Coeur est A Toi' by Mistinguett. The music wafts across the room.

Sylvie enters with the bottle of wine and two glasses.

SYLVIE
(pouring him a glass)
He's been through so much.

William sips his wine and studies a PICTURE of Sylvie and her husband on the mantelpiece.

SYLVIE (CONT'D)
That was just before he enlisted.

WILLIAM
I'm sorry.

William notices her hands trembling.

Sylvie clasps them together.

INT. BRITISH DIVISIONAL HQ, CHATEAU DE BELIARD, WAILLY - DAY

An ADJUTANT escorts William and Askew across a grand office to BRIGADIER JOHN BROWN, 40s, his moustache twitching with a mind of its own.

The Brigadier extinguishes an enormous cigar and holds up the first edition of 'Back to Front News'.

BRIGADIER
A good mix of humour, news, satire.
Let's have circulation up to five
thousand by the end of next month.
(MORE)

BRIGADIER (CONT'D)

I'll send you a stack of newspapers from home to use as inspiration.

ASKEW

It was an effort to produce two hundred, Brigadier.

BRIGADIER

Then put more men on it.

WILLIAM

We're limited by the press, sir.

BRIGADIER

Once it's written, how many copies can you produce per hour?

WILLIAM

If we bust our guts, maybe ten.

BRIGADIER

Plenty of Tommies busting their guts at the front. Two hundred per day means six thousand a month.

ASKEW

That's running the press round the clock. No failures. No delays.

WILLIAM

No rest.

Brigadier Brown flicks through the paper once more.

BRIGADIER

Morale is ebbing. This pamphlet pokes fun at our men as well as belittling the enemy. It brings a smile to the face of the tired Tommy. Print five thousand and it'll be read by ten times that. Dismissed.

William is about to reply but Askew gives him a subtle look.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Diane, Richard, Lucinda, Thomas, Elizabeth, Jacintha, Toby and Evelyn take supper.

Arthur Renfrew's WAITERS serve them from silver trolleys.

RICHARD
I haven't got any potatoes.

ARTHUR
I'm sorry, sir, but there are food shortages in the village.

RICHARD
Unacceptable.

ELIZABETH
Richard, it's no hardship to go without for a few meals.
(to Arthur)
Please, pay him no attention.

Arthur wheels his trolley out of the room.

THOMAS
(to Toby)
I hear the worst part is the mud.

TOBY
And you'd be right, sir. We live it, breathe it, even bathe in it.

EVELYN
Revolting. How do the men cope?

TOBY
Good old British humour.

DIANE
So you've been to the front line?

TOBY
Twice. Hell of a place. Where one truly finds oneself.

DIANE
But you're home already.

TOBY
Officers get certain privileges.

DIANE
And everyone else?

TOBY
The rank and file are only allowed a break every fifteen months or so.

DIANE
Then his leave is overdue.

THOMAS
Not this again.

TOBY
I'm told William is recuperating
near Albert with a French lady.

RICHARD
Sounds like a good enough reason
not to come home.

Toby slides a tatty copy of 'Back to Front News' across the table. Diane glances at the cover.

INSERT - THE PAMPHLET, which reads: "Writer and editor:
Private William Pascoe."

BACK TO SCENE

RICHARD (CONT'D)
(taking the pamphlet)
Gardener to editor in two years.
Maybe I was wrong about him.

DIANE
He puts you to shame.

RICHARD
Rodney's arriving tomorrow to
discuss the arrangements. He's
returned the favour and asked me to
be best man.

Diane snorts derisively and marches to the door.

Thomas bangs his fist on the table.

THOMAS
If you leave this room, you turn
your back on everything this family
gives you. Including the cottage.

DIANE
Yet all I want is your love.

As Diane storms out, Thomas stands as if to follow but Elizabeth takes his hand.

THOMAS
She needs to learn to grow up, not
bite the hand that feeds her.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, STUDY - NIGHT

Elizabeth joins Thomas and Richard as the men drink brandy.

ELIZABETH

We need to address this matter.

RICHARD

There's nothing to discuss. She's deluded if she thinks the family will allow a relationship to develop with a commoner.

Elizabeth fixes her son with a steady glare.

ELIZABETH

I will not have another of my children suffer a loveless marriage.

RICHARD

Evelyn and Jacintha are perfectly besotted.

THOMAS

(to Richard)

Give us a moment, please.

RICHARD

Father.

THOMAS

I won't ask again.

Richard finishes his drink and marches out.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

My dear, Richard's right.

ELIZABETH

Constricting her will only make her more determined.

THOMAS

And we know who she gets that from.

ELIZABETH

What do you want for her?

THOMAS

Happiness.

ELIZABETH

Then you must set her free.

INT. DIANE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Diane lies on her bed reading when there's a knock at the door. Elizabeth pops her head round.

DIANE

I don't need another lecture.

Elizabeth crosses the room and sits on the edge of the bed.

ELIZABETH

That's not why I'm here.

DIANE

Help me fight them.

ELIZABETH

I swore an oath to obey my husband.

DIANE

An archaic tradition.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry, Darling. The line has been drawn.

DIANE

Drawn or crossed?

Elizabeth squeezes her hand and leaves the bedroom.

Diane crosses to her desk and puts pen to paper.

INT. WILLIAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

William's uniform lies neatly folded on the bed in a small but tidy room. He sits at a desk and opens a letter.

DIANE (V.O.)

My dearest William. I can only apologise for not putting pen to paper sooner. My family remain adamant that I will find love with Rodney, so they have forbidden me from writing to you. I can take their suffocation no longer. For my own sanity, I must see you again. My heart is fractured by the distance between us and the burning embers of love I felt in the gardeners' hut. I need to know if we have a future together. Yours ever. Diane.

William stares into his mirror, then places the letter in a drawer.

INT. SYLVIE'S CELLAR - DAY

William binds a copy of 'Back to Front News', then packs it into a box and seals the top.

Parker stacks the box in a pile next to the door into the tunnels and Askew makes a note on a list.

Sylvie enters with a tray of drinks and a cake. She hands the drinks out to all the men, then cuts them cake.

ASKEW

Thank you, Madame.

As Sylvie heads for the stairs, she brushes William's hand. She climbs a few steps, then turns and their eyes meet.

INT. SYLVIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sylvie removes a pan of water from the stove.

SYLVIE

Will you read Jean-Louis a story?

WILLIAM

I don't think he's ready.

SYLVIE

(making coffee)

Please try.

WILLIAM

What does he like?

SYLVIE

You choose.

Sylvie hands William the mug of coffee.

INT. JEAN-LOUIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

William enters and sits on the edge of Jean-Louis's bed but Jean-Louis rolls over and faces the window.

William picks up a Jules Verne novel and begins to read.

INT. SYLVIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

William places a needle on a record and Mistinguett wafts across the room once more.

He's about to settle into the chair opposite Sylvie when she stands and takes his hand.

SYLVIE

Will you dance with me?

They dance by the light of a paraffin lamp and continue swaying after the record finishes.

Sylvie leans into his chest and inhales deeply.

She eventually pulls back and their eyes meet. She lifts her hands to his face and draws him into an embrace, but William quickly withdraws from the kiss.

Sylvie's delicate eyes fill with tears.

EXT. DIANE'S COTTAGE - DAY

Rodney arrives on a motorcycle and knocks on the front door.

RODNEY

Di.

There's no reply so he knocks harder.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Diane!

He eventually climbs back onto the motorcycle and roars off.

EXT. HELIGAN GARDENS - DAY

Two older GARDENERS tend to borders that are overgrown with weeds stifling the flowers.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, STUDY - DAY

Thomas, Richard and Gerald drink tea at the table.

THOMAS

I'd like to propose a tuition schedule for Jacintha and Toby's firstborn.

GERALD

A child's parents should provide schooling until at least the age of four, Mr Luxton.

RICHARD

Nonsense. We'll be using a governess.

THOMAS

Who's to say James will have a father in two years' time? You'll be handsomely compensated.

Elizabeth suddenly rushes in with a note.

ELIZABETH

She's gone!

Thomas takes the note and shakes his head in exasperation.

EXT. CALAIS STATION - DAY

Diane climbs out of a carriage and joins hundreds of volunteer NURSES on the platform.

An ANNOUNCER with a bullhorn stands on a tea chest at one end of the platform.

ANNOUNCER

Form into lines please, ladies.
You'll be dispatched to Beaumont-Hamel, Longueval and Beauvais.

Diane gathers her belongings and barges through the crowd.

DIANE

(to the announcer)
I need to get to Albert.

ANNOUNCER

All our wounded have been evacuated from Albert.

DIANE

I've urgent news for a friend.

ANNOUNCER

Ma'am, you volunteered. Get in line for Beauvais.

A queue of NURSES begins to form behind Diane and several start barking questions at the announcer.

The platform descends into chaos as the crowd swallows Diane.

INT. TUNNEL BENEATH THE WESTERN FRONT - DAY

Jack and his two colleagues enter a large chamber packed with explosives. They lay more sacks on the pile.

SOLDIER #1
Two more loads...

Jack suddenly holds up a hand. Vague scraping sounds and muffled German voices reach them through the chamber walls.

Jack removes two steel tubes from his pack and inserts them among the sacks of explosive. He then unravels a wire from a roll and retreats to the chamber entrance.

JACK
(whispers)
Let's get a wriggle on.

The three men dive into the tunnel and crawl towards a distant light.

The lanterns in the tunnel suddenly start flickering out.

SOLDIER #2
Hurry!

The three men start to pant as their air supply dwindles. They frantically scramble along the tunnel until they're dragged to safety by more of Jack's MEN.

JACK
Now we clear the last few cellars.

INT. SYLVIE'S CELLAR - DAY

Parker loads another stack of paper into the press and sets it in motion. He then joins Askew and Lester at a desk.

William swaps a printed page for a fresh sheet of paper and slides it into the typewriter on the next desk.

Unseen by the men, Jean-Louis climbs down the steps and peers into the cellar.

He spots the press pounding away and sidles towards it. The machine suddenly grinds to a halt with a paper jam.

Jean-Louis reaches into the press to free the jam.

William spots the danger and charges across the cellar. He wrenches Jean-Louis out of the way as the press tears through the jam and thunders back to life.

Jean-Louis bursts into tears so William picks him up and holds him tightly while Parker shuts the press down.

ASKEW

Is he okay?

WILLIAM

(checking on Jean-Louis)

Well?

Jean-Louis wipes his eyes and eventually nods.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I won't say anything.

(turning to Askew)

I need a few days' leave.

ASKEW

We can't lose a man now.

WILLIAM

Please, Mark.

ASKEW

I'll speak to the brigadier but don't get your hopes up.

(taking William aside)

Between you and me, he hinted that there's a big offensive coming up. Regardless of whether we get the pamphlet finished, we're all going back to the front.

WILLIAM

We'll get it printed.

ASKEW

I don't want you going back.

William puts Jean-Louis down and wipes the last few tears from his eyes.

WILLIAM

It's our duty.

Then William and Jean-Louis head upstairs together.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Shall we have a look for some chocolate?

EXT. BOUZINCOURT, FRANCE - DAY

Sylvie leaves a bakery with a bag of bread.

She crosses the street in front of an abandoned house and spots a YOUNG GIRL, 6, sitting against the garden wall.

The girl cradles a wooden doll in her arms. On the ground next to her lies a bloodstained soldier's backpack.

Sylvie kneels next to the girl.

SYLVIE

Are you okay.

The young girl nods and clutches the doll even tighter.

YOUNG GIRL

What's in the bag?

SYLVIE

Some bread and a treat for my son.

YOUNG GIRL

(holding up the doll)

My daddy made this for me.

SYLVIE

Where is he?

YOUNG GIRL

Mummy said he's not coming home.

SYLVIE

Is she here?

YOUNG GIRL

(shaking her head)

This is grandma's house.

Sylvie opens the bag and gives her a croissant.

INT. SYLVIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

William bursts into laughter and ruffles Jean-Louis's hair.

JEAN-LOUIS

You fibbed! No one can talk to birds.

SYLVIE
 (peering round the door)
 You two are louder than the
 artillery. Bath time, Jean-Louis.

Jean-Louis climbs onto the sofa next to William.

JEAN-LOUIS
 I don't want to go to bed.

SYLVIE
 (glancing at William)
 William will read to you.

William nods and Jean-Louis scampers out.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

Gerald cycles into the overgrown estate and leans his bike
 against the office. The gardens are lifeless, quiet, sombre.

He knocks on the door and enters.

INT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE - DAY

Herbert hands Gerald a bag of garden supplies.

HERBERT
 Tea?

GERALD
 Please.

Herbert pours him a mug and offers him a chair at the desk.

GERALD (CONT'D)
 The gardens are suffering. Any word
 from the front?

HERBERT
 There's been a recruitment drive.
 Even Richard had to sign up. This
 house, the Luxtons' future, it
 hangs by a thread.

GERALD
 Every family is touched by war.

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL, BEAUVAIS - DAY

Endless rows of beds are filled with wounded. Their moans fill the air. Several NURSES scurry among them.

An OFFICER hobbles into the tent and approaches Diane.

DIANE

I won't be a minute.

Diane finishes dressing a PATIENT's arm and joins the officer. A piece of shrapnel sticks out of his side.

DIANE (CONT'D)

What seems to be the problem?

OFFICER

A wee headache, Ma'am.

Diane leads him to an empty cot and helps him sit.

DIANE

At least you haven't lost your sense of humour.

OFFICER

Plenty more jokes where that came from.

DIANE

You'd better tell me one. This might sting.

Diane removes a pair of scissors and a bottle of iodine and cuts open the officer's jacket.

OFFICER

A private is staggering across no-man's land when he sees a lieutenant-colonel's cap in a shell-hole.

Diane examines the shrapnel and gently eases it out.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

(through the pain)

He picks up the cap and gets a mighty surprise to find the man's head underneath. The poor officer is up to his neck in mud.

Diane removes the shrapnel and cleans the wound. The officer tries to hide his discomfort as Diane stitches him up.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

The private says, "By Jove, are you all right, sir?" "Perfectly fine and dandy," the lieutenant-colonel replies. "But I'm a trifle concerned about the private whose shoulders I'm standing on."

DIANE

(finishing the stitches)
Who comes up with this nonsense?

OFFICER

I think his name's Pascoe.

Diane nicks him with the needle.

DIANE

I'm so sorry.

The sound of an aircraft engine reaches them.

OFFICER

You'd better get down, Miss!

DIANE

What?

The wounded officer struggles off the cot and pushes her under the bed.

A thunderous explosion shakes the earth and the canvas wall rips apart beside them.

Shrapnel slices through tent and embeds itself in flesh. Patients groan in pain. Nurses scream in panic.

Diane helps the wounded officer back into bed, then races outside through the tear in the tent.

EXT. FIELD HOSPITAL, BEAUVAIS - DAY

Diane spots the aircraft turning for a second pass. She rips off her headscarf and runs to a grassy mound.

As the aircraft roars towards her, she raises her fists to the heavens.

DIANE

Damn you to hell!

The plane closes in and the OBSERVER pulls up his goggles. His eyes meet Diane's ferocious stare.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Cowards!

As the aircraft races above her, she twists her head defiantly and shields her eyes from the dust it kicks up.

The observer swivels his machine gun and points it at Diane, but he then lowers the barrel and blows her a kiss.

Diane sees the plane rear into the sky to avoid a barrage of anti-aircraft fire. It's then swallowed by the clouds.

EXT. BEAUVAIS CASUALTY CLEARING STATION - DAY

SURGEON AUBREY SANDERS, 40s, waves Diane into his office. It's barely more than a wooden shelter fifty yards from the remains of the field hospital.

SANDERS

I like what I'm seeing, Nurse Luxton. I want you to work for me.

DIANE

I've no practical medical experience, Doctor Sanders.

SANDERS

But you're a fast learner and have a cool head under pressure.

DIANE

Pure survival instinct.

SANDERS

That deals with self-preservation. Yours is selfless. Let's face it, Diane, just looking at you will cheer the chaps up.

Diane glances at the remains of the field hospital.

DIANE

How could they attack wounded men? It's... it's inhuman.

SANDERS

War, by its nature, is inhuman.

DIANE

Would our planes attack their hospitals?

SANDERS

Let's not get bogged down in the ethics of warfare. You start immediately.

INT. AN OLD BARN BEHIND BRITISH LINES - NIGHT

William and the 'Back to Front News' team sit at a makeshift bar on a stage in front of a couple of hundred MEN.

They have flour in their hair and grey moustaches taped to their top lips to give them the appearance of pensioners, but they are still wearing their tatty military uniforms.

A rectangle of mud sits on a table next to them.

WILLIAM

(in a croaky voice)

My grandson told me that he's signing up tomorrow.

ASKEW

How old is he?

WILLIAM

Fifteen going on fifty.

Laughter ripples around the audience.

HOUSMAN

I know how he feels.

WILLIAM

Twenty years ago, maybe.

More laughter circles the barn.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(holding up his drink to the crowd)

You're easily pleased.

(returning to character)

Who told us this bloody war would be over by Christmas?

LESTER

I can't remember that far back.

PARTRIDGE

Every man and his dog said so.

WILLIAM

If I'd known they meant Christmas
nineteen-fifty, I'd never have
volunteered.

PARKER

They could have had another war by
now.

ASKEW

Or two.

The crowd lap it up.

WILLIAM

How much German territory did we
take on the last big push?

ASKEW

Glad you asked. Join me at the map.

The men climb off their stools and stand around the table.

ASKEW (CONT'D)

Well, here it is.

WILLIAM

What's the scale?

ASKEW

I'm afraid it's one to one.

PARKER

Meaning?

WILLIAM

This is all the land we captured on
the last offensive. Quite why we
needed to bring it to the pub, I've
no idea.

The audience erupts as the men link arms and bow.

Sylvie and her sister ZOE, 25, sit in the front row. Zoe
applauds vigorously. Sylvie catches William's eye and smiles.

SYLVIE

(mouthing)

Bravo!

EXT. BOUZINCOURT, FRANCE - NIGHT

Sylvie and William walk through deserted streets.

SYLVIE
My sister and I loved the show.

WILLIAM
(with mock arrogance)
They say all the great performances
have an element of truth.

SYLVIE
Not like you to take the credit.

WILLIAM
Who do you think wrote the sketch?

SYLVIE
No one comes to mind.

They stop at Sylvie's front door.

WILLIAM
No one?

Sylvie and William face one another. She eventually breaks
into a seductive smile and grips his hand.

INT. SYLVIE'S CELLAR - DAY

William's team pack a final box with more copies of 'Back to
Front News'. Their eyes betray their toil.

PARKER
(checking a list)
That's the lot. Now can we get back
to the business of beating the
blasted Boche?

There's no applause, merely contented exhaustion. William
walks around the team and shakes their hands.

Askew then accompanies Brigadier Brown into the cellar. The
men all snap to attention.

BRIGADIER
Stand easy, men.

ASKEW
(to William)
Did you reach five thousand?

WILLIAM
It took a huge effort from men and
machine, Brigadier.

PARKER
 (patting the press)
 They'll do our thinking for us
 someday.

WILLIAM
 Let's hope they choose peace over
 war.

PARKER
 Unless absolutely necessary.

BRIGADIER
 Remarkable job, everyone. Join me
 for lunch on Tuesday, then take a
 couple of days' leave.

WILLIAM
 (mouths to Askew)
 Thank you.

Askew acknowledges William with a brief nod and then
 accompanies the brigadier back upstairs.

As William's team collapse into their chairs, he cocks his
 head at the sound of FOOTSTEPS from beyond the locked door.

The handle suddenly rocks up and down.

Parker heads for the door but William pulls him back and
 holds up a hand for quiet.

William opens a drawer in his desk and pulls out a revolver.
 He then inches across the cellar and listens at the door.

JACK (O.S.)
 (unidentifiable as Jack)
 Is anybody in there?

William turns to his men and shrugs.

JACK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Hello? Open up.

PARKER
 (whispering)
 His English is very good.

William keeps his gun pointing at the door and slowly turns
 the key. The lock pops and the door swings open.

From the murk, Jack steps into the cellar holding a lantern.

JACK

Not the first time you've wanted to shoot me.

William drops the gun on his desk and throws his arms around his brother.

WILLIAM

What the hell are you doing here?
(finally releasing him)
Everyone, this is my brother Jack.
Tunneller with the Pioneer
Battalion. First time I've seen him
since the war started.

Jack places the lantern on the desk next to one of the pamphlets. He picks it up and whistles.

JACK

Ma told me about the newspaper.
Beats fighting for a living.

WILLIAM

You haven't answered my question.

Jack removes a map of the tunnel system from his pocket and spreads it across the desk.

JACK

I've been burrowing like a mole for months. Securing all the tunnels in the villages along the River Somme. This is the last one.

EXT. BRAY-SUR-SOMME - NIGHT

Jack and William sit on the riverbank under a full moon.

William removes Askew's half bottle of rum from his pocket and hands it to his brother.

WILLIAM

A present.

JACK

(opening the bottle)
Untouched. You have been good.

Jack drinks straight from the bottle and hands it to William, but William declines.

WILLIAM

God, I miss home. The boys.

JACK
Pa's put them to work.

WILLIAM
Ma said that Phillip had written to
Lord Kitchener saying he wanted to
serve his country.

JACK
He just wants to be with us.

WILLIAM
I know how he feels.

JACK
(sips more rum)
Have you heard from Diane?

William stares into the river.

JACK (CONT'D)
Will?

WILLIAM
I'll use my leave to find out if we
still mean something to each other.

JACK
What about Sylvie?

WILLIAM
What about her?

JACK
You can't hide your feelings from
me, little brother.

William takes the bottle and drinks.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE, VEGETABLE GARDEN - DAY

Herbert helps Phillip and Oliver dig up the vegetables and
place them in a barrow.

Nellie and two YOUNG LADIES wash a pile of fruit and veg on a
nearby table.

The older gardener, DANIEL, leaves another young FAMILY
working the vegetables and joins Herbert and the boys.

DANIEL

I never thought you'd have to teach the youngsters their trade during school time.

HERBERT

That's what happens when you lose a generation. We've seen it before. Defence of the empire.

DANIEL

A terrible waste.

HERBERT

(defensively)
Of time?

DANIEL

Of life.

PHILLIP

Can we stop for lunch, Daddy?

Herbert glances at his watch and hands him some water.

HERBERT

Share this with Oliver. Lunch isn't for another hour.

INT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE - DAY

Herbert enters and joins an exhausted Thomas at his desk.

HERBERT

Can I have the boys' pay today, Mr Luxton?

THOMAS

(poring over a list)
We can't keep up. The war is bleeding us dry.

HERBERT

We owe it to our men.

THOMAS

(filing his list)
Their pay isn't due until Friday.

HERBERT

There's a collection at the church later, and they want to give to the military hospital.

THOMAS

The gardens are decaying. There's no money coming in.

HERBERT

You have family finances.

THOMAS

Completely irrelevant, Mr Pascoe.

HERBERT

Yet you expect everyone else to make sacrifices.

INT. CHURCH, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

Herbert, Nellie, Phillip and Oliver sit at a pew in a church packed with women and children. Elizabeth, Jacintha and Evelyn are also present.

Gerald collects a donation tin from the row in front and then hands it to Herbert.

Phillip and Oliver place their coins in the tin, which is then added to by their parents.

GERALD

(acknowledging the boys)
God bless you all.

INT. SYLVIE'S CELLAR - DAY

William pats the printing press and sifts through discarded versions of the pamphlet on his desk.

Askew walks down the steps and joins him.

ASKEW

Have you got a minute?

WILLIAM

I reckon so.

ASKEW

You're being promoted to lance-corporal. Congratulations.

Askew holds out his hand and they shake.

WILLIAM

What's the citation?

ASKEW

Trying to save Private David Drew.

WILLIAM

To no avail.

ASKEW

Then there's your work here. The
brigadier is very impressed.

(squeezing William's
shoulder)

He's not the only one.

WILLIAM

It's nice to be appreciated.

ASKEW

You've left your mark, William.

William casually flicks through the tatty English newspapers on his desk. Then he frowns and picks up one of the copies.

INSERT - THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINE, which reads: "Heavy fighting at Verdun."

BACK TO SCENE

The colour drains from William's face as he drops the paper on the desk.

ASKEW (CONT'D)

Are you all right, old chap?

WILLIAM

I don't... No, not really.

INT. SUPPORT LINES TENT - NIGHT

Jack and William sit at a table with the 'Back to Front News' team. They all have pints in front of them.

JACK

(a little drunk)

To family. May we see them as soon
as we've done what we have to do.

EVERYONE

(raising their glasses)

Family.

JACK

(to William)

You have a family here now.

WILLIAM

Hardly.

JACK

Tell me you don't love JL and Sylvie.

WILLIAM

It's not that simple, Jack.

JACK

Will, the war sharpens our minds, helps us see what's important.

WILLIAM

The only thing that's important to you is that bloody pint. And it's not sharpening your mind.

JACK

I'll drink to that.

Jack then downs his pint and falls backwards off the bench.

WILLIAM

The wise one has spoken.

JACK

(beer all down his jacket)
And that concludes the acrobatic part of my routine. For my next trick, I'm going to set myself on fire.

ASKEW

Plenty of Boche to help with that.

William helps Jack back onto the bench and Jack helps himself to William's drink.

ASKEW (CONT'D)

(to William)

I thought you were going to use your leave to look for Diane.

WILLIAM

So did I.

JACK

Spill the beans, Will.

WILLIAM

Jack, she got engaged.

JACK

Who to?

WILLIAM

Bloody Rodney.

JACK

I'm sorry, Will. Just thank your
lucky stars you don't have to crawl
round like a mole for weeks on end.

ASKEW

(raising his glass)
We can all drink to that.

Jack grabs William's pint again.

WILLIAM

(to Askew)
Don't encourage him.

JACK

(now serious)
It may be the last time. We're
burrowing again in the morning.

Jack takes one more sip, then hands the drink back to
William. William holds up the glass and drains it but he
seems completely lost.

INT. BRITISH DIVISIONAL HQ, CHATEAU DE BELIARD, WAILLY - DAY

BRIGADIER-GENERAL HENRY RAWLINSON, 50, balding with a bushy
moustache, holds court for ten OFFICERS at an impressive
dining table.

Brigadier Brown and the 'Back to Front News' team sit at a
second table across the hall.

As William and the others finish their main course, the
brigadier checks his watch and stands.

BRIGADIER

Forgive me for deserting before
dessert, but I must join the
General's table.

PARKER

The big push?

BRIGADIER

I know that's the rumour.

PARKER

Finally.

ASKEW

Is it true, Brigadier?

BRIGADIER

I know little more than you at the moment.

A waiter arrives with a tray of trifle.

BRIGADIER (CONT'D)

Enjoy your pudding, gentlemen.

ASKEW

It might be our last.

As the brigadier marches across to Rawlinson's table, William can't help glancing after him.

He spots two L-shaped lines made from cutlery and twisted napkins, two swagger sticks and three champagne flutes laid across the table.

William holds up a hand and declines dessert when the waiter offers him a plate. Instead, he stands and again checks Rawlinson's table.

ASKEW (CONT'D)

What are you doing, William?

WILLIAM

Nothing.

ASKEW

I know that tone.

WILLIAM

It couldn't hurt to ask the plan, could it?

ASKEW

You wouldn't dare.

HOUSMAN

Make that shouldn't.

Askew stands and points William back to his chair, but William ignores him and sidles over to Rawlinson's table.

The general is in full flow.

RAWLINSON
 (pointing to the stick)
 This is the River Somme, although
 it twists a bit more than my stick.

The officers laugh.

RAWLINSON (CONT'D)
 The French line runs south from the
 river, the British line north.
 We're the white napkins. Fritz is
 the cutlery.

Rawlinson moves the other stick and the three glasses.

RAWLINSON (CONT'D)
 Here's the Roman road running
 through Albert, Bapaume and
 Pozieres. We'll concentrate on
 Pozieres as it's the highest point.
 A blizzard of shells for a week
 will destroy enemy lines and sever
 their barbed-wire defences. Our
 cavalry will then stream across
 unopposed and pursue the stragglers
 back to Bapaume.

Rawlinson takes the full champagne glass and drinks it. His
 officers give him a round of applause.

WILLIAM
 Permission to speak, sir?

RAWLINSON
 (spinning to face William)
 You must be that editor chappie.
 What was it now? Passepartout? Pass-
 go?

The officers chuckle.

WILLIAM
 Lance-Corporal Pascoe.

RAWLINSON
 Well, what is it, boy?

WILLIAM
 I've seen a map of the Somme and
 the ground is completely open. The
 German lines are up on the heights
 overlooking the valley.

RAWLINSON
Does this come with a point?

WILLIAM
Won't our men be terribly exposed?

RAWLINSON
It'd be positively suicidal if we
hadn't decimated the enemy
positions first.

WILLIAM
Permission to comment?

RAWLINSON
(becoming impatient)
Comment away.

WILLIAM
Is our artillery accurate enough?

RAWLINSON
We're exchanging accuracy for
volume, dear boy.

WILLIAM
What about their machinegun nests,
their concrete gun emplacements?
Many of our shells are duds.

RAWLINSON
Says whom?

WILLIAM
My brother.

RAWLINSON
Well we'd better take him at his
word. I'm sure he has more
experience in warfare than all of
us combined.

WILLIAM
He's a tunneller, sir. He's spent
weeks under German lines. The
shells that do explode don't
penetrate far enough to destroy
their network.

RAWLINSON
Well hold the front page and I'll
call Haig. What should I tell him?
(MORE)

RAWLINSON (CONT'D)
 Cornish comedian recommends
 postponing the war? Run along, boy.
 The adults need to talk.

WILLIAM
 Yes, General. Apologies for my
 impudence.

William spins and marches back to his table.

ASKEW
 (to William)
 Where do you get such gall?

WILLIAM
 No idea. I nearly wet myself.

INT. SYLVIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

William pours Sylvie a glass of wine.

WILLIAM
 We're going back to the front.

SYLVIE
 What about the journal?

WILLIAM
 This was our last edition.

Tears form in Sylvie's eyes and she turns away.

SYLVIE
 And what about...?

WILLIAM
 (caressing her cheek)
 I have to know where I stand first.

Sylvie forces a thin smile and nods eventually.

Jean-Louis appears in the doorway and runs across to them. He wraps one arm around Sylvie's leg, then reaches up to take William's hand.

EXT. FIELD HOSPITAL, BEAUVAIS - DAY

William climbs out of a train carriage as several stretchers are carried into the hospital. SOLDIERS and NURSES scurry this way and that.

INT. FIELD HOSPITAL, BEAUVAIS - DAY

William enters and spots Diane folding sheets on one of the few unused bunks. He approaches but she has her back to him.

WILLIAM
Hello, Diane.

DIANE
(whirling)
William?

Their eyes meet and they share a brief moment of peace before ORDERLIES start bringing in the wounded and the nurses spring into action.

SANDERS (O.S.)
Nurse Luxton, we need that bed for surgery.

DIANE
(taking William's hand)
Meet me at the Hotel Beauvais at seven.

Diane then helps a wounded SERVICEMAN into bed and starts removing his uniform.

INT. BEAUVAIS HOTEL CAFE - DAY

William gazes at Diane across a table filled with flowers, wine glasses and the remains of a meal.

WILLIAM
Why did you come to France?

DIANE
I had to see you.
(sips her wine)
Before the war, all I could think about was forging a career as a painter. Then you came into my life and everything changed.
(taking his hand)
Where are you staying?

WILLIAM
I haven't thought that far ahead.

DIANE
There's a park bench opposite.

WILLIAM
Beats a funk hole in a trench.

DIANE
I have a room upstairs.

WILLIAM
On a nurse's wage?

DIANE
I help in the kitchens.

INT. HOTEL BEAUVAIS, TURRET BEDROOM - NIGHT

Diane shows William into a small but quirky bedroom overlooking the park. Stars blink through a skylight.

DIANE
(unfastening his buttons)
Every inch of your body is mapped
in my mind. I want to see if
anything's changed.

WILLIAM
Only on the inside.

She removes his shirt and kisses the scars.

DIANE
That's not what these scars say.

WILLIAM
(lifting her chin)
We have to talk.

DIANE
I've already forgiven you.

WILLIAM
For what?

DIANE
Your landlady.

WILLIAM
That's not what you think. I don't
love her the way I love you.

DIANE
How many ways are there, William?

WILLIAM

When a little boy who's lost his
father shows you that he loves you.
Or when you lie in the bottom of a
shell-hole with a friend as his
life drains out of him...

DIANE

Or when you share a moment in the
moonlight with that special
someone.

Diane draws him close but William still resists.

WILLIAM

You're engaged to Rodney.

DIANE

You know that's a sham.

WILLIAM

But your family are forcing your
hand.

DIANE

They're not here to make my
decisions. I came to find you.

WILLIAM

And I you.

They embrace and she pulls him into bed. They make love as
rain patters on the skylight.

INT. HOTEL BEAUVAIS, TURRET BEDROOM - DAY

William cradles Diane in his arms.

DIANE

Let's stay in bed the whole day.

WILLIAM

I can't think of a better way to
spend my leave, but we're being
recalled for the big push. And you
need to care for the wounded.

DIANE

Don't go, William.

WILLIAM

It's my duty.

DIANE
You've changed.

WILLIAM
Not where it matters.

DIANE
You're not the man I met.

WILLIAM
Blame the war. I've been trying for
twenty years to make something of
my life.

DIANE
You can't do that in death.

WILLIAM
We can all make a difference.

DIANE
Not as a line of faceless men
marching towards an unseen enemy.

WILLIAM
It's about collective
responsibility. Taking life on.

DIANE
Hardly the attitude of a carefree
gardener.

WILLIAM
Then perhaps I have changed.

DIANE
You're not the only one, William.

WILLIAM
You didn't have to suffer first.

DIANE
That doesn't mean I didn't face the
same doubts, the same fears, the
same longing to find love. We all
have dreams.

WILLIAM
Until they're dashed.

DIANE
You need to feel like you belong
more than you need love.

WILLIAM
I do belong.

DIANE
Where?

WILLIAM
Here. With my unit.

DIANE
I didn't believe it when I read
your letter and I don't believe you
now.

WILLIAM
With you then. With my family.

DIANE
You certainly don't belong at home.

WILLIAM
(rolling over)
My family provide all the love I
need. Unlike yours.

Diane sits on the edge of the bed.

DIANE
Don't bring my family into this
when yours let you live your life
as a lie.

WILLIAM
(rolling back to face her)
What are you talking about?

DIANE
Can you honestly say you feel the
love from your whole family?

WILLIAM
Of course.

DIANE
Even your father?

WILLIAM
He shows his feelings in different
ways.

DIANE
We both know what that means. The
reason you never felt Herbert's
love is because...

Diane kneels on the floor and takes his hand.

DIANE (CONT'D)
...he isn't your father.

William climbs out of bed and walks to the window.

DIANE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, William, but you need to
hear the truth.

WILLIAM
(turning back to her)
Who?

DIANE
William, please.

WILLIAM
You must know.

DIANE
Gerald.

William pulls on his clothes and marches to the door.

WILLIAM
I should never have come.

Diane stands and grabs his arm.

DIANE
I'm so sorry you had to find out
like this.

WILLIAM
There was never any doubt that
you'd tell me.

DIANE
What do you mean?

WILLIAM
Did you lure me here just to hurt
me? Take every last shred of
dignity I have and throw it in my
face?

DIANE
Of course not.

WILLIAM
But you've done it before when you
revealed your colours at the ball.
(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 Nothing's changed so you might as
 well crawl back to Rodney.

Diane fights back tears.

EXT. BEAUVAIS STATION - DAY

William and Diane shield themselves from the rain and slip
 inside the station.

INT. BEAUVAIS STATION - DAY

Diane takes him by the hand.

DIANE
 Will I see you again?

William removes his hand.

DIANE (CONT'D)
 (fighting her emotions)
 The man before me has found that
 his sense of honour overrides
 everything else. He weighs any
 plans for our future against that
 of a little boy and his mother, and
 finds the scales tilting in their
 favour. Is that my William?

WILLIAM
 I no longer know who I am.

She then turns and walks through the station onto the
 platform without a backward glance.

William gazes after her as the station doors swing closed.

EXT. BRITISH LINES, ALBERT, FRANCE - DAY

SUPER: "The Somme, France"

Artillery fire splits the sky and explosions rock the earth.

William, Parker, Housman, Partridge and Askew march behind a
 line of heavy guns glistening under a blazing sun. The guns
 spit fire and belch smoke.

Hundreds of SOLDIERS march to the trenches alongside them.

Parker checks his gun repeatedly, then attaches his bayonet.

Askew removes his cap and wipes perspiration from his brow. He can't help shivering with fear, his eyes darting from one man to the next.

EXT. BRITISH FRONT LINE, ALBERT, FRANCE - DAY

The guns fall silent.

The brief peace is shattered as the mines Jack planted under the German positions detonate. Enormous geysers of mud, rock and enemy men and equipment are thrown into the sky.

William's COMMANDING OFFICER waits for the echo to fade, then blows his whistle.

William, Parker, Housman, Partridge and hundreds of SERVICEMEN climb ladders and stream into no-man's land.

Askew trembles with fear so William reaches back and helps him up the ladder.

EXT. NO-MAN'S LAND, FRANCE - DAY

William and his four colleagues stick together as they stumble across the cratered wasteland towards a line of trees in the distance.

As they approach the woods, German machine-gunners open up on their flanks.

Housman and Partridge are killed instantly. William, Parker and Askew hit the ground and start to crawl.

The Germans then launch an artillery bombardment. Shells explode all around them, slicing through more men.

A sliver of shrapnel draws blood from William's forehead.

Askew's face transforms from terror to anger. Parker, meanwhile, seems suddenly frozen in shock.

As they reach the woods, a flamethrower unleashes fire and destruction among the British soldiers.

Askew suddenly leaps to his feet and fires wildly at a hidden enemy. Smoke billows around him and he suddenly reappears dragging two injured servicemen.

ASKEW
Look after them.

Askew then leaps back into action and charges into the smoke. He's immediately swallowed by the murk.

William leaps into action but Parker hesitates. William hauls him to his feet and they dart into the trees. Gunfire crackles from both sides and tracer fire streaks between them. More explosions shake the ground.

William and Parker find themselves wandering among hundreds of British soldiers lying dead in the woods. So few are alive that the enemy guns fall silent.

Pockets of mist and smoke drift among the trees.

A couple of shots ring out.

Parker collapses against a tree stump. He trembles in fear, his eyes vacant. Blood stains the front of his tunic.

WILLIAM

Are you hurt?

PARKER

What?

WILLIAM

Dammit, are you hurt?

Parker wipes the blood with his hand and checks for injury.

PARKER

It's not mine. William, what the hell are we doing here?

WILLIAM

I wish I knew.

PARKER

I want to go home.

WILLIAM

(taking his hand)
You will. Soon.

No sooner have the words left his mouth than a single shot pierces the eerie silence. It strikes Parker in the head.

William whips his rifle into position and fires back but the smoke obscures his view.

A second shot strikes the ground next to him, so William leaps to his feet and darts between the trees.

He fires blindly into the woods and suddenly spots a German sniper reloading. William fires but he's also out of ammo.

The enemies share a moment of peace. William doesn't have time to reload so he charges the German and runs him through with his bayonet before the sniper can fire.

William then kicks the German's body to free the bayonet and suddenly realises he's alone among the dead.

He slides into a shell-hole and drains his water bottle. Then he peers into the gloom over the crater rim.

The sun tries to fight through the trees and smoke.

William lies on his back and checks his equipment but he has no ammunition. He crawls out of the crater and begins searching the bodies.

He discards several empty water bottles but reloads his rifle with a spare clip taken from a dead soldier.

William stumbles across the tree stump where Parker's body still lies. He kneels next to his friend and drains his water bottle. Then he closes Parker's eyes.

EXT. NO-MAN'S LAND, FRANCE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

William staggers to the next corpse a few yards away. He fights back tears and moves on through the mud and smoke.

Blood drips from the wound on his forehead and stains his tunic. His piercing blue eyes stare at an unseen horizon.

Bodies lie all around him as he trudges through this hell on earth. Eerie silence threatens to envelop him.

The smoke eventually clears and William finds himself on a low ridge overlooking the valley.

He notices an intact church on a hill in the distance, a beacon of hope amid all the destruction.

JACK (V.O.)
So peaceful. So beautiful.

William suddenly drops to his knees and begins searching the bodies. He frantically rolls them over until they become faceless. He barely registers finding Askew.

He eventually notices a single boot sticking out from under the remains of a tree stump

He pulls the dead man out and rolls him over to find he's wearing a gas mask.

William removes the gas mask and finds Jack. He cradles his brother, tears welling in his eyes.

William eventually lays Jack down and picks up his rifle. Then he fires wildly into the smoke drifting among the trees. Reload. Fire. Reload. Fire. Reload. Fire.

An artillery shell strikes the church.

EXT. NO-MAN'S LAND, FRANCE - LATER

William crosses the battlefield alone. He passes hundreds of bodies, their possessions strewn beside them: combs, spare socks, letters, glasses, photographs, pipes, flannels, ammunition, weapons.

There are also tanks and small artillery pieces lying smouldering in the mud and craters.

EXT. THE BANKS OF THE SOMME, FRANCE - DAY

The ruined church overlooks the river. The distant rumble of gunfire echoes around the valley.

A dishevelled William sits on the riverbank and gazes across the water, which is dotted with ripples from a light rain.

He removes a cutthroat razor from his jacket and catches a glimpse of his bloodshot eyes reflecting in the blade.

He presses the blade against his throat. A trickle of blood seeps from his skin and mixes with the rain.

The blood drips into the Somme and spreads slowly downstream. He presses harder but can't bring himself to finish the job.

He tries his wrist instead but fails again.

He suddenly hears movement on the track behind him. A German patrol of about TEN MEN marches a group of British PRISONERS OF WAR back towards German lines.

William watches as they pass no more than twenty yards away. They don't see him and continue their march.

William throws the razor into the river and picks up his rifle. Then he runs back to the path and follows the column of enemy soldiers.

William draws back the bolt on his rifle and rams a cartridge into the breach.

Three German INFANTRYMEN swivel and drop to their knees, their rifles pointing at William's chest.

William faces them down for an eternity.

WILLIAM
Shoot me, damn you!

Silence.

William's finger curls around the trigger, but he eventually discards his rifle and places his hands on his head.

The German soldiers stand and cautiously approach.

EXT. CHURCH, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

SUPER: "1918"

The VILLAGERS file inside. Nellie and Herbert stop at a grave and lay flowers by the headstone.

INSERT - THE HEADSTONE, which reads: "PTE. Jack Herbert Pascoe, February 4, 1894 - July 1, 1916. His name liveth for ever more. The sun still shines, the birds still sing."

BACK TO SCENE

Nellie and Herbert enter the church.

INT. CHURCH, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

Nellie and Herbert sit behind Rodney, Diane and Evelyn.

Diane rocks a BABY in her arms.

In the pew behind them, Toby and Jacintha sit with their son JAMES, 3, Thomas and Elizabeth, and several more villagers.

GERALD
Let us pray.

The congregation bow their heads or kneel in the pews.

GERALD (CONT'D)
While this war still rages, we ask
that God forgives our men for what
they have had to do in the name of
freedom.

(MORE)

GERALD (CONT'D)

And we pray that some day those who
are still missing will return to
us.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

GERALD

Go in peace.

As the congregation stands and files outside, Gerald removes
a photo of William from his pocket and turns to the altar.

GERALD (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Why won't you hear me?

EVELYN

(to Diane but looking at
the baby)

You have such a way with him. Maybe
you'll have one of your own soon.

RODNEY

We'll see.

Rodney (with his walking stick), Diane, Jacintha, Toby, James
and Evelyn (with her baby), Thomas and Elizabeth leave the
church. They pass a uniformed army officer, NEIL WOOD, 50s,
heading inside.

Diane stops and turns as Wood approaches Herbert and Nellie.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Come on, Di, we haven't got all
day.

Rodney then takes Diane by the arm and marches her outside.

Gerald slips the photo back into his pocket and joins Wood,
Nellie and Herbert.

WOOD

His Majesty appreciates your
sacrifice, Ma'am.

NELLIE

It was no sacrifice, sir. I did not
give my boy willingly.

GERALD

We still feel his loss.

HERBERT

No one has the right to take
another life.

WOOD

I'll leave you to it.

Wood then bows to the altar and leaves the church.

GERALD

(to Herbert)
On this we agree.

NELLIE

And it cost you a job at Cambridge.

HERBERT

(to Nellie)
He was only too happy to stay in
the village.

Gerald glances at Nellie.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

I know the truth about William.

A trembling Herbert takes Nellie's hand.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

(to Nellie)
I should never have struck you.

NELLIE

I always hoped you'd be able to
forgive us.

HERBERT

How can I kick up a god-awful fuss
when I'm wracked with guilt?

(to Gerald)
Excuse my language.

Herbert sits in a pew and faces the altar.

HERBERT (CONT'D)

I could only be angry for so long.
Angry at myself and then angry with
you, but where does that lead? I'll
tell you. Misery, self-loathing and
pain. I thought if I could forgive
myself then I could forgive you. I
found my peace a long time ago.

(MORE)

HERBERT (CONT'D)

And all those years I treated
William as my son to keep that
peace. I've never regretted that.

EXT. CHURCH, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

Elizabeth and Thomas cross the yard. Elizabeth lays a bunch of flowers underneath a plaque commemorating the village's war dead, then bows her head.

THOMAS

We should never have let him go.

INSERT - THE INSCRIPTION ON THE PLAQUE, which reads: "Richard Thomas Luxton fell at Bullecourt in the service of his country, April 14, 1917. His body was returned to the Earth."

BACK TO SCENE

Major Wood joins them.

WOOD

My apologies for intruding on a
delicate moment.

THOMAS

What is it, Major?

WOOD

The local hospital is full. We need
more space for our wounded.

THOMAS

Out of the question.

ELIZABETH

Thomas, please.

THOMAS

I will not turn my birthright into
a casualty clearing station.

WOOD

I understand. Good day to you.

INT. GARDENERS' HUT, HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

Rodney enters the lavatory with a mop. He still uses a crutch and walks with an exaggerated limp.

The older gardener, Daniel, is at the urinal.

DANIEL
 (glancing at the crutch)
 You may fool the family but you
 can't pull the wool over my eyes.

RODNEY
 (holding out the mop)
 I'm not the one cleaning toilets.

DANIEL
 (urinating on the floor)
 That's where you wrong. This is
 where a coward like you belongs.

Daniel washes his hands and leaves.

As Rodney mops the floor, he glances at graffiti etched into the walls above the toilet.

INSERT - THE GRAFFITI, which reads: "Don't come here to sleep or slumber"

BACK TO SCENE

Rodney then reads a list of the gardeners who have scratched their names into the wall. His eyes settle on one.

INSERT - THE NAME ON THE WALL, which reads: "William Pascoe. August 1914"

EXT. GERALD MILLAR'S COTTAGE - DAY

The sun rises above the horizon on a crisp winter's morning.

Oliver, now 13, leans his bicycle against the wall and takes a newspaper out of a basket attached to the handlebars.

He knocks on Gerald's door, drops the paper on the mat and leaves on the bicycle.

INSERT - THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINE, which reads: "The Day of Victory"

INT. DIANE'S COTTAGE - DAY

Diane makes Rodney a cup of tea. His walking stick leans against the dresser.

EXT. DIANE'S COTTAGE - DAY

Rodney digs out a broken fencepost and uses a sledgehammer to drive a new post into the ground.

Diane crosses the garden and hands him a mug of tea.

DIANE
Do you not need your stick?

RODNEY
You know, the leg finally feels
like it's on the mend.

DIANE
I thought it was worse in the cold.

RODNEY
(sipping his tea)
I'm not sure I like your tone, Di.

DIANE
Trust is the foundation of any
healthy relationship.

RODNEY
You'd be wise not to doubt me.

DIANE
Yet I do.

Diane turns and walks back to the cottage.

INT. DIANE'S COTTAGE - DAY

Rodney follows Diane inside and bangs his mug on the table.

RODNEY
Don't ever turn your back on me.

DIANE
You've made that quite impossible.

Rodney grabs her by the throat and slams her into the wall.

RODNEY
Love, honour and obey, Diane.

DIANE
(gasping)
Words you'll never hear.

Rodney increases the pressure.

Diane tries to fight back but she's no match for him. Then she spots the walking stick. She grabs it and smashes it over his head.

Rodney staggers backwards, so she strikes him full in the face. He collapses to his knees in front of her, blood pouring from his nose. She raises the stick once more.

Rodney cowers away so Diane simply snaps the stick over her knee and throws the pieces at him.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Get out!

INT. DIANE'S COTTAGE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

Diane gazes at the unseen painting with a mixture of pride and sadness. She then packs it into a wooden case.

EXT. DIANE'S COTTAGE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

Diane locks the front door and places the case on the Vauxhall's passenger seat. The car is crammed with her belongings.

A MAN, 40, on a bicycle stops and leans the bike against the wall.

MAN

Miss Luxton?

DIANE

Yes.

MAN

I'm glad I caught you. Jack Tremayne. I own the art gallery in Saint Austell.

DIANE

What can I do for you, Mr Tremayne?

TREMAYNE

Your uncle showed me your watercolour of the coast. It's exquisite.

DIANE

Thank you.

TREMAYNE

And I was wondering if you had any more pieces.

Diane waves her hand over the car.

DIANE

There are a few in here somewhere.

TREMAYNE

Don't dig them out now. I can see you're busy. I'd really like to display them in the gallery.

DIANE

I'm not sure they're good enough, Mr Tremayne.

TREMAYNE

Nonsense, Miss Luxton. It could lead to further commissions.

DIANE

May I think about it?

TREMAYNE

Please, take your time.

Diane then climbs into the Vauxhall and drives off along the coast road.

INT. HEAD GARDENER'S OFFICE, HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

Thomas pores over a list of accounts and shakes his head.

He leans back in his chair and glances outside as an ambulance drives through the main gate and pulls up in front of the house.

EXT. HELIGAN HOUSE - DAY

The ambulance pulls up next to the Vauxhall and several ORDERLIES climb out.

Diane and Arthur Renfrew leave the main house and help the medics unload two stretchers.

The four of them carry the stretchers inside.

A cart stacked with supplies also pulls into the estate. Elizabeth leaves the main house as it stops outside.

Thomas strides across from the head gardener's hut.

THOMAS
What is the meaning of this?

ELIZABETH
Isn't it obvious?

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, GREAT HALL - DAY

Diane, Arthur and the medics place the stretchers on the floor next to dozens of wounded SERVICEMEN.

Diane leaves as several NURSES then serve them water.

EXT. HELIGAN HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth takes a box from the cart.

THOMAS
You went behind my back.

ELIZABETH
Yes.

THOMAS
You dare defy your husband.

Diane joins them.

ELIZABETH
Love, honour and obey is a little...
(glancing at Diane)
... archaic. Wouldn't you agree?
Now help me take these boxes inside. There are injured men in there who fought for your freedom.

Diane removes a set of keys from her pocket and hands them to Thomas.

THOMAS
What are these?

DIANE
The keys to the cottage.

THOMAS
Where are you going to live?

DIANE

You know, I haven't thought that far ahead.

Thomas's glare is overpowered by two women who refuse to budge. He eventually turns to the cart and heaves a box onto his shoulder.

INT. HELIGAN HOUSE, GREAT HALL - DAY

Thomas and Elizabeth stack the boxes of food as Diane tends to the wounded.

Diane joins a SOLDIER whose bloodied bandage has worked itself loose.

DIANE

(to one of the nurses)
Bring me a fresh dressing, please.

NURSE

Yes, Sister.

Thomas puts an arm around Elizabeth's shoulders and they leave the hall.

INT. WAR OFFICE - DAY

A SECRETARY shows Gerald into an expansive wood-panelled office.

Gerald crosses the room and shakes hands with a smartly dressed Neil Wood.

Wood shows Gerald to a chair, then sits behind his desk and passes a stack of papers across.

WOOD

I can't find him among the dead, but there are so many who will never be identified. Thousands more are still missing.

GERALD

What about prisoners of war?

WOOD

Our lists are incomplete. I'm sorry, Mr Millar, but he may never be found.

GERALD
I can't give up.

WOOD
We get more information every day.
I'll be in touch.

The men shake hands and Gerald leaves.

EXT. GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

A small parade files through the village to a bonfire on the green. The mood is of relief rather than celebration.

Gerald joins Diane as the fire is lit.

GERALD
Major Wood isn't hopeful.

DIANE
Well I am.

A SMALL BOY approaches and offers them biscuits from a tray.

BOY
Please take one, ma'am. The war is
over.

DIANE
Not for me.

EXT. GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - LATER

Gerald stands alone in front of the smouldering remains of the fire. He then removes his vicar's collar and drops it into the embers.

EXT. SYLVIE'S HOUSE, BOUZINCOURT - DAY

A small CROWD OF PEOPLE celebrate the end of the war by waving flags and cheering.

CROWD
Vive la France!

Sylvie and Zoe watch from the steps of Sylvie's house. Zoe tries to kiss Sylvie but her sister steps back.

SYLVIE
I have a terrible cold.

ZOE

The worst cold couldn't crush our joy.

SYLVIE

There's no comfort in losing the only men I've ever loved.

ZOE

That's not what I meant. We have the chance to start again.

Sylvie unbolts her front door.

ZOE (CONT'D)

(taking her hand)

Come for lunch tomorrow.

Sylvie nods and slips inside as an unseen man watches from across the road.

INT. SYLVIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Sylvie washes her hands, sneezes and then washes them again.

There's a knock at the door, so she enters the

LIVING ROOM

and peers through the curtains. All the colour suddenly drains from her face and she almost collapses into a chair.

Then she rushes into the

HALL

and opens the front door.

An emaciated, unrecognisable William stands before her, his arctic blue eyes mere shadows, his uniform in tatters.

INT. WILLIAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

William stands in front of a mirror in his underwear. His body is pale, drawn, scarred.

Sylvie drapes a blanket around his shoulders and wipes his face with a flannel.

WILLIAM

Please don't look at me.

SYLVIE
We thought you'd been killed.

WILLIAM
Where's JL?

Sylvie takes a brush and runs it through his hair.

SYLVIE
At school.

WILLIAM
Can I see him?

SYLVIE
Not like this, William.

EXT. BOUZINCOURT, FRANCE - DAY

William and Sylvie walk arm in arm to a clothes shop.

WILLIAM
(stopping outside)
Do we have to do this?

SYLVIE
William, please.

INT. CLOTHES SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Sylvie leads William among rows of folded trousers and shirts. She eventually picks up a jersey and holds it in front of him.

The SHOPKEEPER, 40, joins them.

SHOPKEEPER
That belonged to Paul Delveaux. He
was killed at Verdun.
(she crosses herself)
Only twenty-one, poor soul.

WILLIAM
(to Sylvie)
I have no right to wear this.

SYLVIE
His family need the money.

WILLIAM
It still feels wrong. Someone
else's clothes.

SYLVIE
They need a new life.

EXT. BOUZINCOURT, FRANCE - DAY

William wears fresh clothes as he and Sylvie reach her front door. She enters with a bag of more clothes but he doesn't follow.

SYLVIE
Are you all right?

WILLIAM
I'll be back shortly.

SYLVIE
Where are you going?

WILLIAM
I just need a walk.

She caresses his cheek and heads inside.

William walks the ruined streets where few houses are intact.

Teams of workers try to salvage usable bricks from the rubble, which are then stacked neatly by the roadside. The rest is broken up with mallets and shovelled into wagons.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE, GARDENS - DAY

The sun peaks through clouds on a crisp winter's morning.

Daniel, Herbert and Oliver work the vegetable garden.

HERBERT
(to Oliver)
The onions, shallots and garlic
will all be ready in the spring.

OLIVER
That's a time of rebirth.

Herbert nods slowly and smiles.

INT. VILLAGE CLASSROOM, CORNWALL - DAY

Gerald teaches a small group of boys aged five to ten.

GERALD

Which French novelist wrote *Second
Fatherland*?

Phillip (now aged 8) raises his hand.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Pascoe.

PHILLIP

Jules Verne.

EXT. JEAN-LOUIS'S SCHOOL, FRANCE - DAY

William glances into the classroom from outside. JL sits at the back of the room.

INT. JEAN-LOUIS'S SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

William slips inside and heads along a corridor to the classroom door. He pauses for a moment, then pushes it open.

INT. JEAN-LOUIS'S CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

William notices the TEACHER, 30, has written "Rebuilding our past" on the board next to AERIAL PHOTOS of ruined villages.

TEACHER

Who are you?

WILLIAM

William. William Millar.

TEACHER

You're interrupting my class, Mr Millar.

WILLIAM

I'd like to speak with JL.

TEACHER

Who's JL?

Jean-Louis peers out from behind a taller boy. His eyes light up and he leaps out of his chair. Then he runs to William and throws his arms around his waist.

JEAN-LOUIS

I promised mama you'd come back.

WILLIAM
I just came to say hello.

TEACHER
Jean-Louis, who is this?

Jean-Louis opens his mouth to speak but the words don't come.

INT. SYLVIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sylvie collapses onto her bed, tears flooding down her cheeks, but she is suddenly gripped by a coughing spasm.

INT. JEAN-LOUIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

William finishes reading Jean-Louis a story and kisses him on the forehead.

They can hear Sylvie coughing in her bedroom.

JEAN-LOUIS
Is mummy okay?

WILLIAM
She'll be fine.
(tucking JL into bed)
Finish your milk.

Jean-Louis drains the glass and hands it to William.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Sleep tight.

Jean-Louis rolls over so William leaves.

INT. SYLVIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

William enters to find Sylvie kneeling on the floor.

She coughs uncontrollably so he crouches next to her. She shows him a handkerchief covered in blood.

INT. SYLVIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A DOCTOR, 40s, stands behind William as he gazes out of the living room window.

DOCTOR
Mr Millar, please sit down.

WILLIAM
Is she going to be okay?

DOCTOR
Spanish influenza has triggered
severe pneumonia. Her lungs and
heart are under terrible stress.

William grips the back of a chair and steadies himself.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
We survive the Kaiser's madness
only for God to strike us down. I'm
sorry, Mr Millar. There is nothing
to do but pray.

INT. SYLVIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Soft candlelight illuminates the room. William kneels at Sylvie's bedside. She's pale, thin, suffering. Her eyes flutter open but they're empty sockets.

SYLVIE
(taking his hand)
Is Jean-Louis in bed?

William nods.

SYLVIE (CONT'D)
You love him as if he were your own
flesh and blood. Look after him.

Sylvie coughs uncontrollably, her body convulsing.

WILLIAM
I will.

SYLVIE
You must go to her.

WILLIAM
What?

SYLVIE
I've seen into your heart, William.

As the candlelight flickers across his face, she hangs a small crucifix around his neck.

WILLIAM
Sylvie, I can't.

William slumps forward onto the bed and Sylvie runs her hand through his hair.

SYLVIE

I must sleep, my darling.

The candle on the bedside table flickers out.

INT. SYLVIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

William stirs a pot of stew and tastes the sauce. Then he serves two plates and places them on the table.

WILLIAM

JL. Dinner's ready.

William pours two glasses of water and sits.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

JL?

There's no reply so William walks into the

HALL

and then checks

JL'S BEDROOM

but JL isn't there. William hurries into the

LIVING ROOM

but JL is nowhere to be seen. William quickly checks

SYLVIE'S BEDROOM

and then charges downstairs into the

CELLAR

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

JL? Please!

EXT. BOUZINCOURT - NIGHT

William races into the street and calls repeatedly for Jean-Louis but there's no sign of him.

William jogs into the next street and suddenly spots Jean-Louis sitting on the wall where Sylvie had given the little girl a croissant.

Jean-Louis whimpers to himself. Lost. Alone.

William rushes across the street and hugs him.

WILLIAM
Thank God you're safe.

JEAN-LOUIS
(sobbing)
Don't leave me, Papa.

William hoists Jean-Louis into his arms, tears welling in his eyes.

INT. DIANE'S BEDROOM, HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

Diane sits in a chair overlooking the sea. A dusting of frost on the hills sparkles in the morning sun.

She glances at a stack of letters in a fruit bowl on her desk and a tear rolls down her cheek.

INT. SYLVIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

William prepares snacks in the kitchen. Jean-Louis enters and drops his school bag on the floor.

JEAN-LOUIS
What's for tea?

WILLIAM
Cold meat sandwiches. But they'll
have to wait.

JEAN-LOUIS
What for?

William slides a photograph of Herbert, Nellie and his brothers across the table.

JEAN-LOUIS (CONT'D)
Who are they?

WILLIAM
This is my family before the war.

Jean-Louis points to Phillip.

JEAN-LOUIS
Who's this?

WILLIAM

Phillip. My youngest brother. He is your age.

JEAN-LOUIS

Is he nice?

WILLIAM

He's a lot like you.

JEAN-LOUIS

Where does he live?

WILLIAM

England.

JEAN-LOUIS

Is that where your home is?

WILLIAM

My home is with you. Here.

JEAN-LOUIS

Don't you want to see your brothers?

Jean-Louis reaches for another photo.

JEAN-LOUIS (CONT'D)

He looks like you! Only much older.

WILLIAM

That's my school teacher. Mr Millar.

JEAN-LOUIS

He has the same name as us.

Jean-Louis picks up the picture of Phillip again.

JEAN-LOUIS (CONT'D)

I want Phillip to be my friend.

INT. SYLVIE'S CELLAR - DAY

William glances round the clean but empty cellar. There's no press, no paper, no shelves. He then slowly heads upstairs.

INT. SYLVIE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

William glances at the photos on the mantelpiece, then flicks through Sylvie's record collection.

He pulls out Mistinguett and wipes the dust from the cover. He studies it for a second before sliding it back into the pile. Then he spots a recording of the same gentle waltz to which he and Diane danced at the Summer Ball.

William places the record on the turntable and smiles as the music lights up the room.

INT. THE PASCOE HOUSE, GORRAN CHURCHTOWN - DAY

Herbert repairs a set of work boots at the kitchen table. Nellie pours him a mug of tea and sits next to him.

She then takes his hand and gazes at Diane's extraordinary sketch of William tending the flowerbeds at Heligan.

INT. GERALD MILLAR'S COTTAGE - DAY

Gerald retrieves a letter from the doormat. He opens it and removes a list. He reads several entries, then crams the list in his pocket and pulls on a coat.

He's about to leave the cottage when he stops and opens a drawer by the front door. He then pulls out a vicar's collar.

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

Gardeners tend to ragged borders among bare trees and winter foliage. It's overcast but the sun tries to break through.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Even this far from the front
line...

The sun pierces through the clouds and bathes the mansion in glorious winter splendour.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
The constant assault upon the
senses makes it difficult to
remember that other world.

EXT. POPPY FIELD - DAY

William wears his gardener's clothes and cap as he wanders alone among a sea of glorious flowers.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Green and sweet it was...

EXT. HELIGAN ESTATE - DAY

A hand pulls a dead flower from the border.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
People like me and Diane were never
content until we'd locked horns
with a world we found wanting.

Diane places her easel overlooking the sunken garden and begins to paint with gentle brushstrokes.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Then, when that world had weakened
and divided us, we turned on each
other.

A sudden breeze picks up, swirling a pile of cuttings into a mini tornado.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
The real war is the one that rages
inside us, its battles those you
can never win.

Diane replaces her paintbrush and watches the cuttings swirl into nothingness. She senses a presence behind her and turns as William and Jean-Louis appear.

WILLIAM (V.O.)
Then, and only then, peace at last.

Diane stares at William for an eternity. She then joins them and kneels next to Jean-Louis.

DIANE
You must be JL.

Jean-Louis hands her a beautiful red poppy.

William turns as Gerald, now wearing his vicar's collar, crosses the grounds towards them.

William turns back to Diane.

DIANE (CONT'D)
(a smile crossing her face)
Welcome home, William.

FADE OUT