

BBC
Home Front
Episode 4

7th August 1914 – Ralph Winwood

By KATIE HIMMS

Cast

Ralph	Nicholas Murchie
Isabel	Keely Beresford
Alice	Claire-Louise Cordwell
Dorothea	Rachel Shelley
Waitress	Cassie Layton (RDC)

Directed by JESSICA DROMGOOLE

TX Date: 7th August 2014

EOS: 11'46

EOM: 11'58

**(MUSIC – HOME FRONT SIG TUNE STARTS, CONTINUING UNDER
TITLE AND SPEECH. 33 SECS IN TOTAL)**

SCENE 1 EXT. STREET.

RALPH Miss Graham. Miss Graham! Miss Graham.

BEAT

ISABEL Oh. I didn't see you.

RALPH You didn't hear me either.

ISABEL I did. I did hear you.

RALPH In the end.

ISABEL I'm so sorry.

RALPH Are you quite well?

ISABEL No. Not at all.

RALPH Whatever's the matter?

ISABEL A terrible thing just happened.

RALPH What? What was it?

ISABEL In the post office.

RALPH The post office?

ISABEL Yes a man died. A postman. He collapsed while he was speaking. He was just saying to the other man at the counter - about how many more letters there were. Already. Since the 4th. One moment he was standing up and the next moment he was on the floor. And we didn't know. No one knew what to do. I mean he was gone. Just like that. I stroked his hair. I stroked his hair til a doctor could come. And another lady sang Onward Christian Soldiers. And I remember thinking that she ought to sing Onward Christian Postmen. Which of course would have been absurd.

I don't know what I was thinking. And it was all so strange. And ever so disturbing. And at the same time. Rather wonderful that we were all strangers in a queue and then a few moments later we were all united. By a common cause. Which sounds pompous. So I'm pompous and absurd but I do feel – rattled.

RALPH Goodness what an extraordinary and terrible thing.

ISABEL That poor man. He has a wife. Children.

RALPH I think we ought to find you a cup of tea.

ISABEL A cup of tea?

RALPH I think we ought to head straight to the Coronation Tea Rooms.

ISABEL Oh I don't think that's necessary. I'll be quite alright in a moment.

RALPH You're white as a sheet.

ISABEL Am I?

RALPH You don't seem at all well.

ISABEL It's silly really.

RALPH It's not silly at all. You've had a shock.

ISABEL It was a shock.

RALPH Brandy would probably be a more appropriate drink but I can hardly offer the Sunday school teacher a brandy in a public house now can I.

ISABEL LAUGHS

ISABEL Can you imagine it?

RALPH Well I can imagine it yes.

ISABEL LAUGHS AGAIN.

RALPH I think it would make the Herald. Don't you?

SCENE 2 INT. TEA SHOP

ISABEL I do feel ridiculous.

RALPH Why?

ISABEL For making a fuss.

RALPH You didn't make a fuss.

ISABEL You're very kind.

RALPH I have to be kind I'm a vicar.

ISABEL That's true I suppose.

RALPH It was a joke.

ISABEL Oh. Yes. Sorry.

WAITRESS APPROACHES

WAITRESS What can I get you?

RALPH Erm tea for two please.

WAITRESS Tea for two. Any toast or cakes with that?

RALPH Not for me thank you. I ate too much cake yesterday.
But I think you Miss Graham - ought to eat something.

ISABEL LAUGHS

ISABEL Why?

RALPH I don't know.

ISABEL LAUGHS AGAIN.

RALPH Have a cake of some kind.

ISABEL Erm.

RALPH You don't have to of course.

WAITRESS Scones are fresh out of the oven.

RALPH Scones! Scones. Marvellous. Could you bring us a scone for my friend here?

WAITRESS Jam? Cream?

RALPH Definitely. If that's alright? Is that alright?

ISABEL Yes. Of course.

RALPH Good.

WAITRESS Is that everything?

RALPH Yes. Thank you. Thank you.

WAITRESS I'll be back in a moment.

ISABEL Why have you been eating so much cake?

RALPH Oh er it was my birthday.

ISABEL Yesterday was your birthday?

RALPH That's right.

ISABEL You kept that awfully quiet.

RALPH I was forty. If you must know. And it made me feel terribly old.

ISABEL Forty isn't old. Not for a man anyway. Oh!

RALPH What's the matter?

ISABEL Yesterday was your fortieth birthday.

RALPH Yes.

ISABEL And your dog was shot.

RALPH Ah. (slight laugh) Yes that's true.

ISABEL I'm so sorry.

RALPH It wasn't your fault.

ISABEL I meant to say sorry before now.

RALPH It wasn't your fault Miss Graham. Wasn't anyone's fault. Just one of those things.

ISABEL What's his name again? He's got a funny name. Unusual.

RALPH Kush.

ISABEL Kush that's right.

Ralph It means deified hero.

ISABEL Goodness.

RALPH My wife's idea.

ISABEL You do know that Freddie is absolutely mortified don't you.

RALPH I do. And this morning he sent my wife the most beautiful bouquet of gardenias.

ISABEL Did he? Oh good. I'm glad.

RALPH So no real harm done.

ISABEL I don't expect Kush feels that way.

RALPH It was just a flesh wound. Nothing serious.

ISABEL I don't want you to think badly of him. Of Freddie.

RALPH Oh. Well I don't. Of course I don't.

ISABEL It's true. He does have a reckless streak. But I don't believe that it's altogether a bad thing. Because there's a sort of fearlessness to his recklessness. A generosity even. And I think it may serve him very well in France.

RALPH Yes yes you're probably right about that.

ISABEL I do hope God keeps him safe.

RALPH Well I shall include Freddie in my prayers.

ISABEL That's very good of you. Considering that he shot your dog. And on your birthday too.

RALPH LAUGHS SLIGHTLY

RALPH Well apparently he had some assistance from the Macknade boy.

ISABEL But he should never have let the Macknade boy get his hands on the gun.

RALPH We live and we learn.

WAITRESS BRINGS THE TEA

WAITRESS Here we go. Tea for two.

RALPH Thank you.

ISABEL Thank you.

RALPH Shall I be mother?

ISABEL Oh er yes.

RALPH POURS THE TEA.

RALPH There you are.

ISABEL Thank you.

ISABEL TAKES A SIP OF TEA.

ISABEL Did you know that I was engaged once?

RALPH Sorry?

ISABEL I was engaged. Years ago now – he was killed in the Boer war.

RALPH I'm so sorry.

ISABEL And this morning. When I was stroking the postman's hair. Well I thought of him. That boy. And he wasn't much more than boy. I mean we were both terribly young. He died somewhere so far away and so foreign. With no one to stroke his hair. No one at all.

RALPH I am truly sorry.

ISABEL I try not to think of him. I try not to remember him. Which sounds terrible doesn't it. Terribly disloyal. But it makes me so sad you see. And then today. Today it sort of. Well it all came back to me. The way – the way it all went. And if we'd have been married I think the Army would have taken more notice. Of me I mean. He had a military funeral and it was as if I was no one. I was just – I was no one. And I've never been anyone since.

RALPH Isabel.

ISABEL That sounded terribly self-pitying. Good grief. Sorry. I am sorry.

RALPH For what?

ISABEL For talking to you.

RALPH I like you talking to me.

ISABEL I do so wish I could have stroked his hair. The way I did with the postman but I was nowhere near. And now now it's going to happen all over again to women all over the country.

RALPH Because of the war?

ISABEL Yes exactly and I know it's. Well it's an extraordinary time to be young and so exciting. I mean Freddie is thrilled. And utterly desperate – to get cracking – as he puts it.

WAITRESS BRINGS THE TEA

WAITRESS Here we go. Scones. Cream. Jam. Can I get you anything else?

RALPH No thank you. This is perfect.

SCENE 3**INT. PUBLIC SERVICE CAR.**

RALPH I'm so glad that I ran into you.

ISABEL So am I.

RALPH I make this trip back and forth to the church in Hythe every week and I always do it alone.

ISABEL Does your wife never accompany you?

RALPH Dorothea suffers from a certain – well not exactly shyness - I don't know what you might call it. I think the role of a Vicar's wife doesn't sit altogether well with her. And of course I say that in the strictest confidence.

ISABEL Of course.

RALPH My wife is an excellent excellent woman. But it's the public nature of my role within the community. That's what she finds difficult.

ISABEL I see. Yes. I see.

RALPH She's not like you. She's not confident like you.

ISABEL I'd hardly describe myself as confident.

RALPH You are with the children. You're very relaxed. Very natural. Dorothea would never take a group of children on a Sunday school picnic. It would worry her.

ISABEL Oh I nearly forgot! All that business with the postman has turned my brain to. I don't know what. Might I find some picnic baskets at the church hall?

RALPH Er yes I believe we do have some. In that cupboard in the kitchen.

ISABEL We have several at the house but almost certainly not enough for an outing of twenty children.

SCENE 4 **EXTERIOR. CHURCH.**

**ALICE SITS ON THE CHURCH STEPS WAITING.
SHE HAS A BABY WITH HER. RALPH AND
ISABEL APPROACH.**

ALICE I must apologise Reverend!

RALPH Mrs Macknade.

ALICE What Jimmy did to your dog-

RALPH Oh yes of course erm well don't worry yourself . In
time the dog will recover.

ISABEL And it wasn't Jimmy's fault. Not really.

ALICE Well his father has given him a good beating
Reverend. Just so you know.

ISABEL But it really wasn't his fault.

ALICE Miss Graham Miss. He shot the Vicar's dog. He had
to be punished.

RALPH Well let that be the end of it. Was there anything else?

ALICE Oh no Reverend. I'm just going to sit here. Wait for
the Curate. That's alright isn't it.

RALPH Of course.

ALICE I've been sat here all morning tell the truth. But least
it's not raining. Least the weather's nice.

RALPH Erm and you want to see the Curate because?

ALICE Oh no reason Reverend no reason. I wouldn't want to
trouble you. It's nothing really.

RALPH Well I'm not sure when the curate will be along. He's
at Shorncliffe this afternoon. Perhaps I could help.

ALICE Well well it doesn't seem right but well if you insist-
(LOWERS VOICE) I haven't got the rent Reverend.

RALPH The rent?

ALICE The rent. I haven't got it cos he's spent it on the dogs.
The rest is gone on beer. And I'm desperate
Reverend. Landlord says we're likely to be turned out.

RALPH I see.

ALICE But I shouldn't be bothering you with this.

RALPH I could talk to your landlord.

ALICE You?

RALPH See if he might give you more time to pay.

ALICE Would you do that?

RALPH And I could talk to your husband. Try to help him see
the error of his ways.

ALICE Oh no please don't do that Reverend. Please.

RALPH It would be no trouble.

ALICE Well it might be Sir. I mean Reverend. I mean I'd
much rather you didn't.

ISABEL Might we take Jimmy with us on the picnic?

ALICE You what Miss?

ISABEL We're taking all the Sunday School children on a
picnic the day after tomorrow.

ALICE Well I'm not sure he deserves a picnic. Not after
shooting the Vicar's dog.

ISABEL But he didn't mean to. It wasn't all his fault. Please. It'll be ever so much fun. There'll be cricket on the beach. And all kinds of good things to eat. Please let him come.

ALICE What will that teach him though Miss? How will that help him to mend his ways?

RALPH Well I'm sure we can bring God into it somewhere along the line.

ISABEL We certainly can.

ALICE Oh well well if it's about God I suppose that's different. Alright then.

RALPH Ten o'clock?

ALICE (DEPARTING) He'll be here.

RALPH (SOTTO) You are a marvel.

ISABEL No – I'm just a spinster -

RALPH Spinster?

ISABEL - with too much time on my hands.

RALPH You're hardly a spinster -

ISABEL I'll be thirty two in December.

RALPH Really?

ISABEL You see! Now you agree with me.

RALPH When did I say that?

ISABEL I could see it in your face.

RALPH Then you imagined it. Because it wasn't there.

(MUSIC – HOME FRONT TRANSITION AT 10'30. TOTAL USED 7 SECS)

SCENE FIVE INTERIOR. VICARAGE.

RALPH COMES HOME

DOROTHEA Hello dear.

RALPH Hello dear.

DOROTHEA Have you eaten anything?

RALPH No.

DOROTHEA Shall I fetch you something?

RALPH Where's Kitty?

DOROTHEA It's Kitty's night off.

RALPH Is it?

DOROTHEA Of course.

RALPH You know I forgot what day it was.

DOROTHEA There's a cold ham or there's chicken.

RALPH Sorry?

DOROTHEA Which would you prefer?

BEAT

DOROTHEA Ralph?

RALPH Do you know that a postman dropped dead in the
post office at Hythe today?

DOROTHEA Goodness.

RALPH He just dropped dead. Just like that. And nothing
could be done about it.

DOROTHEA How perfectly awful.

RALPH Isabel Graham saw the whole thing. She was right
there with him. She held him in her arms in fact.

DOROTHEA How extraordinary.

RALPH I met her in the street and she was most distressed.
Absolutely white with shock. I thought she might have
fainted. So I took her for a cup of tea. It was the
Coronation Tea Rooms in the High Street you know
the one?

DOROTHEA Yes.

RALPH Well I thought I'd better look after her. I didn't like to
leave her like that. In the middle of the street.

DOROTHEA Well of course.

RALPH You don't mind do you dear?

DOROTHEA Mind? Why should I mind?

RALPH That I took Isabel Graham for tea.

DOROTHEA LAUGHS SLIGHTLY

DOROTHEA You did the right thing. You did absolutely the right
thing.

(MUSIC – HOME FRONT CLOSING SIG. 12 SECS USED IN TOTAL)