

THE LAST POST

Written by

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Episode Two

Blue Revisions

7th November 2016

Bonafide Films

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0 EXT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. NIGHT TWO. 0

1 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. NIGHT. 1

MARY being wheeled down a very long straight corridor in a wheelchair very fast by a NURSE towards the camera. The corridor is really long, entirely empty and free of clutter. The whole thing looks more like something in a lunatic asylum than a hospital. MARY grabs the hand of the nurse. They stop halfway down the corridor. MARY gets out of the wheelchair and leans her arms and her forehead against the wall as another contraction kicks in. It's short; she breathes through it. It's over.

MARY
Terribly sorry.

2 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. NIGHT. 2

MARKHAM sitting looking at a telephone. It rings. He picks up on the first ring.

STONEHAM (V.O.)
Sir? Thirty minutes to zero hour.

MARKHAM
Thank you, Corporal.

3 EXT/INT. BASE. TENTED STRUCTURE. NIGHT. 3

The camera finds BAXTER in battle dress in a tented structure on a field telephone. One side of the tent is open. BAXTER has his back to the world.

BAXTER
(On phone) No, I can't, Dad.
Because I can't get to the kettle.
Because I'm two thousand miles
away, Dad. I just wanted to
say...(A beat) Aden. (A beat) Yes.
It's Alex. Your son. I wanted to
say how.. I know you're busy.
You're off to make yourself a cup
of tea. Because that's what you
just told me.

His father (unheard) asks him if he wants a cup.

Not for me, thanks, Dad.

BAXTER listening - we don't hear his father's voice but we know that he knows what's happening to him and this is what he's telling his son now.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Yes I remember the old songs.. Of course I will.

DIMARCO (also in battle fatigues) looking on. Across two thousand miles and the dying of the light - a soldier's lament ("There was a soldier, a Scottish soldier..") sung by father and son. The song ends; a long silence. The camera shares DIMARCO's POV of BAXTER from behind. BAXTER's stillness and silence tell us how he's feeling. Like Dimarco, we're not allowed to see the big man's face. Then it's like his heart is cracking:

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Dad?

But he's gone. BAXTER takes a second to gather himself. He takes a photograph out of his pocket - his father in uniform - and looks at it. He puts it back in his pocket, then turns. Not clear to Baxter (or us) whether Dimarco has seen the photo.

DIMARCO

How is he?

BAXTER has his brave face on now.

BAXTER

Nobody died of a lost memory.

BAXTER closing up his pack.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

You ready for this, Dimarco?

BAXTER closes his pack and picks it up.

DIMARCO

Born for it. And you, Sarge?

BAXTER hoicks his pack onto his shoulder by way of answer.

BAXTER

Let's go.

DIMARCO out first.

4

INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. NIGHT.

4

MARY with her feet up in stirrups having her pubic hair shaved by the MIDWIFE.

MARY

I'm afraid I don't think there's time for that.

MIDWIFE

Cleanliness next to Godliness. I
make the rules in here.

Another contraction kicks in. The MIDWIFE steps back holding her razor in the air. She will wait for the contraction to be over to carry on with the shaving.

5 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. NIGHT. 5

MARKHAM pacing and looking at the phone. He looks at his watch.

6 EXT. CRATER OLD TOWN. NIGHT. 6

ED (Arab clothing) making his way to a meeting with his source down the back alleys of Crater. He turns into a very narrow street with an open sewer running down the middle of it. A cigarette butt flicks out of the open door of an uninhabited single room dwelling. His INFORMANT steps out.

7 INT. DWELLING. CRATER OLD TOWN. NIGHT. 7

ED and his INFORMANT sitting on the floor.

ED

He was out there for nine hours -
with a sprained ankle.

INFORMANT

He had help.

ED

From who?

INFORMANT

A village twelve miles west of the
base.

ED

What kind of a village?

INFORMANT

Goats and goatherds.

ED

NLF?

INFORMANT

A growing influence.

ED

Would they have known he was there?

INFORMANT

Sooner or later.

ED

So he was lucky.. The right kind of
goatherd.

INFORMANT

It looks that way.

A sound outside. A shadow shifts. ED holds his hand up.
There's somebody outside listening. ED pulls out his pistol.
He eases towards the door.

8 EXT. CRATER OLD TOWN. NIGHT.

8

ED comes out. Nothing. He sidles round the building. There. A
figure by the wall. They spot each other at the same time and
the SPY sprints away. ED and his INFORMANT give chase.

9 EXT. CRATER OLD TOWN. NIGHT.

9

ED and the INFORMANT chasing the SPY. ED falls. INFORMANT
sprints past him. We stay with ED as he picks himself up and
resumes the chase. He comes round a corner. His INFORMANT
rugby tackles the SPY and pins him to the ground. He looks at
his face. They know each other. ED catches up.

INFORMANT

He knows me.

ED looks at the INFORMANT. Both men know what this means. ED
holds his revolver to the temple of the SPY. He hesitates.
This is not easy. Hesitation becomes doubt and we see the
start of hope come up in the SPY. With one quick movement the
INFORMANT pulls a knife across his throat. The look on the
face of the SPY is amazement.

INFORMANT (CONT'D)

He knew me.

10 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. NIGHT.

10

ED comes in. ALISON not there. The record player not playing
but turning. Ketty Lester goes round and round. He knows
where she'll be..

11 EXT. FLAT ROOF. NIGHT.

11

ALISON smoking and drinking and missing Nick. She doesn't
look at ED when he comes up onto the roof.

ALISON

I saw a shooting star.

A beat.

ED
They're dead. That's what you're
seeing - a death.

She hurls her glass into the night - surprising violence. An arc of glass and gin and ice across the blackness. It smashes down below. A dog barks.

ED (CONT'D)
I'll get you another.

12 EXT. SEA/BEACH. FIRST LIGHT. DAY THREE. 12

Five men from 22 SAS come out of the Zodiac Milpro boat onto the beach. The sixth and seventh men (the last two still in the boat) are DIMARCO and BAXTER.

DIMARCO
For Captain Page.

BAXTER
Let's do it.

BAXTER and DIMARCO jump down onto the beach.

13 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. FIRST LIGHT. 13

MARY in labour.

14 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. FIRST LIGHT. 14

MARKHAM by the phone. A knock at the door. Noises off - Yusra and Stoneham by the door. YUSRA comes in.

YUSRA
Corporal Stoneham. He says it is
time to go.

MARKHAM
Give me a moment.

15 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. BEDROOM. FIRST LIGHT. 15

MARKHAM watching GEORGE sleep. GEORGE wakes up.

GEORGE
Where are you going?

MARKHAM
Work.

GEORGE

Where's Mummy?

MARKHAM

She's in hospital having the baby..
Yusra will look after you.

YUSRA visible through the open bedroom door - waiting for her moment to step in.

GEORGE

When will Mummy be home?

MARKHAM

Soon.

GEORGE

Is the baby going to live here?

His lower lip quivers. He's close to tears.

MARKHAM

Yes. Me, mummy, you.. and the baby.

GEORGE fights off the tears. He doesn't want a sibling.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

We can play soldiers when I get home.

GEORGE

Promise?

MARKHAM

On parade at 1800 hours, Corporal Markham.

16 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAWN.

16

MARKHAM has a word with YUSRA. This doesn't come naturally..

MARKHAM

Look after him.

YUSRA

Of course.

MARKHAM

Thank you.

STONEHAM waiting for Markham by the door. MARKHAM hovers by the door for a moment and glances at the phone in the living room. It's not ringing.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

(To Stoneham) Let's go.

17 INT. BARRACKS. DAWN.

17

ORCHOVER dressing. ARMSTRONG still in his bed wide awake. He's been awake a long time. His thoughts are deep and troubled.

18 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAWN.

18

HONOR asleep. JOE dressed. He wants her to be awake. He wants her to wake up before he goes because he's scared and wants some comfort from her. She wakes. At her moment of waking she thinks she's in Hampshire.

HONOR

Daddy?

Now she's awake. What did she say?

HONOR (CONT'D)

Oh. No. Sorry. What did I say?

JOE

Nothing.

HONOR

What time is it?

JOE

Early.

She gets out of bed - she's wearing an old fashioned frilly nightie belonging to Mary.

HONOR

A good wife would have been up and cooked her husband breakfast..

JOE

We've got seven minutes.

HONOR

I'll cook you some toast.

Cook toast? She laughs.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Make you toast..

Not quite right.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Toast you some toast.

That's it. She laughs. And so does he - which really matters to her.

HONOR (CONT'D)
Good morning, Captain Martin.

He doesn't want this - her being coquettish. He wants warmth and confidence to stop him being so afraid. She doesn't see that she's getting this wrong.

19 INT. MARTIN FLAT. KITCHEN. DAWN.

19

HONOR puts bread in the toaster. JOE looks at his watch.

HONOR
What time will you be home?

JOE
I'm not sure. It's best if you
don't know too much..

She gets this. She has started to see what's expected of her.

HONOR
But home for tea..

She smiles; he nods. That's it - that's what she's supposed to be doing..

HONOR (CONT'D)
What should I make?

A flicker of irritation in Joe here - this is not his realm and he really would like his wife to be wifely and deal with all things wifely without asking him about it.

JOE
You decide.

He looks at his watch. He has to go very soon. The toast still hasn't popped up.

JOE (CONT'D)
It's not plugged in.

He has to go.

HONOR
It won't take long to..

JOE
I have to go.

HONOR
Sorry.

He goes. She hasn't done this right and she knows it.

20 EXT. SEA/BEACH. DAWN. 20

The SAS team high up the beach ready for the off. BAXTER and DIMARCO stand together.

CO

Twenty seven miles in six and a half hours. Let me know if it gets tough.

DIMARCO

We won't let you down, sir.

*

They move out.

*

21 INT. MARKHAM'S OFFICE. DAWN. 21

MARKHAM ready to brief the men who sit on upturned crates. All in uniform apart from ED who stands apart from the group. ARMSTRONG is the last to arrive. He's limping. ED clocks the limp; MARKHAM clocks ED clocking the limp. Markham waits for Armstrong to sit. ED watching Armstrong.

MARKHAM

The raid party goes in at thirteen hundred hours. Their objective? The capture of one man.

MARKHAM continues over:

22 EXT. BEACH. DAWN. 22

The SAS unit and BAXTER and DIMARCO coming off the beach and heading inland. This is a speed march and they're straight into it; it's what they're trained to do better than anyone. They need to cross twenty seven miles of desert by one o'clock.

23 INT. MARKHAM'S OFFICE. DAWN. 23

(Intercutting with SAS and BAXTER above) MARKHAM lowers his voice a little - there's nobody within hearing but this is very secret..

MARKHAM

The target's code name is Starfish.

He hands the photograph of Kadir Hakim to the men who pass it round.

He's.. brutal; he's clever; they haven't had a leader until now so this mission is vital. The objective is to take him alive - which won't be easy. And then get him back here - which will be even harder. Our job is to rendezvous up country with the raid party at 1400 hours. They'll be handing Starfish over to us for escort back here. Questions so far?

STONEHAM

Where's Baxter, sir? And Dimarco?

MARKHAM

I can't answer that. (Answering it) But you'll see them at two o'clock. We'll be in two Land Rovers travelling in convoy. Captain Martin will command the second Land Rover.

ED shifts his weight. JOE consciously not looking at him. Here's the big thing:

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

We have to go out the Dhala road.

Everybody knows what this means.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

We don't have a choice about the route. It's only seven miles long.

No comfort to the men.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

We maintain complete radio silence from the moment we leave base and it stays that way until we're back here with the prisoner. This operation cannot be compromised.

Round the faces of the men - it's sinking in what a big deal this is.

ARMSTRONG

Sir, where's the rendezvous?

ED glances at ARMSTRONG.

MARKHAM

A set of map co-ordinates in the middle of the desert.

(MORE)

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
Captain Martin and I both have them
because if one Land Rover gets into
bother the orders are clear -

A pause here which sets up the enormity of what he says next.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
- the other continues to the
rendezvous AT ALL COSTS. This
prisoner is more important than any
of us. It's imperative we bring
Starfish back.

ARMSTRONG
Sir?

MARKHAM
Yes?

ARMSTRONG
Would he be connected?

MARKHAM
To what?

ARMSTRONG
The murder of Captain Page.

MARKHAM
We'll treat the prisoner like we
treat all prisoners, Corporal -
with firmness and respect.

JOE looks over at ED who is staring at his feet. So, yes
then, yes is the answer to his question. That's what
ARMSTRONG and the others take from this. ORCHOVER does his
job and moves the conversation back to practical military
matters.

ORCHOVER
It'll still be daylight when we're
coming home.

STONEHAM
(Sotto) If we get that far.

MARKHAM
Stoneham?

STONEHAM
Nothing, sir. Sorry, sir.

A beat.

MARKHAM

One more thing - there's a reporter coming with us. So tomorrow the world will know what a damn good job the Royal Military Police is doing.

ALL

Sir.

We're done. MARKHAM about to move on. But..

ORCHOVER

Sir?

MARKHAM

Yes?

ORCHOVER

Is it a girl or a boy?

For a moment Markham thinks he means the journalist and then he understands the question..

MARKHAM

No news yet. Don't know.

24

INT. HOSPITAL. MATERNITY WARD. STEAMER POINT. MORNING.

24

The baby's head is visible. And MARY is bleeding.

NURSE

There's a little blood.

MIDWIFE

Let's get this baby out.

NURSE gets forceps out.

MIDWIFE (CONT'D)

You have to push. This baby has to be born now.

MARY pushes. The MIDWIFE in there with the frighteningly big forceps. The baby is born. NURSE whisking the baby away.

MIDWIFE (CONT'D)

Get the doctor.

MARY

Where's my baby? Is it all right?

MIDWIFE

You're bleeding.

Massive hemorrhaging.

MARY

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

25

EXT. TENT. PARADE GROUND. MORNING.

25

MARKHAM approaches JOE who is re-wrapping his putties. MARKHAM likes to go round the men individually before they go out on ops. The men have scattered to spend time on last minute preparations and to be alone with their thoughts.

MARKHAM

You can't keep it out - whatever
you do the sand will get in.

JOE

Why aren't the raid party bringing
Starfish in themselves?

MARKHAM

They're on foot.

JOE

Why?

MARKHAM

It was going to be 1 Para but the
terrain makes a parachute drop
impossible. And a chopper is too
noisy.. So a speed march in from
the coast.

JOE

Royal Marine Commandos?

MARKHAM shakes his head. JOE gets it. Special Forces.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh. So Baxter and Dimarco..

MARKHAM

It's a great honour for a member of
this regiment to be with them.

JOE

They do exist then..

MARKHAM and JOE walk and talk. MARKHAM stops - making what he says next more profound. ED within hearing.

MARKHAM

Captain Page was halfway between
leaving us and joining them when he
died. They asked for us to do this
with them.

JOE

It's a tribute..

MARKHAM

Yes. That's exactly what it is.

ED stubs his cigarette out and smiles to himself - both of which are caustic remarks on what Markham and Joe have been saying. MARKHAM moves on to talk to the next man on his pre op rounds, leaving JOE looking over at ED. ED smiles again and lights another cigarette. JOE looking at him.

ED

What?

26 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BATHROOM. MORNING.

26

HONOR looking in the bathroom mirror.

HONOR

Darling.

Then she tries some new ones:

Honey. Sweetheart. I love you my darling.

That feels good. Then the daring one, the word (American and very grown up) that she's never tried before and it gives her a real thrill:

HONOR (CONT'D)

Baby.

She feels sexy. She tries being sexy whilst saying it.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Baby.

What she would have liked to say to Joe when he left..

HONOR (CONT'D)

Be careful baby.

27 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. MORNING.

27

ALISON on her knees in her nightie looking down at the only 45 she ever plays - Love Letters. She puts the needle down on the vinyl. She turns the volume down. She bows her head over the record player. Like a prayer. She close her eyes. Was that a scream? A second scream. ALISON opens her eyes. That was a scream.

27A EXT. HALLWAY. MARRIED QUARTERS. MORNING.

27A

ALISON heading towards Honor and Joe's quarters carrying a grapefruit half and a copy of Vogue.

From inside:

HONOR (O.S.)
Help. HELP! The door's open.

28 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BEDROOM. MORNING. 28

ALISON comes in to see HONOR standing on the bed in her nightie looking at a scorpion in the middle of the room..

29 INT. MARTIN FLAT. MORNING. 29

ALISON opens the front cover (Sophie Loren in a bejewelled turban) of Vogue (July 1965) and tiptoes towards the scorpion and very, very carefully - tense this; will the scorpion strike? Its tail goes up - places the half grapefruit down on top of the scorpion making a dome on top of it and then (whilst pressing down on the grapefruit half) slides the front cover of Vogue under the grapefruit so that the scorpion is trapped between Sophia Loren and the gin soaked grapefruit half. ALISON picks it up (one hand keeping the magazine in place, the other holding the grapefruit in place). She puts it down on the side - leaves the room and comes back with a mixing bowl which she puts on top of it all. A dome on top of a dome on top of a scorpion.

ALISON
I like your nightie.

HONOR
It's.. uh..

ALISON
Frilly.

HONOR
Yes.

ALISON gets into Honor's bed. She pats the space beside her. HONOR joins her in the bed.

ALISON
Is he good at fucking?

Oh my Giddy Aunt. An amazing question. HONOR doesn't know what to do with herself.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Your handsome husband..

HONOR
I don't know.

ALISON
Darling, you must know.

30 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. MORNING.

30

NURSE holding a bloodied sheet to try and stop the blood. Another NURSE and then a young doctor (HUGO RANKIN) come in fast. RANKIN hiding that he's out of his depth.

RANKIN

We need to stop this bleeding. And to do that it would help to get you into theatre. Nothing to worry about.

A third NURSE and a PORTER crash through the doors with a trolley bed - the speed and noise contradicting Rankin's last sentence and making it necessary for him to repeat himself:

RANKIN (CONT'D)

It's going to be fine.

MARY smiles. She's reassuring him.

MARY

My husband..

RANKIN

Don't worry.

MARY

Major Markham.

RANKIN

We'll get hold of him.

MARY

No.

RANKIN

No?

MARY

I don't want him worrying. Please don't tell him. Promise?

RANKIN - given the circumstances and that he needs to get on with this and how young he is and how impressive Mary is - doesn't feel he has a choice. He gestures his assent.

31 EXT. TENT. BASE. DAY.

31

ED offers JOE a cigarette whilst looking over at MARKHAM talking to one of the men. JOE takes a cigarette.

ED

(Of Markham) A little touch of Harry in the night.

JOE

Shakespeare. Henry the fifth before Agincourt.

ED

What we all forget about the hero king is his ordering the execution of all French prisoners after the battle.

JOE

Major Markham is a decent man.

ED

Major Markham sees honour and decency in everyone - because he's honourable and decent.

JOE

You don't think that's a good thing in a human being..

ED

I think it's a fatal flaw in a soldier.

JOE

We all do that, don't we?
Reflections of ourselves in..

ED

What are you, Joe Martin?

JOE

I don't know. I'm not ready to say.

ED

Why do you think Special Forces asked for us?

JOE

The CO says..

ED

(Cutting in on him) Yeah what do you think?

JOE

Fort Morbut has a reputation for mistreating prisoners.. So it's better if he comes here.

ED

Have you ever put a field dressing in a wound? You have to reach in deep and press down hard or it won't staunch the blood.

(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

They say the pain is much worse than the bullet going in. That's how the men are feeling now about Nick Page. The pain is extreme and raw. And it's better if he comes here?

ED looks at JOE steadily.

ED (CONT'D)

Is that what you think?

32 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BEDROOM. DAY.

32

ALISON and HONOR in bed together.

HONOR

How did you know it was a scorpion?

ALISON

It's always a scorpion. Unless it's a snake.

A beat. ALISON enjoying herself.

ALISON (CONT'D)

I had a snake my first week here. One of those desert snakes that slink around.

HONOR

Where was it?

ALISON

(Matter of fact, knowing exactly what she's doing) You have to check every time.

HONOR

Where?

A beat.

ALISON

Bottom of the bed.

A half beat and then HONOR goes berserk, kicks off the bed clothes and leaps out of bed. ALISON hoots with laughter.

33 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

33

MARY on the trolley bed coming fast down a very long corridor to surgery. The NURSE holding the blood soaked sheet in place with both hands to try and stem the blood - she's running alongside the trolley bed - trips and falls. The PORTER doesn't stop for her.

34 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

34

The SAS unit in single file speed march, twenty yards between each man, as close to running as not running gets. These are seriously fit men. DIMARCO doing well, relishing the challenge. BAXTER at the back. This is tougher than anything he's ever done.

35 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

35

MARY on the trolley nearing the end of the corridor.

MARY
Call him Peter.

Nobody hears.

MARY (CONT'D)
Doctor?

RANKIN
Yes?

She wants him to know this because she thinks she's going to die. She's probably right.

MARY
The baby. Peter.

The trolley crashes through swing doors into surgery.

36 EXT. TENT. PARADE GROUND. DAY.

36

MARKHAM moves away from a quiet word with STONEHAM and heads over to Ed and Joe. Their POV of ARMSTRONG sitting on a beer crate loosening his boot laces.

MARKHAM
(To ED) Have a word. Check he's ready for this.

ED heads over to ARMSTRONG. Joe looks at Stoneham.

JOE
He's a good man.

MARKHAM
He's nineteen.

It hits JOE what this is about and he says it before he's thought on it.

JOE
It's for you, isn't it?

MARKHAM

Hmm?

JOE

You go round settling the men to
settle yourself.

MARKHAM doesn't say no, which is an answer of a kind. He
moves on but then stops, turns back.

MARKHAM

They're like family. No. There's a
word that doesn't belong in that
sentence - they are family.

Joe moved by this. He knows he's being told something
important.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

I'd never forgive myself if
something happened to any of them.

JOE

The Dhala road, sir..

MARKHAM

Sometimes it's better just to get
on and do something and not talk
about it.

JOE

Sorry, sir.

Then something more friendly..

MARKHAM

Everything I know about soldiering
I learnt from Orchover. There's no
shame in asking your Corporal for
advice.

37

EXT. PARADE GROUND. DAY.

37

ED with ARMSTRONG.

ED

Does this hurt?

High up on the ankle. Yes. Then lower.

ED (CONT'D)

Here?

Yes. Then round a bit.

ED (CONT'D)

This?

Lots of pain. ARMSTRONG winces. Just half a suggestion that ED has hurt him more than is strictly necessary here.

ED (CONT'D)
It's a miracle.

ARMSTRONG
Sir?

ED
That you got back to us. All on your own..

ARMSTRONG
Yes, sir.

ED
You're not fit for this. You better stay here with me.

ED moves away. MARKHAM looking on. He goes over to ARMSTRONG and squats down next to him. He gives Armstrong a piece of paper - the co-ordinates.

MARKHAM
I'd lose my commission if it ever got out I'd given you these. But if we're not back by 1600 hours come and find us.

ARMSTRONG
I could look in on young George if you want me to.

This is really about Armstrong seeing Yusra.

MARKHAM
He'd like that.

38 EXT. PARADE GROUND. DAY.

38

ORCHOVER rolling his sleeves up - with some care. JOE joins him - hoping for some courage.

ORCHOVER
Sir.

JOE
Orchover.

ORCHOVER
It's not anywhere in battle dress regulations but there's a convention that one roll up from the elbow is right. It's not. It isn't enough.
(MORE)

ORCHOVER (CONT'D)

I go a whole roll higher - that takes you clear of the muscle, then the arm has maximum freedom of movement. People laugh at me. It can mean a quarter of a second quicker reloading or dressing a wound or belly crawling to cover. I've seen fatal delay. I know what a quarter of a second means. I'm sorry sir - is that what you were asking?

39 INT. HOSPITAL. THEATRE. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

39

The operating table lights bang on - hot and dazzling. RANKIN attempting to stop the blood with heavyweight gauze - it's not working. NURSES step in and lift MARY's legs up by the ankles and place them in stirrups - her legs apart, her feet above the level of her body. RANKIN looks very worried. She's cold; she starts to shiver.

MARY

Sorry. Chilly.

40 EXT. PARADE GROUND. DAY.

40

JOE alone, watching the men getting into the Land Rovers. ED catches MARKHAM.

ED

Have we taken a statement from Armstrong yet?

MARKHAM

No.

ED

I'll do it.

MARKHAM nods. ED's hand is shaking a little. MARKHAM sees this. One more thing:

MARKHAM

Go easy on him.

ORCHOVER

Load up.

JOE rolls his shirt sleeves up higher. That's it. He takes a deep breath - here we go - and rejoins MARKHAM.

JOE

You don't need to come, sir. You could go to the hospital and.. I'd be fine. With a little help from my Corporal.

MARKHAM

I'd just be in the way. I'm better
with a Sterling Machine gun than I
am with ladies biology.

41 EXT. BASE / ENTRANCE CHECKPOINT. DAY.

41

Land Rover's are go but as they approach the gate a VW Beetle comes through it onto base and stops right in front of them blocking their route out. The Land Rovers are forced to stop. MARTHA FRANKLIN gets out of the Beetle. She looks like Lee Miller. Tall, light coloured slacks, white shirt, no jewellery, sunglasses up on her head, camera slung round her neck. She's late thirties, probably an old girlfriend of Ernest Hemingway or Robert Capa and Ed Morrow might be her Uncle or something. She's American. All seven men get out of the two Land Rovers - some to see what the hold up is, some out of instinctive gentlemanliness and STONEHAM because everyone else is doing it. MARTHA smiles. Seven men in shorts; one woman in trousers.

MARTHA

It's the seven dwarves.

What? She takes a picture of the seven dwarves.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Which jeep am I in?

STONEHAM is the first to realize who this is.

STONEHAM

The Reporter.

She smiles straight at STONEHAM - dazzling, lovely, confident - who doesn't know what to do with himself and blushes a lot.

42 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

42

The Land Rovers roar out of the base into desert.

Land Rover 1: Markham, Orchover.

Land Rover 2: Joe, Stoneham, Martha. MARTHA is next to STONEHAM who is overcome with embarrassment.

MARTHA

I used to be Snow White. But I
drifted - Mae West.

STONEHAM has no idea what she's talking about and all he can do is blush. JOE gets it and he can't help but smile. MARTHA sees JOE smile and JOE sees her see him smile. JOE looks away and the looking away tells us that there's a frisson of sexual attraction here. The camera watches the two Land Rovers drive out into the desert - tail lights.

43 INT. HOSPITAL. THEATRE. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

43

RANKIN handed more (heavier) gauze.

MARY

I can't seem to stop shivering.

One NURSE looks at the other NURSE - both are thinking the same thing.

RANKIN

You're cold because that's what happens when you lose blood.. It's not.. It's not..

He doesn't know how to back out of what he's started to say. MARY takes his hand and squeezes it - she thinks she's dying and still she does her job of making sure everyone else is all right.

NURSE

Could I have a word, doctor?

RANKIN and NURSE step away for a moment.

NURSE (CONT'D)

It's not stopping.

RANKIN

I can see that.

NURSE

Maybe Colonel Amery..

RANKIN

I can fix this.

NURSE

How?

RANKIN

Get the anaesthetist. Let's get her under.

NURSE

For what?

RANKIN

Hysterectomy.

NURSE

The Colonel..

RANKIN

Just get the anaesthetist, nurse.

Rankin's pride is in the way of good judgement. He needs help and he won't admit it.

44 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

44

The SAS speed march. The CO stops - one by one his men carry on past him. DIMARCO going well. CO looks at his watch. BAXTER is off the pace. He's under pressure, thirty yards back now from the man ahead. The CO falls in alongside him.

CO
Are you all right?

BAXTER
Yes, sir.

CO
So pick it up.

BAXTER does as he's told. He closes the gap between himself and the man ahead to twenty yards. The CO moves back up the line to the front. BAXTER, now the CO has moved on, allows himself to show the pain he's in (agonizing blisters).

45 EXT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

45

A knock at the door. YUSRA goes to the door. She opens it. ARMSTRONG. He smiles. She can't allow this.

YUSRA
I'm alone.

ARMSTRONG
I came to see George.

YUSRA
He's asleep.

ARMSTRONG
Can I come in?

YUSRA
No. I am sorry.

ARMSTRONG
Did you read my letter?

YUSRA
You must go.

ARMSTRONG
If you don't want me to talk to you again then you should just tell me now and I won't..

A long beat. She takes a letter (her reply to his earlier letter) out of her pocket and gives it to him before closing the door. He looks at the envelope and his name on it. He turns away with his victory.

46 EXT. LAND ROVER. START OF THE DHALA ROAD. DAY.

46

The Land Rovers come to a halt. This is the start of the Dhala Road. The occupants of the vehicles who are not driving prepare their weapons for use. Markham looking through binoculars at the road ahead. (NB We might need x2 SA drivers here).

JOE

It's only seven miles. It'll be over before you know it.

JOE pushes his sleeves up a little. MARTHA watching him. STONEHAM fumbling with his weapon - JOE can see he's not going to be much use.

JOE (CONT'D)

Stoneham. You sit up front.

STONEHAM into the front seat.

JOE (CONT'D)

(To driver) Foot down; straight ahead; don't look at anything apart from the road.

JOE in the back with MARTHA and Stoneham's Sterling machine gun.

47 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

47

The SAS unit stop for water. They'll be here for no more than sixty seconds. Every man pulling hard on their water bottles. BAXTER is slow in arriving. He's covering up that he's in pain.

When he arrives, he takes the photograph of his father out - looking for help from an old soldier.

The CO comes over.

CO

Nothing that can identify a soldier comes with us.. ever. We don't exist.

The CO rips up the photograph, makes a hole in the sand with the heel of his boot, puts the torn picture pieces into the hole and covers it with sand.

CO (CONT'D)

Show me your feet.

BAXTER

I'm fine, sir.

*
*

*

*
*
*
*

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*

CO

Boots off, soldier.

BAXTER does as he's told. Terrible raw, bleeding blisters.
His feet are a desperate mess. CO livid.

BAXTER

Just blisters.

CO

Jesus Christ.

BAXTER

I didn't want to let anyone down,
sir.

CO

You mean you didn't want to let
your regiment down.

BAXTER

I'll be fine, sir.

CO

I can't tell you how many deaths
I've seen caused by pride
masquerading as bravery.

2IC

We won't make it to the target in
time, sir.

CO has a big idea.

CO

Yes, we will. Packs off!

The men all take their packs off.

CO (CONT'D)

(To BAXTER) Look after them. Two
hours and we'll be back for you.

Moving out. DIMARCO gives BAXTER his water bottle.

DIMARCO

Here.

BAXTER about to object..

DIMARCO (CONT'D)

You can buy me a beer later.

The seven men move out. BAXTER watches them go. Alone in the
desert with eight packs and nothing else. He touches his
pocket - checking the photograph of his father is there.

48 EXT. DHALA ROAD. DAY.

48

The two Land Rovers going hell for leather down the Dhala
Road. Steep hillsides either side of the road. It's a death
trap. Joe's Land Rover goes over a pot hole. MARTHA grabs
Joe's arm.

49 EXT. DHALA ROAD. DAY.

49

Land Rovers full pelt - the exit to the valley, the end of
the seven miles visible ahead. A glint halfway up the
hillside. JOE sees it. A shot. Sniper fire. The ping of a
bullet on the side of the Land Rover. Joe lines up a shot -
impossibly difficult: on the move, at an angle. He rakes the
hillside with machine gun fire.

The SNIPER falls forwards (dead) from his position on the hillside. JOE breathing fast. MARTHA looking at him. JOE pushes his sleeve up.

MARTHA
Your first time?

JOE doesn't answer - which is an answer.

50

EXT. LAND ROVER. RENDEZVOUS. DAY.

50

The Land Rovers arrive at the rendezvous. A single scrubby tree in the middle of desert. STONEHAM manages to say something to MARTHA.

STONEHAM
It's a Land Rover.

She looks at him.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)
Not a jeep.

She smiles at him and he dies and goes to heaven and hell.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)
I could show you around?

MARTHA
Sure. What?

STONEHAM
The Land Rover. The door comes off.
So when you're jumping in and out
you don't have to bother with a
door to open and shut all the time.

JOE looking on. STONEHAM demonstrates the thing with the door. But he can't get the door back on again.

MARTHA
(About as sexy as practical advice
has ever been) Slow down. Slower is
usually better.

This is for JOE. MARTHA knows he's looking and listening. STONEHAM slows down - the door goes back on. JOE steps in - he doesn't want Stoneham being seduced or made a fool of.

JOE
Relieve Orchover, Stoneham.

STONEHAM goes to take over sentry duty.

JOE (CONT'D)
Why are you here?

MARTHA

Nick Page promised me.

JOE

You knew Captain Page?

MARTHA

I spent three hours in a bar with him.

JOE

You know he's dead?

She didn't. A moment. Real feeling here for a moment - not hidden.

MARTHA

Follows me around.

JOE

What's that?

MARTHA

Death.

JOE

Other way round, isn't it?

She looks at him steadily.

JOE (CONT'D)

Let's be honest - a war reporter goes looking for it. A day without death and misery is a bad day at the office.

MARTHA

What do you want?

JOE

Anything happens out here - you're on your own. We have responsibility for each other but not for you.

MARTHA

Thank you.

What?

MARTHA (CONT'D)

It makes a change not to be patronized by a man in uniform. And it makes my job reporting on who you're killing.. and how..and why.. so much easier.

51 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BEDROOM. DAY.

51

HONOR and ALISON still in bed.

HONOR
Do you and Ed have a side?

ALISON
He likes to be nearer the door.

HONOR
To protect you.

ALISON
This is Mary Markham's..

The nightie.

ALISON (CONT'D)
You should be naked in bed with
your brand new husband. There'll be
a time for nighties..

HONOR
Where are they going today?

ALISON
Up country - which is a euphemism.

HONOR
What's a euphemism?

ALISON
The English way of not telling the
truth.

HONOR
It's best that we don't know too
much. (She's quoting Joe).

ALISON
Is that what he said?

HONOR nods.

ALISON (CONT'D)
In case the NLF kidnap us and tie
us to a tree and take away our
virtue and force us to tell them
battle plans we've been discussing
with our husbands? Do you love him?

A hesitation.

HONOR
Of course.

ALISON

In every breath and between every
breath?

A beat. A hesitation.

HONOR

Yes.

Does she? Or is it an idea?

HONOR (CONT'D)

You must love Ed very much..

Wrong man, wrong love of course.

ALISON

Why do you say that?

HONOR

I don't know. The way you talk
about love.

52

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

52

The SAS march. In close with the effort. Under real pressure
of time now. CO urging his men on. He looks at his watch.

2IC

We're behind time.

CO

A mile and a half - we'll run in.
Let's go, let's go.

A fast march now becomes a run. They're running the last mile
and a half. It's so hard. It's so hot. Incredible levels of
fitness.

53

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

53

BAXTER sorting himself out. He needs to construct a shelter
from the sun for himself using the packs. He's in a bad way.
Sun stroke? Heat exhaustion? Dehydration? All three.

54

EXT. DESERT. RENDEZVOUS. DAY.

54

RMP Land Rovers at rendezvous. MARKHAM (tense) looks at his
watch.

JOE

I'm sure everything's fine, sir.

MARKHAM

I don't like us being in one place
for too long.

JOE

I meant with Mrs Markham..

MARKHAM

Oh. Yes. Of course.
You should..

JOE

Sir?

MARKHAM

Take your shirt off. You'll burn
but then the next time it'll be
easier and the time after that..

JOE doesn't want to take his shirt off. MARTHA looking on -
she's the reason why. MARTHA gets something out of her bag
and approaches STONEHAM.

MARTHA

May I?

STONEHAM blushing. MARTHA squeezes out Ambre Solaire from a
bottle into both hands, rubs her hands together and then rubs
it in to his back and neck. Everyone looking on and
pretending not to. MARTHA not looking at any of them.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Drink with me tonight?

STONEHAM nods. Blimey. Those who overhear this are
speechless. JOE has heard, it was her intention that he hear.
He looks out at the desert. He pushes his sleeves up.

55

INT. HOSPITAL. THEATRE. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

55

Hysterectomy operation preliminaries underway.

NURSE

Her heart rate's falling.

And RANKIN is losing his nerve. NURSE looks at NURSE. RANKIN
sees this and now he's really losing his nerve and he knows
that the nurses know this.

RANKIN

Get Colonel Amery here now.

56 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

56

The SAS unit reaching their location. The last bit of cover before the target farmhouse. The sun blazing. CO looks at his watch. One o'clock. They've made it.

57 EXT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

57

Richard AMERY arriving fast. NURSE waiting for him outside theatre.

AMERY

Why didn't you call me?

NURSE

I wanted to.

AMERY

Who's the doctor?

NURSE

Doctor Rankin.

AMERY

It's not lack of experience in junior doctors that kills patients - it's pride. Who is it?

NURSE

Her name's Mary Markham.

AMERY

Oh God.

NURSE

You know her?

AMERY

I was at Sandhurst with Harry Markham.

58 INT. HOSPITAL. THEATRE. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

58

AMERY comes in fast.

RANKIN

We're in, sir.

AMERY

For what?

RANKIN

Hysterectomy.

AMERY

Close her up.

RANKIN

Sir?

AMERY

Get me six feet of rolled bandage
soak it in iodine and fold it three
times.

RANKIN

Sir..

AMERY

Big hole in the groin from a piece
of shrapnel and it wouldn't stop
bleeding. So we packed it tight
with every bandage we had. I mean
we jammed it in. Sergeant Paul
Miller. Malaya. June the second
1957. We're going to do the same
with Mary Markham. What are you all
looking at? Move.

59

INT. BARRACKS. DAY.

59

ED with ARMSTRONG. Armstrong's foot in a bucket of ice.

ED

Nine hours we calculate.

ARMSTRONG

Sir?

ED

You were out there..

ARMSTRONG

Yes, sir.

ED

Did anyone help you in any way?

ARMSTRONG

No. Nobody.

This is a lie. ED looks hard at ARMSTRONG.

ED

You stayed away from people?

ARMSTRONG

That's right.

ED

Because for example - going into a
village would have been a risk?

ARMSTRONG

That's right, sir.

He's lying. This is not what his informant told Ed. ED taking care not to show that he knows he's lying.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I can't feel my foot.

ED

Good. Keep it in there.

The foot in the ice bucket.

60 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

60

BAXTER in his shelter. The heat, the heat. He looks at his watch. A scorpion between Baxter and the entrance to his shelter. It lifts its tail. BAXTER goes still. A face off.

61 INT. HOSPITAL. THEATRE. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

61

AMERY steps away from Mary on the operating table. A collective holding of breath.

AMERY

It's over.

Just for a second: she's dead?

AMERY (CONT'D)

The bleeding's stopped.

RANKIN

Sergeant Miller - in Malaya. Did he live?

AMERY

Didn't lose another drop of blood.

RANKIN

Did he live?

A beat. The answer to the question now clear.

AMERY

The risk of infection is high and the heart has been under real pressure. Get her husband here now.

62 INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY. 62

The empty office. The phone rings - the hospital - and keeps on ringing.

62A INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. DAY. 62A

NURSE on phone. No answer.

63 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 63

HONOR looking at her husband's stuff. She finds his army issue Arabic phrase card and the blue terms of engagement card. Who is he? Who is she married to? The heat. She finds the switch for the ceiling fan. She sits on the floor directly underneath the fan. She lifts her dress/nightie up for the cool air to do its thing. She reads the card and repeats some of the Arabic out loud. Repeat. She's learning it. She doesn't see ALISON come in - HONOR with her legs in the air and her pants on show reciting Arabic. Laughter.

ALISON
They're here.

HONOR
Who?

64 INT. MARTIN FLAT. HALLWAY. DAY. 64

ALISON opens the door. MFO boxes. Hurrah. A big moment.

65 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 65

ALISON and HONOR breaking the boxes open.

HONOR
My dresses!

ALISON
Put something on.

HONOR goes into the bedroom. ALISON waits. HONOR comes out in a lovely dress looking wonderful.

ALISON (CONT'D)
The club.

HONOR
Club?

ALISON
The BP Club. Let's go.

HONOR

But the men will be back..

ALISON

You can swim and lie in the sun and
come back glowing for your Joe.

66 OMITTED

66

67 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

67

ED looking round his own flat tracing the life of his wife -
empty glasses, discarded clothes, that fucking record. He
goes around touching them all.

68 EXT. COAST ROAD. DAY.

68

ALISON driving the Fiat 850 to the BP Club. HONOR beside her.
Dresses, head-scarves, sunglasses. Breeze, dust, speed. Arms
out the car.

HONOR

Did you know Captain Page well?

ALISON

Yes.

HONOR

It was hard for Joe anyway -
following in his footsteps. And now
he's dead...[even harder]

ALISON speeds up. The acceleration is sudden, profound and a
direct response to the emotional hit she's just felt. HONOR
shrieks and then laughs and looks at ALISON who's not
laughing but driving.

69 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

69

The SAS unit (with DIMARCO) moving in on the farmhouse.

70 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

70

BAXTER takes his boot off, not for a second taking his eyes
off the scorpion. Real slow unlacing - the pain from the
blisters, not wanting to frighten the scorpion into striking.
He lifts the boot - slowly, slowly - and smacks it down on
the scorpion. The scorpion doesn't die. BAXTER whacks it
again and then again with his boot. It won't die. Again.
Again. Now it's dead. He comes out of his shelter and looks
up at the hot sun. They'll be back soon. He takes a swig of
his water. It's finished. The empty desert. The heat. He's
struggling here.

71 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 71

The SAS unit and DIMARCO moving in on the farmhouse.

72 EXT. RENDEZVOUS. DAY. 72

JOE joins MARKHAM. ORCHOVER in the sun roasting. The men are looking at watches now.

JOE

How do we hide Starfish?

MARKHAM gets out a small canvas bag containing ties for feet and wrists and a gag. JOE stares at them.

MARKHAM

There's just about room on the floor of a Land Rover.

JOE quotes what Markham said earlier.

JOE

Firmness and respect?

MARKHAM

My biggest priorities - after the safety of my men.

JOE

The minute he's taken, the whole insurgency will be out looking for him.

MARKHAM

We're a regular patrol. We drive slowly. We're happy to be seen.

JOE

Down the Dhala Road?

MARKHAM

At fifteen miles an hour.

Bloody hell. STONEHAM has heard this. He moves off. ORCHOVER goes after him.

73 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. DAY. 73

MARY wakes up in recovery - adjacent to theatre. She's not very well. AMERY by her bedside.

MARY

You're here.

AMERY

Extra pair of hands.

MARY

You wouldn't be here if..

AMERY

You've lost a lot of blood.

MARY

Harry doesn't know, does he?

AMERY

We're trying to get hold of him.

MARY

I haven't seen my baby.

AMERY

We need to concentrate on you.
The next twelve hours are vital.

MARY gathers up all her strength and resolve.

MARY

Bring me my baby.

74

EXT. BP CLUB. DAY.

74

HONOR and ALISON arrive. The little Fiat parked next to much bigger cars. The two women get out of the car.

HONOR

What's that smell?

ALISON smiles.

ALISON

Fish and chips. Gin. Ambre Solaire.
This is my favourite place in the
world.

75

EXT. BP CLUB. DAY.

75

An end of empire outdoor version of Rick's in Casablanca overlooking a private beach. A loudspeaker, a really lovely old loudspeaker. White jacketed waiters. Buffet curry lunch being set out. Everybody knows ALISON. A man at the bar in a blue shirt - everybody else in white. Handsome, relaxed with his props (cigarette, drink, charm).

HONOR

Who's that?

ALISON

Harvey Tilbrook.

HONOR

What does he do?

ALISON
He says he's a BP man.

HONOR
He says..?

ALISON
He's not.

HONOR
How do you know he's not..

ALISON
Oil men never take their jackets
off. And a blue shirt.. Like a
beard at Disney.

HONOR
Then what is he?

He joins them before she can answer.

TILBROOK
Lassie or Elvis?

ALISON
Hello, Harvey. What are you talking
about?

TILBROOK
With Mrs M still in hospital you're
in charge of Christmas. The club
needs to know - our Christmas
afternoon film.

HONOR
Goldfinger.

He looks at her.

ALISON
This is Joe Martin's wife.

TILBROOK
Nick Page's replacement..

HONOR
I understand you work for BP?

ALISON amused by Honor's cheeky forwardness here.

HONOR (CONT'D)
My husband swears by BP. We almost
ran out of petrol once in Norfolk
because he wouldn't stop at an Esso
garage.

TILBROOK
Sixteen miles south of Cromer on
the A14.

ALISON
Can we get a drink while you two
talk about roads in East Anglia?

She turns to the BARMAN.

ALISON (CONT'D)
The usual, Clive.

HONOR
And a bitter lemon.

BARMAN
With a twist?

HONOR doesn't know what this is.

HONOR
Yes. Please.

ALISON
(Aside to BARMAN) Stick a double in
that and put it on my tab.

TILBROOK
So actually it's you.

He's looking at HONOR.

TILBROOK (CONT'D)
In charge of Christmas. Your
husband outranks her husband.

HONOR
Does it matter?

TILBROOK
(Incredulous) Is the Pope a
Catholic?

Without warning ALISON slaps him across the face.

TILBROOK (CONT'D)
What the hell was that?

ALISON
My war on cliché.

JOE
They should be here..

77 EXT. TARGET FARMHOUSE. DAY. 77

SAS belly crawling towards the back of the farmhouse. DIMARCO glances at the CO and can see that the CO doesn't like it. Too quiet. They're up as close as they can get to the farmhouse. Tense as hell. CO lifts his hand... and drops it. In they go. They're in and moving through the house checking every room - fluid, systematic and efficient, they've done this a thousand times. It's empty. Nothing. CO signals for them to move to a second farmhouse.

78 INT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 78

The team move through the second farmhouse. A closed door. The last room. A sound from within. This must be it. A beat. CO signals and a SAS SOLDIER kicks the door open. A goat blinks at them. Nobody there. What the hell? They've been tricked.

The house that's supposed to be where the target is located is empty. Starfish isn't there. And he must have been tipped off. It takes no more than a moment for it to register that this is a trap; the insurgents knew they were coming and they've set a trap.

Bang. An SAS SOLDIER goes down. A clean shot to the head. They don't know where the shot has come from. They need to get out - now.

79 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 79

They're out of the farmhouse, backs against the wall, this seems to be cover. But they have to move. They move out in strict retreat order - the back man always covering the retreating men. Organized, drilled, fast.

80 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. DAY. 80

AMERY looks on as MARY is given her tiny baby to hold. He makes a phone call. The baby is taken away again from Mary. She watches him go. Now she concentrates on the fight ahead.

81 INT. BASE. OFFICE. DAY. 81

ARMSTRONG receiving AMERY'S call.

ARMSTRONG
Major Markham is up country. With
no radio contact. Yes.
(MORE)

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

As soon as they're back. How bad is she? I see. Thank you, Colonel.

ED looks at ARMSTRONG.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Mrs Markham. She's.. It's touch and go. They've been ringing and ringing..

ED

We need to go and get him.

82

EXT. VERANDAH. BP CLUB. DAY.

82

ALISON smoking and drinking and somehow not looking like a lush - unself-consciousness is the key. HONOR at the other end of the self-consciousness spectrum not least because she's trying so hard not to appear self-conscious. ALISON gives HONOR a cigarette. She's not very good at smoking.

HONOR

I think the answer is yes. About Joe.

ALISON

In bed?

HONOR dying with embarrassment. They can be overheard here.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Good. That's good. Of course it means he's had other girls. Dress rehearsals for you.

HONOR has never had a conversation anything like this.

ALISON (CONT'D)

(Whispered, sexy) You need to be the one. You need to be surprising and unpredictable and.. profound.

HONOR bewildered - can all these descriptive terms possibly be about sex? ALISON pulls on her cigarette hard then looks at her directly.

ALISON (CONT'D)

I want you to be happy.

HONOR looks at her new friend. She sees but can't read a sweep of deep unhappiness pass across Alison's face.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Let's swim.

83

EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

83

Bang bang bang bang bang bang bang. Intense fire raining down on the SAS unit and DIMARCO just before they reach cover. Down down down. They hit the ground.

DIMARCO

Man down. MAN DOWN.

One casualty. Dead and no chance of getting to him. The remaining five pinned down. It's hopeless. The light cover - boulders, scree - will buy them a minute maybe but they have to move or they'll die. It's like Omaha beach on D Day - you might feel temporarily safe but it can't and won't last and you'll be picked off soon; the only way to survive is to act against all your basic instincts and take the counter-intuitive choice to move. Out of cover and forward.. or die where you are.

CO

We've got to move. We've got to move or we'll die here.

Everybody knows this is true. But it's so hard to contemplate leaving cover. CO looks around. Only one option.

CO (CONT'D)

The cliff. On me.

CO takes a deep breath - probably his last - and breaks cover. The gunfire that comes down on him is profound and he can't do it - he can't overcome his every survival instinct and he scrabbles back behind the scree cover. DIMARCO looks round the faces - no comfort; every face says it's over. DIMARCO goes. He belts across the open space to the cover of the lee of the cliff. Made it. He fucking made it. Then the CO. One by one with covering fire they run the gauntlet. The CO makes it; 2IC makes it; two more SAS men don't make it. Three of them under the cliff. Three dead out in the sun.

CO (CONT'D)

One at a time.

2IC nods. CO lobs a grenade out into the open - the explosion and the smoke buying 2IC time to climb. The 2IC climbs fast and well and gets twenty five feet up the hundred feet climb before he's hit in the arm. He climbs on another ten feet. He's hit in the leg. He can't move. It's only about not falling now - he can't climb anymore. He holds on and holds on and then (he's a sitting duck target) about six rounds go into his body; he clings onto the slope and life for a second but then loses the fight for both and he falls.

CO (CONT'D (CONT'D)

Climb fast; don't stop; don't think.

DIMARCO

Sir?

CO

Dimarco?

DIMARCO

I don't know how to say this..

CO

What is it?

DIMARCO

I can't go up there.

CO

You have to. We'll die here. We'll probably die up there too but there's a tiny chance..

DIMARCO

It's not that.

CO

What?

DIMARCO

I'm frightened of heights.

CO

Then don't look down. Climb and don't look. I'll go first. See you at the top.

The CO hands DIMARCO a grenade for him to use when it's his turn then throws a grenade out into the open - the explosions and the smoke buying him about ten seconds. He takes a deep breath, steps out to climb.. and is shot in the head. Dead.

DIMARCO alone. Last man standing. Fucking hell. He stares at the grenade. He pulls out the pin and lobs it out there. DIMARCO finds the nerve from somewhere to start climbing.. Ten feet up DIMARCO finds a vertical, narrow gulley which gives him some protection; up he goes climbing like a gifted baboon - the will to live expressed in the stunning power, strength and fluidity of his movements. Don't look down, don't look down. He's ten feet from the top under sustained fire. Five feet. Three. He's going to do it; he's only going to do it. His POV of the sky over the rim. One more heave. He gets there. He looks up. The sky space is filled by a figure with a rifle and then five more INSURGENTS with rifles. DIMARCO drags himself over the top and lies on the ground on his belly with six insurgent rifles pointing at his head. He gets up onto his knees and looks back down to the valley floor and the bodies below. He raises his hands above his head. One of the insurgents jabs his rifle into his face.

DIMARCO deals with the pain and lifts his head to look straight at his assailant. Is that all you've got? You won't hurt me you bastards.

84 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

84

BAXTER hears a Land Rover. He struggles out of his shelter. He has to get to the road to be seen. He's in poor shape. One boot on, one boot off. He's limping and staggering and then crawling. He reaches the road just after the Land Rover goes by. ARMSTRONG glances in the wing mirror. His POV of BAXTER standing in the road waving.

ARMSTRONG

Stop!

They reverse. BAXTER down on his hands and knees, spent. They lie BAXTER across the back seat of the Land Rover. They give him water using a wetted handkerchief to wet his lips and then drip water into his mouth.

BAXTER

Where are they?

85 EXT. DESERT. DAY.

85

ED and ARMSTRONG confer.

ED

He needs medical attention now. If we go on...

A shout from the back of the Land Rover.

BAXTER

WHERE ARE THEY?

ED and ARMSTRONG look at each other - we'll be going on then.

86 EXT. RENDEZVOUS. DAY.

86

JOE looks at his watch. It's well past zero hour. He goes to speak to MARKHAM.

JOE

Sir? We should go and find them.

MARKHAM not sure.

MARKHAM

Not our orders. What if they've got Starfish and they make it back here and we've gone?

87 EXT. COUNTRY. DAY. 87

DIMARCO with his hands behind his head being marched (prodded, jabbed at with rifle butts) back down to the farmhouse.

88 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 88

DIMARCO down on his knees, his shirt ripped off. His hands and feet are tied. An INSURGENT lifts his head back and up by the hair exposing his neck. One of his captors runs his finger very gently and slowly down his neck from chin to collar bone.

89 EXT. RENDEZVOUS. DAY. 89

The RMP wait in silence. This doesn't feel right. JOE looks over at MARKHAM - longing for action.

90 EXT. DESERT/RENDEZVOUS. DAY. 90

ED driving fast. ARMSTRONG map reading - he has the co-ordinates. BAXTER in the back.

ARMSTRONG

There.

The scrubby tree. They arrive. Nobody. They've gone. But there are tyre tracks...

91 EXT. BP CLUB BEACH. DAY. 91

HONOR and ALISON swim out to the raft and clamber up the metal steps onto it. TILBROOK is lying there in his swimming trunks. There's a pile of about twenty stones on the raft. Daniel Craig eat your heart out.

TILBROOK

I'm sorry about Nick Page.

A whiff of pointedness in this from Tilbrook. He's watching her response.

ALISON
(To Honor) Can you dive?

HONOR
No.

ALISON
I'll teach you.

92 EXT. RAFT. BP CLUB. DAY. 92

HONOR dives in. She's good at this. Applause from ALISON.
TILBROOK drops one of the stones into the water.

HONOR
What are you doing?

TILBROOK
The sharks don't like it. There
should be a shark net really but
the stones seem to work..

HONOR steeling herself not to get straight out of the water,
then getting straight out of the water. ALISON dives in and
takes a long time to surface - on the other side of the raft.

93 EXT. DESERT. DAY. 93

ED and ARMSTRONG driving fast. BAXTER in the back.

94 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 94

DIMARCO out in the mid-day sun. Naked apart from his
underpants and tied to a stake with rope. Biblical.

95 EXT. DESERT. DAY. 95

The two RMP Land Rovers approaching fast. They slow down -
caution because they're getting close.

96 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 96

DIMARCO at the stake.

97 EXT. DESERT. DAY. 97

Here come the RMP Land Rovers. Then, behind them, travelling faster, a third Land Rover. ED and ARMSTRONG. The first two Land Rovers stop. ED jumps out before the Land Rover stops.

ED

Sir. It's your wife. You need to turn around and come back now.

98 EXT. DESERT. DAY. 98

MARKHAM in an agony of indecision. JOE joins him.

MARKHAM

I can't make this decision.
Choosing between my wife and my men..

JOE

I understand.

MARKHAM

You need to make it for me.

JOE steps away and looks out at the desert and then back at MARKHAM. They all look at JOE. JOE has to call it. He takes one last look over at Markham.

JOE

We can't leave them out there. Mary Markham is being looked after.
Let's go.

MARKHAM gestures as they get into the Land Rovers that he's impressed with Joe's choice.

99 EXT. DESERT. DAY. 99

Three LAND ROVERS speed towards and intercutting with:

100 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 100

DIMARCO at the stake in the blazing sun. A group of men in Arab dress approach. One of them bends down to look into his eyes. DIMARCO blinks to see straight. KADIR HAKIM. DIMARCO recognizes him. KADIR HAKIM gives an (Arabic and unheard by us) order to his people. What did he say? What did that mean? Then to DIMARCO:

KADIR

(In English) Pray.

DIMARCO

Our father who art in heaven.

One of the men steps away from the group and pulls out a sword. DIMARCO realizes that when he stops, when the prayer is over, he will die. His executioner is waiting for Amen. KADIR walks away. The Lord's Prayer over:

101 EXT. DESERT. DAY. 101

The three RMP Land Rovers stop. The men (and MARTHA) get out and move towards the farmhouse. BAXTER is left behind in the back of his Land Rover.

102 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 102

DIMARCO struggling to go on with the prayer.

103 EXT. APPROACH TO FARMHOUSE. DAY. 103

The RMP are coming. They're coming now. The bodies of dead SAS men. MARTHA stops to take pictures.

104 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 104

DIMARCO slows down as he comes towards the end of his prayer.

DIMARCO
For thine is the kingdom...

105 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 105

The RMP moving towards the last cover before the farmhouse. They might be in time to save him..

106 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 106

.....

DIMARCO
.. the power and the glory, for
ever and ever.....

A long beat. His last beat of life? His last word (the struggle to say it):

DIMARCO (CONT'D)
Amen.

A hand takes hold of his DIMARCO's hair and yanks his head back exposing his neck. The sun in Dimarco's eyes.

107 EXT/INT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

107

JOE is the first to reach the last cover. He holds his hand up for the men behind him to stop. The men all gathered. A deep breath. JOE leads his men out. They rush the farmhouse. They're in. Empty. Nothing. ORCHOVER staring out the open door on the other side of the farmhouse from the way they've come in. JOE joins him. Their joint POV framed by the door. A hundred yards away through the heat shimmer - a head on a stake. It's DIMARCO. Next to Joe the sound of a camera shutter opening and closing. MARTHA taking photographs. Out she goes.

JOE
You can't do that.

MARTHA
It's my job.

MARTHA moves in closer. We stay with Joe's POV.

JOE
They knew. They know. It's there
for us to see.

MARKHAM
It might be an ambush.

MARTHA is fifty yards away from the head.

STONEHAM
(To Joe) Sir? We should do
something. Sir?

She doesn't turn, she's clicking away on her camera.

108 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

108

INSURGENTS hidden. The ambush is set. KADIR HAKIM in command. They can hear the clicking of the camera without seeing Martha or what the sound is.

109 INT/EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

109

The men readying themselves for a possible attack. STONEHAM looking to JOE to do something. JOE makes a move to go out there and bring her back. ED puts his hand on his arm to restrain him.

ED
Not our responsibility.

MARTHA keeps taking pictures as she gets in closer.

110 EXT. VALLEY. DAY.

110

KADIR HAKIM and the INSURGENTS POV of MARTHA as she walks into sight and range. An INSURGENT settles into what is a reasonably easy shot. A beat. Ready to squeeze the trigger. KADIR HAKIM reading what is happening and thinking fast.

KADIR HAKIM

(Arabic) **Laa.***[No.]*

They look at him.

KADIR HAKIM (CONT'D)

(Arabic) **Suwarn. Al Aalam ba
yashoof suuratuha wa baadeyn kol
wahid baa yarif an nana. Heya
murrsalha min allah litusaaid fe
khadyatuna.**

*[Photographs. The world will see
her pictures and then everyone will
know about us. She is sent by God
to help our cause.]*

Down below MARTHA takes one more picture. Then it happens. BAXTER. From the side, in he comes, limping, one booted towards Dimarco. He takes his shirt off when he reaches the stake and puts the shirt around the decapitated head of his buddy.

KADIR HAKIM and INSURGENTS look on. The INSURGENT sniper looks at his commander. KADIR HAKIM shakes his head. Don't shoot. Respect for this and this man.

111 EXT. TOP OF THE VALLEY. DAY.

111

BAXTER sits in the Land Rover gently, gently, holding the head wrapped in his shirt. All of the men look on and don't look on according to what they can and can't manage - all of them in silence. Like a funeral tableaux. Soldiers look after their dead.

112 EXT. DHALA ROAD. DAY.

112

The Land Rovers halted at the top of the road. Then GO. GO. Nought to seventy as fast as a Land Rover can do it. Flat out seven mile blast. It's incredibly bumpy and dangerous. BAXTER holding the head tight in his lap..

113 EXT. DHALA ROAD. DAY.

113

The Land Rovers come through and out the other side.

114 EXT. PARADE GROUND. EVENING.

114

They're back. MARKHAM sitting in the stationary Land Rover
with BAXTER.

MARKHAM

If you applied for compassionate
leave you'd probably get it.
Because you'd be applying to me.

BAXTER doesn't want this.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

He fought in the Great War... your
father.

BAXTER

He doesn't like to talk about it.

And (the real reason for what he says) nor does he.

MARKHAM

Men don't.

A beat.

BAXTER

There's a photograph of him in
uniform. He looks like.. a proper
soldier, sir.

MARKHAM

Can I see it?

BAXTER

I haven't got it anymore, sir.

MARKHAM

But you could talk to him.. Have
you ever talked to him about it?

A beat becomes a silence. So no then. Like father like son.

115 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. EVENING

115

GEORGE ready for dad to come and play soldiers. YUSRA combing
his hair into a side parting. GEORGE doesn't like it.

YUSRA

Your father likes your hair combed
this way.

He messes it all up - his hair. YUSRA smiles at him. She
looks at the clock on the wall.

116 EXT. BASE / ENTRANCE CHECKPOINT. EVENING.

116

Orchover comes over to the MARKHAM Land Rover.

ORCHOVER

I'll drive you to the hospital sir.

BAXTER hands the shirt wrapped head over to MARKHAM.

117 INT. HOSPITAL. RECOVERY. EVENING. 117

MARY trying to get out of bed. She's very weak. A NURSE comes over to stop her.

MARY
My husband is coming. I want to be
on the ward and you will bring my
baby to me.

NURSE
Mrs Markham..

MARY
Please don't argue with me.

118 EXT. MARKHAM FLAT. EVENING. 118

GEORGE looking out from the balcony - waiting for Dad. There he is. But he's going. He's being driven off in a Land Rover. He's not coming. GEORGE on the verge of tears. YUSRA tries to placate him.

YUSRA
He's gone to see your new brother.

GEORGE
He promised.

119 EXT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. EVENING. 119

The LAND ROVER arrives. MARKHAM gets out. A CHOIR singing Away in a Manger. They keep singing as MARKHAM goes by carrying a head in a blood soaked shirt.

120 EXT/INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. EVENING. 120

MARKHAM comes in holding the head in the shirt. A NURSE approaches him.

MARKHAM
I'm looking for my wife.

She glances down at the shirt.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
And the mortuary..

121 INT. HOSPITAL. WARD. STEAMER POINT. EVENING. 121

MARKHAM comes onto the ward sans bloody parcel. An oasis of white and blue calm.

Suddenly and unexpectedly it's a profound relief to be in this environment after where he's been and what he's seen but the sense of relief brings out his feelings about what he has just been through and he has to struggle for a moment to hold it together. WARD SISTER to meet him at the entrance.

MARKHAM

My wife. Mrs Markham please. Mary Markham.

The choir singing outside is audible.

122 INT. HOSPITAL. WARD. STEAMER POINT. EVENING.

122

MARY in bed holding her baby. Her head bowed over her sleeping child. She hasn't seen MARKHAM. MARKHAM stands and looks at what is essentially a beautiful picture of Madonna and child. The choir start a new carol.

Silent Night, Holy Night.

All is calm, All is bright.

Round yon Virgin Mother and Child

Holy Infant so tender and mild

Sleep in heavenly peace.

Sleep in heavenly peace.

MARY turns her head and looks at her husband. She smiles. Tears fill his eyes.

123 INT. MARTIN FLAT. LIVING ROOM. EVENING.

123

JOE comes in, dusty, battle weary, been through hell, exhausted. HONOR in another lovely dress and lipstick and everything. She tells Joe to halt in Arabic.

HONOR

Makaanak.
[Halt]

She's really sure he'll love all this..

HONOR (CONT'D)

My dresses are here and I've been learning Arabic and..

JOE

Have you been drinking?

HONOR

A little. Joe, there's a wonderful club..

JOE

Who did you go with?

HONOR

Alison Laithwaite. She's a friend already.

JOE

She can't be.

HONOR

What?

JOE

Her husband isn't an easy man. And I'm superior in rank to him.

HONOR

You can sort that out..

JOE

Not if my wife is undermining me.

HONOR

What do you mean?

JOE

Through her friendship with Mrs Laithwaite..

HONOR

Alison doesn't care about that kind of thing..

JOE

I DO. I care. And it's not Alison Laithwaite who's putting her life on the line..

124 EXT. BASE. EVENING.

124

BAXTER limps across to the tent structure. He stops. He takes a deep breath.

125 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BEDROOM. EVENING.

125

JOE in his pyjamas cleaning his teeth. He gets into bed. HONOR is naked in bed - that's all, she's just naked.

HONOR

Hello.

Joe both loves it and is appalled.

JOE
(Almost angry) Where did you get
that idea?

She reaches down inside his pyjamas and he closes his eyes
with the unexpected pleasure.

126 INT. BASE. TENTED STRUCTURE. EVENING.

126

BAXTER alone on a call with his father. His back to the open
side and the camera - as in the first scene.

BAXTER
Dad. It's me. Alex. Your son. Can I
ask you a few questions? Thank you.
Yes. You don't mind? Good.

END OF EPISODE