

**The Last Post**

by

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Episode Three

Green Revisions

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Bonafide Films

|

The Forge Entertainment

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1 EXT. RAF BASE. KHORMAKSAR. DAY FOUR. 1

Two Land Rovers waiting on the tarmac. The tarmac is sticky with heat. The first Land Rover has MP emblazoned on its bonnet; the second Land Rover a red cross on its roof.

A big, old RAF transport plane coming in - this is what they've been waiting for. Medical Corps personnel get out of the second Land Rover.

2 EXT. RAF BASE. DAY. 2

Four RAF MEN fast walking/running from the plane across the tarmac to the Land Rovers carrying white boxes with red crosses on them. Blood and other medical supplies. Three of the RAF men head for the Medics and their Land Rover. One RAF man peels away and approaches BAXTER. ARMSTRONG starts the engine ready for a fast get away. The white box is handed over. Go. Go. BAXTER in the back seat. They drive away fast overtaking the speeding medics so as to get to the gate and away first.

3 EXT. LANDROVER. DAY. 3

ARMSTRONG driving. BAXTER in the back next to the white box. They're escorting the box. What is it? Who is it for? BAXTER puts a protective arm over the box as they go over a bumpy section of road.

BAXTER

Come on.

ARMSTRONG ups the speed. This matters.

4 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 4

HONOR scrubbing her hands with a nail brush and hot water. She dries them quickly and then pulls on a head scarf so that her hair is held back off her face. She puts on her yellow marigolds. She takes a deep breath and we're out of the scene before she exhales.

5 EXT. BASE / ENTRANCE CHECKPOINT. DAY. 5

The Land Rover comes onto the base waved through at the gate.

6 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 6

HONOR looks up. She goes to the front door and opens it. She returns to the kitchen, leaving the front door open.

7 EXT. BASE / MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY. 7

The Land Rover driving fast through the compound to the officers married quarters. ORCHOVER and STONEHAM watch it go by.

STONEHAM glances at ORCHOVER like a puppy looking to an older dog for a cue. ORCHOVER's gaze fixed on the Land Rover.

8 INT. MARTIN FLAT. KITCHEN. DAY. 8

HONOR waiting.

9 EXT/INT. STAIRS. MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY. 9

The white box being carried up the stairs by ARMSTRONG.

10 INT. MARTIN FLAT. KITCHEN. DAY. 10

HONOR hears the footsteps on the stairs and lets out a breath.

11 INT. STAIRS/MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 11

HONOR in the kitchen doorway. ARMSTRONG at the door.

HONOR  
Here. In here.

Into the kitchen with the white box.

HONOR (CONT'D)  
Thank you. Thank you very much.

ARMSTRONG very pleased to be thanked so profusely.

ARMSTRONG.  
Just doing my job, ma'am.

He wants to see her open the box and he half loiters but it's clear she wants to be on her own. He goes. She's alone with it. Here goes. She opens the lid. The inside is packed with ice. She takes the packs of ice out. There it is.

A fifteen pound turkey.

12 INT. STAIRS. MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY. 12

ARMSTRONG coming down the stairs. YUSRA coming up the stairs. They stop.

ARMSTRONG  
I was just.. I was delivering something..

He wants to tell her that he's here for a real reason and not to "accidentally" bump into her which is how it looks.

ARMSTRONG.  
What I mean is I didn't know you were going to be here.. I'm glad you are though..

He searches for something more to say and his gaze settles on the packet of nuts she's holding. She sees what he's looking at.

YUSRA  
For the deer.

ARMSTRONG  
Deer? Deer?

YUSRA  
Christmas deer.

ARMSTRONG  
Oh. Yes. Yes! Reindeer.

She smiles. This is a love scene. They are ten feet apart - in the ten feet is a whole lot of strong feeling all of which is profound, none of which is allowed or possible.

ARMSTRONG.  
They have names. The reindeer have names.

YUSRA smiling. ARMSTRONG encouraged.

ARMSTRONG. (CONT'D)  
Um.. Rudolf. Uh.. Dancer.

YUSRA  
Dancer.

ARMSTRONG.  
Dasher.

YUSRA  
Dasher.

She's concentrating hard now on pronouncing these names correctly and holding eye contact and now he lowers his voice an octave which together make explicit what they are both feeling.

ARMSTRONG.  
Comet. Cupid.

YUSRA  
Comet. Cupid.

She can't get Cupid right.

ARMSTRONG.  
Cupid.

YUSRA  
Cupid.

That's it. She smiles and his head and his heels go over each other. Noises upstairs bring her back to reality.

YUSRA (CONT'D)

I have to go.

She has to go past him. As she passes him she half stops for a moment almost as though to take in his smell. This is very like a kiss. Then she's gone.

13

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. SITTING ROOM. DAY.

13

GEORGE leaving out the nuts Yusra has brought for the reindeer on a plate with a glass of milk and a note to Father Christmas. YUSRA attending/looking on. JOE sitting on the edge of a sofa leaning forwards.

GEORGE

What time will he get to Aden?

JOE

Oh. Uh.. He sets off from Greenland at around three o'clock..

GEORGE looks at JOE - some doubt about this.

GEORGE

Daddy said he lives at the North Pole. Didn't you, Daddy?

MARKHAM has come in with a drink for Joe and one for himself.

JOE

He's right. What am I thinking? Greenland?

A look between the two men - the kind of look that small children understand means they're being excluded from something. GEORGE is onto it.

GEORGE

You wouldn't lie to me, would you?

MARKHAM reassuring, sincere and clear but with a suggestion running underneath (which Joe picks up on) that these certainties are not just for his young son but for himself too.

MARKHAM

Father Christmas is coming tonight to put presents in your stocking - provided you're asleep when he gets here. Then he'll be at the BP Club tomorrow. I promise.

MARKHAM gives YUSRA the nod.

YUSRA  
Bath time, George.

MARKHAM  
Off you go.

YUSRA and GEORGE go.

JOE  
Well, I believe you. Father  
Christmas definitely exists.

MARKHAM  
We got him.

JOE  
Sorry, sir?

MARKHAM  
Kadir Hakim. Para's picked him up  
last night. We've got the bastard,  
Joe.

JOE  
That's.. that's.. It will help the  
men deal with.. what happened.

MARKHAM  
I can't get it out of my mind. His  
head. Who would do that? What kind  
of... Sorry.

He drinks.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
The reporter..

JOE  
Yes, sir?

MARKHAM  
The world cannot see the  
photographs she took. It comes  
from the top, Joe. She shouldn't  
have been there, she shouldn't  
have seen what she saw and those  
pictures... Sort it out, there's  
a good chap.

MARKHAM whacks his drink back which feels like an implied  
order for JOE to do the same. JOE downs his drink.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
Keep it to yourself that we're  
leaning on her.

Yes, sir. Of course, sir. JOE stands - he's being dismissed. The business side of things over..

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Your good wife doesn't mind being on turkey duty tomorrow? It would be Mary but..

JOE

There's something I want to say, sir. Um.. it's a bit delicate. With what's happened and the increased threat we're experiencing.. I wonder whether Christmas should be a little quieter this year?

MARKHAM

That would be a defeat. That wouldn't do. After all we've been through and who we've lost.. I want to make this Christmas one to remember.

JOE

Sir, yes. And um.. Honor's very at home in the kitchen.

14 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

14

HONOR on her knees in her marigold rubber gloves in front of the fridge. She's trying to lift the turkey out of the white box - it's difficult because the box is deep and the turkey is close to the sides so getting purchase in there is a problem. She gets her hands under the turkey and lifts it out but the turkey rolls out of her hands and into her lap. She stares at it. She picks it up and tries to fit it into the fridge. It won't go. She tries jamming it in. No. Next she attempts to take out a shelf so that the bird can fit in. This means putting the turkey on top of the fridge so her hands are free. The shelf won't come out. Flies are starting to show an interest in the turkey. She flaps at them with her rubber gloves. She yanks hard at the shelf. It won't budge. She turns the white box upside down and puts it over the turkey so the flies can't get to it while she takes the time to plan her next move. She's close to tears. JOE in the doorway.

JOE

Do you need a hand, darling?

HONOR

Yes. Could you? Yes, please.

JOE lifts the fridge shelf up a little so that it's in the groove to slide out. He eases it out. Now there's space.

JOE

Do you want to do the honours?

She smiles and pops the turkey into the fridge.

HONOR

There's something I want to tell you.

JOE

That sounds ominous.

She is serious.

HONOR

I will be a good wife to you. You will be proud of me.

He should say something, but he doesn't because he doesn't know what it would be. He smiles. She looks at him.

JOE

I have to go and sort something out.

HONOR

Oh.

JOE

I might be some time.

HONOR

Can I ask what it is?

JOE

Checking on one of the men.

HONOR

What's the matter with him?

JOE

(Short with her) You should learn not to ask, darling.

HONOR hurt and suddenly close to tears again. JOE softens. He knows he's been too sharp.

JOE (CONT'D)

He's a long way from home and..

HONOR

I could come with you and talk to him? I mean I could come as your wife..

She laughs. He laughs.



HONOR (CONT'D)  
Makes it sound like it's a part  
I'm playing. "She's come as  
Captain Martin's wife.."

He smiles with her. Accidentally, she's close to the truth  
here and she half knows it and so does he.

JOE  
It's fine. It's not really a wife  
thing.

He's heading off.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Don't wait up.

HONOR  
It's Christmas Eve..

Of course she'll wait up.

15 INT. BARRACKS. DAY.

15

JOE has just come in. ORCHOVER the only man there.

ORCHOVER  
To meet the most beautiful woman  
he's ever been near in his entire  
life he was going to wear his  
shorts. What a shmuck. He thinks  
he looks good in his shorts. I  
made him change into slacks. Now  
he looks just about old enough to  
stay out after dark.

JOE  
You never married, Orchover..

ORCHOVER  
Married to the British Army, sir.

JOE  
Do you ever take your uniform  
off?

ORCHOVER  
Mufti makes me uncomfortable,  
sir. Like I might be caught  
unprepared.

A beat - enough of a pause for the next question not to be  
as throwaway as JOE would like it to seem.

JOE  
Did he say where they were going?

15A EXT. CRATER OLD TOWN. DAY. 15A

STONEHAM walking through Crater heading for Cafe. He stops, takes a small white paper bag out of his pocket, pops a mint imperial into his mouth, looks about him and (finding it's all clear) he licks both palms so as to smooth his hair down with spittle dampened hands.

16 INT. CAFE/BAR. CRATER OLD TOWN. DAY. 16

STONEHAM's POV from the doorway of the cafe of MARTHA sitting with her back to him holding a cigarette some distance away from her body like it's in a cigarette holder (it isn't). A faint smile. She knows he's there. She lowers her arm so that it and the cigarette are down by her side. STONEHAM looks about six years old.

17 INT. MARTIN FLAT. KITCHEN. DAY. 17

HONOR looking at a recipe for roast turkey from Good Housekeeping which has been pasted into her recipe book. She's concentrating hard - her finger in her mouth - and she's really worried.

18 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY. 18

Ketty on the turntable. It finished playing some time ago. Round and round - the record. Round and round - the fan. ALISON asleep in her clothes on the sofa with her thumb in her mouth. She wakes up - and remembers something. Shit. Shit. Quick.

19 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. KITCHEN. DAY. 19

ALISON pulls a bottle of wine out of the freezer. The wine has frozen solid. She puts the bottle in the sink and stares at it. How long to defrost? She can't wait that long. She boils the kettle and then pours the boiling water over the frozen bottle. The glass cracks and the solid wine expands and balloons out of the bottle. She grabs a pan and puts the lump of wine and glass in it. She lights the gas stove. She puts the pan on the heat. She switches the radio on. Dusty Springfield. She turns up the music. She stands over the pan waiting for the wine to melt.

ED in the doorway. She hasn't seen him.

ED  
Remember Berlin.

She doesn't turn round.

ALISON  
Don't.

ED  
Why not?

ALISON

It was a long time ago.

Her back to him still. He's screwing up his courage. This will be about the hardest thing he's ever said but from her turned back and the obvious depth of her pain and loneliness he knows he's right..

ED

Is it very painful?

What? She turns and looks at him - she can't keep the pain out of her expression. The remarkable thing here is that he's not asking her to. He pushes on (his courage now firmly screwed to the sticking place).

ED (CONT'D)

You must be missing him terribly.

Her stillness. She's not sure yet about the character of what he's doing. It could even be dangerous, this.

ALISON

Is it so obvious?

ED

Everything you do and say.

He picks up a sieve, takes the pan from the stove and filtering through the sieve pours two drinks.

ED (CONT'D)

You don't mind if I join you..?  
[In a drink]

ALISON

Ed? Why are you..

ED

Because you don't have anyone  
else to talk to and I love you.

Wide open and vulnerable he turns with a drink in each fist (not hand, *fist*) towards his wife looking like a six year old two pistol gunfighter taking on the Sundance Kid.

20

INT. CAFE/BAR. CRATER OLD TOWN. DAY.

20

A local joint - packed; all the clientele are men apart from MARTHA. She has chosen this place to impress STONEHAM. He's in civvies of course, but he stands out a mile. Martha has her camera and camera bag with her both of which are like a part of her. She's looking at him carefully - which makes him blush.

MARTHA

Maybe Life Magazine would do a profile. The private life of a private soldier. In real close..

She leans in closer. He's trying not to show how badly out of his depth he is.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I prefer talking to soldiers. Officers are so...

She undoes one of the buttons on her shirt.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Buttoned up.

The heat. A bead of sweat runs down from her neck into her (just visible) bra. Stoneham sips his Carlsberg. And then he sips it again. There's a line of foam along his top lip.

STONEHAM

It's hot, isn't it?

MARTHA

Yes. Isn't it?

MARTHA orders two more beers from a WAITER with the smallest of gestures (he's a brilliant waiter; she's right at home here, they know each other very well) but not so small that STONEHAM doesn't notice, making it one more thing for him to be deeply impressed by. She shifts from sexy to pure sex.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Let me ask you something. (Low, quiet) Why are you here?

STONEHAM

Honestly?

Stoneham is about six years old now. These are the most exciting moments of his entire life. She leans forward a fraction more, lowers her voice, looks at his mouth.

MARTHA

What else? [What else is there outside of being honest]

She's still looking at his mouth. Stoneham takes the plunge.

STONEHAM

Because I like you.

A beat. She smiles. Instantly, he feels foolish; he senses he's got this wrong..

STONEHAM (CONT'D)

You meant Aden.. You meant why  
are we here in Aden..

Her POV of JOE coming in and looking for her. He's in  
civvies. She's thinking fast.

MARTHA

I like you too.

STONEHAM stops breathing. JOE hasn't spotted them yet. But  
he will - any second. She makes her move. She touches the  
back of Stoneham's wrist with the tips of her fingers  
(really lightly), leaving her fingers there long enough for  
him to understand what promise is contained in the gesture.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Do something for me?

Anything - right now, he'd do anything. She doesn't wait  
for an answer - there isn't time and she doesn't need to.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Take this..

She hands him a roll of film from her bag.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Go to the bathroom. Don't come  
back.

What? He hesitates.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Get up and walk away now. Don't  
look behind you. There's a back  
alley..

He does as he's told. He's out of sight just before JOE  
spots MARTHA by which time MARTHA has slipped her hand  
inside her shirt so as to create some air between cotton  
and skin but which (as she knows and intends) makes for a  
very alluring pose for the new arrival to see. JOE makes  
his way over. MARTHA lights a cigarette.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I don't have it.

JOE

What?

MARTHA

Oh don't be disappointing,  
Captain Martin. We both know why  
you're here.

JOE

Where's Corporal Stoneham?

MARTHA

I ate him alive.

He sits. He glances at her camera bag.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

It's not in there.

JOE

Di Marco's family don't know the details of his death.

MARTHA

I'm interested in one thing - the truth.

JOE

You think the truth is always the best idea? How would you feel if you saw a picture of your brother's head on a spike in a Sunday newspaper..

MARTHA

But that isn't why you've been sent to see me. Is it? You're not here representing the interests of the Di Marco family.

JOE

Can I have the film, please?

MARTHA

Or what?

JOE

I'm asking politely.

MARTHA

You know, I think finally I understand.

JOE

What's that?

MARTHA

How much distance there is between what's said and what's meant when an Englishman opens his mouth. You're threatening me.

A beat.

JOE

You're the only woman in here.

MARTHA

And I need you to protect me from dangerous foreigners?

JOE

That's not what..

MARTHA

Sure, it was.

JOE

Corporal Di Marco has three sisters. The youngest is called Elaine; she's nine years old. If she were ever to see that photograph..

He's right about this and she makes the decision now - in the moment and not a strategy or a move in the argument:

MARTHA

I'll use the other ones.

JOE

Hmm?

MARTHA

The dead soldiers. They make the same point..

JOE

Which is?

MARTHA

This is a war. Your Government would like us to call it something else - a little local difficulty - but these pictures and this reporter tell us otherwise. The third busiest port in the world and the most strategically important doesn't want to be a part of the British Empire anymore.

The WAITER brings the beers ordered by Martha for herself and Stoneham. JOE clocks Stoneham's three quarters empty beer glass .. MARTHA sees him do this.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

He went for a pee half an hour ago. Men are scared of me. Does your wife know you're here?

JOE

(Ignoring the question) They don't exist.

MARTHA

I'm sorry?

He's immediately regretting saying it but now he has, he has win the argument.

JOE

The soldiers were never there.  
They were involved in a terrible  
accident on exercise.

MARTHA

Where?

JOE

Dartmoor. Their wives and  
families thought they were on  
exercise on Dartmoor.

MARTHA

And now? (She answers her own  
question) It's still what they  
think. My duty is to report what  
happens in the world.

JOE

My duty is to protect people from  
what happens in the world.

MARTHA

Sometimes also known as the  
truth..

JOE

The greater good can sometimes  
mean telling the truth isn't the  
right thing to do. And you're  
much too intelligent to pretend  
that you think otherwise.

MARTHA speaks Arabic to the WAITER who looks at JOE when  
she's finished.

JOE (CONT'D)

What did you say to him?

MARTHA

I was just telling him that you  
don't think I'm safe in here -  
amongst so many Arab men.

JOE

What did he say?

MARTHA

He asked if I felt safe being  
with you; I said I wasn't sure.



She lights a cigarette looking at him through the smoke, examining him.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Is the capture of Kadir Hakim supposed to be a secret? Because my waiter knows and he's not happy. My nose needs powdering.

She goes to the loo to powder her nose leaving her bag. JOE glances at the bag. He looks about him. He leans across the table. He pulls the bag towards him. He checks the loo doors. All clear. He reaches into the bag. Wham. Whack. A hand slams down on his forearm. JOE reels away. The WAITER yelling at him in Arabic. Nearly all the MEN in the cafe stand and then form a circle around JOE. He's in real trouble here. WAITER yells at him some more. Several of the MEN shout the same thing. JOE makes a tiny move towards his pistol. The move is seen. The room goes quiet. The circle moves in a little. Now he's in very serious trouble.

JOE

Stay back.

They do. Then they don't. He pulls out his pistol. He whips round and then back again so as to keep an eye on everyone in the circle surrounding him. He points his pistol around the circle. The circle moves in closer. He has to do something. He thinks he's going to be lynched. He fires his pistol at the ceiling. The bullet hits the fan.

The WAITER and three others move towards him. Joe pointing his gun and glancing behind him. He has a choice. Shoot or die. Or will it be shoot and die? A big shout:

MARTHA

Thief! He looked in my bag. Am I right? He would have stolen from it. Thief!

MARTHA by the bathroom door. What's she doing? Joe's face. Jesus Christ. She comes into the circle.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

What happens to thieves under Sharia law? Just below the wrist - off with the hand. Am I right?

Agreement.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

But the victim has the power of forgiveness. And I'm the victim.

Agreement. She looks long and hard at JOE.

MARTHA (CONT'D)  
(Looking at Joe, addressing the  
WAITER) Two more [beers] here,  
Mafouz.

21 INT. CAFE/BAR. CRATER OLD TOWN. LATER. DAY. 21

Five minutes later. JOE's shirt is wet with sweat.

JOE  
I need the film.

MARTHA  
I saved your life.

JOE  
I still need the film.

MARTHA  
And you think you've earned it by  
not lying to me about lying to  
your wife? Or not denying the  
capture of Kadir Hakim. A little  
bit of honesty buys you a whole  
lot of censorship?

JOE  
That's not the right word..

MARTHA  
It happened - British soldiers  
died; it's a fact and I have a  
record of it; you want that  
record destroyed and the fact  
covered up. Is there another word  
you'd use?

The WAITER clears their empty glasses. MARTHA's conscious  
re-working of his earlier line about her being the only  
woman in here:

MARTHA (CONT'D)  
You're the only British soldier  
in here. Did you notice?

WAITER clears Stoneham's glass.

21A INT. HOSPITAL. DAY. 21A

The lights flicker. MARY looks up. The lights go off.

21B INT. CAFE. CRATER OLD TOWN. DAY. 21B

JOE  
You know Stoneham's half in love  
with you?

MARTHA

Only half? Here's me thinking I was doing better than that.

JOE

You're using him.

MARTHA

That's obvious. That's life. It's what everyone does.

JOE

A cynical view..

MARTHA

I'm just honest about what I do and how ruthless I am in pursuit of a story. The film is sensitive. It should have been developed by now - it's been thirty six hours and there are risks in this heat.. Will they be done by now? Your boys searching my room?

JOE

Ruthlessness is..

MARTHA

Documentary makers, journalists, writers. Anyone who's any good has a ruthless heart. It's just they don't want to admit to it. The filmmakers delight at finding the mass grave - what footage; the reporter's excitement at being there when the grenade kills a small child - great copy. The writer's note-making when his mother dies a slow and painful death - right next to his grief: a very moving story. Lance Corporal Di Marco's head on a stake in the middle of the desert; half a dozen ghost soldiers face down in the sand - they're great photographs. Mea Culpa, Joe. I confess.

JOE staring at her.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You haven't asked the question..

JOE

What question?

MARTHA

Am I using you too?

A beat.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You haven't asked it because  
you're hoping you might be more  
than that to me..

He doesn't deny it. She smiles.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I'll tell you where the film is  
on the condition that you meet me  
tomorrow..

JOE

Why would you do that? This is  
not a game..

MARTHA

Isn't it?

JOE

Tomorrow is Christmas Day.

MARTHA

On which everybody is required to  
behave in exactly the same way -  
singing the same songs, eating  
the same food, praising the same  
Great Leader who is so neurotic  
and needy of praise he'll punish  
anyone who fails to worship him  
enough with hellish torture  
forever. Christmas Day is like  
we've all gone to live in a one  
party state.

Blimey.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You could do that. Or you can be  
with me. Martinis at four  
o'clock.

21C EXT. CAFE. CRATER OLD TOWN. DAY.

21C

JOE leaves the cafe.

22 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. EVENING.

22

The phone rings. MARKHAM picks up. Mary.

MARY

Harry? It's me.. The electricity  
is off here and the phones..

The line goes dead. MARKHAM dials the hospital. Dead. GEORGE at the door. YUSRA behind him.

GEORGE

Daddy.

MARKHAM

(Snapped) Not now.

He dials again. GEORGE not happy.

23

INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. EVENING.

23

ED and ALISON drinking and talking.

ED

Captain Page was good to me -  
I've wondered whether it was  
guilt but I don't think it was. I  
think he just liked me.

ALISON

Ed.. You don't have to do this.

A beat. Then the dangerous (but honest) thing to say:

ED

Of course a part of me was  
pleased when he died.

She hits him. She hits him and then a moment later she understands what it's taken to say what he's said and she's sorry.

ED (CONT'D)

Maybe this won't work.

ALISON

Ed..

He looks at her. She sees how grateful he looks and it puts her off saying what she was about to say.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Nothing.

ED

If you can't talk to me.. if not  
your husband, then maybe your new  
friend? Honor seems..

ALISON

I had hopes..

ED

But?

ALISON

Joe warned her off me.

What?

ALISON (CONT'D)

The usual thing. Rank. He can't keep you in line if she's too close to me.

ED

He said that?

She gestures her assent.

ED (CONT'D)

(Very worked up) He said that?

He goes. He's off to sort this out right now.

24 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. EVENING.

24

MARKHAM tries the hospital again. The line is still dead. GEORGE creeping in pretending to hold a gun in his hand. MARKHAM doesn't see him.

GEORGE

BANG. Dead. Got you daddy.

MARKHAM

Jesus Christ. YUSRA!

25 INT. MARTIN FLAT. EVENING.

25

HONOR getting ready for Joe's return. Footsteps. Here he comes. She stands at the door with mistletoe held above her head. She opens the door and it's... Ed.

HONOR

Oh.

ED

Is he here?

HONOR

No.

ED

Where is he?

HONOR

Talking to one of the men..

ED

Really?

HONOR

Why are you..

ED

You know Alison likes you. She really likes you.

HONOR

Oh.

ED

Why don't you come down and join us for a drink?

HONOR

I don't know. Joe will be back soon and...

ED

One of the reasons Alison likes you so much is that she says you're your own woman.

HONOR in a hard place. She's going to have to say it.

HONOR

Joe doesn't think.. I don't know how to put this. My husband..

ED

..isn't here. On Christmas Eve. We'd both very much like your company because.. we would. What could be simpler?

He smiles. A beat. She smiles.

26

INT. BARRACKS. EVENING.

26

JOE with STONEHAM.

STONEHAM

I haven't got it.

JOE

I think that's unlikely to be true.

STONEHAM

I haven't got the film, sir.

JOE

I could have you court martialled, Stoneham if you do this.

STONEHAM doesn't say anything. He's close to giving up now.

JOE (CONT'D)

She's playing you along. You think she'd actually be interested in you? She's using you. She's a journalist. It's what they do.

JOE is really talking about himself here. He's protesting too much/describing what he fears she's doing to him too - because of how complicated his own feelings are. It's working on Stoneham though.

JOE (CONT'D)

You're a boy. She's a woman.

STONEHAM crushed. He hands the film over.

STONEHAM

Sorry, sir. Why did she tell you, sir?

JOE

I'd worked it out but she got in before I said it so as to keep the moral high ground.

27 EXT. RUBBISH AREA. BASE. EVENING.

27

Large rubbish containers. JOE looks at the film. He's ready to chuck it. Then he doesn't. Then he puts it back in his pocket.

28 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. EVENING.

28

GEORGE trying too hard to get to sleep. MARKHAM looks in on him - GEORGE pretending to be asleep.

MARKHAM

I'm popping next door.

GEORGE

Why?

MARKHAM

Yusra has to go home so I'm going to ask Honor Martin to babysit.

GEORGE

Where are you going?

MARKHAM

To the hospital.

GEORGE

Why?



MARKHAM

To check Mummy and your baby  
brother are all right.

GEORGE

What if he comes?

MARKHAM

He won't.

GEORGE

He might. And what if I'm awake..

MARKHAM

Then don't be.

29

EXT/INT. STAIRS. MARRIED QUARTERS. EVENING.

29

JOE arriving back. His shirt still drenched in sweat.  
Laughter coming from the Laithwaite flat. JOE listens at  
the door. Here's MARKHAM.

MARKHAM

There you are. I'm looking for  
your wife.

JOE

I think she's...[in here]

Shrieks of laughter. MARKHAM knocks on the door. He waits  
no more than two seconds before knocking again. He's  
anxious.

ED

(From inside) Door's open.

30

INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. EVENING.

30

MARKHAM and JOE come in. ED, ALISON and HONOR playing Funny  
Bones a game with large (6"x 4") cards with the names of  
two bones on each card (e.g. ankle bone and elbow bone)  
which one player (here Alison) then has to connect to  
another player (here Honor) by placing the card between the  
two designated bones (a bone of their own and the bone of  
the other player) and hold it there. ED handing out the  
cards. The upshot is ALISON and HONOR (about twelve cards  
in place between them) in complicated and twisted body  
positions amidst great hilarity.

HONOR

Come and play. You two next.

MARKHAM looks appalled and he's also worried.

MARKHAM

Actually, I was wondering if you  
could look after George? So I can  
get to the hospital.

ALISON  
Is she all right?

The funny bone cards fall.

31 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. EVENING. 31

A minute later by the door.

ED  
(To ALISON) Why don't you go with  
Honor? Keep her company.

This is pointed and provocative in front of JOE. ALISON  
knows what this is - it's her husband supporting her.

32 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. EVENING. 32

YUSRA with GEORGE. Green Teddy in bed next to him. Yusra is  
incredibly sweet with George.

YUSRA  
I know you're awake. Shall I read  
to you?

GEORGE  
I have to be asleep.

YUSRA  
Maybe don't try so hard.

GEORGE  
How do you get to sleep?

YUSRA  
I listen to the breathing of my  
little brother who sleeps next to  
me.

GEORGE  
Can I see your house one day?

YUSRA  
I don't think that's possible.

GEORGE  
Why not?

YUSRA  
Green Teddy could come and see my  
house. Then he could tell you  
about it.

GEORGE  
Really? Tonight?

YUSRA  
Why not?

33

INT. STAIRS. MARRIED QUARTERS. EVENING.

33

MARKHAM grabs a word with JOE. (The women heading upstairs)

MARKHAM

You sorted out the reporter?

JOE

Yes, sir.

HONOR has heard. She stops on the stairs above them. This is not what Joe told her about where he was going. MARKHAM looks at the sweat on Joe's shirt.

MARKHAM

Once you start it's hard to stop.

JOE

Sir?

MARKHAM

The secret is not to start.  
Sweating, old chap.

HONOR overhearing.

HONOR

Reporter?

MARKHAM

Ah. Confession. I'm afraid I sent  
your husband to chat up another  
woman.. All for Queen and  
country.

HONOR smiles. Through the smile: Why did he lie? Why has my husband lied to me? HONOR heads on up after ALISON.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

You got the film..

JOE

Yes.

MARKHAM

And destroyed it?

He lies. JOE lies.

JOE

Yes, sir.

MARKHAM

Good man.

34 EXT. OUTSIDE MARRIED QUARTERS. EVENING.

34

ARMSTRONG waiting to drive Markham to the hospital. He sees YUSRA leaving. He wants to talk to her and she wants to talk to him and his heart lifts but then he can't and she can't because BAXTER and ORCHOVER arrive carrying a sub machine gun apiece - the escort. YUSRA walks on.

Here comes MARKHAM. They all get into the Land Rover. They go past YUSRA. ARMSTRONG can't help himself turning round to look at her. A bashful smile on her face and a stupid one on his.

35 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. EVENING.

35

ALISON fixing herself and HONOR drinks from the Markham drinks cabinet.

ALISON

Who came before you? Who was the one he didn't marry?

HONOR

Oh. I don't know.

ALISON

He hasn't said?

HONOR

He loves me. We're in love - that's all, really. That's all we've done. Be in love and get married. We haven't.. talked.

ALISON

But you will.

HONOR

I'll miss my parents tomorrow. They did me a stocking every year - even though.. even though I'm not a child. A satsuma and a penny in the bottom. Sorry - talking too much.

ALISON

The one thing the army offers by throwing us women together with nothing to do in dangerous places? Proper friendship.

HONOR

Don't tell Joe I said that - about missing mummy and daddy.

ALISON

I can tell you now that if you  
lead your life doing everything  
your husband wants and nothing he  
doesn't want and without the  
friendship of women, thirty years  
from now you'll wake up on the  
first day of his retirement and  
realize you hate him and, worse  
than that, hate yourself.

A long beat. HONOR doesn't respond which signifies that  
she's torn between the two points of view. Then she  
postpones dealing with the conflict:

HONOR

We should check George.

36

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. EVENING.

36

ALISON is a little heavy footed because there's a fair  
amount of gin in her feet. She stumbles and GEORGE wakes  
up. HONOR behind ALISON.

GEORGE

Has he been?

ALISON

Who's that?

GEORGE

Father Christmas.

ALISON sits on the bed.

ALISON

No.

ALISON kisses his forehead.

GEORGE

You smell nice.

ALISON

Thank you. It's called Gin.

GEORGE

I like it.

ALISON

Good. Go back to sleep.

GEORGE

If my mummy wasn't my mummy I'd  
want you.

ALISON

Your mother is a wonderful woman  
and she loves you very much.

GEORGE

How do babies come out of their  
mummy's?

HONOR

They come out of our tummies.

ALISON

No, they don't.

HONOR

Alison..

ALISON

They come out of our vaginas.

GEORGE

Are you going to be a mummy?

A pause; a hesitation. HONOR picks up on this.

ALISON

George?

GEORGE

Yes?

ALISON

There's something you need to  
know..

HONOR

Alison..?

ALISON

You should sit up for this.

He does. On Honor. Is she about to tell the six year old  
about how babies are made? Or even - is her friend pregnant?

GEORGE

What is it?

ALISON

Father Christmas doesn't exist.

HONOR

No. No. He does. Listen to me.  
She doesn't know what she's  
talking about, she's.. of course  
he exists. Look at me, George.

He looks at her.

HONOR (CONT'D)  
(With all her heart) Father  
Christmas is real.

37 EXT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. EVENING.

37

BAXTER (driving), ARMSTRONG (riding shotgun in the front passenger seat with machine gun across his lap), ORCHOVER (also armed) and MARKHAM in the back, approaching the hospital.

ORCHOVER  
I'm sure it's fine, sir.

MARKHAM  
I'm sorry to drag you out on  
Christmas eve.

ORCHOVER  
I'm Jewish, sir.

MARKHAM  
Of course. Sorry. What will you  
do on Christmas day?

ORCHOVER  
Prepare for a full kit  
inspection.

MARKHAM  
That seems a little hard on  
yourself - polishing your Sam  
Brown while everyone else is  
having fun..

ORCHOVER  
I'm a kinder-transport child.  
Great Britain took me in - I was  
thirteen years old. My family  
stayed behind in Germany. They  
were murdered in the camps -  
every one of them. I owe my new  
country everything including my  
life so once a year when everyone  
else is busy pulling crackers and  
eating turkey I take the time to  
contemplate my good fortune, the  
debt I owe and the importance of  
doing small things well.

MARKHAM  
Who did the inspection last year?

ORCHOVER  
Captain Page last year.  
We're here, sir. You should go in  
and see your wife.

MARKHAM gets out and then stops and turns.

MARKHAM

Nineteen hundred hours, Christmas  
Day. Be ready for my inspection,  
Corporal.

ORCHOVER

Sir, yes sir.

38 INT. HOSPITAL. STEAMER POINT. EVENING.

38

MARKHAM comes in. Mary's bed has been stripped. Where is she? The pillows are stacked in the centre of the mattress. Where is she? Oh God. Oh no. Then, there she is, dressed, ready to go, bag packed, babe in arms. Merry Christmas.

MARKHAM

Mary..

MARY

Take me home for Christmas, Harry  
Markham.

39 EXT. LANDROVER. EVENING.

39

MARY and baby PETER getting into Land Rover sitting between BAXTER (machine gun across his lap) and MARKHAM. ARMSTRONG will be driving; ORCHOVER next to him. The muzzle of BAXTER's machine gun is pointing towards Mary and Peter. BAXTER moves the gun so that the muzzle is pointing away from them.

MARY

How's your ankle, Corporal  
Armstrong?

ARMSTRONG.

Much better, thank you ma'am.

MARY

Your father?

BAXTER

The same. Fine. You know..

A beat. That's all he'll say - he's not the type to talk about this stuff but he appreciates her support. They all do; they all need her. She's the regimental mother.

MARY

How's my husband?

They all laugh. When they stop BAXTER articulates how they all feel.



BAXTER

It's good to have you back, Mrs  
M.

And off they go.

40 EXT. OUTSIDE MARRIED QUARTERS. NIGHT. 40

MARKHAM pauses on the threshold.

MARY

Harry?

MARKHAM

He's fine; he's been fine. But  
it's good to have you back, Mrs  
M.

41 INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT. 41

HONOR and ALISON slip out. MARY hands baby Peter to MARKHAM and goes to see George. MARKHAM stays in the same position with baby Peter held away from his body, too stiff and awkward to be too close to his baby. He waits until his wife is out of view before allowing himself to be with his baby son:

MARKHAM

Hello young man.

42 EXT. FLAT ROOF. MARRIED QUARTERS. NIGHT. 42

ALISON and HONOR up on the roof. They look out at the stars and the desert.

ALISON

O little town of Bethlehem how  
still we see thee lie.

HONOR joins in; her voice is so lovely Alison drops out to listen..

HONOR

Beneath thy deep and dreamless  
sleep the silent stars go by.  
And in the dark night shineth the  
everlasting light  
The hopes and fears of all the  
years are kept in thee tonight.

ALISON pulls on her cigarette. HONOR looking at ALISON. She's so great. She's just so romantic and great.. How can she not be her friend?

ALISON

Teach me to sing.

HONOR  
Teach me to smoke.

43 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

43

JOE buttoning up his pyjamas. HONOR in bed.

HONOR  
Before I came along - who was your  
girlfriend?

A beat. A moment. A hesitation.

JOE  
It doesn't matter.

HONOR  
It's best that I don't know..

JOE  
It's not like that.

HONOR  
I don't think my father has ever  
kept a secret from my mother.

JOE  
That's because he's a chartered  
accountant in Winchester.

He gets into bed, his back turned to her.

JOE (CONT'D)  
What's that smell?

HONOR  
Nothing. What smell?

Silence. Neither of them asleep. Silence. Neither of them  
asleep.

44 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. NIGHT.

44

MARY and MARKHAM wrapping presents ready to put in the  
stocking. Eating the nuts and leaving crumbs on the plate;  
MARKHAM drinking the milk. Milk on his top lip.

MARY  
What time is it?

Five past midnight.

MARKHAM  
Christmas Day.

Markham hasn't really got much/anything to go in the  
stocking but Mary has been creative about using stuff she's  
brought from hospital and things from around the home.

A coin; a satsuma; and MARY is finishing sewing a number 7 on his football shorts to go with the shirt.. MARKHAM remembers he has got George one present. He gets an envelope out a desk drawer.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
I got him his stamps. They're  
Austro Hungarian Empire..

He looks up and sees that she's smiling at him.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
What is it?

MARY  
Nothing.

MARKHAM  
Mary..

MARY  
They're for you, really. Aren't  
they, darling?

He smiles. All right - she's rumbled him.

Baby PETER starts crying. He's hungry. MARY needs to feed him. They get into an agony of 1960's socio-marital complexity over her breast feeding:

MARKHAM  
Do you want me to..[go]

MARY  
No, it's fine. We'll.. [go]

MARKHAM  
No, really, darling .. I can stay  
here and.. just not look.

That's what they'll do. She puts the baby to her breast. MARY gestures that MARKHAM has milk on his top lip - he wipes it with the back of his hand. Baby Peter really yelling now. GEORGE comes in. MARKHAM and MARY scramble and just manage to hide the evidence of present wrapping and breast feeding in time.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
George?

GEORGE  
Father Christmas won't come if  
he's crying like that.

MARY  
Darling darling darling.

GEORGE bursts into tears.

GEORGE

He's not real, anyway.

MARKHAM

Who told you that?

GEORGE frightened (and the initial storm of his crying hushed) by the strength of feeling in his father here. MARKHAM is tough and clear here - he's a good officer.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Listen to your father. What did I promise you?

GEORGE

You promised he'd come.

MARKHAM

Have I ever broken a promise?

GEORGE shakes his head.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Back to bed.

MARKHAM on the way out.

MARY

Where are you going?

MARKHAM

I won't be long.

45 EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. NIGHT.

45

MARKHAM with BAXTER.

MARKHAM

I need you to do something for  
me, Baxter. Above and beyond the  
call of duty.

46 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

46

GEORGE in bed. Tossing and turning, eyes tight shut trying to be asleep. When he opens his eyes he sees something amazing - Father Christmas is in his bedroom. FATHER CHRISTMAS IS IN MY BEDROOM filling my stocking. It's vital that Baxter's Father Christmas costume is very, very good. Better than Selfridges. And not brand new - Father Christmas has been around a while and so has his gear. George has to absolutely believe this is the real thing and so do we. GEORGE pretending to be asleep. He (FC/BAXTER) fills the stocking with presents.

47 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

47

Neither of them asleep. HONOR doesn't know JOE isn't asleep. She slips out of bed and slips out of the room. He gets up. He goes over to the chair and takes the roll of film out of his trouser pocket. He goes into the bathroom and hides the film in the internal zipped pocket of his wash bag.

48 INT. MARTIN FLAT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

48

WOOMPH. The gas oven ignites. HONOR recoils. JOE at the door.

JOE

What are you doing?

HONOR

I'm cooking it now then it will  
be done and it can sit and I  
won't have to worry.

JOE

All right.

HONOR  
Ed insisted.

JOE  
Hmm?

HONOR  
That I went and had a drink with  
them.

JOE  
Otherwise you'd have said no?

She's very still. She feels lonely and frightened. He comes  
over and kisses the top of her head.

JOE (CONT'D)  
You've got me. You've got your  
husband. You don't need friends.

She manages to nod.

JOE (CONT'D)  
There *is* a smell. It's in your  
hair. Have you been smoking?

She thinks about lying but then chooses instead the sense  
of freedom and empowerment that telling the truth about the  
new thing she's been given by her new friend brings.

HONOR  
Yes. Yes, I have.

Then she's worried he'll be cross but much more than that she  
knows it's better to be honest.

HONOR (CONT'D)  
Don't be angry. I don't want us to  
have any secrets.

48A EXT. MARRIED QUARTERS. NIGHT TO DAY. DAY FIVE.

48A

Night turns into CHRISTMAS DAY.

49 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. BEDROOM. MORNING.

49

GEORGE comes in very excited and holding his stocking. MARY  
in bed feeding PETER.

MARY  
Wait outside, please darling.  
Mummy's busy with baby Peter.

GEORGE retreats - his feeling of rejection overwhelming.

50 INT. MARTIN FLAT. KITCHEN. MORNING.

50

HONOR in her nightie gets the turkey out of the oven. A massive moment. It feels like the rest of her life depends on this. It's okay. It looks cooked. It's going to be all right. She covers the turkey in silver foil.

JOE

You should get dressed. We don't want to be late for the service.

HONOR

No.

JOE

What are you hoping for?

HONOR

Oh Little Town of Bethlehem.

JOE

I'm a Hark The Herald Angels man.

They laugh. Warmth. Together again after the fractiousness of last night. They're so young, these two.

51 INT. TENT CHAPEL. DAY.

51

In the Bleak Midwinter. A large open sided tent. ALISON singing with feeling. Everyone (CAST) singing strongly but ALISON is the stand out worshipper. The tent is full and the singing is felt. HONOR (next to Alison; the two women sandwiched between their respective husbands) joins her friend in singing VERY strongly; it feels like a public declaration of their friendship. JOE and ED (hesitant singers both, drowned out by their wives) glance at each other across the two women and.. stop singing.

52 EXT. TENT CHAPEL. DAY.

52

ARMY CHAPLAIN giving the congregation his Christmas blessing. YUSRA arriving. ARMSTRONG slips out of the service (the tent open sided, his departure not registered) and intercepts her.

ARMSTRONG

I read your letter.

YUSRA

I was wrong.

ARMSTRONG

When you said..

YUSRA

[sic]I am a mistake.

The service is over and people are starting to come out.

ARMSTRONG

Yusra..

YUSRA

It is not possible. Please leave alone.

ARMSTRONG

But I don't understand..

She looks at him with real love. Her toughness with him has gone. She can't keep it up. She hands him another envelope.

YUSRA

Do not read this until tomorrow.

ARMSTRONG

But...

YUSRA

Promise me.

He nods. She goes. We see (he doesn't) the pain this has caused her.

53	OMITTED	53	*
54	INT. MARTIN FLAT. DINING ROOM. DAY.	54	
	ED, ALISON, MARKHAM, MARY, JOE, HONOR and GEORGE all starting to sit round the table.		*
			*
	ALISON alongside HONOR for a moment.		*
	ALISON		*
	Don't tell anyone - I'm pregnant.		*
	MARKHAM joins them before HONOR can react.		*
	MARKHAM		*
	(To Alison and Honor) Good to see you praising the Lord with such lusty gusto.		*
			*
	HONOR		*
	I like the words.		*
	MARKHAM		*
	I've always loved Blake.		*
	ALISON		*
	Christina Rosetti.		*
	MARKHAM		*
	I'm sure it's Blake.		*



ALISON

All right, Harry. Let's just say  
it's Blake.

\*  
\*  
\*

Everybody seated. Grace.

\*

MARKHAM

For what we are about to receive,  
may the Lord make us truly  
thankful.

ALL

(Apart from Alison) Amen.

Everyone with their eyes shut apart from ALISON who looks  
at everyone as they say the words.

ALISON

Do you believe in God, Honor?

JOE

Of course she does.

Honor just wants to say (keeping it simple and stepping away from what she fears might become a big row which would spoil things and hedging her bets in a classic C of E way so as not to cause a problem):

HONOR

It's a good way to live.

MARKHAM

Nobody could disagree with that.  
Love thy neighbour and so on.

ALISON

Do you think?

MARY puts a gentle restraining hand on her arm.

MARY

Alison..

ALISON

Whoever they are, Mary? Whoever your neighbour happens to be? How about Joseph Mengele? Should the family Schmidt next door to the monster doctor love Joe Mengele? Or Joseph Stalin? Should the Dimitriev's at 21a love the man next door? Just to stick with the Joseph's. Stupidest advice I ever heard. I'm in favour of hating people who deserve to be hated. Can we open another bottle, Honor darling?

MARY

Maybe we should wait for lunch.

ED

Alison wants a drink. It's Christmas day.

ALISON

Believing in God is about as intelligent as believing in Father Christmas.

GEORGE

Father Christmas is real.

ALISON

You see how easy it is if you catch them young enough? You see how you can get small human beings to believe in anything.

MARKHAM about to direct everyone away from this.

MARKHAM

Do you know what I say?

ALISON

Do you know what Alfred Hitchcock says? The most terrifying thing he's ever seen? A Priest talking to young children. (Shouted, making everyone jump) Run! Run for your lives! What do you say, Harry?

Harry Markham can't remember what he was going to say. GEORGE comes to his father's rescue with his implacable resolution:

GEORGE

Father Christmas is real.

ALISON

That's something called faith, George..

GEORGE

I saw him. Last night. In my bedroom.

MARY

The crackers! We haven't pulled the crackers.

55 INT. MARTIN FLAT. KITCHEN. DAY.

55

HONOR comes into the kitchen. The cooked turkey on the side under tin foil. She plugs in the electric carving knife and switches it on. She gets a serving dish out ready to receive the turkey. She lifts the foil off the turkey. It's covered in flies and ants - meat swarming with insect life. MARY comes in. She sees what has happened. HONOR close to tears throws MARY a look of complete desolation. But MARY has moved on. She has the fridge open and she's taken control of the situation.

MARY

Hold these.

MARY gets a box of eggs, Philadelphia cheese, and a packet of sliced ham out of the fridge. She hands them to HONOR and opens the food cupboard. She hands HONOR a tin of pineapple and a loaf of white bread.

56 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DINING ROOM. DAY.

56

JOE looks anxious. What's the hold up? Here we go. MARY and HONOR come in and serve the Christmas lunch. Eggy bread with a slice of ham on top, then a pineapple ring and a slab of Philadelphia cheese and finally..

MARY

Honor..

HONOR goes round and tops the whole thing off with a glace cherry on each dish. The cherry on the top. MARKHAM is about to say something about where the turkey is. MARY touches his arm lightly to keep him silent.

MARY (CONT'D)

Thrift, dedication, experience - all count for a great deal in the modern housewife. But above all these - imagination. What a treasure you've found, Captain Martin.

HONOR moved. Mary's mood so sure and clear that nobody can fail to agree. Smiles all round and murmurs of agreement. MARKHAM adores his wife and he's so grateful to her.

MARKHAM

Merry Christmas.

57 INT. MARTIN FLAT. SITTING ROOM. DAY. LATER.

57

Laughter all round. Apart from GEORGE who stands staring at his baby brother with a blank expression. A game of Simple Simon.

MARKHAM

Simple Simon says touch your toes.

They all do.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Simple Simon says clap your hands.

They all do.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Simple Simon says rub your tummy.

They all do. MARKHAM in fast with the next command.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Pat your head.

Only HONOR pats her head.

HONOR

Aaagh. No!

All laugh.

GEORGE

Can we go now?

MARY

I think the Markham's might skip  
the BP Club this year.

GEORGE looks upset.

GEORGE

Mummy..

MARKHAM

George..

GEORGE

But..

MARKHAM

(Too loud, too uptight) George.

HONOR

We could take George. I'd look  
after him. It would be a shame  
for him to miss all the fun.

58

INT/EXT. FIAT. DAY.

58

ED driving, ALISON in the front, GEORGE in between HONOR  
and JOE in the back. It's a big squeeze and all the more  
jolly for it. HONOR takes hold of GEORGE's hand.

GEORGE

Can we swim out to the raft?

HONOR takes his hand. No, he can't. Much too much of a  
responsibility for her to swim with a six year old out to  
the raft - she's not a strong enough swimmer.

HONOR

I'm sorry, George. I'm not a  
strong enough swimmer.

GEORGE's big disappointment.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Maybe Joe could do it with you?  
Joe?

JOE really doesn't want to but he has no choice and nods and  
smiles his assent. HONOR and GEORGE both very pleased.

59

INT. BP CLUB. DAY.

59

The Christmas party in full swing. Full of Army Officers  
and families and civilians and their families. It's a big  
number. YUSRA amongst the staff all dressed in crisp  
whites. An ARAB WAITER says something to her. YUSRA looks  
down at the ground. GEORGE is with HONOR holding her hand.  
She's taking her role of being in loco parentis seriously.

ALISON drinking and laughing with everyone.

HONOR and GEORGE make their way across the main room and into the room showing the Christmas film. Goldfinger. The audience is mostly men. TILBROOK loving it. GEORGE very disappointed.

GEORGE  
Where's Lassie? It's always  
Lassie.

This was Honor's choice.

HONOR  
Shall we find Joe? Would you like  
to swim to the raft now?

TILBROOK with JOE in the main party throng.

TILBROOK  
Tell me about your new American  
friend.

JOE  
I don't know much about her.

TILBROOK looking at him.

TILBROOK  
Plans to meet up again?

JOE taken aback that Tilbrook knows they've met.

JOE  
No plans.

60 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

60

MARKHAM and MARY sit down together. The phone rings.

MARKHAM  
Markham. Yes. Yes. Thank you.

MARY  
Everything all right?

MARKHAM  
I have to go to the BP Club.

MARY  
Why?

61 INT/EXT. BP CLUB. DAY.

61

JOE's POV of ALISON dancing alone. She bumps into someone and her drink slops onto the floor.

JOE  
(Leaving Tilbrook) Excuse me.

JOE joins ED.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Your wife is um...

ED  
What? My wife is what?

JOE  
She's..

ED  
What's the word you're finding so  
hard to say, Joe?

JOE  
She drinks too much.

ED  
Maybe not enough.

JOE  
She's embarrassing herself.. and  
you..

ED  
No. Not me. I'm not embarrassed.

JOE  
It's Christmas Day - I don't want  
this to..

ED  
Spit it out, Joe.

There's no way back from this now - but then HONOR and  
GEORGE arrive and HONOR sends GEORGE forward to ask JOE:

GEORGE  
Can we swim to the raft now?

JOE looks at HONOR. HONOR nods her encouragement to Joe.  
The JOE/ED moment has passed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Please.

HONOR looking to JOE to say yes. JOE smiles at GEORGE and  
they move off. HONOR has passed on George to his care. JOE  
looks at his watch. This unexpected childcare is in the way  
of meeting Martha. HONOR left alone with ED. She's  
respectful of the fact that it's a secret so she keeps her  
voice down.

HONOR  
Congratulations.

ED  
Hmm?

HONOR  
Alison told me..

She whispers in Ed's ear, delighted to be in the inner circle of knowledge and letting him know that she's in there. ED covers up his shock - he doesn't know and it's not his - and smiles at her when she steps back from the whisper. He looks over at ALISON dancing. This is going to be so hard for him.

62 EXT. BP CLUB. DAY. 62

ARMSTRONG driving MARKHAM. They arrive at the BP Club. MARKHAM heads inside. ARMSTRONG waits in the Land Rover.

63 INT. BP CLUB. DAY. 63

MARKHAM comes in. He meets and greets a few people but he's looking for Baxter. There he is. Okay. Here goes.

MARKHAM  
Baxter.

The look on his CO's face tells him..

BAXTER  
Is it my father?

MARKHAM  
I'm afraid so. Last night in his sleep. I'm so sorry.

BAXTER stands still looking down at the ground.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
We'll get you on the next flight back to RAF Lyneham.

BAXTER  
It's almost time.

He can't let the kids down.

MARKHAM  
What?

BAXTER  
I'll get changed.

MARKHAM  
Alec. You don't have to..



BAXTER

Yes, I do.

He goes.

64 INT. CORRIDOR. BP CLUB. DAY. 64

JOE walking with GEORGE. GEORGE carrying a towel with his swimming trunks rolled up inside.

GEORGE

Are you a good swimmer?

JOE looks at his watch. Three thirty. If he swims with George he won't get there for meeting Martha..

JOE

Sorry. What?

65 EXT. BP CLUB. DAY. 65

ARMSTRONG waiting in the Land Rover. YUSRA comes out of the club. She hasn't seen him. She rests her back against the wall. She looks frightened and stressed and completely unlike herself. ARMSTRONG gets out and goes towards her.

ARMSTRONG

Yusra? Yusra?

She ignores him and makes to go back inside. He catches her up. She looks at him. Fear and anger and pain in her face - he's hugely taken aback.

YUSRA

Go away. Get away from me.

66 INT. CORRIDOR. BP CLUB. DAY. 66

JOE makes a decision.

JOE

I forgot my trunks.

GEORGE

Oh.

JOE

I can't swim without trunks.

GEORGE

Oh.

JOE

Sorry. Next time, eh? It's a promise. Let's get you back.

GEORGE really disappointed. JOE turns. YUSRA.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I've disappointed him.

YUSRA

I can take you to the beach,  
George? Paddling only but better  
than nothing..

Okay. Okay. JOE ruffles GEORGE's hair and goes.

67 EXT. BALCONY. BP CLUB. DAY. 67

JOE checking where HONOR is and what she's doing. His POV of her laughing. He slips away.

67A EXT. BP CLUB. DAY. 67A

ARMSTRONG standing by the Land Rover smoking. JOE walking out of the BP Club.

ARMSTRONG stubs out his cigarette quickly in preparation for a salute and to present a less slovenly appearance for when Joe sees him - but he doesn't, he doesn't see him, he's leaving in a hurry. ARMSTRONG watches him go.

68 INT. CHANGING ROOMS. BP CLUB. DAY. 68

GEORGE and YUSRA approach the two changing rooms - a male and a female entrance next to each other. Both changing rooms lead through to the beach. YUSRA goes in the female entrance and GEORGE in the male entrance - they'll meet on the other side.

YUSRA

See you on the other side.

69 INT. CHANGING ROOM. BP CLUB. DAY. 69

GEORGE's POV of BAXTER alone sitting and smoking a cigarette. He's dressed as Father Christmas. He doesn't see GEORGE. Is he crying? He stubs out his cigarette and pulls his red hood up. GEORGE looking at him. The man in his bedroom was Baxter. Father Christmas doesn't exist. This might be the worst day of his young life - the stupid baby and his mother's betrayal of what he thought was their unique and exclusive relationship, the shocking discovery that Sergeant Baxter is Father Christmas and that therefore his father is a liar, no swimming to the raft, no Lassie. He's alone and badly let down by all of the significant others in his young life.

70 INT. BP CLUB. MAIN ROOM. DAY. 70

Here he is. It's time! BAXTER (FATHER CHRISTMAS) makes his entrance onto the temporary stage. Great effort and courage here from BAXTER. He has to perform, he has to be jolly ten minutes after discovering his father has died.

As the children form a queue to come up onto the stage to meet and get a present from Father Christmas (they know about this, they do this every year) it becomes slowly clear to MARKHAM that George is not amongst them. He sees HONOR.

MARKHAM

Where's George?

HONOR

They were going swimming.. Joe and George.

71 EXT. BALCONY. BP CLUB. DAY. 71

HONOR and MARKHAM come out onto the balcony to look out at the beach. No George and no Joe. Okay. So where is he? Now some concern.

71A EXT. CRATER. DAY. 71A

JOE getting out of a taxi.

72 EXT. BEACH. DAY. 72

MARKHAM comes out of the club onto the beach. HONOR, ED, TILBROOK and finally ALISON behind him. Searching, asking people on the beach.

73 INT. BAR IN ADEN. DAY. 73

JOE with MARTHA. Two beers.

JOE

So are you?

MARTHA

What?

JOE

Using me?

MARTHA

What did you do with the film?

JOE

Destroyed it.

MARTHA

Good.

JOE

Good?

MARTHA

It's a better story.

JOE

I don't understand.

MARTHA

The lengths the British Army will go to cover up the truth. Better, bigger..

JOE

Listen..

MARTHA

You have the right to dictate what the truth will be whilst at the same time telling full blown lies to the outside world about what's going on here? Really?

JOE

It's not that simple and you know it isn't. I'm an honest man and..

MARTHA

Did you tell your wife about where you were going on Christmas day?

He hesitates.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Are you here because you wanted to see me?

She's testing him, she knows what the honest answer is..

JOE

I'm married.

74

EXT. BP CLUB. BEACH. DAY.

74

HONOR

They were going to swim out to the raft.

The fear that they've drowned. TILBROOK strips off down to his underwear and dives into the water. They watch him swim (strongly) out to the raft and then swim round it looking; now diving all around it.

MARKHAM

Oh God.

HONOR

Joe. JOE!

MARKHAM wades into the water and starts to swim out towards the raft. ED too. TILBROOK diving and diving. BAXTER comes down the beach in full Father Christmas gear.

BAXTER

George! GEORGE!

Father Christmas wades out into the water.

HONOR

Joe said there were sharks. There are sharks. Oh God. JOE!

75

INT. BAR IN ADEN. DAY.

75

MARTHA leans in.

MARTHA

You know what I like about you? You don't know what you're doing.

JOE

What do you mean?

MARTHA

You got married to a girl you met at a dance. Maybe you liked her smell or the way she laughed and now you're spending the rest of your life with her. A smell; a laugh; a dance. She might work out - we don't know yet; we do know she's a part of your idea of yourself as a British army officer - which means having a wife who is decorous, fragrant and unlikely to cause a fuss. But here you are with me.. already looking for something more. Which is the real Joe Martin?

JOE

What are you saying?

MARTHA

I like a man who doesn't know his own mind. And if that's down to more than just youth then there's a possibility you're interesting..

JOE

Is that a compliment?

MARTHA

I didn't spend a week in a Naples hotel room with Ernest Hemingway because I was impressed by the size of his gun.

The WAITER whispers in her ear. A call for her.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I've got to go.

76 INT. BP CLUB. DAY.

76

MARKHAM has gathered everyone at the party together.  
ARMSTRONG has come in because of the brouhaha.

MARKHAM

His name is George. Most of you  
know him. He's wearing a red  
football shirt with the number  
seven on the back. Um.. If we  
could just check everywhere -  
every room. He's probably playing  
somewhere.. He was with Joe  
Martin.

ARMSTRONG

No.

They all turn to look at Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I saw Captain Martin leave.

MARKHAM

Oh. Was he..

ARMSTRONG

On his own. He was leaving on his  
own, sir.

MARKHAM

So George..

ARMSTRONG

Wasn't with him, sir.

Heightened panic.

MARKHAM

Can we.. Can we.. All look for him,  
please.

They disperse to search.

77 INT. BP CLUB. DAY.

77

HONOR looking for George. Running through the club. A frantic  
search.

78 INT. BP CLUB. DAY.

78

PARTYGOERS all return from the search of the club. HONOR  
the last to return. No joy. He's gone. ALISON goes to HONOR  
holding two drinks.

HONOR

It's my fault. I was supposed to  
look after him..

ALISON

Here. Drink this down.

She gives her a big gin. HONOR drinks it. ALISON gives her  
the second big gin.

ALISON (CONT'D)

And this.

She does as she's told.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Good girl.

HONOR

What will I say to Mary?

JOE comes in, oblivious to the panic.

JOE

What about Mary?

HONOR

Joe. Thank God. Where's George?

He doesn't know.

JOE

I haven't seen him.

HONOR

What do you mean? Where were you?  
You were with him..and..and..

JOE

I left him with Yusra.

HONOR

Where's Yusra?

Nobody knows.

TILBROOK

Harry..

MARKHAM

I have to tell her. I have to tell  
Mary.

80 INT. HOTEL ROOM. DAY. 80

MARTHA comes in fast. On her bed - a parcel.

81 INT/EXT. TAXI. DAY. 81

MARTHA in a taxi driving through Crater at high speed.

82 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 82

Mary breast feeding Peter. MARKHAM comes in and does nothing about decorum from which she knows straightaway that something big has happened and that what he's about to say is momentous.

MARKHAM

George is.. George was.. We're not sure where he is, Mary. He was there with Yusra and then.. We can't find him.

MARY stands up, still holding Peter and with one breast out.

83 INT/EXT. TAXI. DAY. 83

MARTHA in the taxi. She leans forward and asks (in Arabic) that the driver puts his foot down. The driver puts his foot down.

84 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 84

MARY thinking hard and moving about the room. Baby Peter alone and yelling.

MARY

If he was with Yusra then he's safe. They'll have gone somewhere together..

MARKHAM pacing.

MARKHAM

Where does she live?

They don't know.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Think, Mary. She must have said..

MARY

Crater, I think.

MARKHAM

Where in Crater? Come on..

She shakes her head.



MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
Jesus Christ, Mary. Why don't you  
know? Crater isn't a bloody  
village.

Then he realises he's shouting at her and he shouldn't be and  
it's not her fault.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

MARY  
Sorry.

MARKHAM  
Right. Crater.

85 EXT. BASE. DAY.

85

The whole unit together. MARKHAM briefing the men.

MARKHAM  
I'm sorry that you're out here on  
Christmas Day.. It's my boy. He  
went missing about an hour and  
half ago from the BP Club. I'm  
sure this is all a  
misunderstanding of some kind. We  
think he may have gone off with  
the local woman who.. Her name is  
Yusra. We need to find her.  
Quickly. But we don't know where  
she lives. Somewhere in Crater.  
I'm asking for your help.

The camera on ARMSTRONG. The taxi at the gate. It stops.  
MARTHA gets out and walks into the base. JOE goes over to  
her.

MARTHA  
The call was anonymous. An Arab  
man with good English identifying  
himself as NLF. The parcel was on  
my bed in my room. This was  
inside.

She holds up the number seven football shirt George was  
wearing. On MARKHAM.

86 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. SITTING ROOM. DAY.

86

ALISON and HONOR with MARY. MARKHAM comes in. All three women  
look at him.

MARKHAM  
They've taken our boy. They've got  
George.

86A EXT. BASE. DAY.

86A

MARTHA and JOE on the base.

JOE

Why you?

MARTHA

I'm just the messenger. They always use reporters for this.

JOE

But why you and not another reporter?

MARTHA

There are no Swiss journalists covering this war. I'm the next most neutral thing..

JOE

A six year old boy has been kidnapped.

MARTHA

And where were you when it happened?

She looks at him steadily.

87 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. BEDROOM. EVENING.

87

MARY holding the number seven shirt up to her face. MARKHAM at the door.

MARKHAM

Mary..

She turns and looks at him.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

The shirt. It's evidence. I need it back.

She looks at the shirt and sees that she is holding it very, very tight in her fists. She keeps looking at it as MARKHAM crosses the floor to her. A long beat. He looks down at the shirt. A long beat. She loosens her grip.

88 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. EVENING.

88

ALISON holding baby PETER opens the door to DOCTOR AMERY.

AMERY

Where is she?

89

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. BEDROOM. EVENING.

89

AMERY comes in. MARKHAM goes.

AMERY

I want you to lie down, Mary.

MARY

Why?

AMERY

I'm going to give you a sedative.

MARY

Why?

AMERY

Because you're in shock and this will help..

MARY

Help?

AMERY

Yes.

MARY

You mean it will make me sleepy.

AMERY

Yes. The men are..

MARY

I can't be sleepy. My son is out there. I have to think. I have to work it out. I'm his mother.

AMERY

It's your choice, Mary.

MARY

Yes, it is.

ALISON and HONOR at the bedroom door. Without thinking, without anything more than just being, they're holding hands.

90

EXT. BASE. EVENING.

90

The men preparing (hurried) to go out. MARKHAM coming from the Married Quarters. He passes JOE and hands him George's neatly folded football shirt. MARKHAM walks over to BAXTER.

MARKHAM

You've got your flight home, Baxter?

BAXTER

I'm not going, sir.

MARKHAM

Go home. That's an order. Your father..

BAXTER

My father's dead - I can't do anything for him now. But your George.. he has his whole life to live. We're going to find him.

MARKHAM

Are you disobeying my order?

A really huge moment for Baxter.

BAXTER

Yes, sir. I am. I'm leaving Orchover here at base to be with you. Permission to lead the search of Crater, sir?

MARKHAM

Permission granted.

MARKHAM walks smartly across the compound. It's almost a march. He's marching so that he doesn't fall apart. If he can just keep doing the things he does, if he can just keep being a soldier..

91

OMITTED

91

92

INT. BARRACKS. EVENING.

92

MARKHAM with ORCHOVER.

ORCHOVER

Sir, you don't have to..

MARKHAM

It's 1930 hours. I'm sorry I'm half an hour late, Corporal.

ORCHOVER

I understand, sir.

MARKHAM

These corners are .. they're the best I've seen.

A beat. MARKHAM's hand on one of the bed corners for a moment in which he buys the time to hold himself together.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Every year?

ORCHOVER

Yes, sir.

MARKHAM

Without fail?

ORCHOVER

Sir.

Sam Brown belt, shoes and cap are all laid out at the foot of the bed. MARKHAM looks at each in turn.

Heroic, in its way. Each item provides him with the prop to keep from breaking down. If he can only keep doing what he's doing, being a soldier..

MARKHAM

Sam Brown - perfect.

ORCHOVER

Sir.

MARKHAM

Shoes..

He doesn't trust himself to speak more. Speaking another word will mean he cracks. MARKHAM picks up the red cap very carefully. He holds the cap in both hands the better to look at the shine on the cap brim.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

He wants to be a Military  
Policeman when he grows up.

ORCHOVER

Then he will be, sir.

MARKHAM holds onto the cap with both hands, it's not the shine he's looking for now; he's holding on for dear life to the red cap, to Orchover's words, to the last of his own emotional control, to his deep, deep love for his missing boy, to his life.