

THE LAST POST

By Peter Moffat

Episode Four

Yellow Revisions

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Bonafide Films | The Forge Entertainment

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1 EXT. ADEN. VARIOUS. DAWN. DAY SIX. 1

Sandstorm establishes:

A - The married quarters. A window latch in George's room is catching on a breeze.

B - Trees are blown by a strong wind.

C - We see a sand storm building in the desert, rolling across the landscape.

D - We see the sandstorm clouds encroaching on the Military Base.

E - Sand filters through the grating in the Married quarters breeze blocks.

F - The voile on the window is whipped up by the wind. George's window is now open and sand is coming through into the room. MARY enters and closes the window. She stares at the sandstorm raging outside.

G - Macro close up of George's toy army figurines on the floor in mock combat shrouded in a light smattering of sand.

2 EXT. ROAD INTO CRATER. EARLY MORNING. BOXING DAY. DAWN. 2

The sand storm through which (sound first, then headlights, and finally the outline of the actual vehicles) three Land Rovers in convoy come towards the camera. Visibility poor, occasionally dreadful.

3 INT/EXT. LAND ROVER. ROAD INTO CRATER. DAWN. 3

BAXTER driving the lead Land Rover. He's very, very focused. ORCHOVER glances at him.

4 INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. MARKHAM FLAT. DAWN. 4

MARY standing alone in her son's bedroom her arms wrapped around herself. His empty Christmas stocking hanging at the end of the bed. The sounds of the sandstorm outside.

5 OMITTED 5

6 INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAWN. 6

JOE and ED waiting by radio. MARKHAM pacing. JOE and ED exchange a look.

JOE
Sir?

MARKHAM
Hmm?

JOE
You've been up all night. You
should go home and be with Mary. As
soon as we hear anything..

MARKHAM nods as if in agreement but then doesn't go anywhere.
ED and JOE exchange another look.

JOE (CONT'D)
Sir..

MARKHAM
I didn't want him to go..

ED
It was the BP Club. You couldn't
have known a thing like this would
happen..

MARKHAM
I'm an officer in the British army;
I'm a military policeman to my
core.. and I'm a father. That's who
I am. It's what I'm for. And I let
this happen.

JOE
Sir? Mrs M..

7

INT/EXT. LAND ROVER. ROAD INTO CRATER. DAWN.

7

BAXTER driving fast, belting into Crater through the sandstorm. This is mad - the visibility is really poor. STONEHAM looks at ORCHOVER - concerned about the speed. ARMSTRONG deep in his own thoughts, a worried man.

ORCHOVER
Slow down maybe, Sarge?

BAXTER
I know my way into Crater.

He actually speeds up - which is very dangerous. He glances in the rearview mirror at a distracted ARMSTRONG. ORCHOVER watching him - concern for his Sergeant.

8

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

8

MARY looking under pillows, then under the bed (both sides, right under, down on her belly to see properly) then pulling off George's sheets. She's looking for Green Teddy. MARKHAM at the door behind her.

MARKHAM

Mary..?

MARY

Where's Green Teddy?

She doesn't stop her search. This matters.

MARKHAM

I don't know..

He thinks this search for a teddy bear is a manic emotional response in her to what has happened and he takes a step towards her to ..

MARY

Did he take him?

MARKHAM

We have to try and..

MARY

(Interrupting, keeping her impatience out of her voice, but insisting he answer her question)
When he went to the BP Club did George have Green Teddy?

Saying the name of her son and his favourite bear really isn't easy and it's all she can do not to break down which feeds his view of Mary's behaviour as a fixing on the teddy as a transference way of dealing with the horror of what's happening..

MARKHAM

Mary..

She has a serious point she's trying to get to here and she's frustrated that her own emotions and his misinterpretation of them are getting in the way of communicating it and she wishes like hell he'd bloody well understand her.. She steadies herself, pulls herself back in.

MARY

Please tell me darling the answer to my question.

MARKHAM

I don't think he had Green Teddy.

MARY

George didn't take him; neither of us have moved him...

MARKHAM

(Finishing the thought) Yusra.

MARY

What do you think is happening to
him right now?

MARKHAM

I don't know..

MARY

But what do you think? Harry?

Too painful to imagine.

MARY (CONT'D)

How could I have been so wrong
about Yusra?

MARKHAM

She's been tricking you.. She
gained our trust.. she got close to
George.. so that... so that..

A long beat. Neither parent is able to speak here for fear
that they'll break down. MARY is the first to regather her
faltering composure.

MARY

She was laughing once about her
little brother being naughty..

He doesn't understand yet where she's going with this.

MARKHAM

That's a part of it. She wanted to
make you think her family life..

MARY

Under a market stall, she said. He
ran from their house to get away
from their mother.. and hid under a
stall in the market.

Now MARKHAM's policeman's brain clicks in, he sees what she's
thinking and he helps her thought process along.

MARKHAM

In Crater?

MARY

Yes.

MARKHAM

Which market?

She doesn't know.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Did she say what kind of..

She's thinking.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
A stall selling what? Think. Did
she say?

MARY
Oranges..?

MARKHAM
Think, Mary.

MARY
She said oranges.

9 EXT/INT. LAND ROVER. CRATER. DAY.

9

BAXTER driving almost blind. They hit something. They don't stop. What was that? A stone. Not sure. BAXTER isn't stopping. STONEHAM looks to ORCHOVER for reassurance. The radio crackles into life.

JOE ON RADIO (V.O.)
*Kilo One Charlie, this is Oscar
Three Mike, over.*

ARMSTRONG
(On the radio) Hello Oscar Three
Mike, this is Kilo One Charlie,
over.

Incoming radio message.

JOE ON RADIO (V.O.)
*Oscar Three Mike. Sparrow
identified, south of fruit market,
over.*

ARMSTRONG
(On the radio) Kilo One Charlie.
Roger, over.

JOE ON RADIO (V.O.)
Out.

ARMSTRONG relaying what's said:

ARMSTRONG
The streets immediately south of
the fruit market.

ORCHOVER
The Royal Scots are covering that
sector.

BAXTER makes a decision and swerves the Land Rover suddenly. A big change of direction. The RMP will be searching this zone now as well.

BAXTER
Change of plan.

10 INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

10

MARY looking at George's clothes in a drawer. She adjusts a T shirt on top of a very neat pile of T shirts so that the fold is a little more perfect. Then she has a thought and she pulls out a red T-shirt from the bottom of the pile, now completely disregarding the neatness of his T-shirt pile.

11 INT. LIVING ROOM. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

11

MARKHAM into the doorway. His POV of MARY working at her sewing machine with intense focus and concentration, her back to him.

12

EXT. LAND ROVER. CRATER. DAY.

12

BAXTER, pumped up - jumps out of the Land Rover. The men follow and all run to a tree in the market place for cover. They hunker down in a tight group (they're all squatting) around BAXTER to listen to him. He has his scarf pulled down to speak; all the men have their scarves pulled up over their mouths. He has to shout to be heard:

BAXTER

Every kidnapping is the same - the longer you go without finding the victim the worse your chances of finding them alive become. I'm telling you this once. Don't not hear me. Six streets running south from the market. I want six pairs - a street each. Door to door, no knocking and waiting, we're in fast. I don't want anyone inside having a second to think. Have you got that?

ALL

Sir.

BAXTER

This is the CO's boy. We have to bring him home.

This was intended as motivating but it comes out as much closer to personal feeling and as such, it surprises him and the men. The men watch their sergeant to see how the next thing he says will come out. The emotion still there in his voice in the next line.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Have you got that!?

ALL

SIR!

BAXTER

(Instructing Orchover) Corporal - two's please.

ORCHOVER organizing the ten men (Orchover plus Baxter makes twelve in total) into pairs. ARMSTRONG and STONEHAM are the last two remaining when ARMSTRONG approaches BAXTER.

ARMSTRONG

Yusra and George were more like friends than..

BAXTER

That woman is in on it and you better start getting your soft head round it, Armstrong.

ORCHOVER grabs a private word with BAXTER.

ORCHOVER

Their comms are down - The Royal Scots. So they won't know we're in there with them.

BAXTER

Thank you, Corporal.

ORCHOVER

Which in these conditions, with this visibility, makes what we're doing..

BAXTER

(Shouted) He's six years old and he's out there with men who cut off Chris Dimarco's head and put it on a stake. And you want me to slow down?

(To ALL) Let's go. Go go go go.

ORCHOVER really worried about this and about Baxter.

13

EXT. CRATER. STREET. DAY.

13

ARMSTRONG and STONEHAM about to head down their designated street together. ARMSTRONG treads on a rotten orange. Stoneham glances over at BAXTER (who is with ORCHOVER) heading for the entrance to the next street along.

ARMSTRONG

Watch out for men in kilts with Sterling submachine guns.

They approach the first dwelling the entrance to which is more like a cave than a doorway. The entrance at street level, the dwelling itself below street level. Sand bags blocking the open door-less doorway. STONEHAM pulls a sand bag away. A shout from inside. STONEHAM pulls another sand bag away. Angry shouts from inside. STONEHAM is frightened, which makes him aggressive. Baxter's adrenalin has rubbed off on Stoneham.

STONEHAM

Shit. Shit. Shit.

He kicks the sandbags in instead of pulling them out. His POV inside. An OLD MAN with a whole herd of goats sheltering from the sandstorm. Two weird POV's: the two soldiers POV of goats; the goats POV of two goggled heads looking in at them. STONEHAM looks at ARMSTRONG. ARMSTRONG shakes his head - they don't need to search this place. They move on.

14

INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

14

HONOR stirring cake mix referring to the notebook given to her by her mother - a guide to being a housewife - included in which is this war-time recipe for curdle cake made from sour milk, flour, raisins. JOE - he's been back to change - is about to go.

JOE

I have to talk to you about what happened at the BP Club. I mean what you saw in the minutes leading up to..

HONOR

I didn't know where you were..

JOE

Time is really, really short, Honor. I have to ask you these questions now so we can build a picture of whether club staff were involved..

HONOR

What was so important that you couldn't take George swimming? You promised him..

JOE

I had to go and speak to someone.

HONOR

Who?

JOE

That reporter.

HONOR

On Christmas day? I don't understand.

JOE

We have a small child to find. I haven't got time for..

HONOR

You were at the party and then you just went without telling me.. like I didn't.. like I don't exist. Am I doing something wrong, Joe?

JOE

(Losing patience, angry) All right. You want the answer? Here's your answer..

HONOR

Joe..

JOE

Photographs of Corporal Dimarco.

HONOR

What what what what photographs?

JOE

(Shouts) Of his head. On a stake.
His head jammed on the end of a
stake. Do you know what that looks
like? Can you imagine?

She recoils in horror at the image and at his cruelty here.

HONOR

I'm sorry.

JOE

I had to get them back and I had to
destroy them..

HONOR

I thought you'd drowned. I thought
my husband had died.

JOE

I can't ask permission from my wife
for everything I do.

HONOR

No. But why are you so far away
from me, Joe? What's happened? I
thought we were happy.

A beat. She looks at him. He has to say something.. but he
doesn't.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Is it me, Joe? (A beat)
Is it you?

The second question is the one. It's brave and it hits him
hard. She recognizes its impact.

ED looking at ALISON sitting fighting silently something.
She's not made up; her hair is down, loose. ED hovers at the
door, hoping to engage, looking for a way in. He loves her.
She doesn't look available for comment.

ED

I'm going back.

No response from ALISON. He goes. She goes very fast to the sink the moment he's gone. She's going to be sick. That's what she's been fighting. She gets to the sink. She's sick.

16 INT. KITCHEN. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

16

HONOR putting the cake into the oven. She's forgotten to turn the oven on. She turns the oven on. She doesn't know if she should put the cake in now or wait for the oven to heat up. She puts the cake in.

17 INT. BATHROOM. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

17

ALISON hangs over the bath using a hand held shower attachment to shower her face and hair. Her dress and the bathroom floor are getting wet - about which she cares not at all. She has a bottle of gin in her other hand. She's sick again - into the bath. She drinks from the bottle of gin - a drink and a rinse of the mouth. She stops still; she goes very still. Damp and desolate on the bathroom floor with a bottle of gin as her only support. This is too much. It's much too much.

18 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

18

HONOR moves through the flat. She feels alone. She stops at the wardrobe in the bedroom. She opens it and looks at her husband's uniform shirts. Who is he? Who is this man she's married? Her eye catches something inside the collar of a shirt. She looks at it more closely. A name tape sewn in to the shirt. JOE MARTIN. His name in all his shirts.

19 INT. KITCHEN. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

19

ALISON comes in and opens the bottom cupboard of a sideboard. Her hair and the front of her dress still wet. She pulls out a basket of sewing and knitting. She selects a knitting needle.

20 INT. KITCHEN. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

20

ALISON, holding the knitting needle, boils a kettle. She holds the knitting needle in the steam from the kettle. Then she pours gin straight from the bottle over the needle too. She doesn't register/care that the gin splashes everywhere.

21 INT. SITTING ROOM. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

21

ALISON comes in. Knitting needle in one hand, bottle of gin in the other. She sits down on the front edge of a chair. She looks over at the record player. She goes over to the record player. She picks up the Ketty Lester 45. With great love and care and in total contrast to her slapdashery in the last few minutes she uses the front of her dress (taking the dress to the record, not the other way round) to wipe away the sand that has gathered on the vinyl. She picks up the stylus, a pause, then blows it clean.

Holding the record between her palms, she places it on the turntable. The crackle of vinyl before the song starts. She looks back at the chair.

22 INT. BEDROOM. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

22

MARY sewing. High intensity sewing. Like it's the last thing she'll do. Ketty Lester from the Laithwaite quarters.

23 INT. SITTING ROOM. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

23

ALISON on the front edge of the chair holding the knitting needle. She takes a long pull on the gin (eyes shut) and puts the bottle down. A beat. She lets her legs fall apart. She pulls up her dress. "I memorise every line.. I kiss the name that you sign.." She turns the knitting needle round so that the sharp end is towards her.

No. She can't. She won't. She closes her eyes which forces the tears that have been forming in her eyes to sprinck out and roll down her face. The record ends. The turntable turns, the needle lifts and auto clicks back to its rest. ALISON goes over to the record player and smashes it up - she loved him so much and now he's left her with a baby and deep unhappiness and no way out.

24 INT/EXT. CRATER. DAY.

24

Bang. BAXTER bashes through a door. Dark inside. No artificial light. Empty. ORCHOVER follows him in. Anybody there? Probably not. Derelict? Probably. BAXTER sweeps the only room. Tense, unsettling. The wind whipping around outside. Strange sound. Done.

BAXTER

Clear.

And they're out. The sand tunnelling down the street straight into their faces. ORCHOVER pulls his scarf higher up his face and goes after BAXTER, who is on the cusp between extreme focus and manic possession.

25 EXT/INT. DWELLING/STREET. CRATER. DAY.

25

STONEHAM and ARMSTRONG come in to a home.

STONEHAM

Yusra. Yusra?

The two WOMEN inside look blank. They don't understand him. STONEHAM looks to ARMSTRONG to step in. ARMSTRONG pronounces the name properly:

ARMSTRONG

(Arabic) **Yusra? Hal tarif yusra?**
 [Yusra? Do you know Yusra?]

The WOMEN understand. They shake their heads at the same time - which feels like it might represent a lie. But they (the two soldiers) move out and on.

26

INT. DWELLING. CRATER. DAY.

26

An OLD MAN, a COUPLE and their teenage SON. A pot on a primitive stove on the floor. BAXTER crashes in. Large men in battle dress, goggles and scarves, with rifles - a terrifying vision. BAXTER still pumped. Speed speed speed. The door swinging open behind them.

BAXTER

Don't move. Stay there.

The door banging on its hinges. ORCHOVER behind him, pulls his scarf down and goggles up to show his face to the terrified people. ORCHOVER commences search. The wind and sand coming in through the open door. The OLD MAN starts to stand..

BAXTER (CONT'D)

I said don't move.

The OLD MAN says something inaudible and unintelligible. He's not sitting down. The sand is getting into the cooking.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Sit down.

OLD MAN

(Arabic) **Low samaht bannid al bab.**
[Please close the door.]

BAXTER

What's he saying? Yusra? Where's Yusra? Sit down.

OLD MAN

(Arabic) **Low somaht. Al bab.**
[Please. The door.]

The MAN starts to get up because he's worried about his father and what might happen with this pumped up soldier. BAXTER points his weapon at his chest.

BAXTER

Sit down.

ORCHOVER

Steady, Sarge.

SON

(Arabic) **Aysh tishti?**
[What do you want?]

Now all three men (OLD MAN, MAN and SON) are on their feet.

BAXTER

SIT DOWN!

ORCHOVER
Sarge..

This is close to breaking point. The OLD MAN won't drop it.

BAXTER
Don't move!

The OLD MAN looking at the door. ORCHOVER steps in:

ORCHOVER
I think he wants us to close the
door. The sand..

They're done here anyway.

BAXTER
Let's go.

And he's out. ORCHOVER after him - closing the door as he goes.

27 EXT. STREET. CRATER. DAY.

27

ORCHOVER down the street after BAXTER. BAXTER fast into the next dwelling.

28 EXT. CRATER. DAY.

28

STONEHAM with ARMSTRONG into Yusra's home. They don't know that this is her home.

STONEHAM
Yusra?

A WOMAN and MAN (Yusra's mother and father) and a twelve year old BOY (Yusra's brother) affect ignorance.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)
Do you know Yusra?

The MAN lies - he shrugs and pretend he doesn't know who this is. The WOMAN stares at the ground. The BOY keeps his gaze fixed on his mother. This doesn't feel right. ARMSTRONG can tell this isn't right.

STONEHAM searches the premises. In a small room off the main living space a mattress on the floor and another (smaller) mattress next to it. A doorway between the two rooms, but no door. On ARMSTRONG who has remained in the main living space watching the occupants - a quick glance towards the second room. Stoneham has been longer than it should take to search the room. ARMSTRONG also realizes that he's not moving in there in the dark.

ARMSTRONG
Stoneham?

No response.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
Stoneham.

ARMSTRONG edges towards the doorway between the two rooms whilst keeping an eye and his weapon on this jumpy seeming family. He peers into the dark. His trepidation as to what is in there. STONEHAM standing with his back to Armstrong and the door staring down at the smaller mattress. Dim light. What has he found? ARMSTRONG can't go in and leave the jumpy family unguarded.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
What is it?

STONEHAM
(Barely audible) It's his.

What?

ARMSTRONG
What?

STONEHAM bends down slowly, picks something up with great care, pauses, then turns and shows ARMSTRONG what he's holding: Green Teddy. ARMSTRONG looks at the family. Suddenly - on seeing the bear - they've all got a whole lot to say and are very animated and talking fast, the WOMAN the loudest.

WOMAN
(Arabic) **Akadoo al walad. Akadoo al walad.**
[They've taken the boy. They've taken the boy.]

MAN is telling her to be quiet but she ignores him.

ARMSTRONG
Slow down. (Arabic) **Dala dala.**
[Slow down.]

STONEHAM on the radio for back up.

STONEHAM
(On the radio) Yankee Two Golf this is Whisky Three Tango. Immediate back up requested. Over.

ARMSTRONG trying to understand what they (the family) are on about.. STONEHAM on the radio while Armstrong is trying to get to the bottom of what's going on - a lot of noise, confusion and emotion all at once. The WOMAN trying to explain the same thing and the MAN really not happy about her doing this and it's all getting out of control..

ORCHOVER ON RADIO (V.O.)
Whisky Three Tango this is Yankee
Two Golf. Wilco, over.

STONEHAM
(On the radio) Whisky Three Tango.
Sparrow's nest identified. Ready to
copy, over

ORCHOVER on RADIO (V.O.)
Yankee Two Golf, Affirmative, over.

STONEHAM
(On the radio) Whisky Three Tango.
Third down on left. Street from
south entrance market, over.

ORCHOVER ON RADIO (V.O.)
Yankee Two Golf. Watchdogs
despatched. Request numbers in
house, over.

The WOMAN insistent appealing to Armstrong trying to get him to understand that her boy has been taken. ARMSTRONG wants STONEHAM to hang on/slow down so he can try and make out what the family are yelling about. The next two speeches on top of each other.

ARMSTRONG

I'm trying to hear what they're saying, Stoneham.. Be quiet, will you?

STONEHAM

(On radio) Whisky Three Tango. Two adults - one male, one female, and their son. Over.

ORCHOVER ON RADIO (V.O.)

Yankee Two Golf. Watchdogs one minute away. Confirm Sparrow or Target present, over.

STONEHAM

(On radio) Whisky Three Tango. Negative. Just get here, can you? Out.

STONEHAM off the radio, turns to ARMSTRONG.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)

They're one minute out.

WOMAN

(Arabic, slowing down, clearer)

Akadoo al walad.

[They've taken the boy.]

ARMSTRONG

(Arabic) **Al walad..**

[The boy..]

She nods.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

The boy.

WOMAN

(Arabic) **Akadoo al walad.**

[They've taken the boy.]

ARMSTRONG

(Translating) They've taken the boy.

BAXTER bursts in with ORCHOVER and two MP's.

BAXTER

What's happening? Talk to me.

Neither ARMSTRONG nor STONEHAM respond immediately so BAXTER - very focused and full of adrenalin - takes over. He grabs Green Teddy from STONEHAM and thrusts it at the family. The BOY is crying with fear. There are a lot of big men with big guns in a small space.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

How did you get this? Was George here? George? Where is he? Where the hell is he?

The BOY really crying now. BAXTER capable of anything. The temperature in the room through the roof.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Shut up. Get him to shut up. WILL
YOU PLEASE SHUT UP.

The MAN (terrified of Baxter) makes a run for it. He's out the door and away into the sand-blindness outside.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Go. Go.

The TWO MP's go after him. The WOMAN now hysterical.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Where's Yusra? Are you her family?
Yusra?

WOMAN

(Arabic) **Akhadoooh.**
[They've taken him.]

BAXTER

(To Armstrong) What's she saying,
Armstrong? What does she keep
saying?

ARMSTRONG

"They've got the boy..."

BAXTER makes a decision.

BAXTER

We're bringing them in. Let's go.

STONEHAM and ORCHOVER usher the mother and son to the door. ARMSTRONG trying to cajole Yusra's mother into coming quietly.

ARMSTRONG

(Arabic) **Ta-al. Argook. Ta-al.**
[Come. Please. Come.]

She doesn't want to leave - her youngest son has been taken from her and she knows she has to stay here.

WOMAN

(Arabic) **Ibni! Ibni! Ibni!**
[My son. My son. My son.]

She's literally clinging on to the door. This has become a really disturbing scene.

BAXTER

Get her fingers off the door,
Armstrong..

ARMSTRONG hesitates.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Just do it, man.

ARMSTRONG tries to prise her fingers away from the door frame. He doesn't want to hurt her; he has to do it; he really doesn't want to hurt her; it's not happening. BAXTER steps in, grabs her by the wrists and pulls hard downwards. Her grip is lost. She screams.

29 EXT. STREET. CRATER. DAY.

29

MAN running. Two MP's chasing. Heavy dust in the air. Visibility very poor. A soldier at the end of the street steps out - a private in The Royal Scots weapon raised. Barely visible. He shouts a warning. The MAN keeps running. A shot.

30 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

30

MARY looks up from sewing. The sand storm is over. She stands up. She's finished sewing. She carries the red T-shirt into George's bedroom. She lays it out on the bed, the back of the T-shirt facing upwards so that we see for the first time (and when George comes home and walks back into his bedroom it's the first thing he'll see) there's a perfect number eight on the back.

31 INT. KITCHEN. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

31

Honor can't get the cake out of the baking tin. She turns it upside down and then shakes it. No. She bangs the bottom of the baking tin. No. It won't budge. Nothing in her mother's make do and mend book on this.

32 INT. BEDROOM. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

32

ALISON lying flat on her back. The same (still damp) dress. Her hands clasped on her chest. She looks like an alabaster saint in the crypt of a cathedral.

A loud knock at the door. ALISON ignores it. Another, louder knock. ALISON turns her head. A long beat. Will she answer it?

33 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

33

HONOR at the door. Oven gloves; sleeveless polka dot dress; warm cake in baking tin, smile. The perfect 1950's housewife. ALISON looks at her.

HONOR

I've baked a cake for Mary.

ALISON looks at her friend in all her pretty, willing innocence, holding a cake for goodness sake. Here is life. Here is the opposite of death.

HONOR (CONT'D)
 I can't get it out of the baking
 tin.

ALISON doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. Both are likely.

ALISON
 You're an angel.

34 INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY.

34

ARMSTRONG ON RADIO (V.O.)
Oscar Three Mike. This is Kilo One Charlie. Mother plus brother Sparrow detained, over.

JOE
 (On the radio) Kilo One Charlie.
 This is Oscar Three Mike. Roger,
 out.

ED pacing. JOE comes off the radio.

JOE (CONT'D)
 Yusra's family.

ED nods.

JOE (CONT'D)
 All leave is cancelled; I've set a curfew for off duty personnel and all dependents at 1800 hours.

ED
 (To himself but intended to be heard) "Personnel.."

JOE
 What?

ED
 The army gets formal in an emergency.

JOE
 Language has to be accurate and precise so nobody misunderstands anything.

ED
 "Dependents.." Alison? Dependent?

JOE
 What's the word you'd use? [to describe your wife?]

The radio.

ARMSTRONG ON RADIO (V.O.)
Oscar Three Mike. This is Kilo One
Charlie. Father Sparrow down. CDK
fire. Now five minutes away, over.

JOE
(On the radio) Kilo One Charlie.
Roger, Out.

JOE turns to ED.

JOE (CONT'D)
Civilian fatality. Yusra's father.
It wasn't us - Royal Scots.

ED nods, thinking, working on the complexity of all this.

JOE (CONT'D)
They're five minutes out. We should
let the CO know.

ED
Have you seen Mary Markham?

JOE
Late last night.

ED
How is she?

JOE
She made me a cup of tea. And
apologized for the powdered milk.
They're remarkable - both of them.
Really.. strong.

ED
You think?

JOE
What do you mean?

ED
The stiffer the upper lip the
wobblier the lower one.

JOE
You could call it backbone. You
could call it the courage to lead
from the front.

ED
How old are you?

JOE
Why?

ED
Just thinking about the life
experience of our new acting CO.

JOE
Major Markham remains in command.

ED

But you've set up a curfew and the
Crater search unit is reporting to
you..

A beat.

JOE

Happy to receive advice,
Laithwaite.

ED

Happy to offer it. Call me Ed.

35 INT. BEDROOM. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

35

MARY feeding Peter because babies need feeding, life goes on for babies. Peter looking right into her eyes.

MARY

You don't know, do you? You don't even know he exists. He's your brother. He's funny, he's naughty, he's your lovely, big.. very brave.. brother..

Voices in the hall.

36 INT. HALLWAY. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

36

Two men in SUITS have come to collect MARKHAM.

MARKHAM

Where are we going?

SUIT

We can't tell you that.

MARKHAM

Give me a moment.

He heads for the bedroom.

37 INT. BEDROOM. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

37

MARKHAM comes in, pauses, then crosses the floor to his wife. The SUITS behind him in the doorway to encourage brevity. He reaches her. She's still breast feeding.

MARKHAM

I have to go.. They want me now.

Here's his re-assurance, his support, the best words he can think of at this worst of all moments in their life together:

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

We're good at this.

The inadequacy of what he's said (does he mean the British army or them as a couple, or both?) registers on her face in a just discernible way, which in Mary (so good at keeping bad things entirely hidden) feels like a very big deal, before she gathers herself and brave-smiles her agreement. Then (deep down somewhere he knows the words have not been enough) he puts an awkward hand on her shoulder. The gesture is too stiff, too male, too little and he knows it but there's nowhere to go, he can't turn this hopelessly inadequate contact into anything better, without a profound readjustment of his whole relationship with the physical world and his present bodily position because she's sitting, so what would he do? Hug her head? With two men in suits looking on? All he can do is tighten the squeeze of his hand on her shoulder. It actually hurts her a little. The SUITS avert their gaze as SUITS do. MARKHAM takes his hand off his wife's shoulder and brings it down to his side. She forgives him his hopelessness.

38

INT. HALLWAY. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

38

MARKHAM and the SUITS heading for the front door. MARKHAM stops for a moment looking into the sitting room at the Christmas tree. He makes a decision. He goes in. He goes up to the tree. He straightens a bauble that's hanging askew. He comes back into the hallway and nods his readiness. They go. The door shuts. Five seconds in the silence of the empty hallway in which we are left to imagine Mary's pain.

39

INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

39

ALISON and HONOR with the problem of the cake. ALISON holding it upside down, tapping the bottom of the baking tin.

HONOR

It's a make do and mend recipe from the war. It's called curdle cake because the milk is curdled. My mother put it in the book for me.

ALISON

The book?

HONOR

How to be a good housewife.

ALISON

You miss her, don't you?

Yes.

HONOR

Has Ed ever lied to you?

ALISON

All the time. Not meaningfully.

HONOR
Have you lied to him?

ALISON bangs the bottom of the cake tin hard.

ALISON
This cake really doesn't want to
come out.

HONOR and ALISON study the intransigent, unmoved cake.

HONOR
Mary will know..

40 EXT. PARADE GROUND. BASE. DAY.

40

The RMP Land Rovers have returned from Crater. From the first Land Rover, Baxter and Orchover emerge with Yusra's mum and son (plus 2x extra RMP from raid scene). They take the family inside. Armstrong and Stoneham step out from the second Land Rover. In the background RMP soldiers fortifying the base - chicken wire, barbed wire.

MARKHAM being shown to a black saloon car. MARKHAM sees Yusra's family being taken from Land Rover to the guard room. ARMSTRONG peels off and heads for his quarters. BAXTER comes over to MARKHAM. ED and JOE out to see all this happening.

JOE
Who's with the CO?

ED
High Commission?

JOE looking at Yusra's family.

JOE
They don't know. They haven't been told about the father. Do we tell them?

ED
If we do - we can't question them.

BAXTER showing MARKHAM Green Teddy. Markham's head bows looking down at the bear. This lowering of the head gives ED and JOE the answer to their dilemma.

JOE
The father is dead - they'll know soon enough. George is probably alive and they're our only line of inquiry.

BAXTER with MARKHAM.

BAXTER

These people will talk, sir. I know they will. An interpreter's on the way.

MARKHAM

Use Ed. Let's get on with it. Use Lieutenant Laithwaite.

The SUITS want to get going.

SUIT

Major Markham..

MARKHAM hands Green Teddy back.

BAXTER

Where are you going, sir?

MARKHAM

Hush hush.

BAXTER nods, impressed.

BAXTER

Good.

MARKHAM nodding (so anxious for any positive slant) before he has processed why this might be positive then he realizes he doesn't know why he's nodding.

MARKHAM

Why?

BAXTER

It's obviously coming from the top.

Looks over at the two SUITS. Smart suits, smart looking men, not flunkies, which makes their escort role all the more curious and - Markham hopes - might mean Baxter is right.

MARKHAM

We're good at this.

BAXTER nods his support for and belief in this and MARKHAM is helped to feel better by this affirmation.

MARY with baby PETER in one arm opens the door to HONOR and ALISON. ALISON holding the cake in its baking tin in one hand and not upright - there's no chance of it falling out of the tin.

HONOR

We brought you a cake.

ALISON

From the 1940's. When everything was better - apart from the Nazis and the revolting food. We thought it might help you get over your missing child.

ALISON is good for MARY. MARY knows this - she's so different from Alison but here, now, absence of bullshit is absolutely the right thing.

42

INT. BARRACKS. BASE. DAY.

42

ARMSTRONG comes in fast. He gets the letter from Yusra that she directed him not to read before Christmas out from the bottom of his locker. It's the first chance he's had to do this. He opens the envelope and reads the letter. The handwriting is in English - a mix of capitals and lower case:

"Sorry. Please forget me. Yusra."

ARMSTRONG sits, staring at the letter. Noises off. STONEHAM coming in ahead of others. He takes his shirt off to shake the sand out of it. ARMSTRONG hides the letter. STONEHAM sits on the edge of his bunk.

STONEHAM

Do you think he's dead?

ARMSTRONG

No.

STONEHAM

Are you just saying that?

ARMSTRONG

No.

STONEHAM

You'd taken a shine to her, hadn't you?

ARMSTRONG doesn't respond. A long beat. ARMSTRONG shifts his position on the bunk.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)

I got lost on the beach at St Ives once.

ARMSTRONG

What happened?

STONEHAM

They found me.

ORCHOVER comes in, unrolling sand from his sleeves. He puts some gear in his locker and picks up a broom to clean up the sand.

ORCHOVER

Six year old's are tough.
Resilient. Adaptable.

ORCHOVER goes.

ARMSTRONG

How?

STONEHAM

When I got lost I was eating fish and chips. Loads of sea gulls were dive bombing me like Stukas because I was crying so much and dropping the chips - so the whole beach came to my rescue. It's funny what you remember - I don't remember the sea gulls.. or being reunited with mum and dad. But I do remember the feeling of being lost.

He's back there in the moment. He's a lost five year old.

43

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE INTERVIEW ROOM. BASE. DAY.

43

ED interrogating Yusra's mother and brother in Arabic. Quiet, studied. The mother seems to trust him - and she's talking. BAXTER looking on through a window into the interview room. JOE joins him and looks on.

JOE

I'm sorry about your father,
Baxter.

BAXTER doesn't look at him, staying focused on the interview, (willing Ed to be more direct and aggressive) so as to not think about his father, his loss, the grief he's hiding.

BAXTER

Come on.

ED comes out of the interview room and reports to JOE and BAXTER.

ED

Her little boy has been taken too.
By the NLF. Yusra's with them.

JOE

She's in on it?

ED

It looks that way.

BAXTER

Why would they take the little brother?

JOE

To make sure the family keep
quiet..

BAXTER

They know something. We need to
make them tell us what it is, sir.

JOE

What are you saying we do, Baxter?

BAXTER hesitates.

ED

Say what you actually mean,
Sergeant. Spit it out and then have
a damned good look at what it is.

BAXTER

God knows what they're doing to the
CO's little boy. What harm does
some active interrogation..

ED

There you go again - you can't say
it. Active interrogation?

BAXTER

My father used to take a hold of my
wrist and squeeze if he wanted me
to tell him something. Then he'd
squeeze harder if I didn't tell him
right away. Never failed.

He holds both wrists up.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

A sore wrist, maybe a red mark for
a few days - against a six year old
boy ripped away from his family -
what matters more? If you don't
mind me asking, sir.

ED

Go ahead, Sergeant. Why don't you
hurt the twelve year old? The child
would be the easiest to crack,
wouldn't you say? (Conscious echo of
Baxter's earlier question) If you
don't mind me asking?

BAXTER and ED look at each other, neither breaks eye contact.

JOE

(Quiet) Release them.

What? ED gets it.

JOE (CONT'D)

The NLF will know we've arrested them and they'll want to know if they've told us anything.

ED

So they'll be paying them a visit. Stake out Yusra's home in order to see who visits and then follow them when they leave... which might take us to George.

BAXTER

Or they might disappear. And our only line of inquiry would disappear with them.. Then what would you tell Major Markham?

JOE's choice. The loneliness of (acting) command.

JOE

Do it. Let them go.

BAXTER on his way. Then (Joe has) another thought.

JOE (CONT'D)

Baxter?

BAXTER

Sir?

JOE

Tell him - tell the boy.

BAXTER

What's that, sir?

JOE

That his father is dead.

44 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE INTERVIEW ROOM/INTERVIEW ROOM. DAY. 44

JOE's POV as BAXTER and ED sit across a table from the BOY who collapses forwards (arms out on the table) as the news is broken to him. BAXTER reaches out and takes a hold of his wrist to console him.

45 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

45

MARY still with baby Peter in one arm pops the cake out. ALISON fiddling with the corner of a pumped up lilo which is propped vertically against a wall. Red on one side, blue on the other.

MARY

You just have to let it cool then it pops out.

The lilo slides down the wall.

MARY (CONT'D)
George's lilo. We don't let the air out because it takes so long to blow it up again. The foot pump. Poor Harry.. pumping away..

HONOR
It was my fault.

A beat. They look at her. It's clear what she means.

HONOR (CONT'D)
I suggested he come with us; it was for me to look after him..

She's upset.

MARY
No no no no no. No.

MARY (holding baby PETER in one arm) moves towards HONOR.

MARY (CONT'D)
Would you like a cuddle?

HONOR
Yes, please.

She thinks she means from Mary. She moves in towards her opening her arms as she goes. Mary meant a cuddle with baby Peter.

MARY
I meant..

HONOR gets it.

HONOR
Oh.

ALISON laughs. MARY laughs. HONOR laughs. All three women laughing, eyes shining with the tears that are close behind the laughter.

MARY looking at baby PETER.

MARY
I love this little chap with all my heart and without condition.. which is funny because he doesn't care at all about how I'm feeling..

ALISON
The world keeps turning.

MARY

If equal affection cannot be
Let the more loving one be me.

ALISON

Auden.

MARY nods.

ALISON (CONT'D)

He's wrong. That's wrong. Jesus
Christ he's wrong.

They look at her. She doesn't hide her feelings, Alison. And
she's not hiding them now.

MARY

Pop Peter down in his cot for me,
would you, Honor?

HONOR goes.

ALISON

Take the U out of Auden and what do
you get?

MARY turns the lilo round so that the blue side is facing
outwards. A(for now)unexplained bit of correction/tidying up.

MARY

I wasn't supposed to have a second
baby. George was a difficult birth
and the doctors at home told me not
to do it again. Our first week here
the grenade attack killed the
little Guthrie lad and I thought
how unbearable it would be.. to
lose George.. and not have.. I
didn't tell Harry. I got pregnant
quite soon after that. A mother's
love for her children is..
A child changes everything, Al.

HONOR comes back in.

MARY (CONT'D)

Have you seen the doctor?

ALISON

Three o'clock.

HONOR

She's told you the news.. Isn't it
wonderful?

MARY

I couldn't have put it better
myself. Wonderful.

ALISON looking at MARY.

47 OMITTED

47

48 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

48

MARY serves the cake on plates with napkins on the side and small cake forks. She looks at the lilo and she turns it round.

MARY

It was important to him which side faced up in the water. He liked the blue side up, Harry liked the red side. They'd have joke fights about it... Boys are like that, aren't they?

ALISON

He's not dead.

Crikey. That's a thing to say. But she's right - Mary needs to shape up and start thinking and helping..

MARY

No. You're right.

The cake..

ALISON

This is...

MARY

Mmmmm.. What's the word?

ALISON

Damp.

MARY

Moist?

ALISON

Damp.

They laugh. Shiny eyed again all three.

49 EXT. ADEN PRISON. DAY.

49

MARKHAM arriving in the black car. The car stops. SUIT opens the door for MARKHAM. MARKHAM gets out. A THIRD SUIT waiting to escort him.

50 INT. WIDE CELL CORRIDOR. ADEN PRISON. DAY.

50

MARKHAM brought in to a custody reception area off which runs a cell corridor. Before Markham sees him:

TILBROOK
Hello, Harry.

MARKHAM
Harvey.

TILBROOK
I'm so sorry. [About George]

MARKHAM
Yes. Why am I here?

TILBROOK
You're not. Nobody must know about
this.

MARKHAM
What do you mean?

TILBROOK
We thought you might like half an
hour on your own with him.

MARKHAM
With who?

51a EXT. ADEN PRISON. WALKWAY. DAY.

51a

MARKHAM being walked down a cell corridor.

MARKHAM
Interpreter..?

TILBROOK
He speaks English.

51b INT. SMALL CORRIDOR BY CELL. ADEN PRISON. DAY.

51b

TILBROOK
Law at the LSE, political science
at the Sorbonne, bomb making in
Cairo..

MARKHAM
He knows where George is, doesn't
he?

TILBROOK
We think so, Harry.

52a INT. CELL. ADEN PRISON. DAY.

52a

MARKHAM alone with KADIR.

KADIR

Please. Sit down.

MARKHAM hesitates - the status in the room isn't supposed to be this way round.

KADIR (CONT'D)

You are my visitor - please, sit.
I'm sorry I have no tea to offer
you.

MARKHAM

You know why I'm here.

KADIR watches him, refusing to relinquish the power in the dynamic, making no concessions.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Is my son alive?

KADIR looks at him for a long time.

KADIR

You care deeply about your son.

MARKHAM

What's the answer to my question?

KADIR

At the moment there would be little point in killing him.

MARKHAM has his answer but he's also shocked and angered by this dehumanizing reference to George as a political pawn.

KADIR (CONT'D)

I can see that you don't like me talking about him as a small part of a bigger picture.

MARKHAM

He's a child, damn it.

KADIR

We have taken your son; you have taken my country. Both are valuable. One is more valuable than the other. I can see that you are endeavouring - against all the odds - to remain objective. So it is in that spirit that I ask you to answer my one question. Which is more valuable?

MARKHAM

What do you want?

KADIR

My country back. What do you want?

MARKHAM

You know the answer to that.

KADIR

Then perhaps we could swap. Your son, my country. Since you argue they are of equal value..

MARKHAM

My wife is waiting at home.. we have a very young baby.

KADIR

Not her war? Not your son's war..?

MARKHAM

(Intense, pure, simple) Tell me where he is.

KADIR

I can't do that.

MARKHAM

Tell me.

KADIR

I was arrested before he was taken.

MARKHAM

But you know he's alive. How would you know that if..

KADIR

We are finished.

KADIR is dismissing him.

KADIR (CONT'D)

You can leave now.

MARKHAM

You can't talk to me like that.

KADIR turns his back to him. MARKHAM very close to the edge here, two degrees away from violence.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

You can't do this, you bastard.

KADIR

I had a friend who was a pupil barrister in London.

(MORE)

KADIR (CONT'D)

One day he wore a blue shirt to court.

"May it please Your Honour I appear for the defendant..."

"I can't see you..."

"Your Honour?"

"I can't see you and I can't hear you..."

My friend was wearing the wrong clothing for court - a blue shirt instead of white - and so he'd become invisible.

He's talking about his friend in court and he's talking about Markham here now and he's talking about the British in Aden.

KADIR (CONT'D)

You do not exist. You are not here.

An implacable righteousness which is too much for Markham to bear. MARKHAM goes for him. He rushes at him, pulls him down to the ground and holds him there.

MARKHAM

Where's my son?

KADIR

I can't see you; I can't hear you.

52b INT. OUTSIDE CELL. ADEN PRISON. DAY.

52b

Outside the cell TILBROOK holds the GUARDS back when MARKHAM hits KADIR. He wants this assault to occur.

52c INT. CELL. ADEN PRISON. DAY.

52c

KADIR offers no resistance. Great courage - which is also maddening for Markham. He hits him twice more - Kadir's nose explodes, broken and bloody. MARKHAM stops and stares. He's let himself down. He feels sickened. KADIR looks right at him.

KADIR

You are not here.

53 INT. WIDE CELL CORRIDOR. ADEN PRISON. DAY.

53

MARKHAM leaving the cell. TILBROOK waiting. KADIR being taken for medical treatment. ARAB GUARDS and other PRISONERS watch him as he passes. Some prisoners call out words of support.

MARKHAM

I'm sorry.

TILBROOK

Quite understand, old chap.

54 INT/EXT. TRUCK. DESERT. DAY.

54

An NLF FIGHTER (1) unthreads the thick rope securing the heavy tarpaulin closing off the back of the truck. The light floods in. A small boy crouched at the very front of the compartment closest to the truck cabin. GEORGE blinking in the light. YUSRA sitting next to him.

YUSRA

(Arabic) **Feeen akhi al sageer?**
 [Where is my little brother?]

NLF FIGHTER 1

(Arabic) **Ma nihtagsh loh thani.**
Howa kad ragah al bait.
 [We don't need him anymore. He's back at home.]

NLF FIGHTER 1 re-secures the tarpaulin on the precious cargo.

55 INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY.

55

ED pacing. JOE standing.

ED

Not enough. We're not doing enough.

ED leaving. JOE left alone. JOE makes double sure he's alone and then makes a phone call. Martha.

JOE

I want to speak to Martha Franklin please.

He waits for her to come on.

We need to interview you. No. I'll do it myself.

56 EXT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY.

56

ARMSTRONG watches ED leave. He's been waiting for this; he wants to speak to Joe alone.

56a INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

56a

ED comes in.

ED

Hello? Alison?

No response. He registers the broken record player. He has a thought. He goes into the bedroom and changes out of uniform and into civvies. He comes back into the living room and goes to the record player. He sees the Ketty Lester 45 on the floor. He picks it up, wipes the dust off, puts it down on the side. He picks up the record player and leaves fast

57 EXT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY.

57

ARMSTRONG intercepts JOE as he comes out.

ARMSTRONG

Sir? A word?

JOE doesn't want to be detained.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Please.

ARMSTRONG takes a deep breath. JOE can see that he's not himself.

JOE

Armstrong?

ARMSTRONG

What I'm about to say.. please promise not to tell anyone?

JOE

The army doesn't really work like that.

ARMSTRONG

This is not.. It's people. It's just people, sir.

JOE nods his assent to the promise.

58

INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY. A FEW MINUTES LATER.

58

JOE pacing.

JOE

When did you last see her?

ARMSTRONG

Christmas morning.

JOE

How was she acting?

Armstrong doesn't want to say that she'd completely changed overnight but nor can he not say this.

ARMSTRONG

She'd changed, sir. She wasn't herself and..

JOE

And?

ARMSTRONG

She wrote me a letter, sir.

JOE

What does it say?

A beat. He hands him the letter. JOE reads it.

JOE (CONT'D)

This is.. Why didn't you give this to me before?

ARMSTRONG

I didn't read it. She asked me not to until after Christmas.

JOE

She said that?

ARMSTRONG

She wouldn't be involved in a thing like this, sir.

JOE

This [the letter] suggests you're wrong about that.

ARMSTRONG

I don't know what or how but I'd bet my life on there being an explanation for her..

JOE

Your life? You'd bet your life?

ARMSTRONG

Sir.

JOE

How foolish people get, Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG

Sir?

JOE

In love. Damn foolish and reckless. And..

He breaks off. JOE seems to be speaking from experience - ARMSTRONG looks at him. JOE catches himself and tries (and fails) to rephrase what he was going to say in less subjective terms.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's when you can be most wrong about someone.

ARMSTRONG perturbed about the tone of this. And from an officer..

ARMSTRONG

You promised not to tell anyone, sir.

JOE

Yes, I did. And I won't.

59a EXT. ELECTRICAL SHOP. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

59a

ED walks into electrical shop carrying the broken record player. He's in civvies.

59b INT. ELECTRICAL SHOP. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

59b

The INFORMANT looks up.

INFORMANT

What are you doing?

ED

I need your help - fixing something.

He puts the record player down.

INFORMANT

Did anyone see you come in?

ED

Yes.

INFORMANT

Yes?

ED

Probably.

INFORMANT

You can't just come here..

ED

But look - here I am. How old is your son?

INFORMANT

Five years old.

ED

A year younger than George Markham. It's hard for me to imagine what it would be to lose a child. Easier for you..

ED is moved by himself here (this is genuine, not performance) which is effective in bringing on the same in the INFORMANT.

ED (CONT'D)

My wife is pregnant.

INFORMANT

I am very happy for you.

ED

I knew you would be.

INFORMANT

Do you hope for a boy or a girl?

ED hesitates and doesn't say. This is complicated for obvious reasons.

INFORMANT (CONT'D)

I think a boy. And he will be
handsome like you. With blue eyes..

Ed doesn't want a boy; physical resemblance to Page would be harder to live with. He cuts him off:

ED

I'm hoping for a girl. Girls are..
I hope it's a girl.

INFORMANT looking at him steadily.

INFORMANT

And your wife..?

ED

I don't know.

INFORMANT

Have you asked her?

ED

You have to find George Markham.

A CUSTOMER comes in. INFORMANT nervous about Ed's presence.

ED (CONT'D)

Six o'clock this evening. Call this number. I want it fixed by then.

He's talking about the record player...

INFORMANT

It's not an easy job.

ED

Six o'clock.

60

EXT. ELECTRICAL SHOP. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

60

ED leaving the electrical shop. MARTHA, carrying a paper bag of coffee, comes out of a shop selling coffee (she's heading back to her hotel) and sees ED go. She stands and looks at the shop. The INFORMANT comes out. Looks about him. Furtive. MARTHA steps back into the shadow of the coffee shop.

61

EXT. CRATER. DAY.

61

STONEHAM and another MP staking out Yusra's home from the roof of a building opposite it. STONEHAM nudges his colleague. Their POV of ARMSTRONG approaching.

62

EXT. YUSRA'S HOUSE. CRATER. DAY.

62

A house in mourning. ARMSTRONG in broken, bad Arabic trying to get Yusra's MOTHER (WOMAN) to understand his question.

ARMSTRONG

When was your boy taken?

MOTHER talking over and around the question - unfathomable to Armstrong.

SON

Two days.

The SON. He speaks English - or at least a little English.

ARMSTRONG

What did you say?

SON

Two days.

ARMSTRONG

Not yesterday?

SON

No. Not yesterday. Before.

ARMSTRONG

Before George..

SON

I not understand.

ARMSTRONG

Never mind. Before George. Before George.

ARMSTRONG has what he needs to exonerate Yusra and he leaves fast to get back to base and impart this to Joe.

63

EXT. ROAD. DAY.

63

ARMSTRONG driving fast back to base.

64

INT. MARKHAM'S OFFICE. BASE. DAY.

64

ARMSTRONG knocks on the door. MARKHAM at his desk staring into the distance.

MARKHAM

Armstrong..

ARMSTRONG

Sorry sir I was looking for Captain Martin sir?

MARKHAM

No. Don't know.

65 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

65

HONOR scrubbing hard at the heavily encrusted baking tin. A knock at the door.

66 EXT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

66

ARMSTRONG at the door..

ARMSTRONG

I know I shouldn't be up here
because it's not my place but have
you seen your husband, m'am?

HONOR

No. The office?

ARMSTRONG

Sorry, he's nowhere on the base,
m'am so I thought he must be at
home..

HONOR

No. No.

ARMSTRONG nods and goes. The call to prayer in the background.

67 EXT. STREET. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

67

JOE walking. A half look over his shoulder suggests furtiveness. Outside a small mosque people are taking their shoes off and going in.

68 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

68

HONOR sitting thinking. She gets up. She starts looking through Joe's things... pockets, drawers, bags. Who is this man she's married? Inside his wash bag - inside the internal zipped up pocket she finds the film given to Joe by Stoneham. A knock at the door. She puts the film back.

69 EXT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

69

ALISON at the door.

ALISON

Is Honor allowed out to play?

HONOR decides. Yes, yes she is.

70 EXT. HOTEL. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

70

TILBROOK staking out the hotel from across the street. He sees Joe going in.

71 INT. HOTEL. LOBBY. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

71

JOE walks in, looks around him, looking for Martha. No sign. She's behind him.

MARTHA

I bought coffee.

72 INT. MARTHA'S HOTEL ROOM. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

72

Martha's home from home. Typewriter on the desk. White shirts (seven the same) on a rail. Boots that have been everywhere. Arab literature; some Camus; Orwell's Decline of the English Murder. Undergarments hanging from the ceiling fan to dry. Coffee on a small stove.

JOE

I need to tell you what to do if they contact you for a third time..

MARTHA

You think they're dry yet?

What? She indicates the underwear.

JOE

Oh. I don't know.

*

MARTHA

You were saying..

JOE

The NLF - if they send another message through you we want you to..

MARTHA

Why do you assume I'm going to help you?

JOE

Because he's a six year old child.

MARTHA

I'm not part of the story, Joe. I'm just in the world, Joe with my eyes wide open, looking for truth.

*

JOE

What the truth is or appears to be always depends on who's looking at it. Wouldn't you say?

MARTHA

Yusuf Ali had a younger sister called Fatima who loved him more than anything in the world.

What's she talking about?

JOE

What?

MARTHA

Their father died a year ago - dropped dead working in the fields. Fatima is paralysed from the waist down and has to be looked after all day every day by their mother so Yusuf was the one the family relied on for income.

JOE

What are you talking about?

MARTHA

Handsome, apart from a half arsed moustache but that's just taste I guess..

JOE

I don't know who this is.

MARTHA

No? It's the man you shot dead four days ago on the Dhala Road. He was nineteen. Sure - poor, George. Poor everyone, Joe. Poor everybody.

*
*

JOE

This is a war - men get killed.

MARTHA

Yes, and children get taken from their parents. C'est la vie; c'est la guerre.

JOE

I better go.

MARTHA

You better had. God forbid you should talk about yourself.

JOE

That's not what..

MARTHA

The past is a foreign country.

JOE

Hmm?

*

MARTHA

The past is our backyard - into which we oughta step every day for a look at the weather. It's right there, behind you, Joe. Take a look.

JOE

Have you been looking..?

*

MARTHA

It's what I do, remember? I took a look at your story. Poor Joe. I mean - [really] poor Joe.

JOE

What about you? Why are you here?

MARTHA

This is my hotel room. I live here.

He's onto her evasion here..

JOE

You see..

MARTHA

What?

JOE

You keep telling me how honest and direct and American you are and how English and buttoned up I am, but when it comes to it..

MARTHA

Same boat.

She looks at him - wide open.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Poor us.

Here's where they should kiss. They've both made themselves more vulnerable than they ever are and in the vulnerability should be a coming together. But the moment lengthens and because it lengthens it passes.

73 EXT. HOSPITAL. DAY.

73

ALISON and HONOR arrive. ALISON sits still for a moment. Takes a deep breath.

74 INT. WAITING ROOM. HOSPITAL DAY

74

ALISON and HONOR sitting in a waiting room.

HONOR

Can I get you anything?

ALISON

Gin and tonic. Rain.

The door to the surgery opens and DR. RUSSELL comes out.

RUSSELL

Mrs Laithwaite.

It's part greeting/part observation/part command. ALISON stands up, and HONOR follows her towards the door.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Just Mrs Laithwaite, I think.

75

INT. DOCTOR'S CONSULTING ROOM. HOSPITAL. DAY.

75

RUSSELL smiles as he speaks. A misleading trait.

RUSSELL

Why have you brought Mrs Martin
with you? Or - to put it another
way: what are you afraid of?

ALISON

I've got a difficult question to
ask..

RUSSELL

Ask away.

ALISON

I'm pregnant.

She's about to continue with what she's come to say but he
interjects..

RUSSELL

Why don't we take a look?

ALISON

Sorry?

RUSSELL

Ladies can be wrong about these
things.. We don't want a whole
conversation about something if
it's not there to be talked about,
do we? Pop up on the bed for me.

ALISON

I think I can safely say that..

RUSSELL

You've been drinking.

ALISON

Yes.

RUSSELL

In the day time.

ALISON

Yes.

RUSSELL

Why?

ALISON

I always drink in a sandstorm.

RUSSELL

Not sure you can safely say
anything, Mrs Laithwaite.

His hands on her belly, pressing and probing.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

When else do you always drink?

ALISON

After church. Before bed. In the
morning and at the going down of
the sun. Your hands are cold.
It must be a hundred and ten
degrees. You should see a doctor.

RUSSELL pressing the left side of her belly.

RUSSELL

Have you felt any movement?

ALISON

A little.

RUSSELL

Here?

ALISON

Yes.

RUSSELL

And here?

ALISON

A kind of flutter.

RUSSELL

Right.

ALISON

Maybe he likes a drink.

RUSSELL

He?

ALISON

[Whatever] She..

RUSSELL

They.

76a EXT. FIAT. BEACH ROAD. DAY.

76a

ALISON AND HONOR driving.

76b INT. FIAT. BEACH ROAD. DAY.

76b

ALISON and HONOR driving. ALISON puts her foot down.

HONOR

This isn't the way we came..

ALISON

No.

HONOR

Are you all right?
Alison..?

ALISON

The desert is so beautiful late in
the day.

HONOR

The curfew starts soon..

ALISON

And then you die.

HONOR

What?

ALISON

You live your life according to the
rules and then... I want to sit in
the desert as the sun goes down and
feel the heat leave the earth. Are
you coming with me?

HONOR

Yes. (A beat) Yes, please.

77

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

77

MARKHAM is just back. MARY stops what she's doing.

MARY

Anything?

No.

MARY (CONT'D)

Where did they take you?

MARKHAM

I can't say.

MARY

I know I'm not supposed to know
things or ask questions.. and I've
always tried to make things easy
for you. But this is our son,
Harry. You have to talk to me.

MARKHAM

Sorry.

MARY
High Commission people?

He doesn't say no.

MARKHAM
Something like that.

MARY
Are you all right?

MARKHAM
(A beat) I let myself down a bit,
Mary.

MARY
I'm sure you didn't.

A beat.

MARY (CONT'D)
I didn't give you your Christmas
present.

She hands it to him. The label: From Mummy to Daddy.

MARY (CONT'D)
George wrote the label.

MARKHAM
We need to sort out his capital
letters. When he gets home.

She smiles.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
What is it?

MARY
Open it and see.

It's beautifully wrapped with a ribbon in a bow around it.
MARKHAM tries to untie the bow. His hands are shaking. He
can't do it. MARY doesn't know what to do - step in and take
over? Pretend she hasn't seen? He keeps trying and the hand
shaking gets worse.

MARY (CONT'D)
It's a shaving brush. From Taylors
of Old Bond Street. It's just a
shaving brush, darling.

MARKHAM
We should have heard. That's what
kidnappers do. They make demands.
And they haven't. Sorry.

78

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

78

A BFBS BROADCASTER is talking on the radio. Family Favourites.

RADIO PRESENTER

Corporal Griffiths with the Green Jackets in Cyprus sends all his love to wife Pat and son Robert. Can't wait for R and R.

Then a request. The Hippopotamus song begins.

RADIO PRESENTER (CONT'D)

(Over the song)

This song is for George Markham from Mummy and Daddy and baby Peter. Mummy's sorry she's been away for a long time but she's home now with her special boy and she's requested your favourite song to sing along to. This is Flanders and Swann and George and his mum - let's be hearing you both..

MARKHAM turns it off.

MARKHAM

They didn't know. They weren't told, I suppose.

A terrible silence.

MARY

Put it back on, Harry.

He hesitates. He does what she asks. MARKHAM stays by the radio, the guardian of the on/off button in case of emergency. We come in just before the audience on the live recording are invited by Michael Flanders to join in the final chorus of the Hippopotamus song. MARY sings. MARKHAM joins in, to be with his wife, to take her through this. In unison along with the live audience on the record they're singing for George and for home. Applause on the live recording.

79

EXT. CRATER. DAY.

79

GEORGE and YUSRA are taken (swiftly, roughly) from the back of the truck into a house.

80

EXT. BEACH ROAD. DAY.

80

JOE stops his Land Rover. He sits. An existential crisis.

81

EXT. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

81

ED walking fast away from his Land Rover down a street.

82 INT. CRATER. HOUSE. DAY.

82

GEORGE and YUSRA taken into an empty room. The door shuts behind them and the key turns.

83 EXT. ROAD. DESERT. DAY.

83

HONOR and ALISON driving.

HONOR

Do you know where we are?

ALISON

No.

HONOR

How will we find our way home?

ALISON stops, gets out, takes a few steps, and is violently sick by the side of the road. She gets back in the car.

ALISON

Hansel and Gretel left bread crumbs.

84 INT. ELECTRICAL SHOP. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

84

ED comes in fast. A CUSTOMER being seen to by the INFORMANT.

ED

Is it ready? Have you done it?

INFORMANT

Please. One moment.

ED

No. I need it now.

INFORMANT says something in ARABIC to CUSTOMER. The CUSTOMER goes, looking at ED as he leaves.

INFORMANT

You said I was to phone you..

ED

No time. Have you got it? Do you know where he is?

INFORMANT nods. He hands him a piece of paper.

INFORMANT

They move him frequently. Every few hours. So you will have to move fast. This is your one chance.

85 EXT. ELECTRICAL SHOP. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

85

The CUSTOMER watches ED leave.

86 EXT. STEAMER POINT. DAY.

86

ED gets into his Land Rover and grabs the radio.

ED

Oscar Three Mike. This is Oscar Two
Lima. Possible location Target.
Request back-up, over.

87 EXT. BEACH ROAD. DAY.

87

JOE responding to radio message from Ed.

JOE

Oscar Two Lima. This is Oscar Three
Mike. Wilco, out.

JOE hits the accelerator.

88 EXT. DESERT. DUSK.

88

ALISON and HONOR sitting up on top of a rise away from the car and with a view of the setting sun. The desert is indeed beautiful at sunset.

ALISON

It's twins. It's much too soon to tell for sure.. but early movement can often mean..

HONOR

Oh my goodness. That's.. Oh my goodness! I mean, crikey, Al.

A beat.

HONOR (CONT'D)

What are we thinking? We have to go back and tell Ed right away.

ALISON

He doesn't know I'm pregnant.

HONOR

I talked to him about it. I talked about it. Oh God. Why haven't you..

ALISON

I don't want a baby. I don't want two babies.

HONOR

I thought he knew. I congratulated him.

ALISON

He hasn't said.

HONOR
Alison..

ALISON
Ssshhh. Look.

The sun disappearing. She doesn't want the moment talked over.

ALISON (CONT'D)

There.

The sun goes.

89 EXT. CRATER. DUSK.

89

ED parks the Land Rover. He walks round a corner. This is it. This is the street.

90 EXT. ROAD. DUSK.

90

JOE driving fast. And then faster.

91 EXT. CRATER. STREET/HOUSE. DUSK.

91

Ed outside the house. He can see that they're about to move on - NLF FIGHTERS exit the house and head towards the truck parked up the street. Where's his back up? Then it happens - there's George. Two NLF FIGHTERS leading him from the house down the street to the truck. George looks back over his shoulder. He sees ED. George sees ED and the two NLF FIGHTERS become aware of this and they turn. Ed knows this is his moment. Both lift rifles. ED fires his pistol twice. Both NLF men go down. GEORGE freezes, terrified.

ED

George!

He's free. GEORGE starts to run towards ED. ED opens his arm to receive him. An NLF FIGHTER comes out of the house behind ED. ED turns. A bullet in the chest. ED spun round by the impact of the round. He goes down in the street, the side of his face pushed into the dirt.

92 INT/EXT. CAR. DUSK.

92

The two women get into the car. There's enough light just about. ALISON tries to turn the headlights on but accidentally switches the windscreen wipers on instead. They laugh. ALISON turns the key in the ignition. Nothing. Dead. Another go. Nothing. Shit. Laughing no more.

ALISON

Did you feel the heat leave?

93 EXT. CRATER. DUSK.

93

ED on the ground. Blood and dirt. His POV of GEORGE being taken to the truck. AN NLF FIGHTER starts to come towards ED to finish him off. The sound of a Land Rover. NLF FIGHTER hesitates and then runs for the truck, leaving ED wounded and bleeding in the street - but not dead.

94

INT/EXT. CAR. DUSK.

94

ALISON and HONOR sitting in the car in the desert. A chill as night comes on. Short sleeved dresses in the desert at night.

ALISON

They'll come looking for us.

A beat. ALISON smoking. Fear, the unknown, the dark brings on:

HONOR

Did you know Corporal DiMarco?

ALISON

Not really. He looked up my skirt once when he was doing press ups.

HONOR

And Captain Page?

ALISON pulls on her cigarette.

ALISON

He was one of twins. Did you know that?

She blows out smoke. She's told her. She knows HONOR is looking at her and why and she doesn't look back at her - so the meaning of what she's said is clear and underlined without any need for further words.

ALISON (CONT'D)

That record I play..

HONOR

Yes.

ALISON

Sing it for me.

HONOR

It's not Ed's song, is it?

A tiny shake of her head.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Did you do this with him? With Nick?

A tiny nod of the head.

HONOR (CONT'D)

I can't. Not if it's..

ALISON

Sing it, Honor. Then I'll never listen to it again.

HONOR sings. ALISON mouths the words along with her. The song plays over:

95 EXT. CRATER. DUSK.

95

JOE pulls up in his Land Rover when he sees ED. He thinks he's dying. He's right. ED looking into his eyes.

JOE

Stay with me. You stay with me, you hear?

ED is trying, he doesn't want to die.

96 EXT. DESERT. DUSK.

96

A truck coming towards ALISON and HONOR. Headlights.

HONOR

They're coming.

ALISON gets out the car. HONOR does the same.

ALISON

It's not one of ours.

ALISON and HONOR watching the truck approaching slowly.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Let's risk it.

ALISON steps out into the road and waves at the oncoming truck with both arms. The truck slows down and stops fifty yards up the road. ALISON in the road in her dress in the dark in the headlights of the truck. HONOR walks out onto the road and stands beside her friend. They're dazzled by the headlights.

97 EXT. CRATER. DUSK.

97

JOE in close with ED.

JOE

Listen to me - I'm going to move you. I'm going to get you to the hospital. You bloody well stay with me, Ed. You hear? Ready? Here we go.

JOE lifts ED under his arms and drags his (almost) dead weight towards the Land Rover.

97A INT. LAND ROVER. DUSK.

97A

JOE driving. It has to be fast. He has to drive fast. One hand on the wheel, he reaches the other hand across to hold the gauze in place on the wound.

98 INT/EXT. TRUCK. NIGHT.

98

TRUCK DRIVER smiles at the two women sitting alongside him. ALISON and HONOR smile at each other. They've been lucky. HONOR holds ALISON's hand.

99 OMITTED

99

100 EXT. BASE. NIGHT.

100

The singing ends. ALISON and HONOR coming towards the base in the truck. Three Land Rovers sweep out of the base. The truck is in the way. MP's get out of the first Land Rover and aim their weapons at the oncoming truck. They've been taken for possible enemy.

ALISON

They don't know it's us. Oh God,
wave, Honor wave.

HONOR hangs out the window of the truck and waves and hollers. ALISON stands up in the cab. Two women in dresses waving and shouting.

HONOR

It's us. It's me. It's Mrs Martin.

Weapons are lowered. BAXTER comes towards them.

ALISON

I'm so sorry, Baxter. We forgot
about the curfew and..

BAXTER's expression stops her mid sentence. HONOR joins ALISON.

ALISON (CONT'D)

What is it? Baxter?

BAXTER

It's Lieutenant Laithwaite.