

The Last Post

by

Peter Moffat

Episode Three

Green Revisions

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Bonafide Films | The Forge Entertainment

5 Denmark St.
London WC2H 8LP

2nd Floor, The Zeppelin Building
59-61 Farringdon Road
London EC1M 3JB

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.

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

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 M(K s842 o7wi fe. ."art)] TJ ET Q q 1 0 0 -1 0 84

ALISON

It was a long time ago.

Her back to him still. He's screwing up his courage. This

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

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 won 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)

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

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.

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. EVENING.

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.

EXT. OUTSIDE MARRIED QUARTERS. EVENING.

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.

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

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
girl friend?

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?

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

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.

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 luscious gusto.		*
			*
	HONOR		*
	I like the words.		*
	MARKHAM		*
	I've always loved Blake.		*
	ALISON		*
	Christina Rossetti.		*
	MARKHAM		*
	I'm sure it's Blake.		*

ALI SON
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 ALI SON who looks
at everyone as they say the words.

ALI SON
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

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

GEORGE Looks upset.

Mummy. . . GEORGE

George. . . MARKHAM

But. . . GEORGE

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)

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

JOE
(Leaving Tillbrook) Excuse me.

JOE joins ED.

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
 Al ec. 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.

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.

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

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

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.