

THE LAST POST

By Peter Moffat

Episode Five

Purple Revisions

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Bonafide Films

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1 INT. HOSPITAL. NIGHT SIX. 1

JOE comes in half carrying, half dragging ED. ED's breathing very shallow. He's looking at JOE - his eyes begging for help. He thinks he's dying. JOE staggers under the weight and can't go on.

JOE
Help! Help here!

2 INT. HOSPITAL. NIGHT. 2

ED in triage. He can't breathe. Really shallow breaths and a big effort to get them. His neck muscles straining as his whole body fights to get air in.

MEDICS pulling open his shirt. High pace, battlefield type medicine. It's crude, urgent and fast.

IV lines go into his neck. (NURSE can't get a line into his arm - so it has to be the neck.)

Simultaneously, MEDICS clean the wound with wet gauze. A pressure dressing is applied. A piece of wet dressing is placed over the wound and then taped around Ed's body to hold it tight in place. Lifting ED to get the tape round his body is painful.

JOE
Why can't he breathe?

DR. RUSSELL
Collapsed lung.

JOE
Can you..

DR. RUSSELL
His chest cavity is full of air so his lung can't re-inflate..

ED's breath desperately thin. JOE emotional now that he has handed over his colleague to o /T08 2dQagQ qa8dydQahovet.

ALI SON

Take me to the hospital now.

ORCHOVER

They're all out looking for George.
The whole unit ma'm. It's just me..

ALI SON

So you drive me. What's the bloody
problem, Orchover?

ORCHOVER

An officer's wife has to be..

ALI SON

What? Christ. What?

ORCHOVER

Protected. Someone has to ride shot-
gun ma'm. I can't drive and keep
you safe at the same time..

ALI SON

Give me your gun.

ORCHOVER

Ma'm?

ALI SON

Give me your stupid gun and I'll
protect myself.

ORCHOVER

I don't think I can..

ALI SON

My husband has been shot; he needs

ORCHOVER

I really don't know, ma'm.

ALI SON

Let's go.

ORCHOVER

Ma' m. . .

His gun. Oh yes. She gives it back to him.

ALISON
Where is he?

8

INT. OPERATING THEATRE. HOSPITAL. NIGHT.

8

The SURGEON is in. His finger in the hole. A great whoosh as the air comes out. And he's breathing. Deep shock, hideous pain, the blessed relief of taking a breath.

Some time has passed. ALISON with JOE side by side sitting waiting for news from surgery. ALISON tries to light a cigarette and can't because she's shaking. She takes a swig

Offers it to Joe who shakes his head. She takes another swig herself. What follows is the story, shot through though it is with her usual linguistic verve and comic brio, of how she started drinking and as such (even if it might not really

exculpatory and its confessional nature is a recognition of the desperate but comradely situation these two have been forced into together. Confessions are usually gifts of some kind and as such it's a recognition of the fact that the man

trying to save her husband. There are about nine other layers inside this speech which I could try and outline were this a novel and not fifty eight minutes of television but which I'm find and employ.

ALISON

me a nip of brandy. I was always falling over. Maybe three times a day; more at the week-end. My mother had bad teeth so we ate soft

Mostly puddings. Banana custard; tinned mandarin orange segments in rice pudding; spotted dick with more dick than spots. Brandy in all

JOE

Ed was close. He nearly made it. He was within moments of rescuing

He takes the brandy from her and swigs it back. He's so tired and so stretched. A man on the edge.

10 INT. OPERATING THEATRE. HOSPITAL. NIGHT. 10

SURGEON preparing the catheter tube ready to go in.

ED fights them. He can't help it; he's on auto response and he doesn't want them sticking a tube in his chest. He has to be held down - a NURSE on each arm.

Insertion of catheter into the chest. If the pain has been brutal before it's nothing compared to this.

The catheter is inserted.

Tubing is then placed into a large bottle half full of water. It bubbles when he breathes.

11 INT. WAITING ROOM. HOSPITAL. NIGHT. 11

JOE and ALISON stand up. SURGEON comes out, like the hero most surgeons believe themselves to be.

SURGEON
He's breathing; the lung is re-
inflated.

JOE
He'll live..?

SURGEON
Honestly?

JOE looks at ALISON. ALISON looks at SURGEON.

SURGEON (CONT'D)
Probably.

The bubbles in the water.

12 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BASE. DAWN. DAY SEVEN. 12

HONOR wakes up. She's cold.

13 EXT. MARTIN FLAT. BASE. DAWN 13

Land Rovers returning. Honor goes outside to look. Her POV from the balcony.

14 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAWN. 14

MARKHAM comes in. MARY very still.

MARY
There's a place just here..

She puts the back of her hand into the space between her neck and her shoulder.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's where a mother feels her child. It's where the baby's head has been and the sensation of it being there doesn't go. He's there. . now. . I can feel him.

And now the hardest thing to say:

MARY (CONT'D)

He will always be there.

15

INT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

15

GEORGE holding one of his front teeth in his palm.

*

YUSRA

*

Show me.

*

GEORGE opens his mouth to show her the gap.

YUSRA (CONT'D)
[You will wait until I say he's ready.]

She parts it in the same way that she parted it in the first block (which he hated then, but doesn't object to now).

*

16

EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

16

GEORGE brought out into the open. YUSRA with him. He keeps his fist tight around the tooth he's holding. A lot of fuss amongst NLF FIGHTERS about where precisely George is going to be stood - which doesn't feel like a good thing. The raised voices and NLF arguing is frightening for George. They need to make sure no identifying features are in the shot. Sun position? No shadows.

*

*

GEORGE
Will they hurt me?

YUSRA
(Lying - she doesn't know and she has her fears) No. Of course not.

NLF PHOTOGRAPHER in the background. He has an 8mm camera.

Also in the background in amongst the throng, NLF FIGHTER 1 with a sword. He's pacing up and down - agitated, jumpy, sword in hand. We catch glimpses of him. He makes some patterns in the air with his sword just above ground level. This feels like some kind of warm up. He's a skilled swordsman. YUSRA sees this/him and stiffens.

NLF FIGHTER 2 takes her by the arm to lead her away. She stands her ground for a moment to give some last instructions to GEORGE.

YUSRA (CONT'D)
If you don't know what is
happening, if you feel scared,
close your eyes.

We're about to witness the execution of a small boy.

YUSRA led away. GEORGE very still.

NLF PHOTOGRAPHER approaches. He stands in front of GEORGE. Then the NLF FIGHTER 1 with the sword moves up through the onlooking NLF FIGHTERS behind GEORGE, making his way to the front of the group so he's nearest to George. NLF PHOTOGRAPHER who has been positioning GEORGE in the right place makes his last adjustment and turns George's head slightly (like a barber does) so that he's facing front and holds it still there. Then - job done - he lifts his hands and walks out of the frame.

NLF FIGHTER 1 pulls a scarf across his face so that only his eyes are showing and steps in behind GEORGE.

The 8mm camera running now. GEORGE smiles at the camera - smiling is what you do with cameras when you're his age.

GEORGE senses things going on behind him and he doesn't know what it is so he does what Yusra has told him to do and closes his eyes. Eyes shut tight; little fist tight around his tooth. NLF FIGHTER 1 with the sword steps in a pace and then another, then adopts a feet apart stance and then pulls his sword up high and wide to his right ready to sweep it through a big arc.

*
*

17 INT. MARTHA'S HOTEL ROOM. THE GORDON HOTEL. DAY. 17

MARTHA gets a call. She listens. She leaves fast. She turns the fan off as she leaves.

18 EXT. STREET/CAFE. CRATER. DAY. 18

MARTHA knows she's being followed. TILBROOK following her.

19 EXT. STREET MARKET. CRATER. DAY. 19

MARTHA weaves fast through the market stalls and ducks into a doorway. She sees Tilbrook searching; he can't see her. She's lost her tail.

20

EXT. STREET. CRATER. DAY.

20

MARTHA standing, waiting. A STREET CLEANER goes by pushing a hand cart for rubbish. He stops and bends down to pick up something on the far side of the cart from where Martha stands. He moves on. Now MARTHA sees that in fact he has deposited a small package on the street. She picks it up.

She retraces her steps deliberately. And so, inevitably and deliberately, she sees Tilbrook (who is trying to pick up her trail again).

MARTHA

Well, fancy seeing you here.

TILBROOK

(Affecting surprise) Hello, Miss Franklin.

MARTHA

What would you have done?

TILBROOK

What's that?

MARTHA

If I hadn't lost you and you'd seen the street cleaner drop this at my feet?

She knows he wants the package.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You can have it if you answer my question. Pulled him in for some gentle questioning? Shot him in the street?

TILBROOK

I don't know what you're talking about.

She smiles.

MARTHA

Have it anyway. I'm just the messenger, remember?

MARTHA gives the package to Tilbrook.

21

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

21

TILBROOK with MARY and MARKHAM.

MARY

I want to see it.

TILBROOK
I don't think that's a good idea.

MARY
I have a right to see what they did
to my son.

TILBROOK
Mary. .

MARY
Don't you dare patronize me. He's
my son, you will take me to see
this film and you will do it now.

In old fashioned language c1965 she's pretty magnificent in
moments like this and she will be getting her way.

22 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 22

HONOR alone. She feels trapped. She doesn't know what she's
supposed to do. She looks through her mother's book of make
do and mend, knowing the answers are not there. She crunches
up the last two pages in her fists.

23 EXT. VERANDAH. MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY. 23

HONOR comes out and looks down on:

24 EXT. BASE. DAY. 24

Armstrong and Stoneham working on Land Rover modifications.
They're fitting a cage over the vehicle.

STONEHAM
What did she think about you?

ARMSTRONG
What's that?

STONEHAM
Yusra. You were head over heels.
What about her?

ARMSTRONG
You wouldn't understand.

STONEHAM
The love that passeth all
understanding. .

ARMSTRONG
Your understanding anyway.

Here comes HONOR. She catches the last of this exchange.

HONOR

Has anyone heard from my husband?

STONEHAM

No, ma' m.

We should be very surprised to discover that George is still alive and his head is still on his body. NLF FIGHTER 2 moves away. GEORGE opens his eyes. He knows nothing about what has just happened. MARY's pain. MARKHAM's pain.

MARY
Again.

MARKHAM
Mary..

MARY
Play it again.

The film again.

MARKHAM and TILBROOK look at MARY as she watches.

MARY (CONT'D)
The parting. In his hair.

MARKHAM
What?

MARY
Yusra does that; she's sending us a message, Harry: she's with him and she's helping him.. I knew it.

26

EXT. BASE. DAY.

26

MARKHAM, MARY and TILBROOK walking back to married quarters.

MARKHAM
You go ahead, darling. I'll catch you up.

MARY walks on. The two men watch her go. She stops at the bottom of the stairs like someone checking on their own strength before going up the steps to the gallows.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
What monsters these people are.

MARY walks up the stairs - a steady tread, good posture, no pausing, head up, facing forwards. Dignified, grace under pressure. The men watch her as they speak.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
What do they want?

TILBROOK
Kadir in exchange for George.
They're offering a swap, Harry.

A beat. Half a moment (really just a tiny flicker of hope) before Markham remembers how things work.

MARKHAM

MARKHAM

Yes.

MARY

They're right, of course.

MARY's ludicrous courage here. There's about five percent of her last sentence above which is a question rather than a statement of fact - she knows the answer but this small part of her hopes against hope that somehow her husband is going to say, "Actually, we do do deals with terrorists sometimes.." This hope crushed by:

MARKHAM

There's something Harvey didn't want you to know..

He's imparting to her what Tilbrook said to him, man to man, which ordinarily he would keep from his wife. She turns and looks at him. Unbearably painful - because it's never in their marriage been like this - to see him need her like he needs her now. Can this get any worse?

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

I'm afraid there's a deadline.

Looking straight at her husband, she nods. She knows the rest. She's never made anything any harder for him than it has to be and he won't have to spell it out.

MARY

How long?

MARKHAM

Twelve hours.

A long beat becomes a terrible silence. MARY unfolding the tea towel in her lap - like the folding before, the unfolding is precise. She goes to the sink. A beat. She's still. Her back to the room. Just before she starts drying the dishes:

MARY

Does Harvey Tilbrook have children?

30

INT. ED'S HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

30

ED in a hospital room. Tube and bottle which allows for his chest to drain the air out is by his bedside. It looks very basic (although in fact a pioneering technique in the 1960's).

JOE watching the bubbles in the bottle. ED wakes up. He wants to talk to Joe. He's trying to speak. At first, JOE can't make out what he's saying. Then:

Out in the sun, two men, old colleagues who have been through an awful lot together stand eight feet apart - no-one around, just the two of them in the heat, out in the open, like we're in a Western.

MARKHAM

At eighteen hundred hours. .

He breaks off.

BAXTER

Sir?

A long beat. MARKHAM doesn't know what to say anymore. The only place left to go would be into full on emotion and that can't be..

BAXTER

Permission to carry on, sir?

MARKHAM

Yes. Yes, of course.

It's clear to Baxter that Markham is not doing well. MARKHAM

BAXTER
Doing your job, sir.

35 INT. KITCHEN. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 35

MARY making summer pudding. She finishes chopping apples. She looks at her watch - the clock is ticking. The timing of elements of the summer pudding making are important and she needs to look at her watch regularly. She adds the chopped fruit to the saucepan. A knock at the door.

35a INT. DOORWAY. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 35a

STONEHAM at the door.

STONEHAM
I was looking for the CO, ma'm.

MARY
Come in. Please.

STONEHAM very awkward.

MARY (CONT'D)
Lemonade?

STONEHAM
No. Thank you, ma'm.

MARY
I love Lemonade.

STONEHAM
Ma'm, yes ma'm.

He doesn't know what he's doing here.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)
I wanted to say. .
Sorry, I know he's not dead, ma'm
but I just wanted to tell you he
was. . he was such a good lad.
Sorry. I keep saying "was" like. . I
shouldn't have come.

MARY
I'm so glad you did, Corporal
Stoneham. People have become
frightened of me because of what's
happened, you see. But not you -
and I'm very grateful. Thank you.

36 EXT. BASE. DAY. 36

BAXTER and JOE walk and talk.

JOE

Now that you've finished buttering
me up you can tell me what you
want..

BAXTER struggling to say what he knows he must say.

JOE (CONT'D)

Baxter?

BAXTER
It's the CO, sir.. He's not
himself.

JOE
Hardly surprising..

BAXTER
Would you do me a favour, sir? Drop
the English.

JOE
I'm sorry?

BAXTER
Keeping calm and carrying on is
posh folks idea of virtue - like
cold showers and thrift - but where
I come from that's all bollocks, if
you'll excuse the Glaswegian.

JOE gets it. It's very, very hard for Baxter to say what he
says next.

BAXTER (CONT'D)
I'd walk through fire for that man.
In fact, I have - more than once.
So please don't ever tell him I
said this. It would kill him if he

37 INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY.

37

JOE Looking at a large map with a matchbox truck on it - checking where NLF/George were and therefore could have been going when ED intercepted them and JOE rescued ED.

JOE

If they were coming from here and heading up country they might well have headed west first to this settlement..

STONEHAM hovering. JOE registers that Stoneham is hovering.

BAXTER

Which we know to be NLF friendly.

JOE

Pick up food, provisions.. then up into Radfan..

BAXTER

You look like you haven't slept in a long time sir. You should go home.

MARKHAM comes in. They all stand to attention.

MARKHAM

We've never done too much of that in this unit so let's not start now just because you feel sorry for me. I'm fine.

They all know he's not fine. MARKHAM stares at the map. They all wait for him to say something. He reaches out to touch the truck. And move it? MARKHAM's hand is shaking.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Radfan? I suppose. Am I right?

His bloody hand won't stop shaking when he tries to move the truck up into Radfan on the map. He puts his hand in his pocket to get it under control, to put it away, like it's not a part of him. When he takes it out again the toy soldier falls out of his pocket. He doesn't notice. But STONEHAM, looking on, sees it. MARKHAM catches STONEHAM looking at him.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Corporal Stoneham..

STONEHAM

Sir?

MARKHAM

Was there something?

STONEHAM
No sir, thank you sir.

STONEHAM goes. He wants to put himself in position to intercept Joe and speak to him alone when he leaves.

38 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 38

MARY washing up the chopping board and pan she's been using for making the summer pudding. The fruit puree is now cooling in a bowl on the side. When she finishes she tries to get her washing up gloves off and it won't come, they're too tight, and she's close to losing it, but (being Mary) doesn't. Mary Berry and Mary Archer rolled into one Mary.

39 EXT. MARRIED QUARTERS. BASE. DAY. 39

JOE walking home. He's SO tired. STONEHAM intercepts him. He's been waiting to catch him.

STONEHAM
Sir. Can I have a quick word?

JOE
So long as it's quick..

STONEHAM
Corporal Armstrong.

A blurt followed by a hesitation.

JOE
Stoneham?

STONEHAM
He's in love with the woman who did this.

JOE
Yusra..

Really hard this, for Stoneham. His pal is in love with the woman who has done this terrible thing.

STONEHAM
Please don't tell him I said this..

The pressure on JOE is mounting and mounting. He seems to be acquiring more and more responsibility (find George, take over command of the unit, deal with Armstrong's flirtation with the enemy). He looks up at the married quarters. He desperately needs a rest and a bath and some home comfort.

40 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

40

JOE comes in. HONOR stands. He walks up to her without speaking and he just holds her and holds her and holds her. He just holds her. He doesn't want anything else. A holding on. His exhaustion is deep. This is ten seconds at least. Then:

JOE

I had a choice, Honor. Ed or George. I could have got back in the Land Rover and.

HONOR

You did the right thing.

JOE

I did the easy thing. I helped Ed Laitwaite; I let George go.

HONOR

Joe.

JOE

Bravery is about having a choice and not taking the easy route.

She feels how he wrestles with himself; she senses how much mental effort goes into the fact of being Joe Martin.

40A INT. KITCHEN/HALLWAY/BATHROOM. MARTIN FLAT. DAY.

40A

The sound of a bath running down the hallway. HONOR washing (deep water in a deep sink) Joe's dirty, bloody shirt. The bath water is turned off. She looks down the hallway to the bathroom. The door is slightly open. She leaves the shirt in the dirty water. She walks down the hallway, wiping her hands (unthinking) on the front of her dress as she goes. She gets to the bathroom and looks through the crack in the door. Her POV of JOE, alone in the bath, alone, deep inside his exhaustion, deep inside his battle with himself. She understands how far away he is from her but/and that in order to rescue him/be with him/make their marriage work she will have to put herself into the world with him.

She makes a decision here. She's determined to act, to be.

41 EXT. BASE. DAY.

41

HONOR approaches ARMSTRONG.

HONOR

My husband is tired. He wants you to drive me to the hospital in his place.

42 EXT. LAND ROVER. DAY. 42

HONOR being driven by ARMSTRONG to the hospital.

ARMSTRONG

She sells sea shells on the sea shore. The sea shells that she sells are sea shells I'm sure.

HONOR

It seems a long time ago now.

ARMSTRONG

I'm going to find out.

HONOR

What's that?

ARMSTRONG

Why they don't want us here.

HONOR

Before it's too late.

He glances at the suddenly much older Honor.

ARMSTRONG

Your husband deserves a medal, ma'am.

HONOR

You should tell him that, Armstrong.

43 INT. BATHROOM. MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 43

JOE wakes up in the bath. He's been asleep. He's very cold. The water is cold and filled with dirt and some blood. He gets out of the bath, not caring about the water splashing on the floor. There's no towel.

JOE

Honor? Honor?

No answer. The silence in the flat.

44 INT. ED'S HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY. 44

ALISON at Ed's bedside. She finishes a cigarette and lights another. She watches the bubbles. Are they bubbling less than they were?

Breathing still difficult and painful. His hand is squeezing her hand on every (laboured) intake of breath (painful) and relaxing his grip of her hand on each exhalation of breath.

He needs to sleep. He goes to sleep. She stands and lights a cigarette.

NURSE
Time to go home, Mrs Lai thwai te.

ALISON
I'm not leaving him.

NURSE
It's time to go home.

ALISON
I'll stay here, thank you.

NURSE
You can't do that.

ALISON
Why not? What will happen?

NURSE walks away and comes back with DOCTOR RUSSELL.

RUSSELL
Is there a problem?

ALISON
No.

RUSSELL
He's in very good hands..

ALISON
I'm watching the bubbles.

RUSSELL
Mrs Lai thwai te. Visiting hours..

ALISON
Jesus Christ. Rules rules rules.

RUSSELL
There's a reason why..

ALISON
Yes. Everything in a box.
Everything described and put in a
bloody box and made never to leave
or else the world might end.

RUSSELL
You're getting..

ALISON
What? I'm getting out of my box and
you can't stand it or understand it
and..

RUSSELL

You're a pregnant woman. You don't know what you're saying.

She hits him. An open slap hard across the face.

ALISON

You're making me have these babies.

RUSSELL

What else is there, Mrs Laitwai te? What exactly am I stopping you doing?

ALISON

Is there anything more cowardly than a man asking questions he already knows the answer to for the purpose of humiliating someone he's frightened of?

RUSSELL

What's the matter with you?

ALISON

Oh yes. There is something more cowardly - a man who avoids answering a question he doesn't like by asking a question himself.

RUSSELL

Here's my question, Mrs Laitwai te. What kind of a wife with a man as brave as your husband in the condition he's in, behaves this selfishly?

She laughs in his face. (I love this old cliché) In his face she laughs. Which is not a good thing to do..

ALISON

The character of my husband? Is that it? What can a woman possibly complain about if her husband is a good egg?

RUSSELL

And what's wrong with that?

ALISON

(Shouted) Because he's not me. Because I exist. Look. Here I am. A human being all by myself.

HONOR arrives here to hear the end of this.

HONOR

Alison?

45 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

45

ALISON angry. HONOR trying to calm her down.

HONOR
Breathe deeply.

ALISON laughs.

ALISON
Is that what your mother's book says? How to deal with collapsed lungs and hysterical women..

HONOR
It's just common sense.

ALISON
Goodness me how quickly you're growing up..

HONOR doesn't want to show it, and is pleased.

ALISON (CONT'D)
That's what everyone says, isn't it? Well done, she's crawling! Her first word! She can walk! Why are we so desperate for children to grow up? All the prizes in life - coming of age, getting married.. are for getting older. Well done for getting closer to death. Do you remember hurting yourself?

HONOR
What do you mean?

ALISON
Falling over. Wasn't it wonderful? God the shock of it. The ground in your face. Bam. BAM. Smack. Knees. Elbows. When was the last time you gave your elbow a second thought? The taste of fresh scab, do you remember? Good and salty and bloody. I miss pain. How far away from childhood (and how quickly) people go.

She looks at HONOR like lovers do.

ALISON (CONT'D)
That's one of the things I love about you. Sometimes when I hear you laugh I could scream/shout with pleasure. Don't grow up, Honor. I'll die if you turn into one of them.

MARKHAM
This takes precedence.
It's an order from high command.

JOE
I'll take Armstrong and Baxter as
my wing men.

MARKHAM
No. Just you.

JOE
Can I ask why?

MARKHAM
No. Strictly need to know, Captain
Martin. And hush hush.

JOE
It must be connected to George,
sir.

That's clearly MARKHAM's hope. JOE goes.

48 INT. KITCHEN. MARKHAM FLAT. CONTINUOUS. DAY.

48

MARY in the kitchen. Peter starts crying. She leaves him to cry, hands covered in fruit puree as she assembles the sliced bread and fruit layers of the summer pudding. She looks at her watch (on the side, removed for assembling the pudding). The clock ticking down. MARKHAM arrives.

MARY
What if George were a prince?

MARKHAM
What? Mary..

MARY
What if Prince Charles had been
kidnapped by terrorists..

She looks at him.

MARY (CONT'D)
And a swap was offered.

He doesn't have to answer her question.

MARY (CONT'D)
They'd take it. They'd make the

MARY (CONT'D)

So there are exceptions to the
rule.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

The rule has discretion hidden inside it. The thing that matters is the identity of the kidnap victim. They don't think our son is important enough.

MARKHAM

What do you want me to do?

MARY

Go and tell them, Harry.

He hesitates. She sees his hesitation.

MARY (CONT'D)

All your life you've done your duty; almost always that involves not asking questions people would rather you didn't ask. In a few hours time our son will be put to death. HE'S OUR SON. There's a rule. It can be broken; if it's broken our son will live. I want you, for the first time in your life, to go and make a fuss.

49

EXT. HOSPITAL. DAY.

49

HONOR leaving. ARMSTRONG comes off the radio when he sees her coming and holds the Land Rover door open for her.

ARMSTRONG

That was base, ma'm. Just to let you know, ma'm that your husband left an hour ago.

HONOR

Where to?

ARMSTRONG

He wouldn't say, ma'm. It's a secret.

On HONOR. Her suspicions and her concern. She makes a decision.

HONOR

Armstrong, would you mind taking me somewhere else?

50

EXT. AIRPORT. DAY.

50

JOE waiting by the Land Rover beside the landing strip. The last few passengers waiting by the hanger. A man in a dark charcoal suit (plain, not pinstripe) approaches. This is the Minister for the Colonies. Nobody can know he's here or why.

A serious man. He doesn't want to be seen and he doesn't want to be spoken to. Fortunately for him, he has an ethereal, almost ghostly quality. Tall, thin, long faced, he could only be English - like Anthony Blunt. This ethereal quality doesn't mean he's insubstantial, quite the opposite, this is a serious player. No hair on his forearms (although this isn't a deal breaker in casting). He carries a briefcase. His name is COLIN CALVERT.

CALVERT
The Gordon Hotel.

51 EXT. LAND ROVER. CRATER. DAY.

51

HONOR being driven by ARMSTRONG. Ahead are Adeni protesters. ARMSTRONG drives on - a mistake. The protestors surround them; Armstrong has to slow down and then stop. There's an atmosphere of anger and aggression. A man with a bloody nose is jostled forwards and pushes up against the Land Rover. He stares at Honor and she stares back. Profound cultural difference in a held moment. Flecks of his blood land on Honor's blouse. She looks down at her blouse and then back up and the man is gone. HONOR works hard against showing how disturbing this is. ARMSTRONG hits the horn, revs the engine and (reckless as to the safety of the protestors) is able to find a way through and away.

52 EXT. ENTRANCE. THE GORDON HOTEL. DAY.

52

JOE arrives with CALVERT. CALVERT goes in.

56 INT. MARTHA'S HOTEL ROOM. THE GORDON. DAY

56

HONOR comes in. MARTHA smoking and typing - both with intensity.

MARTHA

Eight hundred words on the hemline
of the mini skirt for The Times.
What can you say in eight hundred
words? Jean Shrimpton wore a
minidress at Ascot and frightened
the horses. Mary Quant did or
didn't invent the damn thing?
There's blood on your blouse.
Where do you stand on how far below
the panty line a mini can safely
go?

HONOR doesn't realise that this is a rhetorical question and feels the need to answer it.

HONOR

I don't know. I don't like my
knees.

MARTHA laughs. Not unkind. She really likes the utter lack of guile and sophistication in this.

MARTHA

The blood. . ?

HONOR

A man. . a protestor. I don't know.

MARTHA

Smoke?

HONOR

Sometimes.

She means:

MARTHA

Would you like one?

HONOR
Oh. No.

MARTHA
So .

HONOR
Yes.

MARTHA
How can I help?

HONOR
You don't know me.

MARTHA
No.

HONOR
I'm Captain Martin's wife.

MARTHA smiles.

MARTHA
Is that what you do at home?

HONOR
Sorry?

MARTHA
Could you pass the sugar, Captain
Martin? Certainly, Mrs Martin.

HONOR Looking down and then as she speaks Looking up.

HONOR
What's the matter?

MARTHA
Huh?

HONOR
It feels like you're jumping all
over me and you don't know anything
about me. I expect it's the same
for Joe, isn't it? When he's here.

MARTHA
Does your husband know you've come?

HONOR
No.

MARTHA
So this is not a friendly visit. .

HONOR
I don't know. I love him.

MARTHA

Yes. Yes, you do, don't you?

HONOR

Have you ever been in love?

MARTHA

Often. All the time.

She looks at this girl standing looking at her, waiting for her to finish her answer..

MARTHA (CONT'D)

No.

HONOR

But men love you. Often. All the time.

MARTHA

I suppose they do.

HONOR

Is that enough?

It's a genuine question, not a remark.

MARTHA

I don't suppose it is.

HONOR

How can they help themselves..

She looks at her. Here's the big moment. She needs to ask about Joe. She wants a confession.

MARTHA

He hasn't. Joe.. Captain Martin has never..

HONOR

You wouldn't lie?

MARTHA

How could anyone lie to you?

MARTHA is almost in love. Certainly she's overcome by Honor's thrilling naivete and uncomplicated honesty.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

How old are you?

HONOR

Twenty one. How old are you?

MARTHA

I was twenty one. Once upon a time.

57

INT. THE GORDON HOTEL. DAY.

57

HONOR on the way out bumps into TILBROOK as both cross the lobby heading for the exit. Tilbrook is thrown and (briefly) awkward to have been seen here. Honor clocks this.

HONOR

Oh. Hello. What are you doing here, Harvey?

TILBROOK (his composure regained) Lies:

TILBROOK

I've been having a chin-wag with Martha Franklin.

HONOR looks at him, knowing this is a lie. He mistakes her expression for something else..

TILBROOK (CONT'D)

She's an American journalist. I've been putting her straight on a few things.

HONOR

Just now?

TILBROOK

Yes. Stay away from her, if I were you. She does.. bad things.

HONOR

Why do you know that?

TILBROOK

That's a funny question.

HONOR looking at him. The question isn't going away.

TILBROOK (CONT'D)

She's in my sphere of influence.

He doesn't like her tone - unexpected in one so young and easily dominated.

TILBROOK (CONT'D)

And why are you here, Honor Martin?
All on your own-io?

HONOR - now that Tilbrook has lied and not wanting to give away that she knows he has lied (which telling the truth would do) - has to lie too.

HONOR
It's a secret.

TILBROOK
(Smiling but insisting on an answer by not breaking eye contact) I don't like secrets.

HONOR
We didn't have a honeymoon. I thought we could have a night at The Gordon. . I'm here to ask. .

TILBROOK
Permission?

HONOR
The price.

TILBROOK
Bit dear.

HONOR
Yes. I didn't know. Now I do.

58 INT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

58

Hard cut into George (no inhaler) having an asthma attack. He's really struggling. It's a bad one. YUSRA with him.

GEORGE
I can't breathe.

YUSRA frantically searching for his inhaler.

YUSRA
Do you have it?

She doesn't know the word for inhaler and so she mimes what she means. He's really struggling to breathe. He shakes his head. He doesn't have it. He looks panicked.

YUSRA sees an opportunity.

YUSRA (CONT'D)
Stay. Wait.

GEORGE
No.

He doesn't want to be left.

YUSRA
One minute. I will be back.

59 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

59

YUSRA tells NLF FIGHTER 1 (in Arabic) that she has to get George an inhaler from a pharmacy.

YUSRA
(Arabic) Ma yakdersh yatanafas!
[He can't breathe.]

NLF FIGHTER 1 shrugs.

YUSRA (CONT'D)
(Arabic) Ai ysh ba yanfakum low
maat?
[What good is he to you if he
dies?]

Good point. A shift in perception now.

NLF FIGHTER 1
(Arabic) Yemkin yemoot?
[He could die?]

Her answer makes it very clear:

YUSRA
(Arabic) Yahtag al bakhakh.
[He needs the inhaler.]

NLF FIGHTER 1 nods.

60 INT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

60

YUSRA back with GEORGE. He's holding on tight to her sleeve, as though holding onto her will help him breathe. She's trying to get him to hear what she's saying through his panic.

YUSRA
I am going to the pharmacy to get
you a new inhaler. Then you'll be
able to breathe properly.

GEORGE
Don't leave me.

YUSRA

66

INT. PHARMACY. CRATER. DAY.

66

Pharmacist calls the base.

67 INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY. 67
STONEHAM picks up the phone.

68 EXT. ROAD. DAY. 68
YUSRA is driven back to George Location.

69 INT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY. 69
Stoneham ends a call from the pharmacist about the inhaler.

STONEHAM
(To ARMSTRONG) Pharmacist in
Crater. Bit odd actually.

ARMSTRONG
Why?

STONEHAM
Does George Markham want a second
inhaler?

ARMSTRONG puzzles over this and then makes a decision.

70 EXT. LAND ROVER. ROAD/CRATER. DAY. 70
ARMSTRONG driving fast to the pharmacist.

71 INT. PHARMACY. CRATER. DAY. 71
ARMSTRONG at the pharmacist. PHARMACIST gives ARMSTRONG the
written address he took down from Yusra.

72 EXT. LAND ROVER. DAY. 72
ARMSTRONG translates the written address from Arabic by
reference to his pocket dictionary. He looks at a map.

73 EXT. OFFICE. BASE. DAY. 73
ARMSTRONG walking with JOE. Urgent talk.

ARMSTRONG
I think it's where they are, sir. I
think she left this at the pharmacy
so we'd know where their location
is.

JOE
It could be. It could be a trap.

ARMSTRONG

It's not. It's Yusra. She's not like that. She loves George.

JOE

But you're telling me.

ARMSTRONG

I don't understand, sir.

JOE

As opposed to the CO or anyone else. Because you don't think anyone else will agree with you. Am I right?

MARKHAM approachi ng.

MARKHAM

Captai n Marti n.

JOE

Si r?

MARKHAM

Drivi ng job. Take one man. The idea is to make it low key.

JOE

Who is it, sir?

MARKHAM

They're moving him. There's intelligence suggesting there could be a rescue bid so to be safe.. Kadir. It's Starfish. He's at Middle East Command.

JOE

You'll ride shotgun, Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG

Si r, yes, si r.

MARKHAM

I'll hitch a ride with you.

74

INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

74

MARY making summer pudding. She places a bowl on the assembled pudding and begins to make the arrowroot sauce. She looks at her watch as one does when you're cooking and when you're counting down the time to the death of your child.

75

EXT. DISUSED CRAYFISH FACTORY. DAY.

75

CALVERT waiting for Kadir/Starfish. Still wearing his dark

MARKHAM

(A last resort) Then I'll have to
tell the world about this
conversation.

A mistake and TILBROOK - looking right at him, steady and
sure in his view of the world - knows the character of the
man looking back at him. The two men hold each other's gaze.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

The American journalist..

TILBROOK

You won't do that.

MARKHAM

I can't go back to Mary and tell
her I've failed.

TILBROOK

Yes, you can. Yes, you will.

He's right. Both men know this. George is dead.

78

EXT. LAND ROVER. DESERT. DAY.

78

JOE with Armstrong riding shotgun. KADIR hand-cuffed but not
to anyone or anything. They stop at a crossroads in the
middle of nowhere. JOE looks long and hard at KADIR. This is
the moment which will define the rest of Joe's life. He
decides. He nods at ARMSTRONG. ARMSTRONG unlocks the cuffs
and then re-cuffs Kadir to the vehicle. JOE and ARMSTRONG
move away from the vehicle so as not to be overheard.

JOE

I don't want you to have anything
to do with this, Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG

Sir..

JOE

Nobody need know that you were
involved in any way..

ARMSTRONG

I'm coming with you.

JOE

The penalty for allowing a..

ARMSTRONG

You won't pull it off without me.
Two of us - we've half a chance.
Can't be done by one man.

A good, strong practical reason for his continued involvement
- which Joe sees through.

YUSRA

Tony.

Long shot. Heat haze. Here he comes.

NLF FIGHTERS Look on. One looks through rifle sights to get a better view. What the hell? Shoot? Wait. The white hanky.

NLF FIGHTER 1
(English) Okay. Okay.

The swap is on.

ARMSTRONG
One more thing.

YUSRA translates.

YUSRA
(Arabic) Haga thani yah.
[One more thing.]

ARMSTRONG
Yusra comes with George.

YUSRA translates.

YUSRA
(Arabic) Yishtoni arroh ma-ahum
kaman.
[They want me to go with them too.]

He loves her, he's telling her he loves her and she knows this. NLF FIGHTER 1 doesn't like this. The deal might collapse..

NLF FIGHTER 1
(Arabic) Ith nain mukabil wahid,
Ithnain mukabil wahid? At tifi
fakat.
[Two for one. Two for one? Only the
child.]

ARMSTRONG understands this, doesn't need it translated.

ARMSTRONG
No. (Arabic) La.
[No.]

YUSRA
Tony, no. Take George. Leave me.
Please.

ARMSTRONG
One woman and a child for your
great leader. Is he not worth this?

YUSRA won't translate.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
Tell them. Tell them.

YUSRA translates.

YUSRA
(Arabic) Who yas al i da khyi dkum al
azeem ma yi saweesh ithnain
madani yeen?
[He asks if your great leader is
not worth two civilians?]

They nod. Phew. The deal is still on.

EXT. VEHICLE. NEAR FARMHOUSE. DAY.

- 92 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 92
- MARKHAM comes in. He sees MARY. He joins her by the table. MARKHAM and MARY together counting down the minutes to the death of their boy. The second hand reaches the top. The hour. They believe him to be dead. MARY doesn't move. MARKHAM, unsteady on his feet, moves away from the table, like a feeble drunk. He turns the lilo over from red to blue.
- 93 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 93
- GEORGE and YUSRA reach safety.
- 94 EXT. FARMHOUSE. DAY. 94
- Animated conversation - KADIR tells NLF FIGHTERS that there are only two Brits (in Arabic). The NLF have presumed up until now that Armstrong has been sent out (with white flag and alone) as the single sole representative from a proper unit of men. Now they know it's just two men! NLF FIGHTERS pile into the vehicle. They can have their cake and eat it - Kadir back with them and recapture George..
- 95 EXT. DESERT NEAR FARMHOUSE. DAY. 95
- JOE spots the NLF vehicle coming.
- JOE
Let's go, let's go.
- They pile into the Land Rover.
- 96 EXT. TRACK. DESERT. DAY. 96
- JOE, ARMSTRONG, YUSRA and GEORGE. JOE glances in the rear view mirror. The NLF vehicle catching them. They're going to catch them. They come round a bend and almost collide with Baxter et al. They stop. The NLF vehicle occupants see the new firepower facing them and turn tail.
- 97 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 97
- MARY and MARKHAM hold each other believing George to be dead. They're standing, her head resting on his shoulder. Heads bowed. Deep shock. The sound of Land Rovers returning outside. The Markham's steel themselves for the desperate news. Footsteps coming up the outside steps - hammer blows. The news of his death is arriving. MARY closes her eyes; MARKHAM closes his.
- GEORGE
Mummy.

MARY opens her eyes. Slo-mo, distorted sound (The Railway Children) as she goes to her son and takes him in her arms and holds him and holds him and holds him and buries all of her face in all of him. MARKHAM cries. He just cries tears of joy. It may be the first time in his life he has abandoned himself to pure emotion and it might be the last but it is complete abandonment. JOE in the doorway. ARMSTRONG behind him. Both parents look at the two soldiers and their eternal and profound gratitude is unspoken but clear.

98 INT. HOSPITAL. DAY EIGHT. 98

ED leaving. He's insisting on walking even though it's hard and he's in some discomfort and it takes a long time to walk down the long corridor. ALISON by his side.

99 EXT. HOSPITAL. DAY. 99

ED and ALISON come out. He stands and looks at the sea and the sky.

ED
It's blue. It's really blue.

ALISON
Darling?

He turns and looks at his wife (with some difficulty).

ED
I didn't die. And life will be better. Blue will be bluer and we will be happy. I promise.

She smiles. He turns back to look at the sea and just as the scene ends we catch the very beginning of ALISON's thoughts about what this all means for her.

100 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. NIGHT.

ALISON

I don't think you can just announce happiness.

GEORGE goes and stands by his father and JOE. We pick up that MARY doesn't ever once take her eyes off George.

MARKHAM

I don't know how we can ever thank you.

JOE

I let him go the first time. I wasn't going to miss a second opportunity.

ALISON steps in.

ALISON

Let yourself be a hero for God's sake, Joe.

GEORGE

We're heroes, Joe.

JOE

(To George) Go and say thank you to Lieutenant Laitwaite.

GEORGE makes his way over to ED. ALISON looks on. He's good with children. MARKHAM goes to speak to ARMSTRONG.

STONEHAM eating summer pudding.

STONEHAM

Delicious, Mrs M.

MARY

Good. Thank you.

STONEHAM

Is there any lemonade?

GEORGE moves on from Ed to dad. He listens to what they say.

MARKHAM

What are you suggesting we do?

ARMSTRONG

Look after her.

MARKHAM

How?

ARMSTRONG

She needs protection. The NLF know what she did.

MARKHAM
She has a family.

ARMSTRONG
Yes.

MARKHAM
They know where they live.

ARMSTRONG
Yes, sir.

MARKHAM
We can't take the whole family into
our care.

ARMSTRONG
They'll kill them. Then they'll
kill them, sir.

He leaves the party.

102 EXT. MARKHAM FLAT. NIGHT.

102

ARMSTRONG doesn't know what he's doing or where he's going
but he isn't going to let her down.

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GEORGE

He saved my life. You can't do
that. He's a hero.

Everyone looks at GEORGE. JOE goes up to GEORGE, bends down
and tells him what he needs to hear.

JOE

I'll explain. I'll explain
everything and everything will be
all right.

He stands up straight and nods to the arresting officers.
He's ready. They can take him now. He's escorted out of the
room. The sound of footsteps - Joe being taken down the steps
outside - hammer blows. The silence in the room.