

THE UNKNOWN

by
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Based on actual events

and

THE FLAG

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"THE UNKNOWN"

BLACK:

SUPER: This remains the greatest mystery of the First World War.

FADE IN:

TITLES OVER:

EXT. SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS - DAY

The long hollow whistle of the *West Highland Line* train mixes with the vibration of its wheels set against the rails as it steams across a heather clad wilderness, pitching never-ending virgin white smoke against an intense blue sky.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE COMPARTMENT - DAY

RAILWAY GUARD (V.O.)
Next stop, Fort William.

DAVID RAILTON (71, a once handsome man, his face now carries the scars of a poison gas attack), puts on his heavy coat and hat, gathers his suitcase from the overhead rack, opens the compartment door and steps into -

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

Railton squeezes past a TOURIST COUPLE (late 20s), gazing out at the stunning countryside and stops by the carriage door.

EXT. FORT WILLIAM RAILWAY STATION

SUPER: Fort William, Scotland, 30th June, 1955

The platform overflows with a blend of LOCALS and elated HOLIDAY MAKERS at the sight and sound of the approaching train, announcing its imminent arrival as --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. 'ARD RHU' KITCHEN - DAY

A shaft of light from a solitary window cuts across the room to spotlight an oversized KETTLE on a range, whose whistle roars, its spout a torrent of steam.

RUBY RAILTON (76), stretches to remove the kettle from the heat as --

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

ANOTHER PASSENGER hastens past the tourist couple when --

EXT. THE RAILWAY TRACK

The train violently jolts as it passes over a set of points --

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

Causing the Passenger to collide with Railton.

PASSENGER

Oh, excuse me!

Who loses his balance and leans backwards against the carriage door handle as --

INT. 'ARD RHU' KITCHEN

Ruby grasps at the hot kettle and --

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

The carriage door springs open --

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

The female Tourist unwraps a petrifying scream --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. 'ARD RHU' KITCHEN

Ruby lets go a painful scream and --

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

The male Tourist reaches for the Emergency Cord as --

INT. 'ARD RHU' KITCHEN - DAY

The kettle plummets to the ground, its lid separates and boiling liquid spills across the floor.

EXT. FORT WILLIAM RAILWAY STATION

The train screeches to a juddering halt, its engine adjacent to the backend of the platform.

A STATIONMASTER dashes forwards, pushing past expectant passengers.

STATIONMASTER

Excuse me. Excuse me. Get out of the way!

EXT. THE RAILWAY TRACK - DAY

Railton lies horizontal just yards from the train.

MALE PASSENGERS jump down onto the track. FEMALE PASSENGERS crowd the carriage windows. A small group surround Railton.

A PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN (30s) bends down to check Railton's pulse. Stares back-up at the crowd.

PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN

My God... he's dead!

Crowd reacts, horrified, as the Stationmaster arrives.

Railton's bloodied head rests against ballast.

PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN (O.S.)
(CONT'D)

Anyone know who he is?

FADE TO BLACK:

Overhead thunderous 'BWOOM' of artillery shells mixed with the din of never-ending rain.

VOICE (O.S.)

(loud cry)

Down!

Ferocious 'KABOOM!' as a shell lands nearby.

CAPTAIN CLARK (O.S.)

Padre..? David..? You alright?

FADE IN ON:

EXT. A BOMB CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE - DUSK

Railton's soil-encrusted face, in exactly the same position, now 39 years younger, handsome, vigorous and seemingly unconscious.

Railton opens his blurry eyes and stares directly-up past CAPTAIN SYDNEY CLARK (47, RAMC), at the characterless grey, smoke-enveloped sky that hovers above the mud and grime. He takes a second to focus and realise his position.

RAILTON
(cheerily)
I think so, Doc.

Railton grins. The Doctor sighs with relief. Railton physically explores his own body through his mud-splattered uniform.

RAILTON (CONT'D)
No bones broken.

CAPTAIN CLARK
You sure?

RAILTON
Yes, I'm okay.

SUPER: The Battle of the Somme, France, October, 1916

The explosion caused Railton, the Captain, a YOUNG LIEUTENANT OFFICER (20) and 2 STRETCHER-BEARERS (both wearing Red Cross armbands), to hit the ground of a flooded crater, which has an upended, discarded, burnt-out British tank laid-up opposite them.

INT. THE TANK SHELL

From a claustrophobic cavity a GERMAN SNIPER squints one eye tightly-closed and as Clark rises from beside Railton, he shoots.

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE

'WHIP/CRACK!'

CAPTAIN CLARK
Arrggh!

Clark collapses in a heap, gravely wounded. Railton instinctively rolls away for cover.

STRETCHER-BEARER 1 promptly rises to aid the Captain, before Railton has a chance to stop him --

RAILTON
For God's sake, get..!

Too late. 'CRACK!' Another shot rings out.

The Stretcher-Bearer falls to the ground, dead.

EXT. THE BRITISH TRENCH

Two more BEARERS conveying a stretcher, dash-out from one of the snake-like ragged British trenches under copious fire and head across 'No Man's Land' towards the crater.

The air WHIRS with German SHOT, the continual roar of overhead SHELLS and WHISTLING SHRAPNEL. Black earth SPEWS skywards.

It's DEAFENING. Mud-enveloped dead lie everywhere; men and horses prostrate against barbed-wire; some with rifles still in hand, some in one piece, many others, not.

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE

The German Sniper shows his face just a second too long and slumps abruptly forward as the Lieutenant repeatedly fires his pistol at him.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH, THE SOMME

A German rifle shoots.

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE

'THUMP!' - As a bullet enters the Lieutenant's leg. He falls, clutching at his thigh.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

Christ! Aarrhhh!

The two Bearers leap into the crater to witness the disarray, shock on their faces.

PRIVATE FILMER

Blimey!

Railton turns to the lead Bearer.

RAILTON

Filmer..?

Filmer scratches his way low across towards Railton.

PRIVATE FILMER

You alright, Padre, sir?

RAILTON

You need to get Captain Clark back to the casualty clearing station as soon as possible. Take Brown with you. We can't afford to lose a single Doctor.

Filmer studies the Captain, blood oozing from his chest and turns to the other Bearers.

PRIVATE FILMER

Give me a hand, lads.

Filmer and the two Bearers lift the Captain onto a stretcher.

CAPTAIN CLARK

Aarrhhh!!!

PRIVATE FILMER

You'll be awright, sir, you'll see. How are ya going to get back, Padre?

Railton scans the devastation and smiles.

RAILTON

With the good Lord's help, Laddie! I'll take care of this young officer. Now off you all go. God bless!

Filmer bellows at the top of his voice:

PRIVATE FILMER

Coverin' fire!

EXT. BRITISH TRENCH, THE SOMME

A volley of shots ring-out from the British trench. High-pitch WHINES that fade in the distance.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH, THE SOMME

The GERMAN SOLDIERS cower. POV along the barrel of a machine-gun skulking for anyone to enter its sight.

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD, THE SOMME, FRANCE

Filmer and the other two Bearers lurch-out of the crater under the weight of their casualty and scramble, madly zigzagging as they go.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH, THE SOMME

STACCATO-rhythm as the *Maxim* opens-up, it's cartridge belt RIPS through the centre of the gun. Bullet casings CASCADING out of its base.

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD, THE SOMME, FRANCE

A Bearer, hit in his shoulder, instantly drops his end of the stretcher.

PRIVATE BROWN immediately grabs for the stretcher poles. The three men miraculously make it back, falling into their trench, along with their patient.

PRIVATE FILMER

Fuck!

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE

Railton drags himself to a kneeling position and makes a low dash to the Lieutenant, whose terrified eyes stare back.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

Save yourself, Padre.

Railton peers proudly at the young man.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

The instant we show our heads the chances of us both surviving almost nil. I'll only be a hindrance.

Railton reaches into his pack, takes out his *Union Flag* and ties a tourniquet tight around the Lieutenant's thigh.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

ARRRRHHH!!!!

RAILTON

Rubbish, Laddie. God placed me here at this moment for a very good reason, I'm sure of it.

Railton scrutinizes the terrain ahead of their trench.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Can you walk, Old Lad?

The Lieutenant shakes his head.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

I doubt I'll make 20 yards.

Railton stares hard at the boy.

RAILTON

Do you believe in God, Laddie?

'BOOM!' - A shell falls dangerously close-by, causing them both to duck for cover as a shower of mud rains on them both. The Lieutenant gapes at Railton, petrified.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Any God..?

The Lieutenant struggles to remain conscious.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

Yes... Yes, I do.

RAILTON

Then pray for us both!

The Lieutenant cries out as Railton hauls him up by his arms, first to his feet and then up over his shoulders.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCH, THE SOMME

An eagle-eyed BRITISH ARMY SERGEANT looking over the parapet through a periscope spots Railton setting-off at a punishing pace.

SERGEANT

It's the Padre bringing in young Mr. Blackburn. Cover fire!

The BRITISH SOLDIERS let loose rifle volleys.

With the Lieutenant draped across his back, Railton's boots SPLASH deep into the mud. His breath tortuously heaving out his mouth as he recites *'The Lord's Prayer'*.

From Railton's POV, as he passes barbed-wire fences littered with rag-doll-like bodies. Bullet tracers 'WHIZZING' past in both directions.

Railton speeds-on through the mayhem, reciting his prayer. He never hesitates. Never stops. His lungs GASPING through his throat.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

(begging)

Leave me, Padre. Let me go!

Railton heaves again at the Lieutenant's arms, dragging him upwards and onwards, SCREAMING at his own pain, STAGGERING under the weight.

A few yards more. He stumbles momentarily and in desperation drops the Lieutenant's body into the --

EXT. BRITISH TRENCH, THE SOMME

Then topples in himself, hitting the saturated mud hard, landing amongst the MEN of the *19th BATTALION, LONDON REGIMENT*, who glare down at him in disbelief.

The Sergeant hurries over. Railton gapes up at him.

RAILTON

Captain Clark..?

The Sergeant drops his eyes and then his head.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Damn!

INT. IMPROMPTU FIELD STATION, THE SOMME - NIGHT

Overwhelmed MEDICAL OFFICERS, CHAPLAINS and ORDERLIES from the RAMC tend to the wounded in the makeshift hospital tent, assisted only by the half light from occasional paraffin lamps, grotesque characters projected on the roof like a shadow puppet show.

Railton stops a passing ORDERLY.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Captain Clark?

ORDERLY

Dead or alive, Padre?

RAILTON

I imagine dead.

The Orderly points to the far side of the tent. Railton takes a lamp and moves past the cries of gravely injured and dying men.

He stops. Lowers his lamp to check Clark's features. Takes a moment, then unbuttons and reaches into Clark's tunic pockets to empty them. A photograph of Clark's WIFE and DAUGHTER. His blood-stained identity papers.

Railton's eyes gloss over as he angrily removes Clark's rank insignia and tunic buttons with his penknife. Finally, he reaches down to lift-up Clark's left hand and slides-off his wedding ring.

EXT. GRAVESIDE, THE SOMME - NIGHT

A low full moon casts a glow in the darkness. It's eerily silent. A PLATOON of weary soldiers pass by.

A body sits atop two ropes lying in the mud, wrapped in hessian sacking, next to a freshly-dug grave.

A BURIAL PARTY of four exhausted, grubby SOLDIERS, their uniforms caked with mud, huddle around a small brazier, leaning on their shovels.

A group of WOUNDED SOLDIERS have gathered to pay their respects, their frosted breaths, testament to the weather.

Railton opens his pack. Takes out his bruised *Union Flag* and drapes it across the body. In the colourless drenched landscape of mud and khaki, the flag dazzles.

The faces of the soldiers say so much when they see it. The flag brings back individual memories of 'home'.

The officious, MAJOR RICHARDSON (50s, a rotund tragic casualty of the war), appears.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

You four remain with the Padre to complete burial detail. The rest of you, back to the clearing station.

No-one moves.

MAJOR RICHARDSON (CONT'D)

Now!

The soldiers stare at the Major with incredulity.

MAJOR RICHARDSON (CONT'D)

Immediately!

Railton glances-up questionably, at the Major.

RAILTON

(pleading)
Major... please?

MAJOR RICHARDSON

My apologies, Padre, but any-sized gathering might well draw Boche fire.

The Captain's comrades clearly upset, realise they have little choice. They leave. A worn-out Railton dips his head as the Major departs.

Railton takes out his bible and turns to a well-thumbed page. *John 11:25*.

RAILTON

'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.'

The four soldiers take hold of the two ropes and begin to lower the body into its grave. One of them retrieves the flag and folds it as Railton reads *the Committal*:

RAILTON (CONT'D)

'For as much as it has pleased Almighty God to take out of this world the soul of Captain Sydney Rufus Clark, Royal Army Medical Corp, we therefore commit his body to the ground, earth to earth...'

A soldier spades earth into the grave.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

'Ashes to ashes...'

Another spade.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

'Dust to dust...'

And another.

Railton looks-up wearily at the soldiers, eyeing them individually before commencing his prayer.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

'Our Father which art in heaven,'

He closes his eyes as the burial party join in, each speaking so firmly, they mean every word.

RAILTON & BURIAL PARTY

'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.'

BURIAL PARTY

Amen!

Railton secures his Bible and gestures with his head, the signal for the soldiers to begin filling-in the grave. He retrieves his flag and deposits it back in his pack.

The soldiers place a rough wooden cross marked with Captain Clark's name, his regiment, and the day's date, in the ground.

One of them smashes it HARD down with his shovel.

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT - MORNING

Dug-out of the earth itself, Railton's front-line refuge is reinforced with wooden beams. A thin mattress lies on his cot;

a single blanket, paraffin lamp that keeps one half his face permanently in shadow and a battered gramophone player, his only signs of comfort.

Railton rubs at the enameled tiredness in his eyes and grabs at a mug with both hands for warmth.

He closes his well-worn copy of *'The Complete Shakespeare'*, takes out Clark's rank insignia and tunic buttons from his pack, places them on the table and writes:

RAILTON (V.O.)

'Dear Mrs Clark, I was with your late husband, Captain Sydney Clark, when he was unfortunately killed in action yesterday' --

INT. THE HOME OF CAPTAIN CLARK - MORNING

MRS CLARK's (mid 30s, dressed in black mourning), tear-filled eyes read Railton's letter.

RAILTON (V.O.)(CONT'D)

'Sydney was a good friend to me.'

She reaches into the envelope and takes out the photograph, her husband's identity papers, his tunic insignia and buttons and sobs.

RAILTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

'I officiated at his burial service last night and want to assure you that your husband was buried with the dignity befitting such a fine man...'

Mrs Clark reaches again into the envelope and removes her husband's wedding ring. She gazes at it, then clutches it close to her heart as her distraught young DAUGHTER (12) enters and rushes over to hug her.

EXT. THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY

SUPER: The English Channel, January, 1919

A cloud-covered winter sky. Overhead, seagulls chase a CHANNEL FERRY heading towards England, packed-tight with joyous SOLDIERS.

Railton stands sweating, his eyes smarting and bloodshot, at the stern rail, nervously browsing his *'Shakespeare'*.

He peers at the approaching White Cliffs, at the men around him, then recites to himself:

RAILTON

'This fortress built by Nature for herself Against infection and the hand of war, This happy breed of men, this little world, This precious stone set in the silver sea, Which serves it in the office of a wall, Or as a moat defensive to a house, Against the envy of less happier lands, This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England!'

Images flood his brain.

EXT. FRONTLINE TRENCH - DAY

A COMMANDER checks the time on his watch, mounts the first rung of a ladder set against a trench wall and blows three short BLASTS on his whistle to signal the charge.

1ST SOLDIER steels himself then HAULS his body over the top towards certain death. Followed by the NEXT SOLDIER and the NEXT - SCREAMING their last battle cries in sheer terror.

The German guns opens-up. Bullets streak-by, PENETRATING flesh, RAVAGING bodies. Screams of agony from the men who greet the onslaught.

More and more SOLDIERS pour out of the trench. So many fall. In American parlance it would be known as a turkey shoot.

EXT. FOLKESTONE RAILWAY STATION CONCOURSE - DAY

SUPER: Folkestone Railway Station

As a train pulls into a platform, a TICKET COLLECTOR (60s) opens the platform gates to allow the arriving SOLDIERS to exit.

YOUNG RUBY (mid 30s), stands in the centre of an excited, flag-waving CROWD of FRIENDS and RELATIVES, awaiting the return of their heroes.

It appears the last of the soldiers have departed the platform. The station concourse almost empty.

Ruby stands alone staring down the length of the now deserted platform. She can't believe it.

She checks over her shoulder that she has not missed her husband. The Ticket Collector starts to close the gate.

Railton appears in the doorway of a carriage, his uniform loose, his belt a few notches tighter.

A STATION PORTER (60s) hurries over to him. Railton stares down the platform but cannot see Ruby standing behind the now closed gate.

STATION PORTER
Can I 'elp with yer bags, sir?

RAILTON
That's very kind of you, Old Lad.
Here.

He passes two suitcases down to the Porter and steps on to the platform.

STATION PORTER
What about yer pack, sir?

RAILTON
No, Laddie, I wouldn't let that
out of my sight for a thousand
pounds.

STATION PORTER
(laughing)
Stuffed full of French money and
rations, I bet.

RAILTON
(laughing)
Better than that!

Railton puts his pack on his back and starts along the platform. Ruby spots him, throws open the gate and pushes past the Porter --

STATION PORTER
'Ere, Miss!

...and runs as fast as she can up to Railton. They embrace as only two people in love can!

Railton places his arm around her and leads her off the platform. They reach the gate. The Ticket Collector lifts his hat.

TICKET-COLLECTOR
Welcome back, sir.

RAILTON
Thank you, Old Lad. It's good to
be home.

EXT. THE FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - MORNING

A gothic edifice located next to the church.

INT. THE FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

Railton and Ruby sitting down to breakfast. Their children, 8 year-old, MARY and 5 year-old RUTH also sit at the table. Railton reads *The Times*.

MRS MURDOCK (40s,) their Edwardian housekeeper, brings in two plates of food that she places in front of them.

RUBY

I've had Cook prepare us some eggs and bacon.

Railton abruptly drops his newspaper.

RAILTON

Eggs... and bacon?

He glances at Ruby with a surprised look on his face.

EXT./INT. - OFFICER'S MESS, ARMENTIÈRES - EARLY MORNING
SUPER: Armentières, France, 1916

The guns have stopped. A phonograph plays '*Keep The Home Fires Burning*', as Railton enters a once glorious, now war-damaged house which serves as the Officer's Mess.

In a once-richly furnished, downtrodden room, lit by candlelight, he finds the BRIGADIER (60, ramrod straight, immaculately turned out, a scar on his right cheek), and two of his STAFF OFFICERS in pristine uniforms, polished buttons and belts, sitting at a table dressed with white table cloth, laden with silverware, set for a meal.

BRIGADIER

(calling out)

Where the bloody hell are my eggs and bacon? Morning, Padre.

RAILTON

Brigadier.

Tea, bread and marmalade set out on the table. The atmosphere unreal compared to the world they currently inhabit. Railton can't believe his eyes.

BRIGADIER

And where's that bloody Orderly?

Annoyed by the Brigadier's attitude, Railton cannot bite his tongue.

RAILTON

Eggs... and bacon! Brigadier, gentlemen... Are you all honestly so out-of-touch with reality?

A cluster of OFFICERS spread across the room on various bits of furniture, start to take note.

BRIGADIER

Excuse-me, Padre? You seem unnaturally upset, what?

RAILTON

After our experiences of the last few days, Brigadier, I am simply surprised to see a table so neatly laid out with white tablecloth.

BRIGADIER

Got to keep-up standards, what!

Railton raises his arm and points towards the door.

RAILTON

Our men are out there, Brigadier, confused, hungry, freezing, drenched-through, many suffering with septic feet, after yet another bloody battle, attacking nothing but piles of brick-dust it seems, longing for food, shelter and warmth.

BRIGADIER

And..? Your point is what exactly?

Railton tries to compose himself.

RAILTON

I realise of course, gentlemen, that next to your own neat uniforms, I must look rather grubby, ragged and unsoldierly, a no-doubt disagreeable decoration in your breakfast-room, but I simply do not understand how it is, you manage to sit here complaining that your 'eggs... and bacon' are not punctual.

1ST OFFICER

I say, steady on, Padre, remember who you're talking too!

BRIGADIER

Man's got to eat, what? Where's that bloody Orderly?

Railton turns away, disgusted.

BRIGADIER (CONT'D)
 (calling after him)
 Must have come as a bit of a
 surprise to you, Padre, what?

This stops Railton in his track. He turns back to angrily face the Brigadier.

RAILTON
 And 'what' might that be,
 Brigadier?

BRIGADIER
 I heard yesterday, that two
 Protestant soldiers were actually
 buried in a service by a Catholic
 Chaplain. What say you to that,
 eh, Padre?

Railton regroups.

RAILTON
 I don't suppose the *Great Redeemer*
 minds exactly which denomination
 Chaplain buries a man, as long as
 it's done reverently and in the
 manner of *Joseph of Arimathea*.

BRIGADIER
 (pompously)
 You think so, do you..?

RAILTON
 One thing I have learnt,
 Brigadier, is that our men do not
 care a pin whether a man's 'high'
 or 'low' church, 'broad' or
 'catholic', a 'dissenter' even; or
 whether he gives allegiance to
 Canterbury, Rome or General Booth.

The Brigadier attempts to interrupt.

BRIGADIER
 I say!!!

RAILTON
 In my eyes, sir, we are all
 Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindu
 or Buddhist... engaged in a
 struggle against satanic forces,
 currently out to destroy our way
 of life.

Railton storms off, past Richardson, who sits alone, a heavy glazed look over his eyes, staring blankly into a bottle of whisky, as --

EXT. THE OFFICER'S MESS - GARDEN

Railton opens a door on to an unkempt garden. He sucks-in a deep breath of air to regain his composure and gazes-up at a million stars, then spots something at the bottom of the garden. He decides to investigate.

Railton discovers a simple white wooden cross. Words written on it in pencil: *'An unknown British soldier'* and in brackets, *'(of the Black Watch)'*.

He's transfixed. The stillness of the moment only broken by the drunken Richardson, who staggers out to pee.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

Spotted one of the lucky ones I
see, Padre. Gone to your Boss, no
doubt?

He laughs at his own joke. Railton gazes at the grave.

RAILTON

I love every inch of Scotland.

The Major holds up his bottle with his free hand as he continues to pee.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

Makes very fine whisky!

RAILTON

(ignoring him)
Who was he, I wonder? Where was he
from? Who are his folk?

The Major tucks himself back into his trousers.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

(dismissively)
No bloody idea!

Railton fixes his eyes on Richardson.

RAILTON

I long to meet with them and tell
them where he lies.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

Thousands... just like him!

RAILTON

Was he a citizen of 'Auld Reekie'?
Or, was he one of the grand old
Contemptibles? Was he just a
laddie, newly joined, aged 18 or
so?

MAJOR RICHARDSON

Don't have the answers to those
questions I'm afraid. Care for a
drink, Padre?

He proffers-up his almost empty bottle. Railton turns
back to face the grave.

RAILTON

Was he rich, or poor? The only son
of a shepherd perhaps from the far
away Highlands?

RICHARDSON

Who knows..? Who really cares?

Railton turns angrily to face the Major.

RAILTON

I care, Major! Every single Padre
serving with Infantry Brigades
gets assailed after each
publication of casualties, with
letters from broken relatives and
friends. How are we to tell them
that there was hardly anything
physically left of their husbands,
or that their sons had been
blasted to tatters?

MAJOR RICHARDSON

(attempting a joke)
Keeps you busy, I suppose?

Railton ignores the crass comment.

RAILTON

Each letter contains the same
request: 'Where, exactly, did you
lay to rest the body of my
husband/father/son? Please send me
more information.'

Richardson shrugs and lowers his head.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

And do you know Major, we are only
allowed to reply with a map
reference!

Richardson makes to go, but Railton's voice stops him.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

A map reference! I am appalled at the sufferings and loss caused by this war.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

The guns are resting now. The Bosch must be sitting down to breakfast... which reminds me... I need a drink.

He burps. Tosses the empty bottle to the ground and staggers back into the building. Railton stares at the cross.

RAILTON

What can I do to ease the pain..?

Long beat. A spark has ignited in his head. Inspiration shows in Railton's eyes.

INT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Swaying shards of moonlight dance across the ceiling, accompanied by the metronomic ticking of a clock, as Railton and Ruby lie together in bed.

Ruby's asleep. Railton not. He's sweating, open-eyed, staring-up blankly.

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT - NIGHT

SUPER: Armentières, France, 1916

From his cot, Railton focuses on a lone rat crossing a beam above him.

Railton rises, lights his lamp, chooses a soothing record, winds-up his gramophone, places his pack on his cot, takes out his writing equipment and lays it on the table.

Hobnail boots approach from the gravel outside. The blanket that acts as a door thrown aside.

CORPORAL PRICE (mid 20s, Railton's Batman, a solid reliable Welshman) enters. He's holding a lamp and a steaming hot mug for him in his other hand.

RAILTON

Thank you, Price.

Railton takes the mug.

CORPORAL PRICE

You're welcome, Padre.

Price exits. Railton sits, dabs his pen into an inkwell, holds the pen suspended over a blank sheet of paper and spots droplets of water dripping through the roof. He thinks a moment, then writes:

RAILTON (V.O.)
 'To, General, Sir Douglas Haig,
 Commander in Chief, British
 Expeditionary Force. Dear Sir
 Douglas, I write to you to
 enquire...'

Throughout the V.O. -

MONTAGE:

- A lone BUGLER blows '*The Last Post*'
- Whistles blow and soldiers charge out of their trenches
- The Soldiers race across '*No Man's Land*'
- Hopelessly cut to pieces by enemy fire
- Flares in the sky
- Huge number of casualties
- Numerous roadside war graves
- Railton placing his *Union Flag* over ammunition boxes in a trench, setting-up his cross and candlesticks to hold communion for a small group of men just before battle.

These images show the never-ending slaughter that takes place.

RAILTON (V.O. CONTINUED)

'...if the deceased body of a single unknown comrade might be transported back to England to be buried with full military honours amongst the illustrious of the land. As you are aware, sir, unless the death of a comrade is witnessed and the witness remains alive long enough to report it, trying to identify the bodies of comrades scattered all over the battlefields is unimaginable. Many remain unburied, unidentified. We have an enormous problem with the missing'.

END MONTAGE:

He continues to write as his voice overlaps with --

INT. THE OFFICE OF GENERAL, SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, MONTREUIL - DAY

SUPER: Office of General, Sir Douglas Haig, Commander, the British Expeditionary Force

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG (55, affectedly grand), sits at his desk snipping one end of a cigar with a cutter. He lights-up and drinks whisky from a crystal tumbler, in front of a huge pile of correspondence.

Haig savours his cigar, picks-up Railton's letter, scans it once more, then reads a passage out loud to his AIDE-DE-CAMP, who stands embarrassed throughout.

HAIG

(sarcastically)

'No-one will ever know the unknown comrades' rank, wealth, education, or history. Class values become vanity here.' Can you believe that..? 'He may have been wealthy or one, whose home was a slum.' ...A slum, by Gad! 'He may have been a Public School boy, or... A gypsy!' A damn gypsy..?

Haig explodes and angrily stubs out his cigar.

HAIG (CONT'D)

Ridiculous idea! What's this Padre's name?

He double checks the signature at the foot of the letter.

HAIG (CONT'D)

Railton..? Railton? Don't know him. Never heard of him. Deplorable fellow!

He reaches for his tumbler and swallows a large swig.

HAIG (CONT'D)

Doesn't the bloody fool know that there's a war on!

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT - MOMENTS LATER

Railton signs the letter. Price enters.

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE

Padre?

Railton looks-up.

RAILTON

How can I help you?

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE

A trench full of boys from 'D Company' took a direct hit from an artillery shell. You're needed up there.

RAILTON

'D Company'? I was with them only yesterday.

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE

The Transport Officer says he can offer you a ride.

RAILTON

Thank you. Tell him, I'll head-up there as soon as I can.

EXT. A ROAD CLOSE TO THE BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

A bicycle wheel winds its crooked way across the French countryside.

Railton rides with difficulty trying to avoid potholes on the rutted, mud-entrenched road, its sides littered with the grim residue of war.

Silhouetted against the flickering black sky, illuminated by dim FLASHES of light, superseded a half-second later by dull sounding BOOMS, a field full of stumps of hundreds of trees. In the distance a church spire.

INT. THE CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Railton sets foot through the pummeled church door into the shell of the ruined bombed-out church, its roof open to the stars. Only a few pews remain intact.

Railton steps wearily down the aisle to kneel on what remains of the steps leading-up to the altar. He gazes-up at Christ crucified on a stone cross which has miraculously survived, bows his head and begins to pray.

A French CATHOLIC PRIEST arrives and kneels besides him and begins to chant the '*Benediction*'.

Railton peeks across at the Priest, embarrassed, realising he shouldn't be here. He starts to rise.

RAILTON

I apologise, Father. I meant no disres...

The Priest reaches out and puts his hand on Railton's arm.

FRENCH PRIEST

Rester mon fils. Tout le monde est
le bienvenu dans la maison de
Dieu.

Railton's a little perplexed.

FRENCH PRIEST (CONT'D)

Everyone's... bienvenue...
welcome, in dans... 'Ow you say,
God's 'ouse.

INT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hall clock strikes 1am. Railton puts on his coat,
hat, scarf and gloves --

EXT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - NIGHT

Railton leaves the vicarage in the blue of the night. His
shoes crunch on the pathway. He takes out a torch and
opens the gate that leads to the graveyard. Suddenly, he
hears something.

Railton stops and quickly points his torch in the
direction of the noise.

RAILTON

Hello..? Anyone there?

Railton takes a step forward and catches sight of a man
running away between the headstones. His mind instantly
recognises a fully-armed charging TOMMY (nickname for a
First World War soldier).

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Come back. There's no need to run!

The image lasts only a few seconds.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

(shouting)

You're not in any trouble!

Railton stops in his tracks, brought back to reality,
looks back to spot some propped-up boxes set against the
church wall. The man was obviously attempting to build a
shelter.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Please come back!

A POLICEMAN has heard the disturbance and arrives to
discover the cause.

POLICEMAN

Evening, Mr. Railton, sir.
Everything alright?

Railton turns urgently shining his torch direct in the
Policeman's face.

RAILTON

Constable, you gave me a fright.

POLICEMAN

I'm sorry, sir. I was just
wondering why anyone would be up
and wandering about the churchyard
at this hour?

RAILTON

I saw someone. I think he might be
sleeping rough. He ran off. I'd
like to help him if I can.

The Constable takes out his notebook and pencil.

POLICEMAN

A lone man you say?

RAILTON

Just the one, Constable...
Freeborn, isn't it?

POLICEMAN

That's right, that's me, sir. Why
don't you pop down to the station
and fill out a report?

RAILTON

Thank you, Constable, but I don't
want to make a fuss. I'd simply
like to help the man if I can.

POLICEMAN

There's plenty of folks currently
struggling right now, Mr. Railton.
Shouldn't you be in bed yourself,
sir?

RAILTON

A sleepless night, Constable.

EXT. ST MARY'S & ST EANSWYTHE'S CHURCH, FOLKESTONE - DAY
**SUPER: St Mary's and St Eanswythe's Church, Folkestone,
1919**

WORSHIPPERS enter the church.

INT. ST MARY'S & ST EANSWYTHE'S CHURCH, FOLKESTONE

Railton stands atop his pulpit.

The church packed to capacity, the congregation attentive to his every word. Some of the men sitting in pews next to their families blind, legless and/or armless.

RAILTON

Men and nations stumbled back like wounded, gassed warriors to their homes. As I look around I see so many families, but sadly, so few men. Your sons, husbands, brothers and friends, cut down in their prime.

There's sadness on people's faces.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Some of you find solace in prayer, but for those of you left behind, I know that times are hard. Without your men, many of you have no breadwinners. Some have even had your children placed into orphanages...

One YOUNG MOTHER weeps uncontrollably at this and has to be comforted by her own ELDERLY MOTHER. This causes Railton to pause and look down at them.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

...while you mothers are forced to seek employment any way you can. Many have ended up on the streets. The misery, suffering and pain felt by millions of families across this great land, '*this England*', whose men have not returned home, eats away at us all. And for the men who have returned home - gassed, scarred and traumatized, both physically and mentally, I hear you ask, what now?

EXT. FRONTLINE TRENCH - NIGHT

Overcast, grey, gloomy, ankle-deep in mud. A constant barrage of shells WHOOP and fall amid HUGE explosions and dust as they land close-by.

The trench filled to capacity. SOLDIERS lean silently against the earth walls, each loaded down with extra ammunition. Long bayonets extend from every rifle.

The expressions on the dust covered, already exhausted faces, studies in fear.

Two exhausted SOLDIERS clasp each other tightly. Their trench littered with haunted looking, bloodied men, quietly thanking their own Gods in their own silent way for their lives, as the rain persists.

Some try to catch a few moments sleep, stretched-out on sandbags or ammunition boxes. All silent, hunched forward with fatigue, shivering.

The two soldiers break from each other. Trembling, SOLDIER 1 shakily struggles to light a sodden cigarette. SOLDIER 2 reaches for and drinks from a battered hip-flask.

POV of Railton walking-the-line, through the smoke and dust, repeatedly asserting:

RAILTON

God be with you!

He's obviously admired by the men as many turn their heads to acknowledge him.

Railton's hand reaches out to touch a terrified SOLDIER, his face absolute-immobile, a haggard mask, curled-up, shaking uncontrollably, rain dripping off his helmet.

A star shell bursts overhead. Soldiers look-up startled. Their rigid facial features lit in blinding brilliance.

Suddenly, there's a deep-throated scream from a SERGEANT and beauty turns to dread.

SERGEANT

Gas! Gas! Get your fuckin' masks on!

Mass panic as soldiers throw down their rifles and frantically grab for their masks to cover their faces. Some better at this than others.

Railton strives to get his mask out past the various religious paraphernalia he carries in his kit bag as the poison gas descends.

Struggling, he gapes-up at the sky.

RAILTON

Oh, my God!

SMASHCUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE OF GENERAL, SIR DOUGLAS HAIG, MONTREUIL - DAY

Flashlight powder-flash. Haig's photographed and interviewed by a TIMES NEWSPAPER REPORTER.

TIMES REPORTER

Sir Douglas, *The Somme* offensive opened on the 1st July, and, by any standards, it has been a disaster...

HAIG

Nonsense man!

TIMES REPORTER

Please let me continue. Some say that the first day was the worst day ever in the long and storied history of the British Army.

HAIG

Who are these 'anonymous' cretins?

The Times Reporter persists.

TIMES REPORTER

Exact numbers of casualties sustained on the first day will never be known for certain, will they, Sir Douglas, but are generally thought to be about 57,000 men, with 19,000 of them fatalities?

Haig hates the fact that these figures are out there.

HAIG

As you say, numbers are yet to be confirmed. What's your question?

TIMES REPORTER

The Somme will forever be etched on the British conscience as the place where its youth was slaughtered. Losses continue to increase. How can you possibly claim and imagine that this battle will end in success?

HAIG

(pompously)

Because it will young man! The British front line creeps forever forward. Although there has been no decisive breakthrough as yet, the 'push' continues on.

INT. FOLKESTONE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The DESK SERGEANT looks-up.

DESK SERGEANT
Evenin', Mr. Railton. Can't sleep
again?

Railton takes off his hat and coat.

RAILTON
Good evening, Sergeant Palmer. I'm
afraid not. I wondered if you
might you be up for some company?

DESK SERGEANT
Certainly would, sir. Fancy a cup
of --

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT - DAY - 1918

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE
...Cocoa, Padre?

RAILTON
No thank you, Price. Not sure my
stomach will take it. We're about
to clear the bodies.

EXT. THE FRONT LINE BATTLEFIELD - DAY - 1918

Unburdening a battlefield of its DEAD is possibly the
worst thing conceivable. The carnage unspeakable. A
GRISLY task. A SERGEANT-MAJOR addresses his men:

SERGEANT-MAJOR
Come on lads, sooner we get this
done, sooner we can get away from
this bloody place.

A WORKING PARTY chosen to clear the field set-to, fear
and dread on their faces.

A SOLDIER, a damp cigarette hanging from his mouth,
wearing a great coat, carries a CELLO!

He upturns a spent ammunition box, sits on it, takes his
bow out from an inside pocket and starts to play,
Massenets' *'Thais: Meditation'*.

The working party starts to locate and recover the parts
left of twisted, contorted bodies of their fallen
comrades. What HORRORS await them the next time they lift
a piece of wire, or pull away at some discarded
ammunition box stuck in the mud? A booby-trapped bomb
perhaps? Let the Director decide.

Railton waits for them atop a huge bomb crater. He's visibly distraught at the devastation and quietly quotes 'MACBETH' to himself as he studies the bodies.

RAILTON

'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then his heart is no more.'

Two SOLDIERS cover each individual body momentarily with Railton's *Union Flag*, as he speaks a few words over the ever-growing line.

Railton stops and again, scans the scene, undergoing a moment of doubt, his faith severely tested, as bodies are thrown, ONE-BY-ONE into the mass grave.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Have they been abandoned by their faith?

Railton fixes his gaze up to the heavens.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

(cries out)

Why, oh why have you forsaken us?

He's lost.

INT. GENERAL, SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S HQ, MONTREUIL - DAY
SUPER: 18th April, 1918

Haig's holding court at an elaborate banquet with his resplendent SENIOR STAFF OFFICERS. Amidst the crystal chandeliers, he stands, clicks a silver spoon against a crystal glass. The room falls silent.

HAIG

Gentlemen. Gentlemen. Three weeks ago today, the enemy began his attack against us on a 50 mile front. His objectives threefold - To separate us from the French; to take the Channel Ports; and to destroy the British Army.

See MONTAGE below. Haig's voice continuing throughout.

HAIG (V.O.)

In spite of them already throwing
106 Divisions into the battle and
enduring the most reckless
sacrifice of human life, our enemy
has as yet, made little progress
towards his goals.

Shouts of "Hear! Hear!" from the table.

HAIG (V.O.)

We owe this to the determined
fighting and 'self-sacrifice' of
our troops. Words fail me to
express the 'admiration' which I
feel for the splendid resistance
offered by 'all-ranks' of our Army
under the most trying
circumstances. Many amongst us
tired.

The SENIOR OFFICERS attending look nowhere near as tired
as the one's living in the trenches.

HAIG

To those of you I say: Victory
will belong to the side which
holds out the longest. There is no
other course open to us but to
fight it out.

MONTAGE:

- Rows of dead SOLDIERS lie under hessian sacks
- Railton writing letter after letter
- Railton's flag set up on makeshift drum altars as he
leads battlefield services
- GROUP OF SOLDIERS kneeling in ankle deep water
while Railton gives *Communion*
- Troop Carriers pass-by full of fresh-faced YOUNG
CONSCRIPTS waving enthusiastically at desolate SOLDIERS
returning from the front line, as they stagger-past on
either side of the road

END MONTAGE:

Haig's 'BIG' finish!

HAIG (CONT'D)

Every position 'must' be held to
the 'last' man: there must be 'no'
retirement. With our backs to the
wall, and believing in the justice
of our cause, each one of us
'must' fight on to the end!

The Officers rise as one, to cheer, applaud and hail
their Leader.

EXT. FRONTLINE TRENCH - DAY

Another attack about to commence.

SERGEANT (O.S.)
Make ready!

RAILTON
God be with you!

Three loud, SHARP, whistle blasts!

EXT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Railton, Ruby and their friend, EVANS (early 40s, an ex-Sergeant-Major, now a jovial artist), enjoying tea.

EVANS
What's next, David? I can see
you're restless.

Before he can answer Ruby cuts in.

RUBY
He doesn't sleep, Sergeant-Major
Evans.

EVANS
Evans will do, Mrs Railton.

RUBY
After the intensity of the
battlefields, David struggles to
adjust to the blandness of peace.

RAILTON
Nonsense, Ruby!

RUBY
Sleepless nights and nightmares a
regular occurrence since his
return from France. He sits by the
fire in front of the dying embers,
wrapped-up in a blanket, praying
for sleep to return.

RAILTON
Ruby...

But Ruby will not be quiet.

RUBY
He claims the only thing that
helps his nerves and keeps his
mind calm once he's awake are his
midnight strolls. How do you find
it?

RAILTON

Ruby needlessly frets.

Evans glances back at her.

RUBY

Well it's true, isn't it, David?
You go out most nights and walk
the streets. Don't think I do not
hear you go out the door.

Railton attempts to justify his actions.

RAILTON

I can't just lie there waiting for
sleep to return, so I walk. I find
it the only thing that helps. I
try to utilise the time to think
about upcoming sermons. Sometimes
I compose a letter or two in my
head. The more I think of everyday
tasks, the less time I have to
think on the war. The combination
of exercise and sea air appears to
clear my mind.

Evans makes a quiet confession.

EVANS

It never goes away...

Ruby's embarrassed, realising she may have upset a
hornet's nest. Railton strives to change the subject.

RAILTON

Do you ever consider being
forgotten, Evans? That you left
your mark, the short time you were
on this earth?

EVANS

Hopefully my paintings will
outlive me.

RUBY

More tea, Sergeant-Major..?

EVANS

Evans. Thank you, Mrs Railton.

RAILTON

Do you realise, an incredible
number of people don't even know
the name of their own great-
grandfathers?

Evans endeavours to, but fails to remember his.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

I would want to think that I might
have left my mark.

Evans attempts to placate him.

EVANS

You helped so many men, David.
Without you...

RAILTON

But was it enough..? I cannot seem
to forget one particular Private.
Executed for desertion.

EVANS

Well, if he was a deserter...

Railton will not be interrupted. His V.O. continues --

INT. MILITARY TRIBUNAL HEARING - DAY - FLASHBACK

The PRESIDENT OF THE COURT and three additional ARMY
OFFICERS sit at a long bench.

An ARMY PRIVATE sits in a solitary chair facing them,
guarded by two SOLDIERS either side of him.

Four individual WITNESSES sit close by.

The Private stands, holding a Bible to take his oath.

RAILTON (V.O.)

The poor man was permanently
terrified, shell-shocked from the
fighting, living in continual and
daily fear. He walked away from
his position after an artillery
shell killed the two men standing
immediately next to him. He was
tried with no Counsel available to
defend him, found guilty and
sentenced to death. I spent his
last night with him.

The President of the Court pronounces him 'Guilty' and
the Private bows his head, before being led away.

Evans peers at Ruby, sharing Railton's despair.

Ruby slowly shakes her head, unbelieving. Railton perks-
up, instantly changing the subject.

RAILTON

I have had an idea, Evans.

EVANS

I'm all ears!

RAILTON

From 1915, the British Government prohibited the repatriation of the bodies of our men killed overseas. As a result, most bereaved families do not have a nearby grave as a focal point for their grief. I've kept this idea to myself for so long. Ruby knows obviously, and during the war I tried sharing it with General Haig.

EVANS

(astounded)

Haig..?

RAILTON

Yes. I wrote to him. He did not bother to reply.

EVANS

The General probably had one or two pressing matters on his mind.

RAILTON

Of course, I took that into account. Since then I've held my peace with little hope, but I believed then and I believe now that my notion might bring some relief, perhaps even a crumb of comfort, to those families whose loved ones never came home.

Evans stares at Railton, bewildered.

EVANS

You've hung on to an idea all this time, how so?

RAILTON

The war was such a waste, don't you think?

EVANS

I...

RAILTON

More than one million men from the British Empire killed. It practically wiped-out an entire generation... and for what?

EVANS

Why for God, King, Country and
Empire!

RAILTON

Oh, I'm as fiercely loyal as any
man, make no mistake! But was it
truly worth it?

Evans appears anguished. He can't answer.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

The endless sacrifice and the
shedding of blood may have ceased,
but there's no real peace in the
souls of men or nations. I'm sure
my idea could help promote unity
in the face of the severe social
and political upheaval we're
currently experiencing.

EVANS

Do you really think so?

RAILTON

I've promised God, and I promise
you, that as long as he continues
to spare me, I will spend the rest
of my life fighting to get fair
rights for the men who fought over
there.

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT HUT - MORNING

SUPER: May, 1918

The constant BARRAGE continues outside. Railton lies on
his cot in a deep sleep. A lone RAT creeps slowly across
his blanket, up his chest, inching ever-closer towards
his face.

Corporal Price BURSTS into the dugout excitedly. The rat
instantly disappears.

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE

Good news, Padre!

Railton wakes-up, annoyed at being disturbed.

RAILTON

What the..? Is the War over,
Price?

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE

No bloody fear of that, excuse my
language, sir. We're being sent
south to a 'Quiet Sector'.

Railton can't quite believe the news. He sits-up.

RAILTON

The 19th?

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE

All of us.

There's a visible release of tension from Railton.

RAILTON

If ever a Division deserved to be rewarded.

ARMY CORPORAL

Shall I pack you up, Padre?

RAILTON

Can you give me a few minutes, Price?

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE

Of course, sir.

He departs. Railton gets off his cot and drops down on his knees to pray.

EXT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT HUT - DUSK

The dispirited REGIMENT is on the move, loaded-down like pack animals, uniforms marinated in mud; a slow moving, clattering column that resembles a grotesque snake, winding its way through the dust it creates, towards the deepening gloom of oncoming night.

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT HUT

Railton carefully places his wooden cross, a small pair of candlestick holders and his supply of candles into his kitbag. He picks up his *Union Flag*, gently kisses, then packs it. As he pulls the strings tight to close the bag, we spot a RELIGIOUS CROSS embroidered on its side.

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY

A HORSE and CART driven by CHARLIE, a Tommy in the column. It passes two depressed TOMMIES, trying to 'chance' their way to a better mood.

TOMMY 1

'Ere, Mate, hold-up, will ya?

The cart keeps moving, but Charlie turns to answer the Tommies, who follow quickly after it.

CHARLIE
What do you two want?

TOMMY 1
Any chance of a lift, Guv? We've
been riding *Shanks's Pony* for
days.

Charlie stares down and considers.

CHARLIE
Make yerselves at home!

The two Tommies throw their rifles and kitbags on the
back of the cart and scramble aboard.

TOMMY 1
Thanks, Guv.

CHARLIE
You might want to try and get some
shut eye, there's still a way to
go.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD - NIGHT

TOMMY 2 wakes up from a disturbed sleep. Seeks to
rearrange the kitbags he has been lying on. Gets back
down, but finds himself instantly uncomfortable again.

Tommy 1, lying next to him gets woken-up by the movement.

TOMMY 1
What the..?

Tommy 2 sits-up angry, frustrated.

TOMMY 1 (CONT'D)
Get to sleep!

TOMMY 2
I can't get fuckin' comfortable.

TOMMY 1
What's yer problem?

TOMMY 2
It ain't plush, is it?

TOMMY 1
Well, it's not exactly the fuckin'
Ritz, no Mate, but it's definitely
better than sleeping on the
sodding ground. Move the fuckin'
packs around a bit.

TOMMY 2

Tried that.

TOMMY 1

The Sergeant-Major always says:
Men first, packs second. Chuck a
couple overboard if it'll fuckin'
help, lie back down and shut the
fuck up!

Tommy 1 lies down. TOMMY 2 does as suggested. He picks up two or three kitbags and throws them off the cart.

The packs land in a barren field, a RELIGIOUS CROSS embroidered on the side of one of them.

EXT. THE RIVER MARNE - AFTERNOON

SUPER - The River Marne

Birdsong.

Drenched by golden sunlight, grass undulates in the light wind. The rural tranquility of a spring day packed with new life a vast contrast from the war-ravaged trenches.

BRUISED SOLDIERS cavort like young boys in the river or relax in the sun.

Railton sits with his back against a dry-stone wall, glances up from his '*Shakespeare*', takes in the view and enjoys the moment.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his wallet and extracts a photograph. It's Ruby with his two children.

Railton realises then just how much he misses them. He closes his eyes and tilts his head back to bask in the sun.

Corporal Price arrives, carrying a single kit bag. He places it on the ground and makes a show of snapping to attention and saluting.

RAILTON

That's rather formal, Corporal Price. Got my kit bags I see.

CORPORAL PRICE

(nervously)
One of 'em, sir.

RAILTON

What do you mean, one of them?
Which one?

CORPORAL PRICE

The one containing your kit, sir.

RAILTON

Where's my other one? The important one?

CORPORAL PRICE

It... a... appears to be missing, Padre.

Railton pulls himself quickly to his feet.

RAILTON

Missing? How can it be missing?

CORPORAL PRICE

It didn't arrive with the Mess cart, sir.

Railton's distressed.

RAILTON

But you personally loaded it, did you not?

CORPORAL PRICE

I did that, yes, sir...

RAILTON

Then how..? Have you double checked..? Where is it?

Price is visibly upset.

CORPORAL PRICE

Sir, I...

RAILTON

Where is it?

CORPORAL PRICE

(apprehensively)
Padre, it seems that...

RAILTON

Get on with it, Price, spit it out, man!

CORPORAL PRICE

(at speed)
Two Tommies hitched a lift on the back of the Mess cart and one of them couldn't get off comfortable to sleep like, and so threw one or two bags over...

Railton can't believe what he's hearing.

RAILTON

He threw my bag off the cart..?

CORPORAL PRICE

It appears so, sir.

RAILTON

Where?

CORPORAL PRICE

The soldier has no idea. Says it was dark, sir.

Railton's beside himself.

RAILTON

But..?

His voice trails away. Despair.

CORPORAL PRICE

The Sergeant-Major's put them both on a charge.

RAILTON

What..?

CORPORAL PRICE

Sergeant-Major's put them...

RAILTON

No, no, no. We can't have that. The men were probably just trying to rest. I'll talk to him.

But Railton's body language exhibits desolation.

EXT. THE RIVER MARNE - DAY

SUPER: Three weeks later

A totally refreshed PLATOON OF SOLDIERS march past.

Railton watches from a desk he's set-up outside his billet. He's reading a letter and drinking tea. Unwraps a brown paper parcel to reveal a brand new *Union Flag*.

A look of sadness mixed with disappointment.

RAILTON

Thank you, Mother.

He addresses the new flag:

RAILTON (CONT'D)

You'll never make-up for my old lost friend, but I suppose you'll just have to do.

He places the flag back in its wrapping, sips his tea and spots a young STAFF OFFICER approaching out of breath.

STAFF OFFICER

Padre, we've just had word that the Germans have attacked in the Aisne.

RAILTON

Attacked?

STAFF OFFICER

About thirty miles from here. They've launched a heavy attack on a wide front between Reims and Soissons and have penetrated the Nine Corps line.

RAILTON

My God!

STAFF OFFICER

GOC has ordered all dismounted personnel to be ready to move within the hour. We're going to set up headquarters at Chaumuzy.

Railton gapes down at his new flag.

STAFF OFFICER (CONT'D)

Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, Padre.

The Staff Officer hurries off.

RAILTON

(to the flag)

You're going to be needed much sooner than expected, my new friend.

EXT. CHAUMUZY - DAY

An unpleasant scene greets Railton. PANIC has taken hold. Everything in complete disorder. CONFUSION.

The Narrow, cobbled, cratered streets, full of ruined houses, blocked from end-to-end with British and French military transport and guns.

Farm carts piled-high with chairs, mattresses, fowls in crates; all the piteous trappings of peasant refugees in flight.

FRENCH INFANTRYMEN loot a wine shop.

Demoralized and drunk, in a state bordering HYSTERIA. Any pretense of discipline vanished.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD RELIGIOUS SERVICE - DAY

Beneath some trees, shrouded in mist, on the edge of a wood, Railton's new flag draped over a makeshift altar, created using infantry drums.

He shakes hands with each SOLDIER as they depart.

RAILTON

God be with you.

As the last Soldier leaves, Price steps forward.

CORPORAL PRICE

A letter for you, Padre.

Railton takes the envelope, opens it and reads the letter, his face impassive, enigmatic. Price waits. Railton beams.

RAILTON

It's from a Cavalry Assistant Provost Marshall. A pack has been found with a cross embroidered on its side. Included, church ornaments and some letters. He believes it to be mine. He asks: "Would I like it returned?"

Grins break out on both Railton's and Price's face.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Would I like it returned..?

REENERGIIZED!

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Corporal Price please arrange for the immediate return of my kitbag.

Railton collects-up and folds his flag and heads-off towards his billet.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

I need to acknowledge this and send off a letter of gratitude.

Price has never seen his boss this happy before. It's catching!

CORPORAL PRICE

Yes, sir!

RAILTON

(calling back)

If my flag's still there when my bag's returned, I'm determined to ensure that it never goes missing again. And when this terrible business is over... I'm going to offer it up to a London cathedral.

CORPORAL PRICE

(shouting after him)

They'd be honoured to have it, Padre.

RAILTON

Do you think so, Price?

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: The guns fall silent at 11am on Monday, November 11, 1918 - The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. The fighting finally over.

FADE UP ON:

INT. THE FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - MORNING

Railton's two folded flags rest neatly side-by-side on top a bookcase. Ruby enters and reaches for them.

RUBY

I'll put these in the cupboard, shall I?

RAILTON

Careful, Ruby, especially with the old one. I'm not done with that one yet.

Ruby inspects the flag. She carefully picks it up and holds it close to her heart.

RUBY

You're right, my darling, this old flag's day of usefulness is far from over.

INT. ST MARY'S & ST EANSWYTHE'S CHURCH, FOLKESTONE

SUPER: 1920

Railton preaches from his pulpit, now draped by his old *Union Flag*. Fewer people in number in his congregation than before.

RAILTON

As if the war had not been punishment enough for us all, this first winter following the Armistice has brought influenza, which has killed thousands here at home... millions around the globe.

A WOMAN dressed in black, sobs. Hopelessness on the congregation's faces.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Many of you soldiers who survived the slaughter, returned home to find your homes empty, repossessed by greedy landlords...

MR. MOORES, one of those landlords, sitting with his family in a front pew, shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

...their loved ones buried in graveyards, uneasiness everywhere. People no-longer able to trust those in authority. Yes, our Generals led us to victory... but at what cost?

Many nod their heads in agreement. A MOTHER (late 20s) and her two YOUNG CHILDREN sit together, gazing-up at the pulpit.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

The Government's provision of pensions for families of soldiers killed simply nowhere near adequate. There just isn't enough work available for the hundreds of thousands of ex-servicemen who have given so much for our country.

An EX-SERVICEMAN calls out:

EX-SERVICEMAN

'Ear, 'Ear!

He's made quiet by his WIFE. Railton's on a roll.

RAILTON

For many of you soldiers who managed to survive the slaughter, the Prime Minister's promise of 'a country fit for heroes to live in' has quickly turned into hell on Earth.

And the brave ex-Serviceman calls out once more:

EX-SERVICEMAN

'Ear, 'Ear, again!

Laughter. Applause breaks out in the church. Railton glares sternly down at his flock.

RAILTON

I do not seek, nor do I expect applause. I am just thankful that you have joined-us here today. The overall widespread downturn in church attendees in our land a clear sign that individuals are starting to abandon our church, en masse. The losses brought about by war and parishioners' unwillingness to attend church makes me think that faith is actually failing. Once devout Christians must be wondering whether their God has forsaken them!

EXT. ST MARY'S & ST EANSWYTHE'S CHURCH, FOLKESTONE -
LATER

End of the service. Railton and Ruby stand at the door, bidding farewell to their parishioners.

RAILTON

God bless you. Thank you for joining-us this morning.

Mr. Moores and his family exit the church.

MR. MOORES

That was quite a sermon, Vicar.

RAILTON

I hope so, Mr. Moores. I really hope so!

There's a knowing look between them. Moores and his family depart. Ruby's keen to share some information.

RUBY

David?

RAILTON

Mrs Railton?

RUBY

I have some news.

RAILTON

And what might that be, my dear?

RUBY

I wonder how... you might feel
about us bringing another life
into this world?

A moment for this information to connect. Ruby's
desperate for a positive answer.

RAILTON

(perturbed)

Another... baby?

She bobs her head. A million thoughts shoot through
Railton's.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

How... how long have you known..?

It's not the immediate answer Ruby was hoping for.

RUBY

(nervously)

I wanted to make sure before I
told you.

RAILTON

Another... child?

RUBY

Is that alright?

Railton's initial anxiousness turns to wonderment.

RAILTON

Of course... it is, my darling.
Oh, well done us! Are you alright?
Surely you should not be standing
out here in..? When..?

He hugs her to him. Ruby smiles with relief.

RUBY

Dr Brittain says, mid-August.
You're squashing me, David!

RAILTON

Do forgive me.

He releases his grip.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

August..?

RUBY

(laughing)

Ssshhh. We mustn't let everyone
know our business.

RAILTON

Oh, Ruby, my darling. We must tell the children. I do love you so. I also have some news for you.

RUBY

News..?

RAILTON

See what you think. I have received a letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury. He's invited me to become Vicar of Margate. Would you like that?

It's Ruby's turn to throw herself at her husband.

RUBY

Margate..?

RAILTON

(laughing)
Careful, my darling, you're squashing me!

EXT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - GARDEN - AFTERNOON

SUPER: July, 1920

Railton, a now heavily pregnant Ruby, and Evans taking tea under a sunburst sky.

EVANS

Truly inspirational!

RAILTON

When Sir Douglas did not respond, at first I considered writing to the newspapers, but I'm concerned they might try turning my idea into some kind of publicity stunt. This morning's *Times* has published details of the event that will take place to commemorate *Armistice Day*.

He picks up the newspaper to check his facts.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

The 11th of November of course. It's a Thursday. The King is to unveil Edward Lutyens', *Cenotaph* in Whitehall.

EVANS

Then we have just over two months.

RAILTON

To do what, Evans?

EVANS

Why, to realise your idea of course. Don't you see, David? It would make complete sense to reveal both the *Cenotaph* and your *Tomb of the Unknown Comrade* that same day.

Railton slowly starts nod his head.

RAILTON

Yes, I see.

EVANS

Who else can you approach?

RAILTON

I'm just not sure. If I fail to persuade the right people at my first attempt, I fear my entire concept risks being ridiculed as eccentric sentimentality. I've wrestled with my concept night and day but I'm unable to let it drop.

EVANS

You must push forward immediately.

RAILTON

The memorial may be seen as anti-individualistic, because it will not celebrate individual heroism or leadership, rather, it will mourn the common man. To my mind, the foot soldier is equal to the Field Marshal.

EVANS

Who of the 'great' men might be likely to heed the request of an ordinary Padre at such a time?

RUBY

(laughing)
Ordinary..?

EVANS

(embarrassed)
No offense intended.

RAILTON

None taken.

EVANS

You're correct. An initial failure to get your scheme accepted might be final.

RAILTON

What about the Prime Minister?

EVANS

He could definitely take steps, should he approve.

RAILTON

But what if he does not? Politicians normally want to debate everything and do so in such a hurry that they argue matters away.

EVANS

The... Archbishop of Canterbury perhaps?

RAILTON

Davidson's certainly the wisest and most calm of all the moderns.

EVANS

Then... His Majesty, the King!

Railton peers at Evans, astonished.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Why not? There has never been a nobler, nor wiser monarch. I'm sure he'd be delighted to hear from one of his most loyal subjects. He'd agree, I'm positive about that. His Majesty understands the hearts of his people. You must write to the King!

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - RECEIVING ROOM - DAY

A silver handbell peals. Door opens. A NAVAL EQUERRY enters. Stands to attention. Bows his head.

NAVAL EQUERRY

The Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd-George, your Majesty.

DAVID LLOYD-GEORGE (56, Welsh, thick silver hair and mustache), enters. He crosses to KING GEORGE V (54, dressed in a pinstripe suit), bows his head and kisses the King's outstretched hand.

LLOYD-GEORGE

Your Majesty.

GEORGE V

Prime Minister.

As tradition demands, they both stand throughout the audience.

GEORGE V (CONT'D)

What do you have for me today?

LLOYD-GEORGE

I thought we might discuss the proposed Five Minute 'Great Silence' and the unveiling of the *Cenotaph*, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

Far too long!

LLOYD-GEORGE

What is, your Majesty?

GEORGE V

Five minutes. Far too long. Simply won't work.

Lloyd-George changes tact.

LLOYD-GEORGE

It was the Cabinet's opinion that you might come to that decision, your Majesty. We would now like to propose a Three Minute Silence.

The King thinks about this an instant.

GEORGE V

No.

Lloyd-George is despondent.

LLOYD-GEORGE

But, your Majesty... the sacrifices made...

GEORGE V

Three minutes is far too long a 'moment' for a nation to be expected to remain totally silent, Prime Minister. I respect your enthusiasm for the idea, really I do, but three minutes is not acceptable.

LLOYD-GEORGE

(more forcibly)

Your Majesty... My Cabinet feel emphatically, as do I, and are most enthusiastic about the British people having an opportunity to pay their respects to their dead loved ones on Armistice Day. It's a matter of...

GEORGE V

(enthusiastically)

Two minutes!

Lloyd-George is not used to being interrupted.

LLOYD-GEORGE

Two minutes..?

GEORGE V

Absolutely. Two minutes! I am convinced two minutes is a timeframe my subjects would willingly observe.

Lloyd-George takes a beat - he knows when he's routed.

LLOYD-GEORGE

Two minutes. I will put it to the Cabinet, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

Excellent! I will agree to a two minute silence. My subjects should be able to hold their tongues that long, don't you think?

LLOYD-GEORGE

(exasperated)

I think so, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

How will this 'Great Silence' be organised, Prime Minister? Just how exactly, do you propose to synchronise a city, let alone an entire nation?

LLOYD-GEORGE

No elaborate arrangement required, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

How so?

LLOYD-GEORGE

At a given signal which can be suitably planned to suit the circumstances of the locality, I believe our country will unite in a simple service of Silence and Remembrance.

GEORGE V

And what kind of signal do you propose exactly?

LLOYD-GEORGE

'Maroons', your Majesty!

GEORGE V

(surprised by his language)

I'm sorry..?

LLOYD-GEORGE

At precisely 11am - in towns and cities up-and-down our great land, the military will fire a single maroon to signal the commencement of the silence. Likewise, to announce its end.

GEORGE V

Maroons..? Very well, I quite like that... I acquiesce to a two minute silence. What next?

LLOYD-GEORGE

The unveiling of the *Cenotaph*, your Majesty.

INT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - UPPER HALLWAY - AFTERNOON
SUPER: 13th August, Folkestone

Railton stands nervously outside the bedroom door.

Ruby's painful childbirth WAILS sound from within, creating images in his head of the suffering he witnessed in the war.

An enemy star shell BURSTS overhead... then silence.

The sound of a baby crying. DR BRITTAIN (60s, Scottish, in tie, waistcoat and rolled-up sleeves) opens the door and steps out into the hallway to shake the Railton's hand.

DOCTOR BRITTAIN

David... I'm delighted to announce that you're the father of a very healthy baby boy.

RAILTON

A boy?

Realisation. A huge grin appears on his face, immediately followed by one of concern.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

How's Ruby, Dr Brittain? Can I see her?

DOCTOR BRITTAIN

Mother and child are absolutely fine. You should be...

Suddenly, a painful scream comes from inside the room. Railton instantly turns to face the closed door.

A TROUBLED MIDWIFE's head appears.

MIDWIFE

Doctor Brittain, come quick.

The Doctor looks at Railton, concerned.

RAILTON

Can I come in?

DOCTOR BRITTAIN

Best to wait here, David. I'll fetch you if we have a problem.

The Doctor heads back into the room.

Ruby's wails grow ever more powerful. Railton suffers mental AGONY at the thought of what might be taking place --

INT. IMPROMPTU FIELD STATION, THE SOMME - FLASHBACK

Badly injured men, SCREAM in pain.

A soldier dies in Railton's arms as --

INT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - UPPER HALLWAY

Ruby falls silent. Railton's quickly brought back to reality. Sweating. Terrified.

RAILTON

(frantic)

Ruby..?

INT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - BEDROOM

Railton BURSTS through the door, to be met by the Doctor standing immediately behind it BLOCKING his POV.

He glares fixedly at Railton and then breaks into an enormous smile.

DOCTOR BRITTAIN

David, I am now proud to announce that you're the father of a wee boy...

The Doctor steps to one-side revealing a portrait of Ruby, cradling a baby in each arm.

DOCTOR BRITTAIN (CONT'D)

...and a bonnie wee baby girl.

RAILTON

(confused)

Twins..?

Railton rushes over to Ruby and kisses her forehead, her cheeks, her lips.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

I remember you saying that our baby was kicking so hard inside, you thought it had four feet and was wearing hobnail boots. You were right all along, my love.

RUBY

The surprise of my life! I didn't expect this.

Railton touches each of his baby's heads.

RAILTON

You didn't expect this!

He gently strokes Ruby's hair.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

You look absolutely beautiful, my darling. I am so very, very proud of you. I am so happy, I feel I could accomplish absolutely anything at this precise moment.

She gazes up at him.

RUBY

Then, might this be the appropriate time for you to finally write your letter?

RAILTON

My letter..?

RUBY

Now or never, my love.

INT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Railton pours a large whisky, sits down at his desk, peers at a list of names written on a pad.

General Haig's name already has a cross beside it.

There's a question mark next to the King's name.

Railton stares a moment longer, picks up a single sheet of paper, inserts it into his typewriter, throws his head back, leans forward and begins to type:

RAILTON (V.O.)
To the Right Reverend Bishop,
Herbert Ryle, Dean of Westminster.

We follow the letter's journey throughout Railton's V.O.

MONTAGE:

- Railton licks the envelope closed.
- Railton Posts the letter in a postbox.
- A mailbag thrown on a train at Folkestone Railway Station.
- Folkestone to London by train.
- Delivery by Post Office van to Westminster Abbey Chapter offices.
- Placed into another envelope and re-addressed.
- Train from Kings Cross to Harrogate Station.
- Delivery to the Dean's house, by a local POSTMAN.
- A BUTLER delivers the letter to HERBERT RYLE, (64, Yorkshireman, trim, balding man with a thick beard).

RAILTON (V.O.)
Dear Dean, Please forgive this intrusion. Although to my knowledge, we have never met nor spoken on any prior occasion, I am writing to you about an idea I have which I truly believe will serve to ease the pain of mothers, fathers, wives, brothers, sisters, sweethearts and friends of those thousands, now missing, believed killed in action and who now lie buried in Flanders and France in unmarked graves. For families at home, there have been no funerals, there are no graves to visit. Let me get directly to the point. Would you consider the possibility of burying in the Abbey the body of one of our unknown comrades? I believe, that his tomb might become a symbol for all those grieving, who currently have no grave of their own to visit.

(MORE)

RAILTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I might be so bold to suggest that the grave be known as the '*Tomb of the Unknown Comrade*'. The term 'comrade' denotes fellowship and solidarity, which I view as crucial elements of the symbolism of both the tomb and of the British war experience. I think it vital to emphasize the egalitarian symbolism of the proposed shrine. If I might also be so bold to suggest, that a real 'war' flag, such as one in my possession, be used at such a burial, rather than a new flag of no service experience.

END MONTAGE:

INT. THE DEAN'S STUDY, HARROGATE - MORNING
SUPER: Harrogate, 16th August

Ryle opens the envelope with a letter-opener, takes out the paper and reads:

RAILTON (V.O.)

This might add to the emotion of the occasion. I very much look forward to receiving a response from you at your earliest convenience. Yours faithfully,
 David Railton, MC, Curate of Folkestone.

EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - GARDEN

Another audience. The King and Lloyd-George wear coats and hats as they stroll together. The King's Equerry and LLOYD-GEORGE'S SECRETARY walk behind, just out of earshot.

LLOYD-GEORGE

The *Cenotaph* is universally recognised as a just and fitting memorial, your Majesty. Your people are firmly behind the proposal.

GEORGE V

Not all of them. I have received several objections to it from various Church leaders?

LLOYD-GEORGE

The Church? How so?

GEORGE V

It seems many Bishops are opposed to the construction of a non-denominational, secular monument, located in the centre of Whitehall with no Christian symbol upon it.

Lloyd-George is as angry as he can be in the presence of his King.

LLOYD-GEORGE

That's ridiculous, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

And why's that, Prime Minister?

LLOYD-GEORGE

I personally, emphasised to Mr. Lutyens that the structure of the *Cenotaph* was to be non-denominational, and that it should be decorated without a cross or any other Christian symbol that might alienate soldiers of other religions. That Lutyens has achieved this resonance without recourse to conventional spirituality, something that for unknown reason seems to have outraged the established Church, admirable. I believe this to be a vital element of its design. What would they rather see?

The King halts and turns to face Lloyd-George.

GEORGE V

A simple stone cross, I believe.

LLOYD-GEORGE

But what of the Catholics..? What of the Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Muslims that sacrificed their lives for the Empire? This new kind of monument will be a genuine move towards inclusivity. The *Cenotaph*, although clearly gendered, is classless, rankless and inclusive; emphasising the nation as a whole, rather than the estates within it. No, your Majesty, I am afraid that I simply cannot agree.

The King studies Lloyd-George a moment.

GEORGE V

Good! For once, Prime Minister,
we're in complete harmony. I
believe it vital that any parade
demands a focal point. Mr.
Lutyen's obelisk should provide
that.

INT. ST MARY'S & ST EANSWYTHE'S CHURCH, FOLKESTONE
SUPER: Folkestone - 17th August

Railton and Ruby both manning a clothing bank,
distributing items to the POOR, who queue-up at their
stall.

David passes a shawl to Ruby.

RAILTON

The newspapers report religious
tensions and exclusions in regard
to the unveiling of the *Cenotaph*.

Who passes it on to a POOR WOMAN, cuddling her BABY.

RUBY

There, Mrs Chorley, that should
keep her warm.

Mrs Chorley takes the shawl.

MRS CHORLEY

Thank you, Mrs Railton.

Mrs Chorley moves on.

RUBY

Why, David?

Railton looks at the 2ND WOMAN IN LINE and passes over an
item to Ruby.

RAILTON

Apparently, there's to be no
possibility of official ecumenical
involvement by the Roman Catholic
church on the day.

Ruby passes on the item to the woman.

RUBY

There you go, Mrs Gemmell. See you
next week.

MRS GEMMELL

Bless you, Mrs Railton.

Ruby turns back to Railton.

RUBY

Why ever not..?

RAILTON

This morning's 'Times' stated that the Chief Rabbi has agreed to be a participant at the unveiling service, but the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster has not.

A POSTBOY arrives.

POSTMAN

Got a letter for yer, Vicar.

Railton takes it.

RAILTON

Thank you, John.

Railton turns the envelope over. Embossed shield on the reverse.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

It's from Westminster Abbey.

He glances at Ruby, who smiles nervously, and opens the envelope.

RUBY

What... does it say?

RAILTON

It's from the Dean. 16th August, Harrogate. Dear Railton, I have read your letter of the 13th, which has reached me at the above address, with both deep interest and sympathy.

INT. THE DEAN'S STUDY, HARROGATE - FLASHBACK

The Dean sits at his writing desk, busily penning his reply to Railton.

DEAN (V.O.)

I am currently at a distance from the Abbey and in the middle of a much needed-holiday. I'm perhaps not altogether in a position to give you a final decision on either of your two suggestions, but they make a strong appeal to me.

INT. ST MARY'S & ST EANSWYTHE'S CHURCH, FOLKESTONE - DAY

Railton reads:

RAILTON

On first consideration, I find myself warmly inclined to favor them. Would it be all the same to you if I defer my decision until I have the opportunity of both meeting you and consulting my chapter?

INT. THE DEAN'S STUDY, HARROGATE - MORNING - FLASHBACK

The Dean writes:

DEAN (V.O.)

The suggestion of commemorating the unknown dead has indeed been made in different quarters. But your suggestion strikes me as the best I have received. If I could obtain War Office permission, I think I could carry out the rest of the proposal; the interment, etc. The idea shall germinate --

EXT. THE DEAN'S HOUSE, HARROGATE - FLASHBACK

A Rolls-Royce arrives outside the Dean's house. A CHAUFFEUR hurries to open a rear door.

COSMO LANG, Archbishop of York, (56, Scottish and balding), exits the car and stares up at the house.

DEAN (V.O.)(CONT'D)

On my return at the beginning of October, I would see you if possible; discuss it with my chapter; approach the government; and try and find a vacant and suitable spot on the floor of the nave...

INT. ST MARY'S & ST EANSWYTHE'S CHURCH, FOLKESTONE - DAY

Railton reads the last paragraph, elated.

RAILTON

These ideas of which you have spoken to me and to which I am now responding had better not be talked about, or they may get prematurely into the newspapers and do harm instead of good. I very much look forward to us meeting in London. Yours sincerely...

INT. THE DEAN'S STUDY, HARROGATE - FLASHBACK

The Dean having tea with Cosmo Lang. The Archbishop hands Railton's letter back to the Dean.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Although I can never admit it publicly, my Lord Archbishop, many Christians are looking for a way to wrestle back the national symbol of mourning by placing the Anglican church at the heart of it.

The Archbishop puts down his cup and saucer.

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

As you're no doubt aware, Herbert, I am one of those. The church establishment has been deeply unhappy about the secularism of the war cemeteries and us having a '*Cenotaph*'; what the *Catholic Herald* calls, '*a pagan monument insulting to Christianity*', in the middle of Whitehall.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Having an 'unknown comrade's' body buried in the Abbey as a rival shrine to the *Cenotaph*, and as our riposte to the secularism we deplore, would enable us to have our own focus of mourning. When Railton's letter landed on my desk with the idea being suggested in a perfect definitive form, it appeared manna from heaven.

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

It certainly presents the perfect opportunity for the Church of England to create our own national shrine. Nevertheless, the idea of an... 'unknown' resting among our Kings and Queens..?

The Dean interrupts.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

There's currently little democracy within the Abbey, Archbishop, which is above all a place of names I'll admit, most of them those of the great and the powerful. However, I believe that the idea of a 'possible' commoner resting inside the heart of the Abbey...

The Archbishop catches on...

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

Might also help revive the church's relevance and with it, the attention of an entire nation in the heart of the Anglican establishment. However, I doubt the King will entertain this idea coming from a mere Curate. Now... if you were to suggest it, Herbert, and were able to secure the support of the Prime Minister..?

The Dean smiles and reaches for the teapot.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

More tea, Cosmo?

EXT. MARGATE VICARAGE - DAY

WORKMEN unload a delivery van filled with the Railton's furniture and boxes into their new home.

EXT. MARGATE BEACH - NIGHT

The moon casts its beam across the sea and directly onto the deserted beach, save for Railton and Evans, who walk by the water's edge.

RAILTON

Everyone had difficult duties to perform, but it was often left to Padres such as myself, to put away our emotions and feelings. I was the one person who was able to look into that Private's eyes during his final minutes on earth. I saw both the best and worst of men before they drew their last.

EVANS

I never realised...

RAILTON

Some met their fate with anger,
some with fear, doing everything
they could to escape, while others
had comrades give them alcohol to
numb the pain of their death. This
particular Private chose to take
communion with me.

I/E. TEMPORARY ARMY TENT - EARLY MORNING - FLASHBACK

Railton, the Private and two SOLDIERS complete a prayer.
Two Communion goblets sit atop Railton's flag. The
Soldiers then tie the Private's hands behind his back and
lead him out. Railton follows. They walk into --

EXT. A WOOD - FLASHBACK

A single wooden stake stands alone in the rich blue
light. The Private's led up to and strapped to the stump.

A SERGEANT offers the Private a blindfold which he
refuses, shaking his head.

A SIX MAN FIRING SQUAD take-up their positions.

Railton closes his eyes and begins to pray.

SERGEANT

Ready.

The firing squad raise their rifles.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Aim... Fire!

The startling RETORT of 6 rifles fired, cause Railton to
open his eyes.

The Private SLUMPED at the stake.

The Sergeant strides towards the Private, removing his
sidearm as he does.

Railton stares hard at the dead man, as the Sergeant
FIRES the *coup de grace*.

Railton immediately races back to the --

I/E. TEMPORARY ARMY TENT - EARLY MORNING

He snatches ANGRILY at his flag like never before, tipping the Communion goblets and THROWS it HARD on the ground, STAMPING up-and-down on it in BLIND fury.

EXT. MARGATE BEACH - NIGHT

Evans gazes sullenly at Railton.

RAILTON

What was the point if the fallen are to be so easily forgotten? Tell me!

Trying to pick-up the mood of his friend.

EVANS

We will never forget! As Binyon nobly set on paper, '*We will remember them*'.

RAILTON

Was it not George Eliot who wrote, '*Our Dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them*'? What of future generations? We're here for a *minute* second in the scheme of things. Would it not be a total waste to be simply overlooked, disregarded, erased from memory?

EVANS

The Government has set-up an *Imperial War Graves Commission* to oversee the creation of War cemeteries.

RAILTON

Yes I know, but many bereft families are upset that only the wealthy will ever be able to travel overseas to visit them.

They stop for a moment of silence and consideration and to take in the scene.

EVANS

It's beautiful isn't it?

RAILTON

Yes, I so enjoy the peace and the sound of the sea... We should head back.

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

Railton, Ruby and Evans sit down to breakfast with their children. The two babies lie together in a crib to one-side. Railton's reading *The Times*.

RUBY

Look at them, aren't they
gorgeous?

Railton puts down newspaper and observes his children.

RAILTON

You all are indeed. As are you, my
darling. To think that I was
nervous at first about us bringing
new birth into this troubled land.
You're the new generation and I
adore you all.

RUBY

I suppose you're both hungry after
your night on the town?

Railton and Evans both look sheepishly at each other.

RAILTON

On the town..?

Ruby cynically smiles back at his answer.

EVANS

No further news? Nothing from the
Dean?

Railton shakes his head.

RUBY

Have faith, my love.

Mrs Murdock delivers a fresh stack of letters to the breakfast table. Railton checks them briefly and pulls one out which he hurriedly opens.

RUBY (CONT'D)

More letters from the bereaved,
David?

RAILTON

(anxiously)
This one's from the Dean.

RUBY

What does it say?

RAILTON

Dear Railton, As you know I have taken four or five weeks to think about your suggestion and to consult with friends. One of those, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, from whom I have received a positive response. --

EXT. MARGATE STATION EARLY MORNING - DAY

Railton and Ruby board the Margate train to London.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (V.O.)

Can you possibly come to London at your earliest convenience to discuss the matter further with me?

EXT. HORSE GUARDS PARADE - DAY

Railton and Ruby cross from St. James's Park on to Horse Guards Parade. Railton stops to admire a statue.

RAILTON

Would you look at this?

RUBY

Who is it?

RAILTON

It's the recently unveiled statue of Field Marshal, Viscount Wolseley.

She studies it while Railton gazes-up at it.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Just think..? If they can place a statue to the great Wolseley, one of the most influential and admired British Generals of all time, in a corner of Horse Guards, what might they do and where might they consider burying the body of an unknown comrade?

He turns to face his wife, concerned.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

What will we do, Ruby, should I fail?

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - CLOISTERS

Railton and the Dean walk together.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER
Are you in anyway related to
George Railton, ex-Commissioner of
The Salvation Army?

RAILTON
My father.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER
I was sad to hear of his loss.

RAILTON
He passed away in 1913. A heart
attack on a train situated in
Cologne Station.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER
I am so sorry, Railton. He was a
good man. Worked tirelessly. On a
train, you say?

The Dean shakes his head.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)
I hear you share his faith and
concern for the poorest in
society.

RAILTON
I hope I prove to be a good son.
My Father and I did not see a lot
of each other in the months prior
to his death. I miss him terribly.

The Dean stops and studies Railton.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER
Sir Henry Wilson suggested I write
to the King's Private Secretary,
which I did four days ago,
proposing a body should be exhumed
from the battlefields and interred
in the Abbey.

A huge weight lifts from Railton's shoulders. He's
visibly moved.

RAILTON
You have no idea what that means
to me.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER
Oh, I think I do. Stamfordham
replied earlier this morning.

RAILTON

So swiftly?

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Unfortunately, his reply was not all I had hoped for.

Railton tenses.

RAILTON

How so?

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

He suggested that the King is rather doubtful about my proposal.

RAILTON

But this would be the perfect opportunity for our children to be carefully taught that this one comrade represents all Britons who fell in the Great War, both known and unknown.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

I fully grasp your concept, Railton. It's not me you have to convince.

Railton presses-on nonetheless.

RAILTON

It's quite likely that he was a communicant of the Church, or a Roman Catholic, a Jew, a Salvationist, a Wesleyan, or a Presbyterian. If so, and as Christ saw him fall, it's not hard to think of Him praying again over a world gone mad, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

The Dean replies forcefully.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Railton, you're transmitting, not receiving!

Railton's suitably chastised.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)

Stamfordham continued, 'on the other hand, the King recognises the force of my argument and notes what I said of Sir Henry Wilson's view of the proposal'.

Railton has calmed down, but nevertheless makes another effort to persuade the Dean.

RAILTON

It would be an imaginative and fitting memorial that would allow an Anglican church and thereby 'the' Anglican Church, to become the focus for the bereaved of the nation. If we were able to lay a body in a final resting place, accessible to all, then the ghastly unrelenting pain that currently grips each family's heart might be eased, as might the crippling, unresolved grief suffered by the bereaved who have never had a body to mourn. The Unknown Comrade's invisible face could be invested with thousands of familiar faces, all much missed and loved.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

I repeat, Railton, it's not me you have to convince. His Majesty has requested that I speak with the Prime Minister...

RAILTON

The Prime Minister..?

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

...on the subject, and let him know what Mr. Lloyd-George thinks of the idea. I intend to do so as soon as possible and will get back to you with his opinion.

RAILTON

Thank you, Dean Ryle. What news of my flag?

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Your flag..?

Railton presses home.

RAILTON

My *Union Flag* was used during the war at *Holy Communion* as a covering for altars. It was used at church parades and ceremonial parades. It was the covering, often the only covering of the slain, as their bodies were laid to rest.

(MORE)

RAILTON (CONT'D)

For all I know it may have been used in France when the unknown comrade was cut down.

The Dean thinks out loud.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Had such a thing been possible, the nation would have given the same honour to each of her sons.

The Dean gazes at Railton.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)

There must surely be a strong possibility of blood located on your flag? If so, then like any organic material it may present a conservation problem. We would worry it might attract insects or mold.

RAILTON

The question of cleaning my flag a rather delicate one.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Perhaps a report on its condition by the Conservators with recommendations might be in order, before a decision's made on what action we should take regarding your flag.

A change of subject.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)

I want to invite you to preach in the Abbey. Will you come and speak at one of our evening congregations? The services are very popular.

RAILTON

But, I've only recently been installed as Vicar of Margate, Dean Ryle. Before that I was a humble Curate. Surely...

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

You a humble curate, Railton? The evidence, speaks to the contrary.

INT. THE CABINET ROOM, 10 DOWNING STREET - DAY

Lloyd-George is presenting Railton's concept to his Cabinet for the first time.

20 GOVERNMENT MINISTERS sit around the vast table.

ANDREW BONAR LAW (62, Scottish, tough Chancellor of the Exchequer, dark haired, thick mustache), asks a question:

BONAR LAW

I am not so sure. What if His Majesty's not persuaded..?

LLOYD-GEORGE

You must leave the King to me, Bonar Law. His Majesty's a jolly chap, but thank God there's not much in his head. They're simple, very, very ordinary people and perhaps on the whole that's how it should be. Nations must 'justify' mass killings, if only to support the feelings of the bereaved and sanity of the survivors.

BONAR LAW

You think you can change the King's mind?

LLOYD-GEORGE

Once His Majesty fully understands the value of the gesture that validates the sacrifice of every one of the hundreds of thousands who fought and died, he will not be a problem. And as soon as he's made aware that this Cabinet fully endorses the idea, then believe me, Gentlemen, he will approve the addition of the burial of an '*unknown comrade*', in the Abbey on *Armistice Day*. Foreign Secretary?

LORD CURZON (61, politician, former Viceroy of India, formally dressed with wing-collared shirt and tie), peers up from some papers.

LORD CURZON

Prime Minister..?

LLOYD-GEORGE

I require you to form a committee.

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - RECEIVING ROOM - DAY

Lloyd-George presses home his rationale to the King.

LLOYD-GEORGE

It will be seen as a fitting-end
your Majesty to the devastation
that has deprived the nation of so
many young men.

GEORGE V

I am not so sure, Prime Minister.
I have already agreed to unveil,
despite protests, the newly
completed *Cenotaph* on the 11th
November, surely that will
suffice?

LLOYD-GEORGE

The idea of the return of the body
of an unknown comrade was
initially rejected by my Cabinet,
mainly on the basis that the
Cenotaph should be established as
Britain's national war memorial.

GEORGE V

Absolutely. Totally agree!

LLOYD-GEORGE

I hear rumors however, that the
French also have plans for a
similar parade in Paris, including
a saluting point for the marching
troops.

GEORGE V

Do they, by Gad? Tell me, Prime
Minister, what exactly is the
meaning of '*Cenotaph*'?

LLOYD-GEORGE

I believe it comes from the Greek,
your Majesty.

GEORGE V

Greek..?

LLOYD-GEORGE

Yes. *Cenotaph*'s taken from two
Greek words - *Kenos*, meaning
'empty' and *taphos*, meaning,
'tomb'. *Cenotaphs* originated in
Ancient Greece, where they were
constructed when it was impossible
to recover a body after the
battle.

GEORGE V

So, it literally translates as
'empty tomb', yes?

LLOYD-GEORGE

That's correct, your Majesty. The Greeks placed enormous cultural importance on the proper burial of their war dead. The *Cenotaph* will represent our absent dead.

GEORGE V

Why then, do you propose that we require a further focal point..?

Lloyd-George is for once stumped for an answer and remains silent.

The King phrases his next words extremely carefully.

GEORGE V (CONT'D)

I am partially against the idea of this proposed burial on grounds of taste. It's nearly two years since the last shot was fired. There has already been rejection to *Armistice Day* solemnity by many veterans who want a more straightforward victory celebration of their achievements.

Lloyd-George revives.

LLOYD-GEORGE

Whilst victory in the war is acknowledged, your Majesty, the meaning of this victory is now closely-tied to the hope of a peaceable world. We now live in a period where tremendous hope and faith has been placed on the newly created *League of Nations*. Surely this new symbol of loss might be exactly what's needed to bring the nation together?

GEORGE V

I feel that a public interment ceremony might reopen the wounds of war... Will not the idea of a symbolic funeral be regarded as somewhat belated? I consider the idea distastefully sentimental.

LLOYD-GEORGE

I think not your Majesty...

The King's surprised at Lloyd-George's open disagreement.

GEORGE V

Really..? Quite apart from anything else, there's ample opportunity for something to go wrong.

LLOYD-GEORGE

I have set Lord Curzon at the head of the Memorial Services Committee organising the event. I am confident the planning will be formidable.

The King considers this.

GEORGE V

Curzon, eh? You do realise that one false move and there could be a morbid side-show within the National Shrine.

LLOYD-GEORGE

The Cabinet and I are very much in favor of the idea, your Majesty. Think of the value in a gesture that would validate the sacrifice of every one of the millions who fought for King, country and Empire - and died - irrespective of creed or caste. He might possibly be a man of the Dominions. No one will ever know. Whatever, he will be known as one who gave his life for the people of the British Empire.

The King begins to warm to this suggestion.

GEORGE V

This might not be such a bad idea.

LLOYD-GEORGE

Your government hopes that the parade might both unite the nation in celebrating the victorious conclusion to the war, and commemorate the sacrifice of the dead.

Lloyd-George allows the King to ponder.

GEORGE V

We could provide this... '*unknown comrade*'... I do not like that term by the way! Reeks of Bolshevism! We cannot and will not allow Bolshevism to take hold.

(MORE)

GEORGE V (CONT'D)

We must not encourage it in any form, especially after what happened to my cousin Nicky... and not with the current state of affairs in Russia. Absolutely not!

Lloyd-George can sense the tide's turning.

LLOYD-GEORGE

Might we call it, *'The Tomb of the Unknown... Soldier'*?

The King gazes at him critically.

GEORGE V

As a Royal Navy man myself, Prime Minister, do I need to remind you, that many Naval officers and ratings manned guns and fought in the trenches? Your proposed *'Unknown Soldier'* may in fact turn out to be a sailor.

LLOYD-GEORGE

'Unknown... Warrior'..?

A smile breaks out across the King's face.

GEORGE V

I like that! The *'Tomb of the Unknown Warrior'*. Yes, I like that very much!

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING
SUPER: 20th October

Railton, Ruby and family sitting down to breakfast.

Railton's reading *'The Times'*. The door opens and Evans enters.

EVANS

Forgive my tardiness. I slept a little late. Must be the fine sea air.

Railton smiles knowingly, as does Ruby.

RUBY

No need to apologise, Mr. Evans.

RAILTON

We're delighted you have been able to join us for a few days. It's so good to see you again, old friend.

Evans sits.

EVANS

Any news?

RAILTON

'*The Times*' reports that my idea originated from the Dean of Westminster.

RUBY

That's outrageous!

EVANS

Totally!

RAILTON

Perhaps the Dean's just being pragmatic.

RUBY

I don't see how?

RAILTON

I will write to him for clarification.

The door opens and Mrs Murdock enters bearing letters.

Railton reaches for them, spots one with the Westminster Abbey shield on the reverse. He glances first at Evans, then his wife.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

It's from the Abbey.

He holds it in both hands. Frozen. Ruby can't hide her nervousness.

RUBY

Open it, my love.

Railton looks again at Ruby. Then at Evans.

EVANS

Yes, do!

Railton reaches for a knife, opens the envelope, takes out the letter and reads it to himself, giving nothing away.

RUBY

Well..?

Railton focuses on Ruby. He begins to read:

RAILTON

'Dear Railton, The idea which you suggested to me in August, I have kept steadily in view ever since.

(MORE)

RAILTON (CONT'D)

I have been occupied actively upon it for the last two or three weeks. It has necessitated communication with the Prime Minister, War Office, Cabinet and Buckingham Palace.'

Evans can't help but to be impressed.

EVANS

Buckingham Palace..?

In her excitement Ruby breaks in.

RUBY

Sssshhh, Mr. Evans!

Railton peers over at her. She realises her rudeness.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Please excuse me.

RAILTON

'The announcement which the Prime Minister intends to make this afternoon, will show how far the Government...

Railton's overwhelmed.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

'...is ready to co-operate. Once more I express my warm acknowledgement and thanks for your letter. Yours sincerely,'

Realisation!

Eyes locked, slowly, Railton and Ruby both rise.

They can hold back their emotions no longer and fully embrace in front of Evans, who also gets to his feet and starts to applaud.

EVANS

Many congratulations, old friend!

He reaches out to take Railton's hand.

INT. LORD CURZON'S COMMITTEE ROOM - DAY

Curzon's in the Chair. There's no doubt that he's the driving force behind the events of *Armistice Day*.

LORD CURZON

Gentlemen, with only three weeks left until *Armistice Day*, news of the repatriation of an '*unknown warrior*' has been warmly received both by the public and the press. However, our timeframe to discover an appropriate corpse, retrieve it and transport it back to London perilously short.

WINSTON CHURCHILL (46, Secretary of State for War and Air), interrupts.

CHURCHILL

The Prime Minister informs me that His Majesty's now fully behind the concept. So-much-so, he's insistent that the coffin in which the body's laid to rest is made from an oak that currently stands in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace. It's, I believe, to be topped with a rare and valuable Crusader's sword, provided from the King's own private collection.

LORD CURZON

Excellent, Churchill! General Jeffreys? As General Officer Commanding the Brigade of Guards, London, yours is an immeasurable task.

GENERAL JEFFREYS

I am fully prepared for the work ahead, my Lord. My staff and I will not falter. London has seen such similar occasions in the past, with large-scale state funerals of monarchs and politicians.

CHURCHILL

I do not think that there has really ever been a precedent for anything quite like the burial of an '*Unknown Warrior*', General.

LORD CURZON

Dean Ryle has come up with a superb suggestion, I believe, requesting that when the body's transported from France, that we transport 100 sandbags filled with French soil, with which to fill in the grave.

CHURCHILL

The French will love that. A corner of a foreign field, so to speak.

There's a general chorus of, 'Hear!, Hear!' from around the table.

LORD CURZON

The entire process must be treated with the utmost dignity. The tomb of '*The Unknown Warrior*' calls for it to be designed similarly to the *Cenotaph* itself, as classless and inclusive as possible, and to represent unity, rather than exclusion or division.

CHURCHILL

Exactly! Who can say who he might have been? Whether or not the war killed in the person of the '*Unknown Warrior*', a man who might have been the great '*Genius*', a man to lead the rising generation in its gigantic tasks ahead?

(Churchill might have been talking about his own future, had he only known.)

LORD CURZON

It's vitally... and I repeat 'vitally' important, that we ensure that the selection of the '*Unknown Warrior*' is carried out in a meticulously secretive fashion.

INT/EXT. ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH, MARGATE - NIGHT

Railton slips out of the vicarage, puts up his umbrella and makes his way on to rain-soaked Church Street, then --

EXT. MARGATE PIER - NIGHT

Railton trudges down to the end of the pier and stares directly into the dark ROARING face of nature.

The wind forces him to hold on to his hat and close-down his umbrella, as enormous waves BATTER the quay, their THUNDEROUS noise instantly reminding him of the artillery barrages he and his comrades endured.

He bows down to his knees under the pressure and cowers low from the sound of an APPROACHING shell/wave.

A sudden look of DEFIANCE on Railton's face as he raises his head and pulls himself erect, 'Lear'-like, as the sound of the enemy shell/wave EXPLODES and an ENORMOUS wave hits the pier and breaks over him.

RAILTON

'Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! You sulphurous and thought-executing fires, Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts...

Railton rips-off his hat and holds it outstretched in one hand, his umbrella similarly in the other, presenting himself DEFIANTLY, in the shape of a cross, full-on to the storm.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world! Crack nature's moulds, an Germans spill at once, That make ingrateful man!'

Railton challenges nature, unafraid of the RAGING storm.

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING
SUPER: 27th October

A revitalised Railton and Ruby at breakfast. Railton reading a letter from the Dean.

RAILTON

Dean Ryle states that 'the War Office is quite willing to accept my flag for use at the service on 11th November'...

RUBY

That's wonderful news, my love. I'm so... cock-a-hoop for you!

RAILTON

'Provided... that it's in a condition not unsuitable for the occasion.' He asks if I will take it up to town next week for inspection and says:

He gazes for the exact line in the letter.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

'In any case, if it's used, I should like to have a short description of it, so that I could let the press have full information. It would add further interest, not that such is needed, to the ceremony.'

He puts the letter down on the table.

RUBY

Before your flag can be taken to London, my dear, I have to revive it as best I can, if it's to be formally used for the burial.

RAILTON

It does have one or two holes in it that will have to be patched, and we...

RUBY

We..?

Railton laughs.

RAILTON

You, my darling, will have to remove the letters of *141 Infantry Brigade* from one of its corners.

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - WASHROOM - DAY

Mrs Murdock delicately hand washes the flag.

RUBY (V.O.)

But first it must be cleaned. I'll ask Mrs Murdock to handle it personally.

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - PARLOUR - NIGHT

Ruby cautiously removes the lettering from the flag.

INT. - LORD CURZON'S COMMITTEE ROOM - DAY

LORD CURZON

We need a thorough process to select the body. Every precaution must be taken to ensure that his identity shall never become known.

Sir Alfred Mond (52, Northern Industrialist, Financier and Politician), raises a hand containing papers.

SIR ALFRED MOND

Shouldn't he be an officer, rather than a lowly private?

LORD CURZON

The entire point of the exercise Mond, is that class is not an issue. Anonymity is fundamental. Neither his colour, nor religion matter. We should consider him an Everyman.

GENERAL JEFFREYS

We're working on the detail, my Lord.

Mond wants to be heard.

SIR ALFRED MOND

If I may? I have drawn-up an extensive list of those in society who 'must' be invited to attend.

LORD CURZON

Rot, Sir Alfred! Unlike any occasion ever held in the Abbey since its consecration, the congregation cannot be drawn solely from the elite. It must be drawn from all classes.

Mond protests.

SIR ALFRED MOND

I say!

Curzon will have none of it.

LORD CURZON

This ceremony should not, and cannot be seen as a society event.

SIR ALFRED MOND

But what of parliament, what of the Lords?

LORD CURZON

I intend to fully exclude parliament...

SIR ALFRED MOND

Really..?

LORD CURZON

...Say for the Prime Minister and his Cabinet Ministers.

(MORE)

LORD CURZON (CONT'D)

We will also not be inviting the representatives of any foreign government. This is to be a national occasion. The entire purpose of this internment gentlemen, is to try and heal somewhat the pain of our nation's bereaved, not to glorify the cause of their loss.

CHURCHILL

Then how exactly do you see us packing a congregation into the Abbey, Lord Curzon? --

EXT. THE HOME OF CAPTAIN CLARK - MORNING

Over the following dialogue exchange a POSTBOY delivers an envelope.

LORD CURZON (V.O.)

By us simply turning over the majority of seats to the mothers and widows of the fallen who lost their men during the war. --

INT. THE HOME OF CAPTAIN CLARK

POSTBOY

Letter fer Mrs Clark.

Mrs Clark's MAID receives the envelope. Heads off to find her Mistress. --

SIR ALFRED MOND (V.O.)

And just how do you propose we organize that..? --

INT. THE HOME OF CAPTAIN CLARK - DINING ROOM

The Maid enters the room door.

LORD CURZON (V.O.)

Seats will be decided by ballot...

She hands the envelope to Mrs Clark, who now wears her husband's wedding ring on a chain hanging from her neck, and who studies the shield on the reverse of the sleeve.

SIR ALFRED MOND (V.O.)

A ballot..?

Mrs Clark reaches for a knife, opens the envelope.

LORD CURZON (V.O.)
 ...with priority given to those
 women who have lost the most men.

SIR ALFRED MOND (V.O.)
 All 8000 tickets?

Mrs Clark takes a letter and a card out of the envelope. -

INT. - LORD CURZON'S COMMITTEE ROOM

LORD CURZON
 With top priority going to a group
 of approximately 100 women who
 lost both their husbands and all
 their sons.

INT. THE HOME OF CAPTAIN CLARK - DINING ROOM

Mrs Clark is surprised to find an invitation to the Abbey
 service for the internment of the '*Unknown Warrior*'. --

EXT. ARMY HEADQUARTERS - SAINT-POL-SUR-TERNOISE, FRANCE
SUPER: Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise, France - 1st November

BRIGADIER GENERAL L.J. WYATT, (46, GOC British Forces),
 in his office, with his ever-present dog beside him,
 reading a letter of instructions from the War Office,
 stamped 'SECRET'.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL GELL, his Aide-de-Camp, enters with
 GEORGE KENDALL, (38, Yorkshireman, Senior Chaplain with
 the Imperial War Graves Commission).

LT.COL GELL
 Senior Chaplain Kendall, from the
 Imperial War Graves Commission,
 General.

GENERAL WYATT
 Ah, come in Kendall. Gell, you had
 better stay for this. Close the
 door, will you.

Gell does as instructed.

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)
 I have received orders from the
War Office to exhume the bodies of
 six men.

KENDALL
 That's rather out of the ordinary
 is it not, General Wyatt?

GENERAL WYATT

I think you might actually approve this order, Padre, when you hear the reason behind it.

KENDALL

I'm not so sure.

GENERAL WYATT

You're uniquely qualified Kendall, when charged with finding, exhuming and bringing these six bodies back to Saint-Pol.

KENDALL

Why here in particular? Why not take them direct to one of the many cemeteries we're in the process of..?

The General interrupts him.

GENERAL WYATT

You're to accompany six individual digging parties, each led by diverse Subalterns over the next few days to the battlefields of the *Somme, Ypres, Marne, Cambrai, Arras* and *Aisne*. I need all 6 bodies back here no later than the afternoon of the 8th November.

KENDALL

Am I looking for anyone or anything specific, General?

GENERAL WYATT

Quite the opposite in fact.

Kendall appears baffled.

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)

My orders are, that you are tasked to exhume the bodies of 'unknown' British Empire servicemen. All are required to be wearing British uniforms when exhumed.

KENDALL

Why 'unknown'..?

GENERAL WYATT

Your remit's to choose the corpses of servicemen who died in the war and to ensure that they cannot be identified in anyway, whatsoever!

(MORE)

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)

It's imperative you make absolutely certain that there is nothing included on any of the bodies that might be used to recognise them at a later date.

KENDALL

I'm most curious, General. Can I ask why such secrecy is required, and why these unfortunate souls are to be disinterred?

GENERAL WYATT

I will explain presently. In the meantime, Gell, I need you to go to great lengths to ensure that the individual six digging parties never meet-up and that each returns to their own units immediately at the end of their tasks. No-one, and this is vitally important, except for the Padre, here, is to know from which district any of the bodies are taken.

KENDALL

General, I must ask what all this intrigue is in aid of?

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - MORNING

SUPER: 3rd November

Railton's scribbling a summary of his flag's history for the Dean, as he travels through the Kent countryside to London. --

EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - MORNING

Establish Railton heading into the Chapter area of the Abbey. --

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DEANERY

Present is the Dean and his wife, MRS RYLE. Railton opens his pack and extricates his repaired flag, which he unfurls on a table.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

What a splendid thing it is,
Railton!

His wife reaches out to touch the flag.

MRS RYLE

May I? What an excellent job Mrs Railton has done of repairing it.

RAILTON

Thank you, Mrs Ryle. My wife will greatly appreciate your comments, I am sure. What's significant, Dean Ryle, is that this flag is not a 'bit of bunting' bought especially for the occasion.

It's now the Deans opportunity to touch it.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

This flag has literally been tinged with the life-blood of fellow Britons. It will definitely pass muster for the purpose of the occasion.

Railton's delight interrupted by marching footsteps and the arrival of Sir Douglas Haig and his STAFF, who are passing through the Abbey.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)

Ah, Sir Douglas, your timing could not be better.

HAIG

Good afternoon, Dean Ryle. Mrs Ryle.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

May I introduce you, Sir Douglas Haig, to the Reverend David Railton, Vicar of Margate.

Haig ruminates a moment. Where has he heard that name before?

HAIG

Railton..?

He has no idea.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

The return of the body of the 'Unknown Warrior' was Railton's idea.

HAIG

Was it indeed? Then let me shake your hand, Mr. Railton. Excellent idea! Well done you. Truly, excellent!

He reaches out his hand enthusiastically. Railton appears reluctant, but shakes Haig's hand, none-the-less.

HAIG (CONT'D)

Should have thought of it myself!
Must be off. Another bloody
committee meeting. Oh, excuse me,
Mrs Ryle.

He salutes Mrs Ryle. They watch as Haig and his staff march off.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

I must confess, Railton, that
initially when I first contacted
Stamfordham in order to put your
idea forward, I claimed it as my
own. I apologise now to you for
that.

RAILTON

I believe I understand, Dean Ryle.
I very much doubt that the King
would have listened intently to
such a suggestion put forward by a
Padre.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

I did it solely because I believed
it might help your idea stand a
better chance of being approved.
Please forgive me.

And as if to make it up to him...

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)

Railton, it would be the Abbey's
honour if you would allow us to
retain your flag indefinitely and
suspend it in the Abbey close to
the *'Tomb of the Unknown Warrior'*.

Railton's hugely moved.

RAILTON

It would be my, and my flag's
great honour, Dean Ryle, for which
we both thank you.

Railton bows his head.

MRS RYLE

Some tea, Mr. Railton?

They all start to head off.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER
I have composed an inscription for
the tomb. I wonder if I might
share with you?

EXT. YPRES BATTLEFIELD - DAY

SUPER: Ypres, France

Kendall, ARMY SUBALTERN 1 (early 20s) and four SOLDIERS
arrive by transport.

Two graves marked by simple crosses lie by the side of
the road.

Kendall and Subaltern 1 get out of the transport. Kendall
smokes his pipe as the Subaltern checks the first grave.

SUBALTERN 1
This one says, 'Unknown soldier of
the 21st Division'?

KENDALL
That won't do. What's written on
the one beside it, Lieutenant?

SUBALTERN 1
The same.

KENDALL
Alright. Let's leave them
untouched and move on.

SUBALTERN 1
Might I ask what the problem is
with these graves, Padre?

KENDALL
I'm afraid I cannot tell you,
Lieutenant. Orders.

INT. LORD CURZON'S COMMITTEE ROOM - DAY

It's been another long day.

GENERAL JEFFREYS
Might I suggest that we bring the
body into Victoria, rather than
Charing Cross Station?

LORD CURZON
Your thought process, General
Jeffreys?

GENERAL JEFFREYS

We should take into account the anticipated size of the crowds expected to gather in London on the 11th. A change to Victoria Station would make perfect sense.

SIR ALFRED MOND

How so?

GENERAL JEFFREYS

The route from Victoria to the Cenotaph would total just over 2 miles, opposed to less than half a mile from Charing Cross.

CHURCHILL

Outstanding suggestion, if I might say, General. A far greater number of people would be able to witness the funeral cortège and pay their respects.

EXT. THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD - DAY

SUPER: The Somme, France

Kendall, ARMY SUBALTERN 2 (20), four different SOLDIERS discovered digging away at the soil of an unmarked grave.

Again, Kendall smokes his pipe. They hit something. The Subaltern and the digging party react badly to the smell.

DIGGING SOLDIER 1

I'm going to be sick!

He turns away and throws-up.

Kendall descends into the grave. He commences picking through the scraps of remaining uniform for any clues.

SUBALTERN 2

Mr. Kendall, I do not think it correct that you continue to smoke your pipe while examining that body.

KENDALL

Trust me, Lieutenant, I mean no disrespect. The reason I smoke my pipe is that the tobacco scent helps me counteract the evil smell of death.

The Subaltern covers his face. Digging Soldier 1 throws-up again.

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING
SUPER: 7th November

Railton and Ruby at the table. Railton pulls a letter and invitation out of an envelope.

RAILTON

A letter from Mrs Ryle, the Dean's wife, kindly enclosing our invitation to the Abbey ceremony. She says: 'When you get into the Dean's Yard, don't let them try and send you into the Abbey, tell them you're coming to the Deanery'.

RUBY

What a kind and thoughtful gesture.

EXT. THE HUT, SAINT-POL-SUR-TERNOISE, FRANCE - AFTERNOON
SUPER: 7th November

Kendall, SUBALTERN 3, and four different SOLDIERS unloading a stretcher from their transport that contains a body wrapped in hessian. Two armed SENTRIES stand guard at the door.

KENDALL

Right. Form-up and take the body inside. Thank God, this is the last of them.

SUBALTERN 3

The last of them?

KENDALL

You'll see, Lieutenant. --

INT. THE HUT, SAINT-POL-SUR-TERNOISE, FRANCE

Kendall enters followed by the soldiers and the Subaltern.

They're surprised to find the hut has been turned into a temporary chapel. A makeshift altar with a cross at its centre, a candle burning either side.

At the head of six trestle-tables stands a single burning candle. Five of the tables contain bodies lying on stretchers, draped in *Union Flags*. There's one remaining empty table. A single pine coffin stands-up against a wall.

KENDALL

Gentlemen. Can you please place the body of our fallen comrade on this table?

The four soldiers do so, aided by the Subaltern.

Kendall unwraps a *Union Flag* and with the help of the Subaltern drapes it over the body.

SUBALTERN 3

Padre, what's this all about?

KENDALL

I am afraid I cannot say, Lieutenant, but I am sure you will hear about it soon enough. Thank you for your assistance. You may all return to your unit.

INT. LORD CURZON'S COMMITTEE ROOM - NIGHT

Curzon's Committee hard at work.

LORD CURZON

Having initially been rather slow to pick-up on the mood of the country, the British press, well sections of it anyway, have now begun speculating feverishly about the identity of the body.

CHURCHILL

They'll have a job on their hands.

LORD CURZON

If this goes to plan, no-one will ever have a clue as to who he was.

SIR ALFRED MOND

The Daily Express have gone so far as to claim that it thought up the entire idea.

LORD CURZON

The truth will out.

INT. THE HUT, SAINT-POL-SUR-TERNOISE, FRANCE - MIDNIGHT
SUPER: Midnight, 8th-9th November, 1920

Kendall's dressed in full clerical clothing. General Wyatt and Lt.Col Gell enter.

GENERAL WYATT

Good evening, Kendall.

KENDALL
General. Colonel Gell.

LT.COL GELL
Padre.

GENERAL WYATT
I must ask you to wait outside
Padre.

KENDALL
Of course. I fully understand.
Kendall exits.

GENERAL WYATT
Let's not waste time. Colonel.

The Colonel reaches into his pocket and produces a blindfold. The General turns his back on the tables.

LT.COL GELL
Could you please remove your cap,
General?

The General does so. The Colonel ties the blindfold around the General's head.

GENERAL WYATT
Not too tight, man.

LT.COL GELL
My apologies, sir.

The Colonel turns the General's body round to face the tables. The General takes a step forward. Stops. Glances to his left and to his right. Turns to his left. Feels his way past the first two tables, then stops for a moment. Turns and feels his way back past another.

He then places a hand firmly on the next table.

GENERAL WYATT
This one! Gell, remove this bloody
thing at once.

The Colonel unties the blindfold. The General replaces his cap and snaps to attention, followed by the Colonel.

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)
Salute!

They salute the chosen corpse.

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)
This is the body of the '*Unknown
Warrior*'. If you would kindly help
me remove the flag.

The Colonel does so.

The General and Colonel then collect the pine coffin, carry it over and place it next to the table.

EXT. THE HUT, SAINT-POL-SUR-TERNOISE, FRANCE - NIGHT

The two officers exit the hut. Kendall's standing next to the two Sentries, who salute the General.

GENERAL WYATT

Colonel, the remaining bodies are to be reburied with full military honours, immediately after the ambulance departs under escort in the morning. Kendall, I need you to accompany the body as far as Boulogne...

KENDALL

Me, General?

GENERAL WYATT

...where it will board *HMS Verdun*. I am a firm believer that a man should finish a job once he's started it. Think on it as a sacred trust, Kendall.

EXT. STREETS OF BOULOGNE - AFTERNOON

SUPER: 9th November

A MILITARY AMBULANCE and ESCORT enter the city. It is met by hundreds of FRENCH SOLDIERS and CITIZENS who line the route. --

I/E. THE AMBULANCE - AFTERNOON

Kendall sits up front next to the DRIVER.

DRIVER

Blimey, sir! What's all this?

KENDALL

Slow down, Private. Let's enter the city with some reverence.

The ambulance passes through the city, climbing the hill to French Army HQ, situated in the Château D'Aumont --

EXT. THE CHÂTEAU D'AUMONT - COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Where it comes to a halt.

Eight SOLDIERS from different British and Commonwealth regiments, whose rank range from PRIVATE to SERGEANT-MAJOR, collect the coffin.

INT. THE CHÂTEAU D'AUMONT - LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

The soldiers' carry the coffin down corridors lined with saluting FRENCH SOLDIERS to the castle's library, especially converted for the occasion.

The *Chapelle Ardente* decorated with flags, palms and countless candles, the floor scattered with flower petals.

A catafalque sits in the centre of the room, on which rests an empty oak casket.

Waiting for their arrival two British undertakers, KIRTLEY NOADES and JOHN SOWERBUTTS.

MR. NOADES

I am Mr. Noades, this is Mr. Sowerbutts. Could you kindly remove the flag?

The Sergeant-Major does so.

The Undertakers each take one end of the coffin.

The soldiers step aside and the undertakers lift it up and place it inside the oak casket.

MR. NOADES (CONT'D)

Mr. Sowerbutts and I will take things from here. Thank you gentlemen.

They then lift the heavy oak lid and place it over the casket.

Bolted on top, a Crusader's sword, topped by a shield inscribed, '*A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-18 for King and Country*'.

The British Soldiers exit as four FRENCH SOLDIERS from the French *8TH Regiment* form-up at each corner of the catafalque to keep vigil.

EXT. THE CHÂTEAU D'AUMONT - COURTYARD - MORNING
SUPER: 10th November

A cold frosty morning.

A French Army wagon drawn by six black horses waits in the courtyard.

A FRENCH ARMY BAND finishes playing, '*The Marseillaise*'.

Next to MARSHAL FERDINAND FOCH (70), stands the King's representative, LIEUTENANT-GENERAL GEORGE MacDONOGH (55).

The band play '*God Save The King*'.

A guard of FRENCH SOLDIERS present arms as eight soldiers load the coffin onto the wagon.

MARSHAL FOCH

I can only hope that the sacrifice symbolized by the body of your '*Unknown Warrior*' should serve to keep our two countries united in victory, as we were in war.

GENERAL MACDONOGH

I thank you for your kind words, Marshal Foch.

MARSHAL FOCH

I offered to accompany the body of your warrior onto British soil, you know?

GENERAL MACDONOGH

No, I did not.

MARSHAL FOCH

I was informed that my offer was rejected as being inappropriate.

Two British soldiers climb on the wagon to cover the casket with a *Union Flag*. --

EXT. MARGATE VICARAGE GARDEN - MORNING

Railton stands alone in his garden. He checks his watch:
09:30am

EXT. THE CHÂTEAU D'AUMONT

10.30 am. Boulogne's church bells toll.

Grey, misty sky.

Massed trumpets of the FRENCH CAVALRY, the bugles of the FRENCH INFANTRY play "*Aux Champs*" (the French '*Last Post*').

Following the salute, the Bass drums STRIKE-UP and the procession moves off. Chopin's, '*Funeral March*' fills the air.

A solemn procession.

Foch and MacDonogh, FRENCH and BELGIAN OFFICERS of all ranks, plus members of the British Army - GENERALS, COLONELS, CAPTAINS and Kendall, follow the coffin.

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - RECEIVING ROOM - MORNING

Naval Equerry enters, stands to attention and bows his head.

NAVAL EQUERRY

Mr. Lloyd-George, your Majesty.

Lloyd-George enters. Crosses to the King, bows his head and kisses the outstretched hand.

LLOYD-GEORGE

Your Majesty.

GEORGE V

What news of our '*Unknown Warrior*'?

LLOYD-GEORGE

He's currently on route from France, your Majesty. The French have put on quite a show. We dispatched *HMS Verdun* to collect the body. The vessel was specially selected to perform this duty as a compliment to France, given the significance of the *Battle of Verdun* to the French people.

GEORGE V

Quality idea!

EXT. THE STREETS OF BOULOGNE - MORNING

No effort or expense has been spared by a grateful nation to send back over the English Channel, the remains of a warrior who they believe gave his life for France and Belgium.

LLOYD-GEORGE (V.O.)

I've been informed that thousands of people are lining the streets on the journey to the harbour in Boulogne and that the French Government has given local children the day off school.

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - RECEIVING ROOM - MORNING

The King considers his words.

GEORGE V

I may have been a little lukewarm when you first suggested this event, Lloyd-George, but I can assure you that I am now completely absorbed by it.

LLOYD-GEORGE

As is the nation!

GEORGE V

I intend to speak publicly about it.

EXT. THE STREETS OF BOULOGNE - MORNING

Children and representatives of local associations lead the cortège, followed by a detachment of disabled French soldiers, chests covered with medals and endless ranks of CAVALRY, MARINES and INFANTRY.

The streets packed with thousands of people.

GEORGE V (V.O.)

I should like to send a message to all who have lost those dear to them in the Great War. Sons of every portion of our Empire across as it were, the threshold of the Mother Island which they guarded, that Freedom might be saved in the uttermost parts of the earth. For this, a generation of our manhood offered itself without question, and almost without the need of a summons.

The casket's immediately followed by four huge wreaths, carried by FRENCH SOLDIERS.

GEORGE V (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Those proofs of virtue which we honour, are to be found throughout the world and its waters - since we can truly say that the whole circuit of the earth is girdled with the graves of our dead.

The procession makes its way to the *Quai Gambretta*. --

GEORGE V (V.O.)(CONT'D)

In the fair land of France, which sustained the utmost fury of the long strife, our brothers are numbered alas, by hundreds of thousands.

(MORE)

GEORGE V (V.O.)(CONT'D)

They lie in the keeping of a tried and generous friend, a resolute and chivalrous comrade-in-arms, who with ready and quick sympathy has set aside forever the soil in which they sleep, so that we ourselves and our descendants may for all time reverently tend and preserve their resting-places.

EXT. QUAI GAMBRETTA

HMS Verdun moored. Her crew mustered on deck.

Eight NAVAL BEARERS carry the '*Unknown Warrior*', piped aboard with an '*Admiral's Call*', as its *White Ensign* lowered to half-mast.

GEORGE V (V.O.)

I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth, through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war.

EXT. QUAI GAMBRETTA

Marshal Foch, visibly moved by the occasion, stands alone saluting by the gangway as the wreaths are placed onboard.

Four SAILORS move into position at each corner of the casket to stand guard, heads bowed, with rifles reversed.

GEORGE V (V.O.)(CONT'D)

And I feel that so long as we have faith in God's purposes, we cannot but believe that the existence of these visible memorials will eventually, serve to draw all peoples together in sanity and self-control, even as it has already set the relations between our Empire and our allies on the deep-rooted bases of a common heroism and a common agony. We remember, and must charge our children to remember, that as our dear were equal in sacrifice, so are they equal in honour, for the greatest and least of them have proved that sacrifice and honour are no vain things, but truths by which the world lives.

As the destroyer slips out into the mist, A 19-round Field Marshal's salute BOOMS out. --

GEORGE V (V.O.)

I fervently pray, that both as nations and individuals, we may so order our lives after the ideals for which our brethren died that we may be able to meet their gallant souls once more, humbly but unashamed.

EXT. MARGATE VICARAGE GARDEN - DAY

Railton's nervously checking his watch again as Ruby comes out to join him. 12:00pm --

RAILTON

He's on his way, my love.

EXT. THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

Six British destroyers await *HMS Verdun*.

As she approaches, they lower their *ensigns* to half-mast and form the escort, three ships in line ahead; the *Verdun* alone; three ships in line astern.

Together, they set course for England. --

EXT. DOVER CASTLE BATTLEMENTS - AFTERNOON

A NAVAL OFFICER and a SIGNALMAN stand ready on the castle's battlements.

The Officer stares out to sea through binoculars. Spots *HMS Verdun*.

NAVAL OFFICER

Ensign, signal that ship to identify itself.

The Signalman immediately starts to transmit the signal.

EXT. MID-ENGLISH CHANNEL - AFTERNOON

Mid-Channel, the CAPTAIN onboard *HMS Verdun* spots the signal.

NAVAL CAPTAIN

Flash back our response: '*Verdun* and escort, with Nation's unknown son'.

Verdun slips into Dover Harbour.

Another 19-gun salute BOOMS from the castle battlements.

A MILITARY BAND plays Elgar's, '*Pomp and Circumstance March No.1*'. --

EXT. DOVER MARINE RAILWAY STATION - AFTERNOON

Dover townsfolk turn-out in number.

Shops and businesses closed.

Thousands take-up every possible vantage point along the docks and surrounding coastline. It's extraordinary quiet.

TROOPS have been called to attention with arms reversed.

6 BEARERS carry the casket off the *Verdun*.

The casket's placed inside a *South-East Railways* Luggage van, its walls draped in purple cloth, its ceiling painted white, transformed into a traveling chapel.

The French wreaths loaded into a second luggage van.

The train pulls away. GUARD OF HONOUR from the CONNAUGHT RANGERS salute. --

EXT. THE KENT COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY EVENING

Train travels through the Kent countryside.

PEOPLE crowd every available vantage point - bridges, embankments, trees, station platforms. --

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM

Ruby puts the children to bed. --

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - KITCHEN

Mrs Murdock and COOK tidy things away. --

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - STUDY

Railton at his desk surrounded by wooden tea chests, books and papers still needing to be unpacked.

A copy of *The Times* lies open on an article headed, '*The Padre's Flag*', as he carefully folds his precious old friend and lays it next to the article.

EXT. VICTORIA STATION, LONDON - NIGHT

CROWDS heading into the station, most wearing mourning clothes. The station clock shows 8.30pm as --

INT. PLATFORM 8, VICTORIA STATION

They make their way to join the hundreds already waiting, silently on the platform.

Many hold their heads high and proud.

Both men and women weep openly as the train pulls up to the platform. Mrs Clark is one of those women.

OFFICERS salute. Male civilians remove their hats. The Luggage van doors slide open.

I/E. MARGATE STATION - EARLY MORNING

SUPER: Thursday, 11th November, 1920

A heavy fog. Railton wears his military uniform and Military Cross. Ruby's dressed in black mourning.

Railton opens the carriage door to allow Ruby to enter. She stops and turns to face him.

RUBY

I know the years you spent in Belgium and France, my Love, have taken their toll. It's been so very hard for you to adjust back to normal life, but my darling, you need to know, that I am, and have never been more, so very proud of you.

She kisses her husband on the cheek, then boards the train.

INT. PLATFORM 8, VICTORIA STATION - MORNING

A light fog. Mist invades the station, matching the mood.

A SERGEANT-MAJOR commanding the bearer party, salutes as Railton ambles-up to him.

SERGEANT-MAJOR

Ready, Padre?

RAILTON

It's time, Sergeant-Major.

SERGEANT-MAJOR

After you, sir.

Railton and the Sergeant-Major enter the luggage van. --

INT. THE LUGGAGE VAN

SERGEANT-MAJOR

Let's remove this one, shall we?

Railton and the Sergeant-Major remove the flag that covers the casket.

The Sergeant-Major folds it as Railton withdraws his own flag from his pack.

They both drape it over the casket.

SERGEANT-MAJOR (CONT'D)

Look's like this old one's seen a bit of action, Padre.

RAILTON

You could say that.

The Sergeant-Major places a steel helmet and side arms on top of the flag.

The BEARER PARTY slow-march into the van.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Thank you, Sergeant-Major. I have to get to the Abbey. My wife will be wondering where I am. Can't keep the King waiting, can we?

SERGEANT-MAJOR

Certainly not, sir.

The Sergeant-Major salutes as Railton exits.

The Bearer Party lift the casket and carry it out towards the waiting gun-carriage, pulled by six black horses. --

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - NAVE

The Dean shows Ruby and Railton to two empty seats close to where the *'Unknown Warrior'* will be laid to rest.

RAILTON

Thank you, Dean Ryle. We're most appreciative.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

You, above all, deserve them, David.

INT. VICTORIA STATION, LONDON

Eight DISTINGUISHED PALL-BEARERS take-up their positions either side of the gun-carriage. The HIGHEST-RANKING officers in British forces then salute.

The Order's given to reverse arms and slow march.

Massed bands play Chopin's '*Funeral March*'. The gun-carriage, pallbearers, and bearers move forward. --

EXT. HYDE PARK - SAME TIME

THE ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY commence a 19-gun artillery salute. --

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - NAVE

At the sound of the first gun fired, Ruby nervously grabs for and squeezes Railton's hand.

EXT. VICTORIA STATION, LONDON

The Unknown Warrior passes through the ranks of the Navy, Army and Air Force.

Behind the Service mourners come 100 EX-SERVICEMEN. Some in uniform, most in civilian clothes.

Cannon BOOMS echo around the buildings.

Standing on the pavements behind thousands of soldiers lining the route, hundreds of thousands of MOURNERS, standing 10-20 deep, come to pay homage.

The horse's hooves, rattling from the carriage and slow-marching feet clearly heard above the silent crowds.

As the procession moves along the route, men remove their hats, children stand silently next to their parents. It's a RAW display of public emotion.

EXT. THE MALL

The procession heads down The Mall, one mile in length from start to finish, towards Admiralty Arch. --

INT. THE TREASURY BUILDING, WHITEHALL

Lloyd-George stands alongside members of his Cabinet.

CHURCHILL

Don't you think, someone ought to say something before we head out.

LLOYD-GEORGE

This is no time for words, Winston. Our hearts are too full of gratitude to which no tongue can give adequate expression.

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE

The procession turns from Trafalgar Square into Whitehall, as --

EXT. THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL

The King, dressed in Field Marshal's uniform (wearing a black armband), followed by members of the ROYAL FAMILY including, THE PRINCE OF WALES and THE DUKE OF YORK, THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY and Lloyd-George and his Cabinet enter Whitehall from a door in the Treasury Building, witnessed by Mrs Clark, busily making her way through the crowd.

The *Cenotaph* is enfolded in two VAST *Union Flags*.

The King and his family look towards Trafalgar Square. All other dignitaries stand facing them.

The Bereaved stand silently still as the procession approaches.

The gun-carriage halts directly beside the King.

His Equerry hands him a wreath. The King places it upon the casket.

Its card reads: "*In proud memory of those Warriors who died unknown in the Great War. Unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and behold they live. George R.I. November 11th 1920*".

The King steps back and salutes the '*Unknown Warrior*'.

The Archbishop of Canterbury starts to recite the Lord's Prayer.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

'Our Father, which art in heaven,'

The crowd take up the words:

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY (CONT'D)
 'Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom
 come, Thy Will be done,'

XFADE TO:

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY (CONT'D)
 'For thine is the Kingdom, the
 power and the glory, Forever and
 ever, Amen.'

Immediately, the Archbishop says 'Amen' --

EXT. BIG BEN

The clock bell strikes the first note of the 11th hour.
 On that stroke --

EXT. THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL

The King presses a button that releases the two *Union
 Jacks*.

The flags fall to the ground, revealing the *Cenotaph* for
 the very first time.

Two ARMY OFFICERS quickly gather them up from the base of
 the monument.

At the final stroke of 11, a single maroon BOOM echoes
 out.

The start of the Two Minute Silence. A complete
 suspension of all normal activity. And silence on film. --

SILENT MONTAGE:

- The Great Bell at Lloyds of London rung only once
- Across London...
- The entire UK...
- The Empire, whatever the local time is...
- Passenger trains come to a halt and the ENGINE DRIVERS
 and FIREMEN stand in their cabs, heads bowed
- People working in factories
- The middle of an Old Bailey murder trial
- Those driving cars and buses
- Working in the fields
- Prisoners in their cells
- Everyone, everywhere stops what they were doing,
 stand to attention and remain silent for two minutes.

END SILENT MONTAGE

EXT. THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL

The silence is broken by eight BUGLERS of the BRIGADE OF GUARDS blowing *'The Last Post'*.

As the final note dies away, the King, followed by the two Princes and the Prime Minister, lay their wreaths at the foot of the *Cenotaph*.--

The CROWD sing: *'Abide With Me'*.

Pallbearers resume their places.

The gun-carriage moves forward, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The King marches behind.

Behind him, march members of the Royal Family and various dignitaries. --

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - NAVE

Every seat now full, except for the seats immediately besides Railton and Ruby. --

EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The *'Unknown Warrior'* arrives at the gates of the Abbey to be met by a GUARD OF HONOUR of 96 MEN of various ages and nationalities.

They each proudly wear their *Victoria Cross* medals, the highest award for gallantry awarded. --

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - NAVE

The Bearers enter the Abbey carrying the coffin. Every eye fixed on the casket.

Mrs Clark stands proud, raises a handkerchief to her eyes.

Railton squeezes Ruby's hand.

To their astonishment, the King, now joined by QUEEN MARY, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, take-up the vacant seats beside them.

Railton and Ruby bow and curtsy appropriately.

The King turns to Railton.

GEORGE V
Are you, Railton?

RAILTON
 (staggered that his
 King knows his name)
 I am, your Majesty.

The King stares Railton straight in the eye and reaches out to shake his hand.

The King holds on to Railton's hand for an extended moment.

Railton's eyes well-up and he bows his head.

GEORGE V
 On behalf of us all... Thank you.

The King finally releases his hand.

Railton turns to Ruby, her face beaming with pride.

The Bearers enter and lay the casket on bars that sit across the grave and take-up their positions to either side.

The King moves to the head of the grave, his two sons standing directly behind him.

Somewhere, far away in the great church, a scarcely audible whisper sets in motion. It swells with absolute smoothness until we know it to be the roll of drums.

The entire Abbey filled with a reverberating roar - and then it dies away again to a whisper so soft, that no-one can say for certain when it stops.

The Dean reads the committal.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER
 'For as much as it hath pleased
 Almighty God...'

COLDSTREAM GUARDSMEN lower the casket into the grave.

XFADE TO:

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)
 'Earth to earth,'

The King sprinkles soil from a shell into the grave.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)
 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust...'

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

For the first time since returning home from the war, a totally exhausted David Railton sleeps soundly.

FADE TO BLACK:

PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN (V.O.)
Anyone know who he is?

It's the voice from the opening scene.

FADE IN:

I/E. ST BRIDE'S EPISCOPAL KIRK, SCOTLAND, 1955
SUPER: July, 1955 - Scotland

Hundreds of MOURNERS attend Railton's funeral.

Ruby, her daughters, MARY (43), RUTH (40), and the twins FREDA and son ANDREW (35), sit in the front pew.

RAILTON (V.O.)
I have been interviewed from time to time by the correspondents of nearly all our great national newspapers, asking me if I knew who he was, could I say where he was actually found, who was responsible for the idea? I am sometimes asked if our people have really grasped the meaning of that tomb? I can only say that I have received numerous letters and many men and women have spoken to me about it. They have all grasped something of the true meaning.

The elderly Evans is there. So too, Corporal Price and the former young Lieutenant, whose life, Railton saved.

The kirk packed to the gills. Mourners spill outside to cover the graveyard. A palpable sense of loss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

Present day. The Tomb.

RAILTON (V.O.)
Those whose loved ones were amongst the unknown, 'know', that in this Tomb there may be, there is, resting the body of their beloved.

(MORE)

RAILTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

They know also, that he is not there himself, though he may often be near. They have moreover learnt, the unity of all types of men at that grave.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - ST. GEORGE'S CHAPEL

'The Padre's Flag' suspended.

RAILTON (V.O.)

They see that in the long run, all men of goodwill are comrades in life, death and the hereafter.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

FADE OUT:

On the final line of Dean Ryle's epitaph - 'Unknown to man, but known to God'.

THE END