

THE UNKNOWN

by
Graham Mulvein

Based on actual events

and

THE FLAG
Written by Andrew Richards

Contact: Barry Phillips-Richardson Creative Management
Email: Barry@bprcm.com
Tel: +44 7718 781473
WGAW Reg #2246497

**As the First World War comes to a close,
an idealistic Army chaplain works to honour
the men lost by spearheading a campaign
which has become a universal symbol of
unity and perseverance.**

Based on actual events - this remains to this day -

The greatest mystery of the First World War!

"THE UNKNOWN"

BLACK:

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

FADE IN:

TITLES OVER:

EXT. SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS - DAY

The *West Highland Line* steam train hugs stunning countryside as it trundles across a heather clad wilderness.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE COMPARTMENT - DAY

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

The Reverend DAVID RAILTON (71, a once handsome man, his face carries the scars from a poison gas attack), puts on his hefty coat and hat, gathers his suitcase from the overhead rack, opens the compartment door and steps into a tapered corridor.

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR - DAY

Railton squeezes past a young TOURIST COUPLE (late 20s), gazing out a window 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 HOLIDAY MAKERS elated at the sight of the approaching train, its shrill whistle publicizing its imminent arrival.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. 'ARD RHU' KITCHEN - DAY

An oversized kettle whistle roars.

RUBY RAILTON (76), moves through a shaft of light that passes through a solitary window, preparing for her husband's homecoming.

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

ANOTHER PASSENGER dashes past the young couple.

EXT. THE RAILWAY TRACK

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

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

Causing the hurrying Passenger to collide with Railton --

PASSENGER

Oh, excuse me!

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

INT. 'ARD RHU' KITCHEN

Ruby grasps the hot kettle handle --

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 releases a painful scream --

INT. THE TRAIN CORRIDOR

The male Tourist reaches for the Emergency Cord --

INT. 'ARD RHU' KITCHEN - DAY

The kettle plummets to 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 towards it, pushing past expectant passengers.

STATIONMASTER

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

EXT. THE RAILWAY TRACK - DAY

Railton lies on his back just yards from the train.

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

A PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN (30s) bends down, checks Railton's pulse. Looks up at the crowd.

PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN

My God, he's dead!

Crowd reacts, horrified, as the Stationmaster arrives.

CLOSE ON: Railton's bloodied head.

PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN (V.O.)

Anyone know who he is?

FADE TO BLACK:

Overhead 'Bwoom' of an artillery shell, mixed with the din of never-ending rain.

VOICE (O.S.)

(shout)

Down!

'KABOOM!'

CAPTAIN CLARK (O.S.)

Padre...? David? Are you alright?

FADE IN ON:

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE - DUSK

CLOSE ON: Railton's face, in exactly the same position as the previous scene, but 39 years younger, handsome and vigorous, wearing his mud-splattered military Chaplain's uniform.

Railton opens his eyes, gazes directly up past CAPTAIN SYDNEY CLARK (47, RAMC), at the characterless grey, smoke-enveloped sky that hovers above the mud and grime.

RAILTON

(cheerily)

I think so, Doc.

Railton grins. The Doctor sighs with relief. Railton takes an moment to physically explore his body.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

No bones broken.

CAPTAIN CLARK

You sure?

RAILTON

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 in a rain-flooded crater.

A discarded burnt-out British tank is laid-up on the opposite side.

INT. THE TANK SHELL

From a claustrophobic cavity a GERMAN SNIPER's POV as Captain Clark rises-up from Railton. The Sniper shoots.

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE

'WHIP/CRACK!'

CAPTAIN CLARK

Arrggh!

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

STRETCHER-BEARER 1
(stunned)
I'm shot!

He falls to the ground, dead.

EXT. THE BRITISH TRENCH

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

The air WHIRS with SHOT, the roar of OVERHEAD SHELLS and
WHISTLING SHRAPNEL. Black earth SPEWS skywards. The sound
is DEAFENING. Mud-covered dead lie everywhere; men and
horses lie amongst the barbed-wire, some with rifles
still in hand, some still in one piece, many others, not.

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE

The German Sniper shows his head a second too long and
slumps forward abruptly as the Lieutenant fires his
pistol.

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
(painfully)
Christ! Aarrhhh!

The 2 Bearers leap into the crater to witness the mess
before them. Shock on their faces.

PRIVATE FILMER
Blimey!

Railton turns to the lead Bearer.

RAILTON

Filmer..?

PRIVATE FILMER

You alright, Padre, sir?

RAILTON

You need to get the Captain back behind the line to the casualty clearing station as quickly as possible. Take Brown with you. We cannot afford to loose another Doctor.

Filmer looks down at the Captain. Blood pours from his chest. Filmer turns to the other Bearers.

PRIVATE FILMER

Give me a hand, lads.

Filmer and the 2 Bearers lift the Captain onto their stretcher.

CAPTAIN CLARK

Aarrhhh!!!

PRIVATE FILMER

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

Railton peers at the devastation about them 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 aimed at their enemy - high-pitch WHINES that fade in the distance.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH, THE SOMME

GERMAN SOLDIERS cower. POV along the barrel of a German *Maxim* machine-gun skulking for someone to enter its sight.

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD, THE SOMME, FRANCE

Filmer and the other 2 Bearers lurch-out of the crater under the weight of their casualty and SCRAMBLE across 'No Man's Land', 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 and bullet casings CASCADE out of its bottom.

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD, THE SOMME, FRANCE

A Bearer is hit in the shoulder, dropping his end of the stretcher. PRIVATE BROWN immediately grabs at it. The 3 men miraculously make it back falling to their trench, along with their patient.

EXT. THE CRATER, THE SOMME, FRANCE

Railton drags himself to a kneeling position and makes a low hurried dash over to the Lieutenant, who gazes-up helplessly.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

Save yourself, Padre.

Railton looks proudly down at the young man.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

From the moment we leave this crater the chances of us both surviving are almost nil. I'll only be a hindrance.

Railton reaches into his pack and takes out a *Union Flag* to tie a tourniquet around the Lieutenant's thigh. The Lieutenant cries out in pain as Railton tightens the knot.

RAILTON

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

Railton studies the terrain in the direction of their trench.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Can you walk, Old Lad?

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

(shaking his head)

I doubt I'll make 20 yards.

RAILTON

Then give me your arm.

Railton looks hard at the boy for a moment.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Do you believe in God, Laddie?

'Deafening BOOM!' - A shell falls dangerously close, causing them both to duck. The Lieutenant looks back 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, first to his feet and then over his shoulders.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCH, THE SOMME

An eagle-eyed BRITISH ARMY SERGEANT looking over the top of 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 shoulders, Railton's boots SPLASH into the mud. His breath TORTUOUSLY heaving from his mouth, he recites '*The Lord's Prayer*'.

From Railton's POV, barbed-wire fences LITTERED with dead rag-doll-like bodies. His feet SINKING into the mud. Bullet tracers 'WHIZZING' past him.

Railton speeds-on through the hail, reciting the prayer. He never hesitates. Never stops. Just KEEPS moving. His lungs GASP in his throat.

YOUNG LIEUTENANT

(begging)

Leave me, Padre. Let me go!

But Railton heaves again at the Lieutenant's back and drags him onwards, SCREAMING at his own pain, STAGGERING under the weight.

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

EXT. BRITISH TRENCH, THE SOMME

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

The Sergeant hurries over. Railton lies still, but looks 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 a makeshift hospital tent, assisted by light from occasional oil lamps.

Railton enters and stops a passing ORDERLY.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Captain Clark?

ORDERLY
Dead or alive, Padre?

RAILTON
I imagine he's dead.

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

He stops and lowers his lamp to check Clark's face. He stares at him a moment, then unbuttons and then reaches into Clark's tunic pockets to empty them. A photograph of Clark's WIFE and DAUGHTER. Blood-stained identity papers.

Railton's eyes gloss over as he cuts off Clark's rank insignia and tunic buttons with his penknife. Finally, he reaches down to take Clark's left hand and remove his wedding ring.

EXT. GRAVESIDE, THE SOMME - NIGHT

A low full moon cuts through the darkness like a theatrical spotlight. A lull in the fighting. It's eerily silent. A PLATOON of weary-looking soldiers pass by.

A single body lies atop the mud, wrapped in hessian sacking next to a freshly-dug grave.

A BURIAL PARTY of 4 dirty, unshaven SOLDIERS, their tattered uniforms, grey with mud, huddle around a 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 which contains the tools of his trade. He takes out his BRUISED *Union Flag*, bends down and drapes it across the body. In the COLOURLESS drenched landscape of mud and khaki, the flag's dull colours DAZZLE.

The faces of the surrounding soldiers seem to say so much. The flag reminds them of '*Dear Old England*', bringing back individual long-forgotten memories.

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

MAJOR RICHARDSON
You 4 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 back at the Major in incredulity.

MAJOR RICHARDSON (CONT'D)

Immediately!

Railton looks up questionably, at the Major.

RAILTON

(pleading)

Major... please?

MAJOR RICHARDSON

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

The Captain's comrades are clearly upset, realise they have little choice. They set-off. A worn-out Railton simply dips his head. The Major departs.

Railton takes out his bible and turns to a well-thumbed page. He reads, *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.

2 soldiers take hold at each end of the body and gently place it into the grave. 1 of them retrieves the flag and begins to fold 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, speaking so firmly that we feel they really mean it.

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 from the soldier 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 then smashes it HARD with his shovel.--

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT - MORNING

Dug-out of the earth itself, Railton's front-line refuge, his solitude is reinforced with rough-hewn wood beams and logs. A thin mattress lies on a crude bed; a single blanket, an oil-lamp and a battered gramophone player, his only signs of comfort. The sound of rats scurrying-up and down their shafts.

Railton rubs at the enameled tiredness in his eyes and grabs at a mug for warmth, staring blankly ahead. 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 a 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 (mid 30s, dressed in mourning clothes),
silently reads 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, and his tunic
insignia and buttons.

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 once more into the envelope and removes
her husband's wedding ring. She stares at it a moment as
her eyes gloss-over, then clutches it tight to her heart
as her distraught young DAUGHTER (12) enters the room and
rushes over to hug her.

EXT. THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY

SUPER: The English Channel, January, 1919

A cloudless blue winter sky. Overhead seagulls fill the
air as a Channel ferry heads towards England, packed-
tight with joyous SOLDIERS, some of whom tend to other
WOUNDED SOLDIERS.

Railton, his eyes still smarting and bloodshot from the
gas attack, stands alone at the stern rail, reading his
'Shakespeare'.

He looks-up from the book and stares across at the
oncoming White Cliffs and the men around him, smiles,
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!'

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 the excited, flag-waving crowd.

It appears the last of the soldiers have departed the platform. The station concourse is almost empty as soldiers and their relatives depart.

Ruby stands alone, staring down the length of the 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 now loose, his belt a few notches tighter. A STATION PORTER (60s) hurries across to him. Railton looks down the length of the platform, but can't 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 2 suitcases down to the Porter and steps down 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 2 people in love can! Railton puts 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

Establish.

INT. THE FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

Railton and Ruby are sitting down to breakfast. Their children, 8 year old, Mary, and 5 year old Frida are also at the table. Railton is reading *The Times*.

MRS MURDOCK (40s their housekeeper), brings in 2 plates of food that she places in front of them.

RUBY

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

This causes Railton to abruptly lower his newspaper.

RAILTON

Eggs... and bacon?

He peers at Ruby, a shocked 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, serving as the Officer's Mess, he is saluted by 2 SENTRIES.

In a battered, once-richly furnished room, he finds the BRIGADIER (60, ramrod straight, immaculately turned out, with a scar on his right cheek), and 2 of his STAFF OFFICERS, dressed in neat uniforms with polished buttons and belts, sitting at a table dressed with a white table cloth, 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 are laid out on the table. The atmosphere is 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, an exhausted Railton can no longer bite his tongue.

RAILTON

Eggs... and bacon! Brigadier,
gentlemen... Are you all so
honestly 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, confused,
freezing cold and hungry, drenched-
through, many suffering with
septic feet, after yet another
bloody battle, attacking piles of
brick-dust, longing for food,
shelter and warmth.

BRIGADIER

And..? Your point is what exactly?

Railton composes 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

(laughing)

Man's got to eat, what? Where is
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, suddenly remembers who he is, and
gets a grip on himself.

RAILTON

And 'what' might that be,
Brigadier?

BRIGADIER

I actually heard earlier today,
that 2 Protestant soldiers were
buried in a service by a Catholic
Chaplain. What say you to that?

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 is '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.

Having suitably chastised the Brigadier, Railton storms
off.

Major Richardson sits alone, a heavy, glazed look over
his eyes, staring into his bottle of whisky, --

EXT. THE OFFICER'S MESS - GARDEN - NIGHT

Railton opens a door on to a garden. He sucks in a deep
breath to regain his composure. The air is still, silent.
He looks up at a million stars, then spots something at
the bottom of the garden. He decides to investigate.

It's a white wooden cross. The words written on it in pencil: *'An unknown British soldier'* and in brackets, *'(of the Black Watch)'*.

Railton is transfixed. The stillness is broken by the arrival of the drunk Major Richardson, come out to pee.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

Spotted 1 of the lucky ones I see,
Padre. Gone to your Boss, no
doubt?

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

RAILTON

(to himself..?)
I love every inch of Scotland.

The Major holds up his bottle.

MAJOR RICHARDSON

Makes very fine whisky!

RAILTON

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 looks up and glares back at Richardson.

RAILTON

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

MAJOR RICHARDSON

Thousands just like him!

RAILTON

(to himself)
Was he a citizen of 'Auld Reekie'?
Or, was he 1 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, Padre..? 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 left of their husbands and 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 are probably sitting down to tea... which reminds me, I need a drink.

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

RAILTON

Whatever can I do to ease the pain..?

A long beat. A moment of inspiration then shows in Railton's eyes. A spark has ignited a fire in his head.

INT. FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Swaying shards of moonlight spill across the ceiling, accompanied by the metronomic ticking of a clock in the hallway, as Railton and Ruby lie together in bed. Ruby asleep. Railton not. He's sweating, open-eyed, staring-up at the patterns on the ceiling.

INT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT - NIGHT
SUPER: Armentières, France, 1916

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

Sound of hobnail boots approaching on the gravel outside. The blanket that acts as the door is thrown aside. CORPORAL PRICE (mid 20s, Railton's Batman, a solid reliable Welshman) enters. He's holding 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 down, dabs his pen into an inkwell, looks-up, holding the pen suspended over the 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*'
- The sound of whistles blowing and soldiers charging out of their trenches
- Racing across '*No Man's Land*'
- Hopelessly being cut to pieces by enemy fire
- Flares in the sky
- Huge number of casualties
- Numerous solitary 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 should indicate 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 writes 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, 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...

Haig explodes and angrily stubs out his cigar.

HAIG (CONT'D)

...a gypsy!' A damn gypsy indeed? Ridiculous idea! What's his 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, takes 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.

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. His shoes crunch on the pathway. He takes out a torch and opens the gate that leads to the graveyard. Then, he hears something. He stops and shines his torch in the direction of the sound.

RAILTON

Hello..? Is there anyone there?

He takes a step forward and catches sight of a man running between the headstones. His mind instantly sees a charging TOMMY (nickname for a First World War soldier).

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Come back. There's no-more need to run!

The image lasts a few seconds.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

(shouting)

You're not in any trouble!

Railton looks over to see some propped-up boxes set against the church wall. The man was obviously attempting to build a shelter.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Please come back!

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

POLICEMAN

Evening, Mr. Railton. Everything alright, sir?

Railton stops in his tracks, brought back to reality.

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.

(MORE)

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

Shouldn't you be in bed yourself,
sir?

RAILTON

A sleepless night, Constable.

EXT. A ROAD CLOSE TO THE BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

A spinning bicycle wheel winds its way across the French countryside. Railton rides with great difficulty, trying to avoid potholes on a 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, followed half a second later by a dull sounding BOOMS, a field full of stumps of hundreds of trees. In the distance a church spire.

INT. THE CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Railton enters through the pummeled church door into the shell of a bombed-out church, its roof fully open to the stars. Many pews have been destroyed. A few remain.

Railton walks down the centre aisle and kneels on the steps that lead to what remains of the altar. He looks-up at Christ crucified on a stone cross which has somehow miraculously survived, bows his head and begins to pray.

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

Railton looks-up at the Priest, embarrassed, realising he shouldn't be here. He starts to rise.

RAILTON

I apologize, 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 looks perplexed.

FRENCH PRIEST (CONT'D)

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

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

Establish WORSHIPPERS entering the church.

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

Railton stands atop his pulpit. The church is packed to capacity, his congregation attentive to his every word. Some of the men sitting in pews next to their families are blind, legless 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 a sadness on the people's faces.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Some of you I know, 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.

(MORE)

RAILTON (CONT'D)

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 is 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.

2 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 are silent, hunched forward with fatigue, shivering.

The 2 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 is obviously admired by the men. 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 are 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 looks up to the sky.

RAILTON

Oh, my God!

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

Flashlight powder-flash. Haig is being 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

(agitated)

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 is 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.

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 3 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.

German machine gun fire opens-up. Bullets STREAK-BY, PENETRATING flesh and RAVAGING Tommy bodies. Screams of agony from the men who greet the NEVER-ENDING bullets.

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

INT. FOLKESTONE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Folkestone police have got to know their new vicar well, accustomed to his late-night visits. Railton enters. The DESK SERGEANT looks up.

DESK SERGEANT

Evenin', Mr. Railton. Can't sleep?

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 is 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, looks of fear and dread on their faces.

A single SOLDIER, with a damp cigarette hanging from his mouth and wearing a great coat, carries a CELLO! He upturns a spent ammunition box, sits on it, takes out his bow out from an inside pocket and starts to play, Massenets' *'Thais: Meditation'*.

The working party's start to locate and recover what's left of the 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 crater. He's visibly SHAKEN by the devastation. He quotes 'MACBETH' to himself.

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."

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

Railton stops speaking and looks-up, undergoing a moment of doubt, his faith SEVERELY tested, as the bodies are lowered ONE-BY-ONE into the mass grave.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Have they been abandoned by their faith?

He looks up to the heavens.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Why, oh why have you forsaken us?

He's lost.

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

Haig is holding court at an elaborate banquet with his SENIOR STAFF OFFICERS. He stands and clinks a silver spoon against a crystal glass. The room falls silent.

HAIG

Gentlemen. Gentlemen. 3 weeks ago today, the enemy began his attack against us on a 50 mile front. His objectives are 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 are tired. 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 them *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

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 is about to commence.

SERGEANT (O.S.)

Make ready!

RAILTON

God be with you!

3 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), are enjoying tea.

EVANS

What's next, David? I can see you're still 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 are a regular occurrence since my husband's 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

And claims the only thing that helps his nerves and keeps his mind calm once he is awake are his midnight walks. How do you find it?

RAILTON

Ruby needlessly frets.

Evans simply glances back at her.

RUBY

Well it's true, isn't it, David?
You go out most nights and walk
the streets. Do not 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

(almost to himself)
It never goes away...

Ruby is 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, no.

RAILTON

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 can never
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 3 additional ARMY OFFICERS
sit at a long bench. An ARMY PRIVATE sits in a solitary
chair facing them, guarded by 2 SOLDIERS either side of
him. 4 individual WITNESSES sit close by. The Army
Private stands, holding a Bible to take his oath.

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

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 2 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.

Evans looks at Ruby, sharing Railton's despair. Ruby
slowly shakes her head, unbelievably. 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. Repatriation of the dead was forbidden. 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, but he did not bother to reply.

EVANS

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

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? Any concept that might help could not possibly be bad. It would receive my full support.

RAILTON

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

EVANS

I...

RAILTON

More than 1 million men from the British Empire killed. It practically wiped out an entire generation... and for what?

EVANS

For God, King, Country and Empire!

RAILTON

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

Evans looks anguished.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

The endless sacrifice and the shedding of blood may have ceased, but there is no real peace in the souls of men or nations. I am sure my idea could help promote unity in the face of the severe social and political upheaval we're currently experiencing. 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 bed 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, Padre. 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
Thank you, God. If ever a *Division*
deserved to be rewarded by being
sent south, it's this one.

ARMY CORPORAL
Shall I pack you up, Padre?

RAILTON
Can you give me a few minutes?

ARMY CORPORAL PRICE
Of course, sir.

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

EXT. RAILTON'S DUGOUT HUT - DUSK

Establish the dispirited *REGIMENT* on the move, loaded
down like pack animals, uniforms marinated in mud, a slow
moving, clattering column, resembling a grotesque snake,
winding its way through the mist 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 a supply of candles into a
kitbag. He picks up his *Union Flag*, gently kisses and
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) form part of the column. It passes 2 depressed TOMMIES, who are trying to joke their way to a better mood. They chance their luck.

TOMMY 1

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

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

CHARLIE

What do you 2 want?

TOMMY 1

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

Charlie looks down and considers.

CHARLIE

Make yerselves at home!

The 2 Tommies throw their rifles and kitbags on the back of the cart and climb 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' *The 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 2 or 3 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 - DAY

SUPER - The River Marne

Birdsong. Drenched in GLEAMING bright sunlight, the grass undulates in the light wind. The rural TRANQUILITY of a spring day PACKED with new life is a VAST contrast from the WAR-RAVAGED trenches. BRUISED soldiers, cavort like young boys in the river and relax in the sun.

His back up against a stone wall, Railton looks-up from his '*Shakespeare*', takes in the view and thoroughly enjoys the moment.

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his wallet and extracts a photograph. It's Ruby with his 2 children.

Railton realises 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.
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 is 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)
2 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 1 or 2
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, sir. Says
it was dark.

Railton is 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: 3 weeks later

A refreshed PLATOON OF SOLDIERS march past.

Railton looks-up 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 9 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 are going to be needed 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 on the edge of a wood. Railton's new flag is draped over a makeshift altar, created utilising infantry drums. He shakes hands with each SOLDIER:

RAILTON

God be with you.

As the last Soldier departs, 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, are 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..?

REENERGIZED!

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
 If it's still there when my bag is
 returned, I'm determined to ensure
 that my flag 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 is finally over.**

FADE UP ON:

INT. THE FOLKESTONE VICARAGE - MORNING

Railton's 2 folded flags rest SIDE-BY-SIDE, neatly folded
 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 looks at the flag, then across at her husband. She
carefully picks-up the flag 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. There are slightly 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 2 YOUNG CHILDREN sit together, gazing-up at the pulpit.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

The Government's provision of pensions for families of soldiers killed is 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 is made to shut-up by his WIFE. Railton is 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.

The ex-Serviceman calls out again:

EX-SERVICEMAN

'Ear, 'Ear, again!

Laughter. Applause breaks out in the church. Railton looks 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 is 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 in our country. 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 is a knowing look between them. Moores and his
family depart. Ruby is 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 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, David?

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 from September. 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

Railton, a now heavily pregnant Ruby and Evans are again taking tea in the sun.

EVANS

Truly inspirational!

RAILTON

When Sir Douglas did not respond, at first I considered writing to one of the newspapers, but I'm concerned they might try turning my idea into some kind of publicity stunt.

EVANS

Then who else can you approach?

RAILTON

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

You have to contact someone in authority. 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 quite 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 is certainly the wisest and most calm of all the moderns.

EVANS
Then... His Majesty, the King!

Railton looks at Evans, astonished.

EVANS (CONT'D)
Why not? There has never been a nobler, nor wiser monarch.

RAILTON
I have to admit that... I did think about writing directly to...

EVANS

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.

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - RECEIVING ROOM - DAY
SUPER: July, 1920

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, and renowned orator), 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 5 Minute 'Great Silence' and the unveiling of the *Cenotaph*, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

Far too long!

LLOYD-GEORGE

What is, your Majesty?

GEORGE V

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

Lloyd-George regroups like the skilled negotiator he is.

LLOYD-GEORGE

It was the Cabinet's opinion that you might come to that decision, your Majesty. We would now like to propose a 3 Minute Silence.

The King thinks about this an instant.

GEORGE V

Still too long.

Lloyd-George is despondent.

LLOYD-GEORGE

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

GEORGE V

3 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 3 minutes is not acceptable.

LLOYD-GEORGE

(more forcibly)

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

GEORGE V

(enthusiastically)

2 minutes!

Lloyd-George is not used to being interrupted.

LLOYD-GEORGE

2 minutes..?

GEORGE V

Absolutely. 2 minutes! I am convinced 2 minutes is a timeframe my subjects would willingly observe.

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

LLOYD-GEORGE

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

GEORGE V

Excellent! I will agree to a 2 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 is required, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

(surprised)

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 the end.

GEORGE V

Maroons..? I quite like that... Very well, I acquiesce to a 2 minute silence. What next?

LLOYD-GEORGE

The unveiling of the *Cenotaph*, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

Ah, Mr. Lutyens obelisk. Let's discuss that further in my garden.

EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - GARDEN

The King and Lloyd-George wear coats and hats as they stroll together. The King's Equerry and LLOYD-GEORGE'S SECRETARY walk together 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 is ridiculous, your Majesty.

GEORGE V

How so?

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 has outraged the established Church, is admirable. I believe this to be a vital element of its design. What is it they would they rather see?

The King halts and turns to Lloyd-George.

GEORGE V

A simple stone cross, I believe.

LLOYD-GEORGE

But what of the Catholics, your Majesty..? 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'm afraid that I simply cannot agree.

The King studies Lloyd-George for a moment.

GEORGE V

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

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. They remind him of the suffering he witnessed in the trench casualty stations and images FLASH through his memory. 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 are the father of a very healthy baby boy.

RAILTON

A boy?

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

RAILTON (CONT'D)

How is Ruby, Dr Brittain? When can I see her?

DOCTOR BRITTAIN

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

Suddenly, more PAINFUL wails from inside the room. Railton instantly turns to face the closed door. It opens and a TROUBLED MIDWIFE's head appears.

MIDWIFE

Doctor Brittain, you'd better 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 EVERMORE powerful. Railton in AGONY at the thought of what MIGHT be taking place - FLASHBACK --

He sees badly INJURED men, SCREAMING in pain. A soldier DIES in his arms as Ruby falls silent.

Railton is brought back to reality. SWEATING. Horrified.

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 looks FIXEDLY at David and breaks into an ENORMOUS smile.

DOCTOR BRITTAIN
David, I am now proud to announce
that you are the father of a wee
boy...

The Doctor steps to one side revealing the PORTRAIT behind him 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 4 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. He picks up a single sheet of paper, inserts it into his typewriter and begins to type:

RAILTON (V.O.)

To the Right Reverend Bishop,
Herbert Ryle, Dean of Westminster.

Throughout Railton's V.O. we follow the letter's journey.

MONTAGE:

- Railton Posts the letter in a postbox.
- A mailbag is 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 on a bicycle.

RAILTON (V.O.)

Dear Dean, Please forgive this intrusion.

(MORE)

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

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. 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

A BUTLER delivers the letter to HERBERT RYLE, (64, Yorkshireman, trim, balding man with a thick beard). He opens the envelope with a letter-opener, takes out the letter and reads:

RAILTON (V.O.)

This might add to the emotion of the occasion.

(MORE)

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

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

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

Railton and Ruby are both manning a clothing bank, distributing items to the poor, when a POSTMAN 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

Well... 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.

(MORE)

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

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 GORDON 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 are no doubt aware, Herbert, I am one of those. The church establishment in England 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, will enable us to have our own focus of mourning.

(MORE)

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (CONT'D)

When Railton's letter landed on my desk with the idea being suggested in a perfect definitive form, it appeared like 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 the Kings and Queens..?

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 fervently believe that the idea of a 'possible' commoner resting inside the heart of the Abbey...

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. Nevertheless, I doubt the King will entertain this idea coming from a mere Curate. Now... if you were to suggest it, Herbert, and managed to get the support of the Prime Minister..?

The Dean smiles and reaches for the teapot.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

More tea, Cosmo?

EXT. MARGATE - NIGHT

SUPER: Margate - September

Establishing shot of Margate's promenade and pier in pouring rain.

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

Railton is unable to sleep. He slips out of the vicarage, puts up his umbrella and makes his way on to rain-soaked Church Street --

EXT. MARGATE PIER - NIGHT

Railton TRUDGES down to the end of the pier and stares directly into the 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 to his knees under the PRESSURE and COWERS from the sound of an approaching SHELL/WAVE.

CLOSE ON: A look of sudden DEFIANCE on Railton's face, and he 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 takes-off his hat and holds it OUTSTRETCHED in one hand, his umbrella similarly in the other, presenting himself DEFIANTLY, 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 stands there CHALLENGING nature, totally UNAFRAID of the RAGING storm.

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

Railton and Ruby are sitting down to breakfast with their children. The 2 babies lie together in a crib to one-side. Railton is reading *The Times*.

RUBY

Look at them, aren't they gorgeous?

Railton puts down newspaper, looks around 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 are the new generation and I adore you all.

RUBY

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

RAILTON

On the town..?

Ruby cynically smiles at his answer.

RUBY

No further news? Nothing from the Dean?

RAILTON

Nothing at all, though 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 King is to unveil Edward Lutyens', *Cenotaph* in Whitehall. However, there appears to be religious tensions and exclusions in regard to the commemoration. Apparently, there is to be no possibility of official ecumenical involvement by the Roman Catholic church on the day.

RUBY

Why ever not..?

He looks at his newspaper.

RAILTON

'*The Times*' states that the Chief Rabbi has agreed to be a participant at the unveiling service, but the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster has not.

(MORE)

RAILTON (CONT'D)

With all this ongoing controversy,
my notion may have been lost in
the wind, forever forgotten in
time.

RUBY

Have faith, my love.

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

Same scene and setting as above. 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

More letters from the bereaved,
David?

RAILTON

(anxiously)
This one's from the Dean.

RUBY

(excitedly)
What does it say?

RAILTON

Dear Railton, As you know I have taken 4 or 5 weeks to think about your suggestion and to consult with friends. One of those is 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, distraught.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

What will happen, should I fail?

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - CLOISTERS

Railton and the Dean walk together.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

Are you in anyway related to George Railton, Commissioner of The Salvation Army?

RAILTON

My father.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

I was sad to hear of his loss.

RAILTON

Yes, he passed away in 1913. A heart attack on a train situated in Cologne Station.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

I am so sorry, Railton. Your father 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 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 is lifted 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 or unknown.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

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

Railton presses-on nonetheless.

RAILTON

It is 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 is 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 are transmitting, not receiving!

Railton is 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.

(MORE)

RAILTON (CONT'D)

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, it is 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, but 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. 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
is 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 is 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 very much approve of this idea, Prime Minister, but if His Majesty is not persuaded..?

LLOYD-GEORGE

You must leave the King to me, Bonar Law. His Majesty is a jolly chap, but thank God there is 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 is made aware that this Cabinet 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, always formally dressed with wing-collared shirts and tie), looks up from some papers he is reading.

LORD CURZON

Prime Minister?

LLOYD-GEORGE

I require you to form a committee.

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - RECEIVING ROOM - DAY

Another audience. Lloyd-George is pressing home his rationale.

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 soldier 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.

The King thinks out loud.

GEORGE V

Do they, by Gad? Tell me, 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* is taken from 2
Greek words - *Kenos*, meaning
'empty' and *taphos*, meaning,
'tomb'.

(MORE)

LLOYD-GEORGE (CONT'D)

Cenotaphs originated in Ancient Greece, where they were built when it was impossible to recover a body after the battle. The Greeks placed enormous cultural importance on the proper burial of their war dead.

GEORGE V

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

LLOYD-GEORGE

That is correct, your Majesty. The *Cenotaph* will represent our absent dead.

GEORGE V

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

Lloyd-George is stunned 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 is nearly 2 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 is needed to bring the nation together?

GEORGE V

I feel, that a public interment ceremony might reopen the wounds of war...

(MORE)

GEORGE V (CONT'D)

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 is surprised at Lloyd-George's open disagreement.

GEORGE V

Really..? Quite apart from anything else, there is 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.

GEORGE V

Curzon, eh? You do realise, that one false move and there could be a morbid side-show in 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 description by the way! Reeks of Bolshevism! We cannot and will not allow Bolshevism to take hold. We must not encourage that 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 is turning.

LLOYD-GEORGE

'The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier'..?

The King looks 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

The '*Unknown... Warrior*' then..?

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!

EXT. MARGATE BEACH - NIGHT

The moon casts its beam across the sea and directly onto the beach, which is deserted, 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. RAILTON'S BILLET - EARLY MORNING - FLASHBACK

Railton and the Army Private and 2 SOLDIERS complete a prayer. 2 Communion goblets sit atop Railton's flag. The 2 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 FREE-STANDING wooden stake. The Private is led up to and SECURED to the stump. A SERGEANT offers the Private a blindfold, which he refuses, shaking his head.

A 6 MAN FIRING SQUAD take-up their positions.

Railton closes his eyes and begins to pray. The startling RETORT of 6 rifles being fired. Railton opens his eyes.

The Private is SLUMPED at the stake. The Sergeant walks towards the Private, removing his sidearm as he does.

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

Railton immediately races back to --

I/E. RAILTON'S BILLET - EARLY MORNING

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

EXT. MARGATE BEACH - NIGHT

Evans looks across 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 are 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.

EVANS

It is beautiful isn't it?

RAILTON

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

INT. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

SUPER: 20th October

Railton, Ruby and family sitting down to breakfast. Railton is 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' is reporting that my idea originated from the Dean of Westminster.

RUBY

That's outrageous!

EVANS

Totally!

RAILTON

Perhaps the Dean is 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 looks 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 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 looks over at 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. I have been occupied actively upon it for the last 2 or 3 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

Ssshhhh, Mr. Evans!

Railton looks 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 is ready to co-operate.'

Railton is overwhelmed.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

'Once more I express my warm acknowledgement and thanks for your letter. Yours sincerely,'

Realisation! Eyes locked, slowly, Railton and Ruby 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 is in the Chair, the COMMITTEE is comprised of LORD LEE, WINSTON CHURCHILL, SIR LIONEL EARLE, WALTER LONG, EDWARD SHORTT, MAJOR-GENERAL G.D. JEFFREYS and SIR ALFRED MOND. LT-COLONEL STORR takes notes.

There is no doubt that Curzon, is the driving force behind the events of *Armistice Day*.

LORD CURZON

Gentlemen, with only 3 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 is perilously short.

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

CHURCHILL

The Prime Minister informs me that His Majesty is now fully behind the concept.

(MORE)

CHURCHILL (CONT'D)

So-much-so, he is insistent that the coffin in which the '*Unknown Warrior*' is laid to rest is made from an oak that currently stands in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace. It is, 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 is 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 is a general chorus of, 'Hear!, Hear!' from around the table.

LORD CURZON

The entire process must be treated with the utmost dignity.

(MORE)

LORD CURZON (CONT'D)

The tomb of '*The Unknown Warrior*' calls for it to be designed similar the *Cenotaph* itself, as classless and inclusive as possible, and to represent unity, rather than exclusion or division.

CHURCHILL

Yes, 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 is '*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. THE MARGATE VICARAGE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING
SUPER: 25th October

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 is 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 looks for the exact line in the letter.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

...'In any case, if it is 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 has 1 or 2 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.

(MORE)

LORD CURZON (CONT'D)

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 are 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 about 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. We will
also not be inviting the
representatives of any foreign
government. This is a national
occasion.

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 studies the shield on the envelope.

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 her invitation out of the envelope.

INT. - LORD CURZON'S COMMITTEE ROOM - DAY

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 return 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), is in his office, with his ever-present dog beside him.

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 6 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 are uniquely qualified Kendall, when charged with finding, exhuming and bringing these 6 bodies back to Saint-Pol.

KENDALL

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

The General interrupts him.

GENERAL WYATT

You are to accompany 6 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

No. Quite the opposite in fact.

Kendall is slightly baffled.

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)

My orders are, that you are tasked to exhume the bodies of 'unknown' British Empire servicemen.

(MORE)

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)

All are required to be wearing
British uniforms when exhumed.

KENDALL

Why 'unknown'..?

GENERAL WYATT

Your remit is to choose the
corpses of servicemen who died in
the war and to ensure that they
cannot be identified in anyway -
whatsoever! It is imperative you
make absolutely certain that there
is nothing included on any of the
bodies that might be used to
recognise them.

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 6 digging parties never meet-
up and that each returns to its
own unit at the end of their
individual 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 is writing down a summary of his flag's history
for the Dean, as he travels 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, extricates the unsoiled, 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

And 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 is significant,
Dean Ryle, is that this flag is
not a new 'bit of bunting' bought
especially for the occasion, but a
real symbol of every Briton's
life.

The Dean reaches 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 is interrupted by the arrival of Sir
Douglas Haig and his STAFF, who are passing through.

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. Fantastic
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)

Wonderful idea. 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
simple Padre.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

I did it because I thought 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 close to the '*Tomb of the Unknown Warrior*'.

Railton is hugely moved.

RAILTON

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

MRS RYLE

Some tea?

They look at each other and then 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 4 SOLDIERS arrive by transport. 2 graves marked by simple crosses lie by the side of the road. Kendall and Subaltern 1 get out of the transport. The Subaltern checks the first grave.

SUBALTERN 1

This one says, 'Unknown soldier of the 19th Division'?

KENDALL

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

SUBALTERN 1

Unknown soldier of the Royal Army Medical Corp.

KENDALL

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

SUBALTERN 1

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

KENDALL

I'm afraid I can not tell you,
Lieutenant. Orders, you
understand.

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

An 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), 4 different SOLDIERS
discovered digging away at the soil of an unmarked grave.
Kendall smokes a 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 don't think it right 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 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 are 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 are coming to the Deanery'.

RUBY

What a kind and thoughtful gesture.

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

SUPER: 8th November

Kendall, SUBALTERN 3 and 4 different SOLDIERS unloading a stretcher from their transport that contains a body wrapped in hessian. 2 armed SENTRIES stand guard at the door.

KENDALL

Right. Let's 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 on it, a candle burning either side.

At the head of 6 trestle tables stands a single burning candle. 5 of the tables contain open pine coffins, draped in *Union Flags*. The 1 remaining table has an empty open coffin on it.

KENDALL

Gentlemen. Can you please place the body of our fallen comrade inside the coffin?

The 4 soldiers do so, aided by the Subaltern. Kendall unwraps a *Union Flag* and with the help of the Subaltern drapes it over the coffin.

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 now.

INT. LORD CURZON'S COMMITTEE ROOM - NIGHT

Curzon's Committee are hard at work.

LORD CURZON

Having initially been rather slow to pick-up on the mood of the country, the British press, 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

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

GENERAL WYATT

Good evening, Kendall.

KENDALL

Good evening, General. Colonel Gell.

LT.COL GELL

Padre.

GENERAL WYATT

I must ask you to wait outside Padre.

KENDALL

Certainly. I understand.

Kendall exits.

GENERAL WYATT

Let's not waste any time. Colonel.

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

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
coffins. The General takes a step forward. Stops. Looks
to his left and to his right. Turns to his left. Feels
his way past the first 2 coffins and stops for a moment.
Turns and feels his way back past a coffin. Places a hand
firmly on the next coffin.

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 coffin.

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 collect the
coffin lid. They place it in position and screw it
closed.

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

The 2 officers exit the hut. Kendall is standing next to
the 2 Sentries who salute the General.

GENERAL WYATT

Colonel, the remaining bodies are
to be reburied with full honours,
immediately after the ambulance
departs under military escort in
the morning.

(MORE)

GENERAL WYATT (CONT'D)

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. 8 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,
converted especially for the occasion. The *Chapelle
Ardenne* is decorated with flags and palms.

A catafalque sits in the centre of the room, on which
rests an empty oak casket. Waiting for their arrival are
2 British undertakers, MR. NOADES and MR. SOWERBUTTS.

MR. NOADES

Thank you, Gentlemen. I am Mr. Noades, this is Mr. Sowerbutts. Could you please 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.

They then lift the heavy oak lid and place it over the casket. Bolted on top is the Crusader's sword. CLOSE ON: An iron shield inscribed, '*A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-18 for King and Country*'.

The British Soldiers exit as 4 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 6 black horses waits in the courtyard. A FRENCH ARMY BAND finishes playing, '*The Marseillaise*'.

Next to MARSHAL FERDINAND FOCH (69), 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 8 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 2 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.

2 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*'). After the salute, 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. I must say that the French have put on quite a show.

(MORE)

LLOYD-GEORGE (CONT'D)

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 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 country!

GEORGE V

I intend to speak publicly about it.

EXT. THE STREETS OF BOULOGNE - MORNING

Children and representatives of local associations at the head of the cortège, followed by endless ranks of CAVALRY. MARINES and INFANTRY next. The streets are packed with hundreds 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 is immediately followed by 4 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. 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. Its *White Ensign* lowered to half-mast.

8 BEARERS carry the '*Unknown Warrior*', piped aboard with an '*Admiral's Call*'. --

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.

4 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, 19 rounds of a Field Marshal's salute BOOM 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 is 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

6 British destroyers await *HMS Verdun*. As she approaches, they lower their *ensigns* to half-mast. They form the escort, 3 ships in line ahead, the *Verdun* alone, 3 ships in line astern. Together, they make 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'.

The vessel slips into Dover Harbour. There is another 19 gun salute. MILITARY BAND plays, '*Land of Hope and Glory*'. --

EXT. DOVER MARINE RAILWAY STATION - AFTERNOON

Dover townsfolk turn out. Shops and businesses all closed. Thousands take-up every possible vantage point along the docks and surrounding coastline. Extraordinary quiet.

TROOPS have been called to attention with arms reversed.

6 BEARERS carry the casket off the *Verdun*.

Casket is placed inside a *South-East Railways* Luggage van, walls draped in purple cloth, the roof painted white. It's been transformed into a traveling chapel.

The French wreaths are loaded into the second luggage van. The train pulls away. GUARD OF HONOUR from the CONNAUGHT RANGERS salute. --

EXT. THE KENT COUNTRYSIDE - EARLY EVENING

Train travels through 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, reading an article in *The Times*, headed, '*The Padre's Flag*'.

Reaches into his desk drawer, extracts his Military Cross medal. Carefully pins it on his uniform. --

EXT. VICTORIA STATION, LONDON - NIGHT

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

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 open.

I/E. MARGATE STATION - EARLY MORNING
SUPER: Thursday, 11th November, 1920

A heavy fog. Railton wears his uniform. Ruby is dressed in black mourning.

Railton opens the carriage door to allow Ruby to enter. She 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 now, that I am, and have never been more, so very proud of you.

She kisses her husband on the cheek, then boards the train, leaving him to ponder. --

INT. PLATFORM 8, VICTORIA STATION - MORNING

A light fog. Mist invades the station, matching the mood. The SERGEANT commanding the bearer party, salutes as Railton walks-up to him.

SERGEANT

Ready, Padre?

RAILTON

It's time, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

After you, sir.

Railton and the Sergeant enter the luggage van. --

INT. THE LUGGAGE VAN

SERGEANT

Let's remove this one, shall we?

Railton and the Sergeant remove the flag from the casket. Sergeant folds it. Railton withdraws his flag from his pack. They both drape it over the casket.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Look's like this old one's seen a bit of action, Padre.

RAILTON

You could say that.

The Sergeant places a steel helmet and side arms on top of the flag. The BEARER PARTY, march into the van.

RAILTON (CONT'D)

Thank you, Sergeant. I have to get to the Abbey. My wife will be wondering where I am. Can't keep the King waiting, can we?

SERGEANT

Certainly not, sir.

Railton exits. The Bearer Party lift the casket and carry it out towards the waiting gun-carriage, pulled by 6 black horses. --

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - NAVE

The Dean shows Ruby and Railton to 2 empty seats close to where the *'Unknown Warrior'* will be laid to rest.

RAILTON

Thank you, Dean Ryle. We are most appreciative.

DEAN OF WESTMINSTER

You above all, deserve them, David.

INT. VICTORIA STATION, LONDON

8 DISTINGUISHED PALL-BEARERS take-up their positions either side of the gun-carriage. The HIGHEST-RANKING officers in British forces then salute.

The Order is given to reverse arms and slow march. Massed bands play Chopin's *'Funeral March'*. 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

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, who have come to pay homage.

Sound of horse's hooves, RATTLING from the carriage, heard above the silent crowds. The procession moves along the route, as 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, 1 mile 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. --

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 2 *Union Jacks*. The King and his family look towards Trafalgar Square. All other dignitaries stand facing him.

Bereaved wives and parents stand silently still as the procession approaches. The gun-carriage halts directly beside the King. His Naval Equerry hands him a wreath. The King places it upon the casket.

CLOSE ON: Its card, which 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 strikes the first note of the 11th hour. On that stroke --

EXT. THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL

The King presses a button that releases the 2 *Union Jacks*. They fall to the ground, revealing the *Cenotaph* for the very first time. 2 ARMY OFFICERS quickly gather up the flags from the base of the monument.

At the final stroke of 11, a single BOOM echoes out. The start of the 2 Minute Silence. There is a complete suspension of all normal activity. And silence on film. --

MONTAGE:

- The Great Bell at Lloyds of London is rung
- Across London...
- The entire UK...
- The Empire, whatever the local time is...
- Passenger train comes to a halt and the driver and Fireman stand in their cab, 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 remains silent for 2 minutes.

END MONTAGE

EXT. THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL

The silence is broken by 8 BUGLERS of the BRIGADE OF GUARDS blowing '*The Last Post*'. The final note dies away. The King, followed by the 2 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, members of the Royal Family and various dignitaries. --

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - NAVE

Every seat is 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, raising 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 curtsey 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 reaches out his arm to shake Railton's hand, looking him directly in the eye.

GEORGE V

Thank you.

The King holds on to Railton's hand for a long while. Railton's eyes well-up with pride, as he bows his head.

The King releases his hand. Railton turns to Ruby, her face beaming with pride.

Bearers lay the casket on bars that sit across the grave. Pallbearers take-up their positions to either side. The King moves to the head of the grave, his 2 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 is full of 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 from the war a totally exhausted David Railton sleeps soundly.

FADE TO BLACK:

PROFESSIONAL LOOKING MAN (V.O.)
Anyone know who he is?

It is 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?

(MORE)

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

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 is, Corporal Price and the former young Lieutenant, whose life, Railton saved.

The kirk is 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. 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