

HOPE AND GLORY  
An Original Screenplay  
by  
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Fourth Draft. 1986

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INT. ROHAN HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - SEPTEMBER 1939 - DAY

COLOUR

Raking down a line of suburban gardens lit by a late-summer sun. Heads move back and forth above the fences that divide the narrow strips of land, moving to the sound of unseen lawn mowers.

In one of these gardens two children, BILL (aged eight) and his sister SUE (aged six) disport themselves. They are sprawled out on the lawn, heads and hands intent on something hidden from view in the lush vegetation of a rockery garden. Beneath those flowers and plants is a dark and mysterious forest, shaded by huge leaves, and broken up by towering boulders. Mounted figures of medieval knights ride in, guided by BILL'S gigantic hand. A wizard appears in the path of the riders who draw up sharply. BILL gives an impression of neighing horses. SUE'S face looms up between large leaves. She makes the sound of spooky wind.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING/LIVING ROOM - DAY

In the penumbra of the room, the mother, GRACE, in droopy flowered frock, crosses, floats towards the walnut wireless and, with trembling hand, switches it on. Its green dial glows with stations like Droitwich and Hilversum. She glides back and drapes herself behind an armchair in which her husband, CLIVE, sits solemn and motionless.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

The sound of the lawn-mower ceases abruptly. BILL looks up sharply. The neighbours' heads come to rest on top of the garden fences. They turn, listening. BILL inclines his head towards the french windows, sensing the dread moment. He walks towards the door and is framed there. He regards his parents.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING/LIVING ROOM - DAY

They look back with unseeing, inward-turned eyes. Young BILL gathers confused fragments of the fateful announcement.

CHAMBERLAIN (V.O)

...those assurances... by eleven  
o'clock... a state of war... that  
this country... at war with  
Germany.

The boy catches his mother's eye. She smiles an embarrassed smile. The boy is embarrassed by her embarrassment. His father's glassy solemnity angers him. In the garden, SUE sings.

SUE (O.S.)

(singing)

Flat foot floogie with a Floy  
Floy.

BILL turns to his sister.

BILL  
Stop that, Sue!

CLIVE is startled out of his funereal reverie.

BILL  
She just sings it. She doesn't  
know what it means.

An older sister, DAWN, a tumescent fifteen, stumbles into  
the room in a nightdress.

DAWN  
Where are my stockings? I can't  
find my stockings!

Her mother, GRACE, interrupts her with outstretched arms.

GRACE  
Dawn, darling. They've started a  
war again.

GRACE says it as though announcing that dinner is served,  
but her voice is torn by a sob as she holds DAWN in her  
arms.

GRACE  
(Whispering and sobbing)  
We mustn't frighten the little  
ones.

DAWN is appalled by her mother's display of sentiment. She  
wrenches free.

DAWN  
I don't care! I want my  
stockings!

CLIVE get's up, blazing. He seizes DAWN and shakes her.

CLIVE  
Stockings? War! Don't you  
understand! War!

DAWN  
I don't care!

CLIVE  
War! War!

GRACE inserts herself between them.

GRACE  
Clive. Don't. Dawn, please.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

BILL calls out from the garden. He is jumping up and down,

pointing at the sky.

BILL  
German planes! German planes!

They run out. GRACE sweeps little SUE into her arms, burying her face in her bosom and rushing back into the shelter of the house. DAWN and CLIVE scan the sky for planes, There are none.

BILL  
I did see them. I did.

DAWN  
He's the worst liar.

DAWN swings a fist at BILL and chases him into the room, raining savage blows upon him.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Father is white with rage. He seizes them, one in each hand. Mother cowers with SUE.

CLIVE  
These are the fruits of my loins?

DAWN lunges at BILL. The GRANDMOTHER enters, tall, frail, elegant, ga-ga, deaf.

GRANDMA  
Is it peace in our time?

GRACE  
(shouting)  
No, Mother! It's War! War!

GRANDMA  
Or what?

GRACE:  
War! War! War!

The wireless begins to play 'God Save the King'. Father immediately lets go of the children and stands rigidly to attention.

The others simmer down and shuffle into stiff and still poses. GRANDMOTHER, who perhaps cannot hear the Anthem, is baffled, shakes her head.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

The sirens sound. A shocking blast of noises, the sickening ululations of the air-raid warning. They call out over the rows of bow-fronted semi-detached, lower-middle-class houses. Some of the occupants, more daring or more confused

than their neighbours, burst out of their front doors, turning in frenzied circles, craning at the heavens.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAY

The rigid family once more jerks into movement at the sound of the siren, looking forcefully out of the french windows, hiding under the table, clutching each other. The siren stops. They wait, anxiously. Silence. Even the birds stopped singing at the wailing of the first siren. This was perhaps the worst moment of the war, the first moment, when war was still an unknown dread thing. The siren again, but this time, a long sustained note.

CLIVE

That's the all-clear. Testing.  
They were just testing.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

CLIVE walks tentatively into the garden, looking up, shielding his eyes against the sun. The others join Him, one by one.

GRACE

Such a beautiful day too.

All search the clear blue sky. The sound of the lawn-mower starts up again where it left off before the war.

SUE

(singing)

Flat Foot Floogie with a Floy  
Floy.

INT. CINEMA - DAY

BLACK AND WHITE

A Ministry of Information film advises and demonstrates how to glue strips of paper to windows to avoid flying glass, and how to construct an air-raid shelter. On the soundtrack, in addition to the patronizing commentary voice, is the sound of hundreds of screaming children.

BILL and SUE sit among the children's matinee audience. The children pay no attention to the screen, but fight and shout, throw things at each other, jump over seats, cry, wander up and down the aisles.

The soundtrack changes to dramatic music and a transformation takes place. All movement and talking ceases. Hundreds of rapt faces stare at the screen where Hopalong Cassidy rides into action.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

COLOUR

CLIVE has put an Anderson shelter at the end of the small garden, He is shovelling earth on to its humped corrugated metal roof. His friend, MAC, is watching him.

CLIVE  
Going to put a rockery garden  
over it, Mac.

BILL's voice echoes from inside the shelter.

BILL (O.S.)  
Dad. It's full of water again.

CLIVE and MAC peer in to see the boy splashing up and down, water over his ankles. He clutches his submerged foot in mock agony.

BILL  
Crocodiles! Aah!

CLIVE  
The sodding water table.

MAC  
Could you seal it over with hot  
pitch, Clive? Caulk it like the  
hull of a ship.

CLIVE  
(caustic)  
Thanks. I hope you can come for  
the launching.

INT/EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - KITCHEN/GARDEN - DAY

The windows are criss-crossed with brown paper. Beyond, in the garden, MAC has taken off his jacket and is shovelling earth onto the shelter. BILL walks barefoot towards the house, carrying his wet socks and shoes in his hands.

MOLLY  
It's not fair on them. It's  
selfish to keep them with you.

GRACE  
My aunt in Australia has  
offered..

BILL sits on the steps at the half-open kitchen door and wrings the water from his socks. SUE comes in and GRACE signals MOLLY to be circumspect, but she blunders on.

MOLLY

Snap it up. Great chance for  
them. Lot more future out there.

BILL listens, talking it all in. GRACE Watches little SUE  
waddle out carrying planes.

GRACE

It's so far way. I couldn't bear  
it.

MOLLY

Kids don't care. You're thinking  
of yourself.

GRACE turns away. Fighting back tears. MOLLY impulsively  
takes GRACE in her arms.

MOLLY

I didn't mean it like that,  
Grace. Why does it always come  
out wrong?

GRACE

I know you mean well.

MOLLY laughs and holds her at arms length.

MOLLY

There you go again. You're so  
bloody nice. I want to shake you.

She does, mock serious.

GRACE

Nothing will ever be the same  
again, Molly. And the funny thing  
is, I'm glad.

MOLLY looks at her, surprised.

MOLLY

Now you're talking.

SUE listening to this, sees BILL on the steps and gives him  
a questioning look. He shrugs, trying to conceal his  
anxiety from his sister.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAWN'S BEDROOM - DAY

DAWN lies in bed, head buried in pillows in that deepest of  
all sleep, the Sunday morning adolescent lie-in. BILL  
shakes her, jumps on top of her, imitates an air-raid  
warning, tries to pull off the bedclothes but she holds  
them tight.

BILL

There's a soldier at he door,  
looking for you.

She whips back the sheet, wide awake. One look at his face is enough to see that he is lying.

DAWN

You're the biggest fibber.

BILL

It's dinner time. It really is.  
Cross my heart.

She snakes out an arm and pulls him into bed. She rolls on top of him, tickling him and smothering him with kisses.

DAWN

If there's no solider, I'll have  
you instead.

He giggles and struggles, gets into a panic, but she is merciless, won't stop. Finally he starts to cry. She leaps out of bed, disgusted with him.

DAWN

Cry baby Bunting.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - GRACE'S BEDROOM - DAY

CLIVE rummages in the wardrobe, chuckling to himself. He finds his Sam Browne belt and Army cap from the First World War.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MOLLY and GRACE and GRANDMA have 'gin and its', the men brown ale. They are in high spirits. SUE is doing a puzzle on the floor. MOLLY shouts into GRANDMA'S ear.

MOLLY

Few bombs might wake up this  
country.

GRACE fills MAC'S glass in a tender gesture. A look passes between them. MOLLY is a friend and wife, they love and suffer in common. DAWN appears, wearing a defiant slash of lipstick.

GRACE

I doubt if a few bombs would wake  
up Dawn on a Sunday morning.

DAWN

This phoney war get's on my  
nerves. If we're going to have a  
war, I wish they'd get it  
started.



GRACE

Just ignore her, Mac.

CLIVE appears having stripped to the waist but wearing his Sam Browne from the First World War. They all shriek with laughter. CLIVE, encouraged by this response, does drill movements and then demonstrates how to salute.

CLIVE

There are many ways of saluting..

(He demonstrates.)

..An old soldier insulting a young subaltern.

His hand flies to his forehead, gouging the air, the salute transformed into an obscene gesture. More laughter.

CLIVE

As an officer, you counter that with one of these.

He raises his arm slowly and languidly until his limp hand just brushes his temple. A faraway look in his eyes disdains any acknowledgement of the insulting salute. A tiny skirmish in the class war.

BILL and SUE swing on the leather straps of the Sam Browne. They want him to stop. They sense something dangerous, alien, their father in an unfamiliar role, another person.

The wireless has been on all this time, playing music and now come the chimes of Big Ben. It is news time. The adults are suddenly stock-still and serious, leaving the children stranded in an excited state..

NEWSREADER (V.O.)

Here is the news and this is Alvar Lidell reading it.

The children are told to be quiet. The room becomes a frieze of portentous concentration.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

BILL slips into the garden, looks up at the leaden sky imploringly.

BILL

Come on. Come on.

The news bulletin filters out into the garden. Norway has fallen, perhaps, or Churchill become Prime Minister.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The meal has been eaten. They are animated again, but more

reflective, DAWN is winding wool with GRANDMA. BILL and SUE have also left the table. BILL is looking at the Sam Browne, now slung over the armchair, with its tangy smell of deep polish like shiny milk chocolate, a mysterious icon of war. The conversation at the table drifts over to him.

MAC

...It was a toss-up. His company went to India, mine went to France. Flip of a coin.

CLIVE

...two Indians to fan me all night. The heat.

MAC

....buried In a shell-hole for thee days, while he's out there playing polo and sticking pigs.

GRACE

It was the best time of his life.

MAC

How many of our class left? You and me out of twenty-eight.

CLIVE

And Jim.

MAC

What's left of him. He'll never see outside of the Star and Garter.

BILL sinks his teeth into Same Browne. He bites hard and is pleased to see that his teeth marks go quite deep into the leather.

CLIVE

I rode into battle...

DAWN, winding wool, knows this speech by heart and mimes it silently with her father.

CLIVE

...On horseback, with a drawn sword, leading a battalion of Gurkhas against the Turks.

GRANDMA watches DAWN'S moving lips and strains to hear.

GRANDMA

I can't hear you.

MOLLY

And where were the Turks?

She also knows the story.

GRACE

No Turks.

CLIVE

We didn't know that. It was a suicide mission. Machetes against artillery. Volunteers only.

GRACE

They'd gone.

MOLLY

Saw Clive coming.

They all have a good laugh at CLIVE'S expense and he takes it well enough. BILL drifts over to his lead soldiers spread out in a corner of the room. They are an eclectic mix of cowboys, Indians, the Medieval Knights, as well as modern militia and a few farm animals.

CLIVE

We all had to write a last letter home.

GRACE

And it was the last. Hasn't written a letter since. Not even a birthday card.

BILL sets a mounted knight against a clutch of modern infantry.

MAC

It's not like when you're in it. Just young boys spilling their guts in the mud.

DAWN

What were they like, the Germans, when you were a prisoner of war?

BILL looks up with interest. The others fall silent.

MAC

Most of them were very decent to me.

MOLLY

I wish you wouldn't go saying that. You'll get into trouble.

DAWN

You can speak German, can't you?

MAC

A bit.

DAWN

Say something. I want to know what it sounds like.

MOLLY

Certainly not!

MAC

In den ganzen Welt die meisten  
Leute sind dumm.

MOLLY

Not so loud!

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Later. The two men are in post-prandial sleep in the armchairs on either side of the fire. Sounds of washing up and women's voices come from the kitchen. BILL walks up very close and examines the two warriors from the Great War, or the First World War, as it was now coming to be known. Their mouths are open, slack. His father's false teeth click up and down as he breathes. MAC shifts his backside in his sleep to let a fart up from the side of the leatherette armchair. BILL looks at CLIVE's mottled skin, the stubble, the sagging epidermis around the eyes. He goes to the mantelpiece and takes down a silver-framed picture of his father as a baby-faced second lieutenant wearing that same Sam Browne. BILL holds the picture next to his father's snoring face. Once again, a new bulletin begins on the ever-playing wireless.

BILL

Dad, the News. It's the News.

CLIVE stirs.

CLIVE

Go off and play, son.

BILL shakes him.

BILL

But Dad, It's the News.

CLIVE

Thanks, son. I can hear it. I'm  
not sleeping, just closing my  
eyes.

BILL is confused. He still feels it is his duty to wake him.

BILL

(shouting)

The Germans! They've landed!

GRACE and MOLLY appear at the door, alarmed. The men sleep on.

BILL

Only joking.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BILL and SUE are in two beds, side by side. Between them is a crystal set and they are sharing the earphones listening to Itma or Much Binding in the Marsh. Their door is half open and a gust of shots and cries rises from below. BILL gets up and goes to the door.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - HALLYWAY AND LANDING - NIGHT

BILL and SUE venture out on to the landing and peer through the banisters to the hallway and front door below.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

MAC and MOLLY are leaving, as CLIVE and GRACE help them on with their coats. They have had a few more drinks, and are making sentimental farewells.

MOLLY

Bloody gin. Always makes me cry.

MAC

Got some wires crossed. Only weeps when she's happy.

GRACE

You're making me start now.

MAC embarrasses her.

MAC

Now, now Grace.

He turns to CLIVE and takes him by the shoulders. They are both quiet drunk.

MAC

Root it out Clive... the thought of it, before it takes hold.

CLIVE

Weeds will grow, Mac.

MAC

Consider Grace, the kids. I love them like my own. And you.

CLIVE

Kiss me Hardy.

As he mentions the children Molly wails anew.

MOLLY

Why couldn't I have the kids? Is he sitting up there... saying... "Grace, yes; Molly, no?"

GRACE holds her tight.

GRACE

Better off, Molly. What's to become of the poor mites!

SUE'S face creases and tears well up. BILL puts a protective arm about her.

MAC

You're a mug, Clive. We did our bit in the Last Lot.

CLIVE

If King and Country call, Mac, you go as soon as I will.

MAC'S face goes white with anger.

MAC

What did we know? We were seventeen.

CLIVE

(with a far-off look)  
I heard the drum and fife yesterday, Mac, marching past. Made my hair stand on end. I thought, I've been asleep for twenty years.

MAC wants to hit him. He turns away, trembling.

MAC

Go the Hell.

He puts an arm about MOLLY and plunges into the blacked-out dark-winter-night. As GRACE turns back, she glimpses the children on the landing above.

GRACE

Do you know what time it is? Go back to bed, this instant.

They dart out of sight.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BILL and SUE slide under the bedclothes. SUE is whimpering.

BILL

We're not going to be like them

when we grow up. We're not even  
like them now.

He picks up the earphones and twiddles with the crystal  
wireless. It is the News again. BILL fiddles with the lead  
soldiers, his eyes getting heavy.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

BLACK AND WHITE

Infantry advance as shells bust all about them. CLIVE and  
MAC push forward, side by side. MAC is hit, goes down,  
cries out for help, but CLIVE does not seem to notice.

A muddy field. Silence. Aftermath of battle. BILL searches  
among the dead. They are half-buried, covered in mud, all  
one texture with the earth. BILL finds CLIVE and MAC, lying  
side by side, dead. He is quite unconcerned, pulls his  
father's Sam Browne which slips off easily. He wipes the  
mud away and starts to eat it. It seems to be made of  
chocolate.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

COLOUR

A 1938 Vauxhall 12 is parked outside a recruiting centre. A  
boisterous crowd of young men mills about, passing in and  
out, encouraging each other, cheering each new man who  
steps out a soldier.

Next door is a pub and there is a continuous exchange of  
customers between the two establishments. BILL and SUE wait  
inside the car. She is whining in the back, sucking her  
thumb. BILL sits in the driving seat, pretending to drive,  
making all the right noises.

SUE

He's never going to come back.  
He's gone off to be a soldier and  
Mummy doesn't even know.

BILL

It doesn't matter, I can drive  
the car home.

SUE

You wouldn't.

BILL

Would.

SUE

You couldn't.

BILL

Could.

CLIVE, arm in arm with a PAL, comes out of the pub and over to the car. He gets in after much handshaking and back slapping.

CLIVE

Sorry, kids. Joined up. I needed some Dutch courage to tell your mother.

The PAL opens the passenger door and leans in.

PAL

Never say die!

CLIVE

Steady the Buffs.

PAL

Up the Arsenal!

CLIVE leans across and slams the door closed. The PAL waves at the window. CLIVE pulls away. The PAL runs alongside, waving. CLIVE laughs and waves back.

CLIVE

He's one of the best.

Still the PAL keeps up with the car, running frantically.

SUE

Daddy you shut his hand in the door.

The PAL jumps on the running board and crouches there, red faced, eyes bulging. He waves desperately at the window.

CLIVE

The silly bugger.

He pulls up the and opens the door. The PAL clasps his hand and writhes in agony.

CLIVE

You silly bugger. We're trying to win a war and you start off by shutting your fingers in the bloody car door.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

CLIVE is putting the car on blocks, taking off the wheels. BILL helps him.

CLIVE

That's it for the duration.  
(runs a duster over the



bodywork)  
I shall miss the old girl. Pop in  
and give her a polish, Billy boy.  
Just now and then. A car needs to  
be cherished.

GRACE has appeared at the door and heard some of this.

GRACE  
Has Sue got it right?

CLIVE  
What's that?

GRACE  
You joined up.

CLIVE  
Oh, that.

GRACE  
I wish you could have told me  
yourself.  
(he takes Grace in his  
arms.)  
Oh, Grace, it's not for long.  
They say it'll be over by  
Christmas.

CLIVE laughs and tickles her, trying to get round her, keep  
it light. GRACE laughs despite herself. BILL makes a face,  
disgusted by the show of sentiment.

GRACE  
Don't be so daft. Act your age.  
(extricates herself)  
I can't cope on my own. I'd  
better let the children go.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

CLIVE leads BILL out on to the lawn, goes down on one knee  
and puts his hand on the boy's shoulder. He looks solemnly  
into his son's eyes.

CLIVE  
Billy boy. Before I go, there's  
something I want to tell you.  
You're old enough now. It's time.  
(produces a cricket ball  
from his pocket.)  
The Googly. Your hand is too  
small to master it, but not to  
start practising. Anyway, I'm  
going to pass on the secret now,  
father to son, in case anything  
happens to me.  
(demonstrates)

You know the off-break, right?

He flicks the ball out of his wrist. BILL nods.

CLIVE

And the leg-break?

BILL knows that too. The ball comes out of his hand, spinning the other way.

CLIVE

Now, the googly looks like a leg break, but it's really an off break. Got it? Like this.

BILL

It's like telling fibs.

CLIVE

That's it. When you tell a lie, you hope to get away with it. When someone else does, you want to find them out. A good batsman will spot a googly. A good bowler will hide it. Always remember that, son.

BILL flicks the ball this way and that, experimenting. CLIVE watches him tenderly, a moment of perfect harmony. He folds BILL in his arms, holding him fast.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

BILL swings on the front gate looking back at his mother, SUE and DAWN bidding their farewells to CLIVE in a confusion of tears and forced gaiety.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - FRONT GARDEN - DAY

CLIVE finally strides away, head high, a military spring already in his step. Behind him GRACE shuts the door as though closing a chapter of their lives.

BILL

Dad! Dad!

CLIVE, now some twenty yards away, looks back. BILL throws the cricket ball and CLIVE catches it neatly. He smiles and marches down Rosehill Avenue. BILL is puzzled as CLIVE shows no sign of returning the ball. He calls after him.

BILL

Dad!

CLIVE is now eighty yards down the street. He suddenly turns smiling broadly, and with a prodigious throw he send

the ball in a high arc towards his son. BILL juggles his position, cups his hands, gets under it as the hard, heavy ball hurtles downwards. At the last moment he loses his nerve and jumps back, letting the ball thump onto the lawn. He looks towards CLIVE, full of shame. BILL is relieved to see that CLIVE has turned the corner.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

BILL winces as he and SUE are passed from hand to hand, hugged and kissed by many female members of the family - DAWN, GRANDMA and GRACE'S three sisters, FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY. MOLLY is on hand with MAC, the only male. On the table are the remains of the farewell party, an iced cake, balloons, gaudy wrapping paper. Encouraging cries fly about. "Aren't you lucky?" "Isn't it exciting?" "I wish I could hide in your suitcase." From the smothering embraces, BILL casts a pleading look to MAC who reaches out and hauls him from the women.

MAC

You survived that. The war should  
be no problem.

GRACE ties a label to BILL'S lapel. It declares his name and other details.

GRACE

Time to go.

She leads the children out MAC follows, carrying two suitcases.

EXT. WATERLOO STATION - DAY

MAC and GRACE lead BILL and SUE into the concourse where hundreds of children are assembled, each wearing an identification label. The noise is overwhelming. The organizers shout into megaphones. One boy has fainted and is put on a stretcher by St. Johns Ambulance men and, to get through the crowd, they hold the stretcher above their heads. The boy recovers, sits up and waves to his friends. The parents throng behind the barrier and they follow him. WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICE (W.V.S) Volunteers stand by.

W.V.S. WOMAN

Australia?

GRACE nods. The W.V.S WOMAN examines the labels on SUE and BILL and checks them against her list. The steam and noise have suffocating effect on GRACE.

W.V.S. WOMAN

Say goodbye and pass them  
through.

GRACE weeps as she embraces SUE. BILL fights back the tears and turns away embarrassed when his mother wants a kiss from him.

BILL

I'm going to miss the war and  
it's all your fault.

They are sucked into the enclosure and quickly disappear among the throng of refugee children. GRACE tries to follow with her eyes, searching for them hungrily. They disappear. MAC flinches at the pain he sees in her face. She lunges forward, and tries to push through the barrier.

GRACE

I can't do it. What's the point?

MAC

It's just the wrench, Grace. It's  
for their sake.

He tries to restrain her, but she breaks free.

GRACE

Let me through, I want my  
children.

W.V.S. WOMAN

No one goes in there. You signed  
the forms, didn't you?

GRACE

Yes, I did. And now I want them  
back.

W.V.S. WOMAN

Too late. Plenty of others  
would've been glad of their  
places.

The W.V.S. WOMAN and an ARP MAN are forcibly holding her. MAC cannot bear to watch her pain. He leaps over the barrier, grans SUE and BILL and hoists them out of the pen. BILL is acutely embarrassed at the scene his mother is making. He struggles to get free of MAC.

BILL

Let me alone. I want to go. I  
want to go.

MAC swings them over to GRACE. She snatches up SUE and hugs her. Over the child's shoulder her eye is drawn to a poster depicting a ghostly Hitler hovering over a mother and her children. He whispers in her ear "Take them back".

BILL

In front of everybody. They were  
all looking at us. Why did you  
have to do it?

GRACE is shattered, drained. She becomes calm almost dreamy.

GRACE  
Please yourself.  
(turns to Mac)  
Let them go, if they want.

MAC  
Grace!

GRACE turns back to the barrier, which is still defended by the W.V.S WOMAN with the clipboard.

W.V.S. WOMAN  
Changed your mind?

GRACE  
Yes.

W.V.S WOMAN  
Well, you're too late. Apply  
again. On your head be it.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BILL glues balsa wood wings on to a model Spitfire. Opposite him, across the dining-room table, GRACE is cutting something out of the newspaper. DAWN'S school books are spread out on the table, but she has abandoned them in favour of a dancing lesson by Victor Sylvester on the wireless. She steers her imaginary partner between the furniture, her face concentrates, trying to follow the steps.

VICTOR SYLVESTER (V.O.)  
Slow, quick, quick, slow. Right  
forward.. left together.. Three,  
four.. Back together.. Turn..  
One, two.. Quick, quick, slow.

GRACE crosses the room towards the kitchen. DAWN passes in from of her and she falls into step partnering her daughter in the dance.

DAWN  
You know it? It must be an old  
one.

GRACE  
Ancient. Have you finished your  
homework?

DAWN  
After this dance.

She mouths the steps, "Forward..quick, quick, slow"

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

GRACE pins the newspaper cutting to a bulletin board which also displays a 'war map' with pins in it showing the progress of hostilities. The cutting is a David Low cartoon showing a soldier standing defiantly on a rocky promontory looking across a stormy sea towards France, saying 'Very well alone.' She is deeply moved by it. BILL enters and watches her, sensitive of her mood, but he has a mournful duty. He takes out the pins, representing the German Army in Russia.

BILL

I've got to move the Germans to  
Minsk. They've taken Minsk.

GRACE lays a restraining hand on his shoulder.

GRACE

Tomorrow. Give them one more  
night of freedom. Move them in  
the morning.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Swirling to the dance music, DAWN comes face to face with the clock on the mantelpiece and registers the hours. She dives for the wireless and searches for another station. She is satisfied when she hears the stentorian tones of Lord Haw-Haw's nightly propaganda broadcast from Germany.

DAWN

Quick! Lord Haw-Haw! He's  
starting.

BILL scampers in. GRACE hovers by the door.

LORD HAW-HAW (V.O.)

..the soldiers like to wager  
among themselves, what day will  
the German army enter Moscow? One  
thing is certain: much sooner  
than anyone thought. From here in  
Berlin, listeners in Britain, I  
can give some very definite news.  
There will be a bomber raid on  
London tonight, the fourteenth  
night in succession. Look out for  
bombs if you live in Carshalton  
or Croydon. There will be  
incendiary attacks if you live in  
Fulham and Hammersmith. And watch  
out in Kew; be alert in  
Walthamstow.

BILL looks at his mother, DAWN gets up and goes over to the

wireless, staring at it.

BILL

That's us.

GRACE

It's just German Propaganda.

DAWN

He always knows.

GRACE

Half the time he's bluffing.

A moment of dread hangs over the room. GRACE summons her resolve and bustles over to the wireless and snaps it off.

GRACE

Bill, off to bed.

She gives him a shove towards the door to silence his protest. She takes DAWN by the shoulder and presses her into a chair and pushes her head into her homework.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sirens are sounding, one after the other, some distant, some close, then the one at the end of the street, like dogs howling in the night waking other dogs. Three German bombers, a Heinkel, a Dornier and a Stuka, fly in formation across the black sky. GRACE appears behind the model planes, which hang on threads from the ceiling, wakes BILL and SUE and they stumble out of bed.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - STAIRS - NIGHT

GRACE leads BILL and SUE down the stairs. They sleep on their feet in this familiar routine. DAWN is still dressed below, playing dance records on the gramophone and finishing homework.

GRACE

We better go to the shelter.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They open the French windows and fierce wind cuts into the room.

DAWN

It's freezing out.

GRACE hesitates, then closes the windows.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

They squeeze themselves into the tiny space under the stairs, close the door and light a candle. BILL and SUE complain irritably as they try to arrange their limbs. The shoving and pushing wakes them up.

GRACE gives each of them a biscuit from a tin.

DAWN

What would we do if a German came into the house?

GRACE

Don't be silly, Dawn.

DAWN

Well, why do you always bring the carving knife in here?

DAWN picks up the knife, pretending to hear someone outside the cupboard door. She presses her ear to the thin wooden partition. BILL'S eyes bulge. He is half convinced. Even GRACE looks uneasy. SUE, reacting automatically to crisis, pulls on her red and white 'Mickey Mouse' gasmask. Suddenly DAWN thrusts the knife through a crack in the boards. She makes a blood curdling cry.

GRACE slaps her, amused, despite herself. BILL seizes DAWN from behind and pulls her back on top of him. They writhe and giggle. BILL cocks an ear.

BILL

Flak!

They are stock-still, straining to hear. He is right. The anti-aircraft guns have started up. Their crisp 'crump' sound gets closer and more frequent. Another separate sound intrudes - falling bombs. The explosions are at regular intervals, each one louder than the last.

BILL

Basket bombing  
Counts between the bombs  
Two and three and four and five  
and six and..

The next bomb falls closer.

GRACE

Why didn't I take you to the shelter?

Her hands touch and caress the children, as though weaving a protective charm over them.

BILL

...four and five and six and...



Another, louder still. They sit tense and straining every muscle, willing the bombs away.

GRACE

If only I'd let you go to Australia.

BILL

...and five and six and...

It is deafening, shaking the house.

DAWN

The next one is ours. Either it hits us or it goes past us.

BILL

...and four and five...

DAWN

Please God. Not on us. Drop it on Mrs. Evans. She's a cow.

BILL

...and six...

It drops, some way past them. They slump exhausted against each other. A fire-engine bell approaches. The flask goes on. DAWN gets up, untangles herself from the others.

DAWN

I'm not going to die like a rat in a trap. Let me out of here.

Staggered out of the cupboard.

DAWN

I'm going outside.

BILL scrambles after her.

GRACE

Wait. Don't.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

DAWN runs out. Searchlights criss-cross the sky. Anti aircraft shells make little white puffs in the black sky, the sound coming much later. Up the road, a house is blazing. A fire engine swings by. ARP MEN run in the street. DAWN dances in the tiny front garden.

DAWN

Quick, quick.. slow, quick, slow.

BILL hesitates in the porch.

DAWN

It's lovely. Lovely. Does little  
Billy want to see the fireworks?

BILL runs out, sees something by the kerb and picks it up.

BILL

Shrapnel! And it's still hot.

He tosses it from hand to hand. At the far end of the street, the skyline of central London is silhouetted against a burning sky. GRACE suddenly laughs at the sight of the burning house down the street. She is shocked at her own reaction.

GRACE

Come in at once, or I wash my  
hands of you.

A shell bursts right overhead and they duck into the open doorway. The four of them are framed there, looking up at the savage sky where the Battle of Britain rages. BILL watches enraptured.

EXT. THE CITY OF LONDON - NIGHT

BLACK AND WHITE

St. Paul's sites at the heart of the blazing city.

EXT. STREET - DAY

COLOUR

DAWN, in school uniform, rides off on her bicycle. BILL and SUE come out with satchels and gasmasks. GRACE watches them making their way along the street scarred and damaged by the night's bombing. PEOPLE scratch in the rubble to salvage their belongings.

BILL'S eyes are fixed on the ground searching for shrapnel. Now and then he stops to retrieve a piece. SUE dawdles along behind him, one foot in the gutter, the other on the kerb.

BILL looks up as he hears a voice groaning from a bomb site. SUE is now some way ahead. The street is suddenly deserted. He looks back at the bomb-scarred house. The front of the house is gone and flowery wallpapers are revealed. The voice cries out again, a panting, rasping moan. BILL ventures forward. Now a WOMAN'S VOICE, groaning.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Oh fuck... oh fuck... oh fuck...

A white hand and forearm stretch up from the debris. BILL

shifts position until he can SEE TWO HEADS, a MALE and FEMALE, pressed against a mattress which is leaning against a broken wall. He darts back on the street and looks for help. The street is still deserted. He hesitates, then runs up the street for all he is worth.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

BILL and SUE are late. They run into the yard where the other children are already lining up in their respective classes. The HEADMASTER is a wizened Welshman, too old for military service. He struts up and down.

HEADMASTER  
Dressing from the right!

He points an accusing finger at BILL.

HEADMASTER  
Late! My study before prayers.

They shuffle into their correct spacing.

HEADMASTER  
Eyes front! Keep still down there, you little ones. It's discipline that wins wars.

Inspects his troops.

HEADMASTER  
Now quick march. Left... right... left... right. Swing those arms.

FLASH CUT:

INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY - DAY

BILL flinches and winces as the cane strikes his hand.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

The children are praying, eyes closed, hands joined. On the dais, the teachers, mostly women, are lined up.

HEADMASTER  
Oh God, bring destruction to our enemies. Make these young one's true soldiers of the Lord. Guide Mr. Churchill's hand in the cunning war.

Some of the boy's covertly swap pieces of shrapnel and cigarette cards as the HEADMASTER'S tirade grows in

passion, but BILL is mesmerized and fearful of this daily rhetoric. He blows on his hands, shakes them to alleviate the pain inflicted by the caning.

HEADMASTER

Let our righteous shells smite  
down the Messerschmitts and the  
Fokkers.

FLASH CUT:

INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY - DAY

BILL'S face, twisted in anxious anticipation, awaits the next blow.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

HEADMASTER

Lord, send troublesome dreams to  
Herr Hitler. Let him not sleep  
the sleep of the innocent. And  
comfort our warriors at the  
fronts. Brighten their swords,  
burnish their bullets with your  
fire.

FLASH CUT:

INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY - DAY

BILL jerks convulsively and grins as the cane connects.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

The HEADMASTER reaches a climatic peak, then is silent, head sinking to his chest. He continues, very quietly.

HEADMASTER

We beseech Thee, Oh Lord, to have  
mercy on these Thy children.

FLASH CUT:

INT. HEADMASTER'S STUDY - DAY

BILL suffers another whack.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

HEADMASTER

We dedicate our studies this day  
to the war effort.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

BILL covertly shows the welts on his hands to his neighbour as he and thirty other nice-year-old children are harangued by a large red-faced woman, their TEACHER. She sprays a lot of saliva as she speaks. A coloured linen projection of the world is hung over the blackboard. She slaps it with her cane, pointing to many countries .

TEACHER

Pink... pink... pink... pink...  
What are the pink bits, Rohan?

BILL stands up, still seeking balm for his hands - he has them tucked under his armpits.

BILL

They're ours, Miss.

TEACHER

Yes, the British Empire.

A boy, HARPER, sits in front row and is in saliva range. Each time the TEACHER turns back to the blackboard, the boy wipes his desk flamboyantly with a cloth, much to the spluttering amusement of his classmates.

TEACHER

Harper, what fraction of the  
earth's surface is British?

HARPER

Don't know, Miss.

TEACHER

Anyone?

A girl shoots up her hand. JENNIFER BAKER.

JENNIFER

Two-fifths, Miss.

TEACHER

Yes. Two-fifths. Ours. And that's  
what the war is all about. Men  
are fighting and dying to save  
the pink bits for you ungrateful  
little twerps.

The pinched little faces find this notion difficult to absorb. They stare back blankly at the British Empire. A SIREN SOUNDS an air raid warning.

TEACHER  
Books away! Scramble!

They grab their gasmasks and run from the class, cheering.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

The children swarm to the shelters, which are long narrow concrete structures in sandbags to absorb blast.

INT. SHELTERS - DAY

The children file in mostly, laughing and chatting. There are clattering duckboards on the ground affording cover from an inch or two of water. Along each side of the shelters are narrow benches. The children sit facing each other. The HEADMASTER'S steel-studded boots hammer noisily down the steps. He raises his arm high.

HEADMASTER  
Gasmasks on!

They open up their cases and pull on their masks. The HEADMASTER conducts their breathing,. Moving his arms up and down to indicate a rhythm.

HEADMASTER  
Slowly... in... out...don't  
panic... in... out...

There is a HISSING SOUND as they inhale, then a RASPING comic RASPBERRY as the air is pushed out of the sides of the rubber masks.

HEADMASTER  
In... out... These masks are  
given to us to filter away  
abominations of the enemy.

He marches up and down in the narrow gap between the scabby knees of children.

HEADMASTER  
Now, nine times table. One times  
nine is nine...

The children's muffled voices chant the multiplication table rubbery GURGLING SOUNDS merge from the gasmasks. Hidden behind his mask, BILL finally gives was to angry tears. He sticks out his tongue as the HEADMASTER passes by.

HEADMASTER  
Two times nine is eighteen...

(And so on)

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

BILL and SUE turn into their street on their way home from school, looking lifeless and dull, but their faces lights up with excitement as the fifty-foot length of a BARRAGE BALLOON suddenly rises from behind the houses to the distant SOUND of CHILDREN CHEERING. They sprint into their house.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAY

BILL and SUE run through the hallway and into the living room, scattering satchels, hats, gasmasks in their wake. Their excitement is far too intense to explain to the startled GRACE. They burst out through the French Windows into the Garden.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

They run to the back fence. In the waste ground beyond the garden, where a further row of house was to be built when war intervened, BILL and SUE witness a TEAM of mostly AIRWOMEN, (WRAFS) intent on launching the BALLOON. Some twenty WOMEN, each holding a tether, are paying out their lines under the rhythmic commands of their LEADER. There is a cable attached to the winch mounted on a TRUCK, and this is wound out as the balloon rises. The balloon has a comforting, humorous aspect, and the children laugh and giggle as they watch.

NEWSREEL

BLACK AND WHITE

Like a school of basking whales, barrage balloons fill the sky. It is a newsreel of the Battle of Britain. A dramatic scene follows: A DOG FIGHT between SPITFIRES and GERMAN BOMBERS. A patriotic, punning commentary, pulsating music.

INT. CINEMA - DAY

COLOUR

GRACE and her three children are glimpsed in their seats, watching. BILL is totally engrossed, enthralled. Out of habit, he simulates the engine noise of the planes and the clutter of cannon fire.

Suddenly a caption is superimposed on the screen:

AIR RAID IN PROGRESS - YOU ARE ADVISED TO TAKE SHELTER.

GRACE leads them out. They shuffle up the aisle, dragging their feet, watching over their shoulders as they go.

BILL

Can't we just see the end?

DAWN

They've got the real thing outside.

BILL

It's not the same.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

A number of PEOPLE have come out of their suburban gardens and look up at the pale-blue-winter sky. GRACE, SUE and BILL are among them.

A SQUADRON OF SPITFIRES is attacking a formation of GERMAN BOMBERS. They are distant black dots high above the barrage balloons. The planes WHEEL and DIVE and give a splendid display of AEROBATICS. Being so high, there is almost no sound of engines or cannon and the feeling of unreality is heightened.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - FRONT GARDEN - DAY

One of the GERMAN PLANES is HIT as the PILOT leaps from his burning plane and a PARACHUTE blossoms and checks his fall. GRACE draws the children back into the corner of the house as the PLANE CRASHES. They creep out again. The dog fight continues but the German planes have lost formation and dispersed. The battle has become straggly and is rapidly disappearing from view. Meanwhile, the PILOT'S PARACHUTE drifts ever CLOSER as he descends, causing great excitement.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

NEIGHBOURS run in the direction of the FALLING AIRMAN. Some WOMEN carry garden forks and others pick up rocks on the way. GRACE and the children hurry back into the house.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

They go out through the back gate to join an excited throng of NEIGHBOURS.



EXT. BUILDING SITE - DAY

The PILOT drifts on to the wasteland where the barrage balloon bravely flies. People rush in from all sides, as he makes an elegant landing and gathers his parachute. A crowd of women, children and OLD MEN encircle him. He looks no more than twenty-years old. The crowd watches every move he makes. They edge back as he reaches into his pocket. But it is only a silk handkerchief that he pulls out. He wipes his hands, puts it away. He moves to an empty oil drum and sits on it. He crosses his legs and carefully lights a cigarette. His affects the greatest nonchalance as he smokes. A little way off a huge hoarding gives the impression of the houses that were to be built on this site, an idyll of suburban bliss. The PILOT looks at the idealized family group on the poster and then at GRACE and her children. He smiles ironically.

GRACE

England is so beautiful, and he  
had to land here of all places.

Finally, a rather aged POLICE CONSTABLE arrives on the scene. The onlookers thrust him forward. He advances a few paces, then stops. Hesitating, quite at a loss. He looks at the PILOT then back to the crowd. They egg him on. Resolutely, the CONSTABLE pulls out his truncheon and steps forward.

CONSTABLE

Now then. Now then.

The German PILOT gets languidly to his feet. The POLICEMAN Retreats a pace. A TITTER or two ripples through the crowd. Encouragingly, the PILOT half raises his hands in the 'stick-em-up' position, the cigarette held delicately between the pale fingers. It is a taunting but oddly gentle gesture. The CONSTABLE takes him by the arm and leads him off. The crowd opens up to let them pass. As he does, DAWN catches his eye and he winks at her. She gives him a flirtatious smile. GRACE is horrified. She seizes DAWN and forces her face against her own breast, hiding her gaze from the lewdness of the enemy.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

DAWN is bent over, looking between her legs at BILL as he tries to draw a stocking seam up the back of her calf. He must continuously lick the brown crayon. She holds a hand mirror in such a way that she can see the progress of his work.

DAWN

It's crooked. Rub that bit out  
and do it again.

She cuff's him and he resumes. He stops halfway up her thigh.

DAWN

Well, keep going. Don't stop now.

He goes higher, then hesitates again.

BILL

Nobody is going to see this far up.

She leers at him.

DAWN

Don't be so sure.

He blushes. She stands up and pirouettes, her flared skirt swings out, exposing her knickers.

DAWN

When I jitterbug.

INT. DANCE HALL - NIGHT

DAWN, swinging as she jitterbugs with a young CANADIAN SOLDIER, BRUCE. They are good. He hoists her over his shoulder. They whirl and swirl. The music changes to a slow waltz.

BRUCE

It was great for me, how was it for you.

DAWN

A bit too quick.

BRUCE

Well. Now we can do it slow. Are those some kind of stockings you're wearing?

DAWN

They might be.

BRUCE

I mean, no suspenders. They just kinda' disappear up your ass.

She slaps his face. He Holds up his hands in mock horror and backs away.

BRUCE

Quit it. Help me someone. The girl's beating on me.

Jeers and laughter from fellow CANADIANS on the dance

floor. DAWN turns and walks off, head in the air, but not forgetting to wriggle her bottom as she goes. BRUCE grins admiringly and stalks after her on tiptoe. His pals love it.

EXT. SKY - DAY

BLACK AND WHITE

A SPITFIRE is attacked by a GERMAN PLANE. The pilot twists and turns away, trying to escape. The pilot is BILL! His eyes bulge with fear as the enemy bullets rip into his fuselage. The rat-a-tat of the gunfire wakes him up.

INT. ROHAN'S HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

COLOUR

BILL opens his eyes, and they alight upon his MODEL SPITFIRE suspended on a thread over his bed. The cannon fire gradually resolves into a TAPPING on the WINDOW. Blearily he gets up and unlatches it. A Dishevelled DAWN climbs through, threading her way between the model airplanes hanging from the ceiling and stepping down over the table on which BILL has his shrapnel collection spread.

BILL  
(whispering)  
Mind that shrapnel

DAWN thrusts a brass regimental hat badge in BILL'S face.

DAWN  
(whispering)  
I'm starting my own collection.

BILL  
(impressed)  
It's Canadian. Where'd you get it?

She pockets it and creeps out of the door, smiling smugly.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

DAWN pulls back the covers and slides into bed, fully dressed. She is asleep as her head hits the pillow. A distant SIREN starts-up, warning of an air-raid.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - GRACE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

GRACE is instantly alert as the SIRENS call to one another,

coming CLOSER. She throws on her dressing-gown, pulls on her fur-lined boots, picks up the ever-packed bag at her bedside and hurries out of the door.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

GRACE shakes BILL and SUE awake.

GRACE  
Bill, Sue. Air-raid!

They tumble out of bed and into their dressing-gowns like automata.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

GRACE enters, shakes DAWN who does not respond. GRACE pulls back the covers and is surprised to see DAWN fully dressed, wearing make-up and with slightly crooked seams down the back of her legs.

GRACE  
Dawn, what have you been up to?

DAWN murmurs her protest. GRACE pulls her out of bed, but DAWN crawls back in.

DAWN  
I'm not going to that shelter.  
I'd sooner die.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - STAIRS - NIGHT

BOMBS are already falling. GRACE switches on a light and hurries down the stairs leading her two children through the familiar routine. She calls back. BILL bumps down the stairs, on his bottom, half asleep.

GRACE  
Dawn! Come down here!

Shew starts back up the stairs, but is halted by a BOMB dropping close by. She runs down again, scoops up the two little ones and heads from the living room.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As they approach the French windows, another BOMB EXPLODES very close by. Before its sound is heard, there is a tremendous BLAST, which rips off the blackout curtains and sends them floating into the room. The WINDOWS are TORN OUT and most

of the fragmented glass hangs limply from the brown paper that criss-crosses the panes for just this eventuality.

Every loose object is hurled inwards. The room light flickers on and off and shell-bursts illuminate the room from without. GRACE and the children are thrown back against the wall, but before they hit it the process is reversed and the blast is sucked out again. They are pulled back towards the windows together with the glass and loose fragments of the room. This all happens slowly as though the room is filled with water and the windows were a reversible sluice gate. SUE'S long blonde-hair is first blown, then sucked across her face. Then comes the SOUND of the EXPLOSION itself, which seems to have the effect of draining water from the room. The People and the bric-a-brac all drop to the floor, dead weights once more.

The children clutch their ears, SCREAMING. GRACE has one or two cuts. She gathers up the children, spreading her blood on them, and frightens herself, confused as to whom the blood belongs. She wipes it away, crying out a desperate prayer.

GRACE

Please, God. Take me, but spare them.

She carries SUE and drags BILL through the shattered French windows, out into the garden and towards the Anderson shelter.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT

Two more BOMBS EXPLODE, further way, but still close enough for the blast to force them off balance. They stumble and fall, covering their ears against the pressure. They tumble into the SHELTER, stepping into several inches of water. The ack-ack keeps up the barrage, and the EXPLODING SHELLS intermittently LIGHT UP the SKY. GRACE, mumbling Dawn's name, clambers out of the shelter to fetch her.

GRACE sees DAWN coming down the garden. She looks dazed as she staggers quite slowly with one arm wound around her head. As she gets closer, GRACE sees that her eyes are glazed and she is MOANING. GRACE leads her into the SHELTER and covers her with a blanket. SUE is fast asleep already in spite of everything. DAWN looks at her mother accusingly.

DAWN

You don't care if I die. How could you leave me there? Even if you don't love me?

DAWN desperately wants her mother to take her in her arms, but GRACE sits stiffly upright, unyielding.

DAWN

Tell me the truth. You had to get married, didn't you? Because of me.

GRACE

The ideas you get in your head.

DAWN

That's why you never liked me. I'm different from you. Well, everything's different now, so it doesn't matter. So there.

Finally DAWN bends forward and puts her head on her mother's lap and cries, at first softly, the more bitterly. GRACE holds her and rocks her at last. BILL watches this, perplexed, as perhaps he always will be, by the complex emotional interplay that passes between women.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

GRACE and DAWN are cleaning up the debris. Some plaster has fallen and there is a pall of dust. They are singing merrily, glad to be alive, to have survived the night.

Outside the front window, BILL and SUE can be seen, having ventured out, eager to explore the damage done to Rosehill Avenue.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

BILL picks up shrapnel. Several houses have been damaged, one heavily so. Outside this house, a handful of people has gathered watching the ARP MEN as they comb through the smouldering ruins. Two of them are working a stirrup pump as they extinguish a small fire in a corner of a room. Some children come up to BILL and SUE. They are flushed and excited, bursting with news. One boy, ROGER, blurts it out.

ROGER

Pauline's mum got killed.

BILL

No, she didn't.

ROGER

Yes, she did, didn't she?

He appeals to his companions, particularly to a GIRL, JANE, a little older than the others.

JANE

Yes, she did. Killed stone dead.

ROGER

You can ask her. Ask Pauline.

He points over at the ruined house, and sure enough there is PAULINE, a girl of twelve. From time to time, a silicosis NEIGHBOUR goes over to her, offering help, but PAULINE shakes her head and looks away. She just stands there as though her mother has told her to wait on that spot and not to talk to any strangers until she got back. The children drift across towards her and stop a few feet away. They stare intently, studying her face.

ROGER

Isn't that right? You're mum got killed last night?

PAULINE nods affirmatively. A BOY throws a miniature parachute into the air. It opens up and drops neatly at PAULINE'S feet.

ROGER

There you are. I told you.

He jabs BILL in the ribs, finding a physical vent for his excitement. BILL lashes back at him with a violent anger that scares and quells the other boy. The group falls silent.

PAULINE steals glances at them out of the corner of her eye. She is not a popular girl, careful and self-conscious, and she cannot help enjoying this situation. She flushes.

JANE

Do you feel rotten, Pauline?

PAULINE shakes her head. The children move away from her and start to fool around, scrapping and laughing, but when they get back within a certain distance of PAULINE, they grow quiet and move away again. BILL nudges SUE.

BILL

Go and ask her if she wants to play.

SUE

Ask her yourself.

BILL

You do it. You're a girl.

SUE edges slowly towards her, not without nervous glances back at her brother.

SUE

Pauline.

PAULINE does not deign to answer the little girl.

SUE

Pauline. Do you want some shrapnel?

She has fragments in her hand. She offers them to PAULINE. It is possibly part of the bomb that killed her mother. PAULINE shakes her head.

SUE

Do you want to play?

PAULINE shakes her head again. SUE goes back to BILL who has been watching carefully at a distance. After a moment, they turn back and walk home. ROGER sees another newcomer approaching. He calls out.

ROGER

Hey, Terry. Pauline's mum got killed last night.

TERRY

She never.

ROGER

She did too.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

BILL and SUE enter, bursting with their news. GRACE'S sister, HOPE, has come to help and so have MOLLY and MAC, and a Neighbour, MRS. EVANS, on whom DAWN wished a bomb. GRACE'S arm is bandaged, MAC is scoring panes of glass with a diamond cutter. He has a dollop of putty. BILL is immediately distracted and cannot resist kneading the putty. DAWN brings in a tray of tea. They are all in high spirits, almost festive. SUE tugs at her mother's skirt.

SUE

Pauline's mummy got deaded.

GRACE'S attention is elsewhere. She does not hear.

MOLLY

You're lucky up here. The East End's been burning for three nights. Incendiaries.

DAWN hands the neighbour her tea.

DAWN

Still not been hit, Mrs. Evans?

MRS. EVANS

Touch wood.

DAWN

You had a near-miss the other night.

MRS. EVANS

I hear they're dropping diseased rats on bomb sites.



DAWN

BILL found this tiny little  
parachute. So that's what it was  
for.

They all slurp their tea and talk at once. HOPE is dusting  
the piano.

HOPE

Is the piano all right, Grace? It  
was knocked clean over.

GRACE goes over to it and opens the lid, runs her fingers  
over the keys.

GRACE

It seems to have survived.

MAC

Play something, Grace.

MOLLY

We never used to sing much before  
the war, did we? Not in daytime  
anyway.

DAWN starts to sing 'Mareseatoats and Doeseaboats and  
Littleambseativy' and GRACE picks it up on the piano. DAWN  
dances around the room. There is something wild and  
abandoned about her.

MRS. EVANS

Dawn's come on fast.

MOLLY

That's the war for you. Quick,  
quick, quick.

MRS. EVANS

Didn't I see you with a soldier,  
Dawn?

It is just a teasing guess. She roars with laughter.

DAWN

I'm just doing my bit for the war  
effort.

GRACE stops playing.

GRACE

I won't have this vulgar talk in  
my house.

DAWN

It's only a joke, Mummy. I'm  
fifteen. I'm still at school. I  
want to be a nun when I grow up.

MAC goes over to GRACE. He picks up some sheet music from a pile scattered on the floor. He selects a piece and props it on the music stand.

MAC

Try and few bars of old Fred,  
Grace.

GRACE is softened by his tone. Their eyes meet for a moment. She turns the stool back to the keyboard and plays Chopin, particularly poignant since the fall of Warsaw. They listen with teary eyes. 'Mareseatoats and Doeseaboats and Chopin. It is the spirit of the Blitz.

SUE

(whispering to Bill)  
Tell them about Pauline's mum.

BILL

Not now. They wouldn't believe  
me.

STOCK FILM

BLACK AND WHITE

The Chopin continues over a scenes of bomb-ruined London, desolate and devastated.

EXT. BOMBED SITE - EVENING

COLOUR

A surreal landscape: a flight of stairs leading nowhere, an exposed bathroom; a house entirely destroyed but for one fragment of wall jutting up, and on it still hangs a picture. BILL wanders among these wonders, scavenging. A marauding gang of boys approaches. They spread out and move up on BILL from all sides, trapping him. ROGER, the boy who told of Pauline's mother's death, is among them and appears to be their leader.

ROGER

What are you doing here? This is  
our territory

BILL

Looking for shrapnel.

A BOY

What you got?

Two of them grab BILL and wrench his fist open, extracting a piece of metal.

A BOY

Look, a detonator.

The others gather round, scrapping and shoving for a better look, BILL'S arms are twisted behind his back and his eyes are covered with a very dirty handkerchief. They take him to a ruined house.

INT. RUINED HOUSE - DAY

The room has a brazier, table and chairs. They remove the blindfold and he sees a wondrous sight, a collection of bullets, shells and bomb fragments. ROGER slaps the shell proudly.

ROGER  
Unexploded.

BOY  
You were spying.

BILL  
I never was.

ROGER  
Yes, you was. Make him talk.

They twist his arm. Several of the boys are smoking. One takes a .303 Bullet and tightens in into an old vice fixed to the table. BILL is fighting back the tears. ROGER leans over BILL.

BILL  
I know a secret.

ROGER  
What's that?

BILL  
The Germans are dropping men on bomb sites.

ROGER  
Who told you that?

They loosen their grip on his arm.

BILL  
My uncle's in the War Office. He said, Don't go on the bomb sites. "Boys are going missing all the time."

ROGER  
They're not.

BILL has captured their attention. They release him.

BILL  
If you find them hiding, they cut your throat. They have to, or

they'd get found out.

The boys begin to get nervous, glancing about them. The BOY on the vice aims a nail at the top of the bullet, brandishing a hammer in the other hand.

BOY

I wish one would come through the door now.

He hammers the nail and the bullet EXPLODES, embedding itself in the door. They jump out of their skins.

ROGER

You want to join our gang?

BILL

I don't mind.

ROGER

Do you know any swear words?

BILL

Yes.

ROGER

Say them.

BILL is stubbornly silent.

ROGER

Well go on then. You can't join if you can't answer.

BILL

I only know one.

They laugh derisively.

ROGER

Well say that one then.

BILL cannot get himself to say it, try as he will. They groan and jeer. BILL forces it out, the one that he heard on the bomb site.

BILL

Fuck!

They fall respectfully silent, exchange covert looks.

ROGER

That word is special. That word is only for something really important. Now, repeat after me... Bugger off.

BILL

Bugger off.

ROGER

Sod.

BILL

Sod.

ROGER

Bloody.

BILL

Bloody.

ROGER

Now put them together. Bugger off, you bloody sod.

BILL

Bugger off, you bloody sod.

ROGER

OK. You're in.

He gets up, leading them out of the room.

ROGER

Let's smash things up.

They go into a newly bombed house and, armed with stout sticks and iron bars, indulge in an orgy of destruction. ROGER has an air-gun and specializes in picking of light bulbs. BILL is tentative at first, but the violence is infectious. Pent-up aggression bursts and his is wilder and worse than the others.

EXT. BUILDER'S YARD - DAY

ROGER leads the way, clambering over a damaged wall and dropping into an enclosed yard. The others tumble after him and ROGER raises a warning arm and addresses the gang solemnly.

ROGER

This is top secret.

He points to a corner where dozens of sign-posts, uprooted from crossroads, have been piled against each other, their arms spread out forlonly announcing the names of towns and their distances.

ROGER

They pulled them up from all the crossroads, so when the Germans land they'll lose their way.

BILL

Won't they have maps?

ROGER

They'll have to go to a shop to  
buy a map, stupid. Then they'll  
give zemselves away viz ze vay  
zay tork.

One BOY starts to goose-step and sing.

BOY  
(singing)  
Ven der Fuhrer says  
Vis iss der master race,  
Ve vart, vart, vart,  
Right in der Fuhrer's face.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LANDING AD STAIRS - NIGHT

DAWN, watched by BILL, tiptoes down the stairs. She opens the front door as silently as possible. Vera Lynn dispenses sexy sentimentality on the wireless ('Sincerely Yours'). GRACE appears. DAWN is caught in the act.

GRACE  
And where do you think you're  
going?

DAWN  
Out.

GRACE  
You go to bed this minute and  
take off that lipstick.

DAWN  
No, I won't.

GRACE files at her, enraged, and slaps her head and face.

GRACE  
You wouldn't dare defy me if your  
father was here.

DAWN covers her head with her arms until GRACE stops, exhausted.

DAWN  
If you've finished, I'm going.

She steps out of the door. GRACE grabs her, tearing her blouse, and swings her back inside. They wrestle wildly, both whimpering and moaning. BILL watches from above as the fight imperceptibly transforms and mother and daughter are finally hugging each other and crying.

DAWN  
I want him. I want him so much.  
I'll kill myself if I can't have  
him.

GRACE

There, there, my baby.

GRACE lets go and turns towards the living room where Vera Lynn wails a lament.

GRACE

Go if you want. What does it matter? We might be all dead tomorrow.

DAWN'S make-up is smudged, her clothes torn.

DAWN

I can't go like this.

GRACE turns back and takes DAWN'S hand.

GRACE

You better bring him home, if you really love him. Don't kill love. You'll regret it for the rest of your life.

DAWN

Who said anything about love?

EXT. BOMBED SITE - EVENING

The gang's H.Q. is even further improved. They have put in some expensive furniture. They have a wireless and a cocktail bar that opens to reveal a nest of mirrors reflecting the bottles within. The gang fool's around, in and out of the room, smoking and drinking beer. A girl walks past, throwing them a flirtatious look. It is PAULINE the girl who lost her mother in an air-raid. They whistle and shout at her.

BOY #1

Want to see our den?

BOY #2

We got a bed.

They laugh bawdily and she turns up her nose. One of the boys starts to wrestle with her. She starts to struggle. They pin back her arms and try and kiss her. Her breasts push up against her blouse like little apples. ROGER whispers something in her ear. She protests.

ROGER

Go on, Pauline. Be a sport.

PAULINE

No, I won't. There's too many of you.

ROGER

One at a time.

PAULINE

No, I won't.

ROGER

I'll give you something.

He gets a box, opens it and shows it her. It is full of looted jewelry, brooches, cheap bracelets. PAULINE is delighted. She pokes around and chooses a necklace, puts it on.

PAULINE

All right. Line up.

They form an orderly queue and PAULINE pulls up her skirt. She holds her knickers open by the elastic so that it is possible to look inside. The boys file past, each peering inside her knickers for a second or two.

BOY 2

I seen better.

BILL is on the end. As his turn approaches, his face is tense with apprehension.

PAULINE

It won't bite you.

They all laugh at his expense. He swings punches, flying in all directions and they hit back. One or two land. They hurt the recipients and they hit back. ROGER calls a halt.

ROGER

Pack it in. It's time to smash things up.

EXT. ANOTHER BOMBED SITE - EVENING

The gang loot and pillage, smashing as they go. Behind a piece of broken wall, BILL discovers a soldier and a girl clasped together, the girl is pressed against a door. BILL moves closer. The soldier fumbles with her clothing, but she is so wild with passion that his efforts are impeded. BILL registers the familiar gasps and cries that he is becoming accustomed to hearing from the injured, the dying and the coupling. The girl moves her head and her face becomes visible over the soldier's shoulder. It is DAWN. She sees BILL as he sees her. She mouths the words: 'Go away'. He turns to shake and cry. He moves away, then on an angry impulse picks up a stone and throws it. The soldier lets out a cry. He turns revealing himself as BRUCE.

BILL

(shouting)

Fuck!

Hearing the sacred cry, the gang come running. They see BILL hurling stones and quickly join in. BRUCE protests angrily and throws a couple of rocks himself, but he is overwhelmed. He protects DAWN from the onslaught and they flee.



ROGER

Teach him a lesson. Think they can  
come over here and take our women.

BOY 2

Wasn't that your sister, Rohan?

BILL shakes his head, denying her.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

GRACE is cutting down a coat for SUE; BILL is reading a comic, the Dandy; DAWN is darning stockings. The doorbell SOUNDS and DAWN catapults from her chair to greet the visitor. She returns with BRUCE, now evidently a welcome and regular guest.

BILL throws friendly punches, one wild one catches him in the crotch. He takes it bravely. He distributes largesse, a tin of corned beef and a packet of tea for GRACE, chewing gum for SUE, a model barrage balloon for BILL and a pair of nylons for DAWN.

BRUCE

You need suspenders for this kind.

She laughs, then holds the stockings against her skin in a transport of sexual delight.

DAWN

I'm going to cross my legs and make  
that rustling noise.

Finally and dramatically, BRUCE pulls out a package in a brown-paper bag. He gives it to GRACE. She opens it. It is a piece of beef steak. GRACE is overcome.

GRACE

Steak! I can't remember the last  
time...

BRUCE

crooning ironically

'The last time I saw sirloin...'

GRACE holds the raw meat in her two hands and impulsively kisses it.

BRUCE

Take it away. I know your husband's  
been away a long time, but....

DAWN

Don't be so cheeky, Bruce.

He holds up his hands in supplication.

BRUCE

Sorry, sorry. Too long in the  
barrack room.

Itma has just ended and a programme has started up about the evacuation of Dunkirk. Its tone is quasi-religious - patriotic as it tells of the armada of little boats heroically snatching the remnants of the British Army out of the jaws of the Nazis. Churchill's voice booms out of the wireless.

CHURCHILL (V.O.)

If the British Empire lasts for a  
thousand years, men will say, this  
was their finest hour.

BRUCE has been horsing around with BILL, and all the time DAWN devours him with her eyes.

GRACE

Oh, do let's listen to this. I  
never tire of listening to it. I  
gives me goose pimples.

BRUCE

You haven't been taking your orange  
juice.

The insolent sally gives DAWN the excuse to jump on him and force him on to the sofa and into a respectful silence. Stirring music punctuates the dramatic narration, which celebrates the bravery of the soldiers fighting their last ditch stand. BRUCE giggles.

BRUCE

Don't sound the Dunkirk I was at. I  
saw no fighting. We did a lot of  
running backwards, though. Then we  
got to the beach and we couldn't  
run no more. And Jerry just sat  
there and let us alone. If he'd  
come after us, boy

shakes his head and laughs as though it would have been the funniest moment of the war.

We were beat so bad, discipline was all to Hell. We told the soldiers to jump in the briny. There was no grub but we broke into the wine stores, and everybody got smashed. When the boats came, a lot of guys threw away their gear and filled their kitbags with loot. One buddy of mine burst into a jeweler's, his backpack was full of gold and silver. We had to wade out to the boats and he was so heavy he couldn't haul himself up. He slipped and sank like a stone.

He laughs again. The broadcast comes to its moving climax.

GRACE

How can you say such things? Can't  
you hear what happened?

BRUCE

I was there.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

God laid his hand upon the waters  
and they were still. The armada of  
little boats brought their precious  
cargo into safe havens. They lived  
to fight another day.

BRUCE

He who turns and runs away lives to  
fight another day.

The inspiring, patriotic music, Elgar, wells up.

GRACE

I don't care what you say. It  
filled our hearts that day. The  
little people stood up for once  
against the tyrant. Stood up and  
said no!

BRUCE impressed, despite himself. DAWN is quite affected too,  
by her mother's deep feeling.

GRACE

That's how we put up with the  
bombing and the rationing, because  
of Dunkirk. Because of the spirit  
of Dunkirk, and because of that we  
shall never give in, never.

The Elgar continues into:

NEWSREEL

BACK AND WHITE

A shot of troops being ferried from Dunkirk beaches by the  
little boats. An open fishing boat is packed with soldiers,  
mostly standing, while two men row. The soldiers begin to  
sway and 'la-la' to the Elgar soundtrack. They are serious  
and sombre, except for one, BRUCE, who is grinning.

SMASH CUT:

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

COLOUR

BILL in bed, smiling and in his sleep.

EXT. DUNKIRK - DAY

Back to BRUCE singing and smiling.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

CLIVE, leather helmet and goggles iced up, rides to the Rohan

House on a Norton motorbike. The street is snow-covered and the road is covered in brown slush. BILL and SUE run out to greet him. He dismounts painfully, his huge army greatcoat is also rimmed with frost. His face is so stiff with cold that he cannot crack a smile and presents an intimidating figure to the children, who draw up short. When he speaks, he can hardly form words. He staggers alarmingly from the stiffness as he walks, and cramp in one leg makes him hop up and down.

CLIVE

On the bike for five hours. Only got a thirty-six hour pass.

He holds out his arms. They cower back, then turn on their heels and scurry into the house, calling their mother.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CLIVE has changed into civvies and is soaking his feet in a bowl of hot water. Tea has been laid and the family assembled. They watch CLIVE warily. They have learned to live without him and his reappearance has upset the new balance.

CLIVE

Hand me my backpack, Bill.

BILL hands it to him and CLIVE proudly pulls out an unlabelled can and plants it firmly on the centre of tea table.

GRACE

And what's that?

CLIVE

Jam.

BILL and SUE jump for joy.

BILL AND SUE

(chanting)

Jam! Jam! Jam!

GRACE

Jam? What kind of jam? It's not like any jam I know.

CLIVE

German jam. It's German jam.

The table falls deathly silent. They stare at the can as though it was a time bomb.

CLIVE

It's all right. It came from a German chip. It got sunk, and this stuff washed ashore, crates of it. Jam. Our fellows found it on the beach, by the rifle range.

GRACE picks it up gingerly, turns it, searches the blank silver-grey metal for a sign, a clue, a portent.

GRACE

We don't know anything about it

CLIVE

Well, it's off ration. We know that.

GRACE

How do we know they didn't plant it there? They know we're mad on jam. They could poison half the country.

CLIVE surveys the suspicious hostile faces. Angrily, he seizes the can and jabs it clumsily with the paper opener.

GRACE

Come away, children. I don't want you to stand too close while he's opening it.

They retreat to the corner of the room. CLIVE has it opened and bends back the top to reveal a deep-red jam. GRACE ventures forward and peers at it.

CLIVE

Well?

GRACE

It looks....foreign.

CLIVE

Jam is jam! It's just jam!

DAWN

Well, I'm not having any. Even if it's not poisoned. I don't think it's right. It's not patriotic.

BILL

You don't like jam. You hate jam. You never eat jam.

DAWN

That's not the point.

There is an impasse. They stare at it gloomily. CLIVE waves grandly at the jam.

CLIVE

Taste it. Why don't you taste it?

GRACE

You taste it.

The eyes turn on CLIVE. The situation forces their resentment for one who has not shared in their hardships, who abandoned them, in fact. The jam has become a test. He looks into the faces of his family. Resolutely, he takes up a teaspoon, picks up the can and begins to eat. Grimly and steadily he

ladles the jam to his mouth. They watch him carefully for signs of pain. Before their doubts are dispelled, he has consumed a third of the can. BILL is the first to crack.

BILL

Give us some, Dad.

CLIVE stops eating, puts the can back on the table and they all dig in. The tension is dispelled. SUE climbs on CLIVE'S lap and he feeds her himself. They laugh and chatter and stuff bread and jam in their mouths.

GRACE

You mean they let you go through the officer training course and then said you were too old for a commission?

CLIVE

That's it.

GRACE

Why didn't they say that before you started?

CLIVE

I wasn't too old when I started the course. I was too old when it finished.

GRACE

What are you going to be then?

CLIVE

A clerk. I'm doing a typing course. I'll be typing for England.

GRACE goes to him, puts an arm around him.

GRACE

Poor Clive. You wanted it so much.

He looks up at her, beaten, uncomprehending. She kisses him.

GRACE

You're such a baby.

The DOORBELL SOUNDS. DAWN scoots out to answer it.

BILL

It's lovely jam. It's nearly as nice as English jam.

CLIVE grins, quickly recovered from his bad moment.

CLIVE

You know what I always say? Jam is jam, the world over.

DAWN reappears with BRUCE. CLIVE darts a querying look at

GRACE. He winces at the sight of his little girl looking up adorningly at a Canadian soldier.

DAWN

Bruce, this is my father. Dad, this is Corporal Bruce Carey.

CLIVE laughs awkwardly, outranked.

BILL

Bruce, look! Dad got some German jam.

SUE

We thought it was poison.

They laugh. BRUCE looks at it with mock suspicion, then tastes it with his fingertip. His eyes bulge and he clutches his throat.

BRUCE

The poison was at the bottom.

He falls to the ground in the most agonized convulsions. The children scream with laughter and jump on top of him.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - KITCHEN STEPS - DAY

The kitchen door is open, admitting thin winter sunlight. GRACE works within. Outside, CLIVE is cleaning his kit, helped by BILL. Belt and gaiters are balanced and laid out to dry. CLIVE is sitting on the steps, putting dubbin on his boots, BILL polishing his father's hat badge, totally absorbed in its beauty. GRACE appears, puts a hand on CLIVE'S shoulder, closes her eyes, lets the sun caress her face.

GRACE

When do you think you'll get leave again?

CLIVE

Not till Christmas, I don't suppose.

SUE appears and sprawls herself across her father's lap.

CLIVE

I'm glad you didn't send them to your aunt.

GRACE

I've had a letter from her. They've moved house.

CLIVE

Where to?

She smiles, eyes still closed.

GRACE

Woolamaloo.

CLIVE splutters with amusement.

CLIVE  
Not Woolamaloo?

BILL looks up, grinning.

BILL  
Woolamaloo? We would have lived in  
Woolamaloo?

CLIVE starts to sing the old music-hall song.

CLIVE  
(singing)  
W-O-O-L-A-M-A-L-O-O, oo.  
Upon my word, it's true.  
It's the way to spell  
Woolamaloo.

They join in, in a ragged way, knowing it well.

EVERYBODY  
(singing)  
I bet you a dollar,  
There isn't a scholar,  
To spell it right first go, O,  
W-O-O-L-A-M-A-L-O-O, Loo-O

DAWN comes through the kitchen with MAC and MOLLY, who find the Rohans in good spirits. There are arm greetings all round.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

BILL is giving his father and MAC a tour of the bomb damage. He picks his way expertly through the rubble, and they clamber after him.

CLIVE  
What kind of war is this Mac? Up there in Cumberland, we never see an air-raid. The worst problem I have is getting a new typewriter ribbon. When I rode in against the Turks, I knew what it was about.

MAC  
Did you? You thought you did. We've been gyped, all our lives. Look at your street.

They pause, looking out of a shattered window on the street. It is a monotonous row of semi-detached houses, lying between other identical rows, now pocked with bomb damage, drab and dreary.

CLIVE



What about it?

MAC

Rosehill Avenue. No roses. No hill.  
And it's certainly not an avenue.

CLIVE

Why not?

MAC

You need trees for an avenue.

CLIVE

There was talk of planting some  
when we first came.

MAC

Propaganda. We've been had.

They fall silent, watching BILL as he greets some other boys.

CLIVE

How's your war, Mac?

MAC

Never done better. On the fiddle.  
Like everyone else.

CLIVE

Except the servicemen.

MAC

Naturally.

CLIVE

I don't understand. Is there any  
point to it?

MAC

There is all right. This Hitter  
fellow. We've got to winkle him  
out. And get shot of some of our  
lot at the same time.

They watch BILL rooting about in the rubble.

CLIVE

Look at how wild the boy's got. As  
for Dawn. Sixteen, going around  
with a soldier.

(shakes his head)

Keep and eye on them for me, Mac,  
there's a pal. I've made a mess  
of it all.

(his voices cracks. A  
sob wells up.)

I've been such a bloody fool.

BILL has come up behind them and watches covertly. MAC clasps  
CLIVE in his arms.

MAC

You always were, Clive. Steady the  
Buffs.

CLIVE

Bugger the Buffs.

Cries and shouts come from the street. BILL swings across a crater on a dangling electric cable and scrambles into the road. There is panic and pandemonium. The local barrage balloon's fins have punctured and it has lost stability. It is careering wildly like a kite out of control. CLIVE and MAC clamber into the street as the balloon skims across the sky, its steel cable shearing a chimney stack which tumbles down onto the front garden sending people scattering in all directions. BILL runs up, mad with excitement, as SUE and DAWN come out of the house with GRACE and MOLLY and look up. CLIVE sprints across to them.

CLIVE

Take cover! We're being attacked by  
our own balloons!

They take no notice of his entreaty, curiosity getting the better of them.

MOLLY

It's having a nervous breakdown.

She giggles. The balloon bumps on the rooftop then shoots up into the sky again. GRACE starts to laugh.

GRACE

It's so wonderful.

CLIVE earnestly dashes back and forth, wanting to do something, but completely unable to decide what.

CLIVE

Don't panic!  
(goes over to Mac)  
Keep your head!

MAC

I will if you will!

The balloon does a fat little waltz in the sky. CLIVE suddenly explodes with laughter. DAWN has SUE in her arms.

DAWN

He just got fed up with all the  
other boring old barrage balloons  
and decided it was time to have  
some fun.

Two ARP MEN run down the street, urging people to go inside. The family retreat grudgingly towards their house, but hover in the front garden watching and laughing. Six HOME GUARDS march into Rosehill Avenue at the double. The balloon has

risen into the sky and the people are drawn out again into the street, looking up. The HOME GUARDS come to a halt and raise their rifles.

BILL

Boo! Leave it alone!

The balloon suddenly plunges down towards the street, scattering the HOME GUARDS. Women SCREAM and everyone dashes for cover again. BILL laughs derisively.

BILL

They're scared of old fatty.

The GUARDS form up again and fire at the balloon. It bursts into flames. The shreds of burning cloth, followed by the spiralling cable, plunges into the street. There are cries of regret and the family and others step forward to inspect the smouldering remains with the same sadness that is felt at the end of a firework display.

BILL

Why did they have to go and do that?

INT. W.V.S CENTRE - DAY

A make-do-and-mend session, where clothes are exchanged, repaired, altered and cut down. It is swarming with women and children. MOLLY and GRACE rummage among the racks of clothing. SUE and BILL, bored and resigned, are obliged to try on items of used clothing.

MOLLY

God, how I hate all this scrimping and squalor.

GRACE

I don't mind it. It was harder before the war. Trying to keep up appearances. Now it's patriotic to be poor.

In the absence of men, women are everywhere stripping down to their underwear to try on the clothes. BILL tries not to watch, acutely embarrassed.

MOLLY

I don't know how you cope, Grace. Three kids, army pay. On your own.

GRACE

You know something, Molly? I like it on my own. I never got used to sharing a bed, not really.

MOLLY pulls off her dress and suddenly, inches from BILL'S face, are those mysterious few inches of white suspended leg between the stocking-tops and the camiknickers.

MOLLY

I love a man in bed, the smell of him, the hairiness rubbing against you, the weight of him. And when they do it to you in the middle of the night and you don't know if you're dreaming or it's really happening to you. That's the best. No guilty feelings. Not that I should have any, wide awake.

MOLLY pulls on a flowered silk dress that clings to her figure. She smooths it out.

GRACE

Molly!

MOLLY

Well! I'm not talking about Mac. He hasn't toughed me for ages. And not often ever. My life started when Mac went on nights.

She dissolves in a fit of giggles. GRACE helps SUE with a sensible navy-blue coat. It is heavy and dull. SUE doesn't like it. Her face creases and tears well up.

GRACE

You're having me on, Molly.

MOLLY

Am I? Maybe I am.

GRACE

You've been drinking. Your tipsy.

MOLLY

Tipsy, topsy, turvy.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BILL and SUE each have a torch, which serve as a searchlight. BILL smokes a woodbine and he blows the smoke around the suspended model aircraft.

Spitfires, Hurricanes, Messerschmitts, Heinkels are picked out in turn. As they appear, BILL simulates their engine noise. With considerable dexterity, he uses his free hand to fire his ack-ack guns, and papier-mache pellets, pre-soaked in ink, fly through the air. BILL animates a distressed plane plummeting to earth. His triumph is interrupted by a TAP at the window. Expertly he dogs his Woodbine then goes to the window. He opens it and DAWN steps through. He is about to close it after her when BRUCE'S face appears. BILL lets fly an ink pellet catching BRUCE square on the forehead. DAWN holds up a threatening hand and the children shrink back as BRUCE clambers in. The two of them tiptoe into the next bedroom, DAWN throwing a warning glance over her shoulder.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LANDING - NIGHT

BILL and SUE share the keyhole, which affords a partial view of Dawn's bed. Complicated combinations of limbs cross the field of view, offering a tantalizing version of events within. The children give up and return to their room, whispering.

SUE

I suppose they're still learning,  
that's why they keep moving about.

BILL

It's easy. I've done it.

SUE

Who with?

BILL

Pauline.

SUE

Liar. Mummy keep still and Daddy  
moves on top of her. That's what  
they do when they know how.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAWN'S ROOM - NIGHT.

BRUCE turns on his back with a deep sigh of satisfaction.

BRUCE

(whispering)  
Boy, that was some air-raid.

DAWN

Air-raid?

BRUCE

Didn't you feel the house rock? You  
must have seen all those shell  
bursts.

She sticks the pillow in her mouth to stop laughing. BRUCE turns and whispers in her ear.

BRUCE

Let's get married. We'll live in  
Montreal. I'll teach you French. Je  
t'aime, mon petit chou.

Even when he's serious, his manner is teasing.

DAWN

Don't get smoochy. You'll spoil it.

She is genuinely irritated.

FILM EXTRACT

BLACK AND WHITE

A scene from a forties romantic movie. The couple on the

screen are deeply in love, but he must go off to the war. Their parting is bitter-sweet, prolonged and accompanied by a symphony orchestra playing its heart out.

EXT. CINEMA - NIGHT

COLOUR

MAC sits between MOLLY and GRACE. He looks from one to the other. They are both weeping,

lost in the movie, and oblivious of him. SUE sleeps, lying across her mother's lap. BILL squirms with embarrassment as the screen lovers kiss. He turns his face away. When he looks back, he is disgusted to see that they are still at it.

EXT. NATIONAL GALLERY - DAY

BILL leans over to the balustrade of the pillar portico looking out on to Trafalgar Square. The strains of a passionate piano recital reverberate from inside the Gallery. Soldiers and their girls, hand in hand, listen enraptured.

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE - DAY

Barrage balloons hang over Admiralty Arch and garland Nelson astride his column.

EXT. NATIONAL GALLERY - DAY

BILL threads his way through the crowd, past signs announcing Dame Myra Hess's lunchtime concerts (SOLD OUT) and into the marbled hall.

INT. NATIONAL GALLERY - DAY

BILL slides back into his seat next to GRACE as DAME Myra concludes the WARSAW Concerto. The audience rises to its feet, applauding, GRACE, he eyes shining, is among them. MAC watches her pleasure with pleasure. BILL is disturbed by the music, by the eruption of emotion and some wearing blue uniforms demoting the war wounded. They clap and clap.

GRACE

Mac, that was wonderful. I haven't been to a concert since...

MAC

...since I used to take you to the Proms?

GRACE

That's right. Not since then Not since I got married.

Their eyes meet. The audience is drowning in its own applause. Everyone is crying, or laughing, or both. GRACE and MAC among them. In the emotional tumult they reveal more than they intend. The audience falls silent. BILL'S gaze drifts to the

wall where huge paintings by special war artists hang. GRACE tears her eyes away from MAC. She senses BILL watching her and turns her attention to Dame Myra's fingers flying over the keys.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The table has been stretched to embrace the Rohan family, including GRACE'S SISTERS. They wear paper hats, have finished their Christmas dinner, and are listening attentively to King George VI stuttering painfully through his Christmas message.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

It is raining. BRUCE hurries along the street, and as he enters the Rohan's front gate, he pauses, pulls an old silk stocking over his head and takes two glass eyes from his pocket. They look as though they once belonged to a stuffed stag. He pushes them inside the stocking and positions them just under his own eyes so that he can peek over them. He crawls under the bow window.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The King falters to a conclusion.

CLIVE

He was a lot better this year.

MAC and the others mumble agreement.

BILL

You said that last year, Dad.

CLIVE

The land and the King are one, my son. If he stutters we falter. He's getting batter, and so are we.

The National Anthem strikes up on the wireless. They all rise and stand to attention.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAY

BRUCE raises his head and presses his grotesque face to the window. He taps on the glass. He is startled to see the assembled family standing upright and staring back at him without expression. He cavorts and waves his arms, but still gets no response. Sheepishly, he slinks into the porch and pulls off the stocking. The door opens to reveal DAWN.

DAWN

Dad's furious. It was 'God Save The King'.

He goes inside and she closes the door. He pushes the stag's eyes into his own sockets and scrunches up his face to grip them into place. DAWN turns back and he lunges, trying to kiss her. She squeals with laughter.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

A charade is in progress. CLIVE and MAC are got up as prostitutes, wearing their wives' clothes. GRACE and MOLLY are dressed as men. There is a lot of salacious flirting and an argument breaks out over the price of whores. MOLLY says the word 'tart' emphatically and BILL jumps out of his seat, yelling:

BILL

Jam tart! Jam tart! I got it! I got it!

The four actors abandon their characterizations and applaud young BILL. BRUCE watches in amazement.

BRUCE

Jesus Christ! This is Christmas?

GRACE'S father rises, his glass held aloft.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

The for my annual toast. Charge your glasses.

There are groans and mutterings of disapproval. He cuts an impressive figure, white hair, drooping moustache, waistcoat and watch-chain. His eyes take on a faraway look, sombre and serious. His wife, pointedly leaves the room, slamming the door behind her.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

To Mary McDonald, Thelma Richardson, Bobo Hinds, Lily Sanderson...

(savours each name, smiles, shakes is head, has a special emphasis or tone of voice for every one of them.)

...Little Sarah Whats-it, now there was a spirit. And Marjorie Anderson.

GRACE

Father, that's enough now

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

And...and...Henry Chapman's girl, was it Thelma? No, I can see those cornflower eyes...I've lost your name, my sweetness.

Tears come to his eyes. He falters. There are cries of 'shame'. HOPE, GRACE'S sister, jumps to her feet.

HOPE

Do we have to listen to this nonsense every year? You're drunk,



Dadda. Sit down.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

...Betty Browning...Betty, let me tell you something. I'm seventy three years old, I've seen half the wonders of the world and I never laid eyes on a finer sight than the curve of Betty Browning's breasts...

raises his glass again

My girls Dead you may be, or old and withered. But while I live, I will do you honour to the last. Bless all of you.

He drinks and slumps down into his chair, overcome with melancholy. Only MOLLY applauds and only DAWN looks sympathetic. BILL taps his grandfather's knee.

BILL

It was Sheila, Grandpa.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE looks up sadly.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

What's that?

BILL

Henry Chapman's daughter. It was Sheila. I remember her from last year.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

So it was. Sheila. This boy will go far.

BILL turns away to DAWN, stifling his giggles.

BILL

I made it up!

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - NIGHT

DAWN and BRUCE kiss goodbye in the porch. She pulls away, sensing something amiss.

DAWN

What's wrong?

He looks away, unhappy and awkward.

DAWN

What is it?

BRUCE

We're not supposed to say, but we're being shipped out tomorrow.

DAWN

Where?

BRUCE

I don't know?

DAWN

You do, you do. You're just not saying.

BRUCE

I swear I don't know.

(offers her a little  
box)

Here's your Christmas present.

She opens it. A diamond ring. She gasps, then trusts it back at him angrily.

DAWN

You expect me to spend the rest of the war sitting at home staring at a ring? And you'll meet some French girl who can speak your own language. No thank you!

BRUCE

Please yourself.

BRUCE hurls the little box into the next-door bomb site and storms off into the night. DAWN slams the door.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DAWN buries her head in a cushion, crying and wailing. Only MAC and MOLLY of the guests remain, and they are playing cards with CLIVE and GRACE. GRACE goes to comfort DAWN.

GRACE

What is it, pet?

DAWN

He's being posted. I was terrible to him.

GRACE

Don't leave it like that. Go after him. Swallow your pride.

EXT. ARMY CAMP - DAY

CLIVE and DAWN riding pillion, pull up at the Guard House on his old Norton. DAWN slides down and hurries to the Guard House. CLIVE props up the bike and follows her. A convoy of trucks pulls out of the gate. Soldiers lean out of the back of the lorries, cheering and whistling when they see DAWN.

INT. GUARD HOUSE - DAY

The SERGEANT of the Guard sits toasting his toes on a coke stove. DAWN addresses CLIVE as he enters.

DAWN

We've missed them. They've gone.  
(turns back to the  
Sergeant)  
Can't you tell me where? You can  
see I'm not a spy.

SERGEANT

I would if I could, but I can't.

He points to a wall on which two posters are pinned. One says 'Careless talk costs lives, the other, ' Walls Have Ears'. DAWN is shattered. CLIVE puts his arm about her.

CLIVE

He'll write as soon as he can.

SERGEANT

Sure, he will. You'll meet again  
(sings)  
don't know where,  
don't know when.  
But in the meantime, I am free  
tomorrow night.

CLIVE leads her out. A sprig of mistletoe hangs over the door. DAWN rips it down and flings it back at the SERGEANT. It hits him square in the face.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

CLIVE is packed up, ready to go. The family has come to bid farewell, all except BILL, who suddenly appears with a triumphant whoop.

BILL

I found it! I found it!

He hands the little ring box to DAWN. She opens it and looks at the ring, but does not put it on her finger. CLIVE and GRACE watch tenderly.

DAWN

You needn't have bothered, Bill.

They watch CLIVE as he rides away. Behind them, the Christmas tree can be seen in the window. As they turn to go in, GRACE looks warily at DAWN.

GRACE

That letter this morning, was it  
from Bruce?

DAWN nods.

GRACE

What did he say?

DAWN

He said I was right. I shouldn't wait for him. I was better to make a clean break.

GRACE

I think it's very sensible in the circumstances.

DAWN

Now he's gone and made me fall in love with him, which I never wanted to do. I told him that.

She runs into the house and up the stairs.

EXT. SEASIDE RESORT - DAY

GRACE, MAC, BILL and SUE are finishing a frugal picnic on the beach. They are muffled up against the nip of early spring. The sand is criss-crossed with pointed iron spikes and coils of barbed wire. Curt signs warn against mines and other hazards. BILL and SUE start to play happily and messily in the sand. In the distance, they hear MUFFLED, deep-throated EXPLOSIONS.

BILL

What's that?

MAC

Big Berthas, shelling France. Twenty-five-mile range, they have.

BILL

Wow!

MAC

They send over a few every day, to let them know we're still here. Each shell costs as much as a Ford 8.

BILL

Who pays for them?

MAC

We will, you will, for the rest of our lives?

BILL gets out a rubber ball, and spins it in his fingers.

GRACE

Remember this beach, Mac? All those summers. Out two families, together.

MAC

Happy days.

(watches Bill's efforts  
with the ball)

When you're bigger, Bill, I'll

teach you the googly.

BILL smiles a secret smile.

BILL

Thanks.

GRACE starts to sing.

GRACE

(singing)

There'll be blue birds over,  
The white cliffs of Dover...

MAC and the children join in. BILL practices his spin, finger and wrist.

ALL

(singing)

...tomorrow.  
Just you wait and see...

Another CRUMP from Big Bertha.

BILL

There goes another Ford 8, Uncle  
Mac.

EXT. RAILWAY - NIGHT

The train is unlit to comply with the blackout, the only illumination being as the fire-box door of the loco opened.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Moonlight flickers intermittently into the compartment, lending a jerky, monochrome quality to the scene. SUE sleeps, thumb in mouth. BILL dozes in the corner of the compartment. GRACE and MAC sit side by side.

GRACE

(softly)

Mac, did you ever find out who  
Molly went off with?

MAC

A Polish pilot. It's like one of  
those jokes on the wireless.

He stares out of the window, the pale broken light making patterns on his face.

GRACE

You miss her. I know you do.

He smiles ruefully.

MAC

She said, 'I know you love me, Mac,  
but you've never loved me enough.'

GRACE

Not loving enough. That is a terrible thing to do to someone. I suppose I did it to Clive. Always held something back.

BILL stirs and fidgets, half hearing, squinting through drooping lids. MAC and GRACE lower their voices further whispering.

MAC

It's all better left unsaid, Grace.

GRACE

You were never apart, you and Clive. He kept asking and asking. And I waited and waited for you to say something. And you never did.

MAC

Clive had a job. I didn't. I couldn't.

They fall silent. GRACE smiles ruefully.

GRACE

He could always make me laugh.

MAC

We did the decent thing.

GRACE

This war's put an end to decent things. I want to close my eyes and jump and give myself for once, hold nothing back.

MAC

We can't change what's past. Not even the war can do that.

GRACE

We did all the proper things, and we lost love. That's sad, Mac.

Their eyes meet and acknowledge what might have been, of happiness accidentally missed.

GRACE

If I saw this at the pictures, I'd be crying my eyes out, but I can't shed a tear for myself.

In the pale half-light, they seem young and innocent. He takes her hand. They almost kiss. But for children, they would. Finally, MAC turns away and looks out at the dark, heavy shapes of the approaching city.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - NIGHT

As GRACE, MAC, BILL and SUE turn into the avenue, they see a house burning. It is theirs. When they get closer, they see it is gutted and the roof has collapsed. The firemen have hoses trained on it, but it is too hot to get into the front door. GRACE'S first thought is for her Daughter.

GRACE

Dawn! Dawn!

DAWN is with a knot of neighbours, watching the blaze. GRACE is so relieved to see her that she smiles and becomes quite tranquil.

GRACE

Thank God you're safe.

The FIRECHIEF approaches her.

FIRECHIEF

Was this your house, madam?

GRACE

I didn't know there was a raid.

FIRECHIEF

It wasn't a bomb, just a fire.

GRACE

What do you mean, a fire?

FIRECHIEF

It happens in wartime as well, you know.

MAC is shattered. He puts an arm round GRACE. She throws him a look, haunted with guilt, and she moves away to console her children, who watch the blaze impassively.

DAWN

I just wished I'd worn my nylons.

GRACE suddenly seized by a dread thought. She runs to the FIRECHIEF.

GRACE

My ration books are in there.

She makes a wild dash at the house, but MAC and the neighbours restrain her. BILL remains next to the FIRECHIEF.

BILL

My shrapnel collection should be all right.

FIRECHIEF

Oh yes, I should think so.

EXT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAY

Mac's car drives up to the charred ruins of the house. GRACE and the children get out. ROGER and his gang are already looting. BILL charges ROGER and punches him in the face. They fall and roll in the wet ashes. The bigger boy is so taken aback by BILL'S ferocity that he cannot gain an advantage. MAC stops GRACE from interfering, understanding the boy's need.

PAULINE has appeared and smiles knowingly as she watches. Other children gather. ROGER picks himself up and the gang beats a retreat.

INT. ROHAN HOUSE - DAY

GRACE, MAC, DAWN and SUE join BILL in the house and scratch among the debris to see what can be salvaged.

EXT. ROSEHILL AVENUE - DAY

They ferry bit and pieces to the car. GRACE discovers the charred remnants of a photo album. There are pictures with unburnt fragments and she carries it carefully to the car.

GRACE

Mac, look! Some of the snaps are saved.

It is open at the picture of the two families at the very beach they visited yesterday. It is burned around the edges, only MOLLY and CLIVE are unscathed and they smile happily. GRACE and MAC look at it then at each other. It feeds their guilt. The neighbours gather and awkwardly try to express their sympathy. MRS. EVANS arrives with some clothes.

MRS. EVANS

This coat should fit you Grace. And here are some things for Dawn. And a few bits for the kitchen.

GRACE

Thank you, Evelyne.

BILL is acutely embarrassed. He catches PAULINE'S smirking look. He fights to hold back the tears, but finally fails.

GRACE

It's only a house. We still have each other.

BILL

I don't care about the house, I just hate all these people watching us and being nice.

EXT. THE THAMES RIVERSIDE - DAY

Carrying GRACE and the three children, MAC's car draws up on the towpath facing an island on which is a number of wooden bungalows with verandas decorated in fretted scroll work. Neat lawns slope down to the river's edge where varnished punts and skiffs like sleekly tethered. GRANDFATHER GEORGE



has spotted them and he rear-sculls his dinghy across the water to fetch them.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Coming. Coming. Deliverance is at hand. All will be well.

GRANDMOTHER comes down from the bungalow to the edge of the river and waves encouragingly. BILL is captivated by the river. Moorhens thread through the tendrils of weeping willow. As electric slip launch is moored where they wait. He strokes its glassy varnish. MAC unloads the boot of the car.

MAC

Another world, eh Billy? And not twenty miles from Picadilly.

GRACE comes alongside DAWN and waves her mother on the far bank, only forty yards away. DAWN glances nervously at GRACE.

DAWN

Are you strong enough for another shock? You're going to be a grandma.

(waves across the river  
at her own  
Grandmother.)

Hello, Grandma.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE docks his craft expertly and lassoes a mooring post. GRACE lets out an hysterical cry.

GRACE

I don't believe this is happening to me.

DAWN

It's not. It's happening to me.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

responding to GRACE

It's only a house, and a ghastly one at that. They should all be burned and bombed and the builder hanged.

MAC and GRANDFATHER GEORGE load the family's few possessions on the boat.

GRACE

What did I do to deserve this?

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

You married that fool, Clive, that's what. Never mind, you can stay with us.

GRACE

(to Dawn)

How long?

DAWN

Three and a half months.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

As long as that? Well, all right.  
Why not? It's nearly summer. Let  
the nippers run wild.

The children have got into the boat. GRACE turns to MAC and  
kisses him awkwardly.

GRACE

Bless you, Mac. What would I have  
done without you?

MAC

(ruefully)  
You might still have a house.

GRACE

(wistfully)  
I wish it could all have been  
different.

MAC

Look after yourself, Grace.

He watches them as they cross the river, conscious of the gap  
widening between himself and GRACE.

GRACE

Everything I have left in the world  
is in this little boat.

BILL studies GRANDFATHER GEORGE's sculling technique.

BILL

Can I try?

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Put your hand on mine, get the  
knack of it.

BILL holds the gnarled old hand and moves in unison.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

I shall teach you the ways of the  
river. Another year in that awful  
suburb and you would be past  
saving. Look, they're coming this  
way! The future on the march. I  
curse you, Volt, Watt and Amp.

Looming over GRANDFATHER GEORGE's bungalow is a newly  
constructed electric pylon.

INT. BUNGALOW - BILL'S AND DAWN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

BILL wakes, looks at the river.

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAWN

A grey dawn light touches the mist lying over a glassy river. BILL comes down out of the house and stands at the edge of the water: not a breath of wind, not a soul stirring. He slips out of his grandfather's voluminous pajama pants. Delicately, he lowers himself into the river, careful not to crack the perfect smoothness of the water. He slides slowly in until only his head is showing. He swims out into the centre of the stream, without disturbing the water. He stops, takes a breath then submerges, leaving not a ripple, never a trace. The dawn river is once more unobserved, its secret self again.

INT. BUNGALOW - BILL'S AND DAWN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

BILL comes in wet from bathing, to find DAWN half dressed contemplating her slightly swollen navel. They share a small room in which are two bunk beds.

DAWN

Have a listen. See if you can hear anything.

With some reluctance, BILL puts an ear to her stomach. His cold wet hair gives her a shock. She slaps him.

DAWN

You're icy cold. A shock like that could give me a miscarriage.  
(grinning)  
That's an idea, do it again.

DAWN giggles and it is BILL's turn to be shocked.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Breakfast, all!

DAWN leaves the room while BILL climbs into his clothes.

INT. BUNGALOW - DINING ROOM - DAY

The room lets out, through open French windows, on to a back garden sown with vegetables for some yards and then giving way to orchard and pasture. The morning sun streams in. GRANDFATHER GEORGE sits at the end facing the garden. GRACE, SUE, GRANDMA and DAWN flank him. GRANDFATHER GEORGE is not the best in the morning. He glares at BILL as he enters and slips quietly into his seat.

GRANDMA

Did they say how long it would take to get new ration books, Grace?

GRACE

(shouting and emancipating)  
Up to six weeks, I think.

GRANDMA

How are we going to cope?

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Nettle soup, like we did in the Great War. Very nourishing. Bill and I will catch fish. The river fowl will be laying eggs soon. We'll hunt, We'll forage. We'll overcome.

GRANDMA

What about tea and sugar. Clever Dick?

GRANDFATHER GEORGE holds up a warming hand.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Keep still! Nobody move!

His aspect fills them with dread. His eyes are boring holes in the cabbage patch, outside the French windows, where a rat is crouching.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

(dramatic whisper)

Mother!! Fetch my gun.

GRANDMA

What's that, dear?

He points urgently at where the gun stands against the wall. GRANDMA creeps on tiptoe over to the gun and hands it to him, resuming her place without making a sound. He raises the shotgun, aiming along the length of the table. The children are statues, only their eyes darting from him to the rat and back. The barrel is inches from their faces. He fires. They jump. Smoke fills the room, He curses under his breath, as the rat escapes. He puts down the gun and readdresses his boiled egg, as an afterthought, he turns to BILL.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Never let a rat creep up on you.

BILL

I think you hit him, Grandpa. He was limping when he ran off.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE gives him a searching look, but BILL is all innocence. DAWN stifles a giggle. GRACE sees what goes on and suppresses a smile herself. BILL suddenly coughs and splutters to hid his laughter.

DAWN goes red in the face, tears come to her eyes and her shoulders shake. SUE suddenly tinkles with innocent mirth and the suppressed laughter bursts out of them all. They roar and gasp and shudder and cannot stop. GRANDMA, quiet perplexed, smiles, happy to see them all so happy. GRANDFATHER GEORGE, eyes blazing with anger, glares at them disdainfully, but the dam has burst and, fear him as they do, the laughter pours out unabated and their eyes are filled with tears.

INT. RIVER - DAY

GRANDFATHER GEORGE poles the punt up the river. GRACE, GRANDMA and SUE lounge in the cushions. BILL stands alongside the old man, learning the way of it.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Up, two, three. Throw the pole forward, let it slide through your fingers. Don't push until it hits the bottom.

BILL takes it all in.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Now check that spinner.

BILL crawls along the shiny deck and hauls in a fishing line.

BILL

No luck, Grandpa.

He lets it out again. A wood-fired steam launch, all polished brass, with an elegant canopy, chugs past them. An elderly couple occupies it, seated in wicker armchairs.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

(raises his cap to them)

Good day, ma'am. Greetings Edward.

They are beguiled by the smell of the afternoon. GRACE trails her fingers dreamily through in the water. Willows, bulrushes, glides past.

GRANDMA

...such nice boys with straw boaters and blazers. All the punts lit up with Chinese lanterns. Like fireflies. And the gramophone going on one of the boats. Always the Charleston, the Charleston, the Charleston. Oh, you girls.

GRACE

Wasn't it lovely?

GRANDFATHER GEORGE entrusts the pole to BILL. He struggles with the technique, does quite well. The the pole sticks in deep mud. He cannot extricate it.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Let it go. Let it go.

But BILL hangs on to the pole and the punt moves on until he is stretched between them. Finally, he hops on to the pole and clings to it.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Stay put. Hang on.

He takes a paddle and drives the boat back to where BILL is stranded. The pole starts to topple in a small arc. GRANDFATHER GEORGE renews his efforts and BILL is able to step neatly on to the rear decking. The old an eases the pole from the mud.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Now there's a lesson for life.  
Never give up the punt for the  
pole.

EXT. GRANDFATHER GEORGE'S RIVERSIDE GARDEN - DAY

Tea is being laid on the lawn by GRANDMA, GRACE and DAWN; GRANDFATHER GEORGE reclines in the faded swing-seat. BILL ferries FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY (his three aunts) to the island in the dingy. He rear-sculls with some difficulty, but well enough. GRANDFATHER GEORGE examines his daughters with binoculars as they 'ooh' and 'aah' greetings on their approach. They disembark and there is much hugging and kissing. They have all brought clothing for the family and dresses and blouses are held up, examined and admired.

The daughters clearly disapprove of GRANDFATHER GEORGE and only offer perfunctory kisses, HOPE ignoring him completely. SUE is held up and passed from hand to hand as though she were a frock herself. They take it in turns to shout clarification to their mother. They flutter around DAWN, who is now showing her pregnancy.

FAITH

No word from Bruce, my pet?

It was meant well, but it makes DAWN bristle.

FAITH

All men are beasts, darling.

DAWN

That's what I like about them.

FAITH

Dawn! Really!

BILL slides over to his grandfather.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

All hens and no cocks. Too many  
women in the family. They're a  
different species from us, Bill.  
Love them, but don't try to  
understand them. That road leads to  
ruin. Let's make a nuisance of  
ourselves.

He mingles among the women, deciding to goad his daughter HOPE.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

You look frustrated, Hope. That husband of yours still can't rise to the occasion?

HOPE flares up, but bites her tongue and turns away. GRANDFATHER GEORGE turns to BILL, confidently.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

I won't have the husbands here. All four married duds, including your mother.

HOPE

He's a menace. He ought to be locked up.

CHARITY

Don't let him get his claws into you Billy, Grace.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE continues his advice to BILL.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

They'll tame you if they can, cage you and feed you tidbits. Better retreat to prepared positions.

He leads BILL round to the back garden away from the river. All the bungalows are built up on piers against flooding. He reaches under the house and retrieves an old cricket bat and ball. He thrusts the ball at BILL.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Bags I bat first.

He takes guard against the trunk of an old apple tree. BILL twists his fingers around the ball and bowls a spinner to GRANDFATHER GEORGE who waits for it to break, then plays it back. The next ball breaks the other way and clean bowls him. GRANDFATHER GEORGE looks back at BILL with astonishment.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

That was a googly!

BILL

I know.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

You're a dark horse, bowling googlies at your age. Toss me up another.

BILL

No, you're out, Grandpa. It's my turn.

With ill grace, GRANDFATHER GEORGE surrenders the bat and offers a harmless arthritic delivery which BILL thumps into the gooseberry bushes. GRANDFATHER GEORGE curses and pricks his fingers as he tries to retrieve the ball. He looks up

irritably at the sounds of laughter from his daughters. He snarls in their direction.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Want to know why they're called  
Faith, Hope, Grace and Charity?

BILL

Why?

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Your grandmother. She named them  
after virtues I lack. That's  
marriage for you.

He bowls again. BILL hammers it away. GRANDFATHER GEORGE  
glares at him, trembling with fury.

BILL

It's only a game, Grandpa.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE gets himself under control and trots off  
to find the ball.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

BILL and SUE are in the dingy, pushing a stand of reeds. BILL  
hangs over and bows, hauling the boat along by pulling on the  
reeds. The parting rushes reveal a moorhens nest, neatly  
suspended above the water on bent-over reeds meshed together.  
There are some dozen speckled eggs. BILL carefully extracts  
one of them and places it in a little basket in the boat,  
which already contains a number of eggs which he has  
presumably taken from other nests.

Further upstream, BILL steps out of the boat into some  
shallows.

He gropes under the water and hauls up a night fishing line.  
SUE shares his disappointment when there is no catch.

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY

The dingy pulls up at the landing stage. GRANDFATHER GEORGE,  
using a stick, limps down the garden to meet them. SUE hands  
him the basket of eggs.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Where's the fish? No fish, no  
supper. Be off with you and don't  
come back empty handed.

He gives the boat a shove with his stick and turns back to  
the house. SUE looks weepy. BILL mouths some of his  
repertoire of swear words. From the dormer window, DAWN  
witnesses their humiliation. She laughs and waves. As  
GRANDFATHER GEORGE turns back to the house, she ducks out of  
sight.

EXT. WEIR - DAY



They row up to the head of the weir. BILL casts a line and fixes the rod to the gunwale, He ties up the boat and slips over the side. He checks a net arrangement he has fixed at the base of the waterfall to snare unwary fish swimming over the weir. It is empty. SUE paddles in the soft weed that grows on the steps of the weir, letting it seep between her toes. BILL kneels and runs his fingers through the same luminous-green weed. They become absorbed in it. BILL lowers his body into the water and lets himself slide over the weed. SUE follows suit. Soon they have discovered a glorious game, sliding like eels down the weir and plunging into the pool below. Back and forth they go. In the far distance, an air raid siren wails, They pay no attention, so caught up are they in their pleasure. SUE checks the fishing line fixed to the boat. Nothing.

SUE

I'm scared of going back without any fish. I hate Grandpa.

They look up at the SOUND of 'ack-ack' fire. BILL spots a German plane high above them.

BILL

Looks like a stray bomber. He's lost his squadron.

Suddenly there is a BLAST OF AIR and a BOOMING EXPLOSION. Two hundred yards up the river, a great plume of water spurts up. They drop flat on the steps of the weir. BILL peers cautiously over the rim of the waterfall. SUE seems his astonishment turn to a broad grin. Floating towards the weir are dozens of fish stunned by the blast. Joyously, they gather them up and throw them into the boat.

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY

GRACE, dawn and the GRANDPARENTS all look amazed admiration at the boat laden with fish.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

This is going too far, young man.

BILL

But Grandpa, you said...

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

I concede I was insistent, but how the Devil...

DAWN looks sharply at the smug faces of her brother and sister.

DAWN

It looks a bit fishy to me.

GRACE

Could we salt them, or smoke them, do you think?

They fall to unloading the fish.

GRANDMA

It's like feeding of the five thousand. It's a miracle.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Well, lad. So it's miracles now, is it?

DAWN

They'll stink the place out by morning. Why not invite all your friends to supper, Grandpa.

He looks up darkly from his task.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

I have no friends, only relations.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

BILL, now wielding the pole with great aplomb, send the punt gliding up river. DAWN heavily pregnant and languidly melancholic, lies in the cushions, bare foot dangling in the river. DAWN stiffens as the figure of a man in uniform comes running along the riverbank. As he catches up with them, he is revealed as BRUCE and the uniform of a Canadian soldier. He waves and calls them.

DAWN

Ignore him, the bastard.

BILL hesitates, but a withering look from DAWN keeps him on course. BRUCE levels with them. He calls across thirty yards of river.

BRUCE

Dan! It's me!

She refuses even to acknowledge him. Under her breath, she instructs BILL.

DAWN

Keep going. Stay on this bank.

BILL whips up speed, keeping to the opposite side of the river from BRUCE, who wades out up to his knees and holds out his arms, pleadingly.

BRUCE

Give me a chance to explain.

SUE waves at him. DAWN glowers at her.

DAWN

I'm going to kill you, Sue Rohan.

Fully clothed, his khaki cap perched on his head, BRUCE swims out towards the punt. By the time he reaches the middle of

the river, they are fifty years upstream. BRUCE swims back to the shore. Dripping wet, he runs up the riverbank until he is well ahead of the punt and plunges in again. This time, his course coincides with the punt. He grabs the side of the boat and hangs on, out of breath.

BRUCE

Couldn't write...secret  
posting...came as soon as I heard  
about the baby.

DAWN grabs a paddle and forces him under the water. He pops up further down the boat.

BRUCE

I went AWOL to be with you. I'm a  
deserter.

She cracks the paddle over his head. He sinks under the water, his cap floats away. BILL rescues it. BRUCE does not reappear. They wait, become alarmed. DAWN kneels down, peers into the water.

DAWN

Oh, Bruce, Bruce. What have I done?

His head pops up inches from her face. Levering himself up on the boat, he kisses her on the mouth. She grabs his hair smothering him with kisses.

DAWN

I missed you so much.

BILL and SUE exchange disgusted looks.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

They are all gathered together. GRANDFATHER GEORGE, GRANDMA, GRACE, HOPE, CHARITY, BILL and SUE. CLIVE, in uniform, gives his daughter away. MAC and MOLLY are together again All witness the quiet, subdued marriage of DAWN and BRUCE. The only guests are two military POLICEMEN sit in the back. They appear to be ordinary soldiers until they step outside the church and put their red caps on.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The bridal pair come out and the VICAR, considerably embarrassed, makes his excuses and backs away. A picture is taken. The REDCAPS seize BRUCE by each arm. DAWN clings to him, a last kiss, and he is borne away. They all stand at the church doors waving to him as he is driven away in a jeep. There is some dutiful sniffing from the women, but since DAWN seems quite happy, there is no need for sympathetic tears. GRACE impulsively hugs MOLLY.

GRACE

I'm so glad you could come. Here we  
are, all together again.

MOLLY

Happy as can be. In the old groove.

CLIVE shakes MAC's hand warmly.

MAC

So you're going to be a  
grandfather.

CLIVE

And I'm still just a lad myself.

MAC

Don't bother to grow up. It's no  
fun at all.

EXT. BUNGALOW - DAY

The party is on the veranda. BILL and SUE sit on the steps. GRANDFATHER is alone on the swing seat. GRACE and her three sisters are a sting quartet. They finish a piece. The others clap. It leaves them a little melancholy.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

What can you do with four  
daughters, I asked myself, A string  
quartet was all I could come up  
with. They hated me for making them  
learn.

GRACE

And now we're glad you did.

CLIVE raises his glass. He is tipsy.

CLIVE

Here's to music. And absent  
friends.

MAC

And absent bridegrooms!

CLIVE

And the bride.

ALL

The bride.

CLIVE

And here's to my CO. He's wangled  
me a posting close to home. He said  
your house burns down, your  
daughter gets married, you're  
always on compassionate leave. You  
might as well stay down there!

There are cries of congratulations and encouragement.

GRACE

I've found a bungalow to rent up

the towpath, Clive. I never want to leave the river again. The children have had such a wonderful summer.

CLIVE

Fair enough.  
(raises glass)  
The river.

ALL

The river.

CLIVE

And loyal friends.

He tips his glass at MAC, who squirms a little. The drink has made CLIVE sound excessively sincere and sentimental, so much so that if he were sober, it might seem like irony.

CLIVE

...and good and faithful wives.

He points his glass at MOLLY and GRACE and waves it at the sisters and DAWN.

CLIVE

We hope, and trust.

He laughs, and the others join in, an awkward moment. GRACE and MOLLY catch each others eye.

CLIVE

And grumpy grandfathers.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Since you are shortly to join our ranks, I throw down the gauntlet. A cricket match. You and Mac against Bill and me. Back garden.

The three men and one boy rise to the challenge and file down the side of the house to the lawn at the back.

CLIVE

You know Mac played for Surrey Seconds, and I opened for the Indian Army. Are you sure...

GRANDFATHER GEORGE waves his objection aside.

MAC

(to Clive, an aside)  
It's an olive branch. Take it.  
It's the best he can do.

EXT. BUNGALOW - GARDEN - DAY

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

We're putting you in to bat.

He hands CLIVE the bat, and flips the ball to BILL with a broad wink. CLIVE takes guard against the apple tree, which is now heavy with fruit. BILL bowls. The ball turns, beats the bat. MAC pats down the grass where the ball bounced.

CLIVE

Fine delivery, Bill, Good length.  
Turned a bit too.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE hands the ball back to BILL and nudges him.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

(whispering)  
Give him the you-know-what.

BILL

Very well, Grandpa.

BILL delivers his googly. It bamboozles his father who pops up caught and bowled. CLIVE is startled. As MAC takes the bat, CLIVE offers a warning.

CLIVE

I think it was a googly.

MAC takes guard. BILL Bowls. He plays forward, smothering the spin. Still no run. The next ball is pitched short. MAC plays back, waits for the ball to break in from the leg which it does more sharply than he expects. He just manages to dig it out. The next is the googly. MAC does not spot it. It cuts in from the off and clean bowls him. GRANDFATHER GEORGE cackles triumphantly.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Googly. You didn't spot it either.

CLIVE

I taught him how and now he turns  
it against me.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

The law of life. Cruel, isn't it?

MAC

The wicked old bugger.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

This boy will make his way in the  
world.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE slaps BILL on the back with such enthusiasm that he sends the boy sprawling. CLIVE catches him, holds him close and whispers in his ear.

CLIVE

I'm proud of you.

Cries of alarm come from the house. CLIVE hears his name called. They hurry back.

INT. BUNGALOW - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The men arrive to find the women in a state of alarm. They are gathered in a knot around DAWN. BILL pushes his way forward.

GRACE

Clive, go for the doctor. It's Dawn. She's in labour.

BILL peers between the women and catches a glimpse of DAWN standing arched against a chair, one hand supporting the baby's head which has appeared between her legs.

CLIVE

Hot water! Lots of hot water!

FAITH

What for?

CLIVE

I don't know. They always say that at the pictures.

He rushes out.

EXT. BUNGALOW - VERANDA - DAY

CLIVE runs down to veranda steps.

HOPE

She just went to the toilet, and it came out.

MAC joins CLIVE and they run to the boat and fumble awkwardly with the oars.

INT. BUNGALOW - LIVING ROOM - DAY

GRACE tries to be calm. She holds DAWN gingerly.

GRACE

Now take deep breaths, and push.

DAWN

Why? It's coming on its own. It doesn't hurt.

BILL comes to SUE's side and they catch another glimpse of the baby's head. SUE wrinkles her nose.

SUE

It's all sticky.

BILL passes clean out and crumples to the floor.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. GROUNDS OF A GREAT HOUSE - DAY

BILL is running flat out, running for his life. He passes a blurred orchard, a garden, a park.

EXT. NEW BUNGALOW - DAY

BILL, still running hard, looks over his shoulder and turns in to a bungalow that faces on to the river.

INT. NEW BUNGALOW - DAY

The living room is cheerful and spacious. Out of the window, the sun sets over the river. DAWN breast-feeds the baby, now a week or two old. GRACE knits a tiny pair of leggings. SUE is drawing a picture. CLIVE snoozes in an armchair. They are listening to Churchill on the wireless.

CHURCHILL (V.O.)

...it is not the end. It is not the beginning.

BILL enters, flushed and panting. His eyes are bright with excitement. He goes to DAWN and, reaching inside his shirt, pulls out a peach and hands it to her reverentially.

BILL

I scrumped it. I nearly got caught.  
They chased me for ages.

DAWN take's it. It looks pretty miserable. Most of the furry skin has rubbed off during its hazardous journey next to BILL's skin. DAWN's first impulse is to make a sarcastic comment, but in her new maturity, she bites it back and smiles.

DAWN

You did that for me, and on the last day of your holidays?

BILL

(blushing)  
Well, for the baby, really.

DAWN

Thank you Billy, from the baby and me.

INT. GRANDFATHER GEORGE'S CAR - DAY

GRANDFATHER GEORGE drives his old Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire along the river towpath. Beside him sits a very morose BILL wearing a school cap, with a satchel, gasmask, and a suitcase on his lap. GRANDFATHER GEORGE adjusts the advance/retard lever and glares at the sullen boy.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

You miserable little tripe-hound.  
I'm the one who should be fed up,  
sacrificing my last sup of black  
market petrol to take you to



school.

BILL

I have to live in Rosehill Avenue  
as well.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Only till they get you into the  
local school.

BILL

With Mrs. Evans. I hate her.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

You'll be at home for the weekends.  
Now shut up, or walk.

They pass a film unit setting up equipment on the river bank.  
Extras dressed as soldiers - Germans, British, American -  
lounge, smoke and drink tea.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Strapping fellows playing silly  
buggers with a war on. Outrageous.

BILL cranes back watching as long as he can.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The car draws up outside the school entrance. A grim wall  
surrounds the institution and BILL gets out, head hung low,  
and walks towards the gate as though to the gallows.  
GRANDFATHER GEORGE watches from the car. He grips the  
steering wheel angrily. A teacher strides past. GRANDFATHER  
GEORGE shouts after him out of the window.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

All you do is knock the sense out  
of them and fill them up with muck.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

As BILL enters, he is astonished to see hundreds of children  
in a state of delirious celebration. Boys fling their caps in  
the air. They cheer. They whoop. They run amok. Behind them  
lie the smouldering ruins of the school. BILL cheers louder  
than anyone. He remembers his grandfather, turns on his heel  
and runs back to the road.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

GRANDFATHER GEORGE is awkwardly turning the car in the road.  
He drives off. BILL runs flat out and comes up to the window,  
shouting.

BILL

Grandpa! There's no school! It's  
been hit by a bomb!

GRANDFATHER GEORGE slows up.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

I have to hand it to you, Bill,  
you come up with some good ones.  
Go back and take your medicine.

He drives off leaving BILL stranded. A fire engine and ARP vehicles race up to the school. They pass GRANDFATHER GEORGE and doubt shows in his face. He stops, gets out. Boys are spilling out of school, cheering. BILL runs up to him.

BILL

It's true.

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

You're much more convincing when  
you're making it up.

They get into the car.

BILL

Grandpa, if you think of something  
hard enough, can you make it  
happen?

GRANDFATHER GEORGE

Apparently so.

A barking laugh wells up and escapes his throat. It bursts forth in great waves like a flood that has been dammed up for years.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

GRANDFATHER GEORGE's laugh, and BILL's too, ring out over the autumn river which beckons to BILL with the promise of stolen days.

THE END