

THE SHOOTING SCRIPT[®]



ATONEMENT

SCREENPLAY BY
CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON

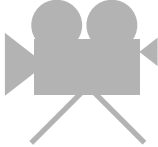
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY
IAN MCEWAN

INTRODUCTION BY
CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON



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INTRODUCTION



In the strange days towards the end of 2001, I was in Thailand preparing to go location-scouting for a film I'd co-written and was intending to direct, based on a novel by Eric Ambler. I'd brought with me Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement*: I always look forward to his books, and this longish novel, I thought, might be the ideal distraction from the gathering conviction that a piece like Ambler's *The Night-Comers*—which deals with the quiet, deadly power struggle in Indonesia between moderate and fundamentalist Moslems—would, in the current climate, never even reach the starting gate. So, sitting by the hotel pool, far from the prewar English country landscapes so vividly evoked in the novel, I felt myself sinking into the world of Briony Tallis, so entranced that I could scarcely bring myself to move when the fierce sun shifted and fell across my feet or shoulders.

By the time I came back to England, I was convinced that, complex and interiorized as it was, the novel could still be the basis of a powerful film. I contacted my agent, who told me that several writers were already interested in the project and that Ian, who had retained a position as Executive Producer, had reserved the right to interview, vet, or otherwise audition the candidates. A dinner was arranged with Richard Eyre, an old friend and colleague of both Ian and myself; Robert Fox, the producer; and Ian. I gave a somewhat halting (and, in retrospect, totally inaccurate) account of the approach I was thinking of adopting and, in due course, to my great excitement, was offered the job.

Over the next couple of years, I produced three or four drafts, each of which was analysed and dissected in meetings at Richard's house, before being discussed in considerable detail with Ian. In the version that emerged, the

story was framed by the return of Briony Tallis, celebrating her seventy-seventh birthday, to the country hotel into which her childhood home had been converted; the voice of the old writer, whose actions one blazing summer's day in 1935 had profoundly affected, not to say blighted, her own life and the lives of those most precious to her, was heard from time to time, reflecting on the implications of this or that event, while she herself was glimpsed occasionally like a ghost from the future; and the second and third sections of the novel (the flight to Dunkirk and Briony's wartime service in St. Thomas's Hospital), which happen more or less simultaneously in time, were rearranged and interwoven. The intention was always to remain as faithful to the spirit of the novel as possible—I'm always baffled by the widespread notion that when a high price has been paid for a much-loved play or novel, the first thing to do is to set about it with a hacksaw—and to translate it into a calm and measured overview of a series of irredeemable catastrophes, somewhat in the manner of Harold Pinter's spare and heart breaking account of L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*.

Time drifted on, and a familiar anguish began to make itself felt: the fear that for one or another unfathomable reason, the film might in the end not be made. A pretty expensive art film about a writer and her very particular sufferings and temptations might well seem a hard sell, and eventually Richard Eyre moved away in the direction of a sure thing: his exquisitely acted and entertainingly malevolent version of *Notes on a Scandal*. It seemed to me as if a whale I'd been riding for a number of years was about to disappear into the deep: and then I was called into the Working Title offices to meet Joe Wright.

Joe wasted no time in uttering one of those formulae that strike dread into a screenwriter's heart (others might include, "This is a really good first draft" or "Who exactly are we supposed to be rooting for?"). He said: "I'd like to start from scratch." Furthermore, he meant it. But the good news was he knew what he wanted: to bring the screenplay back even closer to the form of the novel, and he had good, specific ideas of how this might be done. For him the first move was to kick away the crutches: the explanatory voice-overs, the framing device, the linearity of narrative. This would mean that the story would have to be told primarily in images and that the actors' thoughts would have to be readable on their faces rather than audible on the

sound track; and that, echoing the bold strategy of the book, we would be dealing in big, self-contained chunks of narrative, where the focus would shift unapologetically from one character to another.

This had one major unforeseen advantage: the twenty-minute gap between seeing Briony at thirteen and Briony at eighteen made it far easier to think of casting two separate actors, an idea that had not really occurred to us before, when our structure had appeared to insist on a teenage actor capable of aging up and down. The reclaiming of the first half of the story, so that it could be seen through the eyes of a genuine child, made an immeasurable difference to the understanding of Briony's crime, if that is what it is. And the holding in reserve of old Briony, who now appears only in a relatively brief epilogue, means that the viewer of the film, no longer alerted by premonitory hints, can suffer the same dislocating shocks at the end as the reader of the novel.

The entire process was long and arduous: a couple more full drafts, followed by constant revision of one section or another, until finally, at the end of 2005, Joe and I went to spend two weeks on a property not far from Florence, belonging to Susa Gelpke, an extremely sympathetic and hospitable friend of Joe's, out of which came a final draft which proved to me the truth of something I had often heard asserted: nothing can be more time-consuming or effortful than the work required to make a piece of writing seem simple, lucid, and effortless.

A word, finally, about the passage we always referred to as "the Dunkirk section." Formally troublesome in itself, it was also the most serious victim of the budget restrictions that had, quite sensibly, been applied to this adventurous project. There were to be no columns of refugees strafed by German Stukas, no Panzers rolling northwards, no carpet-bombing of the retreating armies. Instead, illustrating another old adage about the creativity unleashed by imposed limits, there would be three soldiers tramping north through a phantasmagorical landscape of literal death and dreams and memories of many other kinds of death. The teeming chaos of Dunkirk had to be portrayed in a kind of composite scene, brilliantly organized by Joe into a single, spectacularly executed Steadicam shot. Not exactly a case of less meaning more, although it meant that the thousand extras were required only for one day, it gave a genuine sense of sweep and size and a true feeling of

the sorrow and pity of war. Here and elsewhere I can say, almost as an objective bystander, though with great pleasure and pride, that the film found its own compelling way of conveying the novel's particularly eloquent balance of the epic and the intimate.

A word about the text itself: what you have in your hands is a transcription, made after the event, of the finished film. The dozens of scenes that fell by the wayside like exhausted soldiers on their way to Dunkirk had their place in the overall scheme of things, but to include any or all of them might seem like a criticism of the completed object: the film *Atonement*, of which this is the written record.

—Christopher Hampton
December 2007

ATONEMENT

Screenplay by
Christopher Hampton

Based on the novel by
Ian McEwan

CREDIT SEQUENCE

The SOUND of a typewriter, irregularly struck, now fluent, now creating an urgent rhythm that forms the percussive element of the opening score.

A doll's house, in the form of the Tallis house, an enormous Victorian Gothic pile. The CAMERA moves from room to room, from the nursery and spare bedrooms on the second floor, to the main bedrooms on the first floor, where puppet versions of mother, daughter, son and baby sister are neatly ordered, to the ground floor with its library, drawing room, dining room and kitchen. Finally the CAMERA moves to the hall through which a young gardener puppet wheels a wheelbarrow.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK through a downstairs window to reveal the whole impressive facade.

A CAPTION: **ENGLAND, 1935**

INT. BRIONY'S BEDROOM. TALLIS HOUSE. DAY.

The doll's house is kept in BRIONY's bedroom. At 13, she's the youngest of the family, an intense-looking child with a wilful temperament. Her room is meticulously tidy, with model animals arranged with military precision, all facing in the same direction, two by two, as if queuing for the Ark.

BRIONY is typing out a version of her just-completed first play, a battered copy of the Oxford English Dictionary open on the desk. As the CAMERA arrives at her manuscript, she is typing, with a confident flourish, the words THE END. Having done this, she leans forward to pull the page from the typewriter and add it to a small pile (the play is no more than 8 pages) of manuscript, the cover page of which reads THE TRIALS OF ARABELLA by Briony Tallis. It's still early in the morning, but the beads of sweat BRIONY brushes from her forehead tell us that the day is already exceptionally hot.

INT. LANDING, STAIRCASE AND HALLWAY. DAY.

Holding her manuscript, BRIONY hurries along the landing, past a door opening on to a spare bedroom. Inside, a HOUSEMAID is singing as she makes up twin beds. BRIONY descends the servants' staircase, which leads to a black-and-white tiled hallway. She doesn't even glance into the library, a vast, gloomy room glimpsed through its open door, but turns to move towards the back of the house.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

BRIONY glances into the empty dining room and passes through the scullery into the huge old kitchen, where GRACE TURNER, the housekeeper, sits at one end of the kitchen table polishing the silver, while BETTY, the cook, is supervising two or three KITCHEN-MAIDS, who are peeling mounds of potatoes, scouring oven-trays, etc.

BRIONY
I've finished my play!

GRACE
Well done, dear.

BRIONY
Have you seen Mummy?

GRACE
I expect she'll be in the drawing room.

BETTY
I hope you're not going to be getting under our feet today, Miss Briony, we've got a dinner for ten to prepare.

BRIONY's already on her way out of the room, not listening.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY.

BRIONY hurries back down the hall, reaches the drawing room door and is about to enter when she sees ROBBIE TURNER, an impressive-looking young man of 24 in working clothes, outside an open door leading to the formal gardens. He's putting on a pair of muddy gardening boots.

ROBBIE
Hello pal. I hear you're putting on a play.

BRIONY
Who told you?

ROBBIE
Jungle drums.

BRIONY
Will you come and see it?

ROBBIE
I'm not sure that would be quite...

He breaks off, quickly finds another tack and stands.

ROBBIE

Why don't you let me read it? You used to make me beautiful bound copies of all your stories.

BRIONY

I still want you to come.

ROBBIE

Let's see.

BRIONY enters the drawing room. Inside the morning news plays on the wireless.

BRIONY

Mummy, I need you!

She closes the door behind her.

INT. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.

The drawing room is an enormous corner room looking out onto a terrace. EMILY TALLIS, BRIONY's mother, a slightly faded woman with pale skin and raw nerves, finishes reading BRIONY's manuscript. The radio has been turned off. BRIONY hovers above her, anxious and excited. EMILY looks up and smiles warmly at BRIONY.

EMILY

Stupendous! It's stupendous, darling!
Your first play!

BRIONY

Do you think Leon will like it?

EMILY

Well of course he will. 'The Trials of Arabella' by Briony Tallis.

EXT. TALLIS HOUSE. GARDENS. DAY.

It's no later than 10am, but the sun is already high and blazing down on the monumental facade of the Tallis house, recognisable from its miniature version seen earlier. Lying on one of the rolling lawns is CECILIA TALLIS, BRIONY's sister, a beautiful, restless-looking girl of 23, who is making a desultory attempt to read a fat edition of Richardson's Clarissa. She turns back a page to re-read something, then sighs, rolls on to her back and shuts her eyes against the sun. BRIONY is lying a few feet away.

BRIONY
Cee?

CECILIA
Yes.

BRIONY
What do you think it would feel like
to be someone else?

CECILIA
Cooler, I should hope.

Pause.

BRIONY
I'm worried about the play.

CECILIA
I'm sure it's a masterpiece.

BRIONY
But we only have the afternoon to
rehearse. What if the twins can't act?

CECILIA
You have to be nice to them. Think how
you'd feel if your mother had run off
with Mr. What's-His-Name who reads the
news on the wireless.

BRIONY
Perhaps I should have written Leon a
story. If you write a story, you only
have to say the word 'castle' and you
can see the towers and the woods and
the village below... But in a play
it's... it all depends on other
people.

CECILIA
Mm.

BRIONY rolls over. Some way off, ROBBIE TURNER pushes a
wheelbarrow up to a flower bed and parks it.

BRIONY
Cee?

CECILIA
Yes.

BRIONY
Why don't you talk to Robbie any more?

CECILIA
I do. We just move in different circles, that's all.

Down by the flower bed, ROBBIE glances across at CECILIA and BRIONY. But he's very focused on his immediate task which is the planting of a row of cuttings from the greenhouse. He wipes the sweat off his forehead and begins to dig with a trowel.

INT. NURSERY. DAY.

Rehearsals are taking place in a now disused room on the top floor, the former nursery, occupying the front corner of the house. BRIONY has wedged herself into an old high chair and looks down at her red-headed cousins: LOLA QUINCEY, 15, and her twin 9 year-old brothers, PIERROT and JACKSON. They're all clutching handwritten copies of BRIONY's play.

JACKSON
Do we have to do a play?

PIERROT
Why do we have to?

BRIONY
It's to celebrate my brother Leon's visit.

PIERROT
I hate plays.

JACKSON
So do I.

BRIONY
How can you hate plays?

PIERROT
It's just showing off.

LOLA crosses her legs, revealing an ankle bracelet above her sandals, and a set of brightly painted toenails; she speaks quite calmly.

LOLA
You'll be in this play or you'll get a clout and I'll tell the Parents.

JACKSON

You're not allowed to clout us.

LOLA

We're guests in this house and what did the Parents say we were to make ourselves? Well? Pierrot?

PIERROT

Amenable.

LOLA

Jackson?

JACKSON

Amenable.

LOLA

Amenable, that's right.

She turns graciously to BRIONY.

LOLA

Now, Briony, what's your play about?

BRIONY

It's about how... love is all very well, but you have to be sensible.

LOLA frowns, dubious.

LOLA

I suppose you're going to be Arabella.

BRIONY

Well... Not necessarily.

She's been surprised into this, but LOLA takes immediate ruthless advantage.

LOLA

In that case, do you mind if I play her?

JACKSON

Lola was in the school play.

LOLA

Do say yes, it'd be the first decent thing to happen to me in months.

BRIONY can't see any way to get out of it.

BRIONY
Well... all right.

LOLA
I suppose we should start by reading
it...

BRIONY
If you're going to be Arabella, then
I'll be the director, thank you very
much.

LOLA
Sorr-ee!

BRIONY
I'm going to do the prologue.

She looks down and begins reading.

BRIONY
Prologue.
This is the tale of spontaneous Arabella
Who ran away with an extrinsic fellow.
It grieved her parents to see their first born
Evanescence from her home to go to Eastbourne...

The door opens; BRIONY breaks off and looks up to see DANNY
HARDMAN, the seventeen year-old spotty son of the head gardener,
standing in the doorway.

BRIONY
Yes?

DANNY
Nothing. Just thought I'd watch.

BRIONY
Rehearsals are private, I'm afraid.
You can see the play this evening.

DANNY
I'll have to work then.

BRIONY
Well, I'm sorry, Danny.

DANNY reluctantly prises himself away, closing the door behind
him. BRIONY turns back to the OTHERS.

JACKSON
Can we have a swim now?

PIERROT
Yes, yes, yes!

BRIONY
There's no time!

PIERROT
Cecilia will let us.

Before BRIONY can respond, the TWINS are charging towards the door, pretending to fire guns at one another and shouting for CECILIA.

LOLA
I'm sure a half-hour break would do us
all good.

LOLA saunters casually after the twins, leaving BRIONY alone.

She sits on the floor, her back up against the wall, fanning herself with her script, her expression morose. A wasp is buzzing irritatingly, trapped between two panes of the open sash window. BRIONY gets up and goes over to liberate it. She's about to lower the sash, when something outside catches her attention.

Below, to one side of the house, is a terrace, dominated by a monumental fountain. Beside the fountain are ROBBIE and CECILIA glaring at each other.

As BRIONY watches, ROBBIE stretches out a hand and says something, as if issuing a command. In response, although her expression is mutinous, CECILIA immediately kicks off her shoes, unbuttons and removes her blouse and strips off her skirt, so that she's standing before ROBBIE in her underwear.

BRIONY gasps and steps back from the window. The wasp buzzes frantically.

When she returns, ROBBIE is standing motionless by the fountain and CECILIA has disappeared. Then, suddenly, the surface of the water breaks and CECILIA emerges from the fountain. She picks up her clothes, turns her back on ROBBIE and pulls them on to her still dripping body. Then she bends and rises again, this time holding a previously invisible vase of flowers, and strides off back towards the house. ROBBIE, left by the fountain, reaches out a hand and lays it on the surface of the water.

BRIONY lowers the sash with a bang, liberating the wasp.

EXT. WOODS. DAY.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

CECILIA, with an armful of wild flowers, runs through the woods, enjoying the sheer exhilaration of movement. There isn't a cloud in the sky.

EXT./INT. NURSERY. DAY.

CLOSE on BRIONY, seen through the window, staring out.

EXT. WOODS. DAY.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

CECILIA runs on through the woods.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY.

CECILIA crosses the hall, as the TWINS come clattering and shouting down the stairs.

JACKSON

Can we go for a swim please, Cecilia?

CECILIA

I don't see why not, as long as you don't go near the deep end.

And the TWINS rush away as CECILIA steps into the drawing room.

INT./EXT. DRAWING-ROOM. DAY.

CECILIA crosses to the window. Outside, ROBBIE is standing rolling himself a cigarette.

CECILIA goes over to a cherry-wood table, where there's an early 18th-century Meissen vase. She drops the flowers untidily into it and pulls out a crushed packet of cigarettes, which turns out to be empty. She glances back out of the window, picks up the vase, checks her reflection in the mirror and strides out towards the terrace.

EXT. TERRACE. DAY.

CECILIA speaks a little sharply, startling ROBBIE.

CECILIA

Can you do me one of your Bolshevik roll-ups?

She doesn't stop; and he follows her, making the cigarette as she heads across the lawn towards the fountain.

CECILIA
Beautiful day.

ROBBIE
I suppose so. Too hot for me.

They move on in silence.

ROBBIE
How are you enjoying your book?

CECILIA
Not at all.

ROBBIE
It gets better.

CECILIA
I'd rather read Fielding any day. Much more... passionate.

CECILIA suddenly feels awkward and hastens to change the subject.

CECILIA
Leon's coming down today, did you know?

ROBBIE
I'd heard a rumour.

CECILIA
He's bringing a friend with him. This Paul Marshall. The chocolate millionaire.

ROBBIE
Are the flowers for him?

CECILIA
Why shouldn't they be? Leon says he's very charming.

They reach the fountain: CECILIA puts the vase down on the top step leading up to it. ROBBIE hands her the cigarette and lights it. They obviously know one another very well; yet there's some definite, perceptible constraint between them. There's more than a hint of accusation in what CECILIA says next.

CECILIA

The Old Man telephoned last night. He says you're planning to be a doctor.

ROBBIE

I'm thinking about it, yes.

CECILIA

Another six years of student life?

ROBBIE

How else do you become a doctor?

CECILIA

You could get a Fellowship now, couldn't you? With your First.

ROBBIE

But I don't want to teach...

He breaks off, looks away for a moment; then turns back to her.

ROBBIE

I said I'd pay your father back.

CECILIA

That's not what I meant at all.

There's an edge of real hostility in her voice. She puts her cigarette between her lips and bends to pick up the vase, preparing to dunk it in the fountain, having first taken out the flowers and laid them on the step.

ROBBIE

Let me do that.

CECILIA

I'm all right, thanks.

But ROBBIE persists, reaching for the vase.

ROBBIE

You take the flowers.

CECILIA

I'm all right!

He gets hold of the vase, just as CECILIA turns away; and with the crisp sound of a dry twig snapping, two triangular sections of the rim of the vase detach themselves in his hands. In his

shock, he lets them go; and they drop into the fountain and sink slowly, spiralling to the bottom, almost three feet down. CECILIA looks at him, horrified.

CECILIA
You idiot! You realise this is probably the most valuable thing we own.

ROBBIE
Not any more, it isn't.

The hint of truculence in his voice serves to agitate CECILIA even more. She sets the vase down. Then straightens up, aware that ROBBIE has begun to unbutton his shirt. She takes a step towards him, then, confusedly, a step back. ROBBIE, afraid she's going to step on the vase, throws out a restraining hand, a gesture so abrupt as to seem peremptory.

ROBBIE
Careful!

CECILIA's response is to kick off her shoes and, in front of ROBBIE's transfixed gaze, to strip down to her underwear. Then she steps over the lip of the fountain and lowers herself into it.

She gasps at the unexpectedly cold water, but doesn't hesitate to plunge her face beneath the surface.

ROBBIE, watches, unable to look away, his expression a queasy mixture of fear and longing. CECILIA'S hair fantails out across the surface of the water.

UNDERWATER. DAY.

CECILIA reaches down to the bottom of the basin and carefully retrieves the two triangular shards of porcelain.

EXT. TERRACE. DAY.

CECILIA lays the two pieces of pottery down by the vase and, with her back to ROBBIE, scrambles back into her clothes. Then she gathers up her sandals, tucks them under her arm, picks up the pottery fragments and puts them in her skirt pocket, takes up the vase of flowers and marches back towards the house. ROBBIE stands there, watching her go. Then he reaches out a hand and lays it on the surface of the water, as if to calm it.

EXT./INT. NURSERY. DAY.

BRIONY, seen through the window, closes it and stays where she is for a moment, staring out. Then she turns back into the room and crosses it, grabbing up her notebook.

EXT. PERGOLA. DAY.

BRIONY strides through the rose-covered pergola, moving away from the house.

EXT. TALLIS HOUSE DRIVE. DAY.

A cream-coloured Rolls-Royce makes its stately way up the drive.

INT./EXT. CECILIA'S BEDROOM. DAY.

CECILIA's room is heroically untidy. The bed is unmade, the floor is littered with papers, clothes, and open books, the ashtrays are overflowing and the dressing-table is a disaster area. CECILIA herself sits, painting her toenails, when she hears the SOUND of the approaching motor. She crosses to the window gingerly, so as not to ruin her nail polish.

In the distance she sees ROBBIE striding across the lawns on his way down to the lodge, where he lives with his mother. The Rolls-Royce slows and stops alongside ROBBIE and the passenger leans out to speak to him.

CECILIA frowns in obvious annoyance.

CECILIA
No need to encourage him.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY.

The two young men, LEON TALLIS, 25, and his friend PAUL MARSHALL, 28, surge into the house, followed by DANNY HARDMAN, struggling with their suitcases.

LEON
Cee! Mother!

He turns to DANNY.

LEON
Where is everyone, Danny?

DANNY
Dunno, sir.

LEON
I'm gasping for a drink.

He steps into the drawing room. DANNY, still with the luggage, follows confusedly.

INT. DRAWING ROOM. DAY.

LEON is moving over to the drinks table.

LEON
Will you have one?

MARSHALL
Rather.

LEON
Whisky?

MARSHALL
Please.

As LEON fixes the drinks, CECILIA bursts into the room.

CECILIA
Leon!

LEON takes her in his arms.

LEON
Here she is!

CECILIA
Oh, I've missed you. I've been going completely doolally up here.

LEON turns to include MARSHALL.

LEON
This is my sister, Cecilia; Paul Marshall.

MARSHALL
I've heard an awful lot about you.

CECILIA
Likewise.

LEON
Where are we putting him?

CECILIA turns to DANNY.

CECILIA
In the blue room.

DANNY starts off up the stairs, then stops, looking gormless.

CECILIA
Mother's lying down, she's got one of
her migraines.

LEON
Not surprised, this heat.

CECILIA looks up at DANNY, somewhat irritated.

CECILIA
The big room next to the nursery.

DANNY sets off, grunting with effort.

CECILIA
Is the Old Man staying in town?

LEON
Looks like it. There's some sort of
rush on at the Ministry.

INT. EMILY TALLIS'S BEDROOM. DAY.

EMILY is on her bed in her darkened room, propped up against two pillows, her eyes protected by an eyeshade, cooled by an electric fan that whirs on her bedside table.

From the nursery comes the regular thud of a bouncing rubber ball.

EMILY sighs and pushes up her eyeshade.

INT. NURSERY. DAY.

The TWINS are sitting in their still wet bathing suits, bouncing a rubber ball against the wall.

LOLA lies on the couch, flicking through a fashion magazine.

PIERROT
So aren't we doing the play?

LOLA

No.

JACKSON

Why not?

LOLA

Don't ask me.

PIERROT

I don't like it here.

EXT. LAKE. DAY.

On the lake floats a white pontoon. CECILIA is wearing a white one-piece swimsuit and nursing a glass of punch. MARSHALL and LEON are also in bathing suits. We're looking at CECILIA, lying on the diving board in the blinding heat, as MARSHALL's droning voice nibbles at the edge of her attention.

MARSHALL

And currently our main challenge is whether or not to launch the new Amo bar, the *Army Amo*. You see, Pass the Amo!

CECILIA turns her head to look at him for a moment.

MARSHALL

My source at the Ministry of Defence - I used to clean his shoes at Harrow, so he's very reliable - assures me we've a good chance of getting the Amo bar included in the standard-issue ration pack. Which means I'd have to open at least three more factories, more if they bring in conscription, which I'd say is bound to happen if Herr Hitler doesn't pipe down - and he's about as likely to do that as buy shares in Marks and Spencers, wouldn't you agree?

CECILIA's been making a valiant effort to seem interested; now she takes a sip of her punch.

CECILIA

This isn't very good.

MARSHALL

I make a cocktail with rum, crushed ice, and melted dark chocolate. Absolutely scrumptious!

CECILIA manages to catch LEON's eye and make a discreet vomiting face; LEON is obliged to rise to his feet to conceal an irresistible burst of silent laughter. To recover, he turns away to speak to CECILIA.

LEON

Guess who we met on the way in?

CECILIA

Robbie.

LEON

I told him to join us tonight.

CECILIA

Leon! You didn't!

LEON

(to Marshall)

So Robbie the Housekeeper's son, whose father did a bunk twenty years ago, gets a scholarship to the local grammar and the Old Man puts him through Cambridge; goes up at the same time as Cee and for three years she hardly speaks to him! She wouldn't let him within a mile of her Roedean chums.

CECILIA

Anyone got a cigarette?

MARSHALL produces a gold case, brings it over to CECILIA and lights the cigarette she's taken.

LEON

Don't know what the hell he's doing these days, messing about in flower beds...

CECILIA is standing on the diving board now.

CECILIA

As a matter of fact he's planning on doing a medical degree.

LEON

And the Old Man said yes to that?

CECILIA
 Look, I think you ought to go down to
 the lodge and ask him not to come.

LEON
 Why? Has something happened between
 you?

CECILIA
 Oh, for God's sake.

CECILIA dives into the lake.

UNDERWATER. DAY.

CECILIA swims by, powerful underwater breast-stroke.

INT. BATHROOM IN THE LODGE. DAY.

ROBBIE surfaces in his bath: he settles back, brooding, looking
 up at a skylight, a small pane of glass directly above him, a
 square of bright blue sky, through which flies an RAF plane.

INT. NURSERY. DAY.

LOLA, PIERROT and JACKSON are hanging about aimlessly, already
 at a loss as to what to do.

JACKSON
 When can we go home?

LOLA
 Soon.

PIERROT
 We can't go home: it's a divorce!

LOLA
 How dare you say that?

PIERROT
 Well, it's true.

LOLA grabs PIERROT by the shoulders and shakes him.

LOLA
 You will never ever use that word
 again. Do you understand?

PIERROT nods miserably. Eventually, JACKSON breaks the silence.

JACKSON

Now what are we going to do?

MARSHALL (O.S.)

I'm always asking myself that.

They're all startled by PAUL MARSHALL's sudden appearance in the doorway. He advances into the room, hand extended.

MARSHALL

My name's Paul Marshall. And you must be the cousins from the north. What are your names?

They tell him, as he shakes hands with them.

MARSHALL

What marvellous names.

JACKSON

Do you know our parents?

MARSHALL

Well, I've read about them in the paper.

This causes consternation, from which LOLA is the first to recover.

LOLA

What exactly have you read about them?

MARSHALL realizes it may be time to back-pedal.

MARSHALL

Oh, I don't know. Usual sort of nonsense.

LOLA

I'll thank you not to talk about this in front of the children.

MARSHALL turns to the TWINS and speaks with glutinous solemnity.

MARSHALL

Your parents are absolutely wonderful people, that's quite clear and they love you and think about you all the time.

LOLA's expression changes; he's successfully appeased her and follows swiftly through with a compliment.

MARSHALL
Jolly nice slacks.

LOLA smooths them down, visibly pleased.

LOLA
We went up to see a show and got them
at Liberty's.

MARSHALL
What was the show?

LOLA
Hamlet.

MARSHALL
Ah, yes: to be or not to be.

LOLA
I like your shoes.

MARSHALL tilts his brown and white co-respondent shoes, serenely self-satisfied.

MARSHALL
Ducker's in the Turl. They make a...
wooden thing shaped like your foot and
keep it for ever.

PIERROT
I'm starving, when's dinner?

MARSHALL
I might be able to help you out, if
you can guess what I do for a living.

JACKSON
You've got a chocolate factory.

PIERROT
Everyone knows that.

MARSHALL
Ah, so it wasn't a guess.

He takes a slab of something wrapped in greaseproof paper out of his pocket and unwraps it to reveal a shell of khaki sugar which he taps with his fingernail.

MARSHALL

There'll be one of these provided in every kitbag of every soldier in the British Army. Sugar casing so it won't melt.

PIERROT

Why should they get free sweets?

MARSHALL

Because they'll be fighting for their country.

JACKSON

Our Daddy says there isn't going to be a war.

MARSHALL

Your Daddy is wrong.

He's snapped at the boy, and now smiles wolfishly in an attempt to make amends.

MARSHALL

We're calling it the Army Amo.

LOLA

Amo amas amat.

MARSHALL

Top marks.

PIERROT

It's boring how everything ends in O. Polo and Aero.

JACKSON

And Oxo and Brillo.

MARSHALL

Sounds as if you don't want it then. I shall have to give it to your sister.

Which he does. She takes it, smiling triumphantly at the disappointed TWINS. She glances flirtatiously at MARSHALL, who watches with frank interest as she wraps her lips around the end of the bar. His voice is soft and breathy.

MARSHALL

Bite it. You have to bite it.

EXT. GROTTO. DAY.

Beyond the formal lawns at the bottom of the garden is an old crumbling grotto. This is BRIONY's place: she sits in the shade, scribbling furiously in her notebook.

BRIONY (V.O.)

The Princess was aware of his remorseless wickedness, but that made it no easier to overcome the voluminous love she felt for Sir Romulus...The Princess knew instinctively that the one with red hair was not to be trusted...As his young ward dived into the depths of the lake in search of the enchanted chalice, Sir Romulus twirled his luxuriant moustache...Sir Romulus rode north with his two companions, drawing ever closer to an effulgent sea...So heroic in manner he appeared, so valiant in word, no one could guess at the darkness lurking in the black heart of Sir Romulus Turnbull: he was the most dangerous man in the world.

INT. ROBBIE'S STUDY/BEDROOM IN THE LODGE. DAY.

ROBBIE sits at his typewriter, pensive. His tiny room is stuffed full of books; open on his desk is a copy of Grays Anatomy. He reads back what he's just written.

ROBBIE

Dear Cecilia, I thought I should write to apologize for my clumsy and inconsiderate behaviour...

He sighs, pulls the paper out of the typewriter, crumples it up and throws it in the waste-paper basket, where it joins other rejected drafts.

INT. CECILIA'S BEDROOM. DAY.

CECILIA is studying herself in the full-length mirror. She's wearing a black dress and a jet necklace.

With a profound sigh, she shakes her head and lets the dress fall to the floor.

On SOUND: the final duet of Act 1 of La Boheme.

INT. ROBBIE'S STUDY/BEDROOM. DAY.

The music is on ROBBIE'S gramophone. He leans back, wrenching the paper out of the typewriter, again, crumpling it and throwing it in the waste-paper basket.

A series of JUMP CUTS: ROBBIE moves over to the gramophone, stands a moment listening to the climax of the duet, picks up the arm and moves the needle back to replay the high note. He paces his small room. He feeds another sheet of paper into the typewriter, stubs out his cigarette, pulls the sheet out of the typewriter and starts again. Decisively, he begins to type.

As he types, the words appear on the paper: "In my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts I make love to you all day long. Robbie."

ROBBIE sits back with a small gasp and laughs; he's surprised himself. Then he pulls the page out of the typewriter, sets it down on Gray's Anatomy, pushes the typewriter aside and reaches for some notepaper and a fountain pen. After a pause for reflection, he unscrews the pen and starts writing.

He writes: "Dear Cecilia..."

ROBBIE (V.O.)
... you'd be forgiven for thinking me
mad-the way I acted this afternoon.

INT. CECILIA'S BEDROOM. DAY.

CECILIA is now wearing a green halter-neck evening gown and the jet necklace has been replaced with a rope of pearls. A couple of other dresses lie on the floor beside the rejected black dress.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
The truth is, I feel rather light-
headed and foolish in your presence,
Cee, and I don't think I can blame the
heat. Will you forgive me? Robbie.

CECILIA fixes on a diamond hair-clip, contemplates her reflection for a moment, this time with satisfaction and leaves the room.

INT. STAIRS/FRONT ROOM. LODGE. DAY.

ROBBIE comes downstairs in a vest, carrying a shoe brush and a pair of black brogues. His mother, GRACE TURNER, whom we've already encountered in the Tallis kitchen, is sitting in the front room with her eyes closed, her feet up and her slippers dangling from her toes. ROBBIE spreads out a double page of the Daily Sketch, before sitting to polish his shoes.

GRACE
Off out, then?

ROBBIE
Yes; Leon asked me to join them for dinner.

GRACE
So that's why I've been polishing the silver all afternoon.

ROBBIE
I'll think of you when I see my face in the spoon.

He stands up. GRACE watches him for a moment.

GRACE
You're not a bit like your father. Not in any way.

ROBBIE
That's because I'm all yours.

ROBBIE kisses his mother's forehead.

ROBBIE
I'll be late.

GRACE
Your shirts are hanging upstairs.

ROBBIE starts to leave.

GRACE
Son?

ROBBIE
Yes?

GRACE
Nothing.

INT. ROBBIE'S STUDY/BEDROOM. DUSK.

ROBBIE, rushing now, does up the front of his shirt and at the same time finds an envelope, folds his letter, looks for his cigarette case, puts the letter in the envelope and seals it. He puts his jacket on, tests his lighter three times and leaves the room.

EXT. LODGE & PARK. DUSK.

ROBBIE leaves the bungalow, impeccable in his evening dress, the envelope in his hand and a spring in his step; he looks for all the world like a young man with a glorious future.

EXT. DRIVEWAY. DUSK.

ROBBIE walks down the drive towards the Tallis house, his letter still in his hand. He comes to a monumental bridge that crosses a small stream. Below he sees a figure at the water's edge, slashing at nettles with a hazel switch.

ROBBIE
Briony? Is that you?

BRIONY turns, obviously startled and straightens her hair.

ROBBIE
Are you all right?

BRIONY nods, her face flushing.

ROBBIE
Do you think you could do me a favour?

BRIONY scrambles up the slope to join ROBBIE.

ROBBIE
Could you run ahead and give this to Cee? I'd feel a bit of a fool handing it over myself.

BRIONY
All right.

She takes the envelope from him, turns and runs off without another word. He starts to roll himself a cigarette.

ROBBIE watches her go, leaving the drive to take a short cut across the grass, running all the way.

Suddenly ROBBIE gasps, as if punched in the solar plexus, and lets drop the makings of the cigarette.

ROBBIE
Briony.

EXT. GARDENS. DUSK.

But BRIONY is out of earshot, running across the gardens, clutching the envelope.

INT. ROBBIE'S STUDY/BEDROOM. DAY.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

Again ROBBIE tests his lighter three times and leaves the room. But this time the CAMERA PANS back to ROBBIE'S desk and moves in on the hand-written letter, still lying on his copy of Gray's Anatomy.

EXT. DRIVEWAY. DUSK.

ROBBIE, panicked now, cups his hands around his mouth and yells at the top of his voice:

ROBBIE
Briony!

INT. HALLWAY. DUSK.

BRIONY runs into the hall and stands for a moment, alone. Then, impulsively, she rips open the letter, stuffs the envelope into her pocket and reads.

The SOUND of a typewriter, builds to:

INT. ROBBIE'S STUDY/BEDROOM. DAY.

The hammers of ROBBIE'S typewriter in extreme close-up, crashing down with the word: C - U - N - T

INT. HALLWAY. DUSK.

WIDE on BRIONY, a tiny figure isolated in the vast hall, transfixed by what she's just read.

INT. DRAWING ROOM. DUSK.

CECILIA and LEON, both holding gin-and-tonics, sit in a window seat overlooking the gardens.

CECILIA
I suppose he's what you might call
eligible.

LEON
Rather!

CECILIA
He certainly seems to think he's the
cat's pyjamas. Which is odd,
considering he has pubic hair growing
out of his ears.

LEON snorts with laughter.

CECILIA
I imagine he'd give you a lot of very
noisy boneheaded sons.

LEON
He's quite a good egg, actually.

CECILIA
You say that about everyone.

LEON'S face lights up as BRIONY bursts into the room; he goes into his Arthur Askey impersonation.

LEON
Rummy, if it ain't my little sis!

BRIONY thrusts the letter into CECILIA'S hand without a word and flings herself into LEON'S embrace.

BRIONY
I wrote a play, Leon. I wanted to do a
play for you, The Trials of Arabella.

CLOSE on CECILIA as she unfolds the letter and reads. She blushes hotly, looks up to make sure her shock has not been observed and bows her head to read it again.

LEON
There's still time, doesn't have to be
this evening.

BRIONY
No, it's impossible!

CECILIA
Briony?

BRIONY completely ignores CECILIA, pretending to hang on LEON's every word.

LEON
Tell you what, I'm good at voices and you're even better. We'll read it out after dinner.

CECILIA
Briony, did you read this letter?

BRIONY
Yes, let's, that's a wonderful idea!

CECILIA
Briony...

CECILIA's about to speak, but she's interrupted by the sudden appearance of PAUL MARSHALL, who's carrying a silver tray, on which stand five cocktail glasses containing a sludgy brown liquid. He has a faint scratch running down his right cheek.

MARSHALL
Here we are, my chocktail; I insist you try it.

BRIONY tries to take advantage of this to slip out of the room; but CECILIA grabs hold of her arm and hisses at her.

CECILIA
Wasn't there an envelope?

BRIONY wriggles free and hurries out of the room.

INT. BRIONY'S BEDROOM. DUSK.

BRIONY, not yet changed, paces restlessly up and down, trying to make sense of the events of the evening. There's a light tap on the door and she looks up, very surprised to see LOLA.

LOLA
Do you mind if I come in?

Before BRIONY can answer, LOLA comes in and perches on the edge of the bed; her expression is tragic. She's dressed for dinner and wearing make-up and lipstick.

LOLA

I've had the most appalling evening.
The twins have been torturing me.
Look.

She pulls up a sleeve to reveal a blue bruise on her upper arm.

BRIONY

How awful!

As she speaks she notices LOLA's wrist is blotched and sore-looking; she reaches out to take it.

BRIONY

Chinese burns?

LOLA

That's right.

BRIONY

But why?

LOLA is beginning to weep softly, in the presence of BRIONY's obvious sympathy.

LOLA

They want to go home. They think it's
me keeping them here.

BRIONY

Lola, can I tell you something?
Something really terrible?

LOLA

Yes, please.

BRIONY

What's the worst word you can possibly
imagine?

EXT. LAWN/TERRACE. DUSK.

ROBBIE approaches the towering bulk of the house, dragging his feet. He looks up at the lighted windows and comes to a halt outside the front door, not at all sure he can bring himself to proceed. Finally, he takes a deep breath and tugs at the bell-pull.

INT. BRIONY'S BEDROOM. DUSK.

LOLA seems to have made a complete recovery. She's staring at BRIONY in undisguised fascination.

LOLA
He's a sex-maniac!

BRIONY nods seriously, struggling to find the correct mature response.

BRIONY
That's right.

LOLA
What's Cecilia going to do?

From below, a ring on the doorbell.

BRIONY
I don't know.

LOLA
You ought to call the police.

BRIONY
Do you think so?

LOLA
He said he thought about it '*all day long.*' All you need do is show them the letter.

BRIONY
You won't tell anyone, will you?
Promise.

LOLA
I promise.

BRIONY
If he found out, there's no knowing what he might do.

LOLA
You're right.

BRIONY
You'd better tidy your face. I've still got to change.

LOLA goes to the door, turns back in the doorway.

LOLA
Thanks, Briony, you're a brick.

She leaves the room.

INT. STAIRCASE AND HALLWAY. NIGHT.

BRIONY, now changed for dinner, crosses the landing and starts down the last section of staircase leading to the hall. As she reaches the bottom step, she notices a diamond hair-clip lying in front of the door to the library. She crosses to the hair-clip and picks it up. A moment later she hears a low moan, recognizably CECILIA'S voice, coming from behind the door.

INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

BRIONY opens the door quietly and stands, framed in the doorway, peering apprehensively in.

The library is cavernous and dark, lined with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. The only light comes from a desk lamp that points directly into BRIONY'S eyes. Silence. BRIONY takes a tentative couple of steps into the room. As she does so, there's a sound from the far corner.

CECILIA (O.S.)
(*whispering*)
Someone's come in.

BRIONY edges closer and suddenly, revealed in the corner, frozen against the bookshelves, are ROBBIE and CECILIA. ROBBIE, who has one of CECILIA'S wrists pinned against the wall, appears to be attacking CECILIA, while CECILIA has a hand round his head, gripping a handful of hair.

BRIONY, bewildered, stops by the desk.

BRIONY
Cecilia?

SOUND of a doorbell.

EXT. TALLIS HOUSE. DUSK.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

CLOSE on ROBBIE'S hand, tugging at the bell-pull.

When the door opens, it's CECILIA, the folded letter in her hand.

ROBBIE
It was a mistake.

CECILIA
Briony read it.

ROBBIE
Oh God. I'm so sorry. It was the wrong
version.

CECILIA
Yes.

ROBBIE
No one was ever meant to...

CECILIA
No.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

CECILIA turns away and moves briskly towards the library. ROBBIE, after a second's hesitation, follows her, almost stepping on the hair-clip which has dropped from her hair.

INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

It's dark in the library.

ROBBIE waits in the doorway, until CECILIA has switched on the desk-lamp; then he closes the door behind him and advances tentatively into the room. CECILIA crosses almost the full width of the room, before turning to face him.

CECILIA
What was in the version I was meant to
read?

ROBBIE
I don't know, it was more formal, it
was less...

CECILIA
Anatomical?

ROBBIE
Yes.

CECILIA doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. ROBBIE begins to inch towards her as she begins to back gradually into a dark corner, until she's up against the bookshelves.

CECILIA

It's been there for weeks and then this morning by the fountain... I've never done anything like that before and I was so angry with you, and with myself. I thought if you went away to medical school, I'd be happy. I don't know how I could have been so ignorant about myself. So stupid.

Tears well in her eyes. He's moving closer and closer.

CECILIA

You do know what I'm talking about, don't you? You knew before I did.

ROBBIE

Why are you crying?

CECILIA

Don't you know?

ROBBIE

Yes, I know exactly.

He reaches out and draws her to him, until their faces are inches apart. He kisses her briefly and pulls back; then they look at each other and kiss again, this time a long, passionate and breathless kiss, that draws from CECILIA a falling, sighing sound. He pushes her back into the corner and she starts tearing at his shirt, pulling at his waistband. He buries his face in her breasts and she drags his head up by the hair and bites his lip. She links her hands around his neck. He reaches down under her dress and into her underwear. She kicks off her shoes and he raises one of her feet on to the lowest shelf. He undoes his buttons, lifts her dress and enters her. She turns her head sharply, biting her lip. They stop moving and slowly turn to look into each other's eyes. Then, after a long, still pause they whisper to one another, barely audible.

CECILIA

Robbie.

ROBBIE

Cecilia.

CECILIA

I love you.

ROBBIE

I love you.

She gasps as he starts moving again, crushing her against the creaking shelves. He takes her wrist and holds it back against the wall.

The door opens. CECILIA and ROBBIE freeze.

CECILIA
(*whispering*)
Someone's come in.

BRIONY
Cecilia?

CECILIA doesn't answer. ROBBIE steps back from CECILIA and begins adjusting his clothes, keeping his back to BRIONY. CECILIA tidies herself up, steps out from behind ROBBIE and pushes past BRIONY without a word. BRIONY watches her leave the room, at a loss, then turns back, startled, as she senses ROBBIE turning towards her. She takes a step back, frightened; but he merely fumbles with his bow-tie and, staring coldly past her, leaves the room.

INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY enters the dining room to find ROBBIE holding CECILIA'S chair for her to sit. Also around the table are LEON, MARSHALL, LOLA and, at the top of the table, EMILY. DANNY HARDMAN is rather sloppily pouring wine for LEON, whilst leering across the table at LOLA.

LEON
In Charlotte Street last week, people were sitting out having dinner on the pavement.

EMILY
It was always the view of my parents that hot weather encouraged loose morals. In high summer my sister and I were never allowed out of the house.

LEON
What do you say, Cee? Does the hot weather make you behave badly?

CECILIA flushes red, taken by surprise.

LEON
Good heavens, you're blushing.

CECILIA
It's just hot in here, that's all.

EMILY

Lola, wipe that lipstick off. You're far too young.

LEON

What about you, Briony? What sins have you committed today?

BRIONY, now seated, looks across at him indignantly.

BRIONY

I've done nothing wrong.

She turns to look meaningfully at ROBBIE and CECILIA. Meanwhile EMILY speaks to LOLA,

EMILY

Have you seen the twins recently?

LOLA

Er...no.

Following some nervous impulse, ROBBIE suddenly finds himself joining in the conversation.

ROBBIE

They didn't look very happy last time I saw them, poor little chaps.

BRIONY

You know nothing about it.

EMILY

I can't imagine what's got into you, Briony. I've never known you be so rude.

CECILIA dabs her lip with a napkin to find a tiny spot of blood.

BRIONY

Well, they're not poor little chaps: just look what they did to Lola!

EMILY

What are you talking about?

BRIONY

Jackson and Pierrot. Bruised her arm, gave her Chinese burns.

MARSHALL

She's quite right, I'm afraid, I had to pull them off her.

He indicates the scratch on his cheek.

MARSHALL

That's how I got my war wound.

EMILY

The twins did that? Lola?

LOLA doesn't reply.

MARSHALL

It all turned into a bit of a wrestle.
Still, no harm done, eh, Lola?

EMILY

Would you go and find these boys
please, Briony? Tell them dinner's
ready and where are their manners.

BRIONY

Why do I have to go?

EMILY

Briony, you'll do as you're told or
you'll go straight to your room.

BRIONY rises from the table, her expression mutinous; EMILY turns to inspect LOLA's arm. Under the table, CECILIA reaches for ROBBIE's hand.

INT. TWINS' ROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY switches the light on and is surprised to find the room empty. There's a large ragged piece of paper on one of the beds. As BRIONY moves towards it, she sees it's headed in big red capitals: TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN. She reaches for it.

INT. STAIRCASE AND HALLWAY. NIGHT.

BRIONY comes flying down the stairs, the piece of paper in her hand.

INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

All heads turn as BRIONY flings open the door. CECILIA lets go of ROBBIE's hand.

BRIONY

It's a letter!

CECILIA immediately panics.

CECILIA
Give it here.

Then she sees what's in BRIONY'S hand and relaxes; BRIONY, meanwhile, is advancing towards the head of the table.

BRIONY
They've run away.

EMILY
Who has?

BRIONY
The twins.

BRIONY reads from the piece of paper.

BRIONY
"We are going to run away because Lola is so horrid to us and we want to go home. Also there wasn't a play."

She hands the sheet of paper to EMILY. LOLA has gone pale.

MARSHALL
Not to worry, we'll send out some search parties, they can't have gone far.

LEON
Cee, you come with me.

CECILIA manages to catch ROBBIE'S eye and half-shrugs, as if to say it can't be helped.

EXT/INT. TERRACE/DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY comes out on to the terrace; she hesitates a moment and then moves off into the darkness.

WIDE SHOT: the house with torch beams fanning out across the grounds. VOICES calling out the twins' names.

EXT. LAKE. NIGHT.

BRIONY crosses the small bridge that crosses from the bank of the lake to the small island, her torch switched on.

Seeing what might be the flash of another torch in the distance, she stops and listens.

EXT. BOAT HOUSE. NIGHT.

BRIONY comes down a narrow stone alley and peers into the watery darkness under the boat house. Suddenly, a duck splashes away from under a boat, startling her.

EXT. GROTTO. NIGHT.

BRIONY climbs down the steep steps into the bowl of the grotto. Then, once again, she hesitates and slows to a standstill.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, there's a painful gasp; and BRIONY whirls round, pointing her torch. For a fraction of a second there's an image of LOLA, on all fours, her dress hiked up and a tall male figure, kneeling behind her. BRIONY drops her torch in shock; it shines up in her eyes, blinding her, so that the man, rising to his full height, turning and scrambling away up the bank, disappears before she can pull herself together. LOLA'S voice breaks the silence.

LOLA

Briony?

BRIONY picks up the torch and shines it at LOLA, who by now is in a sitting position. She hurries over to join LOLA, dropping to her knees beside her.

BRIONY

Lola. Are you all right?

LOLA

I'm sorry, I didn't, I'm sorry...

BRIONY puts her arm round LOLA's bony shoulders; she seems strangely invigorated.

BRIONY

Who was it?

LOLA doesn't answer. She's sitting up now, her arms wrapped round her knees, rocking slightly. They talk in whispers.

BRIONY

I saw him. I saw him.

LOLA

Yes.

BRIONY
It was him, wasn't it?

LOLA
Yes. It was him.

BRIONY
Lola... Who was it?

LOLA doesn't answer.

BRIONY
It was Robbie, wasn't it?

Silence.

BRIONY
Robbie.

LOLA
You saw him.

BRIONY
Like you said, he's a sex maniac. And you don't even know what happened before dinner. I caught him attacking my sister in the library. I don't know what he'd have done, if I hadn't come in...

LOLA
You actually saw him.

BRIONY
Of course I did. Plain as day.

LOLA
He came up behind me. He pushed me to the ground and then he put his hand over my eyes. I couldn't actually, I never actually...

BRIONY
Listen, I've known him all my life. And I saw him.

LOLA
Because I couldn't say for sure.

BRIONY
Well, I can. And I will.

INT. HALL. NIGHT.

LEON crosses the hall with LOLA limp in his arms, followed closely by BRIONY and CECILIA. He speaks to EMILY in an urgent undertone.

LEON
Call the police. And she'll be needing
a doctor as well.

INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.

As the party surges into the room, following LEON, LOLA bursts into noisy tears, which continue as LEON lays her down on one of the sofas and EMILY tries to comfort her.

EMILY
It's all right, dear, you're all right
now.

CECILIA
Is Robbie back?

EMILY
I haven't seen him.

All this is very fast and chaotic: then BRIONY, who's standing just inside the French windows, makes a quiet announcement.

BRIONY
I know who it was.

INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

BRIONY, her face sharply lit against the dark library wall, is being interrogated by a stony-faced plain clothes INSPECTOR. EMILY is scarcely visible. He rattles out the questions intimidatingly; but BRIONY'S answers are firm and unhesitating.

INSPECTOR
You saw him, then?

BRIONY
Yes, I saw him.

INSPECTOR
Just as you see me.

BRIONY
I know it was him.

INSPECTOR
You know it was him, or you saw him?

BRIONY
Yes, I did. I saw him.

INSPECTOR
With your own eyes?

BRIONY
Yes. I saw him, I saw him with my own eyes.

EMILY rests a comforting hand on her daughter's shoulder.

EMILY
Well done, darling.

EXT. TERRACE. NIGHT.

CECILIA paces on the terrace, drawing hard on her cigarette, as she peers out into the darkness, looking for ROBBIE.

INT. LANDING. NIGHT.

BRIONY hesitates outside CECILIA's room, then tries the door gingerly. It's dark in the room.

INT. CECILIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY steps into the room, closes the door, turns on the light, crosses to CECILIA's dressing table, opens one of the drawers and begins to rummage around in it.

We pass through the wall into -

INT. LOLA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

- LOLA's bedroom, where LOLA, is being examined by a DOCTOR, watched by BETTY the cook.

INT. CECILIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY continues to rummage, opening CECILIA's desk.

INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

CECILIA is being interrogated: as with BRIONY, she's brightly lit, the INSPECTOR and EMILY are in shadow.

CECILIA

My brother and I found the two of them, down by the lake.

INSPECTOR

You didn't see anyone else?

CECILIA

I wouldn't necessarily believe everything Briony tells you; she's very fanciful.

CECILIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY throws back the covers on CECILIA'S bed and finds, there on the rumpled sheet, what she's looking for. CECILIA'S handbag and in it ROBBIE'S letter.

INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

DANNY HARDMAN is being interrogated. He's flustered, almost tearful.

DANNY

When they went looking, I went up to my Dad's. I did, honest..

INSPECTOR

Why was that?

DANNY

To tell him all about it.

INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

CLOSE on the letter as EMILY reads it, the INSPECTOR waits in the background.

BRIONY

I know I shouldn't have opened it.

EMILY

No. You should not. But at least you've done the right thing now.

INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.

Tea is being served to the various POLICE OFFICERS.

MARSHALL is on one of the sofas, fast asleep, his mouth open.

LEON, sitting isolated in an armchair, sighs and consults his watch.

BRIONY sits at the piano. Suppressing a yawn, she reaches forward and plonks on one of the notes two or three times. At the window, CECILIA has seen something.

A WIDER SHOT reveals a CONSTABLE stepping into the room.

CONSTABLE
Sir, there's someone coming.

EXT. TERRACE. NIGHT.

CECILIA emerges from the house to join EMILY, BRIONY, LEON, MARSHALL and the three POLICEMEN all of whom are watching, motionless, the approach of a strange apparition through the mist: which eventually reveals itself as ROBBIE, with PIERROT on his shoulders and JACKSON, clinging on to his hand. EMILY speaks sharply to BRIONY.

EMILY
It's time you went to bed.

BRIONY
But...

EMILY
Now.

Obediently, BRIONY turns and vanishes into the house. ROBBIE, closer now, stops in his tracks as he becomes aware of the POLICEMEN.

INT. BRIONY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY is awake, crying into her pillow silently. She stops, hearing the sound of a car starting, and jumps out of bed.

INT/EXT. LANDING/STAIRCASE/DRIVE. NIGHT.

Briony runs across the landing and jumps up on to a window ledge to look out. Below is a police Humber with all four doors open.

Then ROBBIE appears, his wrists handcuffed in front of him, moving between the two CONSTABLES. One of them rounds the car to get into the back seat. ROBBIE stops suddenly and turns back towards the house. At the same time, EMILY'S VOICE rings out.

EMILY (O.S.)

Cecilia!

BRIONY cranes forward to try to see what's happening.

CECILIA, ignoring her mother, runs to ROBBIE. ROBBIE moves towards her, catching the CONSTABLE off guard for a second; she catches hold of ROBBIE's lapel and whispers into his ear. The CONSTABLE arrives and disengages her hand, gently but firmly, then leads ROBBIE to the car and pushes him down into the back seat. CECILIA bursts into tears, as the door closes. The car begins to pull away from the house. Visible through the back window, as he twists round to look over his shoulder, is the shocked, white face of ROBBIE.

The car is only about twenty yards away from the house, when it's obliged to slow down by the irate figure of GRACE TURNER, clutching an umbrella, marching down the very centre of the drive. As the car passes her and before it can accelerate away, she brings the umbrella down with a great crash on the shining paintwork, roaring out at the top of her voice:

GRACE

Liars! Liars! Liars!

BRIONY'S P.O.V.: CECILIA stands motionless, isolated below on the driveway.

TRACKING SHOT: the CAMERA slowly CLOSES IN on BRIONY's eye, unblinking at the window.

INT. BARN. NIGHT.

ROBBIE TURNER, in a private's uniform, is a good deal thinner than when we last saw him, pale and unshaven. He's with two corporals in the loft of a French barn: TOMMY NETTLE, a young, skinny Cockney and FRANK MACE, a giant of a man, black, with a once-white bandage round his large head, holding a patch over one eye. He's stuffing sacks with straw to make rough mattresses, while NETTLE tries to light a stub of candle.

A CAPTION: **NORTHERN FRANCE, 1940.**

NETTLE

...so I says to him: "you can sit round here twiddling your thumbs, waiting to get your head blown off if you want to, I'm off out of it"...

ROBBIE

Ssh.

He's heard footsteps approaching the barn. NETTLE and MACE reach for their rifles and ROBBIE takes out a revolver. Two figures appear in the doorway, carrying something, possibly weapons, it's too dark to tell.

VOICE

Bonsoir, Messieurs.

ROBBIE

Bonsoir.

He whispers to the CORPORALS

ROBBIE

Let me do this.

VOICE

Anglais? Belges?

ROBBIE

Anglais.

VOICE

On a quelque chose pour vous.
(We have something for you.)

ROBBIE

Quoi?
(What?)

MACE

What's his game?

ROBBIE

He says he's got something for us.

NETTLE

Fucking hell.

The two FRENCHMEN take another step and ROBBIE and the CORPORALS release their safety catches.

VOICE
Laissez vos armes!
(Put away your guns.)

ROBBIE
Vous aussi!
(Put away yours!)

VOICE
Attendez!
(Wait!)

One of the FRENCHMEN reaches in his pocket and brings out a torch, which he uses to reveal that the two of them are carrying loaves and bottles. The two FRENCHMEN are obviously brothers and in their fifties.

1ST FRENCHMAN
Ou a du manger pour vous. Du pain, du sucre...
(We have some food for you. Some bread, some sugar.)

2ND FRENCHMAN
Et du vin!
(And some wine!)

1ST FRENCHMAN
Vive l'Angleterre.

ROBBIE
Er, Vive la France.

Later. The two FRENCHMEN sit in the loft with ROBBIE, MACE and NETTLE, circulating the wine bottle.

2ND FRENCHMAN
Qu'est-ce que vous faites ici?
(What are you doing here?)

ROBBIE
Tout au commencement de la retraite, il y avait un attaque de Panzers et j'ai été séparé de ma section.
(When the retreat started, Panzers attacked and I was separated from my unit.)

1ST FRENCHMAN
Ah, c'est vrai, l'armée anglaise se retire.
(So it's true, the English are retreating.)

ROBBIE

On va disparaître, avant qu'il fait
jour.
(We'll be gone at first light.)

1ST FRENCHMAN

On s'est battu toutes ces années, tant
de gens sont morts. Maintenant les
Allemands sont de nouveau en France.
(We fought all those years, lost all
those dead. Now the Germans are back
in France.)

ROBBIE

On va revenir. On va les chasser.
C'est promis.
(We'll come back. We'll throw them out.
I promise you.)

Later. Below, the FRENCHMEN smile and wave.

1ST FRENCHMAN

Bonne chance!
(Good luck!)

They disappear into the night. NETTLE turns to ROBBIE.

NETTLE

Come on, then. How come a toff like
you, talks French and everything, ends
up a private?

ROBBIE hesitates, then decides to be forthcoming.

ROBBIE

Not eligible for officer training if
you join direct from prison.

NETTLE

You're pulling my tit.

ROBBIE

No, I'm not: they gave me a choice,
stay in prison or join the army.

They're looking at him with increased respect, as he adds,
quietly:

ROBBIE

And, for the record, the last thing I
am is a toff.

He leans back against the wall, lost in thought.

INT. JOE LYONS CORNER HOUSE IN THE STRAND. DAY.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

ROBBIE, in uniform, looks through the glass separating the foyer from the café and sees CECILIA, in her nurse's uniform, sitting at a table near the back. Suddenly overcome with nerves, he turns away, facing the cloak-room, where he tries to get the better of his fears. When he turns back, CECILIA, lit by a shaft of sunlight, is standing by her table, looking at him. ROBBIE pushes into the cafe and moves over to her. For a moment, they stand in awkward silence.

ROBBIE
I'm sorry I'm late, I got lost.

CECILIA
Hello.

ROBBIE
Hello.

A short silence.

CECILIA
Shall we sit down?

ROBBIE
Yes, of course.

She's already ordered tea and now she pours him a cup. Her hand hesitates over the sugar bowl.

CECILIA
I'm sorry. I'm afraid I can't remember...

ROBBIE
Two, thank you.

He begins stirring his tea; CECILIA puts a hand over his. A moment passes, then he gently takes his hand away.

ROBBIE
Where are you living?

CECILIA
Tiny flat in Balham. It's ghastly. The landlady's rude and horribly nose-y.

ROBBIE

You look the same, apart from the uniform of course.

CECILIA

I have to be back at the hospital in half an hour.

ROBBIE

Oh, God, that's...

He breaks off, mastering his dismay. Two OLD LADIES are gossiping at a nearby table.

CECILIA

I'm sorry.

ROBBIE

No...Have you been in touch with your family?

CECILIA

I've told you, I'm not going to. Leon came and waited outside the hospital last week. But I just pushed past him.

ROBBIE

Cee, you don't...owe me anything.

CECILIA

Didn't you read my letters? Had they let me visit you, had I been allowed...every day...I'd have been there every day.

ROBBIE

Yes. But if all we have rests on a few moments in the library three and a half years ago, then I'm not sure...I don't know if...

CECILIA puts her hand on his.

CECILIA

Look at me.

He does so. He's close to tears.

CECILIA

Come back. Come back to me.

She reaches out and puts a hand on his cheek; he inclines his head, holding her hand between his cheek and his shoulder.

INT. BARN. NIGHT.

ROBBIE lies awake, hearing the snoring of the CORPORALS. A white barn owl sits on an adjacent beam staring at ROBBIE, who's composing a letter in his mind.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
Dearest Cecilia...
Dearest Cecilia...
Cecilia...

EXT. WHITEHALL. DAY.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

ROBBIE is walking CECILIA to the bus stop, through milling crowds, many in uniform, past sandbags piled high in shop entrances.

CECILIA
A friend of mine has a cottage by the coast; she says we can use it when you're next on leave. White clapboard with blue painted window frames.

They look at each other; then he kisses her, a long, deep kiss. CECILIA starts to cry. A bus pulls up beside them. CECILIA hurriedly produces a photograph of the cottage and hands it to ROBBIE.

CECILIA
Something to think about while you're away.

She tears herself away and scrambles aboard the bus. She stands on the platform, looking back at ROBBIE and the bus starts up and moves away.

ROBBIE
I love you.

ROBBIE starts to run after the bus, but soon it accelerates away, leaving him marooned in the middle of the road, the traffic passing either side of him.

EXT. BARN. DAWN.

ROBBIE sits outside the barn in the pearly dawn light. He's looking at the now somewhat battered photograph of the cottage which is attached to a bundle of letters, which he now puts back in an inside pocket. Then, checking to make sure he's not being watched, he opens his shirt to reveal, at his solar plexus, a wound about the size of an old penny. It doesn't look too bad, just red and sore. But when he presses on it, he gasps in pain and the wound releases a flow of colourless liquid.

EXT. FIELDS. DAWN.

The three soldiers move across a field, silhouetted against the rising sun.

They move along the bank of a narrow canal, in which are reflected the shapes of three German bombers, passing overhead.

NETTLE

Some poor sod's going to catch a packet.

EXT. STREET IN BALHAM. DAY.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

CECILIA moves briskly down the street with a letter in her hand.

CECILIA (V.O.)

My darling, Briony found my address somehow and sent a letter. The first surprise was she didn't go up to Cambridge. She's doing nurse's training at my old hospital. I think she may be doing this as some kind of penance. She says she's beginning to get the full grasp of what she did and what it meant. She wants to come and talk to me.

She kisses the letter and posts it.

CECILIA (V.O.)

I love you. I'll wait for you.

INT. POSTBOX. DAY.

The letter falls on to the pile of other letters.

CECILIA (V.O.)
Come back. Come back to me.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
Come back.

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD. DAY.

ROBBIE, MACE and NETTLE move cautiously through a mist-shrouded orchard.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
Come back. Come back.

NETTLE, who's limping a little, comes to a ragged halt.

NETTLE
Where are we going, guv?

He suddenly sits down on the ground and, with a cry of rage, pulls off his boots and hurls them into the distance.

NETTLE
I fucking hate those boots. I hate them worse than all the fucking Germans put together!

ROBBIE
You'll have a job getting back to England in your socks.

ROBBIE trudges off through the trees to retrieve NETTLE's boots. He approaches the area where he thinks NETTLE's boots might have fallen, a little out of sight of the CORPORALS, finds the boots, picks them up, wearily removes his tin hat, mops his brow and closes his red-rimmed eyes. When he opens his eyes again, he notices something, frowns and advances a few paces.

In a clearing in the orchard, lying in neatly organised rows, are the corpses of thirty GIRLS, all around 13, dressed in the neat black and white uniform of a convent school.

ROBBIE looks down at them, appalled and moved.

EXT. RIVER-BANK NEAR THE TALLIS HOUSE. DAY.

CUT BACK IN TIME.

There's a natural pool not far from the weir in the river which flows through the woods at the far end of the Tallis House grounds.

ROBBIE finishes dressing, picks up a damp towel and emerges from the trees to find BRIONY, still in her swimsuit, standing by the jump-off point, wrapped in a towel.

ROBBIE

Come on, pal. You should be getting dressed.

BRIONY

If I fell in the river, would you save me?

ROBBIE

Of course.

As ROBBIE bends down to do up his shoelace, there's a loud splash. He looks up. BRIONY has disappeared, her towel lies where she stood. Horrified, ROBBIE moves forward to look down at the river.

BRIONY surfaces for a second, then goes under again. She's drifting towards the weir. ROBBIE doesn't hesitate. He dives into the river.

EXT. UNDERWATER.

ROBBIE flounders around in the greenish murk. Then he sees a flash of white and the bubbles rising round BRIONY's flailing limbs. He swims powerfully towards her.

EXT. RIVER-BANK. DAY.

ROBBIE drops BRIONY in the shallow water near the bank and strides ashore, furious. BRIONY, on the other hand, seems delighted.

BRIONY

Thank you, thank you, thank you...

ROBBIE

That was an incredibly bloody stupid thing to do.

BRIONY

I wanted you to save me.

ROBBIE

Don't you know how easily you could have drowned?

BRIONY

You saved me.

ROBBIE

You stupid child! You could have killed us both! Is that your idea of a joke?

She looks at him for a moment, shocked by his tone, but defiant nonetheless.

BRIONY

I want to thank you for saving my life. I'll be eternally grateful to you.

He strides away angrily, into the woods, leaving BRIONY disconsolate amidst the cow parsley.

EXT. RIVER-BANK IN FRANCE. DAY.

ROBBIE leads MACE and NETTLE northwards beside a broad river.

ROBBIE (V.O.)

The story can resume. Our story can resume. I will simply resume.

NETTLE's insistent voice breaks into his reverie.

NETTLE

Let's see Jerry come and have a go at us in fucking Southend. Or, better still, Trafalgar Square. No one speaks the fucking lingo out here. You can't say "Pass the biscuit" or "Where's me hand grenade?" They just shrug. Because they hate us too. I mean, that's the point. We fight in France and the French fucking hate us. Make me Home Secretary, I'll sort this out in a fucking minute. We got India and Africa, right? Jerry can have France and Belgium and whatever else they want. Who's fucking ever been to Poland? It's all about room, empire.

(MORE)

NETTLE (cont'd)
 They want more empire. Give'em this
 shithole, we keep ours, and it's Bob's
 your uncle and Fanny's your fucking
 aunt. Think about it.

EXT. SLUICE. DUSK.

It's late afternoon and the sun is low in the sky as ROBBIE and the CORPORALS trudge past some kind of sluice which squats across a broad canal. They're approaching the outskirts of the industrial quarter of Dunkirk, close enough now to see the huge pall of black smoke rising above the town.

EXT. RAILWAY BRIDGE. NIGHT.

ROBBIE is trying to get some sleep under a stone railway bridge, watched by an impassive bullfrog.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 Dearest Cecilia, the story can resume.

EXT. BEACH BELOW WHITE CLIFFS. DAY.

On a deserted shingle beach, beneath towering chalk cliffs, CECILIA sits, looking out to sea towards France.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 The one I had been planning on that
 evening walk. I can become again the
 man who once walked across a Surrey
 park at dusk in my best suit,
 swaggering on the promise of life; the
 man who, with the clarity of passion,
 made love to you in the library. The
 story can resume.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL QUARTER. DAY.

The three soldiers tramp along between narrow-gauge railway lines.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
 I will return. Find you, love you,
 marry you, and live without shame.

A WIDE ANGLE reveals that ROBBIE, MACE and NETTLE are moving past an enormous burning steelworks ringed with deep bomb craters, with destroyed vehicles at precarious angles.

EXT. APPROACH TO BRAY DUNES. DAY.

ROBBIE and his companions move along a straight road between patches of scrub grass, the industrial quarter now behind them. Suddenly, ROBBIE raises his head.

ROBBIE
I can smell the sea.

He sets off at a run, along a path cut through long grass, MACE and NETTLE labouring behind.

EXT. BRAY DUNES. DAY.

ROBBIE scrambles up the final steep dune and stops. NETTLE and MACE join him, their jaws dropping in amazement.

They are looking down at an astonishing scene. Beyond them, the beach at Bray is teeming with SOLDIERS, hundreds of thousands of men as far as the eye can see. The few ships there are, out on the iron-grey Channel, are almost all capsized or ablaze; and, most striking of all, what looks at first sight like a series of jetties turns out to be columns of SOLDIERS, six or eight deep, standing out to sea for almost five hundred yards in the shallow waters, the closest submerged up to their knees, the furthest obliged to hold their rifles up above their tin helmets to keep them dry. The three MEN watch for a moment in silence, before MACE gives out a heavy sigh.

MACE
Fuck me, it's like something out the Bible.

For once, NETTLE is at a loss for words.

NETTLE
Jesus Christ.

ROBBIE shakes his head as if to clear it.

EXT. BEACH AT BRAY DUNES. DAY.

ROBBIE wanders with the others through what seems like a hallucination.

Harnessed but riderless horses gallop across the sand. A whaler with ragged black sails lies fifty yards from the sea. A football game is in progress. A small group of men throw off their clothes and splash into the sea for a swim. Another larger group huddles in a bandstand, singing a hymn.

A chaplain and his clerk are throwing prayer books and bibles into a bonfire; the thin pages catch and float into the air like black snowflakes. A YOUNG SOLDIER of no more than 17 sits quietly looking out to sea with tears streaming down his face.

ROBBIE approaches a group of NAVAL OFFICERS, as they stride down the beach with a clipboard, trying to do a head-count. They keep moving briskly throughout the conversation.

ROBBIE

We've just arrived, Sir. Can you tell us what we're supposed to do?

NAVAL OFFICER

Nothing. Just wait.

ROBBIE

Where are the ships?

NAVAL OFFICER

A few made it in yesterday but the Luftwaffe blew them to buggery. We lost five hundred men when they sank the Endurance. And high command in its infinite wisdom is denying us air cover. It's a disgrace, it's a fucking disaster.

ROBBIE

The thing is, I'm expected back, you see.

NAVAL OFFICER

There's over three hundred thousand men on this beach, private. So you'll have to wait your turn. Just be grateful that you're not wounded, we've had orders to leave the wounded behind.

NETTLE pulls ROBBIE away, as the NAVAL OFFICER continues up the beach.

NETTLE

Come on, guv, never trust a sailor on dry land. Best off out of it.

ROBBIE moves on, dazed, through crowds streaming across the beach in opposite directions, past gutted and blazing vehicles.

From up ahead, the SOUND of a gunshot.

MACE

That's not right.

To one side is a detachment of French cavalry, each man dismounted and standing to attention beside his horse. A FRENCH OFFICER with a pistol moves slowly, almost ceremoniously, down the line, shooting each horse in the head.

ROBBIE moves on, as another horse goes down in the background. He rounds the back of the beached whaler where a deranged SOLDIER is perched up on the mast, furiously waving and shouting at the top of his voice.

SOLDIER

Can you hear me, laddies? I'm coming home.

The seafront, or what's left of it was once a cheerful resort with cafes and little shops. ROBBIE, MACE and NETTLE pass a bandstand and merry-go-round decorated in red, white and blue. Soldiers have opened up the cafes and a good portion of them are raucously drunk. Some lark about on bikes. A solitary sunbather in his underpants lies on a towel. A brawling couple rolls down the bank on to the beach.

MACE climbs up on to the gazebo-shaped bandstand where a tight knot of SOLDIERS is singing "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind". Then he catches up with ROBBIE and NETTLE as they plunge on ahead.

ROBBIE

Come on. I have to get something to drink.

NETTLE

You need one. You're grey.

He turns to MACE.

NETTLE

He's gone all grey, look.

They move on past another group of SOLDIERS, disabling vehicles with their rifle-butts. Then ROBBIE points ahead to where a cinema sits, perched unexpectedly at the top of the beach.

ROBBIE
There. Come on.

He scrambles up a wooden stairway and disappears into the cinema, having taken one last appraising look out across the raucous inferno of the beach.

INT. CINEMA BAR. DAY.

ROBBIE pushes his way through a tight crowd of SOLDIERS, who are singing "The Long and the Short and the Tall" with the words changed from "Bless'em all" to "Fuck'em all". He can't find anything to drink, and, as a brawl starts up and bottles begin to fly, he ducks through a door at the back.

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA. DAY.

ROBBIE finds a tap on the wall in a kind of box-room, cluttered with film cannisters; he tries it, but nothing comes out. In the background, the SONG has changed to "The White Cliffs of Dover", but ROBBIE has heard, under this, the murmur of French dialogue and he moves forward to investigate.

INT. CINEMA. DAY.

ROBBIE scrambles down a ladder and finds himself at the foot of a giant screen where the huge face, full of doomed melancholy, of Jean Gabin leans forward to kiss the shining lips of Michèle Morgan in Quai des Brumes. As Gabin kisses her a second time, ROBBIE, dwarfed by the enormous black-and-white image, buries his face in his hands.

EXT. STREET IN BRAY. NIGHT.

ROBBIE wanders down a rubble-strewn street, between blazing buildings and vehicles; NETTLE, accompanying him, cups his hands around his mouth.

NETTLE
Mace! Mace!

They turn a corner and NETTLE, demoralised, stops to light a cigarette.

NETTLE
Hold up, guv.

ROBBIE , looking listlessly around, sees an elderly FRENCHWOMAN step into a shop with shattered windows. His interest abruptly aroused, he speaks crisply to NETTLE.

ROBBIE
Wait here.

He sets off into the shop, leaving a bemused NETTLE.

INT. SHOP. NIGHT.

ROBBIE moves into a kind of parlour off the main shop. He looks around; he's sweating now and very pale. Suddenly, a familiar VOICE breaks into his reverie.

GRACE (O.S.)
Why don't you sit down?

ROBBIE turns to find the reassuring figure of GRACE, his mother, standing in a doorway. Gratefully, he sinks into a chair.

ROBBIE
It's so hot in here.

GRACE
Take your boots off.

Later. GRACE is washing ROBBIE's feet. They exchange a tender smile.

ROBBIE
I have to get back. I promised her. To put things right. And she loves me. She's waiting for me.

GRACE looks up at him, infinitely understanding. There's a loud explosion outside.

EXT. STREET. NIGHT.

ROBBIE strides out of the shop, carrying bread and wine, no longer wearing his boots. NETTLE, who's sitting waiting, is obliged to jump to his feet and hurry after him.

NETTLE
Oi! Wait!

NETTLE catches up with ROBBIE.

NETTLE

What you done with your boots?

No answer. NETTLE circles ROBBIE, trying to get his attention.

NETTLE

You sure you're feeling all right?

ROBBIE

Never better.

He moves on, frowning in concentration.

ROBBIE

Now, I'm wondering if the beach really is the best place for dinner.

EXT. SIDE STREET. NIGHT.

ROBBIE and NETTLE turn into a side street, as bombs explode not far away, and the night is lit up by flashes of artillery.

ROBBIE

I'm not sure, I don't recognise it...

NETTLE follows, scrambling over rubble and bomb debris. He indicates a dark opening.

NETTLE

This'll do. Down here.

ROBBIE

No, no, it's a little further on.

NETTLE

What is?

ROBBIE

This place I know, an old cottage, white clapboard with blue painted window frames.

NETTLE finally understands he's delirious and decides to play along with him, whilst manoeuvring him towards the entrance of an abandoned ice factory.

NETTLE

Oh, yes, that's right, that's where we're going.

ROBBIE

It's close to here.

NETTLE
We're there. This is it.

He succeeds in leading ROBBIE into the side entrance of the factory.

INT. ICE FACTORY. NIGHT.

NETTLE guides ROBBIE between ranks of sleeping SOLDIERS, arriving at a steel staircase leading down to a cellar.

NETTLE
Here we are. Down here.

INT. STAIRCASE AND CELLAR. NIGHT.

ROBBIE descends the narrow staircase, NETTLE following. The cellar is also crowded, but they reach an empty stretch of wall and NETTLE starts to help ROBBIE off with his pack. As he does so, ROBBIE more or less collapses.

NETTLE
It's all right, guv'nor.

He straightens ROBBIE out and drapes a thin blanket over him.

NETTLE
That's right. Get your head down.
There you go. Tuck yourself in. Keep yourself warm.

NETTLE hands ROBBIE a chunk of bread.

NETTLE
Chew on a bit of this but quiet like
or they'll all be wanting some. And
try and get some sleep. Ssh.

Having calmed ROBBIE, NETTLE settles himself down facing him. Darkness. Then a match flares. It's ROBBIE: he has the bundle of letters in his hand, and the photograph of the cottage on the coast. SOUND of the sea. Slowly the match burns out.

MONTAGE

Key moments from ROBBIE's past, some familiar, some not, REPLAY, some running backwards.

The fragment of Meissen flies back up out of the fountain and re-attaches itself to the lip of the vase.

ROBBIE takes back the letter he's handed to BRIONY.

The hammers of ROBBIE's typewriter lift the ink from the page: T-N-U-C, leaving clean white paper.

ROBBIE, alone, advances through a poppy-field in France, under a blazing sun.

ROBBIE (V.O.)
Find you, love you, marry you, and
live without shame.

The Dunkirk cinema is filled with SOLDIERS singing "The White Cliffs of Dover."

As Jean Gabin kisses Michèle Morgan, ROBBIE raises his face from his hands.

A SLOW TRACKING SHOT finds CECILIA, in her green evening gown, standing outside the Tallis House.

ROBBIE's arrest, played backwards: he backs away from the car, breaks away momentarily from the CONSTABLE escorting him.

CLOSE on CECILIA: She leans forward and whispers into ROBBIE's ear.

CECILIA
I love you. Come back. Come back to
me.

INT. CELLAR. NIGHT.

ROBBIE comes awake with a start; NETTLE is gently shaking him.

NETTLE
Bit too much noise, guv'nor.

ROBBIE
Noise? What noise?

NETTLE
You keep shouting. Some of the lads
are getting a bit peeved.

ROBBIE tries to lift his head but can't. NETTLE strikes a match.

NETTLE
Christ. You look a bit rough.

ROBBIE

Thing is, I've decided to stay on a bit. I'm meeting someone. I'm always keeping her waiting.

NETTLE wipes the sweat off ROBBIE'S forehead; he begins to speak, his voice soothing.

NETTLE

Now listen, listen to me, guv'nor. I went out for a Jimmy Riddle just now. Guess what I saw? They're getting themselves sorted out down on the beach. The boats are back and a geezer from the Buffs is marching us down at seven. We're away, we're off home, mate! So get some more sleep and no more of your bleeding shouting, all right?

ROBBIE looks peaceful. He speaks in a cracked whisper:

ROBBIE

I won't say a word. Wake me before seven, would you? Thanks so much. You won't hear another word out of me. I promise.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CORRIDOR AND WARD IN ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL. DAY.

A broad, empty hospital corridor, simonized to an improbable gloss.

A CAPTION: **LONDON, THREE WEEKS EARLIER.**

The SOUND of rapid, regular steps at the far end of the corridor. Then they appear, a group of PROBATIONARY NURSES following a WARD SISTER, like ducklings after their mother.

At the back of the group is BRIONY TALLIS, now eighteen, dressed, like the others, in the constricting purple and white tunic of a probationer.

SISTER DRUMMOND, a woman in her thirties with a narrow mouth and a quiet but lethal delivery, and her NURSES sweep into a long ward with high ceilings and windows.

DRUMMOND

Bed castors should be lined up and pointing inwards. I found three yesterday that weren't. You know who you are.

They keep walking, moving fast.

DRUMMOND

Which of you was responsible for putting away the blankets today?

An amiable-looking nurse, FIONA AVERY, pipes up apprehensively.

FIONA

I was, Sister.

DRUMMOND

I don't suppose you can tell us what you did wrong.

FIONA

No, Sister.

DRUMMOND

Labels are folded to the inside, are they not?

FIONA

Oh, yes, Sister, sorry, Sister.

DRUMMOND

Do them again. Nurse Tallis, I'll see you in my office. The rest of you are excused.

BRIONY follows SISTER DRUMMOND towards her office.

INT. SISTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

BRIONY stands across from SISTER DRUMMOND, who sits at her desk.

DRUMMOND

Is this job at all important to you, Tallis?

BRIONY

Very important, Sister.

DRUMMOND

Yesterday you were seconded to men's surgical. When your patient came round from his anaesthetic, it seems the first thing he did was to ask for Briony. Who might Briony be?

BRIONY

Well, me, Sister.

SISTER DRUMMOND suddenly draws herself up and shouts at BRIONY.

DRUMMOND

There is no Briony! You are Tallis. Nurse Tallis. Is that understood?

BRIONY

Yes, Sister.

INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT

BRIONY stands at a window at the end of a long corridor looking out at a view of the Thames and Parliament beyond. The sun is setting. Her focus shifts to her own reflection which she studies impassively for a moment.

BRIONY

There is no Briony.

She turns from the window and walks away down the corridor, past people putting up the blackout shutters. Over this, the VOICE of a RADIO NEWSREADER.

NEWSREADER (V.O.)

This is the B.B.C Home Service. Here is the news. The B.E.F., with their French allies, are fighting a desperate battle in the Northern Zone of the Western Front. The Allied Forces have not lost cohesion and their morale is high. The R.A.F. continues to give all the support in its power to the Allied armies in Northern France...

INT. NURSES' DORMITORY. NIGHT.

The CAMERA moves slowly through the 20-bed dormitory, taking in jars of cosmetics, overflowing ashtrays and tennis racquets. In the corridor a NURSE stands at the wall-mounted telephone talking to each one of her family in turn.

Back in the dormitory, NURSES are putting in curlers, writing letters, crying gently on one another's shoulder, dancing to a Flanagan and Allen record. Finally, we arrive at BRIONY, who is trimming the nails on FIONA'S right hand.

FIONA

Thanks, I never could make the scissors work with my left hand. Mummy always did it for me.

BRIONY

There. You're done.

She turns to her bedside locker, in which is the small portable typewriter she used as a child.

Somebody shouts "Lights out!" And the lights go out.

FIONA

Oh, bother.

BRIONY lies back on her bed.

FIONA

Good night, Tallis.

INT. WATER TANK ROOM. ST. THOMAS' HOSPITAL. NIGHT

The water tank room is high in a tower above the hospital. The SOUND of someone typing. BRIONY is perched on a step, among the pipes and tanks, typing furiously. Beside her, a small pile of paper.

A noise at the bottom of the stairs. BRIONY is startled.

FIONA

Don't panic. It's only me.

BRIONY

Fiona! I almost jumped out of my skin!

FIONA climbs up. She's wearing her dressing gown. She sits and fishes for a cigarette.

FIONA

So this is what you get up to after lights out. I thought you might be in the middle of some tempestuous romance.

She shivers.

FIONA

Don't you freeze to death up here?

She moves to look out of the window.

FIONA

I love London. Do you think all of this will be bombed and just disappear?

BRIONY

No. I don't know.

FIONA

Do you write about Sister Drummond? Do you write about me?

BRIONY

Sometimes.

FIONA

Can I look?

BRIONY

I'd rather you didn't. It's private.

She puts out a hand to cover the title page, which reads: Two Figures By a Fountain by Briony Tallis.

FIONA

I don't see any point in writing a story if you're not going to let anyone read it.

BRIONY

It's not ready yet.

FIONA

What's it about ?

BRIONY

It's just...it's about a young girl, a young and foolish girl, who sees something from her nursery window which she doesn't understand, but she thinks she does...I probably won't ever finish it.

FIONA considers BRIONY for a moment.

FIONA

I look at you, Tallis, and you're so mysterious.

(MORE)

FIONA (cont'd)
I've never been mysterious. Do you
know what I decided tonight?

BRIONY
What?

FIONA
I could never marry a man who wasn't
in the Royal Navy.

BRIONY thinks about this, then bursts out laughing. FIONA
shushes her, giggling helplessly herself.

INT. HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION OFFICE. DAY

A sympathetic-looking ASSISTANT with an index-card in her hand
turns to speak to BRIONY, who's in uniform, waiting on the other
side of the counter.

ASSISTANT
Here we are, Cecilia Tallis, I think
this is her address.

BRIONY
Thank you.

INT. WARD. NIGHT.

BRIONY, on night duty, sits at her table studying textbooks.

BRIONY (V.O.)
Dear Cecilia, Please don't throw this
away without reading it. As you'll
have seen from the notepaper, I'm here
at St. Thomas's, doing my nurses'
training.

INT. SLUICE ROOM. DAY.

BRIONY, in a heavy rubber apron, sluices a bedpan, looking away,
holding her breath.

BRIONY (V.O.)
I decided not to take up my place at
Cambridge. I decided I wanted to make
myself useful, do something practical.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. DAY.

BRIONY and FIONA are polishing the floors using a heavy bumper that they can hardly move from side to side.

FIONA

It says in the paper the army are making strategic withdrawals.

BRIONY

I saw that. It's a euphemism for retreat.

EXT. HOSPITAL YARD. DAY.

BRIONY works alongside a number of other PROBATIONERS, on her knees in the centre of the yard, scrubbing the frame of one of a number of filthy old beds.

BRIONY (V.O.)

But no matter how hard I work, no matter how long the hours, I can't escape from what I did...

INT. WASH ROOM. NIGHT.

BRIONY stands at the only (cold) tap, fiercely scrubbing her hands with a scrubbing-brush and baking soda. Her hands are red-raw, cracked and marked with chilblains.

BRIONY (V.O.)

...and what it meant, the full extent of which I'm only now beginning to grasp. Cee, please write and tell me we can meet. Your sister, Briony.

INT. STORE ROOM. DAY.

BRIONY works in a corner near the doorway, with FIONA. From time to time PORTERS arrive with trolleys and leave piles of boxes outside in the corridor. Other NURSES unpack and stack kidney bowls and packs of hypodermics.

FIONA

So do you?

BRIONY

Do I what?

FIONA
Have a secret fiance in France? That's
what everybody thinks.

BRIONY
No. Of course not.

FIONA
Imagine not knowing if he'd ever come
back.

BRIONY
I've never been in love.

FIONA
What never? Not even a crush?

BRIONY
I had a crush once, when I was ten or
eleven. I jumped in the river to see
if he'd save me from drowning.

FIONA
Now you're teasing me.

BRIONY
No. And he did save me. But as soon as
I told him I loved him the feeling
sort of disappeared.

Outside in the corridor, there's a commotion. People are running
past. Another PROBATIONARY NURSE sticks her head through the
doorway.

NURSE
Something's happened.

BRIONY and FIONA put down the boxes they're stacking and run out
into the corridor, where everyone is running towards the exit.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL. DAY.

As BRIONY and FIONA arrive, out of breath, bloody and wounded
SOLDIERS are being unloaded from the lorries and ambulances.
Many of them are black with oil, coated in grime and dazed with
exhaustion. BRIONY has scarcely arrived, when a young REGISTRAR
barks at her.

REGISTRAR
You! Get on the end of this stretcher!

He turns away from her and picks up the stretcher, handles behind him, so that he doesn't see the vast effort it costs BRIONY to lift her end. The PATIENT is a large SERGEANT, his bare feet and filthy bluish toes directly below BRIONY's face, his thigh disfigured by an ugly wound. BRIONY struggles forward, each step plainly an agony for her and, even more distressingly, for the SERGEANT.

INT. SECOND FLOOR. CORRIDOR. DAY.

The lift doors slam open and the REGISTRAR emerges carrying the stretcher. BRIONY is struggling desperately along behind the REGISTRAR, her teeth gritted, her face puce with effort. The PATIENT utters a fearsome groan. Tears begin to roll down BRIONY's cheeks as she gasps with effort, the fingers of her left hand begin inexorably to unravel. She hangs on grimly until they turn into the ward.

INT. WARD. DAY.

A NURSE and a SISTER wait by an emergency bed in a ward now crammed with extra beds. The REGISTRAR and BRIONY arrive alongside and stop. BRIONY's left hand gives way and she's obliged to catch the stretcher on her knee. This causes an anguished gasp from the PATIENT. The REGISTRAR glares at her.

BRIONY turns and hurries away, glancing surreptitiously at her red and dented left hand.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE. DAY.

BRIONY emerges into a scene of escalating chaos as more and more field ambulances arrive and dozens of wounded soldiers mill about hopelessly or sit waiting on the pavement.

1ST SOLDIER
Fucking shambles.

2ND SOLDIER
Turner! Private Turner?

BRIONY spins on her heels. There is a slight man, his face filthy and black with oil. It is ROBBIE.

BRIONY
Robbie? Robbie!

ROBBIE turns away. BRIONY rushes to him, puts a hand on his arm and turns him forcibly. The man is not ROBBIE.

BRIONY

Excuse me.

INT. BRIONY'S WARD. DAY INTO NIGHT

A MONTAGE of BRIONY's work against a background of ceaseless activity in the rest of the ward. BRIONY helps lift a man whose leg has been amputated back on to his bed.

BRIONY swabs the oil from a long, stitched wound down a man's back.

BRIONY leans forward, puts one hand on an AIRMAN's leg, grips the end of a protruding piece of shrapnel with the forceps and pulls it out, firmly and smoothly.

BRIONY rips a dressing off a man's chest, causing him to cry out and vomit.

BRIONY joins a group of NURSES around the bed of a young man whose body is entirely covered in savage oil burns.

Outside in the hallway, FIONA, overcome, turns towards the wall and weeps.

INT. WARD. NIGHT.

BRIONY moves between rows of sleeping patients, checking them. She's intercepted by SISTER DRUMMOND.

DRUMMOND

You speak a little French, if I remember rightly.

BRIONY

Only school French, Sister.

DRUMMOND

The soldier over there in bed 13. Go and sit with him for a minute. Hold his hand.

BRIONY hesitates, looking over towards the soldier.

DRUMMOND

Off you go.

BRIONY slowly moves down the length of the ward, full of apprehension. Bed 13 is surrounded by screens. Inside the screens is the patient, LUC CORNET, his head heavily bandaged.

He's asleep. BRIONY sits by the bed and hesitantly takes his hand. He turns to her.

CORNET

Te voilà, enfin.
(Here you are, at last.)

BRIONY

La soeur m'a envoyée. Pour bavarder un peu.
(The Sister sent me. For a little chat.)

CORNET

Ah, oui, je me souviens de ta soeur. Elle était toujours très gentille. Qu'est-ce qu'elle fait maintenant? (Oh, yes, I remember your sister. She was always so nice. What's she doing now?)

BRIONY

Erm, elle est aussi infirmière.
(She's a nurse as well.)

CORNET

Est-ce qu'elle s'est mariée enfin avec cet homme qu'elle aimait tant? J'ai oublié son nom.
(Did she finally marry that man she was so in love with? I've forgotten his name.)

BRIONY

Er, Robbie. Bientôt, j'espère.
(She will soon, I hope.)

CORNET

Robbie, oui, c'est ça.
(Robbie, yes, that's right.)

BRIONY

Et vous, comment vous appelez-vous?
(And what's your name?)

CORNET

Luc. Luc Cornet. Et toi?

BRIONY hesitates.

BRIONY

Tallis.

CORNET
Tallis. C'est joli.
(That's pretty.)

A spasm of pain or bewilderment crosses his face. He grips her hand tightly and looks at her, frowning.

CORNET
Je me rappelle de toi maintenant.
C'est l'Anglaise. Tu te souviens, ta première visite à Millau? Je travaillais avec mon père près des fours. J'ai entendu ton accent.
(I remember you now. You're the English girl. You remember your first visit to Millau? I was working by the ovens with my father. I heard your accent.)

BRIONY looks at him, moved by his confusion.

CORNET
Tu peux me rendre un tout petit service, Tallis?
(Can you do me a little favour?)

BRIONY
Bien sûr.
(Of course.)

CORNET
Ce bandage me serre terriblement. Tu peux le desserrer un peu? S'il te plaît.
(These bandages are so tight. Can you loosen them a bit? Please.)

BRIONY stands to look down at the bandage. It's secured by a pair of simple gauze bows. She begins to undo them.

CORNET
Tu te souviens de ma soeur cadette, Anne? Elle joue toujours ce petit morceau de Debussy. Tu te souviens?
(You remember my younger sister, Anne? She still plays that little Debussy piece. Do you remember?)

He starts to hum the tune. BRIONY continues to unwind the bandages.

CORNET

Elle prend toujours une mine si grave
quand elle joue, tu ne trouves pas?
(She always looks so serious when she
plays, you know?)

All of a sudden, the sterile towel underneath the bandage slides away, taking most of the bloodstained dressing with it. A section of CORNET's skull is missing and BRIONY finds herself looking directly down at his brain.

CORNET

Et nos croissants? Qu'est-ce que tu en
pensais?
(What about our croissants? What did
you think of them?)

Methodically, not panicking, BRIONY starts to replace the dressing.

BRIONY

Délicieux. Les plus délicieux à
Millau.
(Delicious. The most delicious in
Millau.)

CORNET

Oui, c'est la qualité du beurre.
(Yes, it's the quality of the butter.)

BRIONY

Oui.
(Yes.)

CORNET

C'est pour ça que tu venais tous les
jours?
(Is that why you came every day?)

BRIONY

Oui, bien sûr.
(Yes, of course.)

CORNET thinks for a moment. Meanwhile, with infinite care, BRIONY is replacing the sterile towel.

CORNET

Parce que, tu sais... Ma mère t'aime
beaucoup.
(Because, you know...my mother is very
fond of you.)

BRIONY

Ah, bon?
(Oh, yes?)

CORNET

Oui. À son avis, on devrait se marier
pendant l'été.
(Yes. In her opinion we should get
married in the summer.)

BRIONY falters in her work, but recovers. She's tying the bows
of the bandage.

BRIONY

C'est plus confortable comme ça,
j'espère.
(I hope that's more comfortable.)

CORNET

Tu m'aimes?
(Do you love me?)

BRIONY

Oui.
(Yes.)

She's spoken without hesitation. He's broken into a light sweat,
and she leans forward to wipe his face tenderly. He looks up at
her.

CORNET

Tu peux rester un peu?
(Can you stay a while?)

BRIONY nods reassuringly. All of a sudden, it's as if an
electric current has passed through him. He jerks upright and
begins to topple forward. BRIONY catches him and his head slumps
forward, banging against her cheek. It's all she can do to get
him back to his previous position in the bed. She's settling
him, her face close to his, when his eyes flutter open. A tear
rolls down his cheek.

CORNET

J'ai peur. J'ai peur. Tallis.
(I'm frightened. I'm frightened,
Tallis.)

BRIONY

Briony. Je m'appelle Briony.
(My name is Briony.)

She's suddenly aware of SISTER DRUMMOND standing above her. She
speaks with her habitual sinister softness.

DRUMMOND
Stand up, Nurse Tallis.

BRIONY does, bracing herself for an onslaught which doesn't come. Instead, DRUMMOND reaches out to straighten BRIONY'S collar. Behind her, a NURSE covers LUC CORNET'S face with the sheet. Finally, DRUMMOND speaks, an unprecedented note of tenderness in her voice.

DRUMMOND
Now go and wash the blood off your
face.

Numbly, BRIONY turns away and sets off down the centre of the silent, darkened ward.

INT. HOSPITAL DAY ROOM. DAY.

Open on full-screen newsreel footage: the return of the BEF from France. The newsreel is being shown on a makeshift screen in the day room, where it is being watched with various degrees of disbelief and disgust by those of the patients well enough to be up and about. In total contrast to everything we've seen in the hospital and at Dunkirk, what's shown tells of a heroic rescue and a triumphant return. We see the troops offering smiling faces and giving the thumbs-up as train carriages roll into London. We see Union Jacks waving, and happy wives and children.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
*The navy has earned our undying
gratitude. The army is undefeated.
Courage has brought them through
unconquered, their spirit unbowed.
This is the epic of Dunkirk, a name
that will live forever in the annals
of warfare.*

BRIONY stands at the back, watching this propaganda. The next item in the newsreel is introduced by a title: ON THE HOME FRONT.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)
*In the course of a comprehensive tour,
Queen Elizabeth is seen here visiting
a chocolate factory in the North of
England...*

On the screen the Queen is being given a tour of the ARMY AMO factory. BRIONY begins to collect her things to leave. Suddenly her attention is caught, as there, on the screen, she sees LOLA QUINCEY and PAUL MARSHALL shaking hands with the Queen.

NEWS REPORTER

The confectionery magnate, and friend of the British Army, Mr. Paul Marshall, gave the Queen a tour of the Army Amo factory with his lovely soon-to-be-wed fiancée Miss Lola Quincey. And what a mouthwatering couple they are. Keep the Amo coming, our boys have a sweet tooth!

LOLA looks at the camera and smiles, as if straight at BRIONY.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, CLAPHAM. DAY.

The church stands at the end of a street of terraced houses, an imposing facade behind pillars and a flight of steps. BRIONY approaches, moving up the street, taking note of an empty black Rolls Royce parked outside the church. She hesitantly climbs the steps towards the church door.

INT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY. DAY.

The wedding is already in progress, as BRIONY quietly lets herself into the church.

There are a large number of GUESTS. PIERROT and JACKSON, now fourteen, stand between their estranged parents, HERMIONE and CECIL. On the other side are the many GUESTS of MARSHALL. LOLA, in full bridal white and heavily veiled, and MARSHALL in a morning suit, face the VICAR, who is in full flow.

BRIONY slips into a pew at the back and watches.

VICAR

Secondly for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication, that such persons as have not the gift of continence might marry and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body. Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have for the other...

The VOICE of YOUNG BRIONY breaks in, talking to the POLICE INSPECTOR.

YOUNG BRIONY (V.O.)

I saw him.

BRIONY sits in her seat, an appalling knowledge dawning.

VICAR

Therefore if any man can show any just cause, why they may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or for ever hold his peace.

BRIONY's fingers grip her seat.

YOUNG BRIONY (V.O.)

I know it was him.

EXT. GRASSY BANK NEAR THE TALLIS HOUSE. NIGHT. 1935.

BRIONY stands still, blinded by the torch.

INT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY. DAY. 1940.

BRIONY's eyes widen.

EXT. GRASSY BANK NEAR THE TALLIS HOUSE. NIGHT. 1935.

This time it's clear that the figure scrambling away up the bank is PAUL MARSHALL. A CRASH of organ music.

INT. LIBRARY. NIGHT.

YOUNG BRIONY faces the INSPECTOR.

BRIONY

I saw him, I saw him with my own eyes.

The church organ thunders on.

INT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY. DAY. 1940.

BRIONY stands in her pew as LOLA and MARSHALL walk towards her. They don't notice her until the VICAR swings open one of the great doors of the church. A shaft of sunlight sweeps across, shining straight on BRIONY. She stares at LOLA and MARSHALL as they draw level with her. LOLA'S eyes meet with BRIONY'S, her forehead crinkles with displeasure, her lips purse. MARSHALL'S face reddens and then they are gone.

BRIONY is left alone in the church.

EXT. STREET NEAR BALHAM. DAY.

BRIONY passes down a narrow terrace of red-brick houses. Coming towards her is a MOTHER with four unruly BOYS, all carrying cardboard suitcases and knapsacks.

MOTHER

Leave off, let the nurseys through!

The BOYS take no notice of her whatsoever, and BRIONY is obliged to stand aside to let them pass. The MOTHER smiles at her apologetically.

MOTHER

They're going down to the country today. Never been out of London before.

BRIONY

I hope they get a nice family.

MOTHER

They dunno what they're in for with this lot!

EXT. DUDLEY VILLAS IN BALHAM. DAY.

BRIONY walks down the long, drab street and stops at no.43, outside which is an old Ford 8 without wheels, supported on piles of brick. She walks down the front path, rings the doorbell and then, realizing it doesn't work, uses the heavy knocker to knock twice. The door is opened by a sour-faced woman in her thirties, MRS. JARVIS.

BRIONY

I'm looking for Miss Tallis. Cecilia Tallis. Is she in?

MRS. JARVIS turns and yells up the stairs.

MRS. JARVIS

Tallis! Door!

Eventually, CECILIA appears in the doorway. She's wearing a blue striped dressing-gown and men's socks.

CECILIA

My God.

BRIONY

I tried writing, but you wouldn't answer. I have to talk to you.

INT. CECILIA'S FLAT. DAY.

CECILIA leads BRIONY to her tiny kitchen/living room. Everything - furniture, lino, wallpaper - is cheap and shabby. There's a small table covered by a gingham cloth, a few books (Shakespeare, Gray's Anatomy), an overflowing ashtray and a jam jar containing a bunch of harebells. The door to the bedroom is closed.

CECILIA is lighting a cigarette as BRIONY advances tentatively into the flat. She sees CECILIA's uniform hanging behind the door.

BRIONY

So you're a ward sister now?

CECILIA

Yes.

CECILIA forces herself to offer BRIONY a cigarette.

BRIONY

Thanks.

BRIONY launches abruptly into what she's come to say.

BRIONY

I want to go in front of a judge and change my evidence, Cee.

CECILIA

Don't call me that!

She turns away, trying to control herself.

CECILIA

Please don't ever call me that.

BRIONY

What I did was terrible, I don't expect you to forgive me.

CECILIA

Don't worry, I won't.

She turns away again.

CECILIA

You're an unreliable witness, they'd never re-open the case.

BRIONY

Well at least I can tell everyone else, I'll go home, explain to Mummy and Daddy and...

CECILIA

What's stopping you?

BRIONY

I wanted to see you first.

CECILIA

They don't want to know. That unpleasantness is all tidied away in the past, thank you very much.

BRIONY starts: the bedroom door has opened and ROBBIE stands in front of them, in his uniform shirt and trousers. His shirt is open revealing a square bandage taped over the wound at his solar plexus. BRIONY is partly obscured from ROBBIE's view by CECILIA who has turned to him. He talks quietly to CECILIA without focusing on BRIONY, then briefly nods in her direction.

ROBBIE

Excuse me.

Then he's gone again. Silence.

CECILIA

He sleeps so deeply.

BRIONY holds onto the table for support. In silence CECILIA begins to move around the kitchen area of the room. She fills a kettle. Mixes milk and water to egg powder and lays a pot of jam and three plates and cups on the table. Finally they hear the click of the bathroom door and ROBBIE whistling as he crosses the landing. BRIONY moves as far away from the door as possible. She's in his sight line as ROBBIE opens the door. He sees her. He can't even address her.

ROBBIE

What is she doing here?

CECILIA

She came to speak to me.

ROBBIE

Oh, yes? What about?

BRIONY
The terrible thing I did.

ROBBIE moves around the room, putting his hands in his pockets, taking them out again. It's clear he's furious, hardly able to contain himself.

ROBBIE
I'll be quite honest with you. I'm torn between breaking your neck here and throwing you down the stairs.

BRIONY stands her ground, shaken but not afraid.

ROBBIE
Have you any idea what it's like in jail? Course you don't. Tell me, did it give you pleasure to think of me inside?

BRIONY
No.

ROBBIE
But you did nothing about it.

BRIONY
No.

ROBBIE
Do you think I assaulted your cousin?

BRIONY
No.

ROBBIE
Did you think it then?

BRIONY
Yes, yes and no. I wasn't certain.

ROBBIE
And what's made you so certain now?

BRIONY
Growing up.

ROBBIE
Growing up?

BRIONY
I was thirteen.

ROBBIE

How old do you have to be before you know the difference between right and wrong? Do you have to be eighteen before you can own up to a lie? There are soldiers of eighteen old enough to be left to die on the side of the road! Did you know that?

BRIONY

Yes.

ROBBIE

Five years ago you didn't care about telling the truth. You and all your family, you just assumed that for all my education, I was still little better than a servant, still not to be trusted. Thanks to you, they were able to close ranks and throw me to the fucking wolves.

BRIONY shakes her head. ROBBIE clenches his fist, looks as if might attack her. BRIONY prepares herself, flinching. But CECILIA intervenes, holding on to him, calming him.

CECILIA

Robbie. Robbie, don't. Please. Look at me, Robbie. Look at me.

She kisses him gently and lingeringly on the lips. BRIONY looks away, something like shame in her eyes. We stay on BRIONY's face.

CECILIA (O.S.)

Come back, come back, come back to me.

BRIONY looks out of the window. ROBBIE and CECILIA are now talking in low voices as BRIONY watches an OLD WOMAN outside in the street below, pushing a pram.

CECILIA

Briony.

BRIONY turns.

CECILIA

There isn't much time. Robbie has to report for duty at six and he's got a train to catch. So sit down. There are some things you're going to do for us.

BRIONY and CECILIA sit in the kitchen. ROBBIE leans on the table, looming over them.

ROBBIE

You'll go to your parents as soon as you can and tell them everything they need to know to be convinced that your evidence was false. You'll go and see a solicitor and make a statement and have it signed and witnessed and send copies to us. Is that clear?

BRIONY

Yes.

ROBBIE

Then you'll write a detailed letter to me, explaining everything that led up to you saying you saw me by the lake.

CECILIA

Try and include whatever you can remember of what Danny Hardman was doing that night.

BRIONY

It wasn't Danny Hardman. It was Leon's friend, Marshall.

They both look at her, astonished.

CECILIA

I don't believe you.

BRIONY

He's married Lola; I've just come from their wedding.

Silence. Finally, ROBBIE exhales the breath he's been holding, CECILIA looks across at him.

CECILIA

Lola won't be able to testify against him now. He's immune.

ROBBIE straightens up and turns away, grappling with a riot of emotions. Silence. Finally, BRIONY stands up and speaks, very

formal.

BRIONY
I'm very, very sorry to have caused
you all this terrible distress. I am
very, very sorry.

ROBBIE
Just do what we've asked of you. Write
it all down.

BRIONY
I will. I promise.

She leaves abruptly, her eyes brimming with tears.

EXT. DUDLEY VILLAS. DAY.

In the window, CECILIA and ROBBIE are locked in a tender
embrace.

Below in the street, BRIONY turns away and sets off into the
distance.

INT. UNDERGROUND TRAIN.

BRIONY sits on a busy train staring straight ahead, trying to
take in all that's happened, all she's learnt. Trying not to
cry. The lights flicker on and off, taking us finally to black.

OVER THIS, the tired VOICE of OLDER BRIONY.

OLDER BRIONY (V.O.)
I'm sorry, could we stop for a minute?

INT. TV CONTROL ROOM. DAY. 1999.

Seen on dozens of monitors, BRIONY TALLIS, 76 now, has
interrupted an interview she's giving for television. Leaning
forward, she unhooks her radio mike.

INTERVIEWER
Of course. Is anything wrong?

OLDER BRIONY
I just need a couple of minutes to
myself.

The VIDEOTAPE rewinds and we're back to earlier in the
interview.

INTERVIEWER

Your new novel, your twenty-first, is called Atonement; it's a period piece set before and during the Second World War...

He breaks off, concerned, as OLDER BRIONY buries her face in her hands.

INTERVIEWER

Briony?

INT. BATHROOM. DAY.

Alone, OLDER BRIONY grimaces at her over-made-up face in the mirror, pours three aspirin into her hand and washes them down. Then she lowers her head and closes her eyes.

INT. TV STUDIO. DAY.

The interview has resumed.

INTERVIEWER

I'd like to talk now about your new novel, Atonement, which is coming out in a few days to coincide with your birthday. It's your twenty-first novel...

CLOSE on BRIONY, her face against black: where we will remain for the rest of her interview.

OLDER BRIONY

It's my last novel.

INTERVIEWER

Oh, really? You mean you're retiring?

OLDER BRIONY contemplates him calmly for a moment.

OLDER BRIONY

No, dying.

Before the INTERVIEWER is quite able to reassemble his thoughts, she resumes:

OLDER BRIONY

My doctor tells me I have something called vascular dementia; which is essentially a continuous series of

(MORE)

OLDER BRIONY (cont'd)
 tiny strokes. Your brain gradually closes down. You lose words, you lose your memory: which, for a writer, is pretty much the point. That's why I could finally write this book; and why, of course, it's my last novel. Strangely enough, it would be just as accurate to call it my first novel. I wrote several drafts as far back as my time at St. Thomas's Hospital during the war. I just couldn't ever find the way to do it.

INTERVIEWER

Because the novel is autobiographical, is that right?

OLDER BRIONY

Yes, entirely. I haven't changed any names, including my own.

INTERVIEWER

And was that the problem?

OLDER BRIONY

No. I had for a very long time decided to tell the absolute truth. And I think...

She hesitates.

OLDER BRIONY

You've read the book, you'll understand why. I got first-hand accounts of all the events I didn't personally witness, conditions in prison, the evacuation of Dunkirk, everything. But the effect of all this honesty was rather...pitiless, you see. I couldn't any longer imagine what purpose would be served by it.

INTERVIEWER

By what? By honesty?

OLDER BRIONY

Or reality. Because, in fact, I was too much of a coward to go and see my sister in June, 1940.

INT. WATER TOWER AT ST THOMAS'S HOSPITAL. NIGHT. 1940.

BRIONY sits at her typewriter.

OLDER BRIONY (V.O.)
 I never made that journey to Balham.
 So the scene in which I confess to
 them is invented, imagined.

INT. CECILIA'S FLAT IN BALHAM. DAY.

ROBBIE's face; the empty bed.

OLDER BRIONY (V.O.)
 And, in fact, could never have
 happened...

INT. CELLAR AT BRAY DUNES. DAWN.

CORPORAL NETTLE removes a piece of wood from the entrance to the
 bombed out cellar. Light pours in.

OLDER BRIONY (V.O.)
 ...because Robbie Turner died of
 septicaemia at Bray Dunes on the first
 of June 1940, the last day of the
 evacuation...

ROBBIE lies dead amongst the rubble; beside him is the bundle of
 letters and CECILIA's photograph. NETTLE picks up the letters.

NETTLE
 Cheerio, pal.

He covers ROBBIE's face and puts the letters in his pocket.

INT. PLATFORM ON BALHAM TUBE STATION. NIGHT.

A thick pipe, running above the platform, is dripping,
 undramatic but regular.

OLDER BRIONY (V.O.)
 ... and I was never able to put things
 right with my sister Cecilia...

A WIDE SHOT shows the platform, dimly lit, crowded with sleeping
 bodies, mostly women and children.

PAN OVER the bodies: one of them, CECILIA, as it turns out,
 opens her eyes, quite calmly, at the SOUND of muffled explosions
 from the first bombs falling on the street above. The lights
 flicker and revive.

EXT. BALHAM TUBE STATION. NIGHT.

The illuminated sign above the station also flickers and goes out. Out here the SOUND and flash of the bombs is far more present.

 OLDER BRIONY (V.O.)
 ...because she was killed on the 15th
 of October, 1940...

INT. BALHAM TUBE STATION. NIGHT.

A vast wall of water cascades, in slow motion, down the deserted escalators.

 OLDER BRIONY (V.O.)
 ...by the bomb that destroyed the gas
 and water mains above Balham tube
 station.

INT. PLATFORM ON BALHAM TUBE STATION. NIGHT.

CECILIA sits up as the lights flicker and, this time, go out. The thunderous roar of the approaching waters.

INT. UNDERWATER.

CECILIA's body, balletically graceful, hair fantailed out, drifts through the tube tunnel towards a distant light.

INT. T.V. STUDIO. DAY. 1999.

OLDER BRIONY looks intently at the CAMERA.

 OLDER BRIONY
 So my sister and Robbie never had the
 time together they both so longed for
 and deserved, which, ever since,
 I've...always felt I prevented. But
 what sense of hope or satisfaction
 could a reader derive from an ending
 like that? So, in the book, I wanted
 to give Robbie and Cecilia what they

(MORE)

OLDER BRIONY (cont'd)
lost out on in life. I'd like to think
this wasn't weakness or evasion, but a
final act of kindness.

She thinks for a moment.

OLDER BRIONY
I gave them their happiness.

EXT. BEACH BELOW WHITE CLIFFS. DAY.

ROBBIE and CECILIA crunch across the pebbles and splash
gleefully through the waves, below the towering white cliffs on
their way back to their white clapboard cottage.

THE END