



Ross Barnett

Film Services

Feature Film

A Fox-hunting Man

Screenplay by Ross Barnett
based on the autobiographical
novel by Siegfried Sassoon

DURATION:

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Australian Writers' Guild Reg No: PENDING

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The film is factual, set in 1917 at a time of crisis during World War I. There are three primary locations - Scotland (Repatriation Hospital), Ireland and France (the trenches).

*Documentary footage in sepia tones depicts war in France in 1917. Some current footage, duplicated to match the film, is used showing **Lt Siegfried Sassoon** in the front line.*

CREDITS ROLL

Moderated sound represents artillery and machine gun fire.

*As the credits fade, the sepia toned historical footage dissolves to colour, current action. The sound of gunfire increases suddenly, dramatically. **Siegfried** is seen leading a patrol through the mud and barbed wire when he is shot in the shoulder, blood spurting from the wound. He is thrown backwards.*

FADE TO BLACK FADE IN

1. EXT. - STEAM TRAIN

A steam train travels through idyllic English countryside

CUT TO

2. EXT. - EDINBURGH STATION

*The station is thronged with people, many in uniform, especially Scottish soldiers. The steam engine pulls into the platform. Amongst the passengers, **Siegfried** is seen disembarking from the train. He wears the uniform of a lieutenant in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Making his way through the crowd to a busy Military Movement Office, he is approached by a **lance-corporal** in Army Medical Corps uniform.*

Lance-corporal

(shouting to be heard above the noise)

Craiglockhart Hospital, Sir?

Siegfried

What?

Lance-corporal

Mister Sassoon, is it? Craiglockhart Hospital?

The lance-corporal bends down to pick up Siegfried's suitcase and with a nod of the head he leads to way through the crowd.

CUT TO

3. EXT. - OPEN ROAD

A country road winds through a landscape of heather and rolling hills. A car drives into frame and passes between gates into the courtyard of a mansion. Signage indicates CRAIGLOCKHART MILITARY HOSPITAL . . . STRICTLY PRIVATE . . . ALL VISITORS REPORT TO SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE.

CUT TO

4. EXT. - COURTYARD OF THE HOSPITAL

The car draws to a stop. The lance-corporal climbs from the driver's seat and unloads the suitcase, and Siegfried follows towards the huge front door.

CUT TO

5. INT. - FRONT HALLWAY

*The pair enter a cavernous hallway where coats hang on racks with assorted sporting equipment thrown into haphazard piles - tennis rackets, cricket bats. A large notice board displays messages and notices. The **lance-corporal** puts down the suitcase.*

Lance-corporal

If you'll follow me, Sir, please

CUT TO

6. INT. - CORRIDOR

*The pair walk along a corridor, passing two **nurses**.*

Nurses

Hello, Frank.

Lance-corporal

Mornin', Ladies.

*The **lance-corporal** and **Siegfried** reach a door marked SUPERVISOR. The **lance-corporal** knocks and waits, he smiles at **Siegfried**.*

Supervisor
(heard from inside)

Enter!

CUT TO

7. INT. - SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE

A RAMC major sits behind a large desk covered with paper-work. He stands up as the lance-corporal and Siegfried enter.

Lance-corporal

Mister Sassoon, Sir.

Siegfried *enters behind the lance-corporal.*

Siegfried

(coming to attention and saluting)

Sassoon, Sir . . . transferred from Hammersmith.

Supervisor

(moving around his desk and coming to shake hands)

My dear chap, welcome . . welcome indeed . .
thankyou, Frank.

The lance-corporal leaves, closing the door.

Supervisor

George Masters . . . How was your journey? . .
Here, have a seat.

Siegfried

(Sitting down and removing his cap, relaxed)

Thankyou, Sir. The journey was uneventful, a tad
boring except for some drunken jocks who kept us
amused.

Supervisor

A constant hazard up this way. Do you have all you need in the way of clothes? We're very relaxed here.

Siegfried

More or less. I have a box coming with books and things. I can't help feeling I'm here under false pretences, there's nothing wrong with me.

Supervisor

Excellent, that's good to hear. Then you should enjoy your rest. You're in good hands. Rivers will look after you.

Siegfried

Rivers?

Supervisor

Bill Rivers Brain doctor First rate chap, you'll like him. Do you have any questions?

Siegfried

Yes. How long will I be kept here?

Supervisor

That's up to the Army Medical Board. They'll be guided by Rivers, of course. They'll keep you here until you're well.

Siegfried

But I'm not sick.

Supervisor
(laughing)

They'll keep you here as long as they think it's necessary.
Now, I'll get one of the chaps to show you your room.

(picking up the telephone and dialling)

Who's that? George here, Tommy, I've got Siegfried
Sassoon here in my office could you show him
'round? He's in with Iain Ferguson.

(replacing the receiver)

I say, do you play golf?

Siegfried

I do, as a matter of fact.

Supervisor

Good show. A few of the chaps play and it's
excellent therapy.

Siegfried

I'm not sure I need therapy.

Supervisor
(laughing)

Excellent relaxation. There's a golf course not far
from here, walking distance.

Siegfried

Really? Then I'll ask my aunt to send up my clubs.

Tommy

(knocking on the door and poking his head around without waiting for an answer. He wears a woollen dressing gown over army trousers)

Greetings, fellow traveller . . . I'm here to guide you to your place of rest.

Supervisor

(standing and extending his hand)

Come to me if you have any problems at all, Siegfried.

Siegfried

(standing and shaking hands)

I will, Sir, thankyou.

Tommy

Siegfried? Damn funny name . . sounds like you're batting for the other team.

Siegfried

(laughing)

It does, doesn't it? But right now I'm not batting for anybody's team.

Tommy

(shaking hands)

Good show! Tommy Phelps, Coldstream Guards, late thereof.

Siegfried

Siegfried Sassoon, Royal Welch Fusiliers . . . still a member!

Tommy

Come, my friend . . let us away . . time for a drop of refreshment . . . we might travel by way of the bar.

CUT TO

8. INT. - CORRIDOR

*They pass two or three **officers** who wear an assorted mixture of civilian and military clothing and **nurses** who, by contrast, are smartly dressed in RAMC uniforms with starched veils. **Tommy** leads the way into a large room where there is a bar. A number of **officers** chat as they enter.*

CUT TO

9. INT. - HOSPITAL BEDROOM.

*Inside the room, two beds, one neatly made, the other a total confusion of clothes, books, newspapers. **Siegfried's** suitcase stands at the foot of his bed. The door opens and **Tommy** and **Siegfried** enter.*

Tommy

You'll like Iain, grand chap. Queen's Own Highlanders. Shell shock - just don't make any loud noises.

Siegfried

I suppose most people here suffer from shell shock?

Tommy

Yes, mainly, shell shock and depression, men who've seen well, you know what it's like.

(embarrassed pause)

Right . . I'll let you unpack. Dinner's at six, we generally have a drink in the bar first.

Siegfried

Fine, thankyou.

Tommy

Bathroom down the passage on the left.

Siegfried

What's the dress for dinner?

Tommy

Casual, but nothing too outrageous. We generally make an effort to wear uniform, except for the real nutters. Some people wear mufti, it's up to you really.

Siegfried

Thankyou, Tommy. I'll see you in the bar.

Tommy

(leaving and closing the door)

Good show.

Siegfried wanders about the room, opening draws, looking out of the window, then takes off his Sam Browne belt and jacket and hangs them on a hook on the wall. He opens his suitcase and starts to unpack clothes into the chest of draws. The door opens and **Iain** enters wearing a Queen's Own Highlanders kilt with a home-knitted woollen cardigan.

Iain (Fergie) is a happy, good-natured man in his thirties suffering from a nervous tick. He has a broad Scottish accent.

Fergie

(extending his hand)

Iain Ferguson. Call me Fergie.

Siegfried

(shaking hands)

Siegfried Sassoon.

Fergie

Welcome. You've been in France.

Siegfried

Yes. I've been home a couple of months, caught one in the shoulder. And you?

Fergie

(sitting in one of two chairs)

The Somme, then back here for . . . let me see . . . five months it is now. I'm lucky, I'm "cured" . . . they're sending me back.

Siegfried

Back to France?

Fergie

(offering Siegfried a cigarette, hands shaking)

Back to the depot. Training battalion. Then maybe back to France. Do you mind if I smoke? I want to go back to France . . . scared I'll let the chaps down though Not quite what I was.

(lights his cigarette with difficulty)

Siegfried

(taking a pipe from his jacket and packing it)

Yes. I know what you mean. We're none of us what we were.

Fergie

(looking at a pile of books Siegfried is unpacking)

You're a literary man? There's an excellent library here.

Siegfried

(lighting his pipe)

Really?

Fergie

Excellent. We're very well looked after.

Siegfried

Where are your people, are they far from here?

Fergie

Stirling, not too far away. I'm away home most weekends, so you'll have the room to yourself awhile. Though, like I said, I'm away from here in a week or two for good.

Siegfried

Where's the QOH depot?

Fergie

Aberdeen. Have you been there?

Siegfried

No. I've not spent any time in Scotland before.

Fergie

You'll like it. Huntin', shootin', fishin' . Golf, of course. And Edinburgh's a grand town.

Siegfried

Hunting? You mean fox hunting?

Fergie

Ney, not fox hunting like the English toffs. Dear huntin' on the moors, though there are some as hunt stags on horse-back . . now, if ye'll excuse me . . I'll freshen up for dinner.

Fergie *extinguishes his cigarette and exits carrying a towel and wash-bag as Siegfried arranges his books on top of the chest of drawers. He chooses a book and reads meditatively, drawing on his pipe. A dinner gong sounds.*

Fergie

(re-entering without his sweater, putting on a tie and his uniform jacket . . the jacket displays the ribbons of a M.C. and D.C.M. and the crowns of a major)

Dinner in ten minutes. Time for a wee dram.
Are you coming?

Siegfried

I might just go down for dinner . . .

Fergie

Nonsense, laddie! You'll come and meet the lads!
I think I outrank yee!

Siegfried

(laughing and standing up, putting on his jacket)

Very well!

Fergie

(opening the door)

There's a rather good single malt I'll have ye try . . .

CUT TO

10. EXT. - CRAIGLOCKHART HOSPITAL, BACK AREA

Dawn and a mist hangs over the heather adjacent to the hospital buildings. A fox cautiously sniffs around the dustbins behind the hospital. A door opens and the fox lopes off into the heather.

CUT TO

11. INT. - HOSPITAL CORRIDORS

A motley group of officers wanders the corridors together with nurses and smartly dressed R.A.M.C. doctors. Siegfried smartly dressed in uniform walks purposefully to his first meeting with his case officer. He comes to an office door marked MAJOR W.H.R. RIVERS. where he knocks and waits. The door is opened from within.

Rivers

(opening the door and holding out his hand)

Mr Sassoon? . . . welcome to Craiglockhart, come in I'm Bill Rivers.

Siegfried

(shaking hands)

Siegfried Sassoon.

CUT TO

12. INT. - RIVERS' OFFICE

The office is furnished with two large leather armchairs, an ornate desk with desk chair and a wooden chair facing it. Bookshelves contain numerous books behind the desk, which is strewn with untidy papers. There is an ashtray on the desk and a desk light. Two filing cabinets stand against the wall.

Rivers

(returning to his desk, indicating the chair)

Yes . . . have a seat, relax . . do you mind if I call you Siegfried?

Siegfried

Not at all.

Rivers

Excellent, good show . . . and you must call me Bill.
How was your first night here?

Siegfried

Very peaceful, Sir . . . Bill . . . slept like a log.

Rivers

That's the way. It's usually quiet here, but we do get
the occasional drama . . . I've been studying your file . .
you're a very interesting man, Siegfried.

Siegfried

(laughing)

Oh dear !

Rivers

No, no, on the contrary . . . very interesting. You're a
poet, I see?

Siegfried

Self published, yes. I paid for some of my poems to
be published before the war . . I enjoy poetry very much.

Rivers

That's excellent, very good for you. We encourage
chaps to write down their experiences. And you're
also something of a war hero?

Siegfried

No, Sir . .

Rivers

Bill!

Siegfried

No, Bill, I'm not a hero. Just the opposite, really.

Rivers

(reading from the file)

Military Cross? . . says here "for conspicuous gallantry under fire" this at a place called Neu Chappelle.

Siegfried

Anyone would have done the same.

Rivers

Is that why you don't wear your medal ribbon?

Siegfried

(looking down and touching the space on his left breast)

No, not really . . . I regard medals as . . . well, as things which glorify war.

Rivers

(after a pause)

mmmmmm . . . yes, well . . . fair enough . . where is your Military Cross, by the way . . the medal?

Siegfried

I'm afraid it's at the bottom of the River Mersey!
I threw it in.

Rivers

Good grief! That was something of a grand statement!

Siegfried

It would have been if anyone was watching.

Rivers

True. Now, tell me about this other "grand statement"
of yours.

Siegfried

Which one do you mean? There have been a few

Rivers

The famous letter.

Siegfried

Well, it speaks for itself really. And also it speaks for
many hundreds of thousands of young men dying in France.
I didn't write it for myself, you understand . . . I wrote it
for all the others.

Rivers

Mmmmmmm . . . well, it's certainly created a fuss . . . it's
put the "powers that be" in rather a difficult position.

Siegfried

Yes I thought they would Court Marshall me, put me in front of a firing squad or something.

Rivers

Good grief, they couldn't do that. That would cause no end of problems. Much simpler to say you've gone funny in the head due to the German bombardment.

Siegfried

But I'm not "funny in the head". . . . I'm perfectly sane.

Rivers

Quite possibly, but politicians running the war can't admit that. And they want *me* to say that you're stark raving mad.

Siegfried

Will you say that?

Rivers

I have absolutely no idea what I shall say in due course . . . but I certainly shan't say anything until I've had a chance to get to know you.

Siegfried

Are you going to psychoanalyse me?

Rivers

Not in the Freudian sense, no, nothing so extreme . . .
but I will need to complete a thorough psychological
examination.

Siegfried

How long will that take?

Rivers

It will take as long as it takes . . . Do you play golf?

Siegfried

(laughing)

You're the third person to ask me that question . . .

CUT TO

13. EXT. - GOLF LINKS

*The fifth tee, set in rolling hills covered in heather. **Siegfried, Fergie** and another officer named **Clarke** (an expert golfer) are driving off the tee. All wear civilian clothes (plus-fours).*

Clarke

*(commenting after **Siegfried's** shot)*

Bloody hell, that's another damn fine shot . . . must
be close to two hundred yards!

Siegfried

Thanks, Nobby . . . I'm quite good off the tee, it's
my irons I have problems with.

Fergie

(slicing a ball into the heather)

Damn and blast the thing, I'll never find that one . . .
gimme another ball, Ziggy . . .

Siegfried

(looking for a ball in his bag)

Don't try to hit it so hard, Fergie . . . gentle.

Fergie

*(teeing the ball and flashing an evil look at **Siegfried**)*

I'll give ye fuckin' gentle . . .

Siegfried

(laughing)

Much more good! good shot, Fergie!

*They pick up their bags and set off down the fairway. **Clarke** has a distinct limp, no bend in his right knee. **Clarke** takes his second shot and puts his ball within inches of the flag.*

Siegfried

I say! . . you see, that's what I mean. I can drive off the tee but then I fall to pieces. Whereas you always nail your approach shots.

Clarke

It's just practice . . . you'll have time to practice here.

Fergie

(way off in the heather, searching for his ball)

Damn and blast the thing!

Siegfried

It's beautiful here, isn't it? . . . but I feel very guilty,
I shouldn't be here.

Clarke

Make the most of it whilst you can, old boy . . . we're
the lucky ones.

CUT TO

14. INT. - HOUSE OF COMMONS, WESTMINSTER

*It is late evening, the House is only a quarter full and some Members doze.
A small group remain actively attentive. Siegfried's letter to the press is
read out (30th July 1917) by Mr Bryce.*

Speaker of the House

The Honourable Member for Sedgwick, you wish
to make a statement?

Bryce

(standing up)

Thankyou Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on
the Government's policy of protracting hostilities in
Germany . .

Interjection

Rubbish!

Bryce

. . . with particular reference . . . with *particular* reference to a letter published in the *The Times* dated 23rd July . . . with your permission, Mr Speaker, I table the document . . . the letter is written by an army officer recently returned from the trenches, a man who has been awarded the Military Cross for bravery and who now writes: "*Finished with the War - A Soldier's Declaration*"

Interjection

(from the small group of pacifist MPs)

Hear! Hear!

Interjection

Traitor!

Speaker of the House

Will this take long? It's getting rather late.

Bryce

The letter is quite short, Mr Speaker.

(a number of Members get up and walk out . . . Bryce points)

The *very* people who should listen to this letter, Mr Speaker, the *very* people to whom it is addressed

Interjection

Shame! Shame!

Bryce

The letter begins: "*I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority . . .* "

DISSOLVE TO

15. INT. - HOSPITAL BEDROOM.

Fergie lounges back on his bed wearing tartan trues and his hand knitted cardigan, reading a copy of the Edinburgh Times aloud whilst **Siegfried** stands at the mirror adjusting his tie.

Fergie

(reading from the paper)

". this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority

[REFER TO ACTUAL LETTER]

Siegfried

Enough thankyou, Fergie, I *know* what it says . . I wrote the bloody thing.

Fergie

(continuing to read mischievously and with delight)

[REFER TO ACTUAL LETTER]

Siegfried

(grabbing the newspaper angrily)

Shut up !

Fergie

You're famous, laddie! That's nout to be ashamed of, that's a wonderful thing ye've done there . . . needed to be said, but few of us would have the balls.

Siegfried

(mellowing)

You think so?

Fergie

I do, laddie, and so would all of us who's been in the trenches.

(laughing)

Ney wonder they say you're funny in the head!

Siegfried

But I'm *not* funny in the head . . .

Fergie

We know that, laddie, but it was either that or stand ye up against a wall and shoot ye . . .

Siegfried

That's been done before . . . many times

Fergie

But no' in public . . . no' wi' the whole fuckin' nation watching. No, laddie, you put the wind right up their breeches, an' that's a fact. Good on ye.

Siegfried

I can't help feeling I've let the blokes down . . the men in France.

Fergie

Now that's a stupid thing to say . . . it's no' you who've let the lads down, it's the politicians, it's the newspaper men . . . let's be honest, the whole nation has let the lads down. All you've done is draw attention to the fact.

Siegfried

I hope so. I hope you're right.

CUT TO

16. INT. - RIVERS' OFFICE

*The office remains the same casual environment. **Rivers** leans back in his chair playing with a fountain pen, **Siegfried** sits comfortably in one of the leather armchairs smoking his pipe.*

Rivers

So tell me, were you *expecting* the Member for . . where was it . .

Siegfried

Sedgwick.

Rivers

. . that's it, Sedgwick . . . where is Sedgwick?

Siegfried
(laughing)

I have absolutely no idea!

Rivers

. . no matter . . were you expecting him to raise it
in the house?

Siegfried

Not really, no . . . but there are people, people with
influence . . . you know . . artists.

Rivers

Pacifists?

Siegfried

People against the war, yes . . . some of them said
they'd try to raise it as a political issue . . . the letter,
that is . . .

Rivers

And how do you feel about that?

Siegfried

I don't know, really . . I suppose it's a good thing.

Rivers

It certainly raises your public profile.

Siegfried

Yes, it's embarrassing really . . . I get letters . . .

Rivers

What sort of letters?

Siegfried

Hate mail, mostly . . people calling me 'traitor'
'coward'.

Rivers

And how do you feel about that?

Siegfried

I don't feel anything . . I have no respect for those
people . . I'm concerned about the feelings of my
fellow soldiers.

Rivers

And how do they feel ?

Siegfried

They support me . . they share my feelings.

Rivers

Really? You're sure about that?

Siegfried

Oh yes . . . we've walked in the shadow of death,
my brothers and I . . . we've seen horrors that most
people cannot begin to imagine and for what?

*(He pauses and relights his pipe before looking intently at **Rivers**)*

Don't question me on what the soldiers think.

CUT TO

17. INT. - HOSPITAL BEDROOM.

Siegfried sits at a desk by the window writing. Two piles of letters are stacked beside him on the bed. **Fergie** enters with his arms full of another batch of letters which he dumps at the foot of the bed.

Siegfried
(groaning)

Oh no! I can't possibly keep up.

Fergie

Then don't bother, don't acknowledge the nasty ones.

Siegfried
(laughing)

But they're all nasty!

Fergie

Good! Then your job's easy . . . there's a man downstairs wants to see you.

Siegfried

Really? What sort of man?

Fergie

A toff . . . civilian . .

Siegfried

He can't just walk in here . . .

Fergie

Well he has . . . says it's important.

Siegfried

(standing up and putting on his uniform jacket)

Bugger!

CUT TO

18. INT. - FRONT HALLWAY

Siegfried *enters the hallway to find Dr Macamble pacing the hallway. Macamble, a short rotund man wearing a bowler hat and tweed suit.*

Macamble

Mister Sassoon?

Siegfried

Yes.

Macamble

Macamble, Vernon Macamble . . . Mr Sassoon,
I am here to offer you my most sincere sympathy
and admiration for the heroic gesture which has made
your name a . . er . . such a bugle call to your brother
pacifists.

Siegfried

I see . . . and what of my sister pacifists?

Macamble

(puzzled)

I beg your pardon?

Siegfried

I said 'thankyou'.

Macamble

Yes . . . I venture to call on you in the hope that I can
be of some assistance to you during your confinement.

Siegfried

I'm sorry, I have no idea what you're talking about.

Macamble

What you have endured! . . incarcerated with men
driven mad by gunfire!

Siegfried

Ah yes, well, I can put your mind at rest on that score.

Macamble

(furtively and confidentially)

I would like to talk to you about the Stop The War campaign. . . . I wonder if we might be able to take a walk?

Siegfried

What, now?

Macamble

If it's convenient . . .

Siegfried

It's not, actually . . . I have . . . ah yes, I have an appointment with my doctor.

Macamble

Mmmmm . . the famous Doctor Rivers . . then perhaps we could have lunch? . . . Join me for luncheon at the Caledonian Hotel!

Siegfried

(doubtfully)

I really don't think there's

Macamble

(interrupting)

I insist . . it would be an honour for me to buy you luncheon and we can talk in private . . shall we say Wednesday?

Siegfried

Wednesday?

Macamble

Excellent . . then I shall expect you at about twelve o'clock.

Siegfried

Mister Macamble

Macamble

(turning to leave)

Doctor Macamble . . . until Wednesday, the Caledonian Hotel.

Siegfried

Doctor Macamble, I'm not sure that there's anything . .

Macamble

(raising his hat and walking out)

Goodbye Mr Sassoon . . . I shall see you on Wednesday.

Siegfried

(to himself)

Good grief !

CUT TO

19. INT. - HOSPITAL BEDROOM.

Siegfried *returns to find Fergie packing a suitcase.*

Siegfried

What a horrible little man . . he insists I have lunch with him.

Fergie
(laughing)

Really? Well make sure you order oysters and champagne!

Siegfried

I don't want to order anything . . I say, what are you doing?

Fergie

I am cured, my son . . . miracle of miracles . . passed fit for active service.

Siegfried

Oh god . . I'm so sorry . . I mean, I'm so sorry you might have to go back to France.

Fergie

Och, not to worry . . it will be a cushy desk job, for a while, anyways.

Siegfried
(taking off his uniform jacket and putting on a gown)

I hope so, my friend.

A knock on the door is heard and a very young man, smartly dressed in uniform (a new arrival) enters. Siegfried who has sat down on the bed, looks up .

Wilfred

Excuse me . . . it's Siegfried, isn't it? . . . Siegfried Sassoon?

Siegfried

(annoyed at the intrusion)

And who might you be?

Wilfred

My name is Wilfred Owen . . . I've read your books.

Siegfried

My letter, you mean.

Wilfred

No, no . . . your books, your poems . . .

Siegfried

(astonished and mellowing)

Really?

Wilfred

Yes really, I know some by heart . . . "Brother steel, sister moon" . . . all that

Siegfried

Good grief! How on earth did you find my books?

Wilfred

The newspapers said you're a poet, so I tracked them down.

Siegfried

Well, I'm flattered. You've been in France, obviously.

Wilfred

Yes, with the Manchesters . . . I got blown up
I wonder if I might ask a favour?

Siegfried

Of course, what is it?

Wilfred

I've written some lines, nothing as good as yours,
of course I was wondering if . . . if it's not too
much trouble.

Siegfried

You'd like me to have a look at them? . . I'd be
delighted.

Wilfred

(beaming with pleasure)

Thankyou *so* much . . . I'll run and get them!

Siegfried

No, not now . . I'm really not in the mood . . . let's go for a walk tomorrow on the moors, it will be fun . . . are you free tomorrow?

Wilfred

Yes! Totally free . . . what time would suit you?

Siegfried

Let's say ten o'clock.

Wilfred

(turning to leave)

Perfect . . I'll meet you in the lobby.

Siegfried

What did you say your name was?

Wilfred

Owen . . . Wilfred Owen

CUT TO

20. EXT. - THE MOORS, A TRACK AMONGST THE HEATHER

*In the distance **Siegfried** and **Wilfred** walk along the track in earnest conversation with much hand waving. They both wear plus fours, **Wilfred** wears a large cap which emphasises his youth - he carries a leather portfolio under one arm.*

CUT TO

21. EXT. - THE MOORS, ROCKY OUTCROP

Siegfried *sits down and produces a flask from his pocket - they both take a long drink, then Wilfred takes papers from the leather portfolio.*

Wilfred

Here they are . . . as I said, I don't claim to be any good.

Siegfried

(indulgent at first, his demeanour changes as he reads)

Let's have a look.

Soldier V/O

(study of Siegfried's face as he reads)

*What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.*

DISSOLVE TO

22. EXT. - THE TRENCHES

Archival B & W footage is shown with no sound save the voice-over, the text is super-imposed upon vision of soldiers dying in action.

Soldier V/O

*No mockeries now for them
No prayers nor bells
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells
And bugles calling them from sad shires.*

CUT TO

23. EXT. - THE MOORS, ROCKY OUTCROP

Siegfried *sits as if in a trance.*

Wilfred

Siegfried? Siegfried?

Siegfried

(reading hurriedly through the papers)

Wilfred, these are good . . . I mean they are *really* good . . . have you shown them to anyone else?

Wilfred

Not yet . . . I was going to show them to my case worker . . . do you think I should?

Siegfried

Most certainly, yes . . . would you like me to make some comments?

Wilfred

I'd be delighted, of course.

Siegfried

We need a type-writer . . . that won't be a problem, I'll speak to Rivers.

Wilfred

When shall we start?

Siegfried

Why, now . . . can I write on these copies?

Wilfred
(*doubtfully*)

Well, yes, I suppose . . . if you like

*Taking a pen from his pocket, **Siegfried** begins annotating the poems as **Wilfred** looks anxiously over his shoulder. Benjamin Britten's WAR REQUIEM is heard as the camera pans out to reveal an expanse of Scottish heather.*

HISTORICAL NOTE: The original draft poems, including annotations, are available at the English Faculty Library of Oxford University.

CUT TO

24. INT. - HOSPITAL BEDROOM

***Siegfried** types at a typewriter on the window desk of his room, as **Wilfred** sits on the bed beside holding a sheaf of manuscripts. Both are casually dressed in civilian clothes.*

Siegfried

You see how the alliteration works there?

Wilfred

Yes.

Siegfried
(*showing a manuscript*)

And here you can be *much* stronger . . . don't beat about the bush.

Wilfred

You think?

Siegfried

Definitely, that's the strength of the poem . . the truth . . . take that one away and work on it.

Wilfred

Very well.

Siegfried

What's next?

Wilfred

(leafing through the manuscripts)

We've done six that's all the finished ones.

Siegfried

(taking the paper from the typewriter)

Good, that's a start. Enough to show to some publishers . . . I wonder how we can get more copies typed up?

Wilfred

I could ask my mother

Siegfried

(laughing)

I'm not sure your mother would approve! I know, we'll publish them in The Hydra, then use the printed versions as samples

Wilfred

The Hydra? What's The Hydra?

Siegfried

The local rag, our hospital paper. You happen to be looking at the editor, so that's easily done! . . . you're going to be famous, Mr Owen!

CUT TO

25. EXT. - STREETScape, EDINBURGH

*From the castle, the camera pans down to the streets of EDINBURGH, where people go about their daily business. A taxi pulls up outside the CALEDONIAN HOTEL and **Siegfried** climbs out, taking a wallet from his pocket he pays the driver before turning to look up at the hotel, and then looking at his watch. He is in uniform, complete with Sam Browne belt. He walks up the pavement amongst civilian pedestrians and goes into a tobacconists' shop. **Siegfried** comes out of the shop and wanders slowly back to the hotel, looking in shop windows along the way.*

CUT TO

26. INT. - THE LOBBY, CALEDONIAN HOTEL

***Siegfried** sits in a chair loading tobacco into the bowl of his pipe, watching the comings and goings of people, mainly army officers in uniform with their wives. A **major** in uniform with a large moustache and an affectatious **woman** wearing a yellow dress sit down in chairs immediately behind **Siegfried**.*

Woman

(loud and obnoxious)

. and the pacifists are the worst of the lot. Speaking for myself, I'd rather have the Germans run the country than the pacifists. It would be a jolly good thing if Macdonald *does* start his revolution, then we can string the man up from a lamp-post and get on with fighting the war.

Major

(rather bored)

Yes, Mabel . . . good show

Woman

(lighting a cigarette with a lighter)

And what would *you* do, Archie if there's a revolution?

Major

I have no idea . . . find somewhere to hide, I suppose.

Woman

Really, Archie, I despair of you sometimes.

Macamble *walks hurriedly into the lobby. He wears a light overcoat and a bowler hat. Looking around, he sees Siegfried and trots over, his hand outstretched.*

Macamble

Sassoon, my sincere apologies, I'm so sorry I'm late
the trains . . . wartime.

Siegfried

(standing up and shaking hands)

Doctor

The woman turns to study the pair and Siegfried feels uncomfortable.

Siegfried

Shall we go straight in to dine?

Macamble

Of course, you must be starving.

CUT TO

27. INT. - THE DINING ROOM, CALEDONIAN HOTEL

The room is quite full, many army officers. A three-piece band plays at one side of the room as waiters in white monkey jackets and black trousers flit between the tables. Siegfried and Macamble are shown to a table by a window. They sit down.

Macamble

(assuming an aloof, superior air, studying the wine list)

A bottle of the '86 Nuit St George, please . . . *(to Siegfried)*
unless, of course, you'd prefer champagne?

Siegfried

Good gracious, no . . . burgundy would be delightful,
thankyou.

Macamble

(glancing around conspiratorially)

Now, I've spoken to our people in London, and I must say they're all jolly glad to have you on board.

Siegfried

Now wait a minute. I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

Macamble

Quite . . . why I'm here . . . fill you in. Those of us who believe the war cannot be won include the highest strata of society and, you can be sure, a significant number of politicians. Gestures such as yours are precisely what we need to

The waiter arrives with the wine and Macamble stops talking abruptly, taking time to study the label and taste the wine, which the waiter then pours. Macamble waits until the waiter withdraws.

. as I was saying, gestures such as yours are precisely what we need to strengthen the cause. If we can get a number of serving officers to take a stand against

DISSOLVE TO

The meal is concluded, the waiter clears empty plates from the table.

Macamble

Will you have a cigar?

Siegfried

No cigar, thankyou . . . just coffee.

Macamble

(to the waiter)

Coffee and two brandies, please

(quietly, leaning towards Siegfried)

. . . . so, first things first, we have to get you out of the clutches of that man Rivers.

Siegfried

(surprised, loudly)

Bill Rivers? Bill Rivers has helped me more than any man in the past five years!

Macamble

Shsssssssh . . I must ask you to keep your voice down. Rivers represents the pro-war faction. You must realise he . . they . . are trying to bring you back to the war.

The waiter brings two coffee cups and pours coffee, offering sugar and cream, whilst another waiter places two large brandy balloons on the table.

Siegfried

(cupping the brandy balloon)

Rivers spends his time helping people who have been destroyed by the war. I assure you he has no vested interest in sending people "back to the war".

Macamble

Of course he has, that's his job. Now, here's the plan . . . You will abscond from Craiglockhart and take a train to London where an eminent and respected psychiatrist will examine you and declare you perfectly sane

Siegfried

Good grief!

Macamble

(holding up his hand and whispering)

. . . . once your sanity has been made public, you, and several other officers who share our views, will be kept hidden in a series of safe houses until the government can be overthrown and this damnable war stopped. Then you will emerge from hiding, to the gratitude of the nation.

Siegfried

(standing, leaving the coffee and brandy)

Doctor Macamble, I'm afraid you have misunderstood the purpose of my letter to the press. Thankyou for the wonderful lunch.

Macamble

But we have the details to discuss . . .

Siegfried

Let me mull over what you've said so far, then we can discuss the detail later.

Macamble

But time is of the essence . . . every day young boys

Siegfried

(turning and walking away)

Goodbye, Doctor Macamble.

CUT TO

28. INT. - RIVERS' OFFICE

Siegfried *lies back in a large leather armchair, wearing his hand-knitted woollen cardigan over uniform trousers and slippers, whilst **Rivers** sits opposite, equally relaxed, but wearing his uniform. Both are smoking pipes.*

Siegfried

The man sees himself as some sort of Scarlet Pimpernel.

Rivers

Yes, but I'm surprised you reject his suggestion out of hand.

Siegfried

I've no wish to see this country dictated to by the Kaiser.

Rivers

But you don't want to fight?

Siegfried

It's not the principle of the war I object to . . . it's the way it's done, the suffering, the waste of life . . . fifty yards here, a hundred yards there.

Rivers

But you can't wage war without loss of life.

Silence. Both men draw on their pipes, each deep in thought. After some time . .

Rivers

So what *are* you going to do? . . . (*silence*)
Do you have any thoughts?

Siegfried

Yes, I do as a matter of fact . . this Macamble business has shaken me somewhat . . . I think I must go back. There's no other option.

Rivers

I can fix a home posting for you - "not fit for active service"

Siegfried
(*alarmed*)

Good God, no! . . that would be the worst possible outcome the only way I can show my true colours is to go back to France.

Rivers

Think about it a while . . . I can give you another month or two.

Siegfried

No, I've made my decision. When's the next Medical Board hearing?

Rivers

Tuesday week . . . but don't be rash. Think carefully.

Siegfried

(standing up)

Is that all? Are we finished? . . . I hear the golf links calling

Rivers

(standing also)

There's no shame in a home posting, Siegfried . .

Siegfried

(seeing a new copy of The Hydra on the desk)

I say, have you read young Owen's poems? they're awfully good.

CUT TO

29. EXT. - THE MOORS, A TRACK AMONGST THE HEATHER

*A group of four officers walk in the comparative wilderness, each wearing a bizarre combination of uniform and woollen clothing - it is cold, patches of snow amongst the heather. **Siegfried** and **Wilfred** are in the centre with an older man and another, **Charlie**.*

Older man

These are sad tidings, sad tidings indeed, Brother Siegfried.

Wilfred

But surely they can't *make* you go back . . . being ill.

Siegfried

I'm *not* ill . . . and they're not making me go back.

Charlie

(with a severe stutter)

Th . . . th . . . they c . . . c . . . c . . . can't make m . . . m . . .
me go b . . . b . . . b . . . back, I won't g . . . g . . . g . . .

Siegfried

Nobody's making you go back, Charlie . . . nobody's making anybody go back. It's my choice.

Older man

Which proves, without doubt, that you are ill, my son. No sane person would wish to return to His Majesty's forces in France. Which proves you are of unsound mind . . . fucking bonkers.

Wilfred

Precisely . . . they can't possibly send you back.

Siegfried

I shall insist on it . . . it's the only way. If I'm to show that I care about my brothers-in-arms, I must go back. Otherwise, everything I've done, everything I've written, is hypocritical.

Older man

Fucking bonkers.

Charlie

Well I'm not g . . . g . . . g . . . g . . .

Wilfred

(stopping and taking hold of Siegfried's arm)

Ziggy, if you go back, then I'll have to go back as well.

Siegfried

Don't be ridiculous! That doesn't follow at all
There's no reason for you to go back.

Wilfred

There's no reason for *you* to go back.

Siegfried

Yes there *is* *(turning to walk up the track)*
perhaps you'll understand later.

Wilfred

(distressed, shouting after Siegfried)

I'll *never* understand!

Older man

Neither shall I, little soldier, neither shall I . .
as I get older the less I understand.

CUT TO

30. INT. - ARMY MEDICAL BOARD HEARING

Three men sit behind a desk, two senior officers in uniform (RAMC) and one civilian. Rivers sits to one side. They all study papers in front of them.

Board Officer 1

(After some delay studying the file)

Interesting case, this . . you say there are no fund-
amental psychological issues, Rivers?

Rivers

That's correct, Sir.

Civilian Board Member

Surely, under the circumstances, a home posting
would be appropriate?

Rivers

As I state in the submission, Sir, Lieutenant Sassoon
has expressed a wish to rejoin his regiment in France . .
he's rather determined.

Board Officer 1

Extraordinary. Well, let's have him in, see what he's got to say for himself.

A RAMC corporal stationed at the door opens the door. Outside in the corridor a large number of officers in various regimental uniforms can be seen waiting on chairs.

Corporal

(referring to a clipboard and calling out)

Mr Siegfried Sassoon! . . . Mr Sassoon, please!

Siegfried enters looking extremely smart in his Royal Welch Fusiliers uniform. He comes to attention and salutes, then removes his cap and walks to a vacant chair facing the board.

Board Officer 1

Mr Sassoon, welcome. My name is Chambers
how are you feeling? . . . Have a seat . . .

Siegfried

I'm extremely well, thankyou Sir. Fighting fit.

Board Officer 1

Yes . . we have a very positive report here from Major Rivers.

Board Officer 2

Mr Sassoon, the Board is of the opinion that a home posting would be appropriate for you. How would you feel about that?

Siegfried

I need to rejoin my regiment, Sir. I feel very strongly . . .

Board Officer 2

You could serve at the Regimental Depot (*referring to the file*) . . . Caernarvon, isn't it?

Siegfried

I need to rejoin an active battalion, preferably the Second Battalion . . . I was with them before . . .

Civilian Board Member

And why is this, Mr Sassoon? Could it be some kind of death wish?

Siegfried

No, Sir, definitely not . . . I have a desire . . . a need, really . . . to rejoin my comrades.

Civilian Board Member

And if you don't go back to France, what will you do? . . . Would you write another letter to the papers?

Siegfried

(sensing hostility . . . after a pause)

Probably not, Sir.

Board Officer 1

Yes . . . well . . . we don't want any more letters!

(He looks enquiringly to right and left)

No more questions? . . . Siegfried, we would be reluctant to send you back to the Second Battalion. Where's your First Battalion at the moment?

Siegfried

The First Battalion is in Ireland, Sir.

Board Officer 1

What if we send you to the First Battalion? That would get you back with your comrades and you could see how things progress from there . . .

Siegfried

I would rather go to France, Sir.

Board Officer 1

Go to Ireland. If you're determined to rejoin the Second Battalion you can apply to your Commanding Officer for transfer . . we would have no objection to that?

(the members of the Board nod their heads. Rivers closes his file)

Very well . . . we'll make the appropriate recommendation.

(he stands and extends his hand)

I wish you the very best of luck, Siegfried.

Siegfried

(standing and shaking hands)

Thankyou Sir

(He replaces his hat and salutes, then leaves, the corporal opening the door)

Board Officer 1

(Turning to Rivers)

You're confident he'll cope, Bill?

Rivers

Yes, Sir. He's an extremely competent officer.

Board Officer 1

Let's hope your right.

**FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN**

31. EXT. - STREETScape, THE VILLAGE OF BUTLEY

The village is an idyllic English hamlet with thatch roofed houses and climbing rose-bushes. The camera follows a driveway to a large house set back from the road.

CUT TO

32. INT. - KITCHEN - AUNT EVELYN'S HOUSE

Aunt Evelyn, a woman in her sixties, wears an apron and busies herself cooking over a combustion stove.

Evelyn

(speaking loudly to Siegfried in another room)

Steaks are so difficult to get nowadays. I do hope this one's tender.

Siegfried

(heard off-camera)

I'm sure it will be lovely, aunt.

CUT TO

33. INT. - LIVING ROOM, AUNT EVELYN'S HOUSE

Siegfried sits in an armchair smoking his pipe and reading *The Times*, a glass of sherry beside him. He wears civilian clothes, a woollen sweater. At one side of the room, a table is set for dinner. A bottle of wine stands open on the table. **Aunt Evelyn** enters carrying two plates of food.

Evelyn

(placing the plates on the table)

Here we are!

Aunt Evelyn takes off her apron and **Siegfried** knocks his pipe on an ashtray and comes to the table. They both sit down.

Siegfried

Onions! I never can resist the merry onion.

Evelyn

(pouring the wine)

I do hope you don't mind just the two of us, dear. I know you must be dying to see your young friends.

Siegfried
(*eating*)

Strangely not, Aunt. I think I shall have very little to say to my former friends. Water under the bridge, and all that.

Evelyn
(*eating*)

Don't be ridiculous, Siegfried. They'll be dying to hear the news from France.

Siegfried

That's precisely what I *don't* wish to talk about.

Evelyn

You remember old Mrs Hawthorn? She died, you know. And the Moffats have invited you to hunt on Saturday.

Siegfried
(*visibly brightening*)

Really? I say, that's jolly decent of them.

Evelyn

Sally Moffat was *most* insistent. She wanted you to go there for dinner this evening, but I said I wanted to keep you to myself, for one day at least

(*she puts down her knife and fork*)

Siegfried, *why* don't you accept a home posting?

Siegfried

I'm a soldier, aunt. Soldiers fight, it's what they do.

Evelyn

But you can stay in England and 'do your bit' here!

Siegfried

No, aunt . . . I told you they offered me a home posting . . . ,
but I have no choice. I must go back.

Evelyn

I don't understand!

Siegfried

Nobody understands, unless you've been there.

CUT TO

34. EXT. - FORECOURT OF AN ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE

*Foxhounds give voice excitedly on the gravel forecourt, attended by the **huntsman** and whippers-in wearing pink. Many riders in formal attire and riding perfectly groomed horses are gathered chatting and drinking a stirrup cup. Some of the riders wear military uniform but **Siegfried** wears pink. He chats to **Sally**, an attractive young woman wearing a black riding habit and black hat. She rides side-saddle.*

Sally

It must have been *ghastly* for you, all those poor shell-shocked men!

Siegfried

Are you talking about France or Scotland?

Sally

Why, Scotland of course. The papers described it as some sort of lunatic asylum.

Siegfried

(laughing)

Hardly! More like a holiday resort really, lots of golf, good food, good company. I made some good friends there.

Sally

Well I'm jolly glad. You deserve a rest. I must say we all really admire your stand against the war.

Siegfried

You all?

Sally

Well, most of us young ones . . . a lot of us anyway. Of course, Daddy was rather cross . . . but he's alright now.

The huntsman blows his horn and the hounds move off The field follow at a walk.

Sally

You'll stay for dinner, of course!

Siegfried

Of course!

CUT TO

35. EXT. - OPEN WOODLAND

A fox trots along a path in idyllic woodland. Winter, the trees are bare (possibly snow). He stops and puts his head to one side, listening intently, then he turns and lopes casually back along the path. Deeper in the wood, two pheasants noisily take flight.

CUT TO

36. EXT. - OPEN FIELDS, THE COPSE IN THE BACKGROUND

*The hounds give voice, noses to the ground, gathering speed as they approach the copse. The field trot across the open field, **Siegfried** and **Sally** smile at each other.*

CUT TO

37. EXT. - OPEN WOODLAND

The hounds are heard in the distance. Coming to the edge of the copse, the fox breaks cover and heads across open ground.

CUT TO

38. EXT. - OPEN FIELDS, THE COPSE IN THE BACKGROUND

*One of the **whippers-in** stands in his stirrups and raises his cap.*

Whipper-in
(shouting)

Tally ho!

Huntsman

(trotting to his side)

Where is 'e, James?

Whipper-in

'im be headed along the Vale, jus' gone down be'ind the ridge, Sir.

Huntsman

Good man.

*The **huntsman** sets off across the field at a canter, blowing his horn. The hounds sense excitement and pick up the pace, following. The field (about thirty riders) follow at a canter. Suddenly the hounds pick up a scent and and noisily accelerate past the **huntsman** who breaks into a gallop.*

Sally

*(urging her horse forward and turning to smile at **Siegfried**)*

Here we go!

Siegfried

(laughing)

Here we go!

*The hounds are seen jumping a hunt panel set in a large hedgerow, followed by the **huntsman** and then the whippers-in and the field. The fox is now running fast, he comes to a small stream and runs along it to hide his scent, then jumps up a bank. Back in the open country, the hounds are pursuing noisily and the horses hoofs drum on the cold earth.*

CUT TO

39. EXT. - THE BANK OF THE STREAM

The hounds have lost the scent and run along the bank, noses to the ground. The riders come to a halt, panting.

Sally
(turning to Siegfried)

I'll miss you, you know . . . come home safe.

Siegfried

I shall try.

FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN

40. EXT. - LIMERICK BARRACKS, IRELAND

Snow falls, the day is overcast. At the main gate of the barracks, a wall of sandbags set out from the entrance prohibits direct entry through the gate, and inside the wall a red and white counter-weighted bar is guarded by two soldiers with rifles. A sign set high on the wall states 1st BATTALION, ROYAL WELCH FUSILIERS and a smaller sign says STRICTLY NO ENTRY UNLESS ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS. From within the barracks shouted orders can be heard as soldiers drill.

CUT TO

41. INT. - ADJUTANT'S OFFICE

Sounds from the parade ground continue in the background as Siegfried knocks on the door and enters. He salutes, then removes his hat.

Siegfried

Hello, Simon. I'm back.

Adjutant

(standing up and walking around his desk to shake hands)

Siegfried, welcome! Welcome to Ireland! It's jolly good to have you back.

Siegfried

(shaking hands)

I must tell you that I requested a posting to France. I'm hoping for a transfer to the Second Battalion.

Adjutant

(sitting down)

Yes, they told us that. It seems they want to ease you back into regimental life gently, and you'll like it here. There are several chaps you'll know from the Second Battalion.

Siegfried

(sitting down)

Really? What's the news from France? . . . I mean, the real news.

Adjutant

The others can tell you that, they're far more up to date than I am - all I see are the official communiqués. Now, what would you like to do? We can put you second-in-command of a company, or we can make you Training Officer. The Colonel and I rather thought the second option might suit you best.

Siegfried

Mmmmmm . . . I know very little about the situation here in Ireland . . . I'm not sure I'd be much use as Training Officer.

Adjutant

Things are quiet here just now, touch wood. We thought training based on your experiences in the trenches . . .

Siegfried

Really? Now that's something I *can* teach.

Adjutant

Good show, excellent. We'll give you a sergeant and a couple of corporals, you can plan your own schedule and liaise with the company commanders.

Siegfried

Thankyou Simon . . would I have an opportunity to hunt, do you think . . being in Ireland and all that?

Adjutant

(laughing)

I don't see why not . . . there's just one thing, though, we do expect you to be properly dressed whilst you're with the battalion.

Siegfried

Properly dressed?

Adjutant

(opening a desk drawer and taking out some MC ribbons)

Rumour has it that your medal ribbon has gone missing. See the tailor and have ribbon stitched to your uniforms by tomorrow morning.

CUT TO

42. EXT. - OPEN FIELD -TRAINING

Siegfried, wearing 'service dress' complete with Military Cross ribbon on his chest, stands in front of a group of seated soldiers, some of whom are very young.

Siegfried

There are several types of gas used in France, all of which are extremely unpleasant. We use gas as well as the Germans, and friendly gas is just as dangerous as enemy gas as it's subject to sudden and unexpected changes in wind direction. What we are going to teach you today is how to recognise the smell of gas, how to recognise gas warnings and warn others and how to use the Gas Respirator Mark 3. Tomorrow we'll teach you how to care for people suffering gas exposure and inhalation. First of all, Corporal Threllfall will demonstrate the two common methods

DISSOLVE TO

Corporal

.between life and death or worse, a living bleeding death. Like Mister Sassoon says, our own gas is just as bleeding dangerous as Fritz's. Toxic gas will be

released into the atmosphere in one of two ways, either by artillery fire lobbing drums of liquid gas behind our lines, or by the release of fumes on the ground. You are likely to encounter three types of gas. The most common agent is what we call Mustard Gas. This is

DISSOLVE TO

43. INT. - OFFICERS MESS

*Early evening. **Siegfried** sits in a leather armchair before a fire in the large dayroom, smoking his pipe and reading the local Irish newspaper. Another young officer, **Kegworthy**, sits opposite reading the London Times - both are wearing civilian clothes. A mess **waiter** in white jacket with regimental trim approaches.*

Waiter

(collecting empty glasses)

Another drink, Mister Sassoon Sir?

Siegfried

No thankyou, Mumford.

Kegworthy

(holding up an empty glass)

I'll have one, thankyou Mumford. Scotch, thankyou.

Waiter

Very good, Sir.

Siegfried

I say, James . . . the Limerick Hounds are meeting tomorrow. I don't suppose you could drive me over in your motor?

Kegworthy

Tomorrow . . let me think . . . that shouldn't be a problem. Do you have a horse to ride?

Siegfried

No, I won't ride but someone there is bound to know where I can hire a horse for the next hunt.

Kegworthy

What time shall we leave?

Siegfried

Could we leave here at nine? The meet is at ten.

Kegworthy

(as the waiter returns with the scotch)

Thankyou, Mumford do you want the casualty list?

Siegfried

Anyone we know?

Kegworthy

I don't think so.

Siegfried

No, thankyou.

CUT TO

44. EXT. - CAR PARK, THE BLACK HORSE INN

Siegfried and **Kegworthy**, both wearing service dress, drive into a pub carpark in an open car. The pub is hosting the meet, and a number of dismounted **riders** stand around talking and saddling their horses. In *STARK CONTRAST* to the hunt in England, the riders and horses are scruffy. **Siegfried** is seen wandering amongst the riders as **Kegworthy** goes into the pub. A rider points, and **Siegfried** approaches a **parson** wearing a long black surplus and black hat who sits on one of the tables in front of the pub, a glass in his hand as he chats to a small group of riders.

Siegfried

(approaching diffidently)

Excuse me.

Parson

(with a broad Irish accent)

God preserve us, it's the English army!

Siegfried

(holding up his hand)

I come in peace!

Parson

There's some would say 'tis a pity that ye've come at all!

Siegfried

I'm here to talk about horses, not politics.

Parson

Horses, is it? And why would an English officer be wanting to talk about horses?

Siegfried

Well, hunting really . . . I was wondering if you could tell me where I might hire a hunter.

Parson

That would be Patrick Irvine, he owns the livery stables in Limerick. Is it today you'll be wanting to hunt?

Siegfried

No, no. I'm just inquiring for the future.

Parson

Paddy will be here soon, he drives the truck with the hounds. Why, here they come . . .

*An incredibly decrepit truck, coughing and spluttering, pulls into the carpark to the cheers of the riders. Hounds, their heads and tails protruding from the sides of the truck, make a lot of noise. Motley dressed whippers-in let the hounds off the truck as **Patrick** strides towards the pub.*

Patrick

(Speaking to no-one in particular)

A freezin' cold morning and here's me wit' an empty flask!

Parson

An empty flask, Patrick? So ye've drunk it dry before ye start? Come here, man, here's a fine English officer wants to talk to ye.

Patrick

(handing his hunting flask to a rider)

Can ye get that filled for me, John? They know the mix, port and whiskey *(addressing Siegfried)* it's a horse you'll be after, I presume?

Siegfried

Not for today. But I was wondering if, for the future . .

Patrick

To be sure . . . for a pound I can bring a horse to the meets for ye.

Parson

For a pound, indeed! Are ye wantin' to be arrested, Patrick Irvine?

Patrick

Ten bob, then. Just get a message to me at the stables the day before the meet . . . here's me card.

Siegfried
(taking the card)

Excellent, thankyou . . . well, I shall see you at the next meet.

Parson

Will ye not follow the hounds on foot as you're here? There's a grand view over the valley if ye walk up the lane there.

CUT TO

45. EXT. - LANEWAY

Siegfried and **Kegworthy**, both wearing British Warm overcoats with their hands in their pockets, walk between hedgerows. They climb a stile and walk to the top of a small hill overlooking the valley. A wide river meanders past a ruined castle. The hounds are seen drawing the near side of the river.

FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN

46. EXT. - LIMERICK BARRACKS

Siegfried makes his way past the barrack square towards the Officers Mess. A number of soldiers pass him, saluting. He enters the mess and removes his hat, coat, gloves and Sam Browne belt.

CUT TO

47. INT. - THE BAR, OFFICERS' MESS

Siegfried enters to find **Kegworthy** smoking and drinking at the bar.

Kegworthy

Siegfried, what can I get you?

Siegfried

A G and T would be lovely, thankyou.

Kegworthy

There's an old boy been looking for you. I parked him in the Visitors' Room.

Siegfried

Really? Looking for me?

Kegworthy

Wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. Insisted on waiting.

Siegfried

(picking up his drink and leaving)

How very odd.

CUT TO

48. INT. - LADIES LOUNGE, OFFICERS' MESS

Siegfried enters, drink in hand. The room is empty except for **Blarnett**, elderly, stoutish with a pink face and small white moustache - expensively and flamboyantly dressed.

Blarnett

(extending his hand)

Blarnett.

Siegfried

I beg your pardon?

Blarnett

I'm Blarnett. You're Mr Siegfried Sassoon.

Siegfried

(shaking hands, mystified)

Yes.

Blarnett

They tell me it's a fox-hunting man ye are, and I'm here to offer ye one of me horses.

Siegfried

Really? You hire out hunters?

Blarnett

(laughing)

No, no, no, no, no, no! But I'm lucky enough to have a few spare horses in me stable, and you're welcome to one as long as you're here in Ireland.

Siegfried

You can't be serious!

Blarnett

The Limerick Hounds are meeting tomorrow, if ye'd like to join us.

Siegfried

I say, that's incredibly generous of you.

Blarnett

The meet's at eleven, so I'll call for ye in me motor at nine, if that's convenient, Mr Sassoon?

Siegfried

Why, nine o'clock would be perfect. Are you sure it's no trouble?

Blarnett

No trouble, and an honour for me. Mrs O'Donnell hopes you'll take tea with us after the hunt . . . that's me house-keeper . . . a grand woman, Mrs O'Donnell.

Siegfried

Well, I should be delighted, Mr . . . er

Blarnett

(picking up a bowler hat and gloves)

Blarnett. 'Til the morn, then.

CUT TO

49. INT. - THE BAR, OFFICERS' MESS

Kegworthy *still drinking at the bar, slightly the worse for wear.* **Siegfried** *enters.*

Siegfried

Well that's an extraordinary thing. The old boy's invited me to hunt.

Kegworthy

Really? It might be some sort of trap. Do you think you can trust him?

Siegfried

He seems genuine enough . . . I suppose I'll find out tomorrow.

CUT TO

50. EXT. - COUNTRY ROAD

A Rolls Royce (c.1915) drives at speed along a country road. At one point a donkey cart, travelling in the opposite direction, is forced off the road. The car drives on.

CUT TO

51. INT. - THE CAR

Siegfried sits on the back seat wearing his British Warm overcoat over his uniform. Beside him **Blarnett** sits in immaculate hunting wear, a bunch of violets in the button-hole of his pink coat. He has a rug over his knees.

Blarnett

Can ye slow down a bit, John. Actually, can ye slow down quite a lot.

Driver

I'm sorry, Mr Blarnett, Sir.

Blarnett

Your first time in Ireland it it, Mister Sassoon?

Siegfried

It is.

Blarnett

Well I hope ye enjoy your stay. *(to the driver)* When ye see Sean, John, can you pull alongside him? He forgot me flask.

CUT TO

52. EXT. - COUNTRY ROAD

The Rolls Royce drives behind a rather smart horse truck. With tooting horn, the Rolls pulls alongside. Blarnett leans precariously out the rear window waving a glass hunting flask.

Blarnett

(shouting to the other driver)

I have me flask, Sean!

(He sits back down and turns to Siegfried by way of explanation)

There's hell to pay if we forget me flask.

CUT TO

53. EXT. - GRASS OVAL OPPOSITE, THE GREEN MAN INN

*A large crowd of **onlookers** has gathered in festive mood, women and children, dogs. **Riders** wearing a motley array of clothes (some smart, others not so smart) saddle horses. **Pub servants** with silver trays wander amongst the crowd collecting sixpences for large tumblers of hot, mulled wine. As the Rolls Royce drives into view, a small cheer erupts. The Rolls comes to a jerky and abrupt stop.*

Rider

'Tis the Mister!

Blarnett

*(climbing out of the car and addressing **Siegfried**)*

Will ye have a we dram before we start?

*A rhetorical question, he sets off towards the pub with **Siegfried** in tow.*

Riders and bystanders

'Morning Mister . . . 'Morning Mister . . .

Blarnett

Top o' the morning to ye, Patrick. Good morning, Mary.

(they enter the pub and a cheer is heard).

CUT TO

54. EXT. - GRASS OVAL OPPOSITE, THE GREEN MAN INN

*The hounds are released from the shabby trailer pulled by a horse truck. The **Huntsman** and **whippers-in** call them by name as the hounds run around excitedly, jumping up on children and chasing other dogs.*

Huntsman

Come back, Merlin . . MERLIN, come back . .
here William . .pack up, pack up . . . STELLA
come back . . .

Whipper-in

(cracking his whip as a hound becomes aggressive towards a small dog)

COME BACK, Paula . . pack up now . . . good girl

The Huntsman pulls a watch from his pocket and, noting the time, blows three blasts on his horn, at which the hounds give voice excitedly. The pub doors open and riders tumble hurriedly out.

CUT TO

55. EXT. - GRASS OVAL, BLARNETT'S HORSE TRUCK

Two large, immaculate hunters stand tied to the truck ready saddled and bridled as Blarnett and Siegfried approach.

Blarnett

Have ye got me flask, Sean? Where's me flask?

Sean

(pulling the flask from the leather holster by the saddle)

Here 'tis, Mr Blarnett Sir, safe and sound.

Blarnett

(showing Siegfried his horse)

I've given ye Molly, Mister Sassoon. She raced
but she's safe.

(Sean the groom hands Siegfried the reins and he mounts gracefully. Sean walks to Blarnett's horse where the latter has his left leg lifted for a bunk, and somewhat ungracefully Blarnett climbs into the saddle.

Sean

It's a grand hunt ye'll be having through the gorse,
Mister Blarnett Sir.

Blarnett

Indeed we will, Sean, indeed we will.

CUT TO

56. EXT. - OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

Blarnett and Siegfried walk their horses across countryside patched with gorse, the hounds drawing in the distance.

Blarnett

(taking a swig from his large glass flask and passing it to Siegfried)

Will you be staying long in Limerick, Mister Sassoon?

Siegfried

I could be ordered to France any day, Mr Blarnett . . .
perhaps tomorrow, perhaps next month.

Blarnett

'Listen!

Blarnett stands in his stirrups, listening as the call "view halloo" is called in the distance, followed by a note from the hunting horn.

Off ye go now, don't wait for me Go on, boy,
go on . . . Holy Mother, ye'll get no hunting in France.

Siegfried

(smiling and urging his horse into a canter)

Tally ho!

CUT TO

57. EXT. - OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

Fox hounds run at full speed across country, through hedges, over stone walls and through gorse.

CUT TO

58. EXT. - OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - PANORAMA

*We see a panorama of open countryside, the hounds working fast towards a stream or small river with the **whippers-in** close behind and the field spread out behind - many stragglers.*

CUT TO

59. EXT. - OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - A STREAM

A fox, panting, reaches the bank of the stream and hesitates before diving in and swimming along the stream for some distance. Climbing out, he pauses to shake himself before setting off again.

CUT TO

60. EXT. - OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - STONE WALL

***Siegfried** is galloping fast at the front of the field. He (expertly) jumps a huge stone wall and then a large bank. Ahead of him we see the **whippers-in** galloping and the hounds.*

CUT TO

61. EXT. - OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - STONE WALL

*At the stone wall a horse stops and the rider tumbles heavily to the ground.
Blarnett trots up beside him.*

Blarnett

Are ye alright, Seamus?

Rider

Aye, Mister . . . where's me horse now?

Blarnett

He's away home. . 'tis a long walk for ye. Ye sure
you're alright?

Rider

Right as rain.

Blarnett

I'm away then.

*Turning his horse around, **Blarnett** trots back and turns to give his horse a
run at the wall. The horse canters and then draws to the wall, leaving
Blarnett behind the movement.*

Blarnett

(as the horse prepares to jump)

Holy Mother

*The horse clears the wall and **Blarnett** lands heavily in the saddle, almost falling off. He regains his balance and gallops on.*

Woo Hoo

CUT TO

62. EXT. - OPEN COUNTRYSIDE - THE STREAM

*The hounds have lost the scent and are working the side of the stream. The **hunter** rides to the far side and calls hounds by name. Some of the hounds follow and work the far side of the stream.*

Huntsman

Victor! Violet! . . . good girl. Here Tom, here Tom! . .

*The field catch up and wait. **Blarnett** trots up to **Siegfried** . . .*

Blarnett

(taking the glass flask from its sheath and taking a long drink)

That was a big wall, so it was! . . Will you have a drop?

Siegfried

(taking the flask and sipping)

This is a grand horse you've lent me, Mister Blarnett.

Blarnett

(taking back the flask and drinking)

And that's the truth . . . to be sure, she's worth five hundred guineas if she's worth a penny bun . . .

The hounds pick up the scent and give voice in the background as the hunting horn is heard . .

We're off again. Off ye go now, boy . .

Siegfried turns and canters through the stream. **Blarnett** puts the flask away and takes up his reins to follow, then changes his mind and takes out the flask for another drink.

FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN

63. INT. - DINING ROOM - BLARNETT'S HOUSE

*The table is laden with fine food (smoked salmon, wild duck, pate, cheese, fruit, bread)and wine. **Blarnett** is host to **Siegfried** and **Sean** the groom. **Blarnett** and **Siegfried** wear home-knitted woollen cardigans. **Mrs O'Donnell** fusses about the table serving and occasionally sitting to eat with the men.*

Mrs O'Donnell

I keep telling him he's too old for the huntin', but will he listen?

Blarnett

The day I'm too old for the huntin', woman, is the day they put me in me grave.

Mrs O'Donnell

And that might come sooner than ye think, gallivanting about the countryside on horseback.

Blarnett

(helping himself to the buffet)

Ye see what I have to put up with, Mr Sassoon? It's a good thing the woman can cook or she'd be out on her ear.

Mrs O'Donnell

Get away with ye!

Blarnett

Leave me be, Mrs O'Donnell, we might all be dead this time next week . . . *(embarrassed silence)* . . . I beg your pardon, Mr Sassoon, that was a stupid thing for me say.

Siegfried

(smiling and lifting his glass)

Not at all, Mister! . . . I share your sentiments precisely . . . to the hunt!

Blarnett and Sean

(lifting their glasses)

To the hunt!

CUT TO

64. INT. - ADJUTANT'S OFFICE, LIMERICK BARRACKS

Siegfried *knocks on the door.*

Adjutant

Enter!

Siegfried *enters and salutes.*

Siegfried

You wanted to see me, Simon?

Adjutant

Yes, your orders have arrived. Take a seat . . . (*he reads*). . . 'Lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon to report to Twenty Fifth Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers at -'

Siegfried

Twenty-Fifth Battalion? Conscripts?

Adjutant

Well, they're all conscripts now. There's hardly any regular army units left . . . 'to report to Twenty-Fifth Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers at Magnicourt' . . . Magnicourt, do you know where that is?

Siegfried

Yes, it's not far from Arras.

Adjutant

' . . . on Tuesday 10th May' . . . that's nine days.

Siegfried

Right.

Adjutant

Well, it's what you asked for.

Siegfried

I would have preferred the Second Battalion . .

Adjutant

You could apply to transfer when you're in France. Now, I have travel warrants and movement passes here for you. What would you like to do, would you like a week's leave at home?

Siegfried

I'd prefer to stay here.

Adjutant

Really? Well, that's not a problem as far as I'm concerned. Take seven days leave here, S'arnt Stokes can continue with the training.

Siegfried

Thankyou, Simon. I've made some good friends amongst the locals . . . hunting people

Adjutant

Good for you . . . just don't fall off and break your neck!

CUT TO

65. EXT. - DRIVEWAY, BLARNETT'S HOUSE

*The Rolls Royce is seen driving up the drive in a thunderstorm. The car stops at the front door and **Siegfried**, wearing uniform and British Warm overcoat, climbs out and runs to the front door.*

Mrs O'Donnell
(holding the front door open)

You'll never be huntin' in this weather. I think it's a wasted journey ye've had, Mr Sassoon.

CUT TO

66. INT. - HALLWAY, BLARNETT'S HOUSE

***Siegfried** enters and takes off his overcoat, which **Mrs O'Donnell** takes to the doorstep and shakes, closing the front door afterwards.*

Siegfried

You could be right, Mrs O'Donnell. The storm seems settled.

Blarnett
(appearing at the end of the hallway wearing a dressing gown)

Ye'll have to give me ten minutes, Mr Sassoon, I'm sorry to say. I'll be with ye soon.

Mrs O'Donnell

Can I give you a cup of tea whilst we wait, Mr Sassoon?

Siegfried

That's very kind, Mrs O'Donnell, but I won't have any tea, thankyou.

Mrs O'Donnell

(moving close to Siegfried in a conspiratorial way, speaking with a low voice)

Would ye do me a favour, Mr Sassoon, and try to bring Mr Blarnett straight home after the huntin'? The O'Hallorans are coming for dinner and Mrs O'Halloran's a bit stiff and starched. When Mr Blarnett has a few a drinks after the huntin' it can be . . . er . . . difficult, it ye get my meaning.

Siegfried

I'll do my best, Mrs O'Donnell, but I doubt very much whether the Mister will listen to me.

Mrs O'Donnell

Ye'll do your best, though . . . and ye'll stay for dinner yourself, we're hopin'?

Siegfried

I should be delighted, thankyou.

Blarnett

(fully dressed in hunting clothes)

I'm sorry to keep ye waiting, Mr Sassoon, but we're ready now.

Mrs O'Donnell

I don't know why you bother with the weather like it is.

Blarnett

(as lightning flashes and thunder rolls)

A shower, woman. Sure 'twill be over by the time we're at the meet. Is the car there? We'll be off then.

Mrs O'Donnell

Ye'll remember the O'Halloran and her daughter are coming for dinner.

Blarnett

To be sure, Mrs O'Halloran is like Limerick itself. Would you think I'm one to overlook the importance of her?

Mrs O'Donnell *helps Blarnett into an enormous black fur overcoat and exchanges a meaningful glance with Siegfried and mouths something unintelligible.*

Mrs O'Donnell

(passing a hat box and the flask to Blarnett)

Here's ye hat and here's ye flask.

Blarnett *wears a fur hat to match the overcoat and is almost obscured within the fur.*

Blarnett

(muffled within the fur collar)

You're a wonderful woman, Mrs O'Donnell, and that's the truth.

CUT TO

67. EXT. - COUNTRY ROAD

The camera follows the car along the road and then pans across the open landscape as lightning forks.

CUT TO

68. INT. - BLARNETT'S CAR

Blarnett

Ye'll see something of the Irish countryside today, Mr Sassoon . . . we're away some thirty miles.

Siegfried

Where are we hunting today?

Blarnett

Sure it's the wildest place ye ever set eyes on. There's rocks and crags where the fox can hide safe and sound whilst we break our legs looking for him . . .

Driver

I'm thinking, Mr Blarnett Sir, that the dogs'll do better to stay at home on a day like this.

Blarnett

I'm inclined to agree with ye, John. But me friend Tom Philipson will give us a bight to eat . . and he has an old brandy that you'll travel far to match, so the day won't be wasted.

CUT TO

69. EXT. - COUNTRY MANSION

The car passes through huge ornamental gates and then up a long drive towards a huge mansion. In front of the mansion, various horse trucks and cars are parked but as the car approaches a number of trucks drive away. Blarnett's car parks and Blarnett and Siegfried climb out. Sean the groom comes to meet them.

Sean

Good mornin', Mr Blarnett Sir . . . they've called the hunt off and the hounds are away home . . . will ye be wantin' the horses?

Blarnett

No thankyou, Sean, off ye go now.

Sean

I'm away then. Good mornin' to ye, Mister Sassoon.

Blarnett

We'll trouble Tom Philipson for some hospitality. He's an earl or a lord or something, but he don't stand on ceremony.

CUT TO

70. INT. - HALLWAY, COUNTRY MANSION

A maid opens a huge front door and Blarnett and Siegfried enter and take off their coats. The wood panelled walls are adorned with stags heads and family portraits.

Maid

Will ye go straight through into the drawing room, Mr Blarnett, Sir Thomas is expecting ye.

CUT TO

71. INT. - DRAWING ROOM, COUNTRY MANSION

Philipson greets them as they enter. He is about sixty years old and wears an emerald green smoking jacket over jodhpurs and riding boots. A roaring fire burns in a huge fireplace.

Philipson

Blarnett, ye old rascal, I knew a drop of rain wouldn't keep you away.

Blarnett

How are ye, Tom? This is me friend Siegfried Sassoon I was telling you about.

Philipson

(shaking hands)

Your very welcome, Mr Sassoon . . . and what regiment would that be that you're in?

Siegfried

Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Philipson

So your Welsh then?

Siegfried

English.

Philipson

So you're an Englishman in a Welsh regiment
serving in Ireland?

Siegfried
(laughing)

Something like that.

Philipson

In any event, you're very welcome . . .will ye take a
glass of sherry now?

Siegfried

A very small glass, thankyou.

Blarnett

Mr Sassoon has just received orders to go to France . .
I'll join ye in a glass of sherry, thankyou Tom.

Philipson

(hesitating, holding a crystal sherry decanter)

To France, is it? Now I'm very sorry to hear that, very sorry indeed. Can you not pull some strings and stay here in Ireland?

Siegfried

Not really, no . . . I think I will be more useful in France.

Philipson

Well I wish you luck, young man. When is it ye have leave?

Siegfried

Next week.

Philipson

Next week, is it? Then I'll have to break out a bottle of me old brandy. Ye'll stay and have a bight of lunch with me?

Siegfried

Er . . . we really shouldn't stay too long . . .

Blarnett

Indeed we will, thankyou Tom. Indeed we will!

CUT TO

72. INT. - DINING ROOM, COUNTRY MANSION

The table is scattered with remains of lunch, a brace of pheasants, salmon, rough country bread, cheese and two empty bottles of wine. The men, collars undone, each smoke a cigar and hold a large brandy balloon.

Philipson

. . . and the man who says there's peace here in Ireland is a fool. Am I right, Blarnett?

Blarnett

I'm sure you're always right, Tom Philipson, but politics was never me strong suit.

Philipson
(standing up)

Anyways, I'm sure I've bored our young guest half to death and you've a long drive back to town.

Blarnett

No, no, there's no hurry for us to be leaving . . .

Siegfried
(standing)

Best if we make a move, Tom, could you send for the motor? . . . and thankyou for the wonderful lunch.

Blarnett

Give me one last taste of the brandy, Tom.

CUT TO

73. INT. - BLARNETT'S CAR

Blarnett is slightly the worse for wear. He sits back in a corner snoring as the car drives along a country road bathed in sunshine after the storm.

Blarnett

(suddenly waking and sitting upright)

Take us to O'Grady's, John!

CUT TO

74. EXT. - O'GRADY'S COTTAGE

In stark contrast to Philipson's mansion, O'Grady's cottage is very poor. Bluestone walls and slate roof show sign of disrepair as the Rolls Royce pulls into a muddy front yard where chickens roam free. O'Grady, wearing a ragged woollen jumper with a scarf wrapped around his neck, comes out of the front door.

O'Grady

Why good day to 'e, Mister. Will ye join me in a small glass of me whiskey?

Blarnett

(climbing out of the car)

Now that's a very kind offer, Paddy . . . *(to Siegfried)*
Mr O'Grady brews a fine drop of Irish whiskey,
Mr Sassoon . . . we won't be long, John.

Siegfried

(following)

Oh no!

CUT TO

75. INT. - O'GRADY'S COTTAGE

The interior of the cottage is bare, stark and cold. A single oil lamp burns. O'Grady pours from a stone flagon, half filling three large tumblers.

O'Grady

To your very good health, Mister.

Blarnett

And to yours, Paddy O'Grady . . . now about that little red horse ye wish to sell me, I've yet to make up me mind.

Siegfried holds his tumbler of whiskey unhappily and looks for somewhere to dispose of the contents.

O'Grady

She'll be a grand one for the huntin', Mister . . and the fox had three of me chickens just this last night.

Blarnett

I'm sorry to hear that . . . I'll let ye know about the horse next week . . have ye finished your whiskey, Mr Sassoon? We best be away.

Siegfried

(unhappily sipping and returning the tumbler)

Thankyou Mr O'Grady . . that was . . er . . interesting.

CUT TO

76. INT. - BLARNETT'S CAR

Blarnett *wraps himself up in his huge coat..*

Blarnett

A fine man that Paddy O'Grady . . . Take us
to Finnigan's, John!

Siegfried

Oh no!

CUT TO

77. EXT. - COUNTRY ROAD

*The car drives through the early evening, the sun setting. The road leads to
a small village, all dark except for the pub which is well-lit and crowded.*

CUT TO

78. INT. - BLARNETT'S CAR

Blarnett

A fine man is Michael Finnigan . . . I've known
him since I owned nothing but the coat upon me
back, and then later I was able to help him buy
this fine public house

Siegfried

You won't forget we need to get home for dinner,
Mr Blarnett . . I don't think we should stay long.

Blarnett

Oh no, no, no, no, no, no . . . don't worry your head about that . . we'll pop in and out in no time.

CUT TO

79. INT. - FINNIGAN'S PUB

Blarnett makes a grand entrance, followed sheepishly by **Siegfried**. The pub is crowded, the air thick with tobacco smoke.

Blarnett

Whiskey all around, Michael Finnigan, and don't scrimp on the measures.

Bar customers

Bless ye, Mister May the Lord grant ye a long and happy life!

Blarnett

I never forget that I was born no better than any one of ye, my friends, and me money made in America.

*Space is made at a table and **Blarnett** sits down heavily. A large glass of whiskey is thrust into his hand. **Finnigan**, a man the same age as **Blarnett**, leans forward over the bar.*

Finnigan

And who's this ye've brought with ye, Mister? An English officer, is it?

Blarnett

As fine a young man as any Irishman, Michael Finnigan, and I'll thank ye to keep a civil tongue.

Finnigan

(the customers grow silent)

There'll be houses burned and lives lost before the year's end . . . and any English officer would be best out of Ireland, Mister, friend of yours though he be.

*The statement is met with a murmur of agreement from the customers as all eyes turn to **Siegfried** who is sitting beside **Blarnett**. **Siegfried** says nothing and casually sips his whiskey.*

Blarnett

I'm sorry ye feel that way, Finnigan, and here's me embarrassed in front of me guest . . . but if we're not welcome here we best be on our way.

(He drains his whiskey glass)

I'll say only this, me friends, in politics and religion be pleasant to both sides. Sure, we'll all be dead drunk on the day of judgement . . . what's me bill, now? Here, this should cover it . . .

(He pulls a pile of coins from his coat pocket and dumps them on the table).

CUT TO

80. INT. - BLARNETT'S CAR

Blarnett

I'm sorry about that, Mr Sassoon . . . there's some as have strong feelings against the English, I was forgetting.

Siegfried

No matter, Mr Blarnett. From the little I know of Irish politics, I think their opinions are well founded.

Blarnett

(Somewhat drunk, he starts to sing, to Siegfried's astonishment, and John the driver joins in).

DISSOLVE TO

81. INT. - FRONT HALLWAY - BLARNETT'S HOUSE

Mrs O'Donnell , wearing a green evening dress, stands with arms folded and lips pursed as a clearly drunk **Blarnett** struggles to extricate himself from the huge coat. **Blarnett** hums his patriotic Irish song.

Siegfried

I'm very sorry, Mrs O'Donnell . . . I did try.

Mrs O'Donnell

Ye've got one hour to sober up, Mr Blarnett, before our guests arrive . . . *(to Siegfried)* it's not your fault, Mr Sassoon, I know that, but could you put his head in some cold water?

Siegfried

I'll do what I can.

82. INT. - DINING ROOM - BLARNETT'S HOUSE

The guests, Mrs O'Halloran and her daughter, sit primly on either side of the table, which is set richly with crystal, cutlery and silver candle-sticks. At the other end of the table sits Mrs O'Donnell, with Sean the groom on her left. Two empty chairs await the arrival of Siegfried and Blarnett.

Mrs O'Donnell

Miles and miles they travelled in the wild weather,
and then the hounds not able to hunt - God be praised
for that, for me heart was in me mouth when I thought
of the Mister destroying himself in the Mullagharier
Mountains . . . and then what must the Rolls Royce
car do but break down twice on the way home, and
them miles from any assistance . . ah, here they come . .

Blarnett enters, carrying himself rigidly upright and walking carefully, followed by **Siegfried** in uniform. **Blarnett** is immaculately dressed in a dinner suit.

Mrs O'Halloran

Good evening, Mister. Mrs O'Donnell was just saying what a terrible day you've had, on account of the weather.

Blarnett

(carefully lowering himself into his chair . . speaking unintelligibly)

Swas a . . indee . . Ms Halloran

Mrs O'Donnell

And this is Mr Sassoon . . . Mr Sassoon, Mrs O'Halloran and Miss O'Halloran.

Siegfried

(sitting down opposite Sean)

Good evening . . . we do apologise for keeping you waiting.

Sean

Mrs O'Donnell was just telling the ladies about the car breaking down . . . the Rolls Royce . . . breaking down.

Siegfried

Yes.

Mrs O'Halloran

Mrs O'Donnell tells me that you're off to France in the near future, Mr Sassoon

*(as she speaks, **Blarnett** stabs at a slice of claret jelly on his plate and sends it sliding onto the table. He picks up his spoon and pursues the jelly across the table between **Mrs O'Halloran** and **Miss O'Halloran**, who starts giggling)*

Siegfried

*(smiling and watching **Blarnett's** antics)*

Yes. I leave for France next week.

Mrs O'Halloran

*(watching **Blarnett** chase the jelly with his spoon)*

I'm sure we . . . highest esteem

*(**Blarnett** abandons the spoon and picks up the jelly with his fingers, putting it back on his plate as **Miss O'Halloran** laughs behind her hand)*

Mrs O'Halloran

. . . HIGHEST esteem . . . soldiers fighting

Blarnett

(raising his wine glass and standing unsteadily)

To the sojers fightin' . . .

(all except Mrs O'Halloran giggle and laugh openly . . . Blarnett drains his glass then collapses).

CUT TO

83. EXT. - LIMERICK RAILWAY STATION

Siegfried, wearing British Warm overcoat, stands on the platform with kit-bag and small trunk beside him, chatting with **Kegworthy** and the **Adjutant** who have come to see him off. The train stands at the station as a car horn is heard and **Blarnett's** car drives into the station forecourt. **Blarnett** emerges wearing plus fours and hurries onto the platform.

Blarnett

I was afraid I'd miss ye, Mr Sassoon . . I'll shake your hand in the hope that ye'll come back and see us when the war's over.

Siegfried

(shaking hands)

That I will, Mr Blarnett . . thankyou for your kindness and hospitality

Blarnett

It's been an honour, and a pleasure . . .

The train whistle sounds and the guard blows his whistle.

Train Guard

All aboard!

Blarnett

May the luck o' the Irish go with ye . . .

Siegfried boards the train as **Kegworthy** and the **Adjutant** pass up his bags. They shout farewells as the train starts to move. **Siegfried** leans from the window, waving, the train gathers speed.

FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN

84. EXT. - NOYELLES RAILWAY STATION, FRANCE

*The scene is organised chaos, with troops from many different British regiments milling about on the platform beside a steam train which has just arrived. In contrast to the fresh troops just arrived, numbers of walking wounded and scruffy soldiers going on leave are boarding the train. **Siegfried** joins a queue of soldiers waiting at the Royal Corps of Transport Movement Office. A military policeman walks along the queue.*

Military Policeman

Hofficers to the front, please . . Hofficers to the front.

*The soldiers part to let **Siegfried** make his way to the office window where a RCT sergeant is at the window.*

Siegfried

Sassoon . . . Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Sergeant
(consulting a list)

Sassoon, Sassoon . . . 'ere we are, Sir . . your
mobs abart five miles away, Domvast . . I'll
arrange a motor for you.

DISSOLVE TO

85. EXT. - COUNTRY ROAD, FRANCE

*A small open car carries **Siegfried** along a lane in the French countryside. It is Spring (May), the grass and hedgerows lush and green. The car enters a small village, passing a sign indicating DOMVAST.*

CUT TO

86. EXT. - REST AREA, FARMYARD

*The car pulls into a large farmyard where chickens and some cows roam freely. They pull up at a small outbuilding where a sign indicates BTN HQ - 25 RWF and **Siegfried** gets out from the car and unloads his bags. Some passing soldiers salute. The car drives off.*

CUT TO

87. INT. - BATTALION HQ, FARM OUTBUILDING

***Siegfried** enters what was once a farm store, with coarse stone walls, Four wooden desks face inwards. The room is empty except for a **sergeant** who stands up as **Siegfried** enters.*

Sergeant

Mr Sassoon, Sir . . we've been expecting you.

Siegfried

Where is everyone?

Sergeant

The Colonel and the Adjutant are out inspecting company lines . . we weren't sure what time you'd get here . . the two i/c's on leave.

Siegfried

Right.

Sergeant

The Colonel's put you into C Company, Sir. Acting company commander . . . I'll get someone to show you to your billet . . . (*shouting out the door*) Bill!

Williams

(*from outside*)

Sarge?

Sergeant

Show Mr Sassoon to 'is billet . . . the Colonel should be back in a couple of hours, Sir . . p'rhaps you could come back at, say, 5 o'clock?

CUT TO

88. EXT. - VILLAGE STREETS

Corporal Jones and another soldier carry the luggage through the small village, followed by Siegfried. A vague rumble in the distance signifies the

front line. The trio pass French villagers and occasional soldiers, who salute. They pass a noisy bar (estaminet) full of soldiers - an accordion plays. Entering another farmyard, they come to an outbuilding set back from the road.

Williams

(putting the bags down)

'Ere we are, Sir. 'Ome sweet 'ome . . . *(he knocks on the door and speaks bad French)* . . . bon jour!

*The door is opened by **Bond**, a soldier in shirtsleeves and braces.*

Bond

'Allo Billy Boy!

Williams

Bon soir, boyo . . . this 'ere is your new officer.

Bond

'Allo, Sir. Bond, I'll be your batman.

Siegfried

My name's Sassoon

Williams

We'll be off then, Sir.

DISSOLVE TO

89. INT. - BILLET, FARM OUTBUILDING

There are four camp- beds in the room, one bare and one neatly made up with sheets and blankets and two very messy with uniforms, boots scattered

around. **Siegfried's** bags are open on the spare bed as he unpacks. Hearing a noise, he turns to see a small mouse fossicking amongst the discarded clothes. He throws open the door - a church bell tolls slowly and in the far distance the thunder of the guns is heard faintly. **Siegfried** sits on the bed and unpacks books from his bag, two volumes of poetry, a novel by Thomas Hardy, a large diary and a small military pamphlet *Manual for the Employment and Training of Platoons* which he opens and starts to read.

There is the sound of boots approaching and **Jones**, a lieutenant about 40 years old, enters and throws his Sam Browne belt and pistol holster onto one of the messy beds.

Jones

Hallo there! Sassoon is it? Jones, Harry Jones.

Siegfried

(standing and shaking hands)

Siegfried.

Jones

(glancing at the MC ribbon on Siegfried's chest)

Welcome to France . . . or welcome back, I should say . . . you've got the company whilst Tom Pryor's away . . . I'm one of your platoon commanders, the others are young 'Stiffy' Roberts and Sergeant Hodge.

Siegfried

Have I got a two i/c?

Jones]

No. There's just the three of us, we're short of junior officers. Current life expectancy for subalterns in the trenches is two weeks . . . I see you're brushing up on modern warfare?

Siegfried

It's an improvement on Infantry Training 1914 . . .
When do you think we'll be going back into the
line?

Jones

That's anybody's guess . . . tomorrow, two weeks,
two months? We just take each day as it comes.
Tell you what, though - our blokes are booked for
the baths on Thursday. That'll be fun!

CUT TO

90. EXT. - FOREST (BEECH TREES), FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE

The sun filters through the trees overlooking lush green fields. On one side, a platoon practices gas drill whilst on the other side a platoon practices bayonet drill (supervised by an enthusiastic Scottish officer in kilt) and in the distance a third platoon, stripped to the waist, can be seen exercising. Siegfried and the CSM (Company Sergeant Major) sit under the beech trees studying various maps.

Siegfried

You know, sarn't-major, we are sitting on the
exact spot where the battle of Crecy was fought.

CSM

Really Sir? I didn't think Fritz got this far.

Siegfried

(laughing)

We weren't fighting the Germans six hundred
years ago! This is where Henry the Fifth defeated
the French . . .

CSM

Really Sir?

Siegfried

Take command, Sarn't-major , I'm going for a walk. Troop commanders can take the men home as soon as they're done.

CSM

Very good, Sir.

CUT TO

91. EXT. - FOREST (BEECH TREES), FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE

Siegfried walks alone through the trees and the bird songs are exaggerated. Coming to the edge of the trees, he looks out over lush green fields where cattle graze. He lifts his gaze to the horizon where the muffled sound of guns is heard. He sits under a tree, takes a notebook from his pocket and writes.

**FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN**

92. EXT. - COUNTRY LANE, FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE

Black and white period footage shows a column of soldiers marching along a country lane.

DISSOLVE TO

93. EXT. - COUNTRY LANE, FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE

Current footage of soldiers marching along the lane through rich farmland, green fields and ripe barley ready for harvest.

CUT TO

94. EXT. - OPEN GRASSLAND, FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE

Siegfried stands at ease in front of troops drawn up three deep behind him. In total about 900 soldiers form a hollow square at the centre of which stands a trestle table covered with a blanket. All is quiet except for bird calls and the distant rumble of the guns. Two Rolls Royce staff cars with divisional flags drive across the grass. A **brigadier** gets out of one car to be greeted by a **staff major**, both very smartly dressed in contrast to the assembled troops. A **major-general** gets out of the second car followed by a **colonel** who carries a briefcase. The group of four staff officers make their way to the centre table. A regimental **major** and **RSM** complete with pace stick stand waiting.

Major

(shouting orders)

Parade! Parade 'shun! . . . Parade, shoulder - arms!
. . . General Salute - present arms!

There is a flash of bayonets as the 900 rifles are brought to the salute, **Siegfried** saluting with his sword. The **major-general** stands in front of the table and returns the salute as the **colonel** fiddles with the briefcase on the table. The **major** salutes and reports briefly to the senior officer who nods.

Major

Parade, shoulder - arms! . . . Order - arms!
Stand at - ease!

Major-general

(shouting to address the troops)

It is with considerable pride that we are gathered here today to honour a brave soldier, a man who represents the fighting spirit of us all. Corporal Whiteway single-handedly assaulted a German machine gun position which had inflicted severe casualties on his comrades and, without regard

for his personal safety, captured not only the German machine gun, but also a large portion of the German trench. Against considerable odds, Corporal Whiteway held his position for some minutes until his comrades were able to push home their attack. In recognition of his outstanding bravery the King has been pleased to award Corporal Whiteway the Victoria Cross.

*(He turns and nods to the **major**)*

Major

(shouting orders)

Parade! Parade 'shun!

*There follows an embarrassed silence, with nobody knowing what to do, when the **RSM** (who sports a magnificent moustache) fills the void.*

RSM

Corporal Whiteway . . . double forward!

*A small man runs forward across the grass with rifle in one hand, holding his steel helmet with the other hand. He stops in front of the **major-general** at attention. The **colonel** passes the medal to the **major-general**, who drops it in the process of pinning it to **Whiteway's** chest. With the medal retrieved and pinned to his chest, **Whiteway** turns hurriedly and starts running back to his place but is called back by the **major-general**.*

Major-general

No no, Whiteway . . . come back. Come back here. In the spirit of the British army, I now ask you to give Corporal Whiteway three rousing cheers . . . hip hip!

A lack-lustre cheer is heard.

Hip hip! . . . (*hurray*) . . . hip hip! (*hurray with even less enthusiasm*). It goes without saying that I know each and every one of us will follow this magnificent example.

Whiteway *doubles away. In the background, the major is heard ordering a general salute as the staff officers turn and walk back to their cars.*

Major-general

I think that went rather well, don't you?

Brigadier

Absolutely, Stephen . . . jolly good show.

CUT TO

95. INT. - BATTALION HQ, FARM OUTBUILDING

*The wooden desks have been moved and a dozen makeshift chairs face two maps taped up on the wall. Officers, including **Siegfried** and **Jones**, chat quietly until the **2 i/c** (a major) calls them to attention and the **Colonel** (a lieutenant-colonel commanding the battalion) enters.*

2 i/c

(all the officers stand up)

Gentlemen!

Colonel

Sit down please, everyone. As you will have guessed all good things must end. I have our orders for the front.

(He turns to one of the maps) . . .

This large scale map shows the situation as it was two days ago. Our division holds the area between Arras here . . . and St Omer here . . . we're not going straight into the line but will be held in reserve here at a place called Habarcq, some ten miles from the front line. At Habarcq we will be on twelve hours notice to move.

(He turns to the other map) . .

This trench map shows the current layout of the trenches, which are divided roughly into twelve sectors each held by a battalion. Our job will be to relieve one of the battalions or, in the event of a German attack, to reinforce weak areas. Are there any questions? . . . Right, then I'll ask Simon to give you details of the move.

2 i/c

Thankyou Sir. Advance party will consist of C Company, Siegfried . . . bring your baggage to the Quarter-Master here by 7pm tonight and move off at 5 tomorrow morning, marching north to Rue Railway Station . . A Company will march off at 6, followed by . . .

CUT TO

96. EXT. - RAILWAY STATION, ST POL

Late afternoon. Siegfried's soldiers disembark from cattle trucks and pass dirty and exhausted troops waiting to board the train - the haggard troops from the front line say nothing, watching sullenly. The Royal Welch Fusiliers, fresh and smart by comparison, form up into ranks on the roadway. Noise of artillery fire is heard distinctly.

CUT TO

97. INT. - LARGE BARN

*Noise of the guns a constant rumble. **Siegfried** lies in the hay reading when **Bond** the batman interrupts him. The other two company officers, **Jones** and the youthful **Roberts** lie asleep in the hay.*

Bond

(carrying a steaming mug)

Cuppa tea, Sir?

Siegfried

Good man, thankyou . . . have the lads had a brew?

Bond

Yes, Sir . . . how long before we move, Sir?

Siegfried

No move before 5am tomorrow - then it's anybody's guess.

Bond

Right-oh . . . I won't unpack anything.

Siegfried

No, don't . . . I've got some books here, that's all I need.

CUT TO

98. EXT. - MAGNICOURT VILLAGE (LARGELY RUBBLE)

*Siegfried's soldiers walk along the roadway past ruined buildings. A dead horse lies a short distance from the road. The road is congested, French refugees moving in the opposite direction, a **young girl** riding on a cart turns to her mother.*

Young Girl

Ils sont tout tellement jeune, maman!

CUT TO

99. EXT. - LARGE HOUSE, SOMEWHAT DAMAGED

Soldiers are on guard in the driveway. The noise of artillery from the front line is constant. A battery of guns in a nearby field fires at intervals, very loud. A German aeroplane flies overhead lazily.

CUT TO

100. INT. - LARGE LIVING ROOM

*Siegfried sits at a desk censoring soldiers mail, piles of letters before him. He seals and stamps envelopes (with an ink stamp) after reading. Other officers are similarly busy. A **corporal** enters carrying a bag full of letters.*

Corporal

Mail for you, Mr Sassoon.

*Siegfried takes the letter and looks at the sender's address briefly then stuffs the letter into a pocket. The Commanding Officer, a **colonel**, enters the room followed by a **major-general**.*

Colonel

Gentlemen!

Major-General

Carry on, chaps, don't stand up. Just wanting to introduce myself, I'm Osborn-Bell commanding the division. Your men are all fairly new, I believe. How are they shaping up?

Siegfried

(after an embarrassed pause)

Well, Sir, I believe. Moral is good. Most of the NCOs are old hands.

Major-General

Good. Do you have everything you need?

Captain

We need boots, Sir. Many of the boots are worn out.

Major-General

Really? I'll see what I can do. Anything else? . . . right, I'll go to the men's lines now . . . you'll be moving up to the front very soon, gentlemen - good luck . . . if we fail to hold the Bosch here, then Paris will fall.

CUT TO

101. INT. - SMALLER ROOM

The colonel addresses the officers, trench maps pinned up on the wall.

Colonel

(referring to the map)

We take over from the Canadians here . An advance

party consisting of myself, company commanders and one guide from each platoon move at four AM to reach the trenches by first light. The battalion will follow on the night of the twenty-first, that's in two days. Stephen, you'll supervise the battalion move, I'll talk to you about that . . . meanwhile, company commanders - organise your guides and meet me here at 0330.

CUT TO

102. EXT. - COMMUNICATION TRENCHES

Moonlight. The small party of RWF officers make their way up a communication trench following a Canadian guide. Occasional parachute flares light up the desolated area like daylight, then extinguish. Odd bursts of machine gun fire.

CUT TO

103. INT. - BATTALION HQ DUGOUT

*The dugout is lined with sandbags. Four **Canadian officers** sit on makeshift chairs, their uniforms dirty and stained, The **Canadian colonel** wears a Victoria Cross ribbon on his uniform.*

Canadian Colonel

Hello there . . . Clarke, Second Battalion, Princess Pat's.

Colonel

Fitzwilliam, Royal Welch Fusiliers . . . these are my company commanders.

Canadian Colonel

Can you find somewhere to sit? . . . Okay, let me fill you in on the situation . . .

CUT TO

104. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH (CENTRAL)

Canadian soldiers stand along the parapet of the trench with bayonets fixed for the dawn "stand to". **Siegfried** is guided along the trench by a **Canadian lance corporal** until they meet **Major Duclos** of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. **Duclos** is looking through a trench periscope.

Corporal

The British officer, Sir.

Duclos

(turning from the periscope and glancing at Siegfried's shoulder)

Hi there . . I was expecting your Company Commander.

Siegfried

(saluting)

That's me, Sir. Sassoon, commanding A company.

Duclos

(doubtfully . . extending his hand)

Really? Duclos . . here, have a look.

Siegfried

(looking through the periscope)

Quiet?

Duclos

Deceptively so . . . you can never tell what's about to happen . . . shelling fairly constant . . . always the worry about gas . . . patrolling on both sides, probably more from our side . . . we're told Fritz is building for a major attack .

Siegfried

(turning away from the periscope)

Then absolutely nothing has changed since I was here . . .

Both men duck low as two shells scream overhead. Two huge explosions are heard and some dirt showers into the trench. Thereafter there is a constant but spasmodic noise of shells and heavy guns.

Duclos

Range finding, nothing serious. They do it every morning. You've been here before then?

Siegfried

(brushing dirt from his uniform)

Yes . . . eighteen months ago . . . Fritz is in the trenches we had then. we've moved back a mile or so . . . funny to be here again after so long.

Duclos

That's modern warfare for you . . . we sit in the same position for months on end and blow each other to bits.

*A Canadian **warrant officer** approaches **Duclos** (no salute).*

Warrant Officer

Permission to stand the men down, Sir?

Duclos

Sure, George . . . *(to Siegfried)* we don't stand on ceremony in the trenches.

A whistle blows and orders to "stand down" are shouted along the trench. Canadian soldiers climb down from the parapet and unfix their bayonets.

Duclos

Are you tired? . . or can I show you around?

CUT TO

105. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH (SOUTHERN SECTION)

Duclos and Siegfried walk along the trench and crouch low where the parapet is low or damaged. Makeshift signs state KEEP DOWN - LOW WALL.

Duclos

If you show your head over the top here you will be shot . . Fritz has it marked.

Siegfried

You can't rebuild the wall?

Duclos

We've tried . . Fritz just knocks it down again. Here's our limit, to the right are the Manchesters.

The two officers enter a machine gun post, heavily sandbagged in front with fields of fire right and left. One Browning machine gun stands on a tripod, gas gong on the wall. A sentry looks through large binoculars along the line.

Duclos

We find that anything open to the front will be sniped . . they're very good, we've lost a lot of good men.

Siegfried

(making notes in a small notebook)

How far away are the Manchesters?

Duclos

Forty yards.

Siegfried

No connecting trench?

Duclos

No. That's deliberate . . . just in case.

Siegfried

Okay.

Duclos

We have a listening post fifty yards in front, up this little trench here, but it's damn dangerous as the Manchesters keep shooting at it . . . we've been sorely tempted to shoot back!

Siegfried

Can we go up to the post?

Duclos
(doubtfully)

It's empty, only used at night . . . tell you what,
we'll go up with the boys tonight.

CUT TO

106. EXT. - PANORAMA, DESOLATE LANDSCAPE

The camera pans across the trenches, desolate earth with a few skeletal trees, occasional ruined buildings and here and there some grass and bright red poppy flowers.

Siegfried
(gazing through the fire slits across wire)

Right . . . I keep seeing ghosts, friends . . .
they're walking in the daylight, I see them quite
clearly . . . Ormond . . . Dunning . . . does that
happen to you?

Duclos

No, not ghosts . . . visions maybe, men with their
heads blown off, their guts hanging out . . . all too
often the visions are real.

CUT TO

107. INT. - COMPANY HQ DUGOUT

Duclos lies asleep on a wire bed, two other officers lie exhausted and a very young soldier is slumped on the floor leaning against the wall. **Siegfried** sits at the table studying a very old newspaper and a Canadian sergeant brews coffee over a small improvised fire of hessian bags soaked in paraffin. A machine gun fires bursts not far away. Suddenly the scream of shells is heard followed by explosions very close. All the sleepers awake with a start.

Duclos

(his voice almost inaudible in the noise of shells)

Jesus! . . . *(shouting to Siegfried)* . . I need to check on the lads - you stay here!

Siegfried

What?

Duclos

STAY . . HERE !

Duclos puts a steel helmet on his head and leaves the dugout. **Siegfried** follows. Shells are falling very close, the noise deafening. Apart from the explosions, shrapnel sings through the air.

CUT TO

108. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH

Canadian soldiers crouch low in the trench, some in small dugouts they have carved. Occasionally a brave sentry stands on the fire step. **Duclos** speaks reassuringly to the men and climbs up beside each sentry to survey the front area, we see him speak but his words can't be heard above the noise of the shells.

Duclos

*(turning to see **Siegfried** walking along behind him)*

What the . . . ? What are you doing?

Siegfried

I'm following you!

Duclos *shakes his head and the pair walk on along the trench.*

CUT TO

109. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH (DIFFERENT SECTION)

Duclos and **Siegfried** *walk along the trench, the former speaking to each soldier. As suddenly as it began, the shelling stops. There is silence and the two officers climb onto the fire step, cautiously looking out.*

Duclos

They won't attack in daylight . . . they're just softening us up, breaking the wire. They might attack tonight.

Siegfried

We're due to take over from you tonight.

Duclos

Yep!

CUT TO

110. EXT. - COMMUNICATION TRENCH (NARROW)

Night-time. 2/Lt Jones leads his platoon up the communication trench. A constant stream of wounded (some on stretchers) and food containers coming the other way makes progress very difficult. Star shells illuminate the trench periodically.

CUT TO

111. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH (CENTRAL)

Night-time. Siegfried meets Jones and his soldiers as they arrive. There is stark contrast between the fresh troops and the exhausted and gaunt Canadian soldiers.

Siegfried

That way, as far as you can go . . . then sixty yards back this way, that's your section. Get your machine gun set up straight away. Good luck . . . I'll be down shortly.

Jones

Right oh.

They both duck as a series of shells scream overhead, then explosions are heard from the German lines four hundred yards away.

Siegfried

We're half expecting an attack . . . keep the blokes on their toes.

CUT TO

112. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH (SOUTHERN SECTION)

*Flares illuminate the night sky at intervals and machine guns fire. **Siegfried** makes his way along the trench as exhausted Canadian soldiers pass the other way. He finds **Jones** in the machine gun post, **Jones** perusing the area in front of the trenches through binoculars as the **soldiers** busily set up the Lewis gun.*

Soldier

Ready Sir . . . can we test?

Jones

Yes, go ahead.

Soldier

No patrols out, Sir?

Jones turns to **Siegfried** for response.

Siegfried

Not yet, but wiring parties will be out soon.
Keep your aim well to the right.

The soldier swings the barrel of the gun right and fires a short burst.

Siegfried

Good . . . I'll be off . . . stand to at five AM
and an officers' conference at seven.

CUT TO

113. INT. - COMPANY HQ DUGOUT - DAY

Siegfried sits at a desk filling in a form - he is surrounded by papers, maps. A **signaller** (wearing headphones) is tapping out morse on a key. A **runner** sits beside him, watching, and **Bond** the soldier servant cooks eggs in a frypan over a makeshift stove. The **CSM** sits at a separate desk filling in more forms.

Siegfried

Sarn't-major, can you run down to young Roberts and get his rations return . . . I don't seem to have it.

CSM

Right you are, Sir.

As he is about to leave the small doorway, **Velmore** - a tall smartly dressed lieutenant carrying bag - enters. They almost bump into each other.

CSM

Morning, Sir

Velmore

(entering the dugout and saluting casually)

Good morning . . . A Company, is it?

Siegfried

(from his chair)

It is . . can I help you?

Velmore

I'm looking for the officer commanding.

Siegfried

That's me . . . Siegfried Sassoon.

Velmore

I bring greetings and salutations from the CO.
I'm here as your two i/c.

Siegfried

(standing up and shaking hands)

Really? My two i/c? Now that is good news . .

Velmore

(shaking hands)

Tony Velmore . . . *(smelling)* is that bacon?

Siegfried

You're really here as my two i/c?

Velmore

That is my sole purpose in life.

Siegfried

Bond, some bacon and eggs for Mr Velmore,
please! At last I'll be able to catch some sleep
Chuck your kit on that bunk over there . . . is
that a book in your pocket?

Velmore

This one? . . . Flecker's poems . . you know him?

Siegfried
(smiling)

I think we're going to get on rather well, Tony.

CUT TO

114. INT. - COMPANY HQ DUGOUT - NIGHT

We hear desultory shelling and an occasional burst of machine gun fire. Siegfried sits back on his bunk smoking his pipe and reading by the light of an oil lamp. Velmore reads sitting at the table under a second oil lamp. The CSM dozes on his wire bed.

Velmore
(reading with exaggerated gusto)

Listen to this, sarn't major . . .

'Across the vast blue shadow sweeping plain
The gathered armies darken through the grain
Swinging curved swords and dragon-sculptured spears
Footmen, and tiger-hearted cavaliers.'

CSM

Very nice, Sir, I'm sure.

Velmore

Isn't it though?

'Swinging curved swords and dragon-sculptured spears
Footmen, the Royal Welch Fusiliers!'

CSM

Speaking of which, I'll go and check on the lads.

Velmore

(laughing as the CSM leaves)

Oh dear, did I frighten him away?

Siegfried

(pipe in mouth)

Takes more than a bit of poetry to frighten the sarn't major! . . . Here's one for you:

'It is written that you should suffer without purpose and without hope. But I will not let all your sufferings be lost in the abyss.'

Velmore

That's interesting.

Siegfried

Duhamel - Vie des Martyrs . . . sums up our situation really, 'doomed to suffer without purpose and without hope'.

Velmore

That's a morbid outlook, Siegfried.

Siegfried

I feel morbid . . . how many of my young soldiers will live to see England again?

Velmore

'Tis not for us to worry about the dead . . . our job is to biff the Bosch, simple as that.

Siegfried

You're right . . . I've been sitting on my backside
far too long. Too much time to think.

*A blanket spread across the doorway opens and a very young **runner** enters
the dugout. He takes a large envelope from a shoulder bag and offers it to
Siegfried.*

Runner

Despatches for you, Sir.

Siegfried

(relaxing on his bunk)

Thankyou . . . give them to Mr Velmore, please.

Runner

Anything to go back?

Velmore

(exchanging envelopes)

Yes, here you are . . . what's it like out there?

Runner

Quiet, Sir, touch wood . . .

Velmore

*(as the **runner** leaves)*

You take care now.

***Velmore** sits at the table and carefully opens the envelope for re-use, then
sifts through a number of documents and forms before choosing one.*

Velmore
(*suddenly alert*)

I say, you better read this . . . the Fourth Army
has broken through . . .

Siegfried
(*jumping up and taking the note*)

What!

Velmore

They've broken through . . . we are to adopt an
'aggressive initiative' . . .

Siegfried
(*reading*)

Good grief! . . . that means more patrolling.

Velmore

More 'swinging of curved swords and waving of
dragon-sculptured spears'.

Siegfried

Finally!

CUT TO

115. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH

Day, sunshine. All is quiet and a small bird sings not far away. Siegfried cautiously looks over the parapet next to a sentry.

Siegfried

It's too quiet, isn't it, Wentworth? Have you seen any movement at all?

Sentry

Not a thing, Sir . . . not a hint of smoke, not a sound. Do you think they might be preparing an attack?

Siegfried

No, we'd have had some warning. Intelligence says they pull back from the trenches during daylight and come back at night . . . I'll go and have a look.

Sentry

(watching Siegfried take off his equipment and jacket)

Beg pardon, Sir?

Siegfried

I'll go and have a look . . . can I borrow your bayonet?

The bemused sentry takes the bayonet off his rifle and hands it to Siegfried who climbs carefully over a low area of parapet and leopard crawls towards an area of corn. The CSM comes up, looks at the pile of discarded equipment and jacket, then stands boldly up the parapet.

CSM

Where the fuck's 'e goin'?

Sentry

Says 'e's going to look at Fritz's trench.

CSM

Why didn't you stop 'im? . . run get Mr Velmore.

CUT TO

110. EXT. - CORNFIELD, NO-MAN'S LAND

Siegfried *leopard* crawls through the corn. Coming to the edge, he pauses and studies the German trench, now quite close.

CUT TO

116. EXT. - GERMAN TRENCH

Siegfried *crawls* into a shell-hole, listens and moves cautiously forward and rolls over the parapet into the trench, which is deserted. Moving along the trench he finds a pile of stick bombs (hand grenades) - he picks one up and creeps to a corner of the trench. Hearing German voices, he puts his finger through the safety pin of the grenade and peers around the corner.

CUT TO

117. EXT. - GERMAN MACHINE GUN POST

Four very young **German** soldiers sit around a machine gun, all looking up at the sky where two biplanes are engaged in a duel. The Germans point and talk. One **German** stands up and walks directly towards **Siegfried**, stopping as he sees him.

German

Wie gehts? Was tun sie hier?

CUT TO

118. EXT. - GERMAN TRENCH

Siegfried *turns and runs away up the trench, hurdling the parapet and crawling frantically to the shelter of the corn. Safely hidden in the corn, he lies on his back and laughs.*

CUT TO

119. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH (BRITISH)

*A small crowd of soldiers including **Velmore** and the **CSM** stand on the parapet as **Siegfried** rolls back into the trench.*

Siegfried

*(handing the German grenade to **Velmore**)*

Here . . . present for you.

Velmore

(angry, in a low tone)

You're not only a bloody irresponsible, you're also bloody rude . . . why didn't you tell me?

Siegfried

For the simple reason that you would have gone berserk and stopped me!

Velmore

You're damn right I would!

Siegfried

You see? . . . proves my point . . . anyway, they do pull their people back during daylight, there's no-one there . . . *(to the sentry)* thankyou, Wentworth.

Siegfried returns the bayonet to the sentry and retrieves his jacket and equipment. **Siegfried** and **Velmore** walk back along the trench.

Siegfried

You know, we should be able to get a prisoner. I'll send young Howitt - he's good and it'll give him a chance to get a medal.

Velmore

You think he's up to it?

Siegfried

I'll go along with him. We'll go tonight if there's not too much moon.

Velmore

I wish you wouldn't go . . . there's really no need.

Siegfried

Ah, but you're wrong there. It's exactly what I need.

FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN

120. INT. - OFFICERS DUGOUT, FRONT LINE

*Desultory shelling flashes on both sides of the line. In the dingy dugout **Velmore, Jones** and **Howitt** sprawl across wire beds as if dead, all fully clothed. A single candle stuck onto the table casts flickering shadows. **Siegfried** enters quietly and shakes **Howitt**.*

Siegfried

Jamie . . . Jamie, time to go.

Howitt

(Waking with a start and sitting up)

What's happening? What time is it?

Siegfried

Two o'clock . . time to go.

Howitt

Okay.

*Some muffled noises are heard as **Howitt** collects some gear, then **Siegfried** holds open the blanket covering the doorway. The candle splutters and goes out.*

DISSOLVE TO

121. EXT. - FRONT LINE TRENCH (SOUTHERN SECTION)

*Moonlight. **Siegfried**, **Howitt** and two tough, athletic corporals stand in the trench preparing to go out on patrol. They wear black woollen skull caps and have mud smeared on their faces and uniforms as camouflage. Each has a pistol in a holster, a short knife, wire-cutters and two hand grenades in pockets. Each carries a short pickaxe handle. Sentries man the fire step.*

Siegfried

You all know the password?

Howitt

Zulu . . . there's really no need for you to come
Siegfried, I'm quite capable.

Siegfried

I don't doubt your capabilities, Jamie . . . I'm here
purely for my own amusement. Jump up and
down.

***Siegfried** moves along the three men who jump up and down in turn,
checking for noisy equipment.*

Siegfried

Right . . . let's go.

*The four men crouch low and make their way up the narrow trench towards
the listening post.*

CUT TO

122. EXT. - LISTENING POST - NIGHT

*Two **sentries** lie in a shallow hollow, which has makeshift holes cut into the
walls as shelves. They look over the parameter through binoculars and turn
as the group of four camouflaged soldiers make their way up the shallow
communicating trench.*

Siegfried

What's happening?

Sentry

Not much . . . Mr Sassoon, is it?

Siegfried
(laughing)

Yes!

Soldier

Sorry, Sir . . . Din' recognise you . . . we were told you'd be going out.

Siegfried

Yes, four of us . . . we'll be returning in about two hours. Do you have a watch?

Soldier

Yes, Sir . . . zero two fifteen now, by my watch.

Siegfried

Right . . . expect us back between four and five o'clock . . . with luck we'll be bring a prisoner.

Soldier

Right you are, Sir . . . Good luck!

Siegfried *signals to one of the corporals, who slips quietly over the parapet followed by Siegfried, then Howitt and then the second corporal.*

CUT TO

123. EXT. - NO-MAN'S LAND

The four men of the patrol leopard crawl along a path marked with white tape between barbed wire defences. A parachute flare illuminates the

landscape light daylight and they freeze. Ahead, muzzle flashes indicate that a machine gun is firing, but not in their direction. The flare dies and crawl forward.

CUT TO

124. EXT. - CORNFIELD, NO-MAN'S LAND

*They come to the cornfield where **Siegfried** had been during the day. They gather in a small group at the edge of the corn. Suddenly the German machine gun fires, very close but not in their direction. A flare illuminates the German line and soldiers are clearly seen at the parapet, some firing. As the flare dies, **Siegfried** makes a 'washed out' motion with his hands and points backwards.*

Siegfried
(loud whisper)

No good. Let's go home.

CUT TO

125. EXT. - LISTENING POST - NIGHT

*The two **sentries** turn as someone makes their way up the shallow communication trench. Sergeant **Wickham** comes into view, crouching low.*

Wickham

Take a break, lads. Ten minutes . . grab some hot tea.

Sentry

Right oh, Sarge . . . ta.

*The sentries crouch low and return down the shallow trench, leaving **Wickham** lying on guard in the shallow dugout.*

126. EXT. - NO-MAN'S LAND

The four men of the patrol return to the British wire, crawling. They find the white tape marking safe passage when a parachute flare illuminates them.

CUT TO

127. EXT. - LISTENING POST - NIGHT

*Sergeant **Wickham** tenses suddenly, staring at the illuminated figures. He opens and closes the bolt of his rifle, loading a round in the breach.*

Wickham
(shouting loudly)

Who goes there? . . .

A machine gun fires from the German lines and the four men of the patrol throw themselves flat. The flare goes out, leaving darkness.

Wickham
Bloody hell!

He grabs a whistle from the wall of the dugout and blows it, three long blasts. The whistle is repeated from the British trench behind him.

CUT TO

128. EXT. - NO-MAN'S LAND

***Siegfried, Howitt** and the two corporals pause.*

Siegfried

There seems to be some sort of flap. I hope they know we're here.

*A parachute flare illuminates the area. **Siegfried** lifts himself and waves one arm in the air.*

CUT TO

129. EXT. - LISTENING POST - NIGHT

Sergeant Wickham takes aim with his rifle.

Wickham
(to himself)

Right, you bastard . . .

He fires, the noise of the shot very loud.

**DISSOLVE TO
SLOW MOTION**

130. EXT. - NO-MAN'S LAND

Echoes of the shot are heard as Siegfried lurches backwards (slow motion), shot in the head. Howitt and the two corporals move to help him, also moving in slow motion. They pull off his woollen hat and blood soaks their hands.

**FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN**

131. EXT. - CASUALTY CLEARING STATION

Dawn, soft light. A large tent marked with red crosses in the background. A RAMC major makes his way between numerous stretchers on the ground in front of the tent. The scene resembles an abattoir. A sergeant with a red cross armband follows with a clipboard. A rumble of artillery is heard in the background. The RAMC Major stoops to examine a critically wounded soldier.

RAMC Major
(to the sergeant)

"C".

*The **Sergeant** writes briefly and turns to two **orderlies** as the **RAMC Major** examines the next patient.*

Sergeant
(to the orderlies)

"C".

*The **orderlies** carry the stretcher away.*

RAMC Major
(to the sergeant)

"A".

Sergeant
(to the orderlies)

"A".

*The **RAMC Major** comes to **Siegfried** lying unconscious on a stretcher.*

RAMC Major

Hot water!

*An **orderly** brings a steaming basin and sponge and the **RAMC Major** briskly washes the blood away from **Siegfried**'s head, then listens to his chest with a stethoscope.*

RAMC Major

"A".

*The **RAMC Major** moves on to the next patient.*

CUT TO

132. INT. - MARQUEE, CCS

Rows of stretchers are lined up within the tent. Most of the patients have some form of bandaging. Orderlies walk quickly about. One patient rambles incoherently as Velmore and Wickham are guided to Siegfried's stretcher.

Velmore

Is he conscious?

Orderly

Yes, no major damage . . you can't stay long though, Sir.

Velmore

Thanks, thanks very much . . . Siegfried? Ziggy?

Wickham

(shaking a shoulder)

Wake up, Sir, for Gawd's sake!

Siegfried

(opening his eyes slowly)

Hello, Tony . . . hello Sarn't Wickham . . . I was having such a lovely dream.

Wickham

It was me, Sir, it was me what shot you . . I'm so sorry!

Siegfried
(laughing)

I was waving!

Wickham

I thought you was throwing a grenade!

Siegfried

Damn fine shot.

Velmore

They say you'll be alright, but they're sending you home.

Siegfried

That's nice of them.

Velmore

We're on the offensive, the whole line . . . there's talk of an end to the war.

Orderly

Time to go, Sir.

Velmore
(standing to leave)

Good luck, Siegfried!

Siegfried

And good luck to you, my 'tiger hearted cavalier'.

*The camera pans to another **patient**, his head swathed in bandages, his jaw clearly missing and his tongue tied at the side of his mouth. He watches **Velmore** leave.*

FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN

133. INT. - LONDON, HOSPITAL WARD

*There are four beds in a spacious ward with big windows overlooking a park. One bed is empty, two others have patients under blankets and in the fourth near the window. A large bouquet of flowers sits on the bedside table - **Siegfried** sits up wearing pyjamas, his head bandaged. He reads The Times. A nurse enters in Army Nursing Service uniform.*

Nurse

*(with a number of letters, handing one to **Siegfried**)*

Here's mail for you, Mister Sassoon. It looks like this one's from France.

Siegfried

(opening the letter)

Thankyou, sister.

DISSOLVE TO

134. EXT. - ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE, BRITISH TROOPS

*Genuine archival footage shows British troops advancing through ruined towns and villages. **Velmore's** voice in heard.*

Velmore (V/O)

My dear Ziggy . . . I hope this letter finds you well. We have left the trenches behind and are advancing over open country. They say the war will be over by Christmas, here's hoping. I'm writing mainly to tell you that shortly after you left, young Howitt took a strong patrol across the lines and brought back five prisoners and a German machine gun. I'm putting his name forward for gong. I know how pleased you will be. We move again tomorrow and I have much to do, so will keep this letter short. The lads all send their very best wishes . . .

DISSOLVE TO

135. INT. - LONDON, HOSPITAL WARD

*The nurse is shaking **Siegfried** gently, as if waking him up*

Nurse

Mister Sassoon! . . . Mister Sassoon! . . . It's not bad news, I hope?

Siegfried

No, no, not at all . . . it's very good news.

Nurse

There's an officer wanting to see you, a Major Rivers. Can I send him in?

Siegfried

Rivers? Why, certainly you may!

The nurse exits and Rivers (wearing uniform) enters.

Rivers

(wringing Siegfried's hand)

My God it's good to see you safe!

DISSOLVE TO

136. INT. - LONDON, HOSPITAL WARD

Late afternoon, the same day. There are teacups and a teapot on a tray on the bedside table. Siegfried and Rivers are both laughing.

Siegfried

. . . so I started waving, and he thought I was throwing a grenade . . . so he shot me!

Rivers

Unbelievable! You were so unlucky.

Siegfried

No, my friend, I was so lucky . . . so lucky.

Rivers

(after a slightly embarrassed pause)

Right, I must go. It's been so good to see you.

Siegfried

Yes, thank you for coming.

Rivers

(standing, ready to leave - serious)

Did you hear the news about Wilfred Owen?

Siegfried

Young Wilfred? What's he been up to, do tell!

Rivers

I'm afraid he's dead. He was with the Manchester Regiment near Joncourt . I don't know the details.

Siegfried

Oh no! Why the hell did he go back to France?

Rivers

The same reason you did.

Siegfried

What a waste . . . what a terrible bloody waste.

**FADE TO BLACK
FADE IN**

137. PHOTO MONTAGE - DEAD SOLDIERS

A poem is read as graphic images of dead and maimed soldiers fill the screen.

Rough brogue V/O

And by his smile, I knew that sudden fall.
By his dead smile I knew we stood in hell.
'I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark

DISSOLVE TO

As the photo montage continues, the rough soldier's brogue dissolves to Benjamin Britten's War Requiem featuring the same poem.

. . . . for so you frowned yesterday
as you jabbed and killed.
I parried, but my hands were slow and cold.
Let us sleep now '

_____ THE END _____

**FADE TO BLACK
CREDITS ROLL**