

THE IDEALISTS

Written by

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Based on true events

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INT. REFECTORY HALL, PUBLIC ASSISTANCE INSTITUTION - DAY

The face of a six year old girl, IRIS MERRY, wide-eyed but strung out - dark circles under her eyes. She is watching something in front of her - fascinated.

She's watching the face of an old woman - haggard, greying hair, loose and unkempt. Chewing her food with unusual energy, her eyes ahead but seeing nothing, not the little girl in front of her.

The old woman ejects a mouthful of masticated food into her cupped hand and rolls the grey mass into a ball. She places the ball, with precision, on the rim of her dinner plate where it joins several others of its kind.

The little girl, sparked, begins to imitate. She places one and then another ball on the rim of her own plate.

IRIS, AGED SIXTEEN (V.O.)

I have always liked to organise things.

A hard-faced woman, in the uniform of a warden of a Public Assistance Institution of the 1930s. She has spotted the young girl and determines to stop her 'organisation' in its tracks.

MRS BURNS (V.O)

An essential quality for our work but which is not always appreciated, I'm afraid to say.

The little girl is in the path of a clip around the head.

IRIS, AGED SIXTEEN (V.O.)

Yes, I have found that too.

A warden on the other side of the room winces to the sound of contact.

Except for the 1930s dress of wardens and inmates we are in a workhouse of popular imagination. The refectory hall is cavernous, Victorian in construction, windows too high to see anything but the sky.

Long tables with benches lined with a random collection of women and girls of all ages - a storehouse of dysfunction.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

IRIS MERRY, sixteen, is now a fresh-faced young woman, puppy fat pretty, presenting as a grown up - swept up hairdo with 'Victory rolls' above padded shouldered utility suit. It's 1944 and she is fashionable, but appropriate for an interview.

She sits across a large desk in an upright wooden chair interviewed by MRS.BURNS, a pink-cheeked middle-aged woman with hair pulled back tightly in a bun.

Mrs Burns narrows her eyes and peers out of her own office through a glazed partition into a largish open plan office. Two rows of four desks populated by middle-aged men. Some are working on drawing boards, others with office documents - letters, invoices and so on.

MRS. BURNS

Some of the men resent bitterly any attempt to interfere with their own paperwork. And it would be inappropriate for a young thing like you to attempt to do so.

Iris registers disappointment. She is too young for the job it seems.

MRS. BURNS (CONT'D)

On the other hand, an old battle-axe like me has their respect. If I tell you to undertake a task - you must not be intimidated.

Iris watches unsure whether this means she has been successful.

IRIS

Yes, Mrs Burns. I understand.

Mrs Burns stands up - clearly to end the interview and Iris takes the cue. She picks up her handbag from the floor and stands up in a combined movement.

MRS. BURNS

(matter-of-fact cheerful)
Any questions just ask me.

Iris looks unsure. Mrs Burns clarifies.

MRS. BURNS (CONT'D)

I'd like you to start on Monday, Miss Merry.

Iris beams.

INT. 30 ADAMSON ROAD, UNCLE JIM'S HOUSE - DAY

In the front room of a terraced house in the East End of London, 1944. The view from the window is the rubble of a bombed buildings capped with snow. The sound and sight of a seagulls are a sign that we are close to the sea - close to the London Docks.

Sparsely furnished - two armchairs and a low table with two teacups and saucers, a coal fireplace. Functional, dull, worn and void of 'a woman's touch'.

Above the mantle piece a faded oval mirror. On the mantle, a packet of 'Nut Brown' tobacco, some cigarette papers and a *Daily Mirror* newspaper dated January 1944.

Dominating the room because of its jollity, size and incongruity - a small stage occupies the bay window. It echoes the style of an Edwardian Music Hall stage.

Plush red velvet curtains with gold tassels are painted on wood and frame the stage. Gold lettering claims the space as "The Merry Playhouse." All is executed with the skill of a professional artist.

Iris carries a pot of tea into the room ahead of her UNCLE JIM. Sixty, a handsome, intelligent face but wizened by a lifetime of smoking. He wears 'a cripple boot' on his right foot.

A Jack Russell dog, PLUTO, runs between them and jumps onto the centre of the stage settling into a dog bed improvised from an old jumper.

Iris places the teapot on a low table between two armchairs and Uncle Jim gets a fire going - placing kindle and lighting with matchsticks. Drawing the fire with the newspaper.

Iris organises the tea - adjusting the handles of cups and teapot so that they are at the same angle before she begins to pour.

UNCLE JIM

I'm proud of you Iris.

IRIS

Another two shillings a week, Uncle Jim.

UNCLE JIM

And working at the 'eadquarters. That's the thing.

IRIS

I'll miss the other girls though. The building is amazing, really modern but all the people in the offices are old.

UNCLE JIM

Like your uncle.

He grimaces an apology - upturned mouth - and Iris is quick to reassure.

IRIS
Not like you, Uncle. They're all
very --- serious.

UNCLE JIM
You think your Uncle isn't serious?

His eyebrows quiz. She smiles.

IRIS
I know you're very serious about
some things. Oh! I almost forgot, I
brought you something.

She finds the gift in her well organised handbag and hands it
to him, smiling, anticipating his pleasure.

UNCLE JIM
(big smile, chuffed)
You're a good girl, Iris. A good
girl.

IRIS
You didn't think I'd forget?

Uncle Jim takes the tin of Nut Brown tobacco with both hands -
like a child.

LATER - NIGHT

The coal fire is now mature, coal glowing, a steady flame.
The Jack Russell has moved to the hearth to luxuriate in its
heat and Iris sits alongside petting him. Uncle Jim is asleep
in his chair. A scene of contentment.

IRIS (CONT'D)
(nuzzling the dog's ears)
I suppose I'd better be going back
now, Pluto.

She gets up and her uncle rouses. He is unsure of what is
happening for a moment.

UNCLE JIM
Iris. You're here.

IRIS
I'm off now, Uncle.

UNCLE JIM
I've been dreaming about you. You
mustn't worry about your new job.
You're a clever girl. You'll fit in
just fine.

IRIS

I know Uncle. I'm not worried. I'm just really pleased to be with the people who matter. Not just the girl who works in the post-room.

Uncle Jim, provoked, is suddenly very stern. All softness and indulgence has left his face. He searches the face of his niece. She shifts a little showing discomfort.

UNCLE JIM

Everyone matters, Iris. "The poorest 'e that is in England 'ath a life to live as the greatest 'e."

Iris smiles briefly but looks away. A teenager not wanting to be lectured especially not with an old tune. She recovers.

IRIS

(with effort)

I don't want to be the poorest he Uncle.

UNCLE JIM

None of us should be poor Iris and one day, none of us will be. It won't be the same as last time. When we've finished fighting their war, we will have our socialism. We will *all* be raised up then. The working man will own the means of production and we won't have to doff our caps anymore.

Iris's lips part as if to speak but decides against it. Her uncle concedes to her mood.

UNCLE JIM (CONT'D)

And you'll marry a young man back from the wars and be 'appy.

She is grateful for the change of subject. She acquiesces.

IRIS

You make me sound like one of those women in a Greek legend.

UNCLE JIM

Oh, I wouldn't know about that - got no more education than what was necessary. Still, your mother gave you a Greek name. I know that.

IRIS

(welcoming this subject)

My mother?

Uncle Jim closes down the hint of enquiry.

UNCLE JIM

It's proper dark out there now. You
mind how you go.

Iris takes the prompt without demur.

TITLES

EXT. 55 BROADWAY, LONDON TRANSPORT HQ - DAY

Stock footage of war time London, a mix of people going to work, women of all ages, older men in 'civvies' and a number of young men in military uniform, British and American.

Iris, dressed as for her interview, looks up at the entrance of 55 Broadway, the ten-storey art-deco building constructed around St James' tube - the headquarters of London Transport. She enters in merged with the other workers.

INT. MRS BURNS'S OFFICE - DAY

Iris is filing a document in the middle drawer of a steel filing cabinet. She closes the drawer, stands up smartly and turns eagerly to Mrs Burns at her desk. Mrs Burns is engrossed in paperwork.

Iris looks over her head to take in the view. The elongated steel windows of the 1930s art deco building are criss-crossed with tape - a marker of the persistent threat of bombing. A moment of contemplation is interrupted.

MRS. BURNS

Have you finished already?

Mrs Burns looks up from her desk and appraises the new girl.

IRIS

Yes. Mrs Burns.

MRS. BURNS

Good. We'll get the place ship
shape in no time.

She returns her attention to the paper work on her desk and absentmindedly instructs Iris.

MRS. BURNS (CONT'D)

Well then, a round of tea for the
men.

IRIS

Yes. Mrs Burns.

Mrs Burns looks up as Iris is leaving the room. She sees her fixing her hair.

MRS. BURNS

You don't play up to the men, do you Miss Merry?

IRIS

No, Mrs Burns. No. I don't. I wouldn't.

MRS. BURNS

You impressed me when I first met you as a very sensible sort of girl.

IRIS

I am, Mrs Burns.

Iris realises the cause of Mrs. Burns' suspicion.

IRIS (CONT'D)

I like to look tidy.

MRS. BURNS

Hmph. Get along then.

INT. THE MEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Iris walks through the centre aisle of the open office, four desks with associated filing cabinets and gizmology of the era for surveyors and engineers.

The men idly check her out as she passes, clipping the linoleum floor with elegant court heels.

At the very end of one of the lines of desks, JOHN LANE, seventeen, with film star looks.

As Iris nears, she casts a surreptitious look in his direction which he avoids conspicuously. He immediately looks away, directing his attention to the paperwork in front of him.

As soon as she exits, John makes his excuses to his elder mentor.

JOHN

Is it alright if I ... the Men's room?

The mentor, a man of about sixty, looks over to him briefly and gestures his permission. John leaves in the direction of Iris's exit. Another of the men in the office, GEORGE, 50, speaks.

GEORGE

Young John seems to have a problem with the old waterworks. How many times is that today?

THE MENTOR

It's an unfortunate condition.

A dry smile breaks through his deadpan.

THE MENTOR (CONT'D)

Triggered by a girl's ankles.

They laugh.

INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - DAY

A corridor in 55 Broadway. Wide boulevard corridors with travertine walls and double swing doors, walnut frames and rectangular leaded lights. Iris is steering the trolley and two foot high tea urn down the corridor.

John moves in front of her and holds open a door - a teenager experimenting with acts of gallantry. Iris is the personification of sensible.

IRIS

Thank you. Mr Lane.

JOHN

John. Please.

He follows Iris through the door. Ahead, another door needs to be opened and he gambols in front to get there before she does. He opens it. She gives in - the voice softens.

IRIS

Thank you. John.

John smiles and smiles.

Iris attempts to glide through but something goes wrong. As she attempts to navigate her way through the doorway, the trolley veers to the side. She angles her wrist to correct the movement but to no avail.

She moves her body weight to force it round but although it yields to the effort it is not enough - the contraption scrapes the door frame - slowly. She flushes to know that John is watching.

Her face tense with the effort to appear normal. Eventually, she steers the trolley back to the centre of the corridor and continues - sensibly.

The door frame has trolley height striations etched into the varnish. John is oblivious - his smile persists unchanged.

EXT. NELSON'S ARMS PUB - NIGHT

BILL MERRY, Iris's father. Mid-thirties, good-looking - eyes the colour of faded denim. Five foot six, his powerful build and pugnacious strut represent his twenty years as a stoker in the Merchant Navy.

His left arm is heavily tattooed - the right is a flapping sleeve.

Bill walks into the pub.

INT. NELSON'S ARMS PUB - NIGHT

Bill makes his way to the bar and looks around. It's early evening and the pub is not crowded.

In a corner seat, three working men are half way through a pint and a smoke. One of them notices Bill at the bar.

WORKING MAN 1.

'ere 'ere. Look what the cat's dragged in.

WORKING MAN 2.

(with a growl)

I'm off. I've 'eard one too many of Merry's stories this week.

WORKING MAN 3.

Oh come on 'e's always good for a round or two. And I for one believe every word 'e says.

Scoffing.

WORKING MAN 1.

So do I. After all, why shouldn't 'is father be a Canadian mountie. No-one knows who Bill's father is.

WORKING MAN 3.

Least of all Bill.

WORKING MAN 1.

Least of all Bill. And so he could very well be all he says of him.

Guffaws.

Bill has seen his pals for the night and hails them from the bar. They nod back. Broad smiles. One calls him over with a wave of the arm.

WORKING MAN 1. (CONT'D)

If 'e hasn't had a ship for a while, how does he get to be so flushed? Rolling in it come Friday, 'e is..

WORKING MAN 2.

It's 'is old lady. She works up West End. Posh 'aberdashers or something.

WORKING MAN 3.

And 'e's got a daughter - office worker now.

WORKING MAN 1.

So, what you might call living off moral earnings, eh?

Guffaws.

Bill has made his way to their table.

BILL

Drinks on me, lads. What you 'aving?

The men sit back and prepare to give their orders.

INT. 3 BEACONSFIELD ROAD, IRIS'S HOME - NIGHT

LANDING

Against the background of an AIR RAID SIREN, on the small landing at the top of a narrow stairway, Iris emerges from her bedroom in a nightdress. Also in nightdress, MILLICENT, forty, has emerged from the bedroom opposite.

Two women never looked so unrelated. Millicent is a mousey, small boned woman who holds herself even smaller. She has a deformity of her gum which gives her an extreme buck-tooth appearance.

They both carry lighted candles - the only light in the midst of blackout. Barely visible, behind her, Bill Merry is prostrate on the bed - fully clothed.

MILLICENT

(whispering)

He won't be woken, Iris.

IRIS

What time did he get in? Never mind. No point us all being blown to kingdom come. You go ahead.

She sees her step-mother down a few stairs in the gloom before returning to her father on the bed.

BEDROOM

Iris attempts to prod him awake.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Dad! Wake up! There's an air raid.

BILL

Aw get out of 'ere! Leave me in peace.

IRIS

There's an air raid, Dad. You've got to take shelter.

BILL

Leave me in peace, I tell you.

Dogged in his determination to sleep on - eyes closed, he swings his arm out in Iris's direction. She moves back to avoid it.

Iris stares down at the figure of her father - resigned.

BACK ROOM - LATER

Iris and Millicent are sitting together under a small dining table in the back room of the house. Millicent's tiny frame next to Iris visually inverts the mother and daughter role.

In the skies above and around them the sound of batteries of ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE.

IRIS

I met the managing director today, Mum.

MILLICENT

Did you dear? How did you do that?

IRIS

Mrs Burns asked me to take him a report on the tenth floor.

MILLICENT

The *tenth* floor.

Outside, in the middle of the fire, the sound of A V1 ROCKET, "the doodlebug," is heard. It's familiar, Iris continues.

IRIS

Yes. I was just leaving and he asked me to stay and make some corrections.

(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)

For a moment, I thought I should tell him I was only just learning to type but I didn't. I just did it.

(flashes a mischievous smile)

The first time I have ever used my typing at work.

MILLICENT

Iris! You should have told him you hadn't got your certificate yet. What if --?

The sound of the doodlebug has stopped and the two women are silent as they privately wait for the sound of its explosion. Many seconds pass and then it explodes some streets away. They continue.

IRIS

I did it without any mistakes. He didn't say anything bad. He just asked me my name.

Millicent gives a begrudging smile.

MILLICENT

How are you getting along with your young man?

IRIS

He's not my young man, Mum. He's... not my young man. He talks to me sometimes as if he is but he's not.

MILLICENT

He likes you though.

IRIS

He seems to but he doesn't ask me to the pictures or a dance or anything. He told me the other men tease him about me. Why does he tell me that?

MILLICENT

I don't know Dear.

IRIS

Perhaps because ... His father was an engineer.

MILLICENT

You must keep yourself nice, Iris.

Iris's face changes. Her body stiffens. When her stepmother laces her arm through hers, the action is not reciprocated. The statement hangs.

IRIS
I need some air.

Iris moves out of the shelter. Millicent looks alarmed.

MILLICENT
I didn't mean --

Millicent looks puzzled.

EXT. GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The small terraced house - two up, two down with outside lavatory, blacked out windows. Beyond and above, the sky riven with intermittent ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE.

Iris walks out into the thirty feet of garden. Agitated, she speaks to herself mostly within the privacy of her mind but sometimes, her thoughts escape into speech.

IRIS
Nice! Nice! If she were my real mother, she wouldn't say -- she wouldn't question.

A single red poppy shelters between the fence and the leaves of a potato plant - a survivor from the 'Dig for Victory' garden. She kneels down and cradles it gently in her hand.

IRIS (V.O.)
If I should die tonight, before I have lived, before I have loved or been loved. What would have been the point?

Removing her hand from the poppy, she paces the garden path.

IRIS
Would he even know that I had died. Or care? One day I wouldn't come into work. A notice on the board. My name listed under Personnel Lost. Filing clerk. Filed. "She kept herself nice".

Iris inhales sharply - an involuntary breath as if she had forgotten to breathe. Jolted out of her melancholy she surveys the troubled night sky. The morning light is beginning to break through.

INT. 31 POND STREET, JULIAN HUXLEY'S HOME - DAY

31 Pond Street is a white stucco fronted Georgian house in Hampstead, London. JULIETTE HUXLEY, mid-forties, is a delicate featured, demure woman wearing her hair in a simple bob. The home suits - modest but well-to-do.

DINING ROOM

The 'dining table' is a Morrison's shelter, so gives the appearance of a cage. Inside and in foetal position, Juliette is asleep wearing a dressing gown.

Although asleep, there are signs of disturbed rest - involuntary head movements. Lips mouthing silent babble. She curls up tighter and shields her temples in fisted hands to the sound of a V1 ROCKET in the skies above - now imaginary.

The sound of a FRONT DOOR KNOCKER takes over from the sound of the air raid and becomes more and more insistent but it is the efforts of her maid, IDA, mid-thirties, that eventually rouse her.

IDA

Mrs 'uxley! Mrs 'uxley! There's someone at the front door. I thought you would like me to wake you.

JULIETTE

(slowly coming to)

Yes. Thank you Ida. Answer the door - I'm not in - take their name.

IDA

Right you are Ma'am.

HALLWAY

Ida opens the door on a tall gaunt man with jaundiced skin and eyes. Dressed in a safari jacket. It's JULIAN HUXLEY, mid-fifties.

JULIAN

Who are you?

Ida is affronted and pulls herself up to her full height to answer.

IDA

I work 'ere, Sir. For Mrs 'uxley.

JULIAN

Not for long.

The ambiguity of the pronouncement unsettles Ida - is he just stating the recency of her employment or is he giving her the sack?

IDA

Mrs 'uxley has not found fault in my work, Sir.

JULIAN
 (unaware of the distress
 caused)
 I'm glad of it. And where is your
 mistress?

Ida hesitates - unsure whether her mistress's instruction would be valid for her husband - if this is her husband.

IDA
 May I ask, Sir, 'oo it is that is
 enquiring.

Juliette comes forward and settles the matter.

JULIETTE
 It's alright Ida, it's Mr Huxley.

Julian seeing his wife, declaims the obvious.

JULIAN
 I am returned.

He walks into the hallway and collapses. Juliette rushes forward. Ida stands back.

JULIETTE
 Julian!

JULIAN
 (smiling weakly)
 Malaria.

Seeking to raise him from the hallway floor.

JULIETTE
 Ida help me take Mr Huxley to the
 drawing room and call the doctor.
 No. I'll call the doctor, just help
 me take him to the drawing room.

Ida joins the struggle to lift the dead weight of the unconscious man.

BEDROOM - LATER

Julian is in bed in an upstairs bedroom, Juliette and a doctor in attendance. Julian is feverish and periodically delirious.

DOCTOR RAU
 Continue the Mepacrine for the
 malaria, we will have to do some
 tests but I think the jaundice may
 be to do with Hepatitis.

JULETTE

Oh!

JULIAN

(in delirium)

The beautiful heads.

Juliette, goes to her husband's side, takes his hand and looks into his yellow eyes. He grabs her hand and raises himself up to speak to her. A crazed intent in his look.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

I must make them safe. Thieves all around.

DOCTOR RAU

Don't expect to make sense of it - it's the fever.

Julian falls back to the bed, releasing his wife's hand.

JULIETTE

And yet, it does makes a kind of sense, if you know him.

DOCTOR RAU

I bow to a wife's intuition.

Rau returns an ironic smile.

INT. MRS. BURNS'S OFFICE - DAY

The seasons have changed, it's mid-summer and Iris is wearing a simple white blouse and navy skirt.

MRS. BURNS

Miss Merry, do you know what has happened to the pile of invoices I had on the top of the filing cabinet?

IRIS

I filed them with the others you gave me yesterday. Mrs Burns.

MRS. BURNS

You did what?

IRIS

(subdued)

I filed --

MRS. BURNS

(cold fury)

Then you must un file them.

(breathing noisily)

(MORE)

MRS. BURNS (CONT'D)

I suppose you think you were using your initiative but your initiative was seriously misplaced. Never do anything I don't specifically tell you to do, is that clear?

IRIS

(shocked)

Yes. Mrs Burns. I'm sorry.

MRS. BURNS

Sorry is not enough.

Iris goes automatically to the filing cabinet, opens the top drawer and halts.

IRIS

Mrs Burns, I don't know what I'm looking for. I don't remember the names of the invoices.

MRS. BURNS

How would you, indeed?

Iris is on the edge of tears. Mrs Burns watches and waits.

MRS. BURNS (CONT'D)

They were set apart for a reason and were marked for that reason.

IRIS

The numbers all had PC at the beginning.

Mrs Burns stops her admonishment and is visibly impressed.

MRS. BURNS

You are an observant little thing.

IRIS

I should look through the cabinet and find all the invoices beginning with PC?

MRS. BURNS

Yes. That is what you should do. You won't be leaving early this evening.

Iris registers concern.

LATER

Iris is sifting through invoices in the filing cabinet she is in the letter 'D' - she extracts one with the number PC 3002 in the right hand corner.

INT. THE MEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

John Lane at his desk, watches Iris working through the window of Mrs Burns' office. Mrs Burns is there too. Only George is still working in the men's office besides John.

GEORGE

Time to call it a day.

JOHN

I need to check a few things before I can leave.

GEORGE

Very well. The girls are working late too. Some crisis in the filing.

JOHN

I won't be long.

George has left and the silhouettes of Iris and Mrs Burns show they are ending their activity. John prepares to leave.

INT. LOBBY, 55 BROADWAY - LATER

John loiters in the lobby of the building. Apart from the odd movement of a caretaker, there is no-one until Iris descends the wide stone staircase. He moves forward, she smiles at him and quickens her descent.

IRIS

I thought you'd left.

JOHN

It's my birthday remember - you promised to help me celebrate. What happened?

IRIS

I fouled things up badly, I had to fix it.

John takes Iris by the hand and sweeps her to the lift on the first floor.

JOHN

Have you ever been to the roof terrace?

IRIS

Now?

JOHN

Why not now?

INT./EXT. LIFT - CONTINUOUS

Iris giggles and follows him. They wait and then enter the lift. As the doors close, a caretaker in uniform calls out to them.

CARETAKER

Where are you two off to?

The doors close. They grin at each other delighting in their escape from the grown ups.

The journey to the tenth floor is intensely exciting - the couple have everything to say to each other and therefore say nothing. Instead, quick glances and hardly suppressed smiles. The sound of the lift like a third heartbeat.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Exiting the lift, they move along the corridor but when John attempts to push open the glazed walnut framed doors, he finds they are locked.

JOHN

Ah.

IRIS

We didn't think of that.

JOHN

You can still see across London,
see St. Paul's.

Iris looks out across the roof terrace to see a view of the sky and the top of those few buildings higher than 55 Broadway on the tenth floor.

IRIS

(over enthusiastically to
mask her disappointment)
Yes, I can see it.

JOHN

Sorry. I had planned something ---
different.

IRIS

There's nothing to be sorry for.

JOHN

We ought to go down. The caretaker
thinks we're German spies.

Iris giggles.

EXT. ST JAMES'S PARK - LATER

A June evening, about 8 o'clock, late sunshine in a bomb-cratered park. John and Iris are walking and talking.

JOHN
I sometimes think they hate us
because we are young.

IRIS
She's not usually as bad as she was
today. I did do wrong.

JOHN
The men call her Mussolini.

IRIS
That's terrible!

John smiles to have got a rise.

JOHN
You would think that she alone made
the trains run on time. It's we who
do the work.

IRIS
We help, don't you think?

JOHN
Of course. Everyone loves you and
Musso is good at what she does -
but --

IRIS
She only does what she does.

JOHN
You understand perfectly, Miss
Merry.

An American GI is walking past with two girls, one on either arm. They're loud at play.

GI
But which of you should I present
to my mother?

The girls protest and the party pass into the crowd.

JOHN
Greedy GIs.

IRIS
Three's a crowd!

JOHN

George lied about his age to get to the front in the last war. I think he thinks I should have done the same. What do you think?

IRIS

You're exempt. If the work you do wasn't important to the war effort you wouldn't be.

JOHN

Next year, I can join up officially.

IRIS

Please don't. I'm sure George doesn't care.

John smiles at this sign of *her* caring.

JOHN

I've all but decided I will.

Iris looks down at the pavement and hugs herself.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Are you cold? Here take my jacket.

Iris leans a little into his embrace as he places the jacket around her shoulder.

IRIS

I ought to be getting back.

JOHN

I'll see you home.

Iris panics.

IRIS

No, Please don't!

JOHN

Don't?

IRIS

I mean - it will be out of your way.

JOHN

Not by much. It will be dark soon.

IRIS

I don't have far to go after the tube. I'll be fine.

John looks dejected. He's misinterpreted the response.

EXT. 31 POND STREET, JULIAN HUXLEY'S HOME - DAY

It's raining. Outside Julian Huxley's house, a man pays off a black cab and carrying a large Duffel bag, makes his way up the garden path to the front door. Wisteria clad - in full bloom.

ENTRANCE PORCH

ALDOUS HUXLEY, fifty, lean, the high forehead of intellectual stereotype. The iris of his right eye opaque but otherwise energy and health - a light tan and sun-blonded hair. He moves to sound the door knocker.

Juliette opens the door and is emotionally overcome at the sight of the cavalry. A woman at the end of her tether, she greets him with a mix of tears and joy.

JULIETTE

Aldous. Thank God you're here.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Julian Huxley sits listlessly at his desk surrounded by books and objects marking his intellectual and actual journeys. A Masai shield of decorated cowhide is most conspicuous. Other objects from Africa are visible in display cabinets and on the desk.

A painting of two Great Crested Grebes in mating dance hangs on the wall ahead of him. Beautiful plumage adorning their heads. He is looking in its direction but nothing interests.

On the bookshelves, many works of Thomas Henry Huxley, including *Evolution and Ethics*, occupy a shelf above publications by Julian Huxley including *Africa View* and *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*. Other works include those of H.G. Wells, *An Outline of the History of the World*, and novels by Aldous Huxley, including *Brave New World*.

Aldous opens the door. In a delayed action, Julian turns his head slowly towards him.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Brother.

Julian produces a faint smile.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Juliette sits forward on the sofa her hands clasped, knuckles white. Aldous sits in an armchair mirroring her posture - forward, hands clasped, but without the angst. Instead, concerned but calm.

JULIETTE HUXLEY

Sometimes I think he hates me
Aldous.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

He loves you.

JULIETTE HUXLEY

One minute, he clings to me unable
to do anything for himself but then
in a flick of the eye, he will fly
into a rage. The rage is at me. I
feel as if he's expressing his true
feelings. Things that have only
been kept in check by reason and
duty.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

I don't think that is true. I think
the rage is more likely at himself,
frustration.

Juliette is not listening, she has something to say.

JULIETTE

I don't know how much Julian
confides in you. Whether you know
about --- the American Poetess.

Aldous is impenetrable. Juliette takes his silence as
knowledge.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)

We had come to a sort of agreement.
That he should have his freedom and
I would be equally free.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

You don't need to explain any of
this - I know it isn't what preys
on his mind now.

Juliette looks grateful. Her clasped hands release. She rubs
her eyes and brow.

JULIETTE

But what to do?

ALDOUS HUXLEY

I was thinking of a former student
of his. Russell Brain.

JULIETTE

I remember Russell at Oxford. How
different things were then.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

I thought he might be able to help -
if not personally, he could
introduce us to the people with the
right expertise.

JULIETTE

I'm sorry. Why should Russell be
able to do that?

ALDOUS

You haven't followed his career,
then. Perhaps inevitably given his
surname, he is now *Doctor* Russell
Brain. A neurosurgeon.

Juliette stares aghast.

JULIETTE

You can't mean he should have brain
surgery. It's a spiritual matter.
He needs ---

ALDOUS

No. Juliette, forgive me. I don't
think a surgical intervention would
be necessary. Only that what you
think of as spirit, Julian himself
would understand as biological.

Juliette closes her eyes and turns her head away from her
brother in law. A long moment before she resumes the
conversation.

JULIETTE

Our decades old marriage has taught
me something of how Julian views
the world. You do me wrong Aldous
if you think I would consult my own
religion at this time. 'Spiritual'
has some ordinary meaning, I think.
He is in low spirits.

ALDOUS

Russell will know who to talk to.
And will be discreet. That would be
welcome, I think.

JULIETTE

Understanding is more important.
Which is why ... You as his brother
--

ALDOUS

I can only be here a short while -
I have to return to California.
(MORE)

ALDOUS (CONT'D)

And in any case, you know surely,
that this is much more serious than
we've known before.

JULIETTE

Yes. I know that. It helps to hear
you say it. And, of course, you
have to return.

With a new resolution.

JULIETTE (CONT'D)

I know what I have to do now.

Her body now relaxed, she inhales deeply as she falls back
against the sofa.

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Julian Huxley continues to sit listlessly, staring ahead into
space.

INT. IRIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the back room of the terraced house. Bill Merry, seated in
an armchair is staring listlessly into the flames of a coal
fire.

Millicent is knitting in a companion armchair but regularly
looks across to check her husband.

Iris is sitting at the dining table, along the opposite wall
to the fire.

She's restless, her thoughts are elsewhere, she is reliving
her first date with John - she smiles, looks coy and
sheepish.

When not elsewhere she reads a magazine: "Everywoman,"
admiring a knitting pattern for a cardigan with Poinsettia
flowers.

A copy of The Evening News, 6 June 1944, announcing "WE WIN
BEACHHEADS" lies on the same table - thumbed.

Bill nods off to sleep and the women whisper to each other
across the room.

MILLICENT

He's gone off now, Iris.

IRIS

I'll be off to bed then. You'll be
safe?

Millicent smiles a reassurance.

INT. TREATMENT ROOM, PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

The last of four large leather buckles is being fastened around the body of a woman in her mid-forties, lying prone but conscious on a treatment table. Hazel eyes and prominent cheekbones, a good-looking woman - as if anyone cared.

A woman nurse, a male orderly and a male doctor are in attendance. All dressed in white hospital uniform. The patient is terrified but acquiescent. Her eyes widen, her fists rigid on the sight of the doctor as he applies the electrodes to her head.

In the corner of the room, Juliette Huxley has been watching the event. She closes her eyes and turns her head away as the mechanical sounds of the Electro Convulsive Therapy rip through the air accompanied by sounds of a body struggling against its tether.

INT. GENTLEMAN'S CLUB - NIGHT

SIR JOHN MAUD, 40, a good-looking example of a Foreign Office Diplomat, suited and wearing an Etonian tie, stands up from a leather club chair and pushes back the top of a drinks cabinet in the form of a globe.

He fixes himself a whisky. His companion, DALRYMPLE, an older man of the same species is seated in a similar chair, whisky in hand.

DALRYMPLE

I cannot agree with you on this, Maud. We need to instate our man now. Otherwise the Americans will manouevre their choice into place. And we don't want that.

SIR JOHN MAUD

(taking a chair)

Then declare our man to be Huxley.

DALRYMPLE

The man's a gibbering fool from all accounts.

SIR JOHN MAUD

That's uncharitable of you Dalrymple. Hepatitis and a bit of jaundice. We all know Africa can be bloody.

Dalrymple's jaw tightens.

DALRYMPLE

I've heard it's more serious.

SIR JOHN MAUD

Ah.

(cautiously)

I'm not going to pretend it isn't - but - as serious as it is, his recovery is certain and it would surely be short-sighted to throw away the opportunity to have him as our head - for the sake of a few months.

DALRYMPLE

A few months is what we don't have. Besides there are other objections to Huxley.

SIR JOHN MAUD

Other objections?

DALRYMPLE

On the Americans' side.

SIR JOHN MAUD

Huxley's a great admirer of our American cousins.

DALRYMPLE

It's unrequited, I'm afraid. He has opinions - positions which alienate. He's a public atheist and - they seem to think - a Communist.

SIR JOHN MAUD

That's ridiculous.

DALRYMPLE

I can't give you chapter and verse - they would hardly present a dossier. But from my own knowledge of the man, well, he has expressed an almost girlish enthusiasm for the Soviet revolution.

SIR JOHN MAUD

So many did, initially but not recently, I think.

DALRYMPLE

He also shows no sense of diplomatic restraint.

SIR JOHN MAUD

Now that's not my experience --

DALRYMPLE

Three days before Pearl Harbour, in a press conference, he told the Americans they should join the war.

SIR JOHN MAUD

That would not have gone down well.

DALRYMPLE

Well no. It didn't.

SIR JOHN MAUD

But surely that is water under the bridge now. For a young country, they hold some very ancient grudges.

DALRYMPLE

What they choose to remember and what forget is not within our influence.

SIR JOHN MAUD

What they remember but not *how* they understand. At least with the Communist suspicions we can work to dislodge their perception there.

DALRYMPLE

I am not convinced that effort is worth the risk. We need America and all that she brings. Her investment will not only be financial. And we have Zimmern. A *New College* man, like yourself.

SIR JOHN MAUD

(ironic smile)

Yes, much to commend him. But Huxley brings a breadth of command - not only education and culture - but science. And he is a younger man, and he has the energy and capacity to inspire.

DALRYMPLE

Young, with the capacity to inspire. And recovering from exhaustion.

Sir John is visibly chastened.

DALRYMPLE (CONT'D)

The *French* like Zimmern too.

SIR JOHN

The main preoccupation of the French is that the organisation is established in Paris and we have conceded that to them.

DALRYMPLE

I didn't realise that was a concession.

SIR JOHN

We have made it seem so. But look here - put in Zimmern and an organ of The United Nations inherits the failure of the League of Nations.

DALRYMPLE

The Institute for Intellectual Cooperation can hardly be blamed for Hitler's invasion of Poland.

SIR JOHN

But it didn't prevent it.

DALRYMPLE

And you think our organisation will have that power?

SIR JOHN MAUD

If we do it right. Yes. I do.

An EXPLOSION is heard - a single bomb has detonated a street away. The light fitting in the centre of the room shakes above their heads and bits of plaster fall.

A flake of plaster is in Sir John's whisky. They sit silently for a while whilst Sir John extracts the alien material from his glass. A process which seems to demand all of his attention but his absorption is elsewhere.

SIR JOHN MAUD (CONT'D)

We must never let this happen again.

DALRYMPLE

We can agree on that. My instinct is still for Zimmern but I will go to see Huxley. Let him speak for himself.

Sir John looks concerned but nods assent.

INT./EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Dalrymple walks down the corridor of a hospital accompanied by a male orderly.

At the end of the corridor, he is pointed to a terrace overlooking a garden with a large yew tree at its centre.

On the terrace, Julian Huxley is sitting in a wheelchair with a blanket over his knees. He remains impassive whilst his wife, Juliette, and a male doctor in a white coat are arguing.

The French windows to the terrace are closed and Dalrymple can only hear muffled but agitated voices.

The doctor's angry voice dominates. Juliette mostly flinches and sidles up to her husband to support him or to support herself - its ambiguous.

Dalrymple watches for long enough and then retreats.

EXT. TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

DOCTOR

It is a simple choice you must make Mrs Huxley - either you consent to our treatment of your husband or you take him back home to your wifely care. We are not a hotel, we are a hospital.

JULIETTE

I want to talk to Russell, I want to talk to Doctor Brain.

She grips the back of her husband's chair.

EXT. 55 BROADWAY - DAY

Iris is standing on the edge of the pavement of the London Transport building. She is studying a carving above the colonnade at the front of the building.

The carving is by Jacob Epstein, in modern primitivist style, of a woman and a child across her lap.

John approaches her and whispers into her ear.

JOHN

A penny for them.

Iris jumps and then seeing John she smiles.

IRIS

Have you ever looked at these sculptures?

JOHN

Not as much as you. This is Night
the other one is Day. There's a
funny story about the other one.

IRIS

This is the opposite of funny. I've
been trying to work it out.

JOHN

(flirtatiously)
And what have you discovered?

IRIS

The child looks dead. Or about to
be sacrificed by Pagans.

He looks at the figure for the first time.

JOHN

I think he's supposed to be
sleeping.

IRIS

What mother would let her child
sleep like that?

JOHN

"And in that sleep what dreams may
come."

IRIS

Is that a poem?

JOHN

It's Shakespeare.

IRIS

Oh.

JOHN

Hamlet. Shall I tell you the funny
story?

IRIS

Tell me about *Hamlet*.

They move off down the street together.

INT. RUSSELL BRAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Juliette Huxley's hand trembles as she holds a pen poised to
sign a form. The form is a blur to her except for the words:
"I, ... Wife of the Patient, do hereby consent to the
following treatment:"

DR RUSSELL BRAIN, late forties, tall, fair, podgy faced. A doctor's manner - detached dispensation of professional compassion. A piercing gaze.

DR BRAIN
You hesitate.

JULIETTE
I'm not a scientist like my husband. I don't feel equipped to make this decision on his behalf.

Dr Brain inhales and then explains with studied patience.

DR BRAIN
The form we are asking you to sign is merely to acknowledge the possibility that during the procedure, the convulsion results in broken bones. This is, I stress, very unlikely. But, it is theoretically possible.

JULIETTE
So, it has never actually happened.

DR BRAIN
There are no records of it happening.

Juliette frowns at Brain, trying to decipher the significance of his answer.

JULIETTE
But the brain - there must be a risk of damage?

DR BRAIN
Some short term memory loss only.

He warms to the explanation

DR BRAIN (CONT'D)
In fact, we think this is how it may help your husband - by removing those memories which immediately triggered his depression.

JULIETTE
You can do that? - remove the wrong memories and maintain the rest?

Dr Brain is stony faced. His tone changes.

DR BRAIN
You know how he is. You spoke with despair about his dependency on you.

(MORE)

DR BRAIN (CONT'D)

Forgive me, but no man wants his wife to become his mother - or his nurse. It emasculates him.

JULIETTE

Russell, I've seen it, you see. The 'procedure'. It is so very violent.

DR BRAIN

To use a crude expression - you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.

JULIETTE

Yes. That is crude.

Brain smiles testily - the offence taken.

DR BRAIN

I apologise.

(cold and determined)

I don't think your husband will forgive you if you leave him in his current state.

Juliette absorbs the accusation, then nods and briskly signs the form.

INT. BEDROOM, IRIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Iris is asleep in her bed. The bedside lamp is on and a thick hardback book, *The Citadel*, by A.J. Cronin, lies across her chest, her hand loose beside it. She shudders.

The inaudible sounds of Bill Merry, drunk and angry downstairs. The sounds of pots and pans crashing. The voice of Millicent trying to pacify him.

Iris opens her eyes wide and listens. There is a period of silence. She closes the book, puts it on her bedside table ensuring that its side aligns neatly with the edge of the table and turns off the light.

MOMENTS LATER

Iris turns on the light and reaches for a magazine on the floor beneath her bed. Everywoman magazine carries a picture of Vivien Leigh, English and Hollywood actress.

Iris puffs up her pillows and curls up to enjoy the magazine. She flicks through the magazine pages from article to article - restlessly.

INT. BEDROOM, 31 POND STREET - DAY

Juliette writes a letter at a dressing table in her bedroom. Outside the window, autumnal leaves on the trees in the garden.

JULIETTE (V.O.)

Dear Aldous. It was lovely to receive your letter this morning and I am so glad to be able to write back with such hopeful news.

Her narration of the letter continues over a montage of scenes charting Julian's recovery.

JULIETTE (V.O.)

Julian's recovery has been slow as predicted but steady. The natural world has reclaimed his interest and he can work again. And most joyous - he no longer looks at his grandson as an alien species but the fondest of grandpapas. He's even back on the radio at the BBC, you remember, the radio quiz programme. And this will amuse your Hollywood self - Julian is about to be a film star - they've decided to film a programme and show it in cinemas in the B film schedule. What do you say to that?

MONTAGE:

EXT. HOSPITAL, TERRACE - DAY

Julian Huxley, another patient, Dr Brain and a nurse are playing Bridge at a table on the terrace overlooking the garden of Harrow hospital. In bright sunshine. Julian is engaged in the game and appears to be winning.

EXT. WOODLAND, ENGLAND - DAY

Julian is bird watching through binoculars.

INT. JULIAN'S STUDY, 31 POND STREET - DAY

Julian is writing amidst sets of papers and books at his desk.

EXT. SITTING ROOM, 31 POND STREET - DAY

The sitting room is decorated for Christmas, presents wrapped under a tree that scrapes the ceiling. Julian is rocking a young baby in his arms.

INT. CINEMA - NIGHT

AUDITORIUM

Juliette and Julian Huxley sit together at the back of the auditorium. The cinema is full and the B Movie is announced.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)

The B.B.C. Brain's Trust answering
any questions.

Juliette cuddles up to her husband's left arm. He leans back and watches with fortitude through heavy rimmed glasses.

LOBBY

Iris arrives in the lobby of a cinema where John is waiting. The film is *Jane Eyre* starring Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles.

Iris and John are finding their seats towards the back of a cinema. The cinema is full and as they shuffle past those already seated, including the Huxleys. They apologise as they go.

When they finally get to their seats they fidget and preen and John puts his arm around Iris's shoulder.

They have arrived as the B film is being shown - the B film being the filmed version of the radio panel quiz show that Juliette referred to in her letter to Aldous - *The Brain's Trust*.

As they are shuffling to their seats the host of the show is finishing his introductions to the panel guests.

THE HOST (O.S.)

And on my right, Miss Jenny Lee, daughter of a miner, graduate of Cambridge university, a former member of parliament, today a writer and journalist. On the extreme left, Dr. Julian Huxley, famous biologist, fellow of The Royal Society, grandson of the great Thomas Huxley. Huxley is a man who still maintains that science is a good thing.

They are seated when the first question is asked.

HOST (O.S.)

And here is the first question.
What does *The Brain's Trust*
consider the basis of a happy
marriage.

Juliette releases her husband's arm and sits up in her seat. Julian reaches his right hand over to take her left - reassuring.

Iris and John look at each other meaningfully in response to the question and smile. John leans in and whispers into Iris's ear. She giggles. A woman in front turns to tut them.

INT. MRS BURN'S OFFICE, 55 BROADWAY - DAY

The wall clock reads three o'clock. Mrs Burns and Iris are listening to a radio set up on a bookcase for the occasion. They listen intently to the voice of Winston Churchill

CHURCHILL (V.O.)

Yesterday morning at 2:41 am at Headquarters, General Jodl, the representative of the German High Command, and Grand Admiral Doenitz, the designated head of the German State, signed the act of unconditional surrender --

INT. FRONT ROOM, UNCLE JIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Uncle Jim leans against the fireplace as he listens to the broadcast. Pluto is curled up in an old jumper on the stage in the bow window.

CHURCHILL (V.O.)

-- of all German land, sea, and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Force, and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command.

Uncle Jim - broad smiles - crouches and extends his arms wide towards Pluto who runs towards him for a fuss.

INT. 31 POND STREET, JULIAN HUXLEY'S HOUSE - DAY

BEDROOM

Juliette Huxley is laying out clothes on her bed as she listens to the Churchill broadcast. She folds and smooths the items slowly as she listens solemnly.

CHURCHILL (V.O.)
The German war is therefore at an
end.

INT. BEACONSFIELD ROAD, IRIS'S HOUSE - DAY

BACK ROOM

Bill Merry listens to the broadcast alone. Sunk in an
armchair. Tears stream down his cheeks.

CHURCHILL
Advance Britannia! Long live the
cause of freedom! God save the
King!

EXT. THE MALL, LONDON - DAY.

Small in a crowd before Buckingham Palace, Iris is in an long
embrace with John. One of the few men of his youth, dressed
in civvies.

As they kiss, the crowd chants.

CROWD
We want The King! We want the King!

Iris and John release from embrace as KING GEORGE VI comes
out onto the balcony and a huge cheer goes up. They join the
cheer.

The crowd roar as WINSTON CHURCHILL joins the King, QUEEN and
THE PRINCESSES ELIZABETH and MARGARET on the balcony of
Buckingham Palace.

CROWD (CONT'D)
(singing)
For He's a Jolly Good Fellow, For
he's a jolly good fellow, for he's
a jolly good fe - ellow. And so say
all of us.

Iris and John join in.

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE - NIGHT

Iris and John are in a conga line that has formed moving into
Trafalgar Square. Morning light is breaking through.

A couple of young women and soldiers are doing a version of
the can-can in the fountains. A young woman catches their
inspiration and attempts to drag her boyfriend over to join
them. CHARIS ELLIOTT, eighteen, tallish, slender with mousey
hair, good teeth and thick lensed spectacles.

The boyfriend resists but undeterred she turns round and finds Iris instead. She smiles.

CHARIS
(laughing)
How about it?

Iris is captivated by the invitation, looks at John, who looks blankly back.

IRIS
(to Charis)
I don't know.

Charis has taken Iris by the hand and they run to the fountain.

Standing on the low fountain wall together.

CHARIS
One, two, three. Jump!

Iris then jumps in the fountain but Charis remains behind. Iris looks back, open mouthed at the betrayal. A moment of horror burst by their laughter. Another young woman laces her arm in Iris's and they move off splashing in the water. Idiotically carefree.

Iris looks back to find John and sees him turn away into the crowd. Her face is the face of a child recognising the moment her father abandons her.

INT. CORRIDOR OF WORKHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Six year old Iris is being lead by the hand of a warden down a corridor in the Public Assistance Institution of the first scene. She turns back to see her father retreating in the other direction. She struggles to be free and is yanked by the warden.

WARDEN
Don't make a fuss!

She looks back again and her father has gone.

BACK TO SCENE

Iris struggles to be free, forcibly pushing the other woman's arm away. Successful, she stands alone in the fountain. The crowd's celebration like a silent movie of ghouls.

EXT. SIDE STREET OFF FLEET STREET - NIGHT

In a clearing off Fleet Street, a bonfire is being stoked by a ragged line of people passing pieces of broken furniture or dismembered timbers from bomb sites.

In the distance St Paul's is illuminated by search lights criss-crossing the sky.

Iris can be seen to the side of the bonfire illuminated by the dance of lights.

On the other side, MARY, eighteen, tall, catches sight of Iris. Recognition leads to her excitedly pushing through the crowd to reach her.

MARY

Iris! Iris!

Iris responds to her name when she sees Mary, there is immediate recognition. A long lost friend.

IRIS

Mary!

They embrace.

MARY

I can't believe it's you.

Iris chuckles. They hold each other at arm's length and then embrace again.

IRIS

I'm lost.

MARY

I'm lost too. Isn't it wonderful.
Let's be lost together!

Mary takes Iris's hands in hers and squeezes them.

EXT. ALEXANDRA PALACE, LONDON - DAY

Alexandra Palace in North London is built on a hill affording a panoramic view of central London. In May 1945, this is a view of devastation. In the distance, St. Paul's is visible, alone, intact, surrounded by rubble.

Sitting on the grass, looking out over the bomb-damaged city, Iris and Mary are experiencing their own kind of devastation after the night before. Wearing the same clothes as the previous evening but hair and make up are bedraggled and faint.

MARY

What now?

IRIS

I can't take another step. I'm pooped.

MARY

I meant "What now?" Now the war is over.

IRIS

Oh gawd. I don't know. (singing)
"The lights will go on again

IRIS AND MARY

(singing together)
All over the world"

IRIS

I just want to lie down in a dark room.

MARY

Me too.

IRIS

(smiling)
Why did we come up here again?

BETTY

(sharing the joke)
It seemed like a good idea at the time. A jeep, American soldiers.

IRIS

(in an American accent)
Going your way, little ladies?

Mary giggles.

They sit in silence for a while - at ease in each other's company.

IRIS (CONT'D)

It's funny, isn't it? How St. Paul's was spared?

MARY

Do you think they did it on purpose?

IRIS

Jerry? Of course not.

MARY

God then.

IRIS

If God saved his church, he would have NOT saved all the people who were killed.

MARY

Don't say that.

IRIS

Sorry. I wasn't thinking.

MARY

It's alright. I'm not the only one to have lost family in the war.

IRIS

I'm sorry about your parents.

MARY

Have you ever been up The Monument?

IRIS

Which one?

MARY

The Monument. It was built by Wren after the Great Fire.

IRIS

I didn't get that far in History. I left when Charles the First lost his head.

MARY

That was very careless of him.

They laugh. They're tired - they laugh easily - like convivial drunks.

IRIS

Anyway, what about *the* monument?

MARY

It just occurred to me. Looking at St. Paul's with its huge dome. And then there's *The Monument*. It's a bit silly really - like a matchstick. A stone tower and this gold tip.

IRIS

It's obviously made an impression.

MARY

Ah! I remember now. I had a profound thought. It was about the architect - Wren.

Iris yawns.

IRIS

Sorry, please go on.

MARY

I don't want to bore you.

IRIS

I won't be. I am just tired. Go on.

MARY

He wanted to completely rebuild London after the fire but he wasn't allowed to.

IRIS

That's a shame.

MARY

But you don't know what he would have done.

IRIS

No. But it would have been different.

MARY

Perhaps it would have been lots of domes and matchsticks.

They laugh and sit heads together with arms linked in an act of consolation and survey the view.

MARY (CONT'D)

Things will change though.

IRIS

I ruddy hope so.

MARY

Iris!

Iris chuckles.

INT. DINING ROOM, MARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Iris and Mary are eating a breakfast - eggs, a single rasher of bacon and toast - at a large dining table in a large Victorian villa in Belsize Park, London. At the head of the table, MARY'S AUNT, a woman in her mid forties.

A coal fire is alight in the grate and a maid in uniform, late thirties, hovers between dining room and (presumably) the kitchen - bringing in fresh hot water for the tea pot.

The furniture is 1930s Art Deco, dining table and chairs, sideboard in burr yew.

On the walls, decorated in a light apricot wallpaper, are a number of modernist paintings the largest in Italian futurist style. Objets, including Lalique and African masks, are displayed in cabinets.

It's glamorous and light.

MARY'S AUNT

This is what the Americans call
'Brunch.'

IRIS

Breakfast and Lunch.

MARY'S AUNT

Yes. How quick you are! Mary has
told me so much about your
escapades as evacuees together. It
is lovely to meet you.

IRIS

And to meet you.

MARY'S AUNT

Although. You're not quite as I
imagined.

IRIS

I'm older.

MARY'S AUNT

Not only that. Mary gave me the
idea that you were something of a
corrupting influence.

Iris looks wounded, her lips part about to defend herself.

MARY

She's teasing you, Iris. I promise
I didn't say anything bad about
you. Perhaps elaborated the stories
a little.

IRIS

(partly reassured)

Oh!

MARY'S AUNT

Oh Mary. How disappointing.

IRIS

I don't think I did anything too
naughty.

MARY'S AUNT

And it must have been so different
for you - from the East End.

IRIS

I think it was different for
everyone. Mary was quite homesick
at first.

MARY'S AUNT

So I understand but the Hamiltons were very nice people and I expect it was easier for Mary in many ways.

Iris looks tense, not sure what is being said.

MARY

(to Iris)

Do you remember when we went into the grocer's --

At this point the drama in flashback is shown so that the dialogue explains what we see happening.

INT./EXT. GROCER'S SHOP - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A twelve year old Iris and a fourteen year old Mary are standing in a village grocer's store. A typical 1940s set up - grocer behind counter and goods on the shelves and under the counter.

On the shelves, there is a jar labelled 'Broken Biscuits' containing broken biscuits which were commonly sold at the time.

We see but do not hear the exchange between Iris and the grocer, he taking the jar down from the shelf, she telling him to mend them and her leaving the shop promptly as he says something like 'Get out of here, you scamp'

MARY (V.O.)

--and you asked if he had any broken biscuits?

MARY'S AUNT

(laughing)

And when he said yes, you told him to mend them!

BACK TO SCENE

Iris is shamefaced.

IRIS

I was still a child, then.

MARY

I was older. Iris left and I was left standing there. Quite the stooge.

Mary and her Aunt continue to enjoy the joke.

MARY'S AUNT

Anyway, girls, I have to make some calls this afternoon, can I leave you to entertain yourselves? Iris if you'd like to call your uncle, please do.

IRIS

Thank you, I will.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, MARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Iris is browsing the contents of the bookcases and mantle piece of a well appointed drawing room.

IRIS

What exactly does your aunt do?

MARY

She works for some bod in the Foreign Office.

IRIS

(echoing the words for their novelty value)

"Some bod in the Foreign Office."

MARY

She's his personal secretary. Correspondence, diary, general organisation of the office.

Iris stops to look at a picture of Mary's Aunt wearing a cloche hat, in Montmartre, Paris.

IRIS

Was she working in Paris at the time this was taken?

MARY

No. At that time she was just with her family. My grandfather was someone's bag carrier in the embassy.

IRIS

Is that a job?

MARY

(shrugs)

To be perfectly honest. I'm not sure what it involved. It's just what was said. Later he was aide de camp.

IRIS

Ay de kong?

MARY
 (scoffing)
 Aide de camp. It's French. Aid of
 the camp, I suppose.

IRIS
 So, he was in the army.

MARY
 No. Diplomatic service. I don't
 know much beyond that - best not to
 ask me anymore.

IRIS
 Sorry. I won't. But it's all so
 glamorous. A different world.

Scrutinising the photograph again.

IRIS (CONT'D)
 I had always dreamed of going to
 Paris for my honeymoon.

MARY
 You may still do so.

IRIS
 No. He made it clear, he didn't
 want to have anything more to do
 with me.

MARY
 When you say you did the can can,
 was it really the whole bottoms in
 the air can can?

IRIS
 (mixed laughter and
 cryingm)
 No. It wasn't that bad - there was
 a lot of kicking and splashing.

MARY
 There may be another explanation
 for his leaving.

IRIS
 I can't think of one. He's never
 seen me like that. He didn't like
 me.

Iris moves along the bookshelves. Attentive to titles.

Mary watches her, interested in her interest.

Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*, Beatrice Webb *A History of Trade Unionism*, Julian Huxley's *Evolution: the Modern Synthesis* and *The Putney Debates & The English Revolution* by A.J. Smith.

IRIS (CONT'D)

May I take them down?

Mary scrunches her face - fine, why not?

Iris takes out *The Putney Debates* and eagerly searches the contents page and then, on second thoughts, the index. When she finds what she is looking for, she stabs the entry with her finger: "Rainborough, Thomas, 64-66."

MARY

My Aunt was a member of the Communist party in the 1930s.

IRIS

(searching for page 68
scanning a page)

I thought she worked for the Foreign Office.

MARY

You think that odd? Lots of people were communists in the thirties. The F.O allows for what it sees as youthful aberrations. Anyway, I thought your uncle was a bit of a revolutionary?

Iris turns her head toward Mary.

IRIS

A bit, I suppose, but he wants to ...

Iris looks away, she has decided not to say what her uncle wants to do.

IRIS (CONT'D)

(talking to Mary in the direction of the book)

He's not a revolutionary. He just thinks ...

Mary tilts her head expectantly but is left without an answer as Iris, silent, is absorbed in the text in front of her.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Here it is.

MARY

What?

IRIS

It's something my uncle always says. I can't believe...

MARY

What?

IRIS

It's so funny to see it written down. In a book. Here.

Iris looks up and takes in the whole of the high ceilinged room with a kind of disbelief.

On the page that Iris has turned to, her finger is held under the words she pronounces.

IRIS (CONT'D)

"The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he."

Iris turns to Mary with a radiant smile.

INT. 31 POND STREET, JULIAN HUXLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

STUDY

Julian is writing a letter to his brother at his desk.

His demeanour is calm and relaxed.

JULIAN (V.O.)

Dear Aldous. And so now there is peace in Europe. Though we, of course, continue to be anxious about the Pacific War where Francis is now on *HMS Ramillies*.

Julian breaks off writing and looks at a photograph on his desk. He touches the frame. The photograph is of a young man on board a warship in the uniform of an Assistant Navigation Officer.

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

Juliette takes all this particularly hard but I am at least no longer a burden to her. No longer consumed by the 'melancholy mad' as Grandpapa called it.

He looks ahead of him to the painting of the pair of Great Crested Grebes.

EXT. FACTORY, LENINGRAD - DAY

ENTRANCE

Two uniformed armed guards, stand sentry at the entrance to the building. As Julian and other men enter the factory, the guards are stiff and expressionless.

As he walks through the doorway, Julian reaches into his pocket and causes a notepaper to fall out. As he leans to pick it up a bayonet pierces the paper. Julian pulls back. Arms in the air in a gesture of surrender.

The guard raises the bayoneted paper towards Julian. His face impassive. Julian removes the note from the blade. The guard sneers.

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

Despite the ongoing war, The Academy of Sciences celebrated its bicentenary this year and the Soviet government invited me, with others, to attend.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Julian and other men are walking around a heavy machinery factory. The workers in uniform, very thin and cowed.

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

We were toured through factories and museums including Tolstoy's house where evidence of our poet ancestor's friendship with him was on display.

EXT. TOLSTOY'S HOUSE, FIELDS - DAY

A scene of peasants in great meadows hay-making with scythes.

INT. TOLSTOY'S HOUSE - STUDY - DAY

Pictures of Leo Tolstoy line the walls. Julian studies a letter exhibited in a glass case.

INSERT : "Your great admirer, Matthew Arnold, Chief Inspector of Schools in Britain,"

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

We were fed at lavish banquets

INT. REFECTORY HALL - NIGHT

A long refectory table beneath a white table cloth supports a host of foodstuffs to tempt the grey-suited invitees. Julian Huxley is looking with some disgust at a large wild boar in the centre of the table. Bowls of caviar and glasses of vodka are abundant on the table.

JULIAN (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 But my real task was to talk to
 Lysenko which proved impossible.
 Instead there was a lecture.

INT. LECTURE THEATRE - DAY

Julian is among the audience. On the stage, LYSENKO, a small-framed wiry man, mid-forties, lean, tight jawed, icy blue eyes. His hair parted to the left-hand side and slicked down on his head. He speaks Russian.

On a table in front of him there are obviously wax models of large tomatoes and potatoes to which he refers boastfully. A female interpreter translates into English. Mid-speech, he speaks excitedly waving his hands up and down in front of him.

JULIAN (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 The man who has Stalin's approval
 is scientifically illiterate. He
 showed us examples of the success
 he claims for his new methods but
 they were clearly made of wax. The
 pretense is not the least of it.
 It's the betrayal of science which
 is so dangerous.

INT. 31 POND STREET, JULIAN HUXLEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

STUDY

Julian continues to write his letter, his forehead creased, his pen tightly gripped.

JULIAN (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 He rejects Mendel as 'bourgeois
 propaganda' and promotes the idea
 that grafting can permanently alter
 its inheritable material.

He relaxes back into his chair.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
 We are wrong to think our
 scientific knowledge can only go
 forward.

INT. 55 BROADWAY - DAY

THE MEN'S OFFICE

Iris walks from Mrs Burn's office through the men's office. She is carrying a bundle of papers in her arms and as she passes John's desk, he looks up at her sheepishly. She delivers a curt smile. He turns his head further towards her.

An ugly bruised right eye.

Iris is alarmed and makes a move towards John, solicitous. She checks herself and composed, continues through the doors out into the corridor.

EXT. ST. JAMES'S PARK - DAY

John and Iris are sitting on a lawned area of the park. In the background, the bomb craters are being filled in and garden beds are being planted.

The couple are facing each other, talking intimately, holding hands.

Iris

You should have ignored him. What does it matter what a stranger thinks?

JOHN

It mattered because I knew he was right. I should be ashamed of my civvies. As soon as I turned eighteen last month, I should have joined up and done my bit.

IRIS

But it's over. At least in Europe. And you've been doing your bit.

Iris hesitates. When she speaks it is quietly and nervously. Not daring to look at John.

IRIS (CONT'D)

I will be eighteen in a couple of months. I thought we wanted our own home. Together.

John looks at Iris's downcast face. He raises her chin. She pulls away.

EXT. HOUSE IN NORTH LONDON - DAY

An election flyer for the Labour Party, national election, July 1945.

Iris and Mary are canvassing for the Labour party in the forthcoming general election - going door to door. Working different sides of the street.

Iris stands outside the front door of a red-brick Victorian semi-detached house with a bow window.

The woman of the house is in the doorway. In her late forties, wearing a floral housecoat and headscarf.

IRIS

Everyone agrees that Churchill was the right man for the war but now we must look to the future - the peace.

WOMAN ON DOORSTEP

My son is still in the war, he's fighting out East. It's indecent to be having an election now.

IRIS

Your son will be voting too - ballot boxes are being sent to all our soldiers out East. This is for when your son comes home. We mustn't forget what happened to them after the last war - the men crippled in the war, left to beg on the streets. Mr Attlee will not let that happen again.

WOMAN ON DOORSTEP

(disapproving)

You're a very passionate young woman but you're talking about things you have no memory of. My husband wasn't on the streets, he was in work bringing home a salary to his family.

MOMENTS LATER

At the end of the road, Mary waits for Iris to catch up.

MARY

You were a long time with that woman. We're not supposed to argue with them.

IRIS

I couldn't help myself. She was so 'my husband this and my husband that.' I wanted her to just think of other people in the country - just for a minute.

MARY

You mustn't expect everyone to think like us.

They walk on together to the next street. Mary checks the street name against paperwork.

EXT. LANCASTER HOUSE, LONDON - DAY

Julian Huxley strides up the stone steps of the palatial building, battered brown briefcase underarm. On the opposite flight of steps, Sir John Hume is also on his way to a meeting.

At the top of the steps, Sir John spots Julian.

SIR JOHN

Huxley!

JULIAN

Sir John!

SIR JOHN

Just the fellow!

JULIAN

How so?

SIR JOHN

Zimmern has been taken ill, an operation. He's completely incapacitated.

JULIAN

I'm sorry to hear that and at such a crucial time.

SIR JOHN

Exactly. We expect him to make a full recovery but not sufficiently soon to be able to take the reins.

Julian anticipates the next move.

JULIAN

No.

SIR JOHN

I understand your reservations. We all do.

Julian looks uncomfortable. Sir John takes his measure and changes tack.

SIR JOHN (CONT'D)

Of course, you've just returned from the Soviet Union.

JULIAN

The Russian Academy of Sciences. Yes. It has left me with such a different impression from my last visit. So many good men, but - all the promise of the revolution will be lost if they continue to be led by this desecration of scientific fact.

SIR JOHN

You're talking about Lysenko.

JULIAN

You know.

SIR JOHN

It's been a concern.

JULIAN

They're pursuing a complete refutation of evolution - Darwin even Mendel. It seems to stem from a pathological distaste for the idea of competition. The facts of life are that Robin Redbreast does not cooperate to secure his territory - he fights for it. However much we would prefer otherwise.

SIR JOHN

This is precisely why we need you for UNESCO. Without your contribution, science would not even be part of the project.

JULIAN

I'm not an administrator.

SIR JOHN

You wouldn't have to be. Please consider carefully. I know this is sudden but time is crucial.

JULIAN

I must speak to Juliette before I can even begin to think about this.

Sir John nods.

INT. BEACONSFIELD ROAD, IRIS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

BACK ROOM

Millicent and Bill are seated at the dining table, empty dinner plates with traces of gravy in front of them.

Iris is seated in an armchair in front of the fire, unlit. She is reading the newspaper out loud to them. The paper is dated 10 August 1945. They listen carefully.

IRIS

"This revelation of the secrets of nature, long mercifully withheld from man, should arouse the most solemn reflections in the mind and conscience of every human capable of comprehension."

BILL

It means the war is over. No more of our blokes getting it.

IRIS

And John won't need to fight now.

MILLICENT

He'll be disappointed.

Bill explodes.

BILL

Bloody 'ell woman. Do you want 'er to end up with a man like me.

Bill waves his empty sleeve in the air.

INT. 31 POND STREET, JULIAN HUXLEY'S HOME - NIGHT

DRAWING ROOM

Juliette is seated in an armchair and Julian is standing at an unlit fireplace, a telegram in his hand.

JULIETTE

Of course, I'm concerned. You know I encouraged you to attend the Russian conference but that was getting back to normal. Something you knew.

JULIAN

And this is the unknown, inconceivable, a huge experiment. I share your reticence but she suggests a meeting only. Nothing lost in discussing the matter.

A DOORBELL RINGS.

JULIETTE

She's early.

Huxley looks at his wife and then moves toward the door.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Julian is standing with ELLEN WILKINSON, Minister for Education in Attlee's government, a woman in her fifties with died red hair, small stature, large eyes, busy manner.

JULIAN

We had better go into my study to be alone.

ELLEN WILKINSON

I'd like to include your wife in the discussion. Her role is not to be discounted.

DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Julian, Juliette and Ellen Wilkinson all seated, midst conversation.

ELLEN WILKINSON (CONT'D)

It may not be 'indelicate' of me to say this. But, as a working class Northerner, I may be permitted to speak plainly. Zimmern in hospital is a Godsend. The last thing we needed is another Classicist at the head of this organisation.

Juliette shifts in her chair

ELLEN WILKINSON (CONT'D)

Science must be part of our project. We knew that before Hiroshima but it is lightning clear now. The power of science must be tethered by the humanities and your unique background provides that guarantee.

JOHN

I am a scientist.

JULIETTE

My husband - we - were concerned about the administrative dimension of the role.

ELLEN WILKINSON

We will take care of that, you will have the support. We have some ideas who may suit but of course you will have the final pick. They will be your staff.

JULIAN

I've been thinking of a few people.

Juliette observes her husband and exhales slowly - defeated.

INT. ADAMSON ROAD, UNCLE JIM'S HOUSE - DAY

FRONT ROOM

The room is decorated with paper chains and a Christmas Tree set on the little stage of 'The Merry Playhouse.' The view through the window shows snow on the rubble of bombed houses opposite.

Uncle Jim is seated in an armchair and Pluto is extended in front of a lit coal fire. Iris is sitting on the floor beside her Uncle. She's showing him a photograph. As she does so she leans on his knee.

The photograph is of John Lane in the uniform of a naval lieutenant flanked by two other young officers their arms hanging over the others' shoulders - all grinning broadly.

IRIS

He looks happy to be away from me.

UNCLE JIM

Do you miss him?

IRIS

Of course. But ...

UNCLE JIM

Your work and your work for The Party keeps you busy. And so it is for him. Man does not live by love alone and perhaps it's the same for you.

IRIS

I work to keep my father in beer.

Uncle Jim looks embarrassed. He winces and levers Iris off his leg.

EXT. PICCADILLY CIRCUS, LONDON - DAY

It's raining. Spring rain.

Iris and John are in an embrace under the Eros statue. Iris is wearing a floral cotton dress with a cardigan - the Poinsettia cardigan she was studying in a magazine the previous year. John is in naval uniform.

Laughing, they run across the road into Lyon's Corner House.

INT. LYON'S CORNER HOUSE - DAY

The restaurant is full to bursting with couples including one or two male couples on the far wall. The famous Lyon's waitresses - 'Nippies'- bustle efficiently like skaters around the tables.

John and Iris are sitting quietly at a table, the remnants of their sandwiches and cake and pot of tea in the space between. Iris's hand rests in John's across the table.

IRIS

I never thought you'd ask.

JOHN

Why on earth not? We've been stepping out for over two years now. My mother takes an interest in her eldest son.

IRIS

Still.

JOHN

You are a funny girl.

Iris pulls her hand away and sits upright in her chair.

IRIS

What shall I wear?

JOHN

I don't know, what you usually wear.

(looking at her Poinsettia cardigan)

But nothing too flamboyant.

IRIS

Do you think this is too flamboyant?

JOHN

I think it's very nice.

IRIS

(subdued)

I can't go to tea at your mother's wearing my work clothes.

JOHN

Tea at my mother's will probably be a bit like work.

IRIS

Oh no! John! Don't say that.

JOHN

But please if you do *talk* about work, please don't come out with phrases like 'the means of production' over teacakes.

He laughs.

The 'Nippie' approaches their table.

WAITRESS

May I bring you a fresh round of cakes? More tea?

JOHN

No. Thank you. Just the bill.

Iris looks at him, admiring - a man who knows how to conduct himself in a tea room. Proud to be his girl.

IRIS

Apart from that *one* time, when do I ever talk about 'the means of production.'

JOHN

Once was enough - it sounded so funny coming from you. I just don't want you to give the wrong impression to my mother.

IRIS

I don't want to either.

John has finished with the subject. He smiles and then playfully shimmies across the table in imitation of a snake.

JOHN

Now. The means of reproduction.

Iris is mock scandalised and then embarrassed as she realises the waitress is hovering next to them writing out the bill.

INT. BACK ROOM, IRIS'S HOUSE - DAY

In the mirror overhanging the mantelpiece in the backroom, Iris is putting on lipstick. In the background, Bill is making fun of her by miming the action.

MILLICENT

Bill. You are a fool.

BILL

A fool am I? I'm not the one making a fool of myself.

IRIS

It's not a crime to look nice.

Iris puts her lipstick into a handbag, briefly checks its contents and snaps it shut.

IRIS (CONT'D)

I'll be off then, Mum

MILLICENT

Very good, Dear.

BILL

What nothin' for your old Dad?

IRIS

I will be back by the evening,
Father.

BILL

I *am* your father, Girl. Don't you
forget it.

IRIS

And how would I do that, then?

EXT. EALING COMMON TUBE STATION - DAY

John is waiting at the entrance to the lobby of Ealing Common Station, striking a pose in his trench coat and Trilby. Iris emerges at the top of the steps, nervously fussing hair, dress. A simple dress in bottle green.

They see each other, she hands over her ticket to the collector and makes her way towards him. Both made shy by the coming ordeal.

EXT. NORTH COMMON ROAD, EALING COMMON - DAY

John and Iris in conversation as they walk to his home.

JOHN

I should have told you my mother
doesn't approve of lipstick.

IRIS

(looking horrified))
You *should* have told me! John!

Iris stops and takes a handkerchief from her handbag and blots her lips hard, several times. John approves, kisses her on the mouth.

JOHN

That's better.

Iris is calmed.

EXT. JOHN'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The front of a large Victorian villa befitting "The Queen of the Suburbs". John opens the front gate to allow Iris to walk through.

JOHN

It doesn't matter to me you know,
whether my mother likes you or not.

IRIS

I want her to.

JOHN

I know.

He rings the doorbell.

INT. JOHN'S HOME - DAY

DINING ROOM

A well to do and conventionally furnished room for the period: 1940s with a legacy of mahogany Victorian furniture. The paintings on the wall above the dresser is an English pastoral dominated by tones of brown.

A dining table in the centre of the room is set for an elaborate tea - a beautiful China tea set, silver cutlery paste sandwiches, scones - whatever would be possible in rationed Britain in a well-managed home.

A large family is seated at the dining table. John is seated at one end of the table, as the oldest son, MRS LANE, his widowed mother, at the other end of the table.

Iris is sitting in the middle of the table, equidistant from both John and Mrs Lane. Opposite Iris is the younger brother, THOMAS, seventeen, dressed in his naval uniform and there are four sisters aged fourteen, sixteen, MARGARET, twenty and ALICE, twenty-one.

MRS LANE

And you're doing evening classes in
typing.

IRIS

I'm learning to do Pitman's
Shorthand now.

MRS LANE

Oh. You've moved on. And do you plan to continue working at London Transport when you're qualified - as a shorthand typist?

IRIS

I'm very happy there.

MRS LANE

So, is John, but once he qualifies as a Surveyor, he will have opportunities further afield.

Mrs Lane, tries to ignore her son's interjection by fixing her gaze more fastly on Iris.

MRS LANE (CONT'D)

Iris, would you like another sandwich?

IRIS

Yes, thank you, Mrs Lane, I could have another sandwich with impunity.

Thomas lights up with amusement.

THOMAS

(stifling a snigger)

I too mother would like another sandwich and I'd also like to try some of that impunity stuff.

MARGARET

Would you like some more tea, Iris?

Iris is chastened and subdued by Thomas's mockery.

IRIS

No, thank you. I'm fine.

MRS LANE

You can fetch the cake now Margaret

Margaret leaves the table.

ALICE

John tells me that your father is in the navy, Iris.

IRIS

Yes, he is. Or he was, his ship was torpedoed in 1941 and he was injured.

MRS LANE

Oh dear! That was unfortunate. Was he badly injured?

John frowns from the other end of the table.

IRIS

Not too badly. Quite badly.

MRS LANE

Enough to keep him out of the fighting.

IRIS

My mother works in a haberdashers.

MRS LANE

I thought your mother had passed away.

IRIS

No, she hasn't passed away. I mean my step-mother.

Iris blushes.

MRS LANE

I don't understand. Your mother hasn't passed away and you have a step-mother?

Iris is visibly troubled. She's suggesting she lives with a couple in a bigamous relationship or worse.

IRIS

She ... my mother ...

John is aware of Iris's difficulty and seizes the opportunity to change the subject when Margaret returns.

JOHN

Ah! The cake.

Margaret brings the cake to sideboard server. A Simnel cake, covered in Marzipan and decorated on its rim with eleven Marzipan balls.

Mrs Lane prompts her two youngest daughters to clear away the first set of plates and bring new plates to the table which they do dutifully. The cake is placed to the right of the matriarch.

Iris is mesmerised by the cake. For a long moment, the world is at a standstill, her face falls - emotionless.

Mrs Lane sets about slicing and serving the cake and then notices Iris's unusual fixation. She watches her intelligently.

MRS LANE

Iris? Would you like a slice of
cake?

Iris moves her gaze to her interrogator slowly, her face still impassive. She blinks rapidly as she returns to the here and now.

IRIS

I would love some cake, thank you
Mrs Lane.

John is reassured. All is well.

EXT. EALING COMMON STATION - DAY

The mood is subdued.

JOHN

I don't know what you're worrying
about - my mother liked you.

Iris looks at him with a mixture of sadness and skepticism.

JOHN (CONT'D)

She said you were very pretty and
she understood why I liked you.

Iris looks down.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about Tom - he can be a
bit of a child.

(amused)

But you do speak sometimes like you
swallowed the dictionary.

Iris looks up - a face of pure misery.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And you were a hit with Margaret.
She likes history too.

IRIS

I've never seen a Simnel cake
before.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

IRIS

Is it named after Lambert Simnel -
the pretender to Henry the
Seventh's throne?

Thomas makes an exaggerated expression - this is seriously weird.

MRS LANE
 (tone of a headmistress)
 At Easter, Iris?

MARGARET
 The eleven balls represent the
 apostles of Jesus. Judas Iscariot
 isn't there. He's the traitor, I
 suppose.

MRS LANE
 I don't think you're helping
 Margaret.

IRIS
 I'm sorry, I'm not a Catholic. We
 don't have this.

Mrs Lane is deeply offended, she snaps back.

MRS LANE
 We are not Catholic, what makes you
 think --

She glares.

BACK TO SCENE

IRIS
 I thought because you're Irish.

JOHN
 Not all Irish are Catholics - I
 thought you knew your history.

IRIS
 I hadn't thought about it at all
 until I blurted it out in front of
 your mother.

JOHN
 If truth be told, my mother was
 born into the Catholic church but
 after marrying my father she
 quietly became Church of England.
 She's a bit ashamed of it.

IRIS
 She shouldn't be. It wasn't her
 fault.

JOHN
 I don't believe in God, Protestant
 or Catholic.

IRIS
 I didn't know.

John takes stock of the effect the revelation has had on Iris and she searches his face in an enquiry of her own.

JOHN

So, now you've met my parent, when
do I get introduced to your father?

Iris looks uncomfortable and confused. She burrows into John's chest - to avoid his gaze.

INT. 3 BEACONSFIELD ROAD, IRIS'S HOME - NIGHT

Millicent and Bill are sitting in the back room of the terrace, adjacent to the small kitchen. The coal fire is alight in the grate. Millicent knits, Bill reading *The Daily Mirror*.

They listen to Iris entering through the front door, and as the sound of her running upstairs infiltrates, they look at each other significantly - things haven't gone well.

Bill puts aside his paper and kneels down to attend to the grate, poking the fire with an iron prong.

LATER

Iris enters the room, her eyes show signs of crying but her manner is very cheery - overdone. Bill half looks round and then returns his attention to the fire - now fully ablaze and not needing any attention. He prods the coal without effect.

MILLICENT

Did you have a nice tea?

IRIS

Yes, Mum. It was very nice. I met
the whole family.

MILLICENT

That's nice. He has brothers and
sisters.

IRIS

Five. But he's the eldest son.

Bill's lack of contribution is noticeable. Iris stares at his back as if to provoke engagement. He maintains his attention on the fire.

IRIS (CONT'D)

They asked me about my family.

BILL

Did you lie?

MILLICENT

Bill!

IRIS

Lie? Why would I lie? I have nothing to lie about. Do I?

BILL

Doesn't stop you.

IRIS

I can't believe you of all people are asking me about lying.

BILL

So you lied.

MILLICENT

Bill.

BILL

Don't Bill me, woman. I'm not a fool. I know how she gives 'erself hairs and graces.

IRIS

You mean I don't want to stay in the gutter where you are! You're the one who lies - you go down the pub and tell them all sorts and they listen and say what a good bloke Bill Merry is. And then you can't buy the drinks and it's a different story.

MILLICENT

Iris.

IRIS

Well. I'm sick of it Mum. It's embarrassing. He makes up stories and I have to go along with them.

BILL

You don't have to do nothin'

IRIS

They asked about my mother.

This lands like a great weight in the room.

BILL

(nodding in Millicent's direction)

Your mother is there.

IRIS

My real mother.

Millicent looks uncomfortable.

BILL

What do they want to know about 'er
for?

IRIS

Because they're a normal family.
Normal families want to know about
who their son is going to marry.

MILLICENT

Marry?

IRIS

Not marry exactly. But well I could
have. His mother wanted to know
about me, that's the point. And she
has every right. And I couldn't
say. What could I say?

BILL

She's dead.

Millicent looks alarmed but says nothing.

IRIS

No. She isn't. Don't say that.

BILL

She's dead and buried.

IRIS

If she's dead and buried where is
she buried?

BILL

You think they give the likes of
'er a grave and a gravestone?

IRIS

Why wouldn't they? Stop it. I know
she isn't dead. She came to me.

Bill is on his feet now, propped against the fireplace. He
turns to his daughter.

BILL

Gawd. It's bleedin' Joan of Arc -
she's seeing visions.

IRIS

No vision. She came to see me after
school one day. She brought me
grapes. I think that was my mother.

Bill is taken aback.

BILL

You don't know.

IRIS
It was my mother.

BILL
You left school years ago. She died since.

IRIS
I don't believe you. You would have told me. Even you would have told me - not let me go on --

BILL
I'm telling you now.

IRIS
I don't believe you. You want her to be dead. You made her leave.

BILL
You know nothing.

IRIS
I know she left you because she couldn't bear you any more. And I can't.

BILL
If 'e loved you. None of it would matter.

Iris is devastated. She stares at her father for a long moment. He turns away. Sits down and stares into the fire.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

A single bed with embroidered Chenille bedspread. Dark oak bedside table, similar single wardrobe and chest of drawers. Bare floorboards, dark stained oak and small Paisley patterned bedside rug. All neat and tidy.

Iris places a hairbrush on the top of a packed suitcase. It's a small suitcase. Old scuffed labels indicate it was once destined to return "c/o James Shoemaker, 36a, Adamson Road, West Ham, London". Another label, equally scuffed reads, "c/o Miss E Hamilton, The Rectory, Thornecombe, Somerset".

She considers another item, a book on her bedside table - *One Hundred Details in the National Gallery* by Kenneth Clarke. She puts it in the case and attempts to fasten it without success. She removes the book and substitutes a woman's magazine with a picture of Rita Hayworth as Gilda on the front cover. The case fastens.

She draws back a curtain to look down onto the street - a line of worker terraced house.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET, WEST LONDON. - NIGHT

Iris is walking briskly with suitcase along the deserted street.

IRIS

And just where do you think you're
going at this time of night?

Her pace slows to a standstill. At the corner of the street, there's a church - Catholic.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Iris enters the Church, reverently. Surveying the interior - there is no-one. It is lit by the night sky through the windows and votive candles.

Sitting on a pew in the nave, Iris creates a pillow for herself from items of clothing from the suitcase. She lies down on the bench - a bed for the night. Her eyes close on a figure of the Virgin Mary.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Light streaming in through stained glass windows, a priest performs morning ritual at the altar to an empty church. Iris sits up and packs her 'pillow' away. She leaves the church as mouselike as possible.

As she leaves she notices another person bedded down in a pew. A classic tramp - toeless shoes, a piece of rope for a belt around a soiled Trench coat. Asleep.

UNCLE JIM (V.O.)

'the poorest 'e that is in England'

Iris narrows her shoulders in an incomplete shudder and leaves.

EXT. ADAMSON ROAD - DAY

Two rows of identical terraced houses, bricks blackened by decades of pollution appear but one third is rubble as a result of heavy bombing. The skies are overcast.

Iris with suitcase at her feet is talking to her uncle's neighbour. A middle-aged woman in an overall and knotted hair scarf. She leans against the frame of her front door, a cigarette hanging without visible support from one corner of her mouth.

Indistinct voices of a man and a woman are emanating from the upstairs windows, they rise and fall in anger. Iris only looks concerned when the sound of a heavy object hits a wall.

NEIGHBOUR

They're always at it. Pay no mind.
 Jim's as like gone to the corner
 shop to get his Sunday paper and
 baccy. You can wait inside, he
 won't have locked the door.

IRIS

I'll walk to the shop and meet him.

As Iris sets off, the figure of her Uncle and a little girl of about six are turning the corner into the road. She is holding his hand and skipping. Pluto toddles by their side - no lead necessary.

EXT. ADAMSON ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

In bright sunshine, Adamson road is intact. Groups of young children are playing in the trafficless street - the boys marbles, the girls hopscotch, one toddler is sitting on the edge of the pavement talking babble to himself. Two women chat in a doorway.

A decade younger, Uncle Jim is walking with Iris aged six. She is holding one hand whilst in the other he carries a large brown paper parcel tied with string - it holds clothing.

A couple of boys, seven and eight, sweep into the scene, one pushes his face into Iris's.

BOY

'ose that Mr Shoemaker?

UNCLE JIM

This is Iris, she's coming to stay for a while.

BOY

She don't look very 'appy.
 (to Iris)
 Where's your mother, then?

UNCLE JIM

'er mother's my sister.

BOY

You're too old to 'ave a sister.

UNCLE JIM

Do you think they just disappear when you grow up.

BOY

I dunno.
 (giggling)
 I'd like my sister to disappear.

UNCLE JIM
You'd miss 'er if she went.

Uncle Jim reaches in to his pocket and pulls out a coin and offers it to the boy.

UNCLE JIM (CONT'D)
Buy me an ounce of Nut Brown from
the shop and you can keep the
change.

The boy's face lights up. He grabs the coin and runs off. Jim looks down at Iris and smiles. Her face remains drained of emotion but she moves a little closer to him.

BACK TO SCENE

On the street, Iris is now close enough to speak to her Uncle.

IRIS
Room for one more at the inn?

UNCLE JIM
I didn't think to see you this
morning. This is Mandy. She lives
upstairs.

IRIS
Hello Mandy.

The little girl moves closer to Uncle Jim and stares balefully at Iris.

IRIS (CONT'D)
I think I heard her parents.

Uncle Jim scrunches face - confirming Iris's guesswork. He looks down at Iris's suitcase.

IRIS (CONT'D)
I was thinking I might stay a
while.

Uncle Jim raises a brow.

UNCLE JIM
Are you in trouble, Iris?

IRIS
Not in trouble but I wanted to
talk.

Jim looks concerned.

INT. FRONT ROOM, ADAMSON ROAD - LATER

Iris, her uncle, Mandy and Pluto walk into the front room. The little girl clearly at home skips the last couple of steps and climbs onto an armchair.

Iris notices the theatre has been removed and proper curtains are hung instead of the gaudy painted imitation.

Mandy is sitting in the armchair, her six year old legs fully extended in the seat. There is (still) only one other armchair - Pluto is curled up in that one. Jim slaps Pluto to get him to move but Iris refuses to take the chair offered.

IRIS

You take the chair, Uncle. I'll make a pot.

She turns to leave the room.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A cramped and sparsely provisioned kitchen. KETTLE WHISTLES. Iris is staring at the steam issuing from the spout of the kettle but doesn't respond.

Her face crumples into an expression of pain which she immediately suppresses by biting her thumb. A single sniffle marks her return to reality. Uncle Jim enters. Iris moves to remove the kettle from the stove.

IRIS

You're out of milk.

UNCLE JIM

You don't mind that I've taken down the stage?

IRIS

Of course not. I don't know why you kept it up so long.

UNCLE JIM

I suppose it was company.

Iris looks at her uncle with gratitude for the acknowledgment.

IRIS

I'm all grown up now. I won't be playing dressing up anymore.

UNCLE JIM

You were happy though, weren't you Iris?

IRIS
 Very. You were. Are. More of a
 father to me--

UNCLE JIM
 (sternly)
 I'm not your father Iris.

IRIS
 No.

UNCLE JIM
 I'll be taking Mandy back to 'er
 parents now. They'll be wondering
 where she's got to.

IRIS
 I imagine they know.

UNCLE JIM
 Still.

IRIS
 I'd better be getting back too.
 I've got to go to work tomorrow.

UNCLE JIM
 That's right.

IRIS
 I'll get some milk.

UNCLE JIM
 Yes. We can have that tea before
 you go.

Uncle Jim leaves the room.

FRONT ROOM - LATER

Except for Pluto who is back in his armchair, Iris is alone in the front room. Seated in the other armchair, drinking black tea, she looks at the space in the bay window that used to be "The Merry Playhouse."

FRONT ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A twelve year old Iris is singing on the stage of The Merry Playhouse. She's wearing a man's jacket which swamps her, and a flat cap with its brim turned round to the back of her neck.

As she sings, she does the full cockney swagger, thumbs in armpits and waggly fingers.

IRIS, AGED TEN

I'm Burling'on Ber'ie, I rise at
ten thir'y. I'm a toff as everyone
knows. I just 'ad a banana with
Lady Diana. I'm Burlington Ber'ie
from Bow.

Uncle Jim sits back in an armchair smiling - every inch the indulgent uncle.

BACK TO SCENE

Iris smiles.

EXT.3 BEACONSFIELD ROAD - DAY

Iris has returned home from her uncle's. She waits for a moment on the opposite side of the street, her gaze focussed on the front door of 3 Beaconsfield Road - suitcase in hand.

Her face is miserable for a long moment before she takes a sharp intake of breath, stands up straighter and crosses over the road. Home.

INT. 3 BEACONSFIELD ROAD - DAY

IRIS'S BEDROOM

Iris opens her suitcase on the bed. The face of Rita Hayworth greets her. She smiles like a kid being offered an ice cream. Cheered, she takes the magazine out of the case, puts the suitcase on the floor and stretches out on her bed to read the magazine.

MOMENTS LATER

Iris is reading an article entitled: "Has the Family Got a Future?" She is deep in thought.

MOMENTS LATER

In the advertisements at the back of the magazine, there is one for learning French: "Learn French through the AudioLingual Method. The way of the U.S. Servicemen." Iris gets off the bed and goes to her dressing table. She takes out a pair of scissors.

She cuts out the advertisement neatly and puts it carefully on the top of her dressing table at its centre. A wide smile signals her excitement.

BACK ROOM - LATER

Iris opens the door to the back room carefully. Inside, her father faces the fireplace and doesn't look up. Her stepmother is knitting.

A teapot and used teacups and saucers are on the dining table against the wall. Iris enters the room.

IRIS

Shall I make a fresh pot?

Bill smiles but doesn't turn his head.

MILLICENT

That will be lovely, Iris.

Iris looks at Millicent who scrunches her nose in a gesture of encouragement - That's a good girl.

INT. LYON'S CORNER HOUSE - DAY

John and Iris are sitting together much as they were a few month's earlier. But the mood is very different. No hand holding - a bit flat. John is in military uniform. Iris gives him a photograph of herself - a rather stiff studio setting.

JOHN

The other blokes have been asking to see a photo of my girl.

IRIS

Now you have one.

JOHN

And will you keep my photograph by your bedside?

IRIS

If you like.

JOHN

The funny thing is that the navy is still full of conscripts, they won't demob them. They make fun of me for joining the day before we bombed Japan.

IRIS

We didn't. The Americans did.

JOHN

They're our allies.

IRIS

Would you mind if I didn't go to the pictures tonight?

JOHN

This one is supposed to be good.

IRIS

Another time. There's a lecture I wanted to go to.

JOHN

A lecture! I'm leaving next week. It's as if you don't care.

IRIS

I do. I do care. It's just this is rather special. We can spend tomorrow together - all day.

John stares uncomprehending and hurt.

EXT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Iris has arrived at the steps of Hampstead Town Hall a red-brick municipal building.

At the top of the steps a billboard announces "Tonight's speaker. Mrs Ellen Wilkinson, M.P For Middlesborough East, Minister for Education." No one else is arriving suggesting she is late. Iris runs past the board.

INT. TOWN HALL, AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Inside the hall, Ellen Wilkinson has just walked onto the stage to a rousing applause of welcome. Iris spots the back of Mary's head and shuffles along the row to join her.

Mary turns to see her surprised and delighted.

MARY

What are you ---?

IRIS

I needed some air.

Mary raises a brow. Ellen Wilkinson stands behind a desk and speaks. Iris and Mary direct their attention to the stage.

ELLEN WILKINSON

Thirty years ago, we fought a war. we were told it would be the war to end all wars. And yet only twenty years later, we were at it again. Widows who lost their husbands in the first 'Great' war, saw their sons go off to fight. They fought. We fought and we won. But what have we won?

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD

A Labour Government.

A burst of laughter in the audience. Iris, smiling, looks out across the crowd to find the heckler.

ELLEN WILKINSON

(smiling)

Indeed. We've won that. A Socialist government in Britain - but that is not enough. We are but one island and even though this island is at the centre of a big Empire, it is not enough. The embers of war may yet again become the sparks of future wars. So this time, we must learn the mistakes of the previous generations and we must build the peace and that is the work of the United Nations. And within the United Nations we are building an agency which will bring together all the peoples of the world to share their cultures and the future education of their children. Because, Comrades, war begins in the minds of men and so it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

Iris's face is now ecstatic. When the applause erupts, she joins in enthusiastically.

EXT. ALEXANDRA PALACE - DAY

Iris and Mary are sitting on the hill, holding their knees and looking out at central London.

MARY

To work for the United Nations and in Paris.

IRIS

I've only just started to learn French.

MARY

The interviews aren't until September, that's months. If you're good at music, you're supposed to be good at languages.

IRIS

I don't know the least thing about music.

MARY

How can you say that, you sing like an angel.

IRIS

You think too much of me, Mary.
Remember, I'm the corrupting
influence.

MARY

You think too much of that. My aunt
was only teasing you. I think she
thinks I could do with a bit of
corrupting. I'm a bit dull for her.

IRIS

John has asked me to marry him.

MARY

Gosh! When? Congratulations! Why
didn't you say?

IRIS

He only asked last week. I've been
thinking about it. Why did he have
to join up just as the war is over.

MARY

We're not men, Iris we can't
understand what it's like to feel
you need to fight. And, at least
now he won't have to. Will you like
to be a naval wife?

IRIS

Mary. I have a secret.

Mary turns her head to Iris expectantly.

IRIS (CONT'D)

I don't know why I didn't tell you
before but I don't live with my
uncle any more.

MARY

Where do you live?

IRIS

With my father.

MARY

I thought he was dead.

IRIS

I know. I didn't say he was, did I?
I think it was just sort of assumed
that I was an orphan because I was
living with my uncle when the war
started.

MARY

I suppose so. What is your father like?

IRIS

He's in the navy. Or was. He lost an arm in 1941 - that's why I had to go back to London.

MARY

You said you wanted to go to work.

IRIS

Well, I did, in a way, but I'd have liked to have stayed at school really.

MARY

What about your mother?

IRIS

I don't really know about her. She left. No one will tell me the truth about her. She may be dead.

Mary searches her friend's face but Iris is looking ahead.

MARY

Does John think you live with your uncle?

IRIS

No. He knows the truth. At least, he knows I live with my father. He's always on about meeting him.

MARY

He hasn't yet? Iris you're a funny girl.

IRIS

He has a way of messing things up. The thought of him walking me up the aisle has always filled me with dread.

Mary sits up straight - as if a new alertness is required.

INT. WHITEHALL BUILDING - DAY

The corridor outside a large black door is lined with wooden chairs on either side. These are occupied by young women dressed in variations of the contemporary utility suit. Iris and Mary sit among them.

Generally occupied with their own thoughts, the women are silent except for an occasional tense smile as they meet another's gaze.

A makeshift board explains the occasion: "UNESCO Interviews."

The door opens and a young woman emerges - Charis, from the night in Trafalgar Square. Iris double blinks as she recognises her and then looks away and begins to fidget, plucking at her clothes - disconcerted.

From the doorway, Charis continues a conversation with an interviewer inside the room - in French. The relaxed manner of her speech in sharp contrast with the tension in the corridor.

YOUNG WOMAN

J'y irai toute de suite. Ne craignez pas.

INTERVIEWER (O.S)

And my regards to your father.

As she turns to the corridor, her face is aglow with self-confidence. She walks jauntily down the corridor past the other applicants. Mary, unaware of her friend's new distress - turns to Iris.

MARY

Did you understand?

IRIS

Parfaitement.

MARY

You'll be fine. You speak it much better than me these days.

IRIS

It's not the only thing they will look for.

Iris smooths out her skirt and tries to regain composure.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

A large office with a desk behind which three interviewers and a single wooden chair in front for the interviewee. Iris is in the chair.

INTERVIEWER 1

Well, Miss Merry, your shorthand and typing speeds are excellent. What other qualities would you bring to the position?

IRIS

My spelling is very accurate and I have been commended for keeping a very tidy desk and I'm always punctual. And cheerful.

Interviewers 1&2 turn to look at each other and smile knowingly.

INTERVIEWER 1

Good Methodist virtues.

IRIS

I'm Church of England

Interviewer 1 scoffs.

INTERVIEWER 2

We're a broad church here, Miss Merry. We wouldn't mind if you were Roman Catholic.

INTERVIEWER 3

Or Mohammedan!

INTERVIEWER 2

(facing the others on the panel)

Our Arabists would like that.

Iris is visibly uncomfortable. She knows she has been gauche and has been excluded from the conversation which nevertheless is ostensibly about her.

INTERVIEWER 3

And your French certificates look good but of course you have no real experience in a French speaking country.

INTERVIEWER 2

She would likely be working in the English section anyway.

Iris looks disappointed.

INTERVIEWER 3

Is that a disappointment to you Miss Merry?

IRIS

I would just be happy to be in Paris and be part of UNESCO.

INTERVIEWER 3

Quite right.

IRIS

And in time, with experience, I
expect to be able to --

INTERVIEWER 3

-- Well, let's keep the immediate
task in hand.

Iris draws herself in.

INT. VICTORIA TRAIN STATION - DAY

Iris is standing alone with a suitcase on a train platform.
One or two members of uniformed staff, are present but
besides Iris, only one or two other passengers - well dressed
in suits and winter coats.

EXT. CHISWICK TUBE STATION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Early morning at the entrance to the station. Iris is in
conversation with her father. He has a prosthetic arm so his
coat sleeve no longer flaps.

IRIS

It's alright, Dad. There's no need
to come with me all the way to
Victoria. I can manage from here.

BILL

(putting down Iris's
suitcase)

You'll want to have your old Dad,
see his girl off. To Paris.

IRIS

You have, Dad. We can say goodbye
here. Nice and quiet like. No fuss.

BILL

(looks hurt)

There was a time, you know.

IRIS

I know Dad.

Iris pats the prosthetic arm and kisses him on the cheek.
Bill pulls her toward him for an awkward one-armed hug. Iris
is the first to pull away.

IRIS (CONT'D)

I'll write.

BILL

(like an excited child)

Send us a postcard.

She nods.

BACK TO SCENE - LATER

The platform is now full of people with various family members ready to board. Through the crowd, Iris makes out CHARIS who is accompanied by a man in green peak cap, part of his uniform. SIMPSON, 45, the Elliott family chauffeur, now acting as Charis's own personal porter.

The train pulls into the platform - *The Golden Arrow* - a luxury Pullman class steam train evoking the glamour of its now more famous sibling *The Orient Express*. Its arrival announces adventure. Iris's face is alive with excitement.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY

Iris is just attending to her carry case in the luggage rack above her seat when Charis enters - chauffeur first. Iris's mouth falls open but this time she doesn't seek to hide.

CHARIS

Next to the window, Simpson.

The chauffeur puts a carry case and hatbox in the luggage rack above the seat opposite to Iris's. There is a short awkward shuffle as chauffeur and Charis exchange places. At the door of the carriage, he stops.

SIMPSON

It only remains for me to wish you
a pleasant trip Miss Charis.

He hesitates before continuing and then when he does, they speak together.

CHARIS

Thank you Simpson.

SIMPSON

(overlapping)
Bon voyage!

Charis raises an eyebrow. He leaves. With a half-smile she turns to Iris.

CHARIS

Well. Hidden depths.

Charis takes off a glove and extends her hand.

CHARIS (CONT'D)

How do you do. Charis Elliott. But
do call me Chary.

Iris, gloveless, shakes the extended hand.

IRIS

Iris Merry. Iris. Please call me
Iris.

CHARIS

What a terrific name. The Merry
part I mean. Iris too. Iris and
Charis. We rhyme.

IRIS

Iris and Charis are off to Paris.

CHARIS

It's all meant to be.

Broad smiles.