

WAR HORSE

by

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Based on the novel

by

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EXT. DEVON, ENGLAND. A SUMMER'S DAY, 1912.

The bucolic magnificence of the Devon countryside. We fly low over the high, thick hedges untouched for hundreds of years. The thick verdant countryside in all its splendor, ancient woodlands, fields of corn, and finally a paddock in a typical Devonshire dale.

We come to rest beside three farmers standing over a pregnant mare. The mare is in distress - she is about to give birth. The farmers calm the mare and tend to her gently with assurance and authority.

We pull back to see, ALBERT, a fifteen-year-old farm boy, watching the whole drama with delight from the paddock gate.

FARMER

Come on, easy, girl. Easy, girl.
Easy.

The men hold the mare firmly, but clearly this is a difficult birth.

FARMER 2

This is a stubborn one, huh?

FARMER 3

There we go. Who's a clever girl?

Moments later - the summer's sun glints off the wet, sticky hide of the foal (JOEY) - red hide, four white socks and a distinctive white cross on its forehead.

Soon the creature is attempting its first clumsy steps. It is both awesome and comical to see the new born creature struggle to his feet, but eventually, he succeeds.

Title: WAR HORSE

EXT. PADDOCK/FIELD, DEVON. VARIOUS.

We follow Joey's progress over the course of his first year. His initial fearfulness, his connection with his mother, the intimacy of their relationship.

As Joey gets strong they run together, frolicking gayly in the last dregs of summer. Albert looking on. Joey notices him at the fence and they share a moment of connection.

Spring: flowers are beginning to sprout by the hedgerows. Our boy Albert runs into the field. He takes an apple from his pocket - he holds it out tentatively. Joey approaches Albert with suspicion. Albert gently encourages him.

His mother paws the ground and neighs at Joey. He turns and runs over the field at her beck and call.

Albert tosses the apple to himself, ruefully - watches in awe as Joey races away with his mother.

He is a magnificent one year old. His distinctive red coat gleaming, now it is clear that he is half thoroughbred. He runs quickly around the field enjoying his own power and strength.

Later - the three farmers open the gate and come into the field. Both Joey and his mother instinctively canter over to the two men, expecting food. The three men gently greet the horses and pet them, then we see one man has a noose made of a rope. He slips it round Mum's neck. She pulls back, Joey is shaken and bewildered but before he knows what's happening the second farmer is trying to get a similar rope around his neck. Joey balks and pushes the farmer aside, distressed to see his mother tethered. The farmer grabs Joey again and struggles with him, enlisting the help of the second farmer. With some effort they get the rope around his neck and calm him down.

FARMER 2

Easy does it. Easy does it. Come on,
steady does it.

Unused to being tethered Joey pulls at the rope but the farmers are solid and firm. They gently lead Joey and his mother across the field to the gate and out into the road.

The whole road becomes overtaken by a flock of sheep on their way to the market. In the distance we hear the bustle of Market Day.

EXT. THE MARKET. THE SAME.

The farmers lead Joey and his mother through the chaos of the market and into an auction pen. They find themselves amongst a hoard of pigs, sheep and cows. Joey is agog at all of these creatures and all this life he had no idea existed.

The farmers lead the horses into a stall to await the auction. Joey is bewildered by all the noise - buttressed against a couple of mules and a cow. He is uncomfortable in this tight space.

An AUCTION WORKER holds a clipboard out for the lead farmer.

AUCTION MAN 1

Mornin', pop. Put your mark here.
Good luck.

EXT. JOEY'S PEN. THE SAME.

Two men approach the pen.

AUCTION MAN 2
Get the colt...

One man grabs Joey and pulls him out of the pen. Suddenly there is a look of horror on his face. His terrified mother realises they are being separated. Joey panics and desperately tries to get back to his mother, he rises up throwing the man who is leading him aside. Joey is out of control. The man regains control of Joey.

AUCTION MAN 3
Whoa! Whoa!

He pulls Joey away from his mother, who lets out a heart-rending cry, paws the ground, and crashes her foreleg against the fence. Joey remains disoriented in the midst of the market day chaos.

AUCTION MAN 3 (CONT'D)
Easy...

INT. MAIN AUCTION RING. THE SAME.

The auction ring is full of people of all shapes and sizes. There is a sense of celebration and busyness about market day.

We concentrate on two men - Ted Narracott (DAD), in his forties, clearly both the cares of the world and alcohol have worn him down before his time, and SI EASTON, his more solid friend, both working farmers. Just behind Si is his 15 year old son, ANDREW. Ted has a drink in his hand. They all look at Joey bridling against the men who are trying to hold him.

DAD
Now that's a beauty.

SI EASTON
Forget it, Ted. He's half thoroughbred and not got a day's work in him.
(points to a plow horse next to Joey)
Now, there... There's your ticket.

In contrast to Joey, the solid and bulky plow horse stands like a rock. But Dad remains fixated on Joey.

DAD
But look at him, Si. Look at that creature.

Indeed, Joey is magnificent, his power clearly emerging because of his upset.

SI EASTON
Don't be daft. You need something solid to plow a field.

DAD
(fixed on Joey)
Yeah, but he's something else, that one.

The AUCTIONEER announces the start of the auction...

AUCTIONEER
Alright gentlemen - settle down - settle down - horses on my right - men with money in their pockets on my left - it's the perfect combination. Is Fred Goddard here?

FRED shouts his reply from the crowd.

FRED
YES! I's here.

AUCTIONEER
Good - more money than sense. Dave Hill?

DAVE
I'm here. Yes!

AUCTIONEER
Bugger off, you tight bastard - you've been coming here for 20 years - never bought so much as a pork scratching.

The crowd are loving all this.

Dad notices a figure across the ring, LYONS, clearly a man of money. You can see something light up in Dad's eyes - a combination of dislike and alcohol.

Joey is led into the auction pen.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
Okay - first up today - a gorgeous young horse - prettiest thing I've seen since my wife on our wedding day. Let's get going, shall we? Who wants this wonderful creature.

But no-one bids.

DAD
One guinea.

AUCTIONEER

One guinea, one guinea, one guinea...

YOUNG ANDREW EASTON

I thought you needed a plow horse, Mister Narracott.

AUCTIONEER

Any advance on one guinea? Any advance on one guinea?

Joey is still trying to get back to his mother. A voice from the crowd pipes up:

LYONS

Two guineas.

DAD

Three!

SI EASTON

Ted Narracott - it's completely the wrong animal.

Lyons whispers to his son, DAVID, 15, next to him. David eyes Joey skeptically.

DAD

Si Easton - I'm not gonna let that bastard see me off.

LYONS

Five guineas.

DAD

Six!

SI EASTON

Oh for the love of...!

Joey is straining to get to his mother, the men are pulling him back.

LYONS

Seven.

DAD

Greedy sod thinks he can just buy anybody.
(bidding)
Eight.

SI EASTON
 Stop it - he's your landlord - you
 can't be picking fights with him.

Lyons looks over. There is now tension in the crowd as they
 sense a Battle Royal for the horse.

LYONS
 Ten guineas.

He smirks at Dad.

SI EASTON
 You haven't got the money. Let's go
 home - let's have a pint.

DAD
 Eleven guineas, sir, from as good a man as
 any in this town.

They all look at Lyons in his suit and bowler hat.

AUCTIONEER
 Do I hear twelve guineas? Twelve guineas?

SI EASTON
 That's top price for a workin'
 animal. Ted! Save it for the shire!

DAD
 There are big days and there are
 small days. Which will it be?

AUCTIONEER
 Do I hear any advance on eleven guineas?

All eyes are on Lyons and his son - David is 15, smartly
 dressed.

DAVID LYONS
 Just let him go, dad, I don't care
 for him, he's too... jumpy.

Lyons isn't listening to David; he's looking hard at Ted.

LYONS
 Shall we say - twenty five?

The crowd gasps. This is clearly personal.

SI EASTON
 Well, he's got you there. Nice try, Ted.

ANDREW

You were great, Mr N. Gave him a run
for his money.

But when he looks at Ted, Ted's eyes are locked into the eyes
of his rival.

AUCTIONEER

Going, going...

DAD

Thirty. Thirty guineas!

Total silence. He stares hard at Lyons. Who simply smiles,
raises an eyebrow, tips his hat and walks away. It dawns on
Dad that he's won the auction. He breaks into a sweat.

AUCTIONEER

Thirty guineas. Thirty guineas. Going
going gone - to Mister Ted Narracott.

He bangs his gavel. It's a done deal.

SI EASTON

What have you done, Ted? What have you done?

Dad doesn't acknowledge Si.

Moments later - Ted stands staring at Joey, who looks back.
Ted holds his reins numbly, accepts his receipt from the
auction man in a kind of daze.

Suddenly, Lyons appears at Dad's shoulder.

LYONS

Quite a beast, there. But what you gonna do
with him - on a working farm? I hope you
got the rent, Ted. I'll be around for it
when it comes due.

Dad does not acknowledge Lyons. Lyons smiles and walks away
with son David, and his cronies. Si shakes his head at Dad.

SI EASTON

You're a fool, Ted. And our Rosie'll
never forgive you.

EXT. NARRACOTT'S FARM. SUNSET.

MRS. NARRACOTT kneels in her garden, digging up some carrots,
when she sees Ted returning.

Dad walks down the hedged lane as the sun sets pulling Joey
with him, his bad leg always moving slightly to the side.

Mrs. Narracott looks in horror and bewilderment at Joey and then at Dad. She is a good-looking, intelligent woman, but clearly her life is always hard.

MRS. NARRACOTT
What have you done?

Dad stands shamefaced as Albert - the boy we have already met - runs out of the house to join them.

ALBERT
That's Mooney's colt!

MRS. NARRACOTT
You were supposed to buy a plow horse.

ALBERT
You bought him?

MRS. NARRACOTT
What'd you pay for him?

Albert is totally taken by the horse.

MRS. NARRACOTT (CONT'D)
How much, Ted Narracott?

DAD
I won't tell you a lie - though I would love to. Thirty guineas.

MRS. NARRACOTT
Thirty guineas!

She is stunned. She looks at Ted - and he just nods.

MRS. NARRACOTT (CONT'D)
He's not worth ten! Are you out of your mind? What about the rent?

DAD
He's a strong one, Rosie. Look at the way he holds his head!

MRS. NARRACOTT
How the hell are we gonna pull anything with that? Ted - you have to take him back. You have to take him back right now now.

ALBERT
No.

MRS. NARRACOTT

You have to get down on your knees and beg
for our money back.

Joey bridles at the raised voices but Albert takes the rope
and tries to calm him.

ALBERT

No. No, please don't take him back.

Suddenly we see Dad's dejection. He is a man lost.

DAD

We can't take him back till he's broken in.

MRS. NARRACOTT

And how are you gonna train a horse with
that leg?

ALBERT

I'll train him.

MRS. NARRACOTT

No, you stay out of this, Albie. You don't
know nothing about horses.

ALBERT

Please, Mum. Please let me. I can do it.

DAD

We have to keep him. We've no choice.

MRS. NARRACOTT

Right. Well... you've got one month to
break him in or I'm taking him back myself.

(She turns to the house,
but then...)

How did you get to thirty - what other fool
bid you up that high?

DAD

It was Lyons.

Mrs. Narracott turns back towards the house, then stops,
dazed, speaking almost to herself.

MRS. NARRACOTT

We're gonna lose everything. After all we've
been through - we're gonna lose it all.

She turns back to the others - the weight of the mistake
heavy on their shoulders - but Albert quickly steps forward.

ALBIE

Don't worry, Mum - I'll raise him - and I'll raise him good.

MRS. NARRACOTT

Well, you better. Go on - get started. See if a child can undo what your fool of a father's done to this family of ours.

Mrs. Narracott storms into the house. Albert immediately goes to stroke Joey but the nervous horse draws back uncomfortably. Dad leads him off, drunk and bewildered, across the yard to the barn.

EXT. STABLES. LATER.

Albert loads some oats into a bucket and approaches Joey in the field.

ALBERT

Right. Let's make a start then.

As Albert approaches, Joey nervously runs in circles, then stops on a dime, looking at Albert suspiciously.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

It's oats. Very tasty, that is. It's beef and gravy to us!

Albert squats down. He shows the food. Joey catches the scent on the air, but still hesitates and shies away.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Come on...

This time, Albert takes a new tact, almost turning his body fully away from Joey, but keeping the bucket extended. Albert slowly backs towards Joey, speaking gently all the while.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I bet you're missing your mother. Look at you... first time without your mum. First time away from home. But you're not alone, are you. In fact. Cos I'm 'ere...

Feeling safer, Joey moves toward the bucket of oats and starts to eat.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

It's alright. It's alright.

Albert reaches out his hand and touches Joey. And with a slight start, the horse relaxes into Albert's hand, feeling safe with the boy.

Albert stares at the distinctive white cross on Joey's forehead. Joey calms.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
I'm gonna call you Joey. Understand? Joey.
That's you. And I'm Albert. It's alright,
You're mine now. You're mine.

Albert strokes Joey's forehead. Joey lifts his head and the two stare at each other in close proximity.

EXT. FARMYARD. NEXT DAY.

Dad, with a hangover, hobbles off to work the fields. As he reaches the gate, HAROLD the goose snaps at his heels. Dad dismisses him with a stare and heads for the stables.

EXT. THE FARMYARD, DAY.

The training episode: Albert walks Joey around the yard on the rope. It all seems to be going well. Mum looks on. Albert is clearly proud of his progress.

EXT. PADDOCK. ANOTHER DAY.

Albert's friend, Andrew Easton, sits on a rock with an apple in hand to watch the training.

Albert sets Joey in a spot and tells him to wait.

ALBERT
Whoa. I want you to stay there,
Joey. Stay. That's it. Good boy.
That's it, you've got it.

Of course when Albert walks away, Joey follows.

A game of "Grandma's footsteps" ensues as Albert patiently places Joey then walks away.

ANDREW
Hey, look at him, Albie. He's
playing "Grandma's Footsteps."

Albert patiently leads Joey back to his starting position.

ALBERT
Right, come on, Joey. Back you go.
Come on. Back you go.
(MORE)

ALBERT (CONT'D)
You're all right. That's it. Good
boy. Right. You've gotta stay
there, understand?

Albert walks away again.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
That's it. Good boy. You've got it.
Good boy.

Finally Joey stays put. Andrew smiles, impressed.

ANDREW
Good boy. Good.
(to Albert)
Now call him. Whistle.

ALBERT
Come now, Joey. Come on.

Albert whistles like an owl. Joey stands completely still.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
You can come now, Joey.

He whistles again. Joey remains still.

ANDREW
Don't think he fancies your owls.

Albert walks back to Joey, frustrated.

ALBERT
No, I read it in a story. It's how
the Indians used to summon their
horses.

He gently strokes Joey's nose.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
Now, Joey, when I whistle, you've
gotta come, understand?

ANDREW
My dad had a dog who stayed when you
called him. He used to run up
behind you when you weren't
looking, and uh...

ALBERT
He's not a dog. He's just puzzling
it through.

Albert runs further away than before and whistles. After a moment, Joey trots over to him. Andrew smiles broadly.

ANDREW

Brilliant. Look at you.

With the basis established, Albert begins to train Joey to react to the owl whistle without his prompting. It's not all easy going - sometimes Albert makes progress, sometimes not.

QUICK MONTAGE - Mrs. Narracott fills a bucket at the pump, then promptly spills it when Joey trots past her in response to an owl whistle. She calls off, frustrated.

MRS. NARRACOTT

Albie.

Dad heads out to the fields with a rake on his shoulder. There's an owl call and Joey trots past him in the background. Dad sees Albert welcome Joey by the haystacks, stroking his nose affectionately. Dad walks on, his expression inscrutable.

Joey trots up a path, pursuing another owl call. After several more calls, he still can't spot Albert, until he cranes his neck up and sees Albert sitting in a nearby tree. Albert laughs.

INT. FARM HOUSE. LATER.

Lyons is there with his son, David, and his unlikable cronies. He holds a meager handful of cash. Dad and Mum look chastened. The mood is sombre.

LYONS

There's only fifteen here.

DAD

The rest will come.

LYONS

You know by rights I could take this farm back today, don't you? And I'm a great believer in my rights.

DAD

It will come.

LYONS

If you drank less beer and bought fewer horses you might be able to look your landlord in the eye, Narracott.

Lyons begins loading up his ledger into his bag.

DAD

I said I'll pay you. We got to plant the bottom field.

LYONS

Bottom field's rock hard. Only stones down there.

DAD

No, we're going to plow it. Just give me 'til the autumn. I'll pay every penny I owe you. With interest.

LYONS

How you going to plow it? Not with that fancy animal of yours?

DAD

He'll do it.

LYONS

You'll not get that one in a harness, let alone pulling a plow. Even drunk on a Tuesday night, you know that. And I can't wait for the money - there's a war coming.

Dad stands up from his chair, resolute.

DAD

I promise you that field will be plowed. We'll plant it with turnips. And the money will be yours when harvest comes.

Mrs. Narracott interjects, desperate.

MRS. NARRACOTT

Please, sir. Please.

Lyons takes his time. He looks at them both - Ted and Rosie, almost beaten.

LYONS

Very well - if that fancy plows that field I'll give you till October to set things straight.

Lyons heads for the door, but Albert stands in his way.

ALBERT

What if he doesn't?

LYONS

I'll take the horse on the day he fails.

(beat)

(MORE)

LYONS (CONT'D)

And I'll take your father's farm and give it to working men who can hold their pints and hold their heads high in decent company.

Lyons tries to move past, but Albert grabs his arm.

ALBERT

No, please. Sir, you can't do that.

LYONS

Now, now, now, lad. What - are you bladdered as well?! Ted Narracott - I got you down in my book!

Albert knows he has to back down. Lyons walks past him and leaves with David and his cronies.

EXT. THE NARRACOTT FARM. THE SAME.

Harold the goose attacks Lyons and his men. They quickly pile into his car and drive off.

Ted stands in the kitchen immobile with upset.

EXT. STABLES. MOMENTS LATER.

Dad throws open the stable door, jerks the harness from the wall, throws open Joey's stall and starts to lunge at the horse.

Albert runs in to try to stop him.

ALBERT

You can't harness him.

DAD

He's got to be collared.

Dad starts to grapple with Joey desperately flailing in an attempt to get the harness onto Joey. Joey is completely confused and frightened.

ALBERT

No, you can't. Look, you're scaring him, Dad. You're scaring him. He...

(desperate)

He can't take a plow!

Joey tries to push Dad out of the way, Dad frustrated by this hits Joey hard with the harness.

DAD

He's got to plow!

ALBERT

He won't be able to do it - he's too young -
he's not even been backed yet....

Joey rears up and kicks Dad. Who falls to the ground.

MRS. NARRACOTT

Ted!

Albert grabs Joey's bridle. Joey wrestles with Albert.

ALBERT

It's alright, boy. It's alright. It's
alright. It's alright.

Dad is mad with anger and frustration - and in pain. He
staggers to his feet and leaves.

Albert calms Joey down. Mrs. Narracott returns the harness
to its hook.

MRS. NARRACOTT

I knew this would happen soon as I laid eyes
on him....

But then she notices Dad has returned. He has a gun.

MRS. NARRACOTT (CONT'D)

Ted. No. Ted, no!

DAD

He's worth nothing to me! If he won't take
the collar, he's not worth a damn thing!

ALBERT

Dad?

He grabs the rifle, but Dad shoves him away.

DAD

Move aside.

Dad raises the rifle, but Albert wrestles for it again.

ALBERT

Dad. Stop.

Furious with frustration Dad throws Albert to the ground and
takes aim at the horse.

Mrs. Narracott quickly pulls the gun aside.

MRS. NARRACOTT

You shoot that horse we have nothing.

Dad whips the gun back towards Joey to find Albert standing between them - right in front of the gun's barrel. For a second we think Albert will be inadvertently shot.

MRS. NARRACOTT (CONT'D)

NO!

Dad pauses his finger just in time. Albert gently holds the barrel of the gun. Speaks calmly.

ALBERT

You were right what you said, Dad. "He'll do it," you told Lyons, "He'll plow that field." And he will! You'll see. He'll show you. We'll show you. We'll get it done.

Dad looks at him, frozen. Mrs. Narracott eases the gun away from him -

MUM

Let go. Let go.

- and hands it to Albert, telling him -

MUM (CONT'D)

Go back to the house.

As Albert leaves, Ted takes out his flask. But Rosie takes it from him gently. He doesn't resist.

MRS. NARRACOTT

Here, here. Some days are best forgotten. Today ain't one of them. Come on.

They exit the stable together, leaving Joey in his stall.

INT./ EXT. STABLES. DAWN.

Albert walks towards the stables - enters. And talks to Joey as he prepares the harness.

ALBERT

How are you today, Joey? I don't know much about life, boy, but I do know that there are big days and there are small days. And most days are small days, and, well, they don't matter much to anyone - but this - well, this is a big one. This is our big day. Well, it's cold out there. So I'm going to take this off -

(he takes off his coat)

Well, if it's tough for you - it should be tough for me, too...

He is left in just a loose-fitting white shirt....

ALBERT (CONT'D)
 Now, I'm gonna teach you how to plow
 and you're gonna learn. Is that
 understood? And then we can be
 together, which is how I believe
 things are meant to be.

Joey instinctively balks, but Albert is stern with him.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
 Boy. Steady, boy. Here we go. Here
 we go.

As he approaches Joey with the harness, Harold the goose
 enters the stable to watch.

Albert approaches gently and slowly puts the harness over his
 own neck and shoulders to demonstrate -

ALBERT (CONT'D)
 Easy, easy... Look at me, Joey. See?
 See? You've just gotta put your nose
 through.

It is a moment between them. The horse looks Albert in the
 eye, then yields. Albert comforts him and show there is
 nothing to fear. Finally he gets the harness in place.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
 That's it. See? You've got it.
 You've got it. Good boy. There...

Harold honks his approval.

Albert leads Joey out across the yard, through the broken
 gate.

EXT. LOWER FIELD. THE SAME.

It is a grey day as they walk across the plowed fields
 towards the huge lower field. They come to a rusty, primitive
 plow left in the grass. Albert looks around the field - it is
 overgrown, it seems to go on forever - even if Joey was a
 plow horse this would be a heavy task.

Si Easton and Andrew stroll up the road to watch.

SI EASTON
 Too large, too rocky, matted with
 grass roots. Even a sturdy plow
 horse'd never manage it alone.

ANDREW

Yet he will, I say.

SI EASTON

You'd swear he'd sprout wings and fly if Albert had told you so.

(smiling at his son:)

It's a fine thing, loyal to your mate. Even if he is a bit barmy. A team of two might manage, given a month and good weather.

They're interrupted by the honk of a horn as Lyons and David pull up in a car. Lyons and David get out. Their driver remains inside.

LYONS

Ted too squeamish to watch, is he?

SI EASTON

'Course he's watching.

Si nods in the direction of the house.

Albert steadies Joey and starts to tie on the heavy plow. It just seems too big and bulky for Joey's sleek frame. Albert sets Joey right and fixes the plow.

Lyons, David, Si, and Andrew walk towards Dad, who looks on anxiously from a nearby hedgerow. Lyons gestures at David to stay back and walks over to Ted alone. He stands beside him and begins to talk gently.

LYONS

Well, you've raised him up a true Narracott, Ted, picture of his father, he is: not a dollop of ordinary sense but that thick stubbornness that'll lead him to insist on the impossible.

Down in the field, Albert continues to prep the plow.

LYONS (CONT'D)

Wasn't a farmer in Devon didn't admire you, myself among 'em, leaving your brothers that fine farm and setting yourself at this stoney patch of unpromising ground. You've fettle enough for twenty men, but with a gimpy leg and the drinking - for the pain, isn't it, that you drink?

(MORE)

LYONS (CONT'D)

- yeah, none of us could have anticipated an ending better than this. Makes me question the wisdom of the charity that urged me to rent you this place, not only looking at you, me old pal, but that pretty little wife of yours, thought you were a spark, she did.

Ted hasn't acknowledged Lyons for a second; he's never taken his eyes off Albert. He simply stands and walks away as Lyons concludes:

LYONS (CONT'D)

And now your son's sinking into the selfsame bog that's swallowing you.

Albert has been meticulously preparing everything, positioning Joey, checking the tethers, digging the rusty plow in the earth. He takes his position behind the plow, throwing the rear leather harness over his own neck.

ALBERT

See Joey - I got the collar, too!

Albert gently snaps the reins. Joey doesn't move, confused by the whole affair.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Come on, boy. Walk on. That's it. Walk on! Walk on, Joey. Come on, boy, walk on.

LYONS

You'd be better off startin' at the top of the hill and goin' down! Gravity's the only friend you're gonna have today, young lad.

ALBERT

Walk on, Joey! Walk on! Come on, Joey, walk on. Walk on, boy.

At the house, Mrs. Narracott opens an upstairs window to look on, anxiously. Ted, standing alone by the fence, only looks at Albert.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Walk on. Come on, walk on.

TED

(to himself:)

It'll take the whip to move him.

Just as Ted is saying this, Albert, as if hearing his father, takes a breath and then abruptly produces a whip. Joey's ears prick up. Albert, grimly determined, snaps the whip at Joey. Joey panics and bolts. The plow spins to its side, pulls Albert off his feet. Joey drags them all the way to the top of the hill, right by the farmhouse.

Lyons, yelling, starts laughing and can't stop.

LYONS

Bravo! You've reached the top of the hill! Off you go again, boy! You'll make even better time comin' down!!

He continues past Dad, laughing.

INTERCUT - Mrs. Narracott looks on from the house. He glances back at her. Her face is full of angry concern for their son.

Townsfolk begin arriving, climbing the hill to the lower field.

Ted looks down, ashamed. Mrs. Narracott looks back at Albert, mortified, bruised, setting the plow right again.

Mrs. Narracott moves away from the window, takes a seat, and picks up her knitting.

Later - Albert has made no progress. Joey is moving, but only in a useless circle.

ALBERT

Good boy. Good lad. Good lad. Now walk on. Good boy.

More townsfolk clamor to the fence. Andrew calls out.

ANDREW

Albie, we're all with ya!

Albert tries to encourage him forward but Joey still isn't pulling sufficiently. The plow skips uselessly over the surface stones.

LYONS

Look look look! The plow hasn't even cut yet!

As Albert struggles with the plow, he sees Dad walking up the hill behind the spectators. He doesn't even turn to his son.

Joey strains as Albert pushes with all his might. We sense the strain on the horse and the inappropriateness of the task. But Joey perseveres. The plow limps along.

ALBERT

Do you know - I believe we can do it, Joey. I knew when I first saw you that you'd be the best of us. That's why he bought you. He knows you've all the courage he never had. I knew when I first saw you that you'd be the one who'd save us.

The plow skips and Albert falls. Joey's legs buckle and he goes to his knees. Albert rushes to his side.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Whoa. Whoa.

Lyons calls from the crowd as rain starts to fall.

LYONS

You've got no chance, lad. He'll not turn over half an acre. Give it up now. You've done well. You've tried hard. You're more of a man than your father.

Albert examines the collar - he sees it is ripping into Joey's flesh. He grabs his shirt, tears a piece off it, tenderly folds it and puts it between Joey's shoulder and the collar.

SI EASTON

Come on now, Mr. Lyons, that's a bit rough, isn't it?

LYONS

(a shrug:)

Well, he'll destroy that horse.

The crowd's beginning to disperse. One of Lyons' cronies holds his umbrella as he returns to his car. He passes Ted.

LYONS (CONT'D)

I'll be over Thursday. Give you a day to close it up.

Mrs. Narracott emerges from the house and heads to the fence - holding her knitting in the rain, ignoring the leaving crowds. A SYMPATHETIC NEIGHBOR hands her:

NEIGHBOUR

Your wool.
 (then)
 I'm sorry, Rosie.

Lyons passes behind her, almost speaks, but then thinks better of it.

As the rain intensifies, Albert digs his toe into the wet soil and notices how it has softened. Suddenly something flashes through Albert's mind. He leaps into action, runs through the rain to shout at Joey.

ALBERT

Now, boy! You've got to do it, Joey. You don't know, so I'm gonna have to do the knowing for you when the rest of our lives depend on this! So get set to pull - and pull straight! And pull hard!

He races back to the plow and sets himself.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Now, boy! Go!

Joey pulls firmly and finally the inertia is broken - the rain has softened the earth.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Walk on, Joey! Walk on! That's it! Good boy, Joey! Good boy!

Finally, the plow bites deep into the soil.

ANDREW

Walk on! Walk on! Walk on! Walk on, Joey!

At the fence, Mrs. Narracott looks on in amazement.

Albert notices a large rock in their path. Andrew sees it, too.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

(yelling)
 Go around it!!

ALBERT

Whoa, Joey! Whoa, Joey! Joey! Joey, whoa whoa whoa! Joey, stop! You'll break the blade -

Albert hauls back on the reins, but Joey throws his flanks forward, straining and lurching until the plow blade splits the rock completely in half and now the plow moves more easily through the wet ground.

The ground yields. Soon Albert and Joey are making great progress. The wet earth slipping open beneath them.

Andrew is loving it, speaks in wonder.

ANDREW

Will you look at you?

Mrs. Narracott looks very happy, a smile breaking slowly across her face...

The crowd begins to return. Lyons notices and looks out from his car - sees the plow digging through the field.

Annoyed at the progress Albert's making, he gets out of his car and walks over to Mrs. Narracott. With great disdain he says:

LYONS

I'd not let a child of mine slip in the mud alongside a plow blade. He could lose a foot!

Mrs. Narracott brandishes her knitting needles, backing him up.

ROSIE NARRACOTT

You'll likelier lose an eye, Mr. Lyons, if you carry on prating at me how to manage my son! Or my plow, or my horse, or my field, or *my* farm!

Dad sits nearby, watching this exchange with silent approval. Lyons stares at her, gape-mouthed, as she turns her attention back to Albert.

MRS. NARRACOTT

Come on, Albie! Push on through!

The rain becomes torrential. Lyons turns towards the car - gestures, frustrated, to his driver, who runs forward with the umbrella to shield his boss from the rain. David remains on the running board, watching Albert plowing.

The plow speeds through the earth. The boy and the horse are working as one. It is a moment of triumph.

ANDREW

Get it done, Albie! Get it done!

We pull back to see they have made only the smallest dent in the enormous field.

As Lyons' car passes, Dad steps forward, takes in the scene, and almost smiles.

EXT. THE LOWER FIELD. EVENING.

The rain has abated. Albert, soaked to the skin, sits next to Joey. They are both covered in mud.

Andrew, followed by Si Easton, charges through the gate up to Albert. They are lifting Albert up between them, laughing, Si Easton planting a kiss on Albert's muddy cheek, Andrew tousling his filthy hair, when Mrs. Narracott arrives with Ted. She helps Si and Andrew lift Albert and slings her son's arm over her shoulder, glowing with pride, crying, overjoyed.

ROSIE

Oh, my pair of fools. My mighty
fools.

As the others help Albert up, Ted tends to Joey. He looks over to his son and, after a moment, removes his cap and slightly bows his head.

The others stagger away, supporting Albert, and Ted pats the horse and gently begins to unbuckle the harness.

INT. STABLES. DAY.

Albert washes Joey and tends the wounds and sores on his body. Rosie is putting antiseptic on Albert's wrists and shoulders. Joey bristles but is soothed by Albert's care.

ROSIE

You're as battered and bloodied as he is.

ALBERT

And where's Dad?

ROSIE

Still in the bottom field.

ALBERT

Stumbling about, I suppose.

ROSIE

It's not the drink, Albert, that
makes him stumble -

ALBERT
 (abruptly)
 He drinks, mum.

ROSIE
 Well, so might you if you'd been
 where he's been, seen what he's
 seen!

ALBERT
 Well, he don't talk to me about it.

ROSIE
 He don't talk about it because he
 can't. There aren't words for some
 things. Come here...

Rosie stalks over to a pile of broken equipment in a corner of the stables. She rummages until she finds a waterstained brown paper parcel tied with yarn. She brushes away some mouse turds.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
 The mice've been at it. Sit down.

They sit together on a step. As she begins to untie the yarn, a change comes over her: her irritated determination gives way to sadness. Albert comes to her and kneels beside her as she gently opens the paper.

Inside there's a red and tan pennant, knotted and fringed at both ends.

MRS. NARRACOTT
 Here. It's his campaign pennant. He were
 Sergeant, Seventh Battalion, Imperial
 Yeomanry.

Then with great care she unfolds the sash to reveal two silver medals. The first, with the profile of Victoria, hangs from a red, blue and orange ribbon.

ROSIE
 And that is the Queen's South Africa
 Medal. Every man who fought in the
 Boer War got one of those. But
 this...

She holds up the other medal, hanging from a red and black ribbon.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
 That's the Distinguished Conduct
 Medal.

She hands Albert the Distinguished Conduct Medal. He takes it, astonished.

ALBERT

Not dad's?

ROSIE

Well it ain't *mine*, dear. He got that after the fighting at Transvaal. After he'd been hurt, and he'd saved some other lads, and well... I don't know what else, he won't tell me either. But the first day he got home he just... tossed them out. First day he could walk, he threw 'em straight in the dustbin, and wouldn't hear a word I said not to.

Albert nods, looking at the medal and campaign pennant. She takes the medal back, puts it in the sash, and begins to wrap it again.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

See, what you done today, you and Joey, you're chuffed up now, and so you should be, my splendid boy. It's good to be proud when you done something good. But what he done, in Africa, whatever it was, he takes no pride in it. Hard as it surely was, and however much pain it's cost him, he refuses to be proud of killing, I suppose.

She returns the things in the footlocker, closes it.

ALBERT

(confused:)

I'd be proud. If I'd gone off to war. If I'd gone and saved my mates, and -

ROSIE

Well, whether or not you think you'd do the same thing as him... Think how brave he is for refusing to be proud.

She heads back to Albert, pennant in hand.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Oh, your dad makes mistakes. And he drinks to forget the mistakes that he's made - but he never gave up and he does that for us. And today, you showed the world it's all been worth it.

As she leaves, she drapes the pennant over Albert's shoulder.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

You keep looking after Joey and he'll always be looking after you.

Albert looks again at the pennant.

ALBERT

(softly:)

Sergeant, Seventh Battalion,
Imperial Yeomanry.

(amazed, to Joey:)

You see this, Joey? It's been through an entire war.

Albert holds the pennant in wonder.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I'm not stealing it. I'll give it back to him, someday.

EXT. FIELD. DAY.

Early morning. Dad hobbling across the furrows, alone, planting the field by hand.

EXT. NARRACOTT FARM. DEVON COUNTRY MONTAGE.

Albert and Joey are now in a meadow. They trot past the field he plowed, now packed with a strong and sturdy crop, which Ted tends to.

The sun is breaking through and Joey starts to run across the field and up a small incline. As both Joey and Albert gain confidence they pick up speed. Albert pushes Joey on, they are going faster and faster, Albert yells with the exhilaration of it all. Joey races flat out across the countryside. Albert hanging on for dear life.

Albert and Joey pull up beside a sleek red car. It's Lyons' car, being driven by David Lyons, every inch the expensively-tailored rural gentry.

DAVID

Um, I'm the only boy that drives in the village. No one else drives but me.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, yeah?

DAVID

That's right and this is my dad's car. You're lucky that you're in it. I'm not normally allowed to drive it 'cause it's so -

Albert urges Joey to go faster, till they're neck and neck beside the car, racing it. David Lyons looks to see Albert and Joey running alongside his car. He feigns disinterest.

Albert glances at David, but he's much more interested in the very pretty young woman seated next to David, her hands trying to control her hair, flying in the wind. Forgetting himself momentarily, Albert stares at her, dazzled. The woman turns to David:

YOUNG WOMAN

Is he a friend of yours?

She smiles at Albert, encouraging him. David Lyons, annoyed, pushes the accelerator down, and the car edges ahead of Joey.

But not for long. The sound of the acceleration and Albert's eagerness to impress the young woman make Joey go faster, and again he moves out ahead of the car. The young woman grins at Albert.

Up ahead Albert sees that the wall alongside of which he's been racing turns the corner, presenting him and Joey with an obstacle. Albert encourages Joey to go faster.

ALBERT

Come on, boy, let's show her how to fly!

They head right for the wall, but at the very last moment, Joey balks and comes to a dead standstill, sending Albert sailing over the wall.

Back in the car, the girl gasps and covers her mouth, concerned. David says nothing, but allows himself a small smile.

On the other side of the wall, Albert stands a bit battered, but unfazed.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
Well...you're clearly not gonna be a jumper.

Thunder starts to rumble ominously in the background.

EXT. NARRACOTT FARM. NIGHT.

Albert and Joey return, driving sheep before them. Angry storm clouds stretch to the horizon.

EXT. NARRACOTT FARM. NIGHT.

As Albert leads Joey to the stable, lighting blasts across an angry sky. The rain is falling in torrents.

INT. FARMHOUSE. NIGHT.

Another crack of thunder - and a piece of wood in the roof gives way - water gushes in - Dad rushes to support the roof as the wind forces a window open.

At that moment, the door suddenly swings open with the violence of the storm, smashing against the wall - Dad and Rosie turn - and there is Harold the goose, who scuttles in without his usual arrogance and hides himself in a corner.

MRS. NARRACOTT
Shoo, Harold. Shoo, shoo, shoo!

The thunder cracks again and...

EXT. LOWER FIELD. DAY.

Albert and Dad walk across the field. Mrs. Narracott digs through the mess. The entire crop is flat - ruined by the storms. The ground squelches beneath their feet.

The whole field is a write off.

ALBERT
We can try planting something else, or we could hire ourselves out to Uncle Bob.

Dad doesn't answer. He shakes his head and limps away.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
How else we gonna pay Mr. Lyons' rent?

Ted doesn't turn around.

INT. KITCHEN. EVENING.

Mrs. Narracott makes some coffee. Ted sits alone on a chair.

MRS. NARRACOTT

What we gonna do?

DAD

I used to believe that God gave each man his fair portion of bad luck. I don't feel that any more. I've had more than my share.

(pause)

You'll stop loving me, Rose. And I won't blame you when you do.

ROSE

Well, I might hate you more - but I'll never love you less.

Then somewhere in the distance, an unfamiliar sound...

EXT. LANE LEADING TO THE VILLAGE. EVENING.

A motorbike rumbles along the lane at huge speed creating a cloud of dust as it goes. The noise of the motorbike is drawing attention from all over the valley. It can be heard fields away and everyone is drawn to this completely unheard of sound.

EXT. THE VILLAGE. EVENING.

The motorbike whizzes through the village. Heads turn in astonishment.

MOTORBIKE RIDER

It's war!

The bike comes to a stop in the market place. The rider takes off his goggles.

Men of the village start to flock around the machine, with great curiosity.

MOTORBIKE RIDER (CONT'D)

We are at War with Germany. You hear?
England is at war with Germany.

Shock and amazement. The rider takes off his goggles:

MOTORBIKE RIDER (CONT'D)

They're going to ring the bells at six o'clock - and then never ring them again until the war is over.

Everyone across England knows that their lives are about to change.

EXT. FARM YARD. DAY.

Dawn rises over the farm.

EXT. FARM YARD. DAWN.

Albert races to the stables, excited with the campaign pennant.

INT. STABLES. THE SAME.

As Albert enters the stables, he calls out:

ALBERT
Look smart, Joey lad, it's the Tavistock Fair!

Albert opens the doors and stops dead. He looks at the empty stables.

EXT./ INT. KITCHEN / YARD. DAY.

Albert runs out.

He rushes into the kitchen. His mother stares out the window. She has been crying.

ALBERT
What has he done with him?

She says nothing, but her face gives everything away. Albert in a panic turns and runs out into the lane. Mrs. Narracott tears up again.

EXT. SQUARE OF A MARKET TOWN. THE SAME.

The market square is full of military men. The Union Jack is flying up the flagpole. A group of girls has gathered to check out the army boys. Eager young men crowd a table staffed by recruiting officers:

RECRUITING OFFICER
Last name first. First name, middle name, last.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS is in the square inspecting Joey, knowledgably. He is a handsome, attractive, modest, upper class man. Dad stands beside him. He checks Joey's teeth, his feet and finally, looks him straight in the eye.

DAD

Take my word for it - finest horse
in the parish. Goes like a racer,
strong, decent, very fine.

Captain Nicholls has immediately connected with Joey and puts
him at his ease. SAM PERKINS, a tough sergeant, is physically
inspecting Joey.

SAM PERKINS

No curbs, no splints, good feet and
teeth. He's as sound as a bell,
sir.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

And how much are you charging, sir - for
this strong, decent, and very fine animal?!

DAD

Forty.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I'll give you twenty and not a penny more.

DAD

Twenty is no good to me, Captain. Thirty
five and he's yours.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I don't even know how he rides.

DAD

Oh, he rides... Splendidly. You'll
be astonished. I promise you that.
(his heart's in his
throat, fighting back
grief)

Finest horse in all of Devon. Finest
horse I ever seen.

EXT. SQUARE OF A MARKET TOWN. THE SAME.

Albert bursts into the square just in time to see Nicholls
and Dad shake hands. Their business concluded.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Thank you.

Albert races towards Joey. Ted grabs him. Albert fights to
get free. He looks at his father in anger and betrayal.

ALBERT

You can't! You can't, he's mine! I trained
him!

DAD

Albert.

Albert is hysterical.

ALBERT

You can't have him. He's my horse, sir.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I'm afraid it's too late, lad. I've just paid thirty guineas for him.

ALBERT

(to Ted:)

Please, I'll get you money. I will, I'll get you money. I'll...I'll work for it! I'll work for it.

(to Nicholls:)

He won't obey anyone else. He won't be any good in the war, neither. He...he shies at every sound!

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I'm sorry.

Albert snaps to attention.

ALBERT

Well, if Joey's going, I'm going, too. I'm volunteering.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I see. What's your name, lad?

ALBERT

Albert, sir.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

And how old are you, Albert?

ALBERT

Nineteen, sir.

CAPTAIN NICHOLS

Is that the truth?

ALBERT

No sir. But, but I look nineteen and I'm bigger than most nineteen-year-olds, sir! And I'm strong, sir! And I...I'm not afraid of anything.

Nicholls interjects:

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I don't doubt your qualifications, Albert, but the law is very clear about the proper age for soldiering, and your father's done what he had to do. You know that. Thirty guineas isn't nearly enough to purchase a horse as fine as your Joey, I know that. But it's all I've got. Will you lease him to me, Albert, to be my own mount?

(he removes his cap,
earnest)

I promise you, man to man, that I'll look after him as closely as you've done, I'll respect him and all the care that you've taken with him. And if I can - I'll return him to your care.

Albert looks at him. Although Nicholls speaks with authority he has a kindness which Albert recognizes.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS (CONT'D)

Now say goodbye.

Albert kisses Joey.

ALBERT

It's all right, boy...

But at that moment, Sam Perkins pulls Joey away:

SAM PERKINS

All right, turn it in, eh? That's enough. He's a horse, not a dog. Now, on your way.
(to Joey)
Come on.

Nicholls walks away into the crowd. The Sergeant pulls Joey, but Joey does not want to be separated from Albert. His reaction is implacable, reminiscent to the separation from his mother. Perkins leads Joey away. They disappear into the crowd and Rosie is suddenly there. Ted senses her silent judgment.

DAD

Do you want to lose the farm, Rose?

ROSIE

It's the way you did it.

DAD

But we're at war.

ROSIE
Aren't we just.

She looks at Albert. Implacable. Forever.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE. THE SAME.

The recruits march through town under pennants and the strains of a familiar song ("The Jolly Plowboy") - it is a song they all know, which means a lot to them - full of soul - a song of harvest or a Celtic hymn, something relating specifically to the lives they have led together. Everyone of every age - everyone in the village knows this song - it is theirs.

Nicholls passes in his car and we see those they are leaving behind - cheering - a whole generation of young men is marching off to war. One girlfriend rushes up to kiss her leaving boyfriend.

Albert watches Joey, then remembers the campaign pennant dangling from his pocket. He runs up to Joey -

ALBERT
Joey...

- and tucks the pennant into Joey's halter.

SAM PERKINS
Here now, I've told you - sling your hook!

But Nicholls intervenes from his car.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
Let him be, Perkins.

ALBERT
This isn't the end. This isn't the end, my brother... I, Albert Narracott, solemnly swear we will be together again. Wherever you are, I will find you. And I will bring you home!

And then they are past him, leaving him behind. As Perkins leads Joey across a stone bridge, Albert watches from the bank of the stream.

Joey balks one last time -

SAM PERKINS

Whoa. Steady, steady. Steady now,
come on. Walk on! Walk on now,
come on!

- then Perkins leads him away, leaving Albert behind.

The very last recruits leave the village - leaving the debris of this army's visit strewn on the square. Like the debris of a party you are already beginning to regret.

INT. ARMY STABLES. THE SAME.

Joey is handed off to a groom. Joey is amazed by the scale of the building. Each horse has a large stall and is being tended to assiduously. Joey looks around at the hundreds of men and horses around him and panics.

GROOM

Whoa whoa whoa. Easy easy...

He bucks, throwing the groom to the ground, and gallops away. But Perkins cuts him off, grabs his halter, and jerks him back to attention.

SAM PERKINS

Whoa whoa whoa, Joey! Stop muckin'
about, you hear? Yer in the army
now, son.

He pushes him into his stall, next to Major Stewart's horse, a magnificent black stallion, TOPTHORN.

SAM PERKINS (CONT'D)

Good boy, good boy. Steady
steady... Easy. Relax. Easy easy,
back up.

Joey rears up in his stall.

SAM PERKINS (CONT'D)

Joey - meet Topthorn. Topthorn - this is
Joey. Sort out who's in charge between the
two of you, you hear? If you want to fight,
you get it over with - 'cause once we're
over there, you're gonna need everything
you've got for Fritz!

This is the first time that Joey has had to deal with another horse since his mother - the beginning of one of the most important relationships in his life.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Gently, Perkins. I don't want to sour him.

Nicholls passes his gloves and crop to his bat boy who is there to assist him.

SAM PERKINS

There'll be nothing gentle about the war, sir. And there'll be nothing gentle about this one either!

SAM PERKINS (CONT'D)

I understand that, Sergeant, but I want him fit and shining. He's my horse.

SAM PERKINS (CONT'D)

Sir.

Nicholls is joined by his friend LIEUTENANT CHARLIE WAVERLY. He is sweet and friendly - upper class but completely benign.

CHARLIE WAVERLY

Scares the living daylights out of me.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Who?

CHARLIE WAVERLY

Perkins. Glad he's on our side.

They're both joined by a tall, confident officer, MAJOR JAMIE STEWART. He sizes up Joey.

MAJOR STEWART

Not bad. Not bad at all. Still not a patch on my Tophorn.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I wouldn't be so sure. I think he's got potential. He's certainly got the bit between his teeth.

CHARLIE WAVERLY

I actually think my Blenheim is faster than the pair of them.

MAJOR STEWART

Clear off!

He suddenly turns from the joking into the efficient senior officer he is.

MAJOR STEWART (CONT'D)

All right, gentlemen, listen here. Everything tells us the same story, from Waterloo to Omdurman, from Pickett's Charge to the Battle of Mars La Tours - the first attack can and should be the decisive one. Perkins...

SAM PERKINS

Yes, sir!

MAJOR STEWART

No excuses, no mistakes - every horse groomed and fit for presentation! I want a full practice charge tomorrow.

SAM PERKINS

Sir.

They leave.

EXT. SALISBURY PLAIN. DAY.

The whole regiment is gathered. Everybody is in their ceremonial uniform. It all has the feeling of the Changing of the Guard rather than anything related to a real battle. The day is hot, the plains are quiet and beautiful, the gathering is huge, there is a real sense of pride and anticipation.

Captain Nicholls, resplendent in full uniform rides Joey out over the vast expanse of the plain. Both Nicholls and Joey are dressed up like something from the last century, out of the Boer War, even the Charge of the Light Brigade. Nicholls is proud and confident. They gather before hundreds of men and horses all lined up to be inspected. Charlie joins them, looking pretty good on Blenheim.

Finally, Nicholls and Charlie reach Stewart and Topthorn waiting in position.

MAJOR STEWART

Thought you two had bottled out.

CHARLIE WAVERLY

As if.

Nicholls looks at his friend tolerantly.

MAJOR STEWART

All right, then, let's see what you two jokers are made of, shall we?

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

This is what quiet confidence looks like.

CHARLIE WAVERLY

I'll wait for you two at the Duke of York.

Nicholls and Stewart and Charlie prepare themselves for the charge. Joey and Tophorn size up to one another.

MAJOR STEWART

Over to you, Captain Nicholls.

Tophorn bristles at Joey. Everyone is highly charged. The competition between Stewart and Nicholls seems to have been absorbed between the horses. Tophorn and Joey square up for the practice charge like two athletes before a race.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Draw...swords!

Nicholls raises his sword. It glints in the summer air. It seems to hang there forever. Every man follows suit.

Tophorn and Joey glance at each other, ready to charge.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS (CONT'D)

Give...point!

Every sword is pointed directly ahead at arm's length.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS (CONT'D)

Charge!!!!

A roar goes up from the men and a deafening pounding of hooves breaks the silence. The huge line of horses start running straight ahead of them. Joey and Tophorn run off at top speed. Dust and earth rise up behind them.

Bugles, the deafening thunder of hooves. It is exhilarating. We see the scale of the operation, we enjoy the speed and the splendor of the mass of men and horses. The soldiers shout in glee and excitement. Each man pushes his horse to out-run those around him, Nicholls and Stewart seem locked in mortal combat.

Nicholls smiles at Stewart, confidently.

Tophorn starts to pull away, ahead of all the other horses in the line. Nicholls pushes Joey on. Tophorn seems too strong, Joey will never catch them. Nicholls is determined not to be beaten.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS (CONT'D)
 Come on, Joey. I know you've got
 it. Come on, boy! Come on!

He pushes Joey on. Joey digs in and finds hidden strength and speed. He starts to catch up with Topthorn and draws along side. Nicholls and Stewart exchange tense looks.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS (CONT'D)
 Come on, boy!

Stewart is amazed and pushes Topthorn harder.

Now both riders are going at their top speed. They are neck and neck - they fight for every inch of advantage, every fibre of their being invested in the race. Nicholls pushes Joey on and Joey pulls away. Joey inches forward till he is almost a length ahead of Topthorn. The effort is enormous.

Nicholls looks back at Stewart, very happy. Stewart's frustration shows. He knows he is beaten.

Then suddenly they race over the line. Nicholls spears a ring decorated with a blue ribbon and pulls Joey to a halt. They have crossed the enemy line. Nicholls is ecstatic. Topthorn comes to Joey's side.

MAJOR STEWART
 Whoa. Whoa.

Nicholls laughs, grinning.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
 Nice of you to turn up.

The horses are nose to nose, snorting, we sense the heat, the exertion. Topthorn and Joey are brought together by the effort. We sense Topthorn's newly minted respect for Joey. And Joey is no soft touch - he slightly holds his head up in victory, letting Topthorn know that he knows he won.

The other horses come charging in. There is a real sense of achievement and congratulation amongst the regiment.

MAJOR STEWART
 He's got speed...I'll give him that. But
 has he got stamina?

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
 He has everything.

The two men enjoy the moment of rivalry and the exhilaration of it all. The two horses, face to face rub against each other for the first time. A bond has been formed...

INT. OFFICERS' STUDY. DAY.

Stewart enters. A phonograph plays "Roses of Picardy." The walls are decorated with etchings of famous battles, and a large map of Western Europe that depicts how the English troops are crossing the channel to confront the Germans near Belgium. Nicholls is writing a letter - though actually at this moment, he is making a little pencil drawing of Joey to enclose with it.

MAJOR STEWART

What are you up to?

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

I'm writing a letter.

MAJOR STEWART

With a picture in it?

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

It's to the boy who owned Joey. I want to show him how wonderful he's looking.

MAJOR STEWART

Before we take him away across the Channel to face a million Germans guns.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Yes. Before that...

MAJOR STEWART

4 a.m. start tomorrow - travelling with the Dragoon Guards and the Royals. Transport detachment - they'll need to be at the docks at 5 am. Check all kit. Battle orders: no polishing - buttons, helmet buckles, stirrup irons - let 'em all go dull. I want nothing to flash in the sun and give us away.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Of course.

As Stewart leaves, he passes Charlie. He casually acknowledges him.

MAJOR STEWART

Charlie...

CHARLIE WAVERLY

Jamie.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Charlie.

Charlie checks his new cap in the mirror.

CHARLIE WAVERLY
What do you think of the cap?

He shows the bright red lining to Nicholls.

CHARLIE WAVERLY (CONT'D)
Silk lining. I quite like it.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
I'm not sure it's going to make a lot of
difference to the Germans.

CHARLIE WAVERLY
Oh, I don't know about that. Think about it -
you're a Boche, just working out which of
two chaps to shoot - and you thought - "Good
Lord - one of them really is wearing a very
stylish cap indeed!" You might shoot the
other one instead.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
Or, alternatively, think - "I fancy that
cap" and kill you first of all.

Pause. Charlie removes the cap.

CHARLIE WAVERLY
Hadn't thought of that.

Nicholls returns to his sketch.

EXT. DIRT ROAD. FRANCE.

Three hundred horses and their charges in a slow march in the
middle of the most pristine French countryside.

TITLE: FRANCE - 1914, QUIÉVRECHAIN

EXT. ROAD. DAY.

Nicholls and Stewart and Charlie ride on a smooth road past a
series of posts screened with cloth. They're silhouetted
against the setting sun.

EXT. ROAD. DAY.

The regiment are tense and nervous as they gingerly make
their way along the country road. Tophorn and Joey sense
the grim change of atmosphere.

EXT. WOODLAND ABOVE A PLAIN. DAY.

They are in woodland above a plain stretching for miles. A small table has been taken out for Stewart and his officers. SERGEANT MAJOR SINGH - a turbaned Indian with a magnificent moustache dressed in ceremonial garb - explains the lines of battle on a map.

SGT. MAJOR SINGH

That is our target - the German 11th Division - at the moment bivouacked three miles to the east of the Menin Road. We have been watching them and they have pitched tents for the night and lit cooking fires. Knock them out - and we could slide in behind the German lines and come at them from the South at Geluveld.

MAJOR STEWART

Excellent.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Numbers?

SGT. MAJOR SINGH

About six hundred. Infantry.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Twice our size...

MAJOR STEWART

In regiments of horse and men, the advantage is ours.

SGT. MAJOR SINGH

And we have surprise on our side. But the sooner we move, the better - we have no assurance they'll still be there tomorrow morning.

Our officers just have a second to take in the news. The day has suddenly arrived. The day they have worked for, for so long.

MAJOR STEWART

Right. Good. So - today it is. Charlie - tell the men.

CHARLIE WAVERLY

Salisbury formation?

MAJOR STEWART
Salisbury formation. We'll charge
through them and secure the ground
behind.

SGT. MAJOR SINGH
The grass to the left is taller than
we are - it's perfect cover.

MAJOR STEWART
Excellent work, Sergeant Major.
Time spent on reconnaissance is
rarely wasted.

As Stewart departs:

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
Thank you, Singh.
(calling after)
Jamie!

Nicholls catches up to Stewart, concerned.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS (CONT'D)
They have no idea we're coming.

MAJOR STEWART
Not having scruples, are you, Jim?

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
No. I understand the surprise is
everything. But if it must be done,
let's do it quickly.

Nicholls notices Charlie nervously attending his horse.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS (CONT'D)
Are you alright, Charlie?

CHARLIE WAVERLY
Never been better. Literally, never
better.

We worry for him - he is afraid.

Stewart rides through the lines astride Tophorn.

MAJOR STEWART
Prepare to mount! Mount!

As the cry is echoed throughout the regiment, Nicholls
accepts Joey from an attending soldier.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Thank you, Standley.

(to Joey)

Hey, Joey. My bonny boy. You're all right, aren't you, Joey? Hey?

Nicholls takes the red campaign pennant from his pocket and threads it through Joey's reins.

Minutes later - Stewart addresses the men.

MAJOR STEWART

Gentleman. It is an honour to ride beside you. Make the Kaiser rue the day he dared to cross swords with us. Let every man make himself, his King, his country, and his fallen comrades proud! Be brave. Fear God. Honor the King!

TROOPERS

(in unison shout)

Fear God. Honor the King!

EXT. OVER GROWN CORN FIELD. DAY.

Cut to an elegant field of tall grass, waving in the gentle breeze. Then suddenly three hundred men seem to rise out of it. They are in fact our soldiers, mounting their horses - but the horses are invisible in the height of the grass.

Stewart gives a signal. We see the intense anticipation on his face. He takes out his sabre.

MAJOR STEWART

Draw swords!

The men draw their sabres in silence. The birds chirping, oblivious.

Then Nicholls just turns to his two friends and almost whispers...

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS

Good luck, my friends.

He pats Joey's side. And then...

MAJOR STEWART

Forward, to walk! Walk...march!

The regiment begins moving through the field.

MAJOR STEWART (CONT'D)
Forward to canter! Canter...march!

The men start to float over the grass - swept along by their invisible horses, until...

Suddenly they emerge from the tall grass - the immense power of the galloping horses - silence explodes into a violent crashing of hooves. The noise is immense, swords are flying in the air. Hundreds of horses racing towards the German encampment.

On the German side, TWO SOLDIERS wake to the sound of hoofbeats. They pull their tent flap aside to find the invincible charge coming towards them. The Germans are totally unprepared. We see them scramble back towards tents, rush towards their guns - one man pulling up his trousers rushes for cover. One German drops some dirty dishes into a wash pot, screaming:

GERMAN SOLDIER
Kavallerie!

Topthorn and Joey race each other like a rerun of their practice on Salisbury Plain. The swords and uniforms glint in the sun, the German troops look terrified - some run in panic, others prepare to stand their ground.

CAPTAIN NICHOLLS
CHARGE!

The British head in for the kill, the men scream battle cries with sheer exhilaration.

We see the horses at close quarters running with all their might. Nicholls and Stewart yell as they approach the enemy. The surprise attack is a huge success. The first row of unprepared Germans are falling...

The regiment sweeps through the encampment, cutting down soldiers and driving the rest in a panicked retreat to the tree line.

But then we see, in the shadows of the forest behind the camp --

A machine gun. No, a line of machine guns - at least twenty guns, sandbagged apart - the logical, new, modern defence of a garrison. In an instant, the fleeing Germans have manned the guns. All now firing.

The noise of the blast of bullets drowns out everything else. A score of men and horses are suddenly on the ground, it happens almost so quickly Joey and Tophorn don't realize anything's wrong and find themselves racing straight towards the guns. The bullets keep coming, now suddenly half of the regiment are on the ground.

Horse after horse races past the guns into the woods...all of them now riderless.

Nicholls watches helplessly as one of the barrels swings towards him. His face goes slack as he realizes he is about to die.

A moment later, Joey runs on - we pan up to see he is running on riderless - he has not realized that Nicholls is gone. The bullets whizz around his head, but he still runs directly ahead. We would always know him by the red pennant Nicholls tied on his saddle.

Joey is now running through the German lines. No one bothers to attack him as the German's concentrate their efforts on the cavalry behind him. The line of machine guns fire as one, decimating the horses and their riders.

Joey leaps and dances nimbly through the German ranks, but suddenly rears up in the confusion, surrounded by Germans.

Near him, surviving English officers are hauled from their horses.

Stewart wheels back around on Tophorn, sabre in hand. But he, too, is quickly surrounded by several Germans with their rifles trained on him. A furious GERMAN OFFICER storms over, speaks perfect English:

GERMAN OFFICER

(outraged)

What? Did you think that a garrison
on open ground would go undefended?
Look at yourself! Who do you think
you are?!!

Stewart looks at the Officer - at the guns that surround him - and throws down his sabre, stabbing it into the ground. The Germans take Stewart from Tophorn.

Around them, the fields are littered with dead soldiers and horses.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD. DAY.

Topthorn appears disoriented and frightened. Suddenly, he rears up and bolts from his new German handler, galloping over to Joey. The horses briefly nuzzle, but both rear up again as they are separated and led past a young German soldier, GUNTHER.

He zeroes in on them, the finest horses.

A slightly more JUNIOR OFFICER approaches the outraged senior officer.

JUNIOR GERMAN OFFICER.
What do we do with the horses?

GERMAN OFFICER
If they're injured, shoot them.

JUNIOR GERMAN OFFICER
And the others, sir?

GERMAN OFFICER
The others you round up and take to base camp - they will pull guns.

THIRD OFFICER
You'll never get fancy horses like these to pull guns.

GERMAN OFFICER
Then shoot them also.

Gunther, the young private, now standing behind them, interjects.

GUNTHER
Sir - perhaps we could use some of them with the ambulances - to get the injured men off the field.

GERMAN OFFICER
Will they take the harness?

GUNTHER
I'd like to try, sir.

The officers move away - that's enough talk about horses...

CUT ON - Gunther is now with Joey and Topthorn. Near a wooden ambulance - which is like a giant wagon to carry humans. He is with MICHAEL, a very young soldier, his brother - possibly as young as 14.

Gunther lifts a heavy pulling harness - and tries to get Topthorn into it.

MICHAEL
It won't work - they're cavalry

GUNTHER
Let's try.

MICHAEL
You won't get the harness on.

GUNTHER
Come on, Michael.

Topthorn balks violently.

GUNTHER (CONT'D)
Whoa, whoa. Easy, now, easy now,
Englishman... Whoa, whoa, whoa.
Easy now, easy.

MICHAEL
Gunther! It's hopeless - we can't
help them.

And suddenly Joey moves up and presents himself, with his strange self assurance and self sacrifice. And instinct for survival.

He sniffs the harness and places his head through it, which helps to calm Topthorn enough that Gunther can slip the collar onto the big black horse. Gunther turns to Joey, impressed.

GUNTHER
Well, well, look at you. Whoever
taught you this has just saved your
life.

Gunther spots the red ribbon in Joey's saddle, removes it, folds it, and places it in his pocket.

Later - Gunther and Michael are returning from the battlefield with Topthorn and Joey, pulling an ambulance with British and German wounded. Amongst the wounded, we see a hand gripping a battered, silk lined hat. It is Waverly, wounded but alive.

EXT. NARRACOTT'S FARM. DEVON. DAY.

Si Easton lets himself in through the gate. Ted pulls up turnips from their three acre crop.

Rosie, just across a furrow, is also engaged in the harvest. It's hard work. Si holds a parcel.

SI EASTON
Hello the farm!

ROSIE
(looking up, wiping her
brow)
Hello, Si Easton!

Albert passes carrying a crate laden with turnips, but pulls up short when he hears:

SI EASTON
I was at the post office and while I was there, Mrs. Allen said a parcel had come for Albert, from the, from the, from over there - and I thought I could go up that way in the morning. And - here it is.

ALBERT
Well, who'd be sending me a parcel over there?

DAD
Well, open it and see.

Albert opens the parcel and pulls out a leather sketchbook...

ALBERT
It's a sketchbook...
(gasp of realization)
That's Captain Nicholls' sketchbook!
See that? That's a picture of Joey!

ROSIE
It's a picture of Joey. Well, I never!

ALBERT
(excited)
And there's a letter...

ROSIE
Well, go on then, go on.

ALBERT
All right.
(reading)
"Dear Albert Narracott.
(MORE)

ALBERT (CONT'D)
 Captain Nicholls, who died...Captain
 Nicholls, who died in action today
 left you this. Yours, Sergeant Sam
 Perkins.

Si Easton drops his head guiltily. Rosie catches this.

ROSIE
 You weren't to know it was bad news.

ALBERT
 He was riding Joey when he died.

ROSIE
 You don't know that he was riding
 him...

ALBERT
 "In action," it says.

Everybody falls silent. Albert goes to the fence and looks down at the sketches of Joey. Rosie looks at her son, her heart breaking for him. Dad returns to the harvest without a word. Albert looks off to the horizon and - over there.

EXT. GERMAN BASE CAMP. EVENING.

CLOSE -- A step stool.

Michael mounts the stool next to Joey and Tophorn, removes their harnesses and carries them across the road.

Michael slips and falls into the mud. Gunther dashes over and pulls him up just before a military convoy pulls into the camp, running over the tack.

The BASE CAMP OFFICER appears on a motorbike.

BASE CAMP OFFICER.
 Gentlemen! We move forward to the
 frontline tonight. Full marching
 orders. Get moving!

As the soldiers hop to their orders, the officer turns to -

BASE CAMP OFFICER
 Schroeder! Schroeder!

Both Michael and Gunther turn to him. But it's Gunther the Officer wants to talk to.

BASE CAMP OFFICER (CONT'D)
 No, not you - you. Come.

Gunther picks up the dropped harnesses as he approaches.

BASE CAMP OFFICER (CONT'D)
I'm keeping you here. You are best with the horses and we need to move the camp quickly if the enemy continue to push through from the west.

GUNTHER
They're pushing through?

BASE CAMP OFFICER
I'm told. We will move later when we find where the horses are needed most.

GUNTHER
Yes, sir. Perhaps I can keep my brother here with me, he's also very good with horses.

BASE CAMP OFFICER
Oh no no. Not necessary.
(to Michael)
Get moving. We leave tonight.

He walks away. Gunther is stricken by the news, but Michael is excited. As he leads Joey past his brother:

MICHAEL
It's all right, Gunther.

Gunther can't really speak. Michael is just a boy.

EXT. GERMAN CAMP / VARIOUS. EVENING.

Soldiers are lifting up their equipment - gathering - moving in the same direction.

In a quiet tent, a few last soldiers are packing. And there are Gunther and Michael, packing together.

GUNTHER
You are not going. I'll tell them you are only fourteen, that you're a boy.

MICHAEL
Father signed me in. He knew my age -and so do they.

The process of packing is their way of coping with the shock. Gunther is folding one of Michael's shirts. Michael takes it back...

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Mother obviously never taught you how to fold a shirt.

GUNTHER

Of course she did. I just wasn't listening. But you need to listen now! I promised her, I made her a solemn promise, that you would be safe with me. With me, Michael!!

He leans close to Michael, talking in almost a whisper.

GUNTHER (CONT'D)

They'll never make a head count. There are too many of us. You can stay here - slip underneath the bed - until they move out.

MICHAEL

Then what?

Michael carries on with his packing.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Gunther, it will be fine. And when all the machines break down and they call up the horses, I'll see you at the front. We'll be together again.

And now the case is packed. Gunther heads to the tent opening.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Gunther...

Looking round, the tent is now empty. The moment to leave has come. Gunther pulls the red pennant from his pocket and follows Michael out of the tent to where the soldiers are lining up in the road.

GUNTHER

I'm giving this to you. For luck.

Gunther ties the pennant to the back of Michael's pack as he forms up.

GUNTHER (CONT'D)

To keep you safe.

Michael smiles at him and begins to march. Marching towards Ypres, on the Western Front.

BASE CAMP OFFICER
*Im schnellschritt! Marsch...links!
Zwei, drei, vier!*

We settle on young Michael - in line - he passes Gunther. He remains eager. But it is goodbye. These soldiers moving into the darkness and towards death. Gunther looks on - tears in his eyes. The two horses are uneasy - sensing tension.

A few minutes later - Gunther grabs a saddle and throws it onto Joey's back.

Back to the soldiers.

Suddenly we see the galloping legs of two horses. They whip past the back of the line of marching soldiers. It's clear what is happening - Gunther is on Topthorn - and has hold of Joey, on a loose rope, galloping beside him.

Gunther, galloping along the line of soldiers, spots what he is looking for, a red pennant unfurled and flapping in the wind, tied onto Michael's pack. Gunther speeds toward him. This was his plan all along. And in an instant he is beside him and without Michael ever realizing, he suddenly finds his arms and legs akimbo, as he is yanked out of the line and dragged along the ground, desperately close to Joey's pounding hooves.

Michael looks at the soldiers beside him - he looks at the skyline of violence ahead...but before he can decide, he feels his brother's arm - pulling him upwards. And now, the two of them are fully on Topthorn.

They leave a jumble of soldiers in their wake as the officers try to restore order.

GERMAN OFFICER
Get back in line! Line!

EXT. WOODS. LATER.

Michael now rides Joey, following Gunther on Topthorn. The brothers look at each other - can't believe what they have done - Michael is following his brother, swept along, doesn't know if it is right.

And Michael and Joey and Gunther and Topthorn charge on to freedom.

They spot a lonely house and burst past a line with some drying clothes.

As they ride, they grab civilian shirts and jackets and trousers, the clothes pegs ping off and falling to the ground.

And on they ride - though all too soon day starts to break in the far distance. They see a very dilapidated windmill. They aim for it as the sun begins to seriously break over the horizon.

INT. / EXT. WINDMILL. DAWN.

They reach the windmill. It feels very unused. The machinery of the windmill creaks in the dawn. The brothers untether the horses, careful now that it is light outside.

MICHAEL
I'm hungry. Did you bring food?

GUNTHER
I'm sorry.

Michael fingers the pennant on Joey's reins. Then...

MICHAEL
Will Father be ashamed?

GUNTHER
He will pretend to be. Maybe at first he will be. But in the end, he will be glad.

MICHAEL
And us? What about us?

Gunther looks at him - but doesn't reply. As Michael removes Joey's saddle:

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
I was ready to go. I was proud to go.
(after a beat, in a very small voice)
I wanted to go.

Later - They sit in silence, waiting for sleep.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
The food in Italy is good.

GUNTHER
Yes.

MICHAEL
What about the women?

GUNTHER
Not as good as the food.

MICHAEL
Because...they've eaten too much of
the food?

GUNTHER
You are too young for war. And
you're too young for women!

Gunther laughingly pushes him over.

MICHAEL
I don't feel so young. Not anymore.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Michael.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
What?

GUNTHER
Go to sleep - we have a big night of
riding ahead. Goodnight, Michael.

He jokingly strokes Michael's cheek. Michael swats him away,
but as he settles in the hay:

MICHAEL
Night night, Gunther.

EXT. WINDMILL. DUSK.

Gunther and Michael sleep. Suddenly something awakens Joey.
He stirs and then rises. Hear the sound of engines and see
lights through the slats sweeping across Joey's face.

Michael and Gunther are stirring in their sleep as we hear a
car and several motorcycles approaching. Head-lamps filter
through the cracks in the windmill walls stabbing the
brothers awake.

GERMAN SOLDIER
Hei! In die windmühle!

The boys spring up, speaking in terrified whispers.

GUNTHER
Go, go, go...

MICHAEL
Okay.

They race up a nearby ladder, but Michael stumbles against a table, upsetting some gear. It clatters loudly. They cower as they hear boots tromping up the steps outside. Then the windmill doors are thrown open, pinning them in the bright headlights of the vehicles.

As they're marched out, we see what they see: A German car - two motorcycles. Six Germans, including the officer who was in charge of them.

BASE CAMP OFFICER
Schroeder.

GUNTHER
Yes, sir.

BASE CAMP OFFICER
A mistake?

He's offering an excuse, but -

GUNTHER
A promise.

The officer accepts this grimly, nods.

BASE CAMP OFFICER
Ja...

As the boys are taken away, he lights a cigarette.

INT. WINDMILL. NIGHT.

Through the turning arms of the windmill, we glimpse the double execution. Four rifles fire - flashes of the soldiers shooting - the bodies on the ground.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE WINDMILL. DAY.

Complete stillness in the empty countryside.

INT. THE WINDMILL. DAY.

There are Joey and Tophorn, still waiting.

And then suddenly - the doors of the windmill creak. The two horses turn, immensely aware of the break in the silence. The door opens a little - and we see, reflected in Joey's eye, a very delicate, beautiful, thirteen-year-old country girl (EMILIE).

She stares at the horses. They stare straight back at her. And she walks straight out again, closing the big door behind her. Joey and Tophorn settle for a moment.

Time transition - Joey and Topthorn are in a slightly different place - and the door opens again. It is the same little girl - but this time she comes in carrying two buckets full of water.

INT. / EXT. FARMHOUSE / FARM. DAY.

A small humble farmhouse - and round it, small fields, planted with different fruit crops. We see an old man (GRANDFATHER), burdened with a basket of berries heading back towards the farmhouse.

A SOUND CAUSES HIM TO LOOK OUT ACROSS THE FARM -- far in the distance the STORM OF WAR is in the sky.

He enters the kitchen - which is rough, but full of the paraphernalia of jam-making - jars, sieves, pectin, sugar.

Emilie is at the sink, washing berries.

EMILIE

Grandpère.

He heads towards the side-board, dumps the two bags and lifts the first handful of fruits on to the counter.

She empties her clean berries into a bowl. Notes the explosions outside.

EMILIE (CONT'D)

It's closer today.

GRANDFATHER

The wind plays tricks with the noise - it's moving away from us.

EMILIE

I can hear it, *Grandpère*, and there is no wind. You shouldn't lie to me.

GRANDFATHER

Here. There is no wind here. But over there - a wind so strong it will lift you off the ground...

EMILIE

You lie about everything. You say you aren't worried but it's clear you are. I know the war is approaching but you say, "Oh, it's just a trick of the wind."

He retrieves a bottle of medicine from the mantle.

GRANDFATHER
(smiling)
Did I say that?

EMILIE
You started lying when Mama and Papa
went away.

She pours a load of sugar into a bowl with the fruit.

EMILIE (CONT'D)
They're dead. But you won't say so.
Do you think I'll die if you tell me
the truth?

GRANDFATHER
The truth is -

He feeds her a spoonful of the medicine.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
- you should speak to your elders
with respect.

She sticks her wet finger in the sugar and sucks it to help
with the taste of the medicine.

EMILIE
If you tell me the truth about the
war, I will tell you the truth about
the big horses I've been keeping in
the windmill.

GRANDFATHER
(standing, putting his
hands on his hips)
Now - who is the one telling lies!

EXT. COURTYARD. SAME.

Grandfather looks stunned as he paces in front of JOEY AND
TOPTHORN - who stand in the small courtyard outside the
house.

GRANDFATHER
In the windmill?

EMILIE
Yes. They were standing in the
windmill waiting for Don Quixote.
This is François (Joey) and this is
Claude (Topthorn).

GRANDFATHER

Yeah.

EMILIE

I named them after two boys who broke my heart last Summer.

GRANDFATHER

They must belong to someone. Horses like this don't just appear from a fairy-tale.

EMILIE

Yes - I know, *Grandpère*. They are not unicorns - so I will be fair and wait -- one day.

GRANDFATHER

Emilie... Emilie...

EMILIE

And if no one comes to get them by night-time, then they belong to me.

GRANDFATHER

Emilie. Look at me. You cannot ride.

EMILIE

Mother used to tell me how my bones would give way with the slightest bump or fall.

GRANDFATHER

Yes. That's right. So it is settled?

She kisses his cheek --

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Good girl.

-- but then calmly leads the horses back to the windmill.

EMILIE

It will only be settled when I decide which one to ride first.

GRANDFATHER

But it's - Over my dead body!

EMILIE

At least I won't have long to wait.

That is the end of the conversation as far as she is concerned.

EXT. FARM HOUSE. DAY.

Emilie is with the horses in the little stable at the end of the courtyard - a bit away from the farm house - she is feeding them out of a bucket - not very nice gruel.... WE SEE THAT SHE IS HESITANT WITH THEM - that she has spent no time around horses.

EMILIE

(to Joey)

I was in love with a boy called François - who had your lovely eyes.

(to Claude)

Unfortunately he was in love with a girl called Marie, who had your teeth. She fell for a boy called Claude - who broke my heart. And who I intend to marry one day.

INT./EXT. FIELD IN FRONT OF FARMHOUSE. DAY.

Grandfather watches Emilie from inside the house as he makes jam.

EMILIE (O.S.)

Eyes on me. No talking.

Outside, Emilie has fashioned two jumps. The big one for Joey and a little demonstration obstacle for herself. She leads Joey to a starting point about 30 yards in front of some crates supporting a stick about four feet off the ground. The red pennant hangs from the stick. Joey stands quietly as Emilie hobbles to the big jump, making a jumping gesture with her hand.

EMILIE (CONT'D)

Today we learn to jump. Did you know the French cleared one meter eighty-five at the Paris Olympics to win the gold medal? Today we will beat that record.

Grandfather chuckles. Emilie indicates the larger barrier.

EMILIE (CONT'D)

This is your jump. When I call you....be very brave and leap over it.

She claps, but Joey doesn't move.

EMILIE (CONT'D)
Leap over it! Watch me.

She turns to her demonstration jump and easily steps over her six-inch high barrier.

EMILIE (CONT'D)
And now it's your --

She turns to find Joey already stepping over her mini-jump, stopping in front of her. He's only interested in the apple in her hand. She takes a bite herself.

JUMP TO:

Emilie returns Joey to the starting line and runs back behind the big jump. From behind her back she produces three big carrots dripping soil. Joey's ears perk and he takes off quickly but at the last moment veers right and passes between the two jumps.

INT. FARMHOUSE. DAY.

Grandfather is watching through the window as he prepares his strawberry jams. He laughs and goes back to work.

BACK TO FIELD

Aware she's being watched, she slings the carrots over her shoulder, frustrated.

JUMP TO:

EXT. BARN. LATER.

Joey slowly emerges from the barn with Emilie out in front leading him with one hand. In the other hand, she carries a small wooden step ladder.

EMILIE
He doesn't think we can do it. But
we will show him, won't we?

Emilie unfolds the ladder beside Joey and shakily starts climbing to the top of it.

EMILIE (CONT'D)
(Her voice shaking)
No need to be afraid.
(Emilie looking down at
how far off the ground
she is)
You are...very tall.

Before she can swing her leg over Joey's back -

GRANDFATHER
You'll kill yourself.

Emilie turns, and there, blocking the hurdle, now standing hands on hips, is Grandfather.

EMILIE
Only if you get in my way to make me fall.

GRANDFATHER
Oh please, come off the ladd--

A SOUND from far down the road. Grandfather looks. Emilie turns to look too. Two trucks led by a German motorcycle are approaching the farm.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
Find somewhere to hide them. And do it quickly!!!

As Emilie races off with the horses, Grandfather pushes over the jumps and jams the pennant into his pocket.

The bikes arrive first, just missing Emilie as she leads the horses behind the house.

The trucks arrive, pull round - one of the soldiers in the front jumps out and opens the back.

GERMAN OFFICER
Halt! Und aussteigen!

The people - 20 of them, all seeming to be poor French peasants, mainly women, move out of the truck. As they walk past, they avoid the eye of the Grandfather, who approaches the soldiers.

GRANDFATHER
My name is Bonnard - this is my land. Why are you here?

SOLDIERS
Food for the soldiers at the front.
Everyone must give their share.

And suddenly we see what is going to happen - the 20 peasants spread out and move through the field - with either bags, or using the aprons they wear - picking all the fruits - at just the moment all the work has brought forth fruit - and the new year's crop is ready.

Raspberries, black-currants, gooseberries. In a few minutes, everything he lives by will be gone.

Watching from his car and calmly smoking a cigar is BRANDT, the officer in charge of the unit.

Cut to the fields - the aprons and baskets are getting full. They move through the rows of fruit like a plague of locusts.

Back to the Grandfather - and out of the house comes Emilie.

GRANDFATHER

They are taking everything. Where are the horses?

Pause.

EMILIE

What horses?

The sound of jars breaking draws Grandfather and Emilie into the kitchen, where the Germans continue to raid their other supplies.

One German picks up waterbath canner -- inspecting it.

GERMAN SOLDIER

What is it?

GRANDFATHER

Leave it if you don't know what it's for.

GERMAN SOLDIER

A pot is a pot. We'll find some use for it. Sir, where's the livestock?

Brandt sits quietly, casually using his finger to scoop jam from an open jar.

GRANDFATHER

I make jam. We have no animals.

GERMAN SOLDIER

But there's fresh hay in your barn.

Emilie enters, overhearing.

EMILIE

We use it to replace the mattress stuffings.

GERMAN SOLDIER

Her grandfather?

GRANDFATHER

Yes.

GERMAN SOLDIER

Where are her parents?

EMILIE

(breaking in)

They're dead. They died.

The German nods and is about to take his leave, putting the pot back where he found it, when a clumping noise from somewhere in the house begins.

GERMAN SOLDIER

What is that?

GRANDFATHER

The wind. It plays tricks in the attic.

Brandt licks his finger and tests:

BRANDT

There is no wind.

GRANDFATHER

An old house creaks.

(to Emilie)

Go - close the shutters.

Emilie runs out of the room. The soldier picks up the medicine bottle.

GERMAN SOLDIER

She's sickly, no?

GRANDFATHER

If you or any of your friends harm her, as old as I am, I will kill you.

The soldier looks shocked and then begins to laugh. He slaps the medicine flask into Grandfather's chest.

GERMAN SOLDIER

You know, I was going to give you back your pot. But now I'm going to keep it. For soup.

He slings the huge pot he had put back up on his shoulder and leaves the house with the other soldiers.

BRANDT

We will be back in the new season.

As the Germans leave, we cut to the upstairs bedroom where Emilie lies curled up on the bed - and there, standing on either side of the bed - are the two horses. They look huge in the tiny room.

INT. KITCHEN. LATE THAT NIGHT.

The sound of shells exploding. A huge bombardment somewhere in the deep distance. But much closer than before. The distant, malicious giants of war growl.

It is like a lightning storm on the horizon.

The kitchen has been emptied. The war has finally come to them - and we can see it on Emilie's face.

EMILIE

Tell me what happened to them. To my mother and father.

Grandfather doesn't respond.

EMILIE (CONT'D)

You said you would tell me how they died. On my birthday. And tomorrow's my birthday! They died fighting, didn't they? But when the soldiers come -

She finally turns to face him.

EMILIE (CONT'D)

- you do nothing. You are a coward, aren't you?

GRANDFATHER

Yes. Yes. It was your parents who were brave. I make jams.

EMILIE

And you've never done a brave thing in your life?

He eases himself into a chair and shrugs.

GRANDFATHER

Maybe there are different ways to be brave. Did you know the French have the best carrier pigeons? And this could be the difference in the war - our messages getting through.

EMILIE

I don't want to hear about the birds.

GRANDFATHER

They are released at the front and told to go home - this is all they know. But to get there they must fly over a war. Can you imagine such a thing? Here you are flying over so much pain and terror - and you know you can never look down. You have to look forward or you'll never get home. I ask you - what could be braver than that?

Emilie sheds a single tear.

INT. THE BARN. DAWN.

Grandfather enters the barn, strokes Tophorn's nose as he passes. He sweeps aside a rug from the barn floor, to reveal a trap door. Then, he opens it.

Now from out of the trap door, he lifts a big ungainly object, covered in another rug.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN. MORNING.

Emilie comes down the stairs as Grandfather waits proudly by the stove. She stops when she sees the OBJECT COVERED BY THE RUG.

EMILIE

What is that?

GRANDFATHER

A present.

Emilie moves toward the object that is covered.

EMILIE

I hope you have not bought me a disgusting dress that I then have to wear like last year.

GRANDFATHER

(laughing)

It was disgusting?

EMILIE

Yes. I looked like an ugly nun.

Then she stops herself and turns to Grandfather with a parental rebuke.

EMILIE (CONT'D)

Give me your hand.

(she takes it in hers)

Grandpère, we have no money. When the war is over, then you can buy me jewels and carriages.

The grandfather smiles and gives Emily a hug.

GRANDFATHER

Anything you say, my sweet one.

Anything-you-say! You are, of course, the boss. It's just an old thing I found - don't worry yourself - leave it, I'll put it back.

He leaves the room. Now Emilie is alone and she can't help it when she brings her eyes back to the object covered by the rug. She looks back over her shoulder to make sure she's not being watched and then lifts one corner of the rug. Her face explodes with a gorgeous smile. She pulls off the rug that is covering the big thing and...it is a gorgeous old saddle. She runs her hand along the saddle -- can hardly believe it.

INT. A HILL. JUST BEYOND THE FARMHOUSE. NEAR THE WINDMILL. DAY.

Grandfather helps to swing Emilie up and into the saddle. All at once, the Grandfather's charity evaporates.

GRANDFATHER

It was your mother's. I hid it, so as not to encourage you. Emilie, I want you to ride very slowly, very carefully. And promise me you won't go far --

EMILIE

Of course. Okay, I promise.

GRANDFATHER

To the top of the hill and straight back again.

EMILIE

I promise.

Emilie unties her hair and tosses the red pennant to Grandfather, releasing her hair to spill down her back and shoulder.

EMILIE (CONT'D)

My hero.

She sets off on Joey - and quickly spurs him to a gallop.

GRANDFATHER

Slowly...slowly...

She rides - past the windmill - and then over the top of a nearby hill - she speeds over it and out of sight.

Back to the hill - a sudden change of mood. An empty shot. No movement, no returning girl.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Emilie!

Cut again to the top of the hill, then back to the Grandfather, very worried.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Emilie!

Topthorn suddenly rears up - and charges off following, sensing danger. Grandfather starts to run in the direction of the hill.

Topthorn charging over the brow of the hill.

The Grandfather running - out of breath.

He hears an indistinct scream from Emilie!

He reaches the top of the hill - comes over the brow - and there is not the fallen body of Emilie, which he has been fearing, but a brutal line of German soldiers - and motorbikes. It is like a line of Indians in a Western - total, alien fear.

And there amongst them is Emilie, astride a panicked Joey, surrounded by soldiers. Another one holds Topthorn, who bucks and rears, but to no avail. Grandfather starts down the hill towards his granddaughter.

EXT. GERMAN COLUMN NEAR THE WINDMILL. THE SAME

The Germans are moving through the horses they have gathered. Emilie, unhorsed, tries to get to Joey, who is being roughly led away by a German soldier.

EMILIE

No! Let go of me! No!

Grandfather grabs her. She is screaming. He tries to calm her down. Joey is tied up as is Tophorn. Emilie is kicking and screaming - but also desperately short of breath.

GRANDFATHER

She is my granddaughter! Emilie,
stop! Don't hurt her, please!
Don't hurt her.

A soldier roughly shoves Emilie at him.

Brandt approaches. Emilie screams at him, in tears.

EMILIE

You don't need them! There are so
many others!

Emilie is still sobbing. Grandfather hugs her - in horror that she is now struggling so hard for breath.

GRANDFATHER

Please, take the bigger one and
leave the smaller one. You are
breaking my granddaughter's heart.

BRANDT

(leaving)
The war has taken everything from
everyone.

GRANDFATHER

(calling after)
What will happen to them?

BRANDT

They will pull artillery until they
die -

EMILIE

(coughing)
François!

BRANDT

- or until the war is over.

GRANDFATHER

It will never be over!

BRANDT

You have your answer then.

The motorbikes start up and drive off. The Grandfather hugging tiny Emilie as she coughs.

The Germans disappear up the lane leaving the old man and the child bereft in the bitter cold.

EXT. GERMAN CAMP. LATER.

Two grooms trail Brandt, leading Joey and Tophorn toward a makeshift corral.

BRANDT
Heiglemann - these are yours.

FRIEDRICH
Yes, sir.

BRANDT
They look strong - should last a month or two.

FRIEDRICH is an unprepossessing, chubby man. He marvels at Tophorn.

FRIEDRICH
You are beautiful.

But then he looks to the other horses penned nearby, haggard and weak. He turns to Joey.

FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)
It's a pity they found you.

He takes the leads of the pair of them. He sighs...

FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)
Such a pity...

In a strange way, there are many humans Joey meets, but also just one, the spirit of goodness and consideration for animals, joined by little echoes throughout the film.

And then they go over a ridge - and we suddenly see the explanation of Friedrich's comment. The road they can see below them is the main through road of the area - and it is a scene of horse horror - huge, massive guns and cannons and artillery being dragged by teams of horses that are in a terrible condition.

For Joey and Tophorn, this is a moment like when soldiers arrived to liberate the prisoners who had been kept in Changi prison by the Japanese during World War 2. They have never seen horses in this condition. You can see in their eyes the confusion. This is a whole different world, where horses can turn into creatures that look like this.

And it is also a vision of their future. This may be the moment the mighty Tophorn begins to lose hope. For Joey it is another level of knowledge - another mighty thing he will fight through - because he always fights through.

EXT. STEEP INCLINE. DAY.

Friedrich leads Joey and Tophorn in the wake of THE HUGE MORSER - an elaborate 15 ton monstrosity with a six inch bore. It takes a team of six horses to haul it with a dozen men pushing from behind.

ARTILLERY OFFICER

Pull together!

A soldier calls from the front of the heavy cannon - pulled by a particularly wretched group of horses.

ARTILLERY SOLDIER

Halt! Halt! Stop!

Lower down the hill, Friedrich waves down the rest of the column.

FRIEDRICH

Stop! Stop!

At the front of the Morser, one of the lead horses collapses - he will never get up again.

Brandt steps up, pulls a revolver out of his pocket and shoots the horse dead. It has come to this.

Joey, Tophorn, and all the other horses are spooked by the pistol shot.

Brandt shouts to Friedrich from the road.

BRANDT

Heiglemann, bring up another one!

ARTILLERY OFFICER

Heiglemann, bring up another horse!

BRANDT

That one!

Friedrich begins leading Joey up the hill, but --

BRANDT (CONT'D)

No, no. The big black one!

Friedrich hauls Tophorn, hesitantly, while Joey watches.

As he reaches Brandt:

FRIEDRICH

He's a good horse, sir. But if you move him up to the heavy gun, he will be no use at all. Prince is already losing condition. His leg, sir.

BRANDT

You have given them names?

FRIEDRICH

Yes, sir.

BRANDT

You should never give a name to anything you are certain to lose.

FRIEDRICH

His leg is not good enough, sir.

BRANDT

Private, you will do as you are told.

(calling off)

Hook him up.

Friedrich has no choice but as he starts to lead Tophorn, Joey rears up and escapes his groom. He gallops up the hill to the gun - offering himself up to save Tophorn. It is his "Tale of Two Cities" moment - giving up his life to save his friend. He bucks and rears. Friedrich turns to Brandt.

FRIEDRICH

As you see, sir, this one is stronger.

Brandt takes up Friedrich, and Joey's, offer -

BRANDT

Hook him up.

As Joey is hooked to the gun, he looks back to Friedrich who leads Tophorn back down the hill.

EXT. STEEP INCLINE. LATER.

The convoy struggles up the hill. Joey feels the dead weight of the gun. These are several tons of cast iron - almost dwarfing the horses. Friedrich notices. Together, this grim circus struggles along the pot-holed country road in the rain.

Joey leads the team up the incline. Each step is an immense effort. The going, over rough scree, is very tough indeed. It is very difficult for Joey to get a foothold on the loose ground, but his experience in Dartmoor comes into play and although he almost loses his balance several times he stays upright and hauls the cannon - Fitzcarraldo-like - over the hill.

We follow his progress step by step. Friedrich watches anxiously. Soldiers strain at the sides of the gun. One throws boards under the wheels to aid in traction. As they reach the top of the hill it almost seems the effort is too much, the cannon always in danger of rolling back. Joey finally staggers over the top - it feels as though the tethers are going to snap with the strain - but at last the cannon reaches the peak, the crest of the hill.

EXT. THE BATTLEFIELD. DAY.

Soldiers scurry around the giant gun, preparing it.

OFFICER

Halt! Halt! Take the horses away!

ARTILLERY OFFICER

Shell!

Friedrich observes with Topthorn as a giant shell is carried to the gun's breech.

ARTILLERY OFFICER (CONT'D)

And load!

The men wrestle it into place -

ARTILLERY OFFICER (CONT'D)

Back! Case!

- and secure it.

ARTILLERY OFFICER (CONT'D)

Position!

The barrel of the giant gun ratchets upward.

ARTILLERY OFFICER (CONT'D)

And...fire!

The shell explodes from the barrel. And then from another. And another. For the first time we see the big picture - the line of assembled cannons of which they were just one tiny part.

Each gun recoils violently as they shoot their shells into oblivion - as soon as one shell is fired another is loaded - the noise is deafening - the line seemingly endless - an obscene production line of death. This is what the horses have been feeding - this massive merciless thing.

Smoke wafts from the guns as we see the explosions in the distance. The sound of the explosions takes us to -

EXT. BRITISH TRENCH. NIGHT.

Explosions light the dirty faces of British boys in uniform, one after the next. Each light fading out before the next great blast illuminates another anonymous face - then another - and then another - and then ALBERT. Hold on him for extra moments before he fades completely.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. EARLY DAWN.

TITLE: FRANCE - 1918, THE SOMME

With the barrage lifted, the British soldiers that are huddled in a low sub-trench, are ordered back on the line. Andrew Easton is with Albert and he's shaken and terrified. A far cry from the happy young boy we knew.

A gruff sergeant (SERGEANT MARTIN) walks the trench with a bucket and each soldier puts in their valuables and personal belongings. One a lighter, some money, etc.

SERGEANT MARTIN

Valuables in the bucket, lads. If
you live, you'll get them back. If
you live, you'll get them back.
Good lads.

Albert and Andrew move down the trench in a line of soldiers who are given ammo belts and grenades.

Albert gets his grenades and walks further along the trenches. We follow him in real time as he passes a bunch of soldiers who are kneeling in the ankle deep water, a PADRE is giving them communion. The deafening noise of shelling all around.

ANDREW

Maybe it's a drill, Albie. Maybe
it's a drill like last time.

We keep following Albert's progress in real time - further on there is a post box where they all put their final letters home in identical green envelopes. We see Albert's letter addressed to "Ted and Rose Narracott" in Devon. He posts it in a battered metal post box.

An officer approaches:

DAVID
Love letter?

ALBERT
That's my business.

It is David - Lyon's son - now in charge of this small group of men. Still arrogant - looking older than Albert in his uniform - and clearly enjoying his superior rank.

DAVID
I hear you and your mate were doing bird imitations again. You gonna write a letter to your horse?

Albert ignores him. Andrew can't help but giggle.

DAVID (CONT'D)
After you find your horse, I've lost my needle in a haystack, and I could use some help.

David takes up a bucket and walks down the line of soldiers.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Anything valuable. Anyone who comes back gets to share it out.

ALBERT
(to Andrew)
Stay here.

Albert follows David down the trench.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
Remember that day me and Joey raced you in your car?

DAVID
I remember you somersaulting through the air.

ALBERT
Who was that girl you were with?

DAVID
There was a girl?

Albert nods.

ALBERT
There was. Don't you remember?

DAVID

It was just some girl, I suppose. I don't recall which one. I do remember you falling on your bum in a ditch.

Andrew laughs amiably. David points to him, smirking.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You see? Always entertaining, Narracott, I'll give you that.

As David walks on, Andrew smiles at Albert.

ANDREW

You did that? You fell on your bum?

Albert leaves without answering. Andrew keeps smiling until a large shell explodes nearby. Troops surge towards their ladders as officers scream indistinct orders.

Now David leads his troop through the trenches to the front line where they stop, lean against the enemy-side wall nervously and wait - each man in private contemplation.

Sergeant Martin moves along the lines, pushing men forward.

SERGEANT MARTIN

Be ready! Be ready! Let's go, men, get ready to go! Get ready to move out! Stay in position!

David calls out from atop a trench ladder.

DAVID

Hold your nerve, boys. Remember, it's not far to go. There's a way through.

(he moves down the line)

Run fast, keep your wits about you, keep your eyes open and God and the King will keep an eye on you. Company will fix bayonets! Fix bayonets!

The echo of 'fix bayonets' goes down the line - and every man fixes the brutal shining bayonet to the end of his gun.

Then Albert turns to Andrew.

ALBERT

You know what it reminds me of out there?

ANDREW

What?

ALBERT

That bloody impossible lower field the day me and Joey plowed it. Best day of my life that was and you were there.

ANDREW

And this here is the worst day of my life, about to begin, and you're here cheering me on. Us two, always. And him.

He nods at David Lyons, who gives instructions to another soldier.

DAVID

Once you're in no man's land, go to the flanks. Stay on the flanks.

SOLDIER

Yes, sir.

David turns to Albert and Andrew.

DAVID

Come on, boys, come on. To the ladder!

ALBERT

(to Andrew)

Stick close to the gentry, that's our ticket, yeah? We have the pluck but they have the luck.

They both smile. And then the fear takes over again. Andrew particularly feels as though he is on the very edge now. David urges them forward.

DAVID

You, too, Narracott.

(to Andrew)

And you, too.

Andrew and Albert pass by the bucket. They throw some valuables in. But a moment later, Albert goes back to the bucket and pulls something out - a worn piece of paper - he unfolds it - it is the little sketch that Captain Nicholls drew of Joey the night before they left for France. He slips it inside his shirt, next to his heart.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 Come on, on your ladders, boy. On
 your ladders. In you go, in you go.
 That's it.

Andrew turns towards a ladder. As fate and placement would
 have it - he is first in line. He puts his foot on the
 ladder, when suddenly the Sergeant stops him.

SERGEANT MARTIN
 Listen to your sergeant!

He pulls Andrew aside, speaking so that everyone can hear.

SERGEANT MARTIN (CONT'D)
 If anybody turns back, if any one of
 our boys come running towards you -
 you take this rifle and you shoot
 them dead. Do you understand?

SOLDIERS
 Yes, sir!

The sergeant pushes in on Andrew, private and intense.

SERGEANT
 Do you understand me? Do you
 understand what I'm telling you,
 son? You take this rifle and you
 shoot them dead. Understand?

Andrew looks ready to cry, but manages to nod. Albert turns
 to him, only to be pushed back by the sergeant.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
 Up there, son. Up your ladder. Up
 your ladder to your work!

Albert looks nervously back at Albert, comforting.

ALBERT
 It's good. Andrew, it's good.
 Andrew! Nobody's retreating today.
 Andrew! Andrew! Nobody. Is
 retreating. Today.

The COMMANDER arrives, checks the time on his AIDE's watch,
 mounts his ladder and blows a whistle to signal the charge.
 A BAGPIPER plays as the men go over the top.

David now heads up the ladder first. Gun fire overhead,
 Albert steels himself, then hauls himself over the top,
 followed by the next man and the next.

Immediately machine gun fire whistles past, we hear the screams of the first men who are shot. We follow Albert.

We are him. His vision. His experience. The ground is blasted, there are bodies all around him. He tries to run but his feet sink into the mud. Bullets fly past him. Felled men are screaming at his feet in fear and agony. Albert staggers forward. David is now right by him. They run together. Albert looks round and suddenly, David is hit. He falls to the ground, screaming.

DAVID
I'm shot! No!

Albert instinctively goes to help. Bullets shower all around him.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Just leave me. Leave me!

Albert grabs him and drags him onwards with him - David screaming at the pain - Albert grimly determined. Shells explode around them as they stumble on. Other men are running and falling. Albert sees cover in a huge shell-hole so dives into it for a moment's reprieve from the gun fire. He sits in still terror for a moment.

ALBERT
You'll be all right here. You'll be safe. Someone'll come for ya.

DAVID
Albert. Albert, listen...

ALBERT
It's all right. It's all right.
We're Devon boys, yeah?

David looks at Albert as though seeing him for the first time.

DAVID
Yeah...

Albert races onward.

Back at the trench, Andrew waits - terrified - and then, back out of the mist step two men - heading back towards him. Then a third. They suddenly catch sight of Andrew waiting there with his gun pointed towards them. They slow down - in the terror of the assault, they had forgotten that death was waiting for them if they turned back.

Time seems to slow down - Andrew shifts his gun from pointing at one - to the other - we see their individual faces. They are all just boys really.

And suddenly, instinct hits Andrew - he charges up the ladder, and forward, firing - past the three men, towards the enemy. He chooses his death instead of theirs. A sudden barrage of machine gun fire all around him.

Cut back to Albert, who makes his way to the edge of the shell hole. Bullets whizz inches from his head. He looks over to see a German machine gun position to his right. Bullets whizz past forcing him to duck.

Andrew charges past other soldiers, ignoring their warnings.

RANDOM SOLDIER

Get down!

Albert continues forward to dive into another shell hole, nearer to the German line. He scrambles from shell hole to shell hole. Now he's very close to the machine gun position.

Albert takes a grenade, fumbles with the pin as his hands tremble. He finally gets the pin out and he hurls the grenade at the machine gunner. We see the explosion and the machine gun stop. Albert sprints over the top again and makes it all the way into the German trench.

Albert runs through the trench, which seems curiously empty. Albert swings round as he sees the startling face of a gas-masked German holding a rifle on him.

Albert readies his bayonet but the man is dead, slumped backwards against the side of the trench still upright. Albert spins round, his bayoneted rifle in front of him, ready for action, but there is only the ghostly sight of dead German soldiers.

Albert is alone, everyone else is dead. All the dead wear gas masks.

More British soldiers drop into the trench, among them Andrew. He stumbles in the mud, drops his rifle, recovers it, and races through the trench.

He glimpses Albert ahead of him, stalking through the mist. Andrew breaks into a smile and rushes forward, prompting Albert to whirl with his rifle raised.

ANDREW

NO!

Albert pauses just in time. Then he collapses against the side of the trench, overwhelmed.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Albie.

Andrew grabs Albert and holds him up, embracing him. Albert can barely whisper:

ALBERT

We made it. We made it.

A moment later, the pair of them hurry through the trenches. Albert spots more comrades around a corner and calls ahead to Andrew.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Andrew, this way out!

Suddenly ANOTHER SOLDIER leaps from a trench branch between them, shouting in panic.

SOLDIER

Gas! Gas! Gas!

An instant later, a gas cloud blasts through the trench. Andrew and Albert look in horror. It spreads towards them, too powerful to avoid. Andrew is closest, turns to Albert with a helpless -

ANDREW

Albie...

- before he takes the full power of it. An instant later, the white, deadly cloud encompasses Albert, too...

EXT. EDGE OF THE BATTLEFIELDS. DUSK.

Close on hooves and boots, slogging through muddy water, several inches deep.

Friedrich is walking along, leading Tophorn and Joey. Tophorn is limping.

Something is wrong - Tophorn seems to be failing - he coughs badly, breathes strangely. Friedrich stops to check on him. An officer notices.

GERMAN OFFICER

Hey, there's no stopping here. Keep them moving.

FRIEDRICH

Sir, there's something wrong. This one needs to rest.

GERMAN OFFICER

There's no rest for them. Move them along. Move them along!

Instead, Friedrich leads the horses under the cover of a low bridge for a brief respite. A moment later, Topthorn collapses.

FRIEDRICH

Please, please, please. Stay on your feet. No, please. No no no...

Friedrich tries to help Topthorn valiantly struggling to get up but finally sinks to the ground again. This time he lies semi-conscious. He is dying.

FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)

Please please... Stay on your feet.

Joey deeply upset nuzzles his nose into Topthorn but the life drains out him. Friedrich is in panic at Topthorn's quick decline:

FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)

Come on. Please please...

Friedrich continues to stroke Topthorn's head. Joey pushes Topthorn as if to stop him falling into unconsciousness. For a moment we think Topthorn will come round but he slips away and all life leaves his body. Friedrich solemnly strokes the horse, knowing all is lost.

Joey does not understand. He pulls at Topthorn's reins, as if trying to pull him upright. Topthorn's body is inert, his head falls to the earth. Joey will not give up, he pulls at him desperately not understanding that Topthorn has died.

Suddenly, Friedrich looks around. Chaos - all the German soldiers stream back past their position, scrambling to get their guns and helmets. An officer charges down the bank next to the bridge, screaming orders at Friedrich.

GERMAN OFFICER

They're coming! Leave it, private!

Friedrich tries to pull Joey away to safety but Joey will not leave Topthorn's body. Friedrich pulls at Joey, but Joey is too lost in his grief to care about or even notice the danger.

GERMAN OFFICER (CONT'D)

Leave it! Come with me!

FRIEDRICH

Go to hell!

The officer nods to two other soldiers who pull Friedrich to safety. As he's dragged away, he screams at Joey:

FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)

Run. Run! Run! Run!

But this is all background noise to Joey's profound refusal to accept Topthorn is dead. He paws at the ground next to Topthorn, a horse standing over his best friend in a field, and he will never leave him.

And then suddenly - from around a blind turn in the streambed, a huge, remorseless tank turns, heading right for Joey. He bolts, galloping down the streambed, until he reaches a barbed wire barrier - a dead end. He attempts to run up the banks, but they're blocked, as well. He rears up, but the tank keeps advancing.

The tank is about to crush Joey. He has left it too late. He is about to die.

But then, counter-intuitively, he runs straight towards the tank and...leaps over it - a leap he learnt from Emilie. Then scrambles up and over it and leaps down behind.

Joey keeps on running. He is wild, frightened.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE / VILLAGE / TRENCH. THE SAME.

Joey is free - in countryside - but there is blood pouring from his leg, clearly torn by his encounter with the tank. He runs on - it is becoming night - suddenly there are explosions to the left of him - this fast, elegant creature simply runs through the gaps between explosions.

But as he charges on - the sky lights up in the direction he is heading. He is suddenly in the thick of battle. A shell explodes next to him, and he leaps entirely over a trench. Another explosion sends him leaping, but not far enough - he finds himself crashing downwards, and into a trench - and he races through it - and finds himself charging towards a German company. Both sides are equally startled - Joey charging through a thin trench lined with German soldiers - the soldiers, finding a live horse careering through them.

In desperation, Joey scrambles out of the trench - and once again, rushes away from the fighting...

But now it is very dark indeed - he is stumbling as he runs - there is blood mixed with the mud on his legs.

Now it is total night - fog - confusion - he jumps again. And now everywhere there are potholes - the land is massively uneven - shells are exploding all around. And suddenly sees in front of him barbed wire. He crashes through it - more - he bursts through again - now dragging barriers behind him - the barriers tangle, pulling him up short - he flips and lands amongst even more barbed wire.

He pulls and turns to release himself but it is impossible. The more he pulls, the more firmly he is trapped. He rises up, wild, magnificent, a beast fighting for his life.

He is completely trapped. He cannot move. He cannot see. He is in pain. He falls. It feels like an end.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCH. THE SAME.

GEORDIE SOLDIER (O.S.)
Stand to, stand to -

A young soldier, a Geordie, is on look-out duty. He looks through a periscope. He alerts his colleague in his thick, northern, Newcastle accent.

GEORDIE SOLDIER (CONT'D)
There's something moving.

SOLDIER
What the hell is it?

GEORDIE SOLDIER
It looks like a cow.

He passes the periscope to the second soldier.

SOLDIER
What the hell would a cow be doing out there?

We see what he sees - nothing but morning mist on the surreal landscape - and something strange. It is Joey in the distance

SOLDIER 2
That definitely isn't a cow.

SOLDIER
(handing over periscope)
Well, what is it?

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH. THE SAME.

We see an almost identical scene of several German soldiers looking out at Joey just as the British soldiers had done.

SECOND GERMAN

It can't be a horse. Nothing alive could be out there.

THIRD GERMAN

It isn't a horse. It isn't a horse.

The first German looks through his periscope. We see what he sees - Joey in the mist:

SECOND GERMAN

Yes - it's a horse.

The second German looks through the periscope, stunned.

THIRD GERMAN

It's a horse.

A third German (PETER) lowers his binoculars.

PETER

Yeah, it's a horse.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. THE SAME.

Now all the soldiers are gathering to look out at Joey. A CAPTAIN now has the periscope.

BRITISH CAPTAIN

Well, bugger me. It's a horse.

GEORDIE SOLDIER

Lads, we should call him.

BRITISH SOLDIER

How do you call a horse?

The Geordie starts clicking his tongue, followed by all of his comrades. They all try to attract Joey's attention with tongue clicks.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH. THE SAME.

The Germans hear the clicks and respond with a chorus of whistles.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. THE SAME.

Now both sides are whistling. Even the captain joins in.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. THE SAME.

Joey tries to rise, but remains entangled. He whinnies in pain.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH. THE SAME.

Peter lowers his binoculars.

PETER
He's caught on the wire.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES, THE SAME.

GEORDIE SOLDIER
Oh sod it...

Geordie climbs up the side of the trench, and waves a white handkerchief tied to the end of his bayonet.

BRITISH CAPTAIN
What do you think you're doing? Get back, do you hear me? Corporal, that's an order! Get back!

Geordie, not receiving fire, is emboldened to stand up.

BRITISH SOLDIER
Listen to him, sir. We can't leave him.

He waves the handkerchief to clearly signal he is no threat.

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH. THE SAME.

The Germans look at the young soldier making his way over No Man's Land.

PETER
What's he doing?

SECOND GERMAN
It's a trap.

PETER
No, I don't think so. I think he's trying to help.

The second German cocks his rifle and starts to take aim.

THIRD GERMAN
Scare him back into his hole.

The second German takes a shot aimed over the Geordie's shoulder.

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. THE SAME.

The Geordie crouches for cover, waving his handkerchief more frantically.

GEORDIE

It's a white flag, ent it? You see
the white flag!? I'm just after
tending to this here horse, is all!

The Geordie marshals his courage and stands again, waving the handkerchief.

BRITISH CAPTAIN

Get back, you stupid git!

There's no fire from the German trenches. Muttering to himself, the Geordie marches forward towards Joey:

GEORDIE

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not
want, he leadeth me into green
pastures, he lay me down beside the
still waters...

The Geordie walks very slowly across the mud - there are bodies - the ground squelches beneath his feet. He waves his handkerchief as he walks. He crosses a narrow bridge that spans a flooded bomb crater.

Joey, lying on his side, wrapped head to toe in barbed wire, covered in mud, watches Geordie approach. When Geordie gets too close, Joey freaks out and begins thrashing about. Joey whinnies a high scream of pain, because wire is cutting into his hide in several places, and as he thrashes it cuts him deeper. Particularly worrisome is a strand that's wrapped around his head, crossing right over his eye, threatening to slash it. The Geordie calls out in a soothing voice:

GEORDIE (CONT'D)

Poor beastie. Poor babbie. It's
alright. It's alright. Don't buck
and wriggle so, you're only
shredding yourself.

Joey calms a little, still moving his head up and down.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)

You'll blind yourself.

He reaches Joey and surveys the formidable tangle of wire in which Joey's bundled. The Geordie soothes and at the same time gingerly tests other strands, trying to figure out where to begin.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)
 Bugger me worthless - I didn't think
 to bring gloves or something to cut
 the -

He stabs his hand on one of the barbs.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)
 OW! DAMN! OW!!

There's a noise behind him, and the Geordie turns around to see the Peter (the German from the trench) standing several feet away, holding some wire cutters.

PETER
 I thought perhaps you might need
 these.

He holds out the wire cutters. The Geordie, still frightened, stares stupidly at them.

PETER (CONT'D)
 For the barbed wire?

GEORDIE
 Yeah, yeah I... Ummm, thanks.
 Cheers. Cheers...

He reaches out and takes the proffered cutters.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)
 Thanks.

He returns to Joey, nervous about turning his back. He tries to figure out where to begin cutting. He lifts a long strand of wire that wraps around Joey's neck, stretches across his shoulder and torso and around one of his front legs. He puts the wire in the crux of the cutters and is preparing to snip when Peter steps closer to him.

PETER
 That...That's a very long strand.
 When you cut it, it's going to
 release this -

He points to a wire wrapped around the wire the Geordie's lifting. Then he points to two other wires, similarly entangled:

PETER (CONT'D)
 - and this, and this, and they'll
 coil back rather violently, which
 I'm afraid will only wound the poor
 fellow further.

The Geordie nods.

GEORDIE
You speak good English.

PETER
I speak English well.
(re: the cutters)
May I?

The Geordie hands them over and Peter surveys the wires.

PETER (CONT'D)
What if we cut his head free first?
So he won't try to stand up and
blind himself? And then -

GEORDIE
Pity you didn't bring a second pair.
Then I could cut the wire here -

He points to one of the wires entangled with the strand he'd been prepared to cut.

Peter stands and shouts in the direction of his trench.

PETER
WE NEED MORE WIRE CUTTERS!

All at once one, two, three, six pairs of cutters come soaring through the air and splash into the watery crater.

Moments later - Peter and the Geordie kneel beside Joey, each with a pair of cutters.

Joey is calming down again.

The Geordie positions himself across Joey's body so that when he's cut the wire, it won't coil back and cut Joey. Peter positions himself to be able to cut the two wires in quick succession, holding the first wire to stop it from springing back.

Joey's completely still now.

Peter points between Joey's eyes.

PETER (CONT'D)
His blind spot. The cutters won't
frighten him. If you could cut
here, holding this wire -

He points to wires that intersect the wire that crosses Joey's eye. Then he points to the wire across Joey's eye.

PETER (CONT'D)

I could -

GEORDIE

Say no more, I'm right behind you.

As they reposition themselves, the Geordie says to Joey:

GEORDIE (CONT'D)

And you understand what's happening, do you not, O Best Beloved? That you must lay so very nice and still. There's a lad, you're a remarkable horse, you are, helping us help you. There's a lad. There's a remarkable lad.

The Geordie looks into Joey's huge eye as he and Peter get to work on their cutting. Joey returns his gaze.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)

So how's things in yonder trench?

PETER

Delightful. We read, we knit sweaters, and we train our rats to perform circus tricks.

GEORDIE

Well, if ever you need any more rats, we can always send ours over. 'Cause we've more than we need, strictly speaking. Besides, they scare off all the pretty girls.

PETER

Our girls aren't afraid of rats.

GEORDIE

Big strapping German girls, eh? Kind what gives robust massages?

They laugh.

PETER

Every Thursday! And they bring rum cake on your birthday.

Both men smile at this while Joey is completely still; they work quickly, in concert, cutting the horse's head free of the wire.

Joey raises his head, gives it a shake, neighs and then stirs a little. The two soldiers smile at one another. Then they set about cutting the rest of the wire; it's much easier now.

The Geordie cuts through the last wire binding Joey's legs. The two soldiers help as the horse staggers upright.

GEORDIE

Look at that horse! Look at the muscles he's got, them long legs. They're made for running, horses. Runnin' away from danger.

PETER

Running away is all they have.

GEORDIE

Yet we taught 'em opposite. Running into the fray.

PETER

War horse.

GEORDIE

Yeah. War horse. And there he is. What a strange beast you've become.

The Geordie grabs hold of Joey's halter, though Joey shows no sign of running.

Joey is finally free.

The two men look at each other.

PETER

And now?

GEORDIE

I take him back with me, yeah?

PETER

Since I supplied the cutters, the horse is mine. This is fair, no?

GEORDIE

In a pig's eye. He's English, plain to see.

PETER

Oh, you mean because he's so filthy?

GEORDIE

Because he's so smart. And you're none too clean yourself.

PETER
We could box. And the winner gets
the horse.

The Geordie smiles.

GEORDIE
No, thanks, pet. Must be careful not
to start a war.
(patting his pockets:)
Do you have a coin of any sort?

PETER
Coin toss?

GEORDIE
Yeah.

He takes a coin from his pocket, hands it to the Geordie, who
looks at it.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)
All right, Fritz - you're on.

He flips the coin back to Peter.

PETER
My name is not Fritz - it is Peter.

GEORDIE
Peter - I'm Colin.

PETER
You call it, Colin.

GEORDIE
Heads.

Peter spins it in the air and lets it fall into the mud. They
look down. Peter shakes his head, resigned.

PETER
That's the face of my Kaiser and he does not
look pleased with me. The horse is yours.

They collect their helmets as snow begins to blow around
them.

GEORDIE
Gone quiet, hasn't it?

PETER
Yes.
(pause)
(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

But wait half an hour and we'll be shooting again.

GEORDIE

I'm a terrible shot, Pete, don't believe I'll ever hit the target.

He hands back the cutters.

PETER

Thanks.

He notices the Geordie has offered his hand, as well. A beat, then Peter shakes with him.

PETER (CONT'D)

Cheerio, mate.

(re Joey:)

You'll take good care of him, yes?

GEORDIE

I will.

PETER

Our strange beast.

GEORDIE

And you take care of your own strange self.

Peter tosses Geordie his cutters.

PETER

Colin! A pair of German cutters - in memory of your handsome friend from Dusseldorf.

GEORDIE

Thanks.

Peter nods, and walks back to his trench. As he goes, the Geordie calls after him:

GEORDIE (CONT'D)

I'll use 'em back in the garden in South Shields. You keep your head down, now, Pete me lad!

As he walks away, Peter turns back briefly, calling:

PETER

Remarkable! A remarkable horse!

The Geordie leads Joey towards the British trenches.

EXT. TRENCHES. THE SAME.

Joey is now in the trenches, splashing about in the ankle deep water. He seems enormous in this cramped labyrinth. He is led past the broken and wounded soldiers who look at him with amazement, dumbfounded. It is a surreal image. The horse where horses shouldn't be.

As Joey makes his journey through the trenches soldiers excitedly gather to watch him come by, taking pleasure in the saving of this single life.

EXT. TRENCHES. THE SAME.

We arrive at a section we recognise as the place from where Albert set off only the night before. Sergeant Martin is there - as one man helps a wounded soldier into a medical area. It is David, hobbling and looking shell-shocked. Another wounded soldier approaches, but Martin waves him on.

SERGEANT MARTIN

We're full up. Move on.

David is seated next to Albert, who now seems in worse condition. His eyes are bandaged and he's wheezing. Andrew is nowhere to be seen. As a MEDICAL OFFICER checks Albert:.

DAVID

The gas got him - we had to wait till morning.

The medic moves to Sergeant Martin, looking stricken.

MEDICAL OFFICER

This can't be all of us.

SERGEANT MARTIN

This is all.

(bellowing to the men)

All walking wounded, away to the dressing station! Away to the dressing station!

EXT. HOSPITAL AREA. LATER.

Joey is led into the hospital area beyond the trenches. The Geordie leads him through the snowy streets. Bandaged men strewn around, wounded soldiers waiting for attention.

The waiting soldiers gather to view the strange spectacle of the horse.

At one of the dressing areas, a NURSE tends to Albert's damaged eyes. Behind him, we see Joey pass in the street, but Albert doesn't know it.

Joey limps, his foreleg clearly injured. The Geordie soldier stops outside a makeshift hospital. Joey looks frail and exhausted.

A DOCTOR storms over from his patients.

DOCTOR
What's this doing here?

GEORDIE
We need a vet, sir.

DOCTOR
There are no vets. We've scarcely any horses left.

GEORDIE
He's cut all over, but this leg here's got the worst of it.

Geordie strokes Joey as the Doctor examines him.

DOCTOR
It's probably tetanus. It's no good.

GEORDIE
Please, sir -

The Doctor heads back into the hospital, dismissive.

DOCTOR
I've all these men to take care of, corporal, you can see that, can't you?

GEORDIE
Please, sir, this horse can pull through anything.

The doctor absorbs his earnest appeal.

EXT. INTENSIVE CARE TENT. SAME.

Elsewhere, a line of soldiers waiting for medical assistance are curious about what is going on. Blinded by gas, eyes bandaged, one of them turns toward the commotion. It is Albert.

ALBERT
What is it?

AN ORDERLY

It's a horse they found, wandering about in
No Man's Land.

(easing him back onto a
cot)

Down you go.

ALBERT

What kind of an horse?

AN ORDERLY

Bloody miraculous kind of an horse,
be my guess. Nothing makes it out
of No Man's Land.

Albert lies there, but can't let go of the thought:

ALBERT

Miraculous horse...

EXT. HOSPITAL AREA. SAME.

Joey stands - breathing very deeply. The Doctor touches his
wounded leg.

The men from all over the medical area gather around Joey
concerned about their new hero's pain.

The doctor looks at the Geordie and frowns shaking his head
"no."

GEORDIE

(to the doctor:)

He was alive, y'see, sir, where
nothing survives, so to me and me
mates, to the men, sir, he's - Well,
we have high hopes for him -

DOCTOR

You should shoot him now.

The Geordie is broken hearted.

GEORDIE

Oh, but I can't.

DOCTOR

It'd be a mercy, lad, that leg's not
going to mend.

The Doctor sadly addresses a nearby Sergeant.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Sergeant. Put him out of his misery.

The doctor nods his head towards Joey. The sergeant, SERGEANT FRY, takes his gun from his holster, checks that it's loaded. He turns to some nearby NURSES, urging them away.

SERGEANT FRY
Ladies, if you please.

Total silence from the crowd who have gathered. They thought they were there to see something wonderful. And now they find that they've gathered for an execution - but can't take their eyes off it. The Sergeant waves them back.

SERGEANT FRY (CONT'D)
All right, back off. Back off.

The Geordie is the last to step away from Joey. The sergeant draws breath - before he steps forward to take aim. Joey is totally still, sensing the atmosphere.

The sergeant cocks his pistol.

Suddenly there is a strange owl like whistle from fifty yards away. Joey looks around startled.

The sergeant turns Joey's head back around, raises his pistol once more.

Then, the whistle again. Even the doctor notices this time.

Joey turns. Slowly, the crowd parts - another owl whistle - and we see Albert, his eyes bandaged - walking forward blindly - guided by the hands of the crowd.

One soldier urges Albert gently.

SOLDIER
Go on. Do it again.

One more whistle.

ALBERT
Joey?

And this time, Joey trots over to Albert. The horse nuzzles into him. Albert can't see Joey but he touches him.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
(softly:)
Hello, Joey. Hello boy. Where you been then, hey? Where in the world you been?

He strokes Joey's mane. Joey responds, becoming very still. The Doctor approaches with the Geordie.

DOCTOR
 (to the Geordie:)
 Do you know this man?

The Geordie shakes his head, no. The Doctor speaks to Albert, gently; clearly he thinks he's dealing with a traumatized, possibly crazy soldier.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 What's your name?

Albert, realizing he's being addressed, turns to the doctor.

ALBERT
 Narracott, Private Albert Narracott,
 sir.

DOCTOR
 This is a random horse, Narracott,
 and too badly injured.
 (to the orderly)
 Is this man in your care?

AN ORDERLY
 Yes, sir.

ALBERT
 He's not random at all, sir! He's *my*
horse, I raised him, in Devon. Sir,
 look at his legs! He's got four
 white socks, he's brown all over -
 (points to his own
 forehead)
 - and he has a white mark here -
 like so...

He makes the shape of a diamond with his hands. The doctor turns to the orderly.

DOCTOR
 Take him back.

AN ORDERLY
 Come on, son.

GEORDIE
 Wait! You can't see 'cause of the
 mud.

The Geordie looks around, spots a bucket of water, grabs it and uses a rag to clean Joey's legs, revealing the socks. The Geordie looks at the doctor.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)
Four white socks!

The doctor takes a rag himself and wipes Joey's snout, revealing the white diamond mark.

The Sergeant takes this in...and holsters his pistol.

SERGEANT FRY
All right, break it up. Clear off,
the lot of ya.

ALBERT
You see, sir? He's not random at
all.

The doctor steps up to him.

DOCTOR
We will attend to your horse. Patch
him up best we can. Treat him like
the soldier he is.

ALBERT
Thank you, sir.

With one last amazed look at Albert and Joey, the doctor returns to the hospital area.

Moments later - Albert, the Geordie, and Sergeant Fry all lead Joey through the snowy street together.

EXT. MESS HALL. EARLY MORNING.

Sergeant Fry strides into the middle of the throng of soldiers.

SERGEANT FRY
Gentlemen! Gentlemen! It falls on me to give
you some important news. At eleven o'clock
today, in two minutes time - the War will
come to an end.

Shock from the troops. Strangely muted. Not the explosion of emotion you might have expected.

Albert enters, his eyes still red, but no longer bandaged.

SERGEANT FRY (CONT'D)
The King and Queen thank you for your
service. We have been victorious - even if
at a higher price than many of us might have
imagined.

(MORE)

SERGEANT FRY (CONT'D)

When the bells ring out - and they will in a moment, for the first time for four years - let us remember our brothers fallen in the field. And thank God for the end of this struggle and victory.

And, in the distance, the church bells ring.

INT. STABLES. THE SAME.

Joey stands tall, eating some hay, now healed.

INT. FIELD OFFICE. DAY.

Complete change of atmosphere. Silence. Tension. Albert stands at attention with Sergeant Fry. A severe Major is behind his desk.

ALBERT

I don't understand, sir.

MAJOR TOMPKINS

Officers' horses only. All other horses are to be auctioned immediately.

SERGEANT FRY

That is a complete and bloody outrage. It's the lad's horse, sir, from Devon. He raised him up from a pup, he did. Trained him right up to the day when the army came to town.

MAJOR TOMPKINS

These aren't my orders, sergeant.

(to Albert)

You'll have to take him to market. That's all.

INT. STABLES, DAY.

Albert puts on a brave face as he collects Joey and leads him out of the stables in silence.

EXT. THE STABLES, THE SAME.

As Albert comes out the men have gathered. There's a strange sense of optimism, for such a gloomy moment. The Geordie comes up to Albert and hands him a sheaf of pound notes.

GEORDIE

We've all clubbed together. It's everything we have. There's twenty-nine pounds there. Buy him back.

ALBERT
Does the Major know?

GEORDIE
The Major put in ten.

The Geordie flashes a sly wink.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)
Mum's the word where the Major's
concerned. Your friend on the
crutches over there -

He turns to indicate David Lyons, who nods at Albert
solemnly.

GEORDIE (CONT'D)
- even asked the Major to say that
Joey was his, an officer's horse, so
that he could go back with the
others.

Albert is amazed. He is about to show his gratitude when the
sergeant major shouts:

SERGEANT FRY
Come on, Narracott! Get a move on. We don't
want to miss the show.

Albert snaps to attention and begins to lead Joey out of the
parade ground with the other horses.

As they walk off, the sergeant silently adds some of his own
money to the notes in Albert's hand.

EXT. MARKET PLACE. DAY.

The intense bustle of the market. Farmers are gathered,
bidding for horses.

AUCTIONEER
Seven pounds! Seven pounds there!
Seven pounds! Eight pounds here!

A groom leads Joey to the auction pen with other horses.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
Eight pounds! Ten pounds here! Any
advance? Sold!

INT. AUCTION PEN. THE SAME.

Albert waits anxiously, the Geordie lad by his side, as Joey
is led into the pen.

GEORDIE

You're alright. Nobody's gonna bid more than fifteen for a thoroughbred. They want work horses.

The auctioneer starts the bidding on Joey.

AUCTIONEER

Next one. We start at four pounds.
Four pounds.

The farmers seem disinterested, shaking of heads. The bidding starts. Five pounds, six, seven, now it goes slowly, eight, nine, ten. Albert looks pleased at how it's going. He feels the cash in his hand. It seems to stick on ten, then a new hand comes up at the back of the auction - it is a nasty looking moustached man.

THE BUTCHER

Eleven.

Sergeant Fry scowls.

SERGEANT FRY

It's the butcher from Cambrai. He's been bidding for the best all morning.

AUCTIONEER

Eleven. Eleven pounds. Eleven pounds.

SERGEANT FRY

Let me handle this, private.
(he calls out))
Fifteen, and let that be an end to it.

He looks daggers at the Butcher.

AUCTIONEER

Fifteen pounds.

BUTCHER

Sixteen.

AUCTIONEER

Sixteen pounds.

SERGEANT FRY

Seventeen.

BUTCHER

Twenty of your English pounds. And let THAT be the end of it, my friend.

AUCTIONEER
Twenty pounds.

SERGEANT FRY
Twenty Five.

AUCTIONEER
Twenty five pounds.

BUTCHER
Twenty Six.

AUCTIONEER
Twenty six pounds.

The men are all looking very worried... There's not much left.

SERGEANT FRY
Twenty seven.

BUTCHER
Twenty eight.

AUCTIONEER
Twenty eight pounds.

SERGEANT FRY
Twenty nine.

BUTCHER
And thirty.

AUCTIONEER
Any advance at thirty pounds?

Then, from the back, another, new French voice...

FINAL BIDDER
One hundred pounds.

He steps to the front of the crowd, and suddenly we see who it is. It is Emilie's Grandfather.

GRANDFATHER
And sir, if you bid against me, I will sell the coat on my back and bid to one hundred and ten. And if you bid against me again, I will sell my farm and bid to a thousand.

Everyone looks at Albert who is devastated. Albert is reeling. He hears the auctioneer repeat the final amount and brings down his gavel.

AUCTIONEER

One hundred pounds. Going, going,
gone.

The soldiers slowly disperse, leaving Albert to stare at Joey. It really is all over.

EXT. THE AUCTION. THE SAME.

The Grandfather finishes paying for Joey. Albert and the Geordie stand in front of the grandfather.

ALBERT

Sir, I'll give you all your money.
Everything you paid when we get back
to England. I'll give you twice -

GRANDFATHER

You don't know anything about him.

ALBERT

Oh, but you're wrong, sir, I know
everything!

GRANDFATHER

Yes, you found him! I heard you
found a horse in the wire between
the armies -

GEORDIE

No, I found him, he raised him -

The Grandfather goes to Joey and takes his reins.

GRANDFATHER

When I heard about the miracle
horse, I traveled three days because
I knew whose horse it was. My
granddaughter's. She saved his life!
He was everything to her.

He pauses, briefly, to collect himself.

GEORDIE

Where is your granddaughter?

GRANDFATHER

The war has taken everything from
everyone. He is all that I have left
of her.

The Grandfather leads Joey away. Joey pulls, firmly but not wildly, on the rein the grandfather's holding. The grandfather lets go.

He watches as Joey walks to Albert and nuzzles him. They have a moment together. The Grandfather watches carefully.

Albert puts his face right near Joey - speaks gently.

ALBERT

Don't be worried, boy, when I go. I won't worry over you none. Hey, I found you, didn't I, and you found me.

Grandfather softens and begins to wonder about this soldier.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

And we'll both... we'll both know that we made it through. Now go on.

He leads Joey back to the Grandfather.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

We're the lucky ones. Always have been. Lucky since the day I met you.

He quietly hands over the reins.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

God be with you, sir.

The grandfather looks at Albert, then takes the regimental pennant from his pocket:

GRANDFATHER

Do you know what this is?

Albert's amazed.

ALBERT

It's my father's. It's his regimental pennant. How did you come by this, sir?

Grandfather hands Albert the pennant.

GRANDFATHER

You may have this.

Albert takes the pennant and looks at it, his eyes filling with tears.

ALBERT

Thank you ever so much for this, sir...

GRANDFATHER
 (with a sigh)
 ... And this.

He hands Albert Joey's reins. Albert turns to face him, almost mute with disbelief. He reaches for his money.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
 No no, not necessary. He belongs to you. That is, of course, what my little girl would have wanted. And she was the boss.

Grandfather laughs, then turns and slowly walks away.

ALBERT
 What was her name?

GRANDFATHER
 Emilie.
 (turns back with a smile)
 Her name is Emilie.

Albert gently embraces Joey.

EXT. FIELD. DEVON. DUSK.

Suddenly, we are back in the village in Devon, in the fold of the valley. Dusk light. A figure approaches, silhouetted against the setting sun.

Mrs. Naracott gathers the harvest, then notices as the figure makes its way up the road to the farm.

A man in uniform. On a magnificent horse. Mrs. Narracott meets them at the gate and we can finally see them clearly - Albert and Joey.

Albert dismounts and removes his cap. An instant later, Mrs. Narracott is hugging him for all that her life is worth.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD. DEVON. THE SAME.

Ted sees them and makes his way to the field gate...shaky. Albert approaches, and stops a slight distance away.

Ted opens the gate to stand before his son. Albert slips something from his pocket and lets it unfurl in his hand - Ted's campaign pennant.

Ted accepts it quietly, then offers his hand to Albert. They shake, as men. And then slowly embrace, as father and son.

Mrs. Narracott joins them as Joey looks on - a small family and a beautiful horse, finally home.

THE END