

Miss Verity

by

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FADE IN:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A JUDGE surveys his courtroom. A man stand from the defendant's table, this is WILLIAM HOWARD RUSSELL. 30, portly, bearded, smartly dressed. He nervously fidgets with his court papers.

RUSSELL

My lord.

JUDGE

What do you say? I cannot hear you.

RUSSELL

My lord. I appear in this case on behalf of John Jones.

JUDGE

Why can't you speak out sir? Come nearer.

Russell approaches. He drops his notes but ignores them, pretending he's not put off.

RUSSELL

My client, my lord, is not a rich man...

Russell is so quiet, the Judge misses him say 'not'.

JUDGE

What do you mean? If he is a rich man and had acted as is alleged, it is all the worse, but the question has nothing to do with the matter before the court.

RUSSELL

I did not say... I meant to say that he is a poor man... Not rich.

JUDGE

Oh not rich? Then why did you say he was, eh?

Russell looks meekly at the Judge before sitting back down. His client gives him the cold shoulder.

JUDGE

The argument of the learned counsel, as far as I could understand it, and with the utmost attention in my power I am not sure that I do.

Russell looks at the floor, embarrassed.

EXT. COURTROOM - DAY

Russell hurries onto the street.

RUSSELL

Taxi!

A horse-drawn cab stops, Russell jumps in. The taxi departs.

EXT. SLUM HOUSE - DAY

The taxi pulls up in a squalid Victorian slum. Russell climbs out and walks past the poor residents. He stands outside a door and knocks. A WOMAN answers, she's holding a baby.

WOMAN

Mr Russell sir.

RUSSELL

I'm terribly sorry ma'am.

The Woman looks at him, fearful.

WOMAN

My Tommy?

RUSSELL

Two years, with hard labour.

The Woman starts to cry. Russell stands awkwardly.

RUSSELL

Have you any savings or alternative means of support?

The Woman cries hysterically.

RUSSELL

I should be going. I'm so sorry.

Russell walks back through the slum. He is self-conscious as the residents watch him back into the waiting taxi.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - DUSK

A woman is cooking, this is MARY, Russell's wife. Mid-20s, fair. She wears an apron over a modest dress.

Russell enters.

MARY

How did it go?

Russell collapses into a chair.

RUSSELL

From the moment I opened my mouth it was a lost cause.

MARY

It was your first trial. You were probably just nervous.

RUSSELL

I couldn't even get my words out. It was humiliating.

Beat.

MARY

And what about your appointment? What did the doctor say?

RUSSELL

I have no ailment to speak of. He believes my fear of a heart condition is common among overworked young men.

MARY

You do work yourself too hard.

RUSSELL

I'm merely exploring opportunities.

MARY

So you should. But pursuing ambitions as a barrister and journalist? It is too much even for you.

RUSSELL

You think I should choose?

MARY

I think your work should be what you enjoy, not what you think you ought to be doing.

Mary pulls a letter from her apron pocket and hands it to Russell. Curious, Russell opens it and reads.

RUSSELL

It's from Mr Delane. He's invited me to dinner tomorrow night.

MARY

Clearly Mr Delane agrees with me.

RUSSELL

Surely not? I've sent him articles for years and he's quite content with our arrangement. Why now would he want to force my hand?

MARY

I imagine it would be because he
doesn't want to share your talent
with a bunch of stuffy lawyers.

Russell sees Mary grinning, they both know she's right.

RUSSELL

All right, point made. Now come
here...

Russell holds out his hand, Mary comes over and takes it. He
pulls her into the chair.

RUSSELL

If you think it's right.

MARY

I do.

RUSSELL

That's all the convincing I need.
You always know the right words.

MARY

I learned from the best.

Russell kisses her again and the two share an embrace.

INT. RESTAURANT - DUSK

Russell approaches a table of a dozen men. A man stands to
greet him, he is JOHN DELANE, The Times' editor. 31, smartly
dressed, growing sideburns.

DELANE

William, welcome.

Delane and Russell shake hands.

RUSSELL

Good evening Mr Delane.

DELANE

Come, sit yourself down.

Russell sits next to Delane. A Waiter comes over.

WAITER

Drink, sir?

RUSSELL

A brandy, thank you.

The Waiter nods and departs.

DELANE

How have you been?

RUSSELL

Well. I had to visit the doctor on account of my heart. As it turned out my condition was merely a case of working too hard.

DELANE

You've been called to the bar then?

RUSSELL

My first case was yesterday.

DELANE

And?

RUSSELL

All I can say is if I am unable to defend my actions before you now, how could I have ever defended my client?

DELANE

Oh.

RUSSELL

I suppose it was not entirely my fault. The judge seemed more willing to hear what suited him than the truth.

DELANE

No surprise there.

RUSSELL

I'm sorry?

DELANE

You see there's the truth: one's unwavering conviction, and the truth: that which is universal and absolute. Very rarely do the two align, and that is because people only accept what they trust.

Russell ponders this. Delane studies him.

DELANE

I hope you do not take offence William, but it is a relief to hear your debut was such a catastrophe.

RUSSELL

I am not offended. On the contrary, I expected it to be the catalyst for the main topic of tonight's conversation.

The Waiter returns with Russell's brandy.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

DELANE

I'm glad, because the articles you send to us at The Times are impressive, very impressive. Evidently you are a man capable of recognising a story and turning your observations into compelling and informative prose. It is an exceptional talent.

RUSSELL

Thank you. In all the years I've contributed I've never considered myself more than an enthusiast.

DELANE

I think your skills extend beyond that of an enthusiast. You recognise when to defend what is right, and attack what is wrong. For that, I can offer you a position as one of our permanent correspondents.

Beat. Russell processes this.

RUSSELL

I'm flattered sir. Yes, I accept.

DELANE

Splendid. Cheers.

Delane and Russell toast their drinks.

DELANE

Come to the office tomorrow, Printing House Square. We'll start you off with something manageable.

RUSSELL

I look forward to it.

Waiters bring trays of food and place them on the table.

DELANE

Ah. Wonderful.

Everyone starts helping themselves to the feast.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS VIEWING GALLERY - DAY

Russell sits, bored, with other journalists and spectates as a debate drones on.

Title over action: One month later.

Russell watches an MP stand to address the chamber.

MP

If you are to have two Secretaries of State, I earnestly entreat you to consider the nature of such an arrangement as this - to put Wales and Scotland under one of them, and England and Ireland under the other.

Laughter in the chamber. Russell's too bored to find anything funny. He stares at his blank notebook and sighs.

EXT. PRINTING HOUSE SQUARE - DAY

Russell walks towards the office entrance.

INT. THE TIMES OFFICE - DAY

Russell walks through the bustling newsroom, arriving outside Delane's office. He knocks.

DELANE (O.S.)

Come in.

Russell enters.

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Delane is sat at his desk, reading.

RUSSELL

Good morning John.

DELANE

Morning William. Have a seat.

Russell sits opposite Delane.

DELANE

Another fine piece.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

DELANE

I've got another for you if you're interested.

RUSSELL

Another session in the Commons?

DELANE

No. This one's overseas.

RUSSELL

Really? Where?

DELANE

Schleswig. There've been rumblings between the Danes and Schleswig-Holstein. I have permission from the Schleswig Command to dispatch a special correspondent in the event that hostilities intensify.

RUSSELL

Special correspondent?

DELANE

Yes. I thought such a venture deserved an appropriate title.

Russell sniggers.

DELANE

It's a privileged position William.

RUSSELL

Of course, apologies. So you're sending me to a hostile area?

DELANE

Potentially hostile, yes.

RUSSELL

How likely is it that there will be hostilities?

DELANE

I don't know. You tell me.

Russell smirks as he makes to leave.

RUSSELL

Very well. I shall bring you the most riveting stories of glory and heroism, direct from the most comfortable chair in the Garrick club!

Delane laughs.

DELANE

Get cracking you shameless rascal.

Russell exits. Delane chuckles to himself as he works.

EXT. SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN CAMP - DAY

Titles over action: Battle of Idstedt, 25 July 1850.

Russell watches the battle unfold from the Schleswig camp. Explosions burst close to Russell and a few dozen officers observing the battle.

An Officer close to Russell barks something in German as Schleswig riflemen fire at the advancing Danes.

The Danish artillery fire lands closer to the Schleswig camp. The officers duck for cover. Russell, confused, hesitates. There is an explosion and Russell falls to the ground holding his arm.

Disorientated, Russell looks around to see Schleswig forces fleeing the field. Russell clambers to his feet and runs.

EXT. ROAD TO SCHLESWIG - DAY

Men and supplies are being loaded into carts. Russell approaches a cart clutching his arm. A Schleswig soldier holds out his hand to help Russell into the cart.

INT. WAGGON - DAY

Russell sits with a dozen Schleswig soldiers. Those nearest give him curious looks.

SCHLESWIG SOLDIER #1
(in German)
You are not a soldier.

RUSSELL
What?

SCHLESWIG SOLDIER #1
Englisch?

RUSSELL
Yes. I'm a reporter.

SCHLESWIG SOLDIER #2
Why do the English want to know
that we lost?

RUSSELL
Our readers rely on me to bring
them the news.

SCHLESWIG SOLDIER #2
Your news. This has nothing to do
with you. Your readers don't need
to know of our humiliation.

RUSSELL
But it's the truth.

The soldier looks at Russell, appalled.

SCHLESWIG SOLDIER #2
Is it?

RUSSELL
If not I got a hole in my arm for
nothing.

SCHLESWIG SOLDIER #2
So be it, because our men fought
and died for a good cause. There is
no humiliation in that.

RUSSELL
And surely not telling your story
diminishes that cause?

SCHLESWIG SOLDIER #2
Diminishes? Or preserves?

The soldiers turn away from him in disgust, Russell is left
reeling. They continue in awkward silence.

INT. INN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Russell writes a letter at a desk. A bandage is wrapped
around his arm.

The letter reads, "...The victory, that may be called the
battle of Idstedt, is decisive for the present of the fate
of the duchies."

Russell sits and stares at a burning candle, pondering. He
then starts to write another letter.

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Russell stands before Delane.

DELANE
When I made you a special
correspondent it was because I
believed you would provide the sort
of stories that would propel us
ahead of other publications.

RUSSELL
You have my article from Idstedt?

DELANE
I do. And it is a very good piece.
Which is why I cannot understand
your other correspondence.

Delane picks up Russell's letter and reads it aloud.

DELANE
In discharging my duties as special
correspondent I have abandoned my
obligations to defend what is right
by betraying those whom I serve.
(looks to Russell)
What is the meaning of this?

RUSSELL

When you offered me a permanent position here you told me I was able to distinguish what stories should be told. But now thanks to this role you have given me I can no longer make that distinction. I told the story of men who fought hard but were defeated. They died in humiliation and I gave that story to our readers as the truth. Is that really defending what is right?

DELANE

If it is true then yes, you did what was required of you.

RUSSELL

I fail to see how. You told me that people only accept what they trust, which is why the truth is not always accepted. In this instance how can they trust what I say when I do not believe in my own words? I made a mockery of those poor men, for no reason.

DELANE

Listen to me. The last time an Englishman was that close to a frontline it was on the fields of Waterloo. You are a fine reporter. Prove to yourself that you could be a great one.

RUSSELL

I can't. Not now.

DELANE

For God's sake man you haven't tried. You have an obligation, you said it yourself. Do the decent thing and stand by that obligation. Devote yourself in the same way you are devoted to your wife. Such commitment is more powerful than any musket or cannon. Until you learn that you're of no use to me as a special correspondent. There is a sitting in the Commons today. I suggest you attend. See if you can put your obligations to good use.

Delane sits and starts going through papers. Russell, taking the hint, leaves in silence.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS VIEWING GALLERY - DAY

Identical to before.

OPPOSITION MP

It is all very well for the Government to say and do as it has done, but it is extremely dangerous to take such a line of conduct when we have not at our disposal one corporal's guard, nor a single florin in our Treasury...

Russell sits among other journalists. While they listen intently, Russell is head down, writing feverishly in his notebook. He scribbles the words 'Universal... Devotion... Miss Verity.'

Russell underlines Miss Verity twice before returning to the debate. He's attentive, determined.

A Government MP stands.

GOVERNMENT MP

Sirs far from a deplorable state of weakness the right honourable gentleman raised, our country is in a better state of preparedness for a sudden outbreak of war.

Russell now writes continuously, his outlook has changed.

EXT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - DAWN

Title over action: 1854

Russell emerges from his house onto the street.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

On Russell as he walks through a typical Victorian London scene. He approaches a newspaper Hawker at his stand.

HAWKER

Copies of The Times, gentlemen?

A man buys a copy. Russell glances at the headline stating Parliament's debating the continued Russian aggression and an ultimatum has been proposed.

DELANE (O.S.)

You seen the news then?

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Same as in 1850. Russell stands before Delane who now has a full mutton chop beard.

RUSSELL

I have. It appears to be serious.

DELANE

Serious, and growing in intensity. Should Russia cross the Danube they'll be knocking on the door of Constantinople. No doubt Lord Aberdeen fears that very scenario.

RUSSELL

Hence the ultimatum.

DELANE

Precisely.

RUSSELL

So what does this all mean for us?

DELANE

I've assigned reporters to keep an eye on how the government handle this. As for you, you're heading overseas.

RUSSELL

It's been a while.

Delane studies Russell.

DELANE

Long enough.

RUSSELL

Where am I heading?

DELANE

The Dardenelles I believe, not entirely sure. An advanced contingent of soldiers is being sent to aid the Ottomans, just in case. I want you to go with them.

RUSSELL

Wherever that may be.

DELANE

Exactly.

RUSSELL

Any idea how long this venture will last?

DELANE

I imagine you'll be home by Easter. Expectations are Russia will back down at any show of force from us and the French.

(MORE)

DELANE (cont'd)
Spring in the Dardanelles should
not be too taxing.

RUSSELL
I suppose not. When does the
contingent depart?

DELANE
As soon as they're fit for travel.

RUSSELL
I'd better get ready then.

Russell makes to leave.

DELANE
William...

Russell turns back.

DELANE
This is Britain's first proper
campaign since the days of
Napoleon. There will be much
interest in this.

RUSSELL
I assure you I am capable. I have
learnt a lot these last few years.

DELANE
I'm glad to hear it, because I'm
relying on you. Our readers will be
expecting great stories, I ask only
that you give me the truth.

RUSSELL
I will do my best, John.

DELANE
I'm sure.

Delane holds out his hand. Russell shakes it.

DELANE
Good luck William.

Russell gives Delane a brief nod before leaving.

INT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - DAY

Russell packs equipment into a knapsack. Mary watches on.

MARY
So how long will you be gone?

RUSSELL
Until Easter according to John.

MARY

Try not to get shot this time.

RUSSELL

I'll do my best. But I shouldn't have any trouble this time, it's only the Dardanelles after all.

MARY

Months of sitting around. You'll have your work cut out making that interesting won't you?

RUSSELL

Are you doubting my journalistic prowess?

MARY

Of course not. You know I read all your reports.

RUSSELL

I did not. What is your verdict?

MARY

I think your words lift the story from the page as if it was being performed in front of me.

RUSSELL

Worthy of Mr Dickens' praise?

Mary kisses him.

MARY

Absolutely.

EXT. RUSSELL'S HOUSE - DAY

Russell and Mary step outside. They share an embrace.

MARY

Stay safe.

Russell gives her one final look, then turns to the street.

RUSSELL

Taxi!

A passing cab pulls over. Russell climbs aboard.

RUSSELL

Waterloo station.

As the cab pulls away, Russell sees Mary waving him off.

EXT. WATERLOO STATION - DAY

Russell climbs out of the taxi. He turns to see crowds cheering columns of soldiers marching to the station, it is a splendid sight. Russell heads through the rabble towards the station.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY

Russell negotiates his way past soldiers and civilians. He stops outside a compartment occupied by a lone Corporal, ELLIOT, 22, black hair, clean shaven. Russell goes in.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAY

Russell hovers on the threshold, sees Elliot stowing a trunk. The name tag reads 'Cpt. R. Sinclair. Gren. Guards.'

RUSSELL
May I join you Captain?

ELLIOT
Captain?

RUSSELL
Captain Sinclair? I read your trunk.

ELLIOT
No sir. Captain Sinclair is my commanding officer.

RUSSELL
Ah, you are his batman I presume?

ELLIOT
Corporal Elliot sir.

RUSSELL
May I join you Elliot?

Elliot invites him to sit. Russell sets down his knapsack and settles into a seat.

RUSSELL
So where is your captain?

ELLIOT
He is checking on the men. He will return shortly.

Elliot sits opposite Russell. An awkward silence develops.

RUSSELL
You're headed for the Dardanelles, are you not?

ELLIOT
It is not my place to say sir.

RUSSELL

Come, come now. No need to stand on ceremony Elliot. I'm coming with you.

Beat.

ELLIOT

Who are you?

RUSSELL

Of course, apologies. I'm William Russell, special correspondent for The Times. My editor wants stories from the campaign, so I hope you will have some stories to tell me.

ELLIOT

I'm not sure I could sir.

RUSSELL

Why?

ELLIOT

Well, I've never heard of such a thing.

RUSSELL

It is a somewhat unique occupation I grant you.

ELLIOT

Have you approached any officers?

RUSSELL

Not yet.

ELLIOT

Why?

RUSSELL

Everywhere else was full.

Beat.

ELLIOT

I must decline sir. I feel this is more an officers' remit. I do not know you or your intentions and I do not wish to receive a flogging for acting out of turn.

RUSSELL

I'm sorry to hear it. But I hope you will reconsider.

ELLIOT

I await Captain Sinclair's opinion on the matter.

SINCLAIR (O.S.)

What matter?

CAPTAIN SINCLAIR stands in the doorway. 32, handsome. Elliot stands to acknowledge his commander.

SINCLAIR

At ease Elliot, you're not on parade everywhere you go.

RUSSELL

Captain Sinclair, I presume?

SINCLAIR

Yes.

RUSSELL

William Russell. Pleased to meet you.

The two shake hands.

RUSSELL

Shouldn't an officer be in first class?

SINCLAIR

I prefer to stay with my men.

RUSSELL

Your loyalty does you credit.

SINCLAIR

Thank you. Now, what is this matter you two were discussing?

ELLIOT

Sir. This gentleman here has an unusual request for us. I felt it proper to refuse until you had made a decision.

CAPTAIN

Yes? What request is that?

RUSSELL

As I was telling your batman, I'm writing reports for The Times on the campaign. I seek stories of our soldiers' exploits from the men themselves.

SINCLAIR

I see. Unusual indeed.

RUSSELL

I covered the 1850 Schleswig War. My work was well received.

SINCLAIR
How did you cover the conflict?

RUSSELL
From the battlefield.

SINCLAIR
And now you want to follow us?

RUSSELL
I want to give the public the truth
about their brave men.

Beat.

SINCLAIR
What would you require from me?

RUSSELL
As much as you are willing to give
me.

SINCLAIR
And what does that mean?

RUSSELL
Permission to share your camp, to
observe and record your actions,
and interact with your men.

SINCLAIR
Hmm. Well I have no personal
objections. You are welcome to join
my company and consult me when it
is appropriate.

RUSSELL
Thank you.

SINCLAIR
However, I do feel you should
discuss your plans with General
Raglan and the staff.

RUSSELL
I shall meet him at the earliest
opportunity.

ELLIOT
If my Captain is willing then you
have my support too.

RUSSELL
Thank you.

Sinclair studies Russell as he lights a cigarette.

SINCLAIR

I expect this will be a very unique
campaign for us with you at our
side Mr Russell.

EXT. SOUTHAMPTON HARBOUR - DAY

Hundreds of soldiers on the quay. Some boarding, others
waiting their turn. Russell works his way through the crowd.

A STAFF OFFICER is coordinating the soldiers.

STAFF OFFICER

C Company, make your way onboard
and head below immediately! D
Company hold here!

Russell approaches the gangplank. The Staff Officer blocks
his way.

STAFF OFFICER

Where do you think you're going?
This dock is restricted.

RUSSELL

Apologies, but I have been granted
permission to sail with you.

STAFF OFFICER

On whose authority?

RUSSELL

Well, no one military...

STAFF OFFICER

Then you have no business being
here.

RUSSELL

If you'll allow me to explain...

STAFF OFFICER

Private!

A PRIVATE comes over and salutes the Staff Officer.

STAFF OFFICER

Escort this man from the dock.

RUSSELL

Now wait a moment...

STAFF OFFICER

If he resists, arrest him.

PRIVATE

Yes sir.

The Private leads Russell through the crowd.

RUSSELL

Who is your commanding officer,
private?

PRIVATE

Captain Topham, sir.

RUSSELL

I need to speak with him urgently.

PRIVATE

I can't allow that sir. I have my
orders.

RUSSELL

Look for God's sake I'm The Times'
special correspondent. I want a
quick word with your commander
about morale ahead of the campaign.
Let me speak to him then you can
lead me wherever you want

The Private hesitates before leading Russell towards a group
of Coldstream Guards waiting around. Among them is CAPTAIN
TOPHAM, 36, athletic, thin moustache.

PRIVATE

Captain Topham, sir.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Yes private?

PRIVATE

This man here claims to work for
The Times. He was being removed for
trespassing when he requested to
meet you.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Really?

RUSSELL

Captain Topham, my name's William
Russell. I have been dispatched by
my editor, Mr John Delane, to
report on this campaign. I request
your permission to accompany your
unit so I may observe our army's
exploits for our readers.

Topham does not reply, considering his options.

RUSSELL

I have already made arrangements
with Captain Sinclair of the
Grenadiers.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Have you? Then why not embark with him?

RUSSELL

Alas I have not been able to find him since we were separated at Southampton station. I fear he may already be onboard.

STAFF OFFICER

F Company! Assemble on deck!

Topham turns to address his men.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Fall in and assemble on deck!

RUSSELL

Captain, I implore you...

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Come with me.

Russell follows Topham and his men to the gangplank.

STAFF OFFICER

Hey! You!

The Staff Officer blocks Russell, Topham and his men.

STAFF OFFICER

You were warned, and now you may consider yourself under arrest.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Lieutenant, this man has been cleared by myself and the Grenadiers to sail with us.

STAFF OFFICER

Sir, this man has no right to join a military voyage and I have received no orders stating otherwise.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

I am giving you that order now.

STAFF OFFICER

With respect, sir, my instructions come from General Raglan's Headquarters.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Quite so. I would imagine those orders stated that this vessel is for military purpose and not for civilians.

STAFF OFFICER

Yes sir.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

This man is not a civilian.

STAFF OFFICER

He is not a soldier.

Russell pulls back his coat to reveal a holstered pistol.

RUSSELL

I am armed. Do I qualify now?

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Lieutenant might I point out that while we debate this my men are waiting to board, as is the rest of the contingent. I believe we have a schedule to keep to?

STAFF OFFICER

Lord Raglan will hear about this.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Of course.

Russell, Topham and his men walk up the gangplank.

EXT. SHIP'S DECK - DAY

Rough seas. Russell observes sailors going about their duties. His focus settles on a group of soldiers, taking bets on who will be the first to be sick.

A SAILOR joins Russell. They watch the seasick soldiers.

SAILOR

They ain't found their sea legs.

RUSSELL

How long will they have to put up with it?

SAILOR

Malta to Gallipoli be a couple o' days by my reckonin'.

RUSSELL

For their sake I hope so.

SINCLAIR (O.S.)

For their sake I hope it is only seasickness.

Russell sees Sinclair approach.

RUSSELL

What was that?

SINCLAIR

Since we left Malta a few of my chaps have been suffering from a bout of ill health. Shouldn't be much to worry about, at least I hope not. A sick soldier is no good to anyone.

SAILOR

Except the soldier. Out of harm's way in a bed with some pretty nurse lookin' after him. Couldn't ask for more.

SINCLAIR

Carry on, sailor.

The sailor continues his duties. Russell turns back to see all the men are now being sick over the side.

RUSSELL

They do look in a bad way.

SINCLAIR

They'll be all right once we reach land, I'm sure.

EXT. GALLIPOLI HARBOUR - DAWN

The Guards disembark and assemble on an empty quay. Russell, Sinclair and Elliot disembark together. Sinclair looks around.

SINCLAIR

Odd. No one to meet us.

The Guards stand around, uncertain what to do.

SINCLAIR

Lieutenant Ramsay!

LIEUTENANT RAMSAY, 27, youthful face, clean shaven, stands before Sinclair and salutes.

RAMSAY

Sir!

SINCLAIR

Have the men fall in and in marching order. I want them ready to move as soon as I find out where we're going.

RAMSAY

Yes sir.

A PRIVATE runs up to Sinclair and salutes.

PRIVATE
Captain Sinclair sir.

SINCLAIR
Yes private?

PRIVATE
Orders sir. The Guards are to march
north to Bolayir and set up camp.

SINCLAIR
Right. Thank you.

Sinclair pulls out a compass and examines it.

SINCLAIR
Company! By the left! Forward
march!

The column begins to march. The Coldstream Guards and Scots
Fusilier Guards fall in behind. Russell walks alongside but
does not march.

SINCLAIR
William. For the sake of the
Guards' integrity on foreign soil,
I ask that you follow the column,
not shadow it.

RUSSELL
As you wish, Captain.

Russell pulls over and watches the impressive column of
Guards march past.

EXT. GALLIPOLI STREET - DAWN

The column marches through the street. Up ahead, they see
the tricolour flag.

SINCLAIR
Look at that boys, the French are
already here.

GUARDSMAN
Hope they've come to decorate the
place sir. Leave the fighting to us
and give us somewhere nice to come
back to after, eh lads?

The troops laugh at the joke. As they leave the town, they
see a convoy of carts carrying supplies and French soldiers.

EXT. ROAD TO BOLAYIR - DAY

The men arrive at an open field. Bolayir in the distance.

SINCLAIR
Company! Halt!

Sinclair surveys the area.

SINCLAIR
Lieutenant Ramsay.

Ramsay stands with Sinclair. Russell watches on as Sinclair heads off into town.

RAMSAY
Company! Fall out!

The men lay down their packs, some light cigarettes. They relax as best they can. Russell heads straight for Ramsay.

RUSSELL
Lieutenant.

RAMSAY
Yes?

RUSSELL
Where's Captain Sinclair gone?

RAMSAY
He's gone to locate our supplies Mr
Russell. Excuse me.

Ramsay leaves Russell and goes to talk to the other officers in the company. Russell returns to the relaxing men.

A group of Guardsmen are sat together, smoking. One of them, SERGEANT HARRIS, spots Russell.

SERGEANT HARRIS
So you're a reporter?

RUSSELL
I am. William Russell.

SERGEANT HARRIS
You here to make us famous?

RUSSELL
I'm here to make sure that the
story of how you died heroically
fighting off twenty Russians with
nothing but your razor reaches the
Queen's breakfast table.

The Guardsmen all laugh.

SERGEANT HARRIS
I could kill thirty men with my
bare hands. Would that get me on
the front page?

RUSSELL
If you live to tell the tale, I
guarantee it.

GUARDSMAN #2

So you're staying with us for all of this?

RUSSELL

For now. Captain Sinclair was gracious enough to allow me to accompany you, but there are other regiments besides the Guards on this little expedition...

GUARDSMAN #3

But none that can match us, eh lads?

RUSSELL

What about the Highlander who can kill four men with one shot?

The Guards all snort and jeer.

RUSSELL

No really. He lies in wait as the enemy line advances, then he picks his moment and...

Russell mimes shooting an invisible musket.

RUSSELL

A proper marksman.

SECOND GUARDSMAN

What's his name?

RUSSELL

No idea. But it shows how people like great stories, and that you boys aren't the only soldiers here for me to write about.

THIRD GUARDSMAN

With a story like that why did you come at all? You could have stayed at home and made it all up.

RUSSELL

No, my place is here. Miss Verity makes sure of that.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Miss Verity? That the wife?

RUSSELL

More like a mistress.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Ooh mistress. So you married then?

RUSSELL
I owe it to both to see that they
are treated with care, respect, and
above all, devotion.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Hear, hear!

RUSSELL
You married?

SERGEANT HARRIS
Wife and son back home. She told me
she would...

SINCLAIR (O.S.)
Company! Fall in!

Russell looks round to see Sinclair has returned. The Guards
start gathering their gear.

RUSSELL
Nice chatting to you fellas. If you
have any stories come and find me.

Russell turns and leaves them.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Welcome to the company of heroes,
Mr Russell!

Russell laughs to himself.

SINCLAIR
Company! Forward march!

The troops march towards the town.

INT. SINCLAIR'S BILLET - DAY

Corporal Elliot is busy stowing Sinclair's kit. Sinclair is
writing at a desk when Russell enters.

RUSSELL
Am I disturbing you?

SINCLAIR
No, I was just writing to Brigade
Headquarters. Have a seat.

RUSSELL
Thank you.

Russell looks for a place to sit. There is none.

RUSSELL
A bit bare isn't it?

SINCLAIR

Best we can manage so I'm told. The French arrived first so naturally they helped themselves.

RUSSELL

Naturally. What are you writing to Brigade for?

SINCLAIR

We've had no orders and the rest of the brigade are nowhere to be seen. If we're sitting here waiting I want my men properly catered for.

RUSSELL

How are the men?

SINCLAIR

Happy to be ashore I imagine.

RUSSELL

I'm sure. What about the fellows who were feeling ill?

SINCLAIR

I don't think dry land has done much to improve their condition.

EXT. BOLAYIR STREET - DAY

Russell wanders down the street. Civilians are going about their business. Soldiers are exploring. A COMMISSARIAT OFFICER is arguing with a TURKISH COUNSELLOR who speaks no English.

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER

I. Need. More. Houses. More. Men. Coming.

TURKISH COUNSELLOR

(in Turkish)

The French have half the town. You have half.

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER

You understand?

TURKISH COUNSELLOR

You understand?

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER

What about waggons? And horses?

The Counsellor is blank.

COMMISSARIAT

Waggons! You know? And horses! Horses?

The Commissariat mimes gripping reins and riding.

TURKISH COUNSELLOR
(broken English)
Oh! Horse?

COMMISSARIAT
Yes, yes! Horses. I. Need. More.
Horses!

TURKISH COUNSELLOR
(in Turkish)
No horses.

COMMISSARIAT
Yes?

The Counsellor signals for the Commissariat to wait, he heads off. The Commissariat spots Russell.

COMMISSARIAT
Bloody ridiculous. Two days I've
been at this.

The Counsellor beckons the Commissariat to follow him.

COMMISSARIAT
What now?

Russell walks on as the Counsellor and Commissariat depart.

EXT. FRENCH CAMP - DAY

Russell passes through a busy French encampment. The contrast is startling: hospitals, field kitchens, waggons, piles of supplies, every necessity catered for.

INT. RUSSELL'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Russell sits on the floor, writing in his notebook by candlelight, it reads 'The worst thing is the want of comforts for the sick. Many of the men labour under diseases contracted at Malta, they are obliged to stay in the camp in the cold, with only one blanket under them.'

As he writes, soldiers come in from their duties and go to bed. Some are not well. Sinclair enters, the men make to stand to attention.

SINCLAIR
As you were gents, as you were.

The men get back under their blankets.

SINCLAIR
Parade tomorrow morning at zero
eight hundred hours. General Raglan
will be inspecting us.

RUSSELL
Lord Raglan's here at last?

SINCLAIR
General Staff landed this morning.

RUSSELL
Can't help but notice you boys have
already been here over a month.

Beat.

SINCLAIR
Rest easy boys.

EXT. BOLAYIR STREET - DAY

The Guards stand to attention three ranks deep, all are immaculately dressed. Russell stands off to the side, making notes.

LORD RAGLAN, 66, no right arm, imperious, passes by on horseback, flanked by junior staff officers.

Raglan stares at Russell. He says something to a junior staff officer before moving on.

EXT. LORD RAGLAN'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A wooden two-storey house overlooking a beach. The courtyard is a hive of activity around a central fountain. Horses tied up, waiting for their riders, officers of varying ranks of different nationalities come and go.

Russell walks straight in, unchallenged.

INT. LORD RAGLAN'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Similar flurry of activity. Officers gathered around maps. Others in conversation. An Officer approaches Russell.

RUSSELL
Excuse me.

The Officer hurries past, ignoring him.

RUSSELL
Thanks very much. Can anyone help?

A JUNIOR OFFICER approaches.

RUSSELL
You.

JUNIOR OFFICER
Yes?

RUSSELL

I wish to speak with the
Quartermaster General.

JUNIOR OFFICER

The General is busy at the moment.

RUSSELL

Then I'll direct my enquiry to you.
I want to know about the provisions
afforded to field reporters.

JUNIOR OFFICER

Provisions?

RUSSELL

Rations, warm clothing, a tent and
all other basic supplies one needs
to survive. I have not been
provided with the rations of the
soldiers, despite my conditions
being the same. I thought if I took
up the matter with the
Quartermaster General, my request
would be noted and looked into. If
the Quartermaster is busy, I look
to you to pass on my request.

JUNIOR OFFICER

I'm afraid sir, that is impossible.

RUSSELL

Why? I'm merely asking what I'm
entitled...

AIREY (O.S.)

You are entitled to nothing
whatsoever!

Russell wheels round to see Colonel RICHARD AIREY, 51, thick
moustache, pompous.

AIREY

The conditions you speak of sir are
not the same as the soldier. You
are a reporter, a civilian, an
impediment. Therefore you are
entitled to none of our provisions.
As for you Lieutenant, may I remind
you that you have orders!

JUNIOR OFFICER

Yes sir. Sorry sir.

AIREY

See him off this instant.

The Junior Officer starts towards Russell.

RUSSELL

I demand to see Lord Raglan!

AIREY

Lord Raglan is currently attending to important military matters and has larger priorities than to waste time listening to the protestations of an odious little man.

JUNIOR OFFICER

Come along now sir.

Russell is led from the room. He glares at Airey, who looks contemptuously back at him.

EXT. LORD RAGLAN'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Russell heads for the exit of the courtyard. A RUNNER rushes towards him.

RUSSELL

What's the hurry Private?

RUNNER

The Russian Army's in Bulgaria. The Light Division's been ordered to Varna.

RUSSELL

That sounds like fun. A chance to face the Russians at last.

The breathless Runner doesn't respond, but runs to the doors of the headquarters. Russell starts walking briskly.

INT. RUSSELL'S QUARTERS - DUSK

Russell writes quickly in his notebook, before tearing out the page. He stuffs the page in his pocket and leaves.

INT. TELEGRAPH STATION - DUSK

A tired OPERATOR is tapping away at the telegraph machine when Russell enters.

RUSSELL

I need you to send a telegram.

OPERATOR

It will have to wait until morning.

RUSSELL

No. I need you to send it now.

OPERATOR

Look mate, I don't know who you think you are, but I've been on duty for hours sending bloody messages. You will have to wait until morning.

RUSSELL

Send this quickly for me now and I'll make it worth your while.

Beat.

OPERATOR

Fine.

Russell hands him the scrap of paper from his pocket.

OPERATOR

Recipient?

RUSSELL

John Delane. Printing House Square, London.

The Operator taps away at the telegraph. Russell looks on.

OPERATOR

There. Sent.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

Russell turns to leave.

OPERATOR

Hey! You said you'd make it worth my while.

RUSSELL

I know. I just have.

OPERATOR

What?

RUSSELL

You've sent it now, so you can go and get drunk instead of still arguing with me over sending it tomorrow. I'm very grateful. Goodnight.

Russell leaves the Operator bewildered.

EXT. TRANSPORT SHIP - DAY

Russell stands on the forecastle deck, watching the Light Division board.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Make way for Sir George Brown!

Russell watches men stand aside and cheer as SIR GEORGE BROWN boards. 64, clean shaven, wispy white hair, flamboyant.

EXT. TRANSPORT SHIP - NIGHT

The Black Sea. Shrouding fog envelops the ship. Russell is still standing on the deck, smoking.

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Delane sits at his desk, reading a telegram. When he's finished, he frantically scribbles a letter which reads, '...With great appreciation and gratitude. Your friend, John.'

INT. ARMY POST OFFICE - VARNA - DAY

An unorganised mess of letters and parcels surround a single desk and chair, occupied by THOMAS ANGELL, Assistant Army Postmaster.

RUSSELL
Good afternoon.

ANGELL
Hello. Are you collecting?

RUSSELL
I hope so. When was the last delivery of mail?

ANGELL
This morning.

RUSSELL
Then there may a letter for me.
William Russell.

Angell sifts through the stack of letters.

ANGELL
Russell... Russell... Here we are.

Hands the letter to Russell.

RUSSELL
Thank you.

ANGELL
You with the soldiers?

RUSSELL

I am.

ANGELL

Where you camped?

RUSSELL

I have no camp as of yet. Lord Raglan's staff seem determined to move heaven and earth to prevent me from receiving basic necessities. They refused me last time, but this time I'm armed.

Russell turns on his heel and leaves.

INT. ARMY HEADQUARTERS - VARNA - DAY

Staff Officers go about their business. Russell marches in.

RUSSELL

I wish to speak to Lord Airey at once.

STAFF OFFICER

His Lordship is not here.

RUSSELL

Is he likely to return soon?

STAFF OFFICER

I could not say sir.

RUSSELL

Then I shall wait, and I will not leave until I have spoken to him.

INT. ARMY HEADQUARTERS - VARNA - DUSK

Russell paces up and down. A few officers are still working. Russell snaps to at the sound of approaching footsteps.

AIREY (O.S.)

Order for brigade commanders, parade tomorrow at two o'clock for full kit and quarter inspection.

NOLAN (O.S.)

Yes sir.

AIREY (O.S.)

And fetch me a brandy.

Russell faces the door as Airey walks in.

AIREY

You!

Beat.

AIREY

What are you doing here?

RUSSELL

Lord Airey, I respectfully request that you honour my position as a special correspondent and grant me the allocation of resources to which I am entitled.

AIREY

I do not like to repeat myself! I told you before, you are entitled to none of our equipment, therefore I am under no obligation to honour your position. This title you have given yourself, it is not even an official position, is it? You have not been dispatched by the War Office, you do not report to the Duke of Newcastle. As far as I am concerned your position grants you nothing more than the deserved scorn of your countrymen for jeopardising the success of this expedition, and the lives of its protagonists.

RUSSELL

Jeopardise? My intentions are merely to convey the realities of the events I witness to my editor, John Delane.

AIREY

While undermining our security, morale and discipline, no doubt.

RUSSELL

Since you have been reluctant to assist, I have made Mr Delane aware of the obstructions you and your staff have rudely placed before me. He has seen fit to intervene.

AIREY

Your editor holds no jurisdiction over this military office!

RUSSELL

I trust this will provide a suitable explanation, and prove to you that my entitlement to such necessities must be respected.

Airey snatches the letter from Russell and reads.

AIREY

This is preposterous! I do not care who Mr Delane has been in correspondence with, he has no right to influence the policy of Her Majesty's government, or the forces that serve it.

RUSSELL

Your position has been made quite clear to you.

AIREY

Outrageous! You expect me to stand by while you shamelessly help yourself to our limited provisions.

RUSSELL

Perhaps they would not be so limited if you recognised the extent of the shortcomings in your preparations, and address the failings in your conduct.

AIREY

How dare you!

RUSSELL

I think there is nothing more to discuss. You have your orders.

Airey glares at Russell.

AIREY

Nolan!

In walks CAPTAIN NOLAN, 36, lean, thin moustache. He salutes Airey.

NOLAN

Sir.

AIREY

Escort this meddling scribbler to the stores. Issue him with a basic consignment of rations, suitable clothing, and a tent. Once you have done that see him to his camp and ensure he does not fraternise with any military personnel. Is that understood?

NOLAN

Yes sir.

AIREY

Good.

Airey heads towards his office.

NOLAN
Which camp am I escorting him to?

AIREY
Just get him out of my sight.

Airey storms into his office.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - ALADYN - NIGHT

Russell and Nolan navigate their way through a maze of tents.

NOLAN
Here will do.

RUSSELL
Where are we?

NOLAN
Camp at Aladyn.

RUSSELL
Which regiments are here?

NOLAN
I cannot say sir.

RUSSELL
I see. Well thank you for your help.

NOLAN
Colonel Airey is inspecting the camps tomorrow afternoon. Come to the Headquarters while he is away and I will see you are provided with a horse and servant.

RUSSELL
You are very kind.

NOLAN
Allow me to apologise for the Colonel. Your presence here has caused a great deal of frustration among the senior officers.

RUSSELL
I've noticed.

NOLAN
I understand you are intending to report on the campaign?

RUSSELL
Yes.

NOLAN

If I may offer some advice sir, the senior officers are a very traditional bunch, they are not familiar with the modern ways of things. But all the same it would be unwise to make enemies of them.

RUSSELL

Thank you, but I will not sacrifice my integrity as a reporter of the facts to satisfy the misgivings of a few stubborn toffs.

NOLAN

I understand completely.

RUSSELL

It is late Captain. I would like to pitch my tent before dawn, and I must not keep you any longer.

NOLAN

Goodnight sir.

Russell holds out his hand for Nolan to shake.

RUSSELL

William, please.

NOLAN

William.

The two shake hands before Nolan disappears into the darkness. Russell watches him go.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - ALADYN - DAY

Russell stares at the picturesque landscape. The mood is broken by the sounds of a soldier suffering from diarrhoea.

Russell looks round to see an exhausted soldier crouched by his tent. He's dehydrated and diarrhetic. Nearby soldiers are just as sick, some vomiting, others are at death's door.

EXT. ARMY HEADQUARTERS - VARNA - DAY

Russell approaches Nolan, who's tending to some horses.

RUSSELL

Good afternoon Captain.

NOLAN

Hello William, and please, my name is Nolan. Louis Nolan.

RUSSELL

Has Colonel Airey left yet?

NOLAN

He has.

RUSSELL

That's a relief. I expect he was not in good spirits this morning.

NOLAN

Not at all. He wrote to Lord Raglan last night, I think the purpose of his correspondence is quite clear. I suggest you avoid any of the commanders for the time being.

RUSSELL

Thank you. I shall. I'll stay with the men in the meantime. Speaking of which, I saw earlier that a number of them are unwell. Several looked gravely ill. I hope something can be done for them.

NOLAN

I will make a note of it. I'm sure Colonel Airey will see it for himself while he inspects the camps and act accordingly.

RUSSELL

I hope so. Now, which one of these fine creatures is mine?

Nolan beckons to a Nubian servant, KHALIL, to bring forth a horse.

NOLAN

Here is your ride.

Russell circles the horse, inspecting it.

NOLAN

He is a strong beast.

RUSSELL

Indeed he is.

NOLAN

This Nubian is Khalil, he'll be your servant.

RUSSELL

You speak English Khalil?

KHALIL

A little, sir.

RUSSELL

A little will be enough to be going on with. Thank you for your help Nolan. I am most grateful.

NOLAN

You're welcome. Good luck, William.

RUSSELL

Good luck to you.

Russell and Khalil set off, Khalil leading the horse.

EXT. ROAD TO ALADYN CAMP - DAY

Russell rides the horse along a dirt track, Khalil walks beside him.

RUSSELL

How long have you been working for the army, Khalil?

KHALIL

(broken English)

Two months. Soldier came, said the army needed men for work. We come here.

RUSSELL

Do you like working for the British?

KHALIL

I miss my home.

Beat.

RUSSELL

So do I. Though I'm assured we will not be out here for long.

Khalil says nothing.

RUSSELL

You have a wife?

KHALIL

Yes.

RUSSELL

Is she beautiful?

KHALIL

Yes.

RUSSELL

My wife is beautiful. But out here Khalil, the only mistress that is of importance is Miss Verity.

KHALIL

Miss Verity?

RUSSELL

If you are to be my servant, you
will devote yourself to her. Is
that clear?

Khalil is blank.

RUSSELL

Well, it will become clear.

At that moment, a snake slithers across the path. The horse
spooks, Russell tries to control it as Khalil snatches up
the snake and throws it into the undergrowth. Khalil then
calms the horse.

RUSSELL

Well done Khalil. How's the horse?

KHALIL

Calm now.

RUSSELL

Good, good. We're not far from the
camp now, feed him when we get
there and make sure he is all
right.

KHALIL

Yes sir.

Khalil strokes the horse, leads it on.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - ALADYN - DAY

Russell and Khalil pass dozens of sick soldiers. They are
busy breaking camp, packing equipment.

KHALIL

What is wrong with them?

RUSSELL

They're victims of disease and
incompetence. God help them.

KHALIL

What are they doing?

RUSSELL

Looks like they're decamping.

Russell approaches one of the soldiers.

RUSSELL

You there. What's going on?

SOLDIER
Orders to decamp. We're moving on.

RUSSELL
To where?

SOLDIER
Not sure, wherever they tell us to
get off the boat.

The soldier carries on packing. Russell turns to see Khalil is visibly nervous.

EXT. BRITISH SHIP - DAWN

Russell, Khalil and several soldiers stand on the ship's deck. Russell surveys the fleet.

RUSSELL
Impressive isn't it?

Khalil says nothing.

RUSSELL
Look. That must be it.

The morning sun reveals the shore line of the Crimea.

EXT. BRITISH OUTPOST - CRIMEAN PENINSULA - DAY

A small collection of tents upon a hillside. Men are already digging perimeter trenches. Others are on sentry duty. Russell and Khalil approach.

RUSSELL
We'll stay with the Grenadiers for
now. Can you go back to the harbour
and find out what the bloody hell
has happened to my tent and horse.

Khalil heads off, Russell starts to wander through the camp. Russell approaches the trenches where Captain Sinclair is supervising the trench digging.

RUSSELL
Hello Captain!

SINCLAIR
Ah William. Good to see you made
it.

RUSSELL
Well, you know me Captain, I go
wherever the action is. Although on
this occasion I don't actually know
where that is.

SINCLAIR

You are standing on the windy
plains of the Crimean Peninsula.
To the south lies our objective,
Sebastopol. Home to Russia's fleet,
though not for much longer.

RUSSELL

So why the trenches?

SINCLAIR

It's a sensible precaution to
install some defences to cover the
landings. We shouldn't be here for
long. Although I wish the artillery
would hurry up and join us. To my
knowledge they've yet to disembark.

RUSSELL

Much like the supply trains.

GUARDSMAN (O.S.)

Captain!

Sinclair and Russell turn to the Guardsman.

GUARDSMAN

Russians, over there.

Sinclair and Russell gaze in the direction the Guardsman
points. Sinclair pulls out his telescope.

Ten Russian cavalrymen stand on the crest of the hill
opposite the British outpost.

RUSSELL

What are they doing?

SINCLAIR

Cossacks. Hold your fire, they're
just spotting our positions.

The Cossacks withdraw off the hill, out of sight.

SINCLAIR

The Light Brigade will catch up
with them eventually.

EXT. BRITISH OUTPOST - NIGHT

Sinclair and Russell sit beside a struggling fire. They are
wrapped in their blankets. There are no tents.

SINCLAIR

I don't know about you but I'm
frozen to my bones.

RUSSELL
Being out here can't be doing your
boys any good.

Sinclair says nothing.

RUSSELL
How was Gallipoli?

Beat.

SINCLAIR
That's the thing about night in the
army. All the thoughts you'd like
to forget come to the fore, there's
nothing to suppress them.

RUSSELL
I don't understand.

SINCLAIR
I lost men at Gallipoli. Cholera,
according to the doctors.

RUSSELL
I'm sorry. I didn't know.

SINCLAIR
The sooner we meet the enemy the
better. Get on with the job and put
that sorry business behind us.

The two sit in uncomfortable silence.

RUSSELL
It's too cold to sleep. I'm going
to go for a walk. Care to join me?

SINCLAIR
No. I'd rather stay here.

RUSSELL
Very well.

Russell stands, still keeping the blanket wrapped around
him. Sinclair settles down to try and sleep.

EXT. BRITISH PERIMETER TRENCH - NIGHT

Russell quietly approaches a trench full of exhausted
British soldiers. Some are sleeping standing up, leaning
against the trench wall. There is the sound of persistent
coughing, Russell heads along the trench to the source of
the noise, where he finds Corporal Elliot.

RUSSELL
Elliot.

Elliot spins round, bayonet poised.

RUSSELL

Woah Corporal! It's Russell, it's Russell!

ELLIOT

You shouldn't sneak around like that, Mr Russell. It's dangerous.

RUSSELL

What are you doing out here?

ELLIOT

My watch.

RUSSELL

I see that. I meant why aren't you in hospital? I could hear your coughing fit from the other side of the camp.

ELLIOT

It's just a cold. Everyone gets a cold at this time of year.

RUSSELL

Yes but September is no month to be out in the open without a coat when you are ill.

ELLIOT

There are men much worse than me.

Russell and Elliot look out over the plateau, in the distance is the glowing light of burning villages.

RUSSELL

Would you look at that. Incredible.

ELLIOT

The Russians wouldn't want us to capture anything useful.

RUSSELL

Useful?

ELLIOT

Like a house with a roof, and walls. Maybe even a bed.

RUSSELL

I bet there are warm houses in Sebastopol. All the more reason to capture it quickly.

ELLIOT

Do you know the time Mr Russell?

Russell squints at his pocketwatch as Elliot coughs hard.

RUSSELL
One in the morning.

ELLIOT
Finally.

Elliot nudges the man next to him.

ELLIOT
Harry. Harry, it's your watch.

The Guardsman slowly rouses himself.

ELLIOT
If you don't mind, Mr Russell, I'd like to get some sleep.

RUSSELL
Of course. Goodnight corporal.

Russell heads off, but looks back at Elliot.

EXT. BRITISH OUTPOST - NIGHT

Russell sleeps under his blanket beside Sinclair. The fire is slowly dying. Suddenly, the silence of the night is broken by a piper playing the Reveille. Russell jerks awake, around him thousands of men are groggily waking up.

SINCLAIR
Stop that bloody racket.

Russell inspects his pocket watch. It is three in the morning.

RUSSELL
What can they possibly want to wake everyone at this hour. Has Lord Raglan had a nightmare?

A Staff Officer on horseback is making his way through the ranks of men.

STAFF OFFICER
Fall in for parade! Officers report to your senior commanders!

Sinclair begrudgingly gets to his feet.

SINCLAIR
Must be big if it could not wait until morning. Lieutenant Ramsay!

Sinclair wanders into the darkness to find Ramsay. Russell is left alone as around him silhouettes of thousands of troops pack equipment.

EXT. ROAD TO ALMA - DAY

Columns of thousands of men and horses marching. The British lead, followed by French and Turkish soldiers. Russell shadows them all the way.

Lord Raglan and his staff head the column. Raglan gives an order to one of his officers.

STAFF OFFICER
Halt! Contingent halt!

The columns halt. Russell, seizing the moment, finds a suitable vantage point on a small hill to observe thousands of soldiers. The French commander, MARSHAL ST ARNAUD and his staff ride to the head of the column. As he passes the British, the infantry spontaneously burst into three cheers.

MARSHAL ST ARNAUD
English! I hope you will fight well
today!

Appreciative cheers from the British infantry as St Arnaud joins Lord Raglan. Russell watches as the commanders converse before continuing the march.

STAFF OFFICER
Forward march!

EXT. RUINED VILLAGE - DAY

The smoking, charred remains of a village. The force marches through the smoking, charred destruction. Russell walks beside Sinclair.

SINCLAIR
Still burning strong. They can't be
far away.

Russell he hears violent coughing and wretching behind him. He wheels around to see a Guardsman collapse out of the column. Russell rushes to help, as does another Guardsman.

GUARDSMAN
Come on mate, you're all right.
(to Russell)
The sick are being taken to the
rear. I'll take him back.

RUSSELL
Let me help.

Russell and the Guardsman prop the sick man on their shoulders and carry him back. En route they pass other men who have fallen out.

EXT. ROAD TO ALMA - DAY

Waggons pulling supplies and the sick follow the column of soldiers. The sick man Russell and the Guardsman have been carrying hangs from them limply.

RUSSELL
Where can we put him?

GUARDSMAN
Here.

They approach a waggon.

GUARDSMAN
Hey! Stop! We need to load this man. He's sick.

The driver stops. A DOCTOR climbs down.

DOCTOR
Set him down, let's have a look at him.

Russell and the Guardsman lay the man on the ground beside the waggon. The Doctor leans over him.

DOCTOR
He's dead.

GUARDSMAN
What?

DOCTOR
He's dead. Looks like another case of cholera.

The Guardsman turns away, clearly distraught with grief.

RUSSELL
May we load his body anyway? This man deserves a proper burial.

DOCTOR
Certainly not. The men back there are sick enough. We cannot risk them being made worse by travelling with a dead body. I suggest you find a suitable spot around here to bury him. That's what everyone else is doing.

RUSSELL
Very well.

The Doctor climbs aboard the waggon, the Driver rouses the horses to walk on. Russell watches the waggon depart. It is full of desperately sick men. The Guardsman, who's holding back tears.

RUSSELL

Have you anything to bury him with?

The Guardsman nods.

RUSSELL

How about over there?

Points to the summit of a small hill. The Guardsman nods again.

RUSSELL

Did you know him well?

GUARDSMAN

We grew up together.

RUSSELL

I'm sorry.

Russell and the Guardsman pick up the body and carry him to the top of the hill.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF RUINED VILLAGE - DUSK

Silhouettes of Russell and the Guardsman digging a grave, before lowering the body into it.

Beat. Russell and the Guardsman stand over the grave in silence.

RUSSELL

We need to catch up with the others. It will be dark soon.

The Guardsman takes a final look at the grave, before turning away with Russell.

EXT. ROAD TO ALMA - DUSK

Russell and the Guardsman walk in silence. Ahead, they see a lone HIGHLANDER walking.

RUSSELL

Hey!

The Highlander turns and sees them. He stops to wait.

HIGHLANDER

What ye doin' out here?

Russell looks to the Guardsman. He says nothing.

RUSSELL

We were... Aiding a sick man.

HIGHLANDER

Aye. Plenty o' men I seen go that way.

RUSSELL

What about you?

HIGHLANDER

Had to take a pal back to have him looked at.

RUSSELL

Is he all right?

HIGHLANDER

He was alive when I left him. Was makin' my way back when I came across this wee lad collapsed on the roadside. Turned out he was a stiff so I buried him. Been walking for about an hour, tryin' te regroup with my boys.

RUSSELL

So are we. I'm guessing we're not the only ones.

HIGHLANDER

Ye right about that. There's a few lads further up the road. More ahead o' them I'd bet.

RUSSELL

Well we don't want to be stuck out in the middle of nowhere when night falls. We probably need to speed up.

HIGHLANDER

Right. Best get going then.

The three men set off together.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - NEAR RIVER ALMA - NIGHT

Russell, the Guardsman and the Highlander stagger into the camp, recognisable only by a collection of pitiful fires. In the distance on top of a hill, the fires of the Russian army can be seen.

HIGHLANDER

I need to find the 93rd, night lads.

The Highlander heads off into the darkness. Russell and the Guardsman wander on, until they spot Captain Topham sitting beside a fire, smoking.

GUARDSMAN

Sir.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Welcome back Sergeant. Everything
all right?

GUARDSMAN
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Is Saunders being cared for?

GUARDSMAN
He, he didn't make it, sir.

Beat.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Get some sleep Sergeant. You'll
need your strength for tomorrow.

GUARDSMAN
Goodnight sir.
(to Russell)
Thank you for your help today.

RUSSELL
Not at all.

The Guardsman slopes away.

RUSSELL
Good evening Captain Topham. Can't
sleep?

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
No. A number of my men fell out on
the march, some still haven't
turned up, so I'm waiting. I'll
wait all night if I must.

RUSSELL
Right. Well, Captain I was
wondering if I may have your
permission to write about what I
have seen today.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
That depends on what you have seen.

RUSSELL
I have seen one of your men die a
needless, pitiful, inexcusable
death. I carried him on my
shoulders past dozens just like
him. For all I know their bodies
litter the road. Those responsible
ought to be denounced.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Are you accusing me...

RUSSELL

No, no, you misunderstand me. I wish to write about the circumstances responsible for his death. As his commander, I thought it right to consult you.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Ah, well in that case you have my permission.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

Russell slumps down beside Topham.

RUSSELL

You know tomorrow I reckon I'll be writing about the British Army's first engagement with the enemy, and in a few days citizens all across England will read how their brave soldiers assaulted the Russian positions without artillery support. But they will also learn that some men spent their last night on God's earth frozen, starving, and crippled by illness.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

I must say William, when I first met you at Southampton, and you told me of your intentions, I thought you were going to be a bloody nuisance. I assumed you'd be a pest, constantly buzzing about impeding us from doing our job.

RUSSELL

I'm surprised you allowed me to board.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

So was I. I suppose I was curious. But I'm glad that I did. You clearly have the concern of the soldier at heart. We should all be grateful for your concern.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

But I would also like to advise caution. As honourable as your intentions are for the welfare of the men, exercising restraint could also help keep my men from harm.

RUSSELL

I understand, and I shall do my best, I assure you. But at the same time I will not allow British Army's victories to act as a veil for the failures of its leaders.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

So be it. Just be careful.

Russell sees Topham is starting to tire.

RUSSELL

You really should sleep captain. Your men will turn up sooner or later, and I'm sure they would prefer you were rested and ready to lead them in battle, rather than tired out waiting for them to get in like an anxious wife.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

You have a point there. Very well, let the morning light reveal who's made it back and who hasn't.

Topham lies down beside the dying fire and pulls his blanket over him. Russell watches him for a moment, then drifts off.

EXT. RIVER ALMA - DAY

Russian soldiers line one bank of the Alma, British soldiers begin to assemble on the opposite bank. Lord Raglan, Airey, Marshal St Arnaud and the senior British commanders gather around a map. Standing near them is Nolan. Russell, notebook in hand, observes nearby.

LORD RAGLAN

Form the infantry ready for the assault.

(to St Arnaud)

If you see here monsieur, that is the Great Redoubt up on the left and the Lesser Redoubt down over there.

MARSHAL ST ARNAUD

Gentlemen, I propose the French attack on their left flank, with support from the fleet, and the British attack their right. We go through the middle together eh?

Lord Raglan spots Russell taking notes.

LORD RAGLAN

Captain Nolan, see that newspaper correspondent off somewhere.

Nolan approaches Russell.

NOLAN

You'll have to move, William. I'll take you up to the cavalry. You should get a good view and be far away from his lordship.

RUSSELL

I'd like to be as close as possible.

NOLAN

All in good time.

Nolan leads Russell away. Raglan, Airey and the other commanders watch Russell leave.

EXT. BRITISH SECTOR - DAY

Russell and Nolan walk through the waiting infantry. Among them is Sergeant Harris.

NOLAN

I'll be able to find us some horses. Don't worry, you'll be amongst it presently.

RUSSELL

Excellent.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Look here boys! Be sure to do your best today. Put on a good show and we'll be in The Times, right Mr Russell?

RUSSELL

Absolutely Sergeant. I'll see you all afterwards to hear your tales of valour.

The soldiers cheer.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Russell and Nolan reach the waiting cavalry. At the head, LORD LUCAN, Commander of the Cavalry Division, and LORD CARDIGAN, Commander of the Light Brigade.

LUCAN

Cardigan you're a shameful cur. Glad to be up here I'd wager.

Russell and Nolan approach.

CARDIGAN

Do one, ratbag!

LUCAN
Zouderkite!

NOLAN
My lords.

LUCAN
Captain Nolan?

NOLAN
My Lord, I request two horses for myself and my companion here. He wishes to ride close to the battle.

LUCAN
Close?

RUSSELL
As close as I can get my lord.

CARDIGAN
What a request! These horses are the finest in the world, you expect us to surrender them for you to go gallivanting around a battlefield?
(to Nolan)
As for you sir! Such gall, I should have expected as much from an Indian! Now remove yourself!

NOLAN
Sir my horse is in the rear, as is Mr Russell's. As you see from the lay of the land before you it is quite impossible for a horse to reach the heights of the redoubt, and therefore the risk would be minimal. And if I may be so bold, Lord Raglan's orders are for the cavalry to remain out of shot, therefore this man has a greater purpose than you.

Lucan glares at Nolan, who stares fiercely back.

EXT. BRITISH SECTOR - DAY

Russell and Nolan ride towards the front, the sounds of artillery can be heard. The British attack has begun.

NOLAN
I apologise for Lord Lucan and Lord Cardigan's behaviour. They are insufferable cretins, and brothers-in-law if you can believe!

RUSSELL
Not a cordial relationship it would seem.

NOLAN

Certainly not, and Lord Raglan saw fit to make them comrades-in-arms! Pathetic that the finest cavalry in the world should be commanded by feuding dilettantes.

RUSSELL

Indeed.

NOLAN

I say look over there! The French are storming the right!

Russell pulls out his binoculars to watch French Zouaves advance towards the Russian defences under heavy fire.

NOLAN

I suggest you accompany General De Lacy Evans and his Second Division. They're leading the charge in the centre. You'll see them in action and have a good view of the assault on the Great Redoubt.

RUSSELL

Then let's be about it!

Russell gallops towards the battlefield, Nolan follows.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF BOULIOUK - ALMA BATTLEFIELD - DAY

British soldiers advance in close columns past the village. Leading the troops on horseback is GENERAL DE LACY EVANS. Russell reaches him as grapeshot rips through the ranks.

DE LACY EVANS

Stand ye firm lads! Let not one man relent!

(to Russell)

If you want to see a great battle, you're in a fair way of having your wish gratified!

The village of Bouliouk bursts into flames. Thick smoke obscures the battlefield, flames engulf the buildings. Across the river, cannon and rifle fire devastates the advancing British.

DE LACY EVANS

Follow me lads! Advance!

De Lacy Evans starts to cross the river, his men follow. As they reach the opposite bank they proceed to scale the hill.

A cannonball whizzes over the head of Russell's horse, striking a man in the face.

An explosion throws Russell from his horse. He seeks refuge in a small hut.

INT. HUT - DAY

Russell crashes through the door and lies down, protecting his head, as more cannonballs rip through the ceiling, showering debris over him.

Russell hauls himself up and pulls out his binoculars. He watches Guards, Highlanders and Fusiliers all advance up the hill. Thick smoke obscures their progress. An officer, brandishing a sabre, leads a charge from the front.

A ceiling beam crashes to the floor close to Russell. As Russell turns to look at it, another cannonball rips through the wall. Russell throws himself back to the floor. This time he's pinned down by large bits of debris.

A BANDSMAN outside witnesses this. He rushes inside.

BANDSMAN

Hold on there! We'll get you out.

The Bandsman pulls Russell out from under the debris.

BANDSMAN

You can't stay in here, it's
decidedly unhealthy!

EXT. ALMA BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Russell staggers out of the hut to find his horse has disappeared. He lies down and watches the attack unfold.

The advance continues, spurred on by the buglers, pipers and the officers. Off to the left, Lord Raglan and his staff charge across a wooden bridge on horseback. They cheer the men as they ride across the battlefield, gallantly evading shot and shell. In the centre, the Light Division led by Sir George Brown charge the heights, De Lacy Evans' 2nd Division is on their right.

Russell gets to his feet as he sees the British celebrate atop the hills.

EXT. ALMA HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell scales the hills to join the celebrating soldiers, passing both British and Russian dead and wounded.

At the top soldiers are busy destroying Russian equipment, collecting souvenirs, eating, drinking and laying out blankets for the night. There's sporadic rifle fire as soldiers empty the chambers of captured weapons.

Russell picks up a Russian rifle, examines it, aims it at the sky and fires it.

SERGEANT HARRIS (O.S.)
With musketry like that I hope you
stayed in the rear!

Russell turns to see Sergeant Harris, bloodied and blackened
by smoke and gunpowder.

RUSSELL
Good heavens Sergeant! Are you
hurt?

SERGEANT HARRIS
What? You'll have to speak up!

RUSSELL
Are you hurt?

SERGEANT HARRIS
Nah, not mine. Ran into a Russian
battery at the top of the hill.

RUSSELL
What happened?

SERGEANT HARRIS
The bloody idiots fired at point
blank. Missed us but damn it I
can't hear a thing!

Russell takes out his notebook and starts scribbling.

RUSSELL
Well, you've done a terrific job
today. Your actions will be in my
dispatch.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Excellent. I look forward to
receiving a letter of commendation
from the palace. I'm sure Her
Majesty will want to thank me
personally.

RUSSELL
I have no doubt.

SINCLAIR (O.S.)
Sergeant Harris!

Sinclair approaches. Harris salutes.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Sir!

SINCLAIR
Sergeant, where are the bandsmen
for the wounded?

SERGEANT HARRIS

I'm not sure sir.

SINCLAIR

Go and find out would you. Can't have our boys lying out here tonight.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Yes sir.

Harris hurries off. Sinclair turns to Russell.

RUSSELL

Well done Captain, a fine victory.

SINCLAIR

Thank you, but I would prefer to see to the wounded first.

Sinclair looks past Russell, Russell turns to see what he's looking at. Sir George Brown rides among the troops leading cries of 'hurrah!' Sinclair approaches him, Russell follows.

SINCLAIR

My lord...

Sir George Brown is oblivious to Sinclair.

SINCLAIR

My lord!

SIR GEORGE BROWN

What is it Captain?

SINCLAIR

My lord, where are the provisions for the wounded? We cannot leave them out here.

SIR GEORGE BROWN

Patience Captain! Bandsmen will come soon enough.

SINCLAIR

Sir they have not arrived. There are no bandsmen nor stretcher bearers.

SIR GEORGE BROWN

The Guards' wounded are no concern of mine Captain. My men shall wait for the bandsmen, I suggest you do the same. Now be about your duties

He slaps Sinclair's uniform with his sabre.

SIR GEORGE BROWN
And see to the state of those
belts!

He rides off.

SINCLAIR
Ridiculous.

RUSSELL
You're not just going to leave
those fellows are you?

SINCLAIR
Hopefully not. With any luck
Sergeant Harris will return with
good news. Lieutenant Ramsay...
Lieutenant Ramsay!

Ramsay eventually comes hurrying through.

RAMSAY
Sir.

SINCLAIR
I want every man to see to the
wounded. Give them water and escort
any walking wounded to the rear.

RAMSAY
Yes sir.

Ramsay heads off. As he leaves, Sergeant Harris returns.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Sir. There is a single medical tent
in the village, but there are no
stretchers or medical staff to
remove the wounded.

RUSSELL
What?

SINCLAIR
Anything else?

Harris shakes his head. Sinclair sighs.

SINCLAIR
All right, thank you Sergeant. Join
the rest of the lads and look after
these poor wretches.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Sir.

Harris departs.

SINCLAIR
Ridiculous. Right, let's see what
we can do for this lot.

Sinclair heads down the hill, Russell follows.

EXT. ALMA BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Men assist the wounded. Russell wanders around, noting what he sees.

He watches a DOCTOR tend to a man who's been shot. The Doctor tears off part of the soldier's trouser leg and uses it as a bandage. After wrapping the man in his soaked blanket, he moves on.

RUSSELL
What are you doing? This man needs
to be evacuated.

DOCTOR
What do you suggest? He cannot
walk, there's no way to move him. I
have hundreds of others to deal
with. If he survives long enough to
be transported he will be. Frankly
if there weren't so many watching
we'd shoot him.

The Doctor moves on, leaving Russell appalled.

Russell sees the man has passed out from the pain. He walks on until he spots Captain Topham kneeling beside a man.

RUSSELL
Captain.

Topham looks up.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Hello William, good to see you're
in one piece.

RUSSELL
I think I should be saying that to
you. Is he all right?

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Looks like it. Come on Corporal, up
you get.

The Corporal slowly sits up, clearly dazed.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Thought we'd lost you for a moment,
Corporal Preston.

CORPORAL PRESTON
I think I'm all right now sir.

RUSSELL

What happened?

CORPORAL PRESTON

There was a blast and I got knocked off my feet. Not sure what happened after that.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

As long as you're better now.

Corporal Preston nods, still coming to his senses.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

If you're able Corporal, I need your help with the rest of the wounded.

CORPORAL PRESTON

Yes sir.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

We'll start with those men over there.

Topham nods to the body of a wounded Russian soldier next to a wounded British soldier.

CORPORAL PRESTON

Even the Russian?

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Every man on this field fell in a glorious battle, they all deserve treatment worthy of that honour.

CORPORAL PRESTON

Yes sir.

Preston goes to the British soldiers' aid. Topham approaches the Russian, Russell follows.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Where are you hurt soldier?

The Russian appears to be unconscious. Topham starts examining him. He discovers he's been shot in the abdomen. He pours water on the wound and starts to dress it. The sensation of cold water jerks the Russian awake. He is wild and panicked.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

It's all right soldier. Stay calm.

The Russian, upon noticing Topham, explodes in a violent, wild rage. He grabs hold of Topham. The two fight fiercely. Russell tries to assist but the Russian is too strong. The Russian manages to pull out a knife and as they struggle, slashes Topham across the leg.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Corporal!

Corporal Preston rushes over. He fixes his bayonet and plunges it into the Russian's back. The Russian freezes before going limp and collapsing on Topham.

CORPORAL PRESTON

Sir!

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Blast!

CORPORAL PRESTON

Hold on sir, we'll get it dressed.

RUSSELL

There's a medical tent down in the village.

CORPORAL PRESTON

I'll carry you sir.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

No. Look after our boys. Mr Russell can assist me.

CORPORAL PRESTON

Yes sir.

Topham struggles onto his feet, hopping to keep the weight off his injured leg.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

When you're ready William.

Russell supports Topham on his shoulder and assists him down the hill and across the river.

EXT. MEDICAL TENT - BOULIOUK - DAY

A bell tent stands in the yard of a destroyed farm house. Wounded men lie outside in varying states of agony. Russell arrives carrying Topham.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Looks like there's a queue.

RUSSELL

Wait here a moment.

Russell sets Topham down amongst the other wounded officers.

INT. MEDICAL TENT - BOULIOUK - DAY

A wounded soldier lies on an operating table made out of a door. Surgeons, covered in blood, attempt to operate. Russell watches on.

RUSSELL
Sirs you have men piling up
outside.

The Surgeons, preoccupied, ignore him.

RUSSELL
They need urgent attention.

SURGEON
We're too shorthanded.

RUSSELL
Then where can they be treated?

SURGEON
There's a hospital at Scutari.

RUSSELL
Scutari? Back in Constantinople?

SURGEON
The navy's collecting men from the
shore.

RUSSELL
That's two days away!

SURGEON
That's the situation we find
ourselves in.

RUSSELL
How can...

SURGEON
Sir! Can't you see we are busy?!

Russell storms out of the tent.

EXT. MEDICAL TENT - BOULIOUK - DAY

Russell returns to Topham, who's surrounded by more dead men
than there were when Russell entered the tent.

RUSSELL
It's no good here, but the navy are
loading men from the shore to
evacuate them to Scutari.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Scutari?

RUSSELL
It's ridiculous, but it's the only
option. I ought to take you there.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM
Not until my men are...

RUSSELL

Captain surely your men would
rather see you fighting fit than
freezing to death on a sodden
hillside?

Beat.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Very well.

Russell helps Topham back to his feet.

EXT. ROAD TO THE BLACK SEA - DAY

Russell supports Topham along a road parallel to the Alma
river. Bouliouk burns behind them. Russell and Topham are
accompanied by other walking wounded bound for the shore.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Look. It's the French.

They see a convoy of covered hospital vans, drawn by strong
mules.

EXT. SHORELINE - DUSK

Russell sets Topham down on the shore with hundreds of
others. Sailors help wounded men into small boats to row
them out to the capital ships. A SAILOR approaches.

SAILOR

Hello sir. What ails you?

Topham says nothing. The Sailor looks to Russell.

RUSSELL

Sabre wound to the leg.

SAILOR

Not to worry sir. We'll get your
leg seen to.

CAPTAIN TOPHAM

Damn my leg!

RUSSELL

Apologies.

SAILOR

We'll take him from here.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

The Sailor takes over supporting Topham and starts to help
him towards a boat.

RUSSELL
There are still hundreds left on
the field sir. Many who cannot
walk. I beg you...

SAILOR
We'll do what we can.

RUSSELL
Thank you. I'll see you soon
Captain. I'll visit you at Scutari.

Topham says nothing as he's taken away.

EXT. ALMA HEIGHTS - NIGHT

Russell returns back to the hillside, exhausted. As he walks
up the hill he sees Elliot, standing over a body.

RUSSELL
Elliot?

ELLIOT
Hello Mr Russell. Forgive me but I
have no wish to divulge the events
of today just yet.

RUSSELL
Of course.

They stare at the body. As they do the cries of the wounded
ring out through the night.

ELLIOT
If they're screaming that means
they're alive. I suppose that's
something.

RUSSELL
That doesn't make this
satisfactory.

ELLIOT
I'm sure our superiors are doing
all they can.

RUSSELL
Too little too late if you ask me.

SINCLAIR (O.S.)
I heard that.

Russell and Elliot turn to see Sinclair approaching.

SINCLAIR
Corporal the fire is dying, can you
see to it.

ELLIOT

Yes sir.

Elliot leaves.

SINCLAIR

Please don't talk about the commanders in that way around the men William. It is not good for morale.

RUSSELL

Captain, look around you. Look at how Sir George treated you earlier today. How can you defend them?

SINCLAIR

I have to believe that my superiors are doing all they can for me and my men. If I don't I may as well shoot them all right now.

Beat.

SINCLAIR

We'll do all we can for them in the morning.

RUSSELL

If they make it to morning.

Beat.

SINCLAIR

Goodnight William.

Sinclair walks off into the darkness.

EXT. ALMA HEIGHTS - DAY

Many have died in the night. Baggage trains approach, some wounded men are crushed. Khalil approaches Russell.

RUSSELL

Good to see you Khalil.

Khalil nods.

KHALIL

Your tent is here, sir.

RUSSELL

At last. Best set up camp, I've no idea how long we'll be here.

EXT. ALMA HEIGHTS - DAY (LATER)

Khalil builds the tent as Russell ponders over his notebook.

GUARDSMAN (O.S.)

Huzzah!

Cheers from the infantry catch Russell and Khalil's attention.

KHALIL

Sir, look.

Russell looks down the hill. Sailors approach carrying oars and large bits of canvas. The men watch as they load wounded men into their canvas, then tighten the ends around the oars to create a makeshift stretcher

RUSSELL

They're using their hammocks.
That's brilliant. Come on Khalil,
there's still plenty to do.

Russell leads Khalil down the hill towards the battlefield.

EXT. ALMA HEIGHTS - NIGHT

Russell sits outside his tent beside a fire, tended to by Khalil. Other fires are burning throughout the camp.

Russell struggles to write a letter. Khalil notices.

KHALIL

Sir?

RUSSELL

I'm just thinking.

KHALIL

Of what?

RUSSELL

The Englishman sits at home unaware
of what has transpired here. How do
I make sense of it all so that he
may make sense of it?

Khalil hands Russell a biscuit. Russell does not take it, he's watching a soldier dry-heaving.

RUSSELL

Lost my appetite.

Russell stands and enters his tent.

INT. RUSSELL'S TENT - DAWN

Russell slowly wakes up. As he gathers himself, he picks up his notebook, reads through it, then starts to write his letter. When he finishes he throws off his blanket, stands and heads out of the tent.

EXT. RUSSELL'S TENT - DAWN

Russell emerges from the tent to find a frozen Russian corpse lying outside the entrance. Russell recoils in shock.

RUSSELL

Khalil!

Russell stands outside the tent, staring at the body. Khalil emerges, sees the corpse and reacts in a similar way.

RUSSELL

Poor wretch.

Khalil inspects the body.

RUSSELL

Probably trying to reach our fires.
Nothing we can do for him now.

Russell looks up and sees soldiers breaking camp.

RUSSELL

Looks like we're moving on.

Khalil starts busying himself with dismantling the tent.

EXT. ALMA HEIGHTS - DAY

Soldiers stand with their gear, waiting for the order to move. A STAFF OFFICER rides among them on horseback.

STAFF OFFICER

I need one man to stay behind with
the Russian wounded. Step forward!

A Doctor approaches, DR THOMSON.

DR THOMSON

I shall stay sir.

STAFF OFFICER

Very good. You are?

DR THOMSON

Thomson, sir.

STAFF OFFICER

Thank you Thomson. The wounded will
be in your charge. Do what you can
for them.

DR THOMSON
And if the Cossacks come sir?

STAFF OFFICER
We can only hope they show mercy.

The Staff Officer rides off. Russell and the men watch Dr Thomson make the lonely walk down to the wounded.

OFFICER (O.S.)
Standby to march!

Russell turns his back on Thomson.

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Delane sits at his desk, reading Russell's letter. It reads, 'Am I to tell these things, or hold my tongue?' Delane turns to Russell's dispatch. After reading, he gives a small smile before writing a letter of his own.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

A paperboy cycles through the street, a satchel full of newspapers on his back. The boy stops outside homes, pushing the newspapers through the letterboxes.

INT. LONDON HOUSE - DAY

A Victorian gentleman sits at his breakfast table, reading The Times. He reads the article, 'Victory at the Alma' with interest.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Our victory has been glorious, but there has been a great want of medical attention; the wounded were left, some for two nights, the whole for one, on the field. From the battle they have been bundled on board ship by 600 and 700, without any proper means for removing the wounded from the field...

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS - DAY

A backbench MP sits, bored. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out an envelope containing a letter and a cutting from Russell's article. He reads the cutting:

RUSSELL (V.O.)
The number of lives which have been sacrificed by the want of proper arrangements and neglect must be considerable.

The MP then reads the letter, 'I trust you appreciate the importance of this. Your friend, J.T.Delane.'

EXT. SCUTARI HARBOUR - DAY

Russell walks down a gangplank, sandwiched between wounded men being carried off the ship and loaded into carts. Russell climbs aboard one of the carts.

EXT. SCUTARI HOSPITAL - DAY

The carts pull up outside the entrance archway of a large military barracks. Ottoman soldiers guard the entrance. Soldiers begin to unload the wounded. Russell jumps down from the cart and heads inside.

INT. SCUTARI HOSPITAL HALL - DAY

A dark, dank hallway, dimly lit by a few candles. Doctors in bloodied hospital aprons rush in and out. Russell looks around, lost. A Surgeon enters in a state of urgency.

RUSSELL

Excuse me, I'm looking for Captain
Topham? Coldstream Guards.

SURGEON

You think I have time to learn
names?

The Surgeon marches off. Russell, taken aback, heads towards a set of heavy doors. He pushes them open.

INT. SCUTARI HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

Russell recoils at the sight that greets him. Hundreds of men, all still in their filthy uniforms. Some lie on beds, the rest lie on a floor soaked with blood and various fluids. Mice gnaw at the rotting wound of an unconscious man.

Russell walks past soldiers in various states of pain. Some share cigarettes, some lie still, some writhe in agony. Russell reaches one soldier who lies still on the ground. Suddenly, the soldier starts convulsing violently and screaming in pain. Russell rushes to try and help.

RUSSELL

Doctor!

The soldier thrashes wildly, his comrade beside him helps Russell hold him down with his one remaining arm, the other is a bloodied stump. The thrashing soldier cries in agony.

RUSSELL

Doctor! Nurse! Anyone?!

No one comes, the rest of the room simply look on as Russell and the injured soldier do what they can. The thrashing soldier tenses in pain, then empties his bowels.

Russell leaps away in disgust. The soldier passes out as blood, faeces and other bodily fluids seep onto the hospital floor. The injured soldier shuffles away from his comrade.

RUSSELL

Doctor!

A Doctor arrives, clearly in no rush.

RUSSELL

Where on earth have you been?

The Doctor ignores him.

DOCTOR

Anyone seen Mr Hayward?

The Doctor notices the sick soldier.

DOCTOR

Oh Christ.

RUSSELL

Mr Hayward is not here. For God's sake man help this poor boy!

DOCTOR

It's dysentery. There's nothing I can do for dysentery.

RUSSELL

Then at least clear up the mess!
You have men lying in this filth!

DOCTOR

I don't have time to be doing
housework.

RUSSELL

These men are in your charge, how
can you let them live like this?

DOCTOR

There are thousands of men relying
on me and my staff to have higher
priorities than whether the floor
meets your standards! Now, if you
are quite finished, I must find Mr
Hayward, he is needed in theatre.

The Doctor leaves through the ward, passing the dysentery-ridden soldier without a second glance. Russell, fuming, looks around the ward for something to use to clean the floor. He spots a bucket. He goes to pick it up but sees it contains bloodied bandages being soaked in blood red water. Russell puts the bucket down.

Russell turns to the dysentery-ridden soldier, he is dead.

RUSSELL
Did you know him well?

INJURED SOLDIER
Didn't even know his name.

RUSSELL
Oh.

INJURED SOLDIER
There's no Topham here. Try the
other wards.

RUSSELL
Thank you. I hope you feel better
soon.

The injured soldier laughs.

INJURED SOLDIER
I'll be outside before long.

RUSSELL
Outside?

The injured soldier nods to the dead man beside him.

INJURED SOLDIER
It's where he's going. It's where
we'll all end up, sooner or later.

Uncomfortable, Russell leaves him and exits the ward.

INT. SCUTARI HOSPITAL - DAY

Russell goes from ward to ward, looking for Topham in vain. With every ward he sees all manner of horrific injuries and illnesses, each one more appalling than the last. It is too much for Russell, he dashes for the nearest exit.

EXT. SCUTARI HOSPITAL - DAY

Russell emerges from the hospital. He rounds a corner to be alone. He takes a moment, attempting to compose himself. He takes out his notebook and starts scribbling furiously.

He spots men carrying bodies out to a cemetery and laying them out in rows. Dozens of bodies are awaiting burial.

EXT. HAYDARPASA CEMETERY - DAY

Russell enters the cemetery, passing by rows of graves. He approaches the lines of waiting bodies as the group of orderlies conduct a burial. His eyes widen when he sees the body of Captain Topham. His leg has turned gangrene.

RUSSELL
Excuse me.

The orderlies look round.

RUSSELL
Would you mind... Would you bury
this man next?

ORDERLY
Friend of yours?

Russell nods.

ORDERLY
Of course.

The orderlies start to dig a grave. Russell takes off his coat and starts to help. An orderly hands Russell a shovel, Russell accepts it gratefully and starts to dig.

EXT. HAYDARPASA CEMETERY - DAY (LATER)

Russell stands at the foot of the grave as the orderlies finish covering it over. One orderly starts hammering a wooden cross into the plot.

Russell composes himself and takes one final look at the grave. He then turns to the orderlies and nods gratefully before departing. He does not look back.

EXT. SCUTARI HARBOUR - DUSK

Men load supplies onto waiting ships. Russell walks towards a ship, a Sailor approaches him.

SAILOR
You lost mate?

RUSSELL
Is this ship going to Balaklava?

SAILOR
Sure is.

Russell makes to board, the Sailor blocks his way.

SAILOR
Woah, what you think you're doin'?
This ship is for the military, I
ain't letting a civilian onboard.

RUSSELL
Have you been over there?

SAILOR
No.

RUSSELL
So which of us is the civilian?

The Sailor has no response, Russell barges past.

INT. SHIP'S SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Russell lies in a hammock, writing his latest letter by candlelight.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

The commonest accessories of a hospital wing are wanting. The sick appear to be tended by the sick, and the dying by the dying.

INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - DAY

A Woman sits outside an office, reading The Times.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

Are there no devoted women amongst us, able and willing to go forth to minister to the sick and suffering soldiers in the hospitals of Scutari? Are there none of the daughters of England, at this extreme hour of need, ready for such work of mercy?

A Man pokes his head out from the office.

MAN

Please come in, Miss Nightingale.

The Woman folds the newspaper and follows the man inside.

EXT. BALAKLAVA HARBOUR - DAY

The gangplank lowers and Russell walks down onto the quay of a chaotically busy harbour.

EXT. BALAKLAVA STREET - DAY

Russell walks past soldiers and locals going about their business. Russell minds his own.

NOLAN (O.S.)

William! Wait!

Russell turns and sees Captain Nolan hurrying towards him.

RUSSELL

Nolan! Good God, how are you?

NOLAN

Very well considering the cold and the hunger and the saddle sores.

RUSSELL

Nothing new then?

NOLAN

Not since we arrived here.

EXT. ROAD TO KADIKOI - DAY

Russell and Nolan approach a small village. As they walk they pass the cannons of the Royal Artillery, their crews rest beside them.

RUSSELL

How have things been while I've been away?

NOLAN

Utterly intolerable. I'm reaching my limit William. There is only so much more I can bear of Lucan and his ilk. They lead their regiments as if they were back in their nurseries playing with their tin soldiers.

RUSSELL

Certainly explains a lot.

NOLAN

You know I'm losing patience with Cardigan. One more remark from him about my time in India...

RUSSELL

You ought not to let it bother you.

NOLAN

If we were not on campaign I'd demand to face him with pistols.

Nolan imagines the prospect.

NOLAN

The soldier and the snob. Oh I could cut him down to size.

EXT. GUARD'S HILL - BALAKLAVA OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Russell and Nolan arrive at the British camp. The masts of the ships in port at Balaklava are visible in the distance.

Sir George Brown rides towards Russell and Nolan.

SIR GEORGE BROWN

Captain Nolan what is the meaning of this?

NOLAN

Excuse me sir?

SIR GEORGE BROWN

Remove yourself at once! Colonel Airey will hear of your infractions.

NOLAN
Infractions? Sir?

SIR GEORGE BROWN
Fraternising with an enemy agent.

RUSSELL
Enemy agent? How dare you accuse...

SIR GEORGE BROWN
Hold your tongue sir! Your words
are poison to these men.

George Brown stares down imperiously at Russell. Russell
glares back.

SIR GEORGE BROWN
Captain Nolan. You will return to
Headquarters and inform Colonel
Airey of your flagrant
insubordination. Not that I would
expect anything else from a
clodhopping Indian.

It is all Nolan can do to contain his anger.

NOLAN
Yes sir.

George Brown slaps Nolan's uniform with the flat edge of his
sword.

SIR GEORGE BROWN
And sort out that uniform!
Raggedness may be acceptable
amongst your colonial vagabonds but
damn it it is not acceptable here!

George Brown watches as Nolan tightens his belts and coat.

SIR GEORGE BROWN
Be on your way, Captain.

NOLAN
Sir.

Nolan does not look at Russell as he leaves. George Brown
gives Russell a look of victory before riding off. As he
goes he slaps men with his sword for petty infractions.

Russell turns his back to George Brown and marches into
camp.

INT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DUSK

Sinclair sits under his blanket, coughing heavily. Russell
pokes his head through the flap.

SINCLAIR

Evening William. Something I can do for you?

RUSSELL

To a point.

SINCLAIR

Oh?

Russell sits down opposite Sinclair and pulls a bottle of vodka from his overcoat.

SINCLAIR

Ho! Splendid. Is that Russian?

RUSSELL

It is. Won it off a Lieutenant on the crossing from Constantinople. Turns out he'd salvaged it from a Cossack at Alma. I thought you could do with a pick-me-up

SINCLAIR

Well I wouldn't say no to that.

Sinclair pulls out two mess tins. Russell pours out the vodka. They toast.

SINCLAIR

Heavens! No wonder they're so easy to beat. I couldn't fight if I had a regular allocation of that stuff.

RUSSELL

I think it's rather good.

SINCLAIR

Heaven forbid any of the staff come in now.

Russell pours them more vodka.

RUSSELL

Ah I'm sure they'd sooner arrest me as an enemy saboteur than haul you up for enjoying a drink. And given the port and wine they get through at their regimental banquets they are in no position to protest.

Strong winds batter the flimsy tent.

RUSSELL

Listen to that. It's really blowing out there.

SINCLAIR
Spare a thought for the 93rd
Highlanders, they're up on the hill
tonight.

Sinclair drains his drink.

SINCLAIR
It'll be our turn soon enough. God
I'm dreading it.

INT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DAWN

Russell and Sinclair are sleeping peacefully. They are woken by the sound of distant cannon fire.

EXT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DAWN

Russell and Sinclair emerge to a hive of frantic activity. Explosions and cannon blasts strike the Turkish positions on the ridge ahead of the British camp.

SINCLAIR
The Turks are taking a pounding.
Stand to!

Guardsmen hurriedly, but professionally, assemble. Russell grabs his binoculars from inside the tent and runs from the camp towards a ridge next to the Turkish positions.

EXT. SAPOUNE HEIGHTS - DAWN

Russell climbs the ridge as fast as he can. When he reaches a suitable vantage point he pulls out his binoculars to scan the battlefield.

Russian infantry attack the Turkish redoubts. Russell scans all six redoubts, the Turks offer scant resistance at each one.

Lord Raglan and his Headquarters staff, including Airey and Nolan, arrive.

LORD RAGLAN
Telescope.

An Aide-De-Camp (ADC) hands Raglan a specially made telescope allowing Raglan to use it with only one hand.

AIREY
They have the redoubts, my lord.

LORD RAGLAN
Damn.

On hearing this, Russell turns back to his own binoculars and sees Russians man the captured guns as Turkish soldiers flee the redoubts.

LORD RAGLAN

Airey, have Lord Lucan withdraw the Heavy Brigade, we don't want any unnecessary loss there.

AIREY

Yes sir. And what of Campbell's 93rd on the hill?

LORD RAGLAN

Send the Guards with all haste to the 93rd's position.

Airey hands the order to an officer, who mounts his horse and departs.

Russell watches Lord Lucan withdraws the Heavy Brigade.

AIDE-DE-CAMP (O.S.)

My lord!

Russell snaps to look over to Lord Raglan. He is looking through his telescope, the staff are gripped by concern.

Russell looks back to see Russian cavalry charging towards the 93rd's hill. The 93rd are hidden on the reverse slope.

AIREY (O.S.)

They're headed straight for the 93rd.

LORD RAGLAN (O.S.)

Where are the reinforcements?

Suddenly, the 93rd reveal themselves on the hill, startling the advancing Russians. The 93rd stand in a continuous line two ranks deep. This is the Thin Red Line.

AIREY (O.S.)

Stand fast boys! Stand fast!

As the Russians get closer, the 93rd unleash a volley of rifle fire which devastates the Russian cavalry, but they continue the charge. A second volley forces the cavalry to veer off.

AIREY (O.S.)

Huzzah!

A third volley into the cavalry's flank forces their retreat to the cheers of the 93rd. Lord Raglan addresses his ADC.

LORD RAGLAN

My compliments to Sir Colin Campbell and his fine body of Highlanders.

RUSSELL

His thin red streak tipped with a
line of steel.

Lord Raglan looks at Russell.

LORD RAGLAN

Indeed. Airey, have Lucan dispatch
the Heavy Brigade to support those
brave fellows.

Airey writes the order and hands it to a waiting adjutant.

As the staff wait for the order to be carried out, Nolan
approaches Russell.

NOLAN

Not a finer display of cavalry as
that before you now William.

RUSSELL

I expect there's no greater honour
for a fighting man than to ride
with them.

NOLAN

Quite, but the fighter is best
suited to the Heavy Brigade. A wall
of steel and power that could break
down the walls of Sebastopol. Now
the hunter, he is the master of the
Light Brigade. Such dash and elan,
striking with the speed and
surprise of the finest regiment in
the world.

RUSSELL

I pity those Russians who must face
them.

AIREY

Captain Nolan that will do!

Nolan returns to Airey's side. Russell turns back to survey
the battlefield. The Heavy Brigade walk march along the
valley.

NOLAN (O.S.)

Look over there! Their cavalry has
reformed!

The cavalry that previously charged the 93rd has regrouped
close to the Heavy Brigade.

NOLAN (O.S.)

Come on Lucan! Charge them damn
you!

AIREY (O.S.)
 Captain Nolan contain yourself!

The Heavy Brigade charges into the numerically superior, but stationary Russian cavalry. The charge allows the British regiments to engage the Russians on three sides.

NOLAN (O.S.)
 We have them!

The Russians break off and retreat up the valley. The Heavy Brigade chase for a few hundred yards before pulling up.

LORD RAGLAN
 Are the infantry in a position to join the cavalry and exploit our success?

The staff survey the battlefield through their binoculars.

AIREY
 They are still some way off, my lord. But if I may point out, the enemy are in such disarray, the mere sight of the cavalry would be enough to drive them from the heights.

LORD RAGLAN
 Yes. Very well take this down for Lord Lucan. Cavalry to advance and take advantage of any opportunity to recover the heights.

Another runner takes the order.

LORD RAGLAN
 Must be time for breakfast.

EXT. SAPOUNE HEIGHTS - DAY

Regimental orderlies serve tea and biscuits as Raglan and Airey survey the battlefield. Something is not right.

NOLAN
 Damn it Lucan! What are you waiting for?

AIREY
 Nolan!

NOLAN
 My lord this will not do! Lord Lucan stands idle as he has done for fifty minutes! Time when the cavalry could have harried the Russians off the field. But now look before you!

The North Valley is bristling with Russian guns, with batteries on both hills and more artillery at the far end of the valley, supported by infantry and cavalry behind.

Raglan stares Nolan down. Nolan concedes and withdraws.

LORD RAGLAN
What news of the infantry?

Airey looks through his telescope.

AIREY
Still absent my lord.

OFFICER (O.S.)
My lord!

Everyone, including Russell, Airey and Raglan, turn to see an Officer pointing off to the heights to the right of the North Valley.

OFFICER
My lord the Russians are removing
the guns.

Russell looks to examine what the Officer describes. Russian infantry in the redoubts starting to haul away the captured guns.

LORD RAGLAN
Airey, take this down in your
clearest handwriting. The cavalry
are to advance rapidly to the
front, follow the enemy and try to
prevent the enemy carrying away the
guns. See that Lord Lucan receives,
and executes.

Nolan stands before Raglan, holding out his hand.

NOLAN
Let me take it, my lord.

Raglan pauses, before turning to Airey, who hands over the message. Nolan mounts a white horse and rides down the hill.

LORD RAGLAN
Never give up a gun, Airey. That's
the mark of a great commander.

Russell looks down at the plain and sees the white horse of Nolan has reached the head of the Light Brigade. He is engaged in a heated discussion with Lord Lucan and Lord Cardigan. Nolan thrusts out his hand and waves it in the direction of the Russian position at the end of the North Valley. There is a pause as the men stare each other down. Nolan gallops off to join the ranks of waiting horses. Lucan also rides off to rejoin the Heavy Brigade. Lord Cardigan remains at the head of the Light Brigade.

The brigade draws swords, and at the sound of the trumpet begins to move off at a trot.

The staff watch on eagerly as the Light Brigade gathers speed, leaving the walking Heavy Brigade behind. They continue on when suddenly, the white horse of Nolan breaks ranks and gallops to the front towards Cardigan...

AIREY (O.S.)

What the devil is Nolan doing?

Russell glances towards Airey, who's visibly fuming. Russell looks back to see Nolan waving his sabre wildly at Cardigan, who stubbornly rides on.

At that moment, there is a burst of grape shot just ahead of the brigade and a distant, piercing scream from Nolan. He slumps on his horse, who turns and heads back up the valley in confusion. Nolan's dead body falls to the ground, yards from where he had argued with Lucan and Cardigan.

Russell watches in shock. He looks at Raglan and Airey, who are in a similar state of confusion.

LORD RAGLAN

What does Cardigan think he's
playing at? Outflank those guns
damn you!

Cardigan leads the Light Brigade straight towards the Russian positions.

AIREY (O.S.)

He's turning into the wrong valley.

The Headquarters staff fall silent as they look on at the catastrophe unfolding before them. The Light Brigade charge towards the Russian guns in the valley. They are mercilessly struck down by cannon and grape shot from the front, the left and the right. Smoke begins to obscure them as they near their target. Eventually, only the muzzle flashes are visible.

Russell, dumbstruck by what he has witnessed, takes out his notebook and starts to write feverishly. Raglan and Airey are too defeated to even notice or care.

Lonely figures of the Light Brigade make their way back up the valley. Some walk, barefoot, their uniforms torn to shreds and their faces blackened and bloodied. Some carry wounded men on their shoulders. A few are on horseback, though they are outnumbered by horses without riders. They are a pitiful sight as they stumble back to camp. Out of the smoke, Lord Cardigan rides back, looking as proud as ever.

LORD RAGLAN

Summon Cardigan at once!

An officer quickly mounts his horse and rides off. Russell looks back to the valley. Lord Cardigan is surrounded by the survivors. They give him three cheers and there are whoops and cries, their spirit is not broken. Cardigan rides off.

EXT. SAPOUNE HEIGHTS - DAY (LATER)

Lucan and Cardigan arrive at the top of the ridge. They dismount and approach Lord Raglan and Airey.

LORD RAGLAN

Explain sir!

CARDIGAN

Explain? Explain what, sir?

LORD RAGLAN

What do you mean sir by attacking a battery, contrary to all usages of warfare, and the customs of the service?

Cardigan points to Lucan.

CARDIGAN

Him.

LUCAN

Me?

CARDIGAN

Yes. My lord, I hope you will not blame me for I received the order to attack from my superior officer in front of the troops.

Beat.

LORD RAGLAN

Lord Lucan, you have lost the Light Brigade.

LUCAN

I have carried out my orders as is my duty my lord. Orders conveyed to me by Captain Nolan from my commander to attack the guns. I have the order still.

Lucan takes out a piece of paper and hands it to Lord Raglan. Lord Raglan examines it before turning to Airey.

LORD RAGLAN

Airey. How could you?

AIREY

I will not be blamed! I wrote as you dictated sir!

As the generals argue, Russell stands by, making notes. He writes the line, 'Someone had blundered'.

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Delane sits at his desk, gripped by what he's reading.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Surely this handful of men are not
going to charge an army in
position? Alas! It was but too
true.

INT. A GENTLEMAN'S CLUB - DAY

An English gentleman sits in an armchair, reading Russell's article on the Battle of Balaklava.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Their desperate valour knew no
bounds, and far indeed was it
removed from its so-called better
part - discretion.

INT. STUDY - DAY

A Man sits at a table and is writing. Beside him is the newspaper, open on the pages of Russell's article.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
With a cheer that was many a noble
fellow's death cry, they flew into
the smoke of the batteries. At
thirty-five minutes past eleven,
not a British soldier, except the
dead and dying, was left in front
of those Muscovite guns.

The Man pauses to think, he looks at the paper, then turns back to his work and writes another line. When he finishes, he pulls back to evaluate his prose. It reads, 'Into the valley of Death, Rode the six hundred.'

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS LOBBY - DAY

Delane stands outside the Commons chamber as MPs mill about, some walk straight into the chamber. Delane is holding a handful of papers. An MP approaches, Delane hands him a piece of paper and talks in hushed whispers. The MP pockets the paper dismissively and walks into the chamber. This happens with a few more MPs.

An MP approaches, he is JOHN ROEBUCK, 52, brown hair, smartly dressed. Delane hands him a paper. Roebuck looks inquisitively at it, he gives Delane an approving nod and shakes his hand before entering the chamber.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS VIEWING GALLERY - DAY

Delane enters the viewing gallery and takes a seat among a few others. Beneath them, the House of Commons is packed with MPs. An MP stands, he is LORD JOHN RUSSELL, 62, thick hair though receding on the top, smartly dressed.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL

Sir, I cannot doubt that all those who approve of the expedition that has been sent to the Crimea, will cordially join in acknowledging the deeds of valour which have been performed.

And I should say, still more strongly, that those who thought that the expedition was unwise, that it was undertaken with inadequate means, will still more be inclined to admire the superhuman efforts that have been made by that army.

SPEAKER

John Roebuck.

Roebuck stands from the back benches. We see he is seated with a number of MPs that Delane had spoken with.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Sir must we point out that our admiration for our army's efforts is more so because of the failures of this administration in recognising the needs of the brave men it manages. The dereliction of Lord Raglan in tandem with this government must be acknowledged and acted upon.

A few murmurs of agreement, but the majority remain silent.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL

Sir I hold that we are none of us well qualified to perform that task that Lord Raglan has undertaken - one which can only be adequately performed by those who are practically familiar with the art of war, and know all the circumstances of the operations which have been undertaken. It is impossible for you to judge accurately with respect to the operations that are by him performed.

SPEAKER

I call the Duke of Newcastle,
Secretary of State for War.

The DUKE OF NEWCASTLE stands as Lord John Russell takes his seat next to Newcastle's.

DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

Sirs, let me only say that if you are pleased to impute any blame on the Government, for not having assisted Lord Raglan and his army with sufficient means, then, if such be the case, so much more must you accord your praise to that army. Sirs you must feel that to any extent to which you can blame the Government to so much the greater extent must you praise the army. It has always been considered that a Vote of Thanks to our gallant soldiers and sailors is the highest reward which it is in the power of Parliament to bestow.

There are mutterings and cheers of support from the government bench behind Newcastle.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Sir our gallant soldiers need more than a mere vote of thanks, they need you to see they receive what they require.

There are a few cheers from the opposition bench, but they do not support Roebuck as strongly. Delane looks at Roebuck before exiting the viewing gallery.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS LOBBY - DAY

Delane hovers outside the commons chamber. The doors to the chamber swing open and MPs exit. Delane intercepts Roebuck and they talk in inaudible whispers.

EXT. BRITISH POSITIONS - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell trudges, exhausted, through the British siege line. Wind and rain batters him. He walks along a flooded trench, past the artillery positions. The British guns fire repeatedly, pounding Sebastopol.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell passes the lines of tents. Men sit in the doorway, staring aimlessly out of their miserable shelters. Nubian servants stand out in the rain tending to horses that are muddy and in ill-health.

All men are now bearded and haggard.

EXT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell approaches just as Corporal Elliot is leaving.

RUSSELL
Hello Elliot.

ELLIOT
Mr Russell.

RUSSELL
How's the Captain?

ELLIOT
It's not looking good sir. I've kept him as dry as I can but this blasted tent is letting in water like a burst dam.

RUSSELL
I thought he'd shown slight improvement since we'd moved on from Balaklava?

ELLIOT
He insisted on checking up on the men, in all weathers. I tried to persuade him to relinquish his authority and transfer responsibility to Lieutenant Ramsay until he was fit to resume command. But he was steadfast in his dedication to the welfare of his men. I fear it has come at the cost of his own.

RUSSELL
I shall let you get on Elliot, no sense in standing out in this weather.

Russell makes to enter Sinclair's tent.

ELLIOT
Please don't go in now Mr Russell. The captain is resting, I'd be obliged if you did not disturb him.

Elliot walks off, Russell heads for his own tent.

EXT. RUSSELL'S TENT - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY (LATER)

Russell stands, staring at his tent, slashed and torn and the remnants of the canvas billowing in the wind. Khalil approaches.

KHALIL
Sir? What happened?

RUSSELL

This is the consequence of my devotion to Miss Verity. I did what was right, and have been made to suffer the petty sabotage of a few bitter and spiteful old cretins. The question is, what am I going to do now?

KHALIL

I could find us somewhere sir.

RUSSELL

No, no that's all right Khalil. I need you at the stables to look after my horse. In this cold more and more horses are succumbing and I need you to keep him fit and healthy. I'll sort out my billeting.

EXT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DUSK

Russell trudges in the rain towards a tent, passing haggard and exhausted men.

INT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DUSK

Russell enters the tent. Sinclair sleeps under a drenched blanket. Water drips in from the roof and the sides do not reach the floor, the gap lets in the wind, rain and a bitter chill. Russell wraps up as best he can and sits opposite Sinclair. He stares at him, concerned.

INT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - NIGHT

Russell writes by candlelight. The wind and rain continues to pound the tent.

SINCLAIR (O.S.)

Do you really think anyone is paying attention?

Russell's surprised to see Sinclair staring at him.

RUSSELL

What did you say?

SINCLAIR

I said do you really think anyone is paying attention? In all the months you've been out here, what difference has it made?

RUSSELL

I'm sure it makes the same amount of difference as you do when your men see you among them.

(MORE)

RUSSELL (cont'd)
I'm sure it makes a difference to
those who need it to make a
difference.

SINCLAIR
You really still believe that?

RUSSELL
I have to. I owe it to Miss Verity.

SINCLAIR
You think that makes a difference?
How about this for your precious
Miss Verity, the most wretched
beggar who wanders the streets of
London leads the life of a prince
compared to us. If Miss Verity
mattered to people as much as it
matters to you then do you not
think something would have been
done by now?

Sinclair coughs violently. He spits out phlegm and blood.

RUSSELL
For your sake I have to believe it.
If I don't, I would feel like I had
betrayed your trust. I would have
signed your death warrant.

SINCLAIR
You couldn't be responsible. The
right of every soldier is to die at
the right time. With glory. This
war has robbed too many good men of
that right. I'll be damned if I'll
be denied that honour.

RUSSELL
You are still equal to the task.
Surely it is more honourable to
face such hardship and prevail?

SINCLAIR
If there was a chance that we will
prevail.

RUSSELL
There still is.

Sinclair shakes his head with a look of resignation. He
stares at the ceiling.

SINCLAIR
Merry Christmas, William.

Sinclair rolls over. Russell sits and stares at his friend.

INT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DAWN

The rain continues to fall. The dripping water lands on Russell, waking him up. He looks over to Sinclair who's slumped facing Russell. His eyes are closed and he looks terribly pale.

Worried, Russell throws off his blanket and crawls over to Sinclair. He goes to check Sinclair's pulse, he reaches under the blanket to find Sinclair's wrist. To his horror, he pulls Sinclair's arm out from under the blanket. Russell's hand is covered in blood, Sinclair has slit his wrist. Russell throws off the blanket and finds a knife in Sinclair's other hand.

Russell sits in the tent, grief-stricken.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Sir?

Startled, Russell tries to compose himself.

RUSSELL

Corporal?

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Mr Russell? What are you doing in there? I asked you to let the Captain rest.

Russell crawls to the tent entrance.

EXT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DAWN

Russell emerges to see Elliot waiting with a steaming mug.

ELLIOT

I have the Captain's breakfast. I hope you did not disturb him.

RUSSELL

Elliot...

Confused, Elliot heads inside, not looking at Russell. Russell does not stop him.

INT. SINCLAIR'S TENT - DAWN

Elliot sees Sinclair's body. Russell enters behind him. Elliot removes his hat and bows his head respectfully.

Elliot and Russell stand in silence.

RUSSELL

I'm sorry Corporal.

ELLIOT

His illness finally got the better of him.

RUSSELL
I'm afraid not.

Russell kneels beside Sinclair's body as Elliot looks on, confused. Russell pulls back the blanket to reveal his slit wrist.

ELLIOT
Good lord!

RUSSELL
He was talking last night about wanting to die with the honour befitting a soldier.

ELLIOT
There is no honour to be had in suicide.

RUSSELL
Compared to being another victim of disease? He deserved a glorious death, but that was impossible.

ELLIOT
But this is not proper for an officer.

RUSSELL
Surely he's earned the right for his honour to be preserved?

ELLIOT
If anyone learned the truth, he would be struck from his parish, his name will be disgraced. There would be no honour to preserve.

RUSSELL
Then no one can know.

ELLIOT
What about the men?

RUSSELL
They have no reason to doubt that he succumbed to his illness.

Elliot nods.

RUSSELL
Go and tell them. I'll see to the body.

Elliot makes to leave. At the entrance to the tent he turns back.

ELLIOT
You're sure about this?

RUSSELL

I have always done my best to stick to Miss Verity. On this occasion it is necessary I pledge myself to her old rival, imagination.

ELLIOT

So be it. If you can bear it.

Elliot leaves the tent. Russell looks back at Sinclair.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

Delane walks through the street, he passes a small gathering of demonstrators peacefully protesting against the war.

Delane arrives outside a pub. He goes inside.

INT. LONDON PUB - DAY

A crowded pub, full of lunchtime punters. In a corner sits John Roebuck. Delane works his way over to him.

DELANE

Afternoon.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Hello again.

DELANE

Drink?

JOHN ROEBUCK

Same again.

Delane goes to the bar. As he goes, the pub door opens and a group of women enter. They each have books and pencils. They move through the crowd, talking to people and getting them to sign the books. They eventually reach Roebuck.

WOMAN

Good afternoon sir.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Afternoon madam. Can I help you?

WOMAN

We're petitioning to bring our soldiers home.

JOHN ROEBUCK

A noble cause indeed.

WOMAN

I'm sure you've read the stories.

JOHN ROEBUCK

I read only last week Mr Russell's latest account of the soldiers, 'miserable, washed-out, worn-out, spiritless wretches.'

WOMAN

Those poor men.

JOHN ROEBUCK

I'd be happy to sign your petition.

WOMAN

Thank you.

Roebuck signs his name as Delane returns with two tankards.

WOMAN

And you sir? Will you sign?

Delane takes the petition and reads it before signing.

WOMAN

Thank you, on behalf of all our fighting men, thank you.

The Woman leaves, Delane and Roebuck doff their hats politely.

DELANE

So what news?

JOHN ROEBUCK

The war seems set to continue. The government has convinced itself it is the right course of action, despite the pressure.

DELANE

The fact that it seems to be unwinnable has not deterred them?

JOHN ROEBUCK

Newcastle read Lord Raglan's latest dispatch in session today, he is certain Sebastopol will fall within the month.

DELANE

Funny. I thought he was sure Sebastopol would fall within the month last month.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Has Mr Russell supplied anything to corroborate his claims?

DELANE

No.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Well then. I think I know whose word I trust.

DELANE

William's doing sterling work. There's no question public opinion has shifted.

JOHN ROEBUCK

It's not enough though. We need to tip them over the edge. Something that will give Aberdeen no choice but to reconsider the value of the campaign.

DELANE

Any thoughts?

JOHN ROEBUCK

I can make a case to Parliament, but I fear they will remain stubborn until they are forced to act. For that to happen we need scandal. We need your man to find something beyond poor supplies and miserable weather.

DELANE

I'm sure that's achievable.

JOHN ROEBUCK

You think?

DELANE

Let's bring our boys home.

Delane and Roebuck toast the prospect and drink heavily.

EXT. BRITISH CEMETERY - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell and the rest of Sinclair's unit attend Sinclair's burial atop a hill. The wind is fierce. Everyone has had enough, but still the guns fire. Once the grave has been covered over, Ramsay, now a Captain, addresses the men.

RAMSAY

Well men. I hope you know I never wanted a promotion like this. Captain Sinclair did his best for us, right to the end, and I want to assure you I intend to do the same.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Follow you anywhere sir!

The men cheer heartily. Ramsay smiles.

RAMSAY

Thank you. Let's get back to camp boys. No sense in us catching any more of a chill out here.

The men disperse off the hill. Russell walks with Sergeant Harris and other Guardsmen.

RUSSELL

How are you Sergeant?

SERGEANT HARRIS

Couldn't be better Russell.

RUSSELL

Really?

SERGEANT HARRIS

I'm still alive.

Russell doesn't know how to respond.

SERGEANT HARRIS

But I received a letter before Christmas that my wife is sending me a birthday parcel. That keeps me going.

RUSSELL

I'm sure. When is your birthday?

SERGEANT HARRIS

Day after New Year. I'm throwing a jolly in my tent. You should come.

RUSSELL

Thank you. That does sound good.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Well, I think everyone needs a lift around here.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

The men walk past the guns, blasting away as ever.

RUSSELL

Do you hear from your wife often?

SERGEANT HARRIS

Hardly. The letter I received before Christmas was the first I'd had in months.

RUSSELL

I can't remember the last time I heard from Mary.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Still finding time for your
mistress?

RUSSELL
Excuse me?

SERGEANT HARRIS
Your Verity woman.

RUSSELL
Oh. Yes, I do my best. Though
recent events have placed a strain
on our relationship.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Ah you shouldn't worry about that.
You can bear the strain if she's
worth it. Anyway, you can never
really know a woman without...

At that moment, explosions rip through the camp. The men all
dive for cover.

RAMSAY
Stand to!

Russell, Harris, and the rest of the Guardsmen, sprint
through the camp as more explosions hit around them.

EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell and the Guards take refuge as explosions continue to
burst around them.

RAMSAY
Stand ready boys! Stand ready!

The Guards train their weapons on the ground ahead. The
valley is a battered wasteland. The high walls of the
fortified city are visible in the distance. Suddenly,
Russian infantry come into view with cavalry support. They
advance steadily.

RAMSAY
Easy lads. Hold steady.

Behind them, British cannons open up on the advancing
Russians. The Russians get within range of the infantry.

RAMSAY
Fire at will! Rapid volley.

The Guards open fire. Almost as soon as they commence
firing, the Russians turn and retreat towards Sebastopol.

SERGEANT HARRIS
What the bloody hell was that all
about?

RAMSAY

Reconnaissance sortie by the looks
of it.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Maybe they just came out to wish us
a happy 1855 sir!

The men all start laughing with relief. Russell watches
Harris, whose laughter masks his fear.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - NIGHT

Russell walks through the camp, his path lit by fires. Light
snow falls as the bitter wind blows. Russell is wrapped up
warm. He reaches a tent, the sound of conversation can be
heard inside. Russell pokes his head in.

INT. HARRIS' TENT - NIGHT

Ten men including Harris and Elliot are packed in with
almost no room to move.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Russell, glad you could make it.
Come in, find yourself a space.

Russell settles in between two Guardsmen. Harris hands him a
bottle of whisky.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Compliments of Captain Ramsay.

Russell takes a swig and hands it back.

RUSSELL

Good lord! Where'd he find that?

SERGEANT HARRIS

A local in Balaklava.

GUARDSMAN

So he says.

The men all chuckle.

RUSSELL

Did your wife's parcel arrive?

SERGEANT HARRIS

No.

RUSSELL

I'm sorry. I'm sure it will arrive
soon enough.

SERGEANT HARRIS

When the mail was handed out all I
got was a letter.

RUSSELL

At least that's something.

SERGEANT HARRIS

She wrote that she was sending me chocolate, and my son had whittled me a new pipe.

RUSSELL

A pipe?

SERGEANT HARRIS

My son's an apprentice craftsman. My wife says he's carved my name onto the side and the regimental crest onto the bowl.

RUSSELL

Impressive.

SERGEANT HARRIS

I know. So where is it?

RUSSELL

If it's not on its way, it must have gotten lost.

GUARDSMAN

More likely it was stolen.

RUSSELL

Eh?

GUARDSMAN

Mate of mine from the Fusiliers. He got a package, large thing, must have had plenty of goods in it. Nothing but his letter. He reckons someone's been helping themselves.

RUSSELL

Who steals from soldiers?

ELLIOT

Locals.

RUSSELL

How could they? Everything comes through the commissariat officers. Lord knows the staff want to keep me out of the stores. The locals wouldn't get within a hundred yards.

GUARDSMAN

The commissariat officers have a lot of mail to go through. It would be very easy for packages to be lost.

SERGEANT HARRIS

In that case I'm going down to the office tomorrow and giving them a piece of my mind.

ELLIOT

And if you find they have been stealing?

SERGEANT HARRIS

If I find some bloke has had my parcel, I'll smash his face in.

RUSSELL

Let me come with you.

SERGEANT HARRIS

If you want. But why?

RUSSELL

If you're right, you'll get into the papers after all.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - NIGHT

The men leave Harris' tent. Russell exits with them, he walks through the darkness with Elliot.

ELLIOT

I tell you what, whoever has Harris' pipe, I wouldn't want to be them when Harris catches up to them.

RUSSELL

Why not?

ELLIOT

Goes crazy. At Alma he beat a Russian to such a pulp his own mother wouldn't have recognised him.

RUSSELL

That's different. That was combat. You can't condemn his actions in battle. He was very brave, you all were.

ELLIOT

Brave? Ah well, that's nice to know. Makes a nice change from being a spiritless wretch.

RUSSELL

Excuse me?

ELLIOT
Miserable, washed-out, worn-out,
spiritless wretches are we not?

RUSSELL
How do you know about that?

Elliot beckons Russell to follow.

INT. ELLIOT'S TENT - NIGHT

Russell is lead into the tent. Elliot goes into his pack and pulls out an envelope containing a letter and a newspaper cutting.

ELLIOT
Read this.

Elliot hands the cutting to a confused Russell. He reads.

RUSSELL
Letters from the seat of war have
been reprinted in nearly every
newspaper in the kingdom. Mr
Russell, the gallant correspondent
of 'The Times' has contributed to
the imperishable glory of the
British army and may justly be
styled the Xenophon of this
memorable war.
(to Elliot)
Good lord.

ELLIOT
My mother wrote to me saying she
intended to join the campaigns
against the war.

RUSSELL
Campaigns?

ELLIOT
It doesn't matter if we are gallant
fellows or spiritless wretches, as
long as they're your words people
will listen. I daresay you've saved
us, Mr Russell. The public knows
that, as do we...and I'm sure
Captain Sinclair did as well.

Beat.

RUSSELL
I... I ought to be getting back.

Russell hands out the cutting. Elliot refuses.

ELLIOT
You keep it.

Russell pats Elliot on the shoulder in thanks.

EXT. ELLIOT'S TENT - NIGHT

Russell stands, stunned. He takes out his pen and scribbles at the top of the cutting, 'Miss Verity: the universal truth.'

EXT. BALAKLAVA STREET - DAY

Russell and Sergeant Harris pass locals going about their business. Russell see a group of sailors chatting to a tradesman. A SHADY MAN approaches and attempts to pickpocket them. He is rumbled and flees, pursued by the sailors.

INT. ARMY HEADQUARTERS - BALAKLAVA - DAY

Harris and Russell hover as staff officers bustle about.

RUSSELL
Where will we find the commissariat
office?

SERGEANT HARRIS
It'll be in one of these back
rooms.

AIDE-DE-CAMP (O.S.)
No, no, no sir you can't be here.

Russell and Harris turn round, an Aide-De-Camp approaches.

AIDE-DE-CAMP
Mr Russell must you keep this up?

RUSSELL
Keep what up?

AIDE-DE-CAMP
Please leave.

Russell spots Airey hovering in a corner, glowering at him.

RUSSELL
I'll wait outside.

Harris nods as Russell is escorted out.

EXT. ARMY HEADQUARTERS - BALAKLAVA - DAY

Russell emerges from the headquarters. He walks around to the side of the building. He checks the sentry is not looking before darting around the wall and along towards the post office. He halts beside a window and peeks inside.

The COMMISSARIAT OFFICER stands at a desk in front of stacks of mail. Harris squares up to him.

SERGEANT HARRIS
There must be a parcel for me.

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER
Well there's not.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Now look here. I received a letter
from my wife, a letter that
accompanied a parcel. I have the
letter but no parcel. Stands to
reason it is here somewhere.

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER
We're far too busy to do anything
about it at the moment.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Nonsense! Just have a look in the
stores.

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER
You telling me how to do my job?

SERGEANT HARRIS
Maybe I wouldn't have to if you
just...

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER
Your parcel's not here sergeant,
and I haven't the time to look for
it. So why don't you go back where
you came from and stop getting in
my way.

Harris storms out. The Commissariat Officer sits in his
chair and lights a cigarette, completely casual.

EXT. BALAKLAVA STREET - DAY

Russell attempts to keep up with an angry Harris.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Bloody ridiculous.

RUSSELL
Maybe it really is lost.

SERGEANT HARRIS
More like that detestable weasel
sold it on.

RUSSELL
You really think?

SERGEANT HARRIS
Captain Ramsay gets a bottle of
scotch whisky off a local. All the
proof I need.

Harris marches off, Russell lets him go on alone.

INT. RUSSELL'S TENT - NIGHT

Russell sits in his tent (previously Sinclair's). Khalil sits with him. The familiar wind blows outside.

RUSSELL
Khalil.

KHALIL
Sir?

RUSSELL
Do you ever interact with the
locals in Balaklava?

Khalil looks nervous, Russell smiles.

RUSSELL
You're not in trouble Khalil, just
answer the question.

KHALIL
I talk to traders.

RUSSELL
What about?

KHALIL
Sometimes I need things to care for
your horse. We talk over prices.

RUSSELL
What sort of things to they sell?

Khalil thinks.

RUSSELL
Cigarettes?

Khalil nods.

RUSSELL
And a cigarette case to put them
in?

Khalil nods again.

RUSSELL
Can you introduce me to the trader
you deal with?

Khalil nods a third time.

RUSSELL
Thank you. You're a good man
Khalil.

KHALIL

Thank you sir. You are a good man too.

RUSSELL

I don't know about a good man. But a redeemed man, certainly, and that suits me for now.

Beat.

RUSSELL

Big day tomorrow Khalil. Do it right and I'm sure we'll all be home soon.

Khalil blows out the candle.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell, Harris and Khalil pass the gun batteries. The bombardment causes Khalil to clamp his hands over his ears in shock.

RUSSELL

Come, come Khalil, I'd have thought you'd be used to it by now.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Sure been at it long enough.

EXT. BALAKLAVA STREET - DAY

The three men navigate the bustle of market day. Khalil leads them towards an alleyway.

EXT. BALAKLAVA ALLEYWAY - DAY

Russell, Harris and Khalil approach a figure standing in the alleyway. Russell recognises him as the Shady Man.

Khalil shakes the Shady Man's hand.

SHADY MAN

You buy?

Khalil nods.

SHADY MAN

You want cigarette?

RUSSELL

No.

SHADY MAN

You want woman? I get you woman.

SERGEANT HARRIS

I want my pipe.

SHADY MAN
Pipe? Yes, yes. I get.

RUSSELL
Where will you get it from?

SHADY MAN
I get.

RUSSELL
Where from?

SHADY MAN
No question.

Harris pulls out his bayonet and pins the Shady Man against the wall. The Shady Man is frightened and confused.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Where from?

The Shady Man shakes with fear.

SHADY MAN
S... Soldier... Every night.

RUSSELL
He sells you items?

SHADY MAN
I buy.

RUSSELL
And sell on to soldiers?

SHADY MAN
Anyone.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Did you sell a pipe?

The Shady Man shakes his head.

KHALIL
There are other traders sir.

RUSSELL
That's true. If they get new items every night most likely it's been sold by now.

Harris relaxes his grip, the Shady Man wastes no time in fleeing.

SERGEANT HARRIS
If a soldier's got it he won't be British. Any decent man will know a Guard's insignia and hand it over.

Harris storms off. Russell and Khalil follow.

RUSSELL

Harris! Where are we going?

SERGEANT HARRIS

I want to talk to the French.

INT. HARRIS' TENT - NIGHT

Russell sits with a despondent Harris.

RUSSELL

So it's not a Frenchman, or an Ottoman.

Harris says nothing.

RUSSELL

We'll keep looking Sergeant. At the very least, you've helped uncover a scandal within the army administration. I guarantee only good can come of this.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Hooray.

Harris turns over, his back to Russell.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Harris and Russell stand in the camp watching the bombardment of Sebastopol.

SERGEANT HARRIS

You think we'll ever get in there?

RUSSELL

Eventually. Either the Russians will run out of men, or they'll run out of wall.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Can't come soon enough.

GUARDSMAN (O.S.)

Sergeant Harris!

Russell and Harris turn to see a Guardsman approaching.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Private?

GUARDSMAN

Your pipe Sergeant, we think we've found it. Corporal Slade saw some Bandsman from the Rifles with it.

SERGEANT HARRIS

Where?

The Guardsman points into the camp.

GUARDSMAN

Over there.

Harris dashes off, Russell and the Guardsman follow.

EXT. RIFLES TENTS - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell arrives to find Harris squaring up to a RIFLEMAN, he is smoking Harris' pipe. Soldiers surround them.

SERGEANT HARRIS

That's my pipe.

RIFLEMAN

Not by my reckoning. I paid good money for it.

SERGEANT HARRIS

And my son made it.

The Rifleman takes a puff and blows it in Harris' face.

RIFLEMAN

Tell him thanks.

Harris punches the Rifleman. They fight wildly. Russell watches on as comrades try and pull them apart.

SIR GEORGE BROWN (O.S.)

Enough!

Russell sees Sir George Brown approach on horseback. Harris and the Rifleman are broken apart, both are in a bad way.

SIR GEORGE BROWN

Haul that man to his feet!

Harris is lifted up and stands before Sir George Brown.

SIR GEORGE BROWN

Remove his shirt.

Harris is relieved of his shirt. He starts to shiver.

SIR GEORGE BROWN

Assaulting a fellow soldier is inexcusable. You will be dealt with in a manner befitting your crime. Bandsman!

A Bandsman approaches. He pulls out a cat o' nine tails.

SIR GEORGE BROWN

Attention!

All men stand rigidly to attention, watching. The Bandsman turns Harris to face them, then stands behind him.

SIR GEORGE BROWN
Fifty lashes.

RUSSELL
Sir, surely...

SIR GEORGE BROWN
Be silent or be under arrest. I trust my leniency will be featured in your latest, treacherous article, you miserable little scribbler.

Russell, furious, backs down.

SIR GEORGE BROWN
Proceed.

The Bandsman flogs Harris repeatedly. Russell looks on with the rest.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell walks with a couple of guardsmen as they carry Harris towards his tent. He is weak from the flogging.

GUARDSMAN
That's it Sergeant, nice and slow.

Ramsay approaches. The men stand to attention, propping Harris up. Harris tries to support himself but struggles.

RAMSAY
It was an act of foolishness Sergeant, and not one I would expect from any of my men, let alone a Grenadier.

SERGEANT HARRIS
Yes sir.

RAMSAY
I trust that you will not do such a thing again?

SERGEANT HARRIS
I have no need to sir. The deed is done, and we have all had justice served to us.

RAMSAY
I'm glad to hear it. Private would you see that a doctor examines the Sergeant at the earliest opportunity.

GUARDSMAN

Yes sir.

Ramsay departs. The Guardsman turns to Harris.

GUARDSMAN

Come on Sergeant, let's get those gashes looked at.

RUSSELL

I'll leave you to it. I need to send today's dispatch.

GUARDSMAN

Of course.

RUSSELL

Rest easy Harris.

Harris gives Russell a weak smile.

SERGEANT HARRIS

I look forward to seeing my name in The Times, Russell.

Russell watches him go before heading to his tent.

INT. RUSSELL'S TENT - DAY

Russell sits and writes. He does not pause, he does not ponder, he knows exactly what he has to say.

INT. TELEGRAPH STATION - BALAKLAVA - DUSK

Khalil delivers a letter to the telegraph operator. He reads it and starts to tap it out on the telegraph machine.

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY

Delane sits at his desk, he is reading a telegram. A satisfied grin crosses his face as he reads. When he's finished, he starts to write a letter of his own.

INT. JOHN DELANE'S OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

Delane seals the letter and the telegram in an envelope marked 'The Rt. Hon. John Roebuck'.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

The newspaper Hawker stands by a stall selling copies of The Times in abundance. Roebuck passes him.

EXT. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT - DAY

Roebuck passes a mass protest against the war as he enters the parliament building.

INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS - DAY

The House of Commons is well attended, Roebuck, seated on the opposition side, stands to address the chamber.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Sirs, I propose the motion that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the condition of our army before Sebastopol, and into the conduct of those departments of the government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of that army. We have sent from this country an army the most unparalleled in its efficiency and in its numbers that ever left this coast, and now it appears that this army, by neglect of the government, has been reduced to a condition that wrings the heart of the nation.

SPEAKER

Is the right honourable gentleman proposing a vote of no confidence?

JOHN ROEBUCK

I am sir.

An MP from the government bench stands as both sides passionately voice their opinions.

MP

Sir I cannot conceive by what arguments you can justify this motion. You may say here is a case of disaster, of great sickness and mortality in the army, and we think the government are to blame for it? There is no disguising the fact that this government has been for a long period a government existing without what may be termed genuine parliamentary support. It has, consequently, been subjected to constant defeat upon cross motions of every description and no doubt its strength and efficiency have been greatly impaired by such proceedings. I hope the House will consider well the course it is about to pursue.

A second opposition MP stands and addresses the room.

MP #2

The conversation in railway carriages, on board steam-boats, among high or low, rich or poor, whatever might be their politics, one universal cry of mismanagement. Not one member of the government had risen to state that proper and sufficient measures had been taken. Instead of showing where the error was, they rode off from the main question to divert public attention from the real evils.

An ADMIRAL stands from the government side of the chamber.

ADMIRAL

Sirs I feel it necessary to repel such an unjust attack. The right honourable gentleman is evidently out of his depth. From the first moment the army landed in the Crimea, it was pressed upon the Commander in Chief that their wants should be fully supplied under all circumstances.

A third MP stands next to the Admiral.

MP #3

I request that the demands of this motion, an inquiry into the condition of the army before Sebastopol, be conducted with all due alacrity, for I believe that upon investigation you will find that the reputation of Lord Raglan will stand far higher than before.

Roebuck stands.

JOHN ROEBUCK

Sirs I have no doubt as to the capability of Lord Raglan and his staff, as has been made clear in this chamber we are in no position to pass judgement on our commanders. But we are able to pass judgement on the inefficiency of ministers. We have confided to Her Majesty's Government the destinies of a gallant army of a great nation. They have betrayed that confidence, and the hopes of the people are now directed to this house. Shall we betray them too?

The Government bench is launched into a frenzy. Roebuck shouts over the noise.

JOHN ROEBUCK

If we refuse this inquiry, we willingly disregard the reality not only that an army of England is at stake, but also that the very safety of the country is in jeopardy.

Roebuck sits. The jeering and objections continue.

SPEAKER

The house will vote, aye or nay, on the motion of inquiry into our army in the Crimea.

The MPs all file out. As they go, many shake Roebuck's hand.

Roebuck looks up at the gallery. Delane looks down at him and gives him a nod.

EXT. BRITISH CAMP - SEBASTOPOL HEIGHTS - DAY

Russell sits on the hill, looking out over the plain as the British batteries continue to bombard Sebastopol. Khalil approaches him.

KHALIL

Sir.

Russell turns.

RUSSELL

What is it Khalil?

Khalil holds out an envelope. Russell takes it.

RUSSELL

Thank you.

Russell opens the envelope. It is a telegram. It reads, 'Vote of no confidence. Aberdeen Cabinet resigns. Enquiry into mismanagement approved. New readers every day. Good work. J.T.Delane.'

Russell wears a victorious smile. He stands and, with Sebastopol behind him, walks back through the British camp.

Titles over action: Sebastopol would fall in September 1855. William Russell remained with the British Army until December. He returned to England a national hero.

The collapse of Lord Aberdeen's government prompted a regeneration that transformed the British Army into the most modern and effective military force until the outbreak of the First World War.

Russell would report on the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War, establishing the credibility of the modern war correspondent.

To this day his legacy lives on as journalists continue to risk their lives to report on conflicts, and hold those responsible to account.

FADE OUT:

END.