

"CHARIOTS OF FIRE"

A Film

by

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PREFACE

"This first experience with 'official' sports was conclusive. Wherever public authorities undertook to meddle with any sports organization they introduced the fatal germs of impotence and mediocrity. The body formed by the good will of all the members of an autonomous sport group becomes swollen to gigantic and uncertain proportions upon contact with this dangerous thing called the State."

Baron Pierre de Coubertin
Founder of the Modern Olympics
Paris, July, 1900.

These are sour days in Olympic history. The bureaucracies of big business and nation states have finally demanded more of the original slender ideal than it can possibly bear and it's fatally begun to crack. This year's Olympiad could possibly be the last.

But it wasn't always so. Back beyond Moscow and Montreal, Bundage and the big brass bands, Hitler and the Zieg Heils, was a time when the young people who gathered under the five rings and flame did so of their own volition. They were fired by their own purpose, inspired by their own dreams, and seeking only to test themselves, on their own behalf, against the fastest, the strongest, the highest on earth.

Such men were Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams. The one the son of a Scots missionary destined to follow in his father's footsteps and to die in Japanese hands in 1945. The other the son of a German Jew who battled against prejudice and the might of the English Protestant Establishment to become the last Englishman and the only Jew ever to win the Blue Riband of the Games -- the 100 metres. Liddell and Abrahams, in 1924 are to become the two fastest men in the world, yet both have their own individual driving force. They run because they have to, Liddell for Gad whose cause he upholds almost to the point of athletic suicide, and Abrahams as a means of dealing a final blow to the humiliation and bigotry which have haunted his life.

They both reach Gold, but on their own terms. Riding their "Chariots of Fire" they fight against and finally sweep aside those newly emerging Goliaths, nationalism and political expedience, those same monsters which today have resulted in the probable demise of the whole magnificent ideal.

Their stories deserve to be told again, if only to inspire today's young men and women the world over to pick up a new torch, to rekindle it and to find for themselves that old Olympic spirit once more.

"CHARIOTS OF FIRE"

FADE UP ON

EXT. FLEET STREET - DAY

1

Filling screen -- BIG CLOSEUP -- a medal, a gold medal -- hanging on a "sky blue" East German chest.

The D.D.R. dirge ploughs on above the image. Then PULL BACK TO SEE the recipient -- erect -- bland -- smiling a practiced smile, programmed. CAMERA MOVES BACK FURTHER TO ENCOMPASS his teammates, second and third -- cast from the same mold. They stand -- a triumphant, manufactured trio.

CAMERA MOVES BACK AGAIN TO REVEAL they are images on a screen -- a TV screen. CAMERA MOVES BACK FURTHER -- more screens -- the image multiplied a score or more.

Reflections flash before us -- passing pedestrians -- London busses, cabs.

The anthem is lost in the sound of traffic as a shop window emerges, filled with TV screens. London passes them by -- and their all too-familiar, boring story.

THEN out of the noise of Fleet Street, rises the sound of singing...a congregation.

"He who would valiant be
'Gainst all disaster.
Let him with constancy
Follow the master..."

The CAMERA PANS LEFT -- SEEKING the singing's source. To the left of the shop is an alley -- down it we can see an open church door. Inside the rear of the congregation.

CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE ON them...erect, sombre suited -- solemn.

MIX TO:

Flying angels vaulting across the screen, gilded and triumphant amidst the pipes of a great church organ reaching for the sky. The light is the pale pastel of a Georgian church interior.

THE SOUND OF SINGING CONTINUES.

CONGREGATION

(voice over)

'...There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a pilgrim.'

The singing soars, the angels leap. The pipes tremble with vibrato. The voices are strident -- mainly masculine -- forceful, yet strangely toneless...school-assembly-like.

PAN DOWN STILL SEARCHING FOR the source.

CAMERA MOVES DOWN PAST the Organist enthusiastically pounding his keys with hands and feet alike -- DOWN PAST the candles and clean-cut altar silver.

CAMERA LEVELS OFF AT the rosy glow of Anglican priests in the medals and white regalia of the English established church.

THEN PAN RIGHT PAST the Rabbi with black, flowing beard... THE RABBI? HERE?

YES. THE RABBI. There's no mistaking his calling, or the cut of his cloth.

CAMERA ROUNDS PAST the choir of cherubic boys, aged it seems, from nine to ninety.

CAMERA ROUNDS TO the congregation itself.

They sing determinedly, making a bit of a chore of it, their "ORDERS OF SERVICE" held bravely before them. On these is emblazoned "A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING FOR HAROLD ABRAHAMS 1899-1978."

PAN ALONG the family -- adopted son and daughter -- very English, women Harrods shot silked.

Their children, Harold's grandchildren, in prep school spruce.

CAMERA MOVES ONTO his contemporaries, elderly, faded, yet proud and upright, white-haired and neck-tied to a man with the red white and blue of the 1924 British Olympic Team.

THEY SING:

CONGREGATION
'Since Lord thou dost defend
Us with thy spirit.
We know we at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies flee away
I'll fear not what men say,
I'll labor night and day
To be a pilgrim.'

The CAMERA RESTS WITH the rallentando finish.

Cont.

CAMERA RESTS ON the face of a small, thin gentle man. His cut is identical to that of the others, yet his eyes are sensitive, aware, without the self-conscious resolution of those about him.

He is AUBREY MONTAGUE -- journalist.

THE CONGREGATION SIT in the usual flurry of coughing.

CAMERA PICKS UP a tall elderly aristocrat making his way to the lectern. He walks with that complete assurance that comes with being born with a whole canteen of silver cutlery in his mouth.

This is ANDREW -- the sixteenth Earl of Cumbria -- the athlete Earl.

The coughing ceases as all faces turn obediently up to him -- the Rabbi's included.

There's a moment's majestic silence -- a theatrical pause before he deigns to speak. He reads from a mammoth bible, half-moon spectacles hanging from his nose tip.

ANDREW

Let us now praise famous men and
our fathers that begat us.
All these men were honored in
their generations...

The old men remember, misty-eyed.

THE SOUND OVER of running feet. Plod, plod, plod...running through sound, rhythmic, deliberate.

Aubrey Montague's face is uplifted as the thud of the runners builds with the pounding of many breaths...

ANDREW

...and were the glory of their times!

CUT AND BANG IN CLOSEUP OF THE RUNNING FEET.

OPENING CREDIT TITLE:

"CHARIOTS OF FIRE"

EXT. A BEACH BROADSTAIRS, KENT - DAY

2

CAMERA IS STILL ON THE FEET the sand flying -- the wet -- crunching through sea pools and driving rain.

Cont.

CAMERA MOVES UP the mud bespattered sockless calves -- the pounding knees, the soaked, voluminous shorts -- all-enveloping the pumping thighs...the clenched piston fists, and finally, the punished faces.

CONTINUED CREDITS.

Over Aubrey Montague, young and fit, leading a pack of young athletes on a training run by the sea -- in the depths of a dull wet summer's day in 1924.

CAMERA LOOKS CLOSELY, RECOGNIZE them, the same features as the congregation, now young, fresh, hair cupped short. Among them two or three strangers.

THEY PASS a MAN and BOY walking a dog, who watch them go.

BOY

Who are they Pa?

FATHER

Athletes -- training for the Olympic Games. See the tall one -- in the middle!

BOY

Yes. Who is he?

FATHER

That, my boy, is Harold Abrahams -- The fastest man in England!

CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE ON Harold tall angular, with a glowering profile, behind him ERIC LIDDELL stocky with freckled open Celtic features...we've yet to meet him, as we have HENRY STALLARD rangily taking up the rear, and scarcely out of breath.

The string threads along the sea's edge leaving a windy, spattered, chopped path in the smooth wet sand.

CAMERA PICKS UP Aubrey at the front again -- setting a cracking pace for such a mild young man. He's happy, healthy, and delighted to be fit and fast.

HIS VOICE youthful, enthusiastic, rises above.

AUBREY

(voice over)

Carlton Hotel. Broadstairs.
Kent. Twenty-eighth of June,
1924. Dear Mum...

Cont.

There's nothing childish or "mother's boy" about Aubrey's voice -- it's straight and strong. Mother/son relationships were like this in 1924.

AUBREY

(voice over)
 ...I'm most awfully sorry about your cold and the general dreariness -- we are also having quite bad weather here too...

CREDITS END.

And the rain drives down as he trots away, leading his pack away from us and up the beach towards the hotel perched on the dunes.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - THE CARLTON HOTEL - DAY

3

The room is high-ceilinged, highly polished and tasteful. Through the French windows the rain has stopped and a family are cavorting towards the calming sea. Aubrey sits at the writing desk by the window. He reads his letter aloud to himself, quietly. He's dressed in immaculate white Cambridge cricket sweater and flannels -- his hair brushed and parted -- his shirt collar standing around a silk cravat.

AUBREY

(reading)

'Thanks for your letters. I'm sorry you and Pa are disappointed that I should be letting the Olympic Games interfere with my shorthand but I'm going on with them just the same. If you were my age, with a chance to win the world championship in Paris, you'd be just as big a fool as I am. By the way, it's awfully kind of Pa to finance me here in spite of my idiocy. It's marvelous for esprit de corps. Most of the chaps have managed to get down.

The door bursts open. The young ANDREW LINDSEY leans in with Stallard and Liddell.

ANDY

Cricket Montague -- in the ballroom -- now. Game?

AUBREY

Fine!

ANDY

Hurry up then. 'Need your spinning finger!

INT. CARLTON HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

CLOSEUP Aubrey's third finger, wrapped around a solid rubber ball -- wrist bent, arched -- preparing to impart a devastating spin.

An indoor cricket game is in session -- enthusiastic -- raucous -- played with varying degrees of seriousness. Batting is Eric Liddell -- a study in concentration. Behind the wickets, which stand on a wooden block -- is Andy -- wearing a Panama, a pair of wicket-keeping gloves and smoking a cigarette in an elegantly long holder.

To his right at first slip is Harold -- glowering, intense -- hands spread, ready.

Umpiring at Aubrey's bowler's end is Henry Stallard -- festooned with sweaters and several hats. Other team members are in "the field."

Aubrey -- gripping the ball menacingly -- trots up to bowl. Through the air the ball arches, buzzing like a wasp. Liddell plays stolidly forward -- the ball spins off the floor, clips his bat by a merest edge and thumps into Harold's hands.

Harold leaps for the ceiling with a yell, and reaches for the bat.

HAROLD

Howizzzeeee???

HENRY

(resoundingly;
eyes to the roof)

Not out!

HAROLD

(purpling)

What d'you mean, not out? You could hear it in bloody Bournemouth. Come on Liddell, my innings.

ERIC

(pulling the bat
away and solemnly
winking at Andy)

Did I touch it? Was it the crack of my wrist you heard?

HAROLD

(apoplectic)

I saw the bloody thing BEND! Andy?

Andy studies Harold's apoplexy with amused tolerance. The cigarette holder perched in his immensely gloved hand. The surrounding fielders smile. Eric retains an expression of complete innocence.

ANDY

Sorry old chap! No tickle for
me.

HAROLD

(raging)

He's OUT I tell you. You're
all deaf -- deaf and bloody blind.
Aubrey, I ask you! FOR GOD'S SAKE!!
It's not FAIR!

His last appeal is to the bowler -- but he's wasting his time
-- for Aubrey is convulsed in uncontrollable laughter. Then
they all break, including Eric.

AUBREY

(voice over)

Harold's here -- as intense as
ever...just as he was when I
first set eyes on him.

CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE ON Aubrey's laughing face.

THEN SLOW MIX INTO clouds of locomotive steam.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE STATION PLATFORM - 1919 - DAY

5

TITLE: September 1919.

STEAM, steam, steam.

The station sign "Cambridge" emerges and INTO SHOT walks Aubrey
-- visibly more gauche...four years younger. He's loaded with
luggage, tennis racquets, golf clubs, etc. -- and he's anxious.

OVER this hear Harold's voice -- loaded with sarcasm.

HAROLD

(voice over)

Sorry to inconvenience you, sir!
Damned inconsiderate of us, all
arriving on the same train. Of
course you're short of porters.
Anyone would imagine it's the
first day of the blasted term.

The Freshmen of 1919 are descending off the train. This
generation, the first after the Great War -- has its own
special poignancy. There's a bustle of luggage -- a slamming
of doors.

Aubrey struggles past Harold, who just "played hell" with the
station master.

Cont.

Harold picks up his bag and catches Aubrey up.

HAROLD

Need some help?

AUBREY

I'll say! Can't get a damn porter anywhere.

HAROLD

I've an arm free. Give me the clubs for a start.

He throws the clubs over his shoulder puts the racquets under his one arm and picks up a suitcase with the other.

HAROLD

All set?

AUBREY

It's jolly kind. Are you sure you're all right?

HAROLD

Fine.

AUBREY

Thanks -- thanks awfully.

They start off down the platform -- both loaded up -- Aubrey with bags and cricket bat.

HAROLD

Quite a sportsman, eh?

AUBREY

'Beg Pardon'...Oh -- all the clubs and things? All show really -- though I do enjoy it. I take it you're not keen?

HAROLD

I run.

AUBREY

Really? So do I!

HAROLD

(smiling)

I'm surprised you can find the time.

AUBREY

Only trouble is, I can't stand getting beaten. How about you?

HAROLD

I don't know. I've never lost!

Aubrey looks at him as they pass through the ticket barrier -- the collector plucking their tickets from their top pockets. A voice cuts in.

VETERAN

Carry your bags sir? Find you a cab?

HAROLD

No! No th...!

He turns and looks into the eyes of a young man of about twenty-five, shabbily dressed but wearing his war medals. One sleeve hangs empty at his side. Beside him, holding his other arm, is another man of the same age, with medals, but with no sight. Aubrey looks at Harold.

HAROLD

Oh! Er -- yes -- thanks.

He hesitates, not knowing what to unload and where.

VETERAN

(eagerly)

Right sir -- Thank you sir -- Here y'are Bill -- grab hold of these.

He takes a case off each of them and puts them in the blind man's grip. Then he takes the rest -- clubs etc. himself.

VETERAN

Where to sir -- which college?

HAROLD

Gonville and Caius...

VETERAN

And you sir?

AUBREY

The same.

(looks at
Harold
apologetically)

Sorry!

Cont.

Harold smiles.

VETERAN

Right gents -- this way.

He leads them through the mob whistling. The Blind Man follows right behind him uncannily following the sound.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE STATION APPROACH - DAY

6

The Veteran leads them to a cab -- opens the door -- and tells the driver the destination as he loads up the luggage beside him.

VETERAN

All stowed sir.

HAROLD

Thank you -- Thanks very much.

He gives the man a florin.

Aubrey presses the sam into the Blind Man's hand.

AUBREY

Yes -- thank you...and good luck.

BLIND MAN

Thanks mate -- all the best!

And he grabs Aubrey's hand and shakes it. Aubrey is visibly moved. He climbs into the cab and slams the door.

INT. TAXI CAB - DAY

7

They are both sitting in silence. Then:

HAROLD

What's the matter? Feeling guilty?

AUBREY

Well? Here we are -- coming up to Cambridge -- everything before us, every chance...

HAROLD

Feel grateful not guilty...The time to feel guilty's when we let those chances slip.

EXT. STATION APPROACH - DAY

The Veteran is looking after the disappearing Cab. He spits on his florin and puts it in his breast pocket.

VETERAN

Mine was Yid Harry. That's what we fought the bloody war for. To give all the Jew boys a proper education.

The Blind Man reacts -- showing his contempt.

EXT. STREETS OF CAMBRIDGE - DAY

8

From high -- looking down at the cab motoring through the spires and towers of the ancient town -- across the bridges, greens and through the droves of cyclists. The clocks chime and the trees stand serene against the autumn mist and all is peace and tranquility.

EXT. CAIUS COLLEGE - DAY

9

UP ON the carved coat of arms over the arched entrance. Harold is looking up at them as Aubrey pays the cab. It pulls away as they pick up the luggage. They walk through the arch into the inner quadrangle of lawn surrounded by medieval arches. This is the college court. They stop and stare.

There is an immediate peace and breathless serenity here. Centuries of stillness yards from the busy street. They gaze about them as the sound of organ music rises from the chapel.

Harold looks up at the spires -- at the stone crosses -- all the symbols of English stability, continuity -- permanence -- establishment.

AUBREY

Penny for them?

HAROLD

Thinking about my parents that's all.

AUBREY

(looking)

Yes. One does, doesn't one.

A VOICE CUTS IN.

HEAD PORTER

In here gentlemen -- if you please.

They turn sharply. The door to the Porter's lodge is open to their right. They drop the luggage and go in.

INT. PORTER'S LODGE - DAY

The HEAD PORTER is behind the counter in top hat and tails -- his ASSISTANT, in mere morning clothes with bowler, is with him.

HEAD PORTER
Names please.

HAROLD
We're new.

HEAD PORTER
I can see that laddy. Name?

HAROLD
Abrahams. H.M.

The Head Porter looks at him for a moment then examines his list. It's a look Harold has learned to recognize.

HEAD PORTER
Top of the list. Repton. That the one?

HAROLD
That's it. I left a year ago.

HEAD PORTER
'Been doing your bit have you. France?

HAROLD
No...joined too late.

ASSISTANT
Bad luck lad.

HAROLD
There's many a man would have liked a share of it -- bad or not.

The Head Porter's eyes harden slightly -- then he offers Harold a pen.

HEAD PORTER
Welcome to Caius -- sign here.

HAROLD
Thank you.

He signs.

Cont.

HEAD PORTER

Across the court. Top right-hand corner and up the stairs.

HAROLD

Thanks.

(hands back
the pen)

By the way what are your names?

HEAD PORTER

Rogers. I'm Head Porter. And this is Mr. Ratcliffe my Assistant.

HAROLD

Well Mr. Rogers, Ratcliffe. I ceased to be called 'laddy' when I took up the King's Commission ...is that clear?

HEAD PORTER

(smiling slightly)

Yes Mr. Abrahams -- quite clear.

HAROLD

Thank you. I'd be obliged if you'd remember it.

(turns to Aubrey)

Meet up with you later.

The Head Porter watches him go.

HEAD PORTER

(to Aubrey)

What's your friend studying then son? Barrack room law?

AUBREY

I've no idea.

HEAD PORTER

(looks at
the book)

Well one thing's certain, with a name like Abrahams he won't be in the chapel choir, will he?

OUT

11

INT. CAIUS COLLEGE - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

CUT TO a sepia still of the Freshers of 1913 -- equally young -- if anything more stiffly self-conscious.

PAN ALONG the faces. The lost generation.

As we do so the voices of the CHAPEL CHOIR singing grace in Latin.

The picture hanging on the Great Hall wall -- lit by candlelight.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Harold standing, the picture behind him. His head bowed.

PAN RIGHT PAST Aubrey then UP and AROUND TO a list of "The Fallen" emblazoned on the wall above the top table.

MIX SOUND to MASTER'S VOICE.

Run down the list as the Master speaks:

MASTER

(voice over)

I take the War List and I run down it. Here is name after name which I cannot read and which we who are older cannot hear without emotion -- names which are only names to you, the new college, but which to us, who knew the men, bring up one after another...

The Master is addressing "The Freshers" dinner. A sumptuous candlelit occasion in the ancient timber-roofed college hall. He's glancing back at the memorial tablet behind him.

MASTER

(voice over)

...pictures of honesty and manly beauty and goodness and zeal and vigour and intellectual promise.

PAN ALONG the young faces before him -- fresh, clean, polished in stiff white shirts and black ties -- listening.

MASTER

(voice over)

It is the flower of a generation, the glory of Israel, the pick of England, and they died to save England and all that England stands for.

He pauses for a moment to collect himself. His young audience bow their heads. His fellow tutors hide their emotion. Harold and Harry catch each other's eye across the table.

Harry half-smiles reassuringly. Harold's gaze shifts to Andy who's sitting erect in complete but respectful control. As the Master continues, dwell on each of our characters, for what he says has its own peculiar relevance to each.

TO Andy -- ultra-privileged -- astronomically wealthy. The elder son of the Duke of Cumbria. His is the choice between dissolute waste, or responsible deployment of his immense advantages.

TO Harry -- Son of a Yorkshire banker -- hard-headed but compassionate. He's chosen medicine as the ideal medium in which to exploit both traits. Great sense of responsibility towards those who worked to put him here.

TO Aubrey -- Gentle son of gentle Southern English middle-class parents. A dreamer with a vaguely romantic vision of what he wants for himself -- to write a powerful novel? To be a hard-nosed but compassionate journalist? He listens with more than a trace of emotion.

And TO Harold -- Jewish money-lender's son from Golders Green. First generation German, conscious of his Jewishness and feels a desperate need to carve a niche for himself in the establishment of his father's adopted country. He's defensive, ruthlessly ambitious, yet intrinsically kind.

Over all this the Master CONTINUES:

MASTER

And to you gentlemen, the new generation, have been bequeathed the hopes and dreams of those who went before you. Through tragic necessity their aspirations have become yours. You are doubly privileged. On their behalf I exhort you to examine yourselves, assess your true potential, seek to discover where your true chance of greatness lies. Without their supreme sacrifice such opportunities would not have been yours. For their sakes, for your parents, for the sake of your college and your country, seize your chance, rejoice in it and let no power nor persuasion deter you from your task.

INT. STUDENTS' ROOM - CAIUS COLLEGE

13

From the stone landing we can see into Aubrey's room. He is seated at a small writing desk lit by a tiny reading lamp. His dinner jacket hangs on his chair and his bow tie hangs loosely round his neck. A coal fire burns red in the fireplace -- the place is cosy if frugal. He is writing his

Cont.

inevitable letter to his mother. As he writes a low murmur rises in his ears -- half-chant, half-song. He lifts his eyes from his letter and listens...puzzled.

Then he rises and quietly crosses his room to the open door.

Across the tiny landing Harold's door is ajar.

Aubrey tiptoes to it and peeps in.

Harold is standing, book in hand before his small table, rocking to and fro as he reads...donning various articles of ceremonial as he does so. He is at prayer. For a moment Aubrey watches, deeply impressed. Then he moves back, into his room, sits and picks up his pen.

AUBREY

(as he writes)

Today I made the acquaintance of
a pretty remarkable chap!

INT. COLLEGE GREAT HALL - DAY

14

It's the Students Societies Fair or "Squash" as it's called. All the various clubs and societies set up stalls and ply for new members from the thronging Freshers. It's bedlam. Club Secretaries and Presidents are barking out the praises of their own pursuits.

Harold, Aubrey and Harry are on parade. Harold is looking at Aubrey's collection of memberships.

HAROLD

Cricket Club, Golfing Society,
Tennis. Squash Club, Flora and
Fauna, and Philately. Is that
all? You're idle man, idle!

AUBREY

I can't join everything, I've
got to work sometime.

A chorus of Gilbert and Sullivan strikes up somewhere -- on a gramophone. Harold immediately cocks an ear.

HARRY

What about bird watching? Take
a book along with you.

AUBREY

How can I watch if I'm reading
a book?

Suddenly Harold breaks spontaneously into song:

HAROLD

'We're soldiers of the Queen,
All linked in friendly tether.
Upon the battle scene,
We fight the foe together.'

The other two look at each other as Harold pushes his way towards the source of the music -- then they follow.

AT THE GILBERT AND SULLIVAN SOCIETY STALL -- a gramophone horn is blowing out the Dragoons chorus from "Patience." The SECRETARY and PRESIDENT are singing lustily bass and tenor. Harold arrives and without a word slips into the baritone heads together.

TRIO

'We're every mother's son,
Prepared to fight and fall is
the enemy of one, the enemy of all is!'

They cheer and shake hands as they finish with a flourish. Harry and Aubrey applaud.

SECRETARY

(to Harold)

Can't manage tenor can you?

PRESIDENT

Desperately short of tenors.

HAROLD

'Fraid not. Except under torture.
(turns to Aubrey)
What about you Aubrey -- sing do you?

AUBREY

School choir that's all.

HAROLD

Stallard?

HARRY

(backing away)

Not on your life. They kicked me
out of Ring a Ring of Roses.

He flees into the mob. Harold watches in mock disgust.

HAROLD

Sorry about that. Still we can't
all be gifted.

(sings)

'If everyone is somebody...'

TRIO

'Then no-one's anybody!'

Laughter again.

HAROLD
Put my friend here down as well.

AUBREY
Hey! Steady on!

SECRETARY
Excellent!

PRESIDENT
Rehearsals start Monday. Iolanthe.

AUBREY
But I was a boy alto!

HAROLD
Perfect. You can be Queen of the
Fairies.

AT THE "GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE ATHLETICS CLUB" stall --
ROBIN, the Secretary is accepting Harry into membership. More
singing continues in the b.g.

ROBIN
(writing)
Stallard H.B. 880 and the mile.
Glad to have you Stallard. Top
class middle distance men are
worth their weight in gold.

HARRY
I can't vouch for those times.
'Taken with the school alarm clock
most of them.

ROBIN
(laughing)
Give or take a second, they're
good enough for me.

He offers Harry a pen. He signs.

ROBIN
Haven't come across a fellow
called Abrahams have you?
H.M. Abrahams? -- He's challenged
for the Trinity College dash.

HARRY
And what's so special about that?

ROBIN
It's special, my dear fellow, because
in all of seven hundred years,
nobody's ever done it.

INT. HAROLD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Harold and Aubrey are sitting by the fire in dressing gowns, pajamas and slippers. The coals burn bright -- lighting up their faces. They cup hot cocoa mugs in their hands.

Harold looks into the embers.

HAROLD

It's an ache, a helplessness, and anger...one feels humiliated. Sometimes I say to myself -- hey. Steady on! You're imagining all this! And then I catch that look again, catch it on the edge of a remark -- feel a cold reluctance in a handshake.

He takes a sip of cocoa. Aubrey follows suit.

HAROLD

My father -- he's a German Jew. He is alien.

(smiles)

Spiritually, culturally, linguistically, and gastronomically he's as foreign as a frankfurter -- and a kosher one at that.

Aubrey laughs.

HAROLD

I love and admire him. He worships this country. From nothing he built what he believed was enough to make true Englishmen of his sons. My brother's a doctor -- a leader in his field. He wanted for nothing. And here am I setting up shop in the finest university in the land.

CUT TO:

EXT. A BRIDGE OVER THE CAM - DAY

Harold and Aubrey are strolling over a bridge -- their arms full of books. Their conversation continues.

HAROLD

But the old man forgot one thing. This England of his is Christian, and Anglo Saxon...and so are her halls of intellect, her corridors of power. And those who walk them guard them, with jealousy and venom.

Aubrey chuckles -- as they walk away from us.

AUBREY

You're right to read law -- you're quite an advocate.

HAROLD

It's one of our rare ethnic advantages. It's called the gift of the gab.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF CAMBRIDGE - DAY

17

They WALK INTO VIEW -- amid flying buttresses and towering Gothic stone.

HAROLD

Strangely enough, I've never consciously felt Jewish. Not even at school. And there they treated me like some rare species of ape. But this place -- look at it. Every stone reeks of Anglican pomp and complacency. It's enough to deconvert St. Paul. I want to stand, and cry out, and bring the whole damn place tumbling down.

Harold stops.

AUBREY

Well go on! Go on -- be a devil!

Harold looks at him. They're outside King's College Chapel, the Great Rose window above them. He closes his eyes, raises his arms up to it, and lets out a long mournful chant in Hebrew. People stop and stare. When he's finished he calmly walks on.

AUBREY

Feel better?

HAROLD

Not really! I prefer Gilbert and Sullivan.

They walk.

AUBREY

So what now? Grin and bear it?

HAROLD

(after a pause)

I'm going to take them on. One by one. All of them. And run them off their feet.

EXT. TRINITY COLLEGE COURT - CLOSEUP THE FACE
OF TRINITY CLOCK - MIDDAY 18

It says 11:50. PAN DOWN TO REVEAL the great square of lawn surrounded by cloisters and above them students' rooms with mullioned windows opening out onto the court itself. In the windows undergrads sit peering out expectantly. Below them the square is beginning to fill with excited crowds of students.

Like most aspects of University life there is a studied casualness about the whole affair. It must appear to be happening almost by accident -- tradition is everybody's guide -- no organization or presentation is needed -- all slots into place as if by magic.

Harold appears clad in an overcoat over his running kit. A scarf flying nonchalantly around his neck. He's accompanied by Harry and Aubrey, plus Robin, very much in his official capacity. They push their way across the square to a position under the clock. There's a smattering of applause and a swell of half cheers/half jeers. Cheers for the courage of the man and jeers for his downright affrontery.

The mob gather around the quartet as Robin raises his hands in a plea for silence. The crowd hush.

ROBIN

Right chaps -- Thank you -- please.

(clears his throat)

Let it be known that H.M. Abrahams of Gonville and Caius has formerly made challenge for the Trinity Court Dash.

Again the jeers/cheers.

ROBIN

For those present who are not familiar with the rules they are as follows: -- The Challenger will attempt to run around the perimeter of the court, to and from a fixed point beneath the clock, within the time taken by the sound clock to strike midday. The distance to be covered is traditionally recognized as one of three hundred and twelve paces.

There's a stir of amazement in the crowd...and a smatter of applause again

FIRST STUDENT

(shouting)

What have you got on your feet, Abrahams? Rockets?

There's laughter at this, which Robin again quells. He looks up at the clock. It says five minutes to go.

ROBIN

The challenge will commence on the strike of one. The challenger must reach his mark before the strike of twelve.

Comments are thrown in as he speaks, from the surrounding crowd:

CROWD

'What on? A motor bike?'
'Go home Abrahams. You're wasting your time.'
'You show 'em, Harold!'
'Go to it, Caius!'
'Do it for Israel!' etc...

With patronizing laughter -- and sarcastic applause.

ROBIN

(plcughing on)

May I also remind those of you who are new to this college and its peculiarities.

(points to the clock)

The Trinity clock is unique. It strikes not one, but two-fold for each hour.

There's a murmur of renewed interest at this. At least it puts the feat within the bounds of possibility.

ROBIN

Would the challenger please make himself ready!

EXT. THE WINDOW OF THE TRINITY MASTER'S ROOM 19
- DAY

The MASTER of CAIUS, H.K. ANDERSON, looks down from the window. His counterpart from TRINITY moves in behind him and tops up his glass of sherry. They survey the scene below.

TRINITY

This Abrahams. What do you know about him?

CAIUS

Repton chap. Jewish. His father's a financier in the city.

Cont.

TRINITY

(dryly)
Financier? A euphemism for what,
I wonder.

CAIUS

I suspect he lends money.

TRINITY

Exactly. And what did they have
to say about his son?

CAIUS

The school?

TRINITY

Yes.

CAIUS

Academically sound. Arrogant and
defensive to the point of pugnacity...

TRINITY

They invariably are.

CAIUS

Yet possessing a keen sense of
duty and loyalty.

TRINITY

Hm!

(sips and crosses to
the window; looks down
on the crowded court)
Did they say he can run?

CAIUS

Like the wind!

Trinity Master reacts and throws open the window wide --
letting in the din.

EXT. TRINITY COURT - MIDDAY

20

Harold has disrobed and is ready. Robin glances up at the
clock. It's one minute to twelve.

He takes out a lump of chalk and draws a broad white line
across the pavement.

He straightens up -- and addresses the immediate crowd.

ROBIN

Gentlemen, would you please draw
back please, away from the starting
line.

Cont.

They do so -- some dash for other vantage points around the edge of the lawn or to hang from pillars.

ROBIN

Mr. Abrahams -- your position please!

Harold moves forward. A hush descends on the court. The crowd crane their necks as Harold toes the line to find the best grip.

ROBIN

(addressing the throng)
Owing to the absence of any other challenger, Mr. Abrahams will run alone.

A VOICE CUTS IN.

VOICE

Not so Mr. Starter!

All heads turn -- to see, hurrying through the crowd, his coat thrown over his shoulders, ANDY LINDSEY. Crooked in his arm is an unopened bottle of champagne. Harold is as amazed as the rest. Andy tosses his coat to the open-mouthed Aubrey and the bottle to Harry. He's resplendent in Eton running strip.

ROBIN

Your name and college if you please sir.

ANDY

Lindsey. I race beside my friend here. We challenge the Trinity Court in the name of Repton, Eton and Caius.

Cheers again.

HAROLD

(shaking his hand)
I didn't know you ran.

ANDY

Nor I you. Chap told me about this shindig over breakfast. I thought I might help push you along a bit.

HAROLD

I'm delighted. Good luck.

Cont.

ROBIN

Gentlemen. To your marks if you please.

They drop to semi-crouch starts. A silence descends on the court as the clock's minute finger moves slowly towards twelve.

ROBIN

Remember. When the clock strikes one!

A HUSH...a moment...then the opening chime begins.

DING! DONG! DING! DONG!

See the expectant faces -- a multitude around the square.

DING! DONG! DING! DONG!

See the Masters at the window -- Trinity Master smugly pleased at Andy's intervention.

DING! DONG! DING! DONG!

Harry and Aubrey anxious amongst the faces.

DING! DONG! DING! DONG!

The King's students hanging from their windows.

CUT TO:

NEW ANGLE

20-A

Harold and Andy poised on the brink. All eyes are on the clock.

SUDDENLY a flock of pigeons flutter from the tower. The runners sway -- then stay.

The crowd catches its breath.

Then:

DONG!!

And they're away!

DONG!!

There's bedlam as the pair race for the first corner. REMEMBER they have twenty-four chimes, two seconds each chime makes forty-six seconds to complete a distance of approximately 310 yards. Easy on a modern track -- but here, round right angle corners, on paving stones, in tennis shoes, and through a mat?

Cont.

DONG! DONG!

Harold, by virtue of his faster start reaches the first corner a yard ahead. The pair stutter around as they pick up speed down the western side.

DONG! DONG!

Harold hits the second corner two yards up but is in need of a breather. So he eases out to allow Andy to take him on the inside. An enormous roar greets this. Andy stretches his long legs down the southern side and the Master of Trinity's eyes flash with delight.

DONG! DONG! -- DONG! DONG!

The third bend. Both men are gasping now as they clatter and slide into the last of the long straights, the eastern edge of the court.

DONG! DONG!

Eleven strikes left! Andy fights to keep his lead, but the jutting jaw of Abrahams inches past him, and there's a yard between them as they near the final corner.

DONG! DONG! -- DONG! DONG!

The crowd spill across the court in the sudden realization that the challenge is definitely on.

DONG! DONG! -- DONG! DONG!

Skidding around the final bend Andy has virtually nothing left -- but Harold, driven by his desperate need to succeed, pumps on and finds a devastating finishing burst from God knows where.

"Nineteen! Twenty! Twenty-One!"

The crowd chant out the count as Harold fights towards the line.

"Twenty-Two! Twenty-Three!"

And he flings himself across the finish and into the waiting arms of Harry and Aubrey.

DONG! and he's DONE IT!

And the exhausted Andy collapses over the line five yards behind.

The crowd go wild -- reaching for Harold as he's lifted to his feet by his friends -- his coat is thrown around his shoulders.

Cont.

Harold crosses to Andy and hauls him to his feet by the hand.
They embrace.

Harry opens the champagne and it shoots skywards. The runners
both take a long pull.

And the crowd cheer.

INT. TRINITY MASTER'S ROOM - DAY

21

The Trinity Master is closing the window on the hilarity. He
crosses and pours out a sherry for himself.

CAIUS

Did they both do it?

TRINITY

I think not. Young Lindsey failed
by a whisker.

CAIUS

A pity.

The Trinity Master tops up his friend's glass...feigning
imcomprehension.

TRINITY

It's been done -- and by a Caius
man. You must be very proud.

CAIUS

I am. Of course I am. It's just
...he hesitates.

TRINITY

(in with the dagger)
You'd have preferred he were an
Englishman.

The Caius Master doesn't answer.

TRINITY

Anderson, Hebrew or not, we've
just witnessed an historic feat.
One man in seven centuries. Perhaps
they are God's chosen people after
all.

(raises his glass)

To Abrahams!

CUT TO:

EXT. TRINITY COURT - DAY

22

Harold is being shepherded through back-slapping crowds, unsmiling in the knowledge that he succeeded in his task.

TRINITY

(voice over)

I doubt if there's a swifter man
in the Kingdom.

EXT. HIGHLAND GATHERING - DAY (MAY)

23

Pipes skirl and Highland Dancers, arms flung high, tiptoe their crossed lain swords. One, a young boy, one a young girl. They dance on a raised platform in a grassy natural arena somewhere in the Scottish Highlands. It's a Highland Gathering, a folk festival of music, dance, and physical prowess.

Through those pointing toes -- across the arena, against the peering faces of out-for-the-day families, see a race on the point of starting. Runners lined, expectant, awaiting the starter's call.

CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE ON them. See they're only boys -- eleven to twelve.

VOICE

(o.s.)

Are you ready lads?

Nervously they toe the line -- faces peer and crane on necks of parents, brothers, sisters. The dancers dance to the ever wailing pipes. The boys fix their eyes up the track, nervous, alert.

CAMERA PANS SLOWLY ALONG them.

Surely none of these youthful Scottish faces can present any challenge to Abrahams?

VOICE

(o.s.)

To your marks!

CONTINUE PANNING as they toe the line and drop to a crouch -- hanging on a word.

PASS them and FIND the starter -- gun raised dramatically -- holding back the magic moment of release.

IT'S ERIC LIDDELL.

ERIC

Get set!!

Cont.

BACK UP THE HILLSIDE LOOKING DOWN ON the rural canvas below.
It's idyllic.

A puff of smoke rises, then the pistol cracks, and a riddle of color scurries across the patch of green. Thin cheers lift from the crowd lining and circling -- Marquees lie like handkerchiefs in shades of clustered trees -- and the highland hills shimmer blue behind.

There's a spatter of applause as the winner wins and the crowds break and drift in a kaleidoscope of burnt browns and tartan.

CAMERA MOVES IN ON THE CROWD.

Eric is surrounded by children all seeking his autograph. He's happily signing, chatting to each kid amongst the forest of clamouring books. Over this hear his sister's voice:

JENNIE

(o.s.)
Do you not think the boy's got
enough on his plate without
taking up racing?

SANDY

(o.s.)
I'm asking him to have a go that's
all.

JENNIE

(o.s.)
Sandy. You know Eric as well as
I do -- he can't crack his egg
in the morning without putting
his back into it.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE ABOVE THE GAMES - DAY

24

Jennie and Sandy are walking through the ferns above the arena... Before them runs ERNEST the youngest of the Liddells -- aged twelve. The meeting chatters and dances below them. Sandy has cut himself a large stick to smooth them a path.

JENNIE

(shouting)
Ernest, don't you go getting
yourself lost now -- we've to go
back presently.

Ernest waves acknowledgement up front.

Cont.

JENNIE

He's to get his degree, play his ruggar, and work for the mission. There's no breath in the poor man for any more.

SANDY

But he's fast Jennie -- really fast. You've seen him yourself with a ball in his hands.

JENNIE

Aye. And I've seen him with the Bible in his hands -- and I know which is the most important.

SANDY

But you can't deny him the chance. Get your brother on a track with a wee piece of technique and I'm telling you Jennie...

JENNIE

Please don't tell me Sandy. I don't want to know. Eric's special to me. Precious...as he is, and I don't want him spoilt with running talk -- d'you hear?

And she walks on -- after Ernest -- down towards the games. Sandy looks after her defiantly before hurling his stick into the heather and making his way down.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE - THE GAMES - DAY

25

THE WINNING BOY all wreathed in smiles, buoyant on applause climbing up onto the platform amid backslaps. Waiting for him is Eric holding a small cup. He shakes the lad's hand, makes the presentation and the boy descends. The applause dies and all faces turn up to Liddell -- those below, clustered around his feet -- and those behind of his Father, a clergyman, and his Mother, his brothers Rob and Ernest, and Jennie and Sandy. They're seated in line with local dignitaries. Eric looks at his feet, hands clasped behind, and speaks -- quietly -- sincerely -- and very effectively.

ERIC

You know, ladies and gentlemen, one of the real compensations of achieving a certain notoriety -- if only as a Rugby player -- is that, as on this happy occasion, one's asked to come along and give things away.

ERIC

It's often said that giving beats receiving -- and let me tell you, that look of delight on that wee boy's face was worth ten of any gongs I've got tucked away in our Edinburgh sideboard.

Applause. "Hear Hears." He pauses.

SEE Rob and Jennie watching him proudly.

ERIC

When we're in China, my father here often waxes lyrical about the beauties of his wee home in the glen...

Smiles all around.

ERIC

...but being oriental born myself, like my brothers and sisters here...
(chuckles)
...I suffer from a natural incredulity.

Laughter.

ERIC

And yet, looking about me now, at the heather and the hills...

As he speaks DRIFT AROUND the beauty of this grey stone Highland town.

ERIC

...I can see that I was wrong. It is special. Thank you for welcoming our family home, if only for a wee while, and for reminding me that I am, and will be whilst I breathe, a Scot.

Rapturous applause as Eric sits between his mother and sister, who clasp his hands, and his family beam. The town Provost stands as it dies, digs out some notes, adjusts his spectacles, and opens his mouth to speak...then:

SANDY

(interrupting)

Mr. Provost Sir!

Sandy stands -- all eyes turn to him -- including Jennie's.

Cont.

SANDY

Before you allow Eric here to go --
is it not true that the main event
of the meeting is still to be run?

PROVOST

It is. The two hundred open
Handicap. It's the last event
of the gathering -- by tradition.

SANDY

Do you not think???...

He deliberately avoids Jennie's eyes as she stares in dismay
at him.

SANDY

...If we can find him some togs,
that we might persuade Scotland's
finest wing to show us his paces?

CROWD

Y - e - e - s - s!!

SANDY

What d'you say Eric?

The crowd applaud and cheer. The Provost turns to Eric
applauding, inviting. Eric looks first at Sandy then at
Jennie, who's dropped her eyes and is looking into her lap.
He hesitates, the applause lifts, till finally he stands and
nods and shakes the Provost's hand.

Jennie stands, brushes past Sandy and leaves the platform.
Eric's parents react -- Mother puzzled -- Father more aware.
Young Ernest is delighted -- Rob sits watching Jennie push
her way through the crowd and up the hill -- then he turns
and looks sadly at Sandy who's smiling with satisfaction.

CUT TO:

THE RACE - ANGLE ON ERIC

25-A

in SLOW MOTION. The sheer power of the man -- head thrown
back, arms pumping at shoulder level and above, heels flying
high behind -- everything wrong -- yet he flies. Man, after
man, after man, are passed as he leans into the bend, like a
full sail clipper, on to his final triumph.

BACK TO SCENE

25-B

In the cheering crowd Sandy's mouth hangs open in astonishment
at his sheer speed. Mother and Father applaud excitedly.

Cont.

After the tape Ernest greets Eric, jumping for joy -- Sandy pushes through to him and embraces him.

SANDY

Didn't I tell you, Eric? Didn't I tell you?

He throws Eric's coat round his shoulders as the crowd cheer and slap his back.

Rob watches, then turns his eyes up to the hill, behind the arena.

EXT. THE HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING THE GAMES - DAY 26

Sitting against a tree, back to the celebrations, sits Jennie. The excitement spills over the green below her, sounds of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" lift through the haze of the evening, and her eyes fill with tears. Under this, bring in the voice of her Father -- preaching.

INT. CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH - HIGHLANDS - DAY 26-A

REVEREND J.D. LIDDELL

The Kingdom of God is no a democracy...there is no discussion, no deliberation, no referenda as to which way to go, which road to take. There is no low road, only the high...one right, one wrong, one voice...one absolute ruler... one benevolent despot, demanding to be obeyed...

The church is packed, the town has turned out to hear the dynamic, uncompromising words of one of its favorite sons. The Liddells sit in a front pew -- directly below the pulpit... listening -- listening to the ideas and philosophy which have shaped them and which will direct their actions for the rest of their lives.

CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE ON Eric. His eyes up to his father -- listening -- enthralled.

J.D.

Compromise is the language of the Devil. Only obey and ye shall be repayed -- in creation's most powerful coinage -- the love of God... 'Love divine all love's excelling -- pure unbounded love thou art!' Seek ye the Lord, bow down before him, and be exalted beyond your wildest dreams.

EXT. CONGREGATION CHURCH AND STREET - DAY

26-B

The church is emptying. The crowds pouring out and onto the street. Eric, his SISTER and BROTHERS, and Sandy are walking back to their lodgings, chatting, elated, refreshed, inspired ...well, the Liddells are...

Sandy goes the way of the wind.

Two little boys are playing football in an alley. The ball bounces out -- straight into Eric's arms as he passes. The BOY runs up to him and stops under Eric's reproaching gaze.

ERIC

(squatting down beside
the Boy)

D'ya not know what day it is?

BOY

Aye!

ERIC

Tell me then.

BOY

It's Sunday.

ERIC

It is right enough...and the
Sabbath's not a day for foot'ball
is it?

The Boy solemnly shakes his head.

ERIC

Are you up early in the morning?

BOY

Aye -- Me Ma gets me up at
seven.

ERIC

We'll have a game THEN, 're y'
on?

BOY

(eyes shining)

Aye, Mr. Liddell -- Thanks.
Can I bring ma da'?

Eric tossing him the ball...and laughing.

Cont.

ERIC
 Sure you can -- bring the
 whole family! And I'll give
 you five goals start.

And the Kid runs off, delighted -- shouting the news to his
 friend.

JENNIE
 (shakes her head,
 helplessly)
 Eric, you'll no have time...
 We've a train to catch at nine.

ERIC
 (smiling)
 We've to make time. The Kid's
 got to fear God, Jennie -- but
 not think he's a spoilsport.

INT. THE LIDDEL LODGINGS - NIGHT

27

Photographs -- framed on the wall.

"The Scottish XV v France 1921-22"

"The Scottish XV v Wales 1921-22"

PAN TO SEE Eric and ROB aged sixteen at school -- in cricket
 gear.

THE FAMILY -- in posed group on wooden veranda in CHINA --
 with Chinese friends. Eric, Rob and Jennie as children.
 Ernest as a baby.

Eric and his Mother in a rickshaw, laughing.

PAN OFF the photographs AROUND TO the group standing around
 the dining table -- glasses of cordial raised -- PAST Ernest
 and Rob. Then Jennie. Opposite her is Sandy, proposing a
 toast. Beside him Eric and then Mother, who is weeping
 quietly into a handkerchief.

SANDY
 To the Liddell family -- whom
 I'm fortunate enough to call my
 friends. J.D. Mrs. L, young
 Ernest -- bon voyage, safe journey
 back. And may the years ahead
 in China be happy, blissful, content
 and blessed. To those who remain
 behind -- may God protect them --
 inspire them...
 (looking directly
 at Eric)
 ...and lead them to Glory.

He drinks and sits amidst murmurs of gratitude. Jennie looks at him daggers across the table -- he's so clumsily, verbosely tried to emulate her father she thinks.

MOTHER

Thank you Sandy -- that was very nice. I'm relying on you to keep them all out of mischief.

SANDY

That I will Mrs. L. And if they do transgress, I'll pop the details on a postcard and you'll read all about it before you can say Marco Polo.

ERIC

You'll be sorry you said that. It'll cost you a fortune in postage stamps.

SANDY

Don't you worry son -- I intend to protect my investment. I'm going to rule you with a rod of iron.

Laughter again. Jennie stands, picks up an empty tureen.

JENNY

I'll get some more potatoes.

She leaves. The others notice her mood -- Mother looks at Eric, motioning to him to see what's troubling her.

INT. LIDDELLS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

28

Jennie is tumbling out some more potatoes, from pan to bowl. The steam rises, reflecting her annoyance. Eric comes behind her.

ERIC

Can I help?

JENNIE

Aye -- There's another jug of gravy here -- you can take that in.

ERIC

What ails you and Sandy. Or is it none of my business?

Cont.

JENNIE

Oh it's your business all right.
Like the folk in those American
pictures -- you play quite a
star role.

ERIC

Because I ran in that race
yesterday.

Jennie is taken aback for a moment at his perception.

JENNIE

Oh. I'm not blaming you Eric.
He blackmailed you into it. You
had no choice but to run. I
asked him, pleaded with him, to
leave you alone.

Gently Eric takes the tureen from her, puts it down, and turns
her to him.

ERIC

Listen Jen -- Sandy's the
University Captain, athletics
are his life -- you can't blame
him for trying -- Anyway, I
enjoyed it.

JENNIE

And what about you? What's your
life? That's what concerns me.

ERIC

Is it? Is it my life that's a
pain to you, or your own?

Jennie turns back to take it out on the dishes. She's hurt.
Eric sees this.

ERIC

I'm sorry Jennie -- I didn't
mean that.

JENNIE

Oh! Sure you meant it, and why
shouldn't you? Ma and Pa traipsing
off back abroad and leaving me with
my hands full tending to the needs
of you two big sodaheads. But
that's not a pain to me, Eric --

Cont.

JENNIE (Cont.)

as long as it's God's work we're all on. I love it! But if you run around like a bairn in brics just to win a couple of cruets, you make nothing but a skivvie of me...don't you see that?

ERIC

Away with you Jennie -- it's harmless enough -- it's just a bit of fun, that's all.

JENNIE

(looking at him
sincerely)

It's not fun, Eric -- and it's not in you to regard it as such. There's twenty-four hours in a day. Be honest with me. Just how many will you have left for God?

INT. THE LIDDELS' LODGING - NIGHT(LATER)

29

J.D. is standing, his back to the fire. Rob and Eric sit either side of him in armchairs. They're supping tea. Jennie is through in the kitchen drying the dishes, out of ear shot. In an adjacent room Mother is playing the piano, old Scottish hymns and singing with Ernest and Sandy.

J.D.

You're a very lucky young man Eric...You're the proud possessor of many gifts...and it's your sacred duty to put them to good use. You know -- I'm fast coming to the belief that God's a Scot. He's benevolent sure -- but shrewd with it...He'd not want you to waste all that speed just catching the bus in the morning.

ROB

Pa's right. Run like we know you can -- strong and true -- and the Mission cannot but gain by your success.

ERIC

But she's right about time -- it's going to take time -- something's got to suffer.

Cont.

ROB

Your rugby -- how much does
it mean to you?

ERIC

A lot -- but yesterday in that
race -- I had a glimpse...a
feeling I've never had before.

ROB

Then give the rigger up. And
the Mission? -- There's willing
hands galore to do the spadework
...what we need now is a
Muscular Christian to make folk
sit up and notice.

J.D.

How good are you Eric?

ROB

Sandy reckons he'll run for
Scotland -- before the month's
out, and after that -- the sky's
the limit.

J.D.

Meaning what?

ROB

The Olympic Games maybe.

J.D.

(taking a drink
of tea)

Eric...You can praise the Lord
by peeling a spud if you peel
it to perfection. Run in His
name...and let the world stand
back in wonder.

CUT TO:

INT. LIDDELLS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

30

Jennie is washing up the dinner dishes, alone.

OVER HER HEAR:

ERIC

(o.s.)
And what about Jennie?

Cont.

ROB

(o.s.)

Don't you worry your head about
Jennie. Just wait 'til she sees
the posters!

Mother, Sandy and Ernest strike up a hymn from the piano room.
Jennie smiles and joins in as she works.

JENNIE

'Fight the good fight
With all your might
Christ is thy strength
And Christ thy right.'

MIX TO:

EXT. GREENOCK ATHLETIC GROUND - DAY

31

Eric is running in Edinburgh University strip -- cheered on by
the ordinary working men of Greenock. Sandy enthusiastically
times his performance.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON POSTER

31-A

displaying:

"Inverkip Road, Greenock.

GRAND ATHLETICS MEETING

Sat. 7th April - 1923 at 2.30 pm.

followed by

Scottish Students Evangelistic Mission

MEETING

in the Town Hall at 6.0 pm.

Speaker

ERIC LIDDELL

All Welcome!"

Mother's and CO's singing is gradually filled out with the
sound of many voices.

CUT TO:

INT. GREENOCK TOWN HALL - NIGHT

32

The hall is half-filled with ordinary men and women singing. On the platform are Eric, Rob and Jennie...the latter pleased with the turnout.

"Lay hold on life
and it shall be
Thy joy and Crown
Eternally!"

THE SINGING CONTINUES OVER

Eric being coached in starting by Sandy...positioning his feet, etc. Then standing back and shouting: "To your marks -- Get set..."

EXT. ATHLETIC GROUND - GLASGOW

32-A

The crack of a starting pistol as Eric explodes from his crouch.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON POSTER

32-AA

SCOTTISH ATHLETIC 'ASSOCIATION'
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Glasgow 1 May 1923

And pasted across its base:

"SCOTTISH STUDENTS EVANGELISTIC MISSION"

ERIC LIDDELL

will speak

6.0 pm.

INT. GLASGOW HALL - NIGHT

32-B

Eric is singing happily with Jenny and Rob with a packed hall. In the front is a party of school girls singing and X gazing at him admiringly. He catches one's eye and smiles. She blushes and looks down at her hymn book.

CUT TO:

EXT. ATHLETIC GROUND - EDINBURGH - DAY

33

In Scottish strip Eric powers down the track.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON POSTER

33-A

displaying:

"Athletics International
SCOTLAND V IRELAND
Edinburgh 16 May, 1923"

"ERIC LIDDELL
Famous Edinburgh University International
Will speak. 6.0. pm."

VOICES

(o.s.)

'Run the straight race
Through God's good grace
Lift up thine eyes
And seek his face
Life with its path
Before us lies
Christ is the way, and Christ the prize.'

EXT. ATHLETIC GROUND - EDINBURGH - EVENING

3¹/₄

It's pouring with rain. Eric stands under an umbrella by Rob as he addresses the crowds around his platform. Umbrellas surround him like a field of damp mushrooms. But underneath all faces listen intently. Jennie stands watching -- enthralled -- while sitting high in an empty stand -- dry and unmoved sits Sandy -- his feet up on the seat in front of him.

ERIC

Is not life like a race?...A serious business, a concentration of will and energy of soul? Did not St. Paul say, 'Know ye not that they which run in a race win all...every man that striveth for mastery must be temperate in all things!' There is no place for the half-hearted, the faint-hearted. Life is a challenge, a challenge we must meet. We will be attacked, from within ourselves and without -- but God will give us strength -- He will be our guide. Step up now! Commit your Life to Jesus Christ. Through Him find life on earth in all its fullness, and life hereafter everlasting.'

The SINGING rises triumphant as one by one men and women step forward in the pouring rain to shake hands with Eric and kneel on the drenched platform steps.

VOICES

(o.s.)

'Faint not nor fear -- His arms are near
He changeth not -- and thou art dear
Only believe and thou shalt see
(Rallentando)
That Christ is all in all to thee!!!'

FADE OUT

FADE UP ON

EXT. THE RIVER BANK - CAMBRIDGE - EVENING

35

It's a summer evening in June, 1923 -- the exams are over and nothing remains except to pass the remaining days on the river. PASSING DOWN the "Backs" SEE everywhere boats containing parties of men and girls laughing and smoking, some moored to the banks, some idly drifting with the stream, and all carrying Chinese lanterns which bathe the river in a soft pleasant light. The trees, in full leaf, sweep the waters, the air, heavy with warmth and insects, lies breathless beneath the fast descending dark. It is a scene of harmony, peace and absolute bliss.

CAMERA PANS ALONG the bank -- ERRATICALLY -- the idyllic scene below. The boating parties look up and wave and laugh with delight. Straw-boated puntsmen cup their hands and shout -- their words drifting away with the waters.

THE SOUND of breath -- regular -- even, rises -- as does the plod of feet...plod, plod, plod, plod. More waves -- more comments -- more laughter.

ANGLE DOWN RIVER SLIGHTLY

35-A

Andy is reclining back on a cushion of girlish breasts...He's in his element -- champagne in hand, debs in attendance trailing daintily fingered ripples in the currents of his hair. They laugh and nuzzle beneath the warm lantern night. Punting them up stream smoothly, expertly and, in the circumstances, very generously, is Aubrey -- himself lost in the tranquility of the time, the place, and the setting.

THEN the cheers lift from up river -- the laughter -- the jibes. Aubrey jolts out of his reverie and peers for the source of merriment. He smiles and chuckles.

AUBREY

My hat! It's old Abrahams --
Does the fella ever stop?

CLOSE ON HAROLD

35-B

sweating, punishing himself. A towel hugging his neck, is pushed smugly into layers of cricket sweaters. Beneath these he wears shorts, his long legs striding from them in a ground-devouring rhythm. His eyes are fixed ahead, purposeful, even grim...oblivious to the ringing banter from the river beside.

CAMERA PANS WITH him FROM the river as he plods through the warm pools of light.

BACK TO SCENE

Andy is laughing with delight -- hugging his creature comforts.

ANDY

Well if that doesn't take the bloody biscuit. Haven't you told him Montague. It's the Summer vac -- cast care aside and all that. What the deuce is the fellow working for?

AUBREY

I doubt if he'd call it work Andy.

ANDY

Well what the hell does he call it then -- fun? What do you say girls eh? Damned bad form don't you think?

He shouts as Harold passes -- raising his glass to him.

THEIR P.O.V. - HAROLD

35-D

as he runs past.

ANDY

(imperiously)
Cease this nonsense at once sir --
abandon yourself sir -- enjoy
yourself sir...that's an order.

But he fades as their punt drops back up the river, OUT of hearing and VIEW.

BACK IN THE PUNT

35-E

AUBREY

(laughing)
He didn't even see us. That'll
teach you to pull rank Lindsey.

Andy smiles -- sits back -- and sips his champagne.

ANDY

There, ladies, you had a manifestation of a deeply disturbing contemporary sickness.

The girls look at him -- then after Harold.

ANDY

Namely, an all-consuming desire for victory.

Cont.

AUBREY

And what's wrong with that? The
Empire was built on such effort.

ANDY

(mock shocked)

Not so young Monty -- not so.
Victory yes -- but never effort.
Good Lord no!

(sips his wine)

The real secret -- young fella
me lad -- is to win, yes, but never
appear to try. Can't give the
game away can we girls? Might
show the poor old plebs that
we're human. Might give 'em
ideas.

And girls giggle and snuggle their hero as Aubrey smiles and
languorously poles them up river into the bountiful balm of
the evening.

OVER THIS hear a chorus.

CHORUS

For he is an Englishman!!
For he himself has said it
And its greatly to his credit
That he is an Englishman
That he is an Englishman.

OUT 36

EXT. FENNERS - CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY CRICKET AND 37
ATHLETIC GROUND - DAY

A misty winter's afternoon -- they ran in the winter -- Harold
taking a two twenty bend like a blacked browed greyhound --
the runners' breath trailing behind them on the cold grey air.
He wears the Cambridge vest -- his opponents, Oxford. He's
cheered by Andy, Aubrey and Harry all in competition garb as
he dips into the tape -- the CHORUS lifts...

CHORUS

For he might have been a Russian
A French, or Turk, or Russian
Or perhaps I - tal - I - an!
Or perhaps I - tal - I - an!

INT. DEBATING CHAMBER - CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY
UNION - NIGHT

HAROLD
(addressing the chamber)
...the Member for Magdeline
ought, surely, to know that a
series of superior sneers and
innuendos, forms no answer to
the concisely presented arguments
of his opponents!

EXT. ATHLETIC GROUND - LONDON - DAY

Two flags -- of England and Holland flutter on their staffs
as Harold, SEEN THROUGH a mix, races up his long jump approach
sporting the red rose of his country. He leaps and seems to
fly.

FREEZE FRAME INTO newspaper photograph of Harold's leap.

HAROLD
(voice over)
The Times London. Monday April 8th,
1923. By a special correspondent.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY ASSIZES - CLOSEUP - HAROLD - DAY

He is smiling as he writes in a notebook.

HAROLD
(voice over)
The highlight of the
International Athletics match
between England and Holland on
Saturday last was the record-
breaking long jump by the
distinguished Cambridge University
athlete H.M. Abrahams.

CAMERA PULLS BACK AND SEES Harold sitting in the public
gallery -- surrounded by law students all earnestly watching
the proceedings below. But Harold's head is bowed as he
composes his Times column on his own athletic prowess.

CUT TO:

THE CHORUS again.

INT. CAIUS COLLEGE MAIN HALL - NIGHT

A concert.

Harold in a chorus -- buoyant, enthusiastic.

Cont.

CHORUS

But -- in spite of all temptations
 To belong to other nations
 He remains an Englishman...

(now swelling,
 triumphant)

...He remains an Englishman!!

The CHORUS linger on that last note for all they're worth -- and as the black-tied audience of Dons and students applaud enthusiastically, the singers take their bows, chorus and all. Aubrey and Harold glance at each other with supreme satisfaction.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE "THE POWDERHALL" TRAINING TRACK -
 EDINBURGH - NIGHT

42

A line of whippets -- barking -- demented -- held by their crouching owners -- leashed -- ready to be sprang. The battered old "hare" rattles 'round the circuit -- passes the dogs and away they go -- bolts in the blue dim light of the ancient arcs.

Crossing the arena, in University blazer, sweater and flannels, is Eric -- accompanied by an enthusiastic Sandy -- Eric looks uncomfortable -- feeling conspicuous, glancing, bewildered, around him at the completely foreign sights and sounds.

SANDY

Professional know-how --
 Prrrofessional advice, that's what
 we need sonny.

(rolls his 'r's'
 with relish at
 the thought)

Prrrrrofessional experience.

ERIC

But I'm no professional Sandy.
 And I'm not a whippet either!

SANDY

No, but I want you to run like
 one. You're at your limit Eric
 -- you've done all you're going
 to do -- if you carry on trusting
 to luck that is.

ERIC

I don't believe in luck.

Cont.

SANDY

Call it what you like. It can only take you so far...This man I've arranged for you to meet -- this Englishman...

ERIC

What's his name by the way?

SANDY

Scipio Antonius Mussabini...
Sam for short.

ERIC

(smiling)
Doesn't sound very English to me.

SANDY

He's half Arab half Italian but as English as a roast potato... He's also the best sprinting brain in the whole British Isles...to hell with his pedigree just listen to what he has to say.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON PRO SPRINTERS

42-A

older -- tougher -- more muscular than any we've seen before... working-class men who, like the whippets, run for their daily bread...Blue-chinned, dour, divorced completely from any pretence of cavalier spirit. Sandy and Eric appear at the side of the track. Eric eyeing them with a mixture of disbelief and awe.

SANDY

Wait here son. Assimilate the atmosphere...I'll away and find Sam.

Eric examines the rare breed cavorting in front of him. This was his description. See it in pictures.

"This was the first time in my life I'd ever seen a cinder track let alone a pro runner. They danced about on their toes as if they were stepping on hot bricks, and whenever they started to run they dug big holes for their toes to go into for the time when those toes would dance no more. Surely they did not expect me to make such a fool of myself as that?"

SANDY

Eric?

Cont.

Eric starts and turns.

SANDY

Eric this is Sam Mussabini.

Eric looks and before him is standing a diminutive little man in a baggy suit, straw hat at a rakish angle, and chewing on the stub of a fat cigar. His hand is proffered. Eric takes it and shakes it warmly.

ERIC

Delighted to meet you Mr. Mussabini.

SAM

And me you Mr. Liddell. I've read all about you in the papers... your friend here tells me you've never been coached.

ERIC

No. To be honest I've never felt the need.

SAM

I take it you've only run in Scotland...

ERIC

That's correct yes.

SAM

Then you'll have never had the need. If you've half the natural talent they say you have you could win here on crutches. Let's have a look at you.

ERIC

You mean strip off?

SAM

My eyes are good son -- but not that good. Let's have a look at your legs.

Eric takes off his blazer, sweater, and trousers and hands them to Sandy. He stands there self-consciously as Sam looks him up and down like some breed of highland sheep.

SAM

Aye -- You're built for it all right...

Cont.

Suddenly he starts to pummel his muscles, feeling them, kneading them, pushing them this way and that.

SAM

All your muscles -- they're too hard -- you need plenty of massage to soften them up. You'll try a quick start one day and one of 'em will snap...Now, let's see you run.

Eric looks at him.

ERIC

What? -- Just like that?

SAM

(twinkling)

I see. You like a bit of competition do you...Right -- let's see what we can do.

He turns and Sandy smiles encouragement at Eric who looks a little apprehensive.

SAM

Pete -- Hughie -- will you give this lad a run? I want to see what he's made of...

He winks at them and they nod -- understanding.

SAM

Right Mr. Liddell -- we'll see you at the tape.

And Sandy and he stride off down the track. PETE and HUGHIE lead Eric to the start. There, either side of him, they set about getting down to their marks in that mannered -- balletic -- conceited manner so familiar to us today. But to the unsophisticated Liddell!!!

Eric drops to his marks without a fuss and awaits Sam who's taken out a pistol.

SAM

(distant)

Set!

The gun fires -- and the three explode from their marks. Eric raw, is a yard behind in five and immediately his two opponent close the gap in front of him -- almost spiking him in the process. He checks in astonishment, then, setting his jaw and throwing back his head, he's after them like a windmill. Round the outside he goes and at the eighty yard mark, he

Cont.

sweeps past them with ease to break the tape three yards up. The other two race on, easing up gradually. Eric stops abruptly -- short -- and turns pleased. He's met face to face by Sam.

SAM

Mr. Liddell, if you want to pull a hamstring you're going the best way about it. Run on lad, run on -- ease yourself to a trot.

And he leaves them, crossing to where his overcoat is hanging on the finishing post. He fishes out another cigar and lights up. Sandy brings Eric over to him.

SANDY

Well Sam? Can you help us?

Sam draws on his cigar and exhales gratefully before answering.

SAM

No Mr. McGrath. I don't think I can.

Sandy looks at him -- then at Eric -- they're both bewildered.

SAM

Mr. Liddell -- you've the worst style I've ever seen in a kangaroo -- never mind a runner. No half measure's with you son. You do everything wrong. Head back, arms windmilling -- heels half up your backside. But do old Sam a special favour will you?

ERIC

(swallowing)
If I can -- aye!

SAM

Never run any different. You've got heart son...and you run like a stag. Don't ask me how, but you do. Leave yourself alone and mark my words the world's your oyster.

SANDY

But surely a bit of coaching -- like his start...

SAM

The only coach he needs is his Maker...and from what I hear -- they're on pretty good terms already.

He holds out his hand and they shake.

SAM

Good-bye Mr. Liddell. It's been an honour to meet you...from now on I'll believe what I read in the papers.

And he strides off jauntily -- cigar smoke billowing behind in the cold winter night. Eric watches him go with affection and respect.

EXT. RUGBY GROUND - EDINBURGH - DAY

43

The Marseillaise in full blaze. A line of French athletes singing lustily behind their dipped tricolour.

CAMERA PANS PAST them TO the Scottish team -- respectfully silent and erect...amongst them Eric. None are in track suits -- all in assorted casual clothing covering their individual nation's running strip.

It's an international -- Scotland Vs. France. June 1923 -- on a converted Rugby pitch -- with the one wooden stand. The French Battle hymn rolls on as we dip into the occasion.

The scoreboard -- primitive -- just the two countries with hooks on which the points will hang -- an elderly gentleman in attendance.

The band -- the local militia...with kilts and pipes. The latter hanging silent as the brass do their best with this foreign "dirge".

The sparse crowd, eighty percent standing, dignitaries and the well-heeled occupy the wooden stand behind them.

Amongst those standing are Sandy with a friend JIMMIE picking their way through the assorted groups -- who glance at programs -- yawn -- light pipes or show general, if silent, disrespect for the anthem.

Sandy motions to Jimmie that he's moving down to the front. Jimmie winks and they separate.

Up in the stand, a far more respectful lot this, being better bred -- an attendant -- checking the press card of a tall, dark young man -- it's Harold. He looks up and stands as he recognizes the tune -- removing his hat...But his eyes immediately scan the scene below him...running swiftly along the Scottish team until they come to rest on Eric.

Cont.

CAMERA SEES Eric...open-faced, relaxed, untroubled.

CAMERA SEES Harold...brows knitted, concerned, competitive.
Then his eyes are on the move again -- purposeful -- exact.

They flit around the grassy arena below -- the judges, track attendants, police, militia, coaches -- ah! There, the figure he's been searching for. It's Sam sitting on a shooting stick, contemplatively pulling on his cigar, arms folded, boater on the back of his head; waiting for the action to begin.

The Marseillaise reaches its heroic climax -- the Frenchmen strain their lungs and in the crowd a large man with a waxed spiked moustache immediately bursts into life -- wiping a small blackboard with the crook of his arm.

BOOKIE

Six to four on -- Liddell -- the hundred. Six to four on -- Liddell -- the 220. Evens Liddell 440. Frenchies 4-1 the sprints -- 3-1 the quarter.

PUNTER

Evens? What sort of odds are those -- the man's never run a quarter in his life before.

BOOKIE

Six weeks ago he'd never run before -- I'm a bookie not Alexander Carnegie.

PUNTER

It's daylight robbery.

BOOKIE

It's Eric Liddell.

The crowd around him laugh.

BOOKIE

All right son! I'll take him -- what odds will you give me?

PUNTER

(after a moment)

Evens.

They crowd laugh again.

BOOKIE

Right! So put your money where your moan is.

Cont.

And a host of bank notes is thrust into his face from all sides.

Sam is lighting up another cigar...passing competitors shake his hand -- or he waves acknowledgement.

An impressive figure appears beside him in kilt and bonnet.

OFFICIAL

Mr. Mussabini I believe?

SAM

Correct.

OFFICIAL

My name is Keddie.
Colonel John Keddie -- I'm...

SAM

President of the Scotch three A's
...Aye I know. Glad to know you
sir!

OFFICIAL

You're very welcome here of course.
But we do have a strict amateur
code...

SAM

Colonel -- don't worry your head.
I'm here spectating and that's all.

OFFICIAL

(uncertain)
Ah! Good! I felt sure you'd
understand.

(then)

Well -- To battle! I hope you
enjoy the games.

And he struts away. Sam looks after him, amused, and chews his cigar.

SAM

Games? You're joking! I've seen
better organized riots.

CAMERA MOVES BACK TO the Bookie.

BOOKIE

Liddell, 6-4 on -- the quarter.
Who wants Liddell 6-4 on -- the
quarter?

The crowd are disgruntled -- hesitant -- the odd bet is placed but that's all. The Bookie feels a tug on his jacket. He turns, sees Sandy, and shakes his hand.

BOOKIE

Sandy -- how are ye?

Cont.

SANDY

Fine, how are you. Can I have
a word?

The Bookie looks at him knowingly, then bends his ear. Sandy
whispers confidentially to him.

BOOKIE

That's gospel is it...the truth?

SANDY

He's not bothering in the quarter.
Told me this morning! I'd hate to
see you in the poor house.

BOOKIE

(smirking)
I'll not forget this Sandy --
I'll see you right!
(stands, with a
flourish scrubs out
Eric's odds)
3-1 against Liddell...who wants
3-1 against Liddell?

PUNTER

For the quarter?

BOOKIE

What d'you think for son? The
egg and spoon?

PUNTER

(fishing out his
money)
Now that's more bloody like it.

43-A

THE 440 YARDS

ON THE TRACK Eric is shaking hands with his French opponents.
There's no stagger -- the race is to be run without lanes.
He's wishing them "God speed" in French. They look a little
bemused at his open friendliness towards them...particularly
one, an aggressive gallic character, who is positively
encouraged by this sign of apparent weakness in his adversary.

43-B

UP IN THE STANDS

Harold sits forward in his seat -- expectantly. Then his
eyes dart to:

43-C

ANGLE ON SAM

who's crossed the arena to set up his stick near to the tape
-- alongside are the judges who are eyeing him as he takes out
his huge stopwatch more jealously than suspiciously.

43-D

ON THE TRACK

The STARTER raises his gun.

IN THE CROWD

The Bookie is doing great business.

BOOKIE

4-1 Liddell. 4-1 against Liddell!
Evens the Frogs.

43-F

ON THE TRACK

STARTER

To your marks!

The four runners move forward to the line and crouch over it -- not a sprint start. Eric is next to the inside -- between the two French.

43-G

IN THE CROWD

Jimmie pushes his way up to the Bookie -- five, B5 notes in his hand.

43-H

ON THE TRACK

STARTER

Get set!

43-I

IN THE CROWD

JIMMIE

Twenty-five pounds Liddell to win.

The Bookie glances at him momentarily -- not recognizing him -- accepts the bet.

BOOKIE

Twenty-five to a hundred -- Liddell.

43-J

ON THE TRACK

BANG!

And they're away.

The inside Frenchman leaps into the lead -- Eric close behind as they reach the first bend. Then suddenly, brutally the French number two passes Eric and barges him off the track -- causing him to tumble head over heels onto the central arena. The crowd gasp with dismay.

43-K

IN THE STANDS

Harold leaps to his feet with the rest.

43-L

IN THE CROWD

The Bookie smiles with satisfaction -- grinning at his clerk.

ON THE RAIL

43-M

Sandy and Jimmie look horrified.

ON HIS STICK

43-N

Sam whips his cigar from his mouth.

SAM

(to himself)

Get up lad! Get up!

ON THE TRACK

43-O

Eric, after a flicker of reorientation, is up and without hesitation is back on the track and after them -- twenty-five yards behind. The crowd pick up their roar again.

ANGLE ON SAM

43-P

His cigar is jammed back in his mouth and he's back to his watch.

IN THE CROWD

43-Q

The Bookie's smile freezes -- but only slightly.

Sandy and Jimmie hardly dare hope as Eric hurtles down the back straight in pursuit.

JIMMIE

We're done for. He'll never do it.

SANDY

Don't you believe it. His heed's no' back yet.

Round the penultimate bend, Eric has caught up an amazing "twenty yards." On the final curve the "heed" does go back and he enters the straight shoulder to shoulder with the leader.

THE CROWD go wild.

ANGLE ON SAM

43-R

He stands, chewing furiously on his cigar.

IN THE STANDS

43-S

Harold watches, enthralled, as all hell breaks loose around him.

The Bookie's mouth drops open.

Sandy and Jimmie yell as if their lives depend on it -- which they do.

ON THE TRACK

And the tape snaps across Eric's chest as he collapses exhausted into the arms of officials. They carry him to the grass verge and lay him down. He's gasping for breath, near unconsciousness.

43-U

IN THE STANDS

Harold leaves his seat and makes his way quickly out.

43-V

ON THE TRACK

Sam pushes his way through and, kneeling beside Eric, kneads his diaphragm with the flat of his hand -- expertly.

Eric's eyes flutter open and look at him.

SAM

Mr. Liddell...That's not the prettiest quarter I've ever seen -- but it's the bravest.

Eric smiles, then Sandy appears, kneels and lifts Eric up.

SANDY

Right ho Eric -- up we get son -- come on laddy. It's all right Sam -- I'll see to him now. He'll be okay in a jiffy. I'll away and get him changed.

SAM

Aye -- well mind you take good care of this man of yours Mr. McGrath. If you drop him you'll never get hold of another.

Sandy smiles and nods -- then throwing Eric's coat around his shoulders he leads him off through the cheering crowds. Sam watches them go. A voice cuts in.

HAROLD'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Mr. Mussabini!

Sam looks up. Harold is standing there.

SAM

(standing)

Hello! Mr. Abrahams isn't it? And what can I do for you?

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Sandy has hustled Eric, still half dressed, into a waiting cab which is now pulling away from the stadium.

SANDY

Put this scarf round your neck
before you catch your death --
I've your shoes here.

He fishes them out of his overcoat pockets. Eric puts them on.

ERIC

Are you off your head or what?

Suddenly the taxi slows and Jimmie leaps in -- slamming the door behind him. The cab accelerates away.

JIMMIE

We did it Sandy -- it worked
like a dream. He paid out --
without a whimper.

Sandy has been desperately trying to shut Jimmie up but it's too late.

ERIC

(looking at
him)

Who, paid what out, where?

SANDY

Och! It's nothing Eric -- just
a wee wager me and my friend
here...

Eric leans forward to the driver.

ERIC

Stop the cab, driver, please!

The cab halts -- and waits.

ERIC

(angrily, grabbing
the rest of his
clothes)

Come on Sandy...and I want no
lies. The truth or we're finished --
d'you hear me, finished.

Cont.

SANDY

(after a
pause)

Old Hughie McLeod the bookie --
I gave him a whisper. I told
him you weren't trying in the
quarter. He swallowed it --
gave Jimmie here 4-1.

JIMMIE

E 100, Mr. Liddell --
E 100! I could na'
earn that in six months.

Sandy tries to stop him again by his expression, but to no
avail.

JIMMIE

We can split it down the middle,
three ways!!

Eric looks at him, then at Sandy. Then he snatches the notes
from Jimmie's hand and leaves the cab.

JIMMIE

Hey!

SANDY

Leave it Jimmie! Leave it! Put
it down to experience...never bet
on anything with two legs.

INT. THE STADIUM - DAY

45

In the crowd. Our unhappy Bookie is still paying out to the
delighted punters. Eric pushes his way towards him -- the
crowd panting in amazement as they see who it is -- in
overcoat and running strip -- walking amongst them.

ERIC

Mr. McLeod!

The Bookmaker pauses and looks at him.. He's amazed.

ERIC

Here's the money Sandy McGrath
swindled out of you. One hundred
pounds exactly.

(thrusts the
notes into his
hand)

You're a fool man. If I'd been
a horse you'd have known me better.

Cont.

He turns and moves away.

BOOKIE
(shouting after
him)
What about the rest -- I'm paying
out all these and all.

ERIC
(turning --
smiling)
Count that as retribution --
for dealing in avarice.

INT. AN EDINBURGH PUB - NIGHT

46

It's smoky and packed...Saturday night. A piano plays --
people sing. Behind two pints, in a corner, sit Harold
and Sam.

SAM
And you've come three hundred
miles just to see me?

HAROLD
You and Liddell. I'd heard you
were both the best.

SAM
And what d'you think now?

HAROLD
Eric Liddell? I've never seen
such drive, such commitment in
a man. He runs as if he is...
I hesitate to say it...as if he
is inspired. He unnerves me.

SAM
Aye and so he should. He'd frighten
the living daylights out of me.

HAROLD
(looking at him)
I want you to help me take him
on.

Sam takes out a packet of cigars, offers one to Harold who X
accepts. They both light up, lean back and draw. Then take X
a pull on their pints.

SAM
Are you married, Mr. Abrahams?

HAROLD

No as yet, no! I haven't had time.

SAM

When you meet the right girl --
How will you feel if she pops
the question?

Harold looks at him, puzzled. Sam laughs.

SAM

You see, like the Bridegroom,
Mr. Abrahams it's the coach who
should do the asking.

Harold looks at him -- then he leans forward, earnestly,
sincerely.

HAROLD

Mr. Mussabini. I can run fast.
I believe, with your help, I
can even run faster -- faster
than anyone ever ran. I believe
that, I need that, more than any
other prize -- pleasure or passion.
It's there -- waiting -- I can see
it...but I'll never reach it on
my own.

There's a pause.

SAM

We've an old saying in my game
son. 'You can't put in what
God's left out.' Leave it with
me! I'll watch -- observe --
and if I think I can help -- if
I can see the big prize hanging
there -- believe me I'll waste
no time. When we meet again I'll
be the one who's doing the begging.

HAROLD

So you will watch me?

SAM

Son. I'll take you apart -- piece
by piece.

EXT. NORTHERN ENGLISH STATION - EVENING

47

Harold is sitting in a restaurant car enjoying dinner. A
wine bottle -- expensive -- stands half empty. The train is
standing at a platform. He is reading the "Times."

On the platform stands a group of homeward bound football supporters. They watch Harold eat -- they're deadpan -- a world away.

Harold glances up, sees them and smiles genuinely. There is no response. He reads. A WAITER appears.

WAITER

Cognac, sir?

HAROLD

Please.

The Waiter sees the watching group and pulls the blind to protect his first class passenger.

Over Harold's shoulder we see:

"Nation Agog at Prospect of Anglo/Scottish
Duel in British Games"

"Clash of Giants expected in Stamford Bridge Sprint.
by our Special Correspondent."

He savours his own headline -- smiles, and a little apprehensively -- sips his cognac.

GIRLS' VOICES

(o.s., singing
sweetly; rises
above this)

'Three little maids and all unwary,
Born in a ladies seminary
Free from its genius tutilary...'

CUT TO:

INT. THE SAVOY THEATRE LONDON - NIGHT

48

"The Mikado" is on stage...The Three Little Maids are in mid trio -- pretty beyond pretty in their makeup and Japanese dress. In the middle a D'Oyly Carte leading soprano, Sybil, is singing to an enthralled house. In the front row of the stalls sit our Cambridge quartet, Harold, Aubrey, Harry and Andy. Dressed for the theatre they sit back in their seats and lift their gaze up to the delightful creature above them. Harold in particular is stunned. Aubrey glances at him, amused.

Harry is enthralled and Andy has the sound appreciative air of the connoisseur. Aubrey whispers in Harold's ear.

Cont.

AUBREY

Didn't I tell you? Isn't she a peach?

But he's too bowled over even to reply.

The trio ends and the audience rapturously applaud. Harold just sits in a stupor. They bow their thanks to the audience and, Sybil, glancing down, catches sight of the dark young man sitting quite still. Their eyes meet. Aubrey nudges Harold who jerks into active violent applause. Sybil smiles, nods to him, then drifts off, back into her land of make believe.

MIX TO:

INT. THEATRE BAR - NIGHT

49

Andy is filling Harry's and Aubrey's glasses with champagne. The bar is filled with interval gossip.

ANDY

So the Yiddisher stone heart's frail after all is it? Abrahams' smitten you say.

AUBREY

Smitten? He's decapitated...he won't listen to reason.

HARRY

Reason? The poor lad's in love.

AUBREY

He's just set eyes on her. I've worshipped her for years.

SANDY

Where is he now?

AUBREY

He's gone -- to ask her out to dinner.

ANDY

Has he by Jove?

HARRY

In the interval.

Aubrey nods.

Cont.

ANDY
 (laughing)
 Good for him.
 (hands Aubrey
 a fifth glass)
 Here Monty -- you have Harold's
 glass. I've a terrible feeling
 you're going to need it.

Aubrey takes the glass, but as it's filled another hand takes it.

HAROLD
 Thank you. Mine I take it?

They turn and look at him.

HAROLD
 (drinking)
 Cheers!

They don't reply -- or drink -- just wait.

ANDY
 (finally)
 Well?

HAROLD
 Well what?

AUBREY
 Did you speak to her?

HAROLD
 Yes.

AUBREY
 Is she coming?

HAROLD
 Yes!

AUBREY
 To DINNER?

HAROLD
 Yes! And to the Games tomorrow.
 She has a kid brother. Athletics
 mad. 'Never stops talking about me'
 she says.

Aubrey's jaw drops. They look at each other -- then Andy bursts into uncontrollable laughter.

INT. A LONDON RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sybil and Harold are seated having just completed an after theatre dinner -- candlelit, special.

SYBIL

You know what boys are. He's in absolute awe of you. You're ruthless he says...it's all in your running.

(looks at him
puzzled)
Why running?

HAROLD

Why singing?

SYBIL

It's my living...and I love it.
Do you love running?

HAROLD

I feel compelled to run. It's a weapon.

SYBIL

Against what?

HAROLD

Being Jewish.

She laughs.

SYBIL

Oh fiddlesticks...I hardly know the difference and I don't care. Anyway, if you are Jewish -- you're hardly deprived are you?

HAROLD

I'm worse -- I'm semi-deprived.

SYBIL

That sounds clever -- but what does it mean?

HAROLD

They lead me to water -- but they won't let me drink.

She looks at him, at this enigma she finds herself dining with. He smiles at her -- disarming her.

HAROLD

You were very good tonight.

Cont.

SYBIL

Thank you! Is that why you asked me to dinner?

HAROLD

I was asking before I had time to think. I felt compelled again.

SYBIL

I see. I'm another duty?

HAROLD

Far from it. You're a splendid luxury. An indulgence. The first I've allowed myself in years.

SYBIL

(laughing)

You make me sound like a cream chocolate gateau.

Harold looks at her, laughing, there, radiant. He takes her hand.

HAROLD

Life's a pretty gloomy affair for me. It's always been so -- it was when I was a boy -- it is now... Tonight...watching you, listening to you sing...

(smiles)

...you bathed me in sunlight.

Sybil laughs and covers his hand with hers.

EXT. LONDON RAILWAY STATION - DAY

51

The Flying Scotsman steaming in to King's Cross.

INT. THE "SLEEPER" CORRIDOR - DAY

52

The ATTENDANT is knocking on a sleeping compartment door. He has a tray in one hand.

ATTENDANT

7:30 Mr. Liddell --
7:30 on the dot.

INT. SLEEPING COMPARTMENT - DAY

53

Eric sits up in the bunk and opens the door. The Attendant edges in.

Cont.

ATTENDANT
Here y'are sir -- hot tea and toast.

ERIC
Great!

ATTENDANT
Sleep all right?

ERIC
Like a log.

ATTENDANT
You must have a clear conscience.

ERIC
Ha! Far from it. Are we there?

ATTENDANT
Just pulling in now sir...King's Cross.
Oh! And here's the paper -- with
your picture in...Expecting great
things from all accounts.

ERIC
Are they indeed? Thanks!
He pops a tip on the tray.

ATTENDANT
Much obliged sir -- no hurry now --
you've an hour before we kick
you out.
(leaves and
shouts back
as he goes)
And good luck for this afternoon.

ERIC
Thank you!
The door shuts -- and Eric spreads the paper open on the
sports page.

He reads:

"Flying Scot comes South
to Tackle Cream of Cambridge.
Abrahams says 'I'm Ready.'"

ERIC
(supping his tea)
Aye Mr. Abrahams -- and so's the
Scot.

EXT. STAMFORD BRIDGE STAND - DAY

54

The crowd -- expectant -- excited -- chatting and peering into programmes. Sybil is edging along towards her seat. With her is her young brother TIM. She excuses herself and reaching it, finally settles down. Tim sits beside her -- she turns to him and smiles.

SYBIL

All right?

TIM

Super! Absolutely super!

And she laughs and faces out, savouring the heady atmosphere for herself.

INT. THE DRESSING ROOM - DAY

55

It's the communal changing room. Various competitors are changing into club or university strip. Our four Cambridge friends are adjacent to each other...There's an eerie subdued atmosphere about the place -- Most are silent -- and those who do speak do so in hushed and reverent tones -- not wishing to jangle tightly drawn nerves.

Harold is still fully dressed -- carefully unpacking his meticulously arranged attache case. His running vest -- shorts -- towel. Spiked shoes, highly polished, a cork on each spike. His shining trowel for digging his starting holes. His cricket-style sweater and college blazer...His bottle of rub. Aubrey is next to him...He looks towards him -- obviously dying to speak to him -- he opens his mouth but the hand of STALLARD on his arm stops him. "Not before the race" is the silent message. He nods and returns to his own preparations.

OVER HIM hear:

AUBREY

(voice over)

Darling Mum.

Thanks awfully for the money for the new togs. I'm going to wear them at the British Games so if by some freak I get my picture in the paper you won't need to be ashamed of me.

As Aubrey's voice prattles on:

CAMERA PANS SLOWLY AROUND the changing room -- PAST the faces of the athletes who glance first at Harold and then in the direction the CAMERA IS PANNING. GO WITH their eyes -- finally ARRIVING ON a powerful -- familiar back. Eric turns INTO CAMERA pulling on his Edinburgh University vest. He makes no glance across to where Harold is changing.

Cont.

See Harold, studiously failing to look back in return.

The others watch with sideward glances, talking on any subject save that which occupies their thoughts. See Aubrey watching.

AUBREY

(voice over)

...We are all fighting fit and each want desperately to do well today -- not only for college but to catch the eyes of the powers that be. Harold in particular is...

His voice trails off as Eric fastens his blazer over his vest -- turns up the collar in the accepted fashion -- combs his hair with a couple of quick flicks -- and slowly and deliberately crosses the room towards Harold.

All conversation ceases. All eyes are on him. He pauses in front of Harold's lowered eyes.

ERIC

Mr. Abrahams?

HAROLD

(looking up)

Mr. Liddell!

ERIC

I'd like to wish you the best of success.

HAROLD

Thank you...and may the best man win.

And they shake hands.

CLOSEUP - THE HANDS

55-A

Behind them Aubrey's face watching.

AUBREY

(voice over)

...and Harold is determined to scotch this Scots chap once and for all!!

The roar of the crowd rises above this image as we:

MIX TO:

EXT. THE TRACK - DAY

The race:

...or the last thirty yards of it...in CLOSEUP...head and shoulders -- the pair. In slow, slow motion -- level -- neck and neck -- driving -- desperate -- mouths asnarl.

Harold -- head thrust forward -- arms pounding driving across the body.

Eyes -- piercing -- staring.

Eric -- head back -- wild -- arms up and flailing -- eyes tight shut.

The last ten yards...Eric a foot in front -- ahead -- oblivious -- flat out. Harold -- desperate -- eyes across to the blue chest ahead of him -- straining -- half terror, half disbelief.

The tape. Eric snaps it as Harold plunges in a last desperation, the worsted strand curling up and about him mockingly...his face a crease of dismay.

Again see it -- Eric winning -- Harold's despairing plunge -- the snap of the worsted.

And again -- SNAP!

And again -- SNAP!

And again -- SNAP!

MIX TO:

INT. A PUB - NIGHT

Harold brooding, morose, tortured, hunched over a pint as that dreadful moment of defeat plays itself through over and over in his mind. SNAP! Eric wins. SNAP! Eric wins. SNAP!

A voice cuts in.

SYBIL

This is absolutely ridiculous!!
It's a race you've lost -- not
a relative.

She's sitting beside him behind a sherry...unbelieving, contemptuous of his shock and grief.

SYBIL

Nobody's dead. No great tragedy's occurred. Nobody's maimed or mutilated. People are laughing, singing, buying a drink. For goodness sake snap out of it Harold, you're behaving like a child.

HAROLD

I lost!

SYBIL

I know -- I was there remember
-- watching. It was marvellous.
You were marvelous. He was
more marvelous than'r all.
On the day the best man won.

HAROLD

I looked for him -- looked and
I dipped too late. It's absolutely
fundamental -- never look.

SYBIL

He was ahead. There was nothing
you could have done. He won
fair and square.

HAROLD

I'm finished -- it's over.

SYBIL

Well if you can't take a beating
-- perhaps it's for the best.

HAROLD

I don't run to take beatings
-- I run to win. If I can't
win I won't run.

SYBIL

If you don't run you can't win.
Give me a ring when you've worked
that one out.

And she stands and goes to leave.

HAROLD

Sybil!

She turns.

HAROLD

Don't go -- I can't explain it
-- I need to talk -- I don't
know what to say, what to do...

SYBIL

Do? Try growing up for a
start.

And she goes to leave again.

HAROLD.
(desperately)
PLEASE!

She hesitates, then turns back and sits. She looks at him.
Then grabs his hands in hers.

SYBIL
(gently)
Harold you're a great man. You
ran like a God...I was proud of
you. Don't make me ashamed.

HAROLD
(quietly)
It's not the losing Syb.
Eric Liddell's a fine man and
a fine runner. It's me...I...
after all that work. I believed
in myself...now -- God knows.
What do I aim for?

SYBIL
Beating him. The next time.

HAROLD
(shaking his
head)
Sybil. I can't run any faster.

A voice interrupts. "Mr. Abrahams." They look down. It's
Sam Mussabini -- smiling and chewing on his cigar. He beams
up at them.

SAM
Mr. Abrahams.
(pitching up
to them)
I can find you another two yards.

INT. HAROLD'S ROOM - CAIUS COLLEGE - NIGHT

58

Lantern slides being projected onto the wall -- sturdy,
laughing faces, "All American."

SAM
(voice over)
Charlie Paddock -- the
Californian Cannonball -- the
world's fastest human. Winner
of the 100 metres Olympic Games
1920 Antwerp...time 10.3 seconds.

Cont.

SAM (Cont.)

Jackson Scholtz -- the
New York Thunderbolt. Runner up --
Olympic Games 1920...Lost by
looking left...Here it is --
the Finish -- Paddock leaping
past him at the tape...that glance
cost Scholtz the race. Scholtz's
fastest -- 10.4.

and:

Eric Liddell -- the Flying Scotsman...
you know all about him.

Look at them -- think them --
sleep them -- live them -- I want
their faces leering at you every
time you close your eyes. Paddock,
Scholtz and Liddell -- the men
you've got to beat.

HAROLD

The Flying Scotsman first -- that
really hurt.

SAM

Eric Liddell? He's no real problem.

Harold looks at him in astonishment.

SAM

He's a great runner -- but he
needs to go further out.

HAROLD

Further out?

SAM

Longer -- the quarter -- he's no
hundred metres man.

HAROLD

He could've fooled me.

SAM

Oh he's fast all right. But
he'll go no faster, not in the
dash anyway. He's a gut runner --
all heart. He digs deep...and
the short sprint's run on nerves --
it's tailor made for neurotics.

Cont.

HAROLD

Thanks very much.

SAM

I mean it. You can hone nerves,
sharpen them up...give them a
precision. You need to push guts
-- bully them -- put them under
strain -- to get at your best.
In ten seconds there's no time
for that.

HAROLD

So I'm an unhoneed neurotic.

SAM

(smiling)
I couldn't have put it better
myself.

He puffs on his cigar and leaves Harold to study the three
faces -- each in turn.

HAROLD

(quietly, savouring
the names)
Charles Paddock...Jackson Scholtz
...and Eric Liddell.

Chink, chink, chink, chink.

The sound of coins being placed on the table. Harold turns.
Sam is plonking pennies down in a long line -- touching --
fifty of them.

SAM

Come over here!

Harold does so.

SAM

Fifty coins -- each one a stride
in your hundred yards -- I know
-- I counted them.

HAROLD

That many?

SAM

Aye -- and not enough.

Harold looks at him.

Cont.

SAM

You know why you lost the other day? 'Cos you're over striding -- a couple of inches a stride ...I watched you, I know.

HAROLD

But I've always run like that -- it's natural.

SAM

Natural or not -- it's death to a sprinter. It's like a slap in the face each stride you take.

(slaps him sharply
on the cheek)

Each stride you take, it knocks you back -- like that --

(slap)

-- and that --

(slap)

-- and that --

(slap)

-- Now! Let's have a look at your snaps.

Sam returns to the projector -- and starts to show slides of Harold -- running.

SAM

Ha! There! There y'are -- d'you see that?

(points on the
screen)

There's your centre of gravity -- you've to keep beneath it to retain your impetus. Look at your leading foot -- two inches too far -- and there's your slap in the face.

Harold examines the slide -- and shakes his head in disbelief.

HAROLD

What can we do about it?

SAM

(nodding towards the
piano in the corner
of the room)

D'you play?

Harold nods. Sam switches off the projector -- and on the light.

Cont.

SAM

Play us a tune.

Harold looks at him bewildered -- then crosses and sits at the piano. Open in front of him is the score of "Trial by Jury." On the top of the piano is a metronome. Sam sets it and starts it off.

Tick tock! Tick tock! Tick tock!

SAM

Sing me something to that.

Harold nods his head to the rhythm -- flicks through the score and comes to the Judge's Song. After the short introduction he begins to sing.

HAROLD

'When I my lords first came to the bar
I'd an appetite fresh and hearty.
I was, as many young barristers are,
An impecunious party.
I'd a swallow-tailed coat of a beautiful blue
And a suit that I'd bought off a booby
A couple of shirts and a collar or two
And a ring that looked like a ruby.'

He vamps as Sam talks.

SAM

This gadget here represents your
running rhythm -- 'tick tock, tick
tock!' It's what we call 'cadence'.
Now what we'll do with you -- is
this!

And he flicks the metronome up a notch producing a slightly faster rhythm. He claps his hands to it.

SAM

Now sing!

HAROLD

'But I soon got tired of third class journeys
And dinners of bread and water
So I fell in love with a rich attorney's
Elderly ugly daughter.
'You'll soon get used to her looks,' said he
'And a very nice girl you'll find her
She may very well pass for forty-three
In the dusk with the light behind her.'

Sam laughs, Harold laughs.

MIX TO:

ANGLE ON SYBIL

laughing -- and then into Harold's feet running to the rhythm as orchestral music takes over -- gradually increasing in tempo.

Dig! Dig! Dig! Dig! Dig!

SWING INTO:

MONTAGE OF THE NEXT SIX MONTHS IN THE CAREERS OF HAROLD AND ERIC 58-B

Harold coached precisely and academically by Sam -- as a dancer -- all delicacy and edge. Eric by Sandy -- crude, school-boy stuff, but building up immense reserves of stamina. Sybil assisting Sam. Jennie obstructing Sandy.

Dig! Dig! Dig! Dig!

Harold running stiff legged to the rhythm. Exaggeratingly flexing his ankles to a point -- like a prancing horse -- almost effeminate.

Sam conducting with his stick -- a ring master.

Eric plodding through wet sand -- heavy -- clinging. He sweats with effort...Sandy on ancient motorbike beside him -- exhorting.

Harold high knee raising to touch Sam's horizontal stick -- Sam counting -- Sybil with stopwatch.

Eric running with greyhounds on sands.

Jennie on sand hills above -- looking down on him -- interested despite herself.

Harold prancing -- placing his feet, balletically, for a start.

Sam with pistol behind him.

Eric matter-of-factly dropping to his crouch -- Sandy with a shotgun behind him.

SAM

Don't react Mr. Abrahams -- go for release -- a coiled spring, a dam about to burst.

Cont.

SANDY

Wait for it Eric! Wait for
it! Wait!

SAM

To your marks!

SANDY

Get set!

And Sam coughs and Harold is away -- such is his nervy
readiness.

Sandy fires -- falls over with the recoil -- and Eric dives
for cover.

Sybil placing pieces of paper on the track at "Fenners."
Lines are drawn across it, the width of Harold's old stride.
The papers are two inches inside it.

Jennie placing hymn sheets onto chairs in an empty hall, with
Rob. She pauses, looks at her watch and helplessly at Rob.

LONG SHOT the misty Fenners. Three lone figures out on the
track.

LONG SHOT of a misty slum street in Edinburgh -- Eric running
along it -- fully dressed, his kit on his back -- looking at
his watch -- worried.

Harold sprinting, his stride shorter, his cadence quicker,
his spikes picking up the paper beneath them. Sam throws his
hat in the air.

Eric running in the street -- urgent -- his breath trailing
behind him.

Harold dipping. Singing rising behind him from the lights
of the pavilion across the track as Sam and Sybil embrace.

Eric running -- singing rising from the lights of a hall
ahead of him.

INSIDE the pavilion -- the rest of the athletic club --
dedicated amateurs all -- are enjoying tea and buns by a
roaring fire. A bustling, motherly groundsman's WIFE waits
on them as they sing, feet up, in shorts and sweaters, a
university song.

Cont.

INSIDE the hall -- the meeting sings a rousing hymn as Eric runs in at the back and trots down the aisle. On the platform Jennie is upset as he takes his place beside her;

END MONTAGE ON TRIUMPHANT FINALES TO ALL THREE MUSICAL ELEMENTS.

INT. THE PAVILION - DUSK

59

The song finishes lustily...applause and bites of buns.

STUDENT

(laughing)

Bit weak on the old baritone.
Where's Abrahams -- still out
with his mahout...

2ND STUDENT

A yid and a wog -- damned unholy
alliance if you ask me.

ANDY

Didn't hear anyone ask you, old
chap.

AUBREY

Well said!

ROBIN

Bad form though, individual
coach! Self obsessed, don't
you think?

HARRY

Out there on the track you've
got to be self obsessed -- it's
not a team sport is it?

ROBIN

All I'm saying is it's being
noticed -- high up -- and it's
not going down well -- not going
well at all.

INT. THE HALL - NIGHT

60

The meeting is dispersing -- Jennie, Rob and Eric are stacking
away chairs with others. Jennie is upset.

Cont.

JENNIE

Training, training, training,
all we ever hear, Eric, is training.
Do you believe in what we're
doing here or not?

ERIC

I'm sorry Jennie -- I was late.
I apologize.

JENNIE

If it was only that easy.

ERIC

I've said I'm sorry.

JENNIE

To me? It's not me you've
insulted.

ERIC

(angrily)

Och away with your bother. The
Lord'll not feel slighted at
the missing of a bus.

Jennie pauses in her stacking and turns to face him.

JENNIE

(slowly, quietly)

Aye Eric, you missed a bus.
But why? Because your mind's
not with us anymore son. It's
full of sprinting and starting
and medals and pace. Your
head's so full of running you've
no room for standing still.

She turns away, worried, upset.

ERIC

Don't fret yourself Jennie...

JENNIE

I do fret myself. I can't help
it. I'm frightened for you --
for what they might do to you.
If your head's lost to us -- will
your heart be long following?

Cont.

Eric looks at her -- then walks away a few paces. He looks up at the banner still hanging behind the platform -- the cross and the mission's name...a young voice cuts in.

SCHOOL GIRL

Please Mr. Liddell -- would you sign your name please?

Eric turns and sees the Girl from the previous meeting looking up at him.

ERIC

(smiling)

Surely.. Would you like to pick yourself a pen.

He bends forward and offers his breast pocket to her. It is full of fountain pens and propelling pencils. She takes one and he signs. She goes. Eric turns back to Jennie.

ERIC

Will you take a walk with me Jennie? There's something I've got to say.

CUT TO:

EXT. KING ARTHUR'S SEAT - EDINBURGH - DUSK

A-60

Eric and Jennie are standing overlooking the lights of Edinburgh spread out below them.

ERIC

It's a sight and a half, isn't it, Jennie?

(pause)

I'll be sorry to leave it.

Jennie reacts.

ERIC

I've decided. I'm going back to China -- the Missionary Service have accepted me.

Jennie smiles and throws her arms round him kissing him on both cheeks.

ERIC

But I've some running to do first.

Cont.

Jennie looks at him, her enthusiasm cut short.

ERIC

Jennie you've got to understand.
(smiles)

I believe God made me -- for a purpose. For China. But he also made me fast, and when I run I feel his pleasure. To give it up would be to hold him in contempt. You were right. It's not

Cont.

ERIC (Cont.)

just fun. To win is to honour
him. Jennie...I've my degree
to get -- all that work and then
there's Paris -- the Olympic Games.
There's just not enough of me.
The Mission, you'll just have
to manage.

Jennie looks at him biting her lip -- then turns away and
runs off down the hill. Eric watches her, sighs and looks
out again over Edinburgh.

MIX TO:

LONG SHOT OVER CAMBRIDGE SPIRES - DUSK

60-A

INT. CAIUS MASTERS' ROOMS - EVENING

61

Vintage port -- held up to firelight -- pondered upon --
relished -- in exquisite cut glass. It's turned, slowly, to
catch its every subtlety, as a ruby, caringly, sacredly.

Harold, his Master at Caius, and our old friend the Master at
Trinity are settled into deep-winged arm chairs before a richly
laden log fire. They wear black ties for the dinner being
cleared silently by a man servant behind them. The casements
of this lovely, lived-in room, as brown and comforting as an
old tobacco pouch, are open to sound of evening laughter
rising from the court below. The May twilight casts an
approving gaze on the scene of mature, civilized, if ultra
conservative contentment.

The Caius Master reminisces through his wine -- theatrically
-- almost as a prologue -- setting the scene.

CAIUS

Laid this down in 1914, on the
day they declared the war, in a
spirit of complete optimism and
faith.

TRINITY

It was the prevailing spirit.

CAIUS

It was. Cambridge was so sure,
so buoyant, so confident then.

TRINITY

A vanishing world.

Cont.

Harold looks at the two old Dons. He envies their unassailable security but despairs at their wallowing in the past -- at their ice bound conservatism. He watches and listens as they sip their wine and continue what takes on the form of a closely knit dialogue -- suspiciously well rehearsed.

CAIUS

What a fateful day that was.

TRINITY

News boys clattering up the streets.

CAIUS

Bright, shining young men in their thousands, marching away...

TRINITY

To decimation.

They sip again and look into the fire. There's a pause:

Cont.

CAIUS

You've served us well Abrahams.
Those of you who survived, or
succeeded. You've helped us
to have faith again in our
task.

TRINITY

In the future.

CAIUS

Yours is a fine generation --
marvellous in its promise.

Harold is embarrassed by all this -- but tries to keep his
end up.

HAROLD

I'm afraid we're the runt of
the litter.

TRINITY

Never believe it. We know. We
knew them, know you. They will
rest content.

CAIUS

They will indeed.

More sips, more fire gazing. Then further musing.

TRINITY

Life slips by Abrahams, life
slips by. But this great country
of ours, this fine old university,
they offer some rare consolations,
wouldn't you say?

HAROLD

Beyond measure sir! Beyond measure.

Caius reaches forward with the decanter and tops up his glass.

TRINITY

We can take it, therefore, you'd
be acutely grieved to discover
that some action or behaviour on
your part was causing her grief?

HAROLD

(warily)
Naturally sir, I would, deeply.

Cont.

TRINITY

Good! I was sure of it.

The Caius Master tops up Trinity's glass and then his own, leaving Harold to stew for a moment. Harold waits. Trinity sits back and looks up at the flickering shadows on the ceiling.

TRINITY

We at Cambridge have long been proud of our athletic prowess. We believe, have always believed, that our games are indispensable. They help mould the complete Englishman. They create character, foster courage, honesty and leadership. But most of all imbue him with an unassailable spirit of loyalty, comradeship and mutual responsibility...Would you agree?

X

HAROLD

(still carefully)

Yes sir -- I would.

He waits, forcing Trinity to go on.

TRINITY

Abrahams. I'm afraid there is a growing suspicion in the bosom of the University -- and I tell you this without in any way decrying your achievements in which we all rejoice -- that, in your enthusiasm to succeed, you have, perhaps, lost sight of the latter.

There's a silence. Harold looks at him, then at Caius. They look back, suddenly cold-eyed. Harold feels his neck hair rise in a surge of anger. He holds back and answers them, quietly, deliberately.

HAROLD

May I ask what form this disloyalty, this betrayal, takes?

TRINITY

Oh! Hardly betrayal.

HAROLD

The word grief was mentioned.

There's a pause, and the baton passes to Caius.

Cont.

CAIUS
It's been said you have a personal
coach!

HAROLD
Mr. Mussabini, yes.

TRINITY
Is he Italian?

HAROLD
(coldly)
...of Italian extraction. Yes!

TRINITY
I see.

HAROLD
But not all Italian.

TRINITY
(superciliously)
I'm relieved to hear it.

HAROLD
He's half Arab.

There's an icy pause.

CAIUS
Do I take it that you employ
Mr. Mussabini...
(pauses, the
distaste)
...on a professional basis?

HAROLD
Sam Mussabini is the finest, most
advanced, clearest thinking
athletics coach in the country.
I am honored that he considers
me worthy of his complete attention.

CAIUS
Nevertheless, he's a professional.

HAROLD
What else would he be, he's the
best?

TRINITY
Ah! Well there Mr. Abrahams, is
where our paths diverge. The
University believes that the way
of the amateur can produce the
most gratifying results.

HAROLD

I am an amateur.

TRINITY

(suddenly vitriolic)

You are trained by a professional. You have adopted a professional approach. For the past year you have concentrated wholly on developing your own technique, in the headlong pursuit, may I suggest, of individual glory. A policy hardly conducive to the fostering of 'esprit de corps.'

HAROLD

(steadily)

I am a Cambridge man first and last. I am an Englishman first and last. What I have achieved, what I intend to achieve, is for my family, my University, and my country, and I bitterly resent your suggesting otherwise.

TRINITY

Your aim, is it not, is to win at all costs?

HAROLD

At all costs no! But I do aim to win within the rules. Perhaps, sir, you would rather I played the gentleman and lost.

TRINITY

To playing the tradesman -- yes!

There's a pause. Then Caius leans forward confidentially -- in a gesture of conciliation.

CAIUS

My boy! Your approach has been, shall we say, a little too artisan? You are the elite, and, as such, must be seen to run rather to the manner born.

Harold looks at them -- petrified in a by-gone age. He puts down his port and stands. He extends his hand to Caius.

HAROLD

Thank you sir! For your hospitality. The evening has been most illuminating.

HAROLD (Cont.)
(then to Trinity)
Good-night to you sir! No!
Don't get up! I'll see myself
out.

(crosses to the door,
then turns)
You know gentlemen -- you yearn
for victory just as I do. But
achieved with the apparent
effortlessness of Gods. Yours
are the archaic values of the
Prep School playground. You
deceive no one but yourselves.
I believe in the relentless
pursuit of excellence -- and
I'll carry the future with me!!

And he goes leaving the Dons behind him. Trinity sighs
and, reaching for the decanter, tops them both up.

TRINITY
There departs a Semite, Hugh --
a different God -- a different
mountain top.

X

EXT. CAMBRIDGE - DUSK

62

Harold, running, away from them, from what they represent...
His jacket flying behind him -- across the sacred lawns...
towards the river. As he runs he tears off his black tie
and stiff winged collar -- freeing himself from their
restrictions -- gasping at the air with his new found freedom.
Past the strolling couples, the cycling groups -- the knots
of chatting students squatting on the river bank. Slowly,
steadily he comes to a halt and strolls almost casually onto
a stone bridge. He looks down into the water, dangling the
starched collar and black tie towards the river below.

Then a voice pierces the gathering gloom -- shouting his name.

Harold! Harold!

It's Aubrey, running flat out towards him, waving an evening
paper. He pants up to Harold and grabs his hand, shaking it,
pumping it.

AUBREY
We're in Harold, all of us, you,
Henry, Andy and me -- we're all
in -- it's in the paper --
Evening News.

HAROLD
The team? All of us?

HAROLD (Cont.)

(then to Trinity)

Good-night to you sir! No!
Don't get up! I'll see myself
out.

(crosses to the door,
then turns)

You know gentlemen -- you yearn
for victory just as I do. But
achieved with the apparent
effortlessness of Gods. Yours
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Prep School playground. You
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I believe in the relentless
pursuit of excellence -- and
I'll carry the future with me!!

And he goes leaving the Dons behind him. Trinity sighs
and, reaching for the decanter, tops them both up.

TRINITY

There departs a Semite, James --
a different God -- a different
mountain top.

EXT. CAMBRIDGE - DUSK

62

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His jacket flying behind him -- across the sacred lawns...
towards the river. As he runs he tears off his black tie
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pumping it.

AUBREY

We're in Harold, all of us, you,
Henry, Andy and me -- we're all
in -- it's in the paper --
Evening News.

HAROLD

The team? All of us?

AUBREY

All of us -- you 100 and 200,
Andy 400 and hurdles, Henry the
mile and me the steeplechase.
Paris here we come!!

HAROLD

(quietly, under
the circumstances)
Congrats Aubrey, well done.

AUBREY

Eric Liddell's picked too --
rivals under the same flag.
Your chance to get even, what?

HAROLD

I can't wait!

AUBREY

Cheers then -- I've got to dash
and find Henry -- bet the begger
doesn't know. I'll buy you a
drink tomorrow. Celebrate!

And he runs off.

HAROLD

(shouting)
I'll hold you to that!

He watches him go then turns back to the river. He finds his collar and tie still dangling in his hand. He swirls them round his head and hurls them into the water. Then watches them sweep away gathering speed on the current.

HARD INTO:

MONTAGE OF HEADLINES

63

...in true early movie tradition. Newspaper banners are crossing the screen, punchy, aggressive, triumphant...with photos.

FANFARE

PRINTING PRESS RUNNING OFF COPIES

63-A

DAILY EXPRESS

Olympic team announced. Abrahams
and Liddell team up for Britain.

DELIVERY TRUCK THROWS OUT BUNDLE - ON BACK SEE 63-B

DAILY SKETCH

Rivals of the cinder path in
Paris line up.

NEWSSTAND VENDOR SELLING PAPERS - ON HIS 63-C
PLACARD SEE

STAR

Cambridge dominates British team.

SPINNING "TIMES" NEWS HEADLINE COMES TO HALT 63-D
- READ:

TIMES

College quarter make track
history.

Beneath is a photograph. Harold, Andy, Harry, and Aubrey
arms linked, laughing.

CAPTION

"Cambridge to Challenge
U.S. Might."

INT. KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL - CAMERIDGE - DAY 64

The beautiful hanging purity of the voices of the King's
College Chapel Choir...singing in German...in praise of the
God of our Dons, of Cambridge, of England and St. George.

The slender, perpendicular chapel reaches its frail stone
fingered arches heavenwards, above the heads of a breathless
nave. Here are seated, in solemn listening rows, those whose
pilgrimage to this ancient city reaches fulfilment here.
Amongst them sits Harold -- listening -- his thoughts
floating on the ether of the clear, sweet sound. Beside him
sits his MOTHER -- a small, slender lady with intense black
eyes and the high boned, aristocratic facial architecture of
the mid European. Neither speaks. Harold's eyes close at
the Choir's bidding. His Mother's roam the scale and
magnificence of this Christian chapel about her...wondering
even fearing, at its power and influence. Her gaze shifts
to her son -- chin held high beside her. She looks at him --
at what he has become -- and here -- in this awesome place --
begins to understand.

INT. CAMBRIDGE - TEA SHOP - DAY 65

Harold and his Mother are seated, facing across a table of
scones, cream cakes and tea. Mrs. Abrahams pours as she
speaks.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Why did you take me there?

HAROLD

You've always enjoyed singing.
There's none better.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Is that the only reason?

HAROLD

What d'you mean?

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Now please, no nonsense Harold,
I'm your mother and I know you
inside out. And if you ask me to
sit in a Christian church and
listen to Christian music, however
beautiful, I want to know why?

HAROLD

(taking her hand and
smiling)

Mother, I constantly underestimate
you!

MRS. ABRAHAMS

(patting his in
return)

You feel safer that way...Now
tell me...Is it about Sybil?

Harold looks at her, taken aback by her awareness and
directness. He sits back and stirs his tea.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

You want to marry her?

HAROLD

I think so -- yes! -- Would it
hurt you if I did?

Mrs. Abrahams, having satisfied herself as to the real reasons
for her visit -- settles back and sips her tea. She looks at
her son.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Harold, Your father and I, we
came to England with no illusions.
We wanted freedom, for ourselves
and our sons. But freedom means
freedom. We love this country
and want you to love it -- yet
I'm a Jewish mother and I'd like

Cont.

MRS. ABRAHAMS (Cont.)

you to love and marry a Jewish girl. But England, Cambridge -- they are your reality -- you want to belong -- and who am I to stand in your way?

HAROLD

But why do I want to belong?
This place...

(looks out of the window at the spires of colleges and chapels)

...behind that charm out there, there's ugliness...I sensed it when I first arrived...I forget... but then I'm reminded -- brutally. And yet I still want to be part of it.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

And Sybil?

HAROLD

Perhaps she's bound up in it, all this Englishness. Do I love her for herself -- or for what she represents...I've got to be sure. I don't want to hurt her.

There's a pause as Mrs. Abrahams pours them more tea. She puts down the pot and stirs her tea.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

When do you go to Paris?

HAROLD

In two weeks -- we go to Broadstairs first.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Is Sybil going -- to Paris I mean?

HAROLD

No! She can't -- she's singing.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Good!

He looks at her.

Cont.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Harold, where is your problem? Your country has chosen you -- to be her champion -- against the world. How can you be more British? Sybil you can love for Sybil's sake -- she brings you nothing you don't already have.

HAROLD

(shaking his head)

It's not that simple Mother. If I win then maybe you're right. But the odds are against me... deep down I know that, and deep down I know that Sybil will be there, regardless, even if I lose.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Harold, you're your father's son. You cross your bridges before they're even built. Tell the girl -- tell her you must clear your mind of her -- for three weeks only. For Paris. It'll be hard -- but I know her. She'll understand. Then go out there and win. When you come back, and you see her again, you'll know.

Harold thinks, smiles uncertainly, then nods his agreement.

MRS. ABRAHAMS

Good! Now! I've come too far to waste time on tea cup tittle tattle. Show me some of this beautiful city of yours.

EXT. HIGHBECK HOUSE - DAY

66

Highbeck House, the seat of the Duke of Cumbria, country home of Andrew Earl Lindsey. See champagne glasses, empty, in a foreshortened line -- perched on the ends of heavy wooden sheep hurdles. These, in turn, are positioned at intervals across the immaculate lawn. Before the house is a terrace along which walk Andy and Sybil. The sun shines as it never fails to do on Andy, the birds sing, bees ride the heavy scent of early summer blossom, God is in his heaven, and all is right with the world.

Cont.

Following discreetly behind are a Butler and a Footman -- one carrying a tray of tea -- the other champagne. See the pair walk, Sybil in light summer coat and hat, Andy in immaculate silk dressing gown and carrying a glass of champagne. Sybil sips tea from a daintily held china cup, feeling rather embarrassed by the standard of service.

CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSER ON them as they talk.

ANDY

He's darn difficult to love, old Harold. In the minority you see -- makes 'em downright prejudiced...feel superior... can't relax...spend the whole damn time proving it...mostly to themselves.

SYBIL

Andy, I've lost him...I can't reach him.

ANDY

You will old girl, you will... after Paris. Now he can't help himself poor chap. Joshua's trump and all that...it's something about us English. The Welsh, Scots, Irish, they all feel the same. 'Must win, can't do without it'...Who knows, perhaps it's because they can still only taste defeat.

SYBIL

He wants to 'clear his mind of me.' He can't love me and say that.

Andy stops and motions for more champagne without taking his eyes off Sybil. As if by magic it's supplied. Tea is offered but Sybil refuses. The "flunkies" retreat silently.

ANDY

(steadily, with quiet authority)
Syb. The world's against him -- or so he believes. And now he's a chance to leave it wallowing in his wake. He can't see or hear anything beyond that...not even you. It's hard but you've just got to try to understand.

SYBIL

Why should I?

Cont.

ANDY

Because he's what you want --
isn't he?

SYBIL

But what about you, and Henry
and Aubrey? You're still the
same. Isn't the chance there
for you too?

ANDY

To be a fastest, yes! But not
the fastest. Faster than any
man, ever before. That's
immortality. Think what that
means to a man like Harold.
I don't need it. To me the
whole thing's fun -- to him
it's life and death.

Slight pause.

SYBIL

So all I can do is wait.

ANDY

I'm afraid so. And hope like
hell that he wins.

SYBIL

And if he doesn't?

ANDY

He'll start all over again.
And he'll need your help to
do it.

Sybil looks at him gratefully, then kisses his cheek.

SYBIL

Thank you Andy.

ANDY

A pleasure. Sure you can't
stay for dinner?

SYBIL

I can't. I've to be on stage
at eight -- remember?

ANDY

How could I ever forget?
(looks at her)
Don't you worry Syb. I've
never ever seen a man so smitten.
It's just...

Cont.

SYBIL

Joshua's trump -- I know.

Andy laughs and kisses her cheek in return.

ANDY

He's a damn fool. I always thought the Irish had all the luck.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON ANDY'S ROLLS

66-A

coasting down the drive away from the house -- driven by his Chauffeur. In the back sits Sybil...looking out of the window -- she's weeping gently.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE

66-B

The champagne glasses -- being topped up one by one -- to the brim -- by a FOOTMAN. At the end of the line of hurdles Andy is limbering up...a grim look of intense concentration on his face as he peels off his robe. Beneath he is clad in running kit...and his right knee and shin are scarred and bloody.

The Footman finishes the last glass and turns to shout.

FOOTMAN

Ready your lordship!

ANDY

Now men -- if I shed a drop -- I want to know. Touch but not spill, all right?

And he crouches at a start, concentrates, then explodes. Over each hurdle he skims, his trailing right leg barely brushing the rough heavy wood. As it does so the glasses shiver and shimmer, but ne'er a drop is disturbed...So much for the myth of the Carefree Corinthian.

EXT. CARLTON HOTEL BROADSTAIRS - TERRACE

67

Champagne glasses being topped up prior to a toast -- shimmering in the sun. A buffet lunch on the terrace overlooking the sands. An all male affair...for the athletes prior to their embarkation for Paris. The men are in their blazers and flannels for the first time...for the first time a team, a unit, and Lord Birkenhead -- of the Olympic Committee -- is delivering their first exhortation. Laughter and applause have greeted his last remark.

BIRKENHEAD

(riding it)
 ...and strong though the temptation
 may be to disport your newly
 acquired finery about the streets
 of Paris -- as if they aren't
 temptation enough!

More laughter.

BIRKENHEAD

On behalf of the Olympic Committee
 may I ask you all to save your
 sartorial spendour, at least until
 after the opening ceremony. As
 the geriatric said to his new
 young bride -- 'There ain't no
 more where that came from.'

Laughter all around again -- SEE our men enjoying the speech.
 Even Eric allows himself a quiet smile.

And they do look great in their blue blazers, union jackets,
 and white flannels. Some are even trying out their straw
 boaters with suitably patriotic head bands.

Birkenhead contines. A bluff man, with more than a hint of
 the debauched about him, but with a hard wit and
 intelligence which augers ill for all who challenge him.

BIRKENHEAD

Seriously though, gentlemen.
 You are the favoured few -- you
 constitute what is without doubt
 the most powerful athletic force
 ever to leave these shores. You
 are to face the world's best,
 brown and yellow, white and black,
 all young and ardent as yourselves,
 fleet of foot and strong of limb,
 from every civilized nation on
 the face of the earth. I am in no
 doubt whatsoever you will acquit
 yourselves honourably and with
 distinction. Good luck to you
 all!

EXT. VICTORIA STATION - DAY

68

Bedlam, steam, taxis drawing up, luggage, press men,
 photographers, handshakes, interviews, porters, whistles
 etc...all the cacophony of a major send-off. The team are
 now in that strangely, to contemporary eyes, middle-aged
 garb of the twenties. Homburgs and spats, sticks and
 umbrellas, formal reserved. But inside they're young and
 vigorously excited. Birkenhead is surrounded by press
 issuing a last flowery but pungent statement.

Cont.

Andy draws up in his Bentley -- the Chauffeur unloading a mountain of luggage. Aubrey and Henry look proud, nervous, unused to such fuss, attention. Eric is standing quietly, alone, in the crowd, as only he can. There's no sign of Harold.

BIRKENHEAD

Broken
by
Questions

Yes! The Americans have prepared themselves specially, some might say too specially, to gain success. But we feel we may, in our own unsophisticated way, have their match...Yes they do have a number of men who rank as world beaters... but this contest is in Europe and not the rarefied climes of the United States. Parisian conditions are bound to be more robust, more combative and certainly more cavalier. And in Abrahams, Liddell and Lindsey we have the men to give them a run for their money.

Aubrey and Henry greet Andy -- looking at his mountain of luggage.

AUBREY

Andy -- it's 'Paree' we're going to, not Peru.

HARRY

What have you got in there?

ANDY

I'm a noble, remember! It's a privilege of the privileged.

AUBREY

What is?

ANDY

A cocoon of mobile luxury. I'm insulating myself from sordid reality. When the revolution comes I'll be blissfully unaware of what hits me.

They laugh.

ANDY

Seen Harold?

HAROLD

Not yet...he'll be around somewhere. This is one train he's not going to miss.

INT. STATION BUFFET/BAR - DAY

The Station Announcer declares the "Golden Arrow" about to leave. Harold and Sam are standing at the bar -- Harold drains his pint, picks up his baggage and shakes Sam's hand.

HAROLD

(briskly)
'Bye then Mussabini. I only wish
you could come along. I tried
but...

SAM

I persona non grata. I know.
There's too many old buffers'
bunions to tread on. D'you
feel ready Mr. Abrahams --
that's the main thing?

HAROLD

As I'll ever be.
(looks at him; then
shakes his hand again;
warmly)
Sam, how can I ever thank you?

SAM

Get to that tape first, that's
the only way.

Harold nods.

HAROLD

I'll do my best. Cheers!

SAM

Ta ta lad. And don't go falling
overboard after all our trouble.

Harold laughs and goes. As he reaches the door he turns.

HAROLD

Be seeing you then!

SAM

(winking)
In a couple of days.

Sam raises his pint to him. Harold goes. Sam chuckles and
thirstily drains his glass.

EXT. BACK ON THE PLATFORM - DAY

The team is now boarding the train. Being pestered by
reporters for one last quote, photographed, kissing loved
ones, protecting precious baggage etc. Eric is about to step
up when he hears a shout.

SANDY'S VOICE

(o.s.)
Eric! Eric!

He turns, and pushing his way through the crowd is Sandy. His face lights up -- he's amazed.

ERIC

Sandy...you've not come from Scotland just to see me off?

SANDY

No, I have not...I'm seeing myself off.

ERIC

You're what?

SANDY

(hustling him
onto the train)

Get on the train will ye. It'll go without us.

ERIC

(protesting)

But man you can't -- I can't take a personal coach. It's not allowed...

SANDY

I'm not your coach, I'm your valet. And I've got my ticket -- d'you want me to waste it?

ERIC

No!

SANDY

Spoken like a true Scot. In you get, go on!

A REPORTER seizes Eric's arm as he mounts the train, Sandy pushing behind him.

REPORTER

Mr. Liddell...what d'you think your chances are against Abrahams?

ERIC

I'll do my best -- I can do no less.

The whistle blows.

REPORTER

(shouting over
Sandy's shoulder)

What about Sunday? Do you think you can beat the Yanks?

EXT. BOAT DOCK - CHANNEL STEAMER

Eric hardly hears -- then, like a thunderbolt, it registers, what he's said. He turns but the Reporter moves on for another catch.

ERIC

What did you say?

But the man doesn't hear.

EXT. ON THE QUAYSIDE - DAY

71

Harold is pushing his way towards the barrier, carrying his suitcases. Reporters and photographers snap at him as he hurries to catch the boat.

Then he sees her, Sybil, standing by the gate. He stops beside her. They look at each other.

SYBIL

(quietly)
I came to wish you luck.

HAROLD

I'm glad.

SYBIL

And I understand. I wanted you to know that. I'll be here... when you come back.

Harold looks at her...the boat's siren wails. The Reporters watch.

HARBOR MASTER

Hurry along, Mr. Abrahams -- she's about to sail. Watch your step sir, we want you there in one piece.

Harold leans forward suddenly and kisses Sybil...then he dashes through the barrier to the boat. She stands and watches him go...the Reporters start firing questions at her.

SYBIL

(shouting)
Good luck! Make sure you win!!

He waves his acknowledgement -- then climbs aboard the gangplank. The Reporters clamor around Sybil.

Cont.

SYBIL
(to herself,
ignoring them)
...For both of us!

The gangplank is shipped. The boat begins to move away from the quay.

Sandy leans on the rail. Eric grabs at his arm angrily.

ERIC
When did you get to know?

SANDY
Did you not see the papers this morning? They had the whole program. The heats for the hundred are on the Sunday after the opening ceremony. The semis and final a couple of days after.

The boat steams into the harbor. People are waving good-bye from the shore -- but Eric is too dazed to notice. He stares into the space, white-faced. Sandy looks at him.

SANDY
Och, come on Eric. It's only a heat. Does it make all that difference?

ERIC
(quietly, flatly)
Aye! -- All the difference in the world.

EXT. FRONT-ON SHOT STEAMER - DUSK

OUT 71-A

71-AA

ploughing through waves.

EXT. THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - DUSK

71-B

The Channel Steamer is ploughing its way to France -- lights blazing -- the sound of movement and singing rising from its decks.

CHORUS
Come friends who plough the sea
Truce to navigation
Take another station
Let's vary piracy
With a little burglary.

Cont.

It's Harold, leading a crowd of fellow athletes, passengers, committee men's wives, daughters, guests around a piano in the saloon -- leading them in his usual boisterous Gilbert and Sullivan chorus. We hear them now -- not see them -- hear them echoing across the water -- very lively -- very British.

INT. THE CHANNEL STEAMER SALOON - DUSK

72

BANG IN ON Harold at the keyboard, head thrown back, cares, apprehensions, tensions lost and forgotten in the exhilaration of the music. One side of him are two American girls -- Jo and Clare -- and Sandy with his arms round both.

ALL

With cat-like tread upon our prey we steal
In silence dread, nor cautious way we feel.
No sound at all, we never speak a word.
A fly's footfall would be distinctly heard.
Come friends...etc.

TRACK BACK FROM the group as they hurl themselves into the Pirates' Chorus once more. BACK PAST the groups of passengers -- playing cards -- feet up, laughing, chatting, high on their great adventure -- TO FIND Aubrey sitting quietly in a corner -- knee up -- writing -- completing his letter -- and in so doing bringing us up to date in our climb back through time.

AUBREY

(voice over; rising)
I wish you could see Ma, the wonderful spirit abroad now that we've left England. Harold on the piano with his beloved Gilbert and Sullivan. We're all relaxing and laughing and chatting about anything -- anything but running. We're here for Britain and we know it. I'm here for you Mum, you and Pa...I hope I do you proud. There's not a chap amongst us who isn't ready to burst his heart for all we've left behind.

EXT. THE STERN - CLOSEUP - ERIC - DUSK

73

He's leaning over the stern of the ship watching the wake -- tumbling, foaming in a great white ribbon towards the setting sun -- and the sea birds crying and wheeling above it. The singing wafts on the wind behind him. He's racked with indecision -- even tormented. From out of it, and the sound of the sea and the gulls, rises his sister's voice.

JENNIE

(voice over)
Your mind's not with us anymore son. It's full of sprinting and starting and medals and pace. Your head's so full of running you've no room for standing still. And if your head's lost to us -- will your heart be long following?

Eric looks again, around and wide at the majesty of the sea and the sky. Then down at the stern crashing through the surf --

at the sheer power of the ocean. God's ocean, God's power...
 God's anger??
 See his face -- conscience stricken.

MIX TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE

73-A

Aubrey shouting -- on echo.

AUBREY

Eric won't run! 'Eric won't run!'
 Eric Liddell WON'T RUN!!!

The cry is taken up by faces, voices carrying the news through
 Eric's imagination fathering pace, intensity.

"Eric won't run!" "Liddell won't run!"
 "Liddell won't run!" "He won't run!"
 "He just won't RUN!!!"

A last huge smash of a wave sees Eric -- eyes tight shut --
 turn sharply away.

CUT HARD TO:

BIRKENHEAD'S FACE

73-B

apoplectic -- real.

BIRKENHEAD

Won't run? Won't RUN? What
 d'you mean man you won't run?

INT. BIRKENHEAD'S SUITE/CABIN - NIGHT

74

BIRKENHEAD is facing Eric, who's come to him to deliver the news
 of his withdrawal from the hundred metres. Eric stands white
 faced but calm in the face of this barrage.

ERIC

(quietly)
 I mean sir, I can't run.

BIRKENHEAD

If you're fit sir! You can run.
 What you mean is you won't.

ERIC

Aye sir. I won't.

BIRKENHEAD

In God's name. Why?

There's a slight pause before Eric spells it out, quietly,
 deliberately.

ERIC

The 100 metre heats. They're on
 Sunday -- and I won't run, not on
 the Lord's Day.

Cont.

Birkenhead is taken aback. Like us all he is completely unused to such an open expression of faith. He looks at Eric, at his steady gaze, at his composure...and prepares his attack.

The singing rises and falls in the b.g.

BIRKENHEAD

You mean it don't you!

ERIC

Aye! I do!

BIRKENHEAD

Then sit down man, sit down!
Let's talk about this. I like
a man who means what he says --
brings the best out of me. Do
you find that yourself?

ERIC

(sitting)
Aye! I do.

BIRKENHEAD

Good!...Drink?

He crosses to the cocktail cabinet.

ERIC

No thanks -- I don't.

BIRKENHEAD

(pouring himself
a deep Scotch)
Mind if I do?

ERIC

I'm not sure I'm entitled to mind.

BIRKENHEAD

Damn right you're not.

And he takes a savoring drink, considers, and turns to face a situation the likes of which he's never faced before.

BIRKENHEAD

Now! When? When did you decide
...upon this course of action?

ERIC

Today! When I discovered the
truth, the decision was made
for me.

BIRKENHEAD

And didn't the possibility occur
to you -- before? Knowing the
Continental's, knowing the French?
Once they've a Mass tucked under
their belt they're capable of
anything.

ERIC

No sir. It didn't! The idea of running on the Sabbath -- it doesn't come into my thinking.

BIRKENHEAD

No!

(looks at him)

No, I don't suppose it does.

He walks with his glass, pondering. Eric's gaze following him.

BIRKENHEAD

So you want to pull out eh? Reject your country and your kind. It's an awful step you're contemplating Liddell. Yourself and Abrahams...you're our key men, you realize that...the whole of Britain will be watching you...and I'm not sure they'll understand. I'm not sure that I understand.

ERIC

...I'm not sure that I understand.

Birkenhead looks at him, surprised.

ERIC

I've run, driven myself, and run and run again, for three whole years, just to be on this ship... I gave up rugby, my work has suffered -- I've even -- even deeply hurt someone I hold very dear. Because, I told myself, if I won I would win for God -- it was his will. And now, I find myself sitting here destroying it all, with a couple of words. But I have to. To run would be against God's law. I was mistaken.

Birkenhead says nothing -- but is deeply moved and impressed by this. There's a long pause. The singing lifts again from the distant saloon. Then he sits and, facing Eric, speaks quietly to him.

BIRKENHEAD

My boy. As things stand you must not run...My Grandfather was like you -- and he was a miner -- even more pigheaded.

Eric looks up at him.

Cont.

BIRKENHEAD

He used to say 'A man's faith is a man's self. He is what he stands for. If he compromises that he risks his entire salvation.' It's a noble position to take -- but a dangerous and sometimes heathen one.

He stands and, crossing, pours himself another drink.

ERIC

In what way?

BIRKENHEAD

He drove my father from the house. He was seventeen. And d'ya know what for?

(drinks and looks
hard at Eric)

Skating on the Sabbath!

Eric lowers his eyes. There's a pause.

BIRKENHEAD

I want you to hold your fire for a while son, and leave this to me, will you?

Eric looks at him.

BIRKENHEAD

Say nothing...to no one. Once it gets out our so-called patriotic press would dine on you nightly, with relish. So wail till we get to Paris. Let me talk to the Froggies...I'm not without a certain pull. And after all -- we fought the war together -- they do owe us something.

ERIC

I don't understand.

BIRKENHEAD

They're not a very principled lot, the French -- but faced with a stand like yours -- one never knows -- I might get through. I might just possibly persuade them.

ERIC

To do what?

BIRKENHEAD

(after a dramatic
gulp of Scotch)

To shift that bloody heat of yours of course.

OUT

75

FADE OUT

FADE UP ON

EXT. THE GARE NU NORD - PARIS - DAY

76

Arrival! Gallic! Fench! Foreign gabble, shouting porters, press, PARIS. A new world for our young British -- suddenly foreigners in a foreign land. They climb down off the train wide-eyed, gazing about them -- excited, elated, apprehensive.

Brickenhead is lording it about in beautifully badly pronounced French -- dealing with a reception committee -- handling press. Harold and Eric are centres of attraction -- Harold in his element -- Eric avoiding, avoiding, not wishing to be forced into comment. Nervous. On edge. A bus is being loaded with all their luggage. There's general ordered chaos.

SANDY

Eric! Eric!

Eric looks about him to see Sandy pushing through the crowd with CLARE and JO.

SANDY

Where've you been man? I have na' seen you since the ship.
(doesn't wait for an answer)

How d'you like what you've been missing! This is Clare and Jo! They're AMERICAN no less. On their holidays. All the way from U.S.A.

JO

Hi Eric.

CLARE

Hello.

ERIC

Hello. Pleased to meet you.

He shakes their hands formally, or as formally as is possible in the crush reaching over to them. This was the last thing he wanted.

JO

Are you really a runner?

SANDY

The best -- I've been telling them, haven't I girls?

JO

Yeah! And how.

Cont.

SANDY

How you're going to run the pants
off those Yanks of theirs.

Clare, the quieter of the two, has been steadily gazing at
Eric. She can see his discomfort.

CLARE

I think we're embarrassing
Mr. Liddell.

ERIC

Not at all. Just take Sandy
with a pinch of salt. His
predictions are not renowned
for their accuracy.

CLARE

I guessed that. But wow! I'm more
inclined to believe him now we've
met.

Eric looks at her. She's smiling. She looks back straight
into his eyes.

ERIC

You're a good judge are you?

CLARE

My dad has a ranch full of horses.
And I know the look of a winner.

SANDY

(laughing)
You're right there lassy -- give
him a bag of oats and he'd win
the Kentucky Derby.

Birkenhead blows a silver whistle over the heads of the mob.

REPORTER

Mister Liddell -- Berjeret, Paris Match.
The hundred metres...

BIRKENHEAD

(interrupting)
Thank you gentlemen. Everyone
aboard the bus please...no more
questions, mon bon homm! There's
a press reception arranged for
later.

Cont.

ERIC

(relieved)

Och! I'm afraid that's us!
Good-bye then. Nice to have
met you.

They climb into the bus. He shakes the girl's hands again.
Clare holds on that little longer, then Bunty gives Eric
a big good-bye kiss.

EXT. THE BRITISH TEAM'S HOTEL - DAY

77

On the hotel steps the team is assembled in all its glory. Every man in full Olympic ceremonial, straw hat squarely, immaculately, straight on the head, Union Jack over the eyes. Blazer, tie, white flannels, polished shoes. They stand for the official photograph, in three rows. Seated at the front is Lord Birkenhead, flanked by two "civilian" Officials. They in turn are flanked by Harold and Eric. Standing in the centre, immediately behind his Lordship, is Andy.

The camera is mounted in the centre of the sidewalk. Two Gendarmes hold back a curious crowd of French who semi-circle the PHOTOGRAPHER as he poses the group. They stare fixedly at our boys -- who have no alternative but to stare right back. Two nations, face to face, with an unmistakable hostility in the eyes of the French.

The boys sense this -- and their joviality is nervous, over ripe. Finally:

PHOTOGRAPHER

Voila Messieurs. Attention!!!

The team stiffens -- their smiles are fixed, facing a wall of hostile eyes.

ANDY

(through his
teeth)

You know chaps, if I didn't know better, I'd swear those Froggies didn't like us!!

And see Liddell's apprehension at the thought.

BANG into "The Star Spangled Banner."

EXT. LE HAVRE QUAY - DAY

78

The U.S. team disembarking in triumph!! On black and white newsreel.

A French Band, in typically brassy, ump-beat style, is silently bashing out the U.S. Anthem as the pride of America pours down the gang-plank onto French soil. A tinny piano provides the melody. In direct contrast with the British they are receiving an hysterical welcome. The vast plated flank of the liner behind them displays UNITED STATES OLYMPIC TEAM in house-high letters. The paper streamers fly -- and French girls in national costume greet the smiling American boys with kisses and flowers.

See this -- enjoy it.

Cont.

A caption comes up on black. "Les Champions, Americans arrivent en France."

Hear Andy's voice translating.

ANDY'S VOICE

(o.s.)
American Champions arrive in France.

PULL BACK TO SEE the picture on a cinema screen...a piano pounding out before it.

Sitting, open-mouthed, watching, are Harold, Andy, Harry and Aubrey -- the light dancing on their faces.

HAROLD

That's Paddock -- Charlie Paddock... and Fitch -- and Taylor.

HARRY

My God, look at the size of Paddock.

ANDY

There's Scholtz.

HAROLD

Yes, that's Scholtz behind -- more my size...mean with it though.

HARRY

Never seen a meaner.

AUBREY

Got your plateful there Harold.

ANDY

Battle on your hands.

There's a shot of Paddock -- arms clasped over his head acknowledging the cheers. A massive man, brawny, cheerful, confident.

CAPTION

'Charles H. Paddock. L'homme le plus vite du monde'

HAROLD

(reading it
in awe)

Charles H. Paddock -- the fastest man in the world!

CRASH IN ON Paddock and Scholtz firing from an explosive start.

EXT. U.S. OLYMPIC TRAINING CAMP - DAY

79

The power, aggression and professional punch of the American track and field training. Track suits bearing U.S.A. Individual coaches barking orders, haranguing, regimenting. The whole area is covered with U.S. figures engaged in some form of vigorous routine. They yell with effort, strain, everything vocalized, physical, back slaps, punches, all to keep adrenalin at its highest flow. The poor fellows are hating it but are driven by merciless "Jocks" who give them no respite.

The piano switches to a medley of American patriotic tunes over a MONTAGE of training and preparation.

THE AMERICANS

Punishing themselves in squad exercises -- sweat cascading in the heat of the day.

Scholtz and Paddock suffering the indignities of it all.

The reactions of the guys themselves -- protesting -- cursing the coaches.

On a "Battle Course" -- to increase stamina. Hurdles -- water jumps -- ropes -- nets, etc.

Waving to French girls on bikes. Being reprimanded by redneck coaches.

Pitching horse shoes, still in track suits, bored, frustrated, drinking orange juice. Writing home. Exhausted.

Finally

THE BRITISH

And Czechs, and Dutch and Italians gathered around a large table in a restaurant all singing "Alouette." The waiters like bees about them topping up the wine.

THE AMERICANS

On their bunks, playing craps, cloistered, imprisoned, drinking cocoa.

CUT BACK AND TO FROM restaurant TO card game TO the rhythm of song, UNTIL...cruelly...and abruptly...

Cont.

AMERICAN COACH

(poking his
head round door)
Okay you guys...hit the sacks.
Lights out. What d'you think
this is, Mardi Gras?

There's general protests as they take to their beds and the
lights go out, PLUNGING THE SCREEN INTO BLACK.

There's a moment's pause as the Pianist finishes with a
flourish.

Then out of the blackness -- Charlie Paddock's voice.

PADDOCK'S VOICE

(o.s.)
Okay Fellas! Welcome to the Bastille.

And the light switches on TO REVEAL Charlie pouring out the
champagne.

OUT 80-
81

INT. SAM'S ROOM - COLOMBES - DAY 82

The CAMERA SLOWLY PANS AROUND Sam's Paris room. It is fully,
lovingly kitted out. A massage table occupies a central
position. On the dressing table are an array of liniments
and various towels and other massage necessities. On the
wall are pinned charts and a newly acquired poster for the
Paris Olympics. Also, prominent and enlarged, are displayed
the smiling pictures of Paddock, Scholtz and Liddell. There's
even a metronome. It's set in motion.

LIFT TO SEE Sam himself smiling, just arrived, in overcoat,
hat. Harold, behind him, carrying his bags. Sam whistles
to the beat and, crossing to the window, throws open the
shutters. The sun streams in as he looks out across the roof.

SAM

So that's the Olympic Stadium eh?

HAROLD

That's it...it's as good as being
in there isn't it?

SAM

Better! We'll need quiet lad --
plenty of quiet. It's tip top,
Mr. Abrahams...you've done a grand
job...if we don't win now we'll
never win.

Cont.

HAROLD

Have I got everything? Everything
you need?

SAM

Everything! All I need now is
Sunday!!

INT. THE BRITISH HOTEL - BALL ROOM - NIGHT

83

The reception and dance in honour of the British Empire
athletes -- given by the British Olympic Association presided
over by His Royal Highness the PRINCE OF WALES. The Royal
is with Birkenhead being introduced to sycophantic guests.

BIRKENHEAD

Your Royal Highness, may I introduce
Mr. Arthur Porritt...representing
New Zeland.

Porritt bows and shakes hands -- he's in a black Kiwi blazer.

PRINCE

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Porritt.
You've come a long way.

PORRITT

From Oxford sir. They wrote to
me...said, whilst I was over here,
I might as well take part.

PRINCE

(smiling)
Economical! But can you run?

PORRITT

I'll give it a try sir.

PRINCE

That's the spirit...the best of
luck to you anyway.

And they drift on. The band plays on. Aubrey, Andy and
Harold watch the royal progress. He's being introduced to
a South African runner.

HAROLD

(watching)
The Royal Benediction no less.

ANDY

The chap's invaluable -- couldn't
do without him.

Cont.

AUBREY

Here, here, Henry the Fifth
and all that.

ANDY

Protocol Aubrey, protocol! He's
here to show us what may be done...
and more essentially what may not.

Eric is on his own -- nervously watching the proceedings, a
fish out of water. Birkenhead pushes through towards him.

BIRKENHEAD

Ah. Liddell...I was worried you
weren't here.

ERIC

To be honest I'd rather not be
sir.

BIRKENHEAD

Nonsense -- do you the world of
good. Take you out of yourself
a piece.

ERIC

(not believing
it a bit)
D'you think so?

BIRKENHEAD

The Prince would like to meet
you.

ERIC

Och! No sir...

BIRKENHEAD

...expressed a particular desire,
you and Abrahams. 'The linch
pins of our aspirations,' those
were his very words.

Eric looks at him, immediately recognizing emotional
blackmail. Shades of things to come?

ERIC

It wouldn't be right! Things
being as they are.

Cont.

BIRKENHEAD
(looking hard
at him)
Liddell, he's your future King...
are you refusing to shake his
hand? Does your arrogance extend
that far?

Eric looks back -- equally hard.

ERIC
(quietly)
My arrogance, sir, extends just
as far as my conscience allows.

BIRKENHEAD
Fine, I hope it's wise enough
to allow for manoeuvre.

There's a moment. Then Eric relaxes.

ERIC
I'd be honoured to meet the Prince.

BIRKENHEAD
(immediately charm
itself again)
Splendid.

He puts his arm around Eric's shoulders and shepherds him
away.

BIRKENHEAD
And remember, not a word about
our little dilemma.

The Prince is talking to Andy, Harold and Aubrey.

PRINCE
I intend to place a wager, Abrahams...
with those American chaps. You
and Liddell to leave them for
dead. What d'you say to that?

HAROLD
It's ten seconds out of a lifetime
sir. All we can do is run and
pray to God it's our day.

Cont.

Birkenhead and Eric arrive.

BIRKENHEAD

Your Highness. May I present
Mr. Eric Liddell...the second
terrible twin.

PRINCE

(shaking Eric's
hand)

Delighted, Liddell, delighted. I
saw you play for Scotland...
depressed me no end -- ran in a
couple of tries against us from
your own half, I remember.

ERIC

I believe I did sir -- yes.

PRINCE

Nice to be on the same side at
last. I've just been telling
Abrahams here...I'll accept
nothing less than one and two
from you two. I don't care
which way you work it, but one
and two.

Eric opens his mouth to speak but Birkenhead butts in.

BIRKENHEAD

Well perhaps we can arrange a
dead heat. Eh?

They all laugh dutifully.

PRINCE

Seriously though gentlemen. These
are changing times. There's a
nasty taste abroad in these games.
There are some nations placing
victory above all else...seeking
to make a virtual profession of
winning. We don't believe in that.
Sport is our recreation. We're
here to enjoy ourselves. You can
do us all a service. Win yes!
But with a smile on your face.

EXT. ARC DE TRIOMPHE - DAY

84

X

CLOSE ON the Eternal Flame. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. X
PULL BACK -- THROUGH the massive draped French Tricolor TO

Cont.

See five upturned faces. Abrahams, Lindsay, Stallard, Montague and Eric...in straw hats and blazers -- solemn, remembering.

MIX TO:

EXT. SKY - DAY

85

Doves fluttering, lifting, sweeping into the air, soaring, arcing -- in a crescendo of life and hope.

They sweep around the sky as the last notes of the Last Post die...to be replaced, immediately, stridently, vitally with the boom of the big bass drum.

More doves, more flutter, sheer excitement as a French band bursts into an exhilarating march.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLYMPIC STADIUM - PARIS - DAY

86

July 5th, 1924

The doves being released, the balloons, the hysteria of opening day.

The sky is perfect blue -- the crowd a multitude -- flags of all nations crowd their poles. Bi-planes fly precariously about the arena -- cameramen hanging in air -- capturing the momentous scene. There's an air of carnival about the place as the great parade, waving, multi-colored, forty-five nations, circumnavigates the track.

South Africa leads to the marching strains of the Bands of Garde Republicaine. The crowds applaud as the flags dip

Cont.

Birkenhead and Eric arrive.

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terrible twin.

PRINCE

(shaking Eric's
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me no end -- ran in a couple of
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victory above all else...seeking
to make a virtual profession of
winning. We don't believe in that.
Sport is our recreation. We're
here to enjoy ourselves. You can
do us all a service. Win yes!
But with a smile on your face.

EXT. THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE - DAY

84

The eternal flame. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Solemn
music from a French band and military guard of honour.

Cont.

LIFT TO SEE the British Olympic team...to attention...hats off and held across their breasts...quiet and solemn... as they pay their respects to the millions of Frenchmen who died in the Great War.

The Prince of Wales in military uniform moves forward carrying a large wreath which he lays on the Tomb. We see written across it:

"With gratitude -- from H.R.H. the Prince of Wales and the British Olympic Team. 1924"

He steps back and salutes. Around stand the French people -- watching -- some weeping -- some veterans saluting -- some just simply curious -- some grateful.

The French Trumpeters lift their bugles to their lips and sound the Last Post.

LIFT TO the great French flag swinging sedately beneath the immense Arch.

MIX TO:

85

EXT. SKY - DAY

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CUT TO:

86

EXT. OLYMPIC STADIUM - PARIS - DAY

JULY 5TH 1924

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Cont.

in honour of the President of the French Republic seated in the stand. With him is the Prince of Wales, the Emperor of Ethiopia, the Crown Princes of Rumania, of Sweden, and of many others.

The Yanks pass by -- several hundred of them resplendent in deep blue...brown, smiling, fit -- followed by Haiti, a tiny two-man team.

Britain's team is close behind, headed by the pipes of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders -- the men in their red, white and blue and the girls in blue coats with skirts of creamy white. Australia's green is there, the black of the Kiwis, Canada in white, India red.

The Finns look hard and fit. The Japanese cheerful and smiling...the Irish Free State, proud to be a nation for the first time.

Finally the teams are lined before the dais -- their flags a semi-circle about it, the Baron De Courbetin, the founder of the Modern Olympics, surrounded by members of the Olympic Committee, calls upon the President to declare the Games open. This he does and the Olympic Flag is hoisted to the strain of the Marseillaise. Salvos of artillery crash out a salute and a host of pigeons rise to carry home the news.

Now the oath. To the strains of Saint Saen's "le Marche Heroique" sung by a Czech choir, the standards dip and GEORGE ANDRE, the French Olympic hurdler, mounts the dais. Turning to the assembled athletes, with right hand raised, he declares in French and English:

GEORGE ANDRE

We swear that we come to the Eight Olympiad animated by a respect for the regulations which govern it, and desirous of participating for the honour of our countries and the glory of sport.

As he does so, FIND Eric, then Harold, standing bareheaded, right hands raised at arms' stretch. Eric obviously troubled, Harold proud.

Then Jackson, Scholtz and Paddock, the latter near to tears despite his size. Aubrey, eyes closed, Andy upright, erect, correct. The Prince of Wales and Birkenhead, both heads high...suckers for ceremony.

Sandy and the girls in the crowd. Clare looking down at Eric -- Jo chewing irreverently, Eric -- unaware of Clare's gaze -- now eyes lowered...ashamed.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

87

And finally...Sam...standing at the window of his room -- looking mistily across to the stadium -- the oath echoing in his ears. Behind his back he has his fingers crossed.

EXT. THE STADIUM - DAY

88

Bang! A pistol shot. And into the GAMES.

Andy striking for his first Olympic hurdle. Against him are the two powerful Americans F.M. Taylor and C.H. Riley.

Stallard breaking for the first bend behind the redoubtable Paaro Nurmi -- the 1,500 metres is off.

Andy rises over the first hurdle. This is the culmination of all their efforts -- the bruised knees, the pounded beaches, the torturous pursuit of stamina and technique. Andy is superb floating over the thick wooden gates like a flowing wave.

Stallard still tracks Nurmi. The little Finn is like a machine -- stopwatch in hand -- pounding before the long striding Henry. Tucked in behind him in turn is Scharer of Switzerland.

Andy dipping and striding eating up the track.

But the Americans are more powerful still.

AS IS Nurmi in the 1500 -- dig, dig, digging, his way round the black cinder track -- a glance at the watch at the bell Stallard and Scharer clinging on for dear life.

Taylor and Riley powerful and strong hit the final bend with Andy hard on their heels. He begins to close.

Nurmi hits the last bend, Stallard striving to reach him -- Scharer at his shoulder.

Andy dips at the tape splitting the American pair.

Nurmi wins -- Stallard's legs give with ten yards to go.

He stumbles over the line as Scharer passes him.

A heroic bronze for him.

AND a magnificent silver for Andy.

Harold, Aubrey and Eric are overjoyed. What a start. A silver and bronze in their first events -- they trot beside them, slapping their backs, applauding as they ease around the

Cont.

track, accepting the acclamation of the crowd. Then suddenly -- they hear the familiar roll of drums which heralds the Anthems. Taylor, the mighty American, then raises his arms in salute to the crowd -- and trots a lap of honor. Andy congratulates him sincerely. Taylor accepts affectionately. They trot round together. The two Yanks and the Englishman -- fellow athletes despite the "Jocks". Henry, Nurmi and Sharer do the same. Eric watches as the terrible pressures of his awful dilemma crowd in upon him.

INT. A PARISIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

89

A tea dance. Couples foxtrot amid the Art Nouveau, to a trio tinkling out a light-stepping rhythm. Waiters flit amidst the palms, dispensing tea and cakes to their fashionable afternoon-clad patrons.

At the corner table sit Eric and Clare -- close in conversation.

CLARE

And this Lord guy, Birkenhead, he's playing some kind of game?

ERIC

Blackmail -- that's his game -- emotional blackmail. He's no intention of approaching the French. What good would it do. The program's fixed. The games are on -- they couldn't change it now even if they wanted to. I should have turned back at Dover and had done with it.

CLARE

Well I'm glad you didn't. Jo and me, we'd have been in Switzerland now, throwing clocks at each other.

ERIC

I'm sorry Clare. I had to talk to someone. And Sandy...

CLARE

Sandy's a no! No! And so's Jo. They deserve each other. I'm glad to be of help.

ERIC

(looking at her)
You're a nice girl, you remind me of my sister.

Cont.

CLARE
(laughing)
Gee thanks. That's great!

ERIC
No! You'd like her. She's
special.

CLARE
Well so's her brother special.
Guys like you don't grow on
trees -- not in East Lake
Virginia anyway.

They look at each other.

CLARE
You say you run because it
makes you feel good...Like
praising God on the track...
is that right?

ERIC
(nodding)
It may sound foolish I know
but...

CLARE
Be my guest -- I like crazy
people!

He looks at her -- she smiles reassuringly -- he goes on.

ERIC
In a race, Clare -- I push
myself to the limit...past it...
into a sort of -- dream..
sublime delight...it's as if...

He struggles with the idea.

CLARE
You run yourself beyond -- your
body I mean! You're riding above
it.

Eric looks at her -- grateful for her comprehension -- he takes
her hand across the table.

ERIC
That's it -- that's it exactly
-- it's spiritual.

Cont.

CLARE

Then what's wrong with Sunday?
Seems to me you couldn't pick a
better day?

Eric looks at her -- he doesn't know how to answer that one.
He looks confused. Clare looks back at him -- immediately
regretting what she's said -- casting doubt on what is
obviously such an unquestioning faith.

CLARE

Take no notice of me kid...I
don't make the rules. You stick
by what you believe in and I'll
love you for it.

ERIC

(looking at her)
On second thoughts, you don't
remind me of my sister.

CLARE

(laughing)
Now we're getting somewhere...
wanna dance?

He smiles and nods. She leads him onto the floor. She places
her cheek on his -- American style -- he's taken aback but
accepts the convention willingly.

CLARE

(quietly)
Say! You're a nice mover!

ERIC

(smiling)
Nobody's ever said that to me
before.

CLARE

(laughing)
Okay, so I saw you first --
that's nice!

They dance -- then:

CLARE

So you're not going to run.
No matter what?

Cont.

ERIC

No matter what.

CLARE

Okay! You've got to tell him tonight.

ERIC

No. Not tonight. It's Andy's party.

CLARE

Couldn't be better -- never hit a Lord when he's down. Wait till he's up, and having himself a time.

Eric thinks about this...stopping dancing as he does so... merely marking time. Clare looks at him.

CLARE

Hey! Are we dancing or are we dancing?

And Eric snaps out of it -- laughs for the first time in days -- and swings her off into the rhythm.

INT. A RECEPTION ROOM - THE BRITISH HOTEL - PARIS 90
- NIGHT

Everyone's having themselves that time Clare was talking about. A jazz band bounces in the corner, and all are bouncing with it. Including Andy who's dancing with three girls at once.

Stallard is doling out the punch. They both wear their medals round their necks.

Eric and Clare enter...they hand their coats to an attendant. Andy doesn't see them.

They push through the mob and tap him on the shoulder.

ANDY

Eric old son. Glad to see you, you old tub thumper you...and the mademoiselle too.

(kisses Clare's hand extravagantly)

Old Henry's dishing out the booze...little concoction of his from Yorkshire...help yourself.

Cont.

Stallard waves to them with his punch spoon. They wave back.

ERIC

Where's Lord Birkenhead?

ANDY

In the ante room -- with the Prince -- he was asking for you.

ERIC

Look after Clare for me will you?

ANDY

With enthusiasm dear fellow...

ERIC

(smiling)
Thanks! But go easy on the Yorkshire punch!

Eric goes with an encouraging squeeze from Clare's hand.

ANDY

(leading her
towards the drinks)
Parlez-vous Anglais Mam'selle?

CLARE

I'm American.

ANDY

Oh! Then you don't do you!!
(laughs)
But here's a chap to translate.

He taps a nearby shoulder and who turns round but Charlie Paddock, and Sholtz...champagne at the ready.

INT. THE ANTEROOM - NIGHT

91

The large anteroom. The distant sound of the party. There's a knock.

BIRKENHEAD

(o.s.)
Come in!!

The door opens and Eric stands there. The party lifts behind him. He's immediately taken aback -- but strives not to show it.

HIS P.O.V.

91-A

Arrayed, across the luxurious carpet, the four most powerful men in Britain turn to face him. Seated behind a massive writing desk...leaning back into the deep leather chair, clad in a dinner jacket and smoking a cigarette in a mist of smoke, is the PRINCE OF WALES. Seated in a winged armchair to his right is the EARL OF CADOGAN, the Chairman of the British Olympic Association...a formidable bald character with a heavy waxed moustache. Standing with his back to the fireplace is His Grace the DUKE OF SUTHERLAND and the President of the Association -- a spindly figure with that high forehead, thin hair and florid countenance of the inbred English aristocracy.

Rising from an armchair to his left is Birkenhead, his hand extended to Eric as he crosses to meet him.

BIRKENHEAD

Ah. Liddell my dear chap. Just the fellow we wish to see...I felt sure you wouldn't miss the party. Excellent effort of Lindsey's don't you think?

ERIC

He hurdled well sir, he did indeed.

BIRKENHEAD

Let me introduce you round. His Royal Highness you've already met...

PRINCE

(nodding through
the gloom)

Liddell!

BIRKENHEAD

His Grace the Duke of Sutherland
...the President of our
Olympic Association.

They shake hands.

BIRKENHEAD

...And the chairman, Lord Cadogan.

A curt nod from the seated Cadogan has to suffice.

BIRKENHEAD

Please be seated Eric.

Birkenhead shoves an upright chair behind Eric who sits down, aware he is very much in the dock.

BIRKENHEAD

Cigar?...Oh no, of course you don't...I can't even offer you a drink can I...to encourage that conscience of yours to be a little more elastic.

Eric looks at him.

SUTHERLAND

Lord Birkenhead has advised us as to your attitude towards your participation in the 100 metres heats, Liddell -- or would your non-participation be more accurate?

ERIC

I'm afraid it would sir -- aye!

SUTHERLAND

We were also consulted as to the proper manner in which to approach the French...

CADOGAN

Which is something we just can't allow. A member of British Olympic Committee going cap in hand to the Frogs of all people -- is completely out of the question.

PRINCE

A simple matter of national dignity, Liddell. Being a patriot I'm sure you understand.

ERIC

I must say sir...I felt it was an impractical suggestion from the start.

BIRKENHEAD

Then why didn't you damn well say so man? As an athlete you value economy of effort.

Cont.

ERIC

I wanted to run, and I was
desperate enough to try anything.

There's a slight pause as the "Committee" exchange glances --
before Sutherland speaks again.

SUTHERLAND

So, all that being understood,
we decided to invite you in
for a chat, to see if there is
any way that we can resolve the
situation.

CADOGAN

(impatiently)

There's only one way to resolve
the situation -- and that's for
this young man to change his
mind -- and run.

PRINCE

Don't state the obvious
Cadogan. We've to explore
ways in which we can help this
young man to reach that
decision.

ERIC

(simply)

I'm afraid there are no ways
sir.

They turn to look at him.

ERIC

I cannot run on the Sabbath
and that's that...I intended
to confirm this with
Lord Birkenhead tonight...
even before you called me
before this inquisition of
yours.

CADOGAN

Don't be impertinent Liddell.

ERIC

The impertinence lies sir, with
those who seek to influence a
man to deny his beliefs.

Cont.

BIRKENHEAD

On the contrary Liddell, we're appealing to your beliefs in your country -- and your King ...to your loyalty to them.

CADOGAN

Here! Here! In my day it was King first and God after.

SUTHERLAND

Yes! And the war to end wars bitterly proved your point.

He silences Cadogan with an icy look.

ERIC

God made countries and God makes Kings...and the laws by which they function. Those laws say the Sabbath is his and I for one intend to keep it his and his alone.

PRINCE

(after a moment)

Mr. Liddell -- you're a child of your race -- as I am -- we share a common heritage -- a common bond -- a common loyalty. There are times when we're asked to make sacrifices in the name of that loyalty...without them our allegiance is worthless. As I see it, for you, this is such a time.

ERIC

(head bowed)

Sir. God knows I love my country...but I love God more. I cannot sacrifice Him not even for her.

Cont.

Cadogan snorts, stands and pours himself a drink. Sutherland turns his back on Eric and looks down into the fireplace. The Prince draws on his cigarette. Suddenly -- a voice cuts in.

ANDY

Excuse me Your Highness -- gentlemen -- but I couldn't fail to overhear.

They turn to look at him, standing in the doorway, a glass of champagne in his hand.

ANDY

May I venture to suggest -- there is one solution.

BIRKENHEAD

Come in young Lindsey...we're grabbing at straws. What little cocktail have you cooked up?

ANDY

Another day -- another race.

They look at each other.

ANDY

The four hundred metres -- it's on Thursday. I've already got my gong, let Eric take my place in the quarter.

CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE ON the Prince of Wales. He takes a long pull on his cigarette -- and then a broad smile invades his face.

PRINCE

All those in favor say 'aye'.

ALL

Aye!

PRINCE

Liddell.

ERIC

Andy, I...

Cont.

ANDY

A pleasure old son...just to
see you run.

ERIC

(smiling)
Then 'aye' it is.

Cheers and congratulations all round -- back slaps, handshakes.
Birkenhead takes Sutherland aside.

BIRKENHEAD

A sticky moment George. Thank
God for Lindsey. I thought
the lad had us beaten.

SUTHERLAND

He had us beaten F.E., and thank
God he did.

BIRKENHEAD

I don't follow?

SUTHERLAND

The 'lad' as you call him is a
true man and a true athlete.
His speed is a mere extension of
his life, of its force...We sought
to sever his running from his self.

BIRKENHEAD

For his country's sake -- aye!

SUTHERLAND

No sake is worth that F.E....and
least of all a guilty national
pride.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

91-B

"Liddell abandons ship
Scot "runs" from 100 metres
Abrahams to face Yanks alone."

"I won't run on Sunday!
Scot puts religion before country
Shameful defection by Liddell."

"God before King!"

"Lindsey makes way for Liddell.
400 Metres for defecting Scot."
"Smacks of fanaticism" says official.
"Man of principle" says Primate.
"We should be proud!"

INT. LIDDELLS' KITCHEN - DAY

Jennie has the newspaper spread on the table as she reads. Her Brother is sitting opposite her awaiting her reaction. Finally she looks up -- reaches over the table -- and clasps his hand with pride.

INT. LECTURE HALL - U.S. TRAINING CAMP - PARIS

A crowd of U.S. athletes in-track suits are clustered around a paper held by Charlie Paddock.

CHARLIE

The guy's got guts, I'll give him that. Now all they've got is this guy Moses.

SCHOLTZ

(sitting beside him)

Abrahams.

CHARLIE

Yeh. Somethin' biblical. Let me tell ya' Jackson, he'll need all the prayers he can get out on that track.

SCHOLTZ

(reading)

He won't run on Sunday. Sounds quite a guy. Maybe it's us should be doing the praying.

CHARLIE

How's that?

SCHOLTZ

In thanks that he's blown!

Charlie looks at him as the coaches come in blaring whistles and mount the stage. The athletes take their places on the benches obediently and wait to be addressed.

COACH

Nocturnal emissions!! I want you to think about nocturnal emissions!

Charlie whispers "What's that?" In Scholtz's ear.

COACH

WET DREAMS! PADDOCK, WET DREAMS! Don't you have them?

CHARLIE

Sure Coach! When I can't get the real thing!

Cont.

COACH

Yeah! Well you're gonna have 'em here then, that's for sure -- and somehow we gotta stop 'em. Riley here...

SEE him head bowed:

COACH

...blew out in the four hundred -- like the true patriot he is he's come up with the answer. He suffered, if that's the right word, a nocturnal emission the night before the race. Reckons it cost him that couple of yards that let the Limey in. Now these are the Olympics and you guys have got to win.

Sees Scholtz looking at him, exchanges looks with Charlie, shakes his head.

COACH

So we're looking for ideas. Some of you are country boys -- had a mighty strict upbringing I guess. What's the practice in Princeton Illinois, Paxton?

Paxton stands up...all muscle and smile.

PAXTON

Well Coach! There was some talk about a silver dollar and some stickin' tape. Right between your shoulder blades. Stopped you lying on your back.

SHOUT. "That's for snorin'!!"

Laughter, hoots again. He shouts back.

PAXTON

Okay! You think of something.

Hoots of derision.

SCHOLTZ

(to Charlie)
I don't believe it.

Charlie winks at Scholtz and stands up.

CHARLIE

I got an idea Coach.

COACH

Let's have it, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Get yourself a piece of ribbon --
tie it around normal like...round
your old oak tree...

Laughter.

CHARLIE

Soon as your dreams start wandering,
and he perks up his head...you'll
feel it. Wake up in time to get
a hold of yourself.

Laughter.

CHARLIE

In a manner of speaking, you
understand.

More laughter. The Coach quietens them down. Scholtz can
hardly contain himself.

COACH

Sounds good Charlie -- and a
big healthy guy like you --
you're just the fella to try
it.

INT. A DORMITORY - U.S. TRAINING CAMP - NIGHT

94

Darkness, peace, sleeping faces, smiles, nocturnal emissions?
Suddenly the night is rent by a piercing scream. Charlie
has leapt out of bed and is yelling and dancing in agony
holding his groin. Scholtz and a couple of other men lift
him bodily and rush him to the showers at the end of the
room.

INT. SHOWERS - NIGHT

95

Charlie is hustled in, screaming. He's hurled into a shower
still in his pajamas, and a cold douse of water drenches
down upon him. He holds himself up to the ardour quenching
deluge. It works. He relaxes and a glorious smile of relief
spreads on his face.

EXT. OLYMPIC STADIUM - DAY

96

BANG! The 200 metres start -- and race -- in STILLS -- or
STOP MOTION. Paddock, Scholtz, Abrahams and the rest Dwell
on the faces -- watching each other -- the triumph of the
victors -- the agony of defeat...Scholtz victorious --

Paddock leaping wildly for second...Abrahams a despairing fifth...he's been training too short for the furlong.

END ON the triumphant U.S.A. -- and a dejected Abrahams in defeat...being consoled by the ever sporting and gentlemanly Scholtz.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

97

Sam is sitting in the sun -- enjoying his breakfast. Open before him is a French Sunday newspaper. Bells sound from nearby churches. Families pass by to Mass.

In the paper the headline:

"Le 200 meters. Un triumphe pour les Etats-Unis!"

The Waiter arrives with more coffee. He sees the paper. He throws his eyes up into his head in exaggerated wonder. "Les Americaines!" he pouts, and makes a "vroom" of speed. Sam smiles and nods -- waits for the Waiter to leave -- then carefully begins to tear the picture of the finish from the page.

EXT. THE ARENA - DAY

98

On to the track, flushed with success, come the American speedmen -- Scholtz, Paddock and Co. -- in their immaculate track suits. The fast men of other nations mingle with them in various modes of attire...Harold appears in long towelling dressing gown and heavy leather shoes. He carries his spikes under his arm. He exchanges greetings with the Yanks. Porritt the Kiwi is there too.

Around the track -- jogging -- warming up -- is Aubrey -- nervous -- on edge. For this is his great day. The final of the 3000 metre steeplechase. As he jogs he passes the obstacles he is to face -- eyeing them -- the water jump, the high hard barriers -- testing them critically.

EXT. THE SCOTTISH CHURCH - PARIS - DAY

99

A very sober congregation is pouring into the Scottish Church The notice board outside proclaims:

THE SCOTTISH CHURCH - PARIS
THIS SUNDAY PREACHER
MR. ERIC LIDDELL

EXT. THE ARENA - DAY

100

Harold peeling off his dressing gown to take up his position with various international rivals for the first heat... watched deliberately by Scholtz seated beside the track.

Paddock joins him at the start. Aubrey...jogging on the spot in a host of steelplechasers. He's in shorts and large cricket sweater -- warming up for his start.

INT. SCOTTISH CHURCH - PARIS - DAY 101

Eric climbing the steps of the pulpit, slowly, deliberately. The congregation sing to "Finlandia", Eric's favourite hymn.

"Be still my soul the Lord is
on thy side. Bear patiently the
cross of grief or pain. Leave
to thy God to order and provide
In every change the faithful will
remain."

EXT. THE ARENA - DAY 102

Harold getting down to his marks -- carefully -- deliberately.

INT. SCOTTISH CHURCH - DAY 103

Eric opening the huge Bible -- and preparing to read his text as the hymn continues --

"Be still my soul, thy best,
Thy heavenly friend.
Through thorny ways leads to
a joyful end."

The congregation settle into their seats.

EXT. THE ARENA - DAY 104

Harold settles to his marks.

INT. SCOTTISH CHURCH - DAY 105

Eric raises his head to address the Church.

EXT. THE ARENA - DAY 106

Harold raises his head to look down the track.

ERIC
(voice over)

My text this afternoon is from
Philippians, Chapters three...
and four. 'But whatever was to
my profit, I now consider loss --
for the sake of Christ.'

Cont.

The gun is raised. Harold lifts to SET. Beside him on his left, Charles Paddock eyes him. He rocks forward deliberately -- Harold rocks with him, then -- realising his mistake -- rocks back. As he does so, the gun explodes -- Paddock is ready and is away with it -- Abrahams -- conned -- dwells, and is left a startled yard adrift. He fights back, but can't catch the big American, who maintains the three-foot margin to the tape.

Charlie turns and grins at Harold, who's furious with himself. The American puts his arm paternally around Harold's shoulders.

CHARLIE

Just follow me in the final
Harry -- and you can't go wrong.

A MONTAGE

106-A

Aubrey in his final, hits the top of the water jump badly, cracking his knee.

Eric in the pulpit -- echoes of the Great J.D.

ERIC

'Seven paces on toward the goal
to win the prize for which God
has called me heavenward.'

Aubrey - picking himself up and staggering on -- in pain.

ERIC

'For as I have often told you
before, many live as enemies of
the cross of Christ.'

SEE Clare in his congregation, stunned by his powerful conviction.

ERIC

'Their destiny is destruction,
and their Glory is in their shame.
Their mind is in earthly things.'

Harold sitting disconsolately on the couch in Sam's room -- a towel around his neck. Sam haranguing him -- demonstrating Paddock's con.

SEE Aubrey staggering home in pain -- a brave sixth, met by Harry and Andy. They carry him up -- proud -- brave.

Finally Eric over this, and in the pulpit:

Cont.

ERIC

'Therefore, my brothers, my joy
and crown, that dear friends, is
how you should stand firm -- in
the Lord!!!'

CUT TO SILENCE:

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

107

It is breathlessly still -- save for the distant, tinny throb of the band, way over in the arena -- and the swish of Sam's oiled hands as they sweep hard and deep over Harold's prone body. He is lying face-down on the massage table -- eyes closed. Sam, silent, leans into his task reverently. There's an almost religious dedication to his labours -- a sanctum-like atmosphere in the room. Then, Harold opens his eyes and looks across at the wall. Pinned on it is the torn out picture of the 200 metres finish. Scholtz first, then Paddock...and himself fifth. He dwells on it for a moment. Above him Sam notices the direction of his gaze. He says nothing -- just rubs.

Harold sighs 'neath Sam's hands -- then, raising his head, turns to look the other way and lowers it again. Through the gloom he sees a figure seated, almost unnoticed, in the corner, as if ashamed to be there. It's Aubrey. He's in shadow, invited in to hear a final confession from the turbulent Harold.

SWISH! SWISH! Goes Sam. "Da de da da" goes the distant band. Then Harold begins to speak, slowly, deliberately, quietly.

HAROLD

Remember when we first met, old man? You were like old Toady, loaded up with all your paraphernalia...bewildered, tottering round, like some funny wind-up toy. We shared a taxi, remember? You made me feel an age old, burdened, sour...even superior. Ha! That was the miscalculation of my life. You, Aubrey, are my most complete man.

Sam glances over at Aubrey and smiles.

HAROLD

You're kind! Compassionate! Brave!
A content man...and that's your
secret, contentment.
I'm twenty-four -- and I've never
known it. I'm forever in pursuit --
and I'm not even sure what I'm

HAROLD (Cont.)

chasing. Aubrey, old chap -- I'm scared. Sam and I, we've laboured, rowed and bullied, laughed and cried...day in, day out. You've seen us, chuckled over us, I'll be bound...out in all weather, madmen. And now! I lost the two hundred -- beaten out of sight, then let Paddock con me in that semi...In one hour's time, I'll be there again. I'll raise my eyes and look down a corridor of time -- four feet wide with ten lonely seconds to justify my whole existence. But will I!... Aubrey, I've known the fear of losing... but now, I'm almost too frightened to win.

And, as Sam massages on, unspeaking, Aubrey just sits, unwilling and unable to reply.

EXT. THE STADE COLOMBES - DAY

108

"Final day" for the six flyers. The stadium is agog with expectancy -- all the dignitaries are there -- as on opening day. This is the race they all want to see.

The band is playing in the centre of the arena -- this time an American Marine band in honour of their four finalists -- Paddock, Scholtz -- Bowman -- and Murchison. A medley of pacy, bouncy American tunes adds spice to the already charged atmosphere.

The Prince of Wales is parading down in the arena with other British officials. Birkenhead included. It's our chance to see the primitive field events in progress -- particularly the pole vault, rope climbing, and tossing the weight over the bar. Up in the stands Eric is taking his seat with Clare, with them are Jo and Sandy. Sandy is looking morose, frustrated. There's a cheer as an American high jumper clears the bar for victory.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

109

Silence. The atmosphere is beyond tense it's rigid. The six men, the sixth being Porritt the New Zealander, are quietly changing, not daring to look each other in the eye. Even the Americans don't communicate between themselves. It's the time for concentration -- for the gathering up of all their emotional and intellectual capacities into one explosive force. From the arena above comes the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner." They barely notice. Harold is just beginning to undress -- shedding his jacket and tie. He places his leather attache case precisely before him and flicks open the catches. He lifts the lid.

Cont.

Lying on the top of his neatly packed kit is a letter. Out of it falls a small gold chain and Arab charm -- with an inscription from the Koran cut out in it. Harold opens the letter and reads:

SAM

(o.s.)

Dear Mr. Abrahams
You must please pardon my not coming to see you run, much as I would like to do so. However, I believe and hope you will win the one hundred metres.

MIX TO:

ANGLE ON SAM

109-A

writing in his room.

SAM

(voice over)

Go out determined to do your best and don't forget to go down at the first stride. A sponge and some cold water used around the nape of the neck, under the ears and at the wrists and elbows will brace you up.

ANGLE BACK TO HAROLD

109-B

reading again.

HAROLD

Get nicely warmed up and then let the gun release you. I should use the springy old six-spike shoes. All the best of luck from
Yours Truly,
Sam Mussabini
P.S. Please accept the charm.
My old father swore by it.

Harold folds up the letter -- and looks at the charm. Then he smiles and hangs it round his neck.

EXT. THE ARENA - DAY

110

The band strikes up a triumphant march and the six competitors enter the arena in line -- to roars of applause from the crowd. The four Americans lead -- then Abrahams, looking incongruous in his long dressing gown and shoes -- carrying his spikes in his hand -- and finally Porritt in an Oxford sweater and a collar turned up black Kiwi blazer. They all carry trowels. They reach the starting line and break formation. They begin to dig their starting holes as the Prince approaches -- and shakes them each by the hand.

Cont.

PRINCE

Dinner for your whole team at
my club when we get back to
London. You win I pay --
Abrahams wins you pay.
All right?

SCHOLTZ

(shaking his hand)
Sir! You've got yourself a
bet.

PRINCE

Done! And the best of luck
to you.

(turns to Harold)
Good luck. Abrahams -- do your
best -- that's all we can
expect.

HAROLD

Thank you sir.

And Harold drifts away to take his place with the other
runners continuing with their agriculture.

The Prince of Wales gazes around the arena at the flags,
the band, the martial music, the fervour, the patriotism.

PRINCE

Wonderful show, eh? Sutherland?

SUTHERLAND

No sir! I'm afraid it frightens
me.

The Prince looks at him.

PRINCE

Why?

SUTHERLAND

I'm not here for flags and anthems...
but honest human endeavour -- man
against man...

X

Cont.

PRINCE

Well?

SUTHERLAND

It's being swamped David...just look about you. Nations have their teeth into our innocent ideal. Our games were conceived by athletes for athletes. Now they're floundering under the bullheaded priorities of a thing called the state.

PRINCE

Perhaps it's a passing phase.

SUTHERLAND

It's evolution, David, and it's evil. Perhaps unstoppable. At any rate it will have to run its course.

And they survey the frenzy around them.

ANGLE UP IN THE STAND

110-A

Eric watches with his friends.

SANDY

No regrets Eric? That you're not down there?

ERIC

Regrets aye! Doubts no!

ANGLE DOWN ON THE TRACK

110-B

The runners are being called to order...The track officials showing them their lanes. From left to right facing them is the order.

Poritt, Bowman, Abrahams, Murchison,
Scholtz and Paddock.

They prance and dance at the back of their marks awaiting the call. Harold looks up at the scoreboard clock -- it says 7:04 P.M.

"To your marks."

They move forward and carefully arrange themselves in their crouched starting positions.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

111

Sam is sitting -- feet upon the bed -- drinking a glass of beer -- listening for the gun.

143

EXT. COLOMBES STADIUM - IN THE STAND - DAY

112

SEE Eric watching...

Then the Prince and Birkenhead...and Aubrey and Andy and Harry.

ON THE TRACK

112-A

"Get set"

HARD IN ON Harold -- hear his voice.

HAROLD

(voice over)

Head down -- watch the first stride. Where's that bloody GUN?

BANG!

This is THE RACE -- THE CLIMAX -- THE CRUNCH.

Cover it as you will but here are the details:

Dr. Moir the British starter gets them off to a magnificent start. At twenty-five meters they are all together, but at fifty meters Abrahams is clear of Scholtz and Bowman. He holds his lead to dip into the tape winning by two feet.

Scholtz is second and Porritt, with a late burst, third. Paddock is a disappointing fifth.

It's all over in ten seconds. Harold has won.

UP IN THE STANDS

112-B

The Britishers go mad. The Prince of Wales and Birkenhead applauding vigorously, the French President shaking them by the hand.

Clare hugs Eric with delight -- American or no.

Sandy, still believing that the title should have been Eric's, applauds politely.

ON THE TRACK

112-C

Scholtz is the first to congratulate Harold, embracing him as he does so.

ANNOUNCER

Le cent metres finale. Premier, numeros quatre cent dix neuf. ABRAMS, Grande Bretagne. Temps dix seconds trois cinquiemes. Second, deux cents soixante quatorze, SCHOEZ, Etats Unis...etc.

PADDOCK
 (shaking Harold's
 hand)
 Congratulations, Harry. You've
 just cost me 25,000 dollars.

Harold turns to accept the hugs and enthusiasm of the boys who've poured down from the stand...Their joy is unbounded. Through this Harold sees Eric extending his hand. They look at each other as he takes it.

ERIC
 Well done Harold, well run.

HAROLD
 Thanks Eric --

The Marine band rolls its drums. They turn to face the flags. Up they go -- the Union Jack, The Stars and Stripes -- and the blue and white of little New Zealand. "The King" booms out.

INT. SAM'S ROOM - DAY

113

As its strains float on the evening air up into Sam's room -- he's suddenly aware of its significance. He stands and stays there rigidly to attention. WATCH his face as the anthem runs its course. Then letting out a yell of triumph he whips off his hat and punches his fist right through it.

INT. THE DRESSING ROOM - DAY

114

In direct contrast to the silence before the race the room is alive with laughter and popping corks. It's packed with the British team and officials -- The Yanks are sportingly joining in the celebrations -- Paddock especially.

Harold is quietly packing his case, strangely subdued as the roistering goes on around him. He finishes and closes it with his usual neat precision. He looks about him, then, surprisingly, he turns, takes his hat from the hook and pushes his way out through the door. Andy and Aubrey see him go.

AUBREY
 (calling)
 Harold!

ANDY
 Let him go, can't you see, the
 poor fella's whacked.

Cont.

AUBREY

But he won!

ANDY

Exactly! One of these days
Monty, you'll win yourself. And
it's bloody difficult to swallow.

INT. SYBIL'S DRESSING ROOM - THE SAVOY THEATRE - 115
LONDON - NIGHT

Sybil -- in "Mikado" costume is putting the finishing touches
to her makeup...There's a knock on the door.

SYBIL

Come in!

She turns as the stage DOORMAN pops his head 'round the door.

DOORMAN

Mrs. Abrahams just rang Miss.
The Daily Express. They've been
on from Paris. Mr. Harold...
He won. She told me to tell
you he won.

She has her back to us as she faces him.

SYBIL

Thanks Bill, thank you very much!

He shuts the door. There's a moment before she turns back to
look at herself in the mirror...and at the makeup running in
happy rivers down her cheeks.

A PAVEMENT CAFE - PARIS - NIGHT

116

It's very late, the waiters are clearing up around Sam and
Harold as they sit, both well-oiled, at a table covered with
empty beer bottles. Harold is in a deep depression...Sam
seeking to reassure him.

There's a pause as Sam takes a pull ~~on~~ a bottle.

SAM

You'll get over it laddy. Time's
a great healer...you'll be up
and about again in a couple of days.

HAROLD

It wasn't worth it Sam...all that
time, that effort -- and for
what? I'm the world's champion
and it couldn't give a damn.

HAROLD (Cont.)

(nods towards the waiters)

All the world wants to do is get home to bed...and who can blame it.

SAM

You had it in you Mr. Abrahams... You couldn't ignore it no more than I could. And I've seen it all before. We had to go after it. And we learned a lot. Forget the winning. It was worth it just for the doing.

HAROLD

I enjoyed it Sam -- the getting there. The pig's ear is what I've ended up with. After all I risked.

SAM

It's out of your system now. Now forget it. Just get off home and start living...

HAROLD

No. I'll not forget it. It's worthless but I'll not let them know it. I'm going to milk the pompous idiots -- ram it down their throats.

(picks up his bottle and smacks it against Sam's)

A toast Mr. Mussabini! To Harold Abrahams -- the fastest man on earth.

INT. THE CAIUS COLLEGE MASTER'S ROOM - NIGHT

117

The Caius Master and Trinity Master are dining together by the open window. It's another typically balmy Cambridge evening. The manservant comes in with the evening paper.

SERVANT

He did it sir!

CAIUS

Thank you Mathews.

He takes the paper and opens it to see the headlines.

Cont.

"ABRAHAMS TRIUMPHANT!

CAIUS COLLEGE ATHLETE WINS BLUE

RIBAND AT GAMES."

He passes it over to Trinity who peruses it -- before tossing it to one side. He picks up his glass, and Caius his, and they clink them together, quietly yet with satisfaction, before drinking deep and long.

EXT. THE STADE COLOMBES - EVENING

118

The last day of competition and the stadium is beginning to look a little tired -- a bit care-worn -- the novelty has worn off. It's the end of a long day and a long week. Souvenir sellers are closing up shop. Litter collectors sweep up piles of rubbish. A news vendor yawns at his stand, his placard says "Olympics. Last Day. American Scholtz wins 200 metres" in journalese French.

People are leaving. A decathlon high jump is being fought out in the arena, at ridiculously low heights.

In the press box -- press men are phoning in their last reports -- bidding farewell to their colleagues -- packing up their typewriters. Ice cream and drinks salesmen are handing in their trays -- counting up their takings. It's one big wind down, a turn off for another four years.

THEN the Pipes and the Band of The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders suddenly strike up and march in full splendor into the center of the arena.

Immediately the place comes to life again. People departing, stop in their tracks, then turn back to catch the new excitement. Press men cease their farewells, set down phones and take notice.

The arrival of the Prince of Wales in the Presidential Box causes fresh excitement and a buzz of anticipation settles on the arena.

"SCOTLAND THE BRAVE" is the clarion call from the pipes as out from the competitors' tunnel come the 400 meter finalists led by Eric Liddell.

Following him are:

J. Imbach	Switzerland
H.M. Fitch	U.S.A.
G.M. Butler	Great Britain
D.M. Johnson	Canada
J.C. Taylor	U.S.A. The conqueror of Andy

The crowd start to clap rhythmically to the beat of the tune as the competitors march to their starting point. Again the Americans, only, wear track suits...the rest are in blazers or sweaters and slacks. Eric is in the latter -- the Edinburgh University crest on his chest. UP in the stand -- behind the Prince and the full British Olympic Committee -- sit their whole track and field team...come to pay tribute to the man they hold most dearly in their affection. With them Sandy, Clare and Jo. Sandy has two empty seats beside him -- he's looking anxiously at the entrance. The race is run on two bends only -- there being an exceptionally long back straight.

The men dig in their starting positions -- staggered of course -- Eric being on the outside. When he's satisfied Eric turns his attention to his opponents. He shakes them each by the hand as is his custom.

ERIC

(seemingly completely
without nerves)

Have a good race everybody.
Remember, I don't expect to
see you again -- 'til after the
race.

And he laughs and goes off up the track to take up a starting position on the outside lane.

The Americans are bemused. Taylor turns to his Coach who's helping him with his starting position.

TAYLOR

That guy Liddell, is he a problem?

COACH

No problem -- he's a flyer --
he's had two races today already
...He'll die...just swing along
you guys and wait. After 300
metres rigor mortis sets in.
You'll pull him in on a rope.

The Coach moves away to his other runners. Jackson Scholtz appears, watching him go.

SCHOLTZ

Good luck J.C...and watch that
guy Liddell.

TAYLOR

No problem the coach says.

Cont.

SCHOLTZ

(laughing wryly)

He's got something to prove --
something personal -- something
guys like Coach'll never understand
in a million years...They're
special and believe me, they're
hell to beat.

And he goes off up the track leaving Taylor to ponder on his words.

The Starter calls them to order...Eric starts to peel off his clothes. Behind him we see the figure in U.S. track suit trotting up the track towards him. It's Jackson Scholtz.

He reaches Eric and silently, without a word, presses a note into his hand. Eric watches him trot away before he opens it. He reads.

"In the Old Book it says 'He that
honours me, I will honour.'
Good luck!
Jackson Scholtz."

Eric, visibly moved, looks after the fast retreating figure.

STARTER

Ready gentlemen!

Eric clasps the note in his hand, tight, and turns his whole attention to the race.

The loudspeaker calls for silence. A more than usually tense hush settles over the stadium. See the PIPERS -- standing, still, watching.

STARTER

To your marks...set...BANG!

Eric and Butler, the second string Briton, go off like the wind leading by ten yards at the first bend. Taylor and Fitch quickly overtake Imbach and Johnson and the race is on between the remaining four. The Americans, obeying instructions, cruise steadily behind and sure enough, Butler begins to tire...Blowing, he "ties up" and the two Yanks pass him without effort. The American Coach is watching with Scholtz.

COACH

Watch the Limey's legs go now!

But Scholtz looks incredulous.

Cont.

But Eric, on hitting the final bend, throws the famous "need" right back and hurls himself up the final straight. Taylor and Fitch, realizing he's not slowing, attempt to pick up but can make no impression. Indeed Taylor's legs give way and he falls ten yards from the line as Eric sweeps through to a magnificent victory in the world time of 47. 3/5 seconds.

Again the wild scenes of jubilation -- but this time the French crowd join in with affectionate and generous applause. Eric trots back to help Taylor to his feet. Taylor shakes his hand warmly and then limps over the line. X

His teammates tumble on to the track to pick him up shoulder high and carry him to the foot of the stand -- presenting him, as it were, to his Prince. The Prince, in turn, responds delightedly with enthusiastic applause, as do his companions in the royal box. Eric looks up at them -- the irony of the situation hardly lost on him.

THEN -- he sees them. His eye zooms in on two familiar figures: sitting with Clare, Jo, Bunty, and Sandy. It's Rob and X Jennie. Eric's eyes meet his sister's, she smiles and claps her hands with the others. To Eric, this is the greatest gift of all. He looks then for Clare. She waves a wave of good-bye. Eric understands and waves a final wave back. Then the hats lift about him, the cheers resound as we:

MIX TO:

EXT. VICTORIA STATION - LONDON - DAY

119

Eric, now in travelling clothes, has been hoisted shoulder high by enthusiastic welcoming crowds. Bouncing and laughing and waving, Andy beside him -- equally borne high, he is carried to the waiting taxis which are to carry the team away. Then Stallard is lifted up, followed by the protesting X Aubrey.

The press are there barking questions -- books, papers are thrust up for them to sign -- as they're bundled into the cabs with the rest of their comrades and slowly, triumphantly borne away.

The crowd cheers and runs and follows -- tumbling after and melting in the wake of the convoy.

As they clear, a few lingering pressmen look back at the deserted platform -- containing nothing but the emptied train

"No Abrahams" they say -- before chasing onto the cars to follow the others.

As the steam and exhaust clear, FIND two figures standing, left, alone. It's Sybil and Harold's mother -- waiting -- waiting for Harold who hasn't come. They look down the deserted platform -- then -- out of the empty train -- steps a tall lone figure carrying his luggage. It's Harold.

The two women walk to meet him. As they near, Mrs. Abrahams smiles and nods to Sybil to go ahead.

Sybil's pace quickens as Harold nears. He drops his bags and waits. Their eyes meet and then she runs and flings herself into his arms...to be swung around in relief and happiness.

A news vendor is selling newspapers -- on the placard:

"Our Boys Return.

ABRAHAMS the toast of England."

Harold sees it -- arms around his mother and Sybil. He sees the placard as they walk past...and smiles a sad smile. They disappear out of a station still echoing with the cheers outside as the strains of "Jerusalem" lift about them.

OUT 120-
122

CUT TO:

INT. ST. BRIDES CHURCH - FLEET STREET - DAY 123

The congregation, as we left them, Aubrey, Andy, once more elderly men...remembering, as they sing:

CONGREGATION

'Bring me my bow, of burning gold
Bring me my arrows of desire...'

PAN ALONG the faces, PAST the relatives TO the priests, the Rabbi and the Choir. Retracing the steps we trod way back, back in the beginning.

CONGREGATION

'Bring me my spear, oh! Clouds unfold
Bring me my CHARIOT OF FIRE!'

Up the organ's soaring pipes we fly -- past the leaping cherubs -- up the angels -- and the vaulting roof.

CONGREGATION

'I will not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand.'

EXT. FLEET STREET - DAY 124

The mourners leaving the Church -- Andy and Aubrey amongst them -- shaking people's hands -- bidding farewell. They walk down the alley and into the main street.

Cont.

In the window beside them the multi-TV screens are showing the multi-faces of a weeping East German athlete who's just tasted bitter and disastrous defeat. He's inconsolable.

AUBREY

Taxi!!!

As they await the cab to pull up, they turn and look at the screens. They chuckle.

ANDY

You know all that fellow needs,
Aubrey?

AUBREY

No? What?

ANDY

A week at Broadstairs.

And they laugh as they step into the cab with an "Athenaeum Club please." It drives off into the traffic as the last triumphant chords of "Jerusalem" rise in our ears.

FADE OUT

THE END