

Revised Second Draft
December 11th 1992

SHADOWLANDS

A love story
based on events in the lives of
C.S.Lewis and Joy Davidman

Screenplay
by
William Nicholson

A note on the writing of
SHADOWLANDS

The story is based on events that occurred in the lives of two real people - C.S. Lewis and Joy Davidman - but it is not documentary drama. I have used parts of their story, not used other parts, and imagined the rest. This is not because I'm careless about facts, but because I know that any story version of a life can only present a fragment of the reality. Rather than offer what a lawyer might define as the truth - a sequence of selected actions and quotations, every one of which can be proved to have originated from the real people, but which remain lifeless - I have tried to create dramatic characters that exist in their own right. You will not find my story in the research material; nor will you find exactly the characters I have created. The love affair was real enough, but they were both intensely private about it. No-one knows exactly how and why they fell in love. It is in this uncharted region that I have created my story.

Joy's son Douglas Gresham, one of the very few who saw the love affair from the inside, wrote the following letter at the time the play opened in London:

I have been peripherally involved with *Shadowlands* since its inception, and in a sense for more than thirty years. Bill Nicholson's play is like a short trip into my own childhood. Much has been written about the nature of my stepfather's relationship with my mother, and it seems strange to me that *Shadowlands* comes closer to the truth than anything else I have read. As I said in the preface to my book *Lenten Lands*, Jack's marriage to my mother was the climax to everything that his earthly life had led up to, and his life after her death was merely an exercise in patience and obedience. Her death taught him something that he had yet to learn; that in the very deepest despair there is hope, and when by grief the entire universe is suddenly emptied, there is God. I didn't put that in my preface, but remarkably, Bill has said it for me in *Shadowlands*.

Summary of the background facts

C.S. Lewis was born on November 29th 1898, in Belfast; the son of a solicitor. He had one brother, Warren, known as Warnie, who was three years older. They became devoted to each other as children, and remained so for the rest of their lives. Their mother died of cancer in 1908. As a boy, Lewis rejected Christianity, seeing it as just one among many myths. He was a clever schoolboy, and made his way to Oxford University, when the First World War intervened. He lived through the horrors of the trenches, and saw his best friend, Paddy Moore, killed. Lewis knew Paddy Moore's mother well, and became a kind of replacement son to her. This was the start of a long relationship of mutual dependence that lasted to Mrs Moore's death, aged 79, in 1951.

Lewis resumed his Oxford career, gained a First Class degree in Greats (Greek and Latin), wrote and published poetry, and, in 1925, was elected a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. His teaching subject was English Language and Literature. He came to specialise in the medieval tradition of allegorical love poetry, the curious culture known as Courtly Love. His book *The Allegory of Love* is still the classic on the subject.

He made close friends at Oxford, all men - Owen Barfield, Hugo Dyson, Nevill Coghill, J.R.R. Tolkien - most of whom happened to be Christians. His atheism was slowly eroded, and ended in a remarkable conversion, described in his part-autobiography *Surprised by Joy*. This 'joy' is the name he gave to a kind of aesthetic-spiritual rapture, and has nothing to do with the Joy he later fell in love with. After his conversion he began to broadcast religious radio talks. These plain-man's-guide-to-morality essays were published under various titles, and sold widely; and continue to sell steadily today.

In 1930 he bought the Kilns, in the Oxford suburb of Headington. Mrs Moore lived here with him, as did Warnie, just retired from the army. Warnie's occupation became the study of 17th century French history, on which he wrote several books.

Lewis was by now an authority on medieval literature, a world-famous author of religious tracts, a writer of science fiction novels; and now he began to write stories for children. The first of the seven volumes of *The Narnia Chronicles*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, came out in 1950, and was an immediate best-seller. It still is. His religious writing, so lucid, so accessible, so understanding of the doubts of unbelievers, was becoming even more popular in America than it was at home. One of his new American readers was Joy Gresham.

Born Joy Davidman, in New York City, on April 18th 1915, her father was a Polish Jew who had given up the Jewish

faith for a passionately idealistic humanism. Joy was brought up an atheist, in a comfortable home in the Bronx. She developed a passion for books, and became socially radical. She wrote poetry. She was educated at Hunter College, the Bronx, took her MA at Columbia, and became a teacher. Shocked by the horrors of the Depression, she joined the Communist Party. She published a volume of poems called *Letter to a Comrade*, which won a national award that she shared with Robert Frost. She wrote a novel, *Anya*, about a young woman growing up in Russia. And she edited an anthology of poems by left-wing poets, *War Poems of the United Nations*, which introduced her to a communist poet and writer called William Gresham. Gresham was a troubled disillusioned man, with one suicide attempt behind him, and a drink problem; but he shared her outlook on life, and was glamorously good-looking. They fell in love, and married in 1942. Both were by now losing their faith in communism. Their son David was born in 1944, and their second son Douglas in 1945. Bill Gresham had some success, drank too much, had many affairs, and then started to fail. Joy became isolated, lonely, and lost. It was at this time that she encountered the writings of C.S. Lewis, and started thinking seriously about her need for God. Partly under the influence of Lewis, she became a Christian, and she and the boys were baptized in 1948. Her marriage was now in ruins. All that sustained her was a correspondence, begun in early 1950, with Lewis himself.

The story from here is told in *SHADOWLANDS*. The relevant dates of the key events in that story are as follows:

Summer 1952: Joy comes to England and meets Lewis.

Summer 1954: Joy's divorce becomes legal.

April 23rd 1956: Lewis marries Joy in a register office.

October 18th 1956: Joy collapses, and cancer is diagnosed.

March 21st 1957: Lewis marries Joy in hospital.

March 1958: Joy seems to be fully recovered.

October 1959: The cancer returns.

July 13th 1960: Joy dies.

September 1962: Bill Gresham dies of cancer in New York.

November 22nd 1963: Lewis dies of a heart attack.

Warnie lives on, increasingly alcoholic, to die in 1973.

SHADOWLANDS

by
William Nicholson

INT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE CHAPEL, OXFORD - EVENING

CLOSE ON the ferocious grin of a gargoyle, bathed in amber light. The SHOT DEVELOPS to find the austere face of an Old Testament prophet, the pale stone warmed by a bar of ruby light.

The soft timeless singing of a college choir -

Opening titles begin.

Beyond the stone prophet, another prophet, and another, a whole stern army of unmoving righteousness, bathed in soft colours, soothed by the flow of sound. The TURNING CAMERA catches the source of light now, a blast of glory flooding through a stained glass window, the setting sun turned gold and blood-red and aquamarine.

In the same moment, a CHOIRBOY begins to sing the solo passage of the haunting psalm. Out of the steady river of sound, like a bird escaping, springs an ecstatic leap of melody, up, up, climbing to heaven -

The CAMERA MOVES ON to find the FELLOWS of the college, unmoving as statues themselves, ensconced in the ornately-carved pews; and the PRESIDENT of the college, isolated in his throne-like seat; and the college chaplain, the Rev. 'HARRY' HARRINGTON, waiting his moment; and beyond him, in his habitual place, a solidly-built man in his fifties, his face impassive, his thoughts far away with the song of the choirboy: C.S.LEWIS, known as 'Jack'.

The stream of melody hovers at its highest point, impossibly high, and then turns and begins to fall. The CAMERA MOVES ON, through the blur of red and white robes that make up the choir, to find the singer of the solo, a ten-year-old boy. And so remains on his young face, given up to the pure sound he is making, as the psalm comes stepping down, down, tumbling over itself in an enrapturing cascade, to return once more to earth.

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE HALL - EVENING

The last of the sunlight falls on the pinnacles and old stone walls of the hall. The centuries-old glass of its mullioned windows reflects and distorts the light, partly veiling the impression of movement within.

As the psalm ends, the sounds of the choir are overtaken by the chatter and clatter of several hundred people preparing to dine -

INT. HALL - EVENING

The swish and scuff of gowns as a procession of dignitaries, led by the President, comes sweeping in to the high table. Suddenly the noise is deafening: scrape of benches, clink of cutlery, buzz of voices, peal of laughter. The dons pass THROUGH FRAME, pink-faced from their pre-prandial sherry by the fire, to take their places before the glittering array of college silver and college crystal.

Beyond them, now visible, the great panelled hall, filled with exuberant life: hundreds of gowned male students, all eager for their dinner; among them ones we will meet again, WHISTLER, FRITH, STANDISH, LIEVEN.

As the President says Grace, the CAMERA PICKS OUT faces at the high table: Lewis's elder brother Major Warren Lewis, known as WARNIE, the only one not wearing a gown; Professor CHRISTOPHER RILEY, a deceptively sweet-faced white-haired don; a younger, harrassed-looking lecturer, RUPERT PARRISH; and the college chaplain, Harry Harrington. On all faces, the look of quiet satisfaction of men who live well, and take it for granted. This is a world of privilege and tradition, and it is entirely male.

Opening titles end.

Grace over, a crash of benches and chairs heralds the start of the meal. At the high table, the light gold of fine Chablis flows into glasses, as the college servants move round the diners. Conversations overlap.

Riley's mischievous eyes twinkle at Lewis.

RILEY

Jack. What a surprise.

LEWIS

How so, Christopher?

RILEY

Not out plying your trade?

Warnie is trying to attract the attention of the wine waiter, as Harrington notices.

HARRINGTON

Here, Parker, wine for our guest first, you know.

Rupert Parrish, sitting opposite Warnie, leans across to speak to him.

PARRISH

Warnie, I've been meaning to ask you.
About your brother's children's books -
(Glance at Lewis)
Does he actually know any children?

WARNIE

Children? Jack? I don't think so.

PARRISH

How on earth does he pull it off?

The waiter gets to Warnie now, and Warnie's attention is held by the gratifying sight of his glass being filled. Lewis, helping himself to the hors d'oeuvre, allows Riley to tease him.

LEWIS

What trade is that, Christopher?

RILEY

I see you as a species of medieval pedlar, selling relics of the saints. Of dubious authenticity.

HARRINGTON

Fair play, Christopher. Jack's no Roman, you know.

RILEY

I speak metaphorically, Harry. It's my way of suggesting that Jack sells tidy little solutions to life's big messy problems.

Warnie turns to Lewis with Parrish's question.

WARNIE

Jack -

LEWIS

I'm not sure 'sell' is fair. My lectures are free, after all.

RILEY

But the slim volumes in which they are printed later?

WARNIE

Jack -

LEWIS

Yes, Warnie?

WARNIE

Your books for children -

LEWIS

Yes, Warnie?

WARNIE

You've not really known any children, have you? I mean, not closely. Rupert's asking me.

Lewis drinks his wine, seems to be searching his memory.

LEWIS

You were a child once, Warnie. And believe it or not, so was I.

EXT. OXFORD STREETS - LATE EVENING

CROSSING MAGDALEN BRIDGE -

It is a clear starry night. Lewis and Warnie walk home together after dinner in hall, conversing as they go in the laconic style of those who have lived together a long time.

Warnie is drunk, and from time to time, discreetly, not wanting to hurt his feelings, Lewis guides him back onto the right path.

LEWIS

Going to be a frost tonight.

Warnie looks up at the night sky. This makes him totter.

WARNIE

Too many stars. Confuses me.

ON THE ROAD TO HEADINGTON --

The road rises up a gentle hillside. Behind and below them as they walk, a glimpse of the night city.

LEWIS

The week's almost gone, and I haven't done my letters.

WARNIE

You don't have to write back, you know.

LEWIS

Don't you think so?

WARNIE

It only encourages them.

LEWIS

You're quite right, of course. But what is one to do?

WARNIE

Acknowledgement slips. Pre-printed. "Mr C.S.Lewis thanks you for your letter, but he has nothing whatsoever to say in reply."

Lewis laughs softly at this suggestion. They go on their way up the hill.

EXT. THE KILNS, OXFORD - NIGHT

Lewis and Warnie come up the path to the front door of their shared home, The Kilns. The house is not very old, not very beautiful, set in a large garden at the foot of Shotover Hill, on the outskirts of Oxford. Beside the house stand two disused brick kilns. Beyond it, a wood with a large pool; all within the eight acres of garden.

The door is not locked.

INT. THE KILNS - NIGHT

They enter the hallway, switching on lights. This is the house of two bachelor brothers, modest and cluttered, its interior decoration untouched for fifteen years.

WARNIE

Nightcap?

LEWIS

No, I don't think so.

Warnie goes off in the direction of the kitchen to get himself a drink. Lewis goes through to the study, and runs his finger down the next day's appointments, scribbled in his big desk diary. There is a pile of letters here too, as well as a copy of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Above the desk there hangs a framed engraving of a beautiful English view, a river valley winding away between hills. It is called 'The Golden Valley'. At this stage this is no more than a background detail.

Lewis returns to the foot of the staircase just as Warnie appears with a glass of whisky. They climb the stairs together.

LEWIS

London tomorrow.

WARNIE

Disabled veterans? Church widows?

LEWIS

Townswomen's Guild.

They head for their respective bedrooms.

WARNIE

Night, Jack.

LEWIS

Night, Warnie.

They enter their bedrooms, and the two doors shut, almost at the same time: a curious and touching little glimpse of the way they live together, each one alone.

EXT. OXFORD - MORNING

The classic English landscape: a woodland path foreground, looking across fields towards the distant city of Oxford, nestling in its cup of green hills. A watery sun is rising into a cloud-layered sky. From this far off, the rooves and towers of the ancient city seem not to have been touched by the twentieth century.

EXT. THE KILNS - MORNING

The gardener, FRED PAXFORD, is at work clipping a hedge. Paxford is a pinched-looking melancholy man, who enjoys a gloomy view of life. He wears an ancient red spotted handkerchief tied round his neck.

Lewis emerges from the house in coat and hat, and greets him as he passes by on his way to the gate.

LEWIS

Morning, Paxford.

PAXFORD

Mr Jack.

LEWIS

Do we want more rain or don't we?

PAXFORD

Makes no odds. If we don't get rain, the beans'll shrivel. If we do, the carrots'll rot.

LEWIS

Alternatively, if it rains, good for the beans, and if it doesn't, good for the carrots.

PAXFORD

I'm not one to set myself up for falling down, Mr Jack.

LEWIS

Nor you are, Paxford, nor you are.

This exchange takes place without Lewis pausing. By the time of his last words, he is already setting off down the road.

As he goes, we hear his voice-over, led from the next scene:

LEWIS (V.O.)

A garden, enclosed by a high wall. Inside the garden, a fountain. In the fountain, two crystal stones...

INT. LEWIS'S COLLEGE ROOMS, MAGDALEN - DAY

Lewis the teacher, alive, dramatic, almost theatrical:

LEWIS

...In the crystals, in reflection, a rose garden. In the midst of the roses, one perfect rosebud. Guillaume de Lorris is using the rosebud as an image, of course. But an image of what?

He is addressing a small group of undergraduates, all male: Frith, Standish, Lieven, and Whistler. All but Whistler are visibly hooked; but this unkempt-looking young man shifts in his seat, keeps his eyes cast down, and every now and again shakes his head in what looks like involuntary disagreement. Lewis is well aware of this.

FRITH

Love?

LEWIS

Yes, but tell me more. What kind of love?

FRITH

Perfect love?

LEWIS

What makes it perfect?

LIEVEN

Is it the courtly ideal of love?

LEWIS

Yes, but what's that? What's its one essential quality?

They look back at him, waiting for him to tell them.

LEWIS

Unattainability. The most intense joy lies not in the having, but in the desiring. The delight that never fades, the bliss that is eternal, is only yours when what you most desire is just out of

reach. Grasp it, and you've lost it.
Pluck the rosebud, and it dies.

Whistler makes a subdued noise, a little snort.

LEWIS
What was that, Whistler?

WHISTLER
Nothing, sir.

Lewis is irritated.

LEWIS
If you disagree with me, say so. Fight
me. I can take it.

Whistler starts to say something, but it seems his feelings are too strong, or too chaotic, to find words. After a moment or two, frustrated by his own inarticulacy, he looks down again, shaking his head.

LEWIS
Even I can't fight on both sides at once,
you know. That is, I can, but I am liable
to win.

INT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB, OXFORD - DAY

Lunch time. Here in a semi-private corner of the pub a group of friends are gathered, each in their accustomed place, following a familiar weekly routine. Lewis and Christopher Riley, Rupert Parrish and Harry Harrington the chaplain; and a local doctor, EDDIE MONK. They drink pints of cloudy beer, and smoke heavily, and eat bread and cheese, and argue cheerfully.

MONK
The thing is, the wardrobe, Jack. I have
a complaint about the wardrobe.

RILEY
I will not have another conversation
about Jack's nursery.

LEWIS
I do have a train to catch, Eddie.

MONK
In the book, you say the house is owned
by an old professor, who has no wife -

Riley grins, and makes a concealed pointing gesture at Lewis, as if to say, Here he is.

MONK

But when Lucy goes into the magic wardrobe, she finds it's full of fur coats.

RILEY

Oh, very good, Eddie!

LEWIS

It's simple. They belonged to the professor's old mother.

MONK

Aha! So to reach the magic world, the child must push through *the mother's fur*?

LEWIS

No, no, I won't have that. None of your hand-me-down Freudianism, Eddie.

HARRINGTON

The imagery is Christian, surely?

LEWIS

No, Harry. It's just itself. It's just - magic. Look.

He gets up, and right there in the middle of the pub he starts to act out what he's describing: waving his arms, unaware how others in the pub turn to stare at this spectacle of a thick-set middle-aged man behaving like a child.

LEWIS

The child goes into the wardrobe - the coats are thick, heavy - the fur isn't important - you must push through - they're pressing close, almost suffocating - and suddenly, there's white light, crisp cold air, trees, snow. Total contrast, you see. The gateway to a magical world.

He's standing, arms spread wide, acting out the child entranced by the magic. Then all at once he sees the time.

LEWIS

Lord! My train!

INT. LECTURE HALL, LONDON - EVENING

A sea of women's faces, gazing expectantly at the podium: middle class ladies, eager to be enlightened. The first women we've seen since entering Lewis's world.

To one side, a committee member is laying out a display of Lewis's books: *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, *The*

Screwtape Letters, Miracles, Broadcast Talks, Beyond Personality: The Christian Idea of God.

Lewis himself stands at the podium, scanning the audience's faces, playing the opening pause with the skill of a practised public speaker. He holds up a copy of a newspaper, and begins to speak.

LEWIS

This morning's paper. July 17th 1952.
Just another day.

He turns the newspaper to face the audience, as if to let them read it for themselves.

LEWIS

Last night, as I'm sure you know, a Number One bus drove into a column of young Royal Marine cadets in Chatham, and killed twenty-three of them. They were ten year old boys, marching and singing on their way to a boxing match. The road was unlit. The driver didn't see them. It was a terrible accident. No-one to blame. Except -

He raises questioning eyes upwards, to heaven. Then suddenly, almost fiercely -

LEWIS

Where was He? Why didn't He stop it? Isn't God supposed to be good? Isn't He supposed to love us? Does He want us to suffer?

He allows a dramatic pause. Then -

LEWIS

What if the answer to that question was - yes?

A sudden crash. All eyes turn to the side table, where the blushing committee member has toppled a stack of books. With exaggerated care to make no more noise, she sets about replacing them.

Lewis allows the expectant silence to form once more. Then -

LEWIS

I'm not sure that God particularly wants us to be happy. I think He wants us to be able to love, and be loved. He wants us to - grow up.

He scans the listening faces, as they drink in his words. He is speaking with the poise and timing of one who is sure of what he is saying, and has said it many times before.

LEWIS

Be honest. We're still clinging to childhood, aren't we? We're innocently selfish, we think only of ourselves. We think our toys bring us all the happiness there is, and our nursery is the whole wide world. Something must drive us out of the nursery, to the world of others. And that something is suffering. To put it another way: pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

Utter silence. Lewis building up to the hardest truth of all: low, clear -

LEWIS

I suggest to you that it's because God loves us that he makes us the gift of suffering.

And so, voice rising, to his pounding rhetorical climax -

LEWIS

We're like blocks of stone, out of which the sculptor carves the forms of men. The blows of his chisel, which hurt us so much, are what make us perfect.

Silence. Then the applause breaks out, and grows, and fills the hall.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - MORNING

The study is the heart of the house, and here Lewis and Warnie sit every morning, drinking cups of coffee; Lewis going through his morning mail, Warnie flicking through the newspaper.

Most of the big pile of letters is fan mail. Lewis ploughs dutifully, wearily, through the stack.

LEWIS

The Association of Christian Teachers want me to address their annual conference.

WARNIE

Do you want to?

LEWIS

No.

WARNIE

Will you do it?

LEWIS

Yes.

A familiar routine: neither of them even look up as they speak. On to the next letter.

LEWIS

A woman has had a dream about me. Writes to ask if I've had a dream about her.

On to the next letter, an airmail letter which he recognises.

WARNIE

I had a strange dream last night.

LEWIS

Another dispatch from Mrs Gresham.

WARNIE

Can't remember any of it.

LEWIS

The Jewish Communist Christian American.

WARNIE

You may ask me how I know it was strange if I've forgotten it. Can't answer that one.

LEWIS

I like her letters. She can be quite sharp.

He reads from the letter:

LEWIS

Listen to this, Warnie. "I can't decide whether you'd rather be the child caught in the spell, or the magician casting it."

Warnie is still scanning the newspaper.

WARNIE

No news, of course. Never is any.

LEWIS

I find that I am quite curious about her.

WARNIE

About who?

LEWIS

Mrs Gresham. Her letters are unusual. She writes as if she knows me.

He ponders the reason.

LEWIS

I suppose she's read my books.

WARNIE

I expect it's just the American style.
Americans don't understand about
inhibitions.

LEWIS

She's called Joy.

WARNIE

One can't hold her responsible for that.

Lewis returns to the letter. After a moment or two:

LEWIS

She's coming to England.

As Lewis reads on, he learns more.

LEWIS

She's coming to Oxford. She wants to meet
us.

WARNIE

You, you mean.

LEWIS

"I'm told you share a house with your
brother Major Lewis. I would love to meet
you both."

WARNIE

Politeness.

LEWIS

A good sign.

WARNIE

You are curious.

LEWIS

When you correspond with someone, you do
begin to form an impression. You wonder
whether that impression is correct. What
do you say, Warnie? I see her as - large
- and yet, at the same time - pointy.

WARNIE

Spectacles.

LEWIS

Certainly not a beauty.

WARNIE
(gloomily)

Trousers.

LEWIS
A distinctive nose.

WARNIE
Beaky.

LEWIS
Probing.

WARNIE
She can't come here.

LEWIS
Oh no, of course not. She suggests tea in
a hotel.

WARNIE
Tea is safe. A hotel is safe. Though she
might be mad.

LEWIS
I don't think so. Though she does write
poems.

WARNIE
Poems? Then she'll be barking.

INT. RANDOLPH HOTEL, OXFORD - DAY

A trio plays plaintively in a raised alcove. All around, the dismal grandeur of an English provincial hotel tea room: brocade and dark polished wood, clinking china and mumbling voices. As if in obedience to some unwritten rule, the little clusters of guests speak in hushed tones, and the waiters glide by in a silence broken only by the rattle of silver spoons on saucers.

The CAMERA, MOVING at the same stately pace, discovers Lewis and Warnie in a far corner, looking stiff and out of place. Warnie speaks in an undertone.

WARNIE
You won't be too agreeable, will you,
Jack?

LEWIS
Don't worry, Warnie.

A very large woman in a very loud coat enters, and stands looking round expectantly. Lewis's face fills with dismay. She sees the friends she has come to meet, and moves away with a bright smile. Lewis's face relaxes.

WARNIE

She'll turn out to be writing a dissertation on your works. She'll ask if she can come and watch you while you create. She'll say, "I'll sit in a corner and you'll never know I'm there." She'll ask you how you get your ideas. She'll take flash photographs.

LEWIS

It's only tea. An hour or so of polite conversation, then we go home, and everything goes on just the way it always has.

Warnie picks up the menu.

WARNIE

I wonder if they do toasted tea-cakes.

They both give their attention to the menu, and so do not see the arrival of another woman in the tea room. She's in her thirties, slight, dark-haired, with a humorous intelligent face. This is JOY DAVIDMAN.

She scans the room. There are other middle-aged men sitting at other tables, and she's not sure what Lewis looks like. She stops a passing waiter, speaking in a low voice.

JOY

I'm here to meet Mr C.S.Lewis, the writer.

The waiter responds in an even lower voice: almost a whisper.

WAITER

Yes, madam.

JOY

Do you know what he looks like?

WAITER

No, madam.

JOY

He doesn't know what I look like either.

WAITER

Yes, madam.

JOY

Any ideas?

A short thoughtful pause.

WAITER

No, madam.

Very polite, very unhelpful. He goes on his way. Joy gives a shrug, and speaks out loud, her New York accent slicing into the murmuring hush of the room -

JOY

Anybody here called Lewis?

Every face in the room turns to stare at her, and every conversation cuts dead. She stands her ground, meeting all their eyes with a friendly but unashamed gaze. Slowly, like a schoolboy caught misbehaving in class, Lewis raises his hand.

CLOSE ON a chair as it is drawn out from the table, and Joy sits down INTO FRAME. She's nervous, and that makes her jokey-aggressive.

JOY

You don't look at all like C.S.Lewis.

LEWIS

What does C.S.Lewis look like?

JOY

He's got these really fine features. Wide sensitive eyes. A wild mane of unkempt hair. You know. Poetic. Spiritual.

LEWIS

I'm sorry to disappoint you. Not to mention the rest of Oxford.

She follows his glance, picks up his unspoken criticism at the way she has drawn attention to him.

JOY

You don't like it?

LEWIS

I'm not what you might call a public figure, Mrs Gresham.

JOY

You're not? You write all those books, and give all those talks, just so everyone'll leave you alone?

Warnie chuckles.

LEWIS

Dear me. We've only just met, and already you see through me. Do you drink tea?

JOY

Tea? Sure.

Lewis tries to catch the waiter's eye.

JOY

Actually, I'm a little in awe of you, and a little tense, and that always makes me - you know -

She mimes a little flurry of punches, laughing at herself as she does so.

JOY

It's very childish. I'll get over it soon.

LEWIS

Not too soon, I hope. I like a good fight.

JOY

You do?

LEWIS

You sound surprised.

JOY

No. That's fine. You like a good fight, Great.

LEWIS

But - ?

She meets his eyes, her look apologising for yet another intrusion into his inner world.

JOY

When did you last lose?

The waiter comes up, ready to take their order.

WAITER

Yes, Mr Lewis?

JOY

See. Everyone knows who you are.

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE PARK - DAY

Lewis, Warnie and Joy stroll through the park, the fine old college buildings before them.

JOY

It's beautiful. How old is it?

LEWIS

The college was founded very nearly five hundred years ago. Not all of it's that old, of course. My rooms are over there, in the New Building.

He indicates the handsome eighteenth century building ahead.

JOY

New, huh?

LEWIS

1733.

A quick shared grin.

WARNIE

Is this your first visit to England, Mrs Gresham?

JOY

Yes.

LEWIS

How do you find it?

JOY

Quiet.

LEWIS

Too quiet?

JOY

The big mystery about the English is, why are they so tired?

Lewis is much amused by this. Following her eyes, he sees several people sprawled out on the grass, asleep. Joy lowers her voice conspiratorially.

JOY

The English are nocturnal creatures, right? They do their living at night. Somewhere in England there's this terrific party going on, all through the night, with everyone yelling and stomping and having one hell of a time. So all day they're sleeping it off.

LEWIS

If only it were true. I'm afraid we don't have the famous energy of New York.

JOY

You can keep New York.

WARNIE

You're a New Yorker, are you, Mrs Gresham?

JOY

Born and bred.

WARNIE

What does your husband do?

JOY

Bill? Bill's a writer. Or he would be, if he ever wrote.

WARNIE

And you too, Jack tells me.

The name comes as a delightful surprise to Joy.

JOY

You call him Jack?

LEWIS

I never liked the name Clive.

JOY

Oh, well. If you're a Jack --

LEWIS

What?

JOY

Well... You look fine. For a Jack.

She bursts into laughter.

INT. BELL TOWER, MAGDALEN COLLEGE - DAY

Voices sound from the echoing darkness of the spiral staircase.

JOY (O.O.V.)

Jewish, but not Jewish-Jewish, if you can follow that. I was brought up to be a good atheist.

LEWIS (O.O.V.)

Atheist?

JOY (O.O.V.)

Don't sound so shocked.

They come into view, one by one up the narrow stairs: Lewis, then Joy, then Warnie.

LEWIS

I'm not. I was an atheist once.

JOY

You don't say? So we're both lapsed atheists.

LEWIS

But I was never a communist.

JOY

Why not?

LEWIS

What do you mean, why not?

JOY

Back in '38, the choice was be a fascist and conquer the world, or be a communist and save it.

They emerge onto the top of the Bell Tower. From here there is a fine view over the rooves and turrets of the city. Joy loves it.

JOY

There's a world worth saving.

LEWIS

At dawn, on the first of May every year, the choristers from the choir school stand up here and sing to the rising sun. I'm told they draw quite a crowd.

JOY

What do they sing?

LEWIS

I can't say I've ever risen early enough to hear them.

JOY

Why not? It sounds wonderful.

LEWIS

I don't really go in for seeing the sights.

JOY

So what do you do? Walk about with your eyes shut?

Lewis blinks.

LEWIS

You know, Mrs Gresham, I almost don't know what to say to you.

WARNIE

(low)

Good Lord!

EXT. RAILWAY STATION, OXFORD - DAY

Lewis, Warnie and Joy wait on the platform for Joy's train to arrive.

LEWIS

How long do you plan to stay in England?

JOY

Till the end of December. I have friends in London. A publisher or two to see.

LEWIS

Do you expect to be in Oxford again?

JOY

I don't know. I could be.

LEWIS

What do you say, Warnie? Do you think we could rise to a pot of home-brewed tea?

WARNIE

I think we can manage that.

LEWIS

Given adequate warning, of course.

JOY

Could I bring my son? Douglas is the biggest fan of your Narnia books. I know he'd really like to meet you.

LEWIS

Of course.

A flurry of smoke, as the train comes hissing in to the platform. Joy holds out her hand.

JOY

Thank you, Mr Lewis. I've enjoyed meeting you.

LEWIS

We shall see you soon, then. Safe journey.

JOY

Goodbye, Major Lewis.

Warnie inclines his head politely. Joy gets into the train and goes in search of a seat.

LEWIS

Does one wait for the train to leave?

EXT. GARDEN, THE KILNS - DAY

Paxford has raked together a great pile of brushwood and has got a fine bonfire going by the little lake. Lewis stands by him, warming himself at the flames.

LEWIS
I've always loved bonfires.

PAXFORD
Me too.

LEWIS
I still see castles in the fire.

PAXFORD
I see souls burning in hell.

LEWIS
You're a cheerful sort, aren't you, Paxford?

PAXFORD
That's what they all say. Too cheerful for my own good. Too full of bobance.

LEWIS
Bobance?

PAXFORD
Bobance.

He gives a little bounce, as if to indicate flightiness. Lewis raises his eyebrows and nods sagely.

LEWIS
Bobance.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - EVENING

Warnie sits at his desk, working on his history of the court of Louis XIV.

Lewis sits at his desk, working on the manuscript of his current Narnia story. All round him are spread sample illustrations for the books: a map of Narnia, a picture of the wardrobe, showing both its outside and the snowy wood discovered within, several sketches of Aslan the lion.

He reads the lines he is writing aloud as he reworks them.

LEWIS
Puddleglum the Marshwiggle had a solemn expression, and you could see at once that he took a serious view of life. "The other Marshwiggles tell me I'm far too flighty", he said, shaking his head.

Here Lewis inserts a new line, murmuring -

LEWIS
"Altogether too full of bobance."

INT. LEWIS'S COLLEGE ROOMS, MAGDALEN - DAY

LEWIS
Character and plot. Chicken and egg.
Which comes first?

The small group of undergraduates listen intently as Lewis teaches, a copy of Aristotle's Poetics in one hand. Peter Whistler, as usual, is the exception. This time he seems to be asleep.

LEWIS
Aristotle's solution was simple and radical. He said: plot *is* character. Forget psychology. Forget the inside of men's heads. Read them by their actions.

He stops in front of Whistler.

LEWIS
For example, Whistler is asleep. From that action, I know that he has no interest in what I have to say. The puzzle is, that being the case, why is he here at all? So we construct a plot from Whistler's actions. He comes, he sleeps. Aristotle would say that the next question is not, Why?, but, What will Whistler do next?

He stops. The silence wakes Whistler. He opens his eyes, and finds everyone looking at him, and goes red.

LEWIS
My classes are not compulsory, nor are my chairs very comfortable. I suggest -

Whistler is already gathering up his books and rising.

WHISTLER
Alright. I'm going.

And he leaves. Lewis turns back to the others with a broad shrug.

LEWIS
He comes, he sleeps, he goes. The plot thickens.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, THE KILNS - DAY

Like most other rooms in the house, the drawing room is a litter of books and papers. Lewis is rather half-heartedly attempting to tidy the room up, as Warnie enters with a tray of tea things. He puts the tray down, and looks around in a forlorn sort of way. Lewis understands.

LEWIS

It's alright, Warnie. She sails back to New York after Christmas. One can be so much more friendly to people who can't stay long.

WARNIE

I wonder what her husband thinks of her running round England like this.

LEWIS

This isn't the Middle Ages, Warnie.

WARNIE

She'll make you listen to one of her poems. I bet you ten shillings to sixpence. Then she'll say to you, "How do you like it, Mr Lewis?", and you'll be stumped.

LEWIS

I shall say, "Only you could have written that."

EXT. OUTSIDE THE KILNS - DAY

A taxi pulls up outside the house, and an eight-year-old boy gets out. This is Joy's son DOUGLAS. While Joy remains behind, paying the taxi driver, Douglas goes through the gate and down the path to the front door. He holds a book, and as he goes he looks about him with great curiosity.

The door opens as he gets to it, and Warnie appears.

WARNIE

Hello. You must be Douglas.

Douglas stares at him.

DOUGLAS

Are you him?

WARNIE

No. I'm his brother.

He sees Joy coming down the path.

WARNIE

So you found us, Mrs Gresham?

INT. DRAWING ROOM, THE KILNS -- DAY

Joy takes off her coat, looking round at the bachelor clutter with some amusement. Warnie is showing his brother to Douglas, speaking in a whisper, as if he is some mythical awesome creature.

WARNIE

That's him.

LEWIS

The books get everywhere, I'm afraid.

JOY

So I see.

DOUGLAS

Will he write in my book?

WARNIE

Ask him.

Douglas goes up to Lewis and holds out his book, too shy to speak.

LEWIS

So this is Douglas.

JOY

I told him you'd write in his Narnia book. I hope you don't mind.

Lewis looks at the book. It's a copy of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. He takes out a pen and writes in it.

JOY

And he wants to know, do you have an attic?

WARNIE

We do.

Lewis hands the book back to Douglas.

LEWIS

There you are.

JOY

What did he write, dear?

DOUGLAS

"The magic never ends."

JOY

If it does, sue him.

DOUGLAS

Can I see the attic?

WARNIE

Certainly.

He turns to Joy as he leads Douglas out.

WARNIE

Jack is particularly hoping you'll introduce him to your poetry.

He gives Lewis a private meaning look.

WARNIE

This way, Douglas.

They leave.

JOY

Are you?

LEWIS

I'd be interested to know about your poems. Here is the promised tea.

He pours tea for both of them.

JOY

What do you want to know about them? How long they are? Their rhyme schemes? Their major influences?

LEWIS

I'm sorry. You're quite right. Would you be so kind as to introduce me to the poems themselves?

JOY

I'm not sure.

LEWIS

I won't be rude about them.

JOY

So what will you do? Stay silent, or tell lies?

LEWIS

I shall choose after I've heard a poem.

Joy grins. Just what she would have answered.

JOY

Okay. Let's get it out of the way. I'll give you an early one, so I'm covered. I wrote this when I was twenty-two, Spanish civil war. It's called "Snow in Madrid".

She recites the poem, watching his reaction as she does so.

JOY

Softly, so casual,
Lovely, so light, so light,
The cruel sky lets fall
Something one does not fight.

Men before perishing
See with unwounded eye
For once, a gentle thing
Fall from the sky.

Lewis says nothing.

JOY

Embarrassed, huh? Well, buddy, you asked
for it, you get out of it.

LEWIS

No. I'm touched.

JOY

Touched? Okay, that'll do. That's about
it's level. When was I ever in Madrid?
The answer is, never.

LEWIS

Personal experience isn't everything.

JOY

I disagree. I think personal experience
is everything.

LEWIS

So reading is a waste of time?

JOY

Not a waste of time. But reading's safe,
isn't it? Books aren't about to hurt you.

LEWIS

Why should one want to be hurt?

JOY

That's when you learn.

Lewis reacts with surprising sharpness.

LEWIS

Just because something hurts, it doesn't
make it more true. Or more significant.

JOY

No. I guess not.

LEWIS

I'm not saying pain is purposeless, or even neutral. But to find meaning in pain, there has to be something else. Pain is a tool. If you like, pain is God's mega -

JOY

"God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

LEWIS

How embarrassing. You know my writing too well.

JOY

I guess I've read most of it. I knew you pretty well before we met.

LEWIS

Ah, but you had not had the Personal Experience.

JOY

Mr Lewis - Listen, I can't go on calling you Mr Lewis, it makes me feel like a kid. Can I call you Jack?

LEWIS

Of course.

JOY

Jack, I'm Joy.

She shakes his hand.

JOY

So, Jack. Have you ever been really hurt?

LEWIS

You don't give up, do you?

INT. ATTIC, THE KILNS - DAY

Warnie watches, smiling, as Douglas explores the attic. The cluttered shadowy space has entirely the right air of magical possibility; aided by the fact that most of the discarded items come from the Lewis brothers' childhood. Old school trunks, piles of children's books, stuffed animals peeping out of boxes, framed school photographs.

In one corner stands a tall wardrobe, of the same kind we have already seen in the illustrations for the Narnia books. Douglas sees the wardrobe, and recognises it. He turns to look back at Warnie. Warnie raises one eyebrow, as if to say: who knows? Douglas gives a shrug, to show he's far too sophisticated to believe in magic.

DOUGLAS

What do you do with all this junk?

WARNIE

Nothing. Nothing at all.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - END OF DAY

Lewis and Joy have gravitated, tea-cups in hand, from drawing room to study. Joy's eyes fall on the engraving on the wall over Lewis's desk. She reads its title, which is carefully lettered beneath it.

JOY

'The Golden Valley'. Where's that?

LEWIS

Somewhere in Herefordshire, I believe.

JOY

Somewhere special?

LEWIS

In a way. It was on our nursery wall when I was a child. I didn't know it was a real place then. I thought it was a view of heaven.

Joy looks at it more attentively, seeing it through the eyes of a child.

JOY

The Promised Land.

LEWIS

I used to look out for it. I used to think that one day I'd come round a bend in the road, or over the brow of a hill, and there it would be -

(Hesitantly)

I have been really hurt, you know. The first time is always the worst. That was when my mother died.

JOY

How old were you?

LEWIS

Nine.

JOY

Old enough to hurt.

LEWIS

Oh, yes. It was the end of my world. I remember my father in tears. Voices all over the house. Doors shutting and

opening. It was a big house, all long empty corridors. I remember, I had the toothache. I wanted my mother to come to me. I cried for her to come, but she didn't come.

JOY

And after death? Did you believe you'd meet her again?

LEWIS

No. I don't think I had any faith in anything when I was a child. She was gone. That was all...

(Suddenly)

You should have a look round the garden before you go.

He turns towards the door.

JOY

And you still listen for the footsteps coming down the corridor. And they still don't come.

Lewis stops dead in his tracks. He doesn't look at her. After a moment, very low:

LEWIS

Yes.

JOY

So show me the garden.

EXT. GARDEN, THE KILNS - END OF DAY

Dusk has gathered now. Lewis walks Joy down the garden towards the wood, both well wrapped up. Douglas runs about, exploring.

DOUGLAS

There's a lake, mom. A wood with a lake.

LEWIS

Not much of a lake, I'm afraid. Just a flooded quarry.

Douglas runs on ahead.

LEWIS

Does he miss home?

JOY

Oh, sure. He'd like to be home for Christmas, but... Well, it hasn't worked out that way.

LEWIS

So what are you doing for Christmas?

JOY

Some lucky English hotel, I expect. That should be a new experience.

LEWIS

And your husband will have to shift for himself.

She looks at him quickly, but sees that the question is innocent.

JOY

Yes. He's pretty good at that.

They come to the lake among the trees.

LEWIS

The pond is much older than the house, of course. They say the poet Shelley used to sail paper boats here.

JOY

Made out of early drafts of his poems, no doubt.

Lewis chuckles.

LEWIS

You know, I don't like to think of you Christmassing in an hotel. Why don't you come here? You'd be very welcome.

JOY

No, no. You don't want strangers rampaging all over your house.

LEWIS

I'll have to ask Warnie, of course. But speaking for myself, I would welcome the company. Somehow Christmas makes more sense when there are children around.

INT. EAGLE AND CHILD PUB, OXFORD - EVENING

Lewis and Warnie are drinking with their friends Riley and Harry Harrington. The pub is bright with Christmas decorations.

RILEY

What I resent about Christmas is the general presumption of good will. I feel no good will towards my fellow men. I feel ill will.

LEWIS

It's got nothing to do with how you feel, Christopher. Feelings are far too unreliable.

HARRINGTON

I'm afraid Christmas is something of a lost cause.

LEWIS

That's because we've lost the magic. Tell people it's about being kind to the poor and needy, and naturally they don't want to know.

HARRINGTON

The poor and needy do come into it. No room at the inn, remember?

WARNIE

Jack's invited them to stay with us.

HARRINGTON

Who?

WARNIE

Mother and child.

LEWIS

Mrs Gresham and her son. They're spending Christmas with us.

RILEY

Well, Jack, you have succeeded in surprising me. Who is Mrs Gresham?

Lewis feels embarrassed without quite knowing why.

LEWIS

Just a friend. An American. A writer...

He sees them all looking at him.

LEWIS

People do have guests at Christmas.

EXT. RAILWAY STATION, OXFORD - DAY

The station platform is crowded with undergraduates leaving for the Christmas holidays. Lewis stands by the station newspaper stall, peering at the magazines on display, his back resolutely turned to the track down which the train will come. He has the air of someone who has come looking for a magazine, and has nothing to do with the business of trains.

The train now arrives, and there is much commotion on the platform. Still Lewis pays it no attention. Train doors open, and people start to get out. Lewis now turns, and without approaching any closer, he watches the disembarking passengers. He is so placed that they must pass him on their way to the exit.

Joy and Douglas step down from the train, not expecting to be met, and so not looking around them. For a few moments, Lewis watches Joy, without making himself known to her. He sees her smiling at a fellow passenger who they have befriended on the journey. He sees her exchange some private joke with Douglas, and then look down the platform towards the exit with an eager expectancy. These few moments of secret observation tell us more of Lewis's growing interest in Joy than he has so far even admitted to himself.

Then at last he goes forward to meet them. Joy is astonished, and obviously delighted.

JOY

Jack! You shouldn't have.

LEWIS

Hallo, Joy. Douglas.

He holds out his hand. For a moment Joy thinks he is holding it out for her to shake; but he is reaching for her suitcase.

LEWIS

Let me take that.

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING, THE KILNS - DAY

Lewis has carried Joy's suitcase up to the landing, followed by Joy, Douglas and Warnie. He now opens a bedroom door, almost in the same movement turning away from it, as if even to look inside is faintly improper.

LEWIS

Joy here.

He opens another door.

LEWIS

Douglas here.

He crosses to the bathroom door.

LEWIS

Bathroom here. And, well, that's that.

JOY

Fine.

Joy picks up the suitcase Lewis has put down.

LEWIS

Good, good. We'll leave you to settle in, then.

Lewis and Warnie leave, and make their way down the stairs. At the foot of the stairs they consult in whispers.

LEWIS

What do you think next, Warnie? A cup of tea?

Warnie nods judiciously.

WARNIE

Can't go too far wrong with a cup of tea.

INT. PORTER'S LODGE, MAGDALEN - EVENING

The college PORTER is hanging up a set of keys when he sees Warnie go by the lodge door, heading into the college. He gives a nod of greeting: a man who prides himself on knowing everybody.

PORTER

Major Lewis.

Next comes Lewis himself. The porter's lips are just framing the greeting 'Mr Lewis' when his eyes fall on Joy, and the words die on his lips. Gaping, he stares after them as they enter the college. A woman! In Magdalen!

EXT. CLOISTER QUAD, MAGDALEN - EVENING

The faces of the stone gargoyles on the buttresses seem to stare with the same look of surprise at the sight of Joy, as Lewis and Warnie escort her down the shadowy cloister to the Senior Common Room.

LEWIS

It's very informal. Just a drink before Christmas, the fellows of the college, their guests...

The sound of cheerful voices, and the clink of glasses -

INT. SENIOR COMMON ROOM, MAGDALEN - EVENING

Lewis, Joy and Warnie enter the fine old room, where the college's Christmas drinks party is under way. Lewis helps Joy off with her coat, revealing a red dress that sings out among the greys and browns of the rest of the guests. The sounds of the party falter and die. Joy looks up.

JOY'S POV - A roomful of staring faces, all male, mostly middle-aged: as amazed as the gargoyles in the quad. Lewis takes her arm, drawing her OUT OF FRAME.

LEWIS

Come and meet our President.

CLOSE ON Riley, as the babble of conversation picks up again. He speaks low to Warnie, who has just joined him, and is looking round for a drink.

RILEY

Where on earth did he find her?

WARNIE

She wrote to him.

RILEY

Ah. A pen-pal.

WARNIE

Where does one get a drink?

Riley doesn't answer. The light of battle in his eyes, he sets off across the room towards the group that includes Lewis and Joy. Lewis sees him coming.

LEWIS

Ah, there you are, Christopher.

RILEY

Yes, Jack. Here I am.

LEWIS

Let me introduce you to Mrs Joy Gresham.
Professor Christopher Riley.

JOY

Professor Riley.

RILEY

Mrs Gresham. I am right in assuming you are from the United States of America?

JOY

Yes, I am.

RILEY

Then perhaps you can satisfy my curiosity on a small matter. I had always understood Americans to be hard-riding, tough-talking, no-nonsense sort of people, and yet Jack tells me his children's stories sell very well over there. Who can be buying them?

JOY

We're not all cowboys, Professor Riley.
Have you read any of Jack's children's
books?

RILEY

Jack has read extracts aloud to me. It is
one of his tests of friendship.

JOY

I think they're magical.

RILEY

Congratulations, Jack. You seem to have
found a soul mate.

LEWIS

I thought you believed we didn't have
souls, Christopher.

RILEY

Well now, you see, I regard the soul as
an essentially feminine accessory.
'Anima'. Quite different from 'animus',
the male variant. This is how I explain
the otherwise puzzling difference between
the sexes. Where men have intellect,
women have soul.

JOY

Professor Riley, as you say, I'm from the
United States, and different cultures
have different modes of discourse. I need
a little guidance here. Are you being
offensive, or merely stupid?

Riley opens his mouth to respond, but for once, no words
come.

INT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE CHAPEL, OXFORD - DAY

The chapel is decorated for Christmas, and the choir are
singing carols. This annual carol service is hugely
popular, and for once the chapel is packed. Lewis and
Warnie are there, with Joy and Douglas as their guests.

CHOIR

In the bleak midwinter,
Frosty wind made moan.
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone.
Snow on snow had fallen,
Snow on snow on snow
In the bleak midwinter
Long ago...

CLOSE ON DOUGLAS - He does not know the words, and so does not sing. He is deep in his own thoughts.

INT. ATTIC, THE KILNS - DAY

The singing of the choir continues over as Douglas enters the attic, and stands there staring at the wardrobe. He moves forward slowly, and opens the wardrobe door. Inside hang several old long-forgotten coats: an army greatcoat, a tweed coat, two boys' size navy blue overcoats. Douglas pushes them apart, feeling for the space beyond. But the wardrobe has a solid wooden back. The singing ends.

When he turns back, he finds Lewis standing in the attic doorway watching him.

LEWIS

We had that wardrobe when we were children.

DOUGLAS

If you don't need it any more, you should throw it away.

LEWIS

I'm not very good at throwing things away. As you see.

Douglas looks around at all the clutter, and nods.

DOUGLAS

We don't have an attic at home.

LEWIS

You wish you were home, don't you?

DOUGLAS

We always have a turkey for Christmas at home.

LEWIS

We'll be having a turkey here.

DOUGLAS

With cranberry jelly?

LEWIS

Ah.

DOUGLAS

My dad loves cranberry jelly.

LEWIS

Does he?

DOUGLAS

And snow.

LEWIS

Who do you look like most, your mother or your father?

Douglas covers the upper half of his face.

DOUGLAS

This is mom.

He moves his hand to cover the lower half of his face.

DOUGLAS

This is dad.

His stern dark eyes gaze at Lewis. Lewis finds it disconcerting.

DOUGLAS

But dad's kind of noisy, and I'm not.

LEWIS

What kind of noisy?

DOUGLAS

Like, shouting. I hate shouting.

LEWIS

Me too.

Douglas goes and shuts the wardrobe doors.

DOUGLAS

I knew it was just an old wardrobe.

INT. KITCHEN, THE KILNS - DAY

MRS YOUNG, a middle-aged woman, is busy in the kitchen preparing Christmas dinner. Lewis enters.

LEWIS

You wouldn't know where we could get cranberry jelly, would you?

MRS YOUNG

Cranberry jelly? What's that?

LEWIS

My guess is it's a jelly made with cranberries.

MRS YOUNG

Well, Mr Lewis, if you can find me some cranberries, I'll jelly them.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE KILNS - DAY

CLOSE ON a jar of raspberry jam. It stands by the roast turkey on a table laid for a fine Christmas lunch, crowded with food and drink, and they are all sitting round it, flushed with eating and drinking: Lewis, Warnie, Joy and Douglas. Warnie in particular has had more than his fair share, and looks round him in an amiable daze.

Joy scoops raspberry jam onto Douglas's plate, not paying enough attention to see what it is. Douglas gazes at his plate in mute dismay. Lewis raises his glass in a toast.

LEWIS

Happy Christmas.

Joy and Warnie echo his toast.

LEWIS

And we should raise a glass to your husband, Joy.

JOY

Sure. Why not? To Bill.

They all drink.

DOUGLAS

Can you telephone to America?

LEWIS

I believe so. Do you want to?

JOY

No, no. We'll be home soon enough.

LEWIS

You're very welcome if you want.

DOUGLAS

I do want.

JOY

It's far too expensive, Douglas.

LEWIS

I don't mind.

JOY

He's only excited by the novelty of it.

DOUGLAS

I am not. I want to talk to dad.

JOY

Well, you can't, and that's that.

The finality of her tone silences Douglas, and leads to an awkward pause round the table. It is Warnie who rescues them, from the depths of his intoxication.

WARNIE

Beastly things, telephones. Ring-ring-ring! Stop what you're doing! Get up! Hurry, hurry! Ring-ring-ring! No manners at all.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, THE KILNS - EVENING

The debris of Christmas day is all over the room. Lewis sits in an armchair, quietly smoking a pipe.

Joy enters. She has just put Douglas to bed.

LEWIS

All well?

JOY

All well. Douglas never makes a fuss about going to bed.

LEWIS

He never makes a fuss about anything. Except telephones, perhaps.

JOY

Right.

Joy seems embarrassed.

LEWIS

Warnie has taken himself off to bed too. Sometimes he overdoes it a little. I expect you noticed.

JOY

Yes. I know the signs.

LEWIS

There are signs, are there? Poor Warnie.

A brief silence.

JOY

You know, don't you?

LEWIS

Know what?

She looks at him, trying to read his face.

JOY

You must think I'm not much of a mother,
won't let her son phone his father on
Christmas day.

LEWIS

Not at all -

JOY

It just isn't the way it looks, that's
all.

She sits down in the armchair facing Lewis and looks down,
to avoid his eyes. She's obviously going through some sort
of inner struggle.

JOY

Thank you for not asking.

LEWIS

Not asking what?

JOY

"What's this woman doing chasing round
England without her husband?"

LEWIS

Ah. That.

She waits, but he says no more.

JOY

I'm running away. Always a mistake, isn't
it? You have to face things in the end.

She rises and moves away, so that she can face away from
Lewis as she speaks, to conceal her pain.

JOY

I left home because Bill fell in love
with another woman. He wants me to give
him a divorce, so he can marry her.

LEWIS

I see.

JOY

This is what's called breathing space.

Lewis frowns as he takes all this in.

JOY

Bill's very talented, he wants to do
right by everyone, he's a good man at
heart, and I guess I love him. Bill's an
alcoholic, he's compulsively unfaithful,
he's sometimes violent, and I guess I
haven't loved him for years.

LEWIS

Violent?

JOY

Only when he's drunk. He doesn't know what he's doing. He's worn me out, that's the truth of it. The only thing that's new is now he wants a divorce.

Joy is struggling not to give way to tears.

LEWIS

I had no idea.

Joy recovers herself slowly.

LEWIS

Do you want a divorce?

JOY

Does it matter what I want? Marriage isn't just a legal contract.

LEWIS

No.

JOY

We'd still be married, in the eyes of God.

LEWIS

Yes.

JOY

I know. I've read your writings on the subject, many times.

Lewis doesn't know what more to say.

JOY

I'm sorry to burden you with all this. It's not your problem. Don't worry, I'll be alright, I always have been.

LEWIS

If there's anything I can do..

JOY

There is.

He looks up at her, almost frightened to hear it.

JOY

Be my friend.

LEWIS

I hope I'm that already.

EXT. THE KILNS - DAY

A taxi waits in the road; the taxi driver is loading luggage into the boot. Lewis, Warnie, Joy and Douglas are making their way from the front door to the taxi. In their different ways, they all feel awkward about the parting.

Douglas goes on into the taxi, without saying goodbye.

JOY

Goodbye, Warnie. Thank you for putting up with us.

WARNIE

Not at all. We shall miss you.

Lewis is looking at Douglas, who is sitting in the taxi, staring ahead at nothing. Lewis sympathises with the boy's dislike of goodbyes.

As he watches, Douglas turns and meets his eyes. Lewis gives a nod. Douglas nods back. It's a very small moment of contact, but it shows how alike they are, these two.

Joy turns to Lewis.

JOY

Goodbye, Jack.

This is now the moment at which some parting kiss would be appropriate, as both are aware; but neither makes the move.

LEWIS

Goodbye, then, Joy.

She gets into the taxi, and it drives away.

Lewis and Warnie wave, and when it is out of sight, turn back into the house.

LEWIS

That's that, Warnie.

WARNIE

Right, Jack.

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

Lewis stands at a lectern on a stage before a hall full of people who have come to hear one of his popular lectures. He scans the rows of faces before him, and then holds up a copy of that morning's newspaper, and begins to speak.

LEWIS

Yesterday the crew of a lifeboat were lost off the coast of Shetland. Good men, brave men, men ready to give their lives to save others. Even as we pray for them and their families, we can't help asking, Why didn't God save them? Isn't God supposed to be good? Isn't He supposed to love us? Does He want us to suffer?

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - MORNING

Lewis sits working at his desk. Warnie enters the study with coffee and the morning post, and pauses by Lewis's desk to drop off his letters. Lewis flips through them, but whatever it is he's looking for isn't there.

Warnie settles himself down, glancing across at his brother, knowing very well what's going on.

WARNIE

You miss her, don't you?

LEWIS

Things are quieter now.

WARNIE

I'm afraid I'm not much of a talker.

LEWIS

One of your many virtues, Warnie.

WARNIE

Is she coming back?

LEWIS

No, no.

An interval of silence. Lewis settles down to his work, then looks up again.

LEWIS

I haven't really thanked you, Warnie.

WARNIE

What for?

LEWIS

You've been very tolerant. Very considerate.

WARNIE

Any friend of yours, Jack.

LEWIS

I know.

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

CLOSE ON LEWIS - His lecture continues -

LEWIS

I'm not sure that God particularly wants us to be happy. He wants us to be able to love, and be loved. He wants us to grow up...

INT. BOOKSHOP, OXFORD - END OF DAY

Outside the bookshop windows, a steady rain falls from a grey sky. Lewis sits at a desk, with a pile of his own most recently published works beside him, engaged in a book-signing session. A line of admirers has formed before him: an ELDERLY WOMAN, a SMALL BOY with his mother, a CLERGYMAN, a YOUNG WOMAN. Lewis hates these sessions, but he performs his duty with a good grace.

He signs a copy of *Mere Christianity*. The elderly woman receives it from him as if it is a treasure.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Thank you so much, Mr Lewis.

She gives way to the small boy.

LEWIS

The Magician's Nephew?

The boy nods, too awed to speak. Lewis reaches for a copy of the latest Narnia book. As he does so, his eyes fall on Peter Whistler on the far side of the shop. Whistler interests him, and he can't help watching; and so it is that he sees Whistler take a book from the shelf, and slip it into his bag.

Whistler browses along the shelves towards the door, and then leaves without paying.

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

CLOSE ON LEWIS - Another hall, another audience, but the same lecture continues -

LEWIS

We think our childish toys bring us all the happiness there is, and our nursery is the whole wide world. Something must drive us out of the nursery, to the world of others. Isn't that something - suffering?

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE - EVENING

The cloisters of the college courts are shadowy as Lewis moves from staircase to staircase, peering at the names painted on the stone entrances. He finds the one he is looking for, WHISTLER P., and hesitates for a moment. It's not usual for a don to call on an undergraduate unannounced.

INT. WHISTLER'S COLLEGE ROOM - EVENING

The door opens, and Whistler looks out onto the staircase, not expecting visitors. He is even more unkempt than usual, and is clearly very surprised to see Lewis.

LEWIS

I hope you don't mind.

Whistler opens the door properly.

WHISTLER

Come in.

Lewis enters and stands a little awkwardly, looking round at the usual undergraduate clutter. There are books everywhere. Whistler waits, not at all welcomingly, to learn why Lewis has come.

LEWIS

I happened to be in Blackwells earlier. I saw you - borrow - a book.

At once Whistler is tense, aggressive, defensive.

WHISTLER

Steal. I stole it. Most of these books are stolen. Why not? They're written to be read, and at least I read them, which is more than most people do.

LEWIS

You read books differently to the rest of us, do you?

This unleashes a confused defiant jumble of intensely-felt thoughts, as if everything he wants to say to Lewis is all coming out at once.

WHISTLER

Yes, I do. I read at night, so nothing breaks my concentration. All night, sometimes. When I start a new book, my hands are shaking, my eyes are jumping ahead - Does he feel the way I've felt? - Does he see what I see? - Yes, that's good, that's true - No, he's cheating, he's ducking it - Ah, wait, that may be

so - Yes, yes, he's seen it too - My father used to say - He's a teacher, like you - No, not like you, only a village schoolmaster - What was it you asked me? How do I read? Sometimes I shout at the book, or I kiss the page, or I cry -

He sees Lewis looking at him, and knows he's not making much sense, and he comes to a stop in mid-speech. But Lewis has been following him.

LEWIS

What was it your father used to say?

WHISTLER

"We read to know we're not alone."

To his own surprise, Lewis is impressed by this. He looks away, and speaks in an offhand manner.

LEWIS

Would it help if I made you a small loan?

WHISTLER

I expect it would, if I wanted to be helped. But I don't.

LEWIS

As you wish.

There's nothing more he can say after that, so he turns to leave. At the doorway, he pauses, and glances back at Whistler, but the young man doesn't even look up. Lewis gives a brief nod, and departs.

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

CLOSE ON LEWIS - The lecture continues -

LEWIS

Could it be precisely because God loves us that he makes us the gift of suffering?

INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY, MAGDALEN - DAY

Christopher Riley sits in a deep armchair, working his way through a learned periodical. Lewis sits at a table nearby, making notes for a lecture. All around them are shelves and shelves of books, receding bay after bay, in the church-like hush peculiar to academic libraries.

After a few moments, Lewis lays down his book.

LEWIS

I've always found this a trying time of the year.

Riley goes on reading.

RILEY

Trying to do what, Jack?

But Lewis is too far inside his own thoughts to be deflected by Riley's little jokes.

LEWIS

The leaves not yet out. Mud everywhere you go. The frosty mornings gone, the sunny mornings not yet come. Give me blizzards and frozen pipes, but not this nothing time. Not this waiting room of a world.

He picks up his book again.

LEWIS

Tell me something, Christopher. How can I put this? Would you say that you were content?

Riley puts his book down now.

RILEY

I am as I am. The world is as it is. My contentment or otherwise has very little to do with it.

LEWIS

You don't ever feel a sense of waste?

RILEY

Of course.

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

CLOSE ON LEWIS - Another hall, another audience, and the conclusion of the lecture -

LEWIS

We're like blocks of stone, out of which the sculptor carves the forms of men. The blows of his chisel, which hurt us so much, are what make us perfect.

Applause. As usual, his audience is mostly women. The CHAIRWOMAN comes up, clapping and smiling, as he gathers up his papers from the lectern.

CHAIRWOMAN

Mr Lewis - what can I say?

Other WOMEN come crowding round him, their faces shining with admiration. He nods and smiles, but it's all too clear that his thoughts are elsewhere.

WOMEN

Mr Lewis, if you have a moment - Mr Lewis, I just had to come up and say thank you - Mr Lewis, I don't like to bother you -

CHAIRWOMAN

I'm sure what Mr Lewis would like now is a cup of tea.

LEWIS'S POV - The eager faces form a blur before him. Beyond them, the hall is emptying. And there, between the bobbing heads and the departing figures, sits one woman, unmoving. At first he gets only a glimpse, but he thinks he recognises her. He shifts, to see her more clearly. It's Joy.

The Chairwoman is speaking, but he hardly takes in what she says.

CHAIRWOMAN

Why don't I go on ahead and see if the tea's ready?

LEWIS

Yes. Do.

Already he's moving down the stage, and the women are parting before him. Down the steps. Up the aisle. And there she is, smiling up at him.

JOY

Hallo, Jack.

LEWIS

What are you doing here?

JOY

I came to hear your talk.

LEWIS

Yes, but -

JOY

What am I doing in London? We live here now. Douglas and I. What have I done with Bill? We're divorced.

LEWIS

Why didn't you write?

JOY

What for? To ask permission?

LEWIS

No, no...

JOY

Do you mind?

LEWIS

Me? No. Why should I mind?

JOY

That's alright, then.

He gazes at her with continuing amazement.

LEWIS

I really am very - very surprised to see you, you know.

JOY

I wasn't dead. I was only in America.

LEWIS

Yes, of course. But you see, I've been thinking about... I've been thinking about you.

The Chairwoman reappears, and looks round for Lewis.

CHAIRWOMAN

Mr Lewis! Over here!

He doesn't even hear her.

LEWIS

I was thinking about you. And suddenly, there you were.

JOY

Here I am. Present tense. Present, and tense.

The Chairwoman is bearing down on him. She fixes Joy with a steely smile.

CHAIRWOMAN

I'm so sorry, but Mr Lewis has very little time.

Lewis gives Joy a small helpless shrug.

LEWIS

Duty calls.

Joy nods, quietly amused. She sits and watches as the Chairwoman carries him off, and the hovering admirers close round him once more.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - DAY

Lewis and Warnie each sit at their desks, working away in the usual way. They don't look at each other as they speak.

WARNIE

So she's settled here for good, has she?

LEWIS

For the foreseeable future.

WARNIE

With the boy?

LEWIS

Yes.

WARNIE

Will you be seeing much of her?

LEWIS

Not much, I shouldn't think. I may look in when I'm next in London.

Neither of them have taken their noses out of their books. There follows a short silence. Then:

LEWIS

She's a good friend to me, Warnie. That's all.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

Lewis makes his way down an undistinguished street in North London, checking the numbers on the houses as he goes. It's autumn, and the leaves are falling. He comes to a stop outside the house he is seeking, and stands frowning at its modest exterior.

Then through a basement window he sees Joy, moving to and fro, unpacking. For a short moment, he stands watching her, a half smile on his face.

INT. JOY'S FLAT, LONDON - DAY

The main room of Joy's flat is dominated by packing cases. Joy displays them to Lewis.

JOY

My life in boxes. Books. Manuscripts. Notes. My uncollected works. I really don't know why I've bothered to keep it all.

LEWIS

One doesn't throw away one's past.

JOY

Don't think I haven't tried.

LEWIS

So. How can I help?

JOY

Books onto shelves. Those boxes are all books.

Lewis begins to unpack one of the book boxes, while Joy concentrates on the boxes of manuscripts.

LEWIS

Any particular order?

JOY

Put them anywhere they'll fit. I'll sort them out later.

Lewis starts to read one of the books he is supposed to be putting on the shelves. Joy looks up and sees his inactivity with amusement.

JOY

Are you sure you want to do this?

LEWIS

I said I'd help.

They work on in silence for a few moments.

LEWIS

You're going to have to get more shelves.

JOY

Stack them on the floor. Bookcases don't come high on my list of priorities.

LEWIS

If you find things are getting tight, you will let me know, won't you?

JOY

I don't want to take your money, Jack.

LEWIS

Don't be silly. That's what friends are for.

EXT. NORTH LONDON PARK - DAY

A light snow lies over the frozen park. A crocodile of prep-school boys goes by, all in uniform, and as they pass

they reveal Lewis, Joy and Douglas, out walking, well wrapped up. Joy's eyes follow the curious sight of the orderly line of boys.

JOY

You really go in for segregation of the sexes here, don't you?

Lewis laughs.

LEWIS

Did you know that in Oxford, dons weren't even allowed to be married until the 1880s? You'll still find plenty of dons who believe that family life is the ruin of a fine mind.

JOY

Including you?

LEWIS

How would I know? I've never been married.

JOY

Do you ever get asked why?

LEWIS

Sometimes. But what monstrous arrogance! To assume that your own way of life is normal, and all others ways are aberrations that need explaining.

JOY

I'm glad now I didn't ask.

EXT. NORTH LONDON STREET - END OF DAY

Early spring. Lewis makes his way up the street as he did before, but this time the route is familiar. As before, he pauses outside Joy's flat, and stands for a moment, watching her. As if sensing his presence, she looks up and smiles.

INT. JOY'S FLAT - EVENING

Lewis has just entered. Joy is hanging up his coat.

JOY

It's sweet of you to come and see me, Jack. I know how busy you are.

LEWIS

Not at all. I look forward to my outings to London. You must come and visit us in Oxford one day.

JOY

Maybe when Douglas gets out of school.
I'd like to see Warnie again. Do remember
me to him, and tell him I promise I won't
turn into a nuisance.

LEWIS

Why should you turn into a nuisance?

JOY

Oh, come on, Jack. I don't have to
explain.

LEWIS

Explain what?

Joy looks at him.

LEWIS

Why are you looking at me like that?

JOY

Like what?

LEWIS

As if I'm lying to you. Why should I lie
to you? I mean what I say.

JOY

I know that. But you don't say it all, do
you?

LEWIS

One can't say it all. It would take too
long.

JOY

Alright, Jack. But I trust you to tell me
anything I need to know.

Lewis puzzles over this.

LEWIS

What sort of thing do you need to know?

JOY

I want to stay friends with you, Jack. I
need to know anything that would make
that hard for you.

LEWIS

I see.

JOY

We might as well know where we are.

LEWIS

Best to have things out in the open, you think?

JOY

That's how I like it.

LEWIS

You never can really tell what's going on between people, can you? People jump to conclusions. Sometimes it makes me quite angry the way people aren't allowed to be - well, just friends.

JOY

Like us, you mean.

LEWIS

Like us. I don't mean to say that friendship is a small thing. As a matter of fact, I rate it as one of this life's most precious gifts.

JOY

But...

LEWIS

But it shouldn't be turned into a watered-down version of something it is not.

JOY

Such as...

LEWIS

Such as, well, to give you one example, romantic love. Though that's not to say that friendship isn't, in its way...

JOY

A kind of love.

LEWIS

A kind of love. I knew you'd understand.

JOY

I understand better than that, Jack. You are a bachelor and I am a divorced woman. Some people might suppose you to have romantic intentions towards me. You have no such intentions. You want to have this 'out in the open' because you care about me and don't want me to be hurt. Have I understood you correctly?

Lewis is silent for a moment; unused to such plain speaking.

LEWIS

I don't know what to say.

JOY

It's okay. I just said it. Wasn't so hard, was it?

LEWIS

I'm not used to this -- whatever it is.

JOY

Naming names. That's all.

LEWIS

Yes.

JOY

So now you don't need to be afraid of me, do you?

LEWIS

Good Lord, I was never afraid of you, Joy.

She looks at him. He smiles and shrugs.

JOY

I really do appreciate your help, Jack.

LEWIS

The least I can do. I'm sure there are far more substantial ways I can help, that you're not telling me about.

JOY

I don't want to exhaust your good will.

LEWIS

No fear of that.

She goes and fiddles with the papers on her desk, not wanting to look at him as she speaks.

JOY

There is something you could do which would help me enormously. If it's too much, you'd just say no, wouldn't you? Just no. No guilt, no evasion, no running away?

She turns and looks up at him. Her eyes hold his: searching, intent.

EXT. GARDEN, THE KILNS - DAY

Warnie is sitting in a garden chair in the sun, reading a book. Paxford is mowing one of the lawns, pushing an aged

and heavy mower, with great effort, up and down the grass, towards Warnie and away again. He utters tremendous grunts as he gets close to Warnie, clearly designed to show that the effort is almost killing him. Warnie pays no attention whatsoever.

Lewis comes wandering out, looking for Warnie. He stands beside Warnie's chair, watching Paxford approach.

LEWIS

Something I ought to tell you, Warnie.

WARNIE

Oh?

The mower is now too close to speak. Lewis waits until its noise has receded.

LEWIS

I've agreed to marry Joy.

Warnie is profoundly shocked.

WARNIE

You have?

LEWIS

Yes. Seemed like the right thing to do.

WARNIE

It did?

LEWIS

It's alright, Warnie. Nothing's going to change. I'm not really going to marry Joy.

WARNIE

You're not?

Paxford and the mower return. They both wait, as he groans and glowers up to them; and turns; and groans away again.

LEWIS

What I have agreed to do is extend my British citizenship to her, so that she can go on living in England.

WARNIE

By marrying her.

LEWIS

Only technically.

WARNIE

You're marrying Joy technically?

LEWIS

A true marriage is a declaration before God, not before some government official. This will be a bureaucratic formality, nothing more. Joy will keep her own name. We will all go on living exactly as before. No-one will even know the marriage has taken place, apart from you, Somerset House, and the Department of Immigration. It is nothing more than a bureaucratic formality.

INT. REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON - DAY

REGISTRAR

Before you are joined in matrimony, I have to remind you of the solemn and binding character of the vows you are about to make.

A gloomy room, with some pretension to the style of a chapel: rows of chairs face a table, on which stand two vases of flowers. The atmosphere is institutional, the participants tense. The REGISTRAR reads his lines from a book with a pompous bonhomie, designed to reflect the happiness of the moment. Lewis and Joy stand before him, both dressed semi-formally. Warnie stands behind them, as a witness.

REGISTRAR

Mr Lewis, if you'll repeat after me. I call upon these persons here present.

Lewis answers with grim clarity.

LEWIS

I call upon these persons here present.

REGISTRAR

To witness that I, Clive Staples Lewis.

LEWIS

To witness that I, Clive Staples Lewis.

REGISTRAR

Do take thee, Helen Joy Davidman.

LEWIS

Do take thee, Helen Joy Davidman.

REGISTRAR

To be my lawful wedded wife.

LEWIS

To be my lawful wedded wife.

REGISTRAR

Miss Davidman, if you'll repeat after me.
I call upon these persons here present.

Joy answers in a low hurried voice.

JOY

I call upon these persons here present.

REGISTRAR

To witness that I, Helen Joy Davidman.

JOY

To witness that I, Helen Joy Davidman.

REGISTRAR

Do take thee, Clive Staples Lewis.

JOY

Do take thee, Clive Staples Lewis.

REGISTRAR

To be my lawful wedded husband.

JOY

To be my lawful wedded husband.

REGISTRAR

Do we have a ring?

Lewis and Joy both speak together.

LEWIS

No.

JOY

No.

EXT. OUTSIDE REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON - DAY

It is raining as Lewis, Warnie and Joy emerge from the awkward little ceremony.

LEWIS

That's that, then.

JOY

Can I buy you both a drink?

Lewis looks at his watch.

LEWIS

I'd love to, Joy, but I simply have to catch the 12.22. I have a lecture this afternoon. You know how it is.

JOY

Of course, Jack. Off you go.

Lewis strides away down the street.

WARNIE

I would be most grateful for that drink, Joy.

JOY

That's kind of you, Warnie.

They set off for the nearest pub.

JOY

I must say I found that an unusual experience.

WARNIE

Yes. You must forgive Jack.

JOY

Oh, I'm getting to know him a little by now. I think I understand him. I'm very grateful to him.

WARNIE

Nobody is to know, he tells me.

JOY

What he actually said was, it will be as if it never happened.

They turn into the doorway of the pub.

INT. DINING HALL, MAGDALEN COLLEGE - EVENING

Dinner is under way at High Table. Lewis is sitting as usual between Riley, Harrington, and Parrish.

RILEY

A great mistake, Jack. You'll live to regret it.

LEWIS

Regret what, Christopher?

RILEY

Staying in Oxford all summer. The day after degree day, I'm off.

PARRISH

Where, Christopher?

RILEY

Tuscany. Where else?

PARRISH
We're going to the Loire. Camping.

RILEY
(aghast)
Camping?

LEWIS
(casually)
I think I'll bring a guest this year.

HARRINGTON
Laura and I used to take the children
camping. Huge fun.

RILEY
Bring a guest, Jack?

LEWIS
Degree day.

HARRINGTON
Sleep outside the tent, Rupert, and smoke
a cigar.

PARRISH
Whatever for?

HARRINGTON
Mosquitoes.

LEWIS
Joy Gresham. You've met her.

RILEY
Not the American? Is she back in Oxford?

LEWIS
No, no. In London. Wants her boy to see
the pageant of learning. I've always
found it hard to say no.

EXT. RADCLIFFE SQUARE, OXFORD - DAY

The square is seething with undergraduates in white ties
and gowns, proud parents in their Sunday best, and dons in
ceremonial robes. This is degree day, in high June, and all
the comical pageantry of the university is on display.

A procession appears, cutting through the crowds towards
the Sheldonian Theatre: black beadles with silver wands,
proctors with tasseled mortar boards, leading the grand
scarlet-robed figure of the Vice-Chancellor of the
university; and after him, his retinue of opulently garbed
Masters and Scholars.

INT. SHELDONIAN THEATRE, OXFORD - DAY

The Sheldonian, built by Christopher Wren in 1669, is the most glorious setting for such a show: shaped like a classical amphitheatre, the great space seems to sustain its ceiling unsupported, by sheer daring, a ceiling painted with a single enormous allegorical painting, representing a canopy being rolled back by infant angels to reveal the painted sky above.

Beneath this glory sits the Vice-Chancellor, on an elevated throne, facing the packed mass of parents and relatives and dons. The undergraduates who are receiving their degrees are processed at a rapid pace in batches. We see Lewis and Riley, gowned among the dons; and Warnie, Joy and Douglas among the invited guests. Riley is watching Joy. She is talking to Warnie, smiling, very much at ease; until her eyes catch Riley's, and she realises she's under observation.

A batch of new graduates is herded forward, Latin incantations are gabbled over them, they are herded forward again, they kneel before the Vice-Chancellor, he bumps each one on the head with a bible, and they are herded out into the sunshine.

EXT. LAWN, MAGDALEN COLLEGE - DAY

Every college hosts a degree day party, and here at Lewis's college it takes place on the immaculate lawns between the Cloister building and the New Buildings, under the shade of the giant plane tree, planted, as a plaque proclaims, in 1801. The proud new graduates mill about with their even prouder families, drinking champagne cocktails in the sun.

Lewis and Warnie are here, with Joy and Douglas as their guests. Riley, elsewhere in the crowd, continues to watch Lewis's conduct with Joy. Joy is admiring Lewis's scarlet hood.

JOY

I feel distinctly underdressed.

LEWIS

Just a sort of uniform, really.

WARNIE

Jack's party frock.

JOY

Come here a moment, Jack.

LEWIS

What is it?

JOY

Something on your cheek.

She brushes an imaginary speck from his cheek with her fingers. Riley, watching, opens his eyes wide.

JOY

There. Gone now.

She looks over at Riley, catches his goggling eyes head-on, and raises her eyebrows, as if to say: your move.

A little later: Riley has got Warnie to himself in the crowd, and is looking at Joy and Lewis, some way off, as he speaks.

RILEY

She's living in London now?

WARNIE

Yes.

RILEY

With her husband?

WARNIE

They're divorced.

RILEY

Why did I have a feeling you were going to say that?

On Joy and Lewis, as she reaches out one hand to support herself on his arm, suddenly weary.

JOY

Jack? Is there anywhere to sit down?

LEWIS

What? Yes, of course. Legs giving out?

JOY

A touch of rheumatism, I think.

INT. LEWIS'S COLLEGE ROOMS - DAY

Joy settles down gratefully into one of Lewis's armchairs. Through the high windows, the party can be seen going on down on the lawns below.

JOY

Oh, boy! That's heaven!

LEWIS

Have you had this before?

JOY

I'm not going to even talk about it. You don't have any coffee up here, do you?

Nescafé? LEWIS

Great. JOY

Lewis goes into the little cupboard that serves as a kitchen, and puts a kettle on to boil.

JOY
Does Douglas know where I am?

LEWIS
Warnie does. Do you want me to go and tell him?

JOY
No. I won't stay long. For all I know I'm not even allowed to be here.

LEWIS
Female guests are permitted between 10am and 8pm.

Joy checks her watch.

JOY
Relax, we're legal.

Lewis emerges from the cupboard.

JOY
Don't you sometimes just bust to share the joke?

LEWIS
What joke?

JOY
Here's your friends thinking we're unmarried and up to all sorts of wickedness, while all along we're married and up to nothing at all.

Lewis doesn't even smile.

LEWIS
Which friends?

His deliberate refusal to see what's going on annoys Joy, tired as she is.

JOY
God, you can be hard work sometimes, Jack.

Her eyes roam round the book-lined room.

JOY

So what do you do here? Think great thoughts.

LEWIS

Teach, mainly.

JOY

Do they sit at your feet and gaze up at you in awe?

LEWIS

Not at all.

JOY

I bet they do.

LEWIS

We have some fine old battles in here, I'll have you know.

JOY

Which you win.

The kettle boils. Lewis returns to the cupboard.

JOY

It must give you quite a boost. Being older and wiser than they are.

Her eyes fall on a copy of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. She's beginning to make some connections.

JOY

Not to mention your readers.

LEWIS

What's that?

JOY

Then there's Warnie. No competition there.

Lewis reappears with her mug of coffee.

LEWIS

What are you talking about?

JOY

And that gang of friends of yours. Very well trained not to play out of bounds.

LEWIS

Nonsense. Christopher doesn't let me get away with anything.

JOY
Except doubt, and fear, and pain. And
terror, and desolation.

Lewis stares at her.

LEWIS
Where did all that come from?

JOY
I've only just seen it. How you've
arranged yourself a life where no-one can
touch you. Where everyone close to you is
younger than you, or weaker than you, or
under your control.

Lewis objects strongly to this, but finds himself
temporarily lost for words.

LEWIS
Why are you getting at me, Joy? I thought
we were friends.

JOY
I don't know that we are friends. Not the
way you have friends, anyway. Sorry,
Jack.

Lewis is astounded. Joy rises.

JOY
I'll go find Douglas.

LEWIS
What happened?

JOY
Don't worry about it.

LEWIS
But I don't understand.

JOY
Yes, you do. You just don't like it. Nor
do I.

EXT. LAWN, MAGDALEN COLLEGE - DAY

The party is still in full swing as Joy emerges from the
New Buildings staircase entrance. She dives into the party
crowds.

INT. LEWIS'S ROOMS, MAGDALEN - DAY

Lewis stands at his window, looking down on the party
below.

LEWIS'S POV - Joy, some way off, in the midst of the jollifications, one arm round Douglas, a drink at her lips, laughing with Warnie, as if nothing were the matter in the whole wide world.

INT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE LIBRARY - DAY

CLOSE ON LEWIS - Frowning -

LEWIS

Hell!

He murmurs the word under his breath, annoyed with himself at a lapse of concentration. He crosses out what he's written, re-reads, and crosses out some more.

LEWIS

Hell!

Across the long room he hears the thump of many books hitting a desk, and looks up to see Whistler returning an enormous pile of borrowed books to the librarian.

INT. WHISTLER'S COLLEGE ROOM - DAY

Whistler's room is almost bare, as he packs away the little that belongs to him. Lewis is there, looking round.

LEWIS

Go? Go where?

WHISTLER

London.

LEWIS

Why? Is it money?

WHISTLER

Not really.

LEWIS

One more year, and you'd have your degree.

WHISTLER

Then what? Teach, like you?

He makes no attempt to disguise the contempt in his voice. Lewis sits down, suddenly feeling defeated. He puts his head in his hands.

LEWIS

What is it everyone wants from me?

WHISTLER

That's the first question I've ever heard you ask that sounds like you don't know the answer.

LEWIS

Is that good? Is that what you want? The blind leading the blind?

WHISTLER

Not blind, maybe. But it's dark out there.

Lewis speaks to himself.

LEWIS

The shadowlands.

WHISTLER

What?

LEWIS

One of my stories. We live in the shadowlands. The sun's shining somewhere else. Round a bend in the road. Over the brow of a hill.

INT. LEWIS'S ROOMS, MAGDALEN - EVENING

Lewis sits at his desk in his college rooms, at work on a lecture he has to deliver. He is still finding it hard to concentrate, and several times he looks up out of the window at nothing.

At last, with the air of one settling some internal argument, he reaches for the telephone that stands on his desk, and dials a number.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JOY'S FLAT, LONDON - EVENING

Joy sits at the table in her living room, going through her accounts. There are bills scattered all over the table, and she is evidently worried.

The telephone rings in the hall. For a few moments she ignores it, because she is in the middle of a sum. Then she gets up to answer it.

As she crosses the living room to the hall, she lets out a sudden stifled cry of pain, and crumples to the floor. The telephone rings and rings; she tries to move, but can't; and the phone goes on ringing.

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

CLOSE ON LEWIS - At a lectern, head bowed. Slowly he raises his head and takes in his unseen audience.

LEWIS

Recently a friend of mine, a brave and good woman, collapsed in terrible pain. One minute she seemed fit and well. The next minute she was in agony. She is now in hospital, suffering from advanced bone cancer, and almost certainly dying. Why?

His authoritative tone falters, and he struggles to keep the emotion out of his voice.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Lewis appears at one end of a long bleak corridor. As he makes his way down it, his brisk footsteps echoing against the comfortless walls, his lecture continues over -

LEWIS (V.O.)

If you love someone, you don't want them to suffer. You can't bear it. You want to take their suffering onto yourself. If even I feel like that, why doesn't God?

He reaches the door to the ward where Joy lies sleeping, and here he comes to a stop. His lecture continues over: he speaks the familiar lines hesitantly, wanting to believe them.

LEWIS (V.O.)

We are like blocks of stone, out of which the sculptor carves the forms of men. The blows of his chisel, which hurt us so much, are what makes us perfect.

Warnie appears, and comes to him.

WARNIE

How is she?

Lewis gives a shrug.

WARNIE

I'm sorry, Jack.

LEWIS

I want her to be well again, you see.

WARNIE

Of course you do. We all do.

LEWIS

What a dangerous world we live in,
Warnie.

WARNIE

You've been up all night, Jack. You must
get some sleep.

LEWIS

I can't sleep. I've never felt more awake
in my life.

He moves restlessly about.

LEWIS

You see, Warnie, this isn't the right
time. It's too soon.

WARNIE

Too soon for what, Jack?

LEWIS

I haven't had time, you see, Warnie.

WARNIE

Time for what, Jack?

LEWIS

Time to... Oh, I don't know... talk... say
things...

Now Warnie understands.

WARNIE

It doesn't take long.

LEWIS

No. I suppose not.

WARNIE

Whatever it is, I should just say it.

LEWIS

Would you, Warnie? You're quite right, of
course. But it's difficult, you see.

WARNIE

Yes. I do see that.

LEWIS

I just want her to be well again. That's
all.

The ward door opens, and DOCTOR CRAIG comes out.

DR CRAIG

Mr Lewis. Your wife -

LEWIS

Any change?

DR CRAIG

Still sleeping. Otherwise, nothing to report.

LEWIS

How much has she been told?

DR CRAIG

She's been told the cancer has eaten away her left femur. That she has a malignant tumour in one breast. She knows it's serious. How can she not know? Her thigh bone snapped like a frozen twig.

WARNIE

Can anything be done?

LEWIS

(briskly)

She's dying, Warnie.

DR CRAIG

That's putting it more starkly than I would choose. I don't pretend to be able to prophesy the future.

LEWIS

No. But it's true, isn't it?

DR CRAIG

The cancer is very advanced.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - EVENING

Darkness has fallen outside. Lewis sits stoic, unmoving, on the chair by Joy's bed. Two empty plastic coffee cups by his side give an indication of the time he has been here, waiting for her to wake.

Joy stirs, and opens her eyes. Her pupils are dilated by morphine. She is very pale, but looks more as if she is lost in a dream than as if she is ill.

LEWIS

Hallo, Joy.

JOY

Jack?

LEWIS

Don't talk if it hurts.

JOY

Where's Douglas?

LEWIS

He's staying with us for the moment. I'll bring him to see you as soon as you're up to it.

Joy is profoundly relieved to hear this.

JOY

Thank you.

She closes her eyes and rests for a moment. Then:

JOY

Did you visit before?

LEWIS

Yes. A couple of times.

JOY

I thought so.

LEWIS

They're going to operate on the broken bone tomorrow.

JOY

I'm sorry, Jack. I didn't mean you to have all this bother.

LEWIS

Tush, woman. You're the one who's having the bother.

JOY

What I mean is, I don't expect you to worry about me.

LEWIS

Oh? And who do you expect to worry about you?

JOY

You know what I'm trying to say.

LEWIS

Who else should be worrying about you but me? You are my wife.

JOY

Technically.

LEWIS

Then I shall worry about you technically.

JOY

Jack, I have to know how bad it is. They won't tell me.

LEWIS

That's because they're not sure themselves.

JOY

Please, Jack.

LEWIS

I don't know any more than they do, Joy.

JOY

Before I see Douglas. I have to know.

He nods, understanding now. But it's still hard to say.

LEWIS

They expect you to die.

JOY

Thank you.

Having got what she wanted, she pauses to regain strength. Then:

JOY

What do you say, Jack? I'm a Jew.
Divorced. Broke. And I'm dying of cancer.
Do you think I get a discount?

LEWIS

Oh Joy.

JOY

You know something? You seem different.
You look at me properly now.

LEWIS

Didn't I before?

JOY

Not properly.

LEWIS

I don't want to lose you, Joy.

JOY

I don't want to be lost.

A spasm of pain passes through her. Lewis can't bear to see her struggling with the pain in such silence.

LEWIS

Nurse!

No-one comes. He goes to the corridor and calls again. A nurse comes, and goes to Joy's side.

LEWIS
Surely this pain isn't necessary?

NURSE
I'll fetch the doctor.

The nurse leaves. Lewis holds Joy's hand tight as she fights the pain. Dr Craig comes at last. He makes a brief inspection, and then prepares an injection of morphine. The morphine takes effect quickly, and at last Joy's features relax.

INT. DOUGLAS'S BEDROOM, THE KILNS - EVENING

Warnie is putting Douglas to bed. Douglas climbs in between the sheets, and Warnie tucks the bedclothes round him tight.

WARNIE
Now what? Lights out?

DOUGLAS
No. I read in bed.

WARNIE
Got your book?

Douglas pulls it out from under the pillow.

WARNIE
How long are you allowed to read?

DOUGLAS
One chapter.

WARNIE
One chapter, then.

DOUGLAS
I want to be awake when Jack gets back.

WARNIE
That shouldn't be long now.

DOUGLAS
He'll say goodnight, won't he?

WARNIE
Of course.

EXT. THE KILNS - EVENING

Lewis walks up to the front door and lets himself in. He moves slowly, thoughtfully.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - EVENING

Warnie looks up as Lewis enters the room. Lewis shakes his head. No good news to report.

WARNIE

I promised Douglas you'd say goodnight.

INT. DOUGLAS'S BEDROOM, THE KILNS - NIGHT

Softly, Lewis opens the bedroom door and enters the darkened room. Douglas is deeply asleep, the light still on, the book open on his bed. For a few moments, Lewis stands watching him sleep. Then, very carefully, he pulls the bedclothes up to cover his shoulders; and bends down and kisses him lightly on the brow, and turns out the light.

INT. ANTE-CHAPEL, MAGDALEN COLLEGE - DAY

A crocodile of choirboys comes filing out of chapel at the end of a service. Harrington stands in the ante-chapel, talking to Riley, who has passed by on his way out of the college.

Harrington speaks in a low voice, glancing in towards the chapel as he does so.

HARRINGTON

It's knocked him completely off balance.

RILEY

Sad business.

HARRINGTON

Has he said anything to you?

RILEY

About her?

HARRINGTON

Yes.

RILEY

No. Nothing.

Lewis now comes out of the chapel, where he has been praying. He is distracted, not aware of his disjointed manner of speech.

LEWIS

Oh. Christopher.

RILEY

I'm so sorry about all this, Jack.

LEWIS

Yes. It's all come too soon, you see. Her affairs aren't in order. What's to happen to Douglas, for example?

HARRINGTON

I suppose his father -

LEWIS

She doesn't want that. He drinks, you know.

HARRINGTON

I don't really see what you can do about that.

LEWIS

Do you think I should take the boy in?

HARRINGTON

There must be relatives, Jack. I mean, it's not as if...

LEWIS

Not as if what?

HARRINGTON

Well, she's your friend, of course, but she's not... well, family.

LEWIS

Not my wife?

Harrington gives a nervous laugh at such a prospect.

HARRINGTON

No. Of course not.

LEWIS

Of course not. Impossible. Unthinkable.

HARRINGTON

I only meant -

LEWIS

How could Joy be my wife? I'd have to love her, wouldn't I? I'd have to care more for her than for anyone else in this world. I'd have to be suffering the torments of the damned at the prospect of losing her.

Harrington is awed by Lewis's passionate outburst.

HARRINGTON

I'm sorry, Jack. I didn't know.

LEWIS
Nor did I, Harry. Nor did I.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

LEWIS'S POV - Douglas sits by Joy, who lies in bed propped up by pillows. She's very weak, and can do little more than stroke his hand.

Lewis and Warnie stand in the doorway, watching, speaking very low. Something very like this happened to them, when they were boys.

LEWIS
Remember?

WARNIE
Oh, yes.

LEWIS
Better take him home. I'll stay a little longer.

Warnie moves forward, and puts a hand on Douglas's shoulder.

WARNIE
Ever had toasted tea-cakes, Douglas? I've got some, for our tea.

Joy looks up, thanking him with her eyes. Warnie smiles back. Joy's eyes close.

WARNIE
Lots of butter. Oozing with butter.
That's the secret.

He leads Douglas away. Lewis goes to Joy's side, and sits down quietly in the chair by the bed. For a few moments, he watches her. She seems to be asleep. Then her eyes open, and take him in, grateful for his presence.

JOY
Back again?

LEWIS
Back again.

She smiles for him, no longer hiding the love in her eyes.

LEWIS
I want to marry you, Joy. I want to marry you before God and the world.

JOY
Make an honest woman of me.

LEWIS

Not you, Joy. It's me who hasn't been honest. Look what it takes to make me see sense.

JOY

You think I've overdone it?

LEWIS

Don't leave me, Joy.

She smiles again. The morphine makes her sleepy. For a moment, she closes her eyes. Then she opens them, and sees that he is still there.

JOY

Jack. About this marrying. Back home, we have a quaint old custom. When the guy's made up his mind he wants to marry the girl, he asks her. It's called proposing.

LEWIS

It's the same here.

JOY

Did I miss it?

LEWIS

Oh Joy.

He takes her hand and kisses it.

LEWIS

Will you marry this foolish, frightened, old man, who needs you more than he can bear to say, and loves you even though he hardly knows how?

JOY

Okay. Just this once.

She smiles for him, and her eyes close once more.

EXT. GARDEN, THE KILNS - DAY

Douglas is by the side of the lake, quietly sailing a boat made of sticks. Lewis comes up and watches. The stick-boat is heading for some dense weeds, out of reach.

LEWIS

We don't seem to have had much time to talk, do we?

DOUGLAS

I'm okay.

LEWIS

You know your mother and I have become friends -

DOUGLAS

Does my dad know she's sick? Did anybody tell him?

LEWIS

Yes. He's been told.

The stick-boat runs into the weeds.

DOUGLAS

It's stuck now. I don't care.

LEWIS

We want to get married, Douglas.

Douglas says nothing.

LEWIS

Would you mind if we did?

Douglas shakes his head, a quick, small, but definite gesture.

LEWIS

It would make me happy. And I think it would make her happy, too.

DOUGLAS

Okay.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - EVENING

Joy sits up in bed, propped by many pillows. Lewis stands beside her, holding one of her hands in both of his. The young hospital chaplain, Fr JOHN FISHER, is conducting the little ceremony, in alb and stole. Warnie and Douglas stand close by; Dr Craig and a nurse a little further back.

Joy speaks steadily and clearly, though her voice has very little power.

JOY

I, Joy, take thee, Jack.

FR FISHER

To have and to hold, from this day forward.

JOY

To have and to hold, from this day forward.

FR FISHER
For better, for worse.

JOY
For better, for worse.

FR FISHER
For richer, for poorer.

JOY
For richer, for poorer.

FR FISHER
In sickness and in health.

JOY
In sickness and in health.

FR FISHER
To love, cherish, and obey.

JOY
To love, cherish, and obey.

FR FISHER
Till death us do part.

JOY
Till death us do part.

Warnie steps forward and gives Lewis a ring. Lewis puts the ring on Joy's finger. His voice trembles as he speaks.

LEWIS
With this ring I thee wed. With my body I
thee worship. With all my worldly goods I
thee endow.

Lewis takes Joy's hands in his, and bows his head over them.

FR FISHER
Those whom God hath joined together, let
no man put asunder.

INT. HOSPITAL X-RAY ROOM - DAY

Joy lies on a stretcher, being wheeled into the massive X-ray machine. It is an unnerving experience, with the medical staff all around her dressed in protective suits.

In she goes, and the mouth of the machine swallows her up.

INT. MAGDALEN CHAPEL - DAY

There is no service going on, and the chapel is empty, but for Lewis. He is kneeling now, and praying, all alone.

EXT. RAILWAY STATION, OXFORD - DAY

Lewis stands looking utterly lost. The London train waits at the platform, and people are boarding. With a little start, he comes out of his dream, and goes to one of the carriage doors.

INT. ON TRAIN - DAY

Lewis sits on the train, staring out of the window, deep in his own thoughts. The carriage is crowded, every seat taken.

Down the train, looking for an empty seat, comes Peter Whistler. He is rather more tidily dressed than before, but otherwise looks the same. He sees Lewis, and is going to go on by without speaking, when something in Lewis's face makes him change his mind.

WHISTLER

Mr Lewis.

Lewis turns and sees him. For a moment his thoughts are so far away that he fails to recognise him.

WHISTLER

Peter Whistler.

LEWIS

Of course.

In the crowded buffet bar, they stand side by side, drinking beer, watching the countryside roll by outside the train window.

LEWIS

Funny how things work out.

WHISTLER

I've not noticed that they do.

LEWIS

No. You're probably right.

WHISTLER

"Fight me. I can take it."

Lewis smiles.

LEWIS

So what are you doing these days?

WHISTLER

Teaching. Feel free to give a hollow laugh.

LEWIS

No. You're a born teacher.

WHISTLER

I do turn out to be quite good at it.

LEWIS

Didn't you tell me your father's a teacher?

WHISTLER

Yes.

(Beat.)

He died. A few months ago.

LEWIS

I'm sorry.

WHISTLER

I miss him. I loved him very much.

LEWIS

Did he know that?

WHISTLER

I think so. I think he knew.

LEWIS

One has to say things. The moment passes, and you're alone again.

WHISTLER

Yes.

LEWIS

"We read to know we're not alone." That's what he said, wasn't it? I've not forgotten that.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE - DAY

Lewis stares at the X-ray photographs hanging before a light box. They show Joy's pelvis and upper thigh bones; but of course Lewis cannot interpret them.

Dr Craig is treading very cautiously.

DR CRAIG

Well, I think I'm in no danger of overstating the case if I say no news is good news. Given the seriousness of her

condition, we have reason to be cautiously optimistic.

LEWIS

I'm sorry, doctor, but I don't understand a word you're saying. It would help me if you would use terms I'm familiar with, like "getting better", "getting worse". "Dying".

DR CRAIG

I'm afraid none of those words meet the case. What seems to be happening is that the rate of spread of the disease is slowing down.

LEWIS

You mean she's getting better?

DR CRAIG

She's not worse.

LEWIS

Is not-being-worse better than being-worse?

DR CRAIG

Put like that, yes.

LEWIS

Did you expect her to make it this far?

DR CRAIG

Frankly, no.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

ON JOY - She's sitting up in bed, still weak, but in very good spirits.

JOY

You won't believe this. Jenny, she's the nurse, she's been asking my advice about her love life. Me! She's been going out with this boy for two years. Will he marry her? How far should she let him go without them being at least engaged? I'm telling you, I'm almost sick with excitement. She's seeing him again on Saturday.

Lewis smiles to hear her. Just looking at her makes him feel happy.

LEWIS

It strikes me you're rather better.

JOY

Shh! We have to pretend we haven't noticed, or He'll take it away.

LEWIS

So what advice did you give the nurse?

JOY

I said, give him enough to make him want the rest, then nothing till he pays up.

LEWIS

Poor fellow. He hasn't a chance.

The nurse enters with a trolley of medication. Joy's eyes tell him this is the one she's been talking about. He rises, and kisses her before leaving.

LEWIS

Back tomorrow.

He turns to leave, saying to the Nurse as he goes:

LEWIS

Good luck on Saturday.

INT. SENIOR COMMON ROOM, MAGDALEN - EVENING

The dons are gathering for dinner, enjoying a drink in the handsome old room. Harrington is talking to Warnie in a grave voice.

HARRINGTON

This is very good news, Warnie. Excellent news. So what will you do?

WARNIE

What do you mean?

HARRINGTON

Well. If she makes a full recovery. Where will you live?

WARNIE

Ah.

The point had not occurred to him. Harrington sees Riley enter.

HARRINGTON

Christopher. Excellent news. Mrs Gresham is not to die after all.

RILEY

That is good news.

He says no more than this, but it is clear he feels genuinely relieved.

WARNIE

I think we must call her Mrs Lewis, you know.

HARRINGTON

If she does recover, we shall chalk it up as a victory for the power of prayer.

RILEY

I've never quite understood about prayer. Does God intervene in the world only when asked?

HARRINGTON

It has been known.

RILEY

And what are the qualifications for divine aid? Merit? Intense suffering? Persistent prayer? I mean, how does he choose?

HARRINGTON

I hardly think this is the time or the place for a theological argument.

RILEY

And if God knows what's best for us anyway, why do we need to ask? Doesn't he know already?

Lewis enters.

HARRINGTON

Jack. Good news indeed. We hear Joy's getting better.

LEWIS

Yes. She is.

RILEY

I'm very glad, Jack.

HARRINGTON

Christopher can scoff, but I know how hard you've been praying, Jack. And now God is answering your prayer. She's getting better.

LEWIS

That's not why I pray, Harry. I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking

and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me.

The doors to hall open, and the President leads the dons through to the High Table.

RILEY

Now, that I can understand. That's the first sensible thing I've ever heard anyone say on the subject.

LEWIS

She's getting better, you see. It's quite something. But we mustn't expect too much, of course. Mustn't get our hopes up.

He goes with the others to the table, and stands gazing at the shining cutlery and glass, seeing nothing.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Lewis and Warnie come marching down the hospital corridor side by side, making for Joy's ward. They meet Dr Craig, just coming out.

LEWIS

How is she, doctor?

DR CRAIG

Well, I think you should see for yourself.

LEWIS

See what?

DR CRAIG

She's doing rather well, all things considered.

Warnie remains standing in the doorway to the ward, as Lewis follows the doctor in. Joy's bed is empty, and Joy is standing by it, supported on two crutches, the nurse at her side.

JOY

Watch me, everybody.

She takes hold of the crutches, steadies herself, and takes a step. Lewis applauds.

LEWIS

Can you do more?

JOY

A little. Come nearer.

He does so. She takes a deep breath, and sets off towards him. It's only a few steps, but it's hard work swinging herself on the crutches.

Lewis holds his arms out for her, and she sinks into his supporting embrace.

JOY

How'd I do?

LEWIS

Not bad.

He hugs her tight, tears of happiness in his eyes. He turns to Dr Craig.

LEWIS

Can I take her home?

DR CRAIG

I see no reason why not. So long as the remission continues.

LEWIS

Which is how long?

Dr Craig glances towards Joy.

LEWIS

You can speak openly. She does have an interest in the matter.

DR CRAIG

It could be months. It could be weeks.

LEWIS

Why not years?

DR CRAIG

In such an advanced case, that would be... unusual. I'm sorry. You did want to know.

LEWIS

Right. We take what we can get. How about first thing tomorrow morning?

DR CRAIG

If that's what you want.

Lewis speaks to Joy.

LEWIS

How would you like to come home?

JOY

Where's home, Jack?

LEWIS
Oxford. My house. Our house. You're my
wife, remember?

EXT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

Lewis and Warnie are walking back home through the hospital
to the exit, after visiting Joy.

LEWIS
Warnie..

WARNIE
No need to worry about me, Jack. I'll
sort myself out.

LEWIS
Sort yourself out? What do you mean?

WARNIE
New digs. No problem.

LEWIS
Do you want to?

WARNIE
As you wish, Jack.

LEWIS
I don't.

WARNIE
Right you are.

LEWIS
That's settled, then.

INT. UPPER LANDING/HALL, THE KILNS - DAY

Douglas stands on the landing at the top of the stairs,
looking out of the window over the front path towards the
road. An ambulance stands in the road. A wheelchair comes
into view, carrying Joy, pushed by Lewis.

Douglas descends the stairs slowly. The front door is wide
open. He is almost at the foot of the stairs as Lewis
pushes Joy through the door. She sees him and gives him a
great big smile. He runs to her, and she cradles him in her
arms.

Paxford appears from the kitchen, and stands looking
awkward with a posy of flowers, gathered from the garden.

Joy looks up and sees him, and he holds out the posy of
flowers.

PAXFORD
 Might as well pick them, I thought.
 They'd have died anyway.

JOY
 Thank you, Paxford. They're lovely.

Paxford looks at Lewis.

PAXFORD
 Tell him. He never notices.

He stumps away, back to the garden.

INT. DINING ROOM, THE KILNS - EVENING

Paxford's posy, now placed in a glass vase of water, stands in the centre of the table. Dinner is just over, and Warnie is clearing away, aided by Douglas. Lewis is behind Joy's chair, helping her up. She rises, and he takes her weight. Then, using him as a crutch, she takes a step.

JOY
 Not bad?

LEWIS
 Not bad.

They move another step.

LEWIS
 Now, I don't want to hear any talk of miracles.

JOY
 Why not? It's a miracle to me. You leave my miracle alone.

LEWIS
 You were alive before. I wasn't.

JOY
 What are you talking about?

They come to a stop. He turns her round to face him, so that she can see how much he means what he says.

LEWIS
 I started living when I started loving you, Joy. That makes me only a few months' old.

JOY
 Could be a short life, Jack.

LEWIS
 At least it's a life.

INT. UPPER LANDING, THE KILNS - EVENING

Lewis now stands by the landing window where Douglas stood, looking out at the path and the garden beyond. Behind him, across the landing, through the open door of Douglas's bedroom, Joy can be seen sitting on Douglas's bed, talking softly to him as she says goodnight. They are too far away to be heard, but the image is one of a tender conspiracy against the world. Lewis does not watch, because he understands that this is the one part of Joy's life into which he must not intrude.

Joy leans forward and kisses Douglas. He clings to her tight for a moment. Then he lets go, and settles himself down for sleep. Joy turns and calls softly:

JOY

Ready, Jack.

INT. LEWIS'S BEDROOM, THE KILNS - EVENING

Using Lewis as her crutch, Joy enters the bedroom. She sees that the room now contains two single beds, side by side.

LEWIS

I hope it's alright.

JOY

It's exactly alright, Jack.

He helps her to one of the beds. She sits down with a sigh of relief. Lewis goes and draws the bedroom curtains. Wanting to get even more weight off her hips, Joy stretches out on the bed.

LEWIS

Now what can I do for you?

JOY

Just sit down for a moment, Jack. I need a lot of pauses.

Lewis sits on the bed beside her. She takes his hand.

JOY

Thank you, Jack.

LEWIS

What for?

JOY

All of it.

He smiles down at her, and strokes her hand. He looks round his old familiar room.

LEWIS

Now that I look at this room, it strikes me it's a little on the Spartan side.

JOY

How long has it been your room?

LEWIS

Twenty-five years. More, I suppose.

JOY

Ever shared it with anyone else?

He shakes his head.

JOY

Feel strange?

LEWIS

I'm not entirely sure of the procedure.

JOY

What do you usually do when you go to bed?

LEWIS

Very much what you'd expect.

JOY

No, tell me. You come in the door. What then?

LEWIS

Draw the curtains.

JOY

Right. You've done that.

LEWIS

Get out my pyjamas.

JOY

Where from?

LEWIS

Under the pillow.

He shows her. She smiles to see them all folded up.

JOY

Of course. Then what?

LEWIS

Hang my clothes over the chair. Clean my teeth. Wash. Turn back the bedclothes. Kneel by the bed. Pray. Get into bed.

Joy follows all this with loving amusement.

JOY
Like a little boy.

LEWIS
Is it?

JOY
Then what?

LEWIS
Then I go to sleep.

JOY
On your back or your side?

LEWIS
On my side.

JOY
Show me.

He stretches out on the bed, on his side, facing her. She turns onto her side, facing him. She puts out one arm to draw him closer. He shifts himself into her arms, and they cuddle close.

JOY
You do everything just the way you always do, Jack. Only when you get to the last bit, I'll be here too.

They kiss.

JOY
That's the procedure.

EXT. MAGDALEN BRIDGE, OXFORD - SUNRISE

A large crowd has gathered on and around the bridge, many hundreds of people. It is a chilly but fresh early morning, and the sun has not yet appeared over the horizon. The river on either side of the bridge is crammed with punts, and the punts are full of people. All eyes look to the east, where the sun will rise, and everyone is silent.

Lewis and Joy are on the bridge too, well wrapped up, arm in arm, just another couple among the many, distinguishable only by Joy's supporting crutch.

On the top of the Bell Tower of Magdalen College a group of choirboys stand shivering, waiting for the sun to appear. All traffic has been stopped on the High Street. Drivers stand by their cars, their eyes too on the eastern horizon.

There is a rustle of anticipation among the crowd, as the first glimmer of orange sun pushes above the low bank of cloud. All eyes turn to the tower.

The choristers start to sing. They are high up and far away, their voices faint, but the silence is so absolute that they can be heard. As the sun climbs above the cloud, its light falls on the choir, and on the honey-coloured stone of the tower.

The anthem is not long. As it finishes, a great cheer goes up from the crowd, and cameras whirr and click, and the vendors of hot tea and hot dogs start to shout their wares, and several high-spirited young men are pushed from punts into the chilly river.

Lewis and Joy turn towards home.

JOY

Admit you're glad I made you come.

LEWIS

It's pagan, and it's vulgar, and it's all faintly silly, but it works. It has no right to, but it works.

JOY

Sunrise always works.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - EARLY EVENING

Joy is sitting at Lewis's desk, writing a letter. She looks up and sees before her the engraving of 'The Golden Valley' on the wall. Instead of glancing at it and looking away, as one usually does with pictures, she stays gazing at it, taking in the idyllic English country scene, as an idea forms in her mind.

Lewis enters, back from the college. He gives her a kiss.

JOY

Jack. Where did you say this Golden Valley was?

LEWIS

Somewhere in Herefordshire, I believe.

JOY

Do you think it still looks the same?

LEWIS

I very much doubt it.

JOY

You thought it was heaven, didn't you?

LEWIS

I was only a child.

JOY

Let's go and look for it, Jack. We haven't had a honeymoon.

LEWIS

Are you up to travelling?

JOY

It's not far, is it?

LEWIS

I don't really know. Where would we stay?

JOY

Some little country hotel.

LEWIS

I truly believe that if I had to go into a hotel with a woman and sign the register, I'd blush.

EXT. IN CAR, ON ROAD TO HEREFORDSHIRE - DAY

Lewis and Joy are driving away on their 'honeymoon', down a quiet English road.

LEWIS

Happy?

JOY

Yes.

LEWIS

What kind of happy?

JOY

Just happy.

LEWIS

Shall I tell you my kind of happy?

JOY

Stupid! I always forget. When you ask a question, it means you've got the answer waiting. Sure, go ahead. Tell me.

LEWIS

No. I'm not telling you now.

JOY

Oh, go on.

LEWIS

No.

JOY

What do I have to do? Go to the lecture?

LEWIS

Yes. And buy the book.

EXT. HOTEL IN HEREFORDSHIRE - DAY

The car turns into the drive to the country hotel.
Lewis is chuckling to himself.

JOY

What are you laughing about?

LEWIS

I told the hotel we were on our
honeymoon.

JOY

We are.

LEWIS

Here comes the honeymoon couple. Shuffle-
shuffle, bump-bump. An old man and a
helpless invalid.

Joy starts to laugh too.

JOY

Not so old. Not so helpless.

LEWIS

Shuffle-shuffle, bump-bump.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A bellboy shows Lewis and Joy into their room, and leaves
their suitcases, and departs. Joy is walking with the aid
of two walking sticks.

She settles herself down in an armchair that is placed in
front of the window. Outside there is a fine view of
parkland.

LEWIS

Will it do?

JOY

It's beautiful, Jack.

He comes and stands behind her, stroking her neck and
shoulders.

LEWIS

Well, I must say, you seem to have survived the journey.

JOY

I could do with a drink. Do they have room service?

LEWIS

Room service. I always used to think that room service was saying prayers in bed.

JOY

You order some prayers if you want. Me, I'd like a gin-and-tonic.

LEWIS

What, now?

JOY

Sure. Why not?

Lewis goes to the room phone. His careful way of speaking shows he is not used to ordering room service in hotels. Joy watches, smiling.

LEWIS

Hallo? This is Mr Lewis, in room - I'm afraid I've forgotten the room number, and I'm inside it, if you see what I mean. Oh, is it? Very good. We'd like some drinks in our room, if that's possible. A gin-and-tonic, and a - a -

He can't think what to order for himself.

LEWIS

And a gin-and-tonic. Two gin-and-tonics. Two gins-and-tonic, I should say. Thank you.

He puts down the phone with relief.

JOY

You don't drink gin.

LEWIS

I'm afraid I panicked.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Close on a map of the area, as the receptionist shows Lewis how to get to the Golden Valley.

RECEPTIONIST

The Golden Valley runs from Dorstone to Pontrilas, along the River Dore, here.

LEWIS

Why Golden?

RECEPTIONIST

It's a mistake, really. The Welsh for water is *dwr*, which sounds like *d'or*, the French for 'golden'. It's not golden at all. It's wet.

Joy, who is standing behind Lewis, laughs at this.

LEWIS

And where can one get a view of the valley?

RECEPTIONIST

I should go along here, to Vowchurch, and go left up this little road to Turnastone. That'll take you up into the hills.

EXT. IN CAR ON HILL ROAD - DAY

Lewis and Joy drive up the narrow hilly road, looking out at every bend for their view of the Golden Valley, and not finding it, but enjoying themselves hugely.

LEWIS

I don't know why we're doing this.

JOY

Yes, you do.

LEWIS

It won't be the same. It's bound to have been spoiled.

Joy catches a glimpse of the valley.

JOY

That's it. No, I'm wrong. The valley runs east-west, doesn't it?

LEWIS

I've no idea.

They drive on, round more bends, looking all the time.

LEWIS

You know we're there already, of course?

JOY

Where?

LEWIS

There.

JOY

Oh, there. Yes.

She understands him, and it makes her incredibly happy. Then the car rounds yet another bend, and there it is before them, the view of the Golden Valley, much as it is in Lewis's engraving, unspoiled. Lewis slows the car to a crawl.

LEWIS

Well, well.

JOY

I knew we'd find it.

He pulls the car up by the side of the road, and they get out. Lewis helps Joy with her sticks, and they walk a little way off the road along a hillside path.

LEWIS

A bit chilly for heaven.

JOY

Watch out for the stinging nettles.

LEWIS

Surely it isn't raining?

JOY

Did you bring an umbrella?

LEWIS

One doesn't expect rain in the afterlife.

There's no doubt now that it is raining. They look at each other, then at a nearby barn, and without further words they make for shelter as fast as they can.

In the shadowy barn, they collect themselves, wet but unharmed, and start to laugh. Then they become quiet again, and look around. An old flatbed trailer stands near the wide open barn doors. They sit down on the trailer, side by side, and watch the rain as it sweeps across the valley. He puts his arm round her. They lean close together as they watch the watery view. After a few moments:

LEWIS

I don't want to be somewhere else any more. I'm not waiting for anything new to happen. Not looking round the next corner, nor over the next hill. I'm here, now, and that's enough.

JOY

That's your kind of happy, is it?

LEWIS

I never knew I could be so happy, ever in my life.

Joy kisses him, deeply pleased that he can say this.

JOY

It's not going to last, Jack.

LEWIS

We don't need to think of that now. Let's not spoil the time we have together.

JOY

It doesn't spoil it. It makes it real.

She turns his head, making him look at her.

JOY

Let me say it, Jack. Before the rain stops, and we go back.

LEWIS

What is there to say?

JOY

That I'm going to die.

Lewis finds this very hard.

LEWIS

Please, Joy.

JOY

We can face it. What choice have we got?

She looks into his eyes.

JOY

What will you do when I die?

LEWIS

I don't know.

JOY

I want to be with you then too, Jack. The only way I can do that is to talk to you about it now.

LEWIS

I shall manage. Don't you worry about me.

JOY

I think it can be better than that. Better than just managing. What I'm trying to say is that the pain, then, is part of the happiness, now.

He nods, unable to speak.

JOY

That's the deal.

He leans his head against her, and she holds him close and strokes his hair.

The sounds of the chapel choir return, and the boy treble begins to sing his haunting melody. As he sings the climbing notes, the shot develops to take in the beautiful rain-soaked view of the green valley, with its river winding away between hills.

MONTAGE - TIME PASSING

Clouds sailing over an English sky; and down to find the beautiful old city of Oxford in its cup of green hills. The chapel choir sings, and the seasons pass in patterns of light.

Slow eddies in the quiet river, leaves dropping onto the brown water. Lewis and Joy walking together down the riverside path, deep in talk.

Snow glinting on the rooves and spires of the city. Bright firelight in the drawing room of the Kilns, orange on the page of the book of poems from which Joy reads aloud, laughing as she reads, and Lewis and Warnie listen with expressions of perplexity. Outside in the garden, patterns of footprints in the snow, as Douglas circles round and round.

Spring rain pattering onto the grey water of the lake, Douglas in sou'wester crouching at the waterside, his boat circling. Sun on the rippling water of the river as a punt passes, and beyond, on the river bank, Lewis and Joy, arm in arm. And now the haunting psalm is falling to its close.

Firelight on Joy's face, in the armchair by the drawing room fire, as she turns to look up at Lewis, suddenly afraid.

JOY

I'm sorry, Jack.

INT. HOSPITAL X-RAY ROOM - DAY

Cold blue light on Joy's face: she is lying on a stretcher in the X-ray room. The radiographers move the menacing equipment into place around her body. Exhausted, she closes her eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE - DAY

Lewis waits in the doctor's office, stoic, impassive. Dr Craig enters with the X-ray photographs that have just been developed. Lewis looks up and reads all that he needs to know in his look of sympathy.

DR CRAIG

I'm sorry.

Lewis nods.

INT. HALL/STUDY, THE KILNS - DAY

Lewis and Warnie carry a bed down the stairs and into the study, where they have made a space for it. Douglas watches them as they set it up, with a small table and a chair beside it. Lewis sees the fear in the boy's eyes, and does what he can to comfort him.

LEWIS

She'll be better here. No stairs to climb.

DOUGLAS

Can't you do something?

LEWIS

I'm afraid not.

There is a short distressing silence.

WARNIE

Tell you what, Douglas. You couldn't fetch another pillow, could you?

INT. UPPER LANDING, THE KILNS - DAY

Douglas stands on the landing, holding a pillow. He looks out of the window, as he did before, and hugs the pillow tight, rocking slightly from side to side.

From this high window, he sees ambulance men carry a stretcher into the house, on which Joy lies, well wrapped. Lewis walks beside her.

They enter the house, and the front door closes behind them in the hall below, but Douglas does not move.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - EVENING

Joy lies propped up in the bed made up for her in the study. Her face is lit by a loving smile.

LEWIS

I know.

JOY

Other worlds, Jack. It has to be more than we can imagine. Even more than you can imagine.

LEWIS

Far more.

JOY

I love your other worlds. That was how I first started to love you. Long before I met you.

LEWIS

Just stories, Joy.

JOY

Good stories.

LEWIS

I don't know what to do, Joy. You'll have to tell me what to do.

JOY

You have to let me go.

LEWIS

I'm not sure that I can.

A silence. She is in too much pain to speak. Then the thought of her son breaks through, bringing another sort of pain.

JOY

Douglas... Will you take care of him for me?

LEWIS

Of course I will.

JOY

He pretends not to mind.

LEWIS

I know.

JOY

Like you.

LEWIS

No pretending any more.

JOY

I've loved you so much, Jack.

JOY

A lot of stupid fuss, isn't it, darling?

Douglas has just entered, in his pyjamas. He nods mutely.

JOY

Come here.

He comes to the bedside. Joy takes his hands.

JOY

Kiss.

He leans down and kisses her.

DOUGLAS

Goodnight, mommy.

JOY

Goodnight, darling. Straight to sleep.
Sweet dreams.

Douglas leaves. Lewis is waiting by the door to take him up to bed. Joy watches as Lewis's arm goes over Douglas's shoulders, and the two depart.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - NIGHT

Lewis is sitting beside Joy's bed; Joy is asleep. The pain returns, rousing her, and she moans softly. Lewis looks at her. As if sensing his look, she opens her eyes and tries to smile.

LEWIS

I can't bear to see you in pain.

JOY

The pain doesn't matter. It keeps me quiet.

LEWIS

When it gets close, you find out whether you believe it or not.

JOY

What is it you always say? "Real life hasn't begun yet."

A pause, for another wave of pain.

JOY

You'd better be right.

INT. DOUGLAS'S BEDROOM, THE KILNS - NIGHT

Douglas lies in bed in the darkness, his eyes open, staring up at the ceiling.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - NIGHT

Joy lies fitfully asleep. Lewis, exhausted by his vigil, is dozing in the chair by Joy's bed. Then Joy wakes, and opens her eyes. She is very weak now. She sees Lewis beside her.

JOY

Still here?

LEWIS

Still here.

JOY

Go to bed. Get some sleep.

LEWIS

Soon.

JOY

Jack. Has it been worth it?

LEWIS

Yes.

JOY

Tell me you'll be alright.

LEWIS

I'll be alright.

JOY

Can I talk about it?

LEWIS

We've never pretended with each other.

JOY

No. Never pretended.

LEWIS

Are you afraid?

JOY

I'm tired, Jack. I want to rest. I just don't want to leave you.

LEWIS

I don't want you to go.

JOY

Too much pain.

Lewis has to struggle with himself to stay in control.

LEWIS

You're better at this than I am.

JOY

It's always easier for the one who goes first.

He can see that the effort of talking is too much for her.

LEWIS

Don't talk, my love. Rest. My love.

She closes her eyes.

LATER -

Now all we can see are the two of them, deep in the night.

Lewis sits with his chin resting in his hands, speaking softly into the darkness.

LEWIS

Not much more to say. Have to say things.
The moment passes.

I love you, Joy. I love you so much.
You've made me so happy. I didn't know I
could be so happy. You're the truest
person I've ever known.

Sweet Jesus, be with my beloved wife Joy.
Forgive me if I love her too much. Have
mercy on us both.

INT. DOUGLAS'S BEDROOM, THE KILNS - NIGHT

Douglas lies in bed, fast asleep now. Suddenly his eyes open wide, as if some dream has startled him.

Then from below there comes a terrible scream.

EXT. GARDEN, THE KILNS - NIGHT

Lights come on in the house. We are retreating from it, from the urgency and the pain, into the trees at the bottom of the garden; across the lake, to a safer more magic world.

From now on, a numbness sets in; sound is muffled, colours dulled, as if an invisible screen has shut off the world.

INT. LEWIS'S BEDROOM, THE KILNS - DAY

Lewis sits fully dressed on the side of the bed he shared with Joy, his head buried in his hands. Slowly he raises his head, and we see his face. No tears, none of the usual signs of grief: only a terrible blankness.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A big black car cruises down an empty road.

IN THE CAR - Lewis and Warnie, with Douglas between them. All three stiff and silent.

INT. CREMATORIUM CHAPEL, OXFORD - DAY

The coffin rolls towards curtained doors. The chapel is almost empty: Lewis, Warnie, Douglas. Paxford, Mrs Young. Harry Harrington is officiating. On Lewis's face, still the frozen mask, as if he sees and feels nothing.

HARRINGTON

We therefore commit her body to the
elements, earth to earth, ashes to ashes,
dust to dust...

EXT. CREMATORIUM CHAPEL, OXFORD - DAY

Douglas comes out with Warnie. The boy is dry-eyed, not really there. Warnie guides him to the car.

Lewis and Harrington are last out of the chapel, together. The others are waiting in the cars.

HARRINGTON

Thank God for your faith, Jack. It's only
faith makes any sense of times like this.

Lewis stops and turns on the chaplain, his face expressionless, unmoved. Then without a word of reply, he goes to the car.

INT. STUDY, THE KILNS - EVENING

Warnie and Lewis sit in their usual chairs. Lewis stares into the distance.

LEWIS

I can't see her any more, Warnie. I can't
remember her face. What's happening to
me?

WARNIE

I expect it's shock.

LEWIS

I'm so afraid. Of never seeing her again.
Of thinking that suffering is just
suffering after all. No cause. No
purpose. No pattern. No sense. Just pain,
in a world of pain.

WARNIE

I don't know what to tell you, Jack.

LEWIS

Nothing. There's nothing to say. I know
that now. I've come up against a bit of
experience, Warnie. Experience is a
brutal teacher, but you learn. You learn.

ENT. SENIOR COMMON ROOM, MAGDALEN - EVENING

The dons are enjoying their pre-dinner drink. Harrington,
Riley and Parrish form a group by the fire, talking in low
voices about Joy's death.

HARRINGTON

I wouldn't say this to Jack, but better
sooner than later. Better quick than
slow.

PARRISH

Is he taking it very hard?

HARRINGTON

I'm afraid so.

Lewis enters, followed by Warnie. An awkward silence greets
him.

LEWIS

I wasn't going to come. Then I thought I
would.

HARRINGTON

Life must go on.

LEWIS

I don't know that it must. But it
certainly does.

Warnie pours them both a glass of sherry, and gives one to
Lewis.

RILEY

I'm sorry, Jack.

LEWIS

Thank you, Christopher.

RILEY

Anything I can do?

LEWIS

Just don't tell me it's all for the best.

HARRINGTON

Only God knows why these things have to happen, Jack.

LEWIS

God knows? Yes, Harry, God knows. But does God care?

HARRINGTON

We see so little, Jack. We're not the Creator -

Suddenly Lewis's anger comes spilling out.

LEWIS

No! We're the creatures, aren't we? We're the rats in the cosmic laboratory. I've no doubt the experiment is for our own good, but that still makes God the vivisectionist.

HARRINGTON

Jack -

LEWIS

No, Harry, it won't do. This is a mess, and that's all there is to it.

He gives himself a shake, as if to control himself, and puts down his glass.

LEWIS

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have come. I'm not fit company.

He turns and leaves. Warnie hastens after him.

EXT. MAGDALEN BRIDGE - EVENING

Lewis and Warnie walk home, Lewis still locked inside his bitter grief. For a few moments, Warnie says nothing. Then -

WARNIE

Jack.

LEWIS

Yes?

WARNIE

Your grief is your own business. Maybe you feel life is a mess. Maybe it is. But there's Douglas.

LEWIS

What about Douglas?

WARNIE

Talk to him.

LEWIS

I don't know what to say to him.

WARNIE

Just talk to him.

INT. ATTIC, THE KILNS - EVENING

Douglas sits on the floor in the attic, huddled up, his arms round his knees, staring at nothing.

Lewis finds him here. He enters without saying anything, and for a few moments, moves restlessly about the attic, feeling for a way to talk to the boy.

Then, not looking at him, without preamble, he launches into the middle of his thoughts. He talks to Douglas not grown man to child, but as if they are equals.

LEWIS

When I was your age, my mother died. I thought that if I prayed for her to get better, and if I really believed she'd get better, then she wouldn't die. But she did.

DOUGLAS

It doesn't work.

LEWIS

No. It doesn't work.

DOUGLAS

I don't care.

With a sigh, Lewis lowers himself down beside the boy, adopting much the same posture. For a moment or two they sit here on the floor, side by side, in silence. Then -

LEWIS

I loved your mother very much. I loved her too much. She knew that. She said to me, Is it worth it? She knew how it would be later.

A pause.

LEWIS
It doesn't seem fair, does it?

DOUGLAS
I don't see why she had to get sick.

LEWIS
Nor me.

Another pause.

LEWIS
You can't hold onto things. You have to let them go.

DOUGLAS
Jack?

LEWIS
Yes.

DOUGLAS
Do you believe in heaven?

Long pause.

LEWIS
Yes.

DOUGLAS
I don't believe in heaven.

LEWIS
That's okay.

DOUGLAS
I sure would like to see her again.

LEWIS
Me too.

Instinctively, hardly thinking what he is doing, he puts one arm round the boy, and Douglas turns and buries his face in his chest. Lewis folds his other arm round him tight, and rests his cheek on the boy's head, and starts to weep. His tears release the tears waiting in the boy, and so, crying, the two of them hug close, close, as if they have no-one left in the world but each other.

INT. STAIRCASE OUTSIDE LEWIS'S ROOMS, MAGDALEN - DAY

Slowly Lewis climbs the stairs to his college rooms. There, waiting for him, is a nervous young freshman called SIMON CHADWICK. Lewis looks at him in surprise.

LEWIS

Who are you?

CHADWICK

Chadwick, sir. You're my tutor this term, sir.

LEWIS

Am I? You'd better come in, then, hadn't you?

INT. LEWIS'S ROOMS, MAGDALEN - DAY

Lewis stands by the window, lighting his pipe. Chadwick sits nervously waiting to be told what to do. Lewis turns round at last and looks at him properly.

LEWIS

Chadwick, you say?

CHADWICK

Yes, sir.

LEWIS

"We read to know we're not alone."

He settles down in his chair with his pipe.

LEWIS

Do you think that's so?

CHADWICK

I hadn't thought of it that way, sir.

LEWIS

No. Nor had I. So - tell me about yourself.

Encouraged, Chadwick begins to speak: Lewis watches and listens, his warm interest giving the young man more confidence all the time.

The sound of the college choir, singing the psalm with which the film began -

EXT. MAGDALEN COLLEGE - DAY

We see the little scene, teacher and student, from outside the window of Lewis's rooms. As the CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS BACK, the scene takes its place in the frame of the majestic building; and back and back, to see the venerable college set in its green parkland. The singing of the choir builds towards its climax.

Over this, Lewis's voice is heard, speaking to some last unseen audience, but quietly, from deep within himself -

LEWIS (V.O.)

Why love, if losing hurts so much? I have
no answers any more, only the life I've
lived..

The wide scene MIXES TO -

EXT. OXFORD HILLS - DAY

A great sweep of land and sky. Foreground, a hillside path:
on one side, trees, on the other, a distant view of the
spires of the city, held like a treasure in its green cup
of hills, beneath high sailing clouds. Along this path, two
small figures in the landscape, Lewis and Douglas, moving
slowly, talking, laughing, throwing stones...

Lewis's voice continues over -

LEWIS (V.O.)

Twice in that life I've been given the
choice: as a boy, and as a man. The boy
chose safety. The man chooses suffering.

The pain, now, is part of the happiness,
then. That's the deal.

The two figures are tiny now, far off in the distance.
Oxford remains, beautiful, and the climbing song of the boy
treble, like a bird escaping, leaping up into the English
heavens.

END CREDITS

faith for a passionately idealistic humanism. Joy was brought up an atheist, in a comfortable home in the Bronx. She developed a passion for books, and became socially radical. She wrote poetry. She was educated at Hunter College, the Bronx, took her MA at Columbia, and became a teacher. Shocked by the horrors of the Depression, she joined the Communist Party. She published a volume of poems called *Letter to a Comrade*, which won a national award that she shared with Robert Frost. She wrote a novel, *Anya*, about a young woman growing up in Russia. And she edited an anthology of poems by left-wing poets, *War Poems of the United Nations*, which introduced her to a communist poet and writer called William Gresham. Gresham was a troubled disillusioned man, with one suicide attempt behind him, and a drink problem; but he shared her outlook on life, and was glamorously good-looking. They fell in love, and married in 1942. Both were by now losing their faith in communism. Their son David was born in 1944, and their second son Douglas in 1945. Bill Gresham had some success, drank too much, had many affairs, and then started to fail. Joy became isolated, lonely, and lost. It was at this time that she encountered the writings of C.S. Lewis, and started thinking seriously about her need for God. Partly under the influence of Lewis, she became a Christian, and she and the boys were baptised in 1948. Her marriage was now in ruins. All that sustained her was a correspondence, begun in early 1950, with Lewis himself.

The story from here is told in *SHADOWLANDS*. The relevant dates of the key events in that story are as follows:

Summer 1952: Joy comes to England and meets Lewis.

Summer 1954: Joy's divorce becomes legal.

April 23rd 1956: Lewis marries Joy in a register office.

October 18th 1956: Joy collapses, and cancer is diagnosed.

March 21st 1957: Lewis marries Joy in hospital.

March 1958: Joy seems to be fully recovered.

October 1959: The cancer returns.

July 13th 1960: Joy dies.

September 1962: Bill Gresham dies of cancer in New York.

November 22nd 1963: Lewis dies of a heart attack.

Warnie lives on, increasingly alcoholic, to die in 1973.