

THE END OF THE AFFAIR

Screenplay by Neil Jordan

From the novel by Grahame Greene

May 7th, 1997

A BLANK PAGE IN A TYPEWRITER.

The keys begin to hit the paper.

TYPE

This is a diary of hate.

The camera moves into the keys which become a blur as they clatter away.

TITLES.

EXT. COMMON. NIGHT.

A rainswept park in London during the Blitz. Bendrix, a writer with a leaking umbrella, walks past bare trees, bombed out ruins seen beyond them. He sees, under a lamp, a very wet figure - Henry - back to camera.

BENDRIX (VO)

I could have avoided him I suppose but some devil made me stop.

Bendrix walks very quietly behind him, his footsteps drowned in the sound of falling water.

BENDRIX

You want to drown, Henry?

Henry turns, startled. His eyes blink behind wet spectacles.

HENRY

Oh, I wanted a bit of air.

He stares at Bendrix, lost and troubled.

HENRY

How nice to see you Bendrix. How long has it been? A year?

BENDRIX

June 1944.

HENRY

As long as that?

BENDRIX

How's Sarah?

HENRY

Oh, she's out and about somewhere.

BENDRIX

She at the cinema?

HENRY

No, she never goes.

CUT TO -

A CINEMA SCREEN.

Some drab, English pre-war romance playing. Bendrix sits in the auditorium with his arm around a beautiful woman - SARAH, HENRY's wife.

CUT TO -

THE PARK IN THE RAIN.

BENDRIX'S face, framed by the umbrella.

BENDRIX

Good night Henry.

HENRY blinks, says nothing. BENDRIX goes to walk on and then stops.

BENDRIX

You'll catch your death here, Henry. Go home.

HENRY blinks again. The rain flowing over his spectacles is like tears.

BENDRIX

Is something wrong, Henry?

HENRY blinks again.

BENDRIX

Let me take you home...

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE.

The well-appointed hallway, in the darkness, as if waiting for someone. We hear their voices outside, as the door opens.

HENRY

Sarah? Sarah?

CUT TO -

A couple making love on the floor upstairs. SARAH and BENDRIX. SARAH is in the throes of an orgasm. From below, we hear the door open and the sound of HENRY's voice.

HENRY

Sarah? Sarah?

SARAH exhales deeply, then calls.

SARAH

One minute, dear...

BENDRIX stares at her,

BENDRIX

What if he heard?

SARAH rises.

SARAH (MATTER OF FACT)

He wouldn't recognise the sound.

CUT TO -

THE HALLWAY -

Henry opens the door to reveal BENDRIX'S face. He is staring at the stairway, as if expecting to see a ghost appear.

HENRY

You see. She's out still.

They both enter.

HENRY

Come into the study.

INT. STUDY. NIGHT.

Henry pours drinks. BENDRIX stands there, looking idly at HENRY'S desk.

BENDRIX

What's troubling you, Henry?

HENRY

Sarah.

BENDRIX smiles wanly.

HENRY

She's out for a walk now Bendrix. A walk...

BENDRIX

She was always a great walker.

HENRY

You were always a special friend of hers, Bendrix. They always say, don't they, that husband is the last to know the kind of woman...

BENDRIX

You know you can trust me, Henry.

HENRY

Jealousy's a terrible thing. You know I went so far Bendrix as to get the name of a private detective.

BENDRIX

You think she's seeing... someone...

BENDRIX smiles. HENRY blinks, catching the smile.

HENRY

Of course you think me a fool.

BENDRIX

No Henry. I don't think you're a fool.

HENRY

You mean you think it's possible?

BENDRIX

Of course. Sarah's human.

HENRY

I can't sleep, Bendrix. I keep picking up this wretched card.

He picks up a grubby business-card from his desk.

BENDRIX

Burn it.

HENRY

I wish I could.

But he doesn't. BENDRIX takes the card from between his fingers.

BENDRIX

Then go to see - what's his name - Savage.

HENRY

And sit where all the other jealous husbands sit? Do you think they have a waiting-room Bendrix? Where we see each other's faces as we pass through?

CUT TO -

SARAH, her head on BENDRIX'S naked stomach. She is fingering a birthmark.

SARAH

He's got one too.

BENDRIX

Who?

SARAH

Henry. But it's there, to the left...

She traces her finger round his navel.

SARAH

I have never, ever loved anyone as much as you.

CUT TO -

HENRY'S STUDY.

BENDRIX looks at the business-card.

BENDRIX

Why not let me go, Henry?

HENRY

You?

BENDRIX

Yes. I could pretend to be a jealous lover.

HENRY blinks, sadly.

BENDRIX

Jealous lovers are less ridiculous than jealous husbands. They are supported by the weight of literature. Tragic, never comic. Think of Troilus. I shan't lose my amoire propre when I interview Mr Savage.

HENRY

Would you really do that for me Bendrix?

BENRIX

Yes. And call me Maurice, Henry. We are friends after all.

There are tears in HENRY's eyes.

HENRY

I somehow always think of you as Bendrix - Maurice -

He takes the card from BENDRIX'S hand.

HENRY

But this is ridiculous. One can't spy on one's wife through a friend. And have the friend pretend to be her lover.

BENDRIX

What else are friends for?

HENRY

You're a good chap, Bendrix. All I needed was to talk, clear my head.

He throws the card in the fire.

BENDRIX

The name was Savage. The address 169 Vigo Street.

HENRY

Forget it. Forget what I've told you. It doesn't make sense. I'll see a doctor.

A sound, outside.

BENDRIX

That was the door. Sarah's come in.

HENRY

It's the maid. She's been to the pictures.

BENDRIX

No. It was Sarah's step.

HENRY goes to the study door and opens it. We see SARAH by the open hall door, lit by the street-light.

HENRY

Sarah, darling.

SARAH

Henry.

Then she sees BENDRIX, as he moves through the hall. Stops dead.

SARAH

You? Is that you?

BENDRIX

Been out for a walk?

SARAH

Yes.

BENDRIX

It's a filthy night.

BENDRIX edges past her. HENRY takes off her coat.

HENRY

You're wet through, Sarah. One day you'll catch your death of cold...

BENDRIX walks past them both into the rain.

BENDRIX

Good night.

SARAH stares at him as he goes.

INT. BENDRIX' HOUSE. NIGHT.

BENDRIX stands at his window in the darkness. Across the square he can see HENRY's house. A light is on in an upper window and a woman's silhouette stands there silently, staring towards him. The silhouetted woman reaches for a telephone. Then the phone rings, behind BENDRIX. He lets it ring, looking at the silhouetted figure with the telephone.

BENDRIX (VO)

We saw each other for the first time drinking bad South African Sherry because of the war in Spain. She seemed happy. In the summer of 1939 happiness had been a long time dying under the coming storm.

The camera pans down from the top window and finds the floors below it ablaze with lights. There is a party in progress.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE. EVENING.

Bendrix, looking over Henry's shoulder at the crowded room. He can see Sarah coming towards them, serving drinks.

HENRY

Sarah - this is our neighbour - the novelist chap -

SARAH

What on earth is a novelist doing here?

BENDRIX

Research.

SARAH

On what?

BENDRIX

Your husband. I've a character who works for the ministry of defence.

HENRY

Wrong department, I'm afraid. I'm Home Security.

BENDRIX

Home Security will do.

He smiles at Sarah.

BENDRIX

I need to know his habits.
What he drinks before bedtime.

HENRY

Cocoa.

BENDRIX

And when.

HENRY

Ten o'clock, isn't it Sarah? Unless we're
entertaining.

SARAH looks at BENDRIX, wryly.

HENRY

Now would you be so kind as to excuse your character?

BENDRIX

The ministry needs him?

HENRY

Unfortunately it does.

HENRY moves through the room towards another group.

BENDRIX

So tell me.

SARAH

What?

BENDRIX

His secrets.

SARAH

Henry is a good man, Mr Bendrix.

BENDRIX

I was afraid you'd say that. Goodness has so little
fictional value.

SARAH

What about happiness?

BENDRIX

Happiness is even harder to write. Is Henry
happy?

SARAH

Can we get away from the service for a moment?

BENDRIX

You mean change the subject?

SARAH

I meant fresh air, actually.

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE. EVENING.

The evening sun lights up the common. Henry and Sarah drink sherry by the steps, while the party bubbles away inside.

BENDRIX

So how long have you been married?

SARAH

Is your character married?

BENDRIX

Ten years.

SARAH

Henry's a perfect model then. We've been married ten years.

BENDRIX

Happily?

SARAH

Henry prefers habit to happiness.

BENDRIX puts his arm around her and kisses her. She smiles, wryly.

SARAH

I was wondering when you'd do that.

And she draws away from him as Henry emerges from the party.

SARAH

We were discussing the house, darling.

She smiles, and goes inside. Bendrix smiles at Henry, who smiles in turn.

BENDRIX

It's quite lovely.

HENRY

My wife found it.

They look over the sun-dappled square.

BENDRIX

Your wife is charming.

HENRY

She's a great help to me.

BENDRIX

As you must be to her -

HENRY

On days like this one feels - how happy we
could all be -

And Sarah emerges again.

SARAH

They've made a picture of one of your books,
haven't they?

BENDRIX

It's playing at Warners. Let me take you both.

HENRY

I'm far too busy for pictures, Bendrix, I'm afraid.

BENDRIX

Should I make a note of that?

HENRY

Yes. Make sure your character never gets home before
ten.

SARAH

Oh come out, Henry, for once -

HENRY

You know I can't darling. But you go.

SARAH

No, I -

HENRY

Take her, Bendrix. I'd be ever so grateful -

SARAH

Henry -

Henry turns to Bendrix.

HENRY

With Sarah, one has to insist.

INT. CINEMA. NIGHT.

The film we saw in the opening scenes. Two unhappy lovers part
at some train station. The music swells.

Bendrix is squirming in the cinema seat, Sarah beside him.

BENDRIX

That's not what I wrote you know -

SARAH

You can't keep saying that -

BENDRIX

But it's true -

SARAH

I know.

She pats his hand, and holds it to reassure him. They sit like two children, holding hands, as the music floods around them.

INT. RESTAURANT. NIGHT.

Sarah and Bendrix together. A bottle of wine, dishes of steak and onions between them.

SARAH

There was one scene you did write.

BENDRIX

Describe it.

SARAH

Where he offered her onions with her meal. She refused, because her husband didn't like the smell. And he got angry.

BENDRIX

Why did he get angry?

SARAH

He didn't want to think of her going home to him.

BENDRIX

Does Henry like onions?

SARAH

He hates them.

She scoops a forkfull of onions into her mouth. Bendrix smiles. She doesn't. He puts his hand on hers. She breathes deeply

BENDRIX

I'm in love, you know.

SARAH

Me too.

BENDRIX

We can't go home.

SARAH

Yes we can. You're not writing this.
Henry's got some committee meeting...

EXT. SQUARE. NIGHT.

Bendrix and Sarah cross the square to her house.

BENDRIX (VO)

Pain is easy to write. In pain we're
all drably individual.

INT. HOUSE. NIGHT.

They make their way up the stairs, almost tearing the clothes off
each other as they go.

BENDRIX (VO)

But happiness annihilates us. We lose our identity...

INT. LIVINGROOM. NIGHT.

They make love on the floor.

Sarah reaches climax and gasps, as downstairs the door opens.
We hear Henry's voice, off.

HENRY

Sarah? Sarah?

SARAH

One minute, dear...

BENDRIX (whisper)

What if he heard?

SARAH

He wouldn't recognise the sound...

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

Henry carefully takes off his coat, scarf, bowler-hat and climbs
the squeaking stairs. He opens the livingroom door to happen upon
the quite chaste picture of Sarah, rising from the sofa to greet
him, drink in hand and Bendrix by the bookcase. He moves to
Sarah, kisses her on the cheek, then wrinkles his face.

HENRY

Sarah - you've been eating onions -

SARAH

Sorry darling.

HENRY

So how was the picture, Bendrix? Up to scratch?

On Bendrix' face. He sees how completely Henry has been fooled.

INT. BENDRIX' FLAT. NIGHT.

He is typing.

TYPE

So jealousy came with love the way gravity came
with mass in Newtonian physics. She deceived him to
love me therefore one day could deceive me...

The camera pans down from the typed page to a notebook at the
base of the typewriter. Bendrix has scrawled, in pencil -

Savage detective agency, 169 Vigo St.

EXT. VIGO STREET. DAY.

BENDRIX walks along Vigo Street. He comes to number 169 where a
shabby brass sign advertises the Savage detective agency. He
walks in.

INT. SAVAGE DETECTIVE AGENCY. DAY.

MR SAVAGE sits behind a desk. He looks like a repellent civil
servant.

SAVAGE

Mr Bendrix. I assume we are discussing Mrs Bendrix?

BENDRIX

Not exactly. She's the wife of a friend of mine.

SAVAGE

Perhaps you and the lady are... intimate?

BENDRIX

No. I've only seen her once since 1944.

SAVAGE

I don't understand. You said this was a watching case.

BENDRIX eyes him bleakly.

BENDRIX

Can't one love or hate as long as that?

SAVAGE

There's nothing discreditable about jealousy,
Mr Bendrix. I always salute it as the mark of true
love.

BENDRIX

I've come on behalf of her husband. He thinks she's deceiving him. She has - secrets.

SAVAGE

Ah. Secrets. Yes.

BENDRIX

There may be nothing in it, of course.

SAVAGE

In my experience, Mr Bendrix, there almost invariably is.

SAVAGE begins to write.

SAVAGE

Shall my man report to you or the husband?

BENDRIX

To me. He must know nothing about it.

SAVAGE

Ah. A most interesting case. Well, all my men use great discretion. I will put one on it immediately. And he will work his damndest to set your mind at rest.

BENDRIX rises.

SAVAGE

Or should I say the husband's...

INT. BENDRIX' HOUSE. DAY.

BENDRIX enters to find the telephone ringing. This time he answers it.

BENDRIX

Sarah. How nice. Yes, it was nice to see you. How long has it been? Two years? As much as that? You were always better at anniversaries than I...

The words are pleasant, but his tone of voice is anything but.

BENDRIX

You want to meet? Whatever for?

His eyes stare at the ceiling, blank.

BENDRIX

No, not tomorrow. I've got this article..

He stares.

BENDRIX

Wednesday? Let me check...

But he checks nothing. Still stares at the ceiling.

BENDRIX

Would Thursday do? Good. The Cafe Royal,
at one.

He replaces the 'phone. Stares at it bleakly. Then suddenly lifts
it again and dials.

BENDRIX

Sarah. Tomorrow's alright. I'd forgotten something.
Same time, same place.

INT. PUB. DAY.

BENDRIX sitting, reading a newspaper, a glass of half-drunk lager
in front of him. Sarah enters.

SARAH

I'm sorry I'm late. I came by bus and the traffic was
bad.

BENDRIX

The tube's quicker.

SARAH

I know. But I didn't want to be quick.

He stares at her. Her hair is wet from the rain. She begins to
cough, as she sits down opposite him.

BENDRIX

I've booked a table at Rules.

SARAH

Can't we stay here?

BENDRIX

It's where we always used to go.

She doesn't reply. He takes his eyes off her and looks around the
pub. They come to rest on a moustachioed man sitting with a small
boy. The boy has an ugly purple birthmark, covering the left-hand
side of his face. The man is staring at him, and when BENDRIX
catches his eye, the man turns away, knocking over a glass of
beer. It spills over the boy and a waiter comes to clean up the
mess, looking at both of them with distaste.

SARAH

You see, I've never been back there.

BENDRIX

Well, it was never your restaurant was it?

SARAH

So you go there?

BENDRIX

It's convenient. Two or three times a week.

She stands up abruptly.

SARAH

Let's go.

EXT. PUB. DAY.

It is raining. SARAH and BENDRIX emerge from the pub. BENDRIX has his coat held over her to keep her from the rain. He draws her into an alleyway and they begin kissing passionately.

BENDRIX

Tell me again.

SARAH

I have never loved anyone as much as you.

They kiss.

SARAH

And I never shall again.

EXT. PUB. DAY.

SARAH and BENDRIX emerge from the pub. It is raining. We are back in the present. They both open umbrellas, awkwardly. They walk in silence through the rain.

INT. RULES RESTAURANT. DAY.

BENDRIX holds the door open for SARAH. An old waiter comes to take their coats and umbrellas.

WAITER

Such a pleasure to see you sir. It's been so long I thought you'd forgotten....

BENDRIX

I was afraid you'd say that...

WAITER

And you ma'am, it's been a long time too

SARAH

Two years, Alfred...

He leads them to their table. Lays out menus.

SARAH

Why did you lie?

BENDRIX

About my coming here?

SARAH

Yes.

BENDRIX

Why did you want to meet?

She stares at him.

SARAH

I wanted to ask you about Henry.

BENDRIX

Ah. Henry.

SARAH

I'm worried about him. How did you find him, the other night? Was he strange at all?

BENDRIX

I didn't notice anything wrong.

SARAH

I wanted to ask you - oh, I know you're very busy - whether you could look him up occasionally. I think he's lonely.

BENDRIX

With you?

SARAH

You know he's never really noticed me. Not for years.

BENDRIX

Perhaps you've given him reason.

SARAH

What reason could I give?

BENDRIX says nothing.

SARAH

Are you on a new book?

BENDRIX

Of course.

SARAH

It's not about us, is it? The one you threatened to write?

BENDRIX

A book takes a year to write. It's too hard work, for revenge.

SARAH

If you knew how little you had to revenge...

BENDRIX

I'm joking. We had a good time together. We're adults and we knew it had to end some time. Now we can lunch and talk about Henry.

His words have upset her. She sits in silence for a moment, then rises. She begins to cough.

SARAH

I'm sorry. This wasa stupid. And I really shouldn't have called -

BENDRIX

That cough needs attending to.

SARAH

It's only a cough.

She holds out her hand.

SARAH

Goodbye, Maurice...

He sits there looking at her.

BENDRIX

Goodbye.

He doesn't take her hand. She moves to the door as the waiter comes with menus behind her.

EXT. RESTAURANT. DAY.

SARAH emerges into the rain. She is crying. As she walks out into the downpour, BENDRIX runs out behind her. He holds his coat over her head to keep away the torrents.

BENDRIX

I'm sorry.

He embraces her.

BENDRIX

You have to realise. I'm jealous of everything that moves. I'm jealous of the rain.

SARAH

How can you be jealous of the rain?

BENDRIX

Because it's making you wet and I'm not.

She wraps her arms around him.

SARAH

If I only could learn how to convince you.
You've nothing to be jealous of. You never will.

INT. RESTAURANT. DAY.

BENDRIX sits there, in the present. He stares at SARAH as she exits the door, at her silhouette as it passes the rainy window.

EXT. RESTAURANT, DAY.

SARAH walks through the rain, alone.

INT. BENDRIX' HOUSE. NIGHT.

BENDRIX sits at his typewriter. A knock at the door and the maid enters.

MAID

A Mr Parkis to see you, sir.

There is a figure in the hallway. Bendrix rubs his eyes. The only light in the room is a reading-lamp by the table.

BENDRIX

Yes?

The maid ushers the man in. We recognise the moustachioed man that spilled the glass over the child in the pub. The maid closes the door behind him.

PARKIS

The name's Parkis. Mr Savage's man.

BENDRIX

Sit down. Have a cigarette.

PARKIS

Oh not on duty sir. Except of course for purposes of concealment.

BENDRIX

But you aren't on duty now?

PARKIS

In a manner of speaking, yes sir. I've just been relieved, for half an hour while I make my report.

BENDRIX

So there's something to report?

PARKIS

It's not quite a blank sheet, sir.

He stares at Bendrix, who is half-hidden behind the reading-lamp.

PARKIS

Have we met somewhere before, sir?

BENDRIX

I don't think so.

PARKIS

Well, as I said sir, it's not quite a blank sheet. But then it never is. Me and my boy followed the party in question -

BENDRIX

Your boy?

PARKIS

My son sir, I'm training him in the business. A boy can be quite useful, in all sorts of ways. On the day in question the party in question went by bus to Picadilly and proceeded up Air Street to the Cafe Royal. She seemed quite agitated, and there met a gentleman with whom she was obviously quite close, since they treated each other with an affectionate lack of ceremony and at one point - though I cannot be certain of this, held hands beneath the table.

BENDRIX

They held hands?

PARKIS

The party's left hand was out of sight sir, below the table, as was the gentleman's right hand which generally indicastes a squeeze of that nature. After a short conversation, they proceeded to a restaurant called Rules which was difficult to gain access to, me being with the boy and all. But I observed them through the window, partake of a short lunch after which the lady left, labouring, it seemed to me, under great emotion.

BENDRIX

Great emotion? You're sure of that?

EXT. RESTAURANT. DAY.

Parkis, outside the restaurant, in the rain. He steps back, as Sarah emerges, then follows her down the street. She turns a corner, down a small alleyway, and in through a small door. Parkis follows. He finds himself in a church. Sees Sarah walk to a central pew and sit there, shivering. We hear his voice, over.

PARKIS (VO)

Without doubt, sir. You see I followed her down Charing Cross Road to Maiden Lane where she turned into a church and remained seated, for what I could only presume was a good cry.

INT. BENDRIX' HOUSE. NIGHT.

Bendrix, by the desk with the table-lamp. Parkis is still delivering his report.

PARKIS

She's not a Roman, is she sir?

BENDRIX

No.

PARKIS

I thought not. She didn't kneel, sir but sat and from the shaking of her shoulders and the movement of her handkerchief I could tell tears were an issue. I observed her from the back, and must say felt the intensity of her emotion. You'll forgive the personal touch?

BENDRIX

Of course.

PARKIS

You see, I like the lady - the party in question.

BENDRIX

As did I. But you are wrong about the hands, Mr Parkis.

PARKIS

The hands sir?

Bendrix stands and comes towards him, into the light.

BENDRIX

We never as much as touched hands.

Parkis stares at him, suddenly deflated. His glasses mist up.

PARKIS

Oh dear sir, I have made a fool of myself -

BENDRIX

Sarah has that effect, Parkis. One tends to look only at her.

PARKIS

So am I to take it that you are the husband sir?

BENDRIX

No. Mr Savage should have introduced us. I am acting on the husband's behalf.

PARKIS

So you have requested an investigation of yourself?

Bendrix smiles at the unintended irony..

BENDRIX

An interesting paradox -

PARKIS

But who is the wronged party then sir if you will forgive -

On Parkis' face as it dawns.

PARKIS

Oh Sir. Pardon me sir, but I am slow in such matters. Both you and the husband have been supplanted in the lady's affections by -

BENDRIX

Another?

PARKIS

Of course. Of course sir. Another.

BENDRIX

The thing about jealousy, Parkis - if you will forgive the personal touch - is that it can only exist with desire. And whereas desire needs its object, jealousy invents one. You understand?

PARKIS

I think so, sir...

BENDRIX

It's quite simple, Parkis. You're on a hunt for desire. Regard yourself as it's servant.

PARKIS

The lady does seem to excite great emotion, sir.

BENDRIX

But the question is where.

PARKIS

Where, sir?

BENDRIX

Where is desire flowering now. Think of it as a river, Parkis. Of yourself as an explorer. You must find it's source.

PARKIS

Of course. That's my job, sir.

Bendrix smiles. He rises, puts an arm around Parkis, leading him out to the hallway.

BENDRIX

The vicarious lover, Parkis.

Parkis smiles, sweats, then leaves.

PARKIS

Goodnight, sir.

Bendrix watches him go, then climbs the stairs. He sits down at his typewriter and begins to hammer the keys. We see what he writes...

TYPE

I am a jealous man...

The camera pans across the room and we are back in the past. We see Sarah bending over a one-bar electric fire, naked, wrapped in the sheets. There is an eroticism about her that is like a moral force. Bendrix enters with a bottle of wine and two glasses.

BENDRIX

Anyone who loves is jealous -

SARAH

I'm only saying that I want you to be happy. I hate you being unhappy. I don't mind anything you do that makes you happy.

BENDRIX

If I slept with someone else?

SARAH

That's neither here nor there. I want you to be happy, that's all.

BENDRIX

You'd make my bed for me?

SARAH

Perhaps.

BENDRIX

But maybe you just want an excuse to do the same.

SARAH

I never would.

BENDRIX

But you do.

She smiles.

SARAH

You mean Henry? How can anyone be jealous of Henry.

BENDRIX

He has you. I don't.

SARAH

We inhabit the same house, that's all. You know that. I'm the shadow he walks around. And I love you.

BENDRIX

You deceive him...

SARAH

For you...

BENDRIX

Which means you've done this before...

SARAH

I told you. All the others meant nothing. They were leading me to you

An air-raid siren starts.

BENDRIX

I'd rather be dead or see you dead than with another man.

She stares at the ceiling. A bomb falls somewhere far off and the ceiling shakes.

SARAH

I will never ever be with another man.

Another bomb falls, closer.

SARAH

And you may see me dead. But I don't want to see you dead.

She stands.

SARAH

We should go down to the shelter.

He takes her in his arms, prevents her from going.

BENDRIX

Stay here Sarah. If a bomb hit us now, think of what wouldn't happen.

SARAH

What wouldn't happen?

BENDRIX

You wouldn't leave at two, walk back across the square to Henry. I could never imagine another lover. And my jealousy would end...

He lifts her in his arms.

SARAH

And would that make you happy?

BENDRIX

Happiness or annihilation...

SARAH

Alright...

She looks into his eyes, and gives a sad smile. He carries her to the bed, as another bomb falls, closer. Plaster falls on top of them, from the ceiling. They begin to make love. The bombs keep falling, coming closer until the whole house shakes. Their lovemaking climaxes then, and the bombs fade away. Then the all-clear sounds.

SARAH

You believe me now?

INT. PUB. DAY.

A LARGE CLOSE-UP OF SARAH'S HANDWRITING -

on a torn piece of paper. We hear her voice, over.

SARAH (VO)

...I have no need to write to you or talk to you, you know everything before I can speak. I know I am only beginning to love but already I want to abandon everything, everybody but you. —
Dear...

Camera pulls back to show Bendrix, reading the torn letter. Parkis is beside him, with a folder. His son sits across the way, drinking a lemonade.

PARKIS

My boy made contact with the domestic at the house of the party in question, sir, who managed to retrieve this from the waste-basket. I call it exhibit A.

BENDRIX

So he's got the scent too, Parkis?

PARKIS

What scent?

BENDRIX

The scent of love, Parkis. Stalking it, like a retriever.

PARKIS

He is remarkably persistent sir, and we are making excellent progress, if I say so myself. The party in question had a dental appointment at three-thirty on Tuesday, but in fact visited a premises at 16 Cedar road, where no dentist's sign was in evidence...

EXT. CEDAR ROAD. DAY.

Parkis' boy, walking down the street, sucking a lolly-pop. He has a camera round his neck. Sarah is ahead of him, walking. The boy gazes at her heels with mild curiosity. Sarah comes to number 16 and walks up the steps towards the door. She knocks. A maid answers and admits her.

INT. PUB. DAY.

Parkis, still talking.

PARKIS

A Mr Smythe owns the premises sir -

BENDRIX

Smythe with a "y".

PARKIS

Yes sir. S-M-Y-T-H-E. And though we have no evidence of intimacy as of yet the implication is clearly there.

BENDRIX

How is it there, Parkis?

PARKIS

Why, the fictitious dental appointment sir.

BENDRIX

So shall I walk in and confront him like an injured husband?

PARKIS

I'm against it sir. It complicates things in the Courts.

BENDRIX

This will never reach Court.

PARKIS

An amicable settlement then?

BENDRIX

A lack of interest. One can't really make a fuss about a man called Smythe. I'd just like to see him, that's all.

PARKIS

But of course you can see him. We have a picture.

Parkis takes a photo from his folder.

PARKIS

I call this exhibit B, sir. Lance took the photo.

BENDRIX

Lance?

PARKIS

My boy. Called after Lancelot. Of The Round Table. He found the Holy Grail.

BENDRIX

That was Galahad. Lancelot was found in bed with Guinevere...

Bendrix stares at the photo. It is of a window, a man in dark clothes with his back to us. Sarah can be seen in the background.
EXT. CEDAR ROAD. DAY.

Lance, across the road, with his camera. The shutter clicks.

POV - SMYTHE'S WINDOW -

A hand draws the blind and both Smythe and Sarah are obscured.

EXT. CEDAR ROAD. DAY.

Several hours later. Lance, lying on the steps of the house opposite, asleep.

PARKIS (VO)

The party in question emerged two hours later, the passage of time being amply sufficient for intimacy to have taken place. The courts generally demand at least an hour, sir -

On Lance's sleeping face. The purple birthmark is turned upwards towards the light. There is the sound of a door closing, and footsteps coming towards him.

PARKIS (VO)

Lance would have provided us with photos of her re-emergence but for the unfortunate occurrence of him falling asleep -

Lance wakes up, to the sound of the footsteps. A shadow falls across him. He looks up, and finds himself staring into Sarah's face. She smiles, sympathetically.

SARAH

Are you lost?

Lance can say nothing.

SARAH

Where do you live, then?

LANCE

Islington.

SARAH

You need money for the fare home?

Tears well up in Lance's eyes.

PARKIS (VO)

But luckily sir, the party in question mistook him for an abandoned urchin, woke him up and led to the nearest tube station. So the time of re-emergence was definitely established as was an acquaintance which may have its uses in the future, for all we know sir -

Sarah, walking along, holding Lance's hand, leading him towards a tube-station. She talks, we cannot hear what she says and for the first time she seems happy.

EXT. SQUARE. NIGHT.

Raining, as in the opening scene. Bendrix is walking the square with Parkis' report under his arm.

BENDRIX (VO)

Poor Sarah. She had committed nothing but love and here were Parkis and his boy watching her every move. I had half a mind to call the spies off and would have had I not met...

As at the start. Henry is underneath the lamp, in the rain.

BENDRIX

Henry... still in the rain...

HENRY

Walking, Bendrix. Doctor recommends it...

BENDRIX

Walk with me then. To the pub...

INT. PUB. NIGHT.

Henry in the empty pub, by a roaring fire. Bendrix comes from the bar with drinks.

BENDRIX

How's Sarah?

HENRY

Pretty well.

BENDRIX

Did you ever consult that detective?

HENRY

I hoped you'd forgotten it. I was overworked. I had a Royal Commission brewing.

BENDRIX

Don't worry Henry. I did it for you.

HENRY

You had absolutely no right -

BENDRIX

I'm paying all the charges.

HENRY

It's infernal cheek.

He stands. But Bendrix is blocking his way. He takes the report from his pocket.

BENDRIX

Here's the report. His name is Smythe. With a "y". You've been properly led up the garden Henry.

HENRY

Will you let me pass?

BENDRIX

You don't want them? The love-letter makes for interesting reading -

Henry grabs the report from Bendrix and shoves it in the fire. He rams it home with a poker.

HENRY

Will you let me go now?

Bendrix steps aside.

BENDRIX

I can always get you a carbon copy -

Henry walks out with a strange dignity into the rain. Bendrix stares at the fire, the burning pages. Then he looks at the ground where Henry was sitting and sees his hat.

BENDRIX (VO)

Stange how much dignity there can be in a hat...

Bendrix takes the hat and walks outside.

EXT. SQUARE. NIGHT.

Bendrix, walking through the rain, holding Henry's hat.

BENDRIX (VO)

Without it he seemed one of the anonymous,
the dispossessed.

We see Henry, some distance off, sitting on a bench in the pouring rain, hatless.

BENDRIX (VO)

I had felt sorry for myself for so long it was
odd to feel sorry for my enemy...

Bendrix walks towards Henry, places the hat on the bench by his side.

BENDRIX

I'm sorry Henry.

He is about to walk on.

HENRY

Sit down.

Bendrix sits.

HENRY

Were you two lovers, Bendrix?

Bendrix says nothing.

HENRY

It's the only explanation. The only excuse too.
Can't you see that what you've done is... monstrous?

Henry turns his hat in his hand.

HENRY

You must think me a fool, not to have guessed.

Why didn't she leave me?

BENDRIX

You're a habit she's formed. You're security. You were no more trouble to us than you'd been to the others.

HENRY

There were others?

BENDRIX

Of course there were Henry. And are...

HENRY

Why did she leave you?

BENDRIX

I became a bore Henry. Like you. But I wasn't born one. You created me. She wouldn't leave you so I bored her with my jealousy.

HENRY

You can't be jealous of me...

BENDRIX

You won, in a way. We'd come to the end of love. She could shop and cook and fall asleep with you but she could only make love with me.

HENRY

She's still very fond of you...

BENDRIX

One isn't satisfied with fondness.

HENRY

I was...

BENDRIX

And that made you her pimp. The bore of a husband who knows where his slippers are, but never notices his wife.

EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

The square, during wartime. A doodlebug - (a VI, an early robotic jet-propelled bomb) sails through the air and crashes somewhere off, sending up a spume of smoke.

BENDRIX (VO)...

But we had another pimp Henry. The Blitz. Strange how catastrophe can have its benefits. The sirens created suspension of time, a kind of infinity within which love was the only possibility. And the VI's never affected us untill the act of love was over.

INT. BENDRIX' BEDROOM. DAY.

Sarah, in Bendrix's arms, in the bed beneath the window. They have just finished making love. The sound of the blast echoes around them.

BENDRIX

So what will you do when it ends?

SARAH

It won't end, I told you -

BENDRIX

I meant the war.

Another blast sounds, closer this time.

BENDRIX

It's the only certain thing...

SARAH

What do you mean?

BENDRIX

That allows me see you.

SARAH

You think love ends, when you don't see me?

BENDRIX

To be is to be perceived. Do I exist for you when you're with Henry?

SARAH

Yes.

BENDRIX

Isn't that why you stay with him? Because you know this will end?

SARAH

No.

And yet another blast sounds. The house shakes.

SARAH

We should go to the basement.

BENDRIX

My landlady might be there.

SARAH

Does that matter?

BENDRIX

Maybe to her.

And another blast. A window-pane shatters.

SARAH

It's close, Maurice -

BENDRIX

I'll go and check.

SARAH

Let me go with you -

She clings to him.

BENDRIX

I'll be one second -

He gets out of the bed and walks to the door.

INT. STAIRWAY. DAY.

Sunlight streams through the tall windows. Bendrix walks to the stairwell and peers down. There is the growing whine of an airborne engine, and then silence. He can see the locked door of the basement below. He turns and looks at Sarah through the open door.

BENDRIX

It's clear -

Then there is a flash of thunder as the doodlebug hits the house, bringing part of the wall in with it. The banastairs gives way and Bendrix tumbles down the stairwell.

The screen goes black.

The billowing black smoke gradually clears, to reveal the ruined stairwell and a huge jagged hole in the main wall of the house.

BENDRIX (VO)

I never heard the bang. I awoke after five minutes or five seconds to a changed world.

Bendrix is lying on the ground floor with part of the staircase jammed over his body. One of the windows above him has fallen away and light pours through the dust-filled hole. For a moment he seems totally inert, dead. There is blood trickling from his mouth. Then his eyes open. He spits out two broken teeth. He manages to push aside the debris and rise, still stunned.

BENDRIX (VO)

For a moment I was free of feeling. Love, hate, jealousy. And it felt like happiness.

He looks around the light-filled stairwell. The dust wheeling, the odd silence, which is then filled with the sound of sirens. At the top, through the open door, he sees Sarah, kneeling, by the electric fire. She is naked. He enters the room, replaces the receiver of the phone on its hook. She meets his eyes.

BENDRIX

Close one.

SARAH

Oh my God. You're alive.

BENDRIX

You sound disappointed.

He walks up the stairs towards her. She stares at him with something like terror.

SARAH

You're hurt.

BENDRIX

I've broken some teeth, that's all.

She rapidly dresses, as he stares at his bruised face in the mirror. Then she dips a handkerchief in the sink and when he reaches her, she begins to clean his bloodied face.

BENDRIX

What were you doing on the floor?

SARAH

Praying.

BENDRIX

To what?

SARAH

To anything that might exist.

BENDRIX

It would have been more practical to come downstairs.

SARAH

I did.

BENDRIX

Why didn't you wake me?

SARAH

I tried. You didn't move. I don't understand. I knew for certain you were dead.

BENDRIX

There wasn't much to pray for then, was there?

SARAH

A miracle.

BENDRIX

And we don't believe in those.

SARAH

No.

The All Clear siren sounds.

BENDRIX

And that siren means you go.

SARAH

Yes.

BENDRIX

Please don't -

SARAH

I have to. Henry'll be -

BENDRIX

Forget Henry.

SARAH

I don't understand. You were gone -

BENDRIX

And now I'm back. Sorry to disappoint you.

He reaches out to touch her. She moves away. Then she moves past him, down the stairs. He looks at her, his eyes devastated.

BENDRIX

Sarah -

She turns.

SARAH

Love doesn't end. Just because we don't see each other...

BENDRIX

Doesn't it?

SARAH

People go on loving God, don't they? All their lives, without seeing him.

BENDRIX

That's not my kind of love.

SARAH

Maybe there's no other kind...

She turns away again and walks to the door.

EXT. SQUARE. NIGHT.

Henry and Bendrix by the bench. It is still raining.

BENDRIX

So I was a disappointment in the end, Henry. I lived. And that was the end of the affair until I met you with that detective's card in your hand.

HENRY

I always wondered why we hadn't seen you...

Bendrix stands.

BENDRIX

Smythe, Henry. With a "y". My current replacement.

HENRY

Why are you telling me this?

BENDRIX

So you'll know. When he's replaced in turn.

HENRY

What if you're wrong?

BENDRIX

I'm not saying she wished me dead, Henry. Just that it would have been more... convenient. Not quite a happy accident. More like an appropriate one. And you should go home now. Before you catch your death...

He stands.

BENDRIX

I'm sorry, Henry.

INT. CAB. DAY.

Parkis, his boy and Bendrix sit in a taxi, which is stationary at the corner of Cedar Road.

PARKIS

I have to say I would advise against this.

BENDRIX

I'd just like to see what a man called Smythe looks like. Will you lend me your boy?

PARKIS

If you'll assure me there'll be nothing unpleasant, sir.

BENDRIX

Sarah isn't there. This scene will have a Universal certificate. Come with me young Lancelot...

Bendrix takes the boy's hand and leads him out of the cab.

EXT. CEDAR ROAD. DAY.

Bendrix leads the boy down the road towards the Smythe house.

BENDRIX

Now remember, you're feeling ill...

LANCE

How ill, sir.

BENDRIX

Ill enough to feel faint. Can you act that?

LANCE

If I hold my breath sir I go all pale.

BENDRIX

Good.

INT. SMYTHE'S HOUSE. DAY.

The door seen from inside, the doorbell ringing. A woman walks towards it, opens it to see Bendrix and a trembling Lance. The good side of his face looks pale.

BENDRIX

Does Dr Wilson live here?

WOMAN

No. I'm afraid...

BENDRIX

Oh dear. I was given this adress. My boy's quite ill and I've come all this way -

And suddenly Lance faints quite convincingly onto the floor.

INT. SMYTHE'S LIVING-ROOM. DAY.

Lance is laid out on a Victorian sofa. He seems to be enjoying the farce. The woman fusses around him.

WOMAN

Can I fetch him a glass of water?

BENDRIX

That's very kind of you.

WOMAN

Or some orange squash?

BENDRIX

Water'll be fine -

LANCE

Orange-squash. Please.

She goes into a kitchen, off, to make it.

BENDRIX

Say thank you, Arthur.

WOMAN

Is his name Arthur?

BENDRIX

Arthur James. His mother was fond of Tennyson.

WOMAN

Is she...

BENDRIX

Yes. Four years now.

WOMAN

He must be a great comfort to you.

BENDRIX

And an anxiety. I ought to introduce myself.
Bridges.

WOMAN

My name is Smythe.

BENDRIX

With a "Y"?

And suddenly the front door opens. Smythe enters the hallway. Bendrix turns, his face concealing his surprise as Smythe approaches. Black trousers, black overcoat, and underneath, a white collar. Smythe is a priest.

WOMAN

My brother Richard.

Bendrix stares.

WOMAN

This is Mr Bridges. His boy
isn't feeling well.

BENDRIX

I was given this adress for a doctor Wilson.

SMYTHE

There's no such doctor here.

He walks over to the boy, feels his forehead.

SMYTHE

I've seen your boy before...

BENDRIX

Maybe on the common.

SMYTHE

What was the real purpose of your visit?

BENDRIX

I told you, a doctor -

SMYTHE

And I don't believe you. Are you ill, boy?

He runs his hands expertly down Lance's back. Lance shivers. There seems to be some power invested in Smythe's hands.

SMYTHE

People sometimes come to me and can't explain why. So if there is a reason -

WOMAN

My brother often deals with -

SMYTHE

Hush Susan. They must ask themselves. I recognise the boy. But you? Who recommended you?

He turns his face to Bendrix.

BENDRIX

We have a friend in common. Sarah Miles...

The woman makes an intake of breath. And Smythe's face reddens, with embarassment or anger.

WOMAN

Oh my dear.

Smythe goes to the window. Speaks with his back turned.

SMYTHE

Your name is Maurice.

BENDRIX

Bendrix.

SMYTHE

I know all about you -

BENDRIX

I'm sure you do. Sarah likes to share...

Bendrix stops. He is embarrassed, at a loss.

SMYTHE

Go. Please go.

Bendrix leaves, confusion on his face.

EXT. CEDAR ROAD. DAY.

Bendrix, walking with Lancelot towards the cab. He opens the door and sits in silence as it drives off.

PARKIS

Did your visit clarify matters, sir?

BENDRIX

Not quite. You neglected to notice one pertinent fact.

PARKIS

What fact was that, sir?

BENDRIX

Smythe is a priest.

PARKIS

Ah. As in the Alexander case.

BENDRIX

The Alexander case?

PARKIS

The correspondent was an anglican vicar.

INT. MYLES HOUSEHOLD. LIVINGROOM. NIGHT.

A party in progress. A crush of ministry types, eating canapes, being served drink.

PARKIS (VO)

It was quite easy sir. There was such a crush and Mrs Miles thought I was one of his friends from the ministry and Mr Miles thought I was one of her friends.

We see Parkis walking up the stairs as others come down.

PARKIS (VO)

I knew the way to her room from the maid. If anyone stopped me I should have been looking for the toilet but of course nobody did.

The door to Sarah's bedroom ajar. Parkis opens it, sees a leather bound diary on her dressing table. Slips the diary under his jacket.

BENDRIX (VO)

Was it a good cocktail party?

PARKIS (VO)

Highly successful I would say but Mrs Miles seemed a bit out of sorts. A very nasty cough she's got.

INT. BENDRIX' OFFICE. DAY.

Parkis places a brown paper parcel on Bendrix' desk. Bendrix unwraps the diary.

PARKIS

I refer to this as exhibit "C".

BENDRIX

Did you look at it?

PARKIS

I ascertained its nature sir, and from one entry judged she wasn't the cautious type.

Bendrix reaches out for the diary and opens it.

PARKIS

My experience of diaries is they always give things away.

Bendrix reaches a page at random. It is filled with one line.

SARAH (VO)

So happy. M returns today....

PARKIS

People invent their little codes, but you soon see through them sir.

BENDRIX

It covers several years...

PARKIS

I hope you feel satisfied, sir.

BENDRIX

This might well close our account, Parkis.

PARKIS

I had a feeling it might sir...

Bendrix doesn't reply, his eyes still on the diary.

SARAH (VO)

Life was going to be happy again, but last night I dreamed...

Parkis' voice interrupts.

PARKIS

I have enjoyed our association sir, if one can talk of enjoyment under the sad circumstances.

BENDRIX

As have I, Parkis

PARKIS

So I hope you wouldn't resent a memento, sir...

He takes an ashtray from his pocket, hands it to Bendrix. It is marked Hotel Metropole, Brightlingsea.

PARKIS

There's quite a history, with that. You remember the Bolton case?

BENDRIX

I can't say I do.

PARKIS

Caused quite a stir at the time. Lady Bolton, her maid and the man. All discovered together. That ashtray stood beside the bed. On the lady's side.

BENDRIX

I shall treasure it, Parkis.

PARKIS

If ashtrays could speak, sir.

BENDRIX

Indeed.

And now even Parkis can remain no longer. He shakes Bendrix's hand.

PARKIS

Perhaps I should call later, sir? Just to make sure there are no loose ends?

BENDRIX

Thank you, Parkis.

And he is gone. Bendrix is at last alone with the diary.

The camera moves in on the page open in front of him. We hear Sarah's voice.

SARAH (VO)

Sometimes I get tired of trying to convince him that I love him and shall love him forever. He pounces on my words like a barrister and twists them...

INT. BENDRIX' ROOM. DAY.

Sarah and Bendrix making love, as before. The air-raid sirens whine, and the sound of a blast echoes round them. We see Bendrix' face then, from Sarah's point of view.

BENDRIX

So what will you do when it ends?

SARAH

It won't end, I told you -

BENDRIX

I meant the war.

Another blast sounds, closer this time.

BENDRIX

It's the only certain thing...

SARAH

What do you mean?

BENDRIX

That allows me see you.

SARAH

You think love ends, when you don't see me?

BENDRIX

To be is to be perceived. Do I exist for you when you're with Henry?

SARAH

Yes.

BENDRIX

Isn't that why you stay with Henry? Because you know this will end?

SARAH

No.

And yet another blast sounds. The house shakes.

SARAH

We should go to the basement.

BENDRIX

My landlady might be there.

SARAH

Does that matter?

BENDRIX

Maybe to her -

And another blast. A window-pane shatters.

SARAH

It's close, Maurice -

BENDRIX

I'll go out and check.

SARAH

Let me go with you -

She clings to him.

BENDRIX

I'll be one second.

He gets out of bed and walks to the door. Sarah watches him as he peers down the well of the banastair. There is the growing whine of an airborne engine, then silence. She watches him turn to her, in the doorway.

BENDRIX

It's clear.

Then there is a blinding flash and the house shudders, as the blast hits it. Sarah screams.

SARAH

MAURICE!!!!

Smoke, and falling plaster everywhere. She runs from the bed, naked, flailing through the smoke and falling debris. She reaches the shattered stairs, can't see him for the smoke, staggers down the stairs as more of the wall falls away and the great light pours in from outside.

As the smoke begins to clear, she reaches the first floor and sees his body lying by the front door, part of the staircase jammed over him.

SARAH

Oh God...

She walks down slowly towards his body, with growing horror in her face. She touches his hand. It is limp and dead. She clears the dust off his face, sees blood coming from his mouth. His eyes are half-closed but absolutely dead.

SARAH

Oh God, don't take him...

She kisses his dead lips, trying to revive him.

SARAH (VO)

But You had...

Sarah, over his body, in wordless grief.

SARAH (VO)

Whatever was him was gone. You'd taken it.
I never had believed in prayer.

She falls to her knees.

SARAH

Dear God, please bring him back. Let him live.

The light pours in on her from above. She reaches out for his hand. It is cold as ice.

SARAH

I don't believe in you. But please let him live.

She begins to shudder then. And weep.

SARAH

I can't love him if he's not there. Dear God please -

She looks at his dead body and retreats back up the stairs in horror, her naked body shaking. She reaches the door of his room.

SARAH

Because if he's not there you're not there,
there's nothing there -

She enters the room, shuddering. Looks at Bendrix' photograph on the mantelpiece. He is smiling, happy. She falls to her knees again.

SARAH

Dear God please let him live. I'll give him
up for ever, only please let him be alive. Let
him live and I promise I'll never see him again...

Her nails dig into the palms of her hands, drawing blood. Her eyes are closed. Then she hears a sound. She turns and sees Bendrix by the door. He replaces the speaker, which has fallen off the telephone.

BENDRIX

Close one.

SARAH

Oh my God. You're alive...

BENDRIX

You sound disappointed.

On Sarah's face, terrified.

SARAH (VO)

I knew now the agony of being without him starts...

ON BENDRIX' FACE, READING THE JOURNAL -

BENDRIX (to himself)

Sarah -

ON SARAH, IN THE BOMB-WRECKED HOUSE -

She turns.

SARAH

Love doesn't end. Just because we don't see each other...

BENDRIX

Doesn't it?

SARAH

People go on loving God all their lives, don't they? Without seeing him?

BENDRIX

That's not my kind of love.

SARAH

Maybe there's no other kind.

She turns and walks to the door.

EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

Sarah walks across the smoking square. The sounds of ambulance and fire-brigade sirens everywhere.

SARAH (VO)

I was in the desert now. He was in the same desert, with the same watering-holes, but we could never drink.

INT. TRAIN. DAY.

Sarah, sitting with Henry in a first-class carriage. He is busy with papers.

SARAH (VO)

Started a tour with Henry. Civil Defence in Southern England. Henry and I sleeping side by side like figures on tombs.

INT. UNDERGROUND SHELTER. NIGHT.

Sarah, being led by a warden through the long tunnel of a shelter. Henry's voice can be heard, ahead of her, out of sight.

SARAH (VO)

In the new reinforced shelter at Bigwell on Sea the Chief Warden kissed me.

The Warden kisses her.

SARAH (VO)

I wanted him to, but it didn't work. Nothing worked.

She stares at the warden as he withdraws. Then Henry appears, with the chief engineer.

ENGINEER

At a pinch we can find room for two hundred.

Henry and the Engineer walk on. Sarah follows, leaves the Warden looking after her.

SARAH (VO)

I'm beginning to believe in you God, and if I believe in you I shall hate you. You make me drive love out, then you say there's no lust for me either.

INT. TRAIN. DAY.

Henry and Sarah, journeying back.

HENRY

They are recommending me for an O.B.E.

SARAH

What's that?

HENRY

A step below a C.B.E. When I retire, I'll probably be a K.B.E.

SARAH
It's confusing. Couldn't you stick to the same letters?

HENRY
Wouldn't you like to be Lady Miles?

On Sarah's face. She would not.

EXT. ST JAMES PARK. EVENING.

An explosion of fireworks, to celebrate V.E. Day. Crowds on the grass, watching them. Among them Henry and Sarah.

HENRY
Very moving, isn't it?

SARAH
I don't know. I'm not sure I like the peace.
She stares at the exploding fireworks.

SARAH (VO)
But I thought now that there is peace, I should have some.

The exploding fireworks dissolve to church candles.

INT. CHURCH. NIGHT.

Sarah is sitting alone in the middle pews, staring at the candles. A priest comes into view. It is Fr Smythe.

SARAH (VO)
I thought it's time to try. To fall
in love with You and out of love with Maurice....

INT. CONFESSIONAL. NIGHT.

Sarah, speaking in the booth, through the grille, into Smythe's ear.

SARAH (VO)
I told him it all, but the act of telling
made me want Maurice. I'd been two years in
the desert now. I walked home in the rain.

EXT. SQUARE. NIGHT.

Sarah, walking through the rain.

SARAH (VO)

You're love is a fake, I thought, a loathsome fake and it's killing me quicker than the cold and the rain. You took what I offered without a second chance and held me to it.

EXT. MILES' HOUSE. NIGHT.

Rain sheeting down as Sarah opens the door to her house. We see the hallway from her point of view. The living-room door opens and Henry is there, as in the earlier scene.

HENRY

Sarah, darling.

SARAH

Henry.

Then behind her she sees Bendrix.

SARAH

You? Is that you?

BENDRIX

Been out for a walk?

SARAH (VO)

Two years. And still I couldn't tell him.

Bendrix moves through the hall, seemingly unmoved, towards her.

SARAH

Yes.

Bendrix edges past her. On Sarah's face, as she tries to conceal her emotion.

HENRY

You're wet through, Sarah. One day you'll catch your death of cold...

Bendrix walks past her into the night.

BENDRIX

Goodnight.

Sarah watches him go.

SARAH (VO)

And I thought, You've won again...

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

She is still shivering in her wet clothes. She can see Bendrix' light on, far across the square.

She rings the number with shivering hands and listens to it ring out.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Sarah on the phone again.

SARAH

Tomorrow?

She listens to Bendrix reply, and we see the rejection on her face.

SARAH

Wednesday?

Again a rejection.

SARAH

Thursday then.

She replaces the phone. Almost immediately it rings. This time we hear Bendrix' voice.

BENDRIX (on phone)

Sarah. Tomorrow's alright. I'd forgotten something. Same time, same place.

INT. UNDERGROUND. DAY.

Sarah, rising up a long series of steps towards the exit.

SARAH (VO)

I took my time. I didn't want to be early...

INT. RULES RESTAURANT. DAY.

Sarah and Bendrix sitting in Rules restaurant. Bendrix eyes her.

BENDRIX

Why did you want to meet?

Bendrix' eyes seem nonchalant and unconcerned. We hear Sarah's voice.

SARAH

I wanted to tell you I'd been dead for the last two years. I can't be without you any longer.

And now we see Sarah's face, and realise she is not speaking.

Sarah looks down at the tablecloth.

SARAH

I wanted to talk about Henry.

BENDRIX

Ah. Henry.

On their conversation, as we've seen it before. Sarah's voice, over.

SARAH (VO)

And I thought, You've cursed me again.

BENDRIX

A book takes a year to write. It's too hard work, for revenge.

SARAH

If you knew how little you had to revenge...

BENDRIX

I'm joking. We had a good time together. We're adults and we knew it had to end some time. Now we can lunch and talk about Henry.

Sarah rises, upset, coughing.

SARAH

I'm sorry. This was stupid. And I really shouldn't have called -

EXT. RESTAURANT. DAY.

Sarah emerges into the rain. She is crying.

SARAH (VO)

In the old days he would have followed.

Sarah walks on. She hears footsteps behind her. She turns, expectant, but sees a small man in a rainmac and a boy walking several paces behind her. It is Parkis and his son.

SARAH (VO)

Whoever was behind me it wasn't him.

On Parkis, as he follows. Sarah turns into a doorway. Parkis when he reaches it does likewise.

INT. CHURCH. DAY.

Sarah, walking down the aisle, sitting in a middle pew. Parkis enters, with his boy, sits some distance behind.

SARAH (VO)...

I said to God, as I might have said to my father, Dear God, I'm tired. I'm tired of being without him. And it's all because of you.

EXT. CEDAR ROAD. DAY.

Sarah walking along Cedar Road. Parkis' boy, Lance, follows with his lollipop and camera.

INT. SMYTHE'S LIVINGROOM. DAY.

Smythe closes the window, obscuring the view of Lance, down on the street below. Sarah stands behind him.

SARAH

I'm giving up Father. I'm a whore and a fake who suffers from delusions about a promise she made two years ago, who imagines one moment should freeze the rest of her life in aspic -

SMYTHE

Time's a funny thing -

SARAH

How so, father -

SMYTHE

St Augustine said time came out of the future which didn't exist yet, into the present which has no duration, and went into the past which has ceased to exist -

SARAH

And it's not a matter of whether I believe or not. In fact the more I believe in the whole bag of tricks the more I want Maurice, the more I want the man that was lying under that rubble. I would have prayed to the devil to bring him back.

SMYTHE

But you didn't.

SARAH

No. But maybe I will.

She rises to go.

SARAH

Can you believe in a God who made something like me?

SMYTHE

Yes. And you know the odd thing?

SARAH

What, Father?

SMYTHE

You came here for help. But you were the one who gave it.

SARAH

To whom, Father?

SMYTHE

To me.

Sarah stops dead. He is sitting by the window, his face in shadow.

SARAH

How strange.

Smythe rises.

SMYTHE

And I don't mean -

SARAH

No. I know you don't. How very strange...

EXT. CEDAR ROAD. DAY.

Lance, sleeping on the steps. His malformed cheek is exposed to the light. Sarah emerges from Smythe's front door and walks towards him.

SARAH

Are you lost?

Lance wakes, stares at her, his eyes wide open.

SARAH

You need money for the fare home?

Tears well up in his eyes.

SARAH

Where do you live?

LANCE

Islington.

SARAH (VO)

I found a small boy sleeping on the steps with a birthmark covering his face and wondered what kind of God would give a child that -

On Sarah, holding Lance's hand, walking towards the tube station. When they reach it, she bends down towards him and presses a coin into his hand.

SARAH

You'll be alright now?

LANCE

Yes Ma'am. And thank you Ma'am.

She kisses him on the malformed cheek.

SARAH (VO)

And as I kissed his cheek I knew I wanted Maurice. I wanted ordinary corrupt human love again...

INT. HENRY'S LIVINGROOM. NIGHT.

Sarah, by a desk, still drenched, writing a letter. We see what she writes.

LETTER

Dear Henry, I'm leaving you. For the last five years I've been in love with Maurice Bendrix. For two years we haven't seen each other but it doesn't work...

She goes into a spasm of coughing. Then, the sound of the door opening downstairs. She continues writing. The steps come closer, then the livingroom door opens. Henry stands there, drenched, tears streaming down his face.

SARAH

Henry -

HENRY

I love you. Do you know that?

SARAH

Yes.

He walks towards her and puts his hand on her head. Rain from his hat smudges the letter she has been writing, making it illegible.

SARAH

Where have you been, Henry?

HENRY

I had a drink, with Bendrix. A horrible drink.

SARAH

Bendrix?

HENRY

Why not Bendrix?

He kneels beside her and his wet forehead touches hers.

HENRY

I can't do without you Sarah

SARAH (VO)

Oh yes you can, I thought. You changed
your newspaper once and you soon got used to it.

On Sarah's face. She is being pinioned again.

SARAH

What's wrong Henry?

HENRY

Nothing.

SARAH

Did Bendrix upset you in some way?

HENRY

I know I haven't been much of a husband, my dear -

SARAH

We are good friends.

HENRY

You can do without a friend. Don't leave me Sarah.
Stick it out a few more years. I'll try, I promise...

She looks down at the letter. It is now a mess of smudged ink.
She says softly, almost to herself.

SARAH

I promise...

Sarah smiles bitterly to herself.

SARAH (VO)

Another promise to keep and when I had made it
I couldn't bear to be near him...

INT. BENDRIX' ROOM. NIGHT.

ON BENDRIX'S FACE, READING. The shock of the realisation has
drawn the colour from his face. It is the first time in the story
he has expressed any emotion. Then the telephone begins to ring.
He leaps on it.

BENDRIX

Sarah -

But we hear Parkis' voice, at the other end.

PARKIS

So has exhibit C clarified matters, sir?

Bendrix says nothing.

PARKIS

Sir?

BENDRIX

Yes Parkis. It clarifies a multitude.

PARKIS

No loose ends?

BENDRIX

Just one. It seems you got the correspondent wrong.

PARKIS

Wrong?

BENDRIX

It's not a man called Smythe. In fact the correspondent doesn't really exist.

PARKIS

Doesn't exist sir? Well I am glad to hear that, sir. A most happy conclusion for all concerned.

BENDRIX

Indeed, Parkis. Indeed.

Bendrix puts the phone down and opens the journal again, on a random page. We see the handwriting, hear Sarah's voice.

SARAH (VO)

And I'm too tired to fight You anymore.
- You've won and we've has lost.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Sarah lying on a couch in the livingroom. She looks exhausted. Her voice continues over.

SARAH (VO)

I've tried to love and made such a hash of it.
If I could love You, maybe I could learn to love them properly...

The telephone rings. She picks it up.

SARAH

Hello -

We hear Bendrix on the other line.

BENDRIX

Sarah?

Sarah blanches.

SARAH

Mrs Miles is unavailable -

BENDRIX

I know your voice, Sarah -

She puts down the phone. It immediately rings again. She rises, slowly, grabs her coat and staggers out into the hallway.

EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

A blur of trees, as Bendrix runs through the square towards her house. He can glimpse her through the trees as he runs, hurrying down her steps towards the kerb. She stops a cab and gets in. Bendrix screams after her, as the cab draws away.

BENDRIX

- Sarah!!!!

But the cab is out of earshot. He stops another, gets in and follows.

INT. CAB. DAY.

Bendrix sits, with the diary on his lap, watching the cab ahead. It stops outside an ABC cinema. Sarah walks inside. Bendrix stops his cab and follows.

INT. CINEMA. DAY.

Bendrix enters the auditorium. It is almost empty. He can see Sarah sitting near the front, some wartime romance playing on the screen. As he makes his way down towards her, she turns.

BENDRIX

Sarah -

She gets up and runs out a side door. Bendrix follows.

EXT. CINEMA - ALLEYWAY. DAY.

Bendrix pushes his way out through the barred doors. He finds himself in a small, dirty alleyway. There is no sign of Sarah. The a door opens in the opposite wall. A nun emerges. Bendrix walks through it.

INT. CHURCH. DAY.

He sees Sarah, sitting in the empty pews of the church as she did in the cinema, quite alone. He walks towards her. This time she doesn't try to escape. He sits beside her and places the diary in her hands.

SARAH

How did you get it?

BENDRIX

You had a drinks party last week.

SARAH

Yes. That small man -

BENDRIX

He's my snoop.

SARAH

Oh Maurice. How ridiculous.

BENDRIX

No more ridiculous than you. Why didn't you tell me.

SARAH

I tried. And each time I tried something would happen.

BENDRIX

That's mumbo jumbo Sarah.

SARAH

No. It doesn't work like that. Accidents. Little things. Like last week. I was going to leave Henry. Finally. I'd written a letter. And he came in crying. Told me in his silly sad voice that he loved me, needed me. And I couldn't go. Then he told me he'd met you. God is in the details Maurice.

BENDRIX

-You can't believe that Sarah.

SARAH

Don't talk. Kiss me.

He leans forwards to kiss her. Suddenly the church door blows open. Bendrix draws back, momentarily startled. Two priests enter.

SARAH

You see...

He kisses her. The priests stare. She breaks away.

SARAH

My mother baptised me a Catholic, Maurice. My father was Jewish so we never practised. But she always said she hoped it would "take". Like a vaccination.

She coughs.

BENDRIX

Or a cold. You should get that seen to

SARAH

Do you believe in it Maurice?

BENDRIX

Your cold?

SARAH

You can't see it. Do you believe in things you can't see?

He looks at the altar.

BENDRIX

You mean Him?

SARAH

I mean you. You see I've never stopped loving you. Even though I couldn't see you.

He sits with his arm around her. Tears stream down his face.

SARAH

I made two promises in my life. One was to marry Henry. The other was to stop seeing you. And I'm too weak now to keep either.

Bendrix can't speak.

SARAH

I know you don't believe in Him Maurice. But try to. Talk to Him.

BENDRIX

I can't...

SARAH

Tell Him I'm sorry I'm too human, too weak. Tell him I can't keep my promises. I'm tired of being without you...

On Bendrix' face. We don't know whether he is praying or not. She seems to sleep on his shoulder. Then, after what seems a long time...

BENDRIX

Let's get you home Sarah...

SARAH

I don't want to go home...

BENDRIX

I know.

He leads her out of the church, into the alleyway outside.

EXT. ALLEYWAY. CHURCH. DAY.

Outside, he kisses her.

BENDRIX

I can't live without you Sarah.

SARAH

Me too. Did you tell Him Maurice?

BENDRIX

Yes.

A dumpster now comes down the tiny alleyway, forcing them to separate. It seems to tell us that he lied.

SARAH

It's like a curse Maurice. You were dead.
And I promised. Then you were alive again.

BENDRIX

So you're afraid -

SARAH

That if I break it you'll be dead again.

He touches her face.

BENDRIX

That's me Sarah. My hand.

He kisses her again.

BENDRIX

My mouth. I'm alive. For the first time
in two years.

SARAH

Me too.

BENDRIX

Let me do it Sarah. Let me sort it. Please.

SARAH

Do it. Please. It'd be such relief. I can't
try anymore. I can't even try not to see you.

She coughs. She looks exhausted. He leads her out onto the High Street, through all the crowds.

INT. BENDRIX' FLAT-STAIRWELL. DAY.

The broken stairwell. The wheeling clouds of dust, aftermath of the bomb. Sounds of sirens in the air. Sarah, naked, bends over Bendrix' body and prays.

INT. BENDRIX' FLAT. DAY.

The door opens and Bendrix leads Sarah inside. She stares up at the large stairwell, everything restored and ordinary, the daylight pouring in through the large churchlike window.

SARAH

You've fixed it.

BENDRIX

Of course I have. The war's over Sarah.

SARAH

I know. I never liked the Peace.

They ascend the stairs.

INT. BENDRIX' BEDROOM. DAY.

Sarah, kneeling on the floor, praying. Dust everywhere. Bendrix enters, replaces the dislodged telephone.

BENDRIX

Close one.

SARAH

Oh my God, you're alive.

INT. BENDRIX' BEDROOM. DAY. (PRESENT.)

Bendrix enters with Sarah. He removes the receiver from the telephone and leaves it dangling.

SARAH

Why did you do that Maurice?

BENDRIX

I don't want any calls.

They look at each other in the empty room. A siren sounds in the distance, but this time it is an everyday police-siren.

SARAH

If you knew how many times I sat by the phone thinking I'll call you and say I'm coming for tonight and all the other nights.

BENDRIX

Why didn't you?

SARAH

I would pack the large blue suitcase and the small brown one. Enough clothes for a month's holiday.

Bendrix lifts her in his arms.

BENDRIX

You would have saved us so much trouble...

SARAH

What do children say? A promise is for keeps?

BENDRIX

And is it?

SARAH

I made it because I loved you. And it stopped me from loving you...

BENDRIX

Did it?

They have reached the bed. He kisses her.

SARAH

Stopped me from seeing you then...

She kisses him back.

SARAH

People go on loving God, don't they? All their lives, without seeing Him...

They begin to make love then, as in the old days. Every gesture seems full with a terrible portent, as if some doom will strike, some toll be exacted. But nothing happens. We just share the affection of two lovers, who have been apart for a long, long time.

Afterwards, her head falls, with all the exhaustion of pleasure into the pillow. His hand strokes her face.

BENDRIX

So have we broken the spell?

She smiles, sadly.

BENDRIX

The world didn't end, did it?

SARAH

It did, in a way. But then it always did...

He kisses her.

SARAH

Can I sleep now, Maurice? Please let me sleep...

Her eyes close.

INT. BENDRIX' BEDROOM. NIGHT.

On Sarah's eyes, closed in the darkness. A sound, like a bomb falling, reverberates through the room. It repeats and repeats, with increasing rapidity.

EXT. BENDRIX FLAT. NIGHT.

A huge close up of the cast-iron door knob, striking off the door.

INT. BENDRIX' ROOM. NIGHT.

Sarah wakes and sits up with a gasp, hearing the sound. Bendrix wakes with her.

BENDRIX

Someone at the door -

He drags his body over towards the window and pulls the curtain back a chink.

POV - BELOW -

Henry, knocking at the door. The rain is sheeting down.

BENDRIX

It's only Henry.

SARAH

Don't answer it.

BENDRIX

We'll have to tell him sometime.

SARAH

What shall we tell him?

BENDRIX

That you want a divorce. Your packing the blue and brown suitcase. You've tried to play that part he wants you for too long.

SARAH

Come away with me Maurice.

BENDRIX

Where?

SARAH

Anywhere. Brighton.

BENDRIX

I want to live with you. Marry you. I can't hide it any longer.

SARAH

And I want a few days peace before the arguments begin.

BENDRIX

Henry never argues.

She turns away from him and says very quietly -

SARAH

I wasn't talking about Henry...

EXT. SQUARE. MORNING.

The camera inches through the trees, to reveal Bendrix, helping Sarah down the steps with one arm, holding a case in the other. He leads Sarah towards a waiting cab. As the cab drives off, the camera swoops upwards, as if the point of view is that of some divine predator.

EXT. TRAIN. MORNING.

A train, travelling through the bombed-out South London suburbs.

BENDRIX (VO)

If I had been told I still had a rival,
I wouldn't have believed it...

We see Bendrix in the train, with his arm round Sarah, who sleeps on his shoulder.

EXT. BRIGHTON PIER. DAY.

Sarah and Bendrix walking down the pier, much as described in Greene's Brighton Rock. Holding hands, like lovers. A figure comes into the foreground. It is Parkis, watching them both like the rather inept detective he always was.

On Sarah, walking with Bendrix.

BENDRIX

Do you think your god's jealous, Sarah?

SARAH

Why do you call him mine?

BENDRIX

You're the one who prayed to him.

SARAH

Doesn't everyone, once in a lifetime?

BENDRIX

So is he jealous of me now? With my arm around you? With all I've ever wanted -

SARAH

And what's that, Maurice?

BENDRIX

You beside me... for a lifetime...

SARAH

Can't you be happy with this moment Maurice?

BENDRIX

I am. But if he loves you, he's jealous Sarah.
Because he hasn't got hands that can touch you.

He kisses her. Parkis is sitting on a bench now, some distance off, holding a newspaper. A wind suddenly blows the newspaper away, leaving Parkis exposed. Bendrix sees him.

BENDRIX

The jealous God ? Isn't that what the Bible calls him?

The wind blows over them both, bringing a cloud of dust over them. Sarah erupts into a fit of coughing.

BENDRIX

Let's get you to the hotel...

He leads her back through the crowds. He passes the bench where Parkis was sitting. It is empty, pages of a newspaper blowing round it.

EXT. HOTEL. DAY.

Parkis on the promenade, across from the Grand Hotel. He watches as Sarah and Bendrix enter.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY. DAY.

Bendrix and Sarah walking through the crowded lobby.

BENDRIX

You go on up. I'll get something from the chemist
for that cough...

He walks through the lobby, and out a side door.

EXT. HOTEL. DAY.

Parkis, by the entrance, chatting to a porter. Bendrix emerges from the side door and comes behind him.

BENDRIX

Still on the job, Parkis?

Parkis goes white.

PARKIS

Oh dear oh dear -

BENDRIX

And where's your boy this time?

PARKIS

I left him at home sir -

BENDRIX

Hardly a wise move, Parkis. He'd have had the sense not to get noticed -

PARKIS

You think so sir? Perhaps I wasn't cut out for this job -

BENDRIX

Tell your superiors the circumstances are unique. That - what was your phrase? - the party in question is a writer. They notice everything.

PARKIS

Do we have to inform them, sir?

BENDRIX

- Not if you inform me. Who hired you Parkis?

PARKIS

I'm not at liberty to sir -

BENDRIX

Let me guess. The jealous husband this time -

Parkis' face tells him it's true.

PARKIS

I never expected to be recalled to this case, sir.

BENDRIX

Yours is a secure profession, Parkis. As long as fools like us love, your employment never ends.

PARKIS

You could put it like that sir.

BENDRIX

And love never ends Parkis, does it?

PARKIS

It seems not, sir.

BENDRIX

So what do you need Parkis? Photographs of us in flagrante derelicto? Copies of hotel bills, evidence of soiled sheets? We'd be happy to oblige -

PARKIS

Nothing like that sir. I was only asked to inform him of your whereabouts.

BENDRIX

Which of course you'll do.

PARKIS

I'm obliged to sir, under the terms of my employment. Poste-haste.

BENDRIX

Along with the details of this conversation?

PARKIS

I would omit those, sir.

BENDRIX

Do me a favour Parkis. Include them in your report. Along with the fact that the lady in question - whom you liked, as I remember, Parkis -

PARKIS

Immensely, sir.

BENDRIX

- wants a divorce.

He turns and walks off.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. EVENING.

Sarah sleeping. Bendrix enters, with a chemist's bottle in his hand. He watches her sleep, and pours the contents of the bottle into a glass, mixing it with water.

BENDRIX

Sarah. Drink this.

She opens her eyes, coughs and drinks.

SARAH

I dreamt we had a child.

BENDRIX - -

We will.

SARAH

We were on the bed together. The room filled up with water. There was a child between us.

BENDRIX

Why water?

SARAH

The sea had come in the window.

BENDRIX

You aren't planning to escape me again?

SARAH

How would I escape?

BENDRIX

Float off on all that water -

SARAH

It doesn't exist. It was a dream

He leans down beside her and holds her.

SARAH

As I was going down the stairs
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
I wish that man would go away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

They make love. Sarah arches her back and a cry of what could be pain comes from her mouth.

INT. BRIGHTON PAVILION. DAY.

They walk through the beautiful Chinoiserie of the Brighton Pavilion. Rain pours down through outside every entrance, every window - and there are many of them.

BENDRIX

Edward built it for his mistress. He thought the more elaborate he made it, the more it would forestall the inevitable.

SARAH

And what was the inevitable?

BENDRIX

His fate - as King. And his marriage.

SARAH

To whom?

BENDRIX

Does it matter? It was to someone else.

SARAH

Not now Henry -

And there he is. Standing on the lawns in the pouring rain, seen through a beautifully curved pagoda-like doorway.

HENRY

Forgive me Sarah. I had to -

She turns and runs.

BENDRIX

You had to what, Henry -

Henry reaches out to Bendrix.

HENRY

Talk -

Bendrix pushes away his hand.

BENDRIX

Go back home Henry. You can't hold onto her forever -

HENRY

I know that Bendrix, but -

And Bendrix loses patience and screams.

BENDRIX

She's not yours, Henry - like your pipe and your slippers - they're yours -

HENRY

Please, Bendrix, I don't mean to make a scene -

BENDRIX

No Henry, it's not done, is it -

And Bendrix walks off, leaving him in the rain.

EXT. PIER. DAY.

Sarah, walking in the lashing rain. She sits, or falls into, a seaside bench. Bendrix runs up to her.

SARAH

He wasn't there again today...

BENDRIX

I wish that man would go away.

He sits beside her, takes her hand.

BENDRIX

Why's he doing this Sarah?

SARAH

Don't you know?

BENDRIX

He thinks he loves you -

SARAH

Maybe that too..

And Henry comes into view again, like a drowned pathetic puppy, in the rain.

SARAH

Don't fight it Maurice. Talk to him.

Bendrix walks towards Henry. We almost lose sight of Sarah in the rain that now surrounds them.

BENDRIX

It hardly suits you, Henry.

HENRY

What's that, Bendrix?

BENDRIX

The role of jealous husband.

HENRY

Oh I'm not jealous Bendrix. What was it you said? Lovers are jealous. Husbands are ridiculous. I was never her lover. Not much of a husband either I'm afraid...

BENDRIX

But you hired our detective.

HENRY

I had to find out where she was Bendrix.

BENDRIX

So you know? She wants a divorce?

HENRY

That won't be possible old man.

BENDRIX

You'll contest it?

HENRY

No. But it would take six months.

BENDRIX

What's six months, Henry, out of a lifetime?

HENRY

Half.

BENDRIX

Half of what.

HENRY

Of a lifetime, I'm afraid.

The rain pours down Bendrix' face. He hardly breathes.

HENRY

Sarah's dying, Bendrix.
Her doctor called, the night she didn't come
back. With the result of some tests. I knocked
on your door. I imagined you were both there, but...

Bendrix stands still in the rain.

BENDRIX

How oddly we behave at such moments, Henry.

HENRY

You believe me, don't you? I have his letter -

BENDRIX

Does she know?

HENRY

She must suspect -

BENDRIX

That's why she came away
with me -

HENRY

Perhaps its her way old man. Of saying goodbye.
She is so fond of you...

BENDRIX

One isn't satisfied with fondness...

HENRY

I was...

They hear footsteps coming towards them. They both turn and see Sarah. She walks through the drenching rain towards them. She takes both of their arms.

HENRY

You shouldn't get wet darling...

SARAH

Don't you like the rain, Henry?

HENRY

I do dear, but -

SARAH

You've had news, Henry? Is it good?

HENRY

No dear, it's -

She touches Bendrix' face.

SARAH

You see Maurice. Never make a promise. You may have to keep it.

She rests on both of their arms. The camera draws back and the rain obscures all three of them.

INT. HENRY'S CAR. DAY.

Henry driving. Bendrix in the seat beside him. Sarah is wrapped in blankets in the back, sleeping.

HENRY

There's no ill-feeling left, is there, Bendrix? I got angry with you once, when you told me, but what does that matter now?

BENDRIX

One can't be jealous forever, Henry.

HENRY

You should never have been jealous of me Bendrix. I did Sarah a great disservice when I married her. I realise that now. I'm not the sort that makes a lover. She wanted someone like you.

BENDRIX

I wasn't jealous of you. She moved on, Henry. And once there, she couldn't move back.

HENRY

If you don't mind me asking, I would like you there when the time comes -

BENDRIX

It may yet not come, Henry -

HENRY

You of all people don't believe in miracles, Bendrix.

BENDRIX

No. But Sarah does.

HENRY

You see I'd always assumed that I would die first and that Sarah would know what to do. In a way it's a woman's job, like having a baby...

BENDRIX

Are you at a loss, Henry?

HENRY

I am, quite... and it would save you a bit if you moved in with us. Sarah always said your books weren't as successful as they should be...

Bendrix smiles wryly.

HENRY

You could be there working, in the daytime, while I'm at the ministry. And at night we could both... help...

BENDRIX

I'll come and stay with you both Henry. Until, as you say, the time comes...

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Light streams into the dusty livingroom. Bendrix is sitting there, typing. We see what he is typing.

TYPE

"And so I moved to the North side of the Common. I wasted a month's rent because Henry wanted me to come at once..."

There is a knock on the door. Bendrix goes to answer it.

INT. HALLWAY. DAY.

Bendrix opens the door to a figure in a black serge suit and a priest's collar. It is Smythe.

PRIEST

Excuse me -

He recognises Bendrix.

SMYTHE

Oh dear -

BENDRIX

Can I help you father?

SMYTHE

I've come about Mrs Miles -

BENDRIX

She's indisposed.

SMYTHE

You mean ill, don't you?

BENDRIX -

Yes, I suppose I do.

SMYTHE

She's been to see me several times -

BENDRIX

Ah. Are you her confessor, Father?

SMYTHE

I had hoped to be. I know she would like to see me before...

BENDRIX

How do you know that, Father?

SMYTHE

Mrs Miles is an exceptionally good woman. She deserves all the help the church can give her -

BENDRIX

She left word with me father. She's not to be disturbed...

SMYTHE

Is her husband here?

BENDRIX

No.

SMYTHE

She told me about you -

BENDRIX

I know she did. I'm the lover, father.

The priest's lip curls in distaste.

SMYTHE

I could send another priest -

BENDRIX

That would include him too, father.

He turns to go, then turns back.

SMYTHE

You know, I know when a man's in pain...

BENDRIX

I'm not in pain father. I'm in hate. I hate the god of yours that's taking her from me. And my last happiness will come with the fact that she's been left with me, not you -

INT. STAIRWAY. DAY.

Bendrix ascends the stairway with a glass of milk. From his expression there could be poison in it.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Sarah, lying in her bed by the open window, a breeze blowing her hair.

SARAH

Who was that, Maurice?

BENDRIX

The postmen.

SARAH

What did he bring?

BENDRIX

He had the wrong adress.

SARAH

How odd for a postman.

She turns and looks at him.

SARAH

You know what happened Maurice - that day -

BENDRIX

You thought I was dead and I wasn't -

SARAH

No, darling. I caught belief like a disease. I fell into belief like I fell into love. And I tried my darling I tried, didn't I, to pretend it hadn't happened, to be with you again -

BENDRIX

You can't believe this Sarah -

SARAH

But it's true - I never loved anyone as I loved you - and when you came through that door with blood on your face - I never believed anything as I did then - I've fought it Maurice but I haven't any fight left -

Her eyes close, out of exhaustion. He sits there, holding her hand. Then after a long time her eyes open again.

SARAH

It wasn't the postman, was it -

BENDRIX

No it wasn't...

SARAH

Dear Maurice, you can't keep fighting...
it's only love, after all...

Her eyes close again. This time perhaps for good.

INT. LIVINGROOM. NIGHT.

Bendrix typing, as if he has been typing for hours. We read the page.

TYPE

So You've taken her. But You haven't got me yet.
I don't want Your peace and your love.
I wanted Sarah for a lifetime and You took her away.
So I hate You God, I hate You as though You existed...

There is a sound of the door opening and we hear Henry's voice.

HENRY

Bendrix?

We hear his feet go upstairs, as Bendrix continues typing. The an anguished cry, which one would have thought could never come from Henry. Bendrix on instinct stops typing and runs out the door.

INT. HALLWAY. NIGHT.

Henry, staggering down the stairs, his face a mask of pain. Bendrix catches him as he falls.

HENRY

You'll have to help me Bendrix - I can't -

BENDRIX

I will Henry, I will -

HENRY

I can't live in a world where she's gone Bendrix -

BENDRIX

I'll teach you to Henry. I know that world very well -
He leads Henry gently into the livingroom.

EXT. GOLDERS GREEN CREMATORIUM. DAY.

The crematorium tower is smoking, with the fire of Sarah's remains. From the mortuary chapel emerge a group of mourners, in very formal black. Bendrix is supporting Henry by the elbow, and as Henry is surrounded by sympathisers, Bendrix withdraws and walks off through the graves. A figure is revealed in the foreground. It is Parkis.

PARKIS

It's a sad pleasure to see you here sir, where bygones are always bygones.

BENDRIX

Do you always follow your people as far as this?

PARKIS

She was a very fine lady, sir. At the cocktail party she handed me a glass of sherry.

BENDRIX

Was it South African sherry?

PARKIS

I wouldn't know sir. But there weren't many like her. My boy now, he's always speaking of her.

BENDRIX

How is your boy, Parkis?

PARKIS

He's exceptionally well sir. Though a little upset today. He imagined she'd be buried in a Catholic way...

BENDRIX

Whatever for, Parkis?

PARKIS

Young boys sir, they get these ideas - though I have to say even I can't explain it -

BENDRIX

Explain what, Parkis?

ON A YOUNG BOY, WALKING THROUGH THE GRAVEYARD URNS

We don't recognise him at first.

PARKIS (VO)

On the day of her assignation, sir, she walked him to the tube. She thought he was lost sir, gave him a coin and kissed him on the cheek.

It is Parkis' son Lance. As he comes closer, we see the birthmark on his face is no longer there.

PARKIS

On his afflicted cheek, sir. And over the weeks that followed, his affliction gradually went away. I try to keep him rational-sir, but he swears it was because of her -

Lance has now reached them. He stares at Bendrix with unsmiling eyes.

PARKIS

Say hello to Mr Bendrix, Lancelot.

LANCE

Hello, sir.

Bendrix cannot reply.

EXT. SQUARE-COMMON. NIGHT.

Two umbrellas, walking in the rain. Bendrix and Henry.

HENRY

Do you know I read one of your books once, Bendrix. Sarah made me. You described a house after a woman - in it had died.

BENDRIX

The Ambitious Host.

HENRY

That was the name. It seemed good at the time, but you got it all wrong, Bendrix.

BENDRIX

I generally do.

HENRY

You described how the husband found the house terribly empty. He moved round the rooms, lost. Sometimes he'd pour himself drinks in two glasses.

BENDRIX

I forget it. Sounds a bit literary.

HENRY

But the trouble is, the house doesn't seem empty. When she was away before and I'd miss her terribly - she probably was with you - then it was empty. But now because she's always away, she's never away. She's not having lunch with anybody - she's not at the cinema with you. There's nowhere for her to be but at home.

BENDRIX

But where's her home?

HENRY

Well, wherever we are I suppose... You must feel it too Bendrix. It's fuller than ever in a way...

BENDRIX

I suppose I do, Henry.

HENRY

But how can it be empty and full? I'm not a literary kind of chap, Bendrix -

BENDRIX

It's called a paradox, Henry...

BENDRIX

Yes, a paradox -

BENDRIX

Two mutually impossible, contradictory facts -

The camera pans as the two umbrellas walk through the rain.

INT. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.

Bendrix typing. A picture of Sarah by the typewriter. Henry comes in with two drinks and places on on his desk.

BENDRIX

Thank you Henry.

We see the typed page.

TYPE

I wrote at the start this was a diary of hate. I hated You as though You existed. Now I'm tired of hating but You're still there. So Your cunning is infinite. You used my hate to win my acknowledgement. And I've only one prayer left. Dear God forget about me. Look after her, and Henry. But leave me alone for ever.

THE END.---