

The Great Escaper

By

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EXT. HOVE SEAFRONT - DAY

A wave flops forwards and hisses over shining pebbles. Early morning sun beats down on a frothing sea.

EXT. HOVE SEAFRONT - DAY

A man in his late eighties stares at the water. He has white hair, wears a Gannex mac and leans against a stick.
BERNIE JORDAN.

Then we see a banner and bunting, attached to a wall of the esplanade behind him. It reads: *D-DAY: 70 YEARS.*

Bernie's eyes remain locked on the relentless surge of the English channel.

EXT. BEACHFRONT CAFE - DAY

Bernie waits in a queue at a wooden hut. He stands behind two men in their thirties, in full lycra, pushing expensive bikes-

CYCLIST

Two cappuccinos, two bacon sarnies, Mick.

The cyclist sits with the other man. Bernie steps forwards-

SECOND CYCLIST

Three. Three of everything - Mick!

A third lycra-man has cut across Bernie. He turns to the others, at their table-

SECOND CYCLIST (CONT'D)

You didn't wait for me! Coming up the Dyke...Cheers mate-

He nods to Bernie, entirely perfunctorily, then clicks across to the others, all three bantering confidently. Bernie mutters quietly-

BERNIE

S'alright...

(re focuses on owner)

Cup of tea, please. Four sugars.

He blinks. He's invisible.

EXT. THE PINES - DAY

Bernie approaches a large, Victorian building. A sign says: The Pines Care Home. He passes an old man in a wheelchair, being pushed by a carer. The bloke looks dreadful, deathly-

BERNIE

Cor...You've gained a bit've weight,
Harold-

He smiles, positively, then greets a couple of other residents, a man and a woman, both about his own age. He jokes with them, full of good humour.

INT. THE PINES, RESIDENTS LOUNGE - DAY

Bernie is inside the home now and turns to place the carrier bag he carries on a side shelf. Then he walks slowly towards the main communal area. He's painfully slow and the smile has gone as he concentrates on putting one foot in front of the other. He stops when he reaches the others and beams again - at a tiny figure in a wing backed chair-

BERNIE

Edith! There you are-

EDITH

Where did you think I was?

BERNIE

I hadn't seen you for days. I thought you were dead.

This bit of banter is a bit too rich and there are several disapproving comments from the others in the lounge.

A young care assistant, mid twenties, looks at him ruefully as she leaves the room carrying a tray of drugs.

ADELE

Mornin', Bernie. Nice walk?

She locks eyes and he stares innocently back.

EXT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

Bernie walks up the stairs. It's a struggle. He takes tiny, uncertain steps. But he is determined.

Then he stops part way along a door-dotted corridor. A mat here says WELCOME. He reaches carefully for the handle and pushes inside-

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

Bernie crosses the room, places his bag down and moves to an inner, bedroom door. He starts to sing.

BERNIE
Hey, did you happen to see the-

He opens the bedroom door-

RENE (O.S.)
Wooah! Hold your horses!

He stiffens; pulls the door towards him again, alarmed-

BERNIE
What's the matter?

RENE (O.S.)
Nothing...only I haven't got my face on.

BERNIE
I seen you without-

RENE (O.S.)
Yeah. I know...1973. 's not happening again.

He tuts and turns to his carrier bag. Instantly, he looks pleased again.

BERNIE
I have the got the big chocolate bar!!

She coos - pleased - as he puts a BIG bar of fruit and nut on a ledge outside the bedroom.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
He had a load o'new gear in:
black forest gateau, which I told him we
couldn't have on account of it being
German-

RENE (O.S.)
Bernie!

BERNIE
What? You wanna flog chocolate bars,
don't start a bloody world war.

We see Rene for the first time. She is sitting on the side of the bed in her nightie, checking herself in a small compact mirror. She is late eighties - and has already dismissed Bernie's last comment.

RENE (O.S.)

Alright. It's safe. You can come in.

And the rhythm of their old lives goes on.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

Bernie though, is staring at the sea again, looking out of their living room window. And for the first time, we see in his eyes, concern. The kettle clicks, boiled and breaks the moment. He turns and gathers himself-

BERNIE

Right. Soon as we've had some grub, I'll take you for a spin along the front.

He turns towards their bedroom again-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Then we can play a bit of whist when we get back...I think they got a male stripper for you this afternoon.

RENE (O.S.)

What?

He turns. She's at the door. He beams-

BERNIE

I made that last bit up.

Rene chuckles. She crosses the room with a stick. She isn't breathing well. He watches, concerned again-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You alright?

RENE

No. I'm not. I'm bloomin' old...

He stares still, then chuckles, choosing to tune-in to the tone proffered. And she is careful to lower herself onto the sofa with the illusion of utter control. He brings tea sweeteners across-

BERNIE

There you go.

He puts them down beside her and kisses her head. She nods her thanks, still a little winded, then frowns, noticing a picture on the side, beside the plate:

She and Bernie - and a donkey in a straw hat. It's somewhere abroad. Mid seventies. The photo is wonky and too small for the frame. She jabs her stick towards it-

RENE

Wha's that?

He peers and grins.

BERNIE

Oh! You seen it? It's Torremolinos.

RENE

I know! What's it doing there?

BERNIE

(confused)

Was a happy holiday.

She would interrogate him further but then spots other photos scattered on the floor, around an open box which has been pulled from a cupboard next to the sofa - the cupboard door still ajar.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You remember? The donkey was called Pedro. He took a real shine to you.

RENE

He was called Manuel. The donkey. Pedro was the owner. And it was him that took a shine to me.

She recalls, ruefully. He laughs. There is a knock-

BERNIE

Come in! Less you're the bailiffs.

RENE

Did they put something in your tea down that cafe this morning?

He ignores her - pointedly, as Judith, mid forties, the care home manager, enters then room-

JUDITH

Hey! Rene. How you doin'?

Rene looks at Judith wryly.

RENE
Very good, thank you, Judith.

BERNIE
You timed it perfect. I just mashed.

JUDITH
Ah. I'd love to, Bernie but...We got an inspection.

BERNIE
Aww. Fair enough...Can't say I didn't offer, though...So, what is it? What can we do you for?

But instantly his expression tightens as he sees her discomfort. He groans. He already knows-

JUDITH
I rang them straightaway. But...I'm really sorry, Bernie. We left it too late-

RENE
Left what? What you on about?

JUDITH
The trip to the beaches. D-Day.

RENE
Bernie?

He turns to her, looks uncertain, all his bravado momentarily gone. But in a millisecond, his eyes are back on Judith and he beams unequivocally-

BERNIE
It's fine! Honest... 's me own fault. I...should'a got organised.

Rene still watches Bernie, as he makes the best of it - becomes the indefatigable one again. But she can see there is a problem...

BERNIE (CONT'D)
They always do a good show here. I'll go to that instead...Thanks for tryin' anyway.

He nods, smiles once more. Judith makes sure, then hurries off. He turns. Rene still stares enquiringly. But he smiles and claps his hands-

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Right. Brew. Then beach!

EXT. SEAFRONT - DAY

Bernie pushes Rene in a wheelchair along the esplanade. The day is bright. They comment on the weather, the gorgeous view. They are back in kilter. The moment has passed.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Or not. Bernie is up - in the middle of the night. He breathes heavily. He's sitting on a suede poof and peering into an old shoe box. He frowns, as at last, he spots what he's looking for!

A small object, 4x2 inches, wrapped in yellowing newspaper. Bernie blinks, moves several kept letters, and takes it out. He hardly breathes in its presence.

Then the door starts to open and he slips the packet into his pyjama breast pocket, as Rene limps in-

BERNIE

Hello, love. You alright?...I didn't disturb you did I?

RENE

No, I...I was awake anyway. Taking my pills!

(seeing the tin and *more* mess from the cupboard)

Oh! What you getting out now?

BERNIE

I'm not! I'm...puttin' back...I'll leave the rest 'til mornin'...

She crosses to a chair and sits, heavily. He tuts - admits a little-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I can't settle. I...I should've had a rum!

He smiles, weakly and she sighs-

RENE

Just go...

He looks to her, lost - then suddenly understanding:

BERNIE

To France?!

RENE

Why not? That's what I'd do.

She holds his gaze - it's disarming. He considers and for a second looks excited. Then-

BERNIE

Yeah but...It's *all* organised trips. That's how they set it up. You...wouldn't manage on your own-

RENE

You would!

She beams. Her faith is absolute. But he's tingling now-

BERNIE

I couldn't leave you. All on your own-

RENE

I'm not on my own. I got round the clock nursing and-

BERNIE

That ain't the point! You...You've not been great lately with your health so now ain't the time for me to go chargin' off on some adventure.

RENE

Unless you have to.

Bang. The silence is like that after a gun shot. Neither quite knows what to say. Rene, as the one who spoke, feels it most acutely and she gets up, as quickly as she can, then leaves. Bernie is shocked. This is new.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The new day is creeping into the bedroom but Rene is fast asleep still. A hand reaches into view and picks up two wrist watches from the bedside table next to her. It is Bernie. He is dressed and on the move.

Now he's at the door. He lifts up his carrier bag, grabs his stick, looks back once and leaves, closing the door with the slightest of clicks. Rene does not wake.

EXT. THE PINES, STAIRCASE - DAY

And Bernie looks pleased. He has made his decision so now there is only action.

Except then, he hears a noise and ducks back around a turn in the stairs as two night staff cross the hall below, chatting. They step into the office and Bernie waddles past, and out.

EXT. SEAFRONT, BUS STOP - DAY

Bernie, set for the long haul, has taken charge of a walker now (his stick shoved down one stanchion) and he leans heavily against it as he arrives at his nearest bus stop. He checks the time table. It's labyrinthine and he's slightly flustered. A bus pulls up and he determines to take it anyway. But Adele, his care assistant gets off the bus. She sees Bernie and frowns-

ADELE

Bernie?

He smiles - but looks far from delighted.

BERNIE

Adele.

ADELE

(checks watch)

Early walk this morning.

BERNIE

Yes.

Adele frowns, sensing something. The doors close on the bus and it pulls away. Bernie watches it - slightly alarmed. He looks back to Adele. And smiles brightly.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

See you later.

ADELE

Yeah....See you later.

He walks off. She does, too. They go in opposite directions but after a moment, Bernie turns round - as Adele does, too. He turns quickly back and continues his walk - stymied.

EXT. SEAFRONT - DAY

He's at another bus stop now, checking its timetable - and this one's no clearer. He glances at his two watches and tuts. Time is rushing on and he's still in Hove. But then he sees something - and beams. Of course! It's obvious! He shoves out his hand-

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Whoosh! A taxi smudges the Sussex countryside and is gone-

INT. TAXI - DAY

Bernie sits in the back of the cab and stares out to sea as they skirt the cliffs. He looks away - and his eyes seem to go somewhere else, not here, and suddenly, that early sense of momentum, of everything being ahead of him, is stopped dead in its tracks. A beeping noise-

INT. THE PINES, BERNIE AND RENE'S ROOM - DAY

Rene hears the alarm clock. She groans, and pads about to turn it off. She takes a second and turns to her side. The other bed is empty. She blinks. He's gone. She sits up. He's done it. And then she feels a rush. It's fine! She tells herself. It's fine. She urged him to do it. But all the same...she breathes deeply...

EXT. PORTSMOUTH FERRY TERMINAL - DAY

Bernie pushes himself forward on this walker as quickly as he can - but he's clearly late; the area outside the departure area is largely deserted and the tables and information points set up for the incoming vets are already being dismantled-

ORGANISER

Thank you, gents. Quick as you can-

A last few old soldiers are beckoned inside by an organiser. Just as a tannoy rings out:

TANNOY

This is the final call for the 08:15 sailing to Ouistreham. All passengers, please, for the 08:15 to Ouistreham, final call.

Bernie's eyes widen! And he pushes inside.

INT. PORTSMOUTH FERRY TERMINAL - DAY

Now he seems already to be at sea but in fact, Bernie shoves his way alongside an oceanic mural which stretches the entire length of the departure hall. Extendable barriers are snapped shut behind him.

INT. PORTSMOUTH FERRY TERMINAL - DAY

Bernie appears at the top of an escalator. More calls go out for the imminent departure of the ferry.

But finally he seems to have caught up with the rest of the cohort as several veterans cross in front of him.

Bernie blinks, the rush has winded him, nevertheless, and he needs a second to catch his breath. He looks round, and spots a departure ramp and a sign: TO THE SHIP.

SCOTT (O.S.)
Are you lost, sir?

Bernie turns. The accent was South London and its owner now limps towards him. He is a young soldier, early twenties, immaculately turned out in tie and regimental blazer. He grabs a wheelchair-

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Would you like a ride?

BERNIE
Don't mind if I do!

Bernie tries to hide his relief as Scott moves the wheelchair into position.

INT. PORTSMOUTH FERRY TERMINAL - DAY

Scott now pushes Bernie up the ramp and looks at the ticket Bernie holds up for him. He's stunned.

SCOTT
You're standin'? All the way?

BERNIE
I couldn't get a seat. There was none left.

SCOTT
Okay. Well...In that case-
(turns, points formally)
I'd suggest you get hammered in the bar.
(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

(Bernie chuckles)

Scott Selwood...2nd Battalion Mercian Regiment. Or, well, I was, 'fore I trod on a mine...Helmand...Five years ago-

(Bernie makes a noise of commiseration)

Who were you with by the way?

BERNIE

Royal Navy. Sparks...Leading Seaman, Bernard Jordan.

The two men shake hands.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

Rene is deep in thought. As Martin toasts malt loaf-

MARTIN (O.S.)

Jam?

She reconnects, turns-

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Jam.

RENE

Ohh. Yes, please.

The wryness is back. She hates being an invalid. He doesn't hear it.

MARTIN

Hey! How's it going by the way...Both of you in here. You got enough space?

RENE

I have! But I'm tidy. You seen the mess he's made down there-

She points to the cupboard and its disgorged contents. Martin laughs. As he gives her her mid-morning pills: three, in a tiny plastic cup, placed before her on the trolley. He returns-

RENE (CONT'D)

I still don't think he should of done it. I have to be here for the nursing but...He could'a kept the house going for a bit longer yet-

MARTIN

He misses you! That's what he told me...
 (gives her the malt loaf)
 Where is he, anyway?

RENE

'Scuse me?

MARTIN

Bernie.

Rene stares - hadn't considered the question of telling anyone. She straightens: assumes her most proper posture.

RENE

Oh. He went out.

Martin glances towards her, quizzically. And she concentrates on taking the pills-all at once.

RENE (CONT'D)

Mmmn. Delicious.

MARTIN

(laughs)

OK. Well, you're done. You got your dosette box for later-

(moves back to drugs trolley)

I'm out of here! See you, Rene.

In a second, he is gone. Rene watches the closed door. And exhales! She chuckles. Then, serious again, she pulls a small photo from up her cardigan sleeve. She straightens and stares at a small black and white print: a young man in navy uniform, HMS lettering clear on his cap. Bernie. Aged about twenty. Her eyes rest on it for a long moment. She blinks, and soon the look of deep thought is over her again. As forties music is faintly heard-

INT. FERRY - DAY

-Music which is picked up by a group singing beneath a banner on board the ship. They are The Candy Girls. They are dressed in Forties military outfits, with hair and make up to match. The whole deck has been decorated with period posters and red, white and blue bunting is everywhere. The space is filled, too, with a mixture of old soldiers, younger carers (or family members), and current members of the armed forces, there to assist.

Bernie moves closer to the singers and stares, amazed. He turns to his side as a woman in her sixties, pushes a be-medalled man in a wheelchair towards the cafe. He looks the other way and sees an old man in his eighties saying something to another old bloke, both laughing, and both with *their* medals glinting.

Bernie hesitates, uncertain almost, but then he undoes his mac, slips it off and for the first time we see what is underneath the coat: *his* medals, on the breast pocket of his smartest blazer. Bernie straightens the medals, then pulls his shoulders back and instantly feels himself settle in. He looks to the singers once more and allows himself a little sway of the shoulders - his decision to come feeling ever more vindicated. Then he hears another noise - the clink of glasses and someone asking for a brandy. He turns - better and better!

INT. FERRY, BAR - DAY

Bernie sits in a comfy chair in the bar area and sips his drink. He inhales, letting the occasion seep into him. There is a hum of companionable conversation all around.

But then, piercing the calm, the ship's horn blasts twice into the clear sky and the vessel starts to move. Bernie ignores it. Concentrates on his drink - as all around him in the bar, people head towards the deck.

Then, as the horn sounds again and the exodus to join those outside grows, we watch Bernie change before our eyes. His features drain of colour and he realises that the hand which was happily swishing ice around his glass, can no longer NOT do that, and is shaking uncontrollably. A second more, as the ship gathers speed, and then Bernie's expression collapses inwards, entirely-

FLASHBACK. EXT. CHANNEL - DAY, 1944

Bernie's young face. Ashen. As all around is a cacophony of noise and confusion. Beside Bernie, there is a large switch, the toggle turned to OPEN, and tanks thunder off the carrier towards shore. An explosion nearby hurls Bernie to the side of the landing craft as voices call out: MIDSHIPS! NO. THERE! BLOODY THERE!...HOLD HER STEADY!!!! It is mayhem-

Then, Bernie again, closer still. He is stunned, incredulous:

END OF FLASHBACK

ARTHUR (O.S.)
You alright?

INT. FERRY, BAR - DAY

Bernie starts. He looks up from his glass. A man of his own age stands there. His accent is pure public school.

ARTHUR
I didn't mean to...
(indicates Bernie's drink)
Man should be able to do certain things
in peace. I was...worried. You
seemed...in a spot of bother.

He smiles. It's kind. Bernie smiles back.

BERNIE
Naah. Thank you. I'm fine. I-
(taps tummy)
Ain't got me sea legs yet...And I'm ex
navy!

They both laugh. A beat. The man reaches over-

ARTHUR
Arthur. Howard-Johnson.
(they shake)
Bit of a mouthful, I know.

BERNIE
Bernie. Bernie Jordan. Pleased to meet
you.

ARTHUR
Would you like another? I was just going
to the bar? 'Less you want to get out
onto the deck, do you? With the rest?

BERNIE
Nah. I'm okay...That'd be lovely. Thank
you.

Bernie smiles again. It's rigid, fixed.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT, BEDROOM - DAY

Rene has been busy. As evidenced by a step-ladder balanced on a pile of books. It's a terrifying thought, but she's obviously been up it - to search in a storage space which sits atop the wardrobe. Now she walks from the steps to her bed, carrying a pile of records.

She sits and flicks through them - the bed, like the floor, is strewn with photos and keep-sakes.

RENE (O.S.)

Oh. Where are you...? I know you're in here somewhere...

(stops; distracted)

Awww...Fifi

She spots a photo on the bed spread and picks it up. It is a snap of she and Bernie.

It is in black and white and features the two of them standing before a van - with JORDAN ELECTRICAL written on the side. Rene is most interested in the black standard poodle that is with them, however. Evidently, the dog is called Fifi.

Then Rene frowns and picks up another photo. It's about ten years later - in colour. She and Bernie are about forty, saying cheers with bottles of beer. They sit in a pleasure garden and hold onto the same poodle - who is now greying with age. Rene tuts and makes a noise of fondness.

Then she gets back to the record search. A moment later-

RENE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ah!...Gotcha! Oh, Fifi, you helped me find it! You are a wonder! And a whizz.

She stands up again. She holds onto an old 78 record-

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT, SITTING ROOM - DAY

Rene cranks a lever on an ancient record player. She straightens, breathless, but still enthused. She lays the needle down and instant crackling ensues. Then the tune begins - upbeat, swing, from the forties. Rene laughs, delighted, and starts to dance. She is hardly moving in truth, but she is feeling every note. Then, after a moment, she stops and smiles sadly. She closes her eyes. It was *so long ago*...

FLASHBACK. INT. VILLAGE HALL - NIGHT, 1944

Young Bernie and Rene jive. The musicians on stage have wound it up so the two sweat with effort but they are REALLY something. And Bernie wants more! He shouts to the band leader-

BERNIE
C'mon!! At the double. Like a graveyard
in here! Hurry up!

The band leader, an elderly man not without pride, looks outraged-

BAND LEADER
Too slow? Too slow! You cheeky bugger!
(looks back to the band)
Right! C'mon boys!

And they juice it up still more. Bernie beams. That's it!

He grabs Rene and they start to move - sashaying to the centre of the floor. Almost at once, the rest of the dancers clear away to give the supercharged couple space to perform. And perform they do, as the bystanders whoop and clap along. Finally, the tune reaches its crescendo and stops.

Bernie and Rene are left, close, staring into each others eyes. A moment...

BERNIE
I wanna take you somewhere.

RENE
Oh, yeah.

She smiles, wryly. He looks abashed, shy suddenly-

BERNIE
I mean...Only if you wanna. It was
just...this place-

RENE
No. I wanna...I'd go anywhere with you.
Anywhere at all.

She looks right at him. Her expression intensifies. Yes. That's *exactly* what she means. He's stunned. And she rather enjoys his look of shock.

END OF FLASHBACK

A loud knocking and Rene turns sharply to one side-

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

-Frowns, in the present, as she peers towards the door from the sofa where she holds a different record sleeve: one of half a dozen now scattered there.

RENE

Hang on.
(crosses; stops player)
Come in.

Adele enters - sees Rene - and all the ephemera...

ADELE

Bloody hell. You been burgled?

Adele crosses, checks Rene's dosette box, and ticks a sheet. She glances up again and sees Rene is frowning-

ADELE (CONT'D)

All that stuff everywhere. Which is a trip hazard, actually. It should really be cleared away.

She has crossed, and now checks a medicine in the fridge-

RENE

Well, somebody got out of bed on the wrong side this morning...
(peers; moves closer)
If you got out of bed at all...You've got great big rings under your eyes...

Adele turns, outraged (and rumbled). She hurries back and grabs her sheet again-

ADELE

Tea downstairs tonight, or up here?

RENE

Up here.

ADELE

Same for Bernie?

Rene blinks. And smiles firmly-

RENE

I don't know. He's not back yet.

ADELE

Really?

She's surprised and glances to the wall clock. Then she makes another note-

ADELE (CONT'D)

Tell him to ring down, will you? Once he's decided-

RENE
Will do. Will do...

She smiles easily and sits. Adele can feel something not said. But she's busy and decides to let it go.

ADELE
Right then, Rene-
(turns to exit)
I've gotta get round the rest, so-

She hears a noise. Rene. In discomfort. She looks back. Rene's head is bowed and she's wincing.

Adele is uncertain...

ADELE (CONT'D)
You alright, Rene?

RENE
Oh...It's nothing. It's just-
(taps chest)
A twinge-

She winces again. Adele looks alarmed.

ADELE
Oh-
(rushes over; helps Rene)
Here. Sit down...You shouldn't be
standing.

RENE
I'm alright. I...I've got me pills...and
more pills.

She sits. Smiles. But she's pale. Adele stares, eyes wide, trying to be reassured. She isn't-and remembers-

ADELE
The doctor!
(Rene's lost)
He's on his rounds-
(hurries across room)
I'll go and get him!

RENE
Adele! You're panicking!

But Adele's already gone. And Rene breathes heavily.

INT. FERRY, BAR - DAY

Bernie, having paid for the next round, is checking his rapidly emptying wallet: bloody hell! He banishes the thought and sits back. Arthur picks up his drink, smiles.

ARTHUR

So, who have you come with, Bernie? An Association or-

BERNIE

No! No. I'm...on me own.

(Arthur is surprised)

I know...I was...a bit late...

(beams; pushes on)

Anyway, I...told you I was navy. You still ain't said a word-

ARTHUR

Oh, RAF. Bomber Command. I was in Halifaxes. Towing the gliders over. Poor buggers...Then straight back to the day job: bombing Caen. Came across four times in the end. Flattened it.

He picks up his drink once more - swigs.

BERNIE

I couldn't'a done that. All the way up there. I go dizzy on the top deck of a bus.

ARTHUR

(chuckles)

Well, up there's a damn sight safer than down where you were-

(replaces his glass)

What about afterwards? What did you do then? I was a school master-at one of England's finest public schools, can you believe-

BERNIE

Well, I can actually, Arthur. That accent: you could cut glass-

(Arthur roars; they both settle)

Have you been many times? Over to France?

Arthur's smile stiffens.

ARTHUR

No. No. This is my first go as a matter of fact.

He nods. But he can't hold Bernie's gaze, and looks away, grabbing his drink. He slides it back again-

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Actually, if you'll excuse me. I think I need to...indulge another of the indignities of old age.

He chuckles, stands. And heads towards the toilets. Bernie watches and frowns. What happened there? He blinks, intrigued, thinking.

INT. THE PINES - DAY

The doctor sits next to Rene, checking her pulse-

DOCTOR SAUNDERS

It's fine.

(nods; stands)

It's angina. We know you get that.

RENE

The pain *has* gone...I feel a bit of a fraud.

The doctor smiles, too, making a note in a pad.

DOCTOR SAUNDERS

I'm going to prescribe you some glycerin pills. If you get any more discomfort, slip one under your tongue and let it dissolve. OK? If you're worried, get someone to call me.

(she nods. He crosses to his bag and roots inside)

You mustn't over do it, Rene.

She frowns. He turns to the record player, the souvenirs, the photos. He looks ruefully back. She holds his gaze-

RENE

With all respect, doctor, a couple of weeks ago you were telling me to make the most of my time...Weren't you?

Her eyes twinkle but the doctor can see flint there, too-

DOCTOR SAUNDERS

No. Of course. I understand...

He shows her the bottle and puts it close, on the table. She smiles, demurely. But firmly in charge.

INT. THE PINES - DAY

Judith waits in the corridor outside Bernie and Rene's flat. She looks frustrated. As does Martin. They speak in hushed tones-

MARTIN

I tried! I tried the cafe on the front,
the shop on Lansdowne...The Red Lion.
Nobody's seen him.

Adele emerges from the flat opposite. She makes a note on a form but registers the other conversation, too-

JUDITH

So where is he?! He's almost ninety. He
can't have gone far...

ADELE

You talkin' about Bernie?

JUDITH

(nods)

He'll want to be with her, if she's not
feelin' well...Only he's disappeared off
the face of the earth-

She looks to Martin whose eyes flash: it's not his fault-

ADELE

He's in Brighton.

JUDITH

What?

ADELE

That's where he was headed. Out of Hove
and...

(makes 'onwards' gesture with
her hand)

When I bumped into him.

MARTIN

You bumped into him?

Adele frowns: hears a note-

ADELE

Yeah.

JUDITH

At what time?

ADELE
Quarter to six. About.

JUDITH
Quarter to six!? And you didn't think to mention it 'til now?

ADELE
I didn't know you were lookin' for him, 'til now, did I?!

Judith's eyes widen. But the flat door opens and the doctor steps out, closing the door behind him.

JUDITH
How is she, Doctor? Is everything okay?

DOCTOR SAUNDERS
Yeah. She's resting. And she ought to take it easy for the next couple of days...Keep an eye on that, will you?
(she nods)
Good...In which case...I better get back to the others-

He hurries off. And Martin prepares to head into Rene's-

JUDITH
Martin...No mention. OK? Bernie...The last thing Rene needs now is any extra stress.

He nods, understood. He taps on Rene's door and enters. Judith looks to Adele-

JUDITH (CONT'D)
You, come with me.

ADELE
Where we goin'?

JUDITH
To follow protocol...

Adele looks upset - and victimised.

EXT. FERRY - DAY

Bernie is out on deck. The sea is like a millpond. He turns to look behind him - to England and the white cliffs which are still quite plain in the distance but then he turns back and focuses on the land before him, which draws ever nearer: France.

His expression tightens:

FLASHBACK. EXT. CHANNEL - DAY, 1944

Shells explode and young Bernie grabs the side of the landing craft. He cowers. The noise of incoming gun fire is getting louder and more frequent. We go closer on Bernie as his name is shouted by his commanding officer - but Bernie does not hear him. Because now his expression has changed, and has gone from disbelief - to one of abject fear.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. FERRY/PORT - DAY

Bernie looks hesitant. He knew what to expect - but to feel it, is nevertheless chastening. Then, the horn sounds loudly, and an announcement is made in French, that the ship is nearing port.

Once more, there is a move to the railings as the veterans crane their necks to see the shoreline they liberated. They point to landmarks they recognise but comment, too, on how changed it all looks.

Bernie though, hasn't moved; he is exactly where we left him, at the rear, trying to be present, yet knowing that the inevitable drip feed of the past will continue - has to continue.

Then there is a jolt of uncomfortable laughter. Scott. He is on the deck below, helping several vets to their feet and towards the coach exits. He jokes with them, takes the mickey, and generally tries to chivvy them along. But there's something wrong with it - something manic. Which Bernie looks down on - and sees.

He sees too, that as soon as the vets are gone, Scott's smile fades - and he looks alone. Then, he glances round, desperately searching for something else he can do-

Bernie stares, troubled-

ARTHUR (O.S.)

There you are.

Bernie turns. Arthur stands a few feet away. He looks self conscious, slightly embarrassed...

BERNIE

Yeah. Sorry. I've been-

ARTHUR

It's fine. Honestly. I just...I've been hanging onto this. All your worldly.

He holds up the carrier. Bernie smiles: he'd forgotten. Arthur places it on a table beside them and then looks straight back to Bernie - something clearly on his mind.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Listen...Do you have anywhere to stay? Over here?

(Bernie hadn't considered it- and immediately sags)

No. No. Don't worry! That's why I'm asking. I mean...you can tag along with us...That's my lot. Over there-

He points to a small gathering of elderly people, forming up in the bar, before a younger, blazered, tour leader-

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

It'd be no bother at all.

He smiles. Bernie, too. But instantly, it falls-

BERNIE

Which is such a kind offer. It's just...cash-wise-

ARTHUR

There's loads of room on the coach! and...I'm in a twin that's already paid for so...You wouldn't have to spend a penny-

(stops; then hesitates)

And in any case...I think I wouldn't mind a bit of company, Bernie. If I'm honest. If that was alright with you?

He looks right at Bernie and Bernie feels, again, a connection. He nods and smiles-

BERNIE

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Arthur smiles, relieved, and quickly turns away-

ARTHUR

Come on! Let's get out of here!

He passes into the bar to join his group. A beat. And Bernie grabs his carrier bag, ready to follow.

INT. THE PINES - DAY

A sixty year old police sergeant fills in a note book. Next to Judith, Adele watches and shifts uncomfortably-

JUDITH

I'm sure he's ok. It's just after nine hours, we have to-

SERGEANT

No. No. You done the right thing. I'll get these details circulated and...

He walks to the exit. Judith and Adele go with him.

EXT. THE PINES - DAY

They all step outside. Adele watches as the copper continues to his car with Judith-

SERGEANT

We'll issue a tweet as well. They can be very effective...We've got the photo, which is the key thing...I can get that to the patrols and-

He opens the car door and pauses-

SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Perhaps give the hospital a ring. Just so they're in the loop...Just in case.

He smiles. He gets in, slams his door and drives off. Judith straightens, her unease growing, then she walks back to the home, past Adele, giving her an icy look. Adele would fire similar back - except now she's feeling a growing sense of guilt.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

The entrance vestibule. It is deserted. A tap on a door.

ADELE (O.S.)

Rene?

Adele enters, carrying a plated meal. She peers into the bedroom. It's empty. She steps back into the sitting room. It's deserted in here, too. She frowns and puts the plate on the breakfast bar. Then she crosses to the window and looks out towards the road-

RENE (O.S.)

I'm here.

ADELE

Haaa!!

(jumps, whips round)
Where were you?

RENE

Under the bed.

ADELE

What?

RENE

Been looking for this...thing. Pressing.

She holds it up: a flower flattened and mounted onto a sheet of white card, then covered with plastic. She reaches the sofa and lowers herself into it.

ADELE

You're supposed to be takin' it easy. Not-

RENE

Oh, give over! I'm alright now...

ADELE

Fine!...I'm just trying to...Keep me eye on the ball...At all times.

(crosses to bar; Rene watches, frowning)

In any case, I bought you this. It's fish and chips...

She carries it across and pops it on the trolley...

RENE

Ahh. That's ever so sweet of you, Adele.
(pulls trolley close)
Where's Bernie's?

ADELE

What?

The colour has gone from Adele's face.

RENE

Is Martin bringing his up later?
(Adele stares. Rene clamps a hand to her mouth; twinkles)
Oh, I'm sorry, love. Your face, honestly...I'm pulling your leg!...Bernie!

(MORE)

RENE (CONT'D)

I mean, it's obvious he's gone AWOL, only no-one's mentioning it, are they? In case it finishes me off. And I haven't said anything 'cause I know the way everyone fusses round here and I wanted to make sure he'd had time to get there-

ADELE

(finding her voice)

Get where!? We've been searchin' all over. He-

RENE

He's in France.

This stops Adele who stares incredulously. Then hisses-

ADELE

What the hell's he doin' there?!

RENE

(irritated now)

He is attending the D-Day celebrations-

ADELE

But that was full! There was no room on the trip-

RENE

Ah, only he's made his own way-

ADELE

At ninety! All the way across the Channel?

RENE

Well, he has done it before. Only then, of course, they were shooting at him-

ADELE

(spins away)

I do not believe this!

(turns back; now Rene's lost)

I've been feeling so guilty; that I never checked, this mornin'; that-

(stops; jabs finger)

I got you a large fish, Rene! That's how bad I was feelin'!

She stares for a second longer, then runs from the room, muttering. Rene blinks, before pronging a chip.

EXT. THE LANES, BRIGHTON - EVENING

A young policeman walks along a bustling alley. He looks worried. He glances down at a police issue tablet. On it is the picture of Bernie-

VICKY (O.S.)

Rob! Rob! It's okay!!...He's safe! The station's just been on-

His colleague walks towards him, holding her lapel radio-

VICKY (CONT'D)

He's in France.

ROB

What?

VICKY

He's a D-Day veteran apparently. Couldn't get himself on a trip, so he just legged it over there on his own...'Cept he never bothered tellin' anyone.

ROB

Ha! Good lad! Life in the old dog yet, eh?

She nods, chuckles. Relieved, they walk on together. She gets her phone out-

VICKY

Sarge wants me to Tweet a stand down...What shall I put?

ROB

That! He's a war hero, wanted to do the right thing only he couldn't so...He did a runner instead - from his old folks home: hash tag, The Great Escaper!!

She grins. She likes it, and taps away-

INT. COSY HOTEL, OUISTREHAM - DAY

Bernie winces, struggling with the long life milk which clearly resides in his hotel cuppa. He sniffs it warily. He sits in the small room he and Arthur are now sharing. Arthur has dance band music playing on the radio as he unpacks his capacious suitcase into the wardrobe on his side of the room.

He's filled a couple of drawers, too, while his immaculately pressed blazer already hangs from a hook above his polished shoes which also wait in readiness for tomorrow.

Bernie finishes his tea, stands and tips his carrier bag into the wardrobe on his side of the space. A clean pair of Y-fronts, his tooth brush and a passport, drop out.

BERNIE

That's me done.

He shuts the door and turns to Arthur who looks round, having finally completed his task, too. Arthur smiles.

EXT. COSY HOTEL, OUISTREHAM - DAY

The two men emerge from the hotel - into a street teeming with Vets, WWII Re-Enactment groups and buildings draped in the flags of Britain, America and France-

ARTHUR

So...there's an organised trip going off from here to a museum or...some exhibition or other...if you fancy that?-

BERNIE

No. I'm gonna...take a walk on the beach.

This seems to rather slow Arthur-

ARTHUR

To Sword? Right...

He looks at Bernie who says no more. And Arthur quickly moves on, smiling, saying, conversationally, that he's going to nose round the streets - and maybe they can regroup later...?

Bernie nods, turns and shuffles on, leaning hard on his walker. Arthur watches him go, troubled.

EXT. STREETS OF OUISTREHAM - DAY

Bernie continues through town, noticing the old boys gathered outside the cafes, drinking and chatting. A couple call out to him, ruddy-faced, celebratory. And he responds - the Bernie of old - easy going and ALWAYS ready to share a joke.

He focuses ahead, and notices a bar towards the end of the street: *Bar-Tabac Overlord*. Bernie blinks and carries on.

EXT. DUNES - DAY

A map - a tourist map, of the coast on D-Day. It is in relief and features the English Channel, the beach, and then higher up, dug into the cliffs, the gun emplacements which the landing craft faced. An arrow, sweeping off the water and onto the exposed stretch of sand says: **SWORD**.

A finger touches the word. Tries to make a connection.

It is Bernie. He stands in the dunes, overlooking the beach, and beyond it, the sea.

EXT. BEACH IN FRANCE - DAY/EVENING

A number of old people are already there, walking up and down the stretch of coastline, one or two supported by family or carers. Bernie moves forward to join them, off his walker and now managing with stick alone-

He wobbles on, towards the water, his eyes never wavering, locked onto the waves, and the place he had been. Finally, he comes to a halt. And breathes. He's done it! He's there. On Sword. With everyone else. And suddenly, he feels a great rush of exhilaration, at what he has accomplished, at what he has overcome-

Yet almost at once, there is a flashing image - of his younger self on the Landing Craft; of movement and of noise...

Bernie, blinks, not surprised, but enduring it, rather. In fact, as the noises get louder and the images intensify, he leans forward, into the wind blowing off the sea, into the storm which he always knew, one day, he would have to face-

FLASHBACK. EXT. CHANNEL - DAY, 1944

The deafening cacophony of shelling. And the Landing Craft bucking in the waves off the French coast. Bernie is hurled against a waiting Sherman tank - groaning as the armour plating knocks the wind from him.

Then, to his side, he hears a moan as a teenage tank crew member clings to the flank of his Sherman, the one he will be manning onto the shore.

The lad splutters, sea water running off his face, and he looks to Bernie - his eyes half crazed with fear, yet trying to hide the fact.

DOUGLAS

Here mate. They not expect us to go in this, will they?

Bernie stares. He can't think. The LCT lurches and he grabs the side. He looks back, angrily-

BERNIE

Why the bloody hell you askin' me for!?

DOUGLAS

'Cause...You've been in once, an't you? The first wave. You know what it's like.

Douglas nods. And suddenly, Bernie has frozen.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

How'd they get on?!

Bernie stares-

FLASH: Tanks crash into the waves. A wounded soldier lies on the sand screaming. Smoke. Flames. More screams.

Bernie blinks; focuses on Douglas's face. It is young, and desperate.

Bernie shrugs, dismissively-

BERNIE

Piece o'piss.

(instantly, Douglas straightens, interested)

'S like a millpond. Once you get in close.

(Douglas slackens with relief; Bernie prickles)

They do plan these things, you know-

Douglas moves away. Bernie stares at him still. His guts lurch. But what could he say? What else could he say?

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. OUISTREHAM TOWN CENTRE - EVENING

Bernie is walking away from the beach. He looks dreadful. His face is pale and his expression haunted. *This*, is the thing itself. Now he's there...

WOMAN (O.S.)
Monsieur. Monsieur!

He stops, focuses. A little old lady, totters up to him. She takes his hand and squeezes it in both of hers.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Merci, monsieur.

She nods, eyes rheumy, taking in his medals. She smiles, then carries on. Bernie stares, wretched, and turns, ready to continue on his way-

ARTHUR (O.S.)
Bernie! Bernie! Over here!

Bernie turns. Arthur. He is at a large table of grey haired men and women seated outside a cafe. Bernie somehow gathers himself and moves clumsily across-

EXT. CAFE - EVENING

Bernie settles at the table and a waiter bids him welcome. Arthur stares as Bernie watches the waiter move away-

ARTHUR
So...How'd you get on? Okay?

BERNIE
Fine.

He says it. But his eyes are dead. And Arthur can see. He waits for half a second-

ARTHUR
Of course. Well...you're here, now-
(grabs wine bottle)
Have a drink.
(he pours)
Our American friend-
(indicates a man opposite)
Marshall-
(lowers voice)
rather fitting-has kindly offered to
provide the whole table with wine for the
entire evening-

BERNIE
(leaning in; cutting him off)
I'm very tired. I-

ARTHUR

Stay-
 (carefully)
 It'll do you good, old man.

Bernie hesitates; and taking his chance, Arthur turns to the rest of the table, exclaiming:

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Gentlemen!...This is my friend, Bernie.
 Royal Navy!

He clenches his fists in front of him. There is a cheer from the table and the Americans all greet Bernie with toasts or doffed caps and berets.

OMNES

Cheers! Cheers, Bernie. Great to meet you-

Bernie smiles, sitting back, touched by the welcome.

ARTHUR

That's better...The world's always more palatable when seen through a glass, Bernie...

Bernie meets Arthur's gaze. And finally takes off his cap-

INT. BERNIE AND REENIE'S BEDROOM/SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Rene sits on the sofa as Judith buzzes about the room, taking care of the evening 'meds'-

RENE

The point is, that in the end, everything turned out for the best.

JUDITH

Oh, yes! Once someone's tracked Bernie down in France, and made sure he's alright!

She stomps into the bedroom, nose clearly still out of joint. Rene calls after her-

RENE

Bernie is a very resourceful man.

She smiles, enjoying her sense of agency. Then she turns her attention to Adele, washing crockery at the sink.

RENE (CONT'D)

By the way, Adele. That was a lovely bit of fish. Bernie'll be sorry to have missed that.

Judith returns and crosses to the drugs trolley-

RENE (CONT'D)

Then again, he's probably tucking into a plate of snails by now, eh, Judith?

Judith tuts, and strides out, dragging the trolley with her. Adele smiles despite herself-

ADELE

You're a wind up, you are...

RENE

Oh, come on. She needs to learn to relax. She's going to make herself poorly-

Adele smiles as she crosses the room to Rene.

ADELE

Let's get you changed. I got your bed ready-

She reaches over for a tray with a tea pot on it-

RENE

What's that on your arm?

Rene nods. Both Adele's forearms are exposed as a result of her having rolled up her sleeves in order to wash the dishes. And several tattoos are now on display.

ADELE

Don't you like 'em?

She takes the tray to the side and moves towards the curtains.

RENE

Well...it depends if you're gonna work on a fairground or not...What does your mother think about them? What does she say?

Adele sweeps the curtains shut. Then she glances at Rene as she carries on towards the bedroom-

ADELE

Don't think she's even noticed.

She passes into the other room. Rene watches, hearing the note of resignation in Adele's voice.

EXT. OUISTREHAM TOWN CENTRE - NIGHT

Laughter. The table is hanging on Arthur's every word-

ARTHUR

To which he said: Oh, I'm terribly sorry, vicar, you're referring to the aeroplane: that Fokker. I thought you meant something else entirely.

Everyone roars. Arthur beams. And then, as conversation at the far end picks up, he slides a dish towards Bernie-

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Here. Have another olive. It'll soak up the booze-

Arthur sounds ever so slightly drunk. But there's something else going on, too. And as Bernie smiles softly back, we can tell that he notices it, as well...

INT. BERNIE AND REENIE'S FLAT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adele folds Rene's clothes. Rene is in the down turned bed and struggling to arrange herself. She stops, breathless, then sighs as she notices the clock-

RENE

Nine o'clock. Nine! Who goes to bed then? The randy and the infirm, that's who.

ADELE

Rene!

RENE

What?! Your lot never invented it, you know?

She struggles again, trying to flex her legs-

RENE (CONT'D)

Oh...ow-

ADELE

What you doin'?

RENE

New knee exercises....Bernie helps me with 'em normally-

(MORE)

RENE (CONT'D)
(slightly plaintiff)
But of course, he's not here...

She lets it hang there...Adele shifts...

ADELE
(not keen)
You want me to have a go?

RENE
Oh, Adele. Would you? That would be wonderful.

Adele sits gingerly on the bed, then takes Rene's leg. She helps her bend and straighten it. Rene groans, but is clearly grateful. After a moment, she nods to the limb.

RENE (CONT'D)
In the war, if I was going to a dance, after I'd shaved, I used to stick a load'a damp tea leaves in some muslin and dab it all over me legs. Give 'em a bit've of extra colour-

ADELE
(amused)
Like a self tan...

RENE
Exactly. Only you did have to be careful. In case it was hot and you started sweating: suddenly, you're jiving in a pool of PG tips.

This time, Adele actually laughs, despite herself. Rene joins her, then reaches out to the leg-

RENE (CONT'D)
There. That's enough. That'll do it.

She flattens the leg but while she is leaning forward, she takes Adele's hand and clasps it-

RENE (CONT'D)
Oh, Adele. Adele. Adele. You're a good girl.

She touches her face with her arthritic fingers. She means it and Adele can tell. She blinks, unsure, not used to praise - or even attention. She looks away and stands quickly-

ADELE

Well...Just glad the day's ended like it has.

(pulls duvet over Rene)

Everythin' alright! How you said.

Adele glances back. But just as quickly, she breaks eye contact and steps away from the bed-

ADELE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'll...see you tomorrow.

RENE

You will. And soon as you're home, put a tea spoon in the icebox, then press it against those bags-

She indicates the spots under her eyes. Adele stiffens. Not *that* again!

RENE (CONT'D)

It'll make 'em disappear! Then no-one'll be able to tell you were out on the lash all night.

Rene grins - back to her old self. And her eyes twinkle:

RENE (CONT'D)

I didn't pop out the womb a hundred and fifty, you know...

Adele tuts, then clicks off the room light. She leaves. Rene takes a moment, then groaning with effort, twists on her side and switches off the bedside light. She leans back against the pillow, and finally closes her eyes.

EXT. OUISTREHAM TOWN CENTRE - NIGHT

Bernie belches, struggling a little. Arthur looks worse - and suddenly stands - swaying. He addresses the table.

ARTHUR

Gentlemen. We're gonna go now and do some drill...

(he makes a ragged salute)

And thank you so much...We'll see you all tomorrow!

The yanks bid them good night and Bernie starts to hoist himself up - when there is a smash of breaking glass and an angry shout from their rear:

SCOTT (O.S.)
 Alright! I'm goin'-!

Bernie and Arthur turn. Scott virtually hangs from the door of the bar next to theirs. Then he levers himself upright and jabs a wobbly finger at the waitress-

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 I dunno why you're makin' such a fuss!

Arthur and Bernie glance at each other. As Scott sees them-

SCOTT (CONT'D)
 Hey! Bernard - Arthur!!!

He beams, takes a pace, and almost falls. He is WANKERED!

ARTHUR
 What's the problem?

Scott is now looking at the door into *their* bar-

SCOTT
 Nothin'. I just...wanna 'nother drink and-

PATRON
 No. Monsieur. We are shut now-

The owner blocks the way. Scott lurches nearer-

SCOTT
 You miserable bastard-

ARTHUR
 Shhh! Shh-!

Arthur comes between Scott and the owner. As Bernie raises a hand to the alarmed Americans.

BERNIE
 S'alright. He's one of ours! We'll handle this. Don't worry...

Scott turns to Bernie and notices the Americans, peering across disapprovingly - a couple of them whispering.

SCOTT
 What they lookin' at?
 (steps towards them)
 You cheeky bloody-

BERNIE
 They ain't!...Doin' nothin'-

Bernie has placed a hand on Scott's shoulder. His grip is firm. Scott looks at it - then back to Bernie

BERNIE (CONT'D)

So why don't you go back to your hotel-

SCOTT

Cause I ain't a bloody baby!!

He shouts it, yanking himself free. The violence is as shocking as a punch. But it is Scott who seems most unsettled by it; because of the look on Bernie's face. Bernie, who now knows for certain who Scott is. And Scott can see he knows-

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I just...I just...wanna drink. That's all I want...I'm not hurtin' anyone.

Bernie stares. He knows, and nods, sadly-

BERNIE

You're gonna get yourself in trouble...
(he lets that land)
Come on...

And then Bernie walks off. Scott stares, feeling the certainty of the old man: the experience. He nods-

SCOTT

Yeah. Alright.

Arthur sways, confused, as Scott looks around-

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I know where it is. It's just around the corner-

He nods. He doesn't need leading. He stares at Bernie again and he laughs, hard and conspiratorial-

SCOTT (CONT'D)

This is why it's hard, innit? When you come out.

(looks right at Bernie)

It don't go, does it? Them...things...in there-

(taps his head)

Like, you never leave a man behind-

(nods)

Even if he's being a twat. You sweep him up and you get him out o'danger and-

He stops; feels the great hole in his life.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I miss that..

Then he smiles at Bernie, trying to rally himself-

SCOTT (CONT'D)

The British soldier, eh?
(clenches his fist)
All for one, and one for all!

ARTHUR

I think that's a French soldier actually.

Scott looks round. Bernie, too. They wait for Arthur to elaborate. Instead, his hand goes to his mouth and he bends and vomits. Bernie watches...waits-

BERNIE

Is that it?

The Americans, embarrassed, leave, weaving past Arthur, and looking shocked. Bernie calls to them-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

What?! We started earlier than you. Same as in the second world war!

INT. COSY HOTEL, OUISTREHAM

Arthur sways in the gap between the two beds as he undresses. Bernie, sitting on his bed, is still concerned-

BERNIE

You should probably keep a glass of water next to you.

ARTHUR

I will. That's a good idea.

He makes no attempt. Bernie nods. He gets up and starts to undress, too-

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I actually feel alright now. Well, I mean...nothing left to throw up. So...same thing.

They both strip to their pants and vests. They bump into each other but seem not to notice. Finally, they are ready and clamber beneath the sheets.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I got you a ticket by the way-
(points to his jacket)
The official do. In the arena. Starts at
11.

BERNIE

How'd you manage that?

ARTHUR

The Americans. I told you - unbelievable.
You're sitting just behind the Queen and
President Obama.

BERNIE

(considers this; nods)
Quite right, too.

Arthur laughs, delighted. But then, from nowhere, he catches himself - and shame suddenly floods his face. He lies down quickly.

ARTHUR

Anyway, I...Night, Bernie-
(switches off light)
Thanks for looking after me. And
Scott...Hope it didn't put a damper on
your day.

BERNIE

(turns in darkness)
Don't be silly. I...Happy to help.

Bernie smiles, then lies down, too. His ears hum with drunkenness and he turns on his side.

But his eyes stay open. As he recalls the day. All of it. And why he's drunk.

FLASHBACK. INT. LCT - DAY, 1944

Loud explosions. Water cascades over the top of Bernie's craft. They are closer now. And enemy fire is intensifying. The tank crews look paralysed. Another explosion detonates close by - and a hand grabs Bernie-

DOUGLAS

What the hell's all this?...You said it was a piece of piss! In close-

The boat kicks. Both men steady themselves. Bernie stares. He's on the edge of panic. And finally, he goes with what worked before-

BERNIE

'Cause we ain't there yet! You bloody idiot!

(Douglas is wrong footed)

And when we are, it'll settle down. Plus, all this shellin', goes straight over your head, on the beach. It's us that cops for it, out here.

Douglas stares, *needs* to believe. He is terrified, on the edge of panic. And Bernie's own gut tightens. That can't happen. He shouts:

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You got a smoke?

Douglas nods and fumbles in his pockets. He pulls out a cigarette tin. He opens it. Three rolled cigarettes. He holds them out-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Not me. You! You-

Douglas nods. He fumbles a smoke into his mouth. He has no lighter. Bernie pulls his out, steadying it, trying not to let his own tremor declare itself. Another loud explosion. Douglas looks to the side again, wide-eyed-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

What's your name?

Douglas turns back-

DOUGLAS

Douglas...Douglas Bennett.

BERNIE

I'm Bernie. Where you from, Douglas?

Another kick and Douglas steadies himself. Then-

DOUGLAS

Nottingham. I'm from Nottingham-

(points to cap badge)

Sherwood Rangers-

(thought)

Same as these-

(he turns the tin)

Players-

They kick again. This time Douglas steadies himself - but much more casually.

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Me girlfriend, she works in the factory-

A shell explodes. Close. Bernie winces and his ears whistle. Douglas steadies himself and keeps talking, hiding in the words. But Bernie can't hear, aware only of the screech in his ears and his own thudding heart.

But then, Douglas reaches into the tin and pulls out a small photo of a young woman. He turns the photo, clinging onto the normal-

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

There. That's her. She's what they call a Players Angel.

BERNIE

Bloody hell..

DOUGLAS

She's a cracker, in't she?

He puts the photo back. His hands shake and a small piece of folded paper falls out. He grabs it and replaces it in the tin. He sees Bernie looking-

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

It's me letter. You know. For if I cop it...

COMMANDER (O.S.)

Get 'em ready, Jordan...We're going in!

Bernie looks from his commander, back to Douglas - hunched and scared, clinging to the memory of his girl. And Bernie knows him. Knows him well.

He nods and steps closer to Douglas, serious, wanting to help-

BERNIE

You ain't gonna need that, Douglas. Cause you're like me: you're a survivor!

He stares, intense. And Douglas nods back, believing him.

END OF FLASHBACK

ARTHUR (V.O.)

Bernie...Bernie-

INT. COSY HOTEL, OUISTREHAM - NIGHT

Bernie moans. The bedroom light snaps on and Bernie is standing by the mirror. He looks round, confused. Arthur is close, his hand on Bernie's upper arm-

BERNIE

I...? What's goin' on?

He takes a second and then realises. He sags, upset-

ARTHUR

It's okay! Here. Just come back to bed.

Arthur helps Bernie sit on his bed. Arthur lowers himself opposite.

BERNIE

Was I sayin' anything?

ARTHUR

No...I just heard a noise and...looked over and...there you were...Does it happen often?

BERNIE

Oh, no...I mean...Every now and again. You know.

Arthur smiles, sadly.

ARTHUR

My brother used to sleepwalk. Started at Prep school. Horrible place. That's what did it.

Bernie shifts, wonders if he's being asked a question-

BERNIE

You don't ever-?

ARTHUR

No, no. Out like a light. Course, it helps if you're nine parts pissed.

Bernie laughs. He's settling. He nods to Arthur's bed-

BERNIE

Well, you should...get back to it. Crisis averted-!

ARTHUR

No. Really. I'm...fine. I'm happy to sit up for a bit...Might have an aspirin, as a matter of fact...

(takes one; rueful)

I shouldn't drink at all, you know.

BERNIE

Why? You on medication?

(nods to bottles on side)

I rattle!

ARTHUR

No, I'm an alcoholic.

(Bernie is stunned)

Sorry. That's a bit da-da! But...there you have it...Actually, it's the reason I'm here. My liver's shot and...Well, I won't be around for the 75th anniversary, that's for sure, so...was now or never!

He smiles. But his words suddenly resonate. Bernie straightens, uncertain how to respond-

BERNIE

Blimey. I...I'd no idea.

ARTHUR

You wouldn't. I'm good at hiding it...Most of the time.

He nods, smiles still. But he feels wretched; increasingly so. He hesitates; for half a beat-

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Do you know Charles Causely? He's a war poet.

BERNIE

(wryly)

What do you think?

ARTHUR

(smiles; then)

Well, he served. He was navy, like you, so he knew what he was talking about and...he wrote this verse called, "At the British War Cemetery, Bayeux" - all about the graveyard - just up the road. You must know that place?

Bernie stares. He is pale suddenly.

BERNIE

I've heard of it.

ARTHUR

Right. Well...There are almost 5,000 dead in there. All British. Nearly all of them killed during the D-Day landings...Including my brother.

(Bernie straightens)

The irony is, he wasn't actually lost in combat. He was RAF. Same as me. And he'd been shot down over Essen a couple of months before...I assumed he was already dead. But he'd bailed out and he'd linked up with the Resistance. He was on his way home to England and...he was holed up in Caen. When I nipped across and flattened it.

BERNIE

Christ.

ARTHUR

(nods)

We killed about 3,000 in all. Civilians, those on the ground...I've often wondered if it was one of mine that did for Clive...

(looks at shocked Bernie)

Anyway, the reason I'm telling you this Bernie is because I've never been to his grave. I wasn't able to, for...well, for whatever reason...but that was the plan. This afternoon, finally, I was going to go and...pay my respects....Except I didn't. I stayed in town and I got pissed instead.

He looks right at Bernie who stares back, increasingly unsettled by the scent Arthur is giving off. He shifts. Arthur thinks he's embarrassed.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I shouldn't burden you with my...tawdry tales...

(smiles weakly)

It's just...

(stares; intense)

-every now and again I meet someone who makes me think, maybe I can be different. I can wrestle *my* demons. The way they do...

He looks right at Bernie. And Bernie struggles to hold his gaze. Then Arthur's eyes water and his face slackens - full of pain.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

But the simple fact is, Bernie, you have to be brave to do that.

And Arthur scoffs, weakly, leaving the rest unsaid. Then he looks utterly exhausted and turns to his bed. Bernie watches, and tingles.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

The familiar blip of Rene's alarm. She moans. She wakes, gets her bearings and turns the alarm off. It says 4:15. She stands. She moves slowly to the window. It is still dark. But there is a glow on the horizon. The sun is coming up. She smiles as she sees it. She waits...

RENE (O.S.)

Bernie!

FLASHBACK. EXT. FIELDS IN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY, 1944

Rene is laughing. But quite where she is, is unclear. We see only flashes of light and the odd spec of green-

BERNIE (V.O.)

Re-lax!

RENE (V.O.)

I can't.

RENE (V.O.)

BERNIE (V.O.)

B-

Trust me!

The sound of them both breathing. Quite heavily. Another glimpse of green, then blackness. And then, stillness.

BERNIE (V.O.)

Okay. That's it. We're here.

And now we see Rene's face - with Bernie's hands across her eyes. He stares beyond her, to the horizon, making sure. And his expression fills with pleasure and satisfaction-

BERNIE

Now. Now you can look.

He takes his hands away. And we directly face Rene. As she blinks, and absorbs the view just revealed-

A great plain of rural England stretches out below, for miles, all of it held in a momentary wash of fragile light, a golden haze of dawn.

She turns to Bernie. She was going to mock. But now she can't. He smiles, touched by her expression.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

It's called the holy hour.

(he looks back)

The light's like...I dunno...It's different to any other time of day and normally you just...sleep through it!

She stares at him. Then she turns once more-

RENE

It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

He looks at her. She turns back and they hold each other's gaze. Then, as one, they make a noise, and smile. As if they're embarrassed to have shown so much. But then her breath catches, as she spots something just beyond him. He looks round as she walks towards it-

BERNIE

What?

RENE

This-

(crosses to a hedgerow)

It's a Dog Rose....I love 'em. I think they're gorgeous-

She turns the flower head toward him.

BERNIE

Yeah?

He joins her and he studies the flower intensely. She laughs at him. He turns-

RENE

It really is quite limited, innit? Your knowledge of the natural world.

BERNIE

(tuts; injured)

Alright!...You gotta appreciate, I'd never even seen an haystack 'til I got posted down here...

(looks back to flower)

And I'm learnin'. Like...that. I'll never forget it now - 'specially as a rose is me favourite flower, 'cause it's dead English and me favourite animal-

RENE

Let me guess. It's a dog.

BERNIE

(embarrassed)

Yeah. It is. I love 'em.

She stares, feels a pang of guilt. And then confesses-

RENE

So do I...which do you like best?

He makes to speak, excited but then stops himself-

BERNIE

I couldn't tell you. You'll only think they're dead pony.

She frowns. And then she beams-

RENE

It's a poodle. You like poodles-!

BERNIE

So?

(she laughs)

I...They're ever so clever-

(she's stepped away; turns back, grinning)

My auntie had one that could count.

(she fights her laughter)

And they don't get hairs on your settee-

(the smile has gone now. She just stares at him)

Plus! If you're goin' on a bus, they're the ideal size 'cause you can stick 'em-

He gets no further. She's kissing him. She has taken two emphatic strides and melded herself to his body. She wants him. She wants *this* boy. He is momentarily stunned - but quickly, his body responds in kind. We stay with them as they fall to the ground and start to make love in the grass, on the hill, washed in gold.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

The new sun shimmers on the horizon. Rene stares as it spills its light across the sea. Then she lifts the piece of paper we saw before. It is the dog rose, plucked and pressed. She inhales: transcendent and reaffirmed.

INT. COSY HOTEL - DAY

The sun is bright in France and its rays pour through the window into Bernie and Arthur's room. Arthur, however, is still asleep, breathing heavily. Bernie is no where to be seen-

INT. COSY HOTEL, BATHROOM - DAY

He is in the tiny bathroom, sitting on the edge of the miniscule tub. He is dressed. But he is far from present. He stares down. We see the small package he had gathered up in the flat-

He unfolds the yellowing newspaper and reveals what is hidden beneath: a cigarette tin with PLAYERS NAVY CUT written on its lid. Bernie's eyes bore into it. There.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT, BATHROOM - DAY

Rene stares in the mirror. She straightens her cardigan-

ADELE (V.O.)

Rene, your toast's on the trolley.

RENE

I'm coming-

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

Rene enters. Martin is there, too, with the drugs trolley-

RENE

Flippin' heck. Like Piccadilly Circus.

She continues, slowly, towards the sofa-

MARTIN

Ha! Good morning to you, too.

RENE

You haven't seen what I just have...Put some money away for plastic surgery, Adele, that's my advice...Generally.

Adele laughs, as she wipes down the surfaces. She points to a mug also on the trolley-

ADELE

Your tea's on there as well.

But Rene has stopped. She is peering across the room-

RENE

What's that?

On TV there are pictures of the D-Day events. Martin beams and steps closer to her-

MARTIN

I saw it was on. Earlier. 'S a special programme. All the beaches...That one's the one Bernie's at. It's the main one. You might spot him on the TV, Rene!

He grins and she joins him: the thought! She turns back and continues to the sofa-

EXT. CAR PARK NEAR MAIN ARENA - DAY

Bernie stands before a makeshift hospitality tent to the side of the main grandstand. A large TV monitor is showing the same pictures as those being broadcast back in England.

Bernie's eyes are hard set. He means business.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

On TV, the picture switches to the arrival of Barrack Obama-

RENE (O.S.)

Oh. I knew it'd be big - the Seventieth - but not this big!

ADELE (O.S.)

Course it is!! People love the war. Lookin' back.

MARTIN (O.S.)

And the Queen's there...

She has appeared on the TV

MARTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There's always an interest where she goes.

RENE (O.S.)
Well, of course there is.

Now we see Martin at the drugs trolley, and Adele, reaching for Rene's cup, on a tray before her-

ADELE
Let me warm that up a bit. I-

But then she stops, stunned. Rene sees, frowns, and turns to follow Adele's gaze. Her own eyes flare, too. Bernie is on screen: a recent picture-

MARTIN (O.S.)
Turn it up. Quickly!

Martin grabs the remote and ramps up the volume-

FEMALE TV ANNOUNCER
-Has become something of an overnight sensation with calls for some form of official recognition-

Judith bursts in, barely knocking.

MONIQUE
Everyone-

ADELE
It's on! We got it-

A photo of Bernie pops up on the screen. Martin laughs. Rene is stunned-

FEMALE TV ANNOUNCER
-after it emerged that the D-Day veteran was so determined to honour his fallen comrades, that he'd taken matters into his own hands and had mounted what has now been dubbed: The Great Escape.

JUDITH
Escape?

Then Edith appears at the door-

EDITH
Here, Rene. You seen the papers?

She holds up the Daily Mail. The full page headline is: **The Great Escaper** - and **The Right Stuff** is the by-line.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Is he botherin' the French now?

Rene looks back to the TV and mutters-

RENE
Bugger off...

On the TV, the picture cuts to a reporter speaking to camera - and standing just outside The Pines...

FEMALE TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
What can you tell us, Jo?

REPORTER
Hi, Laura. Well, just that-

Now everyone is looking to the window. Martin walks towards them-

REPORTER (V.O.)
Having been informed that he couldn't go on an organised trip, Bernard-

Martin peers out. His POV: the reporter stands off the main drive, speaking to camera-

REPORTER (V.O.)
Or Bernie as he's better known-

Back to the picture: Martin now on screen in back of shot.

REPORTER
-resolved to show just the sort of determination which had first carried him to the beaches of Normandy, some seventy years before.

Footage of Royal Navy ships leaving British ports-

REPORTER (CONT'D)
And yesterday morning while most of his fellow residents here at The Pines care home in Hove were still fast asleep, 89 year old Bernie crept out of the building and made a break for the coast-

Images of the Normandy attack are flashed up next. Rene watches, her smile tightening-

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Then, relying on taxi, ferry and shanks's pony, the peace time electrician, according to transport manifests, arrived in France in plenty of time to celebrate today's commemorative events...

Scenes of the beaches, taken. Then, back to the reporter-

FEMALE TV ANNOUNCER

What a great story!

She turns to her co-presenter-

MALE TV ANNOUNCER

Absolutely! And a salutary lesson to the rest of us, I think...There are 90 year olds re-storming the beaches of Normandy!!

They cut back to the reporter

REPORTER

Exactly where he is, Laura, nobody's quite sure. But what everyone *is* certain of, is that in Bernard Jordan, the world has discovered one old soldier who will never fail to answer the call of duty.

In the room there is much cooing and muttering of approval. Except for Rene, who we are now close on, but who says nothing, continuing to stare at the screen long after the last image of Bernie has gone, and who seems to be assailed by new and troubling thoughts.

EXT. CAR PARK NEAR MAIN ARENA - DAY

Bernie hasn't moved, his expression even more intense. He glances at the VIP lanyard around his neck, and the ticket which gives him exclusive access to the arena. He blinks, uneasily. Then, a door to one of the nearby portaloos opens and Arthur steps out. Immediately, Bernie moves over to him, pushing his walker.

ARTHUR

Sorry. Got a prostate the size of a bloody space hopper.

Bernie smiles, reassuringly. But as Arthur turns towards the grandstands, he can bear it no more-

BERNIE
 We can't do this, Arthur.
 (Arthur, frowns)
 We have to go to Bayeux.

Half a beat as the words land. Then Arthur looks appalled-

ARTHUR
 No. I...I said. I can't...Even if you're
 with me. I-

BERNIE
 For me!

Arthur is lost. Bernie stares. He shrugs, and finally
 makes *his* confession-

BERNIE (CONT'D)
 I have to go. I have to, Arthur.

Arthur makes to speak but then realises, there is no more
 to say.

EXT. TAXI RANK - DAY

Arthur is bent over a car. Empty. He straightens. They
 are at a taxi rank of three Peugeots parked in a line.
 But every vehicle is driverless.

ARTHUR
 They're all in there-
 (points to arena)
 I bet!

Bernie stares: undoubtedly true. He looks round and sees
 a bar - and has a new thought!

BERNIE
 Come on. Over here-

INT. BAR - DAY

Bernie and Arthur are the only two customers seated at
 the bar. They lean across. They are clearly anxious. The
 patron speaks on the phone. He nods-

PATRON
 Merci! Merci! Antoine!!
 (hangs up. turns back; beams)
 He would be delighted.

BERNIE

Oh, that's terrific. Did he say how much?

PATRON

No, no, no. His pleasure.

He starts to pour a beer-

ARTHUR

Thank you. Thank you so much.

He nods. His ashen features belie the comment. The patron smiles and places the first beer down. Bernie pulls out his wallet but the patron shakes his head. Non. He pours a second glass, slides it to Arthur and says, *Merci*, to them both.

Bernie and Arthur glance at each other. Suddenly, there is a voice. And an accent. Bernie cranes his head and sees they are not alone, as tucked around the far side of the bar is a table of six grey haired old men who all drink. Another of them speaks - and this time it is clear - they are talking German. Bernie blinks, stunned. Arthur stares across, too-

NATHAN (O.S.)

Maurice. Can we have another round, please? On my tab? When you're ready?

The man who speaks is sixties, smart - American. The patron nods, grabs a glass. Bernie speaks instinctively-

BERNIE

Excuse me. Those men at that table. They're-?

NATHAN

German. Yeah...

BERNIE

Why are they here?

Nathan registers their medals; treads carefully. He knows this is sensitive.

NATHAN

Same as you guys, I guess. To honour their fallen comrades.

Bernie stares at Nathan, computes. Then looks back to the table, unsettled-

BERNIE

So, this is where they actually were. On D-Day.

NATHAN

Heinrich was. Gunter was on Juno, same as Jans...The other three defended Omaha.

Bernie stares. He can't get over how like he and Arthur they all look. He blinks. And then he turns back-

BERNIE

Can I say hello?

Arthur frowns. Bernie's not sure himself where it's come from. But he knows he wants to do it-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Do you...do you think they'd think that was rude?

Nathan smiles and shakes his head. And the three move across. Bernie jumps straight in, a little nervous, smiling and pointing to his side-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Arthur-

(taps his own chest)

Bernie-

One of the seated men stands and Nathan speaks to them all, in German-

NATHAN

Heinrich...These men were involved in the landings. They wanted to say hello.

Heinrich stares, looks surprised, then stands, properly-

HEINRICH

How do you do?

He manages this in English and holds out his hand. Bernie looks at it for half a beat, not even that, then shakes-

BERNIE

It's good to meet you.

He sits - the first man has proffered a chair. Nathan pulls one over for Arthur - who looks uneasy. Bernie smiles though. Heinrich does, too. Then he speaks-

HEINRICH

(in German)

Did you...Land on the beaches? Were you in the army?

NATHAN

He wants to know what you both did-

BERNIE

(instant; touches chest)

Royal Navy.

(indicates Arthur)

Royal Air Force.

(turns back; points)

And it's you that was here. Heinrich?

(Heinrich frowns, lost-)

This was your beach...

(points to ground)

Here. Sword.

HEINRICH

(understands; smiles)

Ja. Sword.

BERNIE

Me, too.

He taps his chest and nods, also smiling. But then suddenly, it becomes real...their memories made flesh...their past suddenly brought back to life...

And Heinrich's lip trembles, despite his still smiling face. It gets worse, and he bends his head.

He makes a noise, swallows a groan, and shakes as the terrible reminiscences flood over him. Bernie blinks, understanding in a moment. And then, he reaches across and places his hand on top of the German's, as it rests on the table. He says, very quietly-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I know. I know...

He rubs the back of the man's hand and Heinrich finally looks up. He places his hand on top of Bernie's and holds it tight. A long beat and then he sniffs. He sits back and finally composes himself.

HEINRICH

Pardon me.

He manages it in English. Then he smiles, self consciously, embarrassed, and glugs his beer back. Bernie stares, and then has a thought. He turns to Nathan-

BERNIE

Can you tell him I want him to have this-
 (pulls out his ticket)
 He should go and sit in there-
 (he points in the direction
 of the arena)
 Tell him he should do that.
 (to Arthur, as Nathan
 translates)
 Have you still got yours?

Arthur nods, produces his ticket. Bernie grabs it-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

We only got two...But they're the best
 seats in the house-

Heinrich stands, amazed. And Bernie passes his ticket
 over. Lothar, too, is getting up. Bernie gives him the
 second ticket. Then he looks back to Heinrich and smiles.
 Heinrich stares back. Then, suddenly, he salutes. Bernie
 blinks, understanding. He straightens his back and
 returns the salute. Arthur and Lothar do similar and
 finally, the whole table is on its feet, to attention.

EXT. OUISTREHAM - DAY

An ancient Renault zooms out of town. We briefly see
 Bernie and Arthur in the back. The car passes a sign:
 BAYEUX 35km.

INT. BERNIE AND REENIE'S FLAT - DAY

Rene stands at the window. A pack of journalists, alerted
 by the breaking Bernie story, can be heard outside,
 calling up to her-

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

Rene...Rene, are you in there?

JOURNALIST TWO (O.S.)

Any chance we could have a word...Rene?

The same look of anxiety is on her face as when we last
 saw her. A tap on the door. And Adele enters-

ADELE

Rene...it's me. It's Adele.

Rene says nothing. Adele looks uneasy. She, too, had seen
 the change come over Rene when she saw Bernie on the
 TV...

ADELE (CONT'D)
 Are you ok? I...I've been worryin'-
 (looks to window; back)
 All the fuss and that-

RENE
 Fuss!? Fuss? Is that what you think this
 is?

Her agitation is clearly back and Adele looks instantly uneasy again. Rene moves closer-

RENE (CONT'D)
 No-body actually *knows* if he's alright,
 or...where he is even and-

She stops. Her expression darkens. Adele is struggling to keep up-

RENE (CONT'D)
 It was between me and him!! This trip.
 That's how it's always been, where the
 war's concerned; it's *our* business...Now-
 (nods to outside and the
 press pack)
 -that's letting everybody in! The whole
 world and...That's asking for trouble!
 (Adele looks lost still; Rene
 sees and spells it out)
 You have to keep your head down and your
 eyes straight ahead or-
 (looks away)
 Bad things happen.

Her anger is now gone, replaced by fear. And a grinding noise gets louder and louder-

FLASHBACK. INT. TOWN FACTORY - DAY, 1944

Deafening machinery. Rene works in a small, dark building with several other girls. She weighs a box of ball bearings as two men walk towards her. She looks petrified as they near, then relieved as they move past and address one of her fellow workers. Rene hears the girl scream as bad news is delivered. Her nerves shattered, Rene fumbles the box of ball bearings and they spill onto the work space all around her. She can bear it no more - and she stumbles away from her work station.

FLASHBACK. EXT. BALL BEARING FACTORY - DAY, 1944

Rene bursts from the factory. She pulls off her apron and hair netting. She moves faster, breaks into a run, and dashes out of the main gates-

FLASHBACK. EXT. STREETS OF SOUTHAMPTON - DAY, 1944

Rene runs across open fields-

FLASHBACK. EXT. CLIFFS ABOVE SEA - DAY, 1944

Rene strains, at last cresting the pinnacle of a hill. She stops, gasps for air, and stares: The English Channel. It is deserted. But squadrons of bombers fly overhead. On the horizon, the smoke of battle rises like a pall. Rene watches it and admits for the first time, the truth. Her colour drains, her body shakes and sheer dread seizes her face.

But then, after only a few seconds, Rene straightens. We see her grit her teeth and push the fear back. We watch her steady her breathing and unclench her fists. Faced with the unthinkable, Rene refuses to think it, and before our eyes we see her banish the facts and cleave to blind faith. Then she turns, and walks stiffly away...

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

Rene's face is ashen, and ashamed.

RENE

I waved him off. I let him go. When what I should have said was: Don't you dare get on that ship, Bernard Jordan! Don't you dare! And now I've done it again.

She looks to Adele, with unbridled emotion. And it scares Adele.

EXT. BRITISH CEMETERY, BAYEUX - DAY

Bernie's walker pushes through the rows of graves. They've made it; the cemetery. Arthur is close to him, still muttering the lines of Causley's poem. But then, he forks off and the two men go their separate ways.

To begin with we stay with Arthur, as his eyes bore into the graves in his section-

ARTHUR

"I walked where in their talking graves
And shirts of earth five thousand lay"-

He says the lines like a rosary, a shield, as he advances, searching for his brother-

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

"When history with ten feasts of fire
Had eaten the red air away"-

EXT. BRITISH CEMETERY, BAYEUX - DAY

At the same time, Bernie reaches the first row of headstones in his section of the cemetery. He checks the names. No match, so he moves forward - quickly, as if he dare not slow-

EXT. BRITISH CEMETERY, BAYEUX - DAY

Arthur moves down a fresh row and then, suddenly, stops: It is his brother's. He kneels. He touches the grave. And he whimpers.

EXT. BRITISH CEMETERY, BAYEUX - DAY

Bernie starts on a fresh row, workmanlike, deliberately matter of fact. Then, with no preamble, he stops too. And he stares-

As the sound of a ships throbbing engines grow in volume. And a man's voice calls out-

FLASHBACK. INT. LCT - DAY, 1944

DOUGLAS (O.S.)

Here, Bernie! Bernie mate-

Bernie feels sick, trying to carry out his job - but still, Douglas slides down the front of the tank and onto the deck again-

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

I need a favour!

Bernie blinks, shocked.

TANK COMMANDER
Bennett. Get back!

Douglas's commander has popped back out of his gun turret-

DOUGLAS
Hang on! I will! In a minute.

BERNIE
What are you doing?

DOUGLAS
I've had a thought...
(Bernie blinks, stunned)
What if I drown?

BERNIE
Wha...?

DOUGLAS
I could drown...And then I'm stuffed,
aren't I?
(Bernie sways - please God)
And that's if they find me. I could get
washed out to sea-

A tank engine bursts into life, spewing acrid diesel into
the air-

LCT COMMANDER
Standing by, Jordan-!!!

BERNIE
Just get in the bloody tank!-

He hisses. Then there is an explosion. A tower of water.
Bernie ducks, terrified. He straightens, looks back. Now
Douglas is holding out the cigarette tin. Bernie stares
at it, like it's a curse. Douglas waves it, desperately-

DOUGLAS
Tek it! Will you?...Just in case.

Bernie understands and tries to hide his shock. The two
men's eyes lock. Douglas's voice is a whisper-

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Please. Tek it.

He twitches it again, weakly. He's pleading. And Bernie
reaches out and takes the tin from him. Douglas smiles, a
weight lifted, and heads back to his tank-

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
The address is on top of the letter. And
her name is Vera.

He scrambles back up the side of the Sherman and into the
turret. As Bernie stares at the tin...

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
And Bernie! If you do have to, you
know...with the letter-

BERNIE
(upset)
I told you. You're comin'
back-

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Tell Vera, I said she was-

He's searching for something appropriate. Something noble-

DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
She was...
(stops; smiles)
Ah, she was fuckin' spectacular.

He beams. And then he's gone, inside the tank, the trap
pulled tight shut above him. Bernie steps closer,
imploring-

BERNIE
I told you-

But it's too late. The tanks rev their engines and the
moment of disembarkation approaches-

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. BRITISH CEMETERY, BAYEUX - DAY

Bernie. His old face, his eyes full.

BERNIE
Hello Douglas.

We see the grave and its inscription:

*Lance Corporal Douglas Bennett, aged 19, Sherwood Rangers
Yeomanry, killed in action, June 6th 1944*

Bernie stares. But suddenly it's impossible. And he bows
his head and starts to cry - sorely and without warning.
He is completely overwhelmed, as the past surges over
him, wave after wave-and then, he grits his teeth as a
new feeling, of anger, surges through his body-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

What a waste. What a waste. Eh?

He twists from the grave, to look at what surrounds him. And the camera pulls back, soaring high into the sky. We look down on Bernie, even as we hear him start to cry once more, standing in the middle of the cemetery, surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of bright white headstones.

INT. COSY HOTEL, OUISTREHAM - DAY

Bernie sits, staring into space. Arthur walks into his field of vision.

ARTHUR

What is it, Bernie? What's wrong?

Bernie looks round. Half a beat and then the smile is on-

BERNIE

Nothin'! I'm fine...really...Mission accomplished.

He says it lightly, nods. Arthur looks into his eyes. He knows all about self-deception, so knows there is no point probing further. Instead, he smiles and tries to help Bernie-

ARTHUR

Right. So...Do you want to...get some lunch or...What do you want to do now?

Bernie considers the question for a moment - nods.

BERNIE

I wanna go home. See my girl.

Arthur stares, then nods, too-

ARTHUR

Of course you do.

BERNIE

What's that mean?

Bernie can feel the sub-text. Arthur's smile takes on a patina of sadness.

ARTHUR

That I don't suppose we'll see each other again.

Bernie thinks.

BERNIE

No...Maybe on the other side, eh?

ARTHUR

That's all bollocks, Bernie. You know that.

(Bernie laughs. And Arthur holds out his hand)

It's been an honour. An absolute honour.

BERNIE

Likewise, Arthur.

(they shake)

Likewise.

They suddenly embrace. And pull each other tight. So tight. A band of brothers.

EXT. COSY HOTEL, OUISTREHAM - DAY

Bernie emerges from the hotel, desperate to get home-

SCOTT (O.S.)

Bernie! Bernie!!

He looks round. Scott is limping towards him-

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I'd given up findin' you!

Bernie doesn't look especially pleased to see Scott and continues to walk.

BERNIE

What you doin'?

SCOTT

I got something for you...That I want you to have-

Bernie stiffens, not in the mood, and still keeps walking. But Scott rummages in a paper bag. He pulls out a squashed pastry-

SCOTT (CONT'D)

It's a croissant...They're like the national dish of France...It looked better earlier...

He slips it back in the bag. And still, Bernie keeps going.

Scott is determined, though, to say his piece. So, finally, he just launches:

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I wanted to apologise! For how I behaved last night. Honest, I dunno what come over me.

Bernie feels a surge of emotion. He fights it; wants out-

BERNIE

It's fine. Really. You're young...Forget it.

Scott stares - really? And then he steps across and physically stops Bernie in his tracks. He beams, so relieved

SCOTT

Aww...Thank you-

(grabs Bernie's hand; pumps)

Thank you, Bernie. 'Cause...you're an inspiration to me-

(Bernie stiffens)

You are! All the things you done, the way you conduct yourself. I swear, it's people like you that make me feel I might be-

BERNIE

Stop it!

(he's snatched his hand away)

Alright? Just...stop sayin' stuff like that! 'S...ridiculous...

Despite his best efforts, Bernie is firmly engaged now. And Scott's shocked face inflames him more. He looks to the croissant bag, then thrusts it at Scott. He staggers off. But he can't just leave him. He turns back-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Stop lyin'! And tellin' jokes and-

Bernie drives himself on, nodding-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Get some help! 'Cause-

(stops; smiles weakly)

I actually think you're a good lad. And I don't want nothin' bad to happen to you but...right now...you're a fuckin' mess.

Bernie shuffles off. Scott watches and his bottom lip trembles. He's trying not to cry.

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

Rene stares at the window - the bloody journalists! She tenses, trying to block out the thoughts which bombard her. But it is too late. She has broken her own spell. She starts to turn away-

REPORTER (O.S.)

Rene! Rene!! Down here!

This voice is louder - shriller. It makes her pause-

SECOND REPORTER (O.S.)

What you gonna say to Bernie? When he gets back? Are you gonna tell him off?!

She jerks round, enraged by the stupidity of *that* question. She jabs her stick towards the glass, moaning, angry and frustrated. But then she controls herself, and turns away again-

But instantly she stops...and her hand goes to her chest. She fumbles in her pocket but can't find the pills. She looks alarmed, scans the room. Then she stumbles to the door, pulls the emergency cord and slumps onto the bed-

She moderates her breathing, trying to remain calm and then, even as she implores herself not to panic, sees the pills: actually on the bedside table, against the lamp. She reaches across, grabs them and slips one under her tongue. She makes a noise of relief as Adele bursts in-

ADELE

What is it? What's the matter?-

Adele rushes over as Rene holds up a placatory hand-

RENE

It's okay-

(Adele makes to speak)

I couldn't find 'em. My pills-

ADELE

Do you need the doctor-?

RENE

No...

(Adele tries again)

No. Honest...They do work. It's just...I couldn't find 'em.

She nods, slightly embarrassed but still a little afraid, too. Adele studies her.

She, also, is gradually coming down from the initial panic but like Rene, continues to tingle. Finally, she smiles. It is nervous-

ADELE

You gotta stop havin' these turns, Rene.
Or at least have 'em when someone else is
around, eh?

RENE

(wryly)

Oh. Thank you so much. I will!

Rene smiles, too. Then she blinks and looks sad. Adele sees it and her own smile fades suddenly. She hesitates. Then finally, simply, she says it:

ADELE

How long have you got?

Rene stares. She chuckles-

RENE

You're too clever to be working here, you
are-

ADELE

Seriously, Rene. Just...tell me. What
have they said?

Rene considers Adele...Then she shrugs.

RENE

Don't start reading any long books-

ADELE

Stop jokin' about it! It...It ain't
funny...Why do you keep jokin' when-

RENE

Hey! Come on...It's alright. I've had a
good life-

ADELE

Yeah but-

RENE

No! No buts.

(smiles fondly; sighs)

When you're your age you cling to every
second, Adele, 'cause...every second's
worth clinging to-

(stops; considers Adele)

Generally...

(MORE)

RENE (CONT'D)

(Adele feels interrogated -
it's not unpleasant)

But you reach my age...You're buggered
basically-

Adele straightens, angry on Rene's behalf. It makes Rene smile, as she takes in the beautiful young woman.

RENE (CONT'D)

But you. You're like a piece of ripe
fruit-

ADELE

I don't care!

Adele glares, like a petulant child faced with an adult's implacable calm. She screws up her face-

ADELE (CONT'D)

I knew it...I knew as soon as you started
gettin' all that stuff out; I knew there
was something-

RENE

Oh, stop it! Everyone does a bit of
tidying up.

She meets Adele's gaze, determined to speak only on her terms and to her limits. Adele stares, then comes and sits beside Rene, on the bed. She stares, aches.

ADELE

What's Bernie say?

RENE

He doesn't know...I haven't told him. And
you're not telling him either.

ADELE

But...it's Bernie!? You can't *not* tell
him!

RENE

Why can't I? He can't do anything about
it and...It'd break his heart if he knew
I was going before him so...

(firm; determined)

Of course I'm not telling him.

Adele stares. She makes to speak but Rene's logic is flawless. A beat. Adele looks at Rene. Her eyes are full - a tear escapes. Then she folds herself into Rene's body and rests her head on her bosom.

As she hugs the old woman, so Rene (confused at first) embraces the young girl and pulls her closer still.

INT. FERRY PORT - DAY

Bernie walks across the main terminal. He looks pale. As he walks, we notice a woman at the P&O Ferries desk. She is dressed in company uniform and carries a walkie talkie. She stares at Bernie, speaks urgently into the device, then quickly crosses and intercepts him-

SANDY

Excuse me? Are you Bernard Jordan?

BERNIE

(suspicious)

Yeah. Why? Is there a problem?

SANDY

Not at all! I'm pleased to meet you. I'm Sandy!

(takes his hand; shakes it)

Chief Press Officer for P&O Ferries.

We've been searching all over for-

BERNIE

Bloody hell!

Bernie has been distracted - and Sandy follows his gaze:

He has spotted a nearby news stand and sees all of the day's papers, British and European, laid out on the racks. His own face stares right back at him. He registers **The Great Escaper** headline, especially-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

What's this?!

As he sways, stunned, we hear The Candy Girls start to sing an upbeat version of: *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To...*

Even as a couple of photographers suddenly appear and start to take snaps of Bernie-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

What's goin' on?-

Sandy blocks off the intrusive journalists and smiles positively at Bernie.

INT. FERRY GIFT SHOP - DAY

Now Sandy waits for Bernie to choose some treats from the gift shop - she stands close, clearly both his guide and his minder. Before he *can* choose, though, a staff member appears and presents him with a large saucisson. Bernie smiles - he can't help but be impressed.

INT. CANTEEN - DAY

Nor can he fail to appreciate the spot reserved for him in the ferry restaurant - or the delicious plate of food flamboyantly unveiled by the ship's chef. Bernie beams - it does look good.

INT. FERRY GIFT SHOP - DAY

As does the large bottle of rum he is offered on a return trip to the gift shop - a LARGE plus digestif. Bernie grins. This is getting better and better!

INT. THE PINES - DAY

Judith beams too, as she hurries down the corridor and bursts into Rene's flat. Rene turns from the window and Adele looks over from the kitchenette where she prepares Rene's food. Judith tells them they've found Bernie and he's on the way home on a ferry! Rene smiles, her eyes filling.

INT. FERRY, LOUNGE AREA - DAY

Bernie faces a TV crew in a hastily erected 'interview' area. His default ebullience is back now, and faced with an audience, he ramps it up even more. And that audience revels in his replies. And as they do, so Bernie glows a little more...

SNAP, SNAP, SNAP:

Then, a series of pictures - TOMORROW'S FRONT PAGES-

Of Bernie posing, and warming to the task, with lifebuoy, champagne, fellow passengers, and one where he gazes, Captain Cook like, to the distant horizon.

The final image is of Bernie, standing before the Captain and the entire bridge, all of them saluting, ship shape and Bristol fashion.

INT. FERRY GIFT SHOP - DAY

And then Bernie is back in the gift shop for one last visit as the ferry prepares to dock. Sandy hands Bernie a bar of chocolate from a shelf beside her. It's the kind he brought Rene at the start - but this is *super* sized. He grabs it and adds it to a carrier bag now bursting at the seams-

BERNIE

Now, where else can we go-?

He's like a kid in a toy shop, interested only in the next present-

EXT. STREETS - DAY

But it's over! Bernie is in a chauffeur driven car, heading home at last...

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Bernie looks into his carrier bag, beside him on the seat. He blinks.

INT. THE PINES - DAY

Rene sits in front of the bedroom mirror. She has done her hair and put on lipstick. She looks lovely. Old and lovely. She tucks an errant strand of hair behind her ear and prods it in place with a tortoiseshell comb-

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Bernie's expression has changed. The further he gets from the ferry, the more uncertain he feels. And now, as the music reaches its climax and he pulls off his hat, a dull fury has swept over him. He looks blankly out of the window and curses inwardly: What have I done? What have I just done?

EXT. THE PINES - EVENING

The car turns off the main road and onto the drive. It stops. Bernie looks out. There is a scrum of journalists but Judith is waiting, too. Adele and Martin, also. And a number of the residents are lined up on the steps, forming a sort of guard of honour. Several wave union jacks. Bernie's gut tightens.

He steps out. He smiles. But it's a huge effort. The journalists fire questions yet he ignores them and shuffles forward instead-

EDITH
Well done, Bernie!

OLD MAN
Welcome home, Bernard!

Judith steps forward. But Bernie's eyes remain locked on the entrance and genuine escape.

JUDITH
A note, please, next time. Just a note.

She pats him on the back. Martin steps up-

MARTIN
You did it!
(pats him, too)
I'll kill you if you do it again!

Bernie nods, smiles. It's deathly.

ADELE
Welcome back, Bernie...
(he turns. Adele smiles. She
whispers)
She's waitin' for you...

INT. BERNIE AND REENIE'S FLAT - EVENING

Rene can't stop fussing. She's nervous - and now adds a touch more rouge from her compact...

INT. THE PINES - EVENING

Bernie struggles up the stairs towards his room.

EXT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - EVENING

Bernie shuffles forwards, painfully slowly.

He arrives outside his and Rene's apartment and focuses on the WELCOME mat there. A beat and he pushes inside-

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - EVENING

He continues into the front room, grabbing the same rail he used when he went off on his quest.

He places his carrier bag on the identical spot used at the end of each of his daily trips to the shop. He stares. NOTHING has changed. Nothing.

And then, he pulls off his mac, as if it's burning him. He throws it onto the armchair and groans-

Then he spots Rene. She stands in the doorway to the bedroom and looks across at him - concerned.

RENE
What is it? What's the matter?

BERNIE
I...I'm sorry. I-

He knows he should greet her. But he can't. He turns away and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand-

RENE
What? I-

BERNIE
(turning back; appalled)
I rolled over. I rolled over, Rene...

Immediately he notices the dog leads, the trophies. He scoffs, points-

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Just like Fifi used to! Straight onto me back and...help yourself!

She's no clearer. But then he steps closer-

BERNIE (CONT'D)
You know I've been in the papers? And on the TV: the cheeky chappie! The...Great Escaper!

RENE
(deliberately positive)
Yes. I...I've seen it all-

BERNIE
(bitter; ploughs on)
90 year old coffin dodger! Honours the glorious dead...

RENE
Bernie, *what is it*-

BERNIE

The truth! Tellin' the truth, Rene!
'Cause people don't. All they care
about's an happy endin' and...Look at us -
here!

He sweeps his finger around the interior, struggling to express himself - while Rene is agog. She's never seen him like this. But he doesn't care.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Grabbin' the grip and...pullin' the
bloody cord and-

(points; then the door)

All them poor old buggers
outside...*That's* the truth. *That's* what
old age looks like. And there's no escape
from it. For anyone. Ever!

His chest heaves and he looks across the room-

RENE

What happened, Bernie? What happened to
you in France?

The question seems to catch him off guard-

BERNIE

What?

RENE

This trip.

(afraid)

Tell me what you did. Please.

This is new. They both feel it; realise the old way of communicating is no longer adequate. And he nods, responds...

BERNIE

I went to see this lad. Who was buried
there. Douglas he was called...Douglas
Bennett.

He stares at her. She forces her eyes to stay on his. He makes to say more but then just smiles, helplessly-

FLASHBACK INT. LCT - DAY, 1944

Bullets ping off the LCT's interior and the sound of shelling is continuous - they are at the beach - and have launched the attack. A tank ploughs into the shallows ahead-

Bernie moans, cowers by his control panel. The commander can be heard - trying to hold *his* nerve.

COMMANDER

Full idle!!! Keep her there!!!
Steadyyyyyyy

Suddenly, one tank slides on the wet floor as it tries to gain purchase, and broadsides towards Bernie. He stares, helplessly. But it straightens at the last second and finally hits the ramp as it should - crashing into the waves.

Then machine gun fire kicks against the LCT and Bernie ducks behind the bulkhead once more, wincing as ammunition pings off the armour plating.

But Bernie cannot stay there. He want to know - wants to be sure - that Douglas is on the beach, is safely onto land. So, gritting his teeth, he cranes his head round the LCT's bows and focuses on the shore-

BERNIE

Go on. Go on, you daft bugger-!

Bernie manages a strangled smile: he's done it! He's there, ashore, in one piece - and now Douglas's tank can speed unencumbered towards the Atlantic Wall-

Which it does, firing again, and then-

It explodes.

Bernie blinks, not sure he's seen it right. He almost speaks. But...But there is no point; the evidence is there: twisted, burning, destroyed-

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BERNIE AND REENIE'S FLAT - DAY

Rene stares at Bernie.

BERNIE

Bang. Gone...That's the truth.

He looks to Rene. Smiles. It goes.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

He trusted me. I said he'd be alright.

(ashamed; then, finally nods)

He got killed because I made him get off the boat-

He is done. Finally, emptied. *This* is the place he had to go. Rene watches, heartbroken. After a long moment, she moves closer to him and she touches his wrist. He looks at her-

RENE

When you came home, Bernie, you were wound so tight...You had something...inside you. I thought you'd tell me what it was but...you never did. And I wasn't going to ask. I thought, if I even touch him, he'll just shatter and that'll be the end of us...And life *without* you?...I couldn't even consider that.

(he looks, amazed; she continues *her* confession)

You've loved me for 70 years. And you've used every ounce of your good luck building a marriage with me. And that's what it was! It was your good luck, Bernie, that got you through the war. And Douglas's bad luck not to. It wasn't your fault he was killed on the beach. It wasn't then and it isn't now. And that, *that* is the truth.

(he hangs on her every word)

And I'll tell you this, too, we have never wasted *one* second of our time together. Alright, we've only done normal, every day, little things but God we did them well. And we still do!

He smiles and trembles. And then he cries. His head bows and his shoulders rock. This time, though, he doesn't stop. Rene goes to him and pulls him close. They kiss and love each other.

EXT. HOVE - EVENING

The sun is down but it is still light. The tarmac smells of the day. Bernie is walking Rene in her chair, away from the home, along the front. They spot a poodle! It comes over with its owner and they fuss it-

EXT. SEAFRONT - EVENING

Bernie pushes Rene along the esplanade. It is warm and they move towards the cafe featured at the start. But also there are the cyclists seen at the beginning, too - and as usual they are loud and overly full of their own youthful vigour.

EXT. BEACHFRONT CAFE - EVENING

Rene inhales. Happy. She sips a beer, finishes it-

RENE

We should get back...You want to take an ice cream?

BERNIE

Naah. Got chocolate up in the room...Super-size. And I got a sausage for you.

RENE

I bet.

He chortles. And they move off-

EXT. SEAFRONT - DAY

The cyclists remain, in the golden sunset, and we see their bikes left against the railings. They drink beer and banter. It's tiresome.

But then we see a hand reach into frame and start to let down the tyres on one of the bikes.

It is Bernie. Rene watches and chuckles. Finally he turns to the lads at their table.

BERNIE

Tossers.

EXT. THE PINES - NIGHT

Now all is silence as Bernie and Rene approach The Pines. Most of the lights are out. They push up the drive. The door opens. Adele. She has waited for them. As they near, she looks wryly at the time on her watch-

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Bernie is at the window. He looks out across the English Channel. The moon now falls over the still water. He checks his watches. It is one minute past midnight. D-Day is over. He comes to attention, body upright, eyes ahead.

EXT. BRITISH CEMETERY, BAYEUX - NIGHT

In France, the moon beats down on the many, many graves. We see Douglas's. And we see it is different. Just in front of the headstone is the cigarette tin, where Bernie has left it, at last returned to its owner.

INT. BERNIE AND REENIE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Bernie hears the last chime on a nearby Church, fade away. But before he can turn-

RENE
You comin' to bed?

He looks round more quickly. Rene is standing by the door, in her nightie. He beams.

BERNIE
Yours or mine?

She smiles. He grabs his walker and moves across the room.

INT. BERNIE AND REENIE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Bernie and Rene are - as usual - in their separate beds. But she leans across and kisses him on the lips. She moves back and closes her eyes, happy. Bernie switches off the light.

FADE TO BLACK:

An alarm beeps

INT. BERNIE AND RENE'S FLAT - DAY

We see an alarm clock. Rene's. The time says 4.15AM. It keeps beeping. And then we see why: the bed is empty-

EXT. BRIGHTON PIER - DAY

The sun rises over the horizon. Bernie and Rene stare at it. Holy Hour. They shut their eyes and feel its warmth fill their bodies. They both breathe deeply. They reach out and grasp each others hands.

Briefly they are as they were in their youth, during the war, in their glorious bodies.

And then they are back. Old and in love still.

Fade-

BERNIE JORDAN DIED SIX MONTHS AFTER HIS TRIP TO FRANCE

RENE WENT WITH HIM, SEVEN DAYS LATER

THE END