

FADE IN TO:

EXT. OLD FAMILY COTTAGE - DAY

A young boy leaps nimbly through a grass field. Nine years old with short back and sides and grey school shirt. Dark shorts and long socks. He carries a model aeroplane high in one hand. It climbs and dives in a mock aerial display.

Behind the boy is an old detached cottage, fronted by a white picket fence. Vegetables, not flowers, fill the front garden. A man stands by the open gate, leaning heavily on the gatepost. Stocky, rustic, dressed in rough work-clothes, typical of the 1950s.

Red faced and angry, he calls out something inaudible. Looks as though he'd rip the boy limb from limb, if only he could. The boy continues running.

Black to MAIN TITLES. Credits continue as:

EXT. VICTORIA SEABRIGHT'S CAR - DAY

A steady drizzle hangs over everything like a shroud, replacing colour with a dull monotone. Characterless buildings huddle together in a small, cramped residential development.

One - a cheerless, grey-brick bungalow - squats as cold as a headstone, among a sodden carpet of dead autumn leaves. A small, dark Vauxhall Corsa is parked outside.

Two people are in the car: LESLIE KEYWORTH and VICTORIA SEABRIGHT. He's sixty-ish with a blanched complexion. Soberly dressed. Cord pants, grey oxford shirt, brown, woollen topcoat.

Leslie stares out toward the bungalow, his expression at one with the weather. He turns to Victoria.

LESLIE
You ready then?

CONTINUED

Victoria, his girlfriend. Fifties, smart, lively. Her bright colours are made more vivid against his drab appearance. Light coloured skirt. Gaily embroidered sweater. A forced smile.

VICTORIA

Are you? I'm sure it can wait,
if not.

Leslie sighs and turns away from her to look out of the window.

LESLIE

Look, I'm okay. Need to get her
stuff sorted now there's been an
offer on the house.

Victoria reaches for him and pauses, noticing Leslie's dark scowl. She continues regardless and places a hand on his sleeve. Her voice softens.

VICTORIA

Well, as long as you're sure.

Leslie tugs his collar up. Pulls a bunch of keys from his coat pocket. Turns to Victoria and nods. The movement is barely discernible. As though this were a signal, Victoria shifts in her seat and opens the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNGALOW FRONT ROOM - DAY

A sparsely furnished room. Stillness, so extreme it is audible - like a chapel of rest. A large, ornate clock on one wall. Once the heartbeat of the house, its pendulums are now still. A door opens. Leslie and Victoria step cautiously inside.

Leslie's attention is immediately drawn to a frame-mounted photograph on the wall opposite. It is the cottage from the opening scene. He stares at the picture, engrossed, for several seconds. Shakes his head slightly, crosses the room and steps into the hall. Victoria follows him.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Leslie opens the bedroom curtains as Victoria enters. Frigid sunlight now illuminates the room.

LESLIE

Let's shed some light on things
eh?

Leslie walks over to a large double wardrobe and pulls open the doors. They open with a Sssh sound, like a whisper.

He lifts an armful of clothes off the rail. Turns to dump them on the bed while Victoria shakes open a black bag. He turns back to the wardrobe and stops. He's looking down at the wardrobe floor.

LESLIE

Hello, what's this?

Leslie squats in front of the wardrobe. Reaches inside.

LESLIE [CONT'D]

There's a wooden box down here,
under her scarves and stuff -
ah, I've seen this before.

Leslie stands, cradling a box in his arms. It is well-made. Shoe-box size. Polished wood with brass edgings.

VICTORIA

What is it?

LESLIE

Mum - and Dad used to keep the
old insurance documents in it.
You know, Co-op book and such
like.

VICTORIA

You going to open it, then?
They're prob'ly still in there.
You know old people and their
hoards.

CONTINUED

Leslie holds the box, gently rubbing the polished surface with his sleeve.

LESLIE

Not sure if I should. I mean, if that's all it holds, why's it hidden down there?

He pauses. Flips the top open and stares into the box. It clearly does not contain insurance documents. Victoria reaches inside.

VICTORIA

A medal? And photographs and stuff. You never told me you had some old pictures.

LESLIE

[Slowly]

That's because I've never seen them before.

Victoria lifts a small medal out and holds it up before her. It is a creamy coloured cameo, hung beneath a bright blue ribbon.

VICTORIA

An' I've never seen a medal like this before. They're normally stars and gongs and such like aren't they? This one's a cameo - look's like/

LESLIE

George Washington.

Leslie reaches for the medal. Holds it up to the light.

LESLIE [CONT'D]

A Purple Heart. Awarded to American servicemen wounded -
[Pauses]
- or killed in battle.

VICTORIA

Yeah, but what's your Mum doing with it? Are you sure it's not your Dad's?

LESLIE

[Scornfully]

Huh, doubt it. He spent the war down a coal-mine. Only medals he got were a bad back and a chip on his shoulder. An unsung bloody hero, in fact. His words. Anyway, let's look at these pictures.

Victoria holds a photograph out for Leslie to see.

VICTORIA

Who's the soldier? You recognise him?

LESLIE

It's an airman. American by the look of it. Anyway, it's strange but the question in my mind isn't 'who is he?' It's 'who took the picture?'

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. ATTLEBOROUGH AIRBASE - DAY

An open, windswept airbase. The edge of the runway. DUANE O'DONNELL, an airman tries to restrain a boisterous Labrador as BLYTHE, a young woman [Leslie's mother], stands with a Box Brownie camera, poised to take a photograph.

BLYTHE

[Shouting into the wind]

Keep him still won't you. He'll be just a blur otherwise.

DUANE

[Also shouting, to be heard]

Just take the damn shot. We'll both be fuzzy in this god-damned

CONTINUED

gale. It's all I can do to stay upright.

BLYTHE

There, I've taken it. Satisfied?

Duane turns toward the nissen hut several yards away. He pulls on the dog's leash.

DUANE

I will be once I'm in the warm.
C'mon boy. Let's go.

Duane runs toward the hut, laughing. Blythe begins to jog after him.

BLYTHE

Wait.
[Louder]
Wait for me.

DUANE

[Shouting over his
shoulder]
You want me, you catch me.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Victoria looks at Leslie. He's staring blankly at the photograph. She frowns, concerned.

VICTORIA

And who d'you think took it?

LESLIE

[Quietly]
Don't know. But I get the
feeling this is a Pandora's box.
One that should have stayed
closed.

VICTORIA

Or one that should have been
opened a long time ago, maybe?

CONTINUED

Leslie stands. Walks over to the bedroom door. He turns to Victoria before leaving the room.

LESLIE

Sorry. Need to take a breather.
Suddenly it's really close in
here.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A small kitchen. Long and narrow. A pair of women's slippers waits by the back door. Leslie enters the room, running his hands through his hair.

Leslie walks slowly around. Reaches out to various objects, his hand lingering on them before moving on. He stops by the back door. On the wall is a coat rack. A faded, flat-cap occupies one peg.

He slowly reaches for it and lifts it down. His face is a picture of tragedy. He brings the cap close to his face, sniffs it, then screws it up in his fist before slamming it down on a work top.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Victoria looks up sharply at the sound from the kitchen.

VICTORIA

Les? You okay?

Victoria waits for a reply. There isn't one, but she hears Leslie approaching. She hold up a photograph as Leslie enters the room

VICTORIA [CONT'D]

I've found a better picture of
him. Doesn't have his hat on
this time. He's got blonde hair,
like/

LESLIE

Mine.

VICTORIA

I was going to say mine.
[Pauses]

VICTORIA [CONT'D]

Look Les, I don't think it wise
to make rash assumptions.
Especially not now. You've
enough to/

LESLIE

Look.

Leslie snatches the photograph and strides over to the bedside table. On it is a photograph of his parents. His mother is looking toward camera and appears to be watching him. His father, in contrast, looks away.

LESLIE [CONT'D]

Who do I resemble most? Blondie
here or Eric the Red?

VICTORIA

I just don't want you to be hurt
any more.

LESLIE

Vickie. I've been hurting all my
life. Besides, these aren't just
photos, they're pieces of a
jigsaw. And they're dropping
neatly into place. What else we
got in there?

They both sit down on the bed. Victoria reaches inside the box.

VICTORIA

Train ticket. Bus ticket. And
something else/

Leslie snatches the tickets from the box.

LESLIE

Train, London to Norwich. Bus
Norwich to Attleborough. Wasn't
there a bomber base there,
during the war?

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. ATTLEBOROUGH HIGH STREET - DAY

It is late afternoon. The sun is setting under a flame-red sky. Blythe waits at a bus-stop on an empty street. Duane hurries over the road to meet her. Big-band music spills from a pub opposite.

DUANE
[Breathlessly]
Sorry I'm late.

BLYTHE
That's okay.

They embrace. Hold each other for several seconds. It's been a long time since they last saw each other.

DUANE
I've been stuck in a pre-briefing meeting.
[Looks around him and lowers his voice]
We're to fly out to Berlin tomorrow.
[Jabs his thumb back toward the pub.]
The lad's are having bit of a drink. A diversion. We're both invited. Coming?

Duane picks up Blythe's small overnight case and steps toward the pub. Blythe reaches out for his sleeve, stopping him.

BLYTHE
Wait. The mission. Will it be a tough one?

DUANE
[Pauses]
As tough as it gets, I'm afraid.

CONTINUED

BLYTHE

In that case let's find a hotel.
I want you to myself tonight.

DUANE

Are you sure. I mean, what if/

BLYTHE

Then I'll have a piece of you
forever.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Leslie stares at the tickets.

LESLIE

Look at the dates. Don't you
see?

[Pauses]

Christ, no wonder the poor
bastard hated me.

Leslie pauses awhile, reflecting on what he's discovered.
He brightens, suddenly.

LESLIE [CONT'D]

Do you realise though, Vickie? I
have a family somewhere. My real
father. Oh, it'll mean a search
- a long one probably. But it'll
give me something to take my
mind off things.

Victoria looks at him. She doesn't appear to share his
enthusiasm.

VICTORIA

Les, if your father is out
there, somewhere. What's his
medal doing in here?

CONTINUED

Leslie stands. Paces the room, leafing quickly through the photographs.

LESLIE

I don't know. Because they loved one another? Because he returned to the States and left his medal as a memento? I've no idea.

Victoria pulls the final document from the box and begins to read it to herself as Leslie rambles on.

LESLIE [CONT'D]

But don't you see? This all fits. I mean, several things used to puzzle me. As a kid, I mean. Odd comments. Strange looks, even.

That I'd catch my Mum and Dad making. But it wasn't just what was said, it were the things not said. If you get me.

Victoria lowers the document to her lap. Her expression reveals that it contains bad news. She pats the bed beside her.

VICTORIA

I do understand, but I think you ought to sit and read this.

She hands him the document. A telegram.

LESLIE

[Reading aloud]

The Secretary of War desires me to express his deep regret -

He pauses and looks up at Victoria. She leans and wraps her arms around him.

VICTORIA

God, Les, I'm so sorry.

FADE OUT:

CONTINUED

FADE IN:

INT. B17 BOMBER COCKPIT - DAY

Duane, in full flying gear, fights with the controls of the aircraft. His co-pilot is slumped in the seat beside him, blood pouring down the side of his face. Flames flicker hungrily behind the cockpit. There's the sound of screaming engines, machine gun fire and blind panic.

A CREW-MAN appears from the compartment behind the cockpit. He is lit by the glare from the fires. He waves frantically for Duane to get out. The scene is obscured by an orange flash, accompanied by a loud explosion.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The explosion echoes into this scene. Leslie flinches, as though struck. He pulls away from Victoria, looks down at the document.

VICTORIA

I am so very sorry.

Leslie continues to stare at the telegram. He appears lost.

VICTORIA [CONT'D]

But don't forget. You still have family. His family. And when you find them, that's when you'll finally get to know the man.

Leslie drops the photographs into the box and picks up the medal. He holds it up to the light now streaming in from the window, turns to Victoria and smiles.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. US FAMILY HOME -DINING ROOM - DAY

A framed print of a B17 bomber is prominent on one wall. A stars and stripes flag stands boldly to attention in a corner. In the room's centre, a highly polished redwood table is set for a special occasion. Silver cutlery shines. Cut glass glistens.

A family is seated. Tanned, sleek and well-heeled, they look expectantly toward Leslie, positioned at the head of the table. Victoria is sitting next to him.

Leslie has undergone a transformation. He appears healthy and relaxed. His dark and dreary clothing has been replaced by a red polo shirt and khaki chinos. He stands and raises his wine glass.

LESLIE

Before we eat, I'd like to
propose a toast

He waits for the other family members to raise their glasses.

LESLIE [CONT'D]

To family.

CUT TO: BLACK