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BLACK C EEN: BANG! A G N HO !

FADE IN

1 EXT. COUNTRY. LATE SUMMER. DAY 1. 1

A brilliant summer's day. The bluest of skies. A young man,
MICHAEL (18) is laying in a small flattened circle in the

A moment between them, unspoken, beautiful, innocent eyes, full of love and wonder... They kiss. The kiss becomes more frenzied, this time they won't be able to stop, this time Katie wants him too...

HELEN (O. S.)

Katie!

She breaks away and runs towards the voice.

KATIE

Comi ng!

Michael watches her go and sighs... Thwarted again.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. KATIE'S HOME. LATE SUMMER. LATE AFTERNOON, DAY 1. 3

A stone-built farmhouse at the bottom of the valley.

Katie's Father **PE E** is in the yard, fixing an old barrow, her Mother **HELEN** watching as Katie joins them, Michael following on behind. Helen looks at Michael as he joins Katie.

HELEN

Michael .

MI CHAEL

Mrs Fisher.

HELEN

I think it's time you went home,
Katie has chores.

Michael nods and turns to Katie.

MI CHAEL

Bye.

KATIE

(sel f consci ous)

Bye.

Michael turns and walks away, nodding to Katie's Father as he goes. Katie smiles as she watches him walk away.

CUT TO:

4 INT. MI CHAEL'S HOUSE. LATE SUMMER. DAY 1. 4

A farmhouse kitchen, cluttered and functional. Michael enters the kitchen and takes off his shoes at the door.

His Mother **AN** is preparing a large supper. In from the farm and already at the table are his Father **WILLIAM**, who is bent over a newspaper and Michael's five year old sister **AH**.

WILLIAM
(reading newspaper)
Austria-Hungary have accused the Serbs of murder. They issued them with an ultimatum at six o'clock last night with the full backing of Berlin.

SUSAN
(to Michael)
Wash your hands.

Michael heads to the bowl of water nearby and washes his hands. Over this:

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
(reads)
.....48 hours to arrest the people behind the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and deliver them up or face the consequences. They've also got to publicly condemn all propaganda against the Austro-Hungarian people... and remove the same from all Serbian school books and public documents.

SUSAN
Can they do that?

Susan puts a plentiful supper on the table, Michael sits down, ruffles his little sister's hair and digs in.

WILLIAM
Doesn't really matter what they can or can't do... The point is they want the Serbs to kiss their arses.

SUSAN
William!

WILLIAM
They'll hear worse, if it turns to war.

Susan brings a plate of cheese and cured meats and sits down, taking William's newspaper off him and casting it aside.

MICHAEL
Will we have to fight?

SUSAN

There won't be a war. Now eat your food.

WILLIAM

It's no use lying to the boy.

SUSAN

You've only got one good leg and he's too young, so there will be no more talk of anyone going anywhere to fight.

MICHAEL

I'm not scared.

SUSAN

Well you should be!

WILLIAM

If it comes to it, we'll have to defend ourselves.

SUSAN

If there's a war, then we'll stay on the farm and grow food to feed the army, but I will not send them my children.

(beat)

Michael, move your sister's plate a little closer for me...

Michael glances at his Father who raises his eyebrows in a male bonding expression... Michael then pushes Sarah's full plate closer to her.

Susan eats her food and looks at them both, they eat...

CUT TO:

5 EXT. STREET. LATE SUMMER. LATE AFTERNOON, DAY 1. 5

HOMA 17, is riding a grocery delivery bicycle groaning with food with some gusto in a quite well-to-do street.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. STREET. LATE SUMMER. LATE AFTERNOON, DAY 1. 6

Thomas at the side of a large house, making a delivery to a cheery elderly woman in a cook's uniform, who puts a coin into his hand.

Thomas nods his thanks then moves to get back on his bicycle, as he does so, two young girls walk past across the street.

A well dressed young man passes them, raising his hat, they nod politely, then chatter excitedly once he's passed.

Thomas suddenly feels very childish, self conscious in his tatty clothes and holding his bicycle. He steps on to his bicycle and pedals away.

CUT TO:

7 INT. THOMAS' HOUSE. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 1. 7

Thomas enters his bedroom and reaches up to a small hand made shelf above his bed, on which are three equally tatty books: an old world atlas, a book about gardening and an encyclopedia about birds. Beside them is an old battered tin which he takes down. He opens the lid and reaches in his pocket to take out the farthing given to him by the cook and he puts it the tin with two other farthings.

CUT TO:

8 INT. THOMAS' HOUSE. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 1. 8

DAVID and **ANNIE**, a couple in their early forties, sit around with their three children, **HOMA** (17), **JOHN**(12) and **FAI H** (7). David is reading from a newspaper.

DAVID

"...in Berlin, Kaiser Wilhelm has already pledged his support to Austria-Hungary..

(beat)

The government will make an announcement later today".

David and Annie exchange a look of concern. Thomas sees that look.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. BACK YARD. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 1. 9

Thomas' Father David fixing a puncture on his bicycle in the back yard, Thomas sits with him. He watches his Father, waiting for his moment.

THOMAS

D'you think there'll be a war Dad?

DAVID

Looks like things are moving that way.

THOMAS

But it's not us, is it?
I mean it's Austria and Germany and
that, but not us... And they're
miles away. Over the channel.
They can't get to us can they?

DAVID

Well all these countries have
agreements with each other, to help
out if the other one's in
trouble...

(beat)

And if Germany go to war with
France then they'll have to invade
the country in-between them.
A place called Belgium.
They're our allies...

(beat)

So we'd have to go and help.

THOMAS

But the Germans... They won't do
that will they? Not if they know
we'd help them?

DAVID

I don't know son.

THOMAS

If they did. Would you go and
fight?

DAVID

(grins)

I'll go if they ask me and I can
cheat me way through the medical.

THOMAS

Wouldn't you be scared?

A moment, David thoughtful, looking at Thomas' open-eyed face
looking back at him, hungry for an answer...

DAVID

You remember Empire Day?

(beat)

Everyone out in the street, up 'til

It's about us doing our bit for
King and country. For the Empire.
Scared or not.

THOMAS

I'd go too.

DAVID

I know you would son.

(beat)

But it won't come to that.

If there is a war, it won't last a
month.

CUT TO:

10 INT. THOMAS' BEDROOM. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 1 10

Thomas in his pyjamas, using an old torch, goes to his makeshift bookshelf and grabs the old battered atlas from beside his bird encyclopedia... He lifts the old atlas onto his bed, opens it up and scours the pages, until he finds Europe.

With his finger he traces the outlines of Belgium, then Germany and Austria-Hungary, then France...

11 EXT. VILLAGE. LATE SUMMER. DAY 2. 11

Favour Michael as he and Katie sit on a low wall. A cloth opened between them, cakes inside. Katie in shop uniform.

MICHAEL

What if I get killed? You can't
let me die before we've done it.

KATIE

It was in the newspaper this
morning, that anyone who signs up
to fight now, won't see any
action...

The war will be over by the time
they've finished training.

KATIE
Course I do. Everyone else's
boyfriend is going.

MICHAEL
Oh... So you just don't want to be
stuck with the coward?

KATIE
I didn't say that.

MICHAEL
No, you're right... The two worst
things in a boyfriend.
Being a coward and a virgin.

She laughs. Then leans over and kisses him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(beat)
I was thinking...
If... When I sign up, I'll get
wages, proper wages... More than I
get from working on the farm
anyway...
(beat)
So I thought, if you wanted...
I could buy a ring?

KATIE
An engagement ring?

Michael grins as the Church hall clock chimes.

KATIE (CONT'D)
I'm late!

She jumps down off the wall, pecks him on the cheek and
scurries away towards the bakers shop.

MICHAEL
(after her)
You didn't answer me!

She stops and looks back. A beat, she smiles and nods.
Then turns and runs into the bakers shop. Michael watching
her, he beams...

CUT TO:

DAVID

(reads)

"...his Majesty's Government
declared to the German Government
that a state of war exists between
Great Britain and Germany as from
11 p.m on August 4, 1914".

Thomas watches the reaction of the adults around him.

CUT TO:

Because I don't want to hear you telling me that you've become a man overnight and that you want to join the army so you can go and kill other men!

MICHAEL

(stands)

There's a war, we have to fight.

SUSAN

Don't be ridiculous, you have no idea what you're saying!
You've had one fight in your entire life, you were nine years old and you came home crying with a bloody nose!

MICHAEL

(strides out)

Well don't worry, this time I won't!

SUSAN

Michael! Come back here!

But he's gone, Susan turns to William as he stands.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Do something!

But William avoids eye contact, there's nothing he can do.

The blue suited man hands Thomas a sheet of paper.

BLUE SUITED MAN
Over there.

Thomas takes the piece of paper and joins the next line behind **CIL**, a nineteen-year-old with huge ears and an even bigger grin. Cyril leans in to Thomas.

CYRIL
You have to be nineteen to go overseas.

THOMAS
Oh.

CYRIL
Not much point signing up and not going anywhere is there?
(offers hand)
Cyril Griffiths.

THOMAS
Thomas Edwards. Tommy.

CYRIL
You can't shorten my name...
Not that it matters, everyone calls me wing nut.
(beat)
No idea why.

Thomas looks at his ears.

CYRIL (CONT'D)
I'm kidding.

Cyril laughs, Thomas relaxes.

CUT TO:

19 INT. CHURCH HALL. LATE SUMMER. DAY 3 19

Michael hands back his sheet of paper, the middle aged man looks at it, then stamps it and hands it back to him, indicating another line. Michael takes his paper and moves to join the next line.

CUT TO:

20 INT. TOWN HALL. LATE SUMMER. DAY 3. 20

Thomas stripped, in a queue to see the medic.

CUT TO:

She runs across the green and pushes her way through the people to see Michael and beams with pride, Michael sees her and puffs out his chest with a grin.

CUT TO:

27 INT. THOMAS' BEDROOM. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 3. 27

Thomas is folding his uniform neatly, then starts packing the rest of his possessions into a canvas bag. His little brother John and little sister Faith both sit on the bed watching him.

JOHN

Will you have to shoot people?

THOMAS

I suppose. They haven't given me a gun yet.

JOHN

Mum said she was going to the town hall to tell 'em you lied, but Dad wouldn't let her... Said you were old enough to make up your own mind. She keeps crying. Dad's covered in snot, his sleeve's all shiny.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. THOMAS' HOUSE. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 3. 28

ANNIE is in the back yard having a cigarette. David stands in the back doorway.

DAVID

It'll be all over before he's finished his army training.

ANNIE

Don't, David alright?
Our little boy is going to fight in a war.
Against grown men.
Grown men who will be trying to kill him.

(beat)

So don't think that saying everything will be alright is enough. Because it isn't. Nothing you can say to me will be enough, or make it alright, or make me understand or make me feel any different to the way I do now...

(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

So just...
Don't.

DAVID

We can't stop him.

ANNIE

Yes we can!

DAVID

For how long Annie? And then what?
He runs away?
He goes over there anyway, only on
his own?
Without knowing his family love
him, that we're waiting for him..?

A moment, Annie stares into space. Then glances up at the light in the bedroom window above her.

DAVID (CONT'D)

This time tomorrow he'll be gone.
And all you'll be able to think
about are the things you'd say to
him if he was here...

(beat)

Well he's here now.

A moment, before David turns away and goes back inside.

OUT on Annie alone.

CUT TO:

29

INT. HAY BARN. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 3.

29

Michael and Katie have climbed up on top of a huge hay stack in the barn. They are laying down, looking up at the stars through a hole in the roof.

KATIE

It's funny to think that wherever
you go, you'll be able to see the
same stars as me...

(beat)

We'll both be looking at them at
the same time... When I'm looking
at them, I'll know you are too...

A beat, Katie turns to look at him.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Are you frightened?

33 EXT. TOWN HALL. LATE SUMMER. DAY 4.

33

Chaos as an old bus waits to transport new recruits. Young men and their families are saying their farewells; Thomas, in uniform, and his family are among them.

Thomas turns and shakes his Dad's hand, but then his Dad hugs him. Thomas then says his good-byes to his siblings John and Faith before looking at his Mum Annie. She can't stop the tears as she embraces him and squeezes him as though she'll never let go, David looking on.

Annie and Thomas part and she looks at him intently.

ANNIE

Whatever you have to do, you come
back to me, do you hear?

Thomas nods. She grabs his arms, looks hard into his eyes.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Promi se me.

THOMAS

I promi se.

A moment between them and then Thomas picks up his canvas bag and walks to the bus. He looks back and positively beams.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I've never been on a bus before!

Annie laughs through the tears as she watches Thomas climb into the bus.

As the bus pulls away, people cheer and wave small flags as they wave the young men off. Thomas waving.

34 EXT. CHURCH HALL. LATE SUMMER. DAY 4.

34

A slightly less frantic scene as a large horse-drawn cart is waiting outside the church hall to collect a dozen or so new recruits in uniform. Families saying their farewells. Michael stands with his parents and little sister Sarah and Katie. Her parents stand nearby, watching.

Michael embraces his Father, watched by Susan.

WILLIAM

I'm proud of you son.

Michael nods, then stoops down to cuddle Sarah, before straightening up to embrace his Mum.

SUSAN

I've packed you gloves and extra wool socks in case you get cold at night and there's a scarf, I don't know if they'll let you wear it, but maybe if you have it under your tunic.

A moment between them, she half glances at William.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You don't have to be a hero you know.

Michael nods, then kisses her. He turns to take Katie's hand, he looks at his Mum who nods her approval. They walk to the cart.

MI CHAEL

(grins)

At least I won't die a virgin.

KATIE

Ssshhh!

She glances at the parents to make sure they didn't hear, which amuses Michael even more as the driver of the cart rings a bell, the other young men start climbing on.

KATIE (CONT'D)

No! It's too quick!

MI CHAEL

Back before you know it.

He picks up his bag.

Everyone there begins handing flowers to the young men about to leave.

Michael and Katie hurriedly kiss and embrace. The bell rings again. Michael moves toward the cart, Katie going with him. He kisses her again and climbs up on to the cart.

The cart prepares to pull away, Katie steps back to join the parents. An elderly woman hands Michael a flower, he takes it with a smile, then stands and throws it to Katie as the cart pulls away. People cheer and wave flags, throwing more flowers.

Katie catches the flower.

William puts a comforting arm around Susan. Katie's parents both hold Katie.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. CARTETON ARMY TRAINING CAMP. LATE SUMMER. DAY 4 35

A slightly bewildered Thomas gets off the bus with all the other young men, none of them quite knowing what to do or where to go. Until a Sergeant-Major **HO ACE GREEN** appears. His voice booms above the excited chatter and demands instant silence.

SGT-MAJOR GREEN
Buses 1 to 3, barracks seven and eight. 4-6, tents row A to D.

Thomas turns to see Cyril bounding up to him with a huge grin.

CYRIL
We're together, come on...

They head off towards the tent together.

CUT TO:

36 INT. THOMAS' TENT. LATE SUMMER. DAY 4. 36

A circular tent with twelve low beds made of straw mattresses on slats of wood. Half a dozen young men are already sitting on their bunks unpacking their bags as Thomas and Cyril enter. They look at remaining empty beds.

THOMAS
Anywhere I suppose?

They grab the nearest empty beds. **AN HON**, (21, fair hair, lean and intense blue eyes) is shuffling a deck of cards, he looks at Thomas from the next bed.

ANTHONY
(holds out hand)
Anthony... Ant. Where you from?

THOMAS
(shakes hand)
Cardiff. Tommy.

ANTHONY
You play cards?

THOMAS
Not really.

ANTHONY
Don't worry, I'll teach you.

BEN (19, short and stocky) calls over from the next bed.

BEN
Just give him whatever money you've got now, it'll save time.

ANTHONY
That's Ben, he thinks he's funny.
(beat)
How old are you?

THOMAS
Seventeen.

ANTHONY
I've got a little brother your age,
Dad had to lock him in his bedroom.

THOMAS
(grins)
I'd have climbed out the window.

ANTHONY
Good man.

He nods at the next bed.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
That's Kev.

KE IN (20, jet black hair, olive skin).

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Just don't introduce him to your sister.

BEN
Or your Mum.

Thomas points at Cyril.

THOMAS
This is Cyril. People call him wing nut.

CYRIL
Don't know why.

Anthony, Ben and Kevin all look at Thomas, a beat then he grins. All five then laugh.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. HAMMULBERG ARMY TRAINING CAMP/SQUARE. LATE SUMMER. 37
DAY 4.

FELDWEBEL-LEUTNANT BIERMANN (Sergeant-Major), a gruff looking man in his forties, steps forward to address new recruits.

Michael stands with fellow new recruits, **DI** (18, clean cut), **F EDDIE** (17, baby faced) **LAN O** (19, overweight) and **EFAN** (18, scruffy, amiable).

Biermann points.

BIERMANN

Over th.0153 Tm /TT5.0 1 Tf (BIERMANN) Tj ETTj ET Q q 1 C

CUT TO:

41 EXT. MICHAEL'S HUT. LATE SUMMER. NIGHT 4.

Thoughtful , not knowing what the future holds, then he starts to sing along...

CORPORAL BOND (CONT' D)
You're honoured... Looks like the
lice have found you already...

Thomas still itching.

CORPORAL BOND (CONT' D)
When you've dropped your packs off,
get a bit of paraffin from one of
the lads, rub it on your skin, they
hate it...

They continue past other soldiers, cleaning rifles and
equipment.

CORPORAL BOND (CONT' D)
We're at stand down now, but
reconnaissance reckons that the
Germans have just got a bunch of
reinforcements in, so it looks like
we'll have a busy day...
Morning hate will start in five
minutes.

THOMAS
What's morning hate?

CORPORAL BOND
Every morning we hit them with
artillery, machine gun and rifle
fire, in fact we throw anything
over there we can get our hands

BEN
Yeah well if you find out, let me know...

ANTHONY
Anyone fancy a bet?

THOMAS
What on?

ANTHONY
Who gets shot first.

BEN
He's actually serious.

ANTHONY
Why not?

KEVIN
Be good though wouldn't it?

CYRIL
Yeah right, good idea, let's all get shot.

KEVIN
Just winged a bit, to go home with.
Just a little scar to show the girls...
(indicates his groin)
Right here..

The others laugh, Thomas smiles, though just a hint of shock by the bawdy nature of the conversation... An officer steps out of the dug out and checks his pocket watch. He nods at the Corporal.

CORPORAL
Come on then! Let 'em know we're here!

The British soldiers all lay their rifles over the top and fire! Not really aiming, just firing. Cyril even has his eyes shut tight.

A couple of soldiers light the fuses and throw over "ticklers".

CUT TO:

49

EXT. GERMAN TRENCH. LATE SUMMER. DAY 6.

49

Michael, Rudi, Freddie, Lanzo and Stefan in their trench on as the "ticklers" explode. The bombardment intensifies and they become terrified and disoriented, but are pushed up on to the fire step by corporals and sergeants..

They fire back, but undisciplined, manic.

Favour Michael, he exchanges a look with Freddie - this is a terrifying experience. Freddie ducks his head below the parapet and squeezes his eyes shut.

Michael wants to do the same, but he steels himself, takes a deep breath then raises himself up and starts firing again.

CUT TO:

50 INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE. LATE SUMMER. DAY 6. 50

Susan and William sitting together holding hands

CUT TO:

51 INT. THOMAS' BEDROOM. LATE SUMMER. DAY 6. 51

Annie sits alone on Thomas' bed.

CUT TO:

52 EXT. BRITISH TRENCH. LATE SUMMER. DAY 6. 52

The artillery kicks in, **ALL HELL BREAK LOOSE** as shells whistle above them and huge explosions around them. A soldier is shot and killed beside Thomas, the first time he's seen a dead body, he stares down at it, distraught. The whistle of a shell snaps him out of it and he looks at the others, all fumbling to reload and fire, dust and smoke and the whistling of shells all around them. Thomas catches Cyril's eye, his face filled with fear, they're a long way from the town hall recruiting station...

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE ONE

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