

INKLINGS

"Pilot"

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TEASER

COLD OPEN:

EXT. OXFORD STREETS - NIGHT

Rain slaps the ground, relentless. Sharp wind. Almost cold enough to snow.

Heavy boots SLOSH through mud and puddles. Two men BREATHE heavily. One COUGHS.

The men hug overcoats tight around them as they walk. A long pipe is clenched hard in the teeth of J.R.R. TOLKIEN (late-40's).

The other, C.S. ("JACK") LEWIS (early-40's), sucks hard on his limp cigarette.

JACK

Gone out.

Tolkien grunts.

TOLKIEN

Mine as well.

Jack tosses his cigarette and reaches for his pocket.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Leave it. Better hurry.

They pass an enormous clock tower. It begins to TOLL and they break into a RUN.

EXT. THE EAGLE AND CHILD - OXFORD - NIGHT

An Oxford street lined with conjoined buildings housing shops, pubs, inns, apartments. Large trees stand, dark and leafless silhouettes against a clouded sky.

A tall and narrow pub with whitewashed walls stands out from its neighboring buildings of wood and brick. It prominently and largely displays its name, "The Eagle and Child", across the front.

Men come and go through the busy front door, cheerfully bundled up against the rain and cold.

INT. THE EAGLE AND CHILD - OXFORD - NIGHT

Two beer mugs HIT the wooden bar. Foam sloshes over the top.

WARREN "WARNIE" LEWIS (mid-40's), tall, balding, and smartly moustached, takes the two mugs from the bar.

WARNIE

Cheers.

He turns and begins weaving his way through the bustling pub.

He makes for a nondescript DOOR in the wall. Holding the beer mugs close to his chest, he squeezes past a group of boisterous Oxford students, into

INT. BACK ROOM, THE EAGLE AND CHILD - OXFORD - NIGHT

Where about a DOZEN MEN of the tweed-coat and pipe-smoking type are gathered.

The men stand, sit, or otherwise lounge around a roaring fireplace. They talk over each other, some nearly shouting. Cigar smoke swirls among them.

Warnie is about to sit, when the door BANGS open, revealing Tolkien and Jack, sopping wet and laughing loudly. The other men immediately quiet down.

WARNIE

Late, Jack.

Jack takes off his wet coat. He throws it and his hat onto the nearest table while Tolkien carefully hangs his up on the crowded coat stand.

TOLKIEN

Your brother's fault.

He accepts one of Warnie's mugs of beer. Jack takes the other with a cheerful nod at his brother.

JACK

All right?

WARNIE

They're restless. Best get on with it.

Jack pops a fresh cigarette in his mouth and Tolkien automatically offers a light.

After a deep pull:

JACK

Well. Shall we?

TOLKIEN
 (looking around)
 And who's hiding the beer jug?

HUGO DYSON, a slim man with as much charm as he has hair,
 nods at the mug in Tolkien's hand.

DYSON
 Isn't that enough for you?

TOLKIEN
 For a few minutes, maybe.

DYSON
 We've been rationed. Supplies are
 short in the buttry.

JACK
 Are they? War's not even begun yet.

WARNIE
 Still, they're short all over the
 country, Jacks. Have you forgotten?

JACK
 I try not to remember.

Scattered chuckles.

DYSON
 But is it not man's duty to sympathize
 with those who suffer?

JACK
 On the contrary, I rather think it
 the duty of every Christian man to
 resist dwelling on such things too
 deeply. It is such a heavy burden.

TOLKIEN
 He will hardly even read the
 newspapers. Save crosswords.

JACK
 Perfectly true. To know how bad we
 are is an excellent recipe for
 becoming much worse.

LAUGHTER.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Well. Does anyone have anything to
 read this evening?
 (to Tolkien)
 Tollers?

TOLKIEN
Nothing from me.

A collective GROAN from the men.

DYSON
Finally sick of the bloody dwarves?
'Cause I am...

TOLKIEN
No. Just haven't had the time...

R.E. HAVARD, a decade older than the rest and with white whiskers to prove it, claps Tolkien on the back.

DYSON
Well, now that Tolkien's a published author, why bother writing anything new?

Tolkien chuckles.

TOLKIEN
Thank you, Doctor. I am working on some ideas, though. And a poem or two.

He pulls from his bag some wrinkled, handwritten PAGES.

The men sit up, interest piqued.

Tolkien brings his chair nearer to the fire and settles down.

He takes a quick swig of beer. Clears his throat.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
These are some new pages from the Lay of Leithian...

The men are all ears. Tolkien settles into his chair and turns the page.

FADE OUT.

END TEASER

ACT 1

FADE IN:

EXT. OXFORD - DAY

Early morning. The Winter sun rises behind the spires and towers of Oxford University.

Super: "January 1939"

EXT. TOLKIEN RESIDENCE, NORTH OXFORD - DAY

A large brown house in the Oxford suburbs. Unassuming, it stands back from the road, with a short wooden fence running in front.

Ivy tentatively climbs the walls. Yellow light glows from windows in the dark winter morning.

A NEWSPAPER BOY on bicycle drops a thick paper on the doorstep.

Headline: "JEWISH FINANCIERS FLEE GERMANY"

The door immediately OPENS. Two worn, brown shoes step out. A quick hand takes up the paper. Right on schedule.

INT. TOLKIEN RESIDENCE, NORTH OXFORD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The door shuts smartly behind J.R.R. Tolkien.

He turns to walk down the hallway, scanning the headlines.

Into the

KITCHEN

Where his four CHILDREN are gathered, eating breakfast.

The youngest, PRISCILLA (9), reads a book, ignoring her brothers completely.

MICHAEL (18) and CHRISTOPHER (14) are scribbling in notebooks, seeming to be finishing some last-minute homework.

The oldest, JOHN (21), is gathering his things to go, the only one already dressed.

Tolkien ruffles Christopher's hair, then bends to kiss Priscilla on the cheek.

TOLKIEN

Good morning.

Tired MUMBLES from all.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
Off already, John?

John nods, taking up his book bag.

JOHN
(self-important)
Breakfast meeting.

TOLKIEN
Ah.

As John leaves, Tolkien surveys the remaining three.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
Mum still getting ready?

Priscilla nods.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
I think it's time you all do the
same. Come on.

The remaining three kids get up reluctantly.

INT. STAIRWAY, TOLKIEN RESIDENCE - DAY

Tolkien follows the kids up the stairs. As all go into their
respective bedrooms, he heads into the

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, TOLKIEN RESIDENCE - DAY

Where EDITH TOLKIEN (mid-40s), very pretty but usually too
tired to make it show, stands at the full-length mirror,
tying up her dark hair.

The WIRELESS RADIO whispers softly in the background.

TOLKIEN
Kids are getting ready.

EDITH
Thanks, love.

He sits down on the bed and puts his feet up, careful not to
get his shoes on the bedspread. He leans back, pulls out
his pipe.

TOLKIEN
Are you sure you know how to get
there?

EDITH

I've been there a million times,
Ronald. Are you sure you know how
to get the kids to school?

Tolkien chuckles.

TOLKIEN

Yes, yes.

EDITH

I admit I am a bit nervous.

TOLKIEN

Don't do it, then.

EDITH

I want to. Better than being home
alone all day, anyway. Now how do I
look?

She turns to face him.

TOLKIEN

Beautiful, like always.

She turns back to the mirror, unconvinced.

EDITH

My hair is so dry in the Winter...

In the silence, they both listen to the radio.

RADIO

*...Winston Churchill reportedly
described Mr. Chamberlain as having
a "lust for peace"...*

EDITH

Hmm. Do you think that's true?

Tolkien opens his newspaper.

TOLKIEN

What?

EDITH

Do you think Churchill is right about
Chamberlain?

TOLKIEN

I think Chamberlain's intentions are
good.

EDITH

But?

TOLKIEN

It's dangerous to be too nice.
Sometimes it borders on weakness.

EDITH

Even if it means avoiding war?

Edith frowns at her own reflection.

TOLKIEN

It won't. Aren't all those Jewish
youngsters evidence of it?

EDITH

Yes, they have reason to flee, but
that doesn't necessarily mean there
will be a war.

TOLKIEN

(back to his paper)
I don't know, dear.

Far off, a bell tower TOLLS. In answer, Edith turns from
the mirror.

EDITH

Is that the fifteen or the half?

Tolkien consults his pocket-watch.

TOLKIEN

The half.

EDITH

Oh-- I'd better run.

She grabs her purse and coat from the bed. They kiss.

TOLKIEN

Have fun. See you tonight.

EDITH

Bye, love.

EXT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY

The outskirts of Oxford. University spires can be seen some
way off in the distance.

Edith approaches a massive building next to an old stone
church.

A long LINE of JEWISH REFUGEE CHILDREN leads to the front doors, where an army OFFICER and a CATHOLIC NUN sit behind a table.

The children sit in groups of fifteen or twenty, each headed by an adult chaperone. Every child has a NUMBER written on paper pinned to their clothes. YELLOW STARS are visible on all of their sleeves. They carry but one bag and an extra coat.

Edith approaches the table at the head of the line, where the Nun is comparing one child's papers with her long list of names.

EDITH

Good morning, I'm volunteering--

The Nun waves her on, with barely a glance.

NUN

Inside.

And back to the papers. Edith rolls her eyes.

EDITH

Thank you.

She continues on through the doors.

INT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY

Edith stops short with a GASP.

A GREAT MASS of children fill the giant hall, ten times the amount as outside. They talk amongst themselves in German, Dutch, Polish. The older ones comfort the ones who cry. Others sit alone and silent.

A dozen adults rush to and fro, readying beds, handing out water and blankets, inspecting paperwork, passports. It's organized chaos.

Edith stands in shock at it all. Until--

SISTER PENNY (O.S.)

Name?

Edith turns to see a short, stocky Nun, SISTER PENNY (60s), holding a clipboard and a pen, staring at her.

EDITH

Um. Edith Tolkien. How do you do.

Sister Penny consults the clipboard.

SISTER PENNY

Tolkien...

(makes a mark)

Come with me. We'll start you in on paperwork.

She sets off across the hall, surprisingly quick for her stature and age.

Edith follows, trying not to let on how overwhelmed she already feels...

As they pass between the rows of beds, a COMMOTION several yards away catches Edith's attention.

She looks over to see TWO CHILDREN, a boy and girl, fiercely arguing.

A tall ARMY officer, BERNARD DARNBY (50s), tries to separate them.

They KNOCK OVER a tray of food and water. Bernard looks pushed to his limit.

EDITH

Oh--

She hurries over and kneels, picking up the fallen cups and food.

Sister Penny follows. She sternly SHUSHES the children and drags them away.

Bernard kneels next to Edith.

BERNARD

Oh, that's alright, love. I can get it.

His accent is slightly cockney. His disarming smile offsets the uniform and boots.

EDITH

No, please, let me. I'm a mother.

He smiles at that.

BERNARD

Then you probably know more than I do.

They begin piling the spilt food onto the tray.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Brother and sister, those were.
Just arrived today from Poland.
Long trip.

EDITH

I can imagine.

BERNARD

It's hard when you can't even
understand what they're bloody arguing
about in the first place...

Bernard gets to his feet.

He wipes his hand clean on his trousers and offers it to
Edith.

She takes it. Standing--

EDITH

I'm Edith. It's my first day.

He smiles warmly. Shakes her hand.

BERNARD

You're doing well so far. Sergeant
Bernard Darnby, miss. At your
service.

INT. JACK'S ROOMS - MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD - NIGHT

A grand Oxford residence, but filled with shabby furniture,
old books, no small amount of dust, and cigarette ash.

Jack lounges on the shabby gray sofa, a pile of student papers
on his lap. He has a cigarette in hand, the ash of which he
casually flicks right onto the floor.

A short KNOCK, then the door opens, revealing Warnie.

He looks at Jack, who again flicks his cigarette onto the
rug.

WARNIE

Bad habit, Jack.

JACK

It's good for the carpets.

Warnie takes over the neighboring armchair and hands Jack a
small stack of letters.

WARNIE

Mail.

JACK

Cheers.

He starts to look through it.

WARNIE

Do you not have the fire on? It's
tremendously drafty in here...

He gets up and goes to the back table. Pours himself a
Scotch.

JACK

I'll send down for some wood...

One particular envelope catches his eye.

JACK (CONT'D)

The London Times sent me something?

WARNIE

Are we late on payment?

Jack opens it. Quickly scans a short letter.

JACK

Ah.

WARNIE

How much do we owe, then?

JACK

No, no. It's from the editor of the
Literary Supplement. They ask me to
write a review.

WARNIE

For what?

JACK

"The Hobbit." American edition.

Warnie looks unsure of how Jack wants him to react.

WARNIE

That's...

JACK

A blow to the face.

Warnie shrugs apologetically.

WARNIE

Well, on the upside, your name will appear in *The Times*. That's really quite exciting.

Jack sighs.

JACK

Yes, but not quite in the same way, Warnie.

Warnie looks troubled on his brother's behalf.

WARNIE

Well. I don't know if this is the right time to bring this up, but it certainly may make you feel better...

Jack looks suspicious.

JACK

What?

WARNIE

Was talking to Hugo on my way here. Seems the talk about town is that Craigie is finally resigning. End of term.

JACK

William Craigie? Of Pembroke?

WARNIE

The very one. Which means...

JACK

The Anglo-Saxon professorship is open for application!

They're both smiling now.

WARNIE

You've been wanting this for a long time.

JACK

Indeed. God. Think I have a shot?

WARNIE

Oh, I dare say it's in the bag.

INT. SIDE OFFICE, KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY

Edith sits in a cramped, windowless room at a small table stacked with papers and envelopes.

She finishes writing an address on an envelope and slips a folded paper inside. Seals it. Stamps it. Tosses it in a box with hundreds of others.

Takes another blank envelope from a never-ending pile and starts the process again.

BERNARD (O.S.)

Need help?

Edith starts. Turns to see Bernard standing in the doorway.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

How are you holding up?

She looks at the envelopes and papers surrounding her.

EDITH

Oh...these blasted inquiries.

BERNARD

Yes, the paperwork... it'll only be for a couple days. New volunteers always get the boring bits.

EDITH

Is that so? The Sister didn't say.

BERNARD

Sister Penny? Don't pay any attention to her. Thinks she runs the place.

EDITH

Doesn't she?

BERNARD

No. I do. Probably until the war starts, anyway. I know, I don't seem the type.

Edith laughs. Then:

EDITH

You really think war's coming to England?

BERNARD

Without a doubt, miss.

Edith sighs. Bernard leans forward.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

What is it, exactly, that you hope to accomplish here?

EDITH

Well, to work with the children, of course.

BERNARD

To clean up after them?

EDITH

To help find them homes.

BERNARD

Why?

EDITH

Because...

She thinks.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Well... I'm not sure what it was at first, but now -- today... seeing it. I'm afraid for them.

Bernard looks at her. She doesn't meet his gaze, seeming embarrassed.

BERNARD

I am, too, miss.

She looks up. He smiles. She can't help but laugh self-consciously.

EDITH

(changing the subject)

And how do you like Oxford?

BERNARD

A little stuffy to be honest. Are all the men in this town so attached to their books and tweed coats as I've seen near the university?

Edith nods, laughing. He joins in. A charming smile.

EDITH

I think we shall be good friends.

EXT. OXFORD STREETS - NIGHT

Jack and Tolkien walk and talk, bundled up against the cold. Darkness starts to fall over Oxford, yet plenty of people are out. Shops and restaurants stand waiting, doors open.

Jack glances at Tolkien before speaking.

JACK
So how about Craigie retiring, eh?

TOLKIEN
It's interesting.

Jack tries to read his face.

JACK
You're not applying, then?

Before Tolkien can answer--

JACK (CONT'D)
I didn't think you would.

He chuckles.

JACK (CONT'D)
All the better for me. Besides,
your career's doing fine, isn't it.

Tolkien doesn't say anything.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'm not exactly sure how best to go
about it... do you think they might
like to see some of my work?

TOLKIEN
It's possible. Perhaps that essay
on the Norse myths.

Jack nods thoughtfully.

JACK
Yes, I forgot about that one.

They continue walking in silence for a moment.

JACK (CONT'D)
I got the review request from The
Times, by the way.

TOLKIEN
Oh, wonderful.

JACK
You prompted them to ask me, I assume?

TOLKIEN
Well, I didn't see why you'd refuse.

This possibility occurs to him for the first time.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Wait - you will write it, won't you?

Jack waves him off.

JACK

Yes, I will. Of course.

TOLKIEN

(half-joking)

Will you write a *good* one, though?

JACK

Tollers, please. I love the Hobbit.
How's that sequel coming along,
anyway?

TOLKIEN

Oh, I have a few sketches...nothing
really worth sharing...

Just at that moment, a small GROUP of STUDENTS excitedly
approaches.

STUDENT 1

Professor Tolkien.

TOLKIEN

Yes?

Jack looks annoyed at the interruption.

The students look nervous. The first one's friends look
like they can't even bring themselves to speak.

STUDENT 1

I--I'm taking your lecture on the
Romantics.

TOLKIEN

Oh, lovely. How do you do.

STUDENT 1

Great. Thank you, sir. I just wanted
to say how much I love "The Hobbit."

Jack busies himself, examining a window display in the nearby
shop.

Another pipes up:

STUDENT 2

Me too.

(MORE)

STUDENT 2 (CONT'D)
 (re: Student 1)
 I had to borrow his copy, of course.
 It's sold out in all the bookstores!

Tolkien chuckles. Facing the window, Jack rolls his eyes.

TOLKIEN
 Have you tried mail-order?

STUDENT 1
 Good idea, sir! We will. Well - we
 won't keep you and...

He looks at Jack for the first time. No recognition.

STUDENT 1 (CONT'D)
 ...Your friend.

TOLKIEN
 Not at all, not at all. Have a nice
 evening.

He tips his hat to them and he and Jack move on.

As they walk off, quietly murmured behind them--

STUDENT 1 (O.S.)
 Who was that other bloke?

STUDENT 2 (O.S.)
 Oh, just Fat Old Lewis. Another
 teacher.

--And the boys fall out of earshot.

Jack looks grumpy. Straightens his coat a bit.

TOLKIEN
 Well.

He seems embarrassed. But in a pleased sort of way.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
 Fancy a pint before supper?

INT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - NIGHT

It's getting late. Edith comes out of the office, pulling
 on her sweater. She stretches. A small yawn.

Passes quietly by the rows of beds, in which lie the sleeping
 children.

She is about to push open the front door, when from behind her, a quiet SOB.

Edith pauses. Turns.

One CHILD (6) sits up in bed, he's easy to spot.

Edith waits, but he is silent. She turns back to the door.

A SNIFF.

Edith turns back. No leaving now. She weaves her way between the beds until she gets to his.

The boy glances up at her, then down again. He HIDES a paper under his pillow. Another SNIFF.

EDITH

Hello, there.

She sits down next to him. He refuses to look up.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Do you speak English?

He makes a sign with his hand for "a little."

EDITH (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Nothing.

She looks at his NAME TAG, lying on the blanket next to him.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Frederick?

He doesn't answer.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Bernard passes through from a side room, walking quickly, holding a huge STACK of FOLDERS.

He stops short at the sight of Edith and Frederick.

BACK WITH EDITH

She hands him her handkerchief. He takes it, but doesn't wipe his eyes.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Do you miss your parents? Is that why you're sad?

He shakes his head, still stubbornly avoiding eye contact.
Edith smiles to herself.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Of course not. Brave boy.

She pulls the blankets back for him, and, as if by natural reaction, he wriggles down under them.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Sleep well, honey.

Bernard watches as she smooths Frederick's messy hair.

Edith touches the YELLOW STAR sewn into the sleeve of his tattered sweater.

She leans down and KISSES his head softly.

Frederick turns his head away.

EXT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - NIGHT - LATER

Edith and Bernard stand outside the building, each under several layers of sweaters and coats. Edith's scarf tight and high on her neck.

BERNARD

Frederick has been here longer than most. It's getting harder to find them all homes.

EDITH

Why?

BERNARD

Families will only take one child at a time, and usually only three years or younger.

EDITH

And their parents?

BERNARD

Most of those kids will never see their parents again.

EDITH

You don't know that.

BERNARD

If Hitler continues to get his way...

He just shakes his head.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I just hope the families these kids end up with are as nice to them as you just were with that little boy.

Edith smiles, self-conscious.

EDITH

Do you really think a child should be separated from their parents like this?

BERNARD

If it means survival, by all means, yes. I don't have to tell you what would happen to them otherwise.

EDITH

I can't imagine being away from my own.

BERNARD

But if you could save them by sending them off, even if it meant you'd never see them again, you would do it.

That wasn't a question.

EDITH

It pains my heart to even think about it. I can't believe the things going on in this world.

He nods agreement.

BERNARD

Everything is changing. It's madness. Truly. I wish I knew how it'd all end.

A heavy, worried pause.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

We must do what we can to help those who cannot help themselves. That much, at least, is certain.

She watches him. Admiring.

EDITH

Yes, we must.

INT. GORDON'S OFFICE - MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD - NIGHT

Jack sits in an ornate office across the desk from GEORGE STUART GORDON (58), a stern-looking man, finely dressed and excellently mannered.

GORDON

You are more than qualified, Jack.
There's no question.

JACK

Thank you, George.

GORDON

The thing is, so are a lot of others.

JACK

You were my own tutor, George. You know better than anyone how good I would be--

GORDON

Jack, I can't play favorites...

JACK

Of course. What do you think might help my chances, then?

GORDON

I would suggest getting yourself a good professional reference.

JACK

Right.

GORDON

Preferably someone at Oxford, of course.

Jack thinks on this.

JACK

What about Professor Tolkien?

Gordon nods slowly, considering.

JACK (CONT'D)

He's read all my work, and admires it.

GORDON

Then he sounds like your man.

Gordon stands and Jack follows.

GORDON (CONT'D)
How is he doing, old Tollers? It's
been quite a while.

JACK
Well, his book is doing extremely
well. In fact, I'm writing a review
for it.

GORDON
Indeed?

He gives Jack a knowing look.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Hopefully you'll write a good one.

Jack lets this sink in.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Thanks for coming in Jack. Always a
pleasure.

JACK
Likewise. Thanks for the... advice.

Gordon hands Jack his hat.

GORDON
Good luck.

FADE OUT.

END ACT 1

ACT 2

FADE IN:

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, TOLKIEN RESIDENCE, NORTH OXFORD - DAY

The door in the ceiling leading to the ATTIC is open, the ladder pulled down to the floor.

Edith kneels at the foot of the ladder, sorting through a box labeled "BOYS' CLOTHES."

She fills a bag with sweaters, shirts, trousers, shoes.

INT. STUDY, TOLKIEN RESIDENCE, NORTH OXFORD - DAY

Tolkien sits at his desk, grading papers.

Edith stands before his high BOOKSHELF.

EDITH

Are you sure it's here?

TOLKIEN

(not looking up)

Yes, darling. Although - didn't you say he could speak English?

Her eyes scan the titles, searching, searching...

EDITH

He didn't actually say anything at all. I'm not sure if he could understand me, or if he was just ignoring me.

There. She pulls down a small paperback: "GERMAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY."

Edith stuffs it in the bag with the clothes.

EDITH (CONT'D)

I wonder if I said something wrong.

TOLKIEN

(distracted, reading)

He's just shy.

EDITH

I think he's scared. I would be.

Tolkien STRIKES OUT a whole paragraph in the student's paper.

TOLKIEN

Yes, I suppose so.

EDITH

I think he'll like the clothes, don't you?

TOLKIEN

Sure. So how long until their parents come?

Edith looks at him.

EDITH

Ronald.

He CROSSES through another line.

TOLKIEN

(re: the paper)

Ahh...bad source, that.

Edith stares at him, but it's clear his attention is elsewhere.

EDITH

No one is coming for them.

He only finally looks up when the door SLAMS behind her.

She's gone.

EXT. THE KILNS, HEADINGTON - DAY

A large, haphazardly-built house in the Oxford suburbs of Headington. Red brick, with white windows. A thick snow has covered the lawn and otherwise lush gardens. Large trees, now stripped of leaves, frame the home.

Smoke steadily rises from all three chimneys.

INT. THE KILNS, HEADINGTON - DAY

A cramped, cluttered, but cozy house.

Jack and Tolkien sit eating lunch.

JACK

Oh-- I was going to ask you. When is the deadline for the review?

TOLKIEN

Did the letter not specify?

JACK

Afraid I misplaced it...

TOLKIEN

(amused)

Why am I not surprised? I wonder if you ever will get around to writing it at all, the way things run around here.

JACK

Of course I will. You know I'm happy to help.

They chew in silence for a moment.

JACK (CONT'D)

Plans for the rest of the day?

Tolkien shrugs. Seems distracted.

TOLKIEN

I may stop by and see Edith. I think I said something...

JACK

She's at the old church, right? What is it she's doing, again?

TOLKIEN

All those Jewish youngsters, you know? They're put up there.

Jack nods.

JACK

What's she mad about this time, then?

In another room, the phone RINGS (O.S.) and Tolkien looks at Jack questioningly.

JACK (CONT'D)

(calling)

Warnie! Could you get it?

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS (O.S.) and the ringing stops.

JACK (CONT'D)

What was I saying...? No matter. More tea?

TOLKIEN

Please.

JACK

(pouring)

So... since you're not too busy today,
hope you don't mind - I put you down
as my reference for that job.

TOLKIEN

Oh?

Jack nods.

JACK

Gordon thought your support would be
a real help. He'll be calling on
you sometime today or tomorrow, I
expect.

TOLKIEN

Alright.

JACK

You don't mind?

TOLKIEN

Why would I? I'd love to help.
After all, you're doing me a favor
as well.

Jack smiles gratefully at his friend.

JACK

Cheers, Tollers.

They are interrupted by Warnie, who enters the kitchen looking
terrible.

TOLKIEN

Hello, Warnie.

Warnie sits down in the remaining chair.

JACK

Warnie? What is it?

No answer.

JACK (CONT'D)

For goodness' sake.

WARNIE

That phone call.

(heavy beat)

I'm being called back to service.

JACK

What?

WARNIE

I'm leaving, soon as war's declared.

No one looks to know what to say. Tolkien looks from one brother to the other, but both avoid all eye contact.

After another moment, Jack gathers himself and straightens up.

JACK

Well, no need to worry, eh? You're an officer, so...

He finally looks at the others.

JACK (CONT'D)

You know. Safe job, that. Right?

Warnie shakes his head, looking dazed.

WARNIE

I don't know.

JACK

Come now.

Jack pours him some tea, but Warnie abruptly gets up and leaves the room, leaving Jack and the tea behind.

INT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY

Edith sits with Frederick on his bed. She shows him the "new" clothes.

They are all decidedly English, in comparison with what he already has on. She holds up an argyle-patterned sweater. He makes a face.

Edith laughs.

EDITH

Come on, they've hardly been worn. New.

Frederick touches the sweater.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Do you want it?

In answer, he lifts his arms over his head. Edith pulls his dirty sweater off, like he were one of her own boys.

She notices how very thin he is.

Frederick lets her help him into the new sweater. He smiles.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Good?

FREDERICK

Yes.

Finally we hear his voice. Small, and strongly accented.

Edith places the new, folded clothes at the corner of his bed, and begins to gather up the OLD ONES.

Frederick lets out a CRY.

EDITH

What?

He GRABS at the old clothes, almost close to tears, and she lets them go.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Alright, alright.

He bundles them up. Puts them with his small pile of belongings on the floor next to his bed.

A yellow-starred sleeve lies alongside a worn PHOTO and a STACK of LETTERS.

Edith bends and picks them up. Lifts the photo to the light--

But Frederick SNATCHES them back. He glares at her. An intruder.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Sorry.

She smiles. Tries to bring him back.

EDITH (CONT'D)

(re: photo)

Are those your parents?

But Frederick is silent once more. He stuffs everything under his blanket. Sullen.

EDITH (CONT'D)

What's wrong, Sweetheart?

He turns his back at her. She waits a moment, then stands up, embarrassed and at a loss.

She walks away.

INT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY

Edith and Bernard help each other fold a huge pile of clean sheets, each taking an end and matching up corners.

Edith still looks upset.

EDITH

I think I did something wrong.

BERNARD

What?

EDITH

Frederick had a picture and some letters - I tried to look, and he got mad at me.

(beat)

I feel so horrible.

Bernard looks sympathetic.

BERNARD

Don't worry about it. These children are different from others. You have to be patient. And careful.

EDITH

I think he hates me.

Bernard looks over her shoulder at Frederick's bed, and SMILES.

EDITH (CONT'D)

What?

She turns, and sees what he does: Frederick, in his new sweater, looking through the other new clothes. He looks happy.

Bernard laughs.

BERNARD

See? He's fine. Whatever you're doing is working.

As Edith bends to get another sheet--

TOLKIEN (O.S.)

Hello, darling!

Edith turns to see Tolkien and Jack coming straight towards them.

She drops the sheet in surprise.

EDITH
 Ronald? What are you doing here?

TOLKIEN
 Oh, we were just passing by.

Bernard looks from Edith to Tolkien expectantly, waiting for an introduction.

EDITH
 Bernard, this is my husband, Ronald.
 Sweetheart, this is Sergeant Bernard
 Darnby.

Tolkien only acknowledges Bernard enough to shake his hand.

TOLKIEN
 And may I introduce Mr. Lewis.

Jack and Bernard shake.

JACK
 A pleasure. Sergeant, eh? My brother
 Warnie is an officer as well.

BERNARD
 Oh, is he currently in service? I
 wonder if we've met.

JACK
 No. Actually, we just got a call...

And as the two strike up a conversation, Tolkien pulls a
 peeved Edith aside for a quick moment.

EDITH
 What are you doing here?

TOLKIEN
 Wanted to check on you. We were in
 the area--

EDITH
 I'm *working* right now.

TOLKIEN
 Can't you stop for a chat for just a
 few minutes...

EDITH
 I never interrupt your work, do I?
 We're busy.

TOLKIEN
What, folding blankets?

Edith's mouth falls open in indignation.

EDITH
Excuse me?

Tolkien, sensing danger, back-pedals.

TOLKIEN
I mean, come now, you can't leave it
for a moment?

EDITH
There is a lot to do. Look around.

He does. Edith shakes her head.

EDITH (CONT'D)
You'd better go. Don't you have a
meeting?

They are interrupted.

JACK
Hey, Tollers! The Sergeant has read
your book.

TOLKIEN
Eh?

Bernard nods.

BERNARD
Yes, I read "The Hobbit" to my
children not so very long ago.

Edith flinches at "children." Jack notices.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
It was a hit.
(to Edith)
You didn't tell me you were married
to the J.R.R. Tolkien!

Tolkien looks at her: You didn't?

Edith shrugs.

EDITH
(dismissively)
Never came up I suppose.

Bernard shakes Tolkien's hand again.

Edith starts to usher Tolkien towards the exit.

EDITH (CONT'D)

You'd better get going. Don't forget to pick up Priscilla from school.

TOLKIEN

Okay, okay.

Tolkien kisses Edith on the cheek. She doesn't reciprocate.

As he and Jack walk away, Jack glances back one more time. He sees Edith and Bernard pick up their sheets again.

Bernard says something we can't hear. Edith giggles, childlike and happy.

INT. GORDON'S OFFICE - MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD - DAY

Tolkien sits across from President Gordon, where Jack sat a mere day before.

GORDON

I'm sure you must know what this is all about.

TOLKIEN

Of course. He is highly qualified. A brilliant scholar and a very good friend.

GORDON

Tollers, let me be plain. I had hoped I would see you in my office -- not as a reference, but as an applicant.

TOLKIEN

Sorry?

GORDON

I think you would be perfect for the job.

TOLKIEN

Oh, I don't...

GORDON

Not that Jack wouldn't be good as well. He'd be fine.

TOLKIEN

I assure you that he would be an excellent man in the position.

GORDON

Yes, but think about yourself for a moment. Your body of work. Your recent success. You're a published author!

TOLKIEN

As is Jack.

GORDON

Not that anyone knows it.

He CHUCKLES. Tolkien does not.

GORDON (CONT'D)

You're hesitant because Jack Lewis is your friend.

TOLKIEN

The closest one I have.

GORDON

I understand. Don't let me pressure you towards anything you don't want to do. Just...answer me this.

Gordon leans back. Watches Tolkien's face closely.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Who do you feel is better for the job? You or him?

Off Tolkien's torn look...

CUT TO:

INT. TOLKIEN RESIDENCE, NORTH OXFORD - NIGHT

Tolkien stands in the kitchen, in the middle of a phone call.

TOLKIEN

What do you mean, you *have* to stay late? You said that last night.

INT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Edith sits on the edge of her desk. Her hair is tied back and secured with a scarf. She looks exhausted.

EDITH

I have to, Ronald. There's too much to do. We have to feed hundreds of them...

INTERCUT WITH:

TOLKIEN
Your own kids are getting hungry.
You need to come home now.

Edith looks exasperated.

EDITH
Well I'm sorry. You'll have to make
dinner.

TOLKIEN
But I have a dinner meeting to attend
tonight--

EDITH
I have to stay--

TOLKIEN
--It's important--

EDITH
Ronald.

He stops.

EDITH (CONT'D)
(hard)
It can wait.

Steel in her voice.

Tolkien looks chilled. His mouth opens but says nothing.

EDITH (CONT'D)
And by the way, it's more than just
"folding blankets."

She HANGS UP. Tolkien stands frozen at the phone.

PRISCILLA (O.S.)
Daddy?

He turns to see Priscilla standing in the doorway.

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)
Are you making dinner?

A pause. He forces a smile. Slowly hangs up the phone.

TOLKIEN
Yes, sweetheart.

FADE OUT.

END ACT 2

ACT 3

FADE IN:

INT. JACK'S ROOMS - MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD - DAY

Jack waits anxiously as Tolkien, standing by the window, reads a piece of paper.

All is silent but for the crackling fire. Then:

JACK

Well?

TOLKIEN

It's interesting.

JACK

I was trying to express the whimsical tone of the book in my descriptions...

Tolkien doesn't look up from the paper.

TOLKIEN

Perhaps too much.

Agitated, Jack moves closer. He hovers near Tolkien, looking at the paper with him.

JACK

This is the first draft, I remind you.

TOLKIEN

Yes, yes. And it is good.

JACK

But?

TOLKIEN

Well - Not exactly what I expected from you.

JACK

But I praised it from beginning to end!

Tolkien seems unconvinced. He puts the paper down.

TOLKIEN

I don't know...why don't you show me the next draft when you're done?

JACK

Well, what is it you want me to do differently?

TOLKIEN

It's your review. I can't tell you what to say. Just be honest.

Jack, indignant, picks up the review from where Tolkien left it.

JACK

I was already!

TOLKIEN

I know, I know. It's great. Show me the next go around, eh? Now I really must be off...

As Tolkien heads out, Jack SIGHS heavily. He sinks into an armchair and stares at the rejected review, calculating...

INT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY

Edith RUSHES into the building, face flushed, out of breath.

Bernard meets her.

BERNARD

I'm sorry I called you on your day off.

EDITH

I ran all the way here. What's happened?

They start walking towards the back of the building.

BERNARD

The kids were playing outside. Frederick and an older boy got in a fight.

EDITH

Why?

BERNARD

The boy told Frederick that they'll never see their mothers and fathers again.

EDITH

What?

BERNARD
And that they're all dead.

EDITH
Oh my god. Where is he?

Bernard points to the door straight ahead.

BERNARD
In the back room. He won't talk to anyone.

Bernard opens the door and Edith enters into:

INT. BACK ROOM, KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Frederick sits in a corner, on the floor, knees pulled up to his chest.

He's wearing the sweater Edith gave him.

Bernard stays by the door. Edith approaches and kneels down next to him.

EDITH
Hi, sweetie.

Frederick immediately throws his arms around her neck and starts to CRY.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Shh...

She holds him tight.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Everything's okay. You're okay.

FREDERICK
Where's Mama?

Edith hesitates a fraction of a moment.

EDITH
I wish I knew, love.

He CRIES harder. Edith shushes him. Rubs his back.

As he quiets down a little:

EDITH (CONT'D)
You know, you have a lot of people who love you.

She gently disentangles him from her and looks at his face.

His eyes are BLOODSHOT. Still crying.

There's something crumpled up in his hand. Edith points at it.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Can I see?

He opens his hand and she takes from it a PHOTO. It's of Frederick and his parents, very worn, and now TORN IN HALF.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Mama and Papa?

He nods. A SNIFF.

EDITH (CONT'D)

I'll glue it back together for you.

She pulls out her handkerchief and holds it to his nose.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Blow.

He does. She smiles at him and wipes away the remaining tears.

EDITH (CONT'D)

No matter what happens, you'll always have a family. No one will ever leave you alone. Okay?

He nods. Seems calmer.

Edith turns to look at Bernard. He smiles, relieved.

BERNARD

What would I do without you?

INT. TOLKIEN RESIDENCE, NORTH OXFORD - DAY

Late afternoon. Tolkien lets himself in, closes the door behind him.

TOLKIEN

(calling)

I'm home, love. Jack might stop by for supper. Do we have enough?

PRISCILLA (O.S.)

She's not here.

He looks to his right, into the LIVING ROOM, where Priscilla sits reading a book.

TOLKIEN

Where did she go? The market?

Priscilla shakes her head.

PRISCILLA

Someone named Bernard called and she rushed off. Told me to stay here.

TOLKIEN

You've been home alone?

PRISCILLA

She said you'd be home soon anyway.

She goes back to her book.

Tolkien heads into the

KITCHEN

TOLKIEN

She say anything about supper, then?

PRISCILLA (O.S.)

No.

Tolkien opens the refrigerator and examines its contents with an unpracticed, uncertain eye.

Finally, he takes out a carton of EGGS.

INT. DINING ROOM, TOLKIEN RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Tolkien and Jack sit alone at the dining table, a platter of bacon and eggs between them.

TOLKIEN

Well. This looks delicious.

JACK

Certainly.

They start to eat.

JACK (CONT'D)

So, I have that new draft you asked for. I think you'll like it much better now.

TOLKIEN

Oh?

JACK

Well I hope so, for my sake...

He LAUGHS, in a half-joking sort of way.

TOLKIEN
Whatever do you mean?

JACK
Oh, you know. In exchange for your help with the professorship appointment, I'm writing what you asked of me. I'll do whatever it takes, whatever you need.

TOLKIEN
Whatever it takes.

Jack nods.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
Really.

Jack looks up at the change in Tolkien's tone. Quizzical.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
Just surprised is all.

JACK
Why?

TOLKIEN
I can't be *bribed*, Jack. Surely you know that.

Jack LAUGHS.

JACK
Bribe? That is ludicrous. You're my friend, Tollers. We're doing one another a favor, that's all.

TOLKIEN
Well, maybe we no longer should.

They study each other. A tense beat.

JACK
Well. I already wrote the review...

He bends down to pull it from his bag.

Placing it on the table:

JACK (CONT'D)
It's your choice now, whether to help *your* friend...or not.

He stands, gathers his things.

Tolkien watches Jack leave.

INT. SIDE OFFICE, KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - NIGHT

Bernard sits at the desk, going through a pile of paperwork.

A KNOCK and Edith enters.

EDITH

(joking)

What, you're doing my job, now?

He smiles, weary.

BERNARD

You've earned a paperwork reprieve,
I've decided.

EDITH

How noble.

Edith leans against the desk, facing him.

EDITH (CONT'D)

In that case, I have a favor to ask.
I do hope you'll agree...

He puts down his pen, all ears, as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. OXFORD STREETS - NIGHT

Edith and Frederick walk through the busy Oxford town, hand-in-hand.

Edith points out things to him. He looks excited. Can't see enough.

They walk towards a THEATER. Frederick looks thrilled-- the happiest we've ever seen him.

Edith buys tickets.

They head inside, Frederick practically bouncing with delight.

INT. TOLKIEN RESIDENCE, NORTH OXFORD - NIGHT

Tolkien sits alone at the dining room table. The eggs and dishes are now cleared. He lights a cigarette. Several others already stubbed out in the ash tray.

Sound of a KEY in the lock.

The door OPENS to reveal Edith.

EDITH

Hi, love.

TOLKIEN

You missed dinner again.

EDITH

I know - I'm sorry. Didn't Priscilla tell you where I was?

TOLKIEN

Yes.

She sits down across from him, looking tired.

EDITH

That poor boy. I just felt like he needed to get out. I took him to see that new play--

TOLKIEN

You can't just disappear.

EDITH

You knew where I was...

TOLKIEN

Your own children need you too, you know.

Edith turns from surprised to angry.

EDITH

Excuse me? I have been here night and day raising the children by myself for decades!

TOLKIEN

But this is the second day in a row that you haven't come home on time--

EDITH

But it's okay for you, isn't it? You're always off at your little meetings and in the pubs with Jack--

TOLKIEN

That's not true.

EDITH

It is.

TOLKIEN

Alright. I've worked a lot. It's to support this family.

EDITH

Drinking all night at the pub? That's work?

TOLKIEN

Hang on--

EDITH

And I'm gone just a couple of days and you lose your bloody head over it.

TOLKIEN

Well you didn't even ask me. You're spending too much time there.

EDITH

I'm trying to help fellow human beings. It's important. Not that you've noticed a thing.

TOLKIEN

I've noticed you getting too close. You know they won't be here forever.

EDITH

I've done nothing wrong. I don't think I have to apologize to you for anything.

TOLKIEN

No?

EDITH

Things are changing, Ronald. Maybe you can just sit back and ignore it, but I don't want to anymore. I'm doing something about it.

TOLKIEN

What are you talking about?

EDITH

Hitler. Germany. You think it's not going to affect our lives? Look at us. It already has.

TOLKIEN

Nothing has to change between us. Where are you getting all these crazy ideas?

Edith falters. She shrugs.

EDITH
I can see it. And I feel it.

Tolkien looks at his changed wife, a hint of fear in his eyes.

TOLKIEN
I don't want you going back there.
I - I forbid it.

EDITH
You forbid it?

She SCOFFS.

EDITH (CONT'D)
When did you get to be so cold?

He doesn't flinch.

TOLKIEN
Well? Are you actually going to
disobey me?

EDITH
Excuse me? Disobey you? I am not
your chattel, Ronald.
(beat)
And yes. I am.

She leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, TOLKIEN RESIDENCE - DAY

The next morning. Tolkien asleep on the couch.

We hear NOISES from the kitchen. Breakfast.

In the distance, an Oxford clock tower TOLLS.

Tolkien finally AWAKES, looking groggy.

He glances at the CLOCK. 8:15.

TOLKIEN
Damn.

He sits up, RUBS his eyes. STRETCHES his back.

Edith comes out of the KITCHEN. Priscilla and Christopher follow with their schoolbags.

EDITH
You have everything?

BOTH
Yes, Mama.

She notices Tolkien.

EDITH
Oh, you're up.

TOLKIEN
And I'm late. Why didn't you wake
me up earlier?

EDITH
Sorry, I didn't know what time you
had class. Have a good day.

She SMILES sweetly, and heads out the door. The two kids
follow, looking confused.

PRISCILLA
Bye, Daddy.

Tolkien rubs his temples.

TOLKIEN
Bye, Sweetheart.

INT. GORDON'S OFFICE - DAY

Tolkien sits before President Gordon once again.

Gordon waits for Tolkien to speak. Expectant.

Tolkien hesitates. A hint of worry? Guilt?

TOLKIEN
I think...I've changed my mind.

Gordon smiles.

GORDON
Excellent.

FADE OUT.

END ACT 3

ACT 4

FADE IN:

INT. TOLKIEN RESIDENCE - DAY

Edith dusts furniture, humming along to the JAZZ playing from the WIRELESS.

She's dressed plainly, no makeup, hair tied up away from her face.

A KNOCK at the door.

Edith walks over, OPENS it, and is surprised to see Bernard.

EDITH

Oh--

She touches her hair self-consciously.

BERNARD

Good afternoon.

EDITH

Everything alright?

BERNARD

I'm sorry, I should have called--

EDITH

No, no. Please do come in.

He steps inside.

Edith turns off the radio. The silence is heavy.

EDITH (CONT'D)

What is it?

BERNARD

We got some news today. I wanted you to hear it first, from me personally.

EDITH

Is it bad?

BERNARD

Well - no, actually. It's good. Just...a couple came by this morning.

Edith's breath catches.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
They want to take Frederick.

Edith sits down on the sofa.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
They are a very nice couple. Young.
Make a decent living... Can't have
their own.

She can't look him in the eye.

EDITH
When?

BERNARD
Tonight.

EDITH
So soon? Does he know?

BERNARD
We - hoped you would do it. He trusts
you.
(beat)
Will you? Please.

He looks almost as pained as she does.

EDITH
Hasn't he had enough for now? I
mean, he was just getting more
comfortable here...

Her voice trails off.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Are they going to change him? Make
him forget everything?

Bernard says nothing.

EDITH (CONT'D)
They can't. He needs to remember.
He needs to grow up knowing where he
came from.

BERNARD
I'm sure he will.

After a heavy moment, she nods. Accepting.

EDITH
It is great news. Of course I'll
talk to him.

She stands up. Bernard follows her to the door. She opens it, but he pauses there.

BERNARD

Edith. I'm...

They look at each other. Sad. Edith is first to look away.

EDITH

I can come by in a couple hours. I just need some time.

He touches her arm.

BERNARD

Alright. And thank you.

He steps out onto the porch. The sun is setting.

She gently closes the door behind him.

INT. JACK'S ROOMS - MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD - NIGHT

Jack and Warnie sit across one another at the table, playing chess.

Warnie makes a move and Jack groans.

JACK

You bully.

Warnie laughs at the small victory.

A KNOCK on the door.

JACK (CONT'D)

(calling)

Come in!

The door opens, revealing Hugo Dyson.

DYSON

It's out. They chose someone. Did you hear?

JACK

What?

WARNIE

No.

JACK

Who?

INT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - DAY

Edith and Frederick sit on his bed, just like the night they met.

EDITH

I'll be there when they come for you tomorrow. And I'll visit you all the time.

He starts to CRY.

FREDERICK

No.

He puts his arms around her. Buries his face in her neck.

She wipes her own tears.

EDITH

You have to be a brave boy now.

She pulls him close. Holds him just as tight.

INT. TOLKIEN RESIDENCE - DAY

The house is silent and empty, but for Tolkien sitting in an armchair by the fire. Pipe in one hand, book in the other.

He doesn't read it though. He stares into the fire, thoughts elsewhere.

The front door OPENS and in walks Edith.

Tolkien glances at her, but doesn't say anything.

EDITH

No class?

Tolkien looks unsure of whether she's still mad at him.

TOLKIEN

No. Just the morning one.

Edith nods. She sits down in the chair nearby.

He notices her red eyes.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Everything okay?

She nods.

EDITH

You?

TOLKIEN

I don't know.

He waits, but she says nothing.

Edith SIGHS.

EDITH

Frederick is getting adopted.

TOLKIEN

Well that's great, isn't it?

She looks at him, but can only shake her head.

EDITH

Sure.

Tolkien seems confused. Opts to stay out of it.

They fall into a deep silence.

INT. BACK ROOM, THE EAGLE AND CHILD - NIGHT

The Inklings are gathered once again in the pub's back room. They're just as boisterous as the other night, but not yet as drunk.

Tolkien stands by the fire, nursing a pint.

Hugo Dyson approaches him.

DYSON

Congratulations, good sir.

TOLKIEN

Cheers.

They CLINK their mugs.

DYSON

You know, I ran into Jack today. He seemed very surprised at the good news.

TOLKIEN

Oh?

DYSON

Didn't even know you had applied.

TOLKIEN

Well, I didn't, see. Not exactly--

They are interrupted when the door loudly BANGS open.

Jack STORMS in. Makes a beeline for Tolkien. Dyson smartly moves aside.

JACK
I need to talk to you. Now.

EXT. THE EAGLE AND CHILD - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Tolkien struggles to light his cigarette in the chill breeze.

TOLKIEN
You know that you and I have differed
in our assessment of curriculum over
the years...

JACK
That has nothing to do with it.
We're *friends*. To purposely go behind
my back...

TOLKIEN
I didn't! I never wanted to hurt
you... Gordon came to *me*. I never
even applied.

Jack can only look at him, shell-shocked.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

JACK
This could have helped me with my
career, you know. Publishing deals,
exposure. Everything I've seen you
get and what *I* have been yearning
for...

TOLKIEN
(earnestly)
And I want you to get those things,
Jack.

JACK
No. You've taken them *from me*.
Betrayed and humiliated me to do so.

TOLKIEN
Jack. That's ridiculous. I only
did what I thought was right for the
college.

Jack lets out a mirthless LAUGH.

JACK

No. All you did was what you thought was right for you. To hold everyone else back. You've been doing it for years.

Tolkien looks surprised at this attack.

JACK (CONT'D)

I question your motives in all this, sir.

TOLKIEN

(hard)

And some would question yours.

Jack laughs bitterly.

TOLKIEN (CONT'D)

Look, alright. I'll admit that I was wrong to not tell you earlier. But come on. In your heart of hearts, do you really think you were right for the job?

JACK

Yes. But that's not even the point.

Tolkien sighs. Searching for a way out.

TOLKIEN

It grieves me that all of these Oxford politics has come between us, Jack. It's just a job. Let's forget it ever happened, eh?

Jack shakes his head.

JACK

No. The threat to our friendship is not Oxford politics, or a job. It's you.

Before Tolkien can answer, he's gone.

EXT. KINDERTRANSPORT HOSTEL - NIGHT

A SMALL CAR is parked outside the building.

Frederick's small brown BAG, his extra coat, already in the back seat.

Near the doors stand Edith, Bernard, Frederick, and a couple: MARTIN and ALICIA TILLMAN.

Frederick has a TIGHT GRIP on Edith's hand. He may still be crying a little.

The Tillmans, in their 30s and happy, talk to Bernard. Martin is dressed smartly in a gray suit.

Edith can hardly bring herself to look at them, but manages to keep a smile on.

ALICIA

...And it is such a charming town.
We've always loved visiting Oxford,
right Martin?

MARTIN

Yes, London can start to get to you.

ALICIA

Such a fun city, though!

She half-directs this at Frederick, but he's staring at the car.

BERNARD

Indeed it is.

MARTIN

Well.

He checks his watch.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Ah, we'd better be off. It is quite
a drive.

Bernard checks his papers.

BERNARD

Yes, everything seems ready to go.
You have his passport.

Martin taps his pocket.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Then...

He glances at Edith. She takes a deep breath.

Frederick looks from the Tillmans to Edith, a slight panic in his eyes. Edith bends down to look him in the eye.

EDITH

I'll visit you and write you all the
time. Don't forget.

She KISSES his forehead.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Brave boy, remember.

He nods. Edith lets go his hand. Alicia takes it up.

The new family of three begins to walk away...

Martin opens the car door for Frederick. Alicia lets go of his hand--

And suddenly, Frederick TURNS and RUNS back to Edith.

She automatically opens her arms to him. Frederick holds on tight.

Edith fights hard against her tears. Takes a deep, steadying breath.

Bernard looks on, but doesn't intervene. The Tillmans wait patiently at the car.

Edith hugs him tight, then lets go.

EDITH (CONT'D)
You have to go with them, Sweetheart.
I promise you'll be happy.

Frederick turns back to the Tillmans, and makes the walk to them alone.

Alicia and Edith share a look. Alicia smiles gently, then turns back to the car.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Goodbye.

INT. THE EAGLE AND CHILD - NIGHT

The pub is emptying out now. Tolkien sits at the bar, his pint nearly empty.

The BARMAN taps the countertop.

BARMAN
One more, Tollers?

Tolkien shakes his head. Sips what's left in his mug.

Completely and utterly alone.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW