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BLACK SCREEN:

GRAPHICS: 1916

FADE IN:

1 EXT. OPEN FRENCH ROAD. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 1. 1

Establishing shot. Thousands of German soldiers marching across the French countryside.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. OPEN FRENCH ROAD. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 1. 2

A platoon of weary German soldiers taking a break from a march, some eating, some playing football, most just relaxing. Rudi, Freddie, Lanzo and Stefan sit in a group eating from tin plates.

Michael to one side, writing a letter, Freddie closest to him.

FREDDIE
Give her a kiss from me.

RUDI
And me!

LANZO & STEFAN
And me!

A few similar shouts from nearby soldiers. Michael smiles as he seals the envelope.

FREDDIE
Must be coming up to your first anniversary...

MICHAEL
Soon.

FREDDIE
The secret to a good marriage, just spend a week at home once a year.

A beat. Stefan looks around at the assembling troops.

STEFAN
I don't know where we're going, but they don't move this many people without good reason.

RUDI
I hate being reinforcements.

MI CHAEL

Why?

RUDI

Well think about it, why do they
need reinforcements in the first
place?

Because the ones that were there
first are dead.

A moment as that sinks in.

CUT TO:

3

EXT. MI CHAEL'S HOUSE. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 1.

3

Katie sitting alone reading Michael's letter. She finishes,
looks thoughtful. Susan puts a comforting hand on her
shoulder, Katie forces a smile.

CUT TO:

CYRIL
Stretcher detail. There's a CCS
two miles away and a couple of
blokes need patching up.

BEN
Two miles!

KEVIN
Haven't they got a cart?

CYRIL
All being used, that's why I
volunteered.

ANTHONY
Wing nut! Two miles carrying a
stretcher, have you gone mad?

CYRIL
I hope so, then they might send me
home. Come on!

CUT TO:

5 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 1. 5

Cyril leads the way with a map as Ben, Anthony, Kevin and
Thomas carry two stretchers, each with a wounded soldier on.

BEN
(nods at Cyril)
Hang on, if this is his idea, how
come he's not doing any of the
carrying?

CYRIL
I'm carrying the map.

ANTHONY
We don't need a map, we can see it!

They look ahead to see the CCS in the distance.

CYRIL
Look, this is my mission, I give
the orders.

KEVIN
You'll be needing your own
stretcher in a minute...

THOMAS
It's okay, we're nearly there...

CYRIL

Exactly... Beside it's not the
journey that's important, it's
what's at the other end...

Cyril grins at Thomas, who has no idea what he's talking
about...

CUT TO:

CYRIL

Excuse me Nurse! - can you come and see my mate please? He's in a really bad way. .

JOANNA

I'm not really a nurse, I'll get someone. . .

CYRIL

No, it's urgent, I think he's broke something!

Cyril leads her behind the truck where Kevin, Anthony and Ben are carrying Thomas by his arms and legs.

CYRIL (CONT'D)

It's his heart we think. Love sick he is, worst case I've ever seen!

Joanna realises it's Thomas and screams, the others let him down and they embrace.

JOANNA

Why didn't you tell me?!

THOMAS

There's a war on, we're not allowed to tell people where we are.

JOANNA

You could have at least told me you were coming!

JOANNA
 (wry smile)
 Come on...

She takes his hand and leads him away from the CCS.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 1 . 8

Michael, Rudi, Freddie, Lanzo and Stefan in the trenches with the rest of the men, all adding sandbags to the parapet, digging new dug outs. A corporal barking out orders.

CORPORAL
 Dig deep, everything away!

Michael and the others dig.

MI CHAEL
 What's going on..?

LANZO
 The British must be planning something.

CORPORAL
 Dig!

CUT TO:

9 EXT. FIELDS. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 1. 9

Thomas and Joanna walking back to the CCS holding hands.

THOMAS
 You wouldn't believe how much stuff they're sending up... it's the biggest push yet.
 It feels like we're near the end...

JOANNA
 I hope so.

He studies her.

THOMAS
 Are you alright? You seem...
 Sad.
 (grins)
 Aren't you pleased to see me?

JOANNA
 Of course.
 (a beat)
 My brother died.

She looks up to see Thomas leaving. He waves.

OUT on Joanna.

CUT TO:

10 INT. GERMAN DUGOUT. EARLY SUMMER. NIGHT 1 10

Michael, Rudi, Stefan and Lanzo and a dozen other soldiers are deep down in a dug out. All looking more than a little terrified in the candle light.

BEN
How long you been out here?

HARRY
We landed yesterday. Finished our training last week.

BEN
You seen a German yet?

HARRY
Not yet.

BEN
You will.

Thomas notices that one of the young boys is scratching, he picks up a small tin can from under his bunk and walks across to sit with the young boy (DEREK).

THOMAS
You itching?

DEREK
Haven't stopped since we got here.

THOMAS
Lice. Everyone's crawling with 'em...

He hands him the tin.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
There's a bit of paraffin in here, rub it on your skin, keeps 'em off... Just careful when you spark up.

DEREK
(takes tin)
Thanks.
(beat)
I'm Derek.

THOMAS
Tommy.
(beat)
How old are you?

DEREK
(tentatively)
Sixteen.
(beat)
I had to try three recruitment offices before I got in.

THOMAS
Does your Mum and Dad know you're
here?

DEREK
I left them a note.

A moment between them.

THOMAS
Stick close alright? When you're
out there, keep your head down.
And write home.

Derek shakes his head.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Your family will wake up every day
and think you're dead...
Letters are our only way of telling
them we ain't.
(beat)
My little brother told me that...

Thomas smiles, Derek does the same as he relaxes a little.

Thomas goes to his bunk and grins as he sees Anthony dealing
cards to a couple of the new recruits.

Suddenly Kevin bursts in.

KEVIN
Hey lads, come and have a look!

CUT TO:

12 EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. NIGHT 1. 12

Cyril, Anthony, Ben, young Derek and the others all follow
Kevin into the trenches to see another several soldiers
laughing as they position a battered old piano at the end of
the trench.

13 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. NIGHT 1. 13

All the soldiers by candle light. A real air of ex

Lanzo takes his dug out entrance, kisses it then g back down.

When do

Tomorrow
All the d nding
round a m ys
a bad sign

It feels di

ST
We're dug in, ight.

LANZ
You think this
That whatever h...
It will be the

Silence. No-one knows th to that... Michael finishes his letter and puts box by the entrance to the dug out, then looks up at the stars.

A moment, then he hears music in the near distance, a piano... people singing.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. BRITISH FRONT LINE. EARLY SUMMER. NIGHT 1. 14

Thomas, Cyril, Kevin, Anthony, Ben and a dozen others gathered around the old piano. Young Derek playing.

They're singing **H O O B ...**

It's surreal, young men in the trenches gathered around an old piano singing, the best of times...

FADE TO BLACK:

15 EXT. BRITISH GUN POSITION. EARLY SUMMER. DAWN 2. 15

A wagon on a narrow gauge track is being pushed uphill towards a huge door by six British soldiers, heaving and sweating. In the wagon is an enormous shell.

CUT TO:

British soldiers in a semi circle around a priest who is giving prayers. On the faces of the boys...

PRIEST (V.O.)
....you will not fear the terror of
the night, nor the arrow that flies
by day...nor the pestilence that

ANTHONY
Poor bastards.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 2. 23

Another big explosion on the German trench.

CUT TO:

24 INT. GERMAN DUG OUT. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 2. 24

Michael and the other soldiers huddled underground as the bombardment gets ever louder, shaking the earth around them.

The roof of the dug out caves in, leaving Michael and Freddie trapped. Freddie disappears under a mound of earth. Chaos as the other soldiers manage to clamber out of the dug out.

MICHAEL
Freddie!

Michael struggles desperately across the collapsed dug out and frantically starts digging. The shelling continues unabated, above and around the dug out, sending more earth crashing down on Michael as he digs.

Michael eventually uncovers Freddie, wiping mud from his face, then dragging him out, turning him on his back, struggling to get him to breathe again. Clearing mud from

FREDDIE
We' re gonna di e here Mi key, di e
here i n thi s hol e. . .

MI CHAEL
No we' re not.

Freddie starts to sob.

FREDDIE
I don' t even know where I am. . .

MI CHAEL
I know. . .

FREDDIE
I don' t want to di e. . .

MI CHAEL
Ssshhh. . .

Michael strokes Freddie' s head.

MI CHAEL (CONT' D)
We' re not going to di e.
(beat)
We' re not going to di e.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. NIGHT 2. 27

The constant "boom" of the big guns.

Thomas, Cyril, Anthony, Ben, Kevin, Harry, young Derek and the others in their dug out.

CYRIL
They' ve had six days and nights of
this, with no let up. There can' t
be any of them left.

BEN
Let' s hope not.

ANTHONY
It' s horrible though, i t coul d j ust
as easi ly been us.

BEN
Exactly, that' s why I ai nt feel ing
sorry for them.

ANTHONY
I' m not sayi ng you shoul d. . .

BEN
What then?

ANTHONY
(beat)
I don't know.

A moment. Corporal Bond appears.

CORPORAL BOND

THOMAS

If there's any shooting... There
will be shell holes everywhere,
just jump in one and keep your head
down.

30 EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. EARLY SUMMER. DAWN 3. 30
Silence. The barbed wire still in place...

CUT TO:

31 EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 31
Thomas amongst all the soldiers that are making their way out of the dug outs to take their place in the trenches, fixing bayonets to their rifles. Corporal Bond walking along.

CORPORAL BOND

Wait until the mine under their line is detonated, then we all go together.

We're not expecting too much resistance so keep moving forward.

(beat)

Let's finish this up and go home!
We go on the whistle.

Thomas takes his place and looks along the line to his left and right. Cyril, Anthony, Ben, Kevin, young Derek and Harry all look back at him as they wait. All smiling, excited, this is it... An eerie calm.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 32
In stark contrast, there is chaos in the German trenches as the ragged, red eyed, exhausted and dishevelled soldiers are all coming out of the dug outs and preparing to defend their lines, setting up machine guns at the parapet.

Freddie and Michael are hauled out of their hole.

An officer barking instructions.

GERMAN OFFICER

The bombardment has stopped,
they'll be coming over.

At your guns!

33 EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 33

Thomas and the others lined up waiting. An officer comes out from the dug out, checks his pocket watch and takes out his whistle.

Cyril is beside Thomas.

CYRIL
How's your guts?

Thomas looks at him.

CYRIL (CONT'D)
I've got butterflies...
How stupid's that?

THOMAS
Me too.

CYRIL
Maybe it's wind.
(beat, grins)
Or worse..

ANTHONY
Who wants a race? Ten bob says I
get to the German trenches first.

BEN
You're on.

All smiles, anticipation...

CUT TO:

34 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 34

Michael and Freddie and Rudi getting machine guns ready. Others along the parapet doing the same. They are all dishevelled, dirty and afraid.

Michael looks at Freddie, his hands shaking. A look of determination comes on to Michael's face as he grips his machine gun.

CUT TO:

35 38. EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 35

Michael and the others being showered with debris from an explosion close by.

GERMAN OFFICER
Back at your guns!

They all scramble to take up their positions again. Michael looks around for Rudi, but can't see him.

MI CHAEL

Rudi!

Then he sees him, dead in bottom of the trench.

GERMAN OFFICER

At your guns!

Michael rushes back to his machine gun, looks at Freddie who holds his machine gun, trembling, staring straight ahead.

Michael takes up his position, anger and fear in his eyes.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 36

Everyone waiting.

BEN

Come on... Come on...

CUT TO:

37 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 37

Michael holding tightly on to the machine gun. Waiting.

CUT TO:

38 EXT. BRITISH TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 38

Thomas waiting. The whistle sounds...

CORPORAL BOND

Come on lads!

Everyone shouts as Thomas, Cyril, Anthony, Ben, Kevin, Harry, Kenny and young Derek scramble over the parapet.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 39

Thomas, Cyril, Anthony, Ben, Kevin, Harry, Kenny and Derek in a line crossing no man's land.

All looking happy as there's seemingly no resistance.

Cyril turns to look at Thomas with a grin.

CYRIL
Looks like no-one's home!

Cyril barely manages to finish his sentence before the noise of hundreds of machine guns fill the air and bullets whistle all around them.

Thomas watches in horror as Cyril falls beside him.

A shocked Thomas drops to his knees to help Cyril, but he's clearly dead, eyes staring, lifeless.

Thomas looks up along the line to see Harry, then Ben, then Anthony mown down by bullets from the machine gun fire.

He looks further along the line to find Derek looking back at him, traumatised, bewildered.

Thomas now is disoriented, confused, he's lost his bearings. He sees Kevin now, through the smoke, being hit and falling to the floor in a crumpled heap.

CORPORAL BOND (O.S.)
Keep moving!

Thomas stumbles to his feet and rejoins the chaos as he stumbles through no mans land, the sound of machine gun fire deafening, soldiers all around him falling.

Soldiers entangled in the wire, stuck and sitting targets for the machine guns... Thomas holds his rifle tightly and runs. He stumbles and falls into a shallow shell hole, to find it littered with dead soldiers, two young soldiers alive but frightened.

Thomas climbs out of the shell hole and stumbles through no mans land, through the smoke and noise and exploding shells.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 40

Michael firing his machine gun, knuckles white as he grips it tightly, soldiers in front of him falling.

CUT TO:

41 EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 41

Thomas running through no mans land, around him explosions, young soldiers trapped in the barbed wire, entangled, the more they struggle, the more entangled they become.

He stumbles onwards, knocked sideways by an explosion, then back on his feet, getting his bearings, looking to check which direction everyone else is running, before continuing on his way.

CUT TO:

42 EXT. CCS. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 42

Joanna in the middle of complete chaos as wounded are brought by medics. Some of the lesser wounded help carry stretchers and tend to the badly injured.

Joanna supervises wounded being lifted into her truck, she's about to follow them in when she sees a young soldier in a British uniform being carried past on a stretcher, she freezes, thinking it's Thomas but then the soldier turns his head, it's not him. She takes a breath then goes into the back of her truck.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 43

Explosions from shell fire and machine gun bullets continue to whistle around Thomas and soldiers as they inch their way forward.

They hit a bank of barbed wire and take cover as a soldier with wire cutters tries to cut a way through.

Thomas moves forward, all hell around him.

CUT TO:

44 INT. THOMAS' HOUSE. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 44

Annie on her hands and knees scrubbing the kitchen floor, a little manic, losing herself in the physicality of it.

CUT TO:

45 INT. COMMUNITY CHURCH. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 45

Katie sits alone kneeling and praying silently.

CUT TO:

46 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 46

Michael still at his machine gun post as there's an explosion directly in front of them, blowing him off his post.

Michael gets up, turns to see Stefan and Lanzo dead around him. He sees his machine gun destroyed, picks up his rifle and starts to fire over the parapet.

CUT TO:

47

EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3.

47

All exhausted, traumatised by what they've seen and done, staring ahead.

A moment then Thomas stands.

He starts to clamber out of the shell hole.

CUT TO:

52 EXT. GERMAN TRENCHES. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 52
Michael stands without a word, walks to a large breach of the trench and clambers up.

66 6

6 6

CUT TO:

53 EXT. NO MAN'S LAND. EARLY SUMMER. DAY 3. 53
Thomas reaches the top of the shell hole and, standing alone, looks out around him.

: -

A twenty mile front, SIXTY THOUSAND MEN, dead or injured, the landscape scorched.

Somewhere in the near distance the sound of a young boy sobbing, his heart breaking...

The boy has no physical presence, it's impossible to pick him out from the thousands of injured and dying, his sobbing just becoming the sound-track to the images surrounding Thomas - a horse on its side trying to get up, its legs broken; a man drowning in a shell hole full of water; a man stumbling blindly into barbed wire.

Michael's legs turn to jelly, he lowers himself down to sit on the ground.

6 66 We rise up, looking down at the battlefield, littered with crushed and broken bodies, the full horror of the first day of the Somme...

FADE OUT.
