

The Postman

By

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Cast of Characters

- Corporal Alfred Hayes: Late 20's, Intelligent, kind and generous. A postman from a small village in Gloucestershire. He has volunteered to go to the front and work for the postal service there. His loving fiancée Heather waits for his return. He tries his hardest to get along with Sgt. John Mills.
- Private Anthony Dillard: Early twenties, a postman from the same village. A fun, loving, lad with a heart of gold. Good friends with Alfred and Casper.
- Private Casper Tate: 17, works for the postal service in the same village as Anthony and Alfred. He's a little slow and simple.
- Sgt. John Mills: Mid 50's. A hard, stern man. His daughter is Heather. He gives Alfred a hard time about their engagement. He believes Alfred is not good enough for her.
- Lt. Pryer: Late 30's, A well spoken and educated man. He is completely oblivious to the dangers in no mans land. He tries to keep morale high.
- Lt. Connolly: Mid 30's. Kind and well educated, in charge of the Postmen at the reserve trench.

(More)

Cast of Characters (Cont'd)

- Mrs Dillard: Late 40's, Anthony's Mother. A strong single parent. She misses her boy dearly.
- Heather Mills: Late 20's. Engaged to Alfred. She longs for his return.
- Mary Mills: Johns wife. Loving mother. Generous lady and is nothing but happy to see her daughter be married to Alfred.
- Mrs Tate.: A single mother who lives a few doors away from Mrs Dillard. She is fragile with back pains. She worries for her son Casper.
- Soldiers: Young men on the western front.

ACT I

SYNOPSIS:

During the first world war thousands of postmen volunteered to help on the western front.

From a small village in Gloucestershire, three postmen sign up together to do their bit for their country. Whilst delivering correspondence to their brothers in arms they witness first hand the brutal condition of trench warfare. Also known to these men is Sergeant Mills. With his best efforts he tries to keep the men out of harms way.

An attack on the Germans lines is imminent, Alfred tries his hardest to make one last ditch effort to bond with his future father in law, Mills. Not only does Alfred have to battle trench warfare but also battle for Mills' approval for marriage.

The front line prepare to attack. Final letters are given to the Postmen to be delivered home. The attack was an utter failure.

Alfred is distraught over the death of Mills and his friends then is offered a ticket home. Returning home with the letters from the deceased, can these letters from the trenches offer the same comfort to the families as they did to the men?

ACT ISCENE 1

A dreary hollow is dug in the side of a trench. Inside is minimal harboring a chair and a small wooden table. LT. PRYER sits at the table looking at a letter. He has sent for SGT. MILLS.

SGT. MILLS (O.S)
Sergeant Mills reporting sir.

LT. PRYER
Yes. Come in sergeant.

MILLS enters. He stands at attention.

PRYER turns.

LT. PRYER
How are the men shaping up?

SGT. MILLS
Nicely sir.

LT. PRYER
Good. Good. Listen, oh you can stand at ease.

MILLS does just that.

LT. PRYER
I will not be doing an inspection this morning.

MILLS is thrown back.

LT. PRYER
I thought an extra hours kip will do the men good. Battalion have sent word to get the chaps ready.

SGT. MILLS
Ready sir?

LT. PRYER
For an attack Sergeant. I thought an inspection would be unnecessary. I don't want to add more pressure before we go over the top.

SGT. MILLS
Yes sir.

PRYER stands. Posture up right.

LT. PRYER

After seven days of waiting an artillery barrage is to begin, this will occur within the hour. They will cease firing at midnight and then continue once more at 0 seven hundred. This should give us complete advantage for when we charge.

SGT. MILLS

Permission to speak sir?

LT. PRYER

Granted.

SGT. MILLS

What time are we to attack?

LT. PRYER

After breakfast, at 0 eight hundred hours.

SGT. MILLS

But sir, that's the middle of the bloody day. We will be sending these boys out to slaughter. Most of the men don't even have all their equipment.

LT. PRYER

It will be alright sergeant, don't be so negative. There will not be a single fritz left alive after the bombardment.

MILLS holds his tongue. Frustrated.

LT. PRYER

Now, I will be suggesting to battalion that before the attack a hot meal away from the front wouldn't go a miss. I have no doubt that they will accept such a request. I think they would see it as a morale booster.

MILLS nods along.

LT. PRYER

I will arrange for support to come in and temporarily take our positions, what would you say sergeant?

SGT. MILLS

A hot meal would do the lads good sir.

LT. PRYER

I was thinking something along the lines of shepherds pie?

SGT. MILLS

Shepherds pie would be fine sir.

LT. PRYER

Very well, let the men know to arrive at the mess facility by seventeen hundred hours.

SGT. MILLS

Of course Sir.

LT. PRYER

Oh and please resist the urge on telling the men we are going over. I would like to address the men myself, lead by example and so forth.

SGT. MILLS

That you will sir.

LT. PRYER

Thank you sergeant, that will be all.

MILLS salutes, then leaves.

SCENE 2

ANTHONY and CASPER lie on wet planks of wood sharing a blanket. ALFRED trudges down the muddy trench, he carries two satchels full of post. He squats down next to ANTHONY and CASPER waking them.

ALFRED gives ANTHONY a gentle shake.

ALFRED

Anthony, wake up.

ANTHONY

What is it Alfred?

ALFRED

It's morning. Time to get up. Mills will be passing through soon. If he see's you two wrapped up like this he'll go spare.

ANTHONY

I'm up. I'm up.

ANTHONY wipes his eyes and sits up.

He nudges CASPER.

ANTHONY

Casper, get up.

CASPER

What's all the racket?

ANTHONY

It's time to get up.

CASPER pulls the rest of the blanket over him.

CASPER

Five more minutes.

ANTHONY

Come on you lazy git. Mills is coming. You'll get us into trouble.

CASPER

Sarge is on his way? Right, I'm up.

ANTHONY and ALFRED chuckle.

CASPER throws the blanket to one side and sits up right.

ALFRED

What are you two doing down here anyway? Why didn't you sleep in with the rest of the lads back in reserve?

ANTHONY

Lieutenant Connolly wanted two posty's to be available through the night to send word just in case there was an attack.

CASPER

Bring any news with you Freddy?

ALFRED

The usual, nothing. However, I did just drop a letter off at Pryers quarters, it looked important.

ANTHONY

Did you see who it was from?

ALFRED

No, but Lieutenant Connolly made sure that it was the first letter I delivered this morning.

ANTHONY

Somethings going on.

ALFRED

Here, I just picked these up from the parados.

ALFRED dumps a satchel on ANTHONY'S lap.

ANTHONY

How many today?

ALFRED opens up his satchel.

ALFRED

God knows, easily a hundred in here?

ANTHONY

Anything for me?

ALFRED

Let's have a look shall we.

ALFRED rummages through his satchel, Plucking out several letters. He flicks through them like they are playing cards. One appears with Anthony's name on it.

ALFRED

Here you go mate.

ANTHONY
Ta.

ALFRED
And Casper, I believe...

*ALFRED pulls out a small package handing it to
CASPER.*

ALFRED
This is for you.

CASPER'S face lights up. Excited.

CASPER
Thanks Freddy.

ANTHONY
Who's it from?

CASPER
Well, it could only be from my mum.

*CASPER pulls the strings apart. He opens up the
cardboard lid. It's shortbread with a letter
placed on top.*

*CASPER moves the letter aside, fixated on the
shortbread.*

CASPER
I can't believe she actually bought me some.

ANTHONY
Bought you what?

CASPER
Shortbread. Look.

*CASPER shows ANTHONY the contents. ANTHONY
jokingly attempt to grab a piece. CASPER pulls the
box back.*

CASPER
Get out of it.

ALFRED
You lucky thing.

CASPER
I was only joking with her when I said to send me some.
She must really miss me. It's a bloody treat to have
biscuits in my house I'll have you know.

ALFRED

What does the letter say?

CASPER scans the letter.

CASPER

Uh..."To my Casper. I hope this shortbread gets to you on time for your birthday. Even when your away I have to make sure my boy has a full stomach. I know Anthony and the boys will keep you safe. Happy Birthday. I pray for the day you return, love mum".

They smile.

ALFRED

When is it your Birthday?

CASPER

It was yesterday.

ALFRED

Happy Birthday.

ALFRED shakes his hand.

ANTHONY and ALFRED sing happy birthday.

CASPER is made up.

CASPER places the letter back in the box, closing it. He puts the package in his backpack.

CASPER

We'll save these for a rainy day lads.

ANTHONY

She looks after you don't she.

CASPER

I couldn't of asked for a better present. She really didn't have to send me anything. My mum worries about me too much.

ALFRED

It's your birthday, Of course she was going to send you a present. Besides, every one of us has a mother who worries mate.

ALFRED looks either side of him. He lowers his voice.

ALFRED

Especially a mother who's boy signs up when there not old enough. You should've stayed at home you wolly.

CASPER

What was I to do? You two volunteered to be transferred over here. I didn't want to be a coward.

ALFRED nods, agreeing.

ALFRED

I guess your right Casper. Not a lot of lads would do that. Your mother must be very strong to let you go.

CASPER

She didn't want me to believe me. She would of held my hand and walked me here if she could.

CASPER saddens.

CASPER

I hope she's coping alright without me?

ALFRED

Don't worry I'm sure she's fine, much better off than any of us let me tell ya.

ANTHONY

You have nothing to worry about mate. You know my mum will keep an eye on her for you. I'm just glad I'm not at that bloody sorting office, the amount of letters their getting each day, no thanks.

ALFRED

All in a hard days work mate, for king and country.

CASPER lightens up the mood.

CASPER

Anyway Freddy, what did your mother say when you signed up?

ANTHONY chuckles.

ALFRED

Sadly Casper my mother has passed. But my fiancée, she wasn't too happy.

CASPER

why's that?

ALFRED

Well, we have been with each other for years. W haven't even been separated not even for night. So for us to be apart is very hard on both of us.

ANTHONY

Have you heard from her?

ALFRED

We speak as fast as the postal service will allow us. Do you want to see a picture?

CASPER nods.

ALFRED pulls out a small Polaroid picture.

CASPER

What's her name?

ANTHONY

You know her mate, the lady from the bakers.

CASPER

That's your Mrs?

ALFRED

Yes. Her names Heather.

CASPER

I recognise her. Ain't she Mills' daughter?

ALFRED

Unfortunately yes.

CASPER

I feel sorry for you mate. Like everyone else in the village, I'm terrified of the man.

ALFRED

It's a tough exterior, I'm breaking him slowly. But I know he's not overly thrilled about the engagement. I'm the man who will never be good enough for his daughter. He always wanted Heather to marry a policeman or a man with an honourable job. Once before he even tried setting her up with a colleague of his but she always ignored his nonsense.

CASPER smiles.

ALFRED pockets his Polaroid.

CASPER

(To Anthony)

Well open your letter mate.

Like a kid opening a Christmas present, ANTHONY rips open the envelope. He scans the letter. He smiles.

CASPER

Well who is it from? What does it say?

ANTHONY

It's a letter from my mum, "Dear Anthony, I'm so proud of you for doing your bit for our country. I can't believe a whole month has gone by already, where has the time gone? The house is so empty without my boy here. Mrs Tate keeps telling me how you and Casper are serving together, it's make me smile. She's so proud of her son. I saw her with an expensive tin of shortbread the other day, maybe she's sending them to him? Tell Casper I'll keep an eye on his mother. Be safe my darling and come home in one piece. Love Mum. P.S I hope Alfred delivers this letter quicker than what he does back home".

They laugh.

ALFRED

Mrs Dillard. Ever such a nice lady your mum. The stories she shared with me about you aye.

ALFRED nudges ANTHONY. Jokingly.

ALFRED

I've known him ever since he was this tall.

ALFRED puts a hand out, feet off the ground, indicating the height of a small child.

CASPER chuckles.

ANTHONY

And those stories will be kept a secret, otherwise you will be doing yourself out of my mums apple pie.

ALFRED

Say no more.

(To Casper)

No one should risk any stories over Mrs Dillard's apple pie. The bloody best in England let me tell ya.

ANTHONY

Apple pie. I would kill for a slice right about now.

SGT. MILLS (O.S)

Right! Everybody up! Get off your backsides!

ANTHONY and ALFRED rush to their feet along with the other soldiers, standing at attention.

CASPER struggles to get up.

ANTHONY

Christ. I wonder if he woke up the Germans as well?

MILLS marches down the trench. He stops in front of ALFRED and ANTHONY.

He gawks down at CASPER..

SGT. MILLS

I see your the last one out of your Pitt again Tate. What where you expecting breakfast in bed?

ALFRED and ANTHONY Smirk.

CASPER

Sorry Sarge.

CASPER finally stands at attention.

SGT. MILLS

Are you still on your rounds?

ALFRED

Just starting them now sir. I believe there's one in here for you.

SGT. MILLS

(To Ant and Casper)

At this time in our lives boys there is nothing better than a letter from home.

(To Alfred)

Head back to my quarters Alfred.

ALFRED

Yes sir.

(To Ant and Casper)

You two do the west side. Make sure you keep your heads down.

ALFRED walks off.

MILLS stands eying up his men. He slowly strolls up and down the trench inspecting his troops.

SGT. MILLS

(Addressing the men)

Right listen up! Everyone is to report to the mess facility at seventeen hundred hours. Make sure you get there early lads before the fat bastards that cooked you your meals shove the lot down their gobs.

They laugh.

SGT. MILLS

(To Anthony and Casper)

Right you two, Do as you where told.

ANTHONY and CASPER leave.

SCENE 3

MILLS stands making a cup of tea. ALFRED is perched on an empty ammo crate. A makeshift door made from a blanket covers the entrance of a small hollowed out trench.

ALFRED hands over MILLS' letter.

ALFRED

Here you are sir.

MILLS takes the letter.

SGT. MILLS

Thanks. Cup of tea?

ALFRED

No thanks, we get plenty off the boys in reserve.

SGT. MILLS

Suit yourself. I can't say the rest of the men are as fortunate as you. Muddy water and scraps is what they get.

MILLS takes a seat.

ALFRED

Yeah, I can see that. Who would've thought the conditions would have been like this?

SGT. MILLS

(Interjecting)

Not the officers, clueless the bloody lot of them. Just because they're educated and speak like toffs they think us west country folk are stupid.

ALFRED chuckles.

ALFRED

Not that it matters now, aye.

SGT. MILLS

How are the young lads this morning?

ALFRED

Chirpy as can be, giving the circumstances.

SGT. MILLS

That's good, as long as their keeping themselves occupied. I don't want them to be dying from boredom.

ALFRED

Well, all we have is the time to kill and the letters to write.

SGT. MILLS

That we do. Have you heard from my Heather?

ALFRED

Yes sir. We correspond every few days.

SGT. MILLS

I did wonder if she was still mad at you for leaving?

ALFRED

Let me tell ya, your daughter is not best pleased that I'm here.

SGT. MILLS

Then we have something in common.

They snigger.

MILLS looks down at his unopened letter.

ALFRED

Good news?

MILLS smells his letter.

SGT. MILLS

Always, it's from Mary. She still manages to put a smile on my face even when she's not around. Here, Smell. She's sprayed her perfume on it.

MILLS waves the letter under ALFRED'S nose.

ALFRED

That brings back memories. Heather wore that the first time we went out together, and again for the second date. She told me it was hers. Months later I found out that it was her mothers and that she used up the whole bottle.

They chuckle.

SGT. MILLS

Crafty girl my Heather.

ALFRED

(Aiming comment at Mills)

I wonder where she gets it from?

SGT. MILLS
Not from me let me tell ya, she's my bloody wife
through and through. You tell Heather to go left, she
will go right.

ALFRED laughs.

SGT. MILLS
I remember when she first started seeing you, I was
furious. My only daughter going after a no gooder. I
still don't approve of the engagement today. I told her
to stay away but that's just Heather she never listens.

ALFRED politely smiles.

SGT. MILLS
I guess I can't talk her mother was the same with me.
The village trouble maker I was. Her Father despised
me.

ALFRED
Nothings changed then. Your still causing havoc now.
Just using the law as an advantage.

SGT. MILLS
Someone has to keep the little buggers in line.

ALFRED smirks.

SGT. MILLS
But Freddy I have to ask, why the hell are you here?
You could of stayed at home with my Heather. You didn't
have to sign up to this.

ALFRED
I felt that it was my duty. You saw the village, every
man there was sighing up. Even policemen like yourself
were joining in. Besides, My old man was a posty before
me. He did his bit serving in the British empire
delivering letters to the young men in Africa.

SGT. MILLS
Your Father served in Africa?

ALFRED
Yes, for a while. He always told me that delivering
letters to his mates brought him great joy. So now I
follow in his footsteps. I've never liked the idea of
shooting someone. I just thought I would do more for my
country by giving the same hope and joy to these boys
than I would do using a rifle.

MILLS gives him an admirable look.

ALFRED

But now that I'm here I feel somehow obligated to join in with the fighting. I feel as if I have a duty to look after my fiancée's father. I don't know, I guess I'm just trying to get your approval.

MILLS resumes his tough exterior, not happy about the engagement.

MILLS looks down at the letter, he sniffs it.

ALFRED observes with sympathy. This is the first time he has seen his vulnerability.

SGT. MILLS

Freddy, I'm going to be honest with you here. We both know what is waiting for us when me and the boys go over the top.

ALFRED nods, serious.

SGT. MILLS

Now, what I tell you lad stays between us, I don't want to start a fuss. Understood?

ALFRED nods.

SGT. MILLS

According to Lieutenant Pryer, Battalion is growing impatient of the stalemate that we have found ourselves in. We are to go on the offensive and attack the German lines.

ALFRED shows growing concern.

SGT. MILLS

Today the lads will be pulled off the front and given a hot meal later today. This was suggested by Pryer to buck up morale. Freddy, we are to attack the krauts at eight A.M tomorrow morning.

ALFRED

Eight A.M? Bloody hell!

SGT. MILLS

We are the first wave.

ALFRED is in silenced shock.

ALFRED

But these men have barely had any training. Men...Some are not even old enough to buy a pint.

SGT. MILLS

(Sarcastic)

Oh the infinite wisdom of the high command, aye.

SGT. MILLS

Listen. Don't you worry about the men, I'll take care of them when we're out there. I need you to keep there spirits high. Make sure they get their letters.

ALFRED

Of course. What about you?

SGT. MILLS

This is my duty Freddy, it'll be alright.

Suddenly, the deafening noise of the British artillery barrage begins.

ALFRED jerks, startled.

SGT. MILLS

Calm down lad it's ours.

MILLS pops his head out the entrance looking at the sky.

SGT. MILLS

Right on time.

MILLS turns, he looks down at ALFRED with respect and gestures to shake his hand.

ALFRED rises out of his seat. They shake hands.

SGT. MILLS

I'll see you at mess.

ALFRED nods and leaves.

MILLS sits, he smells his letter again and opens it.

MARY MILLS (V.O)

"Dear John, I hope you are safe on this day and that you can read this letter in peace. The house is different without you here, it's too quiet. I feel heartbroken John, our daughter has barely spoken a word since you and Freddy left. She locks herself in her room most of the day. Oh I do worry about her. I know she's heard from Freddy because that's the only time I see her smile. She loves him so much. You know what it was like when we first met, nothing but grief from my father, I don't want you to be like him. Just try and

(More)

MARY MILLS (V.O) (Cont'd)
be nice and make some kind of effort with Alfred, for
our daughters sake. I love you John, From your loving
wife, Mary"

SCENE 4

Artillery barrage continues.

Busy mess facility, 5pm. ANTHONY, CASPER and ALFRED perch on a bench eating small bowls of Shepherd's pie. CASPER wolfs down his dinner whilst ALFRED plays with his food, worried.

CASPER

This is so good.

ANTHONY

Slow it down Casper, You'll give yourself a stomach ache.

ALFRED

Let him enjoy his dinner, Ant.

ANTHONY

Blink and you'll miss it, aye Freddy?

ALFRED forces a smile.

CASPER

This was worth the wait.

ALFRED

A simple dish back home is a luxury here. How does that work?

ALFRED looks down at his small bowl, he's not hungry.

ANTHONY

Something wrong with your food mate?

ALFRED

I've lost my appetite.

ALFRED hands the bowl over to ANTHONY.

ANTHONY scrapes the left overs into his bowl at lightening speed.

ALFRED smiles from the side of his mouth.

CASPER

Let's have a spoonful?

ANTHONY

Here you go.

ANTHONY slaps more into Casper's bowl.

CASPER

Cheers. What's the matter Freddy?

ALFRED

I'm not feeling too good is all.

CASPER

Do you want some shortbread? Maybe that will make you feel better?

ALFRED

No it's OK mate, you enjoy them.

ALFRED scans the room looking at the faces of the men, until -

SGT. MILLS (O.S)

Attention!

Men jump to their feet, standing at attention.

MILLS enters with PRYER directly behind.

LT. PRYER

As you were.

The MEN stand at ease.

LT. PRYER

Good afternoon Gentleman. I trust that dinner is up to scratch?

ALL

Yes sir!

LT. PRYER

Good. Men, I have some good news. At exactly midnight tonight the artillery barrage will come to an end. After bombarding the German position for numerous hours I can safely say that there will not be a single soul left alive. Battalion has devised an offensive strategy for us to attack the lines. After breakfast we are to prepare ourselves and charge the enemy position, this will be at o eight hundred hours tomorrow morning. We are to eliminate all enemy strong holds, if there are any left and take no prisoners. This should be a walk in the park chaps. I might even acquire a walking stick to cross for the occasion.

The MEN laugh.

LT. PRYER

Casualties are expected to be low with little or no resistance. So show no fear Gentlemen. Good luck and god save the king.

ALL

God save the king!

The MEN cheer.

PRYER turns to MILLS

LT. PRYER

Carry on Sergeant.

SGT. MILLS

Sir.

PRYER leaves.

The mess quiets down. Men chat amongst one another.

MILLS not wanting to break morale steps forward to address the men.

SGT. MILLS

Quiet down men.

They face him.

SGT. MILLS

Make sure you fill yourselves up lads and get a good nights kip. Prepare your gear and clean out your weapons. If you are lacking in equipment come and see me at my quarters. Tonight, write to your families and loved ones, assure them that when you return home that you will hold them dearly. For those of you that are religious, pray for those who aren't, for peace on earth and goodwill to all men. Dismissed.

MILLS leaves.

SCENE 5

07:50am. The front. Men prepare themselves to go over. PRYER marches down the trench, MILLS follows. A ladder leans on the trench. PRYER climbs on a step now stood above the men.

LT. PRYER

Sergeant, could you inform the men to get ready.

SGT. MILLS

Sir.

(To the men)

Lads listen up! If you have any letters to send home now is the time to give them to the postmen when they pass. Check your equipment! Put a round in the chamber!

The men check their equipment one last time. Then lock and load.

SGT. MILLS

Stand ready! And wait for the whistle!

ALFRED, CASPER and ANTHONY pass taking letters off them.

ALFRED trudges towards MILLS.

MILLS stops ALFRED with a letter in his hand.

CASPER and ANTHONY carry on past.

SGT. MILLS

Give this to my wife.

ALFRED takes the letter.

ALFRED

Yes sir.

SGT. MILLS

If anything should happen, tell Mary and Heather I love them.

ALFRED nods.

SGT. MILLS

Alfred, I know we have never seen eye to eye and that I thought you were never any good for my daughter, but that's not true. I would be awful proud to have you marry Heather. I mean that. I've always thought of you as a son. You an honourable man.

MILLS places a hand on ALFRED shoulder.

SGT. MILLS

Now, look after my little girl Freddy.

ALFRED wells up.

ALFRED

Good luck John.

MILLS grabs ALFRED'S hand, shaking it.

SGT. MILLS

You take care of my family.

MILLS releases ALFRED'S hand and turns away loading his rifle.

ALFRED swallows his tears and pockets the letter. He moves further down the trench, ogling.

The artillery barrage begins.

The men go silent.

Minutes pass. They wait. The suspense is unbearable. Men gaze at the top of the trench, one foot on the ladder. Ready to go.

PRYER looks to his left, then right. He blows his whistle.

END SCENE:

TO BLACK:

INTERVAL:

ACT 2SCENE 1

Reserve trench moments after the attack. ALFRED staggers towards a pile of sand bags, he takes a seat. He pulls out a wad of letters from his satchel, reading the names, discouraged.

Two SOLDIERS traipse past.

SOLDIER #1
Anything for me pal?

ALFRED ignores them. He continues to flick through the letters.

SOLDIER #2
That's a lot of girlfriends mate.

SOLDIER #1
Make sure you say hello from me.

SOLDIER #1 and #2 laugh.

Lt CONNOLLY appears, not impressed.

LT. CONNOLLY
You two, sod off!

The SOLDIERS leave.

LT. CONNOLLY
Sorry about that Freddy, this bunch have been here two weeks and think they know it all. What are you doing here?

ALFRED
I've just come from the front. I just needed a minute sir.

LT. CONNOLLY
And thought you could use this time to look through the soldiers personal letters?

ALFRED
I don't suppose it occurred to you sir or those two soldiers that I am holding the letters of the men who just went over?

LT. CONNOLLY
I apologise. Really, I don't know what to say.

CONNOLLY obtains the letters from ALFRED looking at the names.

LT. CONNOLLY

Philippa Moore, Mary Mills, Lucy Page, Janice Dunne.

ALFRED

Mary Mills is my fiancees mother.

CONNOLLY gives back the letters, dejected.

ALFRED

I have a little under two hundred letters in my satchel, another thousand which are carried by two of my colleagues. Tell me sir, what will the people back home think when they realize their husbands and sons have been sent out to slaughter.

LT. CONNOLLY

I couldn't say. No words could describe the grief that they will feel.

ALFRED

What am I supposed to tell them? How can any words of mine give them any comfort?

CONNOLLY gazes a thought, he looks sympathetic.

LT. CONNOLLY

You have to comfort them Corporal. You tell them what these men did here. They fought for their country with courage and bravery. You tell them that their husbands and sons sacrificed their lives to abolish evil in this world.

ALFRED stands, teary eyed. He places the letters back in his satchel.

He looks up to CONNOLLY, composed.

ALFRED

Thank you sir.

LT. CONNOLLY

Listen Alfred, I have some good news for you. After today you will be on your way home.

ALFRED

Sir?

LT. CONNOLLY

I have spoken to my superiors and they deem you worthy of a ticket home. All you posty's in fact. Replacements will be arriving tomorrow morning.

ALFRED is more confused than happy.

LT. CONNOLLY

Your contribution to our country has been inspirational, it is time now for you continue your work back in England. I think you've done enough here Alfred. Go home, see your family.

CONNOLLY shakes his hand.

ALFRED

Thank you sir.

Muffled artillery BANGS.

Silence.

ALFRED and CONNOLLY look to the sky.

SOLDIER (O.S)

Get down!

CONNOLLY grabs ALFRED, yanking him to the ground.

Explosions fall near.

The explosions stop. It was only a few shells

LT. CONNOLLY

Freddy, are you OK?

ALFRED pats himself, checking his body.

ALFRED

I'm alright.

SOLDIER (O.S)

We need help over here!

ALFRED and CONNOLLY scramble to their feet. They rush down the trench.

SOLDIER (O.S)

Help! Any body?!

ALFRED and CONNOLLY Stop, unsure where the shouting is coming from.

SOLDIER (O.S)

Help!

ALFRED

It's coming from down that way.

ALFRED and CONNOLLY hurry round the corner.

A SOLDIER is crouched by two bodies who are on the ground, stagnate.

ALFRED stands by the soldiers side.

LT. CONNOLLY

Private are you hurt?

SOLDIER

No sir, I'm OK.

The SOLDIER turns one of the bodies over, It's ANTHONY.

ALFRED suddenly drops to his knees.

ALFRED

Anthony! Anthony!

ALFRED gently shakes him.

ALFRED

Anthony. It's me, Freddy.

ANTHONY doesn't move.

CONNOLLY kneels by the other body, it's CASPER. CONNOLLY turns him over. He's dead.

ALFRED shakes ANTHONY.

ALFRED

Ant, Come on mate.

Nothing.

ALFRED

Anthony!

CONNOLLY grabs ALFRED'S arm.

LT. CONNOLLY

There gone Alfred.

Alfred starts to weep.

LT. CONNOLLY

I'll get some help.

CONNOLLY and the SOLDIER leave.

Casper's present lies feet away from his body. ALFRED picks it up. He carefully places the package on Casper's chest resting his hands on it.

CONNOLLY returns with four MEN who carry two stretchers.

Not a word is spoken.

One stretcher is placed by Anthony, the other by Casper. They carry them away. ALFRED and CONNOLLY follow.

SCENE 2

Mess facility. ALFRED trembling, head in his hands. CONNOLLY attempts to comfort him with a cup of tea.

LT. CONNOLLY

It not your fault Freddy. It could of easily been any one of us.

ALFRED is silent.

LT. CONNOLLY

Here you go mate, come on, drink your tea.

ALFRED doesn't move.

LT. CONNOLLY

Come on, it will help.

ALFRED takes a sip.

LT. CONNOLLY

There you go.

ALFRED

What am I supposed to tell their mothers?

CONNOLLY sighs, no words of comfort this time.

ALFRED

Casper was only seventeen years old. This will break his mothers heart. The poor lad shouldn't of even been here.

LT. CONNOLLY

But he was here Freddy and so was Anthony. They both played an important part in this war. Without you postmen these men would have broken weeks ago. See comfort in the fact that you chaps gave these soldiers hope. The letters you delivered helped them sleep at night. I hope you can understand that? Such a tragedy has occurred but their lives will not go without mention. I can safely say that we will never a find another pair of dedicated postmen like you, Anthony and Casper. You chaps did our country proud. I speak on behalf of the other officers and we are grateful.

ALFRED shows a hint of a smile.

LT. CONNOLLY

You have their last letters Alfred, send them home. Their final loving words will offer comfort to their

(More)

LT. CONNOLLY (Cont'd)
loved ones, a message that will stay with them forever.
This is all we can offer them. Your fiancée will need
you more than ever, hold her, tell her that her father
did his family proud.

ALFRED slowly regains his composure.

LT. CONNOLLY
Alfred, I'm sorry but I have to report to battalion.
Are you going to be OK?

ALFRED nods.

LT. CONNOLLY
When your ready, get cleaned up and get yourself on the
next carriage home.

ALFRED
Let me deliver these last letters sir.

LT. CONNOLLY
Leave the satchel Corporal. Private Daniels will make
sure they get sent away.

*ALFRED picks out a few letters and hands over the
satchel.*

ALFRED
I'll take these few sir. I would like to deliver them
myself.

LT. CONNOLLY
That would be fine.

CONNOLLY stands.

LT. CONNOLLY
Good luck Freddy. Take care of yourself.

SCENE 3

MARY MILLS stands outside her home cleaning her front window. Kids play in the street. A POSTMAN swings by dropping off her post.

POSTMAN

Good morning Mrs Mills, here you go.

MARY takes the letter from him. She opens it, excited, until she reads the first sentence. She puts a hand over her mouth, whimpers and drops the letter.

HEATHER rushes outside to her mother, concerned.

HEATHER

Mum, what's wrong?

HEATHER picks up the letter.

HEATHER

Oh my god.

She weeps.

MARY MILLS

Come here love.

They hug, crying in each others arms.

HEATHER breaks out of the hug in panic and runs to her bedroom, shutting the door.

HEATHER drops to her feet pulling out a small box from underneath the bed. She frantically opens it taking out a picture of Alfred. She holds the picture in her hands, desperately wishing he was home. She unfolds a letter from inside the box.

ALFRED (V.O)

Dear Heather. I'm writing my first letter to you sat on a pile of sandbags. There's an unusual beauty here, it's calm and quiet with endless green fields surround us. It's not too different from home. I could imagine it was once a peaceful place to visit. The men seem nice enough. Unafraid. I guess we just don't know what to expect? It doesn't feel like we are at a war. I haven't heard a single gun shot. Your father makes me laugh, he likes to give the men a hard time. As long as it's them instead of me. I think they are more scared of him than the Germans. I will keep an eye on him for you. I see us getting on better already. I just wanted

(More)

ALFRED (V.O) (Cont'd)

you to know that I am safe this day. Forever yours.
Alfred.

HEATHER holds the letter against her chest as if she was hugging Alfred himself. She rocks back and forth crying hard.

MARY MILLS (O.S)

(Gentle)

Heather?

MARY enters the room and sits with HEATHER, hugging her.

SCENE 4

ALFRED wanders down a street carrying a satchel. He looks almost happy to be home until he looks at the letter in his hand. He stops outside a house. He takes a deep breath and knocks on the door. It's a while before someone answers, it's MRS TATE, saddened.

MRS TATE
Hello.

ALFRED
Good morning Mrs Tate.

MRS TATE
Alfred. I almost didn't recongnise you. Come in.

MRS TATE opens the door wider gesturing him to come in.

ALFRED enters, MRS TATE walks holding her back as they enter the living room. MRS TATE heads to a chair but struggles with her back pain. ALFRED assists.

ALFRED
There we go.

She finally sits.

MRS TATE
Thank you my dear, without my Casper here no one is around to help.

ALFRED
I'm sorry about Casper Mrs Tate.

She trembles.

ALFRED crouches beside her, taking her hand.

ALFRED
I'm so Sorry.

MRS TATE
My Casper. He was so sweet and innocent.

ALFRED
He was a good lad, you brought him up well. Casper was very brave and I couldn't of asked for a better friend and colleague. He was over the moon when you sent him some shortbread.

MRS TATE

Did he enjoy them?

ALFRED nods.

ALFRED

We made sure he had the best birthday he could possibly have. But most of all your letters are what kept him happy. He was always so concerned about you, wondering if you were OK? He loved you very much. I know he will always be by your side looking over you. It's been a few weeks since the incident and I have held on to this for safe keeping. I thought I would give it to you personally.

ALFRED saddens, he hands her the letter.

MRS TATE slowly opens the letter. She sobs as she reads.

ALFRED stands, he gives her a kiss on the head and whispers.

ALFRED

I'm sorry Mrs Tate.

Alfred respectfully leaves the house letting MRS TATE mourn. He wipes the tears away from his eyes.

While standing outside her home, ALFRED pulls out another letter from his satchel, he gazes down at the name and takes a deep breath.

ALFRED saunters to Mrs Dillard's house who lives a few doors up.

KIDS run past playing in the street. ALFRED fails to muster a smile at their joy.

ALFRED approaches Mrs Dillard's house. Before knocking on the door, he takes a minute to compose himself. He knocks.

MRS DILLARD opens the door, distraught, she tries to remain positive.

MRS DILLARD

Freddy.

ALFRED

Hello Mrs Dillard.

She gives him a hug.

MRS DILLARD

Welcome home. Come in. I don't want you catching a cold.

ALFRED enters. He stands in the hallway showing no intention of staying.

MRS DILLARD

Can I get you a cup of tea?

ALFRED

No thank you. I was only popping by.

MRS DILLARD

Well take a seat at least.

They take a seat in the living room sitting in silence. ALFRED looks around the room, unsettled.

MRS DILLARD

How are you Freddy?

ALFRED unsure on what to say.

ALFRED

I'm getting there.

MRS DILLARD

Are you sure about that tea?

ALFRED smiles but shakes his head.

ALFRED

Mrs Dillard I'm sorry for Anthony.

MRS DILLARD

Thank you. I know you and Anthony were close. I'm just grateful a friend was by his side at the end.

MRS DILLARD eyes begin to water, but she holds back the tears.

MRS DILLARD

I know he is in a better place now.

*MRS DILLARD can no longer hold back the tears.
ALFRED sits quiet for a minute.*

ALFRED

Um...I came here Mrs Dillard because I thought you should know that Anthony didn't suffer. He did his duty with honour and bravery. It was a pleasure to see him taking special care of Casper. He had a heart of gold.

(More)

ALFRED (Cont'd)

This world will be a lesser place without him. He was a good friend who I will sorely miss.

MRS DILLARD shows a comforted smile.

ALFRED places his hand on hers.

ALFRED

He would have wanted me to give you this.

He pulls out a letter from his satchel.

With a look of somber MRS DILLARD gratefully takes the letter. ALFRED gives her a hug.

MRS DILLARD

Thank you Alfred. I know Anthony looked up to. He would have appreciated this.

ALFRED

Do you need anything?

MRS DILLARD

No it's OK, I'm fine.

ALFRED

If you need anything Mrs Dillard. My door is always open.

She nods whilst drying her eyes.

ALFRED gives her a sympathetic smile.

SCENE 5

MARY sits in the living room knitting in her armchair. It's quiet until a sudden at knock the front door. She answers, gasps. Standing at the doorway in disbelief. It's ALFRED. Her face fills with joy. She envelops him.

MARY MILLS
Hello Freddy. Welcome home.

MARY shouts to Heather upstairs.

MARY MILLS
Heather. Your fiancée is home!

HEATHER runs down the stairs. She stops, looks at ALFRED. Can this be real? All feeling of anguish disappear. She is filled with rapture jumping into his arms. They laugh in happiness.

HEATHER
Oh my God, I can't believe your back. I'm so glad your home. I missed you so much.

They kiss.

ALFRED
I missed you too sweetheart.

HEATHER shows tears of joy.

MARY MILLS
Come on in Freddy.

With blessedness MARY motions him in.

MARY MILLS
Make yourself at home.

ALFRED takes a seat in the living room, HEATHER sits by his side.

MARY MILLS
I'll pop the kettle on.

MARY heads to the kitchen.

ALFRED
I've missed you so much.

They kiss and hug.

ALFRED

Your letters kept me going. I would have been lost without them.

HEATHER

I love you Freddy. I'm so glad your here and safe.

ALFRED

I love you too.

MARY returns with cups of tea.

ALFRED

Thanks Mary.

HEATHER

Thanks mum.

MARY MILLS

Your welcome poppet.

MARY sits opposite.

MARY MILLS

How have you been Freddy?

ALFRED

A lot better now that I'm home or at least I thought I would be.

MARY MILLS

What do you mean?

ALFRED

I can't stop thinking about what happened over there. After my friends where killed I took their last letters and brought them home with me. I needed to deliver them myself, a last letter should not be delivered by a stranger. Before I came here I saw Mrs Tate and Mrs Dillard. I feel so sorry for them.

ALFRED notices a framed picture of John sitting on the mantle piece. He begins to shed a tear. They sit in silence whilst he gazes at the photo. MARY takes the photo staring at the man she has just lost. She gently caresses the picture. Her eyes well up but she doesn't want to cry.

ALFRED

I'm so sorry Mr Mills.

HEATHER cries. ALFRED comforts her.

MARY MILLS

He was a great man Freddy and I know deep down in his inside he loved you. He always did. He must of told me dozen times that you reminded him of himself.

ALFRED smiles.

ALFRED

He did his best to make sure that we where always safe. Looking after us postys even though it wasn't his duty.

MARY MILLS

I know he had a funny way of showing it but he always took care of the people he loved.

ALFRED takes Mills' letter from his satchel.

ALFRED

Before he went over he gave me this. He wanted me to tell you both that he loved you very much.

ALFRED passes the letter over to MARY. Before opening it she holds it dearly and begins to weep.

MARY composes herself and opens the letter. Her eyes run over the letter taking in every word.

MARY MILLS

To my beautiful wife and daughter. Unfortunately the time has come to carry out my duty. This is not my goodbye but see you later. Over the last few months I have grown to love the men beside me as if they were my own sons. I have especially grown to love Alfred. I will miss our conversations together. I will forever be indebted to him for looking after my family. I am a proud man that can say I love him like a son and would be honoured to have him wed my daughter. You have my blessing Alfred.

HEATHER whimpers with a hint of a smile. MARY tries her hardest to remain strong.

MARY MILLS (CONT'D)

It breaks my heart knowing I won't be there to walk you down the isle. I can see that Freddy brings you joy and happiness which no other man will ever do. Oh what I would give to see that beautiful smile of yours one last time. I wish I could be there to watch your life blossom with prosperity, to be their to hold my first grandchild. From the bottom of my heart I wish you both all the happiness in the world. No words can possibly describe how much I miss you girls. You have my whole heart. I will always be holding you both and I will

(More)

MARY MILLS (CONT'D) (Cont'd)
never let go. I could not of asked for a better life.
My two beautiful girls your my whole world, I remain
your father, husband who will love you always and
forever. John.

MARY holds HEATHER as they sob.

ALFRED stares blankly, taken aback by the letter.

MARY opens her arms to ALFRED.

MARY MILLS
Come here Freddy.

ALFRED walks into her arms.

MARY MILLS
(Whilst hugging)
Thank you for keeping your promise and giving us his
last message. You have no idea what it means to me.

ALFRED sympathetically smiles.

MARY MILLS
(Whilst hugging)
Thank you for being patient with him and loving him the
way he loved you. Your kindness will never be
forgotten. John would be so proud of you.

END.

CURTAINS.